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Roadside cabins, Cape Cod, 1959.

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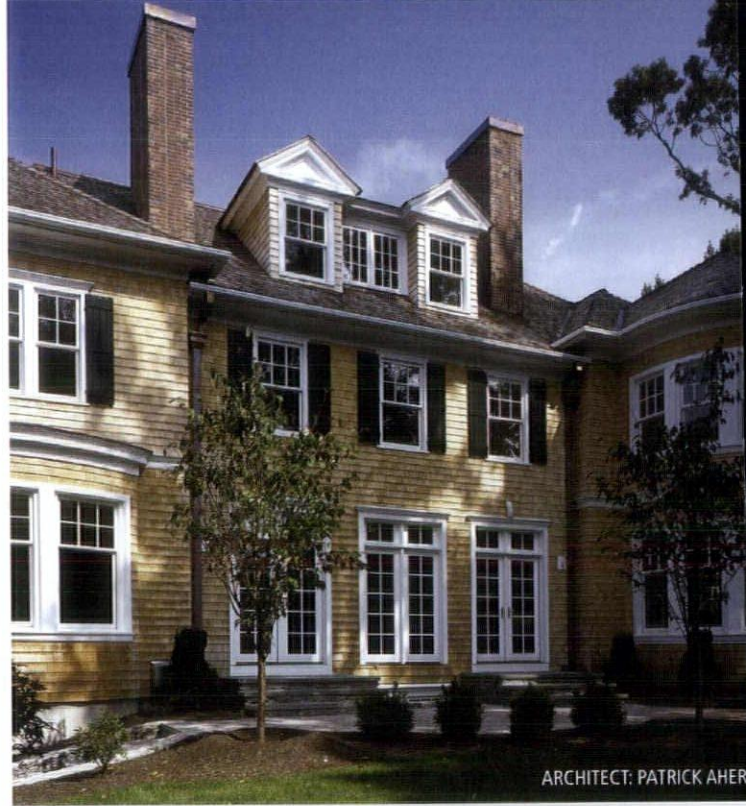
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Our Place in the World

In the early 1990s, futurist Faith Popcorn predicted that the trend most likely to influence American lifestyles over the coming decade would be “cocooning.” We would cope with the stress of our everyday lives by finding ways to withdraw from the world: we would stay at home more, devote our resources to making our homes more comfortable, and occasionally invite close friends to share our cozy retreats. Marketing people took notice and therefore proved her partially correct. People once talked about improving their characters; today they improve their kitchens.

The problem, of course, is that most of us can’t really choose to withdraw from the world — it demands our attention with increasing insistence. What happens elsewhere — in other parts of the globe, in Washington, DC, in the next town or neighborhood — affects almost every aspect of our lives.

It wasn’t always this way. Communities — even entire societies — were once far more self-sufficient; news from away was in itself news. Globalization is an accepted part of our lives today, but our understanding of its implications is still nascent. Globalization is shorthand for a political, economic, and social process. “Elsewhere” — the theme of this issue of *ArchitectureBoston* — suggests an entirely different concept: it refers to a relationship between people and place. It is not hard to imagine that elsewhere would mean different things — if indeed it would have meaning at all — to pre-European Native Americans; Augustus Caesar during the Pax Romana; Bedouin nomads; Qin Shi Huangdi, China’s first emperor; 16th-century seafaring explorers; the pioneers of the Northern Plains; Neil Armstrong. Following the December 26 tsunami, the world was astonished that members of the isolated Jarawa tribe managed to survive, but was perhaps even more astonished by their complete rejection of reporters and aid workers. “My world is in the forest,” one

member said to an AP reporter. “Your world is outside. We don’t like people from outside.”

There is evidence that our own definition of elsewhere is changing. The environmental movement in the late 20th century has taught us to understand the interconnectedness of systems. Multiculturalism has taught us to challenge preconceptions of “the other.” Technology and cheap transportation have given us easy access to faraway people and places. Nothing is exotic when all is familiar. Perhaps, then, it is not much of a leap to look for the attributes of elsewhere in the familiar: family vacations within a day’s drive; the strange worlds of Hogwarts School and Middle Earth at the local movie theater; mythic places in video games on home computers.

There is evidence that our definition of elsewhere is changing. Nothing is exotic when all is familiar.

A changed understanding of elsewhere is a profound cultural shift. Because architecture reflects the culture that builds it, we will see changes in what we build and why; the following pages suggest ways in which that is already occurring. But we also need to explore more deeply what this changing definition means. Perhaps most significantly, elsewhere seems to have become less a place and more a need. We increasingly crave the restorative function associated with traveling elsewhere.

A discussion of elsewhere quickly becomes a discussion of identity: we tend to define elsewhere as the counterpoint to ourselves and our own condition. In our September/October issue, *ArchitectureBoston* will examine identity. We hope that these two issues together will offer our readers a fresh understanding of how we might design our place in the world. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor



Mediterranea, the newest kitchen in the Arclinea Collection, now on display at Arclinea Boston



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Letters Letters Letters

Many thanks for your splendid issue on Boston City Hall [May/June 2005]. I was particularly gratified to see the references to Jim Lawrence's leadership in making that project happen. It was not until the evening when Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell were awarded the BSA Award of Honor (Jim Lawrence was one of the first recipients of that same award) that I learned of Jim's involvement. In accepting the award, Michael said that, had it not been for Jim Lawrence, they would not be standing there that night. I asked him afterwards what he meant, and he told me that it was Jim who had organized the competition. I phoned Jim the next day to pass along Michael's comment, and was met with his usual reticence to take credit.

Jim was a man of exceptional intellect and exquisite grace who struggled mightily in the last years of his life on behalf of improving the condition of City Hall. Unfortunately, without the political, civic, and business support that embraced the initial project, progress to date has been all but non-existent. My own enthusiasm for this building has never waned, and I hope that somehow the appropriate attention and financial commitment can be focused on its rejuvenation. It would be a proper tribute to one of Boston's most distinguished citizens, James Lawrence FAIA.

*James Hudson Crissman FAIA
Watertown, Massachusetts*

Looking at the photographs of Boston City Hall by Steve Rosenthal and Cervin Robinson ["The New Order," May/June 2005] fills me with memories. In 1969, The Committee for the Better Use of Air — a small collection of people connected to the Graduate School of Design at Harvard — was enthusiastically supported by Parks Commissioner John Warner in its plans for a Great Boston Kite Festival. And we were supported in

our idea to hang a collection of Charles Eames Indian fighting kites in the gray lobby of City Hall — many brightly colored diamonds moving in the breeze of the doors.

A year later, when I was working for the Institute of Contemporary Art, Mayor Kevin White and Commissioner of Cultural Affairs Kathy Kane invited the ICA to hold exhibitions in the fifth floor Gallery (now the City Council Chambers). We considered ourselves artists in residence and even threw a fund-raising dance in the lobby. That September, Bill Wainwright and I got married in the office of the Justice of the Peace.

In the middle years of First Night, we held a number of wonderful events on the Plaza; my favorite was The Oracle and the Man from City Hall. Bill Wainwright created a silver oracular bird head, and sculptor Mags Harries used the windows of the City Council Chambers for the eyes of the Man from City Hall, adding a bowler hat and a great jaw. Outside, the audience asked questions from the top of an airport moveable stair; inside, the voices of the Oracle and the High Priestess coped with the Man from City Hall in an attempt to reach their audience.

Boston City Hall holds some of my most beloved memories. And next April, I will be involved in the Faith Quilts Project exhibitions, one of which will be in City Hall.

*Clara Wainwright
Brookline, Massachusetts*

Having a rather long perspective, from when a new Boston City Hall was my thesis project at the Harvard GSD in 1951, to when I saw from my office window Mayor John Collins occupy his new, not-quite-finished office in 1967, I can add a few comments on why City Hall was sited there and why the Plaza became what it is.

Well before 1960, it was clear that Boston needed a new city hall. Though the city had been stagnant, the Old City Hall on School Street, even with the larger office Annex on Court Street, was not enough for city business. The questions were when, where, and what.

With the Back Bay being revived and the John Hancock Tower being planned, the General Services Administration wanted the Copley Square area for its new Federal Office Building. A strong business community, under the leadership of the Vault, had brought in Ed Logue to head the renewal effort, and an active Chamber of Commerce wanted to bring back the Downtown and put together special teams to plan for the Waterfront and a new Government Center.

They promised the GSA a grand setting for their new Federal Building. The GSA was persuaded. Then, of course, a new City Hall had to have its own presence on the grand new Plaza. I.M. Pei was engaged to prepare the grand plan and gave the City Hall a place where it would be prominent and hold its own in the presence of a high-rise Federal Building. That was the environment that the architect-competitors had to consider for the new City Hall.

It was and is the New Boston, and Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell did a magnificent job in making the transition. Now, if Mayor Menino would finally take a strong personal role, with city funds or direct oversight, the Plaza might overcome the difficulties that the GSA inspired.

*Robert S. Sturgis FAIA
Weston, Massachusetts*

Boston City Hall is a masterpiece.

Each of the roughly 7,000 times I've approached the building from the Plaza, I've felt filled with pride looking at this dignified monument framing the Custom House tower on the right and the Old

North Church on the left, a gorgeous composition of government, commerce, and religion. I often continue up the brick hill inside to the dramatic vantage point where views of Faneuil Hall, Quincy Market, the financial district, the harbor, the airport, and the Atlantic Ocean reinforce the composition.

Great architecture fits the context not only of its place but also its times and its culture. Of course, City Hall and its plaza setting are monumental; they had to be to reverse 40 years of distrust of city government. And though the Plaza is criticized as being merely a crossroads, that is no disgrace. From Oedipus to Robert Johnson, folks agree that a crossroads is a most significant kind of place.

Let's re-learn how to use the Plaza, the lobby, and the courtyards. Once they were filled with activity when the fountains flowed and pushcarts sold lunch at the edges and everybody was there. No place could be more democratic, because the Plaza has no center, front, or back; any spot is the center (like the universe). Activity at the edges is good and the new arcade offers it in a beautiful and poetic way. No place in New England is better for bringing us all together. Failing to use it to celebrate the Red Sox miracle was very sad.

Today, closed passages through the building, non-functioning fountains, lost public spaces, and the intrusion of security devices compromise but don't destroy the positive effect. Boston City Hall and Plaza could use some touching-up — maintenance and programming mainly — but let's not touch too much.

Robert Kroin AIA
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston

Your roundtable discussion on City Hall and its plaza ["The Way We Were," May/June 2005] was much needed, but it did not address the street pattern or the neighborhood that City Hall displaced. I remember what today's Government Center used to be: it was Scollay Square, a hustling, bustling center of activity that attracted people from all over New England.

I was one of thousands of teenagers who would skip school to visit old Scollay Square, "peeking" in at the Old Howard Casino Theater to catch a glimpse of Ann Corio or some other burlesque beauty queen or comedy act. The streets, Brattle and Cornhill, flanking on either side what is now City Hall and its plaza, and Hanover Street at the other end of the Plaza against the JFK Building, led up to Cambridge Street and Scollay Square. They were all wiped out by the new Government Center. They were simply steeply sloped streets, lined with buildings, somewhat dingy but appropriately scaled, comfortably fitting into the streetscape and providing a gradual human-scaled transition from Cambridge to Congress Street.

A very foreboding, uninviting multitude of steps has replaced the sloping busy streets. One can only imagine how wonderful and exciting it could be if that same continuous matrix of streets existed today. One could leisurely meander from Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market up to City Hall Plaza, led all the way along by a variety of shops, restaurants, and bistros, only to pleasantly stumble upon a wonderful, open, airy City Hall Plaza, filled with people and activity facing the grand monumentality of "New" City Hall.

Maybe the "unstructured vitality of the city streets," as referenced by Messrs. Kallmann and McKinnell in their adjoining article ["Original Thinking"], can be reintroduced to enhance and engage City Hall, which they so valiantly created, with its deserving citizenry.

Constantine L. Tsomides AIA
Tsomides Associates Architects Planners
Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts

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Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.



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Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York City

April 8, 2005 – January 15, 2006

Among the knitted polyester heart grafts, crystal polymer satellites, vintage muslin airplanes, self-lubricating felt cogs and carbonfiber nanotube skyscrapers at the Cooper-Hewitt's *Extreme Textiles*, the most interesting objects are made of paper. These are the dozens of cardboard rectangles throughout the rambling exhibit, imprinted with "Please Do Not Touch." Rarely has this familiar injunction been so strenuously applied and, on the evidence of a recent visit, so comprehensively ignored. Museumgoers poked, stroked, prodded, and pressed everything not behind glass; even a museum guard quietly tested the texture of a shiny bundle of nylon mountaineering cable.

Textiles are tactile. Their astonishing properties of lightness, changeability, tensile strength, and intricacy are visceral and haptic as much as visual and optic. Currently, digitally and materially inflected fabrication is supplanting acrobatic formalism as the best-pedigreed discourse in architecture. But the folding

surfaces and fluid tendencies of the resulting designs have been insufficiently unfamiliar. Textiles offer a tonic to a design culture long concerned with mere visual affect. A curator confessed to *The New York Times* that the museum had omitted many significant materials that were "really boring to look at." And yet, a little high-performance visual boredom might be just what architecture needs.

One such sublimely boring object is a large beige sphere of woven silicone rubber, covered with a Braille-like grid of tiny gray feet. This minimalist artwork is NASA's prototype Tumbleweed Inflatable Rover. Blown chaotically across the surface of Mars, it deflates and presses itself against the surface of that planet when it runs across something interesting. In its profound simplicity and subjectivity to chance, it is subtle, technological, tectonic, and of course, architectural — all words with the Indo-European root *teks*, to weave. As an object lesson, the Tumbleweed is deeply and endearingly odd, and entirely touching.

Thomas de Monchaux lives in New York.

Building Heaven, Remembering Earth: Confessions of a Fallen Architect

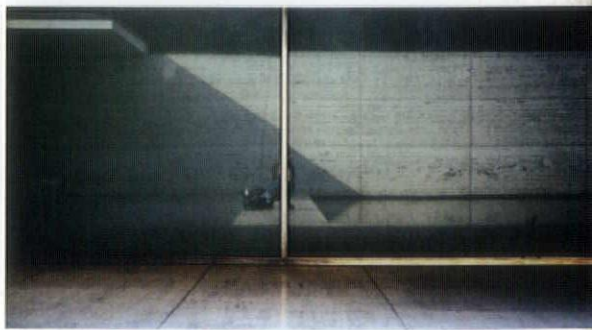
Directed by Oliver Hockenhull (1999)
104 minutes (various venues and DVD)

Building Heaven takes us on a haphazard, grand tour of Europe with a little Asia thrown in at the end. Hockenhull has said that this film was about "the lack of meaning and coherence in the world around me." He might better have substituted the word "footage" for "world."

Despite its shortcomings, *Building Heaven* contains real gems: archival footage of Corbu extolling the virtues of Ville Radieuse; the bizarre anecdote of Albert Speer's death (from too much, ahem, lovin' no less!); the surreal visual treatment of Chicago; and Hockenhull's declaration that Mies' Modernism turned "everyplace into a dentist's waiting room."

Too bad that when Hockenhull made a film about architecture, he took on the ego of an architect to go with it. No doubt it was this that led him to drag what could have been a fantastic 30-minute short into a mediocre feature. But then, directors have a long history of ego all their own.

Coryn Kempster is an M.Arch student at MIT and a videographer.



Lecture: Jacques Herzog Harvard Graduate School of Design

March 18, 2005

It wasn't until the end of a lecture titled "Two Stadiums, Two Museums, a Philharmonic Hall, and a Few Other Things" that Jacques Herzog was able to articulate the idea connecting the diverse projects he had presented in the previous hour. His intention, he explained carefully, is to employ "the aesthetic as a tool to create public life."

Indeed. Much of the work of the renowned Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron includes artfully designed public spaces: the 66,000-seat Allianz Arena atop the landscaped roof of a parking garage in Munich; the 100,000-seat Olympic stadium in Beijing; the recently completed extension of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the New de Young Museum in San Francisco; a proposed

Philharmonic Hall crowning a former warehouse in Hamburg.

Given the scale and complexity of these current projects, it was surprising that Herzog spoke about them only to perpetuate the myth of the master architect. Where was the landscape architect so critical to the Munich stadium (it is Vogt) or the engineer of the Beijing "bird's nest" structure (it is Arup)? Why state that stadiums were "historically built by engineers and developers" and that architects (i.e., Herzog & de Meuron) have only recently become involved, given the obvious example of Munich's 1972 Olympic stadium, a collaboration of engineers and architects including Frei Otto and Gunter Behnisch?

Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, both design critics at the

GSD, were joint winners of the 2001 Pritzker Prize; their firm is known for its intellectual rigor. Buildings survive, Herzog insisted, because they are attractive. Adding something to the building's contribution to the public realm is key — even if the client is not aware of it.

For their current traveling museum exhibition (one of the projects subsumed under the "few other things" in the lecture's title), Herzog and de Meuron developed olfactory objects (perfume) as a dimension of spatial experience, an exercise predicated on the belief that architecture cannot be represented in exhibitions. One might argue that it cannot be represented in lectures, either. Herzog is an eloquent speaker; perhaps he will next similarly challenge the conventions of the slide-talk.

Susanne Schindler is a designer at Utile, Inc. in Boston.

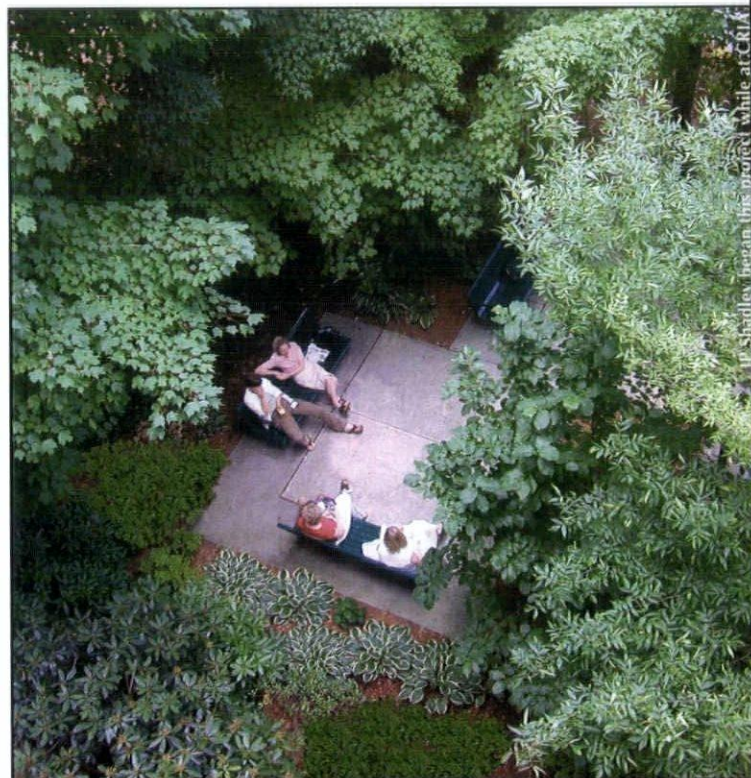
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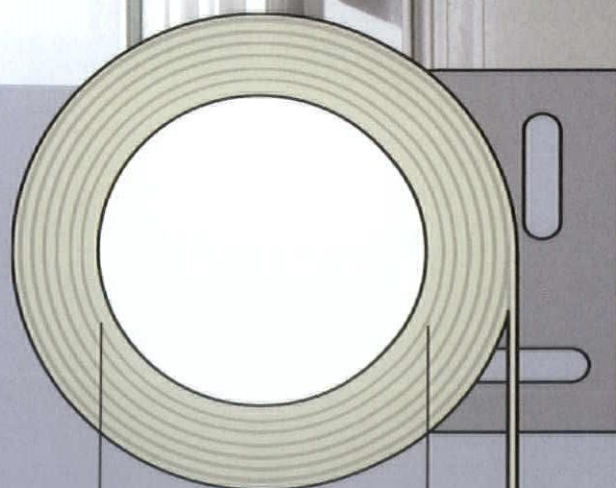
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In the MIT Glass Lab

The glass lab: In the basement of MIT's main building. On this winter morning, snow is piled high outside the windows. Inside, there's a sense of immense banked heat and light. The glass furnace, which has burned continuously at 2070° for the past three years, emits an orange glow, like a sleeping dragon.

The director: Peter Houk [center in photo], who has run the lab since 1997. Originally a painter, he became intrigued with glass as a surface on which to sandblast images, and eventually segued into glassblowing. He divides his time between architectural installations, his own pieces (recently a series of etchings of the Big Dig sandblasted onto richly colored vessels), and teaching in the glass lab.

The students: Undergraduates and graduate students. Bursting with abstract knowledge in fields like aeronautics and nuclear physics. Desperately eager to do something fun and hands-on. When the admissions lottery for this beginner's course was held, 150 students showed up to vie for 16 places. Today's class is only their second glassblowing lesson.

The day:

9:15 Peter arrives, takes a torch, and lights the glory holes, two smaller furnaces that will take about an hour to reach their working temperature of 2300°.

9:45 Readies tools for the students. Sets out trays of frit — colored glass bits ranging in texture from aquarium pebbles to granulated sugar.

9:50 Lifts a bag of broken glass from China and pours it, with a loud shattering noise, into a tall piece of stovepipe. Carries it over to the glass furnace, and dumps it in.

10:05 The four students in the day's first two-hour session gather near the furnace, wearing protective eyewear

(mostly sunglasses). Peter explains that today they'll be making paperweights, their first experience incorporating color into glass. He shows them the trays of frit. "You don't want to use all these together."

One of the students asks, instantly, in quintessential MIT fashion: "Bad color choice, or bad chemical reaction?"

"Sometimes both," Peter says. "Different colors have different compositions — if lead and selenium combine, for instance, they'll turn gray."

10:12 Peter opens the window: the lab has grown noticeably hotter.

10:15 Chris, Peter's co-teacher for this class, begins a demonstration of today's project. He gathers molten glass from the furnace at the end of the pontil, a long steel rod. Comes away with a glowing



Q-tip of transparent orange glass. Carries it over to the marver, the steel work table, and rolls the molten glass in the frit, which clings to the surface. Then heats it in the glory hole. The glass is the color of caramel, the shape of a hot dog. More heating and marvering. He pushes the hot glass into a conical mold; it emerges ridged. Carries it to the bench and uses the jacks — long pointed tongs — to pinch a neck, which he grasps and pulls; the glass stretches like chewing gum. He twists the long grooved strand back on itself, heats it, then snips it with scissors: now the whole thing looks like a spiny sea creature.

Back to the furnace, to coat the piece in molten glass; back to the bench, to shape it in a round wooden ladle which has been soaking in a bucket of water. The sea creature has spread and melted: a soft blooming core at the heart of a smooth glass globe. Peter is seamlessly assisting, opening and closing the furnace doors, anticipating which tools will be needed, shielding Chris's forearm from the hot glass with a wet wooden paddle. He's also teaching: "The inside temperature of the piece now is around 1500°, and the outside is at 1000°. The inside would still like to flow, but it can't because of the outside. So you flash it

once or twice more, to even out the heat differential. The annealer will take care of the rest."

10:39 Chris creates a chilled score line around the neck of the piece. Then he bonks the pontil with a small wooden club, and the paperweight falls neatly into Peter's gloved hands. Peter carries it over to the annealer, where it will cool slowly.

10:40 Peter begins another demo, a paperweight incorporating colored glass rods and a big central air bubble.

11:00 Chris catches Peter's finished piece in gloved hands. He carries it to the annealer wearing a hat, to avoid scorching his long hair. "Not that it's dangerous," he says. "I just hate the smell."

11:02 The students discuss with Peter and Chris what they want to do. A tall guy asks, "Can I make one with a snowflake inside?" A woman is saying to Peter,

"White, and then green." She searches his face. "You don't like that idea."

"I think it's a fine idea," he says gently. "You just might want to clarify it a bit."

11:07 Two students gather molten glass on the ends of their pontils. One woman backs away from the furnace uncertain where to go next. Peter says, "Now take it over to the marver." To the other student, who is finishing up at the marver, he says, "I'm just behind you, on your left." She freezes, looks alarmed, and then figures out where he is and moves slightly to the right.

11:14 Peter is guiding the student at the bench. "Now heat the piece again — then use the tweezers to make the indentation." While she's flashing the glass in the glory hole, he instructs her teammate to heat the jacks and run them through a cake of beeswax.

Peter stresses teamwork in his teaching — partly because glassblowing is inherently a team activity (when Peter

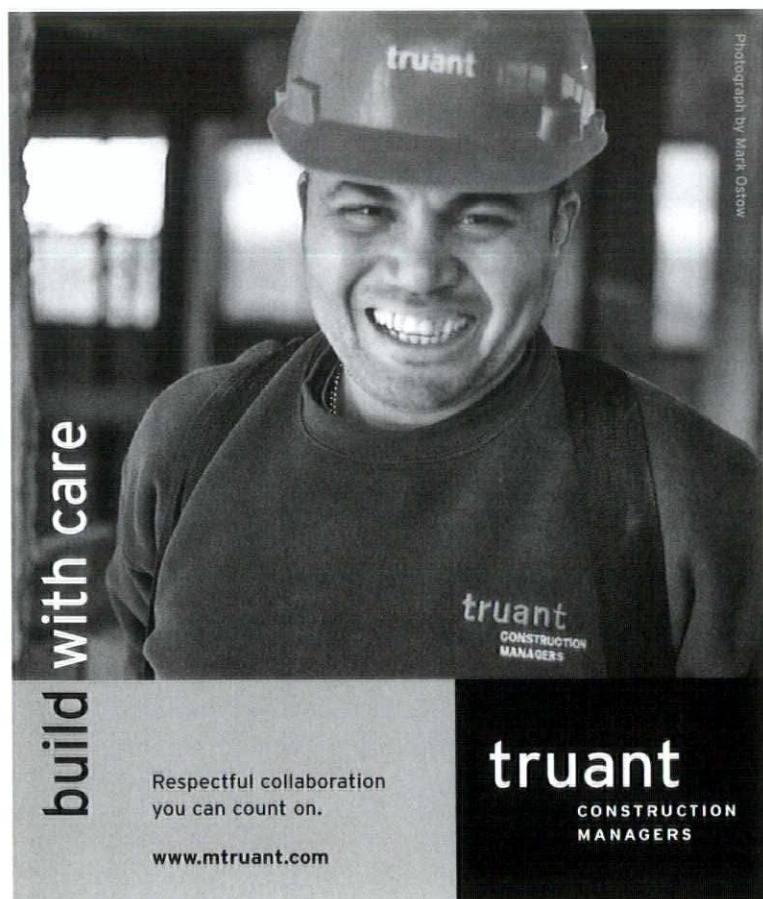
makes his own large pieces, he runs through the process beforehand with his team, as if choreographing a ballet). The approach is particularly useful at MIT, he believes; scientists and engineers need to collaborate, and these students tend to be pretty individualistic.

11:35 "A really nice design," Peter says, holding out his gloved hands while his student bonks her pontil to release the paperweight. He catches it. The student laughs in relief.

11:41 Across the room, Chris catches the other student's paperweight. "Nice break."

11:42 The next two students start their paperweights. The snowflake guy presses his tip of molten glass into the six white canes he's laid out to form his snowflake.

12:03 The snowflake looks more like a primitive sunburst, but it's definitely in there. As Chris carries the piece over to the annealer, the snowflake guy asks:



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"When can I pick it up?"
"Tomorrow."
"What time tomorrow?"

12:05 The students leave, and the next batch assembles. "Today we're going to be working with some color," Peter begins, patiently explaining the project again. Chris has left, replaced by Marty, who will co-teach this next two-hour session.

12:14 Peter and Marty make paperweights to demonstrate techniques to the new group.

12:50 One student says, "I want to do something with cane." Peter produces a big plastic box brimming with Ziploc bags of colored glass rods. "I'm kind of a cane maniac," he tells the student.

"A cane-iac," the student says.

1:05 While the student gathers and marvers glass for his piece, Peter lays the cane on a hotplate and shows the teammate how to heat the cane from above with a

torch while the hotplate heats it from below. The hotplate rests on a ring-shaped frame over an open fire — a device Peter spotted in New Jersey, where it is commonly used for deep-frying entire turkeys.

1:10 The student presses his molten glass against the cane. At the bench, with Peter's guidance, he twists the cane into a tight, thick rope. After more heating, the rope melts and swirls into a candy-stripe pattern.

1:35 The student chills and bonks his piece. It doesn't break off.

"Water it a little more," Peter says.

This time it tumbles cleanly into Peter's waiting gloves. "A nice clean break." The teachers say this every time, like delivery-room nurses whose refrain is, "You have a beautiful baby."

1:40 It's snowing heavily outside. The temperature near the furnaces is hellish. Everyone is peeled down to T-shirts, red-faced and sweating. The lab smells

of fire, beeswax, and the damp sweet smoky wooden tools. The furnaces glow; the glass glows.

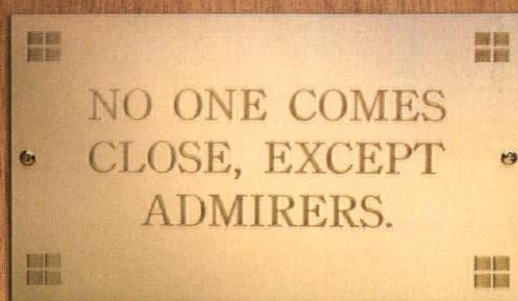
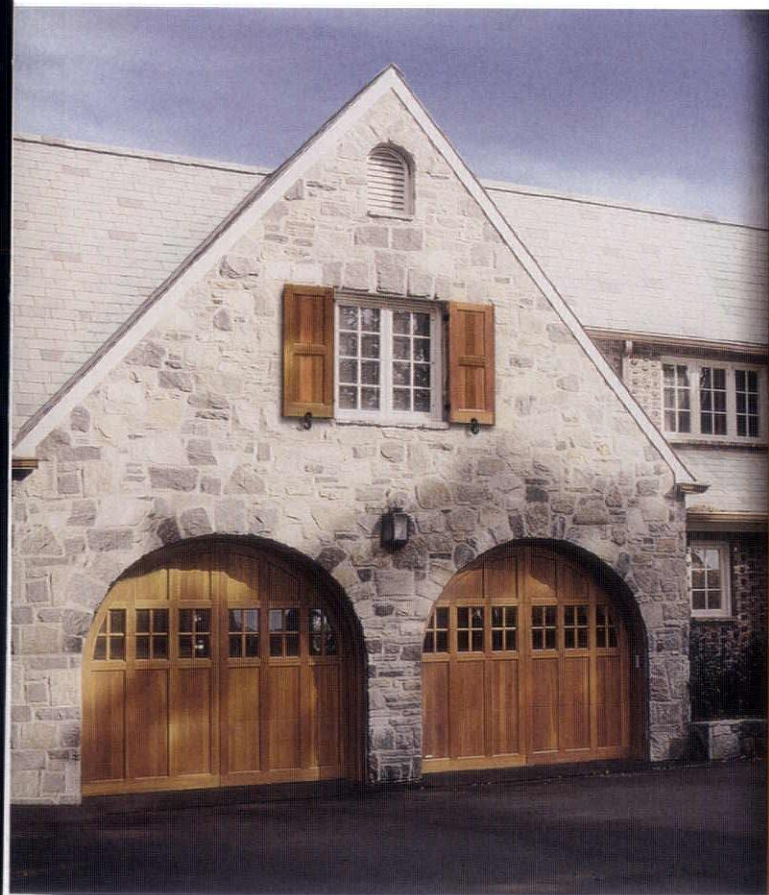
"You're going a little too fast," Peter tells the woman working at the bench. Her paperweight is big and lopsided on the tip of her pontil.

"What do I do?" she asks.

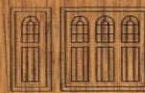
"Nothing. Slow down. Let gravity do it." She holds up the pontil, slowly turning, and the paperweight obediently evens itself out. A minute or two later, she bonks it and Peter catches it. "Good break," he says.

2:05 Another teacher has arrived, to co-teach the next two-hour session with Marty. Peter is off, to swim in the MIT pool and then go to his studio. He heads out past the next four students, who are waiting, in sunglasses, to begin gathering, marvering, and dipping into color. ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* and is finishing a new book.



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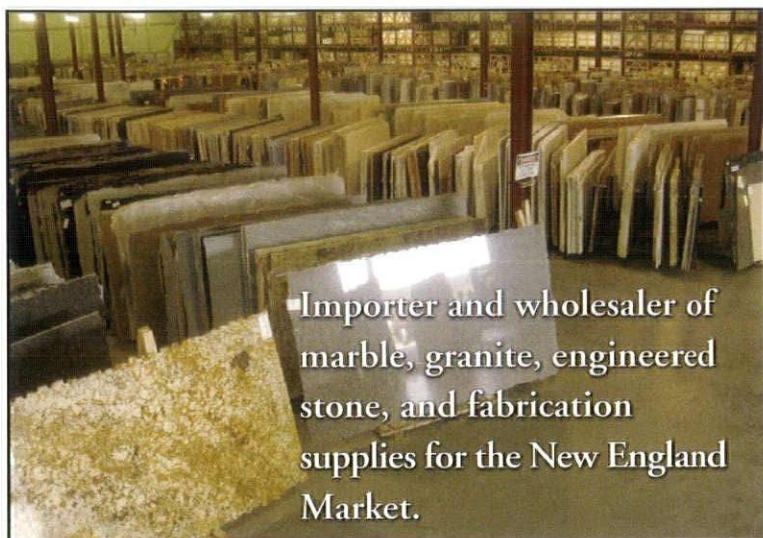
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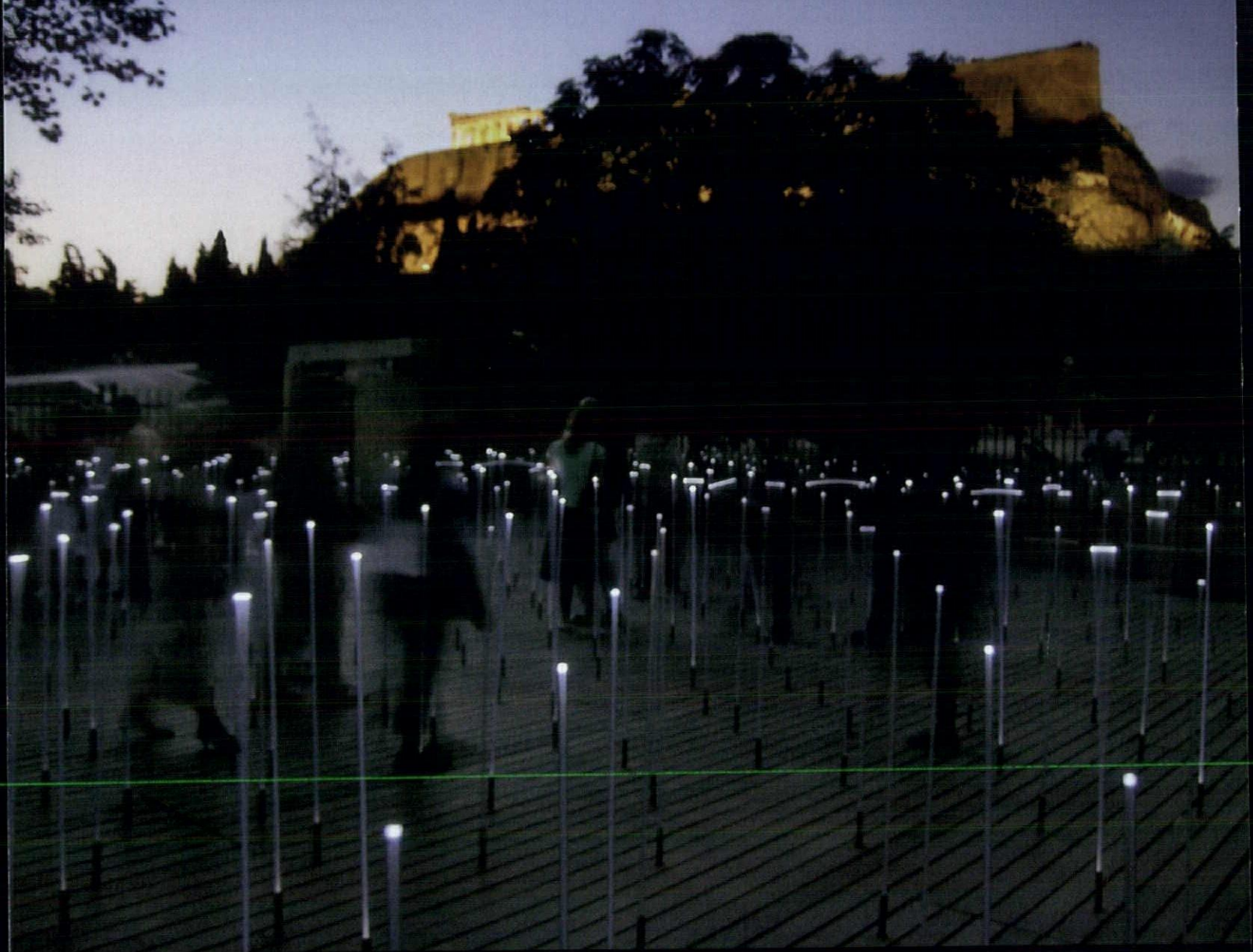
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White Noise White Light.
Athens, Greece, August 2004.
Architect: J. Meejin Yoon.



Creating Destinations

If you build it, they might come,
if they're not too busy

PARTICIPANTS

Nancy Brennan is the director of the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston. Most recently the director of Plimoth Plantation, she was previously the director of the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute and the Peale Museum in Baltimore.

Annie Harris is the director of the Essex National Heritage Commission, which manages the Essex National Heritage Area. She is also a member of the Governors' Northeast Regional Competitive Council.

Peter Kuttner FAIA is president of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His work includes museums and attractions, such as Wonders of Wildlife (Missouri), Discovery Place (Kuwait), and most recently the Boston Children's Museum and the Museum of Science (as architect of record).

Ron Ostberg AIA is the chairman and director of design at The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which designed the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas and the new Marriott Renaissance Hotel in Boston. His clients also include the Indiana Historical Society and Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Elizabeth Padjen: "Destination" seems to be a word that is surfacing more frequently in a variety of contexts — economic development, city branding, tourism. What do you think it means? How do you hear the word "destination" used?

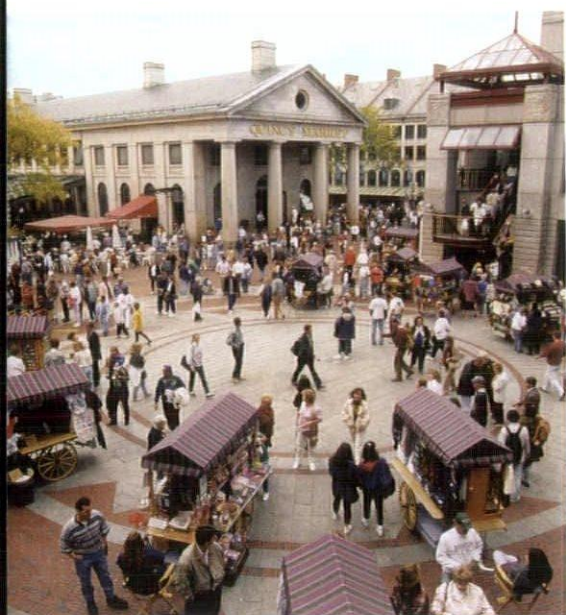
Annie Harris: When we who work in the National Heritage Areas talk about destination, we ask, how do you both preserve and promote what you have? We want to preserve it, but can we brand and reposition it so that people can continue to make a decent living here in the 21st century?

There's a tremendous amount of interest in trying to identify what is distinctive about a place; that's behind the urge for branding it, so what is distinctive doesn't get lost. There is increasing recognition now that historic preservation is economically important, and we're seeing a real evolution in integrating preservation in ways that contribute to the complex texture of a place. Some of the cities that are most successful as destinations are the places that have a very rich fabric that relies on a lot of old and new layers.

Ron Ostberg: The question that comes immediately to my mind is, why do we have an identity crisis with our places? Why are we going to such lengths to try

to define them? I think what we're seeing is the spatial world fighting back against the virtual world, or what the writer Tom Friedman recently defined as the flat world. The spatial world faces incredible competition from the virtual world. Just 25 years ago, no one was using words like "branding destinations," in part because we didn't need to.

Peter Kuttner: There's an interesting counterpoint to the current focus on creating new destinations, and that is to rediscover places that already have those attributes. Some of them are places that we have forgotten, or somehow lost the appreciation of, because we have millions of choices and we're so mobile and we have both literal and virtual access to things. For example, the Boston Architectural Center's recent exhibition on "spirit" presented 10 spiritual places in Boston that get lost in the hustle and bustle of dramatic new buildings — places like the MIT Chapel, Walden Pond, Sanders Theater, the courtyard at the Gardner Museum. These places are examples of a kind of destination that we often take for granted because they don't obviously fill a commercial or economic purpose. They are retreats from that battle between the real and the virtual. The exhibition included a brochure



Area's Largest Tourist Attractions

- Faneuil Hall Marketplace (above)
- Museum of Science
- Minute Man National Historic Park
- New England Aquarium
- Museum of Fine Arts
- Old North Church
- Boston Duck Tours
- Plimoth Plantation
- The Children's Museum
- Salem Witch Museum
- USS Constitution & Museum
- John F. Kennedy Library & Museum
- The Sports Museum
- Franklin Park Zoo
- Boston African American National Historical Sites
- Paul Revere House
- Bunker Hill Monument
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
- The Discovery Museums
- Harvard University Art Museums
- Peabody Essex Museum
- Battleship Cove
- New Bedford Whaling Museum
- National Heritage Museum
- Old State House Museum

Source: Boston Business Journal 2005 Book of Lists: sites ranked by 2003 attendance

directing visitors to these spiritual places, as well as a map of Boston on which visitors were invited to indicate with pins their own spiritual places.

Elizabeth Padjen: There is something ironic in taking spiritual places that you think of as refuges from the hype and the commercialism of the material world and marketing them as destinations.

Annie Harris: And yet those are the kinds of places that help to enrich a place, that make a community that is authentic. Sometimes the greatest challenge with creating a destination is not attracting outside visitors, but creating a real place for the people who live there. It needs to be authentic. If it works for the people who live there, then it becomes an attractive place for other people who will want to visit, or move and work there. Granted, that is an extremely different concept from Las Vegas or Disney World. Those places have some validity as escapism, but what's more interesting is the search now for what is really authentic and what really works.

Peter Kuttner: When I was a student at the University of Michigan, Greenfield Village was my initial exposure to history and preservation. It was primarily a collection of buildings that caught Henry Ford's fancy. Later, when Colonial Williamsburg became a client, I was struck by the fact that it was a real place. Duke of Gloucester Street was a real street, and all the pieces fit together — the jail, for example, was in the right relationship to the governor's house. There were extra layers of authenticity that made the experience of the place so much greater. And when I said to my clients, "This is so much richer than Greenfield Village," they said, "Yes, but that's not our competition. Our competition is Busch Gardens down the way." That particular Busch Gardens had the Old Country theme: an ersatz Germany and an ersatz France. It's sort of an amusement-park version of Epcot. Despite having the highest level of authenticity, Colonial Williamsburg was in competition with the highest level of artifice.

Ron Ostberg: But they may have more in common than they realize. Why does Busch Gardens work? Why does Colonial Williamsburg work? For the same reason: all the layers have been collapsed. There are very few people that really get excited about ambiguity — they want something they can understand, like Venice in Las Vegas — it's clean, it's safe. On the other hand, people go to Europe on vacation, where they are immersed in environments with multiple layers and take pleasure in that. Apparently our expectations change when we go abroad. And that's why Boston will always be a great destination in the United States — it's the closest thing to Europe in many respects.

Elizabeth Padjen: I think that ambiguity appeals more to people now because we've got so much stuff fired at us every day from so many different directions that we've become accustomed to dealing with complexity. The so-called living-history museums are struggling. Why is that? If they were popular at some point, they must have spoken to an understanding of authenticity in a certain time. And for some reason, either we became uncomfortable with that definition of authenticity, or we redefined it.

Peter Kuttner: The question is whether the living-history museums are losing out to Busch Gardens. If they're losing out to Boston, that's different. What's incumbent on a city like Boston is to keep the layers and interpret them. The Freedom Trail is an example of a terrific technique that allows you to avoid certain layers that act like noise while you're trying to tell one particular story. The Boston History Collaborative, with its "innovation" trails, has picked up on that — they say, in effect, we'll help you understand this complex setting one layer at a time, through a series of filters.

Nancy Brennan: There's another way to approach this, which is to ask what people with very little discretionary time are seeking. A Gallup poll showed that in 1975, the average American family had 35 hours a week of discretionary time; in 1995, it was 17 hours. Who knows what it is in 2005?

Peter Kuttner: And we were told that our biggest problem was going to be what to do in a society where we would have more and more leisure time.

Nancy Brennan: Right. But what are people seeking when they decide to pile the kids into the van for a family trip? Because I have been in the living-history business and am familiar with the prospect of 400,000 people in eight months choosing to come to a 17th-century town [Plimoth Plantation] that is located three miles away from the real 17th-century town that has a 21st-century town on top of it, I think I can say with a certain amount of credibility that people are looking for several things.

One is a template for shared experience. We all know that our individual and our family lives are fragmented. So this is a designated time when the family is going to be together having a shared experience that they can talk about, even if it's a 17-year-old boy who's kicking and screaming about being made to go. It's a social dynamic.

The second is that within this preciously small period of time, people are searching for an experience with value. Maybe it's an educational experience. Or perhaps it's the value of beauty because it's evanescent: if we don't go see the cherry blossoms in Washington, DC, they're going to be gone. People look for meaning.

The last is solace. That can have several interpretations — if not the spiritual solace that Peter talked about, then the sense of captured privacy without being lonely. I really think that is why people take time out, or escape. Escapism doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to put a bag over my head and flee from life.

Peter Kuttner: A concept that is related to that is the idea of immersion. A lot of cognitive learning studies suggest that immersion in a subject, being stimulated in a lot of different senses, is a valuable part of learning. Immersion makes it personal. In a re-created historical community with costumed people, you're immersed in another world and you can disappear. When you step into a spiritual space like the courtyard at the Boston

Public Library, the rest of Boston is gone. And in a lot of our museum work, we find that people are striving for that immersive experience, whether it's some sort of re-creation or something more high-tech like IMAX. It's a desire for a full, sensory, very personal experience.

Nancy Brennan: It's time travel.

Annie Harris: Shared experience is equally important; you might say that it's an aspect of immersion, too. People yearn to have civil engagements, ways to meet other people serendipitously, through activities, in public places.

Elizabeth Padjen: And yet, I'm not sure they necessarily need to meet people. I love walking through the crowds in Kenmore Square when the Red Sox are playing. But I don't want to meet all those people.

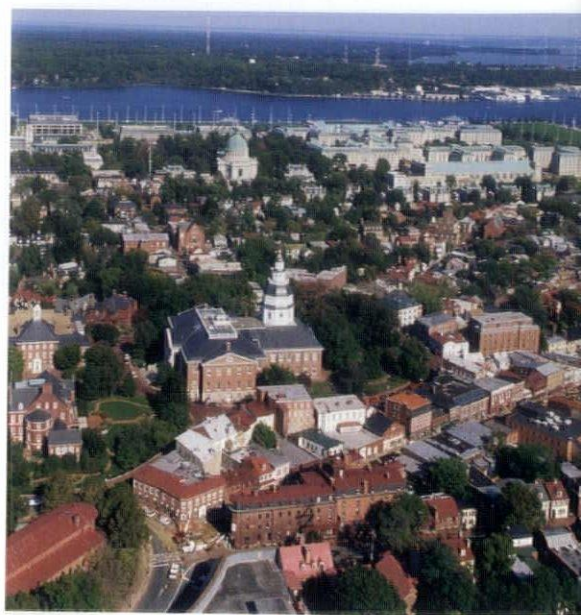
Ron Ostberg: Walking the Vietnam Memorial is a powerful experience because it's shared, even if you're alone.

Elizabeth Padjen: WaterFire in Providence is another example — it's a very mystical urban experience in a shared environment. There are three examples — each very different.

Nancy Brennan: Jane Jacobs actually talked about that in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a role for parks, as well as for sidewalks. Her point was that there are different degrees of interaction, all of which are endlessly fascinating, from people-watching, to eye contact with the same person you see going and coming to work every day, to sitting down and talking.

Peter Kuttner: What is key to each of those examples is that they change over time as well. Walking to the game is automatically different every time you do it. People who are trying to make something a destination are looking more than ever at programs and events.

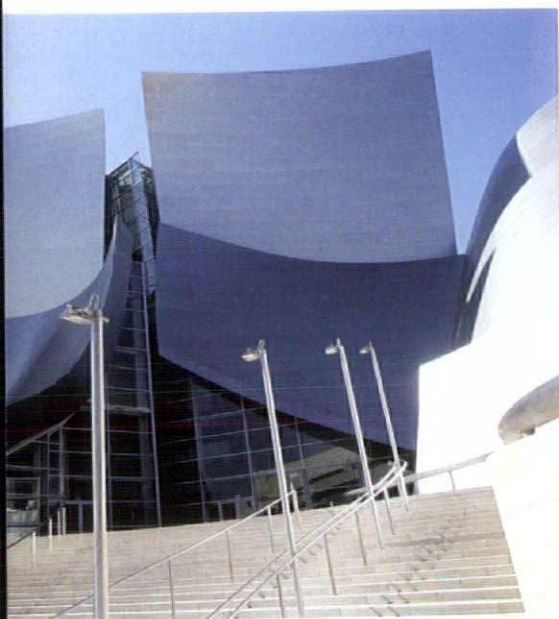
Annie Harris: They're trying to create repeat visitors by making it different every time you come.



2005 Dozen Distinctive Destinations

- Annapolis, Maryland (above)
- Bath, Maine
- Bisbee, Arizona
- Columbus, Indiana
- Dubuque, Iowa
- Helena, Montana
- Jonesborough, Tennessee
- Key West, Florida
- Natchitoches, Louisiana
- New Braunfels, Texas
- Oak Park, Illinois
- Salem, Massachusetts

Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation



Starchitecture: Must-see Sites for the Design-savvy Traveler

- Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (above)
- Sundial Bridge, Redding, California
- Seattle Public Library, Seattle
- Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati
- Fallingwater, Bear Run, Pennsylvania
- Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia
- Lever House, New York
- Pantheon, Rome
- Jubilee Church, Rome
- Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, Spain
- Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain
- Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin
- Museum of Modern Art, Fort Worth, Texas
- Reichstag, Berlin
- Jewish Museum, Berlin
- Potsdamer Platz, Berlin
- Tower Bridge, London
- British Museum Great Court, London
- Notre Dame, Paris
- Georges Pompidou National Arts and Cultural Center, Paris
- Main Hall, Lyon-Satolas Airport, Lyon, France

Source: Concierge

Ron Ostberg: I'd like to return to Nancy's question of what people are seeking, and offer another list of possibilities. Some people are looking for a safe adventure: that is, they want safety and they want adventure. Las Vegas is a wonderfully safe adventure even if you go over the top, because even the motto of the city, "What happens here stays here," is all about safety. Some living-history sites are like that, depending upon the skill of the role players. Some of them will actually drag you by the collar out of your safe position and pull you into their world, and then they really become powerful.

Then there are a lot of people who want a more cerebral experience. They want to know their origins. There are studies saying the best way to engage these people is not the way historians typically do it — which is to go back 400 years. Instead, we should go back only three generations because people can directly relate that period to their own lives. If you can get them interested in their origins, you can pull them in deeper.

And then there is a whole other world of people who are looking for whatever is hot, whatever is newly discovered. These are people who go to a hot club in New York that rises and falls in three weeks. They look at the travel section of *The New York Times* and read that Bhutan is cool, and off they go.

Peter Kuttner: What is interesting is the way people promoting destinations try to manipulate the media to respond to each of those categories. Somebody who already has an existing attraction site pretends it's a little dangerous, but lets you know it's really safe. Or they promise you somewhere safe and push it just a little bit — extreme sports, extreme ecotourism. Or they take things that have always been around and try to put a little edge on them, not so much that you'll drown or catch fire but —

Nancy Brennan: Extreme cannolis in the North End.

Peter Kuttner: Or extreme Plimoth Plantation. I'd say one example is the

Duck Tour in Boston. I can't think of anything that has been more successful. But it's essentially taking the idea of the Freedom Trail and giving it an edge by putting people in duck boats. It might feel a bit more dangerous when you're in the water, but in fact it's more passive than walking the Freedom Trail.

Annie Harris: But what makes the Duck Tours work is what makes places like Plimoth Plantation and Williamsburg work, which is the people, the guides. The physical places can only go so far; it's the personal interpretation that engages the visitor, that really makes the difference most of the time.

Ron Ostberg: That's right — we need to work more with non-spatial concepts. For example, people can be drawn to a place because it has a series of wonderful events. Events can be anything; they might be based on the liturgical calendar, or for example, our civic calendar, with First Night, the Marathon, and Fourth of July on the Esplanade. One of the things I would be tempted to do with the planning of the Greenway in Boston is not get involved in the imbroglio of its design, but do a schedule. Shouldn't there be a new event that's unique to this place? Maybe even a couple. The venue, the event, and the people together harness the civic imagination. In the '60s, the landscape architect Larry Halprin talked about "scoring" activities for public spaces. It was all about choreography.

Annie Harris: A special event — whether it's WaterFire or ice sculptures or cherry blossoms — can draw both visitors and local people; it can create a certain excitement, a certain expectation. But to make a destination really work well, you still need to build in opportunities for frequent, everyday, casual use; you create a community out of that. People create community when they walk their dogs or exercise at the health club. And you need community to sustain these destinations.

Nancy Brennan: And the architecture has to allow that to happen.

Elizabeth Padjen: It seems that there are two perceptions of the role of architecture in creating a destination: the architecture is itself the destination or the architecture provides a container for the people and activities that are the destination.

Peter Kuttner: There is a lot of talk in the museum world now about the misinterpretation of what's commonly called the Bilbao effect — the sense that Gehry's Guggenheim is the reason that the city of Bilbao got up on its feet. In reality, there were half a dozen significant capital projects that were all going on at the same time — new public structures and spaces — and there was enormous public and political will to make the city into a new place. A lot of people have interpreted Bilbao as proof of the "if you build it, they will come" theory, but they really underestimate what else was necessary to make that city a major destination.

Annie Harris: Looking locally, I think that's also an issue with the Peabody Essex Museum. It's a major building for Salem and it's been very successful. But in order to achieve long-term success, the city of Salem has to work better with it, because a building by itself cannot do it all. It's only a catalyst. A successful destination requires something that is really more comprehensive than one building; it's about the whole complex of buildings and environment — as well as the non-physical elements. You need to have a whole community behind the effort to create an experience that will continue to draw visitors to a city over the long term.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's talk about places that were designed as destinations but have failed. Why did they fail? What have we learned?

Peter Kuttner: I'd put into that category most of the utopian experiments in this country, whether they're communes or planned communities like Celebration and Reston. They are a slightly different kind of destination from what we've been discussing, but their intention of attracting outsiders is the same. I would have measured them as successes if they had taught us something, but they've all

become just another suburb, some with more porches than others.

Another example is the idea that was floating around a few years ago that there was a connection between the retail experience and the museum experience, and that they could be put together on a small scale — like our initial relocation of the New England Sports Museum in the Cambridgeside Galleria mall. But, as we all discovered, somebody going to the mall for three hours of shopping doesn't have another two hours to go to an attraction. And the attraction isn't bringing visitors who are then going to the mall. It just didn't work at that scale.

Annie Harris: There's also a whole group of destinations that have failed because they didn't go to the extremes of Disneyland and Las Vegas in creating fantasy.

In the world of historic properties, a lot of isolated living-history complexes seem to be struggling. My work involves the messy stuff of historic properties — people living and working in them, lots of cars, development pressures. Somehow, that seems to work. It seems you have to be either messy and lively or really over the top with fantasy and glitz to succeed.

Nancy Brennan: If you're examining failures, you need to remove the impact of undercapitalization to get down to the bigger issue of whether the idea works. And that's a challenge. One example is a project that essentially tried to blend personalities, which didn't work. The Richmond History Center tried to create an immersion environment but then tried to layer *son et lumière* over it to create a spectacular experience in the evening. But they couldn't train the staff and pay them enough to pull that off. Conceptually, they borrowed a lot from Disney, but they really couldn't take it to a level where people found it believable.

Annie Harris: Isn't that because people have elevated standards through movies and Disneyland? They really have an expectation of perfection.

Nancy Brennan: Exactly. The bar is moving up. Plimoth Plantation, because it's



Top 25 Cities for Convention/Conference/Seminar Travelers 2004

- Chicago (above)
- Las Vegas
- Washington, DC
- Orlando
- Atlanta
- Dallas
- San Francisco
- Nashville
- San Diego
- New Orleans
- Denver
- San Antonio
- Phoenix-Mesa
- Los Angeles-Long Beach
- Boston
- Philadelphia
- Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater
- Austin-San Marcos
- New York
- Seattle
- Detroit
- St. Louis
- Riverside-San Bernardino
- Minneapolis-St. Paul
- Houston

Source: The Travel Industry Association of America, the National Business Travel Association, and the Institute of Business Travel Management

such a mature research-based effort to create an immersion setting, has a sense of place that seems authentic to people. Places that can't figure out where that bar is can't meet expectations. Visitors know the difference.

Lots of places are struggling with these issues — how to balance authenticity against interpretation of an environment or history. The proponents of the new museum for the city of Boston, for example, believe that a new museum can be catalytic — it will encourage visitors to go out into the community and see the real thing after they've looked at exhibits. Some other people worry that it might cannibalize visitation from other sites or even from the real experience of Boston. These are important questions when you're hoping that a new attraction can draw 500,000 people a year.

Peter Kuttner: In Baltimore, a ticketing consultant we were working with, who studied the joint ticketing of attractions there, determined that the Inner

Harbor had reached saturation for a certain level of visitation, particularly the tourism visitation. There were only so many things you could go to.

Elizabeth Padjen: Saturation is an important aspect of all this — as is Nancy's reference to raising the bar. Increased expectations create a moving target. People get numb to a certain level of experience and want stimulation beyond that. A good example is the festival marketplace. That worked fabulously; then the model was repeated, and that worked, too, until there was saturation and suddenly it didn't work anymore because it was all too familiar. Once someone comes across a successful formula and everyone else adopts it, you have to invent another formula. It's a constant game of catch-up.

Ron Ostberg: It's one thing to create a destination. It's another to create a civic identity. Those are different goals.

Boston doesn't need to create a destination; it *is* a destination. It only has to be itself in all its glory to be a better destination. That may strike you as subtle, but it is a huge distinction.

Peter Kuttner: And yet Boston does have some manufactured destinations that are central to the experience of the city — places like Quincy Market and Post Office Square.

Annie Harris: They work for the tourists, and they work for the office lunch crowd. They're the kinds of places that create civic identity, that make the city real, that make it work for the people who live here as well as for visitors.

Elizabeth Padjen: Many of the successful destinations we've talked about have been rather upscale, if not glitzy. Can a destination be downscale and still succeed? It seems that the people who are invited to create destinations tend to be the people who are the stylists of our

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culture — the designers, the architects, the graphics people, the marketing and media people. I wonder if that's inadvertently creating an attitude about destination, perhaps over-designing it. Maybe there's another approach.

Ron Ostberg: If something has a great reputation for value, it can be downright dowdy. Do you remember Legal Seafood in the beginning?

Annie Harris: Artists are a great example of people who create destinations in other ways — moving into down-and-out districts and making them lively. About 25 years ago, lower Manhattan was just artists — it was a deserted, incredibly dirty, funky place. And now it's unbelievably lively; most artists can barely afford to live there now. Music, ethnic and folk culture, and of course restaurants can all create attractive destinations. You don't necessarily have to program them. You create interesting places and people want to be there.

Nancy Brennan: The neighborhoods of New York seem to turn around much faster than they do in this region. It's a provocative question: When does a reputation turn? Where is that tipping point? Lots of places have gone from, "Oh, I'm not sure," to, "Oh yes, let's go." Philadelphia is an example of a city that has managed in the last several years to go to that tipping point and beyond. Cradle of American democracy notwithstanding, people previously weren't particularly interested in visiting Philadelphia. And that has really changed, as a result of marketing and investment. Somehow they found the right critical mass, a variety of things to do, and promoted it. But I also think that it had to do with a sense of civic identity.

Peter Kuttner: And leadership. Drexel and the University of Pennsylvania have joined in a bigger partnership with industry and the medical center to fix up their side of the river.

Annie Harris: It's part of a new model of educational institutions doing their own development and engaging the larger community. Providence is another great turnaround story. I think, like Philadelphia, it had public will, public leadership, and public money. I'd like to suggest that Philadelphia and Providence offer a more sustainable model for creating destinations than do some of the manufactured destinations we've talked about. It's not just about tourism. We need to create environments where people want to be, where the jobs want to come, where people want to live. Goodness knows that with the housing prices in this area, you have to have a lot of things going for you in order to attract and keep workers. By looking at communities more broadly in terms of economic development, we can turn the question around. Instead of asking, will you come to our destination, we will hear, how can we be part of your destination? ■



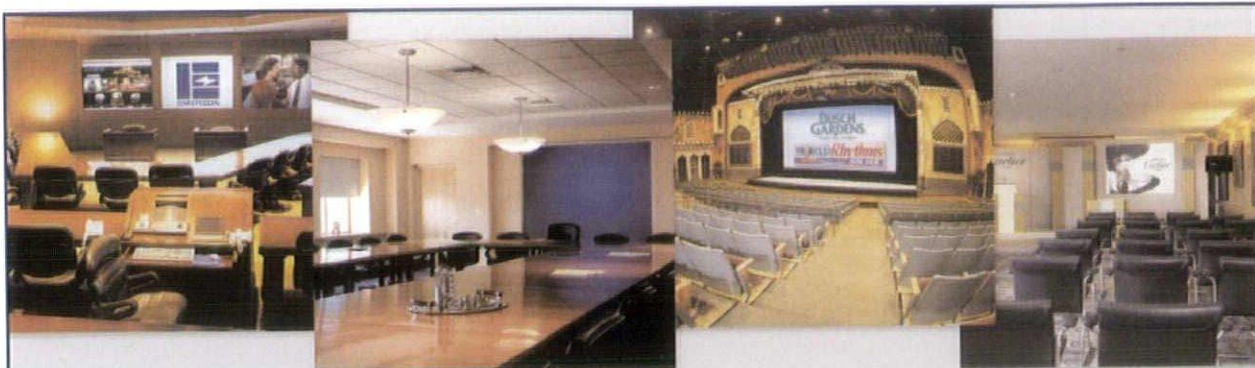
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life is a game

Video games can provide a home away from home

BY LON R. GROHS, ASSOC. AIA

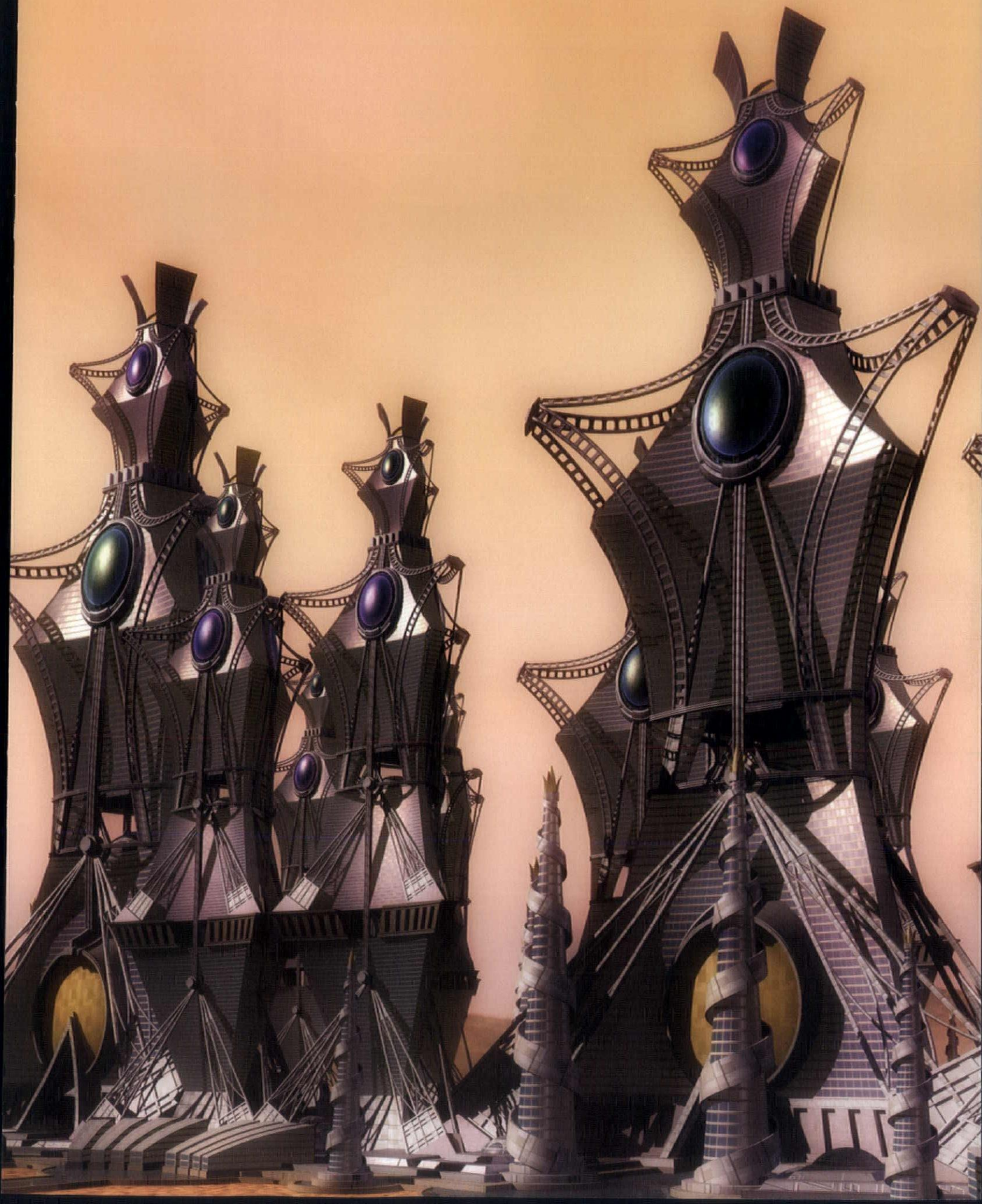
Worlds removed from the everyday hassles of the construction industry — where budgets, punch lists, and paperwork rule — lies another territory, where astonishing buildings are created with nary a lawsuit or insurance claim — even if their occupants do tend to be subject to an unprecedented amount of bloodshed and gore.

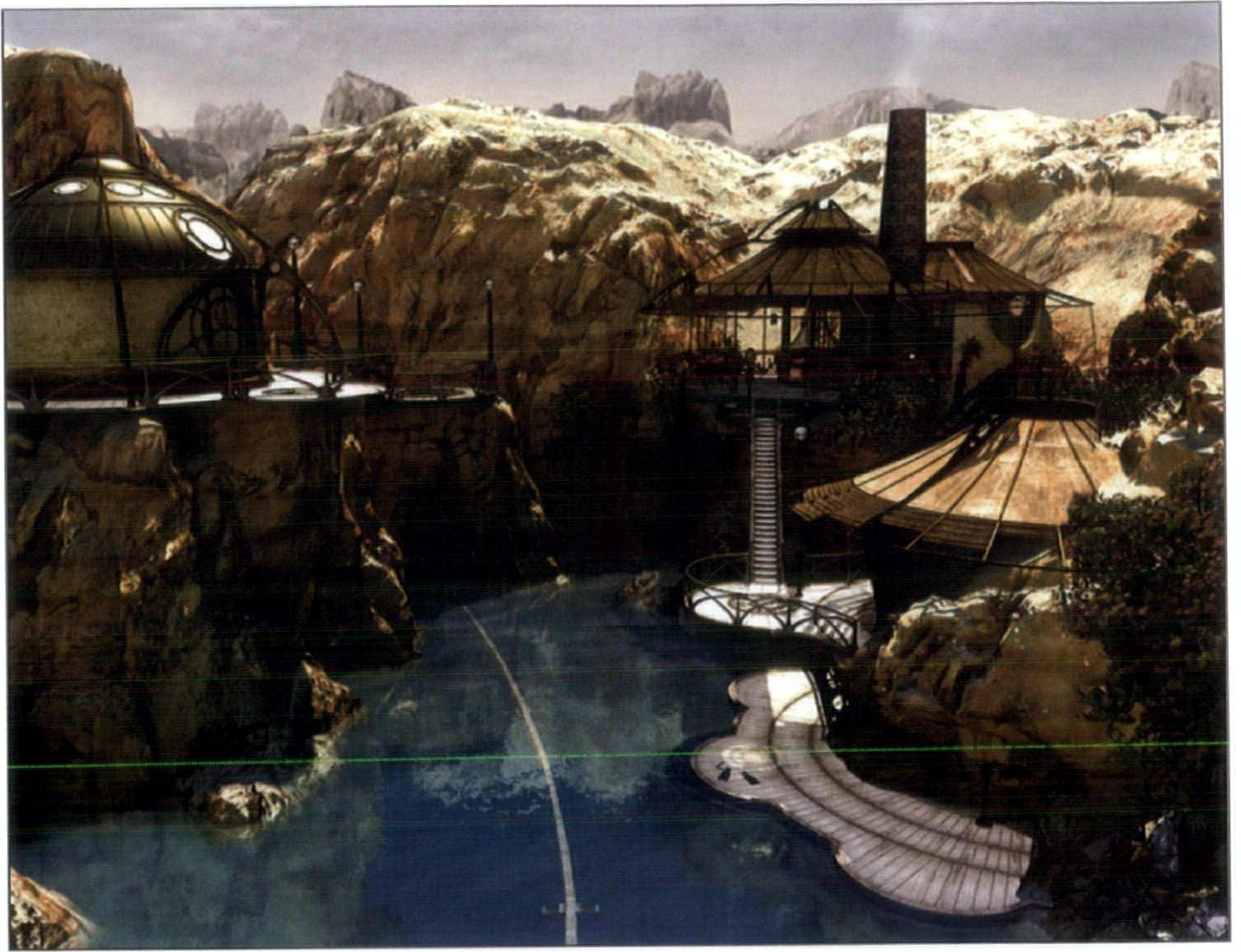
Video games today constitute a multi-billion-dollar industry that depends upon a delicate balance of fantasy and reality: enough fantasy to constitute entertainment, and enough reality to make the experience fully absorbing. Architecture in this virtual environment serves the same purpose as it does in the physical environment: it creates a sense of place. But in a video game, it must also support a story. In some games, architecture provides the backdrop for the activities of the characters: the surreal environments of *Myst 4* allude to the mysterious nature of the gameplay. In others, such as *SimCity 4*, architecture to a great degree *is* the game. And still others absorb the language of architecture to allow players to create alternate virtual lives on the Internet. In *MarsNext*, you can become a certified citizen of Mars and own a deed to a virtual residence. At *Second Life*, you can own your dream house and yacht. One gamer spent \$26,500 in real-world currency on a virtual island in the role-playing game *Project Entropia*.

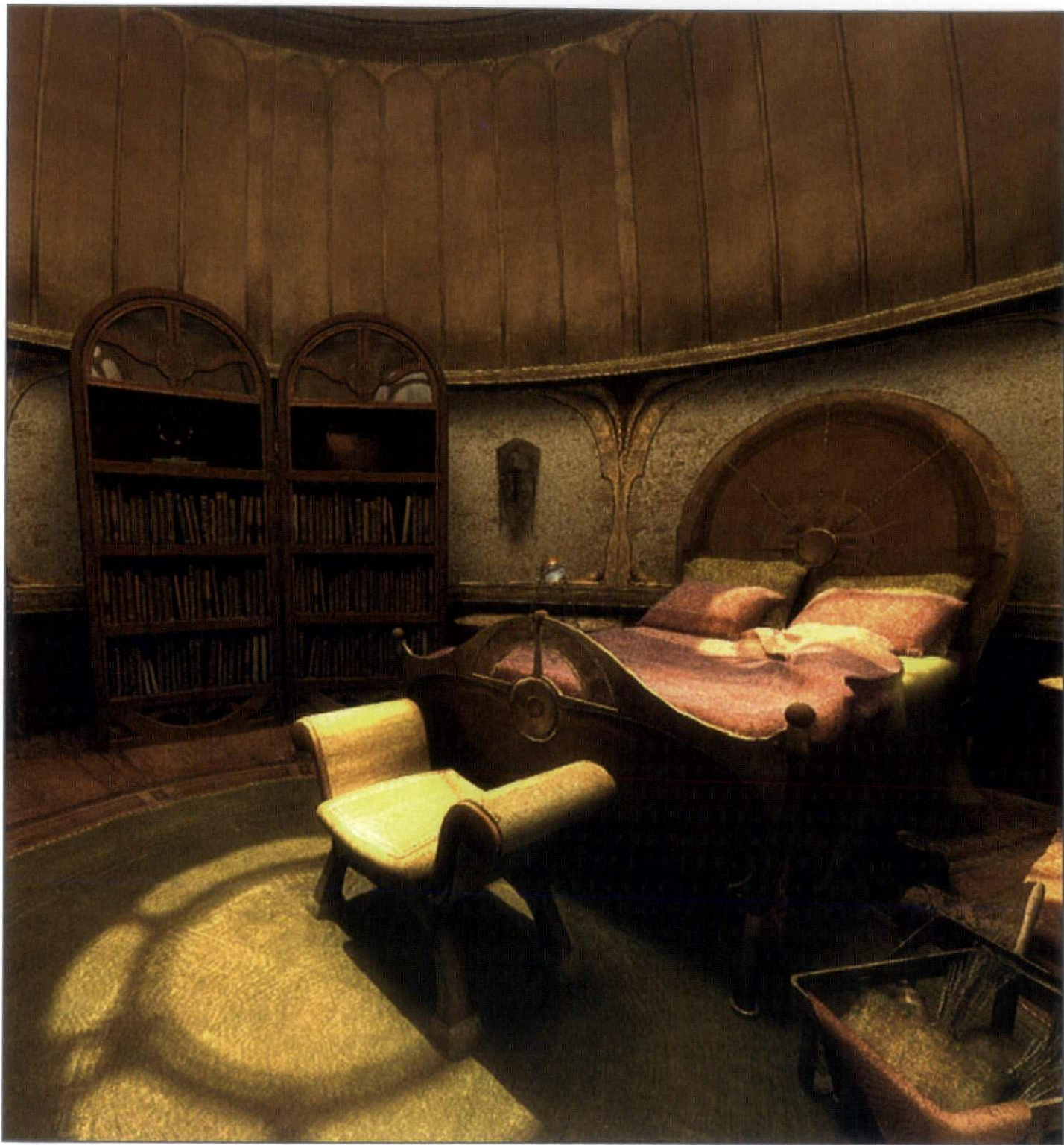
The technologies used in the creation of built architecture and virtual architecture share the same DNA, with sometimes surprisingly different results. As Michael Wu of Microsoft's Bungie Studios notes, "It is easy to lose your way and get lost in a virtual world. We don't feel temperature changes, remember the effort of going up stairs, or notice the slight change in light from one office to the next. Remove all senses except vision, and suddenly you realize just how few cues there are."

As more architecture schools adopt courses in virtual-environment design, we can expect that more designers will be drawn to careers in the virtual world. And among those who are committed to building in the physical world, we may see new design sensibilities. "Architecture doesn't necessarily express the relationship between spaces visually," Wu observes. "In fact it would seem that most contemporary buildings let signage do all the work. People have become accustomed to reading a directory rather than the building itself. But in a game, a player standing in front of a directory will get a melee attack from the back or get sniped from the flank within moments." ■

Lon R. Grohs, Assoc. AIA, is the director of architectural visualization at Neoscape in Boston. He is a member of the American Society of Architectural Illustrators and the New York Society of Renderers.

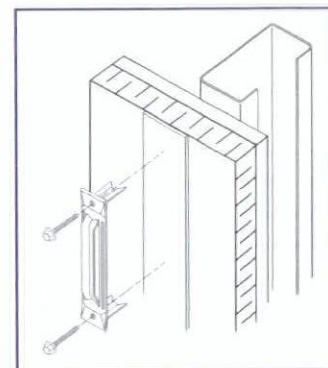






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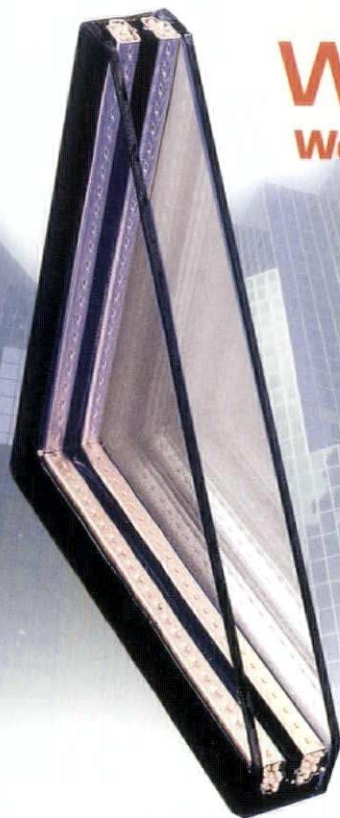
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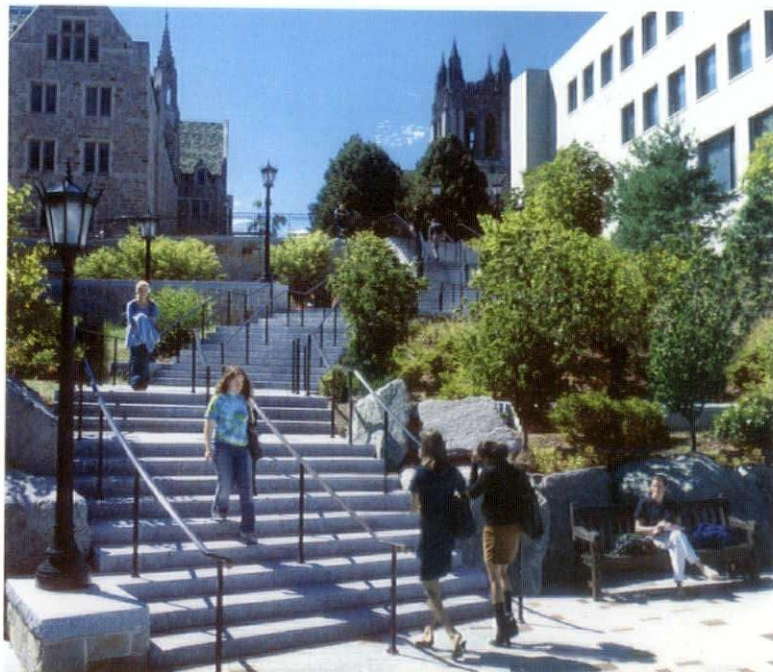
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The Great Escape

When you get the urge for going, is there a need to go?

BY RACHEL LEVITT

My parents taught me this about travel: a vacation should be an extension of school — an important learning opportunity. And so, while other kids went to the shore, we took helicopter rides to Greenland and boat trips to remote fishing islands. I knew I would never see Disneyland.

In the early '70s, the world had become just stable enough to be consumed in relative safety; even so, most people ventured to the usual haunts. But that was about to change. Modern cynicism, globalization, and self-discovery were prodding us out of the comfortable places, forcing us deeper into the mountains, jungles, and cities for a real escape. This was the moment when Tony and Maureen Wheeler traveled the "hippie trail" from London to Sydney. Their friends asked them to write up the details so that they could go, too. The resulting hand-written tour book, published in 1973, became an instant bestseller: *Across Asia on the Cheap*.

Eventually renamed *The Lonely Planet*, it provided a restless generation with a blueprint for adventure.

The Wheelers appeared just when post-Watergate cynics were beginning to eye Fodor and Frommer and Fielding with suspicion. "*Lonely Planet* created a floating fourth world of people who traveled full time," Pico Iyer noted recently in *The New Yorker*. "The guides encouraged a counter-Victorian way of life, in that they exactly reversed the old imperial assumptions. Now the other cultures are seen as the wise place, and we are taught to defer to them."

As airlines deregulated, tickets got cheap, and formerly off-limit places like Cambodia and China and, later, Eastern Europe opened up to tourist dollars. Now, travel is *de rigueur*. We don't just go on vacation anymore — we go someplace. It's not enough to pack bags and disappear for a few weeks. Like where we went to college, where we travel speaks worlds about our sophistication

and self-importance. Did we do an all-inclusive in Cancun, or did we witness a nocturnal lion hunt in South Africa? Did we play the wanderer, the collector, the hunter, or the gatherer? The unspoken message is that if we go someplace exotic, we must have very weighty and demanding lives from which we must occasionally flee.

In fact, the quest for an escape from everyday life is undoubtedly the psychological root of all this frantic vacationing, a phenomenon that probably plagued our species when we were swinging from tree to tree. It's one-third territorial envy and two-thirds getting away from ourselves. If you look at humankind's need for escape from itself as an evolutionary necessity, then the current tendency to propagandize today's wanderlust as a modern phenomenon seems downright silly. How else could you explain our lingering presence in outright hostile environments? Like that house in Amityville,

year, countless soccer moms and dads show up at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, on shiny Harleys, decked in full leathers and fake tattoos. At home they may wear green pants embroidered with little whales, but at the rally, everyone is sporting chains and bandanas. I'm not qualified to say who's a real biker and who isn't, but I trust a friend of mine who claims to be gang-literate. When I asked him why he thought these good suburbanites trade their microfiber and Gore-Tex for the chance to wear leather chaps in the rain, he said, "They are trying not to be who they are. They are escaping their reality to someone else's because theirs is so boring."

Fortunately for most of us, we can get that escapist feeling just by staying tuned. For 50 years, television has been training us to see a substitute reality in its flat screen. So it's no coincidence that programming mimics the escapes we

Remember the *Star Trek* Holodeck — the synthetic, immersive, virtual-reality environment in which Enterprisers could play out their fantasies, or just take an earthly break? The home theater is as close as we can get, for now.

So if the home is our primary retreat, and if through technology we can escape even further, is it possible that one day our houses will be geared to support life and fantasy in equal measure? *The Well-Tempered Environment*, written by Reyner Banham in the 1960s, suggested that environmental engineering had a profound impact on the design of buildings and on the minds of architects. Arguing that modern buildings breathe, sweat, consume, and expel like any organic body, Banham's seminal text produced architects like Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, who used mechanical services as imagistic devices. That was back in the days when playing out the American dream meant choosing between a miniature chalet, ranch, or two-story colonial.

In the spirit of Banham's mechanical prophecy, 21st-century home design is on the verge of being re-tuned again, but to a different system. The façade and roofline may never change, telling the same old story about European planning and imperial values. But pop the roof off a McMansion and search for life. Look beyond the cathedral ceilings, baroque staircases leading to glorious sheets of drywall, the ghostly living rooms, and the intimidating, two-story entrance. Wedged between these residential relics are signs of life. People congeal around the hulking TV in the family room, over computer desks in corners cluttered with paper or in spotless showcase kitchens with shades constantly drawn over the windows to minimize screen glare. Walls are Wi-Fi obstacles at worst, conduits for CAT-5 cable at best. Residential design is no longer about space, but about serving us up what matters most: From outside, the picture of longevity and Protestant productivity. From within, big empty rooms, and dark, hidden, hi-tech pods in which we relax, watch, and escape. ■

Rachel Levitt is a designer and researcher in Boston.

If the home is our primary retreat, and if through technology we can escape even further, is it possible that our houses will be geared to support life and fantasy in equal measure?

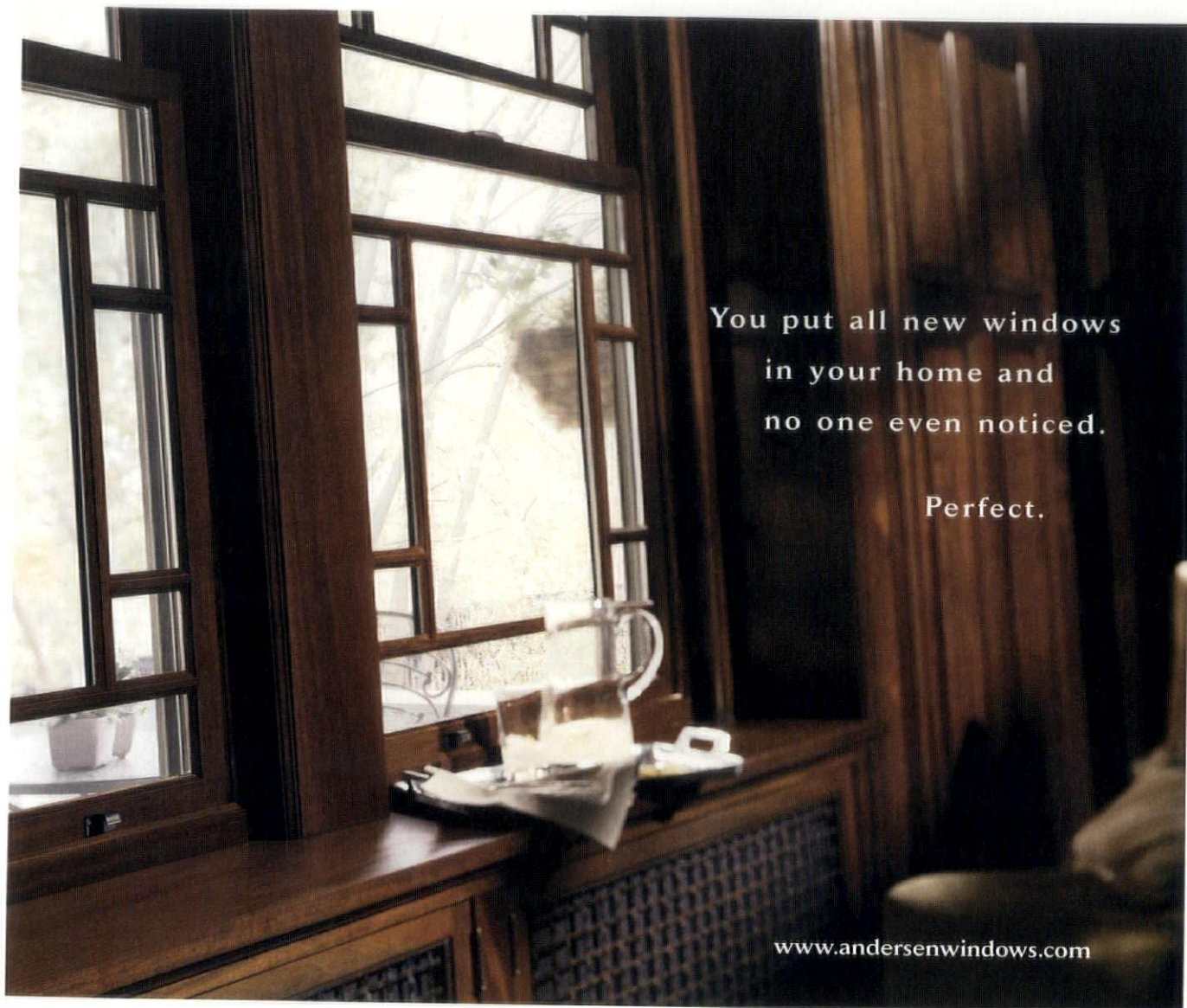
the Manitoba climate says, "get out," but there we are, fully adapted, as if living closer to the equator was so last ice age.

So what are the little things we seek during our two weeks of abandon? For one thing, leaving home forces us to use the survival muscles that have atrophied while we stared at the computer. In a different airport, in a different hotel, in an unknown city, we rely on instinct to avoid getting lost or mugged or ripped off. Once we are oriented, the slight differences in culture, language, or climate magically transform daily tasks into meaningful encounters. John Urry, a British sociologist, calls this phenomenon "the tourist gaze." He explains that the minute differences imbue things with meaning, worthy of investigation, or at least a picture.

For some of us, traveling isn't in itself powerful enough to be cathartic. Some of us have to try on someone else's life to really satisfy our urge to flee. Each

seek. There are the obvious forms: travel shows and travel networks. More interesting, though, are the plethora of voyeuristic stories, covering everything from death (*CSI*), to suburbia (*Desperate Housewives*), to über-suburbia (*The Sopranos*). By watching these shows, we can walk out of our lives without risking bodily harm. And for the voyeur escapist who thirsts for the real thing, hundreds of reality shows offer the opportunity to watch someone else risk bodily harm.

This is why the television now gets its own cushy room: Enter the home theater, a veritable shrine to entertainment, standard for any house over 5,000 square feet. Homeowners can choose from a plethora of home theater systems, surround-sound speakers, as well as full and flat screens, giant projection screens, and plasma screens — not to mention amenities such as soundproofing, better-than-theater seating, dimmable lighting, and lobby-sized popcorn machines.



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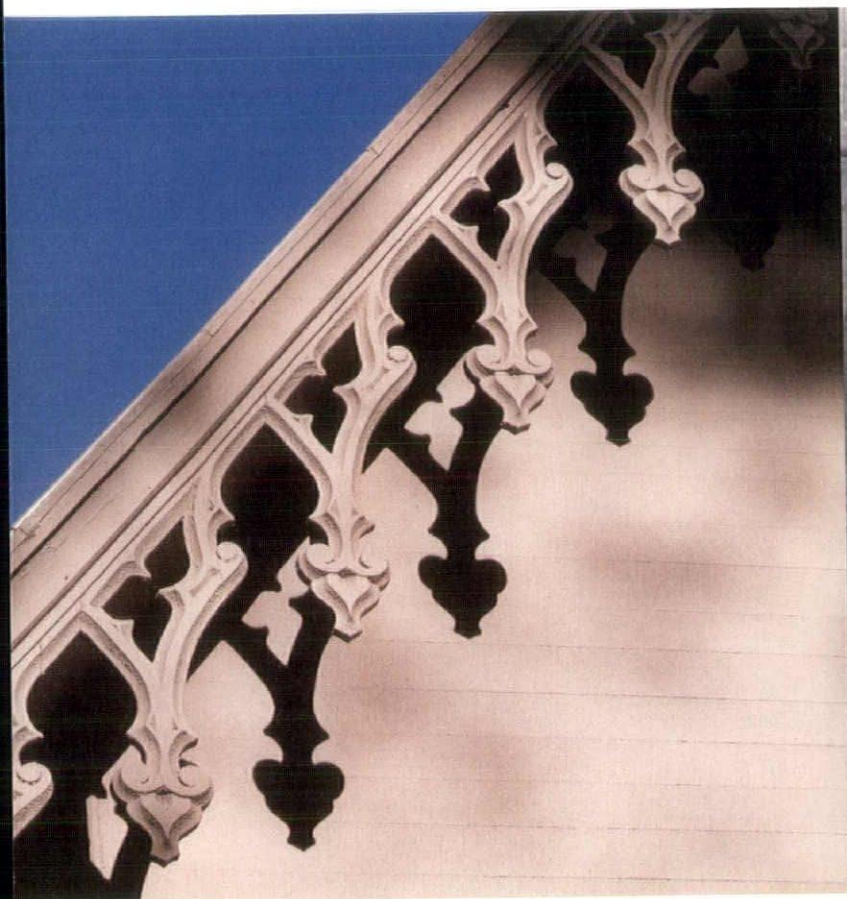
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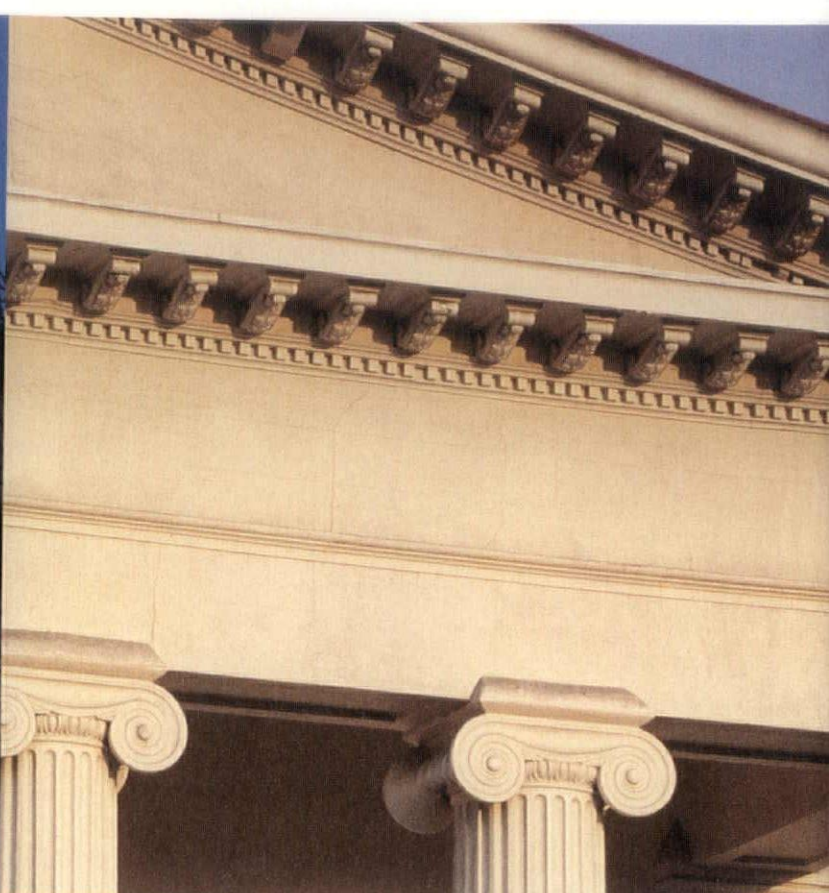
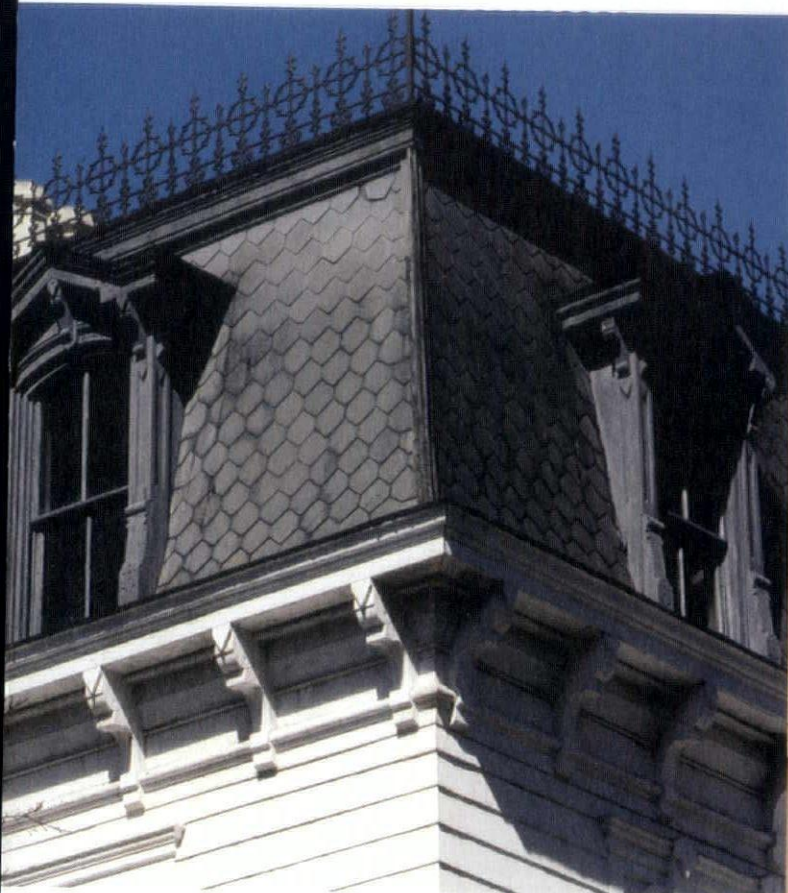
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Take That: The Art of Borrowing from Elsewhere

BY MATTHEW BRONSKI



Opposite, left: Morrill House, Strafford, Vermont. Opposite, right: Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, New York. Above left: Second Empire house, Wetherfield, Connecticut. Above, right: Hiberian Hall, Charleston, South Carolina.

Not a single Gothic building was ever built in America. Yet America has seemingly countless numbers of Gothic Revival, Carpenter Gothic, Ruskinian Gothic, High Victorian Gothic, neo-Gothic, and Collegiate Gothic buildings.

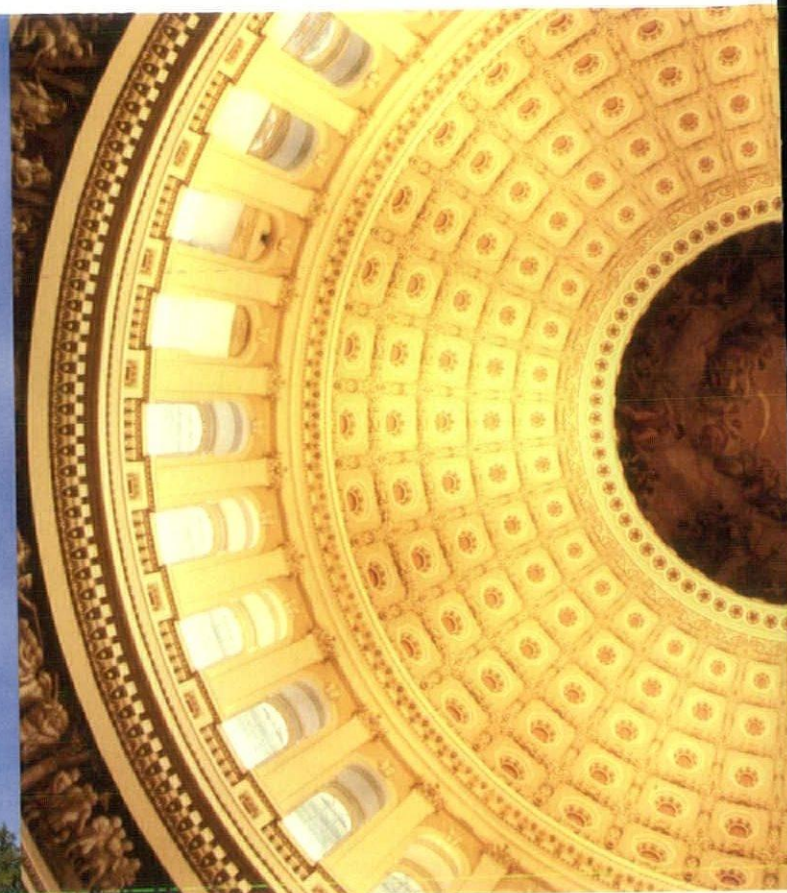
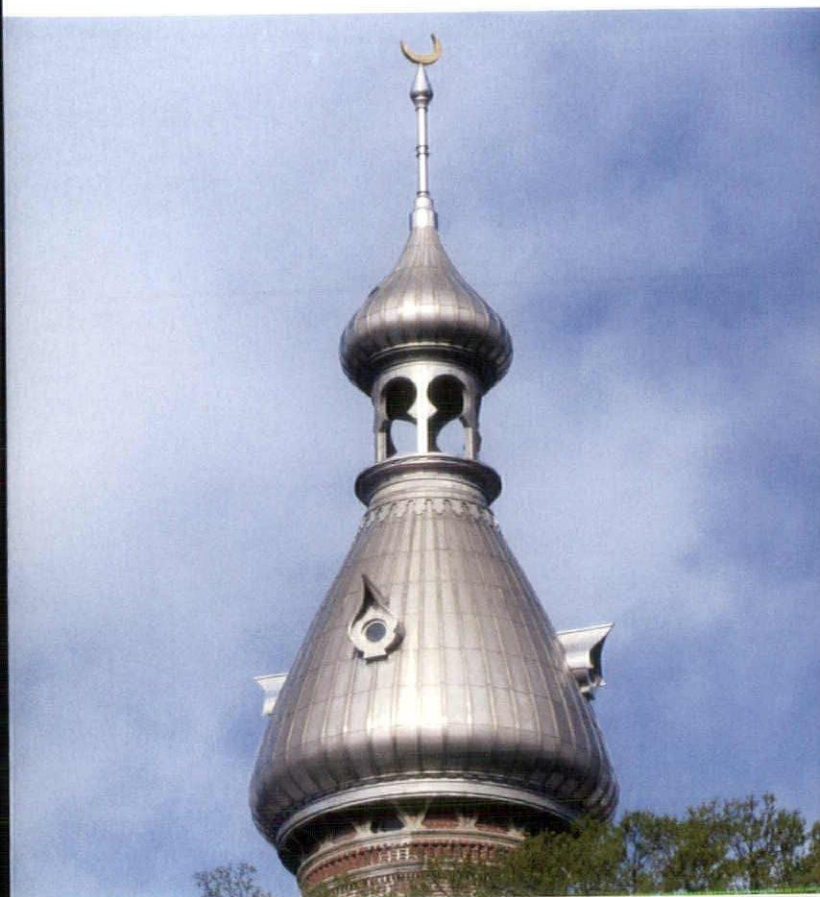
The history of architecture has been largely a history of borrowing and adapting forms, styles, materials, and techniques from elsewhere — from other places and other times. For millennia, information traveled slowly; both personal travel and transportation of materials from afar were relatively expensive. Despite these obvious impediments, architectural borrowing from elsewhere occurred even when no obvious need existed. Although the Romans were remarkably innovative designers and builders, they nonetheless saw fit to borrow stylistic forms and decorative devices from the Greeks. More recently, the history of American architecture is very much a history of architectural borrowing. From the 16th through the 18th century, early settlers borrowed the forms and methods of their native lands, creating a cultural legacy that is still visible today: Spanish in Florida, French and Spanish in Louisiana, Dutch in New York, and English in Virginia and New England. Later, in the 19th century, myriad styles were adapted from other places and other times, including common styles such as Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic Revival, and Second Empire and, less frequently, Egyptian Revival and other Exotic Revivals.

Why does architectural borrowing occur? The reasons may be as numerous and varied as the instances of borrowing. For

early settlers of the American continent, the ability to quickly erect shelter was critical to survival, and they built in the way that they knew. Borrowing was simply easier than innovating. In few other cases do the reasons seem as overtly pragmatic. In 19th-century America, stylistic and symbolic considerations in architecture largely replaced the need for rapid construction of shelter for survival (aside from the frontier). In the 1830s, the Greek Revival became the first truly national style of architecture across the United States. The obvious symbolic reference to civilization's first great democracy reflected widespread pride in our young nation's democratic ideals.

Borrowing necessarily involves reinterpretation, and this reinterpretation imparts the stamp of its own culture and time, either consciously or, more often, subconsciously. The wood-framed, white clapboard, Greek Revival houses found across America are quite different from any building found in ancient or modern Greece. In 1830s America — still a largely rural nation whose ideals and aspirations greatly exceeded her power and wealth — the simple wood reinterpretation of a Greek temple front became a secular sign for democracy. American architecture was learning from Las Vegas long before Las Vegas even existed.

From the mid-19th through early 20th century, a greater diversity of architectural styles flourished, while at the same time the reasons for borrowing tended to become more varied. For example, the popularity of the Italianate style in



mid-19th-century America (borrowed from the Italian villa) can be attributed to a number of factors, including a fascination with the Picturesque, an appreciation for centuries of Italian arts and culture, and the influential writings of Andrew Jackson Downing, an arbiter of taste who advocated the Italianate style, among others, for country houses. Such borrowing was institutionalized in the neo-classical architectural education of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Beaux Arts teaching model, and the phenomenon of the “Grand Tour.” Stylistic emulation reached its zenith in the early 20th century, when numerous period revivals (Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial, neo-Gothic, neo-Classical) simultaneously thrived. Even that most American of all architectural innovations, the skyscraper, was often cloaked in neo-classical garb.

The freedom to root around in the stylistic attics of other places and periods comes with the understanding that “elsewhere” is both a physical place and a state of mind. A reinterpretation of a simple rural building form — be it a 1920s revival of an English Cotswold cottage or a contemporary minimalist cedar-shingled Maine cottage — is intended to suggest the pleasures of the uncomplicated life rather than mere architectural derivation. However, with the Modern Movement’s professed desire to break free of the past, borrowing from previous periods became philosophically taboo for the first time in the history of architecture. (Later, Postmodernism purposefully and antagonistically eschewed Modernism’s

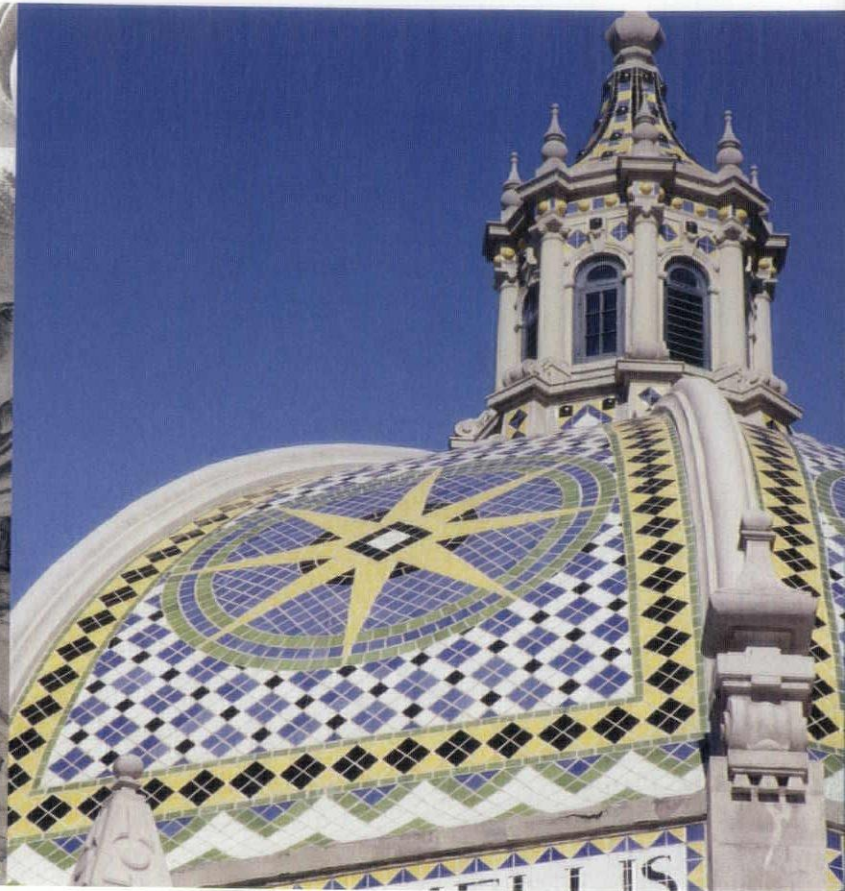
taboo, overtly borrowing well-known architectural elements and forms, which it reinterpreted or caricatured as signs. While Postmodernism embraced such reuse of architectural elements, few architects dare borrow from Postmodernism today.)

Although the Modern Movement vehemently opposed reusing the architectural forms of previous centuries, ironically, many architects continue to borrow heavily from it. If, as Robert Hughes declared, the Modern Movement conclusively ended 33 years ago with the implosion of the Pruitt-Igoe

American architecture was learning from Las Vegas long before Las Vegas even existed.

housing complex, then designing a building today that draws heavily from the Modern Movement is not fundamentally different from other instances of architectural borrowing of forms from a previous century and a bygone architectural movement (aside from the fact that some architects engaged in this revival actually remember it first-hand).

Architectural borrowing has never been restricted to forms and styles, but has long also involved details and actual building materials. Although they worked quarries close to Rome, the Romans transported obelisks from Egypt to erect in their streets. Around 1820, despite nearby quarries of durable Quincy granite, Alexander Parris transported Aquia sandstone from the



Opposite, left: Minaret, Tampa Bay Hotel, Tampa Bay, Florida. Opposite, right: Rotunda, US Capitol. Above left: Mission Church, San Jose, California. Above right: Museum of Man, San Diego, California.

Chesapeake Bay for the columns of St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston — a material that was later found to be remarkably *non-durable*. Unfortunately, many architects and builders have continued to repeat Parris's technical mistake. Seduced by the aesthetic allure of a material from afar, they have rushed to use it, only to learn its drawbacks later: that beautiful, rustic clay roofing tile from the Mediterranean can disintegrate in a New England winter. Even architects borrowing their own details from afar have run into technical pitfalls: the simple, frameless window glass set in masonry in Le Corbusier's work at Chandigarh, India, has been prone to hailstorm breakage at his convent of Ste. Marie de la Tourette in France.

And yet, invaluable technical lessons have always been learned by judiciously borrowing from elsewhere. In Book II of his 2,000-year-old text *The Ten Books of Architecture*, the Roman architect Vitruvius recommends specific stone wall-building techniques that he has observed to be durable in Greek buildings. As engineer Werner Gumpertz has taught many New Englanders, the Swiss chalet offers a stellar model for durable dwellings in snowy climates: a steeply sloped roof with no valleys or dormers; broad roof overhangs; and a high masonry foundation to keep wood walls above drifting and melting snow.

Unless every architectural project invents completely new and previously unimagined forms, details, and materials, some degree of architectural borrowing is inevitable. The growing challenge then is to decide from what sources and in what ways architectural borrowing is appropriate. Today, appreciation of

different cultures and places is in the mainstream of the well-educated and politically correct. Inexpensive container shipping makes building materials from all over the world available at our local supply yards. Laser surveying and computer-aided drawing make recording and transcribing existing buildings rapid and accurate. Images and even drawings of significant buildings abroad are available online or on CD. Information is instantly accessible through the Internet, and e-mail enables us to easily share ideas with our colleagues abroad. All these factors create conditions that are more conducive to architectural borrowing than ever before.

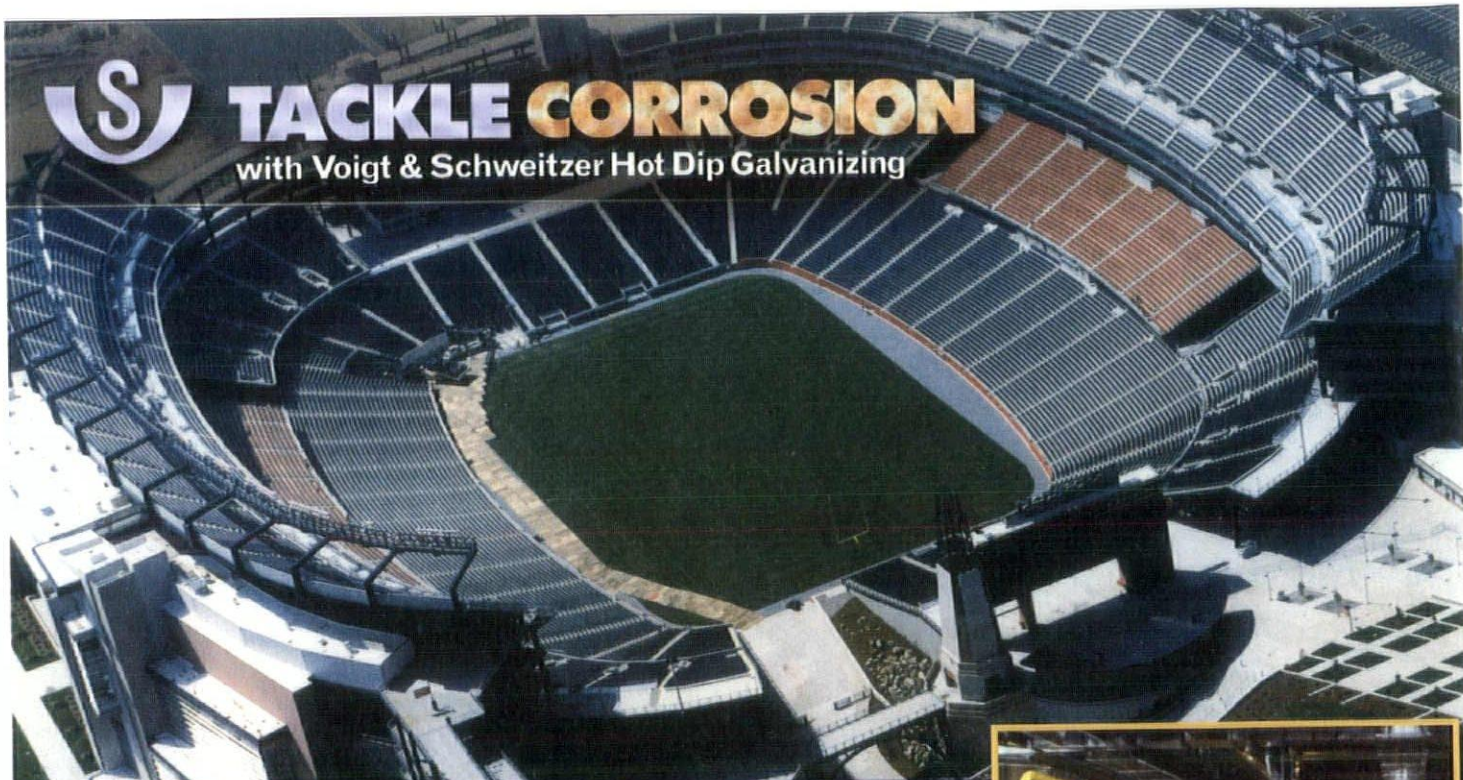
Everyone talks about globalization. Somehow, we tend to think of it as a passive transformation, something that is inevitably happening to the cultures and places that we know and care about. Perhaps the most long-standing tradition in architecture, from Vitruvius forward, is setting off for elsewhere with sketchbook and pen in hand, seeking inspiration and good ideas. If we stop seeing the sole architectural implication of globalization as homogenization and blanderization, we might also see it as an unprecedented opportunity in the continuum of inspiration, good ideas, and important lessons from elsewhere. ■

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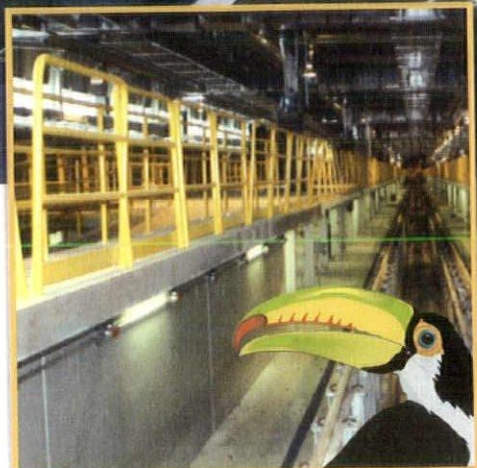
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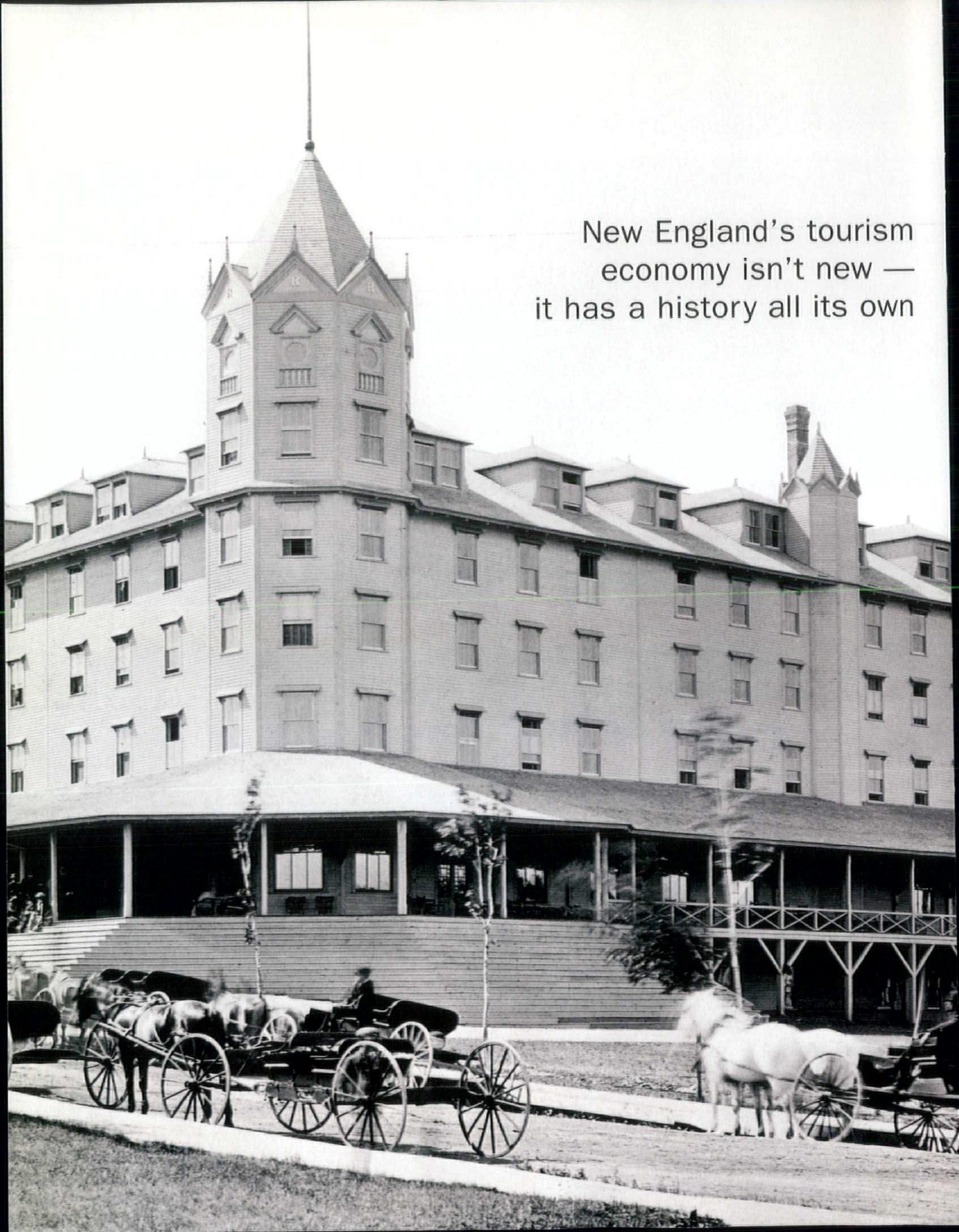
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New England's tourism
economy isn't new —
it has a history all its own



The Road Well Traveled

Dona Brown talks with Phyllis Andersen

Dona Brown is an associate professor in the department of history at the University of Vermont and the director of the Center for Research on Vermont. She is the author of *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) and the editor of *A Tourist's New England: Travel Fiction, 1820-1920* (University Press of New England, 1999).

Phyllis Andersen is a landscape historian and the former director of the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum. She is a member of the editorial board of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Phyllis Andersen: In your book *Inventing New England*, you describe the appeal of old-time New England and how much that appeal was driven in the 19th century by art, literature, and good old-fashioned marketing. Today, it's hard for us to conceive of New England as ever having been new, to imagine that tourists visited the region for new architecture, landscape, and ideas.

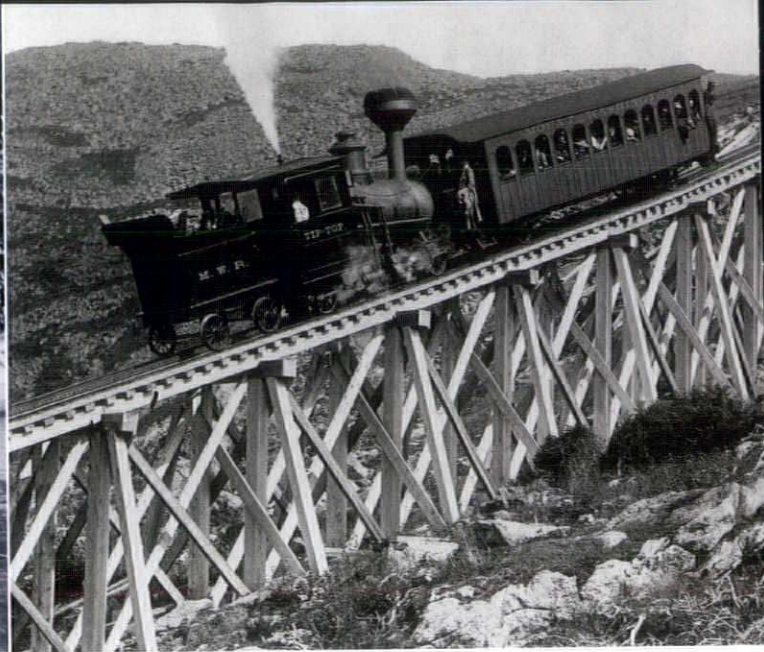
Dona Brown: Travelers came to New England in the first part of the 19th century for two different reasons. One was rooted in the "grand tour" tradition — elite travelers going from city to city, looking for characteristic expressions of the culture of that city. For instance, travelers going to Boston in the early 19th century would expect to see the institutions that characterized the region: for education, they would go to Harvard; for religion, they would go to sermons preached by some of the Unitarian ministers. William Ellery Channing was a big tourist draw.

The second reason is that New England had a well-deserved reputation in the 19th century for being very modern. It was the home of a lot of technological and industrial innovations. Travelers wanted to see Lowell, for example. It was also well known for educational innovation and social reform experiments, such as the education of the deaf at Hartford.

Phyllis Andersen: What happened after the Civil War that transformed New England into a region whose power was based on nostalgia?

Dona Brown: It was a very interesting series of transformations. Far from being hurt by the Civil War, New England actually gained. The region emerged as a great industrial powerhouse

Rodick House hotel, Bar Harbor, Maine, in 1882.



Left: Boating party on Maine lake, 1891. Right: Railway, Mount Washington, New Hampshire, 1895.

that attracted immigrants from all over the world. Fortunes were made and cities were growing. So what's wrong with this picture? Several things. One is that industrial development was not evenly spread out. The industrial and urban development was located primarily in southern New England. At the same time, in northern and western New England, it was pulling people away from the rural areas. So part of the impact was economic. Part was demographic. These kinds of changes caused a lot of New Englanders to look again at what they'd done and to think about where they'd come from, what their past was, and whether their heritage was in danger.

Phyllis Andersen: Many New England communities today are turning to tourism as a solution to economic decline caused by the loss of local industry. You have documented that many 19th-century communities turned to the same solution for many of the same reasons. Are there any lessons to be learned from communities that overreached in their attempt to reinvent themselves as tourist attractions?

Dona Brown: The lesson may be, very simply, that tourism is not as clean an industry as it seems to be. It appears to have no side effects, but it does have serious long-term consequences. In particular, people should think about what the long-term effect will be of selling something that's dear to them, whether that is a landscape or sense of place or ethnic heritage.

Phyllis Andersen: Because in a sense they're giving it away?

Dona Brown: They are. And will it mean the same thing when someone else is controlling it? That's the danger, and it's a subtle one. It's hard to see the danger of that when you're really hurting, when there's high unemployment.

Phyllis Andersen: Can you think of any examples of communities that mounted large tourism campaigns and failed miserably?

Dona Brown: The best example is Nantucket, which of course ultimately succeeded beyond anyone's imagination.

But its first attempts failed dismally. It tried to model itself on Oak Bluffs, on Martha's Vineyard, by developing big hotels and cottage lots to create a classic mid-19th-century beach experience. That all went over like a lead balloon. But in the 1870s and 1880s, promoters began to pitch Nantucket differently, actively distinguishing it from the Vineyard with its quaintness and sense of time gone by. I'm not sure that it was a conscious intention, but it worked.

Phyllis Andersen: You write so eloquently about the power of New England scenery and its emotional and physical effects on tourists. But you also describe how people needed to be told where to go, what to look at, and what to feel when they got there — the sense that the unguided experience was no experience at all. New England scenery was often described using European reference points: the White Mountains were advertised as the Switzerland of America. Wouldn't you agree that it's not unique to the 19th century? How people frame their travel experiences so often depends on external sources.

Dona Brown: That's fundamental to understanding what tourism is. There have always been travelers; there have not always been tourists. That's not a snobbish distinction. There have always been people who traveled for pleasure, but there have not always been tourist industries designed to cater to consumers of tourist experiences. As soon as that commercial enterprise began, it became clear that there were opportunities to develop niches in helping people to understand what they were seeing. It might have been as simple as a guide book listing places you might want to visit and then suggesting why you might want to go there, to much more complex interventions: "Stand at this site at four o'clock in the afternoon and remember these words of Wordsworth."

Phyllis Andersen: You've noted that the idea of "the picturesque" was nurtured here in New England by literary sources. People were open to the idea that there might be a spiritual content in the landscape, but they wanted to be told what that was in order to have the right reaction.

Dona Brown: That of course has to do with the fact that Americans were uncertain about this new experience of landscape. They were a generation or two behind the Europeans in developing this sensibility, and so they were in general quite nervous about doing it correctly. People knew that the proper appreciation of landscape was a sign of your social status, your education, your gentility.

Phyllis Andersen: It's amusing to read their accounts of feeling they had to be educated before they could have a direct emotional experience. But I think Americans today still carry a little bit of that with us when we travel, particularly to sophisticated European capitals.

Dona Brown: Yes, absolutely. There is that sense that as a tourist, you are on trial: When should you be excited? When should you be blasé? That's why "tourist" is a term of insult for many people. One rarely thinks of oneself as a tourist. That would suggest that you have no idea how to react properly to what you are seeing.

Phyllis Andersen: But if you are a "traveler," you are probably more attuned to exotic locales and educational experiences versus pure leisure.

Dona Brown: Yes. And that's why, even though it's amusing to read those accounts by early travelers, they weren't being foolish. It really was the case that they were judged by their reactions. Proper appreciation of scenery was a sign of class standing. There's a wonderful quotation from Nathaniel Willis, the 19th-century editor, who wrote that trees in America are meaningless — they exist because no one has cut them down yet. But trees in England mean status, class, and money. Wherever you see trees there, some rich man has nurtured them. Therefore, in England, trees are scenery.

Phyllis Andersen: You have observed that the most popular activity of late-19th-century tourists wasn't hiking or bicycling, but writing. If we think of it as documenting the experience, then the modern equivalent is probably video and photography.

Dona Brown: Yes — that's an apt comparison. Part of the experience is recording yourself having the experience.

Phyllis Andersen: But if you force yourself to write about your experience, then you're probably engaging in it more directly than if you take a quick, more impersonal photograph.

Dona Brown: You're right, but I've also seen old diaries with commentary like, "Rode through the Notch in the White Mountains. Extremely impressive."

Phyllis Andersen: The same as a postcard today.

Dona Brown: Exactly. And that entry would not have taken much more time than aiming the camera.

Phyllis Andersen: Let's talk a bit about the conflict that is inherent in tourism — the conflict between people who work and people who play. One aspect of it was a social hierarchy attached to specific places that certainly persists today; that is, you are who you are because of where you vacation. It's not unique to New England, but it does seem firmly entrenched here.

Dona Brown: It is especially entrenched here simply because of the long history of many of the vacation places. One of the most intriguing things that I've found in my research is the degree to which people were able to segregate themselves while on vacation, far in excess of what they were able to do at home. In general, 19th-century cities were not really segregated, whereas vacation places were often highly segregated, not just by social class but also by extremely fine lines of social distinction, by religion, and of course by ethnicity.

Phyllis Andersen: And at the same time, they created new kinds of social distinctions, such as the split between vacationers and the people who worked for them, that persists even today. Cape Cod is always a good example, as are all of those New England summer communities where the people who work for the people who visit have some sort of longstanding resentment about their role.

Dona Brown: Sometimes, it's completely situational. Some of those workers go on vacation to another place and then they become the people playing and not the people working. But, at least in the 19th century, there tended to be deep divisions between the visitors and the people who lived and worked in the host location. We see evidence of it particularly in places where the marketing pitch of the place was nostalgic. There's a wonderful quotation from a little novel about Nantucket, in which one of the characters says, "It's not pleasant having the things that we take seriously and that we do every day being made into a joke." That's fairly characteristic.

Phyllis Andersen: And yet many local people had their lives transformed in a positive way by increased tourism.

Dona Brown: There are many accounts of people who said tourism was the best thing that ever happened to their town. It wasn't just the economics. Sometimes they would say, this was such a boring place, but now it's more exciting with more interesting people from far away.

Phyllis Andersen: One changing aspect of tourism in New England seems to be the role of risk. Early 19th-century tourism in New England seemed to be enhanced by the idea of risk. But later in the century, risk-free travel became highly valued, as it seems to be today. By the early 20th century, New England had become the choice of conservative travelers. They seem to have traded adventure for comfort.

Dona Brown: Of course, travel in the early 19th century was fundamentally a much more risky enterprise. But even more important is the fact that those travelers, especially those who



The Gilbreth family (*Cheaper by the Dozen*) on vacation, Nantucket, 1923.

were interested in scenery, were influenced by the concept of “the sublime.” The sublime experience of nature requires risk — you need to feel that nature is bigger than you are. You need to feel that it’s towering over you, or that you’re on the precipice, or that the ocean is about to wash you away. That combined sense of beauty and terror is what they were looking for in the natural world: Niagara Falls; Crawford Notch; the Isles of Shoals, where the ocean was so much bigger than the land. And people associated that experience with New England in the early years.

There was a natural progression in the late 19th century as the West opened to travel and tourism. The Grand Canyon and the Rockies are more sublime than most of New England. By the late 19th century, nearly all of New England was completely deforested. It was no longer a sublime landscape; it had become a pastoral one. And it had become very well traveled: there were lots of hotels everywhere. If you add to that the marketing of New England as a nostalgic, pastoral experience, New England emerges as familiar and safe, while Alaska or the Rockies or Yellowstone become the adventure.

Phyllis Andersen: In a very amusing part of your book, you relate the misadventures of William Dean Howells and his family seeking the perfect vacation spot. He comes across as having a 19th-century Chevy Chase/National Lampoon-type vacation, with enormous mosquitoes and a too-close engagement with his landlord’s marital problems. What came out of that description was the classic vacation sense of heightened expectation dashed by reality. Did New England entrepreneurs set themselves up for failure by overselling themselves?

Dona Brown: I think they did. One example is the early promoters of Vermont’s agri-tourist experience. They oversold, or maybe sold incorrectly, what they had to offer, because they seriously misunderstood their potential clientele. They believed that they could provide the kinds of intangible experiences associated with the farm: peace; a job well done; rural values; simple joys. I don’t think that most tourists actually wanted those things. In fact, I don’t think those things can be provided for tourists.

Phyllis Andersen: Now we are seeing luxury farm vacations, where the idea of comfort is promoted because nobody really wants to sleep in a hayloft.

Dona Brown: The problem is that urban people then and now have a very nostalgic impression about what they will encounter on the farm. You can find discussions of this in the women’s pages of late 19th-century farm magazines, where women wrote in with letters about the experience of having city people stay with them on the farm. There’s one letter I’ll never forget — the woman says, “Your visitors think the farm is so delightful, and they love that glass of fresh buttermilk that you bring to them while they’re sitting on the veranda. And you say to yourself it all looks so lovely, one day you’d like to try it, too.”

Phyllis Andersen: You’ve also explored the impacts in the 20th century of auto touring, which allowed tourists to embrace perfectly restored country villages, such as Litchfield, Stockbridge, and Woodstock. At that point, the lines between authenticity and simple beautification really started to blur. As in the small villages of France and Great Britain, which are of course also well-traveled tourist traps, many residents of these beautifully restored villages live on income derived from urban enterprises. Their connection to rural life is really rather lately acquired.

Dona Brown: Whenever you go in search of authenticity, you’re bound to be disappointed, here or in France or anywhere. Those villages have a long history and it’s difficult to know at what point they stopped being authentic, particularly if you look at a place like Litchfield, which you can say has now experienced well over 100 years of reinterpretation. Perhaps the mistake is that these villages attract notions of unchanging stability. And, of course, they are not representations of unchanging stability. As long as we know that they are the products of multi-layered histories and can accept that, we can understand them perfectly well.

Phyllis Andersen: I suppose the historian can do that. But it’s hard to convince the local tourist bureau to present a layered approach, a lot of which involves 20th-century layers.

Dona Brown: It's ironic, too. I'm sure that the residents of Litchfield 200 years ago would have been insulted by the designation "rural." Up until the beginning of the 20th century, the residents of Litchfield thought of themselves as urban people, very sophisticated, very much in touch with the mainstream of the world. Then the restorationists of the 20th century gave it this sense of isolation and stability, as if it were set in a particular time period, never to change.

Phyllis Andersen: I think the word "stability" best characterizes what makes these villages so attractive to urban dwellers who see change around them every day. It appears these places haven't changed, but of course they've changed profoundly.

Dona Brown: And that's the source of the deepest disagreements between historians and the people who love these places. The one thing you learn by looking at history is that there are no places that are unchanging. As someone once told me, no one has ever lived in the past. But it's natural for all of us in the modern world to try to find some point of unchanging center. Not possible, but always longed for.

Phyllis Andersen: How much do today's tourists really want to see behind the façade, whether it's a country village or a beautiful Vermont town? Looking beyond that may not be part of what you want to think about on vacation.

Dona Brown: That's one reason I admire the historians who work at historical museums, because it is a difficult job to present a story to people who may be only marginally interested or even aggressively uninterested in knowing how things really were.

Phyllis Andersen: What's interesting about that whole field is how the interpretive story has changed with each generation of interpreters. The stories aren't set, they are never set, and in fact, they should always be changing in response to different points of view. Williamsburg is a great example.

Dona Brown: One of my favorite examples is the Shapiro House at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which has been reinterpreted as a 1919 tenement of Russian-Jewish immigrants, which it actually was. It's a wonderfully daring and interesting phenomenon, especially when you look at the long history of the removal of historic houses and their interpretation as things that they never were.

Phyllis Andersen: It complicates the interpretation of Strawberry Banke, but enriches it so much.

Dona Brown: In general, that is what I see happening with our understanding of what New England is as a place. The early historians and promoters were committed to a particular story about New England, and that story was about their ancestors



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and the values they espoused, often in direct opposition to new people and new politics. That's not so true any more. Lowell's designation as a national park represented a real sea change — New England was forced to recognize that the region is not all Yankee villages.

Phyllis Andersen: Lowell was also a breakthrough with its emphasis on the life of the worker and not of the mill owner.

Dona Brown: It really was — that was a significant change in the second half of the 20th century, in how our heritage is presented to us.

Phyllis Andersen: In your work with the Center for Research on Vermont, you've studied New England's long and complicated relationship with agriculture. Farmland preservation legislation notwithstanding, how does a state like Vermont, which certainly has a healthy tourist economy, deal with the potential landscape change that might come about as cultivated fields, pasturage, and farming itself diminish?

Dona Brown: It is an enormous concern among policy-makers. There have been conversations — more than half-joking — about how the state will still be able to keep the fields open on the interstates once the dairy industry has completely died out and put some black-and-white cows out there, and no one will

know the difference. It's true that the tourist image of Vermont for many generations has depended on an open, bucolic landscape with 19th-century villages and black-and-white cows. I think that may no longer be the primary interest of tourists in the state. I think people today tend to see Vermont more as a forested place.

Phyllis Andersen: So, a focus on outdoor sports and activities?

Dona Brown: Yes. The state promoters have moved very heavily into promoting outdoor activities — biking, boating, hiking, skiing, golf. But the greatest threat isn't reforestation. It's suburbanization, and that's a threat to more than just tourism. It is a threat to landscapes and lifestyles that people in Vermont would like preserved as well. I'm also inclined to say we shouldn't sell short the resilience of New England's farmers. Vermont farmers in particular have always been one step away from disaster, and they've had to make some rough adjustments over the centuries. I think they may do it again.

Phyllis Andersen: Has your study of tourism in New England affected your own travels?

Dona Brown: I do think about these issues when I am a tourist. I like to think about what's being interpreted and how it's being interpreted for me. ■

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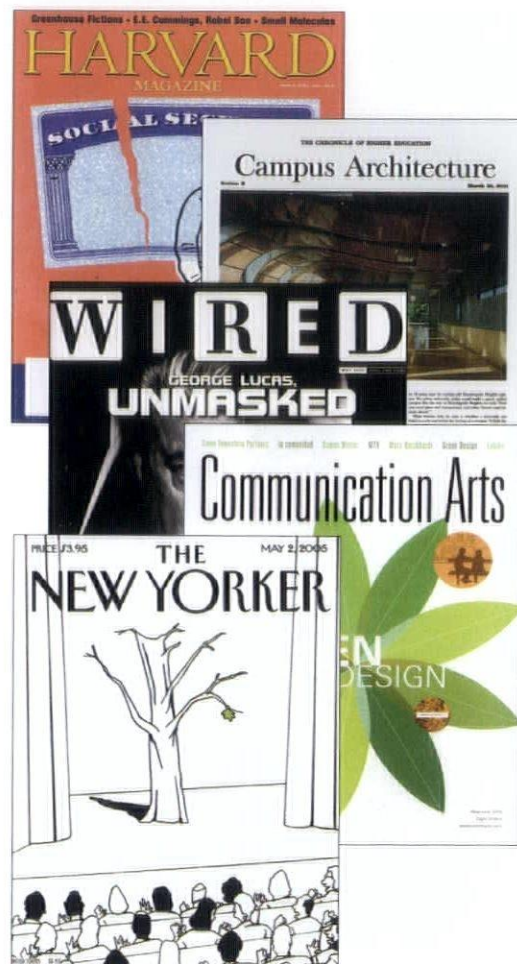
A river runs through it... Allston's about to change. And chances are — despite rumors — it won't involve re-routing the Charles River. In "Parallel Universities," *Harvard Magazine* (March–April 2005) offers a sneak peek into the university's expansion plans for the Boston side of the river. Will Allston become the Crimson's new center for biotech? The editors plant the seeds of this thought as they promote the University of California at San Francisco as a model for Harvard. UCSF's new 43-acre biomedical research campus at Mission Bay also sits among former warehouses and railyards on wetland bordered by highways and water, a fair distance from the current center of academic action. Apparently that project is a "win-win-win" for the city, developers, and the university (are there residents?) and construction is going gangbusters.

Speaking of campus planning... "Most universities seem to grow a million square feet a decade," says Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University. That's roughly the equivalent of one Hancock Tower. For a snapshot of universities' thoughts on this building growth, check out "Campus Architecture" (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, special section B, March 25, 2005). A rather predictable series of topics includes the trials and tribulations of working with star architects, pitfalls of applying historical styles to large new buildings, sustainability, and preservation. The most interesting features are a sampling of collegiate buildings from 2004 and a related new online database. Searchable by building type, cost, square footage, or state, any designer, contractor, or institution is invited to add projects to the website. As of press time, 282 projects were listed: <http://chronicle.com/indepth/architecture>.

"Hygrid is the new Prius"... "Alternative energy has been the next big thing for the past 40 years," notes Daniel H. Pink in *Wired* (May 2005). In "The New Power Generation," he argues that the future is here and it is hygrid. Hy-what? A cousin to hybrid cars, "hygrid" combines mainstream utilities with individual off-the-grid installations (like solar panels) to provide a new approach toward power supply for buildings. Not only are the costs of these technologies dropping as their efficiency rises, but also legislation in 37 states now allows individuals to sell excess power back to utility companies. On sunny days you put power in the bank; on cloudy days you can plug in, potentially saving thousands annually and recouping the high start-up costs within five to six years. Developers and architects are taking notice.

Blue + Yellow =... What does it mean for graphic design to go green? Rebecca Bedrossian argues that the color alone or "photos of big pretty trees" or even soy-based inks on recycled cardstock won't cut it; the subject of the design itself must promote positive environmental and cultural change. She provides examples: most — like brochures for Rana Creek (a company specializing in green roofs) or Alameda County's Green Building Guidelines — are related to architecture and offer a glimpse into how graphic designers present the building industry. Check out *Communication Arts* (May/June 2005).

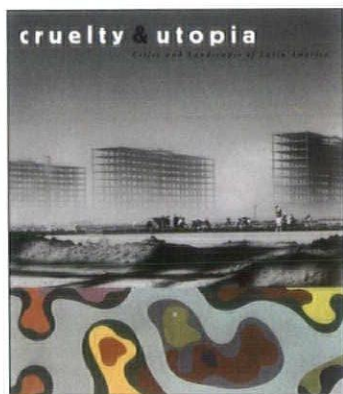
Not built in a day... "Recent events in St. Peter's Square, in Rome, have demonstrated, among other things, the virtues of a piazza," observes John Seabrook (*The New Yorker*, May 2, 2005). He continues, "Whether it serves as the site of an



impromptu soccer game, a political demonstration, or a pilgrimage, a piazza must always function as a stage for acting out scenes from the drama of everyday life." But that doesn't mean piazzas always do, nor are they easy to create. Seabrook writes that if St. Peter's provides an example of excellence, Rome's Piazza Augusto Imperatore demonstrates all that can go wrong. This saga includes: a charismatic young mayor; an emperor's tomb; Mussolini, fascism, and the International Style; pre-construction archaeology; aborted public review; a stubborn architect; cranky city officials; and heroic civic structures intended to define an age. And Bostonians thought renovating City Hall Plaza was tough. At least we don't have to excavate to Year Zero. ■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College.

Books Books Books



CRUELTY & UTOPIA: CITIES AND LANDSCAPES OF LATIN AMERICA

Edited by Jean-François Lejeune
Princeton Architectural Press, 2005
Reviewed by Leland D. Cott FAIA

Based on a 2003 exhibition at the Brussels International Centre for Urbanism, Architecture and Landscape, *Cruelty & Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* is among the best collection of essays on this subject that I have yet to see. Jean-François Lejeune, a professor at the University of Miami, has brought together a diverse group of authors to write about a variety of topics related to Latin American urbanism. Among the 20 essays are a translation — compliments of the University of Miami School of Architecture — of King Philip's 1573 *Law of the Indies* and a previously published piece by Mexican author Carlos Fuentes taken from his well-known book *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World*.

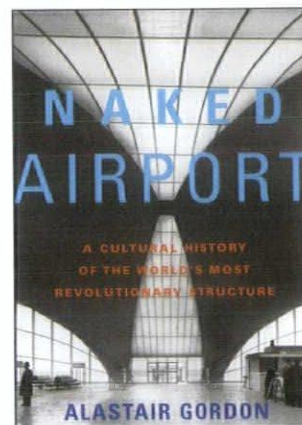
Lejeune's own essay, "Dreams of Order: Utopia, Cruelty, and Modernity," provides a subtle roadmap to the main themes touched upon in the book: the notion of pre-Columbian space; the pervasive Spanish colonial domination; modernization in Latin America; the city as landscape; and finally, modernity, globalization, and cruelty. Other essays describe how the desire for modernity shaped the great cities of Latin America such as Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Mexico City, Caracas, Havana, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, and Quito. Included throughout

are examples of great works of architecture and landscape design by designers such as Lina Bo Bardi, Juan O'Gorman, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, Oscar Niemeyer, Luis Barragán, and Roberto Burle Marx.

Latin American Modernism has been on the minds of North Americans since Henry Russell Hitchcock's landmark 1955 exhibition and book, *Latin American Architecture Since 1945*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Now, 50 years later, this book attempts to put nearly 500 years of Latin American urban and architectural history into perspective. For the most part, Lejeune succeeds in doing so, but the lack of an introductory essay providing a strong connective thread for this diverse collection is a serious omission. Each essay is sufficiently broad to provide ample information for myriad publications, and the lack of such an introduction makes the subject matter so much more difficult to place in context, given the breadth of the material.

In spite of this, *Cruelty & Utopia* makes a major contribution to the field because it succeeds in describing the history of Latin American urbanism and situates the great Latin American Modernists in that tradition — which makes for a greater understanding of their genius. This is a very special collection of written material, accompanied by an extensive and equally important selection of photographs, maps, and drawings, many of which are in color, all of which will appeal to anyone interested in Latin American urbanism and design.

Leland D. Cott FAIA is a founding principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is an adjunct professor of urban design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He has taught design studios on Havana and most recently on Monterrey, Mexico.



NAKED AIRPORT: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE

by Alastair Gordon
Henry Holt and Company, 2004
Reviewed by Mark Ruckman

You have to feel sorry for Lloyd Wright. In 1929, the oldest son of Frank Lloyd Wright submitted an innovative design for an airport for the city of Los Angeles. Abandoning conventional airport design that relied heavily on historical precedents to evoke classical temples or 18th-century formal gardens, Wright's design reflected his knowledge of aviation and his desire to look to the future for inspiration. Although Wright received enthusiastic support from LA's Municipal Art Commission, the city's airport committee chose a more conventional plan. Wright tried again with an airport design for Burbank, California, and again his innovations were rejected. He eventually gave up and went back to designing homes for wealthy clients. It would be another 20 years before some of Wright's ideas were integrated into the design of airports.

Alastair Gordon's fascinating and accessible survey of airport design traces the history of this 20th-century structure from Lindbergh's 1927 landing at Bourget in Paris to the end-of-century "shopping

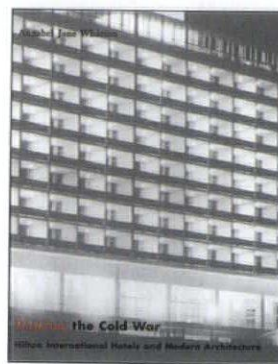
mall with planes leaving from it." It's all here: the creation of civil airways in 1926; the creation of one of the first municipally owned airports in East Boston; Roosevelt's WPA airports; the development of new materials and technologies during World War II; the sexed-up ("Coffee, Tea or Me?"), Pucci-designed '60s; the advent of the jumbo jet in 1970; and the repetition of nightmare scenes on the evening news as airports became the new frontline for terrorists.

Each of these eras is marked by the efforts of architects and planners trying to respond to increasing air traffic, to anticipate future needs, and to confront the limits of architectural convention. What is striking about the evolution of airport design, particularly during the jet age, is that it allowed urban planners to begin to ignore city centers while creating gigantic, self-contained complexes. This trend reflected the direction that America was taking and a design profession unwilling or unable to reshape the political and cultural forces at work,

perhaps best demonstrated in the planning of Idlewild/Kennedy airport. Despite inventive architects such as Walther Prokosh and Eero Saarinen, who were hired to design terminals at Idlewild/Kennedy in the 1960s, there were no provisions made for mass transit to connect passengers with two nearby New York City subway lines. The airport was designed for the automobile and the airplane: The one area designated for pedestrians, a 220-acre plaza, was demolished a few years after the airport opened and replaced with a parking lot.

Gordon's book reminds us how far we have traveled from the early fantasies of glamour and excitement that flying evoked to the caldrons of boredom and fear in the sky today. However unwittingly, airport designers have ushered in a high-speed future, changed our relationship with time, and made the world smaller.

Mark Ruckman is an editorial assistant for *ArchitectureBoston*.



**BUILDING THE COLD WAR:
HILTON INTERNATIONAL HOTELS
AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

by Annabel Jane Wharton

University of Chicago Press, 2001

Reviewed by Joan Wickersham

Remember the weaponry, both literal and ideological, of the Cold War? H-bombs. Radio Free Europe. Sputnik.

And Hilton International hotels.

That's right. Back in the 1950s, Hilton hotels were more than just places for overseas business travelers

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and tourists to get an air-conditioned good night's sleep. They were conceived, in deadly earnest, as crucial loci in the fight against the spread of Communism.

According to Conrad Hilton, "We mean these hotels as a challenge...to the way of life preached by the Communist world." Supported by the US government in the form of Marshall Plan funding, Hilton's strategy was to site hotels in cities perceived as particularly vulnerable to Communist influence; to foster goodwill toward America by infusing local economies with dollars and jobs; and to sell the desirability of the American lifestyle with such cushy amenities as ice water on tap, tennis courts, and cheeseburgers.

Annabel Jane Wharton's study of the Hilton phenomenon is heavily scholarly (words like "signification" and "autochthonus" occur with numbing frequency), but it's also fun to read. She catalogues the overseas Hiltons

from the '50s and '60s — Istanbul, Cairo, Athens, Berlin, London, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Rome — detailing the political and economic nuances as well as the design and architectural impact of each building. Many of the hotels were designed by American architects in collaboration with local architects, engineers, and craftsmen — though, as Wharton points out, the indigenous touches were just that: touches, subsumed by a resolutely American Modernist aesthetic.

The buildings' arrogantly prominent siting within the old cities was often controversial. Architectural historian Vincent Scully deplored the Athens Hilton as "vandalism," regarding it as a desecration of the landscape, and a failure of custodianship on the part of the Greeks. In contrast, Wharton offers the story of the Florence Hilton, which was never built. Ironically, many native Florentines supported the project for its potential economic benefits; it was the city's rich

expatriate residents who indignantly and successfully protested that the proposed hotel would destroy the "authenticity" of the landscape.

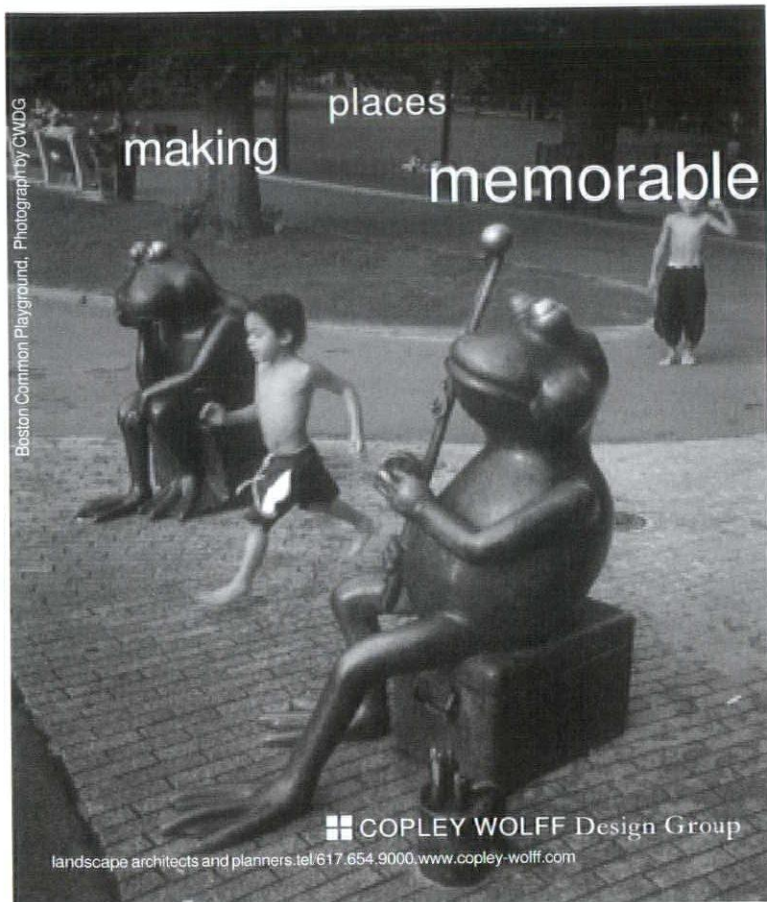
The postwar proliferation of Hilton hotels was also fueled by and partially responsible for the growth of tourism. Americans were traveling in unprecedented numbers, itching to experience foreign places — sort of. What they really craved, Wharton suggests, was a safe "McDonaldized" kind of travel: a chance to view the exotic from the vantage point of the familiar.

Conrad Hilton famously said of his hotels that each one was "a little America." This was true not only in the sense that the hotels functioned as architectural propaganda — but also because they allowed Americans abroad to feel that they had not really, after all, left home.


Joan Wickersham writes "The Lurker" column for this magazine.

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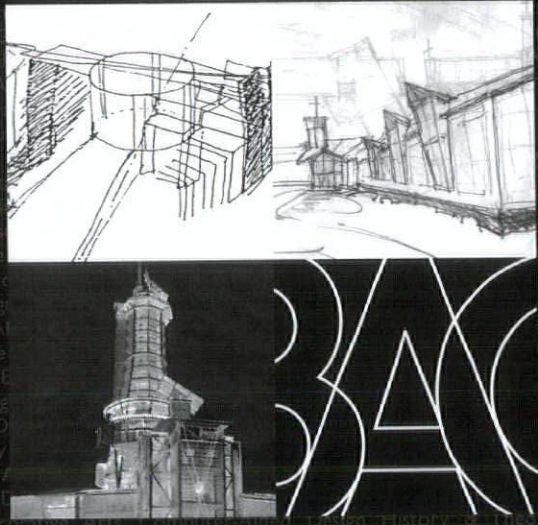


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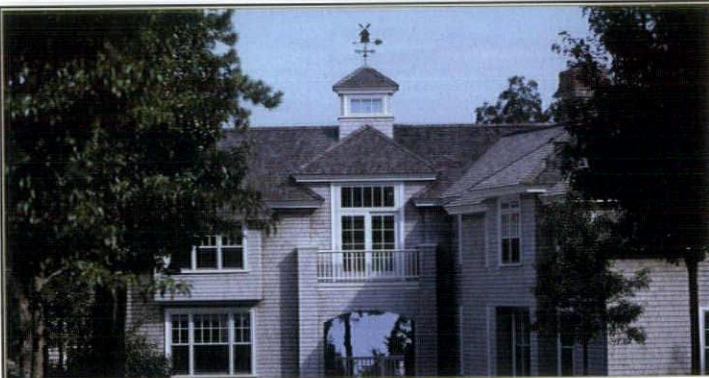

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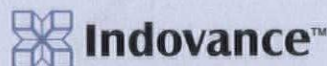
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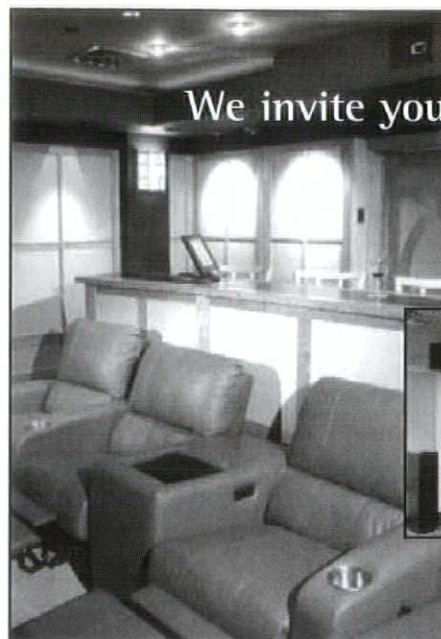
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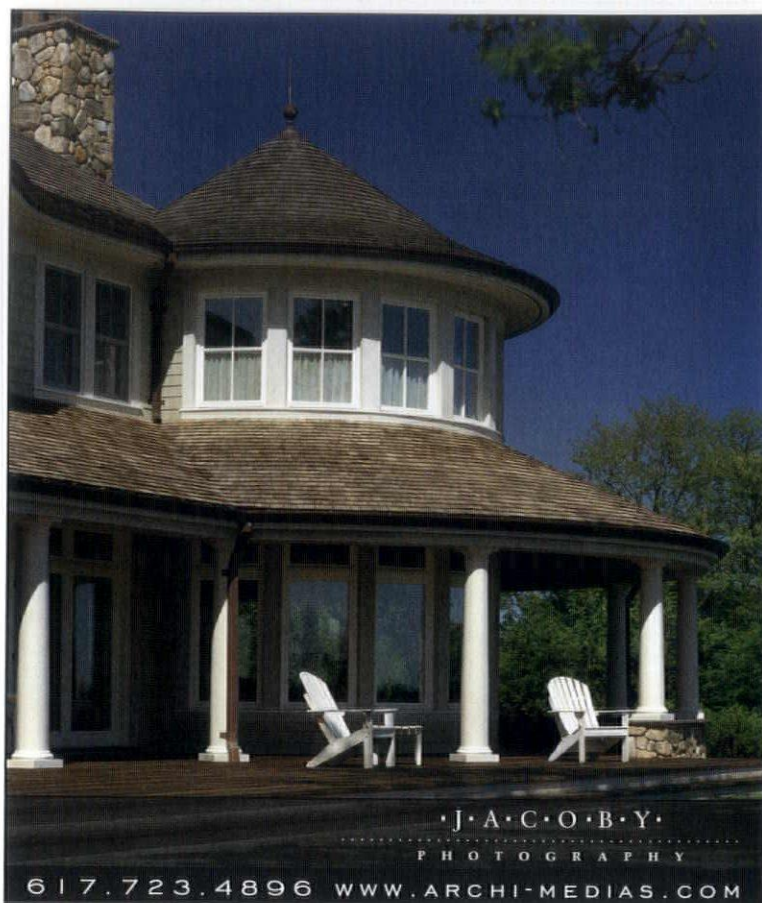
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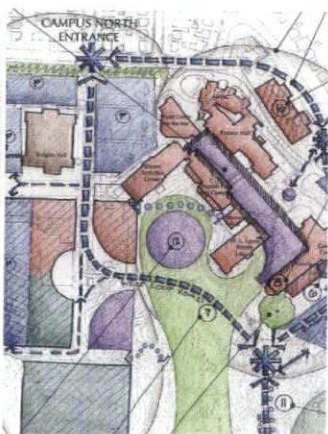
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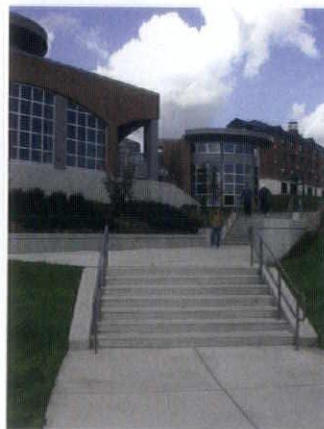
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The Homestead: Emily Dickinson Museum

Once tried to list all the addresses at which my husband and I have lived. The list was long, longer than I could believe, a record of odd jobs and graduate programs, plans pursued, abandoned, realized. After big moves across coasts and continents, we seem to have homed in on a place — or, to speak truer, to have had a place move in on us.

One of the things it means to make your home in New England is that you can never truly leave it afterward. “I have traveled extensively in Concord,” boasted Thoreau, while Emerson, his neighbor down the road, wrote: “Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical that I fled from.”

Emily Dickinson, who once said she thought “New Englandly,” did not even travel extensively in her hometown of Amherst, finding it difficult during periods of nervous anxiety to walk across the street. In fact, except for a few trips to Cambridge and Washington, DC, and a 15-year period when the family lived mere blocks away (while her father repurchased and renovated the Dickinson family manse, in which she had been born), Dickinson traveled extensively only within one address: 280 Main Street.

I visited the Emily Dickinson Museum recently, after 20 years in New England,

during which time the 60-mile distance between Williamstown and Amherst was apparently too great for me to traverse.

The Homestead is a grand brick house built in 1813 by Dickinson’s paternal grandfather; next to it sits The Evergreens, the Italianate house her father built in the 1850s for her brother, Austin, and his wife, Susan, her closest friend. Mid-spring was dear to Dickinson. “Between the March and April line,” Dickinson wrote, “That magical frontier/ Beyond which summer hesitates.” On this April day, the place felt less magical than damp. The 50-yard expanse between the two houses was free of snow, but the sodden layer of leaf and needle mulch was as yet undisturbed by signs of green. A small sign by the cash register at the visitor’s center warned us of a potent mold spore present at The Evergreens.

I stood with my daughter in the small room in which Dickinson traveled most extravagantly — the bedroom into which she brought her niece, turning the key in the lock behind them, then holding up the key to say: “Mattie, here’s freedom.” I hadn’t expected the windows to be so generous — four of them, high and wide. And yet even as I noticed such details, I found myself increasingly less present to the place. I was not distracted so much as abstracted. This peculiar mindset felt true to Dickinson — in the rooms, but not of them.

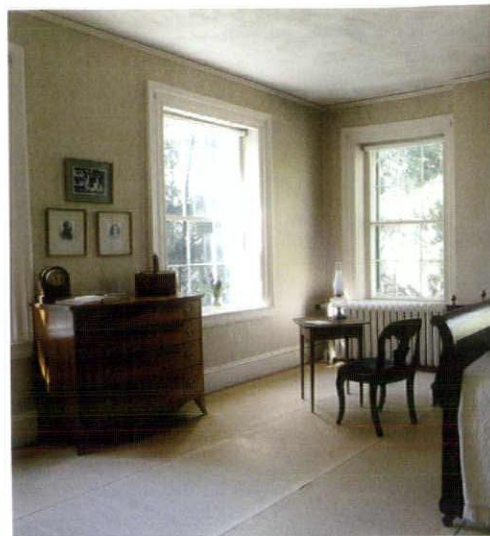
Dickinson didn’t simply dwell at 280 Main Street: she dwelled in the *idea* of dwelling. The poetry is heavy with the language of architecture. Her poems


include mansions, abodes, floors, windows, thresholds, sills, corridors, parlors, roofs, beams, stairs, porticos, hearths, dungeons, basements, and tombs. There are planks and nails, gambrels and empaneled walls, the odd splinter, even a mortised joint and some soldering. There are chambers and doors and latches, many latches.

One poem epitomizes Dickinson’s perverse occupation of and preoccupation with her house. The poem describes the soul in terms of a house that has survived the ordeal of its own building, eventually shedding its temporary superstructure to stand on its own: “adequate, erect.”

“The Props assist the House,” the poem begins, until “the Props withdraw” and the house can “support itself/ And cease to recollect/ The Augur and the Carpenter.” In the final two lines, “the perfected life” exists free and autonomous: “the scaffolds drop/ Affirming it a soul.” As I walked through the place in which Dickinson wrote these extraordinary lines, I saw with new eyes the force of her metaphor. This house at 280 Main Street was the scaffolding; the house in the poem is the relentless poet herself, marked by the menial work of augur and carpenter but infinite enough to house “the Colossal substance of Immortality.” ■

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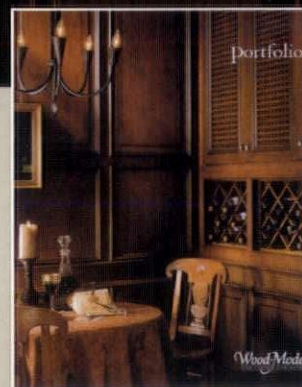
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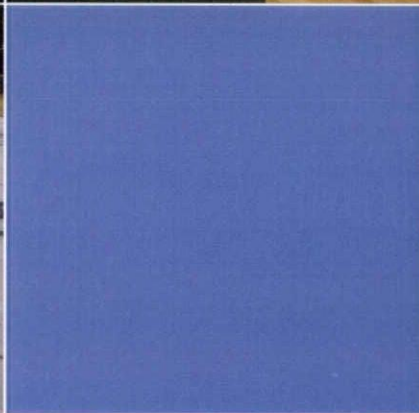
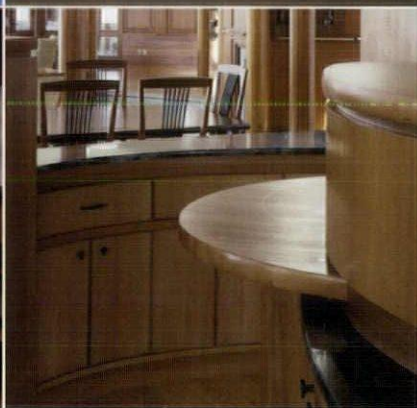
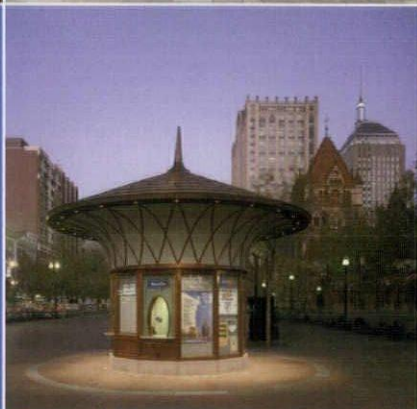
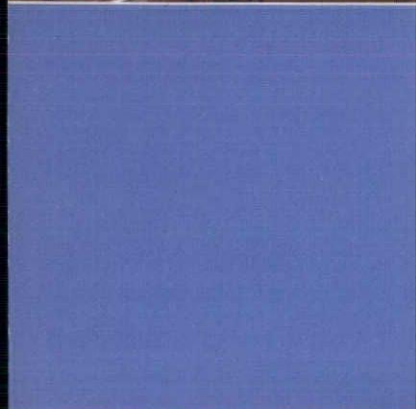
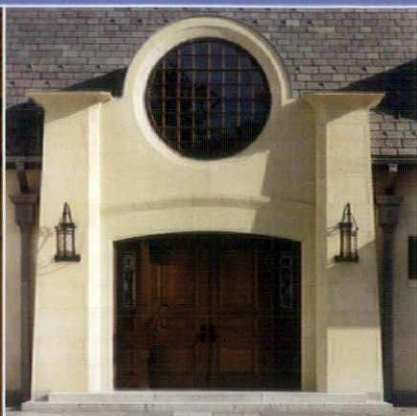
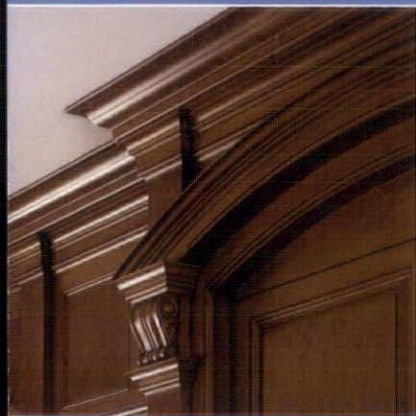
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