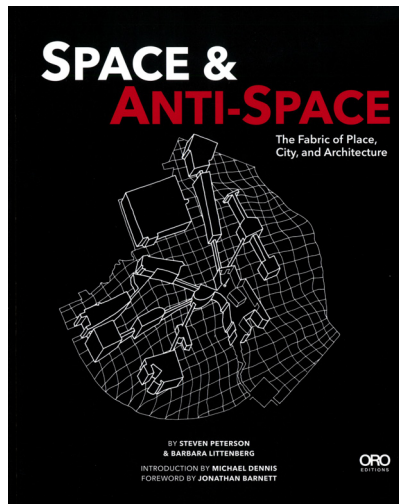


misconceptions around new classicism: On the side of the Traditionalists he criticises those who understand architecture as a way of ‘freezing time’ and that fend for it for reasons of conservative or religious thinking, or out of a regret for the ‘disappearance of class hierarchy and rigid order’. At the same time, he highlights how ‘similarly, many Modernists remain stuck in their own nostalgia for permanent revolution, a revolution now without social or political purpose, proposing no change but only perpetuating the status quo’. Instead, Lucien argues for a “perpetual becoming” and a continuous “re-learning, re-invention and recreation” enriched by the knowledge of generations of preceding architects, that clearly transcends an idealised representation of the past and evokes imagination with regards to architecture, society and togetherness.

The book combines Lucien’s writing with a great number of selected quotations of poets, architects, artists and historians. The composition of these texts and his own vibrant, mesmerising drawings and photographs turn the book into a synthesis of the arts, stimulating the reader on multiple levels, while communicating Lucien’s well-founded architectural and philosophical ideas visually, poetically, and melodically in a unique way.

#### Lucien Steil

*In the Mood for Architecture, Tradition, Modernism & Serendipity*  
Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2018



*The best way to learn about urban design is to study great cities*

*La mejor forma de aprender urbanismo es estudiar las grandes ciudades*

*A melhor maneira de aprender sobre desenho urbano é estudar grandes cidades*

#### Matthew Bell

Colin Rowe is remembered having said that, aside from buildings, there are several scales of architecture, which includes both “micro-architecture like furniture and silverware, and macro-architecture like London and Paris... well maybe more Paris than London.” *Space & Anti-Space: The Fabric of Place, City and Architecture*, by Steven Peterson and Barbara Littenberg, is devoted to what Rowe called the “macro” scale, and this book adds an immense amount to understanding how to design at the scale of the city.

Several observations come to me upon an initial reading of the book. First, it’s sad that anyone should have to write a book about designing cities. Prior to

the advent of modernist architecture, it was an integral part of the discipline and an essential part of any architect’s education. Since then, architects have either struggled with the scale of the city or ignored it altogether. Second, it is surprising to say the least, to start a book about building the city with a chapter devoted to the thoughts and approach of Mies van der Rohe, but more about that later. And third, every architect that aspires to do buildings and urban design in the city, any city, should get a copy of this book and closely study its contents.

The leading premise of the book is that the design of successful cities is largely dependent on the shaping and defining of public “space” by (mostly) private buildings, and the utopian approach of modernists like Mies and others of his generation developed a theory of architecture and urbanism that was predicated on universal space, or “anti-space”, in Peterson and Littenberg’s terms. This ultimately led to a preponderance of individual buildings lacking any coherent relation to one another, a disintegration of the fabric of the city, and a generation of architects incapable or unwilling to shape space with buildings to make urbanity. For Peterson and Littenberg, dense, compact living is now more than ever necessary to combat climate change, and the best way to learn about urban design is to study great cities. For them, the modernist model of the city (the city of “anti-space”), widely practiced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is inadequate to build the cities we need today.

The authors of the book have been engaged in the teaching of architecture and urban design throughout their careers, and their point of view and professional projects have clearly been informed by academic rigor. Their practice has involved influential hypothetical projects, such as the 1978 *Roma Interrotta* project led by Colin Rowe, winning some noteworthy international competitions in North America and Europe, and proposals for the rebuilding of Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan, where they advocated,

unsuccessfully, for an urban design approach based on New York itself. The book includes copious project documentation and diagrams, many published for the first time, providing thoughtful critiques and invaluable lessons in diagramming urban design ideas and relationships.

Peterson and Littenberg's work is among the most public of public urban design work, in that the overwhelming majority of their clients have been public agencies and groups, not private developers. As such, it probably can be said that their client is the city itself, and it is clear that New York is their "urban lab" and has taught them quite a bit. One project that emerges from the "lab" is an interesting critique of the recent Hudson Yards project, a massive development on the west side of Manhattan. In the "space vs anti-space" theory, Hudson Yards is clearly an example of the latter, missing most of the lessons to be gained from the spectacular urbanism of places like Rockefeller Center. Peterson and Littenberg show in clear and simple ways how a few moves could have transformed the entire project from what is a suburban layout of towers in a field to a richer and more emphatic engagement with the city. Through lessons learned studying the relationship of the Manhattan skyscraper to its urban block, they demonstrate how to engage a tower with a base and define a street wall. Such lessons would have immeasurably improved the entire project.

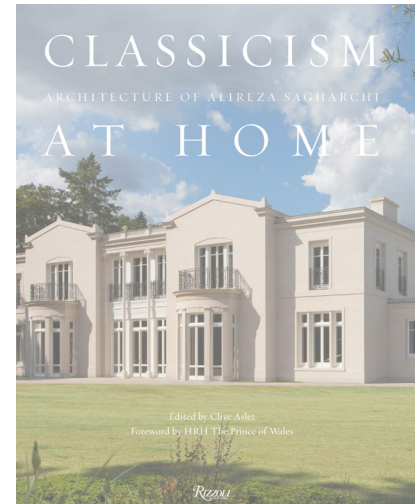
The book culminates in what is arguably the most impactful of Peterson and Littenberg's insights and contributions, a chapter devoted to "urban fabric," which demonstrates in simple and clear diagrams the relationship between the spatial elements of the city - parks, streets, plazas - to its solid elements, such as buildings and city blocks. The didactic nature of this chapter, an instructive distillation of the relationship between the building/block and the role of public space in the making of the city, is the basis of their practice and insights on urban form. It is illustrated with well-chosen examples

of the theory, and does as good a job of illustrating how good city fabric is made as any I've seen. I suppose one could have started the book with this section as the basis of their approach and followed with project examples, but as architects educated in the era of modernism, it is understandable that identifying Miesian theory and "anti-space" as the culprit in poor urban design is an essential first step. To provide a solution, one must have a clear diagnosis of the problem.

Overall, a terrific argument, set of projects and lessons learned. *Space & Anti-Space* should be part of every architect's bookshelf.

**Steven Peterson and Barbara Littenberg**

*Space & Anti-Space: The Fabric of Place, City and Architecture*  
ORO Editions, 2020



*Toward the Beautiful and Durable*

*Hacia lo bello y lo duradero*

*Rumo ao belo e duradouro*

**Thomas Norman Rajkovich**

In *Classicism at Home: Architecture of Alireza Sagharhi*, historian and author Clive Aslet establishes the biographical and intellectual backdrop for the work of this masterful composer-architect, who has created places of truly remarkable beauty in diverse contexts around the world.

Alireza Sagharhi's inventive creativity, emerging from his intimate knowledge of the principles of classical architecture and local building traditions, allows him to design structures which "speak" the language of their specific location and culture.

These buildings are clear in their organization, elegant and appropriate in their proportion and material palette, informed by and complementary to their surroundings, and memorable in composition. As HRH, Prince Charles notes in the foreword, the architecture is meticulous in every respect.

They are, equally, places of great personality and character – gracious