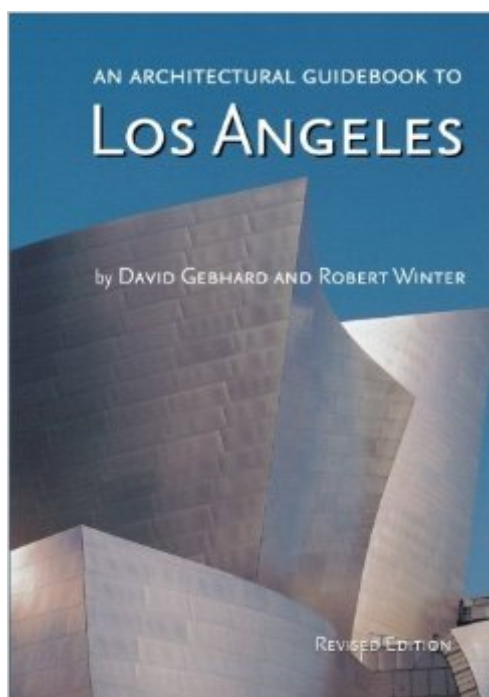


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An Architectural Guidebook To Los Angeles



Synopsis

Known as "the bible" to Los Angeles architecture scholars and enthusiasts, Robert Winter and David Gebhard's groundbreaking guide to architecture in the greater Los Angeles area is updated and revised once again. From Art Deco to Beaux-Arts, Spanish Colonial to Mission Revival, Winter discusses an impressive variety of architectural styles in this popular guide that he co-authored with the late David Gebhard. New buildings and sites have been added, along with all new photography. Considered the most thorough L.A. architecture guide ever written, this new edition features the best of the past and present, from Charles and Henry Greene's Gamble House to Frank Gehry's Disney Philharmonic Hall. This was, and is again, a must-have guide to a diverse and architecturally rich area.

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Customer Reviews

The long-awaited fifth edition of an LA guide that's often called "the bible" is a major disappointment. Robert Winter is a perceptive scholar of Victoriana and arts and crafts, but he sensibly left modernism to his collaborator, the late David Gebhard. Now he has attempted to do it all, by providing entries on key buildings of the 1990s that he neither likes nor understands, and the result is embarrassing. Gehry, Maltzan, Mayne, Moss, Pei, and Yazdani will be surprised to find themselves bundled together under the label "Neo-Expressionism (Postmodernism)." Disney Hall, which is pictured on the cover, is described in terms of what happened ten years ago (plus cloddish public reactions to the first pictures of the model); there's not a sentence on the completed building.

Other adventurous work is dismissed as "very strange." A long-winded entry on the Getty reads like a chatty letter to a friend; most are absurdly brief. The revisions add almost nothing, and are woefully incomplete; the publisher is guilty of gross negligence for not wielding an editorial pencil. Earlier selections have been edited, but the William Cameron Menzies house in Beverly Hills is still there, even though it was demolished three editions ago, along with Gehry's Venice restaurant, Rebecca's. The original 97 percent of the guide remains invaluable and engaging. (Michael Webb is the book reviewer for LA Architect magazine.)

If you want a book to LEARN about architecture in LA, then look elsewhere. But if you want to FIND architecture in LA, there is no better resource than this book. This is just a big fat list & map guide book and as such, functions brilliantly. I haven't seen this latest issue but previous ones had lived in my car the last 8 years I lived in LA. Almost anywhere I went, this guide would show me great homes and buildings hidden away and in plain sight that I never would have found otherwise. I happily burned many tanks of gas with this book in one hand and my steering wheel in the other. I left my copy with a friend when we left the area but if we were ever move back, I'd buy fresh copy right away.

Not AIA sponsored but in familiar AIA format, this guide is about as good as one can expect for such an incredibly vast urban area. There's lots of modernism, which is a good thing in this case since Los Angeles contains perhaps the best ensemble of high-quality modernism in the world. The entries are very short, sometimes as short as one sentence. Only about one building in five comes with a small black & white photograph. Covers all of Los Angeles County, but nothing from Orange, Ventura, Riverside or San Bernardino counties. Some important slivers of Riverside county would be a good addition. While more than a few people believe Los Angeles is nothing but a formless sprawl with little interesting architecture, this guide proves otherwise. The real key to Los Angeles is that its architectural features are scattered all over the basin rather than in one dense location, but they're out there for you to discover. This guide will help you find them. Bring it along with a full tank of gas. Another revised edition that fills out Long Beach, Shaw, Monrovia, Pomona and Claremont would be nice. If you own the 1994 edition of this book (as I do) there are a few things you may want to consider before buying this one. Really, this edition includes very few changes other than the addition of a FEW important modern structures and a new page layout. There are also a few more photographs, but that's really it. In fact, a number of important historic sites are removed from this edition in order to make "page space" for modern structures. I guess what I'm saying is this: If

modern architecture is your thing, by this edition, but the older edition is actually BETTER than this one for architectural historians.

GREAT resource, no where near enough pictures, which I'm sure was a purely financial decision on the publisher's part. But Robert Winter really knows his stuff. This would be a solid five stars if there were a lot more images.

If you are looking for an extensive guide to architecture in Los Angeles County this is the best available. No other current guide covers nearly as many sites. It is conveniently organized by city and neighborhood, with good maps to help find the sites. Each entry has a brief synopsis of the architect, style, history, and the authors' assessment, and many have photos. As with any guide you won't always agree with their opinions, but they almost always provide a good introduction to the work. As has been noted in another review, the latest edition did lose something with the death of one of the authors. It would also be nice if it covered more of Southern California, as a long-ago edition did. But a guide like this is a major undertaking, and I think we are fortunate to have the latest update at all!

On the plus side, it's extremely informative and arranged by neighborhood so you can take a great tour of the important buildings in the area. But on the minus side, especially in areas like the Valley and South Bay, MANY of the buildings listed were actually demolished years, often decades ago, sometimes only shortly after the First Edition was printed. All the subsequent editions failed to actually check most areas to see if the buildings are still standing. For that to still be true for this edition, in the age of Google Maps, is beyond annoying. So while this is still the go-to book, before touring any neighborhood, you have to do the homework that the author and editor FAILED to do themselves and check to see if there's still a programmatic 1930s restaurant at that location, or if there's been a mini-mall there since 1979. It doesn't help that some of the addresses are wrong as well, and you'll find a building you're looking for on the next block. Also, there are many important buildings that are completely ignored. If you want to learn about L.A. architecture this is the book to start with, but you really can't rely on it.

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