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In *The Appearances of Memory*, the Indonesian architectural and urban historian Abidin Kusno explores the connections between the built environment and political consciousness in Indonesia during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Focusing primarily on Jakarta, he describes how perceptions of the past, anxieties about the rapid pace of change in the present, and hopes for the future have been embodied in architecture and urban space at different historical moments. He argues that the built environment serves as a reminder of the practices of the past and an instantiation of the desire to remake oneself within, as well as beyond, one's particular time and place.

Addressing developments in Indonesia since the fall of President Suharto's regime in 1998, Kusno delves into such topics as the domestication of traumatic violence and the restoration of order in the urban space, the intense interest in urban history in contemporary Indonesia, and the implications of "superblocks," large urban complexes consisting of residences, offices, shops, and entertainment venues. Moving farther back in time, he examines how Indonesian architects reinvented colonial architectural styles to challenge the political culture of the state, how colonial structures such as railway and commercial buildings created a new, politically charged cognitive map of cities in Java in the early twentieth century, and how the Dutch, in attempting to quell dissent, imposed a distinctive urban visual order in the 1930s. Finally, the present and the past meet in his long-term considerations of how Java has responded to the global flow of Islamic architecture, and how the meanings of Indonesian gatehouses have changed and persisted over time. *The Appearances of Memory* is a pioneering look at the roles of architecture and urban development in Indonesia's ongoing efforts to move forward.