Amercan Architects and Texts: A Computer-Aided Analysis of the Literature

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Preface by William J. Mitchell In American Architects and Texts, Juan Pablo Bonta analyzes the indexes of nearly 400 architectural books and articles published over the past century and a half to reveal changing societal preferences in architecture and to literally measure the reputations of individual architects. The result is a provocative study -- part book, part electronic database and analysis software -- that follows the ups an downs of more than 7,000 architects' standing in the literature and, indirectly, their standing in the profession. There is a ranked list of the "100 most famous architects," along with views of evolving architectural careers and the response to them by critics and historians. The complete database and analysis is available in machine-readable form.Bonta dates the appearance on the literary scene of past and present superstars, like Jefferson, Latrobe, Richardson, Sullivan, Wright, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Saarinen, Johnson, Venturi, and Meier. From his vast database emerge some surprising observations, for example Maya Ying Lin, the designer of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, reached in just two years a level of visibility in the literature that Frank Lloyd Wright only achieved after thirty years of practice.By analyzing an index and comparing it to other indexes stored in the database, the system designed by Bonta tentatively assesses whether an architecture text delivers what it promises. It can identify areas calling for further coverage, and flag unexpected or unusual names as well as any names that may have been left out deliberately or inadvertently. The system also automatically identifies influential publications like Hitchcock and Johnson's The International Style, Stern's various Forty and Forty collections, or Reagan's American Architecture, which were instrumental in launching yet unknown names destined to brilliant careers.In a chapter devoted to gender equity, Bonta sounds the alarm on an impending sex war in the literature, with authors giving preference in their writing for architects of their own gender. Ada Louise Huxtable and Barbara Lee Diamondstein are credited for being exceptions to the trend.

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