

Paolo Mendes da Rocha: Fifty Years / Edited by Rosa Artigas.--New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., November 2007.--391 p.: ill.--ISBN: 978-0-8478-2984-2: \$85.00.



Paolo Mendes da Rocha: Fifty Years adequately documents the architect's works, but those looking for criticism or context will be disappointed. The book offers instead an even-handed look at fifty-one of the architect's projects and built works, illustrated with plans, details, sketches, and photographs. An extensive bibliography of books and principal foreign and Brazilian reviews, a chronology of works and projects, and a brief biography are also included.

Editor Rosa Artigas notes that a conscious attempt has been made to avoid offering criticism of Mendes da Rocha's work and allow the reader to discover any themes or tendencies to be found in the designs. Furthermore, the book declines to place the architect in a Brazilian or world context so that Mendes da Rocha's role as the foremost practitioner of the Paulista School of architecture, the style centered in São Paulo, is left unsaid. This approach favors those already familiar with Mendes da Rocha or modern

Brazilian architecture, but for others, including most architecture students, there will likely be a missing dimension to the work.

Nevertheless, this is a worthwhile compendium and one of the few book-length publications on the architect in English. Originally published in Portuguese, the book is made up of two parts. The English translation of the first part was published as a stand-alone volume by Princeton Architectural Press in 2002 and details thirty-six projects from 1957 to 1999. The projects are grouped into three sections, each prefaced with a short essay by Mendes da Rocha on the selected themes: territory, technique and the city. The second part includes a new introduction, an interview with the architect, and fifteen projects from 2000-2007.

Between the publication of the first part and the revised publication of parts one and two in 2007, Mendes da Rocha won both the Mies van der Rohe Award for Latin American Architecture (2000) and the Pritzker Architecture Prize (2006). The awards brought the architect greater renown outside of São Paulo, Brazil, the site of most of his built work, and likely increased the audience for this volume. The perfect, seemingly simple concrete forms of works such as the Brazilian Museum of Sculpture in São Paulo, the arresting design for Patriarch Plaza (pictured on the dust jacket), or the recent chapel for Our Lady of the Conception in Recife, Brazil with its mix of historic rough brick walls and smooth modern concrete additions (reminiscent of Mendes da Rocha's earlier remodeling of the São Paulo Pinacothèque) make it easy to see why this architect's work is so appealing.

Recommended for architecture libraries.

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