ADOLF LOOS: A PRIVATE PORTRAIT
CLAIRE BECK LOOS
DOPPELHOUSE PRESS, 2011

Architects, especially modernist architects immolated in austere black and white photographs and strict glass and steel buildings, are too easily reduced to a name, facts and a series of buildings. Their idiosyncratic, voluble, satirical or romantic personalities are clouded in architectural history. So this little book, Adolf Loos: A Private Portrait, is a welcome antidote to assuming severe buildings may imply a severe person. Claire Beck Loos married the famous architect in 1929 when she was 24 and he was 58, and this book is a personal memoire of her time with him before their divorce three years later. Originally published in 1936 in German, the book has only recently been translated into English, a project led by Claire’s nieces. Adolf Loos is an extrovert, the caricature for perhaps the original of the architect who doesn’t pay attention to client’s budgets, changing plans in the middle of building, a lazy, living socialite: “I am a Communist. The difference between me and a Bolshevik is only that I want to turn all the people into architects, whereas he wants to turn them all into politicians.”

The book is separated into short paragraph-length tales of an afternoon or a conversation, making this unique in that you can pick it up at any point. You will get a very clear sense of who Loos was as a person, or at least how Claire remembers him: an eccentric who fits between intense joy and fury, generous to a fault, unfailingly disagreeable with a client, full of quips and contradictory ways of seeing the world. It is indeed a personal portrait, and a surprising, quite wonderful little book. NICOLE STOCK

NEW RINGS
NICOLAS ESTRADA
THAMES & HUDSON, 2011

If a diamond solitaire is as adventurous as you would go with a ring, this book may not be for you. If, however, you’re fascinated by the idea of contemporary jewellers are mashing around, you might just be enthralled with New Rings. Some are outlandish, some so beautiful you want to track the maker down and figure out how to get your hands (and fingers) on one. The variety found in here is inspirational. ANNA FEYNS

ARCHITECTS’ SKETCHBOOKS
EDITED BY BILL JONES
THAMES & HUDSON, 2011

I find one of the wonderful parts about architecture is that there are so many ways of coming to a final building conclusion. Some architects approach a building as a spatial problem, designing rooms that are all about space and feel beautiful to be in, while form is secondary. To others, architecture is an object in the landscape, a form drawn from cues from the site. Others still ignore the site context, and create a mathematical or theoretical interpretation, a thesis made object. This book, a collection of pages from architects’ sketchbooks, reinforces this variety of approaches, and furthermore, continues to emphasise the different ways different architects see the world around them, how they sketch, what they sketch, how they sketch. In some ways it feels like coming across scattered poetry, such is the intimacy of how these drawings and collages. At other times you can tell these are very carefully curated sketchbook pages, and are less an intimate reflection of their process, and more a presentation of their type of work. Either way it doesn’t really matter: What this book does so well is to draw the reader into a world of architecture that exists before a building is actually built, and shows the variety of projects and inspirations. You will also see that ‘sketch’ has so many different meanings from drawing to collage to modelmaking. A fascinating snapshot of working through space. MATTHEW CHA

FLORENCE BROADHURST: HER SECRET & EXTRAORDINARY LIVES
HELEN O’NEILL
HARDIE GRANT BOOKS, 2011

Little more than a decade ago, Florence Broadhurst was a forgotten unknown. After her gruesome murder in 1977, the wallpaper and textile business that she started had petered out, and was sold off, her archives of hundreds of screen-prints growing dusty and green, the bold oversized prints going out of fashion. Fast forward to present day, and Broadhurst is celebrated as one of Australia’s design legends, her wallpaper patterns plastering top restaurants, boutiques and homes from Copenhagen to New York.

This book pulls together the novel-like biography of Broadhurst, with a sumptuous collection of Broadhurst prints and patterns into a single large-format book. The biography on its own (first released in 2006) is fascinating read: girl from the Outback daces her way to the Orient, and ships during World War II; landing up in London before returning to Sydney. Broadhurst wrote: “I don’t think you can fully appreciate the impact of illusion and space as a means to express ideas. Honesty is essentially a disintegrating force in society [and] the progress of civilization made possible by the invention of lying.”

She was a chameleon, lying about her age, her homeland, her past. Well-researched, O’Neill plows through contradictory stories, snippets of information, gossip and rumour to tell Broadhurst’s story. In this new edition, new light is shed on her murder, as well as the future of the Broadhurst collection.

While the text is a fascinating read, the prints are what make this. As well as the iconic, distinctive prints – Harrods Stampede, Japanese Floral, Circles and Squares – there are many new, never-before-seen patterns. The printing is bold and crisp, making the colours pop in the new Y ork.

DESIGNER ART: LAND ART / SITE-SPECIFIC / SCULPTURE PARKS
AMY DEMPSEY
THAMES & HUDSON, 2011

This is something we in the Antipodes seem to be attracted to: art in the wild. And if the extraordinary is something we like, the selection of projects that are shown at momA until May this year explicitly highlights key objects and their impact. This book is of the exhibition that showed at MoMA until May and is the perfect souvenir for anyone interested in landscape and sculpture. The Coffee Maker and Starck’s lemon squeezer, Counter Space has the right balance of text and images to inform, surprise and entertain. It’s cute but not kitschy. FRANCES CHAN

DESTINATION ART: LAND ART / SITE-SPECIFIC / SCULPTURE PARKS
AMY DEMPSEY
THAMES & HUDSON, 2011

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