
In Building after Auschwitz: Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust, Gavriel D. Rosenfeld takes on the somewhat contentious idea of “Jewish” architecture. Rosenfeld divides the tome into three parts: the first briefly examines historical pre-Holocaust Jewish architecture, followed by lengthier sections on post-World War II modernism and its manifestations in Jewish architecture, and Jewish architecture in the postmodern era.

Addressing the perceived increased Jewish accomplishment in the architectural profession post-World War II and responses to the Holocaust by Jewish architects, Rosenfeld clearly defines Jewish architecture as architecture produced by Jewish architects, rather than architecture produced to service Jewish people, and is careful to point out that some of the architects he discusses are reluctant to be viewed through the Jewish lens. In his conclusion, the author argues the success of Jewish architects increased when they began to embrace their religious and cultural identity as Jews, and began to be inspired by Jewish ideas. This conclusion is supported by the preceding chapters; however, Rosenfeld does concede that the “claim is debatable.”

Other publications examining the phenomenon of Jewish architecture tend to focus on Jewish spaces or individual Jewish architects such as Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place (2012) and Daniel Libeskind and the Contemporary Jewish Museum: New Jewish Architecture from Berlin to San Francisco (2008), while books on Jewish contributions to art and culture, such as Jewish Art and Culture (2006) and Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art (2001) omit architectural achievements entirely, making Rosenfeld’s contribution necessary and welcome.

Building after Auschwitz is scholarly and well-researched with complex arguments that are not easily summarized. At times the author’s subjective narration detracts from the scholarship, but it serves to give context to the discussion and his conclusions.

The book is amply illustrated in black and white and color, including a few floor plans and architectural renderings. It is printed on bright white matte-finish paper and is hard-bound in a durable cloth. Included are a comprehensive index and over fifty pages of notes. Appropriate for research and academic institutions, architectural and museum libraries.

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