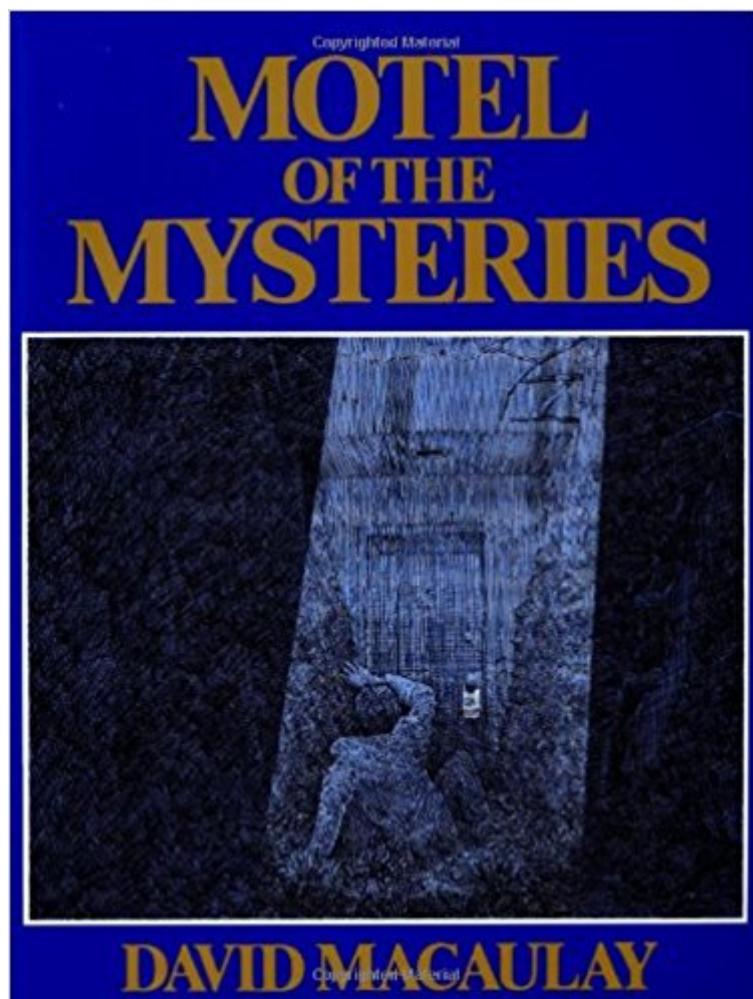


The book was found

Motel Of The Mysteries



Synopsis

It is the year 4022; all of the ancient country of USA has been buried under many feet of detritus from a catastrophe that occurred back in 1985. Imagine, then, the excitement that Howard Carson, an amateur archeologist at best, experienced when in crossing the perimeter of an abandoned excavation site he felt the ground give way beneath him and found himself at the bottom of a shaft, which, judging from the DO NOT DISTURB sign hanging from an archaic doorknob, was clearly the entrance to a still-sealed burial chamber. Carson's incredible discoveries, including the remains of two bodies, one of them on a ceremonial bed facing an altar that appeared to be a means of communicating with the Gods and the other lying in a porcelain sarcophagus in the Inner Chamber, permitted him to piece together the whole fabric of that extraordinary civilization.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"David Macaulay . . . is a superb craftsman and an imaginative writer and illustrator . . . His new book is a marvel of imagination and a comfortable satire. He projects a time when our civilization will have been buried . . . As always with Mr. Macaulay's books, wonderfully illustrated." The New York Times

David Macaulay is an award-winning author and illustrator whose books have sold millions of copies in the United States alone, and his work has been translated into a dozen languages. Macaulay has garnered numerous awards including the Caldecott Medal and Honor Awards, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, the Christopher Award, an American Institute of Architects

Medal, and the Washington Post's Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award. In 2006, he was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, given "to encourage people of outstanding talent to pursue their own creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations." Superb design, magnificent illustrations, and clearly presented information distinguish all of his books. David Macaulay lives with his family in Vermont.

This is a story about a man who discovers the United States - years after it disappeared mysteriously into the mists of time. As this scientist and his crew uncover many ancient artifacts, they do their best to piece together how various items were used in this ancient culture. Their conviction that the motel they've discovered is an ancient burial ground colors their interpretation of every item that they find. Macaulay's illustrations bring the text to life, allowing the reader to see the humor in what is going on - Macauley is able to reference various items they've discovered by the name given them by the scientists, but the illustrations show us what it is that they've really found. (e.g., the pictures show us that the "Sacred Collar" worn at the final burial ceremony is actually a toilet seat.) Of course, what Macauley really does, and does brilliantly, is point out how arrogant it is for us to assume that we can piece together an entire culture's way of life by analyzing a few odds and ends and giving them purposes, even though we have no way to determine whether what we've decided is true is actually true. "Motel of the Mysteries" is an excellent reminder to keep our perspective as we study ancient cultures and peoples - a reminder that scientists are fallible humans like anyone else.

It's humor/satire in the best tradition - something that pokes fun at (some would say skewers) those who tend to take themselves far too seriously. In this case we're talking about archeologists, but even at that it's limited to those who make too many intellectual leaps from the available evidence. By that I mean those scientists who tend to input too much in the way of fiction or story telling to artifacts. It's done so gently, but the tone is spot on - the same pronouncements done with no doubt whatsoever and yet objectively wrong. We have the benefit here of knowing what the actual truth is, which is where the humor is grounded. Macaulay really has done a good job in this parody of a serious scientific work, so much so that one kind of wonders what the *real* story is when reading, oh, the latest paleontological findings or other similar papers. This isn't to say that all science is wrong - not at all - but only to wonder what if science doesn't necessarily know what it thinks it knows. And again, I'm talking about scientists who go a bit too far in their theorizing. I like this book - a lot. It's a fun parody.

What will our world look like to future archaeologists? In this book David Macaulay takes a humorous look at the possibilities as our descendants explore an ancient motel and mistake a toilet seat for a headdress and so on. It's cute, nothing great but cute. And Macaulay's illustrations are always cool.

This should be required reading for every archeology student, this is a very very funny look at ruins. We still use a lot of the terms from here such as 'sacred point', 'sacred urn' and the 'plant that would not die'.... great fun. Lots of illustrations as you would find in a field journal.

I love the way this book is so reminiscent of literature on archeological finds. It makes me wonder how much our interpretations are right---or wrong. I highly recommend it to satire lovers.

The year is 4022. An amateur archaeologist has discovered an ancient tomb from the early 1970s, complete with two skeletal remains - one resting in a ceremonial bed, the other worshipping at an altar. Except that the tomb is a motel, the "sarcophagus" is a bathtub, & the "altar" is a toilet ("sanitized for your protection"). Macaulay's drawings are a hoot - my favorite is the young lady proudly wearing the "sacred collar & matching headband" (the seat & lid of the toilet) with a pair of toothbrushes dangling from her ears. Anyone who has wondered whether modern archaeologists who speculate about the significance of the objects found in the Egyptian pyramids have the slightest idea what they're talking about, or who has ever browsed a museum gift shop, will get a huge kick out of this book.

I loved this book as a kid and was looking forward to sharing it with my kids. Unfortunately, I think it's a little dated and so the "joke" did not resonate as well. I'd recommend other books from Macaulay, instead. I wish he did an update!

Such a shame this book isn't more widely circulated. Our library system no longer carried it, as it is out of print. Such a classic! Great for kids using "Story of the World" and learning about history and archeology.

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