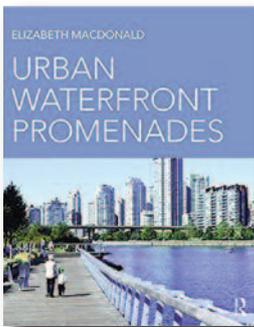


Urban Waterfront Promenades

by Elizabeth Macdonald
£41.99
Routledge
Reviewed by Anthony Carlile



2018
Paperback 298p
ISBN: 978-1-138-82421-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-82419-5 (hbk)

IMAGES are from the book

Given that our ancestors were generally drawn to settle beside a watercourse, it's difficult to imagine any major metropolis where the opportunities described in this book are not immediately relevant.

There are three parts. The first meticulously describes 38 different Urban Waterfront promenades grouped into 12 loose categories: Vancouver's Waterfront Promenade Network (the initial inspiration for the book), Classic Grand Promenades, Beachfront Boardwalks and Promenades, Riverfront Promenade Loops, Park Promenades along Former Industrial Waterfronts, Promenades in the Shadow of Freeways, Spectacle Promenades, Eco District Promenades, Suburban New Town Promenades, Promontory Promenades, Classic Bridge Promenades and Incrementally Built Central Area Promenades.

Each case is described consistently with location plans at 1:400,000 scale, context plans at 1:40,000 and beautifully drawn dimensioned cross sections at 1:20. An appendix also summarises some key data - effective path width, people per hour and people per hour per meter, allowing easy like-for-like comparison and overall creating an exceptionally useful body of design information.

The second part describes the urban context to each with a 1:12,000 scale plan and observations on accessibility and connection.

The third part is a discourse on the main practical aspects surrounding the subject, including safety, maintenance, ecological issues, key planning concepts, overcoming free-way barriers and meeting the challenge of rising sea level.

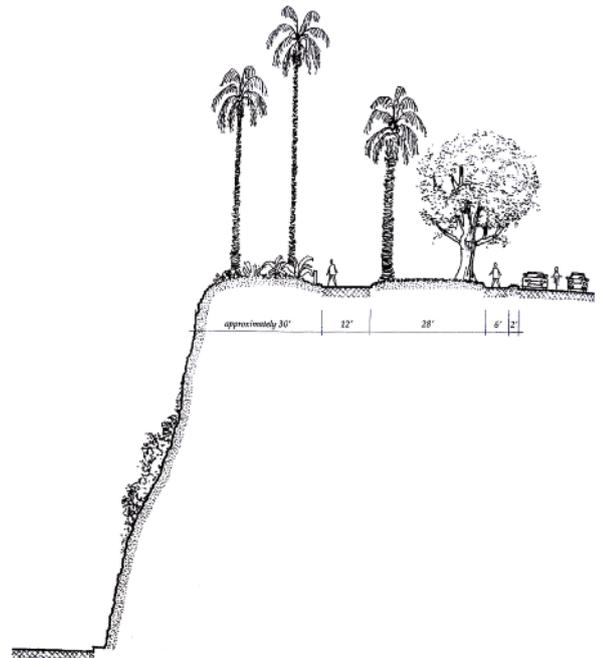
The book is about the positive opportunities for the enjoyment of water but the information on sea level rise is also perhaps the most practically useful I have read. The author acknowledges that ... "the placement and design of waterfront promenades for the communal enjoyment of today's and tomorrow's citizens is a relatively small matter (in the context of major sea level rise) but of course these are related issues and a study of waterfront adaptation strategies and design innovations from around the world follows."

The prospect of any major coastal city facing a 0.98m sea level rise by 2100 makes this a timely and significant subject on several levels and one which it seems many communities have not yet addressed.

This is rigorous research and it is uplifting to read. ■



Anthony Carlile of Anthony Carlile Architects



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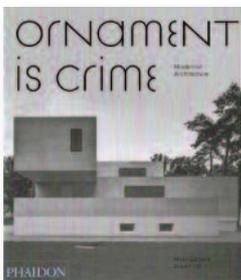


A seminal new text on modern architecture, embracing all of the important architectural movements and influences of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

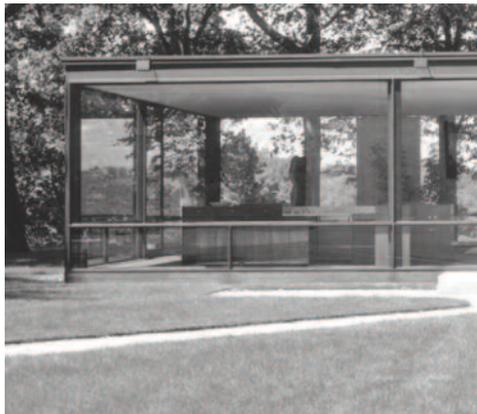


Ornament is Crime

by Albert Hill
and Matt
Gibberd
Reviewed by
Alfred
Munkenbeck



Phaidon Press £29.95
Hardback
290 x 250 mm (11 3/8 x 9
7/8 in)
224 pages
300 illustrations
ISBN: 9780714874166



IMAGES are from the book

Ornament is Crime is a beautifully produced coffee table book with flush cut sides and all black and white photographs in large format, maximum two to a page. The foreword essay was written by Matt Gibberd, grandson of the great Fred and the book was produced in collaboration with his partner Albert Hill, a couple of ex-journalists who founded a fascinating estate agency which shares offices with the Ted Cullinan Studio architectural practice. If you understand the agency you will understand the book. Look it up on www.themodern-house.com

The precedent for the book is Instagram. It is a collection of images. There are no explanations with the houses, either practical or theoretical, plans or sections, only a label with architect, location and year on each image. In addition to the photos there are loads and loads of pithy quotes from architects and other notables never directly related to the images.

Such is the current ethos. It is an excellent source book of inspiring houses based on Modernist tenets that seem to have commenced with an Adolph Loos lecture in 1910. The images are from all over the world for now over a century. What is amazing is to see the breadth of influence of this modern approach and its consistency over time. The historical advances, so to speak,

are relatively technical and subtle. Many houses from the 1920's could have been considered stylish today and vice versa. It is wonderful to see them all mixed together in one publication.

Loos' dictum about Ornament was, unfortunately a bit ahead of its time as it approaches modernism from a negative (strip out ornament) rather than a positive (composition of planes, light and space) point of view.

It is a bit like extolling the virtues of abstract painting by emphasizing how a painting doesn't look (like anything familiar) rather than considering how it does look. Modern design is about much more than avoidance but Loos was not fully aware of that in 1910. Basically, it takes more than avoiding ornament to make a good modern building but from Loos' end of the telescope he had to strip away ornament before he could contemplate what might need to replace it.

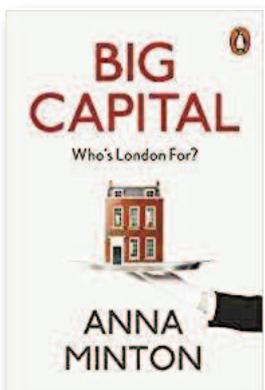
Some quote juxtapositions can seem a bit odd like putting Maya Lin about minimalism beside Paul Rudolph, who was anything but minimal, or quoting a punk band lyric beside Tadao Ando, but it is amusingly provocative. The question of combining word with image has always been problematic but at least this book does it without taking itself too seriously. The sheer volume of quotes and interesting houses is enervating. ■



Alfred Munkenbeck of
Munkenbeck+Partners,
architects

Big Capital Who is London for?

by Anna Minton
Reviewed by Darryl Chen



Available from John Sandoe Books

RIGHT: Images from the book

Anna Minton is angry. From government policy to foreign investment, from property professionals to shady landlords, from greedy developer to greedy local council, a spectrum of forces has created the crisis in which we now find ourselves, where housing has gone from being a human right to a financial product. Big Capital sets out the complexity of its shape and causes, however trades balanced argument for polemic in a litany against the ills of regeneration.

Minton's ambition is to show the consequences of the workings of local and global capital on the lives of ordinary Londoners. This she does in the journalistic way that makes all of her writing pointed and accessible. It is also her weakness, relying on examples of only the worst regeneration projects, selected statistics, and heart-tugging interviews with the dispossessed. Some of the reportage is insightful and genuinely eye-opening, but too often Minton makes knee-jerk generalisations where her research should be leading to more nuanced conclusions.

A recurring theme of the book is that council estates are being bulldozed throughout the city to make way for luxury flats that none but the very wealthy can afford. On the way, social-housing tenants are being displaced around the country or forced into giving up their tenancies altogether. But for each of her egregious examples of exploitative regeneration there are other unpublicised cases of happily housed tenants on rebuilt estates. There is cause to rally against cruelly unfair practices in the worst of cases, but why throw the baby out with the bathwater?

The redevelopment of Battersea Power Station is characterised as 'a high-class gated community, like every single one of the countless other new quarters planned for London'. Such generalisations aren't helpful.

She paints as one of the most grotesque distortions of our crisis foreign investors who purchase properties only to leave them empty as a kind of safe-keeping deposit. Never mind that a GLA study this year concluded that this was an infrequent occurrence and therefore an insignificant issue.

A minor grievance is the characterisation of the 'evil other' played through the lens of race. The

'Chinese investor' (and also the Russian, and Middle Eastern) is now ingrained in the popular imagination as the faceless automaton of some personal self-enrichment project, a byword for all that is brutishly capitalistic about foreign investment. If the actual point is the emotional detachment of capital from homes where people live, then why use a lazy and offensive stereotype?

There is some redemption in these pages – a very readable history of postwar housing policy. And Minton is at her best questioning our received understanding of terms such as 'mixed tenure', 'estate regeneration' and 'development viability' while exposing processes of property development that otherwise remain hidden from public scrutiny. The reader should also take away the sound rebuke that supply is not the sole solution to the crisis.

Disclosure: I work for an architecture practice involved in the design of new housing estates. That doesn't make me a worse or better commentator – we are all participants in this crisis whether first-time buyer or landlord, regeneration consultant or planning officer, foreign student or council tenant. Minton's appeal to all is to be angry and get political, however by diagnosing the crisis by its extreme excesses, she preaches to those already pining for deep structural change, but falls short of a balanced description of a complex situation.

This review is from the latest edition of the Journal of the London Society. You can read the Journal online or purchase a printed copy. ■



Darryl Chen is an architect with Hawkins\Brown

