



The Prodigious Builders: notes toward a natural history of architecture with special regard to those species that are traditionally neglected or downright ignorant

Bernard Rudofsky

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From dust jacket notes: "...Here, Rudofsky displays his genius for seeing and explaining the meaning of vernacular architecture - the dwelling, fortifications, tombs, monuments, and countless other adaptations that constitute the global legacy of untutored men both ordinary and extraordinary: the 'prodigious builders.' The author's discussions range from China's floating villages to the cultural significance of doors and windows in various parts of the world; from a Polish salt mine so vast as to be a self-contained community complete with churches, restaurants, and a narrow-gauge railway, to the African Dogon's 'Big House,' whose parts collectively symbolize a man procreating; from the ingenious pre-technological alternatives to air-conditioning, to giant observation kites. In each case Rudofsky brings to his subject a singular blend of erudition, wit, and insight that makes the exotic seem logical and the commonplace bizarre....Rudofsky's cogent arguments are amply documented with over 100 of his unparalleled photographs, in addition to many more rare engravings and other illustrations. The total effect is to expand far beyond dictionary definitions our concepts of both architecture and the human spirit."

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