

The Technician's Detail: Patte, Soufflot's circle, and the constructive turn, 1755-1802

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Although the term '*détail*', signifying a loose and varied collection of meanings, had long been used in French architectural discourse and practice, in the late 18th century a notably different conception began rising to prominence. This paper traces the evolution of the 'construction detail' as disciplinary concept and term specific to the domains of architecture and engineering, illustrating its relation to a collection of nascent conditions— emerging methods of structural calculation based on mathematical law, the experimental study of materials, new technologies of construction which expanded formal possibilities, and the highly charged socio-cultural conditions of 18th century France. Through this early moment in which industrialization impacts practices of building, this study intends both to clarify the origins and history of the term 'detail' and, in more general terms, to give an account of one way that social, disciplinary, and technological pressures might help condition the evolution of an architectural idea.

Biography:

Eric Bellin (ebellin@design.upenn.edu) is a PhD candidate in Architectural History and Theory at the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include: histories of construction, architectural technology, post-war 'humanism' in architecture, and design education. Eric's dissertation is titled *Detailing Worlds: A History of Architectural Particulars, 1752-1880*.