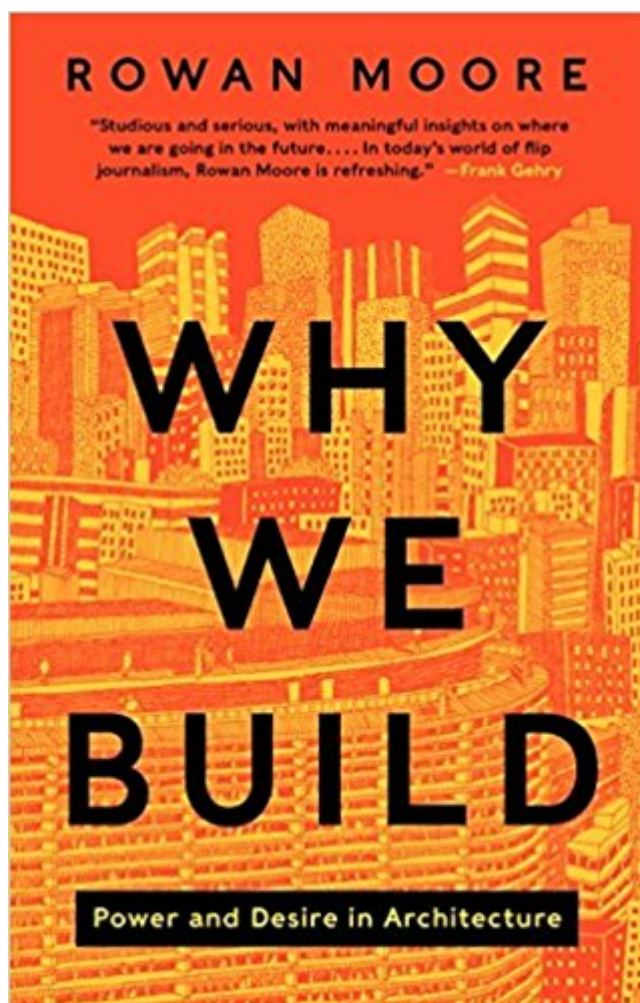


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Why We Build: Power And Desire In Architecture



Synopsis

We are living in one of the most dramatic periods in modern architectural history: a time when cityscapes are being redrawn on a yearly basis, architects are testing the very idea of what a building is, and whole cities are invented overnight. In this bold and wide-ranging new work, Rowan Moore—former director of the Architecture Foundation, now a leading architecture critic—explores the reasons behind these changes in our built environment, and how they change the way we live in the world. Provocative and personal, iconoclastic and transforming, *Why We Build* is that rarest of things: a book about architecture that is also, on every page, a book about people—those chosen few who design buildings, and the rest of us, who use them every day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Architecture resides at the intersection of wealth, power, and art. No wonder then, that it can result in hubris. In this account of why architects and, to some extent, their clients build what they do, architecture critic Moore never shies from skewering those whose designs were left wanting. He praises favorite designs, such as Zaha Hadid's London Architecture Foundation (Moore was director of the foundation) and Lina Bo Bardi's inspired Museu de Arte de São Paulo, and accompanying photographs help drive home his points. Moore provides a world junket of architecture, from Dubai's palm-shaped islands and massive towers to Paris's Pompidou Centre, London's exclusive One Hyde Park, Barcelona's Casa Mila, and New York City's World Trade Center. Only Chicago gets short shrift, unless you consider the Farnsworth House by Mies van der Rohe in Plano, Illinois, part of Chicago. One

chapter covers why architects are frequently hypersexual. Perhaps, as Moore later claims, "Architecture was the lubricant for the penetration of the skyline." It's brash, and opinion at times overtakes the book's premise. But what could be more appropriate?

--Laurie Borman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[A] lively account. . . Moore's deftly chosen and analyzed examples range from Alberti's Tempio Malatestiano and Jamaa el Fna "square" in Marrakesh to Manhattan's High Line. This is a highly engaging. . . vision of architecture's emotive and pragmatic powers." (Publishers Weekly) "Thoughtful and elegantly written, *Why We Build* will appeal to anyone with an interest in architecture, and the egos, power struggles and human relationships behind the creation of our surroundings." (The Spectator) "Intelligent and cultured... Astringent and subtle." (The Independent) "With unfailingly fresh insight. Moore decrypts the ideological narratives of buildings with the same fluency he brings to bear on materials, forms and spaces: today's architectural criticism rarely seems so humane or intelligent." (Sunday Telegraph)

Moore, a trained architect and former director of the Architecture Foundation in London theorizes about the relationship of buildings to emotions. As a critic, he calls his contemporaries on their mistakes, and is humanistic in doing so, saving his praise for those (too few) who have honored the context of their projects. Most of all, he points to the success of projects that honor the people they serve, that are quietly inserted into the life there is. Highest in his echelon is Lina Bo Bardi, an Italian-born Brazilian who, decades ago, designed an art center that simply blended into Sao Paulo's Trianon, a public park. Lower down is One Hyde Park, a set of "harsh and assertive" blocks of apartments selling at 15 to 140 millions of pounds to foreign investors, and spoiling the look of Knightsbridge as well as access to park views. Lowest is Dubai where spectacular and fantastic "show-off" towers rise above imported beaches and the nasty "crisis in the drains." Moore takes us around the world and across time, to discuss the visions that build pyramids and world fairs, the hope that designs housing to accommodate chronic poverty, the open mind that enables futuristic technology. He comments on the failure of the "big roof" concept (think "airports" and success of the simplest laundry (think "shaded pool"). He observes Manhattan's

contentious rebuilding the World Trade Center simultaneous to the collaborative re-purposing an abandoned railway track as a linear park. Moore is amused by but concerned about starchitect power plays, names that dominate the profession, some who will squash opposition. He recalls his own stumbles in working with the amazing Zaha Hadid, who was commissioned to design new quarters for the Architecture Foundation on a "sliver" of land near the Tate Modern. Her daring idea quadrupled the budget, caved in to practical considerations (such as difficulty getting equipment through traffic); and eventually was canceled when the stock market fell. This 422-page tour through our built and imagined environment is strenuous, but it is led by a likable as well as knowledgeable guide.

Only a fraction read to date, but impressed. Examines interesting, often offbeat, situations. Comes to strong, convincing conclusions. Brilliant use of English (those Brits!). Sometimes goes overboard with colorful wording. Recommended to anyone with interest in architecture or urban development.

Fascinating book!

The book is perfect, so as the shipping!

Very insightful and inspirational! Filled with illustrations throughout.

I found nothing to disagree with in this delightful book. A must read for anyone who hires or works with an architect.

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