

disposal. But the costs involved vary so much, both over time and from place to place, Hershkowitz says, that it is impossible to substantiate that claim. Sometimes recycling has the economic edge at the local level; sometimes it doesn't. But any full accounting, he says, should include the hard-to-measure consequences for the environment, health, and society.

One of the biggest advantages of recycling, Hershkowitz writes, is that it reduces the need for landfills. During the last 15 years, more than 10,000 landfills have been closed in the United States, chiefly because of environmental problems. Critics of recycling tout the environmental safety of modern landfills, but Hershkowitz is not persuaded. "Landfills generate hazardous and uncontrolled air emis-

sions and also threaten surface and groundwater supplies." Of the nearly 3,000 currently operating landfills, less than half even attempt to control dangerous air pollutants, and only one-third have synthetic liners to keep groundwater from being fouled.

With 7,500 recycling programs in operation (compared with only 1,000 a decade ago), almost 24 percent of the nation's municipal solid waste is being recovered. "Of course, as a raw-material commodities business, recycling markets can't guarantee profits," Hershkowitz concedes. "No market does." But the financial risks "in no way negate" recycling's environmental benefits. And, he points out, while "some recycling programs lose money under adverse market conditions, dumping at a landfill or an incinerator *always* 'loses money.'"

ARTS & LETTERS

The Curious Madonnas of India

"The Indian Conquest of Catholic Art" by Gauvin Alexander Bailey, in *Art Journal* (Spring 1998),
College Art Assn., 275 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001.

It was by conquest, not choice, that the art of the Amerindians of early colonial Latin America became more European. But in 16th- and early 17th-century India, the story was different. There, writes Bailey, a profes-

sor of Renaissance and Baroque art at Clark University, the Mughal emperor elected, on his own initiative, to serve as a patron of Catholic religious art. "The result was the most visually potent figural iconography ever devised by an Islamic power."

Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), a descendant of Ghengis Khan and ruler of the most powerful Muslim state on earth, had "a passion for world religions and late Renaissance art," Bailey says. In 1580, he invited a Jesuit mission to live at the royal palace in Fatehpur Sikki and take charge of his art projects. "In open defiance of Islam's traditional abjuration of figural art, the Mughal royal family evinced an active interest in—and even open worship of—Catholic devotional images."

Akbar directed his artists to paint hundreds of iconic portraits of Jesus, Mary, and various Christian saints to decorate books, albums, and jewelry. The images also were used in court rituals and at coronations and other major royal festivities. "The dramatic culmination," Bailey says, "came when imperial throne rooms, harems, tombs, and gardens were prominently adorned with mural paintings of Christian figures." European visitors took this to mean that the Muslim regime



Crucifixion (c. 1585–90) was among the works of Catholic art prized by the Mughal emperors.

was on the verge of conversion, but, in fact, the Mughals were using the Christian art for their own purposes.

As Muslims presiding over a predominantly Hindu people, Akbar and his son Jahangir (r. 1605–27), who succeeded him, encouraged religious tolerance and “forged a syncretic ideology of kingship that would reflect the multicultural makeup of their growing empire, while promoting their own unifying image as divinely chosen rulers” for the new Muslim millennium that began during 1591–92. They used the Catholic art to provide a visual manifestation of this ideology.

Jesus and Mary figure prominently in the Koran and are revered in traditional Islam,

Bailey notes. “It is quite possible that the Mughals chose Catholic imagery because Islam itself did not provide an iconographic tradition capable of combating the visually potent pantheon of Hindu deities.”

Whether in official settings or more intimate ones, the Catholic-inspired murals were meant for only a limited audience, Bailey observes. “Christian devotional pictures were painted on a small scale and never appeared on the exteriors of buildings, perhaps so as not to offend the religious sensibilities of the general public.” The Mughals’ murals, he says, were intended only for those “sufficiently immersed in palace culture” to understand their syncretic message.

Big Brother Architecture

Metropolis (Aug.–Sept. 1998) contributing editor Michael Sorkin sees little reason to celebrate such acclaimed New Urbanist developments as Celebration, near Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

Like Modernism, New Urbanism overestimates architecture’s power to influence behavior. The idea is that replicating the forms of the New England town green will move citizens in the direction of the good, democratic conduct that presumably arose from such arrangements in the past. (Never mind the witches being tortured just out of the frame.) But in the same way that Disneyland’s miniaturized, ersatz nostalgia relies on a huge apparatus of manipulation and control, New Urbanist towns are underpinned by a labyrinth of restrictive covenants, building regulations, homeowners association codes of behavior, and engineered demographic sterility. Restrictions range from bans on children and stipulated house colors to limits on what can be grown in the front yard, as well as other exclusions that cannot be placed so explicitly in writing. Robert A. M. Stern, Celebration’s planner, elevates such rigid controls to the status of democratic principle; quoted in a recent New York Times article, he makes the Orwellian claim, “Regimentation can release you.” The reality, though, reminds me of the great Patrick McGooohan TV series, The Prisoner. Behind the delightful facades of that glorious folly, Portmeirion, lay a sinister apparatus of imprisonment.

Nashville’s New Tune

“In Defense of Music Row” by Bruce Feiler, in the *Oxford American* (1998: No.21–22), P.O. Box 1156, Oxford, Miss. 38655.

Most country music critics condemn the sounds coming out of Nashville these days as watered-down, commercially driven, country pop-rock drivel. Country music, they complain, has lost touch with its roots—with hardscrabble places such as southern Appalachia and the Texas flatlands, and the folks who live there. But the critics, argues Feiler, author of *Dreaming Out Loud* (1998),

miss the big picture: country music today simply reflects changes in the South—changes that, for the most part, have made the region a better place to live.

Today, even the people of southern Appalachia and the Texas flatlands have lost touch with their roots, Feiler says. “Regional identity is less important than ever. In an era when computers, chain stores, and cable