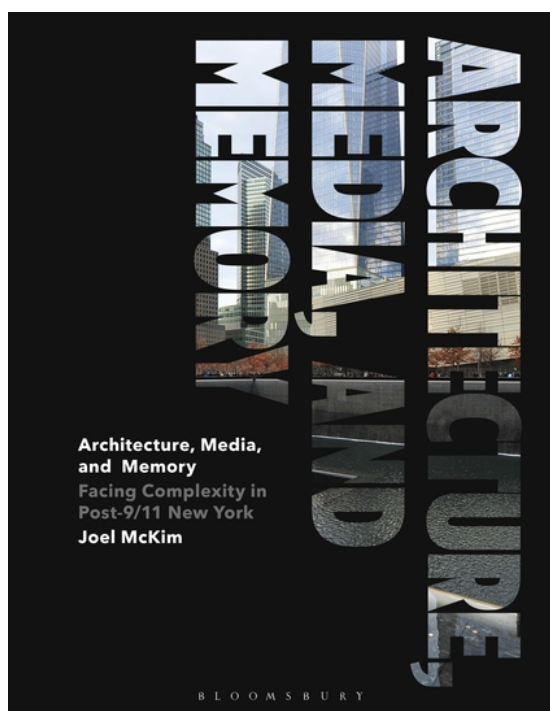


## Architecture, Media, and Memory: Facing Complexity in Post-9/11 New York

by Joel McKim. Bloomsbury, December 2018. 176 p. ill. ISBN 9781350037663 (pbk), \$114.00.

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McKim's book is a slim but substantive volume of theory and aesthetics applied to the case of rebuilding in New York after the events of September 11, 2001. The book opens with a discussion of the variety and geographic density of historic memorials in lower Manhattan. The work of constructing Holocaust memorials in Germany is briefly presented and referred to later in the book. McKim asks whether memorials need be exclusively about catharsis or local projects informed by consumerism, proposing instead how it may be possible to create memorial spaces that allow new political conversations and connections to occur. Throughout the book, the author revisits this prospect, offering insights from theorists as well as from practitioners.

The first chapter describes Union Square as a site of unscripted public activity in the early days after 9/11 and illustrates the potential for spaces concerned with memory to serve new forms of engagement, incorporating a greater global awareness. In another chapter, McKim discusses conspiracy theorists' use of social media. The relevance to architectural theory is in the unprecedented emphasis on architecture and engineering – in this case, of the World Trade Center. As McKim notes, the online sharing of alleged evidence, inspiring factious debates, existed long before the present public sparring over “fake news.” The author links this phenomenon with misinformation and controversy related to the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque.” McKim seeks a positive way out for theorists whose first instinct is to support grassroots activism for its own sake, even if the outcomes are disturbing.

Other chapters provide an account of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, as well as local projects, instrumental in providing interactive, technology-based experiences for the museum. Deliberations relative to the overall reconstruction of lower Manhattan are also described and analyzed. The role of input from victims' survivors is made clear throughout. The final chapter deals with the complexities of the environmental reclamation of the Fish Kills landfill, which was reopened to accept debris from the WTC site after 9/11. McKim describes the contentious design evolution of a site known to have received the remains of victims. At the same time, McKim sees the response to Fish Kill's history as a public landfill to be inadequate.

The book includes explanatory notes at the end of each chapter, a bibliography and index. A selection of black and white photographs supports the text. The author has previously addressed some topics elsewhere. This book is a summation and yet also a record of ongoing scholarly investigation. Grounded in examples, this is primarily a work of theoretical exploration and will be most appreciated by researchers in theory and cultural studies.