

ARCHITECTURE STYLES: A VISUAL GUIDE*Owen Hopkins*

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A Review by

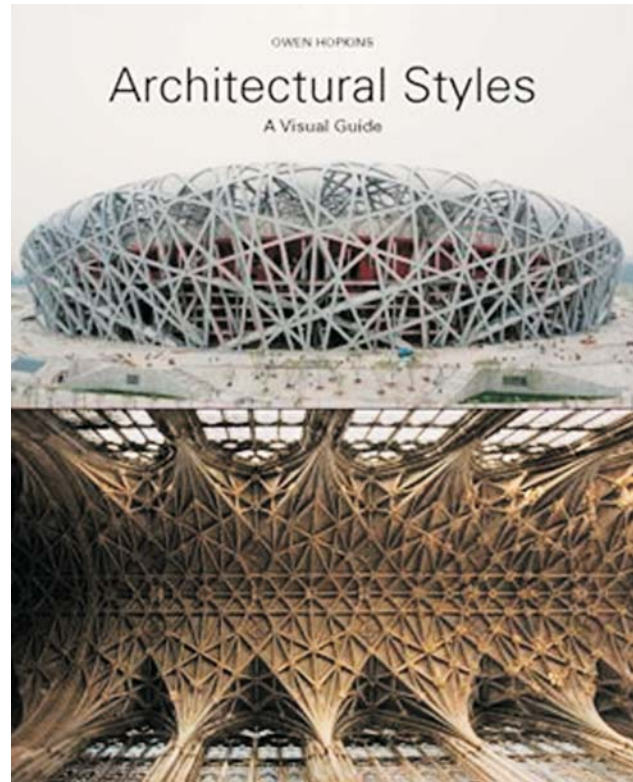
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Owen Hopkins is a British author of several books related to architecture. He is also a historian and curator. He works for the Architecture Programme at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. His famous books include *Reading Architecture: A Visual Lexicon*, *Architectural Styles: A Visual Guide*, *From the Shadows: The Architecture and Afterlife of Nicholas Hawksmoor*. His scholarly interests range from Nicholas Hawksmoor grandeur to Alison and Peter Smithson.

The book “Architectural Styles” is an amalgamation of the architectural history and the modern architectural forms. In this book the author discusses history, culture, civilization and the architectural forms. The basic idea about ‘styles’ is taken from the Swiss architectural historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who made a great attempt to present all the styles of the history of architecture in the form of a chart known as the “Problem of the Development of Style”.

In the beginning of his visual guide to architectural styles, Hopkins introduces the reader to the different architectural styles of the 19th century, something that helps architectural historians create charts documenting the developments of styles of buildings. Two hundred and twenty pages later, in the book's postscript, the author poses a question about the ever-increasing architectural variety and the possibilities of 'styles'. In both instances, Hopkins appears to be arguing against the validity of architectural style and the need for a book documenting one. Generally the book is a good introduction for students of architecture.

There are nine chapters in the book based on form, social and cultural characteristics, architectural manners and principle components of western architecture, from the classical age to present day. The focus is mainly on the



visual aspect, i.e. there are captioned photographs of nearly three hundred buildings with a brief introduction. Through this book, readers can clearly understand the broad cultural trends and the ideologies with respect to different periods of architectural development. This book has a power to enhance the conception of style. In short, this book is worth reading for those who are interested in history of architecture. The book helps in explaining about how to distinguish between Gothic and Gothic Revival, or how to differentiate between Baroque and Neoclassical? It uses photographs to help explain and recognize the characteristic features of nearly three hundred buildings. The result is a clear and easy-to-navigate guide that identifies the key styles of western architecture from the classical age to the present day.

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According to the author the visuals communicate the design history specialists, outlining advancements in the appearances of structures after some time. "While from constantly expanding design variety...what conceivable outcomes are there for 'style'?" In both occasions, Hopkins seems to create a sense of being, opposing against the legitimacy of building style and the requirement for a book. However, he has composed a manual in which he focuses on pictorial presentation. It is a very informative book with respect to both architecture and engineering.

Hopkins provides an explanation on the everlastingly changing architectural styles with the passage of time, the process of change in terms of evolution or diminishing of styles throughout history. The decline of styles is suitably modest and prevents to dictate any sort of principles, as an alternative touching on the most commonly referenced themes for each style. This helps to get an idea about multiplicity of perceptions of design and advancement in construction technology that can be seen in history. The sub-headings offer textual interpretation that keeps the interest of the reader along with the visual information available. The definitions and depiction of the variety of details, are mainly visual, that offer a valuable insight into the diverse characters of one particular style under discussion. Through this book, readers can clearly understand the broad cultural trends and the ideologies with respect to different periods of architectural development.

This book is a blend of both the quantum of text and pictorial representation, so that the reader is able connect visual proof of architectural advancement and alteration, to clearly worded, helpful information and insights which complement their subjects. Unlike rival titles, which focus on the more superficial elements of style, Hopkins' book is a very balanced companion and readily available visual-resource for a wide range of architecturally minded reader. Hopkins gives a ordered and knowledgeable perspective on the varying design styles that have risen and fallen through the ages. The depiction of styles is suitably modest and abstains from managing an exact arrangement of principles, rather addresses the most usually referenced topics for each style.

The book begins with a part on the Classical form of architecture and proceeds to Early Christian, Gothic and Medieval, Renaissance and Mannerism, Baroque and Rococo, Neoclassicism, Eclecticism and Modernism. The last section of the book emphasizes the possibility that style is verifiable; it is utilized to discuss what occurred before, instead of what is going on now. Hopkins incorporates Regionalism, De-constructivism, Eco-engineering, Expressive Rationalism

and Contextualism in the last section of the book. He elucidates minute details about every style in depth that ranges with time and can be found in the spread. Within every section and sub-style, Hopkins emphasizes key terms that are captioned with the image of the buildings. There isn't anything essentially amiss with the approach of the book, however on occasions Hopkins goes overboard with visuals, as he does in another publication entitled "Reading Architecture", which incorporates various drawings, numerous with marks, and photos named as a method for visual narrating. The author has made a good attempt in putting together this book and in bringing many aspects under a single title. Generally the overall structure of the book is clear and makes it easy-to-navigate. This book is compact and can be comprehended easily. This is a book that one can take to a coffee shop and read cover to cover, and feel like one has traveled through history and witnessed the evolution in architectural form and style.