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ABC Of Architecture



Synopsis

ABC of Architecture is an accessible, nontechnical introduction to architectural structure, history, and criticism. Author James F. O’Gorman moves seamlessly from a discussion of the most basic inspiration for architecture (the need for shelter from the elements), to an exploration of space, system, and material, and, finally, to an examination of the language and history of architecture. He shows the nonspecialist how to read a design in plans, sections, and elevations, and how architects, like other artists, make creative use of space and light.

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Customer Reviews

James F. O’Gorman’s A B C of Architecture is a concise, illuminating introduction to the complex subject of architecture. O’Gorman himself calls this slim volume a "modest grammar" on the subject, but it’s much more than that. In elegant prose O’Gorman teaches architectural theory as he teaches history. If you’ve ever wondered about arches, domes, or the importance of concrete, A B C Architecture will likely have the answers you’re looking for. For those unfamiliar with architecture, O’Gorman includes a glossary of terms and suggestions for dictionaries.

This volume represents a significant departure in terms of its intended readership, scope of subject, and depth of analysis for O’Gorman (art, Wellesley Coll.), who has written eloquently and with considerable originality on late 19th-century American architecture. Here he provides a brief primer on architectural awareness for the beginning student or lay reader. The text, which addresses the reader directly, closely approximates the tone of an undergraduate lecture. Structured around three

central chapters, each corresponding to one of Vitruvius's defining elements (firmness, commodity, and delight), the lucid explanations focus on plan, structure, and style, respectively. The illustrations are the chief liability: heavy-lined drawings provide less than adequate visual descriptions of buildings rich in texture, shadow, and color. Moreover, lacking figure numbers and descriptive captions, they are much less useful than they might otherwise be. As an introduction to the topic, this volume does not eclipse Steen Eiler Rasmussen's timeless and original *Experiencing Architecture* (1962), but it may do well in larger public libraries. Paul Glassman, Pratt Inst. Lib., Brooklyn
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This book has provided me with an excellent foundation to the fundamental notion of architecture itself. The writing is unpretentious, clear and logical. There are images which are instructive and clarify the points made in the text. The information provides a powerful set of ideas with which to understand the purpose of architecture and to understand architectural examples in the real world. Very pleased to have purchased and read the book. Thanks to the author for being an approachable teacher.

If you a person interested in architecture, then this is the best book to start with. Its packed with clearly written information on all aspects of architecture. If you want a small paperback book on architecture, I don't see how you can beat this book. Its excellent!!!

Good Product

This is a book required by a Boston College professor. As such I didn't expect much other than a text book. I was wrong. This is a fine book on the basics of architecture and I highly recommend it to anyone with an interest, academic or otherwise, in the subject. Thanks

Great Item.

I got the book used and it was in good condition that's why I have it 4 stars. It was worth my money

"ABC of Architecture" is a catchier title than "Introduction to Architecture" but a little misleading. It sounds like it might be a dictionary of architectural terms. The book is, in fact, an introduction to the principles of architecture written for the uninitiated by James F. O'Gorman, professor of architecture

and author of a dozen books on the subject. His intention is to demystify the basics for interested laypersons or beginning undergraduates. There is a Précis, which one may read instead of the entire book to get the basics of the basics, but I don't think it contains enough specifics or examples to be helpful. O'Gorman's approach is to explain architecture by explaining its three components, as proposed by ancient Roman architect Vitruvius: *Utilitas* (function), *Firmitas* (structure), and *Venustas* (beauty). A building's function is expressed by the client in a building program. It is given structure by the builder, while design or beauty is the domain of the architect. A chapter is devoted to each of these aspects of building creation, in which the basic choices are explained: The plan may be additive or divisive, the structural system trabeated or arcuated, the design formal or picturesque, with the ideas, implications, and examples for these basic options. There is also a chapter that addresses how architecture communicates through associative meaning and one that gives the reader an amusing tour of architectural vocabulary. There is a short glossary of terms in the back and a list of recommended reading. Black-and-white drawings by Dennis E. McGrath provide examples of basic concepts and designs. "ABC of Architecture" is a nice primer that avoids overwhelming the beginner with perplexing terms and engineering but tells the reader enough to know if you want to find out more about the subject or not.

Helpful in terms of understanding architecture. I am hesitant to give 5 stars because he seems to overtly favor historical styles--definitely not a fan of modernistic architecture that seemingly tries to sever itself from the long line of architectural history (or so he claims). If only he stayed... more neutral in his position, I would have liked this book much better.

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