



Colossal: Engineering Modernity - Suez Canal, Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, and Panama Canal

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby

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In this generously illustrated book, acclaimed Berkeley art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby gives us the definitive account of a history that leads from Napoleon's encounter with the gigantic monuments of ancient Egypt to the building of the wonders of the industrial world: the Statue of Liberty, Suez Canal, Eiffel Tower, and Panama Canal. Though now landmarks as famed as the pyramids, Grigsby shows us that all four colossi owe their existence to French engineers and the fantasies of wealth, progress, and colonial expansion they and French financiers and politicians took as a call to destiny. Grigsby goes beyond the boundaries of art history to take her subject in the round. She sets the exploits of characters like Bartholdi and Eiffel against the backdrop of universal expositions touting the new, science fiction predicting future glories, and cartoons deflating the hyperbole. She explains the systems of numbers from profits promised and shares sold to calculations of wind resistance used to promote and then build the colossi. Her book provides more than 200 illustrations, not of art, but of the engineering of the colossi and the visual culture publicizing their construction. Instead of approaching modernism through the emergence of avant-garde practices in the fine arts, Grigsby looks at a time of tragic drama when technology became an instrument of imperialist enterprise and topdown efforts to control and exploit the world's resources, including workers. By uncovering the links between the building of the canals and the erection of the Statue of Liberty and Eiffel Tower, she offers a searing lesson in the network of power and influence permeating even cherished icons of human achievement. Passionately argued, peerless in its research, its synthesis, and its depth of understanding, *Colossal: Engineering the Suez Canal, Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower and Panama Canal* is a magisterial addition to serious study of the modern world.

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