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The Architecture Of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt



Synopsis

Nowhere, Mark Wigley asserts, are the stakes higher for deconstruction than in architecture -- architecture is the Achilles' heel of deconstructive discourse, the point of vulnerability upon which all of its arguments depend. In this book Wigley redefines the question of deconstruction and architecture. By locating the architecture already hidden within deconstructive discourse, he opens up more radical possibilities for both architecture and deconstruction, offering a way of rethinking the institution of architecture while using architecture to rethink deconstructive discourse. Wigley relentlessly tracks the tacit argument about architecture embedded within Jacques Derrida's discourse, a curious line of argument that passes through each of the philosopher's texts. He argues that this seemingly tenuous thread actually binds those texts, acting as their source of strength but also their point of greatest weakness. Derrida's work is seen to render architecture at once more complex, uncanny, pervasive, unstable, brutal, enigmatic, and devious, if not insidious, while needing itself to be subjected to an architectural interrogation. Wigley provocatively turns Derrida's reading strategy back on his texts to expose the architectural dimension of their central notions like law, economy, writing, place, domestication, translation, vomit, spacing, laughter, and dance. Along the way he highlights new aspects of the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida, explores the structural role of ornament and the elusive architecture of haunting, while presenting a fascinating account of the institutional politics of architecture.

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Customer Reviews

Originally written as a PhD thesis in 1986, this book should have been published sooner than it was (1993) because it forewarns just where Jacques Derrida's elusive philosophy was taking us - to a ghost dance, specifically to Derrida's latest ill-fated attempt to prove the ethico-political relevance of his Deconstruction in his book, *Specters of Marx*, 1993. *The Architecture of Deconstruction* focuses on Derrida's essays on Husserl (Introduction to the Origin of Geometry) and on Abraham and Torok (Fors) rather than Derrida's essays on architecture (there are enough now to fill a book, many concerning Plato's intriguing use of the word Chora, but in '86 there was only one published) in order, writes Wigley, "to think the covert architectural economy of his (Derrida's) work", thus, a poverty of resource is disguised as a guiding principle. Wigley had ample opportunity to correct this before publishing but he chose not to. The core of Wigley's thesis is that there exists an unspoken contract between architecture and philosophy. The former lends itself to the latter as a cluster of metaphors for stability (spatially systematised concepts inside built on solid foundations outside) and in return architectural discourse is granted the authority and respectability of higher learning that only philosophy can give. And like all good conspiracy theories this is a self-fulfilling prophecy: someone will inevitably contradict you, thereby proving the conspiracy is operative by attempting to cover it up. If anything, this book proves that conspiracy theories do indeed work, but when Deconstruction dances, its partner will always be a ghost.

Well written and organized. Very helpful in understanding deconstructivist architecture.

Flawless!

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