



An argument for beauty
by Alain de Botton

Alain de Botton was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1969 and now lives in London. He is a writer of essayistic books that have been described as a 'philosophy of everyday life'. He's written on love, travel, architecture and literature. His books have been bestsellers in 30 countries.



ALAIN DE BOTTON
PHILOSOPHER, AUTHOR
AND PRESENTER

Six qualities of attractive cities

1

Order

Buildings should be somewhat uniform
in appearance and layout



2

Visible life

See people walking the streets,
working in shop windows



3

Compact
Don't sprawl



4

Orientation and mystery
Balance of large and
small streets



5

Scale

A building should be five stories max,
unless really worth more



6

A sense of the local

Reflect its unique cultural
and geographic qualities



1

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF LIVING IN AN UGLY CITY?

“The suffering that a bad city imposes is felt perpetually in large ways and small: it can be summed up as a sense that life is a darker experience than it needs to be.”

2

WHY DO UGLY CITIES CONTINUE TO BE BUILT?

“Ugly cities are just an unnecessary suffering we impose on ourselves. We know how to build nice cities. The models are there already; we just need to learn their lessons and apply them to the cities of the future.”

3

DOES THE PAST OFFER US A BETTER MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE PLACEMAKING?

“We have plenty of decent modern examples as well – 19th century Paris or 20th century Manhattan give us plenty of lessons we can use for now.”

4

CAN WE ALL AFFORD TO LIVE IN BEAUTIFUL CITIES?

“Making beautiful cities is no more expensive than cheap ones. Construction costs for beauty are no greater than for ugliness, because beautiful cities don’t require expensive materials. It’s all about forms, shapes, distances, widths etc. The hilltop villages and small towns of Italy or Greece are not expensive in any way, yet are among the most delightful of all urban patterns.”

Six in

5

WE OFTEN FOCUS ON CITIES AND OVERLOOK THE SUBURBS. CAN THEY BOTH THRIVE?

“Yes, suburbs have a role to play. The problem is just when the core centre is suburban in nature.”

6

WHAT DOES SUCCESSFUL PLACEMAKING LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

“The best new places have been built by the Dutch, like Java Island, the renovated dockland in Amsterdam. The best Dutch schemes build on traditional street patterns, where houses are close together – rather than dispersed between motorways – and heights of buildings are limited to six storeys. In other words, the best Dutch

schemes are wary of two great preconditions for bad urbanism: vast motorways and huge towers. Furthermore, the best Dutch schemes also work with traditional materials like brick and wood, rather than swathes of steel. Their shapes speak of today and the future, but their textures anchor us to tradition. The overall mood is like that of a modern citizen with a good memory.”



ABOUT
ALAIN DE BOTTON

Philosopher, author and presenter Alain de Botton started and helps to run a school in London called the School of Life, dedicated to a new vision of education.

Alain started writing at a young age. His first book, Essays in Love (titled On Love in the US) was published when he was 23. His most recent book is The Course of Love.

sights

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