



Through the Healing Glass: Shaping the Modern Body through Glass Architecture, 1925-35 (Routledge Research in Architecture)

John Stanislav Sadar

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In the mid-1920s a physiologist, a glass chemist, and a zoo embarked on a project which promised to turn buildings into medical instruments. The advanced chemistry of "Vita" Glass mobilised theories of light and medicine, health practices and glassmaking technology to compress an entire epoch's hopes for a healthy life into a glass sheet – yet it did so invisibly.

To communicate its advantage, Pilkington Bros. spared no expense as they launched the most costly and sophisticated marketing campaign in their history. Engineering need for "Vita" Glass employed leading-edge market research, evocative photography and vanguard techniques of advertising psychology, accompanied by the claim: "Let in the Health Rays of Daylight Permanently through "Vita" Glass Windows."

This is the story of how, despite the best efforts of two glass companies, the leading marketing firm of the day, and the opinions of leading medical minds, "Vita" Glass failed. However, it epitomised an age of lightness and airiness, sleeping porches, flat roofs and ribbon windows. Moreover, through its remarkable print advertising, it strove to shape the ideal relationship between our buildings and our bodies.

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