

Globalization and Cities: Gautam Bhatia's "New (and Improved Delhi)"

As an architect working in India, Gautam Bhatia uses his perspective of history and cultural identity to comment on the changing nature of global architecture in New Delhi, a large metropolis in India.

This essay contrasts local culture with a larger global one using the writer's personal experience while visiting a new hi-tech building.

This essay can let you think about the changes (good and bad) brought about by globalization and urban development. As you (re)read this essay, ask yourself what is gained and what is lost when architects design new buildings like the one described in the essay? Even though this essay uses evidence from India, it can be applied to architecture and urban development everywhere, including Queens.

- In groups of 2:

1) As a group, spend a few minutes identifying the cities and their skylines on the "Globalization and Cities" handout. (Larger images of these cities will be displayed for the class to help you. We will also look over the answers together as a class.)

*****In the 21st century, is it difficult to identify different cities by their buildings? Why or why not?**

(7 min.)

- Next, re-read / skim Gautam Bhatia's essay "New (and Improved) Delhi (p. 48+) after you look over the questions (pre-reading) below. (5 minutes)

2) **What 2 features or details from the new building in New Delhi does Bhatia notice? Does he think that they are really 'improvements'? What contradiction (based on labor or work does he notice in pointing out the 'labor-saving' devices installed in the building?**

3) As an architect, Bhatia has benefited from the recent emergence of India as an economic power. What are 2 of his current projects? Does he seem to admire all the buildings that he is designing? How can you tell from his tone?

4) **What kind of architecture does he seem to value most?** Is this style of architecture more tied to local culture or global culture? How can you tell?

5) **What is the argument of this essay?** (Notice there really isn't a thesis statement in the entire essay, but there is a clearly argued idea.) According to Bhatia, what would he see as a loss when a new 'postmodern' building goes up in a neighborhood? **What do you think his attitude is to urban development in general?**

- **Reporting Out** – We will spend a few minutes collecting the responses from #2 to #5 (concentrate on the sections in bold) to see what the class has discovered. Choose a 'reporter' on each team who will present your answers.

(~20 min.)

Postmodern Architecture (and Globalization)



#1



#2



#3



#4



#5



#6



#7



#8

Dubai: _____
 Los Angeles, CA: _____
 Las Vegas, NV: _____
 London, England: _____
 Memphis, TN: _____
 New York City: _____
 Pittsburgh, PA: _____
 Singapore: _____

When you walk in a postmodern city, you can easily become disoriented. There are often no landmarks, only reflective surfaces. There are no authentic neighborhoods. More and more, financial centers—and even apartment buildings—in the world's cities resemble one another. One cannot 'memorize' the postmodern city, only navigate its disorienting surfaces. (Based on ideas from Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, 1991).