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Historic Preservation in Downtown Houston

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OverCITE
In the report on the Alfred C. Finn drawings exhibition in the spring issue, the information that Jesse H. Jones owned A. C. Finn's architectural practice was attributed incorrectly to Dorothy L. Victor. CITE regrets the error.

The real cause of Hurricane Alicia damage revealed — see Big Cité Beat, page 3 (Photo by Paul Hester)

Notes on Contributors

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CITE welcomes unsolicited manuscripts. Authors take full responsibility for securing required consents and releases and for the authenticity of their articles. All manuscripts will be considered by the Editorial Board. Suggestions for topics are also welcome. Address correspondence to: Managing Editor, CITE, Rice Design Alliance, P. O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251.

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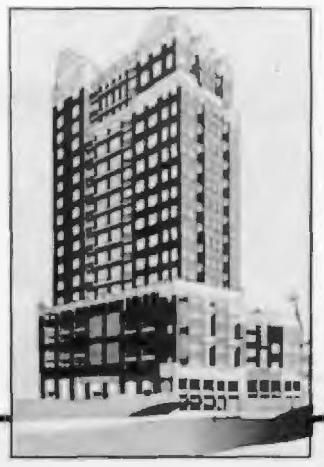


Big Cité Beat

Raiford Stripling Honored by Texas A&M

Raiford Stripling, the 72-year-old San Augustine architect best known for his restoration and preservation work, was honored at a symposium held in San Antonio on 10 September called "Texas: A Sense of Place, A Spirit of Independence." The symposium was sponsored by Texas A&M University, the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, the Texas Committee for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Stripling, who is registered as Texas Architect No. 198, directed the restoration of Mission Espíritu Santo and of Presidio La Bahía in Goliad, of Fort Parker in Mexia, and of numerous structures in San Angustine, Austin, Beaumont, Galveston, and Waco.

The symposium, organized by Gordon Echols, a professor in the A&M School of Environmental Design, was divided into three parts: a photographic exhibition documenting Stripling's major projects; a 30-minute video tape on Stripling, narrated by Amy Freeman Lee, San Antonio artist and philosopher; and a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Lee. Participating in the discussion were Raiford Stripling, Austin architect Robert Coffee, and Austin architect and architectural historian Eugene George.

In remarks made prior to the symposium, Stripling stepped outside his role as celebrated preservationist to pay a debt he owed to the women of Texas. They are, he said, the leaders of historic preservation and architectural restoration in Texas and have constituted the majority of his clients over the years. With tenacity and an independent spirit, and despite unfavorable odds, a number of women, acting individually or collectively, have preserved many historic sites within the state.

Lee set a witty philosophical pace for the panel members. She posed questions that addressed the roles of preservation and restoration today. The panel concurred on the suggestion that the preservation of an historic site, whether it be a whole town or a single structure, perpetuates the events and people connected with it. Destruction severs the thread tying the past to the present. This thread provides a link, renewing the sense of place and independence that is the legacy of the frontier to the present, and it can continue to do so.

At a dinner following the symposium, it was announced that Michael McCullar, formerly associate editor of *Texas Architect*, will write a biography of Raiford Stripling to be published by the Texas A&M University Press. The book is tentatively scheduled for publication in mid-1985.

Sally S. Victor

The Texas Embassy – What Price History?

A significant assault on historic structures in Texas, currently underway, has been gaining momentum steadily. It is a project called the Texas Embassy and it is advertised as a massive, statewide effort at historic preservation.

The Texas Embassy is spearheaded by former television personality Guich Koock of Fredericksburg. Its purpose, detailed in a promotional brochure *Texas Embassy Preserves Texas, 1836-1936*, is to create a "Living Museum" that will be a "permanent historical preservation area" for endangered Texas structures. What is envisioned is a Lone Star version of Colonial Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, or Old Sturbridge Village, populated with 100 historically and architecturally significant Texas buildings constructed between 1836 and 1936. These will be trucked-in from towns throughout the state and arranged around the 1886 Blanco County Courthouse, which Koock hopes to transport from Blanco to a 1,000-acre site (of undetermined location) somewhere between Blanco and Johnson City in the Hill Country. Koock has received the approbation of such luminaries as Willie Nelson, Darrell Royal, and the Texas Legislature. He also has secured $9 million in pledges to carry out the Texas Embassy, which he plans to inaugurate in 1986, the year of Texas's sesquicentennial.

However, the Texas Embassy has encountered considerable opposition from individuals and organizations actively involved in historic preservation. The reasons are not difficult to understand. Although the Embassy staff professes to be interested in rescuing endangered buildings that would disappear were it not for the project, in reality it has assembled what is referred to as a "laundry list" of other types of structures that it would like to move and reconstruct at the Embassy. These include buildings that are donated to the Embassy, those that the Embassy staff would particularly like to have, examples of generic types, and structures that are dedicated State Landmarks. A computer print-out reveals some of these to be the KJT Dance Hall in Fayette County, the Red River Fire House in Red River, and buildings from San Ygnacio, a community near Laredo that only recently recovered from assaults by the Texas Tech Ranching Heritage Center.

A second problem inherent in the project is that some of what the Embassy staff proposes to do is illegal. Article 6145 of Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes expressly prohibits the moving of structures protected by the Antiquities Code of Texas, among which are county courthouses and, possibly, buildings around courthouse squares. Despite this fact, Koock has convinced the State Bar Association to endorse the moving and restoration of the Blanco County Courthouse, although to date the association has refused to underwrite the project.

The recent thrust of preservation activity in Texas, as in the rest of the country, has been to restore and reuse buildings in place. This practice stems from the recognition that a specific relationship exists between buildings and the places where they were designed and constructed. The Texas Embassy fails to recognize that relationship and has ignored the impact that the removal of landmark buildings will have on rural Texas communities. Raising money and consciousness to protect the state's vulnerable historic resources is a commendable, indeed urgently needed, activity. But to pluck the best remaining historic buildings out of their surroundings in order to create a 1920s type of one-of-everything Pioneer Village is a travesty.

Martha Doty Freeman

High-rise Apartment Planned for San Antonio's RiverWalk

Arrow Associates, the architecture and urban-design firm organized by Cyrus Wagner, currently has in design a 19-story condominium apartment tower, to be called The Riverton, for downtown San Antonio. Located at West Market and Navarro streets, the building will also face the RiverWalk just across the San Antonio River from La Villita.

Arrow's design takes careful account of the building's urban situation. A six-story base contains river- and street-level retail space beneath five floors of parking. On the river side of the base, however, apartment units displace parking. A 13-story tower, containing the majority of the building's 106 apartment units, rises above the base. The tower is stepped in plan on all four sides and has a picturesque skyline profile. The big scale and simple massing of the base is intended to relate to such surrounding low-rise buildings as the small, but monumental, Public Library (1930, Herbert S. Green, architect). The setback massing of the tower responds to the presence nearby of such downtown landmarks as the Smith-Young Tower (1929, Atlee B. Ayres and Robert M. Ayres, architects) and the Alamo National Bank Building (1930, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, architects).

According to Gregory Warwick, a principal in the Arrow firm, The Riverton will be of reinforced-concrete construction, faced with brick and glazed tile. Construction is scheduled to begin in May 1984. Southport Development Company is developing the project, which will be the first high-rise residential building to be constructed in downtown San Antonio.

☛ Speculation on what might have caused the damage that **Hurricane Alicia** inflicted on the curtain walls of two of downtown Houston's flashier new buildings is rife. One Houston architect is confident that he knows the answer, however; "That's just what happens when you put a green one next to a pink one."

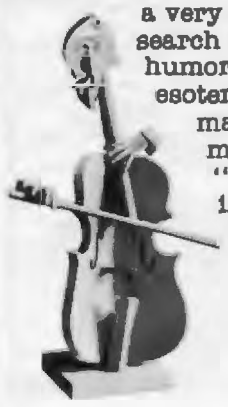
☛ **Helmut Jahn** kicked off the **Houston Design Center**'s series of public lectures by celebrated designers on 23 August before a packed house in Greenway Plaza. Climaxing the talk was Jahn's presentation of the multiple alternatives he developed for the design of the Southwest Center, which, like the Houston Design Center, is being built by Century Development Corporation. Although the 82-story Southwest Center will be Jahn's first Houston building, it will be the Murphy firm's second. In 1938, for a model house building program sponsored by *Life* magazine, Shaw, Naess and Murphy designed a house built at 2241 Stanmore Drive in the River Oaks courts, occupied originally by Adele Boettcher Neuhaus. It is 80 stories shorter than the Southwest Center.

Life *House #8 (Neuhaus House), Houston, 1938, Shaw, Naess and Murphy, architects* (River Oaks Magazine, *1941*)

☛ **All Strung Out** Public art types were more than a little taken aback when, on 27 April, Russo Properties, Inc., announced that it would erect on the plaza of its Lyric Centre Office Building in downtown Houston a 36-foot-high work of sculpture by veteran Houston painter David Adickes. Called "Virtuoso," the piece depicts an upstanding cello being bowed by one disembodied hand and fingered by another, with a disembodied head, mustachioed and curlicued, at the tip of the stem, very much like a bronze figurine by Paul Fairley called "Abstract Cello," which is two feet high.

"Virtuoso" will be constructed of steel surfaced with polished white "cultured" marble. It will be integrally lit and (natch) play recorded cello music during lunch.

The art community's collective eyebrows were raised, but no unkind remarks have been forthcoming, at least not publicly. In the company of downtown's corporate art elite—monumental public sculpture by Miro, Oldenburg, Hepworth, and Dubuffet are the most conspicuous —"Virtuoso" is, well, not a very sophisticated addition. In search of public art that was humorous, accessible, and non-esoteric, Russo Properties' art mavens have settled for the merely corny and derivative. "Virtuoso" was unveiled in October.



Maquette of Virtuoso, *1983, David Adickes, sculptor (Russo Properties, Inc.)*

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Three Fountains Apartments, 2200 Fountainview looking north (Photo by Paul Hester)

Panoramic Photographs on View at the Houston Public Library

Old Houstonians are often heard to say that they cannot find their way around Houston anymore. The city continues to spread in all directions. Indeed, it has grown so fast that even those who have been here for only two years have witnessed the transformation of the skyline; the newest postcards are soon obsolete. The Houston Metropolitan Research Center's photographic exhibition, "Houston-In-The-Round," explores this process of vital and sometimes disorienting change.

The show, made up of giant prints of Houston scenes from the 1920s to the present, is on view at the Julia Ideson Building of the Central Library from 12 September to 24 October. Organized by photographers Curtis Bean and Paul Hester, with Houston author Douglas Milburn, the exhibition includes prints from the Research Center's collection of photographs made by the Schlueter Studio and the Litterst Commercial Photo Company.

These commercial photographers, in the second and third decades of the century, employed a CIRKUT camera to take panoramic pictures of everything and anything people cared to document. Frank J. Schlueter and the Littersts photographed the Houston skyline, large gatherings of people, railroad trains, industrial plants, oil fields, construction sites, groups of workers, great events – in short, the everyday life that made up the activities of the city, both monumental and intimate. While many of the pictures are documentary in nature, the extremely large format negatives (which are sometimes eight inches high by six feet long) are always able to capture a specific moment: the particular expression of an individual face even in a crowd. The familiarity present within the large-scale view or vast event gives these photographs a palpability that is never sentimental or cute. Photographs that were thought of until recently

Is There Life After Dark?

Houston may soon have a theater district downtown. Joe Russo, the founder of the Theater District Association and developer of the new 26-story Lyric Centre Office Building (Darrell Comeaux Architects and Richard Fitzgerald and Partners, architects) in the center of the proposed district, wants the association to help provide the security and amenities that would re-establish that most endangered of species, the Houston pedestrian, on city sidewalks after five o'clock. By concentrating a revival of nightlife in the area bounded by Congress, Milam, Capitol and Buffalo Bayou (an area containing the Alley Theater, the new Alley Theater Center, Jones Hall, the Albert Thomas Convention Center, and the imminent Wortham Theater Center), the Theater District Association hopes to give this area a special theatrical character—and give theater patrons a reason not to run for their cars at the close of each performance.

The Theater District Association (to be composed of local art, business, and civic leaders, so far unnamed) has a preliminary two-year budget of $250,000. Eighty percent is proposed to come from business and private contributions, another 20% from arts groups. Russo Properties, Inc., is offering 50% of the private funding for the first two-year period, plus free office space for the group. After two years, Joe Russo plans to hand over the reins to the association's board of directors.

Houston's rival, Dallas, has been working on a similar proposal since 1976. Where it had no facilities before, it now has an art museum by Edward Larrabee Barnes and the design for a symphony hall by I.M. Pei and Partners. Perhaps more important, it has guidelines prepared by Dallas's City Planning Department that include emphasizing the district's central street as a boulevard oriented to pedestrians, with public spaces for art displays and ground-floor levels of buildings devoted to retail stores and restaurants. No such goals have been proposed to clarify ways in which future buildings would contribute to the character of Houston's district.

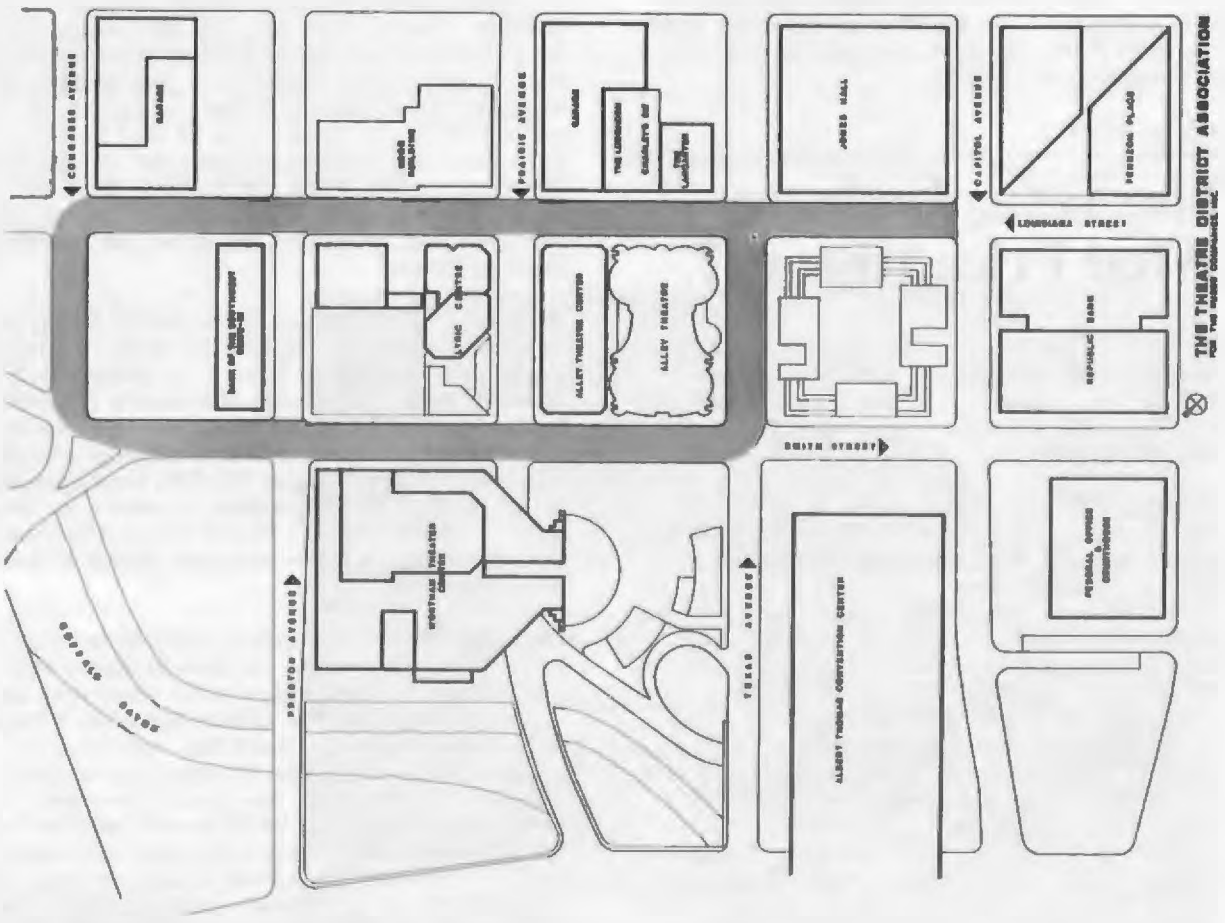
In addition to theater and commerce, the scope of the district could be broadened to include the visual arts: galleries or downtown branches of the Contemporary Arts or Fine Arts museums. Russo has been approached with the idea of including a children's museum in his Lyric Centre Building, a possibility about which he is enthusiastic. Street vendors have been proposed, although this would require special dispensation from City Council, since such activity is legally prohibited. A special cleaning crew, suggested by Russo, could alleviate at least part of the litter such commerce generates. Russo is also suggesting a special security force—in costume—that would patrol the area from 5 P.M. until 2 A.M., augmenting regular service by the Houston Police Department.

Even universally appealing images are surprisingly difficult to translate to reality. Since most of the land required for street amenities is city-owned, the city would have to approve all installations, and the responsibility for future maintenance might well fall on taxpayers. While Mayor Whitmire's appointment of Efraím García as Director of City Planning has infused new life into a city department that for 20 years was moribund, it is still unclear that the City of Houston has the willingness or competence to commit to such long range public-private ventures. One of the chief reasons that such ventures have not been proposed in the past is fear that the city would be unable to bear its share of the responsibility.

If this is to be the case no longer, then Houston has a rare opportunity to capitalize on the foresight of one of its developers. A sense of security, coupled with places to stroll *to*, street-level shops and restaurants, plus more places to pause—benches, shade trees, and fountains—could make the downtown theater district a pedestrian gathering place, one that would give the air-conditioned Galleria a run for its money.

Janet O'Brien

View in proposed Theater District (Photo by Paul Hester)



Map of proposed Theater District (The Russo Companies, Inc.)

as literal testaments of another era now are seen to have qualities of composition and measure that make them art.

More recently, Hester and Bean have been experimenting with the CIRKUT camera, and the results of their work are also part of the exhibition. Curtis Bean has taken as his point of departure the camera's ability to record large-scale gatherings, such as marathons. Paul Hester has spent his energy exploring the documentary capacity of the camera, at times recreating, yet at the same time updating by method and moment, the older work.

The direct comparisons of the Houston of Schlueter and the Littersts with that of Bean and Hester speak to the mammoth dimensions of this city's growth and to the epic and artful nature of the medium. This is a show not to be missed.

John Kaliski

Slovic-Oakwood Mall

Following his joint appointment with Ligia Ravé as Henry Luce Professor of Architecture and Society at Tulane University last January, David Scott Slovic has opened a branch of his new Philadelphia practice in New Orleans. In production now is his first Louisiana commission, the remodeling of 60,000 square feet of public space in Oakwood Mall, a shopping center in Gretna owned by the Rouse Company. Anticipated completion dates for the two-phase operation are in April and summer 1984.

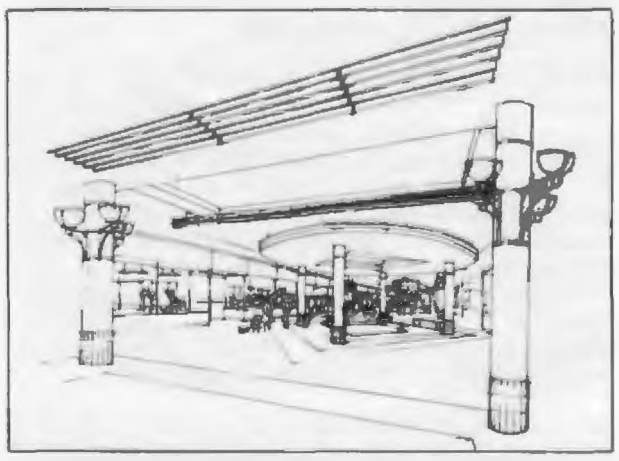
Within the constraints imposed by such a project, Slovic and associates Philip Buckley, John Roth, Burkart Stelzer, and Serge Nalbantian have sought to give the cruciform-plan mall spaces a positive image, treating them as "an interior urban design," according to Slovic.

Existing canopies at major entrances are to be reworked. Paving patterns in tile will be coordinated with modifications to the ceiling and the use of neon lighting to create what Slovic describes as a spatial "sequencing" of the heretofore bland, linear passages. Structural columns will be reclad in tile and plaster and equipped with industrial fixtures containing indirect lighting.

At the intersection of the four arms, a specially programmed fountain, set in a sunken pool in the center of a tile, granite, and bronze floor "compass," is planned beneath an existing skylight. New subcenters will be located in each of the radiating passages. One of these, in an arm of the mall that proved unattractive to tenants, will become a Food Court, featuring a new skylit court, individualized column facings, and redirected access to parking.

Image re-do's of shopping malls are not the most promising of architectural commissions. Slovic has handled this one with imagination and tact, bringing to the suburbs an architectural hint of Mummers-cum-Mardi-Gras delight.

Stephen Fox



Perspective of special mall bay, Oakwood Mall, Gretna, Louisiana (David Slovic Architecture and Urban Design)

William Wayne Caudill, FAIA 1914-1983

William Wayne Caudill (CRS/Caudill Rowlett Scott)

Bill Caudill was an extraordinary man and an extraordinary architect.

He had enormous talents and personal strengths. He was an educator, a writer, a dynamic lecturer, a strong leader, a motivator of people, a lover of ideas, a quintessential conceptualizer, an advocate for change, an iconoclast, a researcher, a designer, a philosopher, a master at understanding human dynamics, an individual with an enormous drive to achieve excellence.

His accomplishments during his 69 years are significant and all the more noteworthy since, as a shy young man with a speech impediment, he believed that if he became an architect, he could then work quietly in the studio and never have any public exposure. Little did he know how public his productive life would be.

Bill attended Oklahoma State University, where he studied under a Beaux-Arts curriculum, then chose The Massachusetts Institute of Technology for graduate work. While at MIT he wrote the first of his 11 books, *Space for Teaching*. It was a revolutionary thesis that combined new attitudes toward education with architectural form. He went full circle in his career: He started his professional life as the Director of Research at Texas A&M University, and at the time of his death was Director of Research for CRS Group.

Bill helped establish an international design firm on the principle of "architecture by team." He instilled a sense of continuity by fostering talent and allowing leadership to emerge. He helped build a firm whose culture, character, and purpose reflect his own values. He was particularly proud of the 300 design awards displayed at CRS—he called it "our ego wall." He was delighted when CRS received the AIA Firm Award for Achieving Design Excellence through Collaboration. He served as president, then chairman, of CRS/Caudill Rowlett Scott, and served on the board of directors of CRS Group. The statement that we ran CRS like a school (CRS alumni now practice throughout the world) and the Rice University School of Architecture like a firm gave him deep satisfaction. He took great pride in the achievements of his firm, its alumni, and his many students and faculty.

As the Director of the School of Architecture at Rice for nine years, he believed the purposes of education were:
1. To instill a sense of self-motivation and passion that is essential to our art.
2. To expose students and faculty to diverse ideas.
3. To develop skills—conceptual, graphic, and verbal.
4. To seek through self-understanding one's unique strengths.
5. To impart knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of architecture.
6. To develop, articulate, and publish new theory.

Bill served frequently on design juries. He was a member of the U.S. State Department Design Commission, and served on the Design Committee for the University of Washington in Seattle. He was on the board of directors of Herman Miller, Inc., and the American Institute of Architects. He served on the AIA Design Commission, and was elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA for his contributions in design. In 1978 he received the Texas Society of Architects' Llewelyn Pitts Award. He was also given a Gold Medal by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Recently, his native state of Oklahoma elected him to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, the first architect so honored.

A visiting design critic at Princeton University as well as a lecturer at every major architectural school in the nation, he presented hundreds of electrifying speeches on his philosophy of design and education. He wrote more than 80 articles and research reports. At the time of his death he was working on the manuscript for his last book, *Memos: Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong*.

Bill Caudill embraced the idea of collaboration and design for an industrialized society extolled by the Bauhaus. But he advocated an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to architecture. His philosophy of architecture was one of balance, as he believed all great architecture—past, present, and future—must have equilibrium between form, function, economy, and time.

In CRS' designs, he always sought the generic qualities of form—be it plastic, skeletal, or planar—as well as generic concepts, because he hoped that our inventions would lead to prototypical solutions. He understood human dynamics better than any architect who practiced from the mid 1950s to the 1980s. In both education and practice he encouraged students and colleagues to "strengthen your strengths—be your unique self." He invented the "squatters" process of on-site interaction with clients and users of the architecture to be created. He fostered architectural programming as both a distinct new discipline and an integral part of the design process.

Bill was a generous man with the most precious gift—time. He always gave his time to help others; he gave counsel and advice to students, faculty, colleagues, and new acquaintances. He was a wonderful listener and willingly shared his experience.

The most important things in Bill's life were *ideas* and *people*. Architecture was the medium through which his love was realized. He was like a magnifying glass placed in the dispersed rays of the sun to create a focus—even a fire. His effect on those around him was catalytic. He helped them to accomplish more than they might have achieved individually.

Bill viewed architecture as essentially anthropocentric; human experience and values are its central motivating forces. His definition of architecture helps explain the kind of man he was: deeply moral, humanistic, and philosophical. "Architecture is a personable, enjoyable, necessary experience. A person perceives and appreciates space and form from three distinctly different but related attitudes: from the physical, from the emotional, and from the intellectual. The architecture experience evokes a response which fulfills physical, emotional, and intellectual needs, effecting an enjoyable interaction between the person and the building." This was the basis for his lifelong commitment to the art of conceiving architecture for people.

A rare and colorful personality, he was a legend in his time. He was an inspirational leader. Bill had a unique style; he communicated significant concepts with clarity; he taught us to probe new ideas, new trends, to look forward, to seek out the excitement and challenges of our times. He was the consummate *searcher*.

He boiled things down to their essence. We called him the "great rifle shooter" because he always cut through the fog and found the central underlying issue. When things really became complex or verbose, he would laugh and say, "I would have written you a shorter letter if I had had more time"—in fact, he always extolled the virtues of verbal and visual economy.

I had the rare privilege of working very closely with Bill Caudill for 20 years at CRS and at Rice University. He was a respected colleague and a close friend. Of all those with whom I worked, he had the greatest impact on my career as an architect.

His lasting principles, his superior example of what a person can accomplish in a lifetime, leave a rich and varied personal legacy unmatched in our architectural community. The spirit and humanism of his architecture will survive through the people he touched. This, above all else, is the legacy of Bill Caudill, the meaning of his life, and a testament to his vision.

Paul Kennon

New Texas Country Clubs

As an institution, the country club might seem to verge on anachronism. Identified particularly with the game of golf, its social origin is irremediably bourgeois and its preferred locus is suburban, if not actually rural. Yet in Texas the country club as a building type is presently the object of some design activity, occasioned both by newly formulated programatic requirements and by the search for appropriate architectural images.

Today, new country clubs in metropolitan areas are being built not only to fulfill the social and recreational requirements of upper-middle-income families, but to attract corporate use of their conference, recreational, and guest accommodations. Entrepreneurs like the five-year-old Houston firm of Kindred Watts Inc. have made a substantial business out of packaging and operating such country clubs for real estate developers.

Two Kindred Watts projects for which Ford, Powell and Carson of San Antonio are architects are the Riverside Club in Grand Prairie (in the suburban Metroplex between Dallas and Fort Worth) and the Mission Country Club in Odessa, connected to a new residential community being developed between Midland and Odessa.

The Riverside Club is, for all practical purposes, a small resort hotel. In addition to a separate three-story Athletic Center, the four-story Main Clubhouse contains 51 "clubdominium" units. The architectural image is simple, modernist, and white, calculated for maximum impact when seen across the green of the golf course beneath the hot, bright blue Texas sky. Developed by the Bedrock Development Corporation of Dallas, the 130,000-square-foot complex is currently in the design development stage.

The Mission Country Club projects another image. As John Mize, Ford, Powell and Carson's project manager for both jobs, explains, "Riverside is based on a corporate philosophy of golf club and athletic center as part of a large commercial development, with office buildings bordering the golf course. Mission is designed in the classic image of a country club, surrounded by large estate lots." The Mission Country Club is a modernist building too. But it incorporates elements of Ford, Powell and Carson's "regional" vocabulary: sheer brick walls, topped by molded coping and broken only by narrow slot windows; cedar *portales* shading exterior spaces; and a succession of 18 masonry *bovedas* capped by lanterns and supported on cylindrical reinforced concrete columns. The *bovedas* provide a linear promenade, a structured formal element to which the brick-clad, box-like massing units of the club adhere according to programatic requirements. The 39,000-square-foot clubhouse separates locker and recreational rooms in a partially exposed basement level from public spaces on a raised main level. In addition to the main clubhouse there will be a free-standing pro shop, a two-story clubhouse to serve the swimming pool and tennis courts, and a set of "clubdominiums." HBF Corporation of Midland is the developer. Under construction since May, the clubhouse is scheduled for completion in July 1984.

A third Kindred Watts project, undertaken for Sugarland Properties (a partnership of Gerald D. Hines Interests and the Royal Dutch Shell Pension Fund), is the Sweetwater Country Club in First Colony, a 10,000-acre mixed-use residential and commercial development at Sugar Land, a suburb on the southwest edge of Houston. Designs from a number of architects were solicited in 1981; a scheme by Charles Moore and William Turnbull was selected, and has been developed with Richard Fitzgerald and Partners. Gentry, Haynes and Whaley were consulting engineers, Morris★Aubry Architects were interior designers, and IBS, Inc. was the general contractor. The first two increments of the master plan – the Clubhouse and the Tennis Building– were completed in May and August respectively. A set of "clubdominiums," for which W. Irving Phillips, Jr., is architect, is in design.

The Clubhouse that emerged at Sweetwater is very different from the one represented in Moore and Turnbull's initial drawings. It preserves the notion of a diagonally stepped plan inscribed in a square and the image of a great pyramidal roof, cut away at one corner for a motor court and visually stabilized by two massive brick stacks. Gone is the light hearted, spatially buoyant interior, where a serpentine wiggle wall secreted stairs and elevators in a "thick" screen partitioning the main public areas. The square footage of the clubhouse shrank considerably (it ended up at 54,000 square feet). The external image at Sweetwater was preserved and, indeed, the building complex sits very comfortably in its purpose-made site. But the loss of what promised to be a rich spatial experience is a disappointment.

The best known new Texas country club, under construction since October 1982 and scheduled for completion in January 1984, is the River Crest Country Club in Fort Worth. Designed by Taft Architects, it will replace the club's second clubhouse, which burned in January 1981. Like the Sweetwater Country Clubhouse, the new River Crest clubhouse has a pyramidal profile based on a square plan and is anchored by tall, vertical stacks. But unlike Sweetwater, River Crest's organization of tightly interlocked internal spaces grows out of the geometry of its plan and section. The partially exposed basement contains locker and service facilities; the main floor a series of dining spaces and the kitchen; and the third floor the ballroom, which rises up beneath the roof. The kitchen is at the center of the plan, accessible to all the club's different spaces. Stairs, elevators, and mechanical risers occupy intermediate bands of "servant"

Playing the Recreational Standards Game

Houston's Green Ribbon Committee produced its "Action Plan" for parks in January 1983.[1] Its 60 citizen members had been appointed to recommend goals, directions, and courses of action to create a high quality park system for the Houston metropolitan area. They began in March 1981 by assessing the existing parks and recreation system, then determined public priorities and formulated goals and strategies based on a forecast of area-wide needs up to 1990. The Green Ribbon Committee resulted from a 1979 agreement signed by the chief executives of the City of Houston, Harris County, the State of Texas, and the Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, prompted by the findings of the 1977 National Urban Recreation Study and ensuing pressure from local groups.

The Green Ribbon Committee's report made six major recommendations.[2] First, it would create a parks management system to coordinate interagency activities and to provide overall guidance for park planning and improvements. Its administrative framework would consist of an Executive Parks Council representing executive branches of local government and school districts, and a Parks Advisory Commission composed of citizens representing various other public and private interests.

The second recommendation calls for the adoption and maintenance of a shared capital improvement program among local government bodies responsible for providing parks. Generally, the committee recommended that in the early stages of the program funds be spent primarily to acquire land, with emphasis shifting later to the improvement of existing facilities.

The third recommendation, concerning effective budgeting and control procedures, appears to be an extension of the second, and deals primarily with sources of funding and fiscal operations.

The actual needs for physical improvement of parklands are addressed in the fourth and fifth recommendations. Specifically, Houston needs to add at least 5,000 acres to its current park inventory by 1990. This addition will remedy existing and future deficits in park space, particularly at the "neighborhood" and "community" levels. (The committee found that available facilities were unevenly distributed in relation to population concentrations.) The report estimates the cost of such an undertaking at about $400 million. It stresses the necessity of improving parkland, once acquired, and spells out a broad range of quite particular recreation standards.

The final recommendation expresses the need for a regular review procedure, in which the Parks Advisory Commission would continue to oversee all program activities and report to the Executive Parks Council. This recommendation seems to be an extension of the first, more clearly defining the continuing role of the Parks Advisory Commission.

The intentions and subsequent work of the Green Ribbon Committee are laudable and should be commended in principle. The members have clearly recognized the very real need for interagency coordination and have recommended steps toward its realization. They have directly faced the controversy over use of Houston Independent School District lands as park facilities and argued for public access. They have listed guidelines for making the provision and improvement of parklands more businesslike and perhaps less burdensome to the public, and they have made public participation an integral part of the future parks program. Furthermore, the report from the committee is reasonably comprehensive and technically competent, at least within its frame of reference.

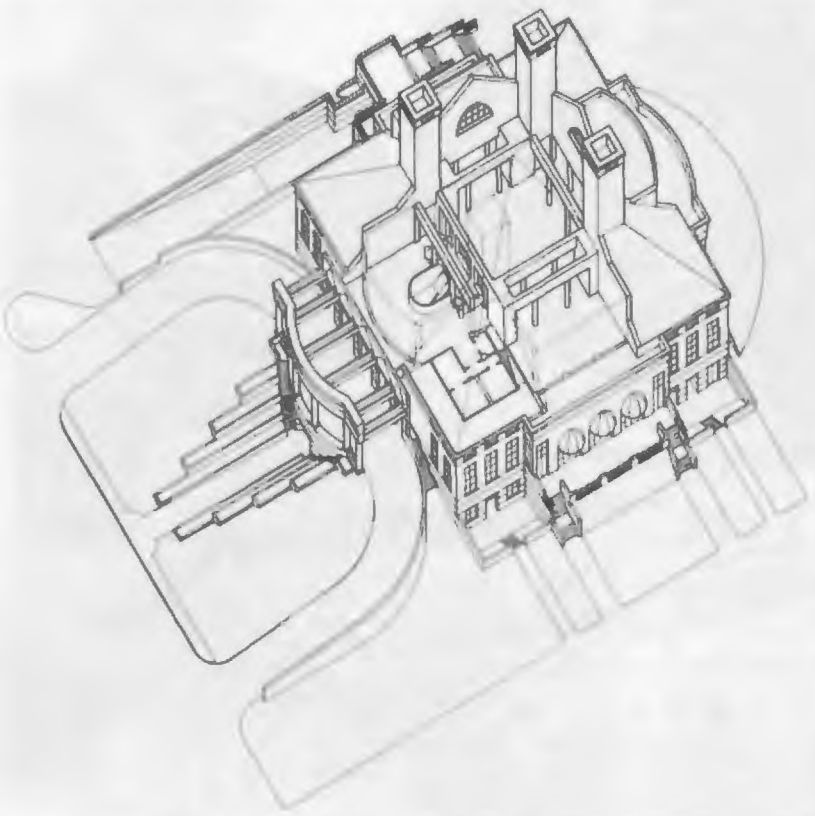
Unfortunately, the deliberations of the committee seem to have skirted several fundamental questions. First, how are initial recommendations for land acquisition and physical improvements to be made? Throughout the statistical and narrative presentation of parkland needs, quantitative space standards are really the only normative prescription. The report tacitly assumes that such standards are reasonable and exclusively represent the values one might expect to find incorporated into a park system of sufficient quality to merit national and even international recognition. This is arguable. In fact, the planning orthodoxy that embraces these kinds of empirical standards is far from unassailable.

Such standards are usually derived using a step-by-step process.[3] First, specific recreational functions are identified, to which use characteristics are ascribed (such as space requirements, frequency of use, type of users, and number of users required to support the function). Second, the functions or activities so defined are aggregated into discrete groupings, usually with reference to ideas about convenience of access, frequency of use, and the level of participation or service required. In almost all cases, the process of aggregation gives rise to a hierarchical spatial distribution of recreational opportunities ranging from neighborhood parks through community and district parks to larger city-wide facilities.

For the resulting model or standard to work, we must assume that: (1) the characteristics of use and the implied preferences are accurate for all the user groups in question; (2) opportunities in each level of the hierarchy are equal; (3) the actual preferences for various forms of passive and active recreation described in the model are continuous within the population; and (4) access is a dominant concern in recreation and the model truly reflects desirable accessibility of recreational opportunities. Furthermore, changes in life styles and in recreational tastes should not unduly disrupt the usefulness of the model.

Even without the misgivings one might have about these underlying assumptions, the report's ultimate standards (and therefore measures of quality) seldom reflect the rich possibility for adaptation and transfor-

Southeast elevation, Mission Country Club, Odessa (Ford, Powell and Carson)



Axonometric, River Crest Country Club (Taft Architects)

View of golf course elevations, Sweetwater Country Club (Photo by Richard Payne AIA)

space, while public rooms migrate to the periphery, overlooking the golf course and the surrounding River Crest neighborhood, Fort Worth's most elite residential enclave. In place of the lyricism of Moore and Turnbull's original design for Sweetwater, Taft Architects have pursued a more earnest approach.

The external imagery recalls traditional architectural forms while avoiding historical literalism. The club's substructure is poured-in-place concrete, striated with horizontal bands of ceramic tile. The walls of the superstructure are faced with brick, interrupted regularly by horizontal courses of molded terra cotta. Roofs will be surfaced with glazed tile. The River Crest Country Club will contain 51,000 square feet and cost about $8 million. Geren Associates/CRS of Fort Worth is associate architect and consulting engineer. JBM, Inc., is general contractor, and the New York decorator Mark Hampton will design the interiors.

These four architectural projects demonstrate the programatic breadth of what today in Texas can constitute a country club. They demonstrate also the tendency to use architecture to image building projects. This can be seen as part of a post-modern (or anti-modern) polemic. But on the suburban fringes of Texas cities, it also serves to create a strong sense of place.

Stephen Fox

mation that alternative formulations might present. Its only real measures of quality are the size of a facility, the geographic radius served, and the density, expressed as a measure of park space to population. The report alludes to the problem when it makes a distinction between "activities" and facilities, defining recreation as an experience rather than as a facility.[4] The full implications of this distinction are never fully pursued, however, and in the "recreation component standards" activities appear to be largely synonymous with facilities (e.g., swimming: "dress-to-swim" pools, 15 square feet of water per person for 3% of the population).[5]

If one suspends disbelief in the efficacy of space standards, the report raises yet another question: how much space is actually needed? The committee estimates that 5,000 acres of additional park space are called for.

The 1977 Urban Recreation study indicated a ratio for Houston of 4.9 acres of park space per 1,000 inhabitants. Houston's deficiency at that time amounted to 50% by the report's standards. The inventory conducted under the auspices of the Green Ribbon Committee shows a ratio of 15.66 acres per 1,000 people, more than three times the federal government's estimate.[6] Further, the standard that seems to have been adopted by the Green Ribbon Committee represents an aggregate supply of 11.5 acres per 1,000 people,[7] considerably less than the current inventory (see table). Therefore, additional park space must be justified by the problem of distributing it, according to the standard, at various levels of the use hierarchy. In playing the standards game, one might also argue that there is an apparent *surplus* of land that could be sold, traded, or developed in some other way to provide funds for acquiring the land purportedly needed for community and neighborhood parks. This is not an unusual strategy, but one that is not mentioned in a report that otherwise is replete with financial and management mechanisms. In any event, the report fails to make a convincing case either for the standards that were adopted or for what appears to be a net increase in required park lands.
Another major disappointment with the report is that it fails to address the fundamental question: what is it, after all the land has been acquired and the planning completed, that makes a park system great?[8] At first glance, such a question might seem unanswerable. It is certainly formidable. But in order to make the qualitative distinctions that go beyond individual taste and that result in some parks being more widely acclaimed than others, answers to this question must be sought. It is instructive to consider parks whose communities have conferred special status upon them. Invariably, the intrinsic value of the setting derives from the landscape conception, transcending simple considerations of function.

Berlin's Tiergarten and the park system to which it belongs, London's Regent's Park, New York's Central Park, and Munich's Englische Garten, to name a few examples, derive their compelling quality as places of urban recreation from their spatial organization, their controlled yet various thematic qualities – in short, from their design. They are artifacts for the mind as much as for the body. On the one hand they are fantastic, offering spectacle and delight; on the other, they celebrate man's contrivance of his natural setting. In the end they are cultural artifacts, where greater emphasis is placed on use through imagination and improvisation than through predetermination.

Clearly, not all parks can or really might be so compelling. It is hard to speak of a neighborhood park in the same breath as the Tiergarten. My point is that transcendental qualities and broad intrinsic values are just as much a part of the quest for a city's landscape as the means that may be required to achieve them. Unfortunately, on this point the Green Ribbon Committee's "Action Plan" is mute.

Park Standards and Inventory by Category (Acre per 1,000 population)

Park Category	Standard	1982 Inventory	(±)
Neighborhood	2.0	1.60	-0.40
Community	2.5	1.73	-0.77
District	2.0	2.49	+0.49
Major Metropolis	5.0	9.84	+4.84
	11.5	15.66	+4.16

[1] S. I. Morris, Donald L. Williams, and Daniel B. Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," January 1983, 1.
[2] Detailed elaboration of the six recommendations is found in Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," 2-30.
[3] See Joseph S. DeChiara and Lee Koppelman, *Urban Planning and Design Criteria*, Third Edition, New York, Van Nostrand, 1982. Also George Nez, "Standards for New Urban Development," *Urban Land*, vol. 20, 1971.
[4] Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," 26.
[5] Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," 27.
[6] Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," 12. Included in the current inventory (1982) are 35,368 acres of public parkland, including Addicks (Bear Creek Park) and Barker (Cullen Park) reservoirs; 2,894 acres of public school land; 1,357 acres from private homeowner association inventories; and about 297 acres of land from other institutional sources. Other Harris County Flood Control District lands (easements, rights-of-way, etc.) were not included.
[7] Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee," 19.
[8] "Greater Houston deserves a park system that is recognized both nationally and locally as among the top systems in the world." Morris, Williams, and Stauffer, "Report of the Green Ribbon Committee,"1.

Peter G. Rowe

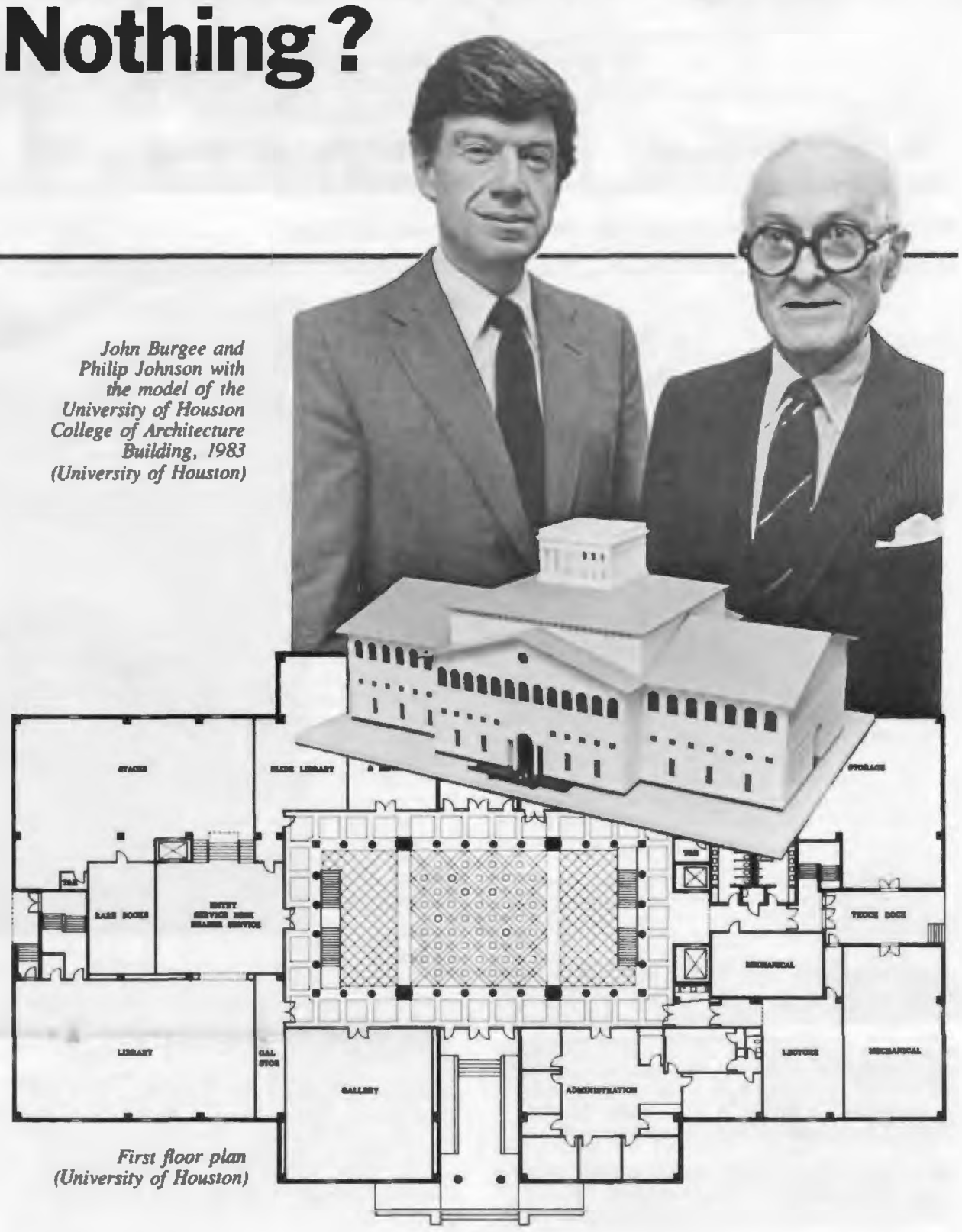
A new building for the University of Houston College of Architecture

Much Ledoux About Nothing?

Mark A. Hewitt

"Philip Johnson may be the last architect of the Enlightenment." Peter Eisenman

Houston has been good to Philip Johnson. And Philip Johnson, in the course of a long, distinguished, and controversial career, has given this city a group of illustrious buildings that, along with a few monuments like the Astrodome, represents a substantial part of its contribution to contemporary architecture.



John Burgee and Philip Johnson with the model of the University of Houston College of Architecture Building, 1983 (University of Houston)

First floor plan (University of Houston)

In the 1950s, as a late bridegroom, Johnson entered the Houston architectural scene with the refined, Miesian University of St. Thomas campus—still one of the highlights of any architectural tour of the city. In the early 1970s, when his prestige was reportedly flagging, he founded a hugely successful comeback on the merits of two Houston office tower complexes: Post Oak Central, near the Galleria, and the renowned Pennzoil Place downtown. Both proved to be national trend-setters, with more offspring, it seems, than the Seagram Building. Johnson's relationship with the city continues to ferment today, as the Transco Tower soars above the Galleria and the RepublicBank Center rises above Jones Hall Plaza, dwarfing their 10-year-old Johnson-designed neighbors in stark stylistic contrast.

The unveiling of a new Philip Johnson design in Houston, then, is bound to be greeted with lively anticipation and treated as an event. But when the 76-year-old architect, through collaborators John Burgee and Eugene Aubry of Morris★Aubry Architects, presented his design for the $18-million University of Houston College of Architecture on 23 May, reactions at the university and in the local architectural community were cool. The building is modeled self-consciously after Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's House of Education for the ideal town of Chaux, designed between 1773 and 1779. Though it raised eyebrows and stirred controversy in this conservative town, its impact, and even the presence of its prestigious architect, were undercut by a sense of disappointment in the process that the university followed in selecting an architect and arriving at a building program. "It's a lost opportunity," said one U of H College of Architecture faculty member, "both for the campus and for the department."

That lost opportunity stemmed from the college's intention, supported by a large portion of the architecture faculty, to hold an open design competition for the building more than a year ago. A fund was set up in the spring of 1982 and a professional advisor, Roger Schluntz, retained. A small faculty committee worked with the Facilities Planning Department of the university to develop a program. Participation in this process was unenthusiastic, partly because (according to Peter Wood, Associate Professor of Architecture at the college and Assistant Dean) the college had witnessed several aborted attempts to plan and build a new facility over the years.

In spite of the clear imperative to replace the college's makeshift, overcrowded, and often squalid facilities, many were skeptical that state or private funding could be obtained even if an architect were retained to design the new building. But both state politics and university politics resulted in discarding the competition plan. The university administration decided to expedite the architect selection process in anticipation of state funding before last fall's gubernatorial elections.

Johnson had been proposed early as an alternative to a design competition (apparently without serious faculty objections), and it was known that he was eager to have the commission — his first school of architecture building. Moreover, he had the support of Burdette Keeland, an influential senior faculty member, who could sway the Board of Regents. Dean William Jenkins and the faculty also considered a competition limited to ten local architects during the fall of 1982, but it too was rejected by the university administration.

The project was given its first significant boost when the Texas Legislature allocated $25 million for the construction of a College of Business Administration and a College of Architecture in May 1982. Though much of the fund was earmarked for the business school, it gave the architects something to work with, and it set the political wheels rolling at a more urgent pace.

Arguments were advanced at a university level for a local firm with international credentials, and the pattern of recent building on the campus suggested that a local office with strong political connections stood a good chance of winning the job. Hiring a Houston firm—especially one with the dubious distinction of having designed one or more of the university's lackluster recent buildings—would not have served the interests of the architecture faculty, administration, or students.

Recently the College of Architecture has been expanding programs, hiring new faculty, and attracting a broader range of students. The school needed the kind of prestige that a new building by a well-known architect could provide. And the example of Houston's "other" architecture school on Main Street loomed large. "We had visiting critics coming to the school," said Peter Wood, "who, when asked what buildings around town they wanted to see, would always mention the Stirling building at Rice."

Late in the fall of 1982, with options narrowing and time running short, Dean Jenkins joined with Keeland to recommend the selection of Johnson/Burgee in joint venture with Morris★Aubry. The compromise worked. The university administration approved the choice, and shortly after the start of the new year, Johnson/Burgee began design and programming meetings with the university's Department of Facilities Planning. Preliminary design for the building was complete by early spring of this year.

The haste with which the programming and schematic design process was carried out, and the fact that it was largely under the control of Facilities Planning, also irritated some architecture faculty members. William F. Stern, an assistant professor, felt that all faculty and students should have been consulted in programming the new building and in choosing its architect. "The university has not acted in the public interest," he said.

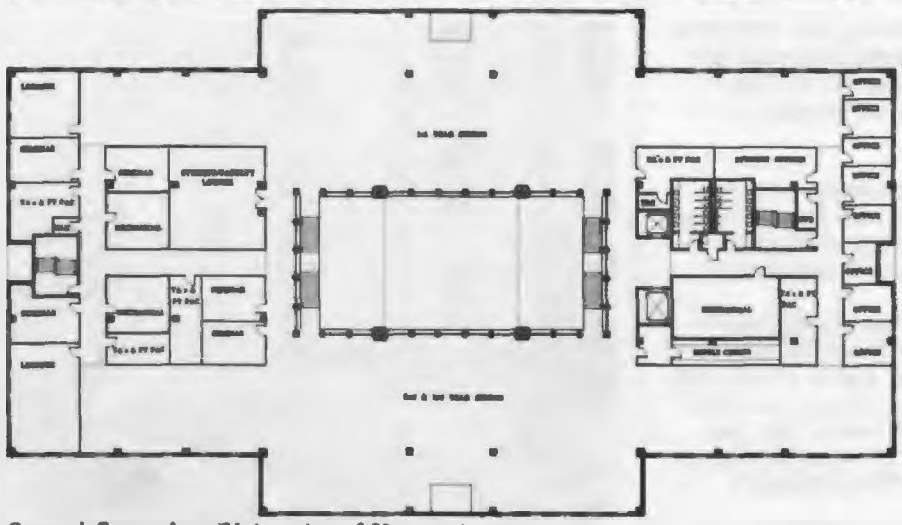
Nevertheless, with the allocation by the state legislature of funds for the building, its approval on 6 June by the Board of Regents, and the architects' confidence that it will have a "noble presence" on the campus, the College of Architecture faculty and students can rest assured that their much needed facility is a reality at last.

The questions of the aesthetic and pragmatic merits of the building as presented in the schematic design in late May, and of its relationship to the architecture of the campus, its precedents, and other works by Johnson, are issues that far outweigh administrative machinations within the university and the College of Architecture.

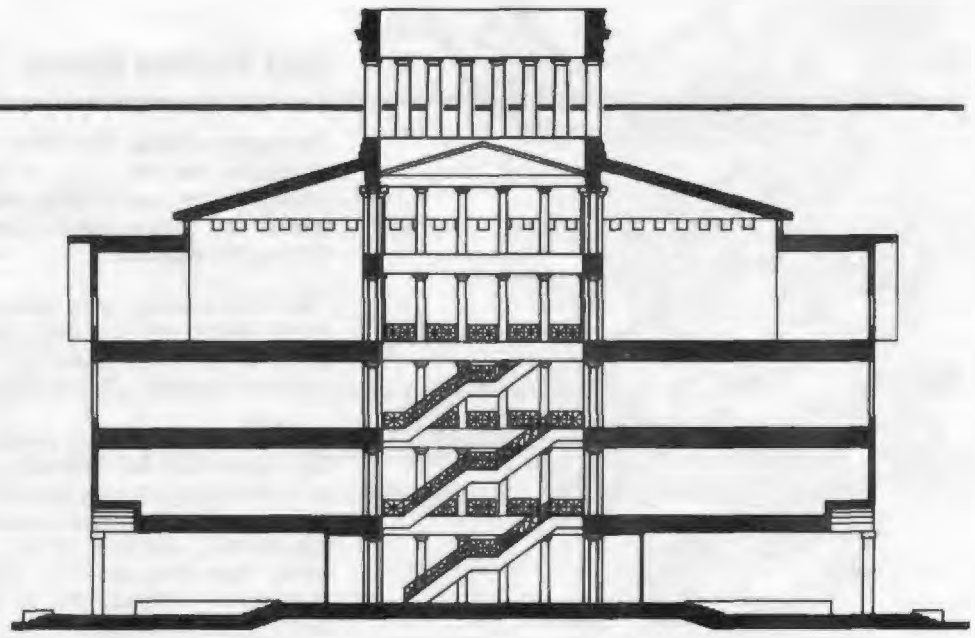
With a characteristic blend of mischievousness and aplomb, Johnson has presented Houston with another provocative architectural idea. It is a campus propylaea, massive and grand in stature, which goes beyond any of his recent works in its fastidious use of precedent. The selection of the Ledoux House of Education is ingenious and apt — Johnson has always been brilliantly concise in his choice of models. It is also not in the least surprising. In September 1950, when he published an art-historical analysis of his own epochal Glass House in *The Architectural Review*, he featured Ledoux's spherical Maison des Gardes Agricoles at Maupertuis as a model with the caption: "The cubic, 'absolute' form of my glass house and the separation of functional units into two absolute shapes rather than a major and a minor massing of parts comes directly from Ledoux, the eighteenth-century father of modern architecture."

In Johnson's earlier works, Schinkel and Ledoux were his spiritual and philosophical masters; and Mies was the father/inventor of his chosen idiom. Today, the post-modern PJ can unabashedly re-do Ledoux and reshuffle Schinkel with only a wink at Mies.

As ideal, absolute form, Johnson's design is praiseworthy. Its elements are strong in conception and relevant in their applicability to an architectural school. The atrium and simple massing bring to mind numerous fine examples of university buildings in this country, from John Galen Howard's Hearst Mining Hall at Berkeley to Henry Hornbostel's architecture building at Carnegie Mellon University and many of the early buildings at Stanford. The octastyle Doric temple crowning the building acts as a simple sign. Had the building been clad with fossilated limestone, as originally intended, instead of brick, its monumentality would have been enhanced. Like nearly all Johnson buildings, this one has a blunt conceptual



Second floor plan (University of Houston)



Section (University of Houston)

*Project: House of Education, Chaux, 1773-1779, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, architect (*Three Revolutionary Architects, *1952)*

Perspective view of south elevation (Drawn by Patrick López, University of Houston)

*Project: Maison des Gardes Agricoles, Maupertuis, 1780, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, architect (*Three Revolutionary Architects, *1952)*

clarity that can border on the clichéd or on the sublime. But unfortunately, like many of his more recent post-modern works, the University of Houston College of Architecture fails to make the step from image to pragmatic architectural reality, from Ledoux's paradigm to a building sustaining the needs of a growing architectural school in the 1980s.

Johnson's love of the witty, the clever, the brilliant *abstractness* of an architectural idea – the same qualities that brought power and resonance to works like Pennzoil, the Glass House, and the Kline Tower at Yale – now stands in the way of his ability to make the difficult translation of traditional forms to the present day. He has chosen not to confront the problems of detail and ornament, dichotomies between compositional systems in plan and in three dimensions, and construction problems that preoccupy many of his younger colleagues. He does not know Ledoux and Schinkel as intimately as he does Mies. His latest works have a slapdash quality that belies the seriousness and care that were hallmarks of early Johnson buildings.

An acute self analyst, Johnson spelled out what are undoubtedly the strongest aspects of his architecture in a talk at Columbia entitled "What Makes Me Tick" (1975). Calling himself a "functional eclectic," he outlined three themes central to his work: the Footprint, the Aspect of the Cave, and the Building as Sculpture.

Of the first he remarked, "It is with the richness of processionals that I try to imagine architecture," and indeed, his best buildings are generally marked by a diagrammatic clarity of circulation and sensitivity to the ritual of movement. There is a succinct atmospheric character to many of the best Johnson interiors, like that of the Port Chester synagogue, which testifies to his concern with the second of his themes. But of the three, he is most consistently brilliant as a manipulator of sculptural form and massing, as his Houston skyscrapers show. Simplicity, purity, powerful directness – the traits that distinguished the Glass House – are ever present in a Johnson design. Yet he cannot stomach the complex, the idiosyncratic, the "messy" in his sculptural manipulation.

The Houston College of Architecture building displays some of the concerns in Johnson's triad. As the architects point out, it takes advantage of its position in the newly revised campus plan to bring visitors through its atrium, though one wonders whether the Serliana main entrances are large enough in relation to the building mass to be inviting. But why, on the long axis of the building, do we find a fire stair and a loading dock framed with arches that signal a secondary cross axis penetrating the building? Will the atrium itself, grand in size, receive enough light from the square skylight, shaded by the temple six stories above, or will it literally be a cavelike space?

Light is also a major problem in the studio spaces, especially on the second floor, where relatively small, square windows light a room that is more than 50 feet deep at its center. The fenestration patterns on the outside, clearly meant to replicate those of the 18th-century model, bear little relation to the lighting needs of offices and other spaces inside. Moreover, for a designer known for his adept handling of massing, this building has a clumsy, ungainly quality that the original avoids through careful balancing of simple bands of fenestration and loggias with larger massing elements. And Ledoux, had he built his building, would certainly have enriched it with the kind of spare, careful classical detail found in the other buildings at the Salt Works. Details of the Houston building are cartoonishly abstract.

But what is most disconcerting about the design of the new College of Architecture is the listlessness of its plan. By treating the zone between the outside walls and the atrium as loft space and allowing the complex program to run riot within, the architect has avoided the resolution of inherent tensions between the rigid, idealized formality of the model and the built-in complex asymmetries of the program elements. Looking at the result makes one appreciate Schinkel's protean genius as a planner in buildings like the Neues Schauspielhaus and the Altes Museum in Berlin and lament the fact that Johnson has not learned more from his artistic heroes.

Are these comparisons with Ledoux and Schinkel (and even with Johnson's former self) unfair? Are the building's weaknesses small in comparison to the visual and functional amenities it provides for a campus that has had few distinguished buildings to its credit in recent years? Perhaps. Opinions on the design have ranged from downright raves (by no less a luminary than Howard Barnstone) to outright condemnations. Johnson is no stranger to controversy and impassioned criticism. Perhaps improvements will be made between now and the completion of construction documents. But in any event, the University of Houston College of Architecture will have a lavish new building and a powerful architectural drawing card – both long overdue.

Easement Down the Road

Good News for Preservation?

Joel Warren Barna

After almost 20 years of frustrating rear-guard battles against ever stronger development pressures, Houston's harried historic preservationists find themselves in an unaccustomed position: They have recently won two major victories. In the afterglow, preservationists are uniting to plan strategy for what may be their hardest decade yet. They are trying to make preservation work in a city without development controls by experimenting with new incentives for those willing to save what's left of Houston's architectural heritage.

The first of the two recent preservation victories is a qualified one—the compromise that saved the façade of the 125-year-old Pillot Building, which stands at the corner of Fannin and Congress. Owned by Harris County, the three-story, cast-iron-front Pillot Building is the oldest building in downtown Houston. The 1889 Sweeney, Coombs and Fredericks Building stands next door In 1975 it was rehabilitated by the county when the nine-story Harris County Administration Building was constructed.

Trying to block demolition of these two buildings in 1974, preservationists succeeded in placing both on the National Register of Historic Places and had them declared Registered Texas Historic Landmarks. They enlisted the aid of a number of activists, including Truett Latimer, then director of the Texas Historical Commission and a member of the commission's Antiquities Board. He, along with lawyer Terence O'Rourke, tried a number of legal and political maneuvers. Their efforts resulted in the county commissioners' decisions to retain these two 19th-century buildings. The Sweeney, Coombs and Fredericks Building underwent façade restoration, and the interior of the remaining three-story building was used for county offices. The Pillot Building was allowed to stand also, but the tactics of the preservationists left County Judge Jon Lindsay, the Chamber of Commerce, and several Harris County commissioners thoroughly angered.

Pillot Building, c. 1860, Lockwood, Andrews and Newnam, architects for adaptive reuse as Harris County Law Library, 1983 (Photo by Paul Hester)

"We tried working with [preservationists], but they didn't deliver on the money or the help they promised to fix up the Pillot Building," Lindsay charged in an interview in 1982. "I can't wait until it falls down."

Even though the county commissioners were exploring suggestions for renovating the Pillot Building for a badly needed county law library, Harris County did not (according to preservationists) maintain the building properly. Lindsay got his wish earlier this year, when, after what one critic calls "10 years of accumulated county neglect," one of the Pillot Building's walls began to collapse.

"At this point, for whatever reason, the county decided to dispose of the problem once and for all, and set about to demolish the building," says Shannon Vale, a lawyer with a major downtown law firm, who worked with the Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, and other groups to save the Pillot Building yet again. "The situation just shows how limited the code protecting Texas landmarks is."

All the county had to do, according to Vale, was notify the Texas Historical Commission of its intent to demolish and wait 60 days before tearing the building down. Citing the emergency created by the collapsing walls, however, Harris County sought to bypass the 60-day requirement. The Texas Historical Commission, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, and other groups mobilized quickly, raising money and public support. With County Commissioner Tom Bass heading the effort, they reached a compromise: All of three exterior walls and a portion of a fourth were preserved and incorporated into the new design for the building. Not everyone was pleased. *The Medallion*, the Texas Historical Commission's magazine, denounced the compromise in a recent issue, noting that county commissioners had rejected $100,000 offered by the state agency to help restore the building to its original form.

Others were satisfied. "What we'll have is a building lacking in historical unity but which preserves the original façade," says Shannon Vale. "It's not the ideal solution, but considering that we were looking at total demolition within 48 hours of a commissioners' court hearing, I think it's the best real-world solution we could reach."

Beverly Pennington, president of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, agrees. "I think the Pillot Building compromise represents a considerable victory," she says. "The streetscape is preserved. But more important, the controversy about it heightened awareness of preservation issues here. It got a lot more people to be involved."

Indeed, there are more people to be involved. After the rash of Market Square renovations in the 1960s faded away, little public attention was paid to historic preservation, according to Pennington. Now there are several groups—the Harris County Heritage Society and its more activist offshoot, Pennington's Greater Houston Preservation Alliance; the Old Town Development Corporation; the South Main Center Association; the Sabine Association in the First and Sixth Wards; and the Freedman's Town Association in the Fourth Ward are some of the most active—working to preserve important architectural and historic places in many areas of the city.

John Hannah, who with Jesse W. Edmundson, III, bought and restored the 1884 Houston Cotton Exchange Building in 1973 (and sold it in 1983), says, "When we got started on the Cotton Exchange, there weren't that many designers or contractors working in preservation in Houston. Now people with skills are easier to find—there's a real preservation *industry*."

Says Shannon Vale, "The renovation of the Pillot Building will give us one more refurbished building—leading, we hope, to a kind of critical mass for preservation in the area, so that each additional building will be easier. You can already see it around Market Square, where several new shops and restaurants have opened recently. On the other hand, in the last year the Market Square area has seen several buildings torn down to make way for parking lots, of all things."

The second victory achieved by local preservationists was the acceptance of a new historic district in downtown Houston (see map) recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district centers on Main Street north of Texas Avenue, and includes most of downtown's remaining 19th-century commercial buildings. The nomination, sponsored by the Old Town Development Corporation and forwarded to the U.S. Department of the Interior by the Texas Historical Commission earlier this year, was listed in the National Register on 18 July.

"Having the new historic district won't keep anybody from tearing down buildings [there]," says Charles Heimsath, Old Town Development Corporation's president. "But it will help us do alternative things to give property owners more than one economic choice. There are significant tax incentives that can become available in the area now that, before, were available only to owners of buildings individually on the National Register. Our aim is to provide economic assistance to landowners so they can preserve historic properties, rather than spend our time trying to block their plans to do otherwise. That kind of confrontation hasn't worked in the past."

Beverly Pennington of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance concurs. "I don't think we'll ever have effective development controls in Houston—people here are too opposed to zoning," she says. "So if preservation is going to be viable, it's going to have to work economically. That's going to be hard in downtown, where land values have gone so high and where the buildings are so small. But nevertheless it's important to Houston—as the downtown goes, so goes the city. A state tourism expert recently reported here that when people visit a city, the number one thing they want to do is sightsee, to get an idea of the his-

Ruins of South Texas National Bank Building (Photo by Paul Hester)

....And Then There Were None

During the night of Friday, 16 September, demolition was begun on the B.A. Shepherd, Dumble, and South Texas National Bank buildings. No advance warning of this action was given by the owners, 201 Main Ventures, an investment group that includes T. Frank Glass, Jr., Leo Womack, and Dean Maddox among its members. The Shepherd and Dumble buildings were 100 years old. All three buildings were listed in the National Register of Historic Places by virtue of their inclusion in the Main Street-Market Square Historic District.

The marble, temple-fronted South Texas National Bank Building (built in 1910 and occupied until 1955 by a predecessor of Texas Commerce Bank) was one of a distinguished collection of bank buildings near the foot of Main Street whose classical architecture has been remarked by Henry Hope Reed. The Shepherd Building, designed by one of Houston's first professional architects, George E. Dickey, was regarded as one of the outstanding surviving High Victorian commercial buildings in Texas. Its builder was Benjamin A. Shepherd, a pioneer Houston banker in whose memory the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University is named. The Houston National Bank (now RepublicBank, Houston), from its organization in 1889 until 1912, occupied the Shepherd Building. The loss of the Shepherd and Dumble buildings fundamentally alters a segment of Houston streetscape that had survived almost intact from the 19th century.

Demolition occured less than a week before Judith Reynolds, a preservation easements consultant from Washington, D.C., arrived to discuss preservation strategy with local preservationists and interested property owners.

tory of an area. Now when visitors come to Houston, people take them shopping at the Galleria. The Galleria is nice, but there's something unbalanced about that. These historic areas are a valuable resource to the city, and they shouldn't be wasted."

It will take initiative from individuals and private groups to get over the first economic hurdles, Pennington says. Federal tax credits for restoration costs have helped some in Houston, she notes. Local efforts—chiefly Houston City Councilmember Eleanor Tinsley's ordinance providing property tax incentives for rehabilitation of historic structures—have bogged down in the red tape generated by requiring that every city tax break be approved by the whole city council. What is needed, Pennington and other preservationists say, is another approach.

Detail, Houston Cotton Exchange Building, 1884, Eugene T. Heiner, architect, Graham B. Luhn, architect for restoration, 1974 (Photo by Paul Hester)

Representatives of preservation groups from around the city have met to explore how they can start a new program to harness easement donations—called "the best tax shelter in history" in one appraisal journal—to the cause of saving Houston's links with its past.

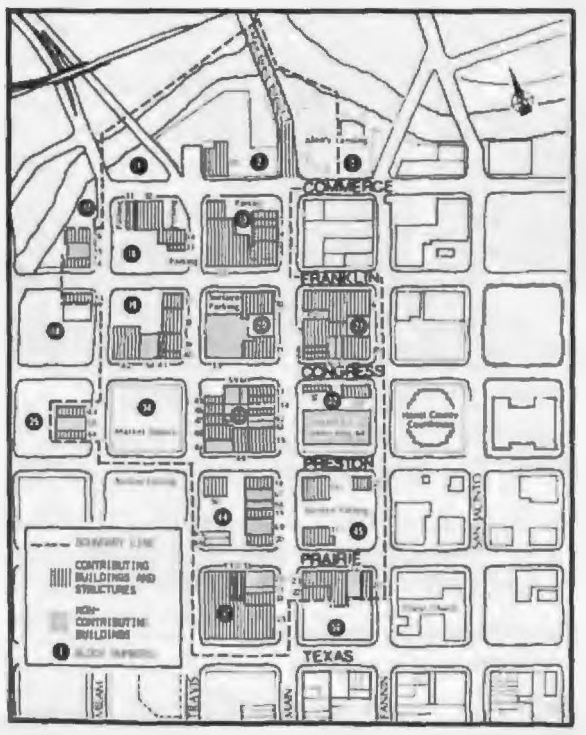
"The owner of a piece of property controls a bundle of rights. Among those is the right to demolish the current building and to redevelop the property in the future," says Tom Warshauer, an architect and vice president of the Sabine Association. Warshauer has headed the informal meetings of preservationists working on new strategies throughout the past several months. Those taking part included Charles Heimsath; Beverly Pennington; preservationist Minnette B. Boesel; Cynthia Rowan, president of the Sabine Association; lawyer Chere Lott; Truett Latimer and Gloria Barboza of the construction firm Spaw-Glass, Inc., representing the Downtown Houston Association; and Wayne Hancock, representing Rovi Texas, the company that owns the Rice Hotel. Rovi Texas is rumored to have a serious customer for the property who is interested in a façade easement donation.

Under the federal tax laws enacted in 1976 and expanded in 1981, property owners can donate all or part of their property rights to non-profit organizations and take the value of the donation as a tax deduction, since they are forfeiting potential income from the donated rights.

For the purpose of historic preservation, owners usually give up their rights to demolish or alter the façade of the property (the outer 1/16 of an inch, for example) and deed them to a receiving organization in the form of an easement—usually called a façade easement or preservation easement—binding in perpetuity over future contracts. The receiving group must be a recognized non-profit organization, and it must agree to oversee the provisions of the easement, also in perpetuity.

As an article in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's newspaper, *Preservation News*, explains, "While zoning limitations and historic district regulations can be changed, easement controls exist forever. They remain with the property and must be obeyed

Map of Main Street-Market Square Historic District (Houston Old Town Development Corporation)



Good News for Preservation?

Market Square looking toward 300 block of Travis Street (Photo by Paul Hester)

by all subsequent owners. Even if a building is accidentally destroyed, a new structure generally must conform to the original use and size and must also receive the preservation group's approval."

Hundreds of property owners have contributed façade easements to preservation groups in Washington, D.C, Charleston, New Orleans, and other cities since 1976. According to Warshauer, no easement donation programs have as yet been implemented in Texas.

The government recognizes the simple proposition that such a preservation burden decreases the potential uses of the property and can make it more difficult to sell (or cuts into its current value), says Warshauer. But tax breaks afforded under the donation regulations have turned out to be anything but simple. The regulations are ambiguous on the value of the donated easement, allowing it to be somewhere between the current market value of the property and its "highest and best use."

The Internal Revenue Service this year initiated audits of some 50 donations in Washington and 80 in New Orleans, claiming that the rights donated to preservation groups had been overvalued. The organizations and taxpayers affected contend that, with few exceptions, the easements are valued properly, and complain that the IRS could destroy the attractiveness of the easement donation program nationwide simply by threatening audits.

The Houston group is keeping tabs on the problems encountered in other cities and has decided on a strategy to keep them from cropping up here. They

Cite Seeing

Buildings and Places that Ought to Be Recognized and Preserved

Photographs by Paul Hester

Since 1974 52 buildings, four districts, and two archaeological sites in Houston and Harris County have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This is only a fraction of the buildings, structures, places, and neighborhoods that could qualify for recognition, however. Lack of knowledge about the requirements for (and benefits of) National Register listing, compounded by the fear that listing will devalue property (the reverse is usually true), impose legal restrictions (it doesn't), or lead to government interference (it won't), inhibits owners of potentially worthy properties from applying to the National Register.

The National Register of Historic Places was established in 1966 as a part of the National Historic Preservation Act. It is administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior through the Texas Historical Commission. The purpose of the Register is to record buildings or places that possess "significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture," according to Park Service criteria.

Included here is just a sample of historically and architecturally significant Houston buildings, places, and structures that should be recognized and preserved.

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1 Shadyside, Main and Montrose, 1916, George E. Kessler, landscape architect and planner

2 Clarke and Courts Building, West Clay and Van Buren, 1936, Joseph Finger, architect

3 Link House (now Administration Building, University of St. Thomas), Montrose and West Alabama, 1913, Sanguinet, Staats and Barnes, architects

4 Fourth Ward (Freedmen's Town) as seen from downtown

5 Lovett Hall, Rice University, 1912, Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, architects

Right to left: Radoff Building, 1860, 1896, and Texas Commerce Motor Bank, 1981, I. M. Pei and Partners and 3D/International, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)

will wait until later this year, when new IRS regulations are to be published, before proceeding with property evaluations. They recommend that anyone contemplating façade donations engage as appraiser the firm with the most conservative record in the country and the best track record with the IRS. The group is currently working with a number of appraisal firms.

Warshauer points out that the IRS has challenged preservation easements most successfully in cities that already have strong historic preservation ordinances. This, he contends, could actually work in favor of Houston preservation interests.

"The IRS argues that since state restrictions and city ordinances in New Orleans, for example, already protect so many buildings, a property owner there is really not giving much away when he gives up a façade easement," says Warshauer. "In Houston, of course, the situation is much different. A property owner here is largely unrestricted, and donating a façade easement is *really* encumbering the property. That makes the donations much more valuable and at the same time harder to contest."

The Houston group also hopes to avoid another problem that has cropped up in New Orleans and other cities: competition between groups that accept façade easements.

"In New Orleans there are three different groups, each providing different services and each charging

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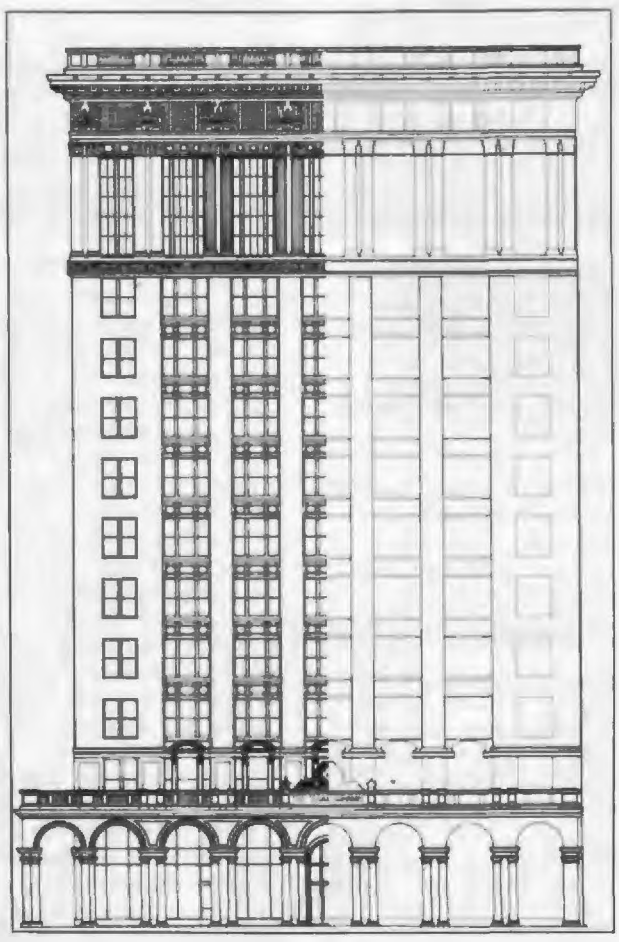
6 Eastwood Elementary School, Telephone Road and McKinney, 1916, Maurice J. Sullivan, architect; 1927, Harry D. Payne and James Ruskin Bailey, architects

7



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8 Texas Company Building, San Jacinto and Rusk, 1915, Warren and Wetmore, architects (Drawing by Roger Cooner, Jeff Holcomb, and Randy Lore)

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7 Lockwood Drive Bridge, Lockwood Drive over Buffalo Bayou, 1928, James Gordon McKenzie, engineer. This concrete counter-weight steel lift-span bridge is slated for demolition by the City of Houston.

9 Petroleum Building, Texas and Austin, 1927, Alfred C. Bossom with Briscoe and Dixon and Maurice J. Sullivan, architects

10 Niels Esperson Building, Travis and Rusk, 1927, John Eberson, architect

11 Brady House, Wilmer and Milby, ca. 1860

Good News for Preservation?

Detail of Main Street entrance, Rice Hotel, 1913, Mauran, Russell and Crowell, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)

Right to left: Brashear Building, 1882, Eugene T. Heiner, architect; Scholibo Building, 1880. Both buildings are located on Prairie Avenue in the Main Street-Market Square Historic District (Photo by Paul Hester)

different amounts to process the paperwork and oversee the maintenance of the donation," says Warshauer. "Some people go to the most expensive organization, which provides the most complete services, and have the preparatory work done, then turn around and donate their easements to another group, which charges a smaller fee. This undercuts the ability of all the groups to maintain easements properly, and could damage the whole program."

To avoid such conflicts, the Houston groups involved are combining to set up a single entity to handle the easement donation program. Although details remain to be worked out, the group has tentatively decided to create a body for accepting easement donations as a committee within the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance. As a city-wide preservation organization, the Alliance is better suited to the donation program than neighborhood-specific groups such as Houston Old Town or the Sabine Association. Seats on the easement committee will be allotted to representatives of other interested groups, however.

"The facade easement idea may not be a panacea, but it will at least give us something new to work with," says Beverly Pennington. "We'll have to wait and see what some of the appraisals end up being to see just how attractive it is to property owners as a tax incentive."

But others think that, for downtown Houston at least, the easement donation program may be a lot too little and a little too late. Truett Latimer, former director of the Texas Historical Commission, now vice president for public relations and marketing of Spaw-Glass, Inc., is among the most pessimistic.

"The best [preservation] strategy would have been for somebody, 10 years ago, to buy up all the land north of Texas Avenue," Latimer says.

He continues, "That didn't happen and the property values in the area have escalated to the point that it will be very hard to preserve anything but large buildings with considerable square footage for rehabilitation. The buildings in the Market Square area are two-and three-story buildings, standing on property that's selling for between $200 and $400 per square foot. The development pressure is on that part of town. And that means that there is no way an individual, even taking advantage of all the incentives available (unless he wants to be a philanthropist), can come up with an economically viable way to save those buildings."

Developer John Hannah, although he says his experience with the Cotton Exchange was "very positive," agrees with Latimer about the prospects for saving buildings in the newly designated downtown historic district.

"Back then we didn't have the tax advantages available for renovating historic structures that exist now," Hannah says. "But it was a whole different picture for land values at that time. Now, with land prices over $100 per square foot, all the tax incentives there are still won't let you restore a three-story building and generate enough income from it to justify saving the building."

Some people who asked not to be quoted said that after the Pillot Building battles, the next big struggle will be over a succession of buildings threatened by development pressures in the new historic district. Their owners are not constrained by even the modest requirements that delayed the Harris County administration.

Said one, "A lot of those buildings could be demolished before the ink is dry on the National Register proclamation."

The Treptow Development Company demolished the 115-year-old Erikson Building on Market Square earlier this summer to build an 11-story parking garage, designed by Morris★Aubry Architects. One preservationist pointed out that Texas Commerce Bank, owner of the Radoff Building (1896), has already filed public notification of its intent to raze the building for an extension of its drive-in banking facilities, designed by I. M. Pei and Partners. A recent issue of *The Medallion* singled out the Dumble and B. A. Shepherd buildings (both 1883) at the corner of Congress and Main for special concern. The buildings belong to the 201 Main Venture, among whose members is Frank Glass. Through Spaw-Glass, Inc., and other partnerships, Glass has participated in the renovation of the Kiam and Hogg Buildings in Houston and other important preservation projects here and in San Antonio. But 201 Main Venture's plans for a 40-story office tower by Morris★Aubry Architects call for demolition of these two structures, most of the adjoining South Texas National Bank Building (1970) and Zindler's (1921).

Acknowledging the concern for the Dumble and B. A. Shepherd buildings, Truett Latimer says, "Think of what is being saved on that block. The façade of the First National Bank Building is being saved. Whether the other buildings can be saved, we don't know – nothing is final yet. There are several plans floating around, and the final plan will depend on the client and the client's needs. In the event those buildings have to be demolished, however, there might be the alternative of saving their façades, as has been done with the Texas Theater in San Antonio." Latimer points out that Spaw-Glass is separate from the 201 Main Venture and is not directly involved in the plans for the block.

And, says Latimer, "No one is building speculative office buildings downtown at this time. Now you wait until you have a major tenant lined up—you can't get financing unless you do."

"Houston real estate values are going through another transition," says lawyer Shannon Vale. "Basing decisions on 1981 price levels could be a mistake. There's been a big change, not in real estate prices yet, but in the psychology of the market. You don't hear people predicting that Houston will be bigger than New York, the way you used to. And you have to remember that there are several major buildings nearing completion that will increase the space available. RepublicBank, Four Allen Center, 1600 Smith: All remain to be filled. It'll be some time before downtown Houston can absorb that much new office space. So tearing down buildings north of Texas to put up new office towers doesn't make sense for now. Maybe that will give us enough breathing room. If the last 10 years show anything, it's that preserving them won't be easy."

Says Charles Heimsath, "The downturn in the office market in downtown may be the best ally these old bulidings have."

Beverly Pennington agrees. "The easement donation program will probably be a lot easier to use and more effective in the historic neighborhoods than downtown," she says. "But we're going to do our best to help property owners with it downtown too. It could be a very good thing."

Historic Preservation Incentives — In Houston?

Minnette B. Boesel

Never before have incentives been so great for preserving the historic fabric of Houston. A local ordinance and nationally legislated economic incentives, coupled with an enlightened new city planning administration, will, we may hope, encourage the preservation of the remnants of Houston's past.

Congress has passed a number of legislative acts to protect our nation's cultural heritage, but it was not until the passage of the Tax Reform Act in 1976 that tax incentives were provided to owners and lessees of income-producing historic structures.

Investment Tax Credits

In 1981 President Reagan signed the Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA) into law. Its sweeping tax reform included even greater tax advantages to those restoring older and/or historic income-producing properties.

Highlights of the law include:

15% investment tax credit on the rehabilitation costs of non-historic, income-producing, non-residential structures more than 30 years old;

20% investment tax credit for similar structures more than 40 years old;

25% investment tax credit on the rehabilitation costs of designated historic structures that are income-producing (including residential). A higher depreciation of 87.5% is also given on the rehabilitation costs of historic structures.

By the end of 1983 the government estimates that $3 billion will have been invested in historic properties as a result of the investment tax credit provision. The effects of this kind of investment, for the most part in inner-city urban areas, are catalytic. New jobs revitalized areas, increased tax bases, tourist attractions, and the influence on others to invest in their communities multiply the initial figure many times over.

To qualify for the 25% ITC, a structure must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, or be in a locally designated historic district whose ordinance has been certified by the Department of the Interior. All rehabilitation work must also be certified by the Interior Department as compatible with the architectural and historic integrity of the building. In Texas, National Register nominations and all certification are coordinated by the Texas Historical Commission in Austin.

Grants-in-aid

As outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, National Register properties are eligible for grants-in-aid for preservation planning and actual restoration costs. In Texas, the Texas Historical Commission administers this program as well as a state grants program. The amounts available vary from year to year, depending on state and national appropriations. Grants cannot be used in conjunction with the 25% investment tax credit.

Preservation Easements

In 1976 Congress passed a law allowing for tax deductions on the value of easements given to charitable organizations or governmental entities. Amended language in 1980 specifically mentions historic buildings. Preservation easements place restrictions on the development or alteration of historic structures; the loss in income value can be taken as a charitable deduction. In downtown Houston a preservation easement on a qualifying building could result in a large tax deduction. Currently, there is no non-profit organization or governmental entity in Houston with an easement program. Such a program is being examined.

Local Property Tax Abatement

Houston buildings listed in the National Register or Texas Historic Landmarks designated by the Texas Historical Commission are eligible under a local ordinance passed in 1981 for property tax abatement of up to 50% annually. A penalty for part or all of the back taxes due is imposed if the property in question is damaged or destroyed, or if taxes are delinquent.

The new City Planning Department director, Efraím García, has stressed his commitment to the revitalization and redevelopment of inner urban areas of Houston. His recent application to seek Houston's first Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) is a sign that city government recognizes the economic advantage of the adaptive use of historic structures. The grant will assist in the redevelopment of the Lottman-Myers Manufacturing Company building as the "Mercado," a festive retail area targeted for Houston's Hispanic community. This structure, begun in 1904, is part of a 15-acre project that abuts Buffalo Bayou and U.S. 59.

Houstonians in general are now recognizing the need to redevelop and preserve what is left of Houston's historic built environment. In this climate of economic austerity where big is not necessarily better, developers can take a breath and examine what *is* here and not what *could be* here. Areas such as the Main Street-Market Square Historic District, a part of the original town site of Houston adjacent to Buffalo Bayou, have the potential of Baltimore's Harbor Place, San Antonio's Riverwalk, or Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace. All the ingredients are there. It will take guts, vision, capital, coordination, and as many economic incentives as possible.

Houston's vibrancy as a "new town" can be coupled with Houston's "old town" elements not only to continue the growth of the city but to maintain its history and character as well.

Citeations

"Cervin Robinson: Architectural Photographs"
Farish Gallery, Rice University
10 March - 17 April 1983

Reviewed by Elizabeth S. Glassman

Had Cervin Robinson lived in the 18th century, he might well have been like Piranesi, traveling, sketching, etching, then publishing views of Rome and its environs. For Robinson, as for Fox Talbot, the inventor of photography, the camera is his pencil and the published photographs do not come to us in oversize leather-bound folios, but rather in the pages of *Architectural Forum* and *The Architectural Review*. In an exhibition of 80 black-and-white and color photographs, organized by Drexel Turner, Robinson' various projects telescope; the show provides a comprehensive review of the past 25 years.[1]

When asked his occupation, Cervin Robinson responds, "Architectural photographer, historian, and critic." The latter two callings surface in his numerous articles and several collaborations with historians of architecture. Most notably, Robinson provided the photographs for the 1973 exhibition *The Architecture of Frank Furness*, organized by James F. O'Gorman for the Philadelphia Museum of Art. His partner on the compelling book *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (Oxford University Press, 1975) was Rosemarie Haag Bletter of Columbia University.

That Robinson is confident and expressive in a range of architectural styles is demonstrated by the extent of historical concerns exhibited. Grouped largely by subject, the photographs underscore the variety and vitality of Robinson's interests. Included are comparisons of nearly identical rooms from five 19th-century houses in Truro, Massachusetts, photographs taken for the Historic American Buildings Survey (of which Robinson was a member from 1957 to 1963), the ornament and structure of anonymous craft (an American cast iron stove, the motif of a wooden bas-relief on Parisian townhouse doors, the solid theatricality of Ledoux's Director's House at Chaux, looking like a Baroque stage set). The exhibition functions as a retrospective of Robinson's architectural interests and commissions.

But what of his photographic development, the mark of a Cervin Robinson photograph? That a consistent style is difficult to discern signals that with Robinson, categories simply don't fit. Robinson is rarely formulaic, nor is he theatrical. You would never find Cervin Robinson armed with high-speed Ektachrome, swooping down in a helicopter, torso hanging out, to catch a dramatic shot of East 57th Street, as some of his Manhattan colleagues have done. Rather, he is like a skillful translator of poetry: the verse is altered but the spirit remains unchanged.

The photographer of architecture uses his instrument primarily to serve the objects he is photographing. The photograph is of something in particular: the sense of volume, the texture of the surfaces, even the relationship to other structures, often indicated by shadow rather than physical presence. Robinson blends the general resonance of the building as it exists here and now with the particular intention of the architect and history.[2]

When Piranesi recorded the monuments of Rome, he included the grassy ruins. Never attempting to provide mere reconstructions, he allowed the monuments to live in the 18th century by depicting their contemporary milieu. So Robinson does not disguise the graffiti tags or The Gap blue jean store on the lower floor of the Ansonia Hotel, Upper West Side, New York.

If Piranesi's passion was Rome, so Robinson's is New York: Gotham. The Coffee Shop and Cobbs Club Car bar and restaurant inhabit the street of Robinson's *Grand Central Terminal* as the winged Mercury graces the skyline with his simple gesture and graceful stance. Shadows of the opposing buildings etch voids in the Neoclassical façade. Robinson's depiction is as much related to the street photographs of Lee Friedlander as to exact renderings of elevations.

Robinson is no less sensitive to the skyline than to the street. As he transcribes the banal rhetoric of coffee shops and cafes, so he articulates the rarefied conversations of building tops. In *The Tribune*, Robinson used the flattening qualities of the camera lens to telescope comparisons: An end ornament holds its own with the bold clock-faced pinnacle of the Tribune Tower. The viewer looks neither up nor down; it is as if one is on an elevated platform or street, pedestrian witness to the raised monuments—indeed often just before the buildings themselves are razed or blocked.

New York, 1966, Municipal Building, Tribune Building, and American Tract Society Building from the Times Building (Photo by Cervin Robinson)

Robinson reveals himself as a critic in his photographs of the World Trade Center towers. The pictures of glass and steel box skyscrapers of the 60s and 70s illustrate his visual adaptation to historical style—in this case, the International. Photographed frontally, using reflections, the plazas and sharp shadows of pedestrians in them seem like models or stills from an Antonioni film—airless, formalist, severe.

In an introductory essay to *Skyscraper Style* entitled "Buildings and Architects," Robinson writes: "Today when we have had twenty years of the austere architecture ushered in by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's Lever House, it may be refreshing to re-examine an architecture that aims to be popular, entertaining, and urbane." As he writes, so Robinson photographs. His pictures reveal a precise conceptual point of view, telling inclusions of contemporaneous details, and often wry humor (evident in his interior shot of Louis Kahn's Center for British Studies at Yale University). Unexpected juxtapositions on the street, in the building interiors, or at their heights add liveliness to the sense of encounter.

Cervin Robinson lectured for the Rice University School of Architecture on 10 March. He said, "I'm always in a good mood when it's a sunny day. I wake up early, grab my camera, and go." Robinson does often use the strong shadows of a sunny day to etch voids or lines on a building's surface just as Piranesi created deep blacks with acid; the sharp lines are clean and neat and the mysterious, endless depths reinforce an exact sense of proportion. More recently, however, Robinson has been working on grey days. Moving from the powerful photographic and architectural legacy of The Institute of Design, the Bauhaus aesthetic transplanted to the U.S., Robinson is exploring another quality of light, one that is less defined, more diffuse. The active surface pattern of high contrast black-and-white is replaced by the enveloping atmosphere of a long, monotone grey scale.

Robinson's current projects include a textbook on architectural photography and an exhibition on the history of architectural photography from 1840 to the present. In the Farish Gallery exhibition, Robinson instructed the audience as he might his classes in architectural photography at Columbia University, where he teaches at present. Robinson persuades; he does not force bold confrontation. Never a simple topographic recorder of structures, rather like Piranesi, Robinson interprets and reveals the buildings. Robinson offers us not postcards, but portraits.

[1] After Robinson and James F. O'Gorman, professor of art history at Wellesley College, and often collaborator with Robinson, made the initial selection of photographs, Drexel Turner arranged the final groupings.

[2] I would like to thank Paul Hester for his insightful discussion of issues facing the architectural photographer.

"Paul Cret at Texas: Architectural Drawing and the Image of the University in the 1930s"
Harry Ransom Center
Sponsor: Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, The University of Texas at Austin
31 March - 22 May 1983

Reviewed by John C. Ferguson

As a part of the centennial celebration of the founding of The University of Texas, the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery presented a major exhibition of architectural drawings, with complementary lectures, focusing on the work of the noted Philadelphia architect Paul Philippe Cret at The University of Texas. The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue represent the scholarship of Art History doctoral candidate Carol McMichael, whose master's thesis focused on Cret's planning and design for the Austin campus. In a sense, Miss McMichael has resurrected interest in Cret's sensitive plan for the university, a plan which, in its most important parts, has escaped the ravages of new construction required by the burgeoning student population.

Paul Philippe Cret (1876-1945) was born in Lyon, France, and educated at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts there, as well as at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where in 1901 he won the Rougevin Prize and the Grand Medal of Emulation. In his lecture before the exhibition's opening reception, Professor Neil Levine of Harvard University, co-author of the seminal book *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, recreated the path of a student of Cret's time through what was then the most prestigious architectural school in the world. The emphasis placed upon large scale planning at the Ecole was to stand Cret in good stead when it came time to formulate a plan that would knit together the disparate elements of the university's campus.

Cret's career before he received the Austin commission was detailed by architect-critic-historian Robert A. M. Stern of Columbia University. By focusing on Cret's work in the northeast United States, Stern illustrated the architect's swing away from the classicism of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts towards a more personal interpretation of classical forms as exemplified by his Folger Shakespeare Library and Federal Reserve Board buildings, both located in Washington, D.C.

While primarily concerned with Cret's work, both the exhibition and catalogue detailed what had come before. The pre-existing plans are critical to understanding Cret's, as he was not given a clean slate when he was hired as consulting architect by the Board of Regents in March 1930.

The most significant figure in the pre-Cret years was unquestionably Cass Gilbert, whose proposal of 1909 for a primary north-south mall approaching the monumental administration building prefigured Cret's executed work. Cret admired Gilbert's completed structures, Battle and Sutton Halls, designed in a Spanish Renaissance manner, and they served as a stylistic basis for his later work. In contrast to the large scale drawings most often associated with Beaux-Arts-style designers of the period, the series of small autograph sketches by Gilbert included in the exhibition remind us of the importance of the initial artistic thought that would later be translated into monumental reality.

Paul Cret's work for The University of Texas occupied much of the later years of his career, which was tragically cut short by cancer. While he was not a specialist in the design of college campuses, his personality and abilities were recognized by Professor William J. Battle, chairman of the Faculty Building Committee, who was the individual most responsible for hiring Cret. Paramount in Cret's and Battle's minds was the need for a central symbolic structure to replace the Victorian Gothic Main Building of 1882-1898 designed by F.E. Ruffini.

With the continued expansion of the student body and the consequent strain placed upon Gilbert's library, Battle Hall, the most critical need was for an expandable library that would serve for years to come. It was also intended to function as the most memorable building on campus. The largest single group of drawings in the exhibition focuses on the series of designs Cret prepared for the library, which was conceived as a three-part construction project. The four preliminary designs indicate the effort Cret expended on the planning and design of this most complex campus building. The inclusion of the original plan drawings is of special importance, as the architect's intent was compromised when he was required to alter the plan to include administrative offices within the building, sacrificing valuable circulation and public space in the process.

Cret's abilities are perhaps more evident in the studies for the smaller academic buildings, including the Union, Architecture, and Home Economics buildings, whose smaller scale was better suited to Spanish Renaissance classicism than was the complex mass of the library.

While Cret's death in 1945 ended his involvement with the execution of his plan, his successor firm, Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson (now H2L2) continued his work, focusing on the completion of the buildings facing the south mall. With the cooperation of H2L2 partners Paul C. Harbeson and William J. H. Hough, Jr., the majority of the 110 drawings in the exhibition were lent from the firm's holdings of Cret's drawings.

Perspective of future development, University of Texas, Austin, 1933, Paul Philippe Cret, consulting architect (Drawn by Alan C. Davoll and J. Floyd Yewell. The Architectural Drawings Collection, Architecture and Planning Library, The University of Texas at Austin)

While the exhibition itself has been taken down, the generously illustrated catalogue is a permanent record of the renewed interest in Cret's work at Texas. Carol McMichael's text is preceded by an introduction by Professor Drury Blakely Alexander, who ably summarizes the university's building program before Cret's arrival in 1930.

Miss McMichael's work is divided into two sections, the first a narrative account of Cret's work with a commentary on his practice prior to receiving the Austin commission. Her research into the work of the Faculty Building Committee provides us with the client's view of what was needed in the construction of a major college campus, a critical factor when one considers the outcome of the design of the library building.

Given the amount of information it contains, the catalogue would perhaps have benefited from the inclusion of an index, but this is a minor criticism considering the overall quality of the work. Carol McMichael's work complements Stephen Fox's monograph on the Rice Institute, although it is limited to events before 1945. *Paul Cret at Texas* represents an important contribution to the architectural history of the state, and deserves a place in the library of anyone with a serious interest in the field.

The text is illustrated with period photographs of Cret's work at Texas. These are an important adjunct to the drawings, since landscaping and alterations now make it difficult to see the Architecture and Union buildings as Cret intended them to be viewed.

The second half of Miss McMichael's work is the catalogue of the architectural drawings themselves, including those of Cret's predecessors. Her discussion of the multiple plans for the library is particularly helpful, amplifying her text chapter on the building. Fortunately, a large number of the drawings are illustrated, including several full and half-page plates. The design of the catalogue, by Barbara Jezek, is noteworthy in that it captures the appearance of architectural publications of the period.

"Paris-Rome-Athens:
Travels in Greece by French Architects
in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Sponsors:
Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts;
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston;
L'Ecole Française d'Athens
1 July - 4 September 1983

Reviewed by Bruce C. Webb

The Modern Movement did its best to put as much distance as possible between itself and the legacy of the Beaux-Arts. When the Beaux-Arts was mentioned at all by the modernists, it was usually as the personification of old-fashioned values—a fading monument away from which progress was to be measured. It is not surprising, then, that the memory of the Beaux-Arts that was passed along to our own time is an incomplete and chimerical picture of a century of institutionally established tastemakers exerting a powerful stranglehold over the progress of architecture.

"Paris-Rome-Athens: Travels in Greece by French Architects in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," an exhibition of drawings by winners of the Ecole de Beaux-Arts's traveling scholarship, the Prix de Rome, which was shown at The Museum of Fine Arts (1 July through 4 September), will probably not change that reputation very much. But the first American showing of the 155 large-scale *envoi* drawings of Classical Greek monuments provides a first-rate opportunity to see the evidence first hand. Looked at from the less heated atmosphere of the 1980s, the drawings can be viewed appreciatively as superb examples of draftsmanship and coloration rather than as agents of the Academy.

The exhibition was organized generally in a chronological sequence of five thematic categories, presenting a sense of the expanding interests of the Beaux-Arts's architects as well as the stylistic evolution of the drawings themselves. In this regard, the later drawings, particularly those of Camille LeFevre (1905), show an increasing interest in mood and at-

Citeations

mosphere and an impressionist's eye for rendering light as something more than the invisible progenitor of form revealing shadows. But the prevailing attitude that comes across in the drawings is one of academic stiffness, which the conventions of the Ecole encouraged as a means of objectification. The polychromatic speculations that enliven the drawings and give them their evocative quality were probably of greater interest to the students than the faculty, who did not see them as being germane to the architectural exercise. But it is the fanciful use of color that provides the primary evidence that a poetic consciousness was at work here, rather than simply a highly skilled and careful draftsman. The coloration provides a real source of delight for those who have previously seen only black-and-white reproductions of the original drawings.

The *envoi* drawings were the culmination of a unique form of education by competition, circumscribed by rigorous rules that supported the prescriptions and formulas of the Ecole. To win the Prix de Rome, a student had to demonstrate his talents as a designer and draftsman through his performance on a competition project set out by the faculty. Each year the winning student traveled to Rome or Greece, where he spent the next five years making drawings of the Classical monuments.

The Prix architects were required to send back two sets of drawings for exhibition and deposit in the archives. The first was a drawing of the extant state of a monument, which was expected to be factual and based on field research. The second half of the *envoi* invited the student to exercise his imagination to create an idealized reconstruction of the monument. Both kinds of drawings were displayed, side by side, in the exhibition, offering an opportunity to see the actual evidence from which the imagined scene was construed. When these two activities, the analytical documentation and the poetic reconstruction, are both reduced to the same genre, perception and conception can be more naturally connected than is possible in our present practice of using photographs to verify what is and drawings to envision what could be. The photograph is usually filled with too much information, which the design drawings selectively sift away.

To lead students in the Ecole to draw upon this growing trove of Classical resources and to shape their appetites for the Classical models, programs for the competition projects in the Ecole frequently offered broad hints concerning the architectural character that was expected in the solution, even citing specific examples from Rome and Athens which could be used as models. This advocacy of Classical sources was not done simply as a matter of recovering the ancient styles or gaining skill in manipulating the architectural language; rather, it represented a belief in an architecture of rational principles that was an integral part of the timeless Classical ideal. In the program for the 1824 Prix de Rome competition, the faculty authors went so far as to introduce the requirements for a *Cour de Cassation* (Supreme Court of Appeals) by noting that the Classical models would be particularly appropriate, since the function of the supreme courts had in no way changed from the Greek and Roman tribunals.

Our own relationship to the romantic past is considerably less grand, and our present appreciation of these drawings is based in part on our ability, in a sense, to defuse them: to see them perhaps more as scenography than as architecture. Thus the inevitable comparisons between the *envoi* drawings and the current post-modern revival of coloration and historical allusions, which Barbara Rose mentions in her excellent catalogue article, is made possible by disentangling the drawings from the collective values and social fixations that surrounded them in their own time. The intent of the Ecole program was to regulate progress and to create a collective order—quite the opposite of our interest in quoting history primarily for its entertainment value.

The exhibition attempted to present the drawings in a historical perspective by using a scholarly organization, a video-taped lecture, and catalogue articles to set out a historical context for the show. But the drawings seem not to need or want this historical justification of their pastness. We have perhaps heard T. S. Eliot's comment that "tradition cannot simply be inherited, it must be labored for" and decided that the effort is not always worth it. Especially when it gets in the way of our little pleasures.

"Design and Communication"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
presented by the Rice Design Alliance
16 February - 30 March 1983

Reviewed by Lorraine Wild

The definition of *design* is in a constant state of metamorphosis. It has been synonymous with drawing, the making of plans for a painting or a building, a tool, or a machine. It has been connected with craft, the creation of the decorative arts, truth-in-materials, "good design."

In more recent times, graphic and industrial designers have defined design as "problem solving" – a vague, all-inclusive definition that reflects our preference for action and process over the finished object. This has never been a satisfactory definition – after all, plumbers or lawyers solve problems, too. By its nature, the definition of this word is bound to change again.

Design and Communication, the lecture series presented by the Rice Design Alliance at The Museum of Fine Arts last spring, gave evidence of design's metamorphosis. The title of the series alone mirrors the current preoccupation of many artists, architects, and designers with the analogy of language to visual form. But new directions in the idea of design do not herald the disappearance of the old; old ideas continue to hang in the air, rendering the practice of design highly eclectic.

The roster of speakers for *Design and Communication* – Richard Haas, James Wines, Colin Forbes, Stanley Tigerman, Ivan Chermayeff, and Saul Bass (one artist-muralist, two architects, and three graphic designers) – represented the truly confusing contemporary range of definitions. This was a rare opportunity to compare conflicting philosophies operating within the design professions, since they are normally somewhat isolated from one another.

Ironically, the two speakers who epitomized current design practice, which questions abstraction, minimalism, and the tenets of orthodox modernism, were architects first and designers by default (by the theme of the lecture series). Stanley Tigerman and James Wines do not produce similar work, but they are both known for their provocative rejections. For instance, Wines praised the ideas of Le Corbusier as "fine for 1910" but dead for today; Tigerman harbors similar sentiments toward Mies van der Rohe. Both use artistic exploration and personal expression in an effort to build an architecture that has decipherable public meaning. James Wines and his partners in SITE have pushed this exploration with undeniable success in their buildings for Best Products. Stanley Tigerman also plays with the contrast between personal and public symbolism, as is evident in his handling of public scale, ritual, and context in his design for the Knoll Showroom in Houston.

Variations of these ideas, particularly the relationship between art, design, and the cultural context, are affecting product designers and graphic designers as well as architects, but the other lecturers in *Design and Communication* hardly seemed to be touched by these recent developments in design theory. Wines and Tigerman represent the further advances of the intellectual growth of design theory; Haas and Forbes have been affected by it indirectly; and Bass and Chermayeff either are ignoring it or find it irrelevant to their own practice.

If design is "problem solving," then Richard Haas's problems are almost always ugly blank walls, and his solutions are almost always *trompe l'oeil* architectural murals. Haas is an artist whose current work in murals is the result of his own interest in the imagery and history of buildings and cities. He tries to achieve a visual reconciliation between the objects of the past and the present that compose our urban environment.

The success of Haas's projects (which are either imposed by clients or proposed by the artist) is dependent upon the degree to which he synthesizes the imagery of the old into the new. For instance, his proposal to paint the shadows of the Empire State and Chrysler buildings on the façades of the World Trade Center towers constitutes the sort of imaginative leap that fires his best work. The less successful projects (and his recently completed mural at Town and Country Center would fall into that category) mimic the decorative arts of the past and invoke a nostalgia for the loss of craftsmanship and rich ornamental design that Haas's reproductive technique can allude to but never really replace.

Colin Forbes, Saul Bass, and Ivan Chermayeff are all graphic designers and very successful businessmen. They built their practices by doing graphic work for growing corporate clients, starting in the late 50s. Now they represent the pinnacle of the graphic design "establishment," and as such they are not inclined to question the philosophical basis of their own work. To these men, "Design and Communication" means the telephone: all three of them referred to the old saw (Saul Bass attributed it to George Nelson, but the real source is Moholy-Nagy) "if you can't describe your idea to a client over the telephone, you haven't got an idea."

Colin Forbes was frank in describing the workings of his London-based partnership, Pentagram. He likened himself to a conductor, orchestrating the wide range of approaches and talents available in a large office, combining the right designers with the right problem and client. The work of Pentagram has no overwhelming formal or philosophical bias; minimal, Swiss-inspired corporate identity projects such as Reuters (designed 20 years ago) co-exist with more eccentric, small-scale projects such as the graphics for a clothing firm, Pinky and Dianne. Pentagram is a fluid organization, permeated by new ideas. It is always interesting to see their latest work, to watch which ideas "in the air" they synthesize to meet the needs of their clients.

Saul Bass showed a "greatest hits" selection of corporate design produced by his large Los Angeles firm. Unlike Forbes, he did not divulge the workings of his office; we can be sure that Bass did not knock out identity programs for A.T.&T., United Airlines, Frontier Airlines, the Girl Scouts, and Exxon all by himself. Even the most recent graphic projects by Bass looked somewhat dated because they are produced under the influence of uncritical Modernism. When Bass showed his prototype for Exxon gas stations, to be built identically from Oslo to Osaka, he spoke of the need to "reduce clutter on a global scale" without a trace of post-modern cynicism.

Most of Bass's lecture was devoted to his historically important work in film graphics, editing, and montage, obviously of more personal interest to him than the corporate work. He offered vivid recollections of the complexities involved in the production of the film work (and of the contributions of the many co-workers inevitably involved in as complex a medium as film). To the delight of the audience, he showed some of his famous film sequences, such as the titles for *Grand Prix* and *Walk on the Wild Side*, and saved many from having to watch for the rare appearances of this better part of his *oeuvre* at the River Oaks Theater or on late-night television.

Ivan Chermayeff referred to his work as "ubiquitous," which it is, and "boring," which is an inaccurate and somewhat cruel assessment. If he were speaking about his own work, it would be an acceptable comment, but he was talking about the work of his partners and dozens of employees in his large New York office, whose existence he barely acknowledged (though he surely profits by their efforts). He treated the audience at The Museum of Fine Arts to examples of, as he put it, "stuff I do on Sundays when I'm away from the telephone." This turned out to be high-budget promotional posters for public television specials or museum exhibitions supported by Philip Morris or Mobil, his main corporate clients. He also presented a smattering of equally glossy *pro bono* government work.

Even if every idea in every poster that Chermayeff showed was his alone (which is unlikely), it took the efforts of many co-workers to produce these fine pieces. Why do so many graphic designers obscure the real design process? Does it seem more legitimate, or more like *art*, if each claims to be the sole creator of his work?

Most of the work that Chermayeff showed is very well known, and for good reason: the best of it displays a deft combination of words and images with the illusion of effortlessness. For example, a poster for the television series *Between the Wars* depicts two military helmets separated by a civilian bowler; the simple but unexpected imagery translates the subject of the poster in a surprising and graceful manner.

"Design isn't too interesting, but it can be fun," Chermayeff informed the audience. He displayed his predilection for global-scale house-cleaning by suggesting that Houston should spray-paint its billboards a nice shade of *beige*. He also offered a bushel of platitudes on the topic of design, which he claims to think about only while drinking on airplanes, and which consisted of such nonsense as "Design is best done in taxicabs, while your ideas are still fresh . . . design is less . . . design is clean . . . design is simple . . . design is making connections . . . design is not doing what you are told to do . . . design is not fashion . . . design is not rhetoric . . . design is knowing when to stop." Whether this litany was a put on or serious was impossible to tell; perhaps to Chermayeff, lecturing to hicks outside of Manhattan means never having to say you're sorry.

It should be noted that *Design and Communication* was a resounding success. The lectures were all well attended and brought in many people new to RDA-sponsored programs. One hopes that the series, or something like it, is continued. As Oscar Wilde (and the promotional poster for the series) reminded us, "It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances." One would have to be very shallow not to *see* things differently after being exposed to the ideas and attitudes of those responsible for our visual environment.

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