Architectural Agents: The Delusional, Abusive, Addictive Lives of Buildings

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Buildings are not benign; rather, they commonly manipulate and abuse their human users. *Architectural Agents* makes the case that buildings act in the world independently of their makers, patrons, owners, or occupants. And often they act badly.

Treating buildings as bodies, Annabel Jane Wharton writes biographies of symptomatic structures in order to diagnose their pathologies. The violence of some sites is rooted in historical trauma; the unhealthy spatial behaviors of other spaces stem from political and economic ruthlessness. The places examined range from the Cloisters Museum in New York City and the Palestine Archaeological Museum (renamed the Rockefeller Museum) in Jerusalem to the grand Hostal de los Reyes Católicos in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, and Las Vegas casino resorts. Recognizing that a study of pathological spaces would not be complete without an investigation of digital structures, Wharton integrates into her argument an original consideration of the powerful architectures of video games and immersive worlds. Her work mounts a persuasive critique of popular phenomenological treatments of architecture.

Architectural Agents advances an alternative theorization of buildings' agency—one rooted in buildings' essential materiality and historical formation—as the basis for her significant intervention in current debates over the boundaries separating humans, animals, and machines.

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