Barry Bergdoll, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MOMA) and Peter Christiansen, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Design and Architecture at MOMA, were curators of the exhibition Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling (Museum of Modern Art, New York (July 20, to October 20, 2008) and editors of its well-organized, accompanying catalog. Essentially a survey of pre-fabricated or modular housing concepts from the nineteenth century to the present, the publication is packed with a plethora of intriguing concepts.

To some extent the names of the architects, designers and inventors tell the story of the various ingenious solutions to the persistent conundrum of scalable, affordable housing. Indeed, some of the more fascinating approaches to modular housing that are chronicled were ideated by such famous figures as Marcel Breuer, Thomas Edison, R. Buckminster Fuller, Walter Gropius, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Charles and Ray Eames. The catalog follows the chronological development of modular architecture, beginning with prefabricated colonial designs for emigrant cottages and culminating in five commissioned projects, which were erected specifically for the exposition.

The majority of the book is devoted to a section titled “Projects,” that contains documentation of architectural projects, building systems, paradigms, and toys. The descriptions of each are brief, informative, and well illustrated. Many stand out, including R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House and Wichita House, the Quonset Hut, David Greene’s 1965 Living Pod, and all three toys, Erector Set, Lincoln Logs and LEGO. Many of the projects address issues of environmental impact, scalability, and affordability.

Not surprisingly, the five commissioned projects also have a strong emphasis on ecological sustainability, while showing the influence of technological advances and computer-aided design techniques. Kieran Timberlake Associates' addition, Cellophane House, the last project in the catalog, features a thin film PET membrane with integrated photovoltaic cells, solar water heating system, and an active double wall structure replete with miniature fans and dampers that anticipate internal climatic needs. All of the building components can be disassembled and used later for other applications, and the entire home is intended to operate without the need of a traditional energy grid.

In addition to succinct descriptions of fifty-eight architectural projects and the five commissioned projects, the catalog includes three essays, a separate chronology, bibliography, forward, index, and credits for over 400 photographs and illustrations. Bergdoll's essay and introduction elucidate the scope, purpose and dimension of the exhibit, while additional perspectives by architect/critic Rasmus Waern and historian/professor Ken Adashi Oshima offer an international flavor. Overall this is an outstanding production, informative and visually appealing, and will make a fine addition to collections that cover architecture, design, and/or environmental sustainability.

Dan McClure, Director of Library Services, PNCA/Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR, dmcclure@pcna.edu

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