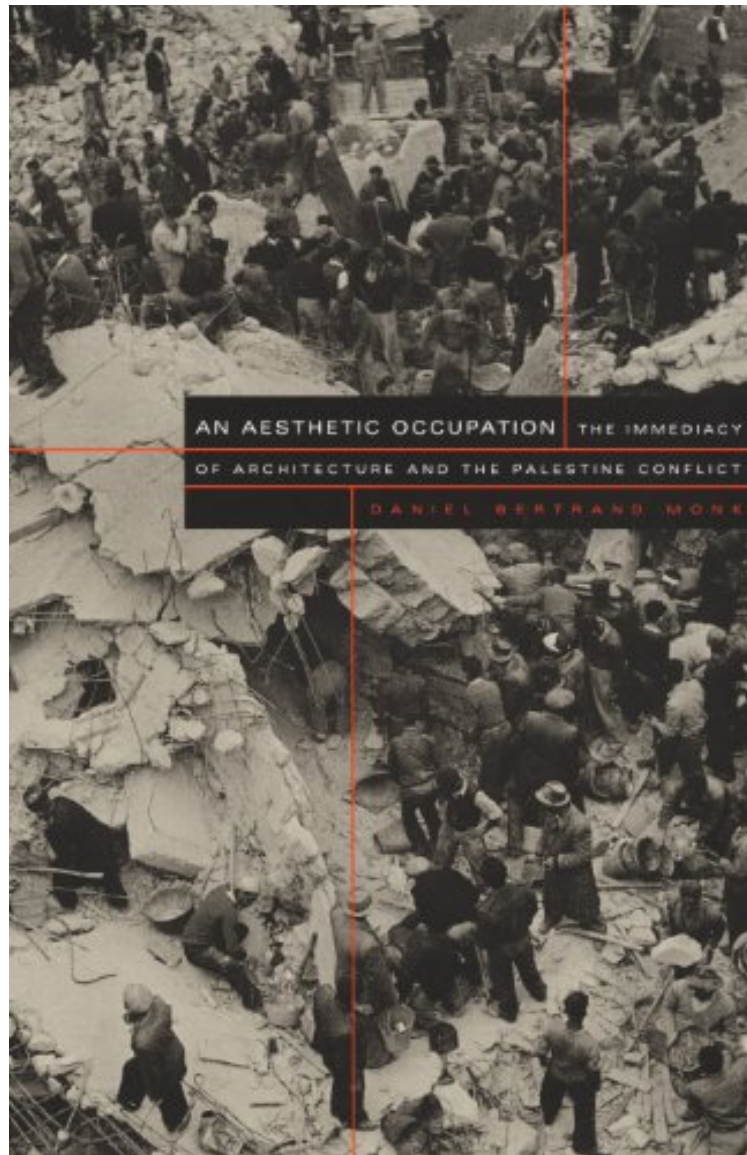


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# An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict

*Daniel Bertand Monk*

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**Daniel Bertand Monk : An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict**

before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insufferable Pretentious GarbageBy Ryan WitteThis is one of the most horribly written books I have ever had the displeasure to read. Thoroughly unenjoyable from the first page to the

last; I could not wait to be done with it. It's repetitive and redundant: I've never read so many sentences in a row that go around and around in circles and arrive absolutely nowhere. It's infuriatingly obtuse: Monk needs to put down the Nietzsche, the Hegel, and the damned thesaurus for five minutes and just get to a point that makes some sense. It's choking and claustrophobic: Monk never departs from practically a single moment in time in the life of a single building, so there's no cause and effect for his ideas to develop into anything useful. It's clumsy and cumbersome: literally half of the entire book is dedicated to footnotes, and since the footnote type is smaller, it means that there's actually more text in the notes than in the actual body of the book. To get the full story (and most of the notes are better written, by other authors), one has to be continually flipping back and forth, back and forth to the second half of the book. I needed two bookmarks, obnoxious. And what's more, the explanatory notes are not separated from the source citations, so you're often flipping pages for information you didn't particularly need right at that moment. Obviously the notes weren't added to the bottom of the individual pages as they should've been because it would've been so much clearer how ridiculous it is; more footnotes than original writing. Most importantly, it barely even touches on architecture, and furthermore, the closer it approaches the subject of physically constructed buildings, the more muddled, confused, and garbled the concepts become. Don't waste your time or your money on this unless you hope to care less than you already do about the subjects it claims to discuss.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
 By FernandoGreat book  
 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Fresh Perspective on the Palestine Conflict  
 By Stephen Wasserman  
 In light of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, Monk's *An Aesthetic Occupation* offers an enlightening perspective on the tired discourse of recrimination and counter-recrimination that has guided the Palestine conflict for over a hundred years. Monk's analysis of architecture as the focus of the accusations fired from both sides does not recreate the rhetoric of the historical actors he engages. Rather, as Monk himself would put it, his book is a history of the history of how architecture has been deployed in the conflict. And as such, the book both gets at the very emptiness of the ideologies that drive this conflict, and demonstrates the eternal return of that emptiness as both sides re-invoke architecture as the epicenter of historical ethnic claims on the land. In this, we need only remind ourselves that the current violence was sparked by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in the autumn of 2000, in a blatant disregard (and repetition) of a history of ideological discourse about architecture and ownership of place that goes back at least to General Charles Gordon, the nineteenth-century British imperialist with whom Monk begins his study. In short, this is an excellent book, excellent because it is able to articulate and theorize the discursive and aesthetic apparatus in which Middle Eastern politics of the conflict have been caught. Monk does not offer explicit solutions out of that morass, but one is still forced to believe that enlightenment and analysis are the first step toward a solution. It is here that Monk's book offers something for the present and for the future.

In *An Aesthetic Occupation* Daniel Bertrand Monk unearths the history of the unquestioned political immediacy of "sacred" architecture in the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Monk combines groundbreaking archival research with theoretical insights to examine in particular the Mandate era—the period in the first half of the twentieth century when Britain held sovereignty over Palestine. While examining the relation between monuments and mass violence in this context, he documents Palestinian, Zionist, and British attempts to advance competing arguments concerning architecture's utility to politics. Succumbing neither to the view that monuments are autonomous figures onto which political meaning has been projected, nor to the obverse claim that in Jerusalem shrines are immediate manifestations of the political, Monk traces the reciprocal history of both these positions as well as describes how opponents in the conflict debated and theorized their own participation in its self-representation. Analyzing controversies over the authenticity of holy sites, the restorations of the Dome of the Rock, and the discourse of accusation following the Buraq, or Wailing Wall, riots of 1929, Monk discloses for the first time that, as combatants looked to architecture and invoked the transparency of their own historical situation, they simultaneously advanced—and normalized—the conflict's inability to account for itself. This balanced and unique study will appeal to anyone interested in Israel or Zionism, the Palestinians, the Middle East conflict, Jerusalem, or its monuments. Scholars of architecture, political theory, and religion, as well as cultural and critical studies will also be informed by its arguments.

From Publishers Weekly  
 A scholarly look at the role of architecture in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, *An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestinian Conflict* shows why controversies over monuments (like Ariel Sharon's infamous visit to Haram al-Sarif, which touched off the current intifada) can explode into violence. Focusing particularly on the British Mandate period and using examples like the Wailing Wall riots of 1929 and the restoration of the Dome of the Rock, Daniel Bertrand Monk, a SUNY-Stony Brook art and architecture professor, explores how holy sites were transformed into political symbols. Academic in tone, this unusual study offers a new perspective on a still roiling dispute. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "A revelatory history of the architectural construction of the Israel/Palestine conflict that is also a stunningly original contribution to critical theory in the tradition of Adorno and Benjamin. Monk shows how both sides—thanks in

part to the Britishmdash;became trapped in a deadly quicksand of sacralized geographies and imagined histories.rdquo;mdash;Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz*