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# Review: 'Flights of Imagination: Aviation, Landscape, Design'

Janet R. Bednarek

*University of Dayton*, [jbednarek1@udayton.edu](mailto:jbednarek1@udayton.edu)

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how the museum could have contributed enormously to the city's social fabric and to expose how the city government missed this opportunity. Had this institution been allowed to thrive, New York's maritime history would today be far better recognized by the public through a museum with important collections surrounded by streets with restored nineteenth-century architecture and sailing ships along a crowded waterfront. In his analysis, the author sees through the self-promotional posturing of various parties to reveal the underlying flaws that thwarted the chances for success from the very beginning. His efforts unearthed a wide range of sources that paint a well-balanced picture of this private institution.

This book is an important addition to the growing body of literature on American museological history, as well as preservation studies and public history. With this work, Lindgren has strengthened his professional credentials immeasurably. In contrast with his previous books (*Preserving the Old Dominion* and *Preserving Historic New England*), the South Street Seaport narrative has a fervor that makes it a veritable page-turner.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps its most interesting contribution will be to a city-wide perspective where the state of the city's preservation and public history efforts can be contrasted with the survival, advancement, and challenges of other nonprofit cultural institutions, such as the prominent art museums that control the city's cultural narrative.

Lindgren does not close the door on the museum's future but seems to suggest avenues by which it could still prosper. It's a tale of woe, of intrigue, of manipulative power brokers and competing ideologies, but it is definitely a necessary read for anyone interested in the complex cultural history and politics of New York.

DANIEL FINAMORE  
*Peabody Essex Museum*

<sup>1</sup> James M. Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993); *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

**Sonja Dümpelmann.** *Flights of Imagination: Aviation, Landscape, Design*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014. x+304 pp.; 91 black-and-white images, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.

The advent of powered flight in the early part of the twentieth century brought profound changes to society and culture globally. In her work *Flights of Imagination: Aviation, Landscape, Design*, Sonja Dümpelmann explores how it influenced the perspective and work of architects, landscape architects, and urban planners and designers, primarily in the United States and Europe. Specifically, the book "deals with those moments during the twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries when these professionals developed an aerial imagination and an epistemology based upon aerial vision, and when they realized the opportunities that the new technology offered them in shaping the land" (1). In addition to airport design, Dümpelmann examines such topics as the impact of aerial photography on both urban and landscape design, the development of the art and science of camouflage, and the relationship between aerial views and environmental thought.

Dümpelmann begins and ends the book with chapters focused on the design and redesign of airports. She notes that the advent of the airplane changed the way people viewed the world, especially in terms of the relationship between time and space. Flight also furthered globalization. And it provided designers with new tools (the airplane and aerial photography), which allowed them to develop an aerial perspective. Both architects and landscape architects came to see airports as design challenges—places where design needed to take into account the new time-space relationship, globalization, and the aerial viewpoint. Importantly, though airports were nodes in an emerging global transportation network, designers also strove to provide them with a sense of place through the use of vernacular architecture and native plantings. The author revisits her examination of airport design in the book's final chapter, which focuses on current projects aimed at transforming former airports into urban park space. As has been argued elsewhere, early airports—at least in the United States—often had connections to departments of parks and recreation and in many ways functioned as recreational areas. Therefore it is of interest that a number of localities—including Orange County, California, and Berlin—are transforming former airfields into new urban parks. The author is less clear on how the design of these parks reflects their past as air fields or incorporates an aerial perspective.

The intervening chapters that more directly explore the impact of flight on design are the book's most successful. In chapter 2, Dümpelmann argues that flight led to development of a new, distinctly modern design epistemology, "the aerial view as a way of knowing that is both abstract and experiential, rational and imaginary, factual and aesthetic, microscopic and macroscopic, detailed and contextual, harmful and essential" (76). Aerial photography and mapping in particular gave designers a broader view and a new way of understanding the relationship between various landscape and architectural elements. It helped city planners expand their view from the city to the region. In a chapter focused on the impact of flight on urban design, the author explores how aerial vision influenced the work of such architects as Le Corbusier and landscape architects Burle Marx and Alvar Aalto. The aerial perspective also influenced military design, as Dümpelmann examines in another chapter. During both world wars architects and landscape architects worked with other design professionals, such as set designers, to apply their knowledge of form and patterns seen from the air to advance the art and science of camouflage. Finally, in chapter 5 she presents aerial images, including those taken from space, that show environmental changes wrought by humans on the planet, revealing the earth's fragile environment.

This book should be of interest to architects, landscape architects, and urban planners and designers. It also may appeal to scholars concerned with the social and cultural history of flight. Military historians might find the chapter on camouflage of value. And it complements other recent scholarship on the aerial perspective, including Adnan Morshed's *Impossible Heights: Skyscrapers, Flight, and the Master Builder*.<sup>1</sup>

JANET BEDNAREK  
University of Dayton

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

S. J. Bowe. *Mulberry: The Material Culture of Mulberry Trees*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015. 124 pp.; 84 color illustrations, bibliography, survey list. \$34.95 (paper).

<sup>1</sup> Adnan Morshed, *Impossible Heights: Skyscrapers, Flight, and the Master Builder* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

- John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain, eds. *A Companion to American Art*. Oxford: Wiley, 2015. xxii+653 pp.; 148 black-and-white illustrations, index. \$195.00.
- Robert P. Emlen. *Picturing the Shakers in the Era of Manifestations*. Clinton, NY: Richard W. Couper Press, 2015. 69 pp.; 2 color and 42 black-and-white illustrations, notes. \$25 (paper).
- Brian D. Gallagher, Barbara Stone Perry, Letitia Roberts, Diana Edwards, Pat Halfpenny, Maurice Hillis, and Margaret Ferris Zimmerman. *British Ceramics, 1675–1825*. London: Giles, in association with the Mint Museum, 2015. 272 pp.; 230 color illustrations, bibliography, index. \$79.95.
- Curtis M. Hinsley and David R. Wilcox, eds. *Coming of Age in Chicago: The 1893 World's Fair and the Coalescence of American Anthropology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. xliii+574 pp.; 18 color and 54 black-and-white illustrations, 2 tables, 2 appendixes, bibliography, index. \$65.00.
- Stephen Knott. *Amateur Craft: History and Theory*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. xviii+160 pp.; 14 color and 41 black-and-white illustrations, notes, index. \$29.99 (paper).
- Amy Kurlander, with essays by Joey Brackner and Michael K. Brown. *Texas Clay: Nineteenth-Century Stoneware Pottery from the Bayou Bend Collection*. Houston: Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2015. xi+99 pp.; 263 color and 9 black-and-white illustrations, bibliography. \$26.95 (paper).
- Robert Macieski. *Picturing Class: Lewis W. Hine Photographs Child Labor in New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015. xi+296 pp.; 174 black-and-white photographs, notes, index. \$29.95 (paper).
- Anna O. Marley, ed. *The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. xi+248 pp.; 91 color illustrations, selected bibliography, index. \$45.00.
- David McCarthy. *American Artists Against War, 1935–2010*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. xiv+242 pp.; 12 color and 63 black-and-white illustrations, notes, index. \$49.95.
- Charlotte Nicklas and Annebella Pollen, eds. *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. xvii+215 pp.; 24 color and 30 black-and-white illustrations, notes, index. \$25.99 (paper).
- Susan Rather. *The American School: Artists and Status in the Late Colonial and Early National Era*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016. vii+308 pp.;