



You said that I did not know enough to be so opinionated and was being reactionary in my criticism of SANAA's New Museum of Contemporary Art because I am anti-modernist. You are right. I am a primitive. Aesthetics is more a matter of intuition than knowledge, for me. But I believe my intuitions.

You said that if architecture were to be wedded to the aesthetics of the past, it would become stagnant. This is nonsense. It might look like the Custom House at Bowling Green. Is this really stagnant architecture? Look at the life that has been carved out of that simple trapezoidal box. Look at the curves and curls; at the undulations and syncopations. There is a constant contrast between large mass and delicate decoration; nature and geometry; round and straight. The magnificent monumental sculptures that fill the façade are certainly derivative. So what? They are no less compelling. Well, one could spend many, many a day analyzing the exterior. But the sheer immediate and intuitive sculptural pleasure should be enough for anyone to be convinced this is what the art of architecture is. The building has so many layers of scale, that I would call it holographic – in that any one section of the building, no matter how small, provides many riches of form and content. The whole of the façade enlivens Bowling Green. Can you really say that the NMOCA does this to the street it inhabits? No.

You said that the architecture of the 19th century was not of its time; it was archaic; filled with irrelevant decoration and dishonest relationships of form and content; alienated from what was modern. Perhaps, but I think the Beaux art might be more authentic and integrated than the Bauhaus. Take a look at the Native American art on display, inside the building to confirm this. You will see artifacts of great beauty; and with a depth of connection between culture and nature. And these artifacts, which no one can challenge the authenticity of, share more in common with the so called inauthentic aesthetic of the Beaux Arts than with the so called authenticity of modernism. Why? Because the Beaux Art and the Native American both share an aesthetic based in the human being and nature. Both share a love of craft and **DECORATION**. Yes decoration.

You said that designing as in the past will not allow us to adapt to new environments. Then why is it that the Custom House and the other older buildings around Bowling Green are so much better adapted to their environment than the glass and steel modernist monstrosities that also surround Bowling Green? Why is it that the spatial relationships of the Custom House; the narrow entry vestibule; the sudden perpendicularly expanding great entry hall; the sweeping symmetrical spiral stairs; the grand oval vaulted space; the long rectangular perimeter gallery spaces; work so well? Why is it that the best parts of this city are the old parts and the modern parts are the worst? Why is it that old buildings are so much better at adapting than modern structures? Because the old buildings and old cities connect to the human being and nature instead of the machine and capital.

You said that modern technology was bound to have aesthetic consequences which some 19th century architecture tried to avoid by covering up. Well in the Custom House, the technology is hidden for the most part. And where the machine is revealed, mostly in the lighting, it is covered with elaborate decorations - that is, expressions of nature and humanity – and I find this preferable to bringing out the machiness of the machine.

You said that we cannot recreate the past. That we cannot build in a way that painting, sculpture, decorative arts are all integrated through hand craftsmanship to create something of great beauty. You said that, bigness rules, capital rules, the machine rules.

Perhaps you are right. Quite frankly, if that is the case, I will live in the past. Yup, I guess I am a reactionary.