

The Fabric of the City

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It is a great honour to be invited to give the first Colin Amery memorial lecture here at Policy Exchange, a policy think-tank that has, for the first time in recent years, put aesthetic values at the heart of the political process. I am grateful to Policy Exchange also for commissioning the report that I co-authored with Sir Robin Wales, showing that support for traditional design in building is highest among the lower income groups – a vital finding that surely refutes the view, popular among modernist architects, that the objection to their work comes merely from middle-class ‘nimbys’.

It is especially an honour to speak today on behalf of a cause that Colin Amery so devotedly championed. Like others of his generation, Colin experienced the post-war destruction of our cities as a personal wound. Some of his contemporaries excused the changes as part of the social, economic and cultural ‘progress’ that had been the theme of pre-war political discourse. Colin was not one to take comfort in such lies. On the contrary, he recognized that ‘progress’ had come to mean destruction, with no clear idea of what might be put in place of the thing destroyed. He therefore gave his life, his energies and his very great intelligence to the work of conserving and adapting the buildings and townscapes that he loved.

Colin saw the city as an organic whole, linked by delicate veins and arteries. The conservation of monuments, he believed, makes no sense if they are left standing like grieving statues above the ruins of the place where they once belonged. All Colin’s work as an architectural critic was therefore based on the premise that conservation must be part of the larger enterprise of adaptation. The most beautiful building will lose its aura if deprived of the frame in which it was designed to stand, and the frame itself must be constantly adjusted as new styles and materials are stitched into the fabric and new forms of human life emerge behind old facades.

Colin presented his response to the post-war destruction in a seminal book, *The Rape of Britain*, co-authored with Dan Cruickshank and published in 1975. This book awoke its readers to the very real threat that our architectural heritage might soon be irretrievably lost. Our countryside, iconised in wartime propaganda, had been the object of eager conservation in the post-war period, and was elaborately protected by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1946. But the towns had been surrendered to the

developers, and to an architectural profession brought up on the inhuman doctrines and belligerent self-opinion of the pre-war avant-garde.

Colin joined Mark Girouard in leading a heroic bourgeois counter-revolution. They squatted in Spitalfields in order to save one of the last intact areas of Georgian London. Colin chained himself to a JCB by way of preventing the planned demolition of Hawksmoor's Christ Church, and in due course, through his powerfully argued column in the *Financial Times*, he landed punches on as many of the villains and vandals as came within range. Looking back today it is hard to imagine another civilised country in which a masterpiece like Christ Church Spitalfields should be scheduled for demolition. But the record of those times – the times when Reading, Basingstoke, Coventry, Swindon and countless other unhappy places were obliterated by ugly deposits of concrete and steel – tells of a nation that had celebrated its victory over Hitler by committing aesthetic suicide.

We should give thanks for public-spirited people like Colin, and the best way to do so, in my opinion, is to apply our knowledge to the causes that they espoused, in the hope of making our own contribution. My field of knowledge is philosophical aesthetics, and in this lecture I will defend an aesthetic of the city, which I hope and believe would have met with Colin's approval. As Colin constantly reminded us, the city is an evolving fabric, in which old and new come together, the old disciplining the new, and at the same time adapting to it. Something in this process of evolution must remain the same: the city itself, conceived as a settlement. Conservation should occur not in order to pickle the city in aspic, but so as to retain its identity as a living community and an object of steadfast affection. Burke argued that in politics we must reform in order to conserve; the lesson of architectural aesthetics is that we must conserve in order to reform. If we do not do so then the result is the kind of dereliction that we observe in cities like Detroit and Liverpool, cities of commercial blocks, vacated at night, and surrounded by warehouses and suburbs. It is this form of urbanism – void plus sprawl – that has created the template that people fear, and it is by studying its defects that we will envisage how to create the new housing that our country needs.

Objections to new developments tend to take two forms. The first objection is that they are mere additions to an existing place, and do not create a place of their own. Thus new housing estates on the edge of towns, in which boxes or towers stand side by side, but with no real conception of the vital spaces between them, and no provision for businesses, shops, schools, or places of worship and recreation, do not create a place. They are at best parasitic on an existing place, created in another way and with

another kind of architecture. Houses and tower blocks dumped on the edge of the town never lose the air of temporary accommodation, where people hole up while looking for something better. And they create a radical price differential between the old centre and its new surroundings, thereby causing the old centre to die. The peripheral estate seems to lead inevitably to the 'void plus sprawl' of modern America, the template described by James Howard Kuntsler as 'the geography of nowhere'. In place of it, as Leon Krier has powerfully argued, we should create 'polycentric cities', of which London, of course, is a specially relevant example. New development should make room for all the buildings that are *not* residences: shops, schools, community halls, places of worship and recreation, pubs and so on. The failure to make provision for these things in the planning process has led to the proliferation of lifeless estates on the urban perimeter, rather than the creation of genuine settlements.

The second objection concerns the design of new estates, and in particular their habit of standing out from their surroundings, rather than fitting in to them, as traditional villages fit around a church, a green and a manor house, all composed in the same spirit and with the same materials. The sense that new developments violate the existing order, rather than embellishing it, is the primary cause of local resistance, and the Government is beginning to take this matter seriously, since it suggests the existence of a 'democratic deficit' in the planning process. There is a demand among all citizens that new buildings should conform to a standard of beauty, but a serious confusion as to what that standard is or how it might be brought to bear on the massive projects that it is now necessary to undertake.

Those two objections suggest that the housing question is not at root an economic, social or political question but an aesthetic one. And it is in this vein that I propose to address it. I firmly believe that there can be a new way of building that runs counter to the template of 'void plus sprawl', and which produces a built environment in which the parts fit together and harmonize, creating a real sense of place. Such a way of building overcomes all the normal objections and is even welcomed as an embellishment of the neighbourhood. Establishing this point has been the work over two decades of the Prince's Trust, in which Colin Amery played a leading part, and it is only the obstinate prejudice of the architectural profession that has prevented the templates established by the Prince's Trust from being widely adopted by the housing market. The prejudice has been that a modern building has to be a modernist building, ostentatiously refusing to be part the traditional urban fabric. But before coming back to that, and to

the political question of how to reform the planning process in the right direction, I must return to aesthetics, since that is where the confusion begins.

The role of aesthetic values can be properly understood only if we begin from the premise that most building is necessary building. Architecture is not a fine art like poetry, music or painting – an art that belongs in the world of leisure and excess. It survives regardless of its aesthetic merit, and is only rarely an expression of creative genius. There are great works of architecture and often, like the churches of Mansart or Borromini, or Christ Church Spitalfield for that matter, they are the work of a single person. But most works of architecture are not great and should not aspire to be so, any more than ordinary people should claim the privileges of genius when conversing with their neighbours. What matters in architecture is the emergence of a learnable vernacular style – a common language that enables buildings to be side by side without offending either each other or the place in which they stand. The failure of modernism, in my view, lies not in the fact that it has produced no great or beautiful buildings – think of Le Corbusier’s Chapel at Ronchamp, or the houses of Frank Lloyd Wright. It lies in the absence of any reliable patterns or types, which can be used by ordinary builders so as to harmonize with the existing urban décor, while respecting the street and the façade as the defining contours of a shared space. The degradation of our cities is the result of a modernist vernacular, whose principal device is the stack of horizontal layers, with jutting and obtrusive corners, built without consideration for the street, without a coherent façade, and without intelligible relation to its neighbours. Such buildings, generated from ground plans, cannot be stitched into the urban fabric, but form blank and detached surfaces, bounded by edges, with no welcoming apertures to mark the boundary between inside and outside, and no decorative stitching to bind them to the neighbours, to the skyline or to the street.

In order to know why we should not build in that way, it is not sufficient, though it is of course highly relevant, that everybody, other than the developer and the architect, dislikes it. We need to explore the foundations of aesthetic judgment. The planning and development of towns in the post-war era has been dominated by two erroneous views about the aesthetic. The first is that aesthetic values are purely subjective, mere records of individual preferences, for which no independent grounds can be given. The second is, to a certain measure, in tension with the first, namely that aesthetic success in architecture is a matter of ‘standing out’ from the surroundings, creating an unforgettable presence, an ‘iconic’

structure that will advertise itself and its contents to the wider world. The combined effect of those two dogmas is to silence all argument concerning the effect of new buildings on the urban fabric, while giving precedence to whatever is maximally intrusive.

Kant marked out a central place for aesthetic pleasure in the life of the rational being, arguing that the judgment of beauty is both disinterested and universal. In aesthetic judgment, he wrote, we are 'suitsors for agreement', not content with irresolvable differences of taste, but always striving for consensus. This is especially true in everyday life. For in aesthetic judgment we view our surroundings as ends in themselves, abstracting from the demands of utility and function. Hence aesthetic interest is always searching for what is permanent, intrinsically valuable, in harmony with our shared form of life. It is the one sure guide to getting things right, not just for the here and now of our current interests, but permanently, and for the community as a whole.

In everyday life we are not animated, as a painter might be, by high aesthetic ideals. We are not trying to reveal the meaning of things, or to create compositions that convey a higher sense of order. Nevertheless we arrange things around us and try to make them fit together in something like the way they fit together in a still-life painting, as when we lay a table for guests, dress for a party or arrange our room. Even in the most minimal tidiness we subject the objects around us to a kind of moral discipline. We tell them: you should stand here, you two belong together, you are the wrong colour, you are out of place, and so on. For whose sake are we doing this? Not for the sake of the objects themselves, for they have no 'sake'. Look at them as they are in themselves and they become inert, inanimate, awaiting our instructions. When we arrange them however, we do so for the sake of people: not just this person here, who is laying the table, but any other person who might come along. While we think we are making one object fit to another, and each object to the whole, we are actually fitting the objects to an imagined community of people.

And it is here, I believe, that we should see how misleading is the idea that aesthetic judgments are merely 'subjective'. The idea of what is 'fitting' takes its sense from a wider experience of community. People learn to adapt their behaviour, their remarks and their expressions to the demands and expectations of others around them, and this is what we mean by manners. It is from the resulting conventions, customs and concessions that we draw our conversational repertoire. Knowing how to address a stranger in a new situation, how to move painlessly and quickly to a spirit of cooperation: these are not simple accomplishments. But when we have

learned them we have also learned something else: a comprehensive sense of the distinction between 'fitting in' and 'standing out'. The most common form of rudeness involves standing out at all costs, drawing attention to yourself, regardless of whether you deserve it, dismissing attempts to fit in as the ploys of little people who cannot live in a more interesting way.

Good manners, therefore, means fitting in to others and responding to them as equal partners in our communal life. Manners are not subjective choices but the by-products of our continual search for consensus. And our general sense of fittingness extends from people to objects, and from the domestic objects that accompany our daily lives to the wider built environment. Understanding this is the first step to grasping the role of beauty in shaping human communities.

It is also the first step to understanding just why it is that ordinary people prefer traditional designs and scales when it comes to housing, and why they are distressed by the fluid and gadget-derived forms that are beginning to dominate our cities, trashing the sky-line of London and Birmingham, and increasingly forming the stock in trade of the would-be architectural genius. Streets built in the traditional way are loved and cared for: people campaign to preserve them, and experience sentiments of ownership towards them, of a kind that they rarely feel towards the downtown areas of a modern megalopolis. And there is a deep reason for this, which is that these vernacular building styles are rooted in the aesthetic sense – they grow from the natural application of aesthetic values in our everyday reasoning, and from the place of architecture in civic life.

If we ask ourselves why we rational beings should have been endowed with aesthetic judgment, one answer suggests itself immediately. We live in a world of appearances, and we have an inherent need to fit ourselves to those appearances and those appearances to ourselves. This is part of home-building, which is in turn the first move in settling. The modern megalopolis is not a settlement: it is in constant motion, and its buildings, despite their size, invariably have an air of impermanence. They are 'where we have got to' in the process of construction and demolition; each building that we see is a temporary occupant of the place where it stands, ready to give way at any moment to its successor. The tower blocks and gadgets of the megalopolis occupy a confined space. But they are not aligned, don't share their boundaries, don't grow from streets or slot themselves into the sky. If there is any aesthetic intention underlying their design it is the intention to stand out, like Norman Foster's City Hall in London, rather than the intention to fit in, which governs the aesthetic of the old settled street. And when buildings refuse to fit together, then they

refuse to fit to us. You don't belong here, they tell us: you people are in the way. Inevitably, in the face of such a rebuke, people flee to the suburbs, and the alien objects in the centre remain as aspects of a growing moral void.

How is it that we fit things together around us, so as to fit them to ourselves? One answer is that we do this by *composing* what we see. When you lay a table for guests, you are very conscious of this – assembling the separate components of the table in such a way as to produce an effect of harmony, not between the objects only, but between the objects and the people who will use them. Composition means bringing things together from *a point of view*. You are arranging things *as observed* and as observed by someone *invited into their presence*.

Buildings constructed in the old way have two features that lend themselves to this enterprise. First they have façades and shared boundaries – they can be slotted side by side into the townscape, while retaining their public orientation on to the street. The normal downtown modern building cannot share its boundaries since it faces in no direction and therefore in all directions, requiring light on all four sides; moreover it has no façade, and so has no way of standing *between* neighbours, as we stand in our group photographs, for example.

Secondly traditional vernacular façades are put together according to generative rules of composition. The highest example of such rules is given by the classical orders, as these were expounded by the followers of Vitruvius in the 16th and 17th centuries. But long before the Orders were rediscovered and adapted to the Renaissance city, buildings were put together from significant parts: such was the enduring legacy of Rome. Door-frames, window-frames, string courses, quoins, shafts, corbels and vaults were all part of the repertoire of the medieval builder, and each part was treated in such a way as to outline it to the eye. The mullions and transoms of windows would be underlined with mouldings, and moulded dripstones would surmount both windows and doors, often terminating in a decorative corbel.

The purpose of such decoration was not to produce a work of genius, or some new and surprising form expressive of a new and surprising ego. On the contrary, the purpose was to suppress the idea of novelty, to bypass the ego, and to fit the work into a texture that pre-existed it. Decorative details were just that – decorations, additions that did not change the fundamental relation of the building to its surroundings, and certainly did not interfere with its integration into the urban fabric. They were part of the stitching that held the fabric together.

Two important observations follow from that. First, if buildings are to be composed then they require a vocabulary and a grammar: in other words, parts that have an independent significance and rules, conventions and customs that govern their combination. Second, the parts must be endowed with character. This is especially true of the verticals, horizontals, arches and apertures that compose the façade. Such details must be fully integrated into the composition while retaining an identifiable character of their own. This is one reason for the use, down the centuries, of mouldings, which show the outlines of a façade as themselves composed. Mouldings create shadows and shadows endow things with a posture. Edges without mouldings have a cutting and dynamic character, which can of course be exciting, but which militates against the aim of fitting in. Buildings that stab or bite their neighbours scarcely conform to the civic paradigm, and while the occasional joke of this kind may appeal to the casual passer-by, the joke will inevitably wear thin in time, like the hatchet jobs of Daniel Libeskind.

There is an erroneous view among apologists for the modernist vernacular that detailing of the classical kind is an irrelevance, that what matters is space and proportion, and that the Orders should be studied with that in view and without regard to the sculptural language. This view is encouraged by the purely mathematical view of proportion proposed by Le Corbusier in *The Modulor*, and by the specious arguments about space and time put forward by Siegfried Giedion in a highly influential book, *Space, Time and Architecture*, which has for fifty or more years been a standard text in schools of architecture.

A moment's reflection, however, will remind us that proportion and composition are connected: proportion is a relation between perceivable parts, and parts become perceivable when composed. The crucial details of the classical idiom in architecture are those pertaining to boundaries and transitions, lintels, architraves, mullions: places where one element ends and another begins, which are often marked by mouldings, sculpted elements and the shadows that are cast by these things.

Moreover, the composition that matters to us is embedded in the surface of the building. Only in public buildings like churches, city halls and concert halls do we freely appreciate the inner space of a work of architecture. In the street it is the external aspect of the building that attracts our perception, and it is here that we search for the compositional order that fits the building into itself and into its surroundings. Many of the important components of our traditional vernacular are therefore street-facing or street-meeting components: doorways, window-frames, columns and pilasters, cornices and string-courses, and so on: elements that can be

displayed on a façade and linked to other façades along the length of a street. Equally important in many cases are components that link the building to the sky: pinnacles, crowns, pitched roofs and crenellations. It is those details that do most to humanize the built environment and which inspire the cause of conservation.

This brings me to the crucial point. Just suppose that we revived that vernacular architecture, by which the high rhetoric of the classical Orders was brought down to earth in ordinary repeatable prose. We should then build, as our Georgian and Victorian forebears built, in a way that would make it more or less redundant to work for the conservation of the old streets of London. We would be building new conservation areas – or rather areas that would be conservation areas, if the cause of conservation were still truly needed. We would have brought architecture back to its proper calling, as the art of settlement, in which people build their shelters side by side, and at the same time create the public spaces that are the foundation of a durable community. All objections to new building would slip away in the sheer relief of the public, to discover that long-lasting and aesthetically pleasing settlements are once again the aim.

But how far from that so easily achievable aim are the forms that we see emerging in our cities today! Perhaps the biggest stylistic transition that we witnessed in the 20th century was the emergence of the curtain wall – in other words, the wall that is not composed so as to stand before us, but hung on a structural skeleton like clothes on a hanger. This was not a new departure from the engineering point of view. Wooden frames supporting boards have been a feature of vernacular architecture from the beginning of history, and the development of the cast-iron frame with stone or masonry surfacing was responsible for the sudden escalation in building height in the American cities in the late 19th century – the buildings in question remaining bound, nevertheless, by a classical sense of detail and proportion. The change was a matter of form, rather than structure.

The curtain wall of glass or cast concrete panels is no longer a *composed* wall. It has no details that summon each other and answer each other across the surface of the building, and no part of the wall is seen as resting on or supporting any other part. The wall is hung there in space. And for this very reason it faces in no particular direction. All four walls of the standard office building look the same. Even if one of them happens to be placed along a street it does not *face* the street, since it has no face. Nor does it stand next to its neighbours, since it has no posture. It is just there, hanging above the city like the contents of a wardrobe. The destructive effect of this is familiar to all of us – the effect of obliterating both

streetscape and sky-line, and facing down every kind of merely human encounter. If you don't get the point, then have a look at the project for the Paddington cube, and ask yourself why people, the heirs of Colin Amery, are fighting so hard to prevent its construction.

There is a well-known distinction made by sculptors between the carved and the modelled form. The first is cut from some hard natural stuff, the second shaped from a pliant material which is then hardened, like fired terra-cotta. Carved forms have clean shadows, sharp edges, and the crystalline texture of stone; modelled forms tend to have softened edges, blurred shadows and subdued and dull textures. Both can be attractive, and sometimes they are combined, as in the carved terra-cotta façades of certain Elizabethan buildings. But many of the most important details in traditional building depended for their effect on mouldings and edges that had the appearance of carved wood or stone. The clean parallels of window frames and surrounds, for example. Even when modelled, the details of a traditional façade were so manufactured as to look as though carved or in some other way composed by the working hand, like the pressed tin cornices of the old American vernacular. The curtain wall jettisons all that. It is manifestly poured out, or made from poured components, which are not composed since they merely repeat each other as panels do. Not surprisingly, therefore, the introduction of the curtain-wall vernacular has led to a new experience of the street, which is no longer a set of facades and entrances, shaped by the human hand and alive with moulded details. It is simply a screen, a barrier, which repels the passing glance, and displays the people within as aliens, bottled in a world of their own.

I think it is important to see that this defect is not simply the result of the vast scale of modern buildings. In the early age of the skyscraper the new iron-framed buildings took care to show themselves rooted into the street, with detailing that created a street-level façade and a clear relationship to neighbours and to the sidewalk. Such buildings rose joyfully into the air, and were slotted into the sky with attractive hats and crowns that overcame their bluntness. Even when made of mass-produced moulded parts, like the Woolworth building in New York, with its cast gothic panels, they appeared to be properly composed of those parts, and stood to attention in the public square as though waiting to be acknowledged and approved.

I don't say that the result was an unqualified aesthetic success, still less a collection of masterpieces. Nevertheless the skyscraper idiom was an attempt to resist the habit that succeeded it, of draping steel frames with

glass or alloy panels, like Mies in the Seagram building and all the hundreds of faceless blocks that followed his lamentable example.

However, things have moved on since Mies's day, and we now have an urban architecture in which the modelled form is taken as the paradigm to which all buildings seek to conform. Two factors have so altered the sense of form that the very idea of a composed architecture, built from parts that belong to a shared vocabulary and a shared grammar, seems as quaint to many people today as tails, spats and silver topped canes. One of the factors responsible for this is the arrival of 'smart' design tools, which enable a building to be sketched, planned, simulated and presented on the computer screen.

The other factor is the dominance of the plastic gadget, the household object, such as the hair-drier, the coffee-maker, the iPod or television, which is moulded out of coloured plastic and which expresses in its streamlined form and folded perimeter its refusal to relate to anything in its neighbourhood. The household gadget is designed to look aesthetically complete and self-contained, to stand apart from the furniture, and to advertise its nature as 'being to hand', to use Heidegger's appropriate term. It may be built from carefully modelled parts, which move expertly together, but these parts are hidden. The outer shell is smooth, poured, self-contained and without observable boundaries. If it is composite the parts click together in the manner of an iPod slotting into a set of speakers. Such objects are easily represented by the smart software now used by architects, and the visual education of the architect has been altered accordingly. Increasingly plans for new buildings emulate the plans for household gadgets, with smooth modelled parts and edgeless perimeters. Examples are proliferating, and of course London's hideous Walkie-Talkie is familiar to you all. But among my favourites are the zoomorphic bus station in Slough, and the Cooper Square Building in New York, by the firm Morphosis under the leadership of Thom Mayne. The first is a repugnant creature emerging from the primeval slime, while the second is a magnified kitchen gadget which like all such objects stands in a space of its own, without relation to its surroundings, without a façade, and with edges and boundaries that have been folded away or cracked open.

It is difficult to define the exact way in which such buildings dislocate the urban environment. It is not simply that they are aesthetically self-contained as gadgets are – so that they derive nothing from their context and impose an aesthetic order that is generated entirely from within and without reference to the surrounding civilities. It is also that their form, being without any compositional logic, is established *against* the city. The

Cooper Square building is a frozen residue, which has no compositional grammar, and no sense of place. Like any gadget, it tells you that it can be picked up and laid down at will, and will never be part of any place where it happens to end up. It is not woven into the fabric of the city, but spilled on top of it like a cup of molten glue.

Increasingly the big commissions are going to architects who design buildings in this way, using computer simulation to translate moulded gadgets into enlarged versions of themselves, which can then be transplanted from the screen to the street. Such buildings cannot belong to the street, since they cannot align themselves. More important, since they are without edges they cannot abut on their neighbours – Cooper Square stands next to another gadget, but they do not touch, nor is there a clearly defined precinct between them. As our cities become littered with junk of this kind their streets will gradually fall apart, or become mere thoroughfares, with no civic meaning, since civic meaning comes from composition, which is the way in which buildings align themselves in mutual relation.

But perhaps the real defect in this fluid architecture lies precisely in the originality that it advertises. Each gadget is entirely new, an expression of its own self-contained aesthetic, which is an aesthetic that no other building can share, unless it is simply a repeat performance. Each gadget is the complete formula for its own style, and the architect who wishes to put something next do it – as at Cooper Square – is forced to produce another self-contained gadget and another aesthetic that is unique to the building in question. Once the architect turns his back on the art of composition, the very possibility of a civic architecture is in doubt. Streets, squares, public spaces and boundaries are all thrown into disarray. The gadgets are attention-grabbing in an adverse way, and their lack of compositional grammar forbids us from relating them to anything around them. Their message is that they do not belong. And in their presence nor do we.

Many will reproach me for what I have said in this lecture, arguing that I have merely defended the old against the new, and offered no advice as to how the great changes in building materials, design tools and engineering capacities can be put to positive use in enhancing the fabric of the city. And it is undeniable that we must adapt to the new possibilities and take advantage of the opportunities that they provide. Exactly how this is to be done is the topic of another lecture. But let me at least offer some comparative examples, to show how it should not be done. Here are three.

First, the great anti-urban bubble, dumped here in Gateshead, which is at least one step better than putting it across the river in Newcastle.

However useful this building may be, it will always be standing alone in a cleared space, without any conceivable relation to the wider built environment. This is a paradigm of what I mean, when I say that the goal of the modern architect is too often to stand out, rather than to fit in. And standing out has proved, as in this case, to be formidably expensive, and a commitment to continuous bills for maintenance and repair.

Secondly, an instance, from the astonishingly off-putting gateway to Bristol, in which we see two sets of modern buildings, one, on the right, a modest line of neo-Georgian facades, with clear entrances, vertical order, and welcoming doors onto a pleasant pavement, the other, on the left, the back end of a shopping centre, which annihilates the pavement, has no accessible opening, and which is constructed from horizontal layers that clash hideously against each other. Needless to say the buildings on the right have adapted quickly to new uses as offices and meeting rooms; those on the left could never adapt beyond the use that first gave rise to them.

Finally let me give one final illustration of the anti-urban nature of the glass curtain wall. This comes from Philadelphia, whose 30th-street station you see in the foreground, a somewhat clumsy piece of beaux-arts vernacular, which is nevertheless one of the best loved public spaces in the city, and whose stone structure and classical details create a genial urban space all around. In the background an office tower which, as you see, makes no contribution to the city at all, since it merely vanishes into air, leaving a devastated area at street level surmounted by an eerie nothingness, the ghost of a building, sitting upon the grave of another.

I have offered this brief excursus into architectural aesthetics as my own personal contribution to the great cause that Colin Amery helped to make part of our national culture. The precise philosophical underpinnings of my argument lie outside the scope of this lecture, though I have tried to develop them in *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, first published in 1979, and *The Classical Vernacular* of 1991. But it seems to me that we will not achieve the necessary change of culture in the architectural and building professions, if we do not see that the questions at issue concern aesthetic values, and their place in everyday life. Aesthetic values are not arbitrary adjuncts to our intellectual equipment; they are our one sure defence against vandalism, and our way of resisting the forces that are destroying our city centres, and drowning us in junk.