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Brian Carter, ed., *boundary, sequence, illusion: Ian MacDonald Architect,* Halifax: Dalhousie Architectural Press, 2019, 135 pp. colour illus. $ 39.95 (paper) ISBN 9780929112725

Menno Hubregtse

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Citer ce compte rendu

difference in house-churches in comparison to later spaces is that there is no prior sacred space or miracle to suggest sanctity. The author rightly tries to refute any assumptions that absence of evidence of sacred articulated space in the domestic sphere should translate to evidence of absence (128). Cianca argues that sacrality in the house is tied to the pagan domestic cult and that Christianity comes to supplement it rather than antagonise it.

The book suffers from a lack of illustrations, of which there are only seven. This absence affects some important points. For example, in order to judge the significance of a piece of plaster moulding that was retained in the "assembly hall" of the Dura Christian building from its time as a house, one has necessarily to refer to the original publication of the excavation; one must also do some detective work in order to understand Cianca's numbering of the images (slightly different to the original image numbering), and to determine which image is the relevant one (the original includes a photo that is presented upside down, which could have been pointed out). The author also mentions that recent photos do not show the moulding in situ (204, n. 39), but does not cite these photos. Had some more careful information and a simple drawing been provided, the reader could focus on the main point, which is that pagan imagery was still relevant in a certifiably Christian space in the third century. This, however, also touches on how the book throws significant evidential weight on archaeological finds that were not published in detail, or on portable finds that do not have accurate findspots. Such material cannot solidly support inferences for the whole of the Roman empire.

Concerning this same example, the use of Dionysiac motifs in early Christian art is well known. The fact that the particular combination of motifs was obviously a product of a Durene workshop that worked for many buildings across town should also not make us dismiss possibilities other than the acceptance of pagan elements into Christian practice. For example, contrary to the book's argument, we could claim that Christians may have left the fragmentary moulding in place to remind them of the error of idolatric ways. Whatever the answer, it is important that a unique site should at least be located in a fuller context and presented in a less haphazard manner. Dura was full of houses and cultic sites, including the decorated synagogue and *mithraeum*, and the town was a military outpost between two major, warring empires. What is missing is the larger picture of the synchronous development of other cults. While churches are absent in the first three CE centuries, for example, one needs no reminder that synagogues are not plentiful either. Lastly, if we are to use later evidence to support conclusions about the earliest Christianity, why not select more widely? The Lullingstone Villa is post-Constantinian. There could have been other choices, going as far as including the use of Christian houses for "pagan"-type burials and funerary ritual in seventh century Sicily (site of Kaukana).

Important points in the endnotes could find a place in the main text, while a minor but easily avoidable inconsistency is that the text jumps continuously between "data" as plural and singular (for example, page 73 includes "data are," "data were" and "data seems"). Barring the methodological issues, though, the book commendably puts together a multitude of diverse sources to explore the meaning of spaces in a challenging context. As a whole, the book is easy to read and shows the potential of the author to add much more to the subject in the future. ¶

Evanthia Baboula is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History & Visual Studies at the University of Victoria, and is also serving as the Associate Executive Director, Division of Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation.
—ebaboula@uvic.ca

Menno Hubregtse

In his architectural practice, Ian MacDonald has concentrated on designing houses with floor-to-ceiling windows that frame particularly fine vistas of each site's natural landscape. *boundary sequence illusion* examines how his Toronto-based firm, Ian MacDonald Architect (IMA), situates the house within the property and organizes the interior layout to achieve this aim. The book is the first monograph on MacDonald and IMA. Like other books in Dalhousie Architectural Press's *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series, it includes a generous number of illustrations to elucidate the architectural firm's design processes. Like Hannah Jenkins and Avi Friedman's *Canadian Contemporary : The Northern Home* (2018), *boundary sequence illusion* is a welcome addition to the literature on recent Canadian dwellings. The book not only seeks to position IMA's designs within broader debates on contemporary residential architecture, but it also considers fundamental questions regarding how we experience the building's interior.

boundary sequence illusion contains detailed overviews of eleven houses that IMA built between 1999 and 2017. These are bookended by a foreword by Christine Macy, short essays by the editor, by Barry Sampson, and by Mac-Donald himself, and an afterword by David Dorenbaum. Macy, Sampson, and Brian Carter, the book's editor, are architects, and Dorenbaum is a psychoanalyst. The featured buildings, all located in southern Ontario, are illustrated with photographs of the interiors and exteriors, drawings, floor plans, elevations, sections, and aerial images. In addition, MacDonald offers a brief overview of each site, the clients' needs, and the building's layout. In each case, he discusses how the house is carefully placed within the property, with windows, walls, and roofs designed to frame particular vistas. The aerial photographs and sections that depict the sightlines emanating from within the home are especially remarkable. For a house situated upon a ninety-acre plot in Caledon, IMA set the building into the ground in order to obscure the view from the interior of an adjacent roadway. Its roof is covered with the type of greenery found in the property's rolling meadow. IMA uses similar strategies to frame the outward views from houses situated in smaller lots in urban neighbourhoods such as Swansea in Toronto and Vanier in Ottawa. For his own home in Toronto's Wychwood Park, MacDonald placed a courtyard between the living room and the garage, which is situated at a lower level than the house's ground floor. He designed the garage's upper wall such that it blocks one's view of the road from the living room but permits one to see the nearby forest and ravine.

MacDonald explains how the natural setting and the houses' design offer "experiential sequences" (79). The last example, a house built in 2017 on a two hundred-acre plot in Mulmur Township, includes a series of photographs that document what one sees as they approach the building from the driveway, pass through the entry, and move through the interior towards the living and dining room. Moreover, he illustrates how the view of the site's meadow is "reduced" as one drives towards the house and how this "approach sequence culminates" in the living and dining room, where one experiences the home's "principal view" of the natural setting (120). MacDonald describes how his firm always arranges a building's layout such that its spaces appear larger than they are. For a house built in Toronto's Swansea neighbourhood in 2007, IMA placed a mudroom within the building's rectangular interior space to form an L-shaped living and dining room, a shape which "suggest[s] mystery and space" and is perceived as more spacious than its actual dimensions (59).

While the book largely concentrates on themes suggested by its title, it also demonstrates IMA's use of sustainable building technologies. A cabin that MacDonald built for his family in Georgian Bay in 2014 has a green roof that cools the house in the summer via evaporation, as well as clerestory windows that draw air through the interior during the summer months. The house built in Caledon in 2009 has two light monitors that project from its roof and face south, allowing for increased amounts of daylight in the structure's central areas during the winter and natural ventilation during the summer. The house also uses a geothermal system for hot water, heating, and cooling.

Macy's foreword introduces the reader to IMA's work by explaining that the firm effectively deploys a number of design strategies that respond to Southern Ontario's natural environment, a landscape which does not offer the type of breathtaking panoramas seen in other Canadian regions. After a brief overview of IMA's aim to create a shel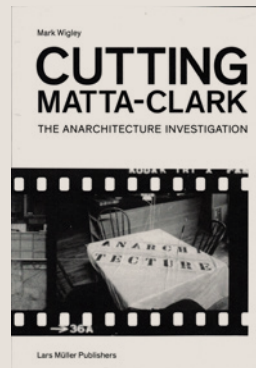ter that is integrated with its surrounding landscape, the foreword draws a comparison between the firm's work and László Moholy-Nagy's *Light-Space Modulator* (1930). Macy maintains that IMA's houses, such as those that employ rooftop monitors, have a similar capacity to alter the effects of light. Carter's essay, "the house," succinctly describes the history of home design in terms of both vernacular traditions and well-known architectural masterpieces. Sampson's contribution, "reframing," considers IMA's designs in terms of broader conventions pertaining to art and philosophy, suggesting that, like painters such as Tom Thomson and photographers such as Ansel Adams, the firm selects an impressive vista and creatively frames this view by orienting the house within the site. Sampson draws upon Walter Benjamin's differing notions of "idea" and "concept" to interpret IMA's designs and the firm's attention to constructing a sequence of experiences. Macy, Carter, and Sampson each refer to a number of the houses featured in the book, though there are only two photographs of IMA's designs interspersed in these three preliminary texts. Those who read these contributions prior to leafing through the detailed descriptions would benefit from more illustrations or figure numbers that point to photographs on the subsequent pages.

MacDonald's one-page essay, "designing houses," follows the book's last case study. The architect summarizes the firm's aims regarding the building's placement in its natural setting, the creation of sequences, the framing of notable views, and the use of sustainable technologies. He also explains that most of his houses include an inglenook and that these corner spaces surrounding the hearth "provide containment and protection" (128). MacDonald, however, places them in a space where one can gaze out to the landscape, so that the sense of security and enclosure is "juxtaposed with a long view that creates a deliberate idea of one's identity in

a bigger place and landscape" (128). Dorenbaum's afterword expands on the psychological aspects of inhabiting IMA's houses. For instance, he contemplates how an L-shaped room evokes a sense of mystery, and he considers this experience in terms of Gaston Bachelard's meditations on the home in *The Poetics of Space*. Dorenbaum extends his discussion of imagination and architectural space to IMA's design practices as well as broader considerations of how architectural interiors influence subjectivity. Moreover, he draws upon insights by authors such as Emily Dickinson and Jean Cocteau and architects such as Luis Barragán and Aldo van Eyck to consider the "paradox of architecture"—where "space transforms us" and the designer, "in a dialectical reversal, creates the conditions for the space to shape its inhabitants" (131).

While the book's essays outline IMA's innovative approach to integrating a dwelling within the landscape, they lack in-depth considerations of the theoretical and social issues that pertain to Canadian residential architecture. In this regard, the book is similar to other monographs in the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series. For instance, the short essays in *Barry Johns Architects* (2000) concentrate primarily on the firm's creative and design processes and offer a few brief observations of how the buildings reflect the identity of the Canadian prairies. *Shim-Sutcliffe—The Passage of Time* (2014) includes a longer essay by the architects that focuses on two of their house designs as well as a postscript by Phyllis Lambert that compares their work with Mies van der Rohe's experimental approach to architectural design.

boundary sequence illusion certainly meets the aims of the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series to examine the designs and processes of significant architectural firms in Canada. The reader, however, would also benefit from a discussion of how MacDonald's education, training, and life experiences have influenced his practice. Only in the cursory notes on the contributors do we learn that MacDonald worked with Arthur Erickson, Ron Thom, and John Parkin before he founded his own firm. While Dalhousie Architectural Press's *Canadian Modern* series is more focused on architectural history, other monographs in the *Documents in Canadian Architecture* series, such as *Saucier + Perrotte Architectes 1995–2002* (2004), do include a brief account of the architects' personal history and the firm's foundations in the introductory essays. Nevertheless, *boundary sequence illusion* is a valuable resource for architects as well as architectural students and theorists, and it will also appeal to those less acquainted with the discipline due to the quality of its illustrations and its engaging descriptions of IMA's designs. ¶

Menno Hubregtse is a Sessional Instructor in the Art History and Visual Studies Department at the University of Victoria.
—menno@uvic.ca

Lezli Rubin-Kunda
At Home: Talks with Canadian Artists about Place and Practice
Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2019
220 pp. 30 colour and 150 b/w illus.
$29.95 (paper) ISBN 9781773100470
$19.95 (epub) ISBN 9781773100494

Mark Wigley, ed.
Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation
Zürich: Lars Müller Publications, 2018
528 pp. 813 illus.
€ 35,00 (paper) ISBN 9783037784273

Kitty Scott, ed.
Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum, exh. cat.
Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2018
236 pp. colour illus.
$39.95 (paper) ISBN 9781894243933

Marie-Paule Macdonald

At a confluence of site-specific and conventional studio practice, three recent publications address domestic and public urban landscapes, each taking this shared theme in diverging directions. Lezli Rubin-Kunda, author of *At Home: Talks with Canadian Artists about Place and Practice*, interviewed contemporary artists in Canada, writing on homes, place, and studios; Mark Wigley's *Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation* examines the Matta-Clark archive, investigating the artist's sculptural practice of cutting buildings in relation to