

# The Museum of Modern Art

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ON ADAM'S HOUSE IN PARADISE: THE IDEA OF THE PRIMITIVE HUT IN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY by Joseph Rykwert. 224 pages; 87 illustrations; clothbound \$8.95, paperbound \$4.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art on December 15, 1972. Distributed to the trade by New York Graphic Society Ltd.

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In this brilliant essay, architectural historian Joseph Rykwert explores the idea of the first house as it has influenced architectural theory throughout written history. According to Mr. Rykwert, the vision of a lost paradise and the essential house it would seem to have contained "seems to have haunted everyone involved in building long before building was distinguished from architecture." The persistence of the idea of a first house is traced through its occurrence in a variety of contexts; from the arguments of architects and theoreticians such as Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Viollet-le-duc, and Piranesi, or philosophers and writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Goethe, Coleridge, and Hegel to the undocumented realms of myth and ritual classical, biblical, Far Eastern, and Australian aborigine.

A wealth of intellectual and illustrative material is ingeniously woven around the theme of man's desire for renewal as expressed in his persistent return to architectural origins. The author shows how man throughout the ages and even today has perennially returned to an involvement with his so-called "innocent" or "primitive" state as a way of preparing for his continuing existence. The primitive hut has been used in ritual and in building as both a token from the past and a guide to the future. Where man has attempted to forge ahead into new areas he has historically defined his task, or mission, in terms of his past, a recollection of lost perfection that he believes to have been his original condition and which he nurtures in memory.

But recollection is only the first step in attempting to understand and remedy the crucial environmental issues that confront man today. In concluding

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his investigation, the author relates his motif to current needs and aspirations: "The desire for renewal is perennial and inescapable. The very continued existence of social and intellectual tensions guarantees its recurrence. And renewal was always sought for in the rituals of seasonal change and initiation, much as the reform of corrupt custom and practice was renewed by theorists in their appeal to anyone concerned with building."

This volume is the second work in the series of Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture, of which Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture by Robert Venturi was the first. Accompanying the essay are 87 fascinating illustrations covering the entire range of subjects in the text, and a bibliography.

Joseph Rykwert is Professor of Art at the University of Essex, England, and a Visiting Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York. In 1971 he was Senior Visiting Fellow of the Council of the Humanities, Princeton University. He is also the author of The Golden House and The Idea of a Town, and editor of Alberti's Ten Books on Architecture.

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