



Vizcaya: An American Villa and Its Makers (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)

By Witold Rybczynski, Laurie Olin

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The Miami estate of Vizcaya, like its palatial contemporaries Biltmore and San Simeon, represents an achievement of the Gilded Age, when country houses and their gardens were a conspicuous measure of personal wealth and power.

In *Vizcaya: An American Villa and Its Makers*, a celebrated architecture critic and writer and an award-winning landscape architect explore the little-known story of Vizcaya, an extraordinary national treasure. Witold Rybczynski and Laurie Olin use a rich collection of illustrations, historic photographs, and narrative to document the creation of this stunning house and landscape. Vizcaya was completed in 1916 as the winter retreat of Chicago industrialist James Deering. The cosmopolitan bachelor, who chose Miami for its warm climate, enlisted the guidance of artist Paul Chalfin, with whom he traveled throughout Italy to survey houses and gardens. With the assistance of architect F. Burrall Hoffman, Jr., and garden designer Diego Suarez, the 180-acre site on Biscayne Bay was transformed into a grand estate, complete with lagoons, canals, citrus groves, a farm village, a yacht harbor, and a 40-room Baroque mansion.

The lure of this architectural and landscape masterpiece, named for a Spanish Basque province, is undeniable. John Singer Sargent planned a short visit in 1917 but stayed for several months, producing an inspired series of watercolors, many of which are reproduced here for the first time. The book is further enriched by archival material and by the color images of noted photographer Steven Brooke, paying homage to Vizcaya as a lens through which readers learn about architecture, landscape and garden design, interior decoration, and art.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Vizcaya* . . . retells and interprets the fascinating story of the great American dream made real."—*Miami Herald*

"*Vizcaya*, long thought of as a wealthy man's folly, has finally gotten the critical consideration it has so richly deserved in this eminently readable book."—*Architecture in Print*

"Mr. Rybczynski and Mr. Olin judge the villa as they find it today and in the context of the historical process that produced it, rather than through a filter of modernist criteria. . . . An admirable job of conveying the history of *Vizcaya*."—*Wall Street Journal*

"On every page the authors breathe life into the plastered stone walls of the estate, and photographer Brooks captures the sunny, light-filled ambiance of the locale in splendid photographs, many in color. Altogether the very model of a major monograph on an important great estate. Essential."—*Choice*

About the Author

Witold Rybczynski is the Martin and Margy Meyerson Professor of Urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of many books, including the award-winning biography of Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Clearing in the Distance*, and the best-selling *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. He has written on architecture and urbanism for the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Slate*, and *New York Review of Books*. Laurie Olin is Practice Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and Principal of the Olin Partnership, a landscape architecture firm in Philadelphia. He is the author of *Across the Open Field: Essays Drawn from English Landscapes* and a coauthor of *La Foce: A Garden and Landscape in Tuscany*, both published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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