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Rowe's Courthouse Utopia

In 1956, Colin Rowe asserted the small Texas settlement of Lockhart was “dedicated to an idea.” An exemplar of the American courthouse town, which he compared to le città of his much beloved Italy, Rowe took Lockhart’s plan and the character of its architecture – its square, courthouse, gaol, churches and commercial buildings – to be the embodiment of a political program, representative and guarantee of law, classical and timeless. A close reading of the essay in the context of Rowe’s oeuvre shows it to be a crucial hinge in the development of his interest in utopia and the city. It would be closely followed by “The Architecture of Utopia” (1958-59) which considered the ideal cities of the Renaissance and Le Corbusier, inaugurating the line of research that produced Collage City (1978). Rowe would return to the Texas town as a manifestation of utopian urbanism in “Program versus Paradigm” (1983), his most definitive statement on the epistemology and methodology of urban design. By conceiving the Lockhart essay to be the foundation stone of Rowe’s political urban theory, the assumptions that underlay Rowe’s subsequent and highly influential understanding of utopia and architectural and urban design are brought to light. In particular, Rowe takes the city and its architecture to be fundamentally representative in structure, explicable in terms of precedent and interest, conceived in the manifold of politics and form, ethics and attention, character and desire. Rowe imagines a mythical architect, the Master of Lockhart, equipped with the ideal understanding and sensible restraint that could construct these representative values. In its apparent equanimity between public and private, judge and jury, ambition and realism, Rowe’s Lockhart is an initial prototype in his search for an ideal balance governing architectural and urban practice.

Prospecting for a paradigm

Of the essays Colin Rowe wrote during his stay at the University of Texas at Austin, between January 1954 and mid-1956, his descriptive judgment on the nearby town of Lockhart, published with documentary photographs by John Hejduk in *Architectural Record* in 1957, is the least well known. Yet certain aspects of the essay, Rowe's first on urbanism, suggest its significance for the subsequent course of his thought. His scepticism of progressivism, utopian thinking, and modern architecture attained shape here. Insofar as this critical position and Rowe's focus on urbanism were influential in architecture's paradigmatic shift from modernism to postmodernism, the Lockhart essay deserves recognition.

It opens with a view of the American West. Rowe paired towns in Utah, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona with particular regions of Italy. These western townships, "founded no earlier than the sixties," were the equivalents of Tuscany, Urbino, "Gubbio or Siena." They "exude an Italian evidence of age," Rowe imagined, and they appear "to have always occupied the land."¹ Although this comparison evinced a Warburgian countenance, Rowe staked his claim with reference to the literature of Gertrude Stein: "Somewhere or other Gertrude Stein says that certainly America is the oldest country in the world ..." Rowe suggested Stein's witticism carried something of truth: "Certainly it is there, where the strata of historical activity are so few and where time has contrived to erode so little of the little past that exists, that there will sometimes be experienced a feeling of inextinguishable antiquity." Rowe's geologic metaphor traded upon an implicit contrast with the sedimentary thickness of Europe. It was a contrast befitting Stein, a native of California, who had left the New World for the avant-garde salons of Paris.

But, if the western township's relative primitivism contributed to its antique quality, the architectural value of the towns did not: "often in the sharp light and the vacant landscape of the West architectural detail will seem to achieve an almost archaic clarity, so that the most tawdry saloon or incrustated false façade may acquire a portentous distinction, ..." Not an intrinsic – "immediate" – quality of the architectural work, the classicism of the Western town seemed to stem from the primacy of its relationship with the landscape and the extraordinary illumination of its context. But, Rowe concluded, the circumstantial contexts of the western landscape and the contingent architectural contents of these towns were too accidental to warrant their standing as "monuments of an heroic age": "... one really demands that these characteristics be embodied in a more typical situation." That typicality was provided by a paradigmatic urban scheme: "It is here that, as a quite stereotyped urban pattern, the American courthouse town might be introduced as a more representative illustration. ... it is scarcely the product of any deliberately expressed taste – and yet one assumes its repetition was inspired by more than mere habit. For patently this is a town dedicated to an idea, and its scheme is neither fortuitous nor whimsical."

The courthouse town demonstrated what was latent in other instances. These western towns were a conscious and collective assertion; not formed by chance, impulse, or individual discrimination, they constituted a program that, geographically widespread, had been

persistently applied. Western towns, exemplified by the courthouse town, were “dedicated to an idea” that, “banal” in its application, had become “powerful.” They were comparable to other urban ideals, such as the “piazzas of Italy,” which “admit the church in a presiding role,” and the “residential enclosures of England.” But instead of an ecclesiastical or bourgeois program, in the courthouse town “it is the law which assumes a public significance; and it is around the secular image of the law, like architectural illustrations of a political principle, that these towns revolve. In each case the courthouse is both visual focus and social guarantee; and in each [courthouse] square the reality of government made formally explicit provides the continuing assurance of order.”

These towns were “emblems of a political theory,” the manifestation of governance, order, surety and stability in the otherwise wild west. Invested with an underlying symbolic order, the eclectic, apparently unselfconscious architecture of these settlements gained clarity. It was this representational dimension, not any contingent property of its landscape setting or the style or workaday functionality of its architecture, that lent these towns their paradigmatic status. The timeless classicism of the American West was born of sociopolitical intent, the equation of architecture and idea. The evident value of architecture in this program, and the courthouse scheme in particular, was that it *constituted* manifest destiny. These courthouse squares were “the foyers of a republic ceremonial, ... their uncompromised form neatly condenses all the imponderables of republican principles.” The courthouse square type condensed this socio-political program into a recognisable iconography; its repeated realisation reasserted that program at a near-continental scale.

The four-square grid

If the courthouse town was the exemplary western town, then its quintessential manifestation was probably found in Texas. Rowe's reasons were geographic, visual and historical. Further west, Rowe argued, “the central courthouse seems scarcely to have been a viable motif,” suggesting the model's capacity to sustain its political program rapidly diminished as one left the fertile prairie for the inhospitable, less-populated territory of the high-desert plains. Moreover, in Texas, “the comparative absence of trees disencumbers the scheme from camouflage,” and the “brilliance of the atmosphere lifts the most modest architectural statement to a new potential ...” But these excuses were insufficient for settling on Lockhart in particular.

Of the towns Rowe listed – “so many French medieval *bastides*” controlling territory and establishing justice – Lockhart was most proximate to Austin. It probably exhibited the right mix and style of architecture for Rowe's argument. And it's possible that Rowe's approach to the town did indeed offer a memorable experience: “Without major incident the landscape has unrolled itself for mile after mile with an almost complete negation of picturesque effect,” he wrote, “Without natural punctuation and without natural relief, it debilitates the eye; so that as an artificial caesura in an endlessly continued scheme the distant view of the courthouse acquires a peculiar significance.” But the most important factor in Rowe's choice was probably Lockhart's “exuberant, more than unusually brilliant courthouse,”

which, Rowe imagined, “is apt to suggest that some provincial disciple of Richard Morris Hunt’s had discovered the irresistible fascination of Leonardo’s studies for domical buildings.” The clock tower of Lockhart’s courthouse provided the requisite impression at a distance. Welling upon the horizon, these towns provided relief from the visual tedium of their surroundings and, as outposts of civilisation, a vision of “amenity.” But, more than experiential episodes and functional suggestion, these towns, with their ordered, centralised plans, were emphatic ideals: “As a form of emotional complement to the interminable terrain, the impact of these four-square, geometrical, concentric little towns is discovered to be one of remarkable intensity. They have, all of them, something of the unqualified decisiveness, the diagrammatic coherence of architectural models; and scrupulously regular, they appear, almost more than real towns, to be small cities in primitive paintings.”

With the Italian references; the discussion of the town figured against the landscape; the impression of the courthouse tower; and now the comparison with painting, Rowe evoked a series of well-known urban fictions: the mediaeval allegories of government by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in Siena; Nicolas Poussin’s proto-picturesque and democratic Athens; and the central perspectives at Urbino, among others. These precedents are ever-present in Rowe’s later writing, like the clear light in this spaghetti Western. But if these canonical references might seem accidental, Rowe’s comparison of the Lockhart courthouse with Leonardo’s conception of the centralised Renaissance church rendered the association with humanist discourse definitive. The “insistently repeated courthouse and square,” Rowe argued, “will unavoidably suggest some Renaissance exercise to demonstrate the ideal significance of perspective.” Although he wouldn’t nominate particular urban precedents until “The Architecture of Utopia” in the following year, Rowe was surely following Wittkower’s *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949), in which Wittkower attributed the centralised church to Leonardo’s interpretation of Alberti, the ideal urban scheme to Alberti, and the ideal realisation of these visions to Bramante’s Tempietto. In this context Wittkower stated the basic thesis of his book: for the Renaissance humanists, the “universal harmony” of the cosmos, “of which they had discovered the key in the laws of perspective, ... could not reveal itself entirely unless it were realized in space through architecture conceived in the service of religion.”² Rowe transferred Wittkower’s logic from humanist Italy to the American West. Rather than the cosmos, centralised architecture and its urban setting were analogous with law and order. The western town embodied the vision of a Roman Republic for the New World. Divorcing the formal schema from any definitive historical association, Rowe extracted from Wittkower’s history an autonomous architectural knowledge, reasserting that in order to constitute an ideal, architectural technique must be aligned with an apparently self-evident – ‘theological’ – sociopolitical program.

Following Wittkower’s related considerations of Palladio, Rowe had compared the villas of Palladio and Le Corbusier in “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa” (1947). The nine-square grid, influenced by these analyses, had become a basis for pedagogical experiments at the University of Texas. Now, in his first essay on urbanism, Rowe identified a four-square grid. The publication included a small map of Lockhart, highlighting the buildings discussed and

photographed. It initially appears as though Rowe missed the opportunity to assert in this plan the conceptual clarity of the urban type. As published, and perhaps as drawn, the plan was not a four-square, but rectangular and asymmetric. But the conceptual clarity Rowe attributed to the courthouse town was impossible to represent by an accurate depiction of Lockhart. The four-square was purely an ideation, relying on the impression of a centre. The design of the Lockhart courthouse, symmetrical, centrally staked by a tall clock tower, constituted this point. But a four-square grid was not self-evident. The plan of Lockhart was a 25-square grid. Cropped such that it included the discussed buildings but concealed the extents of the town grid, the published plan may have been drawn to conceal this fact. Curiously, the courthouse was misdrawn, its longest side oriented north-south rather than east-west. This erroneous orientation had the courthouse correspond in its proportions and directionality with the rectangular boundaries of the published plan, suggesting the possibility that the courthouse was deliberately rotated to reassert its centrality given the depicted extents of Lockhart. If so, the effort to conceal Lockhart's 25-square grid was thoroughly considered.

In any event, Rowe stressed the centralised motif in the text, describing the courthouse town as "concentric." In his comparison of Palladio and Le Corbusier in the Mathematics essay, the nine-square grid was respectively concentric and peripheral, the latter drained of conviction. As a geometric ideal, the four-square, in comparison with the nine-square, grid, asserts a pointed intersection at the centre of the composition rather than an ambiguous field of space. While the four-square and the nine-square grids are the simplest, prime instances of these respective conditions, the 25-square grid is derivative of the latter. In addition to stressing unequivocal centrality, then, the description of Lockhart as a four-square grid established an urban paradigm alongside the architectural model, preferring the undiluted clarity of a basic geometric schema to a derivative one. It's also possible that Rowe was persuaded by the four-square grid's spatial implications. The grid of the published plan was erroneously oriented with the cardinal directions, despite Lockhart's deviation from true north. This orientation stressed the paradigmatic conception of the town and suggested its relationship to the Jeffersonian program of westward expansion and territorial occupation.

A "thirty-two" minute walk

Rowe's essay approached Lockhart from afar, beginning with the West in general, the courthouse town as a type, before considering Lockhart in particular. He approached the town through the landscape, drawn to the square by the courthouse tower. In these initial descriptions, Rowe might have been imagining the courthouse a heroic, upstanding sheriff. But this first impression would give way to a more complex cast. He described the decorum of the town's buildings as though introducing the characters of a Western. The clarity of the urban genre allowed for "innumerable variations" of material, style and detail. Of the architectural figures that vied for visual attention with the courthouse, most prominent were the more pragmatic water tower and gaol. The latter, deputy to the courthouse, was a "small castellated building" which Rowe described, with rhetorical wit, as a "toy fort," evoking both the military encampments of the westward occupation and their place in the mid-twentieth-

century imaginary. The gaol was “partly Romanesque and partly Italianate”; it portrayed a “disarming self-assurance [that] sets the mood for the entire town.” Momentarily diverted, Rowe’s attention was soon “led imperatively from it [back] towards the square” (like a prisoner compelled to a lynching). He offered a description of the courthouse in detail and then the minor characters: the structures facing the square, the Protestant First Christian Church to its north, and St Mary’s, “a product of Irish and German Catholicism,” further still. He then retraced his steps and described two of the commercial, utilitarian buildings that had caught his eye nearer the courthouse.

This ambulatory narrative was a literary trope that allowed Rowe to capture in his description of the buildings the vocations, character and origins of the settlers. In each case, Rowe, remarking the dates of the buildings – 1898, 1918, 1908, 1918 – exclaimed disbelief at their recentness and drew comparisons that emphasised the simultaneous development of modernism elsewhere. The turn-of-the-century First Christian Church was surprising enough: “an ecclesiastical representative of the Richardsonian suburban world of the eighties ...” But confronted with the date of St Mary’s Rowe was baffled: “That this diminutive monument of unassuming piety should be nine years younger than the Robie House, should post-date [Walter] Gropius’s Werkbund Building by four years, imposes a sober curiosity ...” With this astonishment, the timelessness of Lockhart was reasserted, but, more importantly, its provincial temporality was contrasted with the assumed progressivism of the city: “The common sense of metropolitan time is severely jolted by this improbable fact.”

Although presented as a documentary of discovery, Rowe’s essay, which had begun with the avant-garde Stein, had been carefully choreographed to end on this point. In doubling-back on itself, Rowe’s tour reiterated the centralised organisation of the town, followed a programmatic hierarchy – state, church, commerce – but, most importantly, allowed Rowe to conclude his itinerary with a description of the “Masur Buildings,” which, he asserted, stressing their *laissez-faire* credentials, “represent the ultimate achievement in the commercial architecture of Lockhart.” This grouping, constructed at different dates, “read as a scheme of independent and varied pavilions, all manifesting the new ideal of congruity, ...” Indeed, despite the “individuality” of the various buildings, Rowe noted that his route “almost completes a survey of a series of apparently related structures.” “They are in themselves a convincing argument of their relationship;” he summated, “and standing between them, their intrinsic reasonableness, their authenticity, their unsophisticated strength, even their obvious weakness cause one automatically to presume the existence of some pronounced artistic personality, some architect, or more probably, since this is not architects’ architecture, some builder.” But, despite supposing the possibility of a single author – a “Master of Lockhart” – Rowe vacillated: “The Master of Lockhart resists formulation as a myth. Indeed,” he asked, “was there one or were there several Masters?” before dismissing any resolution to the issue entirely: “Apparently such questions are surprisingly difficult to satisfy and perhaps also they are irrelevant, because presumably it is the eternal problem of primitive art rather than the eternal problem of personality which is raised by those very recent buildings.” Precisely because of their altogether “satisfactory” articulation – evidently the product of an

author with “unsubverted integrity, an innate capacity, tastes which are uncomplicated and definite, [and] an understanding of necessity” – Rowe could not “attribute to their designer a developed or conscious *aesthetic* intention.” The anachronistic antiquity of these buildings, their apparent uniformity, their adequate functional and aesthetic resolution, resisted ascription of authorship, despite their comparative recentness. Yet, despite their evident accomplishments, buildings of this kind had become, Rowe proceeded to point out, the subject of ridicule.

On Main Street

That Rowe depicted himself “standing between” these buildings, these characters, is of no little consequence. Throughout the essay, Rowe stresses that the classicism of the West is only discernible to those with a particular frame of mind: The immediacy of the American small town appears only to “*the sympathetic traveller.*” “*Seen dispassionately ... in terms of a not unduly sentimental taste they have intrinsic virtues of a higher order ...*” “[*F*] or the unprejudiced eye, the eye which is willing to see, a number of small towns do present themselves as very minor triumphs of urbanity.” This last statement, and Rowe’s comparison of the coherent appearance of the Texas courthouse town in the treeless landscape to “a ship seen in mid-ocean,” were undeclared references to Le Corbusier. In “Eyes that do not see,” a pivotal section of *Vers une Architecture* (1923), Le Corbusier implored: “There exists a new spirit, ... encountered above all in industrial production.” Le Corbusier’s chief example was the ocean liner. “Architecture suffocates in routine,” he argued, “The ‘styles’ are a lie. Style is a unity of principle that animates all the works of an era and results from a distinctive state of mind,” whereas “Our era,” Le Corbusier advocated, “fixes its style every day.”³

Although it’s not explicit – and Rowe’s essay has indeed been framed and hung as a sepia print of small-town America – these references to Le Corbusier, when seen through the lens of Rowe’s conclusion, suggest an irreconcilable dispute about style. Rowe set conformity to a pre-established and collectively held, though inevitably worn and tired, ideal against the dissatisfaction that prompts striving for reinvention.

In its final paragraphs Rowe turned to Sinclair Lewis’ portrayal of the late-nineteenth-century American town in the novel *Main Street* (1920).⁴ Rowe’s excursion through Lockhart echoed a memorable passage in Lewis’ satire. The heroine, college-educated and progressive Carol Milford, newly married to doctor Will Kennicott, finds herself stranded in the (fictitious) Midwestern town of Gopher Prairie. “When Carol had walked for thirty-two minutes she had completely covered the town, east and west, north and south; and she stood at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue and despaired.” Lewis fabricated the heroine’s interest in town planning and her desire for social reform to critique the naivety of progressivism and the stultifying atmosphere of small town manners. Carol’s aspirations, described by the heroine and her interlocutors as “utopian,” fuelling her dissatisfaction with the ugliness of the workaday settlement and her revulsion for the self-satisfied conservatism and ignorant privilege of the town’s elite, is presented alongside their rejection of her patronising character and radical motivations.

In the Lockhart essay, Rowe offered a pastiche of quotations drawn from various quarters of Lewis' text. He emphasised Carol's vision of a sober neo-Georgian uniformity, stressing that her aesthetic prejudice was part of a general turn-of-the-century reaction to the individualistic eclecticism of the nineteenth century. Her aspiration that the town and America would "succeed Victorian England" were among numerous negative references to Victorian architecture sprinkled throughout the book. But it was surely certain uncited passages that solidified Rowe's interest in Lewis' novel. "The broad, straight, unenticing gashes of the streets let in the grasping prairie on every side," Lewis wrote, "She realized the vastness and emptiness of the land." Lewis had described the smaller settlements surrounding Gopher Prairie as Carol first approached the town by train – "Towns as planless as a scattering of pasteboard boxes on an attic floor" – so, with Carol's arrival, the issue of how a settlement might assert itself against the expanse of the Midwestern prairie had been established. "The fields swept up to it, past it. It was unprotected and unprotecting; there was no dignity in it nor any hope of greatness. Only the tall red grain-elevator and a few tinny church steeples rose from the mass. It was a frontier camp. It was not a place to live in, not possibly, not conceivably." By the time Rowe was reading Lewis' detailed description of Gopher Prairie, then, the role of architecture and planning in presenting an ordered, dignified and memorable image to the mind – in short, the capacity of architecture to hold one's attention – had been firmly established. Not only could the town's buildings not "absorb" Carol's urbanity, neither could its landscape: "At best the trees resembled a thinned woodlot. There was no park to rest the eyes. And since not Gopher Prairie but Wakamin was the county-seat, there was no court-house with its grounds."

Rowe didn't quote the passage. If he hadn't quite asserted courthouses do the job, Lewis had at least suggested they help. Moreover, it was the courthouse *and its grounds* that Lewis identified. The courthouse towns Rowe had 'discovered' used the building *and* its landscaped square as ordering device. Henceforth, urbanism would be unthinkable for Rowe without its landscape component.

Rowe argued the justification for Carol's acute distaste with the Victorian had receded with time. "In the years that have intervened the neo-Georgian dream has receded," Rowe wrote, "and as Victorian England has become less mediocre, so nineteenth-century America has become less abrasive." The Victorian architectural details so unattractive to Lewis' heroine might now be seen as: "indications of a self-consciousness as yet unimpaired by sophisticated inferiority or doubt, the distinguishing marks of a form of post-frontier architecture. It is a guileless architecture which, because innocent, is often apparently venerable; and which, because one may believe it to be uncorrupted, is sometimes curiously eloquent." Lockhart was an innocent ideal rendered problematic in retrospect. It was not as Le Corbusier and Carol Milford supposed, an example of "eyes that do not see," but a "self-conscious" architecture that had not yet suffered the debilitating psychology of reformist obsession. Prying the nineteenth-century American town from scorn, Rowe presented Lockhart as exemplary evidence. It was the employment of architecture and urban thought in the service of a valid, authentic, and civilising mission: "When, as at Lockhart, [this innocent ... guileless

architecture] is combined with a city plan as entirely legitimate as that of the courthouse town; when, as there, a spontaneous and comprehensible architecture flourishes in a complementary relationship with a principle of authority; then we are in the presence, not of an amusing specimen of Americana, but of an exemplary urbanistic success whose meaning has been for too long obscured.”

Throughout the essay, Rowe attributes to these provincial buildings three distinct authorial compartments, depending on the register in which they're interpreted. As evidence of a mythic historical period they appear to be products of a collective will. With the distinction between progress and tradition at issue, they appear unconscious. But, with the stark contours of this issue faded and the nostalgic haze withdrawn, they can “now” be understood as a self-conscious architecture as yet unencumbered by polemic or sentiment. While Rowe offered the classicism of the courthouse town as a timeless ideal, he had also presented a dialectical history of its fluctuating reception. The polemic of progressivism had robbed nineteenth-century America of its “innocence”; but with the polemic withered, its biases more visible as its persuasiveness ebbed, one could now appreciate the period's achievement.

Rowe found progressivism as reactionary and parochial as Lewis' caricature of the small-town mentality. He detested its condescension. Like the heroine's antagonists, one might conclude, Rowe defends bourgeois civil society and the status quo. But it's more crucial to notice that Rowe was making an architectural and not a political point. The coincidence of a “comprehensible architecture” and “a principle of authority” invests architecture with a representative capacity and an environmental efficacy. When expression and intention are broadly-shared, clear and coordinated, architecture can constitute “an exemplary urbanistic success.” Lockhart was a classical utopia, not because of its laissez-faire political-economy, but because Rowe imagined it unencumbered by scepticism.

But to assert Lockhart was, and so recently, the collective exercise of an ideal raised a fundamental problem. It contradicted the theoretical substructure that underlay Rowe's previous writing: that conception of modernity borrowed from Panofsky and Wittkower in which the possibility of a reconciliation between the ideal and the temporal had been irretrievably lost with the Renaissance. Hence the necessary antiquity of America, that of its landscape, and its political naivety. Lockhart, like the frontier vision, was a remarkable anachronism. The Lockhart essay – both the text by Rowe and the photographs by Hejduk – is a panegyric to the improbable presence of an apparition.

A literary utopia

Rowe began the essay: “Somewhere or other Getrude Stein says [...]” Perhaps Rowe genuinely couldn't recall the source, but he'd certainly taken the quote out of context. Where Stein associated America's apparent age with progress, Rowe associated it with classicism. The quote appears in Stein's bestseller *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), which, in keeping with her avant-garde experimentation, she wrote in the voice of her partner. Stein's contention that “America is the oldest country in the world” was based on the notion that America had been in the ‘twentieth century’ the longest. It appears in conjunction with

her assertion that Henry James was her “forerunner” – it was only James in the nineteenth century that felt the sensibility of the twentieth. James was ahead of his time, even if the quintessentially twentieth-century Stein only comprehended that in retrospect. Rowe’s essay transposed Stein’s comment to architecture. The complicated temporal relationship between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries constituted his conclusion. Stein’s ‘twentieth century’ mode of thought – its modernism, its self-consciousness, its deliberate play with genre, its conflation of subject and object, its paradoxical temporality – only impeded an understanding of the more authentic projects of the ‘nineteenth century’.

But if the actual quote was an impediment to Rowe’s argument, the reference to Stein was not. He could assume her avant-garde credentials well known. Sister of the client for Le Corbusier’s villa at Garches, Stein was the definitive American expatriate, embodying the geographic history of modernist self-consciousness. As a European in America, Rowe was her reciprocal. If Stein found modernity in Europe; Rowe plumbed America for its antiquity. Written in the background of his essay the “Chicago Frame” (1956) where distinctions between American and European modernism were crucial, the Lockhart essay appears to have been, in an echo of Stein, an intensely autobiographical work. It would become the cornerstone of Rowe’s writing during his time at the University of Cambridge (1958-62). It prefaced Rowe’s expatriate remarks on the architecture and urbanism of Europe, his defence of American architecture at the Architectural Association, and his catalogue essay for the *New York Five* (1972). Read against his earlier considerations of the westward view, his observations on the eastern gaze of these New Yorkers asserted the exhaustion of the utopian project, a formal ideal bereft of sociopolitical meaning.

In “The Architecture of Utopia,” Rowe, considering the ideal cities of the Renaissance, will suggest utopia – ‘no place’ – in architecture preceded its literary embodiment. “Somewhere or other ...,” the opening to “Lockhart, Texas,” was the deliberate compliment to the geographic punctuation of its title.

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- 1 Unless stated or noted otherwise, quotes are from Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, “Lockhart, Texas,” *Architectural Record* 121 (March 1957): 201-206. Italics denote my emphasis.
 - 2 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1949), 20-22, 26-27.
 - 3 Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* (1923; Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 86-87.
 - 4 All *Main Street* quotes are from the Bantam Classic edition (New York: Bantam Dell, 2008).