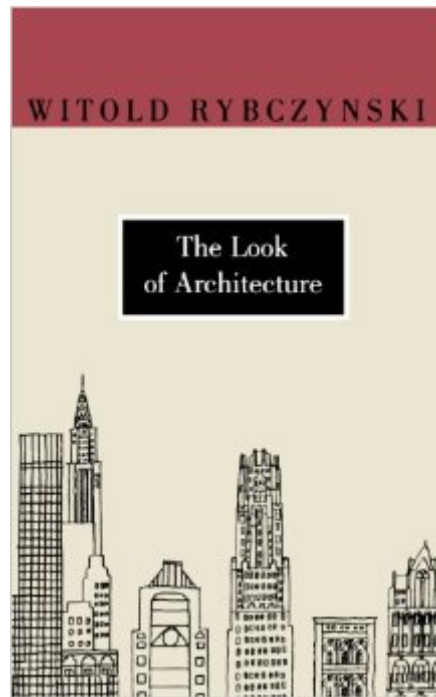


The book was found

The Look Of Architecture



Synopsis

What is style in architecture? "Style is like a feather in a woman's hat, nothing more," said Le Corbusier, expressing most modern architects' low regard for the subject. But Witold Rybczynski disagrees, and in *The Look of Architecture*, he makes a compelling case for the importance of style to the mother of the arts. This is a book brimming with sharp observations--that form does not follow function; that the best architecture is not timeless but precisely of its time; that details do not merely complement the architecture--details are the architecture. But the heart of the book illuminates the connection between architecture, interior decoration, and fashion. Style is the language of architecture, Rybczynski writes, and fashion represents the wide and swirling cultural currents that shape and direct that language. The two--style and fashion--are intimately linked; indeed, architecture cannot escape fashion. To set these ideas in sharp relief, he shows us how style and fashion have been expressed in the work of major architects including Frank Gehry, Mies van der Rohe, Charles McKim, Allan Greenberg, Robert Venturi, Enrique Norton, and many others. He helps us see their works anew and ultimately to look afresh at our surroundings. Style is one of the enduring--and endearing--aspects of architecture, Rybczynski concludes. Furthermore, an architecture that recognizes the importance of style would not be as introspective and self-referential as are so many contemporary buildings. It would be part of the world: Not architecture for architects, but for the rest of us.

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Customer Reviews

This book consists of three lectures given by Professor Rybczynski at the New York Public Library

(lectures he admits to revising for publication based on the need to respond to challenging questions from his audience). While not as innovative in topic and scope of inquiry as his books "Home" and "Waiting for the Weekend," there is much here that Rybczynski's loyal readers will recognize and appreciate--the author's love of his subject, his deep and broad knowledge of the history of architecture, his high regard for the minutia others tend to dismiss, and his confidence in his own opinion. The three essays--"Dressing Up," "In and Out of Fashion," and "Style"--are an investigation, among other things, of architects' reluctance to speak of their work in terms of style. "Architects don't like to talk about style," Rybczynski says in his introduction. "Ask an architect what style he works in and you are likely to be met with a pained expression, or with silence." (p. xi). The lectures explore the differences between architecture and other art forms (including interior design, cooking, and the rag trade). Of the distinction between style and fashion, he says, "If style is the language of architecture, fashion represents the wide--and swirling--cultural currents that shape and direct that language." (p. 51) In the end, Rybczynski observes, "A suspicion of style is a heritage of the Modern Movement, which preached against the arbitrary dictates of style and fashion, while maintaining an unspoken but rigid stylistic consistency." (p. 109) He also attributes the reluctance to speak in terms of style to architects' fears (but I'll let you ferret out the provocative supporting quotations for yourself).

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