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Luca Molinari, Andrea Canepari, eds. *The Italian Legacy in Washington D.C.: Architecture, Design, Art, and Culture.* Milan: Skira, 2007. 213 pp. Illustrations. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-88-6130-304-1.

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Unfulfilling Legacy

This is a handsomely produced, thought-provoking volume, full of fascinating detail and lushly photographed–but one that will ultimately frustrate all but the most forgiving readers. Coedited by Luca Molinari, a practicing architect and professor of architecture at the University of Naples, and Andrea Canepari, First Secretary at the Italian Embassy in Washington, it aims, in Molinari's words, to "[give] recognizable form to some three centuries of American history as it has taken material form in large and small works that have shaped Washington's physical and intellectual landscape" (p. 21). Arguing that Washington's architecture illustrates the fruitful joining of "Italian Classicism and American Pragmatism," the editors and contributors seek not only to document this interaction, but also to highlight the ongoing artistic and cultural relationships between Italy and the American capital (p. 21).

These ambitious goals would be difficult to achieve in any volume, but especially so here, given the parameters set by the book's editors. Unlike many other American cities, Washington has never had a large population of Italian American immigrants or Italian nationals, and large numbers of Italians did not immigrate to the United States until the turn of the last century. (Full disclosure: this reviewer is half Italian-American, and has taken several Italian-language classes at Casa Italiana, one of the local cultural institutions briefly discussed in *The Italian Legacy*.) The many contributions of Italians and Italian immigrants constitute a rich thread that brightens Washington's history–but it is a thread, nonetheless.

The book labors mightily to prove its points, but its organization and emphases are initially difficult to ascertain. *The Italian Legacy* alternates between wide-ranging articles (and some interviews) by Italian and American authors from a variety of backgrounds, interspersed with photographic essays by distinguished architectural photographer Maxwell MacKenzie. Livio Sacchi and Mario Valmarana explore the weight of Palladian ideas and design on early American architecture, particularly on the designs of Thomas Jefferson; Margherita Azzi Visentini documents Italian elements in domestic buildings and gardens after the colonial period to the present. David Alan Brown and Maygene Daniels detail the Italian presence at the National Gallery of Art, covering not only John Russell Pope's Classical design, but also the museum's significant Renaissance holdings, largely the result of early donations by Andrew Mellon, Joseph Widener, and Samuel H. Kress. Classicist John E. Ziolkowski discusses Roman influences on the city's planning; Barbara A. Wolanin, office of the Architect of the Capitol, traces Italian design in the U.S. Capitol, especially in the frescoes of Constantino Brumidi (1805-80), recently restored to eye-popping splendor. Ennio Caretto, correspondent with *Corriere della Sera*, lovingly traces "the Italianness of the Washington area" (p. 172), touching on such extraordinary men as Filippo Mazzei, who started an experimental farm in Virginia, wrote in support of the Revolution, and raised money for the new nation's war chest; and Count Luigi Palma di Cesnola, Civil War hero, American consul to Cyrus, and an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist who became the first director of the Metropolitan Museum. (His collection of Cyprus artifacts now resides at Harvard University.) Caretto also discusses more ordinary Italians and Italian Americans–the artists, stone cutters, and construction workers whose handiwork may be seen every day in Washington's churches, public buildings, and Metro system. And he reminds us of the little-known, and shameful, episode of Italian internment during the Second World War, when some 600,000 Italians and Italian Americans were classified as enemy aliens, and hundreds were interned in camps. (Caretto, echoing other estimates, believes as many as 3,300 Italian nationals and Italian Americans were interned.)

The photo essays highlight themes and topics from the articles, with beautiful layouts on Monticello and the James Barbour house in Virginia, also planned by Jefferson and now in ruins; the Italian-designed Watergate complex; the new Italian Chancery in northwest Washington; John Russell Pope's Jefferson Memorial; and Brumidi's Capitol frescoes. A cluster of photo essays closes out the volume, featuring Holy Rosary Church and Casa Italiana, the center of Washington's small Italian and Italian American communities; Villa Firenze, the Kalorama residence of the Italian ambassador; and the equestrian statues sculpted by James Fraser, presented by Italy to the United States as a gift after the Second World War.

It is instructive to look at the offerings making up the core of the book–interviews with Giuseppe Cecchi, developer of the Watergate; Piero Sartogo, Roman architect and designer of the Italian Chancery; and Leo A. Daly, the Chancery's executive architect and engineer. An essay entitled "Furnishing the Italian Chancery as a National Design Collection," by Nathalie Grenon, a designer employed by the Roman firm Studio S.A.A., is included, illustrated with many pictures of her own creations. Thus, the book's true emphasis, despite its dutiful attention to the historical, is on several of the volume's corporate sponsors (helpfully acknowledged at the front of the book, with their logos). Hence, we can understand the prominence given to Jefferson's plans for the Barbour villa, which sits on the grounds of corporate sponsor Barboursville Vineyards, while Jefferson's other important project besides Monticello, the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, is given a single paragraph of discussion and no illustrations. Likewise, the contribution of Italian stoneworkers to the Washington National Cathedral–the subject of an award-winning documentary and a book by Smithsonian folklorist Marjorie Hunt–is mentioned only briefly and is a curious omission. At one level, this emphasis is only practical; and after all, the designs of today will be the historical heritage of the future. But the end result is that the editors' efforts to write, in essence, the history of Italy's influence in Washington feel strained and scattered.

Moreover, this lovely volume suffers on several points of design and production. One important failing is in tone. The academics writing the historical essays seem to address an audience deeply familiar with Palladian architectural theory, and indeed with the history of architecture generally. Their contributions were apparently translated into English from the Italian (a Milanese translator is credited on the copyright page, but it is not specified which essays he worked on, or what the degree of his involvement was). As a result, these contributions, particularly Visentini's, sometimes display an awkwardness of diction or phrasing which I attribute to their original composition in a language other than English. By comparison, the essays by Wolanin, Caretto, and Brown and Daniels are models of clarity and focus, reading much more smoothly, and supplying brief definitions of terms or events when needed.

Thorough copyediting and continuity of design were needed here as well. Punctuation veers between Italian and American English conventions, and there is much variation in the rendering of dates. Given the technical nature of the material, a glossary and bibliography might have aided the general reader. A comprehensive list of contributors at the back of the volume would also have been useful–some contributors have no affiliation listed.

Documentation is equally scattershot: some articles use endnotes, some have lists of works cited, some have no documentation at all. Endnotes are inconsistent in citation style or are incomplete. Given the desire of some authors to document sources, the editors might have opted to eliminate all notes in favor of a list of works cited for each essay, or imposed a simple form of citation such as MLA style, with a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book.

Problems remain in the presentation of visual information as well. Many archival images (maps, diagrams, and some photographs) have been reduced to the point of illegibility. Captions tend to be inconsistent in format and quite laconic; images are not always credited; most pictures of buildings do not identify the direction (north, south, etc.) from which the camera was focused. The contributions of Maxwell MacKenzie (whose name is rendered throughout, incorrectly, as Max McKenzie) must be surmised when photographs are not otherwise identified. And some of those gorgeously produced photographs are oddly repetitive: there are several similar views of the Barbour plantation and Monticello, for example, and almost identical shots of the Jefferson Memorial at night–one a full-page spread, and one laid out over two pages. Text for the photo essays is uncredited, although one photo essay, on Monticello, reproduces text from Livio Sacchi's chapter "Jefferson and Co.: The Influence of the Italian Architectural Culture in Washington, D.C., and Virginia." A full-page photograph of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saint Matthew, attributed to Archivio Skira, is misidentified as "St. Mark's" (pp. 174-175). Besides correcting these errors, a comprehensive list of images at the back of the volume, with credits, would have been useful; images should also have been

numbered and cross-referenced with the text.

The readership for this volume remains unclear to me. Certainly, *The Italian Legacy* will be a source of genuine pride for members of the Italian diplomatic community and for those designers and architects who were involved in the most recent projects discussed here–the new Italian Chancery, the Watergate complex. The corporate sponsors can also be well satisfied with this testimony to the warm business and cultural relationships existing between Italy and the United States. Students of architecture and design will find much here in the interviews with Cecchi, Sartogo, and Daly and in the essays by Grenon and Paolo Scrivano (on postwar Italian industrial design) to illumine the creative process and the realities of urban planning. However, historians, cultural critics, and students of Washingtoniana will find this volume only whets their interest. Perhaps most seriously, the general reader will be dazzled by the visual beauties of this collection, but ill-served by its content.

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