

Consuming Scenography: The Shopping Mall As A Theatrical Experience (Performance And Design)

In 1986, author and architecture critic Michael Sorkin published a seminal essay titled "The Shopping Mall as Theatrical Experience." Sorkin argued that the shopping mall had become a dominant form of public space in American life, and that its design and operation reflected the values and aspirations of our consumer culture. Malls were designed to create a sense of excitement and spectacle, with bright lights, loud music, and a constant stream of new products to tempt shoppers. They were also designed to be safe and comfortable, with air conditioning, comfortable seating, and a wide variety of amenities.

Sorkin's essay was highly influential, and it helped to spark a new wave of scholarship on the shopping mall. In recent years, scholars have explored the mall from a variety of perspectives, including its history, architecture, economics, and social impact. This book brings together some of the most important and influential essays on the shopping mall, exploring its many dimensions and offering new insights into this fascinating and complex phenomenon.

Performance and Design



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★★★★★ 5 out of 5



One of the most striking things about shopping malls is their performative nature. They are designed to create a sense of excitement and spectacle, with bright lights, loud music, and a constant stream of new products to tempt shoppers. The mall is a stage, and the shoppers are the audience. They are invited to wander through the mall, admiring the displays and trying out the products. They are encouraged to spend money, and to have a good time.

The design of the mall also contributes to its performative nature. The mall is typically organized around a central atrium, which is often used for special events and performances. The stores are arranged around the atrium, and they are designed to attract shoppers with their bright colors and eye-catching displays. The mall is a carefully orchestrated environment, and it is designed to create a sense of excitement and spectacle.

The Social Impact of Shopping Malls

Shopping malls have a significant impact on the social fabric of our communities. They are often the center of activity in suburban areas, and they provide a place for people to meet, socialize, and shop. Malls can also be a source of civic pride, and they can help to create a sense of community.

However, shopping malls can also have a negative impact on our communities. They can contribute to traffic congestion, air pollution, and noise pollution. They can also lead to the decline of traditional downtowns. Malls are often seen as symbols of consumerism, and they can contribute to a sense of alienation and isolation.

The Future of Shopping Malls

The future of shopping malls is uncertain. The rise of online shopping has led to a decline in the number of shoppers visiting malls. In addition, many malls are struggling to keep up with the changing tastes of consumers. Some malls are being redeveloped into mixed-use developments, which include residential, office, and retail space. Others are being converted into entertainment and leisure destinations.

It is clear that the shopping mall is a complex and evolving phenomenon. It is a space that is both fascinating and troubling. It is a place where people can come together to socialize, shop, and be entertained. It is also a place that can contribute to traffic congestion, air pollution, and noise pollution. The future of the shopping mall is uncertain, but it is clear that it will continue to play a significant role in our communities for years to come.

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