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Heroic: Concrete Architecture And The New Boston



Synopsis

Often problematically labeled as "Brutalist" architecture, the concrete buildings that transformed Boston during 1960s and 1970s were conceived with progressive-minded intentions by some of the world's most influential designers, including Marcel Breuer, Le Corbusier, I. M. Pei, Henry Cobb, Araldo Cossutta, Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, Paul Rudolph, Josep Lluís Sert, and The Architects Collaborative. As a worldwide phenomenon, building with concrete represents one of the major architectural movements of the postwar years, but in Boston it was deployed in more numerous and diverse civic, cultural, and academic projects than in any other major U.S. city. After decades of stagnation and corrupt leadership, public investment in Boston in the 1960s catalyzed enormous growth, resulting in a generation of bold buildings that shared a vocabulary of concrete modernism. The period from the 1960 arrival of Edward J. Logue as the powerful and often controversial director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to the reopening of Quincy Market in 1976 saw Boston as an urban laboratory for the exploration of concrete's structural and sculptural qualities. What emerged was a vision for the city's widespread revitalization often referred to as the "New Boston." Today, when concrete buildings across the nation are in danger of insensitive renovation or demolition, Heroic presents the concrete structures that defined Boston during this remarkable period—from the well-known (Boston City Hall, New England Aquarium, and cornerstones of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University) to the already lost (Mary Otis Stevens and Thomas F. McNulty's concrete Lincoln House and Studio; Sert, Jackson & Associates' Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School)—with hundreds of images; essays by architectural historians Joan Ockman, Elizabeth Cohen, Keith N. Morgan, and Douglass Shand-Tucci; and interviews with a number of the architects themselves. The product of 8 years of research and advocacy, Heroic surveys the intentions and aspirations of this period and considers anew its legacies—both troubled and inspired.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a rare book on Boston Architecture, particularly the White (Concrete) Period during 1960~1976. The time of the story is bracketed by the famous Boston City Hall and the Quincy Market project. The book is divided into three sections. It begins with the scholars' essays. Of which, Mr. Douglass Shand-Tucci essay and Prof. Joan Ockman's essay particularly stand out. Second section is on buildings. This section provides project description and photos. Project description was provided by Mark Pasnik (Author), Chris Grimley (Author), Michael Kubo (Author). The trio did an excellent & diligent archive findings to revive the critics' voices of the Heroic era. Readers will find it quite interesting how the architectural circle of the Heroic period reacted when each of the Heroic building was first built. Last section is on Voices. The last section is particularly valuable because actual players (architects) of the White Period share their thoughts and experience. Hearing directly from Michael McKinnell, Henry Cobb, and Araldo Cossutta is particularly awesome. A story first heard (personally) was on Mary Otis Stevens and Thomas F. McNulty's concrete Lincoln House and Studio. Getting to know the inside stories of Cambridge 7's aquarium and TAC's Brattle Street projects were also intriguing. Boston began its Heroic Period following Beton Brut period of late Le Corbusier building. Heroic, as a counter movement to late CIAM urbanism, made a significant architecture history in Boston. Story of Boston City Hall, Rudolph's Government Center, Pei's Concrete buildings, Sert's Harvard and BU buildings, and the Le Corbusier's only American building (Carpenter Center) is well presented, documented, and argued. Great Book and Great Story of Boston Heroic Period. The book is beefy, but a page-turner, great graphics and photos. Must buy for Boston architecture and urbanism fans. Please more books on Boston Architecture !

"Heroic" is as beautiful as it is informative. The book is more than a survey of mid-twentieth century concrete architecture in Boston; it is an elegant history of that architecture, the process of designing and building it, and the historical context in which it was created. Perhaps most important, the book details the optimistic spirit that drove the creation of this "heroic" architecture and the vision of a "New Boston" at a time of unprecedented decline in the city. "Heroic" offers lovers and detractors of

Boston's concrete architecture (often derided as Brutalist) a new appreciation of the history and culture in which it was created, and perhaps even of the often beautiful and exuberant aesthetics of these icons of Boston's built form.

Great book for the lovers of Brutalist architectural style.

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