Houston's Hypermarkets

The Houston Conventions, 1928 and 1992

Vito Acconci's Proposal for Autry Park

Zoning Houston: A Guide

The Rice Hotel

An Interview With Landscape Designer C. C. Pat Fleming

Bruce Goff/Bart Prince's Pavilion for Japanese Art in Los Angeles

InCite

COVER New houses by five Houston architects. *Clockwise from top:* Finnel House, Wittenberg Partnership; Chadwick House, Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio; Wetcher House, Peter Waldman Architect; Stern House, William F. Stern & Associates, Architects; Schiebl House, Val Glitsch Architect. See article by Mark Wamble, page 41.

Cite

THE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN REVIEW OF HOUSTON

A PUBLICATION OF THE RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE

29: FALL 1992–WINTER 1993

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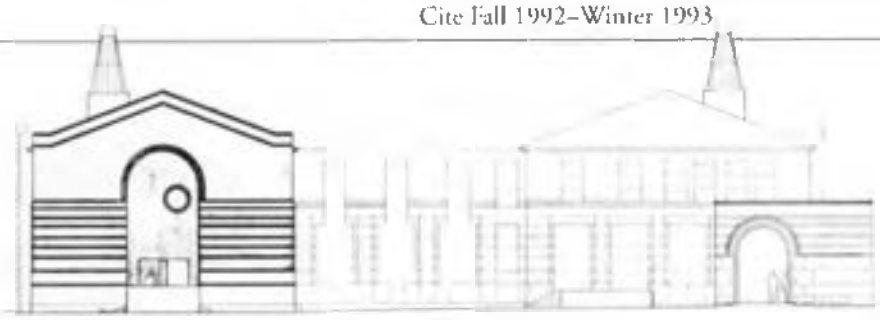
The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture and design.

Stirling Example

I've always been a designer with…eclectic tendencies. JAMES STIRLING, 1980



James Stirling, who with his longtime partner Michael Wilford designed the additions to and renovation of the School of Architecture at Rice University, died unexpectedly last summer in London at the age of 66. The School of Architecture is perhaps the most unassuming project of their joint practice and, by now, also the best-known building (or part thereof) on campus. The nonspecific gravity and extreme, figure-in-the-carpet modesty with which it accommodates Rice's "1920s… sort of Venetian, Florentine, Art Deco" ambience (Stirling's categorization) left Philip Johnson peering from the window of his limousine in mock bewilderment: "I came to see Jim's building but couldn't find it." Just so, the partners' Zelig-like performance was commended by Colin Rowe (acknowledged by Stirling in 1980 to be "my teacher *then* as *now*"), who took godfatherly pride in his pupil's "great discretion" in assimilating the Beaux-Arts strategies of the campus's original architects, Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson.

While exceptionally modest for architects of Stirling and Wilford's standing, the Rice project (1979–81) was their first to be built in the United States. Its conception was no doubt facilitated by Wilford's familiarity with the school and its building, the expansion of which he had assigned as a semester-long studio project while a visiting critic in spring 1979. To Stirling, the notion that "it may be difficult to distinguish the façades of the new building from the [pre-]existing ones" or that the design might be "uncharacteristically quiet or conventional" merely served to define one pole of an "eclectic" practice that reserved the right to "oscillate," in his words, "between the most 'abstract' modern (even high-tech)…and the obviously 'representational,' even traditional." If this capacity revealed itself more directly in the partnership's later work, it did so, he suggested in his dedicatory remarks at Rice, not only in response to society's "return to the more ancient desire for buildings whose primary objective is to appear appropriate in their context," but also because "for many of us working with the abstract language of modern architecture, Bauhaus, International Style, call it what you will, this language has become repetitive, simplistic, and too narrowly confining."

Stirling went on to say, "I, for one, welcome the passing of the revolutionary phase of the modern movement and look forward to a more liberal future producing work perhaps richer in memory and association." This willingness to move beyond fixed positions in anticipation of a less clearly defined but more liberal synthesis is also evident in the premodernist speculations of Bertram Goodhue (Ralph Adams Cram's prodigiously eclectic though silent partner at Rice), who ventured in 1905 that "it is probable that we shall never again have a distinctive style, but what I hope and believe we shall someday possess is something…so flexible that it can be made to meet every practical and constructive need, so beautiful and complete as to harmonize the heretofore discordant notes of Art and Science, and to challenge comparison with the wonders of past ages."

Stirling and Wilford's L-shaped addition of the Brochstein Wing to M. D. Anderson Hall, Staub & Rather's architecture and general classroom building of 1946–47, conforms to the footprint specified in Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson's General Plan of 1910. But its severe, round-arched principal (north) elevation, which terminates in a *risalit* borrowed from Staub & Rather's otherwise underscaled and little-distinguished original, looks beyond the first architecture of the campus to the more abstracted work of Goodhue's post-Rice career. The most striking of these correspondences is to the U.S. Marine Corps Base at San Diego (1918), a rendering of which suggests a hipped-roof, stripped Beaux-Arts accommodation of the round-arched modernity of Irving Gill at La Jolla and Oceanside. With similar if inadvertent congruence, the double-height gallery windows proposed by Stirling and Wilford for the renovation of the west elevation of Staub and Rather's building (but deleted at the last moment as a cost-saving measure) recall the telescoped apertures of one of Frank Lloyd Wright's elevations for the Albert M. Johnson House in Death Valley, California, 1921 – a project that went unbuilt but also aligns with "the limited period of Frank Lloyd Wright's production…of the concrete block houses around Los Angeles" that Stirling had found particularly impressive on one of his excursions outside New Haven while a visiting professor at Yale.

The low-key, uncanny *déjà vu* of Stirling and Wilford's retrospective interpolation for Rice's "eccentric but elegant campus…[of] arcades…and fancy spires" was relieved of its anonymity only by discreet flourishes here and there. A pair of conical glass-and-aluminum lanterns rose above the roof line to mark either end of the concourse connecting the old and new parts of the building (a device that was subsequently proposed, but discarded, as a means of emphasizing the rounded corner of the design for the expansion of the Fogg Museum). An offset bull's-eye window was introduced as a sectional clef floating within a two-story, essentially liminal "arch" that activated the otherwise blank, narrow west end elevation of the new wing. (A canopy of neoconstructivist inclination was also proposed as a signal embellishment for the new streetside entrance to the concourse, but it, like the telescoped, double-height windows intended for the gallery, was said to have fallen victim to budgetary imperatives.)

The firmness and commodity of the building were also constrained by budgetary considerations. Stirling confided at an all-school lecture that the fiscally induced use of Sheetrocked air pockets for *pochè* at Rice, in contrast to the ruin-conscious enthusiasm for pourable rubble he had encountered in the building of the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1977–83), made him hesitant to lean against most upright surfaces. A cost-saving experiment with decentralized air conditioning for the studios, bureaucratically mandated at the height of the energy crisis, imposed units that proved noisy and difficult to manage. But at a more fundamental level, where good sense could be demonstrated to cost no more, the architects' seamless, atelierlike organization of the building yielded a scale and particularity that succeeded in promoting the unfrilled but clublike domesticity that Stirling remarked at the dedication as vital to the special demands and spirit of architectural education. Overall, the result was, as Paul Goldberger discerned in the *New York Times*, a work of "visual pleasure,…quirky and warm and affectionate, taking the older building's themes and giving them a kind of life that they never before had."

It is regrettable that, having attended so famously (and frugally) to the needs of the School of Architecture, Stirling and Wilford were not rewarded with a more substantial commission at Rice. Ampler American projects did however follow at Harvard (the Sackler addition to the Fogg Museum, 1979–85), Cornell (Performing Arts Center, 1982–88), and the University of California at Irvine (Science Library, 1988–93). But even now it should be possible for Rice to show a less stinting regard for the architects' intentions for the building itself, beginning with the double-height fenestration prescribed for the west elevation of the Farish Gallery. The "shocking" colors that initially brightened the walls of the studio corridors could easily be reintroduced (as a surreptitious student initiative briefly succeeded in effecting several years ago) and the janitorially correct brown flooring that muddies the concourse and gallery be replaced with something more congenial from the architects' customary palette. The Smith Court, which Stirling envisioned as "a sheltered garden in an otherwise very open campus," still awaits a suitable complement of chairs and plantings. It might even be possible to fabricate and install the steel-and-glass canopy the architects had initially proposed to mark the building's ceremonial streetside entrance. James Stirling was not one to stand on ceremony, but it seems only proper that Rice should at last accord its own small fragment of his outsized genius a fuller measure of respect.

Drexel Turner

***Top:* James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates, additions and renovations to M. D. Anderson Hall, Rice University, 1979–81. West elevation. *Above:* Frank Lloyd Wright, Albert M. Johnson House, Death Valley, California (project), 1921. Partial elevation.**

***Left:* Bertram G. Goodhue, U.S. Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California, 1918. Perspective rendering. *Below:* Stirling, Wilford & Associates, Brochstein Wing, M. D. Anderson Hall. North elevation.**

Citelines

Heart of the Park Design Competition Winners Announced at 1992 RDA Gala

Heart of the Park winning entry by the Houston team of Melton Henry/ Maurice Robison, Architects Inc.; Peter Brown, Architects/ Planners; and Scott Slaney and Steve Harding.

Chosen by a national jury from a field of 117 entries, the Houston team of Melton Henry/ Maurice Robison, Architects Inc.; Peter Brown, Architects/Planners; and Scott Slaney and Steve Harding, landscape and graphics experts, respectively, were named first-place winners of the Heart of the Park Design Competition at the RDA Heart of the Park Ball on 13 November 1992. The gala, chaired by Susan Criner and Katherine Miller, was held at the Wyndham Warwick hotel, where the jury had met on 12 and 13 November to make their unanimous selection. The winners receive a $15,000 prize as well as architectural fees for the project.

The competition was dedicated to the memory of O. Jack Mitchell, former dean of the Rice School of Architecture and an advocate of public spaces. Carolyn Mitchell, accompanied by sons Jay and Mark, announced the winners. Second place and $7,500 went to Jon Emerson of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with James Burnett, Dale Busfield, Jack Hanna, and Heather Heimarck of Houston. The third-place prize of $5,000 went to SLA Studio Land Inc., Houston, and Lake/Flato Architects, San Antonio. Fourth place and $2,500 went to a team from Kansas State University headed by Stephanie Rolley and including Amy Ackerman, Alton Barnes, Eric Hornig, Jason Jones, and Craig Rhodes.

Also honored that evening were members of the family of Lucie Halm and J. S. Cullinan. Cullinan, the founder of Texaco, prevailed upon the city of Houston to hire George E. Kessler of St. Louis, one of the foremost American landscape architects and city planners of the period, to design Hermann Park and the Main Boulevard parkway, today recognized as Houston's most beautiful landscaped civic spaces. Cullinan's descendants have likewise supported nature conservation and park planning. Patsy Cravens accepted the RDA Award for Design Excellence, a Steuben bowl donated by Neiman Marcus, for her mother, Mary Cravens, the daughter of Lucie Halm and J. S. Cullinan.

The design competition was organized by the Rice Design Alliance in cooperation with the Friends of Hermann Park and the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department. The Friends of Hermann Park have organized a strong steering committee, chaired by Barbara Hurwitz, to raise the $4 million required to build the winning design.

The RDA would like to thank competition chairpersons Barrie Scardino and Jay Baker, gala chairwomen Susan Criner and Katherine Miller, underwriting chairman Scott Ziegler, auction chairwomen Clarisse Burns and Jean LeFevre, environment chairman Rob Civitello, and all the many volunteers who helped make the Heart of the Park a success.

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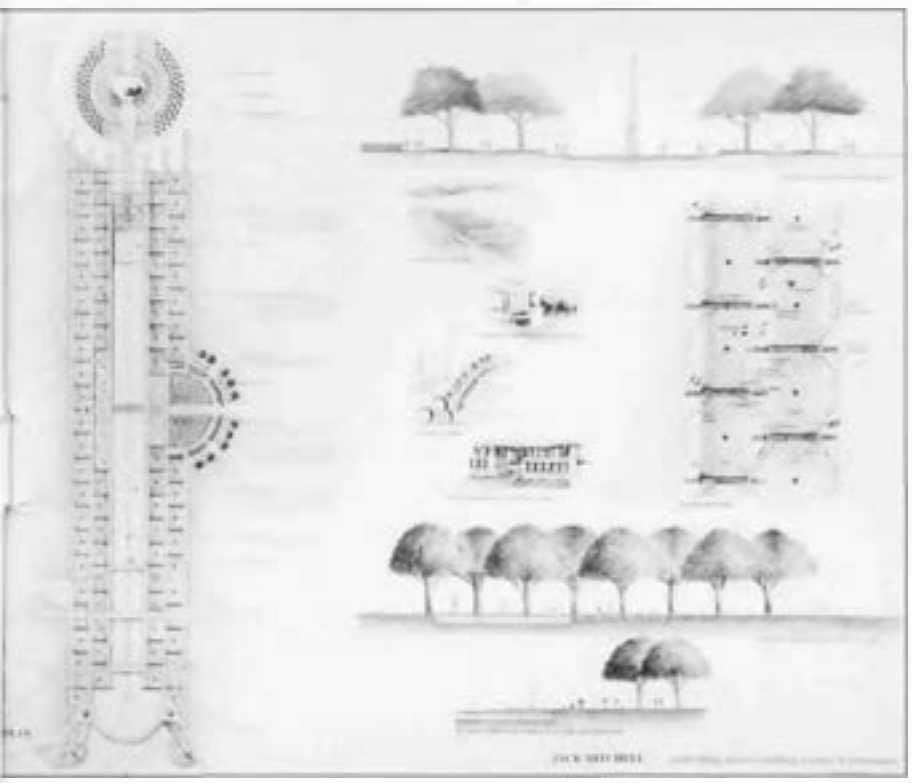

Silent Auction Contributors

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The Acute Catering Company
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The Alley Theatre
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Kyle E. Young, Artist

Below, left to right:
Gala co-chair Susan Criner, RDA vice-president Barrie Scardino, RDA president Jay Baker, and gala co-chair Katherine Miller.

Phyllis Hand

RDA Winter-Spring Architectural Events

For more information, call the Rice Design Alliance, (713) 524-6297

Architecture in the Cause of the Environment
27 January 1993, 6 p.m to 8 p.m., Room 301, Sewall Hall, Rice University. Tickets $5; students $3. Limited seating, paid reservations required.
A Fireside Chat organized to look at the broad implications of changing resources and the impact of environmental issues on building design. Participants will discuss how design professionals and individuals can better address the question of architecture's relationship to the environment.

Spring Lecture Series
The Idea in Design
We are constantly confronted with all kinds of images, from the cars we drive to the computers we operate. Consciously or not, we are affected by the way we perceive the products we use, and our perceptions are tempered by the way these products are visually represented, marketed, and sold. This series will explore the role design plays in everyday life. *All lectures held in the Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 8 p.m.*

3 March – Dianne Pilgrim, director, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution.
10 March – Truman Pollard, chief designer for Mazda Corporation.
17 March – Robert Brunner, head of Apple Computer Industrial Design Group.
24 March – Stephen Doyle, creative director, Drenttel Doyle Partners.
31 March – Ralph Caplan, contributing editor of *International Design* magazine and communications design consultant.

24–25 April 1993
Annual RDA Architecture Tour.

The Neuhaus Fountain

On 17 September 1992, through a bequest of the late architect and philanthropist Hugo Victor Neuhaus, Jr., the city of Houston received as a gift a peaceful refuge marking the juncture between the corporate downtown landscape and Houston's origins along Buffalo Bayou. The Neuhaus Fountain, dedicated to the memory of his parents, Hugo Victor Neuhaus, Sr., and Kate Rice Neuhaus, reflects Neuhaus's lifelong commitment to the cultural life of the city. His vision was realized through the efforts of his wife, Olive, who organized the project and worked with the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department and the Municipal Arts Council over a complicated and lengthy period of site selection and project review. During this two-to-three-year period, several early site suggestions were rejected in favor of the current site in Sam Houston Park, just west of the original "hilltop" location of the old Central Fire Alarm Building.

More an environment than a monument, the fountain consists of a spring spilling into a quiet, granite-lined pool within a grove of bald cypress and river birch. Layered wall-seating and smooth individual slabs of the same granite are interspersed with weather-worn boulders drifting from the stream down a swale toward Buffalo Bayou. Three bronze coyotes by the California sculptor Gwynn Murrill inhabit the tranquil site, creating a picture of what this place may have felt like before the Allen brothers arrived. The prairie buffalo grass used throughout the site and its surroundings adds to its authenticity and sets a low-maintenance example for the city. (A lack of city park maintenance funds is currently being ameliorated by a program of corporate sponsorship, with Texaco as sponsor for Sam Houston Park.) The overall effect of the fountain, which is busy and full of realistic detail, is never simply that of a stage set for a history lesson; the selections made by the designers and the patron accomplish a metaphorical interpretation, allowing abstraction to coexist with reflections on the past.

John Cutler of the SWA Group, landscape architect for the fountain, describes the scheme as a loosened-up version of an initial circular design, affected by both the final site and the sculpture selection. Mrs. Neuhaus credits Walter Hopps of the Menil Foundation for introducing her to Murrill's work, handled locally by the Texas Gallery. The artist, formerly associated with Tony Berlant, is known for her animals (primarily canines and felines) and low reliefs that are reminiscent of ancient Egyptian animal forms, due to their "idealized" realism. In their landscape, which mediates in location and materiality between prairie and metropolis, the smooth, slightly streamlined coyotes may be just modern enough to lure a few jaded office workers down from their towers for a little splash.

Natalye Appel

Gwynn Murrill, sculptor, John Cutler, The SWA Group, landscape architect, Neuhaus Fountain, 1992.

© Paul Hester 1992

Henkel Square bandstand, Round Top, Texas, 1992.

Round Top Gazebo

In the spirit of the Bauhaus desire to restore "the lost chord between artist and the world of work,"[1] architecture students in the first-year graduate program at the University of Houston have transformed the college's atrium into a construction shop during the summer months in recent years. Two summers ago, students learned about craft traditions in the buildings of the historic Texas town of Round Top, using 19th-century construction techniques to build a storage shed.

This summer, working under the direction of Professor Robert Lindsey, students became adept at odd-angle saw cuts and crossbeam connections in the design and construction of a bandstand for Henkel Square in Round Top. Determined to create an artifact that would speak to the present, students departed from the radial frame extending from a central point found in most gazebo construction. Instead they devised a more complex, layered spatial effect overhead by overlapping a crucified framing system with a pyramidal cupola. The uplifted cupola allows light and air to flow in and back out the four open-air corners of the lower octagonal roof.

The student designers had envisioned the bandstand as "vertical punctuation" in the landscape. Prefabricated in the isolated volume of the atrium, the slender yellow pine framework defined an elegant autonomous object. But reassembled on site among the solid structures surrounding Henkel Square, the bandstand seemed to lose much of its former presence. Departing from the intentions of the students' design, a wooden fence was constructed around the curtain of the bandstand, and the cupola was covered with donated cedar shingles rather than the lighter industrial standing-seam metal roofing envisioned by the designers. For the students, with one year of architectural studies behind them, the process of bridging the vast gap between art and the realities of the built world has just begun.

Sheryl Tucker

1 Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 75.

The Domestic Project

The Domestic Project, an exhibition held at Rice University's Farish Gallery from 30 September to 8 November 1992, showcased eight houses designed by faculty members of the Rice School of Architecture. Supplemented with a catalogue discussing the projects, the exhibition displayed built and yet-to-be-built houses by the Wittenberg Partnership, Taft Architects, Lalo Robles, Peter Waldman, Pope Sherman Architects, Anderson Todd, and Jay Baker. Cocurated by Elysabeth Yates Burns McKee and Richard Ingersoll, also members of the architecture faculty at Rice, *The Domestic Project* was a collective essay on nontraditional houses in and around Houston. By virtue of their exceptional nature, the houses represent a critique of domestic architecture in the United States, containing a variety of interpretive programs in remarkably diverse forms. Moreover, the exhibition design, thoughtfully conceived of and fabricated by John Breshears, Jennifer Lucchino, and Robert Amerman, students in the School of Architecture, used scaffolding and other temporary materials to create an "under construction" context that effectively underlined the experimental nature and uniqueness of the projects.

What was most striking about the exhibition was its diversity – the variety of solutions and architectural languages brought to bear on the American house – as well as the architects' consistency in proposing a specific and directed program for domestic life in the city and suburbs. In this sense, the projects represented a collective examination of the theory and practice – the role – of architecture today.

Elysabeth Yates Burns McKee

Cuney Homes Renovation

On the other side of town from the besieged Allen Parkway Village, the Housing Authority of the City of Houston is in the first stage of a complete modernization of Cuney Homes, located on Cleburne Avenue, adjacent to Texas Southern University. Of the 50-year-old complex's 564 units, 208 are getting the kind of attention that Allen Parkway Village advocates have been trying to get for their homes. Two facets of the project, which is being directed by Bradfield, Richards & Associates Architects of Atlanta, are notable. First, in bringing the units up to standard, HACH has deemed it necessary to change the modernist (and possibly historic) architectural character of the buildings drastically by replacing all the industrial metal sash windows and doors, and adding gabled, wood-framed roofs perched on top of the modernist flat roofs. Second, the housing authority has brought in this phase of the project, which includes both architectural and site improvements, at an impressive $30,000 per unit – a figure not all that different from the prohibitive $36,500 figure of 1983–84 that the same authority used as justification to deny the viability of rehabilitating the same kind of units at Allen Parkway Village.

While the two complexes sit on properties of vastly different value and visibility, they share the same heritage. Both are examples of New Deal design of low-cost housing based on modern precepts and barrackslike massing. Cuney Homes was built in two phases, the first (1940) with Stayton Nunn & Milton McGinty as architects, the second (1942) with MacKie & Kamrath as designers for Associated Housing Architects, a consortium of 12 Houston firms. Allen Parkway Village was constructed in two phases, 1942 and 1944, to the design of Associated Housing Architects.

As a result, the second phase of Cuney Homes and Allen Parkway Village, along with a third complex, Irvinton Village, are virtually identical. The two-story multifamily apartment blocks are composed of a series of parallel load-bearing walls that run perpendicular to the building façade (allowing for strip windows across each unit), into which each family apartment is inserted. All units have front and back doors. Simple unit plans and stacking configurations and adherence to modernists precepts of building shape, fenestration, and proportion are evident throughout. The complexes are notable for their durable materials and high-quality construction. Even though all of the complexes face the hazards of lead paint and asbestos and all suffer the drawback of small apartment size, they remain structurally sound after 50 years of use.

(continued on page 8)

Cuney Homes modernization by Bradfield, Richards & Associates Architects of Atlanta, 1992.

Stayton Nunn–Milton McGinty with John F. Staub, Cuney Homes, 1940; Associated Architects of Houston, 1942.

The 1930s modernist approach to community planning also extended to the design of open spaces and communal areas. Public spaces included playgrounds and community gathering spaces, strategically grouped with community facilities. Ranks of colorful drying laundry have for 50 years been anchored to the ground by the ubiquitous metal Ts that demarcate the "back yards" of this public realm. The primacy of communal green space necessitated a remote location for parking. Although sites vary – Allen Parkway Village is twice as big as the others and has a number of distinct precincts and axes, while Cuney Homes is much more wooded – the planning approaches are the same.

The 50-year-old units at Cuney Homes have undoubtedly proved suitable for rehabilitation, as have those at Kelly Courts, Irvinton Village, and Clayton Homes. As of summer 1992, the housing authority's director of facilities and development, Ernest Etuk, forecast a first-quarter 1993 completion date for phase one at Cuney Homes. The current rehabilitation includes removal of asbestos and lead-based paints, bringing all interior fixtures, plumbing, and wiring up to code, and replacement of the units' forced-air central heating (air conditioning is not provided). In conjunction with the appearance-altering replacement of all windows and doors, the housing authority is building new gabled roofs at Cuney Homes to improve roof drainage and the "domestic" look of the place. While professional opinion varies as to the efficacy of this latter move, the now-gabled two-story barracks are eerily reminiscent of worker housing in European industrial towns at the turn of the century.

HACH has determined that modern standards and federal requirements can be met in the existing units. The floor plans are being modified as far as the structural shell will allow; maintaining the load-bearing walls, 15 feet on center at most, precludes extensive expansion of individual units. The contractors have removed the plastered partition walls and are replacing them with drywall on metal studs. The organization of the existing floor plans will remain, with the exception of increased separation of living rooms from kitchens. The load-bearing walls, impregnated with layers of lead paint, have been blasted to remove all the toxins, although Etuk notes that "deep cracks have caused problems with retained paint."

As part of the remodeling effort, 12 units of the first phase are being brought up to standards required by the Americans With Disabilities Act. These have been the most costly units to modernize, raising the cost per unit to the $30,000 range. The utility infrastructure has required extensive overhauling, a problem at all the housing authority units from this era. Completely new electrical, natural gas, city water, sewer, storm drain, and fire service lines are currently being installed.

In terms of the complex's public open spaces (the real living rooms for these often cramped apartments), the housing authority lobbied the city to relax its requirement of 1.35 parking spaces per unit to allow for more "vital green space."

The agencies involved at Cuney Homes have apparently come back to believing in the complex's original modernist organization, which still holds promise for high-quality public spaces. The Texas Historical Commission (which never received any paperwork on the Cuney Homes project) has commented favorably on the rehabilitation but notes that certain character-changing elements, such as the change in roof forms, should in the future be reviewed by the THC staff architect.

Any debate over the merits of changing the architectural character of Cuney Homes through the cost-effective but not necessarily architecturally sensitive replacement of doors and windows and imposition of rather arbitrary roof forms may seem academic in this age of limited resources and the swelling ranks of the homeless. The housing authority can be praised for its attempt to work with viable housing stock in the inner city. Equally impressive is the relatively low cost of this "housing resurrection," which will create good homes for families. Can these lessons be applied to Allen Parkway Village?

Rives Taylor

Big, Small, and Good All Over

Deborah Morris

The day of the prima donna approach to designing buildings has passed.

The new way is by team. Almost any team can produce a mere shelter, but to produce buildings which possess architecture takes a new kind of team – one sensitive to human needs and values. The idea of architecture by team has three underlying, secondary ideas: (1) the team is a genius, (2) the client/user is a member of the team, and (3) the team is an ever-expanding unit, not limited to the design profession.

WILLIAM W. CAUDILL[1]

Austin began contemplating the development of its first convention center in the early 1970s, well before the recession presented such a prospect as a palliative for an ailing economy. A vision of the center persisted in the minds of city officials and members of the community, but it was not until January 1986 that then chamber of commerce member Dr. Neil Kocurek and other representatives of the public and private sector formed the Convention Center Support Group to make the project a reality. "There were setbacks," says Kocurek, who preferred to pursue the project as a private citizen, "but we met regularly with concerned groups and individuals, brought in the experts, and were finally able to develop a common data base from which we could proceed with a real dialogue."

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A serpentine rail defines a south-facing verandah on East First.

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Metal screens create dappled shadows under East Third Street loggia.

Despite open lines of communication, the city council remained embattled over site selection for more than two years. After debating the pros and cons of five possible locations, the choices were reduced to two, one east of Congress Avenue and one west. It was ultimately decided to let the architects make the final recommendation. But the controversy raged on between property owners, who saw the convention center as an opportunity for profit, and individuals concerned with neighborhood traffic patterns and quality-of-life issues.

Reaching a consensus to build in Austin, where a large proportion of the citizens flagrantly brandish their antigrowth sentiments, was no easy task, especially since citizen and environmental groups had already been roused by an early proposal to build the convention center on Town Lake. In 1987, when the commission was awarded to the Austin Collaborative Venture, a consortium including the Austin offices of Page Sutherland Page, Lawrence W. Speck Associates, Villava Cotera Kolar, Wilbur Smith & Associates and Johnson Johnson Roy, and the Minneapolis office of Ellerbe Beckett, Austin voters remained to be convinced.[2] The challenge facing the venture included not only the building design, programming, and site selection, but also the ticklish task of persuading a half-reluctant community to take the giant step. A year and a half later, the citizens of Austin voted to approve more than $69 million in bonds to finance the center. With additional funding from Capital Metro, the Governor's Energy Office, the city's electrical utilities department, and Pacific Gas & Electric, planning began for the construction of the 400,000-square-foot building.

Today, the visitor to the Austin Convention Center, expecting perhaps an unwieldy behemoth, encounters instead a skillfully modulated addition to the cityscape that responds with grace and dignity to each of its contingent neighborhoods. The design team, composed of members from each firm and headed by Larry Speck, wanted the center to be "similar in richness, scale, and diversity to the best of what one already finds in downtown Austin," in Speck's words. The neighborhood context mediated against a single, pat design solution. Speck saw the project as an opportunity to create a building that would engage, invigorate, and distinguish a vicinity known rather for its adjacencies to landmarks than for its own architectural virtues. Located in a warehouse district and occupying four city blocks between First and Third streets, Trinity Street, and Waller Creek, the center looks like an expansive but bite-size village. Surrounded by several distinctive neighborhoods – the Sixth Street entertainment district and Congress Avenue,

Austin Collaborative Venture, Austin Convention Center, 1992. Looking west on East First, past the rotunda to the passenger dropoff.

Canopy over the passenger dropoff.

Unconventional geometries on the Trinity Street façade.

the Town Lake–Waller Creek greenbelt, and a collection of small single-family residences – the building responds formally and programmatically to each, with a character and scale that are both familiar and fresh.

Locating the more prescriptive exhibition and banquet halls at the core of the building and wrapping them with the public prefunction and circulation spaces permitted more expression at the street edge. The exterior order is defined by an evocative play of advancing and retreating volumes, a balanced palette of variously interlocked materials and textures and the composed but dynamic relationships among them. The interplay of lacy, louvered metal sunscreens and satiny aluminum panels with rugged cream-colored limestone and mottled purple brick produces an elegant differentiation of the building's mass.

Four key elements distinguish the building's exterior and function as new "landmarks" for the neighborhood. A 12-sided rotunda of the sumptuous locally quarried limestone anchors the southeast corner and sets up a sequence of processional spaces leading to the main corridors and to the banquet hall. Quiet but dominant, it provides the zone in which the formal rigor of the First Street façade dovetails into the more casual limestone terraces and adjacent dining spaces that zigzag along the densely wooded creek. At the southwest corner is a palazzolike element, almost cubical in volume, that opens on the inside to a grand height and introduces to Trinity Street a collection of quirky but continuous geometric elements containing meeting rooms, entries to the exhibition halls, and a stair. The central meeting room, clad in a rich ironspot brick, with its gambrel roof and great, elaborately shaded dodecagonal window functions as a symbolic terminus to Second Street, at the west end of which will be located Austin's civic and municipal complex. Its mahogany-paneled interior and adjoining balconies afford a view of the fringes of the Texas Hill Country. A projecting quasi-trigonal stair tower of the same brick defines two outdoor gathering spaces in a long, shallow courtyard that is terminated at the north by a deep loggia extending to Red River. Here visitors and neighbors can find shelter while waiting for transportation.

Inside the center one finds the same harmony of materials and finishes and as integrated and skillful a design strategy as on the exterior. Concrete, granite, and steel, soft fabric wall coverings, and exotic woods mix with the brick and stone used on the exterior, making a smooth transition from outside to in and focusing key zones for easy orientation. Corridors expand and contract, bend, turn, and open dramatically onto grand gathering spaces. Soft and even daylight fills the rotunda from two ranks of clerestory windows, spilling over a graceful steel roof truss and throwing leggy shadows on the crisp masonry walls. Contrasts of space, material, and light mark every turn, but an intrinsic sense of calm and order prevails. Even in the superscaled exhibition halls, where utility dominates, exposed ducts and pipes and structure create a datum overhead that defines territory and mediates the vast volume. Experimental tracking solar panels and a high-tech thermal storage unit that allows the building to use off-peak electrical service conserve energy.

If a leitmotif were to be identified in the convention center, it would be painstaking attention to detail and the consistent quality of design and craftmanship. Speck believes the factor that characterizes the project and that is responsible for its success is teamwork. Juan Cotera, representing Villava Cotera Kolar, agrees: "The only competition among the team members was friendly," an achievement in its own right when one considers the levels of cooperation necessary to manage a project of that scope. Cotera adds that an enlightened city council and client (represented by Nathan Schneider, AIA) facilitated the process by genuinely listening to the architects' recommendations. Schneider attributes the project's success to an efficient structure that allowed for detailed analysis and in which each of the players understood his or her role. The result of the efforts of many talented and hardworking individuals is a building – delivered happily within budget and on time – that in its efficacy significantly advances the formula for its type.

When asked if Austin got what it bargained for in a convention center, Schneider responds with a resounding yes. The center now faces the challenges of a still-stagnating economy, and whether it will provide a decisive economic boost initially is uncertain. But to the city of Austin's credit, its long-awaited convention center was no hastily conceived or shoddily undertaken effort. Its success quotient is as high as Austin wanted it to be, and by any standards, that's high. ■

1 From the preface to William W. Caudill, *Architecture by Team* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), pp. ix–x.

2 Longtime project manager Matt Kreisle, from Page Sutherland Page, came up with the formula for the winning Austin Collaborative Venture. Ellerbe Beckett offered expertise in the technical planning of public assembly buildings, and PSI* in management and execution. Villava Cotera Kolar, although providing the required minority status, was selected for its reliability and strength in civic-oriented works, and Lawrence W. Speck Associates for its design leadership and understanding of the Austin community.

Bruce C. Webb

Market Strategies

The modern supermarket owes its format as much to the invention of the shopping cart as to anything else. Before 1936 – the year Sylvan Goldman, an Oklahoma grocer, assembled the first shopping cart in a synectic flash of insight that came to him one night while contemplating a pair of metal folding chairs in the back of one of his stores – grocery stores were modest in size, and shoppers were limited by what they could carry away in wicker baskets. Inventing the cart proved easier than getting people to use it. The story goes that in those days grocers considered carts dangerous, men considered them unmanly alternatives to carrying the merchandise in their arms, and women considered the whole self-service concept déclassé.

But with the acceptance of the cart it was possible for customers to serve themselves on an unprecedented scale, gathering up vast quantities of merchandise laid out in gallery format and paying for it at a single point. Cart-assisted, self-service shopping determined that modern markets would be horizontal building constructed on pieces of land better measured in acres than in city lots – in short, determined a suburban building type.

Over the years, the grocery store has grown in size from market to supermarket to hypermarket, and the common rituals of grocery shopping have become reliable models for vending a variety of goods, from food to clothing, hardware, lumber, and even furniture. It is a form of retail selling, uncomplicated and uninvolving, that is uniquely suited to suburban attitudes about privacy and purification. Richard Sennett has written about the erosion of social life in America as more and more points of contact between individuals are reduced to a minimum, if not eliminated entirely. As a description of retail activity, this means that shopping episodes that once involved eye-to-eye contact between the seller's agents and the buyer – haggling over prices and quality and bartering advice, not to mention tangential conversations of a more personal sort – were no longer part of the shopping experience. Instead, customers were expected to make decisions on their own, spurred on by direct encounters with the products themselves.

This pattern of self-service shopping has spawned a broad range of discount department stores – Kmart, Target, Wal-Mart, and numerous local and regional clones of the national giants – where everything from tennis shoes to bicycles, auto supplies, clothing, jewelry, television sets, and back-to-school supplies can be found in low-overhead settings and at cut-rate prices and can be trucked along through the aisles like meat and vegetables. The supermarket format is more ambitiously stretched in the lumberyard/hardware markets, which allow do-it-yourselfers to feel like weekend contractors: they shop the hyper-real precincts of the builder's warehouse for sheets of plywood, bundles of two-by-fours, sacks of cement, tools, and kitchen cabinets, hauling the merchandise on sturdy mutations of the shopping cart, roping it precariously to the roof of the family car. IKEA, the successor to the short-lived STOR, a Scandinavian furniture store located just outside the West Loop on Interstate 10, sells a comprehensive array of furniture and household fixtures, most of it modular in design and reeking of European smugness. Much of the furniture is made of covered particle board and based on clever blind joinery systems so the furniture can be sold knocked down, to be carried home in your Volvo station wagon and assembled with a screwdriver in front of your admiring family when you get there. The IKEA store is arranged on two levels: a showroom on top, where customers can wander through a homotopia of look-alike furniture set up in a maze of room-a-ramas and be all but ignored by the sales staff, who seem to be contemplating the furniture in some Platonic realm; and a reality-based lower level, a warehouse where items are lifted from shelves and carted to a bank of checkout counters. A small counter up front displays an assortment of packaged foods – loganberry jelly, Euro-biscuits, and other gastronomica with which to complete the transformation of your suburban, middle-class American home into a Swedish middle-class home.

It may be the case, as Oswald Spengler put it, that in each age one of the arts gains ascendancy and leads the others: sculpture for the Classical, architecture for the Middle Ages, music for the Renaissance and Baroque. In our own time, especially after Andy Warhol made the condition visible with his interchanging of artistic and commercial valuations, the prevailing art form is commodification – the creation of tantalizing new products with which to magnify desire. This phenomenon finds its most intense and vivid expression in the modern supermarket, a veritable horn of plenty, confirming in its vast spatiality and endless rows of packaged foods the abundance of the capitalist way of life. It is a gallery of the seller's art, images of desire cunningly packaged, with scientific attention to details of color and nuances of typeface and verbal message.

What fuels this well-ordered orgy of consumption is a vast enterprise that in effect transforms all plant, animal, and mineral substances that serve as food into technical products, then divides and shuffles them into the appearance of significant variation by sorting, coloring, packaging, and labeling. Unlike the past, the present faces few constraints on production; the proliferation of available food products has outstripped the capacities of the more modest-sized grocery stores that were the primary purveyors of foodstuffs up into midcentury. As an example, a Randall's Flagship now requires 45 linear feet of six-foot-high shelves just to display its collection of dry cereals, including a category called "adult cereal." Breakfast food provides an interesting example of food hybridization: not long ago there were only a few types of dry cereal available, mostly straightforward formulations of wheat, corn, rice, or oats distinguished by differences in their "cheese-food"-filled crunch life before they turned into edible papier-mâché when the milk was poured on, and by the kiddie novelties – things like decoder rings – stuffed inside. Then, inspired by the

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Left: **Fiesta Mart no. 16, Interstate 45 at Nasa Road 1, near Clear Lake City.**

Far left: **Hydroponic farm, Fiesta Mart no. 16.**

Below: **Franchise row, Fiesta Mart no. 16.**

© Paul Hester 1992

success of crunchy granola with an increasingly health-conscious public, the big cereal makers rushed out with their own versions, equally expensive and high in calories but in tastefully decorated boxes. It should be noted that the need to improve the nutritional value of products without losing their taste appeal and at low cost to the manufacturer gave rise to the science of enriching and fortifying nutritionally marginal foods such as cereals and Twinkies. Any food can be made to look nutritionally respectable by reinforcing (designing) it to include a broad spectrum of artificially introduced vitamins and minerals. After that it is only a matter of shaping it and giving it a theme.

The consumer is dropped into a labyrinth of choices. Rather than finding food, the dilemma is one of choosing among the apparent surplus of availability. After a time, the production of food becomes similar to the manufacturing of any other consumer product. The difference between the healthful or stylish properties of, say, a running shoe and a breakfast cereal is dissolved. What is required of the modern citizen is simply to need, as David Green, the poet of Archigram, put it:

It's all the same. The joint between God nodes and you, eat nodes and you is the same. Theoretically, one node could service the lot. There's no need to move. Cool it baby. Be comfortable. God burgers, sex burgers, hamburgers. The node just plugs into a giant needery. You just sit there and need. We do the rest. Green stamps given.

Nearly every discipline outside of architecture has been able to make good use of the cultural appraisal that is called postmodernism as a way of understanding our time. Postmodernism describes one of the more pervasive paradigmatic shifts in history, where life as we know it is being systematically dismantled, replaced by simulated realities, hyperrealities, and cyberexperiences where, as Guy Debold writes in *The Society of the Spectacle*, "everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation."

It is easy to see the impact of this shift in what might be called the culture of the mind – that is, in those areas of human activity that are based on superficial sensations, or where, as in the case of business dealings, the actual physical act of the transaction is merely confirmation of what is at heart already highly abstract and symbolic. If my paycheck is automatically and electronically teletransported to the bank and then distributed to my creditors by punching buttons on my touch-tone phone, the difference in the transaction from actually carrying greenbacks around is purely a matter of convenience – the money, after all, being merely a representation of buying power that can be represented just as well by stored electrons branded with my personal code. The same can be said, at least to some degree, of culture, which, as André Malraux demonstrated in his brilliant essay on the "museum without walls," is now readily converted from artifacts to easily transportable forms of publication, video documents and recordings, so that one now has access, in a way unknown to our predecessors, to the whole range of human artistic accomplishment. But there is another culture that defines our humanness that is not so easily deceived, one that exploits other sensory potentials and ministers to other needs. This other culture we might call the culture of the stomach. It is not at all content with the products offered in cyberspace. This stomach culture is guardian of the most invasive sensory experiences, those that finally end up inside the body, where they deliver both the temporary pleasure of good flavor and also the long-term effects of calories, vitamins, and toxic residues.

Thus the supermarkets, purveyors of some of life's most satisfying experiences, may be a hands-on antidote for a world becoming increasingly virtual, if not invisible. This is not to say that modern food is not a reflected reality. We buy at the end of a long chain of ideation and production through which raw food is made into food ideas, imperishable and convenient. Food defies Platonic geometry. In its original form, most of it is amorphous; yet its presentation in the grocery store is nearly always in the form of recognizable cardboard and plastic geometries, a symbolic designation of nonputrefying reality that bears little resemblance to what is inside. Thus one is asked to make choices based on simulations and logical valuations constructed on the surfaces of these packages: promised pleasures, promised benefits, convenience. Participation in this

kind of buying requires skills of a different sort from those required of the buyer in the past, who had to smell, feel, and even sometimes taste the product before buying it. Instead, the modern shopper runs through little equations while rolling along the aisles, the variables of which include convenience, eye appeal, cost, and nutritional value. Or the shopper simply seeks out a product that has already been presold on television. Manufacturers must create the idea of the food first, then have it systematically constructed by technicians.

In order to revivify their contents, supermarkets increasingly are devoting large portions of their merchandising territory to the "real stuff," visceral, organic, putrefiable, short-lived food in the raw: live lobsters and catfish swimming in glass aquariums, crawfish in barrels, mussels lying blissfully under a gentle, cool shower in display tanks, piles of fresh vegetables, fish staring forlornly as they do on a fisherman's stringer. It's all a little like a museum, pieces of visceral art up for sale. But for many, actually having to deal with these forms of food equates to a premodern state of development; for them, modern food comes in sealed packages with instructions for microwaving, and opening a box of some new kind of crunch fulfills the desire to explore the new and exotic.

With this bounty of sameness, the store itself becomes an important part of the shopping experience. Inside, the architect and entrepreneur conspire to create different shopping scenarios based on the conditions under which purchasable items can be presented – to re-create shopping as a form of participatory theater. In Sam's Club warehouse stores, self-conscious proletarianism appeals to hardcore buyers who, as card-carrying members, feel they have slipped the bonds of advertising appeals and overhead niceties and entered the reality room of the back lot, where unadorned stacks of products still in their big boxes are bought up in quantity and hauled off in enormous shopping carts. Contrast this to Randall's Food Markets' appeal to wholesome family values. Or Whole Foods Market's neo-sixties ambience, updated to include wellness, where the food looks like it has been sifted through the counterculture League of Nutritional Decency. The aisles are tight and miniaturized. Whole Foods produces a feeling that this is a place to get your attitude adjusted (along with your neck muscles – a masseuse-in-residence will rub away your body pains for ten bucks in the aisles between the vegetables and the pasta).

No one has played with this idea of imaging more successfully than Fiesta Mart, a local chain that came to prominence by catering to the city's growing Hispanic population. Fiesta's standard store bears a sanitized resemblance to a festival market in a Third World country, heavy on bountiful stocks of produce (much of it exotic by middle-class American standards) and samplings of ethnic-foods-in-a-can organized in sections by country of origin. In front of many Fiesta stores, an aggregation of sidewalk vendors hawks cheap goods, creating the kind of street clutter between the store and the parking lot that merges shops with the street in many cities throughout the world. Not wanting to be one thing only, Fiesta created a different kind of store in Clear Lake, adjacent to Interstate 45, that features a dramatic, vaguely deconstructionist tip-of-the-hat roof as its roadside summons. Inside, a hydroponic farm beckons from the produce section; for a premium, customers can harvest their sprouts and leaves directly from scientifically monitored growing trays – a demonstration that would look more at home in the pedagogical precincts of a science museum than a supermarket.

Houston now sports an Auchan store, a European-style hypermarket with its roots in France – grocery shopping in its most inflated form. There are some 90 Auchan Hypermarkets in Europe, but the Houston store is the first in the United States. What does "hypermarket" mean? In this case it comes down to a marriage of convenience between a medium-size grocery store and a discount dry-goods store – a commercial format that appeared earlier in Houston. Weingarten's and Henke's, both defunct local grocery chains, had full-service counter restaurants and sizable dry-goods sections into the 1950s; the Henke's at Wayside even sold major appliances. Houston's first big discount department stores, Globe and Fed-Mart, both had large grocery-store components, as did Target, which combined grocery and discount stores in a side-by-side arrangement through the 1970s.

Auchan's architectural accommodation of this format resembles a large factory, or perhaps the hangar deck of an aircraft carrier, but is decorated as an upscale flea market. The architecture is what might be called bare-tech: industrial-issue junior trusses, steel roof decks, exposed ducts, big industrial lights – austere treatment intended to suggest a connection to the no-frills economies of European democratic socialism. The store is enormous by any standards, with 140,000 square feet of shopping. But only half of it is food, and nearly half of that is fresh (unpackaged) food.

Auchan suggests a new concept of the supermarket, a kind of mall in the form of an enclosed plaza. The opening layer, up front, is an indoor pedestrian street where one finds sundry shops, fast-food restaurants (McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell), a bank, a beauty shop, a quick copy, a jewelry store, and something called Hyperoptical, located across the entrance from S&M Travel. The subdividing of the vast interior volume into gridded blocks begins after you cross the Auchan threshold, with little gabled pavilions marking off the product neighborhoods: pâtisserie, tortilleria, cheese shop, meat market, butcher shop, cigarette kiosk. Sheer volume combines with perceptual complexity to produce a sense of phenomenal size, size that can be measured existentially by ascertaining how long it takes to find your shopping companion when you get separated. In Auchan, it can be a long time indeed. The aisles are exceedingly lengthy (85 feet just for pet foods) and high. Shoppers seem unusually grim and businesslike. The convivial social atmosphere is missing that makes many grocery stores into commercial incarnations of the agora (an interpretation sometimes stimulated by atmosphere-enhancing embellishments such as the performing mariachi bands in Fiesta Marts); Auchan customers seem obsessed with searching for Auchan bargains. And no wonder. This is heterotopia, an odd mixture of the familiar made to look strange. With 55 functioning checkout stations, it reminded me of the customs stations at a large international airport on the way out of a duty-free country – somewhere you go just to shop for bargains. Fly in, buy a few (or more than a few) things, go home. The airport feeling is reinforced by the way you rent your shopping cart, airport style, putting in a quarter to unlock the conveyance and getting your money back when you lock it up again. Out on the vacant new landscape of Beltway 6, the place seems estranged even for a suburban market, disconnected in the way an airport is disconnected.

This may be the final iteration of American shopping life, a melding of everything you can buy into one anonymous space. You don't need a shopping list; you just buy impulsively. Everything is here on this island, a final resting place for Miranda's brave new world. You really don't know where you are, suspended in a place far removed from time and space, navigating your cart through an overstimulating environment made up entirely of products for sale.

Futurist thinkers imagine a greater impact of technology on the supermarkets of the future, including media transformations that marry the technology of television to the traditional aisles so shoppers will be bombarded by video messages alerting them to bargains and demonstrating how

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Far left: Mariachi band on the balcony, Fiesta Mart no. 20.

Left: The paper aisle, Auchan Hypermarket, Beltway 6, Houston.

Below: Checkout sector, Auchan Hypermarket.

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to assemble new products into "dishes" while they navigate the aisles. This is one road the supermarkets of the future may travel, building on the appeal of convenience, the watchword of the old modernism, by giving shoppers the smug feeling of participating in a state-of-the-art experience. In the early 1950s, architect J. Gordon Carr explored the concept of a circular supermarket that freed shoppers from having to carry anything around with them at all. Strolling the aisles, customers made their selections by punching buttons next to advertised products, and the items were transported overhead from storeroom to checkout with the shoppers' numbers attached – an innovation that would have marked the end to the short life of the shopping cart. Fascinating as this is technologically, the idea fails to take into account the ultimate utility of the supermarket in the future as a conservator of physical experience. As well as it may have served us in the past, the goal of convenience may be limited by a desire to retain some level of complexity – self-navigation, examining, decision making, handling, and toting – and satisfy an implacable urge to consume more than the merchandise itself by inspecting the wares, noshing samples, picking out that box or bottle that will be yours alone. And preserving the semblance of a primitive hand-to-mouth gratification, even on the eve of the 21st century. ■

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Market Square Park during the Republican National Convention. Collaborative design by SWA Group and artists Doug Hollis, Richard Turner, Paul Hester, Malou Flato, and James Surls, 1992.

JOE MCGRATH

AFTER three years of work and nearly $785,000 in private donations and grants, the Market Square Park Project, a renovation of Houston's historic Market Square, was completed and dedicated this summer. The park is the product of an unprecedented collaboration between the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and two private sponsors, DiverseWorks and the Downtown Houston Association. It was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and received financial support from several major local foundations and hundreds of public and private organizations and individuals. Design and project management services were donated by the SWA Group, Law Engineering, and Hines Interests Limited Partnership.

The project benefited from measured but high-minded goals: to educate the public about Market Square's "unique history," to revive Market Square as a "public gathering place [and] as a part of an arts and entertainment corridor," and to "demonstrate the role artists can play in solving urban problems." The restrained and felicitous design that has resulted replaces one that was incommodious and frequently dangerous.

In view of such carefully planned, inclusive, and well-executed work, criticism sounds merely crabbed. Yet in spite of (or perhaps because of) the park's gentility, one wonders whether there might have been greater collaboration among the five artists commissioned to produce individual works for the park and the landscape architects, the SWA Group.

The design sets each artist's work at a distance from the others within a simple framework of diagonal walkways through a green field. James Surls's 30-foot-high wood and steel sculpture rises from a small, square plaza set into the gently sloping grade at the center of the park. Set into the backs of benches lining the plaza are Paul Hester's 80 enameled tiles etched with photographs of Market Square and its environs, past and present. Malou Flato's semicircular benches featuring hand-painted tiles with scenes of an open-air market are located at mid-block on each side of the park. Finally, Doug Hollis and Richard Turner have set fragments of tile and stone from various razed Houston buildings into concrete trays placed at intervals in the park's walkways.

The "rotated" plan of the walkways was designed by Hollis and Turner in response to the centrifugal force of the limbs radiating from Surls's sculpture at the center of the park. The plan provides an easy dynamism for the site by making one simultaneously aware of the park's site plan and the rigid, orthogonal plan of the street grid into which it fits. The diagonal walkways widen from the narrow opening along the central square to splayed, brick-paved areas inviting entry at each corner. The SWA Group's simple, straightforward planning and landscaping judiciously correct the seemingly endless and impenetrably amorphic expanse of grassy mounds formerly found here. The park is now easily traversed; design elements establish a scale sympathetic to the two- and three-story buildings surrounding the park. Against this restrained background, each artist has made his or her contribution independently.

James Surls's characteristically powerful and lyrical work is similar to his other outdoor pieces, which combine steel and treated lumber to create organic forms suggestive of flowers or trees. Rising from the center of the pinwheel plan of the walkways, the sculpture stands like an *axis mundi*, embodying civic myths of growth and abundance. The historical significance of Market Square as the heart of the city's financial and political life for decades is expressed by the work's distinctive, raw, and oracular vision.

In contrast to Surls's personal vision, photographer Paul Hester depends on the alert, watchful gaze of the observer and archivist. Drawing on what Susan Sontag described as the photograph's "inexhaustible invitation to deduction, speculation, and fantasy," Hester's enameled tiles, etched with historical and contemporary photographs of Houston, suggest an open-air gallery that evokes the evanescence of a historical and architectural legacy. Perhaps the central irony of Hester's work is that the spirit of civic expansion that created that legacy has also allowed it to vanish.

A similar chord is struck in Doug Hollis and Richard Turner's contribution. Inspired by the colorful detritus of demolished buildings around Market Square, Hollis and Turner selected and carefully composed architectural fragments in trays filled with concrete and placed them in the park's walkways. It is disappointing, however, that removed from their ruined sites the fragments lose much of their allusiveness. Likewise, the fragments in each tray lie in studied juxtapositions of color and form that are far less interesting than the incidental collisions of old and new in the places from which they were drawn. Hollis and Turner's work is linked to Hester's by the irresistible appeal of a memento mori of a vanishing city history, a reckless destruction of the past that has decimated the stock of historic buildings on the square and elsewhere in downtown Houston.

Malou Flato's benches present a contrasting vision of a Market Square yet to come. They are beautifully made of painted tiles, the murals reflecting a disarmingly optimistic and direct vision of the park brought to life. Unfortunately, their siting is the weakest aspect of the park's design. Placed at the middle of each block and away from the park's entrances, the benches are poorly located to receive the use they deserve.

Although it may be an overstatement to say that the Market Square Park Project demonstrates the artist's role in "solving urban problems," the project certainly shows the potential of using public art inventively to create a significant urban space. Perhaps as a product of such an approach, the new park provides an alternative to both the familiar pattern of civic honorifics and the estranging conceits of works that fail to capture public interest. ■

Beamers

The Houston Conventions, 1928 and 1992

If the Dome were to be used for some social sport, like a political convention, wouldn't the man who controlled the screen control the convention?

LARRY MCMURTRY, "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," 1965

Drexel Turner

Twice in this century, 20,000 or more invited guests and hangers-on have assembled in Houston to sanction presidential candidates whose prospects were less than glowing and whose oratorical abilities were at best deficit-prone. The outcome of neither convention was ever really in doubt, nor, judging from most accounts, did either provide much in the way of incidental entertainment. The 1928 Democratic convention that endorsed the candidacy of Al Smith on the first ballot (and had to be stretched to six days "to bring the guarantors out of the red") was described by one participant as "the longest wake any Irishman ever attended."[1] Franklin D. Roosevelt, who placed Smith's name in nomination in Houston as he had four years before at Madison Square Garden, wrote to Newton D. Baker several weeks afterwards that "the only remark of the Convention which will live was that of Will Rogers, who said that in trying to mop his brow in the Rice Hotel mob, he mopped three others before he wiped his own."[2] At this year's Republican convention, brows furrowed routinely but few required mopping indoors in what had become one of the world's most air-conditioned cities, allowing the August delegation all the cold comfort that could be manufactured from kilowatts on hand. But despite the ministrations of a generous cross section of the media elite (from Norman Mailer and Molly Ivins to William F. Buckley and William Safire), even the best spins on the rites at the Astrodome offered little cause for optimism and still less in the way of diversion or suspense, unless one counted George Bush's attempt to master a new word order without the help of Peggy Noonan.

Besides the 1928 Democratic convention's distinction as a way station to the Electoral College debacle that was to keep Mr. Smith from going to Washington, the brow moppers assembled in Houston witnessed a political transformation of bipartisan scope. The convention was the first such event to adapt itself fully to the use of a broadcast medium, thus transcending the limits of locality and the hall itself to reach out to a much vaster audience nationwide. Roosevelt, refashioning his "happy warrior" encomium of four years before, cast his delivery expressly in terms of the new medium. "Convinced," he wrote soon thereafter, "that the old-fashioned type of oratory would serve no useful purpose," he chose to direct his remarks in an intimate and familiar manner toward "the 15,000,000 radio listeners rather than the 15,000 in the Convention Hall."[3] Roosevelt's speech made on Smith's behalf in 1924 had, as Frank Friedel notes, "been broadcast, but radio had still seemed rather a novelty. By 1928, thanks to improved broadcasting techniques and national networks, it provided a remarkable opportunity to bring Roosevelt's political ideas and personal charm directly to millions of people. In addition it served to circumvent hostile newspapers and magazines."[4]

The alacrity with which Roosevelt seized both medium and moment in Houston only seemed spontaneous, for, as he explained in a letter to Walter Lippmann, he had made it a point to try "the definite experiment this year of writing and delivering my speech for the benefit of the radio audience and press rather than for any forensic effect it might have on the delegates and audience in the convention hall. Smith had the votes anyway and it seemed to me more important to reach out for the republicans and independents throughout the country."[5] Roosevelt's new order of battle did not escape the notice of the *Nation*, whose correspondent reported that it mattered not that "in the vast spaces of Sam Houston Hall it is impossible for an individual on the floor to catch the eye or the ear…[or that] acoustics are sacrificed to ventilation…[for] one man at the microphone is a whole convention in this radio-electric year of 1928."[6] Nor was the lesson lost on the *Chicago Tribune*, which paid wishful editorial tribute to Roosevelt as "the only Republican in the Democratic party."[7]

That the Democrats had chosen to convene in Houston at all, an out-of-the-way if aspiring city of 250,000 at the far edge of the New South, was solely a concession to the influence of Jesse H. Jones, the city's first real estate developer of note. His interests also included banking, publishing, and politics, and he later served as chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and secretary of commerce. The convention was assigned to Houston in January 1928, less than six months before it was scheduled to open. The city had then but one permanent facility that approached the necessary capacity, the 7,500-seat City Auditorium of 1910, a workmanlike Beaux-Arts structure designed by Mauran, Russell & Crowell of St. Louis and located one block southwest of the firm's Rice Hotel of 1913, on the site of what is now the Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts. The owner of a nearby movie house suggested, presciently but to no avail, that by air-conditioning the auditorium it would be possible to accommodate the delegates at less expense and with greater comfort than would be the case in the 20,000-seat temporary structure contemplated by Jones. The site of Jones's hall, originally proposed for Martha Hermann Square in front of the newly completed Houston Public Library, was shifted to a less temporary outpost on the east bank of Buffalo Bayou where the present Coliseum and Music Hall now stand. The new site had to be cleared, lot by lot, of houses, causing the foundation to be laid section by section as the demolition proceeded. "Planned Magnificence Causes East to Marvel," a Houston newspaper assured its readers even before the design was made public back home[8] for an arena with a seating capacity a third greater than Madison Square Garden and that "though temporary in nature, will have the appearance of a permanent structure." The hall was erected at a cost of $200,000 in 64 days, beginning in early March, according to plans prepared by the architectural consortium of Kenneth Franzheim and J. E. R. Carpenter of New York and Alfred C. Finn of Houston (a collaborative that was then also adapting the design of Eliel Saarinen's second-place entry in the Chicago Tribune Tower competition for what was to become the tallest – and last – of Houston's several pre-Depression skyscrapers, Jones's Gulf Oil Company Building).[9]

Sam Houston Hall, so named to honor the city's namesake and Texas's first Democratic politician of national reputation rolled into one, was an exuberantly decorated shed of vaguely Hoffmannstil recognizance. Its boarded faces, painted green and gold, bristled with bundled fasces for pilasters, two species of eagle, and a skyline fringe of staffs and banners. An internally revealed novelty of the hall's design was the lamella truss roof frame "woven" from small standardized pieces of wood curved on one side (lamellas) that made possible the 120-foot clear span of the segmentally vaulted center bay, the limit

Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

Sam Houston Hall, northeast entrance. The chain-link fence at right was a security measure.

View of Sam Houston Hall looking west from the top of the Niels Esperson Building.

***Above:* Interior of Sam Houston Hall.**
***Below:* Sam Houston Hall under construction.**

of the span being dictated by the size of the material in stock, 3 by 14 inches.[10] Devised and patented by a German engineer, the lamella system had been introduced to the United States only three or so years before the Houston convention. It was the same technique that Nervi would begin to employ more expressively in the mid-1930s, and the same that was applied in steel for the construction of the Astrodome. Unlike the Astrodome, Jones's barn was cooled only by the draft from two immense fans. Most of the delegates were housed in hotels owned by Jones five or six blocks from the hall (the largest and most prepossessing of which were the Rice and the Lamar), and they walked to and from the convention in a manner completely foreign to the city today. The temporary hall remained in use until 1936, when it was razed to make way for the Coliseum, a model of WPA sobriety designed by Finn that was to serve as Houston's principal arena until the completion of the Astrodome in 1965, with decades, not days, to spare before the city entertained its next national political convention.

From its inception, the Astrodome, unlike Sam Houston Hall, was far more concerned with its inner than its outer being. It lies six miles south of downtown just inside the Loop 610 expressway, surrounded by a sea of parking lots and Holiday Inns and their offspring. It is the outwardly expedient product of another consortium of architects in the service of another legendary (and surpassingly colorful) promoter and politician of Democratic provenance, Judge Roy M. Hofheinz. A onetime mayor of Houston and former judge (presiding executive) of the Harris County Commissioners Court, Hofheinz was also, as far as can be determined, the only one of his confreres to be photographed by Diane Arbus with a midget on one knee and a chorine on the other (to accompany an article in *Sports Illustrated* titled "The Greatest Showman on Earth and He's the First to Admit It").[11] The Harris County Domed Stadium, as it is still officially called, was the first of its class to be built, and if no longer the "eighth wonder of the world," as the Judge at first insisted, it remains to this day the city's most conspicuous contribution to the repertoire of mid-to-late-20th-century urbanism.

No one could have asked for a more solicitous host than the Judge, even posthumously constrained. His vision for the Astrodome and its environs has been likened, only half tongue in cheek, to that of Pope Sixtus V for the second Rome (had he only been a Texan),[12] although his Celestial Suite atop the Astroworld Hotel suggested an ecumenical fascination with Fellini's Rome as well. The epiphany that led to the Dome is said to have come to Hofheinz after touring the Roman Colosseum, his showman's curiosity aroused by a description of the technics of its original *velarium*, the retractable, rope-hung canopy that had provided shade for 50,000 spectators.[13] (The same apparatus also intrigued the Baroque architect Carlo Fontana, who, unlike the Judge, lacked the patronage of the Harris County Commissioners Court.) The Dome as Hofheinz embroidered it may also have owed something to Salvador Dali's hallucinatory vision of the pleasure potential of New York encapsulated in a round pyramid: indeed, the manic choreography of baseball, football, rodeos, circuses, and demolition derbies – part Barnum, part Radio City – that ensued under his stewardship proved not uncongenial to an occasionally surreal cinematic climax, from extra innings with *The Bad News Bears* (part two) to the in-flight entertainment of *Brewster McCloud*, Robert Altman's Icarus-under-glass.

Since Hofheinz's departure for the ultimate Celestial Suite, his earthbound Elysium has become a noticeably cooler, less eccentric medium, more compatible with conventional standards of Republican decorum. To make way for additional seating, the Judge's prized 474-foot-long, four-story-high faux-pyrotechnic scoreboard, painted blue to double as centerfield sky, has been removed, as has his own sumptuous five-story suite of apartments overlooking right field. Rainbow-colored seats still ring the periphery, but the corporately subdued redecoration of all else within has, like the sack of the outfield, done much to obscure the authentic genius of the place. Historically, the Astrodome has, by dint of acoustical malaise and sheer size, proved a less than optimal venue for most kinds of conventions, so much so that two not inconsiderable annexes, the Astrohall and the Astroarena, were erected soon thereafter to serve ordinary conventions of 15,000 or less. But in 1992, as 64 years before, the internal dynamics of the arena were not, at least for political purposes, at issue so long as they did not impinge on its efficacy as a point of origin for broadcast communications, which in the years since Roosevelt had added a video component as well. The operative question was simply whether Hofheinz's Lucite-covered tent could suffice as a glorified television studio – a matter the Republicans had presumably disposed of to bottom-line satisfaction in the New Orleans Superdome four years before. (Houston can also be considered to have pioneered the domed television studio format in the production facilities of its ABC network affiliate, KTRK, designed by Lloyd, Morgan, and Jones in 1961 just before their engagement with Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson as joint-venture architects of the Astrodome.)

Patricia Leigh Brown, previewing designs for this summer's conventions in the *New York Times*, noted the primacy of television in the calculations of both parties in contrast to Chicago in 1952, "when television coverage first started [and] there was no official convention design,"only a messy vitality that, as Walter Cronkite recalled for the benefit of her readers, was "'as inchoate as democracy itself, and… looked that way.' The podium, he said, looked like a street riot. 'People talked their way up to the chair and the vice chair, and the speaker was lost in a sea of people arguing even when he was speaking.…' Mr. Cronkite recalled delegates sat on loose folding chairs,… [and] by the time the convention was two hours old, chairs were strewn everywhere. 'The floor…was ankle-deep in newspapers and flyers. 'It was a pretty horrible picture,' he said, speaking of the esthetics." Since then, even though the parties have seldom enjoyed video-friendly candidates, they have succeeded in tidying everything else up for the benefit of television, to the point where, as Ms. Brown observed, not only have "today's conventions, preempted by the primary system,…become coronation-like, lavish productions largely stripped of spontaneity. Design has increasingly become synonymous with control (translation: image management).… Desperately seeking permanence, or at least the illusion of it, America's politicos have slowly forsaken swags and drapery for architecture. Frivolity is a no-no: the last thing anybody wants is to look temporary."[14]

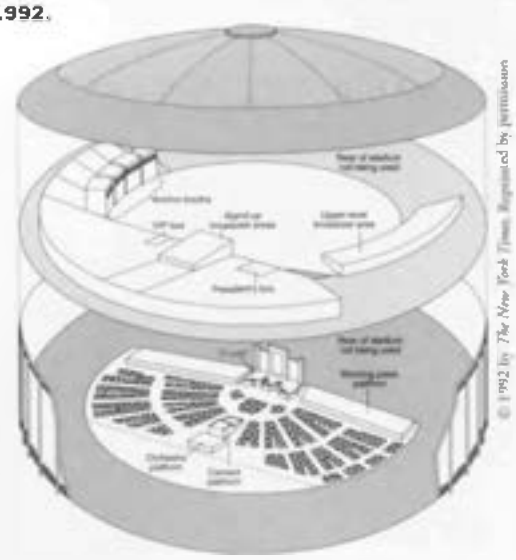
To convert the Astrodome into a commander-in-chiefly-enough set for Bush's renomination meant taking possession of its inner reaches for nearly a month, and sending the city's chronically struggling National League baseball club on a much-extended road trip – a decampment viewed by some conspiracists as a thinly veiled political favor. The Republican National Committee engaged Robert Keene of Burbank, California, an Emmy-winning specialist in set design for television, to oversee the transformation in collaboration with the Houston office of CRSS. Keene claimed his efforts to fashion a set that was "stately, clean…and just a little bit lofty" were inspired in part by his enthusiasm for the city's circa now skyline(s).[15] Certainly the scale of these objects of affection would have been more effective, had time and resources permitted, in stopping down the auditorium by half (just as Boullée had proposed to make his project for a circular opera house in Paris operable by splitting it into auditorium and backstage halves). An elaborate computerized design simulation capability ("the same technology used in the production of the animated film *Beauty and the Beast*") permitted alternative schemes to be vetted on video monitors for the benefit of the client and the designers.

The Astrodome with short-waved banners, August 1992.

Magna-box aglow on Family Values Night, 19 August 1992.

as well as to be auditioned, not once but several times, on the Houston public television station.[16]

The initial design, consisting of three colossal television screens floating atop a red, white, and blue banner, struck convention manager Bill Harris as "too much like the Third Reich."[17] But the final product, a mock-sandstone affair featuring two large screens assembled Chuck Close fashion from a matrix of smaller monitors and surrounded by a selvage of "starlights," could be variously perceived as indebted to the homegrown modernism of the Texas State Fair of 1936 or, as Alison Cook ventured in the *Houston Press*, to the Berlin Olympics of the same year, flexed through the cinematic lens of Leni Riefenstahl.[18] Keene's Magnavox moderne synthesis likewise impressed Elizabeth Drew in the *New Yorker* as "Teutonic" in feeling, but Norman Mailer, having himself sparred inconclusively with Vincent Scully on the subject of totalitarian architecture several decades before in the pages of *Architectural Forum*, was more guarded in his report to the *New Republic*, while hinting at a subliminal game-show ambience.[19]



Party arrangement. Illustration by John Papasian.

The authors of *Learning From Las Vegas* have suggested that "the occasional tour de force of an Astrodome…merely prove[s] that big, high spaces do not automatically make architectural monumentality."[20] For most spectators within the vast hall, the experience was more out of place than in; the hall itself seemed to fade away, leaving one to watch the proceedings on a giant, faraway television screen, along with tens of thousands of others. Instead of masking the unneeded half of the Astrodome, the fiscally responsible magnificence of Keene and company's set appeared like only so much cabinetry – a biopticon breakfront adrift in the middle of a room that, as the Judge was fond of pointing out, could easily accommodate the emerald-capped 18 stories of the once neighboring Shamrock Hotel (scorned as an architectural jukebox by Frank Lloyd Wright, but aptly cast as James Dean's oil-slicked real estate bubble in the movie *Giant*).[21] No matter, the inability of the Republicans' plywood console to slice through the big sky of the Dome was a detail that could be telegenically deleted from signals beamed into living rooms across the country.

Perhaps the freest, most entertaining spectacle of the convention was the flea market set up in the Astroarena – an unabashed enterprise zone where the heartbeat of America, or a fringe thereof, was palpable in what Alison Cook described as a "hymn to the universality of bad taste," informed by a not-for-prime-time "raunchy streak underlying the glitter and sequins and elephant kitsch."[22] The great concentric circles of the parking lot that surrounded the Astrodome remained mostly empty for security purposes, and the conventioneers, whose hotel rooms were strewn in inconsequential allotments over a metropolitan area the size of Rhode Island, were bused, in most un-Houston fashion, to the Dome and back each day from the Rice University stadium parking lot. Under the best of circumstances, Houston can seem visually challenging to the uninitiated. But of the journalists in attendance, only Mailer attempted to colorize the context, beginning his dispatch with a metaphorical exposition of the host city's transition from "agreeable Texas town" to "megacity…not yet built… except in parts,…never crowded except on superhighways." From Mailer's windshield, the city loomed as a late-20th-century incarnation of the car lots' ghost trapped inside Hunter Thompson: "One could now think of it as a gargantuan humanoid in a special effects movie (after the humanoid has been dismembered by a magnum ray-gun wielded by Arnold Schwarzenegger)…sprawl[ing] over the nappy carpet of Texas soil in shreds, bones, nerves and holes, a charred skeleton with an eye retained here, and there a prosthetic hand still smoking."[23]

Special effects aside, the makeup of the city Reyner Banham had acknowledged, not without trepidation, to "have gone even further than Los Angeles into the post-urban future,"[24] was perhaps more familiar to most Americans (and most reporters) than Mailer supposed. Houston, like the twentysomething-year-old marvel that sheltered the proceedings, was no longer an object of topographic curiosity, and those reporters who did venture outside the Dome were content to supplement their accounts with evidence of the city's social, economic, and environmental discomforts. So prevalent was this practice that a spokesman for the chamber of commerce proposed a contextual evasion of what, any other week, might have passed for unparalleled sophistry. If only one were to take "a strictly marketing view of the media presence during the convention," he counseled, "…the stories, even the negative ones, carried a Houston dateline which…raised the awareness of the city in most Americans' minds. 'It's like having McDonald's on your sleeve or Nike on your lapel.…Houston has put its name out.'"[25] If only so long as the Republicans' preelection pageant kept spinning through the air from the Judge's all-weather wheel of fortune. ■

1 Oscar Handlin, *Al Smith and His America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 126.
2 Frank Friedel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Ordeal* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), p. 243.
3 Ibid., p. 243.
4 Ibid., p. 242.
5 Ibid., p. 243.
6 Lewis D. Gannett, "The Big Show at Houston," *The Nation*, 11 July 1926, p. 34.
7 Friedel, *Roosevelt*, p. 243.
8 "Dem Hall Will Be 'Surprise'/Planned Magnificence Causes East to Marvel: Mayor En Route to N'York," *Houston Press*, 18 January 1928.
9 An informative account of the hall and the convention based primarily on newspaper clippings is provided by Doris Glaser and Nancy Hadly, "The Democratic National Convention of 1928," *Houston Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 148–59.
10 "Building Houston's Great Convention Hall," *Engineering News-Record*, 24 May 1928, pp. 815–17. The roof was designed by W. Klingenberg, chief engineer, Lamella Roof Syndicate, New York, and George L. Kelly, chief engineer, Lamella Trussless Roof Company, Houston. Its construction was supervised by Robert J. Cummins, consulting engineer, Houston.
11 Tex Maule, "The Greatest Showman on Earth and He's the First to Admit It," *Sports Illustrated*, 21 April 1969, pp. 36–49.
12 Peter C. Papademetriou and Peter G. Rowe, "The Pope and the Judge," *Architectural Design*, July 1970, pp. 345–49.
13 Bruce C. Webb, "Diamond in the Round," *Cite* 23 (Spring 1990), p. 8.
14 Patricia Leigh Brown, "Design Notebook: On Podiums, Star-Spangled Symbolism," *New York Times*, 2 July 1992, pp. C1, C8.
15 Ibid., p. C8. Keene's impression of the Houston skyline as "the most designed…in America" is reported in Madeline McDermott Hamm, "Red, White and Ooh: Decorations Will Put Dome in Party Spirit," *Houston Chronicle*, 11 May 1992, pp. 1D, 2D.
16 Catherine Chriss, "Computer Sees the Convention in 3D," *Houston Chronicle*, 8 May 1992, p. 34A.
17 Jay Root, "Computer Lets GOP Planners See Variety of Staging Options," *Houston Post*, 8 May 1992, pp. A1, A20. Dushan Stankovich served as project designer and C. Leland Fontenot as project manager for CRSS.
18 Alison Cook, "Ladies' Night With the GOP," *Houston Press*, 27 August 1992, p. 10.
19 Elizabeth Drew, "Letter from Washington," *New Yorker*, 7 September 1992, p. 89; Norman Mailer and Vincent Scully, "Mailer vs. Scully," *Architectural Forum*, April 1964, pp. 96–97; Norman Mailer, "By Heaven Inspired," *New Republic*, 12 October 1992, pp. 22–35.
20 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning From Las Vegas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), p. 46.
21 McMurtry agrees with Wright: "The first promising rumor I heard about the Harris County Domed Stadium was that it was going to be large enough that the Shamrock Hotel could be put inside it. Great, I thought – assuming naturally that the powers that be would take advantage of such an opportunity. At last a real solution to the Shamrock problem seemed at hand. Forty-five million dollars is a respectable sum, but who would cavil if it got that hotel out of sight?" "Love, Death, and the Astrodome," *Texas Observer*, 1 October 1965, p. 1.
22 Cook, "Ladies' Night," p. 8.
23 Mailer, "By Heaven," p. 22.
24 Reyner Banham, "Collect $2,000,000," *New Society*, 16 June 1978, p. 605.
25 Bennett Roth, "National Media Use Houston As Example of Ills Afflicting Cities," *Houston Chronicle*, 23 August 1992, pp. 1A, 26A.

More Than a City Park

Vito Acconci's Proposal for Autry Park

William F. Stern

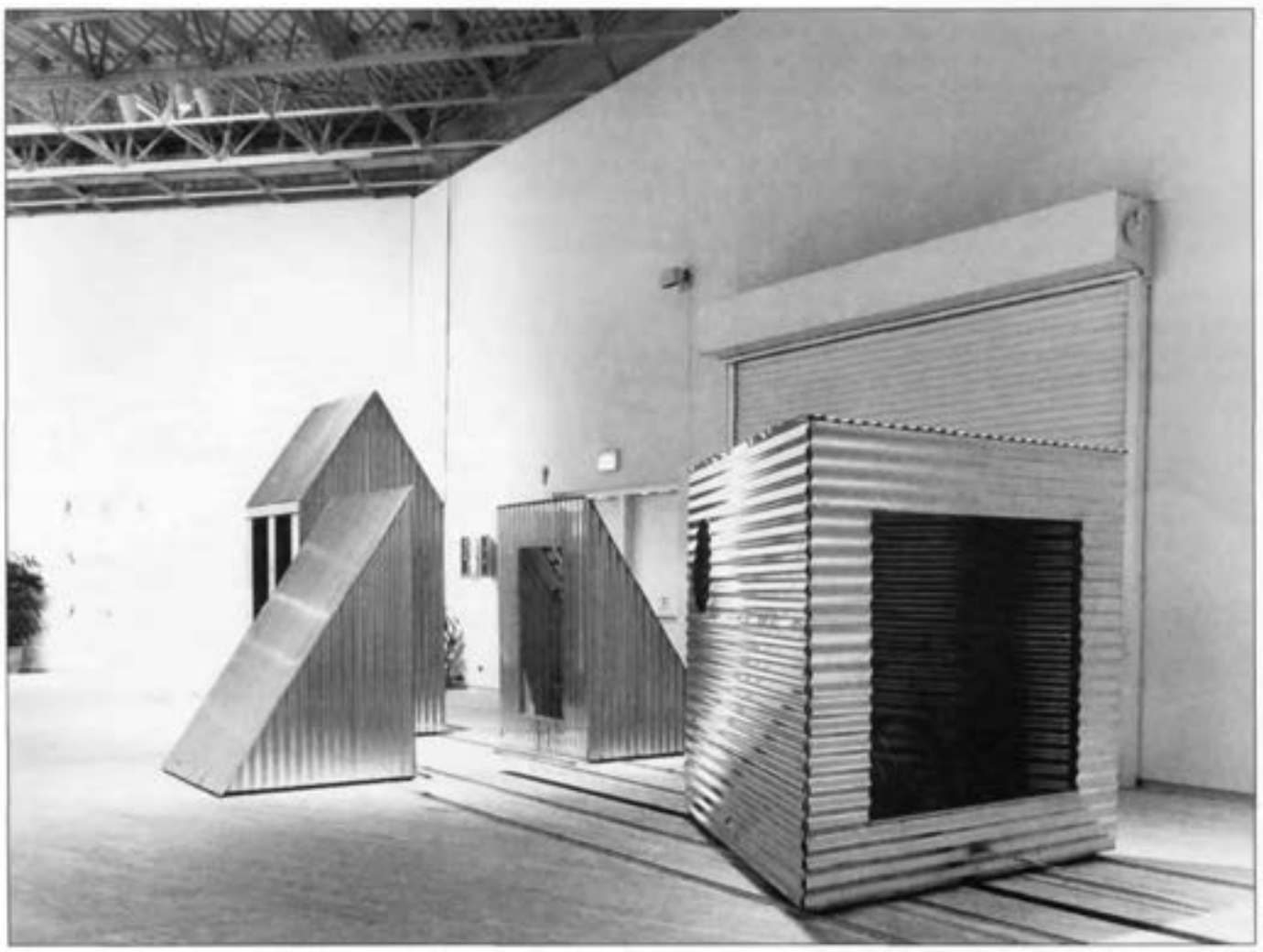
IN SPRING 1990, Susan and Roy O'Connor, founders and principal trustees of the Appleseed Foundation, presented a proposal for the development of Autry Park, city-owned land under the supervision of the Houston Parks and Recreation Department. The unimproved, vacant site is located at the intersection of Allen Parkway and Shepherd Drive, adjacent to the Center for the Retarded. The Appleseed Foundation was founded to support programs that explore new and innovative ways of designing playgrounds, playground equipment, and other play spaces that are beneficial for the development of a child's physical capabilities and motor skills. At an afternoon gathering in their home attended by civic leaders and members of the Houston arts community, the O'Connors introduced Vito Acconci, a prominent artist from New York commissioned by Appleseed to prepare designs for the park. Using a scale model, Acconci presented his concept for a park that would challenge a child or adult to find new ways of moving through everyday space.

Unfortunately, his fascinating proposal was not to be realized. Even the generosity of the Appleseed Foundation and the imagination of the artist were not strong enough to overcome the skepticism of those organizations that claimed to have the greatest stake in the land of Autry Park. Yet Vito Acconci's proposal suggests a wider application, and, reviewing its specifics, one discovers an original approach to landscape design that could be applied at another time and to a different site somewhere else in Houston.

Although not well known in Houston, Vito Acconci is no stranger to the city. In 1981, he participated with five other artists in an exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum called *Other Realities – Installations for Performance*, curated by Marti Mayo, now director of the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston. *Collision House*, Acconci's piece in the exhibition, is helpful in understanding his approach to art. At first glance *Collision House* might appear to be just another piece of large-scale abstract sculpture. Yet a different side of the sculpture comes to life when the viewer becomes actively involved. *Collision House* begins as two separate, corrugated-metal-clad triangular shapes, one upright, the other on its side like a wedge of cheese. The two shapes are connected on a track. Inside the wedge is a bicycle; when the viewer pedals, the wedge moves toward the upright triangular piece. Simultaneously, the center section of the upright triangular piece moves forward until it appears as a small, archetypal house. The now revealed blue and gold interior of the "house" displays a black flag with cut-out letters bearing the inscription "NGGR, FLG. No. 1." As the advancing wedge moves fully into position between the two sides of the opened triangular section, the cyclist looks through two circular cutout windows to see a white interior with inscriptions in black text that read "BMB SHLTR. No. 1" on one side and "BMB SHLTR. No. 2" on the other. These inscriptions are purposely mysterious, the artist's means of communicating obscure and private thoughts.[1]

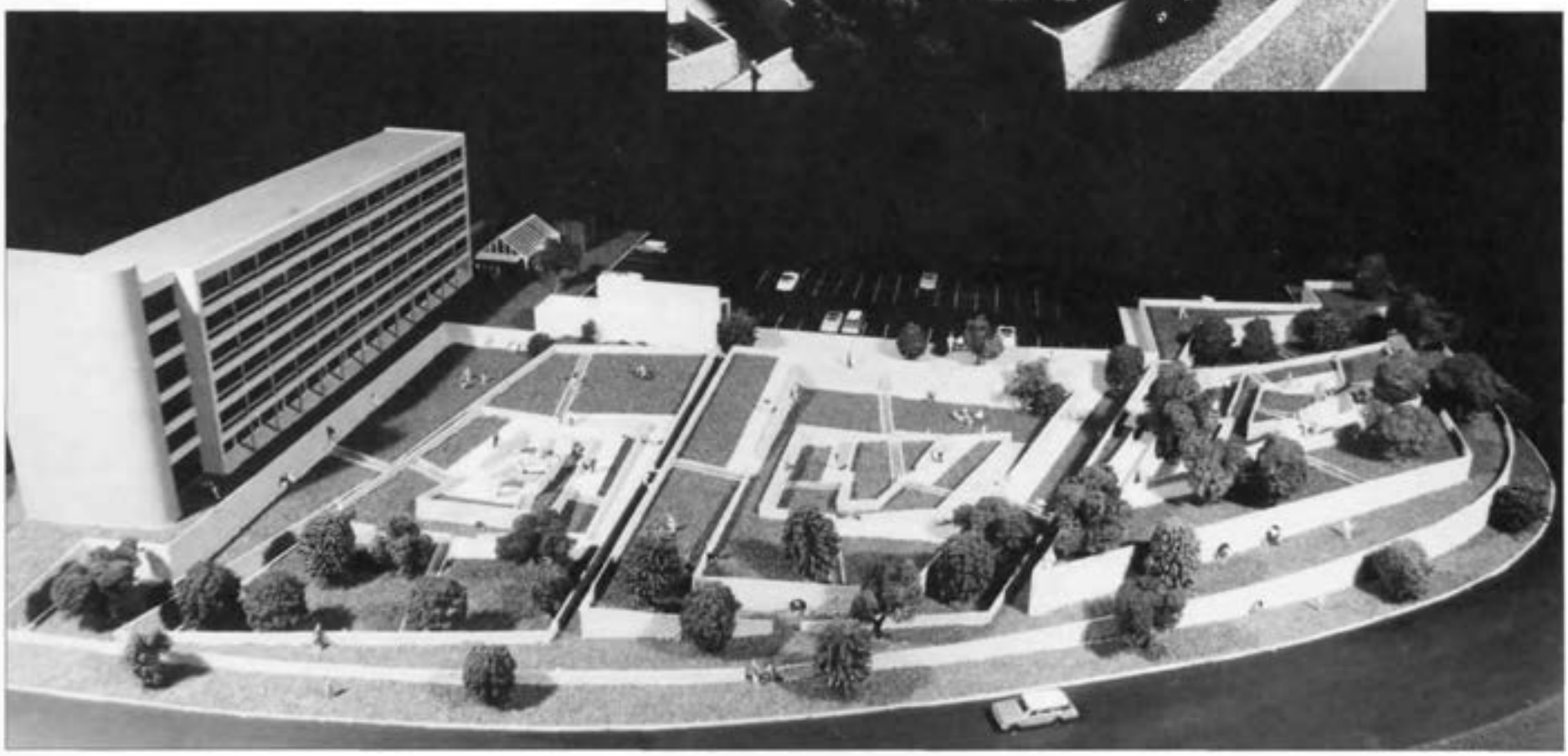
Central to the experience of *Collision House*, and always an issue in Acconci's work, is the joining and separation of two worlds, one outside and the other inside. The layers of inside and outside are purposefully complex, their meaning unfolding as a serial experience. The position of the participant constantly changes, first from the outside to the bicycle inside the wedge, then pedaling the bicycle, which moves the wedge into position within the sectioned triangle revealing the latter's interior space, color, and message. The entire scenario may also be viewed by an independent audience looking onto a virtual performance by the lone bicycle pedaler. Had the park proposed by Acconci for Houston been realized, it might have provoked a similar set of experiences, particularly the sense of coming from without to within through a multitude of overlapping layers, shapes, and forms.

As an artist, Acconci develops his designs through a process quite different from that of a typical design professional. Unlike the determined methodology of an architect, landscape architect, or planner, Acconci approaches a given problem with greater ambiguity. For the design professional, the process most often starts with a rather detached inventory of existing and surrounding conditions, such as landscape, roadways, climate, and circulation patterns. From this inventory a certain logical solution or way of dealing with the particular site reveals itself. The process of designing Autry Park was different. To begin with, Acconci helped determine the site, making his selection not for its potential as a landscape design, but because of its possibilities for personal interaction. And although only two sites were seriously considered, he favored Autry Park because of its adjacency to the Center for the Retarded in particular, as well as the Lighthouse of Houston, the Houston School for Deaf Children, the Gulf Coast Easter Seal Society, and the Houston Junior Forum Recreation Center for Older Adults – institutions serving people who are marginalized within society because of their handicaps. He was also intrigued with the site because he saw the land as a leftover, rejected space between a highway, a parking lot, and a building and not attached to any of these, visually or functionally. It did not matter to Acconci (nor was he particularly aware) that Autry Park is situated at a prominent traffic intersection, made all the more visible because of its sloping terrain. It never seemed very important to Acconci that his



***Collision House* by New York artist Vito Acconci was part of a 1981 exhibition at Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum, *Other Realities – Installations for Performance*.**

The empty Autry Park site as it appears today, with the Center for the Retarded in the background.



Vito Acconci's 1990 proposal for the development of Autry Park in Houston, at the intersection of Allen Parkway and Shepherd Drive. *Inset:* Detail of the model made in Acconci's studio.

proposed park would have a major visual impact at that intersection. Anything seen from passing cars would simply be an incidental byproduct of his design. He was far more concerned with the individuals from the adjoining institutions who would be using the park, or outsiders who might happen upon the park. From the beginning he intended a place that would be substantially internalized for the benefit of people with unconventional sensory perceptions. Essentially Acconci set out to undermine accepted and common order with another order that might stimulate an imaginative and exceptional response. He accepted the fact that an individual without sight or hearing, or one with stunted intellectual development, sees and perceives the world quite differently from the so-called normal. But while acknowledging these differences, Acconci never intended to make a place of exclusion.

Initially Acconci had contemplated a physical connection between the park and the dormitory of the Center for the Retarded via elevated pathways, but he rejected this in favor of a park that would exist fully within itself. In an interview he described the essence of the organization as "embedded" construction rather than an "added to" system: making "space within a space, a space within that, a space within that," to a point within the practical limitations of increasingly smaller spaces.[2] To achieve this end, a pivoting three-dimensional labyrinth was formed by tilting the ground plane of the individual spaces and separating each of the resultant cells with concrete retaining walls. Rather than build on the ground, Acconci chose to build into the ground, by first building up and then shifting the ground inward through a series of tilting planes.

The entire oblong tract was to tilt along its natural slope so that half of the land would rise up toward Shepherd Drive and the other half fall toward Allen Parkway and the center's six-story dormitory building. The tract would then be subdivided by concrete walls lengthwise into three roughly trapezoidal pieces. Within these trapezoidal blocks, the ground would be further subdivided into increasingly smaller trapezoidal blocks, the ground plane of each tilting in the opposite direction, making a faceted surface of tilted planes. For the practical consideration of ambulatory or wheelchair movement, the angle of each plane was determined by the slope for a handicap ramp. A concrete retaining wall was to surround the three largest sections, with entrances on both the parking lot side and Allen Parkway side that could be closed at night with security gates. Each of the three mazelike tables would thus be approached on either side of its pivoting axis. Inside the park there would be a series of walkways interrupted along their paths by three-foot-wide channels of water, two to three inches deep. The water channels would present an intentional obstacle to be crossed or circumnavigated. Benches would be formed of concrete strips projecting forward as the land fell gradually beneath. Round galvanized culvert pipes, like those used for drainage underneath highways, would be inserted into the concrete retaining walls. Some pipes would be covered with perforated metal, shielding walkway lights. Others would be left open and outfitted with seats for resting along the way or threaded from one side of the slope to the other, providing a tunnel to crawl or slide through.

Clearly Acconci intended to set a stage of intrigue that would unfold through individual discovery and exploration. The dilemma of how to move through the park was to be resolved through a series of questions as in a game, such as: How shall I proceed? Shall I go up or down? Do I cross this little stream or follow it until another path joins my path? Where do I start and how do I end my journey? Shall I seek the shelter of an underground tunnel? Where the outside world is rationalized by clear and repeated systems of order, the experience of Acconci's park would have relied far more on an instinctual response as a guide along a benign yet mysterious pathway. Acconci's proposal presents a credible alternative model to an everyday order that can be both alienating and confusing to the outsider who, because of a physical or mental handicap, cannot easily cope with regulated order and its inherent rigidities. The order in Acconci's park would be found through natural instinct without the imposition of preexisting authority. Like the experience of *Collision House* at the Contemporary Arts Museum, the transformation would occur as the park was actively explored. The park would never possess the outward beauty of a conventional park; rather the sensation of beauty would necessarily come from within through the delicate sensations that occur while feeling one's way along.

Acconci's 1990 model for a bus shelter, now being built at the Longview School in Phoenix.

The requirements for Acconci's proposal for Autry Park had been carefully worked out with the O'Connors and the Appleseed Foundation in consultation with the staffs of the parks department and boards of the adjacent institutions. The director and board of the Center for the Retarded, the group with the greatest interest in the park, were more actively involved as the program for the park was refined. So when Acconci presented his model, there was initial acceptance and, indeed, enthusiasm for the unusual proposal. The parks department, happy to accept the generosity of a private foundation, went along. Unfortunately, the board of the Center for the Retarded had neglected to involve their parents' association in the programming and the meetings with Appleseed and Acconci. Members of the parents' association were apparently astounded when they viewed the model, fearing that the park would be a dangerous and disorienting place for their children. Their reaction was so damaging that Appleseed lost the support of the Center for the Retarded and the parks department. Further work on the proposal was tabled even though Acconci explicitly said he was willing to address the concerns of the parent' association. Moreover, Acconci was never given the opportunity to broaden the concept of the initial scheme by addressing obvious technical issues or by introducing more specific elements of the natural landscape.

In retrospect, it is hard to say what went wrong. Even if the parents' association had been consulted at the beginning, they may never have been prepared to accept such a seemingly radical approach to the design for the "safe" playground they probably wanted. Perhaps Acconci's presentation model, in its attempt to simulate reality looking something like a model railroad set, would have been more convincing if it had been rendered abstractly, leaving more to the imagination. It is unfortunate that Acconci never had the chance to answer the challenges and objections to his scheme, but without the confidence and support of the center's board and the parks department, it would have been futile for Appleseed to pursue their proposal. Two years later, Autry Park remains as Acconci found it, an empty place between two highways, a parking lot, and a building.

Audience participation and interaction, always present in Vito Acconci's work, appeared in his design of public places in the 1980s, when the artist first made proposals specifically for parks and outdoor spaces. In an early proposal, a playground was to be composed of giant football and hockey masks, with swings and slides attached to the masks' frames. Another piece, *Face of the Earth* (1984), anticipated some of the ideas Acconci would pursue at Autry Park. First building up flat, Astroturf-covered wooden shelves, he then carved facial features out of the resulting mound. The piece was intended to be climbed and sat upon. Following a 1988 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of Acconci's proposals for public spaces, the artist received many new and even larger commissions for outdoor parks and spaces. Finally, some of these commissions are coming to fruition. In Phoenix, Arizona, construction will soon start on a bus shelter for a school. In the Bronx, New York, Acconci has worked with the building committee and architect of a new public elementary school designing the school's courtyard entrance. Here he proposes to fashion a series of geometrically arranged platforms that replicate and mirror, through the use of the same building materials – glass and brick – the facing walls that enclose the school's courtyard. In Europe, the city of Regensburg, Germany, has commissioned Acconci to design a park adjacent to a housing complex, and in 1993 the Museum for Applied Art in Vienna will open an installation specifically designed for the museum.

Acconci's design for Autry Park challenges the classical idea of a park as cultivated garden. Instead he suggests an approach that would stimulate and engage the senses both physically and intellectually, the precise goal the Appleseed Foundation sought to support. At their best, parks in cities provide relief and contrast to harsh urban conditions. Acconci's design for Autry Park would have accomplished this and much more. ■

1 Marti Mayo, *Other Realities – Installations for Performance* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1981), pp. 5–7.

2 Interview with Vito Acconci at his studio in Brooklyn, New York, June 1992.

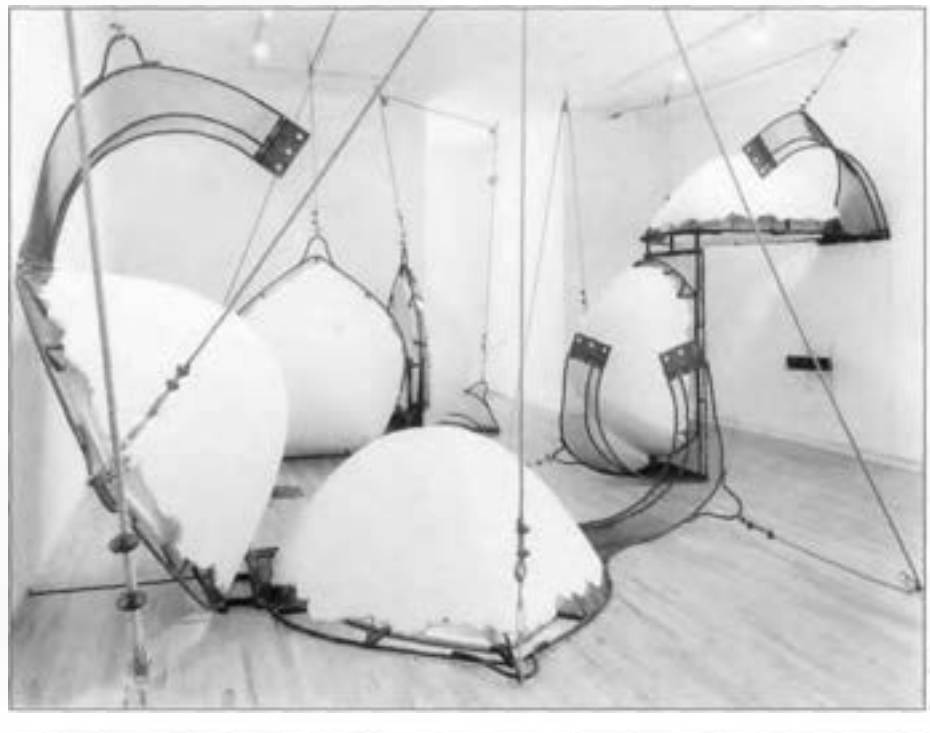
Other Sources:

Ronald J. Onorato, *Vito Acconci: Domestic Trippings* (La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987).

Linda Shearer, *Vito Acconci: Public Places* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988).

Three of Acconci's *Adjustable Wall Bras*, 1991, each made with plaster, steel reinforcing bars, canvas, steel cable, lights, and an audio component, are illustrated here in different positions. One version of the sculpture is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Vito Acconci, *Face of the Earth*, 1984, wood and Astroturf.



Larry Lee

The Rice Hotel

MARGIE C. ELLIOTT AND
CHARLES D. MAYNARD, JR.

When Texas was still an outpost for American civilization and Houston was a rowdy geographical gamble, Jesse H. Jones' Rice Hotel came along and showed the locals what class was all about.

DENNIS FITZGERALD, *Houston Chronicle*, 30 March 1975

Harris County Heritage Society

Ladies' bridge meeting, Crystal Ballroom, Rice Hotel, shortly after opening.

If sentiment were all that was needed to guarantee its preservation, Houston's Rice Hotel would be safe. But 15 years without maintenance have left what may be our most important landmark in ruinous condition. Many Houstonians, sentimentalists and pragmatists alike, wonder whether their city can live up to its own heritage.

At a time when cities were often judged by the quality of their hotels, the Rice was the best-known hotel in Texas, occupying the site of the first capitol of the Republic of Texas. When the Rice closed in 1975, *Smithsonian* published its colorful history, repeating many of the legends about wild and woolly Houston: cattlemen shooting up the hotel elevator, female rodeo stars riding horses into the lobby (and right up the stairs to the mezzanine powder room), Percy Foreman practicing law by telephone from a red leather chair in the Old Capitol Club.

The hotel's mystique is inextricably linked to the land on which it sits. There, on the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Texas Avenue, stood the building that was the first capitol of the Republic of Texas. The Rice is only the third building to occupy the site.

When the first Congress of the Republic of Texas met in October 1836 in Columbia, Houston's founders, John K. and Augustus C. Allen, were ready with inducements sufficient to persuade the fledgling government to choose as the provisional capital the Allens' new town, shrewdly named for the hero of San Jacinto. The nonexistent town of Houston won out over more than a dozen other contenders. The first capitol was built on the site in 1837. After 1839, when the seat of government was moved from Houston to Austin, the Allen brothers retained ownership of the capitol building, which continued to be used for public functions. In 1841 it was leased to become the Capitol Hotel. Since that time, except for a six-month period in 1842 when President Sam Houston temporarily moved the capital back to Houston, the site has been used exclusively for hotels.

The Allens' association with the old capitol ended in 1857 with sale of the property by Augustus Allen's widow, Charlotte M. Allen. In 1881 the original building was demolished to make way for the new Capitol Hotel, a five-story Victorian Renaissance structure with a frontage of 100 feet on Main Street and 150 feet on Texas Avenue. In 1886, William Marsh Rice, who had already built a fortune in Houston from lumber and land holdings, bought the property for unpaid taxes; in 1892 he added a five-story annex. Upon Rice's death in 1900, the property was bequeathed to the William Marsh Rice Institute, under whose ownership operation of the hotel, by then renamed the Rice, continued until 1911, when Jesse H. Jones purchased the building and leased the land. Jones demolished the hotel in 1912 and hired the St. Louis architectural firm of Mauran, Russell & Crowell to design a new 17-story structure, which opened as the new Rice Hotel in May 1913. From the beginning the Rice was a landmark, one of Houston's first steel-framed highrise buildings. Ten thousand people turned up to tour the building on opening day.

Through the years, numerous modifications were made. In 1921, Houston architect Alfred C. Finn was hired to design alterations for Jesse Jones's penthouse apartment at the Rice. The 1925–26 addition of a west wing, also designed by Finn, increased the number of guest rooms and gave the hotel its distinctive E-shaped configuration. A temporary rooftop bunkhouse, added to accommodate expected overflow crowds attending the 1928 Democratic National Convention, later became part of the "Top Deck of the Rice," the city's most popular dance spot. The roof garden was closed in 1942 in response to the blackout imposed by World War II, but the hotel was further expanded after the war. In 1951, an 18th-floor steel, glass, and masonry addition, designed by the Houston architectural firm of Staub & Rather, was made to house the Petroleum Club, which occupied the space until the hotel closed two decades later.

Upon the death of Jesse Jones in 1956, ownership of the Rice passed to the Houston Endowment, Inc., the philanthropic foundation established by Jones and his wife, Mary Gibbs Jones. The hotel was again updated in 1958–59 with the addition of a five-story concrete and masonry annex that housed a motor lobby and a new grand ballroom. In 1971, Houston Endowment donated the hotel to Rice University, which had owned the land upon which the building stood since the 1900 death of William Marsh Rice. For two years the hotel continued to operate profitably. In 1974, however, the city of Houston adopted a new fire code, which by some estimates could have required up to $1.2 million in modifications to bring the building into compliance. In December 1974, Rice University announced that the hotel would be closed and demolished if a buyer could not be found.

Houstonians braced themselves for demolition, but in 1975 the Rittenhouse Capital Corporation of New York stepped in and purchased the Rice. After a major remodeling, the hotel reopened in April 1976 as the Rice-Rittenhouse. Financial difficulties plagued it, however, and within a year the hotel was operating under Chapter 11. Rittenhouse was dropped from its name, and the hotel again operated as the Rice Hotel for a few months. In August 1977, the Rice Hotel was finally closed.

A group of Houston investors operating as the Rice Preservation Corporation bought the hotel in September 1977 at a foreclosure auction for $542,962. Early in 1978 the property was again sold, at a reported price of $3 million, to Portfolio Management of Texas, Inc., which applied for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and announced plans to convert the Rice to residential apartments. In October 1978, then secretary of the U.S. Depart-

Top: **Mauran, Russell & Crowell, architects, Rice Hotel, 1913. West wing addition by Alfred C. Finn, 1925–26.** *Bottom:* **The original Rice Hotel building, formerly the Capitol Hotel (George Dickey, 1881), occupied the site of the first capitol of the Republic of Texas. (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library)**

Anyone who has tried to save a historic building from demolition or establish a historic district in Houston knows about uphill battles, lost causes, and burnout. Houston preservationists have learned the hard way: lacking local preservation ordinances, they have had to rely on state and local preservation tools that are not very effective when owners of historic properties start thinking about aluminum siding or demolition.

Local historical preservation should receive a big boost with the adoption of zoning. Houston's ordinance will include provisions for the establishment of historic landmark and historic district designations. Applications for these designations may be initiated by one of several city agencies or by property owners. Upon the recommendation of the Houston Archeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) and following reviews and public hearings at three levels, city council will decide whether or not to officially grant the designation. Once the designation has been granted, proposed alterations and demolitions of historic property must be reviewed by HAHC, which may approve the proposal, approve it with conditions, or disapprove.

The zoning mechanism for protecting a building or district is the establishment of "overlay districts," which include both landmark and historic districts. Either an "H" (historic district) or an "L" (landmark) designation may be combined with any base zoning district. Once adopted by city council, the more restrictive of the two combined zoning designations will apply.

The stated purpose of the historic overlay provisions in the zoning ordinance includes the promotion of preservation and protection of landmarks and historic districts and buildings of architectural or historical significance. Although they will not guarantee an end to the demolition of landmarks, they will allow consideration of issues of public versus private interests. The ordinance is expected to deter demolition, misuse, or neglect of these visible reminders of the city's heritage and to encourage the development of new projects that are tailored to the character of significant districts and neighborhoods. ■

ment of Housing and Urban Development Patricia Harris announced that the project had been approved for federal funding for rehabilitation plans and rent subsidy. Twenty percent of the 338 apartments were to be rented to low-income families, whose rent payments would be subsidized with federal funds. But Houston was not ready for subsidized housing in a historic downtown building. Apparently because of PMTI's failure to secure the local financial support needed to qualify for federal subsidy, the project never got off the ground.

In 1981, during Houston's last big real estate boom and before the beginning of the recession brought on by the decline in oil prices, the Rice Hotel was acquired for a reported $7.75 million by Rovi Texas Corporation, part of RVW Fides, a large West German investment group that was also involved in the 2,615-acre, master-planned Grogan's Crossing, north of Houston. Shortly after the purchase, Rovi Texas announced plans to rehabilitate the Rice as a luxury hotel with the aid of $9.6 million in federal funds, to be applied for through the city of Houston. The plan stalled in city council; in 1986, Rovi Texas relinquished ownership of the hotel to its bank. Since then, little has been reported about the Rice except for periodic confirmations of an asking price of $15 million to $17 million and occasional rumors about possible buyers.

In June 1992, an agent of the Frankfurt BFG-Bank AG inspected the building and was shocked at the condition of its failing roof and the resulting deterioration. The bank immediately authorized its broker to contact all parties who had made offers in the past 18 months and inform them of a drastic reduction to less than 50 percent of the earlier asking price.

While reduction in the up-front cost of the building might seem to make rehabilitation more feasible, it also increases the likelihood that the property could be acquired for the site alone. High vacancy rates in central business district commercial properties and a relative abundance of open building space downtown would seem to reduce the likelihood of demolishing the Rice for new development, but that possibility has been mentioned. In July, Houston architect Gunther Koetter, a member of the board of directors of Metro, suggested tearing down the landmark hotel to build a bus and rail transit center at the corner of Main and Texas. Indeed, spokespersons for BFG-Bank AG, declining a request to clean and paint the hotel's street-level canopy as part of the city's preparations for the Republican National Convention, admitted that they are trying to sell the property, for demolition if necessary, and do not intend to invest further funds in the building.

Little has been mentioned in the context of this year's price reduction about the feasibility of redevelopment. A 1984 proposal provided an estimate for redevelopment of $80 million, including acquisition and financing costs. The 1984 proposal included rehabilitation of the original 1913 wings of the building for use as a 400-suite luxury hotel, the addition of six floors to the five-story 1958 annex, construction of a multistory atrium and elevator core between the annex and the 1928 west wing to create a 275,000-square-foot integrated office building on Travis, and restoration of the exteriors of the original and 1928 structures. A $15 million tax credit for certified rehabilitation costs in the year placed in service would have resulted in a net investment of $65 million, yielding a per-square-foot cost of approximately $120, including the cost of installation of all-new building systems, from new fire stairs and elevators complying with the code to new heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems and sprinklers.

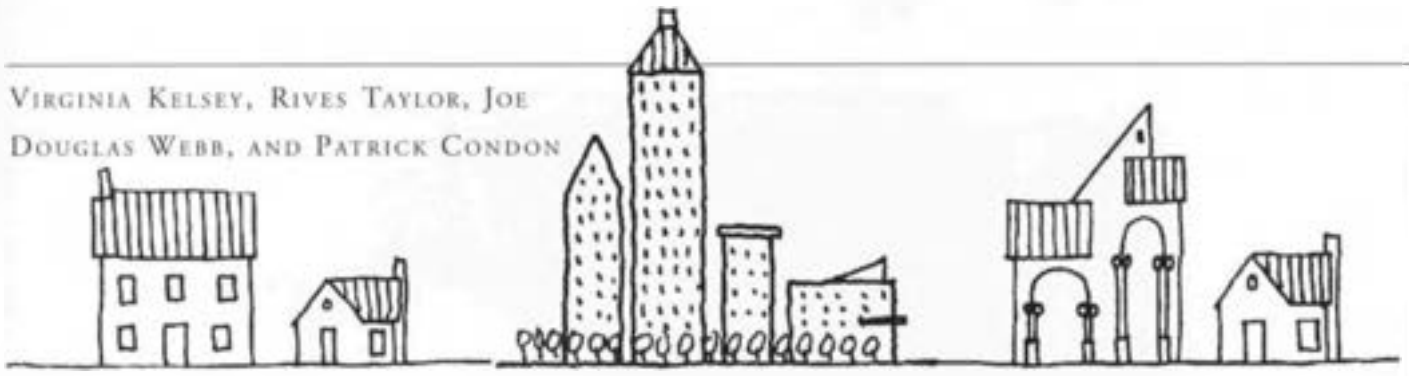
In the wake of Houston's building slump, construction costs have declined as competition among builders has increased. The acquisition cost would also be significantly lower than the 1984 cost. On the other hand, the 1986 tax reform act reduced and restricted tax credits for historical preservation, and the 1984 cost estimate would be further increased by other factors, including the recently enacted Americans With Disabilities Act.

The 1984 study was revealing in several respects. Although it concluded that the width of the building bays would not accommodate space-efficient double-access hallways, it disclosed no structural shortcomings that would preclude interior demolition and reconstruction in accordance with current codes. In fact, the building frame is steel and the walls nonbearing. The designer shrugged off the limitations of the bay width and developed a scheme incorporating a high proportion of suites and junior suites, all with exterior views, and touted the single-access hallways as an amenity that permitted all hallways to be lit by natural light. This constraint would be less significant in the context of office space, which allows greater flexibility of layout, open space planning, and cheaper installation costs. Use of the structure for office space would also reduce plumbing requirements, a significant expense, and permit broader HVAC zones instead of individual room controls. Further, the Rice is adjacent to several segments of the tunnel system and thus has ready access to the network. Overall, costs of the project should be significantly less than the $80 million anticipated by the 1984 study.

It seems unlikely, however, that a successful redevelopment scheme can be formulated without involvement from the public sector. Some have suggested use of the Rice as a city administration building, like the Houston Savings Building on Main. Another possible approach, similar to the model provided by Philadelphia's Hotel Atop the Bellvue, is a mixed-use project. With restaurants or retail space on two or three floors, residential and/or hotel use on others, perhaps with several other floors given over to office use, the numbers might be made to work.

Comprehensive planning, when we finally get around to it, may help prompt a vision to preserve the Rice Hotel. But we're running out of time. ■

Virginia Kelsey, Rives Taylor, Joe Douglas Webb, and Patrick Condon



Zoning Houston: A Guide

THE CITY'S PLANNERS are still working on a final draft of Houston's first zoning ordinance, an initiative mandated by city council in January 1991 in response to a grass-roots call for protection of property values and the quality of neighborhood life. Since the work began, various interest groups have been sizing up just what zoning will mean to this city, trying to assess who will benefit and who will lose when the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations finally become law. ▪ Those speculations have become more focused since the Planning and Development Department issued a proposed hearing draft of the regulations on 5 October. The maps are being drawn that will redefine the city in terms of the ordinance's nomenclature. When the mapping is complete, the plan will be submitted for public review. ▪ The ordinance is scheduled to go to the planning commission, then to city council, for approval in early January. ▪ It remains to be seen how well it will support the initial objectives of simplicity and sensitivity to Houston's existing form and unbridled entrepreneurial spirit. A review of the draft shows that substantial issues remain to be resolved. ▪

- While the state enabling laws for zoning mandate a comprehensive plan, there are no provisions in the draft connecting comprehensive planning and zoning. Scheduled to begin in January after the initial zoning proposal has been approved, the comprehensive planning process is expected to establish a detailed statement of what kind of city Houston wants to be, how the various parts and subsystems of the city can be made to work together toward common objectives, and how the city can best direct its increasingly limited fiscal and natural resources.

  Normally the preparation of a comprehensive plan would precede or parallel the development of a zoning plan. But without approval of a zoning ordinance – not a sure bet in Houston – the comprehensive planning effort may prove to be moot and impossible to implement. In an attempt to ride the crest of enthusiasm for zoning, city council has pushed the city planning department and community committees to produce a draft ordinance quickly.

- The ordinance will generate an immense volume of work for the Planning and Development Department, the Board of Adjustment (still to be created), the Planning and Zoning Commission, and city council. It is not clear what provisions are being made in departmental budgets and staffing to handle the anticipated workload.

- While performance standards have been touted as the best way to have flexible controls in the open and unregulated zones (O zones), there are almost no performance standards in the ordinance. Most regulations are rigidly prescriptive, telling property owners exactly what they must do in terms of such things as setbacks, height limitations, and types and spacing of trees.

  The O zone, which was to preserve large areas in which Houston's entrepreneurial spirit could continue to flourish, may turn out to be an interim designation, eventually to be replaced by other zoning categories. The ordinance requires, for example, that any single-family homes developed in the O zone be rezoned R1, the most restrictive residential category.

- Landscaped "bufferyards" 10 to 25 feet wide are proposed to separate different uses (e.g., homes from stores). These will be costly to build and maintain and difficult to create in already developed areas, and their effectiveness in ameliorating problems between uses has not been tested.

- A new district classification, the major activity center (MAC), was added shortly before completion of the draft. Intended for areas of intense development such as downtown, uptown, and the Texas Medical Center, it includes perimeter setback requirements less stringent than those in the O zone. Neighborhood groups and commercial property owners will probably debate these setback regulations during the public hearings.

- Provisions for the creation of overlay, special, and planned unit development districts are included in the draft. These are devices for tailoring zoning regulations to different areas of the city. Once the zoning ordinance is passed and planning has begun, it will be important to use these tools to fine-tune the overall impact of the ordinance and to make it more responsive to Houston's diverse neighborhoods.

- Zoning proposals are frequently caught between two types of criticism. On the one hand are those who argue that zoning is a weak instrument that fails to promote real changes and improvements. Instead, these critics argue, zoning in attempting to be fair to all can promote a lowest-common-denominator approach to the environment. Or zoning is viewed as going too far, saddling builders with needless and even counterproductive regulations that can freeze development into existing patterns and discourage experimentation with new use patterns and building types. Both concerns will continue to be raised in Houston, no matter what zoning controls are proposed.

A panel of seasoned planning professionals at a recent University of Houston symposium, "Why Plan What?," affirmed that zoning and planning efforts take years and hundreds of community meetings to successfully integrate zoning into the city's thinking about itself. It is also clear that zoning a city the size of Houston is such a complex undertaking that one can only hope to set in motion a process of land-use and building regulation that will evolve from the plan's abstract and prototypical prescriptions into concrete rules for addressing conditions.

The guide assembled here attempts to illustrate Houston's zoning process. It is based on information gathered from the city through the month of October. Preparing such a guide is like shooting at a moving target: because of the nature of the consensus-building process, specifics of the proposal will continue to change right up to the submission of the ordinance to city council in January.

The guide also outlines other city ordinances presently on the books, including the interim zoning ordinance, that together constitute an ad hoc form of zoning. Houston has over the years passed numerous land-use ordinances aimed at specific issues – parking, setbacks, sexually oriented businesses, signs. None of these has been specifically incorporated into the draft zoning ordinance. Left separate, they will constitute a second, uncoordinated body of zoning regulations, adding to the difficulty of understanding the ordinance. The planning department already has taken on most of the responsibility for enforcing these regulations. A close look at their scope in light of the city's desire for minimal restrictions on property owners may well make us ask whether we need further regulations. Or how further regulations, without the guidance of a comprehensive plan, can effect real improvement.

A History of Zoning

Zoning, or at least the attempt to zone, is not new to Houston. In 1929 and 1938 zoning was proposed and subsequently shelved by city council. It resurfaced in 1948 and in 1962, to be soundly defeated in citywide referendums. Each time, well-organized groups derailed the effort, primarily because they believed zoning violated personal property rights.

In 1990 a grass-roots effort spearheaded by neighborhood and civic associations sought protection for Houston's neighborhoods. Their movement was a cry from the citizenry that flophouses, car repair shops, and taverns should not be allowed to destroy their neighborhoods. These efforts spurred the formation of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Planning and Zoning, sponsored by council member Jim Greenwood, and the Land Use Strategy Committee, formed by Mayor Kathy Whitmire.

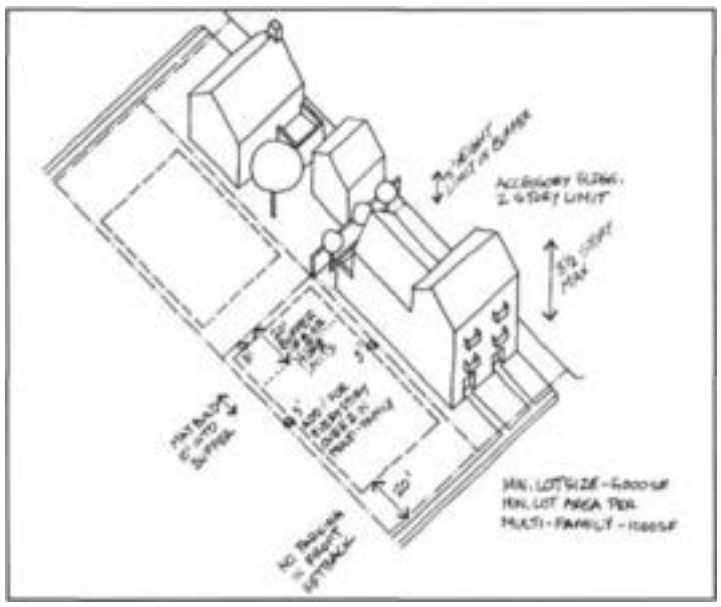
As a result of this effort, city council passed an enabling ordinance mandating that within one year the Planning and Zoning Commission present for preliminary approval zoning regulations to "achieve the goals of an approved comprehensive plan." Although it was council's intention for zoning to follow the comprehensive plan, they realized that given the timetable this was probably not possible. As a result, the original ordinance states that initiation of the comprehensive plan should be concurrent with the development of zoning regulations. Unfortunately, work on the comprehensive plan is beginning only in January 1993. This means that the current zoning proposal will be based on existing conditions rather than on a vision of what Houston wants to be in the future.

For the past 18 months, the Zoning Strategies Committee has been charged with developing an approach to a zoning ordinance that is specific to the needs of the city, i.e., "Houston-style zoning." As a result of their direction, the Planning and Development Department in conjunction with outside consultants presented the proposed hearing draft of the Houston zoning ordinance for review by the public, the ZSC, and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The zoning guide that follows is based on that report, dated 5 October 1992. After input from these various groups, a final document will be presented for city council's approval in January 1993.

What the People Say: The Rice Survey

Rice University's chronicler of Houston trends, Stephen Klineberg, recently con-ducted a survey of attitudes toward zoning (14 August 1992). The Rice poll shows that the average Houstonian aspires to have a pedestrian-scaled neighborhood with a variety of services and living arrangements.

- 55% of the respondents own their residence, while 45% rent
- 69% live in a single-family house in a deed-restricted neighborhood, while 29% live in apartments or condos
- 65% believe that the proximity of traffic to their house is not a problem
- 69% would accept daycare facilities, even if next door
- 63% strongly favor a neighborhood grocery store
- 76% strongly favor neighborhood proximity to schools

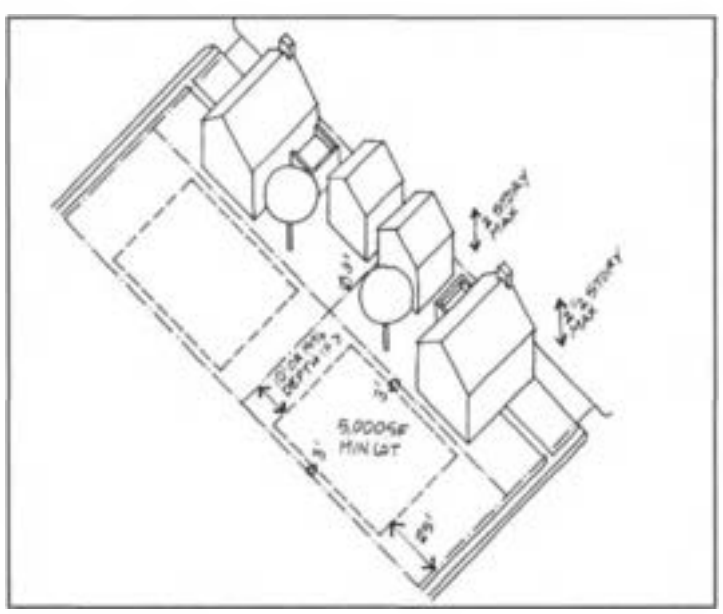


R1 Residential Single-Family Detached

Min. Lot Size 5,000 SF.
Front Yard Setback 25'; 20' on cul-de-sac and lots less than 105' deep.
Side Yard 3'.
Corner Side Yard 10' with 25' on major thoroughfares. On corner lots, garage doors must have a 20' setback.
Rear Yard 10' or 15% of lot depth, whichever is greater.
Max. Building Height 2½ stories.
Accessory Structures Height limit 2 stories. Setback 3' for side and rear. Garage apartments require one additional parking space.

- No parking in front or corner side yard of any R zone.
- There are allowances for chimneys, overhangs, and porches to project into setbacks.
- Fences in all R and UN zones limited to 8' in height but may be placed in the front setback so long as a clear view is maintained at street intersections.

Will not eliminate the proximity of different scales and densities.



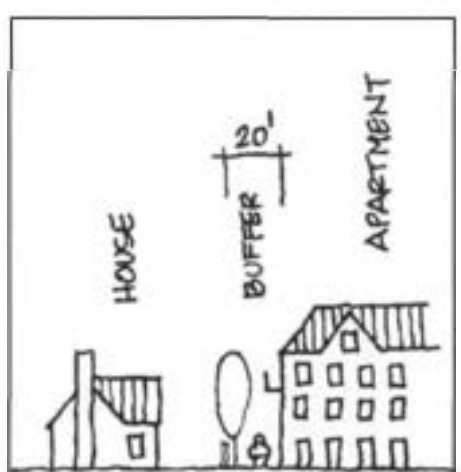
Other Residential Categories

R4 Up to 4 attached or detached dwellings per lot.

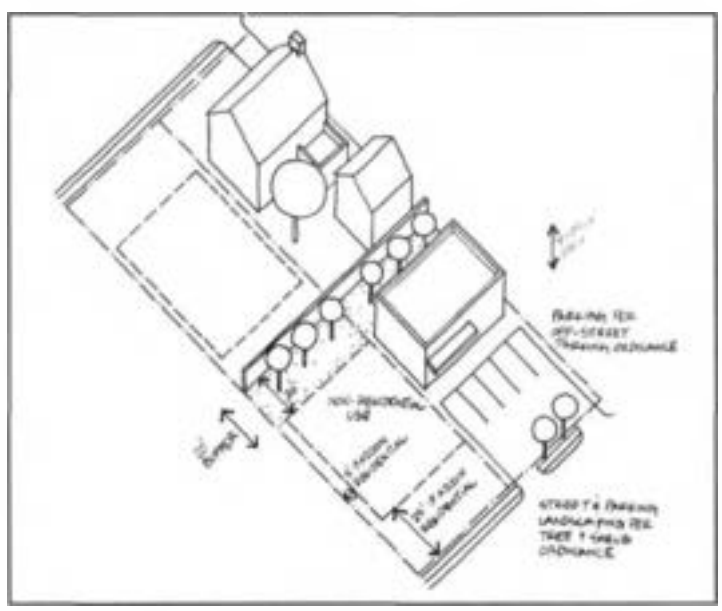
R8 Includes uses allowed in R1 and R4 and apartment buildings with no more than 8 dwellings per lot.

RO Includes uses allowed in R1, R4, R8, and apartment buildings with no limit on number of units.

Min. Lot Size 5,000 SF. May be reduced to 1,400 SF provided specified compensating open space is set aside. For multifamily development with more than 4 dwellings, a minimum 1,000 SF lot is required.
Max. Building Height 3½ stories. Accessory structures — 2 stories.
Other uses including public, semipublic, and commercial may be allowed. Uses may be limited or require a conditional use (CU) permit.

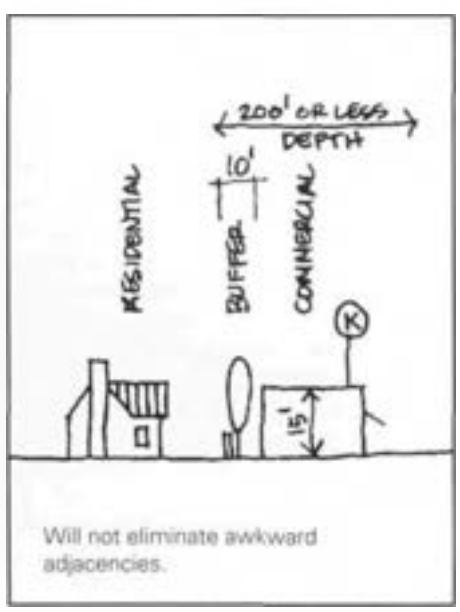


A 20' buffer will separate large-scale projects from your back yard.

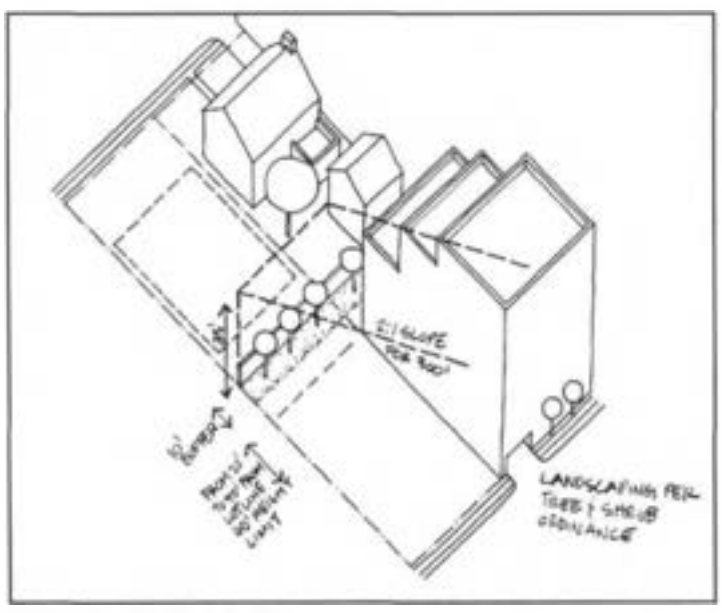


UN Urban Neighborhood

Min. Lot Size None stated.
Minimum Yards – Residential
Front and corner side: same as RO.
Side: 3'; increases 2' for each story over two in a multifamily dwelling. Zero-lot-line townhouses are allowed with a 10' fire break every 300'.
Rear: 15'. Shall be increased 5' for each story over two in a multifamily dwelling.
Nonresidential uses that adjoin residential uses must have a 25' front setback and 5' side setback. In all cases to have a 20' rear setback.
Max. Building Height 4 stories residential, 2 stories nonresidential. On a site with 8 or more units – 200 SF of open space is required per unit; on major thoroughfares – 150 SF.
Facilities That Serve Alcohol Not less than 50' from a residential district or 300' from a school, daycare, or religious facility.



Will not eliminate awkward adjacencies.

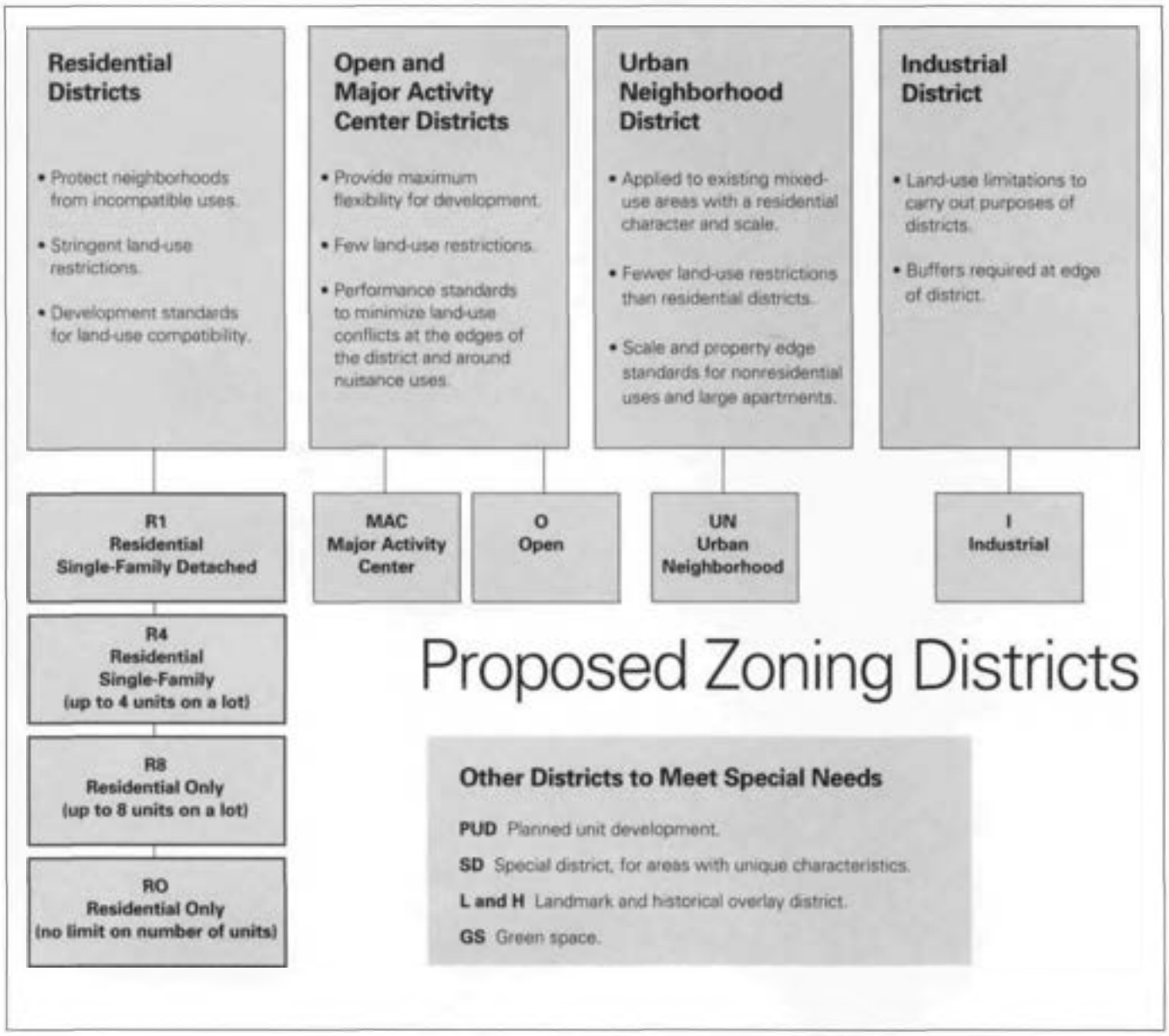


O Open

There are no setback, height, or use restrictions for the O zone except where adjacent to other districts; uses may range from residential to industrial.
Height Feathering Adjacent to R1 or R4 Residential, a 2:1 sloped height limit starts 35' off the ground at the first residential lot line of a district and extends 300'. Structures located more than 20' but less than 40' from the lot line shall not exceed 40' in height.
Facilities That Serve Alcohol Restricted as in UN.
Open Space for Multifamily Developments 200 SF per unit; 150 SF per unit for building more than 4 stories.
See four-lane thoroughfares section for uses limited within 300' of an R or UN district.
Major Activity Center (MAC) is a zoning district similar to O for areas such as downtown or the Galleria that have a minimum of 200 acres and 10 million GFA.

Within the city there are many areas of more than two acres that will be zoned open.

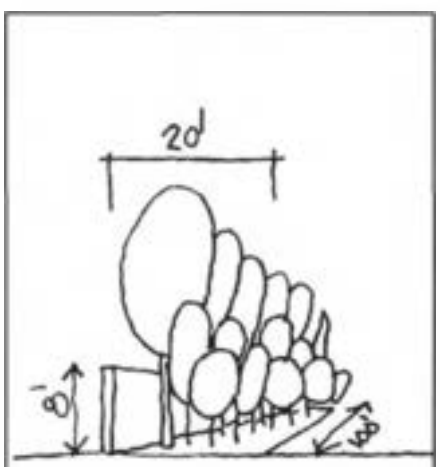
Illustrations by Virginia Kelsey



Most businesses will be restricted to four-lane thoroughfares.

Will allow small-scale retail on residential streets, but off-street parking must be behind front setback.

Downtown, medical center, Galleria will be zoned MAC, while Westheimer outside the Loop will be zoned O.



Standard bufferyard.

Four-Lane Thoroughfares

Houston, which lives and dies by the mobility of the family car, spends a great deal of money, energy, and time on these major traffic thoroughfares. The current zoning proposal limits almost all commercial activity to four-lane thoroughfares as a means of protecting neighborhoods, with the following exceptions:

In the Urban Neighborhood district, food and beverage sales (convenience stores) less than 2,500 SF, retail and office uses less than two stories in height, bed and breakfasts, group residential and nursing homes, Class 1 or 2 hotel/motels, parks, and schools are permitted on smaller streets. Uses limited to four-lane thoroughfares include bars and lounges less than 6,000 SF, building materials stores, car washes, emergency medical and entertainment facilities, general daycare, neighborhood shopping centers, office buildings and retail stores over two stories, restaurants less than 6,000 SF, and service stations.

In the Open zone, the uses above are limited to four-lane thoroughfares if within 300' of an R or UN district. Limitations of access beyond that point have not been stated.

Given the importance of these roads, some planners have suggested that Houston's first step should be a strong thoroughfare plan controlling the form and growth of this major civic realm.

What Is Allowed in the Residential Zone?

Home occupations are allowed as long as there are no signs advertising the business, no employees other than the owner of the property, and no significant traffic.

Home daycare is allowed provided there is a maximum of 6 children with no additional parking, employees, signage, or excessive noise. The caregiver must reside on the property.

Parks, religious assembly facilities, and schools are allowed with limited-use requirements attached. Bed and breakfasts, hospices, nursing homes, and general daycare are allowed in R8 and RO with limited-use or conditional-use requirements attached.

Buffer Zones

Bufferyards are required to screen residential from nonresidential and single-family from multifamily. The bufferyard is a part of and maintained by the owner of the higher-use (i.e., nonresidential) property. Currently, 3 buffer types are proposed – Standard, O, and Industrial. The first two are as follows:

Standard Bufferyard A width of 20' with 5 canopy trees and 11 ornamental trees per 100 linear feet. In addition, one of two options must be incorporated.

A – 8' acoustical wood or masonry fence
B – 8' single-sided fence / 63 shrubs per 100 linear feet

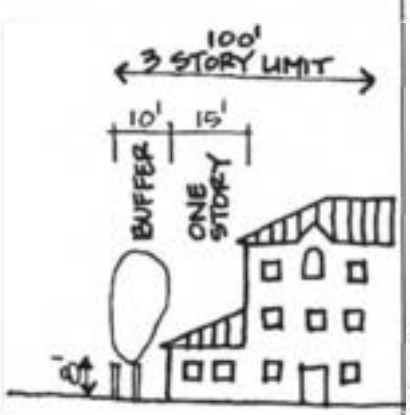
In a residential use, a 15' tall structure may be built 10' into a 20' buffer. In a MAC, O, or UN district, if the lot depth is less than 200', a 15' tall commercial building may be built 10' into the buffer. Surface parking is permitted in 10' of the buffer as well as additional exceptions for parking as close as 4' from the lot line.

O Bufferyard For use in the O district; it requires a 10' width with 3 canopy, 7 ornamental trees, and 53 shrubs per every 100'. An acoustical wood or masonry fence is required only for uses adjacent to residential property.

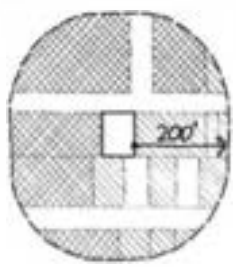
Binz neighborhood, east of the Museum of Fine Arts.

It All Comes Down to Mapping

Mapping is the process of determining, block by block, which of the zoning ordinance's district categories will be enforced in a given area. At the time this article was written, mapping of the proposed districts had just begun. As comprehensive planning has not yet begun, the city cannot be zoned toward a future ideal. Instead, the city will be mapped according to existing land uses – in effect freezing in time our existing use patterns. What is known is that all raw land over two acres in size will be zoned Open, and all single-family deed-restricted subdivisions will be zoned R1. The controversy, which may be great, arises in the mapping of everything in between. As an example, will Bissonnet near Rice University be zoned UN or R? Will the Binz area be R1, RO, or UN? The importance of this process cannot be overstated. Its results will determine the city's future growth.



Buffer and setback requirements for nonresidential uses under interim ordinance.



RESIDENTIAL	32.4%
NONRESIDENTIAL	67.6%
NONRESIDENTIAL AREA WAIVER GRANTED	66 2/3%

A TEST CASE OF THE INTERIM ORDINANCE

If the project is not exempt, a waiver can be sought if 66 2/3% of the land area within 200' of the proposed project is nonresidential. If 33 1/3% or less of the area within 200' of the proposed project is nonresidential, the project will not receive a waiver and therefore cannot be built. If the percentage is in between 33 1/3% and 66 2/3%, the property owner must receive permission from 75% of adjacent owners and file an appeal. Unfortunately, only single-family and duplex units qualify as residential dwellings.

On the Books

The Development Ordinance

Enacted in 1985, it established the first standards for public street and subdivision layouts. Its scope ranges from design of major thoroughfares and residential streets to easement considerations and general lot design. Many standards of the proposed zoning ordinance are in fact adopted from this ordinance. A few examples:

Minimum Lot Size 5,000 SF. Compensating open-space requirements are the same in both documents.
Front Yard Setback Single-family residential – 25', on cul-de-sac – 20', for multifamily – 10'. For nonresidential on local roads – 10' (if abutting residential – 25') and on major thoroughfares – 25'
Side Yard Setback Single-family residential – 10' on corner lot; setback for garage door facing corner lot – 20'. The 3' side yard requirement with 1' increase for each story over two is taken from the Houston Building Code.

Off-Street Parking Ordinance

The Off-Street Parking Ordinance was adopted in 1989 for the purpose of ensuring that off-street parking and loading facilities would be adequately provided for new buildings and for reconstructed existing facilities. The ordinance was designed to reduce congestion on city streets, but it has had the effect of limiting small developments that do not have sufficient land to support parking requirements. Areas such as the central business district, the medical center, and other major activity centers are regulated on an individual basis. As examples: residential requires 2 spaces for each single-family residence, offices require 2.5 spaces for every 1000 SF, and restaurants require 8 spaces per every 1000 SF.

Tree and Shrub Ordinance

This ordinance of 1991 was adopted to mitigate the adverse environmental effects of development, to screen different land uses, and to beautify the city by requiring trees and shrubs to be planted along streets and within parking lots. The code, pertaining to all new construction and building expansion except single-family residential, has the following requirements:

- One tree for every 30 feet of property fronting public streets.
- One tree for every 10 parking spaces, to be distributed in and around the lot. In addition, 10 shrubs per street tree are required to be planted along the parking lot perimeter.
- When the new use is adjacent to existing single-family, a six-foot fence or an evergreen tree screen is required.

Interim Residential Protection Ordinance

This ordinance was adopted this past June to serve as a "quick fix" to stop the conversion of residential dwellings into nonresidential uses and to end expansion of existing nonresidential uses within neighborhoods. A parcel of land larger than 2 acres or an unrestricted platted parcel of land any size is exempt from the ordinance, subject to:

- A 10' buffer, 8' solid fence, and 2 large and 2 small trees per 100 linear feet along adjoining residential property.
- A 15' setback beyond the buffer in which height is limited to one story.
- A height limit of 3 stories within 100' from residential property.

Patricia Johanson, sculpture in Fair Park Lagoon, Dallas, 1986.

Creature From the Brown Lagoon

Patricia Johanson's Environmental Sculpture, Dallas

BARBARA KOERBLE

PATRICIA JOHANSON'S environmental sculpture for the lagoon in Fair Park, Dallas, takes one by surprise. Comprising two segments at the north and south ends of the lagoon, its curling forms are glimpsed first through the drooping foliage of the cypresses that line the water's edge. As one draws nearer, it also becomes apparent that the sculpture is not simply contained within the banks but crawls up onto land, divaricating into tendrilled benches upon which people and birds can perch.

The appearance of Johanson's amphibious sculpture coincided with an $18 million renovation of the fairgrounds for which bonds were approved by Dallas voters in 1982, and which was to provide, as part of a general program of landscaping, new stone edging and a bridge for the lagoon. Although some funds designated for the bridge were diverted to Johanson's sculpture, the principal cost of her work was underwritten privately. The lagoon, built with WPA funds in 1936 as a flood-control measure for the site of the Texas Centennial Exposition, had by the 1970s become choked with algae fed by fertilizer runoff and with silt from the erosion of its banks. Its food chain was unbalanced because of a dearth of emergent vegetation – the aquatic plants that project above the water line and provide food and shelter for a variety of animal and insect life.

As the project for rehabilitation of the lagoon evolved, its elements were expanded to include public education, environmental art, habitat enhancement, and biological restoration. The impetus for the biological restoration of the lagoon came in the form of an ecological awareness event called "Inherit the Earth," organized in 1981 by For the People, Inc., "a small non-profit organization… dedicated to public information and education, especially in the area of ecological concerns."[1] For the People, Inc., was led by Bobette Higgins, whose zeal "pushed us all to the limit to get that project going," according to one curator involved in the planning process. In order to receive funding from the Dallas-based Meadows Foundation for her consciousness-raising initiative, Higgins was required to enlist the cooperation of all four museums situated in Fair Park at the time: the Dallas Museum of Natural History, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Texas Hall of State, and the Science Place, each of which was to host an exhibition related to the environmental theme and participate in a joint symposium. The Dallas Museum of Natural History was responsible for creating an exhibition that would explore "aesthetically satisfactory alternatives to rare and beautiful natural areas,"[2] a point of departure suggested to Higgins by Martin Krieger's article in *Science* magazine titled "What's Wrong With Plastic Trees?," which had speculated that in the future, artists might be called upon to create artificial environments utilizing a combination of engineering, environmental, and aesthetic skills.[3]

The then director of the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Harry Parker, proposed commissioning a site-specific environmental sculpture and submitted the name of Johanson as a prospective artist, having seen a recent exhibition of her *Plant Drawings for Projects* at the Rosa Esman Gallery in New York. The DMFA agreed to pay for Johanson's conceptual drawings, using Meadows Foundation grant money, and also attempted to give fundraising a boost by displaying Johanson's project drawings during the symposium, which took place in fall 1982. At the time, the DMFA was planning its own departure from Fair Park for a new museum building to be constructed in the arts district downtown. Johanson's sculpture was intended as something it could leave behind in addition to its vintage WPA Moderne building, which was to be occupied thereafter by the Science Place. As former DMFA curator of contemporary art Sue Graze put it, the museum's hope was that "this ecological yet aesthetic and functional landscape will extend the space of the |Natural History| Museum out-of-doors, providing a living natural history exhibit as well as contemporary sculpture garden."[4]

With Parker's guidance, Johanson selected the lagoon as the site for her project and immediately sought advice on its biological restoration from the curators at the Museum of Natural History. She was given neither program nor budget, but Parker assured her: "This is Dallas. If they like it, they'll build it."[5] Her initial impression of the lagoon was that "it is beautiful… though badly neglected, but it's not a magical place." She felt it lacked human scale, that "from a designer's point of view there is no middle ground to mediate the shift in scale between you and it, and there is a conventional sameness throughout, so it becomes a very passive and visual environment." And so Johanson set out to "turn this into an environment to be experienced and explored, rather than something that one just drives past. I also thought it would be wonderful to have a complex, ecological landscape in the middle of a big dynamic city like Dallas, and so a major part of the 'environmental art' became to create a functioning aquatic community. And I think symbols are very important for cities – something that is unique and totally identified with the place – so I tried to make it as little like a 'public art' project as I could."[6]

Sue Graze recalled that neither she nor the artist had much hope that the design would actually be realized. But Bobette Higgins's determination to see it built found a responsive and enthusiastic supporter in Sally Lancaster, executive vice-president of the Meadows Foundation, whom Johanson describes as "a very key person." Ultimately the Communities Foundation of Texas (which stipulated that the lagoon be dedicated to the memory of philanthropist Dorothea Leonhardt), the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Charles B. and Florence E. King Foundation, the American Petrofina Foundation, the Eugene McDermott Foundation, the Dallas Parks and Recreation Department, and individual donors contributed funds toward the construction of the project, the cost of which was initially projected at $200,000 but ultimately reached $1 million.

The sculptures, completed in 1986, are built of gunite, a type of concrete sprayed over a steel armature. Crushed firebrick was mixed with the concrete to create its

vivid terra-cotta color. The two discrete sections of the sculpture are patterned, at least in plan, after two Texas aquatic plants. The superstructure at the north end derives from *Sagittaria patyphylla*, commonly known as the "delta duckpotato" because ducks like to eat its fleshy roots, and measures 235 by 175 feet; that at the south end traces the outline of *Pteris multifida*, a fern, and measures 225 by 112 feet. The sides of several of its "leaves" curl upward and undulate in an expressionistic manner, at one point forming an arch to accommodate a pedestrian bridge.

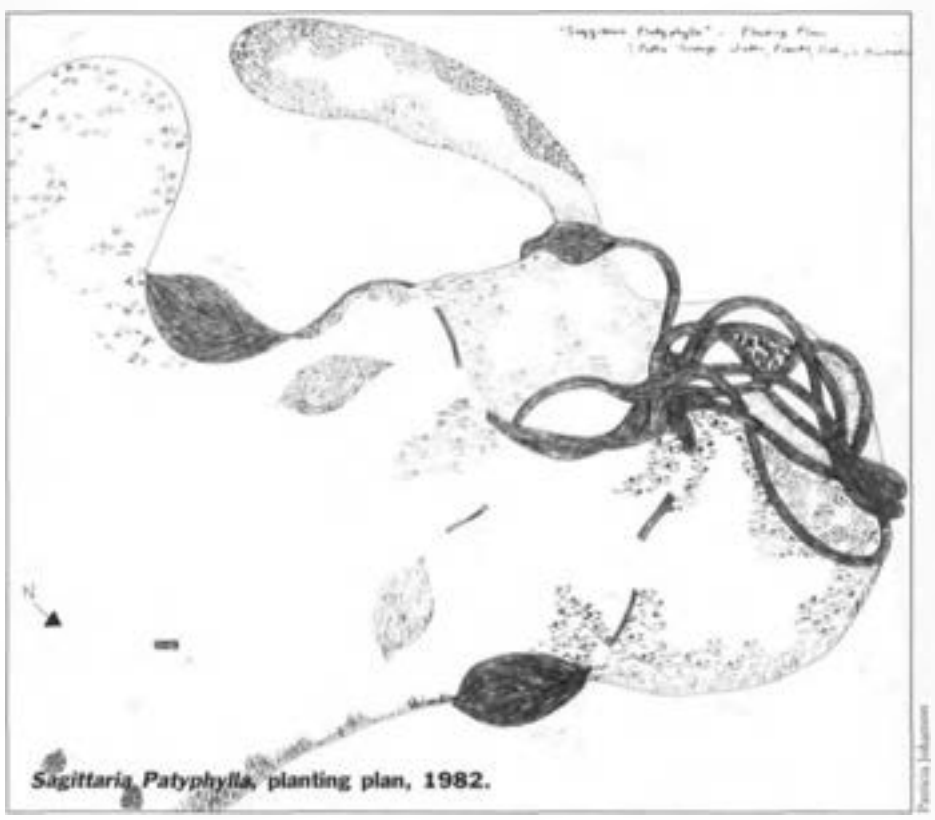
The Fair Park sculpture was Johanson's first opportunity to realize a long-harbored desire to create a water garden, a prospect she had earlier explored in a series of designs and a manuscript commissioned by *House and Garden* in 1969, interspersing garden plans with images of endangered environments – a conjunction the magazine had not anticipated and declined to use. (The *H&G* drawings were eventually published elsewhere.) The *H&G* commission piqued Johanson's interest in botanical subjects, which nearly a decade later, in 1978, produced an exhibition of plant drawings at the Esman Gallery. Johanson's intention was to explore "'meaningful' form by translating the structure and organization of plants into 'art.'"[4] Several of these drawings anticipate the plant forms adapted for the Fair Park Lagoon project: the sculpture's arching "stems" are prefigured by her depiction of a *Pine Suspensor/Bridge*, while leaves and stems are used to span a body of water in her studies for a *Slender Cliff-Brake Fern/Stepping-Stone Path Across Water* and *Lakeshore With Walking Fern Bridge*. To extend this line of development, the artist says she has only recently noticed how closely two sculptures in her *Landscapes, 1969–1980* exhibition at the Esman Gallery – the 1979 *Urban Landscape (Cliff-Brake Fern)* and the 1980 *Drowned Fern* – resemble the Fair Park sculpture."

Several aspects of the sculpture have contributed directly to the biological restoration of the lagoon. The bulbous trunk and intertwining branches of the "delta duckpotato" were deployed to prevent further erosion of the north bank by breaking up surface wave action. The openings between the interlaced arms of both sculptures provide sheltered microhabitats for invertebrates, waterlilies, and frothy clumps of algae, besides trapping soggy newspapers and other detritus left behind by park visitors. While turtles and birds previously had to compete with humans for space along the banks of the lagoon, the sculpture was designed with arching segments of "stems" that dip in and out of the water, extending to leaf-shaped islands just beyond the reach of marauding schoolchildren, so that birds and turtles can disport themselves out of harm's way.

The most critical element of the biological restoration of the lagoon proved to be the planting scheme, which introduced an assortment of emergent vegetation orchestrated by the curators of the Dallas Museum of Natural History and their consultants. Since Dallas has few native aquatic species, most of the specimens were gathered in East Texas by consultant Rosa Finsley with the assistance of project adviser Charles E. Finsley. Dr. Richard F. Fullington provided the artist with basic recommendations for biological restoration and information on Texas flora, and also drew up a plan illustrating recommended groupings of plants, including cattails, bulrushes, waterlilies, pickerelweed, and phalia. The artist prepared her own planting scheme, but in the end neither was rigidly followed. The planting scheme takes advantage of the filtration benefits of water hyacinths, whose roots absorb heavy metals from the lagoon. Although parks department employees have been asked to refrain from fertilizing the grass around the lagoon, the rich soup into which the plants were introduced has caused them to be overly abundant, especially the cattails. According to Finsley, even though the cattails have a tendency to "take over" the lagoon and require an annual thinning by corporate volunteers from LTV, they have attracted new birds to the lagoon. As a result, project coordinator Walter Davis found little need to populate the lagoon and characterizes the essentially self-stocking process as a matter of "build it and they will come." The curators and area birdwatchers have been particularly excited about the nesting of a pair of rare least bitterns in the refuge provided by the cattails. Another sign of improved habitat is the appearance of kingfishers, which require clear water so they can see their prey.

At first, Dallas city officials insisted that handrails would have to be installed along the sculpture's walkways, but they later relented. Another safety issue concerned water depth beneath the sculpture, and whether stainless steel "nets" should be hung underneath it. This notion was eventually scuttled too, but dirt was dumped back into the lagoon so that the water under the sculpture is only 18 inches deep. The retrofilling, while it undid the dredging of the lagoon prescribed by the curators, was a surprisingly unintrusive (and, as it happened, ecologically acceptable) compromise. At this point, the city appears to be covering any residual liability issue with a single sign posted at the north end of the lagoon: "Notice: Adult supervision of children is recommended."

As the DMFA became increasingly preoccupied with its move from Fair Park, the task of coordinating the project fell to Bobette Higgins, and relations between Higgins and Johanson became strained. After construction began, Johanson made only a few visits to Dallas to select the color for the concrete and to attempt to correct mistakes made in interpreting her drawings; funds were evidently not available to allow her to remain on site to supervise construction. As the artist relates, "We were both at an impasse," since Higgins controlled the funds and Johanson had the plans. Yet both wanted to see the sculpture built, and finally an unusual deal was struck: "I sold her the right to build the sculpture," says Johanson. "That was the contract. I don't think that any artist ever made a contract like that before or since. I don't think I



Sagittaria Patyphylla, planting plan, 1982.

would do it again either, because you really give that person carte blanche."

Her virtual exclusion from the construction process, Johanson believes, had an adverse though not fatal effect on the aesthetics of the piece. She says: "I think it could have been a better work of art than it is.... I would have preferred to see both works as genuine [three-dimensional] pieces of sculpture, which they're not. Right now, they're much more like paths over water." She views the fern, *Pteris Multifida*, as the "biggest disaster." Budget constraints precluded the use of long-span arches for a network of bridges and causeways, and in the end the work was constructed "as though it was a pancake." She speculates that the city of Dallas may have required alterations to make the sculpture safer to walk on. Another problem was control of the color of the gunite. Johanson says that she chose a brick-colored terra-cotta for the sculpture, not the "brassy" color that resulted when a sealant was applied over the concrete. She adds that the mixing of pigment with huge batches of concrete is "not an exact science."

When the lagoon sculptures were completed, Dallas critics were generally unenthusiastic, particularly those who evaluated it primarily on aesthetic grounds. David Dillon thought the concept for turning the lagoon into a "miniature nature sanctuary" with the sculpture as an "aquatic promenade" was "downright goofy." His apprehension was heightened by an early encounter with the sculpture when it was beached in the drained lagoon, so that it seemed to him to be "out of scale and character with its surroundings" and "about to devour the site." Janet Kutner echoed his appraisal when she compared the massiveness of its "tentacle-like appendages" to a "prehistoric animal that could devour anything in sight," and she described its color as "garish." Even the Friends of Fair Park conceded that the sculpture's bright orange-pink color had "startled many at first but has taken on a patina over the past seasons and is further softened by the reeds, water lilies and bald cypress growing around and through the mysterious arms." Bill Marvell also recalled his initial "shock" in seeing "yards of concrete sprawling all over the north and south ends of the lagoon like a bloated python," and voiced his reservations about the "too vivid" color of the sculpture, although he was clearly sympathetic to the participatory qualities of the piece. Marvell observed, "The work really only comes into its own when it is experienced, when the viewer becomes an explorer and travels its many paths or finds a sunny spot to simply sit and think."[10]

Bobette Higgins defended the work against Dillon's criticism by enumerating its ecological, educational, and contemplative purposes as an "unobtrusive reminder that all life forms share a beneficent, but finite, earth," and later elaborated on the project in an article for the Friends of Fair Park newsletter titled "No, It Is Not a Pink Snake."[11] The animal life now abundantly evident in the lagoon – the torpid turtles, wading herons, paddling ducks, and other unseen but audible inhabitants – has proven to be the basis of its broadest appeal, and, pink snake or no, the sculptural elements are a more than usually adventuresome viewing platform: hordes of schoolchildren have clambered onto the sculpture's spreading gunite leaves to peer into the pond's shallow depths. Pleased with this acceptance, the Museum of Natural History is now completing construction of a nature trail around the lagoon (funded by the Meadows Foundation) and installing a new second-floor exhibit that will interpret the pond ecology.

Johanson's forms (or the approximation of her intended forms), hyperextended in yards and yards of concrete, are still perhaps more assertive than even the project's admirers might wish, although, as the artist says "all... are taken verbatim from nature,"[12] in a manner consistent with her earlier work and well within 20th-century procedures of enlargement and direct translation. Although time has darkened it, the sculpture's color still stands out, an effect unanticipated by the artist, who recalls: "I think it knocked people's eyeballs out at first.... It is shocking when you first see it. Once the shock value wears off, I think we kind of accommodate things, and at some point, I don't think it's a major issue." She chose terra-cotta in hopes of achieving bright reflections in the water. "If it had been more naturalistic – green, for example – the reflected shapes wouldn't have been really clear."

Johanson's sculpture has received more sympathetic national and international attention, generally articles discussing ecological art.[13] It is also represented in a currently circulating exhibition, *Fragile Ecologies*, organized by the Queens Museum of Art and accompanied by a catalogue written by the curator, Barbara Matilsky, who identifies the lagoon sculpture as "one the most important ecological artworks executed to this date."[14] Eleanor Munro once characterized Johanson's work as drawing an "uncom-prehending but willing audience into the recesses of her imagination,"[15] and this seems to hold true for her lagoon apparatus – people may not have the slightest idea what these strange forms are intended to evoke but instinctively realize that they are vehicles for exploration. In fact, as forms, they may be best apprehended from above, even accorded a helicopter view on the evening

news, as happened with Johanson's 1,600-foot Stephen Long outdoor installation in 1968. For Johanson, this is not a major concern: "I don't think that it's important that they do see the form. What I want them to see is the structure,... how it's built, how it moves, and how the parts relate to each other." Other works since the lagoon piece have also been configured for bird's-eye effect, including her unbuilt *Tidal Color Garden* (based on a butterfly's wing) and her *Endangered Garden*, nearing completion in San Francisco. The latter is revealed in plan to be a snakelike object a third of a mile long. Peter Blake addressed this aspect of Johanson's oeuvre in 1978:

I am reminded of those huge, pre-historic "earth-works" that people keep discovering in aerial photographs. Those things – if they did, indeed, exist – sometimes seem insensitive to their natural settings. Johanson's most recent projects are so "organic," so Art Nouveau in their allusions, that one senses a great love for the natural environment, almost a hesitancy to intrude.[16]

Blake was referring to Johanson's earlier built works, such as *Cyrus Field*, and the unbuilt projects suggested in her plant drawings. Once the unbuilt work was realized in the Fair Park sculpture, it was obvious that this is hardly hesitant or non-intrusive work. Johanson's contention that "the principles of art could be used to forge links between the built world and the natural world" does not ring true in Fair Park if one looks beyond the confines of the lagoon itself.[17] Even though Johanson's degree in architecture (B. Arch., City College of New York) is frequently touted in her biographies, sensitivity to the historic architectural setting of Fair Park is scarcely apparent in the lagoon commission. The labored interlacings of the piece have no connection with the rigid geometry of the Art Deco architecture surrounding the lagoon. While the sinuous curves of the lagoon itself may indeed have been intended as a foil to the formality of the overall park plan, the sculpture's heavy-handed organic giganticism, juxtaposed with the adjacent buildings, throws this subtle interplay out of balance, turning a civilized conversation into a shouting match. Johanson's only concession might be the terra-cotta color of the sculpture, since blue and terra-cotta are colors used elsewhere in the park. Yet again, the dominance of the sculpture's color throws off the aesthetic balance when contrasted with the pale limestone of the museum buildings. Another oddity is the contrast between the concurrent lagoon renovation projects – the uninhibited Johanson sculpture, partially overgrown with untidy clumps of cattails, versus the officially instigated park landscaping, with its neat row of park benches and symmetrical masses of flowering plants.

Johanson's development as an artist has been slow, no doubt in part due to the scarcity of opportunities and the time required to realize large-scale commissions. The proposal for the Fair Park Lagoon sculpture was the first in which she incorporated biological restoration; since its completion in 1986 she has been commissioned to do only one other work, the *Endangered Garden* in San Francisco, now nearing completion.

One question the Dallas sculpture raises is whether we should have the same aesthetic expectations of art when it serves an environmental agenda. The sculptor herself proposes a different set of expectations altogether, taking the view that "art just mediates between people and everything else.... I think, in the process, I've done something that no one else is doing – so I've ended up with a pretty unique [sic] image. But that wasn't the goal at all. I think the best role for the artist is to bring issues to the attention of the general public in a way that everybody can understand.... The most basic way that everything is connected is that we are all matter.... Developing a sacred view of matter is a great leveler, because at that point the worm and the person are on equal footing. I think that's very hard for most people to imagine without seeing an environment like Fair Park Lagoon."[18] ■

The author wishes to thank Patricia Johanson, Walt Davis, Sally Lancaster, the library staff of the Dallas Museum of Art, and the staff of the Dallas Public Library for their assistance.

1 [Sally Lancaster], "Remarks to Parks and Recreation Board," 3 December 1981, p. 1; text provided to author by Walter R. Davis II, former assistant director for long-range planning, project coordinator, Dallas Museum of Natural History.

2 Dallas Museum of Natural History, Leonhardt Lagoon fact sheet, p. 1. For a review of the symposium proceedings, see Bill Marvel, "Earth Works: Exploring Environments at the Fair Park Museums," *Dallas Times Herald*, 12 October 1982, pp. 1, 8C.

3 Marvel, "Earth Works"; Higgins, p. 1C.

4 Sue Graze, "Patricia Johanson: A Project for the Fair Park Lagoon," *Dallas Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, Fall 1982, n.p.

5 Author's interview with Patricia Johanson, 29 October 1992.

6 Patricia Johanson, "Revisioning the Fair Park Lagoon," in Pete A. Y. Gunter and Bobette Higgins, eds., *Present, Tense, Future, Perfect? A Symposium on Widening Choices for the Visual Environmental Resource* (Dallas: Landmark Program, For the People, Incorporated, 1984), p. 78. Individual components of the sculpture are described in *Patricia Johanson: Fair Park Lagoon Dallas and Color-Gardens* (New York: Rosa Esman Gallery), 1983.

7 See *Patricia Johanson: Public Landscapes* (Philadelphia: Painted Bride Art Center, 1991); and Patricia Johanson, *Art and Survival, Galleric: Women Artists' Monographs*, no. 8 (North Vancouver, B.C., March 1992).

8 In Patricia Johanson and Peter Blake, *Patricia Johanson: "Plant Drawings for Projects."* (New York: Rosa Esman Gallery, 1978), n.p.

9 Ibid.; see figs. 13, 8, and 6, n.p. Author's interview with artist, 29 October 1992. See also *Patricia Johanson: Landscapes, 1969–1980* (New York: Rosa Esman Gallery, 1981).

10 David Dillon, "Fair Park: Renovation Aims to Return Vibrancy to City's Art Deco Social Melting Pot," *Dallas Morning News*, 23 September 1984, p. 8C; Dillon, "Reviving a Cultural Paean to Dallas," *Dallas Morning News*, 9 April 1986, p. 2F; Janet Kutner, "Symposium Adds Little on Topic," *Dallas Morning News*, 13 September 1986, p. 2F; "Flowers, Fountains, and Lights Transform Fair Park," *Friends of Fair Park*, Summer 1988, p. 4; Bill Marvell, "Fair Park: '30s Gem Glistens Again," *Dallas Morning News*, 24 September 1986, p. 2F.

11 See Bobette Higgins, Letter to the Editor, "Lagoon Project," *Dallas Morning News*, 6 October 1984, p. 30A; and Higgins, "No, It Is Not a Pink Snake; No, It Is Not 'The Lady,'" *Friends of Fair Park*, Fall 1986, p. 7.

12 Johanson, *Art and Survival*, p. 34.

13 Patricia Johanson, "Architecture as Landscape," *Princeton Journal* 2 (1985), pp. 110–13; Patricia Johanson, "Civic-Minded Landscaping," *Heresies* 6, no. 22 (1987), pp. 94–95; Patricia Johanson, "From the Other Side: Public Artists on Public Art," *Art Journal* 48 (Winter 1989), pp. 337–39; Laurie Garris, "The Changing Landscape," *Arts + Architecture* 3, no. 4 (1985), p. 59; Robin Cembalest, "The Ecological Art Explosion," *Artnews* (Summer 1991), pp. 96, 99.

14 Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 47. A portion of Matilsky's essay is reprinted in "Art and Ecology," *Museum News*, April 1992, pp. 46-49.

15 Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 468.

16 In Johanson and Blake, *Johanson*, n.p.

17 Johanson,"From the Other Side," p. 337.

18 Johanson, *Art & Survival*, p. 35.

Dallas Museum of Natural History

The Dallas Waterworks

Richard Rome

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Dan Kiley's reputation as the doyen of American landscape architects is little known outside of tightly knit academic and corporate circles. Working with a small staff in a Thoreauesque setting in the hills of Vermont, Kiley has produced an oeuvre of built landscapes that has defined and challenged the interpretation of the modern movement in his discipline. Kiley has railed against the educational theories, professional associations, and practices of his colleagues in the field broadly defined as landscape architecture, while producing built works of exceptional clarity, skill, and expressiveness. Neither an environmental determinist, a participatory realist, nor a romantic idealist, Kiley is perhaps best positioned within the design tradition into which he first emerged as a designer, that of high modernism. Kiley has described the designer's work as being to "project the ideal solution; i.e., the highest possibility for the place, then modify this ideal projection only as necessary for a realistic solution."[1]

In an only partially complete plaza on the edge of the area of downtown Dallas known as the Arts District, the wealth of Kiley's contribution to the possibilities for contemporary urban space is powerfully evident. Conceived in a purity of idea rare by today's standards, Fountain Place combines the design expertise of I. M. Pei, Harry Cobb, Harry Weese, and Kiley. Upon visiting the vacant site, which is situated at the base of what was built as the Allied Bank Tower for Criswell Development Corporation, Kiley is reported to have conceived the plaza as a bold reaction to all that he felt the space was *not*. He felt that shade and water were needed in a profusion equal to the blinding white heat that seems to envelop Dallas's downtown core during Texas summers.[2] Kiley's response was not so much a site analysis as it was a simple, intuitive objection to the vacuousness of the proposed building site. As the building now invents itself against the backdrop of the Dallas skyline, the plaza was to be a manmade invention on the ground – a garden, therefore, in the word's truest sense, that of human artifact.

The sea green tower rises from the ground on glass-clad *piloti* that allow the structure to all but disappear at street level, in marked contrast to the signature of its "Texas ski slope" upper floors. This scheme creates a wonderful aberration to the tired cliché of the "tower in the park" that haunts architectural practice. Fountain Place resists the serenity and leisure of a green and parklike space, offering instead an incessantly active and sensuous environment that engulfs the visitor as completely as it does the base of the tower. The sensuality of the scheme cannot be dismissed; rigid geometry, exaggerated water displays, exacting craft, and technical illusion have transformed the space into an Eden of surreal intensity. Mocking its locale, its climate, its poverty of context, the plaza solicits pleasure seekers with a geometric rhyme of seductive measure.

In *The Poetics of Gardens*, Charles Moore and his fellow authors place gardens defined by a rigid internal symmetry in a typological unit identified as "patterns" and comment, "We are fascinated not by the simple and quickly grasped rules that govern them, but by the endlessly varied and thrilling games that the rules make possible."[3] While Fountain Place does not conform to the absolute bilateral symmetry of the classical gardens Moore uses to illustrate that typology, it is nonetheless a spectacular example of such a creation. The visitor is seductively brought into the space and time of the garden, a masterfully patterned network of trees, fountains, and stepped walkways in which the ordinary urban reality of downtown Dallas is displaced and set aside for the moment.

Unlike the private precincts that ground the typical Dallas tower, Fountain Place is not ignored or dismissed as belonging to the few entering the structure. It has assumed a life of its own, and, unlike most speculative landscapes, it is sought out as a destination, a place of comfort, a sight to see. Its prominence could be explained away as the mere product of the wonder of hundreds of fountains located within a grove of hundreds of trees in an urban core, but this fails to explain its fascination, the sensuousness of being within it. The purity of the conception within Kiley's own account is the key to a critique of the work.

By envisioning the scheme in its entirety – two nearly identical towers with a third structure as backdrop – it is possible to reconstruct the ground upon which the plaza evolved into an aesthetic garden, a tour de force of sensuous knowing. Kiley's initial abstraction of the site into a pure composition, a perfect model that has itself as it own defining mechanism, recalls the luxurious self-centeredness of early Italian gardens without any of the demands for theological apologies. Fountains by the hundred (more than 400 in the original scheme) offered not only an alternative sound and scene but literally an alternative climate to the visitor. The existing slope of the site, not unlike that at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli being contrary to the design intent, was forced into complicity through time-honored devices: waterfalls, viewing platforms, and flights of steps create a kind of geometric ground for the aesthetic vision of the space. Geoffrey Jellicoe, designer of the Moody Gardens, under way on Galveston Island, wrote of the Italian Renaissance garden, "No longer in any way symbolic, the garden became a setting for pleasure and philosophical debate."[4] And so also is Kiley's garden no longer symbolic, but rather an intensely sensuous experience, and if not the site of philosophical speculation, it is undeniably a place of solace and contemplative musing.

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Dan Kiley, landscape architect, Fountain Place, Dallas, 1987.

Providing evidence of the power of its abstraction – the idea of the garden – is its success in its present, only partially completed state. Rather than offering a hint of what could have been, the plaza weaves a spell that rivals that of mature and vast gardens. Again, an abstraction of the built scheme offers insights for the critique of such a claim for space. The space is predominantly liquid, but not with calm pools of water or discreet fountains in their containers; it is no less than a benign explosion of water contained within a heroic grove of cypress trees, which anchor and protect the play of the water spirits. Meticulously crafted weirs agitate the water's fall from level to level, and when the garden is illuminated at night they intensify the experience in both sight and sound.

Fountain Place, like its designer, breaks the rules, rails against the dictums of urbanism, and in doing so furthers the bounds of the urban landscape aesthetic. It does not attract enough people to satisfy the criteria that Holly Whyte set out in his influential *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*,[5] yet it is always in use. It hides the building, as the architect feared, but makes the structure all the more powerful by doing so. It requires a level of maintenance at odds with every standard of speculative practice. Visited as a destination in itself, it offers a modernist garden that is without apology and in need of no rationale. It is its own statement, a creation of itself. This garden defines the modernist aesthetic in much the same way that its tower proclaims the power of abstraction over the

postmodern babble of later structures laying claim to the skyline of Dallas.

Designed and built during the heady days of the Texas boom, Fountain Place is a testament to the potential of aesthetic modernism and a statement of its limitations. It bears the mark of genius in its intuitive brilliance and in its meticulously crafted yet extravagantly bestowed resources. Like so many aesthetic creations that come to assume a pivotal place within the historical construction of any period of design and art, Fountain Place is both a definitive work within its genre and a summation of the ideas and methods that initiated and nurtured it. Conceived of as a kind of abstract purity (more a reaction than a response to the site), the garden delights the visitor and offers a suspension of context, taking the viewer into a sumptuous creation of space and time apart from all that surrounds the garden. Obviously and intensely manmade, yet offering the finest of nature's respites in the shade of tall trees and the sound of moving water, the plaza becomes a garden, perhaps the best habitat for the human species.

The essayist Michael Pollan wrote in his allegorical work on gardening, *Second Nature*, that much of what is polemically cited as "ecological" in contemporary literature is really no more than "another instance of moralism's triumph over aesthetics in the American garden." He offers an alternative view of the garden: an intensely cultural, built creation that engages the imagination and the senses and provides "a passage somewhere else – to the personal and shared past its scents evoke, to the distant places to which its forms allude." Pollan envisions gardens as existing both "here" and "there." Those that are all "here" end up being "slack, insipid, indistinct from the surrounding landscape"; whereas gardens that are all "there" may be "cold or abstract," offering no connection to the user. Kiley's garden in downtown Dallas is both "here" and "there." It is both a real place and an imaginary place, a thing apart. As Michael Pollan might say, Fountain Place is "a trope; a trope that gives real shade."[6] ■

1 Katsuhiko Ichinowatari, *Landscape Design: Works of Dan Kiley, Process Architecture* no. 33 (Tokyo, 1982), p. 18.

2 Joel Warren Barna, "Two Dallas Towers," *Texas Architect*, July-August 1987, p. 43.

3 Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, and William Turnbull, Jr., *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), p. 158.

4 Geoffrey Jellicoe and Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), p. 156.

5 Washington, D.C.: Conservation Foundation, 1980.

6 Michael Pollan, *Second Nature* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), pp. 232, 243–44.

An Interview With C. C. Pat Fleming

Anne Schlumberger Bohnn, Edwin A. Eubanks, and Stephen Fox

C. C. PAT FLEMING is the dean of Texas landscape architects. In practice in Houston since 1937, he has been instrumental in formulating a set of gardening conventions that Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller perceptively characterized when they wrote in *The Golden Age of American Gardens*: "Today, broadleaf evergreen gardens in a woodland setting seem uninventive, but in the twenties and thirties they were something new in Texas. Just like white columns, camellias and azaleas stood for Southern conservatism, for the antebellum Southern tradition revived and revised to fit the large suburban estate lot."[1]

Fleming belongs to the generation of landscape architects who established the profession in Texas. As Sadie Gwin Blackburn documents in her essay "The Evolution of the Houston Landscape" in *Houston's Forgotten Heritage*, professional landscape gardeners were active in Houston by the 1840s, and landscape architects unsuccessfully attempted to maintain practices in Houston beginning in the 1910s. But prior to the early 1930s, it was Houston nurserymen, such as Edward Teas, who dominated residential landscape installation.[2] The archives of the landscape architects and city planners Hare & Hare, best known for their public planning commissions in Texas, contain a large collection of drawings of private garden designs for local clients, suggesting the void this Kansas City–based firm was called on to fill in Houston in the 1920s.[3]

Estelle B. Sharp, widow of the oil tool manufacturer Walter B. Sharp, responded to this condition by turning her estate on Main Street into the Houston Studio Gardens and setting the young landscape architect Ruth London up in practice in 1930.[4] Miss London had the patronage of "all the garden club ladies," as Fleming's client and devoted friend, Alice E. Pratt, recalls.[5] But an enthusiasm for garden design seized Houston's elite in the 1930s that one landscape architect alone could not satisfy. Ellen B. Shipman of New York, now recognized as one of the outstanding American landscape architects of the 20th century, designed gardens in the mid-1930s for Mrs. Cleveland Sewall, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Green, and Mrs. Stephen P. Farish in River Oaks and for Mrs. Richard W. Neff in Broadacres. Several years after Pat Fleming and his partner, Albert E. Sheppard, opened their office in the River Oaks Center, Ralph Ellis Gunn came to Houston in 1940 to represent the Jungle Gardens nursery of Avery Island, Louisiana. Fleming, Miss London, Gunn, and J. Allen Myers, Jr., an instructor in landscape architecture at Texas A&M, were the founding members of the profession in Houston, as were their counterparts in Dallas, Joe Lambert of the Lambert Landscape Company and Marie and Arthur E. Berger.

A state as big as Texas provided rich opportunities for this generation, as a review of Pat Fleming's body of work makes clear. His early commissions – notably the Diana Garden at Bayou Bend for Ima Hogg and, next door, the Woodland Garden at Dogwoods for Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hogg – were primarily residential, although his earliest experiences after leaving architecture school at the University of Texas in 1930 were with public landscaping projects. He worked for the Austin landscape contractor Mrs. C. B. Whitehead in carrying out Hare & Hare's planting plan at the University of Texas, part of Paul Philippe Cret's reconstruction of the campus between 1930 and 1933. Between 1934 and 1935, as a junior-grade landscape architect, he designed Palmetto State Park near Gonzales, a Civilian Conservation Corps project, and between 1935 and 1936 he was supervising landscape architect at the San Jacinto Battlegrounds State Park.[6] It was this final project that brought him to Houston.

Fleming & Sheppard were responsible for the gardens of many of the houses that John F. Staub designed in River Oaks, Shadyside, and Broadacres in the 1930s and early 1940s. Fleming's growing reputation brought him work in the affluent suburbs of other Texas cities. He designed estate gardens for Mr. and Mrs. J. Cooke Wilson in Beaumont, for Mr. and Mrs. Pio Crespi in Dallas, for Governor and Mrs. Allen Shivers in Austin, and for Mr. and Mrs. George Parker and Marion Koogler McNay in San Antonio. He was responsible for the grand gardens of Emma Louise Biedenharn in Monroe, Louisiana, and he carried out landscape work for General and Mrs. Kemper Williams, founders of the Historic New Orleans

Collection, in New Orleans. Injuries that Fleming sustained in a car-racing accident kept him out of military service during World War II. Instead, from 1943 to 1945 he served as the first director of the combined Department of Parks and Recreation. In 1936, before he had even established residence in Houston, Fleming was appointed by Mayor R. H. Fonville to the City Planning Commission. In 1938 Mayor Fonville appointed him as one of the original commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Houston.

At the end of the war, Fleming returned to private practice, establishing the firm that came to be called Fleming Planning Associates, which he headed until 1970. Although he resumed the design of small estate gardens (such as that of Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Smith in 1946), Fleming responded dexterously to new trends in design. This is particularly visible in his landscaping of the modernist pavilion that Hugo V. Neuhaus, Jr., designed as his family home in 1950, with its broadly curved, grass-surfaced patio terrace and grassed terrace steps.

The suburbanization of Houston in the 1950s brought new professional opportunities to Fleming. His firm designed the first corporate "campus" in Houston, the 27-acre grounds of the Prudential Building on Holcombe Boulevard of 1952. It is indicative of the intelligence, durability, and quality of Fleming's landscape design that since acquiring the Prudential property nearly 20 years ago, the University of Texas Health Science Center has continued to maintain the grounds, which include a beautifully detailed swimming pool terrace, a smaller version of the now-lost poolside gardens of the Shamrock Hotel.

During the 1960s, Fleming Planning Associates designed landscape installations of garden apartment complexes in Houston and New Orleans. Quite visible was such nonresidential work as the Bellaire branch building of Southwestern Savings Association on Bellaire Boulevard of 1960 and the R. E. "Bob" Smith Fountain at Smith and Polk downtown of 1970. Fleming also designed the George Parker Memorial Garden of 1966 alongside the Margarite B. Parker Chapel by Ford, Powell & Carson at Trinity University in San Antonio.

Pat Fleming retired in 1970, closing his office and moving to Kerrville. In 1972 he married the widowed Mrs. Erwin W. Smith of Houston, and for his new wife he designed and built a house and garden at Jack Rabbit Hill outside Kerrville. During the years of his marriage to Mrs. Smith, Fleming continued to accept selected commissions in Houston. One was the design of new gardens for Mr. and Mrs. Pierre M. Schlumberger in River Oaks in 1980. The third garden he had designed for the Schlumbergers, it demonstrates the evolution of his sensibility. Rather than axially framing a tapis vert with linear plantings of shrubs and trees, Fleming laid out the Schlumberger garden as a relaxed sequence of interlocked spaces, primarily planted or paved in character.[3]

Since resuming his professional practice in Houston in the mid-1980s, Pat Fleming still produces new residential garden designs (often in association with landscape architect Dennis Wright), assists longtime clients with alterations and adjustments to their gardens, and carries out new nonresidential work, such as the installation of gardens on the grounds of the Oscar F. Holcombe estate on Holcombe Boulevard, which is being rehabilitated as the Hospice at the Medical Center (formerly the New Age Hospice). Many of Fleming's recent gardens tend to be landscape installations adjacent to swimming pools and patios and oriented to glass-walled family rooms, such as the garden he designed for Mr. and Mrs. James A. Rickard in River Oaks in 1988.

Whether grand or modest, the gardens of Pat Fleming reinforce a landscape tradition that he helped formulate over a half-century ago. Employing, and often combining, the principles of classical and picturesque garden design, Fleming works with live oaks and magnolias; yaupon, ligustrum, and Japanese yew; jasmine and monkey grass; and azaleas and roses to domesticate the coastal prairie with shade, greenery, color, fragrance, and spatial definition. His is a personal crusade, waged over 50 years, to combat the pervasive rawness of Houston and demonstrate with what grace and ease this city lends itself to becoming a livable landscape.

1 Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, *The Golden Age of American Gardens: Proud Owners, Private Estates, 1890–1940* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the Garden Club of America, 1991), p. 242.

2 Sadie Gwin Blackburn, "The Evolution of the Houston Landscape," in Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton, Barrie M. Scardino, Sadie Gwin Blackburn, and Katherine S. Howe, *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscapes, Houses, Interiors, 1824–1914* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1991), pp. 22–23, 29–30, 51–53.

3 The Hare & Hare Collection at the Houston Public Library's Houston Metropolitan Research Center contains drawings for 25 residential garden design commissions. How many of these designs were carried out has not been determined.

4 The precise activities of Mrs. Sharp's Houston Studio Gardens have yet to be researched. Mrs. Sharp converted her house into an office building where John F. Staub, Birdsall P. Briscoe, Maurice J. Sullivan, and other Houston architects maintained their studios until Mrs. Sharp sold the property to Sears, Roebuck & Company, which built its South Main store on the site in 1940. Ruth London is first listed in the 1930–31 issue of the *Houston City Directory* and is last listed in the 1965 issue. Griswold and Weller identify her as a graduate of the Lowthorpe School, class of 1928 (Griswold and Weller, p. 241).

5 Interview with Mrs. Fletcher Pratt, 11 August 1992.

6 James Wright Steely, *CCC: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Texas State Parks* (Austin: Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife, 1986), unpaginated. Steely profiles the various state parks – including Palmetto State Park – developed with Civilian Conservation Corps labor. Unfortunately, he does not identify any of the landscape architects involved.

7 Interview with Mrs. Pierre M. Schlumberger, 12 August 1992. See also Mary Uhrbrock, "Garden View," *Houston Home & Garden* (March 1986), pp. 48–57. On the work of Pat Fleming, see also "Gardens at Houston and River Oaks, Texas," *Landscape Architecture* 29 (1938), pp. 183–91; "Gardens by Fleming," *Houston Post*, 21 November 1948; Mary Uhrbrock, "A Man for All Seasons," *Houston Home & Garden* (January 1985), pp. 98–103; and Sarah Bergner, "C. C. Pat Fleming: The Man for All Seasons," *Pinnacle*, vol. 5, p. 5.

Courtesy of Diana M. Jones

Fleming & Sheppard, Diana Garden, Bayou Bend, 1937. Fleming's gardens were designed as settings for social events, especially before air conditioning became prevalent. On August 1, 1940, Mary Jane Waine and Whitfield H. Marshall were married in the Diana Garden.

Fleming & Sheppard, Woodland Garden, Dogwoods, 1939.

Cite When and where were you born?

PF I was born in Beaumont, Texas, on February 13, 1909. We moved to Arizona in 1918, and I returned from Arizona in 1928. When I was 19 years old, I studied architecture at the University of Texas, but in chemistry I burned my eyes so seriously I had to give up. Then I came up with a project to create a bunch of good-looking ornamental iron furniture with which I could earn my way to Europe, and I again burned my eyes welding. My father realized that I was desperate to go, so he hired an architecture professor who had retired – Dr. Tandy was his name – and we went abroad. He was one of those remarkable people who knew everything and were perfectly willing to share it. He talked all the time. To me it was monotonous, so that when we stopped I was tired. A funny thing: I realized that though I would always be interested in architecture, I was more interested in creating the setting for architecture. That's how I really got started.

Cite So you hadn't studied landscape architecture at the University of Texas?

PF No. At that time there were no classes in landscape architecture at the University of Texas. I had known Albert Sheppard – my partner from 1937 to 1942 – at the University of Texas. He was one year behind me in architecture. For some reason Albert seemed to take a fancy to me. I was a little older than he was; he was from Mexico and was born in Mexico City. He was working at the time I reencountered him for a Mrs. C. B. Whitehead. She was one of these landscape people, a typical nursery type, who were politically active. She had all the University of Texas work tied up, but she never did any design work, just contractual work. Mr. Hare of Kansas City laid out the University of Texas campus in 1930, and Mrs. Whitehead got the job as landscape contractor. I honestly didn't know one bush from another. It never occurred to me that landscaping could be fascinating. Mrs. Whitehead and I spent an afternoon together, and she conceived a trust in me. She helped me buy a brand new car and gave me two brand new, good-looking, tailor-made suits and put me on the road to go buy all the bushes and trees and things that that job needed. I went up to Oklahoma and all over Texas buying these things. Every time I came to a nursery, I would ask, "Now what is this, what is that thing, what does it do?" Those people were extremely patient with me and very kind. They all realized that I was just a promising two-bit kid. So often we would spend the whole morning talking about pittosporum, for example – how many varieties and variations, whether they were this or that, if they would do well in this area and not in another.

When I left that job at the University of Texas, I was invited to come work for the National Parks Service. I never had a passion for plants, but I was interested and I remembered a lot. Also – another great asset to me – I met a perfectly wonderful older lady, Mrs. W. J. Hildebrand. Mrs. Hildebrand was a widow and a great amateur botanist. She knew all the great plant people of our country. Talk about wildflowers is so commonplace now, it doesn't seem unusual. There was a time when most Texans didn't even know we had wildflowers. Mrs. Hildebrand had a lot to do with making us conscious.

Cite Was she from Beaumont?

PF No, she was from Gonzales, Texas. And it was Mrs. Hildebrand who came out to Palmetto State Park and pointed out to me that we were working in one of the most unusual areas in America. It is a combination of shallow soils and warm springs and unusual, ancient plant material. There were plants growing there that had continued down through maybe three or four thousand years. Everything east of the Mississippi, I'm talking about right on the banks of the Mississippi, was growing in this limited park area. We built all types of retaining walls. And I always built those walls as if they were natural outcroppings and with waterfalls and pools.

Cite What brought you to Houston?

PF The reason I came to Houston is that I was working for the National Parks Service at that time as a junior-grade landscape architect, and I was asked to come down to supervise the landscape development of the San Jacinto Battlegrounds. Otherwise, I would probably have lived elsewhere in this country. When that project was finished, I discovered that I loved Houston. I liked everything about it. I was appointed a member of the City Planning Commission and the housing authority. I have never wished to leave here. Houston has become a part of me, and I think I'm a part of Houston.

Cite When did you start your own practice?

PF 1937.

Cite How did you meet your first clients in Houston?

PF In those days different women's clubs were always looking for speakers. I was a fairly nice looking person at that time, so they often asked me to come and give a lecture. After the lecture there was always this crowding in around you, partly because they wanted to get their picture taken and partly because they really were interested in the idea of a planned landscape, which was such a novelty. They had been accustomed to simply calling up Mr. Teas or some other nursery. Teas was the most important nursery and, of course, the Japanese Nursery was good. And they simply came out and planted your place. Some of them were honestly nice, but more often you would have a hopeless hodgepodge. I remember first getting this type of job because my first client said: "I just didn't realize anybody planned gardens. I have an interior decorator I just love, but I didn't realize that people planned the outside." So she said, "How do you charge?" and I said: "Well, I have a very simple schedule. I work by the hour. I'll be happy to come and work for you for as long as you wish or for as short a time as you wish." And she looked at me and said, "Are you engaged for lunch?" So I went on and had lunch with her.

Cite Who was that client?

PF Mrs. Bowles. John Staub built that house. It was one of my favorite houses from the very beginning. The house was a natural brick at that time, and the green

C.C. Fleming, east square garden, Smith Garden, 1946.

on the shutters and trim was very rich and very New Orleans. I had lunch with Ethel Bowles and met Robert Bowles; he was a banker from San Francisco. We laid out a garden plan that was never completed. Robert traveled around too much.

By then I had made quite a few acquaintances on those lectures. One person, Mr. Herbert Godwin, who had a very nice Georgian house over on San Jacinto, invited me to come and have lunch with them. The important thing about Herbert is that he knew Miss Ima Hogg – he knew all the older ladies. He arranged to have me come out to a luncheon at Miss Ima's.

It was really a cocktail party. They had a great pianist sitting at the far end of the terrace in the unbelievable heat, playing the Steinway, and two attractive little Negro maids with great big ostrich-feather fans waving in the air, trying to keep mosquitoes off him. Herbert said, "Fleming, you seem to be very curious about what is happening here." Well, I'd never met Miss Hogg before. All my life I'd known who she was. My father and her father were acquainted. Miss Ima walked over and asked me what I knew about mosquitoes. I said: "Miss Ima, mosquitoes, as you know, are fragile, mean little creatures: they cannot fly in the breeze. If you would find some way to put fans out here or create a draft, the mosquitoes wouldn't be so bad." She said, "How would we do it?" I said that I would cut a lot of the thicket down. The thicket grew up to and actually hung over the back terrace. She said, "I don't want to hear any more." Bishop Clinton Quin, standing close at hand, said: "Now, Ima, you must not be so abrupt. This young man is supposed to be brilliant. Some of the things he said may be good ideas." She turned back, looked at me, and said, "I will consider talking to you more." I left a little after that. A few weeks went by and Miss Ima phoned. She wanted to know if I cared to come and visit with her. I said: "I would love to come visit with you. In fact, I would like to see more of your house." "Well, I'll be happy to show you more of my house. I would also like to show you my 'thicket,' as you call it." We stood out on the terrace – the mosquitoes were not bad that day – and I said that if she were to clear out quite a large area, so that the breezes could pass over the property, she should have a much lessened concentration of mosquitoes.

We did not get the job to do it. She hired the Lambert Landscape Company of Dallas to come out and cut the thicket. The Lambert people cut a 12-foot trench through the trees and thicket. That didn't do any good at all. While this was going on she went to Europe. Someone saw what was going on and phoned her and said, "Ima, the Lambert people are just wrecking your woods." So Ima cut them off. She didn't really give them a chance to explain what their plan was. When she came home, she phoned me and wanted to know if I would come over to see her. I said I would be delighted to. She said, "Well, since you started this wreckage, I want to see what you can do to improve it." So I suggested that we go down to the far end of that slit and look back up. It was a clear, lovely day. And for the first time I realized, and she did too, that her house was sitting on a series of descending terraces – they were very irregular – and she agreed to cut out everything 12 inches or less. Some of those big trees were magnificent.

When I finished with Bayou Bend I was more or less popular, and I have been more or less busy ever since. But I discovered some things about Miss Hogg. If she got cross with me she could be real testy; she could also be extremely generous.

Cite When you came to Houston, were there any memorable gardens here?

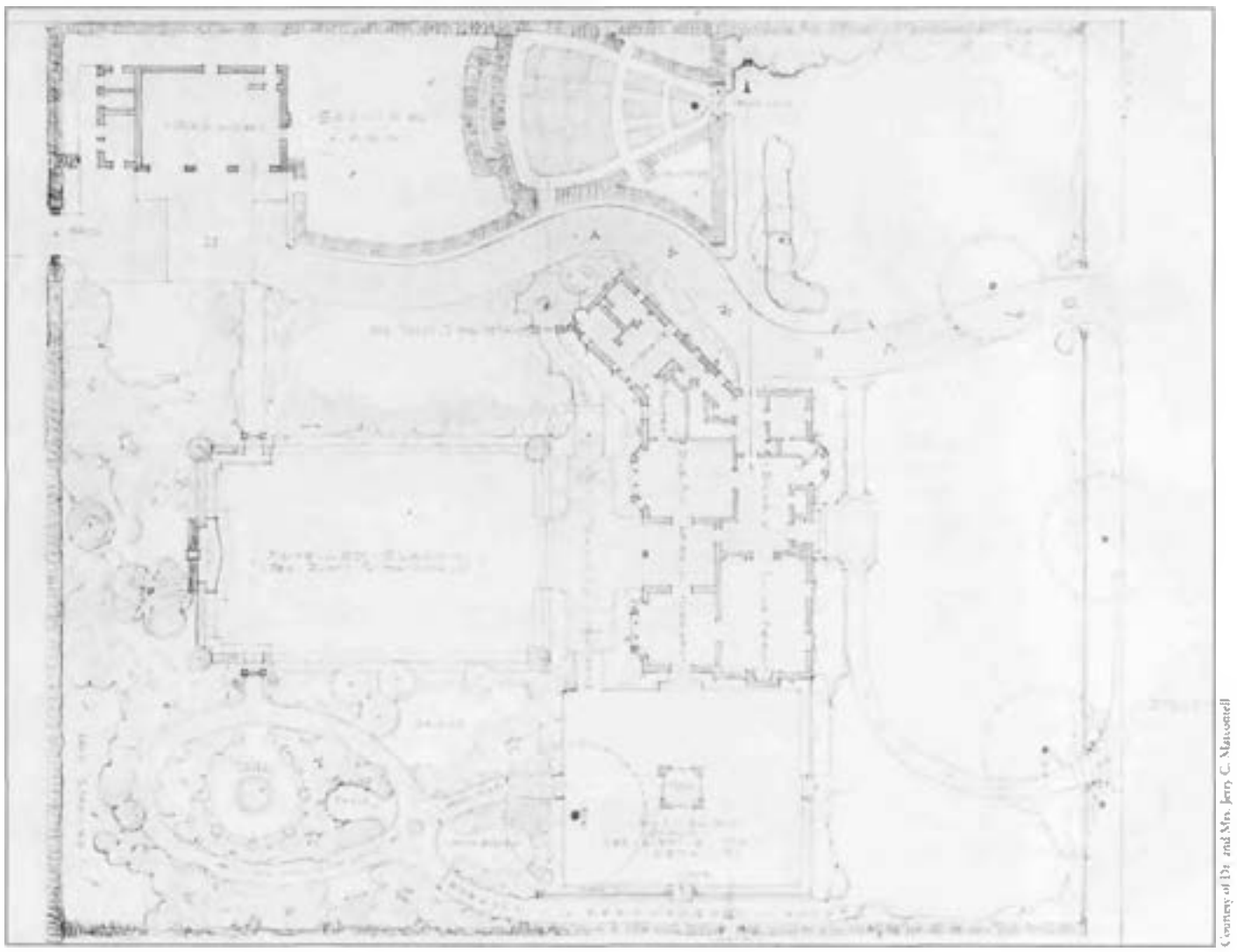
PF Houston was settled and developed by people who had taste. Mrs. Cleveland Sewall, who built an enormous property on Inwood Drive in River Oaks, had exquisite taste. Now, the people who laid out Broadacres had a dispute with Mrs. Sewall, so she built out in River Oaks. She always had good gardens. There were three or four people: Huberta Garwood, who was married to old Judge [Hiram M.] Garwood, one of the founders of Baker, Botts, Parker & Garwood, who lived on Montrose. It was not an enormous garden, but it was a very nice garden, beautifully proportioned, beautifully laid out. I think that it was laid out by Ellen Shipman of New York.

Cite Didn't Ellen Shipman do work for Mrs. Sewall?

PF Yes, and for Miss Ima, too. Ellen Shipman, I think, brought Miss Ruth London to Houston. Ruth London also worked with Miss Ima. Miss Shipman and I became friends. When I went back to Europe after my blind period, I carried a half dozen letters of introduction from Ellen Shipman. People loved that lady, they really did love her. I felt very fond of her, too.

Cite Did you do very much work outside of Houston?

PF Oh, yes, we had a branch office in Dallas. I married a Dallas girl. I used to do lots of work in San Antonio, and I did some work in Austin. In Austin, one of my first jobs was for Margarett and Herman Brown, of Brown & Root. Mr. Brown wasn't sure what he wanted to do; his wife wanted a rose garden. After I laid it out, he agreed that we would put it in, and he



Courtesy of Dr. and Mrs. Jerry C. Maricotti

C. C. Fleming, Smith Garden, 1946. Fleming's site plan for this small estate garden illustrates his practice of creating garden rooms of varying spatial character to complement interior vistas, site conditions, and functional requirements.

Fleming Planning Consultants, south terrace, Schlumberger Garden, 1980.

sent a great big highway maintainer-grader to grade the rose garden. The beauty that was there on that particular piece of property was torn all to pieces. I don't think I ever forgave that man.

In San Antonio, one of the best gardens I did is now the McNay Art Museum. Mrs. McNay was an unusual person, very much advanced for her time. She bought many, many paintings. She bought many of them because she wanted to help the artists. She had one of the best collections of Picassos in America. She gave away paintings as others would give away playing cards. Like Van Gogh. I think the McNay has four of his paintings.

I also did landscape for the other big museum there, the Witte Museum. The George Parkers built a great house, and it had a very good landscape. We brought in the biggest trees that had been transplanted in Texas at that time. Most of those live oaks had trunks that were very big. You talk about labor – there were none of the present-day machines. You dug a trench around the tree. The Mexican workers channeled under it, then cabled it, chickenwired it, and burlapped it with double layers. They would bring a vast piece of equipment, like a crane, to lift it. I think we dug more dirt to get a tree out than we ever did to get a tree in.

Eight of those trees were transplanted for the University of Texas project in 1930. All the trees coming down the main mall are planted in solid limestone. We dug out holes 18 feet across, 15 feet deep. Each is connected by a trench so that the water can go under.

Cite When did you do your house in Kerrville?

PF Oh, that was in the seventies. It was well known.

Cite How do you decide whether to do a formal, axial garden or a more natural garden?

PF Once I meet the owners and we agree that we are going to work together, I visit their house and look out every window, studying what you see from that particular window or vista. Observing what they have in the way of furniture, their paintings, I more or less formulate an approach outside that is harmonious with what I see inside. Very few of those properties are what I would call informal. I have done two or three properties that are almost totally informal because the houses were very simple.

Cite Let's try a specific example, the garden at Dogwoods, next to Bayou Bend.

PF It is more or less naturalistic.

Cite How did that design evolve?

PF That was done for Alice and Mike Hogg. Mike admired his sister Ima very much. One afternoon as we were sitting on that north terrace at Bayou Bend, now free from mosquitoes – he loved old-fashioneds, and I do, too; I think on our second old-fashioned – he turned to me very abruptly and said: "I've decided to buy that house next door from Judge Proctor, and I want you to go over there and look it over, to design a garden. I don't know anything about houses; Ima does. I want something very naturalistic." A few days later I did go over. There was a very nice rose garden on the east side of that house. On the back side it was thicket; people weren't doing much about landscapes in those days. I wandered down into the bottom looking for the other side of the property and looked through the property line fence. There was the great house that John Staub had built for the Neals. I think the landscape architect that had laid it out was Olmsted.

Cite Yes, Olmsted Brothers.

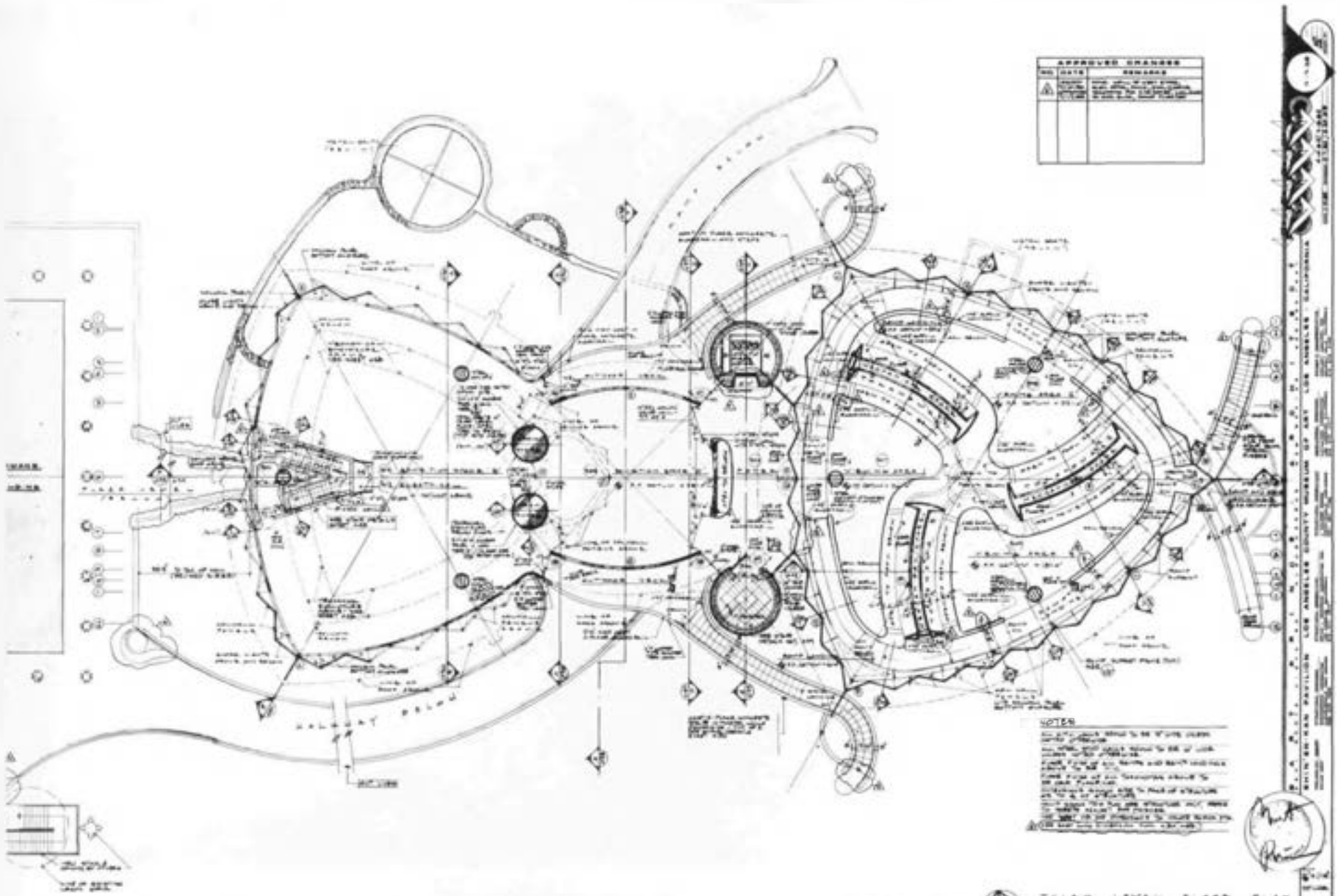
PF I remember backing up to that picket fence and looking down into the valley and realizing that there were two little draws, and that it would be nice if a sparkle of water could be enjoyed in the draw. I knew Mike loved to play cards, so I had the idea of creating a poker room down there in the woods. We only got up to the foundation level, now a terrace. But it was to have had a wing going off to the west. It was going to be a complete house in miniature. He was going to have the first picture window in Houston. We never got to finish the entire project because of Mr. Hogg's passing.

Going down toward the lower valleys are some very graceful slopes, but some of that is densely shaded. We removed all the brush and all the trees we could without ruining the native, overall effect, and planted monkey grass. I was dubbed the monkey grass king. All you have to do is give it a few weeks of growth and wash it with a hose and it's just a beautiful ground cover. A lot of that still exists. I have always been impressed with ground covers.

Cite Do you think that, had you been trained as a landscape architect, you might have approached design in a different manner?

PF I'm not sure that I would have. But the fact is that I was not interested in landscape until the traveling experience I had in Europe – realizing that it was the setting of the building rather than the building itself – that changed me from preferring architecture. ■

Fleming Planning Consultants, east terrace, Streetman Garden, 1966.



Shin'enkan, a Collaboration in L.A.

The Pavilion for Japanese Art by Bruce Goff and Bart Prince at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

CHRISTOPHER MEAD

The Pavilion for Japanese Art rises next to La Brea Tar Pits at the edge of Hancock Park in Los Angeles. Floating on its strip of earth between water and sky, the pavilion turns away from Wilshire Boulevard and the urban babel of modernist pavilions by William Pereira (1965) buried within postmodernist additions by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates (1986) that make up the bulk of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Its ideal is a more natural world, an earlier southern California of sun-drenched Pacific beaches, untouched landscapes, and crystalline skies before the devastation wrought by freeways, overdevelopment, and smog. The pavilion seduces and, at least for a moment, offers a refuge of tranquillity in the midst of the sprawling reality that is late-20th-century Los Angeles.

Projected by the architect Bruce Goff between 1978 and 1982, the 32,100-square-foot building was definitively designed and built by the architect Bart Prince between 1982 and 1988 at a cost of $12.7 million. Joe Price, the original client before the commission was taken over by LACMA in 1982, contributed $5 million toward the project, whose principal purpose is to provide exhibition space for Price's collection of more than 300 Japanese painted scrolls and screens of the Edo period (1615–1868). When the pavilion was completed in September 1988, a gaggle of critics responded with a series of passionately overwritten reviews. Inspired by the juxtaposition of the structure's curved exterior beams with the tusked concrete mastodons in the nearby tar pits, critics likened the pavilion variously to "the carcass of some prehistoric creatures pushed up out of that bubbling black bog," "a lumbering dinosaur," "some breathtaking remnant of Flintstones architecture," "a beast-like carapace perched by the water, antennae extended," "a samurai helmet and sword," and "a futuristic sampan."[1] Informing this mix of metaphors was a consensus summarized by Robert Hughes in *Time* magazine that the pavilion was at best a masterpiece of kitsch, one last example of bad art by "America's maestro of post-Wrightian, off-the-wall kitsch, Bruce Goff." With inimitable condescension, Hughes added that "the design was finished by his disciple, Bart Prince, to whom the urban fabric of Los Angeles owes some gratitude: the green bulk that rises beside the La Brea Tar Pits has been toned down from Goff's original sketches."[2]

A few critics demurred. Better informed about the work of the Oklahoma architect Bruce Goff and the New Mexican architect Bart Prince,[3] as well as their place in the organic tradition inaugurated by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, these writers questioned the relevance of kitsch as a criterion of judgment. Martin Filler wrote in *House and Garden*, "There is nothing debased or sentimental – the prerequisites of kitsch – in Goff's powerful architecture."[4] But even the sympathetic critics found the pavilion to be an irresistible temptation to metaphorical excess and, with the notable exception of an article for *Architectural Record* by Paul Sachner,[5] offered in their reviews more rhetoric than explanation.

The pavilion deserves explanation. This refreshingly original rethinking of museum design is at once a case study of the sometimes difficult process by which the architectural idea of a project is translated into the architectural reality of a building, and the remarkable product of a multiple collaboration between the architects, the clients, art, and architecture. So understood, the Pavilion for Japanese Art begins to speak for itself, and becomes both more interesting and more substantive than the critics would have us believe.

The Pavilion for Japanese Art is actually composed of two pavilions, east and west. Linked at their center by a circulation node that contains the entrance lobby along with stair and elevator towers, the pavilions are reached by an elevated walkway from LACMA's Times Mirror Central Court. The three-story west pavilion houses a ground-level study center (and storage vault beneath the entrance lobby), a plaza-level gift shop and gallery for *netsuke* (decorative ivory toggles), and a third-level sculpture gallery. The east pavilion rises three stories as a single volume of space devoted to exhibiting the Price collection. This collection, and Price's insistence that "the art itself" be the museum's client, determined the building's design and consequent structural system.[6]

Japanese screens and scrolls were traditionally meant to be seen singly – the scrolls in the *tokonoma*, or display alcove, of a Japanese house, the screens standing free in a room – under the changing conditions of natural light filtered through shoji screens. While the resulting soft illumination favored the delicate paintings on their typically gold ground, the real motive was an aesthetic that Jun'ichiro Tanizaki captured in his 1933 essay *In Praise of Shadows:*

Tom Bonner

Right: **View of stair tower and entrance ramps looking northeast.**

Below: **West wing. Shoji screens illuminate Buddhist sculptures.**

Christopher Mead

And so it has come to be that the beauty of a Japanese room depends on a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows – it has nothing else....

Of course the Japanese room does have its picture alcove, and in it a hanging scroll and a flower arrangement. But the scroll and the flowers serve not as ornament but rather to give depth to the shadows.[7]

The standard space of a Western museum, with its clinically white walls planned for collectively hung works seen under a uniform and artificial light, was completely unsuited to the Japanese experience of a penumbral domestic space given depth by one work of art. The challenge in the design of the Pavilion for Japanese Art was to reconcile this aesthetic with the curatorial and archival concerns of a modern museum.

The screens and scrolls of the Price collection are displayed in the east pavilion in three freestanding, two-story, two-sided curved tokonomas. One visits the collection literally from top to bottom, riding the elevator to the third level and then returning by a ramp that descends continuously around the periphery of the pavilion. Connected to the ramp are six viewing platforms shaped like chrysanthemum petals: each platform faces one concave tokonoma for the exhibition of a single screen, and one convex tokonoma subdivided by partitions into alcoves for the exhibition of several scrolls. The chrysanthemum plan permits one to view the screen at any distance from 6 to 60 feet. The natural light bathing each tokonoma is filtered through walls made of fiberglass panels called Kalwall, a modern equivalent of the shoji screen, which produces a comparably gentle yellow light while blocking some 95 percent of the harmful ultraviolet rays. To eliminate the need for protective, but also reflective, glass fronts on the tokonomas, the viewing platforms are separated from the displays by a spatial moat. The entire building is climate controlled; to help keep the interior at the constant 55 percent humidity required by the fragile works of art, open pools murmur at the bases of the tokonomas.

The conditions imposed on the exhibition space by the screens and scrolls dictated the structure of the east as well as the west pavilion. Instead of a conventional structure around the building's perimeter, three steel column-masts rise inside each pavilion and penetrate the roof to support triads of curved steel box beams from which the radially structured steel framing of the roof is suspended by steel cables. The shoji-like Kalwall panels, liberated from any structural constraint, circle the interior as one continuous curtain of light that responds to the advancing time of day, the sun's shifting arc, the sudden shadows cast by a passing cloud. This unceasing if subtle flux constantly renews by changing one's experience of the screens and scrolls on display.

The fusion of triangular and circular geometries defined by the structure is synonymous with the pavilion's formal expression, which reveals itself in plan to be two triangles with curved sides. This triangular motif is also the logogram adopted by Joe Price to identify the pavilion housing his collection as the Shin'enkan. So called after the name that the Edo painter Ito Jakuchu (1716–1800) gave to his studio, the Shin'enkan is best translated as "the house of the tranquil mind."[8]

Despite its name, the Shin'enkan has a complex history. Ultimately, the project is rooted in the collaborative friendship between Bruce Goff and his most important client, Joe Price, which developed between 1953 and 1976 in tandem with the growth of Price's original house in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The house's cumulative additions were themselves partly a response to the growth of Price's collection (begun systematically in 1963, although its origins date to the 1950s) of Edo screens and scrolls. Late in 1976, urged on and (more to the point) funded by Joe Price, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City commissioned Bruce Goff to design a new wing for Japanese art. Although the commission went to Kevin Roche after Goff's project was rejected in May 1978, the experiment turned Price's thoughts to his own collection, which even his continuously expanding house could no longer contain. In October of that same year, Price asked Goff to design the Shin'enkan for an unspecified location, although the Price estate in Bartlesville was being considered along with university and museum sites around the country that included Los Angeles.

The viewing requirements of the art quickly led Goff to the solution that, despite the numerous subsequent alterations, would finally be built. Thus his preliminary project of March 1979 posited the use of several tokonomas connected by a ramp with cantilevered viewing platforms, within a space wrapped and lit by translucent walls. Advised by his structural consultant of long standing, the engineer J. Palmer Boggs, Goff completed the eighth revision of this preliminary project in November 1980: a pair of two-story, curved-triangular pavilions, each with roofs suspended by steel cables from steel box beams resting on steel columns, with translucent walls of Kalwall.

The main west pavilion housed three two-story and two-sided tokonomas, circled by a ramp that was suspended from the ceiling and from which the viewing platforms were cantilevered. During the winter of 1981–82, a full-scale mock-up of one tokonoma and viewing platform was constructed in a barn on the Price estate. Bart Prince, with whom Goff had been discussing the project for several years, then built a cardboard study model of the entire museum in March 1982. By April, the choice of site had narrowed unofficially to Los Angeles, in part because that city's increasingly Pacific culture made it an obvious choice, but also because Price was contemplating the possibility of transplanting himself from Oklahoma to California. This prospective location did not, however, influence the version of the Shin'enkan included in the Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition *New American Art Museums* (June–October 1982), at which were displayed for a still unspecified site two schematic plans, one schematic elevation, and a beautifully detailed presentation model fabricated by Prince.[9] Then, on 4 August 1982, Bruce Goff died.

Bart Prince assumed responsibility for the project that fall, working as the architect of record for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which succeeded Joe Price as the client. Yet Price remained an active participant as the project's principal patron. When in January 1984 he

Tom Bonner

Christopher Mead

Above: **East wing. Edo-period screens and scrolls are displayed in alcovelike tokonomas.** ***Left:*** **Perspective view looking northwest.**

commissioned Prince to build his new residence at Corona Del Mar, south of Los Angeles, he signaled both his intention to supervise the museum closely and his acceptance of Prince as Goff's successor. Prince spent the next three years adjusting Goff's conception of the Shin'enkan to the specific realities of an addition to the east side of LACMA: he refined the structure in consultation with the engineer, August Mosimann, to guarantee that it satisfied the stringent requirements of the California building code, particularly the seismic code; he reoriented, revised, and expanded the interior spaces to answer LACMA's programmatic needs; and he saw the definitive design through the protracted review process required by both LACMA and the city of Los Angeles, during which virtually every detail of this unprecedented building was questioned. Typically, the recommendations put forth threatened the very conception of the Shin'enkan, as when one engineering firm advised that the roof's suspended structure be replaced by conventional columns around the building's perimeter.

The groundbreaking ceremonies for the Pavilion for Japanese Art, formerly called the Shin'enkan, finally took place on 12 December 1985. Yet Prince's sense of both victory and relief was soon frustrated by the discovery of dinosaur bones during the excavation of the site. Bulldozers were replaced by paleontologists' trowels, spoons, and toothbrushes, and the start of construction was delayed until April 1986. Once begun, however, the structure went up uneventfully; the Pavilion for Japanese Art was dedicated 30 months later, on 17 September 1988.

The translation of idea into building left its traces on the design. The building's location at the northeast corner of LACMA required both the addition of the elevated walkway linking the pavilion to the rest of the complex and its reorientation, so that the main pavilion now faces east instead of west. Less immediately visible but as important are the numerous structural and mechanical refinements. A poured-concrete-mat foundation placed above the site's exceptionally high water table was designed to distribute loads evenly in the event of an earthquake and compensate for the absence of any bedrock or firm subsoil on which to seat a conventional pier foundation. Incorporated into this foundation is a system to monitor and collect the site's naturally occurring methane gas with pipes laid in a gravel bed beneath the mat, which vent the gas through the pavilion's six column-masts. This conjures up the image of an oil refinery with its chimneys burning off escaped gas, and indeed Prince once ignited a small but satisfying explosion of methane when he struck a match to an outlet at the top of one column-mast. The realities of structure determined the final curved profile of the exterior box beams and required substantially thicker column-masts than had initially been planned. Equivalently, on the interior, the circulation ramp of the main pavilion now rests on columns instead of being hung from the roof; the viewing platforms are tied structurally to both the ramp and the tokonomas, instead of being cantilevered from the ramp; and the tokonomas, like the column-masts, have been thickened to receive this added structural load and to permit the inclusion of ventilation ductwork.

When LACMA replaced Joe Price as the client, the building program immediately became more complicated. The main, now east, pavilion was realized without any substantive changes to Goff's scheme, but the west pavilion was increased from two to three stories and completely reorganized. Besides housing the expanded mechanical spaces and toilets, it also includes a basement floor for the study center. This contains a screen viewing area with a contiguous storage vault beneath the entrance lobby, a library, and a scroll storage and viewing room. The entry level, with its new lobby, was divided into the gift shop and the netsuke gallery. The upper level, where Goff had located the study center and storage vault, became a sculpture gallery for displaying works from LACMA's permanent collection, reached by a prints gallery (over the entrance lobby).

Apart from Goff's intention to articulate the Kalwall panels as shoji screens, to clad portions of the exterior with a green quartz stone from Utah, and to enliven the stairwell and elevator towers with ornamental crests, little of the building's decoration had been decided upon, let alone detailed, by the time of Goff's death. Besides the strictures of taste and economies of budget imposed by LACMA, which eliminated such gestures as the ornamental crests, most of the decorative decisions were left to Prince. He selected the pale, sea green stucco when LACMA rejected his proposal to surface the exterior with polychromatic tiles; he detailed the Kalwall panels as shoji screens and designed the steel frames that hold the panels, along with the outside lighting of quarter-globes nestled into bottom corners of those frames; on the interior, he profiled the parapets that run along the base of the Kalwall panels in the east and west pavilions; he selected the deep gray carpeting and the creamy yellow plaster (the plaster in lieu of the opalescent tile with which he had hoped to cover the column-masts before LACMA objected); he designed the furniture, including the semicircular laminated-wood desk in the lobby and the netsuke gallery's narrow display cases arranged like the spokes of a wagon wheel. Since, throughout, Prince's impulses were as richly decorative as those of Goff, Robert Hughes is simply and flatly wrong when he suggests that Prince willingly "toned down… Goff's original sketches."[10] Rather, faced with LACMA's insistence that he temper the project's ornamental exuberance, he sought to preserve its sensuous spirit even as he was forced to compromise the decorative drama that he as much as Goff had intended for the building.

The pavilion's metamorphic history continues. The arrival of the curatorial staff in the final stages of construction caused the last-minute transformation of the scroll study and storage room into an office for the curator and assistant curator. The landscaping of a Japanese garden around the building following its completion changed the grade of the site, particularly on the north side, with the predictable result that some seepage of moisture has occurred on the basement level: inverting the more usual client's complaint about leaky roofs, LACMA complains about leaky foundations. After the Plexiglas balustrades in the east pavilion were heightened to conform to the Los Angeles building code, it turned out that their tops cut across the bottoms

Perspective view looking northeast. Ramp connecting the pavilion to the central court of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art appears in foreground.

of the screens on exhibit in the concave tokonomas. Joe Price complained, and the museum maintenance personnel built crudely detailed plywood platforms that indeed raised the screens above the balustrades but also hid the original, carefully executed tokonoma floors.

The Shin'enkan's aesthetic of shadows has provoked the greatest controversy and resulting change in the Pavilion for Japanese Art. Anonymous members of the public, either unwilling or unable to accept the premise of a museum illuminated by the vagaries of natural light, have complained about the darkness of the displays. Caught between this public and the diametrically opposed wishes of Joe Price, LACMA has compromised by installing rheostats in the tokonomas that switch on artificial lighting when the ambient light drops below five footcandles (the normal museum minimum is eight footcandles). However, because the tokonoma lighting was designed only for exceptional use (nighttime, cleaning), the raking lights cast shadows on the often uneven surfaces of the scrolls, with the result that Prince has been called back to conceive a new, balanced system. Conversely, the museum staff complains about the intensity of natural light in the west sculpture gallery, which in the afternoon can reach 15 footcandles and can therefore reduce the objects on exhibit to cryptic black silhouettes. The staff has so far resisted the architect's suggestion that the exhibition layout be reversed so that viewers circulate around the edge, with the light behind them as they look inward at the objects.

The point of itemizing these problems is not to furnish the building's critics with ammunition in their war against the architecture of Goff and Prince. Any architect who has had experience with a large and complex commission knows that such problems are not only inevitable, but also are often the product of circumstances not controlled by the architect. The real point is that a building continues to live after its completion, as previously unforeseen needs subject it to an ongoing process of adjustment. This open-ended sense of architecture, of an architecture whose built expressions are always understood to be in the end merely conditional, is central to the work of both Goff and Prince. What either baffles or enrages most critics is the essential unpredictability of their architecture.

Left unrecognized by those critics is the functionalism of Goff and Prince. This does not mean, naïvely, that their solutions always work perfectly – their architecture is too experimental for conventionally safe results. But architecture for them does mean the design of spaces that generate a building from the inside out according to its particular purpose.

This adherence to one of Frank Lloyd Wright's cardinal beliefs informs the kinship noted by more than one critic between the Pavilion for Japanese Art and Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York (1943–59). The kinship lies in not any immediate similarity of form, since the structures, geometry, spaces, and ramps of the two buildings are consistently different. Indeed, the museum by Goff and Prince suggests several functional improvements on Wright's. The horizontal viewing platforms of the Shin'enkan eliminate the vertigo caused in the Guggenheim by viewing works from an inclined ramp, and tokonomas efficiently inhabit what remains a grandiose void at the Guggenheim's center. Moreover, the Shin'enkan's peripheral curtain of light, originating behind the spectator and illuminating the centrally placed tokonomas, resolves the Guggenheim's problematic clerestory lighting, which glares in the spectator's face as he squints into each alcove.[11]

Yet function, as Louis Sullivan lectured in his *Kindergarten Chats*, is as much a matter of metaphor as of fact, which means that a museum must do more than solve problems of circulation and lighting. Because the Guggenheim was built for a modernist collection of nonobjective art particularly rich in Kandinskys, it follows that the Guggenheim and the Pavilion for Japanese Art are as foreign to each other as a painting by Kandinsky is to an Edo screen. These differences of aesthetic focus cannot, however, obscure the profound sympathy of purpose relating the two buildings: both transform the conventional museum into a cascading experience of space that echoes, as it passes each alcove, the spirit of the art on display. That Wright seems grudgingly to have excepted the work of Kandinsky from his rhetorical dislike of European modernism perhaps partly explains this sympathy;[12] more to the point is the suspicion that Wright really designed the Guggenheim thinking of the Japanese prints that he spent his life collecting and with which he invariably surrounded himself.[13] This latter possibility – that the Guggenheim and the Shin'enkan implicitly had as their client the same art – would explain why Wright as much as Goff and Prince sought to deinstitutionalize the art by housing it in such a poetically evocative space. The subjective experience of art had to be protected against the tendency of modern museums to reduce works of art to clinical artifacts.

The Pavilion for Japanese Art is in fact directly related to the architecture of houses. Appropriately, since Edo screens and scrolls were conceived as an essentially bourgeois art, the Shin'enkan collection was first assembled in the gallery pavilion that Goff added in 1966–69 to the Price residence in Bartlesville. This pavilion shares with the much larger Pavilion for Japanese Art a single purpose: both are domestic structures that were literally commissioned to be houses for art. This domestic conception of the Shin'enkan reminds one that a client's individual desires tend to be more determinant in the personal realm of his house than in the impersonal realm of a public building. It should thus come as no surprise that the Pavilion for Japanese Art shares with the houses successively designed for Price by Goff and Prince the same type of interior, at once spatially continuous and yet so protectively internalized as to eliminate any sense of the outside world. Since these are also the characteristics of the traditional Japanese teahouse, isolated within its garden behind sheltering walls, the result at the Pavilion for Japanese Art justifies the claim of Price that here "the art itself" is the real client.

Like the art with which it collaborates, the Shin'enkan requires a meditative appreciation for the nuanced passage of time. It is less a museum whose contents are to be consumed at once, like so many helpings of information, than a place to be discovered elliptically over many hours. Moving slowly through the building's cycle, up the elevator and down the ramp from platform to platform, hands gliding along the sinuous balustrade, feet cushioned by the carpet, pausing before a screen or scroll that emerges into the light, soothed by a silence heightened by the whispering of water, one becomes, like Edo Japan, an island unto oneself, lost in contemplation. ■

1 In order, the quotations are from Martin Filler, "Magnificent Monster: A Bizarre Museum by Bruce Goff Rises Like a Dinosaur Next to the La Brea Tar Pits," *House and Garden*, October 1988, p. 58; Aaron Betsky, "The Tar Pit Teahouse: LACMA and the Pavilion Oklahoma Crude Built," *L.A. Style*, September 1988, pp. 176–80, 180; Brooks Adams, "The Delirious Palace," *Art in America*, December 1989, pp. 136–45, 139; Jacques Gillet, "Bruce Goff: Un Présent en Perpétuel Mouvement," *Techniques et Architecture*, December 1988–January 1989, pp. 10–15, 12; "Bruce Goff et l'Art Japonais," *Construction Moderne*, March 1989, pp. 6–8, 6; Phil Patton, "Only in L.A.: The Los Angeles County Museum's New Japanese Pavilion," *Connoisseur*, October 1988, pp. 162–65, 162. See also Edward M. Gomez, "Edo Treasures in L.A.," *Art News*, October 1988, p. 166; Roger K. Lewis, "Intimate Spaces for a Delicate Art: LACMA's Pavilion for Japanese Art," *Museum News*, November–December 1988, pp. 18–21; H. G. Kauschke, "Museumspavillon für Japanische Kunst in LA/USA," *Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*, January 1989, pp. 49–52.

2 Robert Hughes, "Splendor Packaged in Kitsch," *Time*, 3 October 1988, p. 84. Hughes's judgment is of course informed by Charles Jencks, "Bruce Goff: The Michelangelo of Kitsch," in John Sergeant and Stephen Mooring, eds., *Bruce Goff*, Architectural Design Profiles no. 16 (London, 1978), pp. 10–14.

3 See David De Long, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1988); Christopher Mead, *Houses by Bart Prince: An American Architecture for the Continuous Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

4 See note 1.

5 Paul M. Sachner, "House of the Tranquil Mind," *Architectural Record*, September 1988, pp. 92–99. See also Bart Prince, "Bruce Goff/Bart Prince: Pavilion for Japanese Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art," *Global Architecture*, document 22 (Tokyo, 1989), pp. 112–19.

6 Joe Price, "A Personal Explanation of the Shin'enkan Collection," in *Masterpieces From the Shin'enkan Collection* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 27–34, 27. On the collection, see also the entire issue of *Arts of Asia*, March–April 1989.

7 Jun'ichiro Tanizake, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. T. J. Harper and E. G. Seidensticker (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1977), pp. 18–19.

8 Shin'enkan is also translated as the "far-away heart house" and the "losing your heart house."

9 See Helen Searing, *New American Art Museums* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), pp. 92–97.

10 Hughes, p. 84. See note 2.

11 In fairness to Wright, it should be noted that the lighting problems were exacerbated when his original scheme of natural lighting filtered through a curved clerestory strip of glass tubing was replaced by fluorescent lighting and a clerestory of flat glass panels.

12 See Wright's 1958 interior perspective, titled *The Masterpiece* and showing his interpretation of a painting by Kandinsky in one of the Guggenheim alcoves, reproduced in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, in association with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the Phoenix Art Museum, 1990), p. 147.

13 This suspicion, voiced most recently by Brendan Gill in *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 441, is rooted in Wright's imitation at the Guggenheim of the slanting shelves that he had devised to display his collection of Japanese prints: at the Guggenheim, paintings were to be tilted back on a platform against the rear wall of each alcove.

Mark Wamble

FIVE HOUSES

Domesticity and the Contingent City

It will come as no surprise to architects in the United States that the affirmation of a public realm, and by definition a political realm, comes largely if not exclusively out of the endeavors of the private sector. What may be surprising in the five domestic projects reviewed here is the degree to which each blurs the lines that distinguish public and private. While these projects are programmed as private houses, each *informs*[1] the city by telling a story. A credit to the insights of both architect and client, these stories reveal an inventive building process that began to unfold before pencil and paper were ever to meet.

What do stories have to do with architecture? Many dismiss the assimilation of building into written or spoken discourse, contending that architecture should not pretend to be more than a relationship of space, material, and light: architects achieve great works when they master these phenomena. It would follow that alternative criteria only serve to dilute architectural resolve. In a world of changing conditions of gender, ethnicity, age, class, environment, nation, and region, building is construed as pure and exempt, having an essence and a solitude beyond topical concerns. I will argue that these sentiments are political in nature and the product of reductive thinking.

In the attempt to define architecture (i.e., professionalism) there is an unfortunate irony. The more precisely terms are set forth regarding the boundaries of architecture, the more an architect's abilities – those necessary for criticism, vision, and invention – are compromised in the practice of architecture. A radical defense of professionalism, through the perpetuation of conventions that structure and *name*[2] criteria of propriety, also impoverishes architectural work by separating architects from their clients' unique circumstances. While this relationship between architect and client should promote the recognition of a need for change – as told through one's own personal story – professionalism limits and predetermines the nature of that change by confining it to the status quo.[3] Certainly issues of safety and performance are a valid concern to all. However, there is a broader definition of performance that enables architecture to go beyond the criteria of style, efficiency, commodity, and resalability. While professionalism also regards the internal evaluation of colleagues as necessary and good, through the more subtle practice of naming, works are either included or excluded pending their review by regulating bodies, the media, or the academy. Consensus through naming consolidates power and unifies an endeavor. Any preoccupation with activity outside the traditional criteria of firmness, commodity, and delight is often perceived as marginal and extraneous to the acceptable scope of architecture – a perspective that serves to discredit or even dismiss alternative activity as insignificant achievement. Anything perceived as being "out there" is a professional liability.[4]

A World of Difference. Houston was recently described to me as "the city of towers and rubble," suggesting that if a broader practice of architecture is to occur in this haptic landscape, we must first recognize the myth of the isolated event. Architecture manifests the interface of difference: of that which is *resolute*, of that which is *contingent*, and of everything that falls between. The question put to architecture then becomes, Where is the resolution and where is the contingency of the always already condition of urban life, given the predominant tabula rasa ideologies that have dominated architecture up to the present?

Most architects visiting Houston view this city with great curiosity. No government has more faithfully refused to question or constrain the practices of private development in terms of collective goals or public agendas. In addition, there are few topographic obstacles or geological constraints that require costly engineering, nor has there been a history of corporate flight or industrial restriction resulting in

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Stern House, 1991, William F. Stern & Associates, Architects. *Clockwise from top:* Street elevation; living area looking through three-story central volume; small gallery at the top of the stair.

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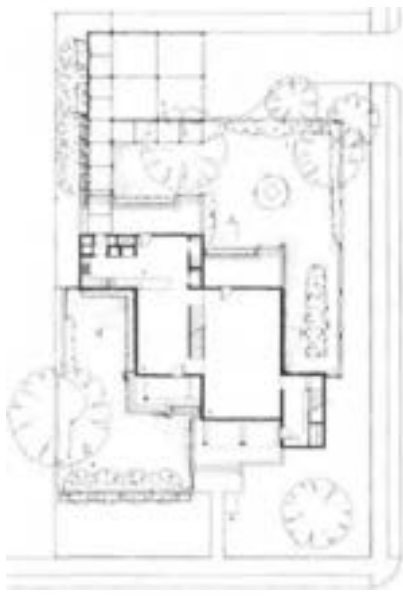

First-floor plan, Stern House.

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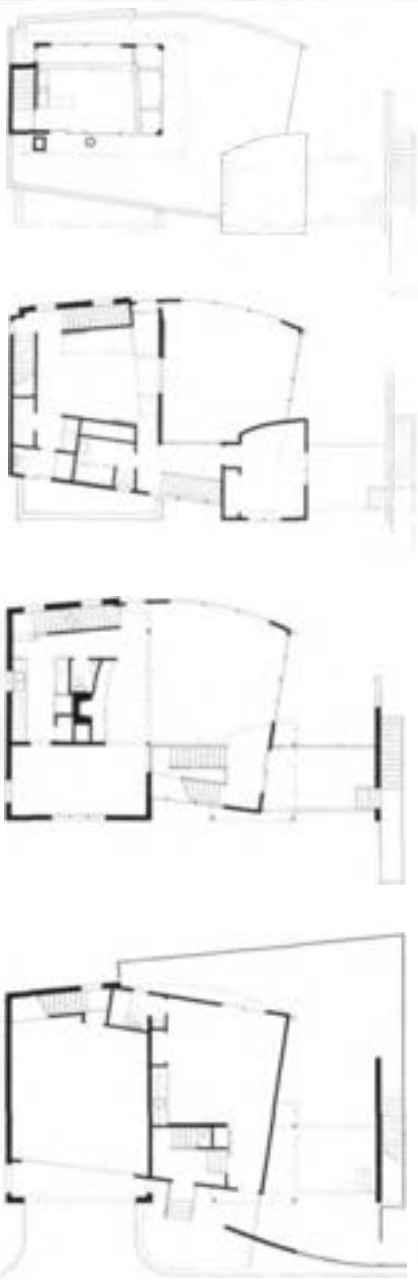

Bottom to top: Plans, levels 1–4.

Finnel House, 1990, Wittenberg Partnership.
Top: **Exterior facing street.**
Bottom: **Third-story bedroom.**

economic decline – certainly none greater than in other North American cities. Yet the general scope of architecture is myopic rather than full. There persists a physicality of disarray, brought about, it would seem, by the extremes of private interest. As a result, the systematic dereliction of the street, aside from the occasional kitsch appreciation of strip architecture, is both the cause and the effect of one bounded enclave after another – some are towers, some are rubble – each proposing a hermetic version of *decidability* and resolution. A decidable work is one purporting a single meaning versus many, the "framing" of privileged references in order to exclude other references by marginalizing or repressing their legibility. *Undecidability*, therefore, is simply the recognition of meaning in its contingent and provisional status. The conditions that produce any meaning at all can also produce many meanings simultaneously. While decidability in regard to professional practice is desirable, undecidability is by definition immanent.[5]

Contemporary American cities are experiencing a shift in self-perception, forgoing the arrival of a long-awaited City Beautiful. It would be a mistake, therefore, to dismiss a city of towers and rubble, ascribing the prevailing perception of decidability to negligence and defeat. For within this darker perception lies the content of the other, where architecture embraces uncertainty and acknowledges undecidability in contemporary culture.

How might this shift affect the production of architecture? Western culture shares a bias for clarity, paring away, rejecting, or ignoring the circumstances of an endeavor that cannot be put in a logical place. The repression of undecidability serves a common cultural preference for wholeness and resolution (as evidenced by the current debate over zoning in Houston). Whether it is the selective wholeness of a modernism rejected by Robert Venturi in *Complexity and Contradiction* or the "difficult" wholeness he nominates,[6] each version takes refuge in a structure of language that is interior and specific, thought to be complete and analogous. Any architecture conceived as such – from a stylized house to an awning wrapped around retail lofts to an isolated suburban office complex – constitutes and iterates a discrete version of isolation. This refuge of interiority urbanistically and philosophically renders destitute anything outside its formal perimeter – a tendency that, with great *rigor*, repeats itself time and again.

Not only in architecture, but in all endeavors, there is the unspoken and accepted belief that a condition of rigor in one's work ethic produces a superior product, transparent in meaning and process.

rigor [ME. *rigour*, lit. stiffness, to be stiff]. Harsh inflexibility in opinion, temper, or judgment; severity, strictness. RIGOR MORTIS: temporary rigidity of muscles occurring after death.

But to be a participant in the built environment requires boundless conductivity. *To architect* could be defined as circumstance and intelligence marking their overlap through the affirmation of their becoming. This is the smooth space of difference. To *ride difference* is to embrace exteriority. It is not "sedentary" but "nomadic" thought that enables production in a diverse landscape where architecture can no longer "immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority." Given this view, the constitution of architecture exclusively through internal logic is reductive, sedentary, rigorous. An architecture of the contingent, the nomadic, and the circumstantial rides difference and embraces that which is always already the body of architecture.

Different Stories. The processes of difference permeate our existence. In a culture of storytellers, for example, one rarely regulates conversational skills with rules of efficiency or economy. Elaboration and rhetoric always seem to be in order when one is asked the simplest of questions, and for good reason. The complexity of a story not only conveys a set of facts, it also brings the listener into a process of exchange initiated by the teller. As events unfold, the rituals of inquiry and clarification open up the particulars to new territory, in excess of an initial subject (the importance of which one rarely recalls with the same urgency). Digressions are not illegitimate tangents; they are the recognition of subtle facets. They are *different stories*.

STERN HOUSE

Regarding a house designed for himself in Houston's museum district, architect William F. Stern of William F. Stern & Associates describes a set of contextually generated concerns regarding materiality and orientation sympathetic to a small 1920s residential development, a neighborhood of bungalows now bereft of its original scale and continuity. Responsive to the scale of more recent three-story, fourplex condominium structures nearby, and unlike the few surviving bungalows, the interior of the Stern House features a double-height space displaying a collection of later-20th-century paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, and sculptures. Circulation through the house highlights a lateral interplay of gallery and living spaces, while simultaneously forming a vertical transition from public spaces to private spaces by way of variations in light, enclosure, and scale. On the outside, two courtyards of crushed granite and paved surfaces anchor the structure, offering views and access from the dining and living areas. According to his description, Stern followed a series of precepts regarding the specific patterns of the immediate neighborhood, existing trees, natural light, and the viewing of artwork.

FINNEL HOUSE

In a neighborhood adjacent to the museum district, on a site next to a depressed stretch of U.S. 59, Susan and Gordon Wittenberg of the Wittenberg Partnership designed a house for Gil Finnel, a professor of law at the University of Houston. A vacation on the West Coast was the client's introduction to the work of Frank Gehry and Morphosis. Finnel requested that a similar sensibility toward materials and geometry be used by the Wittenbergs, expressing his interest in how a house might respond "urbanistically" to an unlikely combination of domestic and infrastructural adjacencies. The Wittenbergs incorporated both industrial and traditionally domestic materials into a design whose diagonal views organize space from room to room and take advantage of the downtown skyline beyond.

SCHIEBL HOUSE

The Schiebl House, designed by Val Glitsch of Val Glitsch AIA Architect, ponders the "consciously casual lifestyle" of the Memorial area of Houston. The siting of this asymmetrical house makes use of its 28 remaining trees (only two were lost, according to the architect), providing a natural sunscreen for the bedrooms and living spaces. A less desirable view, considered in this case to be the street, is designed out of the scenario in order to isolate the house and appropriate the trees. Internal site conditions are addressed through partial plan shifts. A shed structure housing the living and sleeping spaces is oriented to the west toward the wooded portion of the site. With its shortest end facing the street, the long, gabled core structure houses the stair and support spaces, separating an attached shed structure from a semidetached garage and workroom shed. Alternating gray stucco (coding the sheds) with white stucco (coding the core), Glitsch finished the enclosure to indicate its interior zoning. A standing seam metal roof is used to unify the ensemble of volumes.

CHADWICK HOUSE

Just a few blocks north of Interstate 10 in the Heights, a house designed by Carlos Jiménez of Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio occupies a lot reportedly bought by the owner for a song. The Chadwick House was designed for yet another single occupant, in this case a writer. The house is sited deep into the 33-foot-by-135-foot lot, creating a garden space in the front along the street and saving the only large tree on the property. The house unfolds around a volume of continuous vertical space. Starting on the ground floor next to the study, the space spirals through the double-height living

room into a bedroom on the third floor. The rear of the house provides views to the south, where the open space of a parking lot and a railroad right-of-way permits an unobstructed view of the distant downtown skyline. The house was constructed within a strict budget, utilizing raw concrete floors, salvaged floor slats from a demolished church, painted plywood, gypsum wallboard, and stained "two-by" lumber.

WETCHER HOUSE

South of Houston, beyond the strip vernacular of the Gulf Freeway, lies Bay Oaks, a subdivision of Clear Lake City, an expanse of redeveloped prairie now depleted of its former Humble Oil reserves. By searching deeper into this oblique landscape, Peter D. Waldman of Peter Waldman Architect designed a house for the Wetchers, two psychologists practicing nearby. The house is situated between a golf course and a cul-de-sac amidst a catalogue of familiar domestic styles. Like other houses on the street, the Wetcher House acknowledges design constraints and local restrictions regarding front setbacks, materials, and roof profiles. Unlike the surrounding houses, it is organized around a courtyard, into which program spaces look and gain access.

Isolation and Contingency. Discussion of these houses revolves around the circumstances of the creative act. In *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss describes the creative act as a *contingent* moment residing somewhere between what is "sensible," though not yet explicable, and what is "achieved by the natural sciences" and therefore considered traceable, axiomatic, essential. The sensible has qualities of a familiar nature but not of obvious or apparent origins. On a phenomenal level one might refer to them as "brute" qualities – undeniable yet inexplicable. Lévi-Strauss structures this contingency where the sensible and the scientific intersect by suggesting that we use "myth" or "the magical" to act as a temporary explanation of the unknown: that is to say, until science has time to catch up. This is the "science of the concrete," in which myth is the result of a more uncompromising demand for determinism than science, and magic suggests new fields of science based upon an "aesthetic" sensibility. For Lévi-Strauss the creative act is thus an "interlocutor" or intermediate step holding open a space for future scientific determination.[9]

Like many architectural conventions, this basic structuralist position pretends to eliminate contingency by identifying when, where, and how that which is contingent may occur or be identified – a *conditional contingency*, if you will – preconditioning the creative act. Accepting the limitations of the Lévi-Strauss argument, one could translate, but not limit, the case for architecture in terms of four moments of contingency. In order to look closer at the implications of contingency, I will narrow the scope to this example: (1) There is first the initial contingency of the work whereby the architect projects a scenario for the object, focusing on the anticipated result. This contingency occurs anterior to the work, transcending any immanent or locally circumstantial form of execution. (2) The second contingency arises during the production of representative objects, such as models, drawings, diagrams, or specifications. The second form of contingency recognizes a connection between the method of representation and both the limitations they can impose and the opportunity a method imparts as an instrument of exploration.* (3) A third contingency arises during the actual execution of a design, when construction procedures reveal unanticipated and often interesting dimensions of a work of architecture. This third contingency suggests the possibility of a method that circumvents the limitations of representational drawing, employing instead a series of diagrams to explain actual assembly relationships and procedures, leaving the final product open to the circumstances of field conditions. (4) The fourth moment of contingency occurs after a "completed" work affects and is affected by its context(s). This contingency acknowledges the solitude of buildings,[10] pointing to the futility of a preconceived notion of resolution and the indeterminacy of building in regard to expectation and control.

In response to the first moment of contingency, four of the five clients represented here have taken a courageous position regarding their investment in a house, and the potential impact a private project has on a community. By conventional standards of resale and marketability, these houses constitute a risk. However, alternative houses such as these are a commitment to the inevitable circumstantiality of domestic life. The inevitability of contingency and risk go hand in hand. To ride difference does not mean pick up and leave when circumstances change. It is a collective attitude that recognizes the limitations of commodification, the result of an exploitative objectification of property. Therefore, when considering the number of personal fortunes that are lost to the perils of real estate, the risk in the case of these five houses is no greater, while a collective quality of existence is acknowledged and improved.

Moments of Difference. The Wetcher House is as much a commitment to the Wetcher family as it is to Clear Lake City, considering that their clinic and residence are located there. According to Dr. Kenneth Wetcher, he and his wife, Dr. Goldie Rappaport, have become involved in their community through social activities, including a community theater group and local business organizations. For the Wetchers, Clear Lake City is a viable and autonomous community rather than a refuge from Houston proper. Responding to this commitment, Waldman's design plays through different scenarios from their lives with symbolism, theatrics, and allegory, marking events by enacting a series of narrative fictions elaborating on the architect's favorite interpretations. Although Kenneth Wetcher contends that there were no surprises in the house, the architecture entices a broad and more undecidable version of fantasy, keeping in motion the contingent urbanity of Clear Lake City and the play of existing local architectures. About his built work and his academic research, Waldman is fond of saying he prefers a glass to be half full rather than half empty, suggesting an architecture that can provide many responses to an expression of need rather than focusing on one proprietary version.

From the street one enters through a gate in the garden wall along the side of the house facing the golf course. This approach leads to the front porch and the body of the house. From the porch the entry straddles a large double-height space used for dining and entertainment, terminating in a steel-and-glass stair that ascends to a landing overlooking the courtyard and pool. From the outside, the shape of this stair resembles the neck of a horse clad in patinated copper – a Trojan horse, no doubt – perhaps symbolic of the Wetcher House's presence in the midst of the otherwise unsuspecting neighborhood (or the arrival of the architect in an otherwise unsuspecting household.) There are countless references specific to the circum-stances of the project and personal to the Wetcher family, including a breakfast room shaded by the bill of a baseball cap, a fur closet shaped like the Statue of

Schiebl House, 1991, Val Glitsch AIA Architect. *Top:* Front covered entry porch. *Bottom:* Dining room looking toward den.

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First-floor plan.

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Liberty, king and queen bathrooms in the shape of chess pieces, and a pool in the form of a dinosaur. Assembled throughout the house and in the courtyard, this inventory of animated form portrays a private stock of domestic dreams. Meanwhile, the symbolic presence of the Trojan horse casts a curious shadow of doubt across the dream's resolution.

The Chadwick House recognizes and responds to the contingencies of investing in a marginal neighborhood. This three-story wood-frame and wood-sided house finds and articulates a daring prospect in what most lending institutions would consider an otherwise risky financial circumstance. On the other hand, the Heights is interesting because it is content; while modest gentrification is ongoing, prevailing local attitudes discourage large-scale speculative development and the inevitable prospect of frequent property turnover.

In the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots, Ricardo Lacayo wrote in an article titled "This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land" that the efforts of personal initiative and private investment can combine to reduce inner-city crime and ethnic division. Instead of Community Development Block Grants, it is the commitment of small-scale private initiative that tethers incentive to responsibility in communities commonly considered marginal by lending institutions, insurance companies, and representatives of the real estate industry. Therefore, in the absence of guidelines for development, enlightened architects and entrepreneurs (educated by the architect) can affect building in ways regulation never could.[1] As if to confirm this sentiment in the Chadwick House, Jiménez repeats the scale, orientation, materiality, and assembly procedures of adjacent houses in simple acknowledgment of its location. On the other hand, private elements such as the garden are placed in good faith to the front of the lot, while the interior organization turns an eye to the back, toward the distant downtown skyline. Throughout the house, materials and construction techniques reflect necessity as much as aesthetic appeal. The architecture becomes residual, an intersection of local and distant influences combined to create a measured sensibility, indicative of both and overly conscious of neither.

By contrast, the Schiebl House perpetuates a suburban trend, further dividing the interests of an increasingly heterogeneous culture. While the space, material, and craft of the house are impeccable, the project is unresponsive to local circumstances beyond their simple reiteration, thus relegating its impact to tokenism in the Memorial enclave. Critical development of its conceptual criteria, aside from a desire to save existing trees, is missing. The position it takes regarding the stake of architecture betrays the individual and collective ability of architecture to affect the environment, forgetting that no other participant in contemporary culture will take responsibility for the qualities of the built environment if the architect does not. The circumstances of the Schiebl House, like any form of building, are contingent not only upon the needs of a client, but also upon the needs of a diverse public unable to exercise a will of its own, yet implicated by the politics of its isolation. As mentioned above, the Wetcher House too is an introspective work, yet it does not pretend to be a work in isolation. Nor is the architecture limited to a narrow proposition of program. It is inspired as much by the local conditions of Clear Lake City and the Wetcher family as by the broader questions of domesticity, urbanity, commodification, and by the opportunity of the architect to participate in a critical manner by continually redefining the nature of these questions.

The Finnel House informs the circumstances of its becoming. Initially pushing aside the constraints of space, material, and budget, the Wittenbergs began by assessing the conditions of the site, implicating lot proportions, adjacent freeways, billboards, and power lines. At times these elements are referred to literally, while the more subtle aspects of the house deterritorialize their relationships to reconfigure traditional dualities of interior/exterior, front/back, and surface/volume. Weaker moments in the project are attributable to the overt formal aspect of plan kinetics and the appropriation of form according to its collageability, a costly preoccupation limiting the architects' budget for finish materials. The metaphor of "house as theater" was explained in terms of solid/void plan relationships, where an audience (bedroom, study, dining room, and hearth) views the stage (living space) and a proscenium of the Houston skyline beyond. This proposition, without prior knowledge, is hardly legible upon visiting the house; instead it is a rhetorical device serving to condition the organization of the plan. On the other hand, the house continues to evolve as it did during construction. Recalling the third moment of contingency, a combination of unforeseeable criteria outside the architects' control and drawings left purposefully incomplete due to budget constraints enabled the process of construction to be an extension of design. One such example concerns a space on the fourth level, above the bedroom, that remained programmatically unaccounted for in an early massing diagram and throughout construction. During code inspection it was determined that access to the space limited its code classification to an extension of the bedroom, contingent upon new openings being cut in the bedroom ceiling to connect the two spaces. What results is a positive manifestation of unforeseeable conditions attributable to the visual and acoustical contiguity of the loft space with the bedroom, living room, and entry, as

Top: **Longitudinal section.** ***Bottom:*** **First-floor plan with screened porch, study.**

Chadwick House, 1991, Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio. ***Far left:*** **Second floor looking toward dining area.** ***Left:*** **Entry façade.**

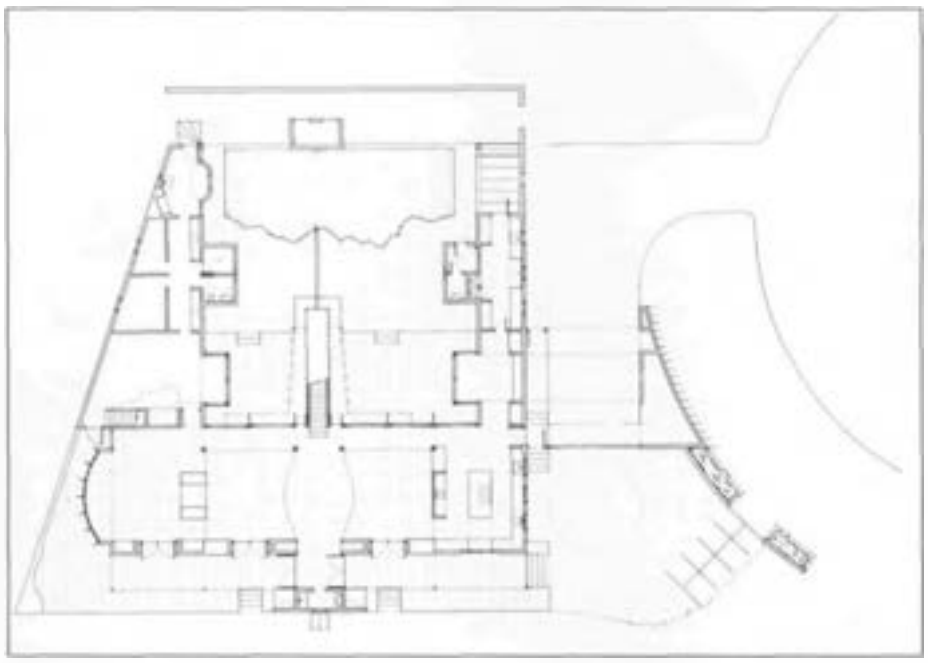
Top: Street façade and entry of Wetcher House in Clear Lake City, Peter Waldman Architect, 1991. *Bottom:* Two-story living space with gallery above.

Peter Waldman

well as combined sounds and views of the exterior, including the highway, the Houston skyline in the distance, the adjacent rooftops of the neighborhood, and the street. Finnel confirms the profound impact of this room, where everyone seems to gather during social events. No doubt the ongoing transformation of U.S. 59 will also continue to affect the Finnel House, as was intended from the start.

On the exterior, the Stern House asserts a stylistic bias in combining the broad gestures of contemporary wood-frame construction with middle-tech ornamental sunscreens – a juxtaposition employed by Renzo Piano on the Menil Collection museum. Not unlike the hardware-store classicism of its Los Angeles counterpart, this architecture represents, on the exterior, its contextual circumstance in decidable form, appropriating an index of contextual elements to ornament its traditional methods. However, unlike its counterpart's, the interior of the Stern House is a *different* story. On the interior there are works by Mel Bochner, Agnes Martin, Don Judd, Dorothea Rockburn, Robert Mangold, and Stephen Keister, with a Sol LeWitt Wall Drawing commissioned as a permanent installation. In an obscure corner of the third level, a Mel Bochner drawing takes an inconspicuous place on the wall – one of a series, produced in the mid-seventies, of small geometric studies that culminate a decade of Bochner's explorations into the relationship of color and shape. Bochner's interest in this series grew from an earlier project titled *Axiom of Indifference*, a mathematical version of this graphic shape and color project. Like many artists in the Stern collection, Bochner developed his work by following an analytical process of clarification and refinement, until, as the artist would claim, the work "reduced to its most essential and telling aspects." At the same time, Bochner understood that each project was an eventual discovery of "that point [where] both closure and a new beginning are implicit," thus enabling contingency to take its inevitable place in his work. As always in the case of Bochner's work, structure was integral, if only subliminally perceived by the viewer.[12]

A critical version of the Stern House objectifies these perceptions, implicating the artist as a welcome influence. Like Bochner, Stern established criteria from the outset. As was mentioned above, issues of scale, orientation, material, light, and view figured into an endeavor of resolution. Following this scenario through the house, one encounters the precision at work until reaching the top floor, where a "storage" room occupies a pivotal place between the principal atrium and bulk storage and mechanical rooms. With the Bochner drawing opposite its entrance, this room terminates a stacked sequence directed by the orientation of the stair and initiated a priori with the kitchen on the ground level and the office on the second level. The interval of movement through the interior establishes this space as critical to the understanding of its pervading order and the fulfillment of its promise. In this room, facing a single table and chair, a sparse collection of framed prints hangs in view of an always absent audience. Above a large window too high to see through and below a smaller window elevated further toward the peak of the truncated space, the suspended form of a triangular extrusion hovers as if frozen in alternative bands of the electromagnetic spectrum. The space, through its program of use and conspicuous contents, floats with an acute sensibility alien to the rest of the house. This sublime allowance on the part of the architect anticipates the proposition of closure to formalize contingency in the face of a more conventional interpretation.



First-floor plan.

Peter Waldman

When viewed from a different perspective, the issue of naming in the context of architecture is side-stepped by the infinitive: *to architect*. With this twist of the frame the subjects, concepts, objects, and representations of architecture acquire a latitude to reorient and respond to evolving criteria. Physical objects left behind become temporal and spatial modulations in a landscape of seamless context. To attach a *style* or the term *avant-garde* to new design criteria is a tendency in our culture, leading to an architecture "co-opted" by the same institutional constraints established to repress a world of difference. To avoid commodification, "architecture" becomes residual to the manner by which architects encounter difference and make adjustments in the midst of complexity. After all, the circumstances and contingencies of participation in any field of counsel delineate the interest and accomplishment at stake. Thought of in this way, a drawing is no more a representation of concepts than the movement of the hand that draws. An object of representation is no more the object than the hand, or the mind that guides the hand, or the *circumstances* that unite the pen and the hand in the first place. Each embodies the potential of architecture in many ways more than the one of the *name*. ■

1 In his book *Le Pli, Leibniz, et le Baroque* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1988), Gilles Deleuze describes the endless passing over and into of form, accounting for work produced by, and indicative of, its physical and philosophical contexts, seeing the two as inseparable. Therefore the theory of the *inform* unfolds a way of building and designing, within a seamless continuum where isolated events cannot occur.

2 The issue of the name concerns the territorialization of endeavors, where the inclusion of one activity defines any distinguished version of that activity as secondary or peripheral, and marked by another name.

3 Lebbeus Woods, "Architecture Is a Political Act," *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 260 (May 1992), p. 3.

4 Cornell West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in Russell Ferguson et al., eds., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), p. 32.

5 Jeffrey Kipnis, "Nolo Contendere," *Assemblage*, no. 11 (April 1990), p. 55.

6 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), p. 16.

7 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 474.

8 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 28.

9 The translator's notes of Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus* point out (p. xvi) that the act of *drawing* requires that "what is drawn does not preexist the act of drawing." Drawing is an active search, to blaze a trail or to open a road not only to represent, but to be represented as well by, the hand and the mind behind the act. Both are discovered through drawing.

10 Rafael Moneo, unpublished address to the student body and faculty of the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, fall 1985.

11 *Time*, 18 May 1992, p. 32.

12 Brenda Richardson, *Mel Bochner: Number and Shape* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976), p. 37.

Cite**ations**

The City Imagined

Paul Kennon Memorial Symposium
Rice University
14 March 1992

Reviewed by Elysabeth Yates Burns McKee

On 14 March 1992, the first Paul Kennon Memorial Symposium was held in Stude Hall of Ricardo Bofill's Alice Pratt Brown Hall at Rice University and was made possible by the Paul Kennon Memorial Trust. The symposium's theme, proposed by Rice's former architecture dean, Alan Balfour, was ostensibly the past, present, and future of the contemporary city, but the subject matter lacked critical focus; if indeed there was a vision for the symposium, it was – as the title suggests – left to the imagination. Given the all-star cast, the results were disappointing. Recent events have shown that there is a significant amount of critical work to be done on the subject of the contemporary city, both theoretically and practically. Many of the architects and theorists present, however, did not engage the larger questions of the life of the city, preferring to remain within the bounds of their own work. Perhaps most of them, the architects in particular, knew each other too well, their familiarity undermining any attempt to broach serious issues for fresh insight. It was also the case that those with new ideas were not, for reasons unknown, given the chance to participate.

Mario Gandelsonas opened the morning session with his now-familiar formalist exposé titled "Mapping the City," albeit prefaced with an astonishing laundry list of current architectural issues. These included marginality of both public and private space as a determinant of power, architecture as event, contextualism, and regionalism. He continued with his research on urban patterns, really the subject of his talk: Los Angeles as the embodiment of the "rhetoric of the uncanny," with its ability to "escape the status quo" (ironic in light of recent events). He included the most up-to-the-minute component of architectural discourse, the impact of the electronic media on architecture, and announced an interest in "difference" or the "other" coupled with the "urban text as the object of desire," an apparent though vague allusion to French psychoanalytic theory.

In the end, however, Professor Gandelsonas presented his usual discourse comparing the American city (planned, the product of "passion") to the European city (unplanned, the product of "reason"), following this with ink and computer-analysis drawings of Manhattan, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Des Moines, Iowa, his most recent project. He linked many of the resultant formal "patterns" in the Des Moines presentation to a neo-Gestalt theory in which "figures" become "found objects" in the urban text. As a result of the analytic

process, an assortment of birds, bugs, and other creatures "appeared" – an episode that bore a resemblance to the reading of tea leaves. What was to become of Des Moines in light of these creatures was not readily apparent.

Gandelsonas's partner and spouse, Diana Agrest, also focused on formal issues, centering her talk around the venerable dialectic "nature versus the city." In a more direct manner than her partner, she grandly indicted the limitations and failures of the 20th-century city. Given the contemporary city's institutionalized "acts of erasure" (such as can be seen in Le Corbusier's urban programs, as well as Houston), Agrest criticized the legitimacy of planning in general. She recommends looking at the city "as it is," perceiving what she refers to as "urban ready-mades" – reminiscent, at least in principle, of Gandelsonas's "found objects." "By bringing to the surface that which cannot be seen," she is, in effect, seeking to "divine" a new dialectic – that of the city versus the suburb instead of nature versus the city. According to Agrest, this change will open up a new and more profitable discourse. Nonetheless, the conservative structural model of a dialectical framework (this versus that) remains intact.

The ever-inscrutable Peter Eisenman followed, presenting a talk roughly titled "Unfolding Frankfurt." Although this was a change from his scheduled topic, "Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media," Eisenman discussed a number of issues arising from the effect of the electronic media on architecture, particularly architectural space. Largely centered around architecture's "loss of effect," or rather "loss of the sensual dimensions" as he described it, the Frankfurt Housing Projects are fabrications that seek an "other" kind of spatial paradigm, one that *affects and is affected by* emerging social orders. How successful or verifiable such a strategy might be is open to question. Like Gandelsonas and Agrest, Eisenman (despite his stated intentions) continues to struggle with what are principally formal issues.

Jennifer Bloomer was the bright spot of the morning session. After a series of introductory remarks on the psychoanalytic nature of language, she read a letter she had written to the late author Angela Carter (*The Passion of the New Eve, Shadow Dance, The Bloody Chamber*). Entitled "City Becoming," it was an intensely personal and rich soliloquy on "the city as muse," in which Dr. Bloomer paid homage to the feminist position that "the personal is the political." Movingly performed, the piece danced around the "hard issues," approaching the question of the city in a profoundly elliptical fashion. Many found the tactic frustrating. However, Bloomer is not known for her research on the city, and she harbored no illusions. Her work critiques both the discipline and the profession of architecture as such. According to Bloomer, architectural discourse suffers from a severe yet redeemable structural dysfunction; in other words, the very foundations of the discipline and profession are in dire need of redress. Our inability as academics and professionals is a result of something not "out there" but rather "in here." The failure of, as well as the hope for, architecture lies principally with architects themselves.

The afternoon session began with a good deal more promise when Rem Koolhaas took the stage. It appeared that the Dutch architect and theoretician sensed the pall that had settled on the auditorium, for he launched into a highly energized performance professing "social intercourse through form." Koolhaas decried the motives and actions of traditional planning strategies, pronouncing them detached and irrelevant. His sardonic yet witty characterization of Houston as the prototype of the contemporary "lite city" (half the calories, half the taste) elicited both applause and consternation from the audience. As was the case during his sessions as Rice University's Craig Francis Cullinan Visiting Professor, Koolhaas represented himself as a realist and a pragmatist, an architect who continuously and unpretentiously sifts through material evidence for clues to the state of society, the city, and architecture. Koolhaas's theory is formulated entirely through practice; in many ways, his was the most optimistic presentation, although, as he stated, one whose success or failure was necessarily based on "low expectations."

Following Koolhaas was the geographer Edward Soja's "Other Spatialities." As Soja himself stated, he did not specialize in "visuals," as would most architects, but rather in "verbals." As a geographer, however, his ideas necessarily reside in material form; in this sense Soja's work is in spirit similar to Koolhaas's, though with a decidedly academic point of view. Highlighting the theories of two noted French academics and dialecticians, Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, Soja proceeded to sketch two very different models of "spatiality," finally proposing the possibility of a "third way" or "third kind" of space. This latter, lately the grand intrigue of a significant amount of architectural discourse, is, according to Soja, embedded in the texts of Foucault, in particular the passages in which Foucault suggests "heterotopologies" or "other landscapes."

Commencing with a recording of Bruce Springsteen's "Dancin' in the Streets," Marshall Berman (*All That's Solid Melts Into Air*) entertained the audience with a rather unorthodox approach to the symposium's theme. Berman aimed squarely at the social concerns of the New Left, criticizing its theorists as ideologues who prefer the ivory tower. In effect, Berman accused both the Left and the Right of being out of touch and increasingly irrelevant, stuck in a nostalgia for the 1960s and with increasingly narrow ideological confines. Berman sought direct redress and direct action for the contemporary city, thereby squarely indicting the conference participants. To make one's bed solely in the realm of "imagination" is to deny both passively and actively the reality of the situation. The near-universal irrelevance of the day's diatribes effectively mirrored Berman's concerns. The emptiness of much of the discussion (is there really such a paucity of issues?) was only symptomatic of the general malaise. ■

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