



PORTRAITS OF THE NEW ARCHITECTURE It's been said that every artist's work is an exercise in self reflection. In *Portraits of the New Architecture*, well-known photographer Richard Schulman takes this notion a step further and attempts to create a more nuanced depiction of 50 prominent architects by juxtaposing their portraits with their buildings. The book is not just a celebration of architecture, but also of the unique faces behind the facades.

Schulman, whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Vanity Fair* and other publications, clearly notes the relevance of his subjects. The photographer says he finds contemporary architecture to be more expressive and challenging to the psyche than ever before, and ultimately "not only an integral part of popular culture, but perhaps our greatest recognizable art form."

As expected, the rise of public architecture also elevated its creators into celebrated cultural figures. Yet, in his introduction to the book, accomplished author, architecture critic for *The New Yorker*, and dean of Parsons School of Design, Paul Goldberger finds, "Schulman presents the architect as celebrity, but he does not kowtow to this phenomenon." Not an easy feat, considering today's high-profile structures increasingly are as intellectually and emotionally engaging as they are personality-driven: Frank Gehry's name is perhaps as recognized as his iconic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and Daniel Libeskind's spectacled face has become as ubiquitous as his design for the Freedom Tower at Ground Zero.

While somewhat mannered, Schulman's portraits resist the urge to fawn over these (mostly) men and instead focus on their subtleties. Colorful visual effects as well as the body



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language and choice of surroundings shape the distinct, complex personalities of each architect: Raimund Abraham stands like a cowboy in a hat and pale duster with his back to the camera as he looks out from inside his Austrian Cultural Forum; Michael Graves sits quietly in his Princeton home, bathed in rich, red light; and a focused image of Rem Koolhaas stares defiantly out among the blurred members of his firm because he will not be photographed alone. As Goldberg aptly notes, "In Richard Schulman's portraits of architects, there are no faint-hearted figures."

Photos of the architects' works are equally expressive and moody. For the most part, the images are as expected: soaring observations taken from unique or dramatic angles, such as Renzo Piano's glimmering Maison Hermès. At other times, the photos take on a different kind of personality. The bright hues of the nearby vehicles and a high-heeled pedestrian provide both a cultural context and a flashy foil to the frosted glass exterior of Hotel Habita in Mexico City, while the gritty black and white rendition of Diamond Ranch High School lends gravity to the California campus.

The personal and professional histories of the architects written by Sarah Stein provide additional insight into these personalities, as do the samples of the design plans, which range from clinical and precise to more creative cartoon-like drawings. However, some of the most illuminating are the quotes from the architects about the spaces. They range from Shigeru Ban's simple plan to build a Tokyo complex within budgetary and landscape restrictions to more conceptual descriptions, such as Santiago Calatrava's metonymic embracing arm of Quadracci Pavilion in Milwaukee "that reaches out and touches the city."

Anyone interested in actually studying the biographical texts should be advised, however, that the light typography makes reading them for long periods something of an optical challenge. But then again, the book's faint font is easily eclipsed by the adjacent photographs. Indeed, Schulman's presentation of these master architects and their powerful structures stand well enough on their own ■ Sandra Nygaard ~ *Portraits of the New Architecture*, Richard Schulman, 228 pages, \$70/hardcover, Assouline Publishing