

# On the Surface

*Architectural Surfaces: Details for Artists, Architects, and Designers*

By Judy A. Juracek  
 W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY; 2005  
 352 pp.; hardcover; 1,400 color photos and a CD-ROM; \$95  
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Reviewed by Douglas Klostermann

Artists, architects and designers are compelled to collect images for reference, presentations and inspiration for their work. Whether photographs, postcards, magazine clippings or sketches, these visual resources are indispensable for creative professionals. In her work as a scenic artist for theater, television and film, Judy A. Juracek accumulated a reference collection of her own photographs. More than a decade ago, she incorporated her image library into a class project while learning to use Macintosh computers. This soon evolved into a book, which then led to a series of photographic image reference books focusing on surfaces. Following *Surfaces*, then *Soft Surfaces* and *Natural Surfaces* is Juracek's new *Architectural Surfaces: Details for Artists, Architects, and Designers*. Peter Pennoyer served as architectural consultant on the project.

The book is a collection of more than 1,400 color photographs logically organized into eight sections of "Walls," "Facades," "Ornament & Molding," "Columns, Posts & Arches," "Windows," "Doorways," "Ceilings & Roofs" and "Floors & Pavement." Also included is a CD-ROM that contains 150-dpi JPEG files of every image found in the book, organized into the same categories. Within each section of the book the images are further grouped into sub-sections by material, type or element. For example, "Doorways" includes paneled doors, battened doors and metal doors, and the section of "Columns, Posts & Arches" contains capitals, bases and pedestals and pilasters and engaged columns.

The images demonstrate examples of the various categories from all over the globe: windows in Florida and England, shutters in Tuscany and Tokyo and doorways in New York and Bali. Other locations where the photographs were taken include France, Turkey and Canada. The proximity, or even adjacency, of details from wide-ranging locations and cultures suggests interesting opportunities for comparisons. As Pennoyer states in the book's Foreword, "Our eyes move from Japanese stone post bases to Ionic plinths in a layout that enhances their shared qualities."

The majority of the book's photographs were taken by the author. This offers a consistency in composition and point of view that provides cohesiveness to the sections and to the book as a whole, and will aid in side-by-side comparisons or presentations that use the images. Many of the photographs capture the subjects straight on, while oblique perspectives are strategically used to best demonstrate the depth or construction of certain details or the intersections of elements at corners or transitions. Juracek explains in the introduction that the hallmark of good design is the elegant solution of problems such as: "How do courses of brickwork accommodate the shape of an arch?" and "What is the profile of a molding where a cornice wraps around the corner of a building?" It is immediately obvious that Juracek composes the photographs with these types of questions in mind. An image in the wood walls and siding section of "Walls" shows not merely wood siding, but how the complex junction of a door, window opening and clapboard siding is resolved. The author's framing of the images of arches, doors and windows is wide enough to adequately show the surrounding walls, elements and materials.



The author provides detailed, technical captions: "Corner detail of enriched ovolo molding with trailing foliated pattern; bead-and-reel framing foliated design flanked by rosettes."



A thorough cross-referenced index is helpful in locating desired details outside their categories, such as this arched window and frieze detail found in a photograph in the "Pilasters & Engaged Columns" section.



Images are framed to show surrounding elements and materials, and to demonstrate how various junctions are resolved, as with this complex octagonal turret and dormer.

Throughout the book there are numerous photographs of aged and weathered surfaces, façades and materials, such as ancient Roman brick walls, deteriorating stucco exposing the structural brick or stone and crumbling columns and entablatures. The author explains that these examples are a reflection of the necessity that sets and scenery not look like environments that are brand new, and so someone creating them must carefully observe how something looks as it gets older.

The *Surfaces* series has proved to be useful to a wide range of artists including set designers and trompe-l'oeil artists, architects and graphic designers. As one of the first image reference books to include a CD-ROM of its photographs, *Surfaces* and its series companions have also attracted an audience of graphics professionals who work primarily in computer applications such as CAD and Photoshop, as well as artists and designers who create computer environments, including animators and video game designers. According to the author, the images have even been used to create knitted sweaters and have been printed on fabric used in quilting.

Juracek writes that as a design tool, the book's details are useful for narrowing down alternatives and determining both what is desired and what is not desired by a client. Whether the end product is a painted or constructed set, or an actual building to be constructed or renovated, the organization of the book allows one to easily show a client a variety of column orders, dormer styles or paving examples. The thorough and cross-referenced index is also helpful for locating images. For instance, many additional arches are found outside of the "Columns, Posts & Arches" section among the doorways and windows.

In the book, each image is accompanied by a caption containing an index number and a brief but detailed and specific technical description. The vernacular and technical terms used in the captions are defined in a glossary, which is illustrated with additional photographs. Juracek is committed to the consistent and technical captions and glossary in her series of

books because she feels it is important for both professionals and lay people to learn the proper terminology and to talk about materials, styles, details and techniques in a way that a person executing the work can understand.

As an architect, I find it frustrating that the images' captions rarely include the location of the subject and do not identify the specific buildings. A detail of Frank Lloyd Wright's Storer House (located in Hollywood, CA) is presented only as a "custom concrete block wall." However, it is understandable,

because the focus of the book is on the surfaces, materials and details of construction. Juracek writes that it was more important to use the limited caption space for detailed descriptive information. She also notes the difficulty of researching the identity of every subject within a reasonable timeframe. Nevertheless, I believe many would find it useful or interesting to at least see the locations of the photographs identified.

In addition to providing the excellent images for reference, and the additional resources, Juracek's *Architectural Surfaces* implicitly reminds artists, architects and designers to observe surfaces, study buildings' elements and look closely at the resolution of details. The author explains that the practice of taking photographs like these is important to the education and development of visual artists. In the process, one more carefully observes the subject and the act teaches the eye to look and it enriches the visual memory. Browsing or searching through *Architectural Surfaces*, one can see the pleasure Juracek takes in seeking out, framing and capturing the examples she shares. ■

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