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978-0-521-57168-5 - Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism

Kathleen James

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Erich Mendelsohn's buildings, erected throughout Germany between 1920 and 1932, epitomized architectural modernity for his compatriots. In this study, Kathleen James examines Mendelsohn's department stores, office buildings, and cinemas, the downtown counterparts to the famous housing projects built during the same years in Frankfurt and Berlin. Demonstrating the degree to which these buildings' dynamic presence stemmed from Mendelsohn's attention to their consumer-oriented functions, James shows Mendelsohn to be more than an Expressionist, as he is usually characterized. James recounts how his architecture closely reflected the controversies over modernity, including relativity, consumerism, and urban planning, that raged during the years of the Weimar Republic. She also illustrates how much Mendelsohn's thriving practice depended on the patronage of his fellow German Jews, many of whom shared his commitment to creating alternatives to the nationalistic historicism of the late Wilhelmine period.

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Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity will comprise monographic studies of important movements and buildings by European and American architects created roughly between 1850 and 1950. Unlike the first histories of modernism, which stressed the international aspects of modern architecture, recent scholarship has attempted to clarify the delicate balance achieved by architects working in a modernist idiom who maintained, nonetheless, a strong allegiance to their cultural roots. This series has been developed in response to this trend and will explore the complex interplay between modern identity and local, regional, national, and related cultural traditions.

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KATHLEEN JAMES

University of California, Berkeley



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To
JULIA BRUCE DOBBIN
and
to the memory of
KATHLEEN BRUCE
and
MARK DALLAS BUTLER

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