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Architecture and Spectacle: A Critique

Gevork Hartoonian

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Gevork Hartoonian : Architecture and Spectacle: A Critique before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Architecture and Spectacle: A Critique:

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Focusing on six leading contemporary architects: Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Bernard Tschumi, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas and Steven Holl, this book puts forward a unique and insightful analysis of "neo-avant-garde" architecture. It discusses the spectacle and excess which permeates contemporary architecture in reference to the present aesthetic tendency for image making, but does so by applying the tectonic of theatricality discussed by the 19th-century German architect Gottfried Semper. In doing so, it breaks new ground by opening up a dialogue between the study of the past and the design of the present. The work of each discussed architect is seen as addressing a historiographical problem.

To this end, and this is the second important aspect of this book, the chosen buildings are discussed in terms of the thematic of the culture of building (the tectonic of column and wall for example) rather the formal, and this through a discussion that is informed by the latest available theories. Having set the aesthetic implication of the processes of the digitalization of architecture, the book's conclusion highlights "strategies" by which architecture might postpone the full consequences of digitalization, and thus the becoming of architecture as ornament on its own right.

'In venturously reviewing design approaches undertaken by very different architects, Gevork Hartoonian seeks to underscore the importance of criticism squarely positioned within the ambiance or culture of building. From Semperian theatricality to Hollian materiality, he raises a number of issues of interest to the designer, not the least of which are the animating force of tectonics or its underlying technological fingerprint.' Harry Francis Mallgrave, Illinois Institute of Technology, USA 'The role played by architecture within contemporary economies of the spectacle is perhaps the most pressing issue facing architectural criticism and theory today. With rare lucidity and nuance, *Architecture and Spectacle: A Critique* provides us with an account of the political economy underpinning architecture's current interests in surface and theatricality that could scarcely be bettered. Focused on the 'neo-avant-garde' practices, but informed throughout by a critical archaeology of modern architecture's shifting engagements with technology and the visual culture of the commodity since the nineteenth century, Hartoonian is a brilliant guide to the cultural logic and possibilities of architectural production in advanced capitalism.' David Cunningham, University of Westminster, UK
About the Author Gevork Hartoonian is Professor of Architecture at the University of Canberra, Australia