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The City Crown by Bruno Taut (Ashgate Studies in Architecture)

Matthew Mindrup, Ulrike Altenmüller-Lewis

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This book is the first English translation of the German architect Bruno Tautâ€™s early twentieth-century anthology Die Stadtkrone (The City Crown). Written under the influence of World War I, Taut developed The City Crown to promote a utopian urban concept where people would live in a garden city of â€˜apolitical socialismâ€™ and peaceful collaboration around a single purpose-free crystalline structure. Tautâ€™s proposal sought to advance the garden city idea of Ebenezer Howard and rural aesthetic of Camillo Sitteâ€™s urban planning schemes by merging them with his own â€˜city crownâ€™ concept. The book also contains contributions by the Expressionist poet Paul Scheerbart, the writer and politician Erich Baron and the architectural critic Adolf Behne. Although the original German text was republished in 2002, only the title essay of The City Crown has previously been translated into English. This English translation of Tautâ€™s full anthology, complete with all illustrations and supplementary texts, fills a significant gap in the literature on early modern architecture in Germany and the history of urban design. It includes a translatorsâ€™ preface, introduction and afterword to accompany the original composition of essays, poems, designs and images. These original texts are accompanied by illustrations of Tautâ€™s own designs for a utopian garden city of 300,000 inhabitants and over 40 additional historic and contemporary examples. The new preface to The City Crown explains the premise for the English translation of Tautâ€™s anthology, its organization and the approaches taken by the translators to maintain the four different voices included in the original work. Matthew Mindrupâ€™s introduction critically examines the professional and intellectual developments leading up to and supporting Bruno Tautâ€™s proposal to advance the English garden city concept with a centralized communal structure of glass, the city crown. Through the careful examination of original documents, letter conversations and previous scholarship, Mindrup locates crucial sources and provides insights into the reasons behind Tautâ€™s thesis. Where previous scholarship has sought to ascribe a single source for Tautâ€™s â€˜city crownâ€™ concept to such diverse architectural and spiritual leaders as Fischer, Landauer, Nietzsche and Eckhart, Mindrup argues that it evolved in a more complex way. During the months immediately following the end of World War I, The City Crown proved a source of inspiration for Taut and his colleagues in the Arbeitsrat fÃ¼r Kunst (Working Council for Art) who were seeking to develop a new post-war German architecture. Ulrike AltenmÃ¼ller-Lewis and Mark Brackâ€™s afterword introduces the English reader to Bruno Tautâ€™s life and career. The City Crown can be seen as turning point where Tautâ€™s social and spiritual agendas became fully equal to the pragmatic and aesthetic impulses found in his work. The text also introduces the reader to more recent (and largely German) research on Taut. These reconsiderations of Tautâ€™s theoretical work and personal development provide a fuller understanding of The City Crownâ€™s impact on Tautâ€™s career while placing the text more inclusively within the cultural landscape of the time.

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