



Discrimination by Design: A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment

By Leslie Weisman

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Discrimination by Design is a fascinating account of the complex social processes and power struggles involved in building and controlling space. Leslie Kanes Weisman offers a new framework for understanding the spatial dimensions of gender and race as well as class. She traces the social and architectural histories of the skyscraper, maternity hospital, department store, shopping mall, nuclear family dream house, and public housing high rise. Her vivid prose is based on exhaustive research and documents how each setting, along with public parks and streets, embodies and transmits the privileges and penalties of social caste. In presenting feminist themes from a spatial perspective, Weisman raises many new and important questions. When do women feel unsafe in cities, and why? Why do so many homeless people prefer to sleep on the streets rather than in city-run shelters? Why does the current housing crisis pose a greater threat to women than to men? How would dwellings, communities, and public buildings look if they were designed to foster relationships of equality and environmental wholeness? And how can we begin to imagine such a radically different landscape? In exploring the answers, the author introduces us to the people, policies, architectural innovations, and ideologies working today to shape a future in which all people matter. Richly illustrated with photographs and drawings, Discrimination by Design is an invaluable and pioneering contribution to our understanding of the issues of our time--health care for the elderly and people with AIDS, homelessness, racial justice, changing conditions of work and family life, affordable housing, militarism, energy conservation, and the preservation of the environment. This thoroughly readable book provides practical guidance to policymakers, architects, planners, and housing activists. It should be read by all who are interested in understanding how the built environment shapes the experiences of their daily lives

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Is the building and controlling of space a feminist issue? Consider the Washington Monument, a prominent feature of our nation's capital--a tall, pointed shaft of a building. Or consider the assembly line layout of a maternity ward--women shunted from labor to delivery to recovery--and how it dehumanizes that most female of roles, giving birth. Leslie Kanes Weisman, former dean of architecture, offers this critique of space management. It is complemented by practical advice on creating more inclusive architecture and community.

From Library Journal

Both Weisman and Daphne Spain (*Gendered Spaces* , LJ 3/1/92) assert that the gendered arrangement and design of space lowers women's social status. Whereas Spain studies both industrial and nonindustrial societies and concentrates on homes and the workplace, Weisman examines primarily contemporary American socioeconomic organizations of space. Through feminist criticism, she looks at male/female roles in public spaces (parks), public buildings (skyscrapers and shopping malls), and private dwellings (houses, multiple family dwellings, and housing projects). A major portion of Weisman's work focuses on contemporary women's housing issues, offering solutions (some architectural and some economic). Despite strong feminist biases, this volume complements Spain's and is highly recommended for academic and large public libraries.

- *Jenny Presnell, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, Ohio*

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From the Back Cover

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