

ICON TRACT ⤴

Charles Jencks is perhaps the most influential (and prolific) architecture critic ever, a one-man powerhouse in search of new forms and new typologies, obsessed with classifying what he uncovers deep within the multi-layered strata of the global architecture scene. The chances are that Mr J has had a hand in practically every movement that's emerged since the late 1960s, and his ability to hobnob with the architectural firmament means his pronouncements are never less than informed.

For his latest book, Jencks turns his experienced eye to the icon, that emergent form that has sprouted across the global skyline, used to superficially encapsulate a particular district, city or even country, epitomised by the 'Bilbao effect' and much sought-after by the world's civic leaders. Icons are all about symbolism, whether real or imaginary, and Jencks wittily dissects the most popular buildings of the day, while getting to spar with their architects about being, variously, pigeonholed, sidelined, typecast, exploited and generally swept up in the post-millennial fervour for this new architecture of populism.

The Iconic Building, Charles Jencks (Frances Lincoln, £19.99)



GOING BUNKERS ⤴

On the surface, the Swiss Alps present the picture-perfect image of mountainside living – cascading green meadows, distant snowy peaks and dense stands of conifers, dotted with the ubiquitous chalet-style home, with its folksy pitched roof, plank sides and shuttered windows. Yet, as photographer Christian Schwager reveals in his new monograph, appearances can be highly deceptive. Centuries of neutrality haven't blunted the mountain nation's state of readiness. Back when the Second World War was raging all around, the Swiss Army took steps to make sure no one else got their hands on this prime slice of central Europe. It set about building military structures – depots, barracks, gun outposts – to rebuff any attempted invasion. *Falsche Chalets*, as the title suggests, is a gazetteer of these architectural deceptions, the concrete bunkers that became part of these chocolate box vistas, and continue to sneak into view, with their fake painted windows, armoured walls and dark secrets.

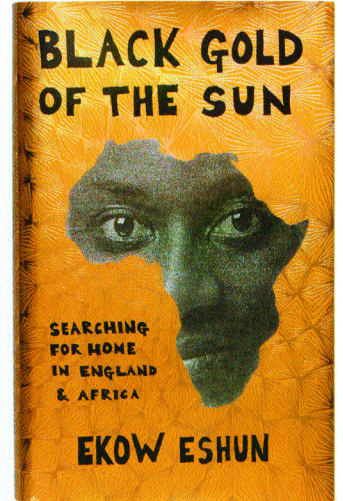
Falsche Chalets, Christian Schwager (Edition Patrick Frey, €39)



BUILDING ON SUCCESS ⤴

Benetton has carved out a distinctive niche in graphics and advertising, but the clothing giant is also a huge architectural patron. In 1964, Luciano Benetton commissioned the very first factory from Tobia and Afra Scarpa, leading to 40 years of collaboration. In 1992, the firm went further out on a limb and appointed Tadao Ando to oversee the Fabbrica creative complex, bringing his distinctive raw concrete style to the Italian countryside. This fine book chronicles a built legacy.

Architecture for Benetton, Antonia Mulas, Marco Mulazzani and Massimo Vignelli (Skira, \$80)



OUT OF AFRICA ⤴

'Is who you are determined by where you are?' That's just one of many questions posed by Ekow Eshun, Wallpaper* contributor, arts journalist and new director of London's prestigious Institute of Contemporary Arts, in his memoir. Taking a trip back to Ghana, his parents' birthplace, Eshun considers his own upbringing and the fractured sense of identity bestowed by Britain's schizophrenic attitude towards its ethnic minority citizens. London in the 1970s and 1980s was no calm capital of multiculturalism – quite the opposite. And the 'fiction' of race – 'a lie contradicted by a drop of blood under the microscope' – continues to shape the lives of millions. Africa is changing too, as Eshun discovers, and *Black Gold of the Sun* tells many stories of oppression and hope. A passionate evocation of memory and identity. *Black Gold of the Sun, Ekow Eshun (Hamish Hamilton, £14.99)*