



Designs on the Public: The Private Lives of New York's Public Spaces

Kristine F. Miller

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New York City is home to some of the most recognizable places in the world. As familiar as the sight of New Year's Eve in Times Square or a protest in front of City Hall may be to us, do we understand who controls what happens there? Kristine Miller delves into six of New York's most important public spaces to trace how design influences their complicated lives.

Miller chronicles controversies in the histories of New York locations including Times Square, Trump Tower, the IBM Atrium, and Sony Plaza. The story of each location reveals that public space is not a concrete or fixed reality, but rather a constantly changing situation open to the forces of law, corporations, bureaucracy, and government. The qualities of public spaces we consider essential, including accessibility, public ownership, and ties to democratic life, are, at best, temporary conditions and often completely absent.

Design is, in Miller's view, complicit in regulation of public spaces in New York City to exclude undesirables, restrict activities, and privilege commercial interests, and in this work she shows how design can reactivate public space and public life.

Kristine F. Miller is associate professor of landscape architecture at the University of Minnesota.

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