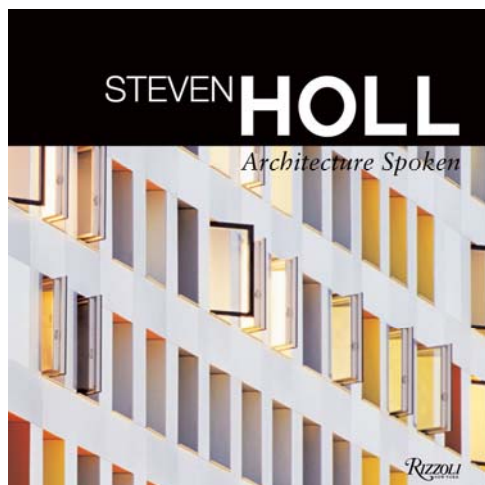


Steven Holl: Architecture Spoken / Steven Holl.--New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., May 2007.--304 p.: ill.--ISBN 0-8478-2920-0: \$75.00.



Steven Holl, professor (Graduate School of Architecture, Columbia University) and architect, is acclaimed for his experimental approach that does not impose architectural style, but develops an architectural idea from the unique characteristics of a site or program. He has written extensively, sharing his thoughts and philosophy on such topics as architectural design, experience of place, and communication through materials.

His early interest in writing dates back to at least 1978, when he and William Stout collaborated on the *Pamphlet Architecture* series, an alternative to traditional architecture publishing. Each publication, modest in size and economical in layout, was written, illustrated, and designed by one architect.

Holl's pamphlet included simple line drawings, spare watercolors, and the frequent use of axonometric views. Not surprisingly, subsequent books by Holl, published by Princeton Architectural Press, bear a certain resemblance to the *Pamphlet Architecture* publications, the majority of which Princeton Architectural Press re-issued in 1998. *Architecture Spoken*, a product of a commercial rather than university press, is a stylistic departure, larger in size and sumptuously designed with 300 images.

Its chapters—"Pro-Kyoto," "Compression," "Porosity," and "Urbanism"—are verbatim transcriptions of four seminal lectures that Holl delivered between 2001-2006. Documented projects follow and illustrate each lecture. The use of the lectures in this way results in a somewhat confusing narrative; without the slides, gestures and intonations that typically accompany lectures, the reader may have difficulty following Holl's thoughts and ideas. Project coverage, however, is excellent and each of the 24 projects that are featured, is illustrated with Holl's watercolors and a selection of photographs. Floor plans of each building are also included as well as the often sought sections, which are necessary to understand the architect's complex spatial moves. Some of the featured projects include the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (1992-1998), Simmons Hall, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1999-2002), Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art addition(2001-1007), and Busan Cinema Complex (2005).

Holl's anecdotes, drawn from interviews with Mildred Friedman, are a highlight of the book. At times amusing, they are always relevant to one's better understanding of the architect's approach to a project and to his concept of the purpose and meaning of buildings.

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