

The Cosmic House review - a dizzying house for all seasons

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SUMMARY

A review of the Cosmic House in Holland Park — the west London home of the late critic-architect Charles Jencks — on its opening to the public following his 2019 death. Moore reads the four-storey Victorian house as a built manifesto of Jencks's postmodern ideas: four season-themed rooms, a solar-year spiral stair, and dense cosmic and physics symbolism. Admiring but sceptical of the literalism, he praises the generosity of turning so valuable a house to public use.

VRIESENDORP — RELEVANCE IN THIS PIECE

Vriesendorp appears only in passing. Moore records that Jencks rejected a Spring-room fireplace design by Rem Koolhaas and Vriesendorp as insufficiently “vernal” — despite her argument that its pattern of coloured parallelograms evoked Dutch tulip fields. This is her single mention in the piece; useful as a footnote on the OMA-Jencks working relationship rather than as coverage of her own work.

| *Maggie Keswick, on her own undecorated study: “symbolism stops at my door.”*

SUBJECT

The Cosmic House — 19 Lansdowne Walk, London W11; opened to the public 2021

Jencks Foundation — based at the house; “to promote critical experimentation”

PEOPLE

Charles Jencks — critic, theorist, architect; former resident (d. 2019)

Maggie Keswick — garden designer; co-founder, Maggie's cancer centres

Terry Farrell — architect; worked on the interior

Rem Koolhaas & Madelon Vriesendorp — rejected Spring fireplace design (see note above)

Michael Graves, Celia Scott, Eduardo Paolozzi — fireplaces / bust / floor plaque

Piers Gough; Allen Jones — whirlpool bath; Summer-room painting

Eszter Steierhoffer — artistic director, Jencks Foundation

RELATED REFERENCES

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