

homes

APRIL 25, 2018

INTERIOR
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out of the mist



Architects' Houses

by **Michael Webb**

Hudson, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, \$50
304 pages, 350 color illustrations

The author of more than 20 books (and many articles) on architecture and design, Michael Webb turns his attention to an interesting sub-category: houses that architects have designed for their own use. He has selected 30 such residences from the last decade, with 17 countries represented. The designers include big stars (Norman Foster, Thom Mayne, Jim Olson, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien), some smaller ones, and some welcome new names.

“All talented architects deserve the opportunity to live in houses they’ve designed for themselves”

Of all these, the most audacious design is Foster’s conversion of a five-story tower from the 1950s into a pool-topped wonder in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France. Perhaps the most intriguingly idiosyncratic is Smiljan Radic’s concrete “House for the Poem of the Right Angle” in Vilches, Chile. The most elegant are a residence in Amsterdam by Hans van Heeswijk, and one in New York’s Catskill Mountains by Peter Gluck and his son and partner in Gluck+, Thomas. But the abode this reader envies most is Williams and Tsien’s weekend retreat just a few blocks from their weekday New York apartment. Right in the heart of Manhattan, it is a compact rooftop studio and terrace with a dynamite view of Central Park.

A delightful addition, inserted in the middle of this survey, is a 32-page history of earlier examples. It begins with Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Virginia, John Soane’s reimagining of three adjacent London townhouses, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin. It ends many miles and years away with houses in California by contemporary architects Barton Myers and Steven Ehrlich.

Addison Mizner: The Architect Whose Genius Defined Palm Beach

by **Stephen Perkins** and **James Caughman**

Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, \$50
354 pages, 223 illustrations (45 color)

“His architecture still defines Palm Beach”

The Society Architect has disappeared (along with Society itself), but it is a refreshing diversion to read about one who was among its most superb examples—and who also did landscape and interior design, could paint, write, box, lay brick, glaze windows, pour concrete, and manufacture many of the elements his designs called for. Mizner, born in 1872, spent some of his boyhood in Guatemala, where his father was U.S. ambassador, and by his 30s had prospected for gold in the Yukon Territory (with some success), studied architecture at the University of Salamanca, and traveled to Hawaii, Samoa, China, and Australia. In San Francisco he was an apprentice to—and then a partner of—architect Willis Polk.

Mizner arrived in Palm Beach, Florida, in 1918, planning to stay long enough to recover from a leg injury, but, enjoying both the weather and the wealth, remained there 15 years. He developed a unique and influential style that was distinctly Spanish and asymmetrical, using terra-cotta tiles, tapestries, stained glass, and decorative ironwork. Working with developer Paris Singer, heir to the sewing machine fortune, he designed the Everglades Club and the mansions El Mirasol, Casa Bendita, and Playa Riente, among many others.

Attracted to a farming village south of Palm Beach, he envisioned a grandiose future for Boca Raton, meant to be “the first tailor-made city in the world”—its miles of canals making it “the Venice of America”—but these ambitious plans led to financial difficulties and a sad end to a great career. Mizner was often prosperous, sometimes poor, but always imaginative, enterprising, and charming.

Stephen Perkins, a co-founder of ForrestPerkins, spent three years on the text, which is discursive but never dull. Craig Kuhner has contributed characterful color photographs and has reproduced many historic images. For us modernists, this is a vicarious trip to another world.



What They're Reading...

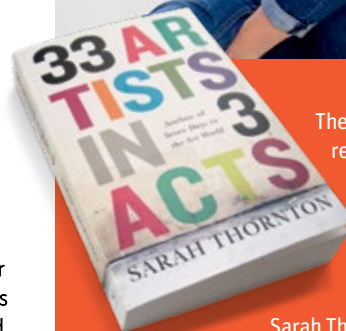
33 Artists in 3 Acts

by **Sarah Thornton**

New York: W.W. Norton & Company, \$16
430 pages, 54 black-and-white illustrations

Magdalena Keck

Founder of Magdalena Keck
Interior Design



The author of the recent monograph on urban living, *Pied-à-Terre*, Magdalena Keck, had already enjoyed

Sarah Thornton’s *Seven Days in The Art World* and was interested in exploring her other works. “Thornton’s new book is a fascinating look into the contemporary art world,” Magdalena Keck says. “On one hand, we have Damien Hirst, whose works sell to collectors at record prices; on the other, there’s Andrea Fraser, who only allows her work to be acquired by museums. Then there is Ai Weiwei standing out against other artists who reject the concept of *social role*. It’s a reminder that designers can also take many different roles.”

Though writing her own book kept Keck busy, she did manage to begin work on two weekend homes in New York’s rural Catskill Mountains. “They signal a bit of a shift in focus for me,” she says. Speaking of different roles.

—Nicholas Tamarin