

BOOK REVIEW

Wolfgang Kemp

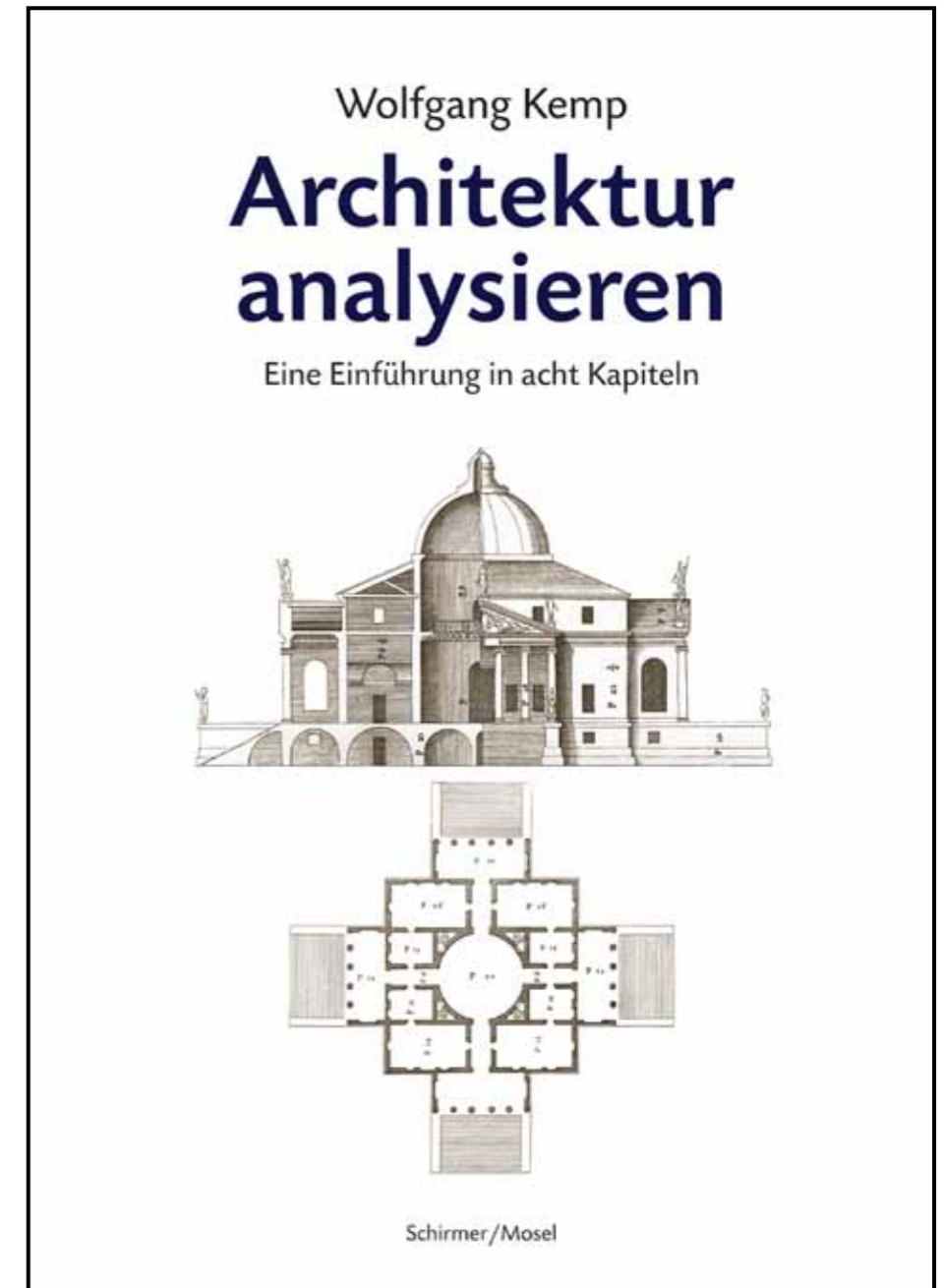
Architektur Analysieren: Eine Einführung in acht Kapiteln

Munich: Schirmer / Mosel, 2009, 416 pp., 304 ill., € 49.80

ISBN 978-3-8296-0262-4

Once begun, Wolfgang Kemp's wonderful, if at times demanding, book-length introduction to the analysis of architecture cannot easily be set aside. It features a thorough introduction to the verbal description and formal analysis of architecture. The eight chapters are devoted to detail and unity, façade and plan, space and body, type and context. Kemp's overall approach could be termed as formalist and structuralist. In many ways, it can be read as a twenty-first-century version of Heinrich Wölfflin's famous *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (*Basic Concepts of Art History*; first published in Munich in 1911). Contrary to the now common and pervasive interest in architectural theory, books, and manifestos, Kemp's *Architektur Analysieren: Eine Einführung in acht Kapiteln* (*Analysing Architecture: An Introduction in Eight Chapters*) is a refreshing exercise in the almost forgotten art of formal analysis. The book ends with a view of Piazza San Marco in Venice and hence with an homage to John Ruskin, an author to whom Kemp has elsewhere devoted a biography (*John Ruskin: 1819–1900: Leben und Werk* [1983], which has also been translated into English under the title *The Desire of My Eyes: Life of John Ruskin* [1991]). Indeed, Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) also totals eight chapters, including the introduction, and the personal tone of Kemp's book is equally reminiscent of nineteenth-century writers.

The examples discussed in mini-essays encompass Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy in San Lorenzo's, Florence, a portal by Serlio, Schloss Charlottenburg, Gropius's Fagus-Werke, the Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Munich, Speyer, Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza at Rome, the Kollegienkirche in Salzburg, Portman's Westin Bonaventure Hotel, the Aachen Chapel, the Florentine Badia, the Karlskirche in Vienna, Trier Cathedral, Stuttgart Main Station, the Bauhaus Building at Dessau, Theodor Fischer's Landesmuseum in Kassel, and Aldo Van Eyck's Hubertus House in Amsterdam. Many



Cover of *Architektur analysieren*.
Photograph: courtesy of Schirmer / Mosel Verlag

more buildings are mentioned. The great strength of this book is that it does not present a theory argued at any length, but elegantly adds example to example. In many ways, it is therefore an anthology, a *florilegium* of buildings and authors. The main argument is never out of sight and this makes following the author a pleasurable and sometimes entertaining experience. On the other hand, the planning phase of architecture is completely absent: any meaningful discussion of drawings, models, photography, *vedute*, or digital rendering is missing (an exception is the plan). The first chapter is a sustained argument against the indiscriminate use of architectural treatises and theory.

In Kemp's eyes, architecture's defining feature is its self-reflective nature that can only be uncovered by careful description: architecture speaks about itself. This tenet (which is nowhere explicitly stated) is the underlying argument put forth in this architectural primer. Each chapter is copiously and beautifully illustrated by small black-and-white photographs of buildings from antiquity to the present day. The eloquent prose of Kemp's book is punctuated by footnotes that give a selection of literature on the subject in German and English. This selective bibliography is in itself highly valuable and Kemp often unearths positions and authors now long forgotten. Conversely, the volume has no comprehensive bibliography and no index. Only a reader venturing to read the book from cover to cover will be able to collect these bibliographical pearls and savour Kemp's aperçus. The book therefore in no way can be compared to the usual classroom handbooks. Any reader looking for a straightforward approach to the subject probably will be disappointed. Nonetheless, in a somewhat old-fashioned way it is a very good introductory text for students and teachers alike.

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BOOK REVIEW

Andreas Beyer, Matteo Burioni, and Johannes Grave, editors

Das Auge der Architektur: Zur Frage der Bildlichkeit in der Baukunst

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Editors and reviewers of anthologies face quite similar problems in binding together a wealth of different approaches in order to stimulate discussion. Unfortunately, edited volumes usually do not have an epilogue. And so one needs to approach the finely designed conference proceedings *Das Auge der Architektur: Zur Frage der Bildlichkeit in der Baukunst (Architecture's Eye: On Iconicity in Architecture)* like an open-ended corridor.

Editors Andreas Beyer, Matteo Burioni, and Johannes Grave wanted nothing less than to extend to architecture the theory of the image, a theory developed since 2005 by the National Centre of Competence in Research 'Iconic Criticism' (Eikones) at Basel under the direction of Gottfried Boehm. To this end, architecture first needed to be declared an iconic phenomenon; the editors already try to do this through the volume's title. But, although this iconicity catches the attention on a literary level, it actually restricts the subject matter to a personified image of architecture and to examples of eye-like building structures and the eye symbol in the self-projection of the architect (see the essays by Andreas Beyer and Michael Gnehm). The editors carefully explain theories of image and architecture, considered from the perspective of sign, surface, or spatial atmospheres. Via image theory the editors introduce a renewed concept of reception: the iconicity of architecture refreshes itself according to the situation, and independently of parts of a building, in everyday use. This may fit intuitively with the experience of architecture but raises the question as to the instrument of research: what is the use of the subjectively perceived and moreover ephemeral oscillation between building (body) and image (view)?

According to the editors, iconicity here means a surprising 'image creation' by architecture, which goes beyond the visual presentation of images and addresses the beholder. This is clearly based on Boehm's image theory, which assigns to the