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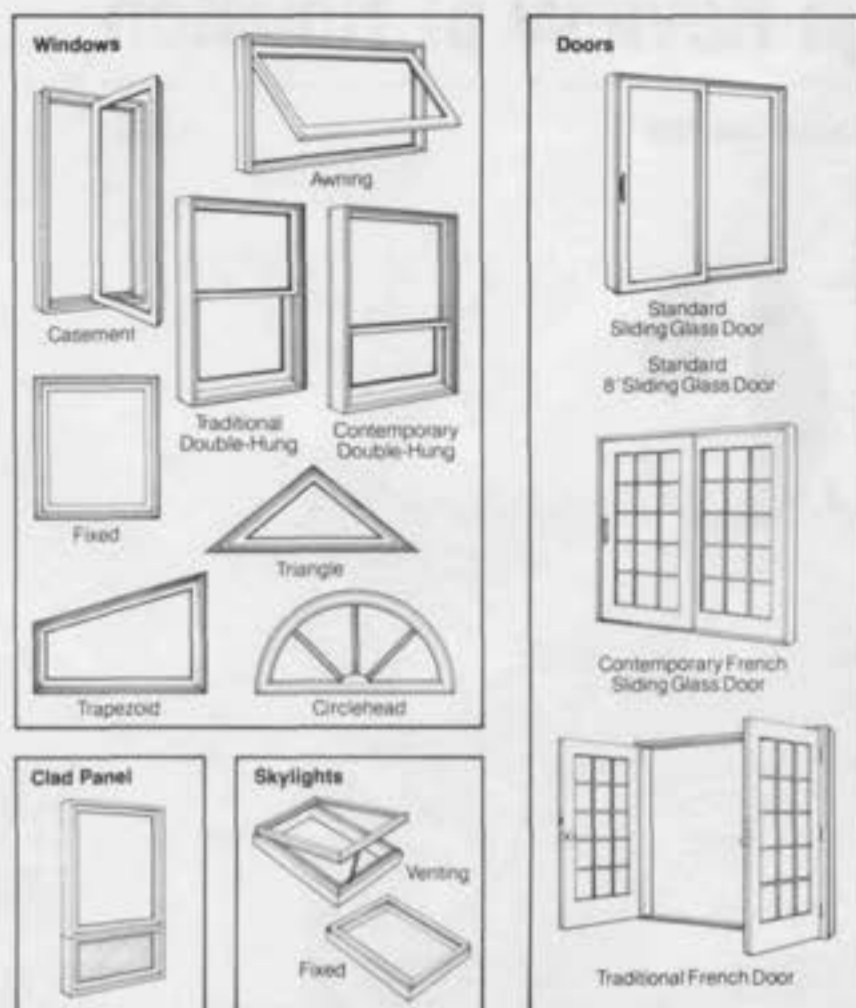


**The Arts in Houston • Houses Between Allegory and the Novel
Houston at the Venice Biennale • Allen's Landing: Proposed Monuments**

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	InCite
3	Cirelines
10	The Arts in Houston: Ideas and Schools
12	Erasing Invisibility: The History and Theory Program at the University of Houston
13	Houston at the Venice Biennale
17	Houses Between Allegory and the Novel
21	Myth-en-Scene: Proposals for the Monumentation of Allen's Landing
24	Citesurvey: Innova
26	Citeations
29	HindCite
30	UnCitey

Cover: "Cloth on Concrete: The Underpass at Galboun and I-45" (Drawing by Wolde-Ghiorghis Ayale); model of Hurricane House, Peter D. Waldman, architect, and Christopher Genik (Photo by Paul Hester)

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Big Cité Beat

☛ *The Taste Police are out. And they've nabbed two prominent offenders: the Contemporary Arts Museum and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Seems the banners with which these culture temples drape themselves to advertise current exhibitions violate the city's sign-control ordinance. Puts them in the same category as used-car dealers with tacky plastic streamers. So down the banners must come. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200.*

☛ *Shaking things up in October was San Antonio congressman Henry B. Gonzalez, in Houston on the fourth to hold one of a series of congressional hearings on the state of public housing in the U.S. Gonzalez took testimony from Mayor Kathy Whitmire, Planning and Development Director Efraim Garcia, and Housing Authority Chairman Gerry Pate, all of whom defended their plan to raze Allen Parkway Village and the Fourth Ward for redevelopment. Gonzalez congratulated Allen Parkway Village and Fourth Ward activists Lenwood Johnson and Gladys House for their fight to resist demolition and redevelopment, along with Dana Cuff and ACLU lawyer Barry V. Griffiths, and pledged to aid them. One immediate result: the Department of Housing and Urban Development returned the housing authority's demolition request proposal for clarification. Cuff's exposé, "Beyond the Last Resort: The Case of Public Housing in Houston," will appear in the Winter 1985 issue of Places, followed by the opening of a major exhibition on the history and culture of the Fourth Ward at Diverse Works on 24 January 1986.*



Architectural Tara-rism (Photo by Paul Hester)

☛ *According to Vincent Scully, there's no better place to find Buildings Without Souls than Houston and Dallas. Writing in a recent issue of The New York Times Magazine, Scully asserts that "The Sun Belt as a whole is a strange new world, far beyond anything the old Northeast can show." Downtown Houston is "the ultimate fantasy world of the corporate tower. . . Each is corrugated or steps back or seems to revolve or is made of some fancy material of a weird color. Each is striking. . . They look like models - and so, with its empty streets, does all of Houston, as if it were too small and inconsequential for human life." Despite more measured protests, Mark Girouard comes to similar conclusions in his newly published Cities and People (Yale University Press, 1985). Houston's "island clusters of skyscrapers" glow "in the low evening or morning sun like New Jerusalem of the twentieth century. But out of working hours they become cities of the dead. The size of their buildings makes them curiously unreal, even when they are in use."*

☛ *The mystique of southern architecture still seduces Houston. At least to judge from a recent act of architectural Tara-rism, the colonnading of a modest house in Broadacres that David D. Red designed for his sister in 1941. A full peripheral ring of prefabricated aluminum double-height columns now surround Miss Red's house, beneath a new roof raised above the old, steep enough in pitch to clear the existing dormers. Brooks and Brooks's encapsulation continues the process that David Red himself began by incorporating fragments of his parents' demolished Victorian house in the suburban house his sister built.*

☛ *Feting the Rice Design Alliance with a gala just prior to its annual architectural tour was River Oaks hostess supreme Carolyn Farb. Beautifully groomed and gowned, la Farb explained that it was the end of a long day begun with her early morning guest appearance on KILT disc jockeys Hudson and Harrigan's show to promote help for victims of myasthenia gravis.*

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Big Cité Beat

Construction has begun on the Lucile Halsell Conservatory at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, designed by Emilio Ambasz with JonesKell. Completion is scheduled for the fall of 1986. Construction has resumed on the Menil Collection Museum after a long delay. Renzo Piano and Richard Fitzgerald and Partners are architects. Ground-breaking has yet to occur on several other notable public buildings in Texas: the Laguna Gloria Art Museum in Austin (Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown), the San Antonio Art Institute in San Antonio (Moore Ruble Yudell), and the Corpus Christi City Hall in Corpus Christi (Taft Architects).

J.B. Jackson, Taos cultural geographer and essayist, will deliver the Craig Francis Cullinan Lectures at Rice University during Spring 1986. The lectures will be open to the public; call the School of Architecture, Rice University, for more information at 713/527-4864.

Menil Collection Museum under construction (Photo by Paul Hester)



When the real estate market is soft, and you can't build one more skyscraper, condo, mall, or strip center, what's a developer to do? Simple. Urbanity is the name of the game. And if there are no more River Oaks Community Centers or Rice Villages left to gentrify, then you've just got to start from the ground up. That's what Atlantic Development Company and John B. Connally III Interests are doing with L'Avenue, a retail and office complex planned for an L-shaped tract on Buffalo Speedway and Richmond Avenue featuring an outdoor street-and-sidewalk theme.

L'Avenue will consist of twin ranks of three- and five-story buildings (in an architectural style best described as Quincy Market faux Federalist) facing each other across a private vehicular boulevard that divides around a series of two-story pavilions. Three levels of open-air passageways will connect all the buildings in the project. The first phase of development is to contain 185,000 square feet, 20 percent allotted to office and 80 percent to retail and restaurants. The buildings also will house parking for 750 cars.

L'Avenue replaces the much-abused Magcohar Building (1954, George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce with O'Neil Ford and Richard S. Colley) at 3133 Buffalo Speedway, more recently known as the Design Center. Coria-Coppel is the architect. Plan on enjoying your Perrier with a twist at one of L'Avenue's sidewalk cafes sometime in 1987.

Citelines

Sesquicentennial Park Competition

The Rice Design Alliance and Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc. have organized an open architectural competition for the design of Sesquicentennial Park. This public green space is to comprise a 10-acre stretch of city-owned property along Buffalo Bayou. The site, which includes land on both sides of the bayou, begins at the Texas Avenue Bridge, wraps around the Wortham Theater Center, and continues downstream to the Franklin Avenue-Louisiana Street Bridge. Since 1910 there have been proposals to landscape the banks of the bayou in this area. But the Rice Design Alliance and Central Houston's competition represents the first real effort to give form to this 75-year-old vision.

The competition is open to all architects and landscape architects registered to practice in the United States. Entries are due on 9 December 1985. In February 1986 five projects will be selected from all those submitted; each will be awarded a \$10,000 prize for further development. A final round of judging of the five pre-awarded schemes will occur in April 1986. The first-prize winner will receive \$20,000, with cash prizes going to all of the other four contestants. Construction of the winning design for Sesquicentennial Park will begin in November 1986.

The estimated cost of construction is \$18 million.

Theodore Liebman is professional advisor. Jurors are Diana Balmori of Cesar Pelli and Associates (New Haven); C. Richard Everett, president of Century Development Corporation; Bernardo Fort-Brescia of Arquitectonica (Miami); Donald A. Greene, president of Whitewater Experience; Allan B. Jacobs of Aidala and Jacobs (San Francisco); Dean Naomi W. Ledé of the Center for Urban Studies, Texas Southern University; Dean O. Jack Mitchell of the School of Architecture, Rice University; Donald G. Olson, director of the City of Houston Department of Parks and Recreation; William Pederson of Kohn Pederson Fox (New York); and R. Terry Schnadelbach of The Schnadelbach Partnership (New York).

The competition is being financed by private contributions. Major gifts to support the competition were received from Giorgio Borlenghi and Interfin Corporation.

The Sesquicentennial Park competition is the first nationwide architectural competition ever organized in Houston.

Stephen Fox

UH Architecture Building To Be Dedicated



Atrium, University of Houston College of Architecture Building, John Burgee Architects with Philip Johnson and Morris Aubry, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)

The University of Houston's College of Architecture will celebrate 40 years of architectural education with an academic festival, scheduled for 3-9 February 1986, to be kicked off by the dedication of its new-old building (John Burgee Architects with Philip Johnson and Morris Aubry Architects). With move-in scheduled for the Christmas-New Year's break and spring classes to begin in the Johnson building, anticipation of the events is rising, with planning lagging somewhat behind.

Beyond compilation of the final punch list, prededication activities include a major student social event and the opening of a gallery exhibition documenting the history of the College of Architecture. Dedication is scheduled for 3 February, with a week of lectures, symposiums, and social events to follow. A special announcement of Dedication Week events will be sent to all interested individuals. To have one's name placed on the mailing list, telephone the College of Architecture at 713/749-1187.

Peter Wood

UH Texas Studio Investigates American Villages

Peter J. Zweig, director of the Texas Studio, and 10 graduate students from UH will collaborate with Charles W. Moore, O'Neil Ford Professor of Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin, and 10 students from the graduate school at UT Austin on a study of the architecture of villages.

The studio will investigate the phenomena of the American village, assemble a documentary exhibition in April 1986, and design projects that capture the identity and place of the American village. To further the educational process, the program will offer a field trip to Mexico, as well as the five regions of Texas. Visiting critics will include J.B. Jackson; Michael Graves, FAIA; William Mitchell, professor of the computer program at UCLA; Peter Schneider, dean of architecture at Louisiana Tech University; and Kent Bloomer, author, architect, and professor at Yale University. Lectures will be open to the public. For more information, call the College of Architecture, University of Houston, 713/749-1187.



Charles W. Moore and Peter J. Zweig in a front-porch seminar with UT and UH students at Winedale (Photo by Dietmar Froehlich)

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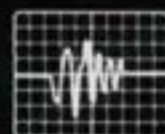


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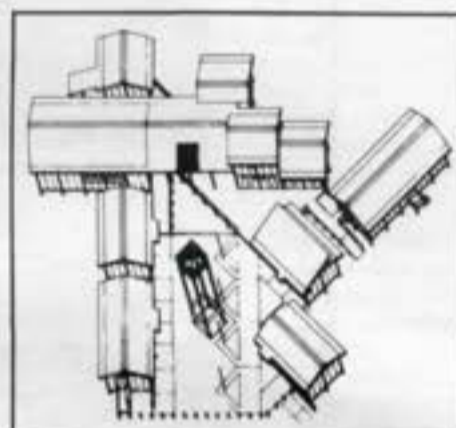
Human Resources Building, Three H Neighborhood Service Center, Bordersville, 1985, John Zemanek, architect (Photo by Paul Hester)

The tenth and final building of the Three H Neighborhood Service Center in Bordersville, an advocacy planning project begun in 1969, was completed in May of this year. The new building houses local offices for state public welfare programs, including a food-stamp certification center. Architect John Zemanek received an AIA Honor Award in 1978 for his design of the complex which was hailed as a model example of the advocacy planning process.

Bordersville, a ramshackle community of 220 families located north of Houston, was the victim of the city's annexation plan in the late '60s to assemble large tracts of land for the construction of Houston Intercontinental Airport (see *Cite*, August 1982, "New Water Mains, Mall Come to Bordersville"). The annexation boundary cut through Bordersville, annexing 180 houses and leaving 40 outside the city. "With annexation came the notices to pay city taxes," recalls Zemanek. "But when the residents asked for city utilities, they were informed that only newly annexed communities of 200 or more families were eligible."

Prompted by protests from residents, then-mayor Louie Welch enlisted the University of Houston's Graduate School of Social Work to cosponsor a program to bring representatives of the Bordersville community together with public officials and representatives of the business sector. Out of these meetings came the Committee on Coordinated Action in Neighborhood (CCAN), with Zemanek serving as chairman of a subcommittee on the physical environment and housing.

In September 1969, Zemanek took his UH architecture design students to Bordersville and they began to work with a Neighborhood Council committee to formulate a program for a community



Axonometric drawing of site plan, Three H Neighborhood Service Center

center. The program included a meeting hall, recreation hall, library, clinic, day-care center, public bath, guest rooms, manager's quarters, and shops. Plans and models were produced and presented for discussion to the community and the CCAN board, and the study committee voted to implement the project.

Initial funding of \$45,000 was secured from four private agencies in April 1970, but the project was delayed by the lengthy process of securing land and building permits. A second grant of \$196,000 came from the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce, and land finally was acquired from the local school district. Zemanek, together with consulting architect Alexander McNabb, structural engineer George Cunningham, and several former students from the University of Houston's College of Architecture finalized the design and produced the contract documents. Construction began in 1974 and, except for the building completed this year, the complex was finished and ready for occupancy in 1975.

Bruce C. Webb

RDA Spring Events

The Rice Design Alliance will embark on an array of public programs for the Spring of 1986.

Architects Fireside Chats, a series of informal presentations by three Houston architectural firms of their work and working methods, is planned for early spring. Organizing the events are Danny Samuels, Richard Keating, and William F. Stern. All presentations will occur in the Jury Room in M.D. Anderson Hall on the campus of Rice University. Admission is free to RDA members with reservations; there is an admission charge for non-members. Limited seating. For information and reservations, telephone the Rice Design Alliance at 713/524-6297.

For its spring lecture series, organized by Drexel Turner and Richard Keating, the Rice Design Alliance explores "The City:

Memory and Invention." Speakers and dates to be announced. All lectures will be held at 8 PM in the Brown Auditorium of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. To reserve tickets, telephone the RDA at 713/524-6297. Admission charged.

The Rice Design Alliance and IES Travel Group plan a tour of Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia for late May 1986. Barrie Scardino and John Lingley are organizing the tour. For more information, telephone IES Travel Group at 713/526-5171.

Available for purchase is the first Rice Design Alliance architectural guidebook, containing three, self-guided, walking tours of the museums-Rice University-Hermann Park area. Called *Houston's Cradle of Culture and Environs*, it was prepared by the Anchorage Foundation of Texas. Photographs are by Paul Hester.



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DART Chooses Subways

In a bold move, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) board adopted subway plans for downtown Dallas and the North Central Expressway corridor on 27 August 1985. This action committed DART to the construction of three subways totaling five miles in length in downtown Dallas and an additional three miles of subway north from downtown under the North Central Expressway to Mockingbird Lane. This decision was just the latest in a series which the DART board has made in moving forward with plans to build about 150 miles of rail transit in Dallas by the year 2010.

DART was created by voters in Dallas and 13 suburban communities on 13 August 1983. At that time, voters approved an \$8.75 billion plan to build a model mass-transit system in Dallas and a 1 percent sales tax to fund transit-authority operations and improvements. Since initiating operations in January 1984, DART has moved to rapidly expand bus operations in Dallas and the surrounding areas and also has begun work on implementing the rail plan.

The plan passed by the voters provided for the construction of light-rail transit in 12 major suburban corridors. Light rail was chosen as the most flexible and the most cost-effective transit mode (a choice confirmed by an independent study funded by the Dallas City Council). Light rail, the transit technology which receives its power from an overhead source, can be applied in a variety of configurations. In September 1984, after reviewing transit technology options, the DART board selected the "pre-metro" mode of light rail. Generally, the pre-metro approach to light rail emphasizes high-speed, high-performance operations. Grade crossings are usually minimized with this approach and the preferred track alignments are usually separated from vehicular traffic.

DART continued progress on the rail plan in February 1985, by selecting the joint venture of Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglas and DeLeuw, Cather & Company (PBDC) as the general engineering consultants for the project. This engineering joint venture then began design work on the rail system.

A major issue left unresolved in the original DART service plan was the system plan in downtown Dallas. As approved, the service plan provided for rail in the 12 major suburban corridors joining to approach downtown Dallas from six different directions. The interconnections of these six lines and the station locations in downtown Dallas are issues which had been under study for the last year. A second unresolved problem was the configuration of the rail project in the congested North Central corridor where both DART rail plans and State Highway Department expressway-widening plans could not be easily accommodated. A range of alternatives for this corridor had been under study for over eight months. The DART board action in late August resolves both these issues and the adoption of the two subway plans means that DART can move ahead with the development of the system. The current schedule calls for 69 miles of rail in place by 1995. The first line, still not selected, is to open by 1988 or 1989.

The implications of the DART board action are clear. Most important, the DART board in selecting the subway plan has shown its willingness to bear higher initial capital costs if this will produce a better quality transit system for the long term. The selected plan will offer convenient, rapid service and will not threaten the environmental quality of the inner-city areas. The selected plan will allow the light-rail system to run right to population and employment centers in downtown Dallas and along the North Central Expressway, but any negative environmental impacts will be minimized.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner



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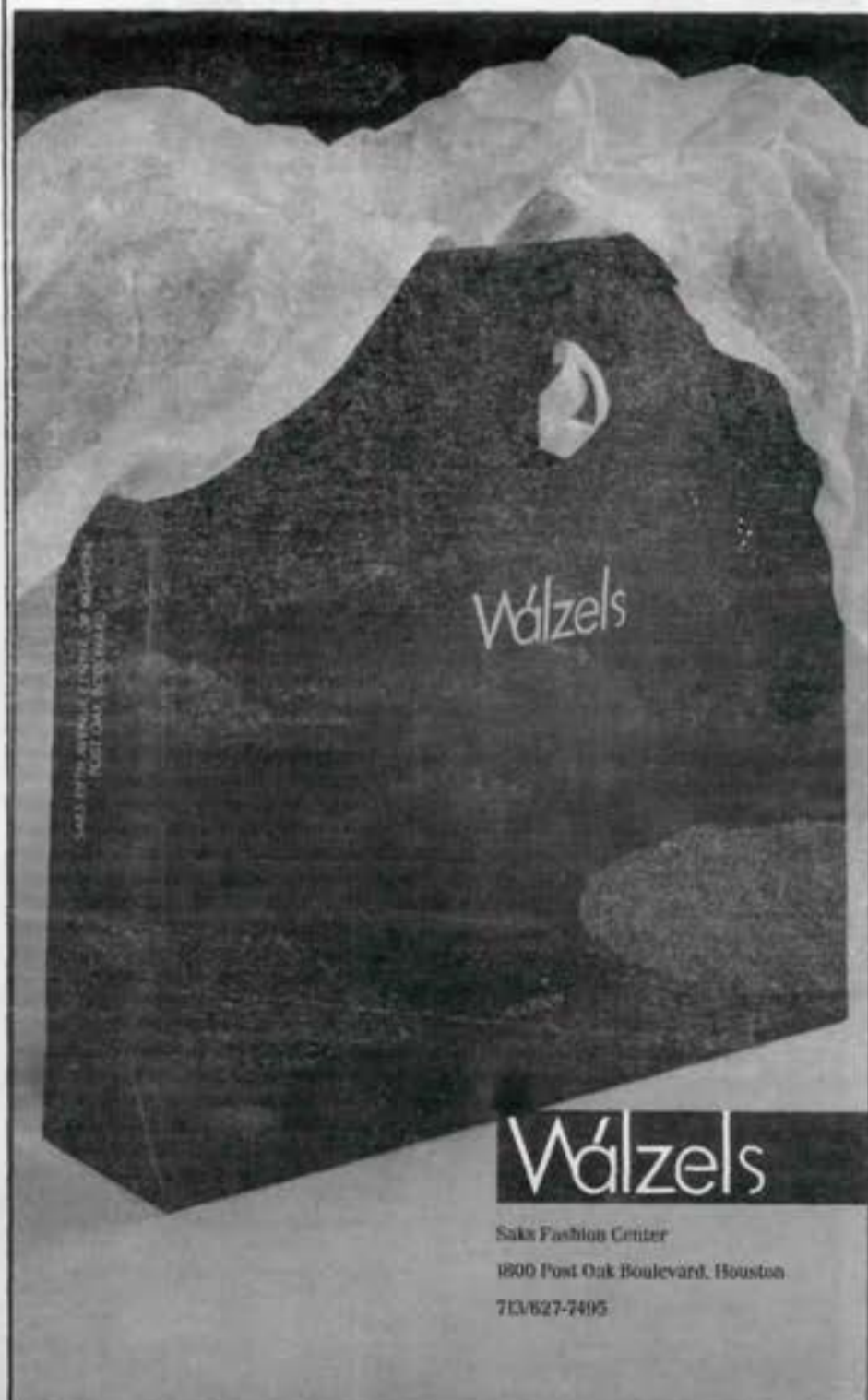
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Chocolate Bayou Theater Gets New Playhouse



Model of Chocolate Bayou Theater, William T. Cannady and Associates, architects
(Photo by Paul Hester)

The Chocolate Bayou Theater Company of Houston will move before the end of 1985 into a new, purpose-built theater designed for it by William T. Cannady and Associates. Located at the corner of Bremond Avenue and Bagby Street in the South End, the Chocolate Bayou Theater is a 14,000-square-foot building containing two performance spaces: a

249-seat proscenium theater and a 149-seat "black box" theater. To keep costs low (the budget is \$420,000), warehouse construction is being employed. The exterior will be surfaced in corrugated metal. Corrugated fiberglass will be used for vaulted skylights above the public promenade.

RDA Sponsors Mayoral Debate

Editor's note: The following article was written prior to the mayoral election.

As part of its continuing series of symposiums on civic issues in Houston, the Rice Design Alliance on 15 October 1985 sponsored a debate between the two principal mayoral candidates, Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire and former mayor Louie Welch. The format of the debate included questions from a panel who focused on the candidates' concepts and proposals for the built environment of Houston.

The symposium was introduced by Andrew John Rudnick, executive vice-president of the Houston Economic Development Council, and was moderated by O. Jack Mitchell, dean of the School of Architecture at Rice. Each candidate opened with a six-minute introductory statement. Louie Welch focused on three primary areas which he judged important to the quality of Houston's environment: jobs; mobility; and community integrity, including the quality and security of Houston neighborhoods. Welch argued that the Whitmire administration was failing in all three areas. Kathy Whitmire's opening remarks pointed to her view that Houston is doing better and that her administration had been responsible for preserving the city's good "business climate," improving its infrastructure, and offering a positive quality of life.

The first panelist, Daniel K. Hedges, former U.S. attorney, now with Porter and Clements, asked about planning and location of new public buildings, inquiring especially whether long-term potential benefits to the public were taken into account and whether contributions from developers were required when these developers benefit from city-financed improvements. Whitmire cited planning for the George R. Brown Convention Center, for Houston Intercontinental Airport, and for the system of police command centers as evidence of her administration's commitment to planning for the long term. Welch argued for building excess capacity in the city's infrastructure to support growth for 20, 30, or even 50 years. Both candidates stated that requiring developer contributions should be required from developers who benefit from city-sponsored improvements.

The second panelist, Troett Latimer, former director of the Texas Historical Commission, now a development and preservation consultant with the City Partnership, focused on downtown Houston and asked whether Houston should consider an ordinance requiring retail and/or restaurants in the ground floors of new buildings to support a better street life. Similar ordinances have been enacted in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and other cities. Welch adamantly opposed such an ordinance arguing that a building owner is the best judge of what uses to include at ground level. He

apparently was unaware of the research by William H. Whyte and others on downtown street life showing the clear need for such ground-level uses. Whitmire said she might be willing to consider such an ordinance, but noted that Houston should not blindly copy other cities.

The third panelist, civic activist Macey Reasoner, asked how the candidates would involve citizens, not just development interests, in the planning of the city. Mayor Whitmire claimed that the planning process for the five-year capital improvements program that she initiated had involved the citizens. She also stated that the single-member council districts had led to much more citizen involvement. Welch recalled a series of "town meetings" which he conducted when he was mayor as evidence of his ability to involve citizens in decision making.

The panelists' questions were followed by five questions taken from the audience. These focused on planning for a west-side airport; enhancing the physical attractiveness of the city; land-use controls and the possibility of zoning; public art; and flooding. In their few points of agreement, both candidates praised the downtown skyline and the collection of public art in the city as being major assets, and both candidates said it was too late to consider zoning. Kathy Whitmire cited the recent series of city ordinances controlling certain types of businesses as an example of land-use control without zoning. Louie Welch argued for protecting neighborhoods by enforcing deed restrictions and the city's building codes.

In their concluding remarks, the candidates appeared to concentrate on their differences. Whitmire cited what she called "misstatements" in her opponent's presentation and then said that her administration had a superior record for turning plans into reality - for actually getting projects built. Welch argued that the critical issue was the lack of jobs for Houstonians and that the Whitmire administration had not really done anything to turn the economy around.

Although each candidate cited positions and achievements, neither appeared to offer a clear, broadly-based vision for the future of Houston. Neither candidate seemed to see his or her achievements as part of a broader strategic approach for the built environment of the city as a whole. Perhaps the city needs to develop a broad "Goals for Houston" process (such as similar processes which produced the Target 90 Plan in San Antonio and a similar plan in Dallas) before a broadly-based consensus for a comprehensive strategy for Houston's built environment can emerge. Perhaps after the beginning of the new term, the mayor will consider initiating such a process to bring the city together as we head into the 21st century.

Jeffrey Karl Ochiner

Crocheron Compound Restoration



University of Houston graduate student Juba Piblatkari at work on restoration of a log building in the Crocheron Compound (Photo by V. Nia Dorian-Bechnel)

The Crocheron Compound is a community of 19th-century Texas structures that have been restored and adapted for 20th-century man. Located on a 30-acre site in Bastrop, Texas on the Colorado River at the old San Antonio Road juncture, it is an ambitious restoration project conceived and financed by Gerald R. Wagner. Wagner, in conjunction with Clay Terrell, president of Restoration People, endeavored to incorporate within the project features that are sensitive to the community, the interaction of the compound to the street, and the making of architecture as objects of art. The project is intended to function as an artist colony, but also will serve as a laboratory wherein students can study early Texas architecture.

The completed site will consist of 20 structures. Seven buildings already have been moved there and restored, including the Crocheron House, the Wolf-Wilbeim House, the Mathis-Skalitsky House, the Jones-Powell House, the Fowler House, the Wilson Log House, and the Venghaus Log House. Each structure is sited as it was originally.

Last summer several University of Houston students participated in the development of the site. Their hands-on involvement included development of the master plan, preparation of registration documents for the state and national registers, participation in the chinking of log cabins and the cutting of stones for a fireplace - all while residing on the compound in a restored 19th-century structure.

Work at the Crocheron Compound consists of modifications to and restoration of the structures. This approach differs from traditional

restoration in that buildings are not only restored historically to a particular period but also are altered or modified by the installation of modern conveniences. This emerging perspective undoubtedly will foster healthy exchanges between those who advocate renovation with modifications and those who are inclined toward the more traditional approach to restoration.

Traditionalists believe that a building should be preserved on its original site, restored to a specific point in history, and serve as an example of some historic event, person, place, or architectural genre. Those who advocate restoration with modifications believe that the habitation of a building is the preeminent consideration in restoration and that habitation may take many forms: house-house, castle-museum, brewery-art gallery. The critical issue is the presence of human beings, which maintains the balance of the house, fosters the spiritual union between architecture/land/man and, most importantly, returns the architecture to its intended use: shelter. It is this perspective which guides development of the Crocheron Compound.

Because of the inclusion of modern conveniences in the restored structures, the project provides a laboratory wherein the effects of comingling modern technology and traditional restoration techniques can be implemented, observed, and analyzed. The debate over which approach is more appropriate is certain to result in a better understanding of the manner in which restoration and preservation should be pursued and the goals and objectives that such projects should seek to accomplish.

V. Nia Dorian-Bechnel

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The Arts in Houston

Ideas and
Schools

As part of *Cite's* survey of the intellectual basis for the arts in Houston, we asked six prominent artists and critics to reflect upon the common ground which the city provides in the thinking of architects, visual/environmental/performing artists, and writers. Recently, attention has been focused upon both Houston's role in the national art scene with The Museum of Fine Arts's "Fresh Paint" exhibition, and its position as either a center of, or an anathema to, "Texas writing," if such a thing even exists. A.C. Greene's article "The Texas Literati: Whose Home Is This Range, Anyhow?" in the *New York Times Book Review* (15 September 1985) suggested that a full-scale battle was raging between Houston's (reputedly) effete, academic, urban-oriented writers and the grass-roots word-punchers of the Texas frontier myth from the rest of the state (mainly Austin). *Cite* decided to fan the flames with its own survey of opinions on what drives Houston's culture, inspires its artists, gives roots to its artistic production, and a regional distinction to its buildings. Among the questions which these diverse opinions address are the following.

■ Are there recognizable "schools" present in the culture of this city, either in the sense of a coherent regional outlook, a group or set of groups which meet regularly and share ideals and theories, or an academically based avant-garde "compound" with connections to national or international movements?

■ How does the character of Houston's environment, business outlook, or attitude toward public and private life affect the arts, artists, production of significant works of art, and consumption of those works? Are any real "regional" factors present or consequential? Has Houston indeed become an international or national cultural center with substantial influence outside its boundaries or the state of Texas?

■ How do the universities and the academic community influence the arts? Is the connection between the ivory tower and the urban village strong and vital enough?

■ What kinds of forums for exchange of ideas are open to members of the artistic community in this city (in each discipline)? Should there be more?

■ What are the mechanisms and organs of criticism and intellectual reflection available to both the public and the artist in Houston? Are they strong enough and in sufficient number to make a difference?

■ What, finally, are the most important elements which make Houston architecture, painting, photography, performance, fiction, poetry and journalism distinctive, which gives these arts a claim to national or international attention?

The editors of *Cite* hope that the responses that follow will enlighten the reader and provide a basis for continuing thought and debate over the calibre of the arts in Houston today.



Elizabeth Glassman
Photographic historian and curator
Glassman & Lorenzo, Cultural Planners

Photography in Houston is not all of one cloth. There is no unifying "school" or aesthetic. There is, however, a vital and energetic community distinguished by diverse approaches, on the one hand, and, on the other, by a singular drive to have contemporary photographs seen and photography discussed.

The centers which currently provide the common ground of experience for art photographers in the city are the schools (University of Houston, Rice University, and the Glassell School), the museums (The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston, and the Contemporary Arts Museum), and the Houston Center for Photography. Both the professors and the programs in the universities serve to draw students to the area. The University of Houston offers a masters degree in fine arts, the terminal degree for photographers. The link between the ivory tower and the urban setting is strong. Rice University schedules courses for degree and non-degree students, and photographers use the Rice Media Center as both darkroom and meeting place. At the Glassell School, courses take advantage of the association with The Museum of Fine Arts and classes are offered in the museum print room. Beginning in the mid '70s, The Museum of Fine Arts embarked on an aggressive acquisition and exhibition program. The collection has grown steadily, and the regularly scheduled photography exhibitions focus on both modern and historical material. Visitors are welcome to see original prints by appointment.

The recent establishment of the Houston Center for Photography (HCP) has galvanized many disparate voices of photography in the city. While personal aesthetics remain as varied as ever, HCP at least has become a place where photographers can see each other and dialogues do take place. HCP serves as catalyst and forum. In the active program of exhibitions and speakers, various national trends are seen and opinions heard. Members' exhibitions give Houston-based artists the opportunity to exhibit locally. The center's quarterly publication, *Spot*, has the potential of offering a much-needed place for critical discourse.

The key element which makes photography in Houston so distinctive - that which causes people outside the city to ask "What is going on down there?" - is the large numbers of people committed to the field. The vibrant and diverse activity is a result of their energy. Photographers also experience a kind of freedom here, a willingness to explore without being hemmed-in by a single aesthetic.

Perhaps one reason for that freedom is that there is as yet little critical discourse. But, the newspapers are developing and *Spot* will continue to grow as a forum for dialogue. Another lack is the number of galleries devoted exclusively to photography. Currently, Benteler Gallery, showing largely European work, is solo in this regard. While other galleries exhibit photography from time to time, a higher awareness is needed to stimulate informed collecting. The FotoFest, a month-long celebration of photography being organized for March 1986 and to be continued on a biannual basis, offers the potential of bringing more national and international work to the city.

The climate for photography in Houston is excellent and interest is growing. Right now we are moving from regional exposure to national and international recognition. True maturity will come, however, when we move from exposure to influence.



Alison de Lima Greene
Artist and curator, twentieth century
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Houston does not have an Academy of Fine Arts. There is no single institution in this city that establishes a standard against which artists measure themselves, either by accepting the rules of such an establishment or by rebelling against it. Instead, like every modern city which hosts an art community, there are a number of factors that create the community and are responsible for the diversity within it.

One of the clearest indicators of the health of an art community is how much is visible. Art, as an act of communication, cannot exist only in studios; it must have an open forum - whether in museums, galleries, alternative spaces, or through public commission. Such a forum indisputably exists in Houston and is what can be called the common ground of those engaged in the arts. But this common ground, however unique it is, simply cannot be summarized as a Houston School. Even the last year, the length of my experience in this city, demonstrates this.

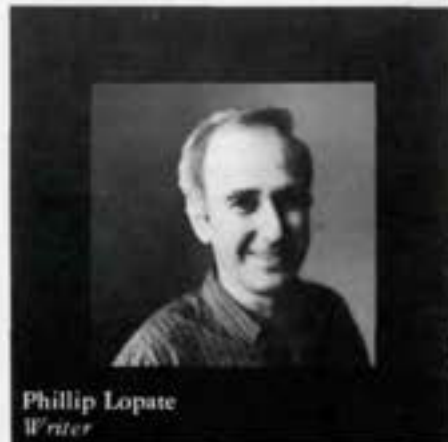
One assumption that frequently is made in discussing the existence of a Houston School is that it only includes artists living and working in and around Houston. I question this assumption. Once an artist moves away from Houston, does he or she shed his or her Houston identity? Or rather, isn't this artist Houston's ambassador to the rest of the world? Should an artist who comes here to work be viewed as an outsider? Is there a moment when such an artist ceases to be an outsider and is assimilated? Furthermore, should we view major exhibitions and commissions devoted to artists outside our community as invasions? Or does the fact that these events happen in Houston give us a proprietary right over them? I would like to take the broader view. For example, the Rothko Chapel has become an indelible part of Houston's history. More recently, Michael Heizer's 45°, 90°, 180° on the Rice campus has extended some of our assumptions concerning public sculpture. Similarly, the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, designed by Isamu Noguchi and now under construction, will change the fabric of the Montrose-museums area. Unique exhibitions, such as the Milton Resnick retrospective sponsored by the Contemporary Arts Museum this year, also give Houston its special character.

Conversely, is the art produced here overshadowed by these imports? In the past it has been true that Houston artists have had limited access to the public forum, particularly that of the collecting institutions. Now, however, this barrier is beginning to lift. The attention devoted to the "Fresh Paint" exhibition, both positive and negative, certainly demonstrates Houston's interest in examining and defining its parameters. With the upcoming sesquicentennial year there will be another burst of self-examination, although this time around it will be Texas rather than Houston alone that will be in the limelight.

Ultimately, however, the greatest need of the Houston art community is to be taken out from under its bell jar. While the phrase "Houston artist" is convenient in terms of promotion, I prefer more simply "artist." Within our community, we are very much aware of the biographical background of each artist - does this artist belong to a group or faction, does he or she have influence on students or show the clear markings of a certain teacher or affiliation? However, outside of Houston these distinctions break down and it is the art itself, not its attendant associations, that has the greatest impact.

I believe that Houston artists have a great deal to contribute to the national scene. Houston also is learning how to nurture its community. For this process to mature, I think we have to abdicate some of our regionalist pride. A museum biennial of local artists is not the solution. The most interesting galleries do not show Houston art exclusively, the same is true of the alternative spaces. Now that Houston artists have entered the museums, I think they should be accorded the respect of being shown in the context of national and international developments.

In lieu of an academy, the art scene as a whole must be Houston's barometer. All of us who wish to see further development in this community now have to take up the challenge of not considering ourselves a special case, deserving of particular rights. The Houston School may never exist, but there is abundant evidence that art in Houston does.



Phillip Lopate
Writer

There is no Houston school of writing - yet. One could try to fan the embers into a regional tradition via such good neglected forebears as the late William Goyen and June Arnold, and Larry McMurtry in his Houston phase, and maybe go all the way back before O'Henry. But one would be up against the mood here, which is benignly amnesiac, ahistorical. Houston literary culture is very thin, partly because it exists in the eternal careerist present.

The thickest cultural milieu is in the visual arts, which supports talents at every developmental level, and is moreover friendly, gregarious, and solvent. One can party with painters, dealers, patrons, and architects at least three nights a week, and if the openings all resemble each other after awhile (the same faces, the same cheeks kissed), at least it's sociable. As a writer I am treated with hospitality and respect - so long as I keep up with the contemporary artists' names and don't expect anyone to talk books with me. The artists read magazines with their names in it, *Colette* ("sensuous"), and the *New Yorker* stable. The whole Houston intelligentsia is basically incredibly incurious about literature. Maybe it's specialization: I notice there's very little collaboration between poets and painters, musicians, or dancers. A lot of cordiality and goodwill - and avoidance of engaging with each other's work. I'm always amazed how few artists and dealers bother to come to poetry/fiction readings. The same is true for the more daring experimental film showings, like the recent Chantal Akerman series at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. People seem to take chances only on films with lots of pre-publicity or big advertising budgets.

Houstonians are ripe for hype. If some hot modern dance group or Phillip Glass-clone comes into town bearing a certain official (mooneyed) avant-garde pedigree, there's a stampede to get tickets. Otherwise, forget it. The screenings of Abel Gance's *Napoleon* were jammed at the Coliseum. In the same season the MFA showed Gance's masterpiece, *La Roue* (a better film, by the way), and four people came. There's very little scholarly follow-through or retrospective interest on the part of audiences. The recent Balanchine festival was an admirable, noble attempt to focus in depth on a fruitful subject, and most people I knew stayed away - just couldn't be bothered with that sort of demand on their attention spans.

Part of the problem is that so little decent, honest, intellectually tough criticism of the arts exists here. Nor do the alternate journals and weeklies exist

that might be willing to stick their necks out (present publication excepted). Instead of healthy self-criticism we get all this silly talk about whether we are "world class" enough yet to stride the international cultural stage. Understandably, we're searching for an identity, but let's do more work first. I hate to sound so dour but we've got a long way to go. And I don't mean before we catch up to New York and Paris; I mean, before we reap the synergistic possibilities of cultural connection and cross-fertilization in our own backyard, for our own amusement.



William F. Stern
Architect, William F. Stern & Associates

Houston is unquestionably a regional cultural center, which does not necessarily mean that Houston, the place, has had a profound or even noticeable effect on the arts. The city supports museums, a multitude of galleries, alternative spaces, dance and theater companies, four universities, and critical journals, all of which are characteristic of big, wealthy cities that can attract painters, sculptors, writers, architects, symphony orchestras, and chamber groups with an equal array of directors, boards, and donors. Fifteen years ago this observation would not have applied to Houston, but, happily, the city's explosive growth has carried the arts with it. Houston has become a cultural center in the spirit of New York and Los Angeles, and like the arts emerging from those places, the majority of work coming from Houston reflects the spirit of the times in which we live and the state of American culture in 1985.

Rather than regionalism, what really appears to mark the arts in Houston is diversity on the one hand, and the solidity of its institutions on the other. Emerging painters, for instance, can find a place in alternative galleries such as *Diverse Works* or the *Lawndale Annex* at the University of Houston, while the work of their more established counterparts is displayed at the Contemporary Arts Museum. Young writers now enter two of the best creative writing programs in the country - at Rice University and at the University of Houston - to study with their illustrative faculty of writers. The possibilities for the education of the painter, sculptor, and photographer are astonishing - the *Glassell School of Art*, and the art departments at the University of Houston and at Texas Southern University. The faculty of these schools are composed of superior artists in their own right.

Both the College of Architecture, University of Houston, and the School of Architecture at Rice University are nationally recognized schools of architecture and have an array of practicing professionals as their faculty. Likewise, there are many opportunities in theater, beginning with the established *Alley Theatre* and including *Stages*, *Main Street Theater*, *Chocolate Bayou Theater*, to name a few. And so it is with dance, music, and film. Recently northwest Houston became the location for one of the largest sound stages in the country, even rivaling studios in Los Angeles.

The myth of regionalism is displaced here by a more tangible and ultimately more sustaining force in the arts, a force that has to do with community, visibility, financial support, and recognition. The atmosphere is clear and open and the opportunities are seemingly without limits. The artist stays and attracts others, offering greater possibilities for Houston as an artistic mecca.



Richard Keating
Architect, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill

Inherent in the make-up of Houstonians is the common ground for determining architecture in Houston. From the Allen brothers to the present, Houstonians have been a breed apart, particularly because so many have moved here from someplace else to further their potential for personal and professional development. Consequently, Houston is a city of singular-oriented and entrepreneurial individuals. The freedom of one's automobile, rather than a dependence upon mass transit, determines and reinforces individual choice of house and work. There are no natural barriers and few of the legal restrictions that customarily influence form in other cities.

The result in commercial architecture is that imagery and expression are market-driven to transfix the attention of observers with the impact of outdoor advertising. Locational choice for buildings typically is made in relation to view volume and market recognition. Distinction is provided by market-share and designer-label appeal. Because of this, architectural form, all too often, is superficially derived rather than intelligently distilled from the realities of site, program, structure, or circulation. In downtown Houston, another significant force at work is the small size of city blocks, on which only one major building can be developed at a time, each separated from the next by a uniform cordon of streets, sidewalks, and leftover "public space." This tends to defy the continuity and coherence of public open space as well as the development of spatial formation by building walls set in relationship to one another. (An unfortunately temporary exception to this are the two "new" open spaces created by the demolition of the Southwest Tower and the Lamar Hotel.)

Another result is a sense of style which may best portray the personal characteristics of Houstonians. Indeed, taken as a totality, this style can be visually commanding, in that it attempts to compensate for the dramatic settings that other cities, with their bodies of water or mountain ranges, enjoy as a natural imprimatur. Unique to this Houston architecture is bold coloration, an appropriate and sensitive response to our region and climate. Towers of white, pink, green, red, silver, and grey are even more rich when seen through our moisture-laden, and somewhat filtered, light. Drexel Turner's characterization of Houston as the Emerald City of Oz is not inappropriate. Emerging robustly from an alluvial plane, carpeted in uniform green vegetation, Houston is a place of destination for the expectant and the motivated.

But beyond the rich, commercial architectural character of our downtown, the force of significant architecture in either design or theory is surprisingly limited in a city of this size. Acceptance of distinguished work in housing, retail, and public buildings is not comparable to that in the commercial sector. This tends to reinforce the perception that in Houston only market forces are at work. When it doesn't matter if a building's design is important for its marketing function, little or no "investment" in furthering the general culture seems to be expected. And unlike other cities of comparable (or smaller) size, we lack the critical media to act as watchdogs over the various activities that affect the city. In a city where no public bodies exercise authority or long-range vision, this is a fundamental deficiency.

It seems that these conditions exist in spite of numerous lecture organizations and two excellent schools of architecture.

One hopes that at least the Architects Club will provide an opportunity for designers to develop dialogues among themselves.

Although circumstances recently have forced Houston architects to develop a significant export industry in design, engineering, and construction, our city remains a grouping of sometimes beautifully designed objects held together by no binding force that might better serve the public other than that of outdoor advertisers. Since human culture and civilization are, of necessity, more than either people or objects in proximity to one another, our community must dedicate itself to distinction. It must evolve a grand and comprehensive vision that can endure the vagaries of the future to serve as an armature from which civilization - the culture of a city - can be maintained and enhanced.



Douglas Milburn
Associate Editor, Houston City Magazine

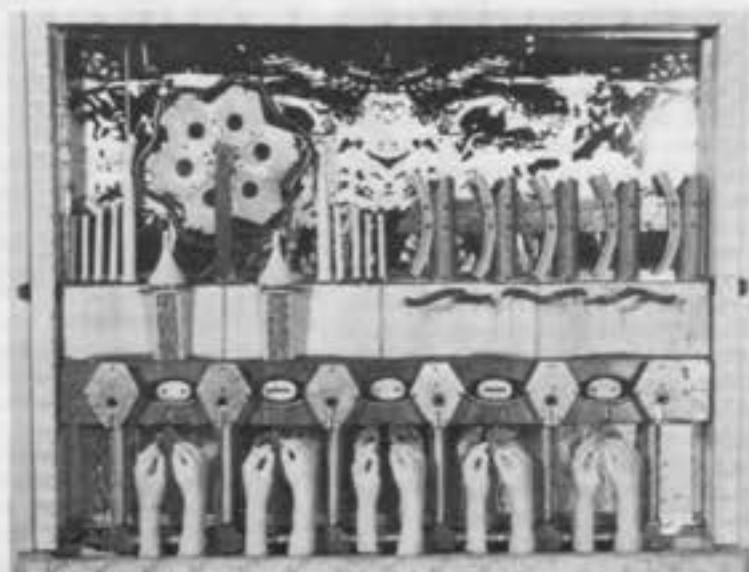
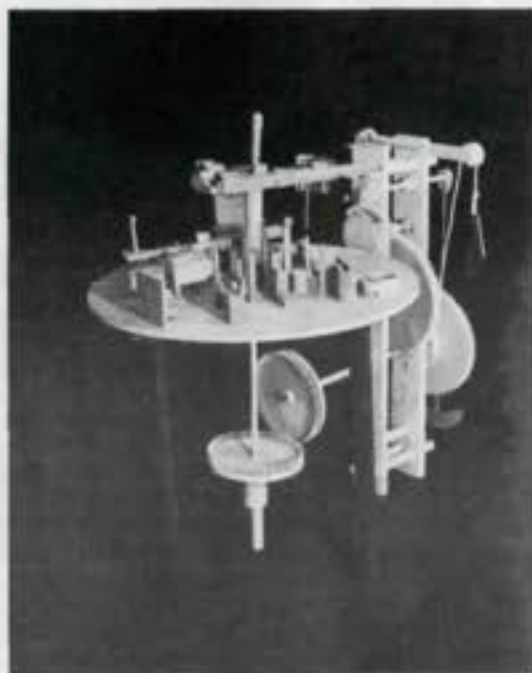
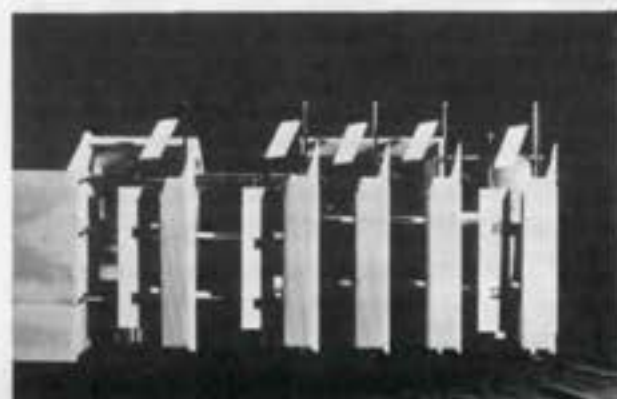
Cultural lightning seems to strike in much the same way as the real thing: quickly, unpredictably, and with a lot of light and noise. The funny thing, though, is that to the careful observer, lightning strikes are not so unpredictable: if a certain set of conditions are present, the odds become very high that lightning will strike somewhere within a readily defined area.

When I first heard of Barbara Rose's foray into artistic meteorology ("*Fresh Paint: The Houston School*"), I applauded the sensitivity of her aesthetic meter-reading but felt her conclusions were premature. Now I'm not so sure. Maybe it's the way of the world. You announce what you are, then you set about becoming it. My undocumented, subjective impression is that the national and international art magazines seem to be taking Houston a bit more seriously since *Fresh Paint*.

So, already firmly in place on the international architecture map, Houston is now finding its place on the art map. But I still find myself thinking "premature." Much of what is being done here is good, and some is very, very good, but so little of the work has a "Houston" stamp on it.

What might characterize a real Houston school in any of the arts? Briefly, I have noticed two qualities of this city which as yet have found only limited expression by Houston artists. One is humor (Jim Love will, I believe, eventually be seen as the true pioneer of Houston art; and it was, I think, no accident that Max Apple was attracted to the city). The other is a much broader and less easily defined quality, and that is tropicality. I don't see either the climate or the geography reflected much in any of the Houston arts. (Larry McMurtry has come closer than anyone to capturing this essential aspect of the city.)

What is happening, I think, is this: a provincial city, trying to move up, first must establish its credentials in the received artistic modes. That's what Houston has been doing, and doing well. Think of the art, the architecture, the music (and musical organizations), the theater, the literature. But, planetarily, Houston is a city of the south, sited well toward the tropics, and European culture (which is the tradition we are working in) has no received, artistic tropical modes. Yet there, in that hot, humid, white-light territory lies the foundation for the true Houston School, if one is to be. ■



Erasing Invisibility: The History and Theory Program at the University of Houston

Mark Schneider

Projects for the Biennale Palmanova Project from Mark Schneider's studio, University of Houston. From top to bottom: "Palmanova Walking Tour: A Helpful Story," Martin B. Axe; "Tondo in Winter," collage drawing toward the "Fountain of Reflection," Yoshinobu Yokono; "A Theater to Face the Cut," Mark Cronander. Top, right: "A Clock for Palmanova," Mackombo Omoile. Upper right: "Fountain of Reflection," Yoshinobu Yokono

Tolstoy was wrong in complaining about his wife; she rendered him some services. A woman is always useful to a novelist, even to a philosopher. Nietzsche used to bless Xanthippe who was helpful to Socrates; she forced him to stay in the street where he discovered so many things. - Jacques Chardonne (Eva, p. 71)

The graduate history and theory program at the University of Houston's College of Architecture is a studio-based investigation which tries to understand the terms under which architecture as theater for poetic dwelling can be extracted from the existing milieu of urban Houston.¹ Supporting seminar courses are given in architectural criticism, the phenomenology of architecture, and the history of Western thought and architecture from Heraclitus to the present.

The studio program is a sequence of projects aiming, in the first instance, to make *invisible* that part of Houston which is not normally seen. In this project, it seeks to engage all of those who are seriously interested in the question of dwelling. Historically, it would appear that the words "landscape" and "country" had a negative connotation. The etymology of the French word "paysage" (as compared to "passage") can reinvolve the question of whether the landscape is "mere stuff" to be got through, or a *place* in its own right. Historically, the founding of a city would appear to have been lived and understood as a replication of the original, cosmogenic act - the setting aside of a sacred place or cosmos for dwelling in the midst of chaos, or, perhaps, country. In the end it therefore becomes necessary to ask the question about the ground of dwelling.

What perhaps remains is the task of finding the most helpful story. Today, one such story reports that the expressways, ghettos, industrial districts, and waste areas of Houston are in fact a kind of

chaos in the midst of which isolated pockets of civilization or cosmos occur. City planning then becomes an endless project of annexing chaos by converting it into cosmos through aesthetic beautification. But it would seem that there are never enough trees. Implicit in this strategy would seem to be the view that the underside of the city is to remain unseen, like the genitals of an immodest statue.

The program for the history and theory studio aims to investigate with clinical precision what may be left out when the strategy of erasing the undesirable is taken as the norm in the design of cities. Da Vinci already has taught us that such investigations need not amount to dwelling in the macabre, even when they show things rather unlearned. In the *Notebooks* we read: "When you look at a wall spotted with stains or with a mixture of stones, if you have to devise some scenes, you may discover a resemblance to various landscapes beautified with mountains, ruins, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and hills in various arrangements, or again you may see battles and figures in action; or strange faces and costumes, and an endless variety of objects which you could reduce to complete and well-drawn forms."² Thus it becomes possible to ask where and how building might regain what Merleau-Ponty called the "full weight and thickness of life," so that it ceases to be a decorated program - a short answer to a cerebral hydrolics problem. Considered from this point of view, the task of architectural understanding becomes one of inspecting for leakage the cracks and stains which are normally considered closed to inquiry in the search for cosmos.

In Vitruvius, it is possible to hear an answer to this question in his explanation of the origin of the Corinthian capital:

Now the first invention of that capital is related to have happened thus. A girl, a

native of Corinth, already of the age to be married, was attacked by disease and died. After her funeral, the goblets which delighted her when living were put together in a basket by her nurse, carried to the monument, and placed on the top. That they might remain longer, exposed as they were to the weather, she covered the basket with a tile. As it happened, the basket was placed on the root of an acanthus. Meanwhile, about spring time, the root of the acanthus, being pressed down in the middle by the weight, put forth leaves and shoots. The shoots grew up the sides of the basket, and, being pressed down at the angles by the force of the weight of the tile, were compelled to form the curves of volutes at the extreme parts. Then Callimachus, who for the elegance and refinement of his marble carving was nick-named catatechnos by the Athenians, was passing the monument, perceived the basket, and the young leaves growing up. Pleased with the style and novelty of the grouping, he made columns for the Corinthians on this model and fixed the proportions.³

This is perhaps a story with no basis in fact. But could it be that to ask whether it is true is to miss the point? Vitruvius presents a *historia*, the word for which, in Latin, still meant an *enquiry*, even as late as Alberti.⁴ The goal and project was self-understanding, aided and promoted by a helpful story. Could it be that what Vitruvius tells us about the origin of the Corinthian column is not a fact but a helpful story? And, could it be that the story is helpful, in the end, because it enables us to catch a glimpse of what it is, or was, to be an architect? According to the story, Callimachus was called a *catatechnos* by the Greeks. In Greek, an architect is an *architecton*; as we say, a master-builder or chief-artificer. But how far do these translations record the actual *idea* or *intention* of the word as it was lived by the Greeks? This is a question we could ask, not to find out just what the Greeks thought, but to find out what is thinkable, above all, for ourselves. In Greek, the word for "architect" is "architecton." To be a *technon* is to have *techné*, or "know how." The *technon* knows how to do it, whether to be a shoemaker or a maker of some other kind. In Greek, the prefix *cata* means "down from the highest." Thus the *cata-technon* is someone who has the know-how to bring something forth from the highest or most primordial source.

Like da Vinci and Callimachus, we in the history and theory program have found in the mimetic act of drawing a way of making *revisible*, out of the chaos of the discarded ordinary, a weight and thickness which remains inaccessible to those who vainly struggle to make something out of nothing. Such attempts always amount to a challenging-forth rather than to a bringing-forth or husbanding-forth, as Heidegger calls it in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," for they always pretend to set the terms under which an object may appear. This is the technological mentality. Drawing, on the other hand, if it is to be truly that and not mere "graphics," which is also a form of "challenging-forth," requires a submission to the object - a surrender of control to its whimsy and seduction. In this way architecture begins in a true phenomenology and is thus also an ontology - a making visible of *what there is* - and is thus a true *mimesis* rather than a snapshot.⁵ This is why the studio work begins with drawing as a search for "thickness."

Yet that making which is truly a *making* requires a transformation of what is extracted by drawing from life. The work shown here is representative in various ways of this process of extraction and transformation as it was undertaken for the Palmanova project of the 1985 Venice Biennale Competition. The basic strategy for what developed as a joint submission was that any significant intervention for the city of Palmanova was acceptable, regardless of scale. In an age where the meter-scale pretends to measure all, the *lived scale* might even remain ambiguous. Is the "real" clock for Palmanova 300 feet in diameter, or is it just the working model itself - a thing to be placed in a non-existent, city museum in order to tell time in a different way, which is, perhaps, more telling? Is the balloon ride from Venice to Palmanova real or imaginary? In which form would it show us more

about ourselves? In which form would it be more profoundly poetic? A water fountain is made which the architect wants to be 20 feet high; but can it be so? Once the thought is taken seriously that what has been made already sets its own scale, quite often in spite of what is desired, the scale is set free to become the reality which is found last or merely surrendered to in exhaustion. These projects thus become a way of asking about the price of closing the gap between what has actually been made and what is merely planned by means of a risky venture and prediction grounded somewhere in the nebulous zone between a wish and a hope.

The several interventions are grounded in a guidebook for the city of Palmanova. The guidebook plays the role of a *historia* (a helpful story) rather than a mere guide to the history of the city. The book interweaves fact and fiction in order to make the sleepy town of Palmanova a visible object once again for its 2,000 inhabitants and the future tourists who will visit it. Could this also be a form of urban renewal? Could it be a form of urban renewal which has about it the additional virtue of modesty, in that it does not presume either to know "all of the facts," or to impose upon the city a "foreign" architecture from "other lands and other customs?" These were the questions we began with in trying to understand how to approach the project. We could not visit the "site," above all, even if we had, we could not have presumed to have lived there as if "to the manor born." Upon what genius or form of life can one presume to ground an international competition entry? We chose the form of life called the *story* because, today, perhaps it alone remains "international." It cannot be denied that Chaucer, Dante, and Shakespeare still speak to us today from a greater distance than Palmanova. And if they do so it is because they tell us a story which is worth reliving like the myth of Oedipus.

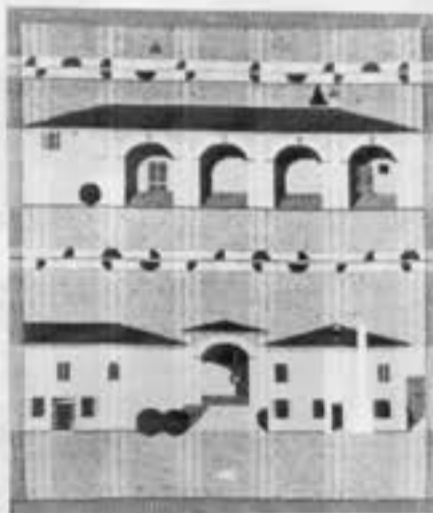
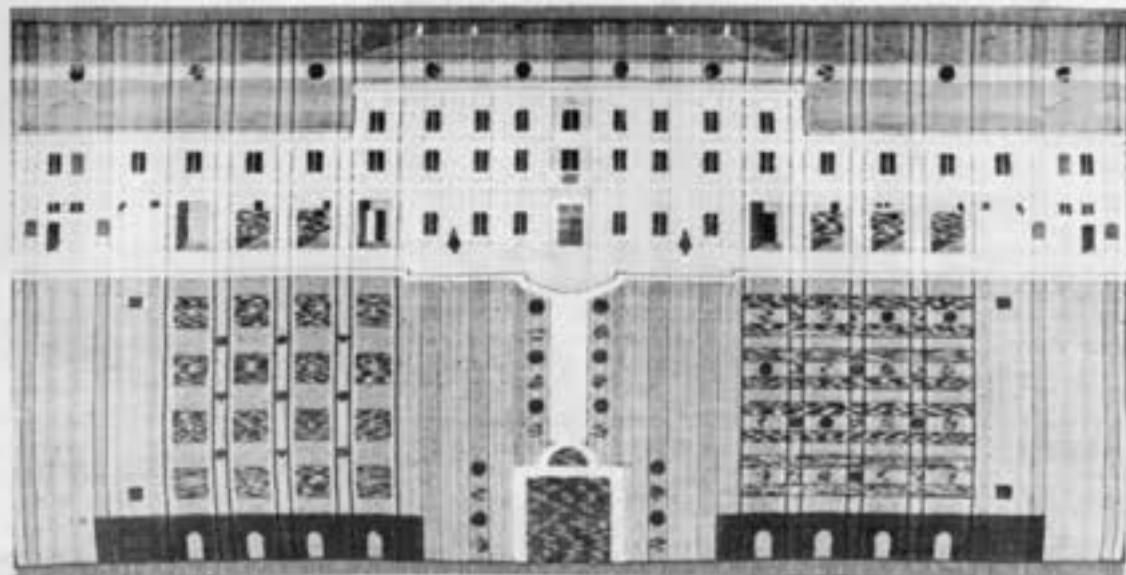
Our aim was to make the guidebook and projects for Palmanova a bringing-forth rather than a challenging-forth. The guidebook invites the tourist or visitor to submit to a story and an artifact, both of which perhaps merge into a single artifact which turns the city into a theater once again - a theater in which the fundamental project of life as self-understanding is played out in all its variations, vagaries, and vicissitudes, like a ticking clock in search of a *time* to tell. At work is always the principle of theater - the suspension of disbelief - the involuntary submission to the story as a thing to be lived through by catharsis or abreaction, through which something more than the predictable becomes available for living.

Theory is thus fundamentally an inquiry into the relation between building and being - a poesis of action and action - a making of the as yet unmade and a saying of the as yet unsayable. And this would be the task of thinking at the end of philosophy, where the comet of metaphysics reaches its *epoché* in the quest for certainty, somewhere between the vacuum and the stars.

History, if it would be *history*, might then be asked for its account of the progressive erasure of the artifact. Could it be that what is truly history must either help erase the invisibility of the object or die with metaphysics as a past not fit for the present? If the thunderbolt of Zeus turned out not to be the one that split the roof of the Erechtheion on the acropolis at Athens, would it matter? Suppose it turned out to be the Trident of Poseidon. Before both, the artifact stands mute, speaking all the while of something these "facts" seem unable to contravene. Reversing Wolfgang Köhler, it thus becomes possible to ask for the place of facts in a world of values. ■

Notes

1. See Frances A. Yates, *Theatre of the World*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969.
2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebooks*, Ms. 23, B.N. 22 V.
3. Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, New York, Dover Press, 1960, 104.
4. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura*, London, Phaidon, 1972, 99.
5. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, New York, Harper, 1977, 296.
6. John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, New York, Dover Press, 1971, 25.



Top and left: Silk and wool tapestries of the Villa Farsetti, 1985, Laura Nicholson, weaver. Above, Villa Farsetti, view of the villa and park, 1833 (Drawing by A. Lazzari)

Houston at the Venice Biennale

"The Biennale," we wrote in the quadriennial program presented to the Board of Directors at the beginning of the present quadrennium, "has in its nature a double cultural vocation: one that originates from the very unusual quality of its territorial emplacement and one that rises from the historical role it has developed (and is declared in its statute), operating on a worldwide scene through an organization just about unique in its kind, that involves, in its cultural management, a great number of nations from the whole world." Internationality and "Venetianity" were thus placed at the base of the work in this quadrennium as an aim to reach, not only through alternation, but also through a synthesis that could represent the great contradiction of Venice, a floating raft on which is perpetuated the myth of a courageous community that has challenged the world and time with weapons of beauty that have helped put in communication and sometimes united opposed parts of the earth. Venice, in fact, is the protagonist of this exhibition... for one whole season Venice becomes, thanks to the Biennale, the capital of projectual hope. - Paolo Portoghesi, *The Projectual Offering, Introduction to the Third International Exhibition of Architecture of The Biennale di Venezia*.

Nine projects by Houston architects and artists were selected for exhibition in the Third Biennale International Exhibition of Architecture this summer. Responding to chairman Aldo Rossi's "thin work-program" to create designs and interpretations for 10 historical sites in and around Venice, over 1,300 architects

and artists from around the world submitted projects this year. Judges Aldo Rossi, Sandro Benedetti, Gianfranco Caniggia, Claudio d'Amato, Guglielmo de Angelis D'Orsari, Rafael Moneo, Werner Oechslin, and Gino Valle had the Herculean task of sorting through the entries, making an initial selection of 500 projects for viewing. From these, 150 were displayed in the Pavilions of the Giardini di Castelli, the permanent exhibition space for the Venice Biennale.

Tapestry artist Laura Nicholson's submission of nine wool tapestries depicting a poetic reconstruction of the Villa Farsetti won a prestigious Stone Lion, one of 14 projects honored with this highest award.

Works from the studios of three faculty members at the University of Houston's College of Architecture also were selected for display. Projects from Ben Nicholson's studio undertook a transformation of the Rialto Market in Venice. William Taylor and his students worked on schemes for the Romeo and Giulietta castles and the Accademia Bridge. Mark Schneider's studio submitted a group of projects reinterpreting elements of the Renaissance plan for the ideal, fortified city of Palmanova.

Taylor and the Nicholsons visited the exhibition this summer; the Nicholsons made two trips, the first to view the exhibition and the second, a hasty trip, so that Laura Nicholson could accept her award.

A two-volume catalogue of the Biennale is now available in translation. *Cite* asked Taylor and Laura and Ben Nicholson to reflect on their participation. (B.C.W.)

Villa Farsetti: A Garden in Silk and Wool

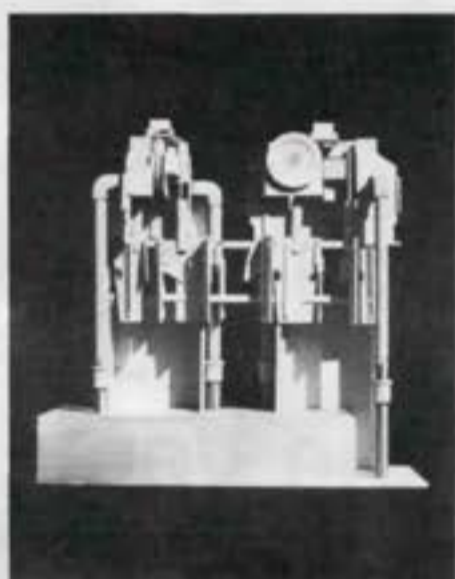
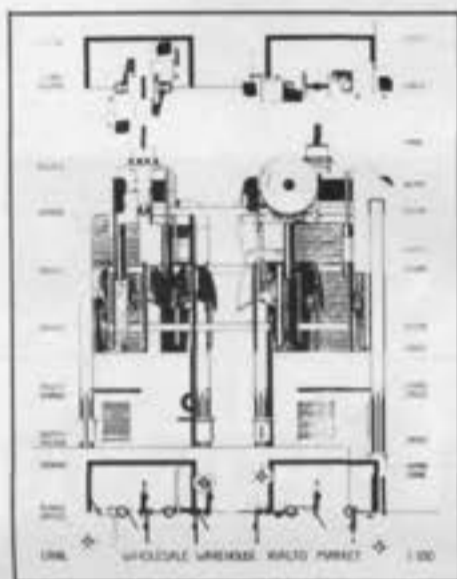
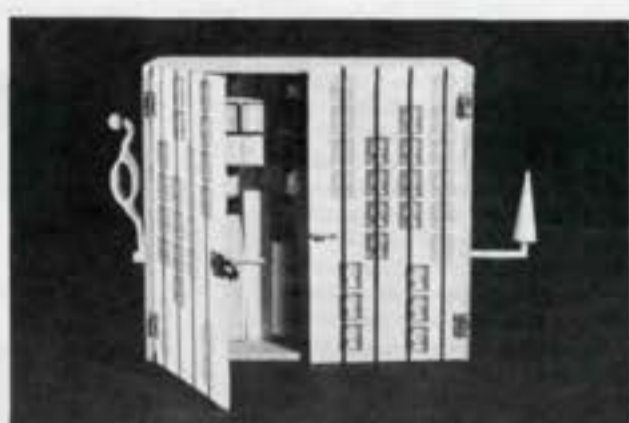
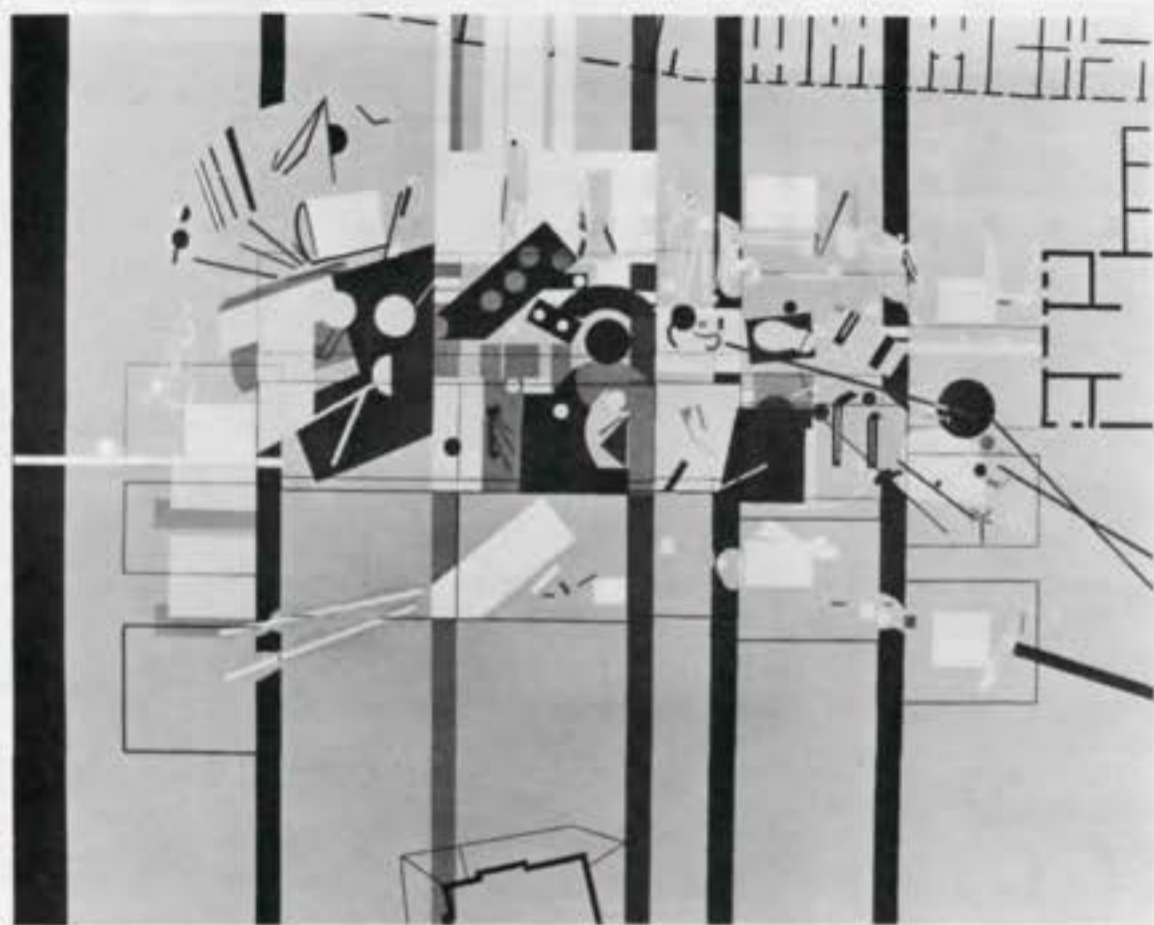
Laura Nicholson

When the ten prospectuses for the Venice Biennale Exhibition fell across my desk last summer - my husband announcing his intention to enter the competition - I leafed through them, attracted perhaps by the photographs of crumbling Venetian architecture on their covers. One of the set caught my imagination: the Villa Farsetti, built in the mid-18th century by Abbot Filippo Farsetti.

He created a "garden of marvels," a collection of beautiful and wonderful things. He built gardens, mazes, orangeries, conservatories, and botanical gardens. He had two water ducts installed... for domestic purposes, fish ponds, and fountains. He commissioned copies of the most beautiful sculptures, models of the most famous buildings and temples; he erected the Temple of Thunderous Jove, he built baths, a naumachia, and an arena in rough stone in the middle of which he put a copy of Trajan's column, and planned the "ancient spina," a Roman road with a Roman bridge.

Although I am not a trained architect, having taken both my degrees in fine arts, I have become involved in the last five years with work that is concerned very directly with garden and architectural subject matter. My tapestries set stages for events, implying narrative; the Farsetti story provided a most fabulous script to work around. The liberal nature of this year's Biennale encouraged all with any sort of interest in the proposed themes to respond; in all it seemed a project designed with my interests in mind.

I made nine tapestries, in wool and silk, to describe Villa Farsetti, working over six months to produce them. Decisions were



Projects for the Rialto Market from Ben Nicholson's studio, University of Houston. Clockwise from upper left: Collage Plan of the Retail Market, Frouz Goravanchi; "The Merchant Centaur," Chris Obi; Retail Kiosks, Michael Moller; The Ice Machine, Alberto Cepeda; Wholesale Warehouse, Ben Nicholson and Minh Dinh, model and elevation

cerebral-cartographic picture of the city. This fruit market is unchartable, but nevertheless it is coherent to the savvy resident. The rest of us must ask the orange sellers for directions.

In the middle of the scheme is a large, metal storage shed that houses 13 bilevel aluminum kiosks which are dragged from their storage shed to sit awkwardly in the square. When in the square they open their panels diurnally to proffer merchandise; nocturnally they close up to make metal-tight figures which act as the policemen of reverie. When the kiosks vacate the glove-tight shed, it is open for the daily traders to do their business in.

To the right of the market and running nearly the length of the waterfront is the wholesale fruit warehouse. At ground level it is an open structure that has a series of porcollis-like wire cages which drop from the ceiling for security. In times of the seasonal floods, these cages lock on to pallets and lift the goods above the water level. The flexings of the façade, composed of brass forms, impose themselves deliberately onto the office space, allowing an office to become by chance a host to an impediment of unusual dimensions, around which the activities of daily life continue to take place. The mechanics of the generated façade are designed to allow for the eye and mind to be in constant agitation, for flow and counterflow to be at an equilibrium.

Behind the kiosks' storage shed is the market's bank. Its ground floor is vacant save for tubular, periscopic business dispensers that retreat into the body of the building to be protected from flood and crime. In the ceiling of this lobby is the uplifted vault supported by Giacommetian caryatids; in the roof of the bank are offices and places for commercial intrigue. Wedged into a thin line between the bank and the wholesale warehouse is a row of 12 stores that dispense goods and immaterialities. Part billboard, part mahogany furniture, these merchant centaurs, with the goods they sell, pull baggages of memory. The 12 stores, plastered with heads of heroes, heroines, and moral dogmas render priceless freely to the shoppers.

Walking through the alley made of the centaur shops, the second square of the

made according to my usual methods of working, rather than to a particularly architectural method. As a result, scale was only of moderate importance; perspective and spatial problems were dealt with in terms which have evolved from working within a textile vocabulary, and mood and implication were considerations as important as specific architectural detailing. The work set out to describe the villa and its gardens with the idea of inviting the imagination to wander through its spaces.

It was important to address the issue of the reality of this villa, a place with a history and a future. Although I was not interested in providing blueprints for "the functional and formal recuperation of the existing buildings, the reconstruction of the ruined ones, and the replanning of the gardens," as the prospectus urged, it was nevertheless necessary to come to terms with the history and essential character of the place, and decide what it means today. As the original villa complex was a full-blown 18th-century humanist endeavor, intended as much as a museum as a place to live, it expressed a contemporary obsession with ancient history. What then to explore today? Should one recreate a recreation of the past? Rather, I chose to take the extant buildings - the villa itself, its guest wing, the stables - and describe them with poetry. I also chose to erect one new building, a long greenhouse stretching half the width of the property, in homage to the greatest aspect of the villa's past, the famed Sala Botanical Gardens. The gardens were redesigned in a contemporary language, a language with relation to patterning and color. Overall a view was taken to recurring themes in my own work, of domesticity, so that the new Farsetti becomes a personal expression of living, rather than a place about public display and formality.

The central theme to the exploration of the Villa Farsetti is the notion of the place where one dwells - the home. House and garden are explored as distinct but connected ways of life. House is the

ultimate sheltering of oneself and one's dreams. Garden is one's response to, and one's attempt to artificially recreate, nature. What is important about both places is that they are man-made, and so are controlled expressions of the human spirit in the process of defining a way of life. What these tapestries attempt to define, however, is not so much the framework - the architecture - but the way that a frame may mirror the life it shelters.

That the images are made in cloth is not incidental. Certainly cloth's function as the lining between man and his surroundings is long-standing. The relation of the image to the cloth is very important, as in the end one is presented not only with the image, where the mind may dwell, but with an object, a length of cloth, which will affect the quality of one's dwelling. The images, along with the sense of space, the picture-plane, must be in harmony with the experience of the object itself.

To make the images seem as integral as possible with the cloth plane, a system of building using warp and weft as horizontal and vertical axes is employed. The warp is accentuated with natural striping, then used as bare skeletal bones upon which to build. The sense of building the images makes a logical connection with architecture, but the work speaks not only of architecture - the articulation of buildings - but also uses those buildings to point to the life within.

Refitting the Rialto Market

Ben Nicholson

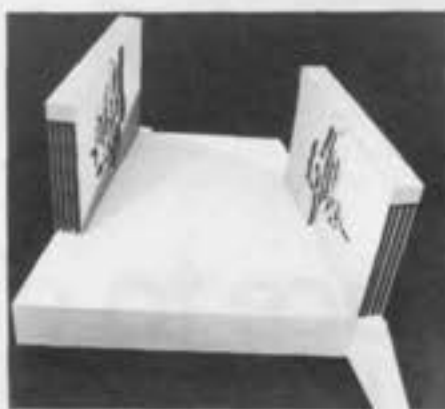
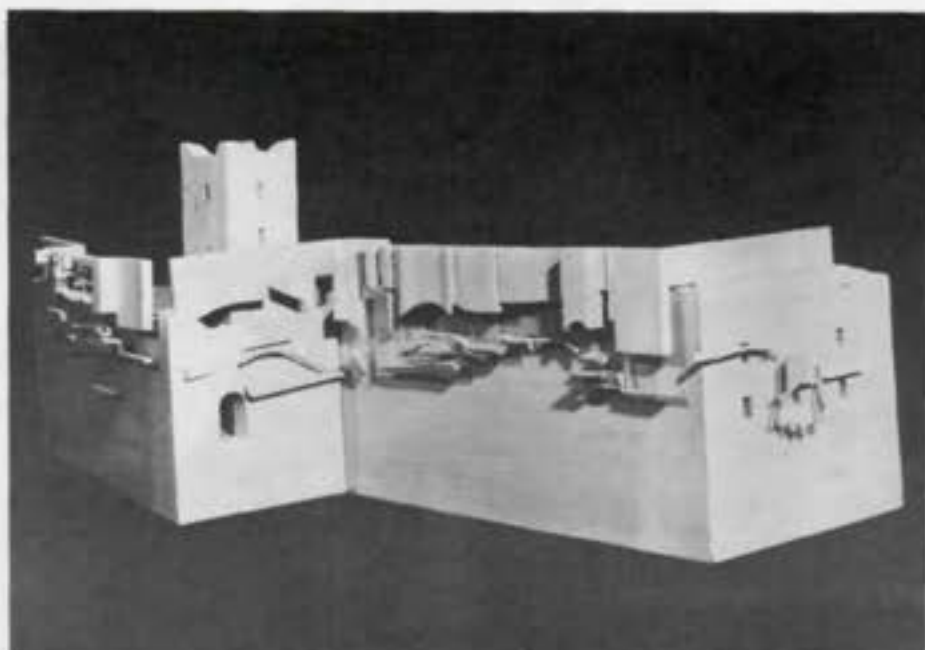
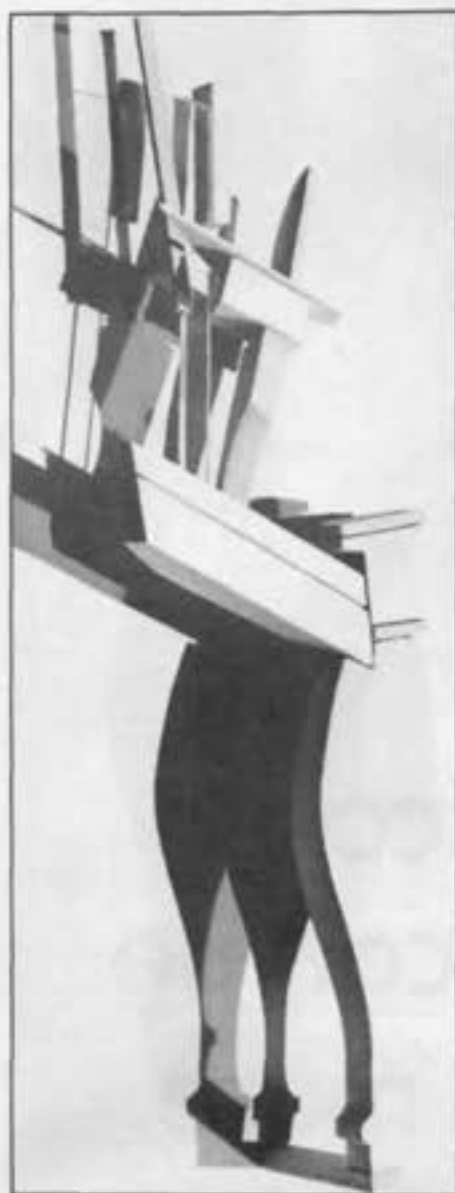
Few visitors are unaware of the bend in Venice's Grand Canal that peels around to the Rialto Bridge. On the convex side of this curve lies the Rialto Market, now a filled-up place that has spilled from the market buildings into wire cages that

squat around their edges. For the inhabitants of Venice, the market is a place to buy fruit and meat; for the tourists it is a decelerated terminus of a peller blast that originated in St. Mark's, embedded itself in the Rialto Bridge, and ended up at the Rialto Market.

Venice works well with tourists; it is vibrant with coagulating voyeurs who fill up the cafes and streets; a well-choreographed set of "extras" who pay their way. This is the city's *Ipro Facto*. Traditionally, the Rialto was the fourth corner of Venetian life, sharing its place with the Doge, the Arsenal, and the church. Rialto signified commerce: now it is little more than a revetment against which tourists are stopped dead-tired, amongst whom are dispersed the extra savvy Venetian shoppers. This uneasy mixture of expectant tourists and the side-stepping local inhabitants calls for a diaphanous resolution for the market.

The refitting of the Rialto Market must magnify the clamor of daylight mercantile intrigue, and, once the din of the trading subsides, this secular place has to open to the nocturnal amblings of the fitful wanderer. To do this the market is made into a shopping place that, when closed, turns chameleon-like into an envelope inhabited by the cool stare of structures that promote nocturnal reverie. After clearing the site of everything except the two palaces and two churches, the project is positioned as a collection of nine parts that are mutually reciprocal. When walking down the steps of the Rialto Bridge the sight seen is akin to a drawing room in which buildings in conversation are carefully placed between metamorphic furniture.

To the left is the retail fruit market. It is designed with the understanding that the city is revealed to aliens either by methodical and prejudicated map reading or a headlong run into its mass. Maps traditionally show an inflexible journey; the headlong run is composed of fragile memories which, when compiled, give a



Projects for the Venice Biennale from William Taylor's studio, University of Houston. Left: Model after Giorgio de Chirico's "The Mathematicians," Gary Chandler. Top: Juliet Castle, Michael Marris. Above: New plaza between the Romeo and Juliet Castles, Gary Chandler. Right: "Harlequins," Michael Marris.

Rialto Market is reached. Wedged between the fish market and the bank stands the ice machine, 14 feet high. It folds and unfolds its louvres; the nervous breaking and making of ice resonating throughout the market. Located throughout Rialto are miniature versions of this ice machine that act as glacial braziers, cooling the hands and feet of weary pedestrians and dispensing small packets of water crystals.

The market has three remaining loci. Along the waterfront are the light barges that sit squat to the land and water; these pointless material fixtures herald the market to canal traffic. In the market square sit three automata that serve as alarms, measuring relative ground subsidence and warning inhabitants of impending floods. Finally, sitting off from the project in the canal is a solitary stone box used as a *forcola* morgue. As each gondola is scrapped, the *forcola* is severed from the boat and placed in this morgue in the stream of the Grand Canal.

The plan of the market was developed in sympathy with the extraordinary conditions of the place, for there are palaces and churches on the site that cannot be disturbed without doing violence to the city. These buildings are at different angles to each other for there exists no grid in the modern sense. The site is bounded by the irregular curve of the canal; the buildings pressed close against each other to induce near-claustrophobia. Venice is a place that questions the usefulness of the site plan; the proximity of things allows for limited manipulation and too many stories abound about places for there to be wholesale upheaval.

In the face of this, the market was conceived as a place of metamorphosis, where something is removed only to be replaced by something more appropriate in program and spirit. This plan repairs itself so as to keep its fabric intact. The city has an indelible self-guilt for there will always be some residue of a building, always the knowledge that once someone

did violence to a place and this record can never be erased.

The great observer of Venice, Adrian Stokes, remarked, "Why this satisfaction, this value, in one thing expressed in terms of another? Because it characterizes all human process, all thought and action and emotion. To live is to substitute."

Building Fiction/ Fictional Buildings

William Taylor

The three projects presented here are selected from the body of work which my studio submitted to the Venice Biennale for exhibition. To my mind, there are two distinct efforts to be seen. The first was to be a scientific one, involving the interpretation of various 20th-century paintings. It was undertaken with practically no reference to the historical situations and problems proposed by the Biennale and was therefore free to exist as work in itself. It did not defer its existence to a future state. It was today's work, a built fiction, not a fictional building.

Mark Wilson (Accademia Bridge), working within the idea of "bridge," selected as a starting point de Chirico's *Double Dream of Spring*, a painting which contains a perceptual bridging of two different realities. Through the use of drawing (plans and sections of the painting) in a scientific way (the science of imagination) the work presents itself as an investigation into the nature of reflection; of two reciprocal realities which are pivotal about the horizon or "water-line." Although the project deals with "bridge" on a fundamental (experimental) level, it does not become a project in the conventional sense of architectural problem-architectural solution. The work (drawings and model) presents an idea; it does not represent an application.

In a similar way the work of Gary Chandler (Romeo and Juliet Castles) and

Michael Marris (Romeo and Juliet Castles) during the first semester concentrated on the idea of "duality" through their investigations of certain works by de Chirico (Chandler) and Picasso (Marris). Like Wilson's project, the work presents itself as scientific, having to do with concrete and imaginative inquiry and having nothing to do with application (The Romeo and Juliet Castles). It was only during the second semester when we began to "apply" these objects of inquiry to the "problems" put forth by the Biennale, that we began to sense a feeling of disbelief in the studio. It became increasingly difficult to be self-critical about the work, because the terms or the actuality of the work was no longer in the studio. Nor was it in Venice, as it might have been if we really believed we were responsible for making architecture on one of those various sites, i.e., a commission. We became aware that we were operating with a constructed reality; the non-reality of imagined solutions to imagined problems which is the conventional basis of studio projects.

At the Biennale exhibition itself there were also two distinct approaches to be seen. Some few works presented themselves as "real," that is they were drawings and objects concerned with the question of architecture, and as such, they were not hypothetical. They were not representational of things at other scales and in other places for other reasons. Architecture can be made in a thimble, if one has good eyes.

On the other hand, an unfortunately large portion of the Venice Biennale Exhibition presented the latest and largest, if not the last, opportunity to see the "state of the art" in project-making. The art of creating imagined solutions to imagined problems is taken to a point of development which points to its own oblivion. After viewing 40-odd renditions-solutions to any one of the problems given as the basis for this exhibition, one cannot help but be struck by the futility of it all. It is no longer possible to engage architecture in this way, just as it is no longer possible to engage religion through a stylized

Christianity. It simply is no longer believable. These projects accept neither the reality of building nor the reality of objects in themselves as concrete moments of inquiry. They are based on the premise that representation is real enough. It is tragic that this sort of endeavor is what almost entirely constitutes the education of an architect. A student is given a problem which doesn't exist and is asked what he would do if it were his problem, if he were an architect. Naturally the student's first question is not "what can I do?" but "what does an architect do (in situations like these)?" and "how does he do it?" Immediately the student is trapped in the no-man's-land of disbelief. His role is not real, the problem is not real, and the work will not be real either. The truth is continually deferred. No attitude toward making is developed, only the skills of description.

Deprived of the reality of the object (or drawing) in time, self-criticism is reduced to an appraisal of composition and technique, and the terms of the student's visual appraisal can be nothing but a comparison with what is understood to be "appropriate" in architecture. And for that, of course, we look to the past, to someone else's idea of what looked right.

True science (the science of imagination), on the other hand, is not interested in what can be seen in history, but rather in what cannot be seen. The conventional examination and utilization of history never separates artifacts from their supposed original intentions or set of beliefs (a set of beliefs which are, of course, no longer valid for us today). That is exactly what the scientist in architecture seeks to do. He recognizes that the things we make which acquire visibility "carve a gap" (Daniel Libeskind), that is to say those things we make which aspire to the quality of art are never only the projects of our intentions. They come to visibility more as "strangers" than as executed ideas. Therefore, the scientist takes as his inspiration the gaps of history, those distances between the artifacts which we inherit and their original intentions. He seeks to readjust the trajectory of history. He never sees himself as a "resultant" of history, as do most of the Biennale projects, but rather seeks ways to cause the future through the creative contemplation of those things which were not intended.

History should be of real interest only to those who understand they are inventing history; for the others, it is merely a scrapbook. Since the scientist believes the world and its arts are still open to a fundamental reinterpretation, he is not interested in refining goals, nor in ends. "The possibility of the invention (and realization) of a fictional future as opposed to an idealized one" (Peter Eisenman) is what interests the scientist as architect. The denial of goals, and the acceptance of the necessity of fiction (not fantasy, because fiction is hard work) forces one to accept the fact that the beginnings of one's work (in the "gaps") are, to a degree, arbitrary, guided only by personal interests and passions. An inclination to philosophy abhors assignments. By the time questions can be formed into an assignment they are no longer valid. Science is not interested in what is known, but in what is not yet knowable; it is not interested in what has been said, but what is as yet unsayable. The scientist in architecture seeks to build what is not yet buildable. He is interested in "building" fiction, not fictional buildings.

The Venice Biennale Exhibition, with the few exceptions mentioned, seems retrospective in character. It documents the end of the predominant convention of engaging architecture in a hypothetical way, through the self-deception of those types of projects which defer their reality to the anticipated operations of the profession. One cannot make buildings in school. What then are the real possibilities of architectural education? The practice of architecture in schools should be seen as being real in itself, the making of objects which are immediate and complete. The experience of inquiry through making is the important thing, not the habit of deferral.

Since (as a jeweller) Brunelleschi revealed a marvelous genius, his advice about buildings was in great demand. - Marnetti (Biography of Brunelleschi) ■



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Houses Between Allegory and the Novel

Alan Hirschfield and Peter D. Waldman

Bruce C. Webb

The allegorical landscape is the natural domain of architecture - a fable of abstractions which are settings for the fabled life. Within this context architecture confronts the allegorical dilemma of having at once two contents: the one literal and immediate; the other figurative and symbolic. It is a dilemma shared with all allegorical art, only here made more difficult by the very nature of the architectural medium which is always a medium of undeniable realities. In struggling with the problem of creating meaningful architecture in the modern world, the choices are these: to make allegories which struggle to be buildings, or to make buildings which aspire to be allegorical. Jorge Luis Borges, in discussing a similar situation in the evolution of narrative literature, writes that the date when the passage from the allegory to the novel, from the species to the individual, occurred was on "that day in 1382 when Geoffrey Chaucer . . . wished to translate a line from Boccaccio into English, 'E con fili occulti ferri i Tradimenti' ('And Treachery with hidden weapons'), and he said it like this: 'The smyler with the knyfe under the cloke.'" And in doing so he made the abstract, allegorical character, Tradimenti, into a picture invested with allegorical meaning.

The work of two Houston architects, Alan Hirschfield and Peter D. Waldman, in separate ways, operates in this space between allegory and the novel. Both make use of stories as a way of structuring the circumstances for their work: Waldman through constructed fables which he populates with his designs; Hirschfield through evocative early sketches which contain the conditions of a story. In terms of the distinction made by Borges, I think of Waldman's work as being more thoroughly allegorical in intent, more concerned with formal idealization, while Hirschfield seems to work through conceptual propositions which are

inherently messier and more complex, like those of a novelist. Both sometimes fall short on their agendas and in predictable ways. Particularly in Waldman's early work, the buildings are sometimes overly dependent on the text, more illustration than tectonics. And Hirschfield's buildings sometimes never quite emerge from their essential quirkiness, especially where an unevenness in execution obscures the distinction between what was intended and what was accidental. But these are perhaps the expected excesses of an emerging genre, one which is seeking a poetic alternative to current styles.



Alan Hirschfield Helmet House

Hirschfield's best buildings are also virtual landscapes in which mythical settings are brought into collision with the real and often constraining features of the site. In his Helmet House, located at 5215 Yoakum Boulevard near the Contemporary Arts Museum, the building is confined to a tight, infill site where a conventional townhouse solution might typically fill out, and consume, all possibilities of a "landscape." Although Hirschfield's earliest sketches for this project were founded on a Teutonic knight's helmet and armorial gear, the actual architectural pieces which comprise the house seem drawn from an idealized, story-book ensemble of building and site consisting of an enfronting wall and gate, a cubic base with long, ascending entry stairs, a breastplate tower and battlement, and, at the apex, a small house and chimney. The layers of space normally associated with these elements have been compressed and flattened in a way reminiscent of cubist painting, and it is significant that Hirschfield's initial sketches were primarily small elevation studies, drawings which could have been reconstituted spatially into more generous and more typical spatial layerings that might have included an entry court, a more robust tower, and deeper balconies. The overscaled pylons and gas lanterns which flank the front wall and entrance gate enhance the sense of perspective from the street by advancing the wall forward. A not-yet-in-place truss beam at the top of the first level will extend out to the adjacent property, pulling an existing house into a knight and vassal relationship. Enough of the martial characteristics of the initial sketch are maintained to make the house appear as a small castle, both menacing and friendly, like an illustration in a child's book.



The effect is saved from mannered picturesqueness by a genuine tectonic development in which the allegorical pieces are constructed in a variety of materials and colors - grey stucco for the gate and ramparts, black ceramic tile for the stairs and basement block, black and red metal siding for the breastplate and the loft house, and red-painted metal for the binding truss and super-scaled lanterns. The house displays Hirschfield's interest in an architecture of shaped and composed elements, reminiscent of a crustaceous exoskeleton where many jointed pieces comprise the hard shell around the visceral life inside.

In contrast to the vivid imagery of the front façade, the interior is more ambiguous, a study in sculpted drywall, creating a rather vague background for the main action unfolding along the central axis where a double tier of stairs connects the three levels. In plan the stairs split the house into two halves creating, on the ground level, a pair of undistinguished rooms, one too empty and anonymous, the other, containing a small bedroom and bath, too full with raised spa-tub, lavatory, shower, and a curvaceous nook for the toilet.



Clockwise from left: Central stair and loft space, Helmet House, 1985, Alan Hirschfield, architect; a warrior's face mask, source drawing for Helmet House; design sketch for Helmet House; front façade, Helmet House (Photos by Paul Hester, drawings by Alan Hirschfield)

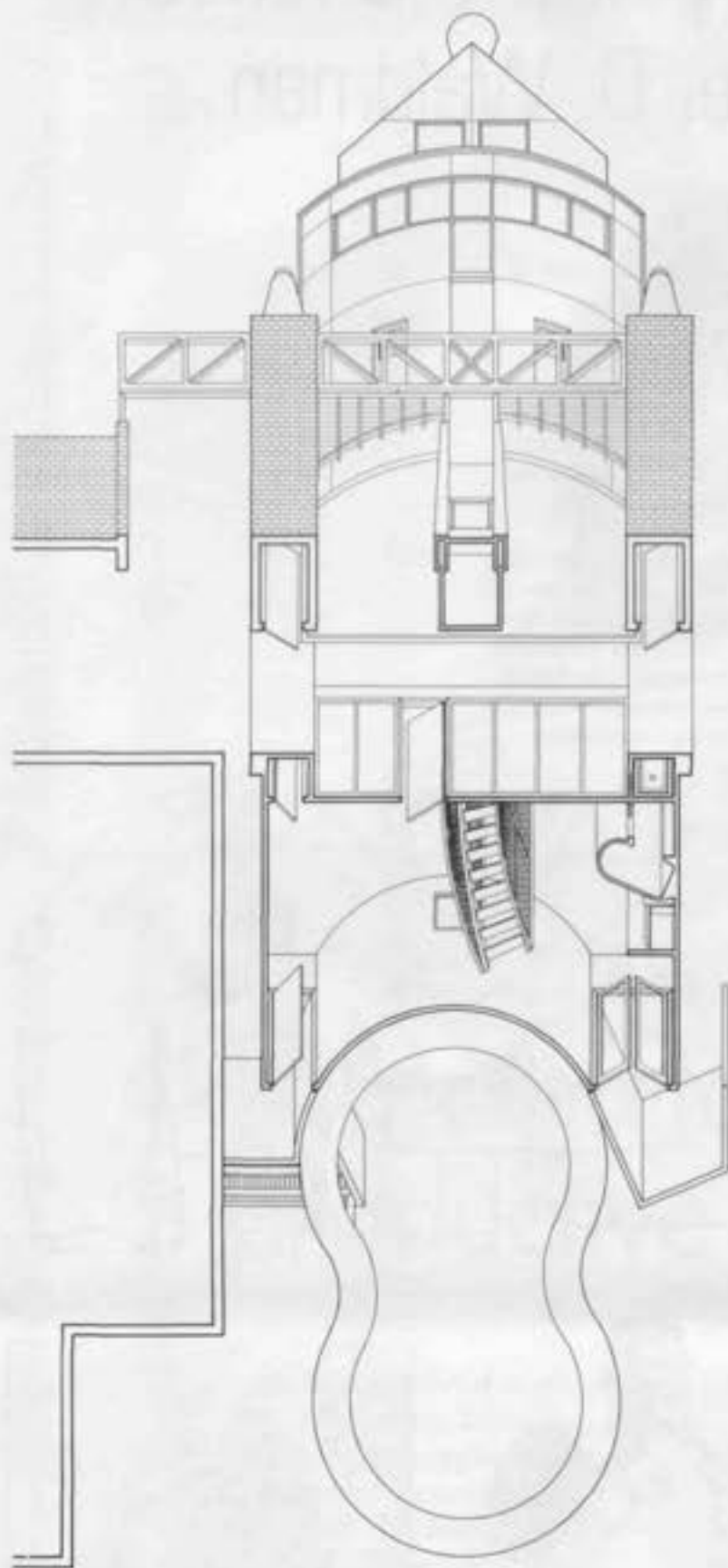


The second level, containing the public rooms, together with the third-level loft, are conceived as one space in which the sectional relationship between the stair and loft takes over from the plan creating a far more compelling ascending axis than that of the lateral movement into and between the dining and living spaces on the second floor. Service spaces have been relegated to the perimeter, creating the impression of two houses, the one a metaphorical watch tower with a long ascending stair, around which a second house of programmatic circumstance has been erected. The effect is enhanced by the materiality of the stair and its metal railing, which are treated as tectonic objects in the space, as well as by the idealization and clarification of the house concept in the loft, an aerie which commands a chimerical view onto the surrounding neighborhood below, one which is both voyeuristic and defensible - a child's "king of the mountain" promontory. On the backside, the loft shares views to the backyard trees with the living and dining rooms.

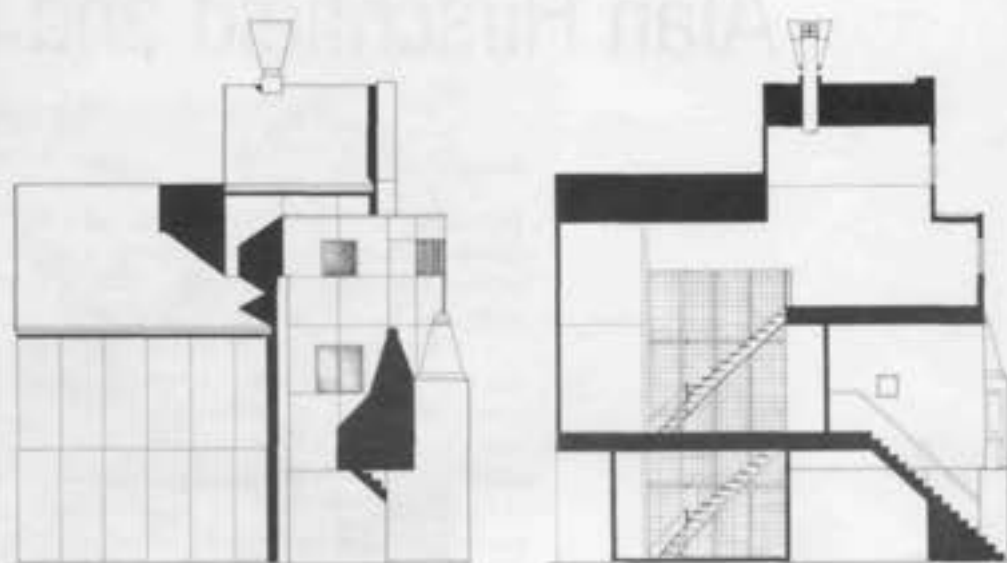
One wishes that the lower levels, particularly the base of the building, were as strongly defined conceptually as the loft

house, thus rendering a more complete interpretation of the promises made on the exterior. This conceptual inconsistency manifests an anomaly in this particular building type where the ground floor, having been bypassed by the entry stairs to the public level, is basement, although it frequently serves as the location for one or more of the primary sleeping spaces. The fable set forth on the front façade calls for a basement of magnificent austerity, one which deals with the rationale of resolved support, but the criteria of the program disallow this interpretation and treat the lower level like those above. Thus the basement lapses into a formalistic accommodation of circumstantial requirements, creating rooms which could be anywhere, on any level, disconnected from the house of fables - an equivocating partner for the loft house.

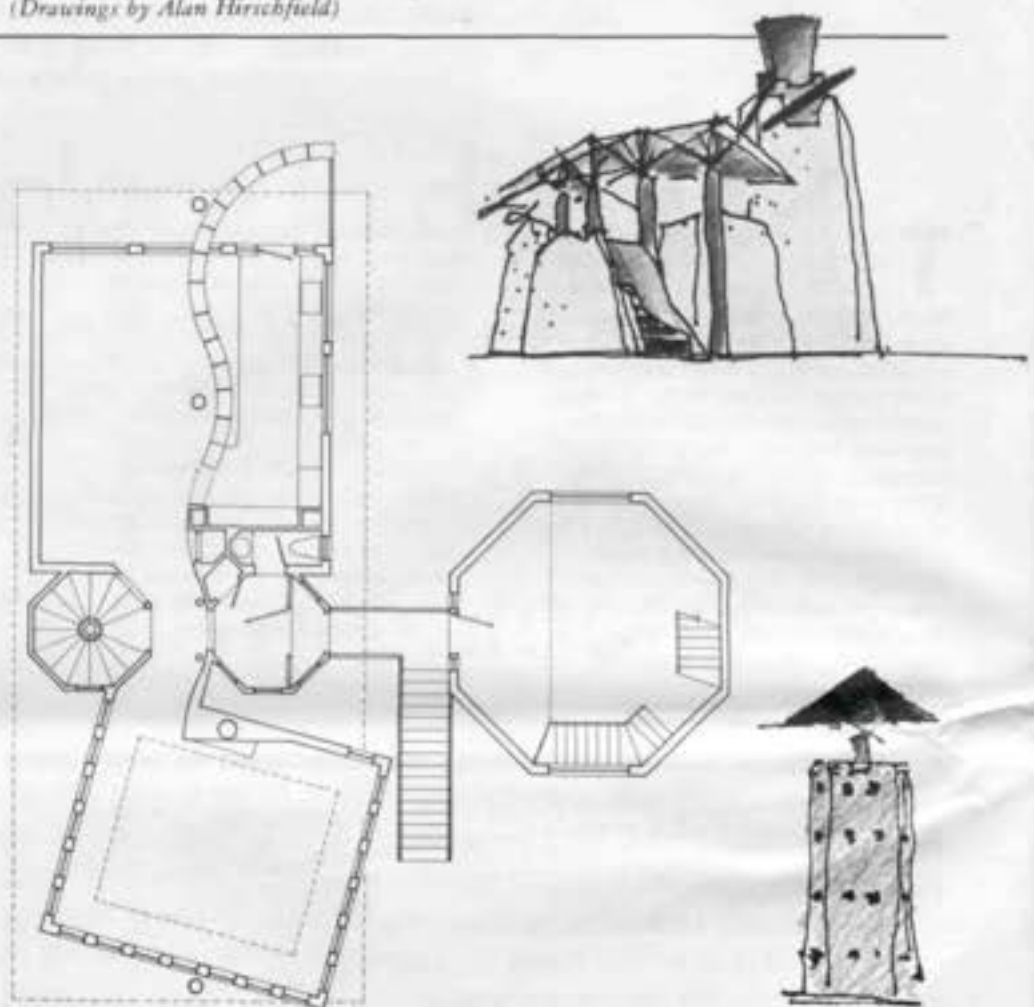
Hirschfield's current interest is in reductionism, leading not towards greater abstraction but towards an increased awareness of the essential features of the architectural elements forming the medium of the work. This frequently leads to the identification of a number of



West face up, projected drawing of Helmet House (Drawing by Alan Hirschfield)



Left: Side elevation, Helmet House, Right: Section, Helmet House (Drawings by Alan Hirschfield)



Preliminary design of a house for a musician and a collector, 1985, Alan Hirschfield, architect. Clockwise from top: Figurative sketch of tower and pole building; tower and canopy; first-floor plan (Drawings by Alan Hirschfield)

typological elements, many of them drawn from vernacular buildings, which are represented through simple, geometric shapes - cubes, pyramids, triangles, cylinders - in a manner reminiscent of a Cézanne painting where a sense of structure is latent in the shapes and their interrelationships. A parsing of the Helmet House, for example, reveals a compositional sub-structure made up of Platonic solids, architectural building blocks encased in an interpretative crust that aims to specify these shapes, treating them as characters rather than characteristics. The backside of the building is conceived in starker terms, creating a more purely compositional backdrop for the swimming pool and patio, which reinforces an interpretation of the front façade as a street masque.

In a later house, designed for a married couple in a Montrose neighborhood, Hirschfield begins with two simple, vernacular building forms, the pole building and the silo, which he transforms into a dialogue between two allegorical, architectural elements: a tower house and a wall house. The two elements satisfy and symbolize the respective needs of the couple: the tower as a sanctum for the husband who composes and plays electronic music; the wall house as a gallery for the wife, who collects paintings and jewelry and who has fond memories

of Norman towers from her childhood spent on an island off the south coast of England. Hirschfield conceives his building through figurative imaging. Drawing in a surreal, stream-of-consciousness fashion, he works in the space between programmatic requirements that are expressed mythically rather than quantitatively and the resonant memories of vernacular building shapes. Elements are made to appeal to both a literal and subliminal process of association, revealing a private world of memories brought to life. This project, which is still at a schematic stage, promises to evoke a more complete resolution of its story line in tectonic terms, allowing the parts to be realized more fully as construction than as shape.

Peter D. Waldman Hurricane House

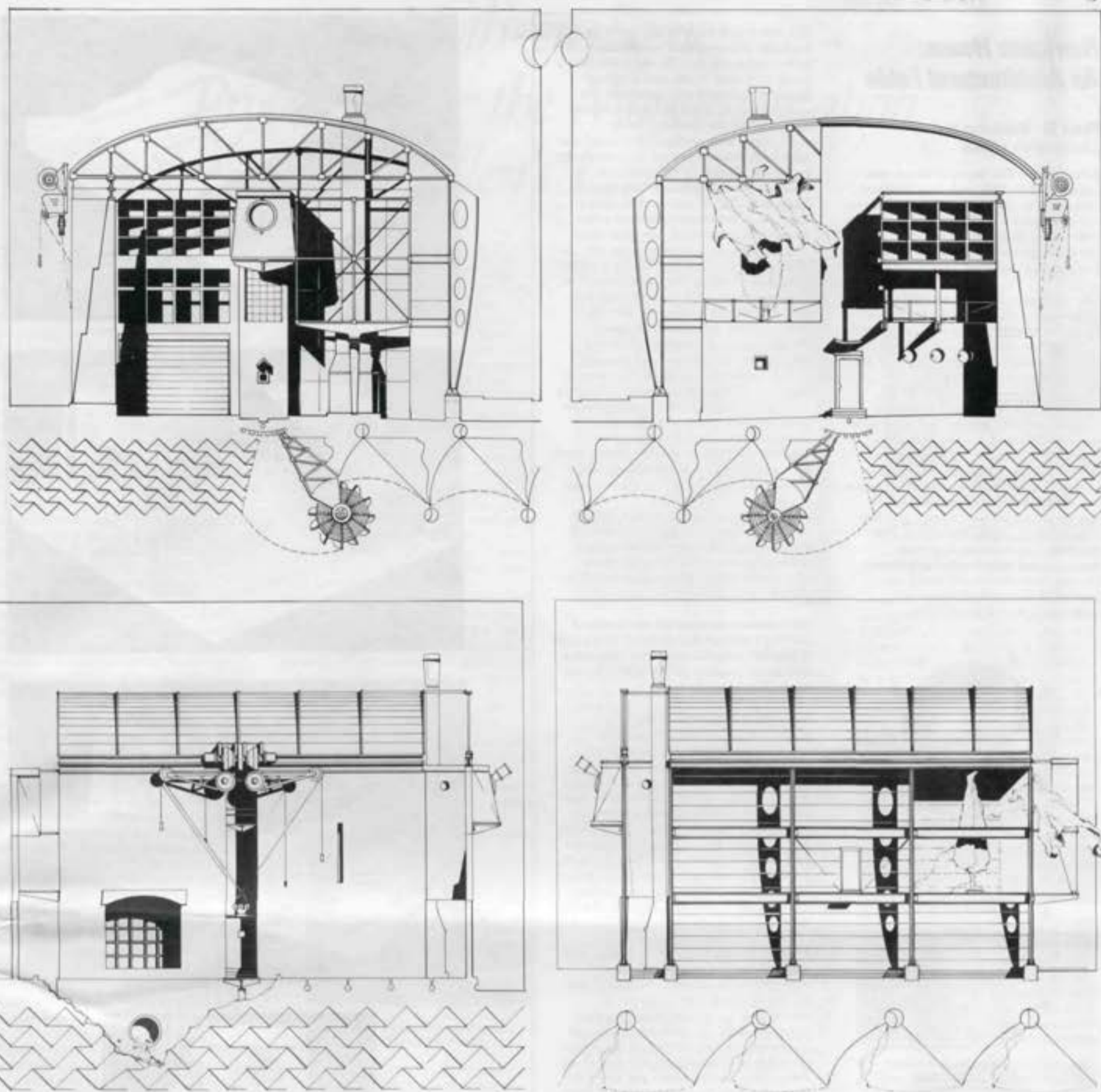
Peter D. Waldman's pedagogical projects, done with students at Rice University and at Princeton University where he formerly taught, frequently make use of certain constructed myths or fables as a way of getting into the architectural problem. One of his primer projects which is described more fully in the essay, "A Primer of Easy Pieces: Teaching Through Typological Narrative" (*Journal*

of Architectural Education, Winter 1982), begins with a serialized fable recounting the life and times of a mythical population on the island of Malta. Using the story as a "program," students were asked to elaborate a simple sheltering building in terms of elemental conditions of door, window, roof, attic, and basement. An architectural structure was given in the form of a *megaron*, a walled enclosure or *cella*, surrounded by a trabeated portico, recalling two fundamentally different forms of primitive shelters, the cave and the tent. In subsequent exercises, the mythical architecture is extended into the landscape through a consideration of the garden and street and the conditions of façade, porch, patio, and fence.

In his discussion of this project, Waldman makes frequent reference to archetypal fairy tales, as well as Dick and Jane primers, in developing a sense of his characters, who include "monks, musicians, mayors and maidens... characters who appear and reappear in the role of both the self-confident inhabitant as well as the self-conscious guest." The process portrayed in the exercises is one of space or building becoming *place* through the transformation of generic architectural elements into parts of, and settings for, the story. What is especially fascinating in

this work is Waldman's interest in an architectural idea unfolding over time, so that at any given moment in its evolution it is both a representation of events which have preceded as well as a precursor of what is to follow. Peter C. Papademetriou has written about Waldman's use of ritual movement in his design for the lobby spaces of the Alley Theater Center ("Mayer House and Alley Theater," *Ritual: The Princeton Journal*, 1983), where "sequence and passage become the glue which binds the juxtapositions into a narrative of experience." But the extension of the narrative idea to cover the process of incremental construction is unique and powerful, particularly in a society which is always changing, adding, and subtracting. In describing the two-year implementation schedule for his "Parasol House," a redevelopment of a tight suburban lot in Southgate near the Rice campus, into a "Palace in Paradise," Waldman proposes the following scenario:

1. Remove the freestanding garage-apartment and den addition to the house to clear out the south-facing garden for an exclusively introverted vision of paradise.
2. Construct perimeter walls around house and resultant patio and locate a pool in the spirit of the house as the major focus of the area.



Clockwise from upper left: East elevation, Hurricane House, Peter D. Waldman, architect, and Christopher Genik; west elevation; north elevation; south elevation

3. Place a parasol to provide shade from the high noon sun for this new Nymphaeum.
4. Beneath the parasol construct three cabanas: formal entry and master bedroom to the east, service entry to kitchen and children's bedroom to the west, living-dining rooms in the center, oriented to the north.
5. Demolish those redundant spaces remaining in the original house leaving one portion as a studio-guest-gate house.
6. Move into the house and walk to work.

Waldman began to make use of stories as a way to resolve conflicts in the programmatic criteria for his projects. Things which were in conflict in the disparate needs and desires described by his clients - the differing views of a house which came from a working husband and a housewife, for example - became essential ingredients. It was an attempt to make designs out of the real events of people's lives rather than the distorted sense which often results when conflict is suppressed in the programming stage. Things which would be denied to the formal logic of problem-solving (either-or) became the basis for a story. After a time, the stories became more allegorical in nature as such recurring themes as the peacable garden, the palace, the procession of entry, and the

idea of performance were used to recast the architectural problem in terms of fables.

In the design for Hurricane House (1985) on a bay-front site near Kemah, Waldman and Christopher Genik use a material dialectic to weave a story about a place in which to ride out a storm. The house as spatial object is a fragile, metal-ribbed, glass cube, geometrically precise and spare. A set of sheltering elements establish a protective context for the cube: a plinth which raises it above the damp and uneven ground, a heavy battered wall which shields it from winds and provides privacy from neighbors, and a hovering, canopy roof formed on bowstring trusses supported by triangular, metal columns. The foundation walls are genuine relics which once belonged to a plantation house washed away in a storm. The sheltering wall and the glass observatory space join together along the south wall where the thickness of the wall is used to house the water utilities.

Entry to the house is from the south by bridge across a storm gully, then under a Copernican gate whose mechanism of operation is visible, portraying a kind of mechanized ritual of entry. The heavy walls on the south contain two windows, one facing a view through the storm ravine, the other fixed on a line of live

oaks belonging to the old plantation road. Inside the wall one again is situated visually in the outdoors in a transparent space seized by the metal framework and decorated by the sky and sea - a room Waldman and Genik describe as a "lense for the sky." The metaphor is suggested by the client's interest in telescopes, and the interior provides numerous platforms or points-of-view for espying the panoramic view.

The house is as tall as it is thin, throwing emphasis on the climb upward from the fireplace to the loft, and then from the loft to the "hammock," a retreat nestled at the top of the house which is hung from the trusses. The interior is treated as one large room in which a lightweight, scaffold-like system is used to support platforms at various levels. The spareness and transparency of the living spaces emphasize the presence of the sheltering elements, and create an idealized point-of-view in a place between the earth and the stars.

Subsequent revisions to the original scheme resulted in a paring down of the program to half its original size. Waldman was able to use this reduction to emphasize further the independence of the sheltering from the sheltered elements: by maintaining the original size of the south wall and canopy while

shrinking the transparent cube, the roof is made to appear more generous, gathering outdoor spaces underneath in the unbuilt portion to the east. A stairway projecting into this zone, which formerly was internal, was wrapped in glass, creating a vertical passage which in a sense involves a trip out from, and back to, the house.

Waldman's designs are frequently discussed in terms of formalistic dualities, propositions which deflect attention from the true metaphorical nature of the work by recasting it in the language of logical criticism. In the case of Hurricane House, the sheltering wall is not the conceptual opposite of the glass cube except in formal terms. Metaphorically it is its companion: the wall makes the glass building possible. Thus the wall mass and the framed hollow are two sides of the same proposition, a construction perhaps denied to formal logic (either-or) but a demonstration of the true nature of metaphors as a union of regions of experience. By embodying complex circumstances of program and site, rather than willful, formalistic invention, in the work, Waldman makes visible a special condition of dwelling, one which is idealized as a place informed by fictions rather than a formal fiction.

Hurricane House: An Architectural Fable

Peter D. Waldman and
Christopher Genik

Editor's note: The Bayview House was commenced in 1984 with Lucy Hubbard Holmes. The Hurricane House as allegory was developed with Christopher Genik in 1985. Peter Waldman wishes to acknowledge the collaboration of George Cunningham on behalf of this project.

The Hurricane House is an allegory of the geography of the imagination. It is the story of a spatial genesis in collaboration with the sun and the moon. It is the tale of the laborings of one gardener and the machination of one engineer.

Not so long, long ago, and indeed not very far, far away, a young geologist came upon the fabled plantation of Bayview. Descending from the highway onto an ancient oak-lined road, he saw in the distance the sky making a room out of the sea. At the junction of sky and sea, a jagged green lawn was scarred with the remains of the fabled plantation. This dwelling, it is rumored, had been destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly during the late 19th century and finally was washed from its foundation in the tremendous tidal wave of 1903.



Illustrations above: Figurative drawings showing the sequential development of the Hurricane House in a cosmological landscape (Drawings by Peter D. Waldman)

The side is concealed on the north by huge live oaks and open to the south facing Galveston Bay. To the south lives a young astronaut, to the east a retired mason: one neighbor to anticipate the mapping of the skies; the other already had spent his life building strong walls. Our young geologist first asked the elder gentleman to extend the jagged edge by the sea, building a straight stone breakwater to redefine the building lot into a neat 100'-0" square. The mason came out of retirement and over a two-year period constructed one good stone wall to resist the deterioration of the sea. The geologist who had spent his energies with success sorting the earth's crust for its secrets then asked the astronaut to help him learn the secrets of the sky. The astronaut instructed this young Prometheus in the making of an observatory. First the ground must be perfectly levelled and marked to measure time and distance. A wall must be built to the south to hide this nocturnal operation from the ever-spying sun. Several platforms must be built from which to measure the horizon. Finally, frames must be constructed to map the ceiling, walls, and undulating floor of this sky-seascape.

At the terminus of this ancient allée, where the sea meets sky, two neighbors and their new geologist friend dedicate themselves to a common landscape to observe the stars and to take refuge from the sea.

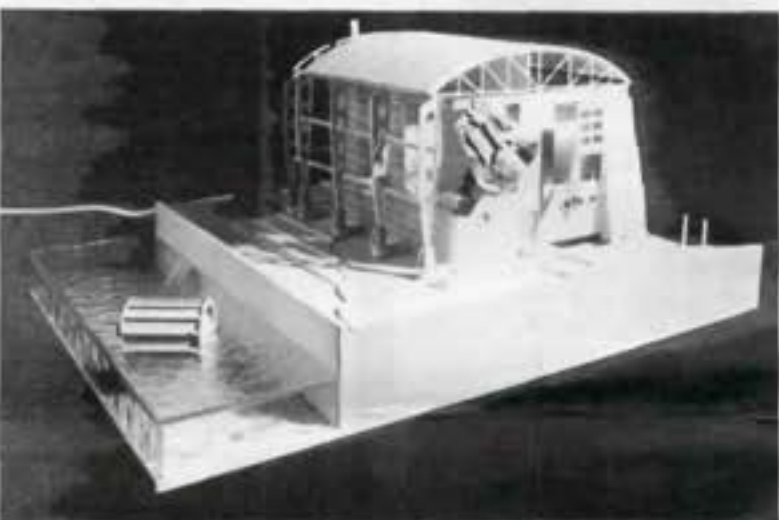
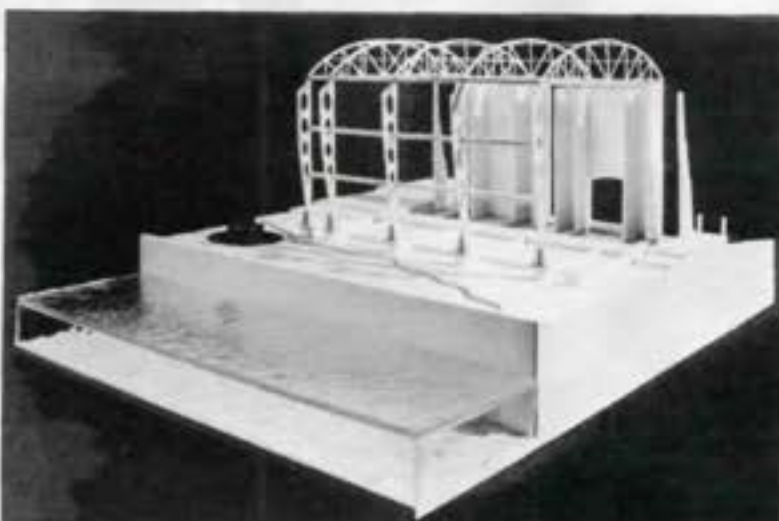
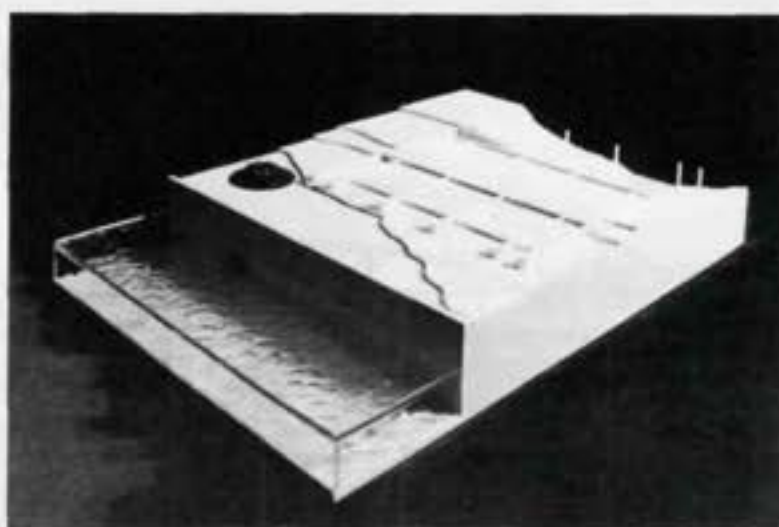
For architects he enlisted one gardener and one engineer and planned the phased evolution of the reconstructed plantation into an observatory within which he and future family would dwell.

Upon the foundations of this very plantation, this young Prometheus labored with his gardener and ancient neighbor to raise one stout wall against the spying southern sun, and ever more jealous young neighbor. Then when light and shadow had been fixed, a crane was imported to raise six framed pylons in six days to frame the sea and sky. Upon this primordial structure, something between a cave and a tent, this Prometheus, now turned learn, projected six bow-string trusses against the sky. They cast shadows upon sandstone and turf.

Beneath this mapping of sky and ground, young learn had established his observatory; he occupies one half of this modest megaron with space for his ancient microscope and newly acquired telescope. With the addition of a hearth and hammock, one resting on the ground, the other suspended from the trussed sky, Prometheus-turned-learn and new bride, Herz, dwell on the western edge of Eden. To the east extends a porch on a plinth, a court and a garden, and a stairway that leads them through the diurnal routines and nocturnal rituals of dwelling in an observatory.

With the passing of storms and the more frequent rising of mirrored moons, Cupid, followed rapidly by Mercury and Andromache, will come to dwell in this first half house suspended without gravity and measuring several horizons. The house then will be expanded into the porch, outdoor terraces become indoor rooms, and then this once fragile observatory becomes fortified for the introverted aspirations of a familial Hurricane House. Generations pass and the cycle comes full circle; one day another generation's geologist will discover the tentative secrets that observatories yield to young men by the sea with the help of a gardener and an engineer.

In the chaos of the storm, this Texas coast was born, and in the same chaos the hurricane routinely reduces the land and renews the task. Every generation from the beginning of time has built again and again an observatory in the face of the hurricane. To build well is indeed the only distinction between the hut and the palace. The work of gardeners and engineers as of late seem to be more palatially stable than the laborings of this generation of self-indulgent architects.



Sequential models of the Hurricane House viewed from the southwest showing, top to bottom, site regularization; construction of wall and frame, and completed house; south elevation showing Copernican entry gate, Hurricane House (Photos by Paul Hester)

Postscript

Postmodernism is intensely concerned with the problem of discovering a referential system upon which to base a theory of architectural form. Most Postmodern architecture is imbued with a certain systematic and formal logic which readily can be decoded, often through analogical references to structuralist propositions borrowed, for example, from linguistics, music, geometry, or painting, or in terms of other, formal architectural propositions and conventions. Jonathan Holden has written about this situation in poetry, where poets who were deprived by the modernist revolution of any sure sense of what poetic form should be, have turned to such non-literary analogies as conversation, confession, or dreams as substitutes for the lost "fixed forms." "Postmodern poetry," he concludes, "is analogical poetry with a vengeance." But where these analogies usually can be absorbed in the poem, in architecture they frequently transform the abstract properties of the medium into the primary contents of the work. In aspiring

to become idealized abstractions, architecture frequently ends up consuming its own materiality - becoming in the end pure proposition - just as the allegorical hero consumes his humanness.

Hirschfield and Waldman, along with several other Houston architects, have been working through this Postmodern dilemma by creating a more complex and personal frame of reference for their work. In their pursuit of characters and situations rather than compositional determinism, they seem guided by the same idea that Umberto Eco claims as his reason for writing *The Name of the Rose*: "What we cannot theorize about we must narrate about." To do this at all in architecture requires a poetic imagination such as these projects demonstrate, an ability to see the allegorical possibilities in the problem: the site as landscape, the program as episodes and situations, the inhabitants as characters, and the architecture as a compilation of their story. ■

Myth-en-Scene: Proposals for the Monumentation of Allen's Landing

Drexel Turner

Monuments that speak about place, directly or thematically, as opposed to those that occupy it to other ends, are touchstones of a special kind. In an urban landscape that is often remote and non-descript, they provide an antidote of explanation and connection. They vary from literal to wishful: from the laconic, awesome metaphor of the St. Louis arch by Eero Saarinen commemorating the city as a gateway for westward expansion to the annotated, contextually attentive explication of the plan of Washington, D.C., by Robert Venturi in the midst of Pennsylvania Avenue; from Charles Moore's festive, freely transposed memory of Hadrian's Villa as a piazza for the Italian immigrant community of New Orleans to the synthetic nostalgia of Bertram Goodhue's Churrigueresque set-pieces for Balboa Park in San Diego. Each imparts a resonance that is immediately apprehensible and evocative. In Houston, Allen's Landing Park, a nearly forgotten remnant of the city's past, affords a similar opportunity to recover and signify, if not invent, roots.

Aside from the names of a handful of streets downtown and the equestrian statue of Sam Houston at the entrance to Hermann Park, Houston proper has little in the way of civic appurtenances to commemorate its past or that of Texas. Perhaps this is a deliberate choice, for Houston seems perennially beset by anxiety as to its identity, something that has rarely troubled Fort Worth or San Antonio. Next year, the observance of the twin sesquicentennials of Texas's independence and the founding of Houston will be impressed on the face of the city by the beautification of a section of Buffalo Bayou alongside and across from the Wortham Theater Center - an undertaking that is to include, among its many parts, a "memory walk" and which will be called Sesquicentennial Park. Commendable as this project is for the future of the bayou and the reception of an important civic building, it seems only incidentally connected with its ostensible motive; neither does the ground it occupies offer any compelling historic association. Meanwhile, Allen's Landing on the south side of Buffalo Bayou at the foot of Main Street, traditionally regarded as the most important site in the founding of the city, continues to await any visible recognition of its role as a point of origin or even the prominent station it occupies in the plan of the city. The possibilities for its eventual monumentation, though omitted from the scope of the sesquicentennial observances, nevertheless deserve consideration as part of a more comprehensive reclamation of the bayou front as a means of diversifying the city's growth of public art and places with civic art of narrative and associational qualities.

Allen's Landing was the first wharfage established by the city's founders, the archetypal speculators John K. and Augustus C. Allen, who determined the site of the enterprise at the head of navigation on the south side of Buffalo Bayou where it joined White Oak Bayou.¹ It was from this point that Main Street was extended south in the original plat of the city, which in its first published version (fig. 1) provided for a public square comprised of the half-blocks to either side of Main Street. Commerce Square, as this reserve was designated, was not in fact realized for that purpose but instead was retained as a wharfage. The other two squares indicated in the plat - Congress Square (now Market, as the Allens failed in their effort to have Houston made the permanent capital of Texas) and Courthouse Square - were eventually occupied by public buildings, anticipating the city's later reputation for expedient civic accommodation. Allen's Landing Park, as it is presently constituted, encompasses the east half of what was to have been Commerce Square and also a contiguous sliver of the west half. It was acquired by the city in 1964 through the efforts of John H. Crooker, Jr., who, as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Civic Affairs Committee, prevailed upon the Southern Pacific Railroad to make a donation of the land.² A modest program of site improvements was subsequently undertaken with private contributions, resulting in the park's principal feature, a landscaped parking lot (fig. 2). Today, Allen's



3 Aerial view of Allen's Landing and downtown Houston looking south showing hypothetical arrangement of monuments (Photo by Harper Lieper, June 1985)

Landing Park adjoins the city's largest surviving concentration of commercial buildings from the 1890s through the 1910s, which together with the site itself, were listed as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

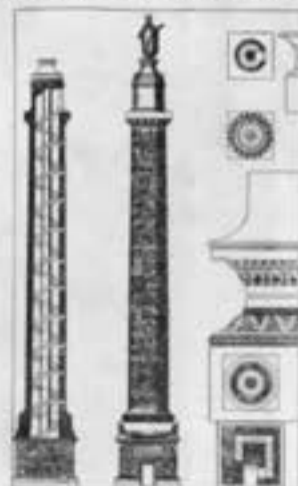
The most imposing aspect of the topography of Allen's Landing Park is an inclined approach to the Main Street Viaduct, a vehicular bridge completed in 1913. The viaduct crosses Buffalo Bayou at an angle which bends the axis of Main Street approximately 20 degrees to the west, splitting the site on the diagonal (fig. 3). This deflection, similar to that of the Michigan Avenue Bridge in Chicago, makes it possible to locate a terminal fea-



3 Aerial view of Allen's Landing and downtown Houston looking south showing hypothetical arrangement of monuments (Photo by Harper Lieper, June 1985)

ture for the axis of Main Street on the south bank of Buffalo Bayou in Allen's Landing Park, providing an immediate connection with the rest of Main Street and downtown. The formal character of such a feature is suggested by the Roman practice of commemorating the foundation - physically and ritually - of towns with "columns, erected at the central intersection of the principal cross streets [so that they] anchored the city at one and the same time in its history and place and in the ahistorical realm of origins."³ Such an appropriation is not incongruous with either the tradition of the site or its subsequent place at the center of the loop freeway system. Moreover, it finds company among other monuments in American cities, especially the tower of the Philadelphia City Hall, in the center of Penn's four-square city, from which Alexander Milne Calder's statue of the founder surveys the prospect below and similarly situated if thematically divergent examples in Indianapolis and Galveston.

At Allen's Landing, such a marker might assume the vertical form of a column devoted to the founding of Texas, reserving the commemoration of municipality for a related but subsidiary monument. The particular models for such a column might include that of Trajan in the Roman forum, an immense Doric column with a spiral frieze of relief carvings depicting Trajan's campaigns against the Dacians, which originally supported a gilded statue of the Emperor (fig. 4), and



4 Trajan's Column, 114, Rome, 130 ft. high. (The Architecture of Ancient Rome, New York, Scribner's, 1927)

its many offspring, among them the column to Napoleon in the Place Vendôme and the Washington Monument in Baltimore (fig. 5). In this case the column might be made of lightweight aluminum with a frieze of brightly colored silhouettes depicting events in the founding and history of Texas, applied as stencils with the bands of the frieze separated by



5 Washington Monument, Baltimore, Robert Mills, architect; Enrico Causici, sculptor. Design, c. 1810; construction and statue, 1815-1829. 178 ft. high (Photo by Keystone View Company)

strands of bluebonnets to heighten its festive aspect. The column might rise nearly 200 feet high and support a figure of Stephen F. Austin, the father of Texas, perhaps a fiberglass cast of Elisabet Ney's buckskin-clad likeness in the capitol at Washington, D.C., and Austin (fig. 6). At night, the column might acquire a laser plume to make the spot visible from a greater distance. The notion of a column admits other variations as well. The staged towers of Erastus Salisbury Field's *nail capriccio*, the *Historical Monument of the American Republic*, conceived for the centennial in 1876 (fig. 7), might provide an equally fruitful point of departure, perhaps considered along-



6 Stephen F. Austin, Elisabet Ney, 1894, 6 ft. high. Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.



7 Historical Monument of the American Republic, Erastus Salisbury Field, c. 1876 (Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts, Morgan Wesson Memorial Collection)



side a child's toy ziggurat composed of stages in the shape of five-pointed stars (fig. 8).

8 Toy ziggurat of five-pointed stars (Photo by Paul Hester)

The commemoration of the city itself would make use of a Hellenistic invention, the figure of a *tyche* or protectress (variously Fortune or Luck) specific to a particular city. *Tyche of Antioch* from the third century B.C., considered the likely progenitor of this phenomenon, was a colossal figure of a woman with a castellated headdress, who held in one hand a sheaf of corn, for which a palm branch sometimes was substituted in copies. This convention of municipal personification, repeated elsewhere in the Roman empire, was adopted for the new Hotel de Ville in Paris and the Alexanderplatz in Berlin in

1 Plan of Houston, Augustus C. and John K. Allen, 1836. Snell and Theuret, publishers, New Orleans (Houston Public Library)



the late 19th century; by Daniel Chester French for figures of Brooklyn and Manhattan to adorn the approach to the Manhattan Bridge (fig. 9); and several years ago for Michael Graves's Portland Public Services Building, which borrowed motifs for the figure *Portlandia* from the city



9 Manhattan, Daniel Chester French, 1914-15. Working model for the decoration of the Manhattan Bridge, 92.7 cm. high (Photo by Bernie Cliff for the National Trust for Historic Preservation)

seal, including a trident for maritime commerce and a sheaf of wheat. The basis for a personification of Houston might be found in an allegorical figure, Storge, devised by Inigo Jones for a masque by Ben Jonsson to represent the spirit of natural affection or "allowable self-love" (fig. 10).⁴ She holds a branch in one hand, a triangular level in the other, and rests one foot on a cube. A relief of a female



10 Storge or Natural Affection, Inigo Jones, c. 1609. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

likeness carrying a triangular level also appears above the east entrance to Houston's art déco City Hall (fig. 11). For purposes of Allen's Landing, such a figure

might be placed atop a miniature locomotive, the most prominent element of the city seal, devised to promote Houston as a rail center (fig. 12). This conceit derives



11 Relief figure above east entrance to Houston City Hall, Herring Coe with Raoul Josssett, 1938 (Photo by Paul Hester)

from an allegorical tableau by the French architectural theorist Cesar Daly, depicting the "spirit of the new art" riding atop a neo-Grec locomotive with the three Graces before her (fig. 13).⁵ The locomotive also corresponds to chariot and "ship of state" motives employed as conveyances for personifications of nation states converted, in this case, to an "engine of city." The figure might hold, in addition to a level, a magnolia branch, since Houston at various times was advertised as the "magnolia city," and magnolia blossoms appear as bosses over the entrance to City Hall; it might also receive a castellated headdress incorporating forms from the centennial skyline. It could be sited to advantage on a prominence or revetment formed overlooking the bayou near the center of the east side of the park.

Beyond this initial pair of monuments, the ensemble might recognize two subsidiary aspects of the origin of Texas - Spain and Mexico. The Spanish colonization which yielded Texas's most emblematic architectural legacy in a succession of 18th-century missions from Goliad to San Antonio to El Paso, might be commemorated by a miniature landscape of those artifacts, idealized and abridged. This approximates the *Fountain of the Little Rome* (fig. 14) devised in the 1560s by Pirro Ligorio for

12 Seal of the City of Houston, 1839



13 Cesar Daly, *L'Architecture Contemporaine*, 1849 (*Revue Generale de L'Architecture*, 1849)



14 *Fountain of the Little Rome*, Villa d'Este, Tivoli, Pirro Ligorio, architect, c. 1650. Engraving by Giovanni Battista Falda (*Le Fontane di Roma*, 1675)

the Villa d'Este. The fountain encompassed, as a backdrop for a statue personifying a triumphant Rome, a "screen of stucco-covered brick buildings arranged in seven groups to symbolize the Seven Hills of Rome. . . [and which were] designed to represent the principal monuments of ancient Rome."⁶ The notion of such a nostalgic compendium of architectural artifacts occurs as well in the campus of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli and has also appeared, at a much reduced scale, in projects by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown for Boston, Washington, D.C., and Galveston. The Mexican patrimony of Texas might be appropriately acknowledged by the sculptural adaptation of a device engraved as part of the title plate of Stephen F. Austin's 1830 map of Texas, showing the eagle of the Federal Republic of Mexico perched atop a many-branched

15 Map of Texas with parts of the adjoining states, Stephen F. Austin, 1830. H.S. Tanner, publishers, Philadelphia (Houston Public Library)



cactus, each branch labeled for one of the constituent states, including Coahuila y Tejas (fig. 15). The aboriginal settlement of Texas might be reflected in decorative patterns or the modeling of various other aspects of the park - urn-like vessels, benches, paving - in the absence of any more apt source of imagery.

Finally, one might consider the possibility of an allusion to Buffalo Bayou which

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affords the landing in the first place, using the bridge as a point of departure. Approaches to bridges often have been marked by pylons supporting statuary embellishments, such as Otto Wagner's lions guarding a bridge across the Danube Canal or A. Phimister Proctor's bison stationed at the corner points of the Dumbarton Bridge across Rock Creek in Washington, D.C. What is proposed for the Main Street bridge are winged bison, suggested by Lee Lawrie's proposal for the entrance to the Nebraska State Capitol designed by Bertram Goodhue (fig. 16). The bison



16 Detail of bison from a preliminary model for the north portal of the Nebraska State Capitol, Lee Lawrie, sculptor; Bertram Goodhue, architect, 1921 (Nebraska State Historical Society)

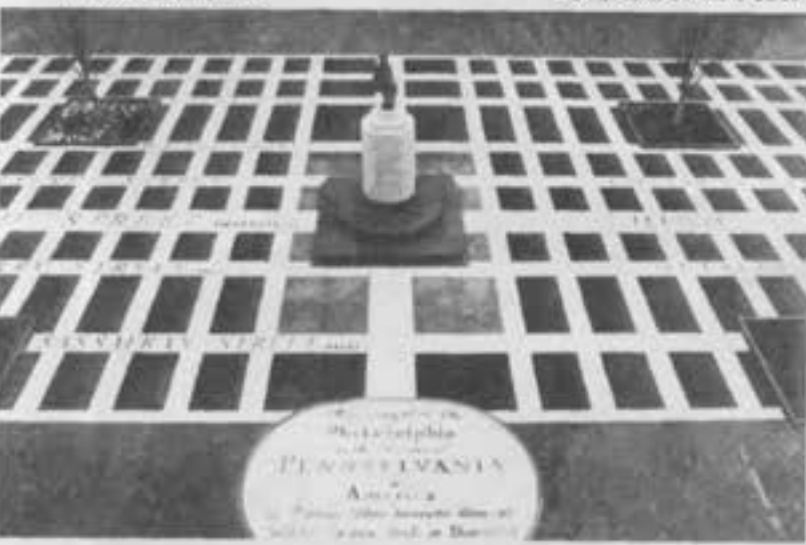
pylons would frame the prospect of the column looking north from Main Street and might also suggest the merit of having various artists repeat the motif on other bridges along the bayou, but without wings to assure the primacy of the Main Street bridge. Although it is sometimes alleged that Buffalo Bayou was named for a variety of fish, the Spanish-Indian word for buffalo appears as the name of a stream in that approximate location in Stephen F. Austin's 1822 map of Texas. Moreover, bison bones abound in Houston and Harris County archeological sites,⁷ so that only the wings of the bison would be mythic, and prospectively magical in the manner of Charles Moore's elephants proposed for Hermann Park (fig. 17).



17 Elephant fountain, Hermann Park, Houston, 1962, Charles W. Moore with Barton Phelps and the Urban Innovations Group

The interpretive, allusive dimension of the program of monumentation proposed for Allen's Landing can be observed in the treatment of similar sites in other American cities. In Chicago, four heroic relief panels depicting themes representing the history of the city are affixed to the gatehouse pylons of the Michigan Avenue Bridge, near the site of early settlement, Fort Dearborn. In Philadelphia, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's recent Welcome Park near Penn's Landing serves much the same purpose. Its paved surface represents Thomas Holme's 17th-century plan of Philadelphia, with a tree planted where each of the four squares is represented (fig. 18). At the center is a cylindrical

18 Welcome Park, Philadelphia, Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1982



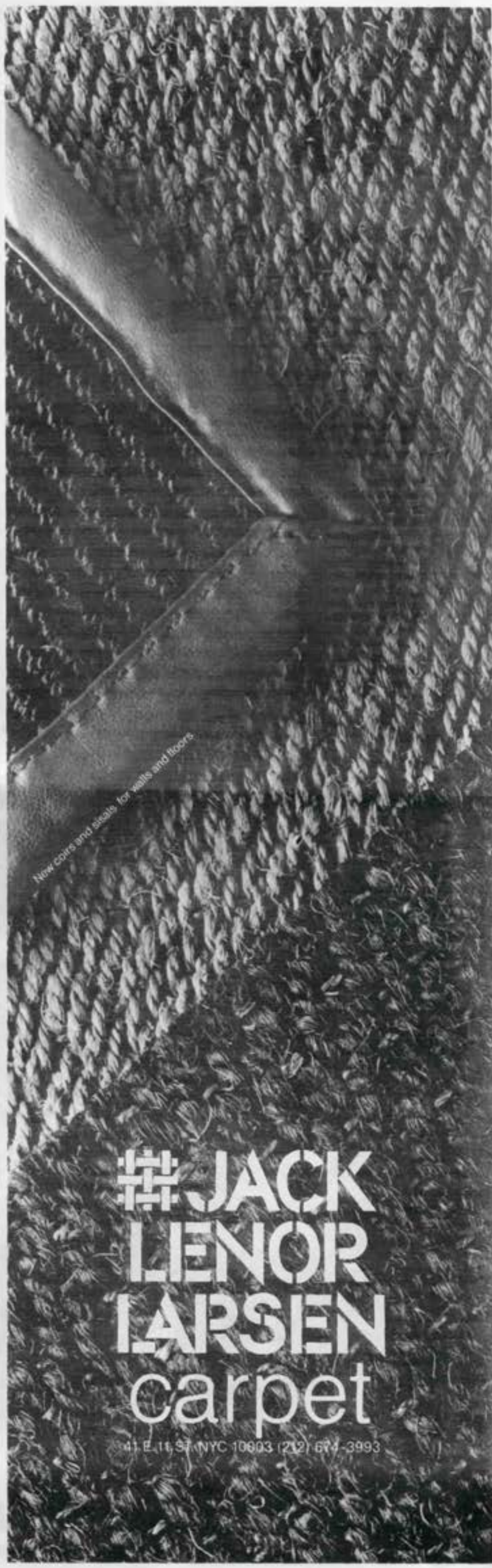
cal pedestal that approximates the tower of the late 19th-century city hall (fig. 19) and which supports, in this instance, a cast of Alexander Milne Calder's maquette for the colossal statue of Penn which actually stands atop city hall. Quotations describing various aspects of the plan and the city are incised in the pavement, while a wall to one side contains an illustrated time-line chronicling Penn's life and events surrounding it.

But no matter how intriguing, such a program of monuments cannot alone convert Allen's Landing to a successful civic place. For the site itself, no less than its surroundings, requires a range of complementary improvements to fully exploit its potential as a scenic resource and activity generator for lower downtown. Such measures might include raising the grade of the main part of the site to the level of Commerce Street so that it could function more readily as an extension of the surrounding streetscape and also the creation of a series of pavilions and terraces to accommodate a small cafe and an informal performing area, perhaps rising along the water's edge in a manner not unlike the Fairmount Waterworks on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. In some cases, these features might make use of elements already proposed for thematic purposes: for example, the pavilions might assume the miniaturized forms of Spanish missions while the diminutive locomotive might house a puppet stage. It is possible that such a broader program of improvements could be accomplished in connection with the routing of the Metro subway into downtown or otherwise as a project of the Parks Board or the Bayou Task Force. But there is, meanwhile, a curious logic to proceeding with the monuments in advance of any more comprehensive set of improvements. For it just might be that the monuments themselves would provide a rationale sufficient to induce subsequent investment - in other words, a sense of mythed opportunity. ■

- Notes
- 1 David G. McComb, *Houston: A History*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.
 - 2 McComb, *Houston: A History*, 160-161.
 - 3 Kurt W. Forster, "Monuments to the City," *Harvard Architecture Review* IV, Spring 1984, 113.
 - 4 Stephen Orgel, "Inigo Jones: An Allegory Recovered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 40, 1977, 314 and plate 26-C.
 - 5 Richard Becherer, "Caution: Irony at Play in Cesar Daly's L'Architecture Contemporaine," *Modula*, 1982, 56-57 and 60-62.
 - 6 David R. Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979, 322-323.
 - 7 McComb, *Houston: A History*, 197.



19 Cast of maquette for colossal figure of William Penn, Alexander Milne Calder; maquette, 1886; cast, 1982, 41 1/2 ft. high, Welcome Park, Philadelphia



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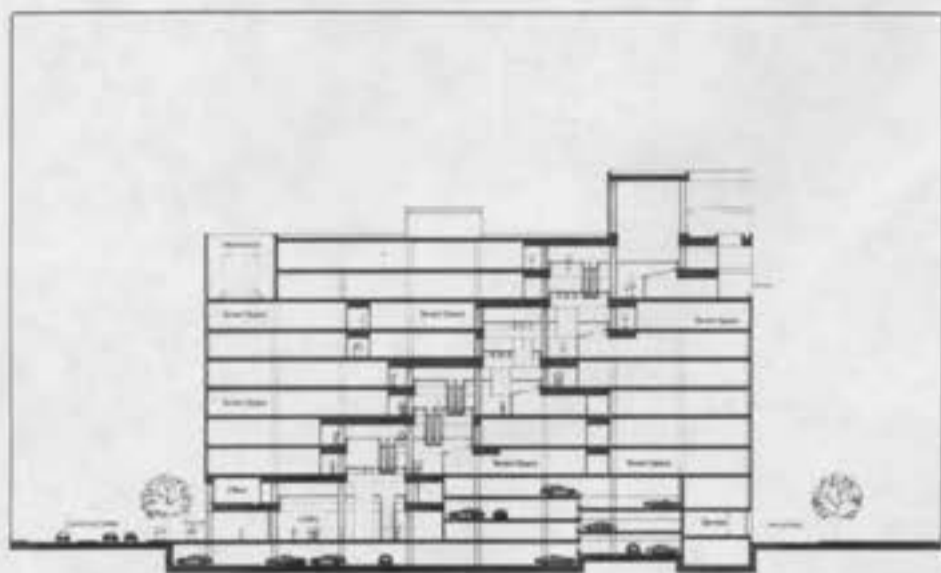
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Innova

Jan O'Brien



Above: Section looking south, Innova, 1985, Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. and Lloyd Jones Brewer Associates, architects. Upper right: Side elevation, Innova (Photo by Paul Hester)

Innova, formerly the Houston Design Center, is an unabashedly modern building. While many buildings designed in the last quarter of the 20th century are compromised, confused, or simply excessive, Innova demonstrates the effectiveness of one bold gesture.

The 500,000-square-foot building was designed by Charles Redmon, a Rice University graduate now of Cambridge Seven Associates. Lloyd Jones Fillpot and Associates, Inc. were the associate architects. Ten stories tall, four of which are partially for parking, it fills an entire city block, expanding the western boundary of the ever-growing Greenway Plaza. From Richmond it rises above and behind now insubstantial one-story strip centers. To the south, nothing but an open field separates the building from U.S. Highway 59, suggesting its urban-pioneer nature.



The highway's edge provides the best view of the slick black cube. No Postmodern reference to base, shaft, or top dilutes its massive form. While the "visionary" generation of Ledoux and Boulée were the first to promote the value of pure, unadorned geometrical forms at immense scale, their goal of promoting exhilaration and anxiety is unlikely to have been Redmon's primary consideration. The subtle references to structural grid and floor level created by adding vertical reveals and flame-cut granite bands, respectively, to the otherwise highly polished black Impala granite, tie the building to the more civilized International Style. Here the Miesian glass box has become a granite box, yet the granite, like glass, is applied as a thin membrane wrapping a unitary volume. Seen in the light of day the effect is identical. What distinguishes Innova from classically proportioned but boring modern boxes is the addition of the stepped diagonal split. James Wines of Sise introduced this motif in his "crumbled corner" Best showroom. In the same

manner, the undecorated shed, the perfect platonic solid, or the mute egg is cracked and pulled apart to reveal the life inside. Five double-story cubic volumes define the fissure, expressed not only laterally, but recessed into the mass as well. These mini glass boxes are lined with primary colors of red and blue and are utilized as terraces. The drama of this is best demonstrated at night, when the black cube practically evaporates into the darkness leaving just a glowing giant stairway.

The multi-colored, multi-story banners that mark the entry come close to compromising the puritanical bareness of the building's International Style allusions. They are ornamental, and as fabric, perhaps they do not qualify as architecture. Either way they appear transitory, distinct from the building's cool permanence.

For all its elegance, Innova is not a museum, and however elevated the taste of the clientele, they are fundamentally shoppers. The internal organization

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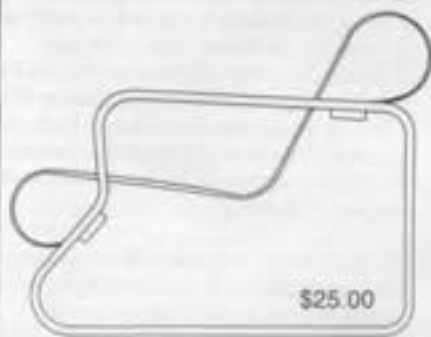
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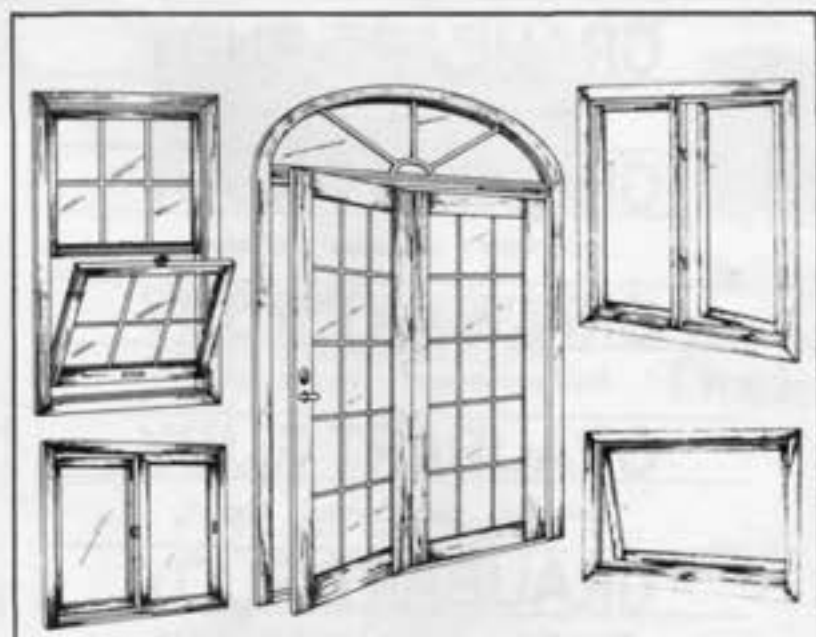
reflects this, with restless escalators constantly propelling visitors from the recessed entry/lobby through the diagonal atrium. This showmanship is reminiscent of the grand department stores of nearly 100 years ago. The gracious art of selecting a purchase was enacted against a backdrop of architectural beauty in, for example, such stores as Carson Pirie Scott, Marshall Field's, and the Bon Marché in Paris. The enticing displays were constantly in view as one progressed from floor to floor. Since this is not a single store, mullionless glass panels unobtrusively delineate the individual showroom spaces. "Greenhouse" showrooms project into the circulation zone, complete with high ceilings. The interior is presented as a high-tech "ground" for the showroom's objects, or the showroom as object. Carefully colorless, the white walls, shiny white-strip ceilings, and gray carpets create a desert of uniformity making each showroom a visual oasis. These highly reflective surfaces are intended to disperse natural light from the clerestory monitor throughout the atrium. While the premise of rising towards the sunlight is apt, on a sunny Texas afternoon it is blinding. As yet, no external blinds are in place to modulate the western sun.

The designers of both the built and planned showrooms have seized the opportunity to create distinctive interiors. Sinuous glass-block walls, gridded barrel vaults, and cascades of fabric are already evident, and many tenant spaces are still under construction. 3D/International explored two intriguing sculptural foci. The one for Seymour Mirrow and Company unveils a five-column helix. Another for Parsons-Skerl and Modern Mode is reminiscent of a child's game, featuring ten-foot-high masonite hoops that appear to roll through the room. Other showroom designers include Frank Gehry & Associates, Gensler & Associates, Morris Aubry Architects and Peter Waldman/ISD. The quality of the showrooms reflects a pride in the building and a long-term commitment "akin to a marriage," according to one of the tenants in situ, Sandra Parker, president of Domus.

Major professional organizations - the local chapters of the American Institute of Architects, The American Society of Interior Designers, and the Institute of Business Designers - will have offices there. The stated goal of Roger E. Hayes, president of Innova, is to have it serve as an educational facility as well as providing a place where buyers can test how the newer elements of the modern office - computers and telecommunication equipment - mesh with furniture. To further this end, Integrand was formed. A non-profit organization independent of the center, it is committed to a collaboration between design and technology and will serve as an information source. Three conference spaces, designed for groups of 300, 150, and 30, are intended to serve an ambitious roster of classes, workshops, and lectures, and are available to local groups, especially those whose themes relate to the advancement of workplace technologies.

A proto-typical "office of the future" will demonstrate relationships between various components and be a testing ground for an evolving industry. While there are not yet any computer-company tenants, they would be appropriate. Within the highly competitive high-tech field, it may be difficult for Innova and Integrand to remain totally neutral. Studies of integration could help determine which machines serve the "user" best, and may act as recommendations.

True to Houston's dispersed and competitive nature, the original Houston Design Center was one of three complexes created for the display and selection of interior furnishings which all opened in 1984-1985. On 12 September 1985, the name was changed to Innova, a neologism of innovate, to reflect an emphasis on the integration of technology with more traditional aspects of the workplace. An Open House with lectures, demonstrations, and a futuristic masquerade officially introduced the concept to the design community. ■



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Citations

Between Talk and Tease

The Land, the City, and the Human Spirit: America the Beautiful - An Assessment, L.P. Fuller, ed., Austin: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, Center for the Study of American Architecture, 1985, 146 pp., \$11.00

Journal of History and Theory, Mark Schneider, ed., Houston: University of Houston College of Architecture, 1985, 49 pp., ill., \$7.50

Reviewed by Malcolm Quantrill

In England we have an expression to distinguish between two clearly contrasting things or experiences: we say that "a" and "b" are as different as chalk and cheese. To an English ear the term "beautification" sounds like so much chalk. On the other hand, the concept of "Post-Cartesian Meditations on Themes from Heraclitus" conjures up a promising, almost soupy *bric*. A report on the post-White House (Conference on Natural Beauty) Conference at The University of Texas at Austin, like many conferences, mixed politics, rhetoric, morality, personal salvation, and other earthbound concerns, and the result is a useful bedside book. In contrast, the University of Houston's *Journal of History and Theory* with its *Kama Sutra* of current architectural positions, would seem to be out of place in the bedroom. Between them, these two publications appear to have much the same agenda as many colleges of architecture or environmental design throughout the world - an agenda that spans the landscape of reality with (or without) a dream.

Allowing that the Austin conference was, as Ian McHarg suggested, an encomium for Lady Bird Johnson, it still must be subjected to the test for all conferences: "Was it worthwhile and memorable? Were there views expressed there that should not have been missed, that stung you to attention about the issues under discussion?" I remember being taught by McHarg when he didn't know words like "encomium." In those days he told us every day that landscapes should be *dramatic*. But the truly great thing about McHarg is his realization that it was only by exercising his own histrionic talents that there would be any landscape left in the environmental drama. His *Inquiry Through Design* is deservedly a bestseller and remains one of the best books in our field; and although almost everybody has (or claims to have) heard him at least once, he remains good at a conference because he quickly comes to the point. I regret that I was not there to hear him say: "As far as we look, the people who are supposed to be looking after the environment are not looking after the environment. If I knew who was supposed to be looking after the environment, I swear to God I'd sue the bastards." And in true McHarg style, he followed up that opening slog with: "All the calculated actions we've seen in the Interior Department and the Office of Surface Mining seem to say the same thing: 'We'll take economic growth because we need economic growth for reelection, and in the process we're absolutely prepared to sacrifice the environment. And we don't mind sacrificing human health and well-being either.'" Then, he hit home with his solution to the problem: "One remedy, of course, is to toilet-train American industry. There is no question that industry is not only incontinent but toxically incontinent. And, of course, incontinence has only two explanations: one is infantilism, and the other senescence." The only difficulty of playing McHarg at a conference is knowing when to put him in to bat: to open the innings or to hit the final, winning run? As Nathaniel Owings went on to say, it's difficult, if not impossible, to follow McHarg's performance. And so we leave the opening session on "The Land" and pass on to Edmund Bacon's innings for "The City." He recalled columnist Neal Pierce's account of that famous debate between Jim Rouse and Jane Jacobs, in which Rouse argued that in order to deal with city problems you have to think big and take big bites of the apple. And Jane

Jacobs countered by saying: "You'll spoil the human scale; you'll just spoil diversity. You've got to think little." Bacon's solution is to accept the essential contradictions of a city's complexity and, in Robert Venturi's terms, to have *both* the bread of scale *and* the meat of quality. Bacon nailed his menu to the mast in Austin by repeating his maxim: "The truth is - and we proved this in Philadelphia - that you've got to think big and act small and then you get somewhere."

From considering "The City," the conference moved on to the realm of "Visions." William D. Ruckelshaus told his audience: "Having deciphered the ecological handwriting on the American wall, we are now charged with the task of persuading others to act upon what we have read." Denise Scott Brown went on to remind us that you cannot actually have a *vision* of the *past* and to claim that we "associate thinking of the future with utopian thinking." She told her audience that: "In approaching the planning for the Republic Square district of Austin, we [Robert Venturi and herself] believe that the most forward-looking plans must look backward and that part of our utopian excitement will come from examining today's city as a descendant of its history and a progenitor of its future." Did she, and does this, imply that our "vision of futures" must incorporate some mirror-image of past experience, just as dreams (a form of "vision," after all) depend upon a sifting of historical consciousness. That is a role which we can, in any case, readily associate with the work of Charles Moore.

Serious academics, who are continually astonished by Moore's almost constant state of jetlag, must have been even more astonished to have him confess that "It always seems to be my role to lower the tone" and then go on in a lucid style that nearly matches McHarg's. He said (and it should be written large in every college of architecture): "You come to a city and deal - as we are doing at the Hyatt Regency where we are staying - with a totally synthetic and interior world that doesn't have anything to do with the world around." Moore went on to explain that: "In poor old Detroit, the almost billion-dollar Renaissance Center made the desperate mistake of staying hermetic, separate from the city, which has come close to destroying it - and surely destroyed downtown Detroit. But even in beautiful Austin, there across the river, we are cooped up in another time capsule that could be picked up and placed, God knows, in Houston without our knowing the difference." The core of our environmental difficulties, Moore so succinctly observed, is the problem we have in matching images we have of "the city of our dreams" and the demands we make about so-called "comfort and convenience." Moore recalled Ed Bacon's "image of the village" that requires both the attention of the human hand and the scale of the human body and pointed out the conflict between these village characteristics and the automobile and air-conditioning machinery, concluding that: "The cars wipe out that human scale, and the machines to make us cool wipe out our connection with the out-of-doors and the world about us."

To Tom Wolfe fell the task of offering some post-prandial, rakish delight, which he did in part by alluding to James Wines's reference to what he calls "the Turd-in-the-Plaza School of Sculpture," quoting Wines as saying, "I personally do not care if they build these boring glass boxes. I do not care if they build an absolutely arid stretch of concrete or marble in front of it and call it a plaza. But why do they have to deposit that little turd in the plaza?" Thus, the Austin conference might be seen as the basis of a manual for the toilet-training of everyone from industry to the developer (and this last category must, of course, include both civic authorities and large state universities), but that would not be entirely fair to its qualities as a bedside book (rather, that is, than a work of reference). What is fair, however, is to point out the deficiencies in editing the proceedings down to size, but there again this failing might be seen as one attached to the way the conference was structured.

In the history and theory publication from the University of Houston, Mark

Schneider opens his essay "Post-Cartesian Meditations on Themes from Heraclitus" with the following observation:

When Ortega y Gasset explained that you cannot become your past because you already are it, he situated himself on the far side of prevailing historicism and squarely in the contemporary stage of phenomenology called hermeneutics - the inquiry into the nature of historical and interpersonal understanding. What is truly history is an art of memory which faces up to the fact that remembering a former lover can never again be the same as loving her... If the woman who stepped out of the box were the same as the one about to be cut in half, there would be no need to applaud the magician. The past always comes into the difference by way of a difference.

And if you are looking for an explanation of where it's at in Houston (where it's most certainly at), as the emperor says in Peter Schaffer's *Amadeus*: "There you have it." For the University of Houston's *Journal of History and Theory* is redolent with such excursions into the magician's realm and that of the occult.

In his project "The Fountain of Reflection," one of several projects by students in the University of Houston's History and Theory Program presented in

the publication, Yoshinobu Yokono quotes from Frederick Kiesler: "Art is not based on invention because Art is an invention; an invention by nature to camouflage the inevitable mortality of flora, fauna, man and matter." Question: How do we find a metaphor between an "improbable" (Pietilä) problem and know models when the models are essentially turgid? The answer is certainly explored in the Houston works presented, particularly those connected with the Progetto Venezia problem for Palmiano. What also makes this issue of *The Journal of History and Theory* worthwhile is the interview of visitor Dalibor Vesely conducted by Mark Schneider, Ben Nicholson, William Taylor, and their students in a graduate seminar. They appear to be talking to each other and to us.

For the most part theory, as Henry Diamond observed about conservation at Austin, is an afterthought that comes slightly ahead of Esperanto in our priorities. The value of theory, it might be supposed, lies in its effectiveness, that is, its impact upon the actual practice of the art. And Heaven knows there was not enough discussion of the environmental art at Austin. I find myself looking for a balance between theory and practice in the environmental game plan and finding only extremes. Does it always have to be a difference between chalk and cheese? ■

The Decorated Diagram: Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy

Klaus Herdeg, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983, 125 pp., 120 illus., \$22.50

Reviewed by Paul W. Schieffer

The Decorated Diagram offers a valuable addition to the few books of critical architectural history. Architectural criticism speaks to us today through some confusion; what it often lacks is a proper sense of criticism. Criticism ought to be imaginative, to explain, to seek out, to clearly show us our past and present. It ought to be critical. Criticism complements architecture. We need criticism. Without it, our powers are diminished. Unlike the criticism of other arts, architectural criticism seems especially difficult because verbal and visual skills are often exclusive of one another. Pictures without words or words without pictures. Also, it's hard to take criticism.

For example, Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House* swept through the history of the Modern Movement with dazzling style, some wit, a little irony, and many facts, incidents, and anecdotes as phrases. Its very slickness concealed the astounding quantity of material it contains. Like Voltaire on Louis XIV, Wolfe put a mighty subject into a thin book. True, he transposed a few facts here and there, but the principal themes are fascinating. Why then were five decades of architects so upset as to fulminate and rage against Wolfe to the point of tedium? It's pretty simple. Wolfe's tone was wrong. He set up Walter Gropius as the Silver Prince. No person who ever met Gropius, worked with him, or was taught by him could possibly accept this Silver Prince stuff. The exceptional warmth, affection, and self-effacing courtesy of Gropius were always apparent. Wolfe's false antipathy toward Gropius (I believe he assumed it to punch up his paragraphs) cost Wolfe the serious audience his theses deserved.

With *The Decorated Diagram*, Klaus Herdeg, also a Harvard graduate, writing about Gropius and the failure of the Bauhaus legacy, reminds us that Edward Barnes, John Johansen, Philip Johnson, I.M. Pei, Henry Cobb, Araldo Cossutta, Paul Rudolph, Ulrich Franzen, Victor Lundy, and TAC's John Harkness and Louis McMillen all were trained by Gropius at Harvard. (The impact of Harvard, Gropius, Marcel Breuer, or indeed of anything on Philip Johnson may be safely left to the reader's imagination.) Herdeg's book examines and critiques the Harvard-Gropius experience from published sources and buildings, thus creating an argument that can be replicated easily. Where he compares Karl Schinkel's Altes Museum and Philip

Johnson's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, you might choose the British Museum reading room and the Boston Public Library addition with perhaps similar results. Herdeg likes his subjects and even in his severest criticisms, one finds no rancor, no bitterness, but rather a sort of affectionate respect. Herdeg's comparisons offer a lovely exegesis of some major criticisms of the Bauhaus ethos. They are so admirable as critical appreciations that if you were quite an unreconstructed admirer of Gropius et. al., I would still press them on you as being intelligent, imaginative and, for the most part, well written. But "... posture of hard-nosed pragmatism at the expense of intellectually speculative and architecturally contextual investigations" characterizing the available problem descriptions at Harvard didn't really bother me as much as it did Herdeg. Gropius's dislike of historical consciousness seems, in retrospect, rather more naïve than ill-intentioned. Philip Johnson reminds us that "We cannot not know history," and he is right.

Other criticisms supported by Herdeg's analyses are: (1) the separation of the design process into the design of a functional plan and the creation of visual interest as discrete events; (2) the refusal to view space as a primary organizing force and experienced event; (3) the inability to provide a clear sense of scale or of easily made transitions; (4) a general sense of dull earnestness (the use of wit or irony seems quite a foreign language); and (5) the use of analogical models is not consciously addressed.

Occasionally the reader stumbles over what I shall describe as Cornell speak. In this language of Formal Structure we confront the graceless airs of multivalency, symbolic attributes, latent interpretations, transformations, and thematic vehicles. This deep structure of architectural-contextual investigation seems to taper off through the book and I'm happy to report that most of Herdeg's writing gives Cornell speak the slip.

Through *The Decorated Diagram*, Herdeg's analyses offer a thorough and careful look at the work of the Moderns, among whom the Postmoderns stand with valencies and latent interpretations pouring out of their pockets. This history-by-comparison and careful analysis is a very good way to look at buildings and a good way to think about buildings, although it doesn't quite cover up the strong and biting criticism of the title itself. These are decorated diagrams and are, in the terms of Gropius's own theoretical work, a failure of the ethos. ■

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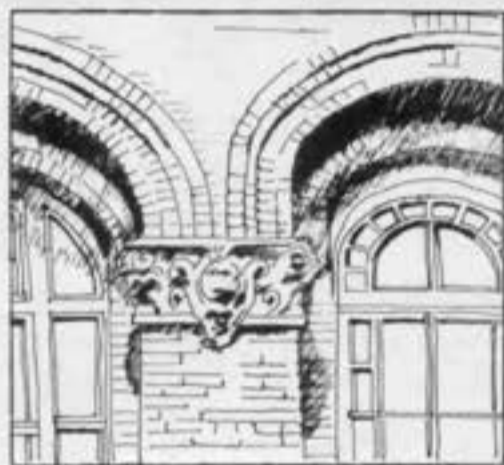
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Pioneers of CAD in Architecture



A computer-generated image of the San Antonio Art Institute, San Antonio, Moore Ruble Yudell, architects; computer program by John Heile

Alfred M. Kemper, editor, Pacifica/Hurland/Swenson, 1985, 654 pp., illus., \$78.00

Reviewed by John Heile

Computer-Aided Design (CAD) is now becoming a technologically and economically feasible reality. From simple beginnings in the early 1960s, the theory and practice of this field have developed to the point where the use of CAD techniques is beginning to transform the practice of architecture. Several factors have contributed to the emergence of this potential. First, basic research conducted over the last two decades has established some important theoretical foundations for the field. Second, an increasingly broad range of powerful and reliable computer software designed for use by architects is becoming available. Finally, the rapidly decreasing cost and widening availability of computer hardware are bringing acquisition of computing capabilities within the reach of even the smallest of architectural offices. - William J. Mitchell, *Computer-Aided Architectural Design*

But, what good is a computer to an architect? Palladio found pen and paper perfectly adequate, after all. And it is hard to imagine Frank Lloyd Wright at the keyboard. (It just doesn't go with a cape and cane.) The most sophisticated piece of technology on most architects' desks, even today, is an electric pencil sharpener.

This question demands a broad answer, and is beyond the scope of this book review. However, for starters, it helps to look at the successes and failures of those that have gone before us. *Pioneers of CAD in Architecture* is a guide to the accomplishments (and missteps) of over 60 practicing American firms, 12 architectural schools, and various special contributors. The sole idea of this book, as stated by the editor, is "to share CAD experiences, facts, and figures, as well as ideas about CAD in architecture." It also contains comprehensive evidence of that learning period and represents offices varying from the largest in the country to single proprietor practices.

This book will give you a good understanding of the problems associated with integrating CAD into an existing company's structure. Many of the firms represented examined CAD as a single element to be incorporated into an established design process and created a specific program to place it within that process. In some instances, this resulted in frustration and poor overall performance because the true capabilities of CAD, or more specifically, a particular CAD system, were misunderstood or misused. The reason for this is partly due to the lack of communication between the architectural profession and the CAD industry. Quite often the result has been the failure of industry to address the needs of the architectural profession and its inability to figure out what it should be doing to satisfy that market.

For instance, the salesmen for CAD systems will say that one can increase professional productivity by replacing drawing boards with graphics work stations, and they probably will quote impressive productivity ratios. They may be right. But it is notoriously difficult to measure productivity, in any meaningful way, in a service profession, and it is certainly absurd to apply the industrial notion of productivity to artistic activity. After all, not all systems available today have features necessary to solve particular problems or increase productivity. But some do: the point is that there exists a wide range of systems with varying capabilities and nobody knows exactly what system is needed for the practice of architecture, and exactly how it will be used. The process of mutual learning is the issue that emerges here. It is an important contribution of this book and not only will help a firm learn how to effectively incorporate the use of a computer in its daily practice, but also will help shape the next generation of architectural CAD systems so that they are geared towards the architectural practice much more than any of the current commercial systems.

The evidence that the architectural profession is learning what it needs and what to demand also is contained in this book. Academicians dedicated to CAD research have been outlining the characteristics of appropriate CAD systems since, at least, the very early '70s. The "Schools" section in this book should offer a refreshing optimism to professionals since many of the features (that they are requesting) already are available in experimental systems running in academic laboratories.

From within the diversity of CAD stories contained in this book springs a general agreement about the basic requirements of a CAD system. First, it needs to emphasize design rather than drafting, and do it in such a way that the business and the technology of architecture are integrated with its artistic and functional requirements. Second, a CAD system should integrate 2-D and 3-D representations in such a way that the design profession essentially generates a model of the architectural solution which next directly will lend itself to automatic drafting and 3-D visualization, report generation and specifications writing, engineering analyses, and designs. Third, a CAD system should be easy to use and adjustable to the traditional methods of the architectural practice, possibly going as far as including "sketch work stations." But in doing so it also should take maximum advantage of the powers of the computer to enhance these traditional methods. Last, but not least, CAD systems should be cost effective for large firms as well as for the over 23,000 smaller U.S. design offices.

In conclusion, these comments should not be interpreted as a recommendation that one should wait until better CAD systems become available. On the contrary, even today's systems are worth installing in an office. Such a move is not simply a sound business and marketing decision, but a required investment in continuing education. The sooner a firm learns how to effectively incorporate the use of the computer in its daily practice, the better prepared it will be to use the more design-oriented systems of the not-too-distant future. A firm's competitive and marketing edge by the early 1990s, when the majority of architectural firms are expected to have CAD, simply will not depend on CAD ownership, but on how well the firm has learned to use the CAD system from both the production-cost point of view and the quality of work produced. For those firms which have not yet moved in this direction, but are ready to do so, this book should prove valuable. ■

Rice Design Alliance
FALL 1985



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Houston in the Rear-View Mirror

John Kaliski

In the Fall 1985 issue of *Cite*, Peter C. Papademetriou suggested in this column that Houstonians need to look in the "rear-view mirror" (i.e., examine the "record" of the past) in order to continue the city's "drive" to the future. I sensed he implied that a certain *Weltanschauung*, or all-encompassing conception of politics and architecture, had begun to emerge in Houston in the period before the Second World War. This concept could be defined as the good city. Papademetriou described this vision as follows:

... an image of order and a sense of integrated organization in which public and private were clearly placed, supported in physical terms by a cohesive architectural language which began to relate piece to piece. Guiding this vision was a sense of the public good. A social contract, even in a laissez-faire context, began to emerge.

This "image of order" dissolved with the vicissitudes of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. While it may be dangerous to paraphrase a friend, I think that Papademetriou is saying that the good city became the bad city. The piece-by-piece construction of a humanly scaled *polis* was destroyed by geometric growth and concomitant speculation.

Indeed, by outward appearance, this view is true enough. As one drives through the older sections of Houston, especially in the near eastern and central business districts, one can find material evidence of an entire ghost city - old warehouses, abandoned apartment buildings, and worse, the endless vacant lots and blocks of parking held for long-term speculation. These unsightly epitaphs to the past suggest memories neglected if not completely forgotten. My hypothesis is that the citizens of Houston merely have not forgotten this supposed golden moment (if indeed it even existed), but more decisively, abandoned it for a quest after a different vision, which like its forebear, the City Beautiful, has both its good and dark sides.

My conclusion is based on personal experience only; I literally watched Houston and Texas recede in my rear-view mirror, having recently moved to Los Angeles. This change of locale has given me the opportunity to think and rethink my opinions of a city that I dearly love in the context of a place that is often assumed to be similar. However, Los Angeles is nothing like Houston. On the other hand, it is precisely the city that Papademetriou imagined in his piece on Houston: the optimistic, 20th-century town that burst with growth out of a provincial stupor in the '20s and '30s to encounter and contribute directly to the sophistication, diversity, and even seaminess of international culture. The vital material evidence is all around Los Angeles, from Sunset Boulevard with its bevy of still-bustling movie theaters and office towers, to downtown's Broadway, where such institutions as the Grand Central Market continue to attract hordes of pedestrians after 60 years of use. The streets, buildings, institutions, and ideals which guided growth in the '20s and '30s in Los Angeles continue to validate their being today - if a little worse for wear.

Houston, by comparison, offers less to experience from that bygone era. True, examples of Houston's rich past do exist - the Heights, the Fourth Ward, Montrose, the area around Rice University, and the Gulf Building. They all should be treasured and encouraged to thrive. But given Houston's almost tenfold growth over the last 40 years, one should not expect a tremendous amount of historical or political continuity. The new, both buildings and people, overwhelm the old.

Instead, I believe in retrospect that Houston's future lies not in the redefinition of its mythic past but in a publically spirited analysis and debate of its mythic visions of the future. Let one think I am buying into the dream of "Space City," reader beware, I am not. Rather, while I do not discount the lessons of Houston's past, I prefer to base my comments about its future on precisely that period of growth that was so destructive of past buildings, institutions, and the values they both represented.

During the '50s, '60s, and '70s people came to Houston for the economic opportunities, life in the suburbs, cheap housing, and, more recently, the city's nurturing posture towards a variety of minorities and lifestyles. The reification of these dreams, which is the American dream, with the inclusion into it of those who were purposely ignored in the first half of this century is Houston's hope and future; not a nostalgic elegy to a past which never existed.

To this end, at least three questions can be asked about revivifying the opportunistic ideals of Houston. The first question necessarily looks backwards but only with the intent of describing the present. What is Houston's current form? The answer to this query must take into consideration the formless suburbs, commercial strips, billboards, freeways, parking lots, and porn shops, as well as Post Oak Boulevard, Louisiana Street, and the San Jacinto Monument. An impartial analysis of what exists does not confirm a place in history. Rather, an impartial analysis makes possible the understanding and eventual critique of the patterns of life and form which ebb and flow with time. To define the future one must recognize not only the record of the past but the tenor of the present.

The second question is the most critical one. What is unique about these forms and patterns which combine to form that locale which is called Houston? This question is critical because agreement is almost impossible. However, the discovery over time of shared local values does imply that the essence of Houston is different from Los Angeles or any other place.

If the second question causes disagreement, the last question causes confusion that is political in its implications. How can uniqueness be promoted? Or, how can Houston best be Houston? The promotion of those unique aspects of Houston in such a way that they are available to an increasing majority provides the key to answering this last question. If Houstonians want to live in a garden city punctuated by nodes of intense activity, fine; just make the nodes and the gardens accessible and good. If Houstonians want to live in dense configurations which provide the more traditional amenities of urban life, that is fine too. Once again though, the crucial question is accessibility and quality. The point is not to infiltrate the River Oaks Country Club with saboteurs from the inner or outer cities. Rather the point is to encourage those economic entities which continue to provide opportunity even as they encourage growth.

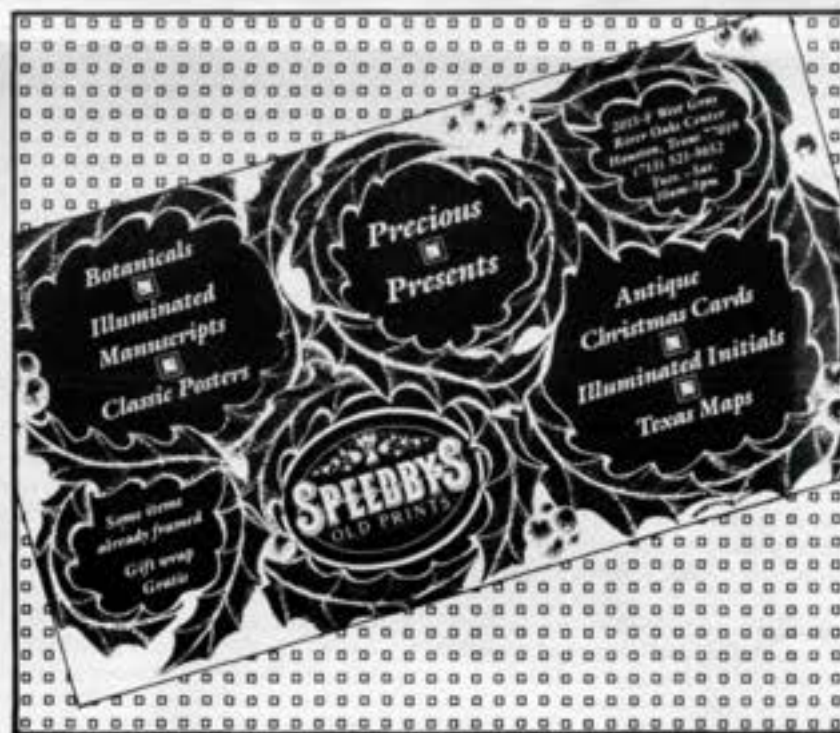


Photo by Paul Hester

Architecture is a reactive force in these arguments, following the lead and cues of others, whether they be developers, politicians, or social historians. If Houstonians as a whole are given the opportunity to participate in this exploration of the future, one hopes that the resultant architecture will reflect the values and desires of a broad cross section of the city. My suspicion is that people still come to Houston to profit and in the original sense of the Latin root of *proficere*: to go forward or make progress. For me, the idea of Houston is both economic opportunity and progress. Houston architecture should reflect both of these ideals, even as the individual designers delve into more personal explorations of form and craft.

Finally, I have arrived at the troublesome notion that there can be appropriate architecture for Houston. Is this architec-

ture seen in the rear-view mirror? Never! But in remembering Houston I do realize that there are many buildings and places which will always affect me. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rice campus, the area adjacent to the Rothko Chapel, and the chapel itself to name just a few. I miss all of these buildings even as I miss the power of the gleaming skyline (though not the streets below). However, what I miss most of all is that quality of Houston which most Houstonians shrug off. I miss the heat: that steamy heat so delightful to escape from yet so satisfying to share with other Houstonians. In the rear-view mirror, as I left the city, the heat shrouded the downtown skyline. It shimmered over the outlying plains of housing and it flattened the light that is particular to this city alone. I had the thought: to make a city of heat - that is Houston. To make an architecture of heat - that is Houston too. ■



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Report of the President

As the Program Committee began planning for 1984-1985, chief among numerous concerns was the need to provide greater participation and involvement for the entire membership of the Rice Design Alliance. To that end, two new programs were initiated which enjoyed considerable success. John Kaliski undertook the task of organizing a series of three "Fireside Chats" where local architects presented their own work for review and discussion. Additionally, for the first time RDA sponsored a tour in June to Newport, Rhode Island under the guidance of Barrie Scardino. The tour was extremely well received, and was financially beneficial to RDA as well.

Another new project which was initiated and published this fall was an illustrated tour booklet of the museums-Rice-University-Hermann Park area of Houston and surrounding residential neighborhoods prepared by the Anchorage Foundation of Texas for the Rice Design Alliance. The Board of Directors expects this project will remain a handsome contribution to the city for some years and will continue to raise RDA's visibility level.

As for the more traditional programs, Stephen Fox and William F. Stern organized the fall lecture series, "Architects Speak for Themselves," which was consistently well attended. A tour of quite remarkable downtown offices, "Executive Suites," was produced by Herman Dyal. The tour was of exceptionally high quality, although attendance was less than desirable. In January 1985, Andrew John Rudnick organized a superb winter symposium concerning the redevelopment of the Fourth Ward in Houston. Rudnick and his panelists played to a packed house.

Spring 1985 brought an unusual lecture series on "Gardens," organized by Karl Kilian and Lorraine Wilde, which was highly successful. Andrew John Rudnick assembled a spring symposium on "Planning for the City of Houston," which brought together a variety of

interested citizens, as well as public and private officials and developers.

Cite, the Architecture and Design Review of Houston, was published by RDA under the guidance of John Kaliski, chairman of the Editorial Board. *Cite* explored such topics as Houston in the 1950s, the Fourth Ward and Allen Parkway Village, Houston townhouse design, and housing outside the loop. The quarterly review's readership continued to increase, both locally and nationally.

No list of the year's endeavors could be complete without special thanks to Leslie Davidson, who helped organize the annual meeting, and to Bill Neuhaus, who made available for viewing his own new offices as well as the facilities of Stages, all located in the vicinity of the Star Engraving Building on Allen Parkway. Lorraine Roberts continued to persevere as Executive Director, and was a constant source of goodwill, charm, and - when necessary - muscle power. LaNeil Gregory initiated informal planning sessions addressing the long-range needs and goals for RDA, and the entire Board of Directors consistently proved to be of enormous support and assistance to me personally. Finally, Dean Jack Mitchell of the Rice School of Architecture continued to guide and assist us all, and through his efforts helped ensure a particularly successful year.

W. James Murdaugh, Jr.

Financial Report 1 July 1984 - 30 June 1985

Receipts	
Memberships	\$46,662
Program Income - Tickets	7,957
Program Income - Contributions	4,500
Architectural Tour	4,575
RDA Salaries and Fringes	15,200
Total	\$79,994
Disbursements	
Program Expenses	\$25,000
Contributions	
Forth Gallery	1,000
Sophomore Field Trip	1,000
Operating Expenses	17,229
Salaries and Fringes	30,558
<i>Cite</i>	13,478
Total	\$87,171
Deficit of Disbursements Over Receipts	\$7,173

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Land Use Abuse



The Park Laureate, under construction, 1985. Howe/Reb Associates, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)

Jan O'Brien

Pretend for a moment that you are a developer in Houston. In researching sites for a new office park you discover a large tract of land on Memorial Drive which now contains garden apartments. You learn that while Memorial is currently two lanes wide from Loop 610 to this site, it has adequate right-of-way to increase it to four lanes. Another plus for access, Chimney Rock Street, the first major north-south route west of the loop, is in the process of being extended to link with Memorial almost directly across from the site in question. Additional research reveals a right-of-way for Wirt Road that will link I-10 to Memorial close to this parcel of land. No land-use restrictions or deed restrictions apply to the land, even though it is surrounded by quiet residential villages. In Monopoly, Houston-style, this is a prime site which even in a soft market could attract tenants tired of crawling along clogged freeways to downtown destinations. You would be a fool not to grab it.

This is not, however, a board game. The site described is now The Park Laureate, formerly the site of Frank J. Forster's Detering Lodge (See *Cite*, Spring 1985, p. 9); the first office building, a nine-story structure, is nearing completion. The project, developed by Hettig/Kahn Development Corporation, planned by Herbert Pickworth, Associates and designed by House/Reb Associates, has many positive features. Plans call for a park with jogging trails and lakes as well as additional office towers, club and restaurant facilities, and retail. A dangerously narrow bridge on Memorial is being widened, and new park land dedicated in an area that has no neighborhood parks.

On the other hand, residents of the nearby villages have no say about increased traffic and office towers above their backyards, for while these neighborhoods are zoned, their authority does not extend past the village boundaries.

In older, pre-war residential areas of Houston that were not incorporated as villages, the only protection homeowners have are deed restrictions. For example, there was a time when Montrose was a totally residential community similar to Hunters Creek or Tanglewood. The lapsing of the deed restrictions in 1937 was recognized by the city as potentially disruptive but no action was taken to keep the restrictions in force. Perhaps their fears were eased when the first non-

conforming structure to move in was a neighborhood church. While the power of deed restrictions is also limited to each subdivision, some progress has been made in keeping these in force - and hopefully aiding homeowner's in preserving existing neighborhoods. State Representative Paul Colbert, of District 152, has sponsored House Bill 2256. This bill, which is now in effect, created legal mechanisms to renew or amend existing deed restrictions, and to create or recreate deed restrictions where they no longer exist. In the past, deed restrictions were generally set up for several decades, then were automatically void unless renewed by 100 percent of the landowners. The new law requires only 75 percent of the property owners to renew or amend and even aids in the creation of deed restrictions where they have lapsed. These are useful tools that depend on concerned neighborhood groups to have any effect.

While this is heartening, many areas of Houston carry no restrictions. As shown in this example, residential neighborhoods that abut large parcels of un subdivided land are particularly vulnerable. Ironically, the same group of homes that were once thought of as a neighborhood also can be seen as a market. And these same people, for convenience, well may support the offices and stores that disrupted their serenity and upset their land values.

The individual histories vary, but towers have recently been built adjacent to the neighborhoods of Tanglewood, Avalon Place, and Southgate. This may not indicate a trend, but neither are we discussing an isolated case. Will Houston choose to remain dependent on market forces and the vision of individual developers? Are Houstonians interested in having a voice in the future of their neighborhoods and their city? The compendium of plans being put together by Houston's Department of Planning and Development (see *Cite*, Fall 1985, p. 15) appears to rely on active neighborhood associations and may not address these crucial interstitial areas, leaving border areas vulnerable. ■

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