

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910554215203321
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Titolo	Air-Conditioning in Modern American Architecture, 1890–1970 / Joseph M. Siry
Pubbl/distr/stampa	University Park, Pennsylvania : , : The Pennsylvania State University Press, , [2021] ©2021
ISBN	9780271089256 0271089253 9780271089003 0271089008
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (306 pages) : illustrations
Collana	Buildings, landscapes, and societies
Disciplina	697.9309730904
Soggetti	Architecture Air conditioning ARCHITECTURE / Buildings / General Architecture - United States - History - 20th century Air conditioning - United States - History - 20th century History United States
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Illustrations -- Acknowledgments -- Abbreviations -- Notes on Terminology -- Introduction. Air-Conditioning and the Historiography of Modern Architecture -- Chapter 1. Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building and Mechanical Cooling, 1890–1910 -- Chapter 2. Industrial Air-Conditioning from the Daylight Factory to the Windowless Factory, 1905–40 -- Chapter 3. The Architecture of Air-Conditioning in Movie Theaters, 1917–40 -- Chapter 4. Air-Conditioning Comes to the Nation's Capital and the South, 1928–60 -- Chapter 5. The First Air-Conditioned Tall Buildings, 1928–32 -- Chapter 6. Frank Lloyd Wright's "Windowless" Buildings for SC Johnson Company and the Air-Conditioned Tower -- Chapter 7. Air-Conditioned Glass Buildings in the Mid- Twentieth Century --

Sommario/riassunto

Air-Conditioning in Modern American Architecture, 1890–1970, documents how architects made environmental technologies into resources that helped shape their spatial and formal aesthetic. In doing so, it sheds important new light on the ways in which mechanical engineering has been assimilated into the culture of architecture as one facet of its broader modernist project. Tracing the development and architectural integration of air-conditioning from its origins in the late nineteenth century to the advent of the environmental movement in the early 1970s, Joseph M. Siry shows how the incorporation of mechanical systems into modernism's discourse of functionality profoundly shaped the work of some of the movement's leading architects, such as Dankmar Adler, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Gordon Bunshaft, and Louis Kahn. For them, the modernist ideal of functionality was incompletely realized if it did not wholly assimilate heating, cooling, ventilating, and artificial lighting. Bridging the history of technology and the history of architecture, Siry discusses air-conditioning's technical and social history and provides case studies of buildings by the master architects who brought this technology into the conceptual and formal project of modernism. A monumental work by a renowned expert in American modernist architecture, this book asks us to see canonical modernist buildings through a mechanical engineering-oriented lens. It will be especially valuable to scholars and students of architecture, modernism, the history of technology, and American history.
