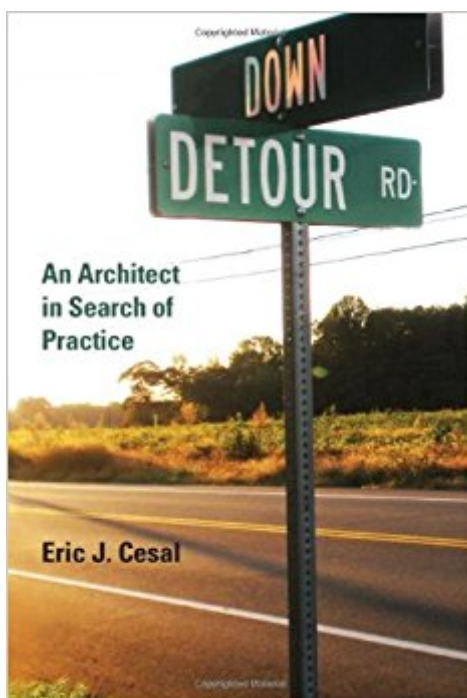


The book was found

Down Detour Road: An Architect In Search Of Practice (MIT Press)



Synopsis

I paused at the stoop and thought this could be the basis of a good book. The story of a young man who went deep into the bowels of the academy in order to understand architecture and found it had been on his doorstep all along. This had an air of hokeyness about it, but it had been a tough couple of days and I was feeling sentimental about the warm confines of the studio which had unceremoniously discharged me upon the world. -- from *Down Detour Road*

What does it say about the value of architecture that as the world faces economic and ecological crises, unprecedented numbers of architects are out of work? This is the question that confronted architect Eric Cesal as he finished graduate school at the onset of the worst financial meltdown in a generation. *Down Detour Road* is his journey: one that begins off-course, and ends in a hopeful new vision of architecture. Like many architects of his generation, Cesal confronts a cold reality. Architects may assure each other of their own importance, but society has come to view architecture as a luxury it can do without. For Cesal, this recognition becomes an occasion to rethink architecture and its value from the very core. He argues that the times demand a new architecture, an empowered architecture that is useful and relevant. New architectural values emerge as our cultural values shift: from high risks to safe bets, from strong portfolios to strong communities, and from clean lines to clean energy. This is not a book about how to run a firm or a profession; it doesn't predict the future of architectural form or aesthetics. It is a personal story -- and in many ways a generational one: a story that follows its author on a winding detour across the country, around the profession, and into a new architectural reality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This down-to-earth critique of the profession is important for the future of architecture . . ." - Charles Holland, RIBA Journal
This book is highly unusual for an architecture opus: it is well written, it is funny, and it is wise in so many ways. I literally 'couldn't put it down,' as the old book review-saw goes, and read it in one sitting...Cesal finds useful parables for architects and their predicament in the most unusual places: the relationship of bartenders to bar owners, how prostitutes are and are not like architects, and how a good architect is like a fire extinguisher...Cesal offers a unique, refreshing take on the profession. (Michael Crosbie *Architectural Record*)
Down Detour Road is an essential roadmap to the present architectural scene and the challenges that it faces. With a tragicomic eye, Eric Cesal exposes the hubris that has led so much architectural education and practice into an impotent cul-de-sac, and succinctly presents a pragmatic and hopeful way out. (Jeremy Till, Dean of the School of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Westminster, and author of *Architecture Depends*)
This manifesto-memoir comes none too soon to rescue Architecture from the trash bin of postmodernism. Lucid, intelligent, and visionary, this small book is destined to become a guide for 21st century architects. Cesal reconnects his profession to the humanities from which it is becoming estranged, and to the economy, culture, and technology of an America radically different from the one built by previous generations. This tract cuts the knot of the confounding jumble all humanities and academic disciplines face, with the swift blade of an Emerson or de Tocqueville. And let me tell you: a real human being wrote this, he breathes warmly from every page. (Andrei Codrescu, author of *The Poetry Lesson*)

Eric J. Cesal holds master's degrees in business administration, construction management, and architecture from Washington University in St. Louis. He is now living in Port-au-Prince, managing and coordinating Architecture for Humanity's design and reconstruction initiatives in Haiti.

I just finished reading *Down Detour Road* by Eric J. Cesal, literally moments ago. I can say, without trepidation, that this was the single best book I've ever read about the profession of architecture. I had no doubt that I would like it from the start. I came across the book completely by chance. I was wandering the shelves at the local national-chain bookstore and, as I often do, came upon their steadily shrinking selection of architecture books. Having perused most of the titles in the past, it

didn't take me long to spot the handful of new titles that had arrived since my last visit. Among them was *Down Detour Road*. I spent a few minutes reading the introduction. Here in my hand was this book that immediately struck me. The author was writing about issues that plague my mind. It makes sense. He graduated from architecture school five months before I did, so he was stumbling through the same economic minefield as I was. He was also older than the average architecture graduate, much like myself. I felt I had found a kindred spirit. It seemed the book held a world of possibility. So naturally I put it back on the shelf and walked away. I don't have a job, nor the steady supply of money that comes from such an endeavor. So I waited until I got home to order it online. The book does a wonderful job of explaining how the economic crisis happened, how it affected architecture, and how it highlighted a litany of problems that already existed. From the rubble it works to help refocus what it is to be an architect and how we might empower the role of architecture for the good of the profession. With a wonderful combination of comedy, tragedy, and personal anecdote, this book gives a direction for the role of architecture without suggesting its form or aesthetics. It is a manifesto for the service that is architecture rather than the product often called architecture. This may be a bold statement, but I think any and every architect and architecture student out there should read this book. Read this book, you won't be sorry.

Every architect should be required to read this book; when our industry recovers (and it will although not next year but by the mid-decade), things will be different - very different. This book examines why things must change if the profession of architecture is to survive. We can only do this by offering value and worth to our clients, our communities and society as a whole; then and only then will we be compensated and rewarded for our dedication, efforts, redeeming qualities, abilities, training and talents. Jack E. Andersen, AIA

Any architecture student preparing to graduate could benefit from this reading. I say could because it's only beneficial if you are currently engaged in discovering how you will practice architecture. The author does an excellent job of laying out the current terrain of the profession, and provides insight into the recovery of the profession.

Down Detour road is an amazing and exact book for Architect who still care about the profession of architecture. Not only is this book a well written tent revival for today's practicing architect, it outlines solutions for a better way. However, I'm afraid that most architects are too jaded and entrenched to be healed by this book. But I still challenge everyone who has a finger in the design profession of

architecture to read it. This book might just save you from the traps that are entrenched in today's profession of architecture.

I gave it a two because it has some interesting insights. Very few. It's cheap, but your time isn't.

A great read to inspire the young architect.

Every architect should also have their friends and loved ones read this so they can understand what's going on in the architect's life. Well written and spot on regarding what happened to the Architecture field. Thank you!

Having a Architecture degree this book confirmed what most architectural students find out once they graduate. A bit depressing but the information was accurate.

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