



# The Most Beautiful House in the World

*Witold Rybczynski*

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## **The Most Beautiful House in the World** Witold Rybczynski

A winning book, a pleasure to read...a revelation about what architects actually do and how they go about doing it." -*Los Angeles Times*

Witold Rybczynski takes us on an extraordinary odyssey as he tells the story of designing and building of his own house. Rybczynski's project began as a workshop; through a series of "happy accidents," however, the structure gradually evolved into a full-fledge house.

In tracing this evolution, he touches on matters both theoretical and practical, writing on such diverse topics as the distinguished structural descendants of the humble barn, the ritualistic origins of the elements of classical architecture, and the connections between dress and habitation, and between architecture and gastronomy. Rybczynski discusses feng shui, the Chinese art of placing a home in the landscape, and also considers the theories and work of such architects as Palladio, Le Corbusier, and Frank Lloyd Wright. An eloquent examination of the links between being and building, *The Most Beautiful House in the World* offers insights into the joys of "installing ourselves in a place, of establishing a spot where it be safe to dream.

## **The Most Beautiful House in the World Details**

Date : Published July 1st 1990 by Penguin Books (first published April 4th 1989)

ISBN : 9780140105667

Author : Witold Rybczynski

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Architecture, Nonfiction, Design, Art

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## **From Reader Review The Most Beautiful House in the World for online ebook**

### **Mary Catelli says**

This book starts with his ambition to build a boat, and toward that end, build a shed in which he can build it. It goes on from there, and uses the story as a framework too.

So we find out what happens in the end to what he started, with excursions into the art of architecture, what architects actually do, the famous names in architectural history.

Vernacular architecture, the art of buildings that fit their environments and account for their settings. In northern India, the English would build English cottages, complete with rose gardens, because the climate would allow. Monumental buildings in southern India posed a challenge.

The reasons why barns and cathedrals resemble each other.

Feng-shui and how the British went about dissipating it in Hong Kong by planting trees, having windy roads, and building pools.

The rituals that surround the building of buildings.

Interesting book. Light reading at that.

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### **Raina says**

A sweet little book about designing and building one's own home, and about the evolution process that both the design and the designer undergoes. A bit rambling, and a bit too archi-dorky for a non-architect reader?

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### **Lauren says**

Really charming. I would caution non-architects: you may find it dry. A background in general architecture history both modern and classical is helpful to keep long sections of this book from becoming too much like a history lesson with no pictures. As for me, this is now one of my favorite books written by the author.

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### **Terri says**

This book is like a conversation with an architect and as conversations sometimes go, Rybczynski goes on many rabbit trails, some interesting, some tedious.

And then he will land upon a nugget of real value to someone interested in designing a house. Things like,

"A building has to be simple enough to grasp and remember," and "Determining the shape of the roof is the most important decision the designer of a building must make," and a classic rule to remember, "reduce the size of elements as the eye moves up the facade."

The pleasure of a window is a function not only of its proper disposition in the room and of the view that it presents but also of its orientation with respect to the sun:

north facing allows an even and clear illumination

east facing lets in cheerful morning rays

west facing admits the glowing light of the late afternoon

south facing receives "pure sun, and a clear light" It permits the low winter light to warm the interior.

The book was written to tell the story of Rybczynski's barn-cum-home and that is mildly interesting. The real interest is in the information he gives the reader about building and designing in general.

If you are interested in just the facts of architecture, buy a text book. If you are looking for a conversation about architecture you will enjoy this book.

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### **Jim Molinelli says**

As a residential architect I loved this story. It's a parable of the architect searching for the fulfillment of building a boat for himself as an escape from the grind. Turns out he becomes his own client while first wrestling with building a boathouse in which to construct the boat of his dreams. Then his wife becomes the client, seeing the boatHOUSE as a getaway weekend home from her grind.

The story is lovely and realistic (as any architect can attest) as analysis, decisions and changes completely alter the initial course of the project into something much greater and different than ever imagined. And the boat? Well isn't the process of designing and building the boathouse therapy enough after all?

A fun tale that mixes in some architectural history and feng shui as well. A real delightful read.

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### **Tim says**

"The most beautiful house in the world is the one that you build for yourself." (186) It is always worthwhile reading Witold Rybczynski. This book did not capture my attention in the way some of his other books have, probably because I feel far from ever constructing my own house. "Building your own home - and inhabiting a space of your own making - is considered by most to be a luxury. It may yet be rediscovered to be more essential than that." Still, his journey, from buying land to building a boathouse, to converting that boathouse into a home, with many long side trips into architectural history and the way an architect thinks, is one worth taking. I especially liked the chapter on the history of the barn.

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### **Nancy Noble says**

I had heard of this author and was eager to read his book. I did like it, although I skimmed quite a bit - i was

more interested in his story of building his house, rather than all the historical detail. Still, a fun journey through his thought processes - going from building a boat to building a house. I'm glad I read it.

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### **Kristine Morris says**

Reading this has resurrected my 20 year old dream of renovating and living in a barn. "Waiting for the Weekend" by Rybczynski is one of my favourite books. This one is of a similar style - an architectural journal with many historical digressions. Most are interesting like the explanation of feng-shui, the Pompidou Centre in Paris, the history of toys and game playing, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth house. Some are a little technical and dull such as a review of architectural treatises through time and while I enjoyed reading about the different styles of barns through the ages, it would have helped to have some illustrations.

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### **Lydia says**

A great little book to read, if you want to get a view of architecture from a purposeful dreamer (and aren't we all). Rybczynski muses about how he haphazardly became an architect, and remembers that he really wanted to build a boat when he was younger. But now he lives in an apartment in Montreal. Bit by bit his dreams come to life. He buys 60 acres to make a boat shed. Things change, he calls in all the architects he has known from his years of study--Vitruvius, Palladio, Mies Van Der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Wright, and slowly the boat building is left behind as he builds his "most beautiful house in the world." I like his time spent talking about barn types, the context of the land and his neighbors, how sketching can get out of hand and you must just begin. I like his sketches and explanation of making the 16'x32' concrete pad, and how it was relatively easy to make a frame, and then add the plywood, and then the gable roof. He reviews all of history to position windows for the best sun, and concedes a front entryway on the east side, and debates each room change. And then he looks at authors who started with one room cottages and built castles by adding on rooms. Now on to Rybczynski's book "Home" for me.

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### **Kaethe says**

Rybczynski writes clearly and well about stuff and what it means. By focusing on the little house he builds he can expound on a lot of issues related to building.

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### **Jenifer says**

I love Rybczynski's writing. And I loved reading his personal account of the evolution of his home. Setting out to build a shed for his true heart's project, building a boat, he details the sometimes sublime, sometimes demoralizing process. In the end, the shed becomes a home and Rybczynski talks about that process, which applies to anyone who makes and loves a home. Also, interesting passages about famous homes around the world, facts from history, and tutelage from an honest-to-goodness architect.

Not for everybody, but right up my alley.

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## **Steven Yenser says**

Enjoyable and brief; I wish it had been a little briefer and more focused.

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## **Benjamin says**

I picked up this book after reading Michael Pollan's "A Place of My Own". I had thought that it would be a similar travelogue of a person building a boat, or at least the process going into building the house to be used to build the boat. Instead this is more of a history of architecture. It doesn't go into quite the same level of detail as Pollan's. In other sections, construction of the house passes in one or two sentences. I was looking for another "how the house was built" book, but this is no really addressed in this book.

Spoiler alert...

By the time he finishes the house for building his boat, he decides that he's not really interested in building a boat anymore! He bought land, spent two years designing it, another year or so building it, and then decides that he doesn't want it anymore for it's designed purpose! I almost put the book down right here. The author then spends the rest of the book talking about how he revamped it to make it into a living house, but by this time he lost my interest.

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## **Paul Cloutier says**

A fun informative story of the author building a workshop that eventually turns in to his house. Feels familiar to many of my own experiences.

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## **Clint Wardlow says**

Rybczynski has a great story to tell but it gets muddled in the many tangents and superfluous information. It was very hard to finish this book but I'm glad I did. The under riding story of how he built his house is great, but like I mentioned, there are too many tangents that I lost focus.

If you are into architecture and specifically the history of architecture, you would like this book.

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