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Cite

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Sesquicentennial Park Competition John Pastier
Houston Monuments Stephen Fox
Noguchi's Cullen Sculpture Garden Andrew Bartle
Sport and Public Spaces J.B. Jackson

Cite

Cover: *Sam Houston Monument, Hermann Park, 1925, Enrico F. Cerracchio, sculptor, J.W. Northrop, Jr., architect* (Photo by Paul Hester)

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Barbara Cochran New RDA Director

Barbara G. Cochran was appointed executive director of the Rice Design Alliance in June. She is the seventh executive director in the history of the alliance, which was founded in 1973.

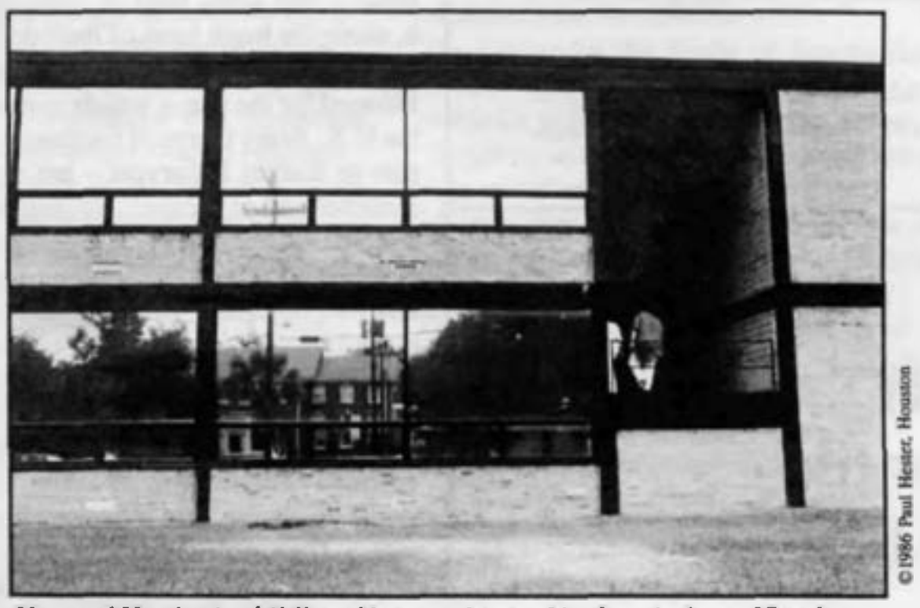
A graduate of Oberlin College, Cochran also studied at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and at Rice University, from which she received a Master of Architecture degree. She has had a wide range of professional experiences in architecture. From 1983 until 1986 she was director of architecture for First General Realty Company in Houston. She has worked for Fumihiko Maki in Tokyo, for Wallace K. Harrison in New York, as a managing editor of *Skyline*, an assistant editor of *The Art Quarterly*, and as an assistant curator at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.

Big Cité Beat

☛ Mirror, mirror on the wall: **Philip Johnson**'s pristine Miesian buildings on the campus of the **University of St. Thomas** have had their windows retrofitted with flashy, silver reflective glass. Unshielded east, west, and south exposures doubtless escalated the electrical bill. But is blatant tackiness the only alternative?

Mary Margaret Hanson

Art in the Streets *temporary installation, 1986, Fletcher Mackey, artist*



© 1986 Paul Hester, Houston

Howard Hughes's childhood home mirrored in the window of Strake Hall, University of St. Thomas

☛ Payne-ful Transformations: After architect **Harry D. Payne** came to Houston in 1925 from the office of St. Louis school specialist William B. Ittner, he designed a series of neighborhood elementary schools (Briscoe, Wharton, Poe, River Oaks) that were strictly state-of-the-art. Although **HISD** has taken considerable care with some of these (witness Sikes Jennings Kelly's fine additions to **Poe** in 1985), quite the opposite has been true with **Eugene Field Elementary School** at East 17th and Studewood in the Heights. Poor Field is now surrounded by pink stucco boxes (GRLA, architects) that almost totally conceal Payne's original. Clearly someone at HISD could use a remedial course in Architecture Appreciation.

☛ **Diverse Works**, downtown's lively alternative art space, turned art out of the gallery this summer with its **Art In The Streets** temporary installations by **Joanne Brigham, Lisa Schoyer, Paul Kittelson**, and **Fletcher Mackey**. Kittelson's foam dinosaur with flashing red eyes was stashed underneath the Southwest Freeway on Montrose, while Mackey positioned four exquisitely crafted and colored birdhouses atop tall poles in the Hermann Park Esplanade. Permanence is also on the agenda at Diverse Works. In conjunction with the **Downtown Houston Association** and the city **Parks and Recreation Department**, the gallery has assembled artists **Malou Flato, Paul Hester, Doug Hollis** and **Richard Turner**, and **James Surls** to collaborate with architect **Jeffrey Karl Ochsner** on the reshaping of **Market Square**.

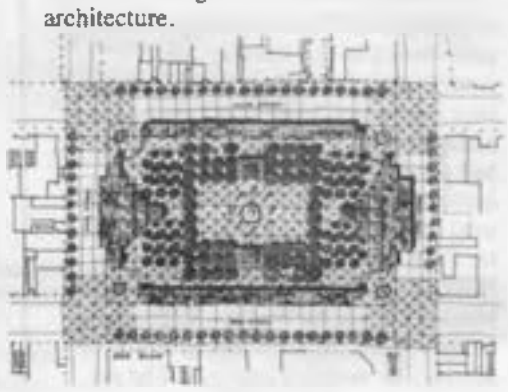
☛ Architectural drawings by **Mark A. Hewitt** and **Peter D. Waldman** and **Christopher Genik** were among those auctioned at Max Protetch Gallery in New York on 21 June to benefit **Architects for Social Responsibility**. Architects **Christopher Genik**, **Tim Cisneros**, and **Michael McNamara** exhibited works on paper at Suzanne Street Gallery in April; architect **Peter Merwin** was included in a group exhibition that followed in June. The Contemporary Arts Museum will open an exhibition of the work of Los Angeles architect **Frank O. Gehry** on 21 January 1987.

☛ Pardon Our Bombs: **The Parks People** are urging immediate public protest of the **U.S. Army's** application to lease 2,500 acres west of State Highway 6, along the north bank of Buffalo Bayou, for an **intensive military training area**. Planned for the site – which is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is part of Barker Reservoir – are a gas chamber and proficiency training area, air and rail loading practice areas for M60 tanks, land-mine warfare training areas, and two company-size maneuver areas, according to Parks People president **Vernon G. Henry**. Harris County also has applied to the corps to lease the site as an extension of existing county-operated parkland already in the reservoir. Henry is asking that letters of protest be sent to the district engineer of the Corps of Engineers in Galveston, the assistant secretary of the army in Washington, and Houston congressman Bill Archer.

☛ Postmodernism littered the streets of Galveston on 17 May after hurricane-force winds blew **Charles W. Moore's** Mardi Gras arch to pieces. Aubry, Graves, Jahn, Pelli, Powell, and Tigerman weathered the storm. Meanwhile, arch-patrons **Cynthia** and **George Mitchell** are reviewing prospective recruits to design arches for the 1987 Mardi Gras.

☛ Dancin' in the Streets: Merriment was the theme on the Strand in Galveston this summer, thanks to **Old Galveston Square**, a historic rehab project of Houston developer **J.R. McConnell**. Every weekend evening The Texas Trumpets played their hearts out atop the sidewalk canopy of Old Galveston Square, while in the blocked-off street below, there was hopping and bopping on the recently uncovered brick paving. Onlookers watched from a bevy of Model A roadsters, sounding approval on still-functioning Klaxon horns. Honk if you're having fun.

☛ Dallas architect **Frank D. Welch** was short-listed (along with Barton Phelps, James Wines, John L. Wong, and Kevin Bone) in the first stage of an open competition for the redesign of Pershing Square in Los Angeles on 23 June. **Christine Cincirpini** and **William Taylor's** was one of five alternative schemes recognized by the jury and **Peter J. Zweig** received honorable mention for his entry. **Antonio de Souza Santos** has returned to Texas from Ottawa to practice architecture in Austin with **Alan Y. Taniguchi**; Santos also will teach at The University of Texas at Austin. **Douglas Milburn** has been named editor of *Houston City Magazine*: look for regular critical coverage of local art and architecture.



Site plan, 1986, Pershing Square competition entry, Frank Welch and Associates

Citelines

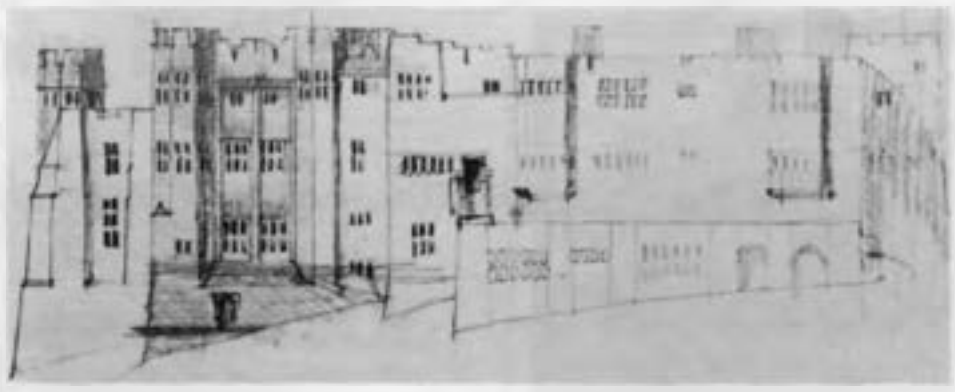
Fall Architecture Events

Rice Design Alliance
The Rice Design Alliance will feature the Houston neighborhood of Braeswood on its annual fall architecture tour. This planned neighborhood, lying just behind the Shamrock Hotel, was developed in 1928-1929 and is the site of some of the best-known examples of modern residential architecture in Houston. It also contains a wealth of traditionally styled houses. The tour will be held on two consecutive days. Preceeding it will be a gala preview party. Dates, times, and tickets prices to be announced.

The Rice Design Alliance also will present a talk by an internationally known architect this fall, as well as a symposium on the effects of the revised U.S. tax code on the building, real estate, and historical preservation industries. Dates, times, locations, and admission prices to be announced. For more information, telephone 713/524-6297.

Farish Gallery
From 19 October to 30 November, "The Architect and the British Country House, 1620-1920" will be exhibited. Containing

Model, Lucile Halsell Conservatory, San Antonio Botanical Center, 1984, Emilio Ambasz and Associates with Jones and Kell. From the exhibition, "Nature's Abode," at the Farish Gallery, Rice University, through 5 October.



Preliminary perspective studies for exteriors, 1909, Castle Drogo, Devon, Sir Edwin Lutyens, architect

90 architectural drawings by the masters of English architecture, selected by guest curator John Harris from the drawings collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the exhibition was organized and is circulated by the Octagon Museum, American Institute of Architects Foundation. Lecture and opening are scheduled for 19 October. Catalogue available. The Farish Gallery is located in Anderson Hall on the campus of Rice University. It is open from noon until 5 PM daily. For more information telephone 713/527-4870.

House Tour
An architectural tour of six houses in the River Oaks and Memorial areas of Houston will be held on 5, 6, and 7 December by the Houston Alumnae Association of Kappa Kappa Gamma. Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the Houston Child Guidance Center, the Sheltering Arms, and The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research. On tour will be houses by John F. Staub and J.T. Rather, Jr., the office of Royal Barry Wills, and Hermon Lloyd. For more information telephone 713/961-7351 after 1 November.

Center for the Study of American Architecture
The Center for the Study of American Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin will hold a two-day symposium, "Building and Reality: Architecture in the Age of Information," organized by Michael Benedikt, associate professor of architecture and author of the forthcoming book, *For An Architecture of Reality*. Participants include Bo Gehring, Peter Eisenman, Horace Newcomb, Charles W. Moore, William Mace, Karsten Harries, Coy Howard, and Michael Benedikt. Sessions will be at Jessen Auditorium on the university campus on 23 and 24 October; the registration fee is $20. For more information, telephone 512/471-1922.

The "New Regionalism" issue of the center's journal, *Center*, will be published in November.

Party Houston

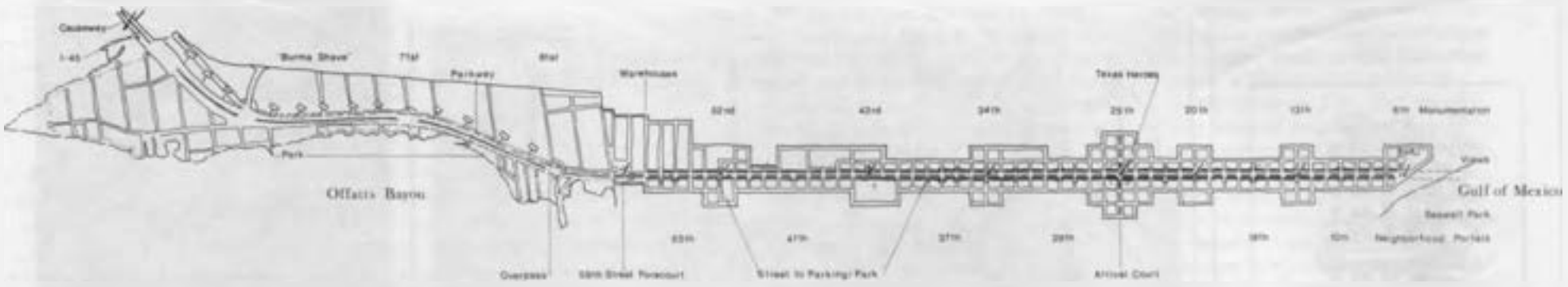
There's a thing that happens to cities and places caught in dire straights. After an initial paralysis, a certain psychology takes over. Bad times seem to make for a "no tomorrow" mentality. Thus, disease-ridden Europe had its medieval dance fever and the Paris commune its orgies. London in the blitz was one big debauch. And now steamy, down-trodden Houston is experiencing a plague of parties.

I first witnessed this phenomenon ten years ago in New York, at that time in the grips of a very serious crisis. It was an era of insolvency, depopulation, and ennui – the place seemed more than just broke. Corporations like Union Carbide were pulling up stakes while entire boroughs (like the Bronx) were overrun by violent welfare-nurtured hordes. Industry was clearing out as fast as it could: whole sections of the city became artists' colonies overnight. But from the depths of depression, at a time when the Mayor's office was contemplating the abandonment of Brooklyn, New York suddenly blossomed as a good time. Everyone got into the party act. NBC put "Saturday Night Live" on the air; newly opened Studio 54 became the No.1 club of the disco era; and somebody invented the "I ♥ (i.e., forgive) New York" campaign. Defeat became unthinkable and the rest is history: The Big Apple became party capital of the western world and its gossip-based economy of brokers and financialists revived.

Here in Houston, the spring of 1986 saw the crash of oil and, fittingly, the end of the Shamrock. As more and more unlucky Houstonians hit the road for more prosperous pastures, it's also seen a wave of good-bye parties. I'm not alone in observing that the momentum of this partying, of rendezvous and backyard barbecues, seems to have carried over into the lives of the survivors. There are just a lot of parties in Houston these days. And exhausting as all this activity has come to be, it's clearly not reached any apogee or conclusion. According to the New York recipe, a final flowering requires certain ingredients – which we should perhaps consider. First, there's a need for a spontaneous/live late-night type of TV show. Some kind of drive-in talk show co-hosted by the likes of Marvin Zindler and Lynn Wyatt might do the trick. Spectacles are also very important. And since Houston has been raised to international stature as a party town via "Rendezvous Houston," more projects by Jean-Michel Jarre would seem in order. He's obviously the person to send the Shamrock out in real style, for instance: laser lights, dynamite, and all. Ka-Boom.

The decline of Party New York has progressed almost imperceptibly, but as any candid native will attest, the Big Apple just isn't that much fun anymore. Which is where we come in. Houston too is beginning to have a pretty good time in bad times. Eventually, like New York, we'll rise from our travail once again to become prosperous and a little dull. We'll be terribly busy and important again, traffic will be awful, and time will be short. Till then, though, attitudes being what they are, our mutual entertainment seems the order of the day. Till then, as they say, "Party Houston!"

Cameron Armstrong



Diagram, 1986, Broadway Beautification Plan

Broadway Beautification Plan

In November 1985, the City of Galveston with the Broadway Beautification Committee commissioned a master plan for Broadway, the grand boulevard that runs across Galveston Island from Seawall Boulevard on the east connecting with I-45 and the Galveston Causeway on the west. A team of consultants, headed by the landscape and urban design firm of Slaney Santana Group, with William F. Stern and Associates, architects, Traffic Engineers Inc., traffic consultants, Babendure Design Group, graphics consultants, and Marlene Lee Lighting consultants, has recently completed the development of the conceptual master plan phase of the study.

The Broadway beautification effort grew out of a recognition in Galveston that an overall vision for Broadway, the primary gateway to the city, was required. Although concern about Broadway had been raised in previous years, a number of recent events (including incompatible construction adjacent to the East End Historic District, a proposal for a ten-story office building at the corner of Broadway and 25th Street, and the possibility that some of the beautiful old trees on Broadway might be cut down) led to the current citizen-initiated effort. The Broadway Beautification Committee, including citizens, business interests, and city officials, was created and funding for the planning effort was raised.

The master plan was developed through a process involving committee recommendations, public meetings, observation, and analysis. The historic order of the street space provided the conceptual framework for the design proposals, which define the sequence along the boulevard: the gateway at the Causeway, the approach along I-45, the transition from suburban to urban between 61st and 59th, entry at 59th, procession along the Broadway "gallery" through the historic district to a 25th Street "arrival court," and finally the Seawall "terrace" and vistas of the Gulf of Mexico. The key features of this vision will be realized in a series of specific steps, including zoning controls with height and setback provisions, extensive landscape improvements, control of curb cuts, and revision of traffic operations (including provision for storm evacuation). From 59th Street to Seawall Boulevard a major landscaping plan, reinforcing the existing pattern of Washingtonia palms and live oaks along the esplanade and adding a planting edge of Phoenix Dactilifera palms on the north and south sides of the street, has been recommended. Special pavers adjoining the north sidewalk have been proposed so that a fourth traffic lane for peak use and evacuation might be created. In addition, a sequence of monuments (building upon the precedent of the Texas Heroes Monument at 25th Street) has been recommended for key locations along the esplanade.

The plan recognizes that Broadway passes through a number of districts of differing character, so the elements of continuity introduced along Broadway would be balanced by improvements specifically conceived for individual locations, such as "portals" to adjacent neighborhoods and designation for individual historic properties.

The team also will propose guidelines for signs and informational graphics, and it is hoped that eventually the standard light poles and fixtures can be replaced with some more in keeping with the original turn-of-the-century lighting along Broadway.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner

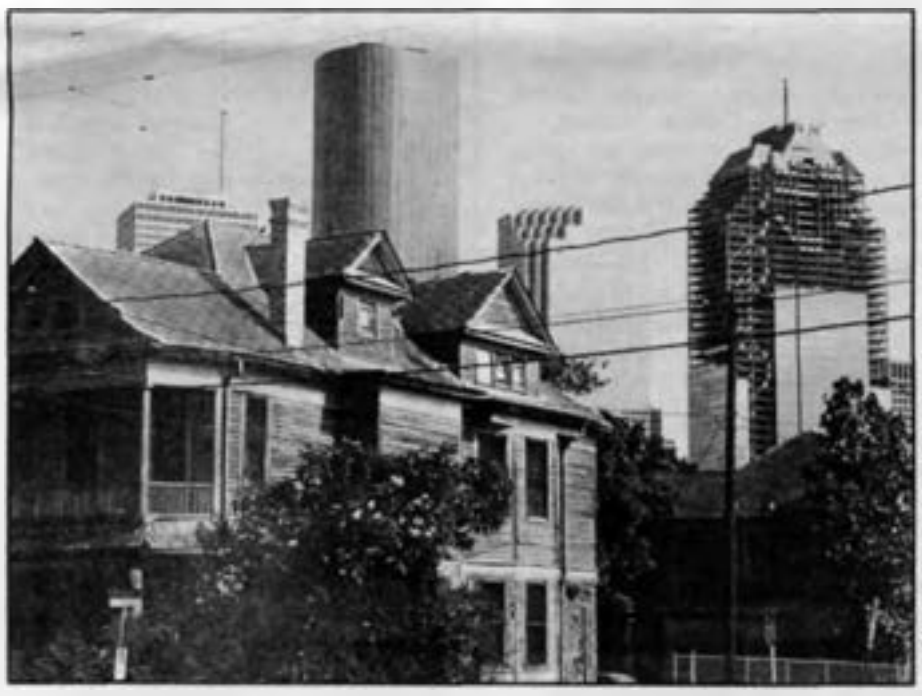
Sixth Ward/Sabine Historic District Survey

The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance has just published a preservation study of the Sabine neighborhood, a 39-block residential area immediately west of downtown in what was once the city's Sixth Ward. Bounded by Memorial Drive, Houston Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Glenwood Cemetery, the Sabine neighborhood in 1977 became the first district in Houston to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The *Sixth Ward/Sabine Historic District Revitalization Study* was prepared by Preservation Services with funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Cultural Arts Council of Houston. It contains 26 recommendations for conserving the district, which in 1980 had a population of nearly 2,000 residents (predominantly low-income and Hispanic), most of whom rent, rather than own, their dwelling units.

The district contains 385 buildings, over 300 of which are residential in use. These include what the report describes as the largest concentration of late 19th-century buildings in Houston, most of them one-story, wood-frame cottages. As in the larger Freedman's Town Historic District in Fourth Ward (which lies directly south of Sixth Ward), the Sabine neighborhood suffers from the negligence of some absentee landlords and the effects of commercial encroachment, especially around its periphery. Unlike Fourth Ward, it has experienced some preservation and rehabilitation activity as well as attracting venturesome, but compatible, new construction. Listing in the National Register has not precipitated widespread displacement of lower-income tenants for more affluent redevelopment.

The study proposes a strategy for preserving the district's historical integrity without drastically altering its present socio-economic status. Many of the recommendations resulted from data accumulated in a land-use and housing survey and a survey of neighborhood residents. Recommendations to encourage preservation address issues of housing improvement for current residents, including cooperative purchases, a revolving fund program enabling renters to buy their houses, and the organization of rehabilitation workshops. These are combined with recommendations for neighborhood action, and the shaping of a consistent, sympathetic policy toward the district by the city government.

The Preservation Alliance's study also advocates a series of steps that draw on the collective energies of neighborhood residents, coordinating these with existing programs, institutions, and city agencies. The resulting approach might well serve as a model for the conservation of other established, lower-income, inner-city Houston neighborhoods.



Top: *House at 1519 Lubbock Street and downtown skyline*. Above: *House on Decatur Street displaying gingerbread ornament*

Illustration from the cover of Civics For Houston, *vol. 1, no. 1, January, 1928*

Buffalo Monument

ForeCite

In Pursuit Of the White Buffalo

As Phillip Lopate observed in the Winter 1984 issue of *Cite*, "Houston for a city its size has an almost sensational lack of convivial public space." Lopate's reflections, which appeared under the title, "Pursuing the Unicorn: Public Space in Houston," ended hoping that "with some goodwill, raised urban-design consciousness, and a lot of money, Houston can catch up with other cities in this respect...even in the present economy." The competition for, and impending development of, Houston's Sesquicentennial Park on Buffalo Bayou downtown, may mark the beginning of such a change, as John Pastier's account of the competition that appears opposite concludes.

The idea of a competition for such a public project, the first ever held in Houston, was conceived by Raymond D. Brochstein, president of the Rice Design Alliance. The competition was conducted jointly with Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc., a non-profit association of downtown interests, which identified the 10-acre park site and secured the support of the Sesquicentennial Committee of Houston and Harris County and the Mayor's Buffalo Bayou Task Force. The winning entry offers a vision of what the bayou front can become, taking as its point of departure an Indian legend of the white buffalo that is said to have given the bayou its name. If, as Pastier notes, the progress of the competition was not altogether smooth and the site not in all ways ideal, the result stands as a considerable collective achievement, perhaps the most concerted example of public and private initiative bearing on the stewardship of Buffalo Bayou since the City Beautiful movement of the 1910s and '20s, when first George E. Kessler and later Hare and Hare devised plans, only partially executed, for the Buffalo Bayou Parkway.

The merits of the winning scheme already have been described by other observers. Mark A. Hewitt, writing in the July-August 1986 issue of *Texas Architect*, ventured that "The Houston Sesquicentennial Park will have the same 'cutting edge,' up-to-date quality that graced so many of the city's skyscrapers during the building boom. It will also certainly have many pleasant spaces for people to congregate and play in, and it will draw Buffalo Bayou and the Wortham Theater into the life of downtown Houston." Ann Holmes, in the 15 April 1986 edition of the *Houston Chronicle*, observed that the "design pleasingly makes much use of nature, lets the presence of the bayou dominate, and imposes a minimum of architectural structures. What architecture they've provided is interesting and provocative without being gimmicky." Peter C. Papademetriou, commenting in the July 1986 issue of *Progressive Architecture*, felt that the winning "scheme reflected the successful integration of many given elements, and a modest strategy for landscape as a unifying element."

The Sesquicentennial Park also can be viewed as an opportunity to help redress the city's lack of monuments in general – a realm of conspicuous underconsumption surveyed in Stephen Fox's essay, "Remember Houston," and amplified by Paul Hester's photographs. The last ceremonial occasion to make amends, the Texas Centennial, had little effect on Houston. For while statues and markers were scattered wholesale throughout the state in the midst of the Great Depression, such pursuits were preempted in Houston by the construction of the San Jacinto Monument – an act of giantism oblivious to the tradition of measured, resonant commemoration of battle sites in America from Concord to Gettysburg. Although the city still lacks a spirited, generously distributed apparatus for recall, it remains attainable, as Fox suggests, although the means at our disposal may have changed.

Another civil gift and example of public and private collaboration is the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, reviewed here by Andrew Bartle. It is the work of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi, retained at the suggestion of Alice Pratt Brown during the tenure of William C. Agee as director of the museum. The garden occupies a one-acre site across from the museum, acquired for that purpose by the Brown Foundation and conveyed at cost to the City of Houston as park land. It was constructed with funds provided by the Cullen Foundation and other donors. Although only one-tenth as large as Sesquicentennial Park, the cost of its improvements (excluding sculpture) represents nearly a quarter of the comparable expenditure projected for the Sesquicentennial Park and constitutes a distinctly different kind of public space – more intensive, introspective, and intimate –"actually an enlarged sculpture by Noguchi" in the words of Peter Marzio, the museum's director. Bartle finds it an appealing, romantic counter-landscape with surrealist and primitivist overtones, a palimpsest of tendencies refined in Noguchi's sculptural and landscape sensibility over a period of more than half-a-century.

Finally, John B. Jackson, an eminent essayist and cultural geographer who was the Craig Francis Cullinan Visiting Professor at Rice University last spring, speculates on a more democratic aspect of the development and use of public spaces in America in the 19th and 20th centuries – the influence of sports and other mass leisure pursuits. In doing so, he calls attention to the variety of settings that constitutes public space for recreation today, and commends a less exclusive vision for the future, quoting the prescription of Michael Laurie who advocates including "open spaces which contribute to some defined purpose ... air quality, festivals, social interaction, sports, wildlife conservation, food production, whatever...[may be]...concerned with new directions in urban life."

The theme of monuments and public places that comprises this issue derives from recent developments in the community at large, abetted in the case of the Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition by the Rice Design Alliance itself. While it may be premature to suppose that this activity signals a more general effort to invest Houston with civic appurtenances that other cities its size take for granted, it deserves attention at a time when the city can pursue such embellishments with maturity and discernment.

Drexel Turner

Late in 1836 the Texas Congress ended its first session by resolving to meet next in a new capital, "Houston on Buffalo Bayou." The full name helped locate a town not yet in existence, and foretokened the stream's importance in the urban scheme to come. Houston began at Allen's Landing, where Main Street met its south bank, and for many years the bayou was the city's link to the world, its avenue of commerce, and, after its dredging in 1914, the impetus for its industrial development and consequent 20th-century growth.

Houston was casual in repaying those favors. Upstream, the bayou is protected by parkways and the ample yards of River Oaks and Memorial. But its lower reaches are lined with heavy industry, and its central portion suffers from generations of neglect. Downtown has turned its back on the bayou, treating it as a storm drain that lacks the manners to align with the street grid, rather than as an opportunity for place-making and the creation of urban amenity.

Of course there have been visions, including *The Bayou Strategy*, a study published by the Rice Design Alliance in 1977 proposing a waterside promenade, an artificial island, and a controlled water level allowing full-time access to the bayou edge. But until lately, aside from plans, no one had taken action to join the bayou with downtown. The first move came in 1984, when Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire created a Buffalo Bayou Task Force to make recommendations on redeveloping the bayou. In 1985, it called for creation of a Sesquicentennial Park as the first part of a seven-mile linear park from downtown to the Houston Ship Channel. The task force envisioned a riverfront as exciting as San Antonio's River Walk, and stated that while "some public funding may be made available ... primary fundraising efforts will be directed toward the private sector...." (Now, however, half the money is slated to come from local government.)

Two decisions were crucial to what followed. One was to hold an open, national, two-stage design competition for the park under the aegis of several organizations, led by Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc. (a group made up of downtown business interests) and the Rice Design Alliance. It was an informed and even brave choice within the context of normal procedure in Houston, for despite the frequency of such events around the country, this was the first design competition for a public project in the city. Raymond D. Brochstein, president of the Rice Design Alliance and originator of the idea, felt

Bicentennial Plinth

View looking southeast toward island

East bank promenade looking north

Entry from Wortham Plaza to Monument

The Houston Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition

Above: *Sketches from the winning entry for Sesquicentennial Park, 1986, Team Hou, architects*

John Pastier

Aerial view of competition site looking southeast

that the process was risky, and was more surprised than anyone that it happened. The other decision was to place the park on an irregular site abutting the Wortham Theater Center, under construction and scheduled to open in 1987. This choice was problematic on several counts.

The Site

Straddling the bayou and bounded by Texas Avenue, Bagby Street, Franklin Avenue, Congress Avenue, and Smith Street, the site is C-shaped, with no two sides parallel, and cut into eight pieces by water, bridges, streets, and ramps to an underground garage. The bayou is a formidable divider, and since it is subject to floods as high as 40 feet, its margins cannot be as intimate, urban, or nicely finished as San Antonio's River Walk. Periodic silting mandates a coarse grain of design and low intensity of human use for what might otherwise be the most desirable portion of the park. Size magnifies its discontinuity: at about 10 acres (compared to a 1.4 acre downtown Houston block), the site nearly equals the original six blocks of Rockefeller Center, and far exceeds a typical downtown open space.

Although the park is meant to commemorate the city's and the state's 150th anniversaries, its setting has no special historic significance, unlike Allen's Landing just five blocks to the east. (From a bayou standpoint, it is anti-historical, for today's straightened concrete-lined stream bears no resemblance to the double oxbow originally found there.) Nor does it possess any sense of place; it is a casualty of the conflict between topography, the street grid, and the incision of the bayou.

The competition program gives a rationale for this location: "While this exciting site [Allen's Landing] is the traditional point of focus on the bayou, it was not selected for the development of Sesquicentennial Park because of the immediacy of the need for redevelopment around the Wortham Theater." Robert M. Eury, president of Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc., who had a major role in administering the competition, explains that this location is "closer to the action" than Allen's Landing. There is also reason to believe that the site was chosen out of dissatisfaction with the theater's design, and that the park's trees and structures were meant to screen the large and basically unelaborated mass of that building. This evidently struck some potential competitors as an inauspicious beginning for good design, and perhaps discouraged entries. One might ask why a celebratory effort was reduced to remedial work on an uncompleted building, or, if the Wortham Theater's design was deemed inadequate (see "A Report on the Wortham Theater Center," *Cite*, Winter 1984), why a better one was not sought directly? Ironically, now that the theater is built, it looks less daunting in the flesh than it did in presentation form. The impulse to screen this structure may have been an overreaction to a relatively minor problem.

Here it must be repeated that the site is physically fragmented in plan and section, and by topography and built elements. Its lower levels are riddled by scores of large columns supporting streets and bridges that constitute another form of intrusion. Seeing the entries made it clear that the shapes formed by the bayou, the streets, and the Wortham Theater footprint were major design limitations. Much of the competition judging was focused not on design or ideas, but on physical problems caused by the site. The importance of site familiarity is suggested by the high proportion of Houston entries – 67 percent – among the nine finalists and honorable mentions.

The Program

For all its drawbacks, the property might have been suited for a certain kind of park space, so long as the demands placed upon it were modest, clearly expressed, and realistic. Unfortunately, they weren't. The competition booklet included general design objectives, "other considerations," and a design program which follows:

The following "places" are required to be included within the Sesquicentennial Park. Their size, location, and relationship to each other has [sic] *not been designated to give maximum creative freedom to the designer. The examples following each "place" are meant only as suggestions, not as a requirement* [sic].

A place to meet friends
Cafe Indoor/outdoor
Point of identity
Landmark
Space
Unique element

A place to celebrate
Theater, dance, music
Capacity ranging from a dozen to thousands of people
Fixed or movable components
Potential for special lighting/decoration
Overlooks for crowds of people

A place to play
Jogging as a continuous activity along the bayou
Boating as a continuous activity on the bayou

A place to commemorate Texas/Houston
Recall the past
Anticipate the future

A place to relax and contemplate
Walking
Sitting
Viewing
Alone
Among people

A place to view the city
View out: the skyline from various points
View in: a park to be seen from the city's towers

A symbol for Houston
A signature for Houston
Natural and man-made environment together
Make a place for humanity
Enduring

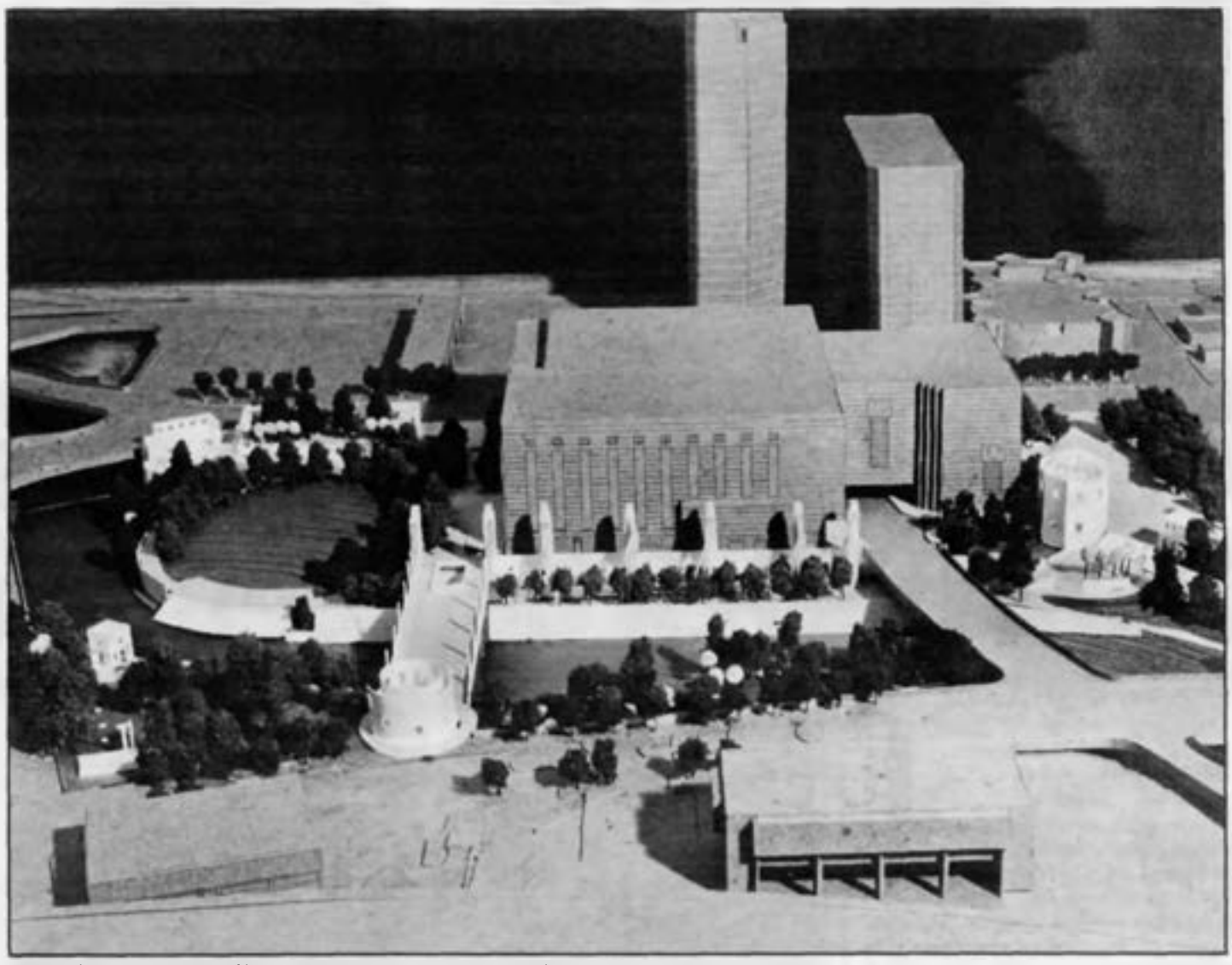
Such soft-focus sentiments and staggered italic typography would have made a fine text for a 1960s inspirational poster, but as the full program for a major piece of urban design, they leave much unanswered. Called "a poem" by its author, professional advisor Theodore Liebman, it is more a shopping list than a design brief, and fails to make any precise aims clear. The statement that "the examples following each 'place' are meant only as a suggestion, not as a requirement" means that no particular element is essential, and, perhaps, that none of them are. It means that "a place to celebrate" may serve "theater, dance, music" or not, and that its "capacity ranging from a dozen to thousands of people" may not need to accommodate so many after all. In the case of the cafe, the finalists were to learn that while they were encouraged to provide such a facility, they should not make the design of their "place to meet friends" dependent upon it, since the sponsors later realized that a cafe in such a location was economically questionable.

More than one jury member felt that the site could not sustain all the activity asked of it. One juror believed that besides being too vague in its intentions, the program was highly remiss in not adequately stressing the great difficulties posed by the site, thereby misdirecting the energies of the entrants and misstating the nature of the problem to be solved. Another found it important to point out the obvious fact that "we [the jury] did not write the program."

Why wasn't the program more fully researched before inviting the efforts of hundreds of design teams? Time pressure was a strong factor. Although it is a Sesquicentennial project, the park will not be built until after that birthday, and it was necessary to have at least a symbolic ground breaking in late 1986. Two of the three candidates interviewed on short notice for the role of professional advisor recommended a longer schedule than the seven months ultimately allotted. While there appears to have been ample time allowed for design, there doesn't seem to have been enough for research into the consequences of the site selection and developing a program of sufficient appropriateness and depth.

The Entrants

A competition poster was sent to 14,000 designers, and about 460 of them purchased programs. There were good reasons to enter: a nicely balanced jury that included two well-known architects, a $14 million budget, and, given Houston's prominence and the Sesquicentennial designation, a good



First place entry, Team Hou, architects, model, second phase

opportunity for recognition. About 26 percent of the 460 actually entered, a respectable but not exceptional ratio. (A comparable competition for Pershing Square in Los Angeles this year drew twice as many entries – about 38 percent from a pool of roughly 630.) Over a third of the entries came from metropolitan Houston, and nearly half were from Texas. Of the people who procured programs, Texans were by far the most likely to enter (38 percent compared to 20 percent for the rest of the country), and Houstonians entered at a rate of 42 percent. This is not surprising in light of the local architectural recession, the presence of two major architecture schools, the general tendency of big-city competitions to draw well locally, and the attraction of the Sesquicentennial for Texans. Beyond that, Houstonians had a major advantage in their physical access to a very difficult and complicated site, one that could not possibly be described adequately by the competition materials, thorough though they were in that respect.

The Entries

The 119 submitted designs largely fell into two categories: those that challenged the site, usually to little avail, and, more often, those that allowed the site geometry to determine their own form. The second group tended to lack big ideas, at best containing promising fragments placed here and there. The better entries in this category were largely disappointing in that they dealt with landscape but not with the other two disciplines asked for in the competition objectives: urban design and architecture.

Certain patterns and elements kept recurring. About 40 entries made use of the Lone Star motif, a few worked maps of Texas into their plans, one had a colonnade with statues of Texas heroes, and another based some of its geometry on the shape of cattle brands. A third of the schemes placed a circular or semicircular element, with or without a Lone Star, on the ground directly north of the Wortham Theater. This seemed to reflect two factors: the curve of the bayou's right bank, and the necessity to put *something* on a problematic piece of land which was the largest uninterrupted site segment but which faced the rear of the theater and away from downtown. Another tactic for this sector was to reduce its size by expanding the bayou. One pragmatic entrant, perhaps from the Sunbelt, dealt forthrightly with this large blank space by placing a parking lot in its center.

Circles were popular elsewhere as well, possibly because they appear more "natural" than orthogonal shapes, and certainly because they are non-directional and thus can be placed freely on a site of such indeterminate geometry. Footbridges were so common that it was easy to lose count of them, but few were memorable or developed in detail; the exceptions tended to be too big or too fussy. Towers were also frequent – about 40 entries had one or more – but also seemed redundant or trivial against the backdrop of the third tallest skyline on earth. Waterside amphitheaters were also big favorites (often in the problem spot north of the Wortham), as were fountains.

Some elements were audacious enough to raise the pulse and tickle the brain. A pyramid over the bayou (Houston is, after all, at the same latitude as Giza), a Spindletop oil rig, an offshore drilling platform (or something looking suspiciously like one), a replica of the space shuttle (submitted well before the fatal launch), two steamboats, and, best of all, a smoldering volcano, were all offered up to placate the gods of symbolism.

There were also larger-scale strategies in evidence, some of which went beyond the site boundaries. This raised the issue of scope. In one sense, the site was too large for eventful yet coherent development, but in another, it was only part of a local open-space network that might properly have been the subject of a more comprehensive urban design outlook on the part of the competition organizers. Many entries reshaped the bayou, usually by enlarging it, sometimes by creating an island, and sometimes by imposing a right-angled geometry on a stream that needed to flow freely and smoothly. Others took a more accommodating course by carefully shaping the necessary retaining walls and making them explicit design elements. A few entries covered over part of the bayou in an attempt to pull the cloven site together at its upper level.

The most interesting large-scale strategy was that of devising a unifying grid for much or even all of the site. Granted, grids are now overused devices in architecture and site planning, but here they represented an attempt to think comprehensively and to unify various site segments. Some were aligned with the theater, while others were set askew to most of the existing site geometry. Some occurred on the ground plane as paving or planting, some were manifest as precise rows of trees, and others floated in the air as lattices or trellises. Some were implicit, others explicit; some were partial while others filled the site with polemical finality. Despite their various strengths, they fell short in two ways. No geometry, however ingenious, could unify such a fractured site, and no single pattern, however supple, could accommodate the disparate program elements.

At least three entries sought to serve history by reviving the Farmers' Market that occupied part of the site between 1927 and 1958. This had the added advantage of being a practical and real use, rather than a symbolic reminder of history that occurred elsewhere. One juror found the site too removed from urban activity to serve as a farmers' market, but such facilities are more often found on the fringes of downtowns than at their centers. The strongest of these schemes, by Interplan Architects, would have added diversity to the finalist group had it been included, and would have provided a strongly urban alternative to the other second-stage schemes. It was hurt by a somewhat diagrammatic quality and by an overly prominent bridge superstructure verging on bombast. It earned an honorable mention, a status that fairly reflected its conceptual strength and formal shortcomings, but did not fully acknowledge its potential to enliven a weak program through self-generated human patronage. Indeed, by juxtaposing mundane and refined activities, it promised a refreshing urbanity rare in the Southwest.

The Top Ten

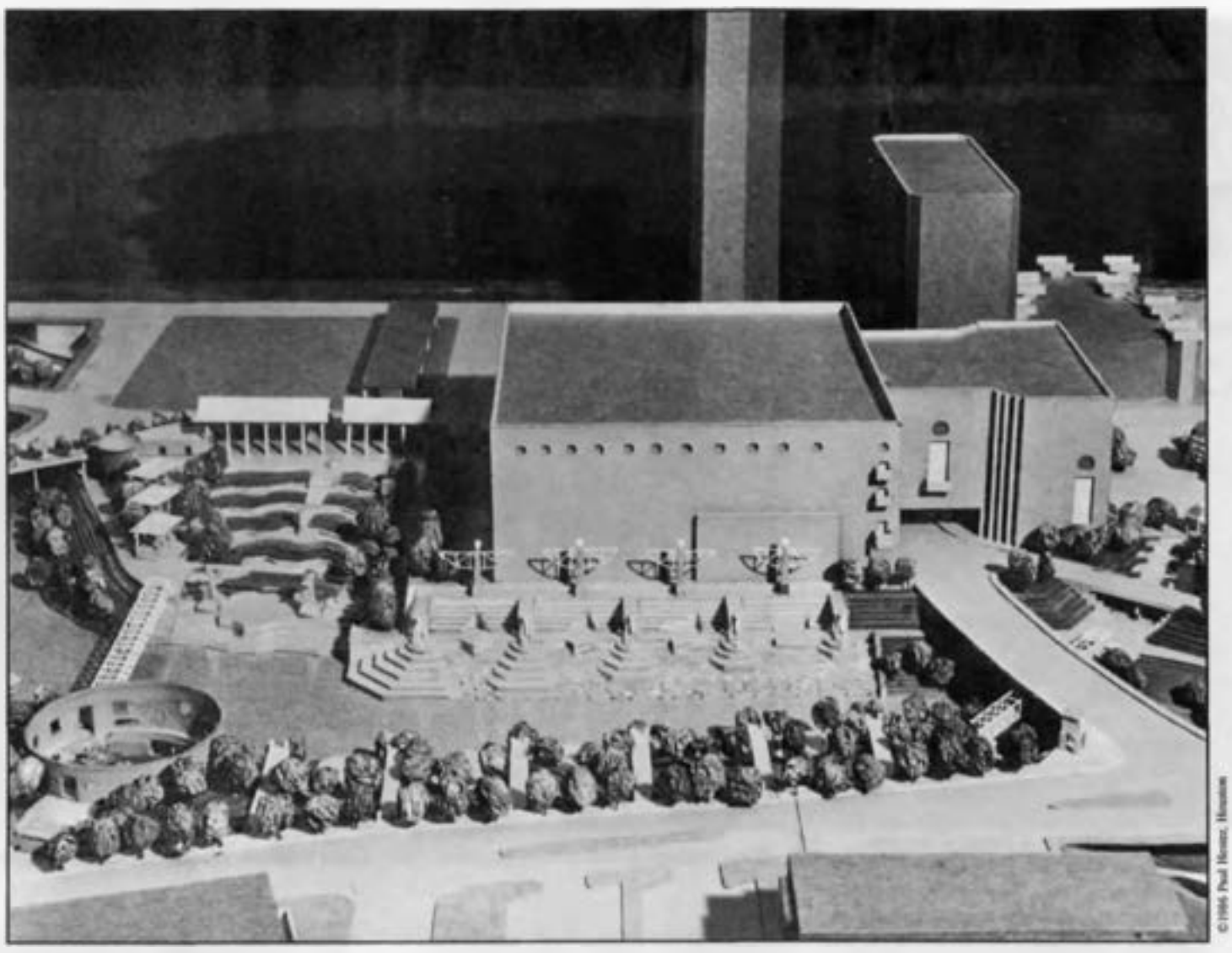
The jury chose five finalists to develop their designs in the second phase, plus three honorable mentions other than Interplan's, and one special commendation. This latter, Richard Verdoorn's fanciful comet, was meant to exist only on paper, with steel tubes as long as 800 feet arcing from one end of the site to another. Here was a free mind declining to be bound by a design problem filled with limitations.

Among the honorable mentions, the team headed by Guiliano Fiorenzoli proposed seductively detailed hanging gardens lining both banks of the bayou. This plan took the streamcourse as its armature, creating a formal urban edge that continued the detailing of the Wortham Theater at a finer scale. The bayou would have been flanked by a pair of impressive set-pieces, but away from its banks the plan was an overly simple series of lawns stiffly ringed by trees. Still, it might well have outshone more than one of the finalists, assuming that the team could have developed those edges during the second phase.

Martin Axe and J. Mark Cronander's "off-center center" entry engaged in manipulation of axes, literally miles long, at an almost metropolitan scale. While this was theoretically intriguing, it was difficult to link such near-mystical geometry with any experience available to a typical visitor at the site.

Philip Mahla and Martin Sapetto's design featured long sweeping curves, a nicely restrained bridge, and an awkward lighthouse tower. Despite its general competence, the qualities that recommended it to the jurors were not readily apparent, especially since there were no jury remarks about the honorable mentions.

There were jury comments on the finalists, but they never saw the light of day in their original form. Each entry was given a written critique to aid its development in the second design phase. But Liebman decided that this feedback would be unfair, and, without consulting the jury, rewrote and rearranged the remarks according to issues rather than according to entries. He then conveyed these generalized remarks to the five teams orally rather than in writing. This diminished the value of the comments, since entrants could not always be sure which ones applied to their designs, and could not know exactly what was expected of them in the next phase. The jury chairman, New York landscape architect R. Terry Schnadelbach, was upset by this action when he learned of it several weeks later. Another juror felt that, since the second-phase designs didn't reflect the



Second place entry, SIR, Inc. annd Bruce C. Webb, architects, model, second phase

criticism, the advisor's method clearly didn't work.

One finalist later said that "Liebman's remarks were not very helpful to me, and I can't imagine how they could help the other entrants." He also found stage two more perplexing than stage one, in that the "clarifications" to the program were confusing, and that instructions were changed regarding the Wortham Theater plaza, possible connections to the downtown tunnel system, the underground parking ramps, the budget, and the financial responsibility for relocating utilities that crossed the bayou. It was also unclear whether the cafe and outdoor theater were wanted or not. As a result, "all those contradictions destroyed the momentum" of the design process. This seems to have been confirmed by the final entries, since most did not evolve significantly, and one even seemed to regress.

The Roberts-Abbott entry was one that did not develop. In both phases it was a naturalistic planting scheme in the English manner, but little else. It became a finalist because the jury was seeking an example of a pure landscape solution. This would seem to ignore the design objective that stated, in part, that "the problem is seen by the sponsors to be as much an urban design problem as a landscape or architectural one." This triple requirement was overlooked more than once, as will be seen later.

Victor Caliandro's scheme found a better balance among the three disciplines, and was the highest-ranked of the first-stage entries, but it too showed little growth in the second phase. It was heavily planted, and its architectural components hovered somewhere between postmodernism and City Beautiful revival. Its most striking feature was a liquid town square incised into the bayou banks. This design shared fourth place with the Roberts-Abbott scheme.

The entry prepared by Charles Tapley and Charles W. Moore with Drexel Turner placed third after starting out as the most striking of the finalists. Its first version was exuberant and joyous, while the second looked chastened. Some jurors felt that Moore's faintly zoomorphic sculptures-cum-towers were too much like his Wonder Wall at the New Orleans World's Fair, and alien to Houston. One competing entrant sensed that the city's professional design community was opposed to Moore, and there were rumblings that if the jury would be so indiscreet as to select this entry, it would never get built. Its treatment in the daily press pointed up the need for competent design criticism in the Houston media. Several local jurors had cited Tapley's nearby Tranquillity Park as an example of what not to do, and that also hurt the entry's chances. But its fate was sealed by devolution: the number of towers had dwindled alarmingly, a subdued pergola had replaced a more original structure, and the soft watercolor presentation seemed apologetic about a scheme that was still better than all but one of the finalists. This failure of nerve was saddening and in some ways symbolic of the course of the competition itself

The SIR, Inc.-Bruce Webb entry, in contrast, maintained its best features to emerge as the strongest contender. It struck the best balance between the demands of urban design, architecture, and landscape, terracing the bayou banks deftly and proposing ebullient fountains and cascades between the theater and the stream. On the opposite bank, five small plazas were inlaid with maps showing the city's expansion over 150 years. This well-chosen historical reference dealt not with the quasi-mythology of heroes, but the city's *genius loci*: growth and change. The fountains that celebrated the bayou so dramatically raised questions of practicality among some jurors, and it was also decided that this design, like Tapley and Moore's, needed the presence of great numbers of people to be successful. Once again, Tranquillity Park was invoked as an example of the dangers of allowing built elements into a park. Thus, the race was not to the swift; the meek, represented by Team Hou, inherited the earth.

Team Hou's design won less for what it did than for what it avoided. The first phase was exquisitely rendered in pencil, and its architectural elements were minimal and unmemorable. Its strengths were sensitive presentation and unchallenging content. The final design was the only one to retain the ungainly Preston Avenue Bridge. It also confronted

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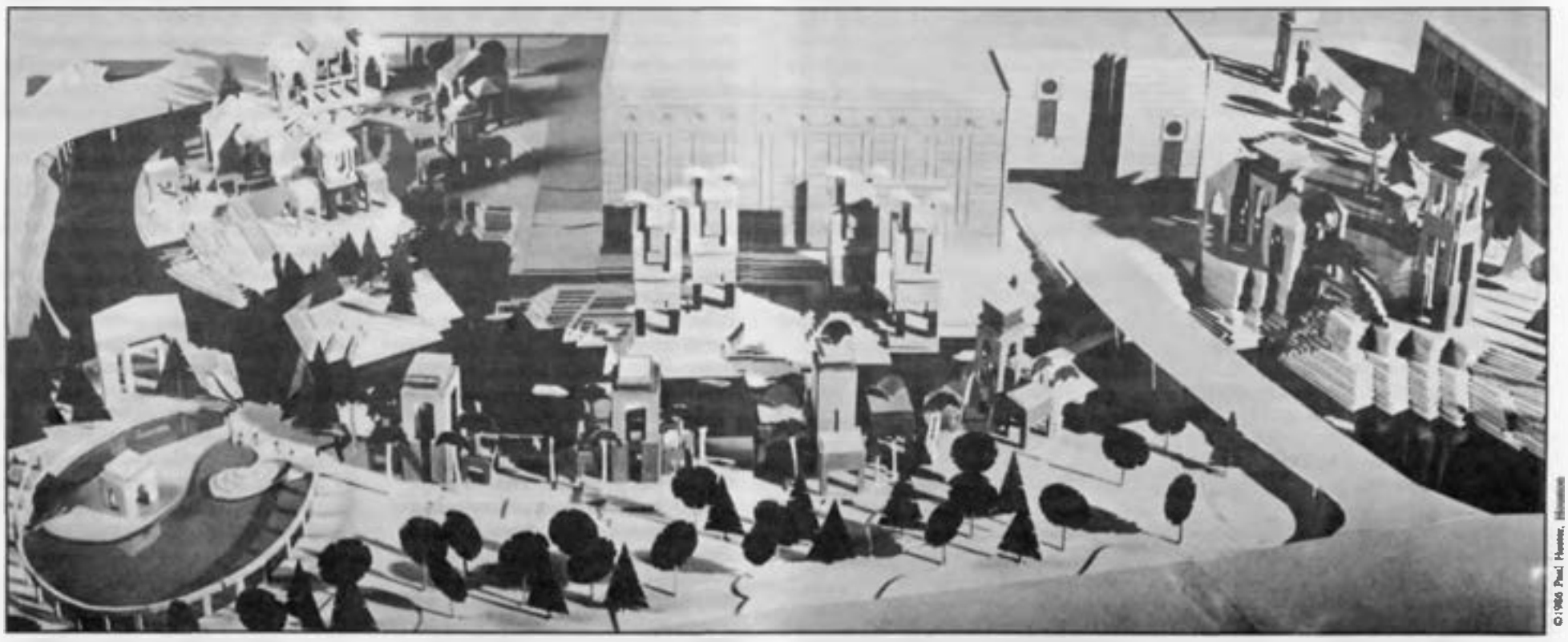

Third place entry, Charles Tapley Associates and Charles W. Moore, Architect, architects, with Drexel Turner, model, first phase

Remember Houston

Stephen Fox

Texas Heroes Monument, Galveston, 1900, Louis Amateis, sculptor, J.F. Manning and Co

Houston has not proved fertile ground for monuments. Remembering – the activity that monuments stimulate – is apparently too unprofitable to occasion much enthusiasm locally for their erection. There are other problems too: a limited conception of what merits recollection and, most critically, the lack of any conventional forms of conduct for experiencing those monuments that have been erected. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that naming parks, streets, and buildings containing public institutions after outstanding citizens or notable events has come to seem a more efficient means of commemoration than "useless" monuments.[1]

To some extent these shortcomings stem from the fact that only twice in Houston's history have there been concerted efforts to make monuments. Both episodes occurred during the first half of the 20th century: the Civic Art movement of the Progressive Era, and the Public Art movement of the New Deal. Both allied artistic production with commemoration, resulting in styles of representation that are easily recognizable. Both also survived as styles of representation in Houston well beyond what is usually considered their historical terms. Yet, with few exceptions, the monuments that were built exist in that peculiar state of suspended animation that seems to pervade everything in Houston connected with the past. By and large these artifacts lack resonance. Disconnected from the life around them, they become – perversely – tokens of the collective amnesia that alienates Houstonians from their city, and keeps them from feeling themselves part of a community.

The earliest monuments in Texas tended to be monuments first, and works of art by courtesy. Not inappropriately, graveyard art accurately describes the style of representation with which these monuments acquired form. The first public monument that can be accounted for in Harris County is the obelisk erected in 1881 above the grave of Benjamin Rice Brigham (one of the two Texans killed during the Battle of San Jacinto) at the battle site. Were it not for patriotic inscriptions and a listing of other Texas victims of the battle, the Brigham Monument (designed and constructed by the Galveston marble cutting firm of A. Allen and Company) would be indistinguishable from funeral monuments typical of late 19th-century American cemeteries. The first public monument erected in Houston, the Dick Dowling statue (1905, originally installed at Market Square, now located in Hermann Park), was the work of a San Antonio stone contractor, Frank C. Teich, whose stock-in-trade was graveyard memorials. This field of specialization apparently was considered sufficient qualification, for Teich exercised a virtual monopoly on the production of public monuments in Texas at the beginning of the 20th century.

Rather than commission such pedestrian work, the trustees of Henry Rosenberg's estate engaged the Italian-born and trained Washington, D.C. sculptor, Louis Amateis, to execute the first monumental work of Civic Art erected in Texas, the Texas Heroes Monument at Broadway and Rosenberg in Galveston (1896-1900). In the American Renaissance tradition, Amateis combined heroic bronze figures and bronze relief tablets depicting Texas historical scenes in a classically detailed architectural composition. The Texas Heroes Monument remains the pre-eminent work of Civic Art in the state, and it immediately inspired Houstonians, just then beginning to assess critically the quality of the local environment, to look beyond Frank Teich.

It was also to Louis Amateis that the Houston chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy turned to produce Houston's initial work of Civic Art, *The Spirit of the Confederacy* (1906-1908). *The Spirit*, a mawkishly conceived but competently executed allegorical piece, was set up in Sam Houston Park rather than at the intersection of the two widest streets in town as was done with the Texas Heroes Monument. Thus it has always been geographically remote, and today it is most often seen at a distance from outbound cars on Lamar Avenue.

In contrast, Houston's most recognizable public monument is centrally located and highly visible: the bronze equestrian statue of Sam Houston, set up at the entrance to Hermann Park in 1925 and modeled by the Italian-born and trained Houston sculptor, Enrico F. Cerracchio. The Sam Houston Monument successfully fulfills conventional expectations about the role of monuments. Its visibility and accessibility are important factors, as is its specificity. It is a monument to a man (Sam Houston), an event (the Texas victory at San Jacinto toward which, it is said, the figure's extended arm is pointed), and a place and its history (the City of Houston, named for Sam Houston and designated under his aegis provisional capital of the Republic of Texas). The monument connects viewers to a series of experiences that account for the existence of the city.

Cerracchio's Sam Houston was the major work of Civic Art erected during the 1920s. It represented a tendency current in Houston during the '20s to memorialize individuals with art monuments, although most of these were privately commissioned. An early example was the bronze relief plaque of James L. Autry that Will C. Hogg had the Italian-born and trained sculptor, Pompeo Coppini, execute in 1921 for installation at The Autry House, 6265 Main Street. The estate of the developer Henry F. MacGregor retained the New York sculptor Gutzon Borglum to model a bronze relief of a female figure set on a stone backing as part of a fountain constructed at Peggy's Park on Almeda Road (1927) in honor of Peggy Stevens MacGregor, MacGregor's widow. (The sculpture, minus the fountain, now sits opposite Peggy's Point Park at Richmond and Main.) Grandest of all was the heroically scaled, seated bronze figure of William M. Rice as The Founder, the work of the English-born and trained New York sculptor John Angel, which was installed on the Rice Institute campus in 1930. The standard of artistic production that these monuments represented was consistently high. But only the Sam Houston and Founder's monuments can be considered major works; and they were all that Houstonians managed to erect during the great boom of the 1920s.

At the end of the 1920s there was a resurgence of interest in Texas historical themes that continued through the 1930s. The architect Kenneth Franzheim retained a New York decorative painter, Vincent Maragliatti, to produce eight murals depicting Texas historical scenes in the lobby of the Gulf Building (1929), designed by Franzheim and Alfred C. Finn. Twice more during the 1930s out-of-town artists were commissioned by corporate clients to execute public murals representing Texas historical scenes: John A. McQuarrie of San Francisco for the Southern Pacific Lines at the now-demolished Grand Central Station (1934), and Eugene Montgomery of Chicago for Sears, Roebuck and Company's new store at Main Street and Wheeler Avenue (1939). Of far less consequence was the insignificant Pioneer's Memorial Shaft, erected in Hermann Park in 1936 to commemorate the centennial of Houston – a reversion to the graveyard standard of earlier years.

By the middle 1930s, however, such private works of public art began to be amplified by the unprecedented expansion of the U.S. government into the field of art patronage. Both sculptors and painters, almost all of them Texans and many of them Houstonians, were retained between 1934 and 1941 to produce monumental works of art in public buildings. The themes represented included the by-now-familiar lineup of personages and events connected with the history of the Republic of Texas, as well as local historical events and vignettes of contemporary life, the so-called American Scene. Painting and sculpture remained figural (rather than abstract) in style and epic in character. But in place of the academic conventions of Civic Art classicism, a new, more aggressive realism was preferred. This "regional" style exchanged the nymphs and muses of the academy for new, down-to-earth idealizations: the common man and the common woman, who, moreover, were not always Caucasian.

Public art patronage was dispensed through several programs. The best-known was the Public Works Art Project of the Civil Works Administration, which commissioned artists to embellish extant public buildings. The Section of Fine Arts of the Public Buildings Administration commissioned artists to provide work for new federal government buildings. New construction projects funded by the Public Works Administration provided for the inclusion of commissioned art work.

In the first category, the best-known local art works were the murals painted in 1935 in the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library by three Houston artists, Emma Richardson Cherry, Angela McDonnell, and Ruth Pershing Uhler. Uhler's immortal *The First Subscription Committee, 1854*, at the first-floor landing of the main stair, is a resourceful adjustment to an awkward site (a wall containing a window). The theme also was unusual for its specificity: an event pertaining to the history of the public library that occurred in a house which originally occupied the site of the library building. In the second category, the young Houston sculptor, William M. McVey, executed two relief panels in the new Federal Office Building at Fannin and Franklin (1941), and the two most celebrated young artists in Texas, Jerry Bywaters and Alexandre Hogue of Dallas, painted two murals each on the theme of the Houston Ship Channel for the now-demolished Parcel Post Annex Building (1941). In the third category, the architect Joseph Finger retained Daniel MacMorris, a Kansas City decorative painter, to execute the heavy-handed plaster reliefs in the foyer of the new City Hall (1940). Finger also retained the Beaumont sculptor Herring Coe, assisted by Raoul Josset, to produce the much more satisfying relief panels that ring the exterior of the City Hall.[2]

The single greatest monument erected in Texas also was a beneficiary of PWA financing, the 570-foot-high San Jacinto Monument (1935-1938), designed by Alfred C. Finn. Built to commemorate the centennial of Texas's independence, the monument consists of an obelisk crowned by a three-dimensional star, centered above a base containing a museum, and surrounded by broad, raised terraces. A 1,750-foot-long reflecting basin provides a dramatic horizontal counterpoint to the shaft's vertical thrust. William M. McVey was responsible for executing the crowning star, the bronze entrance doors, and the band of reliefs that encircles the base of the shaft.

Yet its size, material splendor, and considerable formal presence notwithstanding, the San Jacinto Monument shares in the condition of

...ony, architect — *San Jacinto Monument, 1938, Alfred C. Finn, architect, William M. McVey, sculptor*

marginality that afflicts other Houston monuments. In part it is because the monument is located in an industrial corridor along the Houston Ship Channel rather than in the center of Houston. But its extreme hieratic demeanor seems misplaced for other than geographical reasons. In its formal and rhetorical over-determination, the San Jacinto Monument implies a ritualized conduct of public life so at variance with actual practices that it is apt to be experienced as merely a quaint, if not campy, period piece. (In this regard, it is not unlike its Dallas counterpart, the Texas Hall of State at the Texas Centennial Exposition.) In its enormity, the San Jacinto Monument symbolizes the predicament of public monuments in Houston: even though executed at large scale, it has no relationship to public life. It is a curiosity. Despite its visibility from the Ship Channel and Interstate 10, the San Jacinto Monument has never impressed itself on public consciousness like the Statue of Liberty, for instance, or the archetypal Texas monument, the Alamo.[3]

The representational style embodied in New Deal art continued to be employed in Houston for over a decade after the termination of public relief programs in 1941. During the 1940s and 1950s patronage for monumental art once again reverted to private benefaction. Responsible for the greatest number of significant commissions was the architect Kenneth Franzheim, who time and again managed to persuade his clients to include sculpture and murals in new architectural projects. However, these began to shade into the more generalized realm of public art: works of art displayed in public places but not intended to serve any commemorative purpose.

The monumentality of Octavio Medellín's relief panel at Franzheim's Police Administration, Jail and Municipal Courts Building (1952), Peter Hurd's vast, American Scene genre piece *The Future Belongs to Those Who Prepare For It* (1952) at Franzheim's Prudential Building, 1100 Holcombe Boulevard, and, finest of all, Rufino Tamayo's *América* (1956) in the banking hall of Franzheim's Bank of the Southwest Building is diffuse. The first two were perhaps intended to be didactic; the third was sufficiently abstract and allegorical that Tamayo's subject was not immediately discernible. This was fortuitous, for his theme – the mixture of the races inhabiting the American continent – quite likely would have elicited an excited response in race-conscious Houston of the 1950s.

Ironically, the bank did attract national attention when, for fear of community reaction, it rejected a colossal, bare-breasted female figure symbolizing Texas "rising out of struggle and war" that was part of a larger relief by William Zorach, *The New State of Texas*, intended for the main entrance bay on Travis.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that, with the exception of the Tamayo, the other Franzheim-related works were conservative. This was true also of Edward Z. Galea's relief panel on the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company Building at Travis and Elgin (1951), William McVey's relief panel on the Holland Lodge at 4911 Montrose Boulevard (1954), and even John Biggers's mural, *The Negro Woman in American Life and Education*, at the Blue Triangle YWCA at 3005 McGowan Avenue (1953).

The transition from an epic, figurative, thematically explicit style of art to one that was internalized, non-figurative, and allusive rather than specific resulted in the virtual absence of attempts to erect public monuments in the 1960s, although a piece such as Jim Love's *Area Code* (1962), displayed in the lobby of the Alley Theater, demonstrates that it was possible to secure modernist works incorporating culturally resonant imagery suitable for public installation. When large-scale works of public art began to be installed again in the 1970s they were rarely intended to serve monumental purposes. Most lacked an iconographic program and displayed little interest in inspiring civic virtue or embodying collective memory. Ironically for a city with such a fitful tradition of public art, the quality of the pieces installed was exceptionally high. Yet when these art works were pressed into service as monuments, it was almost always as monuments by implication, whether as a recollection of traditional forms (Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk*, 1966, dedicated to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.), or in the use of indigenous materials (Michael Heizer's *45°, 90°, 180°*, 1984, at Rice University), or simply by the title (Mac Whitney's *Houston*, 1983, at Stude Park).

Several provocative attempts have been made to formulate iconographic styles capable of broader public communication. Ironic archaism and an ingenious synthesis of the values, sources of wealth, and geographical and climatological extremes of Houston inspired Christo's stunning, but unexecuted, *Houston Mastaba* (1974), which was to have been

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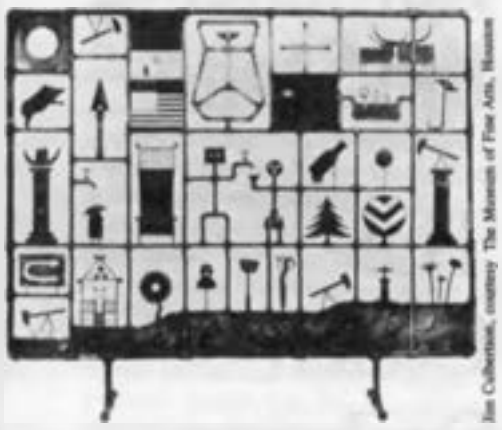
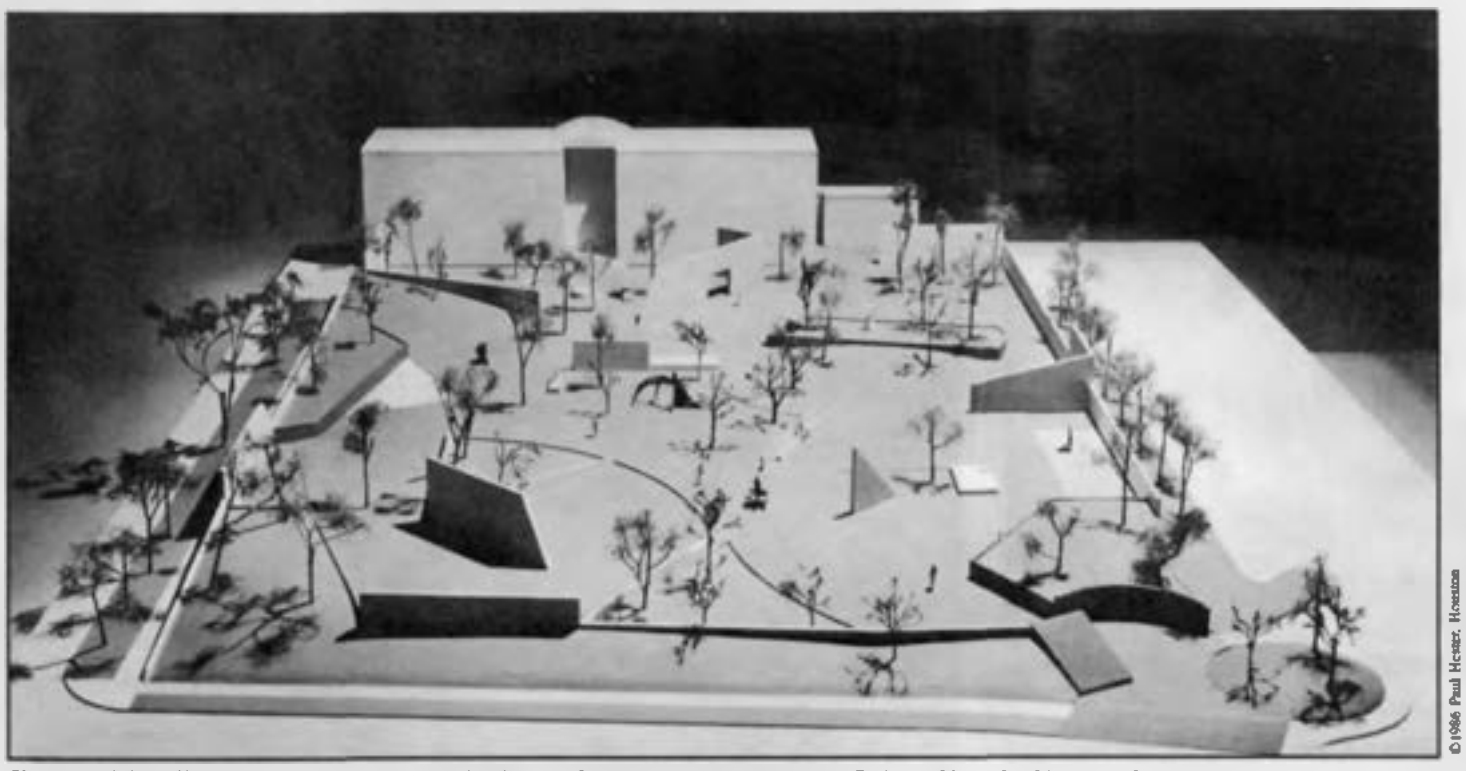
Houston Ship Channel, *Parcel Post Annex Building, 1941, Alexandre Hogue, painter*



Area Code, *1962, Jim Love (b. 1927), sculptor. Steel, cast iron, and lead, 86"x 102"x24", (courtesy of Alley Theatre, gift of the Brown Foundation, Houston, Texas)*

The First Subscription Committee, 1854, *Julia Ideson Building, Houston Public Library, 1935, Ruth Pershing Uhler, painter*



Top: *Model, Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, Isamu Noguchi.* Below: *View looking north*

Romancing the Stone

The Cullen Sculpture Garden by Isamu Noguchi

Andrew Bartle

The people of Houston have cause to celebrate a recent embellishment. The city's most elegant institution, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has acquired a new bauble, a work of cautious yet romantic sensibility in the form of an outdoor public sculpture garden designed by Isamu Noguchi. The Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, built at a cost of $3.2 million, is a maze of concrete and stone-clad walls, earth mounds, paving, and trees sited across from the museum at the corner of Bissonnet and Montrose on an acre of park land owned by the City of Houston. At present, it is the repository for 18 pieces of sculpture by 12 artists, two of which are from the late 19th century, the remainder from the 20th; eventually the garden may accommodate as many as 30 pieces. Completed in April, it has already been the scene of concerts, receptions, and other events and is open daily between 9 AM and 10 PM. One hesitates to say that the project is really finished, for besides sculpture yet to be added, the plant materials will require time to mature. As the trees fill out and the proportion of sunlight to shadow becomes more even, the problem of excessive glare will fade and the extravagant wealth of vegetation will give the city a shady corner of not a little interest.

Isamu Noguchi, a remarkable and prolific artist now 81 years of age, is known primarily as a sculptor, although he has designed a number of other gardens, stage sets, furniture, and industrial objects as well as this year's American Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Noguchi began his career as an assistant to Gutzon Borglum in the carving of Mount Rushmore and subsequently worked in the studio of Constantin Brancusi. He has been producing designs using landscape elements for more than 50 years, the most recent of which is a 32-acre bayfront park planned for Miami. The choice of Noguchi for the museum's sculpture garden is credited to Alice Pratt Brown who, after a minor epiphany at the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden, which Noguchi designed for the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (1960-1965), proposed that he be retained. Noguchi began the Houston project in 1978, working as the design progressed with the architect Shoji Sadao,

Preliminary garden study for The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1954, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, architect

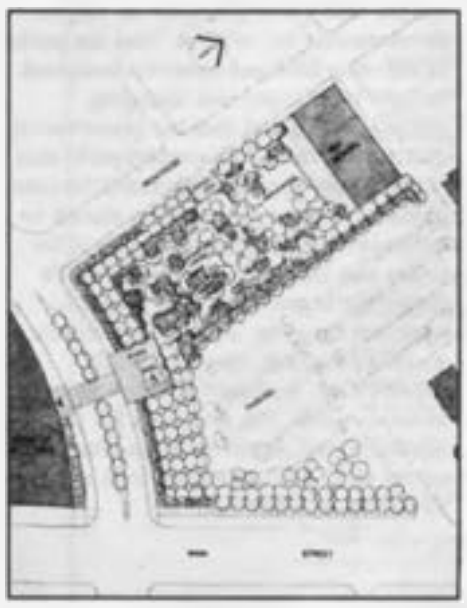
a longtime associate who, like Noguchi, had also collaborated on projects with Buckminster Fuller.

The idea of a sculpture garden for the museum can be traced back at least 30 years to a rather elegant proposal devised for the south lawn in 1958 by David Haid in the office of Mies van der Rohe, architect of Cullinan Hall (1958) and the Brown Pavilion (1972), the two principal additions to the original neo-classical building by William Ward Watkin (1924). Haid's scheme, offered as an alternative to a more domestic landscaping plan prepared by Thomas Church under the auspices of the Houston Garden Club, would have paved over much of the truncated triangle south of the museum with a fan-like grid to accommodate the display of sculpture. This pristine setting, penetrated only by trees already on the grounds, was bounded at one end by an arcing, ornamental pool and at the other by a broad platform ascending to the museum. This conception still seems commendable for the activity it would have imparted to an honorific space, unceremoniously subordinated by the relocation of the museum's principal entry to the north with the completion of Cullinan Hall. It also might have established a semblance of urbanity on a comparatively precious and visible piece of Houston real estate, facing onto the traffic ellipse at the confluence of Main Street and Montrose Boulevard, opposite the entrance to Hermann Park.

A more recent project that merits mention

were three schemes prepared in the 1970s by the landscape architects M. Paul Friedberg and Partners of New York for a site that included the area finally set aside for the Cullen Sculpture Garden. As matter of wishful thinking, Friedberg's schemes encompassed not only the rectangular plot that now forms the sculpture garden, but also a significant if narrow strip of land excerpted from a parking lot belonging to the First Presbyterian Church and extending east to Main Street, thus enabling the scheme to track the full expanse of the Mies van der Rohe front of the museum. Although the museum initiated negotiations to obtain the parking lot in its entirety, the transaction was ultimately deemed too costly and abandoned. With it, the prospect of a cohesively landscaped edge along Bissonnet from Montrose to Main was deferred, perhaps indefinitely, withholding the amenity of a balanced and unified street, trees on one side and the museum on the other. Two of Friedberg's schemes also proposed extending the area of the garden to include the south half of the block now occupied by the Glassell School of the museum – an augmentation that would have extended its influence along Montrose while securing a somewhat ampler site overall. Viewed in this light, the limited purview accorded Noguchi's completed project may have discouraged any concerted effort to make the design less insular and more responsive to the urban possibilities of its context.

Noguchi's initial idea, inspired by a visit to Houston during a flood, was to make the garden an island. This charming and probably impractical scheme was rejected, as was a subsequent and related proposal for a sunken garden. The notion of the garden as a walled enclosure followed, and may have corresponded more nearly to the museum's prior expectations, which were reportedly imbued by a fondness among members of its board of trustees for the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York by Philip Johnson (1953). The walled scheme was modified both as a matter of course in design development and in response to community reaction. The sculptor wished to enlarge the site as much as possible, and a 28 percent expansion was accomplished through various negotiations with the City of Houston and the First Presbyterian Church to eliminate the two adjacent minor streets, thereby enabling the garden to connect to the Glassell School and to gain an entrance almost aligned with the main door of the museum across Bissonnet. The design was presented to the client in a series of models and at a crucial point was exhibited publicly. This latter display, and reaction to it by the Museum Area Municipal Association among others, led to a regrettable alteration in the design in which the walled enclosure became fragmented and replaced at points by bermed outcroppings, an erosion that tended to make the scheme leaky and more diffuse without effecting any fundamental change in its relation to its surroundings. As is often the case, this community intervention was apparently motivated more by a reaction to the aesthetics of the proposal than the defense of any rational set of design criteria calculated to serve the civic good. The museum's indulgence in this instance was matched by its willingness to permit Noguchi full artistic license, particularly with respect to adjustments on site and expenditures for additional materials, plant and mineral.



Site plan, sculpture garden for The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, M. Paul Friedberg and Partners, architects

The process by which Noguchi realizes projects of this kind runs contrary to conventional building practice and requires a great deal of on-site manipulation, modification, and even reconstruction. Here delicate changes of levels and contours are central to the desired effect of eye-level perceptions and to the cumulative visual experience of the visitor. Because the work is premised on these and the most immediate tactile sensations, as well as the conceptual appreciation of abstraction, the hands-on adjustments dictated by Noguchi's well-practiced eye become a primary expression of his sensibility, the authentication of a model, and construction drawings that are more in the nature of final notes than a finished design.

This "touchy-feely" creative process is part of the inheritance of the romantic tradition that elevates sensibility above reason. Noguchi's garden is experienced through a series of episodic perceptions within a continuous flowing, "liquid" space. This type of landscape design belongs to a tradition that begins in 18th-century England, the origin of which was much influenced by artistic ideas of the Orient. The great gardens of that period in England out-perform nature in the dramatic composition of natural elements, directing enormous effort and expense at intensifying the landscape to approximate the magic of untouched nature. Noguchi's garden, however, more closely resembles French urban interpretations of English gardens at a diminutive scale. Parc Monceau, for example, displays a similar density of events and tectonic modulation in the form of ruins, although its classical elements convey a familiarity absent in Noguchi's work.

What draws Noguchi to this romantic garden tradition is an affinity for the direct, (seemingly) unmediated experience of natural form. A related idea informs surrealism, another ancestral spirit of this work. Among the surrealist devices employed by Noguchi are radical juxtapositions that enforce a sense of dislocation and the presence of images and themes intended to penetrate directly into the subconscious. The English garden and surrealism share an interest in unmediated experience: one of nature, the other of the self. The surrealist attempts to recreate the fragmentation of experience analogous to urban life, while in romantic gardens the evocative use of ruins suggests the all-powerful process of time. Both are sources for the topographic disjunctions and incomplete, disconnected structures that populate Noguchi's garden. A final source of influence appears to be an interest in primitive art, in the potent fascination that mythic artifacts and structures of lost civilizations exert as vehicles for the unmediated experience of form.

Model, Riverside Park Playground, New York, 1960-1965, Isamu Noguchi (Photo courtesy The Isamu Noguchi Foundation)

Billy Rose Sculpture Garden, Jerusalem, 1960-1965, Isamu Noguchi (Photo courtesy The Isamu Noguchi Foundation)

If one looks for a body of work to stand for a 20th-century attitude in garden design, these three sources are virtually always present. From Parque Guell in Barcelona by Antonf Gaudf, to Le Corbusier's Trench of Consideration at Chandigarh, to Antoine Grumbach's competition entry for La Villette, one consistently observes elements of spatial continuity, juxtaposition, a sense of dislocation, and also an evocation or intimation of mythic form. The primary identifying feature of most modernist gardens is the transformation of the landscape into something that strongly contrasts with the existing natural features. This breaks with the tradition of European garden history, which exploited the capability of existing landscape features (as manifested, for example, in Italian Renaissance gardens, where hillsides and streams became terraces and cascades; and in French gardens, where vistas were delineated to create images of control over large flat plains).

The Cullen Sculpture Garden adheres to the modernist tradition in its self-conscious manipulation of the ground plane to isolate the work from its immediate surroundings rather than a reinforcement of existing positive features. Noguchi's first published landscape designs, essayed more than 50 years ago, are themselves precocious experiments in earth art, a field more recently amplified by the work of Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer. *Play Mountain* and *Monument to the Plow*, both of 1933, are significant innovations that constitute distinctly self-conscious manipulations of landscape forms, influenced by prehistoric landscape forms, as is also the case with another work of considerable charm, *Sculpture to Be Seen From Mars* (1947). A decidedly surrealist tinge is evident in projects for the Jefferson Memorial Park, St. Louis (1945, with Edward Durell Stone) and the United Nations Playground, New York (1952). Subsequent commissions for corporations such as the Chase Manhattan Bank and IBM produced a body of work that is much more Oriental in feeling and less relevant to the Cullen Sculpture Garden. In the 1960s Noguchi returned to a more "chthonic" style with the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden in Jerusalem and the Levy Playground proposal for Riverside Park, done with Louis I. Kahn (1961-1964). These are mature and powerful works that are at once extremely fragmented but unified, strongly contrasting with existing contexts, but also respectful of them.

The Cullen Sculpture Garden is a more complex and tightly wound object, yet softer and more delicate in feeling. It poses an internal tension between two divergent formal strategies: the garden as a sacred precinct protected by a wall and the garden as a lyrical, flowing, exaggerated natural landscape. The work can be viewed summarily as the result of an overlapping of these two points of departure and, indeed, their resolution at the external edge is active and agitated. It is the initial perception of the perimeter walls that forces visitors to suspend conventional expectations of architectural production and consider the prospect as a ruin. The whirling spatial currents of the interior induce the rise and fall, retreat and advance, of the exterior walls, placing the project apart from the public realm. This ruined countenance suggests a certain temporal notation and the poignant, irresistable power of nature. Thus conflicting formal strategies are held together by the introduction of the illusion of time.

The body of the garden is a more abstracted extrapolation of this approach. Incomplete and interrupted geometries, mammoth fragments of walls (some supported by foundations 27 feet below grade), and raw building materials contribute to a sense that this place had some earlier function, now mysterious, that although lost, inspires awe for both the place and its artifacts. This arch-romantic sensibility is made presentable by the immaculate condition of the exposed construction. The glossy finishes prevent any chance of shock or surprise. Perhaps it is only through this degree of abstraction and the tremendous effort to rationalize the image of the construction that such a compositional method and sensibility could survive.

The internal organization is calculated to give a sense of spatial and psychological dislocation within its diminutive compass. A reassuring re-orientation occurs at the approximate center of the space so that visitors can gauge the area to be traversed, though conscious of the complexity and the probability of surprise. The passages through the space offer no hierarchical sequence; rather they appear as a series of episodes often contrived to produce perceptual distortion and ambiguities of scale. Diagonal walls and bent, warped, and curved surfaces suggest movement analogous to the actual procession of visitors. The emphasis on virtual and actual movement generates a sense of spatial continuity that is flowing and (to borrow a word from Robert Slutzsky) "aqueous." This liquid, feminine impression is interrupted and violated by vigorous upright projections, most dramatically at a point near the center of the geographic whole, that is perceived shortly after entering from Bissonnet. An aggressive, lunging granite monolith rises to pierce the virtual flow in a ritual image of fertilization that gives the garden life. Noguchi insisted that this particular element be changed from its original incarnation in concrete to the more precious granite after a visit to the site. The non-specific, mythic reference of this form is characteristic of late modernism: a cross-cultural, but paradoxically private, expression intended to provide a direct and unmediated experience of Form authorized by an affinity to ante-deluvian artifacts occurring in a self-consciously discrete and complete "world" created by the artist.

(Continued on page 21)

Fields of Play: Sport and Public Spaces

Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

John B. Jackson

The 19th-century tradition of picturesque, landscaped public spaces lingers in many American cities. The broad, tree-lined boulevard or parkway, the landscaped cemetery, and the landscaped residential neighborhood are still elements in the older urban environment, and the city park in the style of Olmsted and Cleveland, though often mutilated and abused, is still a source of civic pride.

The original purpose of these and similar public spaces was clear: they were to add to the monumental dignity of the city by providing areas of designed natural beauty. The park was not for games and play. It was where people came together, as in a family garden, to share the experience of nature and confirm their sense of community. Those sports favored by the middle class – tennis, badminton, croquet, archery, and their derivatives, golf and polo – were confined to the private lawn or the country club. The landscaped park had a more formal, more contemplative quality. The park, however, was soon discovered by all ranks in society. A movement known as the Sanitary Awakening prompted the inhabitants of the crowded sections of town to seek the fresh air, the sunlight, and the quiet of the park, and another reform movement in the 1880s introduced the organized children's playground.

Conservative elements strongly resisted any change in the idyllic quality of the landscaped park, particularly the creation of athletic facilities, but the pressures of a growing population eventually transformed it into a place for patriotic and ethnic celebrations, for concerts and nature studies, and even for boating and swimming. What had originally been a communal work of art, an environment designed to encourage contact with nature, threatened to become a socio-therapeutic resource, a recreation area.

The park was temporarily rescued, thanks to an unforeseen development: the emergence in the industrial towns of a new concept of sport and recreation. A large number of young wage earners, recently arrived from the country or from overseas, strangers to city life and to one another, found themselves without any means of healthy and inexpensive diversion. They lived in a part of the city without gardens and fields – or parks; all they could turn to was the street and the vacant lot. Their plight was first recognized by certain churches and charitable organizations, notably the YMCA, and though their initial purpose was evangelical, they soon discovered that the best way of attracting young workers was to offer them some form of recreation.

But that recreation had to be adjusted to the limitations of the persons involved. The average industrial worker had little leisure time, little money, and no claim on any space. He had had no experience of lawn sports with their ethical restraints and their soft-peddling of competition. On the other hand, he was eager for companionship, eager to excel and get ahead in the world, and he had been inculcated with disciplined work habits. The YMCA and the churches accordingly devised a number of sports – basketball, volleyball, Ping-Pong, swimming (baseball was already popular) – which emphasized team play, strict rules, the keeping of scores and time, and only the normal amount of dexterity. These sports resembled as little as possible the tradition-laden sports of the middle and upper classes. And they differed in their use of space: the typical lawn sport, along with hunting and fishing, presupposed a familiarity with the immediate natural environment and a trained adjustment to its unpredictability. Chance was a large element in these sports, which one might describe as territorial: closely related to a well-known environment and to its inhabitants insofar as they were fellow players. But blue-collar sports rejected unpredictability. Competition between teams or individuals could only be fair when both sides were equal, and equality was best established by hard and fast rules, similar equipment and environment, the dimensions of which were guaranteed by established rules. As a result, the new sports created their own artificial, standardized environments: the regulation court, the regulation pool, the regulation field. The unstructured landscape, especially that of the park, was to be avoided.

The spread of these and other related invented sports and games across the country in a matter of a few decades is a chapter in our history familiar to us all. But it never ceases to invite speculation: how a scattering of well-intentioned charitable enterprises, without money or prestige, could eventually produce an attitude toward sport and recreation that gained the widest popularity. Those original games – basketball, volleyball, baseball – were soon augmented by football, hockey, and, lately, even tennis, and their emphasis on competition and technical prowess was taken over in forms of recreation based on mobility: stock-car racing, motorcycle racing, track, and surfing, and to a degree, hang gliding. As sports for young people, many of them have become part of school and college programs with professional ramifications, and even the less structured sports of mobility have their nationally recognized rules and their regional and national meetings and competitions. It is tempting to interpret their rise, at least in part, to the shift in the source of values and support from the house and the neighborhood to the school and place of work – and ultimately to the world of public recognition. The spectacle of countless young players (and drivers and riders) dedicating much of their leisure time to training and maintenance, to the development of physical and mechanical expertise, and their widespread fascination with scores, ratings, and records are in themselves traits which separate them from domestic or community forms of recreation and suggest the necessity for giving each of them a space of its own.

That, in fact, is what our cities are doing: recognizing that there are at least two distinct forms of recreation: one based on local or territorial sociability and ruled by custom and neighborhood standards, the other based on what might be called sodality: a brotherhood of persons from widely separated origins united by their devotion to a particular sport or philosophy. Melvin Webber's proposal for "community without propinquity" (generally decried as elitist) is in fact an everyday reality in the world of blue-collar recreation. As in all sodalities, what keeps these fraternities of buffs together is reliance on insignia or uniforms, on a special vocabulary, a special press, and an occasional mass meeting. They make no claim on a permanent territory of their own, merely the occasional use of a public space – preferably one which is isolated, open, and empty: an engineered landscape which conveys no message, no surprises, no emotion, but which serves its purpose well.

Those spaces which we now call sport complexes when they are planned and built in cities (of which the Astrodome is a familiar example), but which all too often are inserted in our parks, and residential and wilderness areas, must in the future be kept separate from the small surviving communities. The resurgence of cruising over the last few years has made it clear that certain harmless and very popular forms of mobile recreation can damage a whole neighborhood. Now that our cities are beginning to see the distinction between the two forms, we are planning streets, roads, and public spaces solely for cruising, and even parks for adolescent motorsports. It is not a matter of exiling or isolating sports of mobility and sodality. It is a matter of providing them with appropriate spaces and, at the same time, reserving and rehabilitating spaces within the small community and spaces for pedestrian pleasure.

This brings us back to the park. Michael Laurie, of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, has what seems to me the best prescription for its future development: he believes "that the parks of our cities need and deserve a fresh look in light of changed and changing circumstances, and that the preservation of 19th- and early 20th-century parks may not be related appropriately to this broader picture.... Doors and options should be left open so that the American city of the future can include open spaces which contribute to some defined purpose, whatever it may be: air quality, festivals, social interaction, sports, wildlife conservation, food production, whatever. In other words, the emphasis [in park rehabilitation] should be on the future, not on the past, and concerned with new directions in urban life."■

Citesurvey

Rubenstein Group Building

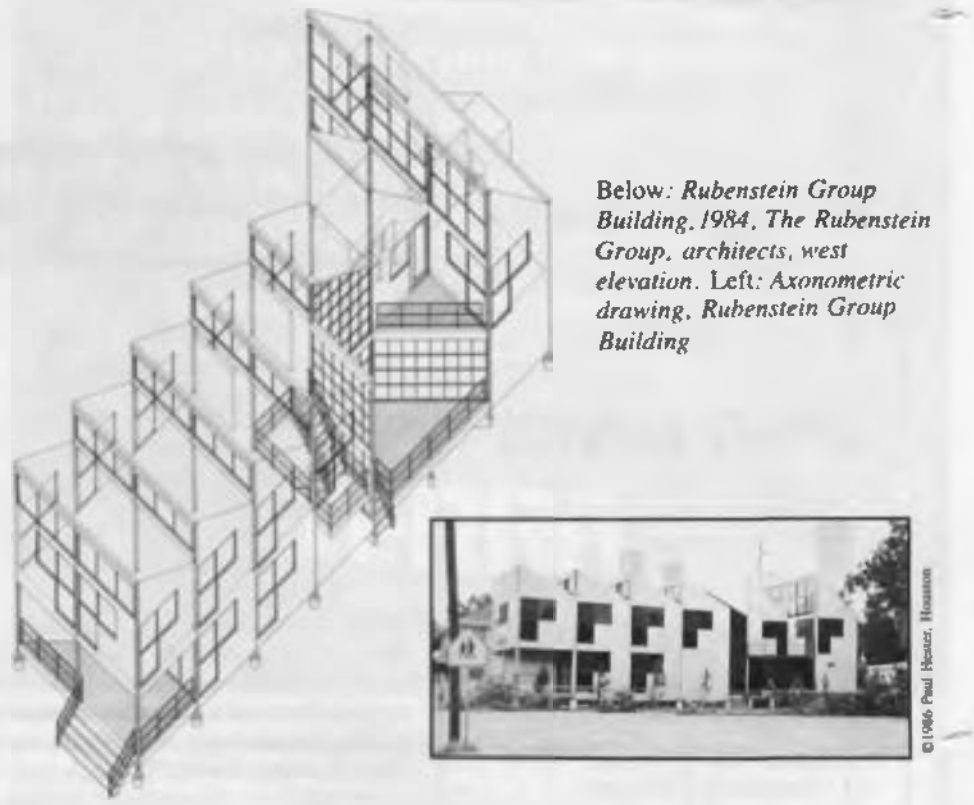
Douglas Sprunt

The Sabine neighborhood, in Houston's Sixth Ward, sits high on the prairie along the north bank of Buffalo Bayou, just west of downtown. It is composed of raised builder's cottages from the turn of the century, and is now occupied by a largely Hispanic population. Because it has been isolated by expressways and perimeter development, the Sabine has escaped the Houston compulsion to raze and redevelop.

Within this neighborhood, at 2009 Lubbock Street, lies the Rubenstein Group Building, completed in December 1984. This small structure was conceived by Larry Rubenstein as an office building built of inexpensive materials that would "blend into the neighborhood." Intrigued by corrugated steel buildings (although disappointed by their detail), Rubenstein felt that the industrial connotation and utility of corrugated steel were particularly appropriate for an office building. The material is also quite literally contextual, considering its endemic use in transitional areas in Houston, such as the Sabine.

The Rubenstein Group Building might best be described as a factory, composed of two-storied shed units filed front-to-back in a repetitive configuration that is emphasized by panels of corrugated steel, revealed structural posts, and regular window treatment. At the same time the building appears to be a saw-toothed shotgun house raised up on concrete bell piers, stepping down to meet Lubbock Street with a front porch. In fact, it subsumes the trace of a pre-existing shotgun house (since moved and remodeled). As a combination of building types, the Rubenstein Group offices suggest multiple images: late-night grindings in the production area, and viewing St. Joseph's Church's annual Novena of Las Posadas procession from the front stoop.

Internally, the shotgun house's spatial organization is all but lost to the discipline of a 12-foot modular, post-and-beam structural system, two bays in width and seven bays in length. Modules are subtracted towards the rear on the west elevation to accommodate recessed deck areas on both floors, and are added to the rear on the east elevation to extend the second-floor office and enclose a carport below. Workspace and offices are defined within the module system and partitioned along the center length of the building by bookcase-door-portal units and standing air-conditioning ducts that punch up from beneath the floors. An interior staircase, backlit by a window wall alongside the deck, climbs from the reception area to a second-floor corridor which connects the production area with the executive offices and leads to an attached rear stairway, recalling the traditional shotgun-house hallway. Standard window units are arranged to form right angles at every bay, providing floor lighting and a view of both the neighborhood and downtown Houston. They also are banded across the street elevation of the shed roofs, admitting north light into the second-floor workspaces and offices. All windows are operable, allowing cross-ventilation. Although the strictness of the module system, compounded by the repetition of the roof-line and the regular window treatment, becomes a bit oppressive in spaces confined to one module (this is relieved somewhat by the diagonal break of the shed roof at the second floor and by the diagonal break in plan at the first floor), it is quite engaging in spaces composed of more than two modules, particularly in the expansive production area where clerestory windows and sloping roofs dramatically open the space to the north.



Below: *Rubenstein Group Building, 1984, The Rubenstein Group, architects, west elevation.* Left: *Axonometric drawing, Rubenstein Group Building*

The building is beautifully constructed. Roger Deatherage, a local furniture craftsman, acted as structural supervisor and directed the dovetailed and mortised joinery of the structure, establishing a precedent for subsequent workmanship that is evident throughout the entire construction (4- by 4-inch posts are finished with lag-bolted 2- by 4-inch posts that bracket the beam connections and create cruciform columns; corrugated steel hardware and flashing were designed by the office to minimize detailing; even the electrical conduit is meticulously worked). This quality of craftsmanship transcends the utilitarian nature of the building's materials.

The Rubenstein Group Building succeeds as a responsive solution to the problem of the neighborhood office building by acknowledging the history of its site and extending the context from which it is collectively and empirically derived.■

Citeations

Regional Cuisine and The Hungry Machine

"New Regionalism: Tradition, Adaptation, Invention"
Sponsored by the Center for the Study of American Architecture
The University of Texas at Austin
24-25 April 1986

Reviewed by Malcolm Quantrill

Jessen Auditorium was full and the occasion promised to be convivial. The scope of "tradition, adaptation, invention" suggested tension and conflict of interest. All that was needed to complete the notion of a symposium was the free exchange of ideas. But "new regionalism" seemed to be a catch-all, a master key to fit every lock. The trouble lay in the order of speakers; that is, by putting the image-cart (Robert A.M. Stern) before the regional-horse (Kenneth Frampton). Howard Davis rightly said that we had to go beneath the surface and seek the underlying questions: "What is the relation of the image to the experience?" he asked. The only real discussion of those substrata came too late, however, in Frampton's paper at the third and final session.

In addition to the main speakers, all panelists were asked to make presentations. As pleasurable as it was to hear from Antoine Predock and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, this was unnecessarily time-consuming and repetitive: it also denied the audience adequate question time. Ringing the changes on "tradition, adaptation, and invention" also failed to yield real variety of the theme and depth of exploration. But there were memorable jokes. For example: Antoine Predock – "I always thought a regionalist was an architect who couldn't get a job out of state;" John Casbarian – "When we did Corpus Christi City Hall, the clients said: 'We want something that looks like Corpus Christi architecture.' So we asked them if they could show us some, and they answered: 'Oh no, we don't have any of it here'"; and Charles W. Moore (in response to the question "Who's a regionalist?") – "Well, I guess I am."

Stern, who opened the proceedings, found "regionalism" an interesting but troublesome term, "because it does not embrace the architectural task." He thought "tradition" more important because it connects us with the past, allowing us to re-invent forms. America has always been a modern country, he said, with tradition as a baseline reference. Innovation comes from technology not art, he insisted; while the past offers not answers but standards. He counseled: "We must face tradition in a responsible and scholarly way;" although his presentation fell far short of that standard.

Ricardo Legorreta spoke of his work and Mexican culture, finding the term regionalism "easily confusing." "The 16th-century architect knew what he was doing, but today life is too fast and we invent a new tradition every five years." He believed that architecture should mix the feeling of intimacy with a sense of mystery, and ended by showing pictures of his factory for Renault. At that moment we became aware of the omnivorous appetite of the multi-national corporations.

Lawrence W. Speck's paper "Regionalism and Invention" offered the intriguing suggestion that Kahn's barrel vaults for the Kimbell Art Museum bear a striking resemblance to the bow-topped stock sheds that are so ubiquitous in the area. Gaudí, Wright, Aalto, Barragán, and Kahn all "invented a new regionalism," he said. There were other felicitudes about the Byzantine as a regional style and the Italian Renaissance as a 15th-century patriotic movement, but no adequate analysis of, or fresh insights into, the symposium's theme.

The task of setting the context for new regionalism in the present, with its roots in the immediate past, fell appropriately to Kenneth Frampton. Expanding his original "six points for an architecture of resistance" contained in his 1983 essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism" to become "ten points towards a map of regional practice," his concerns became: tactile presence; the liberative, critical, and poetic traditions of the 20th century – "to continue to ignore Wright's remarkable achievements in his Usonian houses is only one more sign of our pathological philistinism;" the true limits and institutional status of regions; the distinction between *information* and *experience*; the idea of space and place as a phenomologically bounded domain; the interaction of *typology* with *topography*; the distinction between the *architectonic* and the *scenographic*; the relationship of *artifice* and *nature*; the continuity of the *visual* and the *tactile*; and a final emphasis on the testimony of *information* versus that of *experience*.

Architecture, Frampton told us, is politics! "We are confronted with a paradox: the pace of modernization continues with unabated ruthlessness . . . yet the romance of discovery and invention has lost its popular appeal." Concerning the multi-national corporations, "We should not deceive ourselves as to the total indifference of these conglomerates to the welfare of the society in which they establish their headquarters. Under this hegemony, patriotism is transformed into an absurdity and regional differentiation is a factor to be eliminated." Legorreta has warned us about the dangers of the present speed of information versus the time taken to assimilate experience. Frampton said: "From a cultural point of view, we are confronted with a situation in which everything seems to have already happened. Eveything is touched by a sense of being past." He recalled a journalist's interview with a partner of an American corporate practice, which ended with the architect's complacent irony: "Let's face it: this is a hungry machine!"

The published proceedings will be worthwhile for the extended argument of Frampton's position and Wayne Attoe's concluding contribution, "Regionalism and the Search for Identity," a thoughtful analysis of the Competition for the Municipal Government Center at Phoenix, Arizona. But the politesse of the first day, with the virtual suppression of discussion, offered little to advance the realpolitik of regionalism, old or new. ■

Paul Rand: A Designer's Art

Paul Rand, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, 239 pp., illus., $39.95

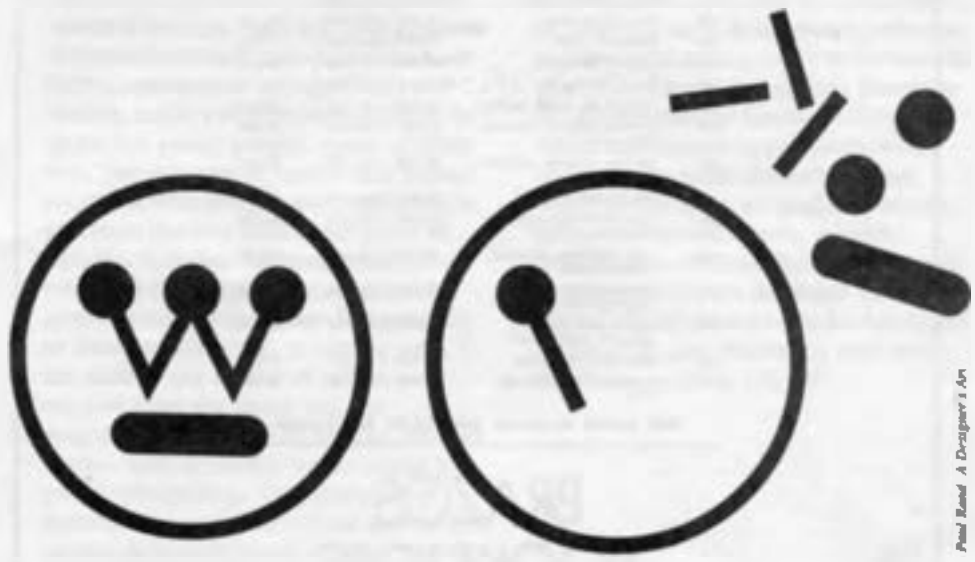
Reviewed by Philip C. Burton

Paul Rand has taught graduate-level graphic design at Yale University since 1956. His sessions with the "kids" are classic Rand performances. At the beginning of the semester the students come one at a time into the seminar room of a 1927 neo-Gothic building and spread their portfolios out over the table. Rand will go over the pieces one by one, identifying a problem when one exists, point immediately to the culprit, and rattle off six different ways the piece could be improved. This routine not only gives Rand an idea of the capabilities of each member of the class but also offers each student the chance to see a master at work. Subsequent sessions involve groups of three or four students presenting their weekly progress. Clarity, succinctness, and vision are the hallmarks of these classes and now Rand has made them available to us all through his new book, *Paul Rand: A Designer's Art*.

At a time when it seems the graphic design profession has come of age, with a national American Institute of Graphic Arts organization, design history books, symposiums, courses springing up all over, and the publication of numerous monographs on significant designers, we are able to read about and see some of the best work of its kind. Certainly the work contained between the covers of Rand's book has influenced many generations of designers.

The fact that art is part of the title is an indication of what's inside. Vasari and Maurice Denis open the first paragraph in the chapter "Art for Art's Sake," in which Rand defines the term graphic design in the context of art at large. In the course of the book, Rand explores many practical aspects of design, including symbols, trademarks, stripes, repetition, the rebus, collage and montage, typography, legibility, packaging, three-dimensional design, and color. All good information. But it is Rand's ability to bring into focus the less tangible features of graphic design – imagination, integrity, and invention – that makes this book truly inspirational.

This book allows us to share a very personal world, one filled with curiosity, surprises, and vitality, one that has at its roots classical visual principles that are essential to the designer whether using a ruling pen or a computer. ■



Left: *The symbol for Westinghouse Electric Corp., 1960.* Above: *Newspaper advertisement, Westinghouse, 1968*

A Guide to San Antonio Architecture

San Antonio Casino Club Building, San Antonio, 1927, Kelwood Company, architects

Chris Carson and William McDonald, editors, Larry Paul Fuller, consulting editor, San Antonio: San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1986. 136 pp., illus., $15

Reviewed by Mike Greenberg

To natives, guidebooks are usually more interesting for their omissions than for their commissions, but *A Guide to San Antonio Architecture* offers a little of each. Produced by the San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, this 136-page volume is nearly square in format and nearly square in presentation, but it packs a lot of reliable data into its capsule descriptions of 239 sites. Included are all known winners of AIA design award programs "except in certain instances wherein the current condition of the property precluded its being listed" – an ominous proviso – and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as many buildings not on either list. The capsules, each with one or two photographs, are arranged geographically, and each section is introduced with a short historic summary and schematic map of the area surveyed.

The editors, Chris Carson and William McDonald, have prepared cogent historical pieces on San Antonio architecture in general and the River Walk in particular. Apart from putting into clear context the major figures and influences on the city's architecture, the historical overview is valuable for its concise statement of the San Antonio outlook of the first quarter of this century:

Yet it was not stylistic uniformity that made the architecture of this period so compelling, but a tacit architectural agreement, an unformulated set of conventions, that – at least in historical perspective – produced an unobsessive consistency. These conventions imbued San Antonio architecture of the 1920s with an urbanity and sense of local particularity that transcends style. A penchant for rich ornamental detail, affirmation of the primacy of the street façade, a deftness at turning street corners, and a preference for brown tapestry brick were recurring architectural characteristics.

The salient phrase is "historical perspective." Just as the spectrum of a chemical element represents the wavelengths the material doesn't absorb, the architectural spectrum of an older city represents the buildings that didn't make way for progress, a disease against which San Antonio had developed a powerful immunity for at least a generation after the start of the Great Depression. Most of the conventions the editors mention were common to many ambitious and prosperous American cities of the period from 1870 to 1930, the period of San Antonio's boom, and it is by an accident of history that so much of that period survived into the '80s in San Antonio. It is those survivals that, collectively, give San Antonio's older neighborhoods their peculiar tonality.

Few of the more recent items in this book, however, are privy to the "tacit agreement" of which the editors speak. Some are good buildings nonetheless; many are not. Seeing so many buildings in this compact format sharpens the contrast between the city's old and new – not just a contrast of styles, but radical differences of viewpoint about urban life.

Important buildings from both sides of the divide are omitted. The Kelwood Company's frighteningly intense Aztec Theater (1926) is mentioned only in passing in another listing, as is the National Bank of Commerce Building (1957), by Kenneth Franzheim and Atlee B. and Robert M. Ayers – the 1950s aesthetic is surprisingly undated in this sturdy, carefully detailed tower of limestone and brick. O'Neil Ford's first buildings for Trinity University are missing, but we get several of his houses. Missing, too, are representatives of the eccentric, amusing – sometimes patently bad – minor buildings that gave San Antonio's neighborhoods their distinct character. The collection is a bit too button-down, like an authorized biography.

A section at the end holds short profiles of nine important architects of San Antonio, from François Giraud (Ursuline Convent) to O'Neil Ford; an architects index would have been a useful addition. Indeed, the principal value of this book is to celebrate the city's architects, both the household names and the less recognized practitioners. It is a joy to thumb through, connecting names with faces, as it were, and tracing lineages. San Antonians, especially, will find many old friends pictured here, along with a few unwelcome in-laws. ■

Too Much Pride, Too Little Place

"Pride of Place," produced by KQED-TV, San Francisco, 24 March - 12 May 1986

Reviewed by J.W. Barna

A school of psychotherapy formed around the philosopher and anthropologist Gregory Bateson in California in the late 1940s. Searching for a more useful model for the etiology of mental illness than that of traditional psychotherapy, its members took as their starting point not repressed memories but patterns of human communication. All communications, they postulated, have two aspects, the *digital* – what is being said – and the *analogical* – how it is being said. When the two aspects of a communication conflict and other conditions are just right, they found, it can make people crazy.

One was reminded of these "communications theory" therapists during the slowly creeping hours of "Pride of Place," the eight-part series recently broadcast on public television. Starring Robert A.M. Stern, celebrated architect and author, professor of architecture at Columbia University, and head of Columbia's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, the series had big problems, both digital and analogical.

To take the digital first: Judging from the series, Stern's mind seems to work this way: "I like this idea. It sounds logical. If I repeat it often enough it will be true." Thus we have, repeated again and again and again, parts of a litany, including: Classicism is the style that knits all American institutions together. Mount Vernon is "the backyard of the nation." Cesar Pelli's Winter Garden in New York's new Battery Park City development is "a living room for the city." (Will New York object if we put our feet up on the coffee table?)

It's not that Stern's arguments are wrong, although many of them are so twisted or so attenuated that they sound thoroughly off the wall. In the picture book that accompanies the series, Stern is at least cogent – describing the complex story of Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building at Yale University, for example, in some detail. On television, however, Stern allows the presentation to be almost bizarrely sketchy – as when he walks down the street at Yale, waving his hands and nodding agreeably as guest Vincent Scully gestures at the Art and Architecture Building and dismisses modernist architects as people "with a vested interest in mediocrity." This misprision of events is related in the midst of a lecture on the folly of ignoring history.

The problem is that Stern seems to think anything he says is self-evident. People, defending Stern's program, have said that complicated ideas can't be dealt with on television. That suggestion, as "Nova" and half a dozen other PBS series attest, is silly. But instead of logical development, Stern gives us some of the most static television this side of C-Span, with a single rhythm: assertion, reiteration, reiteration, summation. The visuals have a curious thinness. We see the same buildings over and over, and the views of the buildings we do see leave out vast quantities of information. The camera goes up, down, around, and back again, but reveals very little. The one thing we see too much of is Stern – modeling various preppy outfits; sawing the air between him and whoever he is talking to; standing on Plymouth Rock, his Gucci shoe buckles flashing; forlornly lugging his baggage around Detroit's Renaissance Center; smirking, with Paul Goldberger, at the gaucherie of Houston's Galleria; and driving his red Chrysler convertible around the water tower at Jones Beach on Long Island not once but half a dozen times.

But here we get into the analogical problems with the series. First, there is Stern's historiography. To Stern, any architect working in any historicist style at any point, particularly if Gothicizing college buildings and offices, was producing something truly American, while modernist architects were merely aping an imported European style. If borrowing once is good *a priori*, why is it bad in later decades? There is much to be said on the point, of course, but Stern does not say it. This is an appeal to prejudice, not to reason.

Everything Stern likes has not just to be praised but sacralized. If he likes a building, it automatically becomes "proud," the repository of national aspiration. He calls the Woolworth Building the "cathedral of commerce" and praises the car-derived details on the Chrysler Building with a little catch to his voice, as if he had just thought of the idea, leaving out the fact that both buildings were not universally esteemed when they were built.

The one guest in the series who substantially disagrees with Stern is Max Bond, a black architect who points out, on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., that "for black people in America . . . Classicism has not always been benign." Digitally, this is a valuable counterbalance to Stern's entablature-mania, some historical shading that goes outside the narrow range Stern otherwise allows. But in the same episode, we see Stern and Leon Krier being driven in a carriage around Colonial Williamsburg, praising its urbanism as a model for the nation. The driver is a black man, impersonating, one gathers, a slave from the good old days. So much for historical sensitivity: the analogics win every time.

And finally there is the use of Stern's own work. It comes in the first episode and practically sinks the whole series. After describing how the modernist office buildings in Manhattan had disrupted his boyhood dreams, Stern takes us to a building site where a building crew in colonial drag is putting up a timber-frame house. A couple of camera jumps and we find ourselves looking at modern workmen putting up a house that Stern, he informs us, designed himself. The problem is the music. Harsh on the Manhattan skyline, it goes pseudo-classical when we cut to wood framing, and turns into a gloppy hymn when we arrive at Stern's house.

Is this what Stern intended? Maybe not, but in normal television terms the progression is clear: having seen a bunch of bad buildings, we are now going to see architecture the way it's supposed to be. Stern is presented as the fulfillment of the promise of American architecture. Even for television, to which the most vegetative standards of intellectual vitality are normally applied, this is just too much. The analogical Stern, whatever his digital intentions, makes himself into the architectural Sylvester Stallone, invoking a misty-eyed patriotism only to wrap himself in it.

Most of this seems to be the fault of Murray Grigor, the show's director, who gave us the equally soporific "Cosmos," in which Carl Sagan was presented not as scientist but as magus, spouting about "billions and billions" of this and that long past the point of bathos.

One hopes that Spiro Kostof and his projected PBS series, with a different sponsor and a different production crew, as well as an inestimably better narrator, will fare better. The story of American building will have to wait for someone a little less willing to confute it with his own dreams. ■

Mask of Medusa

Kim Shkapich, ed., New York: Rizzoli, 1985, 463 pages, illus., $49.95

Reviewed by Ben Nicholson

This 463-page, awe-inspiring monolith of architecture, interviews, notebook pages, prose, and poetry stands as the testament of an American architect who declined the invitation to participate in the ranks of consumer culture. On the cover of the book is the title, at the back of the book is his drawing of Medusa, and in between, in the pages, we are invited into the unfettered workings of John Hejduk's autobiography.

To open the book, Daniel Libeskind has written two extensive introductions in which he circumscribes Hejduk's contribution perfectly, remarking: "His work seeks to heal the rift or wound in architecture that is a result of the lacerating penetration of practice by sophisticated expedience." The book then is divided into two parts, joined in the middle by a "crossover" that serves as a paginated index separating the critical texts from the architectural projects. The two parts are then further divided into seven time frames, taking us from Hejduk's school days to the present.

The critical text includes every facet of Hejduk's career. We can find the nine-square grid problem, an essay on photography and architecture, and two interviews with Don Wall. In one interview Hejduk's profound relationship to Le Corbusier is revealed in a chilling story formulated after his visit to Villa La Roche. In this apparently domestic townhouse, he presents its Janus-like façades to reflect Dr. Blanche's psychic activity. Through intuitive reasoning, Hejduk is able to transfigure the library, balcony, and refectory table into a choir stall, pulpit, and altar, and thus restore a spiritual dimension lacking in the common perception of Le Corbusier.

The work pivots in 1974 after completing a scholarly ablution of western art and architecture, manifested by nearly 40 house projects and the completion of the Cooper Union Foundation Building remodeling in New York City. Hejduk states, "[in] the Modern Movement there were only programs of optimism... we are entering a program of pessimism in architecture. But this pessimism is not necessarily negative."

In the subsequent frames, shot through with poetry, he leaves the solitude of the private house and comes to the black and white city of Venice to make the *Silent Witnesses* and the *House for the Inhabitant Who Refused to Participate*. After 1979 he produced the Berlin, New England, and Lancaster Hanover Masques, bending the English tradition, started by Inigo Jones, of a poetic manufacture of program, substantiated by enlightened construction to one of simultaneous story-telling and building stories to reconstruct the world from the ground up.

Time is a recurrent query in his recent work and is indicated by obsession with clocks. In the Berlin Masque, the clock tower is divided down its length by the numbers 1-12. No doubt this is mirrored by the bookcover's numbers 1-12 and 12-1. *Mask of Medusa* has seven frames (7 PM?), and we wait with bated breath for the coming of the nocturnal hours from 8 PM till midnight.

The sublime quality of this book suggests an inherent danger that provincials will abuse the work, borrowing from its generous style. This is guarded against by the Gorgonian text, so be warned of *Mask of Medusa*: Reflect upon those careful words lest you go too quickly and be cast irrevocably into stone.■

Remember Houston

(Continued from page 13)

Houston Mastaba, Project for 1,250,000 Oil Drums. *1974, Christo, artist. Drawing-collage, pencil, crayons, colored crayons, enamel paint, photostat and map, 30"x22" (76 x 56 cm.) (Photo by Eeva-Inkeri, courtesy of the artist)*

Vaquero, *Moody Park, 1979, Luis Jiménez, sculptor*

constructed of 1.25 million oil drums. Luis Jiménez and Richard Haas both deploy wit and irony in the public monuments they have executed in Houston. Jiménez's *Vaquero* (1979), at Moody Park, exploits lurid colors and action-packed composition to impress itself on viewers; Haas's mural *Houston* (1983), at Town and Country Mall, is American Scene retro, updated with astronauts and traffic jams. Recent submissions to two design competitions – that of Ben Nicholson to the Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition, and that of Peter D. Waldman and Christopher Genik to the "Transformations" charrette sponsored by Young Architects Forum at Diverse Works – although architectural in nature, suggest new ways of imagining and imaging Houston that extract, reinterpret, and objectify local historical and cultural patterns.

Manipulating witty, ironic imagery to attract popular attention and developing procedures for translating patterns of life into artifacts are two possible ways to make the necessary connection between the community and objects intended to memorialize it. It is clear that monuments, if they are to stimulate Houstonians into resisting amnesia and remembering their city, must confront the public with itself, make the city visible as a community, and inspire the forms of public life that will perpetuate civic recognition and memory.■

Notes

1 Thanks to Terrell James and Drexel Turner for their insightful critical observations.
2 Sadly, one of Houston's most gifted young artists, the painter and sculptor Julian R. Muench, was not retained to execute any public works of monumental art locally.
3 On the symbolic potency of the Alamo, see Susan Prendergast Schoelwer with Tom Gläser, *Alamo Images, Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience*, Dallas: DeGolyer Library and Southern Methodist University Press, 1985.

Romancing the Stone

(Continued from page 15)

The decision to create a self-reflective entity rather than use the site and program to build upon salient features of the proximate built environment or regional patterns runs counter to present architectural tendencies. It is not hard to imagine a design that attempts to weave together the Glassell School, The Museum of Fine Arts, and the Contemporary Arts Museum (Gunnar Birkerts, 1972) directly across Montrose. One wonders if even a modest effort to establish some spatial or material relationship to context might have added some richness to the final realization. It is, however, ill-advised to make contextual relationships the sole criterion for evaluating a work of design. Once faced with the intention to create an independent object, it must be considered as such, knowing that the success of urban interventions of any sort derives largely from intrinsic qualities that may influence subsequent development by example.

A more serious deficiency in this project lies in the realization of its internal components, which are sometimes at cross purposes with the intention of creating a counter landscape. The use of close-cropped St. Augustine grass to cover the bent planes and sensuous mounds of earth suggests a golf course green that contrasts unfavorably with Noguchi's initial proposal to cover these surfaces with monkey grass, a less ruly and more giving material. The hyper-articulation of each element in the garden and the over-emphatic separation of all materials used in construction from one another is counter productive as well, depriving the composition of a subdued, accepting fabric at appropriate points along the way. The stone objects concealing numerous ground-level lighting fixtures and even trash receptacles prove ill-chosen subjects for monumentalization and wind up crowding the garden so as to distract from the sculptures themselves. At the other extreme, the banality of the tall, stock lighting fixtures is similarly disconcerting, if less obtrusive. Except for special events, the only provision made for seating (apart from the grassy knolls) are austere, permanently placed concrete benches resembling precast girders – a measure of control that precludes the casual placement of individual chairs. One element that escapes this syndrome of either rigid conformity or indifference is the *mot juste* of the metal grate at the base of many of the trees, which looks marvelous and neither ostentatious nor unconsidered. In all, the avid if occasionally selective adherence to this heavy reductionist palette does more to hinder the presentation of the sculpture than aid it. Because the range of constructed elements is so limited, there is no method of adjusting for objects of a smaller scale, as is apparent in the awkwardness of the presentation of the Robert Graham pieces, and which might discourage further presentation of intimate works. But on the whole, the works of art appear fairly comfortable, perhaps because the collection is such a familiar gathering of works by all the expected artists that it may offer no real test of the space's flexibility.

The passage of time will allow one to evaluate the degree of success or failure of this counter landscape. The inherent problem of the whole strategy is that the "world" here might be only a stage and perhaps an overly determined one at that, despite the greater allure promised once the plants mature. One wonders, though, if the Cullen Sculpture Garden's provocative, slightly surrealist edge might not also fade, and whether its continual call for perceptual and psychological dislocation and awakening will endure. On these accounts there can be little certainty, for like all romances, its essence cannot be fully managed or even anticipated. ■

Fourth place entry (tie), Victor Caliandro Architects, architects, model, second phase

Fourth place entry (tie), Roberts Associates and Dean Abbott, architects, model, second phase

Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition

(Continued from page 11)

the bayou with an unsightly retaining wall and contained a Buffalo Shrine to commemorate an Indian tale about the origin of the bayou's name. (Instructions to the competitors decreed that "historic references must be of highest integrity.") It won the favor of five jurors because it was seen as a landscape solution; once again the requirement for parity of architecture, landscape, and urban design was disregarded. It was also seen as a place not dependent on human presence, a requirement not stated in the program, nor one that could be easily or conclusively demonstrated. The reasons for choosing this entry are contained in the final jury remarks, about half of which follow:

Pro: "[The] concept is damn good."
Con: "There is not a clear concept."

Pro: "It is the marriage of the urban upper level to [the] bayou lower level."
Con: "The natural condition is so divorced from the city that the people will not go down on the island."

Pro: "[The] bayou is the ego."
Con: "This isn't [a] bayou scheme to me. You can't create the bayou scheme here."

Con: "I don't think you can celebrate 150 years with background."
Pro: "This is a park; not merely background."

Pro: "[The] 1920s [sic] City Beautiful movement is there."
Con: "It is modest with no civic intention. It is cut up and will not succeed without being one entity."

Pro: "The terrace and heroic pylons along Wortham conjure images of Nôtre Dame and its flying buttresses on the Ile de Cité."
Con: "After completion the city would look at the result and say 'what was the big deal?' It is not memorable."

To say the least, the jury was strongly split over this scheme. Four of its five proponents were local jurors who were not practicing designers, while two of the three who voted for the SIR, Inc.-Webb entry were out-of-town practitioners. Two professional jurors missed the second-phase judging, thus destroying the intended parity between local and professional viewpoints. One was Allan Jacobs, who was in Rome on a fellowship and seemed unwilling to make the trip to Houston. The other was Bernardo Fort-Brescia, whose absence (without so much as a bayou leave) was later explained by a spokeswoman for Arquitectonica as "business – our practice has to come first." The advisor was "sorry" about this second defection, but knew that the first was likely to occur and made Jacobs a juror nonetheless. There were no arrangements for alternate jurors, a recognized practice in competitions.

As a result, the competition was decided with only three-fifths of its professional jurors' involvement. A judging process that was meant to give equal power to local and national jurors became weighted to Houston perceptions. The intended balance of landscape, urban design, and architecture became dominated by landscape. And a process meant to procure the best design for a major civic space ultimately became a means to select a safe and unadventurous one instead. One Team Hou proponent on the jury acknowledged, "I found myself being ultraconservative."

Half Empty, Half Full

The Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition indicates that 150 is an awkward age. The decision to hold a national design competition was a welcome step in Houston's cultural and civic maturation, but what transpired was not truly national. A predominantly Houstonian jury judged a mostly Houstonian group of finalists, and declared the third best local entry the winner. One sponsor confessed to being relieved when a Houston team won. A juror favoring the second-place entry took the results pragmatically, saying "the local people are the ones who will have to live with the result."

This is true in both senses. Houston set itself an important urban-design challenge but did not rise to meet it. A city aspiring to world stature suddenly fell into parochialism. This is not the spirit that we have come to expect from the place that Ada Louise Huxtable has called "*the* city of the second half of the 20th century." The standards embodied in local patronage of such architects as Cram, Mies, Johnson, Pelli, Stirling, Pei, Venturi, and Piano will not be in evidence at Sesquicentennial Park.

At the same time, consolations can be found. The park will not be a disagreeable place, just not a sufficiently inspired one. Since the site was so unpromising, no irreplaceable opportunity will be lost. A group of young and heretofore unknown designers has been given an opportunity that would have otherwise been beyond its reach. The larger exercise has been a joint venture of public and private interests rarely attempted in Houston. And most important, the competition can be the initial step in fully restoring Buffalo Bayou to its rightful place in the Houston cityscape.

This issue involves more than the three blocks near the Wortham Theater. What occurs all along the bayou's banks and on its waters is of greater civic importance than is widely realized. Physical continuity is essential, and so is a sense of focus. A trip down the bayou, even in its present neglected state, demonstrates this graphically. Approached from the west, Allen's Landing is a sudden and dramatic opening up of space after a varied journey through a constricted channel past the flanks of downtown. At the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak bayous, the widening of the waterway and the lowered and more gently sloping banks create an unmistakable and highly satisfying sense of arrival and place. Even a century-and-a-half later, it is clear that in choosing this site for their city, the Allen brothers were only bowing to the inevitable.

The City of Houston's Department of Parks and Recreation is about to build three linear park segments along the bayou, one west of Sesquicentennial Park and two east of it, extending to Allen's Landing. These strips are modest in their cost and purpose, but, like the park, can be seen as increments of a larger scheme. The realization of that goal can only come with the creation of an unmistakably first-class urban park at Allen's Landing. Until that occurs, the downtown portion of the bayou will be like a body without a head.

The Sesquicentennial Park effort can be considerably enhanced by taking the bayou restoration to its logical conclusion. Then, the tribulations of the park's siting and competition management will have served a purpose, becoming a shake-down cruise for the more significant bayou journey to come, one whose destination is the proper celebration of Houston's origins.■

Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition Credits

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Harris County
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Professional Advisor
Theodore Liebman, New York

Jury
Chairman: R. Terry Schnadelbach, The Schnadelbach Partnership, New York (landscape architect)
Diana Balmori, partner, Cesar Pelli Associates, New Haven (architect and landscape architect)
C. Richard Everett, president, Century Development Corp., Houston (architect)
Bernardo Fort-Brescia, principal, Arquitectonica International, Coral Gables (architect; attended first-stage judging only)
Donald A. Greene, president, Whitewater Experience, Houston
Allan B. Jacobs, Aidala and Jacobs, San Francisco (city planner; attended first-stage judging only)
Dr. Naomi W. Lede, dean, Center for Urban Programs, Texas Southern University, Houston
O. Jack Mitchell, dean, School of Architecture, Rice University, Houston (architect)
Donald G. Olson, director, City of Houston Department of Parks and Recreation
William Pederson, Kohn Pederson Fox, New York (architect)

Winning Teams
First Place and design contract: Team Hou (Guy Hagstette, John Lemr, Robert Liner) with David Calkins, Houston
Second Place: SIR, Inc. (Shafik I. Rifaat, Tom Minor, Suthisuk Vilasdechanon) and Bruce C. Webb in association with Kirksey-Meyers Architects, Houston
Third Place: Charles Tapley Associates, Inc., Houston, and Charles W. Moore, Architect, Austin, with Drexel Turner, Houston
Fourth Place: Victor Caliandro Architects, New York; Roberts Associates (Robert Sena, principal), San Francisco, and Dean Abbott, New York

Honorable Mentions
Guiliano Fiorenzoli, David Kriegel, Lebbeus Woods, Warren Gran, New York
Martin Axe and J. Mark Cronander submitted with Robert E. Griffin, Houston
Philip Mahla and Martin Sapetto, Houston
Interplan Architects, Marcel Meijer, principal in charge, Houston

Special Commendation
Richard Verdoorn, assisted by Brian Larson, Doran Geise, and Tim Lee, Austin

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W(h)ither the Rice Museum?

Drexel Turner

The first plans prepared by Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson in 1910 for the Rice Institute campus contemplated a museum, to be located at the west end of a vast academic mall in a building of equivalent size and station to that intended for the library. It was not until 1947, however, that the university commenced construction of a library and only in the late 1960s that it acquired the beginnings of a museum with the transfer to Rice of the Institute for the Arts along with faculty and library collections in fine arts from the University of St. Thomas under the patronage of Dominique and John de Menil. The Rice Museum, as it was called, was installed at the edge of the stadium parking lot in a low-tech, barn-like building designed by Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry. It opened in 1969 with the exhibition, "The Machine at the End of the Mechanical Age," and throughout the 1970s and early '80s mounted an ambitious series of changing exhibitions which gained for the museum a national reputation. Like the Rice Media Center, another Menil initiative housed next door, the museum became one of the most visible and attractive components of the university – accessible to the city at large and suggestive of an opening to the arts that was perhaps precocious in light of the university's other priorities.

The deceptively elegant, corrugated metal structure that the museum has occupied since its inception was meant only as a temporary expedient. Consequently, the de Menils invited Louis I. Kahn to survey the campus with a view to planning a permanent facility. In 1969 the university retained Kahn to produce schematic drawings and a model for a fine arts complex to be located west of Fondren Library and to include a museum and spaces for the Institute for the Arts. Kahn's study was completed in 1970 but the university, in the face of rising operating deficits, declined to pursue the project further despite the magnitude of the prospective gift. In 1973, Kahn was commissioned by the de Menils to plan a group of buildings to house the institute and its collections on a site in Montrose near the Rothko Chapel, the design of which was unfinished when he died the following year. Howard Barnstone subsequently prepared several proposals for sites in the same area and was succeeded, in 1980, by Renzo Piano, whose design for a museum and study center was made public in 1981. Construction began in 1983 and will be completed this fall, precipitating the vacation of the Rice Museum and perhaps also the promise it held for the maturation of Rice University as a whole. Although the museum's final disposition is still a matter of conjecture, a persistently mentioned possiblity is that it will be reconfigured to serve as a facility for continuing education programs.

The fixture of a modest but adequately supported university museum or gallery is a well-established aspect of institutions that Rice might seek to emulate – not only Princeton and Stanford, two often cited models for the development of the university in general, but also a host of other universities and colleges, Dartmouth, Williams, Brown, and Oberlin among them. As a stimulus for scholarship and liberal education, and as a means of community engagement, university museums fulfill a special role. They are characteristically incubators, venues for projects more specialized and less ostentatious than those that absorb free-standing museums. They admit speculation, reconsideration, and a more inclusive cultivation of the visual arts than connoiseurship alone allows. They are part-laboratory, part-library – palpable manifestations of university values. It would be difficult to imagine Harvard today without the Fogg, Yale without its Gallery, Oxford without the Ashmolean, yet each began ad hoc, prompted more by opportunity than by deliberation.

For various reasons, the Rice Museum was never fully assimilated into the university, but remained an autonomous and ultimately transient enterprise, however lustrous. Yet its shell and its residual reputation are bases enough to occasion the creation of a permanent university museum – an act that would broaden the scope and spirit of the university and repay, in some measure, the fonder expectations of the Menil benefaction. Such an endeavor would require appreciable, though not extraordinary, outlays, little of it capital at this point, although eventually new accommodations would be in order. At a minimum, it would provide the opportunity to test the viability of such an endeavor for a discrete interval, much as the university has determined to "test" the viability of football and for a period of five years, but with results that would be predictably more durable and less costly. As Rice approaches its seventy-fifth anniversary, such a gesture would mark a coming of age as well as years. ■

Rice Museum, 1969, Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry, architects. Replica of Tatlin's Tower, constructed for "The Machine at the End of the Mechanical Age," appears in the courtyard.

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