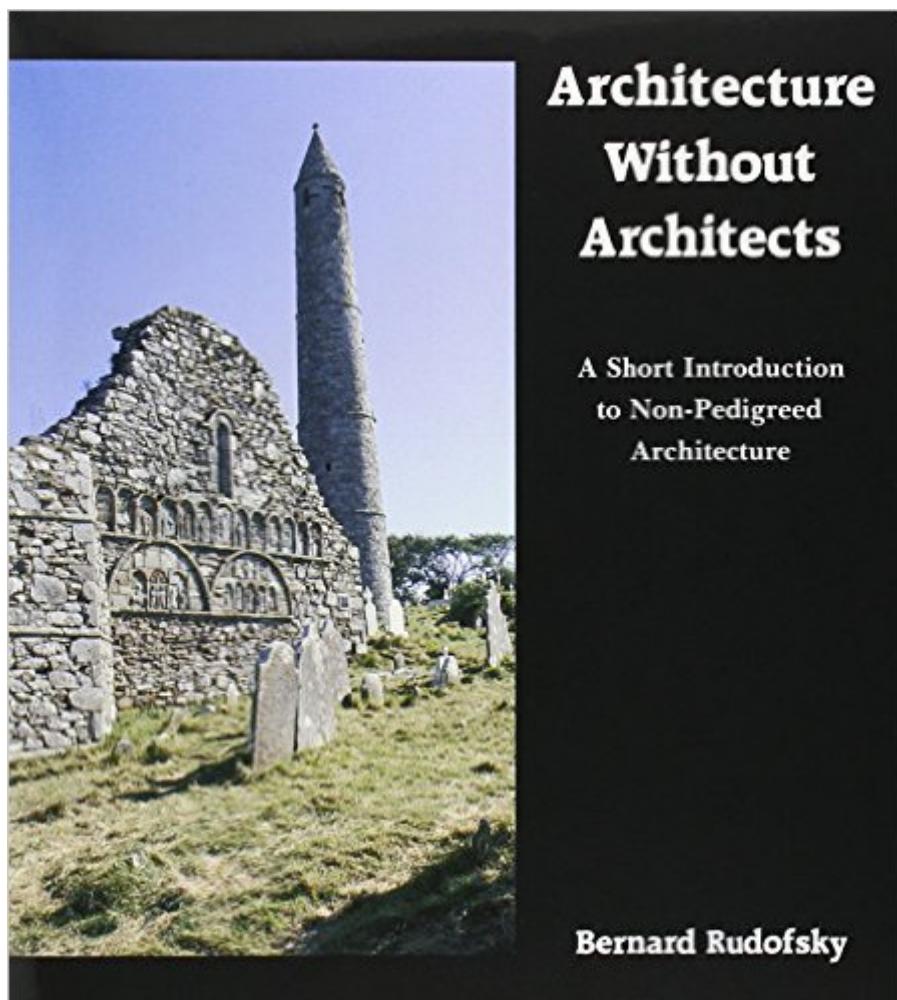


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Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction To Non-Pedigreed Architecture



Synopsis

In this book, Bernard Rudofsky steps outside the narrowly defined discipline that has governed our sense of architectural history and discusses the art of building as a universal phenomenon. He introduces the reader to communal architecture--architecture produced not by specialists but by the spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage, acting within a community experience. A prehistoric theater district for a hundred thousand spectators on the American continent and underground towns and villages (complete with schools, offices, and factories) inhabited by millions of people are among the unexpected phenomena he brings to light. The beauty of "primitive" architecture has often been dismissed as accidental, but today we recognize in it an art form that has resulted from human intelligence applied to uniquely human modes of life. Indeed, Rudofsky sees the philosophy and practical knowledge of the untutored builders as untapped sources of inspiration for industrial man trapped in his chaotic cities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Originally published in 1964, concurrent with the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* shown at MOMA, this slim volume of text and photographs radiates heat and light when reviewed almost forty years later. In fact, Rudofsky's introductory essay is so fresh today it is almost inconceivable it was written the better part of four decades ago! Offering a scathing attack on modern approaches to the landscape and to problems of living more generally in a time of rampant population growth, Rudofsky shrewdly pointed to the fact that "part of our troubles results from the tendency to ascribe to architects-or, for that matter, to all specialists-excessive insight into problems of living when, in

truth, most of them are concerned with problems of business and prestige." But what transpires when the focus can be maintained on functionality, efficiency, ease of use, and a design aesthetic that remains humbly in tune with and loyal to the mood and visual imperative of the land under development? To answer these crucial questions Rudofsky takes us back a few thousands of years to the origins of architectural strivings (even preceding man's earliest efforts) and the material results thereof. The essential point Rudofsky cares to make in these pages is that "vernacular architecture does not go through fashion cycles. It is nearly immutable, indeed, unimprovable, since it serves its purpose to perfection." Rooted in a practical, harmonious relationship with its setting, 'primitive' architecture exemplifies the art of living well through its consistent use of frugality in construction, cleanliness in line and detail, and a general respect for "creation.

Architecture Without Architects by Bernard Rudofsky demonstrates that anonymous builders achieved great form based on function. Confess right now -- designers, planners, architects!! You don't have this book? You don't even know about this book or its author, Bernard Rudofsky? Verdict: You are culturally deprived, which means possibly professionally challenged. Certainly missing chances for inspiration on the job. This classic contains a sweeping revelation of universal traditions of "vernacular" architecture -- structures and spaces built by untutored hands in "primitive" cultures, many now destroyed. Their images remain as amazing testaments to ingenious answers to survival issues and creature comforts in remote locales which, we see, have considerable sophistication. Today's higher education for the design professions, focused on formal issues of a few recent centuries, may have turned you away from study of remote cultures in distant times, viewing vernacular as "inapplicable" in a high-tech world. On the contrary, these places and structural events (including whole mountainsides) demonstrate the significant human act of building with nature-given materials, for human needs and use, with sensitivity to innately purposeful form, without a thought about the disruptive gloss of fashion cycles. Bernard Rudofsky was a brilliant iconoclast and innovator. As a restless architecture student in Vienna in 1923, he cut loose to undertake a *wanderjahr* exploring distant places and forgotten world cultures.

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