

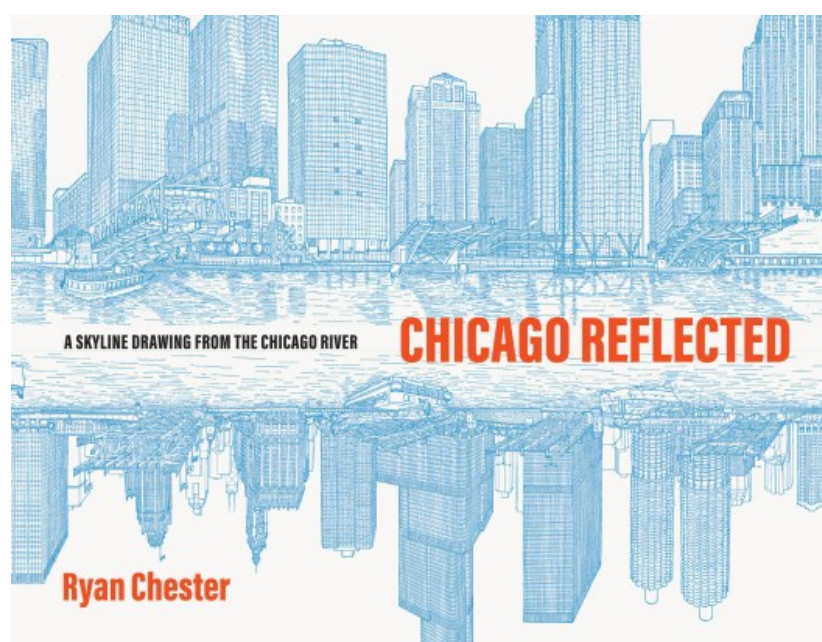


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Book review: Chicago Reflected : A Skyline Drawing from the Chicago River

reviewed by Martin Chandler

Chester, Ryan, and Thomas Dyja. *Chicago Reflected : A Skyline Drawing from the Chicago River*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. 16 pages (booklet) and 1 unpagued volume. \$29.95. ISBN: 0-226-82854-9.



Chicago Reflected by Ryan Chester is not a standard fare academic text one would expect from a university press. While certainly such publishers have expanded in their offerings in recent years, it was still something of a surprise to open this book for review. It includes a short essay by Thomas Dyja, and explanatory images pointing out specific buildings, while the main crux of the work lies in a 2.8-metre-long drawing of the Chicago riverside.

The book is an accordion-style binding, allowing one to flip pages or stretch the full



text out on the floor (as I did). It makes full use of the available paper, offering one side as a view of the West Bank/North Bank of the Chicago River, and other showing the South Bank/East Bank. The full piece itself is a detailed, hand-drawn view of Chicago, as seen somewhat from the edge of the river looking toward the opposite side. The drawing is intricate, careful, and beautiful in its execution. The perspective of the view is reminiscent of a map projection – it would not be possible to reflect the whole riverfront without making choices on sightlines and vanishing points, which are many. As well, while reflective of a particular point in time, buildings since constructed are not present, and long-demolished buildings have been returned to their place; it is, after all, *Chicago Reflected*, not Chicago as it is.

The essay from Thomas Dyja echoes the ethos above. Drawing on artworks depicting Chicago, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, and philosophies of architectural pedagogy, Dyja offers deeper reflections on Chester's work. Underlying it all, Dyja reminds us that this was captured in a particular moment we continue to feel the aftershocks from: March 2020, immediately following the shutdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is both present and not within the depiction – a ghostly after image, perhaps.

Somewhere between art project and commemoration, homage to a city and lesson in design, *Chicago Reflected* is a delight of a book. And while the price is reflected in the somewhat looser quality of the detailings (the slipcase is not *fine*, but it's fine), it is still a significantly more beautiful and delightful object than the \$29.95 cost. It may not be a text a library needs, but it's certainly one worth having.

Martin Chandler

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