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The Spoils of Dust

Reinventing the Lake that Made Los Angeles

Alexander Robinson

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- A new chapter in the story of the infamous Los Angeles aqueduct. Los Angeles attempts to redeem the greatest environmental calamity of the aqueduct by building a water-efficient simulacrum of a lake
- A multimedia atlas, combining environmental history, contemporary design, and an introduction to a little-known and unexplored landscape
- Our most ambitious and technologically advanced attempt to re-invent nature to satisfy the needs of society and nature
- A story about balancing water resources and landscape value in the contemporary West

Once the third largest lake in California, and among the world's greatest air pollution offenders, the deadened Owens Lake was for decades merely a catastrophic footnote to the most notorious water grab in modern history. Now, the lake has been re-assembled to exceed the value of what was lost – without refilling its shores and depriving Los Angeles of its water supply. In*The Spoils of Dust* the lake's peculiar redemption is the backdrop for investigating contemporary relationships between landscape design, control, and perception. The lake-like terrain is the most intimate display of modern technocratic vision and exposes the limits of invention and control of infrastructural ecologies. Whether by observations of dust or scenery, it is as much the product of how we perceive and value landscape today. Answering its analysis, the book concludes with a visual atlas and proposal to induce more imaginative outcomes and perceptions.

Alexander Robinson is a landscape architect, author, and assistant professor at the University of Southern California. He is the co-author of the book Living Systems: Innovative Materials and Technologies for Landscape Architecture and a winner of the prestigious Rome Prize.

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