

*Collage City* suggests a contextualist design procedure that identifies grids and axes to commandeer in an existing city's ground plan, and that matches, mixes, and grafts into them (primarily by means of figure-ground plan making) fabrics and figures from the Greatest Hits of the preautomotive Western city: the grid from Savannah, Georgia, eighteenth-century Parisian hotels, Piazza Navona, and the like. More city-as-epicurean-museum than "collage," this approach also suffers from the "if you build it, they will come" delusion of urban space making.

The "Cornell School" offered an expanded, site-based language of graphic analysis and projection, nurtured an improved range of compositional and combinatory techniques, and established an elaborate genealogy of urban models. If one omits the Cornell School's myopic, ultimately ahistorical notions of "context" and their false and too easy conflation of the architectural figure with the private and the urban ground with the public, their resurrection and interpretation of the Nolli map can be understood as providing a precise tool for measuring and ultimately composing the diverse range of building patterns latent in the modern city. The danger was in the assumption that it is solely or even primarily the figure of the building that construes the experiential life of the metropolis. Nevertheless, Rowe in particular, but also Ungers, Rossi, and Venturi and Scott Brown, must be credited with not only offering a way to read the architecture of the city, but also taking from that reading a means to generate new forms with nuance, ambiguity, and formal invention lacking in the late-Modern period. Lynch and McHarg had developed methods that could indicate where and where not to build, methods that worked well at a city or even regional scale but that lacked a capacity to generate specific architectural form.

In hindsight, it seems that Rowe and his followers provided the intellectual justification for an already-in-motion retreat from any effort to design the metropolis as anything but a series of loosely related parts. Collage was an early-twentieth-century, avant-garde procedure that, broadly speaking, was meant to conjure the absurd, chance juxtapositions that the emerging metropolis was inflicting on its inhabitants. From that time to the present, the liberal city of real-estate speculation and competing political interests has become increasingly collagelike in its effects. Consequently, *Collage City* offered little theoretical alternative to the status quo—the combination of *collage* and *city* was, at bottom, a tautology.