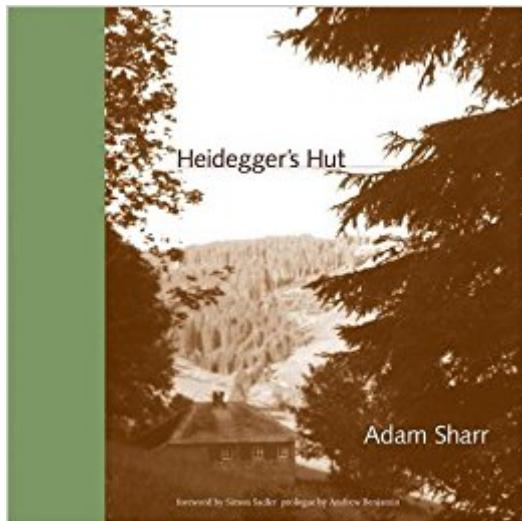


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Heidegger's Hut (MIT Press)



Synopsis

"This is the most thorough architectural 'crit' of a hut ever set down, the justification for which is that the hut was the setting in which Martin Heidegger wrote phenomenological texts that became touchstones for late-twentieth-century architectural theory." -- from the foreword by Simon Sadler

Beginning in the summer of 1922, philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) occupied a small, three-room cabin in the Black Forest Mountains of southern Germany. He called it "die Hütte" ("the hut"). Over the years, Heidegger worked on many of his most famous writings in this cabin, from his early lectures to his last enigmatic texts. He claimed an intellectual and emotional intimacy with the building and its surroundings, and even suggested that the landscape expressed itself through him, almost without agency. In Heidegger's Hut, Adam Sharr explores this intense relationship of thought, place, and person. Heidegger's mountain hut has been an object of fascination for many, including architects interested in his writings about "dwelling" and "place." Sharr's account -- the first substantive investigation of the building and Heidegger's life there -- reminds us that, in approaching Heidegger's writings, it is important to consider the circumstances in which the philosopher, as he himself said, felt "transported" into the work's "own rhythm." Indeed, Heidegger's apparent abdication of agency and tendency toward romanticism seem especially significant in light of his troubling involvement with the Nazi regime in the early 1930s. Sharr draws on original research, including interviews with Heidegger's relatives, as well as on written accounts of the hut by Heidegger and his visitors. The book's evocative photographs include scenic and architectural views taken by the author and many remarkable images of a septuagenarian Heidegger in the hut taken by the photojournalist Digne Meller-Markovicz. There are many ways to interpret Heidegger's hut -- as the site of heroic confrontation between philosopher and existence; as the petit bourgeois escape of a misguided romantic; as a place overshadowed by fascism; or as an entirely unremarkable little building. Heidegger's Hut does not argue for any one reading, but guides readers toward their own possible interpretations of the importance of "die Hütte."

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Customer Reviews

Heidegger's cabin in the Black Forest has been the focal point of his work, and it has been shrouded in mystery and rumor. Adam Sharr has cast on it the light of diligent research, architectural expertise, and liberal judgment, and he has given us a clearer idea of where Heidegger's thought has come from. (Albert Borgmann, Regents Professor of Philosophy, The University of Montana) As Adam Sharr reveals in his remarkable study Heidegger's Hut, the philosopher's timber-shingled cabin (which had no running water and, at least for the first decade, no electricity) can be interpreted as a locus of contemplation, a romantic escape, and a place where, given the politically problematic nature of Heidegger's writings, fascist over-tones cannot but linger. (Andrea Walker Bookforum) Heidegger's Hut, a slim, provocative volume, answers the question: why the architectural interest in the drab, three room, 20-foot square Black Forest hut without running water or electricity inhabited by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger throughout his career? (Norman Weinstein Architectural Record) Heidegger's Hut is and is not a book about a hut. It's about how a place inspired a life's work, and how that work inspired modern architectural theory and, to a lesser degree, the sustainability movement...Many of the book's photos are posed, though the light is beautiful. The hut has a confidence, a rightness that is oddly indisputable, making in the end, even the philosopher's work seem transient and insubstantial. (The Los Angeles Times)

Adam Sharr is Lecturer in Architecture at the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University and a practicing architect.

It discusses the hut from an architectural perspective, situating it in valley & comparing it to his city home. It gives a good sense of what it would be like to have used it in the way Heidegger did, without overreaching into architectural determinism.

In 1922, Martin Heidegger had built for himself a small cabin high in the mountains of the Black Forest in the south of Germany. He called it the hut, and he spent nearly every summer there from the time of its construction until his death. He wrote many of his most important philosophical works during his times there. In this book, Adam Sharr, who is both an architectural critic and a practicing architect, examines Heidegger's hut from an architectural point of view. He begins by describing the landscape in which the hut is situated. He then describes the layout of the hut and its immediate surroundings, how the hut came to be built, and how Heidegger and his family used it. Next, he examines the significance of the hut for Heidegger, both in Heidegger's own view and in the view of those who visited Heidegger at the hut. Sharr also looks at the house that Heidegger had built in the suburbs of Freiburg when he was appointed professor at the University of Freiburg, and points up the contrasts between the house and the hut. This contrast serves as the leaping-off point for Sharr's closing reflections, structured in terms of the problem of modernity and the contrast between city and country. This is a well-done piece of both architectural criticism and philosophical biography, and I recommend it to anyone interested in Heidegger's philosophy or architectural theory.

I found this book when the summer was still young, read every page several times over, with greatest pleasure! What a thinkers' paradise Heidegger's wife built there for her husband (a sign in Todnauberg contradicts Sharr's book, suggesting that Heidegger's wife built the hut from her inheritance -- she was familiar with the village from ski holidays). Here one finds embodied in a building Zengetsu's suggestion for the Zen student, "Poverty is your treasure. Don't exchange it for an easy life". Of course it is difficult for anyone, including Heidegger himself, to really make sense of the place. It has significance only for Heidegger the thinker, as a place that came to support and sustain his thinking, in which he could be creative, in which he felt comfortable. He probably didn't know himself why this place "worked" for him and it probably would not work for anyone else (unless you grew up near the High Black Forest and were intimately familiar with the landscape and its people). For Nietzsche it was the Engadin, for Heidegger the High Black Forest -- German thinkers seem to have a long tradition of attachment to place and so do Japanese. So, does Sharr's book really have any significance beyond the pretty pictures? I think it does. It made me contemplate when and where I will build my own hut. It made me understand embodiment. The simplicity of the philosopher's hut keeps reminding me of what is truly essential and strips away everything else. Here Heidegger could dwell directly in the elements of unpolluted-by-modernity-life itself -- the wind, the trees, the rocks, the traditions of the region.

Martin Heidegger was a thinker of dwelling. His essays after the so called 'turn' indicate an increasing preoccupation with one's environment, dwelling, and world. Adam Sharr is an architect who has done a tremendous job presenting a visual representation of Heidegger's famous place of work in Todtnauberg (the black and white photographs in this monograph are extraordinary) while attempting to link the place of Heidegger's work with the work. Unfortunately, Sharr's knowledge of Heidegger's philosophy is clearly a bit weak, and this text often borders on fetishism. Still, an intimate picture of this notoriously isolated thinker emerges as Sharr traces the particular significance of this location for Heidegger's lifelong pursuit into the meaning of being.

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