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# BALANCED MINDSET, PROFOUND RESULTS

BY C.C. SULLIVAN

What makes successful architecture?

There's a common thread connecting the best architects in the world—a shared trait, or tendency, that inevitably leads to great works. This is a proclivity toward balanced inquiry. The architects that produce consequential buildings spend as much time engaged in cerebral facets of the discipline—theory, history, philosophy, science—as they do in the quotidian: detail, budget, schedule, specification. In between these extremes is a continuum of activities marked by technique, craft, and process—methodically overlaid, and suffused with a broad base of knowledge. Architects instinctively latch onto all of these seemingly disparate vocations, which contribute integrally to transcendent design.

The mindset of serious, successful architecture emanates from a truly multidisciplinary, balanced life. Each aspect of one's work is attended to with equal absorption and belief: no detail, it seems, is too small to consider; no ideal too lofty to aspire to. This renaissance discipline creates harmony and consonance among the artistic, scientific, and business pursuits of the profession.

Balance yields profound results largely by allowing the architect to resolve seemingly irreconcilable goals: The tension, for example, between vision and budget; program and footprint; trajectory and gravity. This is critical for a field marked by many challenges and contrasts: Design, for example, is at once an exercise in unbridled motive and painful compromise; clients and end-users are rarely ready to learn better ways of building, or of being.

Yet, these tensions—and our multifaceted search for answers—often lead to a wonderful surprise: A symphony, lucid and intense. Great design. True reward.

*Architecture* magazine's mission is to reflect the mindset and discipline of our profession, and to examine and occasionally exalt the results. To do this well, our coverage must mirror the yin and yang of leading architects. We must study and expose each task, and consider hard reality as well as unfettered possibility.

It is our job as editors and curators to do so without regard to professional politics or useless notions of seniority and rank—and with care not to be distracted by hype, personality, or appearances. Our independence allows us to seek out the best ideas and the most complete work. And often, this search takes us to the periphery of the practice, where the most stunning designs and challenging growth are taking place.

On occasion, we admit, these forays have taken us well beyond the boundaries of defensible architectural inquiry. Yet, we take these creative risks with the reader in mind—because we truly believe that such experimentation is worth the price of our own failure, especially if it might help advance the profession.

As architects engaged in a balanced practice unavoidably find, risk-taking is vital to healthy professional growth. By pushing established or assumed boundaries, we learn the most.

This month, I am privileged to join *Architecture*, a magazine I have long admired. I look forward to building upon the foundation laid by my predecessors, one that has

brought us a unique and often surprising way of looking at architecture. The magazine's goal has been to understand and expose the context of architecture, in the broadest sense of the word: How the building or work in question relates to society, community, and history. This perspective, I believe, can help us find truth in the built world.

Even more exciting, and also quite humbling, is that I now join you, our reader, on your professional journey. To reflect your search for a balanced practice, *Architecture* will devote more pages to the technique and craft that make architecture happen. We'll spend more time examining our subject buildings and designers to learn how materials, structure, and technology contribute to the best examples of contemporary design. Part of the architect's function is to show people how to live; equally important, however, is the architect's need to show the world how to build.

Of course, we won't be able to do this without a candid, lasting dialogue with the profession. We look forward to your ideas on how we can better serve your needs—and more adequately reflect the challenges of your work.

Along the way, we'll discover a way to emulate your passions and concerns. We'll celebrate how important architecture can be, and find a way to bring broad recognition to the best practices of leading designers and firms. Most significantly, we'll celebrate built triumph: groundbreaking proof of the balanced mindset of architecture. ■

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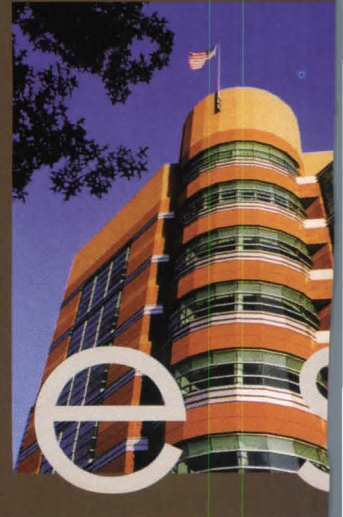
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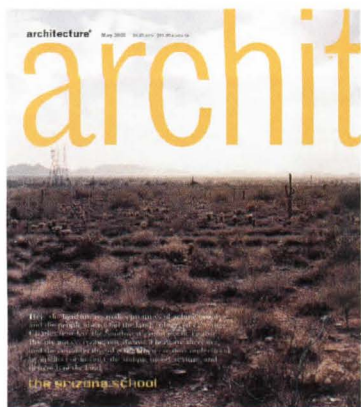
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## BARREN IS BEAUTIFUL

How unusual to have an architecture magazine's cover focused on a largely natural landscape, rather than a single building (May 2002). But how disappointing that the photo was described as "a particularly barren patch of desert." I wonder, would it appear less barren if it were turned into a broad expanse of pavement with a building on it (like page 108), or had a black box land on it (page 122), or a 25,000-square-foot residence (page 120)? While Lawrence Cheek is right in questioning the difference a "scattering of good buildings make" in the face of immense growth, his optimistic answer is not well supported. The majority of the architecture reported by your magazine (among others) is to subdivisions what haute couture is to ready-to-wear: inaccessible to the masses, and therefore unlikely to make any real difference. While the public buildings shown may begin to create centers in the ad hoc Broadacre City, none of the residential projects seem to support this larger goal. The fact remains that when our culture is disconnected from the land, our buildings follow suit. We are living beyond the limits, and it shows.

David D. Gregory  
Aspen, Colorado

## PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER

It is heartwarming to note that Glenn Murcutt (May 2002, p. 27) has received recognition for exemplary work, and yet

does not use CAD. The benefits of CAD are often outweighed by the inattention to detail that cut-and-paste efficiency encourages. Granted, many structures, like Gehry's work, could not be created without computers. But after reviewing many of the new, technological creations, I'm not convinced that these computer-aided designs are yet good architecture. Most are as cold as the computers used to generate them. Here's to pencil and paper.  
Eric Kuritzky  
Orlando, Florida

## AFFRONT TO THE STREET

In the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center (April 2002, p. 72), we are offered a building that replaces sympathetic design with poorly conceived notions seeking to symbolize the struggle for gay acceptance in the community. The glass front, we are told, reflects the seamless, transparent integration of many gays in the city today. The same rhetoric justifies the solid, fortresslike rear of the building, supposedly acknowledging the more secretive, hidden aspects of the gay experience. Has it escaped the reviewer's attention that the rear elevation, though fronting an active street, is a barren and lumpy mass that offers nothing to the streetscape but blank walls and several unsightly roller-shutter doors? Or that the front offers little more to the pedestrian on the sloping Market Street than an eye-level view of exposed sheet-metal ducts inside the Lobby? A bad building is simply a bad building. No amount of politically correct reporting, however well intentioned, can excuse inept or disagreeable design.

Brian Connolly  
New York City

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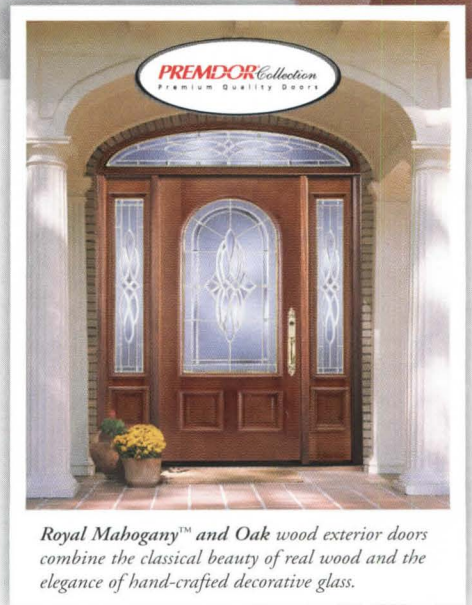


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## New Pedestrian Plan in Front of White House Approved

**> URBAN DESIGN** Landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates of New York City has been selected to redesign the stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House in Washington D.C. Closed off to vehicular traffic after the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, the area has since been held in a limbo of temporary security structures and blockades. The National Capital Planning Commission's Interagency Security Task Force—in charge of the site—began talks in March of 2001 over its possible reopening, as part of a broader initiative to

resolve the capital's security-oriented planning issues.

Van Valkenburgh Associates was chosen from a group of candidates which included Balmori Associates of New York City; EDAW of Alexandria, Virginia; and Peter Walker and Partners of Berkeley, California. The four firms were challenged to provide a permanent security solution for the site, while maintaining its historic character and adhering to aesthetic criteria.

Van Valkenburgh's plan introduces a tree-lined pedestrian plaza with granular paving to the site of this once heavily trafficked section of Pennsylvania Avenue. The plaza is flanked by a one-lane passage which may be accessed by small vehicles, but which will not be open to general traffic. At either end, the area is guarded by security shelters and steel bollards. "We used familiar

elements of the landscape and reinforced them," explains Van Valkenburgh. "We didn't want to make the site look like a suburban mall with pretty flower planters—we wanted to preserve a civic urban quality."

In choosing a design team for this project, the NCPC Task Force was aided by an advisory board made up of the Secret Service, the Federal City Council, the Commission of Fine Arts, the DC Department of Transportation, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation—a coalition whose collective voices were not easy to reconcile. "There is an incredible amount of complexity to the issues involved," says Richard Friedman,

After studying ways to preserve traffic flow through Pennsylvania Avenue, the NCPC settled upon a pedestrian scheme (above) that could be reversed if traffic were reintroduced in the future.

chairman of the Task Force. "This is an image issue, a planning issue, a security issue...[their] plan was the simplest, the most elegant, and had a proper mix of the security features with good urban planning and public access."

Charles Atherton, the Commission of Fine Arts' secretary, is optimistic about the project. "It's a very forbidding street right now. Hopefully this proposal signals an end to a long and unfortunate period, and gives us a place that we can all go to and enjoy." **ANNA HOLTZMAN**



## Mayors' Housing Report Goes National

> **POLICY** Housing policy has historically been a local fight, and not a national one. Each city, by virtue of its unique demographics, urban character, and topography, has its own housing challenge. But in late May at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, following a national forum, released a report that makes several recommendations about national housing policy, in the hope that Congress will lend a hand.

"While housing has not received the national attention and resources it deserves," the report begins, "it is intricately linked to national priorities."

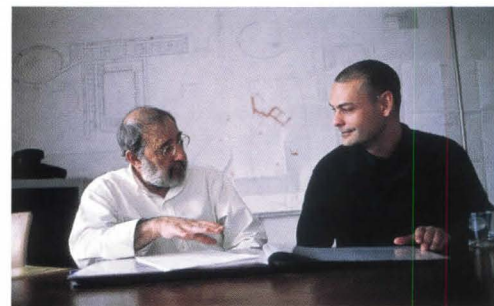
The report cites several critical housing problems afflicting the nation—from financing to public housing to preservation. Although home ownership is considered a greater wealth-builder than any other investment, more than half of all minority families and low- to moderate-income Americans are unable to buy a home. And while available public housing already falls short of national need (the wait list at more than 1 million

households), no significant new public housing has been built in the past 25 years. Plus, almost 1 million of the private, unsubsidized rental properties that are many low-income families' only housing alternative have been lost to disrepair in the past 10 years.

The mayors' report, while trying to leverage Congressional power, also proposes measures which recognize the distinctive urban character of individual cities. "Mayors should facilitate cooperative activities between public housing authorities and public school systems in their communities," the report reads, presenting the possibility of built projects that might combine residential and educational components.

The report also recommends that Congress should renew funding for HOPE VI to the tune of \$1 billion per year for 10 years. And in the area of public housing, for instance, the report argues for congressional legislation to fund the development of 150,000 units of public housing each year for a decade, "in a form which encourages income diversity and fosters healthy urban neighborhoods."

The report also turns its attention away from the urban core, in an effort to open lower-density areas to low- and moderate-income families. Congress, the mayors' report suggests, should consider creating "a national housing opportunities corporation to give technical assistance and support to suburban communities to develop affordable housing." **JACOB WARD**



## Good Times

> **LAURELS** Young Jordanian architect Sahel Al-Hiyari (above, right) will spend a year under the influence of his new-found mentor, Álvaro Siza (left), thanks to Rolex. The Swiss watchmaker launched its Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative by presenting its first round of awards last month in New York City.

The biennial program pairs five young artists with "masters" in their respective fields; they spend a year working with their mentors and receive a \$25,000 stipend. The advisory board includes Frank Gehry, soprano Jessye Norman, and artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Siza was unable to attend the ceremony, missing the once-in-a-lifetime experience of watching Norman (and other less vocally trained guests) serenade Christo and Jeanne-Claude with "Happy Birthday to You." The couple share more than the credit for their work, having been born on the same year, month, day, and even hour. **SARA MOSS**



# WTC Goes Triple-B

> **REBUILDING** The Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey have selected Beyer Blinder Belle, in conjunction with engineering firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, to conduct a planning and transportation study for the World Trade Center site and lower Manhattan. The agencies have asked the team to develop six master plans, from which one should be chosen by year's

end. Outside proposals—from WTC lessee Larry Silverstein, for example—may also be considered for implementation.

According to Jack Beyer, the LMDC's "Principles and Preliminary Blueprint for the Future of Lower Manhattan" will guide the planning process. That document, released on April 9, recommends recreating the historic street grid, expanding transportation options and open space, and accommodating residential growth, historic preservation, and environmental sustainability.

While the Blueprint also states, "future building must exemplify excellence in design," *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp has reported that

Alexander Garvin, LMDC vice president for planning, design, and development, "has stated publicly that the scope of the Beyer Blinder Belle's assignment is limited to planning and excludes architecture. The divorce between these two disciplines is a further sign that architecture will be marginalized."

Deeming urban planning and architecture mutually inclusive, John Belle says, "I think good, intelligent plans inspire creativity on an individual basis. Individual architects [can] come in and fill in the quilt of buildings with as much imagination and creativity as they can and take advantage of what we before them laid down as a framework." DAVID SOKOL

# To the Lighthouse?

> **PRESERVATION** The Coast Guard is giving away lighthouses. Nine of the 301 lights controlled by the guard were given away in Florida, Georgia, Maine, New York, and Michigan, which boasts the most lights in the country, such as the Point Iroquois (right), on the shore of Lake Superior. Part of a cost saving measure, the Guard is off-loading the high maintenance structures at no cost to non-profit organizations and local and state agencies—and even to private

individuals if no agencies answer the request for proposals—with the requirement that the lights be preserved and remain operable. "Even with global positioning systems, lighthouses remain an important check for navigation," says Kevin Foster of the National Park Service Maritime Heritage Program, which is administering the transfers with the General Services Administration. Lighthouse enthusiasts, like James Hyland of the Lighthouse Preservation Society, are cautiously optimistic about the program: "Many of the lights will be better cared for now, but we worry about the lights that aren't sought after, especially off-shore lights." ALAN G. BRAKE



# Economic Indicators\*

**Consumer Price Index:** 179.8, unchanged from April 2002, and up 1.2% from May 2001

**Unemployment:** 5.8%, up from March 2002 (5.7%), and February 2002 (5.5%)

**Construction Unemployment:** 8.9%, up from March 2002 (8.8%), and from May 2001 (6.7%)

**New Construction Contracts (as of April 2002):** \$484.5 billion, up 3% from March 2002

**Housing Starts:** 1,733,000, up 11.6% from April 2002 (1,553,000), and up 8% from May 2001 (1,604,000)

\*unless indicated, as of May 2002

## BUZZ

**Santiago Calatrava** has been selected to design a new \$240 million facility for the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**. Calatrava was chosen over Bing Thom (Vancouver, Canada) and Schmidt Hammer & Lassen (Aarhus, Denmark) for the project, which includes a 2,000-seat concert hall and administrative and educational buildings. The complex is projected to open in 2008.

**Michael Graves:** Architect and Hoosier. The Indiana Historical Society will name the designer an "Indiana Living Legend" at a gala this month. Graves is one of this year's six honorees; past recipients include Larry Bird, David Letterman, and John Mellencamp.

**Skidmore Owings and Merrill** (New York) has been chosen to renovate the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the **Behring Center**, in Washington, D.C. The \$35 million project will rethink the building's circulation, organization, and appearance.

Savvy real estate magazine **Grid** closed last month—before it turned 3 years old.

The **Turner Corporation** has reported that the new construction contracts through the first quarter of 2002 (\$2.4 billion) has increased from last year's first quarter (\$1.5 billion). These most recent values are the highest in the history of the company.

**Maya Lin** has been elected an Alumni Fellow of the Yale Corporation—the first Asian-American woman to be named a trustee of the university.

# NTHP Releases 11 Most Wanted List

> **PRESERVATION** The National Trust for Historic Preservation released its annual “Eleven Most Endangered Places” list last month. Following on the philosophy of last year’s list, the National Trust continues to broaden the definition of place, by designating archaeologically and environmentally significant sites, infrastructural projects, and even entire types of urban neighborhoods. Two of the individual buildings that the Trust designated this year—the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Gold Dome Bank in Oklahoma City—face possible demolition, and according to their advocates, are major landmarks of their respective cities.

The Guthrie, designed by Ralph Rapson and built in 1963, is the subject of a dispute involving the Walker Art Center, which owns the property on which the theater sits. The Walker has commissioned Pritzker Prize-winning Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron and Minneapolis-based Hammel, Green and Abrahamson to expand their facilities; their plans involve tearing down the modernist theater in order to expand the adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and to accommodate surface parking. The Guthrie has commissioned French architect Jean Nouvel to design a new theater building on a site along the Mississippi River.

The Gold Dome Bank, designed by Bailey, Bozalis, Dickinson, and Roloff of Oklahoma City, opened on Route 66 in 1958; since 1996 it has housed a branch office of Bank One. The building’s 150-foot-diameter gold geodesic dome is actually made of aluminum, and is based on the structural designs of Buckminster Fuller. Bank One has petitioned the city to for permission to demolish the Gold Dome building, and replace it with a suburban “big box” bank branch that will also contain a Walgreens. The bank claims that the building would require \$1.7 million in renovations to make it conform to local codes; local fans of the building blame Bank One’s policy of deferred maintenance. For more information, see the website established by the “Citizens for the Golden Dome” advocacy group: [www.savethedome.net](http://www.savethedome.net).

There are nine other nominations on the list:

[Hackensack Water Works](#), Oradell, New Jersey

[St. Elizabeth’s Hospital](#), Washington, D.C.

[Rosenwald Schools](#), Southern United States

[Teardowns in Historic Neighborhoods](#), Nationwide

[Historic Bridges of Indiana](#)

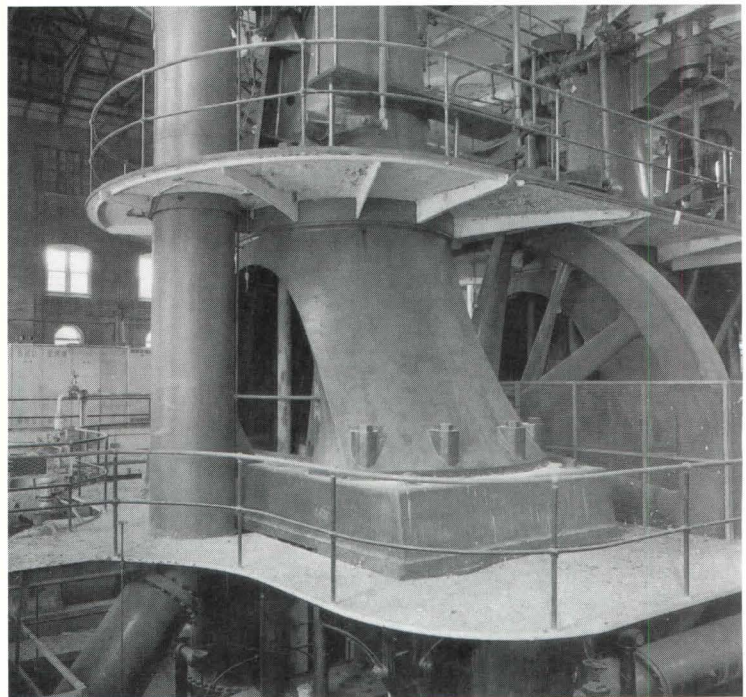
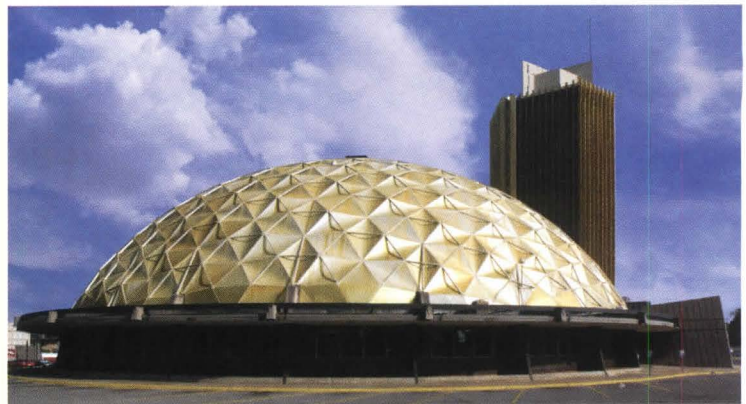
[Missouri River Valley Cultural and Sacred Sites](#), Montana, North and South Dakota

[Pompey’s Pillar](#), Yellowstone County, Montana

[Kw’St’An Sacred Sites at Indian Pass](#), Imperial County, California

[Chesapeake Bay Skipjack Fleet](#), Maryland

The Guthrie Theater, in a photograph taken shortly after its completion in 1963 (top); the Gold Dome Bank (below); and the Hackensack Water Works (bottom).



## Friendly Zoning in the Windy City

› **CODE** Chicago includes approximately 700 miles of commercially zoned retail frontage, much of which dates back to the days when streetcars crisscrossed the grid. The city's Zoning Reform Commission, formed a year ago by Mayor Richard M. Daley (June 2001, page 37), seeks to remedy now-obsolete storefronts and other anachronisms according to its "Principles for Chicago's New Zoning Ordinance," a publication released early last month. Although Chicago has adopted 21 amendments to its 1957 Zoning Ordinance since 1990, "Principles" recommends several directions for a complete overhaul of the moldy statute.

Among the report's proposals is to re-zone those districts of defunct storefronts allowing ground-floor residential uses, especially affordable and senior housing. It also suggests that the new ordinance promote higher-density development around transit nodes and reduce the number of non-manufacturing uses in industrial districts.

But the main thrust of "Principles" is the preservation of community character. For example, the document suggests that residential zones replace floor area ratio calculations with height and setback restrictions, which Planning Commissioner Alicia Mazur Berg says will encourage a "consistent streetscape."

Berg continues, "the 1957 Ordinance was clearly a pro-growth ordinance, to the exclusion of protecting neighborhood character."

If approved, the code would allow citizens to more easily predict future development efforts, but its proponents argue that predictability doesn't equate architectural homogeneity. "While zoning has a lot to say about urban design," says Peter Skosey, vice president of external relations for the Metropolitan Planning Council, "it should not have a role in shaping architectural design, from pitch of roofs to color of bricks to shape of windows."

Once the 'progress report' is circulated for public comment, a new ordinance will be drafted. The City Council is expected to vote on it in the fall. **DS**

## BUZZ

The U.S. Census Bureau released data last month on the **average American's commute to work**, which rose in 2001 to 25.5 minutes from 22.4 minutes in 1999-2000. The Sierra Club blames sprawl.

**J. Carter Brown**, former director of the National Gallery of Art (from 1969 to 1992) and chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts (from 1971 to 2002), died on June 17 at 67. As chairman of the commission, Brown was a strong advocate for the approval of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

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## Golf Carts, Not SUVs, for Playa Vista

> **GREEN** If every car in Los Angeles were replaced by a golf cart, would life be better? Playa Vista—the vaunted and often controversial thousand-acre community under construction between Marina del Rey, California, and the Ballona Wetlands—announced last month that its 20,000 residents will be entirely reliant on “neighborhood electric vehicles” for local travel. The initiative includes electric trams, a complex car-sharing scheme for residents, and special electric vehicles for the local police force, municipal services, and even the U.S. Postal Service.

Long antagonistic toward the Playa Vista development, local environmental groups paint the transportation plan as yet another attempt to cast a halo over a project that is too close to sensitive lands.

“There’s no right way to do a wrong thing,” says John Jay Ulloth, an associate with Malibu-based architect Eric Lloyd Wright (grandson of Frank) and a leader of

Residents of Playa Vista, California will do their local travel in electric vehicles like this one (above), manufactured by DaimlerChrysler.

Citizens United To Save All of Ballona, a loose coalition of 108 environmental and political groups opposed to the 1,086-acre Playa Vista development.

The transit plan is as much a solution to resident safety concerns and the region’s chronic traffic woes as air pollution, counters Steve Soboroff, the new president of Playa Vista (and former unsuccessful candidate for the Los Angeles mayoralty). “Instead of having three cars, a resident can park their car and use one of these [electric vehicles],” Soboroff explains, adding that some 80 percent of the community’s parking is subterranean.

Playa Vista has an exclusive leasing agreement with Daimler-Chrysler to provide electric trams and low-speed cars, and has contracted with eMotion Mobility, creator of the car-sharing concept.

While some opponents of Playa Vista are pleased to see that environmental impact is being addressed, others are highly skeptical of the results, given the project’s siting. “History has shown that these kinds of transit programs don’t last very long,” says Ulloth. “And again, it’s in the wrong place: Playa Vista will add 25 percent more traffic to Interstate 405.” **C.C. SULLIVAN**

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"LABOUR, WORK AND ARCHITECTURE: COLLECTED ESSAYS ON ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN" / BY KENNETH FRAMPTON / PHAIDON

There's no reason to ask whether Kenneth Frampton's new collection of essays is worth reading. Of course it is, if only to get a hold of his seminal "Towards a Critical Regionalism:

Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," an assault on Postmodern spectacle that first appeared in a now out-of-print 1983 anthology. Frampton wrote the book's 26 essays over the course of his career, and regardless of whether you agree with his opinions (which are of a leftist sociopolitical bent), they have influenced architectural culture to the point of being received. Any practitioner will be well served in learning them firsthand.

A far better question is whether anyone will bother to read the book—a question less nasty (and more rhetorical) than it sounds. Besides, the answer is already apparent: Architectural commentary underwent a fundamental change for the visual in the last half-century. The most influential proponents of postwar modernism were not theorist Siegfried Gideon and philosopher Hannah Arendt, Frampton's major influences, but photographer Julius Schulman

and magazine editor John Entenza. Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau's 1997 *S,M,L,XL* simply made the shift official with a barrage of tables, photographs, and typography so overscaled it looks graphic.

What makes Koolhaas's book ingenious—and suspect—is that it employs the rapid-fire techniques of contemporary spectacular culture to critique that same culture. By those terms, Frampton's book looks old-fashioned, even reactionary: So many words! Such small pictures! The only adornment to the green color-field jacket is the author's name and book's title (Frampton presumably had no control over the large Phaidon logo). Both the words and the design riff on Gideon's 1967 *Space, Time and Architecture*, which agitated, as Frampton does now, for an architecture appropriate to the age of its making. Unfortunately, the revolution is over, and it was televised. **NED CRAMER**

### > HARDWARE

WACOM CINTIQ / WWW.WACOM.COM

Touch-screen technology is closing the gap between hand drawing and computer drafting. LCD graphics tablets, for example, let users draw electronically with a stylus, lending the quality and feel of "pencil on paper" to the computing environment.

Wacom, known for their digitizer tablets, has released two Direct Draw LCDs in their new Cintiq line. Priced at \$1,899 at 15 inches and \$3,499 at 18 inches, Cintiq units are the least expensive for their size. With 512 levels of pressure, Wacom's battery-free stylus is the most sensitive device available; the tool even increases the width of drawn lines as more pressure is applied, just like a real pencil. Turned over, the stylus top becomes an electronic eraser.

This technology complements new design software packages like Autodesk Architectural Studio (June 2002, page 35), and SketchUp. With Microsoft's new Windows-based Tablet PC software coming out later this year, graphics LCDs combined with voice dictation and handwriting recognition should further improve drawing input. Wacom's Cintiq line meets Microsoft's Tablet PC specs; users can place drafting tools directly on the screen without affecting the display, as only input from the stylus will register. Designers will be able to draw on the screens with the aid of traditional straight edges, as in pre-CAD days. **H. EDWARD GOLDBERG**

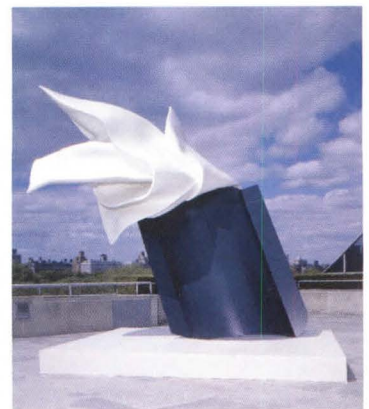


## Mies Sneeze

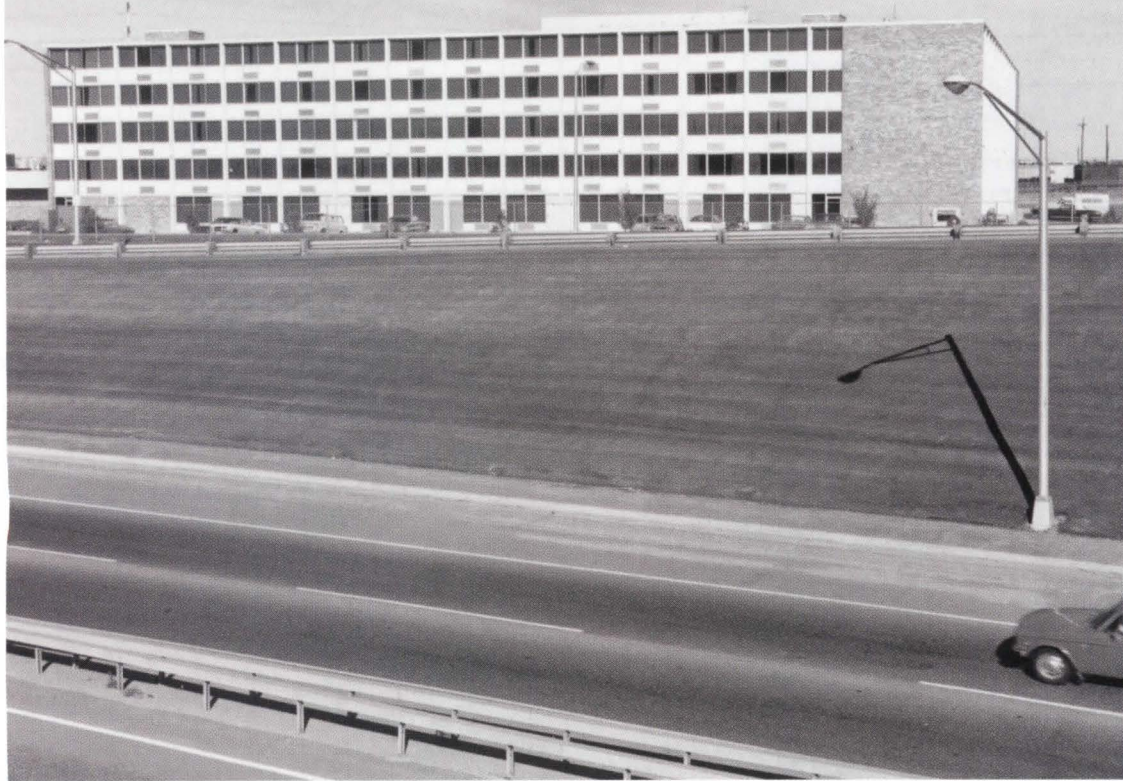
### > INSTALLATION

CLAES OLDENBURG / COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN  
"ARCHITECT'S HANDKERCHIEF"  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART  
NEW YORK CITY  
THROUGH LATE FALL

Best-known for transforming commonplace subjects—lipstick, baseball bat, clothespin—pop sculptors Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen are currently showing an architecturally themed work based on something more specific: a handkerchief seen in a photograph of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Mies sported expensive silk handkerchiefs in his tailored suits, adding a whiff of delicacy to a burly body. Oldenburg and van Bruggen's *Architect's Handkerchief* is a 12-foot-tall enlargement of Mies's breast pocket and its contents in painted, fiber-reinforced plastic. A crypto-portrait, the pocket is as stuffed with references as with silk finery: Miesian high-rises, chaos erupting from order, the decorative impulse, even the torch of the Statue of Liberty. It would look lovely at double the size in the forecourt of the nearby Seagram Building. **ERIC FREDERICKSEN**



# Bought and Sold



## > EXHIBIT

**ROBERT ADAMS / "WHAT WE BOUGHT: THE NEW WORLD"**  
**YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY**  
**NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT**  
**THROUGH JULY 30**

In 1970, photographer Robert Adams left a job teaching college English to concentrate on documenting Denver and its environs. *What We Bought* is the third in a trio of unsparring logs showing what was done to Denver during a period when the region's natural beauty and thriving economy spurred massive growth. Denver residents who, in Shakespeare's phrase, "loved not wisely but too well," destroyed much of what had drawn them there. These photos, taken in the era of *Learning from Las Vegas*, undercut that book's optimism by broadening the frame. Adams captures the beauty of the Rockies, the banality of subdivisions, and the windblown trash in the weedy margins—the only true border left between wilderness and the built environment. His photographs, Adams writes, "record what we purchased, what we paid, and what we could not buy." **EF**

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## > PERIODICAL

**306090: A JOURNAL OF EMERGENT ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN / WWW.306090.ORG**

Student journals come and go. Often they document the beginnings of academic trends and currents of thought; occasionally they become forums for lasting ideas; usually they disappear after their editors graduate. *306090* was founded last year by Jennifer Ferng and Jonathan Solomon, two students at Princeton. In its second issue, the biannual journal—now edited by Solomon and Alexander Brisen— is published independently with national distribution, and is rapidly finding its niche. Geared toward young

professionals and students about to enter the profession, *306090* "seeks to foster a sense of community among thinkers and young professionals to keep them engaged, so they don't just become CAD drones," says Solomon. The journal, which is currently seeking submissions for its fourth issue, publishes mostly unknown designers and writers, although the third issue (which will be out in October) will boast critic Michael Sorkin and DK Ruth, co-founder of the Rural Studio. "Its fascination with the new is reminiscent of the student journals following WWII," says Henry Cobb. "It is a record of the moment." **ALAN G. BRAKE**

# Get a Shelf Life

## EXHIBITIONS

### > BERKELEY

#### **Alexander Rodchenko, 1891-1956: Modern Photography,**

**Photomontage and Film**, at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, through August 14 (510) 642-0808

### > CAMBRIDGE

**Art and Design in Central and Northern Europe, 1880 to the Present** sculpture, painting, and decorative arts from the permanent collection, at Harvard University's Busch-Reisinger Museum, through December 31 (617) 495-8576

### > CLEVELAND

**Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle** three video installations that infuse modernist architecture with human activity, at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, through August 18 (216) 421-8671

### > COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA

**Marcel Breuer Centenary Exhibit** photographs, drawings, sketches, and furniture by the architect, at the Saint John's Art Gallery, Saint John's University, through July 28 (320) 363-2594

### > LONDON

**Gio Ponti—A World** design projects by the Italian architect, teacher, and founder of Domus, at the DesignMuseum, through October 6 (44) 207-404-1584

### > LOS ANGELES

**Dutch Drawings of the Golden Age** 17th-century Dutch landscapes and urban scenes, at the Getty Center, through August 25 (310) 440-7300

**Zero to Infinity Arte Povera = Art Without Limits, 1962-1972**, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, through September 22 (213) 626-6222

### > MIAMI

**Inside and Out: Contemporary Sculpture, Video, and Installation**, works that engage both the renovated original museum building as well as Arata Isozaki's addition, at the Bass Museum, ongoing (305) 673-7530

### > MILWAUKEE

**Museums for the New Millenium: Concepts, Projects, Buildings**, at the Milwaukee Art Museum, through August 4 (414) 224-3200

### > MONTREAL

**Creative Spaces** images of designers' studios and workspaces, at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, through September 15 (514) 939-7000

### > NEW YORK CITY

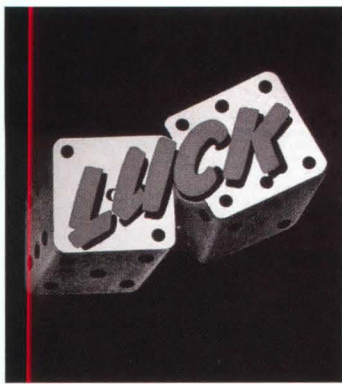
**The Last Days of Penn Station: Photographs by Aaron Rose** the first public exhibit of the photographs, taken between 1963 and 1966 of the destroyed landmark, at the Museum of the City of New York, through October 6 (212) 534-1672



**Out of Site** constructed architectural narratives portrayed through installations, sculpture, painting, and photography, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, through October 13 (212) 219-1222

### > PHILADELPHIA

**Black + White: Beyond the Color Spectrum** graphic design, fashion, design objects, and photographs, at the Design Center, at Philadelphia University, through August 4 (215) 951-2860



### > SANTA FE

**Georgia O'Keefe: The Artist's Landscape** selections from photographer Todd Webb's 30-year study of the painter's life and environment, at the Georgia O'Keefe Museum, through September 21 (505) 946-1000



### > TACOMA, WASHINGTON

**Bill Viola: Something Above, Beyond, Below, Beneath** video works that address memory, perception, time, and space, at the Tacoma Art Museum, through September 15 (253) 272-4258

### > TULSA

**American Modern, 1925-1940: Design for a New Age** a survey of industrial design between the two World Wars, travels to the Philbrook Museum of Art, opens August 25 (918) 749-7941

### > WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Windshield: Richard Neutra's House for the John Brown Family**, travels to the National Building Museum, through August 18 (202) 272-2448

## CONFERENCES

**The World Summit on Sustainable Development**, sponsored by the United Nations, in Johannesburg, South Africa, August 26-September 4 [www.un.org/events/index.html](http://www.un.org/events/index.html)

**UIA Berlin 2002 XXI World Congress of Architecture**, sponsored by the Union Internationale des Architectes, July 22-26 [www.uia-architectes.org/texte/summary/p2b1.html](http://www.uia-architectes.org/texte/summary/p2b1.html)

**2002 VM+SD International Retail Design Conference**, at the Pasadena Conference Center, Pasadena, California, September 18-20 [www.irdconline.com](http://www.irdconline.com)

**Codes Expo 2002**, sponsored by ICC, BOCA, ICBO, and SBCCI, in Fort Worth, Texas, September 29-30 [www.sbcci.org/codes/2002\\_Expo.cfm](http://www.sbcci.org/codes/2002_Expo.cfm)

## COMPETITIONS

Architecture and Metropolitan Home announce a new competition for **House of the Year**. Submission deadline July 15. To enter, write [homeofyear@vnubuspubs.com](mailto:homeofyear@vnubuspubs.com)

**The James Marsden Fitch Charitable Foundation** awards a \$25,000 research grant to a mid-career professional whose project will advance historic preservation in the United States. Entry deadline September 3 (212) 691-3229

**The Busan International Culture Festival Organization** (Republic of Korea) is sponsoring an international ideas competition open to young architects (40 years or younger) for the design of an observation tower. First prize is \$30,000. Entry deadline September 30 [www.biacf.org](http://www.biacf.org)

The city of Ames, Iowa, invites submissions from design students and professionals for the **Landmark Challenge Design Competition**, to give a functioning power plant a new prominent visual identity. Submission deadline December 2 [www.city.ames.ia.us](http://www.city.ames.ia.us)

The United States Army Corps of Engineers is seeking entries for the **Pentagon Memorial Design Competition**. Further information to be released soon. <http://pentagonmemorial.nab.usace.army.mil>





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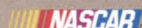
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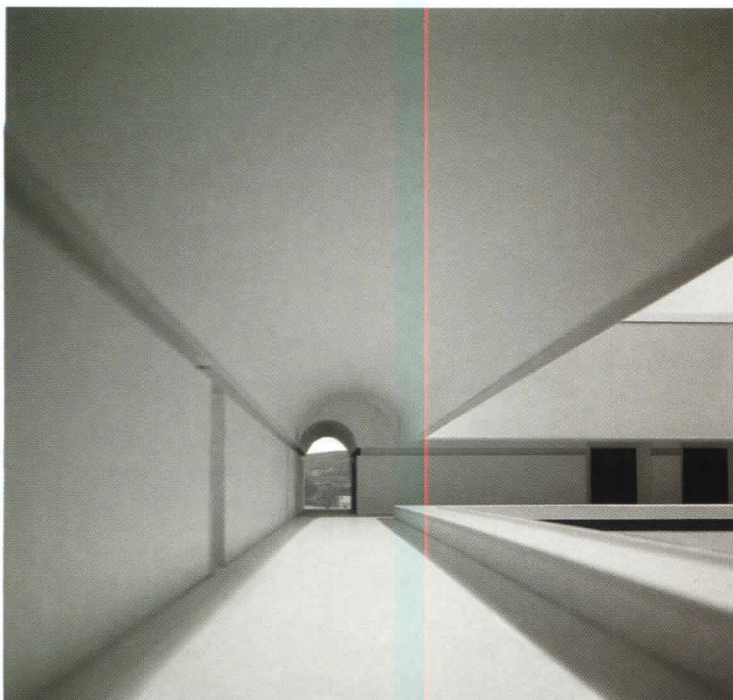
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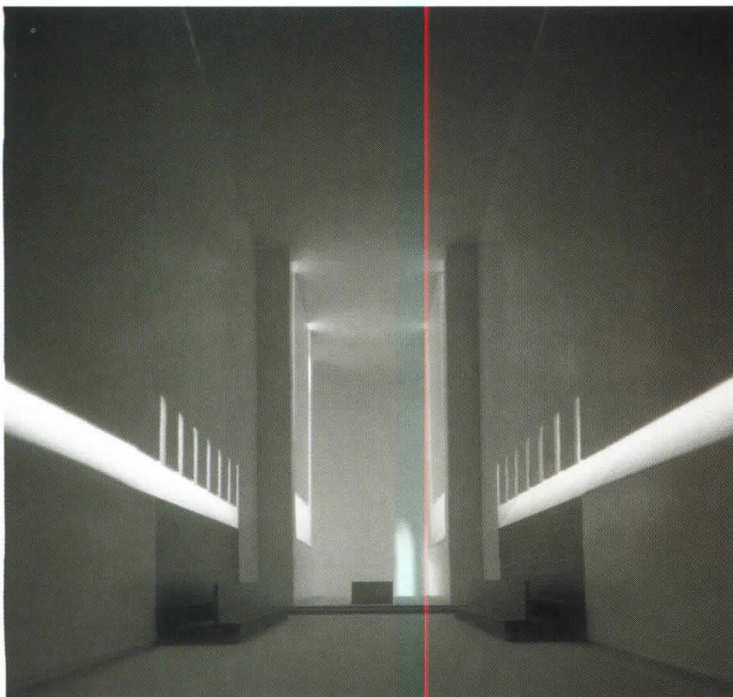


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## > on the boards



Cloister facing east



Church looking east

### > JOHN PAWSON NOVY DVUR MONASTERY / CZECH REPUBLIC

"In cloisters, where the brothers are reading...what is the point of those unclean apes, fierce lions, monstrous centaurs, half-men, striped tigers, fighting soldiers and hunters blowing their horns?... So many and so marvelous are the various shapes surrounding us that it is more pleasant to read the marble than the books, and to spend the whole day marveling over these things rather than meditating on the law of God." (From the *Apologia to William of Thierry*, 1125)

So declared St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a 12th century Cistercian abbot who railed against the worldly decorations that cluttered eyes and hearts of monks in other orders less stringent than his own. His words are illustrative of the Cistercians' spiritual and aesthetic proclivity towards austerity. John Pawson, the British architect known for his ruthless removal of the unnecessary, has long been a fervent admirer of a Cistercian abbey in Provence called Le Thoronet, writing that it "remains for me the most beautiful building in the world." He has thus received what is a most suitable commission: a monastery at Novy Dvur, Czechoslovakia, for the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance at Sept-Fons.

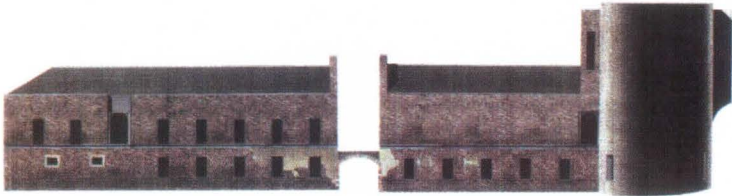
In many ways, Pawson's plan for Novy Dvur follows the typical layout of a medieval Cistercian monastery. Four ranges of buildings surround a square cloister, with the church on the north side, the sacristy and scriptorium on the east, and the refectory and kitchen on the south. However, because the western range is a refurbished baroque farmhouse, the cloister is distinctly different: Though the cloister walk is open to the air on three sides, on the fourth, it passes through the existing farmhouse.

It is in the church itself where one can see most clearly why the monks of Sept-Fons chose Pawson, beyond his dislike of monstrous centaurs and their modern-day equivalents. Light scoops create a ribbon of illumination along the lime-washed parallel walls of the nave and presbytery, filling the space with indirect light. The church will be the last portion of the complex to be completed, however: While the other three ranges will be habitable this summer, the church is tentatively scheduled for completion in 2004, depending on fundraising. **ANNE GUINEY.**

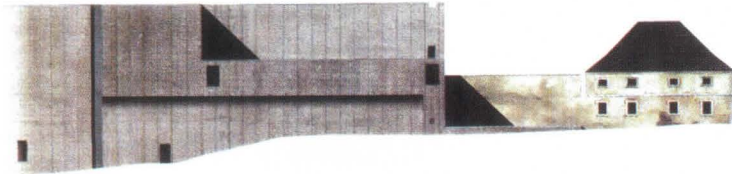
*The show John Pawson will be on view at the Valencia Museum of Modern Art, in Valencia, Spain, through September 1. [www.ivam.es](http://www.ivam.es) For more on Novy Dvur, please see [www.novydvur.cz](http://www.novydvur.cz)*



South elevation



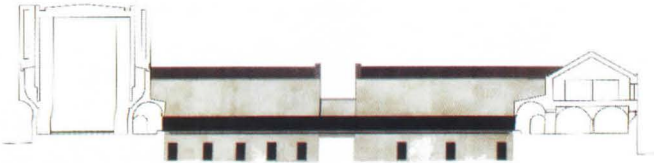
East elevation



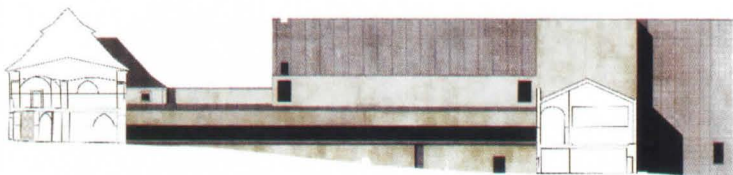
North elevation



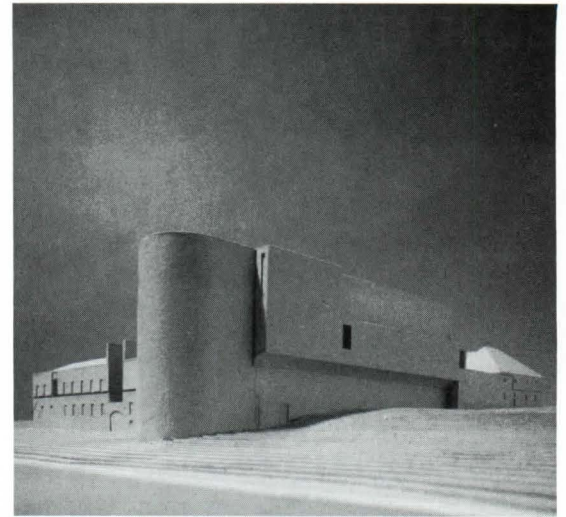
South-north section



North-south section

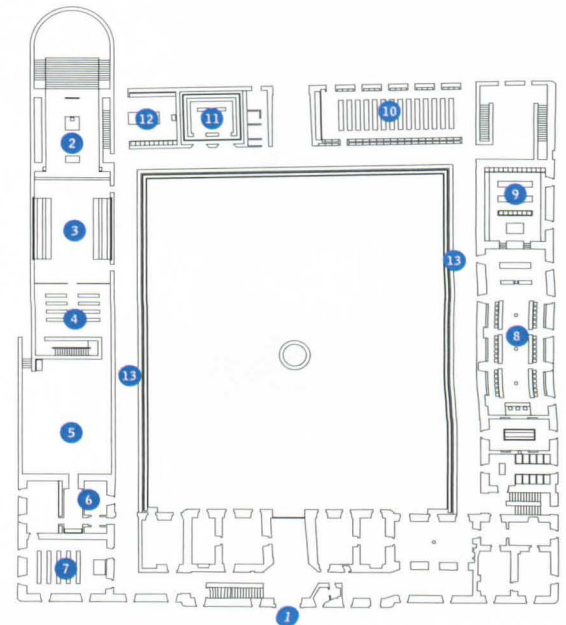


West-east section

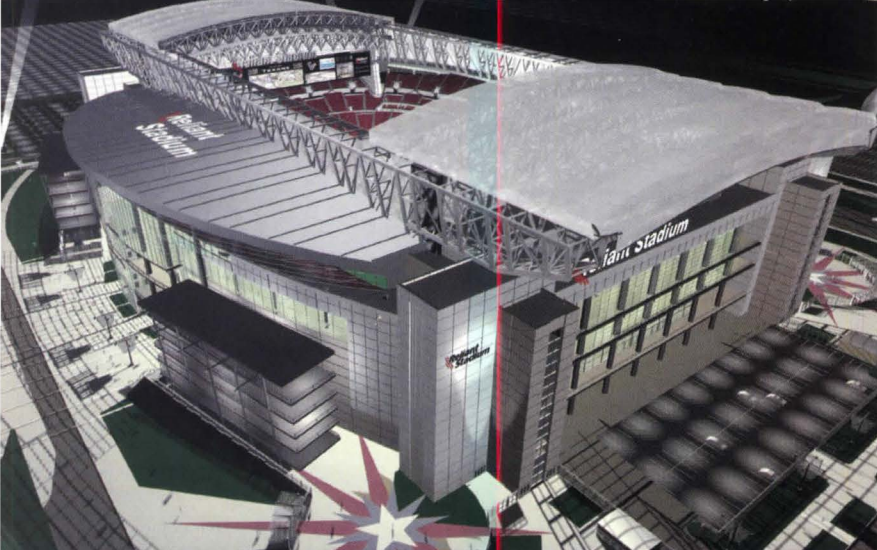


View from northeast

- 1 entrance
- 2 presbytery
- 3 monks' choir
- 4 lay seating
- 5 courtyard
- 6 chapel
- 7 conference room
- 8 refectory
- 9 kitchen
- 10 scriptorium
- 11 chapter house
- 12 sacristy
- 13 cloister



Ground-floor plan 31' <

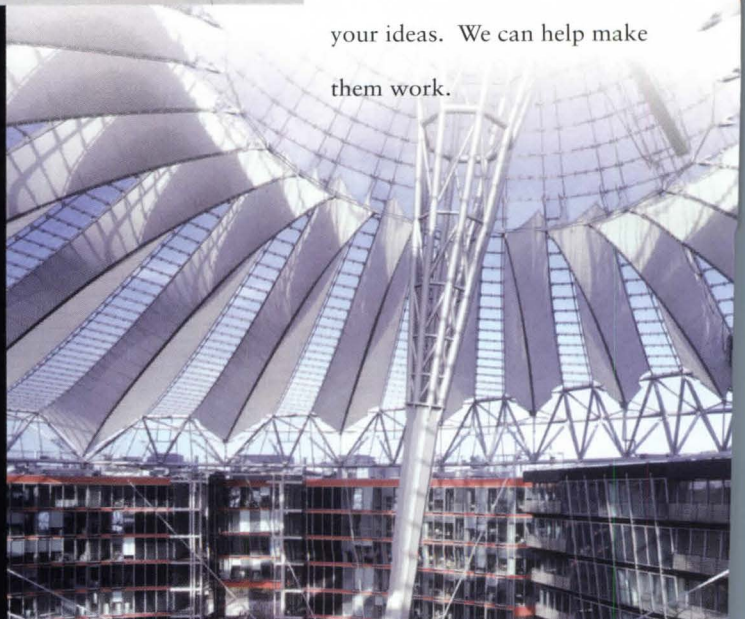


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## After-school Architecture

Mohammed Lawal is inspiring at-risk youth to pursue a career in design.

BY FRANK JOSSI / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TODD HIDO

**> PROFILE** Six years ago, Keon Blasingame, a 15-year-old African-American teenager with an interest in design and drafting, glanced at a few books on famous architects in the library of his Minneapolis high school. But he didn't see a single black face among them.

So when he enrolled in a local youth program on architecture,

Blasingame was surprised to discover one of his three instructors was a young African-American architect named Mohammed Lawal. "I'd never seen an architect who was an African-American; I'd never seen an architect who looked like me," says Blasingame.

"I come from the inner city and there's a big difference between North High School, where I went,

and an architectural firm—or, for that matter, the University of Minnesota," Blasingame says. "Mohammed is the rare successful African-American architect, and he's gone back into the community as a mentor and a role model."

Now a 21-year-old University of Minnesota architecture school graduate who plans to pursue a master's degree, Blasingame says his experience with Lawal in the Architectural Youth Program led him to a career in architecture. After receiving a full scholarship to the University of Minnesota, Blasingame took an internship in the government division at Lawal's Minneapolis firm, KKE Architects.

The architecture profession has



For Lawal (here at one of his school projects), teaching students about architecture means exposing them to a physical expression of culture, and to the wide variety of design and construction professions.

struggled to attract minorities—especially African-Americans. Thirty years ago the American Institute of Architects and the National Organization of Minority Architects began an official program to attract more African-Americans to the profession, but the results have been disheartening. Despite efforts to create a community of African-American architects through educational and informational efforts, only 1 percent of the nation's architects are African-American, according to Paul Taylor, past

president of NOMA and assistant professor at Morgan State University in Baltimore. There are small but encouraging signs of improvement, however: the nation's architectural programs report that 7 percent of their student body is currently African-American.

In the Twin Cities, Lawal leads an effort to increase those numbers. Through the AYP, one of only a handful of initiatives like it in the country, he teaches poor and at-risk students that hundreds of careers exist in the design and construction industry, from engineering to city planning. When a class toured a new federal courthouse three years ago, the students were amazed by the collaborative

nature of architecture—they learned for the first time that more than 300 trades were involved in the massive construction process. Even if they do not become architects, Lawal hopes the students leave the program with a greater understanding of the built environment and of the importance of design.

A group of architects founded the AYP in New York City in 1992. One of them, Joshua Weinstein, moved to Minneapolis and founded a chapter there in 1995. The AYP has since reached more than 170 high school students, often drawn from magnet schools or programs for the arts. Students spend two afternoons a week for 12 weeks visiting construction sites and historic neighborhoods before designing final projects.

"We've had them do a skyway, a pedestrian bridge on the [Mississippi] river, a lobby and proscenium stage for the Schubert Theater, and a trolley stop," Lawal recounts.

The 35-year-old architect grew up in Minneapolis and in Nigeria. His seven years with AYP and his leadership of KKE's 36-member educational division recently led the AIA to select him as one of the four recipients of its 2002 Young Architects Award. "We try to find projects that could be real and have potential clients," he says. "We don't just say, 'Well, let's design a building and you just imagine it and do what you want.' The trolley stop this year was on a leftover vacant urban space and it would be a feasible project if someone wanted to do it."

Lawal's involvement in AYP stems from his desire to serve as a role model for young minority architects, in particular African-Americans. Never blessed with a mentor himself, Lawal strongly believes in the concept of elders imbuing a younger generation with

knowledge and the spirit of collaboration. As both a teacher and architect, he sees his role as bringing together divergent groups and leading them to a "common good."

The architect often entertains the possibility of incorporating elements of African art into his work, but his clientele has rarely handed him the opportunity to do so. "Clearly there's an African 'art' you can see that is an individual expression of culture and society, whereas being an architect is about the client group you're working with, and the users," he says. On occasion, however, he has managed to feature motifs and concepts he first discovered as a youngster in Nigeria, and Lawal's work with AYP seems like an extension of that desire: by drawing in young talent like Blasingame, Lawal has the opportunity to refine and expand a sense of how African-American heritage might apply to architecture.

Lawal likes to create buildings with large communal spaces where people can meet and converse, a reference to the exterior courtyards he recalls seeing in the African homes of tribal elites. He enjoys working on schools—since he's allowed to select vibrant, inviting colors recalling Nigeria—and occasionally referencing cultural artifacts, as he did with a brick pattern taken from a traditional African Kente cloth for a north Minneapolis K-8 school. "I'd like to continue on civic community-based urban projects," Lawal says.

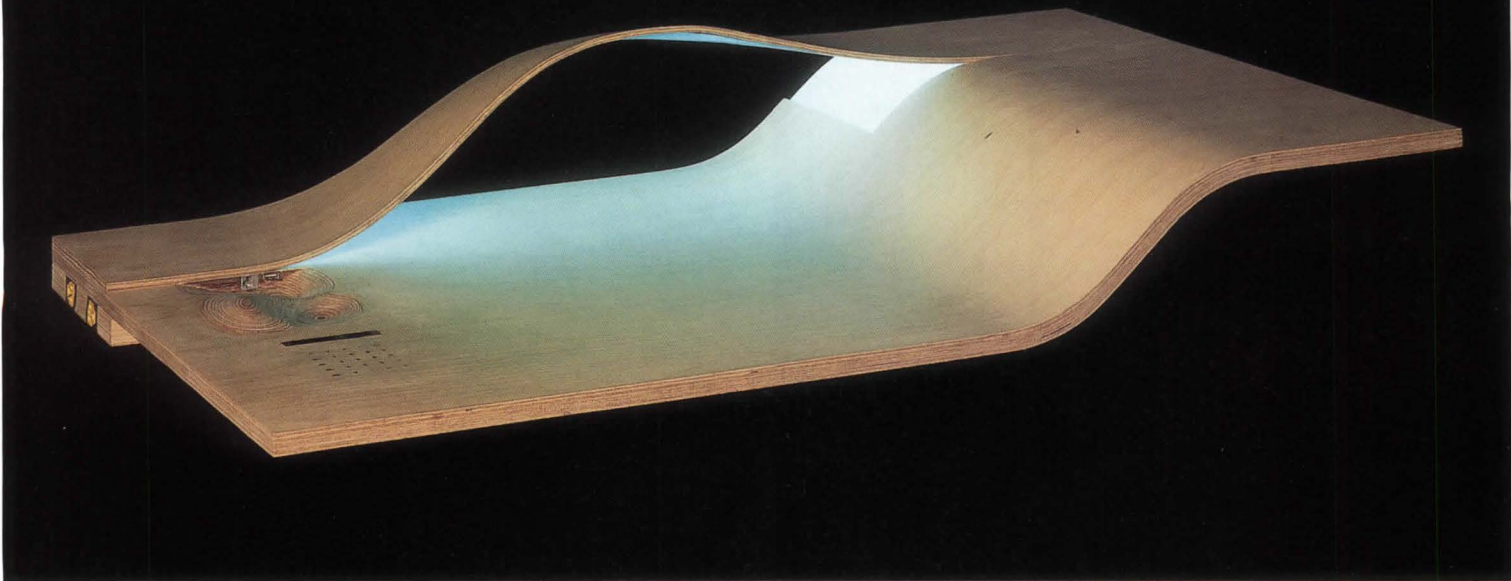
Meanwhile, his sense of community is growing broader. "I'm hoping to someday spend part of my time teaching, studying, and practicing architecture in Nigeria," he says, "perhaps by setting up an AYP-like program." ■

**FRANK JOSSI IS A JOURNALIST LIVING IN ST. PAUL.**

# Mind and Matter

By turning materials research into a sideline business, one firm is reinventing its practice.

BY RAUL A. BARRANECHÉ



**> PRACTICE** Architects are no strangers to working beyond the confines of traditional practice. Designers from Mies to Michael Graves have tried their hand at shaping everything from “the spoon to the city.” But these architects, no matter how successful at cutlery design or urban planning, have yet to move beyond a fixed model for creating products—whether buildings or teapots or city plans—and selling the professional services that go with them. And few, if any, have attempted to work with industry to refashion the very materials with which they and other architects build.

Boston architects Sheila Kennedy and Frano Violich are poised to break that impasse, and to redefine the way clients view an

architect’s skills. In their firm, Kennedy + Violich Architecture (KVA), the pair have been exploring inventive and unorthodox applications of materials for years, whether developing solutions for specific projects, teaching investigative design studios sponsored by manufacturers, or piggybacking architecture onto more pragmatic infrastructure projects. The partners share a longtime fascination with expanding applications for existing materials—what Kennedy calls “material misuse”—and they have pursued the subject in essays, lectures, and design studios at Harvard and SCI-Arc. Earlier this year, the two decided to make their interest into a new business by launching MATx (an abbreviation for “materials”), a materials-research-

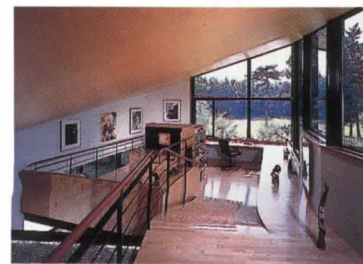
and-development operation within their existing studio.

MATx was born through a slip of the tongue. At an academic conference last year, Kennedy was lecturing about KVA’s investigations into materials. Suddenly—much to her partner’s surprise—she told the audience that the firm had launched a research division. “I suddenly heard myself saying it, and it clicked with what we had been thinking and doing in our studio,” recalls Kennedy.

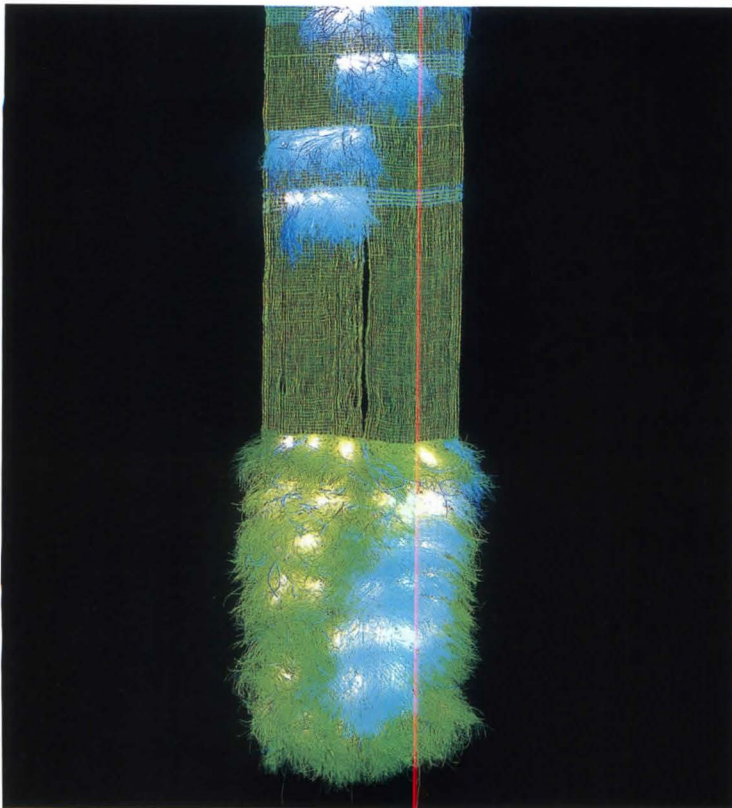
KVA has since discovered that launching a new business arm can be a matter of simply putting a brand name on a body of knowledge. “MATx is an affiliated business within KVA, though we prefer to call it a research unit,” Kennedy explains. For the moment, operat-

The self-illuminating EL Desk (above), which transmits electricity and data through a polymer embedded in its wooden surface, grew out of a 1999 residential project (below).

ing MATx independently, at least in name, has its advantages. It facilitates conversations between the firm and large manufacturers with whom the architects often collaborate on developing new material prototypes. Most of these big manufacturers have research and development units, but not depart-



# >features



ments accustomed to working directly with architects.

"Manufacturers usually see architects in traditional roles, not as people who have the training and imagination to invent new applications for technologies in architecture," says Kennedy. The MATx entity helps counter that shortsightedness.

In practice, the boundaries between the two businesses are deliberately blurry. Kennedy reports that nearly all of KVA's 14 employees have worked on MATx research projects—an efficient and profitable use of resources. The mechanics of billing for MATx work hasn't yet been standardized. Sometimes Kennedy and Violich separate billable hours between MATx and KVA projects; sometimes they don't. The accounting issue could become even muddier, as Kennedy

and Violich are examining ways of adding material-development phases to both schematic design and also to the end of design development. Weaving material R&D services into architectural contracts is also a way to squeeze materials research into a commission, without undertaking an entirely new project and scaring off the client.

KVA's architectural projects are often the source of innovative material studies and applications carried out under the MATx name. For instance, in their 1999 design of a Massachusetts house addition, KVA developed a ramping, 3-inch-deep structural plywood floor that splits into a floor and work desk. The desk became the basis of a MATx project, dubbed the EL (or Electro-Luminescent) Desk. In order to do away with messy cabling and

wiring, KVA embedded ultra-thin polymer films into the plywood work surface—allowing the wood to carry both electricity and data. The electroluminescent film between the wood and the veneer generates light, and handheld PDAs can be plugged into discrete data ports embedded within the desk. (A new prototype of the EL Desk is on view at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City through mid-September.)

In other cases, Kennedy and Violich look for suitable applications for new MATx-generated materials in their architectural commissions. MATx developed a light-emitting "give-back curtain" prototype for the Opto-Semiconductors division of lighting manufacturer Osram. By dyeing the synthetic and cotton fabric of the curtain with phosphors that absorb low-spectrum waves

KVA first developed the phosphorescent "give-back curtain" (left) for Wall International's Boston offices (top). The firm has since received attention from several industry groups, as well as a Department of Energy grant to improve on the product. Wood cladding, made of glue-laminated beams which are then embedded with active-matrix display screens (above right), were first used in KVA's design for the Art Institute of Chicago (above left).

from artificial and natural light, the curtain releases the waves as visible light: a larger, more sophisticated version of the technology used in glow-in-the-dark wristwatches. The curtain then found a perfect application in the Boston offices of German street-furniture manufacturer Wall International. KVA used the luminous curtain to form mutable enclosures for small meeting spaces within the lofty interior.

Whereas an architectural practice tends to afford only a one-time payoff, materials research contin-





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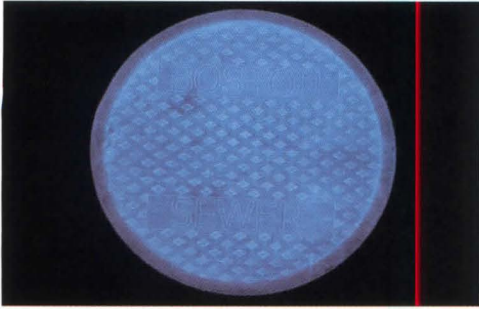
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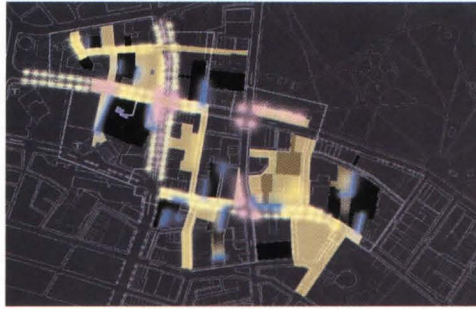
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## >features



For its Boston Theater District project (right), KVA created a system of glowing markers to orient visitors to the streetscape. The markers, like this luminous manhole cover (left), are now standalone objects, ready for production.

ues to earn for KVA, as they further develop and refine existing projects. The give-back curtain is no exception. After learning about its light-generating capabilities, the U.S. Department of Energy gave MATx grant money to take the curtain back to the drawing board and develop a



more advanced version. MATx complied, adding semiconductors that give off more light and tiny microprocessors that control its color and output level. Kennedy and Violich have since been approached by the hospitality and health-care industries about their next-generation curtain. There are also possible applications in the defense industry: temporary shelters made of the give-back fabric could generate their own utility lighting.

The architects also earmark certain projects for MATx when looking for solutions for their building commissions. If they haven't already built a body of knowledge on a particular material, KVA will turn to MATx and begin a new research project. In designing a renovation for the Art Institute of Chicago, KVA was looking for new ways of integrate donor's names into the walls of exhibition areas, auditoriums, and lobbies—a handsome alternative to engraved plaques or slide-in nameplates. From MATx came the idea of walls made of inexpensive "junk wood" (scraps of glue-laminated beams) imbedded with solid-state active-matrix displays (more commonly seen in handheld PDAs and cell phones). The displays can show text or even streaming video.

Often, manufacturers call on MATx's services to work on a product prototype. But industrial clients also pay them for problem-solving skills: conceptual brainstorming about a material, or

Water changes *shape*. Drops of rain.

Blocks of ice.  
Waves of ocean.

Water changes *color*.

From crystal clear.  
To earthy browns.  
To brilliant greens.

Water constantly  
*reinvents* itself.

finding potential architectural or landscape applications for an existing product. Companies have called on MATx to work with them on products they are looking to launch three or five years down the line, products as vague as "large bendable surfaces" or as specific as "smart windows." This intellectual-property work is where the MATx business model makes good sense: By offering itself as a research lab, the firm can tap its existing human resources to sell a valuable service—knowledge and expertise—hopefully at a healthy profit.

"We have to be very careful not to propose competing ideas to different manufacturers; each has to get its own concept," explains Violich. For certain projects, employees and outside collaborators must sign confidentiality or nondisclosure agreements. "It can be very James Bond," he says. If MATx's scope of work includes the development of an actual product, they negotiate royalty agreements with the manufacturer.

Naturally, the process of developing new materials involves creating mock-ups of the products. In the absence of a vast R&D facility, most of those mock-ups and prototypes are built right in the KVA/MATx studio. For the sake of confidentiality, Kennedy and Violich keep those individual projects out of view in separate workrooms down the hall from the main studio, often at a client's request. If possible, the final products are also manufactured in the studio. For instance, Indian-born, RISD-trained weaver Sheetal Khanna set up a loom in the studio and spent two weeks weaving the "give-back curtain" for the Wall International project. The yarn from which the curtain was woven was also impregnated with phosphors in the studio. If a project is too large to be produced in-house or requires, say, large computer-numeric-controlled milling or plastic-forming equipment, it gets outsourced to trusted partners.

Kennedy and Violich's strategy makes good

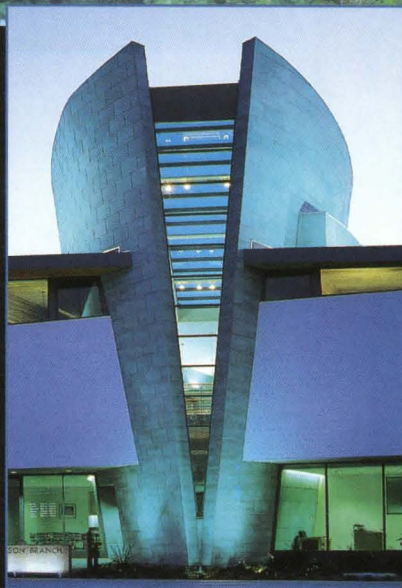
business sense for their firm. But it is also important as a new benchmark in interdisciplinary collaboration among designers, manufacturers, and even government. The work goes a long way towards proving how research can inform architecture, and vice versa, like a feedback loop. And the DOE's interest in the give-back curtain demonstrates how architectural innovations can have a broad interest and applicability beyond architecture and interiors—as a renewable, recyclable source of light, for instance. In that sense, KVA's endeavor really isn't an expansion of the architect's traditional role, but a more accurate representation of the architect's valuable skills. ■

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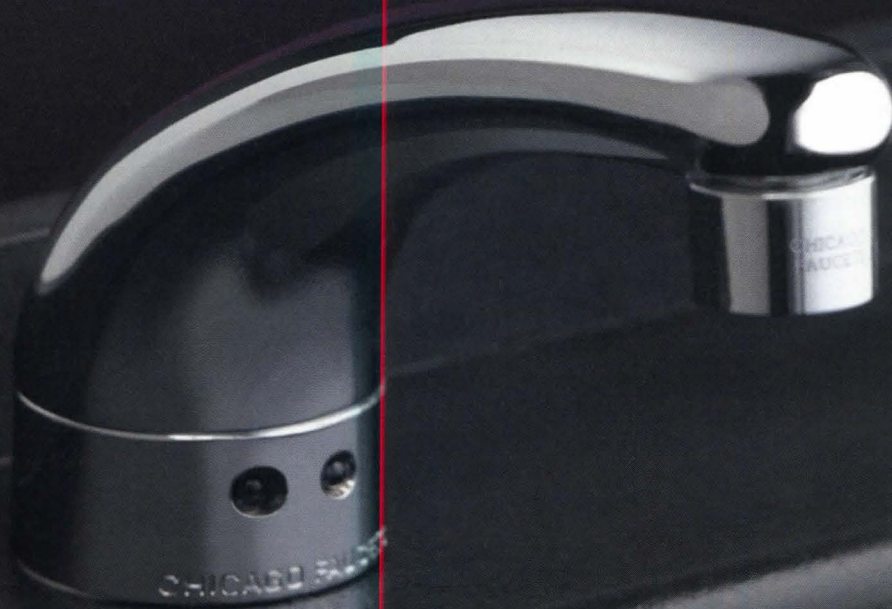


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# Flexibility First

**A**lready beloved for their aesthetic appeal, superior energy efficiency, and reasonable prices, EIFS have moved into the next generation with additional moisture protection and dirt-resistant finishes.

There's a reason why EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) account for nearly 30 percent of the total commercial cladding market. Actually, there are *several* reasons. Their superior energy efficiency is well known. Their affordable price point makes them a viable option for a range of projects. But it's their great design flexibility that really makes them a stand-out.

"Architects love EIFS because they're aesthetically appealing," says Bernie Allmayer, spokesperson for the **EIFS Industry Member's Association (EIMA)**. "There's tremendous curb appeal and architects can do all kinds of designs. They give you a look that you simply can't get with other claddings—and at an affordable cost."

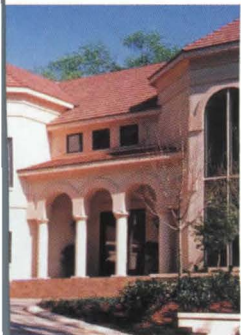
In terms of energy efficiency, Allmayer likens EIFS to a blanket. "EIFS are perhaps the most energy efficient cladding out there," he says. "They're a great insulating product because they form an envelope—or a blanket—against the exterior wall. It keeps the warm air out in

the summer and in during the winter."

Although manufacturers continue to work to enhance energy efficiency, Allmayer and other industry experts agree that innovations in moisture drainage features are the biggest news in EIFS these days. "Architects have always loved the color, texture, and form that comes with these walls," says Kent Stumpe, director of marketing/communications for **Senergy**, based in Jacksonville, Florida, "and they've gotten very good use out of existing systems so many of them have no desire to change what they use. For others, who were more interested in water-managed type systems, we introduced several water-managed systems in the past two years. What they basically do is put a layer of a drainage plane between the sheathing and the insulation, adding a secondary weather barrier."

At the manufacturer **Parex**, based just outside of Atlanta, Georgia, in Redan, "We get a lot of questions about drainage systems and how they work," says Tom Robertson, product

For more information on EIFS manufacturers and associations, [www.thru.to/architecture](http://www.thru.to/architecture)



## EIFS

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manager for Parex. "Lately those questions have become more detailed—architects want to know how they work, how to treat windows, what happens when they run up against another substrate, and working questions like that." To address such issues, Robertson says, "We've got a product—KeyCoat—that provides extra protection for sheathing and works as an adhesive for the EPS foam board. It's a one-step product instead of the standard two, allowing for earlier completion and occupancy."

Waterproofing has also come to the forefront at **Sto Corp.**, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, where they've developed Sto's EIFS NexT system. The system "adds Sto Guard to EIFS to provide the best possible moisture protection," says Mike O'Neil, product manager, specializing in EIFS, for Sto. "It's a waterproofing treatment that's applied directly to the sheathing and other raw elements." While by their very nature, EIFS in themselves are weather-resistant cladding, Sto-Guard provides a secondary moisture barrier. Explains O'Neil: "Where EIFS adjoins other elements of construction, like a window or door, there's a need for secondary moisture protection to provide a method for incidental moisture that might enter behind cladding to have a chance to exit without doing damage." Surfaces protected with Sto Guard can be left uncovered for up to six months before cladding is installed with the sheathing still protecting during and after construction.

**Dryvit** is another EIFS manufacturer that offers a variety of moisture drainage systems. "Dryvit's Infinity, Outsulation Plus, and Outsulation MD systems offer a complete range of drainage options," says Barbara Catlow, manager of marketing services, for Dryvit Systems, Inc., based in West Warwick, Rhode Island, "from pressure equalized systems to a variety of engineered cavity wall systems—allowing the architect to select a drainage system that is appropriate for the use, design, and climatic conditions."

## Looks Count

The flexibility and variety of things architects can do with EIFS has always been the system's number-one attribute. Bearing a pleasing resemblance to stucco or stone, EIFS are far more versatile, with the ability to be fashioned into virtually any shape or design, including those that would be cost-prohibitive using conventional construction, such as cornices, arches, columns, special moldings, and other decorative accents.

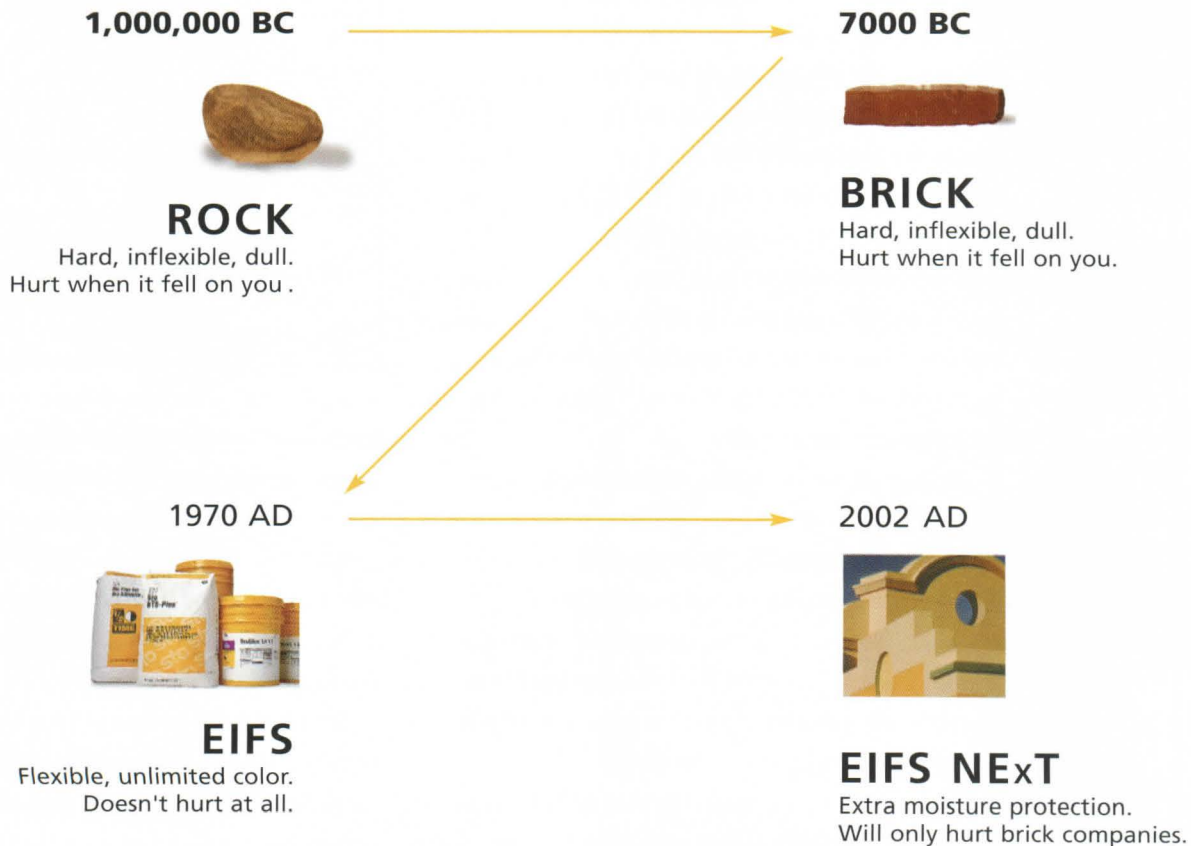
Because of the way EIFS are formulated, they've always had superior resistance to fading, chalking, and yellowing, and rarely need painting because they have excellent resistance to dirt, mildew, and mold.

As with moisture protection, however, "excellent" isn't good enough for EIFS manufacturers anymore. Robertson of Parex says, "We've got new elastomeric finishes now—a flexible finish with a new technology that improves resistance to dirt pickup and is even easier to work with." And at Sto, they've just introduced enhancements to their premium finish lines used in four of their EIFS systems (the Classics and Premiers systems). "We made a remarkable discovery of a way to make those finishes better," says O'Neil. "Now they have even better color stability, reduced dirt pickup, and reduced incidence of mildew or algae growth, which can sometimes occur when atmospheric dirt becomes attached to a finish and serves as food for mildew and algae."

## The Sum of the Parts

In addition to the actual EIFS, the other elements that go into the construction can impact how effective EIFS will be. "In order to create an air-tight, water-tight envelope, the roofs, downspouts, windows, etc. all have to be quality products and properly installed," says Allmayer of EIMA. "Architects are not really dealing with a component or an

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individual product—it's all part of a larger system and all these elements have to work together properly."

For example, **Georgia Pacific** manufactures a patented dense gypsum product, Dens-Glass Gold sheathing, specifically for use with EIFS. This unique sheathing combines glass mats embedded into a water-resistant treated gypsum core and a gold colored, bond-enhancing primer coating.

"It adds moisture protection for the product," says Jim Murphy, national product manager, Dens-Glass Gold, of Georgia Pacific, based in Atlanta, "and it's warranted for exposure to the elements for up to six months by GP. For example, you could hang it in November and don't have to cover it with EIFS until May." In addition to superior moisture and fire resistance, "Dens-Glass Gold scored a perfect 10 when tested under ASTM 3273—which means no mold and mildew growth," says Murphy.

The foam plastic insulation—while packaged as part of EIFS—is critical because that provides a large part of the system's energy efficiency. "Foam plastic insulation controls unwanted air infiltration—in and out of the building," says Rob Krebs, director of communications for the **American Plastics Council**, "a problem that can waste close to 40 percent of every heating and cooling dollar according to the Canadian Housing Information Center."

Krebs notes that other plastic building materials used in combination with EIFS can save even more. For example, the use of vinyl window frames saves the United States nearly two billion BTUs of energy per year (enough to meet the yearly electrical needs of 18,000 single family homes), entry doors with a foam plastic core can inhibit sound and add insulation value, and polycarbonate windows have lower thermal conductivity than glass, which reduces heating and cooling needs while providing additional high-strength shatter-resistance during storm or hurricane weather.

Foam plastic insulation is also typically required to meet certain performance standards. "Whether we label it as

## QUALITY CONTROL

The best way to assure a high-quality EIFS job is to rely on members of the **EIFS Industry Members Association (EIMA)**, a non-profit trade association of over 500 of the industry's leading manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, and applicators. EIMA promotes industry-wide standards and develops specification guidelines and standards for EIFS systems, materials, and methods of applications. EIFS manufactured by EIMA members meet all appropriate building code testing requirements and industry performance standards. The association also publishes specifications and test methods on such topics as performance, durability, fire testing, application, and the use of related exterior wall components. For more information, call (800) 294-3463 or check out [www.eima.com](http://www.eima.com)

a generic or put a company's name on it, we make our insulation either specific to the needs of an individual EIFS manufacturer or to the EIMA standard for EIFS," says Mike Tobin, president of **AFM Corporation**, which makes the insulation that many EIFS use. "EIMA has developed an industry standard for what is acceptable insulation in terms of physical performance, fire performance and tolerances, and so on."

The insulation is just one of the possible variations among systems. "We constantly emphasize the choices available in our systems," says Robertson. "EIFS are a wide variety of systems tailor-made for a wide variety of uses, ranging from a high-end home to a high rise to a hospital." Like many EIFS manufacturers, Parex offers a plan review service. "We'll take their plans and go over the details for them," says Robertson. "Oftentimes, we can help them cut costs or improve the system's performance without increasing cost. As a group of manufacturers, we make a huge effort to make choices available. Don't just specify an EIFS system—let us help you pick what's right for your building."

■ By Irene Kor



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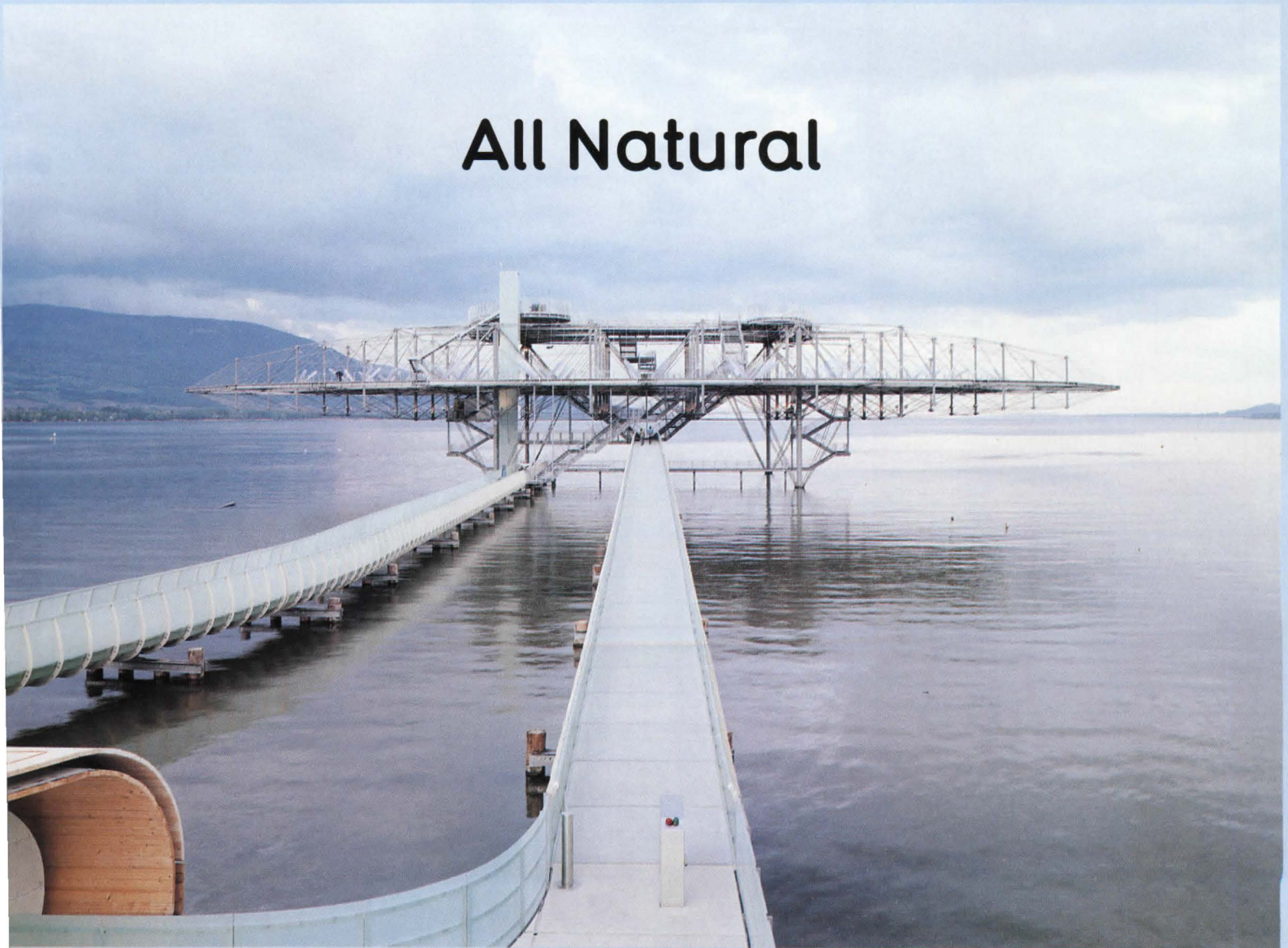
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Imitating nature needs a considerable amount of artifice. "It's incredible, the structure that's required to make this nothing," says principal Ricardo Scofidio, of the engineering behind Diller + Scofidio's new Blur Building for the Swiss Expo 2002 in Yverdon-les-Bains: to begin with, there are the piers sunk beneath the floor of Lake Neuchâtel. Then there's a steel tensegrity structure that would make Buckminster Fuller proud—not to mention the network of the ramps, elevator, stairs, and platforms that make it habitable. Finally there's a computerized system of pumps, pipes, and nozzles. What do they do? Turn the page.

## All Natural











## Diller + Scofidio's Blur Building for the Swiss Expo 02 in Yverdon-les-Bains.

By Ned Cramer.  
Photography by  
Massimo Vitali

Lord Byron spent the summer of 1816 in Switzerland, living with friends at a villa on Lake Geneva. At one point, by way of entertainment, he proposed a competition: *We will each write a ghost story*, the poet told his four companions. Percy Bysshe Shelley and his sister-in-law, Claire Clairmont, came up with nothing. Byron got as far as an outline, which his personal physician, John Polidori, stole, diluted in his own words, and published back in England as *The Vampyre*—a feeble precursor to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Only Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy's 18-year-old wife, produced something of lasting value, beyond the legend of the house party itself. In her story, an overeager chemistry student from Geneva blends ancient alchemy with modern science, adds a dash of lightning, and...*by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.*

Mayhem ensues, of course.

The results weren't as calamitous last month, when Diller + Scofidio flipped the switch on another monster: the centerpiece for the Swiss Expo 02 in Yverdon-les-Bains, a town on the shore of Lake Neuchâtel. The Blur Building, as the architects have named their creation, could be an oil rig; it rises straight from the lake on piers that support a steel tensegrity structure 24 feet above the surface of the water. The national media had been eyeing its assembly and test-runs like angry villagers, but the apparatus, when it finally came to life, proved perfectly harmless. A complex

system of pumps, pipes, and nozzles continuously emit a mist that more or less envelops the structure. The effect by jet ski and from shore is of an isolated, impossibly low-flying cloud, or fog coming off the water.

So what's the connection between the Blur Building and *Frankenstein*? Clouds, for starters. The early 19th-century Romantics had a particular fascination with them, as perfect amalgams of the scientific and the transcendental. Four years after that eventful visit with Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote an ode he called "The Cloud": *I am the daughter of Earth and Water, / And the nursling of the Sky; / I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores; / I change, but I cannot die.* He personified the cloud as a moody, capricious girl—throwing lightning one day, showering sweetly the next—which may seem cute by today's standards, but in fact the poet based her temperament on what was then cutting-edge research into the workings of the Earth's atmosphere.

This scientific accuracy is remarkable given that little over a century before, the city government of Lucerne was blaming thunderstorms on Pontius Pilate, the late Roman governor of Judea and judge of Christ: His remains apparently lay at the bottom of a lake on a nearby mountainside, and when disturbed would send forth a fire-breathing dragon. It must have come as a relief when, in the winter of 1802/03, self-taught meteorologist Luke Howard published a study classifying the four basic cloud formations: Cumulus, Stratus, Cirrus, and Nimbus. The Blur Building might qualify as a fifth: Man-made. Its misty skin comes from 29,000 nozzles that spray filtered lake water across an area 300 feet wide, 200 feet deep, and 65 feet high. A computerized weather station adapts the nozzles' output in response to climactic conditions such as humidity, temperature, and the direction and speed of wind. Not content with representing a cloud, Diller + Scofidio have built one.

Just don't *call* it a cloud, if you want to stay on the architects' good side:

*They call it "The Cloud" in Switzerland, Diller says, and that's a real problem.* She and Scofidio prefer "Blur"—a concept and technique enjoying a certain vogue in cultural circles to describe the indeterminacy of contemporary life. When the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, for instance, commissioned Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto to put a 21st-century spin on 20th-century architectural icons like Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum and Le Corbusier's Ronchamp chapel (*Architecture*, September 1998, page 43), his pictures came back classically composed in black and white—but blurred to the verge of obscurity.

Separate bridges for entry and exit connect the Expo fairgrounds to the Blur Building, which contains two stacked, open platforms joined by stairs and an elevator for wheelchair users. The fiberglass upper platform peeks out of the cloud like an Alpine summit. On the metal-grate platform below, however, in the middle of the mist, visibility approaches zero. *Unlike entering a building*, Diller states in an essay about the project for the anthology *Anything, entering Blur will be like walking into a habitable medium—one that is featureless, depthless, scaleless, spaceless, massless, surfaceless, and contextless. Disorientation is structured into the experience.* To imagine what it's like, picture yourself inside one of Sugimoto's photographs—only much, much wetter.

Better yet, look at the work of J.M.W. Turner (who had a major retrospective this spring at the Baltimore Museum of Art). Throughout the Romantic period, painters like Turner, John Constable, and Alexander and John Robert Cozens conducted their own, artistic studies of clouds—near abstractions in aquatint, oils, and watercolors. *Skying*, Constable called the process. Turner took it furthest, developing his *plein-air* sketches into laborious, epic demonstrations of man battling against nature, with thick lashings of paint as violent as the storms they portray. The earliest and most famous of these pictures is *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing*



the Alps of 1812. Turner placed the Carthaginian general at the center of the scene—a tiny figure astride an elephant, braving weather so inclement that snow and rain and fog and clouds and stone all merge in a titanic whorl. Historian Simon Schama observes, in *Landscape and Memory*, that Turner's *Hannibal*, then, is the culmination of a tradition that made mountains the dreadful judges of human delusions about omnipotence and invincibility.

Natural disasters occur with enough frequency in Switzerland (and the landscape is so stimulating in any event) that 18th- and 19th-century tourists deliberately went there in search of thrills, like some early form of amusement park. The dandy Horace Walpole, who built Strawberry Hill, the famous Gothick country house, got an especial thrill while crossing the Alps: A wolf ate his lap dog. What the Romantics usually found in the mountains was a muse of awesome proportions: the Sublime, embodied in peak and crevasse, snow and lightning. It's a history Diller + Scofidio consciously tap into: *The project aims to create a technological sublime*, Diller states in the *Anything* essay.

Edmund Burke gave the first and best definition of sublimity in his 1757 treatise *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of The Sublime and Beautiful: Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime...* In plain English, Burke related art with experience—the sublime with fear, and the beautiful with serenity.

Like *Frankenstein*, partners Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio assumed God's role in designing the Blur Building, as though it were a requisite of their commission. But instead of stealing fire or the secret of life, they have gone and brought a slice of heaven down to earth, or at least a sample of the atmosphere atop Mont Blanc. At the time of its writing, the moral of *Frankenstein* was rhetorical; no

medic could revive a dead body, especially one assembled from spare parts.

It may be easier to dabble in the divine these days, but judging by Diller's *Anything* essay the outcome could prove much more troublesome—though in perfect accord with the Romantic association of sublimity with terror:

The history of these world exhibitions is a history of speculations about the future... Blur takes on the uncertainty of the future epitomized in the weather... While advanced methods of detection and tracking help to warn and thus protect us from the ravages of an indifferent, tempestuous nature, the weather is unstoppable. It is beyond our control.

At the same time, global weather disturbances, like global warming, are proof that weather and climate are not impervious to human intervention. If, through technological recklessness, we can alter the weather inadvertently, then we can also alter it willfully. We can play God... As with our power to affect genetic structures, both our dread and fascination with weather stems from the possibility of actually controlling it. The terror of the Blur Building, in other words, comes not just from the physical disorientation and dislocation it causes in people walking through it, but from an implication that something similar is occurring on a planetary scale.

Turner knew what was coming, and made it visible in his last masterpiece, *Rain, Steam and Speed—the Great Western Railway* of 1844. The atmospheric effect of this painting differs little from the *Hannibal* of 30 years earlier, yet the cause of it has changed: Smoke from the train mingles and merges with the surrounding atmosphere; man no longer cowers unprotected before the tempest, but builds machines that give nature a run for her money.

While they address climate and the sublime like the Blur Building, Romantic paintings, novels, and poems also serve as relevant comparisons because during that period architecture failed to produce a genius as giant as Byron's, or Turner's. Architects settled instead for archaeology—Walpole's Gothick

pastiche at Strawberry Hill, for example—and only caught up at Britian's 1851 Great Exhibition, in the year Turner died. The Crystal Palace that Joseph Paxton built to house the exhibition was the first true work of Modern architecture and the very first world's fair pavilion—which makes it the direct conceptual ancestor of the Blur Building. And just as Paxton invented Glass Architecture, Diller + Scofidio have given humanity Gas Architecture.

So the Blur Building, in a sense, brings modernism full circle. Turner, Byron, and the Shelleys were forerunners, agitating for an art as advanced as science; Diller + Scofidio are in the rear guard, commentators on the intervening 200 years of progress. Somewhere along the way, “modern” came to mean “immutable,” and progress came to be thought of as infallible. And under the influence of Mies, CIAM, the Harvard GSD, and other authorities, the mission of modern architecture slowly changed from revolution to regulation. Diller + Scofidio have dedicated their careers to setting the record straight, yet even they can slip into an absolute line of thinking: Diller is surprisingly clear in her opinion of a building that she and Scofidio insist on describing as blurry.

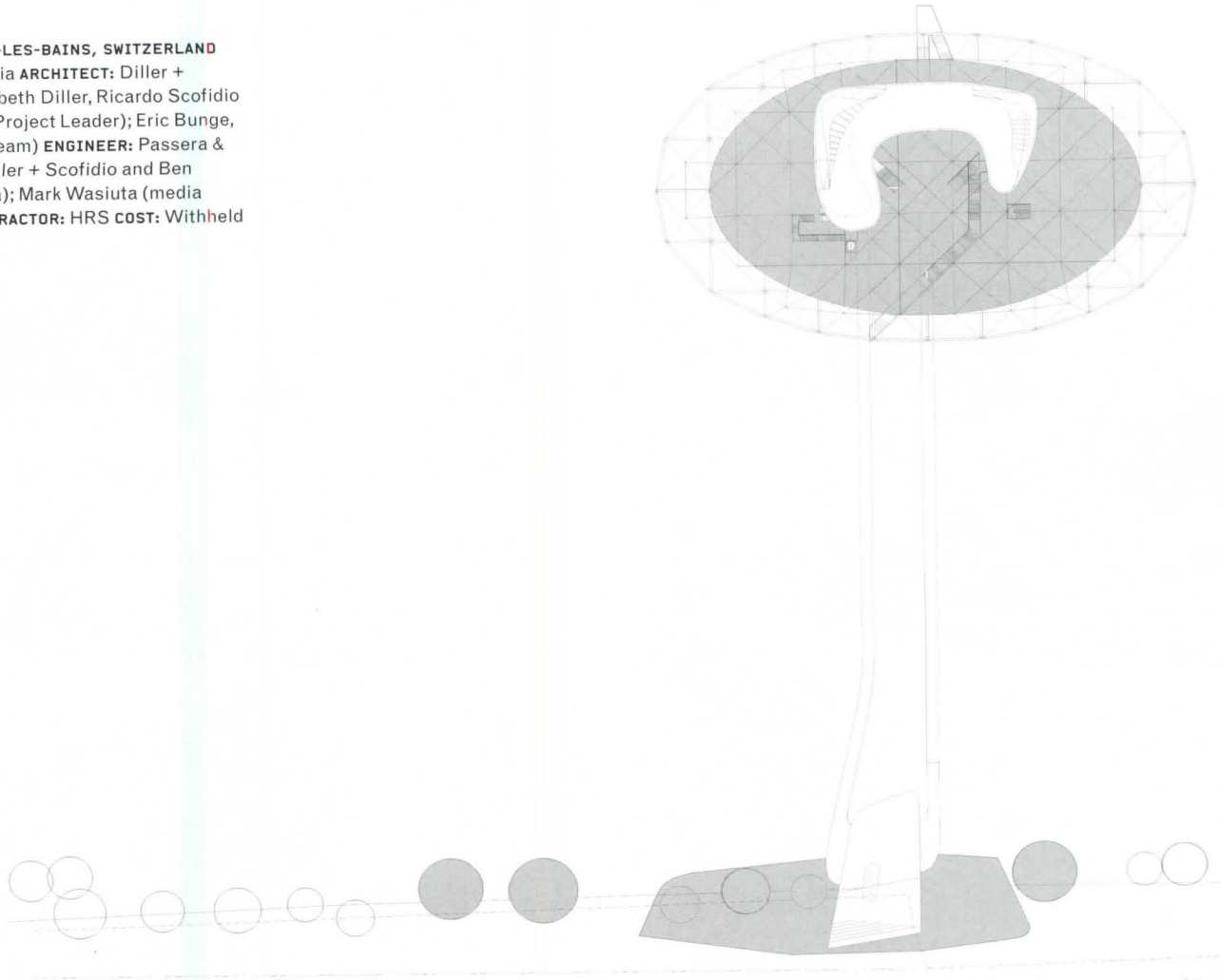
The Blur Building is a masterpiece, and not just for telling a cautionary tale about the environment (which it does frighteningly well). It serves as an infinitely open-ended metaphor for the modern condition—something Karl Marx described in writing in *The Communist Manifesto: All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men are forced to face with sober senses the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men.* These words remains true because their meaning is fluid. They'd make as much sense to a Romantic as they do today. And, terrifying or not, Diller + Scofidio have brought them to life off the shore of Lake Neuchâtel. ■

**ABOUT THE EXPO**  
Switzerland last hosted an international expo in 1964, in the city of Lausanne. This time around, instead of occurring at a single venue, five different sites will stage Expo 02 events. One site is actually a boat that cruises between the other four: lakefront towns in the Swiss Three Lakes region. Each town—Biel, Murten-Morat, Neuchâtel, and Yverdon-les-Bains—has its own centerpiece, the most notable of which, besides Diller + Scofidio's Blur Building, is Jean Nouvel's Monolith, a floating 112-foot cube of metal and concrete, at Murten-Morat. The Expo runs until October 20th. See the website, [www.expo.02.ch](http://www.expo.02.ch), for more information.



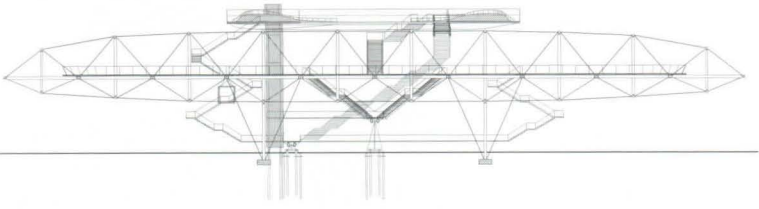


**BLUR BUILDING, YVERDON-LES-BAINS, SWITZERLAND**  
**CLIENT:** EXPO 02 by extasia **ARCHITECT:** Diller + Scofidio, New York—Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio (principals); Dirk Hebel (Project Leader); Eric Bunge, Charles Renfro (project team) **ENGINEER:** Passera & Pedretti **CONSULTANTS:** Diller + Scofidio and Ben Rubin/EAR Studio (media); Mark Wasiuta (media associate) **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** HRS **COST:** Withheld at client's request

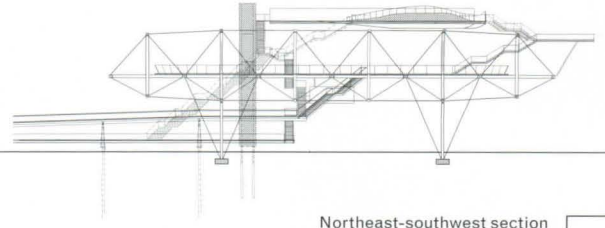


Site plan ↗





Northwest-southeast section



Northeast-southwest section 33'







# READING ROOM

THE ROBIN HOOD FOUNDATION AND ITS BAND OF MERRY ARCHITECTS ARE BUILDING LIBRARIES FOR NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.  
BY ERIC FREDERICKSEN

The day starts in Harlem, where a few of New York's best architects are gathered in the school library at P.S. 101. Tod Williams and Billie Tsien are presenting their first completed design since the rapturously received American Folk Art Museum, some 60 blocks to the south. This project, a 2,200-square-foot library within the old school building, will not appear in as many magazines, and will be seen by fewer people in a year than visit the museum in a weekend—just 800 elementary school students. But it's part of a much more ambitious undertaking, endearingly and immodestly cited by its commissioners, the Robin Hood Foundation: ending poverty in New York City.

Robin Hood, a foundation started by three Wall Street types in 1988, is known for both its ambition and its pragmatism. In this case, the problem is New York's schools, where annual tests of fourth graders show 60 percent reading below grade level. The foundation (led on this project by an energetic director named Lonni Tanner) came up with an apparently

simple way to address schools' problems: focus on their libraries.

The problem was glaring: Many of the schools simply didn't have one, and those that did had cramped spaces, untrained librarians, and paltry holdings (schools are allotted a mere six dollars per student per year to buy library books). Recent studies have found a strong correlation between library investment and student academic success. Robin Hood's goal is therefore to make sure that each of New York's 650-odd schools has a well-stocked, well-designed library. It's the most ambitious library-building effort since Andrew Carnegie decided to rid himself of his millions.

The library project is a private-public partnership in the best sense. Money from Credit Suisse and USA Networks, among other corporations, matches NYC Board of Education financing to fund the libraries. Children's book publishers Scholastic and HarperCollins offered a million books each. And Robin Hood's consulting architect Henry Myerberg

pulled together, in 10 calls, nine architects (as well as himself) to design the first 10 libraries, pro bono. Thus the high-quality architectural companions on a late-spring visit to the first six completed libraries: Andrew Bernheimer and Jared Della Valle, Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi, Zach McKown, Richard Lewis, Paul Bennett, and Ronette Riley. Also along was industrial designer Tucker Viemeister, who served as design guru. (Alexander Gorlin and Deborah Berke participated as well.)

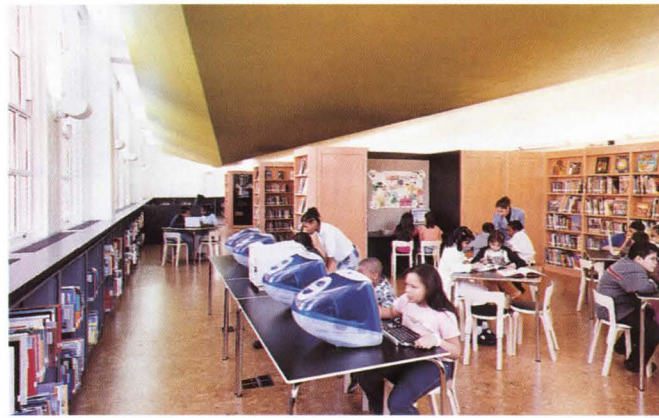
The schools range from '20s Collegiate Gothic (Elementary Gothic?) to '70s modern, but they have much in common: Over 75 percent of their students qualify for free lunch, and over 60 percent read below grade level. Robin Hood also looked for a strong commitment to improvement by the schools' district superintendent, principals, and staff.

While the architects were given a long set of guidelines, a budget of about \$500,000, and typically cramped spaces within which to work, their designs vary





P.S. 18 | Brighton, Staten Island | Della Valle + Bernheimer Design



P.S. 101 | East Harlem | Tod Williams Billie Tsien & Associates

as widely as the schools do. They share several elements: instruction space, built for collaborative learning; a performance area; four computer workstations; and space for 10,000 books. After these commonalities, it's a case of 10 very different flowers blooming. Richard Lewis alone turned in something consciously approaching a classic Carnegie library-style design, with stained wood shelving rising high up on all four walls. *Weiss/Manfredi*, who argued for and won a larger space than they'd originally been allotted, created the most overtly architectonic space, using a wormlike wall with shelving below and overlapping sheets of plywood above to separate the library from a first-floor corridor. Many of the designs used bright colors—a broad stand-in for the idea of making a space welcoming for children, though Della Valle + Bernheimer reserved their loud color (hot pink) for the floor, turning in an otherwise restrained palette of brushed steel and wood. Uncolored homosote covers the walls, so that children's

pinned-up work will provide most of the color and liveliness in the space.

They're ambitious designs as far as school libraries go, though a bit conservative given the architects' CVs. On the tour, Tod Williams said as much to Jared Della Valle: "I don't know how far we [collectively] pushed it."

"I don't know how far you could push it—it's two classrooms," answered Della Valle, "I mean, you have to have books."

That said, Williams and Tsien's design is certainly the most pushy entry, with a dropped ceiling like a massive faceted crystal, painted green to create a sort of inverted park above. Anyone who imagined themselves walking on a ceiling as a child will understand the imaginative possibilities for a creative kid.

The best designs have that link with actual childhood memories. Zach McKown of Tsao & McKown talked during the tour of happy moments spent hiding with a book in the corner of the library in Gafney, South Carolina. His firm's library, among the smallest in square footage

(and at the biggest elementary school in the city) is also among the coziest, with small round pillows on the floor and multiple crannies for the kind of student who doesn't necessarily learn best amidst the tumult of today's collaborative classroom.

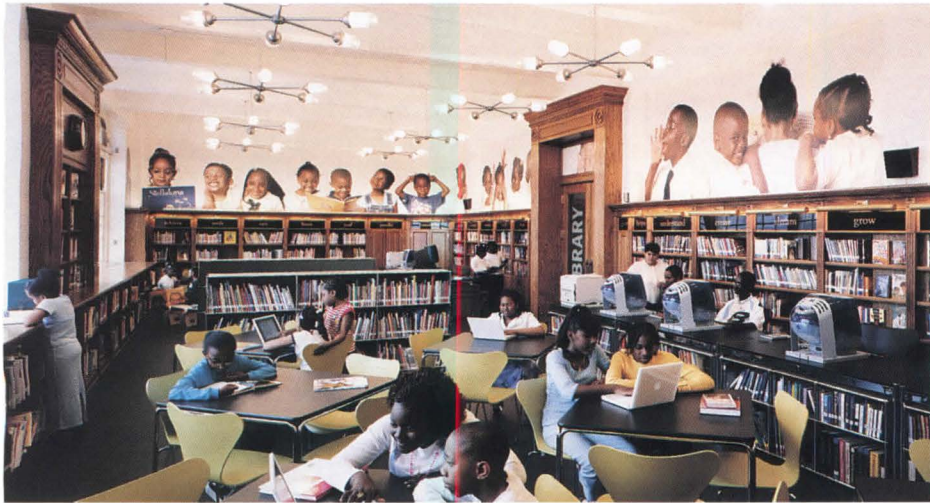
Myerberg compares the results to a student studio in built form: 10 architects are given the same problem. The difference is these projects undergo a lot more scrutiny than a visiting critic typically gives in school. In the next round of 20, some of the original 20 firms will design multiple libraries, while some new "freshmen" (Myerberg's term) will bring new ideas. How will they get from 10 or 20 to 650? Myerberg compares the process to the Model T. "We'd like to come up with a vehicle that everyone can drive, and everyone can afford, but right now we're still trying to invent the car." ■

*Eric Fredericksen is the managing editor of Art on Paper.*

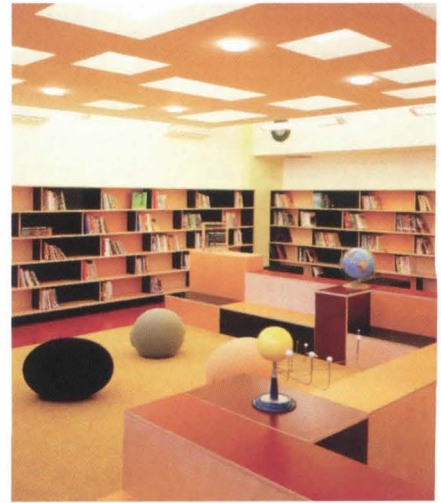
*Photography by ESTO.*



P.S. 42 | Far Rockaway, Queens | Weiss/Manfredi Architects



P.S. 184 | Brownsville, Brooklyn | Richard Lewis, Architect



P.S. 149/207 | Harlem | Ronnette Riley Architect

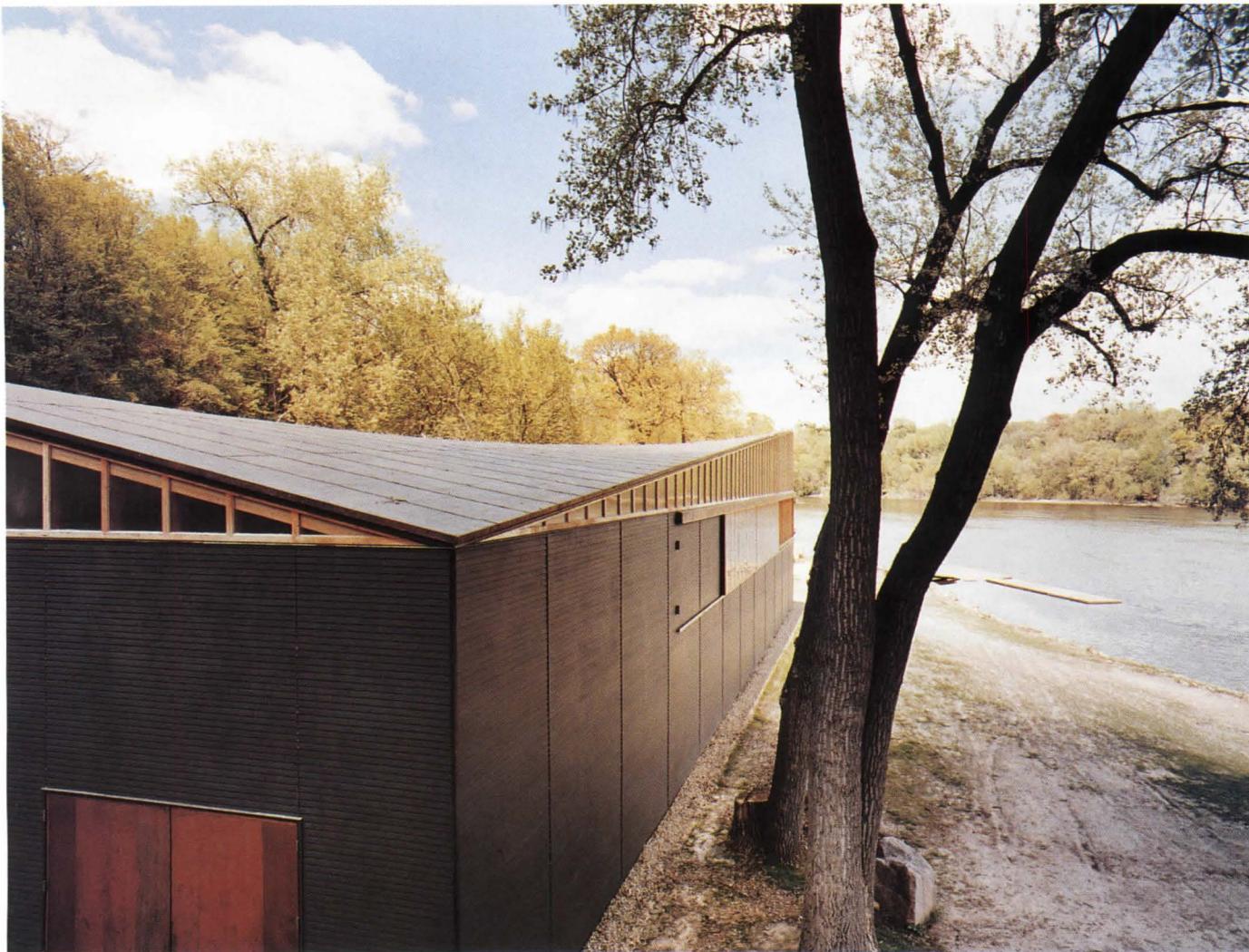


P.S. 19 | Queens | Tsao & McKown Architects



## Against The Current

Vincent James Associates  
bucks the fashion for flash  
in a new Minneapolis  
boathouse. By Thomas Fisher.  
Photography by Todd Hido



Vincent James Associates plays the solidity of the dark wooden walls of this boathouse against a double-curved roof that rests lightly on wedge-shaped polycarbonate clerestory windows (both pages).

Modern technology has let us create an antigravitational architecture, one in which undulating titanium façades, levitating concrete slabs, and sliding convoluted forms seem to deny the weighty or static nature of buildings. Liberation may lie in this, but at what price? This antigravity architecture often uses greater amounts of materials, demands higher amounts of energy, and generates larger amounts of waste than other similar structures. It may appear lighter than air, but it places a heavier burden on the earth.

Vincent James Associates' modest boathouse for the Minneapolis Rowing Club suggests another direction. Located on the Mississippi River, the simple, 9,000-square-foot enclosure shows how a building can defy gravity not with brute force,

but by paring away all but the most essential elements.

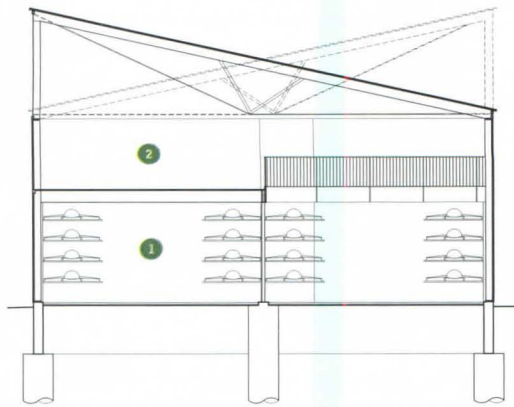
Accessed by a steep, switchback road, the boathouse first presents a double-curved roof resting lightly above clerestory windows. As you walk down toward the building, the roof appears to move, as one corner rises and the other falls, like the arc of a rower's oar.

Countering the apparent lightness of the roof, the building's wood-clad, windowless walls have a dark stain that recalls the black underbellies of dry-docked boats, voluminous and vulnerable at the same time. The boathouse has a similar quality. Its wood cladding, with copper corner reveals, seems thin and stretched over the wall's vertical ribs, which extend up behind the translucent clerestory. Yet the wall's

lack of fenestration, other than its commanding cooper-clad doors, makes the building seem bulkier than it is. There is no lightness without heaviness first.

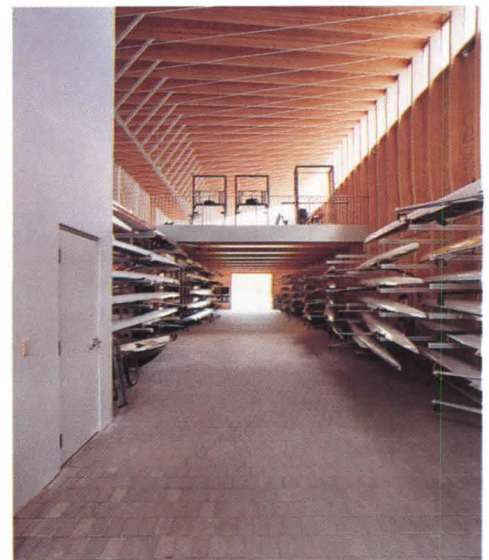
From the water's edge, the boathouse seems to slide. Parts of it do so literally, with a second-story copper-clad door that moves sideways to open up the wall of the training room to a view of the water. But the slide is also figurative. Parallel to the river and the dock from which the sculls launch, the building's horizontal façade and undulating roof give it a sense of propulsion, a send-off to the rowers as they glide away.

Inside, levitation seems to rule. Lining the walls and running down the center of the first-floor space are racks of sculls stacked upside down, one on top of the



- 1 scull storage
- 2 mezzanine

East-west section | 6.5'





The mezzanine level's two offset voids (above) let light from the clerestory windows reach the scull storage areas (facing page, both photos) on the ground level.

other. Above them, two offset mezzanines hover, with their columns buried among the boat racks. But nowhere does the gravity-defying sense of the place come through more clearly than on the mezzanines themselves, where seemingly suspended above you hangs the waving roof.

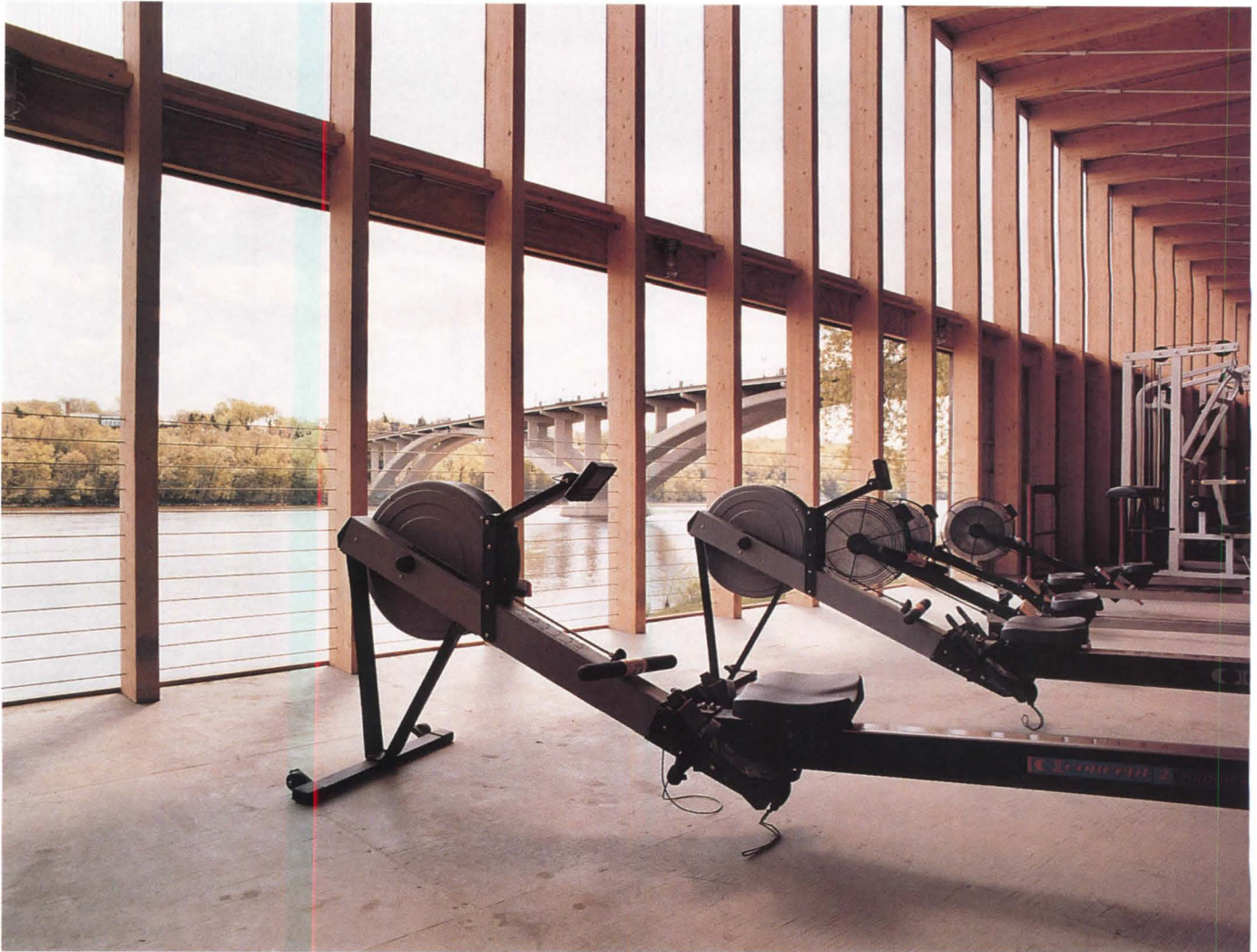
It doesn't hang, of course. Laminated wood studs support parallel rows of wood and steel V trusses that, in turn, support the roof as they slowly change pitch and direction across the length of the building. But the translucent clerestory suppresses that structure, and the visitor's eye goes to the trusses, whose wood cords, tension cables, and center rings recall the paraphernalia of rowing: the oars and oarlocks, riggers, and gates. Likewise, the roof, with its arcing shape, brings to mind the act of

rowing itself: the movement of the oars and the forward motion of the boat.

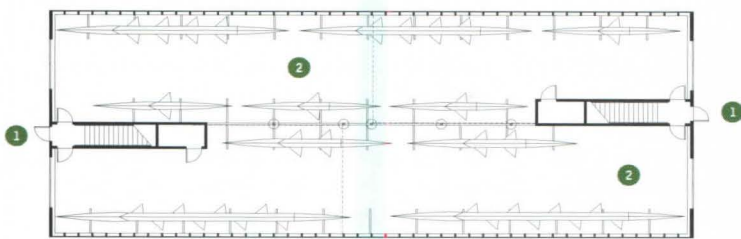
Vince James embraced the rowing metaphor, not just for the building's form, but as a way of communicating with the client. "From the beginning," he says, "we saw the process and experience of rowing as an important part of the building's program. The metaphor of rowing inevitably enters in, particularly when trying to communicate with a client who doesn't necessarily think visually or architecturally." At the same time, the metaphor opened up various interpretations of the work. Explains collaborator Jennifer Yoos, "[A building] is capable of multiple readings and understandings, and the original metaphor inevitably dissolves into ideas about structure, space, materiality, and

spatial experience. In the end, it is completely about the experience of a building, and not a building as a symbol."

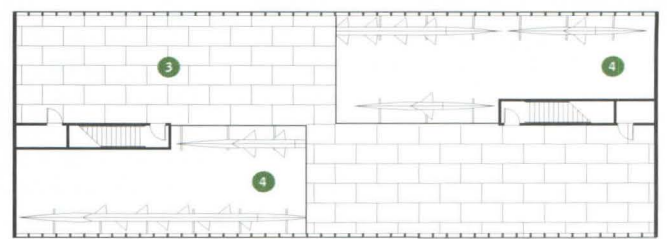
Metaphor also separates this seemingly antigravitational building from so many others gaining attention around the world. The latter seem to express metaphors of pain, or feelings of the uncanny, with forms that writhe, collide, or flail. In contrast, this little boathouse, which won a 1999 P/A Award, reminds us that collective action is sometimes possible, and discipline, desirable. Both the sublime and the beautiful have their value, but in a world with no shortage of pain or extreme emotion—and with no lack of waste following in its wake—we're better off on the side of beauty, taking off from this boathouse on a more sustainable path. ■



- 1 entrance
- 2 scull storage
- 3 mezzanine
- 4 open to below



First-floor plan 13' >



Mezzanine plan





Copper doors on the second floor slide open (below) so that rowers working out in the training room (facing page) have a view of the Mississippi.

**MINNEAPOLIS ROWING CLUB,  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

**CLIENT:** Minneapolis Rowing Club **ARCHITECT:** Vincent James Associates, Minneapolis—  
Vincent James (principal); Andrew Dull, Jay Lane, Jennifer Yoos (collaborators); Paul Yaggie, Steven Philippi, Bob Loken, Nathan Knutson, Scott Muellner, Taavo Somer **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Carroll, Franck & Associates, Bruno Franck—Betker and Associates, Bruce Betker **M/E/P ENGINEERS:** Design build (by contractor) **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Flannery Construction **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Coen + Stumpf + Associates **COST:** \$650,000

**SPECIFICATIONS**

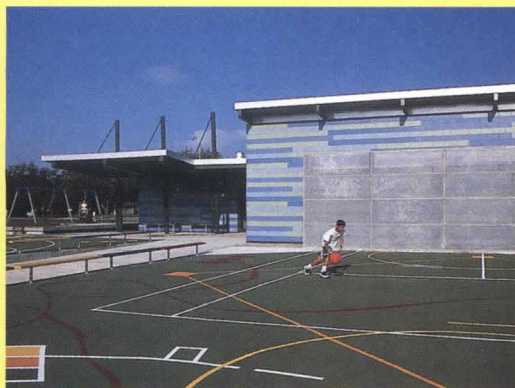
**WOOD TRUSSES:** Western Archrib **VERAL COPPER:** Siplast **CEMENTITIOUS SIDING:** Hardie **PLASTIC GLAZING:** Polygal



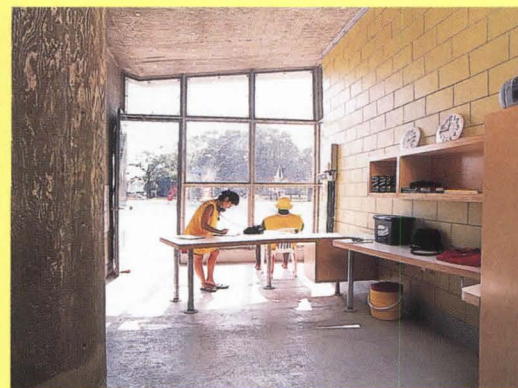
# Mark Wamble



1: JONES PLAZA



2: LINKWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER



3: OAK FOREST POOL HOUSE

## A young Houston architect debuts with three projects that rethink Sunbelt City urbanism.

The city of Houston and lively, detailed, pedestrian urbanism are hardly synonymous, and Mark Wamble, principal of Interloop, the Houston firm he heads with partner Dawn Finley, admits to being “amused, confused, and inspired” about harboring urbanistic motives in America’s capital of laissez-faire development. Trying to pursue such an agenda in this epicenter of leave-me-alone zoning may seem a counterintuitive goal and thankless task: Since the Second World War, backyard barbecues have triumphed over plazas celebrating public life on common ground. Today, long after the total victory of suburbs over Houston’s historic city center, hardly any memory of a pedestrian downtown survives—generations of Houstonians have never been exposed to a walking city.

In their offices opposite Renzo Piano’s Menil Collection, Wamble opens a journal documenting a mixed-use project he worked on with Peter Eisenman for Frankfurt, Germany: an angular “folding” plan that he calls “formally and materially totalizing”; once set in motion, the rules of the design process automatically generate plan and section. “The formal nature of the architecture is carried down to the smallest detail, and therefore influences the program,” says Wamble. “In [Eisenman’s] House VI, the rules necessitated splitting the master bed in two with a gap. That affects how people live.”

Such hermetic design in public commissions is difficult to impossible in a city suspicious of government projects and public spending, says Wamble. Invasive reviews acquire a momentum that hardly allows linear design development, breeding instead endless adjustments and change; subsequent maintenance strategies entail a steady erosion of the architectural concepts. As architects cede control in a process teeming with competing interests and opinions, design necessarily opens to many influences. “Everything changes so much that all you can do is produce a general armature,” says Wamble. “In a more insular, more private process, we can control architectural results, but in Houston, we learned to follow a stepped process with breaks and turns that affect our formal, material, and urban choices. You have to be creative in a different way in these public projects.”

Houston’s basic reticence toward public work, however, hasn’t deterred Wamble from cultivating an urbanist’s agenda. The works on the following pages constitute a portfolio of public projects in Houston which he designed, after leaving a full-time teaching position at Rice to become a design architect at Bricker + Cannady Architects, a large Houston firm. He worked with design principal Bill T. Cannady until 2001. With Interloop, Wamble is now at work on a single-artist museum in Dallas.

Two of the projects, Oak Forest Pool House and Linkwood Community Center, involve the design of park buildings: With the shift in Houston demographics toward larger Hispanic and Asian populations, the city has seen a resurgent interest in parks. Working with Houston’s Parks and Recreation Department, Wamble accepted the requirements from all the cooks in the bureaucracy and strategized his designs to maximize their tolerance to the inevitable body blows. “We were trying to provide a level of formal sophistication, but the forms could not be so complete that they closed out change or prescribed every dimension of use,” says Wamble. “We were making an attempt at establishing an open design system—from the process to the result.”

A third project, the Jones Plaza Renovation, involved the reconception of a major public square in the downtown theater district, perhaps the single most hostile place in Houston, according to a local architecture critic. Wamble found that he couldn’t impose traditions of idealized urban plazas borrowed from Europe, but had to acknowledge the daily routines of Houstonians, who are tethered to the car and have little recourse to public transportation. The humid, blast-furnace climate also encourages residents to travel in air-conditioned capsules.

What does a plaza for Houston mean in the old heart of the city? Downtown as a center had been displaced by gallerias, malls, and suburban subcenters, so what could the area offer instead? The architects concluded that the design coincided with a renewed interest in a downtown emerging as a mixed-use district featuring cultural activities: Some of Houston’s major performing arts institutions are located around or near the plaza, which could emerge as a forecourt to the respective buildings. This middle ground could be developed into a place and institution unto itself, with multiple offerings—cafe, seating, stage, bathrooms, water, gardens, even a giant chess board—rather than just one big thing, like an all-or-nothing band shell. “We couldn’t ignore William Whyte’s studies about how people occupy and gather in outdoor public spaces,” says Wamble.

In all three projects, the architects’ goal was to cultivate a public sphere in the kind of suburban context that has vitiated urban vitality from cities. Success necessitated designs that were many things to many constituencies. “We learned that the architectural moves have to be a little bit brutal and blunt in order to handle incremental changes in the design processes and all the changes that would happen after we, as architects, leave,” says Wamble. “A building needs to be robust to take those kinds of hits.” ■

# 1: JONES PLAZA



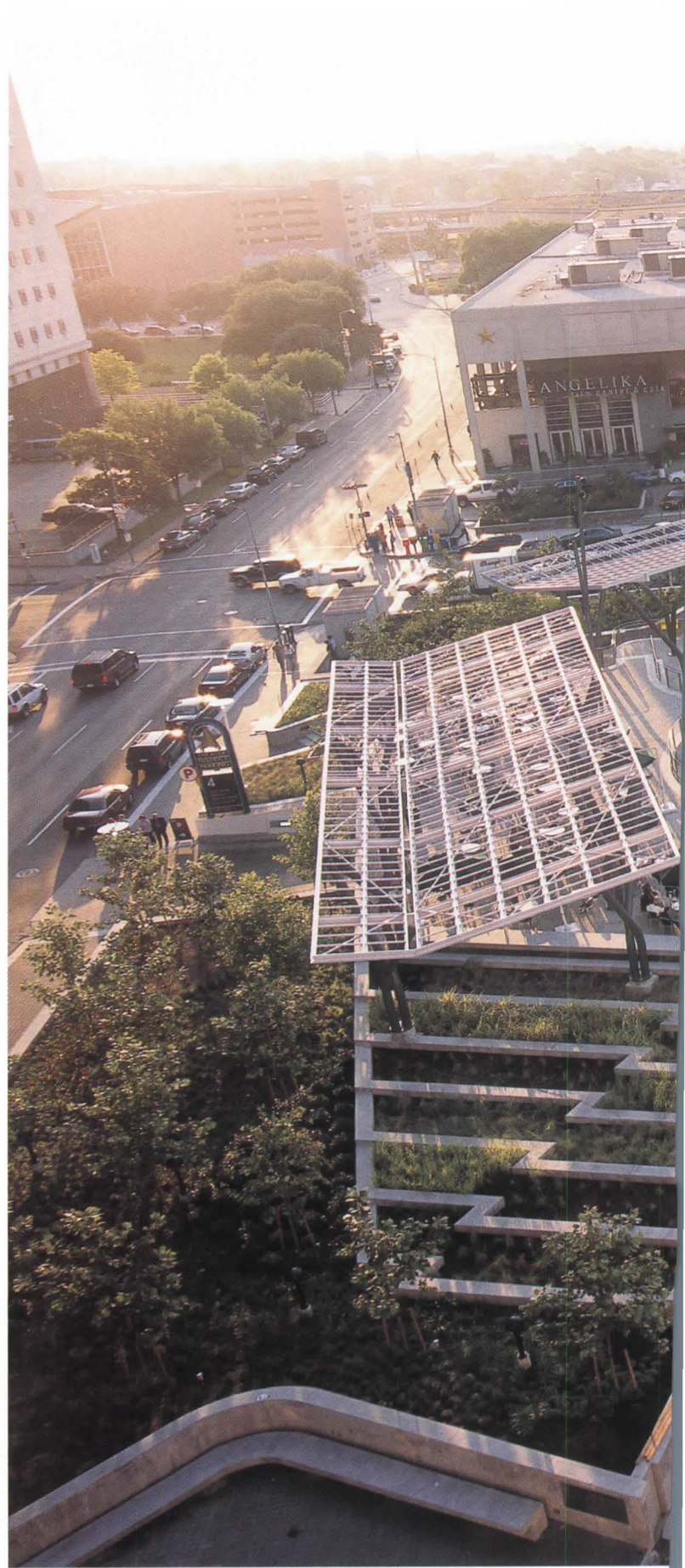
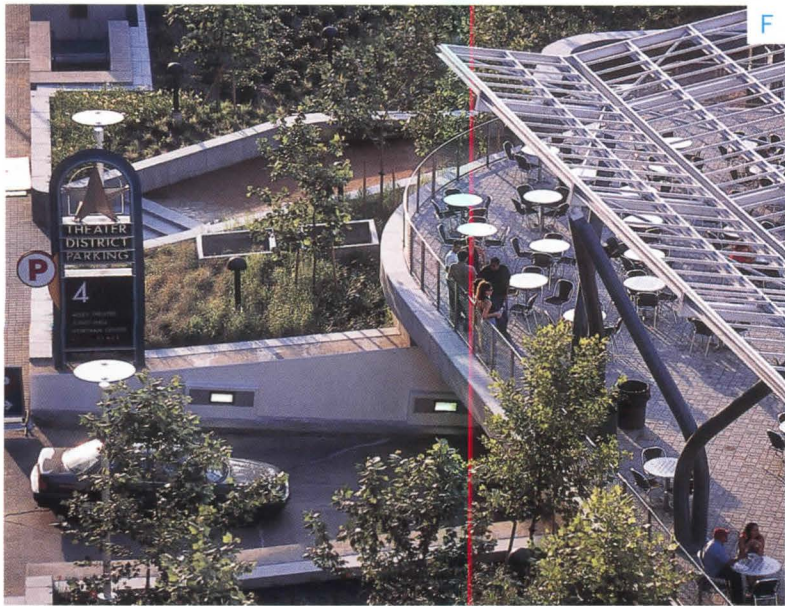


**RENOVATION OF JONES PLAZA, HOUSTON**  
**CLIENT:** City of Houston Department of Public Works and Engineering (owner), Conventions and Entertainment (user) **ARCHITECT:** Bricker + Cannady Architects, Houston—Jeff Bricker, Bill Cannady (senior partners); Mark Wamble (design partner); Rob Owens (managing partner); Bob Fluke (production partner); James Anderson, Blaine Brownell, Elizabeth Chen, Kyle Fischer, Julie Handricks, Mike LaNasa, Doug Lipscomb, Kim Neuscheler, Matt Seltzer, Jim Spearman, Mark Swackhammer, Mike Sweebe (design team), Andrew McFarland (scenario texts) **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Clark Condon Associates **ENGINEERS:** CBM Engineers (structural); MAS & Associates (mechanical); Sunland Engineering Company (civil) **CONSULTANTS:** Hanscomb Associates (cost estimating); Studio of Richard Jeter (lighting); Waterscape Consultants (fountain) **CONTRACTOR:** Stewart-Matl General Contractors—Mark Fluellen (superintendent) **COST:** \$6 million **SPECIFICATIONS:** see page 95.

1: The potential for urbanism in a car-dependent city lies largely in the space between the parking lot and the front door of any given destination, but for years, Jones Plaza, one story up from the surrounding street level of downtown Houston (G), was really only the visible tip of a vast iceberg of underground parking (F). Still, the place-making potential was great since the parking structure beneath the plaza acts as a geyser of people headed for the nearby Alley Theater, Jones Hall, and Bayou Place.

Wamble's reading of the topography revealed that the whole plaza did not need to hover a full story above grade, a difference of levels that kept the plaza out of sight and mind for passers-by. The architect found he could lower the whole platform several feet and chamfer corners to create inviting street-level triangles of park (H). The entire southeast edge of the block was only inches up from street level (B), so Wamble inclined the plaza in that direction, making the plateau at the center visible from the sidewalk.

Jones Hall across the street was designed inside like the introverted curve of a chambered Nautilus (I), and Wamble took, reversed, and extroverted that curve as an elevated edge thickened with program—a cafe (E), stage (C), outdoor eating area, public restrooms, all under steel trellises supported by double columns (D). By angling each pair of columns differently, altering their dimensional spread, the architect effectively widened the distances between beams overhead and varied heights, creating subtle changes from canopy to canopy. The large plaza accommodates audiences watching the stage (C), but the cafe and nearby tables offer a more intimate setting for lunch and snacks. Passers-by can sit on concrete benches, or just lean against concrete half-walls, waiting for a friend.

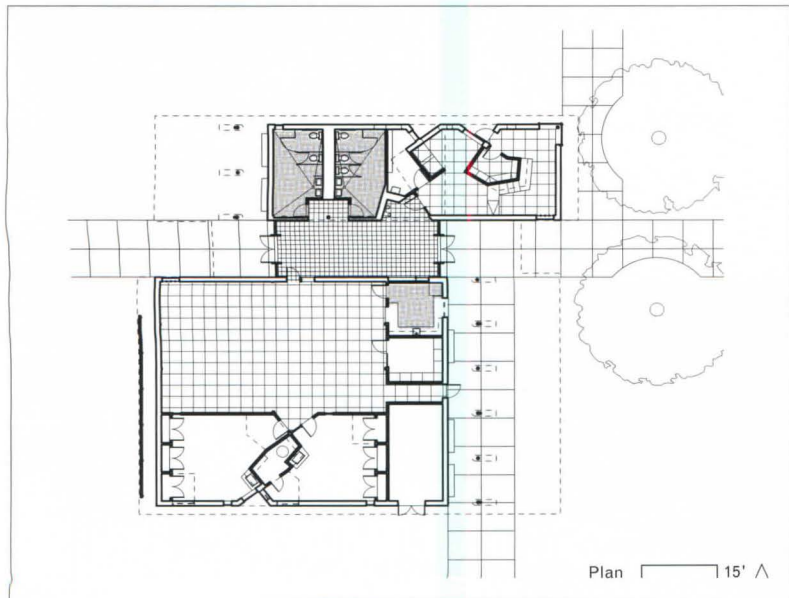
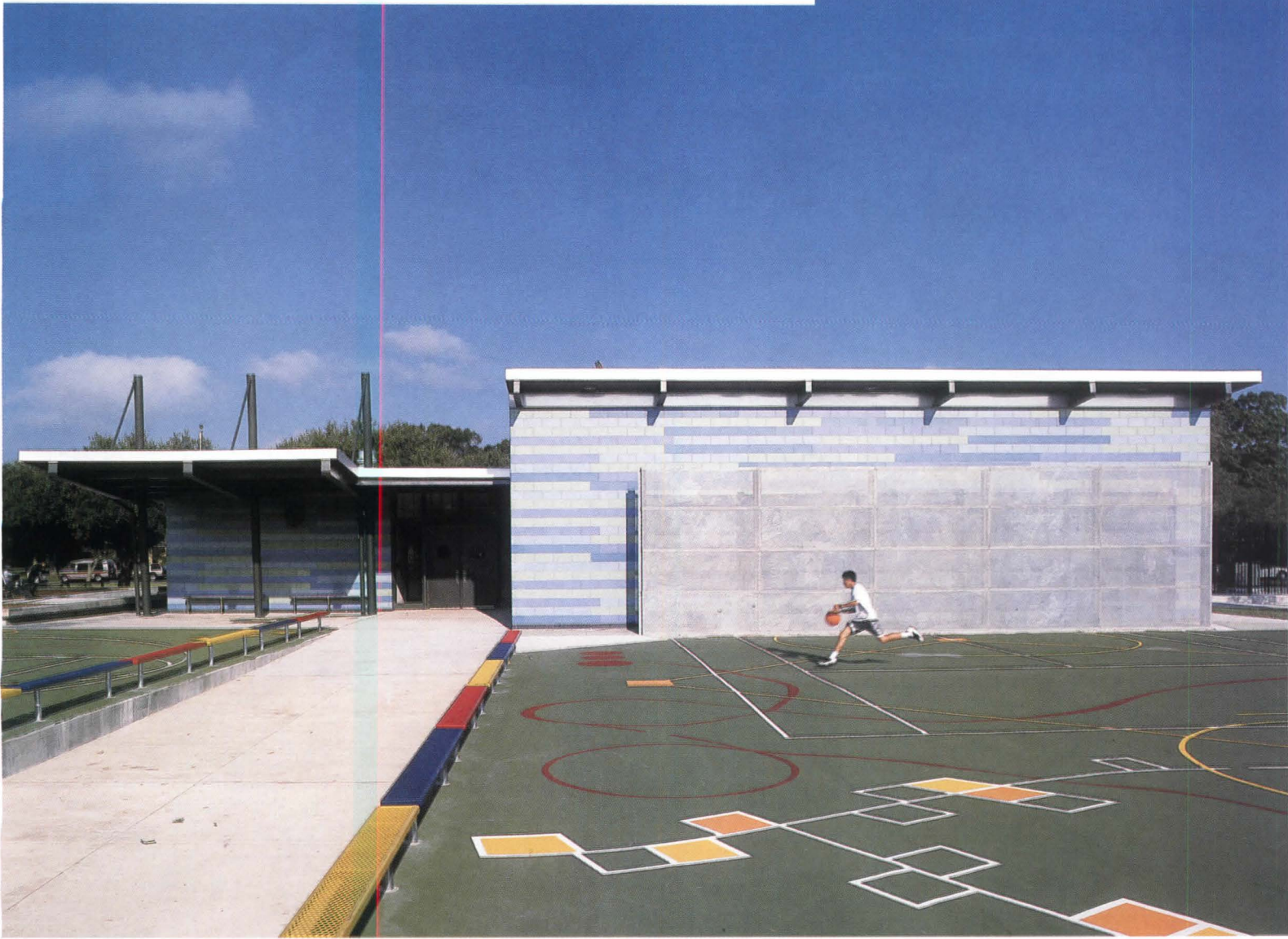


# 1: JONES PLAZA



## 2: LINKWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER

A







## LINKWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER, HOUSTON

**CLIENT:** City of Houston Building Services Department (owner), Parks and Recreation Department (user) **ARCHITECT:** The Park Team JV: Bricker + Cannady Architects / Ray Bailey Architects, Houston (JV Partners)—Mark Wamble (Design Partner); Wendy Heger (Managing Partner); James Anderson, Loren Freed, Shau Lin Hon, Amir Kayal, Blair Satterfield, Matt Seltzer, Mike Sweebe, Celeste Woodfill (design team) **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Clark Condon Associates **ENGINEERS:** D.Y. Davis Associates (structural); MAS & Associates (mechanical); ESPA Corp. (civil) **CONTRACTOR:** Times Construction **BUDGET:** \$1.2 million **SPECIFICATIONS:** see page 95.

**2:** In Linkwood Community Center, where Wamble replaced an existing building that was structurally compromised, the architect keeps a low and modest profile, designing two sprawling wings under sloping roofs. “In a city with a disdain for public space and public expenditures, I don’t believe you can come in with urban banners,” he says. “You have to work within constraints.” The program—two craft rooms, a multipurpose room, a kitchenette, a reading area, an office, restrooms, and a vending area—added up to a 5,800-square-foot footprint, not larger than many ranch houses. Wamble could keep the building at a domestic scale, in tune with the surrounding buildings, by designing in a language that mutes the distinction between public and private. Though the structural system was made of steel, and the walls of glazed concrete block, he kept the overall profile long and low, and the surfaces striated, as though covered with clapboard siding.

The casualness of the design is best captured in a cartoon that Bricker + Cannady’s Blair Satterfield drew to explain the concept. It starts with a wide flat box, which unzips off center and spreads in two separate volumes to create a causeway that serves as a two-sided entry and lounge (A). One end of the roof on each block lifts at diametrically opposite sides of the building, creating a porch fore and aft (C). Each block then inflects at the side (B), creating dents in the exterior walls and two knots of interior space that house special activity rooms. The complexity of the apparently simple building is mostly internalized, but the exceptional geometries imply that these and other, future non-Euclidean moments are welcome: The building may change, and not toward perfection.

### 3: OAK FOREST POOL HOUSE

A





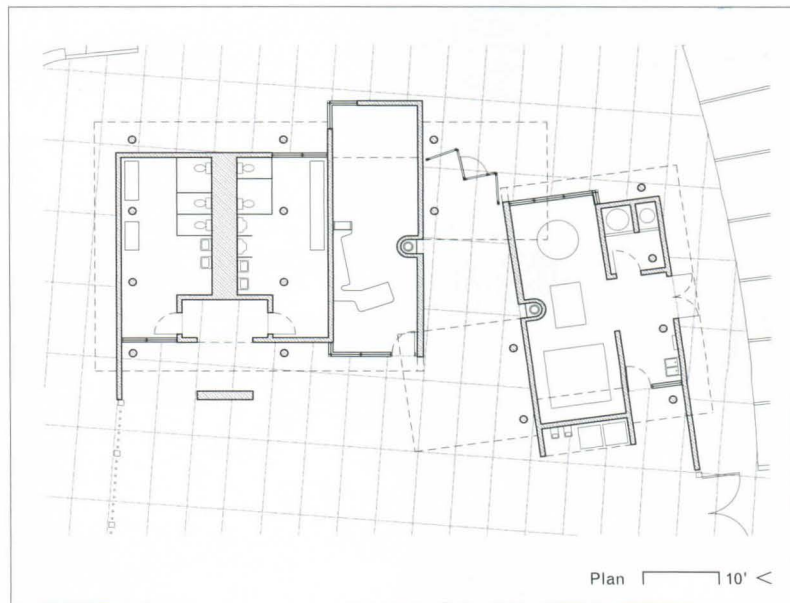
B



C



D



**OAK FOREST POOL HOUSE**

**CLIENT:** City of Houston Building Services Department (owner), Parks and Recreation Department (user) **ARCHITECT:** The Park Team JV: Bricker + Cannady Architects / Ray Bailey Architects, Houston (JV Partners)—Mark Wamble (Design Partner); Wendy Heger (Managing Partner); James Anderson, Loren Freed, Shau Lin Hon, Amir Kayal, Blair Satterfield, Matt Seltzer, Mike Sweebe, Celeste Woodfill (design team) **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Clark Condon Associates **ENGINEERS:** D.Y. Davis Associates (structural); IAS & Associates (mechanical); ESPA Corp. (civil) **CONTRACTOR:** Times Construction **COST:** \$860,000 **SPECIFICATIONS:** see page 95.

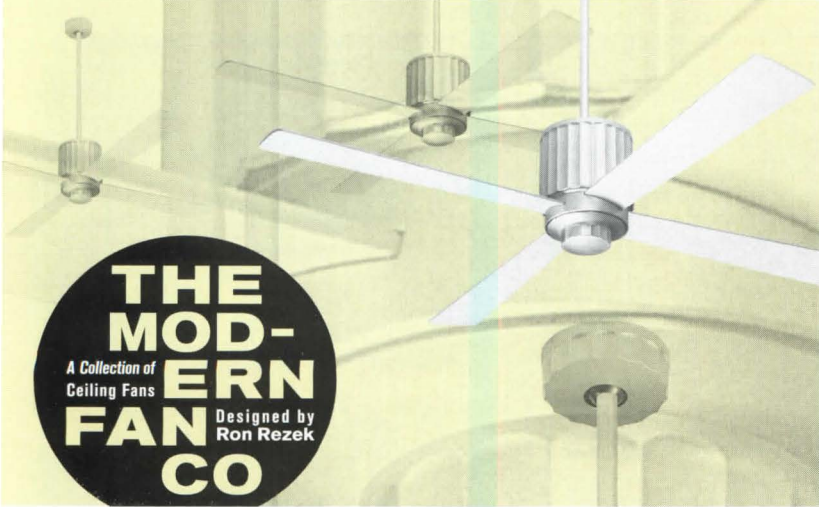
3: There is a haphazard quality to Wamble's new Oak Forest Park pool house, and it reflects the mixed demands of the suburban community, parks department, and program, which pushed and pulled the building's form so that it was no longer unitary. Design motives were not subordinate to, and coordinate with, a single concept, and sometimes they were contradictory. Wamble, for example, developed openings that maximized breezes while keeping out birds; windows were as large as fears of vandalism would allow. Other contradictions involved the scale of a public facility in a residential neighborhood: The pool house had to distinguish itself from surrounding houses without becoming an alien presence.

Wamble mixed messages and created an informal yet official style with a play of solids and voids in two main masses slipped forward and back (C, D): The displacement of the volumes diminishes the sense of bulk as it defines entry and exit areas (B). The building, which acts as a portal to the existing pool paddock (A), also serves as a fence along the narrow side of the swimming precinct (E). The architects conceived of the building as a wall that continuously wraps around the program of dressing rooms, life-guard office, and mechanical room; the wall finally migrates up to the roof and emerges as a long, 12-foot cantilever hovering over the front entrance and back exit. Materials were expedient: poured-concrete columns and concrete-block walls glazed in a yellow that withstands UV rays. Wamble punched circular holes in the canopies (G), "for no reason other than a delight in the play of shadow and sunlight," he says. But the perforations also reduced the weight of the concrete. The butterfly roofs invert the shallow angles of the roofs of nearby ranch houses (F), respecting their domestic scale while signaling a difference.

### 3: OAK FOREST POOL HOUSE







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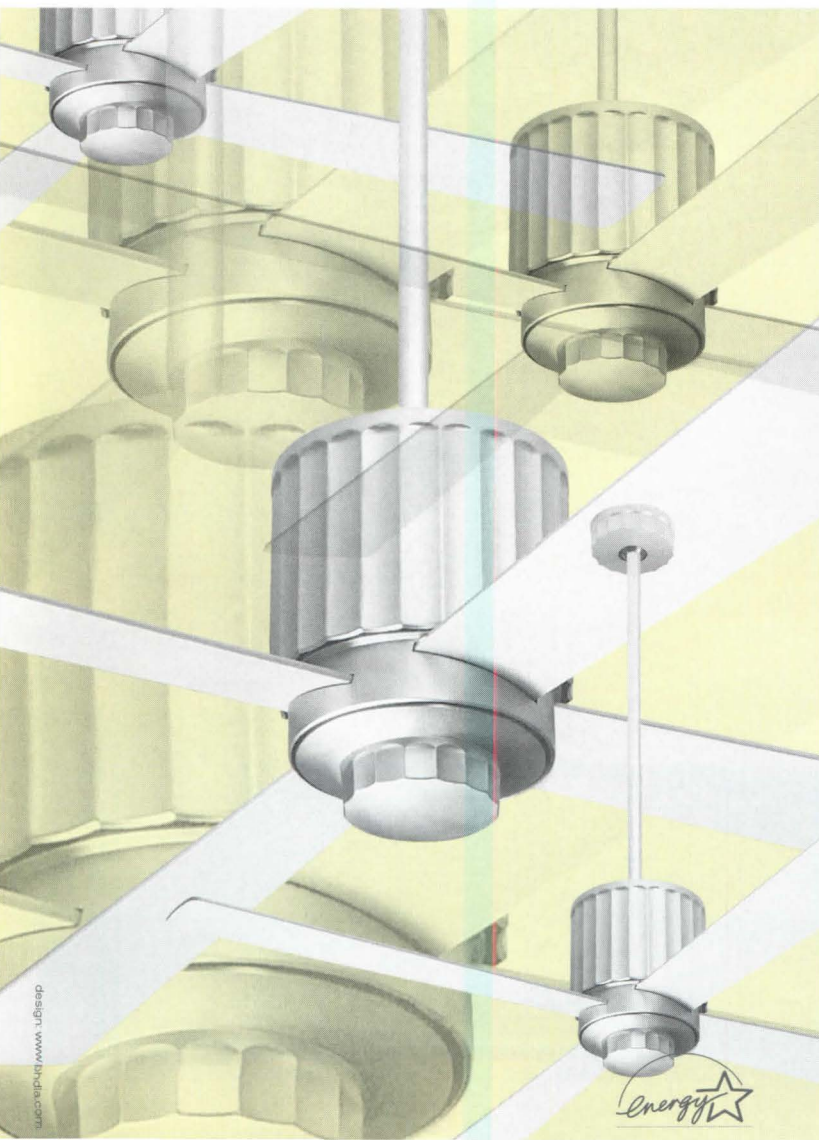
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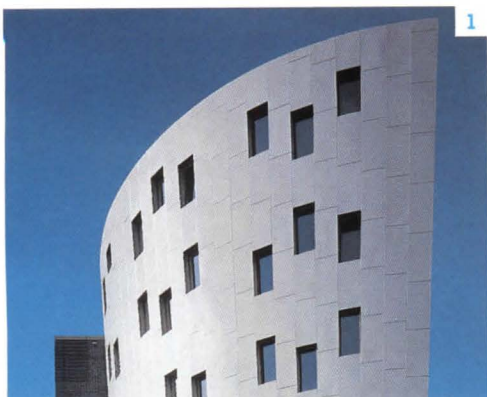


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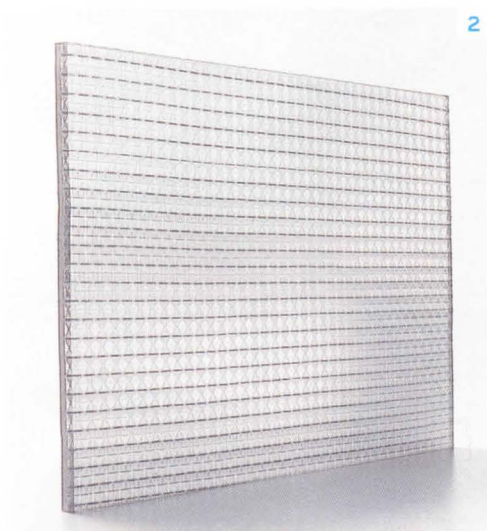
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Special materials and novel manufacturing processes helped inspire furniture designers to a banner year of product introductions. New European furniture unveiled during ICFE 2002 by **Domus Design Collection**, [www.ddcnyc.com](http://www.ddcnyc.com), included the luminous storage units made of translucent plastic called "Room Containers" (A) and Karim Rashid's comfy-looking "Swing" armchair (B).



For information on the products specified in this section, go to: [WWW.THURU.TO/ARCHITECTURE](http://WWW.THURU.TO/ARCHITECTURE)



**"VERMONT WINTER," 2002,  
BY MAUREEN GALLACE**

When Maureen Gallace shows her oil-on-linen paintings of New England houses and barns, it is not uncommon for strangers to approach her and divulge stories of their hometowns. "Part of the restraint and simplicity of the form allows that," says Gallace, who suspects that the phenomenon has to do with both what she depicts and what she omits. The lack of specificity—a façade rendered by a rectangle of thick paint, interrupted by a single window—lets others fill in the gaps with their own memories of architecture. Gallace reduces a building's details down to the

minimum. "For a long time," she says, "there were no features, no windows, no doors," in order to portray the "essence of a place." The results conjure early ideas of what a house can be.

Her painting method intensifies the elemental quality of her work. While oil paint usually permits an artist to rework form indefinitely, Gallace chooses to paint only once, and she doesn't revise her memory of the buildings she depicts. She spends much of her time in preparation for the moment that she lays the paint down. "I work backwards," says Gallace. "Most of it comes down to staring [at the building] and breaking it down to the essentials."

While Gallace now lives in New York City, she was raised in rural Connecticut, and New England architecture is still the primary subject of her work. "The architecture of where you grow up," says Gallace, "is so much a part of your memory."

SARA MOSS

MAUREEN GALLACE'S WORK CAN BE SEEN IN THE GROUP SHOW **AMERICAN STANDARD: (PARA)NORMALITY AND EVERYDAY LIFE**, CURATED BY GREGORY CREWDSON, AT THE BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY, THROUGH AUGUST 16



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