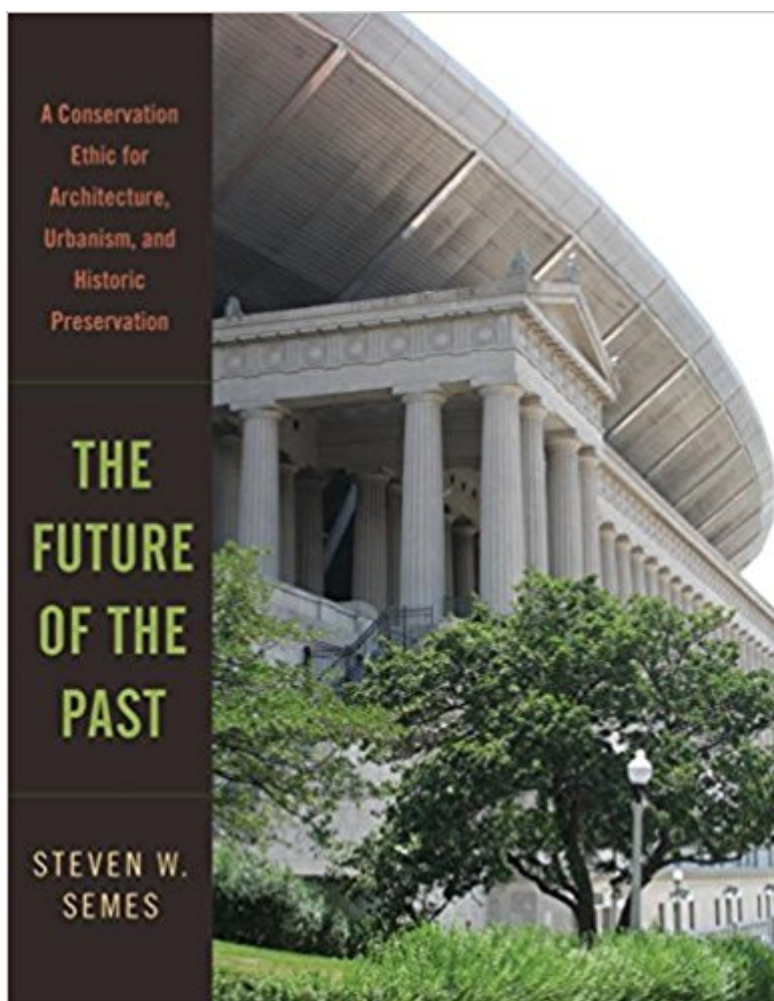


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# The Future Of The Past: A Conservation Ethic For Architecture, Urbanism, And Historic Preservation



## Synopsis

A comprehensive and eloquent argument for "new traditional" architecture that preserves the style and character of historic buildings. With contemporary design being redefined by architects and urbanists who are recovering the historic language associated with traditional architecture and the city, how might preservation change its focus or update its mission? Steven W. Semes, winner of the 2010 Clem Labine Award, makes a persuasive case that context matters and that new buildings and additions to old buildings should be harmonious with their neighbors. The Future of the Past was also named one of Planetizen's most noteworthy books of 2010 and one of The Atlantic Cities' "10 Most Compelling Historic Preservation Reads." 30 color, 250 b/w photos

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Decade's Most Important Book on Urban Architecture". With the publication of this volume, Steven Semes has vaulted into the first rank of contemporary architectural critics and preservation theorists. should be must reading for all preservationists and people serving on landmark commissions and design review boards. - Traditional Building "Will we ever agree on the future of the past? Probably not. However, with this compelling and accessible study, Steven W. Semes has taken a major step forward towards that illusory goal. . . . [A] thought provoking book. - APT Bulletin: Journal of Preservation Technology "Semes mounts the most thorough attack I've ever read on the anti-tradition stance of many architectural and historic preservation professionals. The need for this book is intense. Everyone, including general readers, will find this book's

many illustrations, with their pithy captions, illuminating. This book should help the confused 21st century to create and maintain places of lasting value. [New Urban News](#) “[P]resents a persuasive case against the preservation ethic of oppositional styling; that is, the argument that new additions to historic buildings must be deliberately un-period so as not to be confused with the existing, ‘œauthentic’ section of the building. Semes illuminates the error of this way of thinking, and walks us through a history of architecture and preservation in the process. [Planetizen.com](#) “[A] stirring and passionate call to get historic preservation right by respecting the past without making it sacrosanct. [Civil Engineering](#) “[A] clear and comprehensive argument adds significantly to the discussion, one that should continue as an important topic within the historic preservation, urban planning, and architecture professions. [AASLH History News](#) “[T]houghtful and thought-provoking a must-read for those who care for and care about our architectural heritage. [Sacred Architecture](#) “[B]eautifully illustrated comprehensive needs to be understood and followed by professional architects and preservationists; most of the lay public, which likes old buildings and neighborhoods, is already on Semes’ side. [The Commercial Dispatch](#) “With The Future of the Past, architect Steven W. Semes has planted his foot hard in the tense area between architectural innovation and historic preservation [R]aises questions that everyone involved in historic preservation needs to think about. Semes thus deserves credit for tackling a complex issue that is playing out in myriad ways all over the world. [Kathleen Corbett, Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review](#) “[S]peaks in common-sense terms, it is didactic and approachable, and the laymen who are in the trenches will find powerful ammunition in it. [American Arts Quarterly](#) “Full of well illustrated examples, drawings, and photographs of the results of both approaches, this volume is likely to take up important space in future discussions. [Book News](#) “Mr. Semes makes a compelling argument; hopefully it does not fall on deaf ears. [Portland Book Review](#)

Steven W. Semes is Associate Professor at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture and Academic Director of its Rome Studies Program. A practicing architect for over thirty years, he has designed a wide variety of projects for preservation and new construction throughout the United States. He is also the author of *The Architecture of the Classical Interior* (Norton) and a contributor to *The Elements of Classical Architecture* (Norton). His essays and reviews have appeared in the *National Trust Forum Journal*, *Traditional Building*, *Period Homes*, and *American Arts Quarterly*. He

is a Fellow Emeritus of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America.

Several generations of architects, now in practice, have been inculcated with a modernist perspective on new architecture, that builds an intellectual wall against the 5,000 years history of all the architecture that came before. It also builds a wall against the architectural common sense of the average person...the user of the built environment. Here finally, is an antidote to the prevailing orthodoxy of the modernist academy. Ordinary untrained people feel that there's something wrong when confronted by the typical reductionist, and often wildly abstract approach to the most practical of the arts. They are right. Citizens yearn for order, comprehensibility, and beauty to return to their buildings, and in general, to their built environment. This book is a careful evaluation of our contemporary architectural plight, and is worth careful consideration by academics, practitioners and citizens alike. Steven Semes book explicates the reasons for our discontent, with good examples and telling photographs.

A superlative readable work that explains the importance of respecting and understanding traditional architecture. It should be required reading for every architecture student who is now taught to eschew traditional or classical architecture in favor of glass and steel boxes devoid of beauty, livability, and human scale. Prof. Semes' eloquent text should also be must reading for members of planning, design review, and historic preservation staff and commission members. Too often, the built fabric of our older city cores are being neglected or demolished in favor of inferior ugliness. Perhaps this important work will help serve as a wakeup call.

This is also one of the most accessible, clear-thinking - and passionate - books of architectural theory I have read. Well argued, well-written. I hope it becomes required reading in architecture schools. But ordinary people living in historic districts will also have much to gain in both browsing and reading it this book. Beautifully illustrated.

Steven Semes has written the definitive overview of the history of architecture and how we look at style in buildings of all types. I am an architectural historian and I INSIST that my colleagues read this book. I often quote from this landmark opus. And.....great photos that tell the author's story.

quick ship and exactly as described. thank you.

Essential reading for everyone, whether you are interested in preservation or not! This book shows how and why our cities and towns lost their character during the 20th century, and what can be done to stop the decline. And sculptural 21st century object buildings are not the answer!

Steven Semes book presents a new look at preservation issues, primarily how contemporary infill can upset the balance of historical settings. Excellent ideas and photos that all urban planners and preservationist should review.

Excellent look at standards from fly on the wall when they were written. A must for Hpoz and preservation groups

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