
Rematerial: Del desecho a la arquitectura

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Rematerial is a global movement concerned with the problems of sustainable living, with emphasis on the re-utilisation of materials within architecture and design. In this beautifully presented, hardback edition of Rematerial: Del desecho a la arquitectura Bahamón and Sanjinés explore the ways in which waste materials, ranging from wood from Brighton pier to tyres and disposable nappies, are being recycled for use within contemporary architecture and design. In his introductory essay to this work, the architect and writer Alejandro Bahamón, comments on how global warming and other environmental issues have affected the design world, leading to an re-evaluation of the concept of waste, normally considered as useless, something to be hidden away and claims its re-use to be one of the most potent tools available for reducing the impact of human activity on the planet.

The book is composed of sections on current initiatives, institutional projects, housing, interior design, multi-purpose spaces and landscape architecture, interspersed with essays (approximately 1,500 words) by six leading architects and designers from around the world. The text offers a history of each project and a highly readable description of the processes involved, illustrated by sketches, 2 and 3-dimensional architectural plans, simple diagrams explaining the main recycling process and colour photographs of project, about a third of which and full-page. There is also a short bibliography and directory of the architects mentioned.

A wide variety of projects are described in the main text. For example, the Biblioteca Municipal in Azcoitia, Spain, a disused railway station in the centre of the city, faced with recycled railway sleepers to form an angular building in which the rich colours of the treated wood both harmonises and contrasts with the more traditional existing buildings around it. In contrast, Casa Christine, located in an economically depressed area of Alabama, is a low-budget, single-story house was designed to meet the needs of a single mother and her children. The structure includes elements of vernacular design, such as adobe walls, the bricks of which were fabricated using clay soil from the plot, pulped newspaper and cement. In relation to interior design, architect Nissen Adams searched out high-quality recycled materials for his design of the Liquorice bar in London, which uses wood reclaimed from Brighton Pier to form an elegant entrance to the restaurant.

This is a book which will be of interest to both experts and lay people interested in the concept of sustainable living. The projects described are diverse and originate from a variety of countries around the world. The essays and accompanying texts are highly readable, avoiding technical terms and jargon where possible and the layout of the book is both logical and visually pleasing. The quality of photography is generally high and architectural plans are clearly labelled, so that they can be deciphered even by the novice. I am sure that this work would be greatly appreciated by British readers.

This is a summary of the reader's report by Christina MacSweeney

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