



*100 Houses for 100 Architects.* Edited by Gennaro Postiglione (2008). Published by Taschen. GBP 16.99 (RMB 250).

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

“If houses reflect their owner’s personalities, then architects’ own homes are like autobiographies,” begins *100 Houses for 100 Architects*. By offering readers a chance to peer deep inside the homes of some of the

best architects of the 20th century, publisher Taschen is bridging the gap between the creators, their masterpieces, and the general public. Coupled with great visuals, which include stunning full-page spreads, the light and accessible tone of the text allows even those with a rudimentary knowledge of architecture to enjoy the read.

Put together by the MEAM Net (Modern European Architecture Museum Network), and developed out of a similarly named research project, the book is the result of a long and productive partnership between many of Europe’s top architectural institutes – and it shows. For each of the residences chosen – all either built or heavily renovated by the owner-architects – the book dedicates 6-8 pages of glossy photographs, essays on the architect, their position in 20th century architecture, and details on the inspirations behind the homes. The additional inclusion of planning stage

sketches and architectural drawings offer further insight into the shape and characteristics of the structures, some of which would otherwise be difficult to fully understand.

From the stylized home of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the greenhouse-like house of Reinhold Andris, and the decidedly odd prefab residence of Jan Benthem, the structures are all unique, and almost all are breathtaking. Scattered across Europe – though the map at the back shows a particularly large concentration in Belgium and Holland – the buildings include country manors, art deco mansions, urban terraces, and postmodern complexes. The book even gives their addresses so that readers may travel to see these architectural wonders for themselves.

Some of the houses featured, such as Antonio Bonet i Castellana’s, have unfortunately not survived the ravages of time, while others have been turned into museums. Still, a surprising number are still inhabited by the original architects, sometimes 40-50 years after they were first built.

Rather than focus purely on the exterior and interior of the buildings, the book’s editors have looked into the ways the inhabitants decorated and used the space, from cutlery to bookshelves, children’s bedrooms to fireplaces. It is reassuring to see, as you flip through the book, that the type of people who are able to think up and then build structures such as the CCTV tower and “The Egg,” often decorate their own homes much the same way as everyone else.

There are not many architecture books that appeal equally to both experts and laymen, but if any book is likely to bridge this gap, it is this one. Perfect for just flicking through to admire the beautiful imagery, it can also be treated as a partial history of 20th century architecture, or as an in-depth study of the type of structures architects would actually build if they were given complete carte blanche. *KG* 