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On Architecture: Collected Reflections On A Century Of Change



Synopsis

For more than half a century, Ada Louise Huxtable's keen eye and vivid writing have reinforced to readers how important architecture is and why it continues to be both controversial and fascinating - making her one of the best-known critics in the world. *On Architecture* collects the best of Huxtable's writing from the *New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, *Wall Street Journal*, and her various books. In these selections, Huxtable examines the 20th century's most important architectural masters and projects, cataloging the seismic shifts in style, function, and fashion that have led to the dramatic new architecture of the 21st century.

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Customer Reviews

Architecture is notoriously difficult to write about. Buildings demand to be seen, and, more importantly, experienced. Descriptions of them often swerve into jargon or lurch into hyperbole. Neither of these problems afflicts the writing of Ada Louise Huxtable. In this collection of her essays and newspaper columns she comes across as clear-eyed, tough-minded and thoroughly grounded in the history of twentieth century architecture. The book organizes the critical opinions of five decades into seven sections. If there is an overarching theme, it's the emergence of modernism as the dominant architectural style of the twentieth century and the inevitable Thermidorian reaction against the modernist revolution. While Huxtable appreciates the way modernist masters such as Gropius, van der Rohe, Aalto and Le Corbusier gave form to the twentieth century, she also understands why their rigid insistence on functionality over beauty, disregard for history, and

indifference to the environments surrounding their buildings led to a revolt against their tenets. Still, you only have to look around any American city to see how much we owe Mies and other modernist masters of the skyscraper. She gives the architects who came after modernism their due. She's a big fan of Frank Gehry, for instance. But she also takes the Phillip Johnsons and Robert Venturis to task when their built work falls short of their theories or witty critiques. Huxtable also casts a backward glance at modernism's antecedents, including a fond reminiscence of the Beaux Arts New York (Grand Central, the 42nd Street Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art) she grew up in. In her introduction, Huxtable tells us that she is generally satisfied with her first impressions and stands by her published opinions.

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