

Royal Festival Hall A Living Icon

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Edited by
Eleanor Jolliffe
and Sandy
Rattray
Photography
by Edmund
Sumner
Foreword by
Dan
Cruickshank



The Royal Festival Hall (RFH) - an important example of modernism in architecture and one of London's best-loved buildings - was built as a beacon of hope and renewal after the Second World War, and quickly became popular.

In this new book, a selection of contributors - architects, technicians, musicians, historians and cultural programmers - tell the varied stories of the building and the people who use it. The book is illustrated with photography specially commissioned from the renowned architectural photographer Edmund Sumner, and contains 21 written contributions on different aspects of the RFH, from its history as a piece of architecture to the story of the famous organ, and from the approach to literature and spoken word to the life of the production team.

The building's emergence as a destination for all, whether to enjoy a performance by a world-famous symphony orchestra, a dance class, a poetry reading or just a cup of coffee, is considered in the context of the intentions of its original planners and those who have led, maintained and refurbished it since. This book offers an invaluable record of the history of this celebrated building in the first 75 years of its life, and looks to its future as a centre of cultural programming - both weathering and shaping change - for many more decades to come.

- Published to coincide with the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Royal Festival Hall
- Written by architects, musicians and technicians who have been closely involved with the building and its renovation
- A fascinating and thought-provoking book for anyone interested in the development of London's cultural life.



UK £39.95

Excerpts from Dan Cruickshank's foreword

On the Social Intent:

Cruickshank describes the original 1951 Hall as:

"a tangible expression of a burning desire to create a better society after the trauma of war."

On Democratic Architecture:

He emphasizes how the building rejected traditional, hierarchical design norms:

Cruickshank highlights that the architecture was explicitly conceived "not for the privileged few, but for everyone." He points out that the absence of segregated entrances, tiered bars, or class-divided seating reflected a radical post-war egalitarian philosophy.

On Its Place in Post-War Recovery:

He frames the building as a vital beacon of British Modernism, describing it as a monument built on optimism that served as a catalyst for urban and cultural regeneration on London's South Bank. ■



The Festival of Britain symbol by Abram Games.

The RFH is the only surviving structure from the festival

Where We Live: The Fractured Art of British Housebuilding and How to Build the Homes We Need



Icon Books, Hardback £17

by **Jonathan Glancey**

Britain is in the grip of a housing crisis. It has, in fact, been in the grip of a housing crisis since the Industrial Revolution, when the population soared and people crammed into towns and cities in search of work. What followed is a tale of suburbia, green belts and, since the 1980s, the increasingly common sight of mass-produced and near identical housing across the land.

This book argues that British house building over the centuries has been an art. An art of which we can be proud and an art we can still learn from. The artistry involved includes not just the design and appearance, but the setting of homes into the fabric of urban and rural landscapes and the very fabric of people's lives. We need to get the art of new housing right before building ever more homes that, while considered a necessity, no one truly likes.

Where We Live is at once a critical history of the art of British

housebuilding urban, suburban and rural, a study of where British housing has lost its way for the best part of a century, and a source of inspiration and hope for the future.

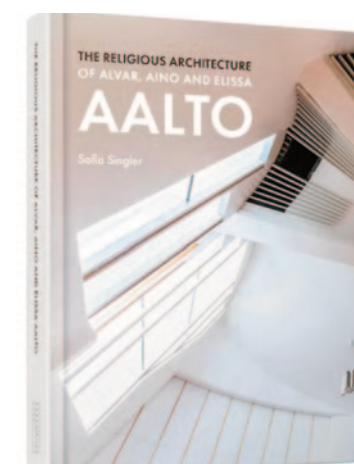
Where We Live is a commendably heartfelt book

Yes, Glancey writes, things are bad, and they may have been thus for a while - but this isn't a defeatist lament, because defeatism isn't a responsible option. Beauty and utility are worth fighting for.

We need to challenge the parallel failures of government and industry, banish the narrow fixation on costs and consultancies, and get back to some existential first principles: democracy, autonomy, decency, meaning.

The renewal of British housing, in other words, will depend on whether we're prepared to reassess not just where we live, but who and what we're living for. —*The Telegraph*

Books received



The Religious Architecture Of Alvar, Aino And Elissa Aalto

By Sofia Singler, Lund Humphries £55.00

Challenges previously held assumptions about Aalto's engagement with religion, reproducing previously unpublished drawings and photographs from the Aalto Foundation's archive.



Sustainable Approaches to Urban Transport

Edited By Dinesh Mohan, Geetam Tiwari, Routledge £43.19

Sustainable Approaches to Urban Transport brings together contributions from leading international experts in urban planning, transport, and governance who suggest changes to make our cities more sustainable in the face of climate change. All professionals working in transport and engineering and planning students will find an overview of a broad field in this interdisciplinary collection of essays.



Why Architects Matter: Evidencing and Communicating the Value of Architects by Flora Samuel, Routledge £43.53

Why Architects Matter straddles the spheres of 'Practice Management and Law', 'History and Theory', 'Design', 'Housing', 'Sustainability', 'Health', 'Marketing' and 'Advice for Clients', bringing them into an accessible whole. The book will therefore be of interest to professional architects, architecture students and anyone with an interest in our built environment and the role of professionals within it. ■