

"... the
coronation of
a vision
all its own."

J. Howard Rosier

Insect Architecture Alex Wells Shapiro

ting ray bathing you so wholly

fragmented pastels & dense blues composing

erd & sheep & feel wool wrapping your wrists & pupils

g & shivering under the weight & this must be real

w goddamn big it is bound so intimately

prayers the priest voters wasps & birds building

pport beams Bible study congregated dust tumbleweeds quivering

Praise for *Insect Architecture*

Formally attuned and linguistically inventive, Alex Wells Shapiro's *Insect Architecture* is the coronation of a vision all its own. The glint of rock salt melting snow on a winter day, the glue-trap texture of a CTA floor — truly, nothing gets past him. But more than vivid imagery or a commitment to language as a tactile thing, I was most enthralled by the poems' sense of movement. Their subjects (and in many cases, their titles) are stumbled upon as an activity, rather than a declaration. Like a Christmas tree riddled with ornaments, or an industrial fishing net, there is so much bountiful history to gaze upon that you almost forget why you're there in the first place.

J. Howard Rosier

Board Member, National Book Critics Circle

In *Insect Architecture*, Shapiro offers an inclusive, expansive lens of the individual juxtaposed with the city; of modern life as a fleeting silhouette. With an avant-garde aesthetic, Shapiro paints poems, like collages, with range and yet the precision of a photographic memory. Mina Loy would be proud. Go read this book on the subway. Or on a graffitied park bench.

Jose Hernandez Diaz

Author of *The Fire Eater*

Alex Shapiro doesn't write of a fallen world. He writes of our consciousness, our environment, our vitality floating, achingly, mid-air. His words seek to chingar, pulse, photosynthesize, disrupt us. In *Insect Architecture*, we read of bodies reacting to their interior and exterior confines, we handle with care, we transform into the connectors that bind us — through the lens of a poet who grips us tight before letting us go.

Natasha Mijares

Author of *violent wave*

Insect
Architecture Alex
Wells Shapiro



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A Fable about Boxes

A dial tone rumbling off a yellow ranch with a white porch, an ultra modern black glass Bond villain condo, and a withering blue colonial with the attic puked across the lawn, interspersed among nondescript brick buildings, sandy browns, heavy reds, rosier reds, and cinderblock greys connected by wood arteries jutting out their backs.

Two delivery people approach the first, each wearing dark colored jumpsuits, bandanas and gloves at the buzzer of a disfigured gate adorned with thin spiring barbs securing a svelte courtyard hemmed by unkempt hedges leading to dozens of little boxes stacked like an industrial Mega Blok wall.

“No one’s come in or out for 10 minutes.”

They test their assignments, pinching and poking two hollow, lightly taped cardboard boxes and an envelope laced with a pressed sheet of bubble wrap. The last to arrive has the most to gain.

loading box onto hip stepping back like a kamehameha and heaving with palms, wrists trailing after with a mask captured ugh

On the rise, the weight of its insides catches a panel and the box flies into the stretch of grass snaked through the walkway’s center. A corner thud and a flop to flat and the worker returns to their route. Deafened and frustrated in the face of the droning buzzer, the earliest goes next.

rocking back on heels, knees stooped, box resting in finger linked cups, hands dangling underhanded like a granny free throw, stabilizing pendulum sways growing and growing until releasing with tender touch on the upswing

The rise and fall are parallel and the box clips the point of a bar, flipping down the other side and clunking into a lean between overgrowth and the fence and the worker returns to their route. The lone deliverer remaining compares envelopes and boxes in their head.

grasping contents and coiling arm around waist, opening up like a novice discus thrower, envelope straight armed back overhead, oscillating in search of a groove, repetition buoying confidence accelerating to flicking fingertips and release leading to returning to their route instep

The envelope frisbees axeled by its contents like a copter seed flat arcing at the door. The crack of its impact is censored by the still blaring broken buzzer.

Onomatopoeia leaking into the unmonitored lobby is reported to the landlord portal by some occupants, thought to be indifferent noise. The deliveries are retrieved when a push notification rustles the occupant's pockets.

HABITUALLY eating the surrounding sand into a moat defined by embankments disintegrating under the weight of consumer builder's displacement, and heaving coarse chunks back up wadded just as they dropped down, but glossier, and it'll never feel like every grain is flushed from stomach lining.

Preparedness

Between streetlights in a sunken gated
alley accordion playing bare arms extending

and collapsing their instrument
accompanying a distorted boom-
box mosquito lamp sizzling above

their ear my sharp lateral stagger around a
hydrant cap tilt obscuring acknowledgment
melody continuing co-mingling in sirens

horns yelps flecked constellations furnishing
the outskirts of our block (occupied by
tunneled wind shepherding leaves

and litter towards lakefront and their song)
raised skin ebbing supple shrunk to non-
confrontational normalcy as I perceive no

other in front of me.

Clear **intersection** outlined
white thru solid rain-lurching
into a trot across tracking
Skid Honk Crunsh behind me.

A tread metal sidewalk cellar
door hinge **gives in** beneath

grandma's concentrated
gait tilting to sliding
down concrete

stairs against an invisible
mushroom cloud of warm
rising into winter.

Bundled busboys swath her chattering
in dishtowels & lean her head on a conveyer
belt frame & spirits steady with stories

about home, a bump revealed
as a toppled box, a spark leaping
off a stovetop to die inches from