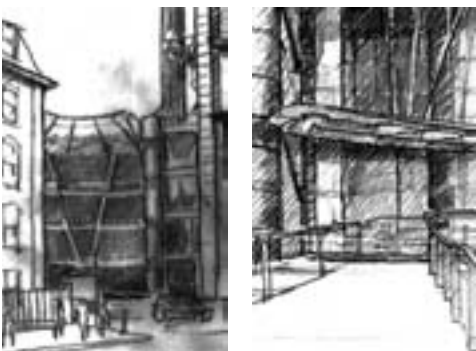




A modern perimeter block in Antwerp, Belgium, that responds to the scale and rhythms of adjacent buildings



Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh: Fresh modern design using traditional materials (Architects: Benson and Forsythe)



Buildings should be designed to provide a stimulating composition from near and afar

5.2.2 RICHNESS AND BEAUTY

Be a good neighbour

The need to respect neighbouring buildings and respond positively to them is not a call for pastiche. Sometimes how a building 'fits in' to the townscape is the principal concern, sometimes it is stark contrast that makes a place. To borrow from Cole Porter, "it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it." Good buildings enrich the surrounding fabric, both visually and physically, while the exceptional adds the magic of contrast, drama and innovation. Respect for context requires adhering to:

- continuity of building line;
- a street's vertical and horizontal rhythms (the building widths, the proportion and scale of windows and doors);
- the local morphology (the pattern of streets, blocks and building types);
- adjacent building heights, roof and cornice lines;
- local building materials;
- first-rate architecture.

Strengthen local identity

Distinctive places have their own character and atmosphere. Remarkable buildings provide a unique sense of cultural and community identity. Variety in architectural expression will transcend mere fashion and create richness and diversity. Local identity can be assisted by:

- a diversity produced by many design 'signatures'. This principle needs to drive the approach to land parcellation and plot sub-division from the outset (refer back to 3.8.1 and 3.8.2);
- drawing on local traditions of built form, materials and craftsmanship, such as masonry, ironwork or stained glass;
- developing a materials strategy that responds to the locale - selecting materials that look good, whether dry or wet.

Keep it rich - from near and afar

The number and composition of elements on the building's façade, and the contrasting relationships between them - as viewed from near and afar - determine visual quality and interest. Great urban architecture requires that at every scale, from a range of viewing distances, a building's surface appears rich in detail. The key is to emphasise vertical rhythm in particular and avoid exposing blank walls.

Cladding systems tend to pose difficulties in evoking a human scale. If their use is unavoidable, then emphasise doors and windows and surface textures on the lower floors and in the immediate landscape.