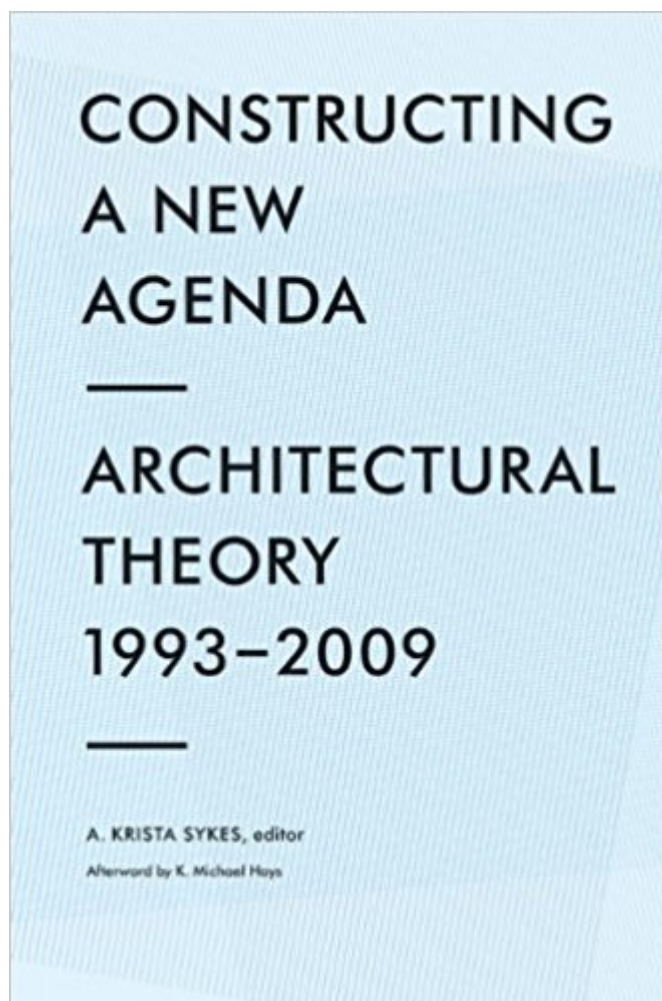


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# Constructing A New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993-2009



## Synopsis

Critical architectural theory has, over the past decade and a half, undergone significant transformation. The urgency of the 1990s postpractice movement, with its mandate to focus on the realities of building, has shifted architectural theory away from utopian ideals and heavy-handed cultural critiques toward the realities of architecture and building. This transition renders theory's immediate history particularly relevant to contemporary thought and practice. *Constructing a New Agenda* offers an overview of the myriad approaches and attitudes adopted by architects and architectural theorists during this era. In this long-awaited follow-up to our critically acclaimed and best-selling anthology *Theorizing a New Agenda*, editor A. Krista Sykes collects twenty-eight essays that address architectural theory from the mid-1990s, where the first volume left off, through the present. Multiple themes—including the impact of digital technologies on processes of architectural design, production, materiality, and representation; the implications of globalization and networks of information; the growing emphasis on sustainable and green architecture; and the phenomenon of the "starchitect" and iconic architecture—overlap to address the contemporary situation as a whole. By providing, in one place, the key theoretical texts of the past fifteen years, *Constructing a New Agenda* becomes a foundation for ongoing discussions surrounding contemporary architectural thought and practice. Contributions by distinguished thinkers and makers such as Stan Allen, Deborah Berke, Michael Braungart, Rem Koolhaas, Sanford Kwinter, Greg Lynn, Reinhold Martin, William McDonough, William Mitchell, Samuel Mockbee, Glenn Murcutt, Jesse Reiser and Nanako Umemoto, Michael Speaks and Anthony Vidler are preceded by brief introductions that establish each essay's particular historical context and significance. An afterword by preeminent architectural theorist K. Michael Hays reflects on where architectural theory is today and where it's headed in the future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A. Krista Sykes is an independent scholar living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"Architecture Theory Since 1968" honestly was all about critical theory. Kate Nesbitt's book, "theorizing a new agenda...1965-1995" was a more balanced theory book, giving equal weights to critical regionalism, phenomenology, structuralism, and post-structuralism. But still, it was all about -ology and -ism. Big thoughts and big talks. Thankfully, this edition, by editor A. Krista Sykes, is about playful and delightful ways of thinking architecture. At last,,, (it's about time !!!),,,, we see an architectural theory centered around design and practice that makes architects laugh and nod. I mean if you are a fan of an architectural theory, here is a book for you. The word, "Projective", summarizes my reading of the book. Projective is not an ideological narratives (a critical-theory based talks), instead, it's a design stance of i-phone attitude; playful and musical, fingertip pushing and pulling of screens, seeking information & networking worldwide. Marxism on diet and Capitalism on weight.

Very interesting. The anthology of the critical texts is very organized.

This is a thoroughly disappointing collection. What's wrong with architecture theory? Read this book. Many of the authors are friends and/or married to one another. As a matter of fact, the big daddy of the theorists featured in the volume appears to be Peter Eisenman. Lynn is married to Lavin, Davidson is married to Eisenman, Lynn used to work for Eisenman and Somol and Whiting did too. Graafland (w/ a stint of research work at Eisenman's) is a good friend of Hays and sponsored Vidler's dissertation at the Berlage/TU Delft... Speaks and Van Toorn both worked w/ Graafland in the Netherlands...etc. etc. (What's up with this Dutch connection?) Perhaps the smart people of architecture are friends with one another, marry one another, promote one another, and/or have Dutch friends... And what's even worse, many of the articles by these theorists essentially refer to one another. And of course you cannot have an architecture theory book without Kipnis...who seems like a friend of almost everyone in the book, wrote many pieces with/for/about Eisenman,

Lynn, Reiser, etc. and taught with many in the book, too. The book is a scary black hole of its own universe. Or is this supposed to be some kind of a feedback loop? So incestuous and gorging on one another, regurgitating the tired theory curds... Or am I missing something here? Sure, it is clear that many of the pieces in the book served the discourse of architecture well. But they are at this point simply historical. For that matter they served architecture well for it to get where it is now for whatever it's worth. But they no longer provide the new agenda. Why isn't there anything by Roche or DeLanda, for example? If one were to include Mitchell in the cast (credit is due to the editors on this point), how about Varela, Lakoff-Johnson, Hayles, Thrift, Masumi or Žižek? There are a lot more interesting theories on architecture outside architecture theory when it comes to new agendas for architecture. The practicing architects' pieces sound interesting enough, but do they really set the "new agenda"? I don't think so. It is quite silly that the editors vaunt of small entrepreneurial firms networking each other and then feature Foster and Rogers. Come on!!! As for sustainability, the featured pieces have been useful, but the debate has moved on (e.g. to the notion of the species-specific conception of environment and of the interspecies relations)...

McDonough-Braungart version of sustainability is not tenable and only provides a cover for continued excesses of unbridled consumer capitalism. If one were to go down this road, why not feature Lovins w/ his natural capitalism? In the end, the editors simply paid a lip service to sustainability only because it is a hot-selling issue. Can you today make a book about architecture without mentioning sustainability? I guess they had to do something on this front. Looking at the sustainability pieces they selected, the editors seem to have no idea about the current up-to-date issues and debates in this regard. Overall, this is an astoundingly ill-conceived and disappointing collection that is focused on a narrow nepotistic cast of authors. Apparently the new agendas for architecture do not include any voices outside the Club Med of architecture theory along the Princeton-NYC-Cambridge corridor with a few tulips thrown in.

i am not a big theory person when it comes to architecture. it does have many writings with the discourse. a good collection of recent published essays and theses. personally i thought many of the writings are a bit hard to grasp. sometimes the language gets confusing. but it is an anthology. so i should give full credit for the author who collected the writings and present them in one place.

I'm not an architect but I like architecture and I wanted to get updated on theoretic developments since the last time I checked in on what was happening (back in the days of High Postmodernism). Actually I didn't know this book would be a collection of essays; I thought it would include discussion

that would thread together various current theories and put them in historic perspective. Be that as it may, it seems that the book provides a decent cross-section of essays, but I came away concluding that it's just no fun reading architectural theory. There's plenty of semiotic/deconstructivist/Deleuzian banter being tossed around, and even those writers who don't rely on these perspectives tend to equally cloud their thoughts in thick, almost impenetrable jargon. I guess I was expecting citation of manifestoes by architects themselves, but it seems that architecture is in a "post-manifesto" mode, also post-formalist: that, more and more, architects are relying on ad hoc responses to program requirements because those requirements have become more sharply defined by the use of information technology. Or something like that. The only essay I found at all entertaining was that of Rem Koolhaas on "Junkspace". As a long-suffering regular visitor to the Dallas-Ft. Worth airport, I particularly enjoyed his observation about the place: "Its drop-off is the seemingly harmless beginning of a journey to the center of unmitigated nothingness..." One other gripe, pretty inconsequential but something I noticed every time I picked up the book: it has what must be the ugliest cover graphics of any book I've ever owned, looking as bland and styleless as a government report.

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