Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance

Karal Ann Marling (Editor) , Neil Harris (Contributor) , Yi-Fu Tuan (Contributor)

Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance

Karal Ann Marling (Editor) , Neil Harris (Contributor) , Yi-Fu Tuan (Contributor)

Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance Karal Ann Marling (Editor) , Neil Harris (Contributor) , Yi-Fu Tuan (Contributor)
Uniting a roster of authors chosen from wide-ranging disciplines, this study is the first to examine the influence of Disneyland on both our built environment and our architectural imagination. Tracing the relationship of the Disney parks to their historical forebears, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance* charts Disneyland's evolution from one man's personal dream to a multinational enterprise, a process in which the Disney "magic" has moved ever closer to the real world. This is a unique perspective on one of the great post-war American icons.

Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance Details

Date : Published February 15th 1998 by Flammarion (first published 1997)
ISBN : 9782080136398
Author : Karal Ann Marling (Editor) , Neil Harris (Contributor) , Yi-Fu Tuan (Contributor)
Format : Hardcover 224 pages
Genre : Nonfiction, Architecture

Download and Read Free Online Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance Karal Ann Marling (Editor) , Neil Harris (Contributor) , Yi-Fu Tuan (Contributor)

From Reader Review Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance for online ebook

Daniel Butcher says

From BetweenDisney.com

I have heard a lot about Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance edited by Karal Ann Marling over the years. Honestly, I've often understood it to be next to John Hench's Designing Disney as a classic of the field. So when I found a used copy of Designing Disney's Theme Parks I knew it had to find it a spot in the Between Library.

Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance edited by Karal Ann Marling serves as a companion to an exhibition at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in the 1990s. As such, the book is focused heavy on design. The text includes articles on Imagineers as artists by Marty Sklar, design, Disneyland and culture and setting. The essays are surrounded by the many images including design sketches, model pictures and images of the park in action. Overall the general theme stresses the importance of understanding design in Disney Theme Parks and learning from them in other projects.

Honestly, I do not believe that Designing Disney's Theme Parks will be a go to book for me. The book does a good job of discussing design. But a lot has changed since the 1990s. The images includes many that at publication date would have likely been new to the reader, but today they have been published in numerous other books. But the difference between this volume and more recent is accessibility. This text really speaks to designers, and converses to them as professionals. Other offerings have a more general audience, speaking to many different fields. Additionally, I had hoped that a major theme of Designing Disney's Theme Parks would be movement. Honestly this is touched on but not empathized to the level I had expected from other commentators. Perhaps that fact this is a collection hindered the ability for it to maintain the consistent theme.

Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance edited by Karal Ann Marling is an important Between Book. It served as a predecessor for many of the design books that we have now, using pictures to help tell the Disney story. Hard-core Disney history fans need this volume. However, more casual readers may want to seek out a less technical book.

Howard Mansfield says

There are many overwrought books about Disney. The parks seem to emit a force field that drives all sense out of visiting writers, and sends academics off on their own "dark ride" of whatever French theorist is in fashion. Designing Disney's Theme Parks is a relief. Karal Ann Marling actually talks about the parks and how they have changed, and Greil Marcus's essay – "Forty Years of Overstatement" – clears the room of all the empty-headed criticism. This book accompanied an exhibit which displayed many original sketches of Disneyland's early designs. Sadly many of the drawings that are reproduced here are too small.

Kitty says

Probably only for the truly Disney-obsessed

The fact that I bought and read this book is probably a testament to my Disney obsession. However, it was actually a lot more "readable" than I imagined. There is a bit of architectural technical jargon that went over my head, but there is also a lot of casual talk about the thoughts and ideas that went into designing Disneyland, and later, the other Disney parks.

Katherine says

Love the explanations of the architecture of Disney. Well-planned theme parks take imagination and perseverance as Disney proved time and again! Wonderful insight into the ability of the man behind the mouse!

Eli says

This is the best book for an aspiring architectural imagineer

---

Simone says

Karal Ann Marling is awesome. She edits this book and also provides it's longest essay on the history and development of Disneyland architecture. The history is excellent and very engaging. She highlights the way the Disney park designs invoke and create place, especially through their use of "weenies" and forced perspective.

---

krad says

Could do a little less on the pretentiousness, and a little more on the artwork, the hands-on creating, and the films. Good for an academic history of the sets, though.

Steve says

A few years ago, I friend and I saw an exhibit at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC with the same title.

Unfortunately, this book is so beautiful, it's still sealed on a shelf in my room. I married a woman who is very much into Disney, I guess I should open it up, now.

Julie H. says

This book is the Rosetta Stone for anyone even mildly interested in architecture, design, and some of the backstory on how carefully planned all aspects of the public spaces are at Disney's theme parks. You'll never look at Main Street the same way again!

Chris says

I was rather disappointed. The main chapter was fascinating, presenting an interesting discussion of the architectural developments of Disney, and how Walt's vision, and the realities of design, budget and the American consumer shaped the parks. However, the layout was terrible--often images referenced were (for no apparent reason) pages ahead of the text. This is understandable in works that have a lot of relevant images for some sections and less for others, but often some relevant images were only encountered after numerous padding or irrelevant images, pages after the text had moved on to some other point. After the main body of text, several additional essays fill out the work, and are largely filler--I got the unfortunate impression several people need to publish something, and so they shaped their flavor of the week theories to Disney, or they cobbled together some material and put their name on it (see the essay that was mostly random block quotes criticizing Disney's design, with the author jumping in from time to time to mention it was random block quotes criticizing Disney's design--it could have been so much more and been a valuable counterpoint to the sometimes fawning main work). An interesting read, but one that could have been presented much more effectively and enjoyably.

Rebecca says

This is a wonderful book on the development of Disney theme parks, from the 1950s to today. It is academic and critical, but well-written and readable at the same time. The book also has a vast collection of Imagineering concept art, plans, maps, and elevations.

Andrew says

There is plenty to criticize about the Disney Corporation and the purely artistic merits of their creations are debatable, but it's impossible to deny the brilliance in the **design** of the Disney theme parks. Charles Eames said that "design is an expression of the purpose, and it may (if it is good enough) later be judged as art". The Disney theme parks undoubtedly have a purpose, and that is to entertain. The myriad ways they achieve that goal has never ceased to be a source of fascination for me - from architecture to illustration to engineering and everything in between.

According to quotes in this book, in both his films and theme parks Walt Disney consistently put the desires of his audience above that of art critics. In that sense, it occurred to me that he was probably one of the earliest practitioners of what we now call "user-centered design". It's the keystone of modern software development, and User Experience (UX) has become a critical component in almost all successful consumer

products. At its core, it's the idea that products should work with and for users, rather than against them. But more than that, a product should engage a user; its value is more than just its utility, it's the delight that comes from using it (think about the first time you held an iPhone). When I read Karal Ann Marling's description the challenge to Disney designers, it sounded exactly like UX Design to me: "Being a Disney store, a themed hotel, a Disney Park, imposes a burden on the architecture. It must be useable and utterly fantastical, all at once."

And yet the absolute success of the park's UX raises a surprising moral question. The better UX becomes, the less critical thought is required of the user. They don't have to figure a device out, because everything is so clear it's as though it's reading their mind. And while that seems an admirable goal, at some point does UX become so good that we turn our users into the hypnotized blob people of Pixar's WALL-E?

Marling calls Disney park design the "architecture of reassurance", and there is undoubtedly truth in that label. When a person walks onto Disney property, they know that every person, every thing, they encounter is ostensibly there to make them happy. Tom Carson, a critic from the Village Voice, summed this up in a quote as insightful as it is potentially disturbing: "I know it's this imminent abnegation of all independent will that thrills me each time I cross the parking lot to those heraldic ticket booths. The feeling's akin to the blissful relinquishing of responsibility I experience on airplanes, where I'm still happier than any place on Earth. I may die. But I won't be asked to live up to anything."

Disney blogger Foxx in Scott Renshaw's Happy Place: Living the Disney Parks Life shares a similar sentiment regarding the theme parks. "They're so brilliantly, romantically realized that they somehow short-circuit that part of your brain that calls 'fake'! In a larger sense, that's what [a Disney park does]: disarms our credulity with oppressive, overwhelming skill so complete that the only responsible response is to give in. Their fakeness is so pervasive, so conceptually radical, that we dare not find the seams. It'd be impolite."

Designing Disney's Theme Parks has left me at a curious impasse. I hadn't previously thought of the theme parks in terms of the pioneering genius in their UX. But just as I marvel at their brilliance, I find myself wondering about where user-centered design ultimately leads us. I don't mean to suggest that we should make our technology harder to use, but I do wonder what happens over time the less we expect of our users. In the same way that Disney Parks or iPhones reassure and delight us, do they also contribute to our eventual "abnegation of all independent will"?

Deke says

More insightful than you might expect, and nice to have a Greil Marcus essay in the mix to cut through the treacle.

Josh says

This book was fascinating and offered a great new perspective on the parks for a longtime visitor of both. That said, I will agree that it was pretty dense in some places and a few of the terms may have gone over my head. None the less, I learned a lot and I think it is worth your time if you are going to any of the parks and have a genuine interest in reading about how and why things were done they way they were.