

Anna Sokolina, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Women in Architecture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 436 pp. incl. 139 b&w ills, ISBN 9780367232344, £190 (hardback); ISBN 9780429278891, £27.99 (ebook) doi:10.1017/arh.2023.25

Reviewed by LYNNE WALKER

As Karen Burns and Lori Brown observed in their article 'Telling Transnational Histories of Women in Architecture, 1960–2015' in *Architectural Histories* in 2020, 'a number of nationally bounded histories of women in architecture have been published over the last fifty years', beginning in the United States with Doris Cole (1973) and Susana Torre (1977); but larger projects with global scope remain in short supply. Framed transnationally, Anna Sokolina's substantial, ambitious edited collection was written by thirty-three scholars and comprises twenty-nine chapters laid out chronologically and thematically in five parts introduced by 'chapter editors'. Each chapter depicts diverse women with different geographies, histories and models of practice, from the early modern period to the present day. Although weighted towards US-based contributors and subjects, the coverage is far from bound within its borders and is particularly good at indicating the complex interconnections between architects and nations.

While interrogating the relationship of gender and architecture more generally, this collection is intended to provide 'an incisive overview' of women in architecture transnationally from the end of the sixteenth century and, in increasing numbers, from the late nineteenth century to the present. Throughout, designs for architecture intersect with the related fields of interior and industrial design, planning and urban design, while both authors and editors fully engage with problematic issues of gender equity and inclusivity. Also included are practices often considered outside 'Architecture' such as research, writing, conservation, education, exhibition and archival curating, and philanthropy — the portfolio of activities adopted by many female participants in the shaping of the built environment. Drawing on newly uncovered evidence, Sokolina demonstrates that architectural history can be expanded and, through the representation of 'women's equal contribution', can produce a transnational remapping of the discipline and its scholarship based on 'significant female presence, accomplishments and leadership in the profession'.

In the initial, and regrettably only, chapter devoted to the early modern period, Shelley E. Roth draws on Consuelo Lollobrigida's *Plautilla Bricci, Pictura et Architectura Celebris. L'architettrice del Barocco Romano* (2017) to identify Plautilla Bricci (1616–1705) as the earliest professional woman architect — thereby challenging received historical opinion that women first entered professional architectural practice in the late nineteenth century. Bricci was employed as an architect in both the public and private realms, most notably on the monumental Villa Benedetta at Porta S. Pancrazio, Rome, in the 1660s, which leads to the intriguing suggestion that other professional women may have been active in the pre-modern era. More is said about the importance of the Renaissance revival of antiquity and developing definitions of the architect for women professionals and amateurs alike. But women's entry into professional architecture in the modern

period was ignited by access to formal architectural education, which in a later chapter Margaret Lester portrays in the successful career of Minerva Parker Nichols (1862–1949), trained in a design school and the first American woman in independent practice.

In an outstanding chapter on women architects in Palestine, Sigal Davidi addresses the architecture and geopolitics of the women — including the modernist architect Lotte Cohn (1893–1983) and interior designer Dora Gad (1912–2003) — who trained at technical universities in Germany and Austria and arrived in Mandatory Palestine, propelled by Zionist idealism, in the 1920s and 1930s fleeing from Nazism. Both before and after 1948, Israeli women designed major institutional and domestic architecture, as well as social projects, but the price they paid for their success was unstinting devotion, which has meant that — with one exception — the leading female architects illustrated here remained single or did not have children. An important historical consequence was that there was no one to preserve their architectural archives, and their names and achievements were soon forgotten as the buildings fell into neglect and disrepair.

Architectural archives are a central concern of this volume. Institutional collections have special significance, and it is acknowledged that this well-referenced book would be impossible without the International Archive of Women in Architecture held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, which contains more than 400 collections from more than forty-seven countries and is represented in its own right here in two chapters.

While other lesser-known architects, such as the German-American consultant and curator Hilda Reiss (1909–2002) and Olive Tjaden (1904–97), designer-developer of an estimated 2000 commissions in the US, figure in rewarding chapters, one of the best studies is of Eileen Gray (1878–1976), arguably the most admired European woman architect of the twentieth century. Carmen Espejel's chapter gives a closely read account of her designs for furniture, interiors and architecture, both executed and unexecuted. The focus, however, is on Gray's magnum opus, E.1027, the 'Maison en Bord de Mer' (1929), in the south of France, where she developed the vocabulary of the International Style, joining modernity and regionality. Espejel describes this as 'the radical [...] idea' of 'Mediterranean sensuality, understood as a form of living and a culture of a vital bond with the environment', an idea ahead of its time.

Another towering figure, Zaha Hadid (1950–2016), the best-known woman in global architecture in the twentieth and twenty-first century, is examined by Nerma Cridge, who focuses not on her built works (which have received extensive scholarly attention), but on her incomparable early drawings and paintings, while also covering the rollercoaster of her life and reputation. Hadid's drawings were characterised by weightlessness, floating voids and a tenuous connection to the earth, heavily influenced by art and architecture of the early Soviet period. Very different conditions of practice prevailed in post-war Russia where remarkably, as Sokolina shows, women were prevalent in architecture and, 'by 2020, built environments [...] to a great degree have been shaped by women'. These include Nina Aleshina (1924–2012), the architect of no fewer than nineteen spectacular metro stations in Moscow from the 1970s to the 1990s, and Galina Balashova (born 1931), who designed the interiors for the Soviet space programme, including all the Mir space stations in the years 1976–86.

Although everyone would make a different selection, this collection concentrates on architects from the global north, with scanty coverage of the global south. Other regions

important in women's history are puzzlingly omitted, especially Scandinavia, which was central to women's early access to architecture, as well as eastern Europe and southeast Asia, key sites of women in modernism. However, women who shaped the built environment in the global context remain underrepresented in mainstream and even feminist histories, which makes this volume and its strong in-depth transnational accounts not only welcome but important.

Lynne Walker is a senior fellow at the Institute of Historical Research in London

G. A. Bremner, *Building Greater Britain: Architecture, Imperialism, and the Edwardian Baroque Revival c. 1885–1920* (London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2022), 356 pp. incl. 298 colour and b&w ills, ISBN 9781913107314, £50
doi:10.1017/arh.2023.26

Reviewed by MARK CRINSON

At the end of his first book, *Imperial Gothic* (2013), Alex Bremner closed the door firmly on 'the somewhat disabling dichotomies established (and perpetuated) by post-colonial theory'. What he offered instead, and has developed further in his new book, is an approach that links Britain to its colonies, asserting their special relationship in a 'planetary' sense of British history. It is an approach that seeks to problematise 'colonial agency and [its] internal conflicts', finding more complexity in the relation between architecture, the work and ideas of colonists, and forms of imperialism. Bolstering and justifying the approach are extensive engagements with the so-called new imperial history, as well as related enquiries into matters such as networks, technology and communications. Certain long-familiar frameworks of architectural history such as style and an emphasis on architects are retained, now accompanied by more acute historical contextualisation, notably in administrative, legal and financial terms.

Building Greater Britain is an account of baroque revival architecture in Britain and the white settler areas of the British empire. It is an impressive, even formidable work. As well as the extent of its treatment (architecture in six countries beyond Britain is considered), it is monumental in its scholarship and physical heft (adding to the debt that British architectural historians owe the Paul Mellon Centre). Previous scholars, among them Alastair Service, understood the importance of the baroque for Edwardian public buildings, especially for its nationalist associations, and placed it as one among several competing styles of the time. Bremner is less interested in the latter aspect (and in the inventive versions of baroque practised by Lutyens) and far more concerned with the baroque as a widely disseminated and pointedly imperial phenomenon. This was an ambitiously history-minded architecture, led by the theoretical writings of architects such as John Brydon, Arthur Blomfield, John Belcher and Aston Webb, and Bremner is always perceptive on how these related to other aspects of the period's intellectual history.