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Robert Venturi's Park Regency • Regional Mobility Plan • Hermann Park

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EDITORIAL

George H. Hermann Memorial, 1981, Lonnie Joe Edwards, sculptor — Douglas Milburn

Reclaiming Hermann Park

Nearly 70 years have passed since Hermann Park was conveyed to the City of Houston through the philanthropy of George H. Hermann. Yet this park remains a conspicuously underdeveloped scenic and recreational resource. Recently the Zoological Society of Houston has embarked on a series of ambitious projects to create a zoo more in keeping with a city the size of Houston today. But no comparable attention has been focused on the rest of Hermann Park. Earlier this year, in a proposal prepared for the Municipal Art Commission, Charles W. Moore and Barton Phelps of the Urban Innovations Group offered a means of redressing this history of neglect. Their Olmstedian vision takes as its point of departure the distinguished, but only partially implemented, plan for the park prepared by George E. Kessler in 1916.

Initial response to this new proposal—which focuses on 50 acres of the park's main entrance and northwest quadrant—has been mixed. Ann Holmes, writing in the Houston *Chronicle*, discerned a "wit and style" in Moore's proposal that would provide a "felicitous accent" for the park which, she noted, was "large enough to accommodate many delights and surprises." Isabel Wilson, chairman of the Municipal Art Commission, predicted that the plan, if realized, "would add immeasurably to the quality of life in the inner city." But the Houston *Post*, while commending the reconstruction of Miller Theater (included in Moore's proposal), questioned other aspects of the plan. The *Post* characterized these as "imaginative," but it objected that they would result in the "packing" of a park already *"too popular"* (emphasis added). Instead of providing an "additional drawing card for Hermann Park to attract even more people from all corners of the city to one spot," the *Post* suggested that improvements such as a 20 acre lake might better be realized in a "big, new, outlying park." The *Post's* objections fairly represent one community of opinion about the Moore plan. But these are misplaced.

The Moore plan scarcely provides too many "drawing cards" for a park of 410 acres. By virtue of its size and accessibility Hermann Park serves as the central park of Houston, a common ground for the city's more than two million citizens. If it is to provide citizens with the scenic and recreational delight of which it is capable, it must be equipped to do so. Kessler's original plan, and Moore's after it, resemble in their array and disposition of landscape elements the mall and lake sequence of Manhattan's Central Park, which accommodates far more intensive use than Hermann Park is ever likely to know. Far from dominating Hermann Park, the lake, if expanded in size from six and one-quarter to 20 acres, would provide a pleasant, and for the first time recreationally useful, water course. Kessler's original plan envisioned a significantly larger lake than was built; Moore's lake, if realized, would devote one acre in every 20 in Hermann Park to water. In Central Park, one acre in six is covered by water. Nearly *three times* the area proposed for the lake is already devoted to surface parking lots in Hermann Park.

If Hermann Park seems "already overcrowded," it is because relatively little of the park is available for general recreation at present, a condition which the Moore plan cannot itself change but which deserves careful attention as part of any long range plan to reclaim the park. Approximately 100 acres of the park are effectively severed from the main body by traffic arteries (Fannin, Outer Belt and North and South MacGregor Ways); another 125 acres are devoted to the 18 hole golf course. In addition the zoo occupies 45 acres, Miller Outdoor Theater 10 acres, the Museum of Natural Science 5 acres, and parking lots more than 30 acres, leaving less than one-quarter of the park—fewer than 100 acres—for general use of the sort that characterizes most of Central Park. Although the simplest way of correcting this imbalance might be to convert the golf course to general use (since it serves comparatively few patrons in relation to its size), such a conversion might also invite the proliferation of buildings, parking lots and dubious landscaping "features" of the sort that already afflict the rest of the main body of the park. In any event, the effect of Moore's proposals, if realized, would be to permit more efficient and appropriate use of that park space which is presently available for general use.

Doubts have been raised as to whether it would be prudent to devote $10 million or more to the embellishment of Hermann Park when the city is in urgent need of expanding its park land. But the real problem with the city's park holdings is geographic maldistribution. In fact, Houston ranks fourth among the nation's 40 most populous cities in per capita park acreage when Cullen Park is included in the computation, and eleventh when it is not. In view of Hermann Park's accessibility and position as the keystone of the city's park system, the relatively high value of the real estate around it and its long history of neglect, the case for a major upgrading becomes all the more compelling. The public might well consider how readily other potential donors will be persuaded to make benefactions similar to that of George Hermann's if sites so offered must face a perpetuity of neglect.

Citelines

Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

Nina J. Cullinan 1896-1983

She was a person you took in her entirety, with unqualified love, in the same way she took her many friends.

She could be fierce. Always loyal to her own, she was nonetheless ready to do battle with them at the drop of a lace handkerchief on behalf of the absent person, persons or group that came under attack. Any careless remark or prejudicial judgment would evoke her defensive queries: Were you there? Did you actually hear that? Did you see it happen? Where did you get your facts?

But her fiercest onslaught came forth when some unsuspecting, unwarned, good-intentioned stranger called her "Miss Nina." Behind an out-thrust finger, a hard and unblinking gaze would impale the cringing person until she had adequately and indignantly explained that she was "Nina" or "Miss Cullinan" but never to be addressed like an old maid, an object to be pitied, in a condescending way, in a familiar and patronizing manner—Southern style.

She was a confirmed lover of life. She felt that she was blessed with an opportunity to enjoy life for a long time, largely on her own terms, according to her own style and beliefs.

She loved good food, served delicious dinners and ate well. But she was scarcely a gourmet or a connoisseur.

She loved nature and all wildlife. But she scarcely knew one plant, tree or bird from another.

There was no doubt that she felt this planet was a wonderful place and that life had been generous to her. Passing from what was to her a magnificent world just meant going to a place where there was more beautiful scenery, higher ranges of mountains, broader vistas—a paradise of healthier, happier, better people and dogs, but certainly not angels and cherubim. It was as if the here-and-now was all the reward she asked for or needed.

She loved art, music, ballet and opera. But she was not a pedant, an expert or in any real sense knowledgeable. Yet before a painting or just after a performance, her judgment, often unduly generous to a young artist, rang true and telling.

Her energy was prodigious. Although exhausted by a long trip and many demands on her, a short nap or an overnight rest would prepare her for another run at life. On the day after a harrowing course of treatment for the cancer that killed her, she might entertain a friend with Mexican food or drive to Galveston to take a lady in a nursing home to visit her family.

She was wise. There were a few—but not many—blind sides to Nina. To the end, of course, she was a "sucker" for a sincere pitch for a good cause. Few people, least of all her family, knew the extraordinary breadth of interests and areas of support implied by these good causes. They meant helping an artist, helping to fund a student field trip to the East, helping to start a bookstore, paying somebody's medical bill, donating a building or a park, underwriting a book, along with innumerable on-going cultural and human welfare activities that she never failed to support.

She was American to the core. She was democratic and unpretentious; optimistic and forward-looking; generous and giving; pragmatic and well-organized; and always unfailingly supportive of the underdog or of those less fortunate. And behind it all lay gaunt, unrelenting character and a will to fulfill obligations.

Portraits done posthumously have a special quality. The question must occur to viewers: why did the people who commissioned them select that time in a person's life? For Nina Cullinan, a painting or a photograph of her—had she allowed it to be made—would have had to be done late in her life to do her justice. More and more her face came to show her inner vitality, curiosity, kindness and air of expectation. As she put it: "I'm not much in the looks department." But to all who came to know her she grew more and more beautiful, strangely innocent yet knowing, in her own uniquely private way.

Anderson Todd

Proposal for Market Square (Downtown Houston Association)

Market Square Remodeling

A plan sponsored by the Downtown Houston Association, a non-profit civic organization whose members represent businesses, corporations and institutions with a stake in the central business district, has been prepared to transform Market Square. This will be the second time in less than 10 years that Market Square has been reshaped. As a Bicentennial project, the Junior League of Houston in 1976 underwrote the "greening" of what, for fifteen years, had been a surface parking lot in 1976, turning it into an undulating meadow of grassy hillocks dotted with saplings. This rolling landscape (somewhat uncharacteristic of Houston in general and downtown Houston in particular) was the work of Fred Buxton and Associates, landscape architects. Reyner Banham, upon being shown the square in 1977, dubbed it "Titty Park."

The Houston offices of the SWA Group and Gensler and Associates have collaborated in devising the plan for Market Square's transformation. In a four-phase operation estimated to cost $2.3 million, the hillettes will be flattened, then the existing live oak trees will be transplanted around the inside of the square's perimeter sidewalks. Within the resulting enclosure a second tree ring—a double row of shumard oaks—will be planted around a spacious central lawn that measures about 150 feet square. A low, triangular platform, suitable for performances, will be stationed at the northwest corner of the lawn (the Milam-Congress intersection). At the southeast corner (the Travis-Preston intersection) will rise the most expensive feature of the proposal, a $1.39 million replica of the clock tower of the last City Hall and Market House to occupy Market Square. This was built in 1904 and burned in 1960.

Urbanistically, the SWA-Gensler proposal represents a much more sensible and appropriate scheme for the design of a public square than does Buxton's. It may not restore quite the level of activity that Market Square knew when it was the site of the city's central public market (1840–1929) and municipal government (1840–1939), or even after the 1904 City Hall became the Trailways bus station (1940–1957). But, as a result of the listing of the blocks surrounding Market Square in the National Register of Historic Places (as part of the 16-block Main Street-Market Square Historic District) this past January, investors now can qualify for substantial federal and municipal tax breaks for rehabilitating buildings within the district. By supporting this listing, sponsored by one of its members, Houston Old Town Development Corporation, the Downtown Houston Association hopes that their plan for Market Square will imbue the new downtown district with a strong focus and provide a public space that can be used intensively rather than merely contemplated from the curbline.

Johnson/Burgee and UH College of Architecture

Although the College of Architecture at the University of Houston was organized in 1946, it has always occupied hand-me-down facilities, most recently the ex-College of Engineering complex and a group of 1940's "temporary" metal buildings. An electrical fire which badly damaged the largest of the temporary buildings in 1976 prodded university and college officials into considering permanent quarters. This encouraged architecture faculty members to propose a competition to select an architect, a suggestion that did not find favor with university authorities however. Instead in the fall of 1982, the Board of Regents named Johnson/Burgee Architects and Morris☆Aubry Architects to collaborate on the design of the new architecture building. Construction of the $19.8 million structure should begin in the fall of 1983 and be ready by the summer of 1985.

Schematic drawings were presented on 8 March. These depict a three-story with garret building, rectangular in plan, configured around a rectangular, central *cortile*. Loft-like tiers of studio spaces will overlook this air-conditioned evocation of the Ecole des-Beaux-Arts's Salle des Etudes. As at Johnson/Burgee's Dade County Cultural Center in Miami, Romantic Classicism surfaces in the proposed treatment of exteriors; Ledoux's project for the House of Education at Chaux is cited as the source. Philip Johnson has indicated that the building will be clad in fossilated limestone, a Texas "regional" material employed for the university's original buildings, which were constructed between 1939 and 1951 in a stripped classical idiom. (It was also the material with which Johnson clad his Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth of 1961.) The symmetrically composed front elevation of the architecture building will terminate the Elgin Avenue access drive, providing a ceremonial entrance to the campus, which has been likened by one UH alumnus to a "world's fair" exposition of architecture, most of it (in the preferred tradition of Texas modernism) big, bland and non-controversial.

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

With the exception of the Student Life Center by O'Neil Ford and Richard S. Colley (1968), the College of Architecture will be the only campus building not designed by a Houston architect. The decision to hire an "outside" architect—albeit one who has maintained a longstanding association with the College of Architecture (Johnson lectured there as early as 1950 while working on his first Houston building, the Menil House)—was perhaps spurred by the attention which Rice University's School of Architecture received after having James Stirling and Michael Wilford perform modest additions and alterations to its existing building. Johnson has once before demonstrated in Houston, with the campus plan and original buildings of the University of St. Thomas (1956–1959), the power of architecture to raise an institution to public notice. The University of Houston central campus certainly needs all the magic it can get and, after all these years of waiting, the College of Architecture could use a home of its own.

Big Cité Beat

Gulf Building, 1929, A.C. Finn, Kenneth Franzheim and J.E.R. Carpenter, architects.

Houston Metropolitan Research Center to Exhibit Drawings of A.C. Finn

In 1976 Michael Spata bought a two-story house at the corner of San Jacinto Street and Rosedale Avenue near The Museum of Fine Arts. Behind the house lay a two-story garage and apartment which he found to be stuffed with rolled drawings and prints, scrapbooks, photographs, architectural models, specifications, ledger books and correspondence files. This pile of material documented the career of one of Houston's most prolific 20th-century architects, Alfred C. Finn (1883–1964).

When Finn closed his office in the Bankers Mortgage Building shortly before his death, its contents were deposited in the garage of the house he had built for his family in 1917 in the newly opened Southmore Addition. After Mrs. Finn moved out of the house about 1970, the papers remained behind. Fortunately, Spata called in Peter C. Papademetriou for advice on the disposition of this material. Papademetriou had recognized, during the course of the development of his 1972 book, *Houston, An Architectural Guide*, that archival material existed and should be assembled. With formation of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, he and Drexel Turner appealed to the sponsoring institutions to include an architectural archive. The unexpected appearance of the Finn papers was the catalyst necessary for achieving this purpose. Papademetriou engineered the transfer of this material to the Research Center where Margaret Henson had the massive pile fumigated before she began to process it. When a flash flood struck the basement where the collection was stored, Mrs. Henson's archival expertise saved it from catastrophe; wrapped in plastic garbage bags, the drawings weathered the ordeal.

Now permanently installed in the Research Center's architectural component and supplemented with contributions from A.C. Finn, Jr. and Golemon and Rolfe, the Alfred C. Finn Collection has been taken out of its garbage bags and is being catalogued. Since acquiring the Finn Collection, the Research Center has also accessioned other architectural collections, including the office records and drawings of Maurice J. Sullivan, Harvin C. Moore and a selection of documents from the Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare dealing with their extensive Houston work. These are kept in the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library.

Finn's drawings span the most productive years of his half-century long career (he opened his own office in 1913) and indicate the full spectrum of his work: houses large and small from Houston Heights, Montrose and Courtlandt Place to Shadyside and River Oaks; tall office buildings like the Gulf Building (with Kenneth Franzheim) and the Peoples' National Bank Building in Tyler; the Veterans Hospital among other medical institutions; and a wide array of public buildings such as the Sam Houston Coliseum and Music Hall, the San Jacinto Monument and the Ezekiel Cullen Building at the University of Houston.

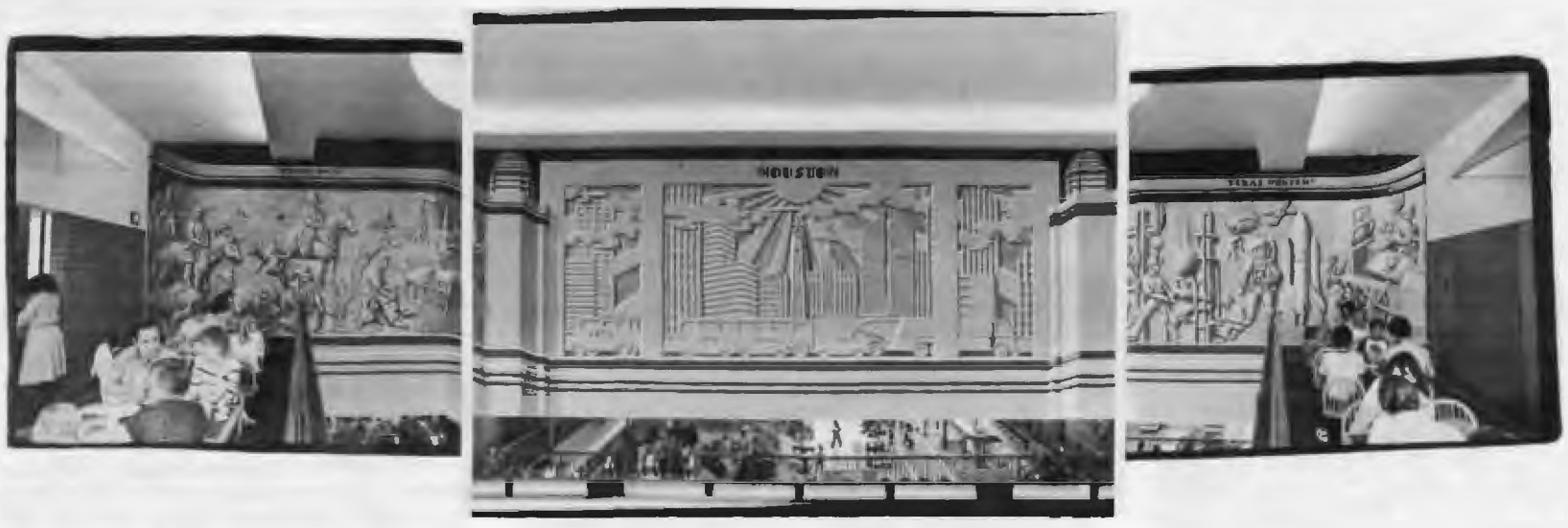
Finn was both a businessman-architect and a businessman's architect. His career was linked intimately to the rise of the developer, banker, publisher, hotel operator and Democratic politician, Jesse H. Jones. In fact, as Dorothy Victor, a member of the architectural firm of Sikes Jennings Kelly, discovered while doing research on the Gulf Building in connection with its restoration, Jones actually owned Finn's practice, a precedent for at least one type of developer-architect relationship that still persists in Houston.

With the assistance of the Cultural Arts Council of Houston, the Research Center will mount an exhibition of drawings and photographs in November to document Finn's architecture. This will be accompanied by a catalogue of the collection, prepared by the Research Center's architectural archivist, Michael Wilson, with an essay on Finn's work by Barrie Scardino.

Harold Farb at the Sunar Showroom.

☛ **Magazine readers** this past fall may have been surprised to see in their September issues a full page advertisement depicting developer Harold Farb settled warily into a Massimo Vignelli Circolo chair at the Sunar Showroom in Greenway Plaza (Michael Graves, 1980), bracketed with a bold headline proclaiming "This Is Farb." Farb appears to have succumbed to Post-Modernism only for advertising purposes; his two big commercial projects—the 45-story San Felipe Plaza (sic) at San Felipe and Augusta and The Centre, a 72-acre multiple use development on the Southwest Freeway—are both being handled by the Houston office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill while The Carlyle, Farb's new grand luxe restaurant at Westheimer and Sage, was decorated by Valerian Rybar and Daigre. However, another local real estate tycoon, Gerald D. Hines, has asked Michael Graves to prepare designs for a house on a lot adjoining the River Oaks Country Club golf course. Hines is already the master of houses designed for him by Charles Moore and William Turnbull (Aspen) and Robert A.M. Stern (Martha's Vineyard). Graves was an unsuccessful contender for the Aspen house commission.

☛ **Moving to San Antonio** from its proto-Post-Modern building on the Bluff in Corpus Christi is the H.E. Butt Grocery Company, which has retained Hartman-Cox and Chumney, Jones and Kell to reuse adaptively six existing buildings and to design one new building at the former U.S. Arsenal on the San Antonio River. The multi-acre site contains structures dating from the 1850's through the 1920's. On the opposite shore of the river, Ford, Powell and Carson have in progress a restoration-remodeling of the Groos House on King William Street (Alfred Giles, 1880) for HEB's president, Charles C. Butt.



Houston, *1983, Richard Haas, artist, Town and Country Center. (Photo by Douglas Harvey)*

Haas Mural Unveiled

Richard Haas was in town to lecture to the RDA, attend a reception at the McIntosh/Drysdale Gallery, which opened with a show of Haas's work, and to dedicate "Houston," a 70-foot long mural at Town and Country Center, on 17 February. The mural is a tryptich in the public art style of the 1930's and 40's. The central, three-part panel consists of a composite skyline pushing up against a radiant sun, with bumper-to-bumper traffic at base level. Haas's ironic retrospective vision of progress features such architectural icons as the Niels Esperson Building, the San Jacinto Monument, Pennzoil Place and One Post Oak Central. The mural was commissioned by Ernest W. Hahn and Dan Moody, developers of Town and Country Center.

☛ **As architectural compensation** for Corpus Christi, Batey and Mack have just completed a 7,500 square foot villa on Ocean Drive for Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin D. Holt. Clad in travertine and granite, the Holt House derives its inspiration from Lawrence Alma-Tadema's late 19th-century paintings of classical Roman dolce vita. Also in the offing are two more Corpus Christi residential projects by Batey and Mack.

☛ To publicize its move to new quarters at 3355 West Alabama, **Morris*Aubry Architects,** in lieu of the expected corporate deluxe announcement, has distributed an accordion-fold picture postcard packet. Called "Morris*Aubry, 45 Years in Houston" and designed by Flat Lizard Graphics, the packet contains color-tinted postcards of eight buildings designed by Morris*Aubry, each juxtaposed with a Houston monument to which the building is related by a pun. For instance, the Sam Houston Monument is superimposed on the First City Tower above the caption "Charge!" Thirty-three fifty-five West Alabama shares its frame with the Goodyear Blimp; the punch line reads: "A Moving Experience." The sign from Cutter Bill Western World pops up in front of 1600 Smith Street, a 56-story building under construction in Cullen Center, to the accompaniment of "Hi, Tex." A cute idea, but for star architects the humor is a little weak. More is arbitrary (than amusing in these) arch texts.

☛ To draw public attention to the recently designated Main Street-Market Square Historic District, the Downtown Houston Association has organized **Project Walls,** a public mural program coordinated by Joan Seeman Robinson. Robinson has assembled an art selection committee and an advisory board for what she describes as Phase One of the project. This will entail locating an appropriate surface (several exposed blank walls are under consideration), an artist of national reputation to execute a mural, and the funds to pay for it.

☛ **For Sale** are a number of choice items of Houston domestic architecture. François de Menil has his much publicized Charles Gwathmey re-do of a Gene Aubry re-do of a George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce ranchburger on the market. For $10 million, one can choose between Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson's Rienzi (a neoclassical casino by John F. Staub with an added ballroom by Neuhaus Associates) and chez Baron and Baroness Enrico di Portanova (the swimming pool that ate Reba Drive). In case you missed it, the Portanovas were featured in the October number of Town and Country, reclining at Arabesque, their thousand-and-one nights fantasy on Acapulco Bay designed by Aurelio Muñoz Castillo. The W.S. Farish House in Shadyside, a superlative Regency-style country house designed by H.T. Lindeberg, is listed for a cool $8.5 million. The one-time residence of another co-founder of Humble Oil and Refining Company, Governor Ross S. Sterling, at Yoakum and Kenwood is also available. Recently entered in the National Register of Historic Places, the Sterling House contains one of the most exceptional front porches in Houston (A.C. Finn, 1919).

*2. Hi, Tex architecture, Morris * Aubry Architects. (Flat Lizard Graphics)*

3. (For Sale) Farish House, 1925, Harrie T. Lindeberg, architect. (Photo by Paul Hester)

Event to Inaugurate The Center for the Study of American Architecture

Lawrence W. Speck

In pursuit of the "American strain" in architecture, a number of public institutions across the United States are establishing centers for the study of American architecture. The "mother" center will be at Columbia University in New York. Columbia's preeminent architectural resource, the Avery Library, qualifies it as the hub of this scholarly network. Regional centers will be established at The Art Institute of Chicago, at Tulane University, at The University of Texas at Austin and in the West at an (as yet) undetermined location.

The charge of the various centers is to "establish and examine cultural and environmental conditions which have directed the course of American building." Clearly this represents a bias toward the sort of architecture which reflects regional landscapes, climates and peoples, as well as the purposes buildings fulfill, rather than prevailing styles or ideologies. The establishment of a network of centers rather than a single center acknowledges the diversity of cultural and environmental conditions throughout the United States and reflects the organizers' desire to "heighten interest in and respect for local architectural traditions."

The resources being assembled for this new endeavor are remarkable indeed, making it perhaps the most ambitious effort ever mounted in this country in the name of architectural research. The Board of Advisors for the National Center at Columbia includes Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Ada Louise Huxtable, Edgar Kaufmann, jr., I. M. Pei and Vincent Scully. Income from an endowment (which is expected to exceed $8 million) will support a community of Fellows—both scholars and architects—who will be selected annually on a competitive basis. In addition, public colloquiams and lectures as well as publications will be supported by the National Center.

As a sort of "kick-off" for the National Center, Columbia is sponsoring a major symposium and exhibition in New York this spring entitled "American Architecture: Innovation and Tradition," co-directed by David DeLong, Robert A. M. Stern and Helen Searing.

The exhibition, which will open in New York on 21 April and will subsequently travel, contains work from various parts of the country chosen by six guest curators: Gerald Allen from the South, Richard Longstreth from the Great Plains, Deborah Nevins from the Northeast, Lawrence Speck from the Southwest, Sally Woodbridge from the West and John Zukowsky from the Middle West. The symposium, scheduled for 21 April through 24 April, will have three major sessions: "The Place: Urbanism, Suburbanism and Civic Design," "The Object: Decorative Arts, Industrial Arts and Interior Design," and "The Buildings: Vernacular and Monumental Forms." Speakers will include J.B. Jackson, Denise Scott Brown, William Jordy, Thomas Hines, James O'Gorman and Arthur Drexler. In contrast to many recent symposiums, this one has involved the advance exchange of papers, so that presentations should represent a refined point of view of the designated topics. Proceedings from the symposium and selections from the exhibition are scheduled to be included in the inaugural issue of *American Architecture*, the regularly published journal of the National Center.

Of the four regional centers, the Southwest Center at The University of Texas seems to be the most advanced in planning its future role. Although its conception followed considerably that of the National Center, several activities are already in progress and fund raising is well underway.

Like Columbia, The University of Texas plans to focus the Southwest Center's work on its considerable resources including the School of Architecture's library, which is one of the largest architectural collections in the country, the architectural archives of the Humanities Research Center, the Barker Texas History Collection, the Winedale Historical Center and the rapidly expanding Architectural Drawings Collection. Fellowships, colloquiams, exhibitions and publications will comprise the major activities of the Southwest Center.

MTA to Build Main Street Subway Someway

Following several months of intense controversy, including the passing of resolutions of disapproval by the Commissioners Court of Harris County and the Houston City Council, the Board of the Metropolitan Transit Authority declined to support the proposal forwarded by MTA General Manager Alan Kiepper for routing the MTA's rapid rail line through downtown Houston on elevated guideways above Main Street. This would have represented one segment of the initial 18.2 mile system which the MTA Board authorized at their meeting of 29 September. Instead, at the 27 December meeting, the board voted to build the downtown section in a subway configuration. In early March contracts were awarded for the design of the first 11 stations. The three downtown subway stations beneath Main Street were awarded to a team for which Morris*Aubry Architects and John S. Chase are project architects.

Exactly how the subway will be built—using cut-and-cover construction or tunneling or a combination of both—is still being examined by MTA's technical staff. Also undecided is where the line will make the transition from an elevated to subway configuration at either end of the downtown segment. At the north end the MTA staff prefers to continue the line beneath Buffalo Bayou in a subway configuration, surfacing near Interstate-10. However, the Buffalo Bayou Transformation Corporation would like for the rapid rail line to cross the half-mile distance between the bayou and I-10 in an elevated configuration in order to include a station along this route, which would enhance the corporation's potential to stimulate redevelopment of this early 20th-century warehouse district.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority proposes that the south end of the subway be located at about Hadley Avenue, three blocks south of Interstate-45. This means that the transition would occur in front of the new Knoll Showroom, now under construction to the designs of Tigerman Fugman McCurry. It would also mean that the elevated guideways of the rapid rail line would traverse Main Street for nearly 10 blocks before veering off it near Francis Avenue, despite the City Council's resolution placing Main Street out-of-bounds for elevated construction last November.

These decisions rest ultimately with the MTA Board, which must approve all of the staff's recommendations before they can be carried out.

Charles Moore and Buzz Yudell (right) designing College of Fine Art with SAAI staff and trustees. (Photo by Gary Hartman)

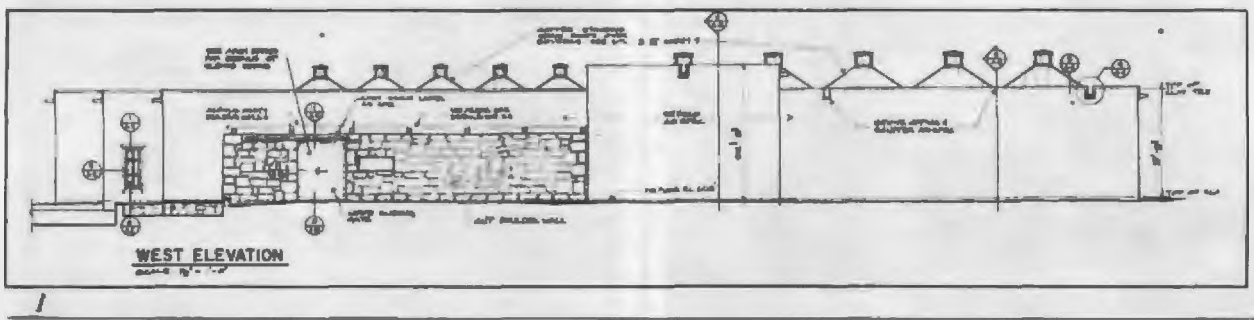
Moore to Design San Antonio Art Institute College of Fine Art

The inveterate traveler and architect Charles W. Moore has landed yet another Texas commission. In October 1982, the trustees of the San Antonio Art Institute retained Moore Ruble Yudell of Santa Monica to design a two-story, 40,000 square foot building to house the institute's newly endowed College of Fine Art. The site is a 2.5 acre tract on the grounds of the McNay Art Institute, in proximity to the McNay (a Spanish colonial revival hacienda of 1928 by Atlee B. Ayres and Robert M. Ayres with extensive additions by Ford, Powell and Carson) and adjacent to the San Antonio Art Institute's present facilities (also designed by Ford, Powell and Carson and completed in 1976 and 1979).

Moore Ruble Yudell was one of four architectural firms interviewed by the trustees' building committee. The other three were Robert A. M. Stern, Taft Architects and Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. O. Jack Mitchell, Dean of the School of Architecture at Rice University, served as professional advisor to the building committee.

The San Antonio Art Institute will raise $3 million, chiefly from private sources, to erect the new building. Construction is to begin in the fall of 1983. Completion is scheduled for the fall of 1984 when the Art Institute will open the College of Fine Art, which it describes as "the first independent college of art in the Southwest."

This is Charles Moore's sixth commission in Texas since 1981. Nearing completion in Fort Worth are two projects by Moore Ruble Yudell for the California development firm, John A. Meyer, Ltd.: the conversion of a small building into the Roundhouse Office Building and 18 units of medium income condominium apartments on McCart Street. Under construction at Sugar Land is the Sweetwater Country Club for SugarLand Properties, Inc. on which Moore and the Urban Innovations Group collaborated with MLTW/Turnbull Associates and Richard Fitzgerald and Partners. Still in the schematic stage are two projects, one in Houston, the other in Dallas. Both involve multiple family housing.



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1. Cowboy Artists of America Museum, Kerrville, 1981–1983, Ford, Powell and Carson, architects. West elevation.
2. Site Plan, Preliminary design for the Museum of the Southwest, Midland, 1982, Ford, Powell and Carson, architects.

New Texas Museums Under Construction or Planned

The San Antonio Art Institute's construction of a College of Fine Art is only one of several major building projects for Texan art institutions either underway or contemplated.

Chief among these is the Dallas Museum of Art. Despite multiple additions, the present Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in Fair Park, a stripped classical building of 1936 by DeWitt and Washburn and Paul Philippe Cret, has become so inadequate that it "inhibited development and expansion of the collections and the museum's services," according to museum sources. In 1979 Dallas voters authorized a bond issue of nearly $25 million to construct a new building, which the museum matched with another $25 million in private donations. Construction began in 1980 and now is nearing completion. The Dallas Museum of Art is located in the newly designated Dallas Arts District, an enclave adjacent to the downtown office center.

The $29.6 million, 193,000 square foot building is the work of Edward Larrabee Barnes Associates and Pratt, Box and Henderson Associates. As is typical of Barnes's work, the Dallas museum comprises an assembly of rectangular blocks containing gallery, instructional and administrative spaces. The minimally detailed elevations are faced with limestone. Dispersed between and alongside principal gallery spaces are walled garden courts.

Similar in organization and ambience to the Dallas Museum of Art is the museum planned for The Menil Collection in Houston, announced in December 1981. The site of this 70,000 square foot, $10 million building, designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Fitzgerald and Partners, was cleared in the fall of 1982, following construction during August of the "Test House," a full-scale mock up of a typical gallery bay. Excavation for the museum began in late March.

The San Antonio architects Ford, Powell and Carson have just finished one museum and are planning another. Scheduled to open in April is the Cowboy Artists of America Museum in Kerrville. The building is small—about 12,000 square feet, containing only three galleries—and located on a suburban site along with guest cottages and studios for artists-in-residence. The architecture is derived from one of Ford, Powell and Carson's most famous buildings, the Steves House. It features walls of stucco over block, *bovedas*—the traditional masonry vaulted skylights of Guadalajara—extensive use of wood for doors and windows and a rubble stone entrance passage. A large courtyard surrounded by an enclosed arcade permits access to the galleries, lecture hall and curatorial spaces on one side and to the administrative spaces on the other. Construction cost was about $3 million.

The desire to set a building unostentatiously into the landscape also has guided Ford, Powell and Carson's preliminary design of the Museum of the Southwest in Midland. The site is again suburban, this time lying between two large houses (one of which has already been adapted for museum purposes by Frank Welch and Associates) with a carriage house in between. Galleries of different height are clustered around outdoor courts. Light, greenery and water are threaded subtlely between publicly accessible spaces to produce an oasis-like effect which should prove quite beguiling on the high, windy, dry plain of far west Texas. The preliminary design calls for about 14,000 square feet in display, curatorial and support spaces to be built for about $6 million. New construction will be clad in cast stone. A change in the administration of the Museum of the Southwest has caused the project to be delayed until a new director is selected. The trustees chose Ford, Powell and Carson as architects in early 1982 after interviewing O'Neil Ford, Michael Graves and Robert Venturi.

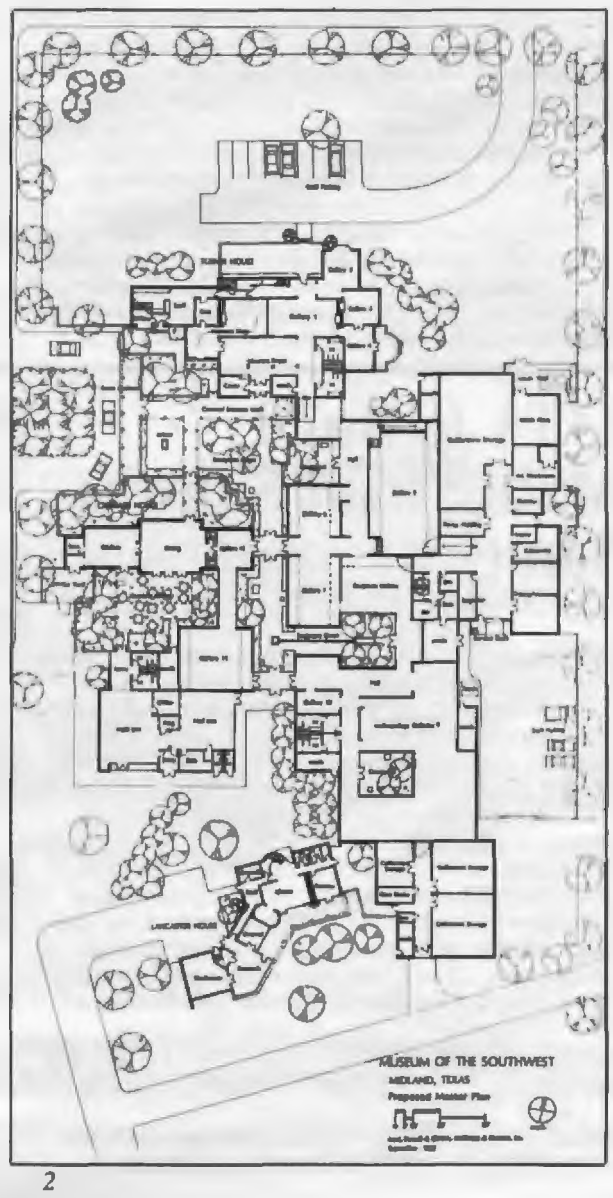
The Dallas Museum of Art, The Menil Collection, the Cowboy Artists of America Museum and the Museum of the Southwest share a pronounced attitude toward building for the display of art in a hot, often hostile, climate. The creation of simply detailed internal volumes and undemonstrative exteriors has been accompanied by the provision of quiet garden spaces and the controlled use of natural light. It will be interesting to see if this attitude prevails in several museum projects which have yet to enter the design phase.

In Austin planning for two museums is underway. The Laguna Gloria Art Museum, housed since 1943 in a suburban country house (Harvey L. Page, 1916), hopes to build a downtown museum containing about 25,000 square feet and capable of further expansion. The architect selection committee of the Board of Trustees interviewed Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, Richard Meier, Mitchell/Giurgola and Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown before choosing the Venturi firm in late April.

The precise location of the museum has not been announced, but it will be built in conjunction with a residential-retail scheme developed by the Watson-Casey Companies. Watson-Casey has offered to build a shell which Laguna Gloria will be responsible for finishing. This offer originated as part of Watson-Casey's proposal to provide facilities for a new Austin city hall complex, a controversial scheme that was rejected by the Austin city council in mid-February. How this rejection will affect the Laguna Gloria project is not clear.

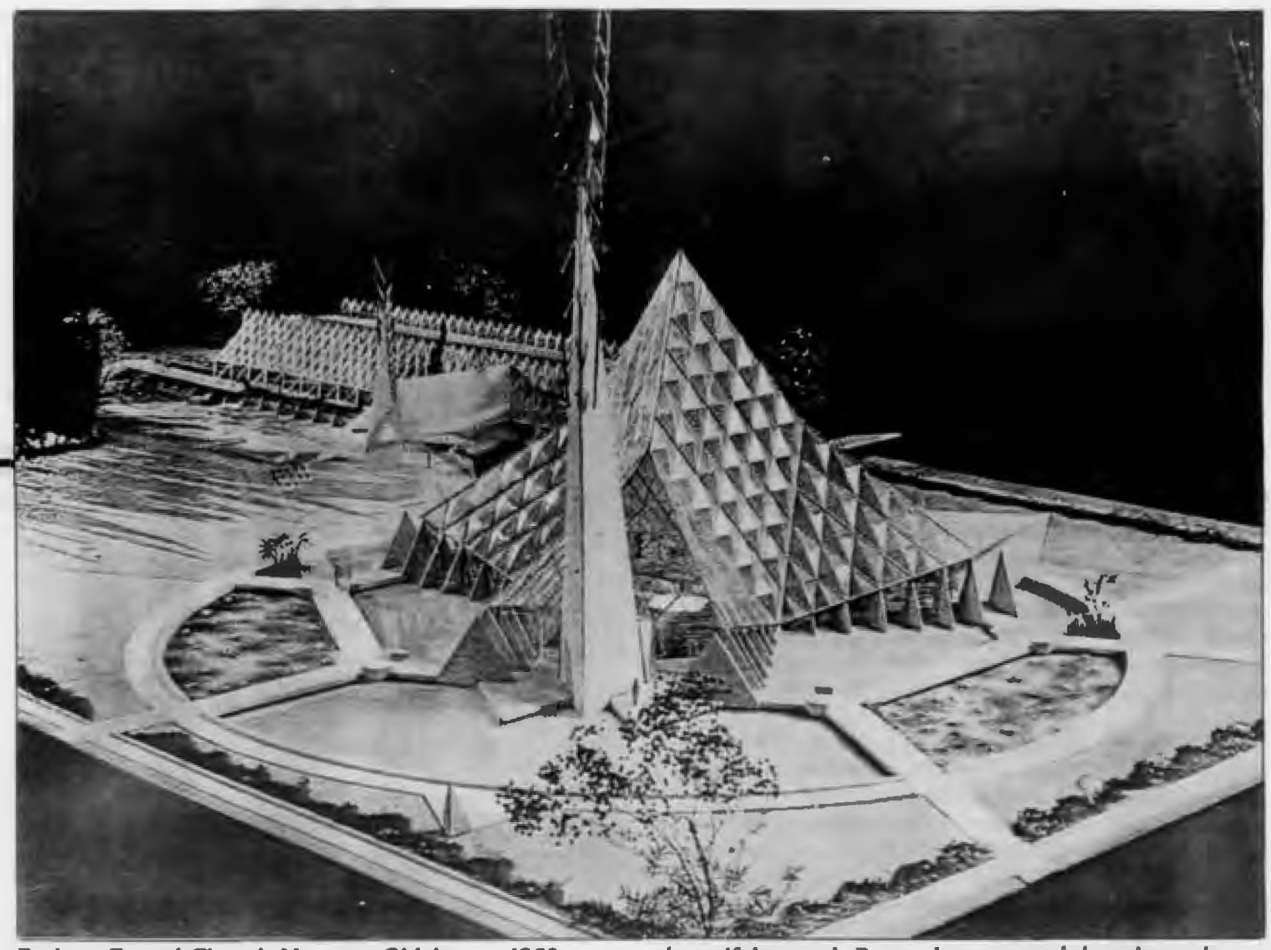
As for the second Austin museum project, Cesar Pelli and Associates completed a feasibility study for a Museum of Fine Arts for the University of Texas in 1981. But before any design work was initiated, the project was postponed. It is now expected that the university administration and the regents will authorize resumption of this project within the year.

Confined as yet to the status of rumor are two potential museum projects. One is an expansion of the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi, for which Philip Johnson (architect of the museum's building) has introduced onto the scene Batey and Mack. The second is a new building for the Tyler Museum of Art to supersede the present museum, completed on the campus of Tyler Junior College in 1971 by E. Davis Wilcox and Associates. The notion of a competition has been broached to select an architect for the Tyler museum.



2

Autobiography In The Continuous Present: An Interview with Bruce Goff



Project: Crystal Chapel, Norman, Oklahoma, 1950. *"On one of Wright's visits to Oklahoma University when I was there, he said of this project: 'That's a beautiful crystal, Bruce, but a crystal doesn't need a spire.' I stated: 'I don't believe it is a crystal, Mr. Wright. I think it's a chapel.'" (Photo, Julius Shulman)*

The following text was compiled from six hours of conversation between Robert Morris and Bruce Goff, recorded in Goff's office in Tyler, Texas in February 1979 and April 1980. ©1983 by Robert Morris

Cite: Most architects I know who are familiar with your work either don't like it or don't understand it.

Goff: I've been controversial ever since I started. I can't help it. I'm neither ashamed nor proud of it. That's just what happened. Still there's never been a time when my work was not published some way without my effort to do it. Never once. There is no mystery force that made me want to be an architect. It was strictly chance. If my father had not apprenticed me when I was twelve, I would never have done it on my own, although I did make drawings of buildings.

To me an architect should always keep growing throughout his life. If he just arrives at a method or formula to produce something, no matter how good it is, it gets old. Neutra asked me why I thought I had to change all the time. He asked me why I didn't take just one of my ideas and perfect it. I replied that I tried to perfect my work each time I did it. Mies told me that he didn't see any reason why I had to invent a new style of architecture every Monday morning. I replied that I didn't think it should be every Monday morning, but every time I did a new work. There is no beginning or end. I'm trying to write my autobiography in the continuous present. It's difficult since we tend to think of life as the past and future past.

Debussy wrote that he was suspicious of artists who were popular with the public. This is one of my favorite quotes from Debussy:

"On that distant day, which I trust is still very far off, when my works shall no longer be a cause for strife, I shall reproach myself bitterly, because that odious hypocrisy which enables one to please all mankind will inevitably have triumphed even in those last works."

Cite: Who were the most influential people in your life?

Goff: The composer Debussy. I learned more from him than any other creative person. I have managed to find some of his writings and have embraced many of his ideas as my own.

Of course I was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright in my early years. However, I didn't want to carry on his work. Wright asked me if I would come to Taliesin, before he established the Fellowship, and become his "right hand man." I was very busy at that time in Tulsa, and was to be a partner in the firm I had apprenticed with, Rush, Endacott and Rush. I declined the offer then, and two other times also. On the third time I explained: "Mr. Wright, I regard you very highly and know people who have worked with you. There seem to be two groups of these people. One group thinks you are God on Earth and feel they cannot do anything. The other group hates you and thinks you stole their ideas. I don't consider myself either of these. You are too big a man for me to be close to, and I need to be away from you in order to keep the right perspective. I hope we can continue to be friends." Wright was silent for a long time. The he put his arms around me and gave me a big hug and said: "Bruce, I wish others knew me like you do." He never asked me to join him again.

Another man who helped me a great deal in all this was the artist Erté. I used to buy *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, not because I was interested in clothes or fashion, but because of the beautiful covers he designed. They were knock-outs! In one of Erté's articles in the magazine, he stated that he was against the mode, meaning fashion, because clothing should express the nature of the individual; clothing should not be a matter of fashion. In architecture, I felt the same. Erté asked me, on the occasion of our meeting in 1980, if I had been accused of being "Art Déco." I replied, "Yes, I suppose you have been too." He said it was true, and that it astonished him.

I asked him, "In all your 86 years of experience, what do you think is the most important thing the world has lost?" Without any hesitation he replied, "The thing I miss most is extravagance." Unfortunately, people today think extravagance is something bad and shameful, but we need it now as we needed it then.

Cite: Considering the handcrafted nature of your work, how have you found people to construct your buildings?

Goff: I have a hard time. My problem is that I never do the same thing all the time. However, no one has ever lost money on my jobs. There are some fine craftsmen out there, if you know where to look, and they turn up in the most unexpected places.

Cite: You have remarked that you don't work for, but with, your clients. How do you find clients?

Goff: I don't find them! I have never gone after a job in my life! I wouldn't know how to get a job if I had to. Clients come to me and ask me to help them. Many people ask me to show them something typical of my work. How can I? It's like asking to see something typical of nature.

If you give your client only what he wants, then he will not like it much after he's got it, because there will be nothing there for him to grow on. There are more people who want something special than there are architects to give it to them.

Cite: Your buildings, particularly in their decorative inventions, seem musical. How has your love of music influenced your work?

Goff: Architecture uses the same devices that music does: rhythm, proportion, scale, ornament, harmony, symmetry, asymmetry; materials take the place of different instruments. One of the main differences between music and architecture is the use of structure. In a building, structure is thought of as a necessity to hold up the building, and thought of, too often, as a separate thing from the form. In music the idea of structure is the basis for constructing the form of the music. It is much more an integral process than most architecture.

Cite: How should structure be used in architecture?

Goff: I don't think structure is anything to hide or glorify. Some architects make a fetish out of structure and I know it can be beautiful. A human skeleton can be beautiful. But who wants to shake hands with it? The thing I don't like about the Renaissance is the borrowed forms, with little or no regard for the structure. In the so-called International Style, structure became not so much the function but the appearance of being functional. For instance, Mies's desire to make a floor slab six inches throughout to express simplicity was, as he said, "telling the truth," because "God is in the details." Well the truth wasn't in the floor slab, and that's for sure, as Mr. Nervi has shown us. Now in so-called Post-Modernism, the idea is to make structure that looks like structure that isn't structure. These architects say, "Why should a column serve a function?" I say, "Why shouldn't it serve a function?" What's so great about making a column that doesn't touch the floor to show that it's only an object? The idea is refined by not having the column touch the beam to show it even more. I suppose the next step is to not show it at all!

Cite: You have said that you consider one of your most important achievements to be "the resolution of duality." What does this mean?

Goff: When I was young, the differences between things seemed very clear-cut. Later in life I began to think that there might be a fusion where one part stops and another begins. For instance, when does red stop being red before it becomes violet? Any color perception is actually light vibration. To say that red, yellow and blue are the bases of color is really stupid. Light is a sliding scale. How many things are red that are not at all alike in color?

Something beautiful to one person may be ugly to another. This is often the case when we encounter something new. "The Rite of Spring" by Stravinsky was considered the biggest calamity in music when it was first presented to an audience. Of course it is accepted today as a great work of art.

Cite: Do you think art ever has a universal appeal?

Goff: Anytime we experience a work of art for the first time, the only reason we notice it at all is because it completes a circuit within us and engages our attention. We may not comprehend it all at once but the important thing is that we notice it. It's important to try and refrain from criticizing the work, simply to respond to it naturally. In order for a work of art to survive the moment of surprise the work must contain mystery. It's nothing anyone can give a formula for. No matter how much you know it—as in knowing nature or people—the mystery is what keeps our interest. For example, I have about two dozen recorded interpretations of Debussy's "La Mer" and every time I listen to any one of them I hear something new. I can never say I know it, any more than I can see the ocean and know it.

Cite: What do you think is the fundamental scientific problem in architecture?

Goff: I don't think there is enough science in architecture today. If you consider men going to the Moon and all the technology required and developed for this endeavor, you realize that architecture, as it is practiced today, is still in the cave-man period. As artists we are able to perceive more about whatever art we create because of the technology of communications. It's almost impossible for any significant evolutionary art event to take place anywhere in the world without the rest of the world knowing about it immediately.

One of the immediate things architects can do is to take a cue from musicians. Since the cost of producing recorded music in the studio is prohibitive for many musicians, they are using the synthesizer in order to compose and produce music. Similarly, architects can learn to use the computer to solve problems and to be cost effective. Eventually, the architect will be a person who can conceive and execute a building almost entirely himself. Of course, he must first have some ideas.

We should consider science fiction as a valid tool for contemplating our future. I have lived long enough to experience many "miracles." *Star Trek* energizers seem a fantastic idea to many people. However, I think that whatever the human mind can conceive can be accomplished. There has to be a strong need for ideas to be developed and there is a great need for many things to be developed today.

Cite: When architects hear the word "organic" they may think of Frank Lloyd Wright. What association does it hold for you?

Goff: It's really nothing new. The eighth-century Japanese tatami mat module, the garden-house relationship and the use of natural materials were organic concepts. When we say organic, are those things any more natural than things we call inorganic? If we think of oil as inorganic, we should remember that it was organic material first. Frank Lloyd Wright said that the tree is Man's best friend. Some architects believe that letting wood weather naturally is organic as Hell! Well, the tree has a bark as natural protection. When you remove that protection, the naked tree is defenseless. Therefore, paint becomes the synthetic bark. The Chinese developed lacquer to protect wood. Wright painted wood on more than one occasion.

Diagrams of Ritual and Experience:

John Kaliski

Fleeting images and impressions swim in darkness, reminding us of a place seen before, Houston. Inserted in this murky chaos are objects, floating in time and space, their past not present and their future uncertain. We are surrounded by fragments to be read like pictures on a screen, far away but up close, beyond our reach, comprehensible by memory which grows with each place we visit, each book we read.

Recognizing this chaos, we cannot easily reject Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's Park Regency Terrace Residences. This project is not a misplaced intellectual exercise; it *belongs* to this locale. To the north lies the Emerson Unitarian Church by MacKie and Kamrath, Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple born again with parking. In the distance is Philip Johnson and John Burgee's Transco Tower, which recalls not only the setback towers of New York but also Mies's Friedrichstrasse building drawing of 1919. The building in that drawing is a crystal, set in a sea of gray German stone rendered in heavy black charcoal that mimes the accumulated dirt of centuries. The Transco Tower takes the Miesian glass incisions and inverts them into a shimmering vision of reflectivity set in a sea of automobiles. Farther away, downtown, rise towers made first in Chicago, copied from the Tribune Tower competition of 1923. The first, Alfred C. Finn and Kenneth Franzheim's Gulf Building, usurped from Eliel Saarinen; the second, Johnson/Burgee's RepublicBank Center, more arcane and further from its Finnish source, Sjostrom and Eklund. Houston is a city of misprisions and condensations at varying distances from their original sources. To say that Venturi's project is somehow faulty in its intent is to deny the dream state which has always guided the making of this place.

There are many stories to be told about The Park Regency. The story whose result is a product—by and for a developer for a specific market—should be separated from the intentions of the architects and their firm, if only to analyze the project in terms of the body of work which Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown has produced.

Their best buildings are elusive; there is in them always the mark of a genius given to the kind of theorizing that twists the final products (or excuses the mistakes). While Robert Venturi says that integration is the final goal of art,[1] Main Street in all its incoherence is *almost* all right. From which it follows that the successful making of an experience is its justification. Any other concerns are irrelevant except to architects. But for architects, thought and responsibility (as Venturi would surely agree) go beyond the immediate experience of the object and encompass the larger whole of architectural history. That history is a millstone, but it is what we know; in the midst of chaos it tells us who we are and what we have accomplished.

The Park Regency, located on Bering Drive south of San Felipe Road, has the kind of site configuration that presents problems and begs solutions. The L-shaped plot has its west arm facing Bering Drive and its east arm tucked behind an anonymous apartment complex. The architect was asked to place approximately 80 one- and two-bedroom condominium apartment units on the site. Given the size of the acreage, parking requirements, fire codes, utility restrictions and the identified market, a dense land use which covered the site completely was required. Given the surrounding views (the backs of mediocre apartment buildings and single-family "swankiendas"), Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown developed a diagram which has as its main element an interior courtyard around which one of the two structures, the east building, is organized. The courtyard opens on its south side into an east-west corridor. The corridor creates a pedestrian axis which passes through the entrance arcade and into the western building. Most of the parking is below the east building, thereby raising its courtyard one level above grade. As a diagram it is a reasonable solution, given the proposition that the surroundings are as difficult as the developer and the architects would have us believe.

The diagram, representing the conceptual organization of the project, also conforms to that impulse which marks so much of Houston's built environment: a turning inward, a denial of "outside." We surround our houses with walls. We abandon our streets and go underground. Our greatest attractions are an indoor stadium, an interior mall with an ice rink and a complex devoted to the development of artificial environments for travel to places with climates even more hostile than our own: outer space. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's response to our way of life was to provide a place which, like so many others here, offers us the illusion of security, protection and escape. To accept the diagram is to acknowledge the harshness not only of our environment but also of our tastes. At The Park Regency, our urbanity is not construed to be anything other than what it is already.

The logic of the argument follows a concept developed by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour in *Learning from Las Vegas:* learning from the existing landscape.[2] Yet given this analysis and the resulting diagram, the question shifts to those annoying elements that comprise the language of architecture, which is not style but integrity of plan, section and elevation. The consistency with which these elements can be combined with one another, the program and the market ultimately spells the success of the project; not at the level of the individual elements but on the plane of the integrated whole, the work of art.

On examination, two problems in the resolution of the diagram as built work present themselves. The first is the redundancy of circulation that occurs at the intersection of the corridor system and the courtyard. The second, partially a result of the first, is the actual use of the building versus the idealized ritual experience suggested by the diagram.

1. The Park Regency Terrace Residences (foreground) 1981–1983, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown and McCleary Associates, architects. and the Transco Tower (right background). (Photo by Paul Hester)

1

Learning from The Park Regency

At The Park Regency the diagram as realized results in two major outdoor spaces. The Court of Honor, the arcaded public entrance to the project, is aligned between a plunge pool and fountain. The connection between the two buildings at the Court of Honor is a continuation of the double-loaded corridor of the western building. The private nature of the other large space, the elevated Grand Court, is assured by the change of grade level. The living units off the Grand Court are entered either directly from this space or from a series of open galleries which surround the court. Presumably, occupants of the east wing would park their cars underneath the structure, proceed to their collective terrace and then to their apartments. Inhabitants of the west wing, after leaving their cars, would use the more public Court of Honor before progressing down the hall to their units. A series of spaces are established which, ideally, set up a progression through increasingly private zones. Yet both the Court of Honor and the Grand Court feel quite empty. For while it is true that the project is not completely occupied, it is also true that it simply is not used this way.

A visitor to The Park Regency cannot help but notice that the most expedient way of entering the building does not demand the use of either space. Instead, a conveniently placed fire stair and elevator at the intersection of the two wings bypass both the formal axis of the Court of Honor and the raised Grand Court.

Before the first sketch was made, there was an understanding that unless an economically unfeasible high-rise was built, the parking required for 80 units would have to occur under most, if not all, of the low-rise structures. To comply with the fire codes, the resulting garage beneath the east building had to be separated completely from the living units above. Additional means of egress in case of fire would have to circumvent the garage (thus partially explaining the redundant circulation systems). A 28-foot road would have to consume much of the narrow west arm of the L to allow access to the back of the site for emergency vehicles.

The idea of entrance is made too complex. The two major communal spaces lack ritualistic connections, transforming them from spaces which could recall a lost pomp to voids suggesting only diminished circumstance. Even though the front doors of units in the east building face into the Grand Court, it still feels like a back alley. One could imagine this space in an earlier era decorated with lines of tenants' laundry hanging to dry, filled with screaming children playing stickball, graced by the aromas of home cooking—a wonderfully inhabited space. The residents of this dream would aspire to melt into American society and eventually move into those ranch houses they could see out their "front" windows (away from the courtyard) even though their "front" doors turned away.

In our time the lack of grand entrance is perceived as necessary since the world threatens violence without warning. Entrance courts become backyards even in projects such as this which provide a guardhouse and complete electronic security. The expression of this insecurity is a condition of the present which compromises any diagram. Yet the logic of the diagram of The Park Regency is not so much compromised by the redundancy of entrance as it is annihilated by the patterns of everyday life.

If one seeks the privacy of a fort, turned away from everything but the hearth, a Court of Honor or even a grand inner terrace becomes questionable. At best these public spaces are symbols of patterns long abandoned. At worst they are undistinguished illusions which cannot recall the ceremony they desire to suggest.

This lack of place is rectified somewhat within the individual apartments. Beyond the confusion of entrance and up the stairs the majority of residences open into generous corridors. The feeling of a 19th-century back alley is forgotten and the distinct impression of arrival, such as one experiences for instance at a La Quinta Motor Inn, is realized.

Beyond one's front door, home and hearth beckon in four fine-tuned lay outs. The Adam, the Carlton and the Dulwich are all single level plans. The fourth type, named the Brighton, is a double level design. The apartments are planned straightforwardly, a welcome relief from the anglemania that continues to sweep the Houston housing market. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's designs are spacious, filled with natural light and incorporate a sense of genteel hierarchy of space and use. As opposed to the entrance sequence, this urbane quality is appropriate to the image which is being marketed. Finally, one has arrived home.

At the center of each apartment is the living room, which features a well-detailed mantle piece. Though floating in a sea of gypsum, this small touch at the hearth, this well-proportioned piece of built-up molding sections, provides customized security in a hostile and unfriendly world. Each dentil below the oversized cornice radiates a figurative glow which turns the efficient (almost mundane but never mediocre) residence into a home. Unfortunately this momentary glow dissolves once we turn to the aluminium sliding glass doors and observe where we have just come from. The empty courts, axial parking lot and nondescript apartment complexes seen through the windows too quickly cancel the security of a well-proportioned mantle piece despite the remembrance of a set of social rituals presumed by using the name "Park Regency." And nomenclature is the key to understanding the intentions underlying the whole project.

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown and the developer, Wynings and Company, state that the source of the design was Robert Adam's British Coffee House project of 1770. There are superficial similarities between the two: both have sculpture niches on their exteriors. Yet beyond this feature, the connection seems tenuous. Surely the example of the Adams' Adelphi terrace of 1768 was also on the minds of the architects. With its clear sepa-

2. Detail of elevation of west building. (Photo by Paul Hester)

In our time, the lack of grand entrances is perceived as necessary, since the world threatens violence without warning. Entrance courts become backyards even in projects that provide a guardhouse and complete electronic security.

ration of service level at grade and housing terrace above, this seems connected to the idea of The Park Regency, with its split between parking and court, more than the facade of the British Coffee House.

Though there is a sense of Adamesque appliqué in the detailing of the project, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown are involved in totally different issues peculiar to 20th-century notions of perception. The relation of art or architecture to a public innundated with images is far removed from the academic eclecticism practiced by the Adam brothers. The Adams could afford to indulge their tastes as eclectic visual historians in a world where the mechanical reproduction of objects had not yet destroyed the aura which surrounded the individual work of art.[3]

That Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown understands the present condition—where authenticity of the object is replaced by the power of a symbol to jog the imagination—is made clear in the following quotation:

> *...essential to the imagery of pleasure-zone architecture are lightness, the quality of being an oasis in a perhaps hostile environment, heightened symbolism and the ability to engulf the visitor in a new role.*[4]

While the majority of people who use The Park Regency are not visitors, the fantasy of a pleasure-zone is invoked, not so much by the literal image of the environment but by a combination of the subdued symbol and the charged name.

The naming of the models, and indeed the project as a whole, marks the point where the architects' vision coincides with the developer's logic. "Park Regency," "Brighton," "Dulwich," and so forth were all made up in conference between the architect and the developer after the project was designed. The artifice indulged in the choice of a name was perhaps the most deliberate and free decision in the entire chain of events leading to the finished buildings. For after the land had been bought, pragmatic constraints decisively shaped every design intention. Once the underlying idea was compromised, the naming and the concurrent marketing strategy became the only places where choice and artistic sentiment could collaborate, plan and dream.

To be a participant in Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's building does not, therefore, demand an initiation into the complexities of architectural history. Instead the image in history, combined with the power of the name, invokes a set of rituals by which the market and the success of the condominium as architecture are understood. "Park Regency" creates an expectation that is more potent than the architecture alone, without name, hence without place. Thus the responsibility of the architect becomes to fulfill an expectation created by a name.

The success of the project from the developer's point of view depends on the accuracy of his reading of a market and his ability to define it by this name. For the developer as well as the architect the choice of name becomes the crucial decision. Once chosen, the name is the vehicle of understanding by which problems can be solved. "In the name of The Park Regency this obstacle must be overcome."

"Park Regency" is more than an architectural concept. The drudgery of dealing with utility connections or fire code puzzles is transcended. The name assures success in the developer's mind more clearly than any diagram of ritual or place. Because the developer is responsible for a market strategy which he symbolized by a name, he relies more on his agility as a salesman than his talent to judge the merits of an architectural proposition. The developer of The Park Regency as well as the buyer of a condominium unit purchases a share of architectural expectation.

The sales brochure developed by the architects' office for the project evokes a sense of place and ritual available for purchase. The overall tone is a warm, conservative gray. There are touches of pink and yellow, dashes of excitement: a gray flannel world, stable and healthy but never boring. The importance of the name and its successful presentation are akin to the connection one makes between a film and its title. Ultimately, the recollection of a specific place in history is replaced by an allusion to prosperous homes, with a pinch of Hogarth's "The Rake's Progress" thrown in for good measure. The clear hierarchies which are needed to sustain this code of manners do not exist beyond the individual residences: Adam, Brighton, Carlton, Dulwich. The exaggeration of experience necessary to mark a place as special demands resolution of the original diagram which in this project is not forthcoming.

There is another historical lesson in this allusion to Georgian London. For if The Park Regency sits like an island in a sea of isolated condo complexes, apartments and office buildings, its namesake—Regent's Park—was the garden suburb *in* the city, generating and shaping the grand plan of an emerging Imperial London. John Nash, the organizational genius behind this scheme, acted as architect, planning commissioner, developer, financier and broker. Eventually, he nearly lost his fortune, risking it to ensure the architectural statement which is his monument. In humble contrast, The Park Regency's place in its landscape depends more on the ability of a developer to create an aura than on the skill of an architect to make a place.

Questions concerning the realization of architectural intention that the developer could have asked as the project was being designed were muted by his desire to believe in his own market strategy. Whatever the success of that strategy, it cannot absolve the serious lack of resolution observed in these buildings. Another way of thinking through the relationship between architecture and development is as follows: if the ideas of place and use were resolved, would the project have attracted more attention and a quicker turnover from developer to purchasers?

Ironically, the making of architecture in a period which

1. *Perspective of Court of Honor. (Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown)*
2. *The Court of Honor. (Photo by Paul Hester)*
3. *Perspective of Grand Court. (Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown)*
4. *The Grand Court. (Photo by Paul Hester)*

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5. *The Adelphi, London, 1768, demolished, Robert and James Adam, architects.* (The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, *St Martin's Press, 1975*)

6. *Project: British Coffee House, London, 1770. Robert and James Adam, architects.* (The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, *St. Martin's Press, 1975*)

7. *West building (right), east building (left) and access drive. (Photo by Paul Hester)*

8. *Detail of arcade, Court of Honor. (Photo by Paul Hester)*

9. *Grand Court. (Photo by Paul Hester)*

10. *Detail of living room mantle piece. (Photo by Paul Hester)*

supposedly eschews design for the pleasure of profit becomes even more crucial in a depressed market which allows the buyers' choices to increase because of lack of demand. The architecture becomes a means by which differentiation can be made, a commodity which cannot have a dollar value placed on it but nevertheless provides a real value. In a time of high interest rates and severe recession, the ability of a developer and an architect to understand precisely how to carry through a design intention is even more important for the success of a project, architecturally and otherwise.

One has the sense that Venturi Rauch and Scott Brown were shoehorned into a design that was predetermined by constraints that were beyond their control. Yet if any office has developed the means to think about the very issue of how one goes about coping with projects in the real world, Venturi's has. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's acceptance and celebration of the rituals of a consumption-oriented society fly in the face of Aldo Rossi's position that the cemetery and the prison are the only architectural programs possible Even granting the implications of Levittown or Las Vegas, they have not been applied successfully at The Park Regency.

The naming of the models, and indeed the project as a whole, marks the point where the architects' vision coincides with the developer's logic. The artifice indulged in the choice of a name was perhaps the most deliberate and free decision in the entire chain of events leading to the finished buildings.

The question this project raises goes beyond the doubts one may feel about the validity of a particular reference or style. What is questioned here is the resolution of a paradigm. The Park Regency establishes a pattern in the user's mind, then wanders along strewing conflicting messages. The result is not an "existential ambiguity" reflecting the modern condition of man. Perhaps the confusion that is not resolved is just an extension of the

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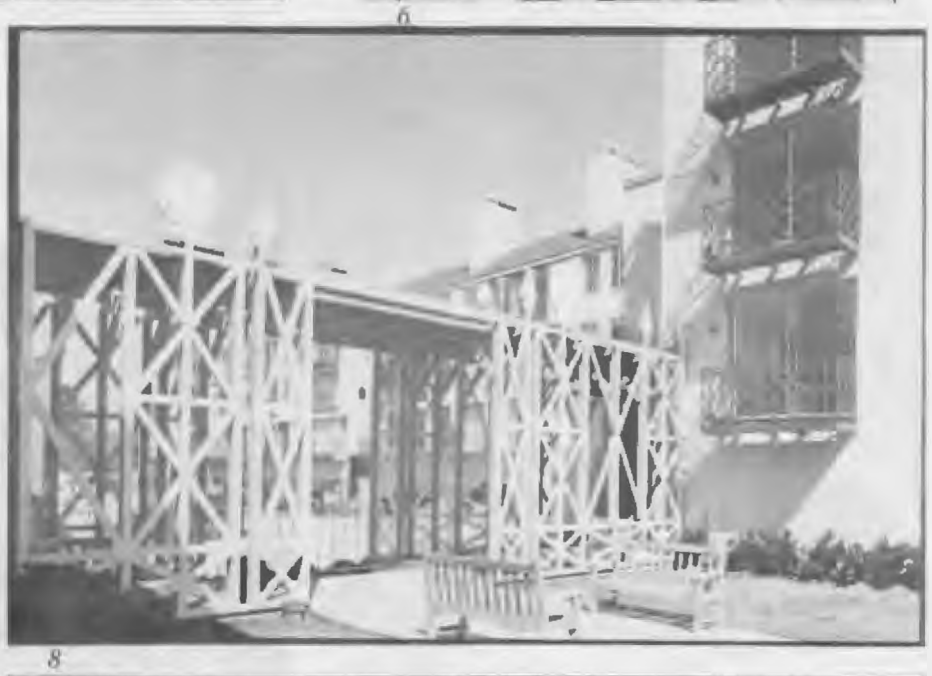

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1. Entrance vestibule, west building. (Photo by Paul Hester)

2. Site Plan.

3. Axonometric, Lovett Square, 1978, W.T. Cannady and Associates, architects. (W.T. Cannady and Associates)

4. Lovett Square. (Photo by Rick Gardner)

The Park Regency establishes a pattern in the user's mind, then wanders along strewing conflicting messages. Perhaps the resulting confusion is just an extension of the confusion that exists throughout Houston, as in the land of Nod, the place of endless wandering.

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confusion that exists throughout Houston, as in the Land of Nod, the place of endless wandering.

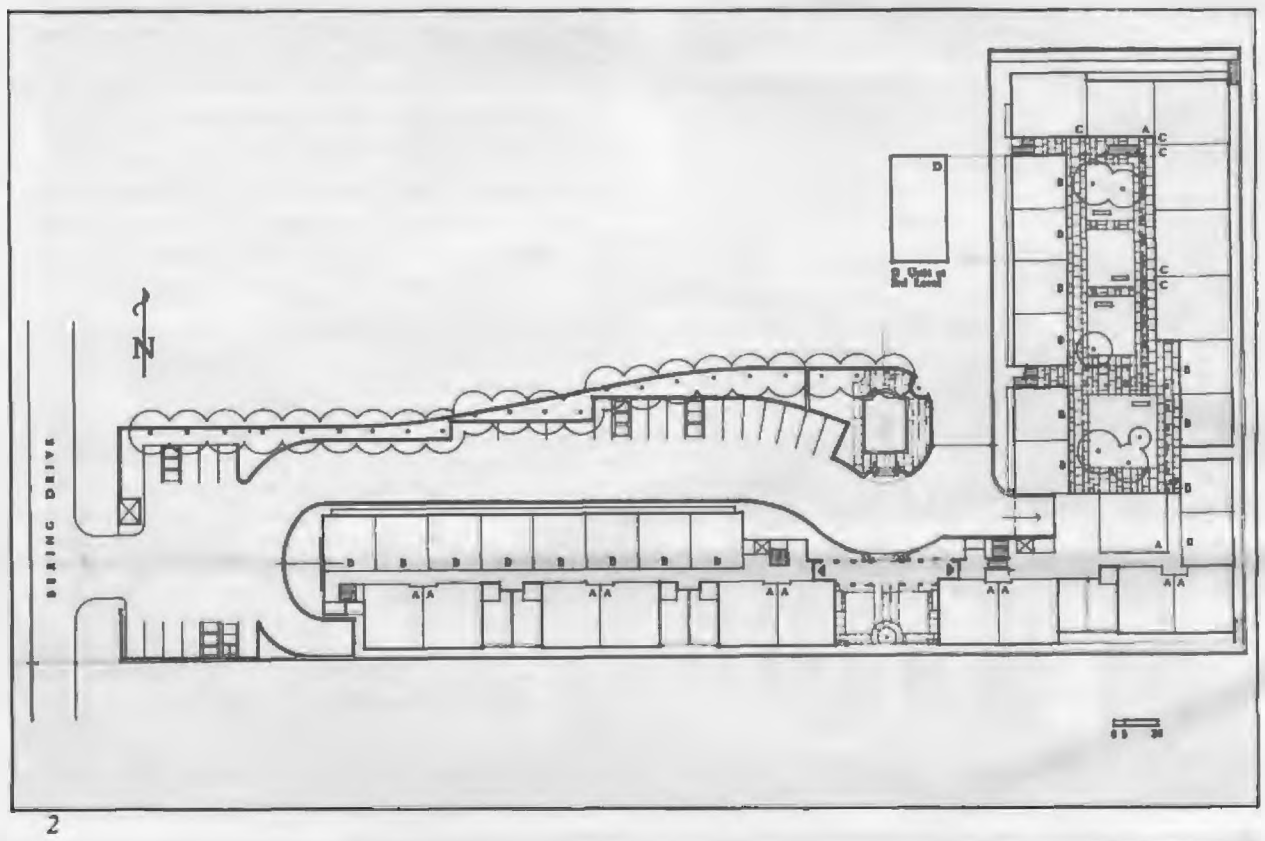
In contrast to The Park Regency, where ritual is diluted, another Houston condominium project, Lovett Square by William T. Cannady and Associates of 1978, makes ritual the basis of an inexorable and secure order. Lovett Square has the advantage of being located within Houston's downtown grid. The city block on which the project sits immediately establishes relationships between street and condominium unit, in contrast to the sprawl of west Houston. The comparison of Lovett Square and The Park Regency is valid, for a diagram involving cars-beneath-structure and an interior courtyard onto which units face are similar. However, unlike The Park Regency, the clear progression—from street to common garage through the entrance court and finally to the unit—exists at Lovett Square. The formal diagram is never diluted. Secondary egress *is* secondary. A strong hierarchy of places is established on this site by the clear and ordered use of the project. A front door is clearly a front door. The court dividing the project in half is clearly a public space. An urbane sequence of movement from place to place allows an understanding of our relationship both to our neighbors and, through the grid, to our city. At Lovett Square neither stylistic gaffes nor shoddy finishes nor exigencies of code can destroy the ritual inherent in the diagram. At least partially because of the advantages of the city block, the buildings created were immune to the constraints they had to overcome.

Given the site, a type was developed which could not be destroyed. This type depended on ritual use to establish place. With the limited means available for implementing the programs of the present, the establishment of a type which through repetition creates ritual is one approach that can be ignored only when the illusionary experience becomes overwhelming.

Venturi demonstrated this latter point when he called certain buildings ducks and others decorated sheds. In both cases exaggeration of the image—one ornamental, the other propagandistic—is used to differentiate buildings from each other. Certainly the entrance screen on the western building at The Park Regency is an attempt to endow a simple, double-loaded corridor building with a larger than expected message. Yet the end experience is short of the expectation which the visual message arouses. The columns attached to the balconies and the bareness of the Grand Court are not sufficient to maintain the excitement anticipated or specific enough to create the mood recalled.

The project, though, is wrongly criticized if the means it uses—the thin-silhouette plywood columns or the painted Ionic order—are the issue. The authenticity of the object is not the ultimate concern. Rather the authenticity of the experience, and the ability of the forms and images to replicate the experience many times over, are the criteria by which this project must be judged. To clarify the issue, another Houston housing project, from the 1920's, bears examination.

The Isabella Court, located at Main Street and Isabella Avenue, once again has the advantage of relating to a



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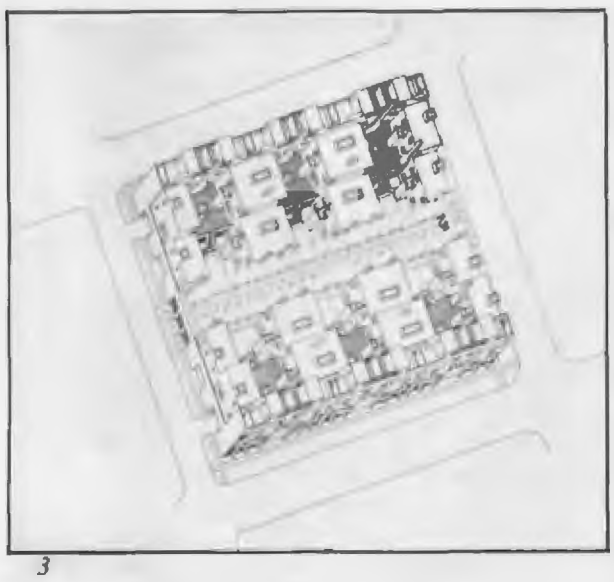

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5. Detail of access gallery, Grand Court. (Photo by Paul Hester)

6. View of courtyard, Isabella Court, 1929, W.D. Bordeaux, architect. (Photo by Paul Hester)

7. Isabella Court. (Photo by Paul Hester)

8. Detail of sculpture niche. (Photo by Paul Hester)

"Park Regency, you've got great deals and lotsa class. And great Venturi Architecture."

—from Park Regency newspaper advertisement

given context of street and grid, a luxury the Venturi project had to invent. Built between 1928 and 1929, this Spanish colonial revival structure belies the existence of an interior courtyard located one level above grade. In place of the parking one finds at The Park Regency or Lovett Square, the architect, W.D. Bordeaux, placed shops on the ground floor. Entrance to the courtyard and then to the 18 one-bedroom units is from a covered stair off Isabella Avenue.

Since the building was designed in 1928 the constraints of secondary access and egress required by today's fire codes were not present to compromise the sequence from entrance to apartment. The strong diagram of ritual pales though when compared to the ability of the architect to provide an image for the building. Leaving the street and the cares of the city, we are transported to a fantasy world: slow, easy, relaxing, symbolized by the quiet splash of a fountain in the courtyard, far away from the bustle of the work world.

This experience is stronger than the reality of the dead-end paths where one can intrude too quickly upon another's private space. This experience is precisely authentic because the idea to which it alludes is contrasted so successfully with the outside world which is the city.

When this project was built, Houston was a place of heat and public transportation. Now this courtyard, raised above the speed of the automobile-oriented city which surrounds it on every side, takes on the characteristic of an island of repose, an attribute of the best places in Houston today. If in 1929 the Isabella Court was a Spanish colonial fragment of a city that never was to be, now this building becomes the ideal fragment in the city which is the future. The sense of place provided by this experience is valid no matter how strong or how confused the diagram of ritual becomes.

The master strokes which are necessary to transform a building into an experience are sometimes splendidly simple. The ice rink at The Galleria is exemplary. This one device transforms a large but mundane corridor into one of the major centers of Houston. As strange as it may seem, in Houston one can neglect the resolution of the plan, but only if this lack of resolution is redeemed by a strong and repeatable experience.

In Houston authenticity of architectural experience becomes the controlling factor that distinguishes place. This land of wandering, seen from the freeway, has no particular landscape feature, no San Francisco Bay or Rocky Mountains, to mark it as particular. On this flat land between the swamps to the east and the prairies to the west, all land lies equal and only human artifacts establish values which determine hierarchy. In this environment one is dependent upon the immediate touch, the quick view. At the horizon all things big or small are equal. The issue is not honesty of appearance but the ability of appearance to provide the background against which we can act out the daily rituals which are our present. The authenticity of experience and one's desire to participate in it, yet remain distant, are characteristics by which Houston architecture can be judged.

Houston's best architecture demands criticism while at the same time permitting benign distraction. Here, the absent-minded user[5] must, from time to time, be taken aback by the illusion within which we exist, made aware of the contrast between our personal islands of security and the flat land which ruthlessly makes all equal.

The Park Regency is a brave but flawed attempt to accept the constraints of modern development and to provide this illusion of security. That it fails to do so can be traced to the annihilation of the diagram of experience. While Venturi's propositions provide a theoretical basis for making architecture relevant to this place, the allusions to social ritual that the name suggests cannot be sustained long enough by the participant.

The ambiguity of intent which charges Guild House, the force of a peeling wall which commands the street corner at the New Haven firehouse, the ambitious vision of pylons which should have tied Pennsylvania Avenue into one great axis, these are architectural projects which demonstrate the superior capability of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown. The sense of purpose which directed these endeavors is missing at The Park Regency.

Perhaps this lack of conviction is a sad reflection of the sometimes overwhelming confusion of the built environment in Houston. From the freeway, at speed, we can almost see the future form that is a great city. At The Park Regency though, the fulfillment of this vision is not forthcoming. The desire to be distracted knowingly is too quickly preempted by the need to be critical.

[1]Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York, 1966, p. 23.
[2]Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 3.
[3]Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," published in: Hannah Arendt, editor, *Illuminations*, New York, 1969, pp. 218–219.
[4]Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, p. 53.
[5]Benjamin, pp. 240–241.

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A REGIONAL MOBILITY PLAN FOR HOUSTON

Does Adding Freeway Capacity Cure Congestion or Create It? And How Will it Play in Plano?

CONGESTIVE

There was not much public reaction when the 15-year, $16.2-billion traffic-congestion relief package known as the Regional Mobility Plan (RMP for short) was unveiled in February 1982. An effort of the Houston Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee, composed of representatives of the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Harris County, the City of Houston, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the Texas Turnpike Authority, consultants Turner, Collie and Braden and the Rice Center, and Friendswood Development Company (a major developer and a subsidiary of Exxon; it's president, John Turner, headed the committee) the RMP was coordinated by the Chamber's Roger Hord. The result represents an unprecedented attempt at consensus planning for a city which looks on itself as the heartland of cowboy capitalism.

Only one critic, planning consultant Ray C. Lawrence, dissented. In an op-ed piece in the *Houston Chronicle*, Lawrence denounced the RMP as "1960's answers to 1980's problems."

Said Lawrence: "I submit that the proposed plan is out of date already, that it will not solve Houston's traffic problems, and moreover that it will only contribute to a continued decline in quality of life and further deterioration of our city as an enjoyable place in which to live and work. It is at best a temporary fix that only postpones more fundamental changes that should be launched now."

For the most part, however, those few paying attention tended to side with the Texas Society of Architects, which gave the Chamber of Commerce its Citation of Honor for "addressing the suffocating problem of traffic congestion in Houston in a bold and creative fashion" that exemplifies "voluntary community service at its best."

Controversy has been reserved for two smallish parts of the plan—Metro's proposal for an elevated rail line through downtown Houston, and the proposed toll road north from Loop 610 along the Hardy Street corridor—which together add up to less than one-fifth of the total spending slated for the RMP. The proposed toll road and the Metro rail plan are hardly gnats, but while Houston has been straining at them the several camels in the rest of the RMP have been swallowed without complaint.

Leave aside, for the sake of the argument, the implications for Houston's urban fabric of a plan that proposes 30 miles of dedicated high-volume transitway (read Metro rail) and 300 miles of new freeways into the hinterlands—seeking to cure congestion by the same method used since the late 1940's.

Consider: Is Houston really ready for 170 miles of double-decking on the West Loop, Southwest Freeway, Katy Freeway and I-45 North, lending darkness and noise amplification to the amenities of what are already among the most heavily traveled roads in the nation? That is what the RMP suggests. The RMP calls for a lot more concrete in Houston—so much so, in fact, that current spending levels fall over $9 billion short of what's needed, and even several billion dollars in new state taxes and fees, and a 73-percent increase in city and county spending for roads may not be enough to cover the bill. To date, Houston freeways have at least been democratic, allowing laborers from the East End to travel side-by-side with corporate lawyers and River Oaks matrons. Are Houstonians ready to see the upper levels of the newly double-decked freeways turned into toll roads 20 hours per day, the affluent whizzing above, those lacking the necessary fees crawling along underneath?

Paul Burka's thought-provoking reflections on mass transit hereabouts ("The Subway That Ate Houston," *Texas Monthly*, May 1981) contained much to startle the complacent.

"Urban sprawl, an abomination to all planners, is not the enemy in Houston. Companies can move far from downtown without diminishing the tax base," Burka wrote.

Perhaps the most remarkable of Burka's assertions was this on traffic congestion: "Houston's traffic isn't as bad as its reputation. There is no problem getting around town except at rush hour." Burka cited his time on a 5:00 pm "test run" from downtown to Gessner and Bissonnet as proof.

Many motorists would disagree and be able to cite a good deal more direct evidence. Burka was unassailably on target, however, when he suggested that business connections between Metro and most of Houston's professional traffic specialists had the effect of stifling criticism of the project's technical flaws.

That goes for the RMP, in spades. There are not many traffic professionals in the Houston area who don't work for the state, the county, the city, Metro, Metro-hired consultants like Houston Transit Consultants and the Rice Center, or Turner, Collie and Braden. The handful left would have to be crazy to slap the hands of *all* these largesse-doling agencies. The RMP, if it accomplishes nothing else, has solemnized the *de facto* merger of the bureaucracies involved.

That accounts for much of the silence since the RMP's release. None of the transit professionals contacted for this story would talk on the record, and few would talk critically at all, beyond a few whispered charges that the plan is "just business as usual for the highway lobby," or "It's postponing disaster at best."

IS HOUSTON REALLY READY FOR DOUBLE-DECKING ON THE WEST LOOP, SOUTHWEST FREEWAY, KATY FREEWAY AND I-45 NORTH, LENDING DARKNESS AND NOISE AMPLIFICATION TO THE AMENITIES OF WHAT ARE ALREADY AMONG THE MOST HEAVILY TRAVELED ROADS IN THE NATION?

Representatives of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation have made public speeches urging popular support of the RMP. Other measures have been taken by a few private citizens, like those of the Texas Crushed Stone Company, which invested more than $30,000 for radio spots deploring Houston's traffic congestion in 1982, and paid for billboard signs (on I-10 at the West Loop and I-45 at Little York) urging motorists to make their feelings known.

"We are in the business of selling roadbuilding materials, but we're also concerned about the deterioration of the area's roads. Our trucks get held up by traffic and damaged by chuckholes just like other vehicles," says James Isbell, a spokesman for Texas Crushed Stone. "We decided to contact some officials about our views and then we heard that the Chamber of Commerce was working on the RMP. We met with Roger Hord at the Chamber and with some of the technical people involved in drafting the RMP and got a look at what they were doing."

Explains Isbell: "Our reaction was, 'Hey, this is just what we were trying to promote.' "

Strife in the Fast Lane

The RMP is published as two documents: an 80-page report and a brief summary (available from the Houston Chamber of Commerce; the report costs $20 and the summary is $2). The plan consists of three parts. The first is an assessment of traffic congestion in Houston and its costs. The second part presents suggestions for alleviating traffic congestion and reversing the "trend of mobility demand outstripping supply." The third part identifies possible "funding resources" to cover costs for the additional roads and other facilities called for in part two.

There is many a shudder of masochistic pleasure to be had in reading the RMP's first part. It's like having your doctors switch their diagnosis from hypochondria to leprosy. Houston planners qualified for large chunks of federal highway funds by getting an early start—the outline of the area's freeway system was laid down in the late 1940's. The intention then was to alleviate the traffic jams afflicting major thoroughfares; it was believed that building freeways that radiated from and ringed the city center would end traffic jams for the rest of the century. During the decades since then, Houston has continued the population growth it has historically shown—roughly doubling every 20 years since the city was founded. Most of Houston's freeway system was completed by 1970. In the next 10 years, freeway miles available grew 22 percent. Population, however, grew 38 percent, and vehicle registration in Harris County grew 71 percent, almost twice as fast. Vehicle-miles-of travel in the county increased even faster—77 percent—and the portion of vehicle-miles traveled on freeways (as compared to total road surface available) tore off at a 106 percent increase. By 1981, 40 percent of the vehicle-miles traveled in the county were on freeways—a jarring statistic, considering that freeways represent only about two percent of total road surface. By nationally-applied standards (more conservative than those applied by the state highway department) freeways are considered adequate to serve no more than 13,000 vehicles per lane per day. In 1981, the Houston-area average daily traffic per lane of freeway was already more than twice that—26,650 vehicles per day.

The RMP quotes figures from the Texas Transportation Institute and engineering consultants Turner, Collie and Braden that compare freeway congestion in Houston with that in other cities, using a "congestion index" on which 1.0 is pretty good, anything over 1.5 is seriously crowded and 3.0 is "critical."

In 1969 the average congestion index value for Houston freeways was 1.2. Only the Gulf Freeway, at 3.1, was critical. In 1981, all of Houston's freeways were considered worse than critical, with an average congestion value of 4.6. And in 1983? No figures exist, but it is estimated that the average congestion value has gone over 5.0, with several freeways close to 6.0.

Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation studies show average afternoon peak-period travel speeds fell from 36.6 to 24.4 miles per hour between 1969 and 1979. During the same period, the studies show, the land accessible within 30 minutes from the downtown central business district decreased from 457 square miles to 282 square miles.

Worse yet, the "peak period"—remember when it was called "rush hour"—spread out like a cloud of humid, polluted air.

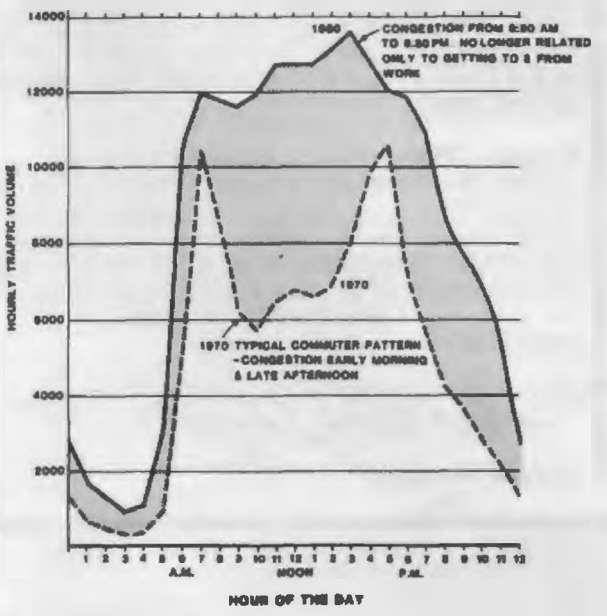
"The average duration of traffic congestion city-wide increased from less than two hours in 1969 to an estimated 7.5 hours by 1981. Some especially critical locations experience continuous congestion for 12 [to] 14 hours per day," the RMP report says, citing examples on five out of six Houston-area freeways and seven major thoroughfares. The development of 12 to 18 additional suburban employment centers before the year 2000 will spread congestion throughout the region, the report contends—initially alleviating some demand from existing centers but later adding their own commuters to the mix, the way Greenway Plaza did in relation to downtown. The report suggests soberly, "Peak period congestion has offset the mobility benefits our freeway and street system is intended to supply."

For those inclined to shrug off the deterioration in mobility, the Chamber Transportation Committee added another filip—they figured out the cost of the congestion to the average Houston-area resident, resulting from time lost, increased insurance costs and higher fuel consumption.

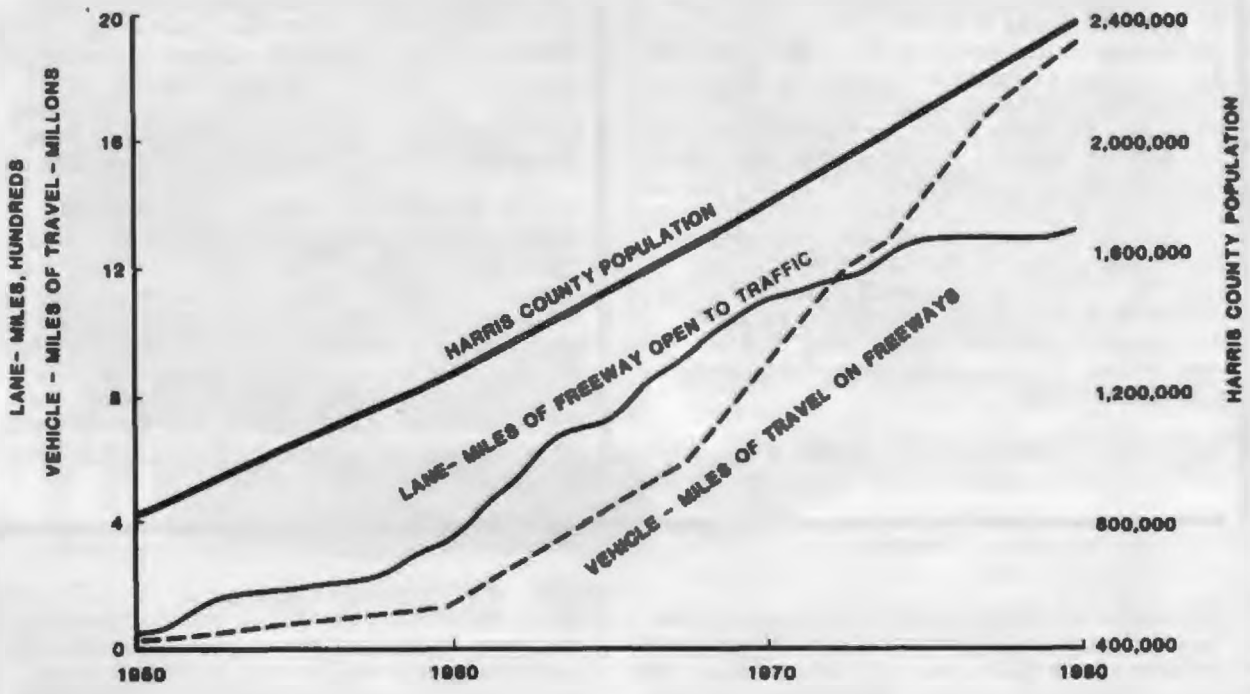
"Houstonians are paying a 'congestion tax' estimated to

Joel Warren Barna

FAILURE



Above: Typical Weekday Hourly Traffic Volume at the Southwest Freeway and South Rice. (A Regional Mobility Plan for the Houston Area, *Houston Chamber of Commerce, 1982*).



Development and Use of Freeway System in Harris County (Includes Expressways). (A Regional Mobility Plan for the Houston Area, *Houston Chamber of Commerce, 1982*).

be $1.9 billion per year, or almost $800 per county resident per year," the RMP report concludes.

What the framers of the RMP propose is first catching up with what is already needed, then allowing for an additional one million people in the area's population in the next 15 years. At the end of that period, if the RMP is followed, congestion in Houston will be no worse than it was in 1975—definitely the good old days compared to what it would be in 1995 without the improvements called for in the plan. The way to achieve this, they suggest, is to build 1000 miles of new streets, 300 miles of new freeway, add 170 miles of freeway lanes to existing freeways, mainly by double-decking them, build 30 miles of high capacity commuter rail lines, construct or straighten out intersections and grade separations, toss in a toll-financed highway and a couple of toll bridges and a couple of dozen park-and-ride facilities. The list of projects runs 24 pages in the report.

It has been argued in all seriousness—particularly by opponents of funding for mass transit—that nothing should be done to alleviate traffic congestion in situations like this. The reasoning goes that if no new facilities are built, development will move to less congested areas and Houston will become an even-density city with diffused population and employment. The second version of this argument is that centralized planning is too ponderous to respond to future growth and development and that by the time facilities are constructed, they will be in the wrong place.

The problems with these arguments are numerous. First of all, the diffused employment/population hypothesized for the future is *already* under way. That's what Greenway Plaza and City Post Oak and Park 10 are all about. Houston is already a diffused city. The problem remains, however, that even with this diffusion the traffic congestion is suffocating and costly. Of course there are other options—businesses and workers could decide to locate in Austin or Dallas or Little Falls, Minnesota. The point is exactly to prevent that from happening—to keep Houston and its tax base growing and to delay as long as possible the day when the city begins its inevitable decline. The problem with the second argument is that it ignores the already enormous investments in infrastructure made in the Central Business District, the Medical Center and other employment centers. Currently there are 175,000 people working downtown, and this number will increase, according to recent estimates from the Rice Center, between 20 and 40 percent, even without additional transit facilities. In any foreseeable future these areas will remain focal points for employment, as will other nodes in the Houston-area grid. The CBD and other employment centers either can be properly served or they can be ignored, so as to provide a stimulus to as-yet-undeveloped areas. Clearly, it is in Houston's interest to choose the former alternative. The chaotic, sprawled development of Houston in the past 20 years didn't happen entirely by accident—it was a by-product of a series of conscious decisions to rely on freeways as a tool for determining Houston's urban structure. There are manifest advantages to such decisions, but there have been side-effects as well—the low quality of over-extended sewers and police- and fire-protection, for example.

The diffused-city arguments are irrelevant to the RMP, moreover. The five agencies involved in its implementation all represent entrenched bureaucracies with enormous budgets. They would not wither away if the RMP had not been devised. They would be spending (and in some cases, collecting) billions of tax and tax-backed dollars in Harris County in the next 15 years anyway. The great virtue of the RMP is that for the first time Metro, the agency charged with providing mass transit in Houston, has joined with the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation and the rest of the agencies; and they are at least trying not to work at cross purposes. Perhaps if this kind of coordination had been undertaken 10 years ago, we wouldn't be in such a spot.

It's a pity there is no evidence to suggest that Houstonians (with the exception of those already in van-pools and using park-and-ride buses) are really willing to use public transportation regularly. If that were the case, the RMP shows, optimum spending would not be four-fifths road-building, one-fifth transit. The best thing would be to spend every penny on mass transit.

In a section on capacities afforded by different modes of transportation in the RMP, the following equation is explained: one lane of freeway traffic equals 13,000 vehicles per day; one freeway lane dedicated to buses or "high occupancy vehicles" equals 2.5 freeway lanes, and one "high capacity transitway" or rail line equals 14 freeway lanes. Thus a double track two-way transitway equals 28 lanes of freeway—twice the current capacity of the North and Eastex Freeways.

Take the case of the North Transportation Corridor for example. Hardy Street runs north-south between I-45 and US-59 where the two freeways run parallel less than six miles apart. Analyses quoted in the RMP show that this North Transportation corridor will require 60 freeway lanes by 1995 in order to meet the RMP's 13,000 vehicle/lane/day goal. In fact, the corridor is already some 20 lanes in arrears. The RMP proposes increasing the present capacity of US-59 and I-45 to the equivalent of 28 lanes, leaving a "shortfall" to be filled by a toll road along what is now Hardy Street, to be constructed and operated by the Texas Turnpike Authority, which already operates a toll bridge across the Houston Ship Channel in east Harris County. The toll road would be built in such a way as to allow for a future rail-transit line connecting downtown to the Intercontinental Airport. The rail line would be added in 10 to 15 years.

Roger Hord of the Chamber of Commerce admits that building a six-lane tollway first, at a cost of approximately $400 million, then adding a rail line costing approximately $750 million (adding the equivalent of 28 freeway lanes) looks like a lot of overlapping expenditure.

"You have to remember," Hord says, "that we're talking about funds available over this period. Metro could put a rail line in that corridor, but there wouldn't be anywhere near the ridership needed to justify the cost. Metro could probably spend that money serving other areas more effectively, until the density of the Hardy corridor merits a rail line. The toll road would not require either MTA or state tax funds, meaning that those funds can be spent on the east and southwest sides of town where they'll do the most good. The different agencies worked out this coordination in informal give and take. There's no way we can pay for everything we need without at least $2 billion coming from toll-financed facilities, and the Hardy Toll Road is the right place to start."

There is a bad side to this amiable collegiality, however, according to some transit professionals—it looks and feels like political deal-cutting and back-scratching, wherein each agency's funding and clientele are protected. Consider Metro and the Texas Turnpike Authority.

Persuasive as it is, Hord's argument is bolstered by another fact which draws its force from the friendly give and take Hord says resulted in the RMP. The Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation has three commissioners, one of whom is John Butler of Houston, an entrepreneur in energy exploration, appointed by former Governor Bill Clements. The Texas Turnpike Authority has a board of directors, on which sits John Butler. TTA has been pushing for the Hardy Toll Road for most of a decade. An agreement on RMP plans that left out the TTA's Hardy Toll project might not have had Highway Commissioner Butler's complete support.

The RMP achieves a lot in practicability with these kind of trade-offs. The problem is that the plan never addresses *why* Houston's freeways failed to alleviate traffic congestion the way they were supposed to—why, in fact, they have seemed to *generate* congestion. And as a result, the RMP is already planting the seeds of its own failure.

The reason freeways seem inevitably to become overcrowded is because freeway access is valuable. The RMP ignores this fact in its planning, which means that the new freeways in the plan will quickly fill up beyond their capacity, just as our present freeways have.

The RMP calls for 300 miles of new freeway, including

I think it's pretty clear that no matter what kind of mass transit system we have, 90% of the people aren't going to use it. There are 10% of the people who are either too old or too young or too poor or too nervous or too sick and have to be driven around. The other 90%, I believe, would really prefer not to have any mass transit.

There's a kind of crocodile thinking to all this. Consider the girl who's sitting in her Mercedes waiting for four or five minutes on the freeway at 59 as it approaches 610. She's smoking a cigarette and reading *The Wall Street Journal* and complaining about being a couple of moments late. The reality is that you're never going to get her out of her Mercedes and into a public conveyance, no matter how much traffic there is. It doesn't make any difference if the public conveyance is of French design and runs on rubber wheels and is air-conditioned and flys through the air *á la* Walt Disney World or anything else. I believe people moved to Houston largely because of the low density. They don't want any of the appurtenances of high density living. And the most obvious, of course, is the discomfort of public mass transportation.

The present proposal for an 18-mile train system is so easily confounded when you think of the cost. The admitted cost is $2 billion. And if my proposal seems a little bit foolish at first, a lot of things that sound foolish sometimes have a grain of sense about them. If one were to take—starting with a single unit—say, a Mercedes 400 SL, which is everybody's dream, and say that it costs $50,000. Say that you bought ten of them, that would be $500,000. And 100 would be $5 million and 1,000 would be $50 million and 10,000 would be $500 million. Well on the purchase price of the so-called "hardware," we've only spent a quarter of what they're proposing to spend on trains. And if you take the remainder of the $1.5 billion to maintain the Mercedeses and for people to drive them, then there are all kinds of possibilities.

I use the term "Mercedes" because it's just a very attractive car and it's everybody's dream. The word "Mercedes" is to give it some magic and to catch your attention. Not only is it irresponsible to be spending $2 billion on a 19th-century transportation system such as a train, it's equally irresponsible to be buying Mercedeses from abroad or any other kind of vehicle that can be made in the United States. Of course, American cars probably wouldn't cost $50,000 a piece, but $16,000 or $18,000, so that you're not really dealing with $500 million but with $250 million, if that.

If you had 10,000 fine cars driving around the city there are various systems for hailing them. For example, you could have a telephone system like the present taxis, only it would have to be developed because of the enlarged nature of it. But when you have that many units chances are you could have free taxi service (or virtually free taxi service) from any single point in the city to any other point. Another system is the Mexico City jitney system, with a car travelling a known route but just for a total of five or six people. Or another system is the New York or London cab system of just roaming and picking up when hailed.

There are certain things you would have to do for example. You would have to restrict these cars from the freeways. There's certainly no point in aggravating the present freeway system. But the streets are not generally overcrowded. Vast portions of the streets are in residential areas and so lightly travelled that they are hardly ever used at all. Children play in the middle of the streets and don't even have to move.

I don't know where the Mercedeses—let's call them—would sleep. I guess they'd roam all night.

Howard Barnstone

Beltway 8, a new Northeast Freeway and a new Alvin Freeway. In addition, the plan calls for adding elevated structures to 170 miles of existing freeways. Most of the freeways in Houston currently have entrance- and exit-ramps at intervals of 1.5 miles or less. The proposed elevated lanes would allow entrances/exits at approximately five mile intervals.

In addition, says the Chamber's Roger Hord, most of these elevated lanes are to be dedicated, at least during peak periods, to bus/high occupancy vehicle use, making each of them equivalent to 2.5 conventional freeway lanes. Tucked away in an appendix of the RMP report, says Hord, is a suggestion for financing these double-decked lanes. "What we're thinking now is that at off-peak hours they'll be toll lanes," Hord explains.

Around 20 hours per day? "That's right."

The stretched-out access of the elevated lanes is important, according to Peter C. Papademetriou, author of the study, *Transportation and Urban Development in Houston 1830–1980*, published in January 1982 by Metro. The upper lanes will do what freeways are supposed to do (although with considerable cost in noise pollution and visual insult)—carry people on long distance trips, providing extra capacity that is qualitatively different from the capacity of already existing freeway lanes.

Papademetriou uses the West Loop as his example to explain the "feedback loop" syndrome in freeway congestion. The method used to handle access to the West Loop, Papademetriou writes, "may be seen now as the cause of the eventual evolution of urban development... and a major contributing factor for the distance between original intent and current reality."

Expanding on this assertion, Papademetriou explains that the West Loop, once at the western fringe of the city, was intended as a "by-pass parkway loop," a belt road linking the routes radiating from the city center—and it was envisioned as primarily carrying through traffic from the radial routes. The "distance between original intent and current reality" arises here, since local traffic on the West Loop has severely curtailed its function as a by-pass belt road.

Road planners have two options on how to treat access to highways. One is to purchase all access rights from the adjacent land, making the road a "throughway" with widely spaced entrance- and exit-ramps. The second and less expensive option, and the one almost invariably chosen in Texas, is to forego buying access rights from the adjacent properties and to construct the highway with parallel frontage roads, allowing frequent access to the highway. This access, Papademetriou says, citing the West Loop example, "generated increases in land value and a *de facto* prescription of probable land use," replacing residences and small businesses with high-density commercial development, generating traffic which used the West Loop as if it were a local street or a collector street. Such a traffic pattern, exactly the opposite of what was intended, swamped the freeway's capacity to handle by-pass traffic and eventually threatened to throttle development served by West Loop access (requiring additional capacity).

This is why, Papademetriou says, double-decked freeway lanes can help: with their limited access, they will function more like the originally-intended loop road. The 300 miles of new freeways proposed in the RMP, however, with their frontage roads and high-rent access, will soon be generating their own hyper-congestion.

In fact, the evidence is strong that the process has already started. Beltway 8, the new ring road planned for the outer reaches of Harris County, is intended to do what Loop 610 was supposed to do when it was built. Current traffic congestion already justifies building the road. But, according to a speech by RMP task force chairman John Turner, reported in the press in January, construction of Beltway 8 is already being delayed by an unanticipated problem. Land prices along the proposed route are skyrocketing.

FOR THOSE INCLINED TO SHRUG OFF THE DETERIORATION IN MOBILITY, THE CHAMBER TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE FIGURED OUT THE COST OF CONGESTION TO THE AVERAGE HOUSTON-AREA RESIDENT—ALMOST $800 PER YEAR.

"In the southwest part of the county, land prices have gone from a few thousand dollars per acre to $2 per square foot," Turner said during a recent interview in his Greenspoint area office.

"Increases like that could deplete the funds available for acquiring land and significantly delay the project," Turner said, adding that the only thing to do was press ahead quickly before prices started rising on the land needed for other projects called for in the RMP.

The land prices are rising partially to cash in on the possibility that they'll be purchased for highway right-of-way. More importantly, however, they are rising because the access provided by the new freeway will make the adjacent properties hot for development - as land along Loop 610 became when that road was begun. As happened along the existing freeways in Houston, this will cause the development to turn Beltway 8 into a giant local street, instead of the loop road it's supposed to be.

It's not hard to imagine, along about 2005, that there will be another RMP with its own bold solutions to the mobility crisis plaguing Houston's 300 miles of 10-year-old freeways.

Freeways—Not Free

There are indications that the really hard part of the RMP is going to be coming up with the necessary money, even for agencies as adept at prying money out of taxpayers' fingers as the highway department and Metro. The third part of the RMP report identifies possible "funding resources" to close the $9.6 billion gap between current spending levels and the costs of the RMP. Getting the funds delivered, the report says, will require "a consensus among our political representatives that transportation is our area's number one problem."

It will also require a great deal of cooperation from state officials and legislators with constituents to serve in other, competing, districts. How will the State Representative from Plano feel when it is suggested that not only must Texas almost double its annual highway budget, but that the proportion of that total budget going to Harris County must be increased from 25 to 30 percent? Or that the moribund Public Transportation Fund must be reinstated, given a minimum of $15 million, and 50 percent of it dedicated to Houston for the next 15 years? How will Mark White, pledged to no new taxes, react to suggestions that the state motor fuel tax be revised and increased, that a separate state sales tax be applied to motor fuel, that the four percent motor vehicle sales tax be dedicated to the Highway Fund, or that the motor vehicle registration fee be doubled? Lots of people who voted for him might take it amiss if he went for all this, particularly when the RMP also calls for taking money from General Revenue and Education funds. Mark White says *his* first priority is education.

The RMP also calls for the city and county to increase their road budgets by 75 percent per year. Several local officials have already said that it's not likely to happen. And will local voters, many still steamed at Metro, approve the creation of the proposed Harris County Turnpike Authority to collect the "user fees" on those double-decked freeways?

Both Roger Hord and John Turner say they are confident the funds can be arranged. The Lieutenant Governor is from Houston, the Harris County legislative delegation is big and seniority-heavy. The new Speaker of the House is closely allied with the head of the Texas Municipal League. And, of course, stories about the highway lobby not getting what it wants are as rare as orchids on the Southwest Freeway median. The outcome of the effort on the state level will be apparent soon, as the legislature will either approve or kill the proposed state funding mechanisms in the current session.

From there it's just a countdown to RMP II.

An Interview with Eleanor Tinsley

Beyond the Woodway Canyon

In June, 1982, when the Houston City Council passed the first ordinance requiring city approval of certain aspects of commercial development, the news made the front sections of the New York Times *and the* International Herald Tribune. *The ordinance, requiring that commercial structures (outside downtown) be at least 25 feet from the edges of city rights-of-way on major thoroughfares and at least 10 feet away from the edges on other streets, prohibits dead-end or "stub" streets in subdivisions, and sets an 1,800 foot limit for the length of blocks on major thoroughfares and a 1,400 foot limit on other streets. Eleanor Tinsley, the first woman elected to the Houston City Council and now one of its most influential members, hammered out the provisions of the ordinance.* Cite *Executive Editor Joel Barna interviewed Tinsley earlier this year to find out how she thinks the Tinsley Development Ordinance is working, and about the other initiatives she and her colleagues on City Council have planned.*

Cite: Mrs. Tinsley, in June of 1982 the Houston City Council passed what is called the Tinsley Development Ordinance, regulating block lengths, set-backs and other matters relating to commercial development. What has been the impact of the ordinance since it went into effect?

Tinsley: That ordinance got more national and international coverage than it did locally. I think the national media saw it as more important than the local media did—as Houston turning a corner, taking an interest in planning for the first time.

The effect of the ordinance shows in the exceptions—the buildings that got in before the ordinance took effect in September of 1982. For each of those instances, the city is, I'm sorry to say, the loser. There is that building that Dr. Cooley is putting up near the Southgate area (Travis Centre, a project of Mariner Development Corporation and Darlco, designed by Morris*Aubry Architects.) That was approved before the ordinance went into effect. We're hearing from innumerable constituents who are frustrated by the way that is being built, but there's nothing we can do right now.

What the ordinance does is provide help for the future. We know it's having its effect because, for the first time, it has required commercial developments to follow the same type of guidelines that used to informally govern residential developments. We know that's changing things because we're getting complaint calls from people who never before had to get city approval for what they were going to do. It's hard to say how any given building changed because of the ordinance. In 20 years the effects will be visible, though.

Cite: You built a consensus for the ordinance. When you first proposed it publicly, Jeff Lewis, then president of the Greater Houston Builders Association, called the idea all-but-useless and suggested that the controversy over the "Woodway canyon" was a red herring. James Box of the Mischer Corporation took part in drafting the measure. By the time the proposal came to a vote by the City Council, however, Lewis urged passage of the ordinance. And it passed on the first reading, unanimously. How did you do it?

Tinsley: I think the secret is Lyndon Johnson's concept that you have to bring people "under the tent." It's one thing to let a group write an ordinance that affects them. It's another thing to let them be participants in what can be done, with the city writing the ordinance and their having input. We really did turn the situation around over eight months. At first when we said we were going to do it, they not only said it couldn't be done, they said I would never get re-elected if we proceeded on it. We met with individuals and several groups and sounded them out. Then people from various city agencies and representatives of developer- and community-groups met to work out the ordinance. It made a big difference that we had the support of Mayor Whitmire, which allowed the active participation of the City Attorney. The city departments drafted the ordinance, then we discussed it. That took from January until March. Then we got another draft out in May, reflecting the input from all the people we had consulted with, and got to a vote in June.

It never had been done this way before. We never had had a group with those various components arguing out what was going to happen if we enacted this or that provision. We learned a lot from the experience. Then, too, we mailed out hundreds of copies for suggestions. So by the time we got to a public hearing we had had a tremendous amount of public reaction to the proposal.

Photo, Barbara Ginsburg

> "At first when we said we were going to write a development ordinance, they said I would never get re-elected if we proceeded on it."

Cite: Large portions of Houston are affected by development controls enacted as a result of the shortage of sewer capacity. Are you considering proposing an ordinance to help end the "sewer moratorium?"

Tinsley: Yes, we're working on a proposal that provides for a new way of financing sewer treatment plants. It's remarkable, considering the opposition that we had when we first proposed the setback ordinance, that no one has come forward challenging the concept of providing a different way of financing sewer treatment plants. In the areas affected by the sewer moratorium, if you wanted to build a multistory building on property with only as much sewer capacity allocated for it as would serve five houses per acre, you couldn't do it—even if you had all the financing and everything else. If there was a *need* for that building you still couldn't build it.

The proposed ordinance, the way we have it drafted now, would give you the opportunity to put some money up front that would help the city finance the sewer treatment plant you would be adding to. The current thing is that you're allowed about 1,575 gallons per acre of wastewater—approximately what's generated from five houses. What we propose is to keep that level as a base level a citizen would have a permit to use. If you want more than that, you would help finance that extra amount—paying a capital recovery charge, so much per gallon per day per acre.

The ordinance is still a draft—it's gone through the first negotiation and the first submittal to the public and we're now just at the stage of going through every submission we receive one by one, looking at the suggestions and evaluating how or whether to incorporate them. We've had 150 different suggestions, plus a lot of input from home owners, environmental engineers and developers before that.

We thought at first that this was going to be mostly a technical issue, affecting the development industry more than individuals. But there is a section dealing with "package" water treatment plants, because those would still be allowed, and they're the bad guys out at Lake Houston and elsewhere. So we do have a section, due to the civic associations and the environmental groups, which specifies what you have to do and the criteria you have to meet.

Cite: In this instance you're trying to come up with a way to allow for growth that the city can't pay for fast enough. The Regional Mobility Plan, released by the Chamber of Commerce over a year ago, calls for the city to increase its annual expenditures for streets and roads by as much as 75 percent over current levels, and continuing that high level of spending for 15 years. Does the city have that kind of money to spend? Is it politically feasible to make the kind of commitment called for in the Regional Mobility Plan?

Tinsley: I don't think, realistically, that we can do that. Our budget is just not that flexible. And I don't know if we'll get the state funds that are called for in the Regional Mobility Plan, either. Some of those projects may have to be cut.

Cite: Do you think there'll come a time when it will be necessary in Houston or in parts of the city to have a kind of "congestion permit" because of the increasing mobility problems in some of the faster developing areas. Take for example the Galleria and Post Oak areas—do you foresee requiring a developer whose new building would add a given number of cars to the streets there to get a city permit?

Tinsley: It's possible. Councilmembers George Greanias and John Goodner and I are working on a kind of traffic and mobility ordinance. We've just had one meeting so far. Off-street parking is one of the major questions involved—so much so that I even call this the proposed off-street parking ordinance. If you're going to build a building, you need to provide for off-street parking, so that you don't force the people with homes near that building to put up with people parking on the streets. There are other parts of the ordinance that will come out as we work.

Developers are eventually going to have to start providing for better access. One developer of a 25-story building on Woodway has built a new access road onto Woodway at his own expense. It may be in the future that if you, as a builder, are going to impact the mobility of traffic on a street, you are going to have to start providing for that increased need of that street. You may need to provide a lane of traffic, perhaps.

Cite: If you follow the pattern from the development and sewer ordinances, there'll be a lot of negotiation and compromise before this measure ever gets to a public hearing. How long will that process take in this instance?

Tinsley: It's too early to say, exactly, but a long time. We're still working out the sewer ordinance, having all day meetings about that, and the off-street parking ordinance will have to come after that.

Cite: In January of 1981 the City Council passed your ordinance providing a tax break for the preservation of local buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Has that been a success?

Tinsley: It's having a small effect—only two or three buildings have received the exemption. It was the first legislation of that sort, to say that Houston cares about preserving its few remaining old buildings. It's a step in the right direction in a state like Texas where we have traditionally made parking lots out of our old buildings and haven't cared. Dallas and San Antonio and Austin have passed similar ordinances since.

Cite: Can Houston sustain growth on the same scale as it has experienced in the last half century?

Tinsley: The projections I've seen show it levelling off some. The population will grow, however, and the city will continue to expand its borders. We need room to grow, which is why I support the city's annexation powers. That's what has made Houston unique.

There's a lot we can do to make the growth work for us instead of strangling us. On the other hand, no matter what we do, it's still going to be more taxing living in a big city than it is living in some suburban area, in terms of the quality of life.

Big Park, Little Plans: A History of Hermann Park

Stephen Fox

Aerial view of Hermann Park looking south, 1930. (Houston Chamber of Commerce)

Hermann Park was one of the chief reasons that Houston became involved in efforts at city planning during the second decade of the 20th-century. Not only was the park itself a focus of civic improvement and beautification, but the properties surrounding it—largely undeveloped when the park was acquired—seemed to present an exceptional opportunity for those citizens concerned about Houston's future to achieve an example of integrated city planning, resulting in a civic environment that was rational, healthy and beautiful. The history of the park's development, however, indicates not only the problems involved in realizing such projects, but the equally difficult task of maintaining what already has been achieved.

In 1910, during the third term of Mayor H. Baldwin Rice, a progressive reformer, a Board of Park Commissioners was formed to advise the mayor and city commissioners on the acquisition, maintenance and development of park property.

Rice appointed three men to the Board of Park Commissioners: Edwin B. Parker, a partner in the law firm of Baker, Botts, Parker and Garwood; George H. Hermann, a real estate investor and industrialist; and William A. Wilson, a real estate developer. They in turn, in February 1912, retained Arthur Coleman Comey, a landscape architect from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to come to Houston to analyze local conditions and make recommendations for the sort of park and parkway system which ought to be developed.

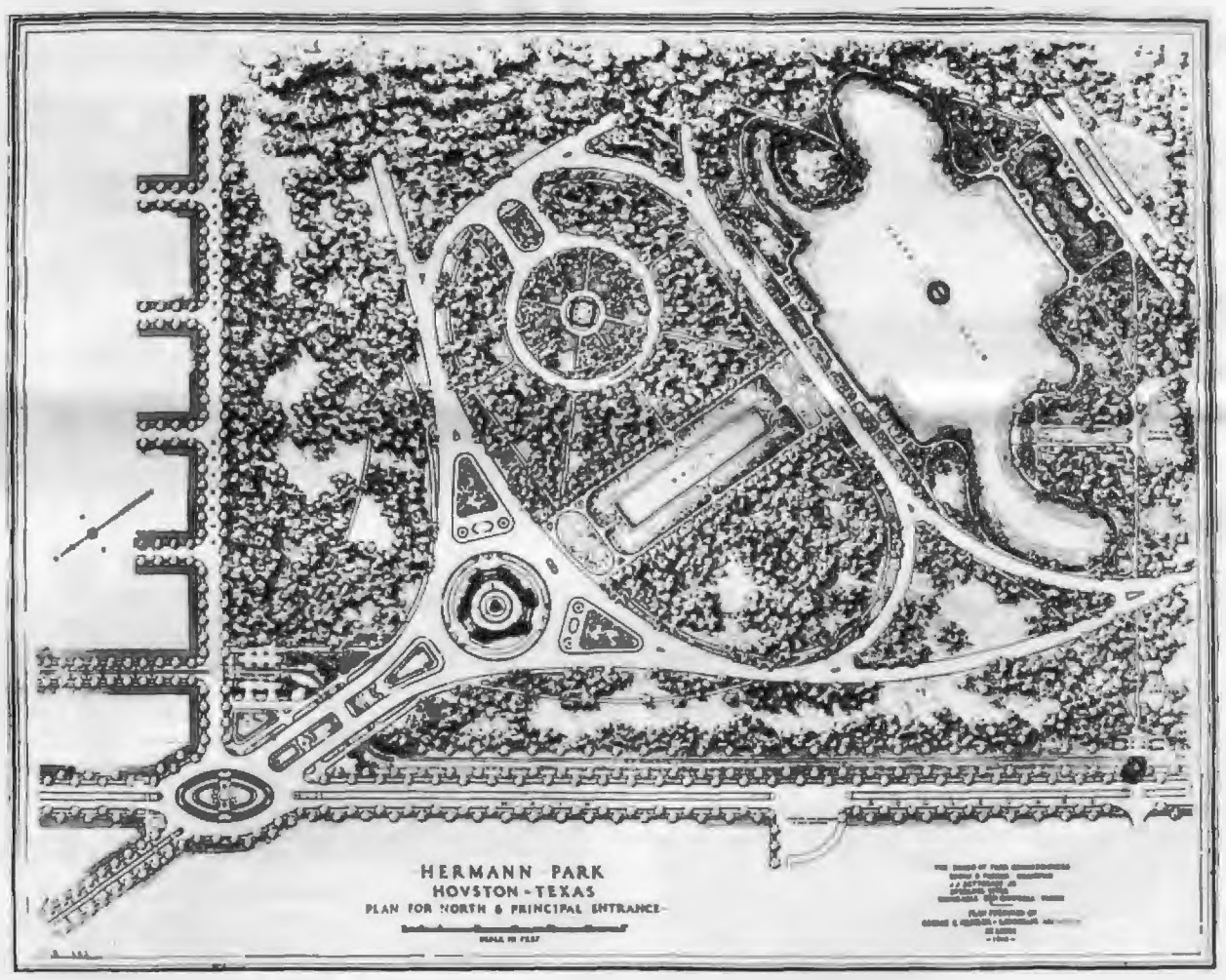
Comey's report to the Board of Park Commissioners, published in 1913 as *Houston, Tentative Plans for Its Development*, was the first city planning document to be written about Houston. One of Comey's specific recommendations was that a major park be acquired within what he described as the inner park system, serving Houston and its area of immediately projected expansion. Called Pines Park in his report, this was indicated as a tract along Brays Bayou, across Main Street Road from the Rice Institute campus, laid out by the Boston architects Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson on a 277 acre site in 1910 and opened in 1912. The location of Pines Park probably was not accidental, for most of the property shown in Comey's diagram was owned by George H. Hermann.

In May 1914 Hermann announced publicly his intention of deeding to the City of Houston 285 acres of this property for a municipal park. The transfer was made in June; after Hermann's death in October 1914, several more acres were bequeathed to the City of Houston for the George H. Hermann Park. John W. Maxcey, the city engineer, produced the initial plan for developing this acreage, which extended from Almeda Road on the east to a line along the projected route of LaBranch Street on the west, between what are now Hermann Drive on the north and Holcombe Boulevard on the south. Maxcey, who in 1899 had laid out Sam Houston Park, the city's first public park, worked closely with Hermann on the proposed design for Hermann Park.

According to Maxcey's plan drawing, Brays Bayou was to be rechanneled extensively to create a series of wooded islands to either side of the existing channel. A curvilinear network of roads defined a series of oval-shaped meadows in the center of the park. Most of the open space was devoted to a golf course. The main entrance was to be on the west side of the park. A landscaped boulevard perpendicular to Main Street, opposite entrance two to the Rice campus, gave access to the park.

Maxcey's plan was never implemented. One reason was that, in 1915 with the encouragement of Rice's successor as mayor, Ben Campbell, also an enthusiastic supporter of the parks movement, the City of Houston purchased from the Hermann Estate an additional 122½ acres between LaBranch (which, of course, had not been cut through the park) and Main Street. This increased the area of the park to 409½ acres. From the five block deep strip of property that Hermann had owned between his donated park site and Main Street, the trustees of the Hermann Estate reserved only a 10-acre rectangular tract across from entrance three to the Rice campus. This was the site Hermann had selected for a charity hospital, which he endowed with his entire estate.

Rather than direct Maxcey to produce a revised plan, the Board of Park Commissioners retained their own consultant, the celebrated St. Louis landscape architect and planner, George E. Kessler. At the instigation of the oilman Joseph Stephen Cullinan, Kessler was appointed consulting landscape architect to the board in early 1915. His proposal for Hermann Park seems to have been presented the next year.



Site Plan, Hermann Park, North and Principal Entrance, 1916, George E. Kessler, landscape architect. (Houston Metropolitan Research Center.)

In the plan he devised for Hermann Park, Kessler relied upon the diagonal geometry resulting from the intersection of the newly extended Montrose Boulevard with the newly widened and paved Main "Boulevard". He used this geometry to generate an infrastructure for the improvements to be imposed upon the flat, wooded site. Where the two boulevards crossed, a landscaped elliptical island, the Sunken Garden, was located. Continuing southward into the park, Montrose Boulevard provided the axis around which different features were organized. In Kessler's only surviving drawing, a plan for the entrance quadrant dated 1916, the roadway broke into a series of circular drives around a traffic circle inscribed with a monument. This circle occurred where the axis of Montrose Boulevard was intersected by a line of vision projectred along the principal axis of the Rice Institute campus. The roadway divided around the circle to encompass a shallow, rectangular reflecting pool, flanked by walks and a music pavilion and its attendant seating area. Beyond these lay an irregularly configured lake called the Grand Basin, with pergolas, boat landings and a large, arcaded shelter house stationed along its shores.

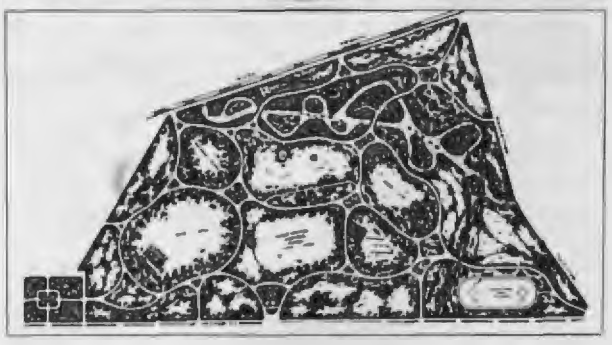
A city map of 1917 diagrammatically shows what must have been Kessler's general scheme of development. A central, oval athletic field was bracketed by two other oval fields in a three lobe configuration. The western lobe contained playground and picnic facilities and the eastern lobe contained a swimming pool and bath house. Southeast of this three-lobed group of open spaces, encompassed in an oval, were the golf links.

That Kessler's proposal was more sophisticated than Maxcey's is not surprising. Kessler demonstrated a pronounced facility for reconciling the requirements of ceremoniousness and informality in his design. The principal axis marked the ceremonial space of the park. Yet beyond the *allées* of trees flanking the reflecting basin, trees conformed to no fixed order in their location. The north and south embankments of the Grand Basin were part of the space of the axis. But the east and west shores (which were not) were eroded by canals and lagoons that broke down the sense of strict boundary and led to small scale, shaded dells.

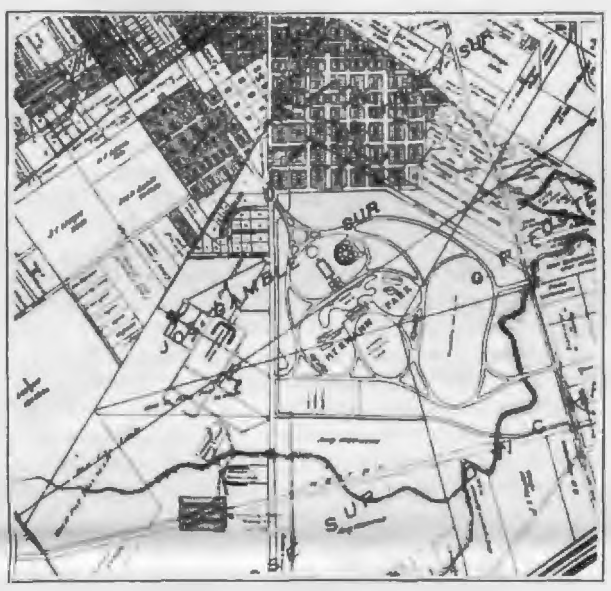
The extent of the improvements which were actually undertaken during 1916 and 1917 is hard to ascertain, although the drives apparently were laid out, the rectangular reflecting basin was built and the Shelter House in the southwest quadrant of the park was constructed. Along Main Boulevard double rows of evergreen live oaks were planted. Instrumental in the realization of these features of the Kessler plan were two Houstonians: Clarence L. Brock, general superintendent of city parks since 1912, and Herbert A. Kipp, who had been appointed consulting engineer to the board of Park Commissioners in 1915.

George M. Hermann. (Illustrated City Book of Houston, *1915*)

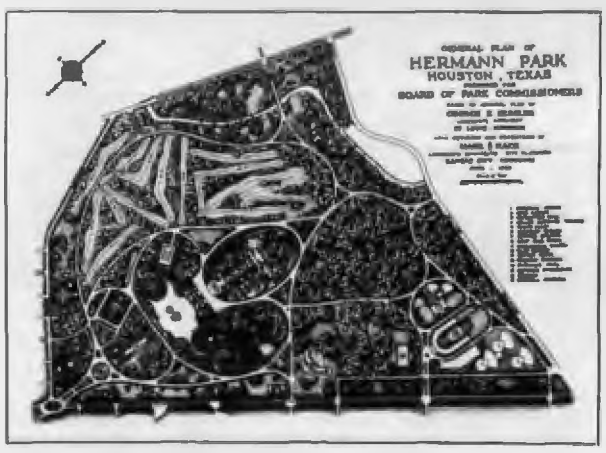
Aerial view of Hermann Park looking north. 1928. (Houston Public Library)



Project: Plan for George H. Hermann Park, 1914, J. W. Maxcey, City Engineer. (Illustrated City Book of Houston, *1915*)



Site plan of Hermann Park, 1917. (Houston Public Library)



General Plan of Hermann Park, 1930, Hare and Hare, landscape architects. (Houston Metropolitan Research Center)

Several other projects contributed to the transformation of the Hermann Park-Rice Institute area. One was the development of a residential enclave called Shadyside by J. S. Cullinan. In February 1916 Cullinan purchased from the Hermann Estate nearly 37 acres along Main Street, north of the campus and west of the park, and with the aid of Kessler and Kipp proceeded to turn it into a residential neighborhood of small estates.

At the time George Hermann died, he had promised representatives of the Houston Art League to donate property for a museum that the league hoped to build. In August 1916 the league acquired the triangular-shaped, three-acre lot between Main and Montrose, opposite the Sunken Garden, a joint gift of the Hermann Estate and Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Cullinan.

The eruption of war in April 1917 and the exhaustion by August 1917 of a bond issue voted in 1914 brought all park acquisition and improvement projects in Houston to a halt. Following the Armistice, the Progressive spirit of civic action that had been so active during the 1910's seemed to falter. It was not until 1922, after the election of a new mayor, Oscar F. Holcombe, that park improvements and other civic planning programs obtained renewed public support. Holcombe recognized the political value of promoting measures aimed at achieving orderly urban growth and a more amenable urban environment. Consequently, he appointed the first City Planning Commission in 1922 and renewed the activity of the Board of Park Commissioners. Unfortunately, this coincided with George Kessler's death in 1923. To replace Kessler the Board of Park Commissioners, in 1923, and the City Planning Commission, in 1924, retained as their professional consultant the Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare.

S. Herbert Hare, the firm's junior partner, was in charge of the Houston work. Under Hare and Hare's guidance, Hermann Park and the rest of the Houston park system as envisioned by Comey, Kessler and committed Houstonians, took shape. Between 1923 and 1933 Hermann Park gradually acquired not only the improvements called for in the Kessler plan of 1916 (which was preserved carefully by Hare and Hare) but a number of unforseen additions. Chiefly these were the inclusion of a zoo, the addition of a 133½ acre strip along the lower west side of the park and the donation of the MacGregor Parkway to the east of Hermann Park.

In 1930 Hare and Hare produced a general plan drawing for the Board of Park Commissioners depicting the extent of their park planning during the 1920's. The Houston Zoological Garden, opened in 1924, was located in what had been the central athletic oval on the south shore of the Grand Basin. Its layout was a miniature version of the park's, with a central axial pedestrian concourse flanked by open air exhibits all set in a more informal network of curvilinear paths. Small buildings, finished with stucco and tile roofs, were built at intervals between 1924 and 1931 along the central concourse to provide enclosed exhibition space as well as quarters for the Museum of Natural History. An 18 hole golf course was constructed on the site allotted by Kessler in 1922, following a design by the Houston stockbroker and golfing enthusiast, George V. Rotan, and the engineer David M. Duller. On the site that Kessler had designated for a concert pavilion, the Miller Memorial Theater, an austere Doric proscenium flanked by peristyles, was built between 1921 and 1922 to the designs of William Ward Watkin. To provide for better automobile circulation, the theater grounds were linked by a short, curved drive to Caroline Street and Hermann Drive along the north boundary of the park. Another "improvement," also involving automobiles, was of short duration. This was the tourist-oriented Automobile Camp, opened early in 1922 and laid out by Clarence Brock to accommodate 150 vehicles. By the time Hare and Hare made their general plan drawing, it no longer existed.

Excavation of the Grand Basin began in 1925, but only the central six and three-quarters acres of the 13 acre waterway called for in the Kessler plan were constructed initially. The basin was picturesquely configured. Between 1927 and 1931 the Parks Department repeatedly announced that excavation of the remaining six and one-quarter acres would be undertaken, but this was not accomplished. The monument circle on the Montrose axis was filled by a bronze equestrian statue of Sam Houston. Modeled by Enrico F. Cerracchio after a painting by Seymour Thomas, the Sam Houston Monument, like the Miller Memorial Theater, was the result of private beneficence. Funds for the erection of the monument, which was completed in 1925, were raised by the Sam Houston Memorial Association. Incremental improvements included the construction of a comfort station and of the Hermann Park Clubhouse of 1933, a handsome Spanish colonial revival building adjacent to the golf course designed by Arthur E. Nutter. In 1927 improvement of the botanical garden, lying along Hermann Drive to the east of the main entrance, began according to plans by Hare and Hare.

Both the improvements that were financed publicly as well as those that resulted from the munificence of individuals or organizations, consolidated the provisions of the plan of 1916. In addition to these improvements there were two major property acquisitions. In 1923 Will C. Hogg, the son of a former Texas governor who adopted civic planning as his foremost cause, purchased the 133½ acre Parker tract south of the Hermann Hospital site, and sold it to the City of Houston at cost and on generous terms in January 1924. This brought the park's area to 545 acres. Hogg had already underwritten the War Mothers' planting of 200 oak trees along Outer Belt Drive as memorials to Harris County men who died during the world war.

Similarly in April 1926 Peggy Stevens MacGregor, the widow of Henry F. MacGregor, a real estate developer, donated 108 acres of wooded land on Brays Bayou, two and one-half miles east of Hermann Park, to the city as a memorial to her husband along with $150,000 to finance acquisition of all the property on both banks of the bayou between the two parks. During the early 1930's the two bayou-side drives, called North and South MacGregor Ways, were built to join Hermann and MacGregor Parks. Although not all the property on both sides of the bayou could be acquired, a sufficient amount was obtained to insure that the parkway was implemented.

Houston's expansion during the 1920's decade was phenomenal. It also caused problems, not the least with transportation. Automobile ownership increased year by year at a staggering rate. One result was that the drives in Hermann Park were paved, as well as the streets surrounding the park: Bellaire, Almeda and eight blocks of Hermann Drive. The difference between 1916 and 1926 however was that Kessler could still envision the park as the scene of leisurely "pleasure" drives in continuation of a well developed 19th-century social custom. Ten years later, speeding and careless driving had effectively terminated this social ritual. When the location of the Sam Houston Monument was under consideration in 1925, the Board of Park Commissioners resolved that it should not be placed in the Sunken Garden, as this might at some point in the near future require removal to accommodate increased traffic. For this reason the esplanades on Main Boulevard north of the Sunken Garden, which Hare and Hare had landscaped in 1924 and 1925, were pulled up in 1928. In 1928 also the Houston Electric Company substituted buses for the South End car line trams. Thus the track which had been built through the future site of the park in 1910 to serve the Rice Institute was taken up.

The Great Depression marked the end of the second epoch in Hermann Park's development. During the 1930's most improvements were incremental additions carried out under the supervision of Clarence L. Brock and Hare and Hare. In 1936 monuments commemorating the centennial of Texas independence and the founding of Houston were dedicated in Hermann Park. One was a 50-foot high granite obelisk, the Pioneer Memorial Shaft. donated by the San Jacinto Memorial Association; the second was a log-built community center, the Memorial Log House, erected by the San Jacinto Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The Pioneer Memorial Shaft was located at the south end of the reflecting basin, between it and the Grand Basin. The Memorial Log House was situated on Outer Belt Drive behind the Zoological Garden. Another belated memorial was proposed in 1937 by the Central Lions Club of Houston, a standing bronze figure of George H. Hermann. A maquette was prepared by Julian Muench, and the landscape architects Fleming and Sheppard were retained to choose a site for the statue. Their choice was a location on axis with entrance two of the Rice Institute, at the western tip of the Grand Basin, once it was extended to its full size. The Lions Club must have been unable to secure the $15,000 to erect the statue, for it was never realized.

The correspondence of J. Robert Neal, a Houston banker who, from 1938 until his death in 1940, was chairman of the Houston Board of Park Commissioners, indicates that by the late 1930's the Houston park system, not excluding Hermann Park, was suffering from the effects of poor maintenance. A series of confidential reports on the condition of city parks prepared by one of Neal's associates in February and March 1938 stated that despite a capable administrator (Brock) and an excellent planning consultant (Hare), the park system was inadequate. Miller Memorial Theater was described as being in "deplorable" condition and vandalism had become so serious that repairs to park buildings and to the landscaping were inadvisable unless future protection could be guaranteed. Neal led the park board in a dramatic confrontation with the city council in the summer of 1938. The council was unable to increase the Parks Department's appropriation and unwilling to assign fees charged for the use of the golf courses in Hermann and Memorial parks to the Parks Department rather than to the general revenue fund. Consequently, the Board of Park Commissioners recommended that the Zoological Garden be closed and all the animals sold to decrease expenses. The city council assigned the golf fees to the Parks Department.

During Neal's tenure a number of requests were made for dedication of park property to non-park related uses. In 1938 a second golf course was proposed for the Hogg tract (a project which Hogg had opposed in 1925), the Houston Conservatory of Music asked for a three or four acre site along Main Boulevard and the Houston Independent School District requested 50 acres for a public school stadium along Almeda Road. Following Hare's advice, all of these proposals were rejected. The last project to be implemented before the war was the construction of the Houston Garden Center, a one-story pavilion containing a meeting and exhibition hall. Designed by William Ward Watkin in 1938, the Garden

View of Hermann Park looking north, November 1979.

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Center was not constructed until 1941. It was located on Hermann Drive, on axis with LaBranch Street, at the east end of the Botanical Garden. In front of the south elevation Hare and Hare laid out the Rose Garden.

During 1940, Oscar Holcombe, who was once again Mayor of Houston, established the City Planning Commission on a permanent basis and created a Department of City Planning with Ralph Ellifrit, a member of the firm of Hare and Hare, as director. Ellifrit and Hare and Hare prepared two major city planning reports—a street and thoroughfare plan and a parks plan—released in 1942 and 1943 respectively. For Hermann Park the report recommended development of a recreation center and athletic fields and proposed that between 20 and 40 acres be acquired along Brays Bayou for this purpose. Acquisition of this property was to compensate for the loss of the Hogg tract.

This unexpected event occured in 1943. The previous year the trustees of the M. D. Anderson Foundation, a charitable trust established in 1936 by Monroe D. Anderson, a founding partner in the cotton exporting firm of Anderson, Clayton and Company, convinced the regents of the University of Texas to establish a cancer research institute and a dental school in Houston. They then persuaded the trustees of the Baylor University College of Medicine to transfer that institution from Dallas to Houston. In return, the foundation was to provide funds for construction of new buildings as well as building sites. The trustees of the M. D. Anderson Foundation, W. B. Bates, John H. Freeman and H. M. Wilkins, considered the Hogg tract an ideal location. It was adjacent to Hermann Hospital (which was built on Hermann's ten acre tract between 1923 and 1925) and the Rice Institute and provided plenty of room for expansion. Despite the opposition of Ralph Ellifrit, the city council, under the successive administrations of mayors C. A. Pickett (1941–1943) and Otis Massey (1943–1947), supported this proposal and in December 1943 a referendum in which 951 votes were cast confirmed the council's agreement to sell these 133½ acres to the M. D. Anderson Foundation for $400,000. Between 1945 and 1955 six new hospitals and two medical schools were built on the Hogg tract following a general plan devised between 1944 and 1945 by H. A. Kipp.

The development of the Hogg tract for the Texas Medical Center (as it was known following its dedication in 1946), was to accelerate the tempo of change around Hermann Park in the years following World War II. Other factors however were the deterioration of the residential neighborhoods north of the park during the 1950's and a more gradual but no less surprising decline of the neighborhoods along the MacGregor Parkway during the 1960's. Yet at the same time the Medical Center stimulated real estate development along Main Street and Bellaire Boulevard, in what came to be called "uptown" Houston. Despite the institutional and commercial development occuring around Hermann Park, improvements within the park progressed at a slower pace. During the first term of Mayor Otis Massey, a city manager form of municipal government was adopted. Proceeding from this, the City Parks and Recreation Department was formed by consolidating two separate departments and the landscape architect C. C. "Pat" Fleming was appointed to replace Clarence Brock as director of the new department in 1943. Through these changes, however, Hare and Hare remained as consulting landscape architects.

As early as 1943 priorities for post-war improvements to Hermann Park were formulated. Chief among these were an expansion of the zoo and provision of an adequately sized and equipped building for the Museum of Natural History. During 1945 and 1946 the Parks and Recreation Association, a group of citizens formed in 1919 to promote and support municipal recreation programs, additionally proposed the construction of a planetarium, an aquarium and a new Miller Theater. Schematic plans for a number of these improvements were prepared: a large Museum of Natural History building was to be sited on the south shore of the Grand Basin, on axis with the entrance to the zoo. This would be flanked by the planetarium and aquarium. The Grand Basin was to be expanded to from 18 to 20 acres, and the excavated soil was to be used to construct a ramped lawn where 10,000 people could be seated in front of the new Miller Theater. As early as 1940 Hare and Hare had made plans for enlarging the seating lawn at Miller Theater, as well as the parking. The "formal" north and south embankments of the Grand Basin were to be built.

Although a bond issue had been voted in 1944, it was not until Oscar Holcombe was re-elected in 1947 that Hare and Hare were commissioned to prepare plans for the expansion of the zoo. S. Herbert Hare recommended keeping the zoo in Hermann Park, expanding its area and building habitats for animal exhibits rather than cages. In 1949 Hare and Hare were authorized to proceed with plans for the $800,000 expansion program. The loop drive bounding the southwest side of the zoo's oval site was moved farther to the southwest to increase the total area of the zoo. The axial arrangement of 1924 was preserved, but it was developed much more carefully, with a sunken reflecting basin flanked sequentially by walkways, planting strips and continuous, canopied passageways. A new Primate House terminated this formal concourse on the south. Beyond the central promenade, in the expanded southwestern and southeastern portions of the zoo, a freer network of curvilinear paths was developed, superseding those of the 1924 plan. The "new" zoo opened in 1950. Incremental additions were made in conformance with the Hare and Hare general plan of 1949 until the middle 1970's. In connection with the zoo expansion, the Grand Basin was reshaped, although it was not expanded in area.

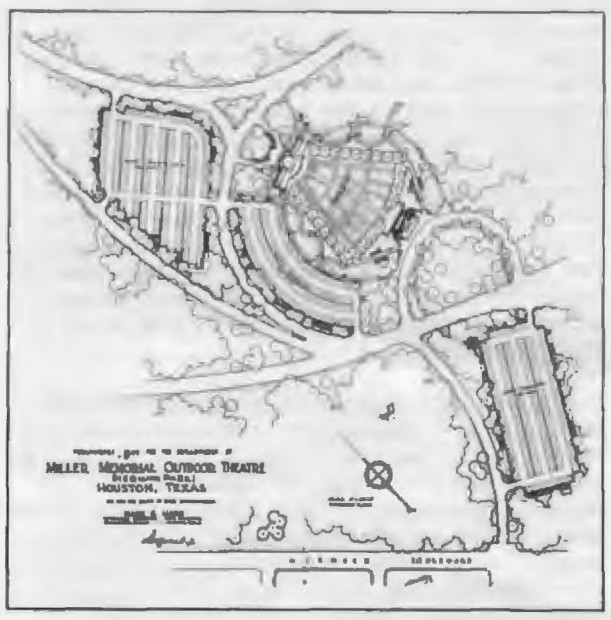
During 1948 and 1949 Fannin Street was cut through Hermann Park between the westernmost drive and Main Boulevard. This was to provide a direct connection between downtown Houston and the Texas Medical Center and to relieve traffic congestion on Main (which lost all but a narrow strip of the remaining center medians in 1940). Subsequently, a connection was made between the Fannin Street extension and San Jacinto Street to ease traffic circulation further. An unfortunate effect of this traffic engineering was that the parkland between Fannin and Main—now known as the Esplanade—became a residual corridor of greenery, and Fannin was established as Hermann Park's effective west boundary. This was confirmed in 1967 when the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs adopted as a civic project the construction of a high, landscaped berm along Fannin, between the main entrance and Sunset Boulevard. Its purpose was to shield the park from the sight and sound of traffic along Fannin. Street improvements also included an extension of Hermann Drive east of Jackson to connect with Almeda Road. In order that this intersection occur at a right angle, Hermann Drive curved away from the park boundary at its northeast corner. The resulting triangle of land became the site of the Jewish Community Center, which was built between 1949 and 1950.

Hare and Hare proposed, at the time the Fannin extension was being designed, that a museum center be built in Shadyside on the estate of former governor William P. Hobby and his wife, Oveta Culp Hobby. This would incorporate a new Museum of Natural History, axially aligned with the Sunken Garden and Hermann Drive. At the same time they proposed that a large fountain be constructed in the Sunken Garden. Because of its depressed, bowl-like configuration, the Sunken Garden had proved to be something of a traffic hazard, a problem that could be rectified by building above the curb line. None of these proposals was carried through, although the city did acquire an additional nine acres along Brays Bayou to compensate for the loss of the Hogg tract.

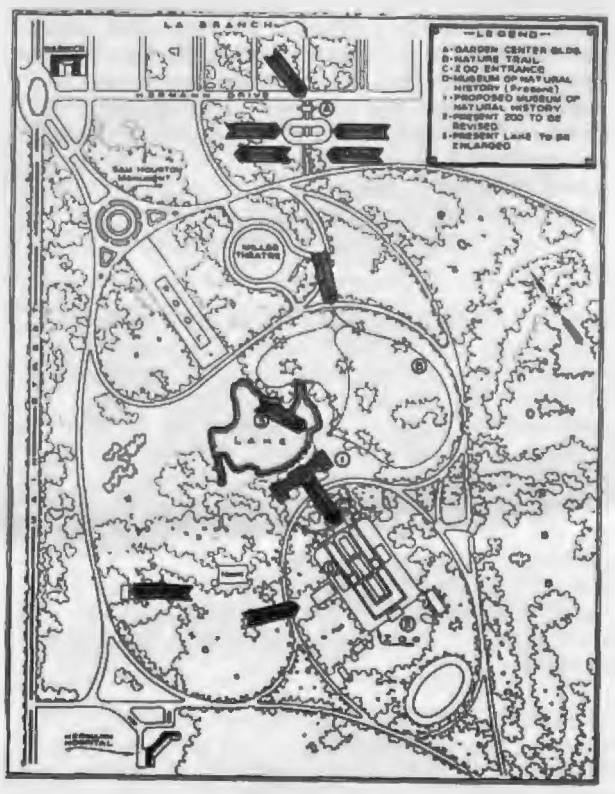
Other than the zoo improvements, no major work was done in Hermann Park during the 1950's except by the Harris County Flood District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A serious flood had occurred on Brays Bayou in 1949 which caused property owners in the South End of Houston to demand more effective flood control measures. In 1953 it was announced that a $5 million program would be undertaken to correct this problem on Brays Bayou; between 1956 and 1959 the channel was straightened and lined with concrete and the banks were stripped of all vegetation, completely denuding the MacGregor Parkway.

Throughout the 1950's the Museum of Natural History struggled to secure a new museum building. In 1959 a four acre site on Hermann Loop Drive was leased by the City of Houston to the Museum of Natural History; a three year fund drive culminated in the construction of the first phase of the museum's new building between 1963 and 1964, incorporating the Burke Baker Planetarium. A second phase, built between 1967 and 1969, resulted in the addition of 8,000 square feet of exhibition and administrative space. Between 1967 and 1969 a new Miller Outdoor Theater, designed by Eugene Werlin and Associates, was constructed on the site of the old Doric proscenium. A high, bermed lawn provided amphitheater-type seating in front of the new stage and orchestra. The columns of the old theater were salvaged and grouped around a circular pool to form the Mecom-Rockwell Colonnade in 1968. Four years earlier, the donors of this fountain, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Mecom, had constructed the Mecom Fountain in the Sunken Garden, sixteen years after Hare and Hare advanced their fountain design.

The protracted realization of facilities that had been required in Hermann Park since the 1940's underscored the lack of recognition and official support which the park, like so many other public properties in Houston, elicited. Even though many of the major improvements continued to be the result of private benefaction, it was



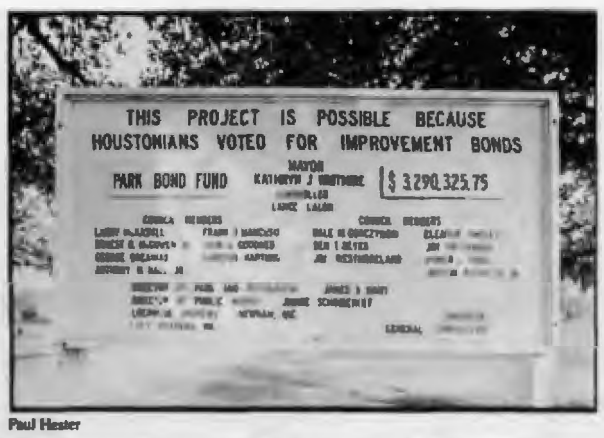
Project: Plan for Redevelopment of Miller Memorial Theater grounds, 1940, Hare and Hare, landscape architects. (Houston Metropolitan Research Center)



Site plan of Hermann Park showing existing and proposed development, 1943. (Houston Public Library)

Hermann Park Master Plan showing revision of auto circulation, 1972, Lockwood, Andrews and Newnam, Inc. and James A. Cummins, Inc.

Paul Hester



Paul Hester

View of northwest section of Hermann Park looking north, showing rectification of lake and construction of parking lots, December 1982.

View of northwest section of Hermann Park looking south, February 1983.

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Plan of the west half of Hermann Park, February 1983, showing siting of zoo commissary and service complex (shaded) scheduled for construction in 1983.

clear by the 1950's that the Civic Art movement of the 1910's and 1920's was spent. And while a reversal of this negligent attitude occured during the 1960's, it often seemed to substitute good intention for a lack of judgement and discrimination. This was evident in the Hermann Park Master Plan, prepared for the City of Houston during 1971 and 1972 by two engineering firms, Lockwood, Andrews and Newnam and James Cummins, Inc., and adopted in 1973 as the basis for subsequent park improvements. The 1972 master plan departed considerably from the Kessler and Hare and Hare genera' plans in an attempt to accommodate the numbers of people using the park and its facilities, the numbers of automobiles within the park and another expansion of the zoo. To accommodate through traffic, South MacGregor Way was cut through the park in 1981, alongside the existing, two-lane North MacGregor Way. As with the Fannin extension, this effectively created a new boundary line separating the park from what became a linear greenway and bayou trail. Within the park, the historic infrastructure has begun to be eliminated in a piecemeal fashion to discourage through traffic. Thus Hermann Lake Drive and Zoo Circle became residual stretches of service alleys, leaving only Golf Course Drive to provide access to a 1,434 car parking lot between the zoo and the golf course. Hermann Park Clubhouse, the most architecturally distinguished older building within the park, is marked in the master plan for demolition as is the Jewish Community Center, which was acquired by the City of Houston and presently is used as the Hermann Regional Recreation Center.

Zoo service buildings have spilled outside the enlarged oval of 1949 and the front gates have been demolished and replaced by the intrusive Kipp Aquarium, built in 1980–1982 with a bequest from Herbert A. Kipp. The Kipp Aquarium sits astride the main axis on the south shore of the Grand Basin, which was reshaped between 1981 and 1982. The master plan proposes that the Reflecting Basin be filled and that the formal promenade between the Sam Houston Monument and the Pioneer Memorial Shaft become an irregularly bounded, picturesque ramble. Parking and service facilities are spotted about the perimeter of the park forming yet another barrier between it and the surrounding city.

Since 1973 additions and alterations not contemplated in the master plan have occurred. The Chinese Teahouse and Garden were constructed along Hermann Drive at the south end of Crawford Street. In 1980 the Cravens Walkway—a network of paths intertwined between berms, raised planting beds and seating areas—was constructed in the Esplanade south of Sunset Boulevard to the designs of Joel Brand and Associates. Between 1980 and 1981 the Hermann Hospital Estate sponsored the construction of a memorial to George H. Hermann at the corner of Fannin Street and Outer Belt Drive, which consisted of Lonnie Joe Edward's standing bronze figure of Hermann set in a fountain display surrounded by a granite-paved court.

Hermann Park's history has been one of high hopes frustrated by a lack of popular understanding and support. It has received more attentive care than any other park in Houston and it is one of the most intensively used parks in the city. Yet even so, Hermann Park has never compelled the sort of civic loyalty with which New Yorkers, for instance, regard Central Park. It has failed to attain the symbolic importance of the Texas Medical Center or Rice University as a representative Houston place, although in terms of actual use it is perhaps more deserving of such recognition than either of its neighbors. It has been treated more like a natural resource than an artifact and has been subject to the sorts of abusive exploitation which Americans seem to reserve for natural resources. Since the 1940's Hermann Park has decreased in acreage, either through deaccessioning of property or on account of the routing of major thoroughfares which produce isolating barriers. This diminished acreage has been expected to accommodate expanding activities and increasing use. However, the issue of how far various activities can expand without disrupting other activities or the general park setting has yet to be raised. The issues of appropriate usage, conservation and preservation are only now beginning to crystallize. With the proposed formation of an ad-hoc committee for Hermann Park under the sponsorship of the South Main Center Association, the opportunity exists to create a forum where such issues can be addressed and resolved. Hermann Park can no longer continue to be whittled away thoughtlessly, especially as its resources become more and more valuable to Houston.

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Cite Seeing

Hermann Park Today

Hermann Park is one of the urban institutions of Houston, a public space where the whole city comes together. The natural features of the park—landscaped greenswards and gardens, stands of native tree growth and various bodies of water—are augmented by structures and places of varied purpose, character and condition. But as Paul Hester's photographs reveal, the popularity of Hermann Park has not insured its careful maintenance or determined public conservation. Instead, official carelessness, expedience and uncontrolled development of various zones within the park continue to erode the qualities of this unique Houston place.

Photographs by Paul Hester

Douglas Harvey

Douglas Harvey

From Less to Moore: New Proposals for Hermann Park

Drexel Turner

Hermann Park is frequently described as Houston's equivalent of Central Park, an analogy which, while not entirely wishful, nevertheless requires qualification. Hermann Park is approximately half the size (410 acres) of Central Park (843 acres). It begins not at the edge of, but several miles south of, the city's central business district. It is square in shape rather than long and narrow. Only two of its edges adjoin what might be considered a pedestrian-scaled urban fabric. Central Park was acquired and initially developed between 1853 and 1876 according to designs begun in 1858 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. It is perhaps the most remarkable civic work of 19th-century America—an elaborate array of greens, lakes, rambles and scenic invention which accommodates an intensity of uses extraordinary even for a large city. Hermann Park, acquired in 1914-15, was originally developed from plans prepared in 1916 by George E. Kessler. Unlike Olmsted, Kessler was led to contemplate a more modest program of improvements from the outset and even this was only partially realized.

Today Hermann Park remains an underdeveloped scenic and recreational resource. The northwest quadrant, which forms its main entrance and window to the city, is at once the most urban and accessible, yet neglected, precinct of the park. Paradoxically, it was the first section of the park for which Kessler prepared plans and the first to be developed to any extent. Kessler's plan, which recalled various aspects of Olmsted's entrance to Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York (1866) and the mall and lake sequence of Central Park, proposed a generously scaled series of spaces for what was intended to be Houston's most civic park. The half-mile long axis which served as the main entrance and chief organizing feature of Kessler's plan is today the city's most impressive Beaux-Arts public space, a product of the brief ascendancy of City Beautiful planning in Houston during the 1910's and 1920's.

Kessler's grand axis enters the park at its northwest corner, just across from The Museum of Fine Arts, and extends to the south shore of the Grand Basin, an artificial lake sited near the center of the park. The axis itself is a projection of the route of Montrose Boulevard into the park commencing with a traffic ellipse and fountain at the intersection of Montrose and Main. Montrose continues only a short distance into the park as a road before terminating at a smaller traffic rotary. The center of this rotary is marked by an arched pedestal bearing an equestrian statue of Sam Houston. Montrose veers left around the rotary to become Hermann Loop Drive while the axis continues into the park as a mall, the edges of which are defined by single rows of live oak trees. A long, narrow reflecting pool occupies the center of the mall, flanked by wide, grass-covered banks which form a promenade. The Pioneer Memorial Shaft, a 50-foot high pink granite obelisk, rises at the south end of the reflecting pool. The axis then traverses the lake before its progress is interrupted on the south shore by a low, circular aquarium building which occupies what was, until several years ago, the entrance plaza to the Houston Zoological Garden. On the other side of the aquarium, the axis resumes as a central pedestrian concourse about which the 45-acre zoo grounds are arranged.

Although the northwest quadrant of the park today is not entirely as Kessler had planned it, the shape of his scheme is still discernible. The rotary which Kessler had intended as the setting for a statue of George Hermann instead bears a monument to Sam Houston, although the arch which supports the statue is too small either to serve as a convincing gateway to the park or to project the presence of the equestrian statue down the axis as far south as the lake or as far north as The Museum of Fine Arts side of the traffic ellipse. To the east of the mall, where Kessler had called for a circular music pavilion, is the second Miller Outdoor Theater, an angular steel pavilion facing into an artificial hill which accommodates 12,000 spectators for concerts and theatrical performances. To the west of the mall are stands of pine trees and small expanses of lawn which no longer extend all the way to Main Street as depicted in Kessler's plan. They now stop several hundred feet sooner at Fannin Street, a parallel six-lane thoroughfare built in 1949, which forms the present west boundary of the park. The strip of trees left between Fannin and Main is now isolated from the park and little used. A west entrance to the park from Main Street opposite gate number two to the Rice University campus was shown in Kessler's plan but never built.

Only half of the 13-acre lake projected in Kessler's plan was actually realized. That part of the lake which was built, however, respected the disposition of Kessler's original design, but the character of its edges has recently been altered by a harshly aligned series of concrete retaining walls and metal guard rails. The large formal pavilion which Kessler had intended to terminate the main axis at the south shore of the lake failed to materialize altogether. Also omitted were the pergolas indicated for the north shore to either side of the mall and the boat landing indicated near the inlet at the west end of the lake. The two oval roadways which framed the mall and lake in Kessler's scheme have recently been removed except for the eastern-most arc which leads to a new 1,434-car parking lot near the east shore of the lake. A happier addition to Kessler's vision is the miniature railroad, opened in 1958, which criss-crosses the lake and environs. Although it suffers from chronic undercapitalization, the railroad is a much used but unobtrusive source of delight to parkgoers. The same cannot be said for the full-sized locomotive and tender recently sited on the east shore of the lake, a dissonant innovation Kessler could scarcely have anticipated.

The continuous north edge of meadows and trees which Kessler envisioned along Hermann "Boulevard" has given way to a congeries of unrelated structures and residual spaces. The western-most segment of this band, between Main and San Jacinto streets, has been sliced into unusable slivers by arteries feeding into Fannin Street from the gridiron north of Hermann Drive. The next block of parkland to the east, between San Jacinto and Caroline streets, is occupied by a water storage facility, pumping station and electrical power station which form a barrier between Hermann Drive and the Museum of Natural Science, built within the park on a site facing south onto Hermann Loop Drive. Further east, between Caroline and LaBranch streets, is the Houston Garden Center, a domestically-scaled structure with meeting rooms and offices served by 250-car horseshoe-shaped parking lot. Two unexceptional fan-shaped gardens adjoin the center to the west and east. East of LaBranch is a small Chinese pavilion, donated by the city of Taipei in 1978, which has occasioned the preparation of plans for an extensive Chinese garden to surround it. At no point along Hermann Drive does the park acknowledge the adjoining neighborhood, an attitude reinforced by the presence of a high chain-link fence extending from San Jacinto eastward. Sidewalks are provided only intermittently, a slight improvement from the Fannin Street edge of the park which has none at all.

Yet for all the park's present disarray, it is still possible to retrieve, in spirit if not always in detail, those features of Kessler's plan which remain relevant and appropriate. It is also possible to proceed beyond the plan, to elaborate and embellish the park with a level of art and invention which earlier resources did not allow so that the result more nearly corresponds to the resources and needs of a city the size of Houston today. To this end the Municipal Art Commission in 1981 engaged Charles Moore and Barton Phelps of the Urban Innovations Group—the non-profit professional practice arm of the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of California at Los Angeles—to prepare proposals for further development of the northwest quadrant of Hermann park. The proposals were prepared in cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation of the City of Houston and with the assistance of the School of Architecture, Rice University. Throughout they retain Kessler's plan of 1916 as the cardinal point of departure and focus on measures to (1) strengthen the scenic impact and cohesion of Kessler's central axis, (2) enlarge the ornamental water several fold to permit boating and related activities, (3) upgrade the visual, acoustical and functional characteristics of Miller Outdoor Theater and (4) enrich the incidental recreational amenity of the park with a variety of subsidiary elements from pergolas to concession areas and scenic overlooks.

In the case of the central axis, Moore and Phelps have attempted to make its processional elements richer and more readily perceived beginning with the Sam Houston Memorial at the entrance to the park. They propose to replace the 18-foot high arched pedestal which presently supports the 15-foot high equestrian statue of Sam Houston with a triple arched structure 42 feet high to create a more emphatic gateway to the park and to permit the mounted figure to command the full prospect of the axis for 1000 feet in either direction. In composition the new arch bears a distant kinship to Sir Edwin L. Lutyens's design for the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval, France (1927-32). In height it is much smaller than either the Lutyens arch (130 feet) or the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch by John H. Duncan of 1892 (80 feet) which marks the entrance to Prospect Park.

The woods to either side of the present mall are filled in and reshaped with pleached evergreen trees—perhaps magnolias—to create a forced perspective converging on the Pioneer Memorial Shaft. The sides of the trees are studded with small lights which illuminate the mall at night. The reflecting pool also takes on the trapezoidal shape of the walls of pleached trees while five howdah-capped gazebos, progressively diminishing in size, line either edge of the pool to strengthen the pespectival effect. The reflecting pool flows into a circular basin surrounding the site of the Pioneer Memorial Shaft. The obelisk itself is lifted 30 feet into the air atop the back of a stylized Art Déco elephant, which allows the shaft to attain a more emphatic visual connection with both the north end of the mall and the south shore of the lake. The elephant upholding the obelisk is flanked by two smaller elephants canted slightly in plan. The three elephants become fountains, with water dripping from their howdahs and spouting from their trunks and tusks.

The design of the elephants is derived in part from the Elephant Towers at the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939 in San Francisco (Bakewell and Weihe, architects; Donald Macky, sculptor) which Moore and the Urban Innovations Group adapted for the "Buildings for Best Products" exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in 1979. The addition of the Pioneer Memorial Shaft to the central elephant recalls Gianlorenzo Bernini's Elephant and Obelisk monument in the Piazza della S. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome (1667), thus continuing the play of Baroque allusions along the mall. The elephants were in fact the elements responsible for Charles Moore's initial involvement with the park. In 1980 Moore was asked by members of the Municipal Art Commission if it would be possible to adapt his Best Products exhibition entry for use as a gateway to the Houston Zoo. That undertaking was preempted by the construction of the Kipp Aquarium, Zoo Administration Building and Entrance Pavilion on the site which had previously served as the entrance plaza to the zoo. The chairman of the commission, Isabel Wilson, and the director of the Parks and Recreation Department, James Hart, subsequently invited Moore to incorporate the elephants into a more extensive proposal for developing the northwest quadrant of the park. And so the elephants eventually came to be stationed on the north shore of the lake in company with the Pioneer Memorial Shaft.

The elephants not only herald the approach to the zoo but also the intersection of the mall with the cross axis described by the projection of Sunset Boulevard into the park, an intersection which determined the siting of the Pioneer Memorial Shaft in 1936. Moore and Phelps have rendered the cross axis from Sunset Boulevard to the Elephant Fountain as an *allée* leading through the trees. The *allée* permits the elephants and obelisk to be seen at a distance from Sunset, Fannin and Main, and also provides a new pedestrian entry to the park. The beginning of this entryway at Sunset and Fannin is marked by two pylons which further frame the view of elephants and obelisk. The pylons correspond in scale to those of the main gate of Rice University, just to the west of the new Sunset entrance to the park.

A bridge, bowed in section and plan, connects the circular basin of the elephant fountain with the lake beyond. The twice-bowed bridge recalls the swelling oval apertures of Calvert Vaux's cast-iron Gothic bridges along the bridle path in Central Park and punctuates the progress of the axis from the mall to the lake. The prospect of the axis is closed on the south shore of the lake by a long, narrow pavilion situated in approximately the spot prescribed by the Kessler plan. It consists of a crescent-shaped arcade which supports a second, terrace, level, parts of which are shaded by lath canopies. The raised terrace provides a vantage point from which to survey the vista back across the lake to the elephants and obelisk, down the mall and to the gateway arch and statue of Sam Houston. The arcade beneath the terrace is actually an extension of an intermittently pergola-covered walkway which originates on Fannin Street opposite entrance two to the Rice campus, where a west entrance to the park is established in accord with Kessler's plan. The entrance is served by an off-street bus stop. It is marked by two howdah-capped gazebos which flank the walkway and act both as bus shelters and gateposts. The walkway crosses the lake by means of a pergola-covered causeway resembling in its disposition the ford-bridge across Lullwater in Prospect Park. Once again western interpretations of Asian motifs are brought into play. The pergola-covered causeway acquires Chinese Chippendale railings, like those abutting the mall of Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia at Charlottesville (1826). The arcade is derived from the south belvedere of the Viceroy's House in New Delhi by Lutyens (1912-31) while the *chattri*-shapes of the canopies which shade the terrace above

Aerial perspective looking north, proposed improvements to Hermann Park, Charles Moore and John Echlin, delineators, 1983.

recall similar devices employed by Lutyens for the Indian capital and by Olmsted and Vaux for pavilions in Central and Prospect parks.

The attention which Moore and Phelps have given to the main and subsidiary axes of the park as formal elements is counter-balanced by the augmentation and picturesque treatment proposed for the ornamental lake, which would be expanded from its present 6½ acre size to slightly more than 20 acres. The resulting watercourse would accommodate boating—an activity Kessler had envisioned in his proposal for a 13 acre Grand Basin—and would be comparable in size to Olmsted's similarly situated lake of 22 acres in Central Park but considerably smaller than the 60-acre lake which serves Prospect Park's 526 acre expanse. The enlarged lake is organized in much the same way as Kessler's original scheme—a lozenge-shaped body of water parallel to the cross axis from Sunset Boulevard with a loop extending south along Fannin Street. However Moore and Phelps have adjusted the diagram to save trees where the east section of Kessler's lake would have fallen and have exaggerated the southwest ear of Kessler's lake to provide a stronger link with the southwest quadrant of the park.

Miller Outdoor Theater is another focal point of the proposals by Moore and Phelps. Completed in its present form in 1969, it is rivaled only by the Houston Zoological Garden as an activity generator in the park. As a topographical feature, the 20-foot rise of its artificial hill is exceptional in comparison to the flatness of the rest of the park and the rest of Houston. Successful though it is, Miller Theater nevertheless requires substantial modifications to improve its qualities as a performance facility, both physically and economically. Sightlines and acoustics need to be altered. Stage support areas require expansion as do concession and restroom facilities. At present there is no way to limit the size of audiences to appropriate numbers or to permit income-producing bookings for which admission might be charged as a means of subsidizing and upgrading the theater's schedule of free performances. On a more prosaic level, the self-oxidizing steel roof and superstructure which cover the 1,700 seats nearest the stage have deteriorated to the point where they must be replaced, as is also the case with the stagehouse roof.

In response to this agenda, Moore and Phelps have attempted to provide Miller Theater with a level of amenity and operational efficiency comparable to such exemplary outdoor performance facilities as Wolf Trap and the Hollywood Bowl. They have also endeavored to keep its outward profile relatively subdued, as it is today, concealing it with artificial topography while enriching the scenographic qualities of the space within. The model chosen for the inside is that of the "atmospheric" movie palaces of the 1920's, which attempted to create the illusion that the audience was seated in an open-air courtyard. To heighten the effect ceilings were depicted as sky—a conceit often abetted by twinkling light fixtures and even cloud machines.
Miller Theater is reinterpreted as an *al fresco* atmospheric theater using the same Art Déco-Moghul vocabulary devised for the Elephant Fountain. The shelter covering the fixed seating is replaced by a new proscenium structure, with a series of raised box seats lining its sides. The structure accommodates 2,500 fixed seats and can be closed off by means of articulated pocket doors to permit shows to be lighted during the day and to allow a limited winter season if desired. Beyond the shelter are a series of grassed terraces accommodating an additional 10,000 spectators and, at the crest of the hill, a steeply raked loggia of grandstand seats for another 2,500 patrons. The loggia encloses the theater from the rear, with concessions and restrooms tucked underneath. The sides of the grassed terrace are enveloped by a low-rise "townscape" of howdah-like elements which, like the loggia, contain concessions and restrooms. The regrading of the hillside seating area would be accomplished with fill from excavation of the new sections of the lake, at a savings to both projects. The increased height of the hill, achieved through regrading and the addition of the loggia at its crest, would be sufficient to contain sound which now escapes over the crest of the hill into surrounding neighborhoods. The back side of the hill would remain much as it is today except for the introduction of a zig-zag ramp to provide visual interest and a gentler means of reaching the crest.

Finally, the architects have attempted to enrich and enliven the park's rather meager repertoire of ancillary diversions and thus its ability to entertain the steady stream of citizens it receives on weekends or holidays. Row boat and paddle boat concessions, like those in Central Park and the Boston Public Garden, are envisioned for the lake which in its expanded state could easily accommodate such activity. A small flotilla of stationary boat pavilions form destination points for rowers and passengers on the other marine craft plying the lake. Such pavilions might also serve as bandstands, picnic spots or even as stages for small performances. The pergola-covered causeway and the howdah-like structures lining the mall would also accommodate picnicing as well as sitting, reading and table games.

Just as Olmsted's plan for Central Park included a small restaurant, the Casino (which flourished on the Fifth Avenue side of the mall from 1864 until it was demolished in 1934), Moore and Phelps have provided a modest café, most of it out-of-doors and all of it catered to avoid the necessity of large kitchen and service areas. The café faces onto the Elephant Fountain and sits atop a large, arced terrace spanning the transverse canal which extends from Miller Theater to the new section of the lake along the alignment of the recently vacated Hermann Lake Drive—an arrangement suggested by the Belvedere Castle in Central Park which spans a depressed traffic artery, 79th Street. The span connects to an island promontory. A Hindu-like tempietto sits atop the promontory overlooking the lake like the tower of the Belvedere Castle. At night, row boats and paddle boats would be nested on the water beneath the terrace. The miniature railroad which skirts the shore of the present lake would be more than doubled in length while still maintaining its figure-eight configuration, knotted at just the point it crosses the axis of the mall. The route would include a new tunnel passing through the island promontory adjoining the Elephant Fountain terrace, a variety of trestle bridges criss-crossing the waterways, and at least one, perhaps several, new stations. Rolling stock for the Lilliputian railroad line would eventually be upgraded, perhaps replaced with railroad cars originally designed by Ray and Charles Eames for a now defunct miniature railroad in Griffin Park in Los Angeles.

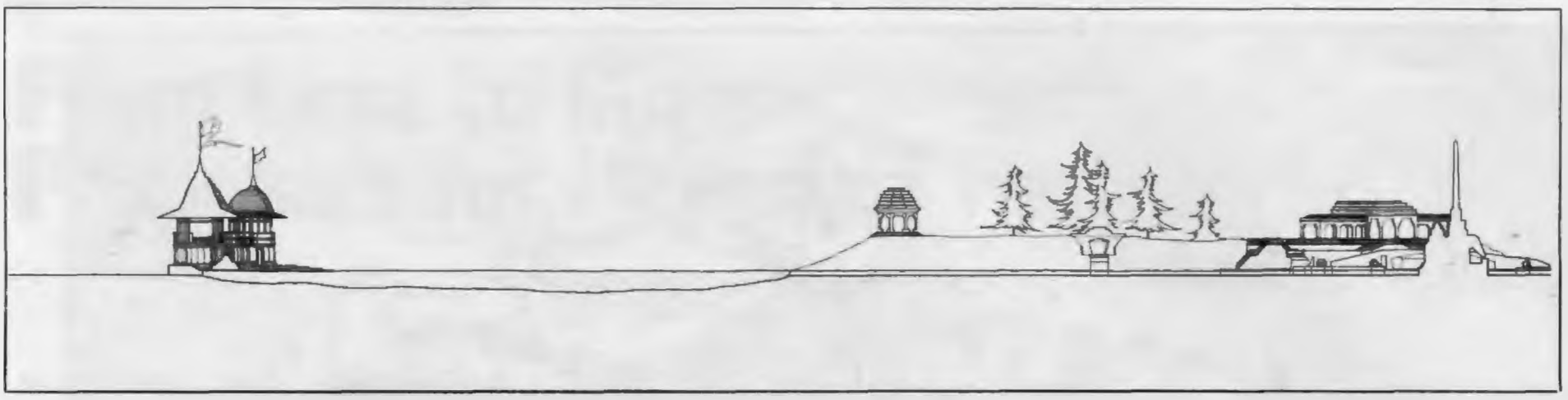
Similar care will be devoted to more pervasive details of the landscape, which will incorporate reproduction Lutyens benches and lamp standards modeled after those originally used on the grounds of Rice University. Infill plantings of trees will augment existing wooded areas. The ragged single file of widely-spaced live oaks shielding the park from heavy traffic along Fannin Street will be thickened with a staggered double row of trees planted in files, just as Kessler did on Main Street along what was then the west edge of Hermann Park.

Moore and Phelps have purposely deferred consideration of the north edge of the park along Hermann Drive. It too stands in need of remedial attention. It is slivered by north-south feeder streets; separated from the neighborhood adjoining the park by chain-link fencing; and cluttered with low-order public utility installations, a sprawling, minimally developed garden center and several large parking lots, one of which also contains a full-size locomotive and tender like that stationed on the east shore of the lake. But for the time-being, resources allocated to the northwest quadrant are intended to resurrect and embellish the heart of Kessler's plan, leaving the margins until later.

Although the proposals contemplated in the plan by Moore and Phelps are still schematic in nature, they are sufficiently developed to permit preliminary estimates of cost. The construction (but not the outfitting) of the basic improvements envisioned—with the exception of Miller Outdoor Theater—would probably require at least $6 million and could be accomplished in several phases. The improvements to Miller Theater would cost at least $4 million exclusive of fixtures and equipment. Neither seems an unreasonable sum in light of Hermann Park's position as the principal park of the Houston municipal system, its age and its history of underdevelopment and neglect. The cost of new parking lots, roads and walkways, conversion of former roadways to parkland and lake rectification completed since 1978 amounts to $7.8 million for two phases. A third phase will soon be under contract. As a private benefaction, the Hermann Hospital Estate provided $864,000 for a new entrance plaza at the southwest corner of the park completed in 1981. Recent improvements to the Houston Zoo have required similar outlays—$3.2 million for the Kipp Aquarium, Zoo Administration Building and Entrance Pavilion, completed in 1981, and $5.4 million for the large cat display facility now under construction. Astroworld, a profit-making venture, has recently invested $10 million in the construction of a 15-acre aquatic recreation "environment" which will accommodate swimming as well as boat rides. Considering that land adjoining the north and west edges of Hermann Park is now valued in excess of $100 per square foot, an investment on the order of $5 per square foot, as envisioned in Moore's plan for 50 acres of the northwest quadrant of the park, seems slight.

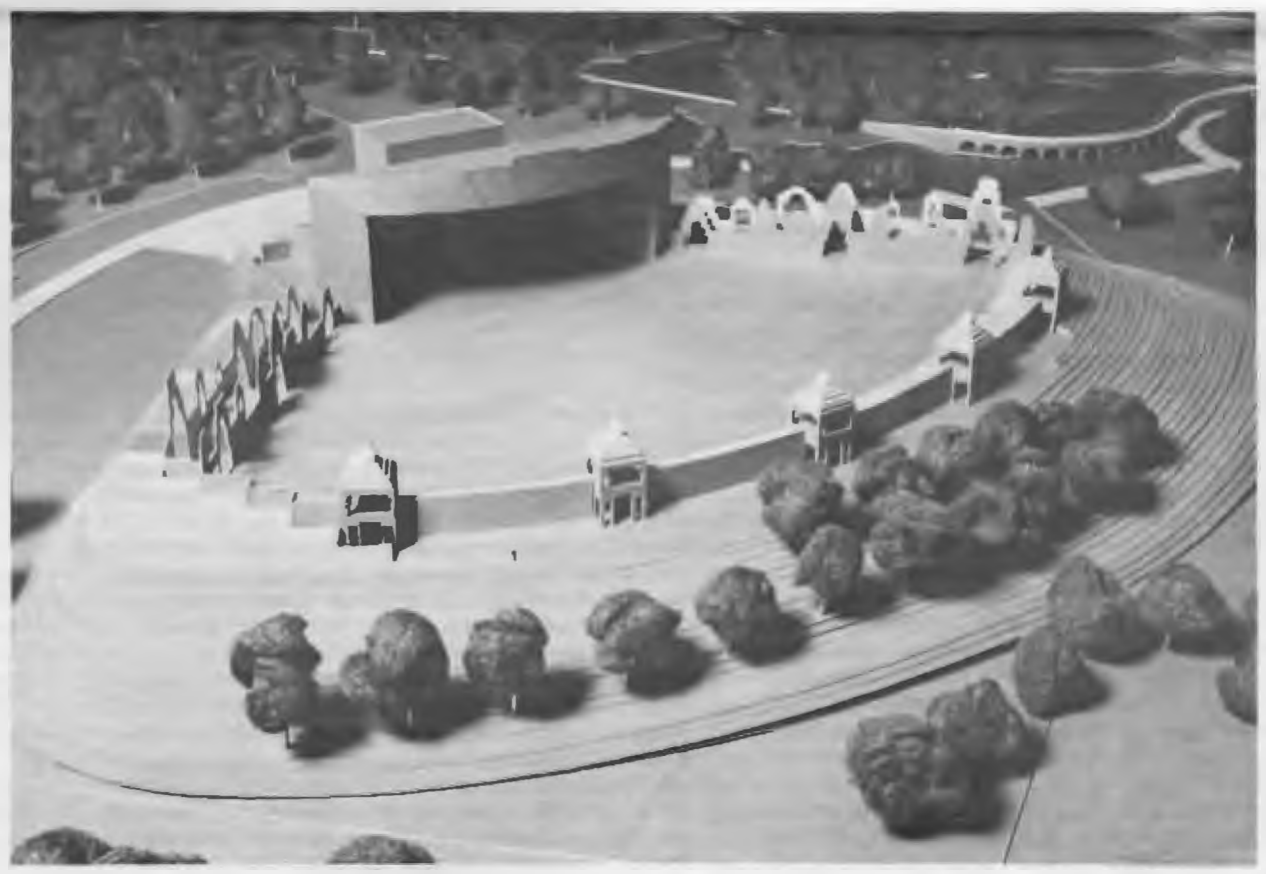
Implementation of the plan by Charles Moore and Barton Phelps of the Urban Innovations Group must await review and acceptance by the newly appointed Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Donald Olson. Should the new director so recommend, complete or partial funding of the first phase of improvements could be included in the bond proposition which the city administration plans to submit for voter approval in early 1984. Were the issue approved, construction might begin in early 1985.

Hermann Park and its environs typify in microcosm the condition of civic art in Houston today: public squalor in the midst of private affluence, to use John Kenneth Galbraith's phrase. But it also provides, with the vision offered by Moore and Phelps, the opportunity to create an exception to this rule; for the city to extend to its citizens the sort of civic amenity New Yorkers take for granted in Central Park. To abet this process the South Main Center Association is investigating the feasibility of a special conservancy for Hermann Park to stimulate enlightened public and private investment in the reclamation and improvement of the park, modeled after the already very effective Central Park conservancy founded in 1980 in New York. By taking the initiative in commissioning the plan prepared by Charles Moore and Barton Phelps, the Municipal Art Commission has provided an immediate and deserving focus for such a conservancy.

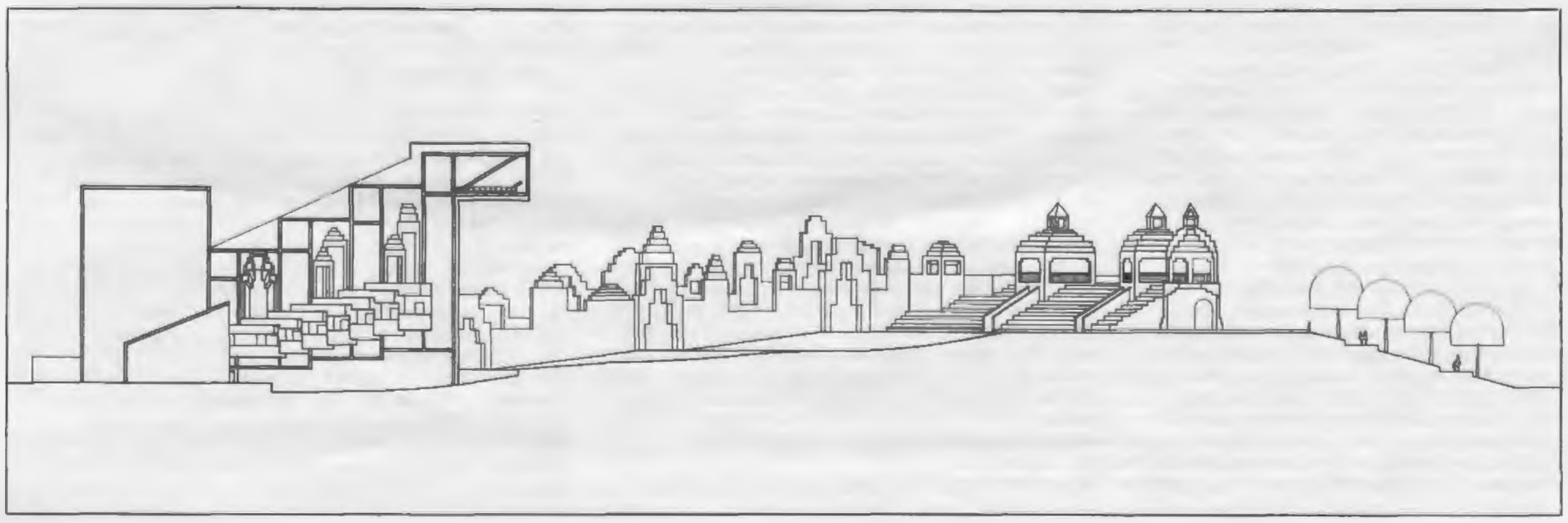


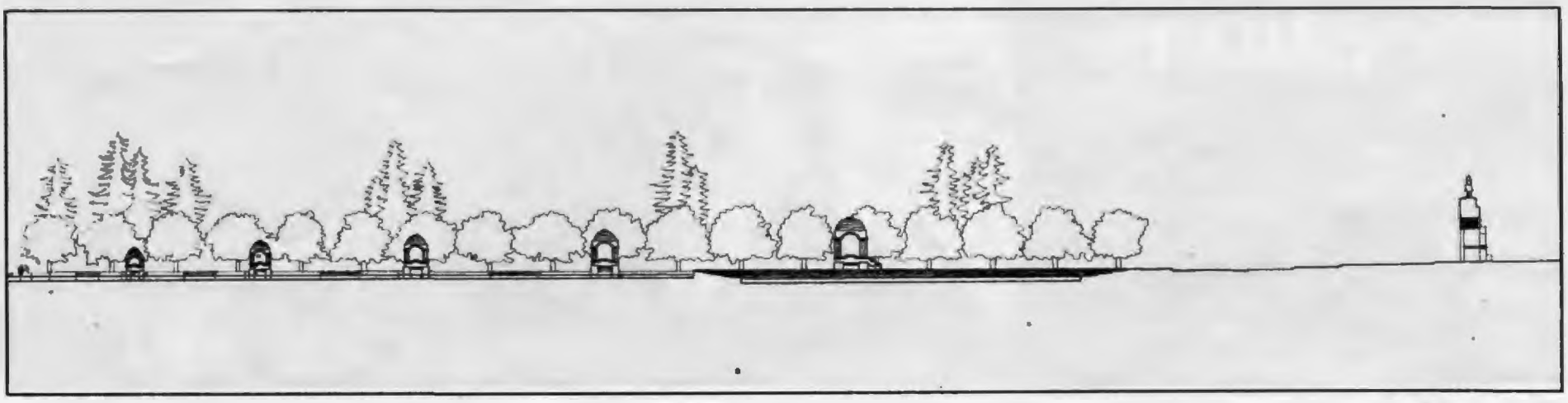
Kiyoshi Tsuchiya

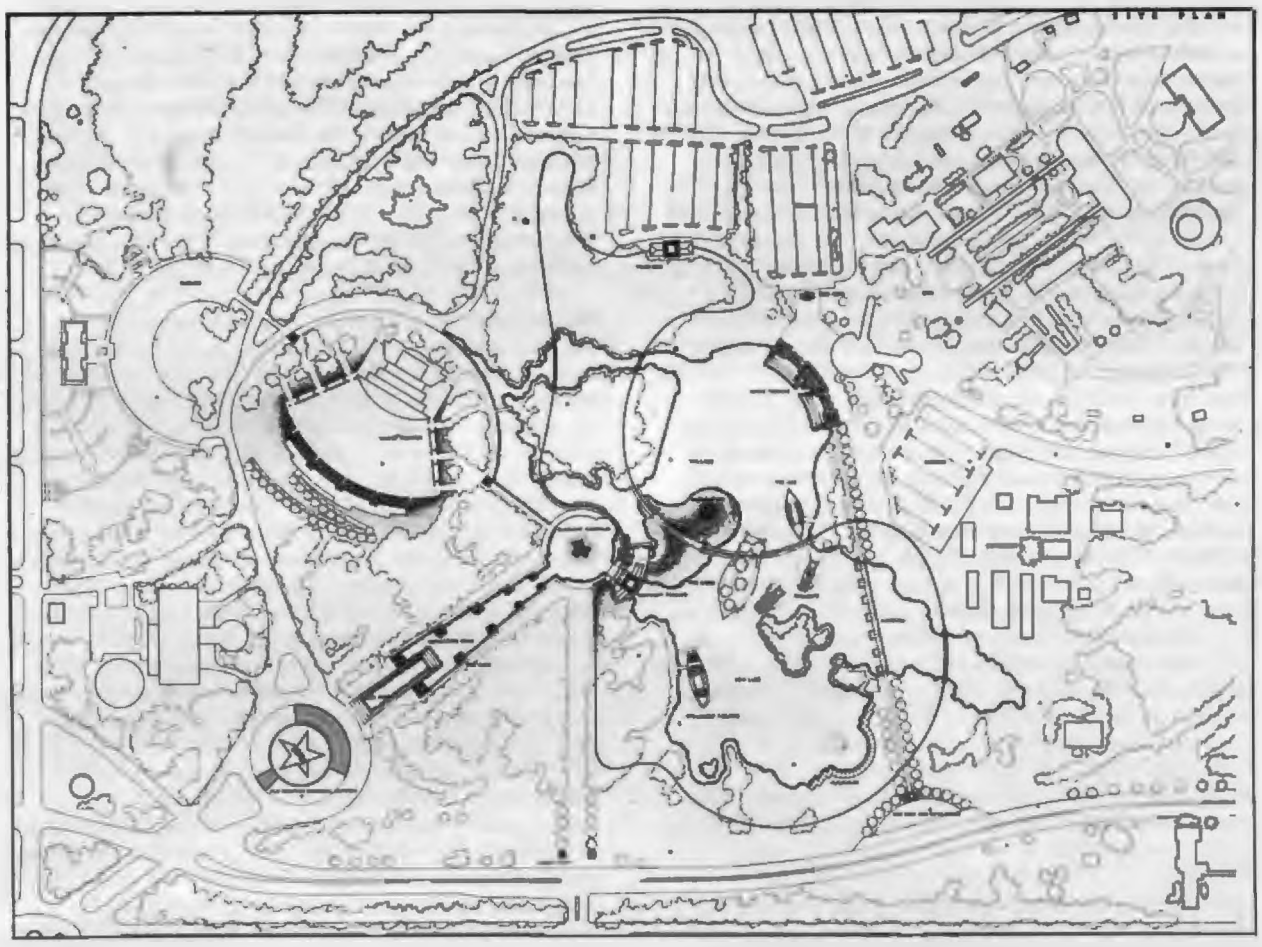
Proposals for Hermann Park prepared by Charles Moore and Barton Phelps of the Urban Innovations Group for the Municipal Art Commission in cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation of the City of Houston, 1982–83.
Above—section through main axis from south (left) to north showing pavilion and arcade on south shore of lake; promontory overlook; miniature railroad tunnel; oval bridge; terrace cafe and boathouse; circular basin with elephant fountain and obelisk; reflecting pool and bench shelters; gateway arch and statue of Sam Houston. Immediately above—view of model looking southeast. Right—model of Miller Theater. Below—section through Miller Theater from south (left) to north. Opposite page: Above—(left) Plan of Proposed Improvements to Hermann Park, Northwest, *1983 Charles Moore, Barton Phelps and the Urban Innovations Group; (upper right) George E. Kessler,* Plan for North and Principal Entrance to Hermann Park, *1916; (lower right)* Central Park, *New York, 1858–78 Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, detail of map of the park as it appeared in 1873 Middle—(left to right) model of elephant fountain, obelisk and oval bridge;* Elephant and Obelisk, Piazza della Minerva, *Rome, 1667 Gianlorenzo Bernini; side elevation (expanded) of elephant fountain and obelisk; front elevation of zoo gate arch; front elevation of gateway arch and statue of Sam Houston. Bottom—(upper left) north (lake) elevation of pavilion and arcade; (middle left) west elevation of terrace cafe and boathouse, south elevation of promontory overlook; (lower left) south elevation of oval bridge, elevation of miniature railroad tunnel entrance; (upper right) side and rear elevations of "galley" island; (middle right) front, side and rear elevations of "galleon;" (lower right) side elevations of "ark" and "steamboat."*

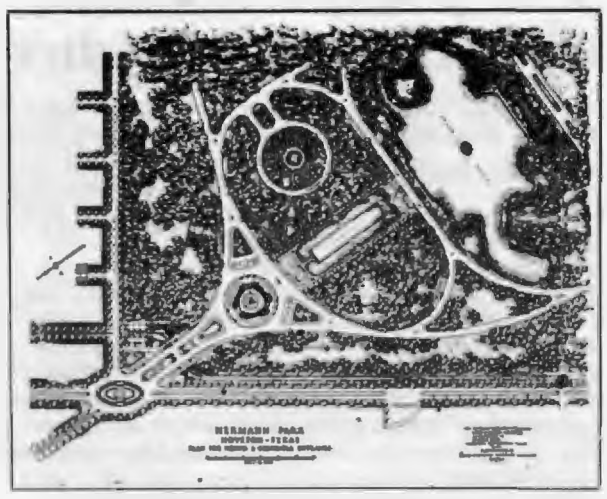


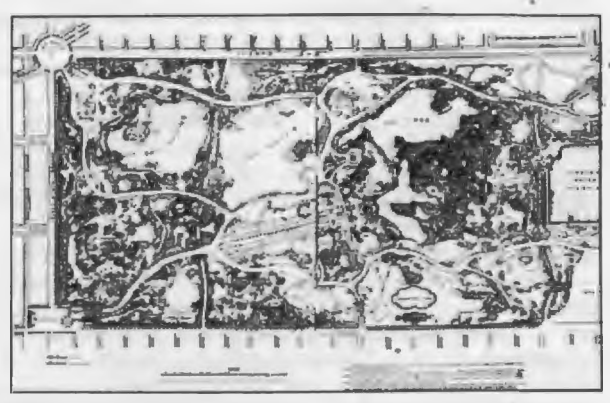
Kiyoshi Tsuchiya

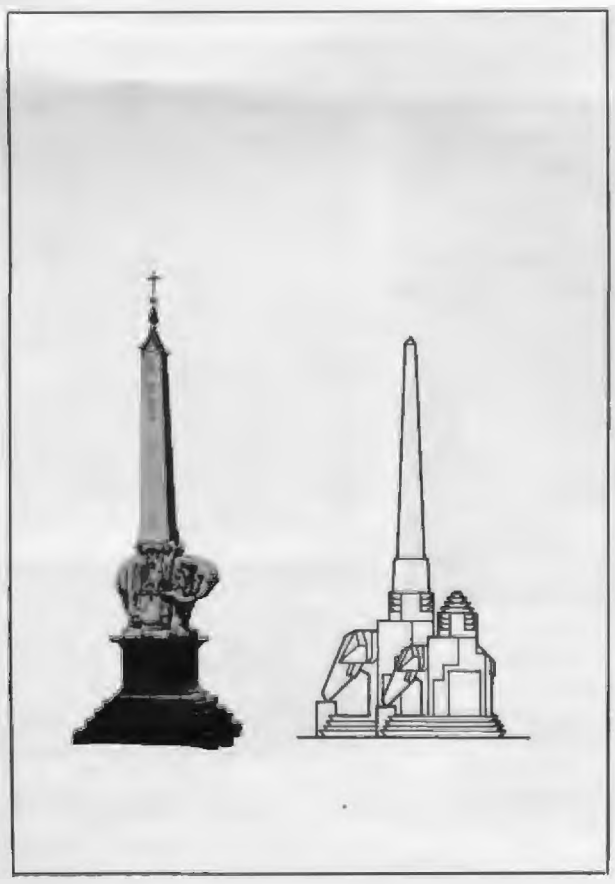


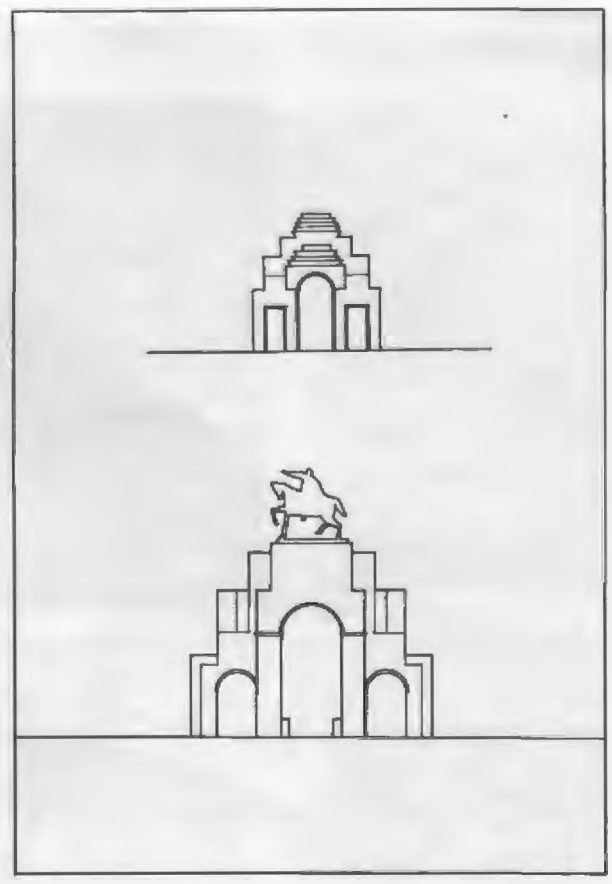


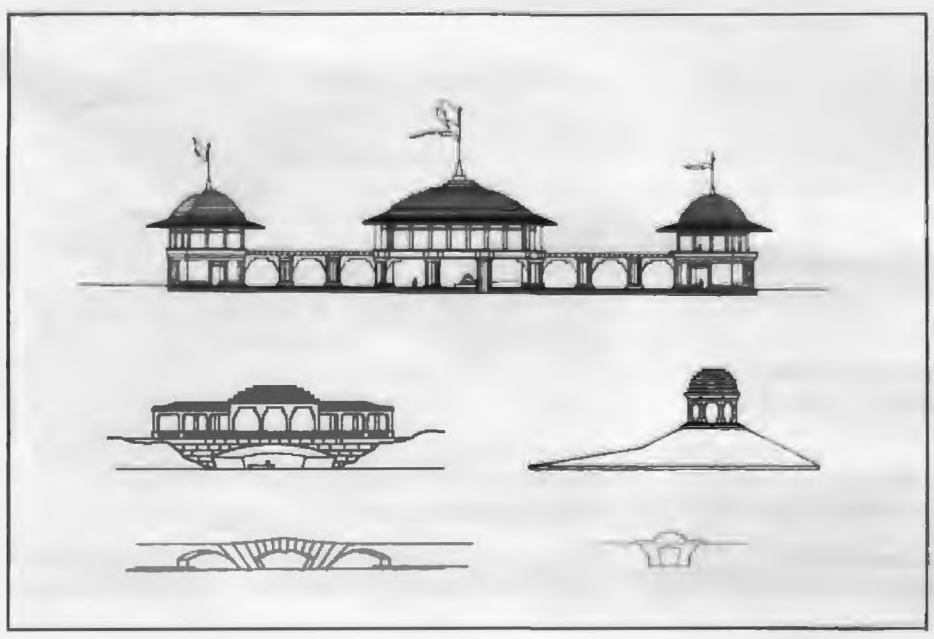


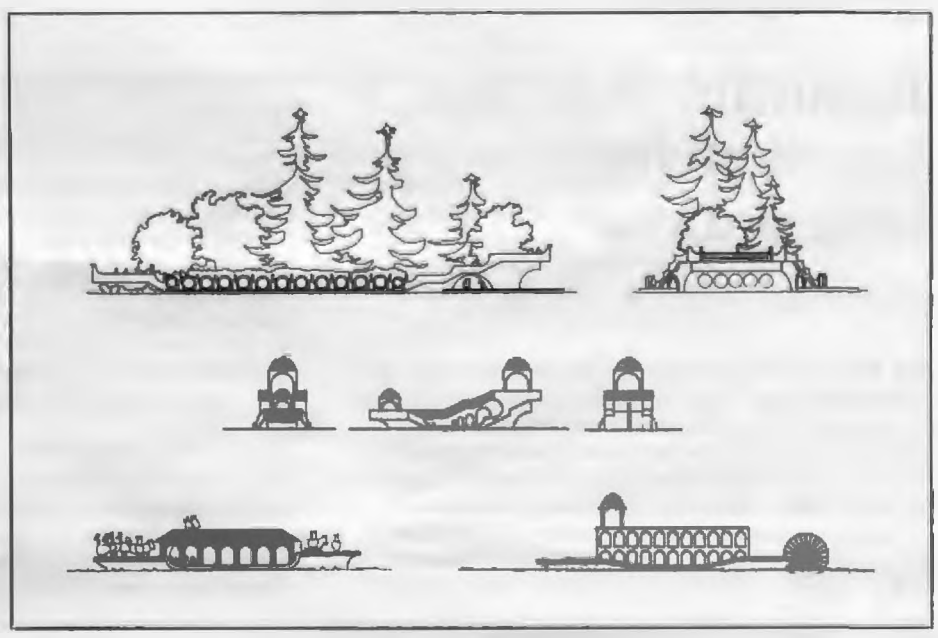












Citeations

The Complete HHR, or Richardson Redux

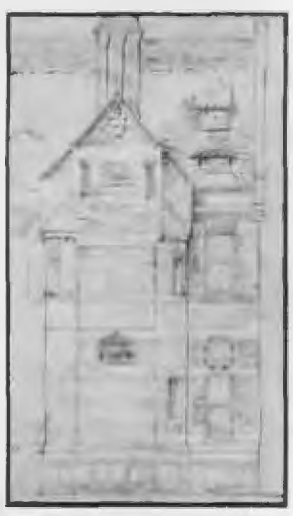
H.H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works

In his classic book, *The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and his Times,* Henry-Russell Hitchcock called Richardson "not the first modern architect" but "the last great traditional architect." In light of more recent studies, it seems that Richardson was both the heroic, forward-looking artist presented by Hitchcock and Scully, and a solid, professional, commercially successful late Victorian architect whose best works merited the enormous acclaim accorded them by critics, and whose lesser works were no better or worse than those of his contemporaries in the 1870's and 80's. Hitchcock's comment notwithstanding, his vivid portrayal of Richardson as a tragic hero crying out in the wilderness of late 19th-century American architecture has colored our understanding of the period in a way which suggests that Richardson's predilections were those of a later generation of functionalists. "Had Richardson lived to build things comparable to the second Leiter Building and the Boston Public Library," he wrote in 1936, "the effect of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago need not have been so catastrophic." From the vantage point of 1983, and the fuller appreciation of 19th-century architecture which recent history has given us, Richardson may appear to stand in a different relationship to the architecture of his times. Though he will no doubt always be considered one of America's greatest architects—and deservedly so—the achievements of his predecessors and successors can now be seen in a more positive light, proving that he was not the last great traditional architect after all.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner's handsome and exhaustively researched new book, *H.H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works,* allows us for the first time to view the complete spectrum of Richardson's *oeuvre*. In it we can see in clear plans and photographs the buildings and projects of Gambrill and Richardson's early years prior to the "breakthrough" buildings of 1872, Trinity Church and the F.W. Andrews House. Major early buildings such as the Brattle Square Church (1869–73), Buffalo State Hospital (1869–80) and Hampden County Courthouse (1871–74) are given relatively full presentation for the first time. Richardson's masterpieces and better known mature works, such as the Watts Sherman House (1874–76), Ames Gate Lodge (1880–81), Trinity Church and Rectory, New York State Capitol (1875–1886), Allegheny County Courthouse (1883–88), Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1885–87), and his magnificent series of libraries can be seen in accurate plans, archival photographs, drawings, rare interior views, and contemporary photographs. Extraordinary unexecuted designs, such as the quaint Cottage Project of 1867, the Connecticut State Capitol Competition entry of 1871–72 (reminiscent of Ecole des Beaux-Arts student projects of the 1850's in plan) and the Young Men's Association Library of 1884 are given a description in text and drawings. And for students and Richardson buffs who may wish to travel from Wyoming to Boston in search of the master's work, Ochsner has even provided a gazeteer of addresses (by Zip Code!) and a series of maps locating both extant and demolished buildings in the U.S. Here is the complete H.H. Richardson—85 built structures and 65 unexecuted projects—chronicling the 20 years of his prolific career from 1866 to 1886.

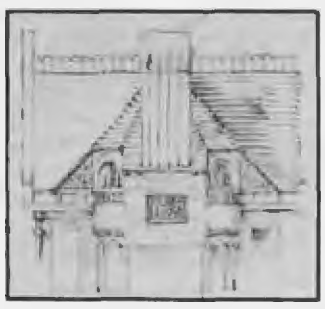
The book is organized as a chronological catalogue, with each entry containing a text section, reference listing, archival resource listing, and photographs. Information is provided on clients, collaborators, history of the design, and, perhaps most interestingly, how the commission was received. The author has unearthed many illuminating details about Richardson's practice, his clients, and the liaisons which brought him his important buildings. The history of the architectural profession has only recently become a topic of study by architectural historians. This book, along with monographs on such major 19th-century figures as Richard Norman Shaw and Richardson's major rival, Richard Morris Hunt, and James O'Gorman's study on Richardson's drawings of 1974, will help to fill out our rather hazy picture of the practices of the first organized professional architects in England and the U.S.

Richardson's major clients, many of whom were Harvard graduates, are fascinating figures with their own success stories. William Dorsheimer, the Buffalo attorney and influential New York politician who helped the architect win several commissions in Buffalo and Albany, including the controversial New York State Capitol in 1875, was introduced to the firm by Frederick Law Olmsted. Richardson did a rather conservative house for him in Buffalo in 1868, thereby winning his patronage for many years to come. James A. Rumrill, son of a wealthy jewelry manufacturer, was a close friend of the architect at Harvard, and helped him to garner his first large commission, Unity Church, Springfield, in 1866, among others. Perhaps the most interesting of Richardson's patrons was the Ames family of North Easton, Massachusetts—already a wealthy dynasty of tool manufacturers and railroad financiers in 1877, when Gambrill and Richardson did the private Oliver Ames Free Library. F.L. Ames, son of Oliver Ames II and a member of Gambrill's class at Harvard, was responsible for the firm's involvement with several family memorials, while also retaining the architect to design the unique Gate Lodge to his estate (1880–81), three stores including the Boston Wholesale Store of 1882–83, and the Old Colony Railroad Station in North Easton. Ames was a man of wide-ranging business and personal interests—a director of the Union Pacific Rail-



Left: Rectory for Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts, 1879–1880, H.H. Richardson, architect, Preliminary elevation study. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)

Below: Hay House, Washington, D.C., 1884–1886 (Demolished), H.H. Richardson, architect. Preliminary elevation study. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)



Left and above: Rectory for Trinity Church, Four studies of Newberry Street elevation. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)

Above: Glessner House, Chicago, Illinois, 1885–1887, H.H. Richardson, architect, Preliminary elevation study. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)

Beautiful Sketches but Sketchy Descriptions

H.H. Richardson: Late Houses

The Rice University School of Architecture's Farish Gallery staged an exhibition of H.H. Richardson drawings in October and November of 1982. The exhibition, entitled "H.H. Richardson: Late Houses," consisted of drawings of 19 Richardson houses executed between 1872 and 1889. The guest curator was Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, who also delivered a lecture on Richardson's houses at The Museum of Fine Arts on 27 October. Drexel Turner, Farish Gallery Director, assisted in assembling and hanging the show.

As an exhibition of architectural drawings, "Late Houses" offered much to delight the eye and educate viewers in the types and styles produced by the finest of America's 19th-century architectural offices. Study sketches, finished plans and elevations, office presentation perspectives, and some detail sketches were presented, along with a small photo of each house and a brief description.

The most interesting portions of "Late Houses" were the various groups of study sketches—notably of the Glessner House, Hay and Adams Houses, and Bigelow House—which treated a particular problem of massing, elevation or detail. In the Glessner House, several studies of an engaged tower or turret, quite complex and grandiose, resulted in the understated treatment of that element in the final building. An extraordinary series of tiny detail studies for the Hay and Adams Houses (which received the most extensive coverage of any building in the exhibition) showed the intensity of refinement which Richardson and his draftsmen were capable of, putting to rest any charge that Richardson was an architect obsessed only with massing. Although, as James O'Gorman observed in *Selected Drawings of H.H. Richardson and His Office: A Centennial of His Move To Boston, 1874* (Harvard College Library, 1974), Richardson's infirmity in his later years prevented him from making more than a few basic sketches for each design, he must certainly have taken an active interest in certain formal problems which could be studied and restudied by draftsmen under his supervision. Various exterior perspective sketches presented in the exhibition also revealed a process of picturesque refinement in silhouette and massing, a more characteristic Richardsonian concern.

Many of the drawings, some done in soft pencil, some in ink, and some in pen and wash, were quite beautiful

road which his father had helped to form, with investments in manufacturing and real estate. He was the kind of confident, almost princely patron well suited to Richardson's artistic temperment, who typified the sort of philanthropic *noblesse oblige* found in men like Andrew Carnegie later in the century. Significantly, Richardson's most abstractly expressive Ames family commissions were memorials—the Free Library, Oakes Ames Town Hall, and the powerful Ames Monument in Wyoming. Hitchcock considered the latter to be the finest memorial in America, an extraordinary vindication for the scandal which followed the Ames brothers' financial dealings over the Union Pacific Railroad.

Ochsner's catalogue entries, while providing client descriptions and building histories of interest to historians, also contain building descriptions and data on the current condition of the structure. While this makes rather dull reading (and, to be fair, this is not a book for light amusement but a reference) it serves an important preservation purpose. Here the author deserves commendation for the tremendous effort put forth in visiting and surveying all of the Richardson buildings still standing in the U.S. during an eight-year period. This book and the recent Frank Lloyd Wright catalogue by Storrer are the only complete historic surveys made of the work of major American architects, and more will be needed if valuable examples of American architecture are not to be lost through ignorance. Like most historic surveys, this document also gives an assessment of the "significance" of each structure. Because the author is able to bring his considerable knowledge of the opinions of Richardson scholars to bear on this problem, what results is a more authoritative statement of value than can be found in most local surveys.

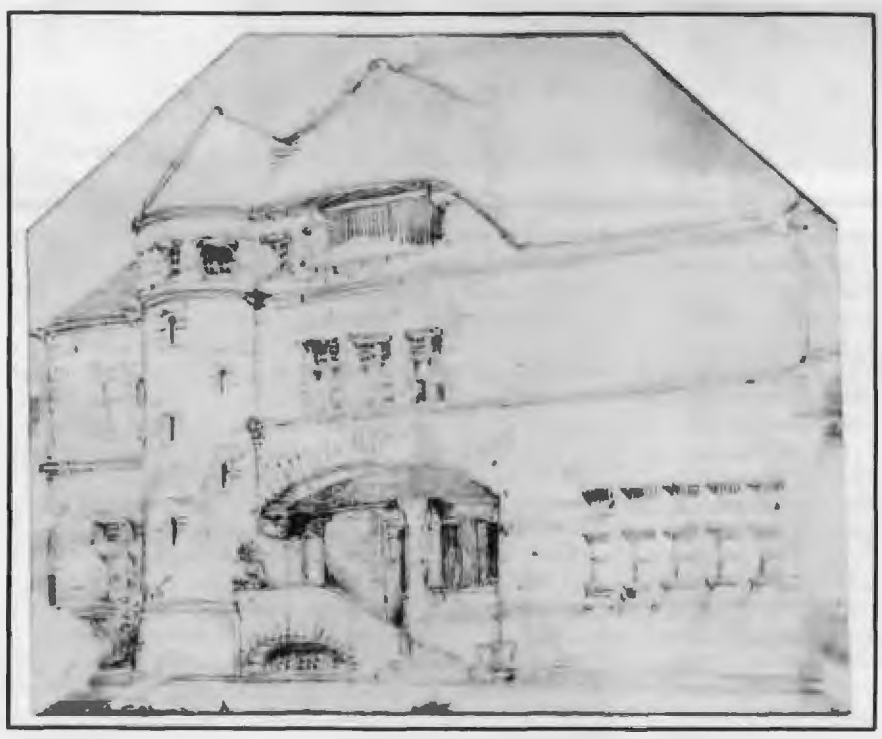
The book is thus something of a hybrid: part art historical catalogue, part reference, part survey, part gazeteer ~~and part picture~~ book. Luckily for architects of a less historical bent who like Richardson's work, the author and book designers have contrived to give the illustrations some prominence and to throw in as many as possible. Most of the photos are of excellent quality, and a substantial number of drawings have been included, though not always enough to fully describe a project. One wonders why plans were omitted for some major buildings, such as the New York State Capitol and Albany City Hall, and why buildings like Sever Hall and the Stoughton House deserved relatively few photographs (none of which showed views of the rear).

Still, these omissions do not take away from the value of the book as a visual document, and most of those who will spend the $50 required to own a copy will do so because of the richness and relative completeness of the visual information. What emerges from a careful perusal of the 386 illustrations is, I believe, a different Henry Hobson Richardson from the one most of us came to know through the standard histories of 19th and 20th-century architecture. Just as we began to see a less protean Frank Lloyd Wright as more of his early career was unveiled, Richardson too can be seen as an architect who absorbed and transformed the influences of his epoch gradually. And we can now more readily compare his work to the standard commercial, religious, and domestic architecture of the period. Richard Morris Hunt, Richardson's less talented but equally successful contemporary, produced a body of work not dissimilar in profile and type to that of his Boston rival—buildings thought at the time to be distinguished in relation to the milieu, but even then judged to be far inferior to Richardson's. Both architects struggled with the exigencies of new building technologies, programs, and a changing clientele—some clients with vision, others with rather unsophisticated tastes. Hunt had fewer artistic successes than Richardson, but achieved some innovative and viable solutions to the architectural problems of his time. In Richardson's lesser works and those in which his individual *maniera* is not prominent, one can see the same hesitancy and conservatism found in most buildings of this period of rapid economic growth and cultural uncertainty.

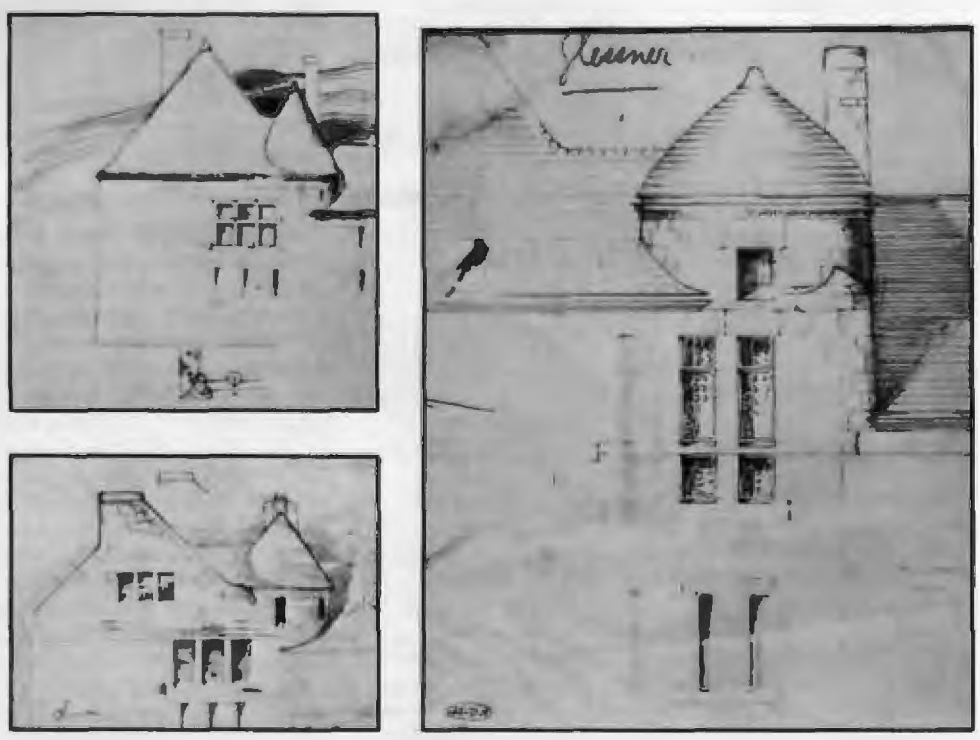
The reasons for Richardson's greatness will no doubt also be reinforced by the documentation of his total output. Many of his less prominent buildings—the houses of his middle and late period in particular—show aspects of his compositional genius more readily appreciated in his public works, a fact noted by Ochsner and by Richardson's first biographer, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. Rare views of well-known buildings will allow us to study massing and detailing more fully by giving a more complete picture. In short, Ochsner's book provides the visual basis for a genuinely balanced assessment of the architect's career, one more nearly approximating that which his contemporaries could provide. Montgomery Schuyler, who saw many of Richardson's buildings shortly after completion, gave what is still the best characterization of Richardson's particular compositional genius when he wrote:

Now the great and merited success of Richardson was as personal and incommunicable as any artistic success can be. It was due to his faculty of reducing a complicated problem to its simplest and most forcible expression. More specifically, it was due to his faculty for seizing some feature of his building, developing it into predominance and skillfully subordinating the rest of his composition to it, until this feature became the building. It was his power of disposing masses, his insistence upon largeness and simplicity, his impatience of niggling, his straightforward and virile handling of his tasks, that made his successes brilliant, and even his failures interesting. Very much of all this is a matter of temperament, and Richardson's best buildings were the express images of that impetuous and exuberant personability that all who knew him remember.

Mark Hewitt



Above: Project: Ames House, Boston, Massachusetts, 1880, H.H. Richardson, architect, Perspective of front elevation. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)



Above and right: Glessner House, Three studies of 18th Street elevation. (Houghton Library, Harvard University)

in themselves. Of the drawing techniques used by Richardson and the draftsmen, the less formal soft-pencil and wash studies allowed a richer and more vital presentation of the robust modeling of wall surfaces and masses which are Richardsonian trademarks. But the exhibition showed that more conventional formal presentation drawings were also made in colored inks on heavy paper. Richardson was known to dislike gaudy color-wash renderings of the academic Beaux-Arts type he had known in Paris as a student. O'Gorman, in his 1974 catalogue, asserts that Richardson's preferred presentation drawing was a brown-ink line drawing done on heavy paper. The Farish Gallery show makes it clear, however, that a number of styles were employed for different purposes, perhaps owing to what a client expected and what a particular draftsman could execute.

Although the problems of attribution for Richardson's office drawings are considerable, as O'Gorman's catalogue shows, one wished that, along with the title of individual drawings, the Farish Gallery exhibition had included some explanation of who made each drawing (especially if there was reason to suspect that a sketch was from Richardson's own hand), at what point in the design process it was made, why it was made, and more precisely what it showed.

There were other problems arising from the arrangement of the exhibition. Since a complete photographic and drawing description was not provided for any of the houses, it was not only difficult to correlate some of the drawings with the finished buildings, it was also impossible to glean a complete impression of the houses' interiors and exteriors. Was the exhibition meant to show Richardson's late domestic architecture, much of it unfamiliar to most of us, in its best light as building? If so, one must question the method and thoroughness of its presentation. Was the exhibition intended as a record of Richardson design process and a presentation of architectural drawings as artifacts? "Late Houses" left one wanting more information in a slightly more coherent format.

The show did, however, bring to the general public a fascinating series of drawings from an exciting period in American architecture. A few of the Richardson houses, like the Sard House, were not well represented. But far and away most of Jeffrey Ochsner's choices were excellent—many drawings from the Houghton Library (not shown in the O'Gorman catalogue) were on view at Farish Gallery, and the series of drawings of the F. W. Andrews House were shown for the first time as a result of Ochsner's research and the courtesy of the Andrews family. A catalogue with more supplemental information and more extensive analysis would take care of the questions raised by this stimulating exhibition.

Mark Hewitt

Malinda Beeman's Cairo on the Bayou: Ancient Evenings in Space City

There are those who come to Houston to create, capture, feel its energy. Some witness it from afar, like Ada Louise Huxtable, the architectural critic from New York, who declared Houston "an anchor to time and place where neither is defined. All those values that accrue throughout centuries of civilization—identity, intimacy, scale, complexity, style—are simply created out of whole cloth, or whole prairie" substituting fantasy for history. To Huxtable Houston has the "kind of vitality that is the distinguishing mark of a great city in any age."

Artist Malinda Beeman sees the same vitality in the built environment in Houston, and for eight years she has been capturing it in a series of sometimes gentle, sometimes startling images.

"What got me interested in the architecture of Houston was that I came from southern California," says Beeman. "Some of the first things that excited me were the older Art Déco buildings—the gas station-restaurant-theater facades I had never paid attention to in L. A.—like the Alabama Theater, the Tower Theater and Captain John's Restaurant. They are such unique, beautiful buildings. There is a magnificent theatrical quality to them. They have character."

Houston's vitality becomes an integral part of Beeman's art. She says that the creative energy the Art Déco buildings made her *feel* unleashed in her a new vision of function and form, mythology and meaning, and Houston's place in time.

"Moving to Houston and watching the buildings going up has been like watching Oz being built," says Beeman.

Her first drawings of Houston buildings were intended as a way of "documenting the architecture because I knew the buildings might not exist much longer," she explains. But the work led her to realize that the architecture "was harkening back to shapes—shapes that give a sense of immortality."

The rapid evolution of the Houston landscape made her feel time as "collapsed," she says, and that led her to think about ways in which the shapes used in recent buildings connected with those used in ancient eras.

"Architecture, rather than being any specific building, is more a symbol of society, as the pyramids are symbols of Egyptian society. You don't think of the Egyptian *people*, but Egyptian civilization. The Interfirst Bank, Greenspoint Plaza, Allied Chemical and Pennzoil Place are equivalent symbols of our time, our place in the universe," Beeman explains.

Beeman made a series of lithographs of these buildings, then a second series that showed the same buildings with bars of brilliant color (energy, she says) hovering near them, and the waters of the local bayous splashing high around them. A third series added allusions to Greek mythology—"things like the Sirens, who sang and brought men to the rocks, where the buildings are like vessels on a great ocean and the sirens of the city are luring us to the rocks or whatever danger confronts us."

But these weren't enough.

"What felt right was Egyptian," she says.

The Nile. The Bayou. The Pyramids. Pennzoil Place. Ocean waves splashing up became flood waters innundating a city. Houston is a society based on water and pools of oil—a whole civilization living by it, being fed by it, dying with it. Much like the Nile with its ebb and flow, the pipelines and waterways of Houston "still encroach upon and threaten our civilization."

She did a painting juxtaposing an Egyptian Sphinx with Pennzoil Place and found "that it made the contemporary building look like it should be in Egypt. I found that the geometry had a quality of extreme modernity and yet a quality of ancientness and timelessness."

The new civilization in an Old Kingdom context.

Philip Johnson is Beeman's hero. "In his fantasy, he steps beyond safety," she says. In a way, her recent paintings are a homage to the architect, but they are also visions of "what I've learned from the geometry and forms of buildings and what they do to their space. Cloud shapes (in the new paintings) give the buildings a quality of space—they provide movement and color, and they are a link into the concept of past and present being one, everchanging but always the same."

Adds Beeman, "Looking at the buildings from Loop 610 and realizing inadvertantly that I was moving into the fast lane in reality, I had a singular feeling about the way the buildings and I were interacting."

Beeman's recent work, entitled "Cairo on The Bayou," was exhibited from 11 March to 2 April at the Harris Gallery.

Carol J. Everingham

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1. Sirens of Cities, *lithograph, Malinda Beeman. (Harris Gallery)*

2. Great Sphinx *from the series* Cairo on the Bayou, *oil on canvas, Malinda Beeman. (Harris Gallery)*

Transportation and Urban Development in Houston

Transportation and Urban Development in Houston, 1830–1980
Peter C. Papademetriou, Houston: Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, 1982, 108 pp., 139 illus.

The scholarly study of the interrelationship between transportation and urban form has been long neglected. Planning professionals have largely concentrated on the analysis of transportation technology optimization while architects and urban designers have focused on the physical form of the city. In recent years, the growth of transportation problems in Houston and the obvious impact of the freeway system on development patterns have generated increased interest in this interrelationship but until the publication of Peter C. Papademetriou's *Transportation and Urban Development in Houston*, its history had never been written.

The pioneering quality of Professor Papademetriou's work cannot be overestimated. When he began, the archives of transportation-related materials for Houston were mostly uncatalogued and no comprehensive bibliography of such materials existed. Thus, this book must be regarded as particularly significant because it has established a framework for the study of transportation and urban geography for the southeast Texas region. It is the work to which future researchers will refer.

The field may have been neglected because the story is so difficult to trace. Multiple issues—technological, financial, political and social—are involved and myriad personalities on local, state and national levels have important roles.

Although Professor Papademetriou begins his narrative in 1830, the major threads of development appear in the 1880's and 1890's. Two separate developments are significant—mass transportation and individual transportation. The rise of the electric street railways following Frank Sprague's construction of the first trolley system in Richmond, Virginia in 1887, was an expression of the first development. By 1890, 51 cities had operating trolley systems. In Houston, the electric street cars began operation in 1891. By 1910, near the height of the proliferation of electric street railways across the United States, Houston had more than 50 miles of trolley line. The development of individual transportation technology was initiated about the same time. The automotive experiments of the 1890's succeeded in producing only a few vehicles regarded as toys for the rich, but the application of mass production and the appearance of the Model T in 1908 signaled the spectacular rise of individual automotive transportation in this country. In concert with this technological advance was the rise of the "Good Roads" Movement, initially a product of the bicycle craze of the 1890's, but given its ultimate direction by the appearance of the automobile, automobile clubs, and a need for streets, roads and highways for auto travel.

The extension of the first trolley lines in cities led to the first major burst of suburban growth in the United States. Today the shape of such cities as Boston, New York and Philadelphia reflects the form of the street railroads even though many of these have disappeared. Houston, in contrast, remained a small city through the first decades of the 20th-century, with a population which did not reach 400,000 until the 1940's. By the time the significant growth of Houston began, mass transit was in decline and the decentralized form of the city resulted from a total automobile orientation. As Professor Papademetriou demonstrates, in the 1950's and 1960's decentralized auto orientation was regarded as the wave of the future. The construction of freeways, pushed through parks and stable communities, was heralded as the height of progress. The dependence of the Houston economy on the consumption of motor fuels reinforced the belief in freeway development, automobile transportation and the decentralized city. In the 1960's and 1970's, the freeways generated their own city form producing Houston's unique combination of linear and multi-nodal development.

Mass transportation in the form of diesel buses (after the phaseout of electric street railways in Houston in 1940) never became a significant influence on the form of the city. Instead, buses followed in the wake of the decentralized sprawl with route extensions resulting in increasing mileage but often decreasing patronage. As the peak of Houston freeway construction was reached about 1970, the bus system, nearing financial collapse, was beginning to suffer from physical deterioration as well. Public ownership, viewed as the option of last resort, came in 1973, but physical deterioration of the bus system accelerated until the system was in near ruins by 1978.

The decade of the 1970s was marked by changing attitudes toward mass transportation in Houston due to the failure of the freeways to handle Houston's tremendous growth and the recognition of limits on the availability of fossil fuels necessary to serve the decentralized city. This change was clearly shown by the August 1978 vote creating Metro.

This complex story is somewhat difficult to follow in the text, if only because it has so many interwoven threads to which this review cannot do justice. The story is aided considerably by the 139 illustrations provided by Professor Papademetriou, including maps, charts, photographs, advertisements and magazine covers, which combine to demonstrate how people of each period viewed their environment and what they perceived as issues in city planning and transportation systems development. Unfortunately, some of the maps have not reproduced well and can be difficult to read, but this is a minor flaw. In addition, Professor Papademetriou assumes his readers will have at least a cursory familiarity with Houston. Without this, it might be difficult to follow the references to various locations, although the central themes and major points will still be clear.

This book is a significant addition to any collection of Houston history and must be regarded as essential reading for those who wish to understand the historical background of Houston's transportation network and its unique urban form.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner

From Werkstätte to Our State: Josef Hoffmann Design Classics in Fort Worth

Like so many turn of the century designers, Josef Hoffmann, until recently, has been the victim of a type of criticism that tended to promote one particular aesthetic by demeaning or, even worse, ignoring an essential body of work. Now nearly 80 years after the founding of his Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop), Hoffmann's name has been resurrected. Hoffmann's designs for buildings, furniture and domestic items of all sorts are once again the subject of intense interest not only on the part of critics, historians and connoisseurs, but perhaps more importantly by the present generation of designers.

Far away from *fin de siècle* Vienna, the work of Josef Hoffman was recently the subject of an exhibition called "Josef Hoffmann, Design Classics" held at The Fort Worth Art Museum between 17 November 1982 and 9 January 1983. The show was organized by the museum's director, David Ryan, with the assistance of David Gebhard, who wrote the excellent catalogue which accompanied the show.

It is still difficult to attempt an evaluation of Hoffmann independent of the complexly intertwined histories of the Vienna Secession (of which he was a leading figure), the English Arts and Crafts movement and the American Craftsman movement. Yet walking into The Fort Worth Art Museum and turning to the exhibition, one was impressed by the objects themselves apart from questions of their historical significance. The Hoffmann designs—which included dozens of wood chairs, upholstered settees, lamps, cigarette cases and silverware—were displayed in a naturally illuminated gallery as pristine objects crafted with intelligence and skill. Even after so many years, the air of experimentation was still fresh.

Hoffmann's sturdy, straight-backed chairs were contrasted with more delicate furniture ensembles, some appearing too fragile for sitting. And yet these pieces had in common the essential Hoffmann traits: invention, material integrity and craftmanship.

Hoffmann transformed his simple chairs by cutting, bending or laminating the wood framing elements, making the joining of pieces integral to the design. The wood, often beech, was rarely left unfinished but painted, enameled or lacquered. While painting and lacquering may seem at odds with expressing the nature of the material, they protected the furniture. Other pieces appeared to have been stained black or brown. On one stained desk, the wood grain was subtly drawn out with white paint. Upholstered furniture was crafted with equal precision. On the underside of one upholstered armchair, copper springs were revealed. Though the springs were not intended to be viewed, they were Hoffmann's way of insuring durability, suggesting that no matter how experimental the piece or how often produced, it was meant to stand up to time and use.

Other furniture pieces included armoires, writing tables, stools and tables, all treated with the same degree of elegance and restraint as the chairs and the upholstered seating. The exhibition concluded with the smaller items of furnishing. These were silver tureens, silver place settings, a cigarette box of ebony and inlaid mother-of-pearl, gridded metal wastebaskets, lamps and pocketbooks. Like the chairs, settees and tables, these furnishings revealed Hoffmann's deep love and respect for the materials.

The Fort Worth exhibition concerned itself mostly with Hoffmann's work of the period between 1900 and 1910, although he produced work until his death in 1956. Many of these items have not been seen for decades and one wonders just how much was lost during Hoffmann's period of critical rejection. This is true not only of Hoffmann, but of Otto Wagner, Otto Prutscher, in fact all the designers of the Vienna Secession. Oddly missing from the exhibition were several of Hoffmann's designs that have remained in production all these years, in particular the bentwood "Prague" chair, made today in the original mold and distributed in this country by Stendig. However, the exhibition showed Hoffmann to have been an extraordinarily thoughtful designer, an experimenter, an inventor. Dismissing him as an eccentric decorator is clearly wrong.

Obviously much of the interest in his work today has arisen because architects are once again turning to furniture design and the design of objects. This raises an intriguing question. Were Hoffmann's works genuinely vital to the development of art and architecture? Or does their revival merely reflect the current interest in any body of artifacts that did not originate in a moral and aesthetic sphere that would have conformed to the purist strictures of the *Neue Sachlichkeit?* As Gebhard demonstrates in his catalogue essay, designers often are judged not on the basis of their actual products, but accepted or rejected on the basis of how well a particular piece fits into current philosophies and styles.

William F. Stern

Chair, 1906, Josef Hoffmann, designer. (The Fort Worth Art Museum)

Art Precinct, *Alan E. Hirschfield, architect with Chris Petrash. (Photo by Rick Gardner, Contemporary Arts Museum)*

Model, Of Gardens, Galleries and Grottos, *Lonnecker +Papademetriou and Peter D. Waldman, architects. (Photo by Peter C. Papademetriou, Contemporary Arts Museum)*

Dreams and Schemes: Architectural Permutations of the Contemporary Arts Museum

Throughout most of last fall Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum featured a major architectural exhibition based on the theme of its existing building and what hypothetically might become of it and its immediate surroundings. Twenty Houston architects were invited by CAM director Linda Cathcart and curator Marti Mayo to submit proposals "both possible and visionary...for the expansion, renovation, rebuilding or conversion of the existing museum structure on the present site." Eighteen widely disparate entries in the form of architectural drawings and/or, models were received and exhibited under the title "Dreams and Schemes, Visions and Revisions for the Contemporary Arts Museum."

Firms and individuals participating ostensibly represented a broad spectrum of Houston's design professionals, ranging from large commercial firms through smaller practices of old and new repute to groups of young designers and academics of a more theoretical and conceptual bent. Approaches or arguments frequently issued from surprising quarters, however. The exhibitors were Arquitectónica Texas; Howard Barnstone; Anthony E. Frederick; Ian Glennie; Robert E. Griffin in association with Randy Gay, John Perry and Bruce C. Webb; Alan E. Hirschfield; William R. Jenkins; Thomas M. Lonnecker, Peter C. Papademetriou and Peter D. Waldman; Morris*Aubry Architects (Ed Brudnicki and Jim Postell); Richard Keating of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Houston; William F. Stern, Herman Dyal, Jr., Drexel Turner and Gregory Warwick; Taft Architects; Charles Tapley Associates; 3D/International; Anderson Todd; Urban Architecture (Hossein Oskouie, Rick del Monte and Lucho Gonzales); Marvin Watson, Jr.; and Ziegler Cooper in association with Stephen M. Starensier.

Given the CAM's existing building, a bi-level, shiny metal parallelogram by Gunnar Birkerts and Associates (1972), two-thirds of the entrants responded predictably with a building set within the bounds of the CAM's property lines. Three of the six non-conforming schemes exceeded the site limits or broadened the interpretation of the context under consideration. Charles Tapley Associates took an urban design approach and reworked the entire museum area, with special attention to rerouting existing transportation systems and connecting to future ones. Alan Hirschfield formed an art precinct by linking all of the existing cultural institutions with a thick wall full of art and artists surrounding a major public plaza.

The other three extra-territorial responses were not so much built solutions as polemical or conceptual statements. The Stern/Dyal/Turner/Warwick submission ignored the existing museum altogether and offered economic justification for relating the CAM to a new, downtown, high-rise development only generically adumbrated. Taft chose to make a didactic and critical point with their cautionary "Allegorical Cartoon about Houston," showing existing buildings growing progressively upward as mindless extrusions which eventually self-destruct. The third non-building submission, Robert Griffin's "Fond Metaphors," seemed to be solely about the rejection of abstraction, for it consisted of eight toy-like models of museum-shaped parallelograms dressed-up as unbuilding-like objects, *e.g.:* an iron or a piece of Swiss cheese.

Though degrees of realism varied from highly practical to conceptual, if not visionary, almost all of the built solutions transformed or obscured the existing building so as to radically alter, or contrast with, its appearance. Only Marvin Watson showed such deference to the existing volume as to leave it untouched and dominant. Ian Glennie retained Birkerts's abstract block, but multiplied and telescoped it upward into a metallic ziggurat, a symbolic diagram of his program for building up the museum's collection.

Apparently the abstract scalelessness, blank, inarticulate elevations and obscure entry of the existing building are no longer acceptable, for the remaining 10 buildable solutions sought to remedy some or all of these faults. Sometimes though, as in Arquitectónica's proposal, the Birkerts building was surrounded and displayed within the new development as if the old were a period piece of abstract sculpture.

All of the buildings proposed were at least somewhat more recognizable as buildings than the original, objects of use and habitation as well as geometry. Many celebrated and made unequivocal the act of entry, while adding exhibition or activity spaces that were either external or exposed through transparency. Some exhibitors used familiar elements in such unexpected and intriguing ways as to impel the viewer into the museum by sheer force of curiosity. "Of Gardens, Galleries and Grottoes" by Lonnecker + Papademetriou and Peter Waldman engulfed the existing building in an extraordinary new envelope which both concealed and revealed its contents with glimpses of promised experiential delights inside and out.

High-rise forms were posited by three exhibitors, foretelling an increasingly dense and "urban" development of the museum area. Howard Barnstone's "Muse" apartment tower piled atop the expanded existing museum 22 floors of drive-up duplexes for those auto-crazed, wealthy Houstonians who cannot bear to be parted from their cars.

Only three entrants displayed what might be called realism as their primary determinant. Among them, Anderson Todd's solution was notable for its unity. Though Rick Keating of SOM used a similar structural idea of spanning the existing volume with great trusses, the result was not a whole, but two built objects coexisting interestingly, but uncomfortably, on the site.

An overview of "Dreams and Schemes" demonstrates the extreme difficulty of adding to so totally self-contained and geometrically pure an object as Birkerts's CAM. Even the combined architectural efforts of these many talented individuals yielded few truly desirable prospects. A more foresighted, less compulsively abstract and exclusionary approach to the design of future architecture would better serve Houston's long range interests.

Lynn Bensel-Hewitt

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