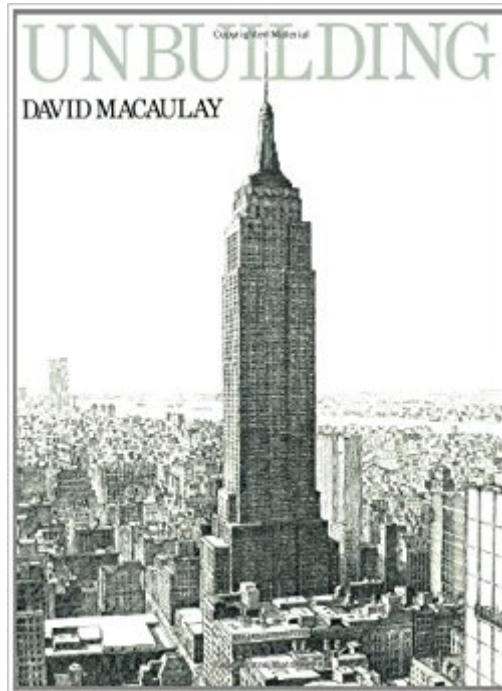




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Unbuilding (Sandpiper)



Synopsis

This fictional account of the dismantling and removal of the Empire State Building describes the structure of a skyscraper and explains how such an edifice would be demolished.

Book Information

Series: Sandpiper

Paperback: 80 pages

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Customer Reviews

In this wonderfully urbane fantasy, the Empire State Building is dismantled after being purchased by a foreigner who wishes to re-erect it closer to home. All ages. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"It is not a work of nonfiction but a work of fantasy, and not the story of the making of the skyscraper but the story of the unmaking of a very particular one, the Empire State Building . . . The exquisite drawing style that marked Mr. Macaulay's earlier works on architecture remains as whimsical as ever." The New York Times

No new yorker would agree to this but maybe they could take down the Trump dump. Still it was enjoyable to read

The 80's were a paranoid time and this book has that aspect. Macaulay does something much more important though, he uses the paranoia of "foreign interests are buying our country" to explore the transience of the structures we hold dear as a country. There is more than art here, there is a great

story and a great lesson for the reader.

What would happen if a crazy multibillionaire in the Middle East decided to buy the Empire State Building and transport it across the ocean? Macaulay presents this scenario with a meticulously researched deconstruction with detailed illustrations of the building's internal structural features, showing over the course of two years what it would take to dismantle this monument of American architecture. In so doing, he helps the reader appreciate how significant an architectural achievement it is while also helping the reader understand how great buildings like this are made. The concept of taking the building apart to show off its construction is a novel one, and Macaulay not only makes the reading worthwhile through his careful research, but also with humor. (Spoiler warning at the end of this paragraph). Tongue-in-cheek, he describes the local protests at the building's sale, and the appeasement of New York's residents by transforming the site into a park with the spire installed at its center. Ironically, after years of deconstruction, he chooses to have the building lost at sea en route to its destination. This plot twist is undoubtedly an acknowledgement of the Empire State Building's place in the American consciousness as a cultural icon, whose ownership cannot change hands. This book, like all of Macaulay's architecture books, focuses primarily on the physical details of the building, so it will appeal best to readers who experience life through the details. This is an outstanding choice to prepare for a trip to New York, as part of an architecture or history study, or just for entertaining reading. Because most of the information comes through the exquisitely detailed drawings, it's a better read-alone than read-aloud.

When as a child I first read this book, I was captivated by it, as I was by all of David Macaulay's imaginative works of illustration and storytelling. And yet even then I thought it was very strange, this charming and odd tale set in an undefined future in which an Arab sheik purchases the Empire State Building and has it unassembled brick by brick for eventual reconstruction in his homeland (a la London Bridge, which today rests in Arizona). I loved reading about how even a vast building might be "unbuilt". I also loved learning about the interior anatomy of a tall building (which was really David Macaulay's intent all along) and I liked the quirky little hidden additions Macaulay always includes for a sharp-eyed reader to discover (like King Kong as one of the workers on the project). Today in an era when it is impossible to read or even think of this 1980 book without being confronted with the destruction of the World Trade Center, Unbuilding seems even more bizarre and ironic. Macaulay, brilliant and creative man that he is, wrote Unbuilding in another age, a more

confident time and place, when it was unthinkable that New York's skyscrapers, those mighty symbols of commerce and human achievement, were in any way endangered by anything less titanic than nuclear war, or that they would not stand for millennia, the Gothic cathedrals of an age wherein faith was replaced by the relative egalitarianism of free-flowing commerce. Ah, how different was my perception of *Unbuilding* upon my most recent reading: the first since at least the early 1990's. I was keenly aware that in 2006 this book might never be marketed at all, and if it was how different its plot would have been. Nonetheless, or perhaps for that very reason, *Unbuilding* seems more important than ever to me, and I hope it stays in print for a long time to come. Read this thirty-page book if you get a chance. It says a lot about the near-miraculous process by which tall buildings are made, and it shines metaphorical light on the psychological reactions of we contemporary Americans.

fine

This is another neat book on New York, done by one of our favorite author/illustrators, David Macaulay. In this book (for kids and adults), you'll imagine the process of carefully disassembling the Empire State Building in order to move it. What can be salvaged? What must be hauled away for landfill? It's incredibly interesting.

It must have seemed like a good idea at the time, but somewhere between conception and execution *Unbuilding* unraveled. The drawings are, without a doubt, spectacular. The story is clever, but the love of the subject matter is missing. The story, at its most basic, is about the disassembly of the Empire State Building. The details of its existence, however, are nowhere to be found. There is, for example, no information on how many tons of steel were used; how many thousands of rivets. Missing too, are any explanations of mechanical systems such as how water was pumped to bathrooms one thousand feet off the ground, or how the elevators safely and efficiently carried their passengers up 85 stories. My suspicion is that *Unbuilding's* weakness lies at its foundation. Organized disassembly just isn't as interesting as a construction project. To be fair to Mr. Macaulay, it's not a bad book. Certainly, if this were the first of his work that you had seen, you would be suitably impressed. But in the context of his efforts prior to and after this one, it fails to captivate. My advice is that, if you are collecting the series, you'll most certainly want *Unbuilding*. If, however, you are new to Macaulay's work, *Castle*, *Cathedral*, *City* and *Mill* are significantly better choices.

I found this book easy to read, with excellent pictures. We need our young people interested in engineering and understand what it means. Fascinating! Fantastic books for young engineers (to be)!

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