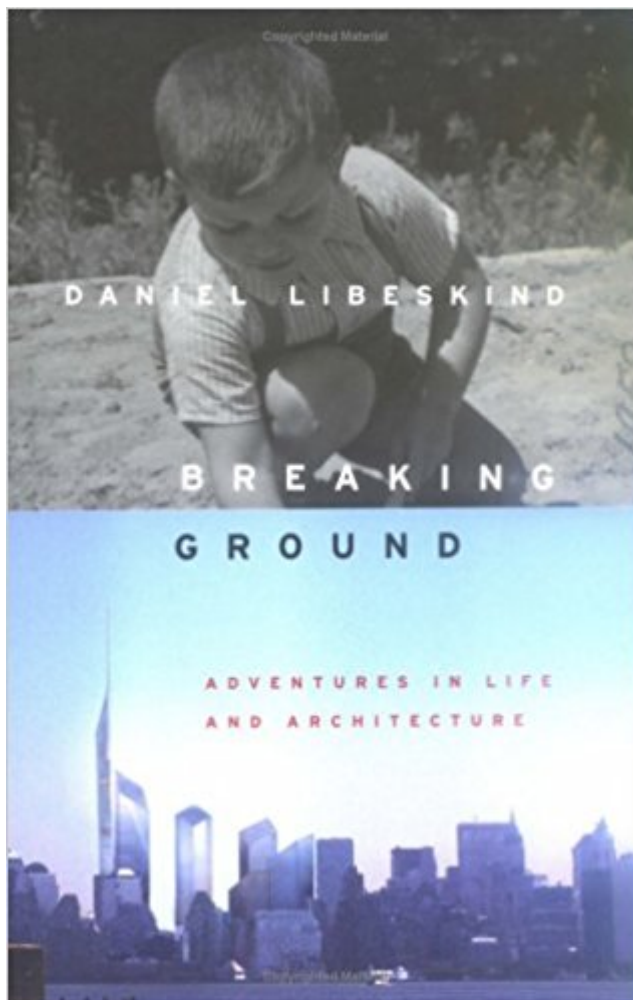


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# Breaking Ground



## Synopsis

The renowned architect introduces his iconoclastic approach to public space and shares his vision for the most important architectural project of our time, the 1776 Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center site. Drawing on his uncommon background and global perspective, in *Breaking Ground* Daniel Libeskind explores ideas about tragedy and hope, and the way in which architecture can memorialize-and reshape-human experience. Born in 1946 to Holocaust survivors in Poland, Daniel Libeskind eventually emigrated to New York City in 1959. A virtuoso musician before studying architecture, Libeskind has designed iconic buildings around the world, including the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, England. In February 2003, Libeskind was chosen as the Master Plan Architect for the World Trade Center reconstruction. Full of the vitality, humor, and visionary spark that helped win him the Trade Center Commission, *Breaking Ground* invites readers to see architecture-and the larger world-through new perspectives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Less a memoir than a portrait of a life as told through architecture, Libeskind's book traces his past and his numerous project commissions, including his most recent and renowned contribution to the design of the new World Trade Center. Libeskind sometimes skimps on historical detail, personal or otherwise, in favor of discussing his architectural preferences. However, tales from his youth in post-World War II Poland and engaging anecdotes about his strong-willed parents, who survived Soviet death camps, are interspersed throughout. For Libeskind, everything relates to architecture, and the book is filled with his beliefs about what good architecture should be and what

inspires him. The book also features Libeskind's many clashes with and strong opinions about other buildings, architects and developers; rightly or not, he often casts himself as a righteous, innovative David facing stodgy, wrongheaded Goliath, and he doesn't hesitate to paint unflattering portraits of the Goliaths he has come up against. This is especially true in the final chapters, which detail the melodramatic quarrels he had with WTC site developer Larry Silverstein and Silverstein's favored architectural firm. Libeskind's enthusiastic, earnest prose will be familiar to anyone who has read his WTC proposal; he believes fervently in the importance of symbols, going so far as to say "some days I suspect that's what people in Israel are really fighting over—not the territory, but the light." The WTC project has made Libeskind as much a household name as any architect could wish for, and with work on the site underway (he aptly describes it as organ replacement surgery "while keeping a network of veins and arteries pumping"), even lay readers may find this an intriguing introduction to the architect's ideas and influences. 32 pages of photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Breaking Ground...reveals the vision - and the audacity - that won him the commission. -- Parade, September 26, 2004

Wonderful read. Very human, very historic, very enriching. A must read for anyone interested in architecture, creativity, or 20th century Jewish history. Very sensitive and insightful writing style.

A professor of mine in grad school once told me that architects shouldn't talk about their buildings, their theories, or their process. For once an architect happens to speak, their aura vanishes as their reasonings or beliefs debunk whatever beliefs the public may have had about them. This book is proof of that lesson. As an avid fan of Libeskind for many years, this book actually has left a sour taste in my mouth. The stories that he tells of his family are great as they make you appreciate his background, but once he actually gets into his reasonings for designing this or revelations of that the aura vanishes. His insight - albeit one-sided - into the selection, design, and collaboration on the Freedom Tower was interesting at first but then devulged into being a series of pages filled with ranting - almost like a personal diary of his that he decided to publish. The recent attention surround Libeskind has placed him at the forefront of architecture, which he may rightfully deserve. However, if you truly want to appreciate Libeskind then spend the time and the effort to appreciate his work in either a portfolio or in person. His work is a better autobiography than this book is.

In all of my years of reading, no autobiography had gripped me more than this one. A fantastic read that is thought-provoking and compelling, as well as inspiring. When I would . Wakeup as after a nightmare, this book is the one I would pick up. Even in the dark, this book gave me hope. Absolutely brilliant.

Daniel Libeskind designed the new wing of my local (Denver) art museum, and to coincide with its opening, my book club chose to read "Breaking Ground." In reading the book I was expecting to gain a little insight into who this man is and possibly how he came up with some of his ideas. But I never expected to find that he is a very good writer, incredibly well-read, and to learn of the amazing thought processes behind his designs (e.g. the Twin Towers Memorial among others world-wide). It was a wonderful surprise and a book I will read again some day.

I got my three copies,as I ordered.Thank you very much. Teresa

Libeskind proves in this personal account of his life that living dangerously has his rewards. He describes his endless struggles with authorities, bureaucrats in Berlin, New York and so on. He tells marvellous tales of taking a stand in architecture, how architecture and good design can add value to a city. But his life in architecture is an adventurous one. He won the commission for the Jewish Museum in Berlin just by good luck and an ambitious wife. Libeskind received too late the invitation to take part in the architectural competition. His wife succeeded by sheer thourness in nominating him for the contest and eventually he won. His struggle for the World Trade Center commission is a tough one. Larry Silverstein is his main opponent. Libeskind can never be confident about the outcome of this fight. Why insist on theoretical books on architecture when such personal accounts are available? Libeskind pleads for architecture with heart and soul. I liked this book tremendously and would like to recommend the book to every student of architecture. Just to learn that architecture is about winning competitions as much as about designing. Libeskind cites Einstein: Only an idiot can be brilliant at breakfast. Libeskind could have written this beautiful book during breakfast.Luuk Oost

Libeskind's formulaic and pedestrian memoir covers the standard, well-trodden ground of perceived persecutions and exile, and growing up in a world where his genius was, predictably, misunderstood. Probably intended as myth-building, it reads more like a script for a Made-For-TV

Movie, and somewhere, someone must be casting Rick Moranis as the pixyish grinning architect. Inevitably, he cites the controversial nature of his work as irrefutable proof of his genius. An immature argument at the best of times, Libeskind pitches it anyway, presuming his audience to be fairly gullible. (I wonder whether he would credit Bin Laden or Charles Manson, also controversial figures, with having genius also?) Blinded by enormous arrogance, Libeskind repeatedly denigrates the achievements of others as a way of making himself seem superior. He brandishes this pedestrian story as though it had relevance. It does not, and in the end, *Breaking Ground* reads more like the marketing brochure it really is, than as a memoir. Like his architecture, this book is flashy, and gimmicky in a way that becomes irritating very quickly.

*Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and architecture*, is wonderful piece of literature. Part biopic, part anecdotal, Daniel Libeskind's up-lifting story leads the reader through the trials and tribulations one faces when designing ground breaking controversial buildings around the world. He makes very clear that regardless of where his buildings are to be built, there are always forces that be that because of their limited vision and narrow minds find his emotionally charged touching work, too much to handle. This book provides every reader with life lessons on how to battle the goliaths that impede progress and vision. How does one man, passionate about an idea face off with an entire city's Building Senate? How does one man defend the rights of millions of New Yorkers against the desire the developer has for profits? How do you compromise on your projects without compromising on your core beliefs? Libeskind's book is beautifully written, and in addition to telling us a very touching story about his family's plight during and after the holocaust, he teaches us never to give up hope and give in to people who on the surface seem undefeatable, but in reality will crumble like the roman empire when faced with visionary ideas. A must have for any dreamer, any optimist, anybody trying to break their own new ground.

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