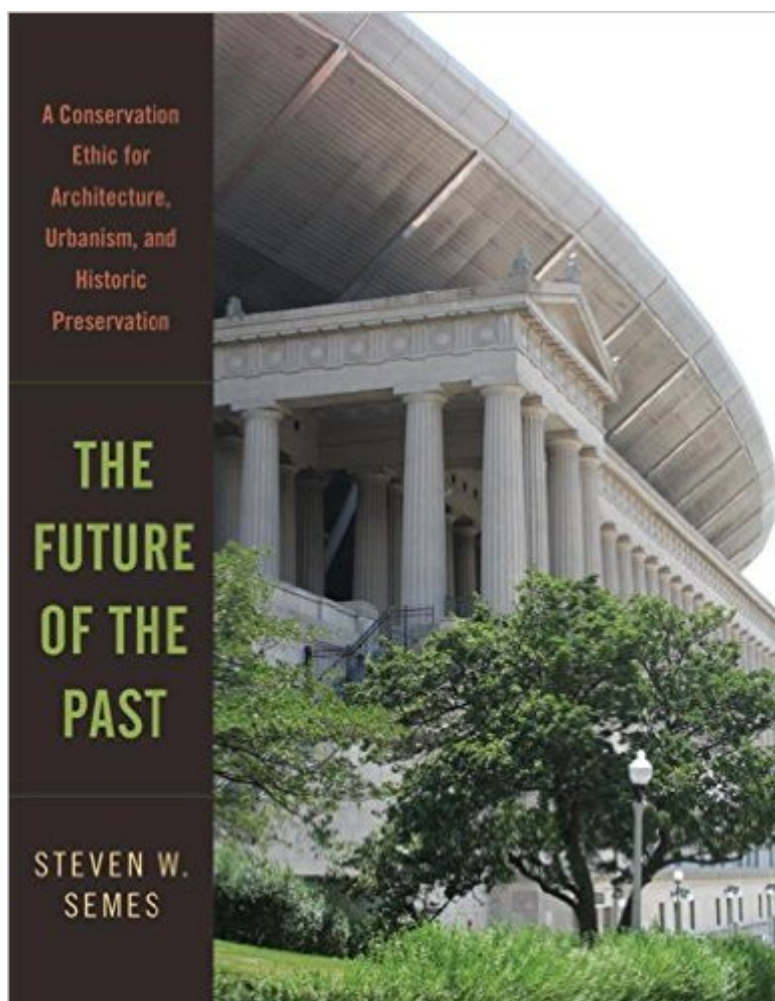


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# The Future Of The Past: A Conservation Ethic For Architecture, Urbanism, And Historic Preservation



## Synopsis

A comprehensive and eloquent argument for a 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

Our cities have many problems, of course, but architect Steven W. Semes, who looks carefully at urban buildings and urban growth, sees the particular problems of preservation. He has detailed the history of those problems, the philosophies of their solution, and his own proposals for respectful progress in a beautifully illustrated book, *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation* (Norton). The great difficulty is that old buildings fall down or fall to desuetude, and are continually replaced by new ones, resulting in clashes of style. Semes, in a comprehensive historical text, shows that this is nothing new; Andrea Palladio himself in 1545 repudiated the Gothic style by cladding the medieval town hall of Venice with classical stone columns and sculpture. It looks all in place to us now after all these centuries, but no length of time will make Semes's examples of modernist buildings imposed among older ones look

fitting. It is the modernist imposition that Semes is trying to explain and oppose, although he repeatedly explains that he admires modernist buildings in their place: "This book is not an argument against modernism or in favor of classicism; rather, it is an argument for \_continuity and wholeness\_ regardless of style." For those of us who are not architects, this might seem a tiny and particularized dispute, but not only is Semes's argument convincing, it convinces the reader of the importance of the issue to the well-being of our cities.

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