

life is a matter of urgency: St. Paul's in burned London, or the "old city" in devastated Warsaw. Symbolic environment is used to create a sense of stability: threatened institutions celebrate their antiquity; kings proclaim their legitimate roots as well as their power. The English gypsies are avid collectors of china and family photographs.

There are striking differences in mood between groups with a valued past, in which they feel rooted, and groups that are living in an isolated present.

Might it also be possible to use environment to teach change instead of permanence—how the world constantly shifts in the context of the immediate past; which changes have been valuable, which not; how change can be externally effected; how change ought to occur in the future? Past flux might be communicated by marking out the successive locations of activities or populations or by representing the changing aspect of a single place. The lesson could be disturbing.

Saving the past can be a way of learning for the future, just as people change themselves by learning something now that they may employ later. If advanced education and upward mobility are to be important characteristics of the coming generations, then we might preserve for them a record of the changing educational environment and evidence of the social gaps that had been jumped before. If common ownership of property or an increased sense of public responsibility were desired for the future, then we might save the evidence of past commons. In other situations, we might preserve the corpus of herbal medicine or of technologies suited to more primitive resources or of ways of survival in a hostile environment. Just as we save plant varieties as the raw material of genetic innovation and to avert the disaster of a universal crop failure, so we may wish to save the skills and cultural solutions of the past in order to meet the demands of an uncertain future.

Ruins

There is a poignancy in evanescence, in something old about to disappear. Old toys, made for brief use, seemingly so fragile, associated with a passing and vulnerable phase of life, are much more emotive symbols than are permanent, serious memorials. In Japan there is an esthetic preference for that which decays and passes. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, projected himself so far forward into the future as to design his grandiose structures with the hope that they would make noble ruins.

Ruined structures, in the process of going back to the earth, are enjoyed everywhere for the emotional sensations they convey.⁷ This pleasurable melancholy may be coupled with the observer's satisfaction at having survived or be tinged with righteous triumph, esthetic delight, or intellectual enjoyment. One may loot the ruin or live in it or put one's name on it. Accumulated literary associations add depth to the experience; place names become pegs for layers of commentaries, as in the Chinese culture. But at base the emotional pleasure is a heightened sense of the flow of time.

Clever restoration obscures the essential quality of impermanent remains. A pleasantly ruinous environment demands some inefficiency, a relaxed acceptance of time, the esthetic ability to take dramatic advantage of destruction. A landscape acquires emotional depth as it accumulates these scars. Certain materials and forms age well. They develop an interesting patina, a rich texture, an attractive outline. Others are at their best only when clean and new; as they grow old, they turn spotted and imperfect.

Communicating the past

Historical knowledge must be communicated to the public for its enjoyment and education. Words and pictures convey much, but real things make the deepest impression. It is a sign of the verbal dominance of our civilization that we call any period without written documents "prehistoric." To be surrounded by the buildings and equipment of the past, or best of all to act as if we were in the past, is an excellent way to learn about it. The creation of skillful illusion requires one to move and concentrate structures and equipment or to counterfeit them. This ambience can then be peopled with live actors.

There are more than 125 museum villages and extensive city walking tours in the United States today, in forty-two of the fifty states. They re-create some particular period with the buildings and equipment of the time, often with simulated inhabitants who dress and act—even think—their parts. These reconstructions are tremendously popular. But they suffer some necessary limitations beyond cost, or information, or the availability of old artifacts, or accuracy in the light of changing scholarship. There can be problems of comfort (heavy wool clothes in the summer, for example, or the stink of indigo curing), or of social sanction (low-cut dresses, or the growing of hemp), or health and safety (dangerous tools and unsanitary conditions), or of isolation from what had been a total