

an image of a dystopian urbanism, but a lesson in how to survive painfully the modern city of Vienna, David Vogel's 1928 Hebrew-language novel *Married Love* (p. 48) would describe the rays of an orange coloured light issuing from the luxurious cafes. It was a glaring arrogant light, so bright that when you entered it, your eyes shrank and blinked momentarily in pain. The sound image he describes is poignant: 'Fragments of jazz, foxtrots and tangos came reeling from all directions, flying around you like invisible bats and leaving you slightly stunned, your arms and legs throbbing in time to the tunes. In the middle of all this the solitary policeman idly patrolling the street looked superfluous, pitiful and forlorn.'

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Blair Kamin, *Terror and Wonder: Architecture in a Tumultuous Age*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2010. xxiv + 291pp. 70 illus. \$30.00 hbk.

doi:10.1017/S096392681100071X

In Blair Kamin's latest publication, he has assembled a decade's worth of articles, 51 in all, to make a book called *Terror and Wonder*, thus setting himself the double challenge of constructing an olympian view from a columnist's weekly fare and in so doing to introduce calm reflection as an antidote to the emotion of the moment. Given the high voltage connotation of 'terror' in American political discourse, it is regrettable that the publisher allowed its use in the title, and a pleasant revelation that this provocative term appears nowhere in the text, allowing Kamin to come commendably close to meeting at least the second of those challenges.

The purpose of the collection, as Kamin puts it, is 'to bring together such stories to accomplish what they cannot do by themselves: to reveal the arc of a tumultuous epoch and to shed fresh light on some of its most significant works of architecture as well as the culture that produced them'. To this end, he has assembled articles from the *Chicago Tribune* and an assortment of architectural publications, casting wide across the United States from New York to Los Angeles and Cincinnati to New Orleans, returning frequently to home base, Chicago. Disaster (not terror) is introduced in the first chapter, iconically, with the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on the day now referred to as Nine Eleven. A mere six days later, on 17 September 2001, Kamin is writing with calm perspicacity about what the towers meant to New York and, looking forward, to what might replace them. A few pages forward, in essays from 2002 and 2005, he is writing about the promise and early suffocation of the brilliant Liebeskind master plan followed the mediocrity of the proposals for individual towers from the offices of Maki, Foster and Rogers. Similarly, within two weeks of Hurricane Katrina's devastating visitation upon the Big Easy, Kamin is talking with sobriety, sensitivity and in exemplary detail about the imperative to rebuild New Orleans. The common thread linking the two cities is catastrophe and renewal. To bring some coherence to this retrospective, here as in subsequent chapters, there is an introductory passage to survey the context revealed by time; and for each article there is an italicized postscript to bring the reader up to date with events as they have subsequently developed.

Kamin works hard to leap from newspaper to book, from the variety of events of the moment to the coherent theme of the decade, from the multifaceted interests

of the fox to the coherent world view of the hedgehog. In the binary construct of his title there is a free association of ideas that lead us from disaster (New York and New Orleans) to security (Washington DC and Chicago's Federal Plaza) to rebuilding (New York again) and, somewhat anomalously in this context, reclaiming the public realm, citing Chicago's Millennium Park. This stream of examples is followed by the 'wonder' categories treating the phenomenon of 'supertall' in Chicago and Dubai as well as the garrulous iconic architecture of campus and cultural institutions perpetrated by Gehry, Holl, Liebeskind, Calatrava, Koolhaas and their ilk. Tall, supertall, garrulous – generally speaking Kamin is in favour, especially when it comes to the work of the Chicago locals, Adrian Smith, Helmut Jahn, Ralph Johnson and, most recently, Jean Gang. There is a third category which one suspects in the author's filing system may have been labelled 'miscellaneous', under which we find preservation, green architecture, public housing and infrastructure, illustrated almost entirely with examples from Chicago, each a compelling discussion in itself but only loosely connected to the stated themes.

Kamin's criticism is constructive. Following a sequence of despairing essays on the banality of much of Chicago's recent development, he presents as counterpoint some gems from architects and developers who are operating under the same rules and similar budgets as those for whom expedience trumps excellence. His greatest enthusiasm is for the Millennium Park, a star-studded common ground wrought out of derelict railway yards, a revitalizing balm in gritty Gilead. Exhilarating as it is to visit Anish Kapoor's 'Cloud Gate' or Frank Gehry's bandstand or even to have experienced the euphoria of Barack Obama's victory speech, what Kamin does not mention is the issues raised by that public realm being financed by private corporations, nor for that matter, the predominantly white patronage of the park, reflective of a city still deeply divided by race and class.

Interesting as these essays are, and perceptive and essentially humanist as Kamin's architectural criticism is, the collection does not rise to its own aspirations. What it ascends to, superbly, is the level of a journal replete with acute observation, a record of the moment augmented with the annotations of hindsight, as interesting a survey of design and development over the last decade in the United States and its pre-eminent architectural city as one is likely to find.

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