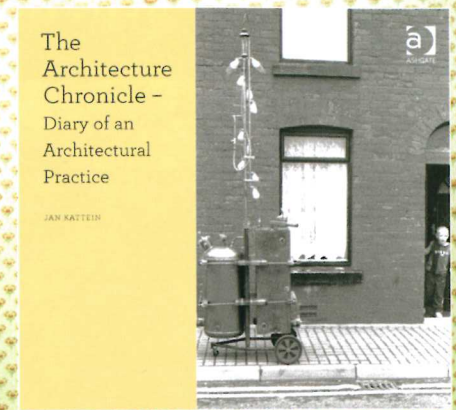


Luise standing and Miller coming out of his door during dress rehearsal  
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## The Architecture Chronicle – Diary of an Architectural Practice

Jan Kattein

Ashgate; £35.00

There has always been a question over what an architect actually is and where they fit into the construction industry and the culture of our society. Architects have to play a variety of roles depending on who they are dealing with or what they are trying to achieve at certain stages in the goal of bringing a building from concept through to completion. It's always very difficult to quantify what an architect is in an easily understood way when explaining to someone from outside the industry.

*The Architecture Chronicle – Diary of an Architectural Practice* by Jan Kattein is the latest book to deal with that difficult question, a question which is crucial, given it is how architects see and portray themselves. To do this Jan Kattein embarks on a reflective assessment of himself through five projects undertaken over a number of years. Kattein kept a diary over the period the projects took place. For the purposes of this book he has added reflective text at key moments. The book has an added end chapter which sums up the conclusions Kattein has drawn to who

the contemporary 'architect' truly is.

The projects themselves some might criticise as not actually being 'architectural' in that they are not buildings but are actually stage sets. Kattein states in his text that he has avoided buildings as the stage sets allowed him to not only design but also then work on their actual production, contributing to building elements himself and being 'on site' constantly. In this way he is following in the traditions of the Renaissance Architects and I agree it adds a dimension to the diary that would have been lost if it was merely site visits.

The stage sets are interesting in terms of contemporary set design and the diary is interlaced with glimpses into Kattein's design process and dealings with clients and craftsmen as well as the improvisations projects always undergo as they progress.

Kattein's book begins to draw relevance in his analysis, gained from the act of self-reflection. He concludes that the architect takes on separate characters from the 'architect-inventor', the 'architect-activist'

and the 'architect-arbitrator'. It may seem obvious to those in the industry who these characters are. Most architects will identify with the names alone, but it is Kattein's description of each, which is rooted in his practical experience but also his knowledge of the history of practice, which is of value. The analysis of his role in each project to derive these 'characters' as he defines them will surely strike a chord with all practising architects today.

The *Architectural Chronicle* is an attempt to simplistically define the varied parts which make up an architect. This diary will surely have architects identifying with the author and perhaps remind the reader of the important role architects still play. This book doesn't explicitly deal with the diminishing role of architects in certain procurement methods; it will reinvigorate the readers who are architects with a new sense of self-realisation. Perhaps every architect should reflect on their diary.

John Joseph Burns RIAS