

Huxtable Was Here

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If New York seems a little less exciting this morning, that is because Ada Louise Huxtable is leaving *The Times*. If America's most grotesque structures stand a little straighter, that is because she won't be kicking them around in our columns quite as often. And if urban planning and preserving lose out more often to greed, it will be because scholarship has stolen her from journalism. But we come to this moment with pride: after two decades of instruction from such a sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued humanist, the American city is a finer, saner place.

As the first full-time architecture critic in an American newspaper, Mrs. Huxtable invented a new profession and, quite simply, changed the way most of us see and think about man-made environments. A champion of intelligent landmarking, she showed a generation how to control the wrecker's ball. A sensitive analyst of every kind of construction, she taught us to recognize "the built world as an act of design."

In every downtown there is a treasure she helped to save, like Grand Central Terminal, or validate, like the Ford Foundation's interior park. And no

failed edifice was too grand to escape being put in its place by her pen. Washington's Kennedy Center will always be "a cross between a concrete candy box and a marble sarcophagus in which the art of architecture lies buried." Miami Beach will always be the place where she contracted "a terrible case of the Fountainblues." The World Trade Center remains "a conundrum: the daintiest big buildings in the world."

As our colleague in this space, Mrs. Huxtable preached power, not sentiment. She did not oppose destroying the old, only replacing too many good buildings with bad ones. She was enthusiastically for civilized renewal; the costly and maligned Westway struck her at once as "New York's planning opportunity of the century."

Ada Louise Huxtable is moving on, to reflect again on the city as art with a coveted MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship. But what she leaves is indestructible. "What I really want to say," she once said of her essays in these pages, "is that, like Kilroy, Huxtable was here." Was she ever.

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