



New York Public Library: Its Architecture and Decoration (The Classical America series in art and architecture)

By Henry Hope Reed

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Visitors to the New York Public Library's main reading room are not likely to gaze enraptured at ornamental moldings, cherubs and vast, uninterrupted ceilings as they cope with poor lighting, uncomfortable chairs and often slow service. Reed's room-by-room architectural tour, a panegyric to the Fifth Avenue building, asks us to believe it is "a people's palace," even though its ornate turn-of-the-century style modeled on classical Paris and Rome has the effect of intimidating rather than welcoming library users. No staircase, lamp, carved relief or marble bust is overlooked as the author pores over "this great jewel of the civic crown" in belabored prose, although his armchair tour does turn up many delightful facets of the building that are probably missed by most visitors. The impressive photographs make the book.

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From Library Journal

The New York Public Library is recognized as one of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts Classicism in the city. Reed's monograph contains a wealth of information about the building's design, from the majestic Corinthian portico on Fifth Avenue to the desk lamps in the Main Reading Room. Each architectural detail is lovingly photographed and labelled, providing an exhaustive record of the building's ornamentation. For Reed, however, architecture is style and form, nothing more; this is unfortunate, for little attention is paid to the building's construction or to the extensive stacks that house the majority of the library's books. Despite this shortcoming, the book should be of interest both to architectural historians and to the thousands of readers who make regular use of this unique resource. H. Ward Jndl, National Park Svce., Washington, D.C.

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