

Designing Your Perfect House: Lessons from an Architect

William J. Hirsch Jr.

William J. Hirsch Jr. AIA

Dalsimer Press (October 2008)

Hardcover \$39.95 (240pp)

978-0-9798820-3-6

“He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home,” wrote Goethe. Most people are neither kings nor peasants, but living in a house designed just for us is one way to find peace. The prospect of designing and building one’s own home may seem daunting, but Hirsch breaks the process down and brings to bear his extensive expertise in assisting first-time home builders. Hirsch holds a master’s degree in architecture, has practiced for more than thirty years, and designs custom homes for clients throughout the U.S.

Stylistically, this book caters to people at a higher socioeconomic level; the photos and example designs exclusively feature high-end homes such as a tropical-influenced, Balinese-style house with connected pavilions and a neocolonial-style home with infinity-edged pool. Anyone contemplating designing a house, however, would benefit from the valuable lessons outlined in each chapter—unifying design, delving into details, and thinking through each room—to name a few. Hirsch explains in a friendly, conversational tone many critical design components that may not be obvious to most people, for example, what it means to make a space comfortable for humans or the importance of scale. It becomes clear that, although readers may not have articulated these concepts before, they intuitively understand them.

The author leaves no paving stone unturned in his careful assessment of the particulars of superior home design, from the inclusion of nostalgic childhood memories to repetition of a specific detail throughout the house. If anything, this book impresses upon the reader just how monumental is the decision to design a custom home with care.

Green building and sustainable development are concepts that must be addressed in any contemporary architecture publication, and although this book’s focus is not “green” per se, it does devote a portion of a chapter to energy efficiency and environmentally responsible design.

Designing Your Perfect Home consists of twelve chapters or “lessons” covering topics such as choosing a site, finding an architect, and figuring out a budget, but this really isn’t a “how to” formula. Hirsch delves into the fine points of building not just a great house but a house that’s perfect for its occupants. His experience working with first-timers and his sensitivity to both architectural concepts and the emotions involved in home design make this an excellent read for those in the trade and would-be homeowners.

(October 13, 2008)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.