

Maya Architecture: Temples in the Sky



Viewing the sprawling city of Uxmal or the sweeping Great Plaza at Tikal, one can sense the enormous pride of the people who conceived and built such places. The grandeur of these Maya cities fascinates all who gaze upon them, and the totality of the Maya architectural statements its harmony, cohesiveness, and inspiring beauty has rarely been matched. In this illuminating volume, acclaimed architect Kenneth Treister brings a unique perspective to the physical remains of the ancient Maya cities. In the numerous color photos that accompany the text, taken by the author over many years of travel, we see powerful, compelling examples of harmony and gracefulness through the ruins and reconstructions of architectural composition. Though one can only imagine how magnificent these cities appeared during their heyday brightly painted and adorned by sculpture and colorful murals Treister fills in the blanks with his knowledgeable treatment of construction methods and materials. He discusses the balance of form and function in Maya buildings, and their integration of art, architecture, and society. He also reveals how Maya structures have influenced current forms of design and construction, inspiring his own work as well as that of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The Maya seldom destroyed older buildings but built over them in successive layers. Because the existing structures served as the foundation for new construction, we can literally peel back these layers and trace the development of Maya building practices. By examining what remains of Maya cities, Treister seeks to discover how their dynamic society, in a hostile environment and in a relatively short time, was able to blossom and create such harmonious architectural masterpieces. Informed by a lifetime spent observing how people interact with their built environments, he also seeks to unlock the secret of the

Mayas mysterious collapse. He argues that the energy, enterprise, and pride that enabled these people to create such majesty hold the key to the seeds of their destruction. In their magnificent buildings, Treister finds not only the mortar that held their civilization together but the competitiveness that was the cause of its ruin as well. His insights reveal much about Maya architecture and the impact it had on Maya society as a whole.

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