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The Architect's Tour: Notes For The Design Traveler



Synopsis

If you want to be a good designer, set aside the glossy magazines, turn off your computer, and seek out first-hand encounters with good design. When it comes to cities, buildings, and art, actual experience is almost always better than the virtual kind. No image can replicate Le Corbusier's Ronchamp when the light is just right, or capture the silent speech one hears on a stroll through Ian Hamilton Finlay's Little Sparta, or explain hours dissolving in Peter Zumthor's baths at Vals. That is the reason for this book: to encourage you to actively pursue direct aesthetic experience in the built environment, and to reflect upon the best reasons and ways to be a dedicated design traveler. Traveling to learn is an integral part of the education of student architects and designers. It is vital for designers to know how to be effective design travelers, to know how to seek out and encounter places, buildings, and objects, and to develop a capacity for looking, drawing, and, above all, discerning. But to be a student is only to be "one who is studying," which means all of us who, if we are truly alive, delight in the application of the mind to the acquisition of knowledge.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ben Jacks, a designer, architect, writer, and teacher, holds degrees from the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing at the University of Southern Maine. When not looking at buildings and making photographs, he teaches at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, including courses in beginning design, human behavior, design detailing, and understanding architecture through drawing. In 1991 Ben walked the Appalachian

Trail, 2000 miles from Georgia to his home in Maine. This half-year experience of walking and living outdoors inspired and continues to inform his thinking and writing about architecture, aesthetics, landscape, and place, which has been published in Journal of Architectural Education, Places, and Landscape Journal. As a designer, Ben focuses on detail and craft, seeking to develop the potentially rich and intimate relationship between landscape, building, dwelling, and interior. He traces his love of good craft to his maternal grandfather, Hugo Swanson, a carpenter, schoolteacher, and labor union organizer, who immigrated to Wisconsin from Eskilstuna, Sweden, much in the manner described in Vilhelm Moberg's The Emigrants. Good craft and a job well done perhaps allowed Hugo to feel some control in a new world. Choosing a hopeful path, and responding to his children's anxiety about the state of our deteriorating environment, Ben is currently at work designing and building a family home meant to last: a flexible-family-structure, aging-in-place, aspiring LEED Platinum, net-zero, Passive House in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I really like this book because as a fan of Rick Steves, I like to get off the beaten path when I travel. This book not only provides incredible pictures of places that are not your standard tourist fare, but it also provides interesting context ranging from the practical (how to get there) to the more thoughtful (the value of travel). And it's well written and engaging to boot. It's both a memento of travel and a guide to good travel. And I have to say the photographs have drawn me back into the book again and again--this book won't just sit on the shelf. A must read whether you are an architect, architecture student or none of the above!

It is a wonderful book, it has that very European feeling to it.

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