



Before Steel: The Introduction of Structural Iron and Its Consequences

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An original and absorbing cross disciplinary look at the many-layered connections between architecture and engineering in the 19th century, this book will captivate anyone interested in how the style of the modern city evolved when iron became the primary building material used. Extensively illustrated with photos and schematics, this book takes the reader into the massive social transformation and increased industrialization of Europe through the 1800s, showing how the new, formable building materials re-defined architecture. Fundamental technology euphoria in the widespread belief in progress, as well as the development and application of new materials, opened up a great number of forms which often recalled classicism or the Romanesque. An amazing journey into the mindset of the late Industrial Revolution. The 19th century is generally considered the time frame in which the disciplines of architecture and engineering irrevocably parted ways. Although the development of civil engineering as an independent discipline had already begun before the industrial revolution, it proceeded rapidly during the period of industrialization in conjunction with several other influences. Among those were processes of social transformation in Europe, the development of specialized fields of activity in all professions as a function of changed conditions of production, fundamental technology euphoria in the widespread belief in progress, as well as the development and application of new materials. Especially the building material iron and the associated new types of constructions and typologies can be characterized as typical for that phase of industrialization. A period of experimentation and discovery occurred in the quest for appropriate methods and forms of construction - built objects continuously confronted physical and cultural boundaries. At a time when the engineers increasingly oriented to the physical sciences, the new homogeneous, formable building material symbolically represented the promise of new, groundbreaking theories and precise computing methods in the comprehensive monitoring and new definition of the bearing structure. The architectural potential represented by a freely formable iron mass opened up a great number of forms which often oriented to classicism or the Romanesque. Within architecture during the second half of the 19th century the stubborn striving towards old styles in the context of the use of the new material from a straightforward, engineering standpoint lead to an often deplored architectural crisis.

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