



Critical Regionalism

Critical Regionalism emphasizes the importance of “placeness” by considering contextual elements like scenery, historical references, and light, without falling into imitation and traditionalism. Critical Regionalism gained popularity as a synthesis of universal, “modern” elements and individualistic elements derived from local cultures. The idea to produce buildings that are modern without neglecting contextual elements like scenery and historical references, has not only produced interesting architectural creations but also spawned a whole range of new theoretical reflections on alternatives to a universalist order or consumerist iconography that Critical Regionalists perceive as oppressive. Contrary to the intentions of mere regionalism, Critical Regionalism does not aim at the reinstallation of a strong vernacular “here” but it attempts to vernacularize modern elements. Critical Regionalism bears a link with “critical history,” a movement that developed within the realm of historical science as early as the eighteenth century. Discussions by Barthold Niebuhr (1776-1831) and especially by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) in his *The Idealist Theory of Historiography*, laid the ground for a critical form of historicism. Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) as well as a subsequent set of philosophers represented by Wilhelm Dilthey, Wilhelm Windelband, and Heinrich Rickert, were trying to approach history critically. It is surprising that philosophy, the field from which architectural Critical Regionalism extracted its theoretical foundations, has never developed its own Critical Regionalist tradition. (TBB)

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