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Ray Smith Ytorria, *Dueño de Perros*, 1990, oil and wax on wood, 84 x 177 in. (213 x 450 cm.).

Cover: Downtown Laredo.

Notes on Contributors

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Olive Hershey is a Houston novelist, poet, and playwright. She is the author of *Truck Dance*.

Gilberto M. Hinojosa is the author of *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755–1870* and *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio*. He has recently been appointed Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts at Incarnate Word College.

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Cite is printed in part on recycled paper.

OverCite: Wilson Griffin Architects also collaborated with Robert Keene on the transformation of the inside of the Astrodome for the Republican National Convention in August 1992 (*Cite*, Fall 1992–Winter 1993).

A New Era: The Texas Dean Trio

Three new deans have stepped forward to direct three schools of architecture in Texas. Lars Lerup will be dean at Rice University starting in July 1993, Lawrence W. Speck became dean at the University of Texas at Austin in fall 1992, and Robert H. Timme became dean at the University of Houston in fall 1992.

Lars Lerup, professor of architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, succeeds Alan Balfour, who left Rice in spring 1992. Lerup is a native of Sweden, where he received a civil engineering degree in 1960 from Helsingborg Higher Technical College. Thereafter he received a bachelor of architecture from Berkeley in 1968 and a master's degree in urban design from Harvard University in 1970. From 1970 to 1977 he was an assistant professor at Berkeley, where he has been a full professor since 1987. In 1991 Lerup took a leave of absence to head the Swiss branch of the Southern California Institute of Architecture at Los Angeles, in Lugano. He will remain there until taking over at Rice this summer.

Lawrence W. Speck has been teaching at the University of Texas at Austin since 1975, when he was appointed assistant professor. In 1990 he became associate dean, and in 1992 he became dean. Speck's schooling includes a bachelor of science in both management and art and design in 1971 and a master of architecture in 1972, all from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Before teaching at UT Austin he was an instructor in design theory and criticism at MIT from 1971 to 1975. Speck has been a principal of his own practice in Austin since 1975. Among a myriad of honors and awards, Speck was named by *Architectural Digest* in its 1991 listing of the 100 foremost architects in the world.

Robert H. Timme has been teaching at the University of Houston since 1972. He is a partner in the internationally known, Houston-based firm Taft Architects. Timme's education includes a bachelor of arts in 1969, a bachelor of architecture in 1971, and a master of architecture in 1979, all from Rice University. Timme has taught courses and studios at Clemson, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania. Currently he also directs the UH Centre d'Etudes d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme in Saintes, France.

Olaf L. Recktenwald

La Villa de las Flores

Last year the city of Houston decided to put the Milby bus barn site back on the tax rolls by providing low-income housing on the property. Fifty-nine 1,200-square-foot single-family houses were planned for an 11-acre site with cul-de-sac streets (in essence, a mini suburban subdivision). There was to be one automobile entrance with a guard house, and a six-foot-high fence surrounding the site.

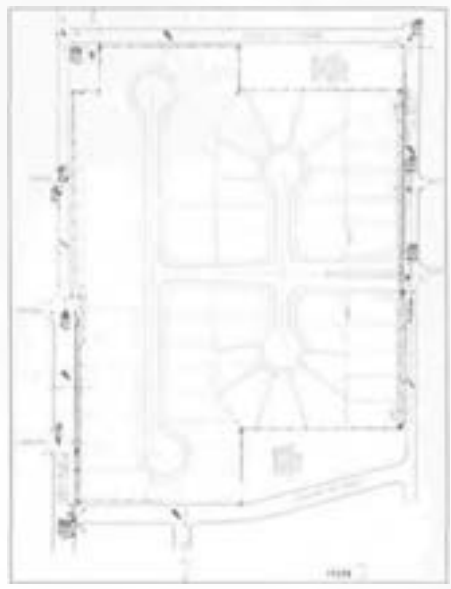
When costs became an issue, the American Institute of Architects/Houston Chapter's housing subcommittee, the University of Houston's Community Design Resource Center, and the city of Houston sponsored a charrette to explore the possibilities of reducing the size and cost of the houses. The steering committee for the charrette also proposed several site plans that increased density by including duplex units, connected the new houses to the existing fabric by having them face all four of the surrounding streets, and provided more pedestrian access to the site. While these changes reflected the sentiments of neighborhood residents, they did not reflect current police department urban planning policy.

This experiment could have demonstrated how to draw people back into the city, increase density, and respond to the economic forces that will determine how Houston's inner city is revitalized. Instead the city government has pulled a standard subdivision development package out of its back pocket and expected to satisfy the very different architectural, planning, and financial requirements of designing and building new projects on old land. At some point the city and its citizens will have to face the fact that increased density is the only way the redevelopment of the inner city can be funded.

Ernesto Luis Maldonado

Original site plan by city of Houston. All lots except for the nine along North Drennan face inward. A fence, funded by the one-percent-for-art tax component of the project, was proposed to surround the site. Three "reserves" are left as common areas. The one that abuts Lovejoy provides pedestrian access to the site.

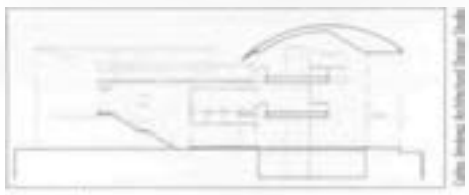
Site plan proposed by charrette participants and community. All four streets have front lawns, continuing the existing pattern of development in the neighborhood. The four large lots, 59 to 62, have duplex units. One large reserve was to serve as a park. The one-percent-for-art component was to fund a gazebo in the park. Pedestrian access at two points was also included.



Final site plan by city of Houston. This plan has 11 lots that face Drennan. The inlet street has been moved to align with Engelke Street. The three "reserves" are now used for pedestrian access, one each on North Milby, Lovejoy, and Bering. The fence remains as a security feature of the project.

Administration and Junior School Building, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Museum of Fine Arts Administration and Junior School Building, cut-away model.



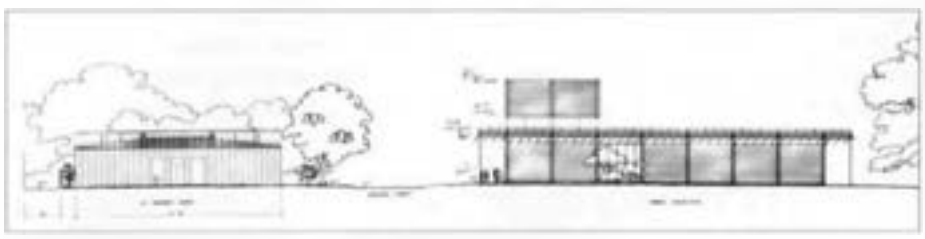
Cross section.

On 19 April the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, broke ground for construction of a 56,843-square-foot building to be shared by the administrative offices of the museum and the Junior School of the museum's Glassell School of Art. The L-shaped, two- and three-story building will occupy a full block on Montrose Boulevard, across from the Glassell School of Art and two blocks from the museum's exhibition building.

The Museum Administration and Junior School Building has been designed by Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio. Jiménez is one of Houston's most internationally publicized young designers. In addition to the museum project, he has designed the Houston Fine Art Press Building and the Lynn Goode Gallery and is presently at work on the new art department building at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Jiménez is assisted on the museum job by his longtime associate, John Bowley. Kendall/Heaton Associates are production architects; Property Development Services is project manager; CBM Engineers are structural engineers; Walter P. Moore & Associates are geotechnical engineers; and I. A. Naman & Associates are mechanical engineers. Miner Dederick Companies is the general contractor. Projected completion date for the building is summer 1994.

Jiménez has carefully shaped the building to respond to its site. The three-story wing faces Montrose. It is set back to preserve the line of live oaks planted along the street in the early 1920s. The junior school is situated in the rear, two-story wing along Bartlett Street, where studios will receive north light. Jiménez has provided separate entrances to the two wings. A landscaped court is set into the crook of the L, buffering the building from a rear parking lot. The building is to be faced with limestone and metal panels. The shallow vaulted roof of the three-story wing will also be surfaced with metal.

Stephen Fox



Cy Twombly Gallery *(left)* and existing Menil Collection museum.

The Menil Collection will begin construction this summer of a freestanding gallery to house a permanent installation of paintings, sculptures, and drawings by the American artist Cy Twombly. The one-story, 9,000-square-foot building is square in plan and divided into eight rooms according to a 3x3 grid devised in consultation with the artist by the architect Renzo Piano. The walls will be constructed of precast concrete blocks and the rooms lighted from above by a lightweight, zenithal glass-roof system that will make use of adjustable louvers and fabric scrims to provide soft, even illumination the year round.

The Twombly Gallery is a joint project of the Menil Collection and the Dia Center for the Arts, New York, and will incorporate materials from the holdings of both institutions as well as numerous works contributed by the artist himself. The gallery will open in early 1995. Piano is also the architect of the museum of the Menil Collection (1981–87), located just across Bronard Street from the site of the new gallery. Richard Fitzgerald & Associates are the associate architects and Ove Arup & Partners the principal structural engineers, working in association with Haynes Whaley Associates and Lockwood Andrews Newnam. Miner-Dederick is the general contractor.

RDA Fall Architectural Events

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

A Texas Dean Quartet
8 September 1993, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Cohen House, Rice University. Tickets $10; students $3. Paid reservations required.
Four architecture deans, Lars Lerup, Lawrence W. Speck, Robert H. Timme, and Simon Wiltz, will discuss their approach to the discipline of architecture at their respective schools: Rice University, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Houston, and Prairie View A & M University.

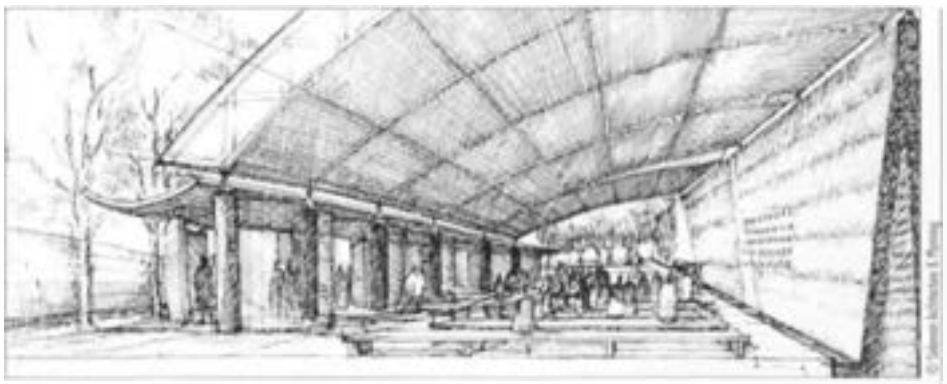
New Architecture of the Southern Region
Five architects from the South and Southeast will speak about their work this fall. This work varies from practice to practice and region to region, yet there are clearly aspects of climate, history, and place in the southern United States that affect the way these architects think about and address building design. All lectures held in the Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 8 p.m.

29 September	**David Lake and Ted Flato**, principals, Lake/Flato Architects, Inc., San Antonio, Texas.
6 October	**Scott Merrill**, principal, Scott Merrill, Architect, Vero beach , Florida.
13 October	**Merrill Elam**, principal, Scogin Elam Bray Architects, Atlanta, Georgia.
20 October	**Samuel Mockbee**, principal, Mockbee-Coker Architects, Canton, Mississippi, and professor of architecture, Auburn University.
27 October	**Gary M. Cunningham**, principal, Cunningham Architects, Dallas, Texas.

The Ball of Energy: A Salute to the Energy Industry
12 November 1993, 7:30 p.m. to midnight, Doubletree Post Oak Hotel. The seventh annual RDA gala fundraiser includes dinner, dancing, and a silent auction. The 1993 RDA Award for Design Excellence will be presented to Constantine Nicandros, president and CEO of Conoco.

Show Us Your Best
The RDA invites all Houston architects and designers to present their best work at an unjuried exhibition that will demonstrate the excellence in architecture and design that this city has to offer. $100 entry fee. An exhibition catalogue will be published. For entry requirements and further information, please call the RDA.

Beth Israel Chapel and Cemetery



Daniel Solomon, architect, Beth Israel Chapel, perspective view.

One function of religion is to devise rites that impart an awareness of divine presence. Architecture may facilitate this awareness by intensifying the properties of the physical world. In a schematic design for Congregation Beth Israel's Chapel and Cemetery on Antoine Road near the Katy Freeway, San Francisco architect Daniel Solomon and his associate, Gary Strang, propose a permeable structure that engages its larger setting through the generous passage of light, air, and water. The building's walls, roof, and ground plane are discrete structural elements, delicately joined into a cohesive and singular movement. Throughout the open plan of the chapel and cemetery, a pervasive spatial liberty prevails.

Solomon's architectural expression of faith has exceeded the expectations of Congregation Beth Israel's Cemetery Enhancement Committee, says chairman Joyce B. Chesnick. The fundamental ideas that underlie the design of the chapel, developed through readings and conversations between Rabbi Samuel Karff and Daniel Solomon, center upon the qualities of individuality, communality, and acceptance. The freedom of movement that characterizes the design makes reference to ancient Judaism, when religion was necessarily portable. At the same time it acknowledges the contemporary pluralism and liberalism of the Reform Jewish tradition. During the funeral ceremony, this spatial freedom will allow the congregation to accompany the casket from the chapel to the cemetery, thereby maintaining continuity throughout the mourning ritual. In the chapel, the adjoining courtyard, and a variety of interstitial spaces there are many opportunities for visual and conversational contact between members of the community. Perhaps most significant is that this simple structure presents no iconographic statements and elicits few responses toward its own architectural form and presence. Instead it imbues space with tactility, light, coolness, and silence, where the final resolution of life may be accepted.

To date, the efforts of the San Francisco–based design consultants and the Beth Israel congregation have been characterized by the project committee as insightful and devoted. The schematic design model and drawings describe an unconventional building type, highly crafted in conventional material. Local consultants W. S. Bellows Construction Corporation and the Mathes Group Architects are preparing cost estimates and permit review packages. Land acquisition for the project has been successfully completed.

Peter Rockrise

West End Special District Zoning

Every Monday night since early January, residents of the West End have been meeting to develop a custom-fitted zoning ordinance that addresses the unique character of their community. Originally zoned R1 (single-family residential only) by Houston's city planners, this neighborhood does not easily fit into either that strictly residential classification or the much more loosely defined Urban Neighborhood designation that has been applied to most mixed-use areas.

The West End, bordered by North Shepherd, Memorial, Westcott, and Washington, is a mixture of commercial and light-industrial uses, apartments and single-family homes, artists' studios, home-based businesses, and vacant land. The community contains several Houston folk-art landmarks, including the Beer Can House, as well as a growing collection of houses designed by prominent local architects. And while the area is predominantly a blue-collar Hispanic neighborhood, both blacks and whites live in the community, as do a growing number of professionals, particularly those in the arts and art-related fields.

Many of the residents, particularly those in the arts community, believed that the R1 zoning was too restrictive and did not consider the diverse fabric of the existing community. One of their concerns was that R1 zoning would abet gentrification, forcing out lower-income residents and with them much of the community's ethnic and economic diversity. On the other side of the fence are residents who do want the R1 zoning and with it an increase in property values and real-estate predictability. With the wisdom of Solomon, the mapping subcommittee of the city's Zoning Strategies Committee divided the community into two halves, one zoned R1 and the other RO (residential only). This split in the community, unacceptable to either side, forced residents to the table to negotiate a zoning ordinance acceptable to all of the community.

The result is that neighbors are talking to each other, fostering a greater understanding of their neighborhood. Two of the key players in the process have been Cameron Armstrong, an architect, and his wife, artist Terrell James. James works out of a studio in the West End, where she and Armstrong are in the process of building a house. Like many of the artists who live in the area, they were attracted to the West End because of its unique character and diverse population. Armstrong, who also works as a commercial real-estate broker, testified before the Planning and Zoning Commission in favor of a special zoning classification and has drafted much of what has been approved by their neighborhood committee.

The group has developed three subdivision classifications: diversified, residential, and arts-residential. The arts-residential district will serve as a buffer zone between the diversified commercial district (along the periphery of the neighborhood, which is already predominantly commercial) and an interior residential district. One obstacle the group has had to overcome is the "vision thing" – when one person suggests the possibility of neighborhood coffee shops, envisioning a Brasil (architect Daniel Fergus's charming, understated coffee shop at the corner of Dunlavy and Westheimer), others see images of a McDonald's or a Shipley's next door. At this writing, the toughest part of the process is yet to come: mapping. The line is clearly drawn between those who believe the arts-residential district should cover the larger amount of land and those who believe the residential district should occupy the greater portion of the area. Most residents, however, seem willing to compromise for the good of the larger community. Once the subcommittee members come up with an agreed-upon draft, they will present it to the larger community at a town meeting. From there the zoning ordinance will go to the city council for approval.

These meetings are a tribute to the openness of Houston's zoning process, and the West End Special District Zoning Ordinance will be a product of neighbors working together. Unfortunately, the Hispanic and African-American residents of the community, as well as many of the older white residents, are not taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in this crucial part of the zoning process (although public notices of the meetings have been posted throughout the neighborhood). They have as much to lose or gain as anyone in the area.

Sheryl Tucker

Modern Landmarks Threatened

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architects, United Carbon Co. Research Laboratory, 1962, demolished 1991.

Cowell & Neuhaus, architects, Neuhaus House, 1951.

Historic preservation has never had high priority in Houston. Yet, step by step during the past 20 years, preservation advocates have built enough of a consensus on the value of preservation that the city's proposed zoning code incorporates provisions for marking and preserving historic properties and districts. Even so, potential Houston landmarks continue to be demolished almost monthly. Particularly vulnerable are buildings constructed between the 1940s and the 1960s, which are not old enough to meet the 50-year age requirement for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Although listing in the National Register does not mean that a building cannot be torn down or altered (that is something only a local preservation ordinance can prevent), it does officially recognize a building's historical merit and gives preservationists moral authority in contested situations. Without historical confirmation, unsympathetic owners are unlikely to be persuaded of a threatened property's significance, and making the public aware of the value of the threatened historic resource is more difficult.

The vulnerability of Houston's modern architectural heritage became clear this spring when it appeared that one of Houston's outstanding modern architectural landmarks was about to be demolished. This was the house that the architect Hugo V. Neuhaus, Jr., designed and built for his family in 1950–51 on Lazy Lane in River Oaks. The Neuhaus House, occupied by the architect until his death in 1987, was sold by his estate last year at a rock-bottom price and without preservation restrictions. After determining that the one-story pavilion, whose design was influenced by the work of Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, was not suitable for their requirements, the new owners initially decided to raze it and build a replacement house on the site, but have deferred this plan and leased the Neuhaus House for 18 months.

An indication of just how pervasive this problem has become is the number of modern Houston buildings of the 1950s and 1960s that are threatened or are already lost. Frank Lloyd Wright's only building in the Houston area – the Thaxton House in Bunker Hill Village – narrowly avoided demolition as a teardown in 1991, thanks to a public awareness campaign orchestrated by the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance that gained national attention and attracted a sympathetic buyer (*Cite*, Spring 1991). Not so lucky was O'Neil Ford and Richard S. Colley's first building for Texas Instruments, built in 1957 at Richmond and Buffalo Speedway. Solvay America tore it down in 1992 and replaced it with a parking lot. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's United Carbon Company Building of 1961 on the Katy Freeway was demolished in 1991 to clear the site. Burdette Keeland's much-publicized Essex-Houck Building of 1962, an early Houston example of the New Brutalism, was demolished in 1991 and replaced by a mega-apartment complex developed by Jenard Gross. Standing, but no longer recognizable, are two Howard Barnstone buildings: Piney Point Elementary School at Fondren and Rosecrest (1962) was encased in concrete by the Houston Independent School District, while the Black Angus at Weslayan and West Alabama (1961) is gone with the wind now that it has been repackaged as the Confederate House. Threatened with demolition are the Blue Ribbon Rice Mills elevators at Studemont and Memorial and MacKie & Kamrath's Schlumberger Building on the Gulf Freeway of 1953.

Changes in taste, fluctuations in property values, corporate restructuring, environmental anxieties (especially over the presence of asbestos), and the effects of deferred maintenance are all factors that can contribute to the decision to demolish rather than rehabilitate and conserve. Modern buildings are particularly vulnerable since they are apt to look "dated" rather than "historic," even to architects.

Jim Steely, deputy director of the Texas Historical Commission and head of its National Register Programs section, observes that "Houston's response to World War II and the boom period that followed through the 1950s and 1960s created a remarkable monument to modern architecture and the automobile. This significant period in Houston's history, from 1945 to 1973, is generally not measured as 'historic' by the 50-year-old yardstick of state and federal preservation programs. Only through local recognition, and local protection through zoning and preservation incentives, will Houston's significant examples of post–World War II modern architecture be saved for future generations."

The threat to modern landmarks has prompted organization of the Modern Architecture Preservation League, based in Denver. Diane Ray, the league's executive director, began the group in 1990 in response to the planned destruction of Denver's central library, designed by Burnham Hoyt. The league's campaign was successful. Instead of bulldozing the library, the city sponsored a competition – won by Michael Graves – for expanding it.

Miss Ray is critical of the National Register's 50-year rule, which she describes as "mindless." Neither Colorado's state register nor Denver's landmarks commission have age restrictions. This has simplified the league's efforts to have other modern buildings designated as landmarks, although even this has not ensured preservation of some contested structures.

In addition to historical surveys of modern buildings and landmark designation, the league is pursuing public education programs and has enlisted the support of Denver's architectural community. A current project is the landmarking of I. M. Pei's Zeckendorf Plaza, consisting of the Denver Hilton Hotel and the May D&F Co. department store (now owned by Foley's), built in 1961. Although the activities of the preservation league remain centered on Denver and Colorado and its membership is small, Miss Ray reports considerable interest nationally, noting that architects Robert Venturi and Walter Netsch, as well as historian Richard Longstreth, have all become members. Moreover, the league has been asked to participate in an international conference on the preservation of modern architecture, being organized for 1994.

The plight of the Neuhaus House indicates, once again, that no building in Houston, irrespective of its location, its architectural merit, or the prestige of its associations, is immune from the threat of demolition. Diane Ray and members of the Modern Architecture Preservation League have demonstrated the feasibility of building a constituency for the protection of modern landmarks. As Jim Steely indicates, the responsibility for ensuring that preservation is even an option is essentially local. From the 1940s through the 1960s, Houston reveled in its image as a "city of the future." Nowhere was this given more convincing representation than in buildings of modern design. If these are not to follow Victorian Houston into a state of virtual extinction, then efforts must be made to identify, interpret the significance of, and legally protect the city's outstanding works of mid-20th-century modern architecture.

Stephen Fox

For the People's Park

Several days a week, to help hold on to health and humor, I trot a couple of miles under the arch of live oaks along Hermann Park's jogging trail. In 1984, while training for the Houston Marathon, I ran that same course 50 miles a week and wrote some rapturous anaerobic verses titled "Poem for the People's Park." I had chosen to train on the two-mile dirt track instead of in Memorial Park because of the visuals: matrons walking in groups, coveys of skinny runners from Rice and the University of Houston. I remember with special fondness a dignified elderly man wearing a hospital bracelet on his wrist, smiling broadly as if each morning were a blessed reprieve for us all, even the high-stepping horses from the stables on Almeda. In those days the Hermann crowd was a yeasty mix of folks of all classes, ages, and races, none of whom wore gold chains or Day-glo shorts.

On the day I sat down to write the poem, I remember distinctly, I had found along the trail a sleeping man wrapped in brown paper, lying peacefully on the swale nearby. There he was, eyes closed, face turned up to heaven, enjoying the people's park unmolested. I must have found something wonderful about the man, because he made it into the poem. Looking back, I realize that his sleeping form spoke to me of the solitude, tranquillity, and freedom many of us find in this green oasis.

Since that time I've noticed many changes occurring in Houston's great urban public space. Miles of walkways wide enough to accommodate a Rolls Royce have begun snaking through Hermann Park's interior. Along Brays Bayou south of MacGregor Drive, the Parks and Recreation Department has made an all-out assault on a rare thicket whose dewberry bushes, rose hedges, and tall trees once provided a habitat for rabbits, squirrels, and many species of birds. On foggy mornings last year, I used to flush the same large gray owl out of a pine tree. It's been months since I've encountered him.

Why this passion for tidiness and uniformity? I've heard it argued that the city tries to eradicate these tangles because they might afford havens for the homeless. I, along with many other park users, deeply regret this loss of habitat. This is not to say that I like seeing vagrants living in Hermann Park. These people ought to have houses but should not be hidden away from the rest of us because they do not. We need to acknowledge them, to recognize their humanity. Once in a while on wintry afternoons I stopped to chat with several men who were cooking cornbread and sausage in the lee of Miller Theater. The men seemed healthy, their manner friendly and polite. I found later that when the need arose they helped the theater people move heavy equipment. They're not particularly scary, and they're not dangerous. But the lack of a permanent habitation renders them a threat to many of us who live in houses. There must be something wrong, we think, with people who sleep in thickets.

View along the main axis of Hermann Park.

The greatest challenge facing groups and individuals interested in Hermann Park today might be how well we learn to share this precious space, this urban habitat, with a diverse group of citizen users. In the ten years I have been running through Hermann Park, six acres of precious open space have been fenced and landscaped as a Japanese garden that costs the people $1.50 to visit. The price of a zoo ticket is $2.50. General admission to the Museum of Natural Science is $2.50; the price of an IMAX Theatre ticket is $5. To play on the recently privatized golf course costs $10, $12 on weekends. While the city of Houston is in the process of leasing land it administers in trust for the people of Houston to private interests who charge admission fees that exceed the budgets of many Houston families, a significant number of picnic benches seem to have disappeared. What happened to those families who once spread picnics under the pine trees next to the playground equipment along Fannin? Where should they go now?

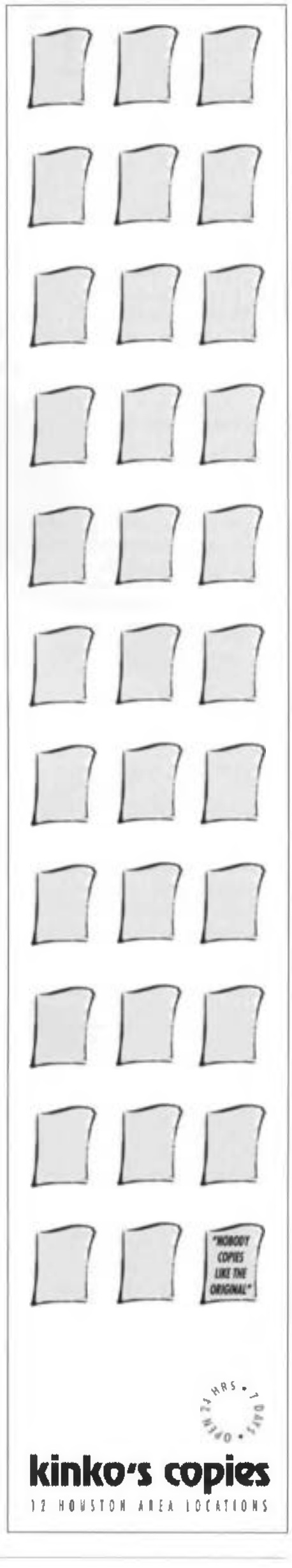
The Texas and Local History Room of the Houston Public Library has on file the will of George H. Hermann. The will is short, almost acerbic. It says simply that Mr. Hermann wished to make a gift of land "to be held in trust for the use of the public as a public park."

In recent meetings of the Friends of Hermann Park, a group (of which I am a member) of interested citizens formed to preserve the integrity of the park and to make improvements to it, I heard people discuss the advisability of installing park benches with center partitions that prevent a person from reclining. I heard the then director of the Parks and Recreation Department, Don Olson, refer to Hermann as a "limited-use park" and other Friends advocate ridding the park of a few limited uses like the train and the paddle boats on the Grand Basin. Already these are almost the only general "uses" presently available in the park. In a recent meeting of this group, I was told that it is Parks and Recreation Department policy not to have public restrooms in Hermann Park. It is difficult to reconcile these exclusionary attitudes and policies with the concept of a breathing space for all Houstonians.

The Friends of Hermann Park have the best intentions toward the park. They entertain grand and sweeping visions. They have undertaken to raise funds to hire a master planner to start the process of creating a premier urban park. In addition, the group has pledged to raise funds to implement the winning design from the Rice Design Alliance's Heart of the Park competition. No one can argue with these aims. However, I begin to get nervous when I hear well-intentioned and well-heeled members of this group speak of their "partnership" with the city of Houston in improving and maintaining Hermann Park.

A partnership requires more or less equal partners, sharing clearly defined responsibilities. But no organizational structure yet exists to distinguish areas in which the city would make and implement policies for areas the private group would manage. It seems imperative that, in the process of planning the park, a formal partnership agreement be created between the city and the Friends of Hermann Park. Such an agreement would establish a quasi-political structure to implement the partnership, including an ongoing citizens' commission or review board to approve all significant changes to the park. Hermann Park was given to the city in trust for the benefit of all the people of Houston, and the mayor and city council must take care not to divest themselves of their responsibility to the electorate. Moreover, we, the Friends of Hermann Park, must avoid even the appearance of privatization, such as the takeover recently attempted in Memorial Park. Runners and other users loudly rejected the proposal of a private health and fitness facility in Memorial Park. The matrons who walk in Hermann Park, the joggers on the trail do not have equally powerful voices. The Friends should certainly carry out their deliberations openly and submit their plans to public scrutiny. The true cost of private charitable subvention must not be a policy of quietly restricting use of the park by instituting user fees, eliminating popular attractions, and implementing designs hostile to users who do not conform to middle-class notions of propriety and decorum.

Olive Hershey



DISPARITY AN

RAFAEL LONGORIA

AS THE DEBATE OVER THE PROPOSED NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT MOVES TO CENTER STAGE, NEW ATTENTION IS BEING PAID TO THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN BORDER. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST FROM THE TEXAS PERSPECTIVE IS THE PORTION OF THE BORDER SHARED WITH THE MEXICAN STATE OF TAMAULIPAS. SINCE MOST TRADE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO PASSES THROUGH THIS RELATIVELY SMALL AREA. THE PAIRS OF CITIES THAT STRADDLE THE RIO GRANDE IN THIS REGION, SOME FOUNDED IN THE 1700S, HAVE DEVELOPED COMPLEX ECONOMIC AND HUMAN TIES. BUT DISPARITY AS MUCH AS PROXIMITY SHAPES THE CHARACTER OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS.

International Bridge between Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, c. 1950.

The George Fuermann Texas Postcard Collection (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries)

MEXAMERICA

In his book *The Nine Nations of North America*, Joel Garreau describes nine distinct regions where shared cultural, economic, and geographic characteristics transcend political divisions. In the region he calls "MexAmerica," with or without NAFTA, the affairs of Mexico and the United States are already irrevocably intertwined. In Garreau's words, "MexAmerica is most evident along the 1,933-mile border that the United States shares with Mexico, but it is highly visible as well in such diverse nonborder cities as Los Angeles, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Pueblo, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston."[1]

In the U.S. portion of MexAmerica, an area that was once a part of Mexico, Spanish colonial roots are still strong. But 20th-century migration has also been crucial in the development of MexAmerica's present character. Northward migration increased as the economic disparity between the two sides of the border grew, then accelerated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the economic boom in the Sun Belt coincided with the Mexican economic collapse and with political violence in Central America.

It is also important to understand the significant role of the electronic media in the cultural reshaping of this region. Every major city on the U.S. side of MexAmerica now has access to at least two Spanish-language television channels, and some of these cities have more than a dozen Spanish-language radio stations. Similarly, many radio stations in Mexico play only American music. And all large Mexican cities, even those outside MexAmerica, now have access through cable and residential parabolic antennas to a wide selection of English-language channels. Of course, cultural cross-fertilization predates the invention of radio. The many words that have been assimilated into English (rodeo, ranch, plaza, patio, tornado) and into Spanish (boiler, Pullman, bar, motel, trailer) clearly reflect the cultural and economic dominance at different periods. The cross-cultural influences are not limited to language; the *New York Times* recently reported that sales of salsa had surpassed sales of catsup in the United States. And under the liberalized investment policies of the Salinas administration, American fast food chains are now selling *hamburgesas* all over Mexico. Observers comment that America is becoming "increasingly Mexican in its ethnic and cultural orientation," while Mexico is "increasingly 'Anglo' in its economic orientation."[2] And while this phenomenon is spreading throughout the two countries, the border is still its epicenter.

DIFFERENCES ALONG THE BORDER

The character of Garreau's MexAmerica is far from uniform. There are significant differences as one moves east to west, and even larger differences moving perpendicular to the border.[3] In his insightful book *Distant Neighbors*, Alan Riding identifies eight different cultural regions within Mexico, including three in northern Mexico: the border cities, the northwestern states, and the northeastern states.[4] While such a degree of differentiation might seem like hairsplitting to those not familiar with Mexico, consider the obvious differences between California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Texas has a good claim to being the place where MexAmerica originated. Stephen F. Austin and his Central Texas colonists might be the earliest examples of the hybrid culture, since they became Mexican citizens in order to settle in the area, even though this required learning Spanish and converting (at least nominally) to Roman Catholicism.

Present-day Texas shares a border with four different Mexican states: Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. The northeastern Mexican states and Texas have a great deal in common. This is the birthplace of *vaquero* culture and the mecca of *norteño* music. For many years Texas and Coahuila formed one entity, with Saltillo as the provincial capital. And until 1848, what is now known as South Texas was a part of Tamaulipas.

The formation of the Republic of the Rio Grande, a short-lived but colorful episode, exemplifies how the histories of this region are intertwined. During the early part of the 19th century, the northeastern states were a stronghold of Mexican liberalism. The conflict of *Federalistas* (liberals) and *Centralistas* (conservatives) dominated Mexico throughout the 1800s. The Federalistas sought a decentralized republic with strong state governments. Their aspirations were enshrined in the Mexican constitution of 1824, which was modeled after the U.S. constitution and embodied the principles of the French Enlightenment.[5] It was the Federalistas who encouraged the colonization of Central Texas by Anglo-Americans, in the belief that the settlers would share their liberal views and strengthen their political position within Mexico.[6] The ascension to power of the Centralistas in the early 1830s eventually brought about the conflict that resulted in the independence of Texas. This and the Centralista repudiation of

D PROXIMITY

THE TEXAS-TAMAULIPAS BORDER

Avenida Guerrero at Plaza Hidalgo, Nuevo Laredo, c. 1950.

the constitution of 1824 prompted the northeastern states to attempt to form their own republic in January 1840. The Republic of the Rio Grande comprised the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo León, as well as the southern tip of present-day Texas. With Laredo as its capital city, it acted as an independent nation until November 1840, when its army was defeated and the Centralistas regained control of the region.[7]

Differences Across the Border

Today the overwhelming majority of the border population lives in one of six pairs of "twin cities." Of these 12 cities (San Diego–Tijuana, Mexicali-Calexico, El Paso–Ciudad Juárez, Laredo–Nuevo Laredo, McAllen-Reynosa, and Brownsville-Matamoros), two are located in California, with their counterparts being in Baja California Norte, while four are in Texas, with one twin in Chihuahua and the other three in Tamaulipas.

Although the pairs of twin cities are totally interdependent, differences in architecture, pedestrian activity, merchandise on display, and street noise are all immediately evident when crossing the border. It begins at the river, for which the two nations have different names: what Americans call the Rio Grande is known in Mexico as the Río Bravo. However, the most noticeable difference is the great disparity in the wealth of the two countries. Ironically, at the Rio Grande, one of the United States' poorest regions adjoins one of Mexico's richest areas. To quote one study, "Although poverty in Mexico increases away from the border, in the United States the reverse is true."[8]

The everyday life of the border is shaped by these disparities. On bridges all along the river, rush hour peaks every day around 8:00 a.m. for northbound traffic and 6:00 p.m. for southbound traffic. In the mornings, hordes of salaried employees who take advantage of lower living costs on the Mexican side legally commute to their jobs in the United States. At dusk they return to Mexico in time for dinner. Some even trek back and forth for lunch. A sizable number of Mexican teenagers cross the border every day to learn English by attending one of the private schools on the American side. Conversely, there are also well-to-do Mexicans who prefer to live on the American side, where utilities and other services are more reliable, and commute daily to their businesses across the river.

Mexican shoppers from as far away as Mexico City cross back and forth constantly, fueling the enormous retail business on the American side that has been created by the extreme protectionist policies of the Mexican government. Shopping for groceries is also an international affair. Residents usually develop a dual routine: meat, processed foods, and dairy products are bought on the U.S. side, while fresh fruits and produce are cheaper on the Mexican side.

In the 1920s, Prohibition on the American side coincided with the closing of all Catholic churches during a vicious period of religious persecution in Mexico. This situation brought about truly international wedding arrangements. Regardless of where people lived, the religious ceremony had to take place on the American side, while lively receptions could only be held on the Mexican side. It was also Prohibition that initiated tourism on the border. Restaurants, bars, and casinos proliferated as the border became the most accessible place for Texans to drink alcohol legally.[9] Even today, Texas teenagers cross the bridges every weekend to dance and drink at the many establishments on the Mexican side of the border where minimum age is never an issue.

Prostitution, too, is part of the border. On the Mexican side, municipalities can create *zonas de tolerancia*, walled precincts within which prostitution is allowed, even though it is illegal outside. Some of these districts are of considerable size and contain elaborate nightclubs with fantasy themes. For better or for worse, the pilgrimage to the border whorehouse – captured in such novels as Larry McMurtry's *Last Picture Show* – has become one of the rituals of the region.

It must be noted that as widespread as the traffic between the two countries is, the rights of the inhabitants of the two sides are far from symmetrical. Since Mexico's passport control stations are located at least 26 kilometers from its boundaries, a free-zone ribbon runs parallel to the border. Every resident of the American border towns can enter the Mexican border towns without showing any documents. On the other hand, a considerable number of residents of the Mexican side are forbidden from entering the United States under any circumstances by the stricter American passport control rules. Many Mexicans have lived their entire lives within sight of an American city and yet have never been able to visit that city legally. For a Mexican, obtaining an entry visa to the U.S. is strictly a matter of socioeconomic class.

The Texas-Tamaulipas Border

The history of the border shared by Texas and Tamaulipas illuminates how the region has been shaped by a long succession of fateful decisions made in distant capitals. Three events altered the region fundamentally: the Spanish settlement of the area, part of a larger strategy to prevent France from expanding its presence in North America; the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which defined the border as we know it; and the arrival of the railroads, which converted a remote outpost into an important link in the chain of international trade.[10]

The Escandon Settlements

On 3 September 1746, Don José de Escandón, the future *conde de Sierra Gorda*, was charged by the viceroy of New Spain with the mission of colonizing *el seno mexicano*, a region that comprised what is now the state of Tamaulipas as well as the southern tip of present-day Texas. This area was inhabited by nomadic tribes of Indians whose now-forgotten culture fell victim to European expansionism. Since the fierceness of the native tribes had kept settlers out of the *seno mexicano* for two centuries, Escandón – who had won a considerable reputation as a soldier fighting the Indians of Guanajuato and Querétaro – was chosen over several other Spaniards who were competing for the prestigious assignment and its potential economic rewards.

Between 1749 and 1755, Escandón directed the establishment of 20 towns and created the province of Nuevo Santander, named after his Spanish birthplace. His settlements included a string of villages straddling the banks of the Rio Grande: Camargo (1749), Reynosa (1749), Revilla (1750), Mier (1752), and Laredo (1755). All these towns were organized with a central plaza and a regular grid extending from the center according to the very precise rules enumerated by the Law of

Courtesy of Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin

Don José de Escandón, *conde de Sierra Gorda*.

the Indies. The settlers recruited for Nuevo Santander were *criollo* ranchers from neighboring Nuevo León and Coahuila whose growing herds of livestock required more range, and who were attracted by the subsidies and tax remissions offered to those who joined Escandon's settlements. This civilian pattern of settlement was very different from the pattern in Texas, New Mexico, and California, where missions were established to convert the local

Nuevo Laredo.

Indians and military presidios were built to provide protection.[11]

In the early years of Nuevo Santander's existence, all grazing land was held communally by each town's settlers. But in 1767 the land on both sides of the river was distributed by a visiting royal commission. Each family received a large but narrow *porción* with river frontage to raise livestock, as well as a plot to build a house in town.[12] This accounts for the predominant regional pattern of ranchers living in cities and commuting to oversee their working lands rather than living on their rural properties.

Texas and Tamaulipas.

18th-century *porciones* and land grants on the north side of the Rio Grande.

The Creation of the Border

In 1848 the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally concluded the Mexican-American War, with disastrous results for Mexico. Half of the country's territory, including California, Arizona, and New Mexico, was ceded to the United States.

Texas, whose earlier independence had been the direct cause of the war, was already incorporated as a state of the Union. However, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo extended the southern boundary of Texas from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande.

At the time, Laredo was the only sizable settlement between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. While Texas had been part of Mexico, Laredo had never been part of Texas. But overnight it became part, not only of the state of Texas, but of the United States as well. This brought about

Matamoros.

the creation of Nuevo Laredo, which, as the romantic myth goes, was founded by Laredoans who crossed the river to continue living in Mexico.[13]

While the rest of Nuevo Santander's river towns remained in Mexican territory, they also experienced radical changes. Suddenly they became part of an international boundary line. And since the residents of all these towns had *porciones* on both sides of the river, the new border caused unimaginable trauma for the local families.

The new international boundary also opened the way for Anglo-American settlement of the north bank of the Rio Grande, which eventually resulted in the dense network of small towns and farming communities that stretches from Brownsville to Roma, with McAllen at its center.

Railroads and International Trade

The arrival of the railroads in the 1880s changed the economic base of the region. Until then, the inhabitants had lived off the land, very much as their predecessors had in Escandon's time. The railroads converted the two Laredos into an international trade center; 30 years later they made possible large-scale produce farming in the lower Valley by opening up Midwestern markets.

Four railroad lines converged in Laredo–Nuevo Laredo: Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México (connecting Laredo to Monterrey and Mexico City), the International & Great Northern Railway (connecting Laredo with San Antonio and St. Louis), the Texas-Mexican Railway (connecting Laredo to the port of Corpus Christi), and the Rio Grande & Eagle Pass Railway (which connected Laredo and the neighboring border towns).

As soon as the railroad lines became operational in 1881, Laredo–Nuevo Laredo became the principal crossing for trade between the United States and Mexico, a position that it still mantains. Because of the railroads, the population of Laredo increased from 3,521 in 1880 to 11,319 in 1890, the largest percentage increase of any decade in its history.[14]

Maquiladoras and NAFTA

The proposed North American Free Trade Agreement, if adopted, has the potential of being another major catalyst for change in the border. The efforts to bring

about a trade agreement can be traced to the success of the *maquiladora* industry. The word *maquiladora* was adapted from the Spanish term used to describe the milling of someone else's wheat for a portion of the resulting flour. The current concept is similar to that ancient practice: foreign components are brought into Mexico to be assembled, taking advantage of the abundant supply of inexpensive labor. The finished product is shipped back to the United States, where, upon its reentry, customs duties are levied only on the value added abroad.

In 1965 the Mexican government opened the door to the creation of the *maquiladora* industry as part of its Border Industrialization Program, whose principal objectives were to reduce unemployment in northern Mexico and to attract foreign capital. By the 1980s, *maquiladoras* along the border were one of the few economic success stories in Mexico. It was then, after decades of trying to ignore the economic importance of the United States to Mexico and the multiple links between the two countries, that the Salinas administration took the first steps toward integrating the economies of North America.

In effect, *maquiladoras* are a way for Mexico to export its labor without exporting its workers. This has potential benefits, as envisioned by treaty proponents, for both countries: Mexico alleviates its huge unemployment problem, thus reducing the pressure for people to emigrate illegally to the United States in order to find work.

If the increased prosperity in Mexico is coupled with a relaxation of that country's longstanding protectionist policies, a consumer market of considerable size will be created for American and Canadian goods. Mexican consumers will have access to cheaper and better goods, while Mexican producers will have access to the huge American market. The resulting political stability in Mexico would not only benefit its citizens but also decrease the national security concerns of its northern neighbor.

The residents of the border overwhelmingly support NAFTA because they believe that the agreement would greatly enhance the local economy. However, concerns are being voiced in communities on both sides of the border. In Mexico, people worry about whether Mexican manufacturing and service industries will be able to survive once protectionist policies disappear. In the U.S., retailers fear that the end of Mexican protectionism will mean the end of their prosperous businesses. American labor unions are pooling all their resources to fight what they perceive as a flood of cheap labor that will inevitably lower their wages and weaken their bargaining position. In addition, serious concerns about working conditions in *maquiladoras* and the environmental consequences of unregulated industrial processes are being voiced on both sides of the border.

Reynosa.

In his autobiography, José Vasconcelos, who went on to become the cultural czar of postrevolutionary Mexico, describes his childhood in Piedras Negras–Eagle Pass at the turn of the century, a time when international trade was beginning to dominate the local economy.[15] Vasconcelos recounts his years as a resident of the Mexican side of the border attending a school on the American side during the day. The wounds of the Mexican-American war were still fresh, and his memoirs are full of heated battles between Mexican and Anglo-American schoolchildren. It is undeniable that, at least from the Mexican perspective, the war still shades the relationship. The pain of losing land in 1848 was aggravated during the Mexican revolution by what was perceived as aggressive U.S. meddling in the internal affairs of Mexico. The revolutionary triumph in 1920 brought about an era of intense nationalism and vocal anti-Americanism that culminated in the nationalization of the oil industry and the expulsion of foreign companies from Mexico.

The history of distrust has prevented Mexico from taking full advantage of its enviable location next to the largest economy in the world and has prevented a meaningful dialogue between the two countries about their shared concerns. Beyond its economic significance, a North American common market would signal the end of hostilities and the beginning of a mature relationship between Mexico and the United States. ■

1 Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 211.

2 John R. Weeks and Roberto Ham-Chande, eds., *Demographic Dynamics of the U.S.-Mexico Border* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1992), p. 271.

3 Ibid., pp. 3–12.

4 Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Random House/Vintage Books, 1986), p. 403.

5 Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755–1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), pp. 26–27.

6 Lorenzo de Zavala, *Journey to the United States of America* (1831). Reprint ed. (Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1980), pp. 96–97.

7 Jerry Thompson, *Sabers on the Rio Grande* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1974), pp. 88–95.

8 C. D. Dillman, "Border Urbanization," in E. Stoddard, R. Nostrand, and J. West, eds., *Borderlands Sourcebook* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), p. 243.

9 Ismael Villarreal Peña, "Breve Reseña de Historia Regional, no. 3," *El Mañana* (Nuevo Laredo), 12 November 1987, sec. 3.

10 Jerry Thompson, "Historical Survey," in Mario L. Sánchez, ed., *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor* (Austin: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1991), p. 26.

11 J. B. Wilkinson, *Laredo and the Rio Grande Frontier* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing, 1975), pp. 11–19; Hinojosa, *Borderlands Town*, pp. 4–19.

12 Thompson, "Historical Survey," pp. 26–27.

13 Manuel Ignacio Salinas Domínguez, *Orígenes de Nuevo Laredo* (Ciudad Victoria: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas/Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1981), pp. 21–26.

14 Hinojosa, *Borderlands Town*, pp. 117–18.

15 José Vasconcelos, *Ulises Criollo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica/Lecturas Mexicanas 11, 1983), pp. 17–52.

Commerce Without Conscience

SISSY FARENTHOLD

Matamoros: One of 182 registered *colonias*. Parents and children wade through calcium sulphate mud on their way to the school bus.

Matamoros: A neighborhood canal containing nonbiodegradable trash, human waste, and industrial waste.

The stretch of the Rio Bravo–Rio Grande and its environs that encompasses the area from Laredo–Nuevo Laredo to Brownsville-Matamoros is only a brief span of the 2,000-mile border between Mexico and the United States. But this region is more than the border and more than the river, as Manuel Ceballos, coordinator of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Nuevo Laredo, points out. The area is bicultural, bilingual, bilateral, and interregional in

Matamoros: Poor workers' housing as far as the eye can see.

spite of international wars, regional difficulties, geopolitical decrees, economic circumstances, and ideological campaigns.[1]

The record of the indigenous people who lived along and used the river is only beginning to be systematically documented. The first settlers of European descent came in the 18th century. Between 1748 and 1845, five towns were organized along the river as part of New Spain and Mexico. The only one on what is now the Texas side of the river was Laredo.

After the Mexican War (the War of Intervention in the Mexican view) and ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the river, which had been the integrating force in the region, became a barrier. But as Ceballos adds, events continued to hold the region tenuously together. One was the American Civil War: as a consequence of the blockade of Southern ports, trade across the river greatly expanded. The development of the railroads in the 1880s, the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and thereafter, and the two world wars likewise forged bonds. After 1945, multiple governmental, nongovernmental, and commercial relationships developed and strengthened.[2] Throughout the 20th century, the pressure of migration from the interior of Mexico and from Central America has increased.

Although there is great disparity in wealth and power between the two countries, what happens on one side affects the inhabitants and environs on the other in a most immediate manner. Population growth, economic development, and environmental consequences reach across the river. The air and water are shared resources. Most contaminants are shared as well.

The latest integrating factor is the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It consists of 22 chapters and is more than 1,200 pages long; it is not light reading. Substantively, it will eliminate barriers to the flow of goods between North American countries and remove most investment restrictions. Not only manufactured goods but also agriculture and service trades are affected.

One of the principal characteristics of the drafting of NAFTA has been the speed with which the negotiations developed. In June 1990, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and President George Bush announced that they would enter into trade negotiations. In June 1991, Congress obligingly gave the president "fast track authority," thus forgoing any congressional opportunity to alter the agreement. Presidents Bush and Salinas signed the agreement in December 1992. The "fast track" authority expired on 31 May 1993. There are specific timetables to be observed by President Clinton and Congress during the period of congressional consideration. After the passage of NAFTA, implementing legislation is required. President Salinas considers it of the utmost importance to have the agreement in place by the 1994 Mexican presidential elections.

A second characteristic of the proposed agreement is its limited scope. Only commercial issues are addressed, despite the agreement's far-reaching effects on labor, environmental, agricultural, and human rights issues. Unlike the European Community agreement, no social charter was envisioned or incorporated.

Economic integration has preceded NAFTA. Whatever the final agreement's content, economic integration will continue. But the question is, What kind of economic integration will prevail? Will it have any relation to environmental sustainability and equity? Is there the political will today to address not only the far-reaching consequences, but also the deplorable conditions that exist along the border today?

One could say that NAFTA is built on the past 25 years of exchange between the United States and Mexico, specifically the *maquiladora* program and the consequences of the economic distress of the early 1980s. The collapse of oil prices in 1981 and Mexico's inability to service its $86 billion external debt resulted in a crisis in 1982. Austerity measures and privatization of many state-owned industries followed. However, NAFTA is more than the sum of past events. It offers a position of privilege to foreign investors, industrialists, and agricultural exporters. It shifts power from the government to the corporate sector. It entrenches that power beyond the reach of governments and limits government to defining national development goals. What NAFTA will do does not need to be based entirely on speculation. At present the *maquiladora* system is a prototype of the future unless neglected issues are addressed by Mexico, the United States, and the individual border states.

The *maquiladora* system had a modest beginning. In the 1950s, the labor-intensive phase of production processes for U.S. products began to be transferred to such places as Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. By the middle of the decade Mexico wanted to participate. In 1962, U.S. customs regulations were altered to permit duty-free importation of U.S.-made components sent abroad for processing or assembling.[3] In 1964 the Bracero Program, which since 1951 had permitted U.S. growers to contract temporary farm labor from Mexico, came to an end, with resulting high unemployment on the Mexican border. In 1965 Mexico established the Border Industrialization Program.

At the outset, only small companies participated. Gradually Fortune 500 companies began opening plants, and in the 1980s, when the drop in the value of the Mexican peso made Mexican wages among the lowest in the world, the assembly business boomed. The few Mexican environmental laws on the books were not enforced. Shantytowns without infrastructure or sanitation grew without parallels in Mexican border cities, especially during the last decade.

Since 1980 the number of *maquilas* has quadrupled, to almost 2,100 plants employing more than 450,000 people and netting nearly $35 billion in foreign exchange. Eighty percent of these plants are located in five border cities: Tijuana and Mexicali in Baja California, Nogales and Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, and Matamoros in Tamaulipas.[4] Matamoros has upwards of 100 plants. There has also been a shift in the type of plants opened. Today, for example, garment assembly and textiles represent only 6 percent of *maquiladora* production, while electric and electronic goods represent more than 40 percent.

One of the unexpected developments of the NAFTA negotiations has been the extraordinary proliferation of groups on both sides of the border working in coalition to correct the exploitation of labor and deteriorating public health and environmental conditions.[5] The Border Campaign, created in October 1992, is a growing coalition of 22 local and statewide groups comprising environmental, human rights, labor, church, and consumer organizations. Among its demands is a binding environmental treaty, including a worker and community right-to-know/right-to-act provision, and a process to hold corporate polluters accountable. The Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, headquartered in San Antonio, has established *maquiladora* standards of conduct based on Mexican and U.S. federal laws and on labor standards of the International Labor Organization of the United Nations. The Texas Center for Policy Studies, with its thorough analysis of environmental con-

Matamoros: Workers on their way to the Deltronics *maquila*, where they will make radios and other electronic devices for U.S. car companies.

ditions, has set forth the major problems regarding protection of the environment on the U.S.-Mexican border and has presented a number of suggestions for U.S. congressional action.[6]

On public health issues, local groups have for several years been attempting to focus public attention on the life-threatening conditions caused by unrestrained industrialization. The best known of these efforts has been the reports of the anencephalic babies born in the Matamoros-Brownsville area since 1991.[7]

In its 1991 study "Border Trouble: River in Peril," the National Toxics Campaign Fund reported on canals originating at U.S-owned *maquiladoras* in Matamoros that are filled with toxins that pose a daily threat through ingestion, absorption, or contact with the polluted water, or through respiration of deadly chemicals as they evaporate. In Matamoros and other border cities, raw sewage flows in open ditches. In 1991, the American Medical Association declared the border region "a virtual cesspool and breeding ground for infectious diseases."

These problems are not limited to the disposal of human and toxic wastes into industrial canals and thence into the Rio Grande. The problem extends to the transportation of hazardous waste into, and sometimes from, Mexico.[8] Disturbing and even more immediate is the effect of pesticides and contaminated water in the growing of U.S.-bound agricultural goods. In a process labeled the "circle of poison" by Senator Patrick Leahy, these products are tainted with U.S.-made pesticides, long since banned in the United States, that are now sent back to the U.S. to be sold.

The 1983 La Paz Agreement, signed by President Reagan and President de la Madrid, was to initiate a new period of respect for and attention to environmental border issues. To date, this agreement has been ignored. It does not have the force of law, and the state of Texas has been particularly disrespectful of its terms.[9]

The border has probably exceeded its environmental absorption capacity in terms of population, sanitation, and hazardous waste storage and disposal.[10] Infants born in Mexican border states are twice as likely to die (1,949 per 100,000) as their counterparts in the United States (925 per 100,000). Typhoid fever is 100 times and hepatitis 16 times more prevalent in Mexican border states than across the river.[11]

But the Rio Grande is no protector. Cross-border contamination is unavoidable. U.S. border states have a hepatitis rate almost double the U.S. rate, and Texas is the worst, with a rate three times the national rate.[12] NAFTA, as it is presently crafted, can only exacerbate this situation.

At the same time, the public relations efforts of the Mexican government and its business advisory group and the U.S.-based multinationals have shifted into high gear to ensure approval of NAFTA. Mexican interests have reportedly allocated approximately $100 million to highly sophisticated lobbying and public relations, in which many of those obtaining funds have not registered as foreign agents because of the methods used in funds dispersal. Even so, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that 70 firms are registered with the Justice Department as representing Mexican interests. The best-known figure representing one of these firms is William Brock, former U.S. senator, former chairman of the Republican National Committee, and former U.S. trade representative. Also included in the *Wall Street Journal*'s list are Public Strategies Washington, Inc., and two Houston firms, Solar & Ellis, L.L.P., and Campos Communications, Inc.[13]

A U.S.-based coalition comprising the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Business Roundtable is reportedly raising $42 million to pass NAFTA.[14] It has been reported that in each state, a customized state campaign has been organized to push the agreement. Meanwhile, the lobbying efforts of a coalition of social justice and religious groups, environmentalists, unions, and small farmers hoping to include parallel agreements on these issues in NAFTA have been no match for the high-profile strategy of the treaty's proponents.

Some political change came about with the November 1992 elections. President Clinton in his State of the Union address spoke again in favor of additional legislation that would protect the environment and workers and protect against the "import surge" that could result from the trade agreement.

The Rio Grande does not have to die, nor do afflictions need to be inflicted upon the residents of the border. It is not a preordained element of an integrated economy, or more particularly a free-trade agreement, that exploitation should escalate. Attentiveness, vision, and expenditures will be required to create mutually sustainable development and a healthy environment. A trade agreement should not be a linear arrangement with only commerce considered. It should be a compact in which social considerations are also priorities, not simply afterthoughts. ■

1 Manuel Ceballos, "The Course of the Rio Bravo–Rio Grande in Tamaulipas and Its Border With Texas: An Historical Point of View," Paper delivered at a colloquy in San Ygnacio, Texas, 14 April 1990.

2 Ibid.

3 Tom Barry, ed., *Mexico: A Country Guide* (Albuquerque: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1992), p. 142.

4 Ibid.

5 Ricardo Hernandez et al., eds., *Cross Border Links* (Albuquerque: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1992).

6 Mary Kelly, *NAFTA and the U.S.-Mexico Border Environment* (Austin: Texas Center for Policy Studies, 1992).

7 Interview with Dr. Carmen Rocca, 20 February 1993, Brownsville. The first study, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and the Texas Department of Health, was inconclusive because of insufficient data. A new study will compare border and nonborder towns.

8 Robert Tomsho, "Environmental Posse Fights a Lonely War Along the Rio Grande," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 November 1992, p. A1.

9 The agreement was to address all pollution issues within 63 miles of the international boundary. Contrary to the spirit of La Paz, two large toxic waste dumps are in the process of being approved by the Texas authorities. They are within 20 miles of the Rio Grande. The Chemical Waste Management, Inc., site is in Terrell County. The Texcor, Inc., site for uranium waste is in Kinney County. In addition, approval of the "low-level" nuclear waste dump in Hudspeth County is on its own fast track with the regulatory authorities of the state of Texas.

10 John Cavanagh et al., eds., *Trading Freedom* (Montpelier, Vermont: Capital City Press and Institute for Policy Studies, 1992), p. 68.

11 Statement of the Pan American Health Organization, as quoted in "Crowded Border Imports High Rate of Disease," *El Paso Times*, 14 May 1991, p. 1A.

12 Ibid.

13 Dianna Solis, "Mexico Hires Numerous U.S. Lobbyists to Push Passage of Free Trade Accord," *Wall Street Journal*, 24 September 1992, p. A12. The relationship between Public Strategies Washington and Public Strategies Austin is an interesting one. Although the latter is not named in the *Wall Street Journal* article, its president is a director of Public Strategies Washington. Both firms were established in 1991 by former aides of then senator Lloyd Bentsen.

14 "NAFTA Spawns a Diverse Union of Critics," *National Catholic Reporter*, 29 January 1992, p. 5.

On the Other Side

GENARO GONZALEZ

The trio had the look of travelers who had been on the road much too long. The old man in particular seemed on his last legs.

I was in the front passenger's seat of the Border Patrol truck when the officer at the wheel spotted them a block from the bridge. "Southbounds. I guess you boys aren't interested in them."

Since we were interviewing any undocumented aliens he apprehended, I wondered why he had bothered pointing them out.

"You mean they're not illegal?"

"They're wet, all right. At least till they cross back over."

"So you could catch them if you wanted to?"

"If I wanted to. But look at them, especially the old one. If I opened the back door they'd fight to see who gets in first. It's like bagging a bird someone else wounded and taking credit for the kill."

Mando stared at the three men for a telltale clue. "They look like shoppers to me." He looked even harder for some apparent motive. "Besides, why are they going back?"

"Depends. A death in the family. Or things don't turn out the way they expected. You'd be amazed at how many guys figure they'll become millionaires in America. And not just the youngsters. Veterans, too – the kind that if you looked into their souls you'd only see used Chiclets and chicken wire." He added with grudging respect, "But they keep coming back until they can't." Suddenly they saw us and froze like terrified jackrabbits.

"Come on," muttered the patrolman. "Just git!"

Finally, they did, with the younger ones trying to shield the old man. But this one must have sensed he looked like the least likely suspect, so he took the lead.

Mando and I followed them across the bridge purely out of curiosity, since our interview didn't address undocumented workers who crossed on their own. Once on the other side, we thought we had lost them in the weekend crowd when they resurfaced outside a restaurant.

"Come on, *tio*," the younger man urged, "it's our treat."

"It's too expensive."

"You said you couldn't wait for a real Mexican restaurant."

"All I see inside are *gringos* and other *turistas*."

"Well, we've been on the other side long enough to qualify on both counts."

The waiter at the door did little to encourage them, perhaps suspecting they would be poor tippers or, even worse, scare away the clientele. Suddenly the older nephew and I locked glances. Greeting me like an old friend, he invited us to join them.

"Our uncle's having second thoughts," he said. "Thinks the place is for *americanos* only."

Mando quickly picked up the bluff. "It's a sad day when a *mexicano* isn't comfortable eating in his own country."

The dare did it for the old man, and the waiter, intimidated by our tape recorder, ushered us to a table far from the other Americans. There we made small talk, keeping alive the fiction of our friendship until he left our side.

"So," said the older nephew after some overdue introductions, "do you work for the *migra*? Not that it matters any more . . ."

"We're doing life course interviews," said Mando.

"Life course?" said the old man. "Well, you've come to the right man. I've just about –"

"So you're working?" interrupted the older nephew.

We nodded and the old man gave our response some thought. "Working, eh?

Other

Well, I hope you boys have permits to work in Mexico."

His serious tone, along with the realization that the tables were suddenly turned, left me clutching at straws.

"Actually we're college students."

He smiled, as though apologizing for my discomfort, then patted his nephews on the shoulders.

"See, that's what you should have gotten back there. An education like these boys. Instead you left behind the best years of your lives."

"Who said anything about leaving anything behind?" said his younger nephew. He stared at the tape recorder, then asked whether I intended to turn it on. I did so, out of courtesy, since he wanted to talk, and there were a few more awkward seconds of silence.

"So," I asked, "where are you from?"

"Depends on which 'from' you're talking about," he said. He let me sit with a baffled look for a moment, then added, "In your country, we're from Houston. But if it's Mexico you're talking about . . . they call us *'los leones de Sabinal.'*"

His brother corrected him: "Come on, they only called us that in Houston."

In truth, neither resembled a lion. The older brother had the scrawny toughness of beef jerky, while the younger one was just as wiry but with a sizable beer belly. It gave him an incongruous appearance, like news photos of emaciated children with bloated bellies.

Oddly enough, it was the old man who had a leonine air: despite his gentle manners, his large, gnarled hands could almost pass for paws, and his streaked, untamed mane hinted at a once-menacing manhood. Even his subdued gestures suggested a self-confident assurance of his place in the animal kingdom, a body that had gone through life without having to throw its weight around. But now his eyes were dull and decrepit with the everyday defeats of domestication.

The younger nephew must have read my thoughts or else realized he was too slight to wear a lion skin convincingly. "Back in Sabinal they actually called *tio* the lion.'"

The old man dismissed the honor with a weak wave of his hand."Back in Sabinal any kid old enough to get a hard-on thinks he's a mountain lion."

"Sabinal," said Mando, making a mental note. "Is that a town, a village?"

"It's more of a ranch, " said the older nephew. "It's close to Perros Prietos. Know where that is?"

Mando shook his head. "Is that close to Ciudad Victoria? Or to Monterrey?"

"Monterrey?" said the old man. "Where the hell is that?"

Because of his tired eyes, it took us a while to realize he was teasing. "When you're in Sabinal," he explained, "Monterrey might as well be on the moon."

"In that case Houston must be on another planet."

"If a man's going to travel," said the younger man, "he might as well go to other worlds." It sounded like something he might have heard his uncle say.

"Let's get back to this life thing," said the old man. "Where should I start? The beginning, or the end?"

His older nephew shifted in his seat as if he were uncomfortable. "Well, since we don't know much about how we'll end . . ."

"I know how," the old man told us matter-of-factly, "and I even have a pretty good guess when." He shook his head as if apologizing once more. "I suppose one starts at the beginning, though. When my oldest sister was left to raise these boys on her own, I . . . you see, I never married, and I loved these boys like they were my own. Like they say, when God won't give you sons the devil gives you nephews. Anyway, I worked up and down the Texas border. One time I even ended up in California."

"How was it?" I asked.

He shrugged. "It was another experience. The *mexicanos* there don't know much Spanish, or if they do they're not talking. Many don't even like to be called *mexicano*. You'd think with all those places with Spanish names – San this or Santa that – you'd think the language would rub off somehow."

"And the *gringos*?"

"*Gringos* are *gringos* wherever you go. No, I take it back. They seemed a bit nicer than the ones in Texas."

Mando had his own theory about it. "It's that Texas . . ." He didn't know the Spanish word for "drawl" – for all I know there isn't one – "that Texas accent. You can't use it without sounding like an arrogant idiot."

"I wouldn't know," said the old man. "They all sound the same to me. Anyway, I came back to the Texas border. It's odd, in a way. There's not as many Mexican celebrations like you have in California, but it felt more like home. I worked like a beast of burden, sending money home so my sister could give these two an education. And for what?" He stared at his younger nephew with a mixture of disappointment and admiration, the ambivalence of fathers whose children follow their footsteps down the same dead end. "No sooner did Tacho turn sixteen than he joined me on the other side."

"Who could resist all those dollars? Besides, I got to see the world." He rattled off the names of a few theme parks he had visited along the way. "Actually, mama was worried about *tio*'s health, so she sent me to check up on him. When I insisted on going up to Houston, he went along to look after me."

The older nephew added, "So then mama sent me up to bring both of them back."

"I would have brought him back in time," the younger one protested, then winked at us. "But I got sidetracked along the way."

"You would have brought him back," agreed his brother, "but not in time."'I'm going back as soon as *tio* gets better. There's this *americana* . . . Not a *chicana*, mind you. A real *gringa*. Blonde, blue eyes, the works!"

On the Side

"If I were you I wouldn't be bragging."

"You're just envious. Ask *tio* what he thought of her."

The old man's evasive glance suggested the delicate matter had come up before. "I've never been an expert on beauty, boys. I'm like most men. I only like what I like."

"Anyway," the younger nephew said in his defense, "it's a good thing we were in Houston when *tio* got too sick to work. They put him in this hospital where only rich people go."

"They were experimenting on him. You should've seen him. All bundled up . . ."

". . . tubes going in and out every which way."

The old man tried his best to squeeze some humor from the scenario they were painting. "I looked like an astronaut. I told the boys, get me out of here before they shoot me to the moon."

"No matter," said the younger nephew. "When we get home you'll have some *caldo de res*. Not the stuff they serve here." He picked up our empty salsa bowl and caught a nearby waiter's attention – no mean feat, since this one was staring hard at a table of Anglos as though trying to coerce them telepathically to leave a large tip.

"I'll bet you were hungry for Mexican food," I said.

"Shit, no," said the younger nephew. He said it in English and so spontaneously that it must have been the first phrase he learned in the U.S. "I never saw so many Mexican restaurants as when I went to Houston. Or so many dollars, eh, *tio*?"

"I'd already had my share. At first you compare yourself to your relatives and friends you left behind in Mexico. By that metric stick, you're practically rich. I remember my first year or two, every time I'd send money home I'd also mail my check stubs so everyone could see how much I made. Of course, most of what I kept went for the bare necessities. Even after I was deported the first time, I kept living in a fantasy world. The immigration bus taking us home stopped at this town where half the schoolchildren came running out like we were heroes. 'The *turistas* are in town!' We started handing out dollars like they were autographs, buying Cokes and *chicharrones* for the kids. Then, for just a second or two, I caught sight of this old man standing away from the crowd. He couldn't have been older than I am now, but he seemed ancient at the time. Anyway, he was staring at us, or at least I thought he was, and I sneaked back to the bus in shame. Afterwards, back home, I started realizing I was living a lie. But it was too late. The other young men said, 'Ah, you just don't want to share all those blondies.' And they began to leave for the other side."

"So did you, *tio*."

"I went back because I was already an outsider at home. Or maybe my home began to change. This last time all I saw were pickups with Texas plates. Soon even our dogs will turn undocumented. We'll be lucky to call it Perro Prieto. Still, I can put up with all that. What I can't stand is those dumpy *mexicanos* with twenty-gallon hats."

"It's the *vaquero* culture," said his younger nephew.

"I grew up when there were still *vaqueros*, and those aren't real cowboys. Not Mexican cowboys, at least."

"Times change," mumbled the young man. "Like you said, you started it all. You were the first one who left for Texas. And if you're an outsider, so is most of Perros Prietos."

"I suppose I can't really blame them. The first time I went back home I must have been a sight to see. And I left for the same reasons this new generation leaves. You see, when you boys ask *mexicanos* why they cross as illegals, you're going to get the official story. I needed to feed my family, I wanted to better myself. And while that's true, sometimes that's not the whole story. The young men especially."

His younger nephew interrupted, "You were young once."

He nodded and corrected himself: "Some of us also do it for the adventure, for the excitement of beating the *gringos* at their own game. Even if you're caught you still have stories to tell your children. There's nothing demeaning about that, is there? What's better for the spirit than adventure?"

He started gesticulating and got carried away, suddenly bringing back his arms to his sides. "I'm still recovering from those rounds with the doctors. If you're poor and *prieto* you're just a guinea pig. They stick you with whatever they can get their hands on, trying to come up with a cure for the rich."

"You don't have anything a *curandera* can't cure," his older nephew insisted. But his words lacked conviction, as if his uncle's pessimism were contagious.

His brother, though, was either more innocent or a better actor: "Look at him. He's got all his teeth, more hair than any one head deserves, and eyes that can spot a *culito* at two hundred meters."

"I might spot one, but after that I'm like those dogs that freeze on the spot and just point."

"That's normal for your age, *tio*," said the older nephew. "I'll get there one day too. Right now you're malnourished. Mama will have a stack of tortillas this high when you get home."

"They'll just stay there and get stale," said the old man.

The younger man grew impatient with his pessimism. "We're all going to die anyway. At least let's hope we die in Mexico."

Mando, trying to second-guess him, gave the comment his own twist. "That's the thing about dying in Mexico. It's direct and dramatic. My father's got family down here, and every now and then we'll get a call or a telegram: another one down."

I added my own ideas on the matter. "That's because you don't hear from your family until some relative hangs up his Nikes. For all you know he was bedridden for months."

The younger brother, though, took Mando's side. "No, it's like we say here. *La vida no vale nada*. You're having a beer at a cantina, when *pas!!* some guy plants a bullet between your eyes. Or you kneel on the sidewalk to tie your shoe when *pum!!* some truck driver with a hangover misses the curb, taking you and five others."

"Then I'm afraid I'll have to go back to Texas," said their uncle. "My disease is too boring for these parts."

The younger man tapped his head. "Your disease is up here, *tio*. A month's worth of *menudo* and you'll be drinking like the old days."

"So that some other drunk can plant a bullet in my brain."

"Well," he said, "there're worse ways to go."

"If I could drink to that, I would."

"I still say *tio* should have stayed on the other side. Pretty soon those *gringos* will discover the secret of youth."

"They already have," said the older nephew. "They get people like us to do their hard work."

"Maybe that's why the women still look good at forty."

"You mean like that *gringa* you were seeing?"

"What about her? She looked half her age."

"Really? Then she must have been pushing eighty."

The old man started to arbitrate, then abruptly excused himself from the table, leaving both brothers trading nervous glances. When the seconds turned to minutes, the older one suddenly said – to us and yet to no one in particular – "He's dying, you know."

This time the other one did not bother to dispute him. He was about to go make sure everything was all right when his uncle returned and took his seat without a word.

He said nothing for a while, tracing the wet ring of his bottle of mineral water, then turned to me. "Look here. A man starts out here." He traced the circle until he came back to the beginning. "And ends up here. What does it mean?"

I've never enjoyed riddles, especially the sort that older, less educated people ask, since the motive is usually a pretext to point out my ignorance. So I figured that the best way to answer a riddle was to talk in circles.

"What do you mean, 'What does it mean?'"

"Maybe I've come full circle. Or maybe I only ran around in circles. Which one is it?"

"I'll let you know when I get there."

For once he seemed genuinely amused and smiled at his nephews to show he expected no less from a college student. "Good answer. Because by then I won't be around."

He turned in the direction of our tape recorder, as though realizing that it was only a matter of time before that was all that would remain of him.

"Let's return to the start of that circle, then. When I first heard about the other side, I wanted desperately to go. I'd been told that life was good there. But I was also scared to cross that border. Scared of the unknown. Sad to leave my loved ones. It's a little like . . . this other thing . . . only you don't come back from death." He sat quietly, struggling with the silence until he brought back his smile. "Unless the devil decides to deport you."

By the time we stepped outside the evening star was out, and I remarked that the norther forecast for later that night was already in the air. "Bad weather always arrives ahead of time," he said, then shivered with the radiance that winter gives to fragile life. His older nephew quickly searched in his bag for something warm.

"It's all right. Soon we'll be in high country, so I'd better get used to the cold. Let's see if I still know the way."

It was hard to imagine that traveling south would take you to a cold place. He started to use the river as a reference point, but remembering that it wound at odd angles, he searched instead for a smudge of sunlight. Finding it, he put it to his right, then looked at me with a smile that was at once tired and tranquil.

"I know where I am now," he said. "I'm going south. I'm going home." ■

THE MC ALLEN STYLE:

Jorge Loyzaga, architect, De la Garza Evia House, San Pedro Garza Garcia, 1983.

Northern Mexico has been invaded by a strange phenomenon that is spreading to more traditional central Mexico. The "McAllen-style" house – so called by some Monterrey designers – is becoming the most popular architectural expression in many residential areas in Mexico's northeast.

It may seem odd that in a country with a rich architectural tradition, boasting such architects as Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legorreta, the middle and upper classes prefer to imitate commercial construction in the suburbs of South Texas. This can be explained in a brief historical summary.

The Frailty of Architectural Tradition in Northern Mexico

The rich culture of the viceregal Spanish colony, which lasted three centuries, did not equally affect all parts of Mexico. In fact, much of what is today northern Mexico lay on the periphery of the centers of cultural influence. Monumental colonial works are sparse in the north: a few churches in Saltillo, Chihuahua, and Monterrey. The cultural isolation persisted during much of the 19th century. An architectural tradition was not firmly established in the region until the "Porfiriato" (1890–1910), when, as a result of the industrial boom, local and foreign businessmen built their houses in contemporary European styles.

After the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917), the European fad vanished, and once again austerity reigned. It was thus that European and American rationalist architecture was introduced by engineers and architects who had studied in Mexico City or in the United States. Houses designed with a Bauhaus or Richard Neutra look, sometimes even in the Frank Lloyd Wright or Le Corbusier style, dominated construction in the 1950s and 1960s. By then, all links with traditional architecture had been lost. At most, a few Neocolonial houses – the Mexican term for the picturesque Spanish-Mediterranean style – were built during the 1930s. But even this ended by the mid-1940s.

Economic Exchange and Cultural Transposition

During the 1960s, several factors led to a rapid expansion in economic and demographic exchanges across the border between Mexico and the United States. In 1965, Mexico launched the Border Industrialization Program to develop its northern cities and towns by fostering the establishment of *maquila* industries and stimulating demographic development. At the same time, the cities of South Texas underwent rapid growth in commercial and service activities. Large shopping malls, built in the 1970s, drew shoppers not only from the border but from interior cities such as Monterrey and Saltillo. And South Texas experienced a tourist boom, particularly along South Padre Island. These changes had a strong impact on the culture of northeastern Mexico. An increasing number of Mexicans living in border cities came into daily contact with "the American way of life" through the mass media and shopping. Many of these were immigrants who in moving to the border left not only their home towns but many aspects of their traditional culture as well. Beginning in the 1970s, middle- and upper-income families from Matamoros, Reynosa, and Nuevo Laredo moved across the river to Brownsville, McAllen, and Laredo and adopted American consumption habits.

As for the inhabitants of the interior of Mexico's border states, they began paying frequent visits to the Texas border towns, not only to shop but also to spend holidays on the beaches of Padre Island or in the discos of McAllen and San Antonio. It is estimated that 20 percent of the purchases made in shopping malls in Texas border towns are made by Mexicans living in the interior. At the end of the 1970s, almost 25 percent of the condominiums in South Padre Island were owned by Mexicans.

Carlos Galán Galán, architect, Treviño del Bosque House, San Pedro Garza Garcia, 1988.

Simultaneously, middle- and upper-income Mexican culture underwent an assimilation process by adopting the consumption standards and the aesthetic values of South Texas. This became evident in popular fashion: Mexicans began aping American television stars, eating hamburgers and other junk food, acquiring furniture appropriate for American "traditional" dwellings, and overequipping their kitchens. It was most obvious in the design of houses.

The stylistic standards of American subdivision houses became familiar to Mexicans who saw and photographed such houses while traveling through the residential districts of Brownsville or McAllen or who read such books as Andy Lang's *101 Select Dream Houses* (Hammond, 1982). The influence of published images increased during the eighties and nineties with the appearance in Mexican bookstores of *Architectural Digest* and other shelter magazines. As a logical consequence, Mexican merchants and distributors began to take advantage of the market by offering imported or "American-style" construction materials and building accessories.

Some Examples in Monterrey

Architectural-cultural transposition is particularly evident in Monterrey's residential districts. Monterrey is the most important city in northern Mexico and the country's most progressive; many of Mexico's major industries and financial institutions have their headquarters there, in buildings that are imitated in other Mexican cities.

The assimilation of American styles began as early as the 1930s and 1940s, when a group of Mexican architects educated at the University of Texas and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology came to Monterrey. As the first professional designers to settle permanently in the city since the Mexican revolution, they had a tremendous impact on Monterrey's cultural life. Joaquín A. Mora was the founder of the School of Architecture of the University of Nuevo León (1946) and later became its dean (1955). He favored European styles for his residential work, with a noticeable preference for Norman lines. Lizandro Peña, one of the most important designers of his time, became famous for Hollywood façades and neo-California houses. Through him, Monterrey became acquainted with Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture. Arturo V. González was the creator of many Georgian-style houses and seduced Monterrey with *Gone With*

ARCHITECTURAL TRANSPOSITIONS

JUAN I. BARRAGAN

the Wind columned porticoes. The engineer-architects Eduardo Belden and Luis Flores incorporated Art Deco in their commercial buildings and built houses influenced by American traditional architecture.

is forgotten. What can be said is that the American traditional style has become a local tradition in Monterrey, one enriched by newly arrived trends from the United States. But imitation of South Texas building styles remains the guideline for these creators.

José Ortiz de la Huerta, architect, Elizondo House, San Pedro Garza Garcia, 1985.

The trend reached its peak with a designer who studied at the University of Texas but graduated from the University of Nuevo León in 1952, Juan V. Padilla. For almost four decades, Monterrey's high society lay under Padilla's spell. His work was extremely functional but was overlaid with an American "traditional" aesthetic. The decoration was sumptuous, combining traditional and exotic elements in the vein of *Architectural Digest*. With his associate, Adrián Audiffred, Padilla was a prolific designer. Examples of his creativity are everywhere in the city's residential districts.

Padilla's social and financial success made him a model for young architects of the 1960s and 1970s. Enrique Rousseau, Felipe Mier, Roberto Scott, Ignacio Gómez del Campo, Armando Garza Cavazos, Guillermo Cárdenas Jiménez, and Carlos Galán Galán are only a few of Padilla's sucessors. Their work extended American traditional styles to middle-class neighborhoods, adding such new elements as the use of materials with a rustic look – available on the market since the 1970s – and incorporating their own innovations and variations on the American style.

The list of architects is so long and interpretations of the original models so numerous that sometimes the prototype

THE LIMITS OF CULTURAL TRANSPOSITION

The transposition of Texas residential architecture styles south of the border has been severely criticized by Mexican architects, especially those from central Mexico, and by nationalists. Architects in the border states are accused of aping American styles and sacrificing their own traditions.

Actually, the imitation is quite superficial. American architects when asked about the McAllen style answer simply, "This doesn't look like McAllen." A recent study of the values and meanings of Monterrey's residential architecture noted that authentic Mexican elements remain, camouflaged in American settings. Siting, use of surrounding walls, construction with solid concrete, interpretations of the inside-outside concept, and especially plan organizations that retain the spatial hierarchies of the Mexican family and its social system are examples of persistent cultural elements. To illustrate the latter, one example will suffice. A middle-class Monterrey house can have up to seven spatial zones of sociability to which guests are admitted depending on their degree of acquaintance with the host. This can range from a couple of benches on the entrance porch, to similar benches on the inside porch, to the foyer near the entrance, to an informal living room, to the formal living room, to the television room, and finally to the private sitting room in the main bedroom – a degree of functional differentiation vastly more complex than that of any American suburban house.

The houses look American because of the use of ornamental bricks and tiles, pitched roofs, bay windows, porches with columns, and a pastiche of European traditional types. But their proportions, greater density of surface materials, and daring solutions of spatial problems are totally uncharacteristic of American suburban houses. Ultimately, the cultural transposition is iconographic rather than essential. Monterrey's houses indeed have an American touch, but they do not constitute a break with the local tradition. They are instead a vivid expression of the cultural dialectic of the border

We do not intend to deal here with how the phenomenon of transposition affects American families who, during business or leisure trips, discover Mexican architectural elements and integrate them – often with an exaggerated touch – into their houses, except to observe that the phenomenon works both ways. The great success of Tim Street-Porter's book *Casa Mexicana* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1989) in the United States is only one sign of this.

It could even be said that the work of untalented architects who try to imitate foreign formal patterns stripped of their expressive essence can only be a pastiche. But this is a common phenomenon in the history of architecture.

Those who visit the cities of northern Mexico expecting to find them filled with colorful buildings and massive volumes in the style of Barragán and Legorreta will experience disappointment. There are, in fact, a few such buildings in our cities, but nowadays they are easier to find in Dallas or Los Angeles. ■

For more information, see Juan I. Barragan and Enrique Diaz, *Arquitectos del Noreste* (Monterrey: Urbis International Publications, 1992), and Barragan, *Genesis de un Municipio de Vanguardia: San Pedro Garza Garcia* (Monterrey: Urbis International, 1990).

McAllen Style?

The "McAllen house" is as likely to be found in the suburbs of Brownsville or on the outskirts of Rio Grande City as it is in McAllen. Indeed, the "McAllen-style" house notwithstanding, what strikes the casual visitor to McAllen is the sheer number of houses there that seem to have been designed by architects. O'Neil Ford and Frank Welch are each responsible for a McAllen house, and the Chicago architect James Nagle produced a modern house in Pharr, on McAllen's eastern edge. Houston architect Kenneth Bentsen designed the influential Winn House in McAllen in 1965. Its planar walls, flat roof, arched openings, and interior patio garden are a modern paraphrase of the 19th-century border brick style. Thus, while Monterrey's elite pay tribute to American suburban house types and styles, their Valley counterparts have demonstrated a consistent fascination with Mexican architectural themes. A happy medium is perhaps established by Roger Rasbach: he is both McAllen's and Monterrey's favorite Houston architect.

Kenneth Bentsen Associates, architects, Winn House, McAllen, 1965.

Frank Welch & Associates, architects, Roney House, McAllen, 1985, elevation drawing.

Extending 200 miles inland from Brownsville to Laredo, the lower Rio Grande rivals San Antonio in its wealth of historic assets. A procession of military forts, battlefields, colonial towns, plantations, and ranchos lines both sides of the river. Rather than dividing two countries, the Rio Grande has for centuries unified a shared culture on both banks. Preserving this common cultural, economic, and architectural heritage is the focus of an energetic program initiated by the Texas Historical Commission, Los Caminos del Río Heritage Project.

Los Caminos was conceived and organized by historian and architect Mario Sánchez of the Texas Historical Commission in 1989. The goal of this binational planning effort is to develop coordinated strategies for the conservation of historical, cultural, environmental, and ethnic resources in the corridor and to use these assets to foster economic development.

Along the Gre

Heritage Tourism at River

GERALD MOORHEAD

Participants in the National Park Service's binational event to mark the signing of a memorandum of understanding on Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Corridor, including then U.S. senator Lloyd M. Bentsen (center), parade through downtown Roma in October 1992.

The Tamaulipas Border

The "Valley" really is not a valley. It is part of the coastal plain that spreads about 100 miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico; the Rio Grande cuts off the tip end of the plain just before it dies against the coastal mountains farther south in Mexico. The area called the Valley is really identified more by use than by topography.

For most Texans, images of the Valley are limited to shots of vast citrus groves wracked by a winter freeze. There is some truth to the image: because of the 330-day growing season, agriculture dominates the region. Citrus is a large part of the harvest, which also includes other fruit, sugar cane, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage, and 99 percent of the aloe vera grown in the United States.

The citrus groves are mostly located north of Highway 83, the real spine of the Valley, and are separated from the Rio Grande itself by a built-up zone of continuous towns extending more than 60 miles upriver along 83 from Brownsville through Olmito, San Benito, Harlingen, Mercedes, Weslaco, Donna, Alamo, Pharr, McAllen, Mission, and Palmview to La Joya. The land rises at La Joya, and the coastal plain, with its irrigated fields and flat landscape, ends.

The passage of Highway 83 through the Valley towns is like any highway anywhere in the country: shopping strips, gas stations, suburban developments, rundown industries. The only locally distinguishing characteristics are the occasional Washingtonia palm and the numerous trailer courts, the settlements of "winter Texans." RV'd down from the farms and towns of the Midwest and Plains states, they wait out the snows in the Valley's balmy winter. With time and money on their hands, these seasonal residents are a stronger factor in the regional economy than transient tourists.

The more scenic route through the Valley is Highway 281, the old "Military Road" that closely follows the Rio Grande. Along this road are the remnants of the Valley's history: Fort Brown and quaint but prosperous downtown Brownsville, brick haciendas suspended in vast cane and cotton fields, a hand-pulled ferry at Los Ebanos, and the elegant molded-brick architecture of Rio Grande City and Roma. Rural life along 281 is much different from the suburban life just ten miles north on 83. Widely spaced along the road are clusters of small frame houses, trailers, sheds, and barns, family enclaves that hug the highway shoulder for support and contact with the outside world. The surrounding unfenced fields extend scalelessly to the horizon, punctuated by water towers and radio antennae. Nearby are small cemeteries with family names welded into rebar gateways. There is more life in these little cemeteries than anywhere else along the road. They are kept in immaculate order – grass trimmed, weeds pulled, fences painted silver. Every headstone and plot is garnished with a wreath or bouquet of bright, weatherproof plastic flowers. There is usually a carload of visitors puttering around. The perpetual bond of the farmer to the land, usually thought of as relentless work and worry, is given an oddly festive face in the graveyard. Of course, these are Mexican-American cemeteries, not Anglo-American. Theirs is the dominant flavor in the region's culture, but there is spicy evidence of others also.

Los Caminos and the Shared Experience

The Rio Grande has been a political border for the last 150 years but never an economic or cultural barrier. Geographically and historically, the river has been the center of the region, so the first objective of Los Caminos has been the recognition that historical resources in Texas and Mexico share a common heritage. The documentation of 231 sites in the project's publication *A Shared Experience* is an exemplary effort, establishing a solid

Enrique Portscheller, architect, Manuel Guerra Building, Roma, 1884.

frame of reference for the program and setting the tone for a unified approach to preservation in the whole river corridor.

The project's second stage, under way for the last year, is to encourage grass-roots preservation initiatives and to form public-private partnerships to undertake specific projects. A conference held in Brownsville by the Texas Historical Commission in October 1992 brought together representatives from a number of government agencies to discuss their experience with partnership-type projects. Declining government funding in recent decades has made it necessary to seek intergovernmental associations and cooperation with the private sector. Speakers described the establishment of a heritage center in Grapevine, a mission historic district in El Paso, an archaeological site near Lubbock, the Barton Creek watershed, and the American Heritage Landscapes Program of the National Park Service. All are joint efforts bringing together government agencies, park authorities, and citizen committees.

La Fiesta en Roma

The Brownsville conference wrapped up with a fiesta on Roma's hot, historic plaza to celebrate U.S. and Mexican agreement to participate in Los Caminos. Local, state, and federal dignitaries from both countries, including then senator Lloyd Bentsen, paraded across the international bridge, escorted by a teenage Mexican drum and bugle corps. The senator looked cool on the green-turfed stage while the crowd fanned themselves and sought what shelter they could find from the glaring sun. Noting that he grew up in the lower Rio Grande Valley, Bentsen admitted that he had taken too much of the region's heritage for granted and called for international partnership to protect its culture and environment. Mariachis played fanfares after each of a dozen speakers signed the enlarged document. Then a folk-dancing troupe stomped square dances and polkas into the plaza bricks, a reminder that the cultural background of the Valley goes beyond Spanish and Mexican influences to include German and Czech. Later, a *conjunto* duo serenaded the thinning crowd with more multi-ethnic oompah.

Preservation Economics

Like everything else in our consumer culture, preservation must comply with the reality of economic priorities. The costs and benefits of a preservation project must be analyzed by financial criteria, for the project must compete in the marketplace.

Recent studies undertaken in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Galveston by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Government Finance Research Center indicate that preservation does enhance property values and brings money into the community through construction and commercial activity, and particularly through "heritage tourism." History can make money. The new emphasis on public/private partnerships will be the means for securing funding for individual projects in the future. Preservation cannot survive on subsidy. It must be a part of the economic mainstream, a part of everyday business activity. Los Caminos recognizes this necessity: "Participants include regional, state, and national organizations and governments, local citizens and businesses – all of whom are interested in the conservation of the region's cultural and natural heritage, the nurturing of community pride and the enhancement of the quality of life."[1]

Today the Rio Grande is horribly polluted with pesticides from agricultural runoff, industrial discharge, and untreated sewage. Increased attention to the natural and cultural environment generated by the coordinated efforts of Los Caminos could have the side effect of restoring the river as well, reestablishing commerce, recreation, and natural habitats.

The Universal Tourist

Any talk of revitalization usually begins with tourism, the presumption being that attracting visitors will provide a sustaining economic base. From the most remote hamlet to sprawling conurbations, from city parks and museums to wilderness retreats, all promote themselves to attract the tourist dollar that will pay for restoration, maintenance, and operations. Government funding and subsidies are becoming scarce, and private grants are normally available only for limited uses. So the remaining source of money is the competitive open marketplace.

Tourism is the largest industry in the world, an international, interconnected network without borders. Travel is in the blood of man. But can so much dependence be placed on such an ephemeral business? The "winter Texans," already an active part of the Valley economy, would be the first to visit remote or obscure places because they have the time to wander. To expand from that base market will require considerable investment in site improvement, development of services such as lodging and food, and promotion.

There are several overlapping categories of traveler, each with its own interests and needs. The recreational tourist is looking for entertainment and comfort. The heritage tourist chooses destinations with educational value, and the ecotourist is concerned with environmental and cultural awareness. The adventure traveler seeks excitement in the out-of-the-way, the unusual.

The Valley has ample historical, natural, and cultural resources to attract all kinds of visitors but lacks the infrastructure to support them. Beyond the small cities strung along Highway 83, there are no lodgings or restaurants, no information centers. Visiting both sides of the river is difficult for the nonlocal because rental cars cannot easily be taken across the border, and car insurance companies discourage taking your own car into Mexico. Amenities for service and comfort of all kinds need to be developed throughout the region before the desired volume of tourists can be sustained. And without volume, the economics of restoring and operating historic sites will not work. Local support is seldom sufficient to maintain a landmark.

What will be the impact of increased numbers of people at the Valley's historic districts? Traffic and parking lots, garbage and litter, damage to buildings and landscape from use and abuse, disturbance of old patterns of life. The impact will be greater because so many of the places to visit in the Valley are in small towns and rural areas, not just the cities. Protecting and regulating fragile natural environments and small historic sites while keeping them attractively "authentic" will be hard to do.

To get the most out of the economic opportunity of tourism and to control the adverse effects of increased human traffic, a regional cultural and economic master plan is needed. The concept of the heritage corridor must be universally endorsed, since many of the sites are not sufficient as a destination themselves. All the resources of the region must be linked. If the cost of facilities can be shared, then individual towns or sites will not need to be self-supporting. An information center can serve several nearby towns and sites; a development incentive district could support a pocket of hotels, restaurants, and shopping for the surrounding territory.

The research and planning accomplished by Los Caminos so far are impressive. Research done on the many historic sites will provide a firm base for expanded study, and the documentation of preservation needs will give direction to individual restoration projects. As the program expands to include other government agencies and private groups, control of goals, policies, and quality will become increasingly difficult. The challenge will be to create a long-term strategy for the preservation of Valley historical and cultural resources and to keep it in force as varying interests become involved. ■

1. Mario L. Sanchez, *The Cultural and Natural Resources of Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Corridor: An Interdisciplinary Evaluation* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission and the National Park Service, 1992), p. 1.

Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project

Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project is a cultural tourism and historic preservation endeavor that began in 1990 with a grant awarded to the Texas Historical Commission by the Meadows Foundation. The result of the project's first-year activities was the completion of *A Shared Experience*, a survey of the cultural resources of the lower Rio Grande region. This publication has received three awards, among them a 1991 *Progressive Architecture* Awards' Research Citation.

As presented in *A Shared Experience*, Los Caminos del Rio will link cultural and natural resources from Laredo to Brownsville, Texas, and from Colombia, Nuevo León, to Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in a binational heritage corridor. The purpose of the corridor is both to attract visitors and to help preserve the unique heritage shared by the United States and Mexico.

The project is based upon a framework of binational public- and private-sector partnership that includes organizations interested in preservation, cultural awareness, and heritage tourism. The partners meet regularly as part of an international heritage task force, which had its origins in a state interagency task force created by the governor of Texas in 1991.

Rodriguez Building, Roma, 1886.

Roma, Texas

Three structures appear on the city seal of Roma: a steeple, all that remains of the mid-19th-century parish church that overlooked the historic town plaza; the 1928 suspension bridge (now closed) that connected the east side of the plaza and the historic business district to Mexico; and a water tower (now empty) that dominates the skyline from the west side of the plaza. As for the plaza itself, the sense of it as a public gathering place was almost completely lost through a dismembering it underwent in 1976 as part of an urban renewal project.

What is left is the buildings of Roma, and they represent one of the finest collections of historic Texas architecture that can be assembled in an eye-full. Through a generous grant from the Meadows Foundation, the Washington, D.C.–based Conservation Fund has acquired a core of buildings around the plaza that vary in their states of repair from nearly habitable to ruinous. A preservation team is now being assembled. But the new owner has more in mind than simply returning the buildings to a useful condition.

With the exception of some individual building rehabilitations along the lower Rio Grande, the work in Roma is the first major project of the Caminos del Rio heritage corridor. The Conservation Fund intends for the project to include a preservation trades training program, with maximum community involvement; scrupulously sympathetic minimum-intervention rehabilitations; and the identification of uses for buildings that will help reintegrate Roma, where locations are now referenced by their proximity to fast-food restaurants and the new Wal-Mart.

The work is off to a good start. In February, the Texas Historical Commission brought together a remarkable group of preservation professionals for an assessment of the Roma properties. Nearly everyone at the conference had strong and specific memories of the first time they saw the plaza. There was a shared sense that the preservation of the source of those impressions was vitally important. As the project moves ahead, let those memories be its watchword.

Frank Briscoe

Project partners in the U.S. include the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas Departments of Transportation, Commerce, and Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Institute of Texan Cultures. In Mexico, participating entities include the Ministries of Tourism, Transportation, Social Development, and the Interior and the Institute of Anthropology and History. Los Caminos del Río, Inc. and A.C., acts as the binational, nonprofit arm of the project. It is incorporated on both sides of the border and shares a board of directors of citizens from both countries.

On 30 October 1992, in a public ceremony in Roma, Texas, these entities signed an agreement to develop a joint work plan for Los Caminos. Specific project activities make the project tangible for corridor residents and visitors. Recent accomplishments include the successful rehabilitation of our Lady of Refuge Church in San Ygnacio, the nomination of Palmito Hill Battlefield and Fort Ringgold to the National Register of Historic Places, and the completion of National Historic Landmark studies for the Roma Historic District and the Louisiana–Rio Grande Canal Company in Hidalgo. The second edition of *A Shared Experience* and a companion lesson plan for the junior high level are near completion. A conservation plan for the historic properties facing the plaza of Roma is being issued, and a citizens' clean-up in the exceptional ruins of Guerrero Viejo was recently coordinated by the Mexican Ministry of Tourism and the Institute of Anthropology and History.

Los Caminos del Río has helped raise awareness among border citizens and in federal and state agencies of both countries that the lower Rio Grande region, too often perceived as merely a land between two nations, has a distinctive heritage that is well worth preserving.

Mario L. Sánchez

TRANS-BORDER:

Three Houses by Lake/Flato Architects

Dwayne G. Bohuslav

"Each surface is an interface between two environments that is ruled by a constant activity in the form of an exchange between the two substances placed in contact with one another."

Paul Virilio

In his essay "The Overexposed City," Paul Virilio introduces this scientific definition of surface and uses it to make the connection to the transformed nature of the boundary as material or space.[1] The border, whether as an evaporated notion in Europe or as a continuing, contested "in-between" between Mexico and the United States, has been transformed into an osmotic membrane, like a blotting pad. The limitation of space has become commutation: the radical separation, the necessary crossing, the transit of constant activity, the activity of incessant exchanges, the transfer between two environments and two substances. I will argue here that the concept of the border has undergone numerous changes as regards both its materiality -- can the border be said to present a facade? -- and its space. If a border is still a place, a geographic site delimited as such, it no longer has to do with the classical image of the peripheral boundary as wall or natural geological feature. This image collapsed with the advent of the transportation revolution and the development of communications and telecommunications technologies. It no longer exists in a lineal state, but has become something more akin to a "trans-border" territory.

The Tamaulipas border region between northeastern Mexico and South Texas, the "trans-border" focus for this text, produces a profound uneasiness. The Rio Grande border country that envelops it is both forbidding and indifferent. Concealed beneath an almost continuous, disorienting canopy of mesquite chaparral, inhabited by people rarely seen by the speeding motorist on Interstate 35, traces of a former vitality are almost all that exist. A harsh landscape to begin with, further ruptured by historical and political events, it is an environment disorganized to a point of almost ireversible decay and degradation. The opposite of a marked site wherein the values of a civilization are gathered and condensed, it is a place of "no country." Politics and architecture have largely avoided this "edge." Subsisting in order to separate, it exists in transit, where users of the roads are understood not to be either inhabitants or privileged residents.

What can be said to "belong" to this edge of nothing, this displaced subject? There remain traces of a materiality, of constructed space, now disoriented and dizzy from the speed of events dictated from the outside. Two procedures confront each other when the remnants of this fragmented existence are examined. The first is primarily material, constructed as it is of physical elements, walls, openings, and thresholds, all precisely located. The other is immaterial, images and messages affording neither locale nor stability, since they are the vectors of a momentary expression with all the manipulated meanings and misinformation that presupposes. The first one is architectonic in that it organizes and constructs durable geographical and physical space. The second haphazardly arranges and deranges space-time, the continuum of societies.

EN PAZ Y LIBERTAD OBREMOS { LET'S WORK IN PEACE AND LIBERTY! }

The Fragmented Existence. This inscription carved on the bottom of the central *viga* of a San Ygnacio house summarizes the character of the descendants of Rio Grande pioneers who survived the wilderness.[2] Many of their dwelling sites are now covered by the waters of Falcón Reservoir and exist only in memory. The initiation of a plan of colonial settlements, the nature of life within the settlements, and the adjustments made to satisfy the demands of a severe environment are reflected in their architecture.

Faced with uncertainties of flood, fire, starvation, and death, the clear image of an unchanging visual environment provided stability for those who lived in relation to its hazards. Long associations with the landscape maintained a sense of continuity through generations of life and extended character through a culture.[3]

Creating New Fictions.[4] Onto these fragmented, dispersed existences, in both the material and immaterial sense, are grafted traces of nonexistence, new fictions, if you will, to focus that memory into a clearer image, to serve the purpose of maintaining the essence of that character and extending those qualities forged during a 200-year period. The three ranch houses reviewed here, all designed by San Antonio architects Ted Flato and David Lake and located in the border country of the lower Rio Grande between Roma and Laredo, participate to varying degrees in reestablishing some degree of dimensionality and materiality to this trans-border region, almost dematerialized by the impact of population shifts and new technology. As houses in dialogue with both sides of the border, they adopt a strategy of "mediation through materials,"[5] like the "osmatic membrane" referred to earlier. Constructed space, then, is more than simply the concrete and material substance of constructed structures, the permanence of elements, and the architectonics of details. It is an instrument of measure, a sum total of knowledge that, contending with the natural environment, becomes capable of recapturing and organizing society's time and space.

Ruins of dry-stacked stone construction, Vallecillo, Nuevo León.

Ford, Powell & Carson, architects (O'Neil Ford, David Lake, and Ted Flato), Killam House, Vallecillo Hunting Lodge, Webb County, 1983.

The Houses

Vallecillo Hunting Lodge Webb County, 1983

Historically, stone has been a primary material in this region, and the quality of the stone masonry encountered indicates that masonry technique was well understood from the time of the first settlement. Wall stones were roughly trimmed quarry blocks, with outer faces trued to alignment. Stone walls were bonded with adobe mud or lime mortar. Often inserted into the joints were small horizontal stones, sometimes forming an overall pattern.[6]

O'Neil Ford, with whom Lake and Flato were working when they designed this house located just north of Laredo, had previously designed two houses for the same client using stone from Vallecillo, Nuevo León. According to Flato, after he had traveled to see Ford's houses, however, the masonry technique looked all wrong – "too slick. You just had to look at those [Vallecillo] houses to figure out how to lay the rock." Vallecillo is a largely abandoned mining village between Laredo and Monterrey built of one-room stone houses.

The material, technique, and plans of Vallecillo were, then, the fragmented existence from which the new fiction of the Killam House was realized. The lodge's layout – a ranch compound composed of freestanding rooms – is like the cluster of stone houses in Vallecillo. The stepped profile of the master bedroom wing romantically recollects

Lake/Flato Architects, Funk House, La Estrella Ranch, Starr County, 1989, exterior.

one Vallecillo house almost literally. The dry-stacked stone structures stand resolute in defiance of the dust stirred up by the continuous convoys of trucks plowing through Laredo on their way to Monterrey.

Barronena Ranch House
Duval County, 1985

Ambrosio de Letinez, a fictitious hero created before 1838, accurately described the typical architectural characteristics of northern Mexico:

The style of building is the Morisco throughout [northern] Mexico; that is to say, the houses are almost universally one story high, only, with flat terrace roofs and few windows to the street. They are frequently built in the form of a quadrangle, round a small courtyard.[7]

Often the hut, known as the *jacal*, was constructed of a fence of closely spaced vertical pickets placed into a continuous trench in the ground defining a single room. The fence would serve as a wooden base on whose inner and outer surfaces adobe plaster would be spread.

The thick, stucco-clad, 2"x 6" wood-stud walls of the Lasater House, just north of Hebbronville off Highway 16, allow doors and windows to be recessed, so that the walls appear massive and impart a sense of refuge from the area's violent heat, much as a *jacal* would. A simple building, its scale and sculptural form derive from breaking up the house into volumes – "cabins" – that, unlike the *jacales*, are all joined under one roof. This results in two bedroom wings covered by low-sloped metal roofs, leading to a central, high-ceilinged kitchen and living space capped by a more steeply sloped pyramidal metal roof with a tall windowed cupola. The boundaries between these "cabins" and the outside are blurred with Mexican-style brick-paved, wide screened porches and breezeways that take advantage of prevailing breezes afforded by siting the house on a rise.

Funk House, plan.

More humble than the Vallecillo Lodge and reflecting a radically different materiality, the Lasater House nonetheless manages to focus the memory of the *jacal* and extend its qualities into the tough South Texas landscape.

Lake/Flato Architects, Lasater House, Barronena Ranch, Duval County, 1985, plan.

Lasater House, exterior.

Lasater House, interior.

La Estrella Ranch House
Starr County, 1989

Most structures located in the Falcón Reservoir Basin were placed at random on a site and not joined together to form a court, nor were they surrounded by high defensive walls.[8] The Funk House and Ranch Headquarters incorporates two existing restored buildings, several prized mesquite trees, a water tank, and a windmill into a new, tightly knit fictional compound that ensnares the existing fragments.

Located northeast of Roma, 30 miles from the Rio Grande, the new buildings (a guest room with an observation deck; a master bedroom with a private courtyard and an outdoor shower; a family room; and a barbecue) were connected to these existing structures by a porch, which forms a breezeway cooling the buildings. A new wall incorporates the windmill and water tank, delineating a courtyard. The new buildings incorporate details from buildings designed by German immigrant architect Heinrich Portscheller in Roma and Rio Grande City in the 1880s and 1890s.

The guest house exterior was designed after the historic La Borde House Hotel in Rio Grande City; a small tower connects with the sky and anchors the structure to the Rio Grande Valley that spreads out below. The owner requested "that the finished product appear old," so walls were constructed of Mexican brick painted with whitewash and powdered pigment, the roof of corrugated metal, and the floors of 4"x 8" pavers and tile from Mexico.

Mesquite has often been used as a construction material in the region. It is durable when properly seasoned. Though its figure and grain are a delight, it is very hard to work because of its tough, irregular grain. Here, long-cut mesquite floors were laid from trees cut at the ranch and seasoned there for a year prior to installation. Mesquite doors and furniture were manufactured in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where carpentry and joinery techniques used before 1850 are still practiced and where the standard of craftsmanship is high. Knowledge of the woodworking skills of the lower Rio Grande is only beginning to be discovered.

Certainly the most complexly interwoven new fiction of any of the three ranches discussed here, the Funk Residence benefits by having had more existing fragments to work with. There is no sense of a master plan. Instead, David Lake opted for more informal groupings of separate volumes, usually one room deep to ensure optimal cross ventilation. Expansion of original one-room units in this region has historically occurred by adding a similar room in alignment lengthwise with the original unit. This tends to fragment the experiences of these houses further, leaving the boundaries of existing fragments and new fiction blurred into a dense intertextuality.

Discussions of Lake/Flato's houses revolve around expressions of the physical over the metaphysical. As retreats and ranch houses – weekend escapes – they do not attempt to represent the status of contemporary architecture within the disconcerting discourse of advanced technologies. They begin with an urge to escape from an oppressive technological environment, to regain one's senses and sense of self. While spatial escape may be possible, temporal escape is not. These works of Lake/Flato embrace the aesthetics of the appearance of the stable image sought by Texas pioneers some 200 years before.

This architecture continues to measure itself according to geology, according to the tectonics of natural reliefs, with stone and stucco and brick, in opposition to architecture that measures itself according to state-of-the-art technologies. The technical culture that has conspired to create the trans-border – the connecting grids of highway, service systems, and mass communication systems – are in these houses ignored in order to reconnect with the material substance and the cultural environment of the Tamaulipas border region. It may be that as images whose duration is purely retinal proliferate and continue to breach the material and dematerialize it, "as cyberspace becomes more real," in the words of Michael Benedikt, "the need for real architecture becomes more critical."[9] ■

1 Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p. 17.

2 Eugene George, *Historic Architecture of Texas – The Falcon Reservoir* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1975), p. 1.

3 Ibid., p. 2.

4 Gevork Hartoonian presented the framework for this strategy for the border during a "Dis Position" discussion titled "Architecture and the Border" on 23 January 1993 at Laredo Junior College.

5 Ivio Dimitriu introduced this term in opposition to "operating through the wire" as another strategy for the border at the conference in Laredo.

6 George, *Historic Architecture*, p. 34.

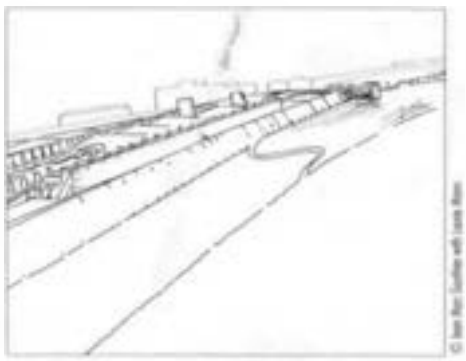
7 Ibid., p. 28.

8 Ibid., p. 34.

9 Quoted from a lecture given by Michael Benedikt for his course, "Cyberspace and the Architecture of Virtual Realities," University of Texas at Austin, spring 1992.

THESE FOUR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PROJECTS ADDRESS WIDELY DIVERGENT BUT CHARACTERISTIC CONDITIONS ALONG THE TEXAS-TAMAULIPAS BORDER. COLONIA LAS PALMAS IS A HYPOTHETICAL DESIGN PRODUCED IN 1992 BY DANIEL M. HEWETT WHILE A STUDENT AT RICE UNIVERSITY. THE PARISIAN ARCHITECT JEAN MARC GAUTHIER COLLABORATED IN 1988 WITH LAURIE MANN ON THE BRAVO PROJECT, A TOURIST-ORIENTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCHEME LOCATED IN BROWNSVILLE THAT WAS NOT BUILT. STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGES ARE A PROPOSED BULLRING FOR NUEVO LAREDO, DESIGNED BY LONGORIA/PETERS, AND A HOUSE IN LAREDO BY FRANK ASSOCIATES.

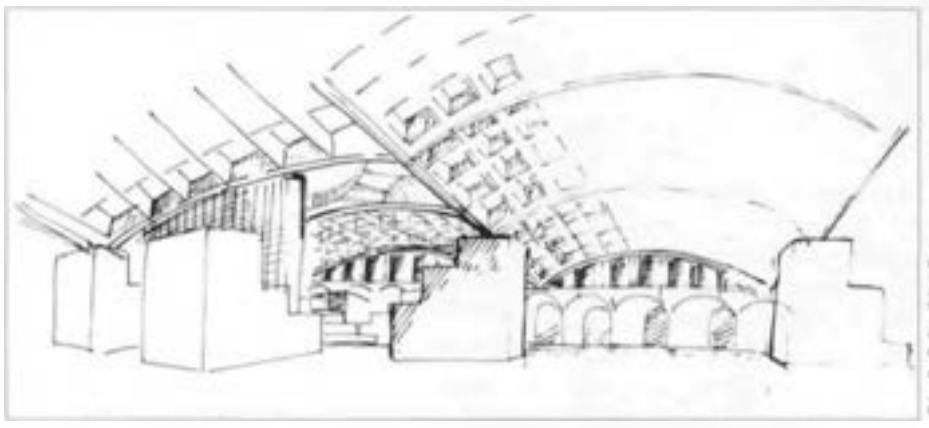
BRAVO PROJECT, BROWNSVILLE



Bravo Project, site perspective along Rio Grande.

The Bravo Project comprises a 90-room hotel, an office building, and a retail, entertainment, and meeting center to be built alongside the International Boundary and Water Commission levee on the left bank of the Rio Grande. Adjacent to downtown Brownsville and halfway between the Gateway Bridge and the B & M Bridge connecting Brownsville to Matamoros, the Bravo looks across the green space of the river's channel toward the Colonia Jardín in Matamoros.

The Bravo Project was designed to provide a promenade for people to stroll along the river. It responds to the configuration of its 12-acre site with a linear system of walkways that distribute visitors to various activity centers within the complex. Low vaulted bays comprise a repeating structural system and are located on one level, above on-site parking; they correspond geometrically to walled semicylindrical courts that serve as private loggias for the hotel rooms. Offices have access to rooftop meeting rooms, while shops and restaurants are collected in a sheltered, open-air plaza that extends outward to a water garden.



Jean Marc Gauthier with Laurie Mann, Bravo Project, Brownsville, interior perspective.

COLONIA LAS PALMAS, HIDALGO COUNTY

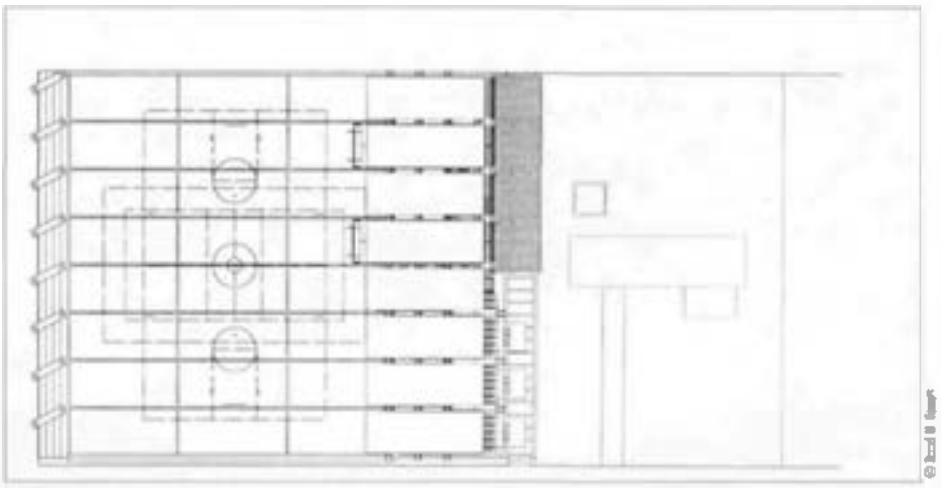
This project began with a visit to several *colonias* in the vicinity of Progreso, in Hidalgo County. *Colonias* originated in the 1950s as unplatted residential subdivisions for migrant farmworker families in unincorporated rural areas.

Colonia Las Palmas, in southeastern Hidalgo County between Progreso and the south levee of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's main floodway, was founded in 1974 and now contains approximately 100 single-family houses. Colonia Las Palmas has electricity and telephone service. There are no paved streets, sewage lines, or septic tanks. A single well provides potable water for the entire *colonia*.

In consultation with Aida González, director of Colonias del Valle, a working program was drafted for a community center to contain a meeting room and space for a branch of the county library, an office, three classrooms, and a large ceramics workshop. Some materials were available: concrete, telephone poles, salvaged wood, and units of manufactured housing. Space for a plaza-playground was also needed.

The community center's three manufactured housing modules – one at right angles to the other two – contain all program spaces except the ceramics workshop, which occupies an open-air basement beneath the modules and is directly accessible from the plaza. A grid of telephone poles supports canopies made of sheets of translucent corrugated fiberglass. These provide shade and compensate for the small scale of the modular units. Use of the same materials and techniques employed in residential construction will enable the residents of Colonia Las Palmas to build the community center themselves.

Daniel M. Hewett, community center, Colonia Las Palmas, cross section.



Community center, site plan.

Frank House, Laredo

Referred to by its designers as the "House Between Two Countries," the Frank House explores several dualities: American versus Mexican cultural influences, regional versus universal, modern versus archaic, and urban versus suburban.

The house owes as much to Le Corbusier as it does to the massive dwellings of Laredo's 18th-century settlers. Located in a new suburb, it is designed as a walled

Frank House, site plan.

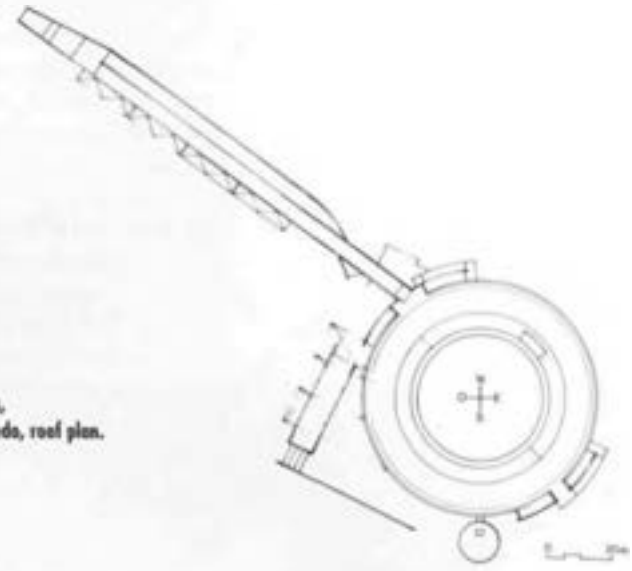
compound reminiscent of the fortresses that once were built in the area to protect against Indian attacks. Today the walls offer protection from the visual aggression of Laredo's newest suburbs, as well as from the region's harsh climate, of which the project's designers write: "A burning sun, very bright, the air is dry and the mesquite trees offer little shadow or shelter. The stark clarity invites delirium."

Frank House, ground floor plan.

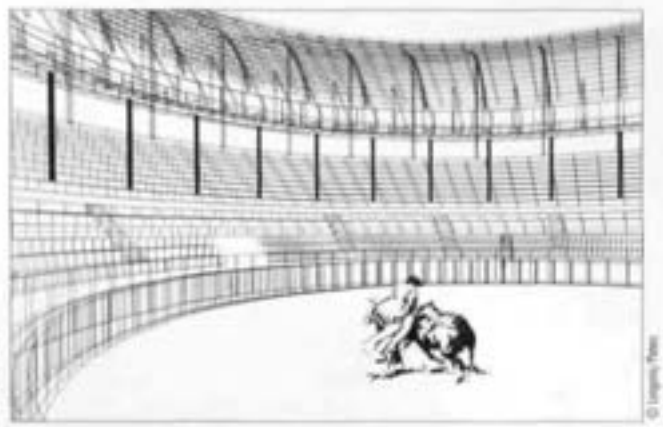
Frank Associates, Laredo
Project Team: Viviana Frank, Frank Rotnofsky, Pedro Morales, Jr., Oscar Perez, and Victor Sotelo.

Frank Associates, Frank House, Laredo, model.

Plaza de Toros, Nuevo Laredo



Longoria/Peters, architects, Plaza de Toros, Nuevo Laredo, roof plan.



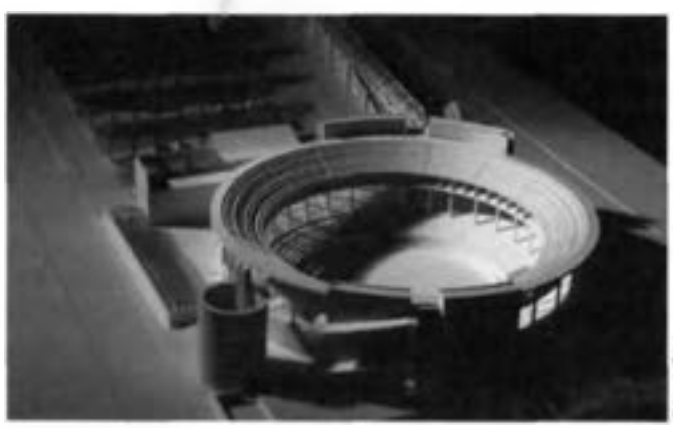
Plaza de Toros, perspective.

A work in progress, the 9,000-seat Plaza de Toros in Nuevo Laredo explores both ancient and contemporary rituals. A complete circle in plan, the bullring is divided into two halves according to the traditional separation of *sol* (sun) and *sombra* (shadow). The abstract figure of this building type is calibrated to the movement of the earth around the sun. Seating is accommodated in two decks in order to decrease the diameter and create a more intimate setting. A circle of private boxes is suspended between the two cast-in-place decks. Circulation to the various levels is intertwined to magnify pageantry during the entrance and exit of the crowds.

Not only a setting for *corridas*, a bullring is also a major landmark in any Mexican city. Everything from concerts to political rallies will take place here. Located at the edge of Nuevo Laredo in a fast-growing area of modest housing, the Plaza de Toros will provide a catalyst and a model for the subsequent development of its surroundings.

Parking is conceived as a periodic use in what will be primarily a shaded civic space surrounded by commerce. This will provide the evolving neighborhood with a plaza, a lively focus in a predominantly pedestrian city.

LongoriaPeters, Houston
Project Team: Rafael Longoria, Patrick Peters, H. Bellinda Osoria, Lynne Sutter, Sergio Astorga, Alberto Bonomi, Sam Mandola, and Gary García.



Plaza de Toros, model.

Documenting Neutra's Kraigher House

MEASURED DRAWINGS BY DAVID PAYNE

The Kraigher House was designed and built in 1937 on what were then the outskirts of Brownsville. Today, the compact, two-story house sits in the middle of a lightly wooded six-acre tract that faces Paredes Line Road and is in sight of the U.S. 77–83 Expressway. Yet looking out the south-facing ribbon windows of the living room, or standing on the expansive second-floor terrace deck, it is possible to imagine oneself in the country, where the loudest sound is

Detail at entrance.

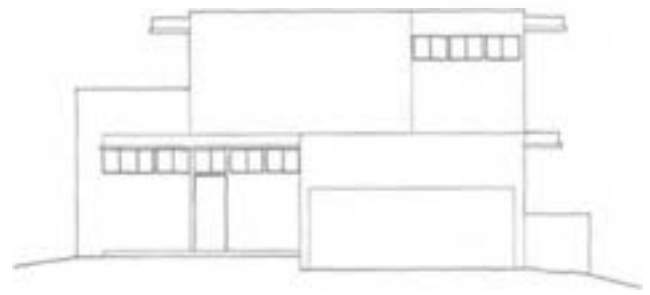
the rustling of mesquite and palm trees in the constant Gulf breeze.

George Kraigher, who built the house, was an executive of Pan American World Airways, which maintained a section of its Latin American division in Brownsville between 1929 and 1944. Los Angeles architectural historian Thomas S. Hines interviewed George Kraigher in 1977 while preparing his book, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (1982). Kraigher told Hines that he was impressed by a modern house he saw while on a visit to Los Angeles in 1936, tracked down the name of its architect, Richard Neutra, and commissioned Neutra, one of the most influential proponents of the Modern Movement in the U.S., to design his house in Brownsville. According to Hines, this was the first building constructed to Neutra's design in the U.S. outside California. It was also the first Modern house in Texas. Kraigher, who eventually had Neutra design a retirement house for him in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1958, gave Hines two renderings that Neutra made of the design: the first for a one-story house, the second of the house as built. The Brownsville contractor A. W. Neck & Sons built the Kraigher House for the contract sum of $5,000. Neutra never traveled to Brownsville. Construction was supervised by the Brownsville architect Frank L. Godwin. The Kraigher House was published in the May 1939 issue of *Architectural Record* as "Open-Planned, Window-Walled House in Southwest." In 1939 Neutra submitted a slightly enlarged version of the Kraigher House design to the *Ladies' Home Journal*'s National Small House Competition.

The Kraigher House is a tightly-packed composition of interlocking L-planned spaces, containing 2,446 square feet of livable space (this does not count the terrace deck or two-car garage). Neutra's planning was so adroit, however, that the interiors seem open and expansive rather than compressed. What most distinguishes the Kraigher House from Neutra's California houses is its lack of ground-level, outdoor living space. There is a small porch off the living room, but neither a patio nor a screened loggia, which were characteristic of Neutra houses in the more benign, less insect-ridden climate of Southern California.

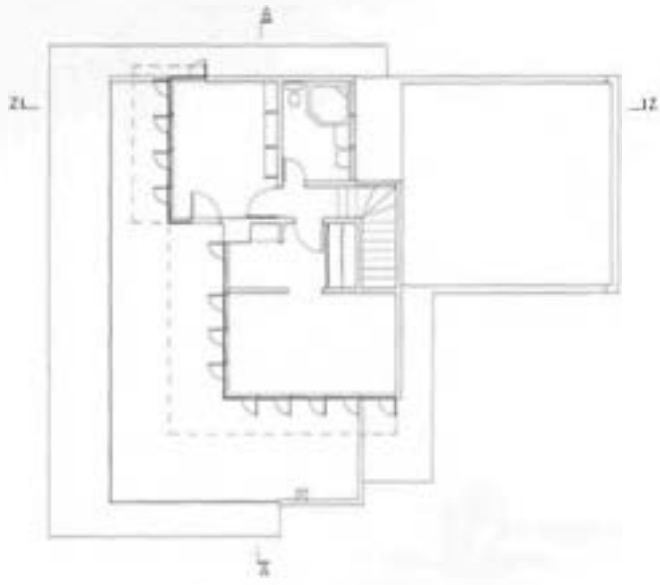
Since the 1970s the Kraigher House has been used as rental property. During the 1970s, Paredes Line Road ceased being a country highway and became instead a commercial strip. Thus the value of the six-acre site is considered by its owners, the Franke Realty Company, as highest for commercial use. The property is listed for sale for $600,000. In 1992, the year of Neutra's centenary, local concern over the condition of the house led to a feature article in the *Brownsville Herald* by reporter Roberto C. Gonzalez, which precipitated stories in *Texas Architect*, *Architecture*, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's newspaper, *Historic Preservation News*. Brownsville preservation activist T. Ashley Gonzales and the city's heritage officer, Mark Lund, have monitored the condition of the house, which is now vacant, windowless, and unsecured. This spring, Brownsville architect Roberto Ruiz, president of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, arranged for measurements of the house to be taken. University of Houston architecture student David Payne, who was involved in the measuring, produced these drawings, which describe the present appearance of the Kraigher House, one of the most significant works of modern architecture in Texas.

Stephen Fox

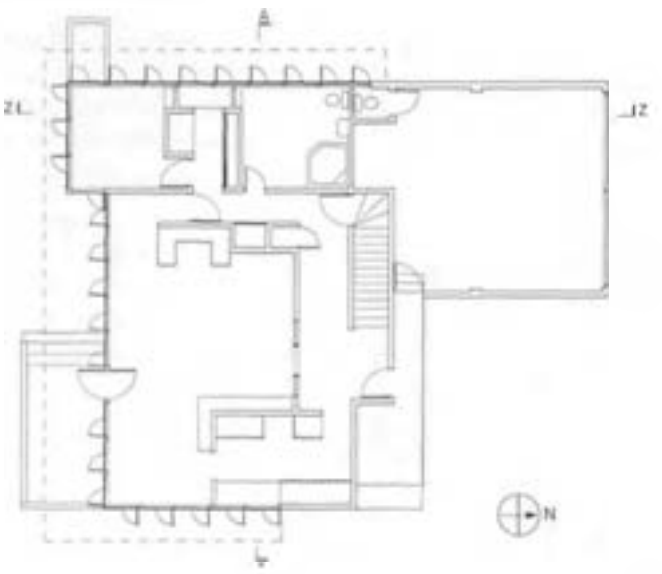


North elevation.

Cross section (Z - Z).



Second-floor plan.



First-floor plan.

LITTLE CAESAR'S PALACE

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF HOUSTON

DREXEL TURNER

I REALLY DON'T SEE WHY, AS A MATTER OF COMMON PRIVILEGE, A MAN SHOULDN'T MAKE AN IMITATION ROMAN TEMPLE IF HE WISHES TO DO SO. ISN'T IT, AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE, A QUESTION OF TEMPERAMENTAL SELECTION, OF SCHOLARSHIP, OF INDIVIDUAL TASTE?

I DON'T EITHER, IF HE WILL MAKE IT IN HIS OWN BACK YARD....BUT, WHEN HE PUTS IT ON THE PEOPLE'S HIGHWAY, AND LABELS IT MODERN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL CRY HUMBUG....

Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*

...CAPABLE ALIKE OF ALL LOWLINESS AND ALL DIGNITY...SIMPLE, AND PLAYFUL, SO THAT CHILDHOOD MAY READ IT, YET...AN ARCHITECTURE THAT KINDLES EVERY FACULTY...

John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*

The street-corner *barocchetto* of the Children's Museum of Houston (Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates in collaboration with Jackson & Ryan, Architects, 1989–92) brightens up the far northeast corner of the city's characteristically diffuse Museum District with a signlike intensity that its art-full but door-shy neighbors on the more fashionable, grown-up side of Main Street might secretly envy.[1] Five blocks west, Mies van der Rohe's bowed second front for the Museum of Fine Arts still awaits the entrance canopy designed for it more than 20 years ago (although for special occasions an ad hoc garden tent is planted as a rallying point for valet parking, anchored by water-filled exchemical drums). Diagonally across the street, the leading edge of Gunnar Birkerts's parallelogram-shaped, windowless aluminum container for the Contemporary Arts Museum shies away from the providential intersection it shares with the Museum of Fine Arts, obliging patrons to slip through a side-street reveal in an obtuse (and so angled) corner. In well marked contrast, Venturi, Scott Brown et al.'s gregariously disposed, pictographically succinct, temple-cornered box *populi* manages to show visitors the door and project itself almost all the way to Main Street.

Conspicuous as it is, the "sign" qua non of the Children's Museum of Houston is an only fragmentary advertence, compositionally discrete and strategically disposed at the point of entry, like the temple porch annexed as a "front" to the circular cella of the Roman Pantheon or set into the Medici villa of Lorenzo il Magnifico at Poggio a Caiano (Giuliano da Sangallo, 1485 f.). Palladio routinely affixed such porches to domestic projects, a procedure in which, as Ackerman notes, "often the porch is the only antique reference in the design; all the rest of the detail is simple geometry."[2] Palladio explains this practice in the *Quattro Libri*: "I have made in all the villa buildings and also some of the city ones a pediment on columns for the front façade in which there are the principal portals. The reason is that these porches announce the entrance of houses and lend much to their grandeur and magnificence. They make the forward part more eminent."[3] In the case of the Children's Museum, this forward eminence is made greater not only by detaching, curving, and corner-positioning the "pediment on columns" but by overscaling it too, in the manner of the all-but-consuming portico of Peter Harrison's Redwood Library (Newport, Rhode Island, 1748–51), of which Vincent Scully writes, "Intention is so heroic, in a building so small, that a new and primitive force is felt . . .of freshness, even of welcome ineptitude," forsaking the delicacy of the then current strain of English Palladianism.[4]

Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates and Jackson & Ryan, architects, Children's Museum of Houston, 1992, view looking north toward rear of "portico" from caryatid arcade.

The temple front is a time-honored fixture of the American scene whose versatility is demonstrated in borrowings both sacred and profane, studied and freewheeling, from Thomas Jefferson's reduction of the Pantheon (in size and materials) as a library for the University of Virginia (1823–27) to the hail-chariot-well-met-at-40-miles-an-hour hyper-detached and realigned "portico"-sign heralding Caesar's Palace along the Las Vegas strip (1964). Even in the outlands of late-20th-century Houston, this emblematic utility still surfaces in the bottom-line vernacular of The Woodlands Water Resources

Gunnar Birkerts, architect, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, entrance.

Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, architect, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, north entrance with demountable canopy.

Colossal sign, Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas.

Peter Harrison, architect, Redwood Library, Newport, Rhode Island.

Taft Architects, Water Resources Building, The Woodlands, Texas.

Frank Zeni studio, Houston.

Building (Taft Architects, 1985) and the templistic tin-type of Frank Zeni's culvert-columned studio for himself (1990). The temple corner, though, is almost entirely a convention of European urbanism, by means of which the energetically bundled columns of Martino Longhi the younger's façade for the Church of SS. Vincenzo and Anastasio (1646–50) chamfer their way onto the Piazza di Trevi and Sir John Soane's non-negotiable, "curiously stylized" capriccio on themes from the circular Temple of Vesta at Tivoli came to amplify a sharp turn in the Bank of England (1804–1806).[5] In the modern American experience, corner openings of any kind are seldom matters of "serious" architectural moment, save for Louis Sullivan's botanically encrusted cast-iron demi-carousel that swells out at the base of the Carson, Pirie & Scott department store, Chicago (1899–1903), above which rises a more slender, glazed-and-colonnetted ten-story cylinder, set noticeably into the building in a gesture once criticized as subversive of the compositional authority of the whole, but since appreciated, by William Jordy among others, for how it not only "*effects a beautiful turn of the corner. . . [but] simultaneously clarifies the role of the walls to either side as mere screens of the space they enclose.*"[6]

The only forum in America where the corner front is celebrated with true abandon and corresponding aptitude is Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas. There neon-corseted bombe-front casinos (the Golden Nugget) vie with monogrammatically woven screens (Binion's Horseshoe) and swagacious embouchures (Del Webb's Mint), shoulder to shoulder in the old quarter of what Tom Wolfe recognized as "one of the few architecturally unified cities of the world."[7] Along Fremont Street, the pragmatically angled corner fronts of the casinos occur not as a concession to orthogonally converging streams of traffic, as in the gridironed heart of Sullivan's Chicago, but as a close-set enfilade of building-anchored billboards, arrayed like those "on Route 66. . . in series at a constant angle toward the on-coming traffic"– a clustering that makes "Fremont Street . . . more photogenic" as postcard material than the parking-lot-exploded Strip.[8] (The flamboyant corner-copia of Fremont Street is anticipated in occasional movie houses of the late 1920s and 1930s, and in the little San Gimignano of corner-pyloned service stations and grocery stores from the same period that signaled the Westwood Village shopping district off Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, several miles west of the four-story corner signboard announcing the May Company's Wilshire Boulevard department store.)[9] The Houston Children's Museum cuts its own corner with comparable, if for the time being isolated, theatricality, like a playfully dignified, Romanized variant, sans electrographic tattoos, of the Fremont Street prodigies anthologized in *Learning From Las Vegas*.[10]

The Children's Museum also consorts with another unbridled example of the westward-moving decorated shed in Bernard Maybeck's expediently romantic Palace of Fine Arts for the Panama-Pacific Exposition (San Francisco, 1915). The two share the use of overscaled, detached (and freely reordered) classical columns and a consonantly rendered stucco façade as a means of prefacing a lower, essentially shedlike exhibition area (which, in the case of the Palace, housed the first large showing of "contemporary" art west of the Great Divide). The shed of the Palace of Fine Arts is exedra-shaped and generously sized, like the welcoming arms of the real Caesar's Palace. It is also skylit and freespanned throughout by "three-hinged metal arches like those which Contamin employed in his Hall of Machines for the Paris Exposition of 1889," an interior aspect William Jordy appreciated in his case study of 1972 along with the grandness of the Palace's freestanding colonnade and rotunda, although he felt obliged to note "from a modern point of view the perversity of . . . the plaster architectural screen of the entire structure on the outside [of the shed]."[11] The popular appeal of Maybeck's ephemerally realized interior decoration, which Jordy commended for "the visual weight and scale of the elements, the magnificent play of light and shade, the legato rhythms, the sumptuous ornament, the coloring in warm tints," was sufficient to prompt its reconstruction during the 1960s – an initiative deplored in the architectural press for its divorce of sincerity and authenticity, but blessed never minding by Philip Johnson.[12] Through a parallel stroke of contrarianism, the reconstruction also managed to include the paradigmatically essential shed, which today houses the Exploratorium science museum, approved by *Good Housekeeping* magazine as the best of its kind in America.[13]

Well into the 20th century, the classical language of architecture dictated more often than not what the well-dressed museum would wear. But since children's museums have come of age as a modestly consequential building type only in the last several decades, they tend, like their junior clientele, to exhibit little if any systematic exposure to Greek or Latin grammars. Apart from the Houston Children's Museum, only the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, a ward of the Victoria and Albert Museum stranded in the neediest reaches of London's East End, bespeaks any externally compelling classical affiliation. Like its Houston counterpart, the Museum of Childhood also happens to occupy a decorated shed, although the shed in question – the ex-Brompton Boilers, a cluster of three iron-framed and clad structures originally built as temporary quarters for the parent museum in South Kensington – preceded its present decoration by nearly 20 years. In 1872, the Boilers were moved to Bethnal Green and

Sir John Soane, architect, Bank of England, "Tivoli corner."

Louis Sullivan, architect, Carson, Pirie & Scott, Chicago.

Golden Nugget Casino, Las Vegas.

A & P store, Los Angeles, c. 1930

Bernard Maybeck, architect, Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco (now the Exploratorium science museum).

Children's Museum of Houston, perspective view of north (Binz Avenue) elevation, "portico," and west (parking lot side) elevation.

rewrapped by James William Wild and the Royal Engineers in a pilaster-segmented, red-brick neoclassical mufti, embellished on its two longitudinal faces by friezes of colorful mosaic panels.[14]

Wild's ministrations are acknowledged in Pevsner's inventory of British buildings as "restrained" and "well detailed . . . (still, one feels, in a Schinkel tradition)," while Edward Jones and Christopher Woodward's guide to London architecture remarks the "quiet dignity" of the museum's long civic elevation when viewed from across Bethnal Green but finds the entrance, relegated to a three-bay end elevation, inauspicious and "curiously understated."[15] Although the Bethnal Green Museum was inaugurated as a socially beneficent general-purpose repository of V&A surplus, its spirit began to be kindered in 1923 through the patronage of Queen Mary, whose fondness for public displays of childhood was also requited as client-of-record for Lutyens's Queen's Dolls' House, a standing-room-only attraction at the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. The Queen's nurturing induced not only the museum's present accumulation of rare dolls, doll houses, toys, children's books, and clothes but its change of name in 1974 and the concentration of the V&A's other children's activities there.[16] Bethnal Green's necessarily hands-off approach to most of its collections is the exception, not the rule, in contemporary pedomuseology, just as its classical casing might seem, by prevailing standards, a hopelessly fusty model for a modern major children's museum.

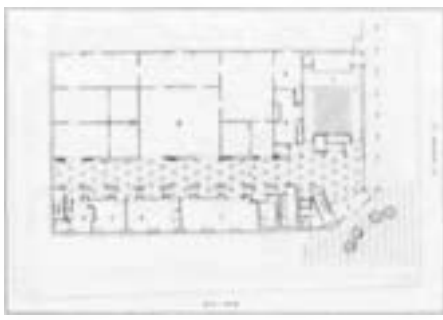
Venturi and Scott Brown's experiment with the idea of a classically vivified museum may actually have begun with Houston in mind, in the improvisational non sequitur of their second "jazz museum" project of 1978 for the unbuilt Nichol's Alley night club. Described by Venturi as "kind of a Palazzo del Te of jazz," the club was sited to face Westheimer Road, Houston's faint approximation of the Las Vegas Strip, which has since become home to such classically burnished attractions as the adults-only Caligula XXI and the coincidentally musico-museologically attuned, adolescents-only Hard Rock Cafe, slightly off menu one block south on Kirby Drive (Tigerman Fugman McCurry, 1986).[17] For the edification of drivers-by, "The Jazz Museum" was to be spelled out in a frieze of large Roman letters, hyphenated by an entablature-framed pediment. Simplified Corinthian capitals were to sprout from pilasters below that combined with the pediment to produce a temple-front centerpiece and otherwise separated niches stocked with statues of jazz worthies.[18] The "portico" of the Children's Museum is earlier anticipated in the Basic Tuscan Doric canopy of the project for the Philadelphia College of Art (1973) and the Eclectic Vacation House project of 1977. Corner-tending, if not particularly ostentatious, entries are also seeded in the firm's work, beginning with the project for a town hall for North Canton, Ohio (1965), and the Dixwell Fire Station, New Haven (1967), and, a decade later, the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia (1977–78), and the unbuilt project for the Discovery Place science museum in downtown Charlotte, North Carolina (1977–78). The competition project for the Frankfurt International Fair Hall (1980) made use of a more demonstrative, concave billboard/entry marquee that played to less-than-full effect against an L-shaped corner-fold where the new hall came alongside an elevated concourse and a lower, preexisting exhibition building.

If the Children's Museum learns outwardly from Las Vegas by way of San Francisco, Bethnal Green, and Nichol's Alley, its internal organization is the soul of rationality, surprisingly close in plan and section to Renzo Piano's museum for the Menil Collection (1981–87), an elaborately roofed but otherwise subdued post-Miesian pavilion stationed half a mile outside Houston's Museum District.[19] Like the Menil, the Children's Museum is arranged about a spinelike main hall that parallels the full, long front of the building. Deep, high-ceilinged galleries open off one side of the hall and comparatively shallow, ancillary spaces off the other, above which is lodged a second level of shallow spaces for offices and other nonpublic uses. There the connection ends, for the galleries of the Children's Museum are black-box, artificially illuminated affairs – a cross between a movie studio (as the architects put it) and Toys R Us – in contrast to the Menil's technologically facilitated luminism, which employs an expressive glass roof and ferroconcrete baffles to deliver natural light to most of its galleries. (Bethnal Green is also organized about a longitudinally aligned, though galleried and symmetrically positioned, "great hall.") The Children's Museum's 15,000 square feet of gallery space to 28,000 square feet devoted to "other" uses mirrors the ratio of 1:2 that Venturi infers as the norm for the modern "popular art museum" – "an explicitly didactic institution, involving educational components, . . . places for instruction via lectures, cinema, television, computers, . . . a big staff beyond that of traditional curators, [and] a shop" and which also tends to serve "as a place of entertainment."[20]

The use of a relatively thin, civically constituted block as a preface for a larger, boxier, matter-of-fact "works" behind appears, mediated by a cross-cutting zone for public circulation, in the firm's earlier, unbuilt design for the North Canton town hall, whose outback

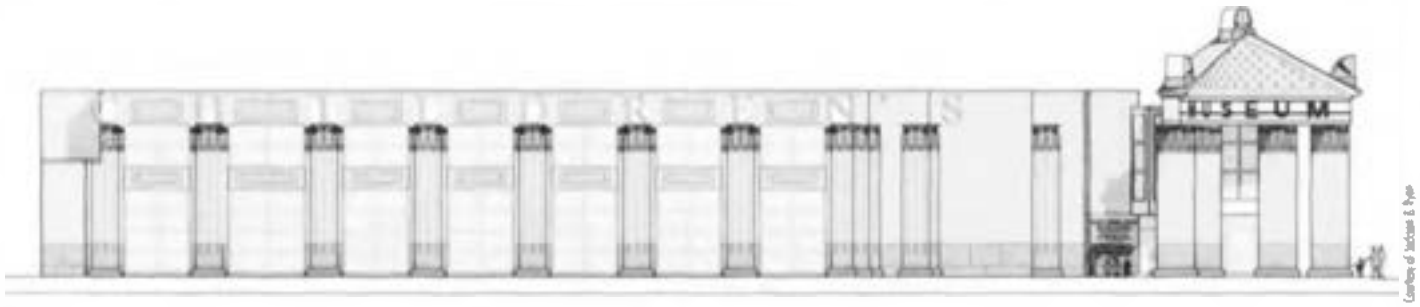
Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco, transverse section.

Children's Museum of Houston, transverse section.



Children's Museum of Houston, first-floor plan.

Venturi and Rauch, architects, North Canton, Ohio, town hall, project, first-floor plan.



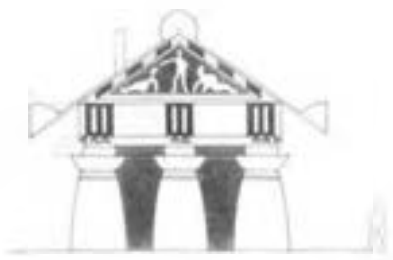
Children's Museum of Houston, computer-generated drawing of north (Binz Avenue) elevation.

Michelangelo, architect, Farnese Palace, Rome. Detail of court façade, third story, with grouped pilasters.

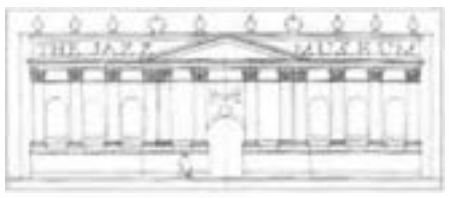
James William Wild, architect, Bethnal Green Museum, London, longitudinal elevation.

Bruno Taut, architect, Reibedanz Laundry, Berlin.

Venturi and Rauch, architects, Philadelphia College of Art, project, entrance canopy.



Venturi and Rauch, architects, Eclectic Vacation House, project, portico.



Venturi and Rauch, architects, Nichol's Alley night club, Houston, project, scheme "B," Westheimer Road elevation.

comprised an extensive (and extendable) warren of bureaucratic offices. This same "blocking," in which a fancy-fronted initial mass precedes a larger, no-frills plant-shed, also obtains in the plane-spoken dualism of "Albert Kahn's factories in the Midwest," appreciated in *Learning From Las Vegas* for the consensual non-agreement of their vast sheds, rendered in "his minimal vocabulary of steel I-sections framing industrial sash," and their fronts, which "almost always contained administrative offices and, being early twentieth century creations, were graciously Art Deco, . . . grandly contradict[ing] the skeletal behind."[21] In the same vein, the mating of splendiferous, often classically contrived, headhouses with minimally, sometimes elegantly, wrought sheds was a conjugally depictive specialty of 19th- and early-20th-century train stations, which *Learning From Las Vegas* chooses to construe as "artful contrast" in contradistinction to Sigfried Giedion's characterization as "gross contradiction" or "split in feeling."[22] In Houston, a similar measure of artful disparation applies not only to the Children's Museum but also, as Venturi has pointed out, to the Museum of Fine Arts, which combines William Ward Watkin's lapidary, colonnaded Beaux-Arts front with a Mies-matched heavy-metal-and-glass pavilion-shed behind.

The long, two-story "civic" front of the Children's Museum faces onto Binz Avenue, an east-west thoroughfare it shares with Mies's fan-shaped addition to the Museum of Fine Arts. Its treatment combines aspects of Bethnal Green's equivalent elevation and the "extended" portico of Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital, Florence (1419–57), where della Robbia baby-blue tondi bounce above Corinthian capitals and even merge into higher-rising pilasters at either end. It subscribes as well to the classically affianced, shallow, but crisply modeled modernity of Bruno Taut's deliberately lettered and colored streetfront for the Reibedanz Laundry, Berlin (1914). (Adolf Loos's heraldically cornered Allgemeine Verkehrsbank project, Vienna [1904], also made use of large, individually affixed letters for signage above its first- and second-story windows.) The façade of the Children's Museum is rendered as a mural in spot relief, with synthetic-stucco-covered, shallow Styrofoam pilasters intervening to frame seven essentially uniform window bays.[23] Each pilaster is "framed" on either side by a partial, recessive repetition of itself emulating the "grouped" pilasters Michelangelo devised for the third-story court face of the Farnese Palace (Rome, 1546). In the case of the Children's Museum, the layered-back partial pilasters merge with the primary wall plane and abut the window apertures so that the cumulated, interstitial capitals act like "garlands" banding the windows loosely together at their tops. The googly-eyed capitals of the pilasters are surtitled by slightly levitated, embossed alphabet-block Roman letters spelling C-H-I-L-D-R-E-N, the initial C teetering parenthetically on just two-thirds of a capital-and-pilaster sliced off by a recision in the northeast corner of the building, not unlike that which occurs on the children's entrance elevation of Alvar Aalto's library at Viipuri, Finland (1930–35). At the N-point of the alphabet frieze, the façade dispenses with fenestration altogether and enters into a blind, bellowslike transitional zone, thinly and recessively layered, that covers an expanse equal to three additional bays before arriving at the corner "portico." This Sainsbury ligature is punctuated by a disorderly "screen" of ganged pilasters and fractions thereof, while the apostrophe and S float above bare surfaces where pilasters would otherwise have materialized, had their spacing maintained a three-bay regularity.

Pink paneled plaques are inserted between pilasters to separate the first- and second-story windows and are also interposed, double height, as spacers between the letters C to N, which spring just above the pilasters framing the window bays. As a matter of emphasis, these large green letters are posed against square white "background" plaques that are slightly undersized to reinforce the effect of spotting and lighting, while the apostrophe and the S make do without highlights as they segue into the bellows. The capitals are Corinthian, as at the Foundling Hospital, but geometrically abstracted and Americanized in red, white, and blue. The field against which the greens, pinks, reds, whites, and blues play is an intense but relatively light yellowish ochre, rising from a duller, slightly darker cast-stone base made with yellow aggregate. The hopscotch of colors activates the façade in a mildly Mondrianic way, corresponding also to Taut's interest in colorization, exercised to effect "movement and playfulness" in his Berlin laundry.[24]

The chromatic variety of the Children's Museum also emulates the technically abetted color-casting of the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, where a plaster equivalent of "travertine" (nepheline), invented for the faux-vaulted ceiling of Pennsylvania Station, furnished an affordable, superficial means of "Romanizing" the Palace of Fine Arts and other cardinal monuments (in contrast to the all-purpose white of Chicago), while lesser buildings were tinted "pastel shades of green, blue, pink, lemon, and ochre."[25] The neo-Plasticine armature afforded by the Styrofoam-based reliefwork (laser cut offsite to achieve precision at critical junctures) updates as well the fiscally induced impasto of late Baroque Rome (and Georgian London)[26] by way of Miami Beach, where the happiest face of stripped classical Moderne-ity is characterized not only by its gaily muted colors but, as Denise Scott Brown observes, a remarkable "sense of thinness, of the skin being stretched, . . . [its] architectural sculpture . . . only shallowly carved, yet . . . suggest[ing] surfaces behind surfaces." In addition to the "cheery humaneness" it grafts onto God's Waiting Room in South Beach, Scott Brown also esteems Art Deco for being the work of "probably the last architects who were . . . trained in traditional skills," by which she accounts for the "suavity in the way they handled both design and construction" – a finesse that permitted Frank Lloyd Wright to "like 'deflowered' classic much better than . . . the old ornate classic."[27] (The remnants of Houston's own fragmentary Art Deco "district" are scattered, in various states of ruin, not very far east of the Children's Museum, along the once-thriving Almeda strip.)

The carefully modulated, colored, and labeled civic elevation of the museum that plies Binz Avenue is chiefly a means to the end of the block, where the street corner is staked out at a 45-degree angle with an embrasively curved, gap-toothed arrangement of four posts and a pediment. A spread-center arrangement of four columns upholding a pediment occurs in the gate to the Roman market in Athens of the late first century B.C. to accommodate carriage traffic, as descended from the also processionally motivated, six-columned spread-center porches of the Propylaea of the Acropolis (Mnesicles, 437–432 B.C.).[28] The motif was reinvented in the Renaissance for ecclesiastical

Children's Museum of Houston, computer-generated drawing of west (La Branch Street) elevation.

purposes by Alberti in what Wittkower takes to be a fusion of "two systems incompatible in antiquity": the Greek temple front and the Roman triumphal arch.[29] Together again, they subsequently passed into Palladio's Venetian church fronts and the porticoes of the theatrically twinned churches of the Piazza del Popolo, and were offered for secular use in a design published by Serlio for a monumental "gate" (which eventually found its way onto the Main Streets of America in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a means of aggrandizing narrow-fronted movie palaces).[30] A subtle spread-center arrangement appears in the temple-front of the Jazz Museum, but viewed head on, the center aperture of the "portico" of the Children's Museum is more emphatically cleft, parted somewhere between its Greek preceptors and Serlio's gate. The exedra-like curve that the columns and pediment of the Children's Museum follow can be found in the similarly modeled, freestanding and pedimented archway-nymphaeum devised by Alessandro Vittoria behind Palladio's Villa Barbaro (Maser, 1557–58) and in the also concave and pedimented upper tier of Carlo Fontana's façade for San Marcello al Corso, Rome (1682–83).[31]

By virtue of its placement, the signally ornamental entrance accedes to the wisdom of both Fremont Street and Vitruvius, who counseled that temples "on the sides of public roads should be arranged so that passers-by can have a view of them."[32] The "portico" wings out beyond the chamfered entrance face of the museum on both sides, and stands just free of it on un-Corinthianly chubby, hollow legs, in the "look ma, no hands" manner of Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts and Ignazio Gardella's Corinthian outrigging for the Terme Regina Isabella, Ischia (1950). The near-palindromic legend M-U-S-E-U-M fills the architrave and frieze with blocky red letters; the tympanum is crusted with a swirled lattice-lazuli; and the pediment is capped with a tri-corn, featherlike headdress of clipped-on, pinwheel-whorled anthemions. The staunch, Froebel-form *coup de théâtre* of the "portico" is the most conspicuously juvenating aspect of the museum – a "recovery of childhood at will," in Baudelaire's formulation, such as Jordy also discerned in the classical divagations of Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts.[33] (As the design proceeded and even during construction, the client entertained the idea of placing a sculpture in front of the entrance, but once completion neared, the "pressed 'duck'" of the "portico" was deemed itself sufficient.)[34]

A giant, gridded window-box composed of large, aluminum-muntined panes projects out over the entrance vestibule to backstop the "portico" at a 45-degree angle to the corner (and doubles as a canopy), echoing a similarly ordered and disposed element behind the flattened Basic Tuscan Doric portico of the Flint House (New Castle County, Delaware, 1978–80), and a like-minded declension in profile in the town hall project for North Canton. On the side nearer the museum's front elevation, the window box is buttressed by a narrow, two-story "pylon" wall that begins the chamfering of the entrance corner. (The rendered "base" of the pylon wall is raised to slightly more than door-plus-transom height and "recast" as an up-scaled cornerstone-stele.) No corresponding pylon materializes on the other (west) side of the window box; it and the vestibule below (penetrated by a pair of side doors as a shortcut to the parking lot) are left exposed in profile, as though the building had been sheared away and patched over with a gridded window-wall. The window-wall angles back into the straightaway of the west elevation and continues on to fenestrate the west end of the "great" hall in a treatment that recalls the similarly gridded and glazed side of the entrance stairhall of Aalto's library at Viipuri. Beyond the "great" hall, the window-wall gives way to the vertically channeled metal siding of the gallery shed, though a narrow band of glazing continues into the building just above the apparent roof of the gallery shed as a clerestory to light the "great" hall along the full length of its back (south) side. Besides tracing the museum's primary circulation sequence, the transparent gridwork serves to "proclaim the duality" of the two walls converging on the entrance corner – stucco and metal, fancy and plain – as a stretched-out, Viipuri-like equivalent of Sullivan's disjunctive exposition at the turning point of Carson, Pirie & Scott.[35]

The pylon that "buttresses" the window box and initiates the chamfering of the building does so with its face set at a 30-degree angle to the corner and its "thickness" expressed as a slender, edgelike bump on the main elevation. The window box, with its face turned in more abruptly at 45 degrees, cantilevers out to present a much ampler glazed edge, setting in motion a fanning that, with two zigs and two zags, leaves the corner half turned and fully engaged. The entrance face of the window box joins in another fanning sequence with the outer and inner doors of the vestibule, all three radiating from an extramural point that intercepts the axis of the "great" hall and helps arc patrons back toward the center line of the auditorium at the head of the hall. These efficient, Aaltoesque maneuvers activate the entry zone in a concentrated and seemingly offhanded manner, as riffs calculated to play against the classically adumbrated stiffness of the building box and its *porticus maximus*. The columns of the portico are held outside the sightlines of the building envelope, one pair to either side, in an extra-mural sweep that recalls the outboard compass of Soane's "Tivoli corner" colonnade (or, for that matter, the out-of-body swelling of Sullivan's iron-frothed roundabout at Carson, Pirie & Scott, or the bulging if not very imaginative entrance-corner totems of two recent additions to Houston's I-10 corridor, Ikea and Fiesta Mart). This winging out enables the "backs" of the columns (and the convex verso of the pediment overhead) to work inflectively too, as a means of folding or slipping visitors into the gap between the vestibule and the portico – particularly from behind and to the west, where the greatest supply of parking lies. The verso of the pediment is studded with a raised dot pattern as a further indication of reverse propriety.

"The side elevation," as also learned from Las Vegas, "is important, because it is seen by approaching traffic from a greater distance and for a longer time than the [front] façade" and stands all the more exposed because "the bulk of the parking [lies] along the side" to "allow direct access . . . yet stay visible from the highway."[36] (In Houston before the arrival of the Children's Museum, these rites-of-way were most arrestingly immured in the little Egypt of the Magic Island night club [Michael von Furstenburg, 1983–84]. The long, parking-lot side elevation of this redecorated shed greets oncoming traffic with a parade of gold-embossed dynastic deities, and the club's freeway front elevation is built up as a pylon whose twin towers step down in windshield-friendly

Roman market, Athens, west propylon.

Design for a gate from Sebastiano Serlio, *Tutte l'Opere d'Architettura* (1584).

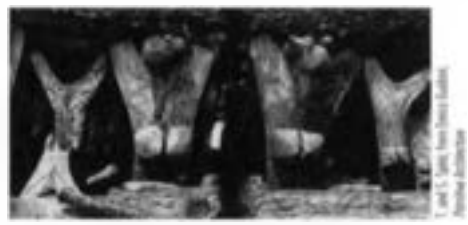
Alessandro Vittoria, architect, nymphaeum at Villa Barbaro, Maser.

Carlo Fontana, architect, San Marcello al Corso, Rome, detail of upper tier.

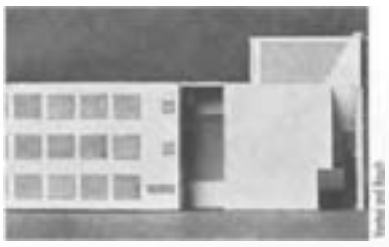
Children's Museum of Houston, perspective view of "portico" and west (parking lot side) elevation.

Venturi and Rauch, architects, Flint House, New Castle County, Delaware, front elevation with "window box."

Michael van Furstenburg, architect, Magic Island night club, Houston, detail of west elevation.



Dogon togona, Dynakobu, Mali, detail of anthropomorphic pillars.



Venturi and Rauch, architects, North Canton town hall, project, side elevation.

Alvar Aalto, architect, Library, Viipuri, detail of entrance staircase window-wall.

Venturi and Rauch with W. G. Clarke, architects, Batco Warehouse, Greenwich, Connecticut, project, detail of side elevation.

Children's Museum of Houston, detail of east elevation.

Children's Museum of Houston, detail of west elevation.

exaggerated perspective while doubling as bookends for a colossal Tut-ular figurehead.)[37] The prospect of the prime (west) side elevation of the Children's Museum is held open as well by the opportune placement of its parking lot, which intercepts the principal flow of traffic proceeding east from Main Street along Binz Avenue. It plays across the *tapis gris* with a sparkle of its own, spread out in the form of 13 "caryakids" that function nominally as slightly hands-off supports for a long metal awning-arcade and as fresh-air "naming opportunities" in the calculus of fundraising. Essentially the same connective strategy is employed by Palladio in the extensive arcades and loggias that customarily link the main houses of his villas with peripheral "storerooms, granaries, stables and . . . other areas" so that "one can go everywhere under cover" (*I Quattro Libri*, II, xiv). The awning-arcade extends from the portico past the window-wall of the "great" hall; past the green, sheet-metal-walled gallery shed (which the architects had hoped to penetrate with a storefront premises for the museum shop); and past the "sylvan street" of the play court, before connecting to a long, thin, gable-ended "backlot" shed (an annex that houses exhibition production facilities and also walls the play court on the south). The caryakids shape up as a generically cartooned exercise class fabricated by a local sign company as 600-pound sheet-metal-and-Styrofoam sandwiches, spray-painted 13 different, ethnically encompassing shades of automotive enamel in a rainbow coalition that joins hands with hold-up artists from the Dogon to the Acropolis, and, most recently, the eponymous dwarfs arrayed on Michael Graves's Disney headquarters in Burbank.[38] (The architects' suggestion that one or two of the caryakids execute handstands to make a less regimented showing was rejected as open to sociopsychological misinterpretation, no matter who took the fall.)

The Children's Museum's mostly low-tech, sheet-metal-shed strategy of containment, as pioneered in the original Brompton Boilers, was first introduced to Houston in Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry's air-conditioning-duct-buttressed but otherwise undecorated corrugated-metal-clad, green-gray-painted "art barn" of 1969, built as a temporary means of accommodating the exhibition program of the Institute for the Arts at Rice University.[39] The "working" parts of both the Children's Museum's main building and its backlot annex are sheathed in off-the-shelf metal siding like that intended for the similarly "preengineered" shed of Venturi and Rauch's unbuilt Batco Warehouse project for Greenwich, Connecticut (1970): "enameled aluminum with big-scale corrugations and other elegant standardized details."[40] For the Children's Museum, the shallow-ribbed (and shadow-enhanced) siding is applied in two shades of green (dark base course, light above), the better to blend into the woods work of the courtyard and Hermann Park, one block south. A visiting architectural correspondent at first supposed that the "sheds" were prexisting, and, in fact, a sizable complement of zoo barns, maintenance buildings, and other incidental board-and-batten structures once dotted Hermann Park (including one that served for decades as the "temporary" home of the Museum of Natural Science), all coated in vanishing green.

The transverse section of the main building is neatly revealed in the subdued but sectionally explicit east elevation, which accommodates a Viipuri-esque window-wall to terminate the "great" hall in the manner intended for the North Canton town hall. The window spreads a "pleasant land of counterpane" across the alcove just inside, which is also appointed with a gently articulated triclinium and side walls of discreet honorific tiles.[41] The interior public spaces "hue" mostly to a client-prescribed white-and-gray-washed neutrality, with the notable exception of the ceiling and upper half of the "great" hall, which exchanges the arched tie-bar truss spareness of Bethnal Green for a serial rainbow of brightly colored, cut-out, unmistakably pendant "arches" that shape and "rib" the space in the manner of the cross-valances employed overhead for perspectival emphasis in the *scalae regiae* of Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates' Seattle Art Museum (1984–92) and Sainsbury Wing for the National Gallery, London (1986–91). (In the commercial vernacular of Houston, a not-dissimilar aggregation of dangling arches provides an armature for retail signage while also diffusing the long march of the arcade of the Shepherd Square shopping center.) Eight pairs of plump columns plus one, all with rainbow-color-coordinated astragal rings, march down the north side of the hall, joining with the clerestory lighting and canopy of suspended arches in skyward approximation of a setting from Winsor McCay's "Little Nemo in Slumberland."[42] A giant order of caryakid was originally auditioned, then abandoned, as a stage-flat receiving line to bracket the "great" hall, with a cast provisionally headed by Little Orphan Annie and the Crackerjack Kid (which presumably could be extended as a line of

Children's Museum of Houston, west (entrance) end of "great" hall looking northwest.

Children's Museum of Houston, "great" hall looking east.

the times to the small worldliness of Bart Simpson and Macaulay Culkin). A whimsical kiosk proposed by the architects to dispense information and tickets was also omitted; initially its function was taken up by a barricade of folding tables that several months later was replaced by an anonymous pyramid-topped apparatus of the type usually favored by airports and malls.

On a confessional note, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour wrote 20 years ago that "after the appearance of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, we began to realize that few of our firm's buildings were complex and contradictory, at least not in their purely architectural qualities of space and structure as opposed to their symbolic content. . . . Most of the complexities and contradictions we relished thinking about we did not use, because we did not have the opportunity. . . . our budgets were low, and we did not want to design a building twice – once to fit some heroic idea of its importance to society and the world of art and, after the bids came in, a second time to reflect the client's and society's restricted idea of our architecture's value."[43] In postulating a symbolically enhanced architecture of the possible, they suggested that "the purest decorated shed would be some form of conventional systems-building shelter that corresponds closely to the space, structure, and program requirements of the architecture, and upon which is laid a contrasting – and, if in the nature of the circumstances, contradictory – decoration."[44]

Their persuasive, unelectrified gilding of the "ugly and ordinary," as matured in the Children's Museum of Houston, poses an arti-factual alternative to the unalloyed simplicity by which Emerson expected genius "to find beauty . . . in new and necessary facts."[45] Children's museums are, after all, a kind of make-believe museum – different from, not just smaller than, their adult namesakes – an actuality expressed in the surely templed show-and-tell of Venturi, Scott Brown, and company's well-rehearsed game of "dress-up." The strategically adorned, self-illuminating civic front and side elevations of the museum recollect, in a more attainable version of the architect's dream, two faces of American urbanism illustrated as a coda to *Complexity and Contradiction*: the rarefied, domesticated grandeur of Jefferson's decorous plaisance at the University of Virginia, dominated by its temple-fronted rotunda, and the demotic, jumbled ostentation of Main Street embodied in the above-average honky-tonk of Canal Street in New Orleans.[46] The result is a cheerful, outgoing and, as Venturi would have it, "taut composition which contains contrapuntal relationships, equal combinations, inflected fragments, and acknowledged dualities" – a strip-compatible, classical-and-modern shoestring variation of the cornerupmanship of the Fremont Street casino, artistically reconsidered. So outfitted, it renders unto both Vitruvius and Caesar's, in the Museum District's own back yard, even.[47] ■

Jackson & Ryan of Houston were architects of record for the Children's Museum and collaborated fully in its realization. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown of Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates of Philadelphia served as principal designers for the museum, and Steven Izenour, Dave Schaat, and Nancy Trainer of their office as project designers. Jeffery Ryan, who was an associate in the Venturi office from 1971 to 1981, was principal in charge of the project for Jackson & Ryan, assisted by Martha Seng as project architect.

The title is recycled, by permission, from Bruce Webb's account of the Fame City indoor amusement center that appeared in *Cite*, Fall 1988.

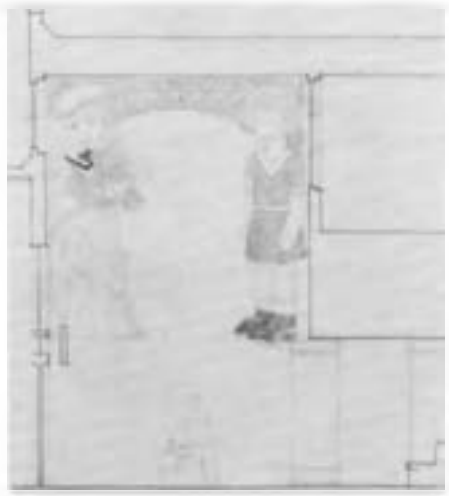
1 The other constituents of the Museum District are the Museum of Fine Arts (South [garden] front, William Ward Watkin, architect, 1924–26; Cullinan Hall, Mies van der Rohe, 1958; Brown Pavilion, Mies van der Rohe, 1974); the Contemporary Arts Museum (Gunnar Birkerts, 1972); and the Museum of Natural Science (Pierce and Pierce, 1964; Hoover & Fort, 1989, 1993), located in Hermann Park.

2 James Ackerman, *Palladio* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965, second edition, 1976), p. 65.

3 Andrea Palladio, *I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* (Venice, 1570), II, xvi, p. 69, as translated by James Ackerman in *Palladio*, p. 65.

4 Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 48. Scully pairs a frontal view of the Redwood Library with the Tuscan-portico'd St. Paul's, Covent Garden, London, by Inigo Jones, 1631, to demonstrate their mutual vigor and trace the "strange scale . . . not ingenious . . . but lumbering, big in detail" of Harrison's rendition of Palladio to "the very beginnings of English Palladianism . . . 100 years before." Venturi includes Jones's portico among the examples used to illustrate his remarks to the Royal Society of Arts, London, 8 April 1987, bracketing it with two instances of porticoes used in buildings by Palladio himself: San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, 1566–1610, and the Villa Foscari ("Malcontenta," Mira, 1560), "From Invention to Convention in Architecture," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, January 1988, pp. 96–97. The effectiveness with which the resplendent temple front of San Giorgio plays against a plain brick background of high, exposed transept wings prescribed by the architect in keeping with the resources at his disposal can be likened to the selective budget-driven procedure followed for the Children's Museum.

5 John Summerson, *Georgian London* (New York: Scribner's, 1946), p. 141.

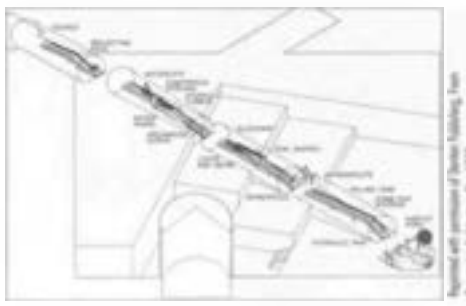


Children's Museum of Houston, "giant" caryatids with segmental lattice arch proposed for "great" hall looking east.

Bethnal Green Museum, London, central hall.

"Little Nemo in Slumberland," *New York Herald*, 1 March 1908.

Mummies Day Out
A Children's Museum Primer



A brook runs through it: irrigated culvert descending into Brooklyn Children's Museum. Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer, architects.

The children's museum is an American invention, the paternity of which can be traced indirectly to Charles F. McKim, the principal architect of the palatial (and still only partially realized) Brooklyn Museum at the edge of Frederick Law Olmsted's Prospect Park. The first increment of the new museum was completed in 1899 and prompted the trustees of the parent Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Science to leave objects judged not quite worthy of McKim's handiwork behind in the institute's Crown Heights mansion in Bedford Park to form the basis of a children's collection. Although planning began for a purpose-built children's museum as early as 1907, it was not until 1967 that the collection vacated the mansion (and another acquired next door in 1928) so that the site, in what is now called Brower Park, could be cleared and a new museum constructed on it. The museum's collections were put in storage and its activities transferred to a former pool hall and automobile showroom on a street corner in Bedford-Stuyvesant, remodeled by Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer to accommodate an interim, neighborhood-based program of temporary exhibitions and tuition-free workshops called MUSE (a designation the architects stencilled diagonally across the face of the building). The "new" Brooklyn Children's Museum (Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer, 1971–77) comprises a 19,600-square-foot exhibition space on five split levels, augmented by workshops, darkrooms, a dance studio, a library, an auditorium, and staff areas that account for the rest of its 30,000 square feet. The entire museum is placed underground, preserving the top for park uses – a notion previously entertained by Louis Kahn and Isamu Noguchi for the building component of the project for the Adele Levy Memorial Playground in Riverside Park, Manhattan (1961–66). The kinderbunker is entered Alice-in-Wonderland fashion through a 180-foot-long, diagonally aligned series of neon-lit corrugated-steel culverts that descend, together with an ecologically demonstrative rill, from a cast-iron streetcar kiosk deaccessioned from the Queensboro Bridge of 1907.

Other ready-made components borrowed from highways, agriculture, and industry continue the sense of pleasurable scavenging, inside and out. As a whole, the splashy, tastefully activated character of the installations and their cascading, hangarlike setting derive more from the progressive expositionese of Paris, Milan, and Flushing Meadows (lightly salted with boiler-room nautica from James Stirling's St. Andrew's dormitory) than from conventional museum fare.

Only a few cities followed Brooklyn's turn-of-the-century lead at first, and those that did (Boston, 1913; Detroit, 1917; Indianapolis, 1925; and Hartford, 1927) made do with architecturally unexceptional buildings, realized at domestic or quasi-domestic scales in parks or parklike settings. Today the official guide of the American Association of Museums lists nearly 100 "children's," "discovery," or "junior" museums of varying size, most of which are relatively new-born to serve the children of the children of the post–World War II baby boom. A few are quite large, although none come close to the Indianapolis museum's nearly 300,000 square feet, whose recent galleried-atrium addition projects an unerring "mall world after all" ambience. Some also involve a laudable and fiscally advantageous recycling of warehouses and other found spaces, the best-known instance being the Boston Children's Museum, which since 1979 has occupied nearly 80,000 square feet in a century-old harborside warehouse, alongside which stands a giant milk-bottle-shaped refreshment kiosk, deaccessioned from the Hood Dairy Company as a nutritional (though hardly competitive) alternative to the McDonald's tucked profitably inside the building.

6 Rochelle Berger Elstein surveys critical discomfort with the corner treatment of Carson, Pirie & Scott within the orthodoxy of modernism in her essay "Enigma of Modern Architecture: An Introduction to the Critics," in Wim de Wit, ed., *Louis Sullivan: The Function of Ornament* (New York: Norton, 1986), pp. 206–207. Jordy's appraisal appears in his "Functionalism as Fact and Symbol: Louis Sullivan's Commercial Buildings, Tombs, and Banks," in *American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 3: *Progressive and Academic Ideals at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 139. More recent and problematic examples of cornering include SITE's "notch" design for the Best Products Showroom, Sacramento (1977), cast adrift in an asphaltic sea of parking; Louis Kahn's right-angled, garagelike voids at the Yale Center for British Art (1969–77), proffered at nearly the last moment as a gesture of townly rapprochement; and the hose-drying tower/pylon-billboard of Earl Carlin and Peter Millard's New Haven Central Fire Station of 1959–62, conceived with official encouragement as a gateway to the Wooster Square renewal area and illustrated by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge: MIT, 1972), pp. 86–87, as an example of misplaced architectural heroics, but more sympathetically appraised in Scully's *American Architecture and Urbanism*, pp. 209–10, as suggesting the transitional capacity of "developed" Brutalism "to break through the old abstract, International Style model toward something much more naturally applicable to existing conditions and programs."

7 Tom Wolfe, "Las Vegas (What?) Las Vegas (Can't Hear You! Too Noisy) Las Vegas!!!!," *Esquire*, February 1964; collected in *The Kandy-Colored Tangerine-Flake, Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965), p. 12.

8 Venturi et al., *Learning from Las Vegas*, pp. 81, 36.

9 Perhaps the most inventively Baroque of the corner-observant movie houses is John Eberson's Loew's State Theatre, Richmond, Virginia (1928), renovated in 1985 as the Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts. Charles Moore, Peter Becker, and Regula Campbell describe in *The City Observed: Los Angeles, A Guide to Its Architecture and Landscapes* (New York: Vintage, 1984) how in "Westwood Village, which was laid out by the planner Harland Bartholomew in 1928 . . . handsome towers, large enough to be spotted from Wilshire Boulevard, sprouted up from roofs to advertise the presence of gasoline stations" and other sundry establishments from movie theaters to banks. Turning toward the May Company's corner on the Miracle Mile (Albert C. Martin, Sr., and S. A. Marx, 1940), they find that "the result, though it lacks the richness of Sullivan's ornament, is a marvelous openness to the street similar to that of . . . Carson Pirie Scott" and "visible for many blocks" (pp. 206, 156).

10 The Children's Museum is selectively embellished, stopping well short of the ultimate possibilities of the type embodied in the Golden Nugget, which "has evolved over 30 years from a building with a sign on it to a totally sign-covered building." Venturi et al., *Learning from Las Vegas*, p. 33.

11 William Jordy, "Craftsmanship and Grandeur in an Architecture of Mood: Bernard Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts and First Church of Christ Scientist," in *American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 3, p. 288. Jordy adds that Maybeck attributed the source of the treatment for the "perversely" attached wall to a painting by Jean-Paul Gerome, *Pollice Verso* (also known as *The Chariot Race*), pp. 391–92. Scully, like Jordy, was also sympathetic in his estimation of the Palace at a relatively early point (*American Architecture and Urbanism*, p. 135). Reyner Banham, who came across the Palace some years later, was no less impressed by how it " breaks unwritten rules, ignores accepted prototypes" in keeping with "the tolerated whimsicality of the period, the adaptable material (stucco . . .) and . . . populist intentions." Banham also discerned in the "about face" disposition of the female figures lining the attic of the colonnade "one of the better architectural jokes since Mannerist times." "The Plot Against Bernard Maybeck," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, March 1984, pp. 36, 37.

12 Philip Johnson, "The Seven Shibboleths of Our Profession," a speech given to the 11th Annual Northeast Regional AIA Conference, Oceanlake, Oregon, 12 October 1962, published in *Philip Johnson: Writings* (New York: Oxford, 1979), p. 146.

13 "Ten Best Science Museums," *Good Housekeeping*, May 1991, p. 208. Maybeck also produced a primitive-rustic variant of the Palace at the exposition in the House of Hoo-Hoo for the Pacific Lumberman's Association that consisted of a side-gabled shed prefaced by a Bunyanesque loggia of four pairs of giant tree-trunk columns.

14 The "temporary museum," referred to popularly as the "Brompton Boilers," was designed and built in 1854 by the Edinburgh engineers Charles Young and Company, who specialized in supplying "iron houses, hospitals, barracks, and other buildings to the British colonies and America." Even before they were completed, the sheds were ridiculed in the pages of the *Builder* as looking "like huge boilers placed side by side," an epithet that stuck despite the hurried application of a coat of paint "in green and white stripes" and a "portico with light iron pillars" to the entry front. John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: A History of Its Building* (Oxford: Phaidon-Christie's, 1982), pp. 23–25. Nearly a century later, Henry Russell Hitchcock, who provides another account of their design and construction in *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain* (New Haven: Yale, 1954), pp. 567–70, was still unreconciled to their sub-Paxtonian plainness, concluding in his general survey of 19th- and 20th-century architecture that "although we can today appreciate some of the practical virtues of this edifice as a Museum of Science and Art, it must be admitted that it was inferior even to the general contemporary run of prefabricated structures to which it belongs technically." Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 128. James William Wild (1814–92), the architect delegated to rewrap the "boilers" when most of their framework and roofing were moved to Bethnal Green in 1872, was a practitioner of considerable sophistication, if little remembered today. He served from 1878 to 1892 as curator of the Soane Museum. Summerson records that he had "been an archaeologist with Lepsius in Egypt . . . [and] was the brother-in-law of . . . Owen Jones" as well as the designer of the Shinkelesque Christ Church, Streatham Hill (also singled out by Hitchcock in *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*) and "another pointer to new ways" in the St. Martin-in-the-Fields Northern District School, "built . . . in a version of Venetian Gothic in 1844, five years before Ruskin drew attention to the style." *The Architecture of Victorian London* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 1976), pp. 22–24.

15 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Buildings of Britain: London Except the Cities of London and Westminster (London 2)* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 69. Edward Jones and Christopher Woodward, *A Guide to the Architecture of London* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983), p. 372.

16 Barbara Flesher Zucker, *Children's Museums, Zoos, and Discovery Rooms: An International Reference Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 26–27.

17 *Yale School of Architecture Seminar Papers*, vol. 1 (New Haven: YSA, 1981), p. 236.

18 The "pediments, . . . pilasters and capitals" were also to be "picked out in neon, blinking alternately" in the glow-or-die *maniera* of the strip. Venturi, "Learning the Right Lessons From the Beaux Arts," *Architectural Design*, January 1979, pp. 27–28.

19 See Reyner Banham, "In the Neighborhood of Art," *Art in America*, June 1987, pp. 124–29. Great hall arrangements also appear in the "Bildinghoard" project for the National Football Hall of Fame (1967) and I. M. Pei's addition to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1977–81).

20 Robert Venturi, "From Invention to Convention in Architecture," *RSA Journal*, January 1988, p. 91.

21 Venturi et al., *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 91.

22 Ibid., p. 78.

23 The next-to-eastmost bay is slightly stretched to provide for a last-minute enlargement of the ground-floor party room requested by the client.

24 Ian Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982), p. 27.

25 Burton Benedict, "San Francisco 1915, Panama Pacific International Exposition," in John Findling, ed., *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and*

However well intentioned, the architecture of children's museums, both new and adaptive, traverses a not particularly green valley between Brooklyn's hole-istic kit of parts and Houston's streetwise shed. The most conspicuously arid of these may in fact be the Las Vegas Discovery Museum (Antoine Predock, 1990), which brings an acute case of Monument Valley syndrome to the desert of enchantment. The architect is reported to have first consulted *Learning From Las Vegas* in an effort to decipher the picturesque local building culture before resolving, on whim, "to do something different from a 'decorated shed.'" The "mountain mesa in abstraction" summoned for the occasion is a poured-in-place Masada of shapes and angles tricky and daunting enough to double as a set for *Home Alone 3*. Another peak of sorts is scaled in the Unagidani Children's Museum of Osaka, Japan (Hiroyuki Wakabayashi, 1991), which specializes in the material culture of contemporary childhood, departmentalized in 22 consumer-ready toy and fashion boutiques shelved together in an architectural *karaoke* of fantasies from Charles Moore, SITE, F. A. O. Schwarz, and Henri Bendel. To ready Paris for the next century, a "Maison des Enfants" was even tossed into the brave new salad of the Parc de la Villette (Bernard Tschumi and Jean-Francois Ehrel, 1986–88).

Far from the junior Wunderkammer one might suppose, today's pedagogically correct children's museum cultivates permanent collections little if at all. Instead, it emphasizes changing exhibitions, many of which are "interactive" or "hands-on" propositions in conformance with the by now well-fixed idea of the children's museum as a laboratory for self-paced, didactically programmed exploration geared mostly to a pre- through elementary-school audience. Exhibits range from exotic environments, real and imagined (an authentic Japanese house, stage-set fragments of folkloric villages); to popular mechanics demonstration pieces (a skeletal cutaway house; deconstructed automobiles); to three-dimensional mazes and climbing apparatuses (some masquerading as giant molecules, all doubling as Ritalin substitutes); to ominous, unmakebelieve lessons about the world-as-it-is, conveyed with unsugarcoated candor on topics such as ecology, homelessness, and death itself (the last engineered by Michael Spock, son of the pediatric oracle, who served as director of the Boston Children's Museum from 1962 to 1985). The familiar and close-at-hand are also repackaged in small doses, from the obligatory preshrunk supermarkets to the wonderfully Loopy knee-high Chicago realized in 1986 by Stanley Tigerman and Frederick Wilson of Tigerman Fugman McCurry with trompe l'oeil painter Tom Melvin for the Express Ways (now Chicago) Children's Museum, then in Lincoln Park (and soon to move from North to Navy Pier, alas without the building bloc in tow). Creative impulses are technologically abetted with impressive batteries of hand-me-down computer, photographic, and video equipment (the Children's Museum of Houston became a virtual reality on the basis of such an exhibition, *Kid Technics*, plugged into the Blaffer Gallery of the University of Houston). To complete the process of demystification (while nurturing balance sheet growth spurts), group sleepovers are encouraged, along with birthday parties and other routinely catered affairs.

Wee windy city: Chicago-in-miniature installation, Tigerman Fugman McCurry architects, Express Ways Children's Museum.

The ideal of the children's museum movement, "Piaget in the Gallery" in the shorthand of one journalist, has already begun to spread abroad, while continuing its friendly takeover of the motherland. As specially equipped supplements to science museums (whose principal audience is steadfastly juvenile) and the junior galleries that are now standard issue in temples of art from the Met to Main Street, children's "museums" are a quintessentially American amalgam: part surrogate parent and drop-in daycare center; part real-time adjunct to *Sesame Street* and Messrs. Rogers and Wizard; and part newfangled, consciousness-raising, mostly soothing curiosity shop. If the name is somewhat fuzzy and vestigial, its connotations – at once fanciful and dignified, self-improving and indulgent – confer an incidental aura on an institutional hybrid whose popular appeal is irrefutable, and which Paul Goldberger, surveying the newly occupied infra-digs of the Brooklyn Children's Museum from the Parnassus of the Sunday *New York Times*, was persuaded to enjoy on its own terms as "a sort of learned funhouse."
D.T.

Expositions, 1851–1988 (New York: Greenwood, 1990), pp. 221, 223. The process of modeling and coloring is described in detail in Paul Denivelle, "Texture and Color at the Panama-Pacific Exposition," *Architectural Record*, November 1915, pp. 362–70.

26 In the protocol of London building, Summerson observes, "Stucco and Coade Stone were both, in a sense, fake materials, convenient substitutes for ashlar masonry and carved stone. But quite unconsciously, their essential character was appreciated and accepted. . . . Stucco and Coade Stone have a slightly cosmetic character; they suggest, faintly and agreeably, the artificiality of powder and rouge." *Georgian London*, p. 114.

27 Tom Killian and Françoise Astorg Bollack, "Interview With Denise Scott Brown on 10 May 1988 in Philadelphia," in Joselita Raspi Serra, Bollack, and Killian, *Everyday Masterpieces: Memory and Modernity* (Modena: Panini, 1988), pp. 205, 206, 209; Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture (The Sir George Watson Lectures of the Sulgrave Manor Board for 1939)* (Cambridge: MIT, 1977), p. 11.

28 The spread-center (dityrglyphic in Doric practice) aspect of the Gate of Athena Archegetis, which forms the western propylon of the Roman agora in Athens, is noted in William L. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2, *An Urban Appraisal* (New Haven: Yale, 1986), pp. 229, 231. For the Propylaea (which also included a gallery to one side for the hanging of paintings) see A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957, revised with additions by R. A. Tomlinson, 1983), p. 208, and J. J. Coulton, *Ancient Greek Architects at Work: Problems of Structure and Design* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1977), pp. 90–91.

29 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1962), reprint ed. (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 54. Alberti's "invention" is first hinted with pilasters spread farther apart in the center in the gabled attic front of S. Maria Novella, Florence (1458–70) and repeated, also with pilasters, with a great arched center opening, across the entire, comprehensively gabled front of S. Andrea, Mantua (1471 ff.).

30 Serlio's gate is published in his *Tutte l'Opere d'Architettura* (1584). The formula was reapplied with astonishing plasticity in Thomas Lamb's Fox Theater, San Francisco (1929), and S. Charles Lee's Los Angeles Theater (1931), described as "unstinting ly sumptuous," if by then much decayed, in Moore et al., *The City Observed: Los Angeles*, pp. 26, 27.

31 The nymphaeum of the Villa Barbaro figures, flattened out, in the formation of Venturi's house for his mother, Venturi, "Diversity, Relevance, and Representation in Historicism, or Plus ça Change . . . Plus a Plea for Pattern All Over Architecture With a Postscript on My Mother's House," *Architectural Record*, June 1982, p. 119.

32 Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge: Harvard, 1914), p. 117.

33 Jordy, "Maybeck," p. 278, quoting from Baudelaire's essay "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), p. 8.

34 According to the "comparative method" of *Learning from Las Vegas*, buildings can be classified as either "ducks" or "decorated sheds." "Ducks," so called "in honor of the duck-shaped drive-in, 'The Long Island Duckling,' illustrated in *God's Own Junkyard* by Peter Blake" (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), are those in which "architectural systems of space, structure, and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form" as a "kind of building-becoming-sculpture"; "decorated sheds" are those in which "systems of space and structure are directly at the service of program, and ornament is applied independently of them" (p. 64).

35 Part of the agenda of Venturi's "gentle manifesto" was to "include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality." *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 22.

36 Venturi et al., *Learning from Las Vegas*, p. 36.

37 Magic Island is rendered in desert-storm stucco, with high points outlined in neon. The theme of perspectival enhancement carries over to a third pylon that brings up the rear of the deified west side façade, also diminished in size in relation to the leading west front (northwest-corner) pylon. The front pylon is prefaced by a high flat roofed portico that shelters an enormous pair of faux doors and is supported by four columns whose palm capitals do not quite "reach" the soffit.

38 Caryatids enter the "modern" architecture of the 20th century with Berthold Lubetkin's Highpoint 2 Apartments (London, 1938), which "incorporated two [copies] of the Erechtheum caryatids" as "heterodox" supports for a porte-cochere in "humorous rebuke to his stylistic critics, who complained of the absence of historical references in Highpoint 1." Jones and Woodward, *Architecture of London*, pp. 344, 345. Michael Graves's headquarters for the Walt Disney Company, Burbank, California (1989–91), restored the practice with an attic loggia upheld by six 19-foot "dwarfs," with Dopey squinched overhead in place of a king post. As nonbearing members, cut-out figures of musical muses appear as a proscenium-top chorus line on Graves's outdoor concert pavilion for the Cincinnati Symphony (1983), though in this case following in the footsteps of the much more than literate, cut-out figure of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave*, installed by Venturi and company atop Marcel Breuer's *beton*-brute entrance canopy at the Whitney Museum, to announce the museum's bicentennial exhibition of American sculpture.

39 The "art barn" was inaugurated with Pontus Hulten's exhibition *Art of the Machine* and remained in use for exhibitions until 1986, after which it was converted, with unnecessary roughness, for use as classrooms and offices. "Machine Shop Art," *Architectural Forum*, July–August 1969, p. 96.

40 Venturi et al., *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 159. Frank Lloyd Wright also appreciated, in principle, the possibilities of sheet metal, maintaining that "standardization is the nature of both sheet-metal process and material" and consequently it was a means by which architecture might be "frankly, profitably and artistically taken from the factory to the field." "Sheet Metal and a Modern Instance," *Architectural Record*, October 1928, pp. 338, 342.

41 Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Land of Counterpane," *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) (New York: Knopf, 1992), pp. 37–38.

42 The career of Winsor McCay (1871–1934) is summarized by Judith O'Sullivan in "Winsor McCay: American Master," in her *Great American Comic Strip* (Boston: Bulfinch, 1990), pp. 26–38. His work was the co-subject (along with that of Herbert Crowley) of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Two Fantastic Draftsmen*, 1966. Maurice Sendak, in reviewing an omnibus reprinting of McCay's work in the *New York Times Book Review* (25 November 1973), wrote that "McCay and I serve the same master, our child selves."

43 Venturi et al., *Learning From Las Vegas*, p. 84.

44 Ibid., p. 70.

45 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Art," in Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 440.

46 Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 103. This pair of contrasts was taken directly from Peter Blake's screed, *God's Own Junkyard*, where they had been marshalled to advocate the orderly superiority of Jefferson's academical village to the commercial squalor of "Main Street," a comparison Venturi dismissed as an "irrelevancy" before asking the Las Vegas–leading question: "Is not Main Street almost all right? Indeed, is not the commercial strip of a Route 66 almost all right?" (p. 102). The vital if looser virtues of New Orleans's "Main" Street were apparent to Mark Twain on a return visit in 1882: he found "Canal Street finer and more attractive and stirring than formerly, with its drifting crowds of people, its several processions of hurrying streetcars . . . not that there is any 'architecture' in Canal Street. . . . At the date of our visit, it was the best lighted city in the Union, electrically speaking. The New Orleans electric lights were more numerous than those of New York, and very much better. One had this mighthed moonday . . . in Canal and some neighboring chief streets." *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), reprint ed. (New York: Oxford, 1990), pp. 276–77.

47 Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, p. 102.

HOUSTON

RICHARD HOWARD

My name is Richard Howard and I am a teacher, a translator, and a poet. I live in two radically different American cities, New York and Houston.

For a good part of the year, I live in Houston, Texas, where I teach literature at the University of Houston (this year, we are concentrating on the work of Emily Dickinson, concentrating on all 1,776 of her poems, 200 each week!) and where I write poems. For what is apparently a bad part of the year, unless it is the better part, I live in New York City, where I have been – and for some years to come where I shall be – making a new translation of Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*, and where I write poems. Evidently the activity that persists in either place, whatever their differences from each other, and whatever the discrepancies in my professional life during the months I am in either residence, is the writing of poems.

So there must be something in common – some residual and pervasive element about living in both or in either that makes such making possible. I think that the fact that the national conventions of our two political parties were held this past year in the two cities makes it easier to suggest the differences, and the abiding urban identities, of the two megalopolises. In any case I shall try to offer some account of how a man may live an intellectual life in American cities, contradictory as such a proposition may on the face of it appear, and contradictory as those cities themselves may be.

New York City is not a place where a Republican National Convention would be welcome. This was a truth immediately perceived by the Republican National Committee, which chose for its site the most imaginary, the most idealistic, the most unreal of all our Unreal Cities, as T. S. Eliot calls them. New York, then, is a place where you are constantly compelled to acknowledge, and to a certain degree to welcome – even while resisting – Differences. It is a city not of the Same, but of Other People. Houston is a city where it is easy to escape Others, where there is always room and time to find, or create, more of the Same, and where you can dangerously forget the Differences. The imminence of otherness – that is New York's character, and its advantage. New York is a place where it is impossible, as it is eminently possible in Houston, to universalize the human plight (such universalization being the most dangerous of our uses of our intelligence, as we may observe from the Houston-carpentered platform of the Republican National Convention).

Such universalization – the choice of an apocalyptic view of this or any other time – is a clog in, or, to put it better still, a blindfold over our awareness of the possibilities of change. What seems in Houston an almost lyrical stasis, the present moment, is in New York never an absolute but a prelude.

The American visionaries, as I may flatteringly call them, who endanger our perception of differences, of others and of change (and who have thereby done so much to abolish our political consciousness) are sometimes among our greatest writers – Emerson, for example, and Thoreau. It is notable that their vision of the country, and of a citizen independent of the pressure of change and acquisition, was achieved in lives lived not in the cosmopolis. Thoreau came but once to New York, visiting Whitman in Brooklyn and noting in his journal his disgust at finding the metropolitan poet sharing a bed with his retarded brother, the chamber pot under that bed far too evident for the fastidious senses of a man from Concord. Indeed, the visionaries of the major phase of American literature, plausibly including Melville and Hawthorne, even Poe and Longfellow, carved out a non-urban reality founded on the use of language (a function peculiar to the United States). Such use can afford to ignore the demands of otherness. But in some sense, for an intellectual, an artist, an educator, only the Great City can rehearse possibilities of Mutual Recognition . . . can overcome the temptations, which I feel so powerfully here in Houston, of those visionary and impersonal systems which seek to dissolve the very concept of personal agency.

It appears initially paradoxical that the agglomeration of several million lives is where an individual discovers existence most readily, most characteristically. But it is by sustaining itself, by prevailing against – rather than by evading – hive and huddle that the self is discovered as a personal agency. One is a poet where there have been poets, where there are poets, where poets will be, oneself among them. The city as conflictual maze is where the student, the artist, the thinker comes to a consciousness of possible change.

Yet we have, in America, we have noticeably in Houston, the converse tradition: the tradition of the prophet who comes down from the hills, who shakes his fist in the marketplace, against the marketplace, and returns to his (comparative) solitude. In this role, Faulkner takes the baton from Thoreau, and Frank Lloyd Wright (answering an enquiry as to how he would solve New York City's problems: "Level it!") reminds us of Emerson in his repudiation of any hope for the City as a vessel of human happiness. Indeed, I have never met a burgher of Houston who did not believe that the best of Houston was in its evasions of urbanity, in its visionary capacity to recapitulate, in measures of space and time, the virtues of Open Country.

Yet that happiness, the pursuit of which is an American axiom, if it is to mean anything more than acquisition and counting, must be a metaphor for consciousness, for the consciousness of more life, that blessing that Jacob demanded of the angel at Peniel. And it is in New York, of the five American Big Cities where I have lived, that as a poet and a student and as a teacher I have been afforded a principal consciousness of life; not of an abstract and universalized life – the Good Life I can so amazingly live in Houston for a good part of the year – but of individual, conflicting, disputed lives, whose response to their dilemmas and determinations produces what polities we can find credible, neither tyranny nor whistling in the dark (again, the Republican platform, issued from Houston), but rather that agon of consciousness that is what I think happiness, and certainly poetry, means.

It is only when other voices sound in the echo chamber that our own has any vibrations of significance, that our own is not merely a delusion. And it is in New York, often contemptuously referred to as "the city that never sleeps," that a consciousness of others is necessarily generated, to the advantage of one's own. In Houston as in Los Angeles, the first difficulty I have encountered among students of poetry, among nascent poets – beyond the general American resistance to the existence of the past, even (and especially) to the past of poetry – is the ease with which the very existence of Other Poets, living and past, is elided. In Houston we acknowledge two entities – my students have two subjects in their extremely subjective poems, their bodies and the weather, both wonderfully consistent. And this elision tends to produce a poetry of rather blank universals, a poetry of that narcissism that is so often observed to be our characteristic and death-dealing art form. Only in New York – in my own experience of New York, I must say – in the most overscored and obliterated, self-obliterated, metropolis, continually remaking its premises from vestiges of its ruins, the city with every deficiency, can the beleaguered artist and poet and intellectual come up (and out) with a credible version of a made reality, human wealth beyond counting and beyond acquisition.

For to be a poet in New York means to contend with existence in other aspects, on other levels, down other streets, and not to assume to oneself the role – and the singing-robes, the mantle – of the poet as a sure thing, as an unquestioned assumption. Perhaps it is the fascination of what's difficult, above all, for these days New York is increasingly difficult to live in if your life and your living are discrepant. No one (not even W. H. Auden, when he lived here, as he so often said, "not an American but a New Yorker") sustains the "realities" of life by poetry; therefore the poet must do something else, must be something, I would say, and perhaps in such being is my central assent to this problematic urban agglomeration: to be a poet in New York means to contend with the Other. . . . My own poetry has become, in consequence, largely a matter of other people, largely a matter of people of the past, whose achievements, whose failures, and whose amusements it has been my study to reinvent, to recount, if not to record. The constant distraction of what I must call the cross-purposes of New York enable such a poetry more busily, more stirringly than the usual, the classical semipastoral assumptions so readily found in Houston, assumptions so rife in the relative peace and quiet of a writers' colony, for example – a place where time and space are set aside (exactly the problem: that setting aside) for poetry, for just poetry.

No such accommodation for me (except during the good months I spend in Houston!). It is just the conflicting enterprises by which my days and nights are imbued, in fact invaded, which call forth what poetry I can imagine. New York is the site where someone is always – famously – awake, and someone always

asleep, the poet being that someone, of course, simultaneously awake and asleep; the site where life assumes its most harrowing aspect (and most healing). And it is just because of what Montaigne calls *cette belle contexture des choses* that I have been able to spin and inweave my own particular threads, which I am certain would snap in my hands at the permanent solicitation of what has always been called the provinces. Some of our poetry – I suggest Emily Dickinson – is not only admirable but representative in its genius "to see New Englandly" – or southwesterly or pacifically: to see from a society whose vantage is the same, as if Americans had never conglomerated in a village larger than Amherst, in a company more populous than a country graveyard. But there is another strain of American poetry that finds its *raison d'être* in New York, city of overscorings and obliterations, urban palimpsest of voices – voices of Whitman and Crane, Moore and Auden, Ashbery and Merrill, Field and Hollander, all of whom have determined Manhattan's poetic "crossings," though they may no longer live there on a regular basis, though they may, as I do, venture into the boundaried vacancies of Houston – voices raised and fading in the echo chamber of all our despairs and hopes. ■

These essays were delivered as part of the program "Berlin Meets Houston – Houston Meets Berlin: Topographies of Literary Experience," held in Houston from 12 to 18 October 1992. A joint project of the Goethe Institut Houston and the Literary Colloquium of Berlin, it brought five Berlin writers to Houston for exchanges with Houston writers. Thanks to Rick Spaler and Sven Arnold for facilitating publication of these essays.

Urban Experience

YAAK KARSUNKE

The big German cities are the relatively young daughters of *industrialization and war. Unlike its counterparts in England* and France, German industry began to develop only in the mid-19th century. It received a decisive shot of capital in the arm when, following the 1870–71 war, the German Empire imposed on defeated France reparations in the (for the time) astronomical amount of five million gold francs. (The German language has preserved the memory of these engins in words like *Fabrikstädte* – "factory towns" – and *Mietskaserne* – "rented barracks," i.e., tenement blocks.)

In the year 1849, Berlin, the city of my birth, numbered 412,000 inhabitants. By 1871, the population had more than doubled; 1877 saw the one million mark passed, 1905 the two million mark. In the portion of the surrounding countryside that was incorporated into greater Berlin by a zoning reform in 1920, the population jumped from 105,000 in 1871 to 1.7 million in 1910.

In the same year, in the foreword to one of the first representative selections of "urban poetry," Theodor Heuss spoke of "socialistic" and "sociological" poetry, with which the Naturalists reacted to the (socially) explosive urban development. Admittedly, the diagnosis was outdated before it was made public. In the "expressionistic decade" of 1910–20, the social and critical canon of naturalistic themes was ruptured, "big city" became the metaphor of an aggressive and destructive attitude towards life and the world, fear mingled with fascination, and the big city appeared as threatening as it was tempting. The hookers at night on the *Friedrichstrasse* looked lyrical, but they probably all had syphilis.

The tone in German poetry that I myself find originally "urban" developed in the Berlin of the twenties. Its inhabitants and its authors took the city more for granted; the expressionistic pathos had been spent. Poems became more matter-of-fact, more laconic, quicker; they incorporated more elements of the witty and flippant colloquial speech. Walter Mehring should be mentioned first of all here, for his richly contrastive integration of the new language material into the old song and verse *forms, though Erich Kästner became much more popular.* Bertolt Brecht's poems *From a Reader for City-Dwellers* stressed the social coldness of the big cities, and in this way again took up one aspect of the naturalistic program. When I was born in Berlin in 1934, Mehring and Brecht were just as "banned and burned" as Alfred Döblin, whose *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was THE German urban novel of the 1920s. The Nazis propagated "blood and soil" and denounced literary modernity as "asphalt literature." There never was anything like a *National Socialist urban poetry.*

I was able to discover my literary models, then, only after the war ended. I lived at that time in Pankow, a lower-middle-class district close to the borders of the formerly "red" Wedding. After 1945, I also lived in the Soviet sector, while Wedding lay in the French sector. The border ran along a city railway line, and I would cross over under a bridge to eat ice cream "in the West," something you couldn't find on our side "in the East." The sector divisions of the four occupying powers emphasized the boundaries that exist within a big city and turned values upside down: Pankow had been a *"better" neighborhood than* Wedding, but now we belonged to the Russians and our proletarian neighbors to the French.

Perhaps it was this experience of boundaries that shaped my sense of the big city. It is not, by the way, necessarily a typical one for all big-city dwellers. The average Berliner lives not in Berlin but in his district – in Wilmersdorf, for example, in Neukölln, in Charlottenburg. In the everyday life of its inhabitants, the city is reduced to a manageable number of places, streets, squares – where one works, shops, enjoys leisure time. The automatic experience of a city dweller is not Big City Experience. It remains partial and particular. Theoretically, you could spend your whole life without ever leaving your neighborhood.

(Or your company car: a West Berlin trade union leader can't keep an afternoon interview appointment at the local radio station because at that time of day his driver would be held up in traffic. He doesn't know that there is a direct subway route from his trade union headquarters to the radio station.)

Urban experience must be consciously organized. You have to set out on excursions, venture forward, cross boundaries. In this way you wind up in unfamiliar parts, in neighborhoods where you don't know your way around, may even feel "out of place." There are streets that – at least at certain hours – one is better off avoiding, or subway routes on which the way you dress will attract attention or prompt an act of aggression. *Eugène Sue, who was one of the first writers to try to fathom The Secrets of Paris* (1842–43), dressed up as a proletarian and for safety's sake took his boxing instructor along with him as a bodyguard. Even today there are districts in which a tie or polished shoes invariably stand out. There are other places or milieus, however, where you would perhaps never even gain admittance: that extends from boards of directors to circles of pimps.

The big city is a discontinuous, diverse assemblage, *distinguished by the simultaneous and unbidden juxtaposition* of the most varied people and ways of life. Perceptions and their meanings change with time and place: two teenaged Asians of for me unidentifiable nationality, conversing in their native language at midday on a crowded Kurfürstendamm bus, elicit totally different emotions from those triggered by the same young men with whom I am suddenly sitting alone at night in a subway car, and who are communicating in the same language – with lowered voices, as I now realize.

Two stations later they get out; I have been aware, not of them, *but of myself. What appears to the eyes is often only* appearance: even organized experience does not suffice. Deciphering a big city requires certain prior knowledge (which then again can only obstruct or restrict one's view). A city like Berlin is also a product of its own history, which has left its marks on the cityscape. They are sometimes obvious, as for example the Nazi architecture of the Olympic Stadium or around Fehrbelliner Square, and sometimes hardly noticeable, like the remnants of Hebrew characters on the weathered façades of the old Scheunenviertel.

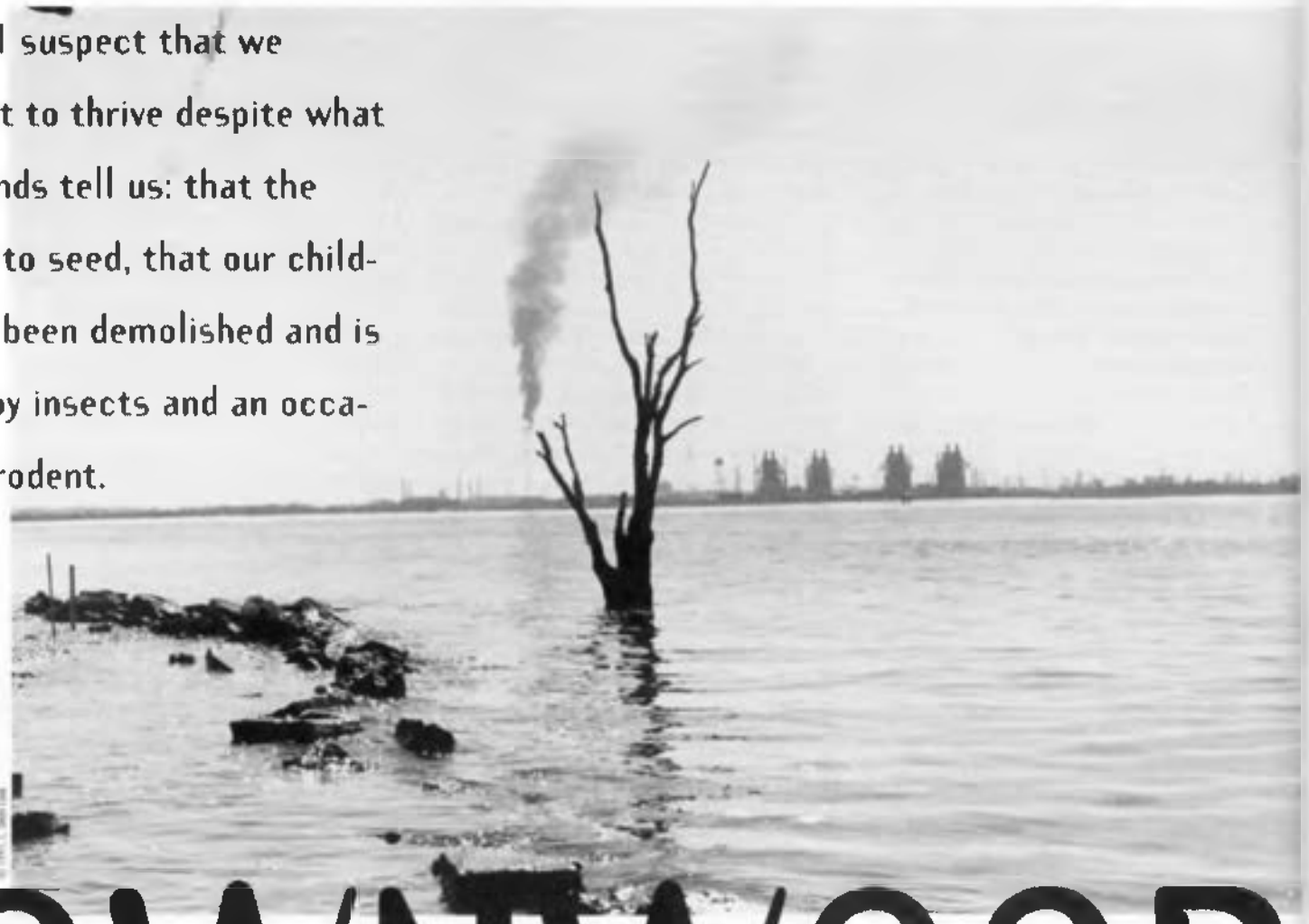
Fortunately, a big city also has archives, libraries, and museums. They too provide pieces of the mosaic that big-city experience becomes, and which, by the way, is as unlikely ever to be completed as is the big city itself. Houses are torn down, others rebuilt, a slum is redeveloped and its social status changed, the butcher gives up and makes way for the antique dealer, the greengrocer gives way to the boutique. What we are witnessing in amazement now is what happens when a city divided for 28 years by a wall is pieced together again: a process far from complete, in which we shall all have to forge our own experiences.

Whoever wants to experience the Big City must stay on track. The work of an urban author parallels that of the private investigator in a detective novel. He must move throughout the length and breadth of the city and the society in which he lives, must keep his eyes and ears open, must do his research, must try to find out what others would prefer to keep secret, *all the while trusting the poor as little as he trusts the rich.* The difference has become clear to me through my work on my own detective novel. To be sure, my hero was threatened and violently attacked much more often than I in my whole lifetime, but in the end he had solved his case – at least the essentials. He knew where he stood. As a writer in a big city that is constantly changing, that is something I shall never know. ■

BERLIN

Somewhere within each of us is a well-defended perception of the place where we grew up. It is part of the fabric that comprises our thoughts now. Perhaps it is the framework that stokes our individualism. And I suspect that we secretly allow it to thrive despite what our rational minds tell us: that the place has gone to seed, that our childhood home has been demolished and is inhabited only by insects and an occasional passing rodent.

ENID E. JIMENEZ



BROWNWOOD

As with any other hopeless situation, all that was left to take care of was the details – how this part of the city would die, and who would absorb the costs.

Valentine's Day, 1969, sometime after midnight, I was awakened by a garbled voice droning from a bullhorn aimed with some urgency from the window of a Baytown city truck. My mother, brothers, and I were bleary-eyed and cranky as we prepared to evacuate our home in the Brownwood subdivision of Baytown. Galveston Bay, not more than 200 yards from our front porch, had finally pushed into the streets, and the neighborhood was now officially submerged.

We loaded all our pets – two dogs, a rabbit named Coco, and an extremely pregnant cat – into our Volkswagen hatchback. My older brother had to release his reptile collection into the backyard, for all intents and purposes now a swimming pool. Then we ploughed through the rising water in the floating VW, toward the promise of higher ground.

The rain storms had begun in January. They were scattered at first, tentative. By February, they had settled in like an unwelcome guest. As we drove in the pelting deluge, I was reminded that there were only two roads out of the Brownwood subdivision – two arteries that fed the entire neighborhood with inhabitants, or depleted it. The road closest to us was already flooded by the time we got there. Headlighted cars, those that could still move, were lined up for hundreds of yards like sullen fireflies. By our turn to move through it, water had begun seeping in through the floorboards.

The Volkswagen virtually lost contact with the street as it bobbed around in the waves like a toy boat. My mother wondered aloud if we would be swept away in the current.

By way of warning, the real estate agent who sold us the house had mentioned Hurricane Carla. Carla had pounded Baytown in earnest back in 1961, she said, knocking the breath out of the town for quite a while. The agent had even showed my mother the water marks: brown stains that climbed the wall to within an inch of the ceiling in the kitchen. Still, we bought the house, with the same blind faith that makes people trust that lightning will never strike in the same place twice.

All of the bayshore, a patchwork of neighborhoods that included Brownwood, had been plagued by the problem of "critical sinkage" since the early 1940s, with an estimated subsidence of five to five and a half feet between that time and 1972. An old newspaper clipping I found recently has engineers clinically ascribing the flooding problem that had affected thousands of Brownwood residences to subsidence caused by the "huge withdrawal of underground water by the City of Baytown and industry along the Houston Ship Channel." Thus had the stage been set for the flood in February 1969; by the time it arrived, the death of Brownwood had been irrevocably set in motion. In retrospect, there was no hope for another outcome. As with any other hopeless situation, all that was left to take care of was the details – how this part of the city would die, and who would absorb the costs.

In the predawn blackness, we couldn't decipher the demarcation between the street and the seemingly bottomless ditches that we knew flanked it, the same ditches from which we had extracted a snapping turtle the size of a truck tire the summer before. We drove for an hour, turning in just before dawn at a motel with a hissing neon sign out front. Although we were exhausted, we could not sleep. The dogs fought, the rabbit gnawed something in a corner, and, true to our bad luck, the cat delivered five kittens in the bathroom.

Before the flood, we had lived one block from Galveston Bay, and if you focused your eyes real hard on the gaps between the trees across the street, you could say we had a bay view. I remember wading barefoot in the smelly bay, checking other people's crab cages and pushing beached trash fish toward the outgoing tides with pieces of shells. Sometimes the tide would bring with it a crop of bloated mullet that would clog the beach for a week. The water was brackish and gasoline infested. There was so much oil in it that you could swirl a stick and create eddies of rainbows.

The fact that the weather was always humid was a given. The fact that our neighborhood was a mosquito breeding ground, a thriving habitat for water moccasins, rattlesnakes, and snapping turtles, also went without saying. Strange crablike spiders that looked like they were dipped in plastic loved to build their webs beside our front door. There was an abundance of thick vines, and many of the trees were majestically tall oaks draped with Spanish moss, giving the place a Deep South appearance. There was a pervasive refinery stench that my family lovingly referred to as "Channel Number Seven," an odiferous mixture of sulphur, oil, and other chemicals that almost congealed in your nose, smelling for all the world like ham and rotten eggs. Those deliciously long summers we spent in Brownwood by the bay put calluses as thick as cardboard on our feet, gave us sunburns that peeled the bridges of our noses off, and turned our hair so blond and strawlike that an occasional bird sought us out for nesting materials. Brownwood was, for us children, paradise. Then the flood came and ruined our house.

So we moved to Houston.

I did not even think of Brownwood for years afterwards. Then in 1985 my stepsister visited me in Houston. She mused about old times there and wondered what it was like now. The last we had heard, it had been declared a disaster area, and no one was allowed in for fear of vandalism. Compelled by curiosity, we packed a picnic lunch and took a day trip to Brownwood.

We were stunned as we approached one of the two roads into the subdivision: it was completely blocked by barricades. The other road was also blocked by a barricade, as well as a pile of trash: things like broken washing machines, foam panels, and dirty lumber. It felt odd to find ourselves denied access to a place we had once called home.

A man sauntered up. We couldn't tell exactly what he was – off-duty policeman, security guard, or vigilante – but he intimidated us into leaving. We spent the afternoon marveling at all the new fried chicken places built in Baytown since we lived there, and driving through the dilapidated downtown. At dusk, we returned and crawled over the barricades. We ran about a hundred yards, staying close to the ditch in case we needed to hide. It was then that the nightmare began for me. The trees were intact and familiar, but there all recognition stopped. The houses, for the most part 1950s-style clapboard ranch houses with an occasional brick veneer, were all in a shambles. Most of the windows were shot out or gouged out: shattered. A lot of houses were half burned down. Many seemed knocked in with bulldozers or sledgehammers. There was not a roof in sight. Entire yards were uprooted, and the Spanish moss I had once regarded as a touch of elegance was slung here and there in spooky tangles. Only the scent in the air was the same as before. But the breeze blew trash and odd tumbleweeds down the street, mocking my every recollection with the reality that part of my childhood was dead.

Somewhere within each of us is a well-defended perception of the place where we grew up. It is part of the fabric that comprises our thoughts now. Perhaps it is the framework that stokes our individualism. And I suspect that we secretly allow it to thrive despite what our rational minds tell us: that the place has gone to seed, that our childhood home has been demolished and is inhabited only by insects and an occasional passing rodent. We delude ourselves into believing that those places go on forever, as we desperately wish we could. We fix them in our mind's eye, as if they were as permanent as those plastic snow scenes that never change, erode, or experience springtime.

At a party in February 1992, the subject of Brownwood somehow came up, and a new curiosity was awakened in me. I decided to make a second pilgrimage.

We went on a particularly sunny day. I would have been depressed by what I saw if it had been overcast. Now the barricades were gone – there was no need for them anymore. The bay had usurped much more of the land. There were no buildings anymore, and hardly any evidence that they had ever been there. My friend had to consult a map to find Katherine Street, where my house had been, because the skinny remnants of pavement were gone. We could see the refineries stretched in every direction. I never suspected, as a child, just how encircled we had been by the Orwellian steel towers, cisterns, and gnarled pipes.

I could no longer have any illusions about the place. The flooded cemetery was the only real evidence that anyone had ever even been there. Tombstones still reached above the bay water like the hands of drowning people before they go under for good.

Almost every fledgling Texas city has had to vie for the right to grow. After the discovery of oil at Spindletop at the beginning of this century, many towns along the Gulf Coast started to believe they had a shot at becoming something big. Pelly, Goose Creek, and Old Baytown converged in that faith, creating consolidated Baytown, which continued to aspire to growth. But other towns outgrew it to becoming sprawling cities, while Baytown continues to mutate and burgeon in unexpected ways. The old downtown, "revitalized" in the early seventies, is a ghost town. A new mall just off Interstate 10 has virtually pulled the heart of the city onto the freeway. But Brownwood no longer exists, except in the memories of those of us who once lived there. It is a silent plot of doomed land, sadly beautiful as the bay slowly swallows it. ■

The See-Through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate, 1981–1991

Downtown Dallas, 1991.

The See-Through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate, 1981–1991 *by Joel Warren Barna. Houston: Rice University Press, 1992. 288 pp., illus., $27.50*

Reviewed by Diane Ghirardo

It has been a long time since I read a book about contemporary architecture from cover to cover. The last one was Aaron Betsky's *Violated Perfection* (1991), a book so revolting in form and content and so absent substance that only my misguided consent to write a review kept my reluctant hands turning the pages. By way of contrast, I carried Joel Barna's *See-Through Years* with me on two transcontinental trips, read every word, and often reread chapters. If you read or purchase only one book about architecture this year, make it Barna's.

Thirteen years ago, most of the striking new skyscrapers that dominated the skylines of the major cities in Texas were treated as the aesthetic visions of prescient developers and sometimes talented architects. As Barna explains, they are more accurately understood as the most visible results of the plundering of a vast network of savings-and-loan associations. For the most part, the ties that bind economics and politics to architecture are ignored in architecture schools and in the popular and professional press, in favor of the familiar treatment of buildings as autonomous objects, individual products of architectural genius. Comforting as this vision is for the profession, not only does it vastly overstate the role of the architect, it seriously hampers our ability to deal with the real forces that operate in our society. Barna's great accomplishment is to untangle the complicated web of shysterism, greed, economic sleight-of-hand, and political chicanery involved in the building enterprise so as to demonstrate the sordid matrix of much building in Texas during the 1980s.

In 1980, Texas and other Sun Belt states were touted as the inevitable sites of future growth in the United States. Developers and hopeful Rust Belt exiles flocked south to what seemed to be the last frontier. Braced to meet this onslaught, developers built subdivisions, shopping malls, and skyscrapers, especially for banks, and contributed lavishly to the construction of new arts facilities in major Texas cities such as Dallas and Houston. While Barna describes the formal characteristics of a number of these buildings, especially the skyscrapers, his real interest is in explaining what forces were at work in having them built in the first place.

The picture that emerges is not a pretty one, and it ought to be required reading for every voter and potential voter in Texas. The heroes of the 1980s – bankers, developers, and real estate moguls all, from J. R. McConnell to Don Dixon and Stanley Adams – in fact led Reagan-era Texas on a speculative binge in real estate that resulted, by the end of the 1980s, in a calamitous decline in real estate values, the multibillion-dollar savings-and-loan disaster, and untold destruction in the lives of hapless victims, either small investors or homeowners forced into foreclosure on their properties. In their wake, these shady characters and their cohorts left millions of square feet of unleased commercial space in Dallas and Houston, the celebrated buildings of early in the decade becoming empty eyesores by 1990, bitter reminders of the destructive power of greed. As Barna notes, "The skyline monuments for Momentum Bank, Allied Bank, RepublicBank, InterFirst Bank, and others, intended by their builders and architects to represent . . . economic vitality, . . . ended up as monuments to a colossal social tragedy." They are likely to last about as long as our grandchildren will be funding the savings-and-loan debt.

> "The celebrated buildings of early in the decade became empty eyesores by 1990, bitter reminders of the destructive power of greed."

Others have discussed the link between the banks, the recent economic downturn, and empty highrises, but Barna carries the discussion beyond angry polemic to explore the psychological and social forces that lay behind the activities of the diverse players in the building community of the 1980s: buyers, bankers, builders, architects, old money, politicians. And in the process, Barna recounts stories that give the lie, once and for all, to the idea that buildings are autonomous artifacts independent of politics and other real-world forces. Apart from the banks, there are also suburban developments such as Las Colinas outside of Dallas, developed because old-money scion Ben Carpenter manipulated business leaders, state highway department officials, and others to support his project and to put the Dallas–Fort Worth airport in close proximity to his land.

Barna discusses the shifting fortunes of middle-class housing, from suburbs to condominiums, with equal assurance, putting the differences between builder-designed housing and architect-designed housing into perspective. Subjects that are routinely ignored in most histories, such as schools and medical buildings, receive thorough and thoughtful treatment from Barna, along with the more standard fare of skyscrapers and cultural buildings such as the Dallas Museum of Art and the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas and the Wortham Theater Center in Houston. Barna also evaluates developments along Texas interstates, such as the IBM/McGuire Thomas joint development, Solana, outside of Fort Worth, a project so full of architectural stars that it is remarkable it has received so little press elsewhere: Ricardo Legorreta, Peter Walker Martha Schwartz, Mitchell/Giurgola, Barton Meyers, and, inevitably, SOM, among others.

In only two areas can Barna be faulted. The first concerns low-income housing. This story in Texas is much bigger than Barna indicates, and it involves not only subsidized projects in Houston and Dallas, but the acres of substandard housing lining the Rio Grande along the Mexican border. The poor live in places other than Allen Parkway Village (obviously, since the Housing Authority of the City of Houston spent years depopulating it), and their poverty is not unrelated to the speculative boom in Texas over the last 15 years. Their vicissitudes should have received more substantive coverage in this book.

The second, paradoxically, concerns some of the truly high quality architecture produced in Texas over the last decade; not the flashy Po-Mo garbage conjured out of thin air by remote East Coast Tinkerbells or local wannabes, but work by serious and talented architects and designers who have tackled everything from large-scale office buildings to mini-budget middle-class homes with the same thoughtful care. Carlos Jiménez is one such architectural designer; his forthcoming office building for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, sets a high standard for public projects, and his recent house for Susan Chadwick achieves, if anything, yet a higher standard on a truly bare-bones budget. What this last project demonstrates, once and for all, is that excellent design is possible for even the smallest of pocketbooks.

In his introduction, Joel Barna sets a "tradition of minority reports in architecture," in which architecture is considered in social, political, economic, and psychological terms, against the more common treatment of architecture in terms of stylistic lineage and aesthetic merit. *The See-Through Years* not only falls into that minority category, it occupies it with such assurance and such power that it is a model against which any architectural history should be measured today. While I dispute some of the conclusions and some of the exclusions, I can only applaud a book written with such grace and wit from a perspective so consistently critical. ■

Hispanic Texas: A Historical Guide
edited by Helen Simons and Cathryn A. Hoyt. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992. 502 pp., illus., $49.95 hardcover, $19.95 paper

Reviewed by Gilberto M. Hinojosa

At first glance, the size, the glossy finish of the pages and photographs, and the general appearance of *Hispanic Texas: A Historical Guide* give the impression that this is another coffee-table volume one buys, shows off, but never uses. It would be a mistake to think that way about this book.

Hispanic Texas is a beautiful tome. It is well crafted. The print and layout make it easy to read. The photography – which includes many gorgeous color pictures – is great. The 11"x 8" page size, plus its two-inch thickness, make an impressive yet handy volume. Indeed, *Hispanic Texas* will grace any coffee table or display shelf. But it does more.

This is a book that should be read and consulted. The content is excellent and well organized by editors Helen Simons and Cathryn A. Hoyt of the Texas Historical Commission. An introductory Part One presents a dozen interpretative essays, and Part Two guides the reader through the various regions of the state, pointing out the Hispanic cultural imprints on the land and buildings. The combination provides a good overall background that makes interesting reading on its own and a handy guide to places with a Hispanic heritage across the state. Additionally, a short bibliography lists some of the most significant historical and cultural book-length sources on the subject.

An essay by borderlands scholar Félix D. Almaraz leads off Part One, surveying the Spanish, Mexican, and Mexican-American imprint on the land. Sixteenth- and 17th-century Spanish exploration is detailed by Texas Historical Commission archaeologists and staff members. Patricia A. Mercado-Allinger reviews the Hispanic heritage of the Panhandle, which has close links to New Mexico. The ranch culture is examined by some of the best scholars in the field: Jack Jackson, Joe S. Graham, Curtis Tunnell, and Enrique Madrid, as is the mission era, here described by Robert S. Weddle. Twentieth-century restoration of the missions is analyzed by James W. Steely. Hispanic religiosity as seen through churches, chapels, and shrines is described by Helen Simons and Roni Morales. Ann Perry examines the links between celebrations and community that are exemplified by Tejano festivals. A brief but inviting chapter by Helen Simons gives the reader a visual and descriptive taste of the "Tex-Mex menu," while a thoughtful concluding essay by Jesús F. de la Teja leads the reader through the available archival resources.

Part Two opens, appropriately, with the Hispanic heritage of San Antonio, the heart and onetime capital of Spanish Texas. As in each of the geographical-cultural regions covered, the section on San Antonio and South Texas briefly relates its Spanish and Mexican past, supplies a contemporary road map that lists the locations referenced in the text, and proceeds to describe major and minor Hispanic imprints. Museums, historical markers, and celebrations are also catalogued. This reviewer, a San Antonio resident for some time, was surprised to read about places and events related to Spanish culture of which he had not been aware.

Needless to say, he learned a good bit about the other six geographical-cultural regions: Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley, El Paso and Trans-Pecos Texas, Austin and Central Texas, Houston and Southeast Texas, Dallas and North Texas, and Lubbock and the Plains. He was pleased to see that in the section on Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley, along with excellent coverage of Laredo, Zapata, San Ygnacio, the Lower Valley, and points below the river in Mexico of significant 18th-century importance, his own hometown of Weslaco was referenced and a photo of the city hall, with its elegant Spanish Revival architecture, was included, confirming the breadth and scope of the volume. References to neighborhoods, church communities, and other organizations in the chapters on Southeast and North Texas make ample mention of the 20th-century Mexican-American experience.

While *Hispanic Texas* is an excellent book, it does have serious shortcomings. The essays focus almost entirely on the Spanish past (and this a bit romanticized), with little mention and analysis of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. The coverage in Part Two on Hispanic imprints is great, but more space could have been given to Hispanics themselves. In other words, the book deals more with places, events, and things than with people. Much could have been said about 18th- and 19th-century communities in essays by Gerald E. Poyo, this reviewer, Andrés Tijerina, and Arnoldo de León. The editors could have invited Mario T. García, Richard A. García, David Montejano, and Guadalupe San Miguel to describe the struggles faced by 20th-century Mexican-Americans. Martha Cotera and Cynthia Orozco could have been asked to write about Mexican-American women.

Additionally, the Hispanic history is somewhat sanitized. San Diego is referenced without any mention of the famous plan. From reading this book, Juan N. Cortina left no trace of his often-mentioned revolt, and Gregorio Cortez's odyssey is here left unsung. The Salt War is treated well, but the Cart War, the attack on Las Norias, the killings of 1914–15, the pecan shellers' strike, the La Casita strike, and the workers' epic march from the Rio Grande Valley to Austin go unmentioned. There is no photograph of that ubiquitous sign of the era of segregation: "No Dogs, Negroes, Mexicans." This is like writing about African-Americans without mentioning slavery, post-emancipation exploitation, and Jim Crow.

The expertise of the staff of the Texas Historical Commission, which sponsored this volume, is very evident in the sections on the Spanish past, particularly the archaeological material, less so in the Mexican and Mexican-American era. Immigrant communities are mentioned in Part Two, and the work of some civil rights organizations, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), is discussed. But because this book will not be easily superseded – and is so good in many other respects – it is unfortunate that important aspects of the Spanish-Mexican and Mexican-American experience are missing.

Still, *Hispanic Texas* is a fine book, and the recognition it accords to the Texas Spanish-Mexican heritage is long overdue. It is an excellent reference to have around the house or the office. And if you are traveling in Texas, don't leave home without it. ■

A Border Reading List

General

Donald E. Chipman. *Spanish Texas, 1519–1821*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.

Paul Goeldner, comp.; Lucy Pope Wheeler and S. Allen Chambers, eds. *Texas Catalog: Historic American Buildings Survey*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974.

Martin Salinas. *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta: Their Role in the History of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Mario L. Sanchez, ed. *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Corridor*. Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1991.

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Florence Johnson Scott. *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande*. Waco: Texian Press, 1966.

Helen Simons and Cathryn A. Hoyt. *Hispanic Texas: A Historical Guide*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.

James Wright Steely, comp. *A Catalog of Texas Properties in the National Register of Historic Places*. Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1984.

Lower Rio Grande Valley

Valley By-Liners. *Gift of the Rio: Story of Texas' Tropical Borderland*. Mission: Border Kingdom Press, 1975.

Evan Anders. *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Brownsville–Matamoros

Betty Bay. *Historic Brownsville: Original Townsite Guide*. Brownsville Historical Association, 1980.

Ellen Beasley. *Architectural/Historical Survey and Preservation Plan*. City of Brownsville and the Brownsville Historical Association, 1975.

W. H. Chatfield. *The Twin Cities of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande*. New Orleans: E. P. Brandao, 1893. Reprint ed., 1959.

Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Direccion de Monumentos Historicos. *Catalogo Nacional de Monumentos Historicos Inmuebles: Tamaulipas*, vol. 2.

Milo Kearney and Anthony Knopp. *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1991.

Ruby A. Wooldridge and Robert B. Vezzetti. *Brownsville: A Pictorial History*. Norfolk/Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1982.

Laredo–Nuevo Laredo

Gilbert L. Cruz. *Let There Be Towns: Spanish Municipal Origins in the American Southwest, 1610–1810*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988.

Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa. *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755–1870*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983.

Manuel Ignacio Salinas Dominguez. *Origenes de Nuevo Laredo*. Ciudad Victoria: Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas/Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas, 1981.

Jerry Thompson. *Laredo: A Pictorial History*. Norfolk/Virginia Beach: The Donning Company, 1986.

Roma

David Hoffman. *Roma*. Austin: University of Texas School of Architecture, 1972.

O'Neil Ford, Architect

O'Neil Ford and Gloria Galt.

"... at once a prancing, arrogant, querulous, seeming misanthrope, as well as one of the most tender, thoughtful, generous and kindly of men."

John Henry Faulk

O'Neil Ford, Architect *by Mary Carolyn Hollers George. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992. 244 pp., 158 illus., $60*

Reviewed by Gerald Moorhead

John Henry Faulk called him "one of the most creative artists and thinkers that this age has produced – at once a prancing, arrogant, querulous, seeming misanthrope, as well as one of the most tender, thoughtful, generous and kindly of men." This complex personality, its sources and consequences, is the subject of this biography, not the architecture for which Ford is legendary. The author, a professor of art history at San Antonio College, contends that Ford's personality was the architect's most remarkable achievement.

This, then, is not an architectural monograph; David Dillon is working on that, due out late this year. If we put aside the desire to learn about Ford's work, the story of his life makes compelling reading. There is no shortage of material to draw upon: Ford's life was filled with friends and colleagues, and at 46 he began to keep a daily journal of his thoughts and activities. There is almost too much information; the author could have kept some distance and resisted the sometimes tedious blow-by-blow of events. Still, her account is objective, not fawning or condescending.

The colorful, paradoxical personality that attracted both clients and associates is as much a part of the Ford mystique as his work. A mystical artist, a superb actor, a brilliant huckster, insecure: these are descriptions of a man intriguing to know but difficult to admire. "Until the day he died," writes George, "he would devote a large measure of his creative energies, the force of his remarkable personality and his obvious talents, to the pursuit of the adulation and reassurance he craved."

Ford was an idea man, and with his frenzied schedule did not have time to sit down and design whole buildings. But over the years he formed many partnerships, joint ventures, and associations with talented architects who provided the balancing skills of organization and technical ability. The book gives them due credit. The influence and contribution of Ford's mentor, David Williams, early partners Jerry Rogers and Richard Colley, Boone Powell and Chris Carson, and a host of artists, contractors, and craftsmen are acknowledged. Also recognized is the complex trail of patronage, influential friends, political connections, repeat clients, unethical practices, and inept business arrangements, all typical burdens in the profession of architecture.

Ford liked cars, a character trait that is easy to relate to. From early experiences with an uncle's bronze-radiator Model A Ford to a growing collection that included his wife's 1939 MG, a 1925 Bentley, a 1953 Mercedes convertible, Studebakers, Lincolns, a Corvair, a Jaguar, and a Volkswagen, Ford sporadically tinkered with cars for relaxation. His admiration for the well-built automobile paralleled his interest in vernacular architecture as a source of functional solutions to basic problems.

Plenty of the people in this book are still alive, and they are as necessary to the tale as Ford himself, who believed his life to have been "90% people and 10% 'accomplishment.'" Frank Welch, who worked with Ford in the late 1950s, recalled that "no one in my experience possessed a wider and deeper range of observation and generosity and sympathy for his fellow humans."[1] Without these traits, O'Neil Ford's architecture could not have been what it is. ■

1. Frank Welch, "A Day With O'Neil Ford," *Texas Architect*, July-August 1992, p. 48.

Piano Forte at the Menil

Renzo Piano Building Workshop: Selected Projects
The Menil Collection, Richmond Hall
12 March – 30 May 1993

Reviewed by Malcolm Quantrill

Renzo Piano's work is inseparably linked with the processes of 20th-century industrial production. Yet, although his buildings typify the use of these processes according to post-Bauhaus production theory, Piano is atypical of his generation, enigmatic, even eccentric. While he is certainly part of the elite group of high-tech practitioners that includes Norman Foster, Jean Prouvé, and Richard Rogers, Piano's contribution to architecture during the past quarter century remains unique. This uniqueness derives from Piano's characteristics and achievements as a designer and the quality of his collaboration with contemporaries.

It was the combined talents of Piano and Richard Rogers that achieved the astonishing form and environment of the Centre Pompidou in the Place Beaubourg, Paris. In a very real sense, too, Piano was a partner of the late Peter Rice of Ove Arup and Partners – indeed, Piano places the engineer Rice in the role of teacher – in an association that celebrates the rebonding of architecture and engineering. Then there is the exhibition *Jean Prouvé – Constructeur* (1990), symbolically located in the Centre Pompidou, from which Piano gained special insights into the problems of presenting an architecture that flourishes in a climate of restraint. For Piano this notion of restraint is not a puritanical constriction of forces, but rather a joyful emancipation from an excess of ideas, materials, and gestures.

Piano is first and foremost Italian. Italian rationalism is grounded in its humanism. It is not by accident that his compatriot, Enzo Biagi, has dubbed him "Renzo il Magnifico." The very notion of the "Renzo Piano Building Workshop" recalls the humanist period of the Italian Renaissance, as evidenced by the workshops for painting, sculpture, and architecture that flourished in Florence. These workshops nurtured the culture of creativity under the direction of a master, but they also housed the spirit of production by a coordinated team of workers; and they flourished because they provided the support necessary to bring the insights of a master to a refined and complete state. Piano's work and working methods link this traditional working environment with the contemporary design process. The workshop speaks of sharing – not just a division of the task, but also a division of responsibility. This sharing is emblematic of Piano's approach and is forcefully demonstrated in his relations with clients, for example in the "Traveling Laboratory for the Restoration of Town Centers" (as sent up in Otranto, 1979), where the design process is taken to and involves the citizens.

Piano is a great admirer of Joseph Paxton, the English designer of the 1851 Great Exhibition pavilion in London. In the manufacture and construction of his "Crystal Palace" Paxton combined for the first time the principles of industrial production, the prefabrication of building components, and a system of building assembly that not only promoted rapid construction but also permitted demountability and reassembly. Piano admired Paxton for anticipating these concerns of 20th-century builders, an admiration reflected in his attention to detail in building assemblies.

When Piano came to design the *Jean Prouvé – Constructeur* exhibition, he wanted visitors to have access to Prouvé's working methods. He decided that the key to understanding how Prouvé's mind worked was to evoke as closely as possible the actual layout of the Prouvé studio. So successful was the representation that it provided the genesis for the Richmond Hall exhibition *Renzo Piano Building Workshop*, which was organized by the Architectural League of New York and the Italian Cultural Institute.

The Piano Workshop's projects are laid out simply, on four rows of trestle tables within a single space. Drawings, models, bound volumes of explanatory materials, and computers give access to Piano's mind. Examining the first project, we are already drawn behind the scenes of the workshop. This is not so much an exhibition as "a working record of a method." As we are absorbed deeper into the Piano process, we want to take an active part, to become one of the team. Our old familiarity with the Menil Collection (1981–86) becomes a new acquaintance as we come to understand the subtleties and complexities of the roof louvers from drawing board to installation. The San Nicola Football Stadium (1987–90) is revealed from concept to final structural design.

Installation view of models for arch of Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church *(suspended)* and tent pavilion for Traveling Laboratory for Restoration of Town Centers *(foreground)*.

In the case of the IBM Traveling Pavilion (1982–84), we can actually touch the exquisite interlocking fingers of aluminum that permit the rapid assembly and dismantling of the pavilion's elegant wooden frame members; these linking devices – neither "joint" nor "connection" does justice to the finely sculpted components – seem to offer homage to both Paxton and the nautical traditions of Genoa. They suggest ship's tackle rather than land-locked architecture, perhaps hinting, too, that they have connections with the highway tankers that facilitate the pavilion's existence in every port. The rehabilitation and conversion of the Fiat factory at Lingotto – formerly Europe's largest mass-production facility – into a trade center (1986) is a magical achievement that produces a white rabbit out of the old hat of an industrial monument, with the theater as a notable feature.

The Columbus International Exhibition in Piano's native Genoa, which occupied the workshop from 1984 until 1992, produced a range of images connected with ships and sailing and achieved a superlative standard of detailing in every sphere of building, industrial, and exhibition design. There is much more to see, including the Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church (1991); the Jean Marie Tjibau Cultural Center for Noumea, New Caledonia (1991); an exceptionally bold and imaginative design for Kansai International Airport, Japan (1988); the UNESCO Laboratory Workshop in Vesima, Italy (1989–91); and the provocatively inventive "Prometo" installation for musicians and audience, which permits flexible relationships between performers and listeners.

A number of significant themes recur throughout the Workshop exhibition. Piano's inventions, like Bach's, depend upon an inherent clarity of theme that is then extended through a blend of rationality and whimsicality. This is immediately evident, for instance, in the grass hut parody that generates the forms of the Noumea cultural center. Piano, as a Genoese, is caught up in the complex cultural web of the Mediterranean region, a web that embraces the stone architecture of cathedral and fortress plus the nomad's tent of North Africa. To these are added the Mediterranean traditions of shipbuilding and sailmaking. This provides a rich formula of precedent and archetype – not simply as forms and images, but as principles and details. Thus we have a blend of land and naval architectures on the one hand, and the canvas worlds of tent and sail on the other. The bold experimentation that characterizes the Piano Building Workshop can be understood in terms of his handling of these well-established traditions. Somewhere between security of tenure and the simplest shelter, between the landlocked castle and the free-ranging ship of exploration, lies the inspiration for Renzo Piano and his "team," "crew," or "garrison." ■

Garden at the CAM

Meg Webster, *Kitchen Garden*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1992. View looking north.

Meg Webster:
Sculpture and Garden
Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston
30 November 1992 – 31 January 1993

Reviewed by Elizabeth McBride

Meg Webster, whose sculpture was shown at the Contemporary Arts Museum last winter, is most often thought of as working in the stream of minimalism and earthworks. But unlike the minimalists, Webster works in elemental materials, making cones of salt and copper, mounds of earth and circles of sand, never aspiring to the minimalists' technical perfection. And unlike the major earthwork artists, Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson, who in their early days wounded and defaced the earth in order to make monumental structures, Webster works with the earth, more in the spirit of Smithson's wife, Nancy Holt, who sculpted on a human scale with respect for the earth's surface.

Perhaps the natural progression of Webster's work was to the making of gardens. Some of her first efforts departed little from the romantic conceit of a garden, retaining links to the great formal gardens of history. *Hollow*, created at the Nassau County Museum in New York in 1985, enclosed a circular space planted with bulbs and perennials within a wall of packed earth. *Glass Spiral*, created for the Milwaukee Art Museum in 1990, wound a picturesque planting of flowers and greenery through a vertical glass spiral the height of a person.

Webster made these gardens to draw people in, to place them closer to nature. Then her intentions were simple. She depended upon the viewer to allow the work to penetrate, to be drawn into a universal experience. The cooperative nature of the experience began with the making. Because, like her sculpture, the work required so much physical assistance, these gardens became a form of collaboration.

Gradually Webster's concerns shifted. When she installed *Stream* at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh in 1991, she made no attempt to conceal the technology which made the garden possible. As she would later do in Houston, she exposed the garden's workings, expressing her concern for living things in a project which combined art and farming, city and enterprise. She resolved to take the entire community into her work by preparing a garden which she would leave to the care of the people. The dream was that the people would tend the garden, making it theirs.

"How much land is there around our civic buildings?" she asked when I interviewed her in Houston in November 1992. "What's happening in the parks? There are hundreds of thousands of people out of work. Why aren't they growing food? I am talking about enterprise gardening on an individual level." We might also ask ourselves what is happening in our own back yard.

Webster designed the garden for Houston after extensive research and with the help of Treesearch Farms, a local nursery which specializes in native vegetation. The bed was thoroughly prepared, using only natural fertilization – fish emulsion, turkey droppings, and mulch, for example. A gardener herself, Webster was aware that the plantings would have to be right for Houston and that, just as on a working farm, not all would survive. Some plants, donated by Treesearch as experiments, have already died.

The garden is a continual challenge to the CAM staff, which has an affection for it and checks it regularly. Many people stop to look at the garden; a few have manifested a passionate interest in its care. People walk the path or sit on the large boulders, contemplating. Even the nursery hopes to remain involved until the garden's dug up in 1994.

Webster knows her garden projects involve risks. Located on a small piece of land at the very corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, the garden contains a serpentine stream which winds through the raised beds, a basically simple and attractive design. But the artist has left the rubber that forms the stream bed partly exposed and made the pump which circulates the water deliberately obvious. It's an affront to some that the garden isn't conventionally pretty. "Why," Webster was asked by a woman passing by, "didn't a landscape architect design the garden?"

Well, why *didn't* a landscape architect design the garden? Why has the CAM engaged Meg Webster? It's another kind of risk to allow an artist to design a garden or a park. One can see that by looking across the street at the sterile jail we call a sculpture garden. Its concrete walls can't just be dug up if we want to start over. Webster's garden, an oasis of life amidst a clutter of concrete, metal, and glass, allows us to choose between digging it up and letting it stay.

The garden is also an invitation. People are welcome to work in the garden and they do, a few admirers becoming regular hands. Eventually, Webster hopes, the city will think of the garden as its own, since it will stay in place until spring 1994. If her hopes are realized, perhaps the garden will be permanent.

Webster has run into trouble with garden projects, especially with her most ambitious and largest garden, in Atlanta. Originally fully funded, it lost the commitment of several donors who decided to redirect their gifts to fight Atlanta's drug crisis. As an artist in process, she learns from each experience.

From Atlanta she learned she needed to spend more time with her donors in preparatory communications. In Houston, she realized she needed to find community groups to help maintain her gardens even before they were made. At the moment, the Houston garden is being maintained by the CAM staff and by the River Oaks Garden Club with assistance from Treesearch. But what Webster has in mind is engaging individual citizens in an effort which could contribute something to truly needy people. She wants the garden not only to be a source of food, hence the vegetables being raised, but to inspire others to make gardens to grow food themselves.

The complex philosophical issues the garden raises are fully understood by Webster. They include the issue of ownership and the nature of art. Is it a work of art because she made it? And if it's her work, how can she turn it over to someone else, effectively giving the work away? But if no one owns the garden, who will care for it? She wonders also why we value what we value, an issue the garden is meant to raise. Why do we erect walls to protect objects, while we allow living things to go unprotected?

Although making gardens seems still to be experimental for Webster, she considers the effort a serious venture which engages her not only as an artist but as a citizen, and ultimately as a political activist. Perhaps she has already begun that activity by working to set an example. The visual success of this particular garden may not be as important as our realization that major changes will have to be made in the use of resources if we are to feed ourselves, to restore closeness with the earth, to do more than abuse ourselves in hostile cities.

Gardens are works in progress for Webster, a form of expression, part aesthetically pleasing and part not. They exist in contrast to her sculpture, which is minimal and controlled. The content is less weighted in terms of enterprise than in terms of human endeavor, that of making something and setting it free. Because her projects require the work of so many people, even in the making, Webster has to learn to relinquish control. By doing so she sends a message to the whole culture, not only about gardening but about ownership and tolerance.

Meg Webster is not a classy up-scale gallery artist who takes the money and runs. She works in the dirt in T-shirts and jeans, and suffers the pain of leaving her garden, which is like a child to her, behind with us. The controversy surrounding the garden is part of its purpose. But critical theory should help illuminate our thinking, not overpower human needs. Meg Webster's garden is a challenge not only to Treesearch and to the CAM but to anyone who sees it, plants in it, or walks through it. Are we going to stand around griping or get in the dirt and make it work? ■

Theater in Russia

"Yesterday: Museums, temples, libraries
Today: Factories, plants, bustling ports
Yesterday: European culture
Today: American technology
Today's rhythm is the rhythm of the machine centered in America."

Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913–1935
McNay Art Museum, San Antonio
6 December 1992 – 28 February 1993

Reviewed by Bruce C. Webb

The story of the avant-garde movement that flowered in Russia during the time of the 1917 revolution is intricately woven into the fabric of political upheavals that forged the protean creation of Russian communism. Influenced by European modernism and testing out new-found freedoms, the movement flourished in the turmoil of social and economic reformation, proclaiming visions of cultural revolution that paralleled and supported the new theories of international communism. During its short life, the movement gave back more than it took from its European precursors, but in pursuing a course of radical artistic freedom it ultimately rejected alignment with official party politics and was finally purged by Stalin on the brink of World War II.

As an artistic movement, the avant-garde ferverently cultivated a spirit of internationalism and a complete emancipation from history and bourgeois attitudes of nationalism, extolling the virtues of the new in manifestolike statements such as Grigorii Kozintsev's declaration:

Yesterday: Museums, temples, libraries
Today: Factories, plants, bustling ports
Yesterday: European culture
Today: American technology
Today's rhythm is the rhythm of the machine centered in America.

The shared vision of the young experimenters in the movement engendered revolutionary work in all the arts, and as the most all-encompassing of these, the theater put this collaboration in close quarters, bringing into conjunction efforts of writers, musicians, actors, dancers, painters, and architect/set designers. The recent exhibition *Theatre in Revolution* at San Antonio's McNay Art Museum offered a rare opportunity to see firsthand evidence of the collaboration in a collection of design drawings, stage maquettes, and other theater artifacts. The exhibit was organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in cooperation with Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum in Moscow (which held the artifacts in storage through the long period of repression), as a part of the cultural sharing engendered by the 1985 cultural agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The theater of the avant-garde jettisoned most of the conventions of classical theater together with the feigned realism of 19th-century naturalism, dismantling the old rules and replacing them with powerful new spatial constructions that looked like frames drawn around fragments of an industrial plant. Then the frame too was discarded, leaving the set a free object, fully equipped as a stage machine, equally suited for the theater and the street and no longer dependent upon illusions hidden away in fly galleries or the wings. Vladimir Mayakovsky, Futurist-Constructivist poet, dismissed the old theaters and museums as "dead mausoleums where dead works are worshipped," proclaiming instead a new proletarian spirit – "a living factory of the human spirit in the streets, in the tramways, in the factories, workshops, and workers' homes."

Seeking to portray things as they are (a stage construction is a construction rather than an illusion), the movement raised the industrial landscape to allegorical levels: stage constructions and machines often served as "characters" in the drama rather than simply backdrops. Sketches for costume designs reveal visions of costumed figures in motion, often highly geometricized or starkly angular, and decomposing into splinter drawings reminiscent of Duchamp or Léger. Acting too was subjected to Constructivist themes through a system of biomechanics involving scientific studies of bodily movement, which emphasized the symbiotic relationship between the actor and the machines and machinelike settings.

Seeing the exhibition from the vantage point of the late 20th century reveals how this brief explosion of artistic activity served as a mine for future generations, sustaining and feeding less inspired periods and showing up in present-day theater sets, architecture (Philip Johnson highlighted formal similarities between the Constructivists and the work of architects Zaha Hadid and Coop Himmelblau in his catalogue essay for the 1988 exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* at the Museum of Modern Art), and even advertising art. But still more, these visions continue to formulate and instruct a way of seeing: as noted by several visitors to the show, the maquette of Liubov Popova's set for *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (1922) was displayed against a large window in the McNay beyond which lay an inchoate scene of scattered builder's equipment and debris – a ladder set against a wall, random pieces of lumber piled like pickup sticks, cast-off bricks, and metal window frames – assembled like an ad hoc stage set, full size and entirely in sympathy with the miniature constructions in Plexiglas cases.

Interest in the work of the Russian avant-garde has been rekindled by today's deconstructivists and the formal similarities between the two movements, to which Philip Johnson alluded. But as this exhibition and the accompanying catalogue essays show, the present work is a shallow simulacrum. The project of the Russian avant-garde was nothing less than an attempt to construct a wholly new society and its culture. ■

Cite at 10

Joel Warren Barna

In more than ten years of admiring *Cite* (and sometimes contributing to it), it has seemed to me that this good gray magazine was generated and has been sustained by two related impulses.

In a city that had been doubling in size every generation, that had developed with neither planning nor growth controls, in which active commitment to a coherent public spatial order had disappeared nearly 50 years before, and where most criticism of buildings and public spaces was hardly distinguishable from advertisng, the first impulse behind *Cite* was the urge to argue that economic and political self-interest could be enlightened by engagement with planning and design, and that the result would benefit the city economically and politically as well as aesthetically.

The second of *Cite*'s generative ideas sprang from the diffusion of structuralist linguistics into architectural theory, as well as the diffusion of such architectural theory into the hinterlands in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The postmodernist idea underlying *Cite* was that the "reality" of Houston was a purely social construction, and that to tell the city's true story it was necessary to look beneath and behind the reified facticities that constituted the public understanding of architecture. Such inspection, according to postmodern theory, could provide a way to rediscover and reestablish the shared, even archetypal, forms of building and landscape that had been lost in modernism's rupture with historical patterns.

Discovering a form for an amorphous city and matching it to a therapeutic world-historical mandate – that's a heady mix, but, I must admit, one discernible only in retrospect. Certainly no one discussed *Cite* in those terms by the time I came to work (part time) for the publication in 1982, commuting from Dallas to borrow a typewriter in the Rice Design Alliance offices or to meet in the conference room of Dyal and Babendure Architects with Stephen Fox, William F. Stern, Gordon Wittenberg, and then art director Herman Dyal.

Nevertheless, the cover story for the first issue of *Cite* made the pattern clear. "Trading Toilets: The Subterranean Zoning of Houston," by Houston architects William H. Anderson and William O. Neuhaus III, argued that new urban development was being steered to downtown and the city's suburban fringes by something other than market forces. A much-needed municipal sewage-treatment plant was behind schedule, they stated, and, as a result, the city's building officials were issuing building permits on a no-net-growth-of-toilet-connections basis in inner-city neighborhoods. The consequence, they said, was a thriving black market in sewer-connection rights acquired from defunct apartment complexes and old-age homes and a tremendous kick to fringe development when the inner-city neighborhoods of Montrose and the Heights were ripe for increased density. Anderson and Neuhaus's article was most pointedly a political critique, questioning the fairness of de facto city regulations. But underlying their analysis was the notion that officials should foster greater density in the city's close-in neighborhoods.

The real story was literally underground; the crucial actors faceless bureaucrats! By implying that with less interference and more insight Houston could have its own *vieux carré*, the piece was also pure Po-Mo for sprawl city. To me the story was a grand revelation that altered my career as a writer and editor. City officials, however, if they ever saw the story, paid no notice. Peripheral development, driven by expanding roadways, cheap land, the predictable and laudable desire of people to have better living and working conditions, and a historically unique combination of chicanery and stupidity, continued well past the point when the sewer plant came on line and the city stopped restricting growth around downtown. But that's another story.

Cite, it was said in later editorial meetings, was to be the magazine of design and planning for Houston. Work continued on an expanding agenda of topics, including, in the early years, a catalogue of threatened historic buildings, Metro's feckless rail plans, the environmental impact of tall buildings, a series of articles by Houston fiction and nonfiction writers, and the plans for the Wortham Theater Center. It was only years later that I came to understand the magazine's devotion to these themes (like that of its parent organization, the Rice Design Alliance) as a natural outgrowth of the situation occupied by the architects and designers who were the mainstay of the RDA's membership and of the *Cite* editorial board. These were people trained to value coherence, history, contextuality, and creativity. They also earned their bread working for clients who, too often, wanted whatever existed of the city's history and context wiped out or counterfeited, and who, too often, characterized the dense-cored-city ideal as economically atavistic and politically senseless.

If the thought that Houston could be rationalized by professional design was alien to the majority of Houstonians in 1982 (as it arguably remains in 1993), for *Cite*'s audience it must have been a balm. Unquestionably it also represented more than a modicum of ideological self-

promotion, suggesting avenues for the expansion of billable architectural services. From the start, *Cite* was about ideas, even in its physical makeup. The magazine began as a big tabloid that had to be folded over to fit on most bookshelves. Its graphics were bold, but it was cheap to produce, with its coarsely screened black-and-white images on grainy newsprint, and it had to be, given the RDA's financial situation. The choice of format, driven by the need to keep initial costs low, was fateful. It made *Cite* pretty much useless for presenting the glossy photographs of new buildings that other architecture magazines depend on. The format also made the magazine of only marginal usefulness to advertisers, since the most profitable sorts of advertising also typically require glossiness and color, and they generally depend on an environment, supplied by the editorial content, of wish fulfillment and glamour. In the RDA, that function was apparently fulfilled by the house tours. *Cite*, for the most part, had only ideas – often the rather prickly ones espoused by Stephen Fox, Drexel Turner, Bruce Webb, Rives Taylor, and Richard Ingersoll.

It has occurred to me that the RDA is a kind of re-creation, at the middle-class economic level of most Houston architects, of the group that created Hermann Park and the elite neighborhoods around Rice University in the 1920s. The RDA's emergence has seemed to indicate a trickling down of the type of civic spirit that used to be expressed only by those with oil fortunes. In general this is a hopeful sign. True, the notion that the market has to answer not just to buyers and sellers but to history and to the future implies that those doing the judging are a cultural elite. But there is also something subversive about the idea: after all, if the market can be steered to make its results more aesthetically pleasing, then it can with considerably greater justification be steered to foster political and economic justice. And if architects have the right to suggest that there can be public oversight of the private enterprise of building and development, then other citizens even further outside the money/power loop can be permitted to tackle issues about freeways and public spaces without being dismissed as not-in-my-back-yard reactionaries. Not many such voices have been heard in *Cite* yet, but some have, and no other publication in Houston has even created room for the possibility. *Cite*'s finest moments, as in its advocacy for the people of Fourth Ward and Allen Parkway Village, have thus represented an important beginning, even if the magazine's efforts at public persuasion have had little effect.

In some ways, Houston has started to catch up with *Cite*. First there was the setback ordinance, then Houston Proud's controls on freeway clutter, and finally "Houston-style zoning," whatever that works out to mean. But by clinging to its roots – to the ideas that Houston is not a thing but our ongoing fabrication, and that the city's true story lies in structures hidden by surface events – *Cite* is still creating a necessity for itself. ■

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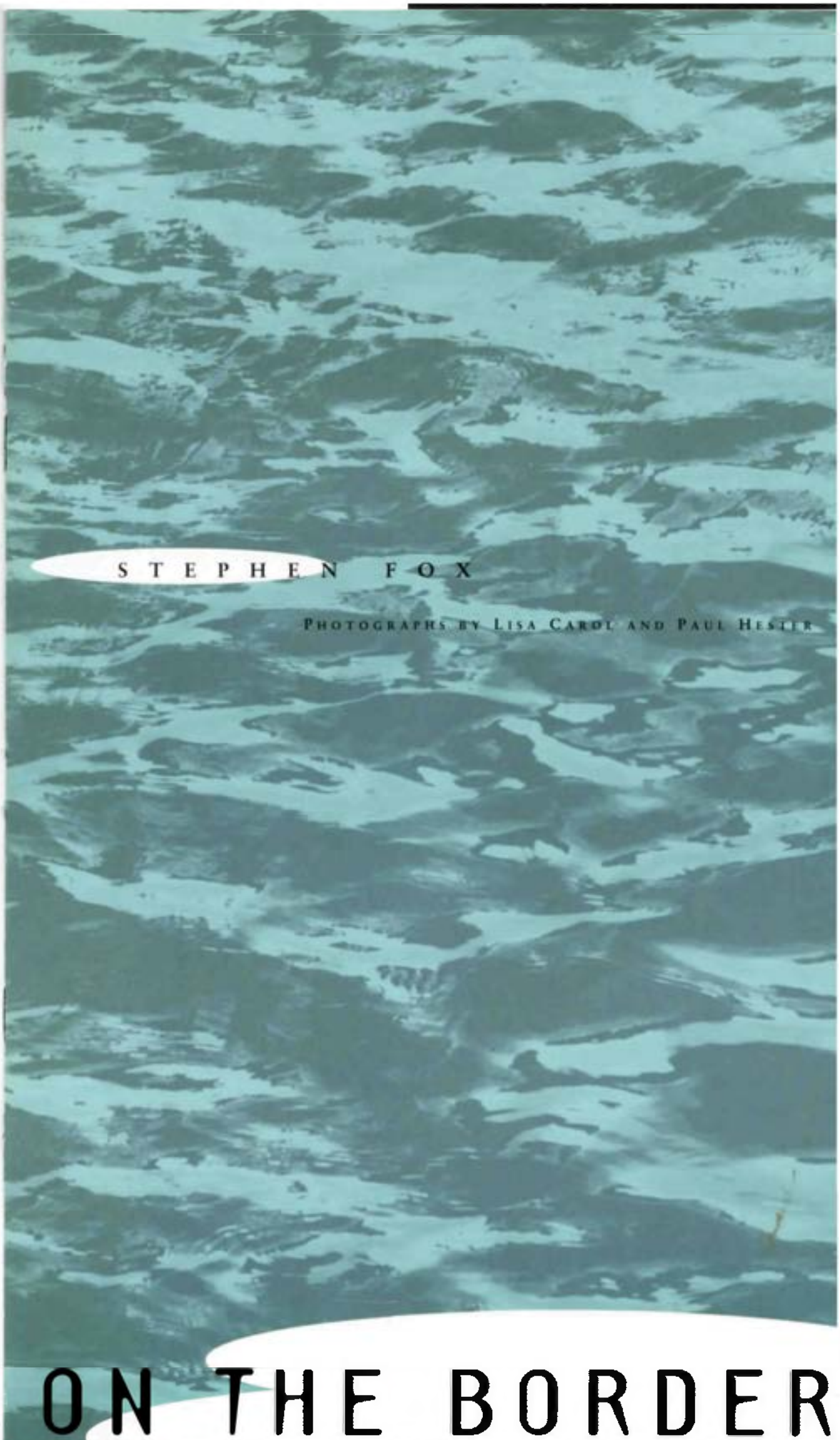

STEPHEN FOX

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LISA CAROL AND PAUL HESTER

ON THE BORDER

ON THE BORDER

An Architectural Tour

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The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1974, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture and design.

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This is an impressionistic tour of architecture along the lower Rio Grande–Río Bravo del Norte. With the exception of Harlingen, it sticks close to the river and therefore does not address many of the towns of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Its emphasis on 19th-century border buildings and 1950s modernism may seem eccentric. But each tradition reflects a characteristic facet of the borderland: its indigenous richness, and its receptiveness to broader cultural trends.

Harlingen

Harlingen is one of 11 towns developed in Cameron and Hidalgo counties along the tracks of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway. Built between 1904 and 1905 to link Brownsville with Houston, this railroad line ended the isolation that had descended on far South Texas when it was first bypassed by the railroads in the 1880s. The Valley's new railroad towns were settled in the 1910s and 1920s by immigrants from the Middle West. As Evan Anders points out in *Boss Rule in South Texas*, these immigrants recoiled from Texas-Mexican border culture. In its place they devised a "Valley" counter-culture (application of the name Lower Rio Grande Valley to the fertile delta of the Rio Grande became common after the start of the large-scale irrigation and real estate speculation that the arrival of the railroad made possible). Gridded town plans suffused with subtropical vegetation, neo-Spanish-style architecture, and ethnic segregation were the hallmarks of this Valley culture.

Modern Architecture

For *aficionados* of 1950s modern architecture, Harlingen is a pilgrimage point. During the 1950s, John G. York and Alan Y. Taniguchi practiced in Harlingen and attracted national attention with their economical, clean-lined, structurally expressive buildings. The value of this work is not recognized today. Consequently, many of their buildings have been inappropriately altered or demolished.

Just outside the parking lot of Valley International Airport, at Iwo Jima and the entrance to the Marine Military Academy, is – without warning – the **Marine Corps War Memorial** (1982), sculptor Felix de Weldon's full-scale cast of his famous Arlington, Virginia, monument.

From Austin Avenue turn south onto North 5th and into the *Maiz Addition*, where Alan Taniguchi designed two large modern houses upon moving to Harlingen from San Francisco in 1952. These are the **Jondahl** and **Black houses** at 546 and 538 Lake Drive. At 505 Lake is the Monterey-style **Boggus House** (1951) by – surprisingly – Harlingen's archmodernists, Cocke, Bowman & York. The precise detailing of the blind west-side elevation is the giveaway. At 1023 Ferguson Drive, just north of Austin Avenue, is Taniguchi's **Hartman House** (c. 1957), now so embowered in archetypal Valley vegetation as to be practically invisible.

West of the railroad tracks that slice diagonally through Harlingen lies what was traditionally the Mexican-American side of town. In the 1950s, the central business district crossed this divide to begin its migration toward the Valley's only freeway interchange, where 77 and 83 merge. At 1220 West Harrison is the small **Cocke, Bowman & York Studio** (1950), a steel-framed garden office building in mint condition. Bailey Swenson of Houston was architect for what was originally the **KSOX Radio Studio** (1950) at 1519 West Harrison. In 1958 John York added the **KGBT-TV Studio** to the rear, facing West Tyler. South on M Street at 702 South M is **Los Vecinos** (1952), Cocke, Bowman & York's venture into low-income public housing.

Downtown Harlingen has decisively lost out to suburban competition. Cocke, Bowman & York's **Clarke & Courts Building** at 115 East Harrison (1951) survives unscathed, although York's full-story-high aluminum *brise-soleil* screens now shield a sports bar rather than office equipment. The walls of the **Casa del Sol** at 215 East Madison (1962) by Taniguchi & Croft have been covered over with stucco, but its ebullient thin-shell concrete roof retains its lifting shape and crisp profiles. Cocke, Bowman & York's ex-**First National Bank Building** (1950) at 202 East Van Buren has been absorbed into 3D/International's tower addition and refacing (1975). The nine-story **R. W. Baxter Office Building** at West Jackson and South A (1927, by

Harlingen architects Elwing & Mulhausen) was, for nearly 50 years, the Valley's tallest skyscraper. Harlingen's public library has just moved out of the **Lon C. Hill Memorial Library** (1951) at 504 East Tyler by Cocke, Bowman & York. To the south, the 600 to 1100 blocks of East Taylor and East Polk streets are where Harlingen's elite built their houses in the 1920s and 1930s.

Laurel Park, at South 77 Sunshine Strip and North Parkwood, was the first Harlingen subdivision to break with the city's gridded geometry. It was developed in 1949 by John W. McKelvey and planned by Cocke, Bowman & York. John York designed some of his most adventurous architecture in Laurel Park. Changing tastes, and the aftermath of Hurricane Beulah, which flooded the neighborhood in 1967, have cost many of York's houses their architectural integrity. Dimly recognizable at 1802 Laurel Drive is the **York House** (1952), York's homage to Charles Eames's Case Study House. Its panelized wall surfaces are intact, as are the exposed interior bar joists, visible through the narrow clerestory windows. But it has acquired a pitched roof and an avocado paint job. York's **Beck House** (1957) at 1914 Laurel restates some of the themes of the architect's own house. The **Willeford House** at 1019 East Parkwood (c. 1957) is the best preserved of York's Laurel Park houses. York's hand is visible in the **Van Tyne House** (c. 1953) at 1913 South Parkwood and the flat-roofed **Palmer House** (c. 1951) at 1910 South Parkwood. The **McKelvey House** (1949) at 1909 South Parkwood has been Mediterraneanized. And it is only the presence of pipe columns and compound wood beams in the carport that hint at the original appearance of the **Chilborn House** (1949) at 1801 South Parkwood, which won a national AIA design award in 1951. South of Arroyo Colorado lies Arroyo Estates, the location of Alan Taniguchi's **Levine House** (c. 1956) at 1618 Sam Houston and the **Lambeth-Swanson House** at 1627 Sam Houston (c. 1953), designed by one of York's draftsmen, William H. Lambeth, Jr., as his house, and subsequently owned and expanded by architect E. Lester Swanson.

During the 1950s, Valley towns competed with each other in the construction of motels that portrayed themselves as tropical resorts. Harlingen's **Sun Valley Motor Hotel** at 1900 South 77 Sunshine Strip (1956) has undergone little change since it was built, replicating Niggli & Gustafson's Terrace Motor Hotel in Austin.

San Benito

York and Taniguchi worked throughout the Valley. Therefore on the banks of Resaca de los Fresnos in San Benito one encounters Cocke, Bowman & York's **Casey Clinic** at 400 West Highway 77 (1950) and, at the north end of Lake Shore Drive, Taniguchi's **Madeley House** at 1465.

Sam Houston Boulevard is San Benito's main street. It demonstrates the way in which 20th-century Valley newcomers used space to distinguish their towns from the 19th-century border towns. Sam Houston is wide and open. Its bungalows and palm trees were the Pasadena, California–approved symbols of exotic tropicality in the 1910 era. At South Sam Houston and West Robertson (the latter street commemorates Colonel Sam A. Robertson, founder of San Benito) are a pair of neo-Spanish landmarks, the **San Benito Bank & Trust Company Building** (1911) and the **Cameron County Irrigation District No. 2 Building** (1911), both examples of the California Mission style, with which the first generation of Valley town founders populated their competing town sites. At North Sam Houston and West Stenger is the Spanish-Mediterranean-style **Hinkley-Sublett Building** (1927) by Brownsville architect W. D. Van Sicklen, and one block to the east, at East Stenger and North Reagan, is San Antonio architect Harvey P. Smith's Mediterranean-style **Stonewall Jackson Hotel** (1927). At North Dick Dowling and East Adele is Smith's **San Benito High School** (1927), also decorated with Spanish-Mediterranean detail. Through the 1930s, the use of Spanish-style architecture expressed a fervent collective hope that the formula that had succeeded in Southern California might work its magic in South Texas.

H. Matamoros

Heroica, Leal, e Invicta Matamoros – its official name – was settled by families from Camargo, farther upriver, in 1774, when the town site was laid out. San Juan de los Esteros, as Matamoros was originally called, became a self-governing municipality in 1796. In 1823 the central government authorized the opening of an international port at Matamoros, renamed in 1826 to honor the Mexican patriot Father Mariano Matamoros. During the 1820s Matamoros outgrew its older neighbors and, as the Mexican port nearest the United States, attracted substantial trade and a resident international community.

The plan of Matamoros is a Spanish colonial grid set into the Santa Cruz bend of the Rio Bravo. The spatial dimensions are 18th century in scale. As in the older river towns of Nuevo Santander, streets are ten *varas* (approximately 30 feet) wide. Urban buildings follow Creole architectural traditions. Built to the street line, they firmly shape public space while concealing internal patios, often accessible from the street through oversized doors leading into a *zaguán*, an open-air passageway. Located on the principal plaza, the

Plaza Hidalgo, in accord with Spanish colonial city-building practice, are the Palacio Municipal and the city's oldest parish church, Nuestra Señora del Refugio de San Juan de los Esteros, now the cathedral of the Diocese of Matamoros. Four blocks west is a second plaza, Plaza Allende. Newer buildings are just beginning to vitiate the spatial integrity of Matamoros's urban fabric. Sadly, this is most visible from Plaza Hidalgo, where Nuestra Señora del Refugio is flanked by a parking lot, and the mirror-glass-faced Edificio Banamex has pulled away from the street corner to create its own plaza-parking lot.

COLONIA JARDIN is the neighborhood laid out in the late 1940s in the Santa Cruz bend, along the route through which travelers from Brownsville entered Matamoros by ferry before construction of the Gateway Bridge in 1926. Today, this passage is dramatized by Matamoros's **Edificio de Inmigración y Aduana** (1963), by one of Mexico City's most famous modern architects of the 1950s and

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1960s, Mario Pani. Pani clearly picked up architecturally on the designation "Gateway Bridge" when he designed this suspenseful welcome to Mexico. Avenida Alvaro Obregón leads through the Colonia Jardín to the *zona centro*, past Matamoros's grandest modern house, the **Treviño García House** (c. 1965) at Obregón 58, which appears undisturbed by the touristic "*zona rosa*" development that enveloped it in the 1970s. On the curve, at Obregón 1–21, are a series of peak-roofed retail and office buildings by Pani, all part of President Adolfo López Mateos's Programa Nacional Fronterizo, which set out to improve the image of Mexican border cities with well-designed tourist facilities. Pani's office prepared the PRONAF master plan for Matamoros in 1958.

Another segment, at Obregón and 5th, is the **Centro Artesanal** (1969, now the Centro Cultural Matamoros). More dramatic engineering is in evidence in its patio, although the look of this complex differs considerably from that of Pani's buildings.

ZONA CENTRO. The narrow width of streets in the historic center of the city means that continuous lines of buildings endow downtown with a distinctly urban feeling, even though few buildings are more than two stories high. This spatial dimension also causes the exceptions to stand out. One of the oldest is the Victorian-style **Cross House** (1885) at Herrera and 7th, designed by Brownsville architect S. W. Brooks. Undergoing rehabilitation in 1993, the Cross House broke in a typically American way with the Creole discipline of the street. Going south on 8th Street, this discipline is especially evident.

At Morelos and 6th one enters the **Plaza Hidalgo**, laid out in 1814. It contains the defining elements of a Mexican plaza: the central bandstand, patriotic statues of Hidalgo and Juárez, vegetation, sidewalks, benches – and people. The cathedral, **Nuestra Señora del Refugio** (1831, rebuilt after the storm of 1933), is faced with a screen of freestanding

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Doric columns and flanked by tall twin towers. On the side streets bounding the cathedral block are some especially fine mid-19th-century buildings. At Morelos 84–86 is a pair of houses built in the 1840s, now known as the **Villar House**. The arched openings fitted with iron grilles, the shuttered doors, the iron balconies, and the molded brick cornice and framing pilasters are all elements of the 19th-century border brick style. One block to the north, at González 63–67, is the very large **De Tárnave House**, probably built in the 1860s, to judge from its elliptically arched openings and the circular discs above its second-floor windows.

At 6th and Abasolo is evidence of the extent to which Matamoros profited architecturally from the American Civil War, since it was the closest port through which Confederate cotton could be shipped to avoid the U.S. blockade of Southern ports. The paired **R. Pérez Building** and the **Yturria Building** (1865; Henry A. Peeler, architect), framing the west side of the intersection at the entrance to the Calle Abasolo mall, date from this period. Across the street, the **Teatro de la Reforma** (1956) was refaced in 1992 to simulate the façade of the original Teatro de la Reforma of 1864, which was demolished in 1956. Along the lively Abasolo mall are the **Ampudia House** at 89-A, with its low pediment, which dates from the 1840s, and the so-called **House of Stars** (1873) at 125.

Closer to the river, at the intersection of Santos Degollado and Guatemala, is the **Casa Mata**, begun in 1845 and completed in 1865. This is all that remains of the ring of fortifications that once surrounded Matamoros. Built for protection against the U.S., the Casa Mata was more often the object of domestic attack, especially during the French occupation of the 1860s and again during the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s. Since 1970 this has been the site of Matamoros's **historical museum**.

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1st Street leads back through Colonia Jardín to the Gateway Bridge. At 1st and Bugambillas is **Hogar Longoria** (c. 1950) by Brownsville architect Ellis F. Albaugh & Associates, which testifies to the international popularity of the California contemporary look in the 1950s.

Brownsville

Brownsville is the oldest and largest city in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It was founded in 1848 by Charles Stillman, a Yankee trader who had lived in Matamoros since 1828. In contrast to Matamoros, Brownsville has no central plaza and no hierarchical arrangement of public and religious buildings. Its principal streets are more than twice as wide as those in Matamoros. Levee Street terminated at the wharf warehouse area on the Rio Grande. One block over, Elizabeth Street (which Stillman named for his fiancée) was the main business street. In a show of nationalism, Stillman named most of the parallel streets for American presidents, a trend emulated in later Valley towns.

Fort Brown Charles Stillman platted his new town on contested ground (the settling of claims to land ownership in the territory that the U.S. conquered from Mexico south of the Nueces River continues to the present) because it lay across the Rio Grande, although slightly upriver, from Matamoros and because of its proximity to the permanent U.S. Army fort that Zachary Taylor established in 1848 and named Fort Brown. What is now International Boulevard was the old demarcation line between fort and town. Fort Brown existed until it was decommissioned in 1944 and its property sold to the city of Brownsville.

The University of Texas at Brownsville occupies a number of ex-Fort Brown buildings, notably the

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Post Hospital (1869) at May Street and Taylor Avenue, now the Administration Building, which dates from the rebuilding of the fort after its destruction during the Civil War. Although the design of the hospital was based on a standard plan, architectural details – brick arches, brick pilasters, and brick corbeling at the roof line – are redolent of the Creole architectural tradition of northeastern Mexico.

The campus was redeveloped between 1987 and 1991 by the San Antonio architects Marmon Barclay Souter Foster Hays in a neo-border brick style. The most impressive new buildings are the pair of **classroom and office buildings** facing Gorgas Drive and Fort Brown Resaca, for which Balli/Gómez & Associates of Brownsville were project architects.

On the opposite side of Fort Brown Resaca (a *resaca* is an oxbow lake that lies in one of the abandoned river channels on the north side of the Rio Grande) is the **Neale House** (230 Porter Drive; c. 1850), one of the oldest houses in Brownsville. It was moved to this site in 1950 and adapted as a home for the Brownsville Art League. Occupying the "island" in Fort Brown Resaca is the **Fort Brown Motor Hotel** complex (1964) by Houston architect William F. Wortham, designed in a tropical version of the eclectic style Wortham used at Houston's Westbury Square.

On the ex-parade ground of Fort Brown at 600 International Boulevard is the **Fort Brown Memorial Center** (1954). The commission for its design was won in a statewide architectural competition by Dallas architects Wiltshire & Fisher in 1951. The Fort Brown civic center received a national design award from the American Institute of Architects the year of its completion. It precipitated a wave of competitive civic center building in Valley towns that lasted through the 1960s. The complex is in virtually original condition.

Downtown Brownsville Elizabeth Street is still the center of brisk retail trade, as are Washington and Adams streets. There are few surface parking lots downtown. But it is crossover traffic from Mexico that sustains the downtown retail district; Brownsville residents shop at the malls. Downtown's oldest surviving buildings are **The Gem** (400 East 13th, between Levee and Elizabeth; 1849), the partially defaced **San Román Building** (1245 Elizabeth; 1850), and the **Yturria Bank Building** (1255 Elizabeth; 1859; Henry A. Peeler, architect). All are simplified versions of the mid-19th-century urban architecture of New Orleans. Like many New Orleans buildings of the period, the San Román Building has a pitched roof framed by high side gables.

Market Square (12th Street between Washington and Adams) is also bustling. Although much remodeled (the last time in 1949, when it was made over as a Spanish mission), Brownsville's **City Hall and Market House** (1852, 1868, 1912, 1949) is the oldest municipal building in continuous use in Texas. At 12th and Adams is the **J. H. Fernández y Hermano Building** (1883), a one- and two-story Mexican Creole–style brick commercial building with shuttered French doors opening onto the second-story balcony. The one-story wing on Adams encompasses a central patio. Like many of the principal Spanish-surnamed merchants of 19th-century Brownsville, Fernández was a native of Santander in Spain. His cousin, **Miguel Fernández**, built the one-story Creole business building a block away (Adams and 11th; c. 1880s). There, shuttered doors beneath grated transoms still open to the sidewalks, and the building encloses a rear patio.

Up *12th Street* at *Jefferson* are the first permanent **Cameron County Courthouse** (1882, now the Masonic Lodge) and **Immaculate Conception Cathedral** (1859). The Austin architect J. N. Preston designed the Victorian courthouse, which has lost its central cupola and corner mansard caps but not its iron fence. Immaculate Conception is the work of the Breton architect-turned-missionary Father Pierre Y. Keralum, who came with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate from France in 1852 to serve along the Rio Grande. The

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brick walls of the Gothic Revival–style church were originally stuccoed and scored to emulate stone. The transept on the Jefferson Street side of the church contains the **Stillman Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament** (1959; Joseph Sanford Shanley and W. Knight Sturgis), a gift of Elizabeth and Charles Stillman's great-grandson, Chauncey D. Stillman, in their memory. Behind the church is the Oblares' **Community House** (1860), which was crudely remodeled in the 1970s.

Courthouse Square at 12th and Madison contains the dour **Cameron County Courthouse** (1912), designed by Atlee B. Ayres of San Antonio, who designed stylistically similar courthouses in Kingsville and Alice at the same time. At 11th and Monroe, at one corner of the square, lies the walled **H. M. Field compound**. The corner building dates to c. 1895; its top floor is still occupied as a residence. A block from Courthouse Square, at

Madison and 10th, is **La Madrileña**, the ebullient detailed brick corner grocery building of Adrián Ortiz (1892), rescued from dereliction and restored by lawyer Reynaldo S. Cantú in 1987.

The *East End*, between 13th and International Boulevard, was a residential district during the 19th century. At 13th and Washington is the **Stillman House Museum** (1851), a
22 comfortable brick town house faced with a deep, columned porch. Charles Stillman leased this house for his family in 1851, but his wife and children retreated to Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, in 1853, where Stillman would visit every summer. Stillman's son, James, and his grandson, James A., were major architectural patrons. The son was a repeat client of McKim, Mead & White's; the grandson commissioned Harrie T. Lindeberg's first great country house, Mondeanne. Chauncey Stillman bought this house for the **Brownsville Historical Association** and furnished it with Stillman family heirlooms. The association has operated the house as a museum since 1959 under the direction of Kino Camarillo.

At 15th and Madison lies a type of suburban house-and-store complex characteristic of 19th-century Brownsville, **El Globo Nuevo** (1897). The Creole commercial building, with its marvelous corbel courses, adjoins an Anglo-American–type Victorian cottage. The **Webb**
23 **House** (1308 Madison; 1905) reposes, Garden District–like, across from **La Nueva Libertad** (Madison and 13th; 1893). Houston architect Anthony E. Frederick restored the iron balcony of this handsome Creole commercial complex in 1986. Across 13th Street is a one-story brick commercial building (1247 Madison), to which corner brick pilasters lend a semblance of classical dignity.

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Downtown Brownsville also contains evidence of the *Spanish-Mediterranean* style, which represented the region's Hispanic heritage more suggestively to Anglo-American imaginations in the 1920s than indigenous Mexican building types. The **Borderland Hardware Company Building** (Washington and 10th; 1927) by Harlingen architect Stanley W. Bliss is the most evocative example downtown. At 11th and Levee are the **Hotel El Jardín** (1927) and the **Capitol Theater** (1928), designed by San Antonio architects the Kelwood Company and Henry T. Phelps respectively as part of a complex of Spanish-Mediterranean buildings that included the now-demolished Missouri-Pacific Passenger Station, next to the hotel, and the Chamber of Commerce Building.

After the Civil War, the *West End*, between 10th and 3d, was where new Victorian and Colonial Revival houses were built in Brownsville. The **Celaya**
24 **House** (St. Francis and 5th; 1904), in its impressive but old-fashioned Victorianism, bespeaks the isolation, and consequent architectural conservatism, of Brownsville before the arrival of the railroad in 1904. Samuel W. Brooks, Brownsville's most prominent Victorian builder, engineer, and architect, designed the **Browne House** (3d and St. Charles) in 1894. The detail is vintage border brick style; the T-shaped plan was current in the 1860s, when Brooks came to Matamoros and Brownsville from New Orleans. Side by side in the 500 block of St. Charles are the columned **Young House** (1912; M. E. Tracy, architect), a large Colonial Revival house built for a member of the Ball-Young-McAllen family, and **Los Dos Cánones** (c. 1890), part of another Creole house-and-store complex, its iron galleries reminiscent of New Orleans.

At St. Charles and 6th is the Russell House (1872), a handsome wooden cottage with an odd, overscaled dormer. Across the street are the houses of **Samuel W. Brooks** (623; 1888) and his chief rival, **Martin Hanson, Jr.** (647; c. 1880). Like Brooks, Hanson, a builder and architect, came to Brownsville from New Orleans. Brooks's boarded and shingled Victorian chalet was moved from its original site in the 1950s. It was brought to this site in 1986 and extensively restored.

Around the corner, on Levee Street, is the delightful **Rock House** (500 Levee; c. 1900), a border-brick-style rendition of a 19th-century Southern town house. *Elizabeth Street* was Brownsville's Victorian grand avenue. Only traces of its glory days remain. The Fernández sisters live in the house built by their great-uncle **Benjamin Kowalksi** at 4th and Elizabeth (c. 1890). A block away, at Elizabeth and 5th, is the house S. W. Brooks designed for Benjamin's brother, **Louis Kowalksi** (1893). The intrusive wall is a recent addition.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Elizabeth and 6th; 1913), by the San Antonio architect Frederick B. Giesecke, was rehabilitated by the Diocese of Brownsville as part of the agreement by which the rest of the block was sold to the International Bank of Commerce. Brownsville architect M. E. Tracy designed both the **Celaya House** at Washington and 5th (1911) and the house that José Celaya's mother-in-law, **Mrs. José Fernández**, built next door (405; 1912). These large Colonial Revival houses display the curving porches that were Tracy's trademark.

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Tomás Tijerina, a descendant of Don José Salvador de la Garza, recipient of the 1781 Porrero del Espíritu Santo land grant on which Brownsville sits, built the vernacular brick house at 333 Adams Street (1912). Tijerina added buttresses to shore its walls against hurricane winds. The Tijerina family still occupies the house. The **Cisneros House** at 451 Madison Street (1926) represents a very conservative survival of a traditional Brownsville house type. At 5th and Monroe is the walled **City Cemetery**, opened for burials about 1850. To the left of the 5th Street entrance gate is the **Bouis Vault** (c. 1886), which has been attributed to the Roma architect-builder Enrique Portscheller because of its idiosyncratic classical detailing in molded brick. At Madison and 6th is the **Southern Pacific Passenger Station** (1928), an elaborately decorated Spanish-Mediterranean building designed in the corporation's Houston office. Since its restoration in 1984 by San Antonio architect Richard MyCue, the station has housed the **Historic Brownsville Museum Association.**

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West Brownsville extended the grid of Stillman's original townsite westward after the arrival of the railroad in 1904, but intensive development did not begin until the 1920s, when Brownsville experienced its first big spurt of growth since the 1860s. Palm Boulevard, the effective border line between the old town and West Brownsville, was the city's most ambitious exercise in City Beautiful urban planning. Bougainvillea and Washingtonia palms were planted along its length to advertise the Valley's new identity as an exotic tropical paradise. The complex of **public school buildings** at Palm Boulevard and Washington, centered on **Brownsville High School and Junior College** (1927, Phelps & Dewees and Atlee B. & Robert M. Ayres), anchored the lower end of the boulevard. It was joined by the **First Presbyterian Church** (Palm and West Elizabeth; 1927), designed by the Kelwood Company, and the **Church of the Advent** (West Elizabeth and West 1st; 1927), a sensitively profiled Spanish-Mediterranean parish group by Colorado Springs architect Thomas MacLaren. Both First Presbyterian and Advent moved

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to West Brownsville from their 1870s-era S. W. Brooks churches in the West End. At 5 East Elizabeth and Palm Boulevard is the **Manautou House** (1924) by Brownsville architect-builder E. Guy Holliday, which combines Prairie School and Mediterranean elements.

Farther up Palm Boulevard, at 1020, are the Spanish-Mediterranean **Valley View Apartments** (1929) by W. D. Van Siclen, one of the many architects who contributed to the Valley's Mediterranean building boom of the 1920s.

Palm Boulevard leads to *Los Ebanos*, Brownsville's first elite garden subdivision, developed in 1926 by the James-Dickinson Company, which also built the Hotel El Jardín downtown. This was the first neighborhood to take advantage of Town Resaca and, as its romantic Spanish name implies, of native tree growth. E. Guy Holliday designed the most alluring of Los Ebanos' many Spanish-Mediterranean houses, that of **Fausto Yturria** at 2012 Palm Boulevard (1931). Next door at 2020 and 2030 are the big houses that Weslaco architect R. Newell Waters designed for two sisters, **Mrs. Larry F. Lightner** (1936) and **Mrs. Dean A. Porter** (1941). Gladys Sams Porter was the founder of Brownsville's Gladys Porter Zoo. At 1905 Palm Boulevard is the **Scanlan House** (1940), a romantic regionalist interpretation of Brownsville's Creole architectural heritage, designed for a Balli-McAllen descendant by Frank E. Torres of Brownsville, the first Mexican-American licensed to practice architecture in Texas.

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Just off Palm Boulevard, at the foot of Ringgold Street, is **St. Joseph's Academy** (1961), Brownsville's oldest boys' school, designed by Charles E. Lawrence and William M. Peña of CRS of Houston. Caudill Rowlett Scott won a *Progressive Architecture* design award in 1956 for this dramatic modern campus, which has been compromised by recent additions.

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At Calle Retama and Palm Boulevard one enters *Rio Viejo*, the 1950s counterpart to Los Ebanos. At 155 Calle Anacua is the **Garcia House** (1961), which incorporates elements – including the long louvered shutters – of the 1853 Yturria House on Washington Street. Two Rio Viejo houses are the work of John G. York of Harlingen: the **Cisneros House** at 244 Calle Jacaranda (1955) and the **Whitman House** at 544 Calle Retama (1955).

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The **Yturria House** at 54 Calle Cenizo (c. 1960; Homer Elizondo, designer) is philanthropist Mary A. Yturria's tribute to John F. Staub's Bowles-Rutherford House in River Oaks. Two houses evoke the border brick style. One is the **Herminio Yturria House** at 164 Calle Cenizo (1954; William C. Baxter, architect). The other, the **Heri House** at 244 Calle Cenizo (1963), is the master work of Brownsville architect Ruth Young McGonigle. The long, low **Ortiz House** at 344 Calle Cenizo (1965; Bill Burns, designer) incorporates antique Mexican artifacts collected by its owner. Next door is the contemporary-style **Philen House** (1951) by Austin architects Page, Southerland & Page, set in a dense grove of ebony trees.

At 37 South Coria, off Boca Chica Boulevard, is the **Peña House** (1950), designed by Harry S. Ransom of Candill, Rowlett, Scott & Associates for the brother of CBS's William Peña. This is the childhood home of Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña.

A historically significant 20th-century building pays tribute to the role of Pan American World Airways in opening Brownsville to the world during the 1930s, when Pan Am routed all its overland flights to Latin America through Brownsville. At 525 Paredes Line Road (between Los Ebanos and Price Road) is the first International

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Style house built in Texas, the **Kraigher House** (1937), designed for a Pan Am executive by Richard Neutra of Los Angeles. It is in decrepit condition but completely intact. Farther north on Paredes Line, at its intersection with Coffeeport Road, is the walled **Casa Poinciana** (c. 1940) by Frank E. Torres, its lush gardens the work of landscape gardener Isamu Taniguchi, father of Alan Taniguchi.

SOUTHMOST is the name of the area downriver from Brownsville, the southernmost point of the U.S. mainland. Nine miles out Southmost Road are the turreted Victorian **Rabb Plantation House** (c. 1891) and the adjoining **Sabal Palm Grove Wildlife Sanctuary**, the latter a remarkable remnant of the rain-forest-like stands of sabal palms that grew in the delta of the Rio Grande when Spanish explorers first charted the mouth of the river in 1519. The Palm Grove is open to the public under the auspices of the Audubon Society. The Rabb House, built for the granddaughter of Petra Vela de Vidal Kenedy, is also open to the public under the auspices of the Foundation for a Compassionate Society.

Following the course of the Rio Grande from Brownsville upriver to Rio Grande City is the *MILITARY HIGHWAY*. Near its point of origin in West Brownsville are the **Van Sicklen House** (c. 1926) and the **Argentine Apartments** (1930)

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at West 18th and West Washington, designed and owned by architect W. D. Van Sicklen, who had practiced in northern California, Seattle, Canada, and Oklahoma before immigrating to South Texas.

Until the 1880s, the Rio Grande was the chief highway of the border country. The fortunes of the great South Texas cattle barons Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy were founded on the profits they realized from their steamboat business on the Rio Grande after 1846, when the U.S. took possession of the northeast bank of the river. The Military Highway was the land route staked by Zachary Taylor when he marched from Matamoros to Camargo along the river in 1846. At *LANDRUM*, just southeast of the intersection of U.S. 281 and Highway 2520, is the **Landrum House** (1902), built on the southern half of the Concepción de Carricitos land grant, which Mrs. Landrum's father had taken in payment for confirming the Fernández

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family's ownership of the property after the Mexican War. Its old-fashioned appearance (it could just as easily have been designed in the 1850s) was typical of Brownsville architecture in the decades of isolation that followed the Civil War.

On the south side of U.S. 281 at *BLUETOWN*, just east of its intersection with Highway 506, is the **Taniguchi House** (1952), a flat-roofed modern house built of concrete block. This was Alan Y. Taniguchi's first job in Texas, and was designed for his parents. The architect's father, Isamu Taniguchi, subsequently designed the Japanese Garden in Zilker Park in Austin. Upriver from Bluetown is SANTA MARIA. Before the arrival of the railroad, Santa Maria was, with Brownsville and Point Isabel, one of only three towns in Cameron County. South of Highway 281 but visible from the road is the white-painted brick hacienda built by Lawrence J. Hynes of Brownsville, the **Rancho de Santa Maria** (1870). On the highway is the Gothic Revival–style **Our Lady of Visitation Catholic Church** (1882). The church was built according to plans prepared by the missionary-architect Father Pierre Y. Keralum, who had died in 1872.

After crossing the county line into Hidalgo County, turn left at the International Bridge sign onto Highway 1015. A left onto Toluca

Ranch Road brings one within sight of another river ranch complex, **Tofuca Ranch**. Visible are the turreted Sáenz House (1903) and, in the grove of trees to the right of it, **St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church** (1899), a variation of Father Keralum's ranch chapel plan.

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Follow Highway 281 as it turns north toward Pharr. Turn on Moore Road to 100 West Moore, where the **Franden House** (1979), an homage to Luis Barragán by Chicago architect James L. Nagle, is located. Follow Moore Road east to South I Road. At South I and Ridge is **Pharr–San Juan–Alamo High School** (1960) by Alan Y. Taniguchi, San Antonio architect O'Neil Ford, and Pharr architect Max Burkhart. South I intersects with Sam Houston Avenue, which leads west beneath U.S. 83 Expressway to become East Jackson Avenue in McAllen.

McAllen

McAllen, like Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, San Benito, and Harlingen, is one of the 1904-era railroad towns. With a population of just under 90,000, it is the second largest city in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Named for the rancher James J. McAllen (whose wife, Salome Balli, was a member of one of the founding families of Reynosa and whose ranch was nearby), McAllen embodies the present-day version of the myth of the Valley. Although it prizes its connections with Mexico, it is not a border town. McAllen is economically dynamic and aggressive, as its skyline implies. The 17-story McAllen State Bank Building is the Valley's tallest skyscraper. (In pointed contrast, Brownsville's tallest building, the 14-story Villa Del Sol, is low-income public housing for the elderly.) Architecturally, McAllen has a strong Houston connection, due to the fact that two of its three leading financial figures from the 1950s through the 1970s, Lloyd and Elmer Bentsen, were the father and uncle, respectively, of Houston architect Kenneth Bentsen, and its third, V. Frank Neuhaus, was the cousin of Houston architects Hugo V. Neuhaus, Jr., and J. Victor Neuhaus III.

East Jackson Avenue passes through the most visually impressive of McAllen's many affluent suburban neighborhoods. Although the city's ruling grid reigns almost unchallenged and McAllen lacks Harlingen's arroyo and the resacas of Brownsville and San Benito, money and imaginative landscape design more than compensate, as is apparent, for instance, in the bougainvillea wall at the Calvin R. Bentsen House, **Chula Vista** (1969), by Weslaco architect Merle A. Simpson at 500 East Jackson. At 329 South McColl Road is the **Stahl House** (1951) by Corpus Christi architect Richard S. Colley, which has been maintained with scrupulous care. It even retains its columns of unstrimmed logs. Across the street, at 600 McColl Circle, a panel of vibrant orange glazed bricks identifies the house of **Zeb Rike**, dean of McAllen architects. McAllen architect David P. Ashcroft designed the **Cook House** (c. 1965) at 520 East Houston. Ashcroft had worked for John G. York, who was responsible for two exceptionally well maintained modern houses at 201 and 211 Jackson, the **Garza House** (1958) and the **Narro House** (1957).

Downtown McAllen is where the city's modern architecture treasures have not been respected. By February 1993, all that remained of O'Neil Ford and Richard Colley's 1954 additions to Harvey P. Smith's 1928 McAllen General Hospital in the 800 block of South Main Street was a pile of rubble. The ex-**First National Bank Building** by MacKie & Kamrath with Lloyd G. Borget and Kenneth Bentsen (1956) at South 15th and Beaumont has been Mediterraneanized by its present occupant, Laredo National Bank. A much worse fate befell downtown's transcendent work of modern architecture, Hugo Neuhaus and David Haid's magisterial **McAllen State Bank Building** (1961) at South Broadway and Austin, which the International Bank of Commerce defaced with motley brown brick. Only the travertine plinth of this beautiful Miesian pavilion survives. On axis with Beaumont is the Neuhaus-Haid building's successor, the 17-story **McAllen State Bank Building** tower (1978; 3D/International and Rike/Ogden), now called the Neuhaus Tower. Treated with more care have been the Spanish-Mediterranean-style ex-**U.S. Post Office** (1936) by W. D. Van Siclen at 301 South Main and **Sacred Heart Catholic Church** (1926) by San Antonio architect Leo M. J. Dielmann at 302 South 15th Street. At 1701 West Highway 83 is McAllen's other skyscraper, **One Texas Commerce Center** (1985; Kenneth Bentsen Associates). Since Texas Commerce has absorbed both the First National Bank and the McAllen State Bank, it now designates this building the Bentsen Tower to distinguish it from the Neuhaus Tower. On the other side of old Highway 83 and the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico tracks at 109 North Main Street is the **Doubletree Hotel** (1974; Turner, Rome & Cotten), an "improved" reconstruction of the Mission-style **Casa de Palmas** (1918; by San Antonio architect M. L. Waller), which burned in 1973. Gone are the cabañas that O'Neil Ford and Jerry Rogers designed for the Casa de Palmas when it was owned by V. Frank Neuhaus in the 1940s. However, in the southwest corner of McAllen, on an estate at 4201 Neuhaus Road, is the **Neuhaus House** (1942) by O'Neil Ford. Next door, at the south end of Bentsen Road, is the first house that Kenneth Bentsen designed (1952), built by his parents while he was still an architecture student at the University of Houston.

The main axis of McAllen is *10th Street*. In the 1500 block of South 10th is the **McAllen Civic Center** (1958). Caudill Rowlett Scott of Houston were consulting architects; Zeb Rike and J. Edwin Byers of McAllen were architects. CRS's Charles Lawrence took up the challenge issued by Brownsville's civic center in this well-proportioned, well-built, and very well maintained complex. McAllen was the clear winner in the intercity resort motel competition with the **Fairway Motor Hotel** (1956) at 2105 South 10th. McAllen geologist William H. Wilson (with Houston co-investors John H. Crooker, Jr., and Flint Sawtelle) hired John G. York to design this tour de force, which married the myth of the Valley-as-tropical-paradise to modern architecture in a very seductive way. Although the street front of the control building has been abused, its principal interiors, the central "fairway" green, and the guest-room *casitas* are in prime condition.

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Near the hotel, in the 700 block of Wichita, is the **McAllen Country Club** (1958) by Cowell & Neuhaus. The country club's golf course is the focus of yet another upscale McAllen neighborhood. Houston architect Roger Rasbach has designed a pair of Mexican-McAllen-style houses for members of the Jones & Jones specialty store family at 217 Valencia and 301 Byron Nelson. At 300 Cris Lane and at 400 East El Rancho are the defining works of the "McAllen style": two successive **Burns Houses** (1963 and 1984) by Dallas architect Harry C. Hoover. Nearby, at 300 Burns Drive, is the spacious, pavilionlike **Roney House** by Frank Welch & Associates of Dallas (1985). Off South 10th, at 600 Sunset, is **Quinta Mazatlán** (c. 1939), the hard-edged, homemade Mediterranean villa of right-wing pundit Jason Mathews, which was restored and expanded by architect Max Burkhart.

Hidalgo

Nine miles south of McAllen on Highway 336, a continuation of South 10th, is Hidalgo (1852), the oldest town in Hidalgo County and, until the arrival of the railroad, the only one. Located opposite Reynosa, Hidalgo was the county seat until 1908. It retains, as few other settlements in Hidalgo County do, its historic architectural identification with the border, rather than the Valley.

At 220 South Bridge Street is the **Vela House** (c. 1905), a combination of border brick construction and Anglo-American typology that was not untypical of the turn of the century. An especially exuberant display of brickwork is visible in the pinnacles at the corners of the **Hidalgo School** (1915) at 4th and Flora. The bottom floor of S. W. Brooks's 1886 **Hidalgo County Courthouse** still stands at 1st and Flora; Brooks's Starr County Courthouse in Rio Grande City of the same year was identical. The Hidalgo courthouse and jail were restored by Houston architect Graham B. Luhn for Border Bank. Across the 1st-Flora intersection are the ex-**U.S. Post Office** and a **commercial building**, both in the border brick style. At the end of 2d Street, the smokestack of the Louisiana–Rio Grande Canal Company Irrigation Pump Station (1912) dominates Hidalgo's skyline. Efforts are under way to transform the pump house into a historical museum.

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Reynosa

What could be more unexpected in the delta of the Rio Grande than a hill? It was precisely this topographic feature that occasioned the establishment here of Reynosa, the second of the five towns authorized by José de Escandón along the Rio Grande–Rio Bravo. The gridded town plan was laid out in 1767, when legal title to property in the town and its flanking *porciones*, narrow strips of land with river frontage, was assigned. Of the original Escandón river towns, Reynosa was the farthest downstream. The upstart Matamoros surpassed Reynosa and the other river towns after the 1820s. Consequently the historic center of Reynosa does not have as substantial a stock of older buildings. However, it shares with Matamoros an 18th-century scale and a lively, urban street life that seems to contrast even more startlingly with McAllen than that of Matamoros does with Brownsville.

The *Zona Centro* of Reynosa is focused on the **Plaza Hidalgo** (bounded by Zaragoza, Hidalgo, Morelos, and Juárez), which is centered on a zoomy, futuristic bandstand installed as part of the remodeling of the plaza in 1970. Appropriately, the parish church of Reynosa's patroness, **Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe**, turns a parabolically framed façade, flanked by modernistic towers, toward the plaza. The high, hall-like interior is considerably simpler. Next to the church the tower of its predecessor is preserved. On the opposite side of the plaza, facing Calle Hidalgo, is a two-story, classically styled house faced with tiles. Continuing south along Hidalgo, one enters a pedestrian mall that is the scene of local action.

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Mission

Mission takes its name from La **Lomita Mission Chapel** (1899) on FM Road 1016 downriver from the town. This was one of a number of chapels that the Oblate fathers built in the 19th century along the circuit they followed up the Rio Grande to minister to those living on the isolated ranches of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr counties. It is similar in appearance to older ranch chapels built as far back as the 1850s. The ranch on which this chapel was constructed was owned by the Oblate order. Here, in 1912, they built the morose, Mission-style **St. Peter's Novitiate**, designed by Frederick B. Gaenslen of San Antonio. It is still the most prominent element in this rural landscape.

FM Road 1016 becomes the very wide Conway (originally Lomita) Avenue, Mission's main street. Laid out in 1908 near the terminus of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railway, Mission was one of the most aggressively promoted of the Valley's railroad towns. Its avenues are named for local luminaries; its cross streets, now numbered, originally evoked native and citrus trees. South of the tracks was Mexican-American Mission; north of the tracks the town had a mixture of Midwestern and Southern Californian architectural traits. The airplane bungalow was an especially popular house type.

Downtown Mission features Neuhaus/Wingfield's **First State Bank & Trust Company Building** (1964) at 900 Conway and Kenneth Bentsen Associates' ex-**First National Bank Building** (1964) at 1101 Conway.

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so radically reoriented South Texas's culture and economy in the early 20th century.

Camargo

Camargo is not located on the banks of the Rio Grande–Rio Bravo, but on the Rio San Juan, about four miles from its confluence with the Rio Grande. This is the oldest town on the Tamaulipas-Texas border. It was the first of the new towns authorized by Escandón near the river and was settled in 1749. The town site was laid out in 1767 on the east bank of the San Juan, which is only one block from the Plaza Hidalgo, the town's principal plaza.

The *Zona Centro* of Camargo is bisected by Libertad and Zaragoza streets, which parallel the San Juan. Several blocks north of the *zona centro*, on Libertad between García and Obregón, is the block-square **Cuartel Militar**, a spirited 1920s patio-centered compound. Facing the **Plaza Hidalgo** (between Iturbide and Méndez) are the exuberantly detailed **Palacio Municipal** and, next to it, the **Escuela Primaria Apolonio Falcón**, a

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Neo-Colonial-style building built around a rear patio. The intimacy of Camargo's central plaza is quite a contrast to those in Matamoros and Reynosa. At the southeast corner of the plaza is the parish church, **Santa Ana de Camargo**. Its overscaled Mission-style tower is a later addition to the simple, hall-type church, which opens directly onto its *atrio*, set in a fenced enclosure.

Farther south, at Libertad and Constitución, is a two-story **brick building** of the type that proliferates in Matamoros and Brownsville. Its exceptional status here attests to Camargo's isolation even in the 19th century. A few blocks more to the south, at Libertad and Benito Juárez, is a second plaza, containing the marvelous **Triumphal Arch to the Liberal Heroes** (1914), with polychrome figures of Juárez, Madero, and Pino Suárez at the apex of the Victorian Gothic arch.

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Rio Grande City

Downriver from Rio Grande City is *Fort Ringgold*, established in 1848 as part of the U.S. Army's chain of border forts. Like Fort Brown, it was rebuilt after the Civil War, although it retains on a slight rise the **Robert E. Lee House**, a pre-war wood-frame cottage that is not in good repair. Also like Fort Brown, Fort Ringgold now houses a local educational institution, Rio Grande City High School. Alan Y. Taniguchi & Associates are responsible for new buildings (1979) and a rehabilitation of some of the existing fort buildings. Unlike Fort Brown, Fort Ringgold retains its spatial focus, the **Parade Ground**, onto which the **Post Hospital** (c. 1875) faces. Unfortunately, access to the fort grounds is restricted by the Rio Grande City school district when classes are in session.

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Los Ebanos

Although it does not possess historic architecture, Los Ebanos is fascinating nonetheless. It is a tiny border town, and the site of the last ferry to operate on the Rio Grande, a hand-pulled flatbed barge accommodating three cars plus pedestrians.

Beyond the Hidalgo-Starr county line, the landscape begins to change from the delta to the hilly, rocky terrain upriver. Not only do geography and vegetation change, but culture as well. Starr County, which the railroad did not penetrate until 1925, is what the delta counties must have been like before 1904. Wide, busy Highway 83 skirts the river from Mission to Laredo and goes right through Rio Grande City and Roma. Its impact is visible in the ugly swath of highway strip development that precedes entrance to Rio Grande City especially. Yet it has not brought an influx of newcomers like those who

The Rio Grande has shifted south, away from the Rio Grande City town site, which once marched up a low hill from the waterfront along the axis of Britton Avenue. At 150 feet, Britton Avenue is wider than Congress Avenue in Austin, supposedly the source of town-planning inspiration for H. Clay Davis, who founded Rio Grande City with Forbes Britton in 1848 on the site of a ranch belonging to the family of Davis's wife, Hilaria de la Garza of Camargo.

Downtown Rio Grande City lies east of Britton Avenue along East Main and East 2d streets, which carry highway traffic through the center of town. The highly ornamented brickwork for which Rio Grande City and Roma are known is in evidence at the two-story building on East 2d between Abasolo and Flores, and the two-story **Solis Building** on East Main between Washington and López. Both were built after 1894. The town's most famous example is Roma master builder Enrique Portscheller's **De la Peña Building** (1886) at East Main and López, with its startling fluted columns and Doric entablature.

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At East Main and Garza is **La Borde House** (1899, with additions of 1917 by Leo M. J. Diehmann), a commercial building transformed into a hotel after the turn of the century and rehabilitated in 1980. The **First Methodist Church** at East 3d and Washington (1885) is capped with a Victorian Gothic broach spire similar to those atop Our Lady of Refuge in Roma and the original church of Our Lady of Refuge in Rio Grande City (1868, now demolished), both probably by the Oblate missionary-architect, Father Keralum. At Britton and West 3d, where the church stood, **St. Joseph's Convent** (1887) remains. The molded brick architraves framing the doors on its front wing strongly suggest Portscheller's hand. Across the street, at Britton and East 4th, is the **Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes** (1928), comprising a mountain of petrified wood quarried in Starr County. The grotto is genuinely affecting, despite its potential as kitsch. At the summit of Britton

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Avenue rises the **Starr County Courthouse** (1936) by Harlingen architect Stanley W. Bliss. The vista down Britton Avenue looks out to **Davis Landing**, where steamboats once docked on the Rio Grande.

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Even without the river, the old waterfront neighborhood along **Water Street** is fascinating. At 203 East Water is a building that formerly served as the Starr County Courthouse, which the Texas Historical Commission believes to be the oldest surviving county courthouse in Texas. The **Kelsey House** (1878) at the southeast corner of Washington and East Main is now a retail arcade centered on the house's patio-garden, which can be entered from both Water and Main.

Roma

When U.S. 83 was routed through Roma, it bypassed the old center of town. As a result, Roma's historic center survives in picturesque isolation, one block from the busy highway, yet quite remote in feeling. Because the townsite occupies a bluff high above the river, the old main street, **Convento Avenue**, functions as a platform for spectacular prospects of the Rio Grande and the Tamaulipas town of Ciudad Miguel Alemán (originally San Pedro de Roma) on the southwest bank of the river. According to historian Florence Johnson Scott, Charles Stillman of Brownsville established Roma on the site of an existing settlement, Rancho García, to avoid the high wharfage rates that Clay Davis charged at Rio Grande City. Roma was the head of navigation on the Rio Grande–Rio Bravo and the terminus of Stillman, King, and Kenedy's steamboat line.

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The town plan of Roma is a condensed version of Rio Grande City's. Convento Avenue is 120 feet wide, but only two blocks long. The blocks bracketing Convento make up the Roma Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The landscaped plaza and parking lot on Convento were installed in the late 1970s.

Thanks to the research of Austin architect and historian W. Eugene George, Roma's cultural hero is the 19th-century Prussian-born master builder *Enrique Portscheller*. Hidalgo Street in Roma has even been renamed in his honor. Between the mid-1880s and mid-1890s he worked as a brick contractor, mason, and master builder in Roma. Portscheller's trademark is the rendition of conventional classical detail in molded brick. A building boom that climaxed the steamboat era on the Rio Grande in the mid-1880s gave Portscheller the opportunity to transform the center of Roma. As was the case in Brownsville, Hidalgo, and Rio Grande City, traditional Mexican Creole building types and techniques were employed. It was through the medium of ornamental brickwork that Portscheller raised Roma's commercial houses to positions of architectural distinction.

At the summit of *Convento Avenue* is the tower of Father Keralum's 1854 church, **Our Lady of Refuge** (the rest was demolished in 1962 to permit construction of an unremarkable successor). To the left of the tower, on Estrella Street, is the 1887 convent, which, like the convent in Rio Grande City, bears decorative evidence of Portscheller's handiwork. Next to the convent, at Estrella and Lincoln, is the **Roma Historical Museum**. It occupies a very plain stuccoed building used as a church before the construction of Father Keralum's building and dated to 1840.

The **Pablo Ramírez Building** (1884) at Estrella and Zaragoza is by Portscheller. The chamfered corner bay denotes the building's commercial use. The brick pilasters and architraves were a Portscheller specialty. On Portscheller Street, between Zaragoza and Lincoln, is a small, stucco-faced stone house on the north side of the street. Its high, gabled end walls, rising above the roof line to bracket the pitched roof, are the hallmarks of a distinctive 19th-century border house type.

At the northeast corner of Portscheller and Convento is the largest of Portscheller's commercial houses, **La Mexicana** (1884), built for Manuel Guerra, who began a political dynasty that is still a force in Starr County. This splendid brick-built compound wraps around the corner with a chamfered bay, its horizontality emphasized by a continuous wrought-iron balcony. Across Portscheller, on the northwest corner of the intersection, is **Ramírez Hall** (c. 1880s), an earlier Portscheller building that holds its Convento Avenue frontage with a walled storage yard. Following the wall down Convento to the river, one comes to the **Cox House** (1853) and, across Convento, the refaced **Leocadia Leandro García House** (1857), two stone structures built by John Vale. Returning to the intersection of Convento and Portscheller, the **Rafael García Ramírez House** at the southeast corner, which dates from the early 1880s and is attributed to Portscheller, displays its brick construction in a deteriorated state. The herringbone pattern of the double-leaf wood doors suggests a source for one of O'Neil Ford's favorite door details.

In the middle of the block on Portscheller, between Convento and Juárez, is another Portscheller design, the one-story brick **Antonia Sáenz House** (1884), which contains an inset brick arcade on its back side. Across the street, in an eerie state of decomposition, is the **Rodríguez Building** (1886) at the northwest corner of Portscheller and Juárez. Its composite stone, brick, and wood construction

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is clearly – almost surrealistically – visible in its present condition. Across Juárez, at the southwest corner of the intersection, is the **Nestor Sáenz Building** (1886), its classical detail identifying it as the work of Portscheller.

Up Juárez and around the corner onto Estrella, one returns to Convento and, at the southwest corner of Estrella and Convento, the remodeled **Hord House** (1853), built by Charles Stillman's lawyer and now a hospital. Entrance to the historic district, at Grant and Lincoln, is marked by the modernistic **Guerra Apartments**.

Mier

Mier, founded in 1752, is accessible from Ciudad Miguel Alemán by way of Calle Hidalgo. Another Escandón town, it was platted in 1767 on the west bank of the Río Alamo, nestled picturesquely among low hills ten miles south of the Río Bravo.

Zona Centro Mier's main street, Calle Allende, leads to the central square, Plaza Juárez, between Álvaro Obregón and Hinojosa Palacios. Facing the plaza is **Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Mier**, the 18th-century parish church. Its stone front façade is capped by an outsized Victorian brick tower containing the town clock. As in Camargo, the stone-built buildings in Mier's *zona centro* lack the elaborate detail characteristic of the border brick style. An ebullient exception is the two-story **house** on Obregón facing the plaza. Its façade seems to undulate beneath layers of projecting molded brickwork.

Midway along Calle Hinojosa Palacios, between Allende N and Terán N, is the watermelon-colored **house** where prisoners of the Texas army that attacked Mier in December 1842 were held before being sent to Salado, site of the Black Bean Incident. Projecting from the corner of the house at the southeast intersection of Hinojosa Palacios and Terán N is a wrought-iron **lantern**. This was the standard street-lighting fixture of Mexican border cities in the 19th century.

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Calle Allende S bridges a creekbed in its 200 block. The occasion is marked architecturally by a single stone **column**. In the 400 block of Allende S is *Plaza Hidalgo*. Facing it are two heavily restored 19th-century buildings, the **Capilla San Juan** (1840) and a **house** now used as Mier's Casa de Cultura. The stone construction of each has been left exposed rather than stuccoed over, as it would have been originally, giving the buildings a rustic look not shared by others in Mier. Behind the Casa de Cultura is Mier's small, modern **Biblioteca**.

San Ygnacio

San Ygnacio is only 35 miles from Laredo. Yet is still appears today as it did to the architect J. J. Frary, who wrote in the April 1919 issue of *Architectural Record*: "The little towns and villages along the Mexican border, apparently sleeping under the spell of ancient Spain, are practically forgotten. Yet here are to be found quaint old stone houses and churches, picturesque streets and bits of architectural detail that transport one in imagination to the Old World and make it difficult to realize that one is actually within the confines of his own land."

San Ygnacio is extraordinary. It is a Mexican-planned town, centered on a plaza. Although the landscape is more open here than in Camargo and Mier, urban space is defined by Creole wall-houses, their windows protected with grilled cages. In 1973 almost all of the town was listed as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places.

The settlement of San Ygnacio dates to 1830, when the original section of the **Treviño House** at Uribe and Treviño was built by Don Jesús Treviño, the town's founder, overlooking the Río Grande. The house, originally a ranch headquarters fortified to guard against Indian attacks, was expanded in 1851 and 1872. Over the entrance portal facing Uribe Avenue is a stone sundial. Clusters of

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stone-built **houses** define the intersections of Uribe at both ends of the Treviño House.

Facing the *Plaza* at Washington and Laredo are **Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church** (1875, restored 1993), the **Vela Building** (c. 1870s) at Washington and Houston, with its

stone-quoined corners, and, at Grant and Laredo, the **Benavides Treviño House** (1881). When Frary illustrated San Ygnacio in *Architectural Record* in 1919, this house was faced with elaborately framed stucco panels.

One block away, at Grant and Hidalgo, is the stone-built **Zaragoza-Dominguez Store and House** (1900), restored in 1987–88 by artist Michael Tracy, working with Henry Estrada and Corpus Christi architect Bibiana B. Dykema. This complex encompasses an extraordinary wildflower garden and the offices of the River Pierce Foundation. At Benavides Elementary School, Lincoln and Laredo, is San Ygnacio's **La Paz Historical Museum**.

Laredo

Of the five towns that José de Escandón authorized along the Río Grande–Río Bravo, only one, San Agustín de Laredo, was on the north bank. Don Tomás Sánchez established the town in 1755, and the town plan was laid out in 1767. Like Matamoros, Reynosa, and Camargo, Laredo is an 18th-century city, its streets ten *varas* wide. They give the city a scale that is at once intimate, urban, and much more Mexican-American than Anglo-Texan. The original grid dimensions were retained as the town expanded to the east, west, and north. Enough of Laredo's 19th-century urban fabric survives that one experiences it as a Creole city. Thus, like its tiny neighbor, San Ygnacio, Laredo represents a rare survival in modern Texas of an urban complex of pre-Anglo origin that has successfully resisted assimilation to mainstream Anglo-American cultural patterns.

Facing the plaza is the Victorian Gothic **San Agustín de Laredo Church** (1873), one of the last works of Father Pierre Keralum. Its entrance bay and the clock stage of its tower are alterations from 1922, as is its all-white color scheme. On the opposite side of the plaza are two houses dating from the post–Civil War period, the **Benavides-Vidaurri House** at 202 Flores Avenue and the **Leyendecker House** at 204 Flores. The dean of Laredo architects, Alfonso A. Leyendecker (like many prominent Laredoans a descendant of Don Tomás Sánchez), lived his whole life in his family's house on the plaza. The flat roof of the house was packed with dirt to insulate the interiors against the intense, dry summer heat.

On the south side of the plaza, backing up to the river, are two buildings now incorporated into **La Posada Motor Hotel** (1961; by San Antonio architect Wallace B. Thomas): the ex-**Laredo High School** (1917) and the ex-**Casas Consistoriales** (pre-1840), now the **Capitol of the Republic of the Río Grande Museum**. The oldest part of the Casas Consistoriales, once the seat of municipal government, is the wing that projects into the hotel garden, not the Zaragoza Street front, lending weight to the supposition that this wing originally faced an earlier plaza. One block east, at 915 Zaragoza, is one of the oldest buildings in Laredo, the **Ortiz House**, begun in the 1830s. One can glimpse its interior patio-garden through the grilled *zaguán* opening. At 908 Grant is another very old house, its lack of architectural detail an indication of its antiquity. One of the amazing things about the San Agustín Plaza neighborhood is that it successfully mixes commercial, institutional, and residential uses in an unassuming way, an achievement that most American urban planners only dream of.

Downtown Laredo grew northward from the original plaza. Walking up Flores one passes the grandly scaled, classically detailed ex-**Laredo National Bank Building** at Flores and Lincoln (1916) by San Antonio architects Adams & Adams. Across Lincoln is another plaza, *Market Square*, site of Laredo's 1885 **Market Hall** by Galveston architect W. H. Tyndall. Its Victorian Renaissance–style exterior has been Mediterraneamized. From the Flores-Hidalgo intersection one can see to the east one of Laredo's two 1920s "skyscrapers," what was originally the **Robert E. Lee Hotel** at Hidalgo and San Bernardo (1925, by San Antonio architect J. M. Marriott), now part of the Laredo National Bank complex. Its richly ornamented top story is distinctively San Antonioan. Turning in the other direction along Hidalgo, make a right onto Convent Avenue. At the Convent-Farragut intersection is the splendid modernistic-style **Hachar's** (1942) by San Antonio architect Bartlett Cocke, with its fluted corner bay and marvelous neon pylon. As in downtown Brownsville and McAllen, shopping in downtown Laredo has become largely oriented to cross-border customers. Hachar's is the only department store to remain downtown.

Up Convent and left on Matamoros to Salinas is Laredo's other 1920s skyscraper, the 13-story **Hotel Hamilton** (1928) by San Antonio architects Atlee B. & Robert M. Ayres. In place of cast-concrete relief ornament, the Ayreses faced the lower flank and the crest of the hotel with decorative tile work. The Hamilton defines one corner of *Jarvis Plaza*, another in the sequence of public squares that make walking through downtown Laredo like going from one urban living room to another. At the head of Jarvis Plaza is the nobly scaled **U.S. Courthouse, Custom House, and Post Office** (1907), an Anglo-Palladian palace designed in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury.

At Salinas Avenue and Lincoln Street is the ex-**Milmo National Bank Building** (c. 1905) by San Antonio architect Alfred Giles. Its chamfered corner bay and florid classical decor make a big impact on downtown's small-scaled street scene.

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San Agustín Plaza With its bandstand, patriotic statuary, landscaping, and benches, San Agustín is a regulation Mexican plaza. However, historian Karen J. Weitze has recently discovered that San Agustín Plaza (bounded by Zaragoza, Flores, Grant, and San Agustín) may not be the original plaza of Laredo, which her research suggests might have been along the line of San Agustín Avenue, opening toward the Río Grande.

West End Adjoining downtown to the west are two fascinating residential neighborhoods that illustrate the movement away from Mexican Creole building types to Anglo-American house types and patterns of city development in late-19th-century Laredo. Closest to the Rio Grande is a working-class neighborhood, the more conservative of the two. It retains a fine collection of vernacular houses (most of them still used for residential purposes) as well as substantial corner stores. There is a complex of **small houses** at the southwest corner of Iturbide and Main, the ex-**Laredo Casino Club Association Building** at 1620 Iturbide and Main, and another cluster of houses at the southwest corner of Iturbide and Santa Cleotilde. There is a fine **corner store building** at 1617 Lincoln and Main, and more **houses** at 1505 Lincoln and the northwest corner of Lincoln and Santa Maria. The **Bognulia Building** at 1520 Hidalgo and Davis is the neighborhood's major commercial outpost.

Farragut Street separates this neighborhood from the West End, Laredo's turn-of-the-century Garden District, where well-to-do families built large, freestanding houses on tree-shaded lots between the 1880s and the 1920s. The 1500, 1600, and 1700 blocks of Farragut retain examples. At Farragut and Davis is the Victorian Gothic **Christ Church** (1881), abandoned when the parish moved onto the Heights in the 1950s. Matamoros Street, one block north, was a major residential street, studded with graceful houses at 1805, the **Orfila House** (1885) at 1701, and the splendid **Benavides House** (1924) at 1519, built for members of one of Laredo's seigneurial families in pink and cream cast stone. At Matamoros and Main is the much-altered **St. Peter's Catholic Church** (1898), a Victorian

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Gothic structure built by Enrique Portscheller, who moved to Laredo after he left Roma. The 1500 through the 2000 blocks of Houston, Victoria, and Washington streets contain more large Colonial Revival houses and the discarded churches and temple of Laredo's oldest Protestant and Jewish congregations. Washington bridges the International & Great Northern Railway tracks (this was the line whose completion in 1881, linking San Antonio with Monterrey and Mexico City via Laredo, economically doomed far South Texas) to connect with *Fort McIntosh*, established in 1849 and now the campus of Laredo Junior College–Laredo State University. The campus has extensive frontage on the Rio Grande. Therefore, despite encumbrance of its grounds with too many new brown-brick boxes, the fort retains a collection of buildings and landscape features redolent of its border setting. Bearing right onto the dirt road next to the Campus Police Station near the campus entrance, one arrives at the **Laredo Demonstration Blueprint Farm** (1990) by Austin architect Pliny Fisk III's Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems. Intended as a demonstration of ecologically responsible techniques for intensive agriculture in a specific climatic setting, the complex's whirring wind turbines, its lofty canopy of translucent polyester panels, and the steel-framed pavilions set beneath this canopy, their walls built of stucco-surfaced bales of hay and their roofs sprouting downdraft cooling towers, produce an extraordinary environmental sensation of their own. The temple-fronted **Post Chapel** (c. 1910) is now home to the **Nuevo Santander Museum**, Laredo's historical museum.

On the east side of downtown (severed when IH 35 slammed through the center of the city to provide a second downtown bridge) is the *Azteca* neighborhood, a counterpart of the lower West End neighborhood. After Iturbide Street crosses Zacate Creek, its name changes to Market Street and one enters the Heights.

The Heights was developed in 1890 as an eastward projection of Laredo's grid, which courses up and down the gently rolling landscape east of Zacate Creek. In the 1920s this was where Laredo's middle class began to move, bringing churches, hospitals, schools, and other neighborhood institutions with them. However, the Heights is far from monocultural. Middle-class neighborhoods form discontinuous islands of affluence in a much larger and more varied suburban field. Not until the 1970s did Laredo's middle classes begin to forsake the Heights for more "restricted" neighborhoods.

At 1419 Chihuahua Street is the ornate **Canseco House** (1924), a French-style cast-concrete villa architecturally related to the Benavides House in the West End. Members of the family, who still occupy the house, believe that the Francophile Dr. F. R. Canseco may have had his brother, the Mexico City architect Enrique Canseco, design the house.

The **Gibson House** at 1320 McClelland and Corpus Christi (1931) is a small but exotic production, designed in a Moorish-Mediterranean style by Laredo architect L. S. Sanderson around a south-facing patio garden. At 1312 Galveston Street is the imposing but meagerly detailed **Ursuline Academy** (1940; A. A. Leyendecker, architect), which the Ursuline sisters built on the Heights after they sold their original convent on Convent Street to the federal government for construction of the U.S. Immigration Building at what is today the old International Bridge.

Lane Street is one of the principal residential streets on the Heights. At 1515 Lane is another one of L. S. Sanderson's Mediterranean villas, the long, low **Heins House** (c. 1935). The grandest of Sanderson's residential

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works is the opulent **Hachar House** at 2201 Lane (1939), occupying a full-block front behind an imposing scalloped wall. Across the street, in a complementary style, is the **Sames House** by San Antonio architect Henry Steinbomer.

At the intersection of Lane and Milmo is one of Laredo's collection of outstanding 1950s *Modern*

Public School Buildings. **Mirabeau B. Lamar Junior High School** (1952). Caudill, Rowlett, Scott & Associates (then of Bryan) and A. A. Leyendecker of Laredo teamed up to produce a series of state-of-the-art modern buildings for the Laredo school district, all of which are maintained in fine condition. William M. Peña of CRS is a native of Laredo; he and Bill Caudill were responsible for Lamar.

A fine example of fifties modern architecture is the **McNary House** at 2202 Fremont (1957) by Wallace B. Thomas. A block away, at Fremont and Malinche, is a **house** by another San Antonio architect, Isaac Maxwell, featuring his trademark molded brickwork. Around the corner at 2121 Musser and Bartlett is the modernistic **Ellsworth House** (1941; Lawson Libby Wagner). The **Powell House** at 1620 Clark Boulevard (1938), an imposing Southern Regency–style house by Henry Steinbomer, is home to another descendant of Don Tomás Sánchez, former Laredo mayor J. C. Martin. CRS and A. A. Leyendecker were architects for **M. S. Ryan Elementary School** at 2401 Clark Boulevard (1953, another Caudill-Peña coproduction and named for a Laredo architect-builder) and for **C. L. Milton Elementary School** (1960; Charles Lawrence, designer) at 2502 Elm Street. Between them, at 2601 Bartlett, is CRS's **Fire Station No. 5** from the same period.

North of the Border. Laredo's old and new monied families have increasingly forsaken the historic center as well as the Heights to follow the axis of IH 35 north. Much of old downtown Laredo has regrouped behind a phalanx of Washingtonia palms at **Mall del Norte** (1977), IH 35 and Hillside East, which draws upscale shoppers from Monterrey and other interior Mexican cities. Its spacious, handsomely appointed public spaces are the work of Dallas architect Gary Gene Olp (1991). Carrying the internalized-plaza theme to its logical conclusion, Mall del Norte is home to **St. John Neumann Catholic Community**, which worships in an elaborately decorated church located in a lease space (1980; Leyendecker & Cavazos). At Del Mar Boulevard West and Springfield Avenue, one encounters *Regency Park*. This is where competitive house-building has reached Nouveau Laredo heights, with suburban mansions moving steadily across the rolling (and naturally treeless) terrain. The hands-down winner to date is the fabulous **Farrell House** (1991) at 408 Canterbury and Kensington, by Laredo-born Houston architect Alfonso Varela.

In southeast Laredo, at 2600 Zacatecas, just east of the Zapata Highway, is the flamboyant **Leo González Cigarroa High School** (1987) by JonesKell Architects of San Antonio, an extraordinary bravura attempt to fashion a nonhistoricist Mexican-American postmodern architecture. JonesKell and Ford, Powell & Carson, also of San Antonio, are collaborating on the design of the new campus of Texas A&M University at Laredo, which will be off U.S. Highway 59, also on the east side of town.

Nuevo Laredo

Nuevo Laredo reverses the pattern one finds in the other border cities of the lower Rio Grande. This is the post–Mexican War city, rather than its opposite number on the north bank of the river. Nuevo Laredo was an 18th-century suburb of what is now Laredo, Texas. After 1848, families from Laredo who rejected U.S. citizenship left their home city rather than be alienated from their homeland, an event memorialized by one of the many **monuments** along Bulevar Reforma. They moved across the Río Bravo to make Nuevo Laredo a city in its own right. Old Nuevo Laredo families still refer to their city simply as "Laredo."

The town plan of Nuevo Laredo did not adopt 19th-century Anglo American spatial standards. Thus, it too is diminutive in scale and achieves an easy sense of urbanity. However, Nuevo Laredo's main street, Avenida Guerrero, which continues the line of Convent Avenue in Laredo southward, is more a citywide corridor than a reinforcer of centrality, and it challenges the plazas along its route in importance.

Like Laredo, the *Zona Centro* of Nuevo Laredo comprises a city of plazas. One block south of the Río Bravo, at Guerrero and Bravo, is the *Plaza Juárez*, with Nuevo Laredo's oldest parish, **Santo Niño Church** (1879–88), at its southeast corner at Victoria and Ocampo. Santo Niño is a Victorian version of an early Renaissance basilica, recessed from the plaza behind its own *atrio*. Assertively pushing toward the plaza from the southwest corner of Plaza Juárez, at Guerrero and Victoria, is Nuevo Laredo's most stunning modern building, **Martí's** (1971, 1983), designed by Houston architect Howard Barnstone for his stepmother, Martí Franco. Martí's has its own *atrio*, befitting its status as a temple of high-style consumption. Barnstone took full advantage of Mexico's different ideas about building codes to produce an idiosyncratic, spatially fluid interior.

West on Victoria, at Victoria 3020, is a restaurant of the same name, occupying the walled **Longoria House** (1931), a Spanish-Mediterranean villa designed by Laredo-born San Antonio architect J. Fred Buenz.

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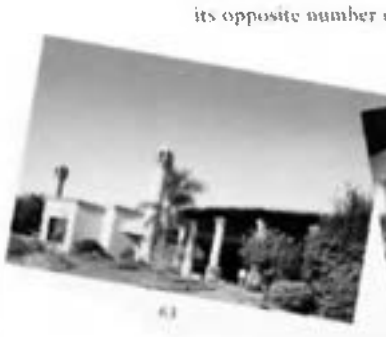

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Buenz collaborated with San Antonio architect John M. Marriott on the American-style, classically detailed **Banco Longoria Building** (1929) one block away, at Belden and Matamoros. The popularity of American-style houses among Nuevo Laredo's middle class in the early 20th century is

evident in the numerous freestanding Neo-Colonial-style houses with tile roofs built along Calle Belden.

As one continues west along Belden, more traditional Creole house types 67 begin to appear in the blocks between Matamoros and Morelos. Walking south on Morelos and east on Calle Dr. Mier brings one back to Avenida Guerrero and the *Plaza Hidalgo*, with its splendid **municipal clock**, erected in 1926. At the southwest corner of the plaza, at Guerrero and González, is Nuevo Laredo's premier Art Deco building, the four-story **Hotel Plaza** (1931). The entire east side of Plaza Hidalgo is bounded by the splendid Neo-Colonial-style **Palacio Municipal** (1940), now the Palacio Federal, which occupies a full-block site. With its beautifully proportioned public arcades surrounding all sides of the building and its generously dimensioned tiled staircases, the Palacio Federal is a paradigmatic public building. 68

South on Guerrero at Heroes de Nacataz is Nuevo Laredo's penultimate **Palacio Municipal** (c. 1970), now a state office building. Heroic modernity rather than public amenity was the order of the day here.

Past the traffic circle and Juárez monument at Baja California, Guerrero becomes Bulevar Reforma.

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A left onto Paseo O. L. Longoria brings one into *Colonia Madero*, Nuevo Laredo's elite 1950s suburb. At Tixtla and Nayarit is the flamboyant **Espíritu Santo Catholic Church** (1968), now the cathedral of the Diocese of Nuevo Laredo, built by Octaviano Longoria, whose father founded Banco Longoria. Longoria and two of his brothers built houses on the street, which was eventually renamed for the family. Of these, the most architecturally notable is the **Eduardo Longoria House** (1958) on the curve at Paseo Longoria 2132, designed by Houston architect Roger Rasbach. Arthur S. Berger of Dallas was the landscape architect. ■

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