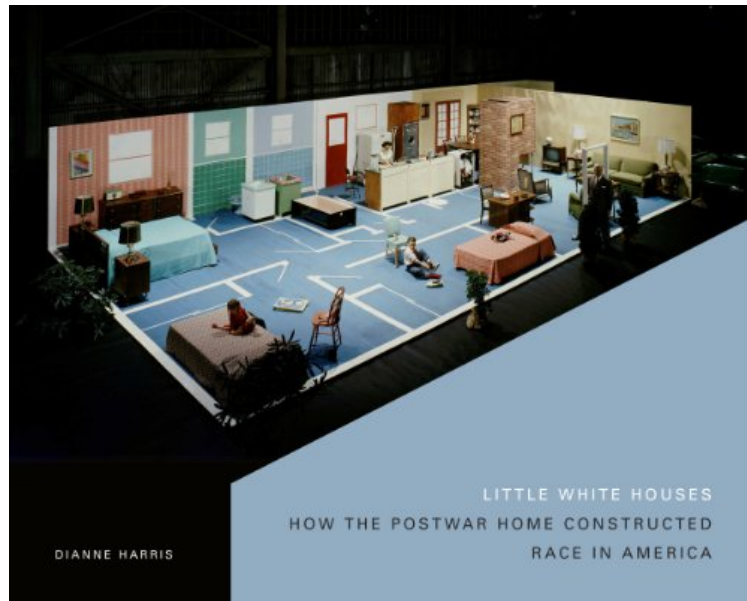


[Download free ebook] Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (Architecture, Landscape and Amer Culture)

Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (Architecture, Landscape and Amer Culture)

Dianne Harris

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Dianne Harris : Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (Architecture, Landscape and Amer Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (Architecture, Landscape and Amer Culture):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. New take on a familiar topic
By Sarah Lerch
Diane Harris is a Professor of History, an architectural historian, and the Director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her area of interest is the intersectionality of racial and class identities and the built environment. Harris' latest book, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*, published in 2013, is an exploration of the social construction of whiteness in postwar America through suburban architecture and landscape. She concentrates on the time period of 1945 through 1960 and the structure of the "ordinary postwar home," which she describes as ones built by developers for a mostly white, audience (4). She takes a new approach and enhances a familiar subject, post-War World II housing, by analyzing how cultural norms and iconography equated the standard single family suburban home with white middle-class families. Harris uses descriptions of her Jewish grandparents' postwar house to give the reader a detailed sense of an actual "ordinary postwar home." This example gives an added layer to the black vs white binary and as the case study provides intimate details of an immigrant family navigating a racialized housing market and interior space. Her sources are plentiful and varied, including floor plans, architectural drawings, advertisements, television programs, popular and trade magazines, and photographs. The visual images from these sources are included within the text, which greatly augments her argument by giving the reader a clear visual connection to the concept or space she is describing or analyzing. The most innovative and intriguing chapters of the book are the last three on the interior of the house and

the surrounding landscape. Harris describes the racialized interior of these typical houses by looking at built-ins and closets meant for storage space. Using the example of her Jewish grandparents needing additional storage space to maintain a kosher household, she demonstrates that the “ordinary postwar house” was designed specifically for a public presumed to be white and Christian (185). She also explores the outside spaces of the home, including the fences, gardens, and lawns. Harris reveals that tending to lawns and gardens was presented as both a recreational and a status enhancing activity (270). She successfully emphasizes the idea that identity, whether it be racial or class, was formed, and continue to be formed, not only through cultural beliefs but through material culture and spatial arrangements. Harris turns the familiar post-World War II suburban housing development on its head by looking at the racial and class distinctions imposed on these neighborhoods through the juxtaposition of architecture and culture. She makes a convincing argument about the connection between the formation of non-white and white racial identities and the postwar suburban home. Harris’ extensive research, in-depth analysis, and nuanced approach of using material culture and space as evidence changes the way historians view postwar housing and race relations in America. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful, well researched book that looks at how postwar ...By dwayneA wonderful, well researched book that looks at how postwar suburban housing and its cultural associations defined race, class, gender, nationality, etc.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. intenseBy American Mani've never had my mind blown within the first few pages. this is (and should be) a controversial reappraisal of suburban architecture in the fifteen year period following world war ii. harris applies zizek's cynical reason to the design, construction, sale, and celebration of what are ostensibly bland looking houses. this books's existence can almost be seen as a call to arms against the invisible ideology of the mundane, like bogost with more suspicion. hell, she even brings into light the cultural politics of the axonometric perspective. i am a game designer and between the notion of applying architectural rhetoric to our pseudo-worlds, thinking about the fashion / art-politic concerns in our choice of mechanical (or non) perspective and rewriting how i look at my workspace, this book is more than worth the cost.

A rare exploration of the racial and class politics of architecture, *Little White Houses* examines how postwar media representations associated the ordinary single-family house with middle-class whites to the exclusion of others, creating a powerful and invidious cultural iconography that continues to resonate today. Drawing from popular and trade magazines, floor plans and architectural drawings, television programs, advertisements, and beyond, Dianne Harris shows how the depiction of houses and their interiors, furnishings, and landscapes shaped and reinforced the ways in which Americans perceived white, middle-class identities and helped support a housing market already defined by racial segregation and deep economic inequalities. After describing the ordinary postwar house and its orderly, prescribed layout, Harris analyzes how cultural iconography associated these houses with middle-class whites and an ideal of white domesticity. She traces how homeowners were urged to buy specific kinds of furniture and other domestic objects and how the appropriate storage and display of these possessions was linked to race and class by designers, tastemakers, and publishers. Harris also investigates lawns, fences, indoor-outdoor spaces, and other aspects of the postwar home and analyzes their contribution to the assumption that the rightful owners of ordinary houses were white. Richly detailed, *Little White Houses* adds a new dimension to our understanding of race in America and the inequalities that persist in the U.S. housing market.

"In this fascinating probe of the familiar suburban tract homes of the post-World War II era, Dianne Harris powerfully conveys how race and class were inscribed on the new metropolitan landscape. White middle-class America was born and raised in suburbia, a legacy we still live with today."—Lizabeth Cohen, author of *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*"Impressively interdisciplinary and marvelously attentive to telling details, intimate lives, and social structures, Dianne Harris joins Dolores Hayden, Gwendolyn Wright, and others in making the architecture and landscape of everyday lives illuminate the workings of an entire historical period. *Little White Houses* is a blockbuster contribution to the critical study of whiteness and to the history of the United States after World War II."—David Roediger, author of *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon*