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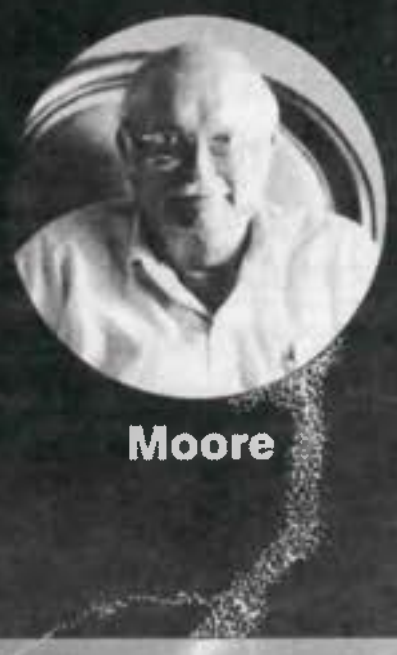
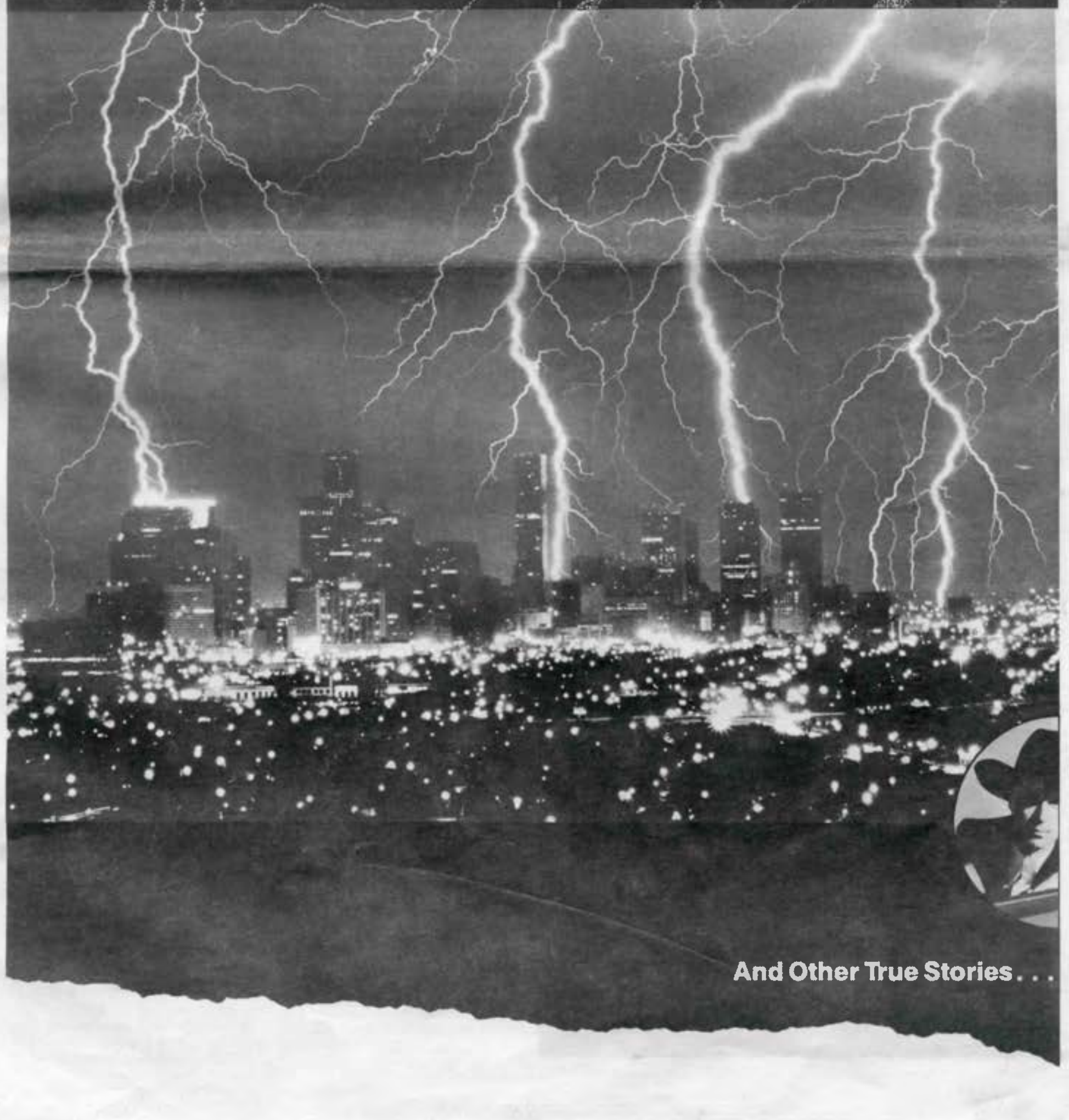
Gehry

Botta



Moore



And Other True Stories . . .

Cite

COVER: **From left to right, architects Frank Gehry, Mario Botta, and Charles Moore with photograph by George O. Jackson. Design by Alisa Bales**

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Big Cité Beat

☛ **MacKie and Kamrath** observes its semicentennial this spring, marking for founding partner **Karl Kamrath** a half-century of modern architectural practice in Houston. The firm's first building, a speculative house at 1811 Portsmouth Street, remains in mint condition. Alas, some of its better-known works are faring less well. The **Houston Fire Alarm Building** (1939) in the Civic Center, the first modern public building in Houston, is slated for demolition by the **City of Houston**, which also plans to deface the **City Health Department Building** (1963) in the Texas Medical Center with a gratuitous face-lift. Nearby in the Medical Center, **M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute** (1954), perhaps MacKie and Kamrath's single most famous building, is now completely surrounded with annexes and additions.

☛ Biting the Dust: Guardian Savings will demolish the **Lang Building** of 1904 on **Market Square**, better known as Warren's. It is the last historic building on the west side of the square and it was occupied by one of the few survivors of Market Square's hey-day as a center of downtown nightlife. **Texaco, Inc.** demolished the 16-story **Medical Arts Building** (1926) at Walker and Caroline, an effusive neo-Gothic extravaganza in cast stone, the second week in February. It was one of a number of "Gothic" skyscrapers designed by the architects Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb in Texas during the '20s; it follows into oblivion Medical Arts Buildings in Dallas and Fort Worth.

☛ **V. Nia Dorian-Becnel** was guest curator for the exhibition "African-American Contributions to Texas Architecture," mounted in January by the Dallas County Heritage Society in Dallas. New books are popping out all over: **Wolde Ayele**'s *Mirage* (Hothouse Press); **Ann Holmes**'s *Joy Unconfined* on the work of Houston artist **Robert Joy** (San Jacinto Museum of History); **Peter G. Rowe**'s *Design Thinking* (MIT Press); and **Phillip Lopate**'s *The Rug Merchant* (Viking Press).

☛ Impresario extraordinario **Scott Harmon** and crew on 7 February pulled off yet another memorable bash, «¡Holá Dalí!», the **Archi-Arts Ball** of 1987 at El Mercado del Sol. The Archi-Arts floor show featured living embodiments of great surrealist works: architectural historian **Richard Ingersoll** was Magritte's "Le Thérapeute" (birds courtesy of printmaker **Karin Broker**). LA's **Diane Ghirardo** jetted in just for the fiesta; she was escorted by architect-about-town **Carlos Jiménez**. Party Houston was represented by king **George O. Jackson, Jr.**, novelist **Olive Hershey**, and landscape architect **Frances Chamberlain**, decked out in black, gold, and bumble-bee wings. A surreal time was had by all.

Spring Architecture Events

Rice Design Alliance
P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892, 713/524-6297
1 April-15 April – "Inner Space to Outer Space." Architects' Fireside Chats, a series of informal presentations by three Houston architectural firms of their work and working methods. All presentations will occur in the Jury Room in M.D. Anderson Hall, Rice University, at 8 PM. Admission free to students, $2 RDA members, $5 non-members. Limited seating.
1 April – Sally Walsh, interior designer.
8 April – William T. Cannady, Cannady, Jackson & Ryan.
15 April – Guillermo Trotti, Bell and Trotti, Inc.
26 March – Lecture by Mario Botta, "Recent Works." For reservations and information about both events, telephone the Rice Design Alliance.

Farish Gallery
M.D. Anderson Hall, Rice University, 713-527-4870
3 March-17 April – Exhibition: "Mario Botta." Drawings, photographs, and models of buildings and projects by the Swiss-Italian rationalist architect. Organized by The Museum of Modern Art. Introduced with a lecture.

Greater Houston Preservation Alliance
18 March, 15 April, 20 May – Guided walking tours. For more information, please call Barthel Truxillo at 713/861-6236.

Houston Chapter, American Institute of Architects
20 Greenway Plaza, Suite 246, Houston, Texas 77046-2002, 713/622-2081
15 March, 19 April, 17 May – Guided walking tours.

School of Architecture, Rice University
713/527-4870
9 March, 17 March, 23 March, 30 March – Lectures in architecture; 1 PM, Sewall Hall, Room 301, Rice University campus; admission free.

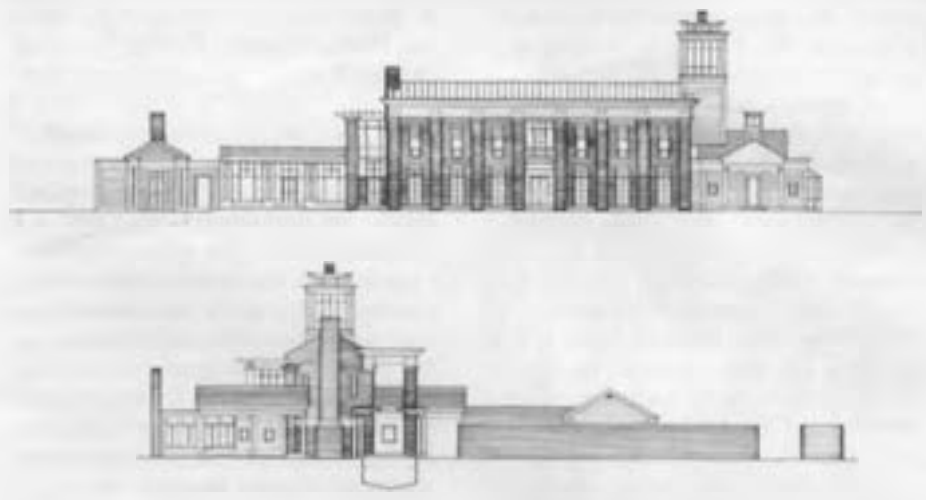
College of Architecture, University of Houston
713/749-1187
25 February-12 March – "The Shadow of a House;" new tapestries by Laura Foster Nicholson. The Architecture Gallery.
4 March-8 April – Spring lecture series, "Evolving Perspectives," continues. All lectures at 2:30 PM in the Theater on the UH campus. Sponsored in part by the Brochstein Foundation.
4 March – Robert Kliment, "Recent Work."
11 March – Malcolm Quantrill, "Lateral Mindedness vs. Literal Mindedness in Alvar Aalto's Design Thinking."
1 April – Peter Eisenman, "Realizing the Fault."
8 April – Diane Ghirardo, "Deceit and Meaning in Postmodern Architecture."

Department of Architecture, Texas A&M University
409/845-7851
4 March – Lecture by Peter Davey, editor of *The Architectural Review*, 7 PM in Harrington Auditorium, Room 207; free.
8 April – "The Spirit of Religious Architecture," by Clovis Heimsath. Lecture at 7 PM in Harrington Auditorium, Room 207; free.
20 May-23 May – Architecture Registration Exam Workshop; fee required.

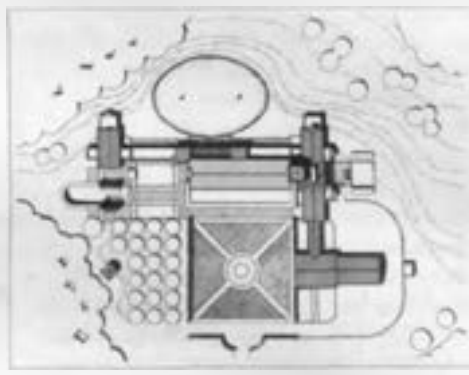
School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin
512/471-1922
6 March-26 March – Spring lecture series continues. All lectures held at 4 PM, Jessen Auditorium; free to the public unless otherwise noted.
6 March – Peter Davey.
10 March – Michael Graves. Lecture at 6 PM in LBJ Auditorium; registration fee $5, $3 students.
25 March – Ricardo Legorreta.
26 March – Ricardo Legorreta.

Citelines

Machado in Texas



Top: Bedell-McFarlane House, 1985, Rodolfo Machado, architect, south elevation. *Above:* West elevation, Bedell-McFarlane House. *Right:* Site plan, Bedell-McFarlane House



Rodolfo Machado's arrival at Rice University this year as the first Harry K. and Albert K. Smith Visiting Professor of Architecture had been preceded by three unbuilt designs by Machado and his associate Jorge Silvetti for projects in Texas. Architectural and urban design schemes by the Boston-based firm of Machado and Silvetti Associates have been honored with numerous awards, exhibitions, and publications and their work has figured prominently in the postmodern preoccupation with the semantic dimension of architecture and the debate over historicism versus invention.

The work of Machado-Silvetti deals most often with ethnocentric themes and urban typologies where an assured sense of the classical mechanics of architectural form-making is used to pursue metaphorical intentions. Even at the residential scale there is an intense interest in urban issues of publicness, privateness, and gathering, and their architectural representation through courts, gates, gardens, and towers. The designs are rigorously conceived in plan, usually employing strong, geometric partis, evocative both of classical architecture as well as an almost primordial sense of place-making.

Two of their Texas projects are urban design schemes. Machado's individual entry to the Houston Sesquicentennial Park Competition (1985) organized the irregular site along Buffalo Bayou into five public squares by extending the axes of the surrounding city grid. Each of the squares seized upon opportunities in the site and context to create a series of thematic parks. A major figurative element of the scheme was a 150-foot-high "constructivist tower" in "Houston Plaza" on the corner of Bagby and Franklin, serving as a Houston symbol and a platform from which to view the downtown skyline.

A second project, in Dallas, done with an urban design consortium, undertook the redevelopment of Deep Ellum, an older section of that city adjacent to the central business district. This project, which is extensively described in *Lotus 50*, attempted to unify the district by proposing a master plan in which a set of coordinated typological buildings (townhouse, tower, loft, courtyard, and market buildings) were used to establish a distinct identity for the mixed-use district – one which restored the potential for urban street life by providing a contrasting scale and architectural character from the isolated, self-contained towers in the downtown.

The third project, a large house near Palestine, Texas, takes off on the grand style of a southern plantation house with its long, narrow plan for ventilation and a high, shading veranda porch. Machado calls this project "a house in the country" rather than "a country house" to avoid inappropriate associations with now-mythical 19th-century country manor living (the clients are daily commuters). The house nonetheless evokes a manor-esque scale and presence. The apparent size, however, is neatly broken down into a set of smaller and distinct parts, setting up a kind of dialectical relationship between manor house and cottage ("We all have our cottage moments and our palace moments") such as Gaston Bachelard writes about in *The Poetics of Space*.

The plan employs an L-shaped parti which forms around a central motor court and organizes the activities of the house into three distinct parts. The largest and most prominent of these, the formal house, faces onto the axis from entry gate of the motor court and contains the public rooms on the first level and the family sleeping quarters above. A "domestic house" forms the east leg of the plan with a den, kitchen, service entrance, and caretaker's quarters. The crossing of these two legs is marked by a lantern over the kitchen service island and a taller observation tower over the stairs, giving a vertical punctuation to the horizontal, gabled profile of the building.

The rooms of the formal house are linked by a two-story loggia on the north side which extends out to the west, abutting with the third domain of the house, a summer pavillion with a ping-pong room, sauna, swimming pool, and outdoor kitchen. A small ceramics studio is detached from the house and positioned on the irregular edge of a formal orchard that occupies the fourth corner of the rectangular site plan.

The site concept uses geometries figuratively to create symbolic conditions of order in the wooded site. The motor court and elliptical lawn are idealized figures; the third element, the grid-planted orchard is disrupted and eroded on the west side allowing the rectangular plan to soften and unwind on the fourth corner. The service entrance through the domestic house along the side is

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segregated from the formal entrance which occurs along an axis from the gate, across the motor court to the entrance hall, and a view out to one of the two obelisks marking the generating centers of the elliptical lawn.

The house is a veritable catalogue of historical allusions and attributions. The entry hall is a direct quotation from *Boscobel*, an early 19th-century Federalist house in Putnam County, New York, known to the clients and the architects. The general shape and colonnaded veranda porch of the formal house recalls southern plantation houses of the late 18th century, here interpreted in brick with a generous masonry cornice (the subsidiary wings are painted wood). The overall site plan and formal arrangement of the house and landscape are sympatric with the English country houses of Philip Webb and Edwin Lutyens. And the observation tower is reminiscent of the widow's-walk towers found in captain's houses in seaside locations.

With all of its architectural mnemonics and *double entendres*, the Palestine house seems to lack some of the metaphorical intensity of earlier Machado-Silvetti houses. Instead, this house exhibits a real concern for livibility and domestic order. In an essay for the 1980 Biennale, Machado-Silvetti described an interest in their work as "a searching for an architecture which effects its own clarification by resorting to principles that are beyond style." Though this house seems to deal in a kind of calculus of styles, the principle lies in a well-thought-out plan and a concept of symbolic place-making based on the representation of the several domains of domestic life.

Bruce C. Webb

On Making History in Reverse

If it is at all possible to entertain a ghostly apparition of Ledoux's "Maison d'Education" alongside a Texas freeway, then to behold within this startling vision a glimpse of the growing and groaning shadow of Bramante's Tempietto under construction should not come as a surprise. Fashioned to celebrate the completion of the College of Architecture's new facility on the University of Houston campus, this project, undertaken as a class assignment for the sophomore history of architecture survey course, managed to metamorphose the school into a bustling construction site, complete with masons and engineers, carpenters and craftsmen. These were the unlikely missionaries who came together to trace the profile of new classical dimensions.

Directed by Benjamin Nicholson, and coordinated by master mason Silvano Sole, with faculty consultants Christine Cinciripini and Mark Schneider, 120 students worked some 30 thousand hours throughout the 1986 fall semester to assemble with clockwork precision a truckload of lumber, five van-loads of cardboard, six thousand screws, several boxes of glue sticks, 20 pounds of nails, and one hundred dollars worth of 3-inch bolts, into a modern transformation of one of the Italian Renaissance's gravest tributes to antiquity. As much a scholarly document of historical conjecture as an exercise in building "restoration," the College of Architecture's Tempietto was quick to assert itself as a polemical construction. A combination of hands-on research, home-spun ingenuity, and team-work coordination described the impetus for this authentic effort of architectural *re-production*.

Treatises by Filarete, Serlio, and Letarouilly provided the students with a basic interpretative strategy, enabling them in turn to unravel, on piece at a time, the nearly 500-year-old puzzle. From drum to dome, the dissected pieces were laced back together into a sandwich structure of horizontal cardboard cut-outs and open layers of space. This procedure was the manifestation of an "implicit" spatial program derived from an operation of three-dimensional section-making. As a sort of architectural vivisection to expose the poetic "innards" of the work, it was meant to guide the initiated into, through, and beyond the mysteries of the Tempietto's essential beauty.

During construction the rising drum was the genesis of a fin-like world that more aptly described the workings of an engine than it did the classical dimensions of a Renaissance structure. "Our work is divorced from the moment in which Bramante conceived of his Tempietto so that we have wanted to express honestly this dislocation in time." The desire to re-produce the Tempietto, not as a ghosting of an old artifact but as a new messenger engaged in a discourse with today, is the fundamental premise of the work. Its procedural ethic of section-making not only reveals an attempt at documenting the physical characteristics of the building, but also optimistically realigns itself with a five-century slice through western civilization. It embodies a recursive conception of time and space which is capable of yielding extraordinary wealth by viewing history in reverse.

Christopher Genik

The New Market Square

Top: **Model, 1986, James Surls, sculptor.**
Left: **Aerial view of Market Square**

DiverseWorks, the artist-run downtown arts organization, has initiated a project to turn a downtown eyesore into a useful and aesthetically relevant park. Market Square was to have been the site of the first capitol of the State of Texas. In the bicentennial year it was transformed into a landscaped park – a transformation that proved less than successful. The park is neither well-used by citizens, nor a focal point for the surrounding 11-block area designated by the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Since 1982, the Downtown Houston Association (DHA) has been studying proposals for the transformation of the site into a more appropriate park. In 1985, DHA and the Parks Department endorsed a proposal from DiverseWorks that called for site-specific art works to be chosen and incorporated into a new scheme. Following procedures recommended by the National Endowment for the Arts in selecting artists to execute works of art in public places, a consultant was retained and a panel chosen. Walter Hopps, director of the Menil Collection, was named consultant and, in addition to the author, the panel consisted of William A. Camfield, professor of art history at Rice University, and Al Nodel, director of the Gallery of Otis/Parsons School of Design, Los Angeles.

The DiverseWorks panel chose five artists to submit proposals for art: Malou Flato, Paul Hester, James Surls, and collaborators Doug Hollis and Richard Turner. Both DiverseWorks staff and the panel were committed to choosing experienced artists who would respect the historic importance of the site and would encourage and promote increased public use of Market Square for casual strolling, resting, and informal music and dance performances.

What came to be the guiding idea for the project – that the park would be a work of art in itself rather than a space to install art – came about as the DHA deferred to the DiverseWorks concept and DiverseWorks assumed organizational and financial supervision. The DHA has remained an enthusiastic partner.

The artists were charged with working together to develop an overall scheme. In early meetings it was decided that Hollis and Turner (California artists who individually and as collaborators have been responsible for a number of public-art projects) would develop the site plan. In their concept, a simple, almost routine, plan, consisting of diagonal walks sloping slightly down to a central square, would be elaborated by grafting the works of art directly onto the architectural elements of the plan rather than treating them as separate objects in the park. Turner and Hollis would turn surfaces of the walks and central square into an *objet trouvé* mosaic: in recognition of the historic focus of the park and perhaps the wholesale demolition of historic buildings in the surrounding blocks, they will collect debris from demolished buildings – floor tile, marble, sections of brick – and set them in the concrete as the sidewalk is poured.

Malou Flato, an Austin artist who also has completed other public-art projects, will construct eight quarter-circle wedge-shaped benches covered in ceramic tile. The artist will paint ceramic glazes over the tile, and each separate bench will portray some aspect of the markets that formerly surrounded the square: flowers, trinkets, vegetables, and hats. The benches will be placed on the four sides of the park, close to the surrounding sidewalk, as convenient resting places to eat lunch, watch pedestrians, or enjoy an outdoor performance. Their tile surfaces, cool and colorful, are reminiscent of town squares or plazas in Mexico.

Houston-based sculptor James Surls will fabricate a 20-foot-high work for the center of the square. As illustrated by his model, the work will have a steel stem topped by a cluster of organically shaped slim wooden petals. The sculpture – one of Surls's largest to date – is reminiscent of a flower. Its height will direct the viewer's eye up to the city's skyline, moving from the street level of the historic square to Houston's contemporary buildings.

Paul Hester, a Houston photographer, will contribute both historic and contemporary images to the park. Turner's and Hollis's sidewalks will be lined by rough-finished concrete walls of a height which varies from 8 to 24 inches. The photographic images baked onto industrial tile will be installed on the sides and tops of these walls.

Some images will be culled by Hester from his research in the files of the Houston Public Library and will picture shops that existed around Market Square through the years. Contemporary images of the area, taken by Hester, will be included as well. Each tile will be a contact print, as both old and new photographs have been taken by an 8-by-10-inch view camera. The historical photographs chosen by Hester are small "moments in time" and will reinforce the fragments in the sidewalk and lively images glazed on the tile benches.

The park will be planted with grass and shaded by trees which, for security reasons, are placed so that a clear view of the park from the sidewalk is possible.

In early December, 1986, the artists presented their plan to the panel of jurors, the Parks Department of the City of Houston, and the Municipal Arts Council, the body charged with approving all public art within the city. The concept was endorsed and site preparation began. Project costs are approximately $500,000 – a modest sum for a work of art the size of a city block. DiverseWorks has begun fund-raising efforts.

The new Market Square Park is scheduled for completion in August 1988. Its quiet presence will do much to transform the downtown historic district into a more focused and people-oriented part of our city.

Marti Mayo

ForeCite

On Springtime Conjunctions in The Warehouse of the Imagination

Peter D. Waldman

Spring has always been the proper time for cleaning out attics and warehouses in the spirit of renewal and reconstruction. This spring issue of *Cite* brings into conjunction three distinct landscapes of aggression to be discovered within the storehouses of our culture. The first territorial argument locates Houston as the forum of a debate polarized between California and Switzerland. The second encompasses both landscape and skyscape prophesied as the geography and cosmography of this city. The third establishes the frontier between familiarity and estrangement, recording temporal isolation as a Texas phenomenon.

The temporal confrontation of two major architectural exhibitions in one city – one of the work of Frank O. Gehry at the Contemporary Arts Museum and the other of Mario Botta at the Farish Gallery – confirms that Houston is either the most critically astute or fortuitous city in the land. These exhibitions, prepared respectively at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, represent the clearest critical positions in the cultural debate between the normative and the archetypal.

Albert Pope postulates that the personally contrived work of Gehry paradoxically utilizes the most accessible artifacts of popular culture. Not necessarily the vernacular, but the normative language of contemporary building types and of contemporary constructional practices is not "built upon," but "built with," in an extraordinary body of work, one example being the SunarHauserman Showroom at Innova in Houston.

William Sherman argues that the apparently more reductive and logical work of Botta is another paradox of archetypal domestic models evolving into stereotypical contextualism at the urban scale. At first appearing to be an exemplar of critical regionalism, this high priest of the rationalist Tendenza has been suggested by Sherman not to hold the constructural ethic so dear, but to reside within the diminished limits of Form measured by geometry, not gravity.

The month of March marks the equinox, and is a proper setting for the crossing of these polar exhibitions which will engender a debate within our community.

The second landscape is the exclusive territory of the geography of the imagination. Another aggressive debate is framed by two prophetic articles: one by Eduardo Robles, entitled "City Edges;" the other, by Christopher Genik, was inspired by the Parklane Collection by George O. Jackson. Robles takes us on a geography lesson of the familiar and the memorable from bayous by bateau to the temporal twinkling of nightscapes of Post Oak Boulevard in season. Robles, like Gehry, finds the poetic dimension in the normative conditions of our time, but returns us to the fundamental principle of taking possession of the land. Genik establishes Houston's Messianic claim to the sky, the cosmography of this place as successor to Tycho Brahe's obsession with the city as observatory. Genik, like Botta, postulates a poetic sensibility residing somewhere between the territory of Cabalist and Alchemist.

Finally, the third landscape brings us "back home" in a series of interviews, previews, and reviews which provide us with attenuatingly exhilarating and terrifying mirrors of our condition at this time in Houston.

This third debate is initiated in an extensive interview with Charles Moore at his home in Austin. Moore evokes none of the popularist, yet critical casuality, of Gehry, nor the exclusive anxiety and angst of Botta. Moore is more about the impression of temporal simultaneity, thus is as modern as Gehry or Botta without their respective needs for deformation or reformation.

Moore's youthfulness permits him to reside comfortably within the warehouses of all times without the prejudices of *The Children of Light* or *The Children of Darkness* as exemplified by Gehry or Botta. [Rodolfo] "Machado in Texas" has come to a new land to project the sane-ity and gravity of ancient truths. He too seems selectively comfortable in other times and distant geographies. Machado's reconfigurations of type on domestic and urban scales confront Moore's more phenomenally rich appreciation and projection of history. Moore and Machado, one resident, one visitor, frame a debate within a familiar language of distinct political and temporal postures.

In the end, all three landscapes are obsessed with the construction of a mirror for our time. Gehry and Botta, both committed to the constructional ethic, work out of distinct warehouses: one additively, the other subtractively. Moore is obsessed not with the immediate or the abstract, but with the recollections of the voyageur who values the souvenir with no pretense for leaving monuments for another age. Machado's monuments are so well "finished" that they already appear to be the archeological artifacts of an autonomous architecture.

These six articles are a testament to six who know the temporal holiday that is America. Far, far away from the Guilt of Eden and blissfully short on memory, America's temporal isolation, its capacity for the aspiration of apathy, is captured in the interview with Moore, and mirrored in other "True Stories," by Neal Printz, who brings us critically home again.

This issue ends in NoHo, "The Warehouse District," by Stephen Fox. It is proper that this issue starts and ends in the Warehouse of the Imagination. This spring we all may begin to define the path home to Houston. Perhaps one might find direction in the literal constructural exuberance of Gehry's warehouse of contemporary popular culture, in the elegantly evacuated terminals of Botta, in the ecstatic storehouses of Moore, or in the refound clarity of Machado's autonomous baggage now appearing on loading docks throughout Texas. Or we may choose never to go home again, but to search out the limits of our new Texas geographies with Robles and/or Genik as our guides. In the spring of this year as we hear predictions of an early end for this youthful city, let us rather acknowledge the potential geographies residing in the warehouses of NoHo, and projected unto the flat plains of Virgil.

The Public Gallery

Albert Pope

Frank Gehry

The idea of an architect posing as an artist is about as appealing as an architect posing as an engineer, or a sociologist, or a social reformer, or a solar expert, or any of the other roles architects have assumed in the bizarre professional masquerade that has plagued architecture since the Second World War.

The continuing presence of the architect/artist is not hard to understand. For the strictly amateur, "art" seems to provide the necessary license for the public exercise of private obsession, and while architecture has always been a public exercise, it has also been a public expression leading to the formation of the public world. The void left by the recent decline of that world (the extinction, for example, of the man on the street), has prompted some architects to assume a new role: that of the artist with buildings on display in the city, as art on display in a gallery. For an architect to promote the "city as gallery," substituting something like a vague aesthetic shudder for a concrete civic message, is a radical re-evaluation of what constitutes a city, the implications of which have scarcely been considered.

The Argument

This is, perhaps, a rude introduction to comments on the *gallery show* of an architect who, more than any other as notable, has come to be acknowledged as *the* architect/artist. But the characterization is as inaccurate of Frank Gehry as the prevailing evaluation of his work as "artistic," and it is perhaps one of the greatest values of the exhibition to be able to set his work apart from the ongoing professional masquerade. The exhibition, "The Architecture of Frank Gehry," at the Contemporary Arts Museum opened 20 January and continues through 29 March.

The understanding of Gehry's work as being principally architectural is critical. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue Henry Cobb remarks that "the measure of [Gehry's] achievement resides in the fact that he works not outside, but firmly within, the normative framework of institutional constraints and procedures that define the contemporary profession of architecture." This achievement, which seems at first unremarkable, gains significance when one considers that not only does Gehry work *within* the normative framework (for anyone who builds must do this), but he also works *with* the normative framework – this framework, as will be shown, becoming the apparent language or *rhetorical opportunity* for his work. It *has* been Gehry's achievement to exploit this "normative institutional framework" as found, and to exploit it not only instrumentally, but also for the associated meanings it has acquired since its implementation 40 years ago.

In subscribing to the limits of a found contemporary architectural vocabulary, Gehry sets himself apart from recent architectural trends. For both the modern and the postmodern architect/artist, the acknowledgement of such limits in the formation of an expressive language has been difficult. On the one hand, the modernist (or member of a neo-avant-garde) would reject the idea of *any* shared language as potentially undercutting the level of creative freedom sufficient to "reinvent" a vocabulary of form. On the other hand, the postmodernist, while subscribing to the idea of a received language, sees this language as internal to the discipline and that the language of architecture is autonomous and traditionally defined. A language of "constraints and procedures that define the contemporary profession of architecture" is quite different from the language of postmodernism. Paper-thin arches, "rusticated" concrete, curtainwall pilasters, sonotube columns, stucco cornices, the asphalt piazza, the panoply of postmodern kitsch reveals the obvious stress between the constraints of an "academic" language and a normative *language that stems from contemporary* production.

Gehry thus stands apart from the strictly aesthetic concerns of both the postmodern architect/artist, who would substitute an academic language, and the modern or neo-avant-garde architect/artist, who would wish to substitute a language of his own. If it is clear that Gehry is no Leon Krier, it is also obvious that he is no John Hejduk. And it is perhaps because his work does provide relief from these extremes that his popularity today can be explained.

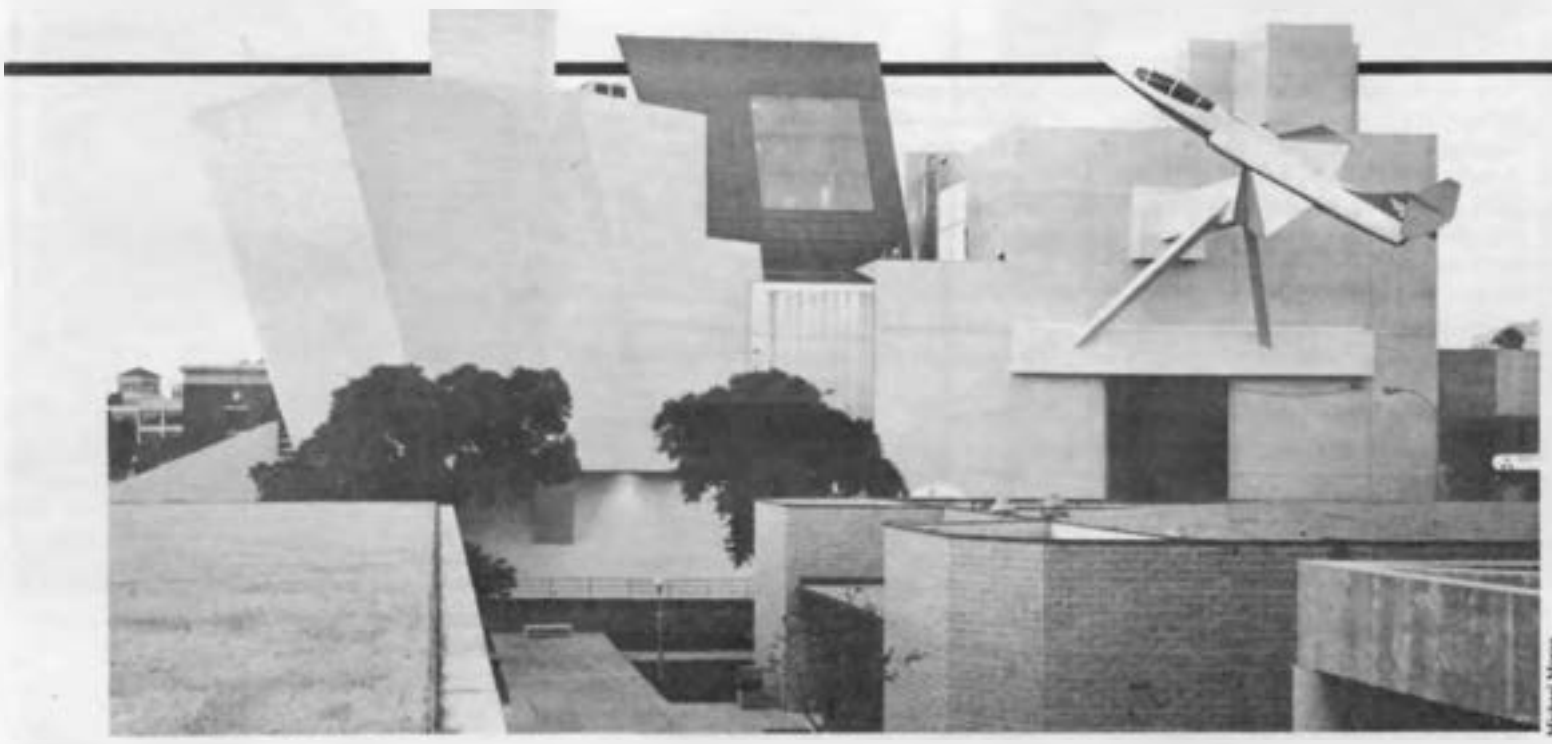
A Normative Language

Beyond the value of a critique, however, the questions Gehry's work ask are simple: why a *substitute* language at all? Does not a language already exist beyond our presumption to impose one? What is it that constitutes a potent language if not one that is rhetorically charged by current usage and association with contemporary institutions. The value of Gehry's work has been to extract from the constraints of contemporary practice a normative vocabulary of materials and, such as they exist in the modern city, building types. In using this normative vocabulary, unexpected manipulations, juxtapositions, deviations, and subversions become legible with respect to this norm and constitute a critical and speculative project within the found meanings of the late 20th-century city.

Take apart any building site in Los Angeles – factory sheds, parking garages, strip development, office blocks, or houses – and most will include studs, cardboard, glass, corrugated metal, shingles, tile, drywall, and stucco amassed in a tangle of utility poles and chain link, all set in a ground of asphalt. The procedure is straightforward – uncover, deconstruct, recombine:

[children]. . . .are particularly fond of haunting any site where things are being visibly worked on. They are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by

The Architecture of Frank Gehry



Michael Moran

Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects, 1985, New York, Rizzoli

Clockwise from left: **Parking Garage, Santa Monica Place, 1973-1980, Frank Gehry, architect. California Aerospace Museum, 1982-1984, south façade, Frank Gehry, architect. Gehry House, 1978, model, east elevation, Frank Gehry, architect. Gehry House, north elevation. Entrance, SunarHauserman Showroom, 1986, Frank Gehry, architect. Gehry's sculptured fish lamp is shown at left.**

building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the fact that the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely different kinds in a new, intuitive relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one.[1]

That the activity of reconstituting the material of the 20th-century city might result in a "small world" of great poetic force and density is clear and a substantial aesthetic achievement in itself. But as has been suggested, Gehry's work is also speculative and critical. It is most convincing where the poetic force of the small world is brought critically to bear on the larger one.

A House, a Garage, A Mysterious Factory

The pink suburban bungalow in Santa Monica (Gehry House, 1977-1978) would have little to tell you about itself (or its neighbors) without its odd metal frame to set it off. The roof begins to list, shadows of dormers materialize, reflections in the glass bend the chimney, existing asphalt shingles and exposed guttering associate with the new corrugated siding, and the old picket fence seems threatening. Inside, bars of sunlight are thrown through old lath like a black-and-white film interior, and the household appliances are parked on the asphalt kitchen floor.

Close by, a Los Angeles parking garage (Santa Monica Place, 1973-1980) would go unnoticed without its elusive chain-link skin. Its huge phantom letters, which sometime advertise a shopping mall, materialize in and out of the depths struck by reflections off of slow-moving cars.

And near downtown, in Exposition Park, surrounded by an armory, a coliseum, several museums, and the University of Southern California, sits what appears to be a "mysterious factory" with a real jet plane suspended off one side over an enormous hangar door (California Aerospace Museum, 1982-1984). In such auspicious settings, one might really ask if a temple with a frieze would be as appropriate for this new museum of war machines? It is precisely to the point that museums today tend to look and function more like factories than temples, which allows this building its poignant question. Its enigmatic disposition, like the institution/industry it represents, is not without complications.

From houses, parking garages, and museums the list could go on (why are what look like old park benches covered with carpet sitting by potted trees in the waiting room of a law office?), for there may be no limit to the analogical leaps to be made by juxtapositions of such conventional elements. And by conventional elements it is meant a found order, not an invented or a revived order. The present constraints upon the practice of architecture, no matter how oppressive they may be, mark the limit of some of the most potent (not to say the only) means of expression. Which is only to say that like the *bricoleur* (or Simon Rodia never far away), we might be able to sort out some things with materials at hand – "the starting point of a speculative organization and the exhibition of the sensible world in sensible terms."[2]

Rudolph Ivins

An Assessment

An answer to the question of what is to fill the void left by the decline of the public world is thus suggested. If the late 20th-century city is to be more than a gallery, more than a rarified realm of aesthetic display for the architect/artist, the conventional architectural elements of the city would seem to present an important rhetorical opportunity. Perhaps only children like to play with trash, if indeed this is what our cities have largely become. Yet an impoverished vocabulary must be better than no vocabulary at all, or a vocabulary that has ceased to have meaning for anyone but the connoisseur. For to affirm the idea of the architect/artist and its corollary – the city as gallery – is to abandon even a potential setting for public society. And if this is already unavoidable (for what sort of miraculous speech might call back this decimated theater) then before we retreat to our television parlors, it would be perhaps *important* to understand that there is magic in the trash we leave behind. ■

Notes

1 Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. London, New Left Books, 1979, pp. 52-53.

2 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 16.

The Architecture of Mario Botta
Narrowed Gates in an Expanded Field

William Sherman

Mario Botta

The Gerald D. Hines Interests Architecture Program, a series of exhibitions beginning with the work of Leon Krier and Ricardo Bofill, in its new exhibition focuses on the work of Mario Botta. Having opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in November 1986, the exhibition will arrive at the Farish Gallery in Anderson Hall, Rice University, on 3 March. With photographs, models, and drawings, Botta's buildings and projects are well represented and displayed, providing the opportunity to study them as well as one can short of visiting Switzerland. The accompanying text and catalogue by Stuart Wrede elucidate Botta's ideological stance.

In the mid 1970s a group of young architects practicing in the Swiss canton of Ticino began to attract attention for their work, which sought to overlay a modernist formal vocabulary with a distinct regional sensitivity. Powerful objects in the landscape, abstract representations of timeless archetypes formally rooted in the vernacular types of Ticino and expressing their materiality in built form, they offered a fresh vision. At the center of the group was Mario Botta, whose small "disturbing"[1] houses and challenging civic buildings were beginning to appear in the valleys and on the mountainsides in the suburbs of Como and Lugano. After a decade of tremendous production by the still-young architect, a body of work rather than a few isolated projects can be discussed, tracing the development and discovering the limits of a narrowly focused formal investigation. In addition to the houses, larger commissions in nearby urban centers provide a new subject for critical evaluation, placing the generative ideas of the early work in a new light.

The Modern Legacy

In the absence of the perception of a coherent ethos at this stage in our cultural development, contemporary artists, architects, and writers find it necessary to define themselves by their relationship to "modernism." These stances range from reaction, as in "postmodernism," typically by setting up a functionalist or aesthetic straw man as the representative of all aspects of modernism, to an aspiration to continuity, building on threads of inquiry not yet exhausted. While a reaction to an oversimplification tends to generate an impoverished response, the narrow focus on single threads suffers in its privacy as exclusive insight.

With the intention of regrounding architecture in a more profound or inclusive inquiry, a few individuals and schools of thought disavow such limited definitions. They are looking instead within the discipline of architecture as a source, not with the postmodern propensity for images or models, but for its underlying continuities. The essential element which distinguishes this approach from historical revivalism is the reinvigorating of the idea of type as the manifestation of archetypes of human interaction, with their common timeless ideal in the construction of the city as a place of public social interaction. The means for the reconnection of type and archetype is geometry, the primary vehicle by which man orders his perception. While this represents an approach fraught with potential, it also has its perils, negotiating a fine line between geometry as the means to an end and geometry as an end in itself.

In contrast to the previous Hines exhibitions, Botta's work is introduced as representing the "revitalization of modern architecture."[2] That phrase and the work chosen to illustrate it demand definition. The buildings clearly grow out of a modernist legacy, reflecting Botta's admitted debt to his mentors: Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, and Carlo Scarpa. The ideological foundation of the work of Botta and the Ticinese School (including Tita Carloni, Aurelio Galfetti, Ivano Gianola, Flora Ruchat, Luigi Snozzi, and Ivo Trumpy) have often been traced to the Italian Neo-Rationalist Tendenza[3], retaining the faith in abstraction and rational geometric order, while reconnecting to the history of the city as a source for analogous interpretation.

On one level, we can identify an almost archeological obsession with the forms of his predecessors, drawing on characteristic details and plan forms. On another level, at least in the terms in which he discusses his work, the legacy of his masters is present ideologically in the continuity of an architecture grounded in human experience. In this respect, he continues the modern critical program against the superficial manifestations of the dominant culture by seeking to stretch the limits of its conventions. It is in this marginal area, where conventions are redefined by invention, that one must confront one's deepest values.

I seem to have more and more a sense of the existence of certain hidden but profound demands – which I recognize as part of the heritage of the modern movement's masters – demands which reassert man as the focus of interest of our profession. These profound exigencies, the need for memory, the need for archaic suggestions, the need for mythic forms, the need for the confrontation between man and cosmic values, the need for the great ideas of the past, are all, in fact, the real motivators which have sustained the need for expression and testimony in every epoch.[4]

I would like to make an architecture which responds to real needs. Today, I see real needs as a series of elements which place man in relation with the earth itself, with the trajectory of the sun in the sky, with the awareness of the passing seasons. Thus, one may recapture, via the notion of dwelling, the initial values for which the dwelling was built. The dwelling as the repository of mankind must offer a micro-climate of life to enhance social communication, as well as eating, sleeping, love-making, and working. The role of these needs has been somewhat distorted and modified by the International Style, and by consumer-oriented architecture, through the proposal of lavish artificial paradises.[5]

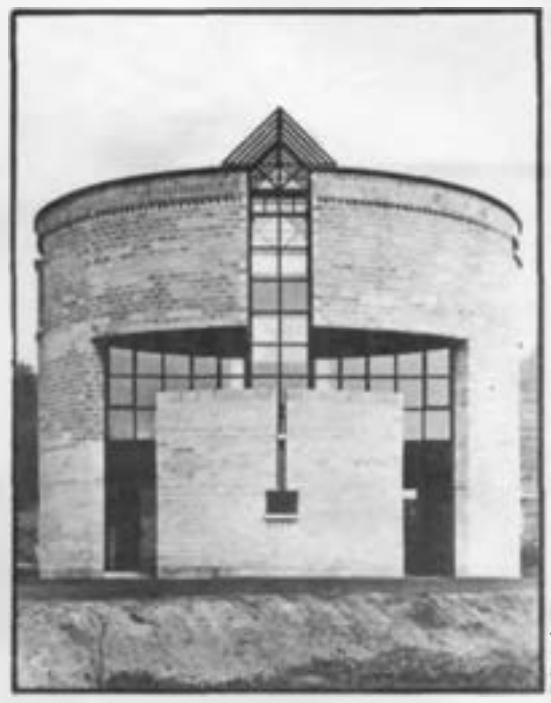
Order, the Matrix of all Artifice

By the good fortune of having had the opportunity to build, Botta is constructing a record of his exploration in built, rather than verbal or drawn, form. The pace of his production is impressive; in light of the work shown, however, it also raises questions about his ability to keep pace in his exploration of the potential within his vocabulary of expression.

For one attempting such lofty goals as those described above, Botta builds from a minimal palette: an obsession with geometric order as shapes in plan and elevation, as extruded form in three dimensions, an abstract interplay of solid and void (masonry and glass), and introducing a precarious tension to the enclosing wall in its erosion as an inverted ruin or its disjuncture as a floating plane. The geometric orders at the center of Botta's work are the linear projections of the circle, the square, and the triangle: the cylinder, the cube, and the prism.

The architectural paradigms may be found in the late work of Kahn, in the conjunction and serial repetition of simple geometric orders; of Le Corbusier, in the abstraction of his modification of pure geometries and, more specifically, the urban strategy of freeing the ground plane (literally and visually); and of Scarpa, in the love of the material and craft of construction.

An architecture of such minimal articulation demands one of two strategies: the discovery of the geometry through the exhaustive investigation of the clear expression of the represented human institutions (the genius of Kahn) or the limiting of informative input ("restricting traffic at the gates of perception"[6]). The development of Botta's work in time suggests, with a few exceptions, a progression from the former position (house at Riva St. Vitale, the School at Morbio Inferiore, the Zurich Railway Competition), with obvious roots in both the ideology of the Tendenza and the teachings of Louis Kahn, toward the latter (the Casa Rotunda and subsequent houses, the Housing at Turin, the Gallery at Tokyo) in which a facile play of geometries and paradigmatic forms appears to take precedence. Botta discusses his work convincingly in Kahnian terms, though the few sketches offered as well as the increasingly singular quality of the buildings themselves (in more ways than the stronger symmetries noted in Wrede's accompanying text) imply a more narrow focus. Such a progression affirms the precariousness of the line between geometry as a means to an end and geometry as an end in itself.



Single-family house, Stavio, Ticino, Switzerland, 1980, Mario Botta, architect

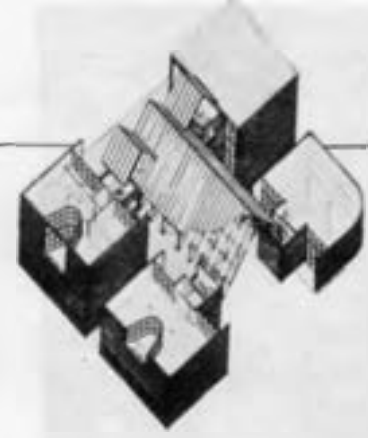
Taking Possession of the Site

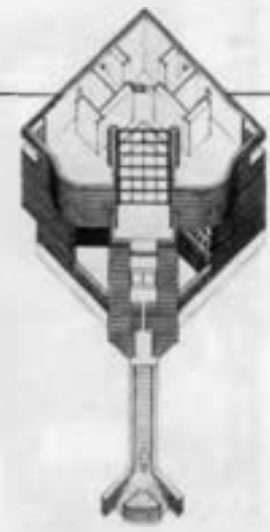
As the organization of the exhibition reflects, it is necessary to consider the houses separately from the urban projects. The similarities of language and expression mask radically different intentions. The houses represent defiant monuments set in contrast to the landscape, while the urban projects typically support (while subtly modifying) the historic pattern. Instead of an architecture which at all scales is about the construction of the city, Botta is at one scale exploring the isolated object in the landscape, while at the larger scale addressing the construction of the city solely as transformation by extension when confronted specifically with that context.

The early houses at St. Riva Vitale (1973) and Ligornetto (1976) also achieve this dual role, the first in its dynamic sectional relationship to the site (the making of the bridge a primary urban act of crossing, the tower one of marking) and articulation of multiple volumes within the coherent whole. At Ligornetto, the bipartite conception bridged within affords a simultaneous unity and discontinuity, as well as its legibility as a fragment of an urban wall.

By contrast, the Casa Rotunda and the House at Pregassona (1979) represent architectures of the form of the enclosing wall, configurational rather than spatial, untensioned by structure, sectional development, or the exceptional event, yet retain an empathetic power in their simplicity, particularly in light of the more baroque sensibility to follow.

The search for the variation in later houses leads into an attempt to modify the pure geometry through the introduction of other recognizable shapes, as in the houses at Breganzona (1984) and Morbio Superiore (1983). The geometries which brought meaningful order to the first conceptions have been reduced to shapes, the powerful formal moves, such as the central rupture, reduced to signs of their origins, diminished yet elaborated to a state of willful play. From geometry as the order "which transforms nature into culture,"[7] we have proceeded to an autonomous geometry, signifying only its own existence and to which all institutions of dwelling submit. That this is a conscious act (seeking the "zero degree" of





Right: Artisan Center, Balerna, Switzerland, 1977-1979. Mario Botta, architect. *Far right:* House, Breganzona, Switzerland, 1984, Mario Botta, architect

House, Riva San Vitale, Switzerland, 1972-1973, Mario Botta, architect

Administration and commercial building, Lugano, Switzerland, 1981, Mario Botta, architect

Urban Housing, Turin, Italy, ground floor plan, 1985, Mario Botta, architect

School, Morbio Inferiore, Switzerland, 1972-1977, Mario Botta, architect

Row Housing, Pregassona, Switzerland, 1985, Mario Botta, architect

meaning in spite of his public statements?) may be evidenced by the recent tendency to include images of the architect in the drawings, completing the self-referential cycle.

The Modification of the City

Two early projects, the school at Morbio Inferiore (1972-1977) and the Artisan Center at Balerna (1977-1979), may be identified as successful explorations of the use of ordering geometries as a means of revealing archetypes of the construction of the city: both sit in sympathetic opposition to the surrounding landscape while prefiguring an urban condition in the construction of a civic space in suburbia. The serial repetition of the constituent elements of the institution works in concert with the unique event – the monument – to create a legible urban analogy.

While using similar formal devices, the recent urban projects are rescued on one level from the conceptual arbitrariness of the recent houses by a respect for the discipline of urban conventions, but they fail as critical works by their unquestioning acceptance of the conventions. In the work in historic urban centers, Botta explores the possibilities in the tension between the abstract geometric order and the traditions of conventional city making, his "newness of the old and the archaeology of the new."[8] The "new" in this case goes little further than the abstraction of the language and the maintenance of whole geometric figures within the limits of complex urban contexts.

This approach, in contrast to his early work, represents a movement away from the ideology of the Tendenza: substituting geometry for analogy and form for type. The geometries represent values unto themselves in defining "type" in terms of shape: round house, triangular house, square house with circle. As opposed to a *typological* expression of the underlying orders of our cultural life, Botta's recent work is approaching a disciplined archeology of the *forms* of recent cultures. In moving away from the idea of type – by which the architecture may connect to the culture and its history, according to the precepts of the Tendenza – and into the abstract manipulation of pure forms within traditional urban conventions, Botta is indeed continuing a legacy of modern architecture, but at the expense of the critical power of the sources of his early work.

This evolution is evident in the commercial projects: the State Bank at Fribourg (1983), the office buildings in Lugano (1985, 1986), and the Gallery in Tokyo (1985). All are extremely well-behaved in respecting the continuity of the urban fabric while retaining a geometric purity. Skillful use is made of the geometry to articulate the planarity of the façade (Tokyo, Library at Villeurbaine), the monumental imperative of the corner, or the repetitive nature of the urban wall. A closer look at the plans, however, reveals the extent to which geometry controls, instead of reveals, relegating the perceptual and occupational experience to one of dependency rather than causality.

By contrast, in the housing at Pregassona (1985), one of the few urban projects generated out of typological concerns, the urban, street-defining row-house type is subtly transformed through the interlocking of a bridge-like element into an *architecture parlante* of the interdependence of civic life. Here the geometry is dependent rather than causal through the introduction of the interpenetration of two recognizable types – the bridge and the row house conjoin to form a new, yet familiar order.

The obsession with the inverted ruin or the viaduct which appears in many projects (with sources in Kahn's Venice project of 1969 and Rossi's Gallaratese[9]) emerges as the vehicle for the transformation of the conventional street model for the Urban Housing at Turin (1985). Its genealogy lies in the marriage of the megastructure to the street and superblock. A similar operation to that at Pregassona, the balance has been shifted away from the type which has the possibility to order the streets. As an urban enclave, it unfortunately inherits an inhuman scale that renders repetition monotonous, streets without definition through the freeing of the ground plane, and housing types of indeterminate lineage. The location of the circular civic space at the exact center reinforces one's suspicions of the reappearance of an arbitrary geometric determinism (plan into shape), an attitude toward the construction of the city truly conceived through narrow "gates of perception."

Surfaces in Light

Much of the power of Botta's work lies in his ability to use common available material such as concrete block, which is appropriate to the modest budgets of many of the clients, in a way that both exploits the modular properties of the block as it may be revealed in light, and its density as an enclosing wall. However, in articulating the order of both his houses and urban works, Botta's use of materials and disregard of structure [10] reinforces the emergent self-referential quality. Unlike Kahn, who consulted bricks before using them, Botta is interested in the textural, sensuous qualities of the surface rather than the representational value in the structural properties of masonry, and will support them as necessary (without comment) to achieve the desired abstract play of solid and void. This is merely a recognition of the tendency toward the singularity of meaning of the elements of his palette, rather than a demand for structural expressionism, a direction which is precisely the opposite of what one would expect of repeated investigations in a narrowly focused field: the charge of multiple meanings by the disciplined exploitation of the manifold expressive qualities of the medium.

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Many of the qualities for which Botta's work has been praised are well-represented in this exhibition: the desire to "build the site," the relationship to vernacular Ticinese traditions, the tension between contextural relationship, and the identity of the new construction (particularly in historically rich urban settings), and the succinct clarity of the objects. Increasingly, as the body of work expands, however, one is struck by the seemingly arbitrary appropriation of geometric and formal devices, applied without evidence of a consistent or coherent meaning. The compelling investigations of his best work are diminished by the formulaic reapplication of the results in subsequent projects. In becoming increasingly reliant on a geometric and formal determinism, the critical argument of the work – central to its position in the "revitalization of modern architecture" – is lost as the generating idea detaches itself from its highest function, the act of the construction of the city. This speaks of the need to return to the generative principles; to push the limits of the vocabulary without resorting to arbitrary elaboration, ordering perception in the service of higher ideals rather than conceiving of order as an end in itself. ■

Notes

1 Mario Botta in interview with Livio Dimitriu, *Perspecta 20*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1983, p. 122.
2 Stuart Wrede, wall text of the exhibition.
3 Kenneth Frampton, "Mario Botta and the School of Ticino", *Oppositions 14*, Fall 1978, p. 2.
4 Mario Botta in interview with Stuart Wrede in exhibition catalogue, *Mario Botta*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1986, p. 67.
5 *Perspecta 20*, p. 124.
6 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962, p. 124.
7 Ibid., p. 67.
8 Ibid., p. 69.
9 Frampton, p. 9.
10 Exhibition catalogue, p. 68

Charles Moore and memory palace at home with Martha and William Moore

Reflections on
A Less Critical
Regionalism
And Other
Burdensome
Matters:

A Conversation With Charles Moore

When the question was asked at a University of Texas symposium last spring, "Who is a regional architect?" Charles Moore confided, "Well, I guess I am," although elsewhere he has suggested that the limits of regionalism may be so expansive as to admit virtually anything between the purely personal and the universal. Yet Moore's eclectic sensibility seems at least as wide ranging, with results that now dot both coasts and various points between. From his recently completed addition to the Hood Museum at Dartmouth, an evocative combination of vernacular New England forms set beneath a vestigial Wren-like cupola, to the genial, Graumanesque baroque of the Beverly Hills Civic Center, he demonstrates a public voice that can capture, without apology or condescension, the spirited diversity of American building. So doing, he carries on what E.M. Forster called "the battle against sameness," with results that can be anticipated but, happily, not predicted.

Since 1984, Charles Moore has been O'Neil Ford Centennial Professor of Architecture at The University of Texas in Austin. There he maintains a practice and has built a modest house and studio (see "Moving In: Moore in Austin," Cite, Spring 1986) on a site that incorporates a companion house by his associate, Arthur Andersson. Moore's compound, in the tradition of H. H. Richardson's Brookline redoubt, harbors a confraternity of acolytes, students, and friends. It is perched on a small hill in a suburb overlooking the MoPac Expressway, which separates west Austin from the hills of Clarksville, the university, and the Capitol. It is outwardly plain, a gray, domesticated version of the Texas shed building, which inside opens up to a meandering oval that forms the curved edge of an otherwise L-shaped hall and salon. The oval will eventually extend outside to enclose a courtyard and pool on a high terrace. But for now there is diversion enough in the shelves that follow the oval inside, lined with an astonishing array of objects – toys, icons, miniature buildings – culled from his never-ending travels. In late September, when Cite *visited Moore, the living room had been pressed into service as an assembly area for a congeries of whimsical memory palaces, then in the last stages of preparation for a retrospective exhibition that was to attend the opening of his addition to the Williams College Museum in mid October. In another, distant reach of the room, a dozen or more students gathered for the first part of a seminar being conducted with Kent Bloomer, who had just seen the house for the first time and found it, for all the jumble, remarkably serene.*

Charles Moore's introduction to Texas came in 1940, when as a boy of 14, he traveled cross-country with his parents and sister. Stopping in Houston, he visited the newly completed PWA City Hall, bristling with stone reliefs and pictorial cast aluminum panels, and recorded it with his camera. He began teaching a seminar at the University of Houston in the mid 1970s on a visiting basis, which cast a sidelong glance, among others, at the state's indigenous architecture. Buildings have followed since, including the Sweetwater Country Club for Gerald Hines Interests' First Colony near Sugar Land (with William Turnbull and Richard Fitzgerald and Partners, 1980-1983); the San Antonio Art Institute (with Moore, Ruble and Yudell, 1982), now under construction; and the house for Sally and Robert Hoffman in Dallas (1986), also under construction.

Two notable designs for public spaces in Houston, the entrance to Hermann Park (with the Urban Innovations Group, 1982-1983) and the third-place competition entry for the Sesquicentennial Park on Buffalo Bayou downtown (with Charles Tapley, 1985-1986), have, despite their ample merit, failed to advance beyond the project stage. Construction will soon begin on his Turtle Creek Condominiums in Dallas (1982) and the expansion of the Alumni Center of the University of Texas at Austin (with Richard Dodge and Fred Day, 1985). Inevitably, Moore's practice continues to take him beyond the gates of the Austin airport, most frequently to California, but also to Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Ohio, Oregon, and Hawaii with regularity. Yet, as if to affirm the deliberation of his latest arrival in Texas, the Moore family portraits (Martha and William, his early 19th-century forebears from Vermont) that once hung from one of the interior towers of the celebrated house on Elm Street in New Haven, now occupy a discreet niche in the Austin homestead.

Drexel Turner

Cite: Let's begin with the importance, real or imagined, of being regional. You have lived and practiced for extended periods in the Bay Area, Connecticut, Los Angeles, and now Texas. How has this affected your work, or has it?

Moore: I think locale does matter. One of the ways of looking at architecture is to say that there are two kinds of architects. Some are cosmic, like Aldo Rossi, and interested in general ideas, as free from specifics as they can be. Then there are others who are interested in particulars, in the sense of place and places. I've come down very much in favor of the latter. I don't have any particular desire to be cosmic, and I do like very much the notion of making something that fits into the site and with specific people and circumstances. So I'm very proud when somebody says that they can't see any thread of consistency in my work, that it's all special to the place and arrangement that it's in. And I'm a little embarrassed when people say, "Oh yes, no matter what you do in all those places, it's always the same stuff." I hope that isn't so. It seems to me that obviously it's the same stuff in the sense that I did it and that I now have a set of preferences and prejudices and attitudes. But I like to hope that what I run up against and what I listen to each time is more important to me than the baggage carried from somewhere else.

To follow this point a little farther, I think I learned something from the example of my great grandfather, who was a farm boy in Michigan. He was self-taught, and yet he kept his farm records in Latin and his personal diaries in Greek until the 1830s. He introduced co-education to the University of Michigan, the first state university to have it. He introduced the resolution in Latin and since it was in Latin, they thought it must be right. Obviously he wasn't standard, but I think he was an interesting phenomenon, somebody who was of the soil and operating in that part of the world, but who also felt some connection to the classical world and a lot of things that lay way beyond his own experience in space and time. I like to think that that kind of thing is still possible, and that I am my great-grandfather's great-grandson; that it's still possible to have some hook on literature and history and other things and still be operating in a particular place in the way of that place.

Cite: But isn't it more difficult to deal with a place in very particular terms today when so much, perhaps all, of the country seems to be becoming so much alike? Is it impossible, without nostalgia, to render such distinctions credibly?

Moore: It's probably not possible to do without nostalgia. The thing to do is to get rid of the notion that nostalgia is in some way unworthy of us. It seems to me that if you can take some high-minded pleasure in nostalgia and see it as something altogether worthy of building on, then the problem improves some. It isn't necessarily solved, but the prospects are improved. Yet it's true that there is more and more sameness. Like the Howard Johnson song: "Someone you know wherever you go." The world is Howard Johnson-ing at a breakneck pace, and our only solution is to die before it gets much worse, or to try to counter it as a romantic with a great deal of nostalgia.

I thought when I came here to Texas that one of my reasons for coming was that Texas is a lot like California was 20 years ago. I think it's less so now, but Texas reminded me of that California I remembered from my childhood and which I inhabited from time to time during my adult life, which started out to be a place where anything goes. . . That old Noel Coward thing I quoted over and over again in my L.A. book about a place where what's phony seems real and what's real seems phony. That back-and-forth between fantasy and the real I liked very much, and my sense is that in the last 20 years in California things have become increasingly and overpoweringly and saddenly earnest and bureaucratized and tangled up in themselves, desperate to maintain their qualities. And so the California of my joyous rememberances is not very much like the L.A. of today, which has got more suicidal regulations than any governmental entity I know of. And it seemed to me that three or four years ago when I was pondering a move to Texas, that Texas still had (and to some extent still has) a looser, more laissez-faire, less tangling sense of itself, and the Texas of 1984 was in that sense more Californian than the California of 1984. So I didn't see myself as giving up something to pick something else.

Cite: Lionel Trilling once observed that a 20th-century public is "likely to be unschooled in the comic tradition and unaware of the comic seriousness," and "our suspicion of gaiety in art perhaps signifies an inadequate seriousness in ourselves." This was written in a piece called "E.M. Forster and the Liberal Imagination," where Trilling noted that Forster "is sometimes irritating in his refusal to be great . . . [that is] . . . greatness with a certain sternness and a

touch of the imperial and imperious." He goes on to specify "serious whim" as one of Forster's virtues, as well as "the very relaxation of his style, its colloquial unpretentiousness" and a "worldliness without the sentimentality of cynicism and without the sentimentality of rationalism." Doesn't this describe your work as well?

Moore: I like to think that's so. There is a distinction that can be made between low camp, which is just horsing around, and high camp, which requires a certain command of the situation. Mozart, who had his stuff very well under control, would fashion a sonata as an act of play, no matter how dire his circumstances were. Beethoven was a very skilled, non-high-camp person who was struggling through his material as a matter of personality, and he made great stuff too. But I like Mozart better. I find that most people I admire have their act sufficiently together to enjoy it, and the people who feel that suffering and gloom are essential to genuine OK-ness are, by and large, less impressive to me.

Cite: This general penchant for seriousness and the suspicion of gaiety seems to surface as well in David Littlejohn's book about you. If you read between the lines, he seems to approve of Sea Ranch and its near relations with an enthusiasm that doesn't extend, in all cases, to the later work, which seems to make him uncomfortable at times. But it is just this later work which strikes others as most challenging and rewarding. How do you account for this?

Moore: I think that at Sea Ranch and a few other little houses from the same time we found ourselves particularly interested in the land and local buildings. The idea was about fitting the buildings to the land and being sensitive to the land. What came later didn't represent for me a step backward from the gestures of Sea Ranch but rather trying something new.

Marty Filler wrote a not very positive piece in *Artforum* several years ago where he announced that I had had it. Yet again. His point was that I was always talking about freedom of speech in buildings, about the need for buildings to speak in many voices, presumably the voices put there by their designers. He said that I was saying things that were chatty, that were not to the mark or important enough. I found that odd, not because I deny it, but because it appears to me that that would be a reasonable expectation from a desire to test the freedom of speech of buildings. One would say things that were of very different sorts and some of them would be considerably less monumental, ringing through the halls of history, than others. I've taken it as part of my mission, I guess, to deal with things which were not central to the culture. I've known of architects who felt that every building, everything they did, had to be dead on to the main, throbbing pulse of the civilization, which seems to me gives us a national architectural heritage of branch savings and loans as a building type that is determined to be serious beyond its capacity. I don't want to do branch savings and loans. So it seems to be quite proper, as far as my own agenda goes, to do things that seem appropriate to the circumstances attending them. I don't have any very extensive system for getting jobs, so I take the jobs that come to me and some of them have called not for peals that will ring down through the ages but for making something that was pleasant in the circumstances. Every building does not have to be wildly important.

Cite: The tunnel-vision of critics is something that Trilling remarks as well when discussing Forster as a critic. Although he finds critics in general concerned, as never before, with the need "to make distinctions and erect barriers, to separate thing from thing and to make salvation depend on the right choice," he finds Forster, as a critic, to be accepting in an almost mystical, non-Western way, and admonishes him for "excessive relaxation." Yet what he goes on to describe seems to suggest the considerable merit of such a course, whether pursued by critic or artist.

Moore: I guess it's a matter of what one wants. I've been in discussions with Charles Jencks about why Michael Graves is the only important postmodern architect, in which he points out that Michael Graves is the only one who hasn't relaxed some, who made up this thing he was going to do, the style he was going to work in, and works in it. He has excited people by the things he has done in that very special manner and has gotten more and more, and bigger and bigger work and so is succeeding at being what he set out to be, which is the inventor of a style really. It hasn't seemed to me that that was what I particularly wanted to do, I suppose partly because the notion of being on the edge of all that ambition makes me tired to think about and also because one of the things I've wanted to do and have done with some frequency is to design buildings with the people who are going to *use* them instead of separate from the people who are going to use them. The ways are varied and some work for some groups and not for others.

I had a long talk with the rector of St. Matthew's Church that we designed (or they designed) in L.A., and we seemed to notice that in some professions – clergy and architects for two – some things you do are in the nature of working yourself out of a job. Clergy don't save people's souls; they help people to save their own souls. And architects don't move in to inhabit people's buildings; they try to help the inhabitants to inhabit their buildings. Both of these require a certain self-effacing set of activities. My claim is that they require far bigger egos than the obvious ego trips, and it's also clear that you belong to a different kind of profession that gets itself more and more into the center of things, instead of less and less like doctors or lawyers; those people get paid increasing amounts of money while the clerics and architects seem to get paid increasingly tinier sums of money. But no matter, it still is more interesting to me to try to get closer to the basic truths of dwelling and inhabitation so as to make that act more and more available to people, rather than inventing and purveying a special, personal view like Frank Lloyd Wright did.

Cite: So that architecture might become a cottage industry, more or less?

Moore: Yes, I think that's a noble desire to inherit, to become more and more the property of the people who mean to dwell in the buildings. And so from that point of view I've gone in the direction I've meant to. Not by any carefully planned set of moves but by being pushed around where I was pushed. But anyway, that kind of desire to vanish is I think easily hookable to the kind of relaxation that Trilling fusses about in Forster or Marty Filler fussed about in me.

Cite: How does that idea apply to the design of public, civic places? Is it more relaxed or less so?

Moore: The way I see it is that buildings are solid objects that have to perform a number of quite specific functions efficiently and have to be maintained and have to do all the things that we know buildings do. Public spaces, on the other hand, are something like gardens. They are fantasies. They don't in many cases perform a specific function like most rooms and most buildings, but are meant to be nice places for relaxing and enjoyment. I think it's right to say that public spaces, like gardens, could and should be lighthearted, sybaritic, and, I guess more than I had realized, ephemeral. Certainly they are more difficult to maintain and there is less pressure to maintain them.

We had a visiting Chinese student who was asking me why our Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans was so unloved and uncared for. I was trying to think of the reasons why, and I found myself giving a long speech on how the great value of gardens as a civilized building form is that it doesn't work just to build them. You've got to keep on loving them and taking care of them or they very quickly go to pieces. And we had loved our piazza, but I guess hadn't known how to ensure that there would be any continuing love for it. It's our fault that we didn't perceive past what we were enjoying doing ourselves – not *really* our fault, but we can't expect others to pick up on the attention we were giving it at one point. I suppose that's the way it is with all these spaces in Texas that we snarl about. They're gardens and maybe somebody loved them once, but we've left them alone for a long time and some lovers will have to get found if any one of them, from Republic Square to Hermann Park, is going to get turned into anything that people can actually enjoy.

Cite: It has been reported that one of your fantasies is to do a tempietto atop a turtle, a sort of Celliniesque maneuver. Is that so?

Moore: I do like the notion. There was an ad some time ago in which Noel Coward stood on rocks at the edge of the ocean with the surf rolling around, his tuxedo trousers rolled up a little bit, barefoot, casually clutching a glass of Smirnoff vodka on-the-rocks. The pun was silly but the whole business of extremely cultivated architectural arrangements or lifestyles happening on the edge of chaos and disaster has always appealed to me. Which is why the tempietto on the back of the turtle appeals to me or why I, at one stage, invented a whole set of aerial turtles borne aloft on balloons carrying whole tropical islands and made a thing of flying turtles bringing palm trees to Catalina Island.

Cite: In a less threatening way, fantasy seems to be marketable in Texas, from the Crescent in Dallas by Philip Johnson to any number of amusement parks. Have you visited any of them here?

Moore: I find the Crescent astonishing. I was there once to have breakfast with Robert A.M. Stern. I just can't get over how big it is and I can't figure out whether it was done out of conviction that this was the way to do it or simply out of a desire to get the job done. Maybe somebody was mean to Philip Johnson in Dallas once. The business of putting a piece of Paris, I guess it's Paris, probably at 2.7 times normal scale, is staggering. Strangely enough, I haven't visited any amusement parks in Houston or Dallas. I've been to a whole slew in Los Angeles and have very careful gourmet reports of

(Continued on page 16)

Clockwise from upper left: **Moore House, 1985, sitting room, Charles Moore, architect. Case-tie. Table top. Moore House, gallery**

CiteSeeing

The Warehouse District
An Architectural Tour

Stephen Fox

The warehouse district, which grew up along Buffalo Bayou between the 1890s and the 1920s, developed in response to the overlap of major transportation arteries – the bayou itself, navigable by barge, and a series of railroad lines. It was railroad expansion after the turn-of-the-century that made the lightly settled working-class neighborhood on the north bank of Buffalo Bayou and the somewhat denser middle-class residential district on the south bank attractive locales for commercial redevelopment. The north side (today's NoHo), in Fifth Ward, became the "factory district;" the south bank, in Second Ward, the "wholesale district," reflecting Commerce Street's long-standing identification as Produce Row, where wholesale grocery, meat, produce, and baking establishments were concentrated until 1950. What is surprising about the warehouse district is how much still remains of its industrial vernacular buildings, rail trackage, and brick-paved streets. And there are the startling views: up to the towers of downtown Houston in the middle distance, and down, to always unexpected glimpses of the muddy bayou from which Houston sprang.

Enter from the north on North Main Street

1 1 North Main Street
Merchants and Manufacturers Building
(now University of Houston-Downtown)
1930, Giesecke & Harris

This vast, 11-story hulk, with its double-volume, drive-through arcade and 6 1/2-story sallyport entrance bay, was constructed to serve as the Merchandise Mart of Houston. Accessible by water, rail, car, and truck, it was designed in the so-called American Perpendicular manner of the late '20s by a firm of Austin architects. The great flood of 1929, followed five months later by the Stock Market crash, foretold its economic doom, before construction was even completed. Acquired by the University of Houston in 1974, the M&M Building has been rehabilitated externally by Charles Tapley Associates with a jazzy polychrome paint job (1985).

2 Main Street and Buffalo Bayou
Main Street Viaduct
1913, F.L. Dormant, City Engineer

This is the *only* way to enter downtown Houston, up over the high-arched span of the Main Street Viaduct, then down into the heart of the city, crowned with domes and the cornices of classically detailed office blocks. The viaduct spans not only Buffalo Bayou but White Oak Bayou and the tracks of the Houston & Texas Central and Missouri, Kansas & Texas lines as well. The 150-foot-long concrete arch spanning Buffalo Bayou was the longest single bridge span in Texas when the viaduct was completed.

3 719-721 Franklin Avenue
(nw corner Milam Street)
Magnolia Café Building
1911, Cooke & Company

The Magnolia Café was part of an extensive complex of buildings linked to the Houston Ice & Brewing Company's Magnolia Brewery on the opposite bank of the bayou. The second great flood on Buffalo Bayou (in 1935) precipitated the collapse of portions of this complex, including the back of 110 Milam Street, which has survived ever since in its ruined condition.

4 404 Washington Avenue
(ne corner Louisiana Street)
Houston Ice & Brewing Company Building
c. 1912, Cooke & Company

The original Magnolia Brewery of 1893 lay to the west, across what is now Louisiana Street. This building was part of an extensive expansion campaign undertaken in the 1910s, all of which seems to have been the work of the English-born architect Henry C. Cooke, who set up practice in Houston in 1900.

5 800-806 Commerce Street
Siewersaen and Hogan-Allnoch Company Buildings
1894 and 1906

Wilson/Crain/Anderson/Reynolds's rehabilitation of these two buildings as a law office (1975) was one of the first examples of preservation-oriented adaptive reuse in the warehouse district. Off to the left catch a spectacular glimpse of the Main Street Viaduct.

6 901-915 Commerce Street
(ne corner Travis Street)
Deesi-Boettcher Company Building
1912, Cooke & Company

Benjamin A. Riesner, a blacksmith turned carriage-maker, redeveloped the west end of Produce Row in the early 1900s. He and his architect, H.C. Cooke, were responsible not only for this building, leased to a wholesale grocery company, but 902 Commerce across the street (1906).

7 1000 block of Commerce Street
Allen's Landing
1967, W.H. Linnstaedter

Here, where White Oak Bayou empties into Buffalo, beneath the H&TC trestle, Augustus C. and John K. Allen staked their townsite of Houston. Through the early 1900s the foot of Main Street was a wharf area, where barges loaded and unloaded directly onto the earthen bank. Transformed into a city park through the efforts of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, it is – appropriately – navigable by automobile almost all the way to the water's edge. It is also possible to walk beneath the viaduct to a westward extension of the park.

8 1118 Commerce Street
(sw corner San Jacinto Street)
Gordon, Sewall & Company Building
1913, Sanguinet & Staats and A. E. Barnes

Considerably gentrified and shorn of its roof-top water tank (outfitted to look like a coffee pot), this stolid brick wholesale grocery company warehouse is one of several buildings in the area that has been adaptively reused by Harris County.

9 1119 Commerce Street
(nw corner San Jacinto Street)
Texas Packing Company Building
1924, Joseph Finger

Still owned and occupied by S. J. San Angelo's meat-packing plant, this 2-story above and 2-story below-grade building is in the industrial vernacular style of the 1920s: an exposed concrete frame in-filled with red brick and metal industrial sash windows.

10 1201-1207 Commerce Street
(ne corner San Jacinto Street)
Central Warehouse and Forwarding Company Building
1927

A handsomely proportioned example of the '20s industrial style, respectfully updated externally by Harris County. Henry C. Schuhmacher and Charles A. Perlitz erected this building next to the no-longer extant Schuhmacher & Company wholesale grocery warehouse of 1910. Like the earlier building, it sandwiches three floors between the bayou and street level. The street front walls are all brick, but the reinforced concrete frame is exposed on the bayou elevation.

11 San Jacinto Street and Buffalo Bayou
San Jacinto Street Bridge
1914, F.L. Dormant, City Engineer

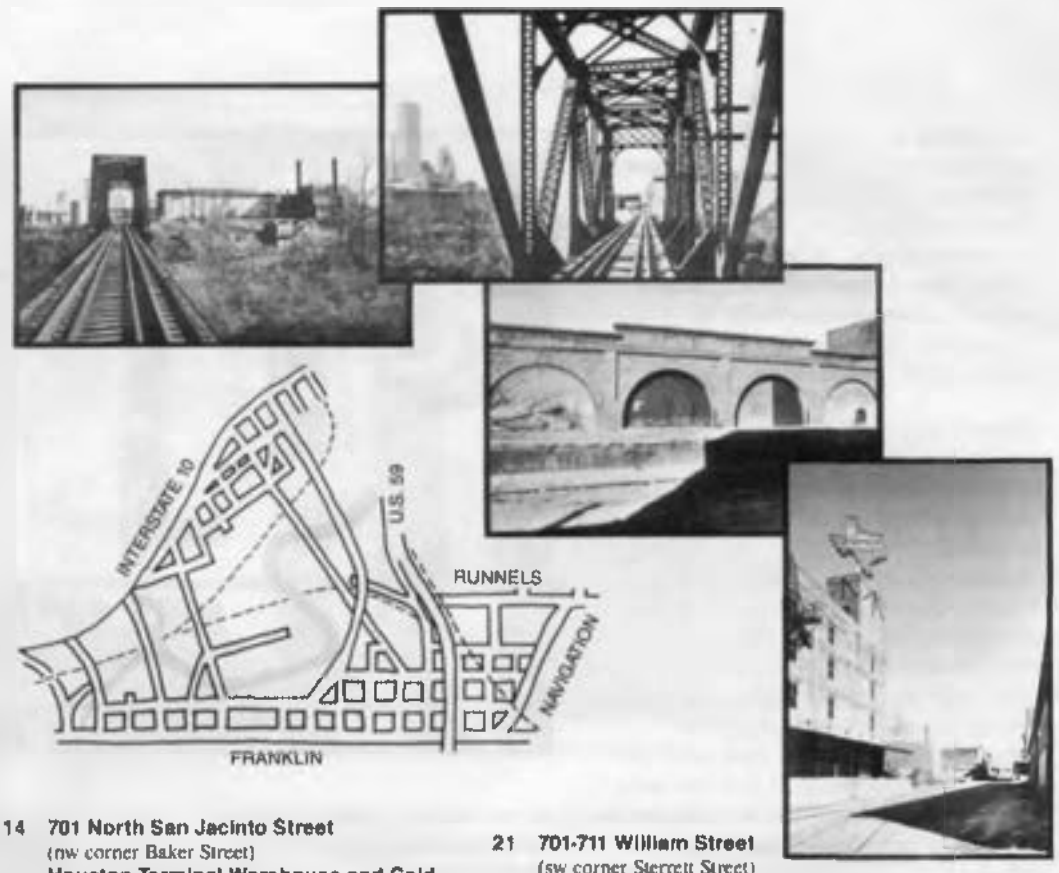
Connecting the Second Ward, on the south, to Fifth Ward on the north, this is a condensed version of the Main Street Viaduct.

12 810 North San Jacinto Street
(se corner Baker Street)
Peden Company Building
1930, James Ruskin Bailey

Opened within a few months of the M&M Building's inauguration, this building – originally containing the offices of the Peden Company and its retail "hardware department store" – was also in the American Perpendicular style, replete with a moderately setback penthouse tower above the corner entrance bay.

13 700 North San Jacinto Street
(ne corner Baker Street)
Peden Iron & Steel Company Building
1906, C. H. Page & Company

Arched windows and the use of projecting brick piers and string courses distinguish the Peden Company's earlier headquarters and warehouse building, one of the first to contribute to the modernization of the Fifth Ward factory district. Peden, manufacturers of heavy hardware, mill, railroad, and oil well supplies, added an extensive L-shaped concrete and brick annex to the 1906 building in 1912, designed by C. D. Hill & Company. Mustard-colored paint now gives the complex a rather depressing aspect.



14 701 North San Jacinto Street
(nw corner Baker Street)
Houston Terminal Warehouse and Cold Storage Building
1927, Engineering Service Corporation

This white, concrete-framed monster is strategically positioned between the H&TC and MKT tracks and Buffalo Bayou. When crossing the tracks, look eastward for an uplifting view of the M&M Building.

15 807-811 North San Jacinto Street
(sw corner Steam Mill Street)
City of Houston Crematory and Pumping Station
1901

This complex of buildings, executed in red pressed brick with very thin mortar joints, contained the city's pioneer sewage-treatment plant and municipal incinerator (the crematory). The molded brick arches of the pump house are especially good examples of what constituted standard brick detailing in Houston at the turn-of-the-century. Still owned by the City of Houston.

16 804-810 North San Jacinto Street
Southern Pacific Lines Freight Depot
1928, R. W. Barnes, Chief Engineer

Designed in-house in the Southern Pacific's Houston office, the main block of the complex is regulation 1920s concrete-and-brick frame-and-fill. The 1- and 2-story warehouse, shooting out on the diagonal of the Houston & Texas Central's transfer track, is formidable, however. The Southern Pacific firmly insinuated itself into this part of town between 1881 and 1899 by successively absorbing the Texas & New Orleans, the Houston & Texas Central, and the Houston East & West Texas lines.

17 908-912 Wood Street and 711 Walnut Street
Moore Warehouses #2 and #1
1908 and 1907
902-910 Wood Street
(nw corner Walnut Street)
South Texas Implement & Transfer Company Warehouse
c.1908

Consolidated for much of their existences, these three 3-story warehouses of "mill-type" construction (brick load-bearing perimeter walls encasing a heavy timber frame) were the first in the warehouse district to be converted to loft lease space for studios and offices, in 1982. The concrete-walled film studio and sound stage affixed to 711 Walnut was added by Houston Studios in 1986.

18 802 Walnut Street
(ne corner Sterrett Street)
Patrick Transfer Company Warehouse
1911

Another solid utilitarian warehouse of red brick construction with paneled brick exterior walls. The Houston Studios sign atop is a kick: "Texas On A Stick," as the Washington D.C. photographer Renee Butler quipped.

19 1200 Rothwell Street
(ne corner Nance Street)
Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Store Building
1883

The awkward intersection of streets here does not reflect the insertion of Interstate 10, as it might appear to, but the historic collision of two discontinuous grids with the Liberty Road. A small commercial sub center took root here, of which Henry Henke's branch grocery store (now the North San Jacinto Café) is the only visible remnant. Above the altered ground floor, the rendered masonry façade is intact.

20 1302 Nance Street
(se corner Richey Street)
Erie City Iron Works Warehouse
1909

Herbert A. Paine built this extensively arcuated brown brick warehouse to contain his wholesale machinery business. The most impressive elevation – on the south, facing Sterrett – is composed solely of repeating semicircular openings.

21 701-711 William Street
(sw corner Sterrett Street)
James Bute Company Warehouse
1910, Olle J. Lorehn

Olle Lorehn's block-long, 4-story, concrete-framed paint factory for the James Bute Company was the largest warehouse in Houston at the time of its completion. Remarkably, it is still occupied by its original owner and used for its original purposes.

22 801 William Street
(1333-1377 Sterrett Street)
Bartell Warehouse
1912

The brown brick Bartell Warehouse, with its narrow, jack-arch headed windows, represented the old school of warehouse design in the 1910s, a lingering Victorian presence in the Progressive Era.

23 1403 Nance Street
The Last Concert Café
1951

This delightful hybrid of brick, stucco, glass block, and iron grills, all festively painted, is the concoction of Sam González, who built the Last Concert in the back yard of the cottage at 904 William Street.

24 801 McKee Street
(ne corner Sterrett Street)
Houston Sash & Door Company Building
c. 1916

A brown brick reprise of the Bartell Warehouse at #22.

25 1902 Rothwell Street
(se corner Maury Street)
W. T. Carter Lumber Company Warehouse
1909

Of red brick and heavy timber construction, this building originally comprised the high nave-like central bay and its flanking lower bays, to which more "offsets" – as they were described in 1909 – have been added subsequently.

26 900 block Elysian Street

When the City of Houston built the Resweber Viaduct to carry traffic across the bayou, the railroad tracks, and the future I-10, it simply bridged Elysian Street, leaving the buildings facing it intact and the roadway unobstructed. As William T. Cannady has observed, this strategy offers an enticing suggestion of how elevated highway structures might have been made to intervene civilly in the fabric of hot, humid cities to provide arcaded vehicular streets of noble proportion. Elysian Street is the central thoroughfare in the S.F. Noble Addition, platted in Fifth Ward in 1867; the names of flanking streets commemorate heroes of the lost cause.

27 McKee Street and Buffalo Bayou
McKee Street Bridge
1932, James Gordon McKenzie, City Bridge Engineer

During his tenure in the City Engineer's office, McKenzie put the ingenuity back into engineering. The undulating reinforced concrete girders that bracket the brick-paved roadway of the McKee Street Bridge are in the shape of moment diagrams, expressively demonstrating the disposition of structural forces. The spirited polychromy and the landscaping of adjacent banks are the work of the artist Kirk Farris, who orchestrated a volunteer beautification campaign in 1985.

28 507 McKee Street
Gable Street Plant, Houston Lighting & Power Company
1898, 1913, 1917, 1918, 1921, 1939, 1950

This is the oldest electrical generating plant in the city, opened on this site by HL&P's predecessor, the Citizens Electric Light & Power Company. The present plant building, although it incorporates older construction, dates principally from the 1910s, as the arched industrial sash windows set into recessed wall bays of red brick suggest.

29 View from McKee and Runnels Streets toward Spruce and Bramble Streets
***Frost Town* shotgun cottages**

This collection of shotgun cottages is all that remains of Frost Town, an eight-block subdivision slightly downstream from the Allen brothers' townsite (although located in the John Austin Survey, which the Allens acquired in 1836). Its name derives from a settlement predating the Allens, made hereabouts in 1822. Unlike the Allens' grid, the Frost Town grid aligns with the boundaries of the John Austin Survey; McKee Street is virtually the only trace remaining of this old network; note that it also retains its exposed brick paving surface.

30 1801 Ruiz Street
(ne corner McKee Street)
MK&T Railroad Company of Texas Freight Office Building
1927, A. L. Sparks

Like the Southern Pacific freight depot, the Katy freight office is skewed in plan, pivoted on the intersection of the Frost Town and Houston grids. Designed by the railroad's St. Louis corporate architect, the freight office exhibits vestigial classical detail at the main entrance, which is considerably less compelling than the expanse of sheds along McKee.

31 1901 Ruiz Street
(ne corner Hamilton Street)
J. L. Jones Warehouse
1930, J. W. Northrop, Jr.

Northrop is best remembered for his numerous American Georgian houses in the South End and River Oaks. But for one of his most loyal clients, J. L. Jones, he designed a number of warehouse and commercial buildings in the 1920s. There is just a hint of the Georgian - streamlined, to be sure – in this 3-story brick warehouse, with its abstract rendition of a pedimented portal at the main entrance.

32 1901 Commerce Street
(ne corner Hamilton Street)
M. De George Warehouse
1925, L. S. Green

This was the last major work of Lewis Sterling Green, a Houston architect quite active between 1900 and 1914, after which his career began to wane. It was built for Michael De George, who also built the De George and Auditorium (now Lancaster) hotels.

33 1700 block Commerce Street
(sw corner Chenevert Street)
National Biscuit Company Building
1902, Olle J. Lorehn

Nabisco's first production plant in Houston was a comparatively elaborate building, as far as local industrial architecture was concerned. The slightly tacky stone-faced cast concrete voussoirs above the arched openings were all the rage in Houston between 1900 and 1910.

34 15 North Chenevert Street
(sw corner Ruiz Street)
National Biscuit Company Building
1910, A. G. Zimmerman

So successful was Nabisco's business in Houston that in 1910 the company's architect, A. G. Zimmerman, made plans for this exceptionally well-detailed and constructed 5-story baking, packing, and shipping plant, where Nabisco was located until 1949. The building displays a kinship to Zimmerman's contemporary plants for the company in New York and Kansas City. Its reinforced concrete frame construction is evident from the regular disposition of vertical piers, horizontal spandrels, and bay openings. The variegated red brick of the exterior walls is relieved with courses of molded tan terra-cotta. The Nabisco Building remains the most monumental work of architecture in the wholesale district, thanks to the 6-story corner tower, containing the entrance and fire stairs.

35 11 North Jackson Street
(sw corner Ruiz Street)
Grocers Supply Company Building
1940, Joseph Finger

A far cry from the utilitarianism of Finger's Texas Packing Company Building (#9) is this 2-story, block-long, streamlined modernistic building, with slot windows inserted into a second-story band of continuous speed lines. This was the last major wholesale company building constructed in the district; in the 19th century this block and the one to the west had contained the generating plant of the Houston Gas Works.

36 1701 Commerce Street
(ne corner Jackson Street)
J. L. Jones Warehouse
1927, J. W. Northrop, Jr.

In contrast to the Jones Warehouse at #31, this red brick box is strictly plain-Jane, with only a protruding mechanical penthouse to alleviate the building's flat, unarticulated Commerce Street front. Diagonally across the intersection, at 100-104 Jackson Street, and now painted eye-eze green, is a near twin.

37 1606 Commerce Street
(se corner Crawford Street)
Eller Wagon Works Building
1909

Befitting a production plant for beast-drawn wagons constructed at the dawn of the auto age, this 3-story brown brick building is architecturally anachronistic: the narrow jack-arch headed windows bespeak its conservative design.

38 103 Austin Street
William L. Macatee & Sons Building
1906, Cooke & Company

Vigorously modeled abstract classical detail, picking out the second-floor arched openings and the pedimented entrance bay, gives this small building big presence, which it needs now that the mammoth Harris County Jail looms over it. The two blocks that the jail occupies were where the International & Great Northern Railway built its freight depot between 1901 and 1905, disrupting the tranquillity of what had been the old antebellum residential district of Quality Hill, and precipitating its redevelopment as an eastward extension of Produce Row.

39 109-111 Crawford Street
(visible from the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Crawford Street)
Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company Building
1920, Alfred C. Finn

PPG had taken over the Eller Wagon Works Building (#37) when it built this 3-story office building just after World War I – now camouflaged in eye-eze green. The crisp, rectilinear composition of the Crawford Street front and the pair of cartouche plaques above the two outer window bays betray the hand of H. Jordan MacKenzie, an obscure but exuberant designer who worked for the Houston architect Alfred C. Finn.

40 1619 Franklin Avenue
(nw corner Jackson Street)
Shell Petroleum Company Service Station #12
1934

An ebullient little art déco pavilion.

41 2018 Franklin Avenue
(sw corner St. Emanuel Street)
Standard Brass & Manufacturing Company Building
1937, John F. Staub

This building is by one architect you wouldn't have expected to find represented in the warehouse district, but here it is: a handsome composition of horizontally banded industrial sash windows emphasizing the planar walls of the building box, into which deep and shallow volumetric incursions are made to provide for vehicular and pedestrian access. Staub's partner, J. T. Rather, Jr., was the designer.

42 121 St. Emanuel Street
(ne corner Franklin Avenue)
Gribble Stamp & Stencil Company Building
1948, C.R. Berry & Company

The 2-story glass-block cylinder functions as the pivot point for the Gribble Building's diverging, two-toned, red-and-tan brick walls. A witty adaptation to a pie-shaped site.

43 Hutchins Street and Commerce Street Navigation Boulevard Underpass
1928

With the railroad-track grade crossing at Hutchins and Commerce underpassed, the way was opened – via Navigation Boulevard and Clinton Drive - to connect the new industrial district stretching along both sides of lower Buffalo Bayou directly to downtown Houston, foretelling the day when the "old" district along the upper bayou would be superseded.

44 2405 Navigation Boulevard
Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
1923, Leo M. J. Dielmann

Dielmann, a prolific San Antonio architect, had already designed a church for the Spanish-language Roman Catholic parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in San Antonio when he was retained to design Guadalupe, Houston, the city's first Spanish-language parish. Rendered in Dielmann's distinctively heavy-handed style, the church is of Italian Romanesque derivation, more Victorian than '20s neo-Lombard, however. Slated for major restoration.

45 2115 Runnels Street
(nw corner Lottman Street)
Lottman Manufacturing Company Building
(now El Mercado del Sol)
1904, 1910, 1926

Marking the far east edge of the warehouse district is this complex of 2-, 3-, and 4-story brown brick and heavy timber-framed buildings, which housed the wholesale furniture factory of the Lottman (subsequently Lottman-Myers, then Myers-Spalti) Manufacturing Company. A number of additions were carried out in the original vernacular style; a 5-story concrete frame and brick in-fill wing dates from 1926. Between 1983 and 1985 the complex was rehabilitated to become El Mercado del Sol, a Mexican-themed shopping center upon which Fortune has yet to smile.

End of Tour.

A Conversation With Charles Moore

(Continued from page 13)

the differences between Knott's Berry Farm and Magic Mountain and Lion Country Safari (now closed) and all the others. I started my book about L.A. with a mention of a young fellow who was clerking in his father's curio store in Kashmir and as he took my address in L.A. his eyes brightened up and he said, "Oh! I spent my honeymoon in Los Angeles, California, and we went to Lion Country Safari."

Cite: Bringing it all back home.

Moore: Bringing it all back home. And I was delighted with that. So I think that the worries that architectural critics seem forever to have about places like Lion Country Safari or Six Flags Over Texas are all very interesting. I find the critics dead wrong. I'm especially fascinated by this business that many architectural critics (they mostly seem to be British) have developed: a passionate fear of kitsch, as though if one were guilty of liking any or causing any to be built, or having any, or inhabiting any, that somehow one is rendered unclean. That it's kind of like getting herpes, and you want to hold yourself clean.

Cite: Recognizing that one culture's kitsch may be another's art?

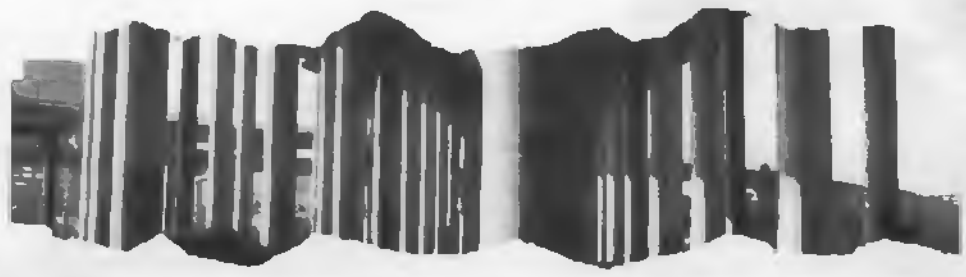
Moore: Well, I don't see how they can tell. It seems to me that the things that I'm interested in – ways of getting at peoples' desires to dwell in places and, therefore, their connections with them – are going to land me sometimes in kitsch. It is the 20th century after all; these are not hearty peasants, running around close to the ground, that we're trying to make houses or buildings for. They're sophisticated people in a complicated environment where kitsch is everywhere. I don't see any point in wasting my energy trying to steer clear of it.

Cite: Fear of kitsch at the expense of memory and delight. Just as Robert Stern has been raked over the coals for lingering in places like San Simeon, or going there at all.

Moore: It would all be so much better if everyone would relax a little. We don't even have to learn to love kitschy things; we just have to get over the stark and debilitating fear of being tainted by the ordinary.

Cite: The design of public places today seems beset by an evasion of what Forster posed in *Howard's Way* as the need to connect, whatever the risk. The Piazza d'Italia makes such a connection and so does Western Plaza in Washington, D.C., although neither has been well repaid for its effort. So too, might the premise of a truncated freeway interchange downsized for Pershing Square – a sort of belated Fine Arts Squad trope as skateboard heaven – or your colossal steers for Sesquicentennial Park in Houston. Perhaps if we considered monuments initially to be somewhat disposable commodities available for later stabilization where warranted, like Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts, the results might be more worth keeping?

Moore: Exactly. Or at least the process of designing them wouldn't be so painful. I got a particular thrill out of designing the Wonderwall at the 1984 New Orleans fair, built for six months. When people asked, "But will it last?" I was able to say, "No." Temporariness removes a heavy burden. ■



City Edges

Eduardo Robles

Imagine a small boat slowly moving up the bayou. In the boat, anxious, intrigued, curious eyes stare at a world different from that of their past experience. As the boat moves, the banks seem to move, as the waters move, the banks also seem to move. The boat seems to move faster when the eyes look at the water, at the reflection and the shadows of themselves; and it seems to move slower when the eyes look at the banks that almost seem to move with them.

For what reason the boat ended its voyage where it ended it is of no importance. What matters is that at a precise point the keel sank into the mud and the people set foot on the land, at the edge of the bayou.

From that point on, the land was to be transformed. Wilderness was to be shaped and a house was built. The house and the new landscape clashed right at the foundation of the building, where the new, alien, upright plane touched the natural, spreading, horizontal plane of the land. A crisp line, short and powerful; a statement that from here on there would be city on one side and country on the other.

When Gail Borden and his associates laid out the first plat of Houston for the Allen brothers in 1836, the transition from wilderness to city happened almost instantaneously. From the banks of the bayou to the south, a square grid was superimposed on what was practically virgin land. And it is an image like this that those eyes might have been able to see before the horizon: a city, a landscape surrounding that city, and a wilderness beyond that landscape. There would appear three clearly defined concentric zones, as if the ripples of the water from the keel of the boat had been able to climb the banks and travel through the land.

Landscape means shaped land, land modified by people for their use and existence. Landscape happens by intention, not by accident or chance. To modify the land is not only an act of survival, it is also an act of possession, not only for others, but for one's self. And we carry this premise deep in our cultural heritage.

When people arrived and took over the land, they dealt with issues of adoption and adaption, surviving and imposing a presence, as they carved a landscape out of a new wilderness. They brought, however, a baggage of knowledge, experience, and tools which allowed them to interpret and modify the land. And it is these people who, for the first time, due to their direct daily action, determined the first true edge of the city. Others followed, and again, because of them, other edges were determined.

If we look carefully at the city from above, or at a map, we can virtually see how Houston grew. We can read the original grid extending to the south; we can see how later it grew in other directions; we can see how each growth related to the previous one. At times we can clearly distinguish the thin line that separates the original grid and the others that were later added, and the line between these and the ones that followed.

There are in the city places from where we can look at the change in the grid patterns. Hyde Park at Fairview, for example, makes visible the steps through which the city grew. The recent redesign of the park, now a small pocket against a utilities station, also makes us aware that if we stand at the corner, before us there was a city, behind us, fairgrounds and country. We can stand at the place where once the edge of the city stood.

Through changes like these, we can see how the edge moved. We also can see how square blocks became rectangular blocks, and how straight streets became curved streets, slowly changing the city with each new plot developed, with each new edge created. We can also see in other places how different towns, settlements, and developments became part of the whole of the ever-expanding city. We can see the different sensibilities, needs, philosophies of city design, and the aspirations and economic motivations that modified the shape of the city as it grew through time and space.

From below in the streets of the city, the buildings and the building lots tell us their own story of how the city grew and changed. Through major thoroughfares in motion we can see the years passing like the rings of a tree. Streets like Westheimer, from its beginning near downtown to its vague end far to the west, show us by their size, shape, buildings, and use, the history of the city through which they run. The street slices through not only urban space, but also urban time. There are many streets,

avenues, boulevards, and parkways like this; many slices that tell us many stories of how the city grew. It would be possible to select a dozen or so major arteries and through their description imagine the city as a whole.

As the city grew, as the edge was relocated, other places with names like Parks, Places, Cities, Valleys, Hills, and Villages became the new edge and the edge moved faster further away. This we can visualize as an expansive ring, a shock-wave that started at a precise point and changed wilderness into landscape, and landscape into cityscape. This is a process of generations, but in Houston it took just a few.

We could say that people were afraid of the edges, so the edges grew wide and vague as invisible walls. Only once was the edge crisp and thin and that was during the existence of the first house, then only a hut. As the city expanded and the edges grew wider and further away, people moved with the edges and the edges became like the center. But they expanded so much that the center itself became the edge. In this urban explosion, the edges became the center and the center decayed. It slowly became an edge of the city, of itself, and unto itself. The force involved in the push of the city outwards compressed the surrounding landscape until it slipped under itself.

Features like Market Square, one of the most historically significant spaces in Houston; like Buffalo Bayou, one of the most geographically significant features of the city, became forgotten. The edge became an open wound in the middle of the city. In a situation like this, places like Allen Parkway Village and River Oaks came to share the common border of the city edge, as do the collection of practically brand-new buildings, which at points face block after block of empty, flat, dark, parking lots. This is not the center, this is the edge itself. The edge that crept under the push of the city and resurfaced back at the place where it started.

It is a conscious act to shape the land, an act of intention, not chance or accident. But the edge of the city slipped under itself and was back at the center by accident, not by intention; or so we want to believe. ■

Photographs (details) courtesy Sally Gall

Citeations

The Astronomer's Garden And the Levitator's Towers

The Parklane Collection
Photography by George O. Jackson
Sponsored by the Transco Energy Company
Transco Gallery West, Houston, Texas
18 December 1986 - 9 January 1987

Reviewed by Christopher Genik

The terrace is on two levels: a loggia or belvedere dominates the hurly-burly of the roofs over which Mr. Palomar casts a bird's-eye glance. He tries to conceive the world as it is seen by birds. Unlike him, birds have the void opening beneath them, but perhaps they never look down, they see only to the side, hovering obliquely on their wings, and their gaze, like his, wherever it turns encounters nothing but roofs, higher or lower, construction more or less elevated but so thick that he can move only so far down. That, down below, hemmed in, streets and squares exist, that the true ground is the one at ground level, he knows on the basis of other experiences; at this moment, from what he can see from up here, he would never suspect it. . . – Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*

Amidst Houston's infinitely mobile generation of obsessive freeway dwellers, George O. Jackson conjures an extravagant landscape of stationary giants. Safely propped up 28 stories above the city's uncertain ground, a levitated living-room armchair becomes a surrogate astronomical observatory of the city. Two measuring lenses – one wide-angle, the other telephoto – are set up as voyeurs to taunt the Bayou skies. Viewfinders feverishly monitor 270 degrees of the horizon, as they disembowel and redigest it into a "video" frenzy of endless suspended panoramas. A relentless profile of a Babel of towers is unleashed. Mesmerizing mirrored mirages, as well as uncommon vistas of Cyclopean monoliths, compete with the thunders of nature and command the passage of day into night. This is the familiar spectacle captured by Jackson's magic machine.

Jackson presents Houston as a wanton and mythical cosmopolis. It is a city which reaches a kind of metaphoric state of apotheosis when viewed through his schizophrenic apparatus – part lens, part mirror. Indeed, the object of his scrutiny, a towered skyscape, is no less a construction of mirrors and lenses than the camera which seeks to record it. In between the inverted world of the camera body and the "upright" world beyond, a conspiracy of phenomenal lenses and mirrors yields a legendary towering metropolis enriched by its own infinite refractions. These optical mechanics concoct a mirage as the genesis of a city whose fundamental genius lies in its ability to be an optical illusion. It is a landscape supplemented by a refracted moonbeam that is capable, if only momentarily, of stunning gravity.

George O. Jackson's uncanny proposition for Houston, the sky and the city, must be interpreted as the work of an inspired artist as much as it should be enjoyed as the trickery of a skillful prestigiator. As an almanac narrating the forecast of what Houston would become, the Parklane Collection remains the work of an astronomer turned levitator.

At the edge of his 28-story balcony, Jackson longs for the city's moons. With two cameras to augment his vision, a makeshift observatory is set up that recalls the twin observatory towers of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe. The father of modern telescopy, Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) dwelled on a magnificent observatory on the island of Hveen in the strait of Sund, near Elsmore in Denmark. He called his research institute *Uraniborg*, the "City of Heavens." The main building was situated in the center of a large square garden surrounded by high walls like a fort, with the corners directed to the cardinal points. Furnished with a rich supply of sextants, equatorial *armillae*, parallactic instruments, and clocks of various types [1], it had the special property of being in great part underground, probably because instruments could better be shielded from the effects of weather.[2] The buildings of his observatory were the progenitors of a landscape of skies and permitted Brahe to finally align the map of his "City of Heavens" to the cardinal imperative of polar coordinates.

Brahe removes himself to the splendid isolation of his "City of Heavens," while Jackson sequesters himself in his Parklane condominium. Both rely on the recalibration of their instruments – synchronized to the changing skies – to provide us with the specifications of their world. As viewed through their respective mirror, the "City of Heavens" and the City of Houston become endowed with an agenda which metamorphoses them into extraordinary lenses for measuring the sky; Tycho's is virtual while Jackson's is abstract.

Brahe's dynamic skies are the guarantee that his "City of Heavens" will remain firmly anchored to the ground where it will trace a kind of orrery garden for measure and gravity. Jackson's city knows no such boundaries. Prompted by the exceptional spectacle of towering mirrors reflected 28 stories in the air, a suspended horizon is enraptured with its own apparent weightlessness.

Not unlike the manner in which the Franciscan monk Joseph of Copertino (1603-1663) would raise his feet and remain suspended in mid air while provoking the magical rearranging of altar furnishings[3], Jackson's willed levitations attempt to "rearrange" our perception of the city. Through the use of magic as much as through the conspiracy of coincidental mirrors (those of the city and those of the camera), a skyscape is conjured. In the abstract compression of a virtual plane, reflected and refracted images facet a new geography for towers of sky. As George O. Jackson's observatory prepares to focus on a ubiquitous, surreal landscape, his subject assumes lense-like dimensions. Viewed through these spectacles, Houston the mirage is prodigiously transformed into Houston the miracle.

If Jackson fails at all in his task, it is to reveal the extraordinary circumstances of Houston's weightlessness without resorting to the nostalgic and the cliché. Fireworks, melodramatic moonrises, and sentimental sunsets only demean what is surely a tremendous, if slightly frightful, agenda for a city like none other. Perhaps these are images that might be more appropriately kept for the pages of theme calendars, or glossy picture-postcard views.

Whether perceived from the miasmic network of elevated freeways or the precocious levitated vantage point of a 28-story terrace, Jackson inaugurates the possibility of an eccentric exurban city of sky. Like Jonathan Swift's suspended observatory kingdom of *Laputa*[4], the invention of Jackson's dioptic towers is ensured by their foretelling revision of urban conventions. They exist as positive and idiosyncratic aberrations within the landscape of their own tectonic tradition, and are inventive exceptions to themselves and to their environment.

If Joseph of Copertino was banished from choir and left to levitate for the last 35 years of his life in his isolated cell, so Jackson might also be exiled for the next three decades or so to the rooms of his Parklane condominium. Though we may wish momentarily to dispel the tremendous impact of his trance, let us make no mistake: Houston *is* the city in which the ground plane has been all but canceled, gravity admonished, and scale irreparably distorted. This does not imply, however, that we are condemned to perspectival purgatory. Quite the

George O. Jackson

View from George O. Jackson's studio at the Parklane

Tycho Brahe's observatory, "The City of Heavens"

contrary. By hoisting himself some 250 feet in the air, Jackson has been able to reveal how a city, weary of the frustrations of the ground, can be transformed to one obsessed with the promise of the sky. Assisted by his lenses and mirrors, Jackson has spectered a city destined to become the astonishing garden for disbelievers and the towering capital of luxurious possibilities. His messianic timepiece – a levitated observatory – premonishes questions left unanswered by the Parklane Collection's bi-focal views: What provoked this generation of prodigious tower-builders from the Texas plains to first lay the foundations for their totemic skyscapes, and who are they and what do they do as they lurk in the shadows of their magnificent Babels? ■

Notes

1 J.L.E. Dreyer, *Tycho Brahe*, 1890. Gives full, authentic information on Brahe's life.
2 R. A. Gray, "The Life and Work of Tycho Brahe," *Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Journal*, XVII, 1923.
3 The *Acta Sanctorum* credits Joseph of Copertino with more than 70 separate flights, and relates witnessed accounts of his levitations.
4 Jonathan Swift, *Travels Into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, Then Captain of Several Ships*, first edition, October 1726.

Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects 1949-1986

Eugene J. Johnson, editor, New York, Rizzoli, 1986, 305 pp., illus., $45.

Reviewed by Gerald Moorhead

There is already an astoundingly large bibliography on the work of Charles Moore and his collaborators. This latest offering, compiled in conjunction with an exhibition of the architect's work at Williams College, is not an *oeuvre complet*, but it does give, perhaps, the best insight into the personality, ideas, method, and joy of Charles Moore.

The book consists of a series of brief, very readable, unpedantic essays followed by illustrations of 59 projects, selected and arranged by Moore into four groupings: Houses for the Architect, Houses as the Center of the World, Frivolous and Serious Play, and Fitting. Topping it off is a collection of fantasy drawings and decorated Christmas cookies which themselves deserve a volume of explanation.

The essays delve into various aspects of Moore's work and ideas. Kent Bloomer sets the stage by squaring us with three concepts which are the foundation of Moore's architectural thought: *form*, which represents the basic organizing principle of a structure; *shape*, the peculiar configuration of the form; and *order*, which gives to architecture values, meanings, or metaphors. From Bloomer's essay we realize something which is continually reiterated in the following articles: Charles Moore the person cannot be separated from his architecture.

Donlyn Lyndon describes his experiences with Moore as a collaborator and teacher, his deft ability to allow, encourage, and to infuse projects with his own will and style all the multitudinous changing and conflicting aspects of a project. Robert A.M. Stern describes Moore as an architect in search of the means to create "places" in an American environment worsened by a transient, ambivalent culture and a failed modernism which "never offered the public the fundamental gift of architecture – a sense of place."

Heinrich Klotz plays with Moore's toys, finding hope and strength in his sense of humor in defiance of "good taste." And Dorothy and Frederick Rudolph contribute their experiences as clients for two Moore-designed houses, including intimate details like: "Charles Moore has slept in both our houses. He snored and left his pygamas [sic]." Richard Song details the client-participation process that the Moore team used in designing St. Matthew's Church in Los Angeles.

Editor Eugene Johnson provides the major critical article. Using detailed descriptions of numerous projects, he chronicles and analyzes the complex assortment of inspirations, methods, organizations, and forms in Moore's work. Investigations of the progress drawings for several projects (Sea Ranch and the Jobson, Klotz, Johnson, and Rudolph houses) help to unlock the geometrical evolution of these complex plans. Johnson goes to some length to explain the sources of inspiration (especially from Kahn and Aalto) for Moore's designs. It is never entirely clear, however, if these sources are Moore's own or speculations by the author. Moore's work does show a personal and progressively more literal use of architectural history culled from his vast memory of the famous and the obscure, grand schemes and minute details, both past and present. But we are left with a feeling that perhaps Johnson takes the source search a bit too far, attributing the work to too many references and leaving too little room for Moore's own manipulations. For example, the false river-boat recreation center in the Berlin Tegel Harbor housing competition is compared to the marble barge in the pond of the Peking garden of the Empress of China, the boat-like Isola Bella in Lake Como, Italy, and ocean liners admired by Le Corbusier; the glass exterior of the recreation center is related to Berlin examples of the use of glass in early modernism. In discussing the face-like arrangement of openings in the St. Matthew's Church tower, Johnson overreaches again, attributing it to a photo of a Dogon building in Africa on the cover of a book published the same year as the building was designed.

Johnson makes frequent, subtly derisive comments about Moore's collaborators, as if everyone who works with him is only awkward and struggling until the master intervenes to bring order and style to the work. Working closely with other professionals is such a vital part of Moore's method that Johnson might have made a more positive analysis of their contributions.

But for the most part Johnson's article is balanced and clear. His last remarks put very directly a continuing problem of Moore's work "being misunderstood, partly because his instinct for joy can easily be mistaken for frivolity. Moore is sometimes seen as the master of the architectural joke . . . but anyone who knows his life knows that he, too, is a man of learning and intellect. Anyone who looks seriously into his work will find it filled with complex architectural ideas and an extrordinary sensitivity."

The finely printed illustrations show many of the now familiar projects, from the Jones's House of 1949 to last year's addition to the Museum of Art at Williams College. One of the real pleasures of the book are all the previously unpublished sketches and drawings which, together with Johnson's informative text, provide new insights into the development of familiar designs. ■

Bad Day at Hard Rock, Thunderbird Branch

Hard Rock Cafe
Houston, Texas
Stanley Tigerman, architect

Reviewed by Drexel Turner

©1987 Paul Hester, Houston

Outdoric: High rider, flags, and porte cochère

Stanley Tigerman's uncharacteristically subdued, neoclassical casing for the newest in the line of Hard Rock cafes, nestled at the edge of River Oaks, could scarcely give offense. Disinclined to rock around the block, it adopts instead the becolumned countenance of the somewhat distant River Oaks Country Club, a preference it shares on the Kirby Drive strip with a drive-in bank and a funeral emporium. In fact, the Hard Rock is so well-mannered that it requires the brashness of Ant Farm's latest sequel to Cadillac Ranch – an aqua blue '63 Thunderbird with operable headlights inclined skyward more than 40 feet atop a golden shaft – to make itself heard above the genteel din of upper Kirby.[1]

Where the Hard Rock fails to connect adequately, though, is inside, where one might have hoped that the hamburgers and strawberry daiquiris would be served up in the midst of a sort of rolling Soane museum. But what one finds is a post-pubescent, sub-Polo fern bar freighted with less-than-riveting, mostly rock, memorabilia; a bibulous MacDonald's of thematic disarray and quasi-touristic dimension, inspirited by such blithe digressions as an inflatable facsimile of the ill-fated space shuttle displaying on its underside the legend: "God Bless Michael Smith, Dick Scobee, Ron McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Christa McAuliffe, Judy Resnik, Greg Jarvis," a note echoed by the headline of a framed tabloid close by, "JOHN LENNON SHOT DEAD."

Which is too bad in a way, because the cafe might have possessed a more apposite, if not entirely deathless, charm, had Ant Farm or Red Grooms or even George Lucas been turned loose on the inside. One could imagine tail-finned booths, electric guitar shaped bars, and, for spin, a dance floor in the form of a record player, unfolding beneath friezes of L-P album and Rolling Stone magazine covers – something comparable to the inside of a jukebox flocked with blue suede, chrome pipes, and neon. Should this prove too extreme by itself, the ensemble might be tempered with Eggleston photographs of Graceland, Friedlander glimpses of Madonna, and Avedon portraits of the Stones, amplified by assorted rock Warholia and culinary Oldenburgers, and perhaps even brought into the present by brick curtains to suit David Byrne (a conceit devised by Bill McDugald for the new All Records shop several blocks away in the River Oaks Shopping Center).

Instead, the space within is shrouded in a down-home, faintly Texanic veneer of embossed plastic imitation pressed tin, narrow paneled oak wainscoting, and striped awning upholstery. This armature is encrusted with various small-scale relics ranging from Tina Turner's outerwear to the non-sequiteur of Akeem Olajuwon's sneakers, set in a sea of pedigreed cast-off guitars, gold records, and letters to fans from a minor constellation of stars, professionally assembled and disposed by the Hard Rock organization's full-time director of interiors. The only legibly scaled, somewhat transformational aspect of this assemblage are two over-sized Coca-Cola bottle "sconces" appended to the half-ring promenade on the Kirby side, which seem to want to become caryatids without quite knowing how. Otherwise, Houston's Hard Rock is soft inside, hardly the thing to save the planet from life in the fast-food lane. But if people will stand in line to get in anyway, why bother rocking the cafe?

Notes

1 The piece, titled the *Save the Planet Sculpture*, is by Doug Michaels, Hudson Marquez, and Chip Lord, who initially collaborated as Ant Farm, but have lately refrained from that collective assignation.

©1987 Paul Hester, Houston

Inner space: Shuttle craft Challenger and Lone Star bar

What Could Have Been: Unbuilt Architecture of the '80s

Curated by Peter Jay Zweig; organized by Lorry Parks and Roberta Mathews, Grace Design Exhibits
Sponsored by the Dallas Market Center
28 January - 30 January

Reviewed by Jay C. Henry

Entering the exhibition in its Dallas installation, one immediately encountered projects by Charles Gwathmey and Michael Graves. Gwathmey is represented by his addition to the Guggenheim Museum; Graves by his beautifully rendered project for the Phoenix Civic Center, the *pièce de résistance* of the show. It is a shock for someone with a middle-aged memory to realize how far apart Gwathmey and Graves have traveled since their common brotherhood in the New York Five of the 1960s. Gwathmey remains a discreet modernist, standing aloof from fashionable historical quotation (at least from history before Modern Movement), whereas Graves affirms his role as arch-priest of postmodern eclecticism, whose highly mannered, classical forms are exaggerated almost to the point of caricature. Both of these strands of contemporary design are represented elsewhere in the exhibition, but the postmodern eclectic predominates.

The 30 designs on exhibition are difficult to evaluate comparatively because there is no consistency in what is shown. The projects range from skyscrapers to playground furniture. Some are viable proposals for specific buildings; others are visionary concepts without serious prospects for realization. Some projects are shown with complete drawings, while others are represented only as models, sometimes without context. This makes for a stimulating show, but hardly "what could have been." Some of these designs are so outrageous that they could never have been built.

Of those projects for which a specific site is indicated, a wide variety of contextual responses are on view. Gwathmey's Guggenheim Addition is a reticent backdrop to a transcendant historical monument. The complicated site planning of Graves' Phoenix Civic Center recalls the formalism of the Beaux Arts/City Beautiful milieu, ignoring the alternative American environmental tradition of locating public buildings in parks. Frank Gehry's and William Turnbull's design for the Triton Museum in Santa Clara, California, on the other hand, seems to merge formalist planning elements with the naturalistic landscape tradition through the expedient of collonades of vines or topiary.

Entries to the skyscraper competition for New York's Columbus Circle by both Helmut Jahn and Cesar Pelli are included in the exhibition. Both respond admirably to the picturesque diagonal moving up Broadway. Jahn's helical, spiral, grid-framed structure is totally without historical allusions, however, whereas Pelli's grouped towers suggest a resurrection of the art déco skyscraper. On the other hand, the New York Skyscrapers of George Sowden would be blatant intrusions on their site in central Manhattan, violating the scale and historical context of Grand Central Station and the Chrysler Building.

The work of the Texas firms included in the exhibition is inconclusive, as none of these projects are given complete presentations. They do represent the range of current possibilities in architecture, however, from the non-eclectic modernism of Peter Jay Zweig's House of Walls, through the classicizing eclecticism of Taft Architects' Austin Office Building or the romantic schmaltz of Charles Moore's Theater for Beverly Hills, to the almost literal revivalism of Larry Speck's Lakeside House for Austin.

The exhibition, for all of its inconsistencies of scope and presentation, conveys a provocative series of concepts and images. It does not suggest a single clear direction in contemporary architecture, nor even a plurality of approaches, so much as a fecund muddle out of which a new concensus, or school, or style of design may eventually emerge. ■

Work of Emerging Architects

Sponsored by the Young Architects Forum, a committee of the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects
Innova, Houston, Texas
1 October - 15 November 1986

Reviewed by William Hartman

The fall lecture series, "Work of Emerging Architects," offered up contrasting lessons in how to "make it" as a young architect. The four lectures featured work by Team HOU, Carlos Jiménez, Craig Hartman, and Chris Genik, all Houston architects who have distinguished themselves through their work in a short time since completing their professional education.

Team HOU opened the series, telling the story of their participation in the Houston Sesquicentennial Park Competition held last year (see *Cite*, Fall 1986). These guys "made it" by winning an important competition. Acquaintances before working together on their entry, the three formed a professional partnership after winning the prize money and the contract. Robert Liner explained the symbolism and historical references in the initial park design. Guy Hagstette presented a realistic explanation of how a novice team learns to put together a developed architectural design for a very demanding client. John Lemr gave a humorous recounting of how the team managed, after countless bureaucratic revisions, to maintain some of the original intentions of their design.

At the second lecture, Carlos Jiménez presented several of his designs, including his own house and studio and the recently completed building for the Houston Fine Art Press. In the few years since finishing school at the University of Houston, Jiménez has put together a significant catalogue of built work, mostly houses. How did he do it? With some hard work, clever organizing, and by building his own house to showcase his ideas and having it published in an architectural journal. Jiménez's buildings have a simple, reposeful quality, evoking an almost pastoral sense of place. The best qualities of his work are seen in his excellent design for the Houston Fine Art Press building.

Craig Hartman presented his work in both the Chicago and Houston offices of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Hartman, who made it by going directly from college to a large, prestigious firm and working his way up to a partnership, has been responsible for the designs of many large projects involving the coordination of large design teams. Hartman's designs exhibit a concern for formal order at the large scale and for patterning at the scale of the individual. The designs eschew the highly personal styles and theories of the other architects in the series, seeking instead to satisfy clients' needs through high quality, responsive design.

In contrast, Chris Genik, the final lecturer, presented the case for an academic architecture, one which requires a change in the order of the environment. Genik "made it" by initiating collaboration with his teacher at Rice, Peter D. Waldman, and designing several projects for which they received important recognition. Genik began his presentation of his thesis project at Rice and the work of this collaboration with Waldman with the notion of "the geography of cyclical invention." He cited the revolutionary developments of the Italian Renaissance as the point in time when man altered his perception of reality from an indeterminate state of consciousness to one determined and clearly defined by the order of the natural world. In the 20th century, he explained, mankind has dismantled parts of the Cartesian-coordinated consciousness to create a reality which includes the revolutionary changes of the modern world. Provocative images in his work evoke a recognition of a new society and a different place for man within it.

The lectures attracted audiences ranging in size from 30 to 75 people, and those who wore their woolens were fortunate since the Innova rooms where the lectures were held were chilly. ■

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- Invitations to Farish Gallery openings

Student Membership $15
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- the option to receive courtesy tickets to two selected RDA programs with reservations in advance

Patron Membership $250
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Sustaining Membership $500
- All of the benefits accorded Patron Members
- Courtesy tickets to all RDA programs

Corporate Membership $1,000
- All of the benefits accorded Patron Members
- Courtesy tickets to all RDA programs

Rice Design Alliance Membership Application

Name
☐ Home Address*
Zip Telephone
☐ Business Address*
Zip Telephone
*Check preferred mailing address

Occupation Membership Category
Amount enclosed

True Stories

Directed by David Byrne; screenplay by Stephen Tobolowsky, Beth Henley, and David Byrne; executive director, Edward R. Pressman; director of photography, Ed Lachman.

Reviewed by Neil Printz

In *True Stories*, David Byrne's Texas reminded me more than once of William Eggleston country. Take a look at Eggleston's *Guide* (Museum of Modern Art, 1976), an acid portrait of the New South, or the half-dozen color photographs by him published in *True Stories*, the book of the movie (Penguin, 1986). Byrne's travelogue ambles along, a little queasily I thought, through a putatively average Texas town, whose namesake is Virgil, classical poet of the bucolic, and Dante's guide.

Virgil, Texas, is part Main Street, U.S.A., part shopping mall, part industrial park. It epitomizes placelessness. Just about everyone in Virgil either works for or lives off the profits from Varicorp, a mega micro-chip corporation, which provides the community glue. Byrne, both tourist and guide, takes us down the assembly line and the freeway, giving us repeating vistas of chips and subdivisions, corrugated metal "architecture," and the utterly uninflected horizon of the Texas prairie.

The operative model for Byrne in his role as narrator in *True Stories*, as Barbara Kruger has noted in *Artforum* (December 1986), would appear to be Mister Rogers, the video Virgil for the younger set. "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood," croons Mister Rogers as he makes TV contact with the kids, and overrides all crucial distinctions of weather and neighborhood, of climate and class. There *were* moments when I began to wonder, but I don't think that David Byrne really wants to teach the world to sing in demotic harmony. Driving a red Chrysler LeBaron convertible, Lee Iacocca's new American dream machine, and got up in country-and-western attire, Byrne never quite strikes the balance between *flâneur* and yahoo, between *boulevardier* and local yokel. His deadpan and aw-shucks demurs tend to turn rancid right out of the jar. The real trouble with Virgil is with Virgil. If you get my drift.

As *True Stories* more or less tumbles into a series of skits and music-video *divertissements*, performed by a cast of highly diverting *secondarios* putting on the hits, a king of shaggy-dog silliness overtakes the movie, stifling dissent. One character, Louis Fyne, the country bachelor, and one story line – his holy matrimonial quest – is pushed with apposite bashfulness into the foreground. He even manages to get under Byrne's otherwise placid mien. When Byrne shows up at Virgil's penultimate Sesquicentennial event – the parade down Main Street – in the same C & W threads as Louis, he recapitulates a telling sight-gag in the movie, that of twins. Looking for love, Louis finds a clone. And, at the big moment on stage during the Sesqui shindig, when Louis croons, "People like us/ We don't want freedom/ We don't want justice/ We just want someone to love," the town of Virgil is right behind him. David Byrne might well paraphrase Flaubert on Madame Bovary, "Louis Fyne, *c'est moi*." ■

David Byrne in *True Stories*