Journal of Architectural Education
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjae20

Looking Like Developed: Aesthetics and Ethics in Rwandan Housing Projects

Yutaka Sho[a]
[a] Syracuse University
Published online: 14 Oct 2014.

To cite this article: Yutaka Sho (2014) Looking Like Developed: Aesthetics and Ethics in Rwandan Housing Projects, Journal of Architectural Education, 68:2, 199-208, DOI: 10.1080/10464883.2014.937237

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2014.937237

Looking Like Developed
Aesthetics and Ethics in Rwandan Housing Projects

Yutaka Sho
Syracuse University

This article examines the relationship between "modern" aesthetics and ethics in the context of Rwandan architecture and urbanism. In Rwanda, global capital and the general desire for an improved life manifest in the built environment, and both urban high-rises and rural villages attempt to look like "modern" buildings from the northern hemisphere. The "modern" aesthetics take on the difficult task of dealing with memories of the past violence as an integral process of development. Using Rwandan housing projects as a case study, this article investigates the meanings, expectations, and possibilities for modern aesthetics.

Introduction

On sunny Saturdays, the Kimihurura Roundabout in Kigali, Rwanda, buzzes with wedding guests in colorful headdresses and neckties (Figure 1). In one of Africa's densest countries where scarce flatland is farmed and people have large extended families, a beautified roundabout is the perfect stage for ceremonies. Designed to allow the smooth flow of traffic, on wedding days the roundabout is nevertheless jammed with decorated SUVs dropping off attendees and rubber-necking vehicles. A statue of the last Rwandan queen carved in white stone stands tall in the center like a candle on a cake. Surrounding the roundabout, a convention center, a Radisson hotel, and an IT park are under construction by a Chinese contractor. They will create a suitably "modern" background for wedding photos. In those photos, the buildings' program, scale, and three-dimensionality will be insignificant.

This article examines the relationships between spaces of international development, people's occupation of and aspirations for them, and their shared aesthetics that manifest in Rwandan housing construction. Progressing in parallel to the new urban construction projects in Kigali is a government policy to relocate its twelve million citizens to rural planned settlements. This fervor in building, urban and rural, large and small, is supported by international development aid that has flooded the country since the genocide in 1994. Despite their apparent disparity, both glassy hotels and village houses are being financed or destroyed in pursuit of the developed look. At the same time, challenged by the lingering effects of the genocide, Rwandans are using physical space to address issues of reconciliation and justice. In a country where speech is censored and public space is a luxury enjoyed by a select few, open conversation retreats to the relative safety of domestic space. As roundabout weddings are evidence of the overlap between development ideals and unexpected practices, rural housing reflects the conflicting forces of global development pressures, local needs for establishing peace, and the role of development aesthetics.

I first visited the country in 2008 and have returned annually since. In 2011, I taught at the country's young and only architecture department for one semester. In 2013, GA Collaborative, the nonprofit design firm I cofounded, planned, designed, and built a small prototype house and trained local people and architecture students in construction. Although we originally aimed to support local development efforts, it soon became clear that Rwandan models and the delivery of development derived from a complex mixture of Western, Eastern, and indigenous origins, real and imagined. In this article, based on literary analysis and observations on the ground, I argue that Rwandan "modern" housing projects offer a site for negotiating between development and peace building in a highly controlled postconflict space. They do so by incorporating modern aesthetics' concealed opposites—taboos, secrets, ugliness, and absurdities—in the construction process.

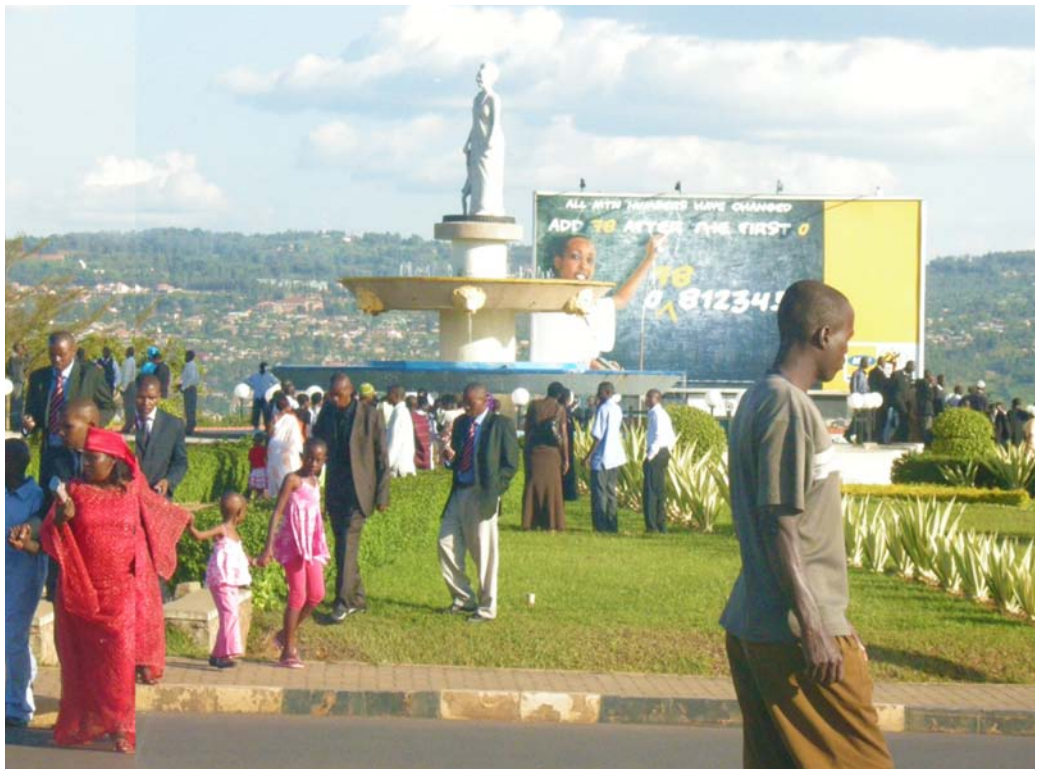

Figure 1. Kimihurura Roundabout, Kacyiru, Rwanda, 2008. Photograph by Christopher Bartlett.

Looking Developed

Although the critics of international development projects have declared that the development era is over, its allure persists in many parts of Africa.[1] Development ideology, policies, and projects have promised modernization in the so-called Third World since the 1940s. James Scott argued in *Seeing Like a State* that the goal of development is to "help render society legible to the state via taxation, property titles and planned housing in order to control a previously disorganized field."[2] James Ferguson has claimed, however, that the field was never disorganized and the goal was never efficiency. Instead of seeing and acting like an efficient modern bureaucratic state, African states are trying to *look* like a state, and their goal has been to get their "hands on more and more things, but without forming a coordinated and rationalized apparatus of planning and control."[3] Here, the state's audience is not only its people but also nations and NGOs that are potential donors, allies, and enemies around the globe. Along the line of this thinking, then, to the power that *looks like a state*, resultant development products such as buildings, cities, and people must *look* developed and modern, even if they cannot or do not care to function like it. In Rwanda, "modernity" is performed by the people, on Saturdays in the Kimihurura Roundabout.

However the Rwandan modern lifestyle and look are distinct from Western architectural modernism or other contemporary architectural styles. For instance, "modern" lifestyle and looks do not originate in the industrialization, urbanity, and advanced technology that are associated with classic modernity or contemporary definitions. Instead, modern products such as windows, doors, and furniture in Rwanda are mostly handmade in small workshops.[4] The main construction expenses are not labor costs but for materials, equipment, and imported specialized expertise. These factors result in such phenomena as custom-made modern buildings that have nothing to do with mass production, technology, low cost, speed, infinite design options per parametricism, or simulated environmental analyses. Modern buildings in Rwanda are defined by orthogonal masonry walls. Roofs are corrugated and galvanized steel sheets. Steel windows and doors look identical but are slightly different due to their handmade nature. It is not the scale, material, building technique, location, cost, style, or existence of modern equipment that hint at their modernity. The modern looks are independent of the delivery of development.

Regardless of their varied meanings, modern architectural projects are implemented as rigid policies. A handful of new high-rises sprouting from the hills of Kigali are visible from the surrounding valleys (Figure 2). The gleaming towers are home to banks, multinational company headquarters, and 24-hour shopping malls. Large mansions of international NGOs in affluent neighborhoods and glass high-rises bear Chinese and Kenyan names on their protective tarps.[5] The master plan by Colorado-based OZ Architects is being aggressively, if selectively, implemented.

Figure 2. The hill of downtown Kigali, 2013. Photograph by James Setzler.

Low-income neighborhoods are demolished according to the plan, only to pop up again down the street. Near the large traffic roundabout in the city center (a different one from the wedding roundabout), armed guards stand by to cite anyone who dares to step on the manicured lawn. There is the country's first public toilet, equipped with CCTV. Compared to other African nations, modern Rwanda is orderly, clean, and safe, showcasing the development economy at its best.

Not only space but "modern" lifestyles and aesthetics are defined by the government and imposed in the form of social engineering. The street vendors, many of them low-income women, have been outlawed. To construct toilets, to make compost pits, to wear shoes, to be clean, to wear school uniforms, and to dry dishes on tables instead of on grass are all national policies.[6] People's bodies too are sites to be developed, modernized, and urbanized by the government. The mayor of each of the thirty districts signs a performance contract (*imihigo*) with the president to reach development goals and must prove their progress in annual televised reporting. *Imihigo* has expanded to the household level, and families are held accountable for reaching achievements that "'will [be] base[d] on the government's goals meant to uplift the country's economy and the people's welfare,' and which will be assessed by the local authorities."[7]

Scholarship on urban informal settlements has revealed that urbanization does not equate to development, however: instead, industrialization and subsistence farming occur side by side in numerous urban spaces worldwide and certainly in Rwanda.[8] The UN's policy recommendations are based on the prediction that the world's urban population will reach 50 percent in 2050.[9] Such recommendations exacerbate the widening gap between the government's urban-focused policies and rural reality in Rwanda, where 80 percent of the population is sustenance farmers.[10] In spaces where urbanity resides adjacent to rural practices, and urbanity does not lead to development, the choice between urban (assumed to be modern and developed) and rural (assumed to be traditional and underdeveloped) identities and aesthetics are not automatically determined by context. At the same time, the choice between urban and rural, or modern and nonmodern, is not a free choice: it depends on one's social and economic abilities to obtain it.[11] African modern aesthetics are difficult to pin down: they appear in the same sentence with development, yet they do not require development in order to be defined. In the remainder of this article, I will develop a theoretical framework for Rwandan "modern" aesthetics based on Sarah Nuttall's propositions about African aesthetics.

Aesthetics and Ethics in Africa

Nuttall argues in *Beautiful Ugly* that aesthetics in Africa have been historically constrained by an ethical framework defined by Euro-American writers. In these writings, beauty/ugly have stood for good/bad, white/black, developed/underdeveloped, or modern/traditional

Figure 3. Batsinda, 2012. Photograph by author.

and have not been investigated with other contingencies such as culture, form, or sensation.[12] This is because either African aesthetics are considered not worth serious theorization or, "in view of the forms of human degradation which the African continent is seen to speak, to talk about beauty has been implicitly encoded as not simply superfluous but indeed morally irresponsible if not reprehensible."[13] In other words, Westerners tend to think that ethical problems need to be solved before aesthetics could be discussed in Africa. And if African aesthetics are discussed at all, they are historically associated with pornographic depictions of human suffering such as starving children pictured on charitable organizations' newsletters or as the indigenous objects of occult rituals, such as Picasso's famous masks.[14] These "authentic" African aesthetics have been deployed by non-Africans and Africans alike to stand for otherness: to incite fear and to reaffirm the supremacy of Western culture or to establish a unique black identity such as in Negritude.[15]

Divorcing aesthetics from ethics reveals that aestheticized African suffering allows Westerners to claim a moral high ground and justifies military, economic, and humanitarian interventions. The dissociation between the two concepts also reveals that the seemingly respectful categorization of African aesthetics as authentically primitive results in its isolation, irrelevancy, and disqualification from being critically examined. Disentangling aesthetics and ethics could liberate, redefine, and reclaim both. Similarly, decoupling "modern" aesthetics from postgenocide ethics in Rwanda allows us to examine the significance and potentials of both for architecture.

Building in Rwanda

Bye Bye Nyakatsi

The government's law regarding thatched roofs and mud brick homes (*nyakatsi*) is a good illustration of Rwanda's commitment to development and how it uses the development *look* as policy. The goal of the law is to eliminate this low-cost building type whose circular plans and windowless mud walls distinguish themselves from "modern" housing. Government-sanctioned houses are made of blocks of mud-and-cement mix, with rectangular plans and rectangular windows and topped with tin-sheet roofs. Citing public-health concerns and the inherent danger of building with flammable materials, *nyakatsi* are sometimes forcefully demolished, rendering the inhabitants homeless. A government official defended the "Bye Bye *Nyakatsi*" law by saying, "As the country develops, the living standards of the people should also improve."[16] The official line might be more convincing if high-profile hotels such as the Hotel des Milles Collines did not proudly tout thatch as an authentic cultural artifact of Rwanda, or low-income residents were not forcefully evacuated. The unspoken reason behind the law may be that the aesthetic of *nyakatsi* contradicts the modern image the government wishes to portray in accordance with Vision 2020, Rwanda's development master plan. As a Kigali city planner said, *nyakatsi* are banned because they do not look developed.[17]

Despite the government's aggressive national policies on the built environment, the modernization of domestic space is nuanced, and the reason for this is rooted in Rwanda's political climate. In Rwanda it is against the law for the media to openly question ethnic inequalities. Those who criticize the government are often labeled as supporting the genocide ideology, and their organizations have been closed down or harassed.[18] As a result of ubiquitous surveillance, candid conversation retreats to one of the few safe locations left: the home. As sites of reconciliation, homes

Figure 4.
Transformation of Batsinda from 2008 to 2011. Photographs/ drawings by author.

become concealed and conflicted. Rwandan practice defies the theory of modern public space as a platform for democratic debate. It is amidst this atmosphere of tension that the country-wide housing policy, *imidugudu,* was signed into law in 1996 to relocate all Rwandans to planned settlements. I will return to the issue of "modern" aesthetics after an overview of *imidugudu*.

Imidugudu, the National Housing Policy

Policies to relocate rural people to concentrated housing sites have been tried in Rwanda since the period of Belgian colonialism. The Paysannats program was initiated in 1953 by the colonists, continued by the government after independence in 1962, and reinforced by the World Bank from 1974 to 1986. Paysannats provided each farmer with two hectares of thin rectangular land with one short end facing a road. Ethnic favoritism, forced farming techniques, and the exacerbation of class gaps are only some of the reasons for its unpopularity.[19]

Villagization has also been implemented in Tanzania's *ujamaa*, and in Mozambique and Ethiopia in East Africa.[20] All of these programs were based on ideological foundations that neglected existing social structures, and most have failed.[21] Yet the Rwandan government claims that theirs will be different, and in any case, that there is not another option to house the more than two million returnees from exile.[22]

Batsinda, a new suburb of Kigali, is a typical government

settlement built to fulfill the *imidugudu* housing policy (Figure 3). Many of the residents were relocated from a neighborhood in the city center to make way for commercial and upper-class housing according to the award-winning Kigali Conceptual Master Plan, developed by OZ Architects and implemented by Surbana from Singapore. As with all projects constructed under the *imidugudu* policy, Batsinda's rectangular houses follow an orderly rhythm along the steep contour. The project is located near an existing village so residents can take advantage of a market and schools. "Like western homes," no property walls were designed (Figure 4).[23] A breezeway between the living and utility buildings was provided as a shaded work area. Two years after moving in, some residents have filled them to create more interior space and privacy. Some erected stone or brick property walls with steel gates. The Kigali city planner who accompanied me commented on the walls: "This is no good. What do they have to hide behind the walls?"[24] Four years after the opening of Batsinda, well-off residents have expanded the building volume to twice the original size to accommodate large families despite the government's campaign to reduce the average number of children. Rainwater collectors were a response to unreliable and privatized water pumps and were perhaps the most welcome amenity for these homes. A biogas digester, a mechanism that collects methane gas from human waste, was provided in each home. Everyone cooks the old way, however, using wood or charcoal instead of with the methane gas stove-top burner. The residents cannot be blamed for their lack of compliance with the rules, for most amenities, such as electric wiring and gas pipes, were capped at the property lines and the residents were responsible for completing the installation. For those who could not afford to pay the mortgage (the number of vacant homes has increased in the five years since their construction), additional amenities may not be a priority. Batsinda is transforming irrespective of the government's vision for modernization.

I have visited a dozen planned settlements built between the 1970s and today. Many of them were still awaiting infrastructure such as water, latrines, electricity, or reliable bus service (Figure 5). One village in Butare funded by a Chinese corporation was by far the best built, with strong materials and precise construction. Another government-initiated planned village in Butare used the site-and-services method and was in a desperate state. Although site-and-services was initially promoted by John Turner and backed by the World Bank to give design and construction agencies to residents, this village suggested that many low-income Rwandans are not able to provide homes for themselves even if the site and infrastructure were provided. Given that nearly 50 percent of the federal budget comes from foreign aid, Rwandan spaces are built in response to a mixture of local and global agendas. Rwandan housing is a testing ground for various foreign interests to invest in a state that wants to look "modern." In these spaces residents are excluded from decision-making processes yet held accountable for instilling the modern look per the *imihigo* performance contract.

Accompanying the housing policy is the 2005 land law that regulates tenure. It requires farms that are less than one hectare in area to be combined into cooperatives to prevent property miniaturization and to promote monocrop cultivation. Despite the tendency of such policies to expose farmers to market fluctuation and disease, cooperative farming does ensure that risks are shared between members and increases opportunities for a larger market share.[25] Yet most farm land is either nonexistent or located far from *imidugudu*.[26] There is no doubt that the houses in planned settlements are better built on average and that they provide land tenure security for some residents. But if one does not originally own the land, one must rent farther from the city. Displaced to a remote location, away from economic centers and family ties, or without means of obtaining food, life in a planned village could turn out to "undo" modernity.

Although the *imidugudu* policy is strictly enforced and the houses are aesthetically similar, they vary in methods of implementation and meanings they convey. Two types of *imidugudu* delivery highlight where the government policy fails. The combination of limited freedom of speech and lack of public space makes the Rwandan public sphere inconducive to reflecting on the genocide, except along the official narrative of good versus evil. This fact places the onus on domestic space to negotiate between external development pressure and internal needs for dealing with memories of violence. Rwandan housing projects and their "modern" aesthetics are integral to the process of translating the divided past into the shared present. The first *imidugudu* construction process, TIG, worked well with the government-initiated security strategy to providing housing for all while separating ethnicities (therefore making them legible to the state).[27] The second strategy by Sasaki and REACH offers an alternative: it has taken on the peace and reconciliation program and merges it into housing construction.

TIG and Counter-TIG

Walking down the hilly paths of rural Rwanda, one encounters groups of men dressed in pink, orange, or blue uniforms, holding hoes, machetes, or shovels. These are the prisoners who are deployed in the first construction strategy, Travaux d'Intérêt Général (TIG). In TIG, convicted genocide offenders (*tigistes*) work on building projects and elsewhere in lieu of imprisonment. When TIG was launched by the Rwandan government in 2005, the majority of *tigistes* returned to their villages to restore what they had destroyed during the genocide, and some took part in the reconstruction of buildings for survivors. Today, most *tigistes* are held in work camps.[28]

Figure 5. Various *imidugudu*, 2008–2010. Photographs by author.

Figure 6. Sasaki and REACH housing construction project in the Kirehe district, Rwanda, 2012. Mr. Tadeo is in an Obama shirt. Photographs by author.

The camp model allows the government to take full advantage of the free labor for rural development.

In response to the government's TIG, Dr. Kazuyuki Sasaki, a development and postconflict reconciliation scholar-practitioner, organizes offenders to construct houses for the victims of their own violence. The second *imidugudu* construction type resulted from Sasaki and Bayisenge's research, which found that both offenders and survivors wished that TIG was used as a means of reparation and reconciliation. One of the TIG workers said, "After five years or more, we will go back to our communities and then we will have to start from zero for building reconciliation with survivors."[29] Sasaki launched his project in partnership with the local organization Reconciliation Evangelism and Christian Healing (REACH), and since 2007 they have built around forty homes, mainly in the Kirehe District in Eastern Province.[30] Although the organizers are Christians, being Christian is not a prerequisite, and there are Muslim participants as well. The idea of house construction as reparation was suggested by the offenders themselves during the initial workshop with Sasaki and REACH, while they were still employed in TIG. A group of offenders subsequently decided to continue the work voluntarily after completing their sentences.

In Sasaki's project, survivors have invited their offenders to build their homes, which will bear the marks of their presence and the memory of the genocide for as long as the survivors occupy the houses. In addition, the survivors allowed the construction process to be openly documented for public scrutiny. Private testimonies became linkable between the offenders, the survivors, and their community via the house construction process. The project shows that, while new public spaces such as roundabouts are off-limits and discussing ethnicity in public is prohibited in Rwanda, domestic spaces allow openness in privacy. Instead of keeping enemies outside while protecting those inside, Sasaki's walls are magnetic: they attract the opposite sides of the war and give them time during construction and within physical space for a simple talk.

An interview with Habiyakare Tadeo, a former offender and volunteer house builder, took place at the construction site for a house

for a survivor in Kirehe in July 2012 (Figure 6). Tadeo said that the former offenders chose building construction as a means of reparation because they had no other skills. Anyone could build, he said, and housing construction was one of the easiest, necessary, and available ways to translate their repentance into form. To the question of why they constructed domestic space, he answered that the offenders had already worked on public projects while they were serving TIG sentences for the state. When they decided to work with Sasaki and REACH, it was unanimously agreed that the individual survivors should directly benefit from the construction projects.[31]

In Rwanda, where public language on the genocide is strictly controlled, housing by Sasaki and REACH is one of the only manifestations of dialogue between the survivors and the offenders. When offenders build for the survivors, houses become both proof of justice delivered and a space in which the meanings and validity of justice can be questioned, albeit in private. By physically occupying space and time for discussion, offenders and survivors redefine domestic and public territories and imagine the reciprocity of their actions. As a promise of reparation and future peace, it is crucial for all involved that structures summon respect: even if the walls are mud bricks, the aesthetics must restore survivors' dignity and a place in society. Here, the aesthetic of the house is evaluated not only for its pragmatic, economic, and cultural values but also for its ability to restore the humanity violated by the genocide. And the houses are "modern" without exception: rectangular and with a tin-sheet roof.

In Rwandan spaces that confront the past, the manifestation of architecture is meager: they are simple houses built of mud. Though they may be poorly constructed, the spatiality of these houses demands and enables thoughts and actions that abstract constructs of peace fail to achieve. Beyond visualizing the reconciliation process, Rwandan housing creates spaces that allow both survivors and offenders to work toward an unknown future. Where freedom of speech is restricted, in the absence of formal public space, and under the looming threat of another violent event, rural Rwandan domestic space has taken on the role of a public sphere neglected in "modern" urban planning. Housing offers a much wider array of meanings and expectations for "modern" aesthetics, in contrast to the majority of construction that is driven by a narrowly defined idea of development.

Modern Aesthetics in Rwanda

As Nuttall suggests, aesthetics in Africa have been restricted by ethics that fill Western designers with anxiety. At the same time, the meanings of and expectations for "modern" aesthetics are not singular or readily legible, as shown in the urban roundabout and rural housing examples discussed in this article. Therefore, the simple application of modern or contemporary architectural styles to Rwandan buildings will not suffice to widen the discourse. In Rwanda and perhaps in other postconflict spaces, architectural aesthetics need to address issues beyond innovative material use, precision of construction, or skills training as promoted by the mainstream development agenda.

In response, nonarchitects such as Sasaki and REACH have pushed "modern" beyond the existing definitions and charged the aesthetics to take an active part in political mediations. Their modern aesthetics are attached to some of the only places where people can discuss taboos, ugliness, the secrets of past violence, and current strong-armed and absurd development policies. Taboos, secrets, dissonance—these are elements of aesthetics that constitute the other side of modernity, the side that international development policies try to conceal and contain. The construction process put forward by Sasaki and REACH has identified complexities and discrepancies as starting points for thinking about practicable peace. They have revealed the "irritating differences and contiguity" among ethnicities and classes, between offenders and survivors, and between global capital and internal aspirations for cohabitation.[32] There, at their construction sites, one can imagine the misalignments between people's memories, misplaced blames, fears, resentments, seemingly insurmountable miscommunication, and emotions possibly and gradually changing over the course of the house construction. As Doris Sommer articulates, irreconcilable differences and the system that allows them to cohabit are the very basis of democracy, and Rwandan housing translates this idea into space.[33]

It is also in Rwandan housing, however, where the binary inherent in aesthetics breaks down and exposes the faulty moral high ground of diversity argued by Sommer. In Sasaki and REACH's project, for instance, it will be difficult to imagine aesthetic diversity for their houses. Genocide offenders and survivors alike will choose to build modern buildings for they are the most powerful spatial symbols of development. Square plans and imported materials legitimize the project for the audience both inside who construct and live in the structure and from the outside looking in. For them, building and living in a *nyakatsi* mud house would be simply unacceptable. Modern housing has an economic mandate as well. Not only are households made accountable for development as per the *imihigo* performance contract, future international investment depends on the development *look*. Painting a picture of Rwanda as developed may present it as an economic, political,

and racial equal in the eyes of the West. While modern aesthetics may invite further investments and an improved life, it is indeed difficult to divorce aesthetics from ethics.

Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to sketch a relational diagram of "modern" aesthetics and their meanings in postconflict architecture in Rwanda. The multitude of desires, fears, and ethical mandates complicates Rwandan "modern" aesthetics.

In Rwanda, what is at stake is not the discovery and stabilization of the right understanding of "modern" aesthetics. The aim is not even to create new aesthetics.[34] In fact, a close study of the myriad complexity of Rwandan housing suggests that the new image of "modern" is as much a culprit of disappointment as the unfulfilled promises of development. Nevertheless, Rwandans are not stuck with failed modern projects that represent "second best" and all they can afford to build.[35] Instead of doing away with modern by appropriation, Rwandan housing translates it.

Both downtown high-rises and rural planned housing projects are driven by the Rwandan aspiration to develop and to gain foreign aid funds. On one hand, a building must *look* modern in order to demonstrate its development credibility: thus the government's policy to demolish all mud and thatch buildings. On the other hand, those affected by the genocide use the construction process and modern aesthetics to deal with the consequences of the past violence and create an opportunity to contemplate possibilities of peace. The construction process provides the time and space to negotiate and translate difficult memories and absurd policies into a shared society. The final houses must look "modern" as a symbol of reparation and restored dignity. These buildings are necessarily domestic given the controlled freedom of public speech. In Rwanda, people multiply the meanings of modern aesthetics in homes that they build for each other.

Subject matter gains new meanings and loses others in the process of translation. Original definitions and spontaneous interpretations become equally valid. The act of translation encourages users to restructure the syntax without losing the shared datum. Translation destabilizes thoughts and actions and demonstrates their fallibility, while releasing exciting possibilities. Such translation occurs when aesthetics and ethics are decoupled, rejoined, and the process is repeated in modern architecture in Rwanda. Different ways of looking, thinking, and occupying could be developed even further by designers of modern Rwandan homes. Once freed from development ethics, modern housing could include taboos and the ugly, such as traditional building technology (weaving), banned materials (mud and thatch), shunned people (genocide offenders), and disenfranchised classes (the poor and women). This way the goals of modern aesthetics will no longer be driven solely by governmental agendas but by local needs for shared community. Such decoupling/rejoining of ethics and aesthetics could invigorate the architectural translation of modern not only for its inhabitants but also for those who plan and implement the construction—the local government and foreign funders. In this translation, then, the original meaning of "modern" becomes one of many other associations that aesthetics can unleash.

Author Biography

Yutaka Sho is a partner at GA Collaborative, a nonprofit design firm. In 2013 GAC built a prototype home in Masoro, Rwanda, in collaboration with the local association with support from a Brunner Grant from AIA NY. Sho researches the role of architecture and construction in the unevenly developed globe, and she has researched, taught, and/or practiced in Bangladesh, Ghana, Japan, Lebanon, Turkey, Uganda, and Rwanda. She is an Assistant Professor at Syracuse University.

Notes

1 For critiques of development, see, among many others, Wolfgang Sachs, *The Development Dictionary* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press; and London and New York: Zed Books, 1999); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). For an analysis of persistent development, see Peter Geschiere, Birgit Meyer, and Peter Pels, "Introduction," in *Readings in Modernity in Africa,* ed. Peter Geschiere, Birgit Meyer, and Peter Pels (London: International African Institute in association with Indiana University Press, 2008), 1.

2 James Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); see also the *Humanity* interview with James Ferguson, pt. 1: development as "swarming state power" by Editorial Collective, November 22, 2009, http://www.humanityjournal.org/blog/2013/06/humanity-interview-james-ferguson-pt-1-development-swarming-state-power.

3 Ferguson, *Humanity* interview (note 2).

4 Manual modification of industrial objects extends to automobiles. See Jojada Verrips and Birgit Meyer, "Kwaku's Car: The Struggle and Stories of a Ghanaian Long-Distance Taxi Driver," in Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels, *Readings in Modernity in Africa* (note 1).

5 China Star Construction Company, Beijing Construction Engineering Group, New Century Development, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, China Communications and Construction Company, and Century Park Hotels and Residences are some of the Chinese construction and development companies that are active in Rwanda. Kenyan firms include CN International, Hass Consult, Noah Management, Knight Frank, and Axis Real Estate.

6 Albert-Baudoin Twizeyimana, "Rwanda: La propreté à marché forcée," *InfoSud-Belgique*, June 29, 2006. Quoted in An Ansoms, "Rwanda's Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction: The Mismatch between Elite's Ambitions and Rural Realities," in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 240–251, on 246.

7 "Performance Contracts to Be Signed at Household Level," *New Times,* November 19, 2002. Cited in Ansoms, "Rwanda's Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction" (note 6), 247.

8 Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London and New York: Verso, 2007); Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World* (London: Routledge, 2004); Garth Myers, *African*

Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice (London: Zed Books, 2011); "Daily Chart: The Urbanization Trap," *The Economist,* 2012. Last modified October 2, 2012, http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/10/daily-chart.

9 United Nations, *Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development: An International Perspective* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2011), http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/PopDistribUrbanization/PopulationDistributionUrbanization.pdf (accessed February 27, 2014).

10 Throughout the book, contributing authors point out the multiple gaps between the Rwandan people's desires and the government's vision, but especially in Ansoms, "Rwanda's Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction" (note 6).

11 Ferguson, *Humanity* interview (note 2), 111. For a case in Turkey, see Tahire Erman, "Becoming 'Urban' or Remaining 'Rural': The View of Turkish Rural-to-Urban Migrants on the 'Integration' Question," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 4 (November 1998): 541–561; for a case in Ghana, see Deborah Pellow, "Internal Transmigrants: A Dagomba Diaspora," *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 1 (2011): 132–147.

12 Sarah Nuttall, "Introduction: Rethinking Beauty," in *Beautiful Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics*, ed. Sarah Nuttall (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 8–29.

13 Ibid., 13.

14 For discussion on images of suffering in Africa, see Niranjan S. Karnik, "The Photographer, His Editor, Her Audience, Their Humanitarians: How Rwanda's Pictures Travel Through the American Psyche," *Bulletin* 50/51 (Winter/Spring 1998), http://concernedafricascholars.org/docs/acasbulletin5051.pdf (accessed February 23, 2014); Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Invisible Again: Rwanda and Representation after Genocide," *African Arts* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 36–39, 86–95; Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa," *Granta* 92 (2005): 91–95; Asim Rafiqui, *How to Take Photos of Africa: Or, Where Intent and Ideas Collide,* March 16, 2010, http://arafiqui.wordpress.com/2010/03/16/how-to-photograph-africa-or-thank-goodness-for-a-semblance-of-intelligence/.

15 Nuttall, *Beautiful Ugly* (note 12), 11.

16 Edwin Musoni, "May, Set as Deadline to Eliminate Nyakatsi," *New Times*, January 8, 2011.

17 Conversation with V.R., June 2010. Mr. V.R. was then an employee of the Kigali City Planning Department and is now with the Rwanda Housing Authority.

18 See, e.g., Josh Kron, "Rwandan Editor Who Accused Officials in Shooting Is Killed," *New York Times*, June 26, 2010, sec. A7; Andrea Purdeková, "'Even if I Am Not Here, There Are So Many Eyes': Surveillance and State Reach in Rwanda," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 3 (September 2011): 475–497; Reporters Without Borders, *Journalist Held for "Deceiving Intelligence Services" and "Inventing Abduction,"* July 20, 2012, http://en.rsf.org/journalist-held-for-deceiving-20-07-2012,43075.html; Reporters Without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2013,* http://fr.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/classement_2013_gb-bd.pdf (accessed February 27, 2014); "Exiled Rwandan Journalist Killed in Uganda: Police," *Reuters,* December 2, 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/02/ozatp-uganda-killing-idAFJOE7B109520111202.

19 René Lemarchand, *The World Bank in Rwanda: The Case of the Office de valorisation agricole et pastorale du Mutara (OVAPAM)*, African Studies Program (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1982).

20 Mathijs van Leeuwen, "Rwanda's Imidugudu Programme and Earlier Experiences with Villagisation and Resettlement in East Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2001): 623–644.

21 Ibid.

22 Catharine Newbury, "High Modernism on the Ground Level: The *Imidugudu* Policy in Rwanda," in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 232.

23 Conversation with V.R., June 2010 (note 17).

24 Ibid.

25 Kathrin Wyss, *A Thousand Hills for 9 Million People: Land Reform in Rwanda: Restoration of Feudal Order or Genuine Transformation?,* FAST Country Risk Profile: Rwanda (Bern: Swisspeace, 2006); Chris Huggins, "Presidential Land Commission: Undermining Land Law Reform," in Straus and Waldorf, *Remaking Rwanda* (note 22), 252–265.

26 Newbury, "High Modernism" (note 22), 234.

27 Ibid., 229.

28 Kazuyuki Sasaki and Fortunée Bayisenge, *Community Service for Reconciliation? Perspectives on Rwanda's TIG Program*, Public Reforms in Rwanda, PIASS Publication Series, no. 1, (Butare, Rwanda: Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences, 2012), 10.

29 Ibid., 13.

30 Interview with Sasaki, December 4, 2011.

31 The interview was conducted on July 13, 2012, at the construction site in Rugando cell, Kigina sector, Kirehe district in Rwanda.

32 Doris Sommer, *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), and Sommer, *Bilingual Games: Some Literary Investigations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

33 Ibid, xiv.

34 Rodney Place, "Urban Imaging: The *Friche* Waiting to Happen," in Nuttall, *Beautiful Ugly* (note 12), 319.

35 For a critique of the West providing second best services to developing countries and cloaking it as charity, see Renzo Marten's art installation in the Congo, titled *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty* (2008).