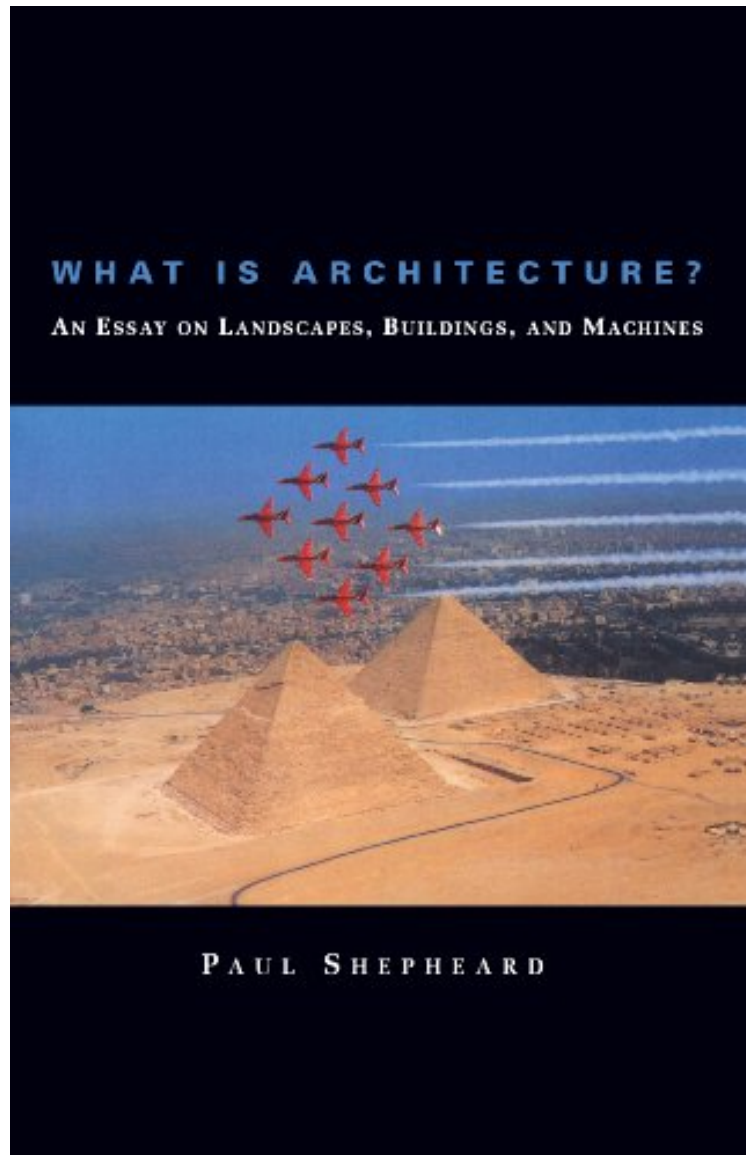


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What Is Architecture? An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings, and Machines: An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings and Machines (MIT Press)

Paul Shephard

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Paul Shephard : What Is Architecture? An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings, and Machines: An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings and Machines (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Is Architecture? An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings, and Machines: An Essay on

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A regular bloke chatting about architectureBy Saul BouschettI give it four stars although if judged strictly by its content alone, it's worth maybe three and a half. But given the sheer volume of intolerable turgidity, confusion and pretentiousness in architectural writing out there, this book is like a breath of fresh air in its regular-bloke-rambling style of writing. The author is British and there is some Brit slang as well as references to British examples and geography. This may hinder understanding somewhat if one is not familiar with places and life in the UK. The content does ramble a bit, and the intensity of focus is not quite there. Topics raised are never quite pursued to the depth the author seems to be capable of. Nonetheless, the author does everyone in the field of architecture a favor by reminding one that architecture is not about buildings alone, but about the structuring of three things, all strangely intangible and formless: landscapes, buildings, machines. Desires, really, rather than things. He cites Vitruvius as evidence that that's the way architecture was conceived from the beginning. The book is a teaser of sorts, and does have moments of real poetic insights about the subject matter. The book has spurred me to think about certain things that the author himself does not mention. For example, the consequence of Vitruvius's definition of machine as 'cyclice kinesis', circular motion. Chatty, yes, but still not really for the layman. Which is just as well, since only architects read architecture books. Very British in the framing of the issue and very AA in presentation. On the whole, the book reads like a document of the author's speculations about things and questions concerning that bloody thing called architecture. I just wonder if he should not have titled the book, What WAS Architecture? Well, do ya now?!Roight,then. Cheers, mate!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. What is ArchitectureBy A CustomerAn absolutely brilliant book. Highly recommended for those who see architecture as hobby as well as those who have been in the profession for years. Truly refreshing and innovative.

British architect and critic Paul Shephard is a fresh new voice in current postmodern debates about the history and meaning of architecture. In this wonderfully unorthodox quasi-novelistic essay, complete with characters and dialogue (but no plot), Shephard draws a boundary around the subject of architecture, describing its place in art and technology, its place in history, and its place in our lives now. At a time when it is fashionable to say that architecture is everything -- from philosophy to science to art to theory -- Shephard boldly and irreverently sets limits to the subject, so that we may talk about architecture for what it is. He takes strong positions, names the causes of the problems, and tells us how bad things are and how they can get better. Along the way he marshals some unlikely but plausible witnesses who testify about the current state of architecture. Instead of the usual claims or complaints by the usual suspects, these observations are of an altogether different order. Constructed as a series of fables, many of them politically incorrect, What is Architecture? is a refreshing meditation on the options, hopes, possibilities, and failures of shelter in society.

This is a brilliant book in every respect. It has wit, insight, provocative proposals for the future, and an eloquent use of language. (James Wines, President of SITE)This is one of the strangest and most enchanting boos I have ever seen. It is like starting again; the same subject but seen with different eyes, told by different characters. Instead of the magniloquence and opacity with which we (architectural writers) have become so familiar, instead of the increasingly cryptic revisions and restatements of things heard and read before, a lucid introduction to something that we might care to call architecture, if we so wish. The quality of writing is just wonderful, the essay immensely intelligent, for all the simplicity of its exposition. (Robin Evans, Harvard University Graduate School of Design)A sharp and remarkably clever essay which makes a real contribution to the discussion of architecture. Shephard's work gives a strong and positive sense of someone really thinking. (Robert Harbison)An unusual and personal book which romps through the generalities of architecture with comment and reflection. (James Gowan, Architect)From the Back CoverWhat Is Architecture? An Essay On Landscapes, Buildings, And Machines --Paul Shephard'This is one of the strangest and most enchanting books I have ever seen. It is like starting again; the same subject but seen with different eyes, told by different characters.'About the AuthorPaul Shephard is an architect living in London.