Cite

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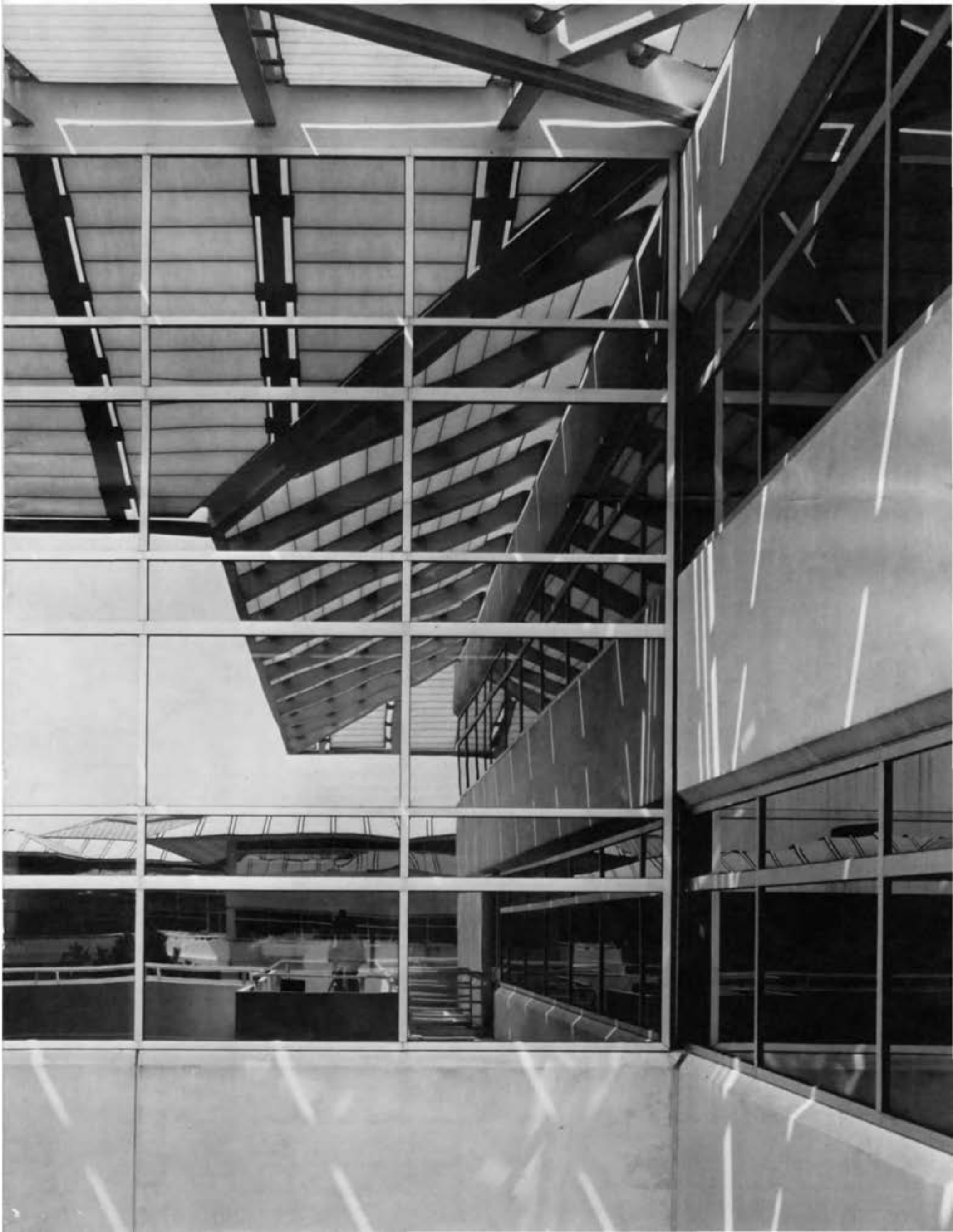

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The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

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23: Fall 1989

Cover: *Headquarters, Conoco Inc., 1985, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, architects. Photo by Paul Hester.*

In Cite

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The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture and design.

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OverCite: The Houston Science Center Addition (*Cite*, Spring-Summer 1989, p. 15) was designed by both Mario Bolullo of Golemon & Rolfe and Gilbert Hoffman of White Budd Van Ness.

Cite Backs Track

EDITORIAL

For nearly a decade, *Cite* has chronicled the Metropolitan Transit Authority's planning for a rail system, first with a special issue on an ill-advised proposal for an elevated segment downtown (Fall 1982) and later with reports on the general configuration of a light-rail system connector (Fall 1987) and the consideration of specific rail technologies for the connector (Spring-Summer 1989).

Just as planning seemed virtually complete, Robert C. Lanier, appointed last year as chairman of the Metro board of directors by Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire, appears to be dismantling the agency's commitment to build the first increment of the rail system, approved by a public referendum in January 1988. Lanier, a former chairman of the Texas Highway Commission, is concerned that projections for initial ridership may be overstated and that rail may not be cost effective for Houston, at least in the near term. Now he has suspended plans for the system connector pending further review by a new series of consultants. Several business leaders have criticized Lanier's backtracking, spurring the chairman to announce that he will resign his volunteer position after the Metro board acts on the results of the most recent restudy. Lanier's fellow board members, most of whom were instrumental in devising the rail plan, have remained silent.

The system connector, projected for completion by the year 2000, was planned in a deliberate, somewhat protracted fashion that benefited from a previous generation of rail plans devised in the early 1970s. It was prepared and presented by Metro, publicly debated among special-interest groups (from grassroots to chamber of commerce), modified in consultation with elected officials, and finally approved by popular vote.

A mass transit system is a monumental public works project that could significantly enhance the city's future form, logistical efficiency, and air quality. As it is currently drawn, the rail line will create a hub linking Houston's dominant work centers – downtown, the Texas Medical Center, Greenway Plaza, and the Galleria – from which lines can be extended to the east, west, and north to create a viable regional rail network. Inner-city neighborhoods stand to benefit immediately from the access provided by stations along the hub rail lines, while the system would penetrate, once and for all, the city's most congested destination points.

The Metro board of directors should stand by its by now amply considered plan to build the system connector as the first installment of a regional rail transit network. To do less is to jeopardize Houston's already belated acceptance of rail as an attractive, efficient alternative to the automobile – an alternative conducive to both continued growth and a better quality of life.

Citelines

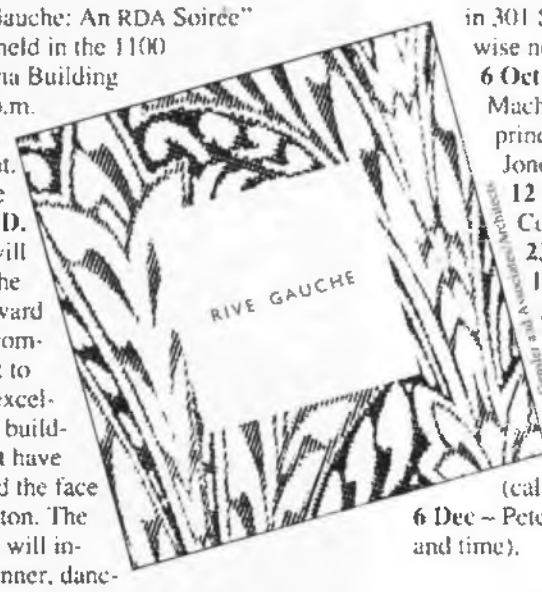
Fall Architectural Events

Rice Design Alliance
P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892, 713/524-6297
Fall Lecture Series – "The Saarinen Legacy," a six-part lecture series that will examine the remarkable work of Eero Saarinen and his followers. All lectures will be held at 8 p.m., Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Series tickets are $20 RDA and MFA members; $15 students with proper identification; others $30. Single tickets are $5 RDA and MFA members, $3 students, $6 others, and are usually available at the Main Street entrance to the museum, 7:45 p.m. on the evening of each lecture.

Eero Saarinen.

4 Oct – Peter C. Papademetriou, "Eero Saarinen."
11 Oct – Kevin Roche
18 Oct – Gunnar Birkerts
25 Oct – Marilyn and John Neuhart, "Charles Eames."
1 Nov – Paul Kennon
9 Nov – Cesar Pelli
The series is made possible by a generous grant from Gerald D. Hines Interests and by support from Conoco Inc., a Du Pont company; Continental Airlines; the Cultural Arts Council of Houston; and Herman Miller Inc. For reservations and information, telephone the Rice Design Alliance, 713/524-6297.

4 Nov – Third Annual RDA Gala
"Rive Gauche: An RDA Soirée" will be held in the 1100 Louisiana Building from 8 p.m. until 12 midnight. Honoree **Gerald D. Hines** will accept the RDA Award for his commitment to design excellence in buildings that have reshaped the face of Houston. The evening will include dinner, dancing, a silent auction, and a haute couture fashion show presented by Tootsies. The "Rive Gauche" theme celebrates the design, architecture, art, music, and literature of Paris in the 1920s, and guests are asked to wear formal dress or period costume.



The gala is being organized by co-chairmen William E. Boswell, Jr., Frank F. Douglas, and Adele Howell. Architects and designers will create candelabras to illuminate the dinner tables, and guests will dance to music by the Cary Richards Orchestra. Supper will be prepared by Byron Franklin Catering. Auction chairman Lynn Bock reports that among the items available in the silent auction will be a Philippe Starck "Richard III" lounge chair donated by International Contract Furnishings; a black Cab armchair (413) by Mario Bellini from Atelier International, Ltd.; two round-trip Continental Airlines tickets to anywhere in the U.S., courtesy of Travel Enterprises; a Louis Vuitton duffel bag from Neiman Marcus Town & Country; and a ride on the Goodyear airship *America*.

Charles Moore's grammatically ornamented moosehead allée at the Farish Gallery.

Benefactors and underwriters of "Rive Gauche" include Baker & Botts; Brochsteins Inc.; CRS Sirrine, Inc.; Dr. Patrick R. Davidson and Leslie Barry Davidson; Gensler & Associates/ Architects; Gerald D. Hines Interests; Innova; Helen and Paul Kennon; Ellen and Matthew Simmons; and Vinson & Elkins. Benefactor tables are $2,000. Underwriter and sponsor tickets are also available. Single tickets are $100 each; tickets must be purchased in advance. Please call the RDA office, 713/524-6297, for ticket information and reservations.

Farish Gallery
M. D. Anderson Hall, Rice University 713/527-4864; noon–5 p.m., seven days a week.
6 Sept–21 Nov – "Charles W. Moore: Buildings and Projects, 1949-1988," Retrospective of the career of the eminent Postmodernist, organized by the Williams College Museum of Art. Sponsored in part by a grant from Gerald D. Hines Interests.

School of Architecture
Rice University
713/527-4864
Fall Lecture Series – All lectures in 301 Sewall Hall unless otherwise noted.
6 Oct – "Words, Buildings, Machines," by Wesley Jones, principal, Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones, San Francisco, 7:30 p.m.
12 Oct – Rand Carter, Hamilton College, 7:30 p.m.
23 Oct – Michael Dennis, Harvard University, 8 p.m.
30 Oct, 6 Nov – Colin Rowe, Cullinan Visiting Professor, 7:30 p.m.
13 Nov – Colin Rowe, 124 Herring Hall, 7:30 p.m.
20 Nov – Colin Rowe (call for place and time).
6 Dec – Peter Eisenmann (call for place and time).

College of Architecture
University of Houston
713/749-1187
Fall Lectures – Speakers include **Joseph Paul Kleihues,** professor of design and urban design at the University of Dortmund and director of planning for the new building areas of the international building exhibit in Berlin; **Thom Mayne** of Morphosis Architects, Santa Monica, California; and **John Hejduk,** dean, Cooper Union School of Architecture, New York. Please call the College of Architecture for dates and times; admission free.

School of Architecture
University of Texas at Austin
512/471-1922
Fall Lecture Series – All lectures held in Jessen Auditorium at 4:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted.
9 Oct – "Ornament Is Dead. *Long Live Ornament*," by Kent Bloomer, professor of architecture, Yale University.
19–20 Oct – Symposium: "On Craft and Building." 1–5 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Friday.
23 Oct – "The Architecture of Douglas Cardinal," by Douglas Cardinal, architect, Ottawa, Ontario.
15 Nov – "Landscapes for Mexico," by Mario Schjetnan Garduno, landscape architect, Grupo de Diseño Urbano, Mexico City.
For exhibition schedules or for further information, contact the School of Architecture.

Kennon, Balfour Join Rice School of Architecture

Paul Kennon, design principal of the architecture group at CRSS, has been appointed dean of the Rice School of Architecture. Kennon succeeds former dean O. Jack Mitchell, who will continue to teach architecture at Rice.

Kennon received his M.A. in architecture from Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he was awarded the Eliel Saarinen Memorial Fellowship for graduate study. He worked with Eero Saarinen's firm from 1957 to 1964 as senior designer on Saarinen's later projects. In 1964 Kennon became associate professor of architecture at Rice and was named associate director of the school in 1966. Kennon left in 1967 to join the firm of Caudill Rowlett Scott, which later became CRSS. Major projects designed under his supervision include the ARCO Petroleum District Office Building, Houston; the IBM Building, Clear Lake City; the Indiana Bell Switching Center, Columbus, Indiana; the Fodrea School, Columbus, Indiana; the University of Iowa Arena, Iowa City, Iowa; the Chrysler Technical Center, Auburn Hills, Michigan; the Herman Miller, Inc., Seating Plant, Holland, Michigan; and the Paul Kennon House, Tokyo, Japan.

Kennon was named to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in 1976. He was Davenport Professor of Architecture at Yale in 1984 and is a member of the AIA national committee on design. He also served as a member of the board of directors of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York from 1981 to 1985 and as a Ford Foundation resident adviser in Santiago, Chile, from 1964 to 1966. His design work has been recognized by awards from the American Institute of Architects and *Progressive Architecture*. Kennon will continue as design principal at CRSS.

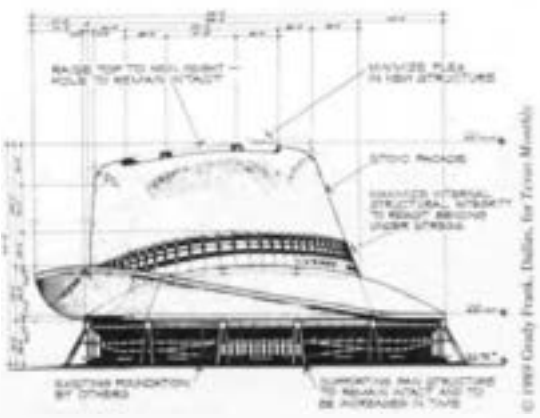
Alan Balfour has been named associate dean of the School of Architecture. He comes to Rice from the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he established the graduate program in architecture in 1978 and served as its first director.

Balfour completed undergraduate studies in architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art and graduate studies at Princeton University. He practiced in London and New York before joining Arthur D. Little, Inc., in Cambridge, Massachusetts. From 1973 to 1976, while teaching at MIT, he directed a study of architectural education for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. He is author of *Portsmouth* (Studio Vista, 1970); *Rockefeller Center: Architecture as Theater* (McGraw Hill, 1978); and a forthcoming monograph, *Berlin: Leipziger Platz*. He is currently at work on a study of Rome in the fifth century. Balfour has also served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Architectural Education* and as chairman of the magazine *Art Papers*, published in Atlanta. ■

Citegeist

Fish stories, dragon tails

The balconied maw of a great northern pike, looming here in David Graham's photograph of the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward, Wisconsin, helped spawn Charles Moore and Mell Lawrence's smaller "scaled" but no less awesome dragon-morphic lifeguard stand, essayed last year for the Kirsten Kiser (now Donna Grossman) Gallery in Los Angeles. For now, the model of the dragon lies in wait for an oceanfront property deep within the Farish Gallery, where it occupies an arch-fronted cave as part of the exhibition "Charles Moore, Buildings and Projects, 1949-1988," on view through November 21.



Pop top

Grady Frank's faux Oldenburg coverup for Cowboy Stadium in Irving – a snappy-brimmed tribute to the house Tom Landry built – appeared in the September issue of *Texas Monthly* as part of a makeover scheme for the sagging image of America's Team, produced by the Richards Group of Dallas with the help of Faye Smask and Associates, architects.

Eye tech

This nocturnal preview of the eyebrow canopies of the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center (I. M. Pei, 1980-89), which opened as the home of the Dallas Symphony last month, reminded us of another eye-con of the night (and day), the recently re-faced King Leo's Club on Griggs Road (Betty Reid, 1988).

Road company

Dancing tires from *The Highway Sings* (Alexander Hackenschmied and Jan Lukas, 1937, four minutes), a Bata Tire commercial that won first prize at the Paris Exhibition the same year. It is not quite the shortest subject in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's retrospective of Czech cinema, flickering in the Brown Auditorium October 8 through December 10.

Big Cité Beat

Mies's pieces: The **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston**, was closed during September to overhaul the roof and steelwork of **Mies van der Rohe**'s only building south of the Mason-Dixon line. The museum recently received a $3.25 million gift from **Caroline** and the late **Theodore N. Law** to purchase a second block due east of the Mies building, completing a land assembly that will be the focus of a major new MFA building program.

Second table? **Ouisie's Table**, the Chez Panisse of Sunset Boulevard, went table up during the dogmost days of August, the victim of peculiarly resurgent lease rates for its premises and a perpetually Procrustean kitchen. Never averse to culinary whisk taking, displaced proprietress **Elouise Cooper** is recharging her batteries de cuisine while scouting new table settings.

Kahntext: The **Kimbell Art Museum**, Fort Worth's much-vaunted vaulted treasure house by **Louis I. Kahn**, will be extended on both its north and south flanks by 1992, adding 25,000 square feet to its present 120,000 at a cost of $8 million. The expansion will be carried out by **Romaldo Giurgola** in the spirit of the original building, completed in 1972.

Not in their front yard: Thirty acres of prime undeveloped property on Space Center Boulevard at Middlebrook belonging to NASA's **Johnson Space Center** in Clear Lake City have been designated surplus as part of a court-ordered effort to provide housing for the homeless under the McKinney Homeless Act of 1987. The **Uplift Mission Women's Center** of Houston's Third Ward initially sought the tract in hopes of setting up a treatment center for homeless women with drug and/or alcohol dependencies, a feat of bureaucratic odd coupling that has since been scuttled in view of the stratospheric cost of extending utilities to the site.

Bar flees: The proto-Memphis bar at **Spanish Village**, Houston's homage to mariachi funk where **Larry Castellano** has Osterized many a margarita, has been relocated to a semi-concealed alcove off the beaten linoleum unbeknownst to the National Register of Historic Places.

Stripe joint: **Gordon Bunshaft**'s **First City National Bank Building**, Houston (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1960), has sprouted a rash of less-than-self-effacing metal strips to protect recently repointed joints in its white marble cladding.

Star of Hope Mission Women's and Family Shelter

A just-renovated thirtysomething plumbing supply warehouse at 419 Dowling Street near the edge of downtown now provides shelter for needy women and families, the fastest-growing segment of Houston's displaced community. In the face of a homeless population estimated at between 35,000 and 60,000,[1] the 188 beds recently made available may seem insignificant. But for those who might otherwise continue to face the hazards of street life or domestic abuse and neglect, the safe, clean sanctuary of the newly opened Star of Hope Women's and Family Shelter is a welcome resource.

Providing safety, security, and basic comfort is the shelter's immediate goal, beyond which staff members and mission administrators hope to contribute to the financial and emotional stabilization of its residents. According to Star of Hope president Donald L. Johnson, this less tangible agenda will be furthered by the facility's range of social services and by its carefully considered architecture as well. In contrast to the Star of Hope's first emergency women's shelter, opened in 1986 on North Main Street, the functional and social criteria for the new facility were based on actual experience. In the North Main shelter, the term "temporary" described not only the length of stay of residents, but also the makeshift nature of the shelter itself, which was given over to an ad hoc particle-board maze of semiprivate living accomodations. The level of consideration brought to bear on the planning and construction of the Dowling Street shelter resulted in a more permanent solution. Although the new shelter is still more institutional than homelike, architect Geoffrey Brune has nevertheless managed to transform the essential spatial requirements of the program into relatively pleasant surroundings. Staff members believe that establishing a sense of a community toward which to contribute and from which to draw support is a means of reintroducing structure into homeless people's lives. The public spaces of Brune's building send clear signals to residents and staff alike, from the "village common" of the skylighted central court to the partially shaded exterior play yard –

Village common with house for infant feeding and hair care salon.

Skylighted dining area and vending and telephone pavilion.

amenities unfortunately compromised by the more confined institutional character of the private spaces.

Star of Hope Women's and Family Shelter renovation, Geoffrey Brune, design architect, McCleary/German Associates, architect of record, 1989. First-floor plan.

When purchased in 1986, midway through Houston's real estate depression, the building seemed something of a prize, despite its forsaken location well beyond anyone's backyard. Staff members initially attempted to plan the facility themselves, incorporating their experience with other shelter facilities. But the practical difficulties of inserting a new second floor in the existing structure led them to seek the counsel and services of McCleary/German Associates, architects of record, and Geoffrey Brune, design architect. The architects were initially asked to find workable solutions to problems of construction and code compliance, but their role soon expanded. They contributed the idea of the central atrium court and the single-loaded, motel-style arrangement of the rooms about it. While low clearances and clutter made the placement of mechanical and electrical services problematical, Brune's atrium court yielded a useful and engaging central space that also affords each residential unit a second source of natural light.

Security is provided at the public entry, a projecting "lighthouse window" that permits surveillance of those waiting to enter. While this vertical wedge suggests the scale of the tall public lobby sandwiched between two sets of security doors, it gives no hint of the skylighted central court lying farther in. The central court contains communal dining facilities served by a commercial kitchen, a vending and telephone pavilion, and television, library, and counseling lounges. Set within the court as a templed focus of the implied village common is a quiet little house providing a kitchenette for infant feeding and a modest salon for hair care. Surrounding the court, on three sides at the first level and on four sides at the second level, are 74 residential units, each furnished with a toilet, sinks, shower, and exterior window, as well as an individually keyed lock. A clinic, a nursery and preschool, a laundry, and a large meeting hall are provided just off the court.

Another key to the operation of the shelter is the presence of children. One staff member observed that watching and caring for children offers the greatest source of hope for those staying here and creates daily responsibilities that residents must fulfill in another's behalf. In time, these images of a return to normality, cast against the theaterlike settings of the play yard, fashioned from a former loading dock, and the central court, carved out of the warehouse interior, may allow the children to help the adults take the next step toward wellbeing.

Patrick Peters

Notes

1 Thirty-five thousand homeless persons is the estimate published by the Houston Coalition for the Homeless; Dr. Virginia Moyer of Baylor College of Medicine places the figure at 60,000 (*Houston Post*, February 23, 1989).

Fifth Ward AIDS Clinic

In its most recent reincarnation, the old Southern Pacific Railroad hospital has been transformed into a new outpatient clinic for AIDS patients. Built in 1911 as a 116-bed hospital for railroad employees, the building has served in recent years as a rehabilitation facility for M. D. Anderson Hospital. Now county-owned and renamed the Thomas Street Center, the clinic will significantly expand the county's resources for AIDS patients.

Set atop a wooded Fifth Ward hill overlooking Hogg Park and White Oak Bayou, the four-story, E-shaped Italian Renaissance Revival building sports polychrome exterior detail, a low-pitched hipped tile roof, and round-arched upper-floor windows. Its three symmetrical wings were originally connected by open solariums, later enclosed to create additional rooms. Construction is of reinforced concrete with yellow brick facing. Red brick is used for horizontal banding, as trim around windows, and in simulated quoins. No exterior renovations are planned, although landscaping improvements, using donated plants, have been made. Asbestos removal constituted the major interior alteration and delayed the opening of the clinic, which has received patients since May 22; other interior renovations were limited to the addition of several nurses' stations.

This AIDS treatment facility is especially timely in view of the closing of the Institute of Immunological Disorders due to financial problems after only one year of operation. Persons with AIDS seeking inpatient care through the public health care system are now accommodated through the Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital, which recently replaced Jefferson Davis Hospital; the Thomas Street Center may provide inpatient care in the future. The center, located at 2015 Thomas Street near the intersection of I-10 and I-45, houses a permanent art collection from the September 1988 Art Against AIDS benefit.

Kate Grossman

Southern Pacific Railroad hospital, Department of Building and Bridges, G.H.&S.A. Railway, architects, 1911. Thomas Street Center renovation, 1989.

William R. Jenkins

William R. Jenkins (1926-1989) served as dean of the University of Houston College of Architecture from 1968 until his death shortly before classes began this fall. During his tenure the college grew in enrollment and reputation for its design curriculum, emerging, in the words of John Hejduk, as "one of the few exciting places in America to study architecture."

A leading Houston architect as well as teacher, Jenkins was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects. His buildings won awards from the American Institute of Architects, the Texas Society of Architects, *Progressive Architecture* magazine, and the Houston chapter of the American Institute of Architects. They include a notable series of modern houses from the 1950s; the Park IV and V Apartments (1963 and 1965); the Houston Firemen's Training Academy (1969); and the Geraldine Humphreys Cultural Center, Liberty, Texas (1970). Jenkins was also responsible for the skillful, low-tech renovation of the Architecture Annex at the University of Houston (1971), which accommodated the college's expanded enrollment until its new building by Philip Johnson was completed in 1985.

The library of the College of Architecture will be renamed in Jenkins's honor. Those wishing to contribute to a memorial lecture fund and scholarship should direct their gifts to the College of Architecture, University of Houston, Houston, Texas 77204-4431. For further information, call 713/749-1188.

Myron Anderson

Myron Anderson (1922-1989) taught structures at the University of Houston College of Architecture for 35 years. A registered professional engineer, he had a special interest in vernacular building methods. Professor Anderson's "hands-on" teaching methods were legendary, particularly his annual student projects involving construction of playground equipment, benches, and concrete castings. A memorial scholarship and annual technology award fund have been established in his name.

Donald Barthelme

Donald Barthelme (1931-1989) was by consensus one of the most original writers of our time – a master and renovator of the short-story form. His sensibility, variously characterized as "avant-gardist, collagist, minimalist, Dadaist, existentialist, and post-modernist," resisted reduction to simple categories, as a recent tribute in the *New Yorker*, his principal literary venue since 1963, noted.

The son of an accomplished Houston architect and educator who once headed the architecture program at Rice, Barthelme was himself interested in design and the visual arts. He organized several exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, including "New American Artifacts: The Ugly Show" (1960), and served as director of the CAM from 1961 to 1962. In 1981 he returned to Houston after an absence of several decades to join the faculty of the creative writing program at the University of Houston.

He was an acute observer of city life, of Houston itself, and even of Galveston, where he spent summers as a youth with his grandfather and which became the subject of a post-Haussmannic musing on urban renewal, "I Bought a Little City." His gently visionary prescription for Houston, which we only wish had appeared in *Cite*, added a prescient note to the March/April 1988 issue of *Texas Architect* by proposing a "Main-Binz-Montrose-Westheimer" pedestrian loop as a sort of outdoor Galleria, to be planned and executed, insofar as possible, without expert guidance. "I like my experts confused, uncertain, even fearful," he wrote. ■

Looking west down down the mall at street level.

Reborn to Shop

RIVERCENTER IN SAN ANTONIO

Richard Ingersoll

Neither the automobile nor the freeway killed the American downtown. The real assassin was the suburban shopping mall.

Once the commercial hegemony of this alien, automobile-pandering phenomenon was established, the only surviving downtown retail outlets were thrift stores, porno theaters, and that most curious harbinger of economic decline, the wig shop. Even a charming provincial city like San Antonio, blessed with a fine collection of historic buildings and equipped with a major tourist-generating feature, the River Walk, has suffered from the retail exodus to the freeway malls. Last year, however, this suburban sack of the center was countermanded with the opening of a major shopping mall, Rivercenter, in the heart of downtown San Antonio. While Rivercenter is not a unique instance of a new downtown mall, it represents a uniquely successful resuscitation of a truly urban retail environment and is thus worthy of note, both as a design solution and for the political process that brought it into being.

Other recently built downtown shopping centers, such as Watertower Place in Chicago, the Beverly Center in West Hollywood, or, to take more local examples, Plaza of the Americas in Dallas, The Park in Houston Center, or even San Antonio's own Fiesta Plaza, are all as antiurban and inwardly oriented as their suburban prototypes. Not only are these huge retail shells filled with the identical collection of franchise shops one finds everywhere, but also they offer no architectural clues to indicate that one is in a particular city, or even in a city at all. This body-snatching syndrome can be attributed to the inert wisdom of marketing formulas derived from the suburbs and applied to the cities. One obvious exception to the progress of placelessness was the Jerde Partnership's Horton Plaza (1984), in which a two-block parcel in the heart of San Diego was sliced by an exposed diagonal street. "Tarted up" does not do justice to the riotous collage of historical motifs and gaudy color combinations of this adrenalin-fed overreaction to the disappearance of urban variety. The exploitation of historic downtown cityscapes has been the key to the festival markets, such as San Francisco's Cannery, Boston's Quincy Market, or Baltimore's Harbor Place, which are likewise cases of retail-based urban revival. But because they cater primarily to tourists there is a high degree of sociological inverisimilitude as to what makes an urban context real.

Rivercenter might at first be mistaken for a tourist festival market, as it willingly plugs into a perfect tourist trap. Its three-tiered U shape wraps around a newly extended branch of the River Walk, located between the sacrosanct Alamo that all tourists are obliged to remember (in Ektachrome) and the

Convention Center, which captures an estimated ten million conventioneers annually. Fortunately, the mall is more than just a way station for accidental tourists. In the tradition of the airy shopping arcades of the late 19th century, it is a well-designed connecting armature and thus a pleasant addition to the pedestrian's path through the city. Departing from the conventions of suburban mall design, it is split open, relying on a single-loaded circulation system. The three levels are exposed by glass curtain walls that allow views from almost any location of the outdoor activity and give the interior luminosity and loftiness. In addition, the majority of stores above the tourist realm of the River Walk are meant to compete with those of the suburban malls: Foley's (replacing Lord & Taylor) and Dillard's are the major anchor stores, and a third anchor, rumored to be Neiman Marcus, is soon to be announced. The commodious parking garages, which offer two hours of free parking, add the kind of incentive to locals to come shopping that initially made the freeway malls so successful. Rivercenter is thus a convincing lesson in how to revive a vanishing retail base while restoring the social functions of the downtown street.

This new snatch of River Walk guarantees a healthy mix of public life and private enterprise, and its importance is evident in both the project's title and its slogan: "Just add water."

The success of Rivercenter, which after only eight months was 93 percent leased and visibly brims with activity, is due as much to the cooperative policies of the city government as it is to the abilities of its designers and developers. *Civitas*, the traditional sense of civic responsibility, cannot develop without citizens, and San Antonio has proven on several occasions, from the initial implementation of the River Walk in 1939 to its restoration and expansion in the 1960s, to be a city that can involve its citizens in a public vision of urbanity. The four-block, 13.1-acre site included the historic Menger Hotel (1859), the original Joske's department store (begun in the 1890s and expanded many times), and a small stone church, St. Joseph's (known locally as St. Joske's because it is lodged in the midst of the expanded store). A fourth historic structure, the Fairmount Hotel (1906), was moved to a site six blocks away, where it was restored and renovated. The rest of the site was mostly empty lots. The first step was taken in 1977 by the Rouse Company, the leading developers of festival markets, and Allied Stores, owner of the ailing Joske's, which presented a proposal to the city that would have cost the public $44 million. This prompted the city manager's office to fund its own study in 1979 with the participation of the Edward J. DeBartolo Corporation of Youngstown, Ohio, the country's largest developer of shopping malls (not known for its daring in design). DeBartolo formed a partnership with Allied Stores, and in 1981 the city, working closely with DeBartolo, obtained a $15.75 million Urban Development Action Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for site preparation, one of the largest UDAG grants awarded during the program's history. The city committed itself to $1.1 million for street and utilities improvements and $2 million for the expansion of the River Walk. A firm experienced in mixed-use development, Williams Realty of Tulsa, was engaged soon after as managing general partner. In 1983 Williams in turn retained the project's architects, the Urban Design Group, also of Tulsa, with whom they were finishing the Tabor Center in downtown Denver (1985), a project that shares many of Rivercenter's design characteristics, in particular the use of a single-loaded circulation plan that exposes the center's interior to the street. After seeing the advantages of the Rouse-developed Tabor Center, Edward DeBartolo approved the unconventional design. The entire Rivercenter project – which includes the mall and garages, the remodeling of Joske's (now Dillard's) into two smaller stores, an IMAX theater, and Foley's – along with a 42-story Marriott hotel, the expansion and interior renovation of the Menger, and the turning basin extension of the River Walk cost approximately $370 million. Without the city's initiative and the federal seed money, together only a fraction of the total cost, the project would never have come to fruition.

The involvement of city manager Lou Fox and special projects coordinator David Garcia was decisive. Unlike most large Texas cities, San Antonio mandates extensive review of building projects. Various phases of the project were subject to the scrutiny of 23 city agencies and numerous citizen review boards, including the River Walk Commission, the Historic Review Board, and the Fine Arts Commission, as well as the San Antonio Conservation Society. Fox and other city officials called for enabling legislation that would streamline the approval process for such a complex project, and a special ordinance was passed; the city thus was able to retain its high standards for smaller-scale projects without scaring away the Rivercenter developers. The continued participation of the city manager in the project's development kept the issues of historic preservation, public access, parking, and urban conservation central without allowing them to become sticks in the wheels of commercial development.

Rivercenter's essential feature is the 500-foot extension of the San Antonio River, which terminates in a turning basin where a powerful pump that keeps the filmy water from stagnating serves as a rushing fountain for the "food courts" of the mall. This new snatch of River Walk guarantees a healthy mix of public life and private enterprise, and its importance is evident in both the project's title and its slogan: "Just add water." Yet if it had not been for the city's involvement, this public amenity, without which Rivercenter is now unimaginable, might well have been excluded. There is an underlying legal reason for its location: the city, which was responsible for assembling the site parcels for the project, was forced to exercise its powers of eminent domain to expropriate the area of the turning basin. Land reclaimed through public authority, however, cannot be used for speculative or commercial purposes, and thus the city's continued involvement with the site was mandated. The city's special projects office hired its own architect, the local firm of Ford, Powell & Carson, which had been involved in earlier proposals for Rivercenter and has helped shape the character of the River Walk since O'Neil Ford's first San Antonio work at La Villita (1939) through the firm's recent design of the Paseo del Alamo water concourse between Alamo Plaza and the lower level of the Hyatt Regency. The automobile bridge over the river at Commerce Street and four pedestrian bridges were designed by principal Boone Powell with lacy steel trusses, studded with light bulbs, and painted teal blue to blend with the color scheme of the mall.

The mall includes one further double-decker bridge, connecting to the River Walk on its lower level and lined on its upper, enclosed level with ten-by-ten-foot

Looking south toward the turning basin.

market stalls in imitation of Florence's Ponte Vecchio. The bridge partially screens the turning basin and gives it a comfortable sense of enclosure, creating a space that approximates the outdoor rooms so much admired by Camillo Sitte at the turn of the century but not attempted since the age of the Baroque. In the center is a two-tiered performance platform reached by its own bridge and bifurcated stairs. Although the management of the mall employs entertainers to keep the stage active, it can be and is used by whoever reserves it through the city's Parks and Recreation Department. Stairs step down from open loggias on the two long sides of the turning basin to form an informal amphitheater. The paths of the River Walk are lined with undulating retaining walls and planted with a rich collection of elms, cedars, and bald cypresses in addition to hundreds of terra-cotta pots filled with seasonal flowers. When the doors to the shopping center close at 9 p.m., this landscaped urban theater, perhaps the most successful example of urban design in the United States since Rockefeller Center, remains in use as a permanent public setting. San Antonians could use this forum, owned and maintained by the city, for political purposes, as the mall owners have no authority to prevent the exercise of First Amendment rights.

The design of the mall is straightforward and airy – a modern-day stoa made from a scaffold of three-story steel pillars and capped with a pitched metal shed roof. Each successive level is stepped back to allow views down to the lower levels. Unlike Jerde's extravaganza in San Diego, the individual parts, such as decorative ephemera or store façades, do not subvert the clarity and nobility of the frame. As in most malls, conventional shops are fitted into the grid of the structure, but pushcarts and stands that appear to be improvised are allowed in the ample circulation space of the single-loaded corridors, greatly increasing the variety and scale of retail. The outer metal members are painted teal blue, various shades of blue, turquoise, and purple are used throughout for details, and green-tinted glass is used for the vast expanses of glazing, all combining to give the interior an aquatic feeling that contrasts sympathetically to the generally tan color of this southwestern city. John Novack, principal of the Urban Design Group, broke away from C. F. Murphy Associates of Chicago in 1975. While his firm's clever restructuring of dense urban fabric at Rivercenter has a post-modern agenda, the dignity of the structure and the expertly rendered truss and fenestration details are in the best Chicago Modernist tradition. The decorative equipment, including tensile awnings and festoons and fan shapes made of folded aluminum, are the work of Henry Beer of Communication Arts in Boulder, Colorado. They were meant to give graphic identity to the mall but can be dismantled or changed at will. Of the permanent details, great care was given to the surfaces that come into contact with the human body, from the splendid marble pavers to the multicolor ceramic highlights used to decorate pathway intersections and special signage areas. The gently bulging railings are particularly graceful. The indoor townscape elements, such as the huge hanging terra-cotta flowerpots and the heavy, Mexican-style carved benches (an excellent alternative to the Britannic-issue teak benches that have become so universal),

© Greg Hursley

Rivercenter looking west from the Marriott Hotel.

add a sense of continuity with the River Walk. Because its regionalist elements are mostly ephemeral, Rivercenter achieves local color without resorting to nostalgic architectural forms.

Novack's office also was responsible for additions and renovations to the Menger Hotel and for the design of Lord & Taylor (now Foley's). Three overgrown classical aediculae organize the façade of the store, more in line with the client's stodgy taste than the spirit of the mall. The 42-story Marriott Hotel, the tallest building in San Antonio, was designed by RTKL of Baltimore and plugs into the three levels of the mall. The poverty of detail both inside and out make "tallest" the only superlative that could ever be used to describe this thousand-room dorm. Still, the building could have been worse, and its stepped-up profile is an attempt, albeit clunky, to recapture the dynamic thrill of the Waldorf-Astoria, on which it is crudely modeled. The important aspect of the Marriott is that this awkward giant has been tamed at its lower levels and kept from overwhelming the pedestrian scale of the project.

Aside from the major public space around the turning basin, Rivercenter has spawned two new minor public spaces. Blum Street, once a service alley, has been transformed as part of the Alamo Plaza renewal into a planted pedestrian walk lined with shops and outdoor seating for the famous Menger bar; it will also house the entry to a multiscreen movie theater, scheduled to open late this year. On the north side, near the Lady Bird Johnson Fountain, is a small, funnel-shaped plaza leading to the IMAX theater and the mall. The two parking structures, one on Commerce Street, the other on Crockett, are placed mid-block. With their discreet precast-panel façades of alternating soft pink and tan, they help to flesh out the contours of the block.

Despite the pleasant shock of discovering that a shopping center can satisfy aesthetically and urbanistically, one criticism must be reserved for Rivercenter and for most so-called mixed-use projects, especially those with government funding. Real mixed use cannot be achieved without housing, and while it is true that people live in hotels, transients do not contribute greatly to the continuous local life of a place. Public money has been used cleverly at Rivercenter to create an exceptionally fine public environment, but it has also served to boost retailers' profits. Should not at least a portion of this investment have gone toward remedying the single greatest problem of all big cities, affordable housing? Housing, affordable or not, would not only be in the public's interest but would enrich the daily life at Rivercenter around the clock, as well as provide a permanent clientele for the retailers. It is simply no longer true that all Americans want to live in Usonian houses in the suburbs; perhaps the elderly, singles, yuppies, and others who for various reasons want to live downtown should adopt their own slogan – "Just add housing." Rivercenter is a perfectible lesson in reurbanization of the center city. While it may be free of wig shops, it is nevertheless missing an essential component that could make it still more satisfactory as an urban place. ■

© 1989 Paul Hester, Houston

Riverwalk court.

Site plan.

A Menger Hotel
B IMAX theater
C Parking
D Foley's
E Marriott Hotel
F Shops
G Dillards
H Future anchor

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING STORE

FOLEY'S DEPARTMENT STORE, DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

Bruce C. Webb

Elwood M. Payne

Foley's main entrance, 1948.

In the classical model, the form of cities was analogous to the classical structure of the atom: concentric rings of lightweight, suburban electrons spinning around a denser and more consequential nucleus. Whatever the city contained in the way of commercial, civic, and social life would naturally find its greatest concentration and most diverse expression at the center, gradually thinning and becoming more purified toward the fringes. A visitor to a new and unfamiliar city could always anticipate this arrangement, expecting that downtown he would find the "heart of the city."

Most American cities still look that way: tall buildings clustered tightly together, making the most of premium land and forming a kind of symbolic focus for the expanding suburbs and sprawling horizontal hinterlands. Even Houston looks

Bob Bailey Studios, Inc.

Foley Brothers Department Store. Preliminary design, Kenneth Franzheim, architect, 1945; Thomas Greacen II, delineator.

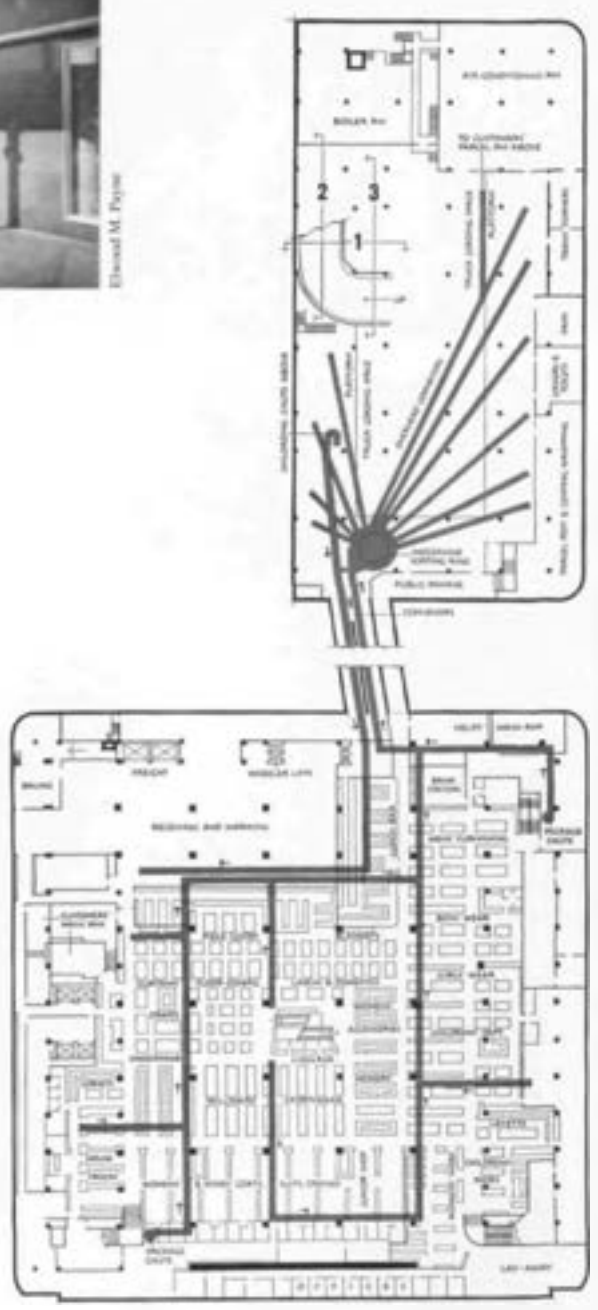
that way. But in Houston, at least since the 1960s, the role of downtown as the center of things has been more a matter of geometry than real life. Paradoxically, as the downtown area grew it became less diverse and less . . . well, *urban*, trading its retail life for sculpted highrise office towers and parking garages connected by a labyrinthine network of underground tunnels and concourses. On the plus side, the city recently added a new, first-class convention center, a performance hall, and the beginnings of a bayou park adjoining the theater district. The conversion of the old Albert Thomas Convention Center into a space-age entertainment mall adjoining the theater district should also pump up the downtown action.

But downtown Houston in the 1980s, although much grander than it was two decades ago, is far less varied as an activity center. Basically all one can do is work in the office towers by day or attend performing arts events at night. The rest of what might be called the "life" of the city – shops, restaurants, hotels, museums, and parks – is spread thinly across a broad panorama of suburban centers, some of which, like Greenway Plaza and the Galleria, have added their own tower markers to the skyline. As early as 1972, Peter Papademetriou, in his perceptive essay in *Houston: An Architectural Guide*,[1] noted the inverse relationship between the dramatic new growth and the accommodation of real diversity in the central business district, concluding that even as it lost much of its everyday, functional centrality, downtown was likely to retain at least an occasional symbolic focus, since it was still the best place to have a parade.

But then there was Foley's. No matter how many times it cloned itself in miniature satellite versions located in ever-expanding suburban orbits, Foley's always had the big store downtown to serve as a kind of Copernican center. The big store was truly big – ten city-block-size floors of merchandise offering selections and service that made the shopping-center versions look like frontier outposts by comparison. A trip to Sharpstown Mall was routine, but shopping in the downtown store was serious business. Long-term Houstonians can recall how Foley's downtown exerted an almost magnetic attraction. In its heyday in the fifties and sixties it featured four restaurants and a "town hall" auditorium and served as the commercial "town square" for celebrating the retail solstices and equinoxes: Christmas, Easter, Swimwear, and Back to School. In a downtown always notoriously lacking in big stores, Foley's was *the* place, a position of preeminence it nurtured with public events like the "Splendida Italia" festival in 1965, a half-million-dollar extravaganza that featured art shows, musical performances, a Pinocchio village and daily marionette shows by the Italian National Puppet Theater, and, as the pièce de résistance, a two-thirds-scale papier-mâché reproduction of the Trevi Fountain in the big vista window that once marked the Main Street entrance, guarded by Italian carabinieri. Or the "Golden Anniversary" fête in 1950: to celebrate a successful half-century of growth and progress, Foley's filled the vista window with an elaborate artist's model of "The City of Tomorrow" that looked like a set from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, with an expanded 12-story version of Foley's own store positioned front and center.

More than just a store, Foley's was a symbol of retail ingenuity inextricably woven into the public life of the city. Sponsorship of the big Thanksgiving Day parade, which marks the start of the Christmas shopping frenzy, began in 1950 with one float delivering Santa Claus from Union Station to the downtown store. The one-float parade attracted such a large and enthusiastic crowd that Foley's has repeated the event for the past four decades, each year's parade a little bigger than the one before. A city bus strike in 1950 prompted Foley's to take to the airwaves in a pioneering version of a home shopping show: merchandise was displayed on television, and customers could order by phone and have their purchases delivered to their homes by the store's fleet of trucks. In 1970 a group of women's rights advocates rallying in front of the Federal Building marched on Foley's to liberate the Men's Grill, a "sexregated" sanctuary of sirloin and cigar smoke on the store's second floor. Besides seeking entry to the grill, the women were also protesting the fact that larger entrees were served there than in the fifth-floor Azalea Terrace tea room, where the ladies lunched.

Even when Sakowitz, its more upscale downtown competition across the street, joined the exodus of downtown retailers a few years ago, Foley's hung on in the familiar ten-story, windowless block of orange brick and Minnesota limestone it has occupied since 1947, its ads proclaiming its location: "At the heart of Texas, Foleeeey's." But now, under the management of the May Company (which also owns Lord & Taylor), Foley's has pared back its flagship store to a mere six stories of retail space, consolidating the profitable departments and reassigning the abandoned space as central offices for its far-flung empire of suburban stores. The basement, formerly the site of the bargain store, has been cleared and redecorated for other uses; a portion is given over to Foley's Academy, an HISD magnet program offering self-paced, individualized instruction for academically capable underachievers and dropouts. The remainder will be used as headquarters for the OASIS project, a new senior citizens' activity and service center sponsored by Foley's and Memorial Care Systems. The retail retrenchment to six stories makes the central store about the same size as the larger suburban stores, Sharpstown (390,000 square feet) and Greenspoint (310,000).



Basement plan showing route of merchandise from truck platform to sorting ring, tunnel under Travis Street, and receiving and marking area in main store. From there it was taken on wheeler lifts to stock receiving areas on each floor.

Trevi Fountain display, "Splendida Italia" festival, 1965.

Photograph by Preiss and Associates, courtesy of Foley's

Ever the good citizen, Foley's was always one step ahead of Houston. The present downtown store opened in 1947 just ahead of the downtown growth boom, replacing a series of smaller quarters that had been successively outgrown in the years since Foley's was founded by two brothers in 1900. Houstonians and Houston watchers alike hailed the opening of the big new store as a landmark event, evidence of faith in the fast-growing city. Despite its steady growth and a reputation for a raw-bones entrepreneurial attitude, Houston in the 1940s still had not acquired the look and feel of a big city; as Fred Lazarus, head of Federated Stores, said, "When the Lord distributed department stores, he forgot Houston."[2] Lazarus, whose firm purchased Foley's in 1945, was in a position to do something about the divine oversight. He set out to build not only the biggest but the best-planned store in the South.

On October 20, 1947, the public got its first look inside the streamlined interior of the new attraction, which the press hailed as "The Store of Tomorrow." The opening put Houston in the limelight. *Time* and *Newsweek* sent reporters. Even the *New Yorker* (September 27, 1947), while not actually present at the festivities, did cover the "road company celebration" in the Maisonette of the St. Regis Hotel in New York, devoting more attention to a bevy of cowmen delivering a four-foot-wide Texas-shaped cake, embellished with sugar bluebonnets and surmounted by a wooden model of the new store, than it did to the actual event down in Texas. Both *Progressive Architecture* (July 1948) and *Architectural Forum* (April 1947) carried extensive articles on the technical innovations and the systems approach developed by Houston architect Kenneth Franzheim and his collaborator, famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy.

Compared to the puffery and self-conscious elegance of Sakowitz and Neiman Marcus, Foley's style seemed almost willfully middle class. Loewy's extensive studies of merchandising and department store operations resulted in a store that was more a huge mercantile machine than a retail palace, a place of convenience and efficiency – the modern (or middle-class) equivalents of luxury and elegance. *Architectural Forum* wrote that the store was "designed to express modern merchandising methods rather than glorify the architectural or decorative approach."

The design project actually involved three buildings working in tandem: the retail store on Main Street, a five-story parking garage across Travis Street connected to the store by a tunnel, and a distribution warehouse on Eastwood Street where heavy merchandise was stored. The linked parking garage would prove to have the most lasting influence on other downtown buildings, but the striking feature of the new building from the outside was its lack of windows on all but the ground floor. An extensive ribbon display window under a concrete canopy at street level created the distinctly modern illusion of a heavy, massive block floating on air. Windows had been eliminated because they wasted both space and air-conditioning, and besides, who needed to look outside when the real purpose of a retail store was to keep the customer looking at the merchandise, which was of course displayed under controlled lighting conditions? The perimeter was given over to storerooms and stocking lanes, leaving the vast interior spaces unencumbered except for concrete columns placed at 35-foot intervals and a central core of "electric stairs" running from the basement to the top floor.

But the most radical innovation was the way Loewy and Franzheim organized and mechanized the movement of goods. Incoming merchandise was unloaded in the garage across Travis, dumped onto a conveyor belt, and transported to the store's basement for marking and pricing. It was then piled onto pallets, carried by elevator to the proper floor, and rolled out for display. A similar system in reverse was used for handling customers' purchases. Selected merchandise was wrapped, then dropped down strategically placed spiral chutes onto a conveyor belt in the basement that carried it across to the garage. Customers would find their purchases waiting for them when they returned to their cars. Besides the convenience, old-timers remember the fun children had racing down to the basement to watch their packages glide along on the overhead belt to the garage.

The designers anticipated the success of the new store by making structural provision for additional stories, and in 1955 Foley's stacked four new city-block floors atop the existing building, nudging it again into the ranks of the South's largest stores. Ironically, the recent shrinking of its retail space reduced Foley's to its 1947 dimensions, a diminution paralleled elsewhere in the big store's environs. Main Street has become mainly history. Across the street, Sakowitz is now a hollow warehouse whose leasing signs proclaim it "THE WORLD'S LARGEST CLOSET" – perhaps the most inelegant retrofit of a downtown landmark anywhere. And while once the downtown stores sent their little colonies out into the suburbs, now the suburbs invade the downtown in phenomena such as The Park, which looks like a suburban shopping center minus anchor tenants that has slithered into the central business district. But the big store on Main Street, even in its shrunken state, still recalls the time not so long ago when a shopping center was merely a training ground for downtown shopping, when you could buy everything from chain saws and major kitchen appliances to Gucci bags and airplane tickets to Rome in the same building, without having to adjust to the different rhythms and different credit cards of the conglomeration of different merchants in a mall.

Retail shopping was the glue that held the downtown together, and the evolution of the department store pretty well parallels the evolution of cities in America. The museums of our everchanging fads and fascinations, they helped to show everyone just what the city had to offer.

Courtesy Vernon Kilns Collection

Commemorative plate, Vernon Kilns, October 1947.

Somehow the situation in Houston – a new convention center in the midst of a dwindling retail district – just doesn't add up. Foley's still hosts the big Thanksgiving Day parade in downtown Houston, but any other day of the year that momentary focus could be replaced by the following scenario. Someone walks out of the convention center and announces that he wants to see the city. He's packed into a car and driven north, south, east, and west, always with the downtown buildings in the rearview mirror. Then he's taken out to some distant vantage point, perhaps on the South Loop, where he can look back to the cluster of gleaming towers, knotted together and looking a little like Oz. Pointing him in the right direction, his guide announces, "Look over there. That's Houston." ■

Bill Bailey Studios, Inc.

"Saga of the Century, Houston 2000 A.D." Display window on the occasion of Foley's 50th anniversary celebration, 1950. An expanded, 12-story version of Foley's downtown store is visible in the foreground of the center panel.

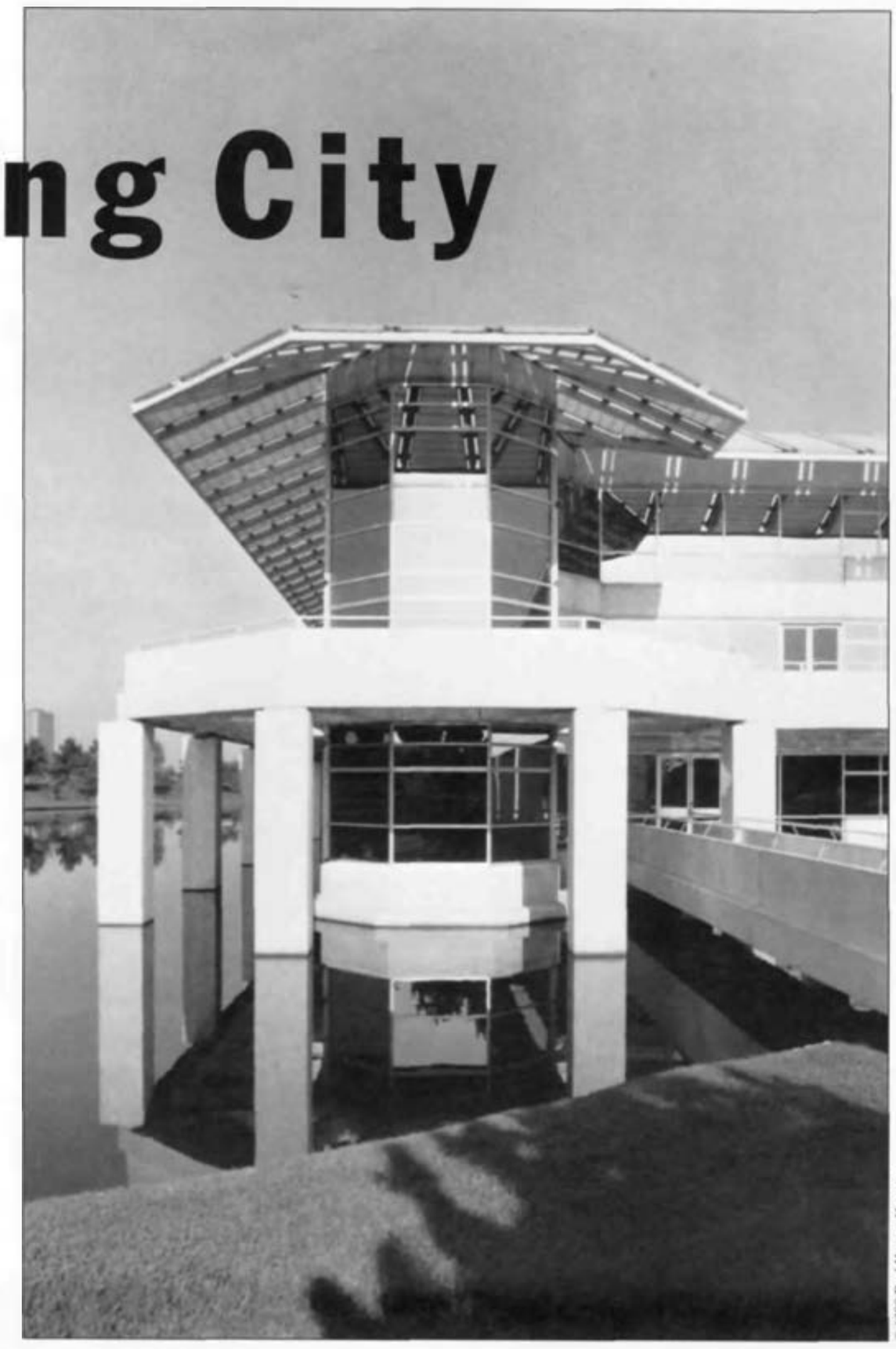
Notes

1 *Houston: An Architectural Guide* (Houston Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1972), p. 32.

2 "Federated Foley's," *Newsweek*, 3 November 1947, p. 60.

Floating City

Conoco's Corporate Headquarters by Kevin Roche



Faceted end pavilion with conference rooms projects over man-made lake.

Two-story atrium connects the three adjoining buildings of each of the five groupings.

William F. Stern

During the recent period of intense building activity in downtown and suburban Houston, an elegant, albeit unassuming office building joined the ranks of corporate Houston without fanfare. In 1985, Conoco Inc. moved its headquarters toward the city's western edge, leaving a multistory office tower in Greenway Plaza for a series of three-story pavilions set in a park along the Katy Freeway (Interstate 10). Conoco's new 1.2-million-square-foot building was designed by Kevin Roche of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, the architectural firm whose reputation was established in the mid-1960s by the Ford Foundation Building in New York City.[1] It is a commentary on our time that Conoco, a building whose design innovatively addresses the requirements of a contemporary working environment, is far less celebrated than the more prominently displayed, stylish tall buildings of Houston.

Conoco is perhaps the best example in Houston of the office campus, a building type that has become popular in the outer limits of America's corporate suburbs. Conoco and its neighbors, Shell, Exxon, and Amoco, are part of a new kind of suburb defined by Robert Fishman in *Bourgeois Utopias* as the "technoburb." The traditional suburb, as found in the 19th- and early-20th-century American city, was an extension of the urban center, a place for living and recreation linked closely to the workplace of the center city. The technoburb, a development of the late 20th century, with its massive shopping malls, housing tracts, and office parks built along the freeways, loops, and interstates that surround the older city, exists independently of the center city. The technoburb is so detached and self-sufficient that its population need never venture to the city center. Because of the concentration of oil-related service companies along this stretch of I-10 near Highway 6, the technoburb around Conoco is known as the "Energy Corridor." Conoco's three-story complex, built in a 62-acre park, represents an alternative to the self-contained, multistory office building. Indeed, if Conoco had chosen to build an office tower, its height would almost have equaled that of the 64-story Transco Tower adjoining Houston's Galleria. By moving farther from the center of the city Conoco was able to spread the building components out, making a completely self-contained environment, a workplace in the garden of the technoburb.

In 1979, Roche Dinkeloo and Associates was awarded the commission for Conoco Inc.'s Houston headquarters. Using an approach he had developed a few years earlier at the Union Carbide corporate headquarters in Danbury, Connecticut, Roche began by interviewing representative groups of employees from all ranks of the company. From these interviews he ascertained what was currently unsatisfactory and what employees wanted in the workplace: for instance, they disliked waiting for elevators. He also learned that, as at Union Carbide, disparities in office size and proximity to outside windows fostered jealousy and affected morale; moreover, time and money (up to $2 million annually) were consumed in altering offices whenever promotions or personnel shifts occurred.

Awning canopy covers employee parking at either end of the complex.

Employees felt cramped and compartmentalized in the impersonal surroundings of Conoco's high-rise quarters and shut off from the world in its many interior offices. What the employees wanted was an office environment more akin to the living rooms or libraries of their homes. They also expressed a strong preference for covered parking, with easy access to individual offices. Clearly many of these desires could more readily be realized in a building unconstrained by its site, a site that would permit the dispersal of office functions over several acres.

Conoco's white concrete maze of buildings is approached by automobile from the freeway feeder. Although Conoco closely borders the Katy Freeway, it would be easy to drive by and only barely notice the 16 buildings that make up the complex. This is accomplished by Roche's strategic placement of an undulating grass berm, which shields the buildings from the noise and view of the busy interstate. Passing through Conoco's security gates, one is scarcely conscious of the 18-wheelers and Suburbans speeding along eight lanes of freeway only a few yards away. From that moment, one enters the serenity of a lush green park of trees and grass, and of buildings meandering over a still lagoon.

Kevin Roche has for some time been intrigued with the idea of the superhighway as an organizer of and distributor for the great distances to be traveled in the technoburb. In describing the relationship of the highway to the building at Union Carbide, Roche remarked:

The front door . . . is the act of arrival by automobile. You drive from home on a highway system. You get off the public highway onto a private highway system which goes straight into the garage, and for an employee is the first act of entry.[2]

At Union Carbide the highway literally enters either side of the building, terminating with parking garages at the center. At Conoco the highway is also terminated by parking, contained this time within two outdoor covered areas for 1,500 cars on the east and west sides of the complex. Roche further extends the metaphor of the superhighway as distributor with an elevated and enclosed second-level pedestrian walkway, nearly a third of a mile long, linking the two employee parking areas. Access from the ground-level parking to the walkway is by escalator. From this main avenue, and on the same level, a secondary system of interior as well as protected outdoor walkways links the adjoining three-story buildings. From both central and secondary distributors the journey to the ground or third levels is only one story. At Conoco, Roche has devised a clear and efficient system of circulation, one that gives employees easy access from the automobile to their offices. Beneath the raised east-west walkway a street for visitor, executive, and service vehicles penetrates the center of the complex, with guest and executive parking under the main building, next to the visitor entrance.

The three-level Conoco complex is composed of 16 buildings arranged in five groups, with an additional service structure at the center. A 60-foot-wide bay with double corridors is the regulating module for each building. In keeping with the employees' desire for views to the outside, offices face outward to the garden; storage, toilets, and service facilities are situated in the middle of the 60-foot bay, between the corridors. Roche also established a standard office size, designing a universal office module of 12 feet by 16 feet to achieve a more democratic distribution of personnel. The exception is a series of double-module offices for top executives in the central building. Each office is separated from the corridor by a five-foot-three-inch-high storage wall for files, shelving, and closets, with mullionless glass to the ceiling above the storage wall allowing daylight into the corridors and interior service rooms. In an effort to satisfy individual tastes, employees are given a choice of three basic office styles – traditional, transitional, and contemporary. The drawback of the democratic office, however, is a uniformity that tends to be disorienting and repetitious. This problem might have been addressed through shifts of interior finishes and decor as well as a bolder selection of art.

Functionally, Conoco's 2,300 employees work in buildings divided between the "upstream" business of exploration and production, occupying the western half of the campus, and the "downstream" business of refining, marketing, and transportation on the east. Between these two, a central service building, larger than a football field, provides executive and visitor parking, third-floor executive offices, basement mechanical services, loading docks, a fitness center, a computer center, employee cafeterias, a credit union, and a travel agency. The multitude of services and amenities was located

Protected outdoor walkway connects buildings at the second level and also serves to shade the offices on the first level. Translucent fiberglass awning projects 13 feet to screen second- and third-level offices.

Open corridor between outward-facing offices and interior service rooms.

intentionally in the central building so employees would have little need to leave the grounds during the workday. The overall layout and positioning of building groups surrounding the center was determined compositionally rather than in response to programmatic requirements. The 15 adjoining buildings, arranged in five groups, vary in size from 33,000 to 100,000 square feet. The three buildings of each group form a pinwheel; a pair of two-story atrium spaces at right angles to each other extend from the pinwheel's center. A single elevator serving the three buildings sits at the juncture of the atrium spaces, but most employees prefer to use the stairs in the naturally lit wells at the ends of the buildings. On each floor, near the stairwell, a conference room pokes out from the building's end with a semi-octagonal glass bay. The three buildings of each grouping define an irregular pattern of outdoor courtyard spaces laced in and around the lagoon.

Escalator from employee parking to second-level interior walkway.

In discussing the outdoor space, Roche has remarked:

In Conoco . . . we do not have the central community space; instead we turn the idea inside out and create a park into which the whole building is placed. It is a campus and will have the same felicitous effect on the occupants as if they were working in a well-planned university campus.[3]

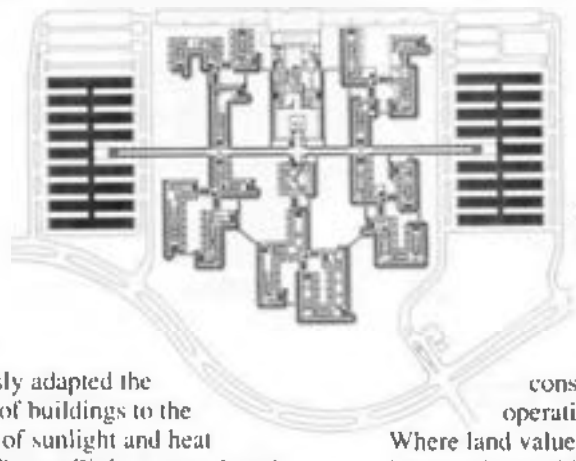
The community space Roche refers to was first introduced in his work at the Ford Foundation and became a prominent element of many designs to follow. In such programmatically diverse buildings as the additions to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City and the corporate headquarters for General Foods in Rye, New York, Roche has used the indoor communal space as a primary organizer. At Conoco, Roche realized the site's potential for year-round green by placing the communal space outside, surrounding an informally designed lake with an indigenous garden of willows, oaks, and pines. Carolina jasmine and fig ivy climb the columns and trellises of the ground-floor arcade. Even though the grounds are easily accessible and are popular for picnicking, walking, jogging, and occasionally fishing, it is from the inside looking out that one most effectively experiences the calm of this idealized landscape.

In making the garden, Roche turned Houston's semitropical climate to his advantage. Going further, he also ingeniously adapted the complex of buildings to the extremes of sunlight and heat in south Texas. Giving strength and drama to Conoco is an awning system made from a translucent fiberglass sandwich panel supported by an aluminum frame that projects 13 feet outward from the face of the wall to screen the offices from the relentless summer sun. Controlling levels of natural light and providing protection from the sun has been an ongoing concern in the work of Roche Dinkeloo. The awning canopy that distinguishes the Conoco building was introduced as a screening device in earlier, similar work, most notably at Richardson-Vicks (1974), Kentucky Power Company (1978), and more recently Union Carbide (1982). But the Conoco awning is perhaps the most expressive and developed use of this device. Whereas the awning at Union Carbide projects above each level, Conoco's white, translucent awning extends only from the roof parapet, giving the appearance of a great eave gracefully hovering over and sheltering the structure below. Like the overhanging eaves of a Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie house, the awning draws the building into the landscape. In combination with silver reflective glass, the 13-foot projection adequately screens the east, west, and south façades on the second and third levels. The north face is unscreened, as direct sunlight to this exposure is minimal. To shade the ground level, a three-quarter-mile elevated outdoor walkway runs beneath the awning, serving also to connect the complex at the second level. Responding to the employees' desire for covered parking, the canopy design is repeated for the outdoor parking in what is surely the finest architectural solution in Houston for disguising the endless sea of automobiles and asphalt. From the parking area the canopy climbs over the escalators at either end of the complex, running the length of the second-level central walkway. The expression of the awning is synthesized with the structural expression that defines the character of building at Conoco. Hefty poured-concrete columns support precast concrete beams, framing members, and wall panels and a poured-concrete floor. The translucent white of the awning is reiterated in the milky white of the concrete, rendering a bright cohesiveness against the surrounding garden.

As Houston continues to grow outward, it is likely that the office campus will be a choice for the corporation seeking consolidation of its operations under one roof. Where land values are lower, this building type is a viable alternative as well to the multistory office building. As the technoburb matures, communities with the assets and planning sophistication of the traditional suburb will become increasingly needed. In many ways Conoco points to future possibilities for the workplace and office buildings in the technoburb. Take away the steel security fence that surrounds the Conoco grounds, and one might imagine a series of similar buildings, loosely connected to make an extraordinary landscaped park on the scale of the 18th-century French gardens. Conoco emphatically reaches a new plateau for office design in Houston. Kevin Roche at the Conoco headquarters has dignified the office community by considering and responding to the aspirations of the employees. Moreover, he has intelligently resolved the conflict between the imposition of man-made structure and nature's opposing forces. What was formerly dull, empty land along a noisy freeway is now a peaceful park with a series of handsome structures straddling a lake, within a sculpted landscape of grass and trees. ■

Union Carbide Headquarters, Danbury, Connecticut, 1982.

Aerial view, Conoco, 1985.



Second-level plan.

Pedestrian bridges traverse the lake.

Notes

1 Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo had previously been partners in the office of Eero Saarinen & Associates in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. From 1950 to 1961, the year of Saarinen's premature death at the age of 51, they were closely associated with Saarinen projects. In 1961, Roche and Dinkeloo opened their office in Hamden, Connecticut, outside New Haven. Until his death in 1981, John Dinkeloo was actively involved in all projects. Kevin Roche, principal designer for the firm, has continued the practice under the name Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates.

2 Francesco Dal Co, *Kevin Roche* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 64. These remarks are taken from a conversation between Roche and Dal Co that makes up the majority of the text of the monograph.

3 Ibid., p. 58.

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Francesco Dal Co, *Kevin Roche*, New York: Rizzoli, 1985.

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THE FUTURE

In the past, streets and public places were stages where social classes and social uses mixed, stages of solemn ceremony and improvised spectacle, of people-watching, of recreation. In their changing architecture, their slow shifts and adjustments, they were also time channels – the safeguard of the continuities of culture and place that made us, as actors in the public realm, older than our age and wiser than our own natural gifts. This public realm of the past was an untidy place, physically and morally, but it was also both school and stage of urbanity, which in the end means nothing less than the belief that "people can live together in proximity and interdependence," as Gerald Allen put it.

Spiro Kostof

The public realm was all those things, not because of the container, but because of what we were willing to put inside it. I see little point to reviving the container now if we are not ready to reinvest it with true urbanity. As long as we would rather keep our own counsel, avoid social tension, schedule encounters with our friends, and travel on our own in climate-controlled and music-injected metal boxes, the resurrected public realm will be a place we like to visit every so often but not inhabit, a fun place and a museum – but also the burial place of our hopes to exorcise poverty and prejudice by confronting them daily; the burial place of our chances to learn from one another; the burial place of spontaneous excitement, of the cumulative knowledge of human ways, and of the residual benefits of a public life.

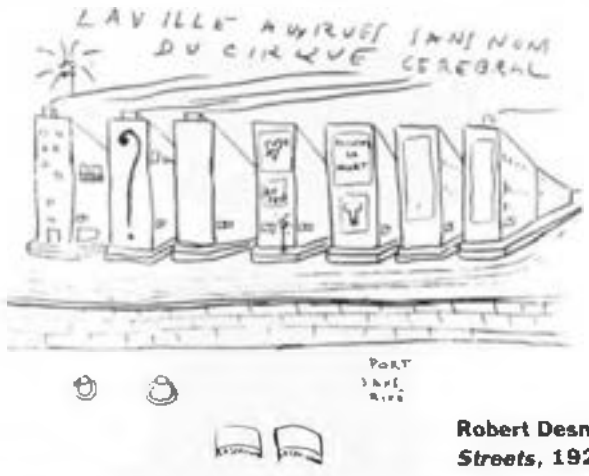
We seem ready to take our losses. In the eighties the momentum to re-create the public realm has been lost. Some see a fundamental change of society in the works, and there is much evidence to prove them right. At the turn of the century a revolution culminated that shifted us from a nation of farms to a nation of factories and moved us from country to city. Now we have started as momentous a revolution, it would seem, a shift from factory to service and information, and from city back to country. I am talking about megacenters – the landscape of postindustrial America, of the new information economy – those gigantic pseudo-cities in which hundreds of thousands work and live without any need of or love for the traditional city: Tech Center in Denver, Ben Carpenter's Las Colinas and the Golden Triangle in Dallas, Cumberland and Galleria malls north of Atlanta, the Princeton Forrestal Center on the Route 1 corridor, and in my own Bay Area, Bishop Ranch in San Ramón. One suburban Bay Area developer is quoted as saying, "We can offer a self-contained city, and that's a hell of a selling point."

These instant cities of the countryside have little to do with the dormitory communities that resulted from the earlier abandonment of the old downtown. After the residential component left, and the factories and industrial establishments followed suit, the heart of the metropolis was still held together, at least in the daytime, by offices, banks, and administrative buildings symbolically grounding the city in the manner of the old guildhall, the Rathaus, the *palazzo di podestà*. Now they too are beginning to leave. The worker pool needed by the information economy is already out there in the suburbs – upscale, white, professional. So you take the plant to them. You give them shopping malls and parks, movie theaters, restaurants, conference centers, and luxury "townhouses" or apartments. But you do not confuse the alternative city environment with schools or churches, with poor people or ethnic concentrations. There are no streets in the traditional sense and, of course, no history.

Are these megacenters the final challenge to the traditional public realm and to the city itself? It is clear that the developers are doing their best to ignore the public realm, and by so doing they are depriving the metropolis of its remaining mystique, which emanates from the downtown towers that are supposed to be the seat of corporate might, political muscle, the managing world of entertainment and design. It is entirely possible that the institution of megacenters will erode the much-celebrated renaissance of the downtown and lead to yet another major exodus, leaving these worn-out artifacts to the poor, who cannot escape them, and to the incorrigible romantics, who would rather run their rat race down corridor-streets and live in Victorians yanked from the jaws of bulldozers.

The real revolution – perhaps not surprisingly, after all the inflationary rhetoric of modernism, the technocratic totalitarianism, the alienating scale of housing structures and of the much-lauded open spaces – was not still another futurist adventure, but rather a search for the long-suppressed traditional experiences of the street. This search started around 1960, spread fairly far both in Europe and in this country, and was doubtless related to the general ferment of the sixties. The new mood was reflected in a number of influential books, Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* being the most popular. More for the professional crowd, there were books like the Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour treatise *Learning From Las Vegas*, Edmund Bacon's *Design of Cities*, and Rob Krier's *Urban Space*, which was a more accessible account of the kinds of concerns brought up in an opaque and mystifying manner by Aldo Rossi in his writings and in such buildings as the Gallaratese housing block outside Milan.

These books sought to analyze the qualities of the traditional street in order to stimulate its revival and emulation. This meant defining the street's practi-



Robert Desnos, *The City of Nameless Streets*, 1922.

OF THE STREET

cal and socioeconomic functions – determining how it served the city. The traditional street provided lots for buildings, accommodated traffic, had representational and symbolic content, facilitated social interaction, gave direct access to buildings. Modernism had stressed traffic and ignored the other uses; the time had come to reconsider them. These lost functions had been associated with specific forms: the continuous edge of street walls, important height-width relationships, fronting devices such as stoops and sidewalks, the extension of public space inside the blocks and of private space out into the street. Once you had defined these things, you were on the way to understanding how they could be reinforced or resurrected.

Now there is a European side of the issue and an American one. The American penchant is for endowing ordinary streetscapes with new approval: Main Street is almost all right. We have never quite found out what we are supposed to do to it to make it *really* all right, but we have been encouraged to be ashamed of our intolerance for the landscape of average Americans, gambling, cruising, doing their thing, and to be ashamed of the elitism of City Beautiful boulevards and the bloodless elegance of corporate plazas.

"There is . . . nothing to be 'learned from Las Vegas,' except that it constitutes a widespread operation of trivialization," responds Europe in the person of Léon Krier.[1] Turning to the ordinary in Continental terms is a different story. "The European city," says Krier, "is a creation of the intelligence; the very trace of this intelligence embarrasses 'the builders of today,' who are all too happy to find in Venturi and the other consorts of postmodernism unexpected intellectual allies." Krier is speaking of preindustrial Europe – the stone cities of multilayered tradition that have been savaged by "unbridled industrialization with no aim but consumption" and by the cult of mobility, which contributed to social fragmentation. Their physical disintegration was aided and abetted by modern architecture and urbanism and the myths attendant thereon – "the separation of functions, the myth of prefabrication, the useless typological works undertaken for themselves in the name of sacrosanct 'creativity.'" For Krier, the only option is to resurrect the preindustrial city, which means reviving two critical constituent features: first, its elements – the quarter, the street, the square – which "must form the basis for any reconstruction of cities destroyed by 'modern' urbanism"; and second, its techniques – preindustrial building technology, artisanry, manual work.

And how do we proceed with this agenda? By studying carefully what is left of historical cities, and applying this language to today's projects. As Berthold Brecht put it in 1925, "In civilized countries there are no fashions; it is an honor to resemble the models." Housing must stem only from the urban fabric and be completely subject to the constraints of urban morphology. The same logic applies to urban configurations – they reflect patterns of city living that have evolved over the course of centuries. "A street is a street," writes Léon Krier, "and one lives there in a certain way not because architects have imagined streets in certain ways." ■

Notes

1 All quotations are from "The Consumption of Culture," *Oppositions*, no.14 (Fall 1978), pp. 54-59.

Courtesy Pace/MacGill, New York

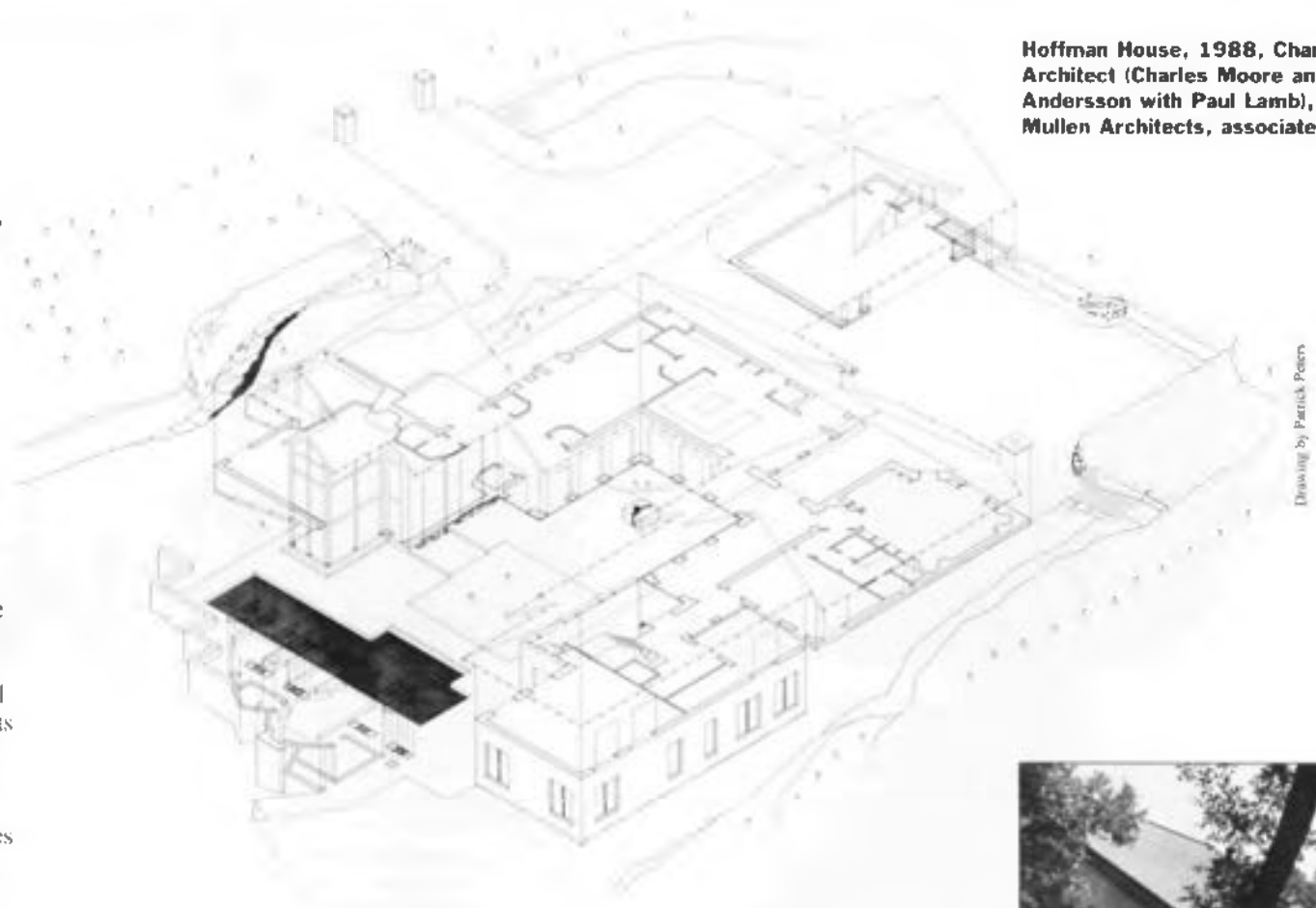
Joel Sternfeld, *Fourth of July, Canyon County, California*, 1983.

Citesurvey

An Aedicula for the Prodigal Sun

The Hoffman House, Dallas, by Charles Moore

Patrick Peters



Drawing by Patrick Peters

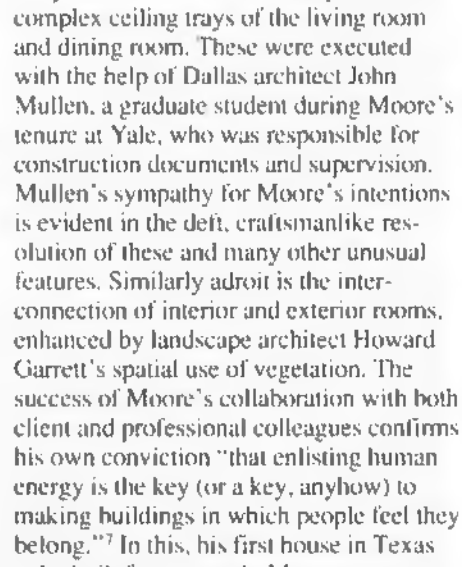
Hoffman House, 1988, Charles Moore, Architect (Charles Moore and Arthur Andersson with Paul Lamb), architect; Mullen Architects, associate architect.

The harsh Texas sun establishes a need for shade and diffused light that Charles Moore accommodates with cross-cultural sophistication and regionalist know-how in a recently completed Dallas home for Sally and Robert Hoffman and their daughter. Louis Kahn, in his duel with the sun at the Kimbell Art Museum in neighboring Fort Worth, sought to develop a timeless daylight solution applicable to all contexts. Moore, a student of Kahn, adopts a more modest *modus operandi*, perusing archetypes from a wide range of sources and deploying them on a case-by-case basis for the sequence of rooms and spaces that surrounds the Hoffman House's central courtyard.[1] The result is a sense of place and progression that defies simple diagramming or photographic encapsulation. According to Robert Hoffman – an architecture enthusiast since his days at Harvard and developer of a condominium project by Moore intended for a nearby site on Turtle Creek – siting, daylighting, and vertical space are essential elements of Moore's work. These qualities are in evidence throughout the house, which opens up to an uncommonly lush and serene setting.

Completed in 1988 after three years of planning and construction, the house rests in an unlikely spot near one of Dallas's most heavily trafficked intersections. However, surprisingly little noise intrudes, as the site vegetation and the courtyard plan exercise an insulating effect. Following a domestic protocol removed from the obligations of the street, the house presents no formal façade or obvious front to passersby but instead engages views of the surrounding dense growth and shallow creek below. The delicate task of siting the H-shaped house of 6,500 square feet amidst a preexisting retaining wall, trees, and recalcitrant landforms was accomplished with an agility focused on preserving the site's inherent charm. The result is a finely crafted poesis attuned to Moore's conception of a landscape of repose, which will someday be extended to the design of new gardens on an adjacent lot.

The plan serves as a partial map of Moore's architectural peregrinations. In diagram, the open court is that of Alvar Aalto's Säynätsalo Town Hall (1949-52) but depends also on the indoor-outdoor continuity of a much-admired house in Cuernavaca.[2] One must look to the Japanese-inspired courtyard houses of the California architects Charles and Henry Greene, however, to find a comparable example of interior-exterior integration in America, and particularly to their designs for the Bandini House in Pasadena (1903) and the Hollister House in Hollywood (1906) to find an interpretation of the open courtyard type that corresponds directly to Moore's design.[3] But Moore departs from the basically uniform disposition of spaces and fenestration that marks the Greenes' courtyard houses and fashions instead a complex series of windows and concealed skylights that choreograph cyclical patterns of daylight through an equally varied series of spaces, "making sense" by allowing for "light and space, for order and clarity, for reverie."[4] In the living room and the dining room, tray ceilings derived from an appreciation of the Kimbell's light diffuser and Sir John Soane's breakfast room at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields impart a luminous mantle. In the living room, as throughout, the spatial benefits of bilateral ambient light that Moore graphically demonstrated in *The Place of Houses*[5] are used to admirable effect, while focused downlighting is used only to highlight pieces from the Hoffmans' collection of 20th-century art. In this way, daylight connects indoor and outdoor spaces, providing views across adjacent spaces, through rooms, and into hidden gardens beyond. A continuous surface of Pennsylvania Lilac paving stone at the entry and screen-like layers of window and wall further this effect. "Seventy-five steps from the front door to the master bedroom" indicates the extent to which Hoffman takes measure of his house.

The presence of water in three specific places evidences another of Moore's longstanding fascinations,[6] as does the appearance in the pool court of an aedicula (sans shrine) of native trees purchased from the Texas roadside. The aedicula form, which recurs in many of Moore's early houses, is also recalled by the complex ceiling trays of the living room and dining room. These were executed with the help of Dallas architect John Mullen, a graduate student during Moore's tenure at Yale, who was responsible for construction documents and supervision. Mullen's sympathy for Moore's intentions is evident in the deft, craftsmanlike resolution of these and many other unusual features. Similarly adroit is the interconnection of interior and exterior rooms, enhanced by landscape architect Howard Garrett's spatial use of vegetation. The success of Moore's collaboration with both client and professional colleagues confirms his own conviction "that enlisting human energy is the key (or a key, anyhow) to making buildings in which people feel they belong."[7] In this, his first house in Texas to be built from scratch, Moore seems very much at home. ■



Photograph by Patrick Peters

View from creek.

© 1989 Paul Hester, Houston

Conservatory in living room.

© 1989 Paul Hester, Houston

Tray ceiling and fireplace in living room.

Notes

1 Eugene J. Johnson, "Performing Architecture: The Work of Charles Moore," in Eugene J. Johnson, ed., *Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects, 1949-1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), pp. 58, 61.

2 Charles Moore, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lyndon, *The Place of Houses* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 167-68, figs. 28, 29.

3 Duncan Macintosh, *The Modern Courtyard House*, Architectural Association Papers no. 9 (London: The Architectural Association, 1973), p. 11.

4 Charles Moore, "The Yin, the Yang, and the Three Bears," in Johnson, ed., *Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects*, p. 15.

5 Moore et al., *The Place of Houses*, pp. 98-99.

6 Johnson, "Performing Architecture," p. 60.

7 Moore, "The Yin, the Yang, and the Three Bears," p. 20.

I-10 Primer

Guadalupe Plaza, Houston

Plaza Guadalupe, San Antonio

Joe McGrath

Top: Elevation, Plaza Guadalupe, San Antonio, Reyna Caragonne Architects, 1984-89. Guadalupe Street row of storefronts ("Las Tiendas"), phase I.

Above: Arcade, Plaza Guadalupe, San Antonio, completed 1984. Guadalupe Street front.

Above: Vaulted passageway leading to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

Satisfactory public spaces require the sort of public life that is no longer common in American cities (if it ever was) – something that urban planners and designers are in any case hard put to manufacture. Where such projects are envisioned to serve an ethnic constituency predisposed to civic conviviality, the prospects for success would seem greater. But good intentions and wishful urban typecasting are no substitute for proper location and real community ties, as two plazas of almost the same name, separated by several hundred miles of Interstate Highway 10, demonstrate. Names excepted, Guadalupe Plaza in Houston and Plaza Guadalupe in San Antonio have little else in common.

The dedication of Guadalupe Plaza Park, as it is called in official cityspeak, in September 1988 was yet another chapter in the serial drama of El Mercado del Sol, an ill-fated 400,000-square-foot Hispanic-theme shopping complex that opened in summer 1985 in a remodeled five-story factory and warehouse building on Houston's east side near downtown (*Cite*, Fall 1985, pp. 9-11). When the Houston City Council initially approved the use of $2.3 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds for park construction in July 1987, El Mercado had already been in Federal Savings & Loan Insurance Corporation receivership for more than a year. In September 1987 the FSLIC threatened to foreclose, announcing that it would evict tenants if a new owner could not be found. With a commitment from the city of Houston to loan up to $5 million (also to be drawn from the federal funds), Abercrombie Interests and Equity Fund Advisors formed El Mercado Partners II, purchased the development for $1.9 million, and began additional renovations. Since then the city has loaned $2.1 million toward the completion of work on El Mercado, which reopened rather unceremoniously in February.

In his article "In Search of Public Places" (*Cite*, Fall 1987), Peter Papademetriou commented on the precarious balance between El Mercado's need for viable shops and an authentic civic role. On the one hand, he writes, the project risks becoming gentrified by introducing shops and attractions that have broad economic appeal but ignore the needs and desires of local residents. On the other, he points out, El Mercado has never been a "purely indigenous effort," and its economic success was (and is now entirely) dependent on public and private investment from outside the Hispanic community. Guadalupe Plaza is a modest attempt by the city to improve the image of El Mercado by adding public amenities to what is essentially a private (albeit publicly subsidized) commercial redevelopment project.

According to architect Luís Bodmer, the park's designer (along with Arnold DeAnda of DeAnda Engineering), the park was part of a "loose package" of supportive improvements discussed with the city of Houston by the project's first developers in 1983.[1] Guadalupe Plaza as realized is in many ways as bereft as the nearly empty building it is meant to complement, consigned to the far western edge of the Hispanic East End (which, ironically, has supported a successful city-sponsored commercial redevelopment carried out by Weingarten Realty on the site of a former Sears store located several miles farther east at Wayside and Harrisburg, near the heart of the community). The park sits on a 6.4-acre parcel of land along the west side of Jensen Drive that begins at Runnels Street, in front of El Mercado's parking lot, and leads down to the south bank of Buffalo Bayou. The 2.8-acre corner tract on which the plaza itself is located faces one side of its namesake, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church across Jensen Drive. The bayou section of the park includes a small boat dock, reached by an enormous staircase and a system of switchback ramps. The plaza is separated from El Mercado del Sol by some 170 feet of parking lot and is surrounded by low walls on the south and east street sides. A freestanding arcade is located on the west edge, facing onto the market buildings. At the center of the plaza is a raised circular stage overlooking a court enclosed by an expansive, 12-foot-high pergola. The architectural elements (arcade, pergola, stage, perimeter wall) organize the park into formal, axially related, semi-autonomous precincts. Within the park, the structural bays of the arcade and pergola work off a grid that is reiterated as a pavement pattern. Sapling elms and palms have been planted in rows on center with the pergola's structural bays, along with what few flower beds the park's "low maintenance" mandate will permit.

Although the plaza affirms the city's interest in the success of El Mercado, the connection between the two is tenuous and made more so by the intervening parking lot. Rather than attempt to engage the renovated warehouse directly, the park lies somewhat detached beyond El Mercado's parking lot, though even so it lends an appreciable sense of civic intent to its enormous neighbor. Conceived as a tribute to Houston's Hispanic community, the park has a subtext of Aztec images incised in the pavement at various places.

Below: Guadalupe Plaza, Houston, DeAnda Engineering, Inc., with Luis Bodmer, architect, completed 1988. Runnels Street entrance between El Mercado parking lot (not visible, left) and Clinton Drive (right). Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (not visible) stands across Clinton Drive on the right.

Guadalupe Plaza, Houston. Clinton Drive entrance looking toward El Mercado parking lot and El Mercado.

but the architectural realization ignores this potentially provocative source of form in favor of a generic array of "Hispanic" postmodern elements, deployed like so many toys. Perhaps a thematically resonant work of public art would help the plaza transcend the conventional qualities of its built components as well as strengthen its civic identity. The recent controversy surrounding the proposed installation of Luis Jimenez, Jr.'s *Southwest Pietà* in Albuquerque's historic Old Town and its subsequent installation in that city's Martineztown/Longfellow Park illustrates the potential for such work to galvanize space and a community.[2]

Reyna Caragonne Architects' Plaza Guadalupe in San Antonio (*Cite*, Spring 1986, p. 16) provides an instructive basis for comparison with Houston's Guadalupe Plaza. The one-acre, $1.7 million plaza was completed in two phases between 1984 and 1987 as part of an extended, community-based effort to revitalize San Antonio's Guadalupe Avenue and the surrounding low-income Hispanic neighborhood. Since the early 1980s, the Avenida Guadalupe Association along with the city of San Antonio has undertaken a master plan that in addition to the plaza includes a privately developed medical office building, completed last spring, and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, an adjoining cinema successfully renovated as a performing arts and exhibition space, whose offices now spill over into a building across the street. Long-range plans include continued expansion of the arts center and renovation of low-income housing in the area. The neighborhood association has just completed a 20,000-square-foot row of street-front shop spaces across Avenida Guadalupe from the plaza that will be occupied by merchants in time for Christmas.

Both Plaza Guadalupe and Guadalupe Plaza offer outdoor performance areas as central elements, and both feature an assortment of incidental structures such as trellises, freestanding arcades, walls, and entryways. But Plaza Guadalupe is architecturally somewhat more sophisticated, if at times overwrought (evidenced particularly in the premature deterioration of fussy details) and still dependent on a generic postmodern vocabulary. Smaller in scale and more densely arranged, it successfully links Guadalupe Avenue with the nearby Our Lady of Guadalupe Church by a succession of outdoor spaces cut through a block. These are intended to be enclosed by buildings on either side. Guadalupe Plaza, on the other hand, is sited and sized more like a front lawn. Because it is isolated from its surroundings its ability to serve as an urban public place is compromised.

Both plazas raise questions about the ability of civic spaces to contribute to the revitalization of neighborhoods. Both depend almost entirely on programmed events for public activity because neither is particularly conducive to daily and spontaneous interaction – a deficiency that, in the case of Plaza Guadalupe, may be remedied once the row of shops across the street is occupied. The spirited, nurturing vision of the Avenida Guadalupe Association has motivated and sustained the project thus far, boding well for its future. Plaza Guadalupe shows the virtue of small-scale, incremental interventions that grow out of viable neighborhood contexts. But in the case of Guadalupe Plaza, El Mercado's ability to generate daily activity seems doubtful. Even the plaza's occasional use is problematic, given its tenuous link not only to the East End but to El Mercado itself.

Houston has experienced persistent difficulty in managing community development funds and thinking in neighborhood terms – monumentally so in the case of El Mercado, for which initial feasibility studies recommended only 70,000 square feet of retail space, roughly one-sixth of what was finally developed.[3] Even as enthusiastic a supporter of El Mercado as Bodmer admits that "the renovation of a large complex such as El Mercado and the addition of Guadalupe Plaza will not be sufficient to stabilize the area in the long run."[4] Nor does the creation of a tax abatement district in May 1988, embracing El Mercado along with other depressed Second Ward real estate, seem sufficient to overcome fundamental problems of location and community ties.[5] One wonders if, all along, the more reasonable course would have been to take both plaza and market to the community, instead of attempting the reverse. ■

Notes

1 Luis Bodmer, "El Mercado del Sol: Pioneering Redevelopment Solutions in Houston," typed manuscript.

2 William Peterson, "Luis Jimenez, Jr.: *Southwest Pietà*," *Artspace* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 62-64.

3 Susan Allen, "The Rise and Fall of El Mercado," *Houston Business Journal*, 27 October 1986, p. 1.

4 Bodmer, "El Mercado."

5 City of Houston ordinance no. 88697, May 4, 1988.

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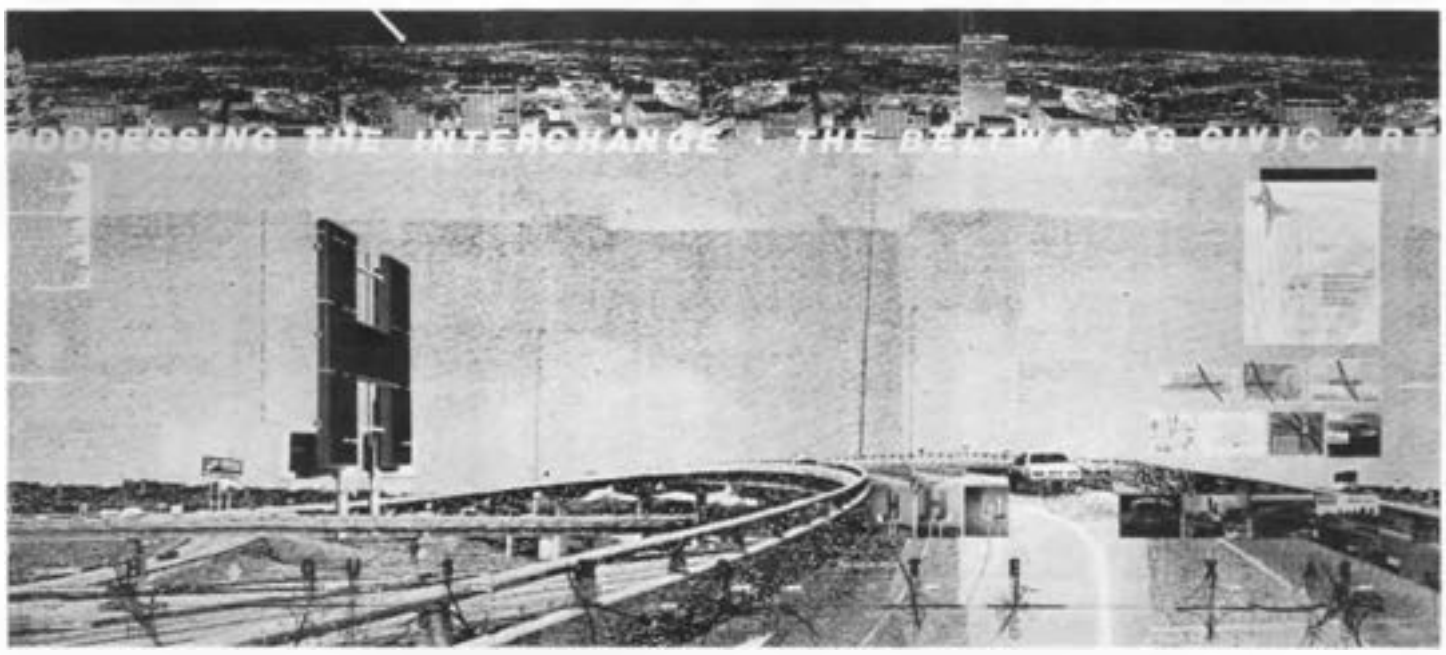
Gulf Gate

Missed Metaphors at the Gulf Freeway – Loop 610 Interchange Design Competition

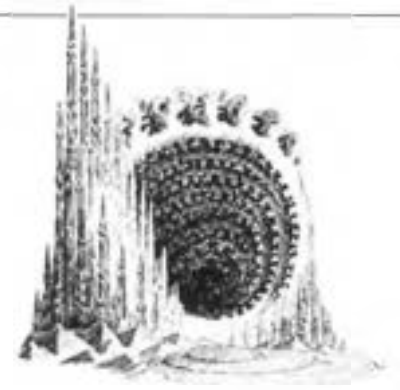
Drexel Turner

City gates are a comparatively recent feature of the American landscape, a byproduct of the creativity of Dwight Eisenhower, whose genius as architect of the interstate highway system managed to surround virtually every locality possessed of at least one shopping mall and a chamber of commerce with a loop road that enabled motorists to transit the city without ever passing through it. The new highways also ran to and through the centers of cities, usually propped up on stilts like low-riding Augustinian aqueducts, penetrating the loops to form rudimentary if inadvertent gates. The loop roads constituted perhaps the most spectacular transformation of the national topography since Jefferson's Cartesian partition of trans-Appalachia. Coiled around city after generic city like multi-laned cousins of the long-discarded ramparts of European capitals, they rounded out whole pages of the urban atlas with a template efficiency that Rand McNally could only envy.

Shopping malls were far less plentiful then than now, a deficiency Eisenhower's highways also corrected. For wherever the loop roads and main highways came together, spaghettilike interchanges resulted, soon attended by shopping malls in one or several of the corners of the newly dissected and excited real estate. Daunting as Eisenhower's vision was, the highways and loop-sided city gates were marked by a certain sameness and predictability that merged not unsmoothly with the memory of the sponsor-general himself. But to a



John Forney, John Bastian, and Richard Torchia, Gulf Freeway – Loop 610 Competition entry, 1989.



Courtesy Patrick Media Group of Dallas, Inc.

Top: Hans Luckhardt, "Fantasy in Form," c. 1920. Middle: Pearl billboard, Stemmons Expressway, Dallas, 1962. Bottom: René Magritte, *Annunciation*, 1930. Tate Gallery.

populace that no longer glides through these 50-mile-an-hour mazes in Buicks and Edsels but in Japanese imitations of Porsches dealer-prepped for MTV they appear oppressively "retro," much as a longstanding breach in the Aurelian wall must have struck Pius IV when he summoned Michelangelo to fashion the Porta Pia as a more seemly conduit for a new, improved papal avenue.[1]

A kindred urge to fast-forward at least one small stretch of Houston's piece of the universal Eisenhower memorial evidently seized the Department of Landscape Architecture at Texas A&M University last fall. With the sponsorship of the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation and the National Endowment for the Arts, it organized a competition for the embellishment of the intersection of the Gulf Freeway (Interstate 45) and Loop 610 in Houston, expectantly titled "Urban Freeway Interchange as Art." Not long before, the city of Los Angeles had staged a competition to elicit a West Coast equivalent of the Statue of Liberty astride the Hollywood Freeway where it passes between Little Tokyo and the Hispanic Pueblo. The winning entry ("Steel Clouds" by Studio Asymptote) was an overhead deconstructivist colossus, the heavy-metal apparatus of which, if ever built, would add yet another element of seismic suspense to everyday freeway roulette.[2]

The first-prize entry in the Houston competition ("Blue Shadows" by Studio Zero, a collaboration affecting the name of a more elementary mathematical construct) was less fashionable and threatening, though similarly enigmatic.[3] Chief among its assortment of built and landscape elements (scored, according to its creators, like a string quartet) was a celestial whirligig composed of an 80-foot-long rotating "conductor" arm held aloft on a 150-foot-high pole to alert passersby to solstices and equinoxes. The rest of the entries included a fairly predictable range of laser plumes, lightning fields, mastabas of crushed automobiles and tires, and special-frequency radio tune-ins, as well as a proposal to mark all 12 interchanges ringing the city on Loop 610 with giant letters, one to a site, spelling H-O-U-S-T-O-N T-E-X-A-S – a Venturi-effect, perhaps too BASCO for local consumption, which its proponents advanced with a motto from James M. Cain, "A place is only as good as its sign."[4]

Behind every good sign is a good name, however remote the connection. None of the more than 40 Houston competition entries took notice of the nominal genius of the site as a way station on the road to Galveston and the Gulf of Mexico. This connection, though 50 miles distant, had not been lost on the developers of the property at the southwest corner of the interchange, who chose to call their enterprise, the city's first freewayside shopping mall, Gulfgate. The problem, therefore, would seem to be to put the right sign in the right place, something capable of making a bigger splash, perhaps in the form of miniature Gulf. The first city with a sign that points toward the sign for the job is Dallas, several hundred miles farther up Interstate 45, where an aquatic billboard has occupied the bluffs above the Stemmons Expressway since 1962 featuring a man-made waterfall of real water that initially promoted Pearl Beer ("Brewed with pure artesian water/ From the Country of 1100 Springs"). The sign's affiliation with the down-home brewery has since fallen by the wayside and is now transferred, waterfall intact, to a clear-flowing imported vodka, in keeping with the yup-scale progression of marketing demographics in Dallas.[5]

Even Sixtus V, the Robert Moses of Baroque Rome, was not averse to mixing water effects with traffic, and so caused the approach to the Porta Pia to be elaborated by the Aqua Felice. But the Via Pia was a fairly narrow passage compared to the ten lanes and multiple ramps of the Gulf Freeway and Loop 610, just as the gentle lapping of the Aqua Felice would scarcely project above the incessant traffic at the Gulf Gate interchange today, whether stalled or free-flowing. The Pearl billboard waterfall in Dallas is perched well above its expressway audience, but the Gulf Gate interchange, spread over flat coastal prairie, offers no topographical leg up, so whatever seeks to command the spot must do so at more or less the implied scale of the Magic Mountain at Disneyland, Hans Luckhardt's melted Alpine fantasy, or Hokusai's giant wave off Kanagawa. But since, as Oscar Wilde observed, "to be natural is such a difficult pose to keep up," to say nothing of the effort required to make water run uphill, one might forsake the hydraulic short-fall naturalism of the Pearl billboard for the more spectacular faux-form falls of Magritte's imagining or the luminescent, electronic sublime of the Pepsi-Cola waterfall that lately graced Times Square. Perhaps a pair of waves would promote a sufficient aspect of procession, parted so that one could pass through, like Claes Oldenburg's *Colossal Knees* proposed for the Victoria Embankment. The surface of the waves could come alive at night with a crawling pattern of fish and sea creatures unimagined by Hokusai but folded easily enough into (or onto) Grand Marnier's "Ocean of Grandeur." Another option is to consider the interchange as a sort of drive-through Cornell box, a sea-farm cross section with fish suspended from an ocean-top datum bar on which boats could be perched.

The notion of embellishing highway interchanges extends back at least to the first century A.D., when at the outskirts of Rome the Emperor Claudius devised the Porta Maggiore to carry the Aqua Claudia and the Aqua Anio Novus across the Via Labicana and the Via Praenestina, a feat Palladio and Piranesi both found awesome enough to record in drawings. In our own time, the perpetrators of Archigram offered to settle a circuslike variant of "Instant City" at the intersection of the Santa Monica and San Diego freeways in Los Angeles (1969), but found no takers. Ettore Sottsass and Marco Zanini have proposed to absorb a rotary for Milan into a building scheme at the Piazzale Loreto (1985), a project distantly related to John Barrington Bayley's coliseumlike arrangement of Columbus Circle (1958). Similarly, Léon Krier has proposed to camouflage an interchange in Piraeus, the harbor of Athens, with all manner of herbage (1977). But the most promising route for interchanges, if they are amenable to intervention at all, perhaps lies outside the bounds of public taste. Which is why it might be better to lease the Gulf Gate sight byte to Sea World or Disney, and wave goodbye to the highwaymen. ■

Katsushika Hokusai, *Fuji Seen Through the Waves off Kanagawa*, early 1830s.

Notes

1 Elisabeth B. MacDougall, "Michelangelo and the Porta Pia," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 19, no. 3 (October 1960), pp. 97-108.

2 Mark Alden Branch, "'Steel Clouds' Stirs L.A. Debate," *Progressive Architecture*, February 1989, pp. 22-23. "Steel Clouds" was the work of Hani Rashid and Lisa Ann Couture of New York; its construction cost was estimated at $33 million.

3 "Blue Shadows" was the work of architect John Brown and artist Michael Knudsen of Calgary and architect Mark Hults of Dallas; its construction is projected to cost $500,000. Accounts of the competition include Ray Don Tilley, "Bringing Art to the Freeway Vernacular," *Texas Architect*, May-June 1989, p. 6; Ann Holmes, "Interchange With Art," *Houston Chronicle*, 25 March 1989; and Jerry Laws, "Racing Imaginations Collide, Erupt Into Freeway Art Work," *Houston Post*, 13 March 1989.

4 From *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. This entry, called "Beltway as Civic Art," was the work of architects John Forney and John Bastian and artist Richard Torchia, of Philadelphia. The proposal's giant letters all faced in toward the center of the city to be read from skyscrapers downtown, as if learning from the Porta Pia, which also faced inward in opposition to established practice for city gates.

5 Jennifer Tucker, "Purely Dallas: The Hay-Tech Waterfall – Down by the City's Old Billboard Stream, Advertisements Spring Eternal," *Dallas Times Herald, Dallas City* magazine, 14 July 1985, pp. 14-15. Constructed at a cost of $125,000, the rocks are made of hay; the "fall" requires 1.5 million gallons of recycled water.

Magazine advertisement, 1989.

Citeations

Shop Lifting

A Pair of Shoe Boxes in the River Oaks Shopping Center

Lucy H. Holmes

The "shoe box interior" is the basic unit of most upscale and would-be upscale retail establishments in Houston, whether found in malls or in strip centers – those quintessentially American drive-up bazaars. The exterior of the retail strip stands as a regimented façade, with repetitive elements of material, texture, and color; individuality is expressed in the sign band, window treatment, and attitude toward display in the store window. Location within the strip is critical, for the retail shop depends on exposure for much of its business. The interior of the shoe box, a finite volume of fixed dimensions, challenges the designer to create the illusion of greater width, height, and depth. Space is divided into three main areas: the entry (waiting and check-out), front of the house (display), and back of the house (service). This typology can be observed in two retail establishments, coincidentally next door to one another, in the River Oaks Shopping Center that have treated their shoe box spaces in an innovative way.

Allrecords, 1960 West Gray, by architect Bill McDugald (1986), is a remembrance of things not too long past, executed with wit and charm that jive, as it were, with the store's inventory of jazz and rock classics. The entry, with a vinyl tile grid of random colors on the floor and a dropped soffit supported by a single decorated column (pins, beads, dolls' arms), brings back the colors and images of the fifties with a surreal overlay. Curtains of painted brick, like David Byrne's suit, divide display areas. The first set of curtains is freestanding although somewhat obscured by shelving;

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Cotton Club. Clothes horse with rider.

the second set is mounted on a partition of narrow, horizontal wood pieces suggestive of grooved siding. This "siding" is also used for the store's long side walls, with display racks slotted in the grooves. An ivy and flower-light frieze (the irregularly bent conduit connecting the wall sconces reminded Fred Allred, the proprietor, of ivy) runs around the interior of the store.

A new alcove at the rear, formerly an office, was recently incorporated into the retail space. The ceiling of the addition is glass, set into a grid that exposes the mechanical system. An installation-in-progress by artist Jack Massing promises to transform the ductwork-crossed plenum above into a glass-bottomed boat of kinetic curiosities – climbing gorillas, flashing lights, spinning pinwheels, a tiny putting green, a toy caboose blown back and forth by oscillating fans.

The Cotton Club for Men, 1956-A West Gray, by Swan & Swan Design with Deborah Laurel (1985), reflects a somewhat minimalist approach to store design such as seen at Issey Miyake in London and New York, to which owner Terrell Swan has added a distinctive regional overlay. He calls the overall effect "Japanese western," although

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Allrecords. Alcove ceiling installation by Jack Massing.

© 1989 Paul Hester, Houston

Allrecords. Cherubic column, ivy conduit, and "curtain" wall.

"country eastern" might apply with equal precision.

The sense of height, openness, and light, coming both from skylights and the front window, makes this shoe box seem much larger than it actually is. The window on the street is left without display most of the time. The shop interior, which becomes the display, uses the materials that are part of the minimalist trend – concrete, warm wood, pipe shelving and racks. The floor is concrete and unfinished pine planks. One wall is exposed brick. The built objects are a concrete sofa, two bunkerlike display areas along the central axis (accented by industrial wireglass skylights above the double-height space), and a glass checkout counter, with carefully broken edges, near the entry. Pipe shelving and racks are used for display around the periphery. Regional touches include a neon cowboy lassoing a star-shaped clock placed above the entry door, cowhide cushions on the concrete sofa, and (two-ply) screen doors on the dressing rooms. ■

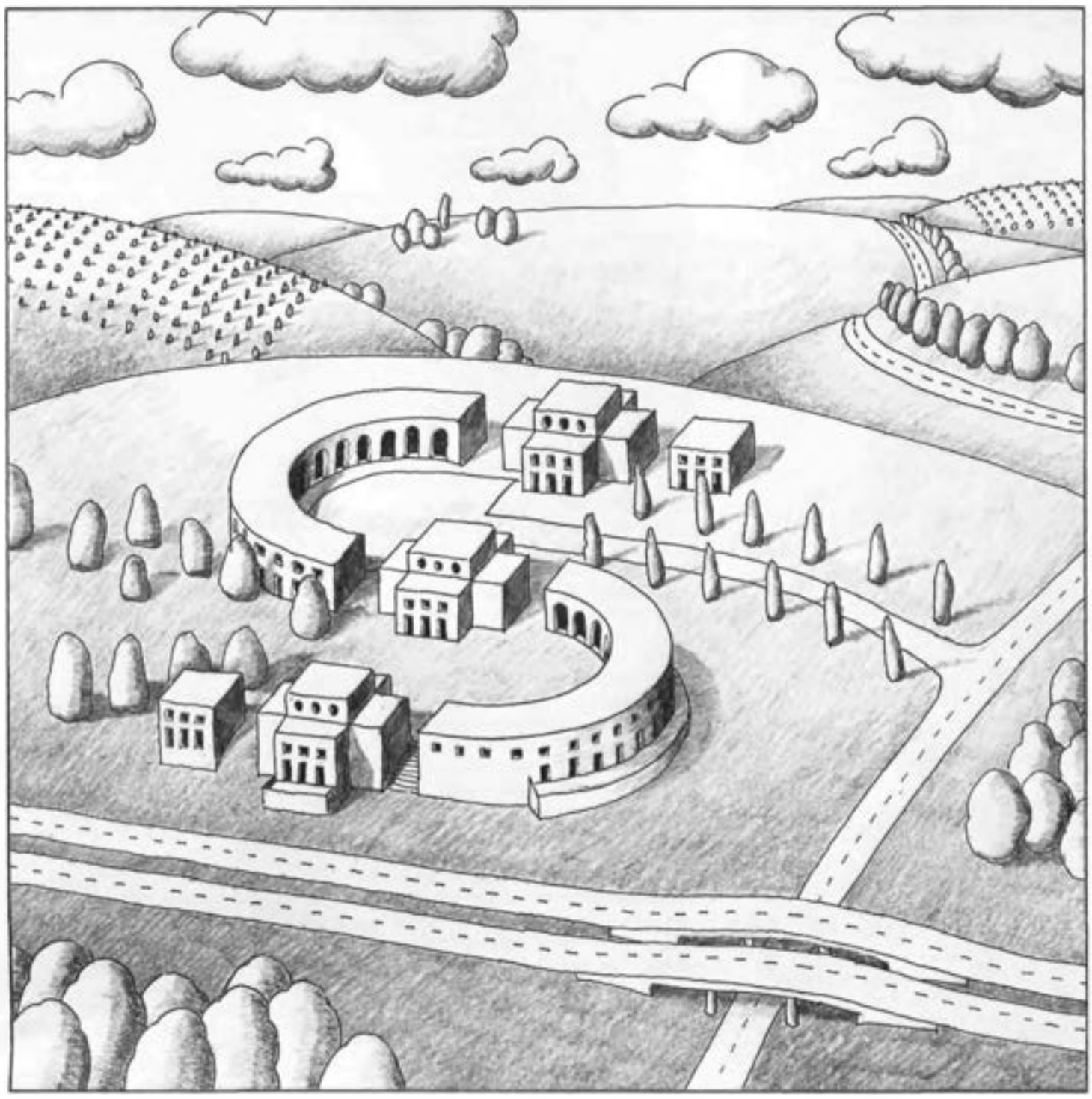
Pinstripe Paradigms

Architecture and the Corporation: The Creative Intersection, *by Thomas Walton. Studies of the Modern Corporation, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University. New York: Macmillan, 1988. 218 pp., $29.95*

Reviewed by Jeffrey L. Meikle

Recent observers of American business have emphasized "quality" and "excellence" when confronting the problem of aggressive foreign corporations. The drive to rejuvenate American capitalism initially focused on emulating the success of the competition. Quality experts advised imitating the Japanese by developing "just-in-time" manufacturing systems or by increasing worker loyalty; they encouraged imitating the Europeans by adopting long-term product-oriented management strategies in place of a typically American obsession with abstract short-term profit-and-loss statements. More recently, however, business advisers have focused on the product itself, on the attractiveness and function of its design, rather than on the process by which it is manufactured. Thomas J. Peters, one of the first promoters of quality (*In Search of Excellence*, 1982), devoted considerable attention to product design in his followup bestseller, *Thriving on Chaos* (1987). The message that design sells products, a maxim widely accepted during another era of intense business competition, the Great Depression, has been brought home in the past couple of years by major articles in *Forbes* and *Business Week*, a design column in the *Wall Street Journal*, books by Christopher Lorenz (*The Design Dimension*, 1986) and Peter Gorb (*Design Talks!*, 1988), and reports from several design organizations funded partially by the National Endowment for the Arts' Design Arts Program and partially by corporate grants. As a result, business executives and managers have become more aware of product design as a force that not only motivates consumers at point-of-purchase but also shapes the general image of a company, builds employees' perceptions of corporate culture, and contributes to the overall potential of everyday life. Although contemporary accounts of design and business often describe a continuum running from graphics to products, from exhibitions to interiors, from individual buildings to the built environment in general, most actually focus on product design to the exclusion of everything else. Addressing this imbalance, Thomas Walton, a professor of architecture and planning at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., has produced an extensively documented study devoted to the use of architecture as a tool for business success.

Architecture and the Corporation is directed at executives and managers responsible for initiating and supervising design and construction of corporate facilities. The sloganeering subtitle – *The Creative Intersection* – links the book to the current genre of promotional works aimed at boosting American competitiveness and productivity. Walton flatters executives by referring to them as "archons" (from the Greek word for the chief magistrate of ancient Athens) and by comparing them to such patrons as the Gonzaga of Mantua or the Medici of Florence. He implies that the corporation bears primary responsibility for the welfare of contemporary society and suggests that an enlightened age of aesthetic harmony, based on the collaboration of archon and architect, is at hand. Some readers, especially architects but also businessmen who have grown weary of the "excellence" genre, will be put off by this appeal to executive vanity. That would be a shame. *Architecture and the Corporation* presents a series of detailed case studies whose



Drawing by Danny Samuels

lucid explication reveals pragmatic techniques for the successful application of architecture in the business sector. Avoiding undocumented random anecdotes organized by theme (the stock-in-trade of self-help books since Dale Carnegie), Walton offers primary research and scholarly analysis. Businessmen may have more to learn from Walton than do architects, most of whom are willing to compromise and collaborate. But for the executive whose knowledge of architecture is limited to an admiration of Frank Lloyd Wright (or to an avant-garde appreciation of Peter Eisenman or Frank Gehry), Walton's case studies should prove indispensable when contemplating a new headquarters or the expansion of an old plant.

Before introducing the volume's five case studies, Walton devotes two chapters to a preliminary statement of his major findings. The first, "The Rationale for Rational Design," explores the benefits to be derived from good architecture. In his opinion, even an executive with little experience in construction should expect the design of a headquarters building, factory, or research center to yield two benefits: an increase in corporate prestige among business contacts and the general public, and a good return on investment. But Walton maintains that architecture can do far more for a company. An appealing work environment increases productivity, especially among educated white-collar workers trained to be sensitive to their surroundings. By its spatial arrangements a building can reinforce or reshape the patterns of human interaction that make up corporate culture. A building may also respect lifestyle preferences or employee values at no additional cost and thus contribute to the satisfaction of workers on the job. Awareness of such technical factors as appropriate materials selection, passive and active energy conservation, and efficient project management leads to effective cost control. Architects and executives with a sense of planning flexibility can ensure that a structure remain usable long after its original function has disappeared. Finally, corporate architecture can fulfill a sense of social responsibility by maintaining a sensitive relationship to the environmental, urban, and human contexts in which it is placed. As developed by Walton, this last point rarely goes beyond the sentiment that what's good for business is good for America; the unit of concern here is the individual corporation competing with others for the business and goodwill of the public.

While Walton's first chapter describes the benefits to be gained from adopting architecture as a business tool, his second summarizes methods for doing so. The four "Maxims to Maximize Results" suggest how to approach the following crucial processes: 1) integrating the diverse perspectives of all the people with a stake in the design process – managers, employees, and architects; 2) orchestrating the roles of the various active participants in the design process, both in house and outside; 3) identifying from among the welter of opposing claims and viewpoints those points whose resolutions are crucial to the success of a project; and 4) rationally managing the plurality of sometimes conflicting opinions to create consensus decisions acceptable to all participants.

After stating his rationale and maxims with logical clarity, Walton demonstrates their relevance with five case studies – the heart of the book. He has carefully chosen the corporations and their architectural projects to portray a diversity of companies and building types. The projects encompass two corporate headquarters of vastly different scale, a chemical company's urban office tower (Hercules) and a loan company's villagelike campus in a rural setting (Beneficial). Industrial facilities include a manufacturing plant for a small company with a longstanding interest in "good design" (Herman Miller), an engineering center for a major aircraft company whose successful excursion into "good architecture" subsequently frightened it back into aesthetic invisibility (Lockheed), and two projects for a conglomerate whose major concern is cost effectiveness (United Technologies). Although Walton writes with his paradigm and maxims occasionally too much in view, his narratives accurately portray the frequent clashes and compromises that occur in any large building project. Based on in-house documents and interviews with a host of participants, supplemented by articles in trade journals and business magazines, the case studies are utterly convincing. While not as dramatically realized as the interaction among client, architect, and contractor portrayed by Tracy Kidder in *House* (1985), Walton's narratives of more complex situations name names, assign praise and blame, and probe beneath the promotional surfaces over which a lesser analyst might have skimmed. The overall impact, however, is not quite what the author intended. Dedicated to an honest presentation of the facts, he finds that solutions that seem successful after the fact often actually occurred fortuitously. Each project reveals numerous errors of judgment, many of which could not have been avoided. Chance and hindsight are more important than Walton would like to admit, and his book, as a result, cannot go beyond suggesting to corporate executives how to get started and what to do when things inevitably go wrong.

Architecture and the Corporation, despite its too fashionable, somewhat superficial adoption of "excellence" rhetoric, should prove an indispensable guide to executives and managers unfamiliar with the design and construction processes. Even those who have already successfully directed the evolution of corporate architecture will find it a helpful, rationally organized checklist of procedures and, through its case studies, a guide to flexible modification of that checklist. Architects, on the other hand, may find Walton's message sobering. J. Robert Hillier, whose firm drew up plans for the Beneficial headquarters, observed afterward: "'I don't think of us as creators, but rather as translators of a client's ideas. When a project is completed, it stands as monument to the client, not to us'" (p. 104). Few architects would disagree with this concept, at least as mildly stated by Hillier. In most of Walton's accounts, however, the architect nearly vanishes among a welter of in-house project managers, outside construction managers, design auditors, engineers, cost accountants, technical consultants, subsidiary contractors, and so on. Perhaps the wife of the company's president no longer settles design matters, but neither does the architect, and in fact Walton advises using an experienced construction manager rather than an architect on projects in which time and money are more important than "human and aesthetic concerns" (pp. 186-87). Ultimately, then, his title is misleading. His book is a guide to the process of effectively creating corporate architecture, but the architect's influence bears little comparison to that of the archon. ■

A Brooding Peninsular Light

Erik Gunnar Asplund: Buildings and Projects, 1917-1940
Farish Gallery, Rice University
27 March – 23 April 1989

Reviewed by Carlos Jimenez

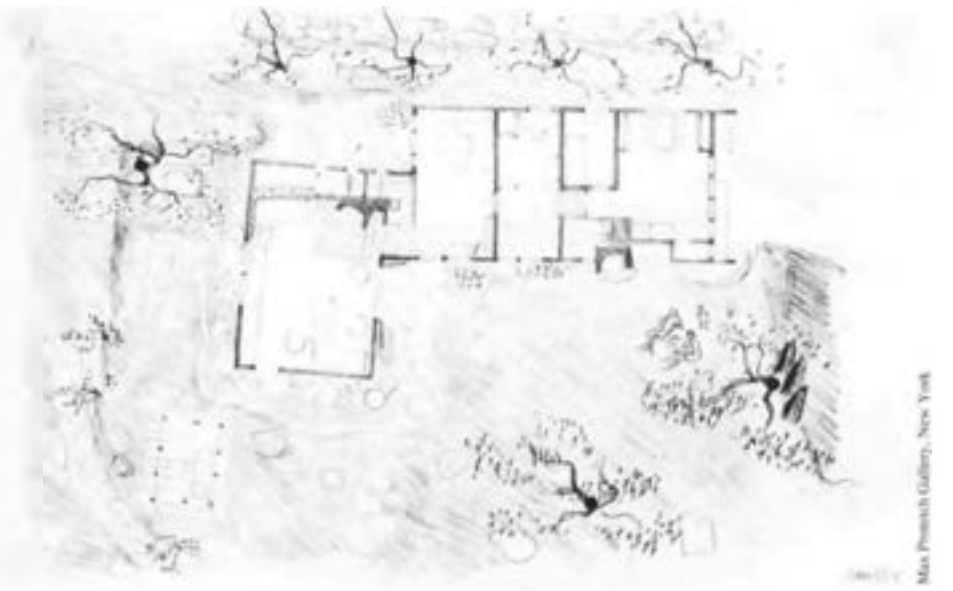
Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940) possessed "a craving for the truth, clarity, absolute genuineness, and self-criticism," in the words of his friend, the architect and writer Hakon Ahlberg. These traits seem to exude from his drawings, 89 of which were exhibited this spring at the Farish Gallery, Rice University. Assembled from the Asplund estate by the Max Protech Gallery, New York, in 1984 and 1988, and lent to Rice by Protech and various collections, they reveal an artist of great lucidity engaged in ceaseless exploration and wonderment.

Working entirely in his native Sweden, Asplund's career extended from Scandinavian neoclassicism to the advent of Modernism. His work spanned a diversity of building types, from modest cottages to intricate villas, from schools to a library, law courts, a department store, and worker housing, from a solitary chapel in the forest to the consummate beauty of his last project at the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm. He and Finland's Alvar Aalto, whose work he influenced, are the great Scandinavian architects of this century.

Asplund's singularity emanates from a refined sensibility toward the great and simple themes of human experience. Architecture for Asplund was the means by which to bridge these themes, capture their presence, and at times celebrate them. His work did not linger on the sentimentality of place but rather on the discovery of a place, aiming to reconcile and make apparent the particular emotional undercurrent of an idea and its effect on that place. Grand utopian fervors or the dicta of functionalism were not the impulses of his work. Instead he was guided by an understanding of the connection between nature and human emotions, the transitions between the old and the new, and the infusion of the tangible with the spiritual. As Ahlberg reminds us, "He had an ability to blow a fresh life and spirit into his work such as none of his contemporaries perhaps possessed." Yet this ability was the result not of virtuosity, but rather of painstaking dedication.

The Farish Gallery installation, rendered in patriotic blue and yellow, reminds one that Asplund could not have existed without Sweden and its brooding peninsular light. In his work he sought to craft this light into his buildings, as if he wanted to contain not only light itself but also the magnitude of an interior sky. The Stockholm Public Library and the Woodland Cemetery chapels and loggias attest to his depth of feeling in achieving this. At the same time, the Skandia Cinema drawings demonstrate that he could playfully turn this internal sky into a blue and red canopy hovering above enfiladed seats. The blue vault defines the cinema as a world within a world, and the building itself as a space where one awaits the screen's unwinding spell.

The Göteborg Law Courts Addition drawings recall this influential project's prolonged gestation. Confronted with the necessity of adding to a neoclassical building, Asplund sought the solution through struggle and endless revisions over a period of 25 years. The result is an ingenious integration of spatial relationships in which each element has found its exact placement. The existing and the new plans interlock while composing a complex and poetic sectional whole. The quiet repose of the courtyard and its view to the sky, the sensuality of a glass drinking fountain adhering to the wall, an implacable clock overlooking the staircases, and light – perennial witness – brightening the wooden panels: all in unison make evident Asplund's patient refinement and pursuit of lyrical detail.



Summer house, Sononda. Site plan, 1937.

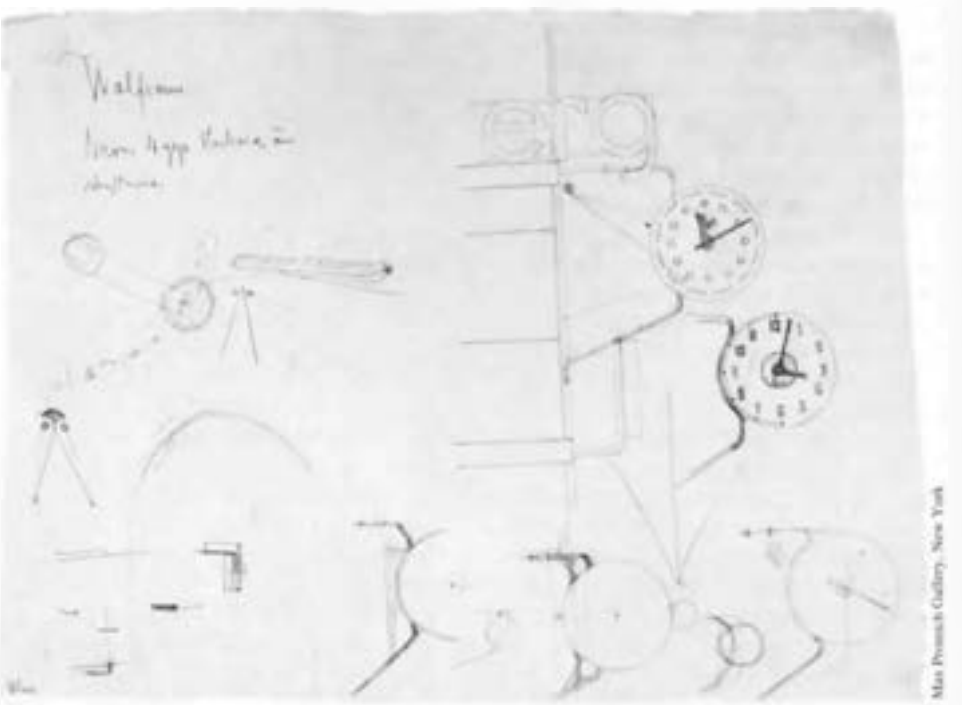
In contrast, the drawings for the Stockholm Exhibition buildings and grounds (several rendered by Rudolph Perssan with confident, bright colors) display an ease and an immediate grasp of a concept and its realization. The temporary nature of that exhibition appears to have furnished Asplund with a tabula rasa on which to project a vibrant vision of the future. Sweeping canopies, bands of glass, and a profusion of multicolored flags herald an optimism about things to come. The constructivist assemblage of buildings, redolent of functionalism, does not suffer the fate of similar projects but rather establishes a strong relationship with the site, achiev- ing an urban scale through the articula- tion of promenades, streets, and gathering spaces joined by continuous buildings.

One of the most gratifying aspects of the Farish Gallery exhibition was the opportunity to see Asplund's hand tracing his thoughts, a process apparent in various sketches and drawings but fully manifest in four of them. Drawings reveal the temperament of the hand, the shadows of emotion, the physical gesture in space. In drawings, architecture is a history of hands. Whether through the piercing precision of a line by Mies, the ethereal shades of Kahn, or the jagged lyricism of Alvaro de Siza's scrawls, this lineage of hands brings us in direct contact with the architect's underlying faith. The four Asplund drawings are each imbued with his faith, at times suggested by a mere wave of graphite as it encompasses space and light, at times manifest in an ink line's intensity as it fuses building with site.

The drawings of the summer house on the island of Sononda (1937) situate the house in rhythmic counterpoint with the surrounding trees. Site and plan become one as pencil textures and tonalities merge. The unexpected turn of the living room, pivoting from a hingelike fireplace toward the water, and the various changes in grade further emphasize the integra- tion. Views and open courts create stations from which to glimpse the nearby sloping fields or the archipelago beyond. In the 1933 drawing "Houseboat for an Artist," the delicately drawn structure hovers almost weightless above the boat's main body. Transparency and minimal detailing of the construction combine with ele-ments of ground, water, and air. Floating serenely on a plinth of water, the house casts its flag to the wind, while a railing sketch recalls the contouring bridge.

The courtroom chair sketch for the Göteborg Law Courts Addition (1935) is a window on itself. Through an enlarged armrest, the viewer enters the chair's world. Plan, structure, texture, and section render the chair complete. A study in scale and tactility results: the shadowed contours of the armrest invite one to feel its wood, gather its grain, encircle it in space. Similarly, the sketches of the exterior clock for the Bredenberg Department Store (1933) describe the duration and evolution of the clock's making and simultaneously delineate another world. A journey moves counterclockwise as one follows the gradual emergence of the clock and its bracketing to the wall. In a dance of structure and gravity, the clock is fixed beneath the building's signage; in its own time frame, Asplund's hand stops, erases, remembers, and begins again.

What Asplund's work ultimately affirms is that genuine architecture is achieved through clarifying the place and making palpable the spirit of that place. The forms and materials of the Sononda House, the luminous Stockholm Library, or the Woodland chapels and paths are not the sum of his architecture. They are only the means of establishing a realm of emotional amplitudes that the drawings in this exhibition delineate. They declare not only the self-awareness of the architect in his search, but also the unfolding of his silent faith. ■



Bredenberg Department Store, Stockholm. Studies for clock, 1933.

Houston From A to Z-Word

Free Enterprise City: Houston in Political and Economic Perspective. *by Joe R. Feagin. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988, 313 pp., cloth $36.00, paper $12.95*

Reviewed by John Mixon

Free Enterprise City is required reading for Houstonians who want to keep up with cocktail talk over the next year or learn why the city lacks zoning, denies that poor and homeless people live within its rotting core, and makes a religion out of unencumbered free enterprise. Reading the book requires advance preparation, though. First, the reader must forget about *Lonesome Dove*, because *Free Enterprise City*'s less lovable characters are dryly and technically described, not developed as personalities. Second, skip pages 14-42, or even better 14-48, unless you are a sociology student or just love reading graduate theses that paraphrase prior publications to prove that they were read. Third, memorize the definition of *palimpsest* and make a game out of figuring out why the author uses it.

When it gets down to business, *Free Enterprise City* does a businesslike job of describing how Houston was begun by hucksters, handed over to businessmen, and run by a corporate clique out of the late Lamar Hotel's Suite 8F from the 1930s to the 1960s. The names are familiar: Jesse H. Jones, James A. Elkins, Sr., George and Herman Brown, Gus Wortham, and James Abercrombie. From Suite 8F, these power brokers made the decisions, formed the committees, picked the mayors, fired the mayors, and sometimes shared power with presidents as they played Monopoly with their community, scarcely perceiving any conflict between the public interest and their own. Hugh Roy Cullen and Glenn McCarthy were better known to outsiders, but they were far too flashy to participate in Suite talk. Make no mistake about it, Houston's early business elite were good at business. Whether they were equally good at running a city, and whether the city they created is worth living in, is less clear in Feagin's estimation.

Houston's entrepreneurs were never afraid of government. From the beginning, they manipulated governmental power to advance their own business interests. At a local level, they used tax money to bail out flooded subdivisions and to provide water and sewers for private developments. At the same time they pulled a steady flow of federal dollars to fund the ship channel, Ellington Field, and the Johnson Space Center. Government's more traditional role, that of regulating development and providing a public service infrastructure, was a different matter. These functions could be downright dangerous if placed in the hand of voters.

Following the business model, Houston's public planning (an oxymoron?) is privately produced, not publicly sponsored. As chief planner, the Houston Chamber of Commerce has spun out plans for air pollution (a 1945 report said not to worry), flood control, surface water supplies, traffic, airports, and home-rule annexation to ensure that Houston can spread infinitely outward. Privatized planning is shrewdly farmed out to those firms that are likely to provide the ultimate service. For example, Browning-Ferris was hired to plan the city's waste disposal, and an unnamed engineering firm described as "the other public works department" takes care of water and sewer planning.

Land-use planning is left to private developers who decide unilaterally where the next subdivision or office tower will spring up. Privatization now covers parkway planning as well, with private organizations busily assembling land for the next ones, all without significant public input.

Both the Suite 8F gang and the suite itself are gone now, but their influence lives on. Houston's current mayor, while not a good old boy, runs the city like a business and leaves the developers alone. In the public-private partnership the city is still junior partner, and its clear purpose is to serve business.

How has Free Enterprise City turned out? Real estate development has been Houston's hallmark from the beginning; so, predictably, Feagin chronicles the sprouting of high-rises and smelly industries from boom times to bad times, summing it up with the observation that "For what would seem to be sophisticated business, real estate is awfully unsophisticated. It's done by feel or by stomach." When the price of oil plummeted 32 percent, a billion-dollar bellyache was therefore inevitable.

Judged by the 1980s, Houston's oil-based businesses didn't do too well at business. They may have done even worse at running the city that the Suite 8F crowd willed to them. Putting business first meant that during 30 years of boom growth, the subservient city government delayed or ignored its enormous infrastructure needs until crisis time. The crisis is now, and Feagin sees impending disaster from toxic waste, water pollution, untreated sewage, subsidence, crumbling streets, and an immobile transportation system. He indicts the city for conspiring with its behind-the-scenes bosses to dump the social costs of unrestrained private development on the citizens by keeping taxes and services at the minimum survival level preferred by the barons of business. Even though some in the business community now acknowledge a problem, their most visible response is "Houston Proud" boosterism and no new taxes.

Feagin notes that Houston's public neglect has hit minority areas the hardest. In the early days, of course, minorities were excluded from both business and governmental power. Accordingly, the city took little account of them, except for an early zoning proposal to set aside three districts for black housing. Lack of political power also ensured that minority areas would be poorly served by utilities and other urban niceties. Highway planning, though, was easy from 8F: simply find a direct route through a black neighborhood and build a freeway.

Feagin's book holds little new for anyone who has read Houston newspapers for the past 40 years, but it should enlighten newcomers and youngsters. In closing, Feagin suggests that a new awakening among citizens may shift the balance of power. I disagree. I don't see how anyone in this century can pry Free Enterprise City away from the ghosts who continue to haunt us from Suite 8F. Just ask anyone who dares whisper the word *zoning* in public. ■

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