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The Identitarian Episteme: *The 1980s and the Status of Architectural History*

المحف الشعبي للحاي والأزياء
JORDAN MUSEUM OF
POPULAR TRADITIONS

Mark Jarzombek

In the last decade global history has emerged as a disciplinary concept unto itself. Though its parameters are not yet set in stone, it generally emphasizes cross-cultural or cross-regional connections through trade or other means of interaction. In some cases it is defined as self-consciously political. According to Diego Olstein in *Thinking History Globally*, global history is a project that “adopts the interconnected world created by the process of globalization as its larger unit of analysis, providing the ultimate context for the analysis of any historical entity, phenomenon, or process” (Olstein 2015: 24). While this is undoubtedly an important opening in research thinking, it does not map particularly well onto the field of architectural history. The further back one goes in time, for example, the more difficult it is to document flows and exchanges, nor should one want to limit the study of a building in such a way. The word *global* in the phrase “a global history of architecture” cannot be just a subfield of global history; it must be defined by other means.

In the field of *architectural* history we must see “global” not through the social construction of economics but through the social construction of historical knowledge, which in turn means the problem is preeminently historiographic in nature. The difference is particularly important when we discuss architectural history from the 1980s onwards. Whereas some scholars, when they look at the 1980s, see the deregulation of the global economy and the emergence of neoliberalism, I see in the triangulated space between culture, architecture, and economy the opposite: the birth of an array of academically oriented regulatory systems, with multitiered and mutually reinforcing regimes of historians, curators, publication protocols, research agendas, journals and even peer review processes. Though all these activities were in play well before the 1980s, that decade saw a radical intensification of these interactions. The field of architectural history—in its broadest sense—was no longer an esoteric academic domain still largely associated with art history but an ever-widening, dismembered cultural phenomenon that quickly found itself operating at the scale of geopolitics.

Take, for example, the word *tradition*. We might think the word was commonly available throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, but that would be wrong. Though the association of the word with national culture emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, it was hardly ever associated with architecture but rather with religion, law, culture, poetry. In Japan, a typical title was *Guide Book to Japanese Architecture* (1962). The turning point was *Katsura: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture* (1960), a popular book in which the architect Kenzo Tange champions the Jomon (Japan’s original pre-rice, hunter-gatherer culture from ca. 14,000 BCE—500 BCE) as the ancestors of Japanese modernism. The book presents the case that the seventeenth-century villa is a fusion of a tough, simple farm aesthetic rooted in the world of the ancient Jomon and the elegant aesthetic of detachment that came from Japan’s aristocratic tradition. These two horizons, Tange claims, stand as the backdrop to a uniquely Japanese understanding of modern architecture. The designers of Katsura, however, had never heard of the Jomon, who were discovered only in the late-nineteenth century. In fact, most postwar Japanese

might have never have heard the word *Jomon*. But after Japan's defeat in 1945, something had to supplant the imaginary of an emperor and the history of his lineage as the focus of national consciousness. With the Jomon, a largely young, Marxist-oriented generation of Japanese archaeologists saw an opportunity to stress the values of "common people" (Habu and Clare 1999). Allied with this was the change of the phrase "imperial Japan" to "cultural Japan" (Edwards 1991: 3). The term *bunka* (culture) emerged in the immediate aftermath of the war as a prominent element in the rhetoric about rebuilding the nation. By reaching back to an imagined Jomon and tracing Japan's subsequent rice farming history, Tange was trying to nativize the idea of a populist, agrarian tradition.

With *Katsura*, the word *tradition* became a semiotic indicator of a type of disciplinarity in which archaeologically legitimated ancient-ness served to empower a nation's relationship to both history and modernity. This was implied in books like *Traditional Sukiya Architecture* (1969), *Impressions of Japanese Traditional Architecture* (1972), and *Traditional Domestic Architecture of Japan* (1972). The elevation of the concept tradition was not limited to Japan. It quickly became a global phenomenon and was even given a new theoretical polish. The German Catholic philosopher Joseph Peiper (1970) argued that in the modern world of constant, unrelenting change, tradition was that which must be preserved unchanged. More important was Edward Shils (1910–1995), professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, who argued in his book *Tradition* (1981) against the old modernist notion, as defined by Max Weber, that saw it as a type of uninspired, automatic reaction to habitual stimuli. In contrast, Shils believed traditions were characteristically meaningful and motivated. All of this helped transform tradition to the level of a disciplinary project. *A Survey of Traditional Architecture and Related Material Folk Culture Patterns in the Normandy* (1976), *The Traditional Architecture of the Kathmandu*



Entrance to Jordan Museum of Popular Tradition, Amman

Valley (1977), *An Analytical Study of Traditional Arab Domestic Architecture* (1979), *African Traditional Architecture* (1978), *Arsitektur tradisional daerah Sulawesi Utara* (1981), *An Introduction to Nigerian Traditional Architecture* (1990), *Temples in Traditional Environments* (1992), *The Traditional Architecture of Mexico* (1993), *The Traditional Architecture of Indonesia* (1994), *The Traditional Architecture of Saudi Arabia* (1998), *Traditional Buildings of India* (1998), and so on and so forth.¹

Ethnography experienced a clear boost with museums being created at an ever-faster pace in places all over the world: South Sea Islands Museum (1964), Latvian Folk Art Museum, Chicago (1964), Portuguese National Museum of Ethnology (1965), Tekirdağ Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (1967), Inner Mongolia Museum (1967), Folk Art and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia and Thrace (1973), Museum of Cretan Ethnology (1973), Hong Kong Museum of History (1975), Kaduna's National Museum (ca. 1975), and so on. Here, too, was a good dose of theoretical underpinning, the most significant being Anthony D. Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). To this can be added outdoor museums such as Heritage Park Historical Village (Canada, 1964), Rumšišškės Wallenberg Switzerland (1968), Giorgi Chitaia Open Air Museum of Ethnography (Georgia, 1966), Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Indonesia, 1975), Hagen Westphalian Open-Air Museum (Germany, 1970s), Korean Folk Village (South Korea, 1980s), Khokhlovka (Russia, 1980), Sirogojno (Serbia, 1990s), West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village (England, 1999), Nazareth Village (Israel, ca. 2009), and so on. To these types of institutions can be added the emergence of vernacular studies that, beginning in the 1970s, developed its own level of institutionality with journals and conferences and research agendas.

The positive contribution was impressive. We now know more about our cultural past world than ever before. But the historical knowledge that was produced in all of this was soon implicated in the reverse ethnicization of the nation-state. In 1987, for example, the Japanese government created the International Center for Research on Japanese Culture, the mission of which was to find evidence for the distinctive Jomon-ness of Japanese culture. Jomon sites were located and preserved, and large museums, free of cost to all Japanese students, were set up nearby, most with full-scale reconstructions of ancient house types. Jomon was no longer an esoteric, intellectualist alternative but a national institution. No one today doubts the fact that the Jomon are a relevant part of the story of the history of Japan, but the "Jomonification" of Japanese history is associated

1. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, scholars working in the field were well aware of the complexity of the term and its disciplinary realities, whether overtly or covertly expressed. See, for example, Nezar AlSayyad's *Traditions: The "Real," the Hyper, and the Virtual in the Built Environment*. In the

introduction, AlSayyad writes, "Because of all of these contradictions about what tradition really means in different cultures and how it may be deployed in the making of built environments, it becomes impossible to generate a singular universal narrative about tradition and built form" (AlSayyad 2014: x).

with the Japanese sense of modernity and postwar identity and not just with some archaeological period in the remote past.²

The rewriting and reordering of history so that ethnicity can conform to the superstructures of national narratives is an operative, historiographic moment with its own organizing momentum.³ More museums of national history were created after the 1960s and then after the break-up of the USSR than in the previous one hundred years. An important intensifier was the rise of “heritage,” especially after 1975, when members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage. In 1983, the old English national heritage collection was reinstitutionalized by the Thatcher government. Originally the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, the name was simplified to English Heritage by its first chairman, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu. The majority of British heritage conservation legislation came to be codified in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. So widespread was the investment in “heritage” that in the mid-1980s scholars were already talking about a “heritage industry.” As just a single demonstration of its reach, I point to the border tribes of Thailand. Once considered part of a “hill tribe problem,” by the 1980s they were an essential element of ethnic tourism, with tourism itself the oil in the machinery (Nimomniya 2014). Just as all nations are nation-centric—with nation-centrism seen as a natural and legitimate part of their right to exist, supported by UNESCO and its protocols of objectivity and universalism—so, too, all ethnography expands into ethnocentrism, needing scholarship as a support structure in the complex drive for agency in the political-economic world of globalization.

2. Cătălin Nicolae Popa (2016) points out that, in Romania, pseudoarchaeologists, reenactors, self-declared specialists, and enthusiasts have risen to the position of experts and have produced an environment “infused with strong nationalist messages” that has “the potential to fuel extreme right-wing and even xenophobic movements.” Consequently, he argues, “academics should make it a priority to re-engage with the public and disseminate their work to a broad audience in a convincing manner” (ibid.: 28). I agree. However, the point I am making is that it is too late to make a substantial inroad here—or anywhere, for that matter. Historians have to see the problem not as one of local abuse, not as professional versus amateur, but as one in which the disciplines created by or used by the amateur are just as strong as—or stronger than—those of the professional historian. We have to historicize the rise of these disciplines before we can critique them. Popa does this by studying the “Dacianization” of the public.

3. I am sidestepping the difference (probably now outdated) between a constructivist and a primordialist view of national identity. Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and others generally represent the former view, which holds that the idea of nationality became compelling to people only in the modern period as a result of economic and attendant social changes. Primordialists see culture as a given rather than something that is produced. Both sides can point to examples, but one can also see where nations like Iraq, which are clearly constructivist since they are artifices of colonialization, have within them primordialist components. With its list of Heritage Sites, UNESCO acts on the premise that nations are modern entities but wants nations to imagine themselves as primordial.



UNESCO Sign at Barkley Airport, Kentucky, USA

Underlying this was the emergence of the identity politics movement that had begun in the 1960s and 1970s when various groups—black power movements, Greens, feminists, gays, Marxists, and indigenous and tribal movements of various kinds—started to speak out against their neglect and oppression (Wiarda 2014). By the 1980s, however, more was at stake than an identitarian politics from below or the flattening of ethnicity in the whirl of tourism. In asking ethnicities, heritages, histories, and their contingent objectivities to deliver up their secrets, a world of knowledge was created that was placed in the domain of a range of productive and exploitative practices, all of which feed on the semantic ambiguity of power.⁴ *Architectural* history, in its broadest sense, was on the cutting edge—as well as the receiving edge—of this identitarian episteme.⁵

4. In general terms, as a political term, *identitarianism* as we understand it today aims to bring the concept of the nation-state into question. The nation-state, from that perspective, is complicit in the Western drive to democratize and flatten difference. Globalization, this perspective argues, has forced itself onto the nation-state as a quid pro quo to participate in the process of wealth-generation for the elites. I am not using the word *identitarian* in that way but in a broader sense that is linked to the nation-state. The tendency has been to see nation-state identity formations as “natural” to the modern worldview and as only slightly distasteful in the hands of the more oppressive regimes, but even then as permissible. The drift of all nation-states is toward national chauvinism. We do not critically review the curatorial outlay of the Saudi National Museum, for example, or any other national museum for that matter. Its nation-centrism is seen as a natural right. The assumption that the protocols of scholarship will offset or correct the warping of historical narrative is naive. Right-wing identitarianism as a type of play-on-the-play of “knowing” is only taking the project of identity-making that has been around for two hundred years and engaging it for its

own purposes. I am interested in that larger project for the simple fact that far-right-wing identitarianism does not have the same level of access to the vast regimes of history-writing, history-creating bureaucracies that are still largely within the purview of the nation-state.

5. The word *episteme* points to Michel Foucault, who argued that the episteme sets the general conditions for knowledge for a certain period of time. Foucault defined “the episteme retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won’t say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The episteme is the ‘apparatus’ which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific” (Foucault 1980: 197). The episteme is a kind of unspoken and unconscious stratum that forms the precondition for accepted knowledge in a particular period (Merquior 1991: 36). My use of the term is somewhat less encompassing; it is a formation within other formations.

In fact, the main lesson of the last decades has been that historical architecture—revised, restored, and touristified—broadcasts the message of ethnic identity and national pride more effectively than anything else, especially in the non-West, where its politicization is a foregone conclusion. In other words, historical architecture become the embodiment of the geo-political imaginaries. At the National Museum of Saudi Arabia (1999), eight exhibition halls cover the following themes—Man and Universe, Arabian Kingdoms, Pre-Islamic Era, Prophet Mohammad's Mission, Islam and the Arab Peninsula, First and Second Saudi State, Unification of the Kingdom, Hajj and Two Holy Mosques. That the exhibition ends with a focus on buildings is not to be overlooked. Architecture's core metaphysics is revealed in all its glory.

When President Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle, landed in India on a state visit in 2010, the couple was brought from the airport to Humayun's Tomb, which was built in 1570 and—more important—had been inscribed into the World Heritage list in 1993. In front of the tomb, with its imposing dome and extensive gardens, all laboriously restored, the Obamas were received by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his wife Gursharan Kaur (*Deccan Herald* 2014). This was a new approach by the Indian government. When President Bill Clinton arrived some years earlier on a similar trip, he was ushered directly to the Parliament building. Obama learned the lesson and in 2014 gave French President François Hollande a personal tour of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's mountaintop home, on the occasion of the French president's state visit to the United States.

Schools of architecture began to play an increasingly important role in the naturalization of this type of nation-centrism. In Japan, for example, one of the leading design schools recently announced that its students will “learn the elements of architecture through classes on planning and general construction, while a class on Japanese architectural history cultivates foundational learning as an architect” (Kyoto Seika University). In India, the Council for Architecture rewrote the curriculum in 1983 to mandate that students “study the various styles of Architecture and methods of construction through the ages in the world with emphasis on Indian Architecture.” Even as late as 2013, the recommended curriculum in India listed ten books dedicated to architectural history. Five had the word *India* in the title.⁶

In all of this, architecture's history came to be no longer just something architects were supposed to know as part of their professional training or something to be associated with the tropes of learning and sophistication. Architecture's history at its various scales was now something *embedded* in popular imaginaries and as such

6. The rest were on Greece, Rome, the Romanesque, the gothic, and the contemporary, including readings from that nineteenth-century classic, *History of Architecture* by Sir Bannister Fletcher. See All India Council for Technical Education 2013. See also <http://www.aicte-india.org/mugarc.php>. (Education/Model Syllabus/ Under graduate).

was produced toward that goal in academe with its tenure promotion and publication requirements. A Google image search of “India” will show the Taj Mahal, a similar search for Cambodia will produce Angkor Wat, and so forth. These are all sites where national pride, tourism, exhibition cultures, preservation agencies, and scholarly literatures are all intertwined. What we see is a transformation of that old discipline known as “architectural history” into a field that stretches from the popular to the academic in such a way that it is no longer possible to center the discipline within the conventional notions of history. In other words, as I suggested at the beginning of this article, the subject matter of architectural history has less to do with the primacy of buildings than with its own globally-scaled epistemological productions. This infinite deferral of objectivity places scholars in an awkward semiotic space of historiography, one that is devoid of or even resistant to the “global” part of that imaginary.

The problem of how to address this “history-of-history mkaing” – namely how to write a historiographic critique, much less properly theorize it - is not made easier if one assumes that this newly expanded field is an answer to the constrictions of Eurocentrism. The standard liberalist critiques of Eurocentric hegemonies have failed to tackle the problem, at least in the art- and architectural history community where the critique of Eurocentrism had three distinct responses. One was to insert a non-Western piece into the standard narrative. In 1989, for example, Frederick Hartt, for the third edition of his book, *Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, added a section entitled “Far East” that had stand-alone chapters on India, China, and Japan. The same add-ons are to be found in Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History* (1995).⁷ This is still a common approach and is clearly—in its intellectual laziness—limited in its capacity to deal with larger and more complex historical realities.

The second response to the critique of Eurocentrism was to self-occidentalize. In 2004, for example, Janson's *History of Art* added the subtitle “*The Western Tradition*.” The same was done by Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman for their textbook *Architecture: From Pre-history to Postmodernism, the Western Tradition* (1986). Self-occidentalism was a safety position where Eurocentrism could be maintained without having to struggle to acknowledge any type of “outside” to its formation. “I'm okay, you're

7. When Vikramāditya Prakash and I wrote *A Global History of Architecture* (Jarzombek and Prakash 2006), we designed the table of contents as a list of buildings sited within chapters that were basically time cuts (e.g., 800 CE, 1000 CE, 1200 CE). The list was meant to serve as an alternative to other forms of packaging, such as through nations or styles, which were common at that time. The format allowed us to present buildings as contemporaneous and thus favored—for better and worse—a more horizontal or comparative narrative. The list was not intended to be encyclopedic, though it had some

appearances of that effect. We were simply trying to acknowledge that the field had to address the volume of sites. Since we were looking for examples of quality, we were not abandoning the idea of cannon, but we were certainly not deciding which buildings were higher or lower in that cannon. The list allowed us to begin the narrative of each chapter in places where we felt we could make the strongest narrative. That is, each chapter began at a different place in the world. There has never been and will never be a universal beginning point to history.

okay.”⁸ But it is not okay. The word *West* codifies the obsolete division of the world, whereas the second word, *Tradition* offsets the notion that the West was associated with modernity and secularism. The “Western Tradition” is more than just an admission of such a thing as an expansive world outside of that “tradition”; it is a type of defense *against* breadth—it is academic protectionism at its worst.⁹

The third response to the critique was the most unexpected. Eurocentrism moved into a new field, the history of modern architecture. In the 1970s modern architecture did not really have “a history.” The only history it had was either through Sigfried Giedion’s high-civilizational perspective or through the lens of great men. If taught in architectural studios, it was done so only in the most haphazard manner by practitioners who showed their favorite buildings. This changed in the late 1970s. The Museum of Modern Art played its part with shows such as *Louis Kahn: 1901–1974* (1974), *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* (1976), *Le Corbusier: Architectural Drawings* (1978), *The Architecture of Gunnar Asplund* (1978), and *Russia: The Avant Garde* (1979). Kenneth Frampton’s *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* appeared in 1980. When I got my PhD in 1985, there were few job postings for modern architectural history. Soon, however, most PhD programs in architecture taught *only* modern architecture, leaving the earlier periods to other disciplines.

The impact on curricula was swift. At the Tokyo School of Architecture, for example, students now take two courses in architectural history: Traditional Japanese Architecture and Modern Architecture, taught almost inevitably by two different professors. At the architectural school in Tunis, one architectural history course is on Islamic architecture and the other on modernism. This bipolarity surfaces uncritiqued not just in schools of architecture. Increasingly, the art world has embraced it too. The Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul has one building for traditional Korean art and another for modern art: two buildings, two separate curators, two separate staffs, two separate publication venues, and the like.

8. Samuel Eisenstadt argues that what we have seen in the last decades is “the continual development of multiple modernities or of multiple interpretations of modernity—and above all to attempts at ‘deWesternization,’ depriving the West of its monopoly on modernity” (Eisenstadt 2002: 24). While this is not inaccurate in the sense that it champions heterological realities, it should not lead us to ignore how unifying historical imaginaries leak into the various “multiples.” The modernity in Iran may be different from that of China and Russia, but how their individual histories are researched, funded, and museologically exhibited are probably not that different. The multiple modernities are produced largely because the patterns by which they are produced are easily reproducible within certain economic and political parameters.

9. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom writes, “There are many other examples of the ambivalent effects of the critique of Eurocentrism on the field. Have courses in world history replaced Western civ ones on many campuses, forcing Europeanists to redefine their pedagogic activities? Yes. But are there first-rate periodicals with generic names (the *Journal of Modern History*, for example) that still only publish work on Europe? Also yes. Is it more likely that a publisher will return your call if you say your book focuses on urban life in a Japanese as opposed to a Dutch city? Probably. But if both books appeared, would an essay on ‘Trends in Urban History’ still be more likely to ignore the one on Yokohama as opposed to Amsterdam? Almost certainly” (Wasserstrom 2001).

The emergence of modernism’s history as a disciplinary formation should not be seen as a corrective to the parallel emergence of tradition and its more conservative political positionings. From the 1970s until recently, modern architecture could not be taught without including something about the Renaissance and the Baroque, for example. In other words, the history of modernism allowed Europeanism to flourish without the danger of appearing Eurocentric. Only in the last ten years did the job category known as modernism shift to global modernism, acknowledging finally the extensive history of non-European modernism. Furthermore, the modern + tradition equation may have allowed tradition its own disciplinary status, but it was always one that was bonded to another closure, the closure of modern to tradition. The modern becomes the new universal. The role history once had in its post-Enlightenment sense, a history-of-civilizations ending in the superiority of the West, has been replaced by the self-constructing “short history” of modernity, a short history that already *presupposes* its globalized presence as one of rupture *and* eventual self-resolution. The history of modernism might not have been committed to an identitarian logic, but its presumption that the modern world was the world of nation-states meant it could not challenge the identitarian episteme.

I am suggesting that the critique of Eurocentrism did not produce a view of history that was “global.” In fact, what emerged, cumulatively, was not just the extreme falsification of history-through-time but a view point that was anti-global, dividing up the world into an array of uncontested disciplinary regimes. To make matters worse, the autonomy of the history of modernism created in its wake a new and more seditious discipline, premodernism. Titles like *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-modern Europe* (2007) are increasingly common. The venerable Max Planck Institute recently organized a conference called “Art Knowledge in the Pre-modern Europe” (2015). If Europeanists want to use the term to talk about the sixteenth century, then fine, but let us keep it focused on Europe. Sadly, that is not the case, as indicated by the arrival of books with titles such as *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization* and *Multiples in Pre-modern Art*. Even Antoni Gaudí is bandied about in reading lists as an example of premodern art. And now a new term has developed: *late premodern*! Job postings like the following are increasingly



Heritage Mughal Garden, Ahmedgarh, India – sign

common: “Yale University seeks to appoint a Postdoctoral Associate in ancient and pre-modern cultures and civilizations”; or “The Department of Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at the University of British Columbia invites applications for a tenure-track appointment at the rank of Assistant Professor in the field of Premodern Japanese Art History or Architectural History.”¹⁰ The postings are clearly trying to avoid the by now obviously toxic word tradition, but they are only firming up as unchallenged the premise that modernity is the *only* rupture that reaches disciplinary magnitude.

It is difficult for me to understand how there can be such a thing as premodern, for it means that modernism has become the reference point of understanding history *backward* into all of time and space. Why should the rise of European technology, nation-states, and regimes of control—the concepts most associated with modernism—be the concepts against which everything is measured? In the world of architectural history, “premodern” stands before us as a pseudo-field, filled largely by preservationists, archaeologists, and art historians. Worse yet, it puts the final touches on the separatist metaphysics of modernity. The results are real and tragic.

Can one not ask whether the institutionalizations of the 1980s have come to the end of their shelf-life? How do we move past these late twentieth-century ideas into ideas more suited to the twenty-first century? The question then emerges: Where does the idea of a different type of history, a “global history of architecture” come in, one that is not defined by a reductivist nation-centrism or by tortured concepts like The Western Tradition and the vernacular, or by the false dualisms of modern + tradition and modern + premodern?

To answer the question, let me start from a different perspective. When I began to teach in the late 1980s, sites I recalled from lectures taught with black-and-white lantern slides were suddenly available to be seen in the flesh and blood and travel to Africa, South America, Indonesia, and Russia was becoming easier. *Fodor’s, The Blue Guide*, and *Go To* showed how to get to places without spending a lot of money. But it was glaringly apparent in the early 1980s that the hand-me-down Eurocentrism, while easily challenged by high-minded intellectuals, was not easily replaced in the field of architectural history. The issue was not just the intransigence of the field. The amount of material on which the field was based—namely, the list of sites and buildings—had exploded. Furthermore, few scholars were working in these fields, and so it took decades for advanced scholarship to kick in. Machu Picchu is a case in point. Each book, as a selection of titles suggest, made the site more complex: *Monuments of the Incas* (1982), *Art of the Incas and Its Origins* (1984), *Machu Picchu: The Sacred Center* (1991), *Machu Picchu: A Civil Engineering Marvel* (2000), *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (2010). Even now we are expanding and revising our understanding of that site. And this situation is multiplied across the globe. Some sites, like the Mausoleum of the First Emperor, clearly a significant building,

10. See <http://archaia.yale.edu/news/job-opportunity-postdoctoral-associate-pre-modern-cultures-and-civilizations>

<https://shinpaideshou.wordpress.com/2012/11/17/job-opening-premodern-japanese-art-history-or-architectural-history/> Accessed 22 May 2017.

have yet to be excavated and probably never will be. The ruins of a vast temple city have just been discovered on the top of Mount Kulen in Cambodia using ground-penetrating radar. New pre-Columbian sites are still being discovered as well. Scholars are now able to visit Mongolia and reassess the ancient Buddhist landscapes there. To all this, vernacular studies supplies an endless stream of interesting and worthy buildings. The prospect is dizzying, but it means that only now—well into the twenty-first century—are we able to begin to see certain histories that two decades ago would have been thought impossible.

For these reasons, the “global” in the phrase “a global history of architecture” points not to the culmination of a historical project, or to the opening of awareness that globalization brought, but to a beginning, as it tries to re-historicize and re-theorize the vast number of new buildings, sites, and landscapes—whether in situ or in ruins, whether great monuments or humble barns, whether drawn and measured or fully neglected—that are now on the table. And since there are still too few scholars working on these topics, the word global also points to the diminutive scale of advanced scholarship compared to where we need to be.

Compare this shock of ignorance with contemporaneous events in art history, where the new field of contemporary art created a vast new literature all unto its own. As *Canadian Art* editor David Balzer writes, “Too many artists, too many movements, too many works in too many shows, too much discussion: Who would parse them?” (Balzer 2014: 46). One could express a similar sentiment in architecture, except that there the system was being flooded not with *new* buildings but untold *old* ones. As far as I know, thousands of new Indian miniatures have not found in some far-off museum, thousands of new Rembrandts have not been uncovered in tropical highlands, thousands of ruined canvases have not been meticulously restored to their original condition even as thousands more were left to rot. When art historians use the word *global*, they mean something very different than when an architectural historian uses the term.¹¹ Even today we have not adequately faced or processed the shock to the disciplinary system that this expansion entailed.

As I have tried to show, the post-1980s disciplinary formations around words like *tradition*, *heritage*, *preservation*, *critical regionalism*, *UNESCO*, and *premodernism* served

11. I am trying to identify a narrative for the history of architecture and its related disciplines that is separate from that of art history or other types of history. There are, of course, parallels. As Saloni Mathur writes, “Clearly, there is no ‘pure’ oppositional practice vis a vis the contemporary museum, that is to say, no museological context wholly uncontaminated by the circuits of capitalism, or the history of power of the western museum. How, then, should we begin to assess the range of emergent museum practices and counter-practices within an era of globalization?” (Mathur 2005: 697–708). Architecture stands in a slightly parallel universe, largely because its

disciplinary overlaps are so much more numerous. Furthermore, we have to take into consideration the internal popularism of knowledge at a range of realities from the artificial mandate to the level of posttraumatic desire. Finally, in the architectural history world, the issue of how to see the future cannot be framed against the finitude of a process of corporatization. Unlike the mega-museums that draw so much attention, most architecture and ethnographic museums survive on shoestring budgets. (I extend this argument in “Art History and Its Architectural Aporia;” Jarzombek 2010).

to organized the field of architectural history along with regimes of museums, curators, administrators, and art and architectural historians. But what may have started with a world-opening position developed increasingly tighter constraints on thought. A type of “global” was put in play that is now an impediment to a more expansive and messier understanding of history.

In trying to evoke the drama and scale of this episteme, I am alluding to Jacques Derrida’s idea that signs can never fully summon forth what they mean but can only be defined through appeals to additional words, from which they differ. The more concepts ask for semiotic reduction, the more dependent they become on a range of other terms that attach themselves to it. Words such as *tradition*, *heritage*, and *vernacular* are excellent examples. And as I have tried to explain, the web of relations that was therein constructed did not happen naturally, but were intensified by disciplinary realities that not only fed off one another but have now reached a steady state. That is, only so many traditions, ethnicities, and vernaculars—not to mention great monuments like the Pantheon and the Taj Mahal—can be identified. From these the various instrumentalities of knowledge-making, be they national, political, museological, or academic in nature, elevated some at the expense of others that were repressed or simply died off. The very real danger is that much was frozen out of the discipline or integrated into it in increasingly microscopic form.

We are approaching the endgame of a trajectory. Soon we will be able to map all surviving ethnicities with their individual disciplines, museums, experts, and promoters. *Surviving* is the critical word, and we will now do everything to protect these remaining realities—in a type of neo-Enlightenment project—in order to establish a status quo. Think here, as an example, of the *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (1997), the *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature* (1998), or *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (2004). To this we can add something like the Global Heritage Fund

(2002), which looks to match funds with endangered sites; or even the Joshua Project, a Christian organization that began in 1995 to map all the ethnic groups of the world—of which 6,642 (out of some ten thousand) are classified as “unreached”—so they can be better evangelized. Both the Global Heritage Fund and the Joshua Project produce and instrumentalize knowledge—*historical* knowledge—at the global level.

The issue is not about the merits of global history—meaning here the discipline that began to take shape in the first decades of the twenty-first century—versus national history versus vernacular history. What one encounters in asking the question, “What is meant by the word *global*?” is, first, to recognize a preexisting, entangled, institutionally supported environment so secure in its legitimacy that no amount of “global history”—as it is now called—will ever penetrate its armor. The problem revolves around the dialectical nature not just of the word *history* but of the word *global*. A “global history” is the site of the unstable relationship between the inside and outside of history, the inside and outside of the nation-state, and the inside and outside of modernity and of its history *and* its self-proclaimed legitimacy. From within *that* paradox, the “global” of which I speak begins to stand before us as a problem *within* a problem—as an unknown—as an Archimedean point with no real leverage. It all harkens back to the moment of shock that occurred in the 1980s—the shock of the *immaturity* of the discipline of architectural history and the need to restructure it from the bottom up. The “global” of today—in the context that one can loosely call “architecture”—rotates at the outer surface of these now fully globalized productions. To think “global” is thus not to herald it as a method or a result; it is rather to see first of all its absence—globally—forcing us to do away with the material object of its potential referentiality; it leaves the word standing as a sign of what is not there; but it also points out the possibility of a signification of something to come.¹² This understanding of *global*—when added to the word *history* and the word *architecture*—is an exteriority to the disciplinary mash-up that has institutionalized itself over the last thirty or so years. It speaks to a promise that has yet to be filled, that will not be filled for a long time, and that most likely will never be filled. But it needs to be pronounced!

12. What I am sketching here is a historiographic project that is not simply the handmaiden of the discipline, congratulating itself on its refining practices and its immersion in the protective tissue of expertise protocols. Whereas disciplinary historiography sees only opportunity—the opportunity to continually flesh out its project—a critical historiography chases down that which is foreclosed. It does not reject disciplinarity or the necessary performances of objectivity but reminds us that opportunities outside the realm of disciplines still need to be placed into the equation. Whereas a disciplinary historiography would marvel at the different methodological approaches we can find within the discipline with

different degrees of acceptances, uses, schools, and factions, a critical historiography exposes the imperatives of closure. This means that, unlike other assessments of current trends that tend to emphasize an expanding domain, I see just the opposite. (Here I am reflecting on an earlier article written under different circumstances: “A Prolegomenon to Critical Historiography”; Jarzombek 1999). But if in the 1990s the target was something called “modernity” and its suppressions of subject position, the targets today are the self-protecting, disciplinary alliances between historical sciences, the culture industry, and populist/national imaginaries. They have become the new modernisms.



Railway Reserve Heritage Trail Sign Board - Mundaring Shire region, Western Australia

Left: Cultural heritage monument sign on the wall of Schloss Johannisburg in Aschaffenburg, Germany

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