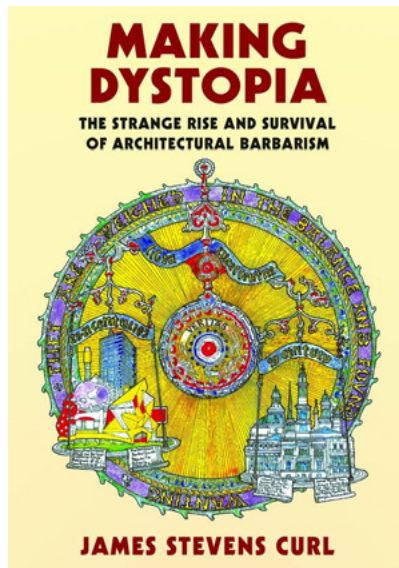


El “presente” viene determinado por la necesidad de actualización, esto es, de recuperación de aquellas estructuras dañadas a través de experiencias de restauración concretas.

Pero, lejos de quedar enterrada por la historia, la técnica tabicada continúa proyectándose hacia el futuro. En un mundo en el que el cambio climático está cambiando la manera en que se seleccionan los materiales –decisión condicionada por la huella ecológica– las técnicas tradicionales suponen una alternativa viable –no solo en lugares con menos recursos– de reducido impacto, con amplios márgenes para ser optimizadas. Y es aquí donde tradición e innovación confluyen. A las inagotables prestaciones compositivas y operativas que brinda el sistema (versatilidad, sencillez, economía, rapidez de ejecución), incluso para grandes luces –recordemos las obras de Rafael Guastavino–, se unen las mejoras que proveen los programas de modelización y cálculo, el conocimiento de las implicaciones de las variables constructivas (aparejos, direcciones, tabiquillos...), la experimentación con nuevos materiales ligeros (lana de madera, vidrio celular reciclado...) o con viejos conocidos (BTC), como también la oportunidad no tan lejana de una ejecución robotizada sin necesidad de guías ni cimbras.

**Fernando Vegas López-Manzanares, Rafael Marín Sánchez, Lidia García-Soriano y Camilla Mileto (eds.)**  
*Construyendo Bóvedas Tabicadas II*  
edUPV, 2022



### *Pretentious Starchitecture: Modernism and its Conceits*

### *Arquitettura de arquiestrellas: El modernismo y su arrogancia*

### *A arquitetura-estrela pretensiosa: o Modernismo e as suas presunções*

## Frank Albo

One of the most eminent architectural historians of our time – James Stevens Curl – has penned a magisterial *tour de force* that dismantles the conceits and folly of architectural Modernism. It exhibits the work of a scholar at the height of his perceptive powers and provides a penetrating interrogation into one of the greatest shams in the history of architecture. Having already made outstanding contributions in many unexplored tributaries ranging from Freemasonry to Egyptian Revivalism, Curl turns his discerning gaze to what he calls a “Catastrophe” in contemporary architecture and urban design. This indispensable volume exposes the numerous misconceptions

about the Modern Movement and illustrates the gross fallacies perpetuated by CIAM, MARS, and Corbusianity. But make no mistake, this is no mere revisionist account of twentieth-century architecture; it is a surgical takedown of the juggernaut of Modernism itself, unmasking the baleful manifestations of International Style on streets from Brasilia to Milwaukee.

Curl also provides dire warnings about the growth and health of our cities, while opening our eyes to the cult-like fundamentalism of the Modern Movement and the blind devotion accorded to its chief propagandists. Combining wit and erudition to debunk the pseudo-scientific pretensions and snobbery of the Athens Charter, Curl demolishes the myth that Modernism would engender an egalitarian utopia and offer a panacea for the ills of twentieth-century urbanism. The massive 57-acre Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St Louis – infamous for its abject poverty, crime, and racial segregation – is but one of the many colossal failures of Modernist principles and American urban development.

Curl’s excoriation does not end with the patriarchs of the Modern Movement but extends to their acolytes, Gehry, Libeskind, Hadid, and a medley of other exalted “star architects” who have filled our skylines with ever more jarring towers of Babel devoid of cohesion, history, context, or a straight line. As Curl reminds us, “it is impossible to create pleasant, ordinary, humane streets or places when every ill-educated, conceited architect is straining beyond his or her capabilities to be “original”, which really means cribbing exemplars of the latest fad...” (14). Every subject in this cornucopia of scholarship is scrutinized with fluency and élan. Curl’s tome is a timely marvel, and nothing previously published comes anywhere close to this meticulous dissection of a century of deceit, pomposity, and destruction. The reader will be engrossed with the author’s masterful command of primary sources and sage insights about the life and works of neglected figures, including Baillie Scott, Erich Mendelsohn, and C.F.A.

Voysey, who was erroneously labeled a Modernist “pioneer” despite his disdain for the Movement’s incoherent design language, trivial eclecticism, and “false originality”.

Curl’s fiery manifesto has spawned a legion of enraged detractors, including one British design critic, who compared the book with death, while spuriously equating the crudely minimalist Farnsworth House with the towering elegance of Chartres. This is not a work to be read passively but instead must be mined as a vast repository of cultural learning about the failures and hubris of modern architectural education, theory, and design. With this invaluable study, Curl solidifies his place as the nonpareil among scholars unafraid to challenge received opinion and the “Mosaic authority” of luminaries such as Pevsner, Ruskin, and Philip Johnson. *Dystopia* is unquestionably a major contribution to the history of architecture and the most important publication in Curl’s enormously prodigious oeuvre.

**James Stevens Curl**

*Making Dystopia: The Strange Rise and Survival of Architectural Barbarism*  
Oxford University Press, 2018