



Sixteen Acres: The Rebuilding of the World Trade Center Site

Philip Nobel

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On the morning of September 12, 2001, the sixteen acres of the World Trade Center site lay in ruins. They were wrecked and they were burning; they were the scene of an unprecedented crime. But they were not exactly 'erased' or 'wiped off the map' as some newspapers would claim: under the pile dominating what had already been named Ground Zero, the land remained, the space remained, the deeds and leases remained, signed and countersigned, gruesomely intact among the waste. The towers were gone, but their troubled redemption was already taking shape: it would come in the boilerplate of deals, in the exchange of memoranda, in handshakes and whispers and white papers, and soon in the form of architectural fancy. Tracing the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site from graveyard to testing ground for high design, critic Philip Nobel strips away the hyperbole to reveal the secret life of the century's most charged building project. Tragic and comic by turns, full of low dealings and high dudgeon, *Sixteen Acres* takes us behind the scenes at the site itself, exposing the reconstruction as the flawed product of a complicated city: driven by money, hamstrung by politics, burdened by the wounds it is somehow supposed to heal.

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