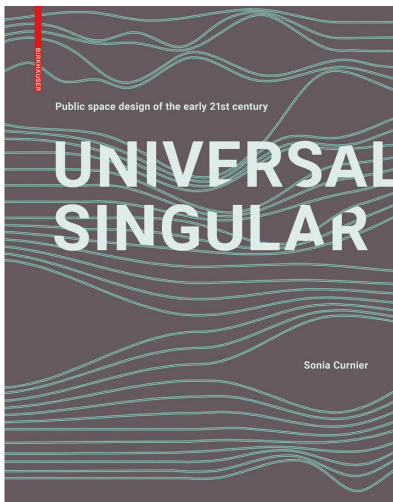# Universal Singular
Public Space Design of the Early 21st Century

Author: Sonia Curnier
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Are you always confused about how a urban space project is generated and then landed? Then this book is the book for you. The author Sonia Kurnier is a young urban designer and architect who wants to break down many kinds of urban design processes in an easy-reading way with this 297-page book.

The book is divided into four sections, its structure guides readers from a general overview to more detailed insights into urban design. The first part 'Introduction' explains the author's motivation for this book and highlights the importance of public space design. Then in the next part 'Genesis', the author talks about the development of urban design careers from the 1980s to now and some famous theories, which provides a historical foundation. These case studies in 'Portraits' present various kinds of cases and well-known theories related to urban space design from designers' perspectives and summarize conclusions from these projects in 'Cross-Examination'.

There are many strengths of this book. It is helpful for readers to understand actual design projects and develop design ideas. It contains functionally distinct chapters that structure its content in a way that helps the reader to systematically understand many types of public space design, from historical background to specific cases to general conclusions. What's more, each project is analyzed in detail and in various ways to make readers acknowledge more information about urban design. However, some aspects could be improved. Firstly, the book is highly specialized and contains a lot of technical details that may be more difficult for non-specialist readers to understand. And for the introduction part, it is not clear for some process of the development of urban space design. For example, the development period before the 1980s. This might require readers to have some prior background knowledge to fully understand the content. What's more, the book focuses mainly on the designer's perspective and lacks detailed discussions on the challenges encountered during project construction, public feedback, and actual usage. This may prevent readers from fully understanding the actual effects and social impacts of the project. Finally, there are many terms with complex language and terminology in this book without any explanation, such as 'formal autonomy' and 'semantic autonomy'. they are a kind of barrier for some readers to understand the author's meaning.

Overall, recommend this book to who want to learn about urban space design. This book provides insights for those interested in urban public spaces design. Through a structured arrangement of chapters, readers are able to gain a systematic understanding from broad historical contexts to the analysis of specific case studies. While some of the terminology and design theories may be complex for non-specialized readers, and the book lacks in-depth discussion of the project implementation process and social impacts, it is still a book of high value.

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Review by Jin Tao (12.09.2024)