37 : Spring 1997

Cite

$5.00

THE ARCHITECTURE
and DESIGN REVIEW
OF HOUSTON

PLEASURE-GROUNDS

Fountains and Water Parks
Bayou Bend Gardens

ALSO

Sol LeWitt
Frank Stella

Notes on Contributors

Jay Baker, the principal of Jay Baker Architects, is a visiting critic at Rice School of Architecture and is working on a biography of Bill Caudill.

Joel Warren Barna, a writer living in Austin, is a frequent contributor to *Cite* and the former editor of *Texas Architect* magazine.

Jane Anderson Curtis, a landscape architect, is associate curator, Bayou Bend Gardens, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. With Hanna/Olin, Ltd. (now the Olin Partnership) of Philadelphia, she worked on the master plan for Hermann Park before moving to Houston.

Robert Fishman is a professor of history at Rutgers University.

Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.

Michael King, associate editor of *The Texas Observer*, lived for 10 years in Houston Heights.

J. Pittman McGehee, a Jungian analyst in Houston, lectures and writes extensively on psychology and religion. His poetry has been published in local and national journals.

Barry Moore, FAIA, an adjunct professor and director of the Center for Historic Architecture in the College of Architecture, University of Houston, is president and managing partner of SJKB/Houston.

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Barrie Scardino, managing editor of *Cite*, wrote the National Register nomination with Minnette Boesel, for the Main Street/Market Square Historic District in downtown Houston (1983).

William F. Stern is principal of William F. Stern & Associates, Architects and is an adjunct professor of architecture at the University of Houston.

David B. Warren, director of Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, came to Houston in 1965 as curator when Miss Hogg was still residing in the house. He is currently researching the history of the Bayou Bend Gardens for a forthcoming book.

Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

A Publication of the Rice Design Alliance

37: Spring 1997

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WebCite
http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA

Cite is printed on recycled paper.

Cover: Bayou Bend, north façade from behind the statue of Diana of Versailles, Antonio Frilli Studios, 1936.

Cite Calendar

MARCH

MARCH 1 THROUGH APRIL 20

MFAH Exhibition:
Fabulously French: Haute Couture 1897–1996.
The Textile and Costume Institute's annual exhibition showcases the last century of trend-setting names in French fashions. Haute couture by Lanvin, Vionnet, Courrèges, Saint Laurent, Dior, Chanel, Givenchy, Bohan, and Balenciaga are all included. *For information, please call 713.639.7300.*

MARCH 20 — THURSDAY, 3 P.M.

UHCA Lecture:
Recent Work.
Doug Oliver and **James Ray** discuss their work. *Lecture theater, College of Architecture, University of Houston. For information, please call 713.743.2400.*

MARCH 26 — WEDNESDAY, 10 A.M.

Decorative Center Lecture:
Creating the Wealth Corner.
Johndennis Govert, author of *Feng Shui: Art and Harmony of Place*, will lecture on Feng shui, the ancient art of placement now influencing American design. The household wealth corner is the main energy collection spot. Placing your bed correctly can assure sound, restful sleep; the position of red flowers in a room can help a relationship flourish. *A seminar from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. ($60; reservations required) will follow the lecture. 5120 Woodway at Sage. For information and reservations, please call 713.961.9292.*

MARCH 31 — MONDAY, 7 P.M.

UHCA Lecture:
Recent Work.
Aldo Rossi discusses his own work. *Atrium, College of Architecture, University of Houston. For information, please call 713.743.2400.*

APRIL

APRIL 4 THROUGH MAY 17

RDA Exhibition:
Houston Works: Exhibition of the Work of Houston Designers.
In collaboration with Lawndale Art & Performance Center, RDA has invited Houston design professionals to participate in an exhibition of their work at Lawndale. The show will provide an opportunity for the public to see a wide variety of built and unbuilt projects being designed in Houston today. *4912 Main Street. For information, please call 713.528.5858 or visit http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA*

APRIL 4 THROUGH APRIL 5

RSA Symposium:
Architecture after Individualism.
For the Second Paul Kennon Memorial Symposium, 35 participants, including **George Baird, Françoise Gaillard, Benjamin Gianni, Jean-Joseph Goux, Kevin Kennon, Greg Lynn, Bruce Mau, Kay Ngee, Allen Weiss,** and **Mabel Wilson** will contribute papers in eight sessions: "Architecture and Liberty," "The Collective and the Procedural in Architecture," "Capital's Passions and Architecture's Geometries," "The Architect as Individual in Changing Economies," "The Place of the Individual in Work," "Signature and Identity in Architecture," "Public Infrastructure and the Formation of Communities," and "The Object of Architecture." *Friday and Saturday, Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Anderson Hall, Rice University. For information, please call 713.528.2759 or visit http://www.ruf.rice.edu/arch*

APRIL 7 — MONDAY, 5:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

MFAH Evening for Educators:
All About Architecture.
Museum director Peter C. Marzio and architectural historian Stephen Fox will discuss the museum campus and provide information for classroom use including activities and walking tours. *Cosponsored by Aldine ISD. Admission is $3.50; registration not required. For information, please call 713.639.7590.*

APRIL 9 — WEDNESDAY, 8 P.M.

RDA Fireside Chat:
Towards a New Cultural Landscape in Quebec
As part of the *Northern Lights* lecture series, **Odile Hénault**, a young Montreal architecture critic, will give an inside view of the Québeçois architecture scene. *Sewall Hall, room 301, Rice University. For information, please call 713.527.4876 or visit http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA*

APRIL 10 — THURSDAY, 7 P.M.

UHCA Colloquium:
The House of the Century Turns 25.
Ant Farm architects **Richard Jost** and **Doug Michels** will join their client **Marilyn Oshman**, to discuss the futuristic ferro-cement weekend house on Lake Mojo in Brazoria County that turns 25 this year. *Lecture theater, College of Architecture, University of Houston. For information, please call 713.743.2400. See also* Cite*Survey in this issue (p. 7).*

APRIL 15 — TUESDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.
APRIL 16 — WEDNESDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

MFAH Exhibition:
Florescence: The Arts in Bloom.
Floral and horticultural arrangements by prominent floral designers, garden club experts, and well-known Houston personalities. *Cosponsored with the Garden Club of Houston and the River Oaks Garden Club. The flower show will be held at the MFAH, 1001 Bissonnet. Open to the public, free with museum admission. All proceeds benefit Bayou Bend. For information, please call 713.639.7538.*

APRIL 17 — THURSDAY, 6:30 P.M.

AIAH Symposium:
Rebuilding Beirut.
An explanation of the master planning effort to reconstruct the central business district in Beirut. *Lecture theater, University of Houston, College of Architecture. For information, please call 713.622.2081.*

APRIL 19 — SATURDAY, 7 P.M. TO 12:00

AIAH Gala:
Celebrate Architecture.
Benefitting the Houston Architecture Foundation, the annual AIA, Houston Chapter gala and design awards program will be held at the Four Seasons Hotel. The 1997 Thomas Jefferson Award, celebrating inventive spirit, will be presented to Larry McMurtrey. *For ticket information, please call 713.622.2081.*

APRIL 23 — WEDNESDAY, 8 P.M.

RDA Lecture:
Recreating the Ranch
Atlanta architect **Amy Aronson** will lecture on American ranch-style houses and their renovation. The ranch-style house, which had its heyday just after World War II, is newly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *Sewall Hall, room 301, Rice University. For tickets, please call 713.527.4876 or visit http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA*

APRIL 26 — SATURDAY, 1 P.M. TO 5 P.M.
APRIL 27 — SUNDAY, 1 P.M TO 5 P.M.

RDA Architecture Tour:
Rancheros Deluxe.
RDA's annual members-only architecture tour will look at the wide variety of ranch-style houses in Houston, including those at 3912 Roseneath Drive, 4216 Fernwood Drive, 3403 N. Parkwood Drive, 1802 Sunset Boulevard, 5330 Mandell, and 40 Tiel Way. *Tickets $10. Memberships available on the tour for $35 and include complimentary tour tickets. For information, please call 713.527.4876 or visit http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA*

MAY

MAY 1 — THURSDAY, 6 P.M.

UHCA Summer Program:
Architecture for High School Students.
Deadline for the June 16 – July 25 program, which will be held at the University of Houston. *See* Cite*Survey in this issue (p. 6). For information, please call 713.743.4000.*

MAY 3 AND MAY 10 —
SATURDAYS, 10 A.M. TO 6 P.M.
MAY 4 AND MAY 11 —
SUNDAYS, 12 NOON TO 6 P.M.

GHF Tour:
Galveston Historic Homes.
Ten privately owned houses are featured on the 23rd annual tour. *Advance tickets $13 before May 2; $15 at the door. For information, please call 409.765.7834.*

MAY 6 — TUESDAY, 8 P.M.

RDA Lecture:
Bill Boswell Memorial Lecture.
French designer **Andrée Putman** will lecture on her work, which includes the interiors of the Musee d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, the Morgans Hotel in New York, and the fashion boutiques of Ebel, Alaia, Lagerfeld, and Carita in Paris. Brown Auditorium, MFAH. *For information, please call 713.527.4876 or visit http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA*

MAY 31 — SATURDAY, ALL DAY

AIAH Competition:
Sand Castle Competition.
This annual event will be held on Galveston's East Beach. *For information, please call 713.622.2081.*

SUMMER

JULY 8 — TUESDAY, 6 P.M.

Quilts, Inc. Exhibition:
Tactile Architecture 1997.
Deadline for entries to the 12th annual juried exhibition. Quilt designs must have an architectural motif expressing the artist's understanding of the exhibit's theme. *The exhibition will be held in Houston in October 1997. There is a $25 entry fee. For information, please call Catherine Purifoy at 713.781.6864, ext. 123.*

FALL

SEPTEMBER 24 THROUGH OCTOBER 22

RDA Fall Lecture Series:
1900 to 2000, American Cities in the 20th Century.
This series will examine the dynamic changes that have occurred in American urbanism over the last 100 years, and the effects these changes have had on the architecture and physical nature of cities. *For information, please call 713.527.4876.*

NOVEMBER 14 — FRIDAY, 8 P.M.

RDA Gala:
Silver Jubilee.
RDA will celebrate its 25th anniversary with dinner, dancing, and a silent auction at the Petroleum Club. *For information, please call 713.527.4876.*

Cite Calendar now includes a wider range of design-related events in the Houston community. Please call 529-2483 to be included in our summer calendar, which will be published in Cite 38, June 1997.

Abbreviations for contributing organizations:
AIAH: American Institute of Architects, Houston
GHF: Galveston Historical Foundation
GHPA: Greater Houston Preservation Alliance
MFAH: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
RDA: Rice Design Alliance
RSA: Rice School of Architecture
UHCA: University of Houston, College of Architecture

op ED

The Bayou City

The pleasure-grounds of Houston include back yards, public parks, privately developed subdivisions, rivers we call bayous, and all the outdoor spaces in between that anyone has noticed or perhaps tried to improve.

Houston within Harris County has more than 2,000 miles of waterways, and we treat them like sewers. In this climate and on our overbuilt land, we need to protect every source of water we have. The city, in both the public and private sectors, has recently begun to take notice of how rich a resource our geography really is. We have abundant water and a climate that allows for beautiful trees and gardens.

By looking at Houston's landscape, this issue of *Cite* focuses on a variety of outdoor places in order to applaud the preservation of old places such as Bayou Bend and the construction of new ones such as the fountain at the Contemporary Arts Museum. We also hope to encourage projects on the drawing boards, such as the restoration of Hermann Park's grand basin and reflection pool and the Cotswold Project in Houston's historic district downtown. On every scale, from back yards to bayous, we can work harder to improve the landscape and the quality of our community life.

Barrie Scardino

On Houston: Space, Place, and Character

Lars Lerup
Dean, School of Architecture
Rice University

"To walk is to lack a place," wrote the French multi-theorist Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. To Houstonians who move mostly by car, the sense of "lack of place" is greatly heightened. After all, pedestrians don't feel that the buildings they walk along move, especially since most cities made for pedestrians have continuous buildings lining the sidewalks. But Houston drivers, in the face of all reason, see the world fly by, thus revving up the sense of placelessness. If, in addition, the driver leaves a generic office space and arrives at a house almost identical to the houses of his neighbors, only the other members of his family, their heirlooms, and their personal effects help slow down the sense of "always going West."

Place, argues Certeau, is a "configuration of stable positions," while space "is like the word when it is spoken." Thus freeway drivers are involved in making space, while simultaneously leaving place behind in the dust. These long attenuated spaces form invisible cocoons that come alive every time the driver gets on the road. Yet the connection between place and space is intimate, since Certeau also argues that "space is a practiced place." In other words, place doesn't exist until it is practiced or turned into space. This finally suggests that, while lacking place, we are simultaneously performing place, making placelessness in Houston a somewhat less urgent problem — provided of course that we think having a sense of place is important.

Place in Houston is quite different from place in Paris simply because place is practiced while walking in Paris but while driving in Houston. The place that is being activated in Houston while driving relies on a set of stable and "proper" positions that are quite distinct and specific: the canopy of trees, the system of bayous, the network of freeways, the weather (especially when it gets into its position of 90/90). These specifics are juxtaposed with generalities, such as franchise stores, gas stations, shopping centers, single-family houses, and standard cars. (Although we may argue that since there are so many Chevrolet Suburbans in Houston, they could be seen as specific.) The specifics are part of a menu of metropolitan characteristics essential for making Houston a place, while the generalities are part of global characteristics that we will find in Juneau as well as in Miami.

For Houston to fictionalize its characteristics, the way Paris or London has done, we need to create more metropolitan specificity. However, we have no reason to despair; Houston has distinguished itself quite well in its short lifetime. The Museum District, for example, like the dramatic separation of downtown and the Galleria, helps to give the city its specificity, but as citizens we can do our part too. The suburban house, which threatens to be diminished to only two or three types because that suits the mortgage industry, needs to embrace specifics. Where are the houses with a giant kitchen and no living room? Where are the houses with eight garages and no dining room? Where are the houses with one great Caracalla bath(room)? Where are the tree houses and the bayou houses? And where are the houses for those who love to dance? We are not all of the same tribe; we have different passions, quirks, and peculiarities. Let's play them out, give them form in our daily lives. Here is where architects can help. They know how to lift programs out of humdrum stereotypicality and how to give specificity and character to individual buildings. Tudors belong in England (and a past England at that)! Let's develop a set of Houston houses that will distinguish us from all other faceless megalopolises. All architects need are great clients. Are you out there?

RoadSide Kicks

Karen Weintraub
Norfolk, Virginia

It is a sad commentary on northwest Houston that the most attractive things to be seen off Interstate 45 are billboards. Without them the drive would be unbearably dull. Stretching out in both directions from this segment of freeway is a visual wasteland: trees are cut back several hundred feet on both sides, grass is rare, and the frontage road is pock-marked with hourly-rate motels, car dealerships, and discount furniture showrooms — not exactly the stuff of great architecture. Billboards interrupt the numbing horizontality of the exurban terrain the way mammoth towers of glass and steel punctuate the flatness of downtown Houston. Billboards don't make freeways beautiful, but they do add texture, even an urban fabric that is missing in other parts of the city.

There was a lot of talk in the 1970s and 1980s about the disappearance of Main Street, which, critics argued, had moved inside suburban shopping malls. Main Street also moved onto the American freeway. Driving down I-45 is like window-shopping on a nine-lane Main Street. Some of the stores are big and wide like Best Buy, others are short and modest — mom-and-pop operations. Some are set back or inflected a bit more toward the roadway, providing an unexpected density to these two-dimensional streetscapes. Unlike the old Main Street, best viewed during a casual stroll, the freeway Main Street must be appreciated from a car, preferably in the fast lane. At 60 mph, gaps between the billboards and other road signs — between storefronts on Main Street, to extend the metaphor — tend to disappear and the wall becomes continuous. Going too slowly or driving on feeder roads won't leave the same impression.

The new Main Street is not created by billboards alone but by the combination of billboards and signs. No roadscape is complete without a few golden arches or giant seashells. A pickup truck on a pole adds interest to the streetwall as it sends an unmistakable invitation: "Buy your truck here!" Signs also help make the area more visually interesting at night. Billboards are evenly lit from the bottom, but signs often flash, pulse, or spin, adding depth and action to the streetscape.

Boards and signs also give drivers a sense of orientation and location. The buildings along the road are undistinguished, and, in Houston at least, there are no real curves or hills to provide visual markers. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour recognized the importance of billboards when they wrote in *Learning From Las Vegas* in 1975: "If you take the signs away, there is not place. . . . The graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape." Another thing that makes billboards interesting is that they change. Unlike conventional architecture, the beginning of a month can bring a new image: spring brings the Astros, winter brings the Rockets. Billboard changes help mark the passage of time.

The presence of billboards along area highways also affirms something essential about Houston. Houston's personality has a lot to do with the city's libertarian business ethos — anyone can do what he wants with his own property. From its origins as the Allen brothers' real estate venture, Houston has been one big sales pitch. Billboards help reinforce that character. However, billboards are only spatially and iconographically important when they appear near other billboards. The single beer-promoting board in a residential patch doesn't belong. But to prohibit billboards along a highway such as I-45 would deprive Houston of a much-needed urban corridor and make thousands of commutes much less visually interesting.

At the University of Houston in 1992, Venturi said his "name would be mud" for admitting it, but he believes billboards are important to Houston's cityscape because they form a middle ground between the shotgun shacks of Fifth Ward and the skyscrapers of downtown. He concluded, "I love your billboards. The only trouble is they're not big enough."

Editor's note: *With this issue, Cite begins an op-ed page, which will become a regular feature. We invite submissions of approximately 500 words. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor will be published as space allows, and Cite reserves editorial rights. Please send correspondence to Editor, Cite Magazine, 1973 West Gray, Suite 1, Houston, Texas 77019 or fax us at 713.523.6108. Our e-mail address is barriemi@aol.com*

Letters

Cadillac Ranch, Absolutely!

Thanks for publishing photos of Cadillac Ranch and its sad alcoholic imitator, "Absolut Ranch," in *Cite* 36. For your information, we have taken legal action against Absolut Vodka for copyright violation. Ranch dressing indeed . . .

As you may know, Ant Farm's House of the Century is 25 years old this year (1972–97), and a celebration at the site is being planned. Hope to see you all there. After the flood . . . HOC Biotecture! By the way, the "Ant Farm in Houston" article in *Cite* 34 was excellent. Tom Diehl did a great job on the text, and the graphics were very cool.

Back here in Power City, it's NATIONAL SOFA time. My studio is now designing an interactive monument at the White House for live two-way communication between the President and the American public. We are scheduling a live test of the project this summer on Flag Day (June 14).

Meanwhile, best success with *Cite*.

Future on,
Doug Michels, Architect of Ideas
Washington, D.C.
February 10, 1997

Tunnel Vision

Here's a way to force all those downtown moles out of the tunnels [*Cite* 36] and onto the streets of downtown Houston to mingle with the thugs, winos, and panhandlers: why not flood the tunnels with Freon and convert them into giant air-conditioning coils? Ordinary people aren't as smart as architects (who don't seem to own cars) and have to be forced to enjoy strolling in the 85- to 95-degree heat (for six months out of the year), 95 per cent humidity, rain, auto exhaust, noise, and pollution. Maybe if we can air condition the streets of downtown Houston, we'll see more pedestrians.

G. Clifford Edwards
Houston
January 22, 1997

Rice Village

The last issue (*Cite* 36) was packed with some interesting stuff; hope you can keep it up. The article on the Rice Village left me wondering about a whole series of issues that were not addressed. Perhaps some future issues could. SUCH AS What is the trend in ownership? Did a registered architect really design the parking garage so visible from the west approach, which looks for all the world like a freeway overpass? What are the divergent opinions of the landlords/tenants as to what threatens the stability of the Village? I would love to see a map showing the real estate values, land uses, and revenue per square foot.

This issue of *Cite* concerned itself very directly with several important local topics. Something I would like to see in a future issue: a plan of the proposed Allen Parkway Village. I have never seen a plan of what designers have in mind, only a few verbal descriptions.

Tim Hansen, ASLA
Houston
February 3, 1997

News Flash

Hines College of Architecture

The Gerald Hines family will make a $7 million contribution over 20 years to the University of Houston College of Architecture. In honor of this donation, the college will be renamed the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. "This gift will help us become one of the preeminent architectural schools in the nation," said Bruce Webb, dean of the College of Architecture. The donation will provide a permanent endowment and fund programs that enhance study opportunities for architecture students at the University of Houston.

CiteSurvey

Simms Bayou at Broadway, laid back to prevent flooding and allow natural vegetation to reestablish itself.

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

The saga of Simms Bayou is approaching a happy ending. Since the 1940s, the Corps of Engineers, which moves very slowly (thank goodness) has had a project on the books to channelize Simms Bayou in a 300-foot-wide swath — solid, straight-across concrete, not just at the bottom of the bayou. Even though it has been public knowledge that the bayou would be swallowed up in this way, subdivisions and commercial buildings had gradually built up over time, sometimes constructed in the bayou right-of-way.

Around 1991, bayou neighbors were called to action by public bid announcements for the concrete job. A full set of working drawings had even been completed, and public hearing had been held over 10 years before and been forgotten. This time neighborhood activist and environmentalist Evelyn Merz did an amazing job of organizing opposition. Through the courts, the Corps of Engineers was forced to study alternatives; the agency found none.

After stalling the $400 million project but failing to change or cancel it, the Merz group got the ear of Houston Congressman Mike Andrews, who was on the House Ways and Means Committee. Andrews brought in landscape architect Kevin Shanley, who subsequently has spent hundreds of volunteer hours on the Simms Bayou project.

Shanley, who had been promoting a 200-year plan for Houston's bayous, was given two weeks to come up with a workable alternative. He admits to pulling a rabbit out of a hat. In exercising condemnation rights, the Corps of Engineers had acquired an extra right-of-way because many buildings were condemned even if they only encroached slightly. Shanley's idea was to use the whole right-of-way and make the channel much wider, enabling it to hold flood waters when necessary.

Houston's bayous have always been little more than sewers and storm drains. The Corps of Engineers, and its partner the Harris County Flood Control District, wanted only two things from the bayous — for the water to move as fast as possible, and for it to move in channels that were as inexpensive as possible to build. The environmentalists, on the other hand, have wanted to slow the water down and treat these waterways more like rivers, leaving them to nature. Shanley was able to find a compromise solution.

Simms Bayou is 22 miles long, flowing from Buffalo Bayou to Missouri City. Along its banks native Live Oaks and Bald Cypress trees were clear cut at the turn-of-the century for farm land and rice fields. The trees presently growing in the flood plain have all grown up since the subdivisions were established. Shanley's wide-channel proposal necessitated taking out all these trees, much to the chagrin of neighbors.

In the geomorphology of rivers, flood benches are formed naturally over time as flooding periodically occurs. Imitating nature seemed to be the best solution, so artificial benches were proposed with the promise that trees would be added back on the upper terraces. The typical southern forest has 600 trees per acre, and that was the initial goal. With budget reductions, only 14 trees per acre are to be planted now, but the possibility of supplemental planting will always exist.

The banks of Simms Bayou are being laid back, with no concrete, in reaches of about two miles each. The first reach, around Broadway near Hobby Airport, is almost complete. Construction will take at least another five to ten years, working its way slowly upstream.

Shanley is happy with the direction that this project has taken. He says, "It shows that we can work in partnership with neighbors and engineers to make our bayous living things within the urban fabric. There is great possibility for Houston's waterways to become an integral part of our lives."

The Bayou Preservation Association has regrouped with a focus on creating long-term policy. To participate or receive further information, please call 713.529.6443.

CAMP VITRUVIUS

Forty students representing 27 area high schools took part in the first Summer Discovery Program for High School Students at the College of Architecture, University of Houston last year. The students were taught by professors from the architecture schools of both the University of Houston and Rice University and by local practicing architects as well as experts in related fields. This five-week introduction to the architectural profession included field trips, college-level studio work, and several hands-on design projects. The summer session culminated with a show of the students' work. A lot of interest (over 100 applications were received) and positive reviews have led the UH College of Architecture to offer this summer school program again this year.

The 1996 program benefited from an unusually talented and dedicated group of teachers, many of whom will return this year: studio critics Rob Civitello,

University of Houston summer program student in the chair he created for the second week project.

University of Houston students show and tell at the exhibition of student work at the end of the summer program.

Nonya Grenader, Gabriella Gutierrez, Carlos Jimenez, Donna Kacmar, and David Thaddeus; teaching assistants Wayne Andrist, Hector Garcia, and Nina Murrell; and guest lecturers Leonard Bachman, Betty Bollinger, Joe Colaco, Margaret Culbertson, Stephen Fox, Deborah Grotfeldt, Barry Greenlaw, Nora Laos, Paul Lodholtz, Barry Moore, Patrick Peters, Jeff Ryan, Danny Samuels, Suzanne Theis, and Dean Bruce Webb. Major gifts from the Elkins Trust, Exxon, the Atrium Society of the College of Architecture, and the Rice Design Alliance were joined by contributions from HOK, Morris Architects, W. O. Neuhaus, and Ziegler Cooper Architects. Individual scholarships were underwritten by the Junior League of Houston, Inc., Mrs. Jackson Hinds, and Jose Molina.

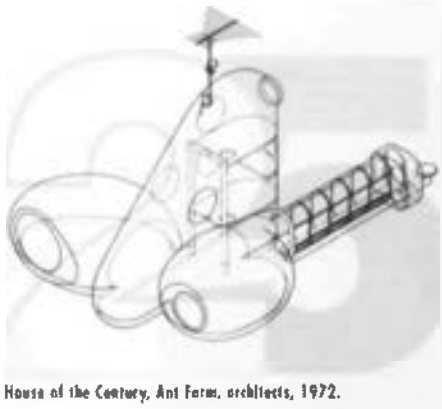
The second annual Summer Discovery Program for High School Students will take place this year from June 16 to July 25. Students entering the 11th or 12th grades or the first year of college are eligible to apply. Tuition is $285, including field trips and supplies. Scholarships are available on the basis of need. Applications must be completed by May 1, 1997. *Drexel Turner for information, call 713.743.4000*

MORE MOORE

Last September the Charles W. Moore House and the Moore/Andersson architectural offices built in 1984 in Austin were finally put into the hands of the Charles W. Moore Foundation to be opened at a museum. The foundation was established after Moore's death at age 68 on December 16, 1993. The generosity of Austin residents, particularly Mr. and Mrs. Willard M. Hanzlik; Moore's nephews, Lawrence, David, Steven, and Bruce Weingarten; and Arthur W. Andersson, Moore's architectural partner, helped saved this legacy of late-20th-century American architecture. For almost three years, architects, students, and clients have been working to preserve this landmark as a memorial to Moore's work and whimsey.

In Moore's sprawling house his collections of toys, books, dolls, masks, drawings, and architectural models are part of the architecture of his life and his work, not mere interior decorations. In the *New York Times* (October 20, 1994), Paul Goldberger wrote that the hacienda like compound (two houses, two studios) "sums up Moore's architectural ideas

Charles Moore House interior, Austin, Texas, Moore/Andersson Architects, 1984.



House of the Century, Ant Farm, architects, 1972.

brilliantly: it is a tiny village that wants to be a cathedral. A cluster of small shed buildings arranged around a courtyard containing a small swimming pool, it is deceptively simple on the outside." Saving this remarkable house and its contents will give the public an American house museum equivalent to the John Soane Museum in London.

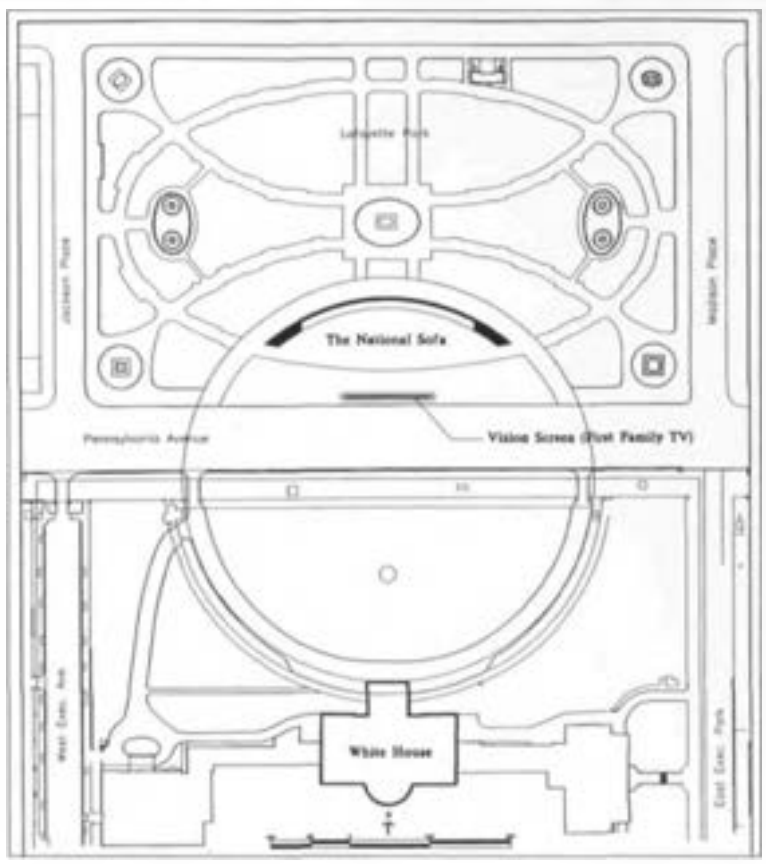
Significantly, the Weingarten family has also donated the Charles W. Moore Archive to the University of Texas at Austin. A monumental record of Moore's career, this archive consists of 100,000 slides, correspondence, drawings, watercolors, and manuscripts. Moore's exceptional architectural library, also donated to the University of Texas, will remain in the house.

Kevin Keim, director of the foundation, says that the house at 2102 Quarry Road, Austin, Texas 78703 is now open by appointment (call 512.477.6660). Tours are $10 per person but free for students.

HOC 25

To celebrate the House of the Century 25th anniversary, a party will take place at the Mojo Lake site in September 1997. The HOC was designed in 1972 by Ant Farm architects (Richard Jost, Chip Lord, Doug Michels) for Houstonian Marilyn Oshman. An Ant Farm press release states: "The Brazoria birthday bash will be featuring a futuristic cake, ethereal lighting with swamp gas, Ant Farm multimedia performance, and a live Mojo music soundscape. In coordination with the live on-site event, an HOC25 design exhibit is scheduled to open in Houston featuring original HOC concepts, design drawings, 3-D architecture models, and a private photographic history of this secluded Brazoria County Dreamhouse over the past 25 years. *HOC 25 Myth Management: Curious Relic or Forgotten Masterpiece?* You decide . . . <www.hoc@25.com>."

On April 10, 1997, two of the architects, Jost and Michels, will join owner Oshman at the University of Houston for a colloquium on this unusual project. See *Cite* Calendar in this issue (p. 3).



THE NATIONAL SOFA (James Allegro and Doug Michels, architects, 1996) is intended as "an icon of freedom and an interactive monument of the future." The architects would like to see the curved 300-foot marble sofa built across from the White House. The idea is to be a living symbol of American democracy, where cameras located throughout the White House could beam live images of the First Family to a floating screen in front of the National Sofa, where American couch potatoes could have two-way, impromptu conversations with the President.

Coming in Cite 38 . . .

Blackboard Jumble

Lost and Found Spaces: Alternative Schoolrooms

Care Packages: Daycare in Houston

. . . and other articles on school architecture

courtesy Library of Congress

Moundville, Alabama, 1938. WPA photograph by Walker Evans.

CONTEXT

J. Pittman McGehee

Corrugated tin forms,
like cardboard turned in-
side out hiding light in
gray waves, were the
ubiquitous buildings of my youth,
leaving no more impression
than bald mesquite or
barbed wire.

In 1969, I saw this
Walker Evans image. Like a
Masai warrior seeing a
Serengeti lion on
Broadway, I saw my life on the
MOMA wall.

Something rose, while the
tin lion yawned, and I
fell prey.

Rite of Spring Fountain: *The Firebird*, Place Igor Strawinsky, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. Niki de Saint-Phalle, sculptor, 1983.

Intellectuals think that we live in a world of ideas which we invent. . . . But deep inside of us is a wilderness. . . . The collective unconscious is a great wild region where we can get in touch with the sources of life.
— Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols*

The human need for water goes far beyond biological necessity. It is a need born of our deepest instincts, captured in myth and celebrated in pageantry, art, and spectacle. In Greek mythology, water, equated with life itself, was the home of the Nereids and naiads, who beckoned mortals in the ancient world with their beauty and immortality to partake of the natural wonders and sensuous pleasures of brooks, springs, rivers, and the sea. Water entices and

Fountain Place, Dallas, Texas, Dan Kiley, landscape architect, 1989.

Foun

Richard C. Rome

captivates the human mind, prompting thoughts of solace, freedom, and spiritual rebirth.

Cities are no less connected than their individual inhabitants to the need for water. Indeed, the presence of water often determined settlement sites, and many cities became great because of the abundance and quality of their waters. Harbors, rivers, springs, and fountains provide the lore of historical city life, and perhaps nowhere has this happened more gracefully than in Rome. Yet it was not the Tiber that bathed Rome's citizens and quenched their thirsts. It was the fresh water from mountain springs that reached imperial Rome via an elaborate system of aqueducts that fed her public bath houses, which were unprecedented in their number, scale, and sumptuousness.

Trevi Fountain, Rome, Italy, Nicola Salvi, architect, 1762.

The Water Gardens, Fort Worth, Texas, Johnson/Burgee Architects, 1974.

tains & Fireworks

The Roman fountains that have endured remind visitors and residents how water can shape and distinguish an urban environment. The Trevi Fountain locked within its tiny square; the Tortoise and Triton fountains surviving the ever-rising tide of Fiats; the Fountain of the Four Rivers majestically afloat in the Piazza Navona; and the Barcaccia washed up at the base of the Spanish Steps shape our memories of Rome. By commissioning these works of great art and design, the powers of both ancient and Renaissance Rome not only provided signification of its water sources but bequeathed a layering of richly varied civic monuments to the city. These engaging landmarks enrich one's perception of the city and provide neighborhoods and districts with identifying imagery. The engineering brilliance of early Roman aqueducts has been surpassed in the modern era, but it is questionable whether the splendor of Renaissance fountains has been duplicated in the 20th century.

The use of water as a feature in urban centers takes many forms, from isolated fountains to grand water gardens. Like fireworks, fountains delight in direct proportion to their serial perception; a single fountain is a joy and a pleasure, but a series of fountains in combination with pools and waterfalls provides an urban spectacle.

Texas cities have produced several significant water features: the River Walk in San Antonio (Robert H. H. Hugman, 1941); Town Lake in Austin (a dammed segment of the Colorado River); the Water Gardens in Fort Worth (Johnson/Burgee Architects, 1974); Fountain Place in Dallas (Dan Kiley, 1989); and the Transco Fountain in Houston (Johnson/Burgee Architects and Richard Fitzgerald & Partners, 1985). Of course innumerable fountains and pools dot and sometimes enliven other Texas cities. There is no shortage of Texas fountains, but there is often a lack of critical mass. Tranquillity Park in Houston (Charles Tapley Associates, 1979), for example, makes a gesture toward being a water feature but lacks the succession of experiences that build upon one another to create a true water garden. The possibility for a change in context explains the popular success of Houston's Transco Fountain and Park, which offer a series of spaces and environmental moods in addition to the grand spectacle of its water wall. If the reflecting pool envisioned in the original scheme had been constructed, the park would have achieved most of that to which a water garden aspires.

Like a successful fireworks display, a water garden assumes its own character and tempo. The immense power of a flood-swollen river can be evoked through careful choreography of syncopated jets and geysers. Or the peacefulness of a calm lake can be achieved through properly scaled and sited pools. But an individual fountain, no matter how clever in detail and rich in metaphor, can only offer a single spectacle. Even if its display is varied, its context and environment are static. Houston's downtown fountains, such as those at Allen Center and Sam Houston Park, offer individually satisfying water moments, but they lack the power of an intentional series of coordinated water features, and they resist linkage in the viewer's eye and consciousness due to their idiosyncratic designs and water displays.

Most Houston fountains also lack sufficient interplay between architecture and water. Even some of the most successful fountains in terms of water play have no architecture connected with them at all, either as a backdrop or integrated into the fountain design. These include the Mecom Fountain (Eugene Werlin & Associates, 1964) at the intersection of Montrose Boulevard and South Main Street and the Jesse H. Jones Fountain (SWA Group, 1983) at the intersection of Fannin and Greenbriar near the Astrodome, among several others, whose only constructed components are mere saucers to contain the water. This is adequate for the three-part Mecom Fountain, where the high water jets are always in operation and the landscaping is always perfect. It is an eyesore in the case of the Jones Fountain, which never seems to be turned on, so all one sees is a dry concrete lip looking desolate. The Jesse Jones Fountain was given to the city by Houston Endowment Inc. with the understanding that it would be maintained by Houston's Parks and Recreation Department. On a recent visit to all of the city-owned fountains, including the Jones Fountain, half of them were not in operation, leaving one to question Houston's stewardship of these public amenities (see *Fifty Fountains*, p.12).[3]

Fort Worth's Water Gardens demonstrate what kind of commitment a community must make to sustain a major public water park. The $3 million price tag for the current renovation of the Water Gardens is equal to the park's original cost in the early 1970s.[4] Even with an annual operating budget of about 10 percent of the original construction cost, the project has suffered the fate of other urban water gardens and fountains — gradual decline and incremental mechanical failure. The collapse of one of the garden's light towers in the early 1990s resulted in the death of two visitors to the park, and hundreds of thousands of nesting birds in the garden's now mature trees have created serious health hazards for both park users and plants. Along with new accessibility standards imposed upon public parks by the federal government, these necessitated a total renovation plan for the property.

The expense will be staggering. Yet the impact such a garden has upon an urban area is incalculable. Much like the network of fountains that energizes Rome, the Water Gardens contribute significantly to Fort Worth's urban countenance. Currently enjoying a remarkable renaissance of street activity and urban night life, downtown Fort Worth has become a major regional entertainment center and weekend destination. Replacement of the central elevated freeway with a landscaped, at-grade boulevard will undoubtedly enhance opportunities for expanded use of the Water Gardens. While such a public amenity cannot alone revive urban life, it can provide a key ingredient shared by all great urban centers — a place for impromptu entertainment and relaxation, a place to see and be seen.

Because Rome is full of such places, every visitor there has been tempted into the city's night to explore its charms and hazard its dangers. The piazzas and their fountains beckon crowds by energizing a cold, wet winter night and by alleviating the hot sun of a summer afternoon. Water gardens, not unlike a lake's edge or an urban river bank, offer much the same invitation. As long as crowds provide ambient security and authorities provide real security, such places enliven and animate the urban scene around the clock.

They create place-specific memories and give special images to record a visit. Photographs taken at the Fort Worth Water Gardens or along San Antonio's River Walk cannot be mistaken for those taken elsewhere. They are icons of urban Texas. The captivating quality of a collection of water features elevates a setting to urban theater, making it memorable and conferring an identity.

Water displays can go hand-in-hand with artistic achievement. Bernini's heroic stoneworks give their piazzas mythical and magical import. Likewise, Johnson/Burgee's Fort Worth water cascade creates a roar and a spectacle missing from most urban parks. When landscape architect Dan Kiley was questioned about his inspiration for Dallas's downtown Fountain Place, an equally successful water experience, he quoted Genesis: "And a river went out of Eden."[3] Perhaps all great water features are conceived with Biblical references. Charles Moore, who created a number of memorable water features, in his poetic work *Water + Architecture* quoted Nicola Salvi, architect of the Trevi Fountain: "Fountains and the water they give forth can be called the only everlasting source of continuous being."[4]

Johnson/Burgee's intentions for the Water Gardens in Fort Worth are similarly abstract and grandiloquent. Like Kiley in Dallas, the architects were inspired not by what their site offered, but by what it lacked. Unlike Bernini, whose inspiration came from context and milieu, Kiley and Johnson/Burgee saw the cores of these Texas cities as hostile to civic art and as unfinished places. Through the eyes of European or even East Coast urbanists, the fabric and topography of Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth offer little inspiration: these cities are automobile oriented and given to architectural hyperbole rather than coherent urbanist vision. For an outdoor space to succeed in the flat, hot Texas environment, it must overcome a boring site and provide an alternative vision — a virtual place that creates its own space, time, and climate.

The park at Transco Tower in Houston offers many of the same lessons as the Fort Worth Water Gardens. Both create a mythical mindset that seeks to capture a history that never was. The meaning of a landscape is a combination of what users bring to it and what the design evokes.[5] The design of public spaces needs powerful expression and forceful creative imagination, but serendipity can play an important role as well.[6] Successful public spaces are those that the public accepts and makes its own. They must be safe, populated day and night, and they must instill pride and a sense of ownership in their users; yet they can be neither too abstract, lest they lose their sensual qualities, nor too literal, lest they become boring and lifeless.

Susan and Geoffrey Jellicoe have pointed out that our society is not, as it was during the Baroque period of Versailles and the Vatican, constant and static. They suggest that in our world the "only constancy is change, and therefore movement." Water therefore is the most appropriate civic symbol, for "Water *is* movement."[7] The two essential states of water, quiet movement and active movement, are seen by the Jellicoes as being akin to the art movements of the abstract (quiet) and the constructive or geometric (active). In his plan for Moody Gardens in Galveston, Jellicoe employed both states of water to a remarkable degree, and the plan contains tributes to his favorite water environments: the Generalife, Shalamar Bagh, Katsura, the Villa d'Este, the Villa Lante, and Isola Bella. It is not surprising that the link between Jellicoe's garden worlds is a river voyage through both time and geography.

A crucial question of water gardening remains: How can we maintain the architectural use of water, skillfully captured and displayed for our pleasure, when the agent is so universally corrosive? Budgets for the gardens in Dallas and Fort Worth suggest that 10 percent of the installation costs are minimal for maintenance of operation. It is also a reasonable expectation that after 25 to 30 years, renovation and improvements will run near the initial capital expenditure. Such high figures might lead decision makers to question the wisdom of constructing water features in the first place, but as a society we know that great civic art through the centuries has proven to be worth any expense.

While it is difficult to measure the pride and enjoyment residents find in returning time and time again to a dynamic water-play, it is impossible to assess the value of a visitor's gasp of recognition upon seeing that which had before been seen only as a video image or glossy photograph. We travel to those places that captivate our imaginations and offer us unique and memorable imagery. The greatest and most alluring of such places almost always include water. ■

1 A list of all "decorative fountains" owned and maintained by the City of Houston was supplied to *Cite* by the Parks and Recreation Department in December 1996.

2 Hunt-Zollar, *Fort Worth Water Gardens—Architectural/Engineering Assessment* (Fort Worth/Dallas, 1994); and author's interview with Robert P. Riley, Superintendent of Park Planning and Resource Management, City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services, 1996.

3 Patricia Lee Quaid, *Landscape Palimpsest: Layers of Meaning in the Dallas Built Landscape* (Arlington: University of Texas Press, 1966).

4 Charles W. Moore and Jane Lidz, *Water + Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 49.

5 Quaid.

6 Amos Rapport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982).

7 Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *Water — The Use of Water in Landscape Architecture* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971).

Fifty Fountains

Barrie Scardino

Houston has more fountains than you think. For what we thought would be a very short side-bar to Richard Rome's **Fountains and Fireworks**, **Cite** *began to look at Houston fountains, beginning with a list of those owned by the City of Houston (*). We found many more fountains and water features than we imagined existed in Houston. Although a few of the city fountains are inoperable, depending on wind velocity and maintenance schedules, all of them are off at one time or another. New fountains in restaurant courtyards, office and hotel plazas, and apartment/condominiums are literally springing up everywhere. The following list is by no means complete, but it contains some of our favorites.*

Downtown

4. *Baldwin Park, 1701 Elgin Street. 1910. *This sad concrete dish is forlorn and waterless in an unkempt area with no sign of life.*

1. Allen Center Fountain, 1200 Smith Street. ca. 1977. The SWA Group. *Moving water flows from stepped orthogonal pools under a bridge and spills into a lawn-edged pool from three silvery tubes.*

5. Cullen Bank Tower Fountain, 1600 Smith Street. 1984. The SWA Group. *A wall slit on Pease lets passers-by see this plaza and fountain from an unusual vantage point.*

2. Allen Center Dwarves, 1200 Smith Street. ca. 1977. The SWA Group. *Doc, Dopey, Sneezy, Sleepy, Grumpy, Happy, and Bashful are hi-ho-ing it off to work in Allen Center.*

6. Glenwood Cemetery Fountain, 2525 Washington Avenue. 1871. *This three-tier fountain originally stood in Market Square; it was moved to Glenwood Cemetery long ago.*

3. *Hector Azios Fountain, Guadalupe Plaza, 2311 Runnels Street. 1988. Luis Bodmer, architect; George S. Porcher, landscape architect. *This three-tier carved stone fountain is set in an interesting pool next to the failed El Mercado del Sol.*

7. Hellenian-Baldwin Fountain, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Avenue. ca. 1925. Gregory Catlow, landscape architect. *This stone basin fountain carved in New York enhances a pleasant churchyard oasis in the middle of downtown Houston.*

8. *Houston City Hall Fountain and Reflection Pool, 901 Bagby Street. 1939. Hare & Hare, landscape architects. *This fountain spills into a long pool that reflects the City Hall tower.*

12. *Sesquicentennial Fountain, Sam Houston Park, Allen Parkway at Bagby Street. 1891. *This cast-iron fountain was part of Mayor T. H. Scanlan's estate at 1917 Main Street from 1891 until 1937. it now greets motorists entering Allen Parkway.*

16. *Tranquility Park, 400 Rusk Avenue. 1979. Charles Tapley Associates. *When it works, water glides down giant cylinders (that hide exhaust stacks for the Civic Center garage) into multilevel pools of water. Except for a few vagabonds, this water park is underused because it is so cut off from the street.*

19. *Bell Park, 4800 Montrose Boulevard. 1970. Wilson, Morris, Cram & Anderson, architects; Allen D. Thompson, landscape architect. *This park, close to the Museum District, has a natural-looking pond spouting water and is well maintained.*

9. *Jones Hall Public Plaza, 600 Louisiana Street. *This fountain is at the bottom of the staircase leading from the tunnel-level parking garages to the plaza in front of Jones Hall.*

13. *Sesquicentennial Park, 400 Texas Avenue at Buffalo Bayou. 1989. TeamHou. *Water cascades down several levels below the Wortham Theater can be seen from the Bagby Street bridge over Buffalo Bayou, if you're stopped by a red light.*

17. *Gus S. Wortham Memorial Fountain, Buffalo Bayou Park, Allen Parkway. 1977. William T. Cunnady & Associates. *This dandelion fountain was designed after a fountain the Worthams admired in Australia. Owned by the city but maintained daily by American General, whose headquarters is across the street.*

20. Dolphin Fountain, Hyde Park Boulevard at Waugh Drive. 1936. *This idiosyncratic fountain, created for a World Floral Exposition in Sam Houston Coliseum, was bought by the Hyde Park Funeral Home and placed in front of its building. Marble dolphins spout into a pleasant pool also fed by a double-tier basin.*

10. M. W. Kellogg Tower Plaza Fountain, 601 Jefferson Street. 1991. Slaney Santana Group, landscape architects. *Water bubbles out of the sidewalk around a long sunken lawn.*

14. *Bob and Vivian Smith Fountain, 1300 Smith Street. ca. 1969. *This large, happy water display is on a prominent downtown site.*

Midtown–Medical Center

21. Garden Club of Houston Park Fountain, Texas Medical Center, Bertner Street at Wilkins. 1980-84. Charles Tapley, landscape architect. *In front of the Institute of Religion, this restful corner is kept beautifully planted year round by the Garden Club of Houston. The fountain is a big gush with water coming and going.*

11. *Neuhaus Fountain, Sam Houston Park, 1000 Bagby Street. 1991. The SWA Group, landscape architects; Gwynn Murrill, artist. *Three coyotes wander in a grove of trees beside a rocked rill flowing into a pool. Hugo Neuhaus left this fountainscape in memory of his parents.*

15. Tenneco Fountain, 1000 Louisiana Street. 1988. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. *Water slithers down zigzag glass panels and rushes over a short flight of tiny steps before falling into a rickrack-edged pool on a busy sidewalk.*

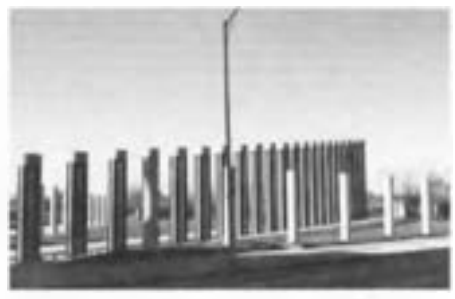
18. Alkek Fountain, Texas Medical Center, Baylor College of Medicine, M. D. Anderson Boulevard. 1982. Ray Bailey Architects. *This high water-spray identifies the front door of Baylor.*

22. *Hermann Park: George Hermann Fountain, Fannin Street at North MacGregor Way. 1981. Ben Lednicky & Associates, landscape architects. *This footed, curving trough spills plenty of water with a satisfying gush into its basin.*

23. *Hermann Park: Garden Center Fountain, 1875. J. Worrington Wood, sculptor. A handsome Italian marble sculpture kneels in the center of a small bubbling pool amid well-tended rose gardens.*

27. *Hermann Park: Sandy Reid Memorial Kugel Ball Fountain, 1995. Lauren Griffith & Associates, landscape architects. A 5,100-pound, perfectly balanced polished granite ball rests on a water bed created by a 1.5 hp pump. Even small children can rotate the sphere. Big success.*

31. *"The Sisters," Mary Ellen Hale Lovett Courtyard, Jones College, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, 1969–70. Carl Milles, sculptor. The oversize bronze sculpture by the renowned Swedish sculptor Carl Milles (1875–1955) stands in the center of three rectangular pools with syncopated fountains.*



35. *Worthham Fountain, from Texas Medical Center, Main at Holcombe, 1990. Johnson/Burgee Architects; Martin Schwertz, landscape architect. This is not really one of our favorites, but it is too big and too expensive to ignore. We still miss the Shamrock pool, which made this corner look like Miami Beach.*

24. *Hermann Park: John Malcom Fountain, Montrose Boulevard at Main Street, 1964. Eugene Werlin & Associates. Houston's best set amid mature Live Oaks, this series of major water displays is across from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at the entrance to Hermann Park.*

28. *Jesse H. Jones Fountain, 7898 Lamon Street at Greenbriar near the Astrodome, 1983. The SWA Group, landscape architects. This huge empty concrete dish would be a great UFO landing site. Houston Endowment requested that the fountain be repaired or Jones's name be removed; it's not fixed, and his name is still there.*

32. *Rose Fountain, South Main Baptist Church, 4000 Main Street, ca. 1965. Although this church was built in 1930, it was not until the 1960s that it was able to obtain its frontage on Main Street. The fountain is a memorial to Wade Hampton and Nannie Sue Irwin.*

36. *Worthham Fountain, back, Texas Medical Center, Main at Holcombe, 1990. Johnson/Burgee Architects; Martin Schwertz, landscape architect. Behind the graceless monolithic marching columns (see above) is a most pleasant reflecting pool flanked by pergolas.*

25. *Hermann Park: Mecom-Rockwell Fountain, across from 1111 Hermann Drive, 1992. Lauren Griffith & Associates. High water plume in the center of a colonnade created from the Doric proscenium of the original Miller Theater designed by William Ward Watkin (1923). Preferred site for bridal photography.*

29. *Peggy's Point Plaza, 4240 Main Street, 1964. Neuhaus Associates, architects. When it's working, this lively water display brightens the bus stop on a dreary corner almost underneath U.S. 59.*

33. *Rothko Chapel Reflection Pool, 1409 Sul Ross. In front of the Rothko Chapel, a quiet reflection pool has Barnett Newman's sculpture "Broken Obelisk" (1964) installed by Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil as a memorial to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

37. *Wyndham Warwick Fountain, 5701 Main Street, ca. 1975. This series of fountains is special because it is, with the Mecom, Mecom-Rockwell, Warwick Towers, Natural Science Museum, and Garden Center fountains, along a 15-minute stroll, where one is never out of earshot of water.*

26. *Hermann Park: Virginia and Ernest Cockrell, Jr., Sundial Fountain, 1 Hermann Circle Drive, 1989. Hoover & Furr, architects. At the base of an asymmetrical polished black granite pyramid sundial, called a gnomon, a fountain shoots water 10 feet into the air, then cascades down over a weir into a pool shaped like the coast of Texas.*

30. *Shirley Baker Pond Fountain, Palmer Memorial Church, 6221 Main Street, 1979 (pool, Charles Tapley Associates); 1994 (fountain). This unusual fountain is enjoyed not only by parishioners but also by homeless people to whom breakfast is served every morning in the courtyard.*

34. *Wiston-Westheimer District Plaza Fountain, 1901–1915 Westheimer, 1996. McDugald Steele, landscape architects. This unusual sidewalk fountain and plaza were added to a strip development by T-CONN Properties, Ltd. as a way to attract attention. It works.*

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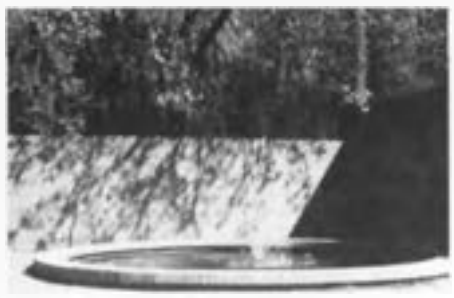
River Oaks Garden Club 38
Richard E. Reese 13
Stacey Santana 10
Barne Suardino 1,2,4,5,8,9,11,12,14,16,18,21-23,26,27,29,30-37,40-46,49,50
James F. Wilson 48

River Oaks–Memorial



41. *Memorial Park: Houston Arboretum and Nature Center Fountains, 4501 Woodway. *A pair of sprays on either side of the Arboretum entrance welcomes visitors.*

45. *River Oaks Park Fountain, 3600 Locke Lane. 1938. *This is another nonworking concrete dish. Glad to see party with Baldwin Park.*

South and East Houston

38. Bayou Bend Diana Fountain, 1 Westcott off Memorial Drive. 1938. Fleming & Sheppard, landscape architects. *Water jets form a series of arches in front of the marble Diana, goddess of the hunt. Bayou Bend Gardens, once private, are now open for tours; this is one of the loveliest fountain settings in Houston. Bayou Bend has several other fountains.*

42. *Memorial Park: Anita and Charles Wilner Fountain, golf course clubhouse. 1995. *The golf course serves as a backdrop for this curving brick cascade on the terrace of the golf club restaurant.*

46. *Sleepy Hollow Park, 3400 Sleepy Hollow at Chevy Chase, River Oaks. ca. 1930s. *This charming cherub is located in an old-fashioned setting, but the fountain looks as if it hasn't worked for decades.*

48. Exxon Brookhollow, 4500 Dacoma. 1996. The Office of James Burnett, landscape architects. *Burnett's new landscaping for old Exxon buildings is centered around a gurgling, contemplative linear pool that invites stone-stepping. Exxon employees are happy to have visitors join them.*

39. Goode Company Hamburgers & Taqueria, 4902 Kirby Drive. 1986. *Each shelf of this four-tier Mexican fountain is carved from a solid piece of stone. Squeezed into a small parking-lot courtyard, this is one of the best local restaurant fountains.*

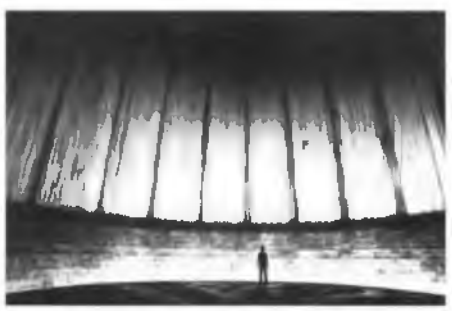
43. Omni Fountain, Omni Hotel, 4 Riverway. 1981. The SWA Group, landscape architects. *Three fuchsia colored wall-trough fountains in front of the hotel were inspired by the work of Mexican architect Luis Barragan.*

Northwest Houston

49. Tower of Cheyenne Fountain, Anne Garrett Butler Plaza, University of Houston. 1972. Peter Forakis, sculptor. *The Cullen Family Plaza and the Student Life Plaza at the UH also have memorable water displays.*

40. *Memorial Park: Barbara and George Bush Presidential Grove, 6501 Memorial Drive. 1996. Lauren Griffith, landscape architect. *Just south of the golf clubhouse, this water garden has a rock-lined nature pond filled by water cascades. The water leaves the pond to wander gently in a rock-lined brook through the golf course.*

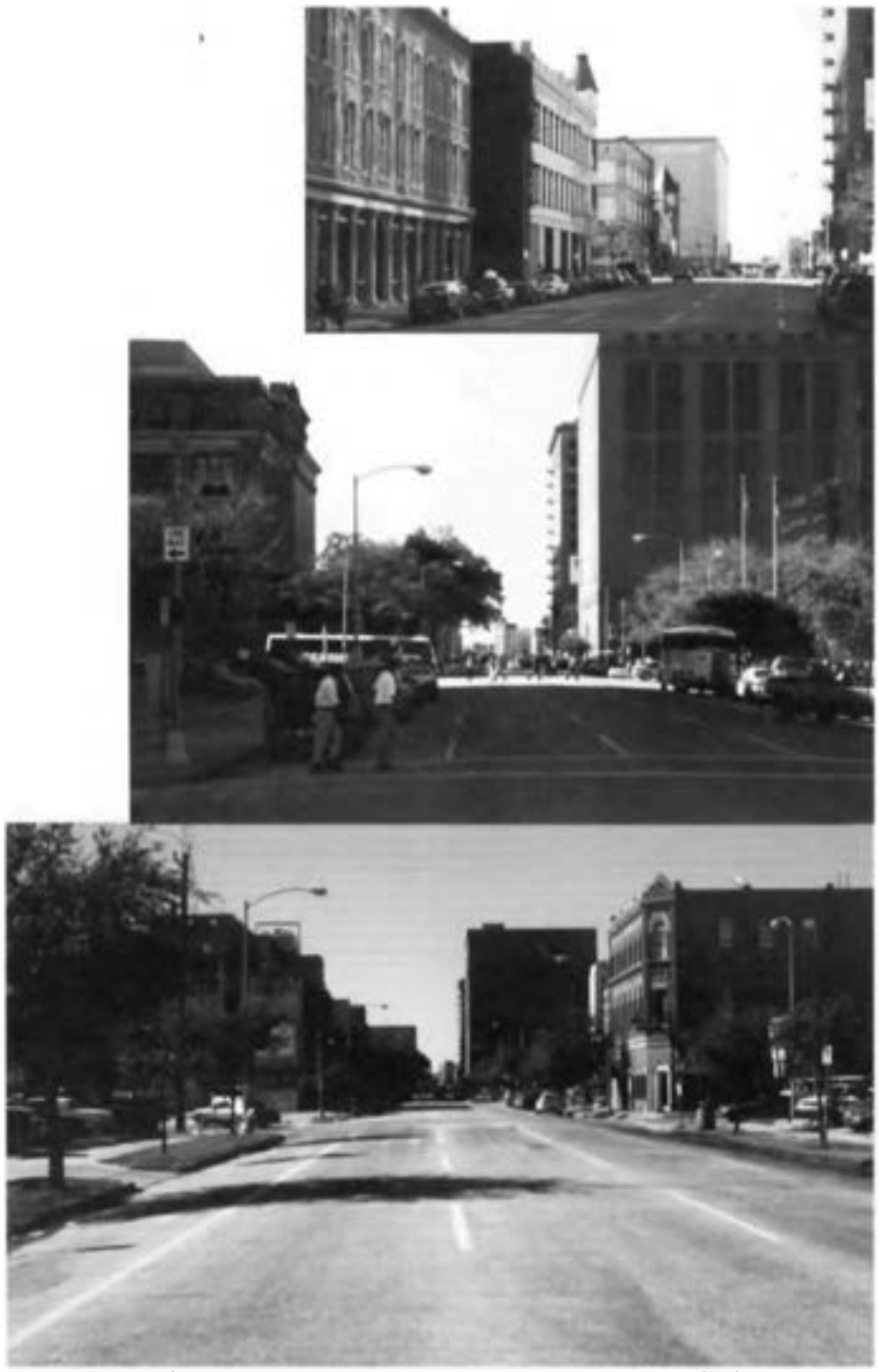
44. River Oaks Boulevard Fountain. 1995. *In front of a private house, this rather institutional looking fountain is one of several in the River Oaks area that can be seen from the street. There are probably hundreds of hidden fountains behind garden walls of private houses in such neighborhoods.*



47. Transco Fountain and Park, Hidalgo at Post Oak. 1985. Johnson /Burgee Architects and Richard Fitzgerald & Partners. *Houston's most famous fountain destination, especially popular at night with young lovers. The fountain's high curving wall and great waterfall plays yin to Transco Tower's yang.*

50. *Wilson Memorial Park, 100 Gilpin. 1962. *WAY outside the loop, this fairly large water pond looks stagnant and unkempt; no operable fountain feature was visible.*

CITE
thirty seven



Congress Avenue looking from east to west. Top: from Fannin Street to Travis Street and Market Square; Middle: from San Jacinto Street, Harris County Courthouse at left; Above: from Crawford Street.

Water Wold

Barrie Scardino

A botched job of reporting (or managing) the news earned a less than enthusiastic reception for the ambitious Cotswold redevelopment project slated for the north end of Houston's downtown.

When the large-scale, amenity-rich proposal was publicly announced on January 23, 1997, in the *Houston Chronicle*, many of Houston's civic-minded groups and individuals felt left out of the planning loop. The Cotswold scheme looked like another urban theme park, a private fantasy emanating from a small group of Houston's business elite with little or no relationship to the real problems or potentials of downtown. A quick reading of the *Chronicle* headline hit on the words "Downtown . . . Riverwalk," missing the text in between, which said "Riverwalk style corridor proposed for downtown." It seemed that Houston was trying to clone San Antonio's famous downtown attraction rather than taking something of its own for inspiration.

Using the name Cotswold also made the proposal an easy target, recalling, as it does, a suburban subdivision more than a central attraction for a downtown seeking respectability. Adding further fuel to suspicions that this was another pipe dream, little of the history of the project was revealed. Even the name of the eminent landscape architect, Peter Walker, who had designed the scheme was not announced, in order to emphasize the roles of the local power brokers who had commissioned him.

To the public it appeared that this was the product of a weekend charrette, captured in quick, impressionistic sketches, high on image and low on content, and rushed to conclusion to meet the announcement deadline.

But nothing is ever as simple as it appears. The planning of Cotswold, a two-year undertaking, has been engineered, with the support of Mayor Bob Lanier, by a group of respected citizens: John F. Bookout, Leo E. Linbeck, Jr., Gordon Cain, Robert J. Cruikshank, James A. Elkins, Paul N. Howell, Robert C. McNair, Walter M. Mischer, Sr., Jack T. Trotter, and Richard Weekley.

It is no secret that Mayor Lanier has been committed to reviving the inner city, and Leo Linbeck III, project executive, credits Lanier for coming up with the precept that any new downtown project needed to include water.[1] Lanier's experience as a developer taught him that whenever water features were included in a new project, it was an easy sell. He maintains that the return on a water-centered amenity can be triple the initial investment. Lanier's desire to improve the ambiance of downtown dovetailed with Leo Linbeck, Jr.'s concern about water quality and drainage. Linbeck Jr. headed a group to investigate appropriate and attractive ways to deal with runoff, including filtration of this excess water before dumping it into the bayou.

Allen Potok, a civil engineer at Turner Collie & Braden, brought in the first schematic design with water on Congress Avenue. Focused on technical issues, his investigations showed that Congress is the only north-south street in lower downtown Houston that could be closed and redeveloped. No massive utility conduits are buried under this street; no loading docks face Congress; and the jury assembly parking garage is the only building with a single entrance, which can easily be relocated to Main Street. Congress, three blocks in from Buffalo Bayou, connects Market Square and Courthouse Square and is lined with low-rise buildings ripe for redevelopment.

With Potok's diagram, encouragement from the Mayor, and deep pockets, the group decided to establish a non-profit foundation to receive donations. The ten directors of the foundation could not agree on what to call their project. Leo Linbeck III tells the story that at the eleventh hour in the office of their attorney, Howard Ayers, they were admonished that Mr. Ayers was leaving town the next day, so a name had to be decided on the spot.

Someone asked Ayers, "Where are you going?" You got it — the Cotswolds!

"With so much at stake and so many financial decisions to make, the name really didn't seem to matter much," Leo Linbeck III said. Actually, the Cotswolds is a region in Gloucestershire, England, west of London, which is famous for picturesque stone houses and Cotswold sheep.

That was the first misstep. It does matter. When asked if there was any playfulness or humor in his design, even Peter Walker said, "The name is pretty humorous."[2]

None of the directors has any financial or business interests in the Cotswold project area, with the exception of Mr. Weekley, who has a minor interest in the Hogg Palace. The Cotswold directors have made it clear that they are interested

Cotswold proposal for the remaking of Congress Avenue. Sketch by William Johnson, Peter Walker and Partners, 1997.

River Walk, San Antonio, Texas.

in providing an infrastructure that will bring development downtown, but not in developing it themselves.

Linbeck III said, "The purpose is to get people out of the tunnels and onto the street by providing adequate security, parking, and a shading canopy of trees." He continued, "We wanted to change the terms of the debate — to look at the forest instead of the trees."

Indeed, the Cotswold sector encompasses the equivalent of 79 city blocks from Buffalo Bayou through the south side of Texas Avenue. This is a good approach for two reasons. The area is almost an overlay of the original 1836 town site, which gives the project some historical context.

Secondly, the many attempts at redevelopment in this area have failed because efforts have proceeded tree by tree (or building by building), with ownership interests in specific properties often working at cross purposes with one another. Having this historic district unified by coordinated features and landscaping makes a lot of sense. A bonus is that the city, in the person of Mayor Lanier, is willing to cooperate.

Stanford University's David Newman was invited to Houston by Leo Linbeck III to advise on how to proceed. According to Linbeck, after seeing the project, Newman had only one suggestion — "Get Pete Walker!" Linbeck's ties to Stanford as an alumnus and to San Francisco through the Linbeck Construction office there facilitated the introduction to Walker and probably helped persuade him to take the Houston job.

Peter Walker, a native of Pasadena, California, has a long and distinguished career that began before he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1955. As an undergraduate he worked as a designer and draftsman in the office of Lawrence Halprin. After receiving a master's in landscape architecture from Harvard's Graduate School of Design, he became a partner in Sasaki, Walker & Associates (later The SWA Group) in Watertown, Massachusetts, while staying on at Harvard to teach.

From 1973–83, Walker was chairman, president, and principal in The SWA Group, which by then had offices in Sausalito, Laguna Beach, Houston, and Boston. In 1975 he was elected a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and, from 1978–81, he was chairman of the department of landscape architecture at Harvard. By 1990, Walker had returned to California as president of Peter Walker and Partners in San Francisco.

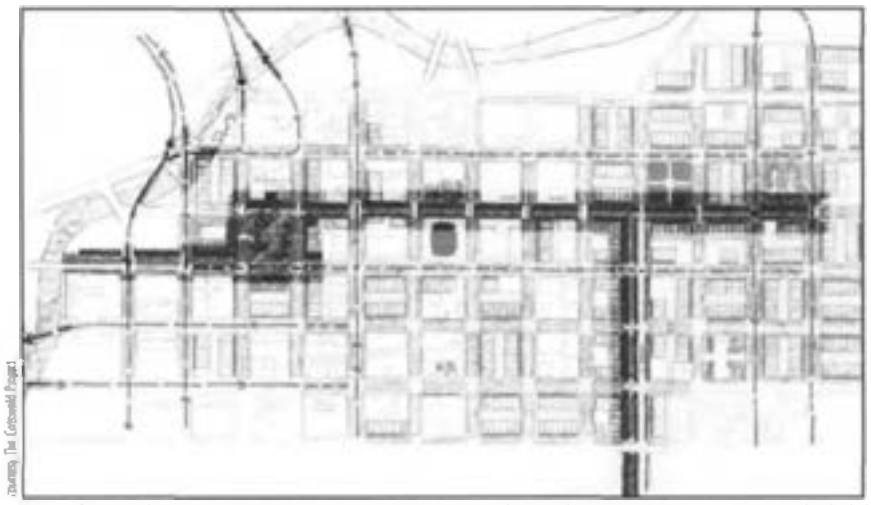
Walker is well respected among his colleagues and has completed projects all over the world. Architect and critic Marc Treib has written: "Peter Walker's recent projects remain at the forefront of landscape design at the close of the 20th century. They continually remind us that the discipline of landscape architecture must result not only from the needs of people and the physical environment, but also from a response to the aesthetic impulses of its era."[3]

Walker's work is most often described as minimalist with a strong connection to Modernism. But it also shows an equally strong desire to fulfill a "basic and communal impulse to mark the land"[4] exemplified by places like Stonehenge. Likewise, the highly disciplined and patterned work of Andre Le Nôtre in 17th-century French gardens gives form and inspiration to a good deal of Walker's work. The simplicity and serenity of Japanese Zen gardens also find their way into Walker projects, but with a twist. The Japanese are masters at simplifying by condensing, whereas American and European Modernists, including Walker, simplify by elimination.[5] Peter Walker values the abstract and mysterious. He looks for ways to express the classical notions of purity and clarity, glorifying nature and the human spirit.

Walker has written: "I feel we need a different, more humanistic and more holistic way to look at the city, . . a new metaphor to replace our functional imperative. I would suggest the urban garden as that alternate vision."[6] These are encouraging words. In another context Walker explains that Frederick Law Olmsted was "trying to use art to serve a set of social goals — not just rich men's fancies, but the public good."[7] Walker and his senior partner, William Johnson, along with Tom Leader and Douglas Findlay have been in on this Houston project almost from the beginning.[8]

Logically, initial designs focused on Buffalo Bayou. Because of flooding, it has been long accepted that any development near the banks of the bayou would be unwise. Leo Linbeck III revealed, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that at one point an inflatable dam was discussed. The first program sought an attractive way to treat what were basically retention ponds. By March 1996 Potok's plan had developed into a scheme that would connect the bayou with Congress Avenue via a shallow canal that would run from Buffalo Bayou at Sesquicentennial Park for three blocks on the north side of Preston (behind the Wortham Theater), across Market Square, then down Congress for nine blocks to Chenevert where a new full-block park was planned.

In early drawings, the linear park also made a right turn at LaBranch and proceeded south, on the west side of the street, to the convention center and its proposed hotel. Although this seems to be a grandiose idea, it actually makes more sense than the announced plan, which runs from Market Square to the proposed stadium. Walker and other landscape architects have stressed that what landscape design is really all about is connectivity — making good and pleasant use of the spaces in between things. In the early plan there is a clear visual connection between the water park and Buffalo

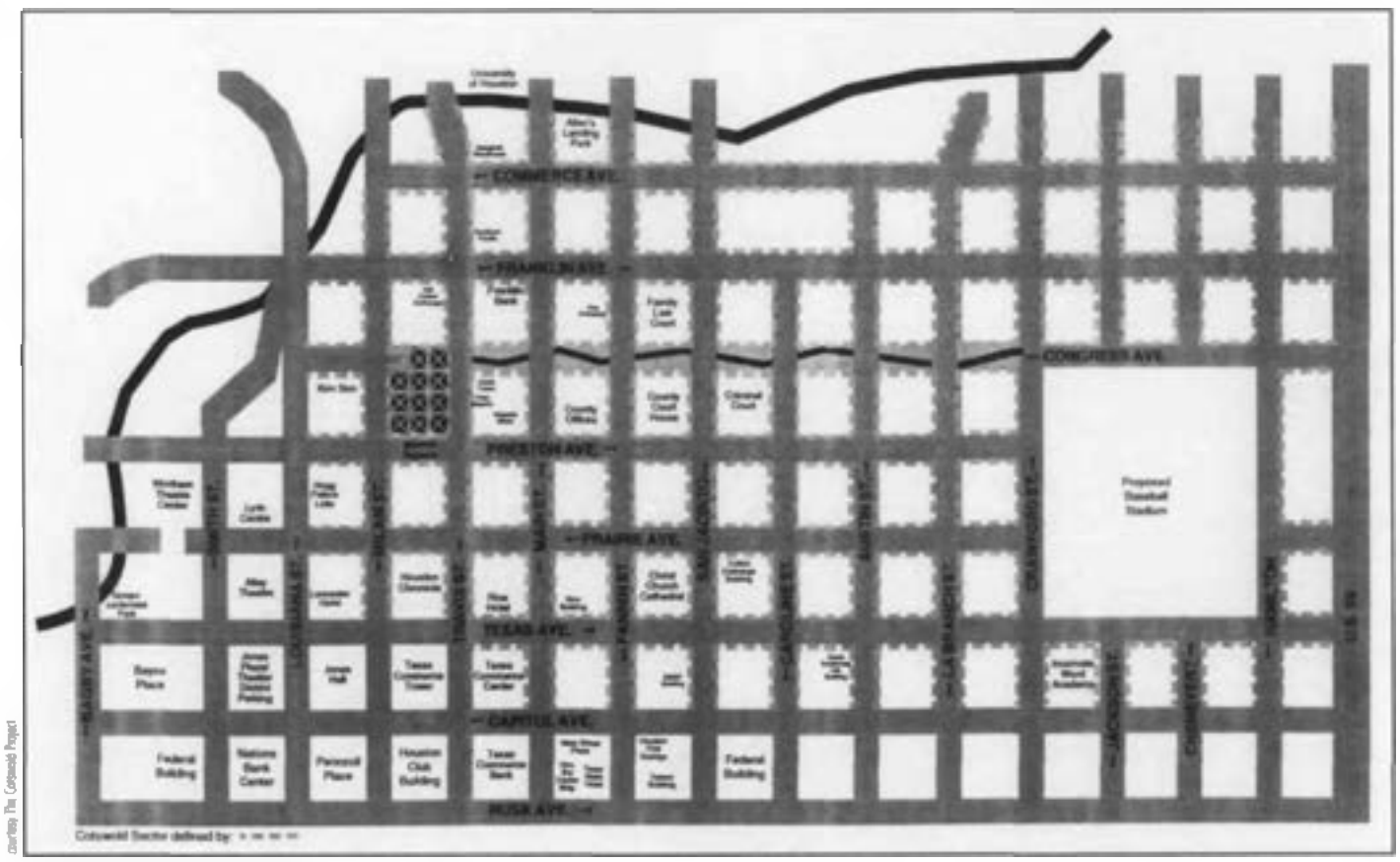


courtesy The Cotswold Project

Cotswold Project plan, Peter Walker William Johnson and Partners, March 1996 showing a more extensive water park (shaded).

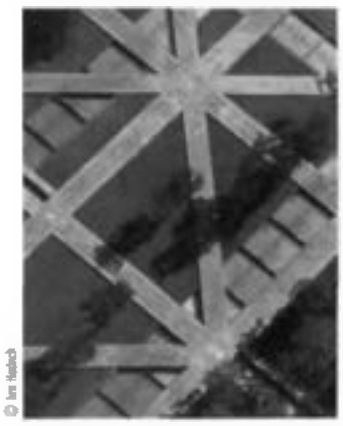
"Peter Walker's recent projects remain at the forefront of landscape design at the close of the 20th century...."

Peter Walker.



courtesy The Cotswold Project

Cotswold Project plan, Peter Walker and Partners, January 1997.



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Burnett Park, Fort Worth, Texas, Peter Walker with The SWA Group, 1983.

Bayou, making the bayou a source, if not for the actual water in the fountains and pools, at least for the idea of bringing a linear water park through the city.

The Cotswold plan was formulated before the new downtown stadium was on the drawing boards, so the early schemes did not include the stadium but promoted residential development east of the courthouses. Walker acknowledges that more than a half dozen schemes were considered before arriving at the announced plan — which he is quick to describe as a concept design, not a plan.

Taking emphasis off the series of block long fountain pools, Walker explains that the income stream is the key to the success of the project, not his design. Income from 3,000 new parking places will be deposited in a parking cooperative and used to fund a 24-hour, private security force and maintain the "pedestrian-oriented park with water gardens and tree-covered walkways."[9]

Investors hope to leverage their money into a larger community-spirited project. The estimated cost is $30 million, which is to be raised through philanthropic contributions ($12 million) and private financing ($18 million). The foundation directors, who have been footing the bills during the planning phases, are already approaching local foundations to participate. Houston Endowment Inc., for example, was asked for $4 million last December.

No public funds will be used, but public land will be, including Market Square, on which the Cotswold group will work out a leasehold agreement with the city so they may build and operate a 300-car underground parking garage and redesign the square above it.

Walker's design for Market Square has been one of the most controversial aspects of the plan. In concept and geometry it looks like a knock-off of Burnett Park in Fort Worth (Peter Walker with The SWA Group, 1983). Because of local criticism, both Leo Linbeck III and Peter Walker admit that whatever goes on top of the garage will be redesigned from the presen. proposal.

New programming for the square asks for more of a festival plaza, not another water park. Walker said redesign of the Market Square element is about to begin in his office. One would hope that the present configuration and art/sculpture in the park, which was redesigned in 1986, will be taken into consideration.

As it is today, Market Square is a memorial to the passage of time and celebration of the everyday life of the old market and city hall. The walks are paved with the rubble and fragments from demolished sidewalks and buildings; tiled benches depicting scenes of Houston's history are the work of painter Malou Flato; and photographic images of long-gone buildings in this part of downtown were installed by photographer Paul Hester.[10]

The *Houston Chronicle*, perhaps misled by press releases, referred to the central feature of the Cotswold plan as a "waterway."[11] It is not a waterway. Although a canal was envisioned at the beginning of the planning process, the problems of bridging cross-streets, extensive mechanical systems, and the tunnels under the courthouses area precluded such an idea. The plan has evolved into a series of block-long fountains with pools about three feet deep, each with its own water circulation.

Other concerns gave rise to another misconception that the proposal would create a seven- or eight-block-long pedestrian mall. Such outdoor malls have meant death for retailers in places where parking was too far away. Desolate expanses of concrete with a few planters have not turned our to be very inviting. In Philadelphia the long mall in front of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell is being broken up and reconfigured. However, the Cotswold plan calls for street closing only on Congress; north-south traffic will continue uninterrupted. The one-block mini-parks with a fountain in each and close-by parking on either side street may work better. In Savannah, Georgia, two short blocks with cross-street access have been closed in the old city marker area with considerable success.

Visible security guards, good lighting, nearby parking, and narrower spaces, which Cotswold promoters promise to deliver in a self-sustaining arrangement, could make for a comfortable area to stroll, sit, or shop. Walker's patterned plan will bring a pleasant sense of order to the streetscape and the planting of thousands of street trees will replace the shade on sidewalks once provided by building canopies.

Selana: A joint venture of Maguire Thomas Partners and IBM, South Lake, Texas, Ricardo Legorreta, architect, Peter Walker, landscape architect, 1986-91.

Burnett Park, Fort Worth, Texas.

Since its founding, Houston's most successful long-term projects, including the ship channel, the Astrodome, Memorial and Hermann parks, and dozens of other quasi-public projects, have come from smoke-filled rooms. It is unclear whether the approval or even moral support of the citizens of Houston matters. Along with the mayor, a number of other influential leaders concerned about the future of downtown Houston are supporting this project.

Harris County Judge Robert Eckels is excited about incorporating the Cotswold ideas into the county's master plan for developing the courthouse complex east of Main Street. He said, "It is a total rethinking of the way downtown will be developed to reflect the reality of today's economy. . . I think it can spur a lot of activity."[12]

Guy Hagstette of Central Houston also supports the Cotswold plan: "We have a tremendous amount of energy and momentum in downtown right now with individual projects, and Cotswold offers an opportunity to help weave all those individual projects together into a cohesive urban environment."[13]

Support from the Theater District is also understandably strong. Potential restaurateurs and owners of retail establishments are working with the theaters and the Cotswold people to institute a series of staggered curtain times. A multiscreen cinema is also willing to locate downtown if the Cotswold project is successful. Now restaurants only attract diners for one seating before the 8 p.m. shows. By varying show times, more theater patrons will be accommodated and restaurants and shops will have continuous business.

Although Leo Linbeck III is adamant that the Cotswold developers want to work with Metro and its new streetscape planners [*Cite* 36], it looks as if Cotswold could preempt Metro. This might not be all bad, given Metro's delays and lawsuits. Some redevelopment in downtown will obviously take place in the next five years. The Cotswold planners have realized the opportunity to jump in and provide some infrastructure. It is unlikely that any new highrise development will take place in this area. Proximity (to each other, their banks, and their lawyers) is no longer key for many companies. Where the density unravels in lower downtown, it is easier to redevelop at this smaller scale. Instead of holding out for the huge square-foot prices of the early eighties, property owners are beginning to envision types of smaller businesses that will support theaters and tourism. The underused convention center and the proposed stadium (approved in a recent referendum) will both benefit from a coordinated project in this area.

But is Cotswold the right thing? Probably. It has the benefit of an experienced designer, and if sufficient funds to realize the whole project at one time can be raised, Cotswold, by any name, will transform downtown Houston. But it remains to be seen if the solid and suitable parts of the plan can overcome the hype. ■

1 Interview with author, February 17, 1997.

2 Interview with author, February 26, 1997.

3 Mark Treib in "Peter Walker, Frame, Order and Pattern" in *Process :Architecture* #118, 1994, p. 12.

4 Leah Levy, "Dialogue with the Land: The Art of Peter Walker" in *Peter Walker: Minimalist Gardens* (Washington, D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997), p. 7.

5 Treib, p. 11.

6 Peter Walker, "The Public Realm and the Form of the City" in *Process :Architecture* # 118, 1994, p. 13.

7 Yoji Sasaki, "A Second Conversation; Art, Objectiveness and Values in the Landscape" in *Process :Architecture* #118, 1994, p. 23.

8 From 1992–96 the Walker firm was called Peter Walker William Johnson and Partners, but it has now reverted to its original name: Peter Walker and Partners. William Johnson is still a senior partner in the firm, but he is now semi-retired.

9 "Cotswold Project Description" from *Cotswold: Redefining Houston's Historic Downtown*, press kit released January 1997.

10 DiverseWorks and the Downtown Houston Association were major forces behind the 1986 redesign of the Market Square. California sculptors Doug Hollis and Richard Turner worked with three Texas artists, Mahon Flato, Paul Hester, and James Surls, to remake this park.

11 "Lanier gives thumbs up to Cotswold," *Houston Chronicle*, January 24, 1997.

12 Ibid.

13 Interview with author, February 28, 1997.

Cotswold sheep. Clone?

Cotswold Conundrums

The Cotswold redevelopment project, recently announced with considerable fanfare and influential support, is at first glance an appealing idea. It promises to improve security with a private police force, increase on-street parking, and provide a sizable special-focus amenity that will put people back on the street — all of which could be beneficial in the struggle to revive downtown.

And it promises to deliver this package of benefits without public funds, since the nonprofit Cotswold Foundation will rely exclusively on private donations and private debt. The Cotswold vision of a residential, urban neighborhood with urbane bistros and shops would seem to fit nicely with several other major projects, forecast or under way, in downtown.

But having said all that, the Cotswold project needs to be seriously scrutinized to make certain that it can deliver on all its promises. The last thing Houston needs is a conspicuous failure to dampen the spirit of optimism and progress that has raised hopes for a revivified downtown.

As a property owner in downtown Houston's Market Square area for over 25 years, I have been involved with numerous plans and ideas both as a businessman and as a preservationist. Numerous groups have made proposals for the downtown, some good, some bad, all of them ignored by the group moving the Cotswold proposal forward.

I am among many interested parties who were not consulted or informed about this project. The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, among other downtown groups with an interest in this historical area, would have liked to share some of their knowledge and ideas during the development phases of this proposal.

I have serious doubts about the potential success of any in-town pedestrian mall concept, since I've never seen one that really worked. Also, why build an expensive water feature only three blocks from the real thing? Buffalo Bayou figured prominently in the early history of the city and is gradually being worked back to respectability.

And why the subdivision-like name? Are other projects with names like Tuscany and Szechwan to follow? Who is the design team behind this project? It seems strange that they were not publicly announced.

I am not against parks and fountains. Indeed, a series of fountains designed by Houston artists stretched out along a linear park could be a wonderful addition to downtown. But was the local art community consulted or invited to participate? And what will the plan do to Market Square? Where will we have New Year's Eve, Halloween, concerts, art shows, and other festivals, which have become a part of the square?

There are many other questions that should be answered before the project moves any further. Will archaeological studies be done before the street is excavated for the fountains? What will be the impact on the present downtown infrastructure, including the street grid, utilities, and the tunnel system? And what will happen to the surrounding historic structures?

Despite the Cotswold Foundation's claim to make the project self-sustaining, the project cannot be thought of as a suburban subdivision since it will have considerable impact on the city's public environment. How will the fountains and landscaping be maintained if the parking revenues don't materialize? The sooner the Cotswold planners and designers begin to parley with the legitimate public agencies and commissions who are charged with coordination and review of downtown projects (including the Planning and Development Department and Metro), the better for the city.

Who knows? They may find allies and supporters who could make their work easier, less contentious, and more connected to the city.

Bart Truxillo
Chairman, Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission.

Bisley, the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire, England.

Jane Anderson Curtis

Bayou Bend, south lawn, John Staub, architect, 1928; photo 1997.

Bayou Bend, south lawn; photo ca. 1940.

Bayou Bend Gardens

The grounds and gardens of Bayou Bend in the springtime are never a disappointment. During the Azalea Trail the profusion of blooms, mostly in shades of pink, white, and lilac; the vivid jade of the winter rye grass; and the extensive grooming of the paths and beds present a flawless display. Even though the gardens have been open to the public on a year-round basis since 1988, about three-quarters of the annual visitors, more than 22,000 people, see the gardens at their peak in March and walk away dazzled.[1]

This picture-perfect image of Bayou Bend is perhaps the greatest obstacle to long-range planning and preservation for the gardens. The annual escalation of Azalea Trail preparations has altered the feel and intent of Bayou Bend from an integrated, domestic, and personal series of garden rooms set in the bayou woodland to a manicured showpiece with thematic displays, seen by most in a state of perfected prettiness. The point of initiating a planning and preservation report was not only to assess the physical state of the gardens and the effect of 30 years of subtle changes, but also to address their significance as a historic designed landscape of the Gulf Coast region and the South.

The 14¼-acre estate was set aside in 1926 by the brothers William C. Hogg (1875–1930) and Michael S. Hogg (1885–1941) when they subdivided the land for their River Oaks development. It was the largest tract in the Homewoods section and had the most distinctive landform, a sloping point of land defined by ravines and an acute bend in Buffalo Bayou.[2] The Hogg brothers' intention was to build a suburban country house for themselves and their sister, Ima Hogg (1882–1974), based on contemporary models for wealthy homeowners as well as a composite image of a Southern plantation.[3] Completed in 1928, the house is set deep within the property, reached by a winding drive that drops gently through the native woodland and turns to approach the main entrance directly on axis with the front door. This entry sequence not only echoes the traditional approach to a Southern plantation house but also adds to the sense of privacy and reserve.

The gardens at Bayou Bend developed and evolved over 40 years under the guidance of Ima Hogg.[4] She was an active, hands-on gardener who under-

All who learn to cultivate beauty within the limits of their own home grounds, awaken a kindred spark in every passer-by. So the whole loaf is leavened, the whole community benefited.

— A Garden Book for Houston, 1929

took extensive new projects every year (slope protection, tree and bulb planting, drainage, and the like), and she did not hesitate to remake or replant the gardens as her taste and experience evolved.[5] Her first efforts, while the house was still under construction, focused on supplementing the native woodland with flowering bulbs and understory trees. The earliest gardens (1929–37) include the Lower Garden (now Clio), the Upper Garden (now East), and the White Garden, a naturalistic walk and grove carved from the woodland.[6] All of these areas were discrete in scale and hidden from view on the main procession from the Lazy Lane entrance: through the woodland, into the house, and on to the north terrace with a view down the wooded slopes toward the bayou. Will Hogg was enthusiastic about development of the gardens and encouraged his sister to preserve the existing hardwood trees. His early death in 1930 and Mike Hogg's marriage and move next door in 1929 left Miss Hogg as the sole occupant and manager of Bayou Bend.

The second phase of development (1937–39) cemented the relationship of the house, site, and gardens as an integrated composition. Clear focal points for the main and cross axes of the gardens were provided by three white Cararra marble statues ordered by Miss Hogg from Florence, Italy — Diana, Clio, and Euterpe.[7] These ancient deities imported to a Texas garden lent an air of refinement and brought a didactic tone to the wooded and somewhat untamed site. The statues were framed by a backdrop of native bayou woodland and a growing collection of azaleas and camellias, an evocative link to Southern gardens in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Louisiana.[8]

The crisp lines of the Diana Garden and the restrained palette of plants selected by Miss Hogg were offset by the magnificently irregular procession of several mature trees down the terraced lawn. This created a garden unique to the site and to Houston, then and now. When the Diana Garden made its debut in the spring of 1939 at the annual meeting of the Garden Club of America, visitors from all over the nation were introduced to Houston and its finest domestic architecture. Miss Hogg, and the other 30-odd Houstonians whose homes and gardens were on display, must have been conscious of their tremendous opportunity, even responsibility, to present an image of the city that would be both gracious and memorable. This meeting may have been the impetus to commission Bayou Bend's and other designed landscapes in Shadyside, Broadacres, and River Oaks.

During World War II, Ima Hogg's priorities shifted to business and community service.[9] When Mike Hogg died in 1941, Miss Hogg became the head of her family's business interests. In the community she remained committed to the Symphony Society, serving as president from 1945 to 1946; she joined the school board; she continued her work with the Houston Child Guidance Center, which she helped establish in 1929; and she steered the progress of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, which she created at the University of Texas in Austin in memory of Will Hogg. It was at this time that she began planning for the transfer of her home and collection to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.[10] Her later decision to entrust the care of Bayou Bend's grounds to the River Oaks Garden Club (ROGC), of which she was an active member, ensured a thoughtful and personal approach toward maintaining the gardens that had been a significant part of her life's work.[11] Had ROGC volunteers not inserted themselves as stewards and established the Bayou Bend Gardens Endowment in 1966, the gardens would not exist, as they do today, in a form recognizable to Miss Hogg.[12]

This picture-perfect image of Bayou Bend is perhaps the greatest obstacle to long-range planning and preservation.

Ima Hogg moved from Bayou Bend in 1965 and died ten years later. In giving a group of volunteers responsibility for her gardens, she left remarkably little documentation regarding her vision for long-term management and upkeep of the gardens. This was in complete contrast to the way in which she handled the future of her collection and of her home as a museum for decorative arts. Her taste and the way in which she lived and worked in her gardens gave the Bayou Bend landscape its special character. Miss Hogg walked in the gardens each day, cutting flowers for the house and making observations on which she based her planning. Lists of plant materials and improvements for the gardens were written out in her own hand, and she took tea and entertained often in what she considered her garden rooms. Although she was involved with the design of several thematic, less spatially distinctive gardens added between 1961 and 1975,[13] efforts to interpret her overall vision and personality have been flawed because of the difficulties of transforming a private domain into a museum.

The only real goal since Miss Hogg's death has been to keep the gardens pretty, and this, in all fairness, is very much in keeping with her spirit and vision. She liked things to be pretty, and she enjoyed sharing her gardens with visitors, especially those who came on the Azalea Trail in early March. Bayou Bend was on the first ROGC-sponsored Azalea Trail in 1934 and has been on every Azalea Trail since. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the River Oaks Garden Club, co-stewards of Bayou Bend Gardens, are intent on encouraging wider public interest in the gardens during all four seasons and on providing a more extensive educational program. To this end a garden docent program has been developed that now provides individual and group tours Tuesday through Saturday.

However, preserving and interpreting a historic landscape is an elusive challenge. Objects weather and grow old; plants change in form and die. The value of landscape elements — plants, trees, paving, the soil itself — is difficult to assess, and replacement is not always easy or even possible. The nascent field of historic landscape preservation has developed two criteria for assessing the value of a historic landscape: first, it must be a composition with integrity, worthy of preservation or restoration; second, it must operate and function as a medium though which historic events or eras can be interpreted and understood. The value of individual landscape elements can be most effectively judged within the context of historic merit. Bayou Bend Gardens unquestionably meet these criteria as a fine example of a regional country house garden[14] and as the setting for the home of the Hoggs, who contributed much of their energy and private wealth to the city of Houston.[15]

In 1990, then president of the River Oaks Garden Club, Anne Symonds, became concerned about the pattern of decisions being made for the care and upkeep of the gardens at Bayou Bend. Budgets and staff apportioned by the museum for maintenance, by the garden club for annual plantings, and by the endowment for capital projects had grown steadily. The gardens chair, an ROGC volunteer appointed annually, had had significant control over the use of these funds and the grounds staff without a clear set of guidelines. It had become possible and acceptable for each chair to make decisions based on her taste or current fashion — yellow daffodils one year, winter rye grass seeded throughout the woodland in another. Things were, in Mrs. Symonds's words, "a little out of control," and it was her initiative, in cooperation with David Warren, director of the Bayou Bend Collection, that engineered a long-range planning committee for the gardens whose work would parallel the similar effort to restore and protect the house and decorative arts collection.

Jon Emerson & Associates of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, working with landscape historian and preservationist Suzanne Turner from Louisiana State University, was commissioned to continue the planning process. Extensive research preceded publication of the plan, including interviews with those who knew Miss Hogg well and had worked with her after the ROGC assumed management control of the gardens; with the administration of the

Plat of the Homewoods section of River Oaks, April 1926. Bayou Bend was built on lot C (shaded).

Bayou Bend, entrance drive, top: 1929; above: 1997.

Bayou Bend, Diana garden and fountain, top: 1929; above: 1997.

Museum of Fine Arts, particularly David Warren; and with longtime gardens administrator Bob Ross.

Emerson's "Plan for the Preservation, Management, and Interpretation of Bayou Bend Gardens," completed in 1994, is accessible and interesting. Emerson & Associates has academic as well as practical experience in preservation of historic designed landscapes. The out-of-town planning team also brought the kind of objectivity that is necessary when dealing with a multiheaded client, a perspective both healthy and productive when so many voices, and feelings, are involved. Jon Emerson revealed that it never occurred to him until he actually began working on the project that the management plan (he is clear to refer to it as such, never as a "master" plan) had to embody the life experience of a person who had evolved just as the gardens had evolved. Although the restoration could not be fixed to any single point in time, and documentation had been at best haphazard, a cohesive physical design still had to be clarified and articulated.

A mission statement emerged from the first charrette: the Bayou Bend Gardens "are to be developed to reflect the lifetime of Miss Ima Hogg and her vision for the gardens," setting her story and that of the gardens in the context of, first, "the history of Houston, and the political, social, economic, and environmental developments of the period," and second, "American garden design, a product of the Country Place Era, and its emphasis on architectonic space, geometry, and axial links between house and garden."[16] To assert the significance of Bayou Bend in local, regional, and national contexts is to give voice to an era that is fast fading from our collective consciousness — the brief years when the founders of modern Houston envisioned a city worthy of grand planning gestures.

Emerson's management plan, a 240-page document, is exhaustive. It outlines the history of the gardens and their historical context; assesses their significance in the region and nationally; evaluates the integrity of the original garden composition; and develops strategies for the preservation, management, and interpretation of the gardens. Recommendations are intended not only to recapture the look and feel of the gardens as conceived and cared for by Miss Hogg but also to address the needs imposed by the year-round audience and recognize the strong potential to reach an even broader group of garden, nature, and design enthusiasts through the addition of new interpretation and programming.[17]

"Bayou Bend Gardens are to be developed to reflect the lifetime of Miss Ima Hogg and her vision for the gardens."

The weaknesses of the management plan are largely a function of its ambitious scope. There is an overreliance on secondary sources regarding the history of the gardens, including undocumented myths about Miss Hogg and the evolution of certain areas at Bayou Bend. Publication of the Emerson & Associates study has sparked a new wave of research into the history of the gardens, mostly by David Warren. Mistakes in the document have meant that the historical narrative has been discredited just when it is most needed — at the startup of the garden tours program. Further, despite a host of detailed recommendations and plant lists, the management plan was not presented with any sense of priorities. An unwieldy management team led to a year of wrangling and, at times, dabbling. Energy floated from area to area, resulting in small corrections to restore discrete parts but no clear focus on what should come first.

However, since the management plan was formally adopted by the ROGC in 1995, several significant projects have begun. The White Garden was renovated and replanted under the guidance of Jon Emerson & Associates. Although it will continue to evolve slowly, as would any garden, the initial effort has been to open this garden spatially and diversify its plantings. Now offering multiseasonal interest, it has become the most dependable destination in the gardens, where visitors can see something blooming at any time of year. Other new projects that have been launched include an assessment and replacement plan for the mature trees and a full-scale irrigation system, the first since the original in 1929.

The long-range planning committee has also commissioned a comprehensive survey by Karen Rose Engineering and Surveying that locates all woody plants as well as hardscape. This survey will form the basis for several planning initiatives, mainly a horticultural archive in which all trees and shrubs are located, assessed, recorded, and thereby quantified in an integrated database of both drawings and data. The program, which has enormous educational potential, will incorporate factual information, history, and scanned images. It can be used interactively with a touch screen or launched on the Web. This is the most effective and concise way to make information accessible to both onsite garden visitors and those in remote locations.

The River Oaks Garden Club, backed by the substantial endowment the club has created, has taken the lead in planning for the preservation and interpretation of the gardens at Bayou Bend. The question now is whether the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, its management partner, will follow that lead. The museum has had distinctly different criteria for the treatment of the decorative arts collection and the horticultural collection (the gardens). Curators and administrators who are fierce in their protection of objects within the house have been oblivious to the mistreatment of the gardens. It is hard to imagine a forklift running into a painting or a highboy with impunity, but this routinely happens to trees, paving, and walls during preparations for the many special fundraising events held at Bayou Bend. The gardens are a crucial part of the setting for these events, but policies for monitoring work crews and policing the inevitable damage are haphazardly enforced.

Several challenging questions posed by the management plan remain unresolved. One is the element of programming in the gardens. In order to attract visitors throughout the year, plantings need to reflect the constant diversity of nature. Special moments offered by changes in the season are best appreciated in a garden — thousands of migrating robins in January; the early blossoms of redbud and oriental magnolia in February; the chartreuse leaf-

A Garden Book for Houston 1929

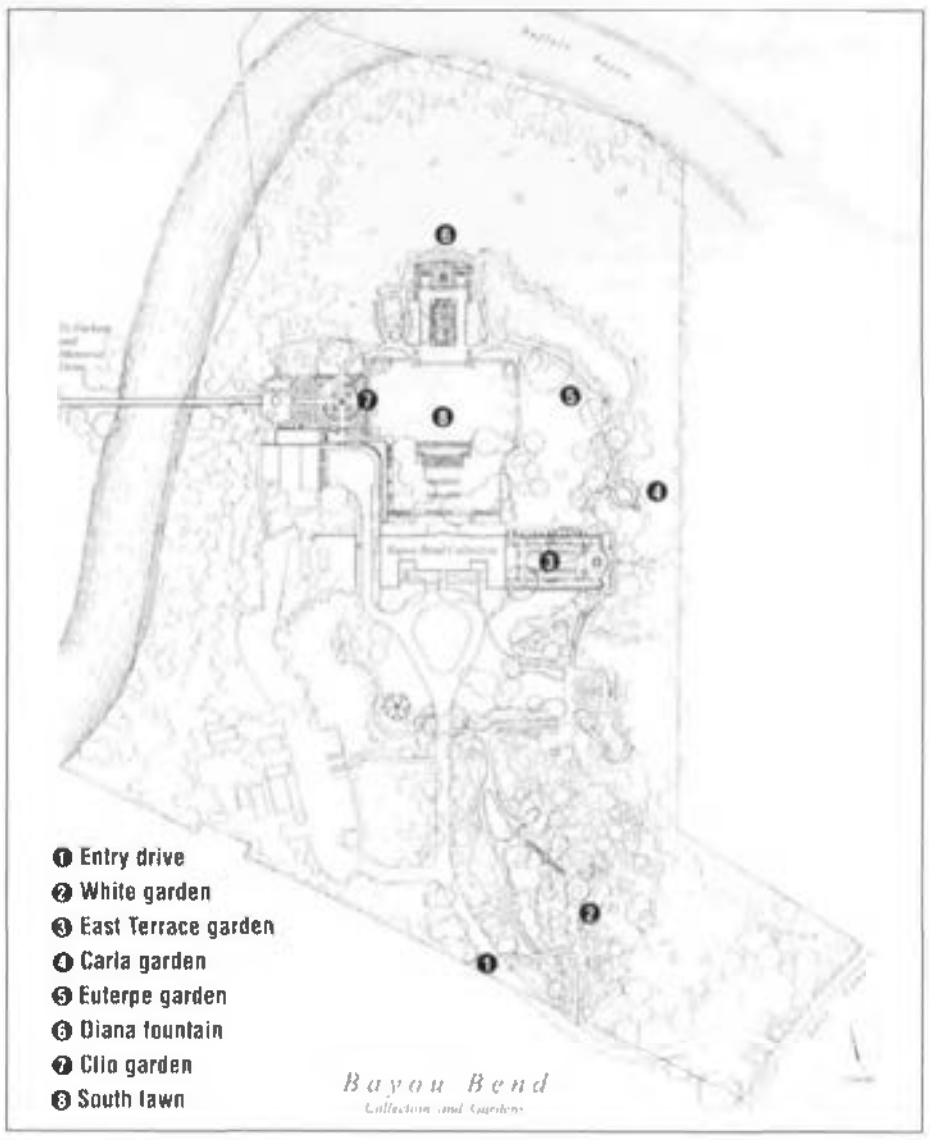
© 1997 Peter A. Harholdt

Bayou Bend, East Terrace Garden, top: 1929 with Ima Hogg sitting on the bench; above: 1997.

ing out of deciduous trees in March; the scent of magnolias in June; the flowering of summer roses; and the late-arriving fall color. Promoting and reinforcing aspects of both the native woodland and introduced species, thus reducing the emphasis on annual plantings, should be a focus of future planning.

If there is a recognizable landscape tradition in Houston, it is the leaf-blown, manicured, evergreen showpiece with a burst of spring color. Well marketed, constructed, and maintained by an ever-growing landscape maintenance industry, this kind of landscaping — which is not really gardening — is efficient, consistent, static. This style, and the tendency to over-emphasize the spring blooming season, became a trap and a dead end for the management and maintenance of Bayou Bend. To recapture the look and feel of Bayou Bend as the private creation of a civic-minded family will require a move away from constant manicured maintenance. Visitors, maintenance staff, and volunteers alike will need to embrace the concept that gardening is based on faith and respect — faith that things will come back and respect for the intrinsic value of the landscape.

The gardens at Bayou Bend have operated in a vacuum, a little oasis in central Houston, a prestigious relic of a quickly fading era. In order to live up to the mission statement, several orchestrated changes will have to occur. An enlarged professional staff must work effectively with both the Museum of Fine Arts and the River Oaks Garden Club; volunteers will need to understand and work with the management plan initiatives; and the MFAH needs to carefully enforce policies concerning the use of the gardens for special events. Emerson & Associates have made it clear that their management plan should be considered a flexible set of guidelines from which the gardens and their interpretation will continue to evolve. Even with its shortcomings, the plan is an appropriate way to begin more sophisticated stewardship of the Bayou Bend Gardens. ■



1 Attendance figures for 1996 were provided by the Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens. The Azalea Trail, sponsored by the River Oaks Garden Club since 1934, is held the first two weekends in March.

2 River Oaks, including Homewoods, was platted by Herbert A. Kipp in 1926. Kipp prepared a master plan for the Hoggs' Country Club Estates development, which superseded an earlier master plan prepared in 1925 by Hare & Hare of Kansas City.

3 The Hogg children grew up with tales of their forebears' Old South plantations, and they lived in the Greek Revival Governor's Mansion in Austin during their father's tenure as governor of Texas (1891–95). Their respect for family tradition and later (after 1901) their residence at Varner Plantation near West Columbia, built in the 1830s, influenced the design of both the house and grounds at Bayou Bend. Ima Hogg, acting as the client for the design of the house, worked closely with Houston architect John F. Staub (1882–1981) and his associate Birdsall P. Briscoe (1876–1971). Christian J. Miller (1872–1952) was the general contractor. Initially, in 1927, she chose the name Bayou Banks for the estate to evoke its setting; the name evolved by 1929 to Bayou Bend. Her description for the architectural style of the house was "Latin Colonial" — a mixture of 19th century American Federalism and English Regency with a Louisiana Creole flavor. The two-story, 22-room house was built for a reported $217,000.

4 Hare & Hare was commissioned by the Hoggs for Bayou Bend's initial landscape plan (February 1928). Although it was not executed, aspects of the Hare & Hare plan resemble elements of the gardens as they evolved.

5 The East Garden, for example, was revised several times in the early years. The first beds were laid out in a scheme similar to that drawn on Hare & Hare's 1928 site plan for the property, with plantings selected by Miss Hogg. A second scheme was proposed before Will Hogg's death in 1930 by Houston landscape architect William H. Caldwell. The Caldwell plan, recently discovered, matched the beds sketched in Miss Hogg's garden book. In 1934 Ruth London of Houston Studio Gardens was commissioned to redesign the East Garden once again. Her scheme clarified the concept of the enclosed garden room, unseen from both the entry drive and the bayou woodland beyond the house.

6 *A Garden Book for Houston* (Houston: Forum of Civics, 1929), pp. 87–88. An all-white garden was recommended in this book, which was funded by the Hoggs to encourage people to garden, plant trees, and preserve native ecosystems. The Forum of Civics, founded by Will Hogg, was "an organization designed to stimulate civic pride and to combine many and varied forces for the betterment and beautification of our city and country," as the *Garden Book*'s title page explained.

7 Jon Emerson & Associates, "A Plan for the Preservation, Management, and Interpretation of Bayou Bend Gardens, Houston, Texas," 1994, p. 41. Ima Hogg is quoted describing her reasons for choosing these particular statues: "Clio, Muse of History, represents the Past. Diana, the Goddess of the Hunt, represents Endeavor, Action, therefore, the Present. Euterpe, Muse of Poetry and Music, both of which give eternal delight, represents Eternity, therefore, the Future." The statues Miss Hogg ordered for Bayou Bend are copies of Italian sculptures she admired in the Vatican Museum.

8 Images and icons of the South were important to Miss Hogg, and she designed her gardens to evoke a Southern setting. She also brought in plant materials from the lower South. She has been credited with importing the first camellias and bringing about the popularity of azaleas in Houston. Both of these archetypical Southern plants, now common in Houston, require soil and drainage conditions opposite to those that predominate along this part of the Gulf Coast.

9 The only addition to the gardens during this period was the Butterfly Garden (Fleming & Sheppard, 1941–42).

10 Ima Hogg's donation of Bayou Bend and its property was formally accepted by the MFAH in 1957.

11 Although the ROGC assumed managerial control over the gardens in 1961, the club did not begin maintaining the gardens until Miss Hogg moved out in 1965. Garden club volunteers, who contribute one morning a week, began working in 1966. That same year the ROGC established the Bayou Bend Gardens Endowment.

12 After Miss Hogg's death, several proposals for the gardens were thwarted by the River Oaks Garden Club; camellias and azaleas, which require significant care, were to be taken out of the gardens; paths were to be bricked; and trimmed, low-maintenance evergreens were to be the predominant plantings.

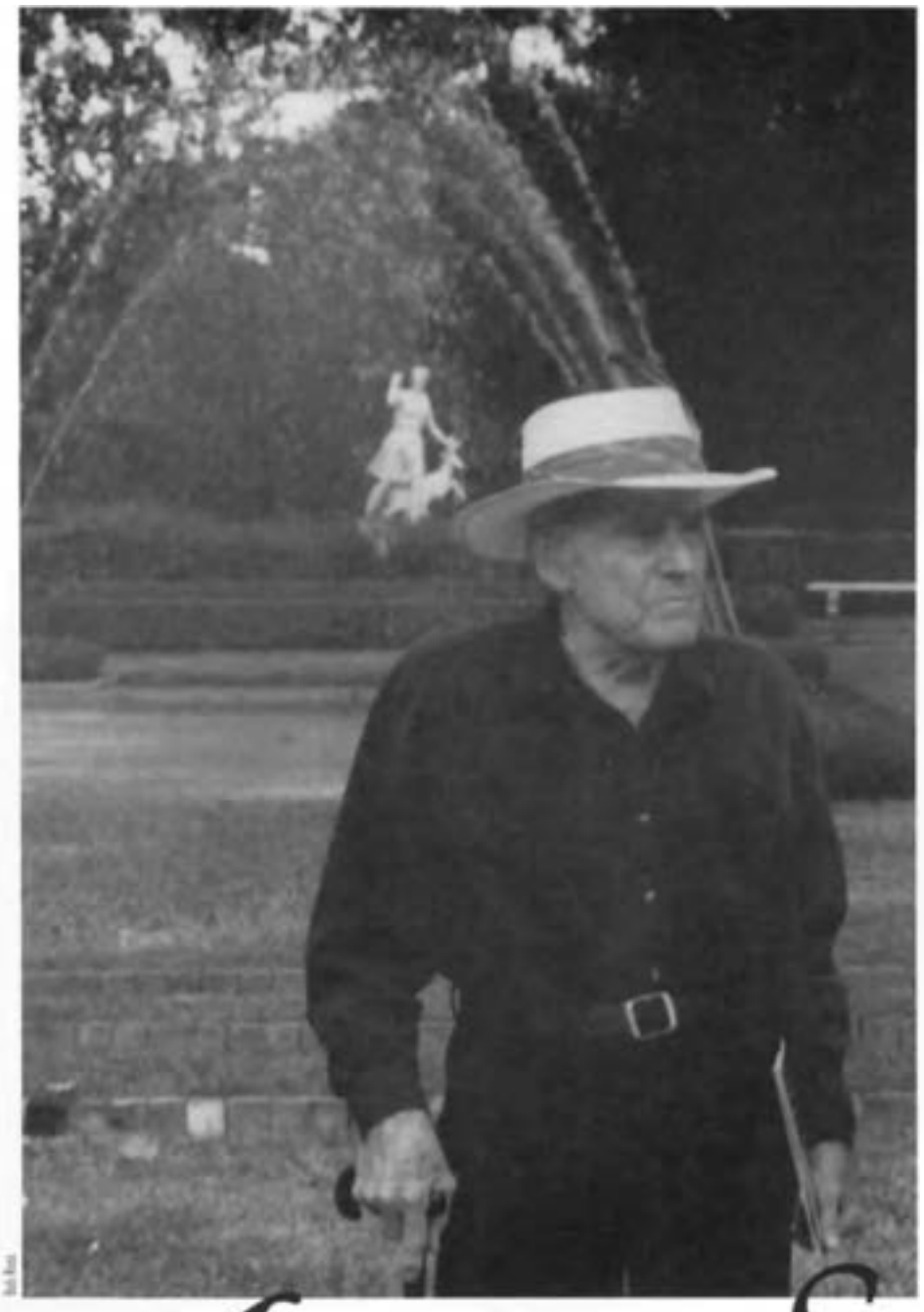
13 The Carla Garden was created to fill an area opened by Hurricane Carla in 1961. It was redesigned in 1970 by the landscape firm of Harriet Wagner and Janet Osborn. The Topiary Garden (A. Gregory Catlow, 1975–76), the last garden added to Bayou Bend, was created to commemorate the American Bicentennial. Before her death, Ima Hogg chose the native Texas animals to be represented in the garden.

14 Mark A. Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Hewitt included Bayou Bend among his exemplary American country houses (pp. 234–36).

15 Stephen Fox, "Bayou Bend," unpublished, 1996. Fox assesses Bayou Bend's significance on many levels and includes pertinent information concerning Ima Hogg's and Will Hogg's considerable civic, social, and cultural contributions to Houston and Texas.

16 Emerson & Associates, p. 16.

17 Ibid., p. 7.



Above: Diana of Versailles in her packing crate from the Antonio Frilli Studios in Florence, Italy with construction worker, 1937.
Top right: Albert Sheppard in the Diana Garden at Bayou Bend, 1996.

Albert Sheppard

David B. Warren

The name Fleming & Sheppard is legendary in the history of garden design in Houston. I met C.C. Pat Fleming nearly 30 years ago, yet it was not until the summer of 1996 that I had the privilege of meeting his pre–World War II partner, Albert Sheppard. In retrospect, this lapse seems plausible. Pat Fleming (1909–96) continued in the landscape design business throughout his life, and it was in that capacity that I met him in 1968, when he was called to Bayou Bend to design a new walk from the Clio Garden to the Diana terrace. Sheppard, on the other hand, withdrew from Fleming & Sheppard in 1942 to work for Brown & Root, where he remained, eventually becoming chief architect, until his retirement in 1975.

As part of my research on the history of the gardens at Bayou Bend, I made an appointment to interview Mr. Sheppard. Arriving on a steamy summer afternoon this past August, I found his house nestled in a secluded, wooded neighborhood just off Memorial Drive. The pale St. Joe brick front walk and neat mondo grass borders were instant clues that I had come to the right place. The octogenarian owner's boyish good looks, firm jaw line, full head of wavy gray hair, and piercing blue eyes, combined with a ready smile, belied his age. I was welcomed in, and we settled down to talk. With what I learned was characteristic modesty, Mr. Sheppard began by saying he doubted that he could tell me anything I did not already know about the gardens at Bayou Bend. Over the past few months, though, he has been a source of critical new information about the important formative period of the gardens.

A 1935 University of Texas graduate in architecture, Mr. Sheppard went to work for the WPA, where, in conjunction with the Texas Centennial celebration, he was assigned to work on the master plan for the San Jacinto Battleground. There he met Pat Fleming, also a Texas architecture school graduate. In 1937, after the San Jacinto project, they formed the partnership of Fleming & Sheppard, Landscape Architects. "I was the architect," Sheppard recalled; "Pat was the horticulturist. Pat could not draw because of his poor eyesight. I did all the drawings; Pat's job was to solicit business." In December 1937 Fleming & Sheppard moved from a tiny office on Main Street to a location above One's a Meal in the newly opened River Oaks Shopping Center. Very soon afterwards, the firm received what was to become a historic telephone call — and one critical to the success of the firm. Miss Ima Hogg was asking them to take a look at her garden.

While Fleming had apparently met Miss Hogg before, the meeting was Sheppard's introduction to the already legendary collector, philanthropist, and gardener. Although Fleming recalled that the statue of Diana was ordered long after the firm became involved at Bayou Bend, shipping records in Bayou Bend's archives indicate that, in fact, it arrived in December 1937. When I asked Sheppard about this, he replied, "Yes, she was there, in her packing crate. Miss Ima wanted us to tell her what to do with the Diana." Sheppard also confirms what 1928 and 1931 photographs indicate: again contrary to Fleming's memory, which recalled woods right up to the Diana terrace, the area north of the house was "nothing but a big lawn."[1] Along the slope were a number of large, picturesque trees saved by the Hoggs when the site was graded during construction of the house between 1926 and 1928.

The immediate problem at hand was to site the newly arrived marble figure of the Diana of Versailles, which Miss Hogg had purchased at the Antonio Frilli Studios in Florence the previous summer. The logical place, Sheppard explained, was at the base of the hill in line with the door of the north façade of the house, thus forming an axis perpendicular to the house itself. The chosen position for Diana, at the north edge of the lawn, was filled with underbrush, just as Fleming had recounted. That was cleared except for the large trees, and the reflecting pond was laid out. According to Sheppard, plans for placing the statue for the pool evolved simultaneously. The irregularity of the natural slope did not lend itself to the formality that the new axis demanded, so the decision was made to terrace the contour. The large trees were to be retained, despite the fact that

Bayou Bend looking north, reflecting pond and Diana pedestal under construction, 1938.

Bayou Bend looking south, terraced steps under construction, 1938.

Remembers Bayou Bend

several of them would be randomly dispersed in the new terraces. Sheppard's typically uncomplicated reply to my question of what Miss Hogg said about leaving these trees was, "She liked trees. . . . The first thing Miss Ima said was, 'I don't want to cut any trees we don't have to cut.' However, there was one large magnolia located directly on the axis between the house and the proposed siting of the reflecting pool and statue. We all realized this tree had to go. When the day came for its removal, Miss Hogg was on the site, and as the men began to dig, Miss Ima stood on one foot and then another, obviously unhappy. So I told her, 'Miss Ima, if you don't want to cut it, we'll try to leave it and work around it.' 'Oh, no, no,' she said, 'it's got to come out. I just feel like they're pulling out one of my teeth.' "

"I used the concept of the garden room," Sheppard told me. "Pat did not. To me the hedges were the walls, the grass the carpet, and the shrubs the furniture." In accord with this concept, a hedge was added on the eastern perimeter of the newly terraced area, while the existing garden wall on the west closed the other side. White marble benches designed by Sheppard and four white marble urns made at the Frilli Studios became accent points of the overall design, echoing the white marble of Diana. Sheppard was, and remains, pleased with the fact that everything about the Diana Garden plan was the right scale. But, he told me, "the urns are too small."

Once Diana was securely placed and the proper retaining wall and pedestal built, the big question was what kind of background would be created for the statue. "We were having trouble finding the trees to put behind her. Miss Ima was very fond of pink and she was thinking pink magnolias back there. She wanted pink azaleas and you name it, and we tried to honor her ideas as much as we could," Sheppard recalled. "You know, pink was her favorite color. . . . Pat, Miss Ima, her driver, and I took a drive to Louisiana to look for pink magnolias. We had a picnic lunch in Beaumont. From there we went to whatever towns come after that, . . . and we visited nurseries there. We came back knowing we were not going to be able to get the pink magnolias. But, for the first time, I saw dwarf yaupon. . . . While Pat and Miss Ima were talking pink magnolias, I was looking at the dwarf yaupons." Later the three went on another expedition in search of trees. "The nicest we saw — we were looking for verticals — were between Houston and San Antonio." Sheppard explained to me that the original arrangement behind Diana had more trees than there are now; they were individually narrower, but the grouping was wider. "We tried to create a rhythm." He thinks the present arrangement, while different, looks very good.

One facet of the project that Sheppard recalls with particular relish was the installation of lighting on the Diana fountain and in the surrounding trees. "No outdoor fixtures existed then," he related, "so we had to invent them using theater equipment and waterproofing it. We worked on the lighting late at night — it was like hanging a picture by trial and error. We would sit on the terrace with Miss Ima and someone would say, 'Move that one a little higher.' Miss Ima gave us ice cream and cake while we were working. In the fountain, each spray had a light under it to follow the line of water. The arcs met in the middle to make a full arch."

The rose garden, located west of the lower lawn, provided the terminus for a cross axis with the new scheme of what was to become the Diana Garden. Miss Hogg had been considering purchasing two additional statues (although exactly which had not been settled), so the concept of a cross axis was part of the overall plan from the onset. The rose garden remained unchanged except for the addition of a circular pedestal built of St. Joe brick on the existing circular base. "Fred Eckert did all the brickwork," Sheppard told me. "He was a master mason we met through Miss Ima. After Bayou Bend, we used him on all our jobs." The site of the second statue was to be across the lawn to the east, outside the newly installed hedge. That area was a thicket, as Fleming had recalled. When the underbrush was cleared, the placement for the new statue was determined both by the axis it would create with the complementary siting in the rose garden, and also by the desire to have the statue under the trees, Sheppard says. Fred Eckert built a pedestal and retaining wall of St. Joe brick. The scrolled terminations of the retaining wall presaged the scrolled brick antennae of the later Butterfly Garden.

To a degree, the making of the gardens was a response to the upcoming visit of the Garden Club of America in February 1939. While the nature of the setting for the Diana statue was the cause of speculation in the newspapers during the spring of 1938, the area was not shown during the Azalea Trail that year. Through some confusion between Miss Hogg and the Frilli firm in Florence, who were making the figures of Clio and Euterpe ultimately selected by Miss Hogg, delivery in time for the Garden Club meeting proved impossible. In fact, they did not arrive until April 1939. However, the rest of Fleming & Sheppard's brilliant design did make its debut when the Garden Club of America ladies came for a late-afternoon visit to Bayou Bend. "We were the only men there," Sheppard recalls. "When the Garden Club was here, if it hadn't been misting they all would have gone out to look. . . . If you could imagine a silk curtain being dropped in front of Diana at six-thirty, . . and then we turned the lights on, . . at first there were two or three ladies there [at the door] and then they began to come to the windows because the door was too small. . . . One of them said, 'Ima, I have traveled all over the world, and to think this is right here!' "

The firm's next project at Bayou Bend was the creation of the Butterfly Garden in 1941. "The idea of a butterfly was Miss Ima's, and Pat and I looked for a place to put it. It was sort of a joke, not meant to be serious. I designed it, and then Fred Eckert and I laid the brickwork out. Miss Ima sat in a chair and watched us." I had heard that Miss Hogg had found the butterfly design in an encyclopedia, and I asked Mr. Sheppard if that were so. "No" was his simple reply. Initial planting was uncomplicated — purple and yellow pansies, hyacinths, and snowdrops for color, and ribs of Chinese grass.[2] "There were no azaleas in that area then," Sheppard told me. "That came later." In response to my query about work elsewhere in the gardens he replied, "We really did not do very much from the [Lazy Lane] gate to the house."

"When we first started working for Miss Ima, Pat and I became her proteges. She had us in her house for every party; she took us to the symphony; and she introduced us to the right people." Indeed, the Mike Hoggs, living next door to Bayou Bend at Dogwoods, began an extensive renovation of their garden, which continued during 1938 and into early 1939 under the direction of Fleming & Sheppard. By the time of the February 1939 Garden Club of America tour, six gardens designed by Fleming & Sheppard were among those on the official program. This number was only surpassed by the nine gardens designed by Ruth London, who had been working in Houston since 1930. Fleming & Sheppard had been in business for about two years, and only a little over 13 months had elapsed from the time the two young men met Miss Hogg and began work at Bayou Bend. That they had secured so many important commissions in such a short period of time is an impressive testament to the talent of the short-lived partnership.

I asked Mr. Sheppard what it was like working for Miss Hogg. "She was a very gracious lady. I did not hesitate to feel close to Miss Ima because she was trying to help us. . . . Pat was a perfectionist, and I am a perfectionist. We took the better part of a year to do the project," he replied, referring to the creation of the Diana, Euterpe, and Clio gardens. "Ninety percent of the time Miss Ima would accept what we showed her. It was a cooperative effort, so we all got what we wanted." ■

1 Information that the thicket of woods grew right up to the terrace of the house was given to the author by Pat Fleming in an interview during the summer of 1988 and was subsequently published: David B. Warren, "Bayou Bend, The Gardens," *Bulletin, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*, Winter-Spring 1987, p. 77. The same information was repeated in a later interview for *Cite* magazine: Ann Schlumberger Bahun, Edwin A. Eubanks, and Stephen Fox, "An Interview With C.C. Pat Fleming," *Cite* 29 (Fall 1992–Winter 1993), p. 35. Photographic evidence that there were no woods on the north façade slope appeared in the *Houston Post*, August 26, 1928, and the *Houston Chronicle*, April 19, 1931.

2 *Houston Chronicle*, March 1, 1942.

FORTRESS

MICHAEL KING

SOMETHING THERE IS THAT
DOESN'T LOVE A WALL.

Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"

Street gates separating a neighborhood from the outside world.

Robert Frost's ambivalent declaration might well be the unacknowledged motto of the City of Houston's Neighborhood Traffic Project (NTP).[1] The most visible and controversial aspect of the project has been the installation of street gates — permanent barriers that would close off neighborhoods to incoming or cut-through traffic. As originally designed, the NTP included not only street gates but also diverters, one-way streets, and, more recently, speed humps (low-grade asphalt risers that force traffic to slow down). But since its inception, the program has been identified with the street gates, which, in their simplest application, were intended to allow city neighborhoods to ameliorate traffic problems. In more elaborate, multiple-gate versions, the barriers theoretically would create the sort of exclusive residential enclaves now commonplace in suburban developments across the country.

But like the antagonists of Frost's poem not everybody in Houston agrees that "good fences make good neighbors." In 1994 and 1995, as NTP projects got under way, the gates began to generate controversy, much of it clearly unanticipated by city planners. Neighborhoods were split on whether the gates were necessary, whether they truly addressed the problems they were intended to solve, even whether they reflected accurate or sensible definitions of urban neighborhoods. Active opposition, complete with petitions and public demonstrations, began in several neighborhoods, and formal complaints of racial discrimination were filed with the city as well as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In late 1995, following lengthy investigations of the civil rights complaints, HUD entered into protracted negotiations with city officials over the continuation of the street gates program. Negotiations are still going on in 1997. The city halted some projects and delayed others. In response to some of the more strenuous objections, city council amended the NTP enabling ordinance.[2] HUD had been expected to issue the formal results of its investigations sometime early in 1997, but it now appears that any formal report has been again delayed, apparently by the continuing negotiations and the changeover in administration at HUD. If HUD eventually issues its findings, presumably the city will then determine which NTP projects can proceed as planned.

But whatever the outcome of the official reviews (which are likely to end in a formulation that saves face for city officials), in practical terms, it appears the street-closing element of the NTP program has been ended by citizen opposition. The most ambitious project, for the Shenandoah neighborhood in the Gulfton area on the city's southwest side, has been shelved and will almost certainly never be built. To a significant degree, gates have been effectively replaced by less intrusive speed humps, a program which the city recently expanded in response to growing demand.[3] Like gates, the speed humps reduce the amount and

HOUSTON

speed of traffic through residential neighborhoods — but without the effect or appearance of neighborhood segregation.

The brief history of the NTP provides a cautionary tale in the limitations of urban planning as currently practiced in Houston. Explicitly conceived as a method of bringing suburban-style living to the inner city, the NTP program quickly ran afoul of the architectural and cultural differences between suburban developments and urban neighborhoods.

The idea of street gates as a city planning option under NTP is a product of the first term (1992–94) administration of Mayor Bob Lanier, who proposed them as an offshoot of his Neighborhoods to Standard program, which targeted for improvement substandard streets, lighting, and other services. Previous city administrations had not been enthusiastic about civic association requests for street gates; the fire department strongly opposed gates as potentially life-threatening barriers to emergency vehicles. But Mayor Lanier considers restrictive gates a tool that allows the city to compete with nearby suburban planned communities, which are often exclusively residential, single-access subdivisions built around cul-de-sacs. If suburban homebuyers have controlled access and private subdivisions, argued Lanier, why shouldn't city dwellers have them too?

This competitive logic was made explicit in the city's 1993 NTP manual: "An ever-increasing decline in the overall quality of life in [Houston's] residential neighborhoods over the past few decades [generates the] flight of families and businesses to smaller, outlying suburban communities — causing a reduction of [the city's] tax base." The manual further explains, "While there are a myriad of causes for this decline of quality of life, one of the most prominent is through-traffic in residential neighborhoods and its relationship to the disruption of a peaceful environment, and the potential for criminal activity."[4]

Although the manual is vague on the precise relationship between traffic and crime — "It can be inferred that effective policies and programs to manage through-traffic may also act to mitigate the potential for criminal activity" — the NTP was explicitly conceived as both a traffic program and a crime-prevention program. This dual intention was largely responsible both for the initial popularity of the program and for its eventual disrepute. Few Houstonians could argue with a plan that promised to alleviate traffic problems; but yoked to undemonstrated assumptions about criminal activity, the NTP generated political controversy.

Houston, of course, is not unique in this recent experiment with gated communities. Private developers, in or out of the cities, conventionally market exclusivity, security, and private entry as essential features of residential housing. From New York to Los Angeles, Miami to Seattle, city governments have considered various forms of street closure as a response to citizens' concerns about traffic and crime. Locked gates preventing

outside access to a public street are theoretically a last resort for solving neighborhood problems — but in recent years restrictive gates or walls have become increasingly popular across the country. City officials have become enamored of the acronym CPTED (pronounced SEP-ted), for "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design," a concept closely associated with the work of architect and urban planner Oscar Newman.[5] One of CPTED's principles is that diverting or restricting traffic around residential neighborhoods can decrease not only cut-through traffic but crimes of opportunity. Supporters cite successes in Chicago, Dayton, and other cities where, they say, large, decaying urban neighborhoods were stabilized, made safer, and even rejuvenated by judicious redesign.

Critics of CPTED, on the other hand, argue that building barriers between neighborhoods is an antidemocratic and polarizing approach to city problems, exacerbating the very racial, ethnic, and economic divisions that make urban problems so intractable and cities so difficult to govern. Michael Lind calls the now-common gates a symptom of "the new feudalism," citing an opinion from a California appeals court, which "recently ruled that seven metal gates installed by the Los Angeles suburb of Whitley Heights represented an illegal 'return to feudal times.'" "Increasingly, those Americans who can afford to do so," writes Lind, "have been withdrawing into gated suburbs, many of them indistinguishable from private cities, whose community associations provide not only security but trash collection, street cleaning, and utilities as well."[6] University of Houston urban historian Robert Fisher describes the utilization of street closures as another sign of an international trend toward privatization of public resources and a rejection of the traditional concept of the city as a place "where people come together as a community." Increasingly, says Fisher, citizens feel unable to rely on an underfunded and diminished public sector to provide basic services and have rejected the notion of the city as a place of "learning to live with, and enjoy, the Other." Instead, they turn to private, commercial sources for protection (private police and security systems), and they see street gates as one more way of closing out the unexpected and potentially dangerous encroachments of city life.[7] In his book on the built environment of Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, architecture critic Mike Davis argues that this demand for "security" is often a self-justifying cover for something else: "As a prestige symbol — and sometimes as the decisive borderline between the merely well-off and the truly rich — security has less to do with personal safety than with the degree of personal insulation . . . from 'unsavory' groups and individuals."[8]

"BUILDING BARRIERS BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOODS IS AN ANTI-DEMOCRATIC AND POLARIZING APPROACH TO CITY PROBLEMS."

But Kelly Hawkins, president of the Shenandoah Civic Association, disputes this portrayal of the Houston residents who are requesting street gates. Writing in the *Houston Chronicle*, Hawkins defended his neighborhood, which he described as primarily working-class and minority: "Houston's rich and privileged already live in fortressed security. The poor and subsidized are increasingly living in fortressed security complexes, like the Gulfton area. Only the working classes and middle classes are being denied parity. When imagining Houston's future without fortressed neighborhoods, realize that this would be a future of fleeing working-class and middle-class taxpayers."[9] If the city hopes to retain its middle-class residents, concluded Hawkins, it will have to allow controlled-access residential areas across the board.

When NTP opponents from civil rights organizations, including the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the NAACP, complained that several proposals seemed designed to place barriers between predominantly white subdivisions and their predominantly black or Hispanic neighbors, city officials responded by insisting — despite the explicit language of the NTP manual — that the NTP was solely an anti-traffic program.[10] Susan McMillian, who originally supervised the program, asserted that the NTP ordinance, especially in its revised form, recognizes only excessive traffic counts as reasons to close a street. "We must be able to demonstrate that the cut-through traffic is a real problem. . . . Crime is not an issue. I'm telling you it's not a justification — truly it never has been."[11]

City councilwoman Helen Huey, who strongly supports the NTP and headed the committee that revised the law, echoed McMillian's comments and added, "In limiting the ordinance to what is absolutely measurable — and that is traffic impact — we are making it as objective as possible."

McMillian noted that "the logic of CPTED" would suggest that diminishing traffic volume might also have an effect on crime, but says she tells civic associations that "gates won't keep out burglars any more than locks do."[12]

While opponents describe NTP as a form of racial and class segregation, proponents, who consider it first and foremost a crime-fighting measure, also argue that gates will protect property values. But a serious weakness in the property-values argument is the fact that gates often initiate a direct transfer of property values from one part of the neighborhood to another. While the investment of installing the gates, the accompanying landscape improvements, and theoretical improvement of security will logically increase property values in one part of the neighborhood, property values in the accessible, unclosed surrounding area could just as logically depreciate. According to previously published summaries, of 16 NTP projects proposed and planned under the original ordinance, 11 were to include at least one street closing with so-called "911 gates," accessible only to emergency vehicles.[13]

According to Washington HUD spokesman Alex Sachs, at least 6 of the 16 projects generated significant neighborhood opposition and formal racial discrimination complaints to HUD; 5 of those 6 projects included street gates.[14] The city says 10 projects involving gates have been installed, and another 5 are "currently in design," although, significantly, this list no longer includes 3 of the contested projects.[15] It should be noted that, since economic or class discrimination is without legal standing as an actionable offense, opponents and proponents of the gates have been inevitably polarized into racial and ethnic camps. Once the protests began in fall 1994, it appears that only two of the proposed gates were installed (in Timbergrove Manor and Idylwood) before the program was suspended in the summer of 1995.

A short summary of four NTP projects provides a general idea of how this program has worked.

Pleasantville. An early NTP project installed one-way streets on the edge of Pleasantville, a predominantly black, east-side neighborhood. After black residents picketed the project (protesting that they were now required to drive miles out of their way to return to their own homes), the one-ways were replaced by less restrictive, narrowed entrances designed to slow or divert cut-through traffic elsewhere. Complaints of discrimination are still pending with HUD.

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Braeburn Valley. On the west side, a gates plan was announced by the Braeburn Valley Civic Association after little public discussion. When an attorney who lived in the neighborhood objected, the city administration sealed the NTP files, citing possible litigation; the attorney appealed to the Texas attorney general, who overruled the city. Opponents charged that the gates would aggravate traffic problems and flood problems and were racially motivated; the project was suspended. The Braeburn Valley project is not currently included on the list provided by the Department of Public Works.

Timbergrove Manor/Heights Annex. Despite much neighborhood opposition, in October 1994 a single gate was installed on the edge of Timbergrove Manor, a subdivision just below 14th Street northwest of downtown. Opponents of the gate charged segregation and loss of emergency service (an ambulance was delayed en route to a heart attack victim, who was permanently disabled), and requested a HUD investigation. Complaints of discrimination are still pending with HUD; the gate remains, and the protests continue.

Shenandoah/Gulfton. The ambitious Shenandoah gates project was apparently designed as the Lanier administration's showplace NTP project. The original plans called for as many as 20 barriers, which would have separated almost completely the Shenandoah single-family residential subdivision on the far southwest side from the much larger Gulfton area. One temporary barrier was installed but was removed after repeated public protests and formal complaints to HUD from Hispanic residents of Gulfton. The project was indefinitely suspended, pending the outcome of the ongoing HUD investigation and city review. At this writing, although permanent barriers remain officially under consideration, none has been installed in Shenandoah; the project is not currently included on the list provided by the Department of Public Works.

The two most controversial projects have been Timbergrove Manor/Heights Annex and Shenandoah/Gulfton. The double names in themselves reflect divisions within the neighborhoods. In each of these instances, a neighborhood association representing a small, single-family residential subdivision (200–250 homes) sought to separate itself, to one degree or another, from its surrounding neighborhood. Although the only explicitly allowable reason for a street gate under the city's NTP program was excessive traffic, proponents of the gates in both neighborhoods freely acknowledged that their motivation in applying for the gates was their belief that such barriers would reduce crime.[16]

Although HUD officials have released no official report in connection with the agency's investigation of the gates-related civil rights complaints, they say they are engaged in a "good faith effort" at reconciliation between the City of Houston and the complainants. HUD spokesman Alex Sachs said that representatives are engaged in "productive discussions" with the city and the affected neighborhoods, but that these matters take time, and there is currently "no timetable for resolution." The formal report from HUD — originally promised at the beginning of 1996 — has been delayed yet again, this time by the transition to the new Clinton administration. Late in 1996, Sachs anticipated an announcement on the Houston investigation "in the next few weeks," but now he has revised that prediction, calling it "overly optimistic." Andrew Cuomo has replaced Henry Cisneros as HUD Secretary, and it will be after a transition period that the agency again turns its attention to specific local investigations.

One indirect outcome of the street gates controversy has been an apparent extension of the ongoing tension between HUD and the Lanier administration, most evident in the lengthy controversy over Allen Parkway Village, the historic public housing complex. Mayor Lanier has been adamant in his criticism of HUD for what he describes as its mismanagement of the Allen Parkway matter, and he reacted angrily to the decision by HUD to investigate the street gates program. Lanier has lobbied HUD (Secretary Henry Cisneros) and Congress (Representative Tom DeLay) directly on behalf of the gates program, and has openly advocated funding cuts for HUD's Texas regional offices should the agency continue to "interfere," as he called it, with the city's program. HUD has refused to respond publicly to the mayor's charges, and its spokesman dismissed speculation that the continuing controversy might increasingly strain relations between the city and the federal agency on other matters. "We have seen no evidence," said HUD's Sachs, "that there is a strained relationship [with the city of Houston] because of this investigation. Secretary Cisneros is particularly proud of moving forward on Allen Parkway Village." Sachs saw no reason why the agency and the city administration could not continue to work together on other coordinated projects.

Meanwhile, local opponents of the gates are not so optimistic. Dismayed at the continuing lack of official HUD action, they have begun to recruit their own allies in Washington. Congressional representatives Gene Green and Sheila Jackson Lee have each written to HUD and to the city of their concern about the gates program. Speaking of the Timbergrove Manor gate, Lee described the residents' problems with emergency vehicles and school traffic, adding: "Lastly, and possibly most disturbing, is the fact that the barrier has now created two separate neighborhoods with *vastly* different ethnic makeups" [emphasis in original].[17]

Whatever the outcome of the legal battles, the citywide opposition generated by the street gates program has effectively eliminated the gates as a serious instrument of public policy in Houston. That will not mean the disappearance of gates, of course; private developers of suburban subdivisions or of urban apartment complexes will continue to market gate enclosures as emblems of "exclusivity" and "security," thereby generating pressure on the public sector to compete with the private market by providing those same intangible commodities. But if the city continues to respond as if individual subdivisions or civic associations should dictate public policy for entire neighborhoods — and by extension for the whole city — neighborhood polarization, and the political crises that accompany it, will be the inevitable result. ■

1 Original enabling legislation for the NTP consists of a group of related city ordinances adopted or amended by the city council in 1992–93: City of Houston, Texas, Ordinance No. 92-1009 (July 28, 1992), No. 93-177 (February 23, 1993), No. 93-218 (March 3, 1993). The ordinances are included in the "City of Houston, Neighborhood Traffic Projects Manual," n.d. [1993].

2 The revision attempted to define neighborhood boundaries more precisely and to allow for more inclusive neighborhood representation. Although the substance of the regulations was largely unchanged, the deterrence of criminal activity was deleted as an explicit justification for the installation of gates. (City of Houston, Texas, Ordinance No. 95-1070, October 4, 1995). The revised version of the ordinance did not satisfy most opponents of the street gates, who continued their protests.

3 Tom Kennedy, public information officer for the Department of Public Works and Engineering, says that as of December 1996, the city had installed approximately 500 street humps, and he expects it will triple that number by the end of 1997. One "street segment" generally requires three such humps.

4 "City of Houston, Neighborhood Traffic Projects Manual," p.1.

5 Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). *Community of Interest* (Garden City, New Jersey:Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980). Newman has consulted on several CPTED projects across the country.

6 Michael Lind, "To Have and Have Not: Notes on the Progress of the American Class War," *Harper's Magazine*, June 1995, 35-47, passim.

7 Interview with the author, August 1995.

8 Mike Davis, "Fortress L.A," in *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990), p. 224.

9 Kelly Hawkins, "Working Class Houstonians Want Secure Homes, Too," *Houston Chronicle*, October 29, 1995, p. 4C.

10 Complaints of discrimination were made to HUD under both Title VIII (fair housing) and Title VI (federal funding). Officially, these complaints are still pending; a HUD spokesman said that the laws require the agency to attempt "conciliation" of complaints before attempting to impose a resolution.

11 Interview with the author, December, 1996.

12 Interview with the author, December, 1996.

13 The summary here is based on previously published information concerning the original NTP proposals. *Houston Chronicle*, August 17, 1995.

14 HUD public information officer Alex Sachs was interviewed by the author in December 1996 and January 1997.

15 Letter from Tom Kennedy, Department of Public Works and Engineering, to author, January 18, 1997, including a list of street gates projects "constructed" or "approved, currently in design."

16 In a 1995 interview with the author, Paul Vogel, a former Timbergrove Manor resident who had been the foremost proponent of the gates, based virtually all of his arguments on crime statistics, saying the gate was needed because it would separate "a relatively well-off neighborhood from a relatively poor one." Similarly, the Shenandoah residents pointed to fear of crime as the primary motivation in proposing the gates. Ross Lence, a professor of political science at the University of Houston and a Shenandoah resident, told the author that on certain corners drug deals are taking place "any hour of the day or night, and the police know about it." Lence believes that the gates would make it more difficult for criminals coming from outside the subdivision to frequent the area. Lence's comments were echoed by other residents, including Tip Allen, chairman of the Shenandoah crime watch committee. Allen's neighbor, Carlo Penagos, told the author that gates were necessary because the presence of crime in the neighborhood — particularly drug related crime perpetrated by "outsiders" from Gulfton — prevented his children from playing outside. A few months after the interview, Penagos was charged by Houston police with practicing medicine without a license and distributing drugs without a license; according to the Houston Police Department, his criminal case is pending.

17 Sheila Jackson Lee to Robert C. Lanier, Mayor of Houston, October 28, 1996 and to Jamie Jameson, Director, Program Operations Compliance Center, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, October 28, 1996.

Never Mind the Bollards: 1100 Milam Becomes Houston Industries Plaza

Houston Industries Plaza. CRSS Keating, architects, 1996.

Joel Warren Barna

In its original manifestation, the building once known as 1100 Milam was not really bad looking, but it had an unlucky location. Now called Houston Industries Plaza and given a new address, 1111 Louisiana, the reconstructed building has changed from a multi-use tower to a corporate headquarters, and it has gained a new, very theatrical top, marking a small rebirth of faith in the future of downtown Houston.

Completed in 1973 and designed by JV III (a joint venture of the Houston architecture firms Koetter, Tharp & Cowell; Caudill Rowlett Scott; and Neuhaus & Taylor), the 47-story, 1.4-million-square-foot office tower was one of the first of the 1970s generation of efficient American skyscrapers. Structural design experiments in the late 1960s, along with the invention of reflective and absorptive glass curtain-wall materials, had shown that the earlier generation's web of expressed exterior framing and elaborated sun-control devices could be improved to make buildings more profitable. The 1970s style, as exemplified by 1100 Milam, reduced the number of interior columns and maximized rentable area by relying on concrete cores and steel frames pushed out to the edge of the building envelope and encased in a thin skin of glass and metal or stone. The 1100 Milam Building, clad in dark glass and bronze anodized aluminum that matched the Tenneco Building, filled its entire block, creating floor plates of just over 20,000 square feet, the size that corporate managers had come to recognize as optimal for most office operations.

The problem: 1100 Milam was built across the street from the Tenneco Building (originally the Tennessee Building; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1963), Houston's one truly great skyscraper. Practically every view of 1100 Milam also contained some glimpse of Tenneco's perfectly proportioned structural anodized-aluminum-clad cage and brise-soleil system and its elegant glass skin, also in charcoal-gray glass, set off at the top by a thin pipe painted a surprising but harmonious Chinese red. By comparison, the flat-faced window wall of 1100 Milam, with its wide combined window and spandrel panels mimicking the overall proportions of the Tenneco Building, looked chunky and undeveloped. At the street level, 1100 Milam was cloaked in a form that looked just similar enough to the Tenneco Building to invite unfavorable comparison. The base flared out to the sidewalks, joining the building five levels up in a pyramid of black-glass curtain wall. This device recalled New York's 140 Broadway Building of the late 1960s by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, but in this case it read as a tensionless inversion of the Tenneco Building's gracefully beveled granite paving, which curved up the wall of the building's core and seemed to sweep the energy of the street toward its entrances.

All in all, 1100 Milam was a Guernsey grazing near a gazelle, a bloated box beside a monumental sculpture. This visual impression, in fact, closely mirrored the economic situation of the buildings: the Tenneco Building was a corporate headquarters, the downtown palazzo of the company's officers, while 1100 Milam was built by Tenneco (in partnership with Prudential Insurance Co. of America) as a back-office building, the high-rise workhouse of lower-level paper shufflers who slogged through the company's unglamorous day-to-day affairs. Perhaps adding to its second-classness, 1100 Milam wasn't even built as a unique event. It was part of a package created by Tenneco and Prudential, who developed the office tower simultaneously with a new Hyatt Regency hotel and a 2,750-car parking garage. The air-conditioning equipment for both the

hotel and the office tower were built on top of the garage; the pipes carrying the chilled water for the office building's air conditioners ran through the hotel and across the intersection of Dallas and Louisiana in a box-truss pedestrian bridge that spilled into 1100 Milam's second-floor banking lobby.

While 1100 Milam may not have been as beautiful as its corporate-headquarters neighbor, it was a more interesting urban object. Built just before the tide of office-building construction began sweeping out to ring roads in cities throughout the country, 1100 Milam showed the persistence of the belief that downtowns held a vitality, carried over from the 1920s, that building designers and owners could simultaneously support and exploit by tying their buildings into the urban fabric. To correct the manifest problems of the building-in-a-plaza form so common in the 1960s, architects began pushing out to the sidewalks, incorporating multiple uses, and linking their buildings to the surrounding city by all the means available. This, in fact, was the logic behind developing 1100 Milam not as a single building but as a package with the hotel and the parking garage, all linked by a continuous circulation path. The 1100 Milam Building's skirt sheltered specialty retail shops and restaurants for its patrons and passers-by entering at street level or coming by bridge. It was also connected to the growing underground tunnel system, which was intended to make commerce between downtown buildings more efficient. One Allen Center, built the same year as 1100 Milam, was set up with similar connections, as were later downtown developments including the nearby Two Allen Center (1977), Three Allen Center (1980), and Four Allen Center (1983).

But the experience of the next 20 years did not support the hopes of the urban planners of the 1970s. Although the Louisiana Street corridor boomed with million-square-foot office towers, each named for a different Texas bank growing to national stature, the predictions of synergy based on multiple use failed to materialize. Like other Texas downtowns, Houston's became more and more a single-use office park. Downtown housing developments failed to materialize. Movie theaters and restaurants abandoned the city center for the suburbs. Worse, the volume and character of downtown shopping, in Houston and throughout the country, began an accelerating decline; by the late 1980s, general-merchandise retailers knew that downtown locations had little hope of selling anything that cost more than $15. In Houston's mixed-use centers, shopkeepers in the office lobbies were left competing with shopkeepers in the tunnels for a shrinking set of customers whose per capita expenditures were dwindling. Then the Texas banks started failing, and the economy went into a slump that took the best part of a decade to shake off.

Tenneco was one of the core businesses that weathered the catastrophe, but as it went through tough times, its requirements for office space in 1100 Milam fell; at the same time, the need to generate revenue by renting space to other tenants grew. But 1100 Milam faced more than the typical problems — outdated graphics and faded paint — of a 20-year-old building in need of a face lift. There was the problem of the pyramidal glass lobby, which leaked.

"The glass skirt leaked like crazy," says Richard Keating, FAIA, chief designer of 1100 Milam's reconstruction into Houston Industries Plaza. "After a while the building just had matching-colored buckets to catch the drips." Keating, who produced several studies of the building and possible solutions for Tenneco over a period of eight years, says other problems included thin tiles in the plaza and retail space that kept coming up, along with a confusing circulation pattern that required people entering the building in search of the escalators to the underground tunnel system to walk through two banks of elevators .

"With these problems, and the changes in downtown retailing, it was hard to attract high-end retail," adds Keating. "Eventually, a person entering the space was confronted with graphics for cheap retail and the smell of cheap food." This, Keating says, scared off potential tenants, and so 1100 Milam was faced with a death spiral, a slide into Class B status, or worse — a fate like that of the smaller, less flexibly planned office buildings from the 1920s through the 1960s that were standing empty east of Main Street.

Tenneco Building, S.O.M., architects, 1963 with model of Houston Industries Plaza.

1100 Milam, before renovations, JV III, architects, 1973.

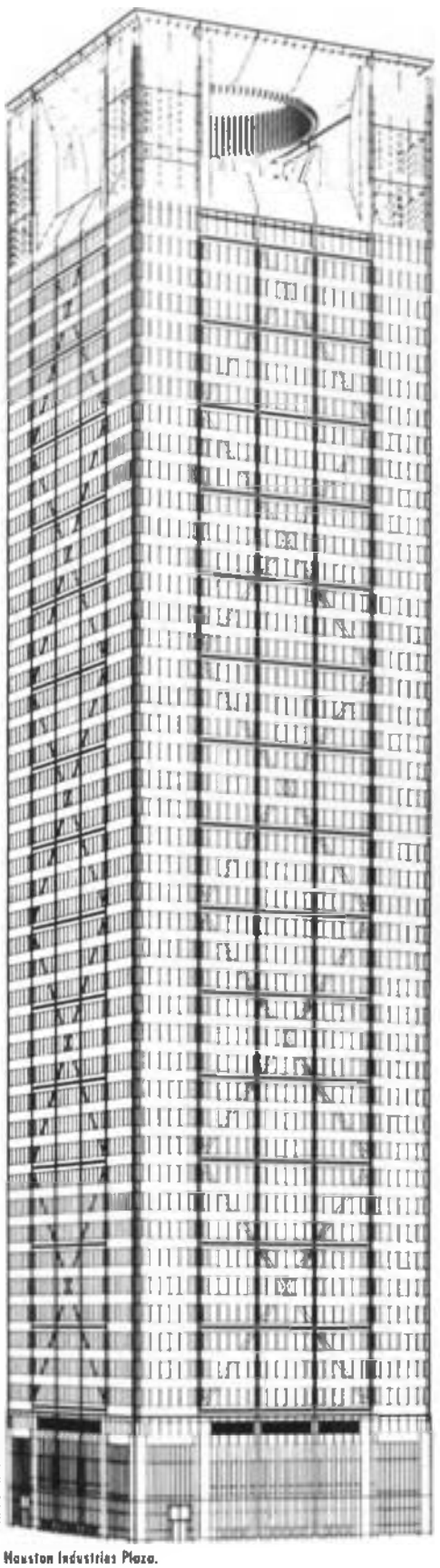
Meanwhile, Prudential assumed sole ownership and began exploring possible ways to save 1100 Milam. One of Houston's other core businesses, Houston Industries, the parent company of Houston Lighting & Power, had outgrown its headquarters, the 27-story Electric Tower (1968; Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson with Robert O. Bering), and was looking at options for a new million-square-foot location.

Houston Industries architect David George explains: "For years we had been looking at ways to expand our space needs. Every possibility was investigated, from existing buildings to other downtown sites, with and without buildings, to sites for a potential campus. Eventually, as Houston Industries reorganized for the increasingly competitive electric-enegy market, the decision was made to house all parts of the company under a single roof."

Prudential, realizing that Houston Industries needed over a million square feet for its 2,000-plus downtown employees, offered to sell 1100 Milam. "At first we turned them down," says George of Houston Industries. "The building was the right size and it had a good location, but it didn't look like a headquarters for a major company." In addition, if Houston Industries bought 1100 Milam, it would be stuck with selling its old building. The deal was struck after Prudential showed Houston Industries officials the schemes for improving the building that Keating had proposed, and after Prudential agreed to take the Electric Tower in trade as part of the purchase (Prudential has since sold the Electric Tower to the City of Houston). "They brought us a deal we couldn't refuse," admits George.

After a design competition to rehabilitate 1100 Milam involving what became DMJM Keating; Kohn Pedersen Fox of New York; and PGAL Architects of Houston, Houston Industries chose DMJM Keating. Hines Interests, development manager, assembled a team with Kendall/Heaton Associates, building document architects; Ziegler/Cooper Architects, interiors architects for most of the standard office floors; and Lehman/Smith/Wiseman & Associates, interiors architects for the executive floors.

Keating, once partner-in-charge of the now-closed Houston office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1980s, where he headed SOM, then became a principal in a new firm, Keating Mann Jernigan Rottet, and is now a principal in the firm DMJM Keating. Keating's hand guided the design of a sizable number of major downtown office buildings built in Texas during the boom of the early 1980s, including First International Plaza (1980, now the 1100 Louisiana Building) and Allied Bank Plaza (1983, now First Interstate Bank Plaza) in downtown Houston; LTV Center (1983, now Trammell Crow


Houston Industries Plaza.


Houston Industries Plaza at night.


Houston Industries Plaza, entrance.


Houston Industries Plaza, auditorium ceiling inspired by vacuum cleaner pattern on carpet.

Center) and Texas Commerce Tower at 2200 Ross (1987) in Dallas; and Interfirst Plaza (1984) in San Antonio. While Keating still headed the Houston office of SOM, the firm provided the design for remodeling Interfirst II, a 1975 bank tower in downtown Dallas, where an about-to-fail curtain wall had to be replaced if the building was to be rescued. Renamed Renaissance Center, the building got a new glass skin that expressed its structural cross-bracing and a street-level glass pyramid over an underground food court, along with a rather fanciful new crown that turned the rooftop services into a memorable skyline image for the otherwise hard-to-spot building.

DMJM Keating has pulled off a similar feat at Houston Industries Plaza, saving an important piece of the urban fabric in the process. The most noticeable changes in Houston Industries Plaza happened at its base and at its top. The ground-level skirting was removed from the building (giving up any pretense of mixed use); a new skin of black granite, penetrated by tall, narrow windows, was added where the skirting had previously been attached; the now-open plaza was given a new stone surface that carried into the building lobby, along with new planters. The lobby's finishes were updated in pale wood, stainless steel, black stone, and green glass; a long light fixture, looking like a cross between a sculpture and a New Hebrides war canoe in a museum display, marks the elevator lobby. A deeply raked ground-floor auditorium with a ceiling of dynamically interlaced strips focused on the stage was added. The ceiling form reportedly was derived from the pattern created by vacuuming a carpet. New three-story-tall entries, notched into two of the corners, with clear-glass curtain walls and round entrance kiosks, opened up the lobby interior invitingly to the street. Relatively lightweight looking lighted bollards were placed at the sidewalk line, seemingly just ornamental but in fact protecting the entrances from the threat of a vehicle driving into the building,where the ground floor is only a few inches above grade. In addition, HL&P, like other electrical utilities, has become more security conscious; these bollards at the perimeter of its new headquarters are a reminder of that fact. Closing HL&P's architecturally remarkable downtown switching station on Clay Street, which had been open to the public, was also a security decision.

The second-floor space was developed as an interior garden, with benches, potted trees, and banks of flowers. The problematic multilevel circulation pattern was reworked, with the escalators from the street meeting the entrance from the pedestrian bridge at a second-floor security desk, while the tunnel entry, leading to a new underground food court lit by glazed skylights, like the Renaissance Center's in Dallas, was repositioned as well. At the same time, the whole building was brought into compliance with recent handicapped-accessibility standards.

Above the new base, the skin of the building was left largely the same as it had been. The glass-panel system, refurbished after suffering some damage from Hurricane Alicia in 1983, was found to be in excellent condition. The aluminum on the exterior was painted black. ("You can hardly call it paint, it's so advanced," says Keating.) Inside, there were major changes: the building was gutted and asbestos was removed. At the same time, the building's structure was stiffened to comply with a new building code put in place following Hurricane Alicia.

"This is one of the most remarkable feats of the whole project," says David George. "We knew we had to strengthen the building on the exterior, but when and how to do that were problematic. One of the best parts of the building was the skin, and we didn't want to disturb that, plus taking it off and putting it back would have been a huge expense. We also didn't want to block any more of the windows. So we determined that we would strengthen the building from the inside. We chose a nine-story X-brace system — a structural steel diagonal goes across nine floors, set within the three center bays of the building, dying into two vertical super columns on each side. Cross bracing in exterior walls of other Houston buildings, such as Heritage Plaza, in my opinion, didn't look good, so we came up with a cruciform section for the bracing, which decreases the visual impact. And we designed it so that pieces could come up in the freight elevators — from the outside you never knew what was going on."

Electrical and communications services were replaced, as was most of the air-handling equipment. Houston Industries bought the portion of the mechanical system at the Hyatt Regency parking garage that services the building, separated it from that serving the hotel, and updated it to use a more efficient ice-storage system. The cooling lines, however, still run through the skywalk.

If the changes to the base and shaft of the building are functional upgrades, the new top added to the building — the equivalent of another six stories — is pure show, a gesture needed to transform what had been a back-office afterthought into a monumental headquarters building. Keating has had a thing for elaborate rooflines since SOM's entry in the 1982 competition to design a new tower in Houston for the ill-fated Bank of the Southwest, for which he designed a roof top like an enormous engagement ring. The tops of other SOM towers designed by Keating are eye-catching, and, in the case of the keyhole top of Dallas's Texas Commerce Tower, truly remarkable, if just a bit weird. All of them have at least a modicum of functional justification, either in providing executive office space or masking roof top equipment.

It is hard to see such a justification at Houston Industries Plaza. Here, a lightweight metal frame was added to the roof, with four corner posts holding up a new flat roof with a huge circular hole in it. With a thin scrim of metal panels attached, this new top is the purest stage set, a backdrop for some amazing lighting effects.

The new top, in fact, does nothing more than make the building taller, the way the utterly useless dirigible mast on the Empire State Building did in an earlier era. But it also makes Houston Industries Plaza more visible, so that people driving by on the freeway can name it as the headquarters of the Light Company. And that's justification enough. There is precious little glue holding downtown Houston together. A major company that could have built a new suburban campus, as most companies seem to be doing these days, chose to stay downtown. Houston Industries, by turning on the lights of its new tower, has saved a big chunk of downtown from a premature eclipse. ■

STELLA STUDIO HOUSTON

Barrie Scardino

The discreet Stella Studio sign on the door of a huge warehouse at 1116 Nagle Street gives no clue as to the enormity of the project taking place within. Even after entering, it takes a minute to comprehend what is actually happening, because your eyes have to adjust to almost total darkness.

Three sides of the empty warehouse are filled with a dizzying, but static, multicolored light show. Giant sections of Frank Stella's monumental mural for the new Rebecca and John J. Moores School of Music Building at the University of Houston are projected onto 100-foot-long by 27-foot-wide connected canvas strips. Local artists and student assistants are spread out vertically and horizontally in the space, working from scaffolds or lying on the floor tracing, painting, welding Stella's 5,000-square-foot painting, which will cover the vaulted ceiling of the Moores Building lobby and an arch over the grand staircase.

Stella Studio, Houston.

Artists at work in the Stella Studio on mural for Moores Building.

The preeminent American artist Frank Stella, born in 1936, began his career making austere black-and-white paintings in the late 1950s. After a wildly successful retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1970, Stella moved away from monochromatic minimalist work into an energetic style using brilliant colors and curving, complex shapes. These later pieces were the subject of another Museum of Modern Art exhibition that traveled to Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum in 1989.

The University of Houston's mural is a product of Stella's increasing movement in the last decade toward a Spanish Churrigueresque or French Baroque style in which he seems compelled to fill every possible surface and space. His more recent work, and this mural in particular, produces feelings of both excitement and terror. The fluorescent colors, applied in swirls, dips, and geometric patterns, will be flamboyant and highly decorative in the space for which it is being prepared.

The design process for mammoth murals such as the Houston piece, which is still untitled, is complex. In this case Stella began by making a collage, photographs of which were scanned into electronic form, so the piece could be refined on a computer. This part of the design process was completed in the New York Stella Studio, where as many as five assistants work with Stella. The original collage is retained to be used as a reference point, but the artists work directly from the transparencies projected onto the wall.

Although Stella and his assistant Earl Childress are directing the Houston project, splitting their time between New York and Houston, Cindy Scaife and Tamsin Plant, from Toronto but living in Houston for the duration of the project, are the on-site project managers. They first worked with Stella Studio four years ago when they helped transfer the mural for the façade of Toronto's new Princess of Wales Theater. The design process for the Canadian project differed because the mural was painted directly onto the building, using Stella's projection technique, therefore all of the work had to be done at night. In Houston, the mural canvasses will be transferred and installed like wallpaper in the Moores Building.

To create a context for the Houston mural, the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston has mounted an exhibition of Stella's architectural and public work called *Stella in Studio*. The small but enlightening show, with models for bridges, houses, and theaters, along with more abstract sculptural pieces, will close on March 23. But work on the mural in the Houston studio will continue for approximately five more months.

Beth Morian, who has been a strong supporter of the Stella mural from the inception of the idea, remains full of enthusiasm and awe. "A cathedral is happening in our own back yard," she said. Morian explained that not only is this an incredible opportunity for Houston to have a work of art that will be world renowned on the same scale as the Rothko Chapel, but also "the project has brought Houston's art groups together in celebration of this monumental piece."

The Moores Building is scheduled to open this May, but the mural installation will not be completed for almost another year. The Stella Studio will be open to the public on two Sundays, April 13 and 20, and guided tours for student groups can be arranged through the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, at 713.743.9527. ■

Top and above: Stella Studio, Houston.

Rebecca and John J. Moores School of Music, The Mathes Group, architects, 1997. Computer-generated image of how the Stella mural will look in the Moores Building.

4 Installations: Sol LeWitt at Rice

William F. Stern

Center wall of the three-part wall drawing by Sol LeWitt, 1997, Rice University Art Gallery.

In late January, the Rice University Art Gallery opened an exhibition featuring the art of Sol LeWitt. Organized and curated by the gallery director, Kimberly Davenport, the exhibition presents an unusual opportunity to view several aspects of LeWitt's current work. Divided between two venues at Rice, the exhibit includes a wall drawing installation, an installation of cut Styrofoam pieces, and a concrete cinder-block piece in the Rice University Art Gallery, and sculpture from the series called the "complex forms" in the Farish Gallery at the School of Architecture. The exhibition runs through April 13.

Born in 1928, Sol LeWitt lives and works outside of Hartford, Connecticut, and spends several months a year in Spoleto, Italy. His work has been the subject of numerous museum exhibitions, including a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1978 and, more recently, a print retrospective also organized by the Museum of Modern Art and shown last fall at the University of Houston's Blaffer Gallery. LeWitt's work includes drawings on paper, drawings on walls, three-dimensional structures, photography, prints, and books with overlapping relationships between the work. Both two-dimensional and three-dimensional pieces are made in series, where permutations of an idea are explored in a multiplicity of variables and sequences.

LeWitt's three-part black-and-white wall drawing forms the centerpiece of this exhibition. LeWitt's first wall drawing was executed in 1968 at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. In those early years the wall drawings were just that — graphite on the flat surface of a white wall. As the wall drawings progressed, LeWitt introduced other media and techniques, including colored pencil, crayon, chalk, black India ink, colored India ink washes, and, most recently, black latex house paint. With the first wall drawings LeWitt developed a system whereby he would write instructions for a drawing, describing in words the idea to be executed; later, more complex wall drawing instructions might also be accompanied by a plan diagram. From the beginning LeWitt wrote his instructions in such a way that the wall drawings could be executed by others. Untitled, each drawing is assigned a sequential number, with its place of original installation identified. The Rice University Art Gallery piece will be recorded as wall drawing #813.

For the Rice show, two of LeWitt's assistants, John Hosford and Kathleen McShane, came to Houston to install the drawing and were assisted by Rice University art and architecture students. Months prior to the installation, LeWitt was sent a plan and video of the gallery space. His instructions, which consist of a diagram for the gallery's three opaque walls, were given to his assistants, who completed the work in a period of one week. The drawing, covering the three 16-foot-high, white walls of the gallery, consists of a series of monolithic black squares divided (or separated) vertically or diagonally by a change in surface treatment from flat black to gloss black paint. As a site-specific piece, the drawing relates specifically to its architectural environment, in this case the gallery container, which is seen initially through the entry wall of glass.

Like much of LeWitt's work this piece deals with combinations, variations, and sequence — thus, on one wall, two black squares, one with a gloss sheen, the other flat, are held apart by the flat white space between them. On the opposite wall, two almost-square blocks, again one flat and one gloss black, join to form a large rectangle. The third wall, facing the glass entry, presents one block, centered on the wall and divided diagonally between flat and gloss surfaces. These blocks are each held six inches down from the ceiling and six inches above the baseboard, making for a constant border that also establishes a common vertical dimension. Though the explanation of the process clarifies the nature of the piece, the wall drawing is intended to be experienced by the viewer as an interaction of form, shape, and texture within the confines of the three-dimensional space. The drawing presents a bold set of geometric relations and combinations, absolute in their purity and directness.

Because the drawing is site specific, it can only be installed at the Rice University Art Gallery and will be painted out when the show closes. Other wall drawings have been permanently installed — in private collections, museums, and public places. Not all of LeWitt's wall drawings are site specific; some can be adapted to different settings. But each can only be installed in one place at any given time.

The secondary space off the main gallery was chosen by LeWitt for the installation of a cut Styrofoam piece. Related to the wall drawing, but standing as a separate work, the installation con-

sists of one-inch-thick Styrofoam (commonly used in building construction as insulation board) broken into hand-size pieces, five to six inches across with three, four, or five sides. The broken pieces, painted gloss black, are nailed to the four walls of the gallery, which is painted flat black. The pieces are closely spaced with approximately a one-inch separation. Like the wall drawing, the Styrofoam piece was installed by LeWitt's assistants. Shape and placement of each broken piece was left to the discretion of the installer within constraints established by LeWitt. In common with the wall drawing, the broken Styrofoam piece is seen and experienced as part of the room and is dependent upon the physical space around it. Like the wall drawings, LeWitt's Styrofoam pieces are made in series with installations in other places and variations explored in contrasting colors.

Just outside the main gallery in the foyer space, LeWitt placed a sculptural piece fabricated from concrete cinder blocks. Entitled *Progression #3*, this work is not site specific and could be installed in another location at another time. The cinder-block piece is conceived as part of an ongoing series LeWitt began in the mid-1980s. Taking as his module the single cinder block (16 by 8 by 8 inches), he explores the infinite permutations possible as the blocks are combined. *Progression #3* begins with a 48-inch cube, three blocks long and six blocks tall. The next tier, stepped in one block, forms a 32-inch cube, two blocks long and four blocks high, and the third tier, a 16-inch cube, is one block wide and two blocks tall. Thus the stacked cubes telescope proportionally (3:2:1), regulated by the scale and module of the cinder-block unit. One can begin to imagine the possibilities as Sol LeWitt has done in dozens of other cinder-block pieces, sometimes painted white or other times left natural gray. *Progression #3* was built by a Houston mason, Wayne Brinkley, who followed the instructions provided for the piece, purchasing the materials from a local supplier and assembling the structure in a few hours. LeWitt fully intends for this type of work to be made by local craftsmen using available materials.

Two years after LeWitt began making the cinder-block pieces, he started working on a series called the "complex forms." Six pieces from this series, all dating from the early 1990s, were installed and assembled in Farish Gallery by the gallery director, Dung Ngo. More complicated than the cinder-block pieces or those from the earlier series known as the "open cubes," these structures closely relate to a series of colored ink-wash wall drawings called the "continuous forms." Fabricated of plywood or aluminum painted white, each begins from a plan drawn on graph paper. The plan is then projected to a point whose position is indicated on the graph paper and whose height is predetermined. While the plan might seem relatively simple, the three-dimensional projection is something else, appearing as a multifaceted carving whose system has been purposely obscured. Of all of Sol LeWitt's work, the complex forms, whether intentionally or not, are the most figurative and most evocative of natural shapes. Seen at the Farish Gallery with its expanse of glass to the outside, these pieces are sharply defined by the play of natural light, heightening the rhythmic interplay between the facets and shapes.

This provocative exhibition of four installations proves the ingenuity of Sol LeWitt's methods, both in the way he conceives the work and in the way the work is realized. Since LeWitt's first exhibition in the early 1960s, this artist has produced an enormous body of work that constantly progresses and invents upon itself. His is an art that can be understood and appreciated on many different levels, from the purely intellectual to the romantic and sensuous. It is an art that communicates equally with its artist, its makers, and its viewers. ■

Wall drawing installation, Rice University Art Gallery.

Progression #3, 1997, Rice University Art Gallery.

1990 sculpture from the series of complex forms, Farish Gallery, Rice University School of Architecture.

Installation of broken Styrofoam pieces, 1997, Rice University Art Gallery.

Lake/Flato

Lake/Flato Architects. *Preface by Oscar Riera Ojeda, foreword by William Turnbull, introduction by Rick Brettell, text by Ray Don Tilley. Rockport, Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers, AIA Press, 1996. 132 pp.; 72 color, 60 black-and-white illus.; $19.99 paper.*

Reviewed by Stephen Fox

The design book publisher Oscar Riera Ojeda has added a monograph on the work of the San Antonio architects Lake/Flato to his Contemporary World Architects series. David Lake and Ted Flato present 16 buildings (mostly houses) completed in the past 10 years, five buildings in progress, and a mosaic of other design work accompanied by brief descriptions.

David Lake (who is from Austin) and Ted Flato (from Corpus Christi) grew up with strong connections to rural Texas through exposure to the ranches of family and friends. A striking consequence of this experience, visible in their residential and nonresidential architecture, is that Lake and Flato aren't afraid of the outdoors. They consistently provide open-air living spaces, rather than treating the out-of-doors as landscape scenery to be viewed from within. Lake and Flato tend to shape their buildings not as single blocks but as compounds made up of pavilions, open-air galleries, and inner courtyards. The spatial organization of their buildings is quite similar to the houses that O'Neil Ford and his associates designed in the 1950s and 1960s. It is this approach to spatial organization, as well as Lake/Flato's strong propensity for tectonic expression, that allies them with Ford, for whom both worked in the early 1980s. These points of similarity contrast with Lake/Flato's preference for figural shapes and gestural appendages, which distance them from Ford, whose buildings tended to be far less demonstrative.

David Lake's and Ted Flato's individual approaches to spatial organization appear virtually identical. Looking only at their plans, it would be difficult to guess which partner might have been in charge of a design. Yet there are distinctions between the two. Lake is credited as principal architect for buildings that explore local vernaculars (such as the Funk Ranch House outside Roma and the firm's houses in Santa Fe), while the buildings credited to Flato display a fascination with the metal shed type (the Carraro House outside Kyle and the Carter Ranch House outside Millican). Flato has adapted the shed type to nonresidential buildings (the Holt Company headquarters in San Antonio and the Great Northwest Branch of the San Antonio Public Library) and transmutes it in two expansive limestone houses in Fort Worth and the San Antonio suburb of Terrell Hills. It is also intriguing to see how Lake adapts to a nonresidential scale. He organized the exteriors of the office building and network control center for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe's corporate headquarters in Fort Worth (designed by other architects) to emphasize shadowed depth, gestural extension, and broad planes of material, texture, color, and rhythm that elicit contrasts where they overlap or adjoin.

Lake/Flato Architects emphasizes houses, which suggests that the practice is more suburban than it really is. The architects underplay their adaptive use of buildings in downtown San Antonio and their design work for various art museums and galleries. A competition that the firm won in the summer of 1996 — to convert the former main library into San Antonio's International Center — will give Lake/Flato a public building commission of sufficient size and visibility to project the firm beyond the residential sphere that this monograph documents.

The interpretive texts by William Turnbull and Richard Brettell do not do Lake/Flato justice. They represent the practice in terms of a parochial, rather complacent regionalism. It is the photographs — by Paul Hester and Lisa Hardaway, Willis Winters, Timothy Hursley, and David Lake among others — that do the work in this book, representing and interpreting the aims and sensibilities of Lake/Flato. These deserve more extended consideration. Lake and Flato's work involves the overlapping contexts of O'Neil Ford's regionalism and San Antonio's distinctive architectural culture, the worlds of contemporary art and environmental conservation, and the South Texas patrician circles from which their commissions emanate. An exploration of these contexts would have expanded on the "sense of place" that Lake/Flato's visually arresting buildings claim with assurance and style. ■

Galveston Architecture

Galveston Architecture Guidebook
by Ellen Beasley and Stephen Fox. Photographs by Ellen Beasley. Houston: Rice University Press, 1996. 275 pp.; illus.; $32.50 hardcover, $17.95 paper.

The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston: An Architectural and Social History *by Ellen Beasley. Houston: Rice University Press, 1996. 170 pp.; illus.; $39.95.*

Reviewed by Barry Moore

These two Galveston books were published at the end of the Rice University Press's life. After only 14 years, Rice shut down the press rather than spend the money required to double or triple its offerings, which would have brought it up to the standard of first-class university presses. These two volumes speak well of the Rice Press and its regional and architectural focus.

The handsome and long-awaited *Galveston Architecture Guidebook* was published in commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the Galveston Historical Foundation. Anyone familiar with Fox's earlier *Houston Architectural Guide* (Houston: American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, 1990) will be able to use this one without any practice: the city is divided into geographic regions, sites are sequentially numbered in each area, and each entry is accompanied by a photograph and a paragraph of pertinent facts. The books are nearly the same size as well: the Houston book has 850 entries, while Galveston has 720.

My lasting impression of the *Houston Guide* is the preponderance of new buildings identified, compared with older structures; the *Galveston Guidebook* is the opposite. And that, of course, is a major difference between the two cities. As Beasley and Fox point out in the excellent and concise introduction: "Ironically, Galveston's economic woes (rebuilding after the devastating 1900 storm) are what saved its architectural riches. Had the Galveston wharves been expanded, much of the east end of the island would eventually have been swallowed by port-related industries and development. There is, after all, little space for expansion on such a narrow strip of land." The reason why these two cities developed so *differently* turns on the fact that Galveston's burden of rebuilding was compounded by the necessity of tying up all available capital to build the seawall and raise the grade above storm tide, just when Wall Street had decided the Port of Galveston was too risky for further major development. Houston, meanwhile, poured its capital into dredging a ship channel and developing its own port.

Since comparisons between the two guidebooks are inevitable, the physical differences should be noted. The Galveston book is one inch wider. It won't, therefore, fit in my overcoat pocket, and it refuses to tuck into my camera bag. It has a sewn binding instead of the Wire-O type of the Houston volume. This creates two problems for me as a regular guidebook user: this one may wear out sooner, and I can't get it to lie flat on a copy machine — serious drawbacks for a guidebook. Beasley and Fox have produced a book that is going to get some heavy use; I wish the publishers had thought that far ahead.

Appropriate credit is given the late Houston architect Howard Barnstone, who in his groundbreaking *The Galveston That Was*, published in 1966, with photographs by Ezra Stoller and Henri Cartier-Bresson, first directed widespread critical attention to Galveston's fast-disappearing architectural heritage. This guidebook will sit next to Barnstone's book on my reference shelf. If you appreciate historic architecture — or if you ever plan to kill a few hours in Galveston — this is an invaluable book.

It is fortunate for us that when Ellen Beasley moved to Galveston, not only was she impressed by its landmark buildings, but she discovered a remarkable world of minor architecture along Galveston's alleys. *The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston* examines the backside of the city, both architecturally and socially, through written documents, artifacts, oral interviews, and photographs.

The oral component of the book gives life to the architecture, history, and urban design discussions. Beasley explains, though, that she had no choice but to rely on oral sources: "As might be expected, little has been written about those [buildings] that do remain because their stories, like the stories of most alley dwellers, have been much too quiet and much too ordinary for the local newspapers — which is why the oral histories that cross generational and decadal lines are so essential to any alley study."

Beasley's book is handsome, beautifully laid out, and full of intriguing images — the kind of book that leads me to first look at the pictures and read the captions before going back to the beginning and taking on the text. My shelf is lined with formidable nonfiction read only through this pictures-and-captions shortcut, but *The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston* will pull you way beyond the shortcut into the text, which is inviting and well integrated with the illustrations.

Beasley creatively combines sources to tell her story. Images from 19th-century bird's-eye drawings are juxtaposed with Sanborn fire insurance maps. When these are compared, especially when they are roughly contemporary, a surprising amount of physical evidence can be gathered about Galveston's alleys and the buildings that line them. In many cases the author supplements the drawn historical record with recent and vintage photographs to illustrate a building type. Interviews with persons who live in buildings similar to those illustrated from historical records, often on similar blocks, give depth to Beasley's observations.

This carefully researched but lively format reminds me of *The American Experience*, a series of history documentaries produced for public television. As I read *The Alleys and Back Buildings*, I imagined a camera panning over the multiple graphics, voice-overs presenting the written and oral material, and occasionally the voice of the well-informed Ms. Beasley herself. This book is a wonderful television documentary waiting to happen.

At the end of the book the author makes plain her belief that back buildings are viable options for affordable housing in modern communities as well as an often overlooked but important piece of city fabric. This book is a plea that smaller buildings and smaller places be recognized as important to our urban landscapes and be acknowledged in urban and architectural studies. Beasley is extraordinarily successful in communicating her message.

This is a valuable book for anyone interested in the way cities evolve over time or how we can find flexibility in the most ordered of city plans. But it is also a text for anyone who believes that historic preservation and adaptive reuse are among the best tools we have to rebuild our cities from the inside out. ■

Architecture at Rice

In September 1961 the new director of the Rice School of Architecture, William W. Caudill, began publication of the series **Architecture at Rice** with his essay "On People and Things." Caudill was a prolific writer and believed that publishing was an appropriate, even necessary, educational tool for both the writer and the reader. Lars Lerup, the current dean of the Rice School of Architecture, agrees. Lerup has revived this series, which became dormant in the early 1970s, by publishing six remarkable monographs since his tenure began in 1993.

Dean Lerup said in a recent interview: "When I first came to Rice I looked over past publications and was impressed with the body of work and surprised that it was unknown. For example, Rice had published conversations with Louis Kahn and Rem Koolhaas that I had never heard about. I realized that this was an important vehicle to make the Rice School of Architecture known in the world."

The quality of design and content of the new Rice books is very high. Dung Ngo is the director of the school of architecture's publishing program, which has struck a partnership deal with Princeton University Press. Rice commissions, edits, and designs the books; Princeton prints, markets, and distributes them (through Chronicle Books — the largest distributor in the world). Since the association with Princeton, Lerup has learned that decisions about what to publish must be market driven. Rice faculty members make up an informal editorial board, but the main purpose is not to publish the work of the school's own faculty. Of the new series' first nine books, only one was authored by a tenured Rice faculty member (Albert Pope; see *Ladders* book review this page).

"What we publish is, in an indirect way, what we believe to be important. **Architecture at Rice** is a success because we have been able to get out our ideas about cities and buildings, so it's worth all the work," Lerup said. Although he is working with a relatively small budget, Lerup is confident about the future of the program. Five new books are now in various stages of editing and production: *Rafael Moneo: Conversations with Students*; *Modern Spanish Architecture 1950–95* by Luis Fernandez-Galiano; *Four Houses* by William F. Cannady; *Craig Hodgetts: Conversations with Students*; *Assessing the New Las Vegas* (revisiting the work of Venturi and Scott Brown) by Dave Hickey; and a second edition of *Louis Kahn: Conversations*. ■

Ladders

Ladders *by Albert Pope. Architecture at Rice 34. Houston: Rice School of Architecture and Princeton Architectural Press, 1996. 278 pp.; illus.: $17.95.*

Reviewed by Robert Fishman

The first and most difficult challenge of contemporary urbanism is to see and perceive what is around us: a city whose scale dwarfs all previous urban forms and invalidates all previous urban theory; a city where the organizing dichotomies of center-edge, urban-suburban, city-countryside have become meaningless; a city whose banality has made it invisible and unnameable; a city that even the

experts describe with the lazy phrase suburban sprawl.

Albert Pope, associate professor of architecture at Rice University, rises to this challenge in *Ladders*, a book filled with original perceptions and rigorous, precise theoretical formulations. Perhaps his work can best be compared to Christopher Alexander's 1965 classic *The City Is Not a Tree*. Like Alexander, Pope builds his argument on geometrically defined paradigms; but Pope goes beyond Alexander in confronting a whole range of historical and planning problems.

Ladders might well have been titled *Grids and Ladders*, for the book begins by comparing cities based on 19th-century street grids with post-1945 cities, where the grid has been eroded. For Pope the 19th-century grid is an open, centrifugal, and nonhierarchical form that permits movement in all directions and is capable of infinite expansion. It corresponds to a wide-open urban society that seeks to maximize options.

By contrast, the ladder is a closed, centripetal form: for example, a linear highway strip development. In a typical ladder, only one route connects different destinations; the options and multiple connections of a grid are eliminated in favor a relatively closed system. Pope sees the post-1945 city as moving from grids to ladders. Indeed, the ladder is the most basic closed system, and in its ubiquity it has come to define the contemporary city.

The most original and valuable perception in this book is that 20th-century planning, far from opening the city as the great visionaries of modern planning proposed, in fact produces a series of closed, uncommunicating forms. Downtown public space implodes to produce the closed-in atrium hotel or a bridge-and-tunnel system; gridded residential streets implode to produce isolated subdivisions and gated communities; retail and office space implode into the mall and the office park.

On the regional scale, Pope sees the emergence of a centripetal city in which the suburbs cut themselves off from downtown and from each other, sucking the life out of the former regional center (the city) without generating their own distinctive urbanity. This leads ultimately to what Pope calls the metropolitan endgame, a region of closed, disconnected, semi-urban fragments floating in chaotic, meaningless space.

Pope supports his pessimistic reading of 20th-century urbanism with a fascinating re-reading of the master planners of the first half of this century. He is particularly original in his treatment of Ludwig Hilberseimer, a member of the original Bauhaus team who emigrated in 1938 to the United States. Hilberseimer is usually remembered for his 1920s mechanistic urban utopia, which Joseph Rykwerk has aptly characterized as "even worse, if that is possible, than what has been realized." Pope recognizes in Hilberseimer the great prophet of the destruction of the grid, the theorist who "came close to approximating the [closed] form of the postwar environment."

But how can society recapture the openness and diversity of a true city? Pope's attempts to move from perception to prescription raise crucial problems that reflect on his theoretical contributions. In his conclusion, he criticizes the arrogance of urban designers who attempt to speak for others — the absent and seemingly apathetic masses — by proposing the revival of public space and "a return to the presumed sanity of the traditional urban community." Quoting the French theorist of hyperreality Jean Baudrillard, Pope argues that the silence of the masses is not apathy but a way of negating values imposed from above. This, I presume, is a critique of neotraditionalism, and there are some uncomfortable truths here for those of us who support the goals of the New Urbanism, which has at least tried to foster public debate using language and images that are comprehensible. Pope's relentless theorizing seems to take us even further from possible public debate.

The problem is not the theory itself — which has a necessary rigor and integrity — but in the presentation, which never gets beyond theoretical discussion. Pope's thesis is not helped by a writing style that seems translated from French. We remain very much in Theoryland, where Fredric Jameson counts as a reliable guide to downtown Los Angeles and where Pope can still deploy that 1970s radical mantra "late capitalism" without irony.

I wish Pope had gone beyond theory and looked more carefully at an example or two of real ladders and how they function block by block. His work would benefit from a more direct confrontation with the lived experience of ordinary people: why people seem to need the closure he deplores, and how some people still generate remarkable diversity even from what he calls "Degree Zero Urbanism." Similarly, a more nuanced look at urban history would show that open-grid cities of the past in fact generated their own forms of closure.

The strengths of this book are an unusual rigor and originality of thought combined with an admirably steadfast commitment to the values of the open city. These values need the support of a more democratic vision that speaks to Bubba as well as to Baudrillard. ■

Cite 39

Texas Places: Call for Entries

An upcoming issue of *CITE* will focus on phenomena throughout the state of Texas that collectively speak about the place in which we live. The *CITE* editors invite your participation. Please send us a photograph (a good quality snapshot will do) that conveys the feeling of a special place in Texas. The coast and borders, roads and highways, and spaces in-between are all potential subjects. Your description/caption should not exceed 25 words; submissions are due by May 1, 1997. Because of space limitations, we may not be able to include all entries. Thank you for your interest!

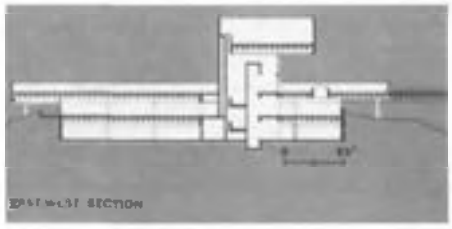
Send to: *Cite*, 1973 West Gray, #1, Houston, Texas 77019.

CRS Serene

Jay Baker

What kind of a place should the CRS people work in? As for me, I'd like to see it look like the site, like Houston, and [be] a place in which most of our people wouldn't mind working.

—William W. Caudill, June 22, 1967



CRS Building section, CRS, architects, 1969.

For more than 25 years, 1111 West Loop South was the professional address of hundreds of architects, designers, and engineers. There, a remarkable building served as the corporate headquarters of a diversifying public company, as well as the incubator for the informal graduate school of design that was Caudill Rowlett Scott. When CRS was sold to its longtime rival Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK) in 1994, the new owners, wanting to distance themselves from the layers of history associated with the building, put it on the market. The property was sold last year to the Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists and Animal Emergency Clinic. Although its life as a center of design creativity is over, the building at 1111 West Loop South will always resonate, for those who worked there and for those who appreciated its architecture, as a place filled with the synergetic spirit of its creators.

Formed in 1946 by Bill Caudill and John Rowlett in Austin, Texas, the firm moved to College Station in 1947, where the principals were associated with Texas A&M's School of Architecture. The next year Wallie Scott joined the partnership. By 1952 a second office was opened in Oklahoma City, and the main office had moved to larger quarters in Bryan, Texas. With 50 employees, Caudill Rowlett Scott decided to consolidate and move to Houston in 1958, where it instantly became the largest architectural practice in the city. By 1967, the firm had adopted the acronym CRS, employed some 300 architects, and was working on projects in 40 states and several foreign countries. The CRS offices were then located in the Dow Center, at the corner of Richmond and Edloe. Although the building was designed by the firm, it was produced for Kenneth Schnitzer as part of a speculative real estate development, and CRS was leasing its headquarters. With their growing success, the CRS partners wanted to house the firm in a facility more representative of their current architectural thinking, gaining also the prestige and long-term financial benefit of owning their own plant.

In the summer of 1967, Bill Caudill had recently celebrated his 53rd birthday, was chairman of the board of CRS, and had just completed his sixth year as director of the Rice University School of Architecture. There was little doubt that Caudill would remain the spiritual leader of the firm, but despite the fact that he held the office of chairman, the truth was that his decision to take the reins at Rice had meant loosening them considerably at CRS. He was no longer in control of the firm he founded. The opportunity to design the company's new headquarters represented for Caudill a chance at renewal, not just to further his vision for the firm, but to combine theory and practice in the design of his own facility.

As CRS began to search for a site, an inquiry was made into property owned by Tenneco adjacent to Loop 610, then still under construction, and just across Buffalo Bayou from Memorial Park. For something under $750,000, an eight-acre parcel was purchased on the northern extremity of the Tenneco tract. It was, in fact, the only tract within their holdings that Tenneco would consider selling. With a 40-foot drop in elevation and a surrounding backwater tributary of Buffalo Bayou, the site was in large part located in the floodplain and was considered by many to be unbuildable. The firm, however, saw opportunities in the location, and made the purchase.

"Caudill was intent on capturing the essence of CRS in the architecture of its new building."

In CRS programming parlance, the firm began "seeking the problem" for the new facility, projecting space needs for the next decade. Although the program focused on sensitivity to the worker, flexibility, and efficiency, Caudill was intent on capturing the essence of CRS in the architecture of its new building. A psychologist from California was brought in to help identify the "mystery of CRS." It is widely believed that Caudill employed the consultant to confirm what he already held to be true and to support his own design goals for the building. Nevertheless, the report stressed communication, functional transparency, and common work spaces to unite the growing diversity of the firm.

Armed with a site, a program, and a budget of $1 million, Caudill retired to the basement of Rice's Fondren Library with his design team, which included Jack DeBartolo and Eduardo Bejar, for a week-long, intensive design session known at CRS as a "squatters." From the very beginning, Caudill divided the site into two sections: the northwest and most challenging part of the site was selected for the firm's offices, while the southwest part, with flat terrain and immediate accessibility to the West Loop, was saved for future expansion or a commercial enterprise.

Vehicular access was a central issue, yet problems with the floodplain led to multilevel schemes, complicating a parking solution. The resulting scheme structurally accommodated the intricacies of the site with several planes of concrete waffle slabs, supported intermittently by concrete columns. Using a series of models and a videotape of sequential vignettes, Caudill presented the design for the headquarters to the entire staff during a Friday lunch in June 1967. Reactions were enthusiastic, and, in due course, the plans were sent to in-house estimators for preliminary pricing. The estimators were not quite as enamored. A price tag of some $2 million was produced; Bill Caudill was disappointed. Always an incessant communicator, Caudill began to issue a barrage of letters and memos. On June 23, 1967, he wrote to his mother: "Boy what a week I am having — designing a new office building for our firm. In my twenty years of practice I have never had such a terrible client. Imagine an architect doing a building for 15 other architects."

The temperature of the memos, shared *ad infinitum* through an elaborate system of carbon copying, was beginning to bother some of the team members. Curiously, a site model was never produced during initial design efforts, an unusual occurrence in standard office practice. The design team approached their boss, asking for a model builder and two extra weeks for a complete analysis of the site so that a solution short of abandonment could be achieved. Ed Nye, a senior partner and engineer, admonished the team to pay attention to site sections and to simplify the concrete structure. They discovered that by creating a single floor plate of some 55,000 square feet in a 2:1 rectangular ratio, the needs of the office could be met on just one level. There was one problem: all of the square footage would rest below the 100-year flood level. The building would have to be conceived as a concrete bathtub, with the window sills serving as the tub lip. The design team extended their studies to site sections including the West Loop service road and discovered that the roof of the proposed tub would be only four feet above the access road elevation. With a bridge spanning the tributary in a gradual slope, the four-foot differential could be accommodated, and a parking

deck could cover the entire building.

This scheme was presented to Caudill, whose first reaction was, "This isn't architecture, this is engineering." But he began to muse about the confluence of engineering and architecture, and saw an opportunity for the relationship between architectural form and structural considerations to find expression in the new CRS building. From that point on, the scheme became infected with multiple efficiencies. The parking deck could double as a roof and as a sunscreen for the offices below. The concrete frame would allow for continuous glass between perimeter columns, giving the entire interior uninterrupted views of the out-of-doors. The warehouselike expanse of space was thought of as a "garage for architecture," providing infinite flexibility for growth and change. The structure was to be left exposed and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems would be integrated into the fabric of the building. Where visitors and clients came into contact with the building, "islands of design" would afford a highly finished contrast to the basic shell of the garage. The whole building would be a demonstration of both process and product — an effective advertisement for the firm.

Even so, Caudill railed against the harshness of the scheme. There was no brick, no wood, no warmth. So the lobby was given a brick floor, as were the vehicular approach and bridge. To mark the place for a turning car, an eight-foot bollard topped with a clear skylight was placed on the centerline of approach, affording the visitor a foreshadowing glimpse into the lobby below. A vertical block that rose above the parking deck was sized to accommodate both a formal staircase and an elevator. The resultant cube contrasted with the parking plane and doubled as an entry sentinel and mechanical plant with concealed cooling towers. Laminated wood beams spanned the glass wall on the receiving face of the entrance pavilion, and a pair of "chopping block" doors was fabricated by laminating strips of hardwood to two huge solid-wood cores.

Invention and experimentation, part of the CRS design culture, were important in developing the building. Structurally, a system of two different spans was employed. Over a 40-foot length, concrete T-sections were left exposed to the warehouse below. Over intervening ten-foot spans, a thinner flat slab of concrete allowed for the distribution of mechanical services to the 40-foot lofts through side walls, while accommodating satellite conference rooms underneath. In a search for ideal light levels, a fluorescent grocery-store light fixture was turned upside down and reflected off a scale model of the concrete Ts. Calculations led to the notion that if the Ts were painted white, the grocery-store fixture could be fashioned with a break-metal underside to create an indirect ambient fixture before commercially available indirect light fixtures had been heard of.

The final design was a kind of inverted office building. Upside down with regard to typical office building strategies, cars were overhead and out of site, while the lush landscape within the floodplain provided an ever-changing panorama for the partition-free perimeter. When the design team questioned the unusual organization, Caudill said simply, "It's a kiva." This reference to an underground ceremonial room constructed in Hopi Indian villages must have seemed radical coming from a man practicing architecture in the middle of corporate modernism, but Caudill used words economically much as he designed by focusing on common denominators.

For such a dramatic idea, the building was mysteriously located, well away from the freeway. Tantamount to taking a product off the market to increase its value, this relationship of the building to the freeway actually served to make arrival more dramatic and unusual. Driving through the trees, over a bridge, and then descending into a space surrounded by the serenity of nature had the effect of a head-clearing, palette-cleansing tonic. The critics agreed. In January 1969, even before it was complete, the CRS office building won a citation in *Progressive Architecture's* 16th Annual Design Awards program.

In December 1969, the firm moved into the new headquarters, and again Caudill was sending out carbon-copy communiqués, this time to his two sisters and brother: "We are in our new office building. Beautiful. . . . My stock is high now since my little design team did our new building and all seem to be enthusiastic about it. It's really something. Built on 'unbuildable' flood land. The site is magnificent. Beautiful forest and bayou. See no cars. Cars on roof. We drive across a fifty foot bridge directly to roofing deck. Offices below — all glass" (December 9, 1969).

The second half of the site, set aside in the early design sketches, came into use relatively soon when CRS sold the tract fronting the freeway. A CRS team designed the 18-story U.S. Home Building at 1177 West Loop South, completed in 1979. As the firm grew, a number of CRS divisions were transferred to new space in the tower. With staff divided between two buildings, the need arose for a simple, distinguishing description of each location. The most obvious architectural component of the original headquarters was the cubic entry pavilion. Because of its white concrete surface, the CRS office building became known as the White House; the U.S. Home Building was simply referred to as the Tower.

Four years later, still embracing diversification and an interdisciplinary mix, CRS acquired the J. E. Sirrine Company of South Carolina to facilitate reentry into the domestic market following a decade when a quarter of the firm's revenues had come from the Middle East. On June 24, 1983, Caudill pulled then chairman Tom Bullock aside to inquire about the status of the acquisition. With Bullock's reassurance that all was moving forward, Caudill turned to him and said, "I want to design the new logo." The next morning, while reviewing the finished manuscript of his 12th book, *Memos: Singapore, Indonesia, and Hong Kong*, Bill Caudill died suddenly at the age of 69.

Over the next 11 years CRSS continued to expand heavily into engineering-related fields. The untimely death in 1990 of Paul Kennon, the design leader of CRSS and, at the time, dean of the Rice School of Architecture, was a monumental blow to the already shrinking architectural division of the firm. At the same time, an overbuilt nation was reeling in the wake of savings-and-loan failures and a plummeting real estate market. The leadership of CRSS decided to sell the architectural practice to their competitor HOK, which understandably, and perhaps mercifully, only intended to occupy the White House until newer quarters could be had. Thus, a group of high-tech veterinarians came to occupy the concrete bathtub.

In response to the needs of the new occupants, renovations to the White House will forever modify the venerable facility that housed CRS — once Houston's and the world's largest architectural firm. The open lofts and uninterrupted perimeter have been carved up to create surgical suites and private offices to meet the technical needs of a medical facility. An additional elevator, required by code and the vertical transportation needs of animals in dire straits, has been built on the axis of approach in front of the distinctive CRS-identifying cube, dramatically altering the original design composition.

Those who loved the CRS Building for its intended purpose had the chance to say goodbye on April 8, 1994, when the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects held its annual gala and awards ceremony there. A crowd of about 500 was present when AIA Houston's 25-year award was given to the White House. Then president David Watkins reminded the audience that much of Houston's architectural community attended the CRS "graduate school" in this building. "It is a landmark, not only for its design but also for the many significant careers in architecture that were launched and nurtured there," he said.

And as Bill Caudill had hoped, the CRS building at 1111 West Loop South, born of the idiosyncrasies of its site, was an architectural monument among Houston's best buildings. ■

CRS Building, 1111 West Loop South, entrance from Loop 610.

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