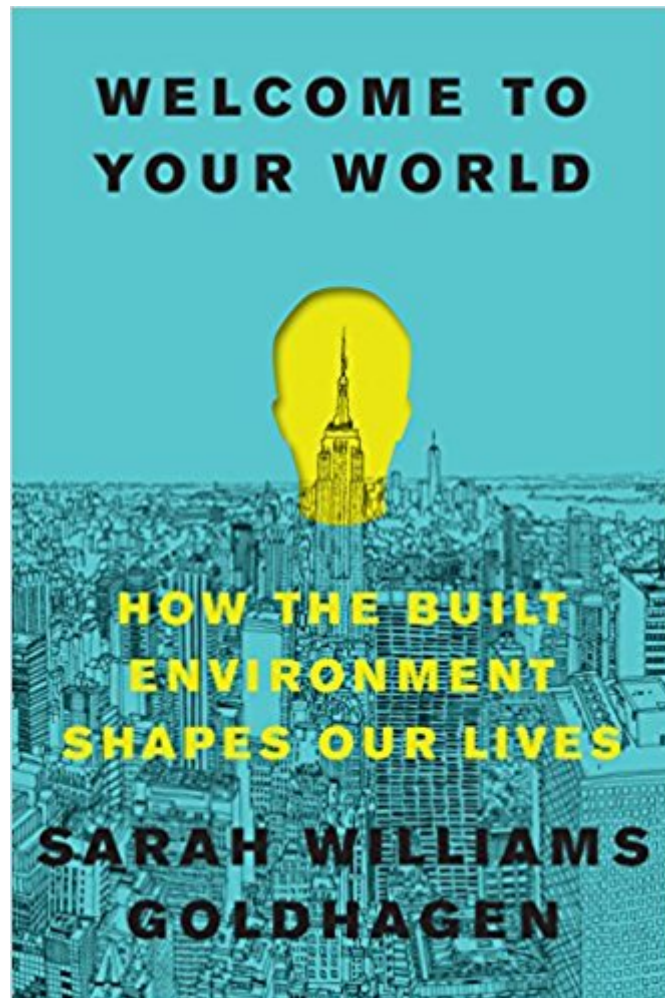




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# Welcome To Your World: How The Built Environment Shapes Our Lives



## Synopsis

One of the nation's chief architecture critics reveals how the environments we build profoundly shape our feelings, memories, and well-being, and argues that we must harness this knowledge to construct a world better suited to human experience. Taking us on a fascinating journey through some of the world's best and worst landscapes, buildings, and cityscapes, Sarah Williams Goldhagen draws from recent research in cognitive neuroscience and psychology to demonstrate how people's experiences of the places they build are central to their well-being, their physical health, their communal and social lives, and even their very sense of themselves. From this foundation, Goldhagen presents a powerful case that societies must use this knowledge to rethink what and how they build: the world needs better-designed, healthier environments that address the complex range of human individual and social needs. By 2050 America's population is projected to increase by nearly seventy million people. This will necessitate a vast amount of new construction—almost all in urban areas—that will dramatically transform our existing landscapes, infrastructure, and urban areas. Going forward, we must do everything we can to prevent the construction of exhausting, overstimulating environments and enervating, understimulating ones. Buildings, landscapes, and cities must both contain and spark associations of natural light, greenery, and other ways of being in landscapes that humans have evolved to need and expect. Fancy exteriors and dramatic forms are never enough, and may not even be necessary; authentic textures and surfaces, and careful, well-executed construction details are just as important. Erudite, wise, lucidly written, and beautifully illustrated with more than one hundred color photographs, *Welcome to Your World* is a vital, eye-opening guide to the spaces we inhabit, physically and mentally, and a clarion call to design for human experience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

â œGoldhagenâ ™s book lays the groundwork for the cognitive neuroscience of architecture.â • (TERRENCE SEJNOWSKI, FRANCIS CRICK PROFESSOR AT THE SALK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES)â œ[À] feast for the mindâ ¨[with] a vital message: We can and must capitalize on this new knowledge to build more human-centered urban environments. Itâ ™s a call to action we ignore at our peril.â • (COLIN ELLARD, AUTHOR OF PLACES OF THE HEART AND YOU ARE HERE)â œGoldhagenâ ™s illuminating book on the design of our world begins just where it should, with us and how we live, not with a dazzling shell. She shows us many ways that good design can uplift our lives and how poor design can fail us.â • (Barbara Tversky, Professor Emerita of Psychology at Stanford University)â œA remarkable book and a fascinating exploration of the human experience in the city. Ground breaking, informed, and inspired.â • (Mikyoung Kim, Landscape Architect)â œWelcome to Your World will go far to help us create healthy, equitable, and thriving cities. This is extremely powerful stuff.â • (Faith Rose, former Executive Director of the Public Design Commission of the City of New York Faith Rose, former Executive Director of the Public Design Commission of the City of New York)â œLucidly written in beautiful prose, Welcome to Your World will stimulate and delight professionals, students, and nonprofessionals alike. A must-read!â • (NADER TEHRANI, AWARD-WINNING ARCHITECT AND DEAN OF THE IRWIN S. CHANIN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT COOPER UNION[Goldhagenâ ™s] analysis is practical and accessible â ¨[À] valuable compendium to design analysis and the benefits of progress in contemporary design. An eye-opening look at the ways in which carefully planned and executed design and architecture can expand cognitive faculties and improve daily life. (Kirkus)â œGoldhagenâ ™s fresh perspective is deep, exciting, and optimistic.â • (Booklist)â œRarely does a book come along where its very premise is to stop you in your tracks, compel you to look around, take account of where you are standingâ ¨[with] [Welcome to Your World] is one of those â ¨stop and smell the rosesâ ™ experiences.â • (Huffington Post)

One of the nationâ ™s chief architecture critics reveals how the environments we build profoundly shape our feelings, memories, and well-being, and argues that we must harness this knowledge to construct a world better suited to human experience. Taking an illuminating journey around the globe and into the brain, Welcome to Your World reveals that the built environment and its design matter

far more than anybody, even architects, ever thought they did. Using cutting-edge research in cognitive neuroscience and environmental psychology, Sarah Williams Goldhagen articulates the ways in which a room, a building, or a city square affects us, and details our reactions to form, pattern, light, color, sound, texture, and more. Expanding on these concepts, she walks us through some of the world's best and worst buildings, landscapes, and cityscapes, from the Parthenon in Athens to One World Trade Center in Manhattan, from Amiens Cathedral in France to Berlin's Holocaust Memorial, from the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris to the 798 Art District in Beijing. Supported by overwhelming evidence and clear-eyed analysis, she concludes that societies must reconsider what and how they build. Put simply: it requires the same resources to construct a building that impairs our capabilities as it does to erect a structure that enhances them. Ultimately the stakes "individual need and collective welfare" could not be higher. Erudite, wise, and beautifully illustrated with more than 150 color photographs, *Welcome to Your World* is a vital, eye-opening guide to the spaces we inhabit, physically and mentally, and a clarion call to design for human experience.

I had high expectations about this book because it was mentioned in an extremely interesting article about architecture in *The New Yorker*. I found it boring, very vague and abstract, almost spiritual. I hate using that word but I had the impression I was reading a book about self help instead of a book about architecture. I was expecting something more focused on architecture and full of examples, I got a book about neuropsychology and cognitive science instead.

Well written with great explanations of design and functionality. I wish I had of read this book prior to employing an architect on my latest project. It obviously is worthwhile to seek out the best and ensure they have the capability to deliver what Sarah Williams Goldhagen suggests.

The book is written about a very interesting topic, and I had high expectations, when I started to read it. Albeit written in eloquent language, it falls short in defining what features are essential in making architecture and city planning supportive of our well-being. I also found that I didn't like many of the photographs in the book that were meant to be examples of good architecture. Many of those buildings looked chaotic, desolate or lacked refinement and sophistication. As a hint for the author, I would like to say that much could be learned by studying the architecture and city planning of old and beautiful southern European villages and towns that people come to visit on their holidays. Many of those villages and towns were grown organically without a grand scheme. When

we visit these places, we feel nourished by their varied, yet harmonious and tranquil forms, colors and decorations.

Well, well, well! It had to happen. Sarah Goldhagen has linked the intuitive and often speculative notions of the *“what”* and the *“how”* of architectural aesthetic experience with the latest neuroscience research that supports what only the most sensitive and lucid designers know. Namely that there is a great chain of relational structures in architectural experience that must be presented to make possible the fusion of the cognitive, valuational, and sensory modes of our being that produces the immersive experience that we call aesthetic. Goldhagen’s research clearly articulates why architecture is not a building but an adjective we use to describe such immersive experiences. Coy Howard Professor Southern California Institute of Architecture Author of *The Thickening of Time*

This brilliant book opened my eyes to the world around me and helped me see my environment in new ways. Goldhagen is advocating for better design, design that is more human-centric and connects us to nature. She’s a former professor at Harvard Graduate School of Design and a well-known architecture critic, and she has spent her entire life trying to understand the process by which the built environment affects us emotionally and psychologically. Here she is writing for a general audience, and sharing what she has learned during a lifetime of interdisciplinary exploration with people like me, who do not have a background in art or design or architecture, but who are curious to learn about how our surroundings affect our lives. Imagine the treat of being able to go on a tour of the world with a guide who is so smart, insightful, entertaining, witty, deeply informed, and passionate about her subject. For what it’s worth, this is also a beautifully produced book with gorgeous illustrations. It’s a book I will save and treasure, and go back to again and again. I wish I could give it more stars.

*Welcome To Your World* is an excellent study in the environment around us - how it effects us, how it shapes our feelings, how it impacts our wellbeing. You don’t have to be an architect, designer or builder to understand the incredibly interesting examples that Mrs. Goldhagen clearly illustrates (often with fantastic pictures). She dives deep into both well and poorly designed environments, both uniquely interesting in how they positively and negatively impact everything from feelings to energy to recovery time in sick patients. A very interesting and informative read!

A real breakthrough in architectural theory, Sarah Williams Goldhagen has brought to light and articulated clearly what many of us may know by intuition: Design matters and it affects peoples' well-being and lives well beyond the attention it is given. This book is written in a very accessible manner and leads the reader through with ease and with just the right amount of supporting evidence, making it quite seamless. A fantastic book that connects Art and Science in a manner that is relevant to our every-day lives and those of generations to come.

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