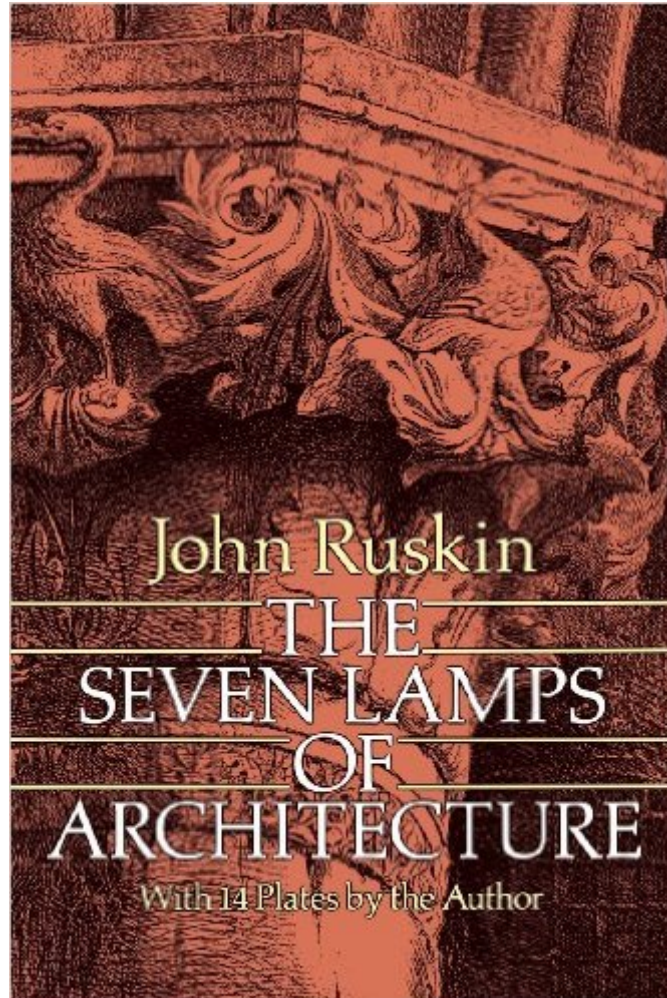


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# The Seven Lamps Of Architecture (Dover Architecture)



## Synopsis

"I believe architecture must be the beginning of arts, and that the others must follow her in their time and order; and I think the prosperity of our schools of painting and sculpture, in which no one will deny the life, though many the health, depends upon that of our architecture." — John Ruskin. In August of 1848, John Ruskin and his new bride visited northern France, for the gifted young critic wished to write a work that would examine the essence of Gothic architecture. By the following April, the book was finished. Titled *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, it was far more than a treatise on the Gothic style; instead, it elaborated Ruskin's deepest convictions of the nature and role of architecture and its aesthetics. The book was published to immediate acclaim and has since become an acknowledged classic. The "seven lamps" are Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, and Obedience. In delineating the relationship of these terms to architecture, Ruskin distinguishes between architecture and mere building. Architecture is an exalting discipline that must dignify and ennoble public life. It must preserve the purity of the materials it uses; and it must serve as a source of power and renewal for the society that produces it. The author expounds these and many other ideas with exceptional passion and knowledge, expressed in a masterly prose style. Today, Ruskin's timeless observations are as relevant as they were in Victorian times, making *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* required reading for architects, students, and other lovers of architecture, who will find in these pages a thoughtful and inspiring approach to one of man's noblest endeavors. This authoritative edition includes excellent reproductions of the 14 original plates of Ruskin's superb drawings of architectural details from such structures as the Doge's Palace in Venice, Giotto's Campanile in Florence, and the Cathedral of Rouen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are looking for a "practical guide to the structures and tools" of architecture, this is NOT your book nor your guide. For John Ruskin is an art critic, classicist, and moralizing aesthetic prophet. He is not an "art for art's sake" temporizer or relativist. He not only knows what HE believes...but he believes he knows what YOU should believe too. If that makes you uncomfortable or makes you feel hampered, you might want to pass him by until you feel you can accommodate the "insult" and "restrictions" on your "free will choices." Otherwise, there is much of beauty, wonder, and insight to be gained in these pages. Ruskin's point of view is that of a classical Platonist mixed with the moralizing tenor of an exhorting (but not shrilly so) prophet toward beauty, Truth, and clarity of vision...and moral purpose in Art. He also has a wondrous prose style which is both clear, compelling, and entrancing. This edition published by Dover as a reprint is of the second edition of the work from 1880. It also includes 14 plates of drawings which Ruskin did to illustrate the points which he makes in the text. Along the way, Ruskin includes shortened Aphorisms in the margin which restate the bold face print points which he is making in the text. In Chapter 2, titled "The Lamp of Truth," Ruskin stands forth most forcefully and dynamically (and perhaps to the "modern," most tendentiously) as the classical Platonic moralizer and aesthetic apostle/prophet/priest. Though raised a strict Protestant, Ruskin rebelled and left Christianity for a classical Paganism based on beauty, Truth, and clarity.

John Ruskin was a brilliant and influential art critic and writer during much of the last half of the 19th Century. Wikipedia has an excellent review of his role in the England of that time. "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," by this non-architect still commands deep respect, which I do not share. The slim 222 page (Dover edition) book addresses architecture in the light of seven conceptual lamps: The Lamp of Sacrifice, The Lamp of Truth, The Lamp of Power, The Lamp of Beauty, the Lamp of Life, the Lamp of Memory, and the Lamp of Obedience. The seven lamps are presented in the context of Ruskin's deep religiosity at the time of writing. The book came out in 1849. His architectural views in this book were deeply conservative, although he was more complicated in his social outlook. Gothic is king, and to be regarded as the near-ultimate expression of architectural form. Ornament was valued highly and the subject of deep discussion and elaboration. Any

machine-made ornament was "deceitful." Isolated bits of the book remain persuasive: "Know what you have to do, and do it." His view of architecture as a political act still resonates, the more so as one dictator after another imposes state-oriented architecture. What Ruskin found objectionable, I sometimes found admirable, as in "There is no law, no principle, based on past practice, which may not be overthrown in a moment, by the arising of a new condition, or the invention of a new material..." As a believer in rules, Ruskin lays down so many, so persnickety in nature, and sometimes so absolute that it is not surprising to find little admiration expressed for his contemporaries. Had his views maintained power, Great Britain today might look very much as it did during his lifetime.

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