

Walter B. Kleeman, Jr., *The Challenge of Interior Design*. Boston, MA: CBI Publishing Company, Inc., 1981. \$19.95

Reviewed by:
Wolfgang F.E. Preiser

This book is about human needs in interior environments. It attempts to fill a gap where little or no easily accessible information existed in the past.

The book is intended for design practitioners and students looking for usable data and guidance on making interior environments more supportive of human requirements, whether they are dimensional, physiological or psychological in nature.

This is a tall order to fill when one considers the complexity and abundance of human interactions with the environment. The author chooses to address himself to a selected set of problems in interior design (Part I, 150 p.), he limits his discussion to specific uses and building types (Part II, 100 p.) and he, through several case studies (Part III, 65 p.) demonstrates applications of his thinking.

In the introductory chapter, the author presents an intriguing argument, i.e., that of legal accountability of the interior design profession and standard making agencies vs. client/users of interiors. He cites several court cases in which law suits challenged existing space and environmental standards, primarily in institutions. Creating humane, psychological and physical environments, then, is the real challenge of interior design, according to the author.

Kleeman then deals with design for the disabled (based on ANSI Standard A-117. 1-1980 and other relevant material) with some very useful suggestions for applications. Next, several environmental stimuli are addressed, including light, color, texture and visual complexity. Health considerations as affected by the quality of lighting are also treated.

The author then moves on to the topic of communication distances

commonly used in interior environments. Ergonomic factors in the design of seating and desks are discussed, and interior design as non-verbal communication. The latter is perhaps the most interesting part of the book.

Part II considers interior ergonomics in spaces for the elderly, in mental health institutions, residential environments, in outer space, offices and university environments.

Part III contains case studies ranging from a doctor's waiting room to Federal Aviation Administration offices and GSA's comprehensive interior design process.

A critical assessment of this book indicates a certain imbalance of scope and topics treated. For example, important sensory modes such as the olfactory, tactile and thermal sense are not treated at all.

Human spatial behavior is only touched on slightly where territoriality and privacy is discussed. In personal communication, the author stated that one of the reasons "material on olfactory and thermal senses is not included in that these have been amply covered in other works (one example is *Space for People, Human Factors in Design*, by Corwin Bennett, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977). His synthesis of available material on the luminous, sound and thermal environments is the best I've seen in a form that's easily understandable for interior designers. Additionally, one of the purposes of this book was to gather previously unavailable material and present it in a way so that designers can use it. This is one of the factors that sometimes make it seem uncohesive."

On the other hand, the data shown such as those from the NASA *Habitability Data Handbook* are very useful, especially to the student of interior design. The language of the book is unpretentious and clear, and the illustrative material is helpful. This is particularly true in the section on the disabled where dimensional requirements are treated.

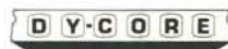
References can be found at the end of each chapter—a somewhat unorthodox method, but one can live with that. This book was written over a period of eleven years in a process of constant refinement and many of the original references are omitted because their material is incorporated in later references. This fact makes the appearance of some disciplines somewhat blurred, but it should not mask the fact that the material originally came from the many disciplines named in the preface.

The feeling of lack of cohesion among the disparate elements treated is reinforced by the observation that no integrative conceptual framework is presented which links people and aspects of interior environments. But then, no one has been able to devise such a framework, whether planning, urban design or architecture are concerned. A summarization of the issues in relating human needs to interior environments would have made for a less cumbersome or roundabout beginning of this otherwise worthwhile book. Despite the shortcomings referred to above, this is a worthwhile book because it contains the distillate of mountains of data. Its target readership are the interior designers, and they seem to love it judging by the sales (more than 1,000 since June, 1981), because the topic and price are right. WP

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(Continued on page 7 )



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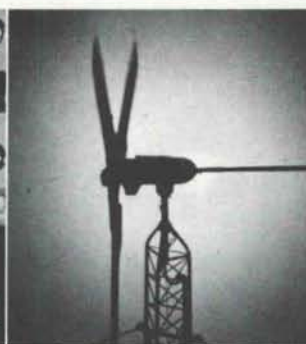
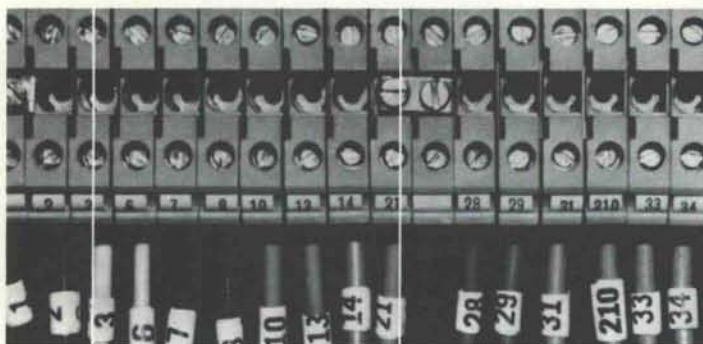


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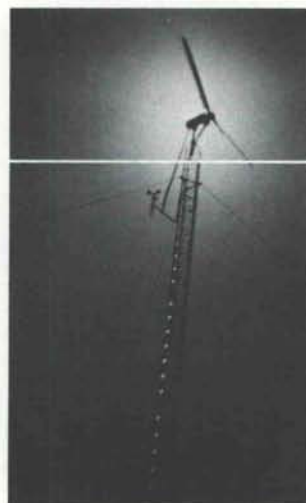
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Continued from page 4

\$14.45 postpaid by Preservation Resource Group, Inc. (PRG).

This important book, edited by geographer David Lowenthal and architectural critic Marcus Binney, answers questions on why it matters to keep old buildings and historic landscapes. It sketches the rise in interest in protecting cultural property; reviews the motives that underline preservation; and discusses management of historic buildings and cultural landscapes for the future. There are four case studies that examine the British experience in linking current inhabitants with historic landscapes and buildings, in the diverse community types from the wild landscape of Dartmoor, the inner city of Leeds, the relict countryside of Suffolk to the outer London suburb.

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The participants in International Council of Monuments and Sites' London Symposium held in April 1979 who have contributed to this book include: Michael Hunter, Hugh Prince, Bevis Hillier, Randolph Langenbach, Tamara Harven, Peter Fowler, Sylvia Sayer, John Popham, Matthew Saunders, Ken Powell, Marion Shoard, Max Hanna and Elizabeth Beazley. The editors of the book are David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney. Dr. Lowenthal is Professor of Geography at University College London and a well-known authority on conservation and the cultural

landscape. Mr. Binney is chairman of SAVE Britain's Heritage and architectural editor of *COUNTRY LIFE*.

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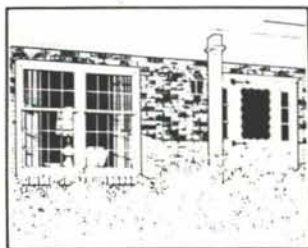
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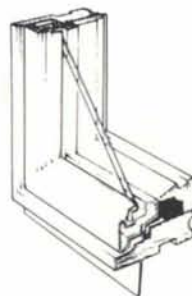
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