



The Portfolio and the Diagram: Architecture, Discourse, and Modernity in America (MIT Press)

Hyungmin Pai

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The Portfolio and the Diagram is about the changing ways architects see, read, and use the words and images of architectural publications. Architects today do not use the glossy photographs of magazines in the same way that nineteenth-century architects mobilized the drawings in the grand folios. The images have changed, and so have the ways in which they are used. The book begins with an outline of the academic discipline and the mimetic practice of the portfolio, established in America during the late nineteenth century. World War I triggered a historical process that resulted in the demise of the portfolio and the emergence of the discourse of the diagram. The Beaux Arts-trained architects had fashioned their discipline through the meticulous object-centered images of the portfolio. The discourse of the diagram provided a new range of possibility in the architect's relation to words, images, and buildings. More than the diagram itself, more than the province of narrow-minded functionalists, the discourse of the diagram is a complex formation of texts, concepts, and modes of representation. Concerned less with constructing a new kind of modernism than with understanding the boundaries and structures of modernity, the book is a history of modern architecture as a discursive practice and its striving to become a viable discipline.

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