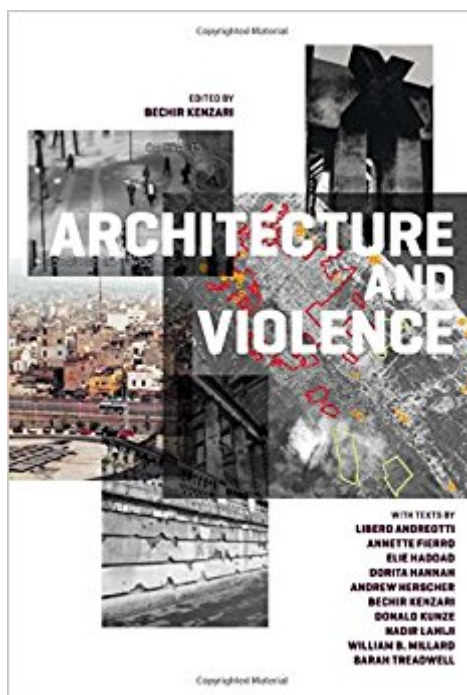


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# Architecture And Violence



## Synopsis

This is a compelling compilation of essays by international architectural theorists on the relationship of violence to space. With the events of September 11th, the London bombings, the Madrid train explosions, and the daily blasts in Baghdad, the question of violence and terrorism is imposing architectural ramifications with renewed urgency. A new sense of architectural awareness has been forged as violence is forcing its place as an architectural datum. Wide-ranging contributions approach design issues related to violence through multiple angles and intersections. We only need to flip casually through the repertoire of the built environment to realize that certain built structures (from concentration camps to separation walls, from jails to propaganda exhibitions, from slaughterhouses to suburban complexes, from illegal settlements to palaces) either sanction violence or give it a spatial ground to happen and thrive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Architecture and Violence provides a fine survey of modern architectural theory and relationships between such architecture and violent events. It considers propaganda exhibitions, suburban residential complexes, concentration camps and more, offering a history of both physical structures and their connections to violence. Fine discussions of the social, political and artistic impact of architectural choices and design concepts make this a highly recommended, powerful recommendation for any college-level architectural collection." --The Midwest Book Review

Diverse perspectives by international theorists on architecture's new relationship to violence

Without doubt, this book is a valuable contribution to architecture theory. Ten essays approach the relationship between violence and architecture under different points of view. This is, at the same time, one of its qualities and its major problem. The authors analyze from the intrinsic violent values of the process of creation in architecture to the violent consequences of the architectural objects on users and the environment; from the poetic use of violence in the making, to the violence suffered along the inhabiting. The reading of this book has been an insightful yet irregular experience, especially due to the diversity of its essays. It is impossible to maintain the same level of interest in all ten chapters. Some of them seem to have been forced into the theme to meet the common requirements. Many of them are wonderful discussions of yet untouched themes in architecture theory, which I would be delighted to see expanded and deepened, perhaps developing into more than essays but into books. That is the case of Dr. Kenzari's, W. Millard's or N. Lahiji's essays. I have to point out that I was delighted with Elie Haddad's critique of B-018 nightclub project and inspired to go back to Bataille, Foucault and Benjamin while reading the book as a whole. Even more important, I was seduced into looking for new bibliography as for instance Hollier's writings on Bataille or Zizek's works. I only missed any quote from Eliade's oeuvre who is, in my opinion, tacitly cited in many of the writings, especially in the inspiring "Construction Rites..." by Bechir Kenzari. I would like to finish quoting Eliade's Sacred and Profane: "If the Gods had to beat and quarter a marine Monster or a primordial Being in order to create the World, Man, at the same time, has to imitate this same action when building his own world, city or dwelling. Therefore, the necessity of Sacrifice..."

Architecture and Violence: a very interesting book about very intriguing topic, rarely discussed but in fact very common to the act of construction, in some form always present around our profession. This series of ten essays by distinguished authors- one could name some of them "short novels about architecture"- tackle the topic from surprisingly different perspectives. Daring premises sometimes lead to wondrous conclusion, explaining the daily reality of architects' profession in completely unexpected ways. Interests of the represented authors span from the origins of the profession (the ancient cruel rites around the act of the foundation of a building or a city) to the competitive nature of the contemporary (bigger, higher...) construction industry; from the fresh reading of Archigram's radical projects as nostalgic instead of futuristic, to the reminiscence of the famous Robert Smithson's Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey... Assuming that we know what is "Architecture", what is "Violence" from the title of this collection? Violence of planning,

zoning and construction codes over residents or violence of project managers, contractors and professional organizations over architects? Violence of iconicity or violence of the ugly and the ordinary over, generally, architecture? Are the relations in the built environment really getting more and more complex, from the Tower of Babel to the Twin Towers, or has the essence always been the same? I recommend this book to anybody interested in this and similar questions. "Short novels about architecture" featuring outstanding personalities in range from Fernand Pouillon to Tony Soprano are delightful reading.

This collection fills a gap in architecture theory literature that has been apparent for some time. Kenzari's book finds its place among several recent monographs and collections on cultural politics in the built environment, but thematically follows most directly from the "Violence Space" issue of the journal *Assemblage*. The earlier collection, published almost twenty years ago, broke new ground in bringing philosophical and literary discourses to bear on an aspect of architecture that was largely under-explored at the time, but many of the *Assemblage* essays were rather idiosyncratic and even at times somewhat tangential to the title themes. The essays in *Architecture and Violence*, on the other hand, never stray very far from careful investigation into relationships between violence and the human-made environment. Almost without exception, these essays provide compelling examples and well reasoned arguments exploring the ways that the built world manifests forms of violence that sometimes escape notice and almost always have profound (and sometimes devastating) effects. The essays in this collection are uniformly well written and insightful, grounded in diverse cultural conditions, and explore the issues from a range of complimentary viewpoints. A wonderful addition to the literature, important for specialists but accessible to a wide audience with interests in architecture, politics, and philosophy. Highly recommended.

The central theme of the book deals with the critical relation between violence and architecture. As violence is increasingly becoming an essential component of today's troubled world, the interest in its effects on the built environment is not only justified but urgent. Drawing on this thesis, the authors weave together ten comprehensive analyses of several violent settings from a spatial/architectural standpoint. The prose is particularly strong and incisive. I recommend this collection of essays, written by some of the best architectural theorists, as insightful and provocative. I'm convinced that academics, students, practitioners, as well as policymakers and officials will find "Architecture and Violence" worth-reading indeed.

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