

# Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture.* Beyond Modernity by the Medium of Perception without Manifesto

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## Abstract

The book *Experiencing Architecture*, published in 1959 for The MIT Press and written by Steen Eiler Rasmussen (1898–1990), a Danish practicing architect and urban historian and writer, represents a little-known chapter of post-war architectural theory.

Although not conventionally included among the milestones, the essay reached a certain notoriety in the States at a time when the world architectural debate was focusing on new themes with the goal of overcoming that ‘modernity’ that in the eyes of the masters themselves, showed the obvious signs of the crisis. With respect to this change of perspective, Rasmussen deliberately presented the book not as a ‘manifesto’ but rather as a popular text, launching (perhaps unconsciously) a more ambitious challenge, that of laying the foundations for an architectural culture ‘after’ modern architecture and, from a functional point of view, more in continuity than against it.

Therefore, our aim is to investigate the issues addressed as well as the method employed to present matters. The scenario in which the author moves is that of spatial perception starting from “solids and cavities” and their effects which Rasmussen illustrates to the virgin eye of the reader, an interest, that also involves contemporary architects at the turn of the Fifties and Sixties belonging to very different geographical contexts. Retracing the steps of this short but intense book can contribute to reconsider origins and time span of the ‘postmodern era’ by pointing out a broader meaning with respect to what is commonly intended.

## Keywords

Rasmussen, Experience, Architecture, Spatial Perception, Theory