

our downtowns begins to suggest such a shift. In any case, we must reassess the scales at which we should be bold and innovative. We have begun to understand and appreciate that architecture need not reinvent itself every generation and certainly not for every new problem or program it addresses. We have started to downsize our expectations and to realize—as players in a classical play realize—that the physical world is finite and must be fashioned out of limited resources, energy, space, forms, and architectural types in a limited amount of time. There is neither the luxury of endless time nor the bottomless resources to pursue casually, cavalierly or experimentally our architectural and urban agenda.

Typology versus critical regionalism

If Critical Regionalism celebrates and reinforces what is unique and enduring, typology provides us with a connection to something bigger and more universal. It connects our buildings to our city and region as well as to architecture and urbanism around the world. It also provides us with the building blocks—the DNA, if you will—to shape a city that is more than a collection of its pieces. In a secular culture, the city may be the biggest and most long-lived thing to which many people can hope to connect. The city was made for us by people who preceded us, and we make it for people who follow us. It is both unique and great. Both needs—to be unique and to be part of some great idea or large group—seem to be a major part of the modern Western psyche. It could be argued that typology, because it allows regional variation on universal types, answers both of these needs. But it no longer speaks loudly enough about the regional differences, which are quickly becoming extinct around the globe. Regional architectural types are not strong enough alone to withstand mass culture and to resist the commodification of architecture that ignores or erases regional and local differences. For this, we need a rooted and judicious regionalism.

The tension and friction between these two proclivities can be fertile. Because Critical Regionalism is critical, even disdainful, of popular culture, it is not always conducive to city making. More concerned about place than community, it is very compelling at the architectural scale, but its critical stance can be counterproductive when trying to make a street or neighborhood. In making its critiques of popular

culture, Critical Regionalism perpetuates an avant-garde attitude toward culture, with its endless overturning of tradition by an artistic elite. In striving to be authentic, pure, and timeless, Critical Regionalism sets itself apart from the norm. This stance may produce good, even profound, architecture, but not necessarily good neighborhoods, towns, or cities. A townspeople knows the importance of a collective framework or covenant that brings people together in less critical and more tolerant ways. This means the city needs many background buildings that behave in predictable, normal ways and that honor their context for every foreground architectural/artistic statement. In short, we must beware of architectural snobbery when designing whole communities and be aware that architectural typology and precedent can help us make our communities more coherent.

Complex, self-defining systems like society, cities, and culture need competing ideas and contradictory forces to invigorate and regulate themselves. Although there must always have been social tension and disharmony, other periods and cultures have inspired and liberated the human spirit to higher civic achievements and fostered a greater sense of a community. (Although this unity may have come at the expense of stigmatizing and warring with an enemy.) Americans seem particularly saddled for better or worse with an equally strong need both to individuate and to be part of a group. Rebelliousness and egotism are joined against connectedness and community, liberty against equality. If we are to design for both the individual and the group, if we are to express what is local and what is universal in our built environment, then regionalism and typology must engage in continuous dialogue.

Notes

1. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, p. 211 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).
2. John Passmore, "The End of Philosophy," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74 (March 1996):1–19.
3. Mark Gelernter, "Teaching Design Innovation through Design Tradition," *Proceedings, ACSA Annual Meeting*, Miami, 1988.
4. Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they're built*, p. 178 (London: Phoenix Illustrated, 1997).
5. Bryan Appleyard, *Richard Rogers: A Biography*, p. 65 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
6. Cesar Pelli, *Observations for Young Architects*, pp. 10–12 (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).