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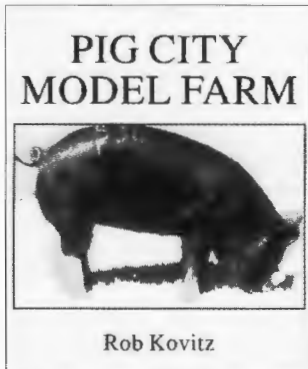
Design 1935-1965: What Modern Was, Montreal. October 15 to January 30, 1994, Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts.

Artropolis 93, Vancouver. October 23-November 20. Woodward's store, 101 W. Hastings.

BOOKS

Pig City Model Farm. Rob Kovitz. Treyf/Coach House Press, Toronto, 1992. Page numbers not included, 3/4".

Review by Marco Polo.



The book is the published version of Rob Kovitz's 1989 thesis project at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture. Theses have traditionally taken the form of hypothetical buildings representing systematic design arguments. The premise of Kovitz's work seems to be an antithesis to these unitary projects. The entire book is composed of quotes and illustrations drawn from sources ranging from the literary and architectural, to tracts on animal husbandry. Its structure challenges conventional notions of authorship, with Kovitz taking on the role of editor or curator, cleverly presenting the collected material in ironic juxtaposition and sim-



Farmhouse, Présentation, Québec by Hal Ingberg and Mark Poddubiuk. Photo: M. Poddubiuk.

ply letting readers draw their own conclusions.

The book is organized in distinct sections. The first, entitled "Fourier," presents the ordered, deterministic approach to social engineering espoused by the French taxonomist Charles Fourier. The second, "Country Life," introduces the hardships of farm life and the role of unpredictability and disorder in the scuttling of the best laid plans. The contrast between these two sections forms the basis of a clever, often enigmatic allegorical critique of deterministic design theory.

The section "Modern Farming" describes the physical analogue of Fourier's attempt to reinvent the world through classification: the utopian architectural project. Enlightenment ideals such as those of Fourier began to form the basis of rational utopias, where rigid rational spatial organization emerged as the ordering principle of deterministic institutional design. For the first time sophisticated architects took an interest in the design of rural buildings. As with other emerging institutions of the day, the model farms represent a strikingly literal expression of power relationships, of organization, of surveillance and control. These rational models, described by Michel Foucault as "the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form," embody the enlightenment

vision of architecture and the city as efficient, ordered and, most importantly, predictable.

"Modern Meat," continues the allegorical nature of the work by drawing a parallel between the activities of the abattoir and the urban butchery of planners such as New York's Robert Moses and Paris's Georges Haussmann.

The final section, "A World in Yellow," is the most enigmatic, having the quality of epilogue and disclaimer in one. Kovitz closes with a collection of short quotes entitled "I Like Breathing...," the most poignant of which is from Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia*:

Should the finished text, no matter of what length, arouse even the slightest misgivings, these should be taken inordinately seriously, to a degree out of all proportion to their apparent importance. What is let pass as a minute doubt may indicate the objective worthlessness of the whole.

This and other similar disclaimers couched in evasive irony provide a bit of a nudge-nudge wink-wink conclusion that borders on the glib. Although the book is interesting and provocative, this flirtation with glibness ultimately renders it somewhat unsatisfying. Having negotiated the gauntlet of quotes drawn from a broad range of disparate sources, there is some expectation of synthesis and completion. One could argue that given the

nature of this work, its lack of synthesis is entirely appropriate to its position vis-à-vis a single sustained and systematic argument. Maybe so, but it begs the question raised by much contemporary (read post-modern) scholarship: is this a legitimate new form of academic discourse in step with its multivalent, chaotic times, or, when it comes right down to it, merely an excuse for intellectual laziness? Only the author knows for sure.

AWARDS

Rome Prize. Architect Hal Ingberg has been awarded the 1993 Canada Council Prix de Rome in Architecture. Ingberg, who won the Canada Council Barcelona Residency in 1991, is a native of Montreal and practises with Saia et Barbarese. Last year he taught at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).

Current projects he has helped design for his firm include the Aile President Kennedy science building for UQAM and a vocational school in St-Jerome, Québec. In 1989 he designed a farmhouse in rural Québec in collaboration with Mark Poddubiuk which recreated the "ghost" of an existing structure and upon that imposed a large barrel vault volume.

Ingberg's study in Rome will focus on the relationship between the city's architecture and the landscape, particularly conditions where the interface between structure and landscape is blurred and anomalous, such as in the Etruscan tombs carved out of volcanic cliffs or in subterranean buildings with courtyards open to the sky.

Members of the jury were Catherine Alkenbrack, Benjamin Gianni, Brian MacKay-Lyons, Jacques Rousseau, and Brigitte Shim.