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Carol H. Krinsky  
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CAROL H. KRINSKY  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

# *State of the Field*

## *Studies of Identity in Modern Architecture*

**I**N THE LAST GENERATION, North American architectural history has expanded its areas of concentration. This has to do with many factors, most of them sociological rather than purely architectural. By 1970, many social and architectural critics realized that insensitive and over-scaled modernist architecture, combined with demolition in the name of urban renewal, was damaging North American cities. The visual coherence of central business districts had disappeared in many places, new highways had isolated some of the poor in decaying neighborhoods, large high-rise projects had diminished street life and neighborly interaction, and the wealthy had fled to suburbs. Among the critics were the social analysts William H. Whyte and Jane Jacobs, the anthropologist Amos Rapoport—all their publications are still useful—and many others including sociologists, historians, architectural journalists, political scientists, and the leaders of minority groups. Cultural losses soon became evident, most conspicuously with the demolition of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in New York City in 1963, an event that prompted the establishment in 1965 of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission, the first of many governmental organizations of this kind in the USA. At the same time, the immigration laws of the USA changed (1965) to admit people from parts of the world that had formerly been under-represented, such as South America, Asia and Africa; Canada, too, experienced large-scale immigration from the Caribbean and Asia, among other areas.

During this period in the USA, existing minorities reflected on their newly-won civil rights, and on their historic place in North American culture. The

African-American leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., became a figure of global stature, and the assassination of other civil rights advocates such as Medgar Evers drew international headlines. The heroic efforts of the leaders and their supporters of all races led to legislative and judicial victories, although some remain incomplete. African nations were then in their early years of independence from colonial rule, and hopes for their success added to the affirmation of African-American identity. In both the USA and Canada, Native Americans insisted on their primacy as inhabitants of the continent, after winning lawsuits against measures of the 1950s that threatened their special status as dependent domestic nations in the United States. They began a slow recovery of their indigenous languages and culture, founding tribal colleges where their culture is taught and reinforced, building heritage museums, and recording languages in danger of obliteration by death and disuse.

When various non-English and non-Germanic ethnic groups began to insist on becoming visible participants in society, they called into question long-held beliefs about typical Americans and what qualified as American architecture. Some groups, particularly Chinese-Americans, emphasize non-western forms and colors to attract commerce to their areas of business, but have not formed a serious Chinese-American domestic or institutional architecture. (But see the "Abstracts" of the 1998 conference of the Society of Architectural Historians for Lynn Horiuchi's session, "Architecture as Sign in Ethnic American Communities", and Stan Fung, "Longing and Belonging in Chinese Garden History", *Perspectives on Garden Histories*, ed. Michel Conan, Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999). Latin-Americans were rarely patrons of ethnically-oriented architecture, although they painted and decorated their houses individually. The absence of broader patronage can be explained by several factors, primarily poverty which can stifle innovation; in addition, not everyone invested for the long term in the USA since there was much back-and-forth migration between Puerto Rico and the east coast, or Mexico and the western states, and middle-class Cuban exiles hoped to returning to their country. Illegal Spanish-speaking residents were unlikely to call attention to themselves through distinctive building or in other ways. More recently, however, identity issues have become prominent in ethnic studies programs and the public press as younger generations seek to understand their bi-cultural heritage, so that Latin American culture in its homelands and in the USA is now the subject of increasing interest to scholars, architects, and creative artists.

Civil rights agitation to promote African-American interests, the demographic changes following immigration reform, the rise of feminism, and the awareness of theory that emphasized hegemonic relations and domination have been among the factors promoting new patterns in design and in analysis. Students who protested against government policies in Vietnam and elsewhere in southeast Asia examined their country in the light of theories of authority, such as Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir: La naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) translated into English by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977), or Jürgen Habermas's *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkapitalismus* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1973) translated by Thomas McCarthy as *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975). The war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s stimulated many agitated reflections on the nature of modern power. Agitation on the part of poor people living in supposedly rational urban high-rise projects that lacked child-care centers, shops, open space, and security also made the public aware that for some of their neighbors, business-as-usual would not suffice. Ethnic and minority groups formerly had to conform to majority white, male, university-educated, Protestant standards. Now these groups asserted their own interests. The small buildings they usually occupied were practical, not avant-garde, and since avant-garde thinking—as in inadequately-funded high-rise housing projects—had not always been successful, some thoughtful architects tried to meet specific needs and traditions of each group. Sometimes they failed, or met the needs only with superficial decoration such as African patterns on a cornice, or the tipi shape of a concrete gambling casino on an Indian reservation. At other times, architects were able to think anew about low-rise housing, designing with ecological principles in mind, accommodating patterns of cultural behavior such as orientation or paths of movement, and recalling familiar shapes and materials—most easily done in southwestern architecture that recalls indigenous pueblos. Bernard Rudofsky exhibited photographs of world-wide vernacular architecture at the Museum of Modern Art (1964) and in the accompanying book, *Architecture without Architects* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964). He exposed thousands of viewers to beautiful buildings that obeyed traditional site-and culture-dependent imperatives, not those of technological modernism. The work of Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio in Alabama have recently attracted attention for its concern for the needs of their poor clients, economy, and innovative esthetics.

Many publications of the past generation have addressed personal and

group identity as reflected in buildings. Among the most pertinent to architecture are: Chris Abel, *Architecture and Identity: Towards a Global Eco-Culture* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996); Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System. Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Binghamton: Art and Art History Department-State University of New York: 1991, updated in 1997 and published in Minneapolis by the University of Minnesota Press); Udo Kultermann, *Contemporary Third World Architecture* (New York: Pratt Manhattan Center, 1983); Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu and Wong Chong Thai, eds., *Postcolonial Spaces* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); Nezar al-Sayyad, ed., *Hybrid Urbanism. On the Identity, Discourse and the Built Environment* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2001); *Design Book Review*, no. 43 (2000): “The Invention of Heritage”; Center for Asian and Middle East Architecture, University of Adelaide, conference on “Self, Places, and Imagination: Cross-Cultural Thinking in Architecture”; Alexander Tzonis, *Tropical Architecture. Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Wiley-Academic, 2001) and Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). One may see continuing discussion of these issues in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review: Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments*, published semi-annually since 1989 at the University of California-Berkeley. The Association’s international conferences feature papers on the construction of group and national identity in architecture. Their heartfelt and even competitive statements about alternative ways of doing the same thing surely stimulate the imagination of participants, architects, and project directors in the groups concerned.

Early in this development, Robert Venturi with Denise Scott Brown and other partners wrote the influential *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* published by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1st ed., 1966). They offered alternatives to mechanistic modernism, emphasizing specific local traditions and aspects of memory. The authors had come of age when it was common in the USA to speak of the country as a melting pot, where immigrants like the South African Scott Brown became standard-issue Americans—which meant like people of northwest European descent. Venturi and Scott Brown matured as the changes occurred, and began to see America’s future in different terms. Postmodernism in various manifestations was one result. The wish to preserve disappearing aspects of the local past was another. Re-thinking accepted truths about a family house, and a desire to take an

ironic stance against standard-issue American ideals were other consequences of the change. To be sure, some of the renewed affection for the old country and for the humble vernacular is based in the comforting knowledge that a modern American will never have to live in a southern Italian town where water is hard to find, or in a village with muddy streets in eastern Europe. But some of it is based on a need to establish a distinctive identity when people are uneasy about big government, feel anonymous in large cities (or corporations or universities), and notice lingering disdain in the mainstream culture for traditions that smaller groups cherish.

### *Studies of Jewish Architecture*

New directions in the study and production of architecture in response to these feelings are now accepted parts of American practice. My own first exposure to this phenomenon came through the study of synagogue architecture in Europe. The result was a purely historical book, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (New York/ Cambridge MA: Architectural History Foundation/MIT Press, 1985, rev. ed., Mineola NY: Dover, 1996), prompted by questions at lectures concerning the absence of Jewish buildings from presentations of Great Western Art and Architecture. Jewish *art* could sometimes be found before Jews were legally emancipated in the nineteenth century, but factors inhibiting a consistent tradition before that time include the prestige of and preference for religious study, and in the past, government restrictions, and limited opportunity for training and earning a living in the visual arts. As occupational restrictions were gradually abolished in the nineteenth century, Jews studied architecture, painting, and sculpture. In North America, some even become prominent architects, e.g. Albert Kahn, Louis Kahn, Richard Meier, Frank Gehry, Denise Scott Brown, and Moshe Safdie.

A younger generation of architects has tried to revive aspects of the past that are in danger of disappearing as people die who remember European Jewry before 1933. The immediate postwar generation did not usually display publicly its memories and traditions, but the grandchildren of émigrés have revived aspects of culture including the Yiddish language and klezmer music. Nostalgia from the safe haven of prosperous North America may seem artificial, but the attempt to connect to a vanishing heritage is a visible phenomenon, evident for example at the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst,

MA, built in 1997 by Allen Moore to recall a village in eastern Europe (image at <http://yiddishbookcenter.org>). For synagogue designs of the past twenty years, increasing numbers of architects have looked with induced nostalgia to seventeenth and eighteenth century models in Poland, known from Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka's book, *Wooden Synagogues* (Warsaw: Arkady, 1959, now expanded as *Heaven's Gates: Wooden Synagogues in the Territories of the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, Warsaw, Krupski, 2004). Elements of destroyed wooden synagogues appear in modern North American houses of worship that are built in a variety of materials. The telltale borrowings are multiply-tiered roofs, but such other features as wood-shingled exteriors; even copies of destroyed European synagogues are being planned.

This architectural phenomenon depends in part upon readily-available source material. As of the mid-1980s, the Piechotkas' book was the principal source for information about the Yiddish-speaking areas of Europe from which most North American Jews originated. Rachel Wischnitzer had published *Synagogue Architecture in the United States. History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), and *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), surveying all parts of Europe. The few extant synagogues discussed in *Sinagogas españolas* by Francisco Cantera Burgos (Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1955) would not have been useful models since their Moorish architectural forms were out of favor by the mid-twentieth century, having been used or varied in the nineteenth. They made Jews look like eastern exotics rather than mainstream Americans, and in any case, most American Jews follow the German, not the Spanish ritual forms of their religion. Harold Hammer-Schenk's essential *Synagogen in Deutschland. Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Christians, 1981) covers German-speaking regions, not just Germany alone. Hannelore Künzl's dissertation was published by Peter Lang in Frankfurt and Basel in 1984 as *Islamische Stilelemente im Synagogenbau des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*. In the same year appeared J.F. van Agt and E. van Voolen's *Nederlandse Synagogen* (Weesp: DeHaan, 1984). Soon afterward came my own work and then a flood of books addressing regional or national examples, as well as some broad surveys of synagogues around the world. Important national studies include Dominique Jarrassé's *L'âge d'or des synagogues* (Paris: Herscher, 1991) about France, *Sefarad: Architettura e urbanistica ebraica dopo il 1492*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (Como: Dell'Oca, 1993), which records the papers on Italian buildings and Jewish neighborhoods presented at a sympo-

sium in Ferrara in 1992, Annie Sacerdoti with Luca Fiorentino's *Guida all'Italia ebraica* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 2003) and a series of *Jewish Itineraries* (originally: *Itinerari ebraici*) in various provinces of Italy (Venice: Marso; op. 1992 ff.) published under Sacerdoti's editorial supervision. Pierre Genée's *Synagogen in Österreich* (Vienna: Löcker, 1992) and his *Wiener Synagogen 1825-1938* from the same publisher in 1987, Jiri Fiedler's *Jewish Sights of Bohemia and Moravia* (Prague: Sefer, 1991) supplemented by Samuel Gruber and Phyllis Myers' *Survey of Historic Jewish Monuments in the Czech Republic* (New York: World Monuments Fund, 1995), and Anikó Gazda *et al.*, *Magyarországi zsinagógák* (Budapest: Műszali Könyvkiado, 1989) are among the publications covering central Europe. The Piechotkas' publication on masonry synagogues in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, *Bramy nieba. Boznice murowane* (Warsaw: Krupski, 1999), are essential for that part of Europe, while Eleonora Bergman and Jan Jagielski have recorded surviving monuments in *Zachowane Synagogi I domy modlitwy w Polsce* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1996). Nicholas Stavroulakis and Timothy DeVinney's *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece* (Athens: Talos, 1992) is a welcome publication of little-known material. Great Britain's wealth of buildings is addressed in Sharman Kadish, ed., *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996). Among the many scholarly studies of regions and individual cities, several come readily to mind: Elias Messinas, *The Synagogues of Salonika and Verroia* (Athens: Ekdoseis Gavrielides, 1997); *Synagogen in Berlin: Zur Geschichte einer zerstörten Architektur*, the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Berlin Museum in 1983; Roberta Curiel and Bernard Cooperman, *The Ghetto of Venice* (also published as *The Venetian Ghetto*, New York: Rizzoli, 1990); Salvatore Fornari, *La Roma del Ghetto*, Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1984; Tomasz Wisniewski's *Synagogues and Jewish Communities in the Bialystok Region* (Bialystok: David, 1992); and Alge Jankeviciene's *Vilniaus Didžioji Sinagoga* (Vilnius: Savastis, 1996). International surveys include the Deutsche Architekturmuseum-Frankfurt's exhibition catalogue *Die Architektur der Synagoge* (1988), Dominique Jarrassé's *Synagogues* (Paris: Vilo, 2001), and for those needing briefer introductions to the subject, Samuel Gruber's *Synagogues* (New York: Metro Books, 1999) and *American Synagogues* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003). This list is far from complete but it includes major works and indicates the range of interest in the topic.

*Studies of African-American Architecture*

Similar activity is being pursued for other ethnic groups. African-American architects have organized for mutual support in New York City, where in 1993 the Cooper-Hewitt Museum sponsored David Hughes' lecture on "Afrocentric Architecture." Others have met at conferences held in Michigan (1991) and Louisiana (1996); see Sharon E. Sutton, "The Urban Environment. The Role of African-Americans in the Social and Built Environment", *Dimensions* 6, Spring, 1992, pp. [102]-113; "Letters from New Orleans. The Jazz Architectural Workshop", *ANY*, no. 16, 1996, pp. 8-9. Several of the architects have tried to add African elements to buildings used primarily by those of African descent, although not all Africans are enthusiastic about this (See J. M. Dixon, "Minority Architects Meet, Present Awards", *Progressive Architecture* 74, no. 12, December, 1993, 14). Adding ornament based on traditional designs is frequently the means by which the reference is made, but it is possible also to use distinctive rooflines or to suggest the plan of buildings known abroad, or to make analogies between jazz or hip-hop music and architecture. (See Tess Taylor, "Hip-Hop Architecture", *Oculus* 63, no. 5, Jan., 2001, p. 11; Craig L. Wilkins, "[W]rapped Space. The Architecture of Hip Hop", *Journal of Architectural Education* 54, no. 2, Sept., 2000, pp. 7-19; *idem*, "A Style that Nobody Can Deal With. Notes from the Doo-bop-hip-hop Inn", *International Review of African-American Art* 13, no. 1, 1996, pp. 22-23, and the report from New Orleans, above.) William Wesley Taylor presented his ideas about "Jazzspace: A Provisional Report on the Production of Existential Place Identity", at the 86th Annual Meeting of the American Collegiate Schools of Architecture where the theme was "Constructing Identities", though his concern was with space rather than built structures. Milton Curry anticipates publication of his *Optic Black: Architectural Theory and the Racial Imaginary*, and Darell Wayne Fields has recently edited *Architecture in Black* (London/ New Brunswick: Athlone, 2000, distributed in the Americas by Transaction Publishers) although it deals more with theoretical aspects of "otherness" than with architecture.

These publications are related to issues collectively described as "black pride", including a revival of previously little-known literary figures, adoption of hair styles and clothing based on African models, use of African names, adoption of Islam as an alternative to Christianity which is seen in some circles as a white man's religion, greater publication of novels and memoirs of the

African-American experience, development of African studies at universities, travel to African nations, and —perhaps most famous in the USA— the television series “Roots” (Wolper Productions, Burbank CA, 1977 and Warner Home Video) in which author Alex Haley, author of a book of that name (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975) presented his efforts to find his ancestors in West Africa. Touching Americans of all backgrounds, and even televised abroad, this brought home to everyone that African-American history had not begun only when enslaved Africans debarked from their ships. Haley is one of the few who can trace even part of his ancestry to a specific region; the forefathers of many African-Americans probably include people of several ethnicities, so it is hard to find a single culture to adopt. Egyptian architecture’s monumentality and permanence are appealing, but there are historic, cultural, and physical differences between inhabitants of the continent north and south of the desert. Is an African-American one who has only one ancestor from the continent, or is something more required to claim African heritage? North American architects of African descent have arrived at no consensus, and have published comparatively little on Afrocentric architecture, except David Hughes’ *Afrocentric Architecture: A Design Primer* (Columbus OH, Greydon, 1994). Nevertheless, the subject recurs in discussions and lectures, and the results appear on occasional buildings. Among the responsible books that provide background for further study are Suzanne Blier’s *Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and, with James Morris, *Butabu. Adobe Architecture of West Africa* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), those of Labelle Prussin including “The Architecture of Fjenne: African Synthesis and Transformation”, her Ph.D. dissertation at Yale (1973), *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), *Architecture in Northern Ghana: A Study of Forms and Functions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), and *Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and Udo Kultermann’s *World Architecture, 1900-2000*, vol. 6: *Central and Southern Africa* (New York/Vienna: Springer, 2000).

Research into historic African-American spatial arrangements has resulted in several articles on vernacular achievements, including Richard Westmacott, *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992, reviewed by Patricia Gibbs, *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 2-3, Summer-Autumn, 1994, pp. 205-207), and his earlier article, “Pattern

and Practice in Traditional African-American Gardens in Rural Georgia”, *Landscape Journal* 10, no. 2, Fall, 1991, [86]-104. See also Grey Gundaker, “African-American History, Cosmology, and the Moral Universe of Edward Houston’s Yard”, *Journal of Garden History* 14, no. 3, July-September, 1994, 179-205; *idem*, “Reverend Kornegay’s Yard Show”, *Metropolis* 14, no. 3, October, 1994, 106-107. See also Richard E. Mitchell, “Hidden Heritage: Thoughts on African-American Influence in Architecture and Planning”, *Dimensions* 57, Spring, 1991, 40-43, and Milton S. F. Curry, “Emancipation Theory. Spatial Subtexts and Subjects”, *Appendix: Culture, Theory, Praxis*, 1993, no. 1, 64-85. John Michael Vlach’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Indiana (1978) traces “Sources of the Shotgun House: African and Caribbean Antecedents for Afro-American Architecture”, addressing modest houses with interconnected rooms and, often, porches. In one case, chosen affinity with west African culture has led to the establishment of a colony in which well-educated African-Americans live like Nigerians; see Mikelle Smith Omari, “Completing the Circle: Notes on African Art, Society, and Religion in Oyotunji, South Carolina”, *African Arts* 24, no. 3, July, 1991, 66-75, 96.

Biographies of African-American architects and landscape architects have appeared recently, and the Federal Government maintains a list of architects of all minority backgrounds so as to promote compliance with recent laws that mandate fairness in awarding government contracts. Publications including doctoral dissertations to 1993 are listed in Ellen Weiss, “An Annotated Bibliography on African-American Architects and Builders” (Society of Architectural Historians. Technical Materials in Architectural History 1, 1993). See also “Designing His Own Path: Edward L. Pryce’s Life is Testimony to Private Determination”, *Landscape Architecture* 89, no. 5, May, 1999, 138-139; Karen E. Hudson, *Paul R. Williams, Architect. A Legacy of Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993, reviewed by Ellen Weiss, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53, no. 4, December, 1994, 478-480; Jeff Book, “Architect to the Stars”, *House Beautiful* 135, no. 10, October, 1993, 76, 93, 168); Jack Travis, ed., *African-American Architects in Current Practice* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991, reviewed by Diane Favro, in *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 13, no. 3, Autumn, 1996, 264-268; Ila Berman in *Appendix: Culture, Theory, Praxis*, 1993, no. 1, 88-115; and Bradford C. Grant in *Progressive Architecture* 74, no. 3, March, 1993, 111, 129). Travis was interviewed in *Oculus* 54, no. 3, November, 1991, 8-10. In 2003, Routledge in New York published Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African-American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*. Ar-

chitect Mohammed Lawal's inspiration to "at-risk" youth is acknowledged in *Dwell* 3, no. 6, June, 2003, 54; *Architecture* 91, no. 7, July, 2002; and *Architecture Minnesota* 28, no. 2, March-April, 2002, 7. In 1991, Auburn and Yale Universities presented an exhibition on "African-American Architects and Builders". Kathryn Anthony's *Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000) combines race with related issues in a book-length presentation. Patricia Neely-McCurdy enlarged the study of African-American architects and architecture to include Canada in a paper given at the "Built Form and Culture Research Conference" at Arizona State University, in 1989.

### *Studies of Native American Architecture*

Native Americans, who are almost as diverse culturally as are the inhabitants of Africa, have also striven to include cultural references in architecture since about 1970. In this case, the catalysts included threats to the legal status of native nations (formerly known as tribes), an increase in the number of those educated in standard American ways, greater inter-cultural knowledge among those who had served in military forces, and other factors summarized in my own *Contemporary Native American Architecture: Cultural Regeneration and Creativity* published by Oxford University Press in New York (1996). Fearing the loss of the old while being able to practice new ways of political engagement led to some improvements in the situation of Native Americans, who are, like African-Americans, still far from being treated equally with European-Americans. A number of architects have tried to develop forms to suit particular Native needs. Among them, Thomas Hodne and his former colleague, Dennis Sun Rhodes, often employed abstracted tribal symbolic forms. Denby Deegan occasionally did this, but more often joined most other Native American architects in creating circular forms that relate to cosmological beliefs and that support various rituals. When buildings assume other shapes, they usually include views outdoors, expressing beliefs common to many Native peoples about their custodial relationship to the land. As with Afrocentric architecture, contemporary Native American buildings may employ traditional ornament or color combinations, or may use distinctive rooflines and even forms related to temporary structures such as tipis. *Native American Architecture* by Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1989) provides an excellent introduction to historic forms. A search in an architectural database such as the Avery Index to Periodicals will yield several brief notices about recent designs for native American clients, created by indigenous architects and also by European-Americans; one example from Canada is "Chatham Village, Prince Rupert, B.C.", *Canadian Architect* 36, no. 2, 1991, 19-21, concerning an office and retail complex in a village.

To date, this new material has been the subject of only one book-length treatment, but sparse publication need not indicate a lack of interest. Authors must travel long distances to see the examples, there are few historians and architects within these groups, and publishers decide about what will sell to large numbers of readers. Leland Roth's "Living Architecture: Differing Native and Anglo Perceptions of Preservation", *CRM Bulletin* 18, no. 5, 1995, 33-40, a publication of a national governmental office, discusses aspects of historic preservation in connection with various cultural values, introducing this minority's perspective to the nation's concern for history and material culture. The principal building that addresses inter-tribal concerns is the National Museum of the American Indian, opening on the central Mall in Washington, D.C. in September, 2004. Of pale brownish color compared to many white buildings nearby, it proclaims its difference in that way and also by its curving contours that evoke natural geographic strata and erosion rather than mathematical or European forms (image at <http://www.nami.si.edu/visitor> information). Here it was not possible to emphasize the architectural patterns of any one group because it is a museum for all Native nations whose traditional architecture varies dramatically. The designer, Douglas Cardinal (a Canadian of part Blackfoot descent) has used comparable forms in the Canadian Museum of Civilization (image at <http://www.civilization.ca/>; see also *Architecture and Urbanism* 7 (238), July, 1990, 7-39; *Architectural Record* 178, no. 2, 1990, 88-93), and finds them well-suited to a generic expression of respect for nature that is common to many pre- or paleo-industrial cultures.

### *Studies of Modern Islamic Architecture*

While the architecture for American minority groups is often modestly financed, public buildings in many Muslim countries may be monumental and built of costly materials, often thanks to individual donors. In the United States, several mosques have been financed by foreign nationals who hope to

bring their co-religionists out of the rented premises built for other purposes where most American Muslims worship. The new mosques in North America and Europe —perhaps also in Mexico— have varied forms, although many have minarets, used as an identifying marker rather than as the means of calling the faithful to prayer. The architects of the new buildings can seek inspiration, if they wish to, from handsome publications by the Aga Khan Foundation and major publishers that illustrate old and recent buildings erected in Muslim countries around the world. Periodicals, too, well edited and addressed to a broad audience, include *Mimar* and *Muqarnas*. The Aga Khan Foundation has sought to encourage production of modern Islamic architecture, and its annual awards guarantee prominence for the prize-winning buildings and their architects. Increasingly, the award-winning buildings have come to incorporate environmental measures, as the petroleum supplies now abundant in several Islamic nations will not last forever, and should not appear to be wasted today. See Samer Akkach, “Identity in Exile: The Aga Khan’s Search for Excellence in Islamic Architecture”, *On What Grounds? Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, 1997*, ed. S. Pickersgill and P. Scriver (Adelaide, The Society c/o Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design, 1997), 1-8. Useful studies include Sherban Cantacuzino, ed., *Architecture in Continuity: Building the Islamic World Today* (New York: Aperture/Viking Penguin, 1985), and Ismail Serageldin with James Steele, eds., *The Architecture of the Contemporary Mosque* (London: Academy Editions, 1996). Samer Akkach has offered informed observations in “A View from Within: The Question of Identity in Contemporary Arab/ Islamic Architecture”, *Proceedings of the 1997 ACSA North-east Regional Conference: Roger Williams University*. At the *Second International Conference on “Mosque Architecture-Future Horizons* held in 2000, Omar Khaldi presented a learned paper on “Approaches to Mosque Design in North America” (<http://www.art.ac.ir/conferences/approaches.htm>). The same scholar prepared an online publication, “Architecture of Islamic Inspiration in the United States: A Bibliographic Essay” ([http://www.archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.tcl?document\\_id=8441](http://www.archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.tcl?document_id=8441)). The archnet website offers an excellent introduction to bibliography, buildings, and resources.

*Current Architecture Reflecting Ethnic Interests*

Some USA residents continue to commission or buy houses that imitate George Washington's home at Mount Vernon, VA, or those of colonial New England where the dominant white population was often British. European-Americans whose ancestors came from eastern and southern Europe, are now assimilated culturally, increasingly educated, and thus comfortably distant from their early immigrant experiences, so they now feel able to commemorate their heritage in architecture. In their early years of residence in North American cities, Polish-Americans used whatever Roman Catholic church was available, often one built initially by Irish-Americans, although occasionally, they were able to form their own parishes and build new churches. By the 1980s, many Polish-Americans reacted positively to the "Roots" phenomenon seen in other groups' cultures, and some requested culturally-sensitive buildings such as St. Hyacinth's Roman Catholic Church in Glen Cove, NY (1983-1987; image in *Progressive Architecture*, December, 1990, 82). The clients gave their architects, Bentel & Bentel, reference books with photographs of churches in Poland. The result does not copy anything in the mother country, but interprets the source material to produce a soaring ceiling, asymmetrical towers flanking the gabled facade, and the stepped brick surround framing the heavy entrance door. St. Hyacinth's is only one example of ethnically-sensitive religious buildings, but the examples have not yet been assembled in book form. They can be tracked with some effort in periodical databases including those dealing with religion rather than architecture alone.

Members of the Orthodox churches have long asserted their difference from Roman Catholics and western Protestants. Russian, Greek, and other Orthodox churches in North America and elsewhere usually include domes and towers, sometimes closely following patterns in their homelands and at other times modernizing or varying them for aesthetic or financial reasons, or because congregation leaders want their buildings to show that the group is progressive. Armenians in New York City followed the path of near-replication. St. Vartan Cathedral of the Armenian Orthodox Church in America at 620 Second Avenue at East 34th Street is based on several medieval models in Asia Minor (Steinmann, Cain & White, with Edward Utudjian, 1967; image at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medny/stvartan1.html>). Serbian Orthodox churchgoers in Illinois asked a scholar to help them copy the royal church at Gracanica. The scholar declined to help, perhaps because a copy cannot ex-

press the situation of current Americans and the present state of their belief and practice, and perhaps because the size of the proposed replica would have created an inflated, unappealing version of the original. Nevertheless, the idea of copying a model is common among those who seek an immediate emotional response from viewers unaccustomed to evaluating modern architectural forms.

How to choose the forms to evoke or copy? This presents difficulties for all cultures that try to evoke a presumably homogeneous past. The most conventional signs of ethnicity tend to be emphasized—wood construction for Poles, Moorish arches for mosques, red-green-yellow patterns to suggest something African. But revivals and interpretations, even popular clichés, can address only a limited audience. Jews who are not descended from those of greater Poland have no personal or emotional connection to multi-tiered roofs. For that matter, no one but an *émigré* from a town with one of those synagogues will have any knowledge of the tradition unless he has learned it from a book. Since wigwam-dwelling groups have virtually nothing in common with pueblo-dwellers, it is necessary to stress a universal idea, that of nature, when designing pan-Indian buildings. Africa can refer to sub-Saharan and Mediterranean coastlands, to ancient or current building, but Egyptian stone architecture's monumentality is absent from intimate village structures for families and villages built of ephemeral materials and sometimes meant to change form as family composition changes. The idea that anything chosen from the entire continent to represent today's African diaspora population is therefore open to question. Likewise, one must ask what an American, Canadian, or Mexican mosque should look like? It could be a single, domed space like some Ottoman structures, as is the Islamic Cultural Center mosque (1991) on East 96th Street in Manhattan (image at <http://www.baron-ochs.mit.edu/agakhan/usmosques/ny1.htm>), designed by Skidmore Owings & Merrill and paid for with international contributions, especially those of Kuwaitis. It could imitate another historic form, one with multiple aisles. Will Muslim immigrants from Indonesia respond meaningfully to forms adopted from Syria? (For a range of buildings used as mosques in one city, see the photographs by Edward Grazda in Jerrilynn Dodds, *New York Masjid: The Mosques of New York City*, New York: Power House Books, 2002). Even if all the members of a mosque come from the same region and country, it will be necessary to choose a model from a specific period. The period is not usually one in the twentieth century but one resulting from a sentimental or convenient choice.

I have emphasized the North American experience where everyone but the Native Americans is an uprooted foreigner by ancestry, and where the ancestors have usually suffered at some point in the past owing to minority ethnic status, to poverty, or to violence. Referential architecture represents an affirmative response to history, although the result is often an arbitrary adoption of a particular moment in historic building. Of course, it is not seen only in North America. It is as problematic to design a mosque in Oaxaca or Berlin as it is in Chicago, because multi-cultural Muslims live all over the world. Emigration to Europe in the past decades has also changed cultural norms. Will Croats in Sweden want to import parts of their historic architecture to their new country? Or will they hope always to return, and therefore not concern themselves with building creatively in exile? How can the German-born children of Turkish guest workers in Berlin express their cultural situation —if they want to do that— in the institutions they build? How many of them agree that there is a single cultural situation needing expression? What will a new Roman Catholic church look like in a Mexican neighborhood occupied by many Slavic immigrants or by indigenous people? The problem may be framed simply enough: Will the building be an example of modern design using the forms of the adopted country, or will it recall something in the group's ancestral culture and if so, what will it recall, and why that?

All oppressed people have of late been asserting their dignity and sometimes commissioning representative aspects of their culture in architecture. At times, the results are visually brilliant, as in Renzo Piano's design for the Tjibaou Cultural Center in Papua-New Guinea where forms associated with domestic architecture have been modified and enlarged to monumental scale. The desire to espouse a national architecture arose in the nineteenth century, and many publications —significantly, during the immediate past generation— have been devoted to them. As I write in 2003, a colloquium is taking place at the University of Rennes in northern France concerning "The Idea of Nation in Europe: 1860-1914: Creation and Affirmation of Identities in Finland, Hungary, Romania, Catalonia" as expressed in works of architecture. Most of these countries have been generally ignored in widely-available architectural literature, but marginal areas have now moved toward the center of interest for many scholars —not simply those hunting for novel topics of research.

But architects and clients who affirm national or group identity are doing something self-conscious, arbitrary, even artificial. Individuals form groups

and individuals vary significantly, including in their degree of adherence to the group. Deciding that members of Orthodox churches can best be identified by domed buildings ignores domeless Orthodox architecture and sets up models for Disney World's designers to adopt as a commercial cliché. The same idea applies to any other simple sign of ethnicity. In order for a specific historic building form or tradition to be declared authentically Mexican, for example, it must ignore the country's multiple ethnicity and religious pluralism. Do today's Mexicans agree that true Mexicans have entirely indigenous ancestry and practice pre-Christian religions? To say that some citizens are authentic while others are not introduces legal, ethical, and cultural difficulties. Formulating authentic national architecture is even harder to do. People must somehow decide what events in the past exemplified national history and they must agree on the interpretations. Then they must decide how to copy or evoke it using today's materials and technology and for today's purposes. The debates could go on for years. The alternative is to commission sensitive contemporary design, hoping that cultural preoccupations can be expressed in new language by an architect using forms of the present day.

As scholars become increasingly experienced in their analyses, they avoid simple-minded notions of identity. There is no single culturally-standard Mexican or American, so the notion of a single Mexican architecture or American architecture cannot suit today's conditions even though property developers continue to sell small versions of George Washington's house. ❖