



American Museums and the Persuasive Impulse: Architectural Form and Space as Social Influence

J. Donald Ragsdale

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In 'American Museums and the Persuasive Impulse', Professor Ragsdale assesses American museums as means of visual persuasion. He demonstrates that museums, their contents, and their manners of display are as capable of influencing visitors as speeches or advertisements are and that an awareness of their social influence provides an insight into the cultural roles of museums. The book considers a diverse array of museums ranging from such national cultural icons as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Art Institute to such city museums as the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, and includes separate chapters on museums devoted to modern and contemporary art and to the specialized collections of individual connoisseurs. In addition to these primarily art museums, Professor Ragsdale assesses museums devoted to collections, such as the National Air and Space Museum, and to commemoration and remembrance, such as the National World War II Museum and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. 'American Museums and the Persuasive Impulse' makes an important contribution to the theory of persuasion and to visual communication, art history, and museology. It utilizes a theory of visual signs based on the semiotic theory of C. S. Peirce. In so doing, it demonstrates that museum buildings, the art and other objects contained within them, and the spaces used for display all may be thought of in terms of means of social influence.

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