



May 31, 2011

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## *"50 Buildings You Should Know" by Isabel Kuhl*

Summertime is traditionally for lighter reading and so it will be with this BuchNotes. 50 Buildings You Should Know by Isabel Kuhl fits this category very well since it is largely a book of architectural photos combined with capsule commentary on each building. The author, an art historian based in Barcelona, presents the buildings, "you should know", not necessarily the ones most important in the history of architecture.

It's an unusual list and an interesting one since it includes several buildings that aren't usually included in traditional surveys of the history of architecture. In addition to many familiar buildings, important in the history of architectural styles, it also presents several that have mostly historical, rather than architectural significance. Among these are the Hradcany in Prague, Angkor Wat, Castel Del Monte, the United States Capitol, and the Kremlin. Of those with architectural significance three of the most interesting are the National Stadium in Beijing, (the Bird's Nest), the Jewish Museum in Berlin, and Philip Johnson's Glass House.

The book is curious in several respects. It lacks any information on the author. I think it's good to know something about the author to fully appreciate a book. It also doesn't have an introduction, or preface, or forward, so there's no clue to the author's purpose in writing the book or why she selected the buildings she did. When you're selecting only 50 buildings from the hundreds of potential candidates around the world, it's easy to find 50, but why this group? Additionally, in the capsule description of each building there's no mention of the architectural or historical thread that links each building to the others. The descriptions do provide the historical significance of each building but only a few include very much on their architectural significance.

For an architect with any recollection of architectural history, the book will probably not provide too much new information. What it does provide is an opportunity to revisit many landmark buildings and be reminded of their importance. For this alone the book is fun to read. More importantly, it will also prompt you to stop to consider your own list of the most important buildings in history. What would your list include? The book will be most useful for non-architects who are interested in a survey of architectural history.

The book was published by Prestel in 2007 with 170 pages, nearly all of which are photographs. The author has also written books on 50 architects you should know and 50 sculptors you should know in addition to a book on Andy Warhol.

*Submitted By*

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