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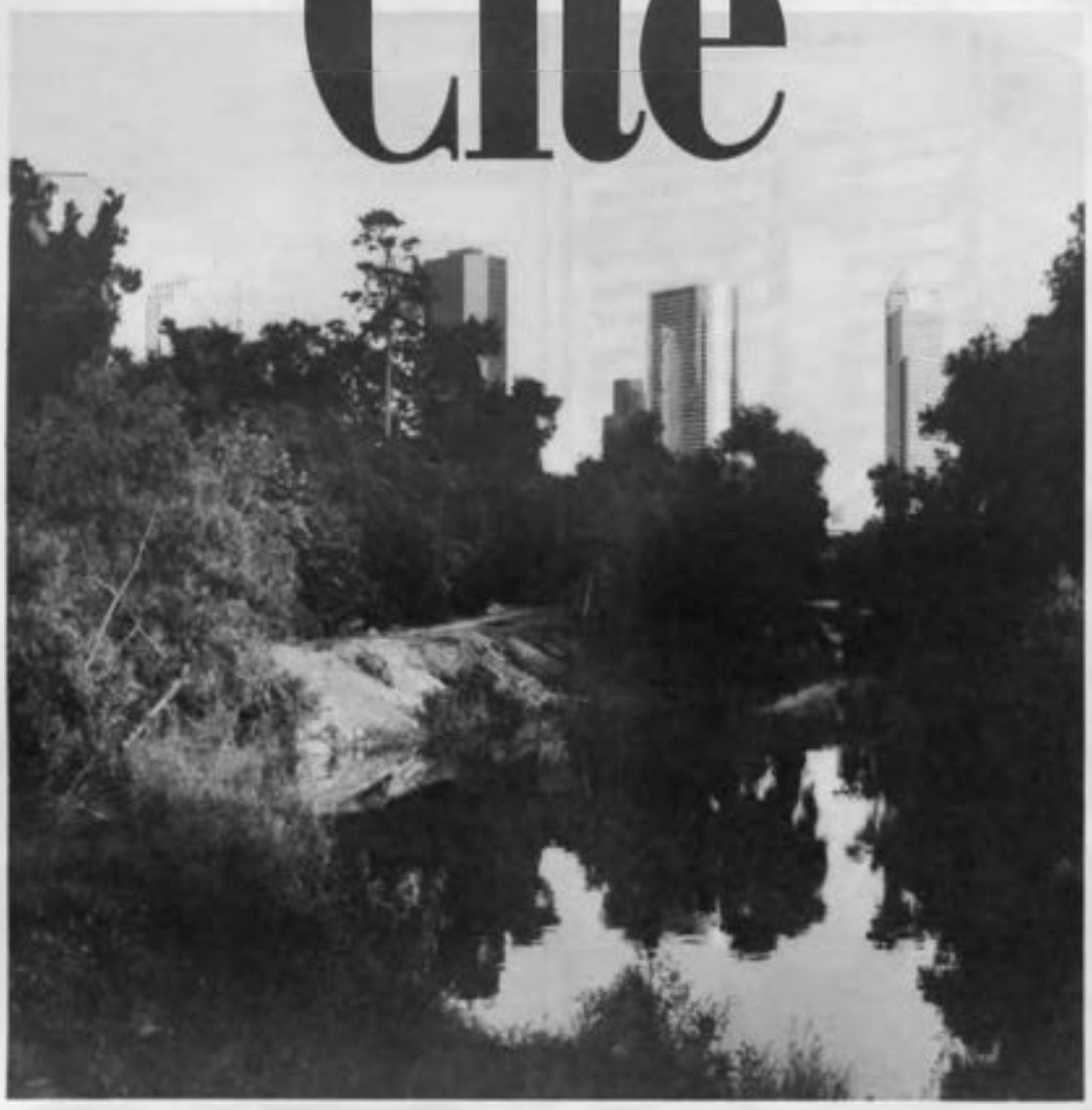

Houston 150

Stories by

June Arnold
Walter Clemons
Max Apple

Photographs by

Lee Friedlander
Robert Frank
Garry Winogrand

UH College Of Architecture Reviewed

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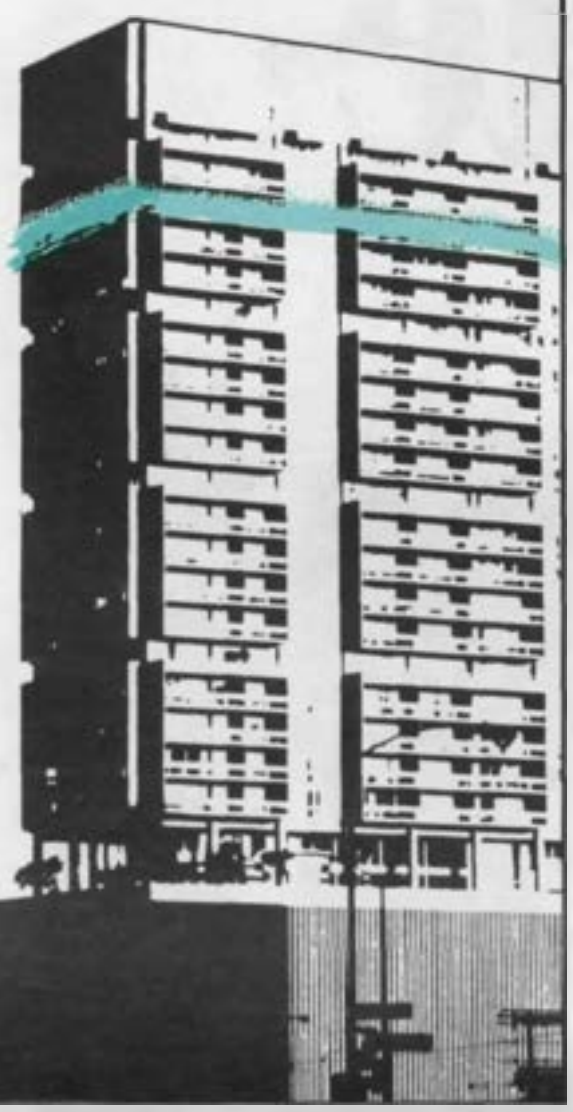

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Cover: Clockwise from upper left: *Photo by Bill Pogue; Sally Gall*, Houston, Buffalo Bayou, *1984 (courtesy of Texas Gallery, Houston); Ikko Narahara*, Houston, *1985 (courtesy of Houston Foto Fest); Garry Winogrand*, Untitled *(Texas Commerce Bank, Houston), circa 1973 (courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco)*

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

Notes on Contributors

Max Apple is Gladys Louise Fox Professor of English at Rice University. He is the author of *Zip, A Novel of the Left and the Right* and *Free Agents*.

June Arnold, a Houston novelist, was the author of *Sister Gin, Applesauce*, and *The Cook and The Carpenter*. She died in 1982.

Wolde-Ghiorghis Ayele works for the architectural firm of Post, Buckley, Schuh and Jernigen.

Walter Clemons grew up in Houston and attended Lamar High School. He is senior writer and book critic for *Newsweek*.

David Crossley, a former editor of *Houston City Magazine*, is a Houston photographer.

Sally Gall is a Houston photographer.

Elizabeth S. Glassman is a partner in Glassman & Lorenzo Cultural Planners. She is a curator, author, and native Houstonian.

John Kaliski works for the Los Angeles office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

David Kaplan is a frequent contributor to *Houstonian* magazine.

Phillip Lopate is associate professor of English at the University of Houston and author of six books, including *Bachelorhood, Tales of the Metropolis*.

Jan O'Brien is a Houston architect and works for CRS Sirrine.

Neil I. Payton is a Washington, D.C. architect and visiting associate professor of architecture at Rice University.

April Rapier teaches photography at the University of Houston and is a curator at the Houston Center for Photography.

Eduardo Robles is an architectural intern with Jeffrey Karl Oshsner and Associates.

Rives Taylor is an architectural intern with William F. Stern & Associates.

Lorenzo Thomas is a Houston poet. He directs the "Black Music in Houston" archival project at the Houston Center for the Humanities and is a lecturer at the University of Houston-Downtown.

David Todd is a consultant on environmental issues. His training is in architecture and hydrology.

OverCite

Cite regrets that in the Winter 1985-1986 issue the names of Rob Krier and Diane Y. Ghirardo were inadvertently omitted from the listing of jurors for the 1985 Venice Biennale.

RE:Cite

Up Front About *CENTER*

To the editor:
While reading Diane Y. Ghirardo's vituperative piece on the University of Texas's *CENTER* publication (*Cite*, Spring 1986), one is struck with the consistency of mean-hearted diatribe which would suggest something akin to a personal vendetta. Whether this author's vendetta is directed squarely at Texas, or merely at select individuals, or at the joy of architecture in general, is difficult to say. Obviously a graduate of the "if-you-can't-say-something-nasty-don't-say-anything-at-all" school of journalism, Ghirardo, in the recklessness of her shotgun attacks, finally shakes the credibility of *any* of her remarks.

It is not our intent here to discuss her whole article. We wish to focus on a single paragraph whose leaps of illogic, whose distorted notion of cause and effect, cannot go unremarked.

If Ah Mediterranean! *is a fair sample of what is being passed off as research, as thoughtful work, as analysis, not just in writing but in architecture - and I believe it is - at the University of Texas at Austin, one can only sympathize with the students who are paying good money in the mistaken belief that they are being educated . . . . The University of Texas is a first-rate institution in many of its departments, but if one doubted it before, it is now clear that architecture is at the bottom of the barrel.*

On the basis of a single publication, one involving only a fraction of our eighty-some faculty and staff, only a minuscule number of our over 600 undergraduate and graduate student population, she indicts, wholesale, the entire quality of architectural education here.

We would like to invite Ms. Ghirardo - or anyone else - to visit Austin and the School of Architecture. Even the crustiest eyes could scarcely help but discern the quality of our educational programs, a calibre nonpareil, an output produced by hundreds of students and dozens of faculty who have none but a geographic connection to the Center for the Study of American Architecture.

Owen Cappleman, associate professor; *Michael Jordan*, assistant professor, School of Architecture, The University of Texas at Austin.

To the editor:
Just to offer your readers an alternative point of view to Diane Ghirardo's rather bilious review of *CENTER*, Volume 2, *Ah Mediterranean! Twentieth Century Classicism in America* (*Cite*, Spring 1986), the following are unsolicited comments on the journal:

"*Ah Mediterranean!* is a triumph. It is fresh and provocative - and timely. I like it so much, I'm kicking myself for having missed the symposium." - Robert A. M. Stern, architect, New York

"*Ah Mediterranean!* is *splendid* . . . . Keep up the good work!" - O. Jack Mitchell, dean, School of Architecture, Rice University

"It made me feel 'Ah ECSTASY.' " - Howard Barnstone, architect, Houston

"I have read it with much interest." - Rafael Moneo, chairman, Department of Architecture, Harvard University

"I always enjoy the content and quality of any material from the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin." - Lois Craig, associate dean, School of Architecture and Planning, M.I.T.

We have been pleased by the very positive response to both issues of the journal among a wide range of respected readers, this chance selection alone representing some of the best historians, educators, and practitioners in the country. Many such responses come verbally and thus cannot be passed on to your readers with complete accuracy.

Just one point of fact to clarify from Ms. Ghirardo's review - graduate students *do* help edit *CENTER* and, in fact, took an even more active role in this issue than they normally do at Harvard, Yale, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, in that substantial writing content came from them. It is unfair to the duly credited graduate students involved to claim otherwise.

Lawrence W. Speck, director, Center for the Study of American Architecture

Diane Ghirardo replies:
To Professors Cappleman and Jordan: I agree. I wouldn't want to have a connection to something like *Ah Mediterranean!* either. Unfortunately, *Ah Mediterranean!* appears under the imprimatur of The University of Texas at Austin, so the faculty's anger should be directed at the appropriate target. They should see to it that some basic standards of intelligence adhere to material the school produces. It is very much to the point that the authors neither rebutt my observations nor defend the publication, for which there is no defense. I indeed love Texas, architecture, and joy (not necessarily in that order); I detest expensive fluff.

To Professor Speck: *Perspecta*, the *Harvard Architectural Review*, *VIA*, and *Modulus* are edited by students, not faculty, as I said. *CENTER* is not. I doubt that these testimonials are quite the whole-hearted endorsements you seem to suggest.

Big Cité Beat

☛ The Stars Are Out in Houston: **Robert A. M. Stern** and **Gerald D. Hines** were on hand at Transco Tower on 17 March to preview Stern's PBS television series "Pride of Place" at a reception tossed by the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Champagne flowed, but not the splashing waters of Transco's fab fountain, which has been dry for several weeks. Repairs are in progress. **Reyner Banham** was spotted prowling about **Renzo Piano's** Menil Museum, scheduled to open in October. The Museum will be the subject of a critical essay by Banham in *Progressive Architecture*. **Piano** himself played to a full house at Diverse Works on 15 March, speaking with V. Nia Dorian-Bechnel, Lenwood Johnson, and W. O. Neuhaus III on architectural preservation and urban conservation in connection with Diverse Works's recent "Architecture and Culture: The Fourth Ward" exhibition.

Drawing by Barbara Hoffgaard and Joyce Kumer

☛ I Could Have Danced All Night: The **RDA Gala** on 26 March - the centenary of the birth of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe - was celebrated in festive style at the Architecture Building at the University of Houston. Co-conspirators **Burdette Keeland** and **Mariquita Masterson**, who whipped up the event, were joined by chairfolk **Toni** and **Isaac Arnold**, and 137 guests to dance, feast, and view an exhibition of photography of **Philip Johnson** and **John Burgee's** newest works by **Richard Payne**. Johnson himself put in an appearance at what is already being called UH's Palace of Architecture to receive an honorary doctorate of humane letters on 17 May.

☛ Brain Drain Continues: **Lorraine P. Roberts** has resigned as executive director of the Rice Design Alliance. **Richard Keating** exits the Houston office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in October to become partner in charge of the Los Angeles office of SOM. **Dana Cuff** likewise has succumbed to the lure of the Golden West; she will join the planning faculty at the University of Southern California in the fall.

☛ New Kids on the Block: **Rodolfo Machado** has signed on for a stint at Rice University's School of Architecture. Rumor has it that **William J. R. Curtis** will be appointed to the architecture faculty at The University of Texas at Austin to teach architectural history.

Welcome back to *Artscene*, the ambitious and stimulating quarterly tabloid that **Anne H. Roberts, Bert L. Long, Jr.**, and crew have reincarnated to focus critically on visual and performing arts, locally and statewide.

☛ The Envelope Please: Architect **Hugo V. Neuhaus, Jr.** and writer **Donald Barthelme** were among those honored with Mayor's Arts Awards for outstanding contributions to the city's cultural life on 7 May. Taking First Honorable Mention in the 1986 Houston Discovery Prizes for prose writing, sponsored by PEN Southwest, was *Cite* contributor **Elizabeth McBride**. **Peter C. Papademetriou** copped a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1986 to continue work on his book on the life of Eero Saarinen.

☛ **Continental Airlines**, as its Sesquicentennial gift to Houston, will dedicate a portion of each fare sold for flights departing from Hobby Airport between 1 June and 1 December 1986 to the restoration of the **Houston Municipal Airport terminal**. This 1940 modernistic landmark, designed by **Joseph Finger**, was Houston's first permanent airline passenger terminal. Located on the western edge of Hobby Airport, it has been closed to traffic since 1954, when the present Hobby terminal opened. Continental estimates that its gift will amount to $250,000.

Citelines

Jean-Michel Jarre Sheds New Light on Downtown

I have never been in love with Houston. The skyline, whose picturesque drama holds many in awe, has always represented to me a sign marking the speculative consolidation of capital (in the form of rentable square footage) by individuals. Thus, I've seen it as an insult to traditional city life.

But as I walked down West Dallas Avenue the night of Jean-Michael Jarre's performance of "Rendezvous Houston: A City in Concert," the apocolyptic vision that confronted me altered not only my perceptions, but my expectations of this city as well. In choreographing lasers and fireworks to synthesized music, Jarre proposed another way of understanding the urban milieu that is Houston. To view the city as scenography, as a backdrop for a continuous sensation of light, color, and sound, and to create an altered awareness of the urban realm, one of mythic proportions: that, it seems, was his intention.

For a moment, two hours really, Houston had a center, but more important, a locus. As the high-rise buildings convulsed in a simultaneous ejaculation of fireworks, I and perhaps a million of my fellow citizens were transfixed. Together, we watched as the gods dueled with laser wands and thrashed about from high atop this new vision of Olympus. We hung out of the windows of the houses of our neighborhoods, camped out on rooftops and carhoods, abandoned our autos on I-45, and we walked like pliant and servile subjects down streets we had never walked before, and in whose glow we saw the city itself.

When it was over, when the last drop of blood had been drained from our mythic protagonists, we separated, and I walked back up Dallas Avenue, past the same crumbling shotguns of the Fourth Ward that only an hour and a half earlier had seemed such an intimate and significant part of the urban realm, but whose ephemeral beauty was, like Cinderella's, hidden by neglect.

Behind me Cullen Center and its siblings reveled in an afterglow of spectacular purple and green light. The city center, familiar and banal, was no longer. The Fourth Ward, isolated and forgotten, was gone as well. Having been *defamiliarized* with the city I had new expectations - and hopes. I had seen the citizens engage in civic life. I had joined them in watching and listening to a man's artistic production and in so doing had witnessed a vision of the city of tomorrow. My view, however, was not the one resembling the sets of science-fiction movies, but the one in which Houstonians, acting collectively, experienced the city and each other. Perhaps, like the handsome prince in the fairy tale, in which ragged shoes become glass slippers and a pumpkin transforms into a carriage (even if only for a few hours), I and my fellow citizens were, in this moment of hyperstimulation, moved to consider the reclamation of such a vision. Like Cinderella's fairy godmother, Jarre has given Houston a wonderful gift. As long as there is memory it will continue to bring joy.

Neal I. Payton

The Galveston Arches: An Editorial

Galveston Arch, 1986, Michael Graves, architect

From early February to late July 1986 the city of Galveston is host to seven triumphal fantasy arches designed by seven renowned architects. The works of Stanley Tigerman, Cesar Pelli, Charles Moore, Eugene Aubry, Michael Graves, Boone Powell, and Helmut Jahn rise above or near a mile-long stretch of Galveston's Strand Historic District.

The 19th-century commercial district has undergone a fantastic transformation due to these so-called exotic ceremonial arches that both adorn the public realm and commemorate a particular event. These public arches have been sponsored by private parties, spearheaded by Mr. and Mrs. George P. Mitchell and J. R. McConnell.

The highly individual arches have more in common than their fantasy elements. The arches span the street; they span 40 years of the absence of the seasonal festival whose occurance they celebrate; and they span centuries of collective memory deep inside the individual observer. The arches manage to bring together the people and the city as they talk about urban rituals for all classes (as in the civic-minded festival pavilions and arches built in American cities during the 19th century).

The arches are temporary. They will be there for only an instant in the history of the city of Galveston, and for that brief period of time it makes us look at the city as something that belongs to the people. For the common observer the arches become anonymous. They are very public, very abstract entities that interact with buildings and with people in a similar fashion, and independently of their own "meaning." By their sheer presence they increase an awareness of the urban built environment and by their historical and traditional nature they reinforce the concept that a city belongs to the people through time. Even their temporary condition tells about a city that lives beyond the life of the individuals within it.

With this in mind, we come to the conclusion that the architects who designed the arches are unimportant to the common observer, as are the builders or patrons who allowed this to happen. Once built, the arches become city and they become part of any and every one in that city. They represent an urban gesture, an attitude towards city and city-life. They are the city; they become part of the collective memory of the children and their children.

We have slowly forgotten the nature of monuments, of entities that, independent of their reason to exist, become an instrinsic part of the public domain. No matter how private or public, generous or egotistical, ignorant or enlightened, or simply incomprehensible their origins seem to be, such entities, sooner or later, are inherited by everyone who lives in the city where they are built. For an instant they make some of us long for a city with which we can interact as individuals and as members of a society; a city that will provide us with a very public identification and a very private interpretation of such identification. A city that takes from us and gives to us in a balanced way. A city that touches us and that we can touch and possess. Imagine how many opportunities for places there are in any city for this to happen.

Eduardo Robles

Galveston Arch, 1986, Boone Powell, architect

Shamrock Hotel, 1949, Wyatt C. Hedrick, architect

Saving the Shamrock: Some Viable Alternatives

In a year of heightened interest in Texas history and memorabilia, the announcement that the Shamrock Hotel has been sold to the Texas Medical Center, Inc. and potentially is faced with imminent destruction seems particularly incongruous. Purchased by the Texas Medical Center for $46 million, the Shamrock might well be one of the most expensive sites for a parking lot in this city.

For 37 years the Shamrock has been a prime location to display the often ostentatious exuberance for which Houston is famous. The very size and audacity of Glenn H. McCarthy's dream of the late 1940s holds its place in Texas legend. Although the hotel's architectural presence has been a favored subject of discussion by inhabitants and visitors alike, the Shamrock has become both a part of Houston's life and a good neighbor

With the "final St. Patrick's Day" celebration this year (the hotel opened spectacularly on St. Patrick's Day 1949), it appears that the local news media has written-off the grand lady of Houston. Not so a spirited band of citizens led by the brothers Don and Kirk Speck, who have barraged newspapers and airwaves with a general call to arms. Citing great support in the Medical Center and in the hotel's neighborhoods, the organizers called for a "citizen parade" to ring the block around the Shamrock on Sunday, 16 March. An estimated 3,500 people of all ages, sporting agitprop T-shirts that read "Tearing Down the Shamrock Would Be Like Tearing Down the Alamo," arrived to demonstrate their concern about the future of the hotel and sign ubiquitous petitions. The speakers of the afternoon, lawyer Charles D. Maynard, Jr. of Kennerly and Maynard, publisher Lute Harmon of *Houston City Magazine*, and HISD boardmember Brad Raffle, called for action rather than nostalgia.

In discussing the future of the Shamrock, Harmon and Don Speck emphasized the need to think beyond parking lots. While the non-profit Texas Medical Center, Inc. is primarily a management group concerned with coordinating maintenance, traffic, and parking within the Texas Medical Center, its board of directors can lease or donate the Shamrock for medical-oriented services, or sell the property at no profit to a third party. The health-care possibilities include housing for the elderly (several such projects have been proposed for West University Place), a joint institute of biotechnics with Texas A&M University, a general admitting hospital, student dormitories for the medical and nursing schools within the Texas Medical Center, or a residential hostel similar to the Ronald McDonald House. In fact, this sort of charitable hotel complex for family and patients (pre- and post-hospitalization) is currently proposed on a nearby site by the Rotary Club of Houston and M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute. This project of 306 rooms is budgeted for $30 million. A more intriguing future for the Shamrock is to capitalize on the hotel's high visibility and maintain the existing, and profitable, convention business, linking it to a scaled-down hotel (the Shamrock currently has 850 rooms). The rest of the extensive building complex can then be opened to publishing, tourist, and international organizations eager to have the address and location. "Why not capitalize on the tourism industry?" asked Harmon. The Shamrock in effect could become the convention and tourist headquarters for Houston.

The major financial constraint to rehabilitating the Shamrock for any adaprive reuse stems from bringing the building up to fire codes. Yet even further out-of-date structures have been imaginatively redesigned and financed. The feasibility and compatibility of any number of these proposals also need to be explored before the green-lit tower disappears from the Houston skyline in July.

Rives Taylor

Down in the Dumps: Houston's Solid-Waste Disposal Discussed

The disposal of solid waste in Houston has become a matter of increasing concern, and it's no small problem. Solid waste consists of municipal garbage and industrial hazardous waste. In the 13-county area including and surrounding Houston, over 2.5 million tons of municipal waste are generated each year, according to the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 10 million tons of hazardous wastes are generated annually in the Houston area.

Recently, two meetings were held in Houston concerning solid waste issues. The Institute for Public History at the University of Houston sponsored a seminar entitled "Dumps, Landfills, and the Neighborhoods" on 24 January, and the Texas Water Pollution Control Federation organized the "Solid and Hazardous Waste Symposium" on 14 February. Speakers at both meetings pointed out effects that solid waste, particularly landfills, could have on risks, rights, and plans for land use.

Most solid waste is disposed in landfills. In 1983, the Texas Water Commission (TWC) and Texas Department of Health files listed 62 municipal landfills in the Houston area. In addition to these, the EPA estimates that there are currently about 230 potential hazardous waste sites in and around Houston. Thirteen of these are listed on the EPA's National Priority List as candidates for Superfund clean-up.

There are risks associated with these landfills. Some are largely economic, consisting of threats to the value of neighboring tracts of land, as evidenced in the siting controversy concerning Browning Ferris Industries' proposed 600-acre municipal landfill in Ford Bend County. Other risks are related to public health. The Superfund site at the former United Creosoting property in Conroe is located partly under a subdivision and thus could pose a threat to local public health. Milton Russell, assistant administrator for policy planning and evaluation for the EPA, pointed out that risk is unavoidable, and zero risk impossible (the Food and Drug Administration has established one-in-a-million probability as *de minimis* risk). Russell said that it is important to recognize risk as a given, and try to establish acceptable levels of risk. A representative from an insurance company and a lobbyist for the Chemical Manufacturers Association noted that it is very difficult to quantify risk and determine what is acceptable. How do the probabilities of exposure from negligent design or chance accidents compare? Are the health risks of exposure best calculated from epidemiological or toxicological data?

Peter Bowman, hazardous waste coordinator of the Texas Chapter of the Sierra Club, argues that statistically calculating and covering a risk is not as important as respecting an individual's right to understand and perhaps volunteer for a risk. Bowman noted that many people seemed willing to accept risks if they could exercise personal control, if the potential perils of exposure could be weighed against long-term benefits, and if the problems involved with exposure were well understood and widely known. Unfortunately, the neighbors of proposed landfills often are not given enough information about, nor are involved in, planning for the proposed disposal sites.

Because of the risks of operating a landfill and safely accommodating neighbors' rights, existing sites are dwindling. The 1983 total of 62 municipal landfills in the Houston metropolitan area is expected by the HGAC to drop to 11 by the year 1990. Out of a state-wide total of 140 to 150 properties that handled hazardous waste on-site, 24 chose in 1985 to stop accepting waste, according to Bill Colberg at the TWC. Conventional methods of planning for future landfills and managing older sites do not seem to work well now, largely because they are often unilateral and generic and do not consider the issues specific to each site. Currently, there is no single operator large enough to make decisions alone (the City of Houston handles only 40 percent of all municipal waste in the city). No site is typical enough to represent the many different sites that might be considered (Jack V. Matson, associate professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Houston, estimates that there could be as many as 1,000 landfills in Houston).

To avoid these kinds of problems, recently developed groups have used collaborative, site-specific planning methods. Matson described the Keystone process as one promising planning method for finding new landfill sites. The Keystone process enables site applicants to work directly with affected communities, and has been used in the review of a potential Low-Level Radioactive Waste Facility site in Dimmit and Hudspeth counties. In the case of existing landfills, Clean Sites, Inc., a national, non-profit group, has been able to accelerate clean-ups by allocating responsibility among involved parties, negotiating an agreed upon clean-up method, and coordinating with the EPA and state agencies. Jan Power reported that Clean Sites is coordinating the clean-up of abandoned waste dumps at the Bailey site in Bridge City, and at the Motco site in La Marque.

The Keystone process and the Clean Sites approach distribute risks and protect rights in a reasonably even way and allow people to come to agreement over disposal sites and practices. However, the risks continue, and many of the rights are inherently incompatible. A permanent solution will rely on limits to the amount and hazard of wastes generated, and on improved disposal methods, such as incineration or recycling.

David Todd

Cite survey

Tin Houses

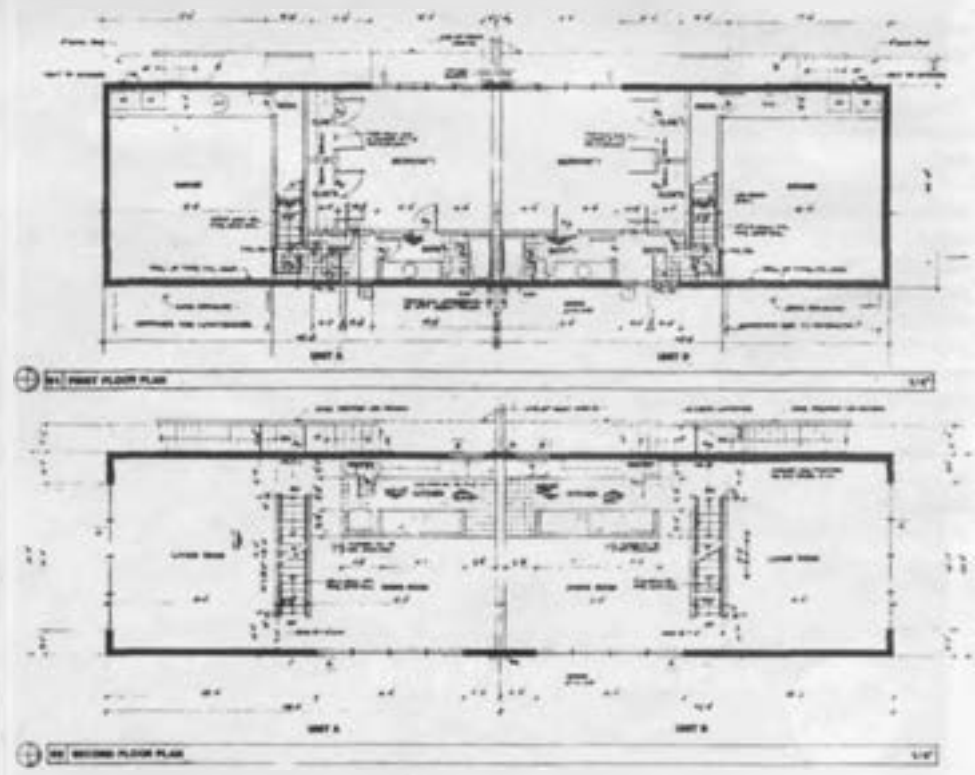
Neal I. Payton

From a distance the svelte, metal-clad, gabled structure in the Mount Pillow area of Houston could be a grain elevator, a smaller version of the structures still seen out in Katy or beyond. But the "Tin Houses," as the duplex on the corner of Blossom and Sandman streets is known, represent an attempt by Ian Glennie to design and build a couple of speculative houses that ignore the stylistic conventions of the real estate market.

Glennie claims to have been reacting to the meager spaces normally encountered in the speculative Houston townhouse market. Having grown fond of a loft in which he lived in New York, and confessing to have "always liked industrial buildings," he sought to recreate the "feel" of a converted warehouse space in these two homes, hence, the "big move" - sheathing the entire structure with corrugated galvanized steel. The industrial metaphor is extended deeper than beyond the skin, Glennie suggests, pointing out that the windows are of wire glass in frames of unfinished aluminum extrusions, and that simple junction boxes serve as lighting fixtures. But loft buildings are interesting not because they initiated the culture of "industrial chic," but because of the potential inherent in their cavernous spaces and their huge windows, which let in light as well as the sounds and smells of the city. As giant framed structures, they epitomize Le Corbusier's hypothetical *Maison Domino*, in which, it was proposed, any number of related or unrelated objects, walls, rooms, and even separate apartments could be located. In the end, Glennie's rooms are rather conventional, save for the double-height living room in the south unit, with little if any of the spatial variety associated with the urban industrial spaces he admires.

Glennie's plan organization, however, is not without merit. The two houses feature almost identical book-matched plans, two-rooms wide and only one-room deep. This organization sets up the potential for addressing many of the limitations inherent in the traditional townhouse plan, such as lack of floor-through ventilation and lack of light. In addition, this arrangement allows incorporation of a ground-floor garage without giving away the entire first-floor façade to a garage door, a situation that plagues almost every contemporary townhouse in Houston. Unfortunately, neither of these two opportunities is taken to advantage. A strip of windows is placed in the end walls, while the east and west living-room walls are left blank. Thus, not only is the opportunity for light and air passed up, but so is the potential for developing notions of back and front, street and garden, and, in general, any sort of spatial progression. Furthermore, the east façade is lined on the bottom and top floors with bathrooms, thus further internalizing the major rooms, while the party wall, the only edge incapable of receiving light and air, is left vacant. And while it is true that a great cascading stair adorns the exterior of the west façade, suggesting its difference from the opposite entry side, this move has little if any spatial ramifications. Likewise, with no façade or plan embellishment at the entry, the ground floor might just as well have been *all* garage.

The only exception to the book-matching in plan occurs where the second story of the double-height living room of the south house is replaced with a roof terrace adjacent to the master bedroom in the northern unit. Glennie admits that this condition is the result of a trade-off between his desire to define the major room of the house as a cubic volume and his desire for a vertical spatial progression ending in a terrace. Such a trade-off is endemic to the original premise, that of Houstonizing a Manhattan loft. In a climate where living outdoors is almost a birthright, and in a city where land is not quite as scarce, the containment of all the space of the residence internally seems not only unnecessary but undesirable as well. The dilemma posed by this condition represents the most interesting aspect of the entire building. It is the only point in which the potential for making exterior rooms related to the interior is acknowledged. And even in this space, the "roof garden," there is no real suggestion that this may be a goal to be achieved. The terrace is simply a roof that one can walk on. Nothing more. It is also the only exterior surface not covered with sheet metal.■



Top left: *Tin Houses, 1984, Ian Glennie and Urban Architecture, architects; living room.* Top right: *View from Blossom Street.* Above: *First and second floor plans.*

We may live without [architecture] and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.
— John Ruskin

August 1986 marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of Houston. In honor of that event, itself a ritual of time and its passage, the summer issue of *Cite* is dedicated to Houston's Sesquicentennial. In recent years a search for the essence of the city has been the theme of essays, editorials, and ad campaigns. Rather than impose a character on the city, however, we have allowed the face of Houston to emerge in the work of the authors and photographers reproduced here. That architecture and land development play so prominent a role should not surprise citizens of a city which dates its founding from the appearance of advertisements placed in New York newspapers. Most critical in the city's existence has been the last 40 years. It is this that is our focus: the years when the population moved from 385,000 to 1,700,000 and the boundaries of the city limits pushed beyond the visible horizon. The buildings and places create a portrait that fills our collective memory. Preserving that heritage, while looking forward to the next 150 years, we recollect and record Houston at 150.

Elizabeth S. Glassman

TEXAS

Here too. Here as at the other edge
Of the hemisphere, an endless plain
Where a man's cry dies a lonely death.
Here too the Indian, the lasso, the wild horse.
Here too the bird that never shows itself,
That sings for the memory of one evening
Over the rumblings of history;
Here too the mystic alphabet of stars
Leading my pen over the page to names
Not swept aside in the continual
Labyrinth of days: San Jacinto
And that other Thermopylae, the Alamo.
Here too the never understood,
Anxious, and brief affair that is life.

Jorge Luis Borges

The Tejas Club

June Arnold

I am looking over the balcony of the Tejas Club. Houston is host to a mist tonight; the outlines of our tiny city are blurred even for those who are not near-sighted, making our downtown look fuzzy and naive. In this room, which should be used for dancing between courses of delicious food, are now crowded the heads of Houston and at least the shoulders of the United States government. President Roosevelt is not here but Eleanor is. Governor and Mrs. Hobby, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Will Clayton, the heads of Humble, Gulf, and Shell, Todd Shipyard, Hughes Tool, Cameron Iron Works - along with the mayor of Houston and Benjie from the OPA.

Cad and I are official hostesses. My special assignment is to forestall any reference to the great rubber fight between Jesse Jones and our vice president, Henry Wallace. We are also supposed to separate the Duchess from Eleanor; Oveta Culp Hobby from the religious fool who still believes women should be mummy-wrapped; to support the mayor in his bid for the Port of Houston as recipient of war contracts (against some members of Washington who consider port cities too vulnerable).

Cad made me promise that I would surround the Duchess so she can't give Eleanor a piece of her mind on the racial question but the Duchess currently distrusts me absolutely: Oscar told her he wanted a divorce last month; although they are now back together (gift of our community property laws), the reconciliation is as unstable as tepid Jell-O. All Cad has to do is remember everyone's political allergies and - if the vice president should show up - get Oscar immediately. She will hardly be busy at all; I am nervous that she will be watching me.

The power in the room is thundering. Patriotism, the war effort, the urge to produce - quickly, efficiently, full-speed-ahead, especially those products that we have to invent, like rubber - speaks directly to our collective energetic Houston hearts. We are on our figurative hands and knees begging for the chance to build ships, produce airplane parts, manufacture aviation fuel, and process chemicals we are just learning to spell like toluene for explosives and butadiene and styrene for synthetic rubber. I can feel it swelling the room: the belief that the city we created was for just this purpose: to prove that excess is our country's greatest asset. And excess is Texas.

Jesse Jones with his mop of white hair towers above the Washington men; Oveta Culp Hobby has a face that is so beautiful and quick and iced with grace that I feel sorry for Eleanor Roosevelt who, the Duchess observes, is long in the tooth like a horse. But Mrs. Roosevelt asked Cad to call her Eleanor and I sidle near when I see the Duchess sitting deep in a charm session with our mayor.

Eleanor is like a magnet; as soon as I am near I am swept into her orbit. The war will at least provide opportunity for the Negro and women, she is saying.

There is no Negro here except the waiter, and I, as an example of war-time woman, feel thrown back a hundred years into my role as bandage-roller and sweet-smiler. I feel this even though Cad and I have gone to work at the Office of Price Administration - even though I have found a job Oscar's sister can take and even though we are dealing with money. We are dealing with prices, I think, as usual.

"They also serve who only sit and wait." I surprise myself by saying that; I speak sweetly though, as usual.

Eleanor turns. "Oh, my dear, *I* certainly have no intention of sitting and waiting at all. And I really don't believe that our young women do either. They are signing up for factory jobs in droves." She bares her long teeth but she speaks sweetly too - although not nearly as sweetly as I.

"Of course you are right," I say. "What an opportunity for a girl who thought her only chance was the five-and-ten. But I wonder - just a little - if war doesn't always set women back. When the whole country is focused on the soldier, the strong brave young man . . ."

Cad jumps in at my hesitation. "Have you looked around the room, my friend? There's no one present under forty and I get the distinct sense that the war is being fought right here."

Eleanor reaches out to touch Cad's arm with that gesture so characteristic of eastern women - deft, glancing, suggesting the choosing of sides rather than warmth. She is winning my best friend away from me. "But when the young men must give their *lives*, surely they deserve the name of hero."

I am isolated; I grow stubborn. "Women give their lives to bring these heroes into the world and we are not given that title."

Cad's stare tells me to stop immediately, I have lost my mind, this is the First Lady of the land. But Eleanor's face is frozen in a sudden thought; I can almost see the currents whirring in her brain. Her hand is raised palm up toward my face. "You will be!" The sparkle in her eyes is giving me official sanction. "We will institute a Mother of the Year. A four-star mother. An award for the mother with the most sons in service in their country. I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for suggesting it, . . .?" She wants my name again. Am I Eudora or just Baby?

"Baby," I murmur. "I'm Oscar Yancey's sister."

But Eleanor's smile is just for me. "I went to school with a girl from the South - oh so many years ago! Everyone in her family was referred to by their familial relationship - Brother, Sister, Baby. She was named for her mother but called Ditty - for ditto. I find it absolutely *charming*.

"Well, I think *you're* absolutely charming." I am blushing and dimpling with pleasure.

Her laugh is shockingly young and strong. Heads turn. I can't believe it: She leans over and kisses me on the cheek.

The Duchess must have seen; her voice is too loud and close for coincidence. "Whatever we have to do to win this war the one thing we must not do under any circumstances is allow colored soldiers to share quarters with our white boys. I hope no one is such a fool as to do that. It would be suicide!"

There are no military men here - presumably they have their hands full; this gathering is to ensure production. Therefore the Duchess has latched onto Jesse Jones as the nearest and most southern voice in line with Roosevelt's ear.

He says something softly.

"But I mean *suicide*," the Duchess emphasizes. "Our white soldiers will have to tell them what to do instead of fighting the war - they'll have to protect them on the front lines. Why, they don't even know . . ."

My arm whips through Eleanor's and I firmly walk her over to an opposite clearing where Oveta Culp Hobby is discussing soldiers too.

". . . manpower shortage. Women could fill at least 20 percent of the jobs now done by the army, freeing men for combat . . ."

I leave Eleanor and spin back to the Duchess. With my arm across Jesse Jones at the waist (I cannot encircle that girth but I am tall enough to reach it) I tell the Duchess what an astonishingly beautiful dress she is wearing, how lovely that fuschia is, how bright and cheerful, how ...

"The Tejas Club" is excerpted from Baby Houston, *a novel in 1982 and to be posthumously published by Texas Monthly Press in 1987.*

"Baby, you're just trying to distract me. Thank you but as I was saying to Jesse here . . ."

"Can't imagine where you found that color! It combines the purple of courage with the red of determination, the silk of our brave ally China with the ostrich plumes of Victorian America . . ."

"Hiding its head in the sand?" The Duchess is quick but I am taller; I do not need to bend my knees with Jesse Jones.

"Well, we've pulled our heads up now," I say. "Aimed them right at . . ."

"Just what I was saying to Jesse," the Duchess interrupts with a futile lift of her chin - she is much the shortest of the three of us. "And we mustn't forget that this war will be over someday and that integration of the troops will destroy *your* father's South and *your* father's South and *my* father's . . ."

"South," Jesse interrupts.

"Why, *yes*." The Duchess rests her case.

I am about to remove myself to a new problem spot when the Duchess spies the lieutenant of our Vice President Wallace (Jesse Jones's announced enemy) standing in the doorway. He spies her and rushes over.

It is happening behind Jesse's immense back. He is not easy to wheel to a safe section of the room; when my arm tries to slide him away like I did Eleanor it is like sliding an oil derrick. I plead my need for a drink. I am dying of thirst. "My tongue is parched - hanging out." I say with a laugh but of course do not hang it. Jesse is surprised but merely beckons to a waiter; here at the Tejas Club he doesn't expect to have to go to the bar for me.

Jesse's opponent is kissing the Duchess. He is a handsome southern-looking man with idealistic eyes. Although Jones is from Tennessee, he stands for the westerness of our state: get it done. With his kiss from the Duchess (on the mouth where the lipstick belongs, she says coyly) still damp, the vice president's lieutenant picks up an obviously unfinished argument: "We don't need *half* that rubber, Jesse, and you know it. You want to spend the taxpayers' hard-earned money . . ."

"We'll need twice that much by *July*," Jesse says firmly. "And I imagine more of that money is mine than yours since I don't have a church to hide my income in . . ."

"We have freedom of religion in this country, thank God." The idealistic eyes manage to look like they just got off the boat.

"Why, of course we do!" I say sweetly, bending my knees toward our refugee. "And I've always thought the collection plates are so beautiful they should be used for something besides just money . . .

"Oh, he doesn't have a *congregation*," Jesse says. "Although I'm sure, since he declared his house a 'church,' that he preaches a sermon there every Sunday." His heavy sarcasm alarms me; I sense it is totally uncharacteristic and tug at his waist once more. He won't budge; however, he does brush his hand over the back of his jacket to see what is yanking at him there. I seize the hand.

"Mrs. Roosevelt said she had to speak to you right away." I am pulling his fingers.

"*I* didn't hear her," the Duchess says. Eleanor is a dozen heads away nodding intently to Oveta Culp Hobby.

"Such a beautiful dress!" I wave my free hand and tow Jesse to the ladies.

He is so gallant I am not suprised to see him bow and kiss the hands of both our First Lady and Oveta. Then he looks expectantly at Eleanor's face.

"You wanted to talk to Mr. Jones about his rubber," I say hopefully.

"His rubber?" Oveta looks wary.

"The shortage is quite critical," Eleanor says gravely.

"Oh." Oveta smiles with relief. "Of course. Rubber." She is small and dark with eyes like Olivia de Haviland, and so immaculately groomed I want to check for stray pink threads on my own hemline.

"The president has utter confidence in Mr. Jones and his ability to solve the problem," Eleanor says warmly.

"Because South America has rubber!" I am so pleased that I remember my current events that a few seconds pass before I also remember that this is the exact source of violent disagreement between Jones and the vice president. "Did you know that rubber comes from trees?" I tell Oveta. "It actually *grows*. But I'm sure *you* knew that." I feel very intimidated between these two career women and sense that they look down on women like me; that knowledge is making me act silly. I straighten up. At least I got Jesse away from his enemy. Now all I have to do is get the conversation off South America.

It's too late. Oveta, thinking to please Eleanor, comments on the vice president's plan to feed the natives of the Amazon Valley in return for their chopping down the wild rubber trees there.

Jesse Jones believes in paying them cash for their rubber on the grounds that the natives won't bother to work if they're already fed. He now remarks to Oveta that the rubber governments will resent any patronizing attitude on our part and the implied insult to their native diet.

I am crazy about Roosevelt but none of us understand why he put *both* Jesse Jones *and* the vice president in charge of solving the rubber shortage, each as head of a different agency. They are opposite personalities: our agricultural vice president wanting to feed natives, our Houstonian insisting on contracts and money.

Of course, Eleanor can't take sides between her husband's second-in-command and the giant towering over us right this minute; she is wearing gray chiffon and pearls. I was delegated to prevent from happening exactly what is now happening. But when I order my mind to think *rubber* it comes up with a picture of Cad and me in those rubber girdles we bought last summer to make us sweat and lose weight.

"It must be very hot in the Amazon jungle," I say, looking from Oveta (still waiting for her answer from Eleanor) to Eleanor (preparing her nonanswer) to Jesse whose face shows the beginnings of a violent scowl beneath its skin now so cleanly arranged. "What kind of food do we want to send them?"

"Rice." Jesse manages to get something so ominous into that one-syllable word that I am awed. "Eight thousand tons of rice. Coincidentally Pará - which is a state on the Amazon - exports rice. I am told that they have, at this very moment, an enormous quantity of rice with no buyers. A glut of rice." Jesse is speaking directly to me as if an obsession with rice were evident on my face.

"I certainly want to assure you, Mr. Jones," Eleanor begins in her amazing ability to speak in paragraphs, "that I am in sympathy with and personally appreciate the sentiments behind your recent suggestion that the underprivileged of our own country, the shocking pockets of poverty in the midst of plenty which we still have in the United States, could benefit from governmental concern about *their* nutritional lacks. It is a noble thought and does you much credit."

Jesse bows slightly but is silent. Oveta is wildly alert. She certainly knows what she's in the middle of. At that moment I spy the Duchess, with the vice president's lieutenant in tow, heading dead for our group. I place my empty glass on a passing tray and reach for a full dark-colored one, hoping for bourbon, willing to accept rye, scotch - anything made from oats, wheat, corn, barley, anything but rice.

"Okay, guy," the vice president's lieutenant says to Jesse Jones. "I just want you to know that I told Henry" - that's our vice president - "that there's no way we can give all that food to the Amazon people and still get rubber. I just want you to know that I'm a Texan too and a business man and I know you can't expect anyone to work on a full belly. It gives them motivation cramps - hahaha."

Eleanor recoils and I'm sure was going to speak but the Duchess thrusts her face right in the First Lady's and says, "You can't go against human nature - I was telling Popsy that just the other night." The reconciliation has produced "Popsy"? "If the good Lord had wanted the Black-eyed Susans to cross-pollinate with the Easter lilies He wouldn't have made one with a root system and the other with a bulb system, I know that." Her smile is dazzling.

"And furthermore Henry agrees with me that social conditions make it imperative that we conduct further study on the Amazon situation before we consider shipping them food. BEW is drawing up a plan of study right now . . ."

BEW? Much as I love FDR I think his compulsion for initials is turning the USA into a giant monogram joke.

". . . take the money we were going to spend on food . . ."

"How much money?" It is a question Jones learned at his mother's knee and asks frequently.

"I'm terribly afraid I don't understand the significance of the bulb system and the root system?" Eleanor's voice is as frozen as a Holland winter.

"Five hundred million?" Jesse Jones practically shouts from outrage at the blood of Houston being sprayed out like bayou water.

"I said *under* five hundred million . . ."

"For a *study*?" We are not that hipped on education in cowboyland.

"For the whole project. The study shouldn't run more than four or five million."

"Three generations of southerners is not long enough to forget . . ."

"Three times the total amount of money which saved the entire banking establishment in Houston in 1933?"

There is no more I can do. I extricate myself and head toward "Popsy." Let them sweat like the Amazon natives, like the figure-conscious women.

Oscar, when I find him, has just noticed the ruckus in the corner - hard to miss with Jones's towering white head shaking in rage over a sea of coiffures.

"Brother, it's such a wonderful party," I say, bending my knees, dimpling pink. "Maybe it would be a good idea to get everyone seated at the table now?"

I catch Oveta's eye as she takes her seat; does she give me a tiny wink? Of course at the table all enemies are carefully separated.

We are having shrimp remoulade, filet mignon with squash soufflé, avocado and Texas grapefruit salad - because I am in charge of the menu we also have tiny creamed onions and a choice of sherbet or chocolate mousse.

Oscar introduces the first of the speakers during the shrimp. By the time the last of the mousse has disappeared, all of us are ready to go to work immediately and produce, produce, produce. Then Oscar winds up the speeches by quoting General Sherman: "Sherman said, 'War is hell.' " There is a twinkle in his eye and everyone waits expectantly for the renegade Sherman to be contradicted. "I say - begging the ladies' pardon, 'Hell, war is *business*.' " The applause is like the roar of a tableful of cannon and the Washington contingent stands and claps to be noticed above the patriotism of Houston.

We break up right after dinner because the men (and Oveta and Eleanor) have been meeting all day and will again tomorrow. Benjie offers to take Cad and me to Jakie's for a nightcap (he is not a member of the Tejas Club because he is Jewish) but Cad feels too patriotic to gamble. Johnny enlisted the day after Pearl Harbor and Cad thinks she should go home and write him a letter - we have been persuaded that letters win the war too.

"Well, *I* will buy *you* a drink." I am holding Benjie's arm and now squeeze it. I have a knot in my stomach as if we are mobilizing against Hitler with our right hand and supporting him with our left, as if my buying Benjie a drink will drown anti-Semitism. As soon as our drinks are set before us the waiter presents Benjie with the check to sign. He hands it to me. The waiter produces the manager just as I have finished signing Oscar's name with a flourish.

"I'm sorry, madam, but ladies are not permitted in the Tejas Club except when escorted by a member," our martinet explains politely.

"I am not allowed to buy these drinks?"

He shakes his head sadly. Benjie starts to rise; I get up too and take the arm I just squeezed.

"Well, thank you very much," I say. The Tejas Club would make a wonderful dancing club but the tables take up all the floor space except for rare parties. I begin dancing in a pathway and singing since we have no music. "Don't be a baby, Baby . . ." I arrange Benjie's arms in a fox trot position. "The drinks are on the house, Benjie. We have to show our appreciation." He won't smile but he won't abandon me either. "Baby me," I sing. "Come on and humhumhum and baby me . . ." I am looking up at his deep sad overhung eyes; his touch is hesitant. "Cuddle up and don't be blue," I sing, disregarding lyric and tune with baby pride. He is getting ready to laugh. I see the manager shrug and sit at a distant table; I know the waiter doesn't care; I know him from when he was at the Country Club.

Benjie grabs my dress at the waist; he begins to tango. He sings with a roar: "Oh, the lady in pink. The fellows are crazy 'bout the lady in pink." The dance is taking all his breath so I do the next line: "She's a bit naughty but lawdy . . ." I point a perfect leg ostentatiously out to the side. "What a personality."

The war has become a musical comedy. I am Betty Grable offering my legs to bolster OPA morale. I wish I had thrown the drinks in the manager's face instead.

"Oh, the lady's in pink, and this fella's crazy 'bout the lady in pink . . . let her be naughty cause lawdy . . ." He's running out of wind but he repeats it all gasping, holding my hand in a damp vise. When he stops he steadies his diaphragm and bows frugally.

Our drinks are still on the table. I do not want even a swallow of mine. I address the manager crouched over a table near the far door. "I just want you to know that neither Mr. Falk nor I will ever set foot in this club again and I intend to tell my brother that there's something too peculiar about the heads of a democracy meeting at a place as snobbish as this one is. It certainly won't happen again!" As I wait for the elevator on Benjie's arm, I even believe I have the power to prevent it. "I'll personally see that it doesn't."

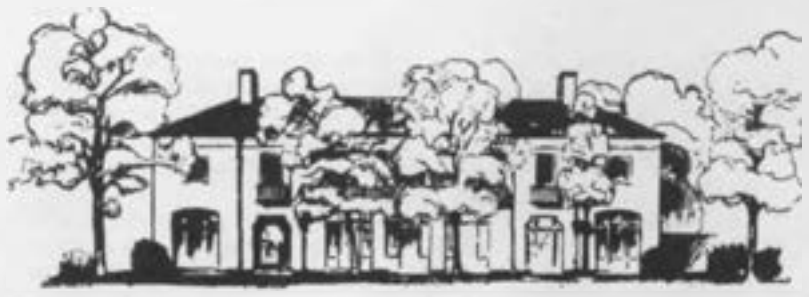
When I am alone, ready for bed, I place the First Lady's kiss on the shelf where the company china stays; I store the sentence that got it for me - honoring motherhood - among the everyday pots and pans.

I am thinking of Oveta. I think she does not look down on me. I think she does not feel superior to me because I am nothing but a housewife. I think - of course I could be wrong - that she meant to tell me, by the wink I *think* she sent my way, that she is not deceived. We will never speak of it but I think she is extraordinary and wonderful. I hope she gets her army of women.■

Esther Bubley, *South Main Street,* Houston, 1945. Courtesy of the Standard Oil (New Jersey) Collection, University of Louisville Photographic Archives

Nicholas Nixon, *South Boulevard,* Houston, 1977. Courtesy of Benteler Galleries, Houston

Robert Frank, *Prudential Building,* Houston, 1955. Courtesy of Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.



The Houston Gargoyle, 2 June 1929

Merrymakers

Walter Clemons

During the intermission we washed down gravelly oatmeal cookies with pineapple punch. Somebody figured out what oatmeal cookies are good for and lobbed one at a pal across the dance floor. Back it came, spinning through the air. Squeals. War broke out, but the chaperons crushed it. The orchestra lurched into a fox trot, net skirts rustled, chairs scraped, and boys in their first tuxedos, fifty faces blank with doom, rose and launched their partners.

Every month we came to these Merrymakers' Club dances upstairs in the old Junior League building. We were fifteen years old; there was no out. A board of iron mothers ran the club, and a week before each dance, if you hadn't asked a date yet, you were apt to come home from school in the afternoon to find a telephone number to call. At the other end of the wire a mother was waiting, with news that some sad tall girl or bouncy pill hadn't been asked yet, and a suggestion. So if you knew what was good for you, you asked a popular girl a month ahead, sent a carnation corsage trimmed with net the color of her dress, and box-stepped under the balloons without reasoning why, until another Merrymakers' evening was done. Our merrymaking was a thick gruel, stirred slowly clockwise to music by the mothers.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder. I said politely, "Thank you, Kitty," and smiled down into a grotto of tiny white teeth. Impartial as a lighthouse, she turned her smile to the partner who replaced me, and I started for the edge of the dance floor. You had to be careful, for if you so much as brushed against one of the toiling couples they would split like a dry pod, the boy would make for the punch table without a blush of shame or a backward look, and you would find yourself dancing. I tiptoed around Hallie Beth Bosley as if she were a bomb and made it to the wall where Edwina Moore had been standing since the music began, thin and unhappy, with a worthless dance card dangling from her wrist. I said, "Would you care to dance, Edwina?"

"Oh, yes, thank you." She cast a farewell look around the room. "I was supposed to have this dance with Jack, but he chickened out." Then she gave it up and put her cool hand in mine and I led her out on the floor. Edwina didn't dance cheek to cheek like the popular girls and that made it awkward because we kept looking each other in the eye and having to say things. I said, "It's an awfully good dance, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," Edwina said hopelessly. "The orchestra's good, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is." We danced on, uttering little pale sentences. I asked whom she'd come with and was sorry I'd brought it up. Her cousin. A put-up job, obviously.

"JoAnne looks pretty tonight," Edwina said.

Not knowing whether to say, "Thank you," or "Yes, she does," or to attempt a flight of fancy like, "Not as pretty as you," I kept my mouth shut. JoAnne was the girl I'd brought to the dance and whose silver identification bracelet I wore on my left wrist.

I was in my usual condition of misery. I really only wanted to dance with the prettiest girls, like JoAnne, but then I would see some poor thing marooned and feel bad and go ask her instead. But it was shallow kindness, for no sooner had I done it than I would be chewing the inside of my mouth and wondering if I was going to be stuck. The shiftings of half-hearted do-unto-others and flighty panic gave me sweating palms I kept wiping on the hip of my tux.

I danced with Edwina until my left hand was moist beyond social acceptability. I couldn't jerk it away, and clearly nobody was going to cut in. I said, "Gee, it's hot in here. Let's go on the porch and sit a while, why don't we?"

We made our way among the couples, me wiping my hand, and stepped out on the long second-story veranda, overlooking a patio planted with banana and palm trees. Edwina sat down and I brought two Dixie cups of water from the cooler. These we drank in deep silence, and then Edwina slowly crushed her cup and tore it in small pieces. Meanwhile I stared. Her straight yellow hair was brushed severely back, and under the lights along the wall her high curved forehead gleamed as gently as pearl. Her face was centered high up, in her forehead and gray eyes; her serious thin mouth I hardly looked at. I was always riotously and guiltily thinking about kissing people, for lack of conversational topics, and my impulse was to kiss Edwina on her clear, vulnerable-looking forehead. Now that I looked at her, for the first time really, I was puzzled why Edwina wasn't pretty. Her hair was pretty, her skin was, her -

I suddenly saw her lips finish a sentence I hadn't heard a word of. "What'd you say, Edwina?"

"I just said, you were looking at me so funny. Is there something on my face?" She lifted a thin hand, with bitten nails, and touched her cheek.

"Oh, no, I was just - I mean, I was thinking you look - pretty," I said, whereupon Edwina blanched, and my remark fell between us like a new-laid egg. In an effort to bury it I opened my mouth and loosed a second horror. "And that's an awfully nice dress you have on." We both stared aghast at the dress, which I observed dimly was green. Then, utterly undone, we sprang up from our chairs, bits of Dixie cup falling softly to the floor, and fled back to the dance floor.

As we stepped through the French doors JoAnne whirled past in the grip of a handsome, dangerous boy a year older than me, who rode a motorcycle, and my heart went up in flames like a ball of crumpled paper. I hardly noticed that Edwina had stopped dead by my side. I turned and saw her stricken face and said, "What's the matter, Edwina?"

She said, "You were awfully nice to dance with me, but I don't want you to be stuck with me - " She began to back away.

"What're you talking about, what're you talking about?" I cried distractedly.

"Please, don't feel responsible. I'm used to it. I'll go comb my hair a while, that's what I always do."

I caught her wrist. I could see JoAnne not far away, laughing with her partner, and I was scared Edwina was about to cry, she was all pink. I said, nearly in tears myself, "What are you talking about, stuck? I like to dance with you, Edwina, honestly. Please don't talk like that, please don't."

Some time later, when one of the partners on Edwina's dance card had appeared and I was at large again, I hunted up a buddy who was playing odd-or-even for nickels in the stagline. "Hey, Stan, do me a favor?" He look wary, and when I said, "Go dance with Edwina Moore," he dropped his nickel in alarm.

"Are you crazy?" said Stan. "What I want to dance with her and be stuck the whole rest of the night for?"

"You won't be. I'll send somebody."

"But she's a head taller'n me and she's so serious and everything. In fact, she hates me. Man, have mercy."

"Come on, she's nice."

In sheer uneasiness he began to look around the room and snap his fingers in time to the music. Then he looked back at me more considerately. "What's the trouble? You bring her?"

"No, I just feel bad about her. Come on, five minutes, for pete sake."

Stan closed his eyes and nodded glumly. "But if you leave me with her, I swear - "

"I won't, go on."

"Where've you *been?*" said JoAnne when I got back to her half an hour later, haggard.

I swallowed. "Well, you know Edwina Moore, how I was dancing with her for a long time?"

"And now you're mad for her and it's all over between us."

"Uh-huh, she's so much prettier'n you," I said wittily and was rewarded with a snuggle. "Listen, JoAnne. There I was, dancing with her, and all of a sudden she said I didn't have to be stuck with her and she'd go comb her hair and thanked me and all." JoAnne groaned. "But I hadn't done anything wrong, JoAnne. I was nice, really. And I thought that was so nice of her, not to just hang on like old Hallie Beth does and talk you to pieces, it made me feel for her, and so when somebody finally cut in on me I decided to go hunt up guys to dance with her, you know, try to make her have a better time."

"And what happened?"

"Well, I got Stan. Then I got Bob to follow him. But then I got in hot water, because when I was trying to talk Horace Ackney into going - what a stinking rat, that Horace Ackney, he wanted a quarter - Edwina looked right over where I was, and I got scared if Horace went, she'd catch on I put him up to it, so there wasn't anything to do but go back and cut in on Bob myself, he was rolling his eyes around. So there I was, big as life, dancing with her again, and it looked so fishy, bouncing back when I'd just got through dancing with her, I had to have some excuse, and what I said was, 'Edwina, I forgot to ask you when I was dancing with you before, would you go to next month's Merrymakers' with me?' "

"But you're supposed to be taking me."

I was totally unhappy. "I know, JoAnne. But there'll be hundreds of guys asking you, and it's just for this once."

"I just don't understand it," JoAnne said.

"Boy, me either! I just couldn't get over it, what she said. I wanted to do something to kind of make up for things. She never acts happy."

JoAnne nodded and said softly, "Well, with her parents the way they are."

"What way?"

"Oh, they don't get along. I don't know exactly. I've heard my parents talk."

"Are you mad, JoAnne - what I did?"

"No, I'm not mad. What did Edwina say?"

"When I asked her? Not much. She just said, 'Yes, thank you, I'd like to,' then she piped down and not another word. She didn't seem real delighted or anything."

Yes, *thank you, I'd like to*. Then, I supposed, if you were Edwina Moore, you fell silent because you just didn't know how to talk to a green boy you'd known distantly all your life. He came bungling up and asked you to a dance a month ahead; probably no one had ever done that before. What should you have done? Make big eyes or say something cute or at least, at the very least, dance cheek to cheek like other girls? Instead, you took the news inside, having been by yourself too much to change and be anything besides alone at a dance. It must be pretty terrible, I imagined, to stand unasked on the outskirts of the grins and music; you probably thought about being twenty-five years old and miraculously beautiful - and unhurt.

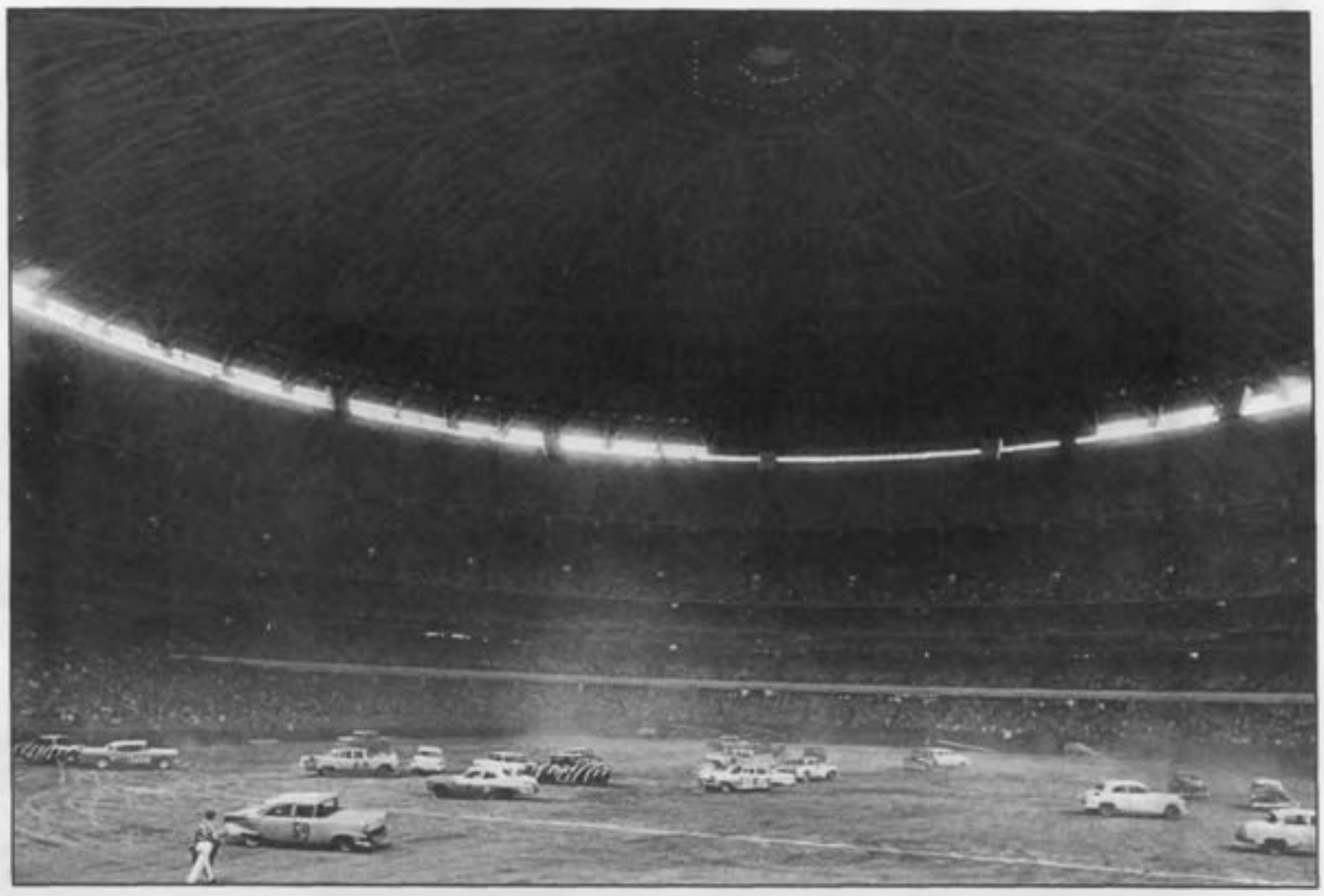
The dance ended while you were combing away at your hair in the powder room. Your cousin Jerry, I was fairly sure, held your velvet coat with a cousin's apathy just too high for you to get your arms into the sleeves. At your front door he grunted and shuffled away down the front walk before you'd even got the key out of your mother's beaded bag.

Other girls, maybe, rushed upstairs to sit at the foot of their parents' beds and chat about the dance. Your parents were social, beautiful people; I had seen them at wedding receptions. You would probably feel like a discredit to them, stiff and shy and sorry-looking. Though they probably didn't always look so handsome; sometimes they stopped talking when you came into the room, the skin on their faces shrunken with anger. You would have learned by now not to look, just get out of the room, not think about things you couldn't do anything about. Anyway, you wouldn't go tell about the dance.

As Jerry's car started off in the dark outside, you climbed the stairs. You sat down at the cool mirror in your bedroom and blurred your eyes to see yourself at twenty-five. At the dance your face burned, your skinny arm on your partner's shoulder felt light and outlandish, as if you had fever. Now you would be calmer; you could feel almost as if the dance had never taken place. Now nobody could touch you. I was sure it would never occur to you a boy was lying awake thinking about you. ■

Excerpted from "Merrymakers," The Poison Tree and Other Stories, *Walter Clemons, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959. Reprinted with permission from the author.*

Let It Rain



Geoff Winningham, *Destruction Derby*, 1971. Courtesy of the artist

David Kaplan

For an exhibition baseball game, limousines pull up, carrying men in tuxedoes, women in mink. They've come, not for peanuts and foul balls, they've come to enter the future.

Spaceship-like, it beckons. They walk the ramp, step inside. Vast, a clear span twice that of any previous structure. A crowned city, filled with great color and humanity. Skybox butlers wearing white gloves surround the highest realm.

A visiting sportswriter observes that when man first steps on the moon, five, ten, or twenty years from then, he'll feel a similar awe. A visiting pitcher asks, "Is it all right to chew tobacco?"

As LBJ peers through his binoculars, Mickey Mantle hits a home run, and the $2 million electronic scoreboard, compared in the program to the aurora borealis, erupts with shooting stars, ricocheting bullets, and a snorting steer. That was opening night, 9 April 1965.

Twenty-one years later, we approach the Dome in Toyotas, hoping for a foul ball. The Dome itself, we pay little mind. Now it means the past, and a place where we've witnessed too many Oiler games.

Beyond the local though, the Dome still holds its own. Among famous Texas buildings, it's second only to the Alamo, built in 1757. Open a Rand McNally city map; the Astrodome is the only building illustrated. Internationally, it's Houston's best known structure.

"Listen to the truckers talking into their CBs," muses Houston Sports Association Chairman John McMullen. "Houston's handle is the Dome City."

The Dome in fact makes a good city symbol. It epitomizes Houston: spacious, adaptable, air-conditioned, audacious, and out in the middle of nowhere.

Yet we've turned our backs on this intriguing monument. It's time we give the Dome its due.

The Dome was conceived in 1960, to lure major league baseball to Houston. Glenn H. McCarthy toyed with a roofed stadium scheme 15 years earlier, but Herbert Allen, who helped conceive the handsome and innovative Rice Stadium, may have originated the dome idea for this project. Popular opinion credits Judge Roy Hofheinz. Hofheinz, a businessman, politician, and circus lover, was certainly its promoter.

The design was touted as daringly innovative and a "geometric nightmare," but according to S. I. Morris, whose firm, Wilson, Morris, Crain and Anderson was one of the architects for the project, "Nothing about it was new. It just hadn't been done that big. We all had an awareness it could be done. The biggest question was whether we could air-condition a thing that big."

Legend holds that the Astrodome was architectually inspired by the Roman Colosseum. The Dome did have a model, but it wasn't the Colosseum. It was Channel 13 Studios, at 3310 Bissonnet, designed by Hermon Lloyd and W. B. Morgan, who were associated with Morris in the design of the Dome.

During construction, fans had to settle for Colt Stadium, where parking-lot attendants in orange ten-gallon hats directed the entering fan to "Wyatt Earp" and other cowboy theme parking areas. Inside, a "triggerette" led fans to their seats. Clouds of insecticide floated above. Hofheinz kept watch on the rising Dome from a Shamrock Hotel balcony.

For the playing of baseball, the Astrodome offered problems: grass wouldn't grow and the players couldn't see fly balls. Solving the glare problem was easy. They blocked the sky with paint.

To solve the problem of dying grass, Hofheinz brought in Monsanto Corporation, which led to the birth of Astroturf. The judge called up the president of the National League and told him that the newly invented polyester carpeting was about the same as grass. The president didn't quibble.

For Roy Hofheinz, the Dome was more than the "Eighth Wonder of the World." It was home. He lived behind the scoreboard. His five-story apartment came with a presidential suite, built for LBJ, containing Louis XIV and XV furnishings, a medieval chapel, a miniature bathroom, trick elevator, trick bar, a shooting gallery, barber shop, and one-lane bowling alley.

For Hofheinz, the Dome became an obsession, his kingdom, his shell. There were stretches of time when he saw little of the undomed world. But in 1976, he lost control of Houston Sports Association. He left a good-bye message on the scoreboard and moved out.

The grand Dome myths, which Hofheinz helped invent, slowly unraveled with time. Time worked on the Dome as it would a '65 Cadillac.

The appearance of other domes considerably dimmed the Astrodome's luster. Who can forget that embarassing moment in the early 1970s, the unveiling of the Superdome, which was bigger, newer, more expensive, and had more skyboxes?

The reality principle brought a more critical assessment of the Dome. Anti-Dome romantics began singing their folksongs of Fenway and Wrigley fields, with their ancient timber, their sky and breezes.

They have a point. As a sports stadium, it's not even the best in town. It wasn't built for baseball physically, in the sense that Rice Stadium was created to house football. The Dome does offer comfort, but it's too distracting. As Joe Jares of *Sports Illustrated* tried to tell us early on, the Dome actually creates a new indoor sport, "a combination of baseball, pinball, and *1984*."

The Dome merits recognition, not as a sports or architectural wonder, but for its symbols and its place in time. It's the Arc de Triomphe of Texas, a classic piece of pop-culture.

And pop-culture is as notable as any other, a point provocatively made by Peter C. Papademetriou in "The Pope and the Judge," a treatise comparing the Dome with Vatican City, which appeared in the July 1970 issue of *Architectural Design*.

Vatican City may indeed be a reasonable paradigm for Astrodomain. Both were begun near, but on a fringe, of their cities, at the site of the original cult centre (old St. Peter's/old Colt 45 Stadium). Both have as their symbols the main building (St. Peter's Basilica/Astrodome) and a public space of great scale (Piazza S. Pietro/Astrodome parking lot), which is adjacent to a collection of outbuildings (Vatican palaces/Astroworld Hotels). In both cases there exists a large collection of gardens (Pontifical Gardens/Astroworld) at a more intimate scale, and finally both the Pope and the Judge reside within each complex.

I take the tour. They still offer three a day. The indoor vastness still amazes first-timers. The tour begins with a lecture. We're given the dimensions of the Marlboro, Budweiser, Coke, and First City Bank signs. We're taunted with a list of skybox accoutrements. We're shown a multi-screen slide show entitled "The Astrodome Experience," which is like a trip back into the sixties. For the most part, this is the original Dome pitch (In the beginning, gladiators fought in the Colosseum of Rome). Some slides are badly faded.

What a tour they could give. Stories the Dome could tell. So much it has seen: circuses, tractor pulls, a Cajun wedding, a secret convention of women, bull fights, Billy Graham, and the Rolling Stones. The Guru Maharaji came, to usher in a thousand years of peace, and, as a rumored bonus, levitate the Dome. His more radical fringe believed that a flying saucer would come down to lift the guru, his disciples, and the Dome to Uranus.

Sadly, no one keeps records of the Dome. Its strange and fascinating young history could make a wonderful archives, but says Paul Darst, scoreboard operator and 15-year veteran, "Every time somebody new comes in, more files get cleaned out." One more way in which the Dome is like its city.

Darst recalls his first encounter with the Astrodome, the thrilling moment when he and his boy scout troop, dressed as astronauts, marched onto the field of the brand new Dome.

It's 21 now, this Eighth Wonder, this giant Channel 13. On this spring morning, the Dome's roof glistens. Across the street, at a trailer camp, a man is cleaning his goat.

As the world's economy looks to the East, as they dazzle us in Hong Kong, let's not forget our shining Dome, and April of '65, when the world looked at Houston and held its breath.

We showed them that nothing could stand in our way. Let the Texas sun blaze. Let the sky fill with mosquitos. Let it rain.■

Stick

Max Apple

Houston is traditionally a sub rosa city. Her prosperity originated in deeply buried oil. In order to avoid the heat of the day, her citizens pass through the downtown in underground passageways. Yet in the 1970s, this underground place burst forth like a new mountain range, a sudden city of structural splendor, a city of skyscrapers. The architectural motif of Houston's new skyline is postmodern; playful, eclectic, surprising, as if the builders, even the buildings themselves, understand the irony of constructing such massive grandeur upon a swamp.

In the 1983-1984 professional basketball season, the Houston Rockets team made its own ultimate gesture toward the sky by signing Ralph Sampson, the 7-foot-4-inch center from the University of Virginia. Sampson's presence made only a modest difference to the basketball team, but he has engaged the fans of this Baghdad on the Bayou in a scintillating aesthetic debate.

Citizens of the new Houston, as they accustom themselves to the shade of skyscrapers, no longer talk exclusively about pick-up trucks, guns, cash, country-and-western music, and the Oilers. They now discuss Ralph Sampson in the context of the continuing debate between modern and postmodern sensibilities.

Sampson is a classic modernist; he is to basketball what the glass coffee table and the Breuer chair are to elegant living. He is built in the standard modernist style, the Wilt Chamberlain-Bill Russell modern that dominated center design from the 1950s to the mid-1970s.

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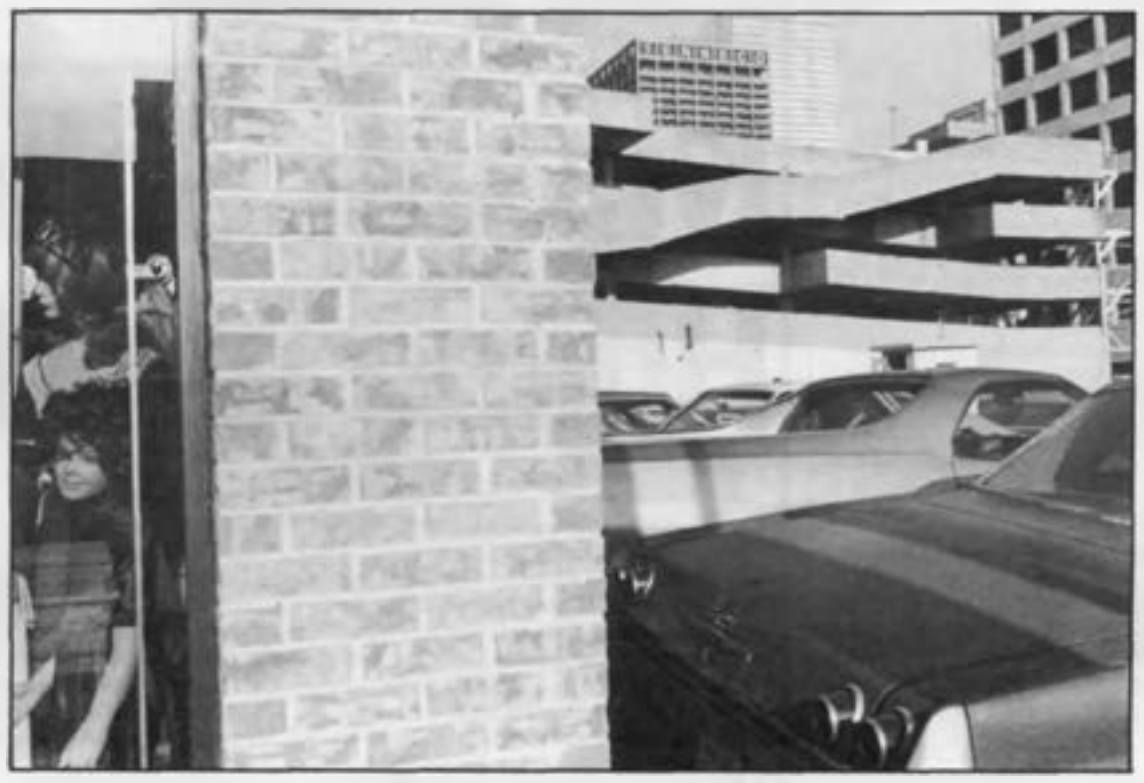
This article was written in 1984, the year following Ralph Sampson's opening season with the Houston Rockets.

George Krause, *Loop 610 East*, Houston, 1984. Courtesy of Harris Gallery, Houston

Lee Friedlander, *Houston*, 1978. Courtesy of Texas Gallery, Houston



Mirage

Wolde-Ghiorghis Ayele

I am on the corner of Capitol and Travis, on the block where the Texas Commerce Center sits, waiting for the number 50 Heights bus. Since the bus is not due for at least the next half hour I cross Travis and walk over to the Texas Commerce Tower. The sky-lobby remains open until the janitors are through with at least that floor. I am surprised that the few times I have been up there I have been the only person. It's only 6:30 in the evening, and yet it's deserted. It's a wonderful place to be. The broad expanse of glass affords an unobstructed view of the surrounding countryside - only the word "countryside" never comes to mind. Earth or terrain, flatlands or marshes seems curiously more appropriate. At this altitude I am saddest for Houston. I know that they say that west Texas is flat. I once had a roommate from Midland who used to tell me that from his house he could see his cousin's house seven miles down the road. Understandably that's very flat, but having grown up in the shadow of mountains all my life, I find Houston intolerably flat. There is some sort of psychological need that is satisfied by the presence of mountains. I don't mean a trite aesthetic longing that is assuaged by the random massing of geographical terrain into peaks and valleys. I think it has to do with some primal need for protection, a sense of guarantee, of existential security. In Houston one is at center stage all the time. In the glaring light and in the absence of any natural barriers there is no place left to hide. All that one sees on the horizon are man-made objects. They are entirely dominating, crowding our field of vision and denying us the sanctity of a refuge. Paradoxically, however, in a city whose civic pride is encapsulated to a large extent in its soaring skyline, architecture provides, very nearly, the only hope of transcendence.

Going back down to street level, I recross Travis and stand by the Texas Commerce Center. At around this time the street cleaners come. I suppose they are hired by the bank since they only clean the sidewalk fronting that building. Their work never fails to astound me. If they were merely picking up litter I would understand. After all, the current campaign to clean up Houston ("Fight Dirty, Keep Houston Clean") is probably more applicable downtown (if that area is to hold on to its showcase status) than any other area of the city. But instead, they spend an inordinate amount of time actually soaping down the very pavement, as if it were some sort of precious marble, and then hosing it with such powerful jets of spray that those waiting for buses have to step aside or actually cross the road in order to avoid getting wet.

Of all these obsessive rites of cleansing none is more decadent, and therefore more appealing to watch, than the daily rub-down of the lower courses of pink Swedish granite that adorn RepublicBank Center. I am hypnotized as I watch the whole drama unfold from my privileged position on a rampart placed across the road from where the bank sits. The rampart protects the staircase that leads down to the Civic Center parking garage. To my left, across Louisiana Street, is Jones Hall. To my right, across Smith, is the Albert Thomas Convention Center. Immediately behind me is the Jones Hall Plaza which sits above the parking garage. Further behind me, across Texas, is the Alley Theater. Directly in front, of course, sits RepublicBank.

At the appointed time, two men, both Hispanic, come out of the building with all the necessary tools. Meticulously they begin to lather the walls starting at one end. Mindlessly they caress the rounded torus that runs the length of the building and that defines the limit of the rustication. Slowly the stones begin to glow until they reach a deep blush. The men converse casually as they continue to scrub the cracks and crevices, leaving the joints free of all grime. I sit watching this scene, deriving an almost erotic pleasure from the sheer perversity of their actions. To be actually washing a building! The thought alone seems almost inconceivable. And yet, the worst, or best part of it, depending on your particular viewpoint, is that it is obviously considered perfectly appropriate and perhaps even necessary. After they are through with the walls, which, I must admit, begin to show their lustrous hues to their best advantage, they begin scrubbing the sidewalk. This, as I have pointed out, is also done around several other buildings. The logic behind such action is so obscure to me that I can only revel in its absurdity. For sure, as soon as they are through washing, people are going to be walking across it. Now, how many people are going to be inspecting the sidewalks while they go to work the following morning? Not too many, I reckon. I can understand such attention being lavished on, say, the Taj Mahal, but on office buildings? I suppose, though, that these buildings are shrines of a sort. Sometimes I wonder if they use water of a certain temperature to wash those walls. Perhaps polished Swedish granite can only tolerate water at 68° Farenheit. If so, then I'm sure every precaution is taken to ensure the exact temperature. It's exciting to be living in a place that can and will cater to the most trifling concerns. Perhaps it has to do with misplaced priorities. Whatever it is, it is strangely exhilarating. If Houston had been an older city, I would not have hesitated to label it decadent. Its willingness to please and satisfy every whim immediately, regardless of any ethical considerations, could only have earned it infamy. But its relative youth, or appalling newness, also serves as its saving grace.

The rampart on Capitol Avenue has to be one of my favorite places in downtown Houston. Sometimes, when there is nobody else around, I simply lie on my back (the rampart is just wide enough to let one person lie down) and stare up at the sky. RepublicBank Center and Pennzoil Place are the two largest buildings in the immediate vicinity. The juxtaposition of colors, materials, form, and style, when these buildings are seen against one another, approaches the sublime. When I hear someone approaching, I easily lift myself and sit upright.

I have long had an urge to lie down in the middle of the road and look up at the buildings from such a faralistic position. Once, I tried to satisfy this unconventional urge. I was with a group of friends during a national holiday. The streets were empty of cars and any other sort of traffic. As we were crossing one street I decided, after checking to ensure that there were no cars in the vicinity, to lie down, flat, on my back, if only for an instant. There was a car far away which was approaching very slowly and did not seem to be any cause for worry. I lay down on the tarmac which was wonderfully warm. Then I got up and, joined by friends who had already crossed over, continued to walk. Hardly had we gone a few steps when we heard a car pull up behind us. Upon turning around I realized to my horror that the car that had seemed on the horizon the instant before I lay down was actually a police car, on its daily rounds. From out of nowhere two more police cars appeared on the scene, one parking immediately behind the first, and the third one parking across the street. I was completely dumbfounded. My intentions had been quite innocent. After all, what danger could I have posed other than to myself? Suppose I had been trying to commit suicide, don't I have a right to choose the means with which to accomplish the act, however gruesome? My mind was reeling with unlikely explanations. How could I ever explain my lying down in the middle of the street? To be arrested for such an inane gesture seemed a crime in itself. The policeman who got out of the first car asked us for some identification, and, appearing satisfied, asked if we had seen any suspicious characters anywhere around since two break-ins had been reported in the area that morning. My friends replied that they had not. At first I had been weakened with distress and then so overcome with relief that I had to sit on the sidewalk for a few minutes in order to recover from the unexpected and ill-timed encounter. We then proceeded on our way. I have never since lain on a road. It has had to suffice to look at Houston from a distance, in an upright position, and go from there.

Lately, the idea of Houston as some sort of monumental mirage has gained prominence in my own mind, making obsolete all other similes and metaphors that I had previously thought of, and that, at various times, had seemed so appropriate in describing this city. I don't know where the idea came from, why, or how, but for the near future at least, I imagine I will be mulling over this idea, justifying its pertinence, and eventually discarding it for yet another, perhaps more accessible, metaphor.

For the moment, though, the mirage idea seems particularly apt. Words such as illusory and unattainable are often associated with the mirage phenomena. On certain days at certain times aspects of Houston confront one with as much substance as an apparition. Despite the grand schema of things, one is not quite convinced. It seems as if, from the overheated pavements, rise visions of unparalleled magnificence. It's too much. That's when I want to hide, or turn around and run back, or descend from the clouds onto solid ground.■

Excerpted from Mirage, *a book of reflections, soon to be published by Hothouse Press.*

*College of Architecture Building, University of Houston, 1986, John Burgee Architects with Philip Johnson and Morris*Aubry Architects, architects; south elevation*

Master Johnson's House of Education

John Kaliski

The University of Houston's new College of Architecture Building has been the subject of controversy since the choice of John Burgee Architect with Philip Johnson as architect, associated with Morris*Aubry Architects, was announced in the fall of 1982.[1] Even before the drawings of the design were released in May 1983 some faculty members of the college were grousing. Though Johnson's neo-historical designs from the mid-1970s to the present have proved popular with developers and CEOs, they were anathema to the ideals of "advanced" members of the college's faculty. Johnson's design, a direct quotation of an unbuilt project for a "House of Education" by the French Enlightenment architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, only added fuel to the fires of internecine academic controversy.

Dismissing the polemics associated with cases of design plagiarism as irrevelant (after all, the argument went, what architect doesn't rely on precedent?), the administration of the college concentrated on putting its best public relations foot forward while attempting to resolve with the associated architects the space-planning problems that occur when a complex program is stuffed into a preconceived form. The result *is* a public relations triumph: a building which grandly, though awkwardly, meets the needs of the architecture college. Awkwardly, because of the unresolved nature of the design and its deficient execution at the level of building craft. And awkwardly also because of the building's ambiguous pedagogical role as an example of the unconcealed truth of present-day architectural *praxis*.

The College of Architecture is big. Despite the published renderings, few realized the impact the finished building would have on its surroundings. From the Gulf Freeway, Burgee and Johnson's design dominates one's view of the university. Capping the building and floodlit at night, a cubic lantern, constructed of Doric-like columns and topped by a cornice, glows like a three-dimensional billboard advertising the presence of the University of Houston. If the freeway vision of the building suggests an invitation to "come on down" to the school (and perhaps sign up for a course?), within the boundaries of University Park the architecture building brings into focus one's sense of the campus as a coherent whole.

Johnson's design smartly terminates and lends a sense of scale to a pedestrian axis that extends northward from the campus center. The walk from the original heart of the university, the venerable Ezekiel W. Cullen Building (1950, Alfred C. Finn), past the library green, and onward to the College of Architecture is now the most impressive stroll on the campus. This jaunt actually gives the student or faculty *flaneur* the feeling of being on the campus of a major university. With the huge mass of the architecture building as a focus, spaces and vistas that before were interminably large are perceived as smaller and more reasonably sized. Before the construction of the college one always felt that University Park just oozed effortlessly from unremarkable buildings to remarkably large parking lots. The physical presence of the architecture building gives a sense of boundary to the Elgin Avenue edge of the campus which it previously lacked.

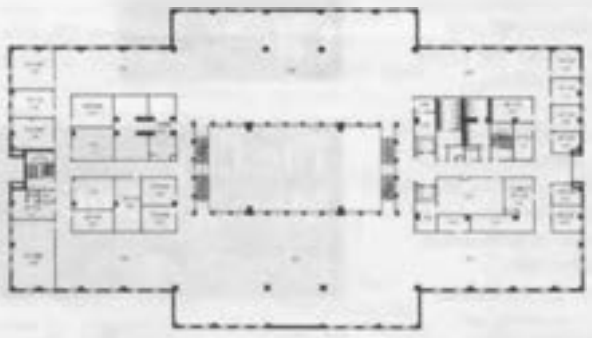
At the terminus of the pedestrian axis, standing before the south entrance of the College of Architecture, one cannot help but notice that this building towers over the adjacent (not so small) Fine Arts Center (1972, Caudill Rowlett Scott) reinvigorating the old saying that "architecture is the mother of all the arts." As one enters the architecture building (to continue the analogy), one arrives within the womb of Architecture herself, a giant six-story court about which the building is organized. This space is not, however, akin to a Hyatt hotel. In size and proportion, it is extraordinarily generous in relation to the area of the surrounding loft floors. Second, unlike the stacked pancake effect of most hotel atriums, this space is ringed by tiers of painted columns, stacked one upon the other, demarcating four interior levels. The vertical thrust of the columns creates a tremendous sensation of upward movement, which is contained, then released, within the transparent lens of the sixth and final cubic void, the lantern. What struck me most strongly, however, was not the size but the acoustics of this central space.

The central court of the College of Architecture *sounds* right for a school of architecture. The hard surfaces of the columns, the terrazzo paving of the floor, and the glass of the skylight echo and redistribute the sound coming from the oddest corners of the building. One moment one can listen-in on a design studio on the fourth floor, the next to a conversation between a faculty member and a student on the second floor. People yell and whoop to each other across the void. The stairs leading to the design studios constantly have people moving about them. What was lacking in the previous buildings of the architecture college, the sense of a community gathered together - audibly, visually, and physically - for a common purpose is present in this space.

If architecture were as simple as choosing an appropriate idea, most buildings would be good and many more would be great. What prevents Burgee and Johnson's College of Architecture Building from transcending the competent and good is the associated architects' inability to resolve the symbolic dynamics of the program and their slapdash attitude towards the craft of building. There are constant reminders of what happens when a building goes from initial conception through construction with very little design development. For instance, the axis from the center of the campus passes through the court where, to judge by the plans, it is intersected by a cross axis. This cross axis is also defined on the exterior by two minor wings to the north and south whose end façades are articulated by centrally placed arched entrances. Unfortunately, one soon discovers that these minor entrances lead not to the central court but to a fire stair and what appears to be a truck dock. From within the building, one's comprehension of the cross axis is further obscured by the unforgiving geometry of the main stairs. As these stairs rise to the second floor, insufficient vertical clearance forcibly blocks the path along the minor axis. The visual connection from the campus entrance on the south to the architecture library on the west is thus broken. If one attempts to move directly from the court to the library, there is the very real risk of cracking one's skull against the stair.

Meanwhile, the auditorium, the formal meeting place of the school, suffers from its placement off the northeastern quadrant of the court. Here, the building is narrowest in depth and, consequently, the proportions of the space are long and thin. The architects nevertheless insisted on placing the seats so that the view of the screen or lectern is toward the long dimension of the room rather than the narrow dimension. Sight lines thus are obscured, rendering many of the seats useless.

Hindsight, of course, is 100 percent correct. Still, I cannot understand why the auditorium was not placed on the eastern flank of the building where it would have complemented the library. In this location



Clockwise from upper left: *First and second floor plans; view of central court; view on cross-axis looking toward library; south elevation*

the dimensions of the building could accommodate a properly proportioned lecture hall. Assuming the stairs also took a configuration which did not block the cross axis, a more compelling symbolic and physical balance might have permeated the entire structure. The library and lecture hall would have been highly visible first-floor counterparts to the elevated design studios - studios which now, physically and symbolically, overwhelm these equally important functions of the school's educational program.

The library and auditorium are only two of the many problems not resolved in the design of this structure. By rigorously adhering to the initial elevations of the building the architects left many of the design studios without windows. Faculty offices are difficult to find. Classrooms and such ancillary spaces as lounges are cramped and dark. The sense of confinement and lack of connection to sources of natural light experienced in many of the minor rooms is difficult to accept in a building which in section is permeated by the light of a huge central well.

The building is also unremarkable in its materials, details, and craftsmanship. On the exterior, a crudely detailed paper-like veneer of black granite appears to be pasted to the base of the structure. The skin of the building is painfully flat; neither the brick nor the solar grey glass sheets offer much visual relief. The overall experience of the exterior is one of thinness and fragility, not unlike the cheap buildings one often sees in surburban office parks. Other incongruous external touches include the "Victorian" lamp standards (picked from a catalogue), which flank the entrance, and the sleazy entry doors, which appear to be made of a thickened version of the type of panelling used in basement recreation rooms. Fragility, thinness, incongruity, even sleaziness when properly executed, can be exhilirating. Here they are simply dull and common, bespeaking only the prosaic necessity of cladding the building in the cheapest manner possible.

The lack of design finesse exhibited on the outside continues inside. The columns ringing the perimeter of the court do not line up with the columns of the exterior cupola. If this break of visual continuity was not visible through the skylight, nobody would notice. Since it is, however, one is left wondering whether a polemical point about the capacity of modern engineering to ignore classical stability is being made, even as the building tantalizes us with its rhetorical display of classical precedent. One can only question what this unresolved "House of Education" teaches. What does it tell us about the aspirations of the architectural profession? What lesson does it offer students of architecture who dwell within its space?

On first glance, the University of Houston College of Architecture Building's diagram, a quadrapartite cross axial plan organized volumetrically about a large central well, is conceptually suited to the site and program at hand. The building's formal disposition well demonstrates Johnson's stated notions on the making of architecture. In a lecture at Columbia University given in 1975 he described his intentions as follows:

. . . three aspects, the Footprint, the Cave, the Work of Sculpture, do not in themselves give form, but they are what I think about in the night away from the boards, when I try to brush away the cobwebs of infinite possibilities and try to establish some way out . . .[3]

At the College of Architecture, "The Work of Sculpture" is akin to the volumetric presence of the building, which attracts one's initial attention. The "Footprint" can be thought of as the axis which leads from the center of the campus to the entrance of the architecture building. From the entrance one passes into the "Cave" and up the stairs to the studio lofts. Following through with Johnson's logic, one might then ask: what besides this *ménage à trois* gives the building "form?" In the evolution of Johnson's work since 1975 the answer clearly is imagistic historical recall.

Philip Johnson's choice of Ledoux's House of Education as a precursor for the College of Architecture no doubt derived from his long love of Ledoux's work. In an essay on his Glass House published in 1950, Johnson revealed (uncharacteristically for an architect of the 1950s) his sources of reference. Not only Mies van der Rohe, but the Parthenon, Schinkel, Le Corbusier, and Ledoux all were claimed by Johnson as precursors. Of Ledoux he wrote:

The cubic, "absolute" form of my glass house, and the separation of functional units into two absolute shapes rather than a major and a minor massing of parts comes directly from Ledoux, the 18th-century father of modern architecture. The cube and the sphere, the pure mathematical shapes, were dear to the hearts of those intellectual revolutionaries from the Baroque, and we are their descendants.

For Johnson, first a disciple of, and then an early dissident from, the modern style, the College of Architecture might be interpreted as an attempt to reestablish for architecture students the correct historical link to the foundation of modernism that his own generation is often accused of neglecting; one last clarion call admonishing the next generation of architects that "you cannot not know history." In this view, the reconstruction of the neoclassical "House of Education" returns the modern tradition to its earliest and purest root. The College of Architecture becomes a built symbol of modernity and modern architectural education in the ironic cloak of Enlightenment neoclassicim.

Johnson's familiarity with the architectural history of this time further informs him that the original "House of Education" was placed in Ledoux's ideal and authoritarian city of Chaux. Within the symbolic protection of the reconstructed architecture school, the properly educated student learns to design for the modern world; a modern world where the architect is not simply the designer of objects but the spearhead of designed political and sociological change.

While the message of the image of this building may appear to be naively optimistic, a closer questioning of these projected assumptions leaves one with a more pessimistic view. Historical research since the 1950s has demonstrated that it is problematic to think of Ledoux as revolutionary in any but a formal compositional sense, and ridiculous to assume that he was "modern." Scholarship (ironically done at the College of Architecture[4]) has shown that Ledoux's architectural endeavor was to reconcile Newtonian science with a traditional transcendent view of the cosmos and the nature of divinity. Ledoux and other "revolutionary" architects were not attracted to simple volumes and stripped surfaces because they anticipated 20th-century abstraction. Rather they chose these forms because they sensed within their Platonic geometry an affinity with Newton's concept that God and Nature's laws were related by the mathematics of physics. For the 18th-century scholar of architecture and metaphysics, the most telling examples of the laws of attraction and repulsion were the spherical heavenly bodies. To Ledoux, a "House of Educa-

tion" was not a gesture of compositional revolution, it was an architectural and metaphysical demonstration of the order of Nature ruled by a supreme being.

Thus Ledoux's creative act had a very different intention than Johnson's clever choice of image. For Ledoux, a man deeply concerned with the growing relativism of his age and craft, a "House of Education," like a great cathedral, had to be understood implicitly as a transcendent experience bringing one closer to an understanding of divinity. Johnson's modernity, on the other hand, requires a course syllabus to explore its labyrinthine intelligence. Johnson's choice of image is a private symbology understood by an already initiated *cognoscenti:* architects.

What prevents Johnson's buildings from being anything more than a clever exercise in formal revival is the College of Architecture's lack of plan resolution and craft execution in relation to its potential symbolic resonance. Ledoux, in his treatises, spoke of his ". . . dramatic enthusiasm of the craft, of which we can only speak but in an exalted mood."[3] Johnson clearly is not interested in this issue except in the most superficial ways. If Johnson and his associated architects had confronted this issue, the building might have, by necessity, veered decisively from its model in history; this discussion could have then transcended narrow historical debate. But by deeming craft and the specific nature of the day-to-day workings of the architecture school irrelevant, the discussion of this building can proceed coherently only as a discourse on tasteful, timely, and witty image-making. Unfortunately for the discerning student of architecture, Master Johnson's "House of Education" demonstrates both his limits as a historian and his lack of care as a builder.

Granted, the University of Houston College of Architecture is a far better day-to-day environment than the decrepit structures that formally housed the school. The roof does not leak. As one who survived the final years in the old buildings watching drawings get ruined by rain and classes interrupted by falling ceilings, this fact is important. The campus of the university is even enhanced by the massing and volume of the college. Yet ultimately, the building works more like an advertising sign than architecture. It locates the university. It impresses an 18-year-old who has visions of being an architect. It becomes the university's current object of good taste. And like all advertisements not backed up by substance, the image of the College of Architecture ultimately wears a bit thin.

The building of a school of architecture, sheltering students of architecture, should represent for those students the highest aspirations of their chosen path. I am left to wonder whether Philip Johnson's design does not too acutely, too easily, remind the students and faculty of the College of Architecture of a world in which most construction is debased by marketing concerns into another fatiguing category of Trivial Pursuit. The University of Houston College of Architecture Building too quickly becomes another one-line answer to a one-line question rather than a thought-filled and thought-through pedagogical act of architectural creation.■

Notes

1 See Mark A. Hewitt, "Much Ledoux About Nothing?", *Cite*, Fall 1983. Hewitt's essay is a testimony to his analytical capability. Some of the ideas for my essay, particularly the use of Johnson's 1975 lecture, "What Makes Me Tick?", were first developed by Hewitt in his prescient analysis.
2 Philip Johnson, *Writings*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 263.
3 Many of Johnson's opinions on Enlightenment architecture were formed by the writings of Emil Kaufmann. Johnson particularly cites Kaufmann's 1933 book *Vom Ledoux bis Le Corbusier*. Kaufmann's general study of this period is *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1955.
4 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1983. Pérez-Gómez taught at the College of Architecture and wrote the final draft of his book when the Johnson design was revealed. Appalled at Johnson's misuse of history, he specifically placed an illustration of Ledoux's "House of Education" in his book as a legacy to the University of Houston which he left in 1983.
5 Pérez-Gómez, p. 148.

Citeations

The City – Memory and Invention

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Sponsored by the Rice Design Alliance
In association with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
17 February - 24 March 1986

"The Vernacular Landscape"
J. B. Jackson, Craig Francis Cullinan Visiting Professor
School of Architecture, Rice University
27 January - 17 March 1986

Reviewed by Phillip Lopate

By general agreement, "The City - Memory and Invention" was considered one of the best lecture series the Rice Design Alliance has ever put on. Certainly the speakers were all solid, well-regarded experts in their field, but this in itself does not explain the phenomenon of a large, crossover audience fighting for seats to a series of scholarly talks on urban design. Some of us, jaded by the miniscule turnouts at other worthy cultural events in Houston, had to rub our eyes and wonder if the millenium had arrived. The "hot-ticket" syndrome must be taken into consideration, plus a certain social cachet attached to RDA lecture series in general (believe me, I'm not knocking it, I wish it could happen more); but beyond that, it would seem that the large numbers who came were hungry for information about how great cities are made. The attendance seemed indicative that a consensus is at hand among educated Houstonians to entertain at least (if not yet implement) visions of ambitious urban design, such as might help to pull this city a little more together.

Drexel Turner, who organized the series, announced in his opening remarks (in his usual half-serious, half-dryly-self-mocking voice): "The 'Grand Tradition of City Planning' is the idea of the series. The city as theater." And Grand Tradition it was, perhaps too much so. The chosen topics - Haussmann's Paris, Schinkel's Berlin, the Ringstrasse and *fin de-siècle* Vienna, Burnham's Chicago, Regency London, and Mussolini's Rome - comprise a Greatest Hits of Urban Design, being precisely those episodes most written about in recent years. But if this strategy risked a certain staleness, it also provided the general audience a useful summation of these celebrated cases - as such, laying the groundwork admirably for what I hope will be a sequel, dedicated to lesser-known, non-European sagas of city planning like Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro, New Delhi, Sydney, or Moscow.

The first lecturer, Spiro Kostof on Rome, gave a talk that was absolutely satisfying. Not only is Kostof a dynamic, charismatic speaker, which helps, but he organized his material with shape and point. What struck me most was his fusion of the architectural with the psychological, by focusing on the contradictory personality of the man in charge, Benito Mussolini. Il Duce, noted Kostof, needed Rome as the showpiece of his imperial pretensions. On the one hand the dictator was a preservationist, putting a stop to speculation and encouraging archeological excavations. Mussolini's position was that "We must liberate all of ancient Rome from the mediocre constructions of today," and make room around the monuments. This policy of isolating monuments and turning them into spectacular stage sets, however, paradoxically led to the destruction of many ancient ruins, paved over and bulldozed when they got in the way of new broad avenues connecting key sites. "The Fascist way is the straight line. It is the straight line which does not lose itself in the meanders of Hamlet-like thought," one architectural ideologue of the day explained.

A further contradiction in Mussolini's urban policy was that his love of Rome as a grand set went against his views of city life as harmful, to the extent of even sapping the "virility" of the masses. New

towns were established where the jaded, consumerist Romans were transported with the hope that fresh air would increase their birth rate. The results were farcical and self-defeating, as was the overall schizoid wavering of government construction efforts between these centralizing and decentralizing strategies.

Kostof's own ambivalence toward Il Duce's urban renewal made for an interestingly tense presentation. In his view, the city planning work of Mussolini must be regarded as an impressive achievement: however much we might want to dismiss his interventions as barbaric because of our distaste for his politics, we must acknowledge that the modern city of Rome bears his imprint everywhere, and often successfully so, for example, in the avenue connecting monuments around the Colosseum. However, Kostof ridiculed the Fascist equation of size with power, and deplored the destruction of many colorful, attractively cluttered neighborhoods of the poor and working class which interrupted Mussolini's streamlined vision of urban grandeur.

Not only are cities a type of theater; so, alas, are lectures. Mark Girouard is a marvelous writer, but he proved to be a rather timid, dry lecturer this time around. In trying to cover so much ground (the period from 1800 to 1860, when London tripled in size), Girouard tended towards a travelogue presentation of slides, which was rather short on analysis though good on small, quirky details. Girouard stressed how London's scale ("not grand but cozy") and its rather weak centralized power made large-scale improvements hard to do. The English aesthetic of the picturesque, with its skyline variety and curving streets, also stood in conflict to grand urbanistic impositions. But after the 1812 victory over France, prosperity dictated a more ostentatious style. The Prince Regent hired John Nash as the architect of a new Regent Street, which would culminate in the prince's own royal residence. Nash, "a brilliant scene designer," rose to the occasion with crescented streets, colonnades, terraces, and a good bit of stucco masquerading as stone. Girouard sorrowfully described the gradual overtaking of this dashing stage-scenery style by the "monotonous, gloomy grandeur" of the neoclassical period, in which even domestic architecture took on enormous scale. The National Gallery, London University, Buckingham Palace, and the British Museum were built in short order, so that London might be seen as a self-consciously grand national capital like her European cousins. Girouard spoke amusingly of the proliferating monumental statues (those "silent figures" that give London an eerie mood), and perked up when discussing the new building types that came into being in this period: the palazzo-like gentlemen's clubs, the railroad stations and shopping arcades, the large new hotels, and the popular architecture of pubs and music halls, for which he clearly had a special affection.

Kurt Forster's talk on Schinkel's Berlin took as its starting point the conflict between the attempt to understand a city as a whole, and the constant fragmentation and decay of urban experiences at close range. Around 1800, Forster asserts, people began to perceive the city as something mysterious that had to be understood - preferably in a single graspable image. Jigsaw puzzles of cities were sold, and urban panoramas came into vogue. Schinkel, as is well-known, made his living at panorama painting before being given his first architectural commission. In some sense, Schinkel spent the rest of his life trying to bring the harmony of such compositions into reality. His creation through the king's commissions of an urban suite along the river ("Schinkel-land") was a brilliant attempt to establish a rapport between nature and technology, between asymmetry and order. Like Regent Street in London, the Unter den Linden terminated in a royal residence. Standing on the roof terrace of the palace, the whole plan becomes crystal clear. As Forster summarized: "From the vantage-point of power - the king's palace - the city yields its meaning, as one giant panorama."

The speaker, who is working on a book about Schinkel, seemed nervous to cram in all his research, reviewing his subject's major buildings in Berlin while making the case for him as a daring proto-modernist and structuralist, chair designer, landscape architect, and inventor of building types. Missing in all this was a sense of Schinkel the man - his emotions, his character - without which, the name "Schinkel" came across as merely a hollow receptacle for genius. Forster's talk was one of those lectures to which one listens, thinking it would be preferable sitting at home reading this on the page at one's own sweet time.

The series regained its top form with Eduard Sekler's *gemütlich*, witty, and magisterially informed stroll through Viennese architectural history. All was unfolded at a leisurely pace, with due proportion, and a loving sense of context: the site of Vienna, its development as a fortified walled city (leading to overcrowding in the center), the building of the Ringstrasse, Camillo Sitte's criticisms of this eclectic grand promenade as only "a street for moving through, not a series of urban spaces," Gottfried Semper's rationalist interpretation of architecture and its influence on Otto Wagner, the link between Wagner, Adolf Loos, and Josef Hoffman, and the role of Gustav Klimt's Art Nouveau paintings. This speaker took seriously the title of the series, "Memory and Invention." In dwelling on the interplay of tradition with innovation, Sekler showed, for instance, how Loos tried to locate the last point of valid architecture in Vienna, and found it in the Biedermeier neoclassical tradition of 1830, which he then adapted loosely as the basis for his own modernist style.

By the fifth lecture, the correspondences and overlaps were setting up a rich echo. The rise of the nation-state and the building of a showpiece imperial metropolis was one of these connections, especially as five of the six examples happened to be capital cities. Another recurring theme was the frequently slapdash nature of such grand exercises, where vision tended to run ahead of available material and finances. David Van Zanten noted the similarity between Napoleon III's large-scale constructions and the temporary plaster-of-paris edifices at international expositions. Alex Krieger, who lectured on Burnham's Chicago, went the other way, showing how the Chicago world's fair of 1893 took the Paris Beaux-Arts style as its exemplar. One suddenly understood how much these monumental projects were set in motion as "rough sketches" to be filled in at a later date. Such city-building is theatrical not only in its creation of dramatic public spaces, but in having as its first intention the sustaining of illusion from a distance.

David Van Zanten's portrait of Napoleon III rubbed shoulders with Kostof's Mussolini, in that both upstarts tried to usurp ancient glories for their own prestige. Van Zanten seemed more fascinated with the financial details - how Baron Haussmann managed to spend one-fifteenth of the annual budget of France every year for two decades - than with the actual urban design. While pointing out that the framework of roads rather than buildings was the Second Empire's real contribution to Paris, his lecture shied away from a systematic evaluation of these changes, drifting off into a disquisition on eclecticism and preservation. The secret hero of his talk was neither Napoleon III nor Haussmann, but the architect of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Henri Lebrouste, whose remodeling was offered as an example of the best preservative instinct. As for Napoleon III, Van Zanten entertained two opposing theses - that he was the destroyer and the saviour of Paris - only to reject both, bringing in a third interpretation. This was Walter Benjamin's idea that the altered city became a sort of static museum where one enumerated without analysis an "extraordinary pile of reminiscences." Altogether, it was a clever talk which left one unsatisfied as to Van Zanten's own position.

There was no doubt where Alex Krieger stood. His was a self-professed love song to the optimism and achievement of the City Beautiful movement. Krieger is right in correcting a recent tendency by revisionist Marxist historians which would make Daniel Burnham out to be little more than an imperialist architectural tool and Babbitt of city planning. The speaker praised Burnham's "contagious hope," his commitment to Beauty with a capital B, and his counsel to

"Make no small plans." But in accepting at face-value Burnham's stress that there need not be any tension between civic generosity and commerce, while deploring the recent "developer-rule" and "technical problem-solving," Krieger failed to see how much the latter flowed out of the former. In a sense, the break-up lamented by Krieger of the old City Beautiful partnership never occurred: business is still wedded to city government, and the corporate leadership is still for beauty, only the scale and the aesthetic rules have changed. I agree, not necessarily for the better as far as city life is concerned.

Sometimes one cannot help noting a little nostalgia creeping into city planning discourse for "the good old days" of emperors and dictators, whose central absolutist authority seemed to make large urban schemes of improvement such a breeze. The corollary in democracies is a sentimental yearning for the old tight-knit business oligarchy, whether it be the Lamar Hotel gang in Houston (*pace* Robert Caro), or Krieger's civic-minded Chicago elite. A healthy counterweight to this tendency could be obtained by attending J. B. Jackson's lectures at Rice University, which ran concurrently with the RDA series. Jackson spoke in praise of the vernacular dwelling, built by the lowest class of society, usually without any architectural pretensions, preferably temporary and mobile so as to follow employment opportunities. To Jackson, the transition in building materials from wood and mud to stone was a great disadvantage for the workingman. The Establishment point of view, in Jackson's paraphrase, is "Stay where you are and tough it out;" the Establishment mode is Renaissance-Mediterranean permanence, stone construction, hierarchical spaces, and privatization. Against this traditional set of architectural values, Professor Jackson proposed a somewhat subversive love of the trailer, improvised housing additions, and flea markets in parking lots. It seemed a far cry from Haussmann's boulevards or the Campidoglio. To shuttle between the two lecture series was to be treated, somewhat dizzyingly, to the full range of arguments about what and whom cities are for. The RDA and the School of Architecture at Rice University should be congratulated for making such a richly contrapuntal experience available to us.■

Architecture and Culture: The Fourth Ward

Diverse Works
Sponsored by Diverse Works, City of Houston Archeological and Historical Commission, and Greater Houston Preservation Alliance
25 January · 1 March 1986

Reviewed by Lorenzo Thomas

Any understanding of history and culture is based upon a compromise of mythologies that can be as easily combative as compatible.

The average Houstonian, for example, lives with a concept of "community" that requires one to juggle, ignore, or accommodate conflicting images of a city that is at once "home" in the deep-seated Texan sense of personal attachment to the land (a speculative real estate venture since 1836) and a locus of immediate economic opportunity ("else we just go somewhere else").

The puzzling configuration that confounds today's Yuppies is not altogether different from that faced by newly emancipated black plantation slaves who settled in Houston in the late 1860s. By the turn of the century, the former slaves developed a large community (originally known as Freedmen's Town) in Houston's Fourth Ward, a number of strong churches founded by such leaders as Rev. Jack Yates, and a sense of progressive purpose. Much of the community's ambition and hope was reflected in the recent Diverse Works exhibition "Architecture and Culture: The Fourth Ward." The exhibition presented more than a few wonderful and thought-provoking revelations, but, unlike the Brooklyn Museum's extensive and highly acclaimed resurrection of the early black community called Weeksville, this show highlighted a community that is currently in danger of demolition.

The Diverse Works show addressed the highly controversial issue of historical preservation in a Fourth Ward teetering on the tightrope of related political and aesthetic problems. The innovative combination of historical artifacts, architectural drawings and models, and both naive and accomplished artworks presented what sometimes seemed to be four different exhibitions that didn't quite achieve the thematic coherence that curator Neil Printz and his talented colleagues sought.

Creative contributions from such painters and sculptors as John Biggers, Harvey Johnson, Vanzant Driver, and the wonderful folk artist Naomi Polk somehow did not blend as comfortably as they might have with the equally brilliant documentary photography of Paul Hester, Earlie Hudnall, Sally Gall, and Janis Fowles. The show was logical and well-designed but a certain narrative element seemed missing here. Many gallery-goers might not have perceived a clear connection between the late Ms. Polk's religious obsession (exemplified by an entire wall of paintings depicting John baptising Jesus), her poignantly colorful expressions of loneliness, and the electric vibrancy of Biggers's transformation of typical Fourth Ward shotgun houses into a hieroglyphic tapestry of ancient African mythology.

An optimist might feel that these images, once the historical preservation of the neighborhood is achieved, allow all of us to see what Biggers sees. It is one thing, however, to sell the public a Lincoln Center (new buildings, old pedigreed art), an attractive Victorian mansion, or a hotel made famous by colorfully besotted oil barons, and quite another to accomplish preservation of humble homes built or rented by the descendants of slaves and poor immigrants.

Pioneers knew the necessity of landmarks, but all of us know that, memorable as they may be, landmarks are not necessarily permanent. Our urge to preserve historical landmarks is an expression of decency similar to our reluctance to kick a dog, but the fact is that every effort of historical preservation always has a subtext of mythological preference or outright cultural bias.

New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts perfectly illustrates the social and cultural conflicts involved in urban architectural concepts of redevelopment or preservation. Designed to house the best of Europe's performing arts (opera, ballet, symphonic recitals), Lincoln Center simply demolished, then occupied the city's historic San Juan Hill district, with protest only from the churches and elderly homeowners of that black community. That San Juan Hill had its own impressive cultural history as the residence of the great Negro performers of the early 20th century (Bert Williams, Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake; childhood home of 1940s jazz innovator Thelonious Monk) and that it was a stable and viable community was well-known but not a significant issue in the city's Board of Estimate debates. Lincoln Center's real purpose was the financial "revitalization" of an old, perhaps blighted, neighborhood accidentally located on valuable real estate.

The Diverse Works exhibition documented similarly questionable motives at work in Houston's Fourth Ward. The building of Allen Parkway Village in the 1940s, an attempt to upgrade housing in the area, produced racial dissension. The construction of the federally funded Gulf Freeway in the 1950s razed the business and cultural center of black Houston, which was located on the now nonexistent Frederick Street. Real estate speculators ploughed under the Carnegie Library, built by and for black citizens, and the lovely Alfred C. Finn-designed Pilgrim Building, which accommodated many of Houston's most successful black businessmen and professionals. The exhibition's collection of maps, historical and recent photographs, and commentary concerning the tragedy of this urban "progress" provided eloquent testimony to the truth of the black community's adage that

"urban renewal" is merely a bureaucratic euphemism for "Negro removal."

Although a 42-block Freedmen's Town Historic District was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, the future of the Fourth Ward is still in jeopardy. The Diverse Works exhibition, as an attempt to focus discussion on desirable alternatives to perfunctory destruction of a community that a few dedicated carpenters (distinguished from computer analysts or engineers) might actually revitalize, was an ambitious and extraordinary undertaking.

The mythologies might come together, as the freed slaves used to say, "bime by." Not yet. As political activism, the Diverse Works exhibition didn't weigh-in heavy enough; as useful documentation for future battles it seemed, lacking a catalogue, too ephemeral. But as an incentive to expand public awareness of real issues affecting Houston's social and physical growth, "Architecture and Culture: The Fourth Ward" was effective. Neil Printz and company deserve applause.■

Photographs of Texas Monuments

Farish Gallery
Rice University
20 February - 19 March 1986

Reviewed by April Rapier

For all the documentation about Texas monuments - erected to celebrate and fix in memory the state's heroes and events - we rarely get a sense of these monuments in a changing context, either environmentally or historically. Paul Hester's recent exhibition of photographs at Farish Gallery, in conjunction with the Houston Foto Fest, has accomplished that rare feat. Moreover, his images manage to have both dignity and narrative whimsy,

Paul Hester, Alamo Cenotaph, San Antonio, *1986*

often incorporating visual punning. Unlike other documentary projects, there is none of that dry, obsessive, restricted notion of accuracy associated with the formality of the view camera and its architectural applications. Rather, one is struck by the spontaneity of the passing, almost peripheral, "decisive moment." At the same time, Hester's technical clarity and delicacy support the concept of timelessness, as these monuments assimilate stoically into their environments.

The statues of people, often photographed from behind or from a peculiar angle, maintain watchful vigil over an eternal domain, sometimes casting stern, disapproving glances over the changes witnessed through the years - as in the case of one portly, bronze-cast gentleman, hat in hand, who glares at students littering a college green. Other statues seem to delight in the lively goings-on. Since historical monuments are usually situated in a public space, complete with park benches and trash barrels, many of these photographs capture an urban traffic ranging from unseemly to familial. Other images cull details from walls and structures, suggesting the solitude and isolated solemnity of history.

One of the most special aspects of Hester's vision of monuments is their reduction in stature from the original glorious intentions and proportions. With many now placed against a backdrop of skyscrapers, these relationships can seem eerie or absurd. The photographer's commentary, however, is tinged with admiration for the resulting eccentricities of age, weathering, fate, and maintenance (or lack thereof).

Ultimately, these monuments and statues come to seem ubiquitous: just as the viewer gets a fix on one predominant form, others pop up in the distance. The inclusion of people, street signs, and other identifying references of locale, as well as Hester's use of a car windshield or window as framing device, proves a wonderful way of reinforcing the permanence of these structures (in the same way that any frame adds an element of formality to a picture). And sometimes the monument is merely a great excuse to photograph the attendant action, as eternal, in its way, as the historical event which inspired the commemorative structure.■

Photographs from the Bauhaus Dessau, 1925-31

Farish Gallery
Rice University
21 January - 16 February 1986

Reviewed by Sally Gall

"Photographs from the Bauhaus" brings together 83 black-and-white photographs by teachers and students of the legendary Bauhaus school in Dessau, Germany. It was assembled by Anne Tucker from a portfolio of Bauhaus photography recently acquired by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. S. I. Morris, and with additional prints lent by the Tartt Gallery of Washington, D.C.

The atmosphere of the Bauhaus was untraditional and experimental: a spirit of inventiveness and a frequent playfulness are visible features of the exhibition. The school considered itself a "laboratory" of exchange between students and masters, encouraging a sense of collectivity. Peter Gay in *Weimar Culture* describes the Bauhaus as "a family, a school, a cooperative business, a missionary society." The Bauhaus not only encouraged a communal spirit in the social sense, but also in the integration of various materials of art and methods of working, and in the integration of the usually separate concepts of art and craft. Towards this end the Bauhaus disavowed the image of the artist as an isolated

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genius set apart from the world. Instead, it viewed the artist as an integral member of society, and as such, considered the artist to be the engineer of a new social order, or, in Gropius's words, "the architect of a new civilization." This idea of a "new civilization" refers specifically to Germany's needs after the failure and loss of World War I. Consequently, the curriculum of the Bauhaus was not focused on the fine arts, but on the design of objects and tools that perform a functional role in everyday life, objects which are the subject matter of several of the photographs in the exhibition.

Photography was embraced by the Bauhaus as one of the modern tools for art and communication. Photography's ability to be mechanically reproduced lent its use to printing and to graphic design, already an important area of the school's curriculum. The medium was widely accessible and was able to be widely disseminated, factors which promoted its use within the collectivist, and often utopian, "art for and by everyman" approach of the Bauhaus. But most important at that time was the concept that photography was a new medium, and that this new medium was not anchored to the past. As part of Germany's attempts to re-build its economy after the war, great efforts were made in the technological and industrial development of the country. In the field of photography, this new technology brought the 35mm camera. This camera, smaller and lighter, allowed for greater freedom of movement, which in turn allowed for new vantage points and for an immediacy never before possible, potentials which the Bauhaus took advantage of.

The Bauhaus's interest in photography covered a wide spectrum. Some of the images in the exhibition consciously break with existing rules of pictorial composition and traditional subject matter. Other works show an understanding that the factual reporting from the unconscious camera offers new visual insights. These and other new ways of seeing the world are explored through negative printing, montages, photograms, double exposures, straight shots from unorthodox angles, and ambiguous and perceptually unsettling vantage points.

Because of the Bauhaus's emphasis on experimentation, many of the photographs in the exhibition were not intended to be individual works of art, but experiments in technology, perception, and design. Thus, as individual finished images, the work is not always strong. Some is student work and not fully developed, in contrast to the work of László Moholy-Nagy, for example (of which one wished to see more). The inclusion of a more comprehensive historic context would have permitted a fuller comprehension of the significance of the images in the exhibition and the significance of the medium of photography to the Bauhaus. Taken in its entirety, however, the exhibition embodies the spirit and ideas of the Bauhaus which remain surprisingly contemporary.

Even today, the Bauhaus has the status of a legendary avant-garde art school whose students and teachers - Josef Albers, Walter Gropius, Vasily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, László Moholy-Nagy, Mies van der Rohe, Oskar Schlemmer, among others - are regarded as some of the great creative intelligences of the 20th century. "Photographs from the Bauhaus" is an important historical document recording a period of time when the ideas of an artistic and intellectual avant-garde coalesced and penetrated widely, so widely that many of their concepts form a part of our everyday creative vocabulary.■

UnCitely

Terminal Condition

Jan O'Brien

When the City of Houston accepted Goleman and Rolfe and George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce's design for Houston Intercontinental Airport in 1963, officials crowed "If it is as attractive as it appears, and as functional as you promise, it will be the greatest airport in the world." City Aviation Director Joseph A. Foster added, "The unit terminal concept is a new approach to air terminal design. We believe that for the first time in the world, we have a design that deals successfully with the basic humanities of public conveniences."

The promise was kept. Today's domestic traveler uses one of the most humane terminals in the country. In the original A and B terminals, four diagonal bridges spring from the corners of a spacious central "holding tank" to four circular embarking areas, each with docking for five planes. Hence the departing traveler can linger in the central lobby containing ticket counters, a restaurant, and newsstand, then walk to his gate in a mere two minutes. The returning traveler is as well-treated. Luggage is returned at the lower level of the lobby with clear signing marking separate doors for taxis, rental cars, and parking for those greeting arrivals. Parked cars can be reached by elevator on upper-level parking decks - a convenient, if expensive, amenity, or via a free electric subway to surface lots.

Why then, in a place named "Inter-continental" from its inception, is the area devoted to "processing" the nearly 1.5 million international travelers as beautiful and functional as a third wing on a 747? Vacationers returning home from tropical isles are separated into a narrow glass "dog run" corridor and shuttled down escalators to a crudely retrofitted customs area in the basement of Terminal B. The finishes of the crowded inspection area are mismatched and abused, signs of its eternal temporary nature.

The original architects' design for phase two called for a central hotel with a three-level terminal to handle international travelers. Unfortunately, neither the Airport Hotel by William B. Tabler, finished in 1971, nor Terminal C by Airport Architects (Goleman and Rolfe and Pierce Goodwin Alexander) followed this design or incorporated the special needs of Federal Inspection Services in other ways.

William Answorth of the Houston Intercontinental Airport's Public Affairs Department stated that international travel will be consolidated into a new International Terminal by 1990. Airport officials are still "discussing the design parameters" and have not chosen an architect. Requests for proposals will be let to the architectural community.

Although the new terminal, originally intended to be in use by the mid-1970s, remains in the embryonic stage, airport improvements are being made. Terminals A and B are being remodeled for increased energy efficiency for $14 million. The remodeling will include mechanical, structural, and roofing upgrading, with very few cosmetic improvements which might be appreciated by the traveler. The new east-west runway is scheduled to be finished in January 1987 at a cost of $55 million. Since fire trucks must respond within two minutes to runway alarms, a new fire station is being added. In addition, operation's facilities and cargo areas are being expanded and new road graphics are nearing completion.

These are all undoubtedly valuable assets, but one hopes that the eighth largest airport for international travel will soon present a true front door to voyagers. It is imperative that now, when the Houston economy is undergoing restructuring, that this aspect of the lucrative tourist industry not be ignored for another decade. ■

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Sally Gall, Shamrock, *1985. Courtesy of Texas Gallery, Houston*

The Last Splash

David Crossley

Long ago, my friend Tom lived at the Shamrock Hotel where his father was the manager so we had the run of the place. We were at an age when everything is available and free and life can be about purpose or about waste and for the moment we had chosen waste. We had postponed our careers to concentrate on the luxury of the Shamrock with its glorious pool and the penthouses and all the other comforts and pleasures of a fine hotel. There was a constant flow of waiters with food and drink and cigarettes. Our gluttony and whims were terrible and expensive but everything was on the house so we denied ourselves nothing and when we were bored we made long-distance phone calls to Jawaharlal Nehru. Sometimes we stood on the 16th-floor balcony to drop kitchen matches which exploded when they hit the sidewalk and terrified the glamorous people coming and going.

Life was about existentialism, which meant lounging around the hotel pool which is the grandest in the world. We were very intelligent and educated then, so we could drink Bloody Marys in the sunshine and talk about Camus and be Camus and look at the waiters with quiet understanding before we suggested that they deliver steaks to us. Because of our endless credit, we were very popular around the pool and made many new friends every day, especially young women whose welfare our waiters saw to as the girls realized that with us they could fully address their desires.

Our favorite place to eat there was Trader Vic's, which served rich, poisonous dream drinks and lots of wonderful little snacks. When we went to someone's home for dinner we went out through the Shamrock kitchen and carried off armloads of huge, double-cut strip sirloins and mushrooms and pounds of butter. We took what we wanted at all hours.

The lobby was a wonderful place where people as privileged as we flowed in and out speaking European languages and being rich. We had almost no money but in the world of the Shamrock none was needed. Many of our friends were rich so we always traveled in wonderful cars. Sometimes a young woman would pick me up from work in a white Thunderbird convertible and my co-workers would watch me and the beautiful blonde in the sun on our way to the Shamrock and the pool and Tom's private rooms.

Life at the Shamrock was more of a mood than a series of vignettes. It was often a question of whether a day or a week was in or out of control and if out whether there would be any dying or brain damage. Once we had a Roman toga party which occupied the entire 16th floor. We covered the floors with mattresses and squashed grapes with our feet and threw food and glasses at walls and were very personal with one another in our sheets. The damage to the hotel was significant, but I recall no consequences. Several people who were involved in this unruly life are now respectable and successful Houstonians. We became sophisticated at the Shamrock during the infancy of rock and roll and just barely prior to the widespread use of drugs among young people, so it could have been worse.

My long ago way of life at the great hotel has been beyond my means ever since, but I still love to go there and swim with my family and have a drink by the pool and listen to the European voices and remember that life can be dangerous and thrilling. The Shamrock has not changed at all except that it is threatened by the Texas Medical Center board, which is rumored to be ready around the end of June to turn the dream to rubble. I am unable to conceive of any justification for the destruction of such a perfect and rare place but I understand that there are men with no souls who have not lived well. They are able to contemplate this action because the Shamrock has always been about light and dancing and endless gaiety and not enough Houstonians are interested in these aspects of life now.■

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