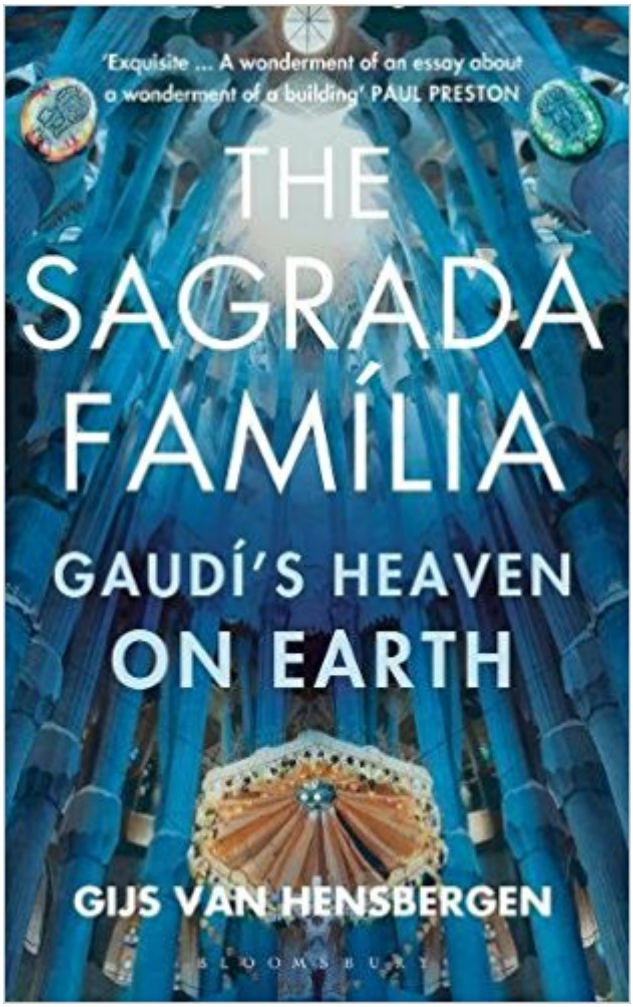
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The Sagrada Familia: Gaudi's Heaven On Earth



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Synopsis

A definitive and illuminating biography of one of the most famous - and most famously unfinished - buildings in the world, the Sagrada Familia of Barcelona. Its scaffolding-cloaked spires reach up to the heavens, dominating the Barcelona skyline and drawing in millions of visitors every year. What seduces our attention is perhaps a combination: not only its almost megalomaniac ambition and architectural extravagance but the sheer longevity of its construction. Its creator, Antoni Gaudi, 'God's Architect', saw the first stone laid on 19 March 1882 and yet it is unlikely to be completed until 2026 at the very earliest. It has survived two World Wars, the ravages of the Spanish Civil War and the 'Hunger Years' of Franco's rule. It has defied the critics, the penny-pinching accountants, the conservative town-planners and the slaves to sterile modernism to witness the most momentous changes in society and history. The Sagrada Familia explores the evolution of this remarkable building, working through the decades right up to the present day before looking beyond to the final stretch of its construction. It is at once a guidebook and a chronological history, and a moving and compelling study of man's aspiration towards the divine. Rich in detail, vast in scope, this is a revelatory and authoritative study of a building and its place in history and the genius that created it.

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Customer Reviews

Terrifically stirring...A gripping firsthand account of Gaudi's power to melt the mind * New York Times (praise for 'Gaudi') * Brilliant * Observer (praise for 'Guernica') * The most extraordinary and important biography ... A vivid, painstaking portrait of an almost mediaeval figure brooding over the

20th century -- Jane Gardam, Books of the Year * Independent (praise for 'Gaudi') * Intoxicating ... Instantly engages ... Van Hensbergen's rich, poetic prose is perfectly suited to describe this unprecedented work of art. An engrossing, vivid inquiry into a man and his magisterial creation * Kirkus * The manic beauty of Antoni Gaudi's `bible in stone' is evoked by the richly nuanced prose of Gijs van Hensbergen. In many ways an autobiography, this exquisite book also offers vivid insights into the life of the eccentric Gaudi, Catalan culture and the roles of the Vatican and of iconoclastic anarchists. A wonderment of an essay about a wonderment of a building -- Peter Preston Gijs van Hensbergen has pulled off a remarkable feat, taming the monstre sacre of 20th century architecture, without diminishing him -- Deyan Sudjic, Director of the Design Museum, London Fascinating and instructive ... Anyone going for the first time should read van Hensbergen's perceptive interpretation of what he calls Gaudi's most quixotic work -- Simon Courtauld * Spectator *

Gijs van Hensbergen is a Dutch art historian, food critic and Hispanist. A former Harry Ransom Research Fellow, van Hensbergen has given lectures across the world, including at the Museo del Prado, the Queen Sofia Institute in New York, the National Gallery in London and at the prestigious El Escorial summer school, Universidad de Complutense, Madrid. He appears frequently on BBC4 and Radio 4, TV3 and TV Espana and has contributed to, amongst many others, the Guardian, The Times, El Pais, La Vanguardia and the Economist. Gijs van Hensbergen leads specialist guided tours to Spain and the United States.

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