



# Parallax

By Steven Holl

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## Parallax By Steven Holl

What makes Steven Holl one of the most celebrated architects working today? As we learn in *Parallax*, his success comes from his sculptural form making, his interest in the poetics of space, color, and materiality, and his fascination with scientific phenomena. Holl reveals his working methods in this, his biggest and most ambitious book yet on his work-part treatise, part manifesto, and part, as Holl writes, "liner notes" to fifteen recent projects, some never before published.

*Parallax* traces Holl's ideas on topics as diverse as the "chemistry of matter" and the "pressure of light," and shows how they emerge in his architectural work: "strange attractors" at Cranbrook, "porosity" in his new dormitory at MIT, "tripleness" in the new Bellevue Art Museum in Washington. The result is a book that provides a personal tour of the work of one of the world's most esteemed architects.

*Parallax* is designed by Michael Rock of the award-winning design firm 2x4. It is our fourth book on Holl's work, following *Anchoring*, *Intertwining*, and *The Chapel of St. Ignatius*.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Steven Holl is probably a pretty cool architect. With its clean, racy curves both inside and out, his recent Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (and biggest project to date) in Helsinki looks like an artfully cut-out chunk of a late '50s sports car, or better yet--given its minty-blue tones and *au courant* materials--a huge iMac. His very intimate Chapel of St. Ignatius in Seattle (about which he published a previous book, *The Chapel of St. Ignatius*; he's also put out *Anchoring* and *Intertwining*), with its exterior reflecting pool and beguiling interior play of light, curves, and color couldn't be more iconoclastic for a Catholic house of worship, yet it exudes a queer grace in the same spirit as Le Corbusier's famous Chapel at Ronchamp. And surely the banks of Boston's Charles River have never seen anything like the dormitory complex Holl has designed for MIT--the model of which, included here, promises a multicube city unto itself with an intricate, discontinuous façade of overlapping grids and screens, so radical in concept that it defies written description (or a really good one, at any rate).

And yet the reason why the very chicly designed *Parallax* (with a list price of \$40, it's probably the world's most expensive cardboard-covered book) only *probably* affirms that Holl is a cool architect is that there are simply not enough full-color photographs of his completed work here to tell. Holl is a very conceptual architect, and most of the pages here contain what he refers to as his "liner notes" on his projects--leaden, humorless meditations on such themes as "chemistry of matter," "pressure of light," "strange attractors," and "porosity" as they relate to his work. Beyond that, there's a profusion of computer renderings, simple sketches, and tiny black-and-white photographs of small portions that, alas, also do very little to illuminate his work for the reader.

What little color photography is offered here is excellent, going a long way even in its paucity toward suggesting why Holl has already created a stir (and you can click on our unique *Look inside this book!* link below the cover image to get a sense of it). Just one limited shot of even a modest project like his 1996 Ikebana House in Makuhari, Japan, seizes the eye with its almost astonishing manipulation of color, texture, and curvature, leaving the beholder hungry for more. If you're already familiar with Holl's work and *really* curious about his scientific-minded musings on them, you'll appreciate *Parallax*. Otherwise, keep your fingers crossed that in the next book of his work, Holl shows more and tells less. --*Timothy Murphy*

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