

How can architectural history, and in particular architectural pedagogy, respond to the overwhelming profusion of images made available through digitalization? What new questions does this enable us to formulate, and what new ways to collect evidence, to communicate ideas, and to generate the past?

Take the array of images to the right, collected by David Bühler, a student in a seminar called *Das Gesims* or *The Cornice*. Digital photographs, etched prints, an Early Modern architectural sketch – 500 years of image making rendered equivalent and comparable for the purposes of building analysis. The building detailed at top right, the E. V. Haughwout Building of 1854, is located in SoHo in New York. Like over a hundred other buildings in its historic district, both of its facades are fabricated in cast iron over the entire five storey height of the building. The etching shows the Renaissance Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi in Venice, designed by Mauro Codussi. The building was endlessly reproduced in 19th century illustrations and provided the model for countless historicist facades, manufactured in new industrial facilities such as Badger’s architectural iron works in New York.

Images can also be retrospectively transformed by texts. In the course of a hundred years, the cast iron that characterizes this façade has gone from being denounced as fraudulent to being celebrated as a historical monument. The Haughwout orients itself on the Venetian architecture that the 19th century English writer John Ruskin had helped make so fashionable. However at that time, the translation of stone ornamentation into cast iron was controversial. Ruskin, in ‘*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*’ (1849), criticized the use of cast iron ornamentation as not only ‘bad’, but also ‘dishonest’. He wrote ‘true architecture does not admit iron as a constructive material’, and certainly not in the guise of a load bearing element, such as a column or a lintel. Interestingly, the report of the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission states that at the time the Haughwout Building in New York was erected, works in iron were only considered to be worthy of being called architecture if they imitated forms that had been evolved for stone buildings.

In contemporary architecture, the use of the cornice has (largely) been banished. Yet the cornice is an artifact laden with current social, economic and gendered meanings that make visible both the conventions and contradictions of architectural history. It poses questions about how architectural design articulates construction methods and materials; how it contributes to the city and how it codifies its own image. The cornice presents an object lesson for thinking about architectural history in its relationship to contemporary design.



Left National Library of St Mark's, Venice, Jacopo Sansovino (1537–1588) / Right Haughwout Building



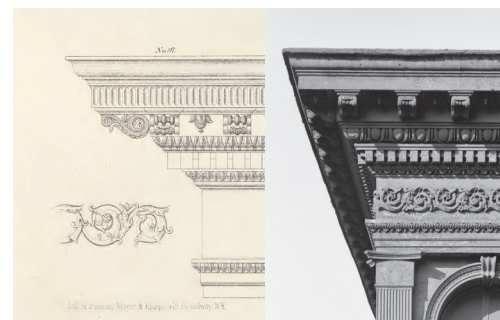
Left Haughwout Building / Right Temple of Venus Genetrix, Forum Iulium, Rome (48 BCE - 113 CE)



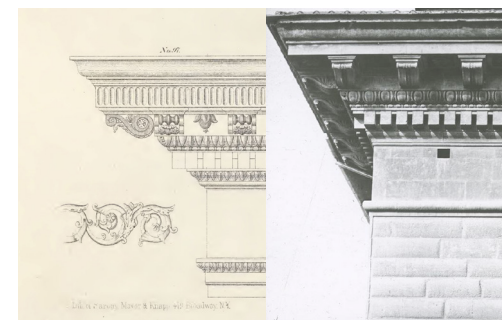
Left Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi / Right Haughwout Building



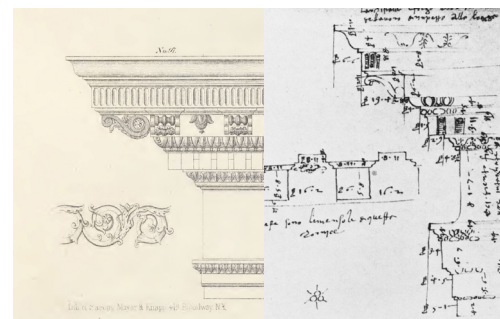
Left Haughwout Building / Right Temple of Venus Genetrix



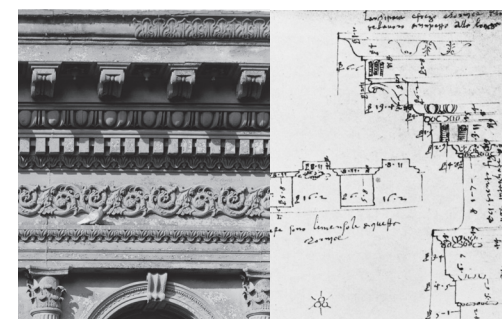
Left Badger's Ironworks Catalogue / Right Haughwout Building



Left Badger's Ironworks Catalogue / Right Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Simone del Pollaiuolo (1498–1500)



Left Badger's Ironworks Catalogue / Right Entablature of the 'Spoglia Christi', Codice Strozzi, Florence, Uffizi UA 1587



Left Haughwout Building / Right Entablature of the 'Spoglia Christi'