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From Your Editor

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain

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Dear Editor:

I was pleased to read the review of Grove’s Dictionary of Art by Tom Gilson in the September issue of _Against the Grain_ (v.9#8, p. 44), though Mr. Gilson notes a few errors and has some concerns about _The Dictionary’s_ comprehensiveness and appearance. For the benefit of your readers, I would like to address these matters point by point.

The article on cathedral architecture at Chartres uses the term _triforium_, with which Mr. Gilson was unfamiliar. As the word is not defined in the article itself, Mr. Gilson turned to a dictionary of architecture to discover the meaning, and he makes the point in his review that readers may need supplemental texts to guide them through _The Dictionary’s_ “technical ... subject matter.” A look in volume 31 of _The Dictionary_, however, reveals an article entitled “Triforium,” in which the term is defined and a cross-reference to an explanatory drawing provided. The editor and publisher of _The Dictionary of Art_ take great pride in comprehensiveness, and except in the cases of the most obscure technical terminology, the reader should be able to find the information he is seeking without resorting to external sources.

As Mr. Gilson apparently did not have volume 31 in hand when preparing his review, he checked the Index and notes that there was a reference only to “triforium windows.” The line above this entry, however, reads “triforia” and cites the “Triforium” article in volume 31. _Triforia_ is the plural of _triforium_, and it appears in this way because, while _Dictionary_ articles are in most cases given singular headings, their citations in the Index are normally in the plural, since the Index covers the topic in all its multiple manifestations throughout the 34 volumes. Thus, for instance, the bold heading “door” occurs in volume 9, whereas the plural form “doors,” appropriately alphabetized, is used for the 231 references in the Index. We are aware that this has been a cause of some confusion, and the November issue of _The Dictionary of Art_ newsletter, _ART&FACTS_ (sent to every purchaser), explains the system in detail.

In his search for the meaning of _triforium_, Mr. Gilson discovered a few errors in the Index, including two terms that were not in their correct alphabetical order. These will be corrected in the reprint of _The Dictionary_ planned for early 1998. It is inevitable that in a project of this size mistakes will occur, and we are always grateful for notification of errors, so that they may be corrected at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, Mr. Gilson expresses disappointment at the use of mainly black-and-white colour illustrations throughout _The Dictionary_. Unfortunately, obtaining reproduction permissions for colour illustrations throughout _The Dictionary_ would have cost in the order of $2 million more than at the present — an increase that would have had to be passed on to buyers, putting it out of the reach of any library. _The Dictionary of Art_ was conceived as a reference book in which the focus is on information, and the principle investment went into insuring the highest possible academic standards and the latest research by the world’s leading experts. The illustrations were expressly chosen not just for their decorative value but for their ability to elucidate points made in the text.

Sincerely yours,

Ian Jacobs (Managing Director, Grove’s Dictionaries, Macmillan Reference Ltd.)