

An architectural type is morphological, although it can also be characterized by specific materials (e.g., a Georgian townhouse is brick). It must be distinguished from building type, which refers to function rather than form. The distinction between architectural types and building types is as important as it is confusing. The word “type” is sometimes employed loosely to refer to a functional building type with no standard morphology or configuration, such as an office building or apartment house. Other times it is used to refer to an architectural type with a standard morphology, such as the Italian palazzo, an example that may help explain this commonly misunderstood difference.

In its ideal or archetypal configuration, the palazzo is a four-sided, three-story urban domicile with other buildings abutting on either side and with a squarish courtyard, which is reached through a front portal and which provides light and air to a rusticated ground floor, a piano nobile (second floor), top floor, and possible attic. There are many inflections, distortions, and variations: the footprint might be rectangular or trapezoidal, the courtyard circular, skewed, or multiple, the site might be a corner or midblock, and the piano nobile may be repeated on the third floor. More to the point, the function can change and has changed over time. This basic configuration has been adapted or built anew to house offices, institutions, or apartments, among other things. Functional flexibility—the fact that different uses can be poured into its immutable form—is what makes the palazzo an architectural type rather than a building type.

An example of a modern architectural type is the American gas station, with its cantilevered canopy, pump islands, cashier room, and service bays. Although it has increasingly been adapted to fruit stand, video store, or adult bookstore, it is not a type likely to be built anew to house these or other new functions. This is because its archetype is a very specific configuration designed for the all-weather vending of fuel and the indoor servicing of automobiles. Form and function are not so loosely matched as in the palazzo, temple, or townhouse, which have proven such versatile and lasting types. At the rate at which gas stations are changing to convenience stores—vending sugar as well as gasoline and without maintenance or repair services—the classic version may soon be on the historic register. The motel, the airport terminal, the multi-level stadium with cantilevered tiers of seating (especially ones with an operable roof), and the parking garage are other modern architectural types. Also highly specific in

configuration, they will not be easily adapted to or reincarnated for new uses.

When a type is realized as individual built form, it is often referred to as a model. A model has inflections and idiosyncrasies that accommodate and express its particular site and crafting. It is not a clone, which has no individuality and is the mechanical product of a prototype. Prototypes are part of an industrial paradigm, wherein standardized design and mass production crank out clones that are exactly identical or in which the differences are too random, too superficial, or too small to constitute true models. In speculative housing, changing the color of the cladding or brick, flipping the garage from one side to the other, or adding shutters to the front facade are usually too artificial to make a type into a model. The model is a thoughtful accommodation of a building type to a specific site and a personal expression of its designer, builder, or owner—not just a marketing ploy.

If architectural types keep working well, they remain alive and are reproduced in new models and are filled and refilled with new and different uses. But if no longer functional or meaningful, they lose their vitality and degenerate into hollow or sentimental stereotypes. This has been the fate, for example, of the contemporary ranch house or split-level, which is now built with superficial variations all over the country in countless suburban subdivisions. Although the bungalow was also built around the country, there were more genuine differences from region to region. At least it seems that way today. Perhaps their differences now seem more genuine (and appealing, like many historic buildings) simply because of their better craftsmanship and materials, as well as heavier, more substantial construction. Their variations were also greater because homebuilders back then built two or three houses at a time, rather than two or three hundred, as they often do now. They didn't all suffer, for instance, standard contemporary aluminum windows with snap-in plastic muntins or sliding glass doors, so oblivious to climate and craft.

Perhaps the most easily understood example of type and model is the human body. The human being is a single biological species with a single physical template (two legs, two arms, one head, etc.), but it keeps reproducing in miraculous morphological variety. There are two sexes, a relatively limited range of skin and hair color, and three basic body types, but no two of today's six billion models of the type are the same. This is not to mention the other billions of humans who have already come