



The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments

M. Christine Boyer

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Christine Boyer faces head-on the crisis of the city in the late twentieth century, taking us on a fascinating journey through theaters and museums, panoramas and maps, buildings and institutions that are used to construct a new reading of the city as a system of representation, a complex cultural entity. Boyer brings together elements and concepts from geography, critical theory, architecture, literature, and painting in a synthetic and readable work that is broad in its reach and original in its insights. What finally emerges is a sense of the city reinvigorated with richness and potential.

The City of Collective Memory describes a series of different visual and mental models by which the urban environment has been recognized, depicted, and planned. Boyer identifies three major "maps": one common to the traditional city -- the city as a work of art; one characteristic of the modern city -- the city as panorama; and one appropriate to the contemporary city -- the city as spectacle. It is a richly illustrated and documented study that pays considerable attention to the normally hidden and unspoken codes that regulate the order imposed on and derived from the city. A wide range of secondary historical literature and theoretical work is considered, with evident debts to structuralist analysis of urban form represented by Aldo Rossi, as well to much post-structuralist criticism from Walter Benjamin to the present.

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