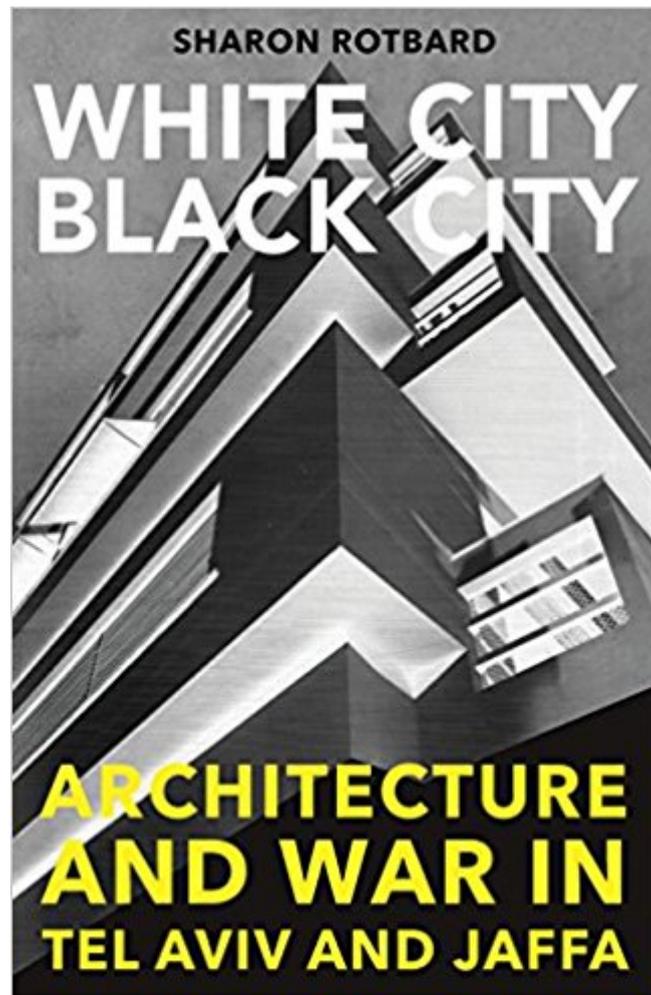# White City, Black City: Architecture And War In Tel Aviv And Jaffa (MIT Press)

Synopsis

The history of Tel Aviv, presented for a moment as an architectural history, can be seen as a part of a wider process in which the physical shaping of Tel Aviv and its political and cultural construction are intertwined, and plays a decisive role in the construction of the case, the alibi, and the apologetics of the Jewish settlement across the country. -- White City, Black CityIn 2004, the city of Tel Aviv was declared by UNESCO a World Heritage Site, an exemplar of modernism in architecture and town planning. Today, the Hebrew city of Tel Aviv gleams white against the desert sky, its Bauhaus-inspired architecture betraying few traces of what came before it: the Arab city of Jaffa. In White City, Black City, the Israeli architect and author Sharon Rotbard offers two intertwining narratives, that of colonized and colonizer. It is also a story of a decades-long campaign of architectural and cultural historical revision that cast Tel Aviv as a modernist "white city" emerging fully formed from the dunes while ignoring its real foundation -- the obliteration of Jaffa. Rotbard shows that Tel Aviv was not, as a famous poem has it, built "from sea foam and clouds" but born in Jaffa and shaped according to its relation to Jaffa. His account is not only about architecture but also about war, destruction, Zionist agendas, erasure, and the erasure of the erasure. Rotbard tells how Tel Aviv has seen Jaffa as an inverted reflection of itself -- not shining and white but nocturnal, criminal, dirty: a "black city." Jaffa lost its language, its history, and its architecture; Tel Aviv constructed its creation myth. White City, Black City -- hailed upon its publication in Israel as "path-breaking," "brilliant," and "a masterpiece" -- promises to become the central text on Tel Aviv.Praise for the Israeli edition of White City, Black City"A path-breaking and brilliant analysis." -- Eyal Weizman, author of Hollow Land"A challenging book that deserves to be read and argued." -- Tom Segev, Haaretz

Book Information

Series: MIT Press

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: The MIT Press; Tra edition (February 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0262527723

ISBN-13: 978-0262527729

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #286,243 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #121 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Regional   #301 in Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine   #2772 in Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources

Customer Reviews

Good read but many of the illustrations are blurred.

Well-written and fairly objective. This is a little discussed subject. The book chronicles the tragedy of one city rising on the ashes of another after a war involving ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian population.Kudos to the author for taking on this important topic.

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