

## Reviews/Rezensionen

Émilie Oléron Evans, *Nikolaus Pevsner, Arpenteur des arts. Des origines allemandes de l'histoire de l'art britannique* (Paris: Demopolis, 2015), 340 pp. (Pb.)

Nikolaus Pevsner's career as a public intellectual and ultimately as a national institution was launched with the Reith lectures, delivered on the BBC in 1955, and consolidated by his magisterial *Buildings of England* series, published in 46 volumes between 1951 and 1974. Although justifiably revered as the preeminent voice of his era on the architectural heritage of England, he was by instinct and education both a modernist and a European. The longevity of his monographs is extraordinary. *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* was first published in 1936: it reappeared under the new title *Pioneers of Modern Design* in 1949 with the support of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and a sixth, revised edition was still in press in 2005. Similarly, *An Outline of European Architecture*, commissioned in 1942 and published 1943, went into seven editions, was translated into 16 languages, and sold more than half a million copies. No other historian of architecture or design comes close to Pevsner in terms of sales and thus influence. In acknowledgment of his extraordinary contribution to the history of architecture and design, he was knighted in 1969.

In contrast, the Pevsner reception in France has been rather diffident. The historiography of modernist art and design proposed in *Pioneers* first appeared in French in the context of a volume, co-edited with Jean Cassou and Émile Langui, published to accompany a 1960/61 exhibition at the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, "Les sources du XXe siècle: les arts en Europe de 1884 à 1914". The French translation of *Outline* first appeared in 1965 as *Génie de l'architecture européenne*, with further editions in 1970 and 1990. The lack of response in France to Pevsner's work is confirmed by Émilie Oléron Evans in the extensive bibliography to her monograph, *Nikolaus Pevsner, Arpenteur des arts*, which lists only four French translations from Pevsner's works, one of them by Oléron Evans herself.<sup>1</sup>

The French readership will certainly benefit from this volume, which investigates the life and work of Pevsner with the depth and detail that reflects the doctoral thesis on which it is based. The book is neither strictly biographical nor

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<sup>1</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Les caractères de l'art anglais*, trans. Émilie Oléron Evans (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016).