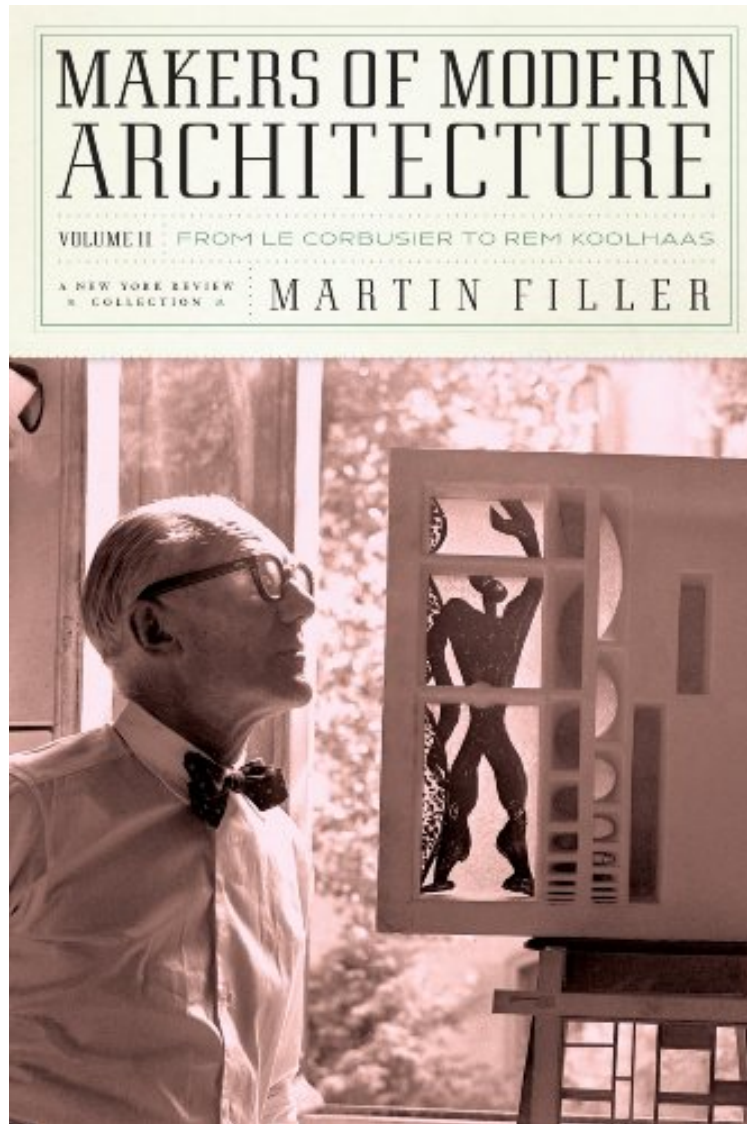


[Free] Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume II: From Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas: 2 (New York Review Collections (Hardcover))

## Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume II: From Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas: 2 (New York Review Collections (Hardcover))

*Martin Filler*

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**Martin Filler : Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume II: From Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas: 2 (New York Review Collections (Hardcover))** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume II: From Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas: 2 (New York Review Collections (Hardcover)):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting insightsBy mark lawlerinformative with little known

background information provided about some of the Architects included. Sometimes the politics of the projects takes up more space than the critique of the Architect and the project. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Wrong on Fuller; weird on gay  
By Robert Fagan  
Very nice prose in this book. I think the author has a tendency to dwell on the personal and particularly romantic lives of his subjects at times; for example, describing Buckminster Fuller's wife of 56 years as "long suffering" but offers no evidence of her or the couple's problems, whatever they might have been. Failing to integrate the personal with the professional reduces such content to gossip. I've not yet finished the book but have finished the chapter on Buckminster Fuller. The author repeats the common mistake of assigning the invention of the geodesic dome to Fuller. It was, in fact, designed in 1926 by Walter Bauersfeld, in Germany. 20 years later, Fuller coined the term "geodesic" to describe the type of dome that Bauersfeld had designed and built. Fuller gave the dome its name and popularized it, but the credit for its invention goes to Bauersfeld. The author finds Fuller's popularity as a lecturer puzzling. I saw one of Fuller's last lectures, in Boston in June 1983. (He died two weeks later). At the age of 87, with his beloved wife dying of cancer, he was funny, engaging, irreverent, sharp and cantankerous. He asked the Harvard professors in the audience if they had ever seen the sunrise and sunset. Walking into the trap, they raised their hands in affirmation. "The sun doesn't rise or set, you idiots! The earth does! You are doing your students a disservice with this talk of sunrise and sunset." (not a word for word quote, but what I remember after nearly 31 years...) He then looked at his watch, exclaimed, "My time is up - thank you" - and left the stage. The last thing I remember is a Harvard professor who commandeered the microphone to offer up a lame defense of the school's science education. It was embarrassing and self-serving and received the boos it deserved. Yet all the author has to offer on his public persona is that he was very short, near sighted and wore thick glasses, and his voice was nowhere near as pleasing as Robert Frost's.. God knows what any of this has to do with architecture. I am not an apologist for Fuller; I know that his geodesic domes are terrible places to live - hard to heat or cool, most of the interior space is unusable, they are next to impossible to add on to, and they leak. The author comes closest to capturing him when he describes him as a "national guru of futuristic technology." So much architectural progress and change devolves into pissing contests; Fuller, one felt, dealt with bigger, more fundamental issues. His chapter is the shortest in the volume and probably belongs in a different book, by a different author. Elsewhere, the author undervalues abstract art and seems to be doubtful of the reality of synesthesia. While discussing Frank Lloyd Wright's supposed homophobia, he also makes the absurd statement that "design students are perhaps more likely to be gay than many other students." This statement is both absurd and clumsy (how many is "many?" What's with the hesitant "perhaps?" ) A non-literate and simply weird thing to say.

In the first volume of *Makers of Modern Architecture* (2007), Martin Filler examined the emergence of that revolutionary new form of building and explored its aesthetic, social, and spiritual aspirations through illuminating studies of some of its most important practitioners, from Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright to, in our own time, Renzo Piano and Santiago Calatrava. Now, in *Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume II*, Filler continues his investigations into the building art, beginning with the historical eclecticism of McKim, Mead, and White, best remembered today for New York City's demolished Pennsylvania Station. He surveys the seemingly inexhaustible flow of new books about Wright and Le Corbusier, and continues his commentaries on Piano's museum buildings with an essay focused on the new Broad Contemporary Art Museum in Los Angeles. There are less well known subjects here too, from the Frankfurt urban planner Ernst May to Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome. Filler judges Edward Durell Stone—the architect of the U.S. embassy in New Delhi, the Huntington Hartford Museum in New York City, and the Kennedy Center in Washington—to have been “a middling product of his times,” however personally interesting he may have been. And he looks back at James Stirling, who in the 1970s and 1980s was “a veritable rock star of the profession,” responsible for what Filler considers some of the very few worthwhile postmodernist buildings. The essays collected here are not entirely historical, however. Filler also focuses on some of the most recent projects to have attracted critical and popular attention both in the United States and abroad, including Rem Koolhaas's CCTV building in Beijing and Bernard Tschumi's Acropolis Museum in Athens. He argues that Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa's New Museum in New York City is “one of those rare, clarifying works of architecture that makes most recent buildings of the same sort look suddenly ridiculous.” He calls Tod Williams and Billie Tsien's brilliant reimagining of the Barnes Collection in Philadelphia “a latter-day miracle...a virtually unimprovable setting” for its art. He finds Michael Arad's September 11 Memorial at Ground Zero “a sobering, disturbing, heartbreaking, and overwhelming masterpiece.” And he argues that Diller Scofidio + Renfro's Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and their work revitalizing the High Line and Lincoln Center in New York make them today's “shrewdest yet most sympathetic enhancers of the American metropolis.” Filler remains, in these nineteen essays, a shrewd observer of the pressures on architects and their projects—money, politics, social expectations, even the weight of their own reputations. But his focus is always on the buildings themselves, on their sincerity and

directness, on their form and their function, on their capacity to bring delight to the human landscape.