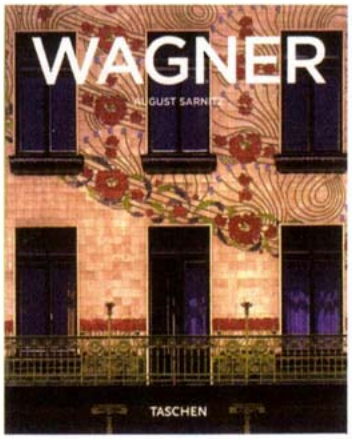

Wagner
By August Sarnitz, Taschen, £4.99

This delicious summary of the work of Viennese Otto Wagner gleams with the high production values one expects from Taschen, and makes a fine introduction to the work of the man who gave art nouveau an Austrian accent.

The handsome photographs look almost dowdy next to Wagner's wonderful drawings and plans. It is pure architecture of the imagination; his representations of buildings are a frothing brew of exuberant decoration, applied not to the perspective itself but to its borders, titles and captions.

Not even a view of an unrealised railway bridge can be executed without a troupe of prancing naiads. Flame-haired nudes crouch beneath a view of an unbuilt academy of fine arts. The inhabitants of the buildings of Wagner's fantasies have a liveliness and personality unlike anything else. Indeed, Wagner's greatest buildings never left his imagination, his opulent visions extinguished along with their imperial sponsors as war swept Europe. **WW**