

## **Noted in Brief**

### **En bref**

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comparable, en sens inverse, à celui que rendaient les élites du XVIIIe siècle à l'endroit du baroque? *L'Encyclopédie* (1776) écrivait, sous la signature de Jean-Jacques Rousseau: « une musique baroque est celle dont l'harmonie est confuse, chargée de modulations et de dissonances », tandis que « le baroque en architecture est une nuance du bizarre. Il en est, si on veut, le raffinement ou s'il était possible de le dire, l'abus », renchérisait *l'Encyclopédie méthodique* (1788). Voilà qui devrait, d'une part, inviter à la prudence lorsqu'il s'agit de juger des oeuvres de notre temps et, d'autre part, suggérer

que des critères objectifs, plutôt que le jugement de goût, déterminent l'identité du domaine de l'art populaire. Sinon, il faudrait admettre que bien des oeuvres de l'art populaire des siècles passés nous auraient échappé pour la simple et tragique raison que nous leur aurions refusé ce titre.

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Geogfrey and Susan JELlicOE, *The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1975. 383 pp; 702 illustrations. \$29.95

The Jellicoe's lavishly illustrated volume attempts to offer "a concise global view of the designed landscape past and present, inclusive of all environment, from gardens to urban and regional landscape." Dividing their book into two major parts (prehistory to 1700 A.D. and 1700 A.D. to the present), they sub-divide these parts into twenty-five sections (China, The Roman Empire, The Middle Age in Europe, 16th and 17th Century France, etc.). Each section is then divided into six paragraphs, entitled environment, social history, philosophy, expression, architecture, and landscape; in Part II, the authors add economics, "which is now required," as if trade did not affect culture prior to 1700 A.D. Despite the lucid structure of the book, the all-embracing scope of the volume provides little more than the broadest of generalizations and over-simplifications which offer little insight into the shaping of landscape.

Take, for example, "Ancient India." The "social history," from Harappa culture to independence in 1947, is reduced to eight sentences! Therein we find such useless, off-hand comments as "civilization in India was dominated by religion to the detriment of civil administration, experiencing

many phases and disturbances." An important environmental change which *did* affect landscape was the salination of the Indus valley prior to or during the Aryan invasion, but the Jellicoes do not mention this occurrence. Under "architecture," we find the judgement that "Secular architecture is of little consequence," although most of the forms of religious architecture (i.e., the *chaitya* arch) were based upon secular prototypes. The authors then make the mystifying observation that "The indigenous architecture was solely religious." Are we to believe that people lived in temples? Entries under other categories in this section are as informative.

So many of the Jellicoe's compressions of history result in slightly absurd half-truths: "The Chinese conceived that man emerged from the bowels of the earth like any mountain or plant, and was therefore one of them in spirit. Hence his love of antique tradition and the worship of ancestors." "The Chinese written character was a pictograph which conveyed to the mind, rather than the eye, the essence of the object." "The philosophical revolt against pseudo-art and the modern mechanical world generally reached a climax in Spain with Antoni Gaudi." "The conservation of historic values has now become a major objective in planning." The structure of the Golden Gate Bridge and Yellowtail Dam "is based on laws of nature that already exist in the universe. They are

therefore a natural rather than an art form." "In the advanced countries, the individual is evolving his own personal beliefs within his own home." "Zen Buddhism went further and set out *intellectually* to reach infinity..." (my under-lining) If there is a basic hypothesis in this book on the relationship of landscape, environment, and history, it fails to emerge from under the weight of such burdensome generalizations and imprecise language.

Ultimately, whatever value this book contains will be found in the some 700 illustrations which reproduce many fascinating old maps and ground plans as well as more routine photographs of architectural monuments. A selective bibliography hints at a certain propensity toward the use of outdated source material; the index is quite incomplete. For example, Moshe Safdie's Habitat is listed, but not Montreal; the Mughal garden of Ram Bagh is illustrated but not indexed. The volume has been adequately printed and bound.

Ronald WOODALL, *Magnificent Derelicts: A Celebration of Older Buildings*, Vancouver, J.J. Douglas, 1975. 149 pp; illustrated. \$29.95.

The eleventh-century Chinese painter Kuo Hsi wrote that one of the great values of a landscape painting is its power to remind the city dweller that a more pristine, organic, and thus moral world exists outside of the materialistic motives enshrined in the urban scene. Although Ronald Woodall says only that his paintings of old rural buildings are "a fond appreciation of some of the debris of progress as seen through the eyes of a hopeless romantic," the reader suspects a therapeutic concern similar to that espoused by Kuo Hsi.

Ronald Woodall is a skillful painter who specializes in capturing abandoned and dilapidated rural buildings in a straightforward, representational style reminiscent of Alex Colville and Andrew Wyeth. Admitting that he seeks to "ennoble" the ramshackle barns, churches, homes and stores in an attempt to make the viewer experience buildings with a "degree of heightened intensity," Woodall removes from the scene all trace of telephone wires, signs, trash heaps, dogs, and, most significantly, people. The resultant paintings, admirably meticulous in technique, cede a haunting quality of surreal isolation, but they also appear, ultimately and in the collective, empty of emotional feeling and psychological meaning. In Wyeth's

"Christina's World," it is the figure of the girl stretched in the dry grass that gives the towering house its power and mystery and human significance. When Woodall says that "with my work, there is very little to explain," he implies that there may be little to think about as well.

J.J. Douglas Ltd. of Vancouver has given Woodall's art and rambling, anecdotal commentary on local history of the Canadian West a handsome and sturdy production; the quality of paper stock, colour separation and printing is high, in accord with the book's price. Absent, however, are proper plate annotations: medium used, canvas size, completion date, present location.

David WATERHOUSE, *Images of Eighteenth-Century Japan: Ukiyoe Prints from the Sir Edmund Walker Collection*, Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, 1975. 234 pp; illustrated. \$14.95 (cloth), \$9.95 (paper).

The Far Eastern Department of the Royal Ontario Museum has recently been publishing its holdings in a series of valuable and handsome catalogues, such as their *Chinese Art* published in 1972. In *Images of Eighteenth-Century Japan*, an exhibition catalogue prepared by Professor David Waterhouse of the East Asian Studies Department of the University of Toronto, the Sir Edmund Walker Collection of Japanese prints is sampled and its general excellence indicated.

The catalogue itself is a curious affair. Professor Waterhouse's expertise in the problematic realm of the Japanese print is recognized and respected. He is meticulous in noting the relationship of each print to other similar or identical prints in other collections. He shares his prodigious knowledge and love of "things Japanese" by expatiating most fascinatingly on the iconography of the prints, ranging from the lore of depicted minor gods to the detailed fashions of Yoshiwara brothel society. He translates poems sensitively and quotes amply from Japanese literature. One can indeed learn a great deal from this fact-filled catalogue.

I must, however, sound a note of disenchantment, for Professor Waterhouse evinces either a blind eye for style or a decided reluctance to discuss stylistic questions and aesthetic impressions. The reader finds neither any discussion of style (within one print or from artist to artist) nor any expression of visual preference on the author's part. Shunso's print of Shokei would benefit great-

ly from a discussion of the print's stylistic affiliation with Yen Hui, even if the author prefers not to discuss the ways in which the lines of Harunobu differ from those of Kiyonaga. One puts down this hefty catalogue with respect and gratitude for Professor Waterhouse's erudition but with some sus-

picion over whether the author experienced any aesthetic pleasure during his research. An appreciation of these prints as art, capturing and transmitting a certain *élan vital* unique to their time and to the hand of the artists, fails to emerge.

— R.A.P.