

From Elephants to Skyscrapers: Zoomorphic Architecture

Neill Lundgren

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This children's introduction to an architectural style emphasizes the importance of creativity.

Neill Lundgren's *From Elephants to Skyscrapers: Zoomorphic Architecture* is an informative examination of architectural design inspired by animals. The book provides middle grade readers with an opportunity to explore the creative possibilities of designing buildings.

The book is organized into chapters about types of animals that may inspire architects. Some chapters are straightforward, such as those that take inspiration from fish and birds. Other chapters have less cohesive themes, including a chapter on creatures including slugs, snakes, and ants and a chapter based on "sluggish" animals including elephants and turtles. Each chapter provides multiple examples of buildings inspired by the creatures along with information about their unique qualities, such as their ability to withstand extreme elements.

The book is written in a clear conversational style that is easy to follow. Information about the animal inspirations for each building is shared. Occasional questions ask the reader to ponder style preferences and engage with the content with the goal of sparking young minds to consider the creative possibilities that exist in architecture. This is perhaps the book's greatest strength. It is successful in demonstrating that architecture is not limited to square buildings but is in fact only limited by the imagination of architects and designers.

There are photographs throughout the book of different zoomorphic structures as well as some of the animals on which they are based. Some of these are useful and interesting, highlighting beautiful and unusual buildings discussed in the text. Other images are grainy, blurry, or do not show enough of their buildings to get a clear sense of their animal-inspired designs.

The book includes a glossary and a bibliography, but there are no references cited in the text itself. There is scant information about how the featured buildings were designed and built, which may frustrate curious readers.

The final chapter consists of a brief discussion of conceptual designs and how experimenting with different ideas and materials can lead to innovation. It emphasizes using recycled material in new buildings. This chapter includes images of other unique designs, but it does not tie into the overarching emphasis on designs inspired by animals, and its content feels more suited to an introduction on what architects do. Because of where the chapter is placed, it feels like tangential information.

From Elephants to Skyscrapers is an interesting introduction to a branch of architecture that is likely to appeal to young children. It will help them to see that creativity is possible, even in a structured field.

CATHERINE THURESON (February 21, 2019)

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