

Jian Dong

Writing 5.28

Professor Van Kley

January 28, 2016

### An Impossible Balance: Regionalism at The Village in Breckenridge

Deep within the Rocky Mountains in Colorado is the small ski resort town of Breckenridge. Its idyllic setting is reflected in its rugged and natural style, albeit with all of the conveniences of modern technology. It is an oasis of rugged log cabin- and gold mining-themed architecture. A seemingly beautiful example of an artistic style known as critical regionalism, a style that combines modernist techniques with a unique regional flair. Nowhere is this style more apparent than at The Village at Breckenridge, a condominium complex set right at the base of the ski slopes. Although at first glance The Village is a beautiful example of critical regionalism done well, it is in actuality two isolated styles of design; the modernist exterior is so separated from the regionalist interior that any sort of meshing between the two styles is far from apparent. The unsuccessful efforts of the designers to blend two fundamentally different styles sheds light on the complex balance between old and new that is required by critical regionalism and casts doubts on the need for such an architectural style.

Critical regionalism, as defined by Kenneth Frampton, is an artistic style that aims to “mediate the universal civilization with elements derived *indirectly* from the peculiarities of a particular place” (Frampton 21). It is, in essence, a way to combat the encroaching of modern homogeneity on regional cultures by creating art that incorporates elements from both modernism and regionalism. That does require a fine balance, as not enough modernity would be nostalgic regionalism and not enough regionalism would come across as a gimmicky and

**Commented [NVK1]:** OK. This is a pretty successful introduction. You offer shared context, a clear initial sense of your methods, a starting position, and a clear claim that responds to that s.p.

You've added this gesture toward significance here, which helps to justify your project. I think it's effective.

It's possible that you could have made this broader significance more compelling by extending it a step further. So, instead of telling us that you'll help us see whether or not CR is needed, you might have told us that you'll help us see what our obligations are to balance local culture with universal design. That broader topic is likely to be more accessible for your audience, I think.

You always have a decision to make about what your audience is likely to find most engaging and what you think your project has the potential to do. In this case, I think a more expansive significance would likely have been better.

**Commented [NVK2]:** Or inefficient and impractical

inauthentic. Critics of critical regionalism, notably Keith Eggener, maintain that this blending requires a balance of both sides that is impossible to achieve. He argues that “[critical regionalism] makes paramount a struggle where no struggle might otherwise have been said to exist” (Eggener 234), which is to say that the intersection of the two styles would not exist had critical regionalism not forced the styles to be in opposition. So then what does Breckenridge have to do with all of this? The Village can be considered as a critical regionalist piece, as it attempts to blend the regionalist interior with the modern exterior.

**Commented [NVK3]:** I think that’s right.

**Commented [NVK4]:** For future academic writing contexts, you’ll want to try to express the topic/claim of a section at the beginning of the section, rather than at the end of the preceding section. I believe I posted a note on your conference draft about this moment. I think this makes for a less skimmable, less-clearly structured document.

The interior of the suites are full to the brim with traditional and regional decorations. Overall, the rooms have a very rustic color scheme, with off-beige walls and earthy red, brown, and beige curtains as seen in the background of figure 1. All of the sidings are finished in a neutral light brown, bringing out the natural colors of the wood. To add to the regional feel, each



Figure 1. The interior of the suites is very nostalgic regionalist, incorporating design cues from the Native American and gold mining history of the region.

suite has a wood-burning stove clad with unevenly cut rocks that are reminiscent of naturally occurring stones, as seen on the left side of the image. The furniture, too, is very regional in its use of

**Commented [NVK5]:** OK. This is precise language that avoids the problem of literal sourcing.

local woods in their natural state. The dining table has a rough, unfinished quality which is heightened by the sturdy chairs surrounding it. All of the pieces of the chairs are made from carefully processed pine logs that are still twisted in their natural shapes (foreground, figure 1).

**Commented [NVK6]:** Verifiably local? Or just seemingly local?

A chandelier made of elk antlers, shown in figure 2, hangs above the dining table, yet another reminder of the animals of the region. Paintings adorn the walls, presenting local vistas or scenes

**Commented [NVK7]:** Yes. A very powerful detail!



Figure 2. The chandelier is quintessentially regionalist in its use of actual antlers from local animals, reminding the viewer of the physical place of the Rocky Mountains.

of native people and animals to the viewer. Also hanging from the walls are faux-traditional tools made in a vintage (c. 1850s) style, such as wooden skis decorated with traditional motifs and snowshoes made of woven fibers. In the bedrooms, the story is much the same with bedframes made of sturdy pine logs and sheets and comforters carrying the same earthy color

scheme of the curtains. Drab green accents add to the down-to-earth feel of the room and suite as a whole and help to remind the viewer of the mountainous locale.

**Commented [NVK8]:** All very compelling evidence, well explained.

The exterior of the buildings is far removed from the traditional style found inside. Instead of organic forms and natural theme, the lines are crisp and sharp and very rectilinear, as shown in figure 3. Across all of the condominium buildings, there is not a single curved edge to be seen. Every window, every balcony, every protrusion fits together neatly into a grid pattern with clearly defined rows and columns. Its simplistic forms minimize the cost of building the complex, at the cost of losing the Rocky Mountain feel. Arguably, if the buildings were moved into a city anywhere in the country, it would not look out of place. Thus, convincing someone that The



Figure 3. The exterior of the buildings is very simplistic and rectilinear, only showing the heritage and culture of the region in its color palette.

**Commented [NVK9]:** Very clearly described. Nice work.

**Commented [NVK10]:** I suspect this is true, but it's a bit of a guess, right? Perhaps language that acknowledges that you don't actually have evidence to verify that these were cost-saving measures would have been useful here.

Its simplistic forms would seem to minimize the cost....

Village was simply a new apartment complex in Boston, for example, would not be difficult. The only slight indication of the actual location of the complex is the color scheme, a mix of earthy beige and red-brown tones. Although the design does make an attempt at referencing the unique region that it is set in, the attempt is weak at best.

While the designers attempted to connect the different design styles in both the interior and the exterior of the buildings, the results were far too weak. The bathrooms of the suites can be seen as a completely failed attempt at bridging the gap between the two styles of design. In contrast to the rest of the suite, the bathroom is decorated with modern materials and colors. Vibrant crimsons replace the earthy reds of the living room, and the stainless steel faucets and white granite countertop combine to create a cold, sterilized feel. This was, as a design choice, most likely necessary as a bathroom with the same relatively drab colors found elsewhere in the suite would make it seem run-down and outdated. Still, design-wise the modern bathroom feels very out of place compared to the rest of the suite. In addition, the brashness of the bathroom design compared to the rest of the suite demonstrates no effort to blend the two styles of design, but seems as if the designers had drawn it up separately and then hurriedly tacked it on. Another place where the designers attempted to merge modernism and regionalism is the fire pit shown in

figure 4. It is hard to miss as it is in the plaza in the middle of the complex, and it has a distinctive faux-traditional feel to it. It is the only structure in the complex to be round rather than rectangular, and boasts a wood-burning fire pit with



Figure 4. The surrounding modernist buildings only serve to further highlight the regionalist style of the fire pit.

**Commented [NVK11]:** You mean because of the color? (the clock tower might also be a gesture, given the snow-sloughing roof-line).

**Commented [NVK12]:** I'm not sure you need to speculate about the process. Worry you lose a bit of your ethos as a credible interpreter in this moment.

**Commented [NVK13]:** Very useful case to analyze.

This particular phrase gives the impression of a "coordinate" structure (to use Williams and Bizup's phrase). This example seems like just an addition, rather than something that will advance the paragraph in some way. Ideally, we'll be moving into slightly new territory and that new-ness will be expressed by the transition.

benches all around it for people to sit and warm themselves up. The shape of the roof is decidedly Native American-inspired, reminiscent of the teepees of the White River Utes that had lived in the region before the arrival of white settlers. The faux-stone foundation and dark wooden columns of the fire pit add to the natural feel, most likely a conscious choice by the designers to tie in the modernity of the surrounding buildings with the nature of the location and the ruggedness of the surrounding mountains and elements of the local culture. Although this is a valiant attempt at bridging the gap between the two design styles, it is simply not enough. As a whole, it is clear that The Village fails at effectively creating the active blend of regionalism and modernism. What is unclear is whether that merger is even possible.

Several simple changes could help the design of The Village more effectively reflect what was originally intended by critical regionalism. The interior would benefit from a lighter atmosphere, which could be achieved through the use of brighter, more saturated paints and thinner, more graceful furniture. This would also help tie the bathroom in with the style of the rest of the suite more, making it more of an effective bridge between the inside and the outside (though at the cost of losing some of the unique regional identity of the decorations). As for the exterior, the pillars supporting the balcony would be more regionalist if they were rounder, like pine tree trunks. The balconies in general would benefit from more organic forms, and the exterior could be more log cabin-esque, a pervasive style throughout the Rocky Mountains, if the terracotta color were changed to more of an authentic wood color. That, too, would have the adverse effect of a loss of high-efficiency modernism. Of course, it is impossible to say whether those changes would really fulfill what it means for architecture to be critical regionalist. While the atmosphere would shift from stuffy nostalgia towards light modernism in the inside and vice versa for the outside, it might not be enough to bring the design to the correct balance of new and

**Commented [NVK14]:** Source?

**Commented [NVK15]:** I've highlighted some language in green. I think that language might not be serving you especially well. Each of these moments gives the impression that there is some kind of valid standard for success in balancing localism and traditionalism. Your audience isn't fully privy to what those standards are, and, what's more, they are likely not particularly interested in exploring those standards (unless they happen to be really invested in architecture as art).

Your question really has to do with whether the blend of old and new in this complex is coherent, right? Whether or not it seems like a genuine attempt to integrate the two. And your answer about that is very clear—it's not a genuine integration!

But does that make it a failure? Overall, your answer to that question is no (given what comes next), but in using dismissive language here, you seem to be setting up a bit of a straw man.

old (conversely, it could err too much on the other side of the design spectrum, which would create a whole other raft of design issues). The two individual design styles of modernism and regionalism are so separate from each other that the point at which they are perfectly balanced is so impossibly difficult to find that it may not even be worth the effort.

**Commented [NVK16]:** OK. This is an important turn in your project. Well executed.

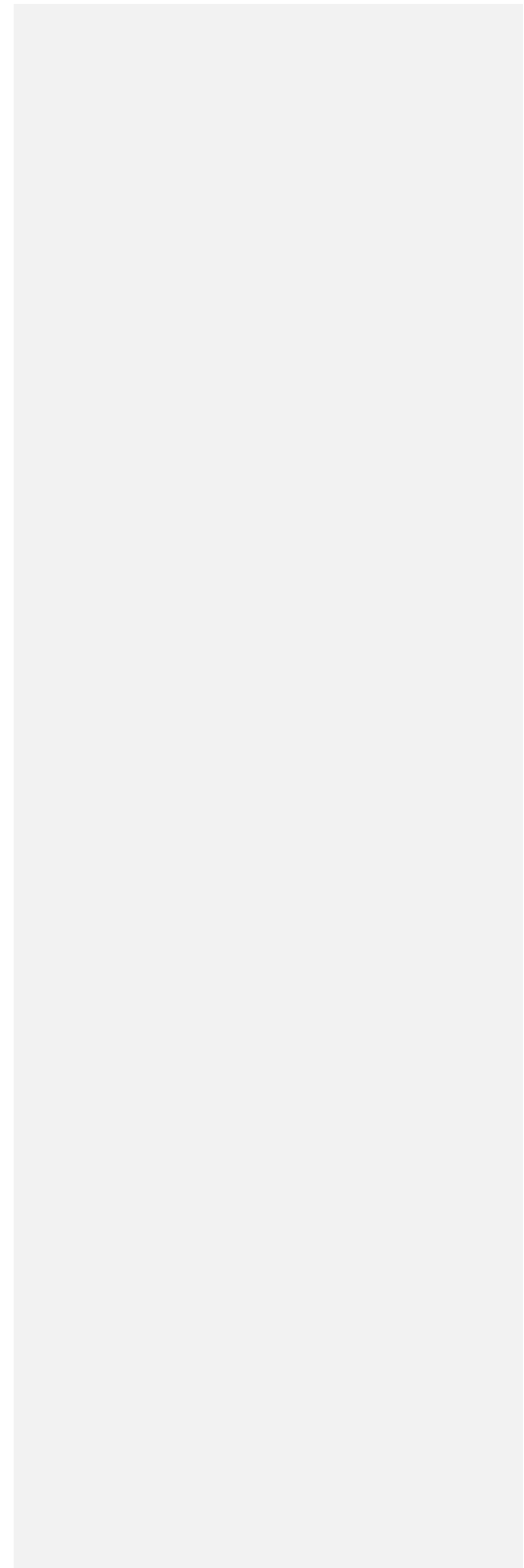
The idea of “regionalism with modernity” or “modern regionalism”, simply regional architecture built with modern techniques and furnished with modern comforts, could create the same atmosphere as a critical regionalist space, without the same drawbacks. Thus, it would serve as a good replacement for critical regionalism. The fundamental difference between the two stylistic blends is that this modern regionalism would not require the inclusion of any modernist design cues, thereby eliminating the impossible conundrum of style balancing. It would serve the purpose of critical regionalism, to resist against the encroaching homogeneity of modernism and to preserve the artistic forms that give places a unique cultural identity by using a distinctly local style of architecture and interior design. It seems, then, that critical regionalism was an obsolete style from the very beginning, as the better solution was lying right underneath our noses. With this modern regionalism, The Village would no longer be a confusing jumble of clashing styles of design, but rather a rustic complex that would immerse its users in the mountain and mining cultures of Breckenridge, all with the added usability of a modern home.

It is easy to simply label The Village at Breckenridge as critical regionalism because of its use of both traditional and modern design cues. Closer inspection, however, reveals that the two schools of design have been isolated from each other, creating a rift in between them. Critical regionalism, however, requires the blending of the two styles with each other, in the process creating a completely new style, a style that is very specific and must adhere to a complicated list of principles. So while there are a large number of pieces of art, whether they be

**Commented [NVK17]:** This is a very interesting response. I confess, though, that I don't really get what's different about “modern regionalism.” What precisely makes this a different approach than CR?

Is it just that MR has lower standards of integration?

architecture, visual art, or performing art, that can claim to be critical regionalist, it is in fact difficult or perhaps even impossible to determine something to be “good” critical regionalism. The problems caused by trying to identify or obtain that then begs the question: what was ever wrong with “modern regionalism”?



### Works Cited

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## Project Post-Mortem

The writing concept that I found the most useful for this project was the logical construction of an essay. It was very useful for building up my argument, as it needed lots of background for it to work properly. Any other construction would have seemed like a jumble of unrelated claims or not to the point. I was also really helped by the idea of the motive statement, with the starting position and then the challenge of that starting position. It made it very easy to organize my essay and gather my thoughts into one cohesive argument. It was also best suited for my essay, allowing me to provide an implicit road map of the essay without losing my thesis at the end of the introduction. Although it may not count as a "writing process" in the strictest sense, actually having been to The Village multiple times and staying in multiple buildings helped to shape my argument a lot. Not only could I draw information from the photos on the internet, but I could also draw information from my own memory and describe (to a degree) how the design actually made me feel.

**Commented [NVK18]:** I can see you using that formula in both the introduction and in the body of the paper as a whole.

**Commented [NVK19]:** Yes! Some first-person research (although you didn't know it at the time).

## WRITING 05.028 (w16) Project 1 Feedback and Evaluation

Dear Jian,

### **Formative Response:**

Your project was on solid footing when you submitted your conference draft. We talked about some ways you might improve your evidence, focus your paragraphing and develop a new stage in your argument. Each of those improvements show up here with fine execution. You're demonstrating successful argument generation, document structuring, and analysis of evidence in this piece. It's highly successful in many ways.

For future projects, there are a few things you should focus on:

- Your successes here suggest that the writing processes you followed are worth repeating, perhaps especially the approach to creating a dynamic logical document structure.
- You might want to spend a bit more time thinking about tone in the second project and beyond. I think you slip into some combative language in places that might not be serving you especially well (there's nothing wrong with combative language in many contexts, but as my marginal note on the subject suggests, I think it might disrupt your purpose a bit in this essay).
- I hope you continue to use visual evidence and/or charts and tables. Those were valuable here, and I'm sure you can find ways to incorporate them into your future projects just as effectively.
- You'll want to think about how your engagement with evidence may need to change as you begin incorporating diverse kinds of evidence from multiple sources. Here, your evidence is almost exclusively visual description (or photographs). Those are effective here, but you should consider how your presentation of evidence (and attendant citation practices) need to change when you use data, cite interpretive positions advanced by others, and employ other kinds of evidence.

I want to encourage you to focus on this feedback (and the marginal notes in the essay itself) at least as much as you do on that forthcoming evaluation and grade. Those latter features of my response are important only if you are able to use them to motivate and structure your learning process moving forward. They can be disruptive to learning if they end up silencing your own self-evaluation and undermining your engagement and self-regulation.

If you'd like to talk to me about any feature of Project 1 or about any element of this response, please don't hesitate to contact me.

-Nick

### **Evaluative Response:**

In class, we agreed on six categories for evaluation, and the rubric—[posted here](#) and included at the end of this document—establishes benchmarks for three tiers of quality within each category. Below, you'll find my description of the document within each of the five categories.

See marginal notes throughout the document for details. The chart below offers an overall judgement of the document's success.

Document Feature	Description of project quality	Tier
Style; mechanics; formatting	Your style and mechanics are clear and clean. I found very few errors and experienced only a few disruptions in the style. Well done.	Excellent
Audience (excluding other rubric elements)	You provide valuable contextual information about the case and about the critical debate, and you explain key ideas and quotations accessibly.	Excellent
Argument; Thesis	I think the introduction might have done a better job of explaining why the claim you advance is significant (you did explain why, but see my marginal note for limitations). But the project offers a clear and motivated claim, and it does justify its interpretive question by exploring a larger consequence.	Excellent
Evidence; Archive	Evidence is consistently clear and relevant. Crucially, you make good decisions about what evidence needs to be robustly analyzed and what can stand on its own. There may have been places where your evidence seemed overly extensive (the long list of rustic features didn't seem fully necessary, for example), and there were one or two places where I thought you might have been more cautious about verifying facts (the locally sourced wood and the Ute architecture).	Excellent (low)
Logical Structure; Arrangement	Overall, the project offers a clear and dynamic logical structure. Paragraphs are coherent and focused, and transitions between paragraphs are adequate. You'll find a couple of marginal notes identifying moments where topic sentences or intra-paragraph transitional phrasing could have been more successful. But the essay is very well designed overall.	Excellent
Application of Debate; Use of Critical Lens(es)	As my marginal note on the introduction suggests, it's possible you could have done more to help justify your use of the debate for your audience (the nature of your objection in the end of the essay to the model of CR makes that a bit difficult too). But your questions and answers are clearly emerging from a robust understanding of the critics. You do an exceptional job of explaining key ideas and putting them to creative uses.	Excellent

### Grade: 96

In the [Project 1 Assignment page](#), I explained the grade function of the assignment documents leading up to the final version. Here's a reminder of their point value:

- Response to reading (used in class discussion); not graded
- Two texts in dialogue (used in class discussion); not graded
- "Close Reading" with keyterms (used in class discussion); not graded
- Workshop draft (used in peer workshop); 10 pt
- Conference draft (used in conference with me); 15 pt
- Revision (completed project, graded)

The initial grade for Project 1 is based on the final, submitted document. That value is generated from the evaluation above. The total available points for the pre-revision assignments is then subtracted from the initial grade. The points you actually received for those documents are then added back to the total, giving us a Final Project 1 Grade.

Initial Project 1 Grade: 96

Total Available Drafting Points: 25

Total Received Drafting Points: 25

Additional Grade Adjustments: n/a

**Final Project 1 Grade: 96**

<b>Composing Element</b>	<b>"Excellent" 100-90</b>	<b>"Good" 89-80</b>	<b>"Acceptable" 79-70</b>
<b>Style; Mechanics</b>	The language of the project is clear and accessible, including word choice and syntax. Clarity and simplicity are balanced with some syntactical complexity, and the project uses varied sentence structures for different effects. There are almost no errors, typos, or other mistakes.	The language of the project is usually clear. Clarity and simplicity are occasionally disrupted by confusing syntax or word choice. The project uses varied sentence structures. There are a few typos, errors, or other mistakes.	The language of the project is clear in places but regularly causes confusion. The sentences are either repetitively structured or disruptively complex. Typos, errors, and other mistakes appear frequently.
<b>Audience (excluding other rubric elements)</b>	The information provided is shaped to be accessible and compelling to an audience unfamiliar with the scholarly conversation and (very likely) with the archive.	Most information is shaped to be accessible and compelling to the appropriate audience. Some necessary information is occasionally missing or excessive.	There are many cases where information is not adequately shaped for the appropriate audience. Frequently, claims, evidence, or important context is left unexplained or shaped for an inappropriate audience.
<b>Argument; Thesis</b>	The project's main claim is clearly expressed in the introduction and genuinely motivated. In other words, it is revelatory or surprising. The problem or starting position to which it responds is also compellingly presented in the introduction.	The project's main claim and a motive mechanism are clearly expressed in the introduction. The motive is either genuine but not elegantly expressed, or the motive is not convincingly genuine.	The project presents a main claim and a motive mechanism somewhere in the document. Either the claim is unclear or the motive is unclear or very clearly not genuine.
<b>Evidence; Archive;</b>	The project always marshals detailed, appropriate evidence to support the claims it	The project often marshals detailed, appropriate evidence to support its claims. Those details are often but not always fully or	The project sometimes marshals detailed evidence in support of its claims. Those details often fail to

	<p>makes about the archive. That evidence is precise and incorporated elegantly into argumentative paragraphs. If visual aids are used, they enhance but do not replace the project's presentation of evidence in language.</p>	<p>convincingly connected to the claims, or they are not always clearly described or incorporated.</p>	<p>convincingly support those claims; they are unclearly described or incorporated; or, several key claims are unsupported by evidence.</p>
<p><b>Logical Structure; Arrangement;</b></p>	<p>The project arranges information, claims, and sources in a clear, logical, and dynamic way. The project's sections are focused and coherent. The relationships between sections of the project are clearly articulated, and their arrangement clarifies the project's argument and motive.</p>	<p>The project arranges information, claims, and sources in a clear and logical way. Sections are usually coherent, although there may be minor digressions. The relationships between sections are usually but not always clear. Arrangement of the sections is logical.</p>	<p>The project arranges information, claims, and sources within sections that are sometimes coherent. The relationships between sections are often unclear. The arrangement of the sections undermines or obscures the logic of the project's argument.</p>
<p><b>Application of debate; Use of critical lens</b></p>	<p>The project presents ideas and arguments from the debate clearly and accurately. It explains or interprets the debate for its readers, and it uses the terms of the debate to generate claims about the archive. The debate it represents contains diverse perspectives.</p>	<p>The project presents ideas and arguments from the debate, but may sometimes be somewhat unclear or inaccurate in its account of the sources. It often but not always makes the key ideas from the debate clear for the reader, and its analyses of the archive are usually driven by the ideas of the debate.</p>	<p>The project presents ideas and arguments from the debate, but it doesn't make those ideas clear and may misinterpret the sources it uses. Ideas summarized or paraphrased are often difficult to understand or arranged in a confusing way. The connection between the debate and the text is occasionally difficult to follow</p>