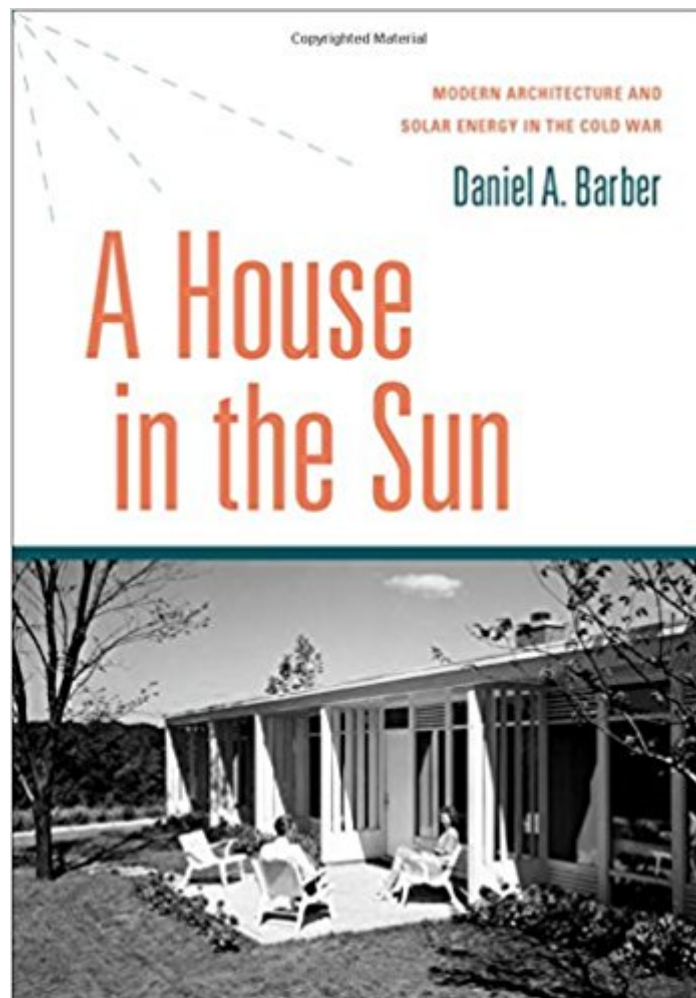




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A House In The Sun: Modern Architecture And Solar Energy In The Cold War



Synopsis

A House in the Sun describes a number of experiments in solar house heating in American architectural, engineering, political, economic, and corporate contexts from the beginning of World War II until the late 1950s. Houses were built across the Midwest, Northeast, and Southwestern United States, and also proposed for sites in India, South Africa, and Morocco. These experiments developed in parallel to transformations in the discussion of modern architecture, relying on new materials and design ideas for both energy efficiency and claims to cultural relevance. Architects were among the myriad cultural and scientific actors to see the solar house as an important designed element of the American future. These experiments also developed as part of a wider analysis of the globe as an interconnected geophysical system. Perceived resource limitations in the immediate postwar period led to new understandings of the relationship between energy, technology and economy. The solar house - both as a charged object in the milieu of suburban expansion, and as a means to raise the standard of living in developing economies - became an important site for social, technological, and design experimentation. This led to new forms of expertise in architecture and other professions. Daniel Barber argues that this mid-century interest in solar energy was one of the first episodes in which resource limitations were seen as an opportunity for design to attain new relevance for potential social and cultural transformations. Furthermore, the solar discussion established both an intellectual framework and a funding structure for the articulation of and response to global environmental concerns in subsequent decades. In presenting evidence of resource tensions at the beginning of the Cold War, the book offers a new perspective on the histories of architecture, technology, and environmentalism, one more fully entangled with the often competing dynamics of geopolitical and geophysical pressures.

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Customer Reviews

"The author provides a thorough, in-depth historical study of the rise and fall of solar houses, the key players (ranging from architects to academics) involved, and the extensive innovation and experimentation generated and relayed through exhibitions, publications, and competitions. Detailed black-and-white and color illustrations are strategically placed to enhance the text. A well-researched prequel to any book on mid-century modern or postwar energy policy

Recommended."--CHOICE "A House in the Sun carefully articulates the complex, and often tacit, role of architects in the postwar entanglement of technology, politics, economics, and ecology, especially in the United States. With clarity, breadth, and great detail, Barber articulates the bright prehistory of the transformations of the architect in the solar-house era. A House in the Sun is a robust and generous contribution that will help architects and historians to better conceptualize and situate their practices within the complexity of architecture and energy in the United States."--Kiel Moe, Constructs

Advance Praise for A House in the Sun "Daniel Barber recuperates a seminal lost chapter in the history of modernism that goes far beyond the stakes of design. His is an account of a vigorous discourse on solar energy that long pre-dated the oil crisis of the 1970s and our current grappling with the slowly unfolding cataclysm of global climate change. Far from a history of hippies and alternatives, Barber reveals that alternative energy research was a mainstream government and university concern in the middle decades of the twentieth century. His probing research interweaves architecture and design history with a nuanced account of the larger political and economic history of energy as the Cold War heated up." - Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History, Columbia University "Daniel Barber's A House in the Sun offers a theoretically nuanced, fascinating account of the solar house that reminds not only that infrastructure isn't destiny but also that the history of design is filled with possible futures that still might be tapped. This is an important book for scholars of the cultures of energy, infrastructure studies, and environmental criticism - and for anyone hoping to participate in the energy transition demanded by global climate change." - Stephanie LeMenager, Barbara and Carlisle Moore Distinguished Professor in English and American Literature and Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Oregon "The postwar

solar house was surrounded as much by the sun as by new & experts; new techniques, and new devices that together transformed the subjectivity of the house and architect alike. Richly illustrated, Barber's book cogently documents the environmentality of this episode in heliotropic architecture through the techno-political optimism of its social, cultural, and political turns." - Kiel Moe, Associate Professor of Architecture and Energy, Harvard Graduate School of Design

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