

the use of visual surveys in order to observe the ways people value cities and so give meaning to them. Cityscapes contain, as Krase explains, social and cultural meanings. Therefore attached to urban landscapes are not only particular activities resulting from people's views of the city, but also the grasp people have of how different areas of the city are seen and so understood as being distinct from other districts.

Immigrants in the US have historically had an impact upon cityscapes, just as Turks have affected German built environments, and North Africans those in France. By and large, immigrants established their communities by residing in houses that were already built, thereby becoming assimilated into the existing environment of the host society. However, Krase stresses that the American cultural landscape, for example, exhibits traces of the most diverse array of ethnic influences anywhere in the world: immigration has created in many cities environmental layers between competing European, Asian, African, and Latin American groups. He argues that with the emergence of ethnic vernacular architectures – commonly seen today as an important aspect of local cultural heritage and so tourism – ‘ethnic theme parks’ (pp. 86, 131) have come to define the face of cities. These are not to be confused with ethnic enclaves. Instead Krase employs the term to highlight the commoditization of vernacular landscapes as part of contemporary property markets, that is as ‘marketable life styles’. ‘In the spectacle of the ethnic theme park the social value of the ethnic neighbourhood ... is transformed by its capacity to produce festivals, restaurants, and other amusements for outsiders’ (p. 17).

As Krase successfully demonstrates, settlements and the spaces within them are not only organized into a spatial order: they are constructed and organized through other means that include culture, a major element of urban studies. Allowing the reader to come to terms with the evolution of modern cities, *Seeing cities change* clearly shows how cities can be analysed and understood in terms of spatial semiotics and visual ethnography.

References

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Patchworks Parisiens: petites leçons d'urbanisme ordinaire by Michaël Darin (photographs by Gilles Targat), Parigramme/Compagnie Parisienne du Livre, Paris, France, 2012, 207 pp. ISBN 978-2-84096-690-6.

In 2009 Michaël Darin, in his book *La comédie urbaine* (Darin, 2009), invited those interested in urban settlements to consider the complexity and diversity of European cities, and in so doing he explained that what we often regard as imperfections or defects are just the effects of time as well as the multiplicity of actors involved in the making of a city (Maumi, 2011). Revealing that the process of making cities is extremely long, streets were shown to be the expression of rules, negotiations, compromises and renunciations. Darin's interest in *La comédie urbaine*, as well as in *Patchworks Parisiens*, is not the planned city, or the monumental city, but rather the ‘imperfect city’ or what might be called the ordinary or banal city. The introduction to *Patchworks Parisiens*, entitled ‘Banal incongruities’ explores the notion that the city is a collective work and deserves to be looked at with attention, curiosity and patience.

Patchworks Parisiens is in many respects a continuation of *La comédie urbaine*, but focused on the French capital. It is a collection of curiosities composed by Darin as a result of 40 walks (each of 2 hours duration) along Paris's streets. The survey made is supported by investigations in the archives and analyses of plans. Having in mind the historical work undertaken to explain the ‘urban comedy’, the reader of *Patchworks Parisiens* is invited to go out into the street and look at it. The book is addressed to the *flâneur*, an individual who loves to see and be seen in the urban scene. It invites us to look at what we see, and to be surprised by it. The book thus is made to arouse curiosity, to question all the irregularities we are used to seeing around us in the urban scene. So in this context it is an invitation to go for a walk, but it is not organized as a guide or itinerary. It is comprised mostly of photographs and short notices related to the photographs, explaining briefly the ‘incongruity’ shown. Unlike *La comédie urbaine*,

Patchworks Parisiens has just a few plans and maps. Darin instead suggests that those interested in the core theme of the book should go to the websites of the land registry office or Paris's Archives for more pictorial information and historical maps. His aim is not to offer a complete analysis of the selected examples given within the book.

Patchworks Parisiens is not organized topographically, but thematically. The examples of 'incongruities' or 'oddness' are classified in different categories which are used to organize the chapters. The book is made up of four primary parts each with chapters within it: 'voisinages' (neighbourhood relations), 'contours' (outlines), 'formes' (shapes), and 'rencontres' (encounters). The first chapter, opening the core of the book, is devoted to what are often considered as 'warts' in city landscapes, here transformed by Darin as 'beauty spots': small constructions (often shops) occupying residual spaces between buildings or walls.

'Voisinages' should be understood as the diversity of relations existing between adjacent buildings aligned along the street, and recurs as a subject in the chapters on 'Silhouette', 'Unexpected floors', 'Small isolated buildings', 'Big solitary buildings', 'Joints and harps', and 'Stylistic sequence'. Questioning the nature of the 'silhouette' of the street, Darin considers gaps between buildings as well as matters associated with the form of party walls.

The 'Contours' part is an examination of the quality of the voids between buildings, including 'Gardens and courtyards', 'Set-back buildings', 'Zigzag façades', 'Bases' (particular ground floor treatments of buildings, or 'socles'), 'Nooks', and 'Triangular additions' (which are another of Darin's 'beauty spots').

'Formes' (or shapes) opens with two photographs of the Rue de Rivoli, one from the level of the Jardin des Tuileries and the other of the Hôtel de ville de Paris. These are discussed with reference to one of the most famous Parisian streets. Thought of as an exemplar of the built diversity that comprises the city landscape, the Rue de Rivoli is explained in relation to the symmetrical composition of the façades in front of the Jardin des Tuileries, the more diverse layout in front of the Hôtel de ville, and rue Saint-Antoine, with an even more uneven alignment. This part of the book does not just focus on perfect alignments: it also covers irregularities and unsightly or unusual juxtapositions. Darin also questions the 'Swollen streets' resulting from the widening of some streets

and their disregard of the alignments of streets lines formed in the nineteenth century. The last part of *Patchworks Parisiens*, 'Rencontres' (encounters), focuses on 'Corner buildings' located at crossroads, or at what are referred to as 'Empty corners'.

Darin concludes his book with numerous 'Absences' in the city, and by re-inviting the reader to look at the 'art of ordinary assembling'. Cities therefore are said to be 'fascinating as collective artefacts developing with time, according to the successive contributions given by a multitude of people' (p. 206). As an invitation to carry on the work of the author the book ends with blank pages that form a notebook entitled 'Other urban curiosities and oddness'.

References

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O ser urbano: nos caminhos de Nuno Portas. The urban being: on the trails of Nuno Portas edited by Nuno Grande, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, Portugal, 2012, 640 pp. ISBN 978-972-27-2067-0.

Between 8 December 2012 and 24 February 2013 the Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon hosted an exhibition designed to cover more than 50 years of professional activity by the celebrated Portuguese architect Nuno Portas (1934-). It had been previously hosted, in early-to-mid 2012, in the then European Capital City of Culture, Guimarães, Portugal. A bilingual catalogue (in English and Portuguese) with the same title as the exhibition was based on the collaboration of a number of individuals, including Nuno Grande, João Serra, Gabriela Vaz-Pinheiro, Jorge Sampaio, Alexandre