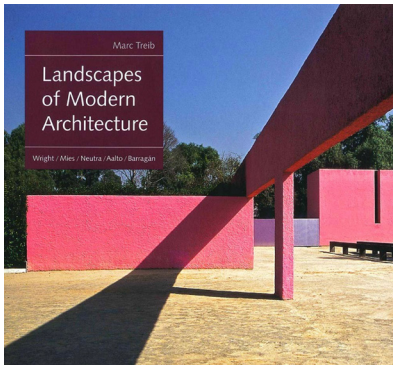


Landscapes of Modern Architecture

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Publisher: Yale University Press, New Haven 2017



No built intervention can escape a relationship with its context. The formal language that binds architecture and landscape may be one of contrast and resistance or of intimate engagement, but in whichever way a designer chooses to interact with a site, a dialogue of space, material, and atmosphere inevitably is formed. Modern architecture has become known for cold insensitivity to its natural context. UC Berkeley professor Marc Treib argues against the superficiality of this common perception in his book's narrative and analytical discussion of the diversity of formal interplay between architecture and its surroundings.

Treib's 268 page book discusses selected works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra, Alvar Aalto, and Luis Barragán in regards to their complex and varied responses to the sites' landscapes. From Wright's built extensions of desert forms and materiality and Aalto's abstractions of the Finnish forests to Barragán's colorful and seductive outdoor oases in Mexican cities, the content is richly diverse. The chosen projects, which span roughly 70 years in the 20th century, provide a broad basis on which to evaluate a multifaceted period of architectural design.

Close examinations of the architects' design processes are particularly effective in supporting the author's conclusions. Selected montage representations by Mies, for instance, bolster Treib's arguments by allowing the architect's portrayal of his own work to give form to the analysis. Discussing how original graphics depicted the landscape more as artwork framed by architectural forms rather than as a complex space in itself aids in revealing the designer's own perspective, and this detailed level of analysis is carried through each chapter. The intellectual and physical weight of this 28cm wide book is justified by the 202 high quality illustrations that accompany not only the thorough technical analysis, but also the engaging stories of each selected project. Introductions into the designers' cultural and geographical worlds frame each chapter and serve as critical support. This contextual background is given the same degree of attention as the dialogues between specific intervention and setting, which is essential in discussing the complexity behind every project. The addition of a summarizing section would more satisfyingly conclude the deep investigations into each architect's designs.

Treib's analysis of works by five modern architects is a visually rich and thought-provoking discussion of modern architecture and landscape from which anyone professionally engaged with or particularly interested in the design of the built world can profit. This elegantly presented book offers a thoughtful reconsideration of the nuanced relationships between architecture of the 20th century and nature while reminding the contemporary reader that built projects will inevitably engage with their contexts—how consciously, how effectively, is the responsibility of every designer.