



Editor's Note

BY SIMON BATTISTI

In 2008, when Europe was beginning to confront life under austerity measures, German Chancellor Angela Merkel invoked the Swabian housewife as a model of fiscal responsibility. Swabia, a conservative but highly prosperous region in southwest Germany, is driven, at least in myth, by the wisdom of the female domestic manager. She is as cunning as she is ordinary and cheerful, outfitted in long-lasting fabrics and coupon-cutting scissors—the exemplar of frugality. Merkel's rhetorical message—that thrifty habits are not new, but actually a native instinct that should simply be resuscitated—has been echoed in recent architectural production by a return to the basics. Undeniably, the discipline of architecture has recently witnessed a judicious impulse to *tone it down*, to simplify, and importantly, to realign with a bygone predilection for formal simplicity.

Boston, the Swabia of the New World, has, for the past four centuries, publicly expressed its Protestant morality with heavy, solid buildings, and savvy decorative economy. So it is from here, in the occidental cradle of moderation, and in the midst of a tedious fiscal recovery to boot, that we propose to look critically at moderation's potential impact on the form of the built environment. But being moderate doesn't come easily. It's hard work. If we are to weather these times with any sense of joy, perhaps we ought to develop an appreciation for the mild, the reasonable, and the fundamental. In the following pages we explore ways in which the wisdom of the moderate can be acquired and ultimately deployed. In a big world of extremes, the moderate can be radical.