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Los Angeles: The Architecture Of Four Ecologies



Synopsis

Reyner Banham examined the built environment of Los Angeles in a way no architectural historian before him had done, looking with fresh eyes at its manifestations of popular taste and industrial ingenuity, as well as its more traditional modes of residential and commercial building. His construct of "four ecologies" examined the ways Angelenos relate to the beach, the freeways, the flatlands, and the foothills. Banham delighted in this mobile city and identified it as an exemplar of the posturban future. In a spectacular new foreword, architect and scholar Joe Day explores how the structure of Los Angeles, the concept of "ecology," and the relevance of Banham's ideas have changed over the past thirty-five years.

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Customer Reviews

Even though Banham's book was written in the early '70's, it remains a cogent view of a metropolis that has changed yet remained the same. It is a place, yes a real place, that is defined by geography and the various cultures of its inhabitants to a unique degree. Architecture is but a backdrop to Banham's larger point about the inter-relationship of people to the natural and built environments. The perspective of 35 years only sharpens the observations made by the insightful author.

Reyner Banham's writing is intelligent and entertaining. He has taken LA to heart and reveals how its "four ecologies" have affected its contemporary appearance and character. You'll not only learn how LA's architecture came to be as it is, but learn a great deal about the history and personality of

the city as well. I read this book to get to know LA better. I couldn't have picked a better one.

Although I've never been to Los Angeles, I conceived a great affection for the city by reading this book. Banham was a wonderful writer, a man utterly without European prejudices regarding the United States and southern California. To better understand the city and its modes of life, he learned to drive. He grasped that Los Angeles depends on mobility, rather than central organization. The illustrations are wonderful--one in particular, the magnificent interior of the Bradbury building of 1893 I found inspiring. A very beautiful book that belongs in every library.

I translated this book into Portuguese and it made me fall in love with a city I've never seen. A perfect example of place-reading and architectural analysis, written in an engaging (and a little wild) style. Hasn't lost anything after forty years.

I had to buy this book for school and had a great price. The ideas the author presents are interesting and his writing style is definitely interesting. I definitely recommend it for people who live in LA.

Los Angeles. There were a few years there when Los Angeles was the center of the world. 1965-1985, give or take a few years. Oh yes, even the Brits were raving. David Hockney had declared LA the best place to paint ("Splash") and Reyner Banham declared LA the city of tomorrow. Things were cooking and I was there. Then things started to go wrong. Spielberg and the boys from USC took over Hollywood and turned the city from a culture center into an amusement park. The pollution started to get too dangerous to laugh at. The gangs took over much of the fringe. There was Rodney King, O.J., riots, earthquakes, fires, gang warfare. All in all, the city was destroyed. Who knows what Banham might make of the place now. This is a great little book.

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