PLACES

Design in the
Public Realm

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The highlighted articles and commentaries were developed from the proceedings of "Public Service Design Abroad," a conference organized by the National Endowment for the Arts in December 1993.

Design in the Public Realm

The urban services that we so often take for granted comprise the most ubiquitous of design challenges. They form, in large part, the basis for the public realm, the place of our encounter with each other, with our predecessors and with the collective values and aspirations of society. The streets, bridges, transit systems, service centers and institutions that are created in the public interest by government action and regulation set the terms within which our individual creative action and experience take place.

The realm of public design can be a forum for leadership at all levels of government, from federal programs to local, neighborhood organizations. In many great periods it has been. Much of the history of monumental architecture is written about buildings of the public realm, and the history of the vernacular environment is suffused with the underlying structures of public rights-of-way and services.

Facilities created for the public can and should embody qualities of concern for human experience and for the equitable and purposeful use of resources. If well designed, they can set standards for private enterprise, and the infrastructure created by roads, services and regulation can evoke the creative involvement of entrepreneurs and engineers in shaping the environment we share.

We should come to think of all design projects as infrastructure — setting the stage for use and elaboration by others. It is not just the shape of what is built that matters, but what it can make possible in use and in subsequent attraction and adjustments.

This is especially true for the design of the public realm, which is made palpable not only with grand projects but also with every step underfoot, with the organization of paving and planting of rights of way; the curbs, sidewalks, roadways, trees, tree gratings, drainage systems, signage and lighting. All these are often relegated to the realm of public works engineering and discarded from conscious design thought. They form, though, the substructure for our actions, they determine how smoothly we move on foot or in vehicles, how easily we exchange with our neighbors or gather in public assembly, how gracefully the forms of our surroundings are fit together and how they reflect our values.

Architecture in the public realm spans across a range of scales, from the shape and material of a curb to soaring structures that shelter places of public assembly; from objects and spaces that are everywhere in our lives to great monuments that mark moments of collective memory. Both the fine-grained and the colossal present opportunities for caring to get it right — to show that shrewd and persistent imagining, when coupled with attention to the multiple interest, can make places that enlarge the realm of experience open to the public. We must create and sustain lively public places that can carry our interests, hopes and pleasures into an evolving future.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*

(Cover and left)
Zurich train station. Design by Santiago Calatrava Valls.
Photos © Paolo Rosselli.

Pride and Stewardship: Renewing the Mandate for Design Excellence in America's Public Realm

Thomas Walton

We refer to those who led the American Revolution and helped establish our country as the Founding Fathers, individuals who hold a unique place in history because they articulated principles that, even today, are cited as the groundwork for our democracy and national character. Their legacy touches on our principles of government, economics and individual freedom. Less recognized is their commitment to design excellence, most notably in the development of key public buildings and spaces.

Sophisticated architecture, landscapes and household objects are often a sign of personal wealth, power, education and social status; they also comprise part of our cultural legacy. But when Thomas Jefferson wrote that "Design activity and political thought are indivisible,"[1] he seems to have been arguing that design could be a means of conveying the values and priorities of a democratic nation. Thus, Jefferson's architecture sought to put Americans in touch with the ideals of the Enlightenment. His state capitol in Richmond, Va., for example, borrowed from the elegant proportions and details of the Maison Carée, an ancient Roman temple he had seen in his travels through southern France.

Jefferson was equally aware that issues beyond style had to be addressed in the quest for democratic design. This is why his scheme for the University of Virginia is especially significant. A central library (whose profile was inspired by the Roman Pantheon) is surrounded on each side by a single story of colonnaded dorm rooms and five larger pavilions designated as classrooms and faculty housing. The buildings frame an open, tree-lined hillside that continues to be used as a magnificent outdoor room for strolling, recreation, study and contemplation. Jefferson's com-

Thomas Jefferson's "academical village" at the University of Virginia, with lawn terminated by library and flanked by single-story dorms. Courtesy Catholic University of America, School of Architecture.

Background: L'Enfant's plan for Washington, D.C., turned the Baroque style to democratic ends. Courtesy Catholic University of America, School of Architecture.
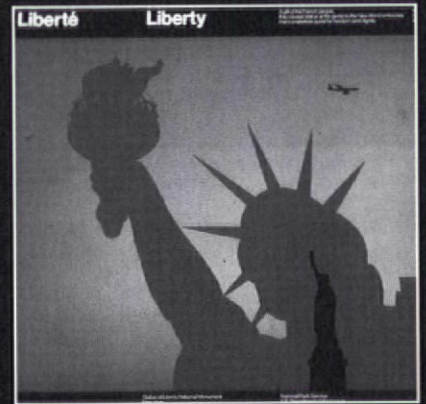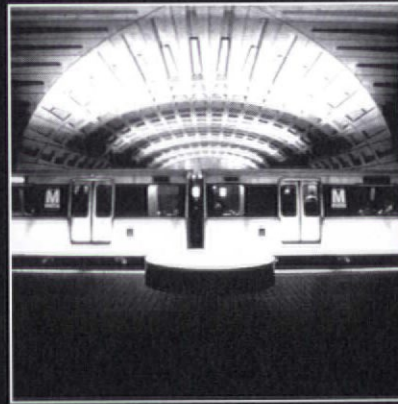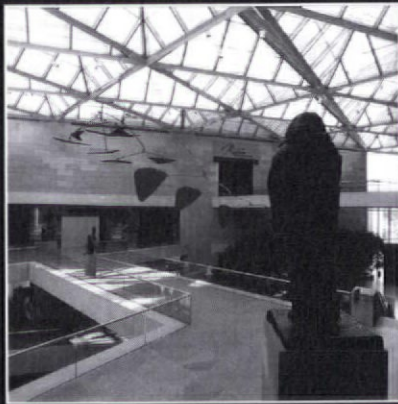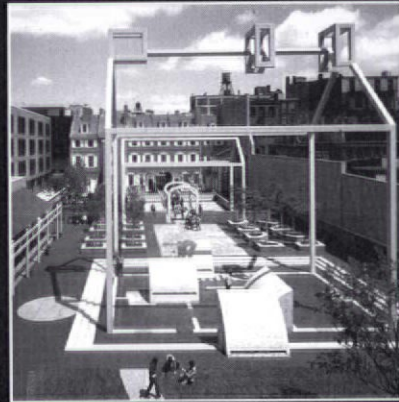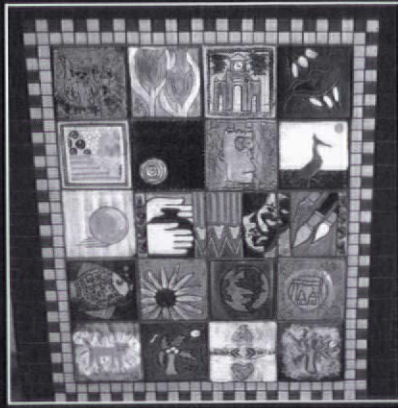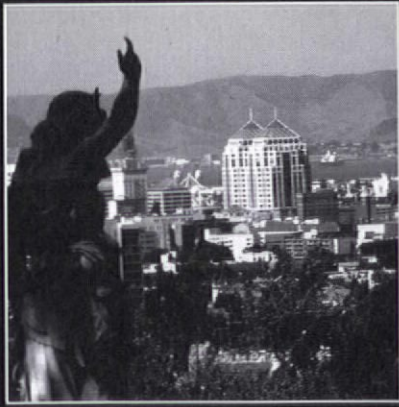
(Top row) Oakland federal buildings (National Endowment for the Arts); Corpus Christi, TX, bus center, tiles made by local residents (© Project for Public Spaces); Vietnam Veterans Memorial (NEA).

(Second row) Perspective from City Beautiful-era plan for Chicago (Catholic University of America); Benjamin Franklin birthplace monument (NEA); Zurich, Switzerland, train station (Donlyn Lyndon).

(Third row) National Gallery East Wing (NEA); Metro Center Station, Metrorail, Washington, D.C. (Hanan A. Kivett), Statue of Liberty National Monument poster (NEA).

(Left) Hotakubo Housing, Kumamoto, Japan (Fumihiko Maki).

position, which he called an "academical village," expressed a defiant confidence in the future of the fledgling country. It seems to have captured important aspects of the national character — a love for and desire to master open space, a scale that invites individual exploration, a sense that all are welcome. All this underscores the notion that in a democracy, quality design is a universal standard that could infuse even the tiniest hamlet with enduring beauty.

Jefferson's architectural interventions established the fact that good government could and should be reflected in designs that incorporated pride and democratic values as well as cost and function as priorities. Styles might vary project to project and from era to era, but the principle that public servants should be stewards of architectural and landscape excellence for the benefit of all citizens was clear from the earliest moments in our history.

Sharing this conviction, George Washington commissioned a plan for the new capital city, Washington, D.C., in 1791. Pierre L'Enfant's Baroque program cleverly transformed an order associated with royalty and centralized government power into a symbol of democracy. Broad, diagonal boulevards linked the prominent sites selected as the seats of the three branches of government; they also connected a generous number of circles and squares designated as public open space for District of Columbia citizens. Washington also endorsed open competitions as a method for soliciting designs for the White House and Capitol building.

During the nineteenth century, both the country and the federal government were growing. To facilitate the government's expansion, the stewardship of design was transferred from the domain of presidential patrons to professionals in the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. New customhouses, post offices and courthouses became symbols of economic vitality and civic pride in communities, large and small, in every corner of the country. Often, these were the most prominent structures in a community and, especially in the west, were intended to reflect the inevitability of America's manifest destiny.[2] These commissions received special attention from

Charleston, S.C., customs house. Courtesy Catholic University of America, School of Architecture.

Romanesque main entrance of Washington D.C.'s Old Post Office. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

Main court, World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893. Courtesy Catholic University of America, School of Architecture.
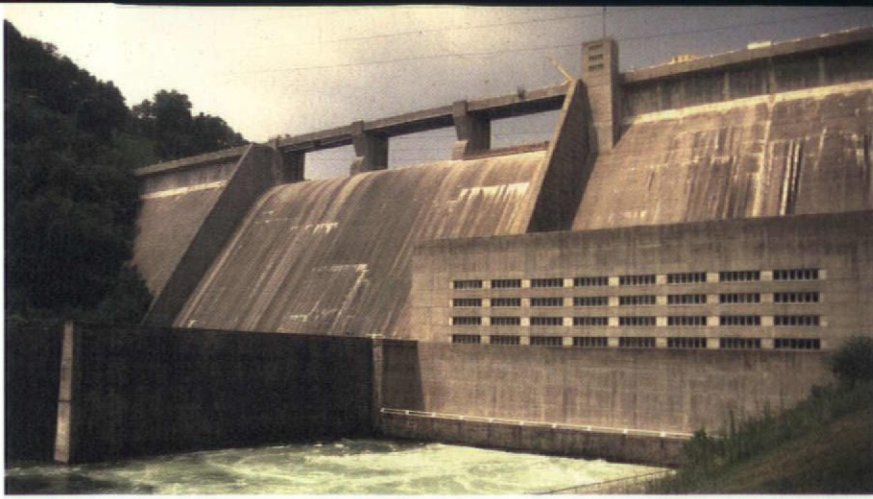
Norris Dam, a project of the federally-chartered Tennessee Valley Authority. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

both Congress and local citizens, politicians and the press; people might have disagreed on details of budget, style and design, but seldom on the need to develop a distinguished project. Comments by Acting Mayor John L. Sneed at the cornerstone ceremonies for the Frankfort, Ky., courthouse and post office in 1884 reflect this sentiment. He pointed out how the building would "prove a handsome ornament to the city," and then noted warmly how the townspeople "fully appreciate and are duly grateful that this evidence of national prosperity has been placed within our limits."[3]

Back in Washington, D.C., the litany of nationally significant undertakings was highlighted by construction of the State, War and Navy Building, the Pension Building and the Library of Congress. A chaste Neoclassicism was initially the favored style but, as tastes changed and design matured from a gentlemanly endeavor into a distinct profession, each supervising architect attempted to provide his own definition of excellence. A more eclectic collection of profiles and facades, from Second Empire to Italianate to Romanesque Revival, came to be the norm.

State and local governments were also increasingly active in the arena of public design. Many impressive state capitols were built during this era, and the architecture of city halls (Philadelphia's exuberant Second Empire edifice comes to mind) started to complement federal structures in terms of quality, grandeur and civic pride. Communities across the country, inspired by the vision and leadership of landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmsted, either improved or created parks whose pastoral designs reflected the long-simmering tensions between the nation's agrarian and urban roots. Bridges, street lighting, paving projects and millions of dollars of other infrastructure investments helped reshape muddy towns into modern cities.

Former San Jose post office, now an art museum, with recent addition at right. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

By the late 1800s, notions of public design had matured into an American Renaissance. The emphasis on single elements was replaced by a holistic view that combined architecture, landscape, ceremonial streets and neighborhood amenities — much of it a response to what many people perceived to be the ugly and chaotic results of laissez-faire urban and industrial growth. The inspiring World's Columbian Exposition, a temporary yet startlingly elegant "white city" of Classical buildings, parks and promenades became the prototype for other fairs, civic centers and urban planning proposals developed in the early twentieth century. Elaborate urban designs for Chicago, Washington, D.C., Cleveland, San Francisco and even Manila (capital of the Philippines, a U.S. territory after the Spanish-American War) followed. And in 1901 Beaux Arts design was officially blessed by the supervising architect as a matter of policy:

The Department, after mature consideration of the subject, finally decided to adopt the classic style of architecture for all buildings as far as it was practical to do so.... The experience of centuries has demonstrated that no form of architecture is so pleasing to the great mass of mankind as the classic ... and it is hoped that the present policy may be followed in the future, in order that the public buildings of the United States may become distinctive in their character.[4]

World War I, shifts in tastes, changing economic circumstances and a new sense of social purpose spelled the end of the American Renaissance. During the depression in

Illustrative map of Public Works Administration projects.
Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

PWA-era courthouse in Boulder, CO.
Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

the 1930s, public stewardship of design excellence expanded into a host of new areas. With hope of reducing unemployment, improving the quality of life in communities and restoring pride in America, the federal government created an alphabet soup of innovative (and controversial) New Deal programs — the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Federal Arts Project among them. These agencies launched countless projects, from airstrips, swimming pools and schools to slum clearance, housing, dams, interior design, graphics, painting and sculpture.

While this dramatic scope of work was subsidized with billions of federal dollars, most programming and design were turned over to local leadership. This shift encouraged stylistic diversity, including experiments with Modernism, and significantly reduced the supervising architect's influence. New Deal programs presented a unique opportunity for the federal government to enhance the quality of public design — from urban planning, architecture and landscape, to interior and graphic design — in ways that went well beyond the vision of any previous period in our nation's history.

Contemporary Challenges

Today, the federal government is the largest consumer of design services in the United States. But while the demand for public projects has grown, design priorities and criteria have shifted. Once public agencies sought a reasonable balance among pride, democratic values, aesthetics, function and cost; now they shortsightedly focus on function and cost. Even when public agencies contract with designers based on the quality of their portfolios, projects must be executed within tight, often unrealistic budgets and at the lowest possible price. Agency heads know what happens when they make exceptions to the minimum-cost rule and are scrutinized by the media and ultra-sensitive taxpayers.[5]

Regaining Confidence in Public Service Design

A conference about design as a public service carries with it an assumption that the public sector has value. It also assumes government has a responsibility for the welfare of its citizens and can improve their circumstances.

However, in a democratic society, government cannot function without general agreement about the legitimacy of its actions, especially if it is to act as a patron of design. In a society beset by increasing tribalization, such consensus is difficult to achieve. Rather than becoming a global village, we have become segregated into various cultural components, each of which seeks legitimization of its own point of view at the expense of all others. We are no longer required to interact with others simply because they are fellow citizens.

In Europe cities are taken seriously as an integral part of a nation's self image. In America, we can find no comparable optimism; the word "urban" has become code for social unrest and disorder. Similarly, "public" is a pejorative — public schools, public housing and public transportation are all regarded as inferior to those in private hands.

This is coupled with a recurring cynicism about government and its ability to solve problems and deliver services. The voting majority assumes projects sponsored by government are inherently wasteful and inferior to what can be accomplished by the private sector. Government is often perceived as a police force, not as an agent of change.

Added to this is the emphasis television places upon product, distorting the purpose of professional life. It is now assumed designers make products whose primary significance lies in their value as determined by the marketplace. Brand name recognition, a concept first applied to consumer products, is now sought by design professionals. Sir Richard Rogers spoke scathingly about the architecture of the market-

place, denouncing the mindset that regards a building solely as profit-making devices, conceived to last for 20 years and then be replaced. That mindset is completely inconsistent with the idea of *public* places: Government is badly represented by structures made by a disposable culture.

Against this complex and negative background, the conference considered an astonishing range of activities. Architecture, planning, art history, public art, advanced technology, transportation, environmental issues, graphic design, restoration and real estate development were all discussed. And in *all* of these presentations it was assumed that public meant good.

In fairness it should be noted that government in the U.S. can mean good. Distinguished restoration efforts remind us of the splendid buildings that have been built by our government in earlier times. Unfortunately, we get somewhat sentimental about how successful our restoration of these buildings has been, failing to note that if we took better care of our buildings, restoration wouldn't be necessary in many cases.

A positive recent development is the use of public-private partnerships to solve problems. By building consensus, creating new alliances among different groups and tapping different sources of funding, these partnerships have realized projects that the public and private sector have lacked the financial muscle or leadership to achieve by themselves. Such approaches can expedite results and achieve quality more surely than conventional systems of management.

Our society must identify a common purpose so that the patient, civilizing work of building confidence in the public realm can begin. While the grand dreams and visions of the fifties and sixties now seem sentimental and misguided, it is not sufficient to say a larger,

more generous idea of society is impossible for this generation.

Our great resources of wealth and talent *can* be used to construct a new definition of the public sector, one that enhances our common experience and provides the leadership now irrationally expected from democratic ideals. We must recognize that we have a common destiny, sharing interests the economic, cultural and social future of America. Nowhere is this more evident in the architecture of the public realm.

— Hugh Hardy

Atrium, Los Angeles Central Library renovation and expansion. Courtesy Hardy Holzman Pfieffer.
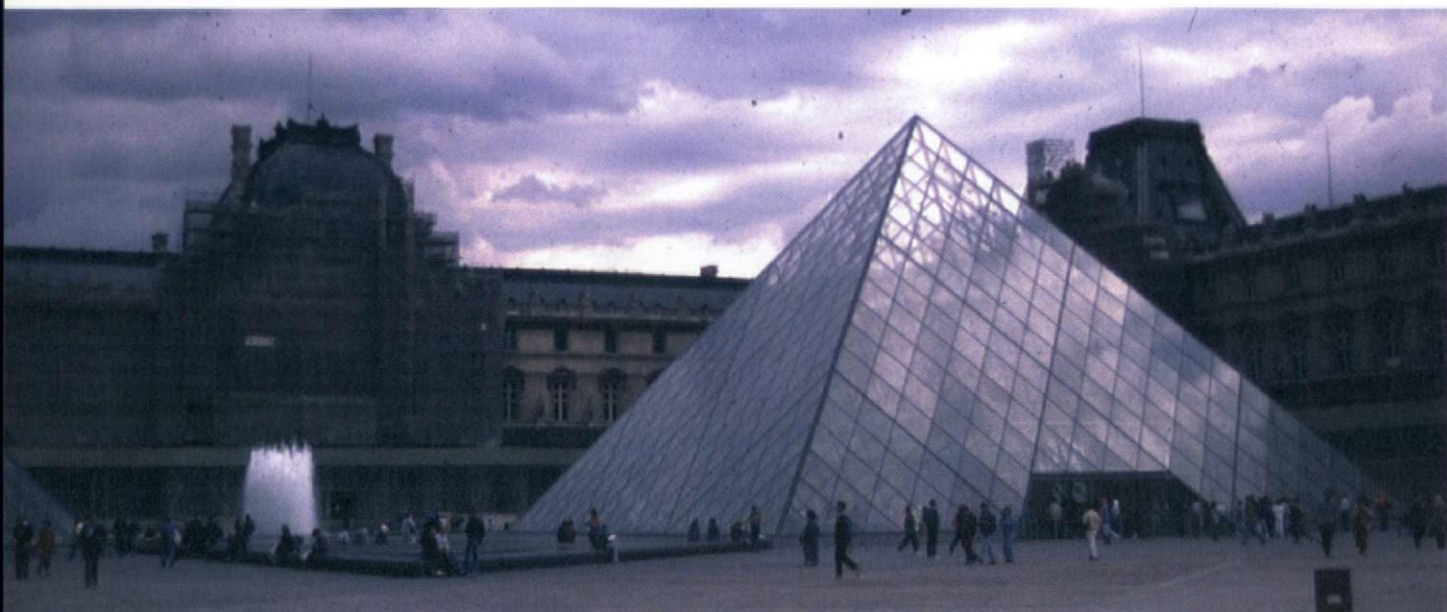
Pyramid atop underground addition to the Louvre, Paris. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

Design in the total context is one of the most strategic economic tools a country has. Those countries that have recognized this have done very well by it. Look at what the Japanese and Germans did in the automotive industry during the 1970s and 1980s. They captured large shares of markets worldwide. How? They did it by design, absolutely. We see European and now Japanese railroad companies today offering solutions to the U.S. by design. We see J.C. Decaux tackling an area of great concern, and again it's through design. If there's anything that designers in this country should be concerned about, it is why we haven't maximized our design potential in this country. We have excellent design capacities but have not fully utilized them.

— Robert Blaich

In truth, Americans have always been healthily skeptical about government power and spending. But today, we seem to have little understanding of the value and meaning of investing in the public realm. The importance that post-war development patterns, both suburban and urban, place on the private realm is the clearest evidence of our abandonment of public places. Increasingly, Americans are moving to places where the streets, infrastructure and open spaces that once bound us together are under private control — in some communities, even city hall is moving to the shopping mall. This has not only had profound consequences for our landscape but also weakened support for attentive, meaningful design in what remains of the public realm.

Not everybody has given up. In several European countries and Japan, quality design in the public realm appears to be the norm. Last December, to explore why this is the case, the National Endowment for the Arts convened a symposium, "Public Service Design Abroad."[6] U.S. public officials and designers listened to the experiences and saw the results affected by their international colleagues. The three days of presentations and discussion pointed towards several lessons for renewing the American commitment to public design excellence.

Ellis Island Main Hall. The entrance canopy was added during the restoration. Courtesy National Endowment for the Arts.
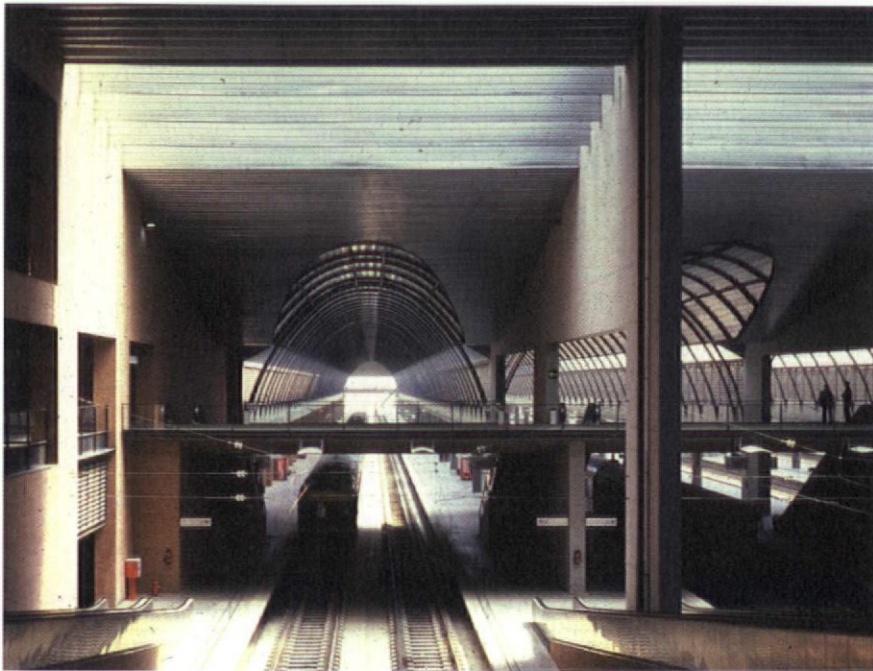
Lesson One: Recognize that Quality Makes a Difference

The voices at the forum were quite diverse. Speakers came from France, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and other countries. They included business executives, government officials and designers. And they shared thoughts not only on architecture, planning and urban design but also on graphic and industrial design — reminding us of the wide range of disciplines that shape our public environment.

One maxim was repeated again and again: The quality of public design can make a tremendous difference. Good design can enhance the presence of the public realm and the value people place on it. It can encourage citizens to nurture their involvement in society — to become active not only in public places but also in art, culture and politics.

The speakers illuminated many cases in which design has been integral to the success of public places. Raymond Turner, the British Airport Authority's design director, described how London Transport's carefully planned and executed design program (which touched everything from stations to vehicles to uniforms to posters) sustained the transit system's identity, respect and popularity for much of the twentieth century. Josep Acebillo, planner and architect for Barcelona, emphasized that public investment in infrastructure like parks, plazas, highways and communication networks can be a catalyst for private investment and universal pride. Jacques Cabineau explained how the French policy of staging design competitions for public projects has resulted in better architecture because the program and goals for a building are more thoroughly researched before design begins and because a broader range of talent has access to commissions.

Clearly the public benefits when government — at the national, regional and local levels — explicitly promotes design excellence. In the U.S., government has a uniquely wide range of opportunities to do this — there are myriad agencies at the national, regional and local levels that either develop projects on their own or fund projects sponsored by others. The case studies from abroad indicate that it is still possible for government to exploit design as a way to instill pride, improve the level of public service and deepen the appreciation of the public environment.

What would happen if we had a day without design? How many of us think about design as an integral part of our life or as a convenient part of our life? If we could raise the public's consciousness about design, whether as professionals or as individuals, or whether government takes responsibility for conveying the message, that might help build a cohesive design culture.

— Alan Brangman

Public Design, Public Education

Q.: In the U.S. there are few places where the average person can get information regarding public projects. Can't we disseminate more information about specific buildings as they are going up and when they're completed?

Joan Goody: Using construction fencing as a series of changing exhibits would be an excellent, informative way to inform passersby about the history of a building and what was being done at the time. This could be written into the contract of every government project, that there will be money for some sort of elaboration presented on the construction fencing and some sort of exhibit when the project is over. Architects love to show off, and you can get them to do that pretty cheerfully.

Donlyn Lyndon: One point at which people do become interested in architecture is when a project is about to appear on their doorstep. If every project that the federal government sponsored could have within it a requirement that there be some piece of informational, educational prepared is placed on public display, that would reach a lot of people.

Beyond that, I think we tend to look at public reviews and workshops as troublesome processes that we have to get through. I would urge that we begin to look at those processes as opportunities to build a level of understanding about what's going to happen. Often when a group that is opposed to a proposal comes to a meeting, its members are not ready to listen to the other side. With patience, you'll find that a public body that is hearing arguments and can be changed in the way it thinks about a project. All of that public interaction, all of that discussion generated by freedom of speech, helps us learn more from each other.

Roger K. Lewis: One practice that has been fairly successful in the suburbs and exurbs is the charrettes that Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk have led. They are architects, but they mainly plan towns and subdivisions. Their mode of operation is to organize multiday workshops and, very intentionally, to invite the participation of anybody and everybody who might have an interest or concern with the fate of a particular piece of land. This not only produces a plan but also is a process of enlightenment and education. When the plan is put up on the wall everybody can look at it and feel a little bit of ownership.

Sir Richard Rogers: Government should set an example not only by commissioning public buildings but also by increasing an awareness of architectural culture among all age groups. All cities and regions should have a forum where members of the public can make their opinions clear to architects and to the government. This should be addressed in education and school curricula — not that there should be a subject called architecture, but curricula should informed by interrelated subjects like geography, history, technology and art.

(Below) Street signs in New York City not only identify historic districts but also help build a constituency for historic preservation. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

(Right) The Environmental Simulation Center in New York City enables citizens and planners to explore alternate scenarios for architectural, planning and urban design proposals. Courtesy Regional Plan Association.
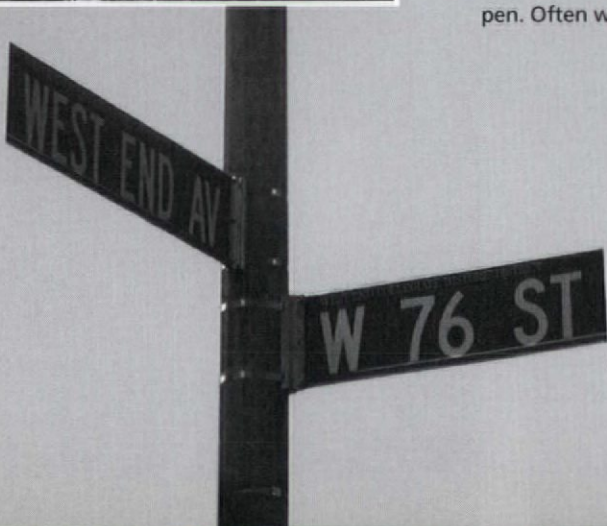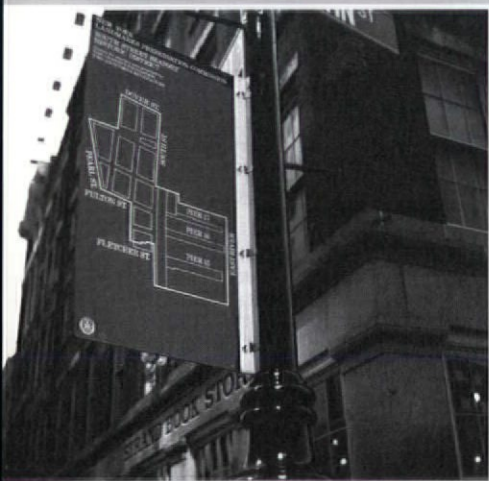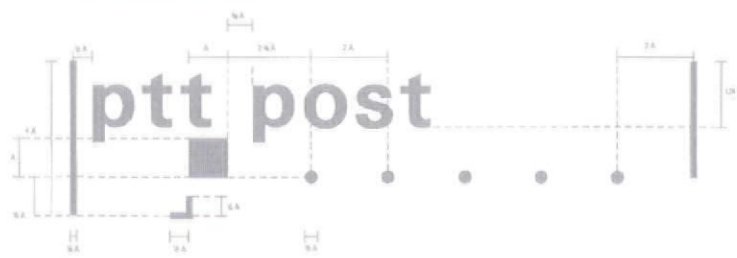
Lesson Two: Establish Leadership and Build a Design Constituency

Two complements to developing a rationale for design quality are establishing leadership and a building constituency for outstanding public design. This can involve not only government officials but also designers and individual citizens who have a variety of options for influencing design.

Innovative leadership can emerge from many quarters. Sometimes it clearly rests in the hands of an individual. The Kumamoto, Japan, "Art Polis" program, in which leading architects from around the world are being commissioned to design some 50 public facilities, was launched by the prefecture's former governor, Morihio Hosokawa. In The Netherlands, the design of many government projects is overseen by an appointed state architect; Barcelona's remarkable transformation in the last decade was orchestrated by Acebillo and city architect Oriel Bohigas.

In Europe, government agencies and public service corporations often take the lead in sponsoring extraordinary design. The Dutch Postal, Telegraph and Telephone (PTT) system uses design to communicate its cutting edge position in the communications market. Its facilities are as inviting as they are efficient. Its presence in the community in the form of postboxes, public telephones and vehicles has been developed to improve the streetscape and reduce clutter. Its general commitment to quality in everything from forms to uniforms, from high-tech equipment to artwork, speaks about a successful, people-oriented, can-do attitude that helped PTT make the transition from a government agency to a profit-making private organization.

Even with aggressive leadership, quality public design flourishes best when there is a public that demands and appreciates it. The French competition system has stimulated a lively debate concerning public architecture. Moreover, it has become the norm to have cities and towns graced with the most innovative and extraordinary public structures. British architect Sir Richard Rogers, a designer of the Centre Georges Pompidou, commented that "culture is the fourth strongest vote getter in France, where design is simply part of the political discussion."[7] (One could imagine Rogers wished there was a similar kind of enthusiasm in England.)

In France, there really is a cultural vote. President François Mitterand, in a private conversation, once said to me, "You have to remember, Mr. Rogers, that culture is the fourth biggest vote getter." I've been trying to figure out what the other three are ever since! Until we make architecture a vote getter or a critical part of the political discussion, then it will be very difficult to put architecture where it should be. When I say architecture, I mean the built environment, but it can also be the green environment.
— Sir Richard Rogers

(Above) Logo for The Netherlands Postal and Telecommunications Services; PTT postbox.

(Left) Paris' Pompidou Center was a presidentially-sponsored project whose design was chosen through a competition. Photo by Martin Charles, courtesy Richard Rogers Partnership.
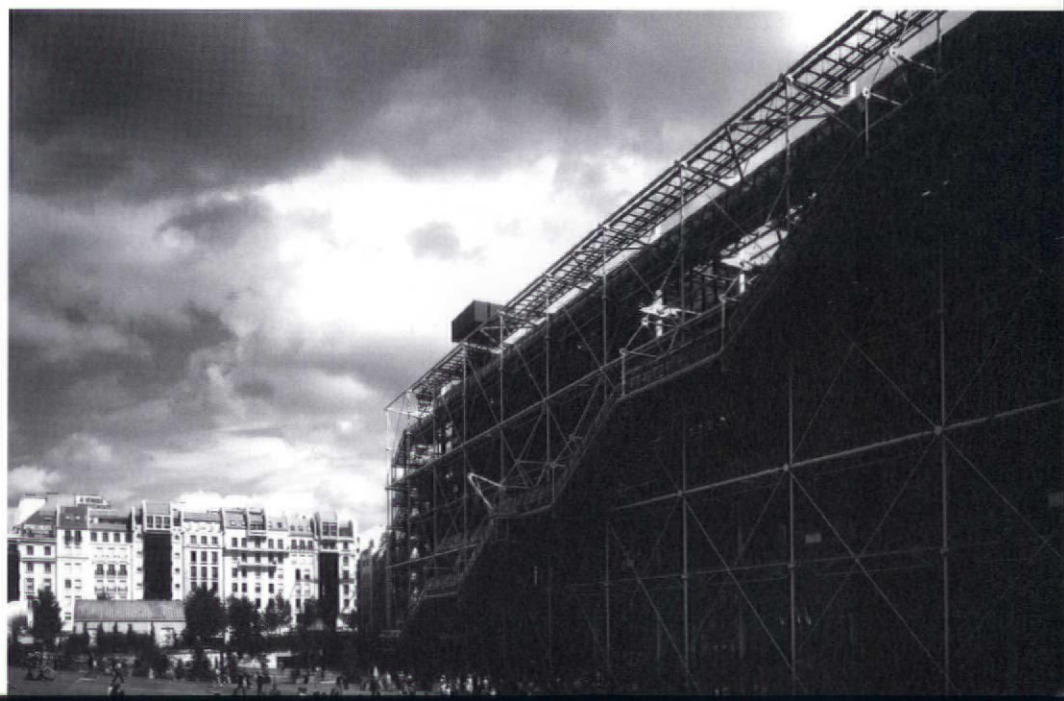
The Keeper of the Street

Street furniture is now considered to enhance the streetscape, and advertising is no longer perceived as a visual pollution, but more as a factor that can enliven the streetscape. Our company's philosophy is based on two main elements. The first is to invest in good design by working with the top architects and designers in the world. The second is to invest in maintenance, which is the key element to the success of any street furniture program.

We hope San Francisco will be the first U.S. city to have our street furniture, including automatic public toilets that will be accessible to everyone, even those with disabilities. We would like to have newsstands and integrate in those public service kiosks some interactive video systems where people on the street will be able to make transactions,

such as buying tickets to see the Giants or paying parking fines.

One of our major goals is to help reduce street clutter — for example, news racks, those little boxes that are placed at intersections. In San Francisco I counted 23 boxes lined up at one intersection. The First Amendment is a good one, but it makes it impossible for cities to get rid of these boxes. The solution is to have them integrated in the vertical kiosk like a soda vending machine.

Most people in the cities where we work today have the impression that there is no vandalism because they never see a bus shelter or kiosk that is broken. There is a lot of vandalism, but we repair it so often that people don't notice. Our experience is that when you clean the equipment often, and don't let the glass panels remain broken for

more than 24 hours, the rate of vandalism goes down.

Every piece of street furniture is checked every day, and we clean each piece at least once a week. In Amsterdam, we have graffiti busters, people on motorbikes who can remove graffiti more or less immediately. We also developed a "pooper scooter," which can collect dog pollution on any sidewalk, grass, in public parks. In Paris we collect 3.5 tons of dog pollution every day with 120 bikes.

Street furniture wouldn't work if there weren't a maintenance service to take care of it. If a nice piece of design is being vandalized, then it's even worse than having bad design.

— *Jean-François Decaux*
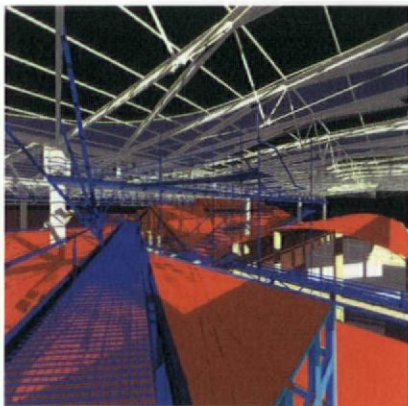
Le Fresnoy media school, Tourcoing, France. Attic space used for workshops and informal screenings and presentations. Courtesy Bernard Tschumi Associates.

Parc de la Villette's design involves systems of movements and activity nodes that interact on several scales. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

Can this type of leadership emerge in the U.S. government? In small ways it is beginning to appear. The architecture division of the federal government's General Services Administration, for instance, has devised a new process for selecting professionals that rewards design ability rather than technical criteria, and other agencies are using charrettes and competitions to search for the best possible design ideas. The National Park Service has been noted not only for its architectural and landscape design but also for engineering and graphic design. And Amtrak (a government-sponsored corporation) is completing a sensitive restoration of historic train stations on its Northeast Corridor line.

At a grassroots level, countless groups across the country are espousing the virtues of historic preservation, river and creek restoration, neighborhood improvement, park development and other causes that highlight the importance of design. Such efforts have helped assure the passage of legislation and programs concerning environmental protection, historic preservation and community revitalization — and in turn these efforts have been boosted by federal support.

Perhaps these separate enterprises can be woven into a broader constituency, a crescendo of voices that includes community leaders, consumers, business executives, builders, manufacturers, bureaucrats and design professionals. Together, these groups can insist on an agenda addressing design excellence that spans large-scale federal initiatives to the tiniest neighborhood pocket park.

Lesson Three: Initiate Activity at Many Scales

What is remarkable about public service design is the wide range of scales at which it can occur: national monuments, city landmarks, neighborhood improvements, infrastructure networks and more. Each establishes a public presence in its own way, and each poses its own challenge for design creativity. Public agencies should be aware of and attentive to this full range of opportunities and responsibilities.

There is certainly a place for what the French call *grands projets* — the Louvre addition and other endeavors that gain international attention. They can transform the dynamics of a city, as Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette has in a formerly industrial section of Paris. And they can provide a sense of pride and identity, as did Kumamoto's Art Polis project and the improvements made for the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona.

On the other hand, giving equal attention to less glamorous things — local museums and exhibits, neighborhood schools, bus stations, the graphic identity of a small town, pocket parks, street furniture — is equally important. Barcelona spent the decade before the Olympics reinforcing its historic fabric by creating scores of catalytic public spaces. In Paris, competitions are staged for housing projects and innovative "industrial hotels" on infill sites. Santiago Calatrava, famous for the way he melds architecture, art and engineering in bridge design, has lavished his talent on bus shelters, canopies, warehouses, balconies and other small-scale projects.

At a grander scale, public design can create a cohesive image across the diverse regions of a country. During the nineteenth century, courthouses and customhouses

Every project that government at any level undertakes should see itself as linking to a larger pattern, improving that pattern and helping inject life into it. This strategy can be embedded in projects of the smallest scale and still have consequence. We see this obviously in the Barcelona examples; it also seems to be true of Parc de la Villette, where small actions configured within a larger picture inject energy into that place.
— Donlyn Lyndon

(Above left) Standard transportation symbols developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the American Institute of Graphic Arts in the 1970s.

(Above) Restoration of historic streetlight near Gaudi's Cathedral Sagrada Familia, Barcelona. Courtesy the city of Barcelona.

(Left) Santiago Calatrava's communications tower for the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona. Courtesy the city of Barcelona.

Putting Preservation in Perspective

Q.: What strikes me is the way European architects relate to their historic architecture. It seems they see architecture as an evolving process, part of life beginning in the past and continuing today. Therefore, they use old buildings as a foundation upon which to build something new, rather than something to protect to the point where any and all retrofitting is discouraged.

Washington D.C. is a good example of the latter situation — if we're going to move ahead in doing excellent design work here, we need to look at the extent to which we are hampered by a paradigm of historic preservation, which does not allow progression.

Roger K. Lewis: I've concluded that here in Washington, at least, we're in a period during which people are very concerned about our architectural legacy, young though it is. They are concerned not only because that legacy might be threatened today or next week, but also because of what might happen fifty or a hundred years from now. I think the preservation movement has its zealots, who are not always confronted. But at the same time there have been extraordinary abuses, and certainly in this city there were egregious abuses. There was a period when people were seriously talking about taking down the old Executive Office Building and getting rid of the Old Post Office.

Joan Goody: Do you think some of the preservation movement is a sign of a disappointment in the contemporary architecture that we produced in the 1950s and 1960s? It's interesting that France produced as much terrible architecture as we did in that period, by some admission it is even worse. While we retreated, their solution was to turn to competitions to try to get better contemporary designs. Certainly what we saw is far more daring than most of our public or private sector design.

Steven M. Davis: The reaction has been like a pendulum that has overswung. We don't have the legacy that Europe has; we don't have a thousand years of fabulous building and construction tradition to build on. More and more projects are going to position restoration in a more balanced perspective, having to do with the need to renovate those 1950s and 1960s buildings that are no longer doing their job. I spend most of my life right now trying to figure out what to do with the World Trade Center and its plaza, which are only 23 years old.
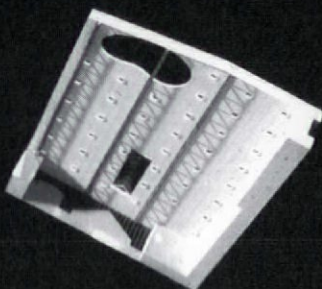
established a federal presence throughout the United States. Today, transportation projects can accomplish this. The Swiss, for instance, devote a great deal of energy to road and signage design, studying problems from aesthetic, safety and environmental perspectives as they strive to create approaches that are locally sensitive while maintaining a national image of impeccable engineering. Postal agencies, the most ubiquitous public service, can pull the country together through the design of graphics, customer service and processing facilities, vehicles and, of course, mailboxes and stamps.

Lesson Four: Today's Challenges are Similar to and Different from Yesterday's

A theme that helped unify the symposium presentations was tradition. Some speakers noted that their countries' current commitment to quality design grows out of a deep cultural tradition. Kees Rijnboutt, The Netherlands' chief architect, and R. D. E. Oxenaar, his colleague from the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone system, tied recent developments in Dutch design to the Renaissance and the early twentieth century de Stijl movement. In France, the similarity between the *grands projets* and the pride that built the chateaux is evident. Barcelona's urban awakening and its celebration of the 1992 Olympic games is the latest release of generations of Catalan creativity and energy.

But if looking to the past provides useful precedents and a foundation for future work, another message was that tradition should also provide the confidence to explore new directions. The success of projects like the dramatic bridges and kinetic buildings by Santiago Calatrava and the visionary Parc de la Villette validate the importance of taking risks and encouraging innovation in the realm of public design.

It will be important to mesh future design directions with the new challenges public projects face. We now demand much greater sensitivity to environmental and historic resources; should we also seek design that is reflective of (or created by) a wider segment of our diverse population? We are concerned about using design to advance improvements in economic and social conditions; how can this be meshed with aesthetic considerations? We also require much more citizen involvement in reviewing designs (a factor that figured in the abandonment of Tschumi's la Villette-like plans for a park in Queens, New York); to what extent should public service design also involve public education about design and about the broader physical environment?
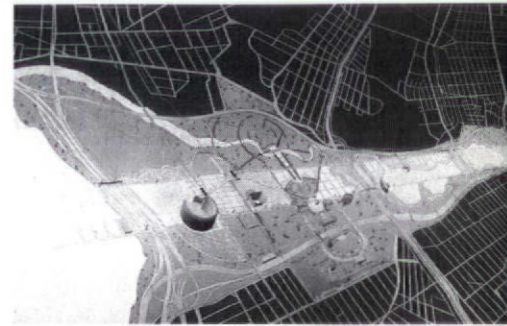
Proposal for rebuilding Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, commissioned by New York City's parks department, was subject to exhaustive public review and ultimately did not win political support.
Courtesy Bernard Tschumi Associates.

Parc de la Villette is 125 acres and cost nearly $200 million. To hold together this energy, there must be somebody — a civil servant, politician or bureaucrat — with the authority to carry such a project to the end. In France, such people have the authority to determine a course of action without necessarily having to ask the opinion of 25 committees and local resident groups. This is a very tricky balance between democracy and authority; in America it would often be considered authoritarian.

I was involved with a large park in New York City, Flushing Meadows Corona Park. By the time we had developed a proposal, we had to appear in front of more than twenty committees. Each was not coordinated with the others, none had any political force or mandate to try to bring these groups together. It is, of course, very difficult to arrive at good design with this lack of focus.
— *Bernard Tschumi*

Proposal to convert Manhattan's former General Post Office into a new Amtrak terminal has interested people who still recall the grandeur of McKim, Mead and White's Pennsylvania Station, demolished in the '60s.
Courtesy Hellmuth, Obata, Kassabaum.

Similarly, there are new actors in design. One of the most promising directions is the creation of public-private partnerships, which have operated on many scales. They offer the promise of working more flexibly than traditional government agencies; in their financing and decision-making they often can take greater risks. But they also can blur the line between public and private, confusing citizens about their stake in the public realm. Privatization of government building construction or of the maintenance of our streets might produce effective, assured results, but it risks further undermining our confidence in the capacity of the public sector.

America's challenge is restoring its healthy skepticism of government while shedding its cynicism about the public realm. We must recall our government's past support of excellence in design, build a constituency for continuing this legacy and seek out leaders that support it. As this framework develops, we will be able to inaugurate a diversity of initiatives confronting the challenges of our cities and our suburbs, of new information and communications technologies, and of complex environmental problems. Some of these efforts will be funded and developed at the federal level. Others will receive federal support but be worked out under regional and local jurisdictions. Still others will emerge entirely from local mandates for excellence.

These contributions may be different from those promoted by the Founding Fathers, the Office of the Supervising Architect, the talents that emerged during the Beaux Arts Renaissance and the depression-era federal efforts involved with design. Nevertheless, they can suggest the pluralism of American democracy, foster a sense of pride and stewardship in the public realm and in public service, encourage human interaction, and reflect a balance aesthetically between tradition and innovation. If we look carefully enough, they will offer us the first glimpse of a new design tradition.

Each year I teach an architecture studio that is made up of some of the most talented young people from around the world. Many of the foreign students, who are the top of their respective classes from wherever they might have come, plan to go back and work in government offices — for the city, the transit department, the PTT, or some other agency. They see excitement, innovation and possibility in the public sector there. Unfortunately, not many American students come to Harvard with the idea that when they graduate they are going to go get a job at their local redevelopment authority.

— David Lee

Notes

1. Thomas Jefferson, as quoted in Benjamin Forgey, "The Jeffersonian Approach," *The Washington Post*, 19 December 1993, p. G2.

2. It is telling, for instance, that the customhouse and post office in Portland, Oregon, was begun in 1869 before that city of 9,000 people even had a railroad or paved streets. See Lois Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 122.

3. John L. Sneed, *Kentucky Yeoman*, 5 February 1884, as quoted in Craig, 167.

4. Report of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, 1901, as quoted in Craig, 236.

5. For example, the Federal Triangle project (previously known as the International Cultural and Trade Center) in Washington, D.C., has been roundly criticized as the costs have almost doubled from $362 million to $656 million. See Kirstin Downey Grimsley, "Federal Triangle's Points of Contention; Delays, Rising Costs, Changing Concepts Beset Project," *The Washington Post* (5 December 1993), p. A1.

6. "Public Service Design Abroad" ran from 8-10 December 1993 in Washington, D.C. It was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, Design Program, with support from the General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

7. Sir Richard Rogers, remarks at the Public Service Design Abroad conference, 10 December 1993.
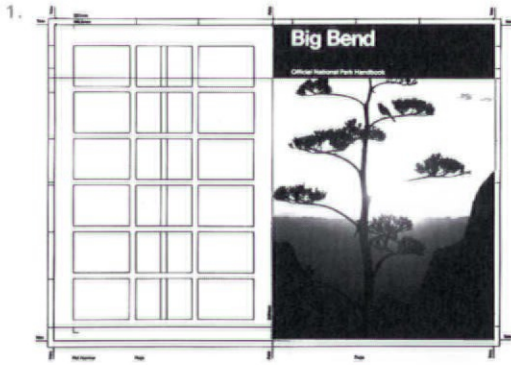
1. "Unigrid" used for National Park Service graphics and publications.
2. Linn Cove Viaduct, Blue Ridge Parkway.
3. Day care center in Social Security Administration building, Baltimore.
4, 5. Proposed Southpoint Pavilion, Roosevelt Island, New York City. Design by Santiago Calatrava Valls • Mitchell\Giurgola. (Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation)
6. Stone griffin sculpture, part of a seven-mile project along I-476 in Radnor, PA. Photo by William Reimann. (Townscape Institute)
7. Pershing Park, Washington, D.C. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. (Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation)

Photos courtesy National Endowment for the Arts unless indicated otherwise.
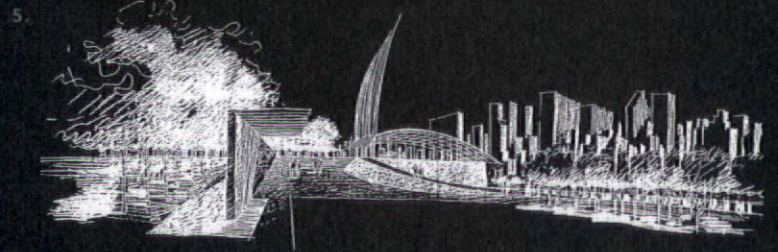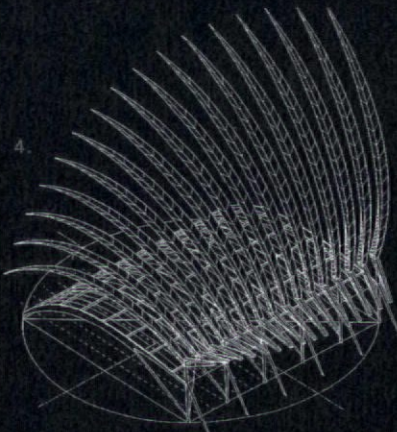
PLACES OF PRIVILEGE

Robert S. Harris

Above: Coastal areas, with their fresh air and inspiring views, are places of privilege.

Below: Plaza de las Fuentes, Pasadena civic center. Courtesy Robert S. Harris.

This article is adapted from a presentation made to the Mayors Institute on City Design West in October, 1993.

All the people of the city should inhabit places of privilege, that is, places that help them know and feel where they are and why it is good to be there. This is a matter of fundamental significance, as it strikes at the center of any person's sense of well-being. A place of privilege should be identifiable, be locally distinctive and provide ample support for everyday life.

Characteristically the people who first inhabit a place, and those who follow them who have wealth or power, settle in the places of natural distinction and advantage — places where the air is fresh or where there is inspiring prospect. Those of us who come later, or for whom the choices are more narrow, settle in places that have less natural advantage.

It is in the places of less advantage that urban design must create distinction. These are the places lost in the midst of extensive urban flatlands. They are the leftover districts that grew without special care and still have no loving sponsor. They have little natural advantage, and without design they have no identity, no particular character. Where we are successful as urban designers we must create a sense of privilege where little was present before.

One of our great successes has been the residential street whose trees have grown to make a canopied outdoor room that supports community aspirations, lasts in our memories and fulfills our need to be in a distinct place. Another successful strategy has been to build public institutions whose location and design lend distinction to districts that otherwise would be nondescript; these places build on our tradition of magnificent city halls and public libraries.

Above: Plaza Sant Pere. Photo by R. Escudé, courtesy City of Barcelona.

Left: Plaza in El Pueblo, the oldest section of Los Angeles. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

Below: Everyday places, such as tree-lined residential streets, can be places of privilege. Courtesy Robert S. Harris.
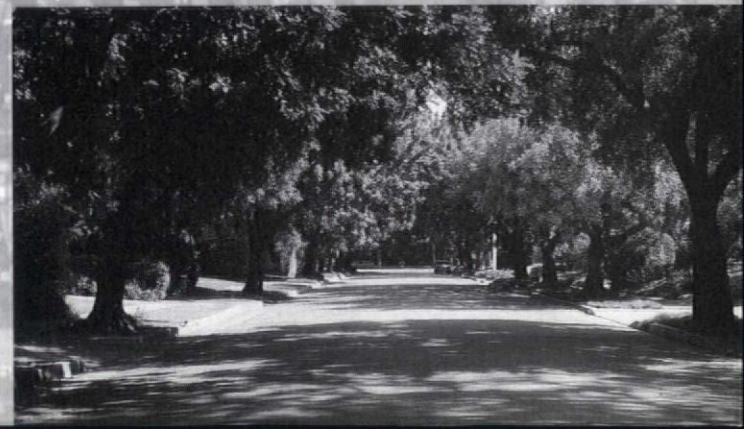
Recently we have had few successes as both local governments and private investors have either ignored what is required to build a suitable public realm or relied too heavily on stylized buildings, decorative plantings and contrived monuments that are more referenced to other places than they are to the history, culture and landscape in which they stand. Our extensive private realms fail to support community life, and they provide only the identity of exclusivity and a rather fearful sense of privilege.

Ultimately, our opportunity to create places of privilege everywhere and for everyone depends upon designing projects at every scale, both public and private, that are designed to augment the inherent identity and distinction of their districts and neighborhoods. Such a realization inspired projects throughout Barcelona during the past decade, an example that is worthy of our attention. These projects and the principles on which they are based have directly influenced planning in many other places in Europe and in the U.S., and have been particularly interesting as similar planning has proceeded in Los Angeles.

Every Project Counts

Biddy Mason Park in downtown Los Angeles was created a few years ago to link a new parking garage to both the Broadway and Spring Street historic districts. It has given identity and privilege where there was disrepair, and it has tempted all who use it to notice the historic districts, learn about an important aspect of cultural history and sense the possibilities for further development in the area. The best Spanish-language bookstore is now adjacent, one of the state's largest banks has been tempted to return to an underserved district and a new deli has recently opened, furnishing food and drink to be taken outside and enjoyed in this lively paséo.

The success of this small place provides an important model. All cities have so many places of no particular distinction that the task of repair and enhancement can often seem overwhelming. Many apparently discouraged citizens, rather than staying where they are and improving their neighborhoods and districts, continue to leave existing environs for newly developed communities. If this exodus is to be stemmed, new civic leadership must inspire a persistent effort towards creating privilege everywhere.
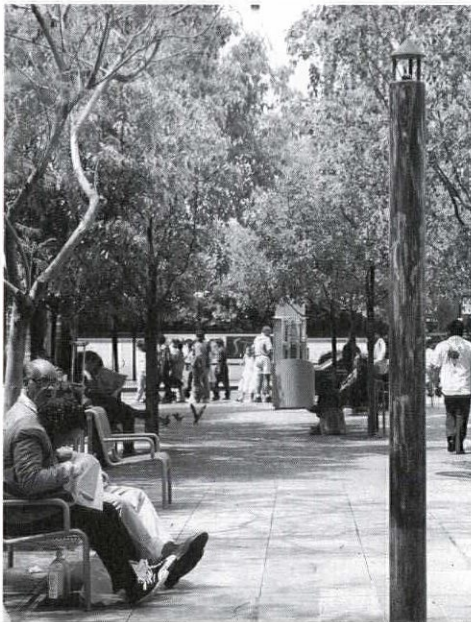
Biddy Mason Park in downtown Los Angeles. Small stores have opened along the park, which winds through the center of a block. Courtesy Robert S. Harris.

SPRING STREET

Parking   Shop   Bank   Parking

Deli

Shop   Shops   Biddie Mason Park   Shop

Bradbury Building   Book Store

THIRD STREET   FOURTH STREET

BROADWAY
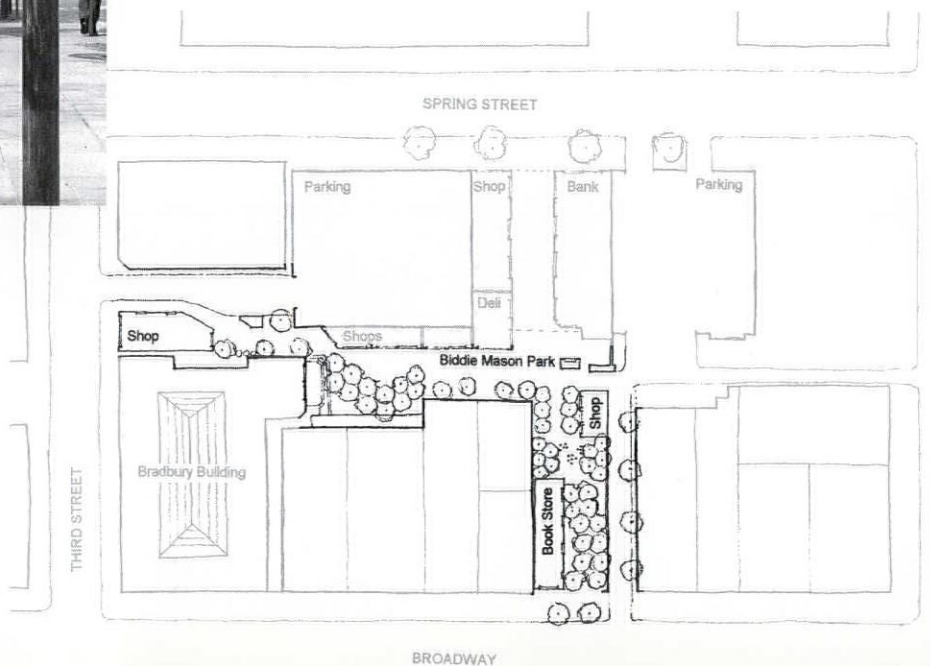
Buena Vista Chlorine Treatment Plant, near Elysian Park, Los Angeles, brings identity to the surrounding area. Courtesy Brenda Levin, architect.
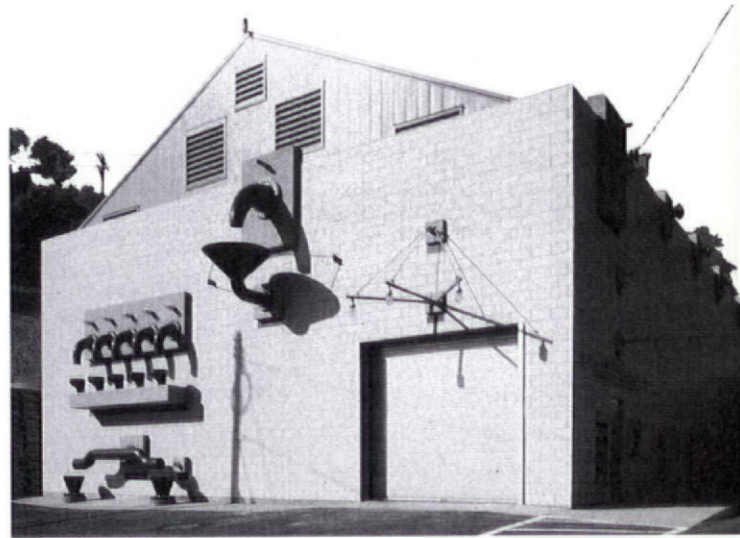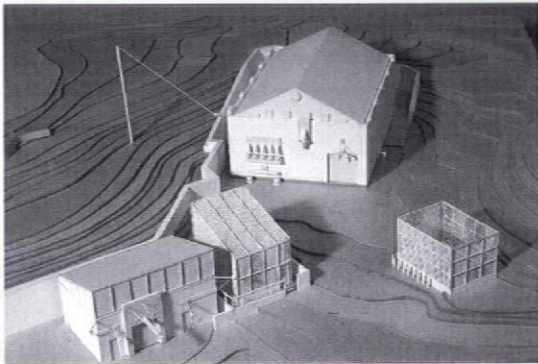
This leadership must understand that every public project, especially those as small as Biddy Mason Park, and every privately sponsored project that requires any public approval or support, must not only serve its own internal purposes but also help repair and enhance its immediate environs. Project by project by project, year after year after year, this systematic attention will create identity and pride. As neighborhoods and districts become places where one would want to be, they will enjoy new prosperity.

The power of such incremental steps towards the reintegration and wholeness of places is a major theme in the work of Christopher Alexander[1] and has been made a central theme in current planning for Downtown Los Angeles. Initiating such a process of development, open to the future yet strategically directed, is a central task and major strategy for the repair and enhancement of existing urban places.

The Annual Work Program

Within every city's annual work program — such as repairing streets, putting up street lighting, building new police stations, libraries, parks or schools — is a powerful set of opportunities for bringing new life, identity and quality to many districts. As projects of every size and every degree of significance are seen as opportunities for creating special quality, they can become catalysts for stimulating the economic and social well-being of their neighborhoods. Of course, for projects to have such significant effect, to create privilege, requires purposeful and memorable design.

Although cities do take action year-by-year through annual work programs, most projects are highly specific, formed around one primary purpose emanating from single-mission-oriented departments, such as public works or transportation. We have come to realize that even when the projects are sponsored by parks departments, housing authorities or school districts, the work tends to be narrowly defined and goes forward without clear purpose regarding urban form and urban life.

On the other hand, comprehensive city plans can require such unusual resources and cooperation that their implementation is uncertain. Without a powerful sense of common purpose, energy is dissipated through projects that often seem as disruptive as beneficial and planning that promises but doesn't deliver. If projects sponsored by either public agencies or private parties are not to be merely scattered and only self-serving, some civic guidance must be provided.

Above: Barcelona. Courtesy City of Barcelona.

Opposite page, top: Cerda plan for extending Barcelona, 1859.
Opposite page, center and bottom: Sert plan for restructuring and extending Barcelona, 1930s.

"DARNING" URBANISM IN BARCELONA

Pasqual Maragall

We are confronting a decisive moment for cities throughout the world, particularly in America, where inner cities are suffering severe problems. The difficulties in solving these problems have much to do with cities' fiscal crises, caused by the nonexistence of strong, effective metropolitan bodies that counterbalance the migration of the middle classes from inner cities to suburbs (where they pay less taxes but continue using the central city) and by diminishing federal aid during 12 years of conservative administration.

I often say that cities are the containers in which humanity places its problems — loneliness, marginality, need. Cities themselves don't create problems; cities can be, must be, places to cope with (I dare not say solve) them. But cities need the means to do this. We need people and their governments to trust cities and invest in urban projects.

Learning from Barcelona

Following the difficult years in which Spain was ruled by Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Barcelona emerged with a sense of urgency and with enough prosperity and resolve to begin a new political and economic future. Its mayor and its leading architect-planner, Oriol Bohigas, supervised a strategic restructuring based on a few critical policy choices.[2]

The first choice was to pursue projects, not plans. They concluded that a city is less a coherent system than it is a patchwork aggregation of differing fragments. That is, cities are better understood by piecemeal inspection and analysis of their separate districts. Only then can the city be welded into a whole by the continuity of streets and paths and by the skillful forming of public spaces and architecture. Instead of generating a new master plan, they opted to initiate a series of projects arising from a detailed study of each area. This enabled the city to undertake the repair and reconnection of local places and neighborhoods with strategically located projects that recreated value and pride in its various neighborhoods.

A second critical choice was to focus on reconstruction and consolidation of existing areas rather than to support further urban expansion. They understood that Barcelona was not only too distended, but also that there was more than enough underutilized land and buildings within the existing city to accommodate the housing and general urban development that would be needed for the foreseeable future.

Reconstruction has its own wrenching dimensions, of course. Some areas need to change function as new regional and global economies threaten the viability of traditional practices, and as new standards for public health are implemented. And contemporary culture will exercise its influence in historic sections as new technologies and means of transportation, especially automobiles, find favor.

A third critical choice was emphasizing the making of meaningful social settings rather than focussing on social projects. Inserting a community center here and there in suburban districts will not create urbanity and a stronger sense of community; these districts must be linked back into the city itself to take advantage of the full range of institutions that have

The Case of Barcelona

It has been said that Barcelona is a combination of Florence and Manchester. It is an extremely densely populated city, resulting from the blending of the medieval center with industrial growth that began in the nineteenth century. Barcelona is steadily becoming a service city in a process that has changed the very definition and limits of the city.

Barcelona has a long tradition of urbanism that makes it an important reference point in urban design and town planning. Its modern urban development is based on the extension plan created in 1859 by Ildefons Cerdà, an engineer and utopian socialist. From then to 1930, little more than half a century, the city's population grew tenfold, from little more than 100,000 to a million.

The debate that Cerdà had started on the duality between city center and suburbs was reopened in the 1930s by the Macia Plan, directed by Josep Lluis Sert under Le Corbusier's supervision. Tragically, this plan did not materialize because of the Spanish Civil War and Generalissimo Francisco Franco's victory.

In the 1950s, after the Spanish Civil War a new phase of economic growth began. The rapid growth of population precipitated a housing shortage. The city continued expanding; its boundaries encompassed 500 square km. (of which 100 are wooded) and the population soared over the three million mark.

During those years the lack of democratic control, with non-representative local authorities operating within a dictatorship, encouraged urban speculation and resulted in a disorganized urbanism and an architecture suffering from even greater sadness. Furthermore, Barcelona lacked public investment — there was little drive, ambition or capacity for the city to make decisions about itself.

With the arrival of a democratically elected city council in 1979, the situation was reversed. The economic crisis of the '70s and the levelling off of population growth helped by taking pressure off the housing shortage.

When we took over the responsibility of municipal administration, we had the political will to renew, refurbish Barcelona and eliminate the housing shortage. Barcelona had a general metropolitan master plan, which, despite the fact that it had been approved by previous non-representative institutions, was regarded as valid. Clearly there was a great temptation to undertake a complete revision of the plan, which would serve as a master plan for the reconstruction of the city. This would have been a slow and complex procedure, largely unnecessary, while the city demanded immediate solutions.

We believed the regeneration of the city would be possible only through the implementation of a clear, disciplined urban policy and through the continuity of firm planning management.[1] Both would be aimed at satisfying the great demand for

Mayor Maragall's observations are very important to the American experience. He talks about major problems that are common to all cities: congestion, security, housing, blight, environment and ecology, to which I would add economics and employment. There is no question Americans identify those things as issues — not aesthetics or design. Maragall pointed out, appropriately, that design can be part of addressing some of those issues. That's an important lesson for us, certainly for people in the position to influence public design projects.
— Roger K. Lewis
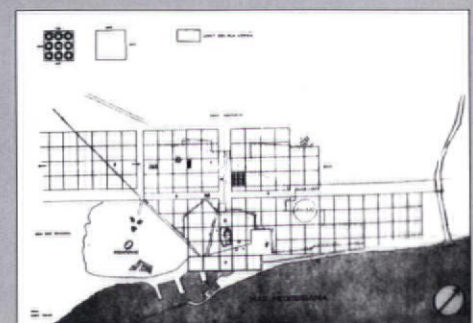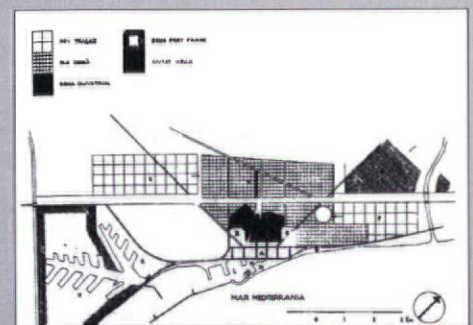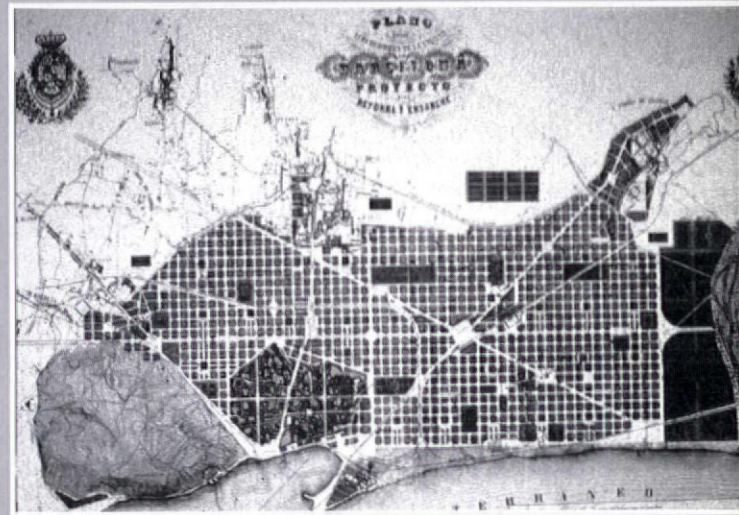
Interventions in central Barcelona, clockwise from top right: Passeig del Born, El Fossar de les Moreres, Plaza Santa Maria del Mar. Courtesy Robert S. Harris.

been created during the city's long and rich history. In Barcelona, augmenting a network of urban places and monuments assisted such a reconnection to history and culture, and to the institutions and resources of the center city.

However, the center city's urbanity itself is too often a superficial impression of a setting and social life that is quite decayed. Thus it was necessary in Barcelona to initiate both reconnection and revitalization projects. For example, small interventions in the historic core, such as at El Fossar de les Moreres and the Passeig del Born near the church of Santa Maria del Mar, were meant to reconstruct meaningful social settings. Each of these opened a small commons, created a small neighborhood focus and generated greater identity while enhancing the connections to adjacent areas.

The fourth choice was between beginning reconstruction of the city with public spaces or with public housing. Countering the twentieth century's tradition of focusing urban social efforts on the building of housing, Barcelona's planners opted instead to create new public spaces and services. They reasoned that such a strategy immediately increases the wholeness and improves the

quality of life in existing areas, and, when skillfully planned, can be the catalyst for restoring and rebuilding districts.

A final question was whether to proceed with projects using outside consultants entirely or with a specially recruited city staff. Perhaps the obvious outcome was both. An office of urban design was created to oversee both the planning and public works departments and the outside professionals who designed projects.

Overall, the principles in Barcelona focus on the immediacy and integrative power of local projects coupled with an overarching vision of a city whose districts and neighborhoods have their own identities and are strongly interconnected. Perhaps the lesson is clearest when it is understood that local governments must be expected to focus on the public realm, on creating a cohesive physical fabric for our lives. In Barcelona the leadership was present to take such urban reformation forward, and to inspire the response of the private sector to continue the work to create not just urban concentrations, but urbanity — to foster places of privilege everywhere.

new open spaces and public facilities that were desperately needed in such a highly populated city.

The open wounds left by years of speculation, negligence and the city's lack of confidence in its capabilities needed urgent attention. For this reason we put into practice what the first democratic mayor, my predecessor, Narcis Serra, described as a "darning urbanism." It was planning on a small scale, which emphasized the design quality of repairs to the urban fabric and the improvement of the quality of life throughout the city.

It is often said that we gave priority to projects at the expense of the plan itself. I would prefer to call it a process that resulted from actions, which in turn stemmed from projects, which have their own executive dimension and, taken together, are strong enough to redevelop the city.

This concept of actions and projects has a long tradition in the field of design and city management.[2] However, it had been neglected by previous administrations, which were much less committed to the idea of change. These actions may refer to a general strategy of urban plan to prevent them from cancelling each other, but each should be coherent in its own right and sufficiently independent of the general plan that it can survive on its own. Actions should speak for themselves and not depend upon, or place too many demands upon, the rest of the system.

Urbanism in pre-Olympic Barcelona was marked by two fields of operation. These were, first, to give priority to work on public spaces (streets, squares and gardens) because they are the backbone of local communities. Second, we set out to rebalance the city center areas with the outskirts with the aim of converting the suburbs, lacking the most essential public services, into centers in their own right.[3] In both areas, the city gained new open spaces by recovering obsolete sites, such as the old slaughterhouse, derelict industrial areas and textile factories and unused railway installations, and sites for which new public facilities had been proposed but never developed.

There was always a concern for the quality of design, not only for the sake of aesthetics but also because we believe that in this way we contribute to the making of the city. One outstanding feature of this concern for design was the street sculpture program, which has furnished the city streets with works by important local and foreign artists, among them an important group of American sculptors, such as Richard Serra, Ellsworth Kelly, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein and Beverly Pepper.

A great change of scale happened in 1986, when Barcelona was nominated by the International Olympic Committee to host the 1992 summer Olympic Games. Organizing the games was Barcelona's aspiration of old, but for us the most important reality was not the games themselves; the Olympics were merely the pretext for our ambition. If we had not been nominated,

Conceptual diagram of Barcelona's "darning urbanism" strategy.
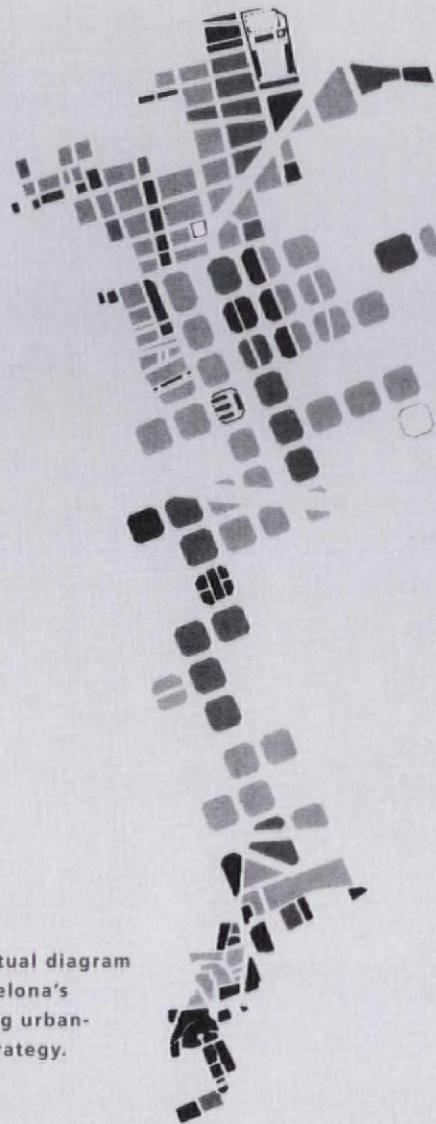
we would have transformed the city nevertheless, probably at a slower pace but nonetheless equally ambitiously.

This new phase of urban transformations was centered on the large infrastructure the city required in order to cope with its historic deficits — mainly a lack of open space, greenery and access infrastructure, such as a ring road, airport and telecommunications system — and was carried out in an exceptionally short period, little more than five years. The main elements were the opening of the waterfront (with the demolition of a railroad that was a barrier between the city and the sea), the construction of a new residential district (the Olympic Village), the building of 40 km of ring roads, the reformation of the airport, substantial improvement in telecommunications (Santiago Calatrava's tower for the state telephone company, Sir Norman Foster's tower for radio and television) and a remarkable improvement of the hotel sector. New sports installations (including the rebuilding of the Olympic Stadium and Arata Isozaki's indoor arena), have substantially enriched the city's heritage.

I would like to stress the strength of the Olympic project in generating social consent. The games and the urban transforma-

Downtown Los Angeles skyline.
Courtesy Los Angeles Community
Redevelopment Agency.

(Above) Location map of strategic interventions proposed for downtown Los Angeles.
(Below) Diagram of main downtown districts.

The Vision and Strategies of the Los Angeles Downtown Strategic Plan

Four years ago in Los Angeles, a large citizen committee was formed to develop a strategic plan for the central district. This Downtown Strategic Plan Advisory Committee worked with the staff of the Community Redevelopment Agency and a team of consultants to develop strategies for guiding future downtown development.

The committee agreed that the existing qualities of downtown were to be respected and augmented. This was in direct contrast to the plan formed several decades before, which had replaced whole neighborhoods with new commercial development and had essentially displaced all existing urban patterns and uses. Second, the committee agreed that the existing districts needed to be interconnected in order to reinforce each other and to create a stronger social and economic framework. Third, the committee established a goal of incorporating at least 100,000 new residents in downtown and its environs.

Respecting existing qualities came to be known as "making the most of what you've got." Downtown is a vital economic center where more than 300,000 people are employed. An impressive amount of growth has occurred there in recent years; while this growth is of inconsistent architectural and urban quality, downtown retains an extensive and impressive inventory of historic places and buildings. These include two historic districts composed the city's early financial center and its first theater district, where the movie industry concentrated its premieres for many years. Nearby are El Pueblo, where Los Angeles was founded; Little Tokyo, the heart of Japanese-American culture in the city; and the civic center (the second largest such district in the U.S. outside of Washington, D.C.). Unfortunately, these special qualities and distinctive places are rather disconnected from each other; between them are too many places of no distinction and no clear value — places of no inherent privilege.

At a broader scale, downtown manifests a coherent structure comprised of three components. The largest, which we call "the city," includes the civic center, cultural facilities, the financial center, the primary residential and shopping areas, the

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tions related to them were not only a cause of civic pride but also a factor in social cohesion.

The urban transformations related to the Olympic Games have substantially improved Barcelona's quality of life. Now our city is more accessible and more livable, with more open space, a better traffic system and better communications. Even if the economic climate has changed from a year ago, we are in a better position to face the current recession.

The City is the People

The whole restructuring of Barcelona, the recovery of the city through its public spaces, the policy of opening up the most densely populated areas and the aim of terminating the isolation of the suburbs, has been guided primarily by the old Shakespearian ideal: "the city is the people."

The city is capable of absorbing large doses of misery and suffering and the diversity of humanity, all taking place within a given area. But its leaders must find the right way to guide the required processes of constant action against isolation, excessive discrimination and lack of communication — that is, to adhere to the old principle that the city should accept neither barriers nor pockets of isolation. Many times a city must sew the borders between different areas together in order to prevent barriers from arising. Diffusing problems throughout a city, rather than segregating them into pockets, can help as well.

We feel the same passionate love Sert and the modern movement felt for the city. If the city were rescued, they said, "our civilization will have experienced a profound change, yet the continuation of its soul and its heritage will have been assured."

Notes

1. Previously, development had been managed only loosely, with much construction occurring in violation of planning rules. The result was too much densification and a loss of design quality.

2. See, for example, Oriol Bohigas, *Reconstrucció de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1985) and Josep A. Acebillo's essay in Josep Subriós et. al, *El vol de la fletxa* (Barcelona: 1993).

3. These efforts followed the so-called "Ten New City Center Areas Plan," created by J. Busquets. It established ten new central areas that were intended to relieve pressure on the traditional business district and rebalance the social composition of the city.

A new space, the Plaça Nova, in the Old City district. The building of the Catalan Architects Association, built in the 1950s, has designs by Picasso on the front.

View of the Olympic Village. The ring road is depressed, allowing the construction of an open space with sculpture.

Roy Lichtenstein's "Barcelona head" sculpture, at the Old Harbor area.

Photos courtesy City of Barcelona.

Proposal for reopening the Los Angeles
Theater in the downtown historic district.
Courtesy Moule and Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists.

University of Southern California and Exposition Park, with its historic Memorial Coliseum and important museums. A second large zone, which we term "the markets," includes economically thriving light industrial and warehouse activities, including produce and fish markets, toy and small electronic manufacturing and distribution, garment manufacturing and other activities that serve the region. Between them lies the historic core, including the two historic districts and the principal Latino shopping street.

The plan's downtown-wide and district-specific strategies are complemented by an idea borrowed from Barcelona and from the direct experience of some committee members and consultants. It is a proposal for a program of catalytic projects to be implemented through both private initiative and public expenditures. These opportunistic and strategic projects are proposed at critical locations where they can augment an existing strength, repair an urban condition, make a new linkage, be a new resource and stimulate additional nearby investment nearby. Each of them relates to an overarching set of basic objectives: economic development, social equity, accessibility and community.

A number of such projects, begun a few years ago, are just now being completed. One of these is the restoration and expansion of the Central Library, originally designed by Bertram Goodhue. That project was funded as part of a larger development transaction that includes the construction of several office buildings, the restoration of a small park and the creation of an important stairway that links the general downtown terrace with the cultural and commercial center to its north on Bunker Hill. The Central Library was brought up to date for its operations, its civic significance has been restored and augmented, and previously disconnected places have been forged into a new and complex center.

Another such catalytic project is the redevelopment of the downtown's major open space, Pershing Square, redesigned by Ricardo Legorreta and Laurie Olin. This central historic park was diminished years ago when a parking garage was built below it. In recent years it has once again created a public commons, a front door for the center of the city located downtown between the historic core and the new financial center.

Seventeen additional catalytic projects at a variety of scales are proposed in the plan. An especially important project is the consolidation of state offices along Spring and Fourth streets. A number of underutilized historic buildings will be restored and new infill construction initiated to accommodate 3,000 employees. The historic district will be further brought to life not only as the buildings are restored, but also as the new employees occupy and use the district.
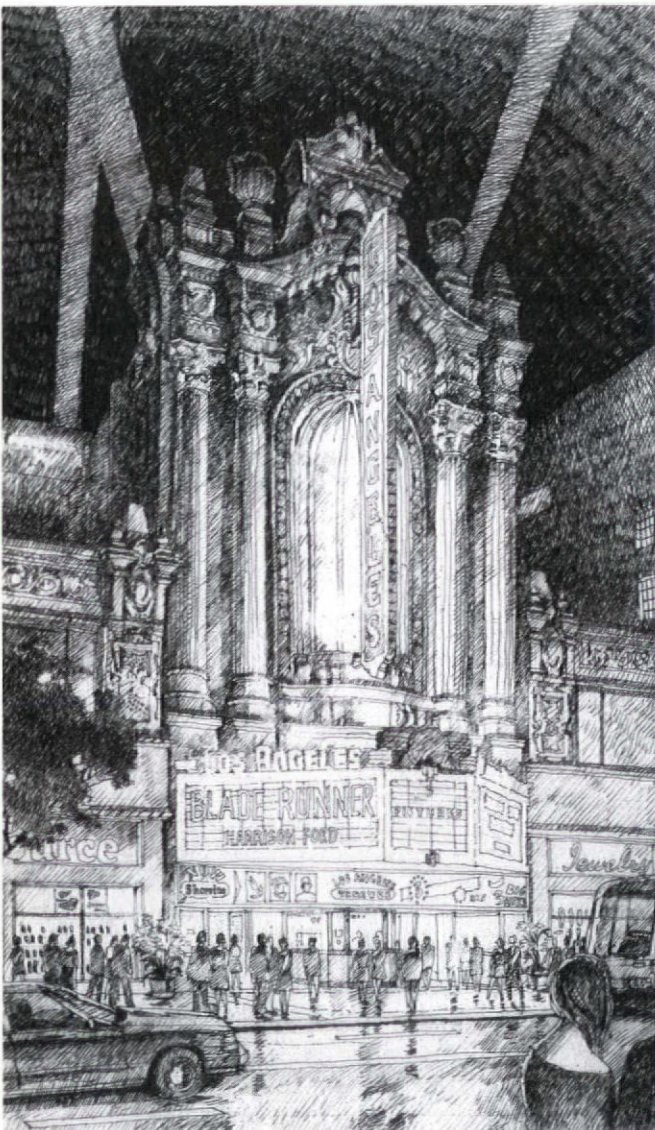
A project along Fourth Street between Hill Street and Broadway would take advantage of the already existing subway station and make the linkages between Bunker Hill's corporate and cultural resources and the historic district. Reconstruction of the funicular, Angel's Flight, which will connect the top of the hill and the historic district, is scheduled to begin later this year. Such projects are likely to be attractive themselves and are essential components of an overall strategy for linking districts. Such linkage is as much a strategy for cultural interconnection as for supporting pedestrian movement and enjoyment.

Especially interesting is the initiative proposed for St. Vibiana Cathedral, in fact a rather small church in a rather derelict but potentially central location. As the seat of the Southern California archdiocese and the home of a cardinal, it is the center of a great culture, but it has little visual presence. The proposal is to create a plaza that could support larger gatherings than can now occur within the cathedral and to define that plaza with a mixed-use project, including extensive new housing.

The Urban Design Imperative

In the end, our purpose must be clear: places of privilege everywhere for everybody. Such a sweeping mission can be accomplished. One of the most powerful tools can be the strategic design of projects that are catalytic and place-making, able to augment the economic and cultural identity of a neighborhood or district. Imagine the cumulative impact of such projects in our cities — hundreds of projects each year, most of them privately sponsored, year after year, making places more whole and evocative.

The leadership of architects and urban designers, of public officials and clients, of critics and teachers must be brought to this fundamental cause. We can create a sense of privilege in the places where little has been present before.

Notes

1. Christopher Alexander, *A New Theory of Urban Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

2. Peter Buchanan, "Regenerating Barcelona with Parks and Plazas," *Architectural Review* 175 (June, 1984): 32-46.
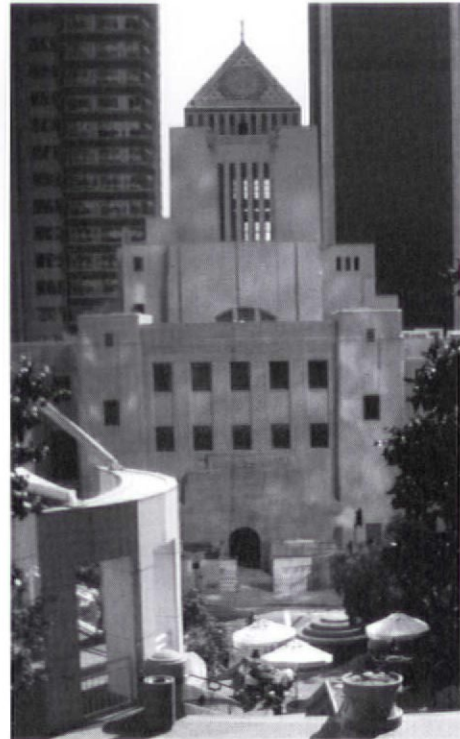
Above: Steps connecting Bunker Hill financial district with renovated Central Library and retail district.
Below: Renovated Grand Central Market, along Broadway in historic district.
Courtesy Robert S. Harris.

Civic Design for the State

Kees Rijnboutt

The quality of the the constructed environment, the way it is perceived, is an important factor in people's sense of well being, both as individuals and in their interactions with others. This is probably one of the most frequently studied themes in regard to the human-made environment, yet very different views on the question have been held during different periods.

In The Netherlands, for many years, the government was insufficiently aware of its own position as a builder of a physical, architectural environment. This was so in spite of the fact that the complex of buildings housing our parliament and government, the Binnenhof, is an exemplary place — an open and public complex that you can touch, enter and photograph and which you can even walk straight through.

In the last decade, the government has become increasingly aware of its central role in the shaping the quality of that environment. At the same time the government, in keeping with its policy of pulling back in general, is pursuing the development of its own facilities through other parties, namely the open market, or through cooperative public-private projects. (Nevertheless, the government is the The Netherlands' largest commissioner of building construction.)

As the state or chief architect for the government of The Netherlands, I am responsible for the safeguarding of the urban design and the architectural quality of government buildings, good maintenance of listed monuments and landmarks owned by the government, and the quality and execution of visual art in newly constructed state buildings. Increasingly, I function as an advisor to other departments, such as roads and waterways, and defense, in their activities concerning architecture and urban design.

The strategic plan for accommodating government offices is the Government Housing Plan, revised every four years by Parliament. In addition, in 1991, the ministers of social housing, physical planning and environment and the minister of welfare, health and cultural affairs published a joint document on architectural policy. The policy lays out three aspects to design quality — user value, cultural value and future value. These are the three familiar Vitruvian values — *utilitas*, *venustas* and *firmitas*. The policy document explicitly states that the role and task of the government are to set examples in the area of urban design and architecture, and that, especially in the case of incorporating a building in an urban context, government should be aware of its role as a catalyst.

It is one thing to draw up a policy document in which society accords itself the right to stimulate architec-

ture. It is quite another thing to create appropriate, market-oriented and beautiful or relevant buildings when one is working in such a rapidly changing context.

We only do business with developers and investors when agreement on the choice of architect is reached in advance. The whole process of design is accompanied and stimulated by the state architect and his staff. Needless to say, the functional requirements have been determined beforehand. And the location of the building must meet requirements for accessibility by public transportation.

As to monuments, an extensive and culturally significant stock of important buildings has come under the jurisdiction of the government; about 20 percent of the total area that the Government Buildings Agency has available is in listed buildings or others of equal importance. These buildings include the major examples of state architecture, such as palaces, parliament buildings, the round prisons still in use in Arnhem, Breda and Haarlem, and various court buildings. The care and appropriate use of both these showpieces and some 300 other listed buildings managed and used by the government requires special expertise and, in some cases, extra money.

A listed building is often less efficient than a new office block. On the

other hand, it offers intangible benefits that its users are aware of and appreciate. A good building will continue to function when the agency responsible for the building continues to put itself to the test. By good, I mean that the building is capable of adequately fulfilling its role as accommodation at reasonable cost.

The time is now for us to concern ourselves with the future value of the environment we have built (both the buildings and their contexts). A building can no longer be seen as an object with a static function. Flexibility and adaptability are prime criteria for assessing a structure that must last for fifty years, before a decision can be made about its eligibility to be listed. Future value in the sense of use, of course, much more than the inventive solutions of built in structures, flexible cabling routes or computer floors.

Historic city centers, for example, have shown that they possess future value, which lies in its ability to change without essentially altering its character while at the same time gaining in meaning. Mixing the functions of living and working, environment differentiation and versatility go hand in hand with the atmosphere created by the buildings and the public.

We are experimenting with this more than ever with our new initiatives. As much as possible, government buildings with a public function are located within the existing urban limits in order to benefit from reciprocal effects or to exert a positive influence in terms of openness, liveliness, durability and safe streets. For buildings with a public function, peripheral locations where they tower above motorways are strictly taboo!

I believe it is extremely important to pay close attention to the quality of public space, to the design of the city, as an essential element in a good development strategy. Since in The Netherlands the government doesn't actually do the building anymore, you may wonder what the developers who put up the buildings into which we move and the institutional investors who provide the money think about our preoccupation with all these architectural and urban standards. During a symposium one of them said:

When you're dealing with the level, the standard of a project, there are things that are not really necessary — a park, works of art, shops, a square and other facilities. But they are necessary to raise the standard of the development.

The problem is that you cannot recover the costs in the first instance, because when it is first rented the price level is determined by the competing buildings. That's the rub. You pay for something, but you don't immediately get it back. It is a mistake that has certainly been made by some investors. They build cheaply to make a profit in the short term, while losing money in the long term. Going for quality pays off in the second or third rental.

Why is Rockefeller Center in New York so much better known worldwide and so much more expensive than the buildings next to it? Purely because of its quality in architecture, in urban design, in the quality in general for the people who work in it, visit it or just pass by. That is a reputation that has to be earned. Be sure that it does not come overnight; you have to work at it.

(Opposite page and below) The Hague, extension to the lower house of the States General. Design by Pi de Bruijn, Amsterdam. Photos courtesy author.

Public Architecture for a New Age

Fumihiko Maki

The Meiji restoration, which took place nearly 130 years ago, also marked the beginning of the modernization of Japanese architecture. Up until then, Japan had been a feudal society ruled by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Though civil engineering projects had been undertaken, there had been no buildings that were public in the Western sense — stadiums, universities, libraries, government buildings and the like.

The Meiji government dealt with public architecture within the context of urban development, through its own bureaucratic apparatus. Young, talented, would-be architects were recruited by the ministries of finance, home affairs, justice and railways and were sometimes sent abroad to study. As a result, many public buildings of relatively high quality (modeled, of course, on Western architecture) were constructed by the 1920s.

At times, professor-architects from the best known public universities (such as Tokyo and Kyoto Imperial) were commissioned to produce basic designs, which were then developed and completed by the building department of government ministries. Professional architects having no government affiliation were very rarely commissioned to design public buildings. (Their low social status is discussed at length in the diary German architect Bruno Taut kept when he was in Japan from 1935 to 1938).

This began to change after World War II. Much of the energy expended in reconstructing Japan, particularily up to the 1970s, was focused on building public housing, primary and secondary schools, and social welfare facilities. The main objective was to provide a sufficient number of such buildings at a low cost. During this time, works of public architecture

A "Ukioe" print illustrating a typical Western-style building after the Meiji Restoration of the 1870s in Tokyo. Courtesy Fumihiko Maki.

The Meiji Insurance Company, designed by Shinichiro Okada in 1934 in Tokyo, is designed in the neoclassical style that was typical for public buildings of the period. Courtesy Fumihiko Maki.
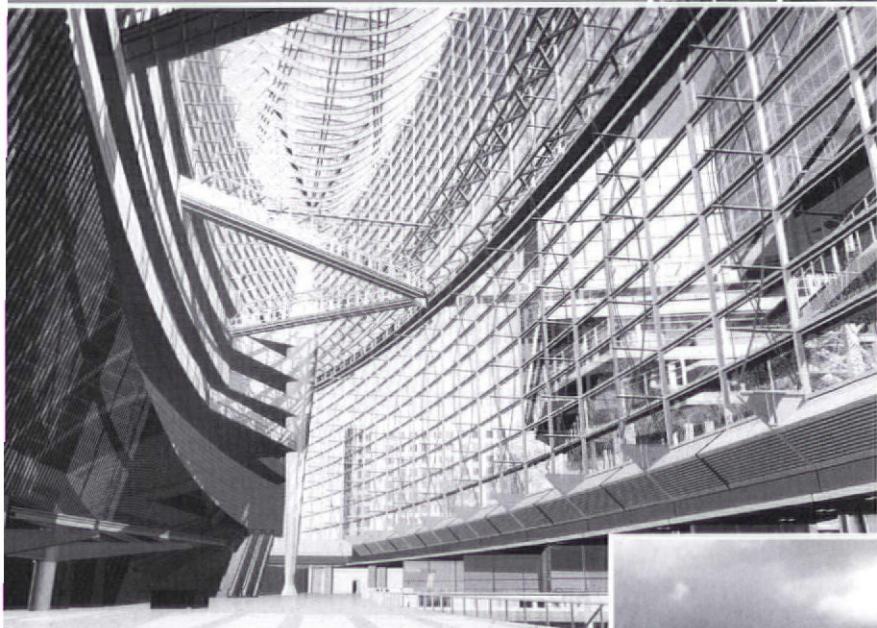
Tokyo International Forum. Designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects PC. Courtesy Fumihiko Maki.

Kumamoto Grasslands Agricultural Institute. Designed by Tom Henegan and Inga Dagfinnsdottir. © Shigeo Ogawa, Shinkenchiku.

Hotakubo housing. Designed by
Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop.
Top © Shigeo Ogawa, Shinkenchiku.
Right courtesy Fumihiko Maki.

Location map of the projects in Art Polis,
Kumamoto. Courtesy Fumihiko Maki.

by architects like Kenzo Tange and Kunio Maekawa began to receive international attention. Moreover, government agencies underwent a major reorganization and more commissions for public buildings began to be awarded to professional architects.

The 1980s brought unprecedented economic prosperity. Both public institutions and the general public expressed greater concern for the quality of public architecture, which began to be seen as a means of expression especially emblematic of an information and comsumption oriented society. Public institutions were able to award commissions for public buildings with a much higher unit cost than those before the war, particularily cultural facilities such as art museums and concert halls. And throughout Japan, public architecture began to depart from a simple functionalism whose aim was to be neutral and easy to use.

In recent years two local governments in Japan have taken equally noteworthy but very different approaches to public architecture. One is Art Polis, a program of the Kumamoto Prefectural Government, and the other is the committee established by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to select architects. In Kumamoto, a small group of persons select young, energetic architects who previously have had few opportunities to design public buildings; Tokyo's system reflects the opinons of many individuals, involving selection by a committee.

Art Polis

Kumamoto City is a city of 600,000 residents; the population of Kumamoto Prefecture as a whole is only 1.6 million, compared to Tokyo's 12 million. The sudden appearance of forty buildings that look unlike anything people had ever seen before not only made a significant contribution to the creation of a regional identity, but also had a much greater impact on the public than would have been possible in a mammoth city like Tokyo.

Art Polis was initiated in 1988 by former governor Morihio Hosokawa, who later became Japan's prime minister. After visiting the IBA projects in Berlin in 1987, he conceived the idea of creating a series of public buildings by selected innovative architects and invented the name Art Polis to characterize his ambitious concept. He then invited Arata Isozaki, an old friend and advisor, to act as commisssioner for the project with Hajime Yatsuka as secretary general. After only four years, more than 25 Art Polis projects have been realized and twenty more are under construction.

The following is a quote from Hajime Yatsuka describing the concept of Art Polis:

The principal significance of Art Polis resides in the fact that it is the first time that so many avant garde architects ... are of the younger generation whose age do not go beyond the forties at the time of commission. Those younger generation had, until then, seldom had chances to get involved in public buildings. Many internationally well-known buildings by them were either small residential works or commercial ones.

Unlike European precendents, Art Polis is a rather modest program. It is a series of independent projects. Except for two joint housing projects, they are dots and not planes. And it is not intended to change the whole urban structure by not establishing any effective guidelines, because Japanese society, and hence the city's morphological structure, were too pluralistic for the projects to be guided by a single major principle. ...

The choice of architect for each program was very crucial. That they are excellent architects is not enough — they should be the best choices for their specific programs. They could be well illustrated in two different kinds of approaches in housing complexes — one, more like the product of European housing of the heroic period, the other by new programs of its own, where the exploration of such a new program was vital for its formal consequences. The other issue pursued in Art Polis is internationality and locality. Not only were the architects invited from Tokyo or Osaka, architects from abroad — Renzo Piano, Lapena and Torres, and Tom Henegan, were commissioned.

Most of the projects, except the Bunraki Theater by Kazuhiro Ishi, are anything but literally traditional. Even the theater may look traditional, but on closer inspection ... the iconoclastic use of wooden beams in the theater and the rotunda exhibition hall annexes, have no historic precedent in Japan. These projects significantly indicate the very modernity of Japan, where no genuine internationality nor regionality exist.[1]
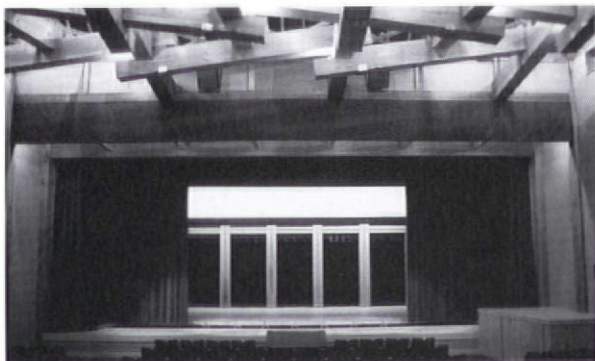
Seiwa Bunraku Puppet Theater. Designed by Kazuhiro Ishii Architect and Associates. Photos © Shigeo Ogawa, Shinkenchiku.

Higashi Nihonbashi police box, Tokyo.
Designed by Atsushi Kitagawara + ILCD.
Photo © Shigeo Ogawa, Shinkenchiku.

Tokyo Sealife Park.
Designed by Yoshio Taniguchi and Associates.
Photo courtesy Fumihiko Maki.

Tokyo's Architectural Selection Committee

Tokyo's new direction commenced in early 1980, when the Tokyo Metropolitan Government established an architect selection committee. The intention was to have impartial architects select appropriate designers for buildings that were expected to become the nucleus for the future urban development and, therefore, required a symbolic quality.

The committee was empowered to select architects through nomination, simple proposals and interviews, or limited or open competitions. The most noteworthy example was the open international competition for the Tokyo International Forum, which was awarded to Rafael Vinoly and is now under construction.

Historically in Tokyo, as in other large cities, influential architectural firms, particularly those with established connections to the city's building-related agencies, would be commissioned for a large share of such work. The introduction of these new selection methods represented a drastic change.

From 1982 to 1986, architects for twenty-five projects were selected by these methods. These projects varied in scale and type, ranging from a concert hall, gymnasium, aquarium, park and welfare facilities, to ward offices and police boxes. Young architects were being actively engaged.

Public architecture has not escaped without problems. In many cases there was inadequate preparation and analysis for civic buildings before design activities commenced. Many projects have been realized in unfavorable locations because of the shortage of available properties, particularily in large cities like Tokyo and Osaka.

In smaller towns and cities, first-class facilities, such as large museums or acoustically superb concert halls, have been built without the art collections or programs to befit them. They are often used for the exhibitions of local Sunday painters or karaoke contest among local residents. Much time must pass before such facilities reach cultural maturity and sophistication. The irony is, when such time arises, there may not be public funds available to capitalize on their formative efforts.

Public Architecture and Urban Structure

While public architecture has often failed to change the basic morphology of the city, it has made certain contributions to the city's cultural makings. As Tokyo demonstrates, service-related industries tend to create a multiplicity of centers scattered throughout an urban area. It is almost impossible for such cities to emulate Paris and to provide a new visual framework and

focal point with a series of grand public projects. And because Tokyo is such an enormous city, the public projects it sponsors bound to be more widely scattered and seem more isolated than those in Kumamoto City.

In cities like Toyko and Kumamoto, each individual work of public architecture should be strategically located and possess an urbanity of its own. The sites for the projects within Art Polis were often spontaneous and not strategic in the sense of an overall master plan; they were selected in accordance with the availability of land. But the modest size of the city and the proximity of the newly built projects to one another has allowed for a certain sense of urbanity to permeate the city.

Many cities of the twenty-first century will come to have mulit-centered structures, and for that reason, new urban forms and functional organizations will be needed. It is in such a context that the role of public architecture must be examined.

Note

1. Hajime Yatsuka, "Beyond Personal Architecture: Kumamoto Artpolis Phase One," *The Japan Architect* (Summer 1993): 14-23.
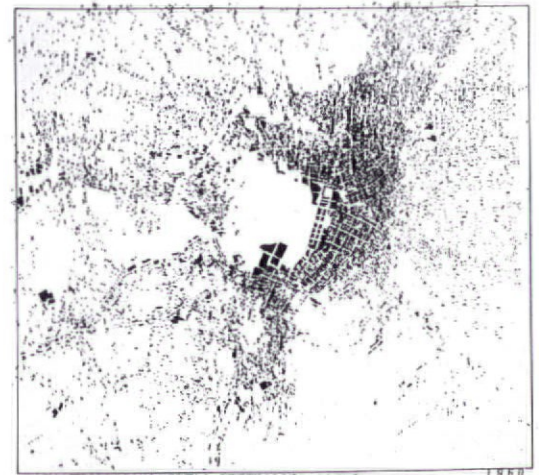
東京都より発行されている土地利用現況図から、都銀系用地のみを塗りつぶしている。現在はここで表現されている以上のオフィスの広がりが、東京では起こっている。

Plan illustrating development of service industries in Tokyo. Black indicates location in 1960; gray indicates location in 1981. Courtesy Fumihiko Maki.
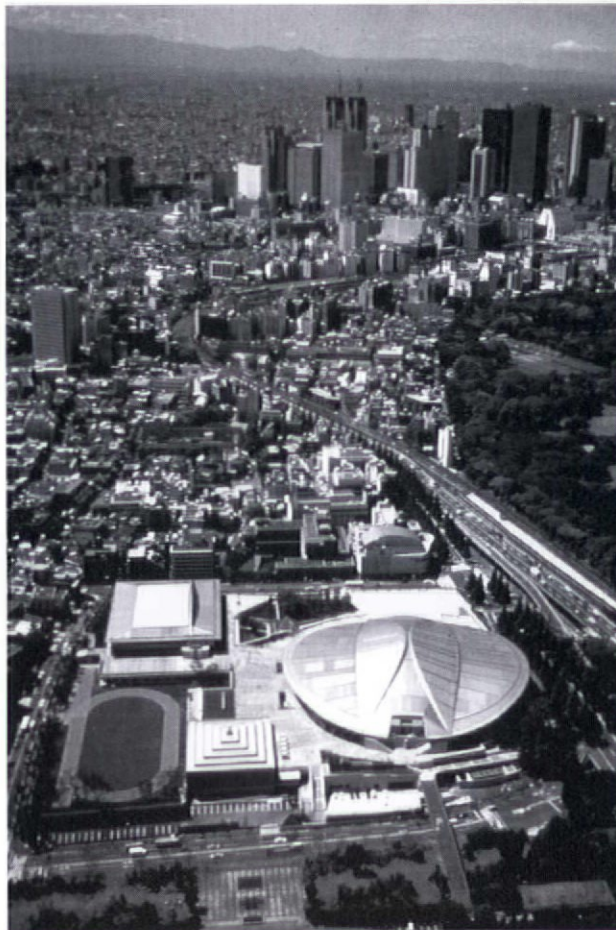
Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium. Designed by Fumihiko Maki + Maki and Associates. Photo © Satoru Mishima.

Competitions and Architectural Excellence

Jacques Cabanieu

During the past 15 years, France has become one of the richest and most active countries in the field of contemporary architecture. Having archiects compete with one another in architectural competitions has undoubtedly been one of the main instruments used to revive architectural quality.

France is the only country in Europe with regulations making competitions a prerequisite for the allocation of publically-funded construction projects exceeding a certain cost. The procedure obliges the client to reimburse the cost of studies made by the teams selected, a fact that leads them to organize limited competitions in order to reduce the number of participants.

For some 10 years, the practice of holding competitions has spread and now concerns not only all public-sector projects but also certain city planning, civil engineering and even private construction projects. Competitions have become fashionable — more than 1,000 are organized a year, for the smallest municipality to the largest government agency. They account for most of the work that many professional designers have.

The rules governing the organization of competitions are set forth by a national agency, the Interministerial Mission for the Quality of Public Construction. The agency has recognized a number of principles that are essential to ensuring quality in architectural design:

• Pre-approved lists of architects and construction models have been suppressed.

• The ultimate responsibility for a project must be in the hands of the clients, whose authority must be strengthened and whose involvement in the process must be total.

• Preliminary programming studies, developed with the participation of users, are fundamentally important.

• The global cost of construction and maintenance objectives must be considered in building design.

All competitions begin with the definition of a program, based on preliminary studies. This program is a document used as a basis for discussion and as a reference for all participants. The preliminary studies, carried out with the participation of the users, include a period of reflection on the institution, on the organization of work and on the services to be provided to users.

Numerous questions are posed. What is the function of the building and what activities does it involve? What site should be selected and how should the building fit into it? What symbolic image should be created? These questions can be used to determine the demand, evaluate the needs and define the objectives of the project.

What are the advantages and disad-

vantages of this procedure? First, a competition offers a choice between several projects, not between several architects. A competition balances the powers of the client, who has to respect the winning project, and those of the architect, who cannot impose his or her project because it must first be selected by the jury. It give new designers a better chance, opening up commissions to young and even foreign candidates. And it stimulates creativity, contributing actively to the architectural debate of our time.

This procedure does have its disadvantages. It precludes any contact between the client and the designer until the jury has made its choice. It is exhausting for the profession and results in a certain waste of creativity. (That is why reimbursement of candidates who are not selected must be provided for in every competition.)

The competition process certifies the integrity of the winning project, one of the best guarantees of architectural quality. Once the choice is made, the project is protected; the concept cannot be questioned. This situation is very different from that of a direct contract, in which the employer is free to accept or refuse the architect's proposal, or to ask for modifications to bring it in line with what is expected.

Although the completed building will comply with the original concept,

its design may have been changed and improved. The limited level of elaboration demanded in the competition allows the project to evolve. A competition based on sketches offers immense flexibility to adapt. It is an open proposal that can be enriched by dialogue with the client during the phases following the decision. Long hours of cooperative effort between the client, the users and the architect lie ahead before the project is finalized.

Competitions are now being organized for civil engineering structures, such as highway viaducts in mountainous regions or bridges over the Seine River in Paris. They have concerned urban design projects like the renovation of public squares and parks and urban renewal, as well as simple projects like water towers and cemeteries.

The systematic use of competitions can offer a good chance of improving architectural quality in public construction projects. The objective of these competitions must be to open up commissions, and the consequence will be a renaissance in architecture, an emergence of new firms of architects producing quality architecture, a marginalizing of the extremely hermetic clique of star architects wielding massive cultural power and a decrease in the importance of large architecture firms, the veritable industrialists of the profession.

Donlyn Lyndon: What is exciting about the competition system was not the result, not the fact that it was competition (although it''s good to allow new stars to form). It the systematic effort toward raising the understanding of what architecture can be and what the parts are that go together to make it that way. It is the agency helping people acquire real understanding of the project, requiring the project really be understood through a technical assessment. A competition by itself isn't any better than some other system. But it is better if it is part of a really carefully constructed, continuous program of learning, formulation and making programs.

Robert Blaich: I think we have pretty good evidence about the value of design competitions. In France, there is excellent work coming out of the design competitions. The way they go about it sounds very complicated, but the results seem to be good. I'd like to propose that we build design competitions into both federal and state processes. Look at the scheme for public art, one percent mandated for public art in many federal, state and local projects. What if you put another one percent for a competition?

Stanley Tigerman: I don't think competitions are necessarily the answer by themselves, not in terms of architecture, urban design or planning. They often lead often to reinforcing the conventions.

Massimo Vignelli: Competitions aren't the same in every country. In France competitions work very well because the French love process and because of the way French competitions are prepared; the amount of homework they do is incredible. In the U.S., competitions don't have the same connotations. Here, a competition is more like an award. In France, architects will work out the prices of different proposals so the judges can have those figures. This would never happen in the U.S.

Recreating the Image of Luth

Lucien Kroll

Four million social housing units have been constructed in France during the past 20 or 30 years. Many were so poorly conceived, constructed and occupied that they will have to be demolished, and others will have to be rehabilitated for the same price as the cost of their construction. The politics of allocating housing, the differences in their residents' purchasing power and the spontaneous arrival of foreigners (who were invited at first, then came clandestinely), have turned many of these places into ghettos of poverty and exclusion, ready to explode or languish.

The design of these housing complexes does not make residents feel as if they are at home; there is no street, no group of houses, no defined public space, no visible connection to the outside. Personally, I hate this architecture. But I sometimes try to save it (the inhabitants, at least), adding buildings and spaces that are the opposite — welcoming spaces, private and public gardens, cultural and commercial places that can attract visitors from beyond the neighborhood, streets leading to the outside, workplaces and a "disorder" that will be regarded as normal urban life.
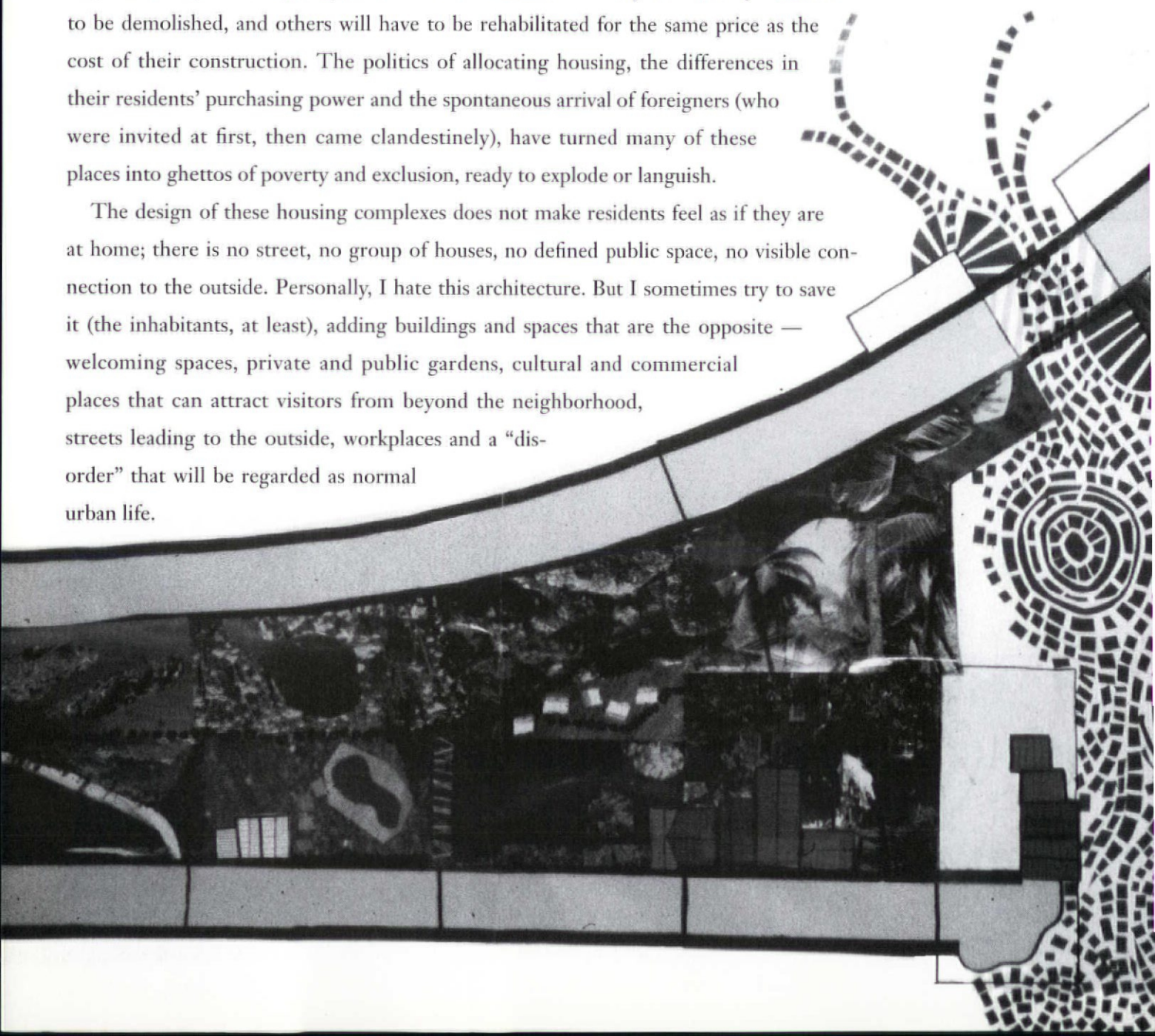
Montage illustrating major concepts for transforming the Luth housing complex. Illustrations courtesy Lucien Kroll.

The translation of this article from the original French text is by Adrienne Zicklin and Todd W. Bressi.
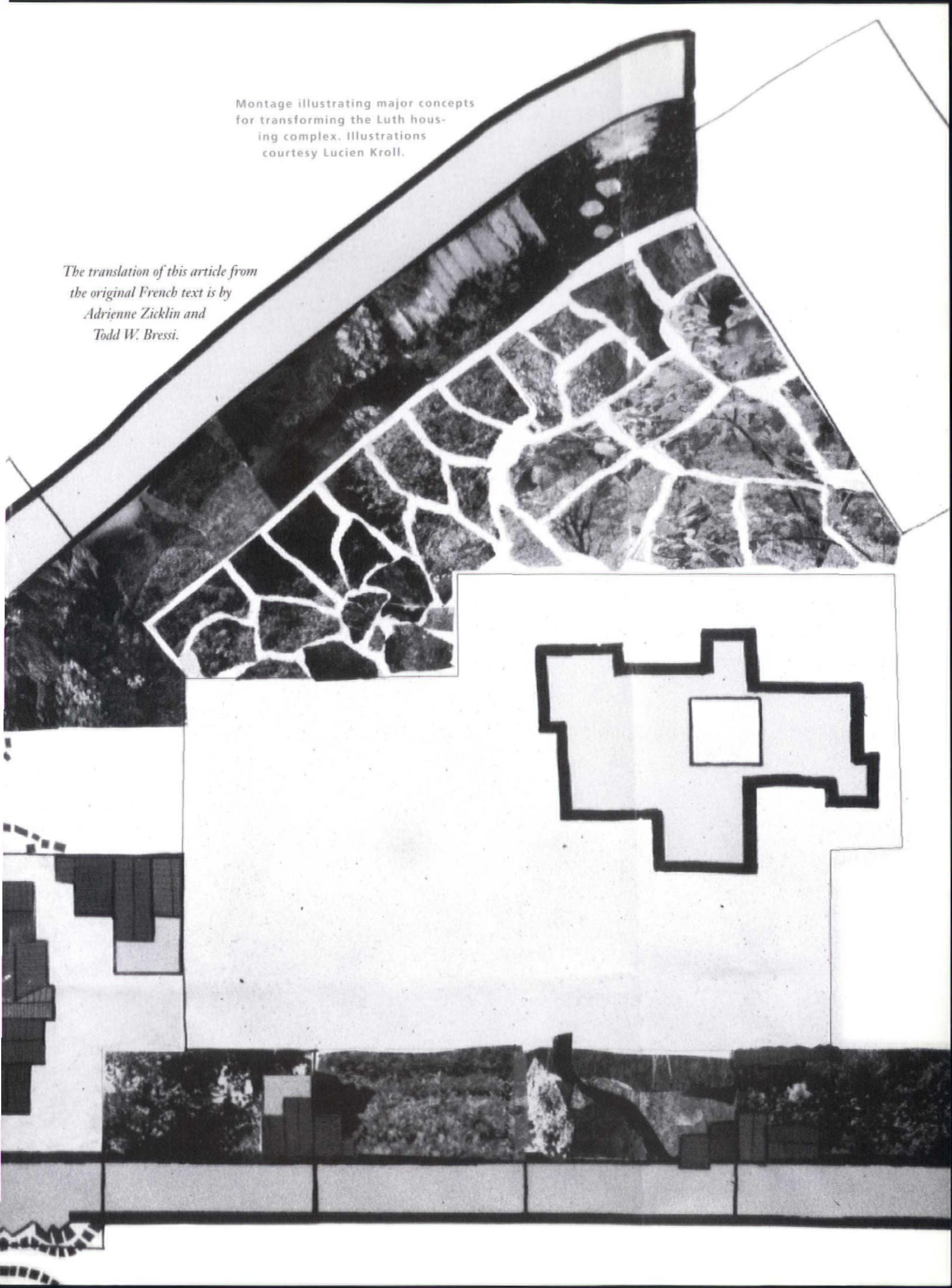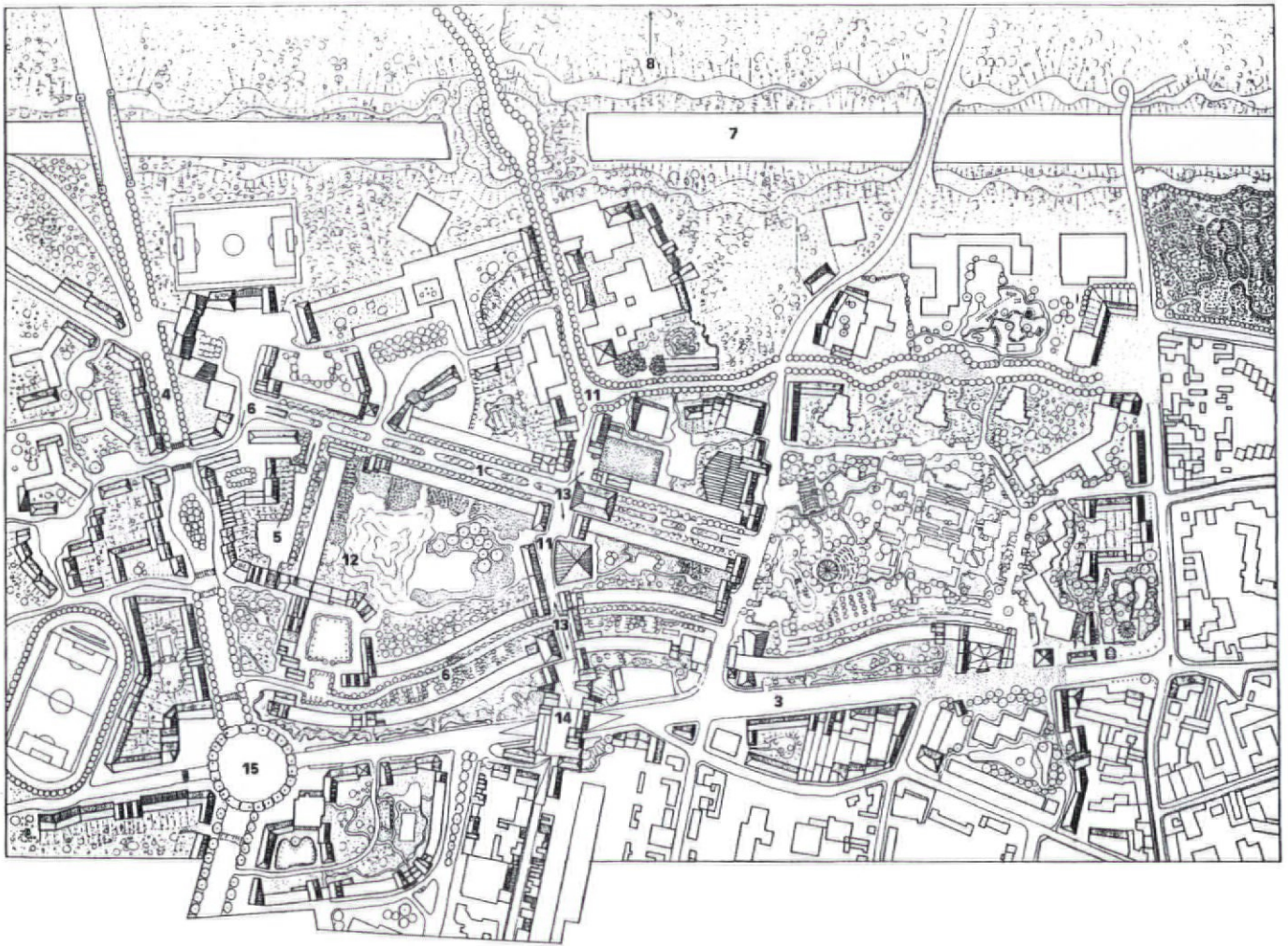
Sketch of Le Luth with major proposals and illustrative
concepts indicated.

1. Rue Lénine
2. Rue Beaumarchairs
3. Avenue des Colombes
4. Boulevard Coubertin
5. Rue Gerard Philippe
6. Rue Guy de Maupassant
7. Autoroute
8. Port of Paris
9. School district
10. Private and semi-private gardens
11. New commercial street
12. "The Peak"
13. Cuts through existing buildings
14. Bridge over avenue des Colombes
15. Redesigned Colombes-Coubertin crossing
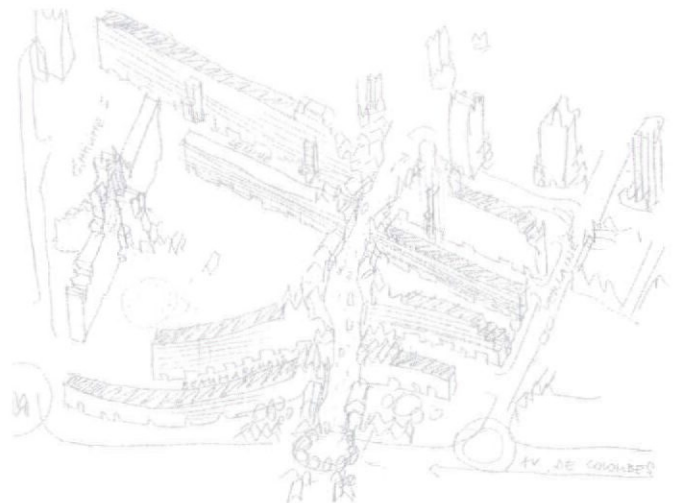
One of these areas is Le Luth, a district in Gennevilliers, a suburb 10 kilometers west of Paris, where 11,000 people live in 3,500 apartments. Le Luth is enclosed on the north by an autoroute, on the east by boulevard Coubertin (an urban autoroute, which is not acknowledged), on the south by the avenue Colombes (always difficult to cross) and to the east by the rest of the old city, which is dense and of a cordial character.

Inside those boundaries, the neighborhood is divided into groups of occupants — those located to the west (renters) and their compatriots to the east (co-op owners) — who have no contact with each other. Between the two is a small commercial center (which is enclosed, without any outer windows), a very nice public garden set up in a fence, and towers that are too high, too long, too rigid and too identical. (Two of them curve and form a single building that meanders for a length of 600 meters.) The density is no more than half that of the historic neighborhoods of Paris.

The first surprise for a visitor approaching the neighborhood is that it is shut in. The neighborhood seems as if it is exiled. The neighborhood is blocked from the river gate and psychologically separated from its neighbors and from the city of which it is part.

The second surprise is the congifuration of open spaces and interior streets, which are not really intended to be streets, just spaces for cars. One street (rue Beaumarchais) is curved, the other (rue Lénine) is (too) rectilinear. To make a street out of that non-human space, one needs a whole process: structuring several spaces alongside them, furnishing them a little (without too much parking) and, above all, reducing the number of windows that look upon them directly; one can plant tree screens that mask the buildings and make them less visible.

Like similar places, the neighborhood suffers from monofunctionality (a factor in anesthetizing the environment) of housing and nothing else, then a little commercial center with its parking and, finally, a school zone completely separated from the houses.

In 1990, the mayor of Gennevilliers invited four architects to take part in a competition of ideas for the redesign of Le Luth. Because of the French law that says all important public projects must be submitted to a competition, hundreds of competitions have been organized in recent years. They are published, discussed in symposiums, then realized and evaluated.

The documents of the competition described a very large number of social actions in the neighborhood coming from all sorts of groups, opinions, manners and ends. We were very surprised and very touched that such activity was occuring in a place where the malaise was said to be so profound. We won the competition in partnership with Massimiliano Fuksas.

Actions

To make the area resemble a neighborhood in a real city, we must invite all the diversity of people and activities that normally live and operate in the commonplace parts of cities and give them their richness. A certain number of housing units will be transformed in small increments, and others replaced in part by a redensification.

The method: We intend not to propose any form that does not respond to an issue posed clearly by a particular lifestyle (otherwise, we would be making only cosmetic changes). We do not want to create theories and activities of rehabilitation that only satisfy the architect. We offer here a fertile image that is meant to stimulate the thought process; it is not a solution or even a proposition but a catalogue of possibilities.

To adopt a form coming from an action, we first invented the action. We imagined a fairy tale. A crowd of pedestrians coming from the south of Gennevilliers wanted absolutely to cross Le Luth to the north and reach the Paris port (on the Seine River). So they did, and they demolished a long trench through the buildings, like a hurricane would. But as they were pedestrians (so they were civilized people) they remolished what they had just demolished, but following their own style: disorganized, diverse, unpredictable, after an evolving program, with popular forms of architecture and spaces. That created the south-north street (not north-south, as usual) of our project.

Ecology: For us, the first ecology is the social ecology, not the urban ecology, not green engineering. It isn't necessary to put up solar panels; rather, inhabitants should be enabled to became active voluntarily in a movement to fight pollution, a movement of communication, of rooting, of interface with the context. Ecological urbanism is a relational urbanism.

Economy: The elimination of this area as an enclave comes through heterogeneity: there will be more activities spread out diversely thorugh the course of the day and the week, and even more, the residents will no longer feel as though they are living in a cul-de-sac. Local employment of all types is a mechanism for diversifying the area.

At the moment, adding workplaces in the neighborhood is forbidden, but it is scandalous not to use this urban refurbishing as a tool for encouraging jobs. We should encourage jobs by building some workplaces before people ask for them and inviting people to work there.

Security: Le Luth was a well-known place for buying hard drugs. The police couldn't eradicate drug sales. But now the people are leagued against drug dealing.

The more the spaces are enclosed, the more there will be a feeling of security. Spaces that are shapeless and free, that allow everyone to go everywhere, understandably make resi-

One major proposal is to create a new south-north street that cuts through existing linear, high-rise apartment buildings.

(Far right) Sketch of plan of new south-north street. (Right) Plan and axonometric of segment of the new street that crosses an existing boulevard and cuts through an existing building.
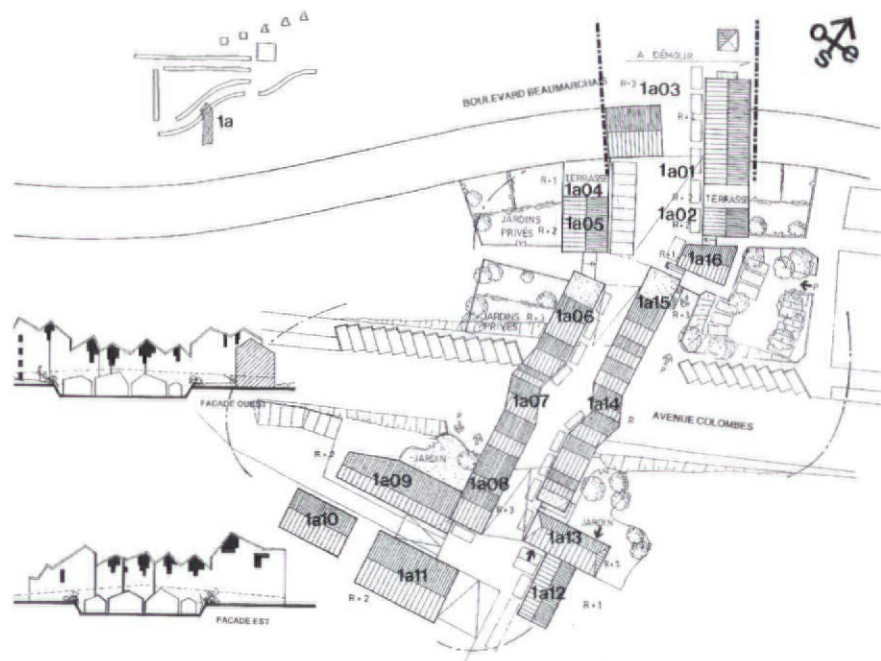
dents anxious. The more easily a street, square or public space can be controlled, the safer it will be.

It is clear that the height of the apartment buildings is a factor in the lack of responsibility and indifference people show; they sometimes throw garbage out windows, probably because the surrounding spaces do not really belong to anybody.

Residents: The participation of residents aims towards at least two moments of social contact: the inquiry and elaboration of suggestions and their verification. We no longer have the attitude of the '60s, when all was talked about and little worried about. Since then some methods have been experimented with, primarily contenting themselves with a small, representative group (it isn't useful to work with the great masses) who are easy to contact, can explain the life experience of the larger group and can effectively provide us with some control (and occasionally even legitimization).*Greenery:* There is too much of a difference between the private initiative residents have taken on the balconies, which are sometimes wonderfully adorned, and the public areas, which are always dry deserts. A campaign of increasing the plantings will give a more contemporary-organic allure to the development and will give relief from the seemingly ferocious density and the repetitive architecture. It will be easy to interest the residents in the support and maintenance of the plants, even more than the private gardens (charming) that can be organized at the base of the buildings (and form a transition there).

The climbing plants will give legitimacy to the buildings; they will root themselves to the buildings and cover the concrete facades. Some of the additions will have balconies that will enable the building to reflower with greenery.

Commercial center, marketplace: The shopping arcade has two entrances/exits. There is only one cafe facing the outside, a
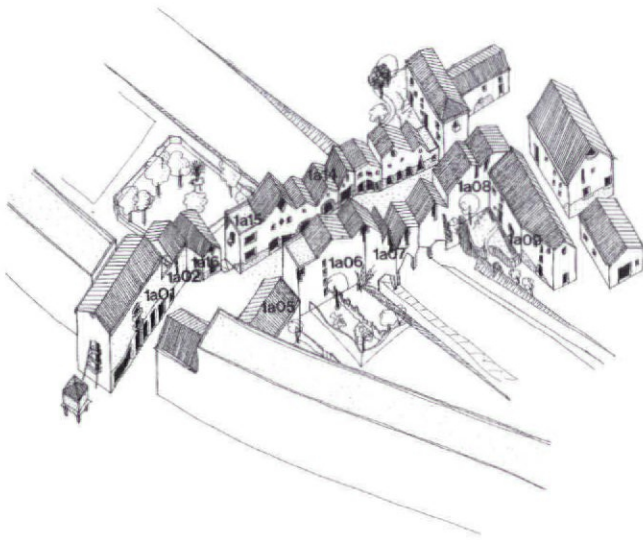
parking lot and a few abandoned cars; nothing else can be seen. We will be able to remodel the commercial center in the form of the south-north street and reorganize neighborhood parking. The arcade will be able to act an engine for the formation of a true European public space — an area that is closed in on all sides and surrounded by boutiques and maybe apartment building entrances.

The Project

Two ways of living are colliding as if in a combat of giants. The first we know well, it was built in Le Luth, it dates from the years of confidence, of objectivity, of redemptive workings. It is military from birth. The second is civil. It is the complex city, which slowly wants to recolonise the first and to try to manage it. It is composed of entirely different elements, a less aggressive apprearance, ecology, history, curves and oblique angles (not too many right angles). It does not admit repetition.

A main street: An opening will be demolished through the buildings to make way for the new path (principally pedestrian). The street begins its cutting on the south bank of the avenue de Colombes, visually disrupting the traffic (without diminishing efficiency). Then it crosses rue Beaumarchais and rue Lénine (breaking through what crosses its path) and ends north of the road between the schools. There it divides, jumping over the autoroute (with a bridge and trees), heading to the Port of Paris. It has a destination, it is no longer a cul-de-sac.

Scale: We have chosen to consider Luth not as a great territory to examine, but as a mosaic of independent and coordinated small blocks of housing. The size of each block has been determined according to the range of view a pedestrian would have in taking a quick glance. We concentrated on the prob-

lems of each block independently from the others, then we examined the relationship between each its neighbor, preventing us from hurrying us into making comprehensive decisions.

The actual sequence of interventions must be outlined by those responsible and involved. It must never eminate from our general plan for the area; the details must be left for the neighborhood to decide, as in a democracy. Otherwise, even our vocabulary has a military stench. It doesn't address a plan (of battle); it only addresses map-making (cartography), a simple statement, a document that does not possess any decision-making power. It is an instrument of control, of management, of appreciation and of action, but never an instrument of creation.

Avenue de Colombes: A few years ago, planners believed they had to create an autoroute, or at least a high-speed boulevard, here. We reconsidered the avenue as a Parisian boulevard, surrounded by interesting, active facades that turn one's attention to the streetwall and define some of the more urban spaces that are currently residual and setback spaces.

At first, we proposed an inhabited bridge over the street, but this was a mistake — that would give the automobile the right to drive fast and feel at home! We now propose to eliminate the planted median strip, in order to assure openness and visibility along the length of the avenue (priorty to pedestrians). And in order to contrast the avenue's longitudinal direction, we impose some transversal visual relief and some transversal arcades towards the crossroads of the Couture d'Auxerre.

The proportion of public spaces: I have been able to work on an interesting experiment at Berlin-Kreutzberg, at the time some old buildings were rebuilt and converted into social housing. The blocks' internal spaces had been reserved solely for the residents. They had been planted and provided with a small amount of equipment for children and walking paths. When I
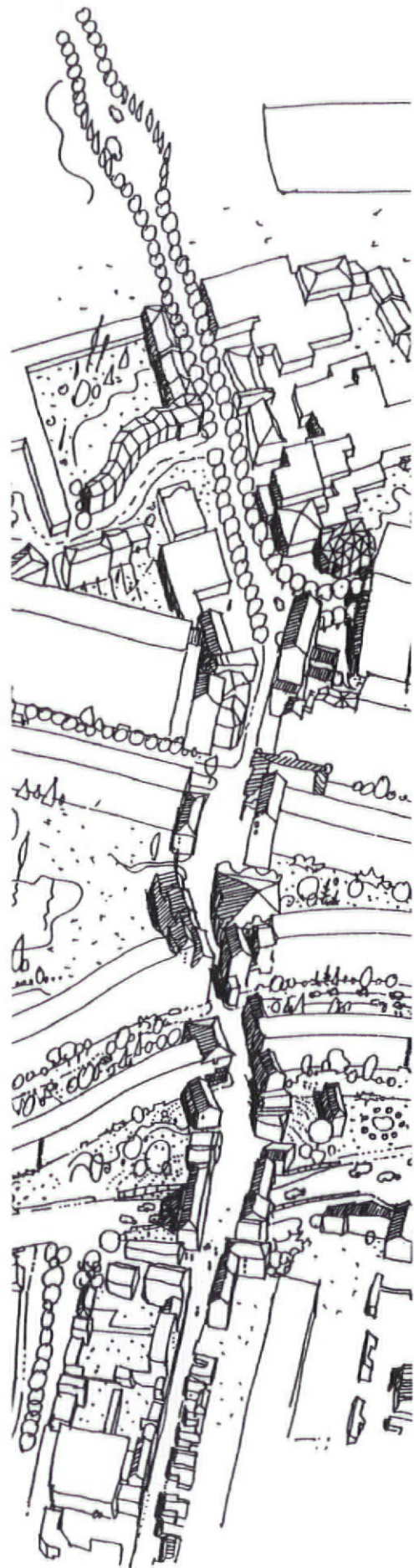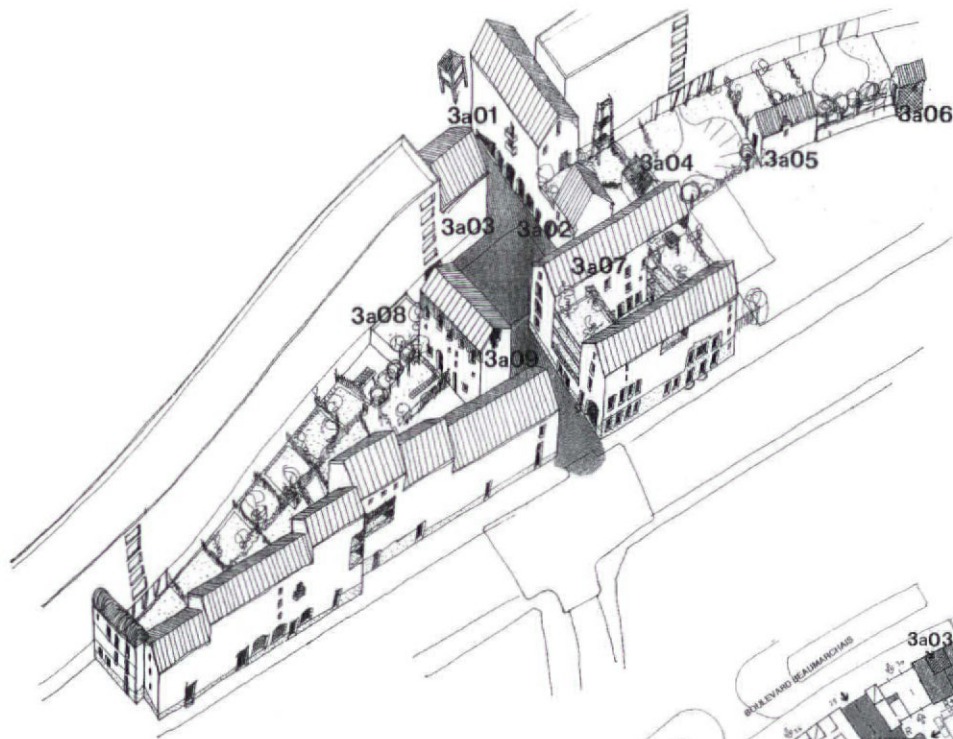
New, low-rise buildings
would be added along
streets,like in this illustra-
tive proposal for avenue de
Colombes. The space
between buildings would be
transformed into private and
semi-private gardens.
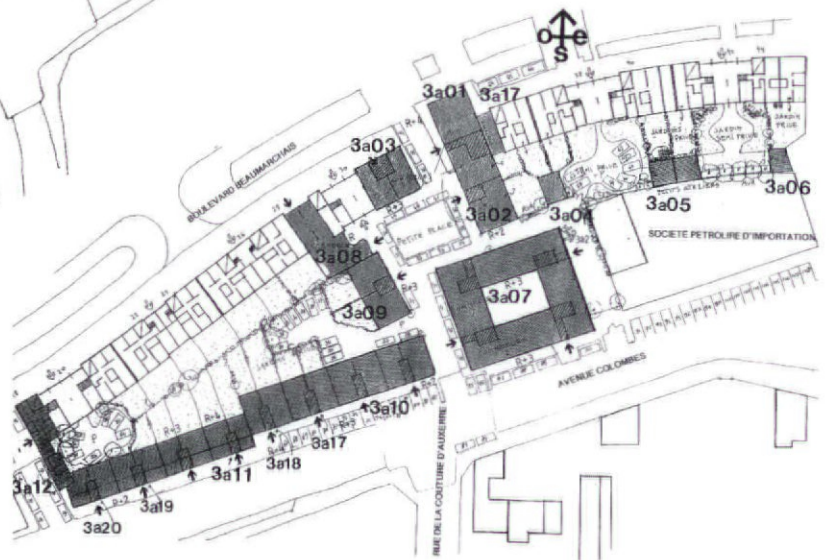
saw those spaces later, they had been subdivided into even
smaller spaces. Those who were managing the project said that
when residents could not see all the space to which they had
access and know everybody entitled to cross the garden, their
insecurity grew rapidly.

The buildings: It seems urgent to change the image of the
facades of the prefabricated buildings and, above all, the
impact of their giant dimensions. We have the means to do it:
exterior insulation and additions to the buildings can change
the perception of scale and divide the great length of the
facades into more comprehensible pieces. Each stairwell would
receive a covering different from its neighbor.

Existing buildings will be as varied and bustling as possible.
Their entrances will be clearly identifiable. There will no
longer be entranceways that cut through the building — those
false entrances that open into the rear space, not to the street,
that do not give residents and visitors access to facilities, activi-
ties or gardens but are simply culs-de-sac. Additions will be of
a traditional type; they will not be expressive of architectural
style or construction technique.

Additions at the bases of buildings: Additions will permit new
uses and diminish the great heights and lengths by masking
them with solids of one to five levels. Additions will be con-

structed following ordinary procedures (building permits,
financing, etc.) through arrangements made by owners and ten-
ants. We demolish nearly nothing. We superimpose a new net,
contrasting with existing buildings while keeping and respect-
ing them (but not for their authority and repulsive character).

Offices: The two faces of the existing apartment buildings
actually have different uses. One, well-oriented, contains
rather spacious rooms (living rooms and bedrooms). The
other, and especially in the center of the building, contains
smaller spaces (including powder rooms). In their present
state, the buildings will be very difficult to use for offices.

We propose to add new floor space to the whole northern
facade and to cover those facades with a new skin that demon-
strates the changed use — reflecting glass, as in all recent
offices. These additions will be easy and cost little to build
because all the services and accessories already exist.

There will not be a great concentration of offices. A mini-
mum volume will be required so the offices can be recognized
among the housing. In principle, all the spaces served by a sin-
gle stairwell should be transformed into office space to avoid
mixing with the housing.

Gardens: The urban form of the prefabricated apartment
buildings is weak, their relationship to each other is cold;

buildings have been placed in space without significance, without concern for their precise location. That is exactly contrary to the comfort of the people who live there, to creating a welcoming environment, to traditional urbanism. In our urban tradition, spaces have always been visibly marked as public, semi-public or private.

We attempt to repartition that indifferent space. We assume that people will behave differently if they are facing the front (the street) or back (the garden); those distinctions have disappeared in the Modern order. This will strengthen the streets and public places, making them precise and delimited, designed for the urban acts of passage, meeting and communication.

At the foot of the buildings, we propose non-public gardens. They will be reserved to be used by a family, the ground-floor inhabitants or those who live above (by means of a simple staircase). They will have friendly but efficient fences. They will be used either by families that use a single stairwell, and kept up between them, or by all the families in a building (or part of a building) and divided into areas for different uses.

We have seen that some residents want private gardens, some want a semi-private garden (facing crosswise to an entrance) and some want a very specialized space. The organization of the gardens will, perhaps, be delicate (jealousy, difficulty of upkeep, waste that falls from windows above, etc.), but that is always less serious than indifference.

A peak: The apartment building on rue Gerard Philippe is doubtless the most monstrous. But we hate to recommend its complete demolition. We propose adding two transversal wings that would extend over its top with a demonstrative mass of several extra floors served by one stairwell. The first ensemble will rejoin the group of buildings proposed along boulevard Coubertin. The other wing attempts to rejoin the nursery in the park and passes at the foot of the towers whose base it scales.

Gateways: To make Luth look more connected to the adjacent neighborhoods, it is necessary that our new additions extend beyond the natural boundaries of the development to the neighborhood's outer limits.

The large intersection of Coubertin-Colombes creates a vacuum around itself. Without diminishing its volume, we are giving it a "party," a crown of trees and are sculpted in the form of a high cylinder of foliage. Before the trees grow sufficiently, the artificial construction of trunks and branches. From a distance, this intersection will seem closed off, and traffic will slow down spontaneously.

*Interfaces:* All of the elements across the street from each other are coordinated. For example, we propose buildings of varied function on each side of avenue Coubertin , giving it a street form. Currently, the numerous pedestrians do not cross between the two banks of the avenue.
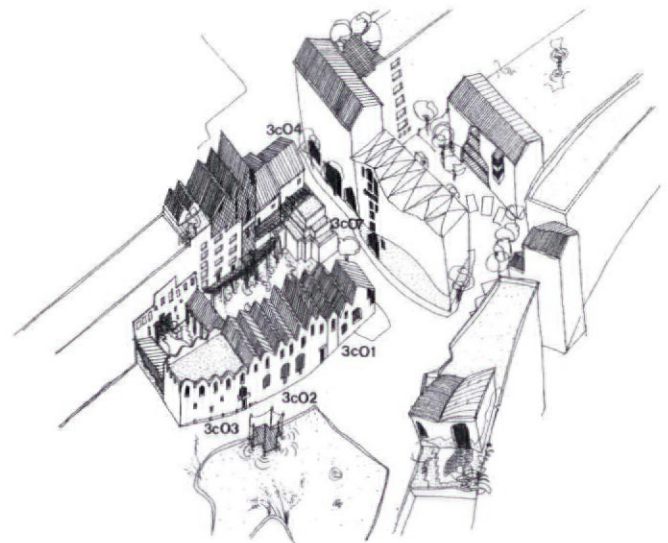
The plan encourages shops, workplaces and smaller parking areas along streets and around the bases of high-rise buildings.
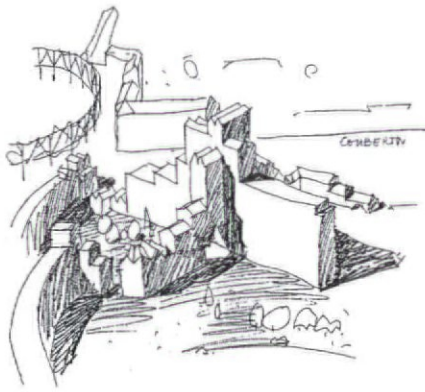
The height and bulk of the neighborhood's tallest building would be tempered by a pair of wing-like extensions that slope down and become linear low-rise buildings. Its long, flat roof would be enlivened by the addition of a peak.
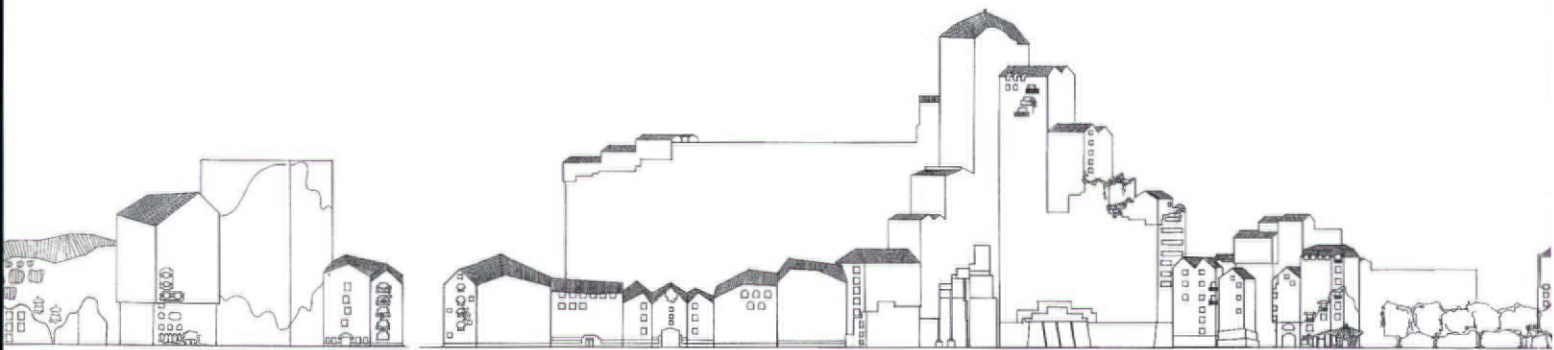
On avenue de Colombes, the alignment of the trees and of the facades on opposite sides of the street make, in the looseness of their arrangement, a veritable Parisian avenue without recuding the lanes for circulation. It will actually be like rue Pierre Timbaud, which extends beyond avenue de Colombes and handles the same traffic volume quite well. Without these facing facades, the "desenclavement" will not be successful.

A few opinions: Each use will have its own expression, avoiding the neomodern obsession of emphasizing sameness ... all available materials will be used, just as in a real city ... different architects will be commissioned on the condition that they understand the fragmentation ... we will avoid making new buildings the same height as each other and as the old buildings ... flat rooves will be for walking or planting upon; otherwise we will opt for a variety of forms, angles and materials ... the buildings will define the borders of the public spaces, not pre-decided geometries in a plan ... there will not be large parking areas but small clusters here and there ... facades of the existing apartment buildings will be broken up by watertight and insulating pieces that will be stuck on; these suspended additions will also add more details ... the line of the rooves will be modulated by adding some wood-structure houses

To be sure not to project our preconceptions and not to obscure existing and future reality, we had recourse to the observation and judgment of our colleague, anthropologist Arlindo Stefani.

This will not be a personal work of architecture, in the sense of the preceding period, but a continuity of architectural substance that will entrust continuing differentiation to occur piece by piece, in a mosaic, by a large number of non-narcissistic architects different from each other and motivated by their participation.

Each architect will be joined in a common movement (like in all the cities) and will try their best to make their participation as personal as possible (with their contradictions and disputes) in the situation with which they will be entrusted (like in all the cities). Those choices will happen later, after we have completed a sufficient prototype.

Already, for the first prototype, I have created a team with two other architects, all of us quite different and contradictory. I kept for myself the job of (dis)organizing the three, dividing the project so that each of us has a piece of work encrusted in the work of another. Each intervention must be as recognizable as possible to create that chaotic landscape which, at a certain point, becomes a harmonious living landscape.

The housing complex will become urban tissue: All that we proposed in our competition proposal for "disenclaving" Luth was obliged to regard the area as an agglomeration of independent elements but bound in an urban complicity. To be adopted by the municipal administration, that attitude must become formalized legally in regulations.
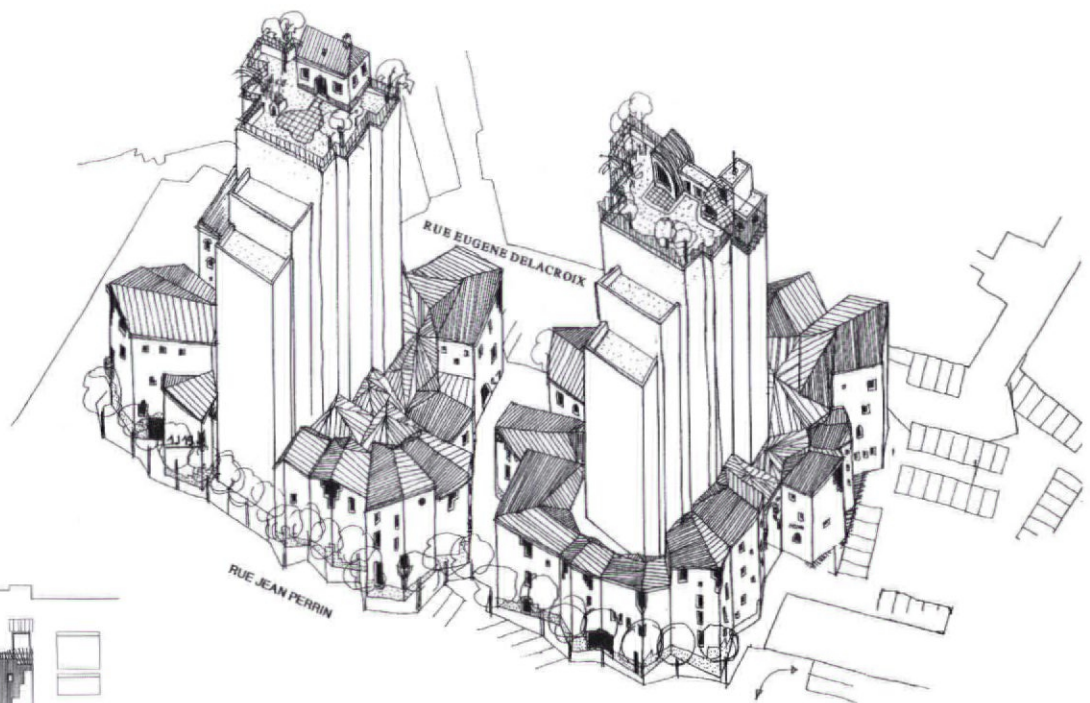
Some sections of the existing high-rise apartment buildings could be converted into offices. Low-rise housing, shops and workplaces could cluster around existing buildings. The changes would be incremental, directed by owners and tenants and designed by many architects.

These large complexes are homogenous (this is truly contrary to the urban tissue, which is by all rights heterogenous). All their behavior was precise, like the army and the factory. They pertained to a hierarchy (the same as if they are anonymous). It is not the inhabitants who make the law; at best, they revolt against or negotiate with those in control.

We have, in all our projects, looked to express that image of responsibility, that structure of being subsidiary in making the bet that the new, fragmented form would help the birth of heterogeneity, of non-uniformity, come about smoothly..

Again, this change is necessary to enable the fragments to come forth and regain autonomy. And so they unite, they rely on the inside on a "moral," on a common rule of behavior, of politeness, of urbanity. And they inscribe those arrangements in a text and on a map explaining the rules. So, each element can be constituted in its own way, without having to give an account to any authority who can block initiative; each fragment can invent. Each element will know its options as well as its neighbor's.

The Action and the Inhabitants

After having reflected on our projects for a long time, having discussed them among themselves and with us so that they could understand them better, the municipality finally alerted the residents of Luth.

First meeting, tumultuous, violent, for mutual information. Political, this one. Then others calmer, constructive. A group was created, became committed, forgot its egocentric demands and little by little, saw interest in the neighborhood!

It took several meetings and our neutrality (we know we helped facilitate) for them finally to take action, in staircases (like the image that we had shown them), with little rooves (they are the nicest), of advances (activities), the bowling alley (more than 500 members), the little volumes along the north-south autoroute (they make several stores), the additions of stories (my terrace breaks through towards my neighbor's below), a fountain (a goblet filled with water), houses under the roof (that varies) of trees, of benches, a place for dogs (an obsession). They even worked physically taking away pieces of plastic foam with a saw that we brought, transforming the model of the Lenine building.

Remark made during the last meeting: "Astonishing: All that we have said is incorporated in the model." So we can begin the project with the first intervention: breaking through rue Lénine.

At the end, the image of the great ensemble will have disappeared and the Luth will become a normal neighborhood, familiar, without precise limits, without anxiety, stitched together and communicative, like all the others.

Designing London Transport

Raymond Turner

Illustrations courtesy Raymond Turner.

London's Underground Group, formed in the early 1900s by the merger of several transit companies, established a visual focus through its trademark (right) and architecture and graphics.

The design of the London subway's newest lines echoes some of London Transport's design style but also signals the fragmentation of the system into smaller parts.

The Victorian era left public transportation in London with an inheritance. Beneath the ground the Metropolitan Railway was opened in 1863 — the first underground railway in the world. Over ground, public transportation relied on horse-drawn busses on the roads and steam-hauled trains.

During the early years of the twentieth century, a number of compaines providing public transportation amalgamated into a larger, privately-owned organization called the Underground Group. They established a visual focus for itself through the use of a trademark comprised of a tram car in the center and underground railway lines leading to it.

The Underground Group also developed a limited architectural vocabulary for its new stations and tube lines opened in 1906. The buildings all followed the same architectural style and used a consistent approach to materials, color and lettering.

In 1933, the Underground Group amalgamated with all the other underground railways and bus and train operators in London and formed one new monopoly public body (which came to be known as London Transport), responsible to the local government. The creation of a single authority responsible for all bus, tram and underground railway operations made it possible to develop a unified design ethic for the whole organization — an aesthetic that was consitent wherever the organization reached throughout the entire region.

London Transport was anxious to promote the public image of a progressive, efficient, caring and style-conscious company. According to Frank Pick, its chief executive, it was committed to using design as a means of harnessing commercial methods to the achievement of large social objectives.

London Transport believed that good design could mean good business. Design presented a major opportunity for the company to contribute to the creation of a civilized and well-planned urban environment.

In terms of product design its busses and uderground trains were the most advanced and sophisticated in the world. Bus development culminated in the custom-designed Route Master bus and train development culminated in the fully automatic one that is running today.

In terms of environmental design it created what was termed "a new architectural idiom" consisting of two modern design concepts appropriate for central London and suburban stations. Both designs established the familiar house style of London Transport for years to come and were capable of considerable variation for different sites and structures.

Innovative designs were also produced for rebuilding ticket halls like Piccadilly Circus and the dramatic new headquaters for the company at St. James Park. Even bus garages were treated as part of the company's public identity and were used to give it greater presence.

As far as information design was concerned, London Transport soon acquired an international reputation as a patrol of modern graphic art by commissioning colorful pictorial posters to publicize the company's services. Throughout the interwar years, London Underground stations became popular showcases for avant-garde poster design.

A particularly significant development in the company's publicity was the redesign of the geographical Underground map into the familiar, easy-to-read, topological diagram — the concept of which has been copied the world over.

Through its product, environmental and information design, London Transport was able to present to the traveling public a consolidated and unified message that every care had been taken to provide them with the best possible service, both convenient and easy to use. Each area of the design was treated with the same prioerity, and even earned the tangential compliment from archtectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner that "this was the most efficacious center of visual education in England."

But as a result of many complex factors there followed a degneration of design throughout the organization.

Underground platform designers became preoccupied with superficial decoration, pariculary in overemphasizing the geographical sense of place of each location. Passenger information on both trains and busses became sloppy, unclear and uncoordinated.

Elements of London Transport's integrated design program. Its architecture, graphics and vehicle design amounted to what one critic called "the most efficacious center of visual education in England."

Much of the hardware in use became treated as though it had nothing to contribute to the public perception of the company.

There was even gross disrespect for the one thing that the company had developed and established as representing all that was good in public transportation and in London — the symbol. It was redrawn in a variety of comic ways, often degenerating into advertising gimmicks for such things as the London Transport health plan or annual carol service.

It would be oversimplifying the situation to say that all this happened as a result of one incident. During the 1970s plans were made to move the control of London Transport away from local government to central government. Perhaps these political issues diverted everyone's attention from the integrated design policy.

In the early 1980s a new authority was created — London Regional Transport — and after that London Transport ceased to exist as a company. This new body was charged with providing the most cost effective passenger service within greater London. Part of its task was to make the main businesses of underground and bus services profitable so they were not so dependent on public financial support. In 1982 two major subsidiaries were created, one called London Underground Limited and one called London Busses Limited. The creation of these operationally independent subsidiaries presented LRT with the problem of formulating its own design strategy for the future.

These changes have led to an ironic situation. Whereas design was once used to draw together the activities of a number of different companies at the turn of the century and unite them into an integrated transport service during the mid-century, the company was then faced with using design to help it handle precisely the reverse situation — to allow the controlled fragmentation of the business on one hand while presenting a coordinated transport service to the public on the other.

Santiago Calatrava's Dynamic Urbanism

Donlyn Lyndon

Platform, promenade and
pergola of Zurich,
Switzerland railroad station.

Photos © Paolo Rosselli.
Drawings courtesy Calatrava
Valls S.A.

Santiago Calatrava is best known, perhaps, for the sheer vigor of his designs — shapes that seem to fuse architecture, engineering and art. Embedded within many of his projects, as well, is a sensitive, dynamic urbanism.

A good design concept is not a big, simple idea in isolation; it is an idea that contains a large amount of information, often conflicting information. Calatrava's projects are elegant but they are not simple; they mobilize a great deal of information and hold together places that are extremely complex. They make good places, not just good buildings or good bridges. It is the project and its surroundings that should become better through good design, not just the project.

Every project, especially every public project, should have multiple purposes. A good project might be conceived with several purposes, or it may start out with a single purpose and then become more complex. The viaduct connecting the two main spans of Seville's Alamillo bridge is a singular example of this — beneath it Calatrava created a beautiful space that

can be used for a market space and other activities that link together the area through which it passes.

During the conference "Excellence in Public Service Design Abroad," Barcelona planner Josep Acebillo remarked that you have to approach designing infrastructure like designing a building; infrastructure, building section and city section must be seen as part of the same context. This attitude is evident in Calatrava's Zurich train station, which threads delicately along a hillside between two historic sections of the city.

This portfolio features images of many projects designed by Calatrava . They reveal not only his distinctive visual style but also a patient and remarkably attentive urbanism, a way of building that infuses spirit in public places — from intimately-scaled entryways and shelters to the skyline of a city itself.
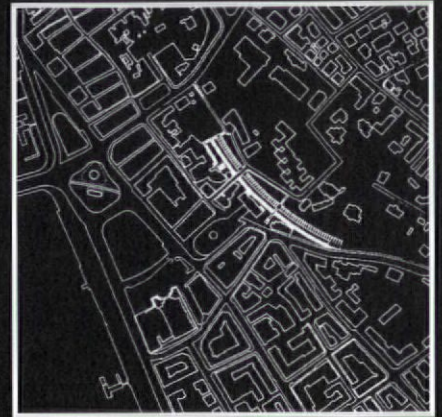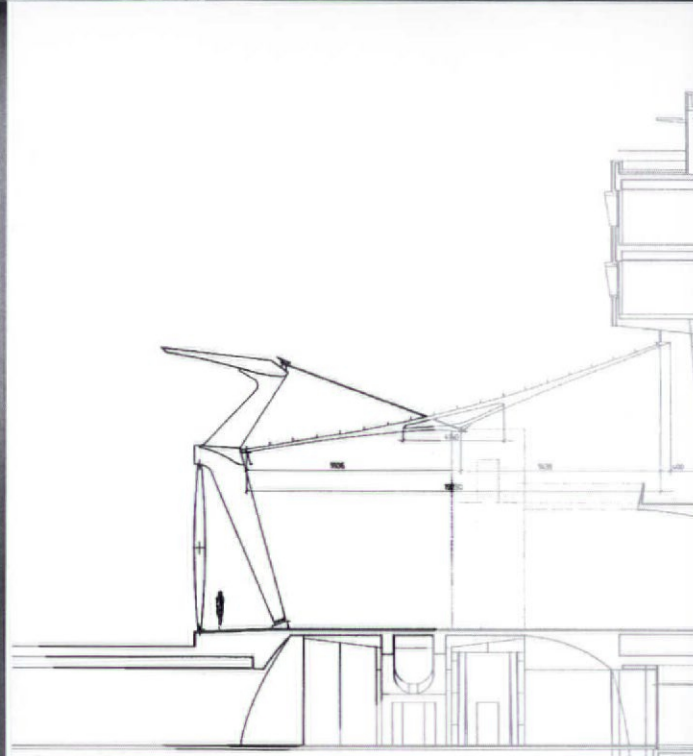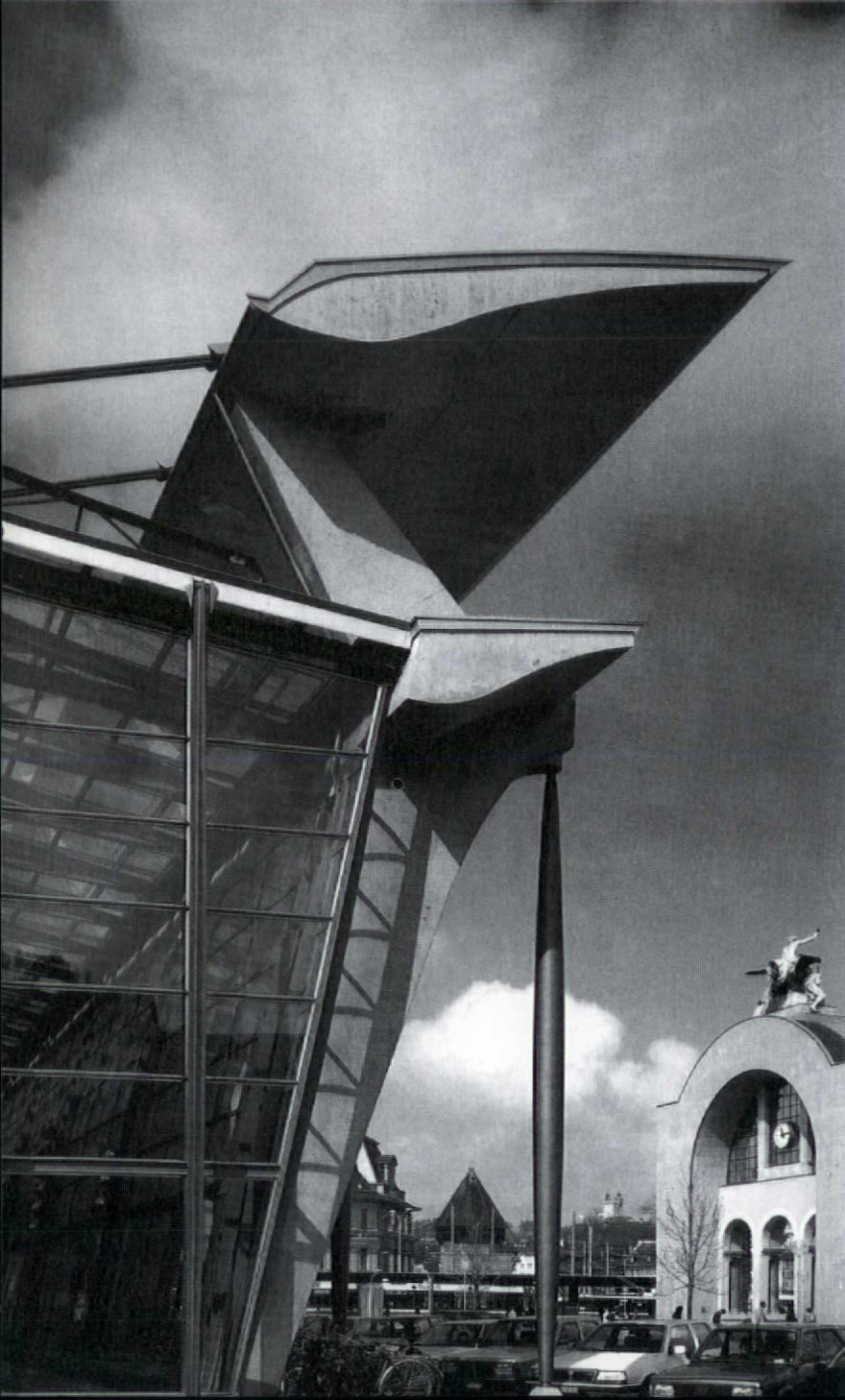

Site plan, Zurich, Switzerland railroad station. A shopping concourse, promenade and station platform are woven into a hillside in an older section of the city.
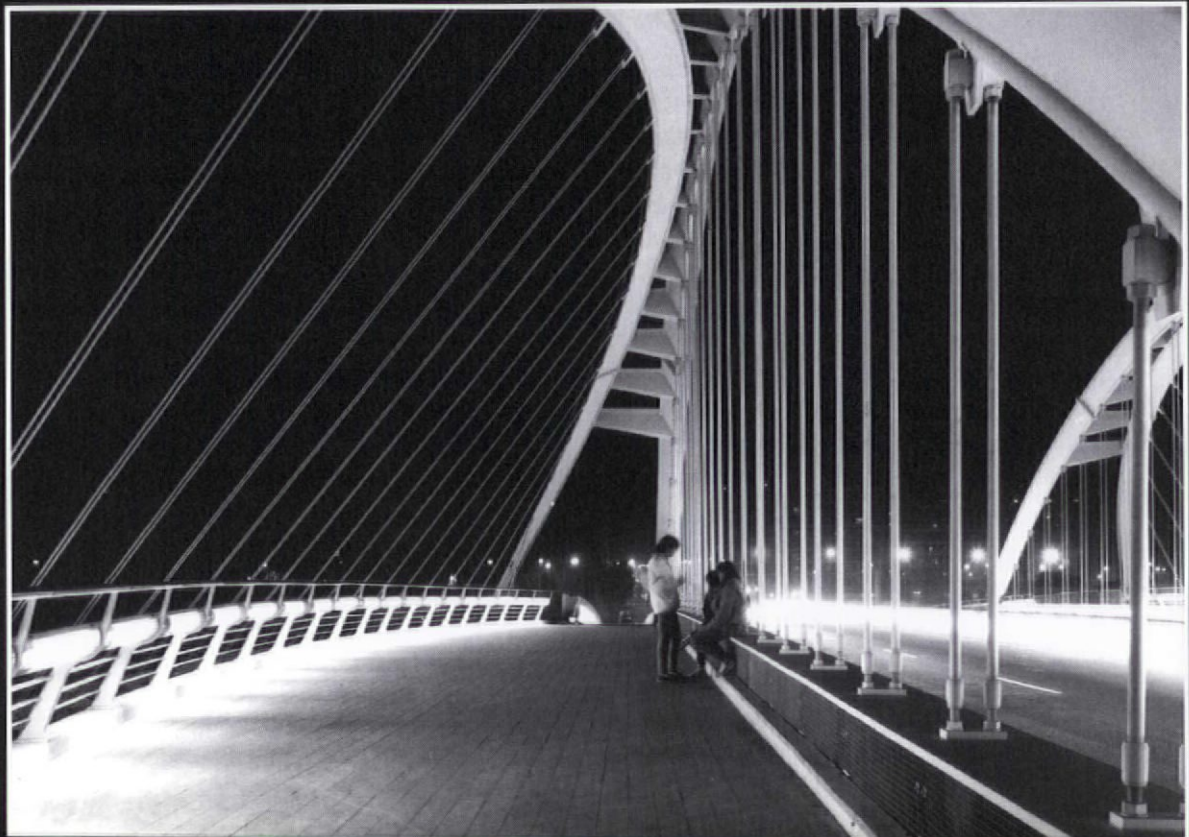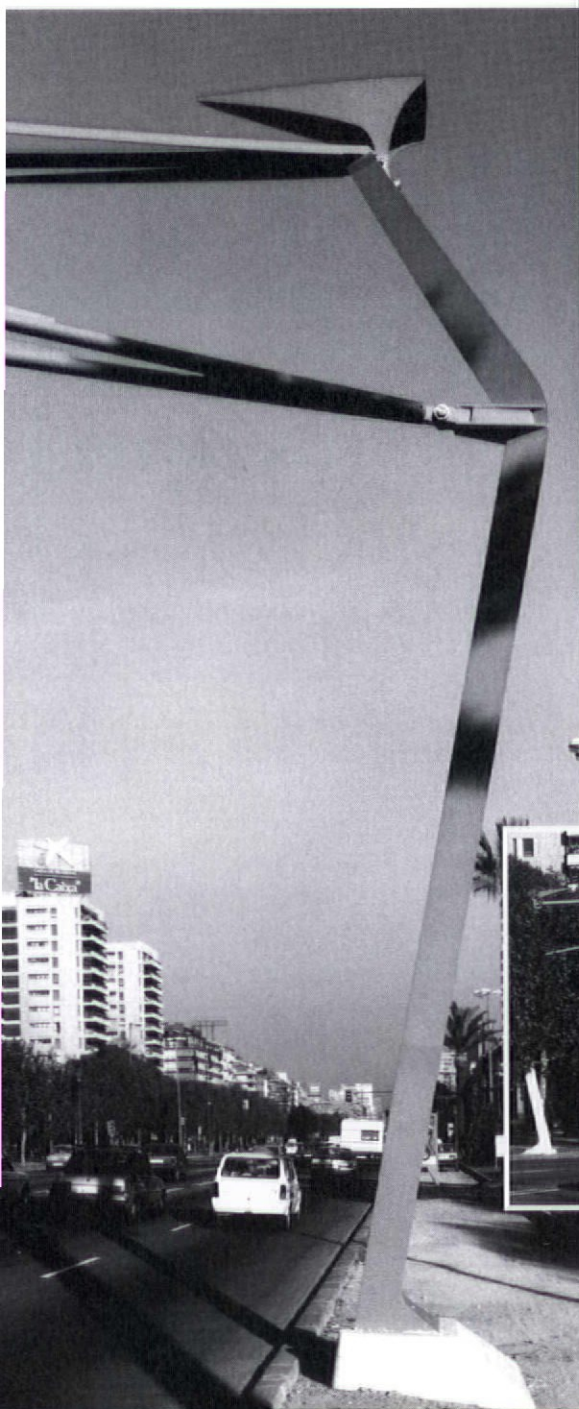
(Right) Canopy for post office,
Lucerne, Switzerland.

(Below) Portico for railway station hall,
Lucerne, Switzerland.

(Opposite page, top) Entrance canopy,
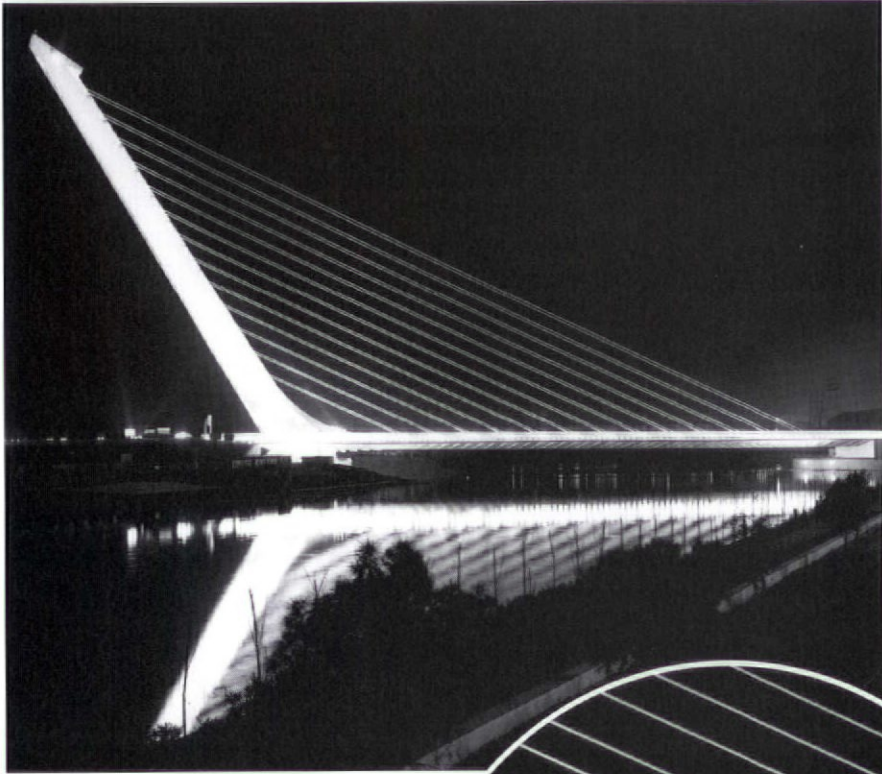high school, Wohlen, Switzerland.

Traffic light structure,
Avenida Diagonal, Barcelona.
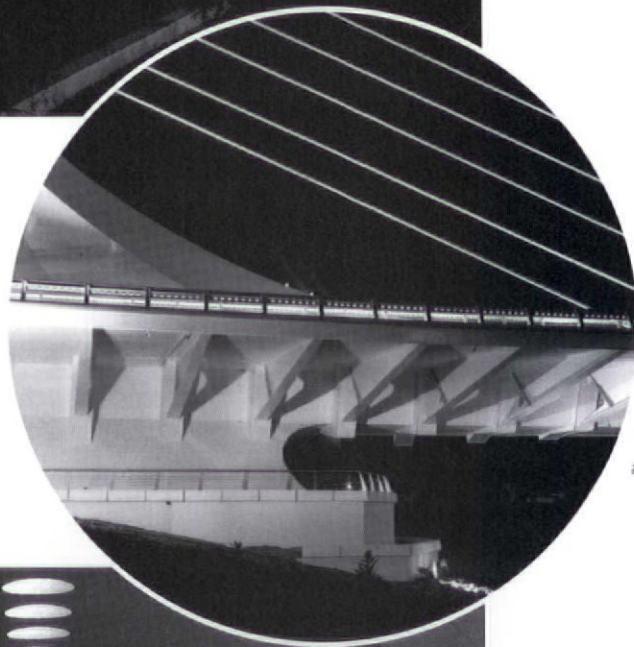
Canopy for bus shelter and
pedestrian underpass,
St. Gallen, Switzerland.

(Above) Alamillo
Bridge, Seville.

(Left) Detail of foot-
ing, Alamillo Bridge,
Seville.

(Below) Underside of
viaduct, Alamillo
Bridge, Seville, where
a market is held.

Bridges and Bridging: Infrastructure and the Arts

Wellington Reiter

Old Colony Bridge, Boston. Built by Schertzer Rolling Lift Co., 1898. While the imperative of the bridge was to ameliorate the conflicting patterns of rail and water traffic by use of a pivoting mechanism, the bridge designers created some of the most elegant formal, visual relationships to be found anywhere in Boston's built environment.
Photo © Peter Vandewarker.

The scenario: A bridge is required over a river in an urban area. Question: Who should perform the work?

The problem, obviously, is technically complex. The span is great, the soil conditions not ideal and the budget less than one would hope for. And, of course, there are the basic questions of erection time, safety and maintenance that are part of any bridge project. *Answer #1: An engineer.*
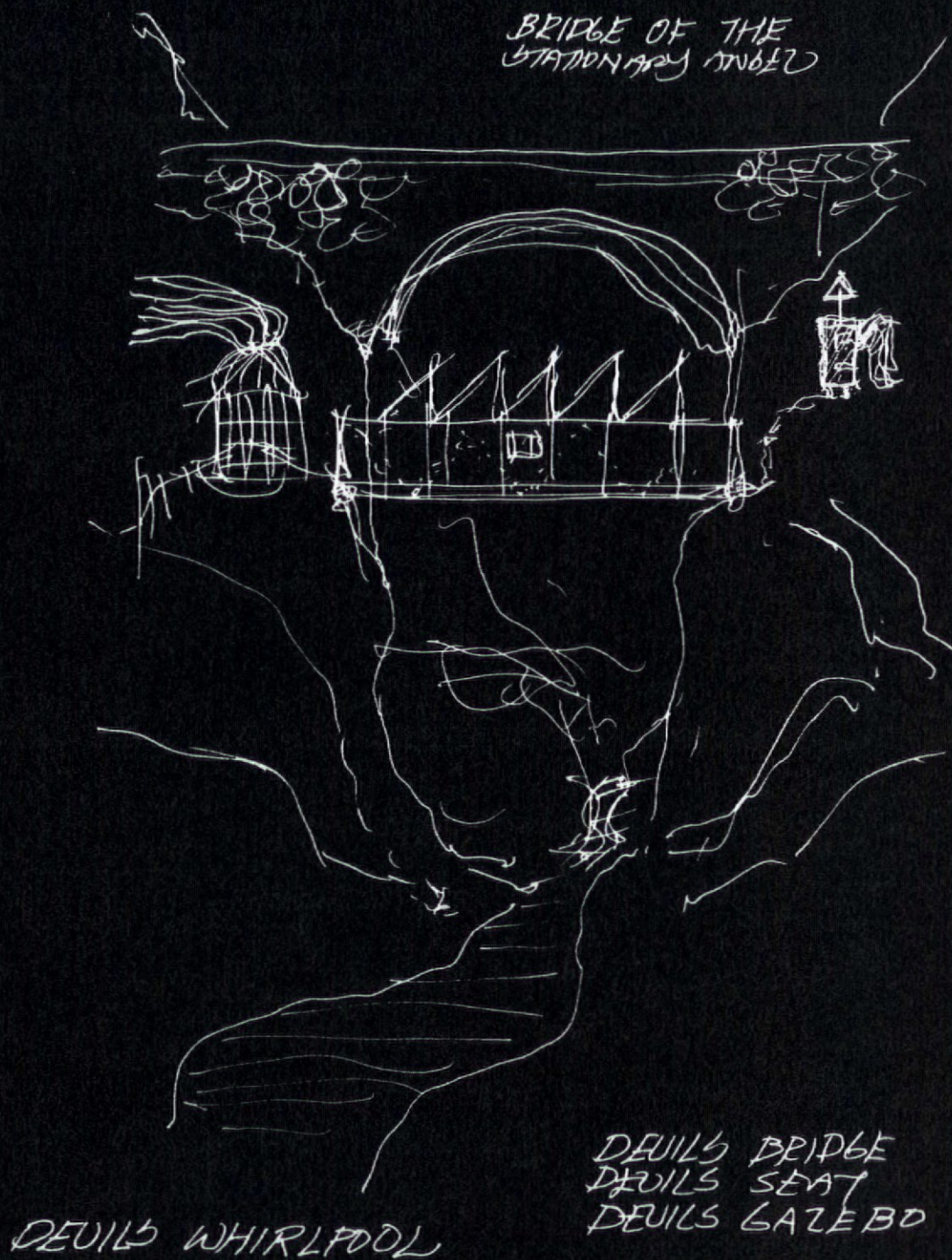
On the other hand, the bridge is to be an integral part of the city fabric. The site is highly visible and surrounded by significant works of architecture. The bridge's design must respond to these diverse conditions, addressing the past with respect while suggesting a progressive civic image. *Answer #2: An architect.*

But engineers and architects are in part responsible for the bleak urban landscape through which we all pass everyday. They and other so-called professionals have blown it. Why not give someone else a chance? An artist, for example, couldn't do any worse and might possibly bring the creative insight the design of the built environment so obviously lacks. This is an opportunity to make something special — a work of art, not just a bridge. *Answer #3: An artist.*

So goes the debate over who should be responsible for designing cities and infrastructure. What makes this dialogue especially complex is the introduction of the public artist into the mix. For artists to be successful in their bid to be considered as alternatives to the disciplines traditionally charged with designing the built environment, the stereotypes suggested above must remain firmly in place: the engineer is an uninspired technician, the architect is a client-oriented image-maker and the artist is a creative genius.

BRIDGE OF THE
STATIONARY ANGEL

DEVILS WHIRLPOOL

DEVILS BRIDGE
DEVILS SEAT
DEVILS GAZEBO

John Hedjuk's exploration, "Devil's Bridge," suggests a broader definition of architectural practice. Hedjuk pursues the metaphoric possibilities of architecture, combining architectural intent with artistic sensibility. On many projects, architects are excluded from such explorations, which are all too often regarded solely as the province of artists. Drawing courtesy John Hedjuk.

This essay reflects on how innovative design in the public realm is suddenly thought to be a question of public art. It will explore the expectations implicit in selecting artists as designers and the consequences of this new alignment of professional and artistic responsibilities. Finally, it examines the tension between infrastructure that serves a collective, pragmatic and social purpose and uniquely authored elements of art that are becoming institutionalized components of the public realm.

The Mandate of Public Art Considered

The advocacy of artists is primarily the responsibility of small, motivated organizations dedicated to elevating artists' participation in the design of cities. These groups aim to intervene in the design of public buildings, private projects, parks, transportation networks and other infrastructure — components of city-making that by their scale and visibility define the public realm.

As contemporary urban monuments are rarely invested with a recognizable sense of *civitas*, it is difficult to refute the crisis of banality that has fueled the call for public art. However, it is not the stated intention of public art advocates to analyze the urban condition and its history; rather, they contend that by including artists in the conversation about city design, the result will be a more visually simulating, environmentally sustainable and user-sensitive public realm.

However, in their effort to establish a beachhead in the design world, public art promoters have employed an argument that is inherently contradictory. On the one hand, the artist, as a non-professional, is cast as being in tune with the needs and concerns of real people — as opposed to engineers, architects and urban designers, who are said to be preprogrammed and indifferent. It has even been suggested that artists' lack of training in design and urbanism assures they will not make decisions by formula or academic abstraction.

On the other hand, artists enjoy a sort of hyper-professional status by virtue of the authority that comes with the concept of authorship — the very foundation of their art. They are frequently offered the opportunity to pose both questions and answers, a luxury that is rarely afforded to design professionals. Consider the contrasting scope of possibility offered to architects and artists in the case of a waste treatment facility in Phoenix. Critic Herbert Muschamp certifies architecture as a service industry and art as alchemy when he writes: "(the artists) were not hired to design a building. They were invited to imagine a place ..."[1] A more succinct definition of architecture would be difficult to find.

The irony of the current situation is that as public art initiatives (such as percent-for-art ordinances) are proliferating, architecture and urban design are bursting at the seams with a backlog of unrealized potential (so is engineering, to some extent). Thus there is a widening rift between architecture's possibility and conventional practice. As a result, while artists are leaving the gallery, buoyed by the possibilities of working on a grand scale, they are bumping into architects who are using the gallery as the site for their most progressive work.

In the case of large infrastructure or public projects, the architects and engineers at the table frequently represent corporate firms that can offer stability, competence and technical capacity — risk is not what they sell. Aggressive problem seeking and solving by design professionals is usually not in evidence, and public art advocates would be loath to encourage it for fear of undercutting the exclusive claim of the artist as seer. Design culture, rather than encouraging artful thinking in all aspects of the public realm (the purported aim of public art advocates), is being segregated into carefully managed subgroups — a situation reflected in our eviscerated public realm.

Interestingly, architects have dominated open competitions that call for a synthesis of poetic representation, formal development, contextual integration and technical implementation. Examples can be found in the outcome of recent memorial competitions in Atlanta, Boston, Cape Canaveral, New York, Salem and elsewhere.

This is not to suggest, however, that what architects do is art — it most frequently is not. Instead, one should question why design issues like marking a site or creating a threshold have been made into questions of public art when they are clearly the historical foundations of a meaningful architecture.

Writing about Roman architecture, historian William MacDonald has stated: *an architecture of passage [which] marked significant armature points and transitions and provided amenities along the way. Passage architecture is a proper urban building category, a basic constituent of urban public circuitry that also made cities and towns visually more apprehensible and vivid.*[2]

Increasingly, design concerns such as MacDonald's "architecture of passage" have been converted into public art projects. As this transformation has occurred, a great deal of initiative has been stripped away from professions like architecture and engineering — and, ironically, from art.

Bridging the Disciplines — Case Studies

The stultifying stereotypes described earlier in this essay attempt to portray the approaches that are all too often the norm when constructing the built environment. Returning to the scenario of a bridge in the city, the following case studies reveal that the crossover activity between architecture, engineering and art has destabilized the role of all three.

Wabasha Street Bridge, St. Paul, MN (1992) — James Carpenter, artist — The competition brief for the Wabasha Street Bridge, which crosses the Mississippi River in St. Paul, required that the lead designer be an artist. The project was awarded to James Carpenter, whose work is characterized by the orchestration of glass and steel in tensile formations backed up by a familiarity with the processes of engineering and fabrication.

Carpenter was able to expand (with the aid of consulting engineers) his previous experiments into a taut, six-lane highway bridge and a thoughtful piece of urban design. The misalignment of the adjoining streets, the V-shaped mast and the location of the island were knitted together with precision and elegance. Here is a case of an artist clearly understanding the problem in all its particulars.

Interestingly, the bridge competition excluded the participation of bridge designers (Santiago Calatrava, the exception, was invited but dropped out). Clearly the expectation was that artists could produce designs that architects or engineers could not. There is no question that Carpenter's proposal is sophisticated and worthy of the praise it has received. But it is not distinguishable as art from the work of architects or engineers who are designing and installing similar projects, particularly in Europe. Carpenter's bridge, in fact, is guided almost exclu-
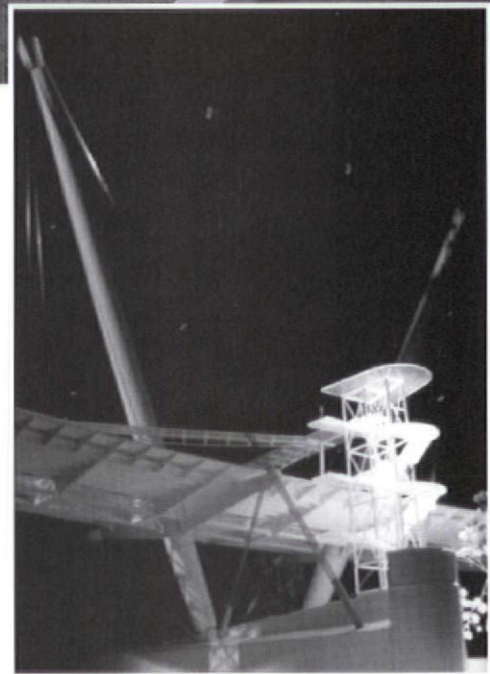
Wabasha Street Bridge, St. Paul. Artist's preferred proposal. Courtesy James Carpenter Design Associates/Macromedia Technologies Inc. Minnisota.

sively by the standard mandate of all good engineering: "There is no structural art without an expression of thinness."[3]

If the rationale of asking an artist to imagine a bridge was to see it expressed as a work of art, then one would have to conclude that the experiment was a failure. Fortunately, Carpenter saw the folly in such a misrepresentation, openly acknowledging the mislabeling of the project as art by virtue of its inclusion in the 1993 *Progressive Architecture* annual awards issue. What the Wabasha Street Bridge proposal illuminates is not a lack of versatility among artists — far from it — but the mischaracterization of the design arts and the poorly constructed questions we ask of them.

Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, designed by Siah Armajani. Courtesy Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, Minneapolis, MN, 1985-8 — Siah Armajani, artist — This pedestrian bridge, which links the Walker Art Center's sculpture garden to the surrounding urban landscape, demonstrates the difficulty of moving the ambiguity of a poetic vision into the bureaucratic world of construction, engineering and highway administration.

While the project is a triumph over standard-issue state or federal bridges, it carries forward little of the provocative ventures into the nature of the type that the artist, Siah Armajani, explored in his small-scale models. Although the syntax of engineering is evident in the arch, suspension and girder motifs registered on the elevations, the bridge does not advance the art of bridge-making in any appreciable sense or demonstrate an awareness of the field. The span is significant only because it has been designated as art by virtue of who authored it.

The Whitney Bridge is more akin to weak architecture because its programmatic imperative (pedestrian passage over a busy freeway) has overwhelmed the philosophical and technical questions of a bridge and reduced them to applied emblems. Armajani's earlier models of small, dysfunctional bridges "perceived in their somewhat self-contained uselessness as conceptual art"[4] are more profound, twisting the conventional into the sublime. They were of no use, by normative definition.

Armajani implicitly confirms the difficulty of actualizing complex ideas within the constraints of building projects. Having texts (such as Melville's *Moby Dick*) tattooed onto his later bridges, Armajani speaks volumes about the resistance of architecture as a vehicle for conveying ideas not indigenous to its own genetic structure. Such literal attempts to apply meaning to the built environment are to be expected as the one tra-

verses the boundaries of art, architecture and engineering, a pitfall that Carpenter avoided by shifting into a mindset that was synchronous with the medium of the bridge.

Alamillo Bridge, Seville, 1987-92 — Santiago Calatrava, architect and engineer — The expressive engineering of Santiago Calatrava is so widely recognized both in style and contribution to the field that his work borders on becoming an art form unto itself. And with good reason; Calatrava has successfully brought the idea of gesture to the fabric of the city and awakened public agencies to the aesthetic possibility of infrastructure.

The Alamillo Bridge in Seville is but one of many examples of his consistently inventive approach to design. Calatrava's bridges, towers and buildings shatter the stereotypical notion of the engineer described earlier and have drawn attention to the many other creative thinkers in this field.

But while expanding the definition of engineering practice, Calatrava also seems to desire the mantle of artist, a notion that relies heavily on formal anecdote. The exhibition of Calatrava's work at the Museum of Modern Art was clearly motivated by the conviction that his projects could, with a bit of squinting, be construed as sculpture, albeit sculpture that works.

The words of the late sculptor Donald Judd, however bombastic, cast doubt on the possibility of such a facile transposition: *A building as sculpture is a bad idea to begin with, but architects know very little about the recent history of sculpture. The deviation is so ignorant that it would never occur in first-rate art. Old forms that are considered finished by first-rate artists are revived by architects as if there is no history, as if sculpture has no meaning."[5]

While Judd's criticism is riddled with inconsistency and ambiguity, he nevertheless illuminates the enormous difficulty of speaking with integrity to one concern through the language of another. Just as architecture is potentially diminished by the pale markings of sites by artists, so too is art marginalized as a sort of fetishizing activity practiced by those with an intuitive sense of form-making.

The Essential Objective Public Realm

We are an impatient lot. Conditioned by television and Disney World, we want and expect to be entertained. Consequently, we have lost both our ability to discriminate between fact and fiction and the patience to reinvest the city with thoughtful myth-making. We have begun to misconstrue the act of making infrastructure as an occasion for entertainment without understanding that infrastructure's expressive attributes are unlike those of art.

City building is about the sequential layering of meaning, beginning with those that are deterministic, utilitarian and costly (infrastructure) and concluding with events that are spontaneous, topical, interactive and potentially outrageous (temporary public art or performance). Understanding the nature of each strata is essential if one is to respond in a manner that not only advances design but also demonstrates the mutually supportive forces among the layers of the city.

Each discipline must make contributions to the built environment that are coincident with the unique insights and critical understandinginherent to the medium. With regard to the visual arts, the idea of boundary-setting is not universally applicable, but it appears a far more radical proposal than the concept of integrating artists into design teams, a process that virtually assures homogeneity rather than vigorous exchange.

Infrastructure and urban architecture extend themselves into the larger dialogue of society quietly. The art of engineering and architecture requires the nearly impossible synthesis of invention, convention and stability. There is no suggestion of banality in this proposition, but no art-making either. Infrastructure and urban architecture are a reflection of our desires as a society, but art transcends those wants, insisting that we examine their reflection and confront their meaning.

For a product of architecture or engineering to encourage such speculation, it must assume the sort of naturalness that one normally associates with landscape. The perception of design as inevitable and economical translates into a demonstration of fact. "If it is to redeem its culture — if it is to project an meaningful Utopia — it must be grounded in actuality."[6]

The Brooklyn Bridge is not art. It is a magnificent instrument spanning the East River. Walker Evans' well-known pho-
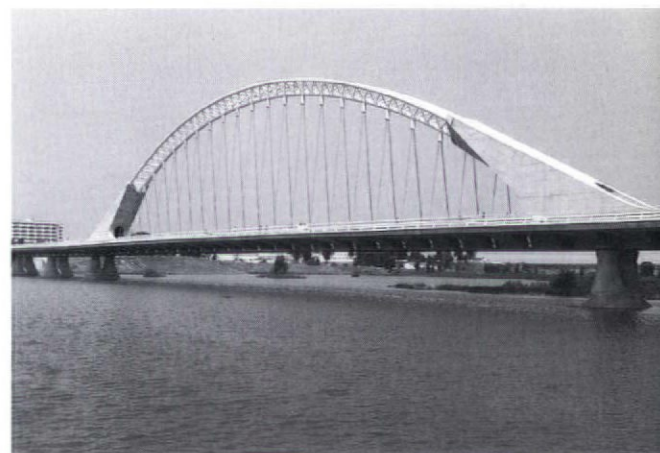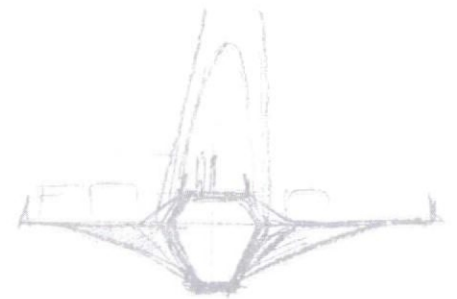
Puente de Merida (bridge over the Guadalquiver River), Merida, Spain. Sketches courtesy Calatrava Valls S.A. Photo © Paolo Rosselli.

The Bridge

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest
The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him
Shedding white wings of tumolt. building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty —

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes
As apparitional as sails that cross
Some page of figures to be filed away;
— Till elevators drop us from our day . . .

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
Never disclosed, but hastened to again
Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
Some motion ever unspent in thy stride, —
Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
Titling there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,
A jest falls from the speechless caravan.

Down Wall, from girder into street noon leaks,
A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene;
All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn . . .
Thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still.

And obscure as that heaven of the Jews,
Thy guerdon . . . Accolate thou dost bestow
Of anonymity time cannot raise:
Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show.

O harp and altar, of the fury fused,
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry, —

Again the traffic lights skim thy swift
Unfractioned idion, immaculate sigh of stars,
Beading thy path — condense eternity:
and we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

Under they shadow by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is they shadow clear.
The City's fiery parcels all undone,
Already snow submerges an iron year . . .

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
And the curveship lend a myth to God.

Excerpted from Hart Crane, "The Bridge." First pub-
lished by The Black Sun Press, 1930.

tographs of the bridge encourage us to think of it as art; so too does Hart Crane's poetry. As Alan Trachtenberg writes, Crane's poetry "completed the passage of the Brooklyn Bridge from fact to symbol. Such a passage was implicit in the earliest ideas of an East River bridge, in Thomas Pope's conception as well as John Roebling's. He imagined an ideal function: a leap into a new consciousness."[7]

Both Crane and Evans were able to make art of the bridge because it was so confident of itself as a matter of engineering. As such, it was available as evidence of larger truths imbedded in its making. This is the art of infrastructure, the foundation for the assembly of meaning in the city.

Redundancy or Relevancy?

One of the mantras of the public art movement is that artists should be involved early in the development process. Artists may find a place at the conference table, but in taking that seat they tacitly agree to work in collaboration with fellow design-ers, thus relinquishing the most fertile territory of the arts: crit-ical commentary.

Artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, one of the most incisive thinkers on the subject of the built environment, both in his public art work and his lecturing, declares: "We must stop this ideological 'ritual,' interrupt this journey-in-fiction, arrest the somnambu-listic movement, restore a public focus, a concentration on the building and its architecture."[8]

Meeting this provocative challenge is nearly impossible with-in the straight jacket of typical public art processes. All too often, artists participating on collaborative teams end up manip-ulating a particular surface of a building. Ironically, this situa-tion is equivalent to the guild system, in which artisans pos-sessed of superior knowledge of a particular material were given the freedom to operate within a framework established by the architect. But public artists have expended considerable effort throwing off the workman-like label of "artisan," wanting to be seen as creative thinkers in their own right. They wil soon dis-cover that the permanent built environment is an awkward and resistant venue for critical work.

For those engaged in exposing the latent conditions of the contemporary urban environment, an enterprise that only artists have the freedom to pursue with abandon, being impli-cated in the process of building is a debilitating prospect, even antithetical to the cause. Architecture is a particularly unwieldy vehicle as an art form — it's turning radius is wide, its accelera-tion and hauling capacity virtually non-existent. Architecture is also particularly ill suited to delivering the messages of other disciplines (literary theory, for example) without becoming a caricature. Theory masquerading as architecture is frequently

grotesque and particularly unstable as a setting either for art or for citizens to conduct their lives.

Yet architecture and infrastructure can be pregnant with meaning, as Crane and Evans revealed in their interpretations of the Brooklyn Bridge. To observe architecture as an artist and to offer the feedback that keeps it alive, one cannot be in the building looking out. Buildings need to be approached with great stealth and captured in the act of being themselves. Such is the case with Wodiczko's projections:

What is implicit about the building must be exposed as explicit: the myth must be visually concretized and unmasked. The absentminded, hypnotic relation with architecture must be challenged by a conscious and critical public discourse taking place in front of the building.[9]

Wodiczko's work is a muscular demonstration of the power of public art to open our eyes to the conditions that could only be demonstrated through this medium. While taking architecture to task, his work capitalizes on the foundation that the static components of the city provide, correctly proclaiming art's culminating position in the layers that make up our urban environment.

Conclusion

There are those that will read my constant references to the differences between art, architecture and engineering as yet another attempt to constrain artists from participating in shaping the public realm. Some will find my call to break out of the percent-for-art radius of traditional public art programs desirable but, without another option in place, foolhardy. And others will object to my critique of collaborative design teams as well-intentioned interest groups focused on process but without a compelling vision of either the past or the future.

Nevertheless, it would be difficult to dispute the fact that most public art, as it is conventionally defined, is of the same caliber as the bland corporate environment that it was intended to eclipse. Many of the best public pieces are still those that come from inventive artists intent on demonstrating expanded possibilities within their discipline, just as Roebling was attempting within engineering. Like the Brooklyn Bridge, accomplished works of art, engineering or architecture became public icons not by designation or committee, but by virtue of the population's reflected recognition of themselves as participants in the construction of the public realm.

(Above) Krzysztof Wodiczko, Hirschhorn Museum Building, 1988. Courtesy Galerie Lelong.
(Opposite page) Brooklyn Bridge, from pedestrian promenade. Courtesy Todd W. Bressi.

Notes

1. Herbert Muschamp, "When Art Becomes a Public Spectacle," *New York Times* (2 January 1994) Section 2, page 1.

2. William MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale, 1986).

3. David P. Billington, *The Tower and the Bridge: The New Art of Structural Engineering* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

4. Janet Kardon, *Siah Armajani: Bridges, Houses, Communal Spaces, Dictionary for Building* (Philadelphia: Institute for Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1985).

5. Donald Judd, "Two Cultures," *Lotus* 73.

6. Alan Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 170

7. Trachtenberg, 167.

8. Krzysztof Wodiczko, "Public Projection," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique at sociale* 7:1-2 (Winter/Spring 1983): 184-7.

9. Wodiczko.

Look, Care, Act:
Project Punchlist

Francoise Bollack, Ethelind Coblin,
Inés Elskop, Denise Hall, Margot Jacqz

People who care about things going downhill want to see a turnaround. Anybody who's worked on this project certainly feels a little better about themselves for having dealt with that, even if it hasn't been accomplished. They are acting in a way that involves their daily life and their environment. That's a very positive turnaround in a kind of grassroots way that we've all been saying is missing. Project Punchlist speaks to the fact that people have been discouraged.
— Sarelle Weisberg, Program Director, New York City Department of General Services; early project participant

Two years ago a group of women architects, members of the American Institute of Architects New York City chapter, met to brainstorm about the state of our city. We sensed that certain aspects of the city's quality of life were deteriorating and that there was no systematic way of addressing them. The reasons were multiple: too many failed global plans, too much planning from the top down, not enough follow through, too much emphasis on the distant future and not enough on the realities of the present. What could be done?

Our answer was to conceive Project Punchlist — a method for helping people recognize, note and monitor conditions in the built environment. Project Punchlist is modeled on the construction "punchlist," the items that must be completed or corrected for a construction project to be considered finished. In this case, residents, community leaders and political representatives make a block-by-block assessment of physical conditions and direct problems to the appropriate parties.

Project Punchlist is meant to be a comprehensive and systematic tool for collaborative community action and power. It enables community members, government agencies and elected officials to look, care and act — with the ultimate goal of improving the deteriorating quality of life in our neighborhoods. While we have been working with Project Punchlist in New York City neighborhoods, it could be applied in almost any community.

The premises of Project Punchlist are simple: First, we cannot allow ourselves to become accustomed to the deterioration of our environment — as we inevitably do — because our environment influences us. The space of the city is, after all, where public and political discourse takes place, and it constantly returns to us information about ourselves, our expectations and our political systems. To paraphrase Leon Krier, the place (the city) becomes the point where individuals identify themselves as citizens fully responsible from a cultural and political standpoint.

Second, the public participation process must be made objective and tangible. In New York City, community boards play an important role but most people (including architects) are unaware community boards exist until they get involved in a hotly debated land-use or planning issue, such as the location of community-based services.

Finally, and maybe most important, residents must see their neighborhood in a truly comprehensive way if they wish to shape its future. An architect's perception and participation can help them do this. Architects deal with the built environment every day and are accustomed to observing its vital signs. Project Punchlist helps people interpret these signs by asking them to consider the connection between the physical characteristics of the environment and the more intangible relationships of urban life.

How Project Punchlist Works

We organized Project Punchlist around three general components of the public realm — streets and sidewalks, open spaces, and building facades. For each category, we devised a punchlist form on which conditions can be noted. Within each category we suggested a list of common physical problems, such as cracked sidewalks, damaged hydrants, missing curb cuts, potholes, garbage, graffiti, crumbling facades and the like. Finally, we created a supplemental glossary of common terms, which helps participants define problems for consideration, and a directory that informs them of the procedures for reporting problems and the responsibility of public agencies or individuals to address them.

The work in each neighborhood begins with an orientation session, during which we familiarize volunteers with the objectives and procedures of the project. We hand out a field manual, show slides of common conditions, designate routes volunteers will follow during their inspections and sign up teams of participants.

The field work consists of a walk through the neighborhood. Teams convene at a designated field location and review their routes for the day. As they walk along their routes, participants document the conditions they find, noting the exact location and time of day. At the end of the walk-through, the forms are collected and presented to the community board staff.

Implementation is the most crucial and often the most difficult phase. The information collected during the walk-through has to be processed. Ideally, this is done through the community board, whose staff generates complaint forms and directs them to the public agencies or individuals responsible for correcting each problem.

Pilot Programs

We began Project Punchlist with three pilot programs in Manhattan. We determined early on that the local community boards should be our starting point, the hub for this collaborative effort. New York's community boards, each of which serves a neighborhood of 100,000 people or more, are composed of volunteer members appointed by the borough president. Each has a paid staff under the direction of a district manager. The boards are a liaison between the community, public agencies and elected or appointed officials; as such, they are the first of many links in the political hierarchy of city government.

The community boards that were most responsive to our project were from the Lower East Side (CB3), the Upper West Side (CB7) and West Harlem (CB9). The district managers put us in contact with active neighborhood organizations — block associations, youth groups, church groups — and individuals. Where there was an interest, we made a presentation. Where we found some level of response and commitment, we chose a site for a pilot project.
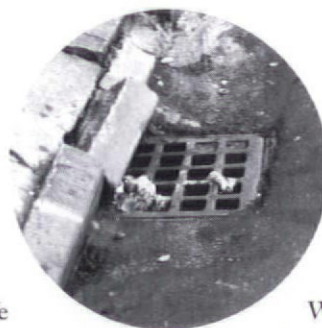
Commitment and interest were the determining factors. We wanted participants who were eager to look at their environment in a fresh way, ready to care about their neighborhood and prepared to act to improve its condition.

The three pilot programs yielded mixed results. From the standpoint of understanding the workings of neighborhoods and their physical, social and political infrastructure, they were extraordinary. From the standpoint of

Project Punchlist offers neighborhoods a vehicle for documenting physical problems like damaged street poles, crumbling curbs, pavement or sidewalks, and poorly maintained or vacant buildings. Photos courtesy authors.

The punchlist targets problems
that indicate a lack of public con-
trol or pose safety hazards.

solving problems, they were a relative
disappointment. We realized that the
strengths and weaknesses of a neigh-
borhood are directly related to the
nature of volunteerism and personal
commitment, the effectiveness of com-
munity board representation, the visi-
bility of public agencies and the sincer-
ity of local politicians.

The processing of our punchlist
documentation would be handled dif-
ferently in each district, in part because
of each community's sensitivity to par-
ticular problems. Also, we discovered
early on that our punchlist format
could interface easily with a citywide
computerized complaint tracking sys-
tem, into which community boards log
problems for which public agencies are
responsible. Unfortunately, we found
out, only one of our test community
boards had the system up and running.

In the Lower East Side, we found a
community divided among special
interest groups that often were
opposed to each other and felt alienat-
ed from city government. To them,
Project Punchlist was not a tool for
empowering the community but
another form of policing. Cooperation
was minimal and turnout at our pre-
sentations somewhat slim. We did pro-
ceed with our walk-through, however,
with a handful of committed residents,
including several members of a recent-
ly forming block association and the
founder of a community garden.

The district manager very selective-
ly collated our documentation. Because
CB3 lacked the computerized com-
plaint tracking system, problems were
sent directly to commissioners of the
relevant public agencies. While the
approach was limited in scope, results
were immediate, with problems reme-
died in a timely fashion — catch basins
unclogged, potholes filled. Facade and
sidewalk issues directly affecting pri-
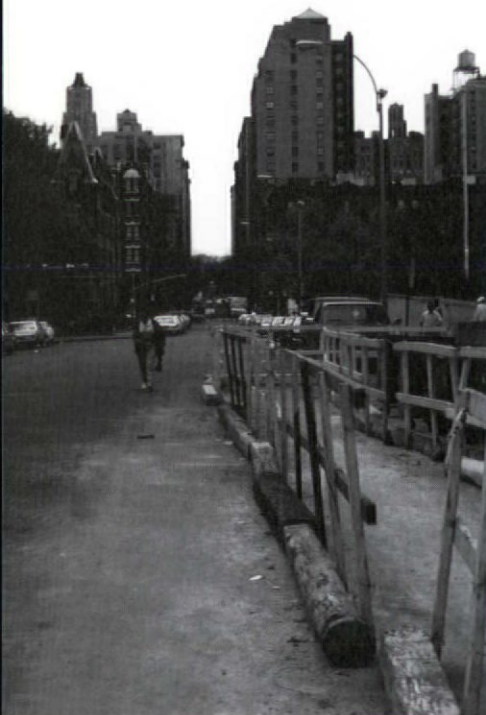vate landlords were not addressed.

In West Harlem, we found a com-
munity overwhelmed by social issues
— housing, crime, drugs — but with
strong group affiliations and a history
of activism. Enthusiasm was high and
so was the turnout. Two walk–throughs
were scheduled. Everyone seemed to
know exactly which trees, pay phones,
garbage piles, loose cobblestones and
broken parking meters were being used
as points of drug activity. Residents saw
Project Punchlist as a positive and effi-
cient tool, a way for individuals to take
back the streets and assume some mea-
sure of control over the physical break-
down reflected in their environment.

Unfortunately, changes of person-
nel were made in the community board
and its staff just prior to the fieldwork.
Official interest waned, and the com-
pleted punchlist forms remain unpro-
cessed. The local residents themselves
remain committed and Project
Punchlist is now seeking a sponsor at
the city council level.

On the Upper West Side, we found
a diverse, well-organized community
backed by a strong community board
office and staff. The pilot program
generated hundreds of complaints,
which were processed through the
complaint tracking system and sent to
the appropriate public agencies.
Anything felt to be locally sensitive was
filtered out to be addressed initially at
the board level. Some remedial action
has been reported, but no community-
based network has been set up to verify
or follow up on the complaints or to
verify the results.

A Full-Scale Walk–Through

Enthusiasm, structure and commitment
are key aspects of any collaboration but
difficult to sustain in small-scale efforts
dependent on a handful of individuals.
Our three pilot programs were charac-
terized by differing degrees of each ele-

New York City Council Member Ronnie Eldridge (right) provided
political and staff support necessary for launching Project
Punchlist on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

ment. Discussing Project Punchlist
with CB7 district manager, Penny
Ryan, we concluded it could take hold
in the community only if it had greater
scope and could reach more residents.
To that end, she put us in contact with
City Council member Ronnie Eldridge,
and what resulted was the first large-
scale community based effort.

The sponsorship of a council mem-
ber was the political element missing
from our previous collaborations.
Eldridge gave us the ability to mobilize
a large constituent base and access to
staff (both paid and volunteer), media
and city government. The structure of
a political campaign, with its system of
tapping into local leaders who share
responsibility for canvassing areas and
disseminating information, was an
ideal model for organizing participants.

In response to a mailing of 70,000
households, more than 200 people
attended a preliminary presentation.
The sites covered in our pilot pro-
grams had been roughly five- by five-
block areas; this group would cover an
entire council district, covering some
200 blocks between 56th and 96th
streets and Central Park West and
Riverside Drive. Participants attended
several orientation sessions, and on the
designated Saturday almost 300 peo-
ple, in sensible shoes and with clip-

boards in hand, took part in the
walk–through.

The large-scale walk–through yield-
ed a large number of complaints, and
team captains delivered the documen-
tation to CB7 staff at a lively open
house. Some team captains have since
recruited participants to help with the
computerized data entry, and efforts
are being made to enlist students from
a local high school computer class. The
community board staff is active, public
agencies have been alerted to the
onslaught of complaints coming their
way and residents are poised for the
follow-up. Now it is a question of time
and commitment.

What Have We Learned?

Our first goal in creating Project
Punchlist was to have people look at
the city, their environment, and do
something about it. Looking would
rekindle enthusiasm for buildings,
whether unique or mundane, for the
streetscapes, for a particular row of
trees, for a park, for the city itself. We
knew that people would be shocked
and galvanized into action. People
would look and they would care.

Our second goal was to present
communities with a simple methodolo-
gy for action, one that they could very

quickly make their own. The simplicity
of the punchlist format, the item by
item reporting method, the division of
the urban environment into the simple
categories of "Streets and Sidewalks,"
"Building Facades" and "Open Spaces"
would provide an understandable
framework that could be used by any-
one. People would act.

Our third goal was to make an
impact on the urban environment by
getting a large number of problems
corrected at one time. We envisioned
that the efficiency inherent in report-
ing groups of complaints — say 25 pot-
holes at one time versus 25 potholes
one by one — would result in better
service delivered faster and more equi-
tably (not just to the "squeaky wheel")
by public agencies.

We discovered that there is indeed a
lack of connection between city gov-
ernment — this big, amorphous set of
agencies whose precise responsibilities
few of us understand — and the people.
Every time we presented the project we
met with enthusiasm and a quick grasp
of its intentions and of what it could
accomplish. Where all the ingredients
were in place — an active community,
strong political support and an orga-
nized community board with an effec-
tive district manager (as, for example,
the Upper West Side) people mobilized

Punchlist   *Sidewalks ╎ Streets ╎ Open Space*

Consider   trees, pavement, curbs, signage, lighting, utility covers, fire hydrants, amenities such as benches and public telephones, garbage, newsstands —

Name and Telephone :

Date and Time :

Location / Street / N S E W side :   Recommendation

Address   Problem

General Comments:

Punchlist   *Open Spaces*

Consider   Vacant Lots, Parks, Parking Lots, Gardens — accessibility, amenities such as benches, tables telephones, and public toilets, paving and planted areas, lighting, fences and railings...

Name and Telephone :

Date and Time :

Location / Street / N S E W side :   Recommendation

Address   Problem

General Comments:

Punchlist   *Building Facades*

Consider   stoops, entryways, front and side yards, fences and railings, garbage, windows, ledges, fire escapes, decorative elements, signage, security ...

Name and Telephone :

Date and Time :

Location / Street / N S E W side :

Address   Problem   Recommendation

General Comments:

Above: A punchlist team comparing notes in Riverside Park on the Upper West Side.
Right: Samples of standard forms for recording problems.

Punchlist teams document the condition of buildings that face — and have a visual impact on — public spaces.

in numbers, they looked and they did something about what they found.

Our second goal has proven more elusive. The punchlist format is understood by everybody, but a number of issues have arisen. Some groups want to customize the forms to collect data according to different agenda — one group wanted us to survey the types of ground floor businesses in a particular area, another wanted us to record instances of prostitution. We find we must remain involved to keep the focus on the built environment and to keep the method of collecting information consistent enough that the project does not disintegrate into a number of unrelated fragments.

As to our third goal of having a noticeable impact, it is too early to tell how Project Punchlist fares. CB7 has just finished entering the large number of complaints generated by the walk–through and has forwarded half to public agencies. One area captain reports that accessibility curb cuts were made in her area recently, but this may or may not be due to our effort. We are all watching.

We have made some unexpected discoveries. While we all expect public agencies to serve us, we forget that we have our own part to play in the maintenance of the environment. Homeowners who count on the parks department to prune their street trees, for example, do not want to be reminded that they have to repair their cornice or redo their sidewalk if conditions become hazardous.

In one neighborhood, brownstone owners said they felt beleaguered because the copper down spouts on their buildings are frequently stolen, but they do not have money to put up new ones. Nor do they have money to fix cracked sidewalks. They did not want either item appearing on a punchlist, and for a moment it seemed that Project Punchlist would be so limited in that area that it was doomed. The head of the neighborhood association reminded the homeowners that there was strength in numbers, and someone else suggested starting a fund to help with certain repairs, something like a Business Improvement District. In the end participants realized that this group effort could actually help them deal with, and perhaps solve, individual problems.

Another interesting discovery was that Project Punchlist provides officials at all levels of city government with a tool for assessment of budget needs

and a framework for realistic dialogue. The project has been readily embraced by public agencies and elected and appointed officials.

Project Punchlist is exploring the role of the architect in service to the community. It is our responsibility to engage with communities as interpreters of advocates for the built environment. Project Punchlist provides a vehicle for us to contribute our professional expertise and knowledge in the community's interest.

Residents must remember both their rights and obligations in a democratic society. Politicians must believe that community service can be self-service. Public agencies must decide to institutionalize caring, not neglect. Architects must remember that they are citizens, too, catalysts for action and education, creators and guardians of the built landscape.

Art and the Transit Experience

Cynthia Abramson

As more and more cities build or modify their transit systems, interest has grown in art-in-transit programs, which generally commission works of art for or engage artists in the design of transit systems. Supporters of these programs believe that they can "integrate creative values into such places ... where thousands of people circulate and encounter each other every day" — thereby improving these environments for users and enticing riders back to public transportation.[1]

Transit art projects have been both decorative and functional. While they can contribute to the cultural life and profile of a city, they also can help shape the experience people have of using a transit system as they move through a city.

The art projects featured here respond to the special nature of traveling through a city on public transit. They celebrate acts of arriving and departing, times when we move not only between different places but also different states of mind. They mediate between local communities and the region to which the transit system connects them, helping passengers understand their place within the region and revealing and strengthening the identity of local communities. And they increase passengers' feelings of safety, comfort and orientation in systems that are often unfamiliar and disorienting.

Additional research by Todd W. Bressi, Hanan A. Kivett and Jill Slater.
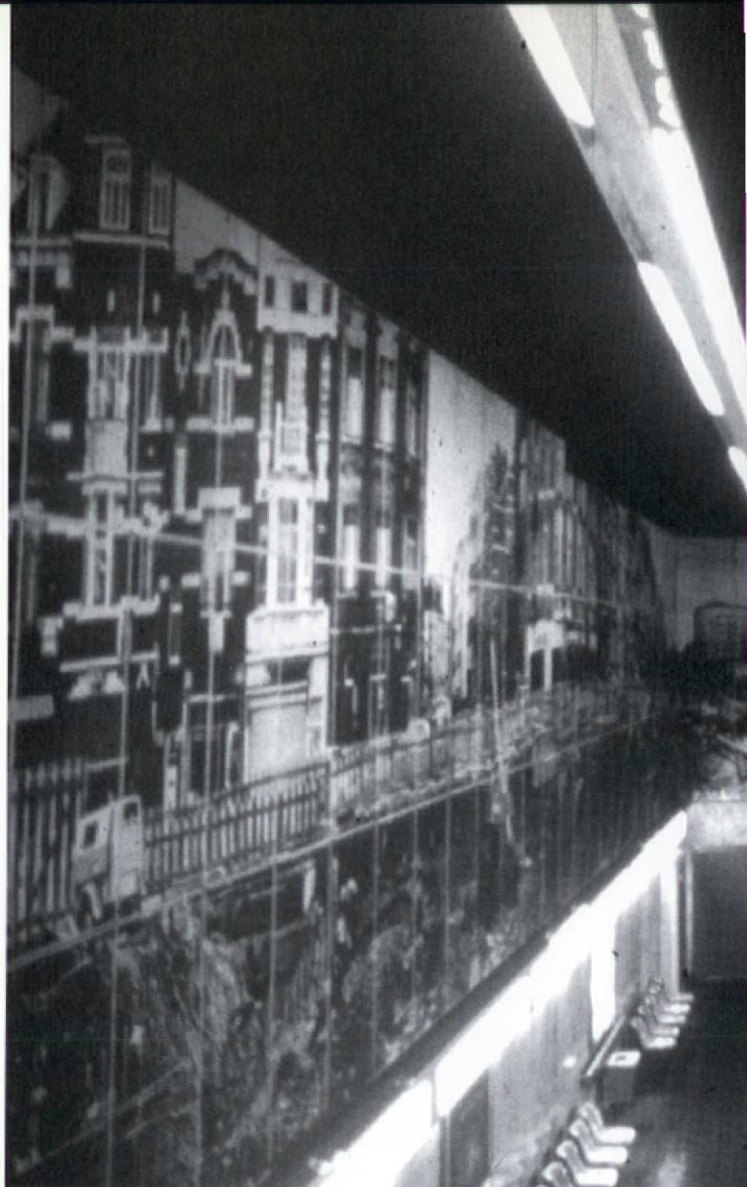
(Above) Jean-Paul Laenen's photomural in Brussels' Aumale Station recalls the neighborhood that was demolished when the subway was built.

(Center) Hector Guimard's canopy for the Abbesses Station, Paris. Photo by Cynthia Abramson.

(Right) London's Charring Cross Road Station, with Richard Dragun's reproductions of paintings from the National Gallery and Portrait Gallery, which the station serves. Photo by Cynthia Abramson.

Placemaking

Landmarks and gateways can help create a sense of place in a city, both for residents and visitors. The ability of transit stations to function as both is illustrated by the art nouveau glass and wrought ironentrances French architect Hector Guimard created for more than 200 Paris Metro entrances between 1900 and 1913. Their stylish design dignifies and elevates the act of traveling by Metro. Guimard's shelters have become synonymous with the Metro and with the city of Paris itself and serve as local landmarks in the neighborhoods where they still stand.

Contemporary artists have created thematic artworks and designed system elements that help establish connections
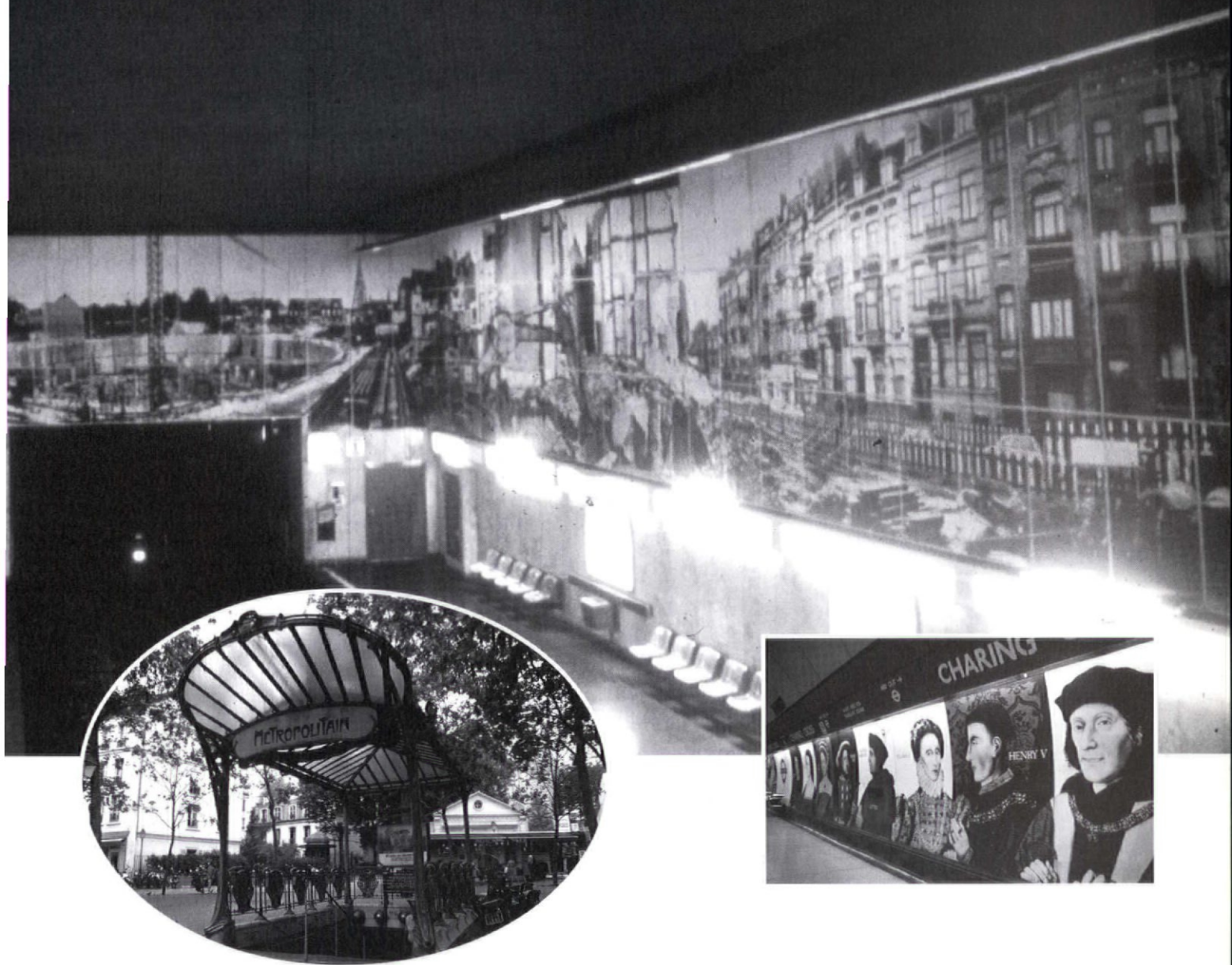
between municipal transit systems and the communities they serve. Often, these projects make reference to a site, landmark, historic person or event that is meaningful to an area served by a transit stop, or they evoke the character of a nearby district.

Metrorama '78, Jean-Paul Laenen's dramatic photomural in Brussels' Aumale Station, recorded both the destruction of the Anderlicht neighborhood and the life that had existed there for more than half a century before metro construction began. The mural literally envelopes riders, wrapping around the upper section of the station walls.

Richard Dragun's vitreous enamelled steel mural in London's Underground marks the place of the Charring Cross station by creating a continuum of visual images — from the National Galleries above to the station below — and by reminding passengers of nearby landmarks in the city.

Recent projects also follow this strategy. In Los Angeles, Francisco Letelier's murals in the Westlake/MacArthur Park station celebrate the culture of the Latino neighborhood above; sculpture in the Aviation and El Segundo stations evoke the dynamism of the aerospace and defense industries nearby.

Other projects celebrate transit environments as places of their own. Jack Mackie's array of green and orange utility poles in a bus staging area next to Seattle's Convention Place Station lend a sense of theatricality to this otherwise workaday space.

(Top) Sigvard Olsson's designs for Stockholm's Rådhuset station play on the sense of being in a place that has been excavated.

(Above) Gunnar Larson's "Transformation in the Sky" in Stockholm's Farsta Centrum station.

Photos by Cynthia Abramson.

Reflective phrases carved into the risers of the Douglas/Rosencrans station stairway on Los Angeles' Green Line. Courtesy Los Angeles County MTA.

Humanizing the Metro Environment

In most cities, the transit system is used by more people than any single building. Yet concerns for passenger comfort seem to have been ignored in the design of transit environments, particularly in older systems. This is especially true for underground lines, where sometimes only minimal lighting and ventilation are provided. While some argue that transit environments are experienced less deliberately than other architectural spaces,[2] one could also argue that transit environments are experienced more intensively than most other places, and passenger comfort therefore demands extraordinary consideration.

The Stockholm Metro provides some of the best examples of how art has been be used to humanize transit environments, to make them more comfortable and interesting for passengers. There, desginers have endeavored to introduce light and color into the underground in order to counteract the effect of Scandinavian winters on passengers.

Gunnar Larson's "Transformation in the Sky," at the Farsta Centrum station, seeks to create a warm and summery atmosphere in what is basically a cold and windy place where passengers both buy tickets and wait for trains. Ulrik Samuelson's

Kungsträdgarden station recreates the gardens above — featured are waterfalls with lichens and moss growing on the walls, cast architectural features, statuary and sculptures from different times and a variety of buildings, terrazzo floors and Venetian water vases.

The designers of the Santa Monica/Vermont station on Los Angeles' Red Line realized that Angelenos, with little tradition of using underground spaces and a long tradition of earthquakes, might be fearful of using that city's new subway. Their design for the station entrance includes skylights that allow natural light to reach the station platforms.

At the Douglas/Rosencrans Station, artist Renee Petropoulos notes that people passing through are marking an important transition in their day — moving from work to home or vice versa. Words set in the risers of the station stairway echo the thoughts that might be going through a passenger's mind.

Vicki Scuri's Seattle bus tunnel counters the disorientation and discomfort travelers often feel in dark, claustrophobic tunnels. Bright lighting and vivid graphics help riders see their place in the tunnel and orient themselves to the streets above.

(Above) Francisco Letelier's mural, El Sol, describes the Latino community living near the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station on Los Angeles' Red Line. Courtesy Hanan A. Kivett.

(Right) Paragraph short stories posted at Seattle's bus stops make waiting a bit more pleasant. Courtesy Seattle Metro.

Safety, Wayfinding, Circulation and Orientation

The connections between different transportation lines or modes present particular challenges for passengers and designers. They are places where people might find themselves momentarily disoriented or where people moving in different directions conflict. Transit artists also have addressed these problems of circulation and wayfinding.

New York City's subway is reknowned for the bas reliefs that adorn its earliest stations and helped identify them to non-English-speaking immigrants — among them are a sailing ship for Columbus Circle and a steam paddlewheeler for Fulton Street.

Nicholas Munro's ceramic murals depicting mazes and the game "Snakes and Ladders" for London's Oxford Circus station were controversial because they parodied the labrynthine passages, corridors, escalators and staircases that characterize many Underground stations. Some critics argued that Munro succeeded only in reinforcing the chaos and complexity of the subway environment.

Ake Pallarp and Enno Hallek adopted a more direct approach to solving the problem of wayfinding at the Stockholm Metro's Stadion station. Using rainbow-colored wooden arrows and pointing fingers, they created lively signage to direct passengers to the College of Music and Stadium.

Gates can serve important functions in metro stations as well, directing passengers towards a particular station entrance or exit and preventing people from crossing the tracks. But they also can be one of the most unwelcoming elements of the transit environment.

The gates in the Stockholm subway, however, include the ornamental ironwork of Britt-Louise Sundell's gate at the

Modern Odysseys: Heroic Journeys We Make Everyday

The moment was frozen in time, like a photograph. They watched each other. Eventually he broke the silence. "I'll come and see you," he said. "Fine," she replied. "I'll walk," he continued. "No," she said, "I live two hundred miles away. You'll have to come by car or bus or train." He waited briefly. Then he said, "Everywhere is walking distance, if you have the time."

Call the Voice Box

548·2787

Brought to you by Metro's Artists' Regional Transit Project.

"Snakes and Ladders," a mural by Nicholas Munro in the London Underground's Oxford Circus station, comments on the complexity of the station layout. Photo by Cynthia Abramson.

Above: "Domino," Wrought iron security gate on platform of Mariatorget Station, Stockholm. Design by Britt-Louise Sundell. Photo by Cynthia Abramson.

Painted wood safety fencing positioned to keep people from crossing tracks at Hallonbergen Station, Stockholm. Design by Elis Eriksson and Gosta Wallmark, with input from local children. Photo by Cynthia Abramson.

Mariatorget station, Sivert Lindblom's sculpted iron platform dividers at Västra Skogen which serve to separate waiting areas for inbound and outbound trains, and the child-like drawings and scribblings of cartoonist Elis Eriksson and Gosta Wallmark on the white wooden fences in the track arches at the Hallonbergen station.

Subway Poster Art Programs

The London Underground is famous for its subway posters. The earliest posters, dating back to the early 1900s, were selected by Frank Pick, publicity director of the London Passenger Transport Board. They depict a myriad of desirable destinations that could be reached by "tube." Their emphasis on the connection between public transport and leisure travel developed as a response to dwindling ridership caused by the growth in popularity of the private car.

The most well-known poster artist was Edward Johnston who, in 1916, created the non-serif lettering and logo design which revolutionized the field of topography. Other noteworthy artists used cubist and abstract idioms to idealize the historic events of the time, stir the patriotism of the British citizenry and expose the public to modern art.

The current poster art program is funded out of London Regional Transport's marketing budget. These funds cover both the design and production of the artwork and artist fees. Between 300 and 400 posters are displayed at a time, depending upon the amount of existing unsold advertising space, throughout the Underground. They stay up for six to eight months, and are produced in runs of 6,000. The original paintings from which the posters are made become the property of the London Underground and are added to their fine art collection.

The use of fine art posters on station platforms has been adopted by other cities, most recently New York. The Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) poster art program began in 1990, also with the goal of encouraging recreational use of public transportation and to celebrate the neighborhoods of New York City. Four artists are commissioned every year and charged with creating a vision of a particular neighborhood. Recent posters have depicted the New York Harbor, Brooklyn's Fulton Mall, the farmer's market at Union Square and various cultural institutions. The original artworks, which range from oil paintings to collage, are added to the MTA's fine art collection.
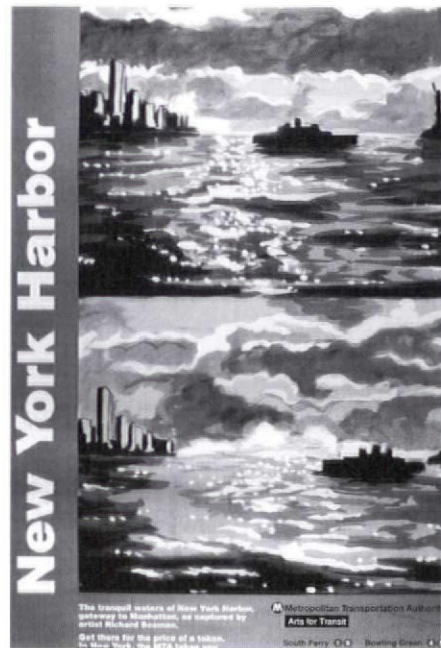
Posters are hung for approximately three months at a time, and printed in runs of three to four thousand. Like in London's Tube, they are displayed in the unused advertising panels throughout the system's 469 stations. The posters, which enjoy tremendous popularity, are funded out of the MTA's marketing budget, with the Arts-in-Transit program paying all artist commissions and fees. Like London's poster art program, the New York MTA's posters function as both aesthetic enhancement and public relations tool.

Notes

1. Pol Mara, *L'Art Dans le Metro*, (Brussels: Societe Transport Intercommunaux Brusselois, 1981), 201.

2. "Metro and Architecture: Buildings and Public Transport," *Revue of the International Union of Public Transport* 36:4 (January 1988): 276.

(Top) "The Port of London Steamer Cruises," Esmé Roberts (1934); "New York Harbor," Richard Bosman (1993).

(Lower row, from left) "Sir John Soane's Museum," Dan Fern (1987); "Downtown Brooklyn/Fulton Mall," Loren Munk (1992); "El Museo del Barrio," Marina Gutierrez (1992); "Chinatown by Underground," John Bellany (1988).

London posters courtesy London Transport Museum.
New York posters © Metropolitan Transportation Authority.
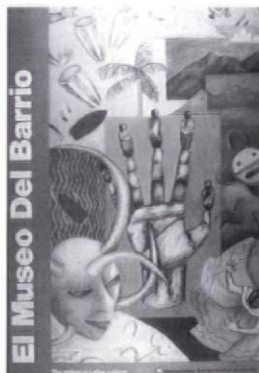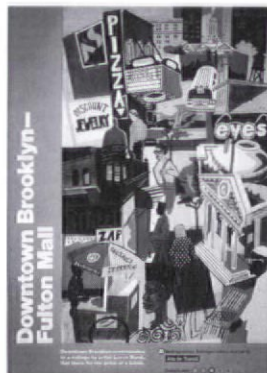
Creating a Sense of Purpose: Public Art and Boston's Orange Line

Myrna Margulies Breitbart, Pamela Worden

A longer version of this article will appear as a chapter in the forthcoming collection edited by Donna Graves and entitled Shared Spaces: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Public Art and Public Space Design.

Top left: Artist Susan Thompson presents a proposal to the Roxbury Crossing Station site committee and arts panel. Photo by Pamela Worden.

Top right: Thompson's "Neighborhood" banners installed at Roxbury Crossing. Photo by George Vasquez.

Center: Poet Sharon Cox and her poem, "Drum," engraved on a pedestal at the Massachusetts Avenue Station. Photo by George Vasquez.

Bottom: Resident Roland Peters with his portrait and oral history, collected as part of the Orange Line arts program. Photo by Pamela Worden.

Background: Orange Line elevated before demolition and made as part of the Orange Line arts program. Photo by Lou Jones.

Photos courtesy UrbanArts.

During the 1980s, throughout the U.S., public art policy and funding focused on the big names and singular visions of a handful of artists. Their products, even when performed or installed in publicly accessible places, were often conceived and realized in isolation from the users of those places. Public reaction, as often as not, was one of disinterest, dismay, even rage.[1]

In Boston, during this same period, a very different kind of public art engendered very different reactions. *Arts in Transit: The Southwest Corridor* officially began in 1984. But its true beginnings go back to the sixties, when work crews began to slash their way through the heart of many of Boston's oldest neighborhoods to make way for an extension of a major highway, Interstate 95. As the inexorable destruction continued, outraged citizens took to the streets.

In 1970, in the midst of a recession that might have been eased by the many jobs provided by the project, Governor Francis W. Sargent declared a moratorium on the planned highway construction. In 1975, Sargent's successor, Governor Michael S. Dukakis, responded to the continued protests of citizens, and, for the first time in U.S. history, abandoned a major highway project in favor of alternate uses.

These uses would include relocating one of the city's four major subway lines (the Orange Line), constructing new commuter rail and Amtrak lines, creating a park that would provide critically needed open space and natural and recreational resources for communities located along the 4.7-mile length of the project (the Southwest Corridor) and a comprehensive public art initiative.

Let your head be your drum
Let your heart be the strings
And your whole body the winds
Listen to the music of your mind
Find serenity in the total sound
Make no room for the melodies of
those who never could carry a tune
Or hear the sounds of love
Hope to have the words of your heart
turn your song to gold
And the music the music
of a world at peace.

I'm a frustrated chef. I used to be a
chef on the railroad. I like to cook for
large parties of people... This is what
my children want to see me do now,
my grandchildren, is to flip the pota-
toes. Because I can take a whole pan
of hash brown potatoes and flip them
up in the air, and bam! And just
catch them. No, they're going to be
there. They just sit and wait.

Dan George's "Transcendental Greens" transforms the Forest Hills subway station into a forest of abstracted trees, responding to the site committee's wish for an artistic representation of the natural environment surrounding the station. Photo by George Vasquez.

The project directly affected more than one quarter of Boston's population, including the ethnically diverse neighborhoods of Chinatown, South Cove, South End, Back Bay, Fenway, Mission Hill, Fort Hill, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. Economic hardship and racial tension in many of these neighborhoods had been aggravated by the lengthy and disruptive process of this enormous construction project. Even after the highway was abandoned, citizens' fears of land speculation, displacement and negative economic impact motivated many to actively monitor critical land use, urban, park and station design decisions.

Public art came on late in the design process, after construction was already underway.[2] When UrbanArts, a small non-profit agency, came on board to administer *Arts in Transit*, community expectations were high while the transit agency's tolerance for additional community input was low. The Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA) was eager for a quick and easy fix to the community's latest demand, this time for public art. If there were to be art, its role would be to enhance the beauty of its stations, reduce vandalism and help erase memories of the past mistakes of urban renewal. Art might also revive images of a more prosperous past and generally improve the MBTA's public image.

Southwest Corridor residents wanted the permanent installations to help create a sense of place within each neighborhood. They also hoped to incorporate citizen participation and public education into the art program so that public art could help achieve the goal of reducing tensions that had long existed in many Southwest Corridor communities, tensions that often were the result of racism and the negative impacts of economic restructuring.

UrbanArts developed a multidisciplinary program. Working with community representatives, the agency lobbied the MBTA to expand community involvement in the selection process for permanent works and public art in each of the new transit stations. In an effort to further community participation, UrbanArts also invited artists and neighborhood groups to develop ideas for temporary and off-site art projects.

The permanent art program, based on established federal guidelines, called for a professional arts panel to select artists to be commissioned to create work for the new stations. UrbanArts expanded this process to include a standing 10-member site committee of community representatives who served as the client for each station's art program, often meeting for several months to develop a community profile and give direction.

Professional arts selection panels, chosen for demographic representation and their ability to offer professional perspective and expertise, worked with information provided by the community to site committees to select artists to develop proposals. When artists finally presented their proposals at a joint meeting of the site committee and arts panel, there was typically a high level of consensus regarding the most appropriate artwork for each site.

The final artworks reflected Southwest Corridor communities in a variety of ways. Some, like Susan Thompson's banners, "Neighborhood," represented a specific community's history in a traditional, literal, narrative way. Others, like Dan George's "Transcendental Greens" and John Scott's "Stony Brook Dance," expressed material relevant to the community in relatively abstract ways.

Concurrent with the selection process, UrbanArts requested and received proposals from artists and community agencies for a series of temporary and off-site projects. Funding for the implementation of these projects initially came from the private sector.

The first of these, a photography project called "The Artist's Lens: A Focus on Relocation," documented the changes taking place as the old elevated Orange Line along Washington Street gave way to the newer transit system along the Southwest Corridor, some distance away. Professional photographers, paired with high school students from the Hubert

H. Humphrey Occupational Resource Center in Roxbury, formed teams that worked together for more than a year to capture the architecture, people and feel of "The El" prior to its demolition.

Increasingly, some team members committed themselves to the politics of change, using their images to encourage people to think about the impact the upheaval would have on their own lives. As bonds between artists and residents grew, so often did public debate regarding the social and economic needs of neighborhood residents and the fear of imminent displacements associated with the Southwest Corridor project.

While "The Artist's Lens" used visual documentation to express community history and to engage people in discussion of the future, a second project, "Boston Contemporary Writers," used the written word to capture diverse authors' experience of urban life. In 1986-87 UrbanArts held a statewide competition to solicit works in poetry and prose that would be inscribed in granite and permanently installed in the new Orange Line stations and adjacent parkland. This anthology of work by urban writers went far beyond the expectations of the MBTA for its art program. A large community advisory group had worked with UrbanArts to launch this project and had helped with extensive outreach in established as well as informal literary circles. The selection panel conducted a blind review of manuscripts, and there was no way to know whether authors were male or female, black or white, young or old.

In the end, the 18 selected authors reflected the diversity of the Southwest Corridor's residents as well as a range of literary experience. For one author, Jeanette DeLello Winthrop, her work on granite was the first piece she had ever published. For others, like Gish Jen, the project represented a unique opportunity for her to have her work read and experienced by people for whom it had particular resonance. Jen's prose lines the long entry corridor into the South Cove station in Chinatown. It is a piece with humor, sympathy and understanding for all of us who are engaged in the struggle between individual behavior and cultural expectations, a struggle that is particularly poignant to the recent Asian immigrants who often use this station.

Finally, UrbanArts launched an oral history project, called "Sources of Strength," in collaboration with Roxbury Community College. The program offered students and residents an opportunity to learn the techniques of collecting oral histories and provided a way to interview and collect stories from Southwest Corridor residents.

People were pleased to talk about their lives, often sensing that their stories might help to break down the isolation many felt within their urban neighborhoods. Some felt that the extraordinary quality of many ordinary lives might put to rest

I was my father's favorite, growing up — the oldest, smartest, most morally upright of the children, perfect except that I should have been my brother. So cruel a confusion! It was as if in some prenatal rush, we had been dressed in one another's clothes. With the direst of consequences for him, certainly: In the China of 1948, a scholar's son could bring honor to a family, or else shame, nothing else; there was no room in that small country for a good-natured boy with a fondness for duck noodles. And as for his brainy sister, who would marry me?"[3]
— Gish Jen, from "The Great World Transformed"

the unremitting, negative stereotypes of urban America generated by the media.

The stories were an inspiration to artists and became the material for new work. "Sources of Strength" was produced as a theatrical performance at Massachusetts College of Art hosted by Northeastern University in 1988, using oral history text for the script. In 1991, an exhibition of text, accompanied by photographic portraits of the story tellers, was hosted by Northeastern University. In both the theatrical performance and the exhibition, the presentations were greeted with "Oh, that's you, isn't it" or "I remember that" and clearly had resonance for their audiences.

Nearly 800 people participated actively in the design, production and presentation of *Arts in Transit* projects. Each per-

son came with different objectives. Together, advisors and panelists, interviewers and story tellers, scriptwriters, photographers, students, artists and administrators, created a unique snapshot of a particular place at a particular time in history. Their contribution established a foundation for a public art program that reflected the special character of many Boston neighborhoods without compromising artistic integrity. Many participants also forged a partnership that led to ongoing efforts to rebuild and determine the future of their communities.

Process Over Product

Public art is rarely, if ever, subjected to environmental impact studies to determine how it affects the public. When an interdisciplinary study group[4] began its assessment of *Arts in Transit* in the summer of 1991, we discovered how few methodologies there were to accomplish this task and how many choices of focus could be made. We soon concluded that evidence of the effectiveness of the project in meeting community goals would best be understood if the focus of analysis shifted from an assessment of the permanent installations to the methods of their selection and to the impact of accompanying off-site educational programs.

By defining their individual and cultural identities as well as producing end products, ... collaborators and audiences are neither consumers of the works produced nor merely protestors of the wrongs they might want to right. Their creative process catalyzes reclamation and repossession of self, in art/work and the building of community.[5]

Arlene Raven's observation that certain forms of public art can begin to empower communities by opening up a dialogue and inviting critical as well as creative imaging to take place, is shared by many practitioners.[6] When members of our study group met with participants from the Arts in Transit project, we discovered that many felt more invested in their community through their participation in the selecting and planning for art to be installed, especially because these are neighborhoods that rarely get to see their environments enhanced. As one resident observer of the Orange Line art declared, "We deserve art just as much as anyone else." This is

especially the case when, as poet Sam Allen eloquently observed, urban residents are surrounded by pathology and need so desperately to create counter forces that "revive their spirit and feed their humanity."[7]

The photographic documentation and oral history projects also actively stimulated residents' awareness of the changes that had been introduced historically into Southwest Corridor communities and were continuing to be introduced by economic and political forces beyond residents' control. When our study group listened to Arts in Transit participants describe these learning experiences, we sensed the effect they had on motivating an even deeper interest in pursuing new research endeavors and forms of artistic expression.

The content of the information uncovered through personal stories as well as the many techniques utilized by Southwest Corridor residents to research their communities may finally have had a more sustained impact on a process of community development than the permanent installations themselves.

Choosing a Past, Creating a Future

Involving the general public in sharing memories and feelings about their neighborhood surroundings through art does not necessarily evoke happy or soothing themes. Nor does it necessarily generate consensus on how that community wants to be represented.[8]

In the Southwest Corridor, mass transit stations with spaces predicated on motion provided challenging sites from which to begin to establish any enduring vision of the present or future of the surrounding community. High unemployment, racism and the accumulated effects of years of unequal treatment also restrained hopes for creating a more liveable environment.

Given these obstacles, our study group wondered whether, and if so, how, local site committees managed to "choose a past," in Kevin Lynch's words, so that they might "construct a future"?[9] Did Southwest Corridor neighborhoods use the public art process to re-present themselves to the larger public in the community profiles, which focussed on diversity and history?
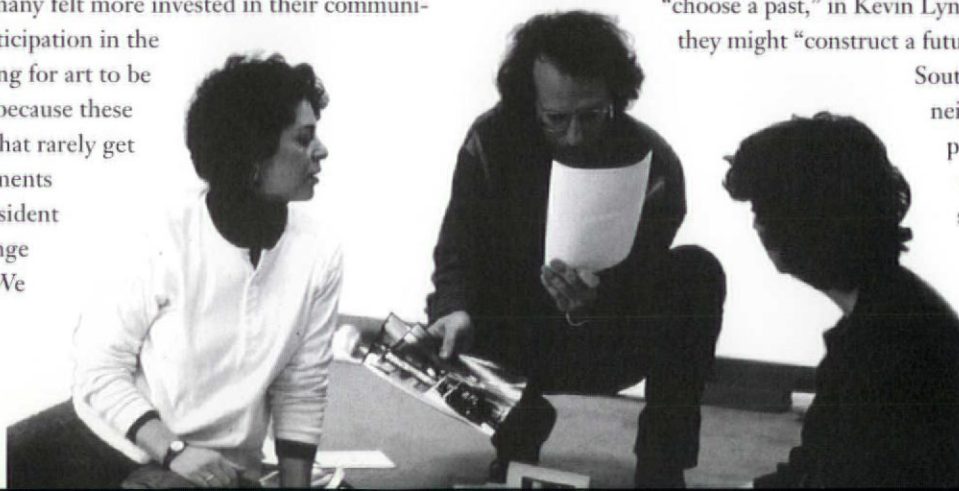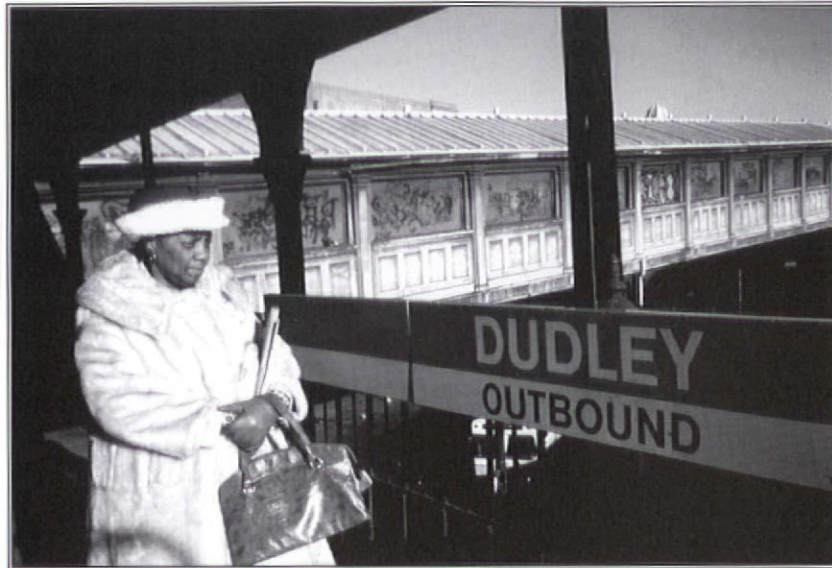
Using an art program to begin a process of healing and regeneration in diverse neighborhoods that were experiencing differing measures of political and social conflict was not easy. Most site committees discussed the cultural diversity of their neighborhoods and the difficult transitions they went through over time. Rather than emphasize the conflicts, however, they chose to emphasize the melting pot qualities and residents' common goals or shared values. The stress on common themes suggests that site committees were, perhaps, more interested in constructing an alternative future than in resurrecting these past struggles, and that they deliberately chose one past from many possible pasts to attain that goal.

Most of the Orange Line site committees described their past communities as vibrant places in which to live and work. They emphasized the multitude of contributions made by ethnic groups through work and community life. Though the negative effects of urban renewal, highway construction and recent gentrification were discussed, site committees chose to remind the public of an earlier time when Southwest Corridor communities provided many positive working and living experiences for their residents.

The juxtaposition of a vibrant past with a more problematic present could have been utilized as a call to activist arms for neighborhood residents. The themes, which spark nostalgic memories and emphasize the positive aspects of diversity in the present, however, are benign rather than provocative. Or so they seem.

Current residents, however, may share an interest in this skewed presentation. Negative depictions of the area focussing on crime and violence already receive enormous attention in the media and have justified public intervention in the past (e.g. urban renewal) that displaced residents without addressing their problems. Many *Arts in Transit* participants believed that those outside their neighborhoods ought to be presented with a view of Southwest Corridor life that was more balanced. The picture that site committees presented to the arts panels thus contrasted with that offered by the media or the more multi-dimensional perspectives portrayed through oral history and photographic imagery.

The political intentions of the site committees are, however, apparent and highly correlated with the destruction wrought in the past by urban renewal and gentrification. Their aim was to be the autonomous creators of a sense of place in order to avoid having one created by others with more questionable intentions for the future of their communities.

Multiple Senses of Place with a Singular Purpose

As participants describe it, their involvement in *Arts in Transit* project and search for ideas to inform the content of the art selection was not a search for a special theme to represent each neighborhood. Rather, it was a search for a sense of efficacy and purpose, of thereness. Residents were less concerned about the content of themes represented through the permanent art than they were about whether the art communicated — to the broader public — that they were there, alive, important and very interested in staying on.

Permanent public art installations created through a participatory selection process, together with participatory projects involving residents in seeing their neighborhoods in new ways through theater, literature, history, and photography, generated a sense of ownership of place, the right on the part of residents to define and redefine themselves, and, most especially, to project their existence into the future.

Though multiple senses of place exist within each community surrounding the Orange Line stations, every neighbor-

hood expressed (through its participation in the art selection and oral history, photography and literature programs) a common desire to lay claim to its space and to control its future as well as to record its past. Such a vision could never have been expressed through the placement of a single art product in a public space, even one as central as a train station. It could only be defined through a process of community building such as that initiated through the many education projects that accompanied UrbanArts' art selection process.

Conclusion

Several months after *Arts in Transit* was completed, our interdisciplinary study group invited participants to convene to discuss the project and its impact. The large turnout confirmed the community's continuing interest in the project; conversation, however, tended to focus on the future, not the past.

The artists and residents who gathered that evening suggested a wealth of ideas for arts projects they wanted to see happen: community art publications, theater productions, arts journals, neighborhood architectural tours, ongoing history projects, afterschool programs in creative writing and visual arts, and the creation of cultural centers. People also talked about the connections between these activities and potential future economic development. Dozens of projects have grown directly from the *Arts in Transit* experience; among these is a major initiative to reclaim Blue Hill Avenue as Boston's Avenue of the Arts.

For many, the underlying message of the *Arts in Transit* project became clear that evening: the arts and humanities could serve a larger community agenda for neighborhood revitalization. The installation of the public art, literature, oral histories, theatrical performances and exhibitions that had been part of *Arts in Transit* helped give form to that agenda. Because of the "force of its imagination,"[10] participation in creating art had helped residents to reclaim the cultural meaning of their lives. Having reclaimed abandoned spirits, residents felt more secure in their efforts to reclaim abandoned spaces and address other critical needs.

This focus on the future suggests new possibilities for public art. It also raises questions. How can public art move beyond the simple enhancement of public space to realize a more far-reaching role in the social and economic revitalization of urban neighborhoods?

What lessons can be drawn from *Arts in Transit?*

One lesson may be that public artists and arts administrators cannot assume the pre-existence of a public; instead, citizen participation must be invited and sustained. The project also suggests new indices for evaluating the success of cultural activity in public space. Instead of only asking "Do I like it?"

we may begin to ask more of our public art projects. How much discussion does it generate in the community? Is it ongoing? Can it sustain local involvement even after the project is completed? How many additional arts activities does it spawn? Is the art, and the process of its selection, responsive to change? Does it ensure community ownership, not only of the art, but of the community itself? Can that sense of ownership be sustained to prevent gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods upgraded through arts activity?

Along Boston's Southwest Corridor, many of these questions remain unanswered. It will take years to assess the true impact of *Arts in Transit*. That the questions were raised at all, especially by residents deeply affected by their engagement in the project, speaks to the reality that public art has gone beyond the elusive task of creating a sense of place. Public art in Boston has also helped engender a sense of purpose.

Notes

1. Jock Reynolds, "Introduction," in Myrna Breitbart, Wilfred Holton et. al, *Creating a Sense of Place in Urban Communities* (Boston: UrbanArts, 1993), 1-3.

2. Policies established during the Carter administration encouraged local transit authorities to set aside a portion of construction funds for public art, but Boston's Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) was slow to exercise this option for the Orange Line. Pressure from the community forced the bureaucracy to implement an art program that would reflect the diverse cultural identities represented in the communities along the Southwest Corridor.

3. Gish Jen, "The Great World Transformed," *Boston Contemporary Writers* (Boston: UrbanArts,), 2.

4. This interdisciplinary study group of scholars, artists, practitioners, and community residents was funded by the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the Boston Foundation for Architecture and the Rowland Foundation.

5. Arlene Raven, ed., *Art in the Public Interest* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 10.

6. Lucy Lippard, for example, believes that art for social change must encourage people to become involved in "the making of their own society and culture." See Lucy Lippard, "Moving Targets/Moving Out," in Raven.

7. Sam Allen as quoted by Myrna Breitbart in Myrna Breitbart, Holton et. al, 43.

8. Raven, 26.

9. Kevin Lynch as quoted in Dolores Hayden, "Placemaking, Preservation and Urban History," *Journal of Architectural Education* (41:3, 1988), 45.

10. Malcolm Miles, ed., *Art for Public Places: Critical Essays* (Hampshire, U.K.: Winchester School of Art, 1989), 7.

Hands On — A Public Role in Transit Art

Jessica Cusick

Top: Local high school student during apprenticeship with artist Steve Appleton. Bottom: Student traces outline of artist Joe Sam for "Hide-n-Seek" project.
Photos courtesy Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority A-R-T Program.

Los Angeles' Metro Rail system, a 400-mile network of subway and light-rail lines, will connect the region's sprawling neighborhoods in a new way. The arts offer a unique opportunity for those connections to be cultural and spiritual as well as physical.

Artists have worked on more than 60 stations. They have been given broad guidelines and encouraged to explore all aspects of the station. Community participation in the design process is especially important to the MTA because it fosters increased support for the design program; public art also can be a vehicle for tapping peoples' inventiveness, creativity and commitment when designing new public facilties. Several artists have chosen to interact with the community in a manner that is both direct and participatory, focusing their efforts on young people.

Steve Appleton, working on the Harbor Freeway station in South Central L.A., rented a studio just a few blocks from the station. There, he established Community Industrial Arts (CIA), an apprenticeship program that focuses on the interdisciplinary skills needed for careers in art, architecture, engineering and construction.

With the help of teachers from neighboring Locke High School Appleton selected 10 students to work in the CIA program for 10 weeks last summer. Appleton, other artists and a member of the community advisory group taught them computer drafting, photography, mold making, casting and etching. The students not only helped design and fabricate floor tiles for the station entrance, but also developed other projects, including cast aluminum sculptures and a series of black-and-white photographs.

Several students are still working regularly with Appleton, who wants to expand the program and provide ongoing training opportunities for young people. All of the studens will return to etch the tiles at the station and help with the finishing touches on this new landmark in their community.

At the Wilmington/Imperial Station, Joe Sam is creating a giant game of "hide and seek." Sixty colorful metal cutouts will play among the forest of concrete gray columns that support this three-level, above-ground station and the freeway above it. He is designing the figures with the help of children from nearby housing projects and schools.

Sam has a particular affinity for working with children. He was involved with the Head Start program for a number of years and he seems to know exactly how to get kids excited about his projects. He organized an intense two-day workshop during which a group of children from the nearby boys and girls club created Foamcore cutouts of their silhouettes, painted them and installed them at the station in a community celebration.

Sam and A-R-T project manager Maya Emsden also developed a coloring book that was distributed to fourth and fifth graders in area schools. Sam and Emsden gave students an opportunity to work with the silhouettes in the coloring book and to ask questions about what an artist does, particularly for a transit project. The sessions helped open a dialogue about career choices and issues of ownership and responsibility in public spaces. The final figures will contain elements of the ideas these children generated. Just before the work is installed next year, the childrens' drawings will be exhibited at a nearby shopping mall.

St. Louis MetroLink: Changing the Rules of Transit Design

Alice Adams
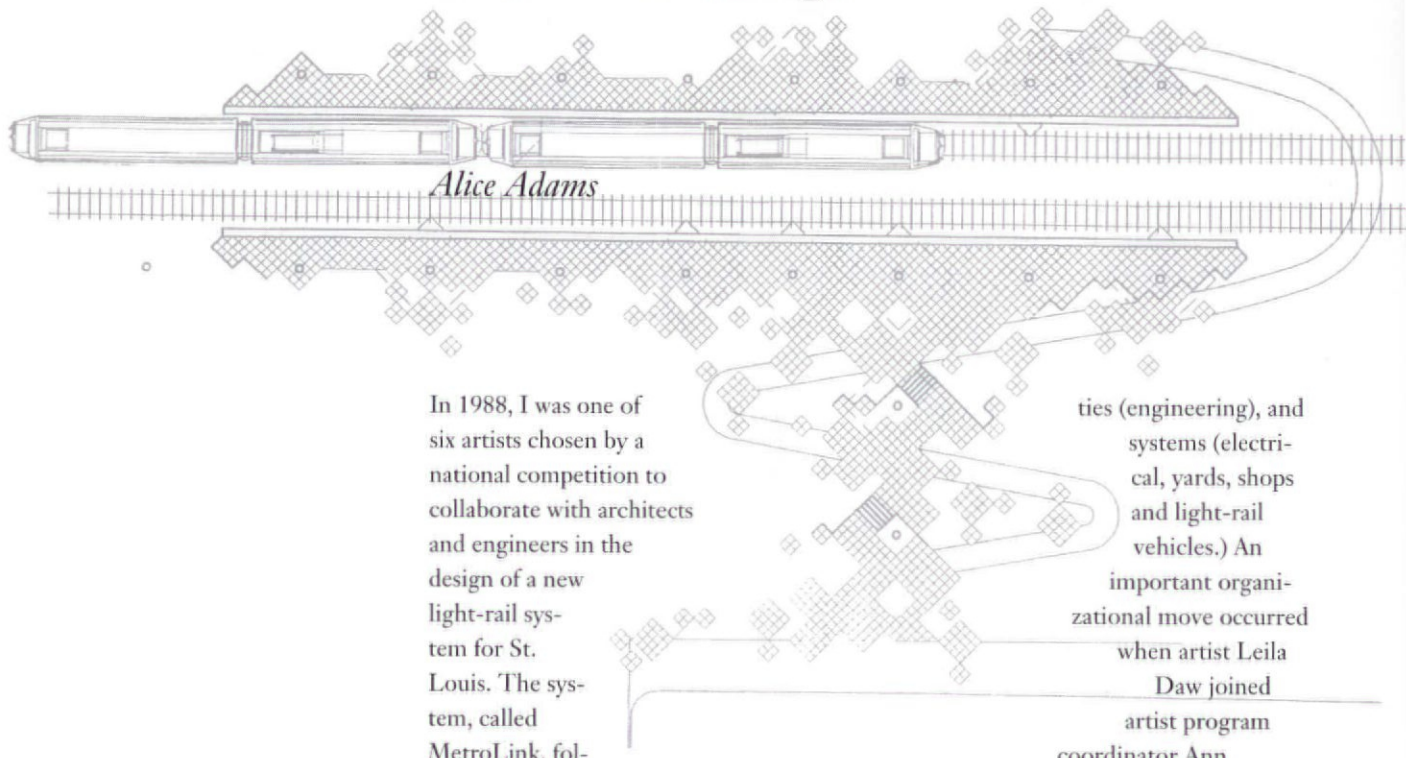
In 1988, I was one of six artists chosen by a national competition to collaborate with architects and engineers in the design of a new light-rail system for St. Louis. The system, called MetroLink, follows an eighteen mile, east-west route from East St. Louis (Illinois) through the St. Louis central business district to Lambert International Airport.

MetroLink planners felt artists might be able to improve the character of the built elements and spaces and to add a positive image to the transit environment. But the budget had no specific allocations for art projects, and no guidelines existed for our involvement; we had to invent our own. Moreover, preliminary engineering documents had been completed by the time we were appointed.[1] We decided to approach the entire system as a work of art — to infuse familiar forms of columns, walls, ceilings, platforms, stairways and landscapes with special qualities and references.

To facilitate our overall approach two artists each were assigned to the three system areas: architecture, facili-

ties (engineering), and systems (electrical, yards, shops and light-rail vehicles.) An important organizational move occurred when artist Leila Daw joined artist program coordinator Ann Ruwich on the overall project management team.

The most successful collaborations occurred in the large infrastructure elements that had to be designed, bid and built first. For example, we helped redesign standard "T"-shaped bridge piers into graceful "Y" forms. This particular shape makes these supports for the trackbed varied and dramatic in their march across uneven terrain.

We rethought the proposed Band-Aid-shaped platforms. Our early drawings show platform edges opposite the tracks breaking into areas that merge with the surrounding site to allow waiting areas and overviews. This idea did not survive but might have made passengers feel safer when approaching the stations and waiting for the trains.

Although we were able to do little with the platforms and their sites, a simple and eloquent canopy for out-of-door stations emerged from a com-

Delmar Station shortly after
opening. Courtesy Alice Adams.

MetroLink bridge piers and super-
structure. Courtesy Bi-State
Development Agency.

bination of artist ideas with later design work by Tod Williams and Kennedy Associates, an architecture firm. The sculptural character of this canopy is apparent in the concrete columns (cam-shaped in section) that support double pipe beams and rippled canopies that resemble the skeleton of a river creature.

We also worked with the architects to reshape the two underground stations. Original plans called for box-shaped spaces with columns along the platforms; the finished stations are free of columns and enclosed by curved ceilings and battered walls. In one station, the light-rail line threads through the opening of an old railroad tunnel, whose walls project into the station.

We left other reminders of the past to enrich the present: The LaClede's Landing Station incorporates old brick walls whose arched windows were opened to allow views of the Gateway

Arch and the Mississippi River; stone columns have been left standing at the Delmar Station.

We placed the signal bungalows near seven of the stations on concrete pedestals surrounded by open steel frameworks painted blue, making visible these important yet often anonymous off-the-shelf electrical buildings. We gave the yards and shops buildings, where trains are serviced and washed, interior viewing platforms so that the workings of the system not usually seen could be open to the public.

From the beginning we had worked with the project architects on landscape plans that included terracing, sweeping prairie planting, tree-lined approach roads and parking lots that responded to the terrain and placement of the station platforms. The parking lot designs, however, fell prey to budget cutting and typical asphalt plots were built.[2]

In the final stage of design documentation, when most of us artists had gone home, a number of elements that we thought would be included did not appear. We were never certain whether this was because of management resistance or overall budget cutting. For example, at 60 percent design the Forest Park Station had curving walks and stairways reminiscent of the architecture of the St. Louis Exposition (which had been held in Forest Park). The artists and architects both wanted this design but had to replace it with prosaic standard stairways and paths. This was an example of design from the architecture group being obliterated by the budget cutting of another group; in this case, the civil engineers of the firm responsible for the Forest Park station infrastructure.

The necessity of making the system earthquake proof increased the cost late in the design process and deflected

Left: East St. Louis Station canopy structure before sheathing. Courtesy Alice Adams. Above: Historic architectural remnants incorporated into design of Delmar station at the recommendation of the artist team. Courtesy Alice Adams.
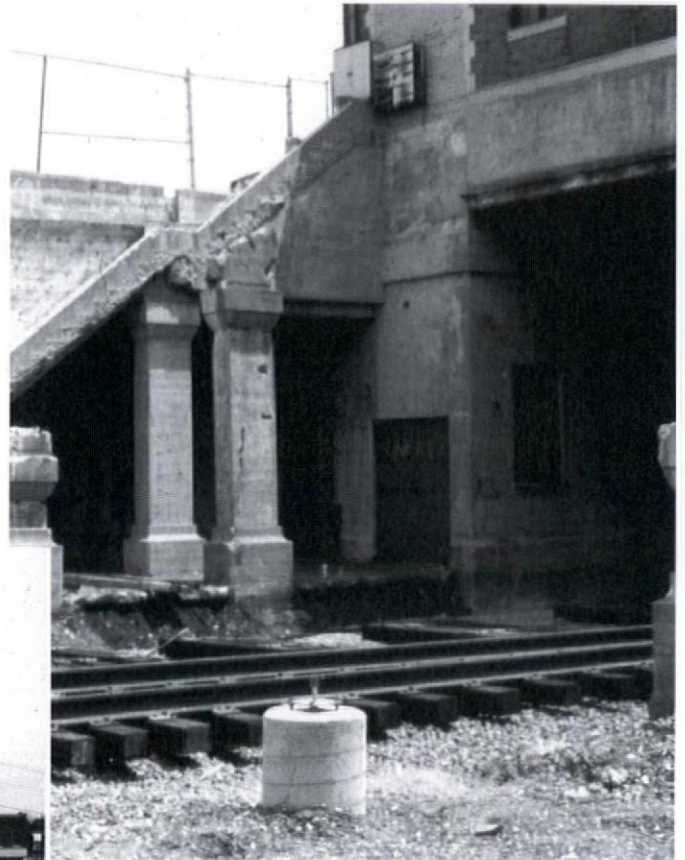
funds from elements that were last to be bid, such as station finishes. It also turned out that during the construction bid phase contractors were given the discretion to submit alternatives to the final design and profit from budget cuts they could make. In this process retaining walls along the right-of-way that had been selected and coordinated by the artists were replaced by versions that we had rejected.

The St. Louis design process confronted the rigid programs of contemporary engineering and transit system planning with the creative traditions of twentieth century site sculpture and community-oriented design. We made sure that when the question "How will it work?" arose it had to be confronted simultaneously with the question "What will it look like?"

Many of our ideas fell by the wayside in the final project stages yet the scope of our thought and research exists in our drawings and notes and is available from the Bi-State Development Agency.

When Metrolink opened in July, 1993, the Mississippi River had risen to within seven inches of the highest flood wall and threatened downtown St. Louis. Nevertheless, thousands of people who had probably never stood next to one another crowded the platforms to ride the trains and to celebrate at the stations along the route. As artists we had communicated with these passengers in shaping the paths and spaces that they were to travel every day. That was our intention and in St. Louis we had only just begun to change the rules.

Notes

1. The artist team (consisting of Alice Adams, Gary Burnley, Leila Daw, Michael Jantzen, Anna Valentina Murch and Jody Pinto) was chosen by the Bi-State Development Agency. The East-West Gateway Coordinating Council and Citizens for Modern Transit were local groups who intially recommended employing artists on the project.

2. After final design additional funding became available, and the artists and Austin Tao, a landscape architect, presented a landscape master plan that incorporated earlier design team work. Some of that work has started, including a prairie planting along route I-70 and a lighted, colored-glass passageway at the Central West End Station tunnel.

The New Urbanism, The Newer, and the Old

The following comments are excerpted from the transcript of a panel discussion, "The New Urbanism: What Does it Mean for Center Cities?" held May 25 in New York City at the Municipal Art Society.

Susana Torre: The New Urbanists, with all of their different stripes, share on the one hand a reliance on and admiration of precedent and on the other an emphasis on an urbanism of the center — not *the* center, but of centers.

The precedents they cite are smaller-scale, pedestrian-oriented places, both in suburbs and in center cities. What does not get asked is to what extent those precedents involve ideas about society that have changed. Some of the neighborhoods the New Urbanists look to as exemplars were, in fact, exclusive places and segregated, whether they were black villages in the south or exclusively upper-class residential neighborhoods in London or Paris.

Although America already happens to be the most multicultural society in the world, we know that the world is moving in a direction in which people will be, at least bicultural and bilingual, perhaps even poly-cultural. Therefore, the way people live and the question of separate identity, which are crucial to the formation of the neighborhoods, are not really accounted for in that a body of precedents. An important challenge is to design without the precedents, try to really envision how one needs to invent, not the new urbanism, but the newer urbanism.

In regard to centers, they are where communities come together to feel comfortable about themselves. They are where celebrations of who we are take place. I suggest the newer urbanism should look not only at centers but also at edges, critical places of friction in our society.

Ron Shiffman: I welcome the New Urbanism because it is reintroducing into the debate on cities throughout the country a sense of place and a sense of design that has been missing. I am a bit concerned, however, because when you look beyond the surface of New Urbanism, it begins to look purely physical and architectural. It tends to ignore a lot of determinants that shape cities, such as the race, gender and class discrimination that permeates our society.

When we talk about rebuilding and rehealing our cities we must realize that one of the biggest problems we have is the destruction of civic life. People don't know each other. They don't interact anymore because they have been alienated from each other. Much of this comes about because of the way we have allowed cities to form — the way we've allowed middle-class, white and upwardly mobile families to move out to suburban areas but have not offered low-income and single-headed households and minority groups the same mobility.

A lot of what we are hearing about is not "new" urbanism because it is a direct outgrowth of the participatory movement that began in the 1960s. One tends to think that when people are engaged in participatory planning or advocacy architecture, they will forget about design. That isn't the case.

Consider the preservation movement. It wasn't started by the architecture or planning professions. It started from the preservationists and community people who set out to preserve buildings and places to which they could connect. Who has protected inner-city neighborhoods from being destroyed, from allowing the Anthony Downs and Roger Starrs to plan them out of existence? It was the communities that knew the fabric that existed there and knew what could be built. It was communities that began to fight and create the entities that would preserve and rebuild those neighborhoods and the larger society.

Recently, a raging debate has taken place in New York City about a plan in the South Bronx that emerged from an extensive dialogue among designers, planners and neighborhood residents. Out of that dialogue came a very good plan that identified elements of urban design, quality materials and interactions that could rebuild a civil society as well as the physical environment. The design standards rejected the inferior quality of housing that has been built in our cities, as well as the suburbanization of our urban fabric, which doesn't build on the qualities of either urban life or suburban life.

That plan made its way all the way up to the City Planning Commission, but then was pronounced not fundable by the new city administration. The new administration tried to unravel what many people had carefully worked out. It tried to bring the plan back to a lowest common denominator.

The fact is, the process of engaging people in the South Bronx plan was a process of creating a new middle class. Cities have always produced middle-class people, we don't have to import them. We need to rebuild the institutions and the processes that create a new middle class.

Andres Duany: After being a rigorous practitioner of the public process, I have lost some confidence in it. When given the chance to make decisions, more often than not, citizens will make palpably wrong ones. They are usually against mixed use. They are always against higher density; they love five-acre zoning. For example, we have shown inner-city people town houses that they could afford, but instead they wanted single-family houses that we warned them would cost must more. The houses are built now, and people are protesting that their community cannot afford them!

The public process is not the answer. Things will not change until planners serve their cities so well that they are again trusted. People must know that most of the communities they admire, including the best of New York and many well-loved towns, did not just happen, planners shaped them. There was once a great deal of confidence in the planning profession. Planners were permitted to do the right things, quickly and efficiently.

Then in the '50s and '60s planners disgraced themselves, thanks to the influence of architectural inventions, and power was taken away from them. At public hearings now, our proposals often have less authority than the dog catcher's. Absolutely anybody can question what the planner says. Until confidence is restored by some real successes

and planners are allowed to implement the difficult decisions, a mob often decide against its best interests.

Shiffman: If we have a breakdown in our civil society, I don't care how well you design or how well egos make the final decision. That space will fail.

Duany: The New Urbanists work from a certain position of modesty: we invent nothing. We select successful models and emulate them. Urban inventions tend to fail and a city is too important to sacrifice to experiment.

Torre: One cannot really hope for a more rational and efficient and orderly process in the design of cities. The problem with that expectation is that it is utopian and undemocratic. Democratic processes that make cities are by definition inefficient because everybody has to be accounted for and things need to be sorted out. If we, as urban designers and planners, understood the messiness and complexity of the process and realized that it will lack efficiency, we would try to understand the kinds of physical forms that can respond to that kind of process, rather than long for the need or the forms that reflect ways of decision–making that are not democratic in structure.

Shiffman: To me you can't talk about utopia if you don't talk about democracy. I'm talking about a dialogue and a debate between the designer and the community. Out of that, a new level of design, a new level of thinking takes place. While citizens might want to be exclusionary, the dictators in this world do the same thing. I'd rather have a system of checks and balances that is democratic rather than a system of authoritarian decision–making. It's the dialogue and the debate that are critical.

Duany: The citizens will, in fact, close the drawbridge, oppose mixed-use and economic variety in housing, so we must fight them. I'm not the sort of

planner that does what the citizens dictate. We are not secretaries to the mob.

Planners must establish their technical superiority by truly understanding cities and gain, thereby, a certain respect. Perhaps, then, citizens overcome their instinctive fear.*Shiffman:* I always thought planners heeded what corporations told them to do. What has replaced the monopolistic tendencies of communism is not the citizens, it is the monopolistic tendencies of the Marriott chain.

Duany: One cannot do exactly what the developers say either. Planners must have their own center, their own principles that can resist both the developer and the citizen. Citizen empowerment is not the salvation. Councils were not assembled to be at the service of whatever group happens to be in attendance at a hearing to raise or lower its thumb. Our democracy is a representative form of government, there are elected officials and planning boards, and we should speak only to them. The citizens themselves are a distorting influence because they are specialists, just like traffic engineers are specialists. Their specialty is their own backyard and only rarely the community as a whole.

Andres Duany is a principal in Duany/ Plater-Zyberk, architects and town planners, Miami.

Ron Shiffman is director of the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development and a member of the New York City Planning Commission.

Susana Torre is chair of the department of environmental design at Parsons Institute in New York City.

Look More Closely at Columbia Point's History

To the editor:

I was especially interested in the articles concerning Columbia Point (*Places* 8:4). Having lived in Italy for 16 of the last 20 years (and, unfortunately, having been out of contact with much of what's happening in the U.S.), I had no idea that plans — which many of us had dreamed of in the early '70s — had actually taken form. As a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (1973-75) I had taken part in exploring redevelopment (and rehabilitation) schemes for the peninsula and the public housing project. Together with architect John Hunt (then a student in Urban Design) and the Columbia Point Alcoholism Program we produced a manual ("Building a Home; Building Community") aimed at developing and stimulating self-help strategies for the CPAP and the neighborhood in general. In addition, I coordinated a summer program at the Boston ICA in which a half-hour slide tape ("The Future of Columbia Point") was produced by a group of Columbia Point teenagers. Certainly, these activities were only a small part of the numerous planning and design programs that were carried out in that decade.

I wonder why none of the many precedents were mentioned in the articles. It would have been very interesting if an author had attempted to analyze which (if any) of the many seeds had contributed to the growth of the new community — which is very different from that which had been envisioned, at least in terms of social composition. I wonder how many of the teens — so involved in and committed to the utopia that they designed in the summer of 1975 — continue to live in the neighborhood as adults.

Perhaps Jan Wampler (who prepared an interesting article for the same issue) or a long-term Community Task Force member would be willing to produce a chronology and historical reconstruction of the numerous community-based actions and university co-projects that contributed, even if only in small part, to the present and future of Columbia Point.

Raymond Lorenzo
Perugia, Italy

The New Urbanism Needs a Broader Vision

To the editor:

The Andres Duany et. al. "New Urbanism" seems to me to be as oblivious to culture and place as Modernism was (review articles, *Places* 9:1). Modernism did more than lead to physical disruption of the urban fabric, it disrupted the philosophic sense of unity in communities.

Transit Oriented Development and Traditional Neighborhood Design are important techniques for advancing some of the urban cultural park purposes. But it is too bad that the new urbanists pay so little attention to the formation of cultural, social and environmental institutions, like the city or region as a park, on which I submit the success of their approach will ultimately depend. It is the urban cultural park that is needed to prove the integrating and unifying forces that will make reurbanization acceptable.

Paul Bray
Albany, N.Y.

Paul Bray's article about urban cultural parks, "The New Urbanism: Celebrating the City," appeared in Places *8:4.*

Errata

The credits for several images in *Places* 9:2 were incomplete or incorrect. The cover photo, an aerial view of Penang, Malaysia, is by Patricia Tusa Fels. On page 41, the photo of the IBM Technical Center is by Julius Shulman.

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Raymond Turner

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Pamela Worden

has designed an administered comprehensive public art interventions along urban artieries such as riverways, roadways and mass transit systems. She is founder and president of UrbanArts, Inc., a Boston-based non-profit public art agency whose most recent initiative is "Blue Hill: Avenue of Arts."

ISSUES back

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Giving Purpose to Change

The International City Design Competition; streets as landmarks; Allan B. Jacobs defends street trees; surrealist Paris; excerpts *from The Waste of Place*; more.
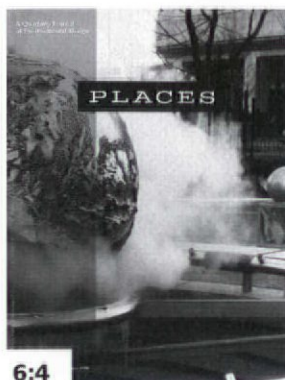
6:4
Holding Steady

Public art in steam and sunlight; Grady Clay sizes up the football field; redesigning a railroad corridor; St. Louis' persistent civic vision; are beautiful images of ravaged places ethical?
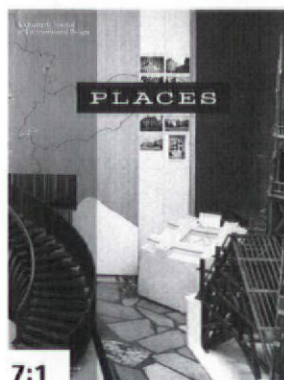
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Vision, Culture, and Landscape

Discovering landscapes created by groups that are not politically or economically empowered — comments from Dolores Hayden, Wilbur Zelinsky, and others.
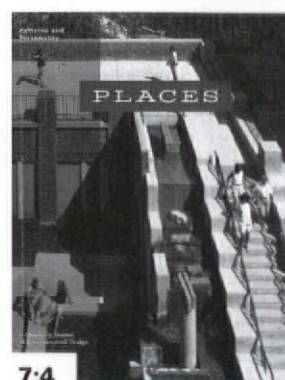
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Patterns and Personality

How user participation, artist collaboration, and Christoper Alexander's *Oregon Experiment* shaped The University of Oregon science center expansion; more.
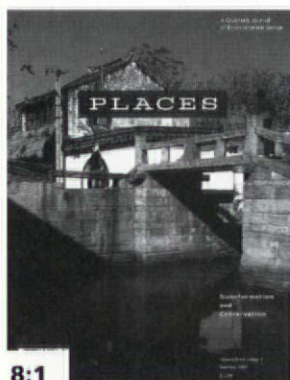
8:1
Transformation and Conservation

Preservation around the world — the politics of history in the U.S.S.R., architecture versus tourism in the Carribean, street bazaars in Bombay's historic core, and more.
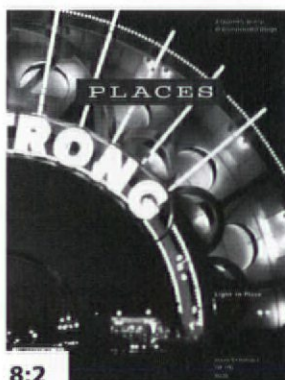
8:2
Light in Place

Focus on light, design, and the art of making places — how architects can organize places in light; the civic imagery of streetlights; essays from Paris, Seattle, Los Angeles, India, more.

8:3
Plaza, Parque, Calle

Profiles of places where Anglo and Latino culture meet — and prospects for streets, squares, and parks in our increasingly diverse cities. Reports from Miami, Los Angeles, Morelia, Havana, more.
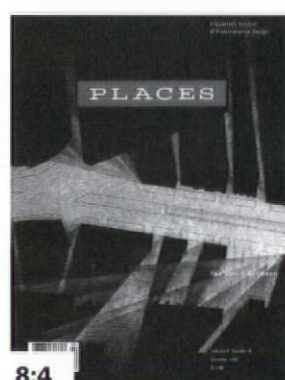
8:4
The Space Between

Rethinking public housing: a place profile of Boston's Harbor Point; thoughts on the new rural landscape; Italian-American neighborhood landscapes; documenting the space between; more.

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