

Daniel Solomon

Cosmopolis

The Raoul Wallenberg Lecture

Cosmopolis

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Introduction / Douglas Kelbaugh

The **public realm** is a powerful ideal but forever fragile and fraught on the ground. I'm referring to the *physical* place, typically urban, that fosters a wide range of face-to-face interaction, from civic conversation to political rallies to social promenading to lowly gutter sniping. Ideally an inclusive, diverse, 24/7 site of chance encounters and opportunistic possibilities, it's a venue where you rub shoulders with *everyone*, including enemies, strangers, acquaintances, people you've seen but don't know and probably wouldn't like if you did know, as well as neighbors and friends. At its best, it is live theatre, with the entire human cast – from panhandling drunks to noisy children to homeless drifters to urbane sophisticates, those latter day *boulevardiers* and *flaneur* that only a cosmopolis can support. And there are rebellious teens and doddering seniors, as well as protesters, hawkers and late-night revelers. It is not your shopping mall crowd, yet all of them are granted basic human rights and right of way, if not dignity. It's an amazing testimony to the city and its ability to absorb the full cross-section of humanity and their teeming differences in a complex, common place.

The public realm is an in-between, contested place of mediation and ambiguity. As Hannah Arendt said a half century ago, it prevents people from falling apart from each other but also keeps them from falling all over themselves – just as a table simultaneously separates people and connects them. If the table is removed, they are no longer separated, but they are no longer connected either.¹

In the litany of writers on public space and democracy, Jurgen Habermas' theory of civil society is a good starting point. It embraces "a robust public sphere as a network for communicating information and points of view." He describes it as forming "a network of sensors" that inform the government of how well it is functioning and render transparent its shortcomings.² His critique is less place-based and more about process than form, but he values civic discourse as crucial to legitimate governance.

Other public intellectuals and designers, to name a few of the chorus of voices that has arisen to defend the public realm, are more specific about the intrinsic and enduring value of public spaces, buildings and streets:

—Marshall Berman believes that "Boulevards of 19th century Paris were the great public equalizers that brought the upper and middle classes nearer and in more contact and aware of the lower class and their impoverishment."³

—Jan Gehl of Denmark, who has spent a lifetime affirming the walkable public realm, is passionate that "First the people, then the (public) spaces, then the buildings" are needed for successful urban design and cities."⁴

—Alex Krieger states "In a city the sense of proximity to a public realm remains palpable.... An urban environment cherishes this relative openness and, therefore, yields to privatization only with considerable reluctance."⁵

—Adriaan Geuze, the Dutch landscape architect and urban designer, laments the decline of the street to many factors: commercialism, the highway, single-use zoning, over-sizing and architecture that ignores the street. He argues for less but better designed public space, with simpler streets – clear, neutral, free for non-designers to express themselves and to colonize; not tricked out with decorative or generic over-design – whether nostalgic or avant-garde. Geuze offers a scathing indictment of Modernist urban space: "...buildings pulled back and lifted high above the ground, result in endless and undefined public voids. Modern architecture has simply ignored the street and chosen to hover and float above it all, preying on sites, hijacking the scene and leaving behind shadow, wind and anonymity."⁶

—Margaret Kohn in her book *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*, describes public space as "accessible to everyone without restriction and/or fosters communication and interaction...places that facilitate unplanned contacts between people." She points out that universities, airports, malls, post offices, parks and ordinary city streets are increasingly privatized, which closes democratic discourse.⁷

—And on the challenge of intervening architecturally in the public realm, the University of Michigan's Daniel Herwitz states "The harder part is to work in public spaces, which are already

composed in the ways they are composed, where there is a diversity of people and, very important, where the signals buildings give off are part of the conversation of democracy and transition.”⁸

—Last, public space – whether sidewalk or plaza – in Western cities is traditionally formed in predictable configurations, and it is defined by buildings with doors and windows opening onto it. It is geometrically predetermined even formally composed space, but the public is free within plain view to engage in an undetermined range of activities, behaviors and expression. We must acknowledge that this conception of public space is not the only one. For instance, in traditional Arab cities, the reverse is true, as John Habraken has pointed out. Public space is geometrically irregular – not predetermined in its form but negotiated by private owners – and it is shaped by inward-looking buildings. Although more formally unpredictable and random than Western public space, citizens are not as free to act or to see or be seen within it. For example, dress and behavior are more circumscribed and eye contact between sexes more restrained by religious mores. In short, to design genuinely diverse and democratic cities in a global world, we must be open and sensitive to a variety of cultures and their different values.

Today the public realm is threatened by privatization, commodification and underfunding, not to mention telecommunication, the internet and other digital media that saturate every moment of our lives. But it has always been in flux and at risk, if not by technology then by spatial segregation or political authority. It was Nazi control and tyranny that put public space and public life under siege in Raoul Wallenberg’s Budapest.

To be the hero he was, Raoul Wallenberg desperately needed the public realm and depended on its protocols, but not to promote public life. Ironically, he used its right of way in a subversive and clandestine way. He took advantage of diplomatic sanctuary to provide private refuge and cover for Hungarian Jews and other persecuted groups. He subverted humanitarian channels to hide identities and to confuse, thwart and confound the authorities.

The immunity of the diplomatic corps and the privilege of the passport – both extensions of the public realm – became two important weapons against the Nazi occupiers. He must also have been a persuasive negotiator.

By arranging for their extradition to Sweden, he provided an escape to safety for many tens of thousands of Jewish victims who would have otherwise been deported and killed. And he did it, not because they were neighbors, friends or family, but simply because they were fellow human beings whose world was imploding. It was for *strangers* that he courageously risked his life, day in and day out, for several long and dark years...and that he himself was later imprisoned for the rest of his life in the USSR. It is a tragic twist of fate that his *legitimate* diplomatic status did not guarantee his public passage and that he was extradited to the very political imprisonment and death from which he saved so many others. We are honored at our college to celebrate and pay homage to this graduate with this annual lecture and book.

An eloquent and urbane spokesperson for the public realm, Dan Solomon fits comfortably into the Wallenberg lecture series, which focuses on architecture as a humane and social art. This exceptional chain of thirty speakers started with Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in 1972 and has included the many accomplished designers, historians and theorists listed at the end of this book.

The 2007 Wallenberg lecturer and author of this small book, Dan is one of the first to distinguish between *tribe* and *city* or between *sectarian community* and *city*, a distinction that I find extremely revealing and profound. Basically he argues that the tribe and sectarian community, which are seemingly the natural default modes for human societies, achieve their unity by excluding others. And their nurturing support often comes with the hierarchy of an authoritarian ruler. A true city (and town), on the other hand, is a more democratic sanctuary for citizens and strangers alike and requires social and religious tolerance, the rule of law and presence of civil institutions. It is a much more difficult achievement and requires collective understanding and vigilance to maintain.

I worked with Dan back in 1988 at a University of Washington charrette in Seattle that resulted

in *The Pedestrian Pocket Book*, which helped jump-start what later became known as TOD (Transit-Oriented-Development) and the West Coast contingent of New Urbanism. He was a team co-leader and wrote the key essay. Since then he authored *ReBuilding* and *Global City Blues*, both collections of witty and insightful essays that could easily have been serialized in the *New Yorker*, a magazine that takes the pursuit of truth very seriously.

Dan was educated at Stanford, Columbia and Berkeley, where he served on the faculty for over 35 years and is now a Professor Emeritus. His professional practice has garnered over 85 design awards and has been published in most of the leading design journals worldwide, as well as in many books.

He is, in my opinion, one of the most thoughtful architect/urban designers in the country – arguably the most accomplished designer in the Congress for the New Urbanism, a movement he cofounded and has kept on its toes by continually challenging its neo-traditional nostrums of historicist architectural style. He marries contemporary, modernist design – that he increasingly tinges with mannerist idiosyncrasy and a *fin de siècle* Vienna vocabulary – with traditional, street-oriented urbanism. It is a simple and workable algorithm of creative architecture forming well defined streets and squares that are eminently walkable.

Combining architecture that is creative and contemporary with normative urban design principles and received typologies is all too rare in this country. We tend either to get banal nostalgia and faux contextualism or sensationalist, free-standing form for its own sake. (Why it's so difficult to build new real estate developments with *contemporary* architecture lining lively urban streets and sidewalks is a longstanding mystery to me! And why must stararchitects be so completely committed to internal design consistency within their buildings and sites and so completely uncommitted to design consistency with the surrounding buildings and site?) Within the discipline Dan is also trying to stitch design theory, construction and social ideals back together with architectural practice, after many years of their separation. And he is doing all of this with style, intelligence and talent.

On a personal note, let me end by allowing that Dan is no arm-chair intellectual. A former football player and boxer and now an avid bicyclist, his dream would be to race in the Tour de France, drafting behind Lance Armstrong and passing him at the finish line, with Colin Rowe smiling on the judges' stand. Like Raoul Wallenberg, he's a fighter – physically and mentally disciplined and tough. He has applied those traits to recuperating the city with energy, agility and cosmopolitan panache – as this little book amply depicts.

*Douglas Kelbaugh, FAIA, Professor and Dean
Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning,
University of Michigan
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Cosmopolis / Daniel Solomon



Susan Sontag writes with great insight and compassion about people with terminal illness. One of the tragedies of sickness is that complex and interesting people tend to become one-dimensional and have difficulty in thinking about anything other than their affliction. It takes no more than reading the newspaper these days to be convinced that our beloved planet has what is very likely to be a terminal illness. The imminent Malthusian catastrophe that many believe in makes Al Gore's version of the apocalypse seem not only benign, but pleasant.

Speaking of terminal illness, a man went to his doctor for the results of his regular check-up. The doctor came in ashen-faced and said, "I hate to have to tell you this, but your blood test shows that you have AIDS." Thunderstruck, the man collapsed in a chair and began sobbing, "No, No, No, No." The doctor continued, "I'm afraid that is not all the bad news. Your CAT Scan shows unmistakable signs of Alzheimer's."

The man lifted his head, "Alzheimer's! Alzheimer's — you mean I'm just going to fade away into the mists of dementia... Well, I guess it could be worse. You could have said I have AIDS."

The world is like the man in the doctor's office with multiple terminal illnesses. One is environmental. It is now all too easy to imagine

that the nice, sturdy, poured-in-place concrete building we have just completed at Seaside, Florida on the Gulf Coast is destined soon to become marine habitat visited by scuba divers from a new seaport at Montgomery, Alabama. The environmental crisis is what everyone is thinking about – the kind of singular obsession with terminal illness that Susan Sontag had in mind.

But there is another potentially lethal illness the world is facing and it has to do with tribalism and community. Humans have been pretty set in their ways genetically for forty thousand years. For almost all of that time, the bonds of community that we all feel for *some* of our fellow creatures have served us well to make humans such a successful species.

As an architect and urban designer, I am often expected to have something intelligent to say about the design of communities. The fact is, I don't. Architects and urban designers actually have very little to do with "community design." The term itself might even be an oxymoron. When I think of the word "community," I think of all the communities I don't belong to: the Jesuits, the transgender community, the Marine Corps, the Social Register. There is a sense in which all communities are gated communities, communities of exclusion, whether the gates are physical or virtual.

9 Community is part of humanity's deepest primeval past. It was their sense of community that helped our high primate and hominid precursors to hunt well, to eat well, therefore to get smarter and become human. It was the sense of community that enabled our Neolithic relatives to invent agriculture and make ever better weapons to hunt and fight with.

It was all going fine until we got so numerous that we started bumping into other tribes all the time. This bumping of tribes is responsible for the rest of the long story of community including the Crusades, World War I, the Holocaust and the latest news from Baghdad. The bonds of community that worked brilliantly to make Homo Sapiens survive in olden times don't function so well since humans have overrun the planet. It doesn't help matters that we have gotten smart enough to know how to unleash the fury of the embedded energy of the universe on one another's tribes.

What we as urban designers, architects and public officials are engaged in is something different from the design of communities. Our subjects are the urban, the civilized and the cosmopolitan. Richard Sennett had some interesting things to tell us about our subjects in a 1990 essay entitled, *Exposure, In the Presence of Difference*. He describes his regular walk from lower Manhattan up the East Side to Midtown.

The characteristic of this walk is the intimacy into which he is thrust with people whose life experience he could not know and could hardly imagine. Each part of his walk is different, a vanity fair of the particular. One block belongs to families from Northern India and the markets that serve them. In another couple blocks he comes to the special turf of elderly, lower middle class single people, where you can buy half a cantaloupe or half a head of lettuce. Yet all the little microcosms of his city are connected, seamless, public and ungated. The modern city, he argues turns people outward to the necessary and salutary experience of otherness. For Richard Sennett, the very definition of a city is that it is infinitely inclusive and cosmopolitan. The modern city has a didactic role in our consciousness as the only place where people can experience the full range of human possibility. Any city is less of a city to the degree that it is exclusive. Without a cosmopolitan experience, there is no way we can know very much about each other.

There are two critical ideas which should be the basis of architectural expression at this distinctive moment. Both ideas exist in relation to fundamental dangers, one might say potential terminal illnesses that threaten the planet. Reductive shorthand names are useful, so let's call the two critical ideas *the environmental* and

the cosmopolitan. The environmental imperatives are completely obvious. It is what the worldwide green architecture movement is all about and today you cannot get two sentences into most architects' promotional material without encountering the word "sustainability." There, however, are only a few lonely souls who see cosmopolitanism as an architectural matter at all, let alone one that deals with the stylistic and aesthetic side of architecture.

What united the allies of World War II was a war in which the cosmopolitanism of European society was assaulted by a primitive and massively organized tribalism based on lunatic ideas of racial and cultural purity. Raoul Wallenberg, an architectural graduate of the University of Michigan, was one of the great heroes of that war and this series of books is dedicated to him. Certainly, the impulse that Raoul Wallenberg's Swedish family had in sending him to the United States to study architecture at a public institution was a cosmopolitan impulse. In contributing to this series of essays, I take it as part of my job to attempt to connect his heroic fight against the evils of tribalism to the lives and careers of architects, to try to raise the issue of cosmopolitanism to the level of consciousness that green architecture has recently achieved.

The cosmopolitan should actually be the special turf of urbanists and architects. A learned

architecture of cosmopolitan eclecticism plays two big roles. First is place-making, the creation and reinforcement of the unique and particular qualities of places. When Jakarta looks like Glendale and you can eat the same meal in Nairobi as in Stockholm, the symptoms denote a disease for which architects and urbanists may be the best doctors.

The second need for a cosmopolitan urbanism is to blur rather than exacerbate distinctions of race and class. In a world that is as threatened by sectarian strife as it is by climate change, an architecture that welcomes immigrant populations, the disenfranchised and the poor into the places where successful economies thrive is truly important.

The term cosmopolitan is uniquely an antonym to two words that are antonyms to one another. The cosmopolitan stands against both tribalism and universalism – the tribalism of sectarian division and the universalism of global placelessness. Global placelessness eradicates history and breeds tribalism. The apparent opposites – tribalism and universalism – are deeply intertwined. 9/11's Mohammed Atta *hated* the impact of world tourism on the ancient agrarian villages of the Nile; it is where he acquired hatred. As the opposite of two menacing and equally dreadful opposites, the cosmopolitan is a term of enormous power and importance.

11 I'm not sure where the diagnosis of multiple terminal illnesses for the world leaves us with respect to the singularity of focus common among sick people. It may mean that because we have even more to fret about, we will all now become more boring than most people who are dying. There is, however, the more optimistic view, that by obsessing about multiple terminal illnesses simultaneously, we will be less monomaniacal and more complex and interesting. It seems like a reasonable, attainable and worthwhile goal – to be less tedious than we might otherwise be, as the world implodes upon itself. It is the path I will try to point toward in this little book.

We are not the first generation that has had to learn to think and behave amidst an imminent threat of global catastrophe. David Orr, one of the compelling apoclyptarians at the Taubman College “Global Place” centennial conference, said at the beginning of the symposium that as the 20th century was the century of the World Wars, the 21st century will be the century of struggle for environmental survival, requiring a scale of mobilization comparable to that of the World Wars. The same idea was repeated at the end of the conference by Robert Fishman, Taubman College’s eminent historian.

My parents and everyone of their generation were caught up in the mobilization for World War II. It was a very big deal. As an Army psychiatrist,

one of my father’s wartime jobs was to select condemned killers on death row who would be effective commandos on D-Day. My earliest memories are of military bases and at the age of three, I could identify most types of American military aircraft by sight and by sound. As a tot, a high point of my day came at the end of my bath, when the rubber bath tub plug turned magically into the payload of a Billy Mitchell B-25... YYYE000www... BOMBS OVER TOKYO... kersplash!

As Orr and Fishman would have it, the bath tub reveries of small boys would now turn to water conservation and the biodegradability of bubbles. There are enclaves of people in Northern California whose young sons are like that now, but it is not yet a general condition.

During WWII, very few people thought about anything but the War and very few people conducting the War thought clearly about the consequences of their actions after the War. For me, the most interesting historians and chroniclers of the 20th century are people like Barbara Tuchman, Theodore White and Kenneth Jackson, who were fascinated by people’s rare abilities and much more frequent inabilities to see beyond the immediate crises that were swirling around them. Tuchman and White wrote about how wartime policies shaped events for decades afterwards and White and Jackson wrote about the disastrous



WWII B24 Liberator



unintended consequences for American cities of economic policies aimed at recovery after the War. If Dwight Eisenhower's 1947 Federal Highway Act and the GI Bill of Rights had been written a little differently, there might have been no need for a Congress for the New Urbanism and my own career would have a different shape.

But here we are, with the mobilization for two simultaneous world wars hard upon us. It appears that the 21st century's World War I and World War II will have to be fought at the same time. Some in the architectural community, including virtually the whole of Ivy League academia, are as blithely oblivious to both as the elegant Jewish tennis players in Vittorio de Sica's film, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, were on the eve of World War II.

While many in the architectural world are oblivious, others are so heavily into preparations for environmental catastrophe that their world view is like a North Atlantic submarine commander in 1942, a dangerous horizon seen through the 10 degree vision cone of a periscope. For this vigorous group, moral good and architectural good are measured in BTUs. So, while we can applaud the sub-marine commanders of the environmental movement and recognize the urgency of their effort, one must admit that some of them are like people

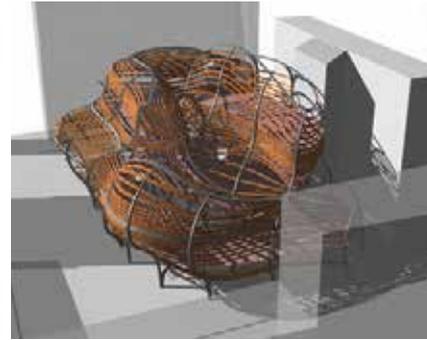


who go to a hundred baseball games a year.
They do know a lot about one thing.

We shouldn't belittle their concerns or water down their message, but urbanism and architecture that attempts simultaneously to address more than one crisis is far richer and more engaging than an architecture measured only by the size of its carbon footprint. Mies van der Rohe coined the aphorism, "I don't want to be interesting; I want to be good." That seemed like a fine polemic viewed against the emerging architectural goofiness of the 1950s, but in fact it is a strangling prescription in the long run.

We are obliged to be interesting; it is a duty. No one will pay the slightest attention to us otherwise. We actually have very little chance of doing good or being good, if all we offer to the world is the dreary salvation of non-consumption. Sustainability alone is not sustainable. With the Prius, Toyota managed to grab a substantial market share from Volvo among that minority of the world's population who really dislike automobiles. Prius drivers are undeniably virtuous, but they are either practitioners of a form of self-sacrifice or they are immune to the addictive pleasures of athleticism in their transport. The next step after the Prius on the path to sustainable sustainability should be an affordable, nifty handling, carbon-zero vehicle that gives the rush of high g-forces to all who love





them and looks zappy. Put me on the list for a 280 horsepower, hydrogen powered Mini-Cooper. If we could combine the elegance and civility of de Sica's tennis players with the purposeful focus of the submarine commanders we might make architecture that is both useful and engaging.

The architect who seems to have the best understanding of all this is Renzo Piano whose architecture is seriously and inventively green, but is also exquisitely crafted, urbanistically sensitive and spatially glorious – good and interesting simultaneously. Piano may not have the answer to all the world's problems, nor would he claim to, but his beautiful works show the way to a layered complexity that is beyond the dogmatism of single issues.

When it comes to being interesting, the tribal catastrophe has the advantages of more plot and more fast-paced action than ecological catastrophe. A whole new genre of fiction and film is emerging around terrorist plots and nuclear proliferation. The spies and double agents following black market traffickers in enriched uranium seem always to do so against a background of British and European social housing projects that are exactly the sort of things architecture students throughout the world are busy learning to design in their housing studios – at Harvard, at London's AA, at Moscow University, everywhere. These are just like the

housing celebrated on the hallowed walls of New York's Museum of Modern Art, the housing estates into which the European Union herds its Arabs, its Africans, its Algerians and its Turks – avant-garde aesthetics conjoined with the politically reactionary in a truly poisonous brew. Universalism breeds tribalism: in these housing estates Muslim youth learns that Europeans despise them, for if they didn't, why would they build these places for immigrants and not live this way themselves? The physical fabric of these placeless, historyless housing estates is the opposite of the seamless, ungated but particularized New York of Richard Sennett, who in fact grew up in Chicago's infamous Cabrini Green public housing project.

European social housing in many places is repeating the story of the American public housing disaster, but with fewer good intentions and far more architectural narcissism. The United States Public Housing Act of 1937 set out to make a new and better world for America's poor – more rational, sunlit, healthy and economical to produce than any public housing had ever been. The result was the complete identification and segregation of an impoverished underclass by building type. We all know or should know what hell-holes American public housing became and the lasting scars it left. And the drug gangs of American public housing projects, violent as



they were and are, don't know anything about enriched uranium or double agents.

Cosmopolitan is the best word I can find to describe the opposite of the sectarian tribalism that is so richly nourished by identifying races and classes by building type and style and then isolating them from the city around them.

During the Clinton Administration, with considerable help from The Congress for the New Urbanism, there was a genuine and at least partially successful attempt to substitute the cosmopolitan for the sectarian in the realm of housing America's poor. The intention of HUD's HOPE VI program was to integrate immigrant populations and our indigenous poor into classic American neighborhoods. It is easy to point to HOPE VI projects that did not fully succeed and thereby miss an important piece of history. Some of HOPE VI's architecture is not so terrific and in some instances people were displaced without a real opportunity to return. But where it succeeded, HOPE VI created a cosmopolitan condition for hundreds of thousands of residents who had been denied it by building racially and economically mixed districts that are seamless, sometimes beautiful parts of the cities around them.

There is nothing esoteric about the need for a cosmopolitan urbanism or the means to achieve it. An example: Our office is currently engaged



in the effort to rebuild San Francisco's most violent and decrepit public housing project, a terrible place called Hunters View. Though it is partially vacant and boarded up, Hunters View remains home to about two hundred mostly African American families, some of whom have lived there for three or four generations. In the current absence of Federal HOPE VI funding, San Francisco's mayor, Gavin Newsome has launched a rebuilding program called HOPE SF (a more optimistic name than NO HOPE VI) but it is a huge stretch for City funds to accomplish something so ambitious.

Hunters View is the demonstration project for HOPE SF. As architects for the rebuilding, we have regular community meetings on the site and we have listened to an incredible litany of tragic stories of shootings, rape, roaches, rats, fatal fires, the wasted lives of young people and gang terror so violent that kids cannot venture into the adjacent project without fear of being shot.

At one recent community meeting, we walked around with small groups of residents and asked them to record what they thought about our proposals for various parts of the site. When the larger group reconvened, we asked a resident named James to report on his group's observations about the southern edge of the site. James is a white man about thirty-five, who has lived in Hunters View since 1979.



With no affectation whatsoever, James speaks in the cadences of his black neighbors to whom he refers as his brothers and sisters. Each time I have seen him he has worn a huge Cleveland Cavaliers jersey down to his knees, behind which is a very substantial person. Most of the others on the tenants committee like it when James gets to collect the Housing Authority's fee for making dinner for the meeting, because his jambalaya is reputedly the best in the neighborhood.

Initially James was reticent about doing the talking, but an aerial photograph that included the wreck of a community center just south of the site got him started. We didn't record his speech, but it went pretty much like this:

“These young kids now with their guns – they don't even bother with drive-bys. They doing walk-bys. Bam! When we were growing up, it was different. Nobody got into trouble. We went to that community center, right there (pointing to the photograph) and it was clean and beautiful. I learned to shoot pool, I learned macramé (that's what he said) and I played basketball. We all did those things all the time. There was macramé stuff all over the neighborhood and nobody got in trouble. Now that place is fallen apart and the director is a bad man. He should go and if you rebuilding this whole neighborhood, it don't make sense not to rebuild the community center.”

I said to James that it would be hard to rebuild the



community center, because it was not owned or operated by the Housing Authority who is sponsoring the rebuilding. I asked if it would be just as good to have new places for pool, macramé and basketball on the Hunters View site instead of next door.

“NO!” he said, “you don’t understand what I’m saying. The reason we didn’t get in trouble was that kids from all over the hill went to the community center. I grew up with people from the other side of the hill. Some of them still my brothers and sisters. Now, Hunters View kids shoot people from the other side of the hill.”

There it was, clear as could be. James is a northern white man who excels at jambalaya. He is a San Franciscan who wears the colors of the Cleveland Cavaliers. He is a big tough guy who is proud of the macramé he once made. And he considers black people who live on the other side of the hill his family. Compared to the teenaged gun slingers of Hunters View, James has had a cosmopolitan life.

I can’t help thinking that there must be people like James in Gaza, Hebron, Sarajevo and Baghdad, people whose life experience is as liberal and tolerant as his, who have watched their communities fold in on themselves. Folding in is the trigger for the gratuitous violence that has made Hunters View a hell hole. In a much bigger and more dangerous way, it is the same folding

in that is occurring many places in the world and has occurred many times in the past. With James’ moving speech, one sees the link between the life of Raoul Wallenberg and what one can do as an architect. Certainly at least a couple of things are now clear about what we should do at Hunters View. First, we should try like hell to get the money to rebuild the community center and focus the rebuilding as much on the linkages of Hunters View to the world outside as on replacing the squalid, horrible buildings.

For a long time it has been wildly unfashionable to claim that architecture can help society. We suffer a generational embarrassment about the naive and hubristic claims of an earlier generation of architects and urbanists that turned out to be so wrong. But James’ story and all the stories about how the isolation of Hunters View has bred its culture of violence show how the physical city shapes the psyche. You can’t convince someone who has lived their life in Hunters View that architecture and urban design are not important.

Cosmopolitan society needs cosmopolitan architecture. Cosmopolitan architecture requires cosmopolitan architects and our schools are not in the business of producing them. Quite the opposite. To explain what a cosmopolitan architect might be like, it is informative to see what cosmopolitan artists of other kinds have been like and what their life stories were.



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Hunters View existing site plan.



This page and following: Proposed reconstruction, WRT|Solomon E.T.C., starting 2009.



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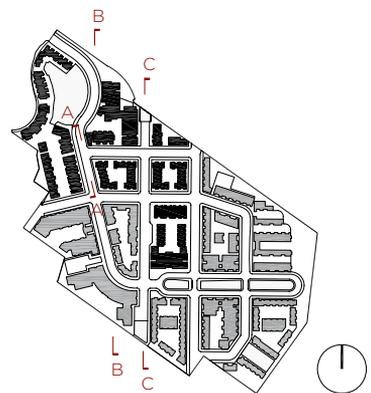
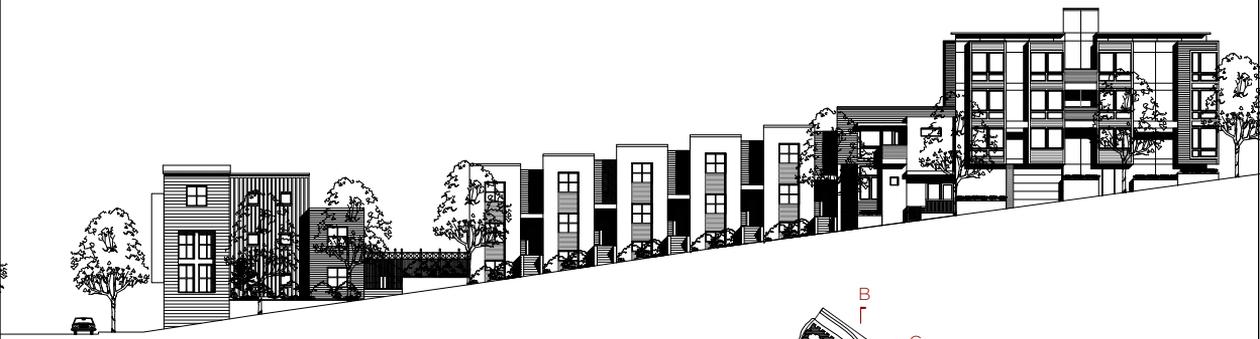


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I wrote an essay a year ago, in which I discussed three of my greatest cultural heroes in a slightly different context. The three are the 20th century's greatest choreographer George Balanchine, the jazz giant Duke Ellington and the couturier and entrepreneur extraordinaire Coco Chanel. They are all attractive for the same reasons and all of them embody exactly what it seems to me is missing from the currently arid culture of architecture, architectural connoisseurship and especially architectural education.

Originally I was thinking of them only in relation to the debilitating style war that pits academic architecture against New Urbanism and vice versa. In thinking more about them and I must admit that they have come to haunt all the nooks of my cortex, I see them as the most splendid exemplars of how to live, how to be in the deepest and most complex sense of the term, cosmopolitan. Even though they were far from perfect human beings, I believe their lives have something profound to tell us about how we might choose to be in the world.

A few things about them:

—They were all supremely well-trained in their own discipline, knew its history inside out and each of them could draw upon that history as the occasion demanded.

—They were eclectic and not stylistically doctrinaire. They all worked in different ways and did a variety of things.

—They were engaged in and not hermetically removed from popular culture and the world around them. They all had what the great architectural historian Colin Rowe referred to as “healthy intercourse with the vernacular,” though their own work was far more sophisticated than mere vernacular.

—They were all completely at home, joyously so, in the most varied circumstances.

—They never compromised their standards for the sake of popularity.

—They all did things no one had ever done before.

If this essay ever turns into a full-fledged book, each of these three deserves a substantial chapter showing how each exceeded their most brilliant precursors and legateses in unifying the past, present and future of their disciplines and in conjoining inclusivity with excellence. If these three represent the ultimate models of the cosmopolitan, the question comes to mind: what does this kind of cosmopolitanism have to do with the life-threatening diseases facing the world?

27 Let me try to answer.

The contemporary American built landscape in its normative state is a vast common ground constructed over the last sixty years and shared equally by the anti-cosmopolitan and the anti-environmental. These life threatening diseases, though they are very different, have many of the same symptoms and they somehow go together. Fortuitously, perhaps, some of the same remedies and palliatives that address one disease may help with the others as well.

Think of these common and interrelated characteristics of the town that nurtures ecological catastrophe, the town that breeds tribal, sectarian violence and the placeless universal town without a history.

—Decentralization: Dispersal of the elements of the city around the landscape in a way that requires everyone to own and operate a private automobile to have access to things. Decentralization and ever increasing auto-dependency has been the normative condition of the American city since 1945. Decentralization is intertwined with segregation, enclave making, hyper-privacy, perpetual newness and the spatial compartmentalization of elements of society by class, race and age.

—Abandonment of historic centers with a disenfranchised underclass left behind – Detroit is the paradigm. Abandonment of historic centers is less pervasive than it used to be and there are more flourishing places big and small where the historic center is thriving. The renewed vitality of many cities is a sign that we can collectively get some big things right, even big things we had terribly wrong a short time ago. Just maybe, we are not, as James Howard Kunstler and other apocolyptarians would have us believe, plummeting rapidly, helplessly and inexorably toward doom.

—Autonomous architecture. Autonomous architecture is virtually all that is taught in our schools of architecture and all that is celebrated in what currently passes for architectural connoisseurship. Autonomous architecture willfully ignores the architecture of its immediate physical context and the architectural heritage associated with that context. It is acontextual and ahistoric by intent. Autonomous architecture is either actively hostile to the city around it, like Rem Koolhaas' Seattle Central Library or it is what Andrés Duany calls "parasitic urbanism", like Frank Gehry's Bilbao Museum, which uses the historic city as a backdrop and foil for something different. There is nothing wrong with "parasitic urbanism" except that it can never



be the normative condition. You can't build a city of autonomous buildings any more than you could subsist on a diet of chocolate truffles. Autonomous buildings are unfortunately all that most architects trained in the last decades know how to design. It is as if we trained a whole generation of chefs who can only make chocolate truffles. Terminally unhealthy.

Autonomous architecture is particularly insidious when it attempts to segregate social underclasses, minorities, immigrants and the poor in their own special brand of autonomous architecture. You might have thought that the utter failure of old style American Public Housing and the relative success of HOPE VI would have taught some clear lessons to people who run schools of architecture and to the architectural culture establishment of museums, critics and magazines. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Even when this seamless town making is done skillfully, the aesthetics of the best of HOPE VI makes people who spend their lives hanging around architecture schools completely crazy.

Decentralization, abandonment of the city and decontextualized architecture are three interrelated poisons. They are all manifestations of the inability of a whole generation of architects and policy makers to think of things in relation to what exists, physically and historically. They are

the products of the willful cultural illiteracy that was part of the modernist hegemony in schools of architecture.

No cult of unlearning swept away centuries of accumulated skill in fashion design, ballet or in parts of modern music. Much, but not all, of what my three heroes did was new and innovative, of its unique time, but everything they did was grounded on centuries of accumulated skill which they had totally mastered, not discarded.

It is striking that my three heroes were also part of the modernist hegemony; in fact they were leaders of it. But in each of their fields and largely because of their respective individual contributions, there was no Maoist Cultural Revolution, such as occurred within architectural education the 1930s and 40s, first under Gropius at Harvard and later emulated everywhere else. The assault by the architectural academy itself on the culture and history of architecture beginning in the 1930s has left an indelible legacy. It is precisely this indelible legacy that has thwarted the emergence in the world of architecture of people like my three heroes.

• • •

Seattle Public Library, WA, Rem Koolhaas, 2004;
Bilbao Museum, Bilbao, Spain, Frank Gehry, 1997;
Graduate student project by Li Kim, Columbia
University, instructor: Yolande Daniels, 2006.

29 It is useful to contrast these three heroes of the cosmopolitan to two contemporary architects whose thinking is both influential and typical. One is a close friend and New Urbanist colleague Peter Calthorpe. The other I have never met, but I regard as a great architect and teacher, the former Harvard Chair, Rafael Moneo. I pick these two because they each represent a powerful position that has become the dominant view, an orthodoxy, within the circle each moves within. Calthorpe's views on architecture have come to dominate the New Urbanist and Smart Growth movements, as Moneo's position or something close to it dominates the architectural academy. To understand the fundamental antagonism that exists between New Urbanist and architectural culture at this moment, I think it is useful to understand these two compelling people.

Calthorpe first: His view of the world doesn't leave much room for engagement with architecture. He considers much of what architects study and obsess about to be hermetic, elitist, self-referential and inconsequential. What he sees in museums, in architectural journals and in every architectural school he visits is preoccupation with autonomous architecture disconnected from the real problems of the city. It is a preoccupation that bores and irritates him. He has bigger fish to fry and he believes that if he catches the really big fish and fries them decently,

the world will be nourished. Reform of the structure of the metropolis is pressing, urgent and universally important to every person on earth and nuances of architectural excellence simply don't rise to that level of importance.

There is a kind of Darwinian environmental adaptation in Calthorpe's view. His personal environment consists of two kinds of people. First there are public officials and bureaucrats who know and care about architecture in the way that gym teachers know and care about the ballet. Gym teachers don't necessarily dislike ballet, which after all is a form of PE. For them a *plié* is a needlessly complicated form of a knee bend and *échappés* are weird and rarefied jumping jacks. For the ballet dancer, however, the *plié* and the *échappé* have an anatomical complexity, a cultural depth and, most importantly, grace and beauty that the gym teachers who only know about knee bends and jumping jacks don't even begin to understand.

The other part of Calthorpe's environment consists of developers whose finish line is the bottom line and whose event is the high hurdles, the hurdles consisting of the very bureaucrats and public officials who are the other half of his environment. When a species and its environment are in sync, both flourish and Calthorpe's view has come to dominate the Congress for the New Urbanism and the Smart Growth movement and has found a welcoming audience in the



New Urbanist projects by Calthorpe Associates. Clockwise from top: ABLA Homes (HOPE VI) Revitalization Plan, Chicago, 2004; Daybreak, South Jordan, UT, 2004; Jumeraih Horizon, Dubai, UAE, 2004; Stapleton Redevelopment Plan, Denver, 1998-present.

Urban Land Institute, the real estate developers' professional association which recently gave him its highest lifetime achievement award. It is worth noting that a majority of the 200 people who were invited to the first Congress for the New Urbanism were architects. Fifteen years later, most of the architects, including most of the best ones, have fled from CNU as if it transmits a communicable disease. New Urbanism and Smart Growth are now the domain of public officials, planners and developers.

By contrast, Rafael Moneo's views on architecture are as familiar and tacitly obvious to an audience of architecture students and teachers as Calthorpe's are to New Urbanists. Like Calthorpe, his views are also a successful strategy for personal survival, but what he has adapted to brilliantly is the fierce and hostile environment of the Harvard faculty meeting. His principal book, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies* shows him as the absolute master of paraphrase, arguing the shifting positions of eight very different architects far more lucidly and poetically than the architects themselves. He has taken pluralistic post-structuralist relativism to its highest point. It is as if this book is the work of a great trial lawyer who delights in the ability to argue any side of any argument with eloquence and passion – from the early Peter Eisenman's views on context and usefulness as “contamination” of architecture to



Alvaro Siza's almost religious reverence for place and the users of his buildings. Surely this is a great strategy for an academic politician, but it also apparently has much to do with Moneo being by all reports a genuinely nice man. He reserves his only moment of sneering, dismissive sarcasm in his 404 densely written pages for his encounter with something akin to New Urbanism in the planning for the critical reconstruction of Berlin, an example of what he considers rigid, outworn and anachronistic principles.

Moneo refuses to grant the status of principle even to ideas behind his own architecture, much of which any committed urbanist can admire.

... without shared values, without any clear expectations of architecture... and with the awareness that the old city is gone, architects no longer believe in an architecture founded on disciplinary principles.

Individuals prevail in the architecture of today... architects enter into the domain of the personal... it is the prerogative of the architect to choose the formal conventions with which to build.

How very odd it is that this gifted man who in much of his work is the very essence of the cosmopolitan, European urbanite would argue so eloquently for the autonomy of autonomous architecture. The Harvard legacy trumps the personal one; the temporal and

Autonomous architecture is like the diced fruit in jello with tasty bits floating in an undifferentiated matrix of characterless goo.
Following spread: Murcia City Hall, Murcia, Spain, Rafael Moneo, 1991-1998.







spatial connections of the historical city are an anachronism and he stands clearly for an architecture that is like the diced fruit in fruit jello – tasty bits floating in an undifferentiated matrix of characterless goo.

So here is the dilemma. On one hand there is a culture of high architecture that absolutely denies the possibility of an architecture based on principles derived from the imperatives of the city, social issues and the environmental crises – the real issues of our day to people outside of architecture. On the other hand, there is a New Urbanist culture that considers the niceties of autonomous architecture irrelevant and is therefore quite willing to settle for an ever lower standard of mediocre kitsch – gym teacher's knee bend and jumping jack architecture as described by a form-based code.

Calthorpe, a man of deep principle who is indifferent to architecture; Moneo, a man with a deep love of architecture who, with a sophisticated rationale derived from critical theory, has dissociated himself from the idea of principle. In this polarizing and pervasive debate, anyone who might believe in a multi-dimensional architecture rooted in environmental imperatives, social issues and global placelessness is left without a home.

The argument here is that such a home actually does exist. It exists in other forms of



art and it exists in the heritage of our cities – in the New York of Duke Ellington and George Balanchine, in the Paris of Coco Chanel. What joyous and stylish cities they were, the cities of the *Cosmopolis*. Those cities have not disappeared. They are there for us to nurture, rehabilitate, add to and replicate. They are the places where we might find the cures for the world's life threatening diseases. An architect who helps build and restore the *Cosmopolis* can be sure he is doing what he can to keep this lovely planet alive and spinning. As long as the *Cosmopolis* thrives, we can go to the ballet, eat oysters, sit in a garden and drink Aquavit for a while longer. It's worth a try.



Les Dejeuner des Canotiers, 1881, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (Phillips Collection, Washington DC).



Earth from space.



Daniel Solomon

Daniel Solomon is an architect and urban designer whose 35-year career combines achievements in professional practice with academic pursuits of teaching and writing. The main focus of his work has been residential architecture and the interaction between housing and urban design. From this base his work has expanded in several directions including large-scale urban planning, regulatory structures that govern urban design and residential, commercial and institutional architecture. He is the author of many articles and two books: *ReBuilding* and *Global City Blues*.

Daniel Solomon's commitment to urban repair and the construction and reconstruction of urban neighborhoods extends beyond his project work; he was one of the co-founders of the Congress for the New Urbanism, an organization whose principles have helped shape the contemporary practice of community design.

WRT|Solomon E.T.C. is a thirty-five person San Francisco based multidisciplinary design firm, providing architectural, urban design, city planning and landscape architecture services. The firm acquired its current form in 2001 with the merger of Solomon E.T.C. and the distinguished 180 person Philadelphia firm, Wallace, Roberts and Todd. In this innovative form of merger, Solomon E.T.C. has retained its working method, focus and key personnel, while benefiting in many ways from the support of the larger collaborative practice.

Solomon E.T.C.'s body of work has grown from a focus on residential architecture and the interaction between housing and urban design. From this base, work has expanded in several directions including large-scale urban planning, regulatory structures that govern urban design and residential, commercial and institutional architecture.

Solomon E.T.C. has been widely exhibited and published in leading architectural journals in the US and abroad. The work has received over eighty design awards including four Progressive Architecture Awards, three national awards from the American Institute of Architects, the Housing and Urban Development Secretary's Platinum Award of Excellence on two occasions and three Charter Awards from the Congress for the New Urbanism. In 2004 the firm's founding principal, Daniel Solomon, received the Maybeck Award for Lifetime Achievement in Design from the California Council AIA.



Raoul Wallenberg

Raoul Wallenberg was born in Sweden and came to the University of Michigan to study architecture. In 1935, he graduated with honors and received the American Institute of Architects Silver Medal. He returned to Europe at the time of great discord and, in 1939, saw the outbreak of the war that was to involve the whole world in unprecedented terror and destruction.

Over the next 12 years, many ordinary citizens were killed. Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, communists and those not of Nazi persuasion were exterminated. In March 1944, Hitler ordered Adolph Eichmann to prepare for the annihilation of the Jewish population in Hungary. In that summer, 32-year-old Raoul Wallenberg was sent to Budapest as first secretary of the Swedish delegation there. Over the next year, he moved quickly to help save the lives of more than 100,000 people – Jews and many other minorities who otherwise almost certainly would have perished. He demonstrated extraordinary insight, intelligence and unbelievable courage. He issued fake passports that proclaimed their holders to be Swedish citizens. He set up safe houses and created shelters where people could get food and medical treatment. He bribed German officials using money from the United States War Refugee Fund and threatened others with war crimes trials after the war.

In December 1944, Budapest was surrounded by the Russians and a month later Raoul went to meet the Russian commander. He was never seen again. To honor his life, the alumni and his former classmates initiated the Raoul Wallenberg Lecture Series.

2007	Daniel Solomon
2006	Hal Foster
2005	Donlyn Lyndon
2004	Saskia Sassen
2003	Anthony Vidler
2001	Rafael Moneo
2000	Michael Benedikt
1999	Kenneth Frampton
1998	Richard Sennett
1997	Michael Sorkin
1996	Vincent Scully
1995	Daniel Libeskind
1994	Jorge Silvetti
1993	James Ingo Freed
1992	Denise Scott Brown
1991	Joseph Esherick
1990	Elizabeth Hollander
1989	J. Max Bond, Jr.
1988	Spiro Kostof
1987	Joseph Rykwert
1985	Grady Clay
1984	Charles Correa
1983	Edmund Bacon
1981	Carl Levin
1979	James Marston Fitch
1978	Jacob B. Bakema
1976	Rudolf Arnheim
1975	Reyner Banham
1973	Eric Larabee
1972	Sir Nikolaus Pevsner

The Raoul Wallenberg Lecture was initiated in 1971 by Sol King, a former classmate of Wallenberg's. An endowment was established in 1976 for an annual lecture to be offered in Raoul's honor on the theme of architecture as a humane social art. These distinguished architects and historians have been invited to present the Wallenberg Lecture to the Taubman College.

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I would also like to acknowledge others who helped make this volume: graphic designers Christian Unverzagt and Rachel Rush and my spirited collaborator in words and images Kimberly Perette.

Architecture as a Humane Social Art

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Daniel Solomon
The Raoul Wallenberg Lecture

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Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning

Raoul Wallenberg was a Swedish humanitarian who saved the lives of more than 100,000 people from the Nazis and was later captured and presumed killed by the Soviets. The Raoul Wallenberg Lecture Series was initiated in 1971 to honor his life. An endowment was established in 1976 for an annual lecture to be offered in Raoul's honor on the theme of architecture as a humane social art. These distinguished architects and historians have been invited to present the Wallenberg Lecture to the Taubman College at the University of Michigan.

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