

Christine Stevenson, *The City and the King: Architecture and Politics in Restoration London* (Yale University Press, 2013)

The City and the King engages readers in the complex and ever-changing web of relationships between the body politic of London and Charles II. Its setting is one of the most tumultuous periods in English history. This book is less an architectural history per se than a sophisticated reading of the metaphorical associations that royal buildings came to embody. What ties these all together is the language of political gamesmanship, handled by the author with a remarkable deftness for the English language. Drawing on municipal archives, contemporary diaries and popular broadsides, Stevenson introduces us to the many players behind the scenes—merchants, mayors, royal surveyors, as well as architects—who shaped the city following the triumphal Restoration of the monarchy in 1661. Stevenson sees architecture most essentially in the service of a collective memory—whether to mark the site of sacred ritual, as in the demolition of Cheap Cross, or as admonition and reconciliation, as in Wren’s Monument to the Great Fire, or as institutionalizing of Madness, as in Hooke’s Bedlam Hospital. In exploring how the gesture of gifting or the protocols of ceremonial processions are invested with the power of place, Stevenson broadens the definition of urban form. She reveals a vision of London at a critical historical moment, its architectural design conditioned by the force of current events and by the pull of a distant past.

Unfortunately, our author is unable to join us this evening, so I gladly accept this award on her behalf.

2016 Committee:

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