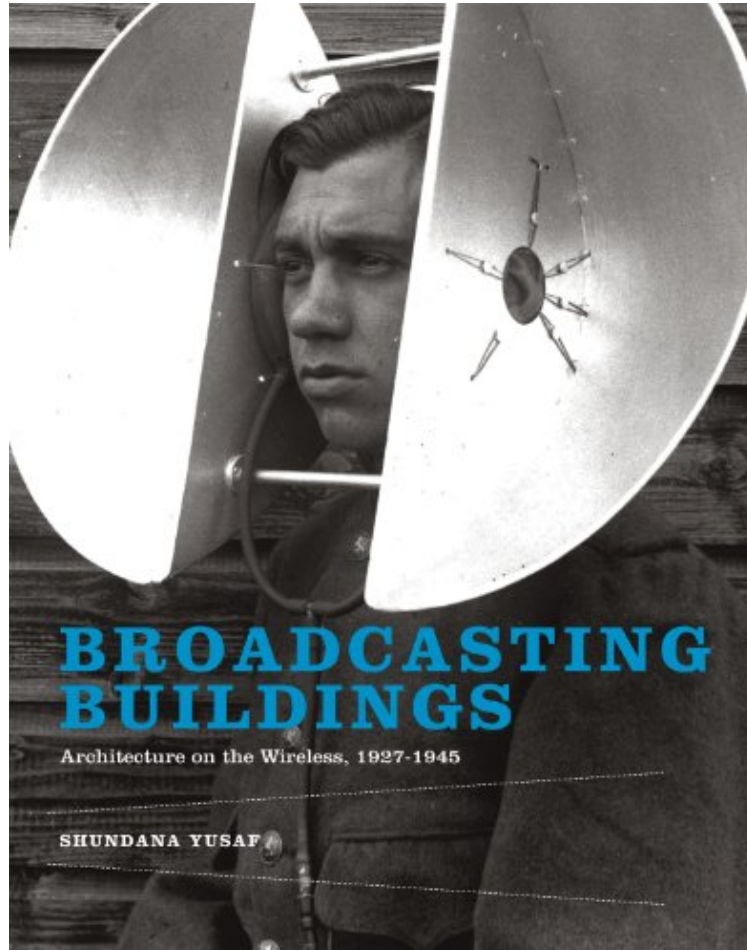


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Broadcasting Buildings: Architecture on the Wireless, 1927-1945 (MIT Press)

Shundana Yusaf

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Shundana Yusaf : Broadcasting Buildings: Architecture on the Wireless, 1927-1945 (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Broadcasting Buildings: Architecture on the Wireless, 1927-1945 (MIT Press):

In the years between the world wars, millions of people heard the world through a box on the dresser. In Britain, radio listeners relied on the British Broadcasting Corporation for information on everything from interior decoration to Hitler's rise to power. One subject covered regularly on the wireless was architecture and the built environment. Between 1927 and 1945, the BBC aired more than six hundred programs on this topic, published a similar number of articles in its magazine, *The Listener*, and sponsored several traveling exhibitions. In this book, Shundana Yusaf examines the ways that broadcasting placed architecture at the heart of debates on democracy. Undaunted by the

challenge of talking about space and place in disembodied voices over a nonvisual medium, designers and critics turned the wireless into an arena for debates about the definitions of the architect and architecture, the difficulties of town and country planning after the breakup of large country estates, the financing of the luxury market, the expansion of local governing power, and tourism. Yusaf argues that while broadcast technology made a decisive break with the Victorian world, these broadcasts reflected the BBC's desire to continue the legacy of Victorian institutions dedicated to the production of a cultivated polity. Under the leadership of John Reith, the BBC introduced listeners to the higher pleasures of life hoping to deepen their respect for tradition, the authority of the state, and national interests. These ambitions influenced the way architecture was portrayed on the air. Yusaf finds that the wireless evoked historic architecture only in travelogues and contemporary design mainly in shopping advice. The BBC's architectural programming, she argues, offered a paradoxical interface between the placelessness of radio and the situatedness of architecture, between the mechanical or nonhumanistic impulses of technology and the humanist conception of architecture.

Broadcasting Buildings is the first book to do justice to the full impact of the BBC in its early years as a patron of architecture: not just in the commissioning of its own innovative buildings and studios, but in the creation of a new type of experience of architecture for the millions of listeners who tuned in. Shundana Yusaf's remarkable survey of interwar British cultural life brings to life the manifold ways the wireless changed how people understood their historical surroundings, the challenges of the new architecture, and even the interiors of their own homes. (Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Kent School of Architecture, University of Kent) Shundana Yusaf's book has a surprise at its heart--that something as visual as architecture proved to be one of the central subjects in the pioneering years of radio. Yusaf shows not only why this should be so--why the built environment played so important a part in the 'civilizing mission' of radio--but also how it was so--what it meant to 'listen' to buildings. A challenging, thought-provoking debut. (Peter Mandler, Professor of Modern Cultural History, University of Cambridge) Shundana Yusaf shows wonderfully well how the BBC in its early years dealt with architecture broadcasts. The modern movement was taking shape and the conservation movement was finding an increasingly confident voice. The radio discussions reached much further than architectural treatises ever would and have a cultural importance that has not previously been recognized. Yusaf brilliantly articulates the attitudes of patrician broadcasters out to educate the listening masses. It is heartening to find that architecture was so much discussed. Yusaf's study shows how the discourse developed and gives a feel for the kind of talk that was possible as familiar voices aired ideas about building, while radical change was in the air and on the ground. (Andrew Ballantyne, Professor of Architecture, Newcastle University UK, and coauthor of *Tudoresque: In Pursuit of the Ideal Home*) This is a fascinating study of the remarkable experiment by the BBC to rethink architecture through radio. It explores the way architectural ideas were communicated through a medium that was itself radically transforming architecture. Radio is the most unstudied medium of twentieth-century architecture but it played a surprisingly major role, as this book so eloquently demonstrates. (Beatriz Colomina, Professor of Architecture, Princeton University, and author of *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*)...the book is both a useful general tour of the cultural politics of the early BBC, and an admirable demonstration of the great and undoubtedly neglected role of radio in shaping British architecture. (Times Literary Supplement) About the Author Shundana Yusaf is an architect and Assistant Professor of Architectural History at the University of Utah.