

Americans have never heard of. Architects chose the work of stars: Fallingwater and the Robie House, by Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Kimbell Art Museum, by Louis I. Kahn.

The public gives great weight to the symbolic role of a building, writes Witold Rybczynski, a professor of urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. This explains its admiration for the White House and the Washington National Cathedral, and perhaps even its somewhat surprising regard for the 1998 neoclassical Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, home to *The Wilson Quarterly*, which came in at 79th. Americans like public buildings, Rybczynski notes. All of their top 25 favorites fit that definition in some sense, whereas the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings were built as private homes. Popular admiration for modern architecture over-

Americans give great weight to the symbolic role of a building, and tend to favor the old over the new.

all is lukewarm, with only the minimalist Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and St. Louis's Gateway Arch making the top 25.

All but three of the public's 50 favorites were built before 1980. Old railroad stations outpooled new airports. Old churches beat out contemporary houses of worship. Old museums trumped new ones. The one post-1987 edifice that managed to make the popular top 25, the Bellagio hotel and casino in Las Vegas, has caused "consternation" within the profession, Rybczynski says. The building includes a faux-Tuscan lakeside village, and its style is

sneered at by critics and architectural prize juries.

When judging movies, the public goes for the latest and the most modern; in architecture, tradition triumphs. But the architectural profession's low regard for the nation's most cherished buildings shows the gap that now exists between professional and public values. The professionals' fixation on novelty and design innovation causes them to dismiss the wide staircases and tall columns so loved by the average American.

The point, Rybczynski concludes, is not that architects should imitate designs of the past, but that they should recognize their appeal and produce work that will speak to the public in the future. A building that is actively disliked, no matter how architecturally innovative, is one that has failed.

## OTHER NATIONS

# Indonesia's Vulnerable Strivers

**THE SOURCE:** "Lasting Impacts of Indonesia's Financial Crisis" by Martin Ravallion and Michael Lokshin, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Oct. 2007.

ONE OF THE REMARKABLE things about the 1998 financial crisis in East Asia was how quickly some of the victims seemed to recover. In Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous

country, the number of destitute people doubled in a single year, but the poverty rate improved immediately as the economy stabilized. Infant mortality rates in urban areas surged, then fell back. By 2000, the economy of the archipelago had begun to expand again. In 2006, it grew by about six percent.

But a detailed statistical analysis

by World Bank economists Martin Ravallion and Michael Lokshin shows that the crisis followed an unexpected pattern. The poorest of Indonesia's poor were not its most vulnerable. The slightly less poor areas—villages better integrated into the national economy, such as those that had moved beyond subsistence farming and were engaged in trade—were more vulnerable. Areas that were desperately poor before the crisis stayed that way; the people it struck hardest were those who had begun to climb the economic ladder.

Indonesian living standards had been rising robustly for more

than a decade before the collapse. Since 1981, the poverty rate had been declining by 2.5 percentage points a year. “Our results suggest that a majority of those living below the poverty line,” the authors write, “would not have done so except for the 1998 crisis.”

## OTHER NATIONS

## Postcommunist Shuffle

**THE SOURCE:** “Rose, Orange, and Tulip: The Failed Post-Soviet Revolutions” by Theodor Tudoroiu, in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Sept. 2007.

STARTING IN 2003, WHEN democracy seemed to be spreading to the most improbable nations,

revolutions broke out in three former Soviet republics. The Rose Revolution toppled a blindsided Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia and replaced him with a 36-year-old former New York lawyer. The Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine installed a Westernized Viktor Yushchenko as the true winner of disputed elections, supplanting a thuggish clique later suspected of nearly killing him by dioxin poisoning. And the Tulip Revolution in 2005 in Kyrgyzstan sent authoritarian president Askar Akayev high-tailing to Russia, succeeded by an opposition leader promising constitutional reform.

The revolutions followed a common pattern: a fraudulent election, massive protest demon-

strations, and the installation of a new “revolutionary” leadership. All three were hailed in the West as proof that a new civil society had grown strong enough in the post-communist countries to check fraud and corruption. In former Soviet republics with incomes as low as that of Swaziland, enthusiasts saw the birth of a new era of Jeffersonian democracy.

Alas, writes Theodor Tudoroiu, a political scientist at McGill University, all three regimes now represent “nothing more than failed revolutions.” In fact, no fresh heroes rose from the grassroots, swept into power by a newly robust civil society and banished Soviet-era apparatchiks. The “revolutions” were really the product



Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko's supporters hand out certificates to participants during the Orange Revolution in 2004. Since then, democracy has gone downhill. Winners of the three botany-themed revolutions in the former Soviet republics have all lost their hero's luster.