38 : Summer 1997

Cite

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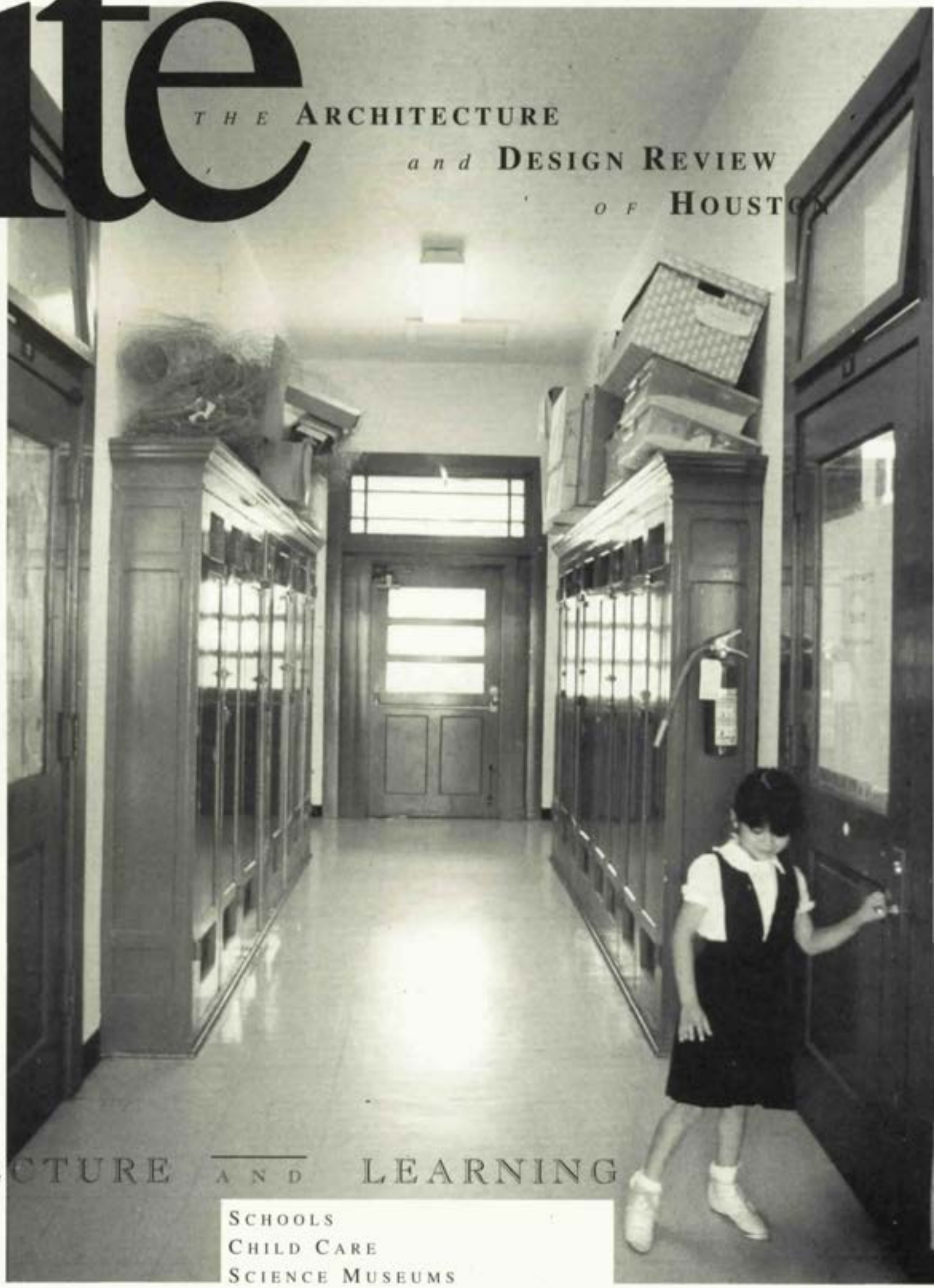
THE ARCHITECTURE and DESIGN REVIEW of HOUSTON



ARCHITECTURE AND LEARNING

SCHOOLS
CHILD CARE
SCIENCE MUSEUMS

also

Tadao Ando's Fort Worth Modern Art Museum
Houston's Drive-In Apartments

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Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

A Publication of the Rice Design Alliance

38: Summer 1997

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Cite is printed on recycled paper.

Cover: Dora B. Lantrip Elementary School, center hall of a 1949 classroom cottage. *Below:* Mega Child Care and Learning Center, 8800 South Main Street, Houston.

Cite Calendar

SUMMER

JUNE 8 – SUNDAY, 3 P.M.

RDA Annual Members Meeting:
RDA's new board members and officers will be elected at the Annual Meeting in Galveston at the Open Gates Advanced Teaching and Telecommunications Center (1891, McKim, Mead & White; restoration and addition by The Mathes Group, 1996). Historian Ellen Beasley will speak on her recent book, *The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston.*

JUNE 16 THROUGH JULY 25

GHCA Summer Program:
Architecture for High School Students.
On July 25, at the conclusion of this program the students' work will be exhibited in the architecture building, University of Houston. *713.743.2000.*

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. 713.781.6864, ext. 123.*

JULY 31 — THURSDAY

DHA: Downtown Home Tour
Loft apartments and luxury downtown living spaces will be open to the public. During the tour, *Live Downtown Essay Contest* entry information will be distributed. By submitting an essay of fewer than 500 words titled "Why I would like to live downtown," Houstonians will have the opportunity to win a $1,000 shopping spree from Foley's and a rent-free, one-year lease in The Rice. Currently being renovated into upscale loft-style apartments, the historic Rice Hotel will reopen in December as The Rice. The winner of the essay contest will be announced in October. *713.658.8938.*

FALL

The Houston Talks
RDA, the Rice University School of Architecture, and the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston will continue this collaborative program featuring international architects who will give public lectures as well as spend time with the architecture students of both schools. *Dates and speakers to be announced. 713.527.4876.*

OCTOBER 1 THROUGH OCTOBER 22

RDA Lecture Series:
1900 to 2000: American Cities in the 20th Century.
As the millennium approaches, this series will look at four American cities as they have matured over the last 100 years. To broadly represent the city in America, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami have been selected. The lectures will examine the dynamic changes that have occurred in American urbanism, and the affects these changes have had on the architecture and physical nature of cities. Of particular interest is how different eras of the American city overlay one another, and how each new generation of city building can revitalize or diminish what came before. *Brown Auditorium, MFAH. 713.527.4876.*

NOVEMBER 14 — FRIDAY, 7:30 P.M.

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

SPRING 1998

FEBRUARY 25 THROUGH MARCH 25

RDA Lecture Series:
Architecture in Furniture and Fashion.
Furniture and fashion have been give little critical attention within architectural culture. This series will explore shared crafts such as draftsmanship and design. *Speakers and dates to be announced. Brown Auditorium, MFAH. 713.527.4876.*

RDA Exhibition:
CITE: Photographic Retrospective
Paul Hester's images of Houston from 1982–1997 commissioned by *Cite* magazine (both published and unpublished) will be exhibited. *Location and dates to be announced. 713.527.4876.*

Please call 713.529.2483 to be included in our fall CiteCalendar, September 1997.

Letters

Sprawl, Growth, Cities, Planning

Houston and the metropolitan centers of California have a common legacy and some common problems today: They have grown precipitously over the last 45 years; expanded without acknowledging true costs of services; intruded on productive farm lands and sensitive natural habitats; leap-frogged areas perceived as bad investments for development; and emphasized the automobile as the primary mode of transportation. Although Houston has driven these avenues with similar negative results that California cities are experiencing, these last few years, under Mayor Bob Lanier's firm hand, Houston has begun to refocus on making its inner city competitive with suburban and exurban areas of the region. Lanier's administration has identified some of the key directions the city needs to take, and, recently, reinforcement that Lanier's ideas are cogent has appeared.

Beyond Sprawl, a practicable report from California, focuses on new ideas for maintaining urban growth while fostering economic vitality and sustaining a measurable quality of life — a place where anyone would want to live and work. This report resulted from a joint project of the California Resources Agency (a government conservation group), the Bank of America (California's largest bank), the Greenbelt Alliance (the Bay Area's conservation and planning organization), and the Low Income Housing Fund (a nonprofit dedicated to low-income housing). It identified four primary goals:

1. To provide more certainty in determining where new development should or should not take place.
2. To make more efficient use of developed land, including a strong focus on job creation and housing in established urban areas.
3. To create a legal and procedural framework that will foster stability and send positive economic signals to investors.
4. To build a broad-based constituency of environmentalists, community organizations, businesses, farmers, and government leaders to combat sprawl.

All major metropolitan regions are at a crossroads. Sprawl, which once signaled economic and population growth, unchecked has become a force that will ultimately inhibit growth and degrade the quality of our lives. Contributing to the social, economic, and environmental costs of unregulated growth are auto-related expenses, including maintenance, fuel, commute times, and traffic congestion; underutilized resources in older parts of our cities; municipal governments' inability to provide equal services in all sectors; and loss of social stability in urban areas through the loss of job opportunities. With the rising cost of housing, decreasing supply of developable land, and increasing budgets to provide basic services, the message becomes clear: We must take stock. We must be smarter about how we grow. We must create new and more efficient growth patterns that are compact, responsive to people at all income levels, and enhance economic competition and quality of life.

Houston has a timely opportunity to address these issues. In November, we will elect a new mayor and several new council members due to term limitations. How Houston will grow, how Houston plans, and how Houston takes charge of its future are crucial issues in this forthcoming election. We must be smart enough to institutionalize the strategies necessary to assure a course of prosperity as well as be good stewards of our resources. November is not very far away, and we, the citizens of Houston, need to make our future leaders aware of our concerns about the long-term livability of Houston.

Joe Douglas Webb, AIA
Houston
May 1997

Cite 39 Texas Places: Last Call for Entries

The next issue of ***Cite*** will focus on places throughout the state of Texas. ***Cite*** editors invite your participation. Please send a photograph 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 caption should not exceed 25 words. Submissions now due by August 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

THE MECHANICAL SHADE TREE, POE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A bleak and empty courtyard at Edgar Allen Poe Elementary School was recently the location of a joint project of Poe School, HISD, and the Design/Build Studio of the Master of Architecture program at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston. Eleven first-year graduate architecture students from UH designed and constructed an imaginative steel structure that will provide rain and sun protection for Poe students. Patrick Peters, associate professor of architecture, led the team with instructor George Sacaris. In cooperation with Poe's principal, Dr. Anne McClellan, its Parent-Teacher Organization garnered community support, both cash and in-kind donations, to finance the project.

Jim Watson

Mechanical Shade Tree, Poe Elementary School, 5100 Hazard, Design/Build Studio, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston, 1997.

Before plans for redesign of the courtyard began, planners visited Bellaire and West Oaks hospitals' ROPES (Reality Oriented Physical Experience Services) playgrounds. Peters said, "Although we did not design a ROPES course, we did work with Poe's physical education teacher, Lisa Youden. The structure we finally designed was engineered to allow for a future ROPES program."

The galvanized steel elements for the canopy were fabricated at UH's architecture model shop and assembled on site. Students learned first-hand to follow a project from the drawing board to completion, giving them practical experience that will be valuable in the future. The Mechanical Shade Tree, the sixth such design-construction project that UH students have built in Houston, has won several honor awards: ACSA National Award for Excellence in Design Studio, 1997; ACSA National Award for Integration of Technology in Design, 1997; and the AIA, Houston's *On the Boards* Student Award, 1997.

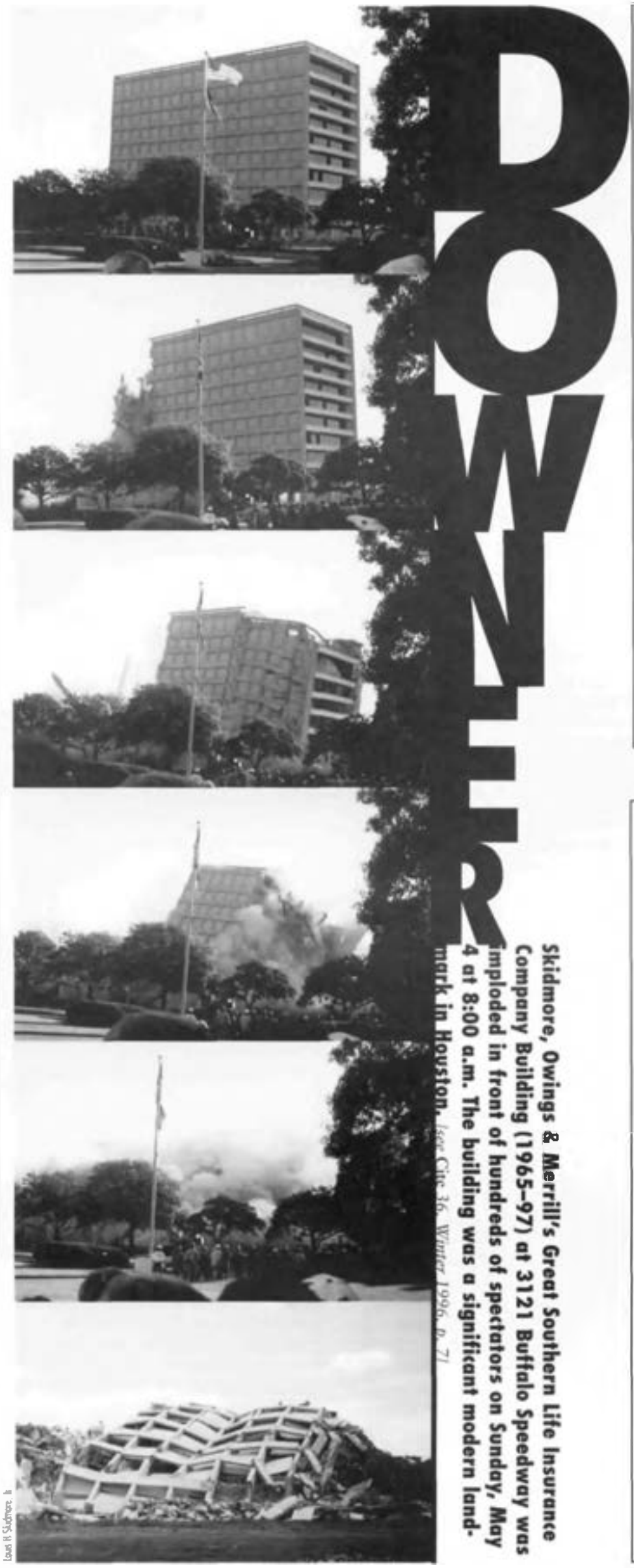
Jim Watson

UH architecture students get hands-on experience.

Patrick Peters

Mechanical Shade Tree under construction.

Alberto Bonomi served as an assistant to the project. The students who participated were Michael Ahmadi, Mohammad Al-Jassar, Rob Blain, Lyndsey Cameron, Kelie Mayfield, Meghan Schwer, Carla Shannon, Chris Shaw, Aimee StCyr, Trent Sullivan, and Denise Wilson.



Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Great Southern Life Insurance Company Building (1965–97) at 3121 Buffalo Speedway was imploded in front of hundreds of spectators on Sunday, May 4 at 8:00 a.m. The building was a significant modern landmark in Houston. *See* Cite 36, *Winter 1996, p. 71*

Louis H. Skidmore, Jr.

James Anson

Where they occur at all, barns in Texas tend to be inconspicuous and indifferently assembled. The barns along Farm-to-Market Road 346 in Cherokee County (near Tyler in East Texas) do little to suggest otherwise. More shed than barn, they are mostly examples of the "cat-slide" approach to outbuilding — a gable roof flanked by one or two shallow-pitch roofs. A mile south of Teaselville, though, one finds an unexpectedly striking pair of barns built by James Anson Blow (1859–1914) at the end of the last century.

In its prime, Blow's spread was something of a show place among small farms of the red-loamed Neches River watershed, where cotton and corn were the predominant cash crops. Blow took out newspaper ads offering fancy registered Poland China hogs, Barred Plymouth Rock chickens, mules, peas, white corn, and watermelons raised on the premises. Between 1906 and 1913, Blow's corn was a perennial sweepstakes winner at state fairs, prompting the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1908 to ask to inspect the farm and buy seed corn as it "is certainly quite distinct from any of the other native varieties."

Born 2, end view.

Born 2, looking northeast.

Blow's two unusual barns were built in 1897 and 1898 near the shoulder of a low, flat-topped hill. Even though large-scaled, both barns are smallish, almost domestic-sized structures of light-timber construction erected with pine lumber purchased from sawmills in and around Tyler. They stand close to each other, with long sides parallel. Small-gabled entry bays, aligned together, mark transverse, central pass-throughs on the long north and south elevations. Neither barn was built with doors at the pass-through points, and the south faces of both were also left essentially open.

The first barn is a cantilevered, drive-through derivative of the enclosed, double-crib type, except that livestock stalls take the place of one of the cribs, stretching the barn slightly on one end. In plan it is approximately 38 x 53 feet with cantilevers 8-1/2 feet deep on the long sides; the roof is about 25 feet high at the ridge point. The sill-plates rest on native ironstone footings spaced at 6-foot intervals; the crib is raised approximately 18 inches above ground to keep grain dry and permit cats to hunt rodents underneath. Exterior walls are covered in board-and-batten siding; the original wood roof shakes have been replaced by galvanized sheet-metal.

The distinguishing feature of the second barn is its gable-on-hip roof, a form occasionally found in central Texas that can be traced back to the tithe barns of Essex County, England. The second barn is bilaterally symmetrical and follows a two-crib, drive-through layout with no livestock stalls. Ten-foot-wide animal runs surround the cribs on three sides, enclosing space that was only canopied along the perimeter of the first barn. Although the framing is somewhat lighter, the dimensions in plan are expanded to 40 x 66 feet, with the roof rising to a height of 30 feet. Despite its increased size, the second barn is less imposing than its predecessor, the top-heavy, sharply raking end elevation of which can be counted among the happier by-products of agriculture in Cherokee County. ■

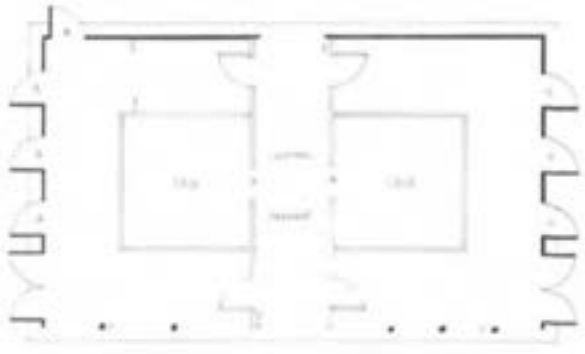
Blow's Barns, Cherokee County, Texas

Mary Edwards

Barns designed and built by James Anson Blow. Left to right: Barn 2 (1898) and Barn 1 (1897).

Barn 1, pass-through.

Barn 1, west elevation.



Barn 2, plan.

N

Barn 1, plan.

N

Barn 1, ironstone footing.

Above and below: Temporary buildings, James Butler Bonham Elementary School, 8302 Bipes River, Houston.

Houston, We Have A Problem

Drexel Turner

The Communities aimed at a higher success in securing to all their members an equal and thorough education. And on the whole, one may say, that aims so generous. . . will not be relinquished, even if these attempts fail, but will be prosecuted until they succeed.

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
The Young American, 1844

No building type better projects the shared aspirations of American society than the public school. Part melting pot, neighborhood center, afterhours playground, polling place, immunization station, even storm shelter — its claims as a touchstone of everyday civilization have been recognized by planning theorists and illustrators of magazine covers alike. Yet the generous view of public education that was once evident in our school buildings and body politic is in serious disrepair. Within the space of several months last year, Houston voters defeated a $390 million bond issue to build 18 new schools and repair 84 others, while approving the first phase of an estimated $625 million in sports arena projects aimed at ensuring the profitability of privately held major-league sports franchises.

It is perhaps small comfort that this unsportsmanlike conduct at the polls is at odds with much of the city's past. In the 1910s, as Houston's population nearly doubled from 80,000 to 140,000, school building was viewed as an essential component of community improvement. Architectural standards were progressive, even modestly overachieving. The mission-style, cottage-plan elementary school designed by Maurice J. Sullivan, then the city architect, for the neighborhood of Eastwood (1916) *[see this issue, p. 10]* and its courtyard-plan equivalent in Montrose designed by his predecessor, John McLelland (1914, demolished 1979) bespoke civic commitment at a quasi-domestic scale to bungalow dwellers on both sides of Main Street. Unpretentious and thoughtfully laid out, they exemplified those characteristics that the early twentieth-century architectural historian Talbot Hamlin found appealing in the newer schools of "the southwestern states. . . not only because of the true beauty and intimate charm of many of the buildings themselves, but also because in them one can see most clearly style developing as it should develop — new forms created to serve new needs; old forms being changed, subtly, and unconsciously, by their new use."[1] Just east of Main Street, the limestone-faced, brick-backed neo-classical South End Junior (subsequently San Jacinto Senior) High School, won in competition by the Oklahoma City architects Layton and Smith, was the city's most splendid

public building when completed in 1914. Borrowing liberally from Gabriel's additions to the north side of the Place de la Concorde, San Jacinto was conceived on a sufficiently generous scale to double as the first home of the University of Houston.

During the 1920s, as Houston's population increased to 290,000 and the school system was made independent of municipal control, educational buildings continued to be a source of civic pride. In 1925, Harry D. Payne joined the Houston Independent School District as its architect, having previously worked in the St. Louis office of William B. Ittner, the foremost specialist in the field of school design in the Middle West. In addition to his administrative responsibilities, Payne designed a number of congenial, dignified elementary schools adhering to essentially the same plan but with distinctive variations in materials and styling: Poe (1927), Briscoe (1928), River Oaks (1928), J. P. Henderson (1929), and Wharton (1929) among them, all of which continue in use. High schools built during the late 1920s and into the 1930s likewise conformed to a more or less standard plan first used by Sullivan for the Heights High (now Hamilton Middle) School of 1920. These displayed, along with an enthusiasm for factorylike expanses of fenestration, considerable architectural and civic finesse, particularly in the cases of John F. Staub's neo-Tudor Reagan Senior High School in the Heights (1927) and Staub and Kenneth Franzheim's curve-cornered, muscular modernistic Lamar Senior High School in River Oaks (1937), the latter emblazoned with a colossal relief map of the state of Texas.

Although school construction accelerated in Houston in the years after the Second World War, the buildings themselves lacked the assurance of former times. The new institutional vernacular tended toward facelessness and sterility, isolationism rather than community engagement. Jones High School, as described in *Chasing Hellhounds*, Marvin Hoffman's memoir of his years as a teacher there, is typical: "a product of 1950s functional architecture: two rectangular spaces, each surrounding a grassy courtyard, the first one story high, the second two, with classes laid out around the perimeter of each. . . . There are no steps leading up to a front door, no imposing rotunda or lobby to swallow you definitively when you enter. Visitors often stop in puzzlement to ask me where the entrance is, and I point to a narrow opening beyond the auto shop and the wood shop, which face out onto the parking lot. Through that gap lies a tunnellike covered walkway reminiscent of the dark ramps in the major league ballparks of my youth."[2]

The same can be said, give or take a story or courtyard, for Bellaire, Lee, Sharpstown, Waltrip, Westbury, and Yates high schools and a host of equally nondescript junior high schools erected to accommodate baby boomers — MacKie and Kamrath's Phyllis Wheatley High School (1949) in Fifth Ward being the only appreciable exception to this general dulling out. Where previously developers had reserved sites of prominence within subdivisions — as at the heads of Heights or River Oaks boulevards — even the largest of the postwar schools tended to be tucked away on obscure side streets and justifiably so.

Where once architects of superior ability had been engaged as often as not, the procurement of design services became problematic. In the period from 1950 on, Houston school buildings rarely received citations for design merit in the general awards programs of the Texas Society of Architects; none received national AIA awards. Donald Barthelme, the city's most talented school architect of the 1950s, whose work was honored nationally and abroad, carried out only one commission in Houston, Highland Heights Elementary School (1959), which survives fairly intact in the predominantly African-American, semi-rural subdivision of Acres Homes. (Highland Heights's "folded-plate roof structure" is described in Stephen Fox's *Houston Architectural Guide* as "very unconventional by the formulaic public school design standards prevalent in Houston in the 1950s."[3]) Howard Barnstone, another distinguished practitioner (and Philip Johnson's associate architect for the University of St. Thomas campus), built only the Piney Point Elementary School (1962), now altered beyond recognition. But no matter how pedestrian the results, the Houston Independent School District was at least suffered to keep pace with the growth of the city.

Another pervasive feature in Houston's topography of public education assignable to the postwar years is the so-called "temporary" building. These portable wood-frame classrooms, deposited at the margins of campuses whenever enrollment exceeded the capacity of the permanent plant, were wishfully projected as stopgap measures but have in fact become a way of life. Today 45,000 students, nearly a quarter of the district's enrollment, receive instruction in 2,100 temporary classrooms that account for the trailer-park ambience of more than 80 per cent of its campuses.[4] The grounds of some schools, which desperately need additional classrooms, are already so saturated with temporary buildings that there is no place left to put more unless to stack them on top of each other. In several instances, schools built as part of the district's $400 million construction program from 1990–95 had to be augmented with temporary buildings the same year they opened.

Recently HISD even contemplated developing an all-temporary building campus for a relief elementary school on Riceville Road in the southwest part of the city, but the project was abandoned when the cost compared unfavorably to that of permanent construction. Although temporary buildings are no bargain either in terms of initial or life-cycle cost, as long as the district continues to build schools on the basis of demonstrated rather than anticipated need, they will remain an extravagantly overused expedient. Even the district's ability to build temporary buildings in a sustained and timely fashion is hardly guaranteed. While $4.5 million was spent from 1994–96 to construct nearly 80 temporary classrooms, using a parking lot at Barnett Stadium as an improvised outdoor factory, none has been built since despite a backlog of 50 requests for new units.

HISD, which projects a more than ten per cent increase in enrollment, from 207,000 to 229,000, in the five year period from 1995–96 to 2000–01, is falling further and further behind in meeting its building needs. Although the Rice School (Taft Architects, 1994) shows that the district is able to produce architecturally accomplished buildings when so inclined and capitalized, and even though Mayor Bob Lanier has encouraged use of tax-increment financing as an ad hoc strategy for developing a pair of new east- and west-side high schools in the absence of bond funds, ad hocism has its limits. As if the bond issue rejection were not daunting enough, it is also true, as the sociologist William Simon pointed out in the *Houston Chronicle*, that HISD, which serves arguably the most needful and challenged scholastic population in Harris County, has the lowest tax rate of all school districts in the county — a circumstance he attributes to the Greater Houston Partnership's efforts to keep Houston tax-friendly for business at all costs.[5]

A quick glance at the plans for the new ballpark at Union Station and a walk through any of the shanty-town annexes of our elementary, middle, and high school campuses suggest that Houston is on the verge of a world class commingling of "private opulence and public squalor" where, in the words of John Kenneth Galbraith, "the private goods have full sway."[6] If we actually have to make a choice between sports and education, then, just as the Athenians early in the millennium-before-last converted their gymnasiums to academies stocked with such franchise players as Plato and Socrates, let's trade in the ballpark for a high school at Union Station. ■

45,000 students, nearly a quarter of HISD's enrollment, receive instruction in 2,100 temporary classrooms.

1. Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, "The American Spirit in Architecture" in *The Pageant of America*, vol. 13. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 237.

2. Marvin Hoffman, *Chasing Hellhounds: A Teacher Learns from his Students* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1996), p. 17.

3. Stephen Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide* (Houston: The American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter and Herring Press, 1990), p. 282.

4. "Nationally, the average square footage of portables (temporary buildings) is 10 per cent of the total gross square footage at the elementary level and 5 per cent at the secondary level. . . . 64 schools in [HISD showed] excessive (more than 15 per cent) use of temporary buildings." John Sharp, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, "Children First: A Report on the Houston Independent School District," October 1996, p. 271.

5. William Simon, "Partnership has Share of Blame," *Houston Chronicle*, November 17, 1996, p. 1C.

6. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), p. 203.

Frank Schlueter, 1921, courtesy Lantrip School

Frank Schlueter, 1921, courtesy Lantrip School

Eastwood (now Dora B. Lantrip) Elementary School, Maurice Sullivan, architect, 1916.

EASTWOOD ELEMENTARY

Elisa Hernandez Skaggs

The elementary school of my youth consisted of several small two-room units arranged orthogonally at one corner of a barren but spacious schoolyard. The school, Southeast Elementary in Lubbock, Texas, has since been torn down, and the grounds are now a parking lot for school buses. Although amenities were meager, the modest arrangement provided students with a friendly, productive environment. The schoolhouses were small and humble. Like our low-income houses, they were basic wood-frame, gable-roofed buildings clad in white shingles — comfortable, familiar, and unintimidating. Sidewalks linking the various units were not only little avenues where one encountered friends, but also paths to higher education — the next grade up. We didn't simply finish first grade and walk across a hallway to second, we were given a whole new building. That was always something to look forward to at the beginning of the school year. After Southeast Elementary, I did not encounter another school planned as separate buildings until, as an adult, I found Lantrip Elementary on Houston's East Side.

Dora B. Lantrip Elementary School, formerly Eastwood Elementary School, opened in 1916 in Eastwood, a developing neighborhood two miles east of downtown.[1] The original buildings were designed by Maurice J. Sullivan, then staff architect of the City of Houston, in a Spanish mission style. Cottage schools, in which classrooms are built as discrete pavilions, had been built in Colorado and southern California.[2] Eastwood Elementary, however, was the first such school in Houston.[3] As early as 1913, the school board had considered a departure from the traditional one-building school in the form of a cottage plan project for Eastwood prepared by the architects Teich & Gideon.[4] Although Sullivan's design superceded that of Teich & Gideon, the cottage plan was retained. Fire safety, easy maintenance, and flexibility in future planning were cited as the principle advantages of such a scheme,[5] though there are social, educational, and cultural benefits of this approach that can also be observed at Lantrip.

The original five stuccoed hollow-tile buildings were arranged with an administration unit flanked by two classroom pavilions. The administration building is bilaterally symmetrical and divided into three parts — a rectangular block and two side wings. An entrance porch with five arches across the front prefaces the library, formally framing what once were domestic science and manual training classrooms. Two stout towers, reminiscent of mission bell towers, rise at the corners of the central library block and

Eastwood Elementary School, addition, Harry D. Payne and James Ruskin Bailey, architects, 1927; side entrance, southeast corner.

EASTWOOD'S COTTAGE PLAN REFLECTS THE PHILOSOPHY THAT A SCHOOL SHOULD NOT BE AN IMPOSING INSTITUTION BUT A HOUSE FOR CHILDREN.

SCHOOL

separate it from the side wings, which contain school offices on one side and a music room on the other. The two-story towers at one time had open-air cupolas, which have since been removed. The cupolas acted as modest landmarks, rising above short trees to identify the complex from the street. The side wings, projecting forward from the towers at a splayed angle, have curvilinear gables that set the tone for treatment of the classroom buildings on either side. Repetition of the curvilinear gables architecturally helps the original buildings form a unified complex. Modest gables at the center roofline of the classroom pavilions mark entrances and divide each pavilion into two classrooms.

The flexibility of a cottage-plan school was conducive to the future additions and modifications inevitably required in a growing school district. In a 1948 article entitled "What We Like About One-Story Schools," Wilfred F. Clapp wrote: "We want buildings adaptable to change. If there is any one thing we know about the educational program, it is that changes are going forward always. Buildings must not prevent them."[6] As has been the case with Lantrip, cottage schools lend themselves to piecemeal construction, planned and phased as need arises and funds become available.

Lantrip has received several such additions to its campus, which are generally sympathetic to the style of the original buildings. In 1927, an addition connected to the older buildings by open arcaded walkways was designed by Harry D. Payne and James Ruskin Bailey. Built behind the original Sullivan buildings, the Payne-Bailey building created a well-scaled courtyard. A wide open-air loggia with large arched apertures and doorways extends from the beige stucco façade of the newer building into connecting walkways. Although this addition was designed in a Spanish colonial revival style, the architects departed from the original cottage plan. The Payne-Bailey building has a central cafeteria block with two arms of classrooms radiating from it at the same angle as the original classroom cottages radiate from the library and administration block. Despite the deviation from the cottage plan, the 1927 building works well with the original buildings because of its design and scale. Decorative allusions are found in chimneylike vents protruding from the gabled roof and in the entry tower at the southwest corner of the building. An arched doorway facing Dallas at the base of the tower has a decorative plaster surround, painted dark brown to match the other exterior wood trim in the complex. "Eastwood Elementary School" is carved above the door.

In 1935 a PWA-funded addition by Robert Maddrey expanded the Payne-Bailey building. Those new classrooms were added seamlessly and symmetrically to either end of the wings, so that one has to look very closely to tell that any addition was made at all.

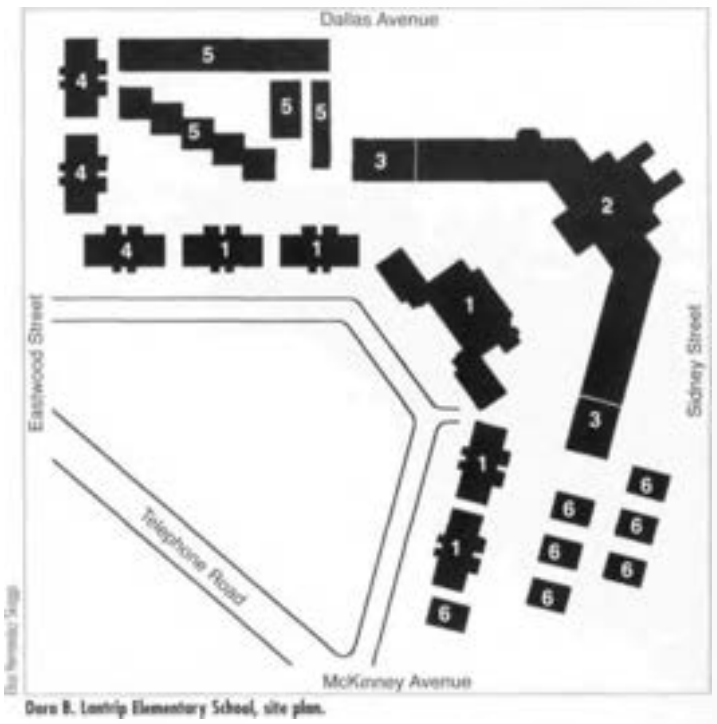
In 1949 three separate cottage pavilions were added on the eastern side of the campus by Wirtz, Calhoun & Tungate in a remarkably sensible and sympathetic manner. These cottages are compatible with the original group in size and material. Like the 1916 Sullivan buildings, they are faced with beige stucco and contain two classrooms each with a core of bathrooms and wood lockers. The primary departure is the lack of curvilinear gables and a simpler, crisper, more modern look. What is most interesting, however, is that the architects chose to return to the cottage scheme in the first place. The east-most of these pavilions is aligned with Sullivan's originals and actually occupies the site where Sullivan had proposed to build a third flanking pavilion.

The most recent addition was completed in 1981 by the architecture firm Cate/Castillon Associates, Inc. This beige stucco building, built on the southeast side of the school grounds, has the most modern treatment of the additions. Like the Payne-Bailey building, the Cate/Castillon building departs from the cottage plan. Also connected by covered

Eastwood cottage additions, Wirtz, Calhoun & Tungate, 1949.

Utilitarian covered walkways to temporary buildings.

Courtyard addition, Cate/Castillon Architects, Inc., 1981.



Dora B. Lantrip Elementary School, site plan.

1 Sullivan Buildings (1916)
2 Payne-Bailey Addition (1927)
3 Maddrey Additions (1935)
4 Wirtz, Calhoun & Tungate Pavilions (1949)
5 Cate/Castillon Addition (1981)
6 Temporary Buildings (>1985)

walkways to the rest of the complex, it has an open triangular footprint with a small courtyard in the middle. Unfortunately, the building separates itself from the rest of the complex because of its internal organization. From across the main courtyard, the stepped classrooms seem unfriendly, their narrow, horizontal strip windows too dark and placed too high. The only engaging view of the building is from inside the new courtyard, where an arched, open-air loggia connects the classrooms with an outside hallway like those used throughout the complex. However, this more private courtyard is separated from the rest of the campus.

as different, the campus has accepted their presence and even embraced them through modest but efficacious landscaping.

One of the most important aspects of a cottage-plan school is its scale. The one-story, closely sited buildings provide a comfortable atmosphere for young children. Small courtyards also help to bring down the scale of the school. The school does not dwarf its low-rise neighborhood but blends with it. Most of the houses in Eastwood are modest one-story bungalows whose low eaves nearly match those of the school in height. Even Lantrip's towers are not overbearing but anchor the design, which reflects the philosophy that a school should not be an imposing institution but a house for children. This atmosphere, initiated by Sullivan's pavilions, has been maintained.

The informality at Lantrip is largely a result of its architecture: the low, connected buildings and the Spanish mission-style design. Unintimidating entrances provide a friendly welcome to visitors, which is especially meaningful when the school is used as a community center or a place for informal neighborhood gatherings.

COURTYARDS ARE NOT ONLY A DELIGHT TO THE EYE BUT CAN ALSO BECOME STIMULATING OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS.

Another noteworthy addition appears at the southeast corner of the school grounds in a group of temporary buildings, popularly referred to as T-buildings. These buildings, found on public school campuses throughout Houston, have been brought in as a quick, cheap solution for overcrowding. At most schools such buildings seem isolated and out of place, but at Lantrip they make sense. In fact, the T-buildings are more sympathetic to the original cottage plan than the Cate/Castillon addition. They are painted beige with dark brown trim to match the rest of the campus, and their scale fits nicely in the decentralized scheme. Close to both the Sullivan buildings and the Payne-Bailey annex, the T-buildings are physically connected to the rest of the complex by covered walkways and are aligned with the Sullivan pavilions. Rather than treating these new buildings

Perhaps because of this informality, the local community seems to have taken ownership of the school. Mothers show up early to pick up their children and sit and chat on the front steps of the classrooms or at the picnic tables in the courtyard. The porch in front of the library is an inviting space where children gather and either play or sit in the shade of the arched cloister, waiting for their rides home. Even the curving driveway adds to this informality. In the afternoon, cars line up in front of the pavilions as if the children were being picked up from their own homes.

The arrival of families from Mexico and Central America in Eastwood has brought Lantrip into an even more meaningful context. The Spanish mission style is appropriate for a community whose ancestors built the original missions, and the cottage plan suits a community that is

comfortable with outdoor living.

Upkeep of older buildings continues to be a challenge for a school system that has perpetual funding problems. At Lantrip Elementary the original red roof tiles have been replaced by less expensive composition shingles. Heating and cooling an older, decentralized complex bring frequent problems. Wiring runs through metal conduits, over roofs, and across walkways. At the rear of the Payne-Batley annex, facing Dallas, unsightly mechanical equipment is nestled between the building and a vegetable garden. These pragmatic accommodations are eyesores. However, considering the informality of the architecture, the numerous additions, and the decentralized organization, they are less bothersome than they might be around a typical schoolhouse.

A cottage school not only lends itself to extensive landscaping but requires it. Separate pavilions divide the outdoor space, creating roomlike areas, sheltered and private, that beg for decoration. Courtyards are not only a delight to the eye but can also become stimulating outdoor classrooms.

Lantrip's main courtyard at the center of the complex is one of the most pleasant places the school offers. Now lush and well maintained, it was barren and neglected before rehabilitation began in 1975. At that time, Lantrip became the ecology magnet school for elementary school children as part of a district-wide program to increase racial integration and improve educational opportunities. The courtyard, densely planted with both evergreens and flower beds, not only provides an experimental laboratory but also reinforces the idea of a Spanish mission setting. Picnic tables in front of the lunchroom and some sheltered paved areas around the courtyard serve as gathering places in kind weather. At the center of the smaller courtyard, a garden and fountain have been established for educational purposes — to attract butterflies. This smaller, shady place with the sound of water is more contemplative than the main courtyard, which is usually full of activity.

Not all of Lantrip's campus is maintained as well as the courtyards. The students and teachers take care of most of the outdoor areas. School administrators do not often enlist the help of the school district because, as the principal lamented, HISD's idea of landscaping is to mow everything down. The grounds at the back of the school, except for the vegetable garden, seem neglected, and the modest landscaping in front of the school has almost disappeared; what is left is unkempt. Between the front circular drive and Telephone Road a broad, manicured lawn used for special celebrations and community gatherings has been replaced by recreation areas. Hard-top paving allows for a basketball court; a baseball diamond and play area have obliterated the grass; and a new Spark Park with brightly-colored playground equipment on safe bark chips hides the buildings behind it. Lantrip's front lawn was necessarily chosen for physical education areas because the available space on the pentagonal site has been filled with buildings and courtyards. Unfortunately, the haphazard appearance of the playground is far less attractive than the wide, green lawn was, and it interrupts street views of the picturesque architecture.

The cottage plan, which makes such intensive use of outdoor space, works best in mild climates. Outdoor living at Lantrip is attractive and intriguing to visitors accustomed to multistoried schools whose classrooms are connected by narrow, artificially lit interior corridors. Even so, the administration gives the scheme mixed reviews: on beautiful days the outdoor spaces are wonderful, but on cold, rainy days they are not so pleasant. Most teachers and administrators admit to having been initially attracted to the cottage plan because the separate pavilions provide personal teaching areas, privacy, and a sense of ownership for both students and teachers.

Although the arrangement has proven at Lantrip to be adaptable to change, pleasant to work in, and supportive of healthy outdoor activities, it has been neglected as a conscious model for schools in Houston.

My elementary school was not intended as a permanent school, nor was the climate as obliging as Houston's. We experienced many days of freezing weather in the winter, windy and dusty days in March, and tornadoes and hailstorms in May. Still, walking across the campus to the lunchroom or two buildings down to watch a film was eventful and refreshing. Students who have attended Lantrip Elementary School surely have memories similar to mine of walks through open-air loggias and the stimulation of outdoor living. ■

1. Stephen Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide* (Houston: The American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter and Herring Press, 1990), p. 164.

2. "School Board Contemplates Cottage Plan for Eastwood," *Houston Daily Post*, July 6, 1913, p. 16. The cottage plan was reported to have been originated by "Dr. H. W. Corwin of the Minnegua Hospital, Puebla [sic] Colorado." Examples noted were the Buena Vista and Edner schools of Colorado Springs. See also *Houston Architectural Survey* (Houston: Southwest Center for Urban Research and The Rice University School of Architecture, 1981), vol. II, p. 398.

3. "Eastwood School will be the First in Houston under Cottage Plan," *Houston Daily Post*, December 12, 1915, p. 11.

4. "School Board Contemplates Cottage Plan for Eastwood," Ibid.

5. *Houston Architectural Survey*, p. 398.

6. Wilfred E. Clapp, "What We Like About One Story Schools," in *School Planning, The Architectural Record of a Decade* edited by Kenneth Reid (New York: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1951), p. 263.

Fifth graders, Eastwood Elementary School, 1926. Lester Scardino and Cecil Isbell, 7th and 8th from left, back row.

AS IT WAS

Lester Scardino remembers the discussions that took place around his family kitchen table in their crowded apartment over a grocery store at the corner of Hamilton and Polk. Not only did his parents want their own home, they were concerned about the quality of his education. After looking at several modest new subdivisions, they chose Eastwood in large part because of its impressive new elementary school. They bought a bungalow on Woodside Drive and moved in time for Lester to begin third grade at Eastwood Elementary in 1923.

Now age 81, Scardino has vivid memories of his school days at Eastwood. "We all walked to school and took our lunches in paper sacks. There was no lunchroom. The sissies went home for lunch, but most of us ate our sandwiches on the grass in front of the school. That was where we played during recess too. The boys played marbles or softball with bats and balls they brought from home. We didn't have any playground equipment or organized sports activities, but we got plenty of exercise." When asked what the girls did, he hesitated for a moment and laughed: "I'm not really sure, we weren't too interested in the girls. I guess they jumped rope and played jack stones on the porch."

When Scardino attended Eastwood, he remembers only the original five buildings. "There was no fence around the school and, with the big lawn and pretty architecture, it was an impressive neighborhood landmark. We called the area behind the school 'the fields.' The fields were overgrown and buggy; we never went back there."

Today the fields are filled with landscaped courtyards and buildings, but on a recent visit to what is now Lantrip Elementary, Scardino smiled at the children and concluded that it didn't seem that different. Inside his old fifth grade classroom, he remarked that the room looked the same, except the open face gas heater was gone, and the cloakroom was now a boys' bathroom.

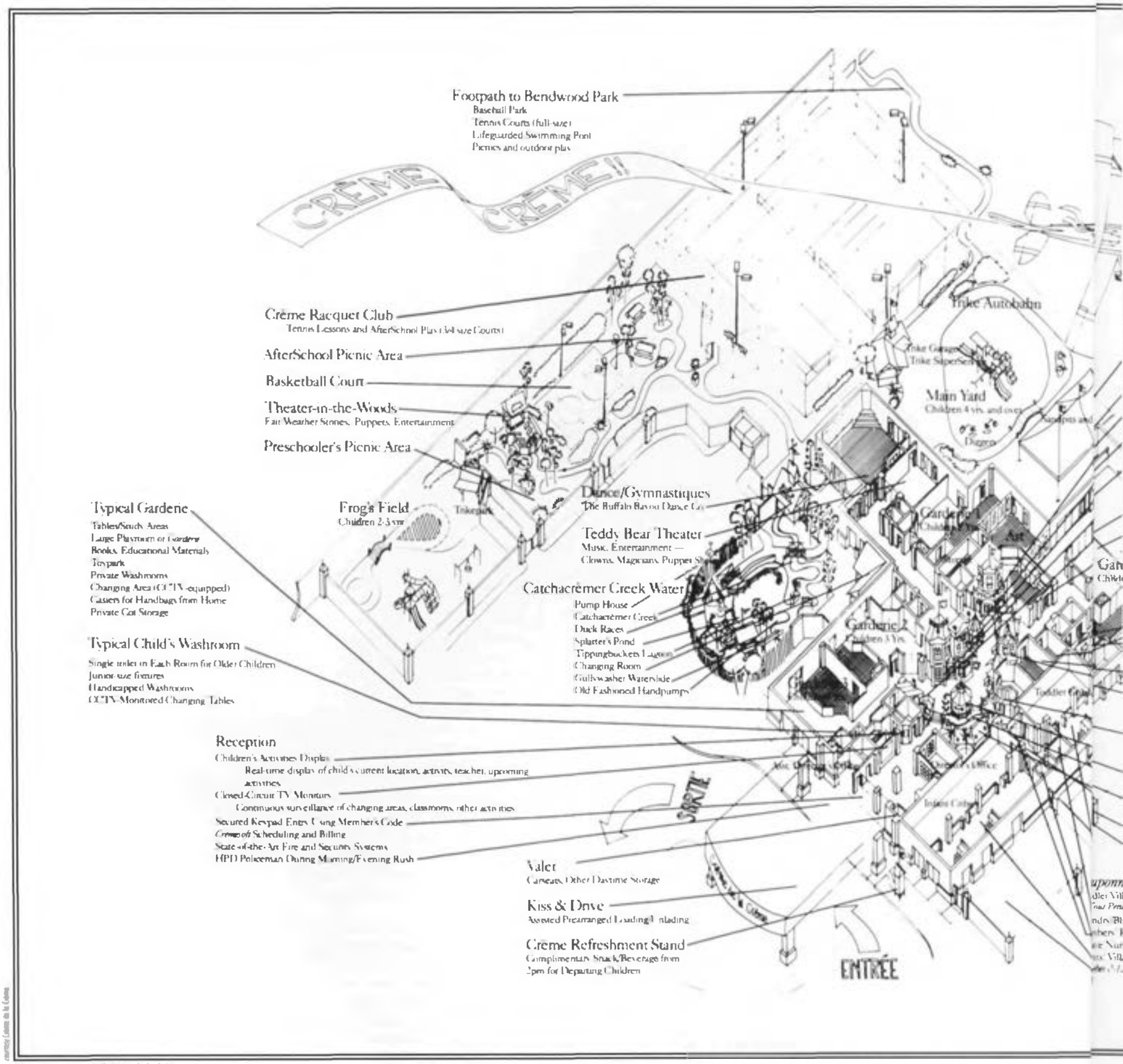
"The cloakroom, my God, that's where Mrs. Meyer took me when I put a tack in her chair. We all had bets on whether she would feel it or not. She was so fat. Well, she felt it. In the cloakroom she picked me up by my ears; I struggled to get away and tried to climb out of the high cloakroom window. She pulled me back by my heels and gave me the worst spanking. I'll never forget that." Surprised, I asked if the students got spanked very often. "If you were bad," was his answer.

The other spanking he remembers occurred after he and his cohort, Cecil Isbell (who, after playing for the Green Bay Packers, became the first coach of the Baltimore Colts), were sent out to pick some branches ". . . to decorate for a play or something. We spent some time catching crawfish in a nearby gully, then we cut down nearly a whole dogwood tree. It was the dogwood that upset Mrs. Anderson so much. We caught crawfish around there all the time."

Another favorite memory for Scardino is of the music contests they had on Fridays. "Life was very simple then. Nobody had an automobile except the Johnsons. We had no radios, but the school had a Victrola. Our fifth grade teacher played classical music such as Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, which we certainly didn't hear anywhere else. At the end of the week we had a contest to identify the composers. She didn't expect us to remember the names of the pieces, but she wanted us to appreciate classical music and hear the differences between composers. It was a great thing. We also had spelling bees on Friday, the girls vs. the boys. The girls always won."

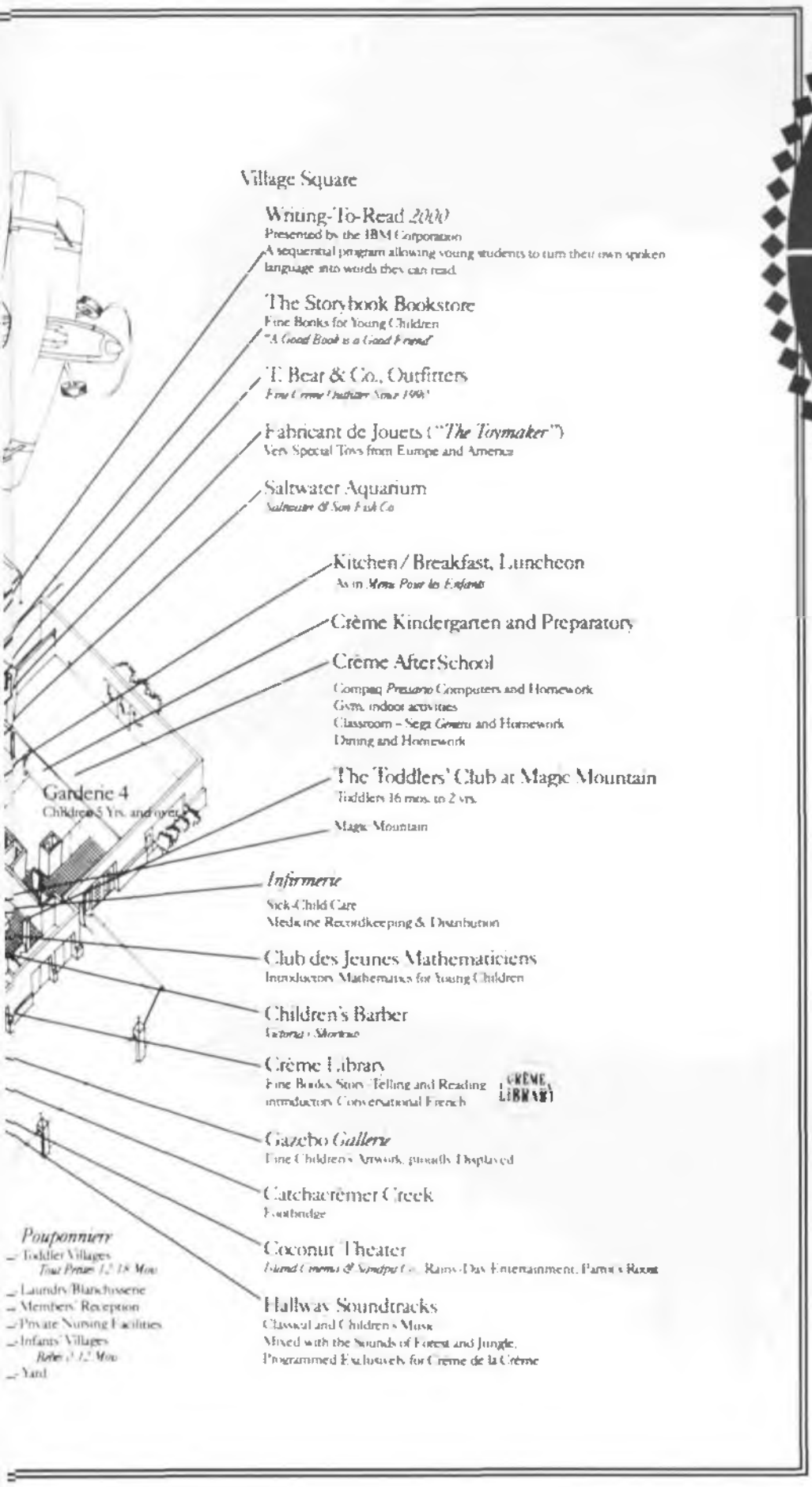
When asked if he knew Dora Lantrip, the principal, he said "Oh my, yes. She was the spirit of the school. Every morning she went to each classroom; we would all stand and sing '*Good morning to you, Good morning to you. We're all in our places with sunshiny faces. Good morning to you.*' She traveled all over every summer. The years I was there she went to Alaska and brought back all sorts of artifacts and costumes from the Alaskan Indians. We didn't have an auditorium, but some children would dress up in the costumes, and Miss Lantrip would gather us outside and tell marvelous stories. She was a big, outdoor woman. Very impressive. We all respected her." *BS*

Dr. Peter Lester Scardino graduated from the Rice Institute in 1937 and settled in Savannah, Georgia. He had not visited his old school in over fifty years.



courtesy Crème de la Crème

"A One-Minute Tour" of Crème de la Crème.



LE CHILDCARE Crème de la Crème

Barrie Scardino

Before and even during World War II day care for children of working parents was a family affair. Rosie the Riveter's kids stayed home with Granny who had the help of teenage cousins after school. Four major shifts in society since the 1960s have thrust thousands of babies into the arms of strangers. Working mothers are now the norm, but Harriet wasn't always home with Ricky and David. Non-working moms of times past, who spent plenty of time at Sears, garden club meetings, and playing bridge, relied on the same system as wage-earners. Mobility, the second factor that has disrupted the Brady bunch, has spread us all over creation without relatives on whom we can count. Coupled with all this moving around, families are generally smaller, leaving a desperate mom with fewer cousins or siblings available for free babysitting. And, on top of all that, full-time nursemaids and nannies are pretty well extinct.

As these changes have occurred, an ad hoc system of day care centers began to develop in the homes and apartments of those willing to keep a few kids for the extra money. Totally unregulated, these care providers were friends and neighbors of their clients, and they were happy to be paid their unreported income in cash. More institutional types of facilities began in Sunday school rooms, a short psychological step from grandma's living room. Private schools that once took pre-kindergartners at age four, began to take little brothers and sisters. The whole system blossomed without much thought given to toddler education, much less physical and nutritional standards.

No one would argue that the single most important factor in childrearing or childcare continues to be the adults who nurture, teach, and serve as models for their charges. But space matters next. The environment, both indoor and outdoor, where children spend most of their time can have a profound effect on their level of curiosity, feeling of safety, and sense of responsibility for their surroundings. There are more than a few studies and reports from educators and psychologists giving statistics and advice on how to structure a world for little children. The architecture and design of childcare centers should be child-centered, or so we have been told.

Cite set out to look at a variety of facilities in Houston that care for preschool youngsters. We found what we expected — an incredible range from small, modest but loving places, to over crowded, under-staffed stables, to attractive, well-funded traditional school rooms. What we didn't expect was Crème de la Crème.

In an unlikely setting off I-10 behind Town and Country Village mall, this new child care center seems to have it all. The founders and owners, Roberta Babb and her lawyer husband Donald Babb, opened the first Crème de la Crème in 1982 inside a leased building (now a Randall's grocery store) in Town and Country. Donald Babb says that this first space was an experimental design station, where he initiated his "Main Street" concept on a smaller scale.

The Babbs's conviction was that a homelike setting could be combined with an imaginative child-sized world, age-appropriate educational resources, the highest standards in cleanliness and nutrition, and a low staff-to-children ratio. They were right. Crème de la Crème is yet another example of how the private sector can establish standards that lead the

Crème de la Crème, Main Street, Donald Babb, designer.


Crème de la Crème, Toddler's Club entrance.


Crème de la Crème, Main Street.


Crème de la Crème, Hermes Reid Architects, 1996, entrance.


Crème de la Crème, art and lunch area.


Crème de la Crème, infant play area.

way in innovative design. Although Crème de la Crème probably has the highest tuition rates in town, the Babbs have pioneered some concepts that could be standardized in public facilities.

The current Town and Country center opened in February 1996 after a prototype was constructed in Atlanta for a franchise operation. (Crème de la Crème has another location owned by the founders in a downtown Houston storefront and three franchise operations in Atlanta. Plans are currently underway to build other franchises in Dallas, Denver, and three in Chicago). Houston architects Hermes Reed Architects designed the building and worked with Donald Babb on the interiors. Stephen Reed was project manager of the building, the exterior of which is unremarkable. It resembles nearby mall buildings, also designed by Hermes Reed, with the exception of a huge dome-skylight visible and intriguing from the street.

Maximum security is a priority. At drop off and pick up times, an off-duty policeman is even on hand. At the front of the quiet, brass-sconced reception area, a mesmerizing grid of TV screens provides constant surveillance of each classroom area. Parents are welcome to drop in anytime to observe their child on TV. Actual classroom visits could be disruptive and are discouraged. During our visit, a couple of mothers had taken time to stop in and observe.

The director, Janet Brown, was our enthusiastic guide. Leaving the reception/administrative area we were stunned to walk into a miniaturized Disneyland. The little Victorian "buildings" in "Town Square, 1892" contained a children's barber shop (good idea!); a uniform store (the kiddies wear uniforms everyday but Friday); the *Gallerie* exhibiting children's artwork; a *Biblioteque*; the *Infirmerie*; and other French-named places. When asked, however, if they taught French, Brown said, "No. We did, but now we teach Spanish." Since even the *Sortie* signs are in French, this seems like a lost opportunity. The French title of the school sets the tone for the whole place. Everything is a little Frenchified but, in any case, *la petite* Main Street is magical.

The scaled down (way down) buildings were constructed under a high, two-story glass domette, which provides plenty of light, making the little streets (halls) seem open and fresh. The streets lead to different age-appropriate areas. For example, infants (*bebes 0-12 mos*) play and sleep in a surprisingly homey setting, with rocking chairs, carpet, soft light, and every infant toy imaginable. Crème de la Crème accepts babies as young as six weeks, but currently the youngest is two months old. There are no playpens; when awake, infants are put in a swing, on the floor with stimulating toys, or cuddled by staff members. Here it seemed that there was one worker for every two or three babies.

We passed the toddler area (*pouponnière*), which looked a little more bleak because the cribs were larger, and a few kids were gazing around, gnawing on their crib siderails. But they seemed content. Rooms for older children (*garderies*) were divided into a sanitized tiled area for art projects and eating and a carpeted play area with reading nooks and the like. The taste police would have nothing to do here. Pleasant and colorful abstract art was sparingly hung on white walls, and oriental rugs for gathering round in the center of the floor are placed over the wall-to-wall carpet.

Having gotten over all the French, we ventured outside to another imaginary world. Several playground areas with different equipment were fenced separately. The trike barn and little roads youngsters safely speed around had no sidewalk cracks or dangerous cars whizzing by. The Racquet Club sign across from the junior-sized tennis courts looks as if Ralph Lauren designed it.

Crème de la Crème is without a doubt a safe, clean place with lots of caring adults (the staff numbers approximately 70 for about 300 kids at any one time). The physical environment is charming, stimulating, just what we all wish we

Creme de la Creme, Frog's Field playground and Trikepark.

Creme de la Creme, toddler sleeping area.

could provide at home (nice furniture, the latest toys and books, swimming pool, and tennis courts). The mix of children represented broad racial backgrounds, but one doubts that their economic backgrounds are very diverse.

But given our national obsession with starting early to get our children on the road to success, privilege is a gift that can't be given too early in life. Whether through getting the kids into the right pre-school, jockeying for transfers to the best HISD schools, or setting up private tutoring lessons, child rearing has become a high stakes strategy game. In the miniature country club setting of Crème de la Crème, the game is made into theater, where everything is at reduced scale. For the parents watching the monitors, it may even become a junior-sized TV soap opera. ■

Creme de la Creme, Theater-in-the-Woods.

Creme de la Creme, Racquet Club storage house.

Creme de la Creme, TV classroom monitors in reception area.

Care Packages

As in other U.S. metropolitan areas, Houston has hugely diverse child care centers. The gamut of possibilities runs from small home care centers, where word-of-mouth is the only advertising, to neighborhood churches that use Sunday school rooms during the week, to method-based programs such as Montessori schools, to expensive, privately-owned centers, to large national chains with local affiliates. Houston's *Yellow Pages* devotes more than seven full pages to "Child Care Facilities." According to Sul Ross, regional manager for child care licensing of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 1,455 licensed child-care facilities serving 129,073 children are in operation in Harris County. In addition, 2,545 regulated in-home programs are licensed to care for up to 12 children each, adding another 30,000 under school-age children to the number that spend most of the day away from their parents and their own homes.

The YMCA , with over 8,000 children enrolled at various sites throughout the city, is the largest Houston-area day care provider. The second largest is Children's World Learning Centers Inc., with a total of almost 4,000 children in its several locations. *The Book of Lists*, published by the *Houston Business Journal*, ranks Houston's largest day care centers and provides general information including rates, activities, and ages of children accepted. However, data are based on voluntary questionnaires, therefore the list is incomplete, excluding many of the better-known centers. Large day care complexes such as the YMCA accept infants to 12-year-olds. Most provide pre-school care for infants to age five.

Monthly rates vary from $30 to $775. The low end of the spectrum reflects centers that receive federal or state subsidies, have remote locations with minimum amenities, and large staff-to-children ratios. Very expensive centers such as Crème-de-la-Crème (which charges $775 for infants and $665 for pre-school children) generally have the most complete facilities and lowest children-staff ratios. There are 24-hour drop off centers where parents pay by the hour. Regulations limit the number of hours that children may stay at these places to four in the daytime or six at night. At the other end, there are places where your child has no chance of being admitted unless you register the day the baby is born, and then you may be on a waiting list.

Every licensed child care center is required by state law to provide to all of its registrant families "A Parent's Guide to Day Care," published by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. This type of "help," rather than first-class public child care centers, is what our tax dollars now buy for young American parents. *B.S.*

DISCOVERY ZONES

FROM TEMPLE TO TREEHOUSE

BRUCE WEBB

The fertile invention of our age, and its teachers, seems to be especially devoted to removing all possible obstacles, and throwing all possible light on the once difficult and toilsome paths to the temple of science.

Andrew Jackson Downing, 1848

Top and above: HEB Science Treehouse, Witte Museum, San Antonio, Lake/Flato, architects, 1997.

HEB Science Treehouse, interior.

A city can be an extraordinary environment for learning. Interdependence and the density of physical contact historically provide one of the attractions of urban life. Edgar Gumbert, in an article "The City as Educator," wrote about the educational potential of the streets of Paris and Florence, which developed as intensely pedestrianized cities, inviting "people to stroll about, with or without aim or purpose, to take in rather than reject impressions, to think and to feel, to enjoy, to mix, to see and be seen"[1] — in short, to make the city and its diverse composition an open and visible part of everyday experience.

Even with its openness eroded by privatization and its functions recast into invisible networks of electronic transmissions, the city of today remains the primary place where one can find contact with the greatest array of resources in political, economic, social, cultural, and technical realms. Certain places in the city stand out as being particular educational partners to the schools. Often acting as classrooms by another name, they are frequently destinations for school field trips, much anticipated (by the students) as respites from the tedium of classroom routines. Museums of art are primary examples, containing samples of the real stuff, which young people can experience first hand. These are reverential places for the most part, calling for special behaviors as children learn that in such palaces of culture one speaks in a whisper, touches nothing, and suppresses giggles when confronting a Renaissance nude.

In the Classical breakdown of knowledge, science has no exact equivalent to the art museum. Even though the contents of a science museum are more like those of a hardware or computer store, early science museum models emulated certain characteristics of an art museum — heavy on artifacts, dioramas, and taxidermy. They were presided over by a priestly class of adult scientists who were able to give demonstrations and make apparatus perform, presenting scientific phenomena as abstract and incomprehensible, hence more magical to behold.

The Buhl Planetarium and Science Center in Pittsburgh, my first introduction to one of these places of science, was housed in a solid, windowless block of stone with great bronze doors that sealed the entire place up tight when the day's work was done. In its weightiness and simple, somber lines, it resembled an Egyptian temple or Masonic hall, counterpoint to the equally weighty neoclassicism of the Carnegie Museum of Art. In deference to a belief in the enduring validity of scientific principles, the main hall of the Buhl was built to accommodate two icons of science. The first confirmed the rotation of the earth. It was a large working model of Foucault's Pendulum with an inexorably swinging pendulum that successively knocked over a circle of black pegs set in a shallow well. The other, a ten-foot-tall Telsa Coil, was fired off every half hour by one of the scientists for the edification of school children gathered around. It looked like a prop from the reanimation scene in a Frankenstein film. All around this hall were little glass windows framing views into exhibits of entombed instruments and miniature dioramas depicting moments of triumph and discovery in science.

The mysterious planetarium theater provided, through its marvelous, humanoidal projection machine, a ceiling of celestial performers in zoomorphic formations like a half-time show at a football game. A visit to the Buhl was the equivalent of going to church; fully convinced young minds thought they had visited sacred ground.

Today, museums of science are radically different. Taking lessons from the success of theme parks, they have become centers of entertainment where fun is used to disguise the fact that learning is taking place. The recent evolution of the Houston's Museum of Natural Science, once a stuffy warehouse for a collection of inanimate objects such as oil drill bits, is a case in point. Everyday was a slow day until the museum began to add first-class attractions. Animated dinosaurs (not quite up to Speilberg standards but more compelling than skeletons) visited. Then the IMAX theater (equally good for showing Arctic ecology or a Rolling Stones concert) opened, and finally the Cockrell Butterfly Center made its debut. Along the way a host of new exhibits and activity centers, including a NASA space flight simulation room, were installed, making the museum a busy place every day of the week. Summer classes at the science museum are almost as popular as a day at the beach.

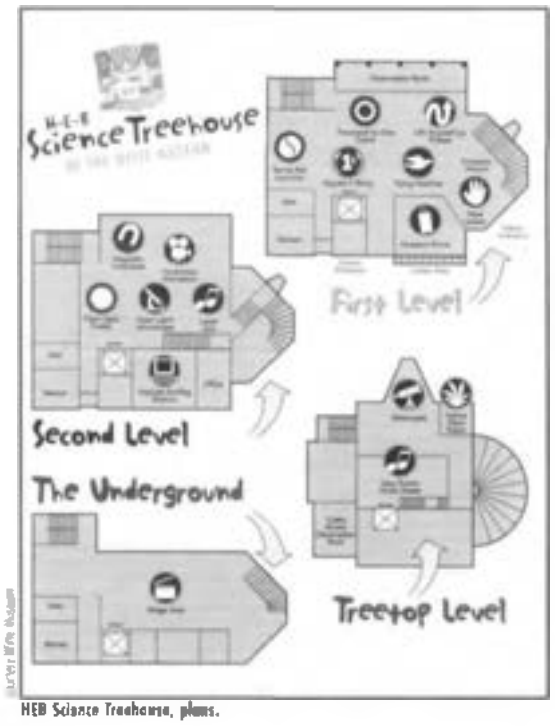
A major part of the museum movement in recent years has been directed at addressing the predilections of children's culture. In a manner similar to the way Marie Antoinette's *hameau* in a corner park at Versailles simulated the rural realities of an agricultural hamlet, a children's museum offers up miniaturized and more entertaining versions of the adult world. Robert Harbison wrote about how the hamlet at Versailles was "staffed by a few farmers who supervised the ladies' fantastic games. In the biggest and flimsiest of the mock-cottages, the queen and most privileged women in the land made butter and cheese in silver containers resting on marble counters, or more likely gave a few desultory turns and left the process to be completed by an underling."[2]

Houston's first children's museum featured a scaled down supermarket (complete with junior-sized shopping carts) where children could mimic adult shopping habits, gathering up a selection of items from the shelves, delivering them to a checkout counter, and paying with play money. That was before Robert Venturi turned the corner at Binz and LaBranch, just a few blocks from the city's major art museums, into Kiddie Klassicism, setting up the Children's Museum of Houston in a quintessential example of the decorated shed.

In the backyard of San Antonio's venerable Witte Historical Museum architects Lake/Flato recently fashioned another version of a junior museum, this one designed to resemble a children's playhouse. The HEB Science Treehouse is well situated on the edge of the San Antonio River in line with several historic houses that are part of the exhibit collection on the 4.4-acre Witte Museum campus. Unlike Houston's Children's Museum, which is more formally organized and artful, the Science Treehouse is deliberately anti-formal, like the improvised con-

Witte Museum, 3801 Broadway, San Antonio; Humanities auditorium in foreground.

structions children make with a set of toy building blocks. The building invites numerous interpretations seeded by images and fragments of castles, old houses, Victorian industrial buildings, and vernacular colonial architecture bundled together into a kind of architectural puzzle. The materials and construction methods used for the Treehouse borrow from local crafts and building traditions, including native limestone and sandstone, colorful clay tile roofs, brick and stone banding, stucco, lightweight steel bridging structures, and copper roofing. Inside, the sense of craft is more specimenlike, with handmade copper lighting sconces, stone flooring, glazed tiles, and assembled metal work in a high-tech matrix with exposed lighting tracks and ductwork. The foregrounding of design elements even extends to the mechanical systems. On the second level the architects installed Air Sox fabric ducts, an ingenious new Oldenberglike soft duct system, which is shaped by air pressure — a built-in physics demonstration.



HEB Science Treehouse, plans.

HEB Science Treehouse.

The Exploratorium, Palace Drive, San Francisco, California.

Instead of assembling its exhibit spaces side by side along a cardinal axis, the HEB Science Center piles them into a four-story arrangement with each level articulated like the house in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*.[3] The low-ceilinged basement houses an assembly room for demonstrations and lectures. At one end, a small skylit niche contains a geological wall with drawers containing sample artifacts found at various time intervals represented in a simulated geological strata. Constructing the building on river bank soil posed special foundation problems, which the architects solved by floating the building on a 30-inch concrete slab, creating a strong stereotomic base like a hull of a concrete ship.

The ground-floor entry hall is a tall atrium containing the obligatory museum store and a routine collection of hands-on exhibits demonstrating basic mechanical principles — a wave ladder, gears, lift-yourself-up pulleys, and the like. Two entrances, one from the Witte compound, the other a side entrance with porte-cochere for school children brought by bus, are prominent on the exterior but discretely hidden on the interior, deflecting attention toward the wall of windows and observation porch along the river.

The second level, a rectangular loft space, is superimposed onto the more idiosyncratic first level plan, creating overlapping double-volume spaces over the primary entrance lobby and stairway, where a tennis ball launcher pneumatically sends tennis balls past the second level floor. A double-height window beyond looks out onto the water court where hydrological phenomena invite play. Exhibits on this level demonstrate more current scientific advances, including fiber optics, lasers, video microscopes, and electro-magnetism. The Internet Surfing Station in a separate attic room offers several computer stations.

A narrow bridge connects the second level to the treehouse, a nominal tokonoma for the building. The treehouse, paid for out of the art budget, is an open-air pavilion perched in a ferro-cement tree analogous to the WPA-financed concrete trees nearby. The roof of the treehouse is the most intriguing level. It is a sky plaza with a collection of small buildings housing a conservatory, a greenhouse, a bughouse, and a grate-metal observation deck, which hangs precariously over the river below. The roof landscape is reminiscent of the marvelous complexities of the roofscapes in old Parisian townhouse neighborhoods where gables, lofts, and other constructed spaces create a secret zone of top-deck backyards.

The multiplicity of images and deliberately mixed metaphors that make a building that is more than the sum of its parts is a credit to the skill of the architects. But there is so much on the exterior and interior of this compact structure that the exhibits seem superfluous. The architectural accomplishment and the splendors of a riverside setting make the building itself the central attraction. This is not necessarily a bad thing given that what goes on inside is not really engaging enough to rival the compelling images on TV or in the movies. The sensorial experience of traversing the thin bridge to the rough-cut treehouse or overhanging the river on a metal grate floor are genuinely engaging adventures. Disney hasn't done it any better. But compared to the hyped-up, commercialized experiences of a Disney theme park, the adventure here is soft-pedaled, and the kids seem to be in control

It's difficult to know what will hold a child's interest. I have seen children playing quite contentedly for hours in a puddle of mud or with a pile of scrap lumber, making quite amazing discoveries and constructions. I have also seen them destroying equipment set up specifically to entertain them. A conclusion is that children seek to maximize negative entropy in a given situation; they dismantle rigid systems of order to create more open-ended possibilities. Such an insight created the adventure playgrounds of the sixties, where a field of unpremeditated what-have-you was established so that play could become the creative enterprise it was meant to be.

It is also difficult to say how the mind of a child works when it comes to matters of architecture. To decode a children's museum one might find its etymology simply by imagining it refitted for other purposes. In the HEB Science Center I had the distinct feeling that the building could easily be a theme restaurant where eating is a kind of theatrical experience. Modernism envisioned a world unified around invariant principles; post modernism imagined it coming apart and imposed mixed places and themes. The essential idea behind a museum is that it is possible to create vantage points from which to peer into a subject, or at least enough of it to be able to construct the rest for yourself. The uncertainty of this position has been magnified by both the increasing indeterminacy of subject matter and by the competing voices of authority. This hedging attitude toward museum contents is precisely the way a child constructs the world. Attention deficit is the norm, and the most curators hope for is that the child will run through the place, spending a moment or two on one thing before looking out of the corner of his or her eye for what to do next. This is the prescription for an architecture of restless complexity and ambiguity, and, in a child, the architect may have found the perfect client for this kind of idea.

But, in the end, all these museum wonders exist in the world outside in a continuous landscape where it is impossible to differentiate between a mall, a theme park, a restaurant, or a children's museum. But driving out along the industrial landscape of route 225 past what seem to be vast brooding cities of unimaginable boldness, places populated not by structures marred by the vagueness of contemporary architecture but by the purpose-built labyrinths of applied science, may pose a far greater challenge to the mind of a child than what goes on inside these little worlds of children's science.

Creating a science museum around a theme of behind-the-scenes reality was a guiding principle for San Francisco's Exploratorium, an innovative science museum and workshop tucked inside the belly of Bernard Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts designed for the 1915 Pan-Pacific Exposition. The interior transformation of the scenographic Beaux-Arts buildings bustles with a dynamic and messy vitality like a vast inventor's workshop. In contrast to the slick, designer look of most museum exhibits, those in the Exploratorium looked surprisingly homemade. They emanated from the working labs and workshops around the perimeter, which were staffed by real research scientists, technicians, teachers, and exhibit designers. On one visit to the Exploratorium, I followed a trail of ascending cognitive objects on the topic of optical physics that included a hands-on exhibit of lenses, a diagrammatic display explaining the lens concept, and, finally, a visceral demonstration by a staff member who dissected a cow eyeball.

Most science museums deliver their experiences in an easier form, one less related to the scientist's lab than to the commercial hyper-realities of museum culture. The great French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss was struck by a certain ingenuity he found in American museums. He wrote, "not being able, or not always, to acquire what old Europe had considered first choice, . . America had managed to make a virtue of necessity by discovering first choices in domains that we had neglected. One such was the natural sciences."[4] Of particular interest to Strauss were the popular early twentieth-century dioramas where "behind glass panes that were several yards high and wide, one could see scrupulous reconstructions of American, African, and Asian fauna in their natural habitats." Strauss wondered whether hyper-realism might not have existed embryonically in these dioramas. Such scenes have escaped from the aesthetically distancing frame and glass and become the iconic content for an architecture of collected copies of experience. ■

1. Edgar Gumbert, "The City as Educator" in *Education and Urban Society* (November 1971), p. 10.

2. Robert Harbison, *The Built, the Unbuilt and the Unbuildable: In Pursuit of Architectural Meaning* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 21.

3. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), Chapter 1, pp. 3–37.

4. Claude Levi-Strauss, "New York in 1941" in *The View from Afar* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 264.

Gardiner Symonds Teaching Laboratory, Rice University

Stephen Fox

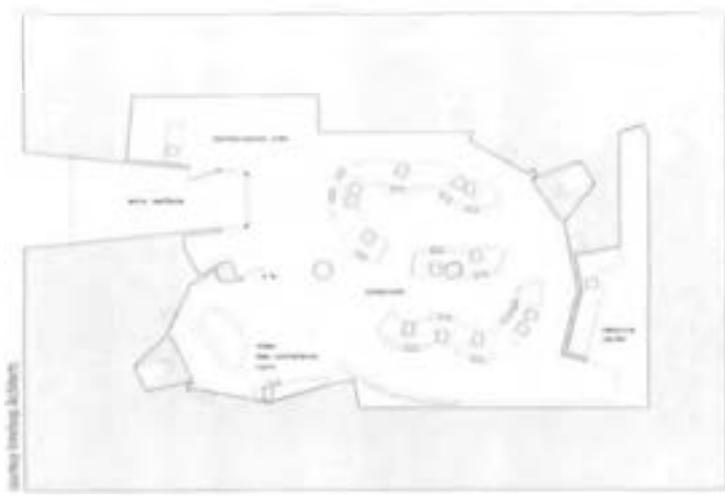
Gardiner Symonds Teaching Laboratory, Rice University, Interloop Architects, 1996.

Houston architect Mark Wamble has explored the implications of electronic communications technology as a learning medium in his design of the Gardiner Symonds Teaching Laboratory at Rice University. The Symonds Laboratory, conceived, built, and operated by the Center for Technology and Teaching at Rice University, is headed by G. Anthony Gorry, professor of computer science and vice president for information technology. Construction was carried out under the supervision of Kevin Brook Long. Gorry persuaded the university to fund construction and operation of the Symonds Laboratory to encourage university instructors — and students — from all departments to test ways in which electronic technology could be integrated into, and at the same time, modify classroom and laboratory teaching. Since opening in October 1996, the Symonds Laboratory has been used for regular academic instruction in the humanities, architecture, managerial studies, psychology, statistics, natural science, space physics, astronomy, and a multidisciplinary course.

Wamble and the Center for Technology and Teaching were given an unpromising space to work with deep in the bowels of Rice University's Fondren Library. Because the library is neutral ground rather than the territory of any one department, this location was critical to the success of the project. However the space's introversion, lack of windows, closely spaced columns, and low ceiling presented considerable challenges. Wamble used these obstacles to ingenious ends to shape a space for learning that, as he puts it, is not a "computer ghetto." Wamble emphasizes that the architecture of the Symonds Laboratory represents more than a series of functional, programmatic resolutions. It reflects an effort to conceive learning as a collaborative rather than individual activity. It also reflects Wamble's provocative thesis that this transformation can be facilitated by providing what he describes as a "flexible and poised environment." Wamble derives this thesis from the work of Michael J. Piore and Charles Sable, especially their influential concept of "flexible specialization." As Wamble writes: "Poised flexibility induces a fluid state of learning where the conventional academic regimes of instructor/student, participant/observer, front row/back row, inside/outside are subtly disengaged or discarded altogether as inaccurate criteria. What counts most is the. . . dynamic incorporation of different perspectives and skills into the content of the lesson. It is in this way that flexibility becomes formalized as opposed to the tradition of flexible objects." Wamble notes that while business management has adopted and avidly developed the concept of flexible specialization over the past decade, its implications for teaching have not been explored, especially in the university, where teaching remains premised on the ideal of teacher-to-student communication.

Within the center of the 3,300-square-foot space, Wamble positioned three serpentine tables around a pair of obtrusive cylindrical columns. The tables contain twelve computer-equipped work stations, each meant to accommodate a pair of students, and a thirteenth station for the instructor. To avoid the hierarchical organization of the traditional classroom or laboratory, Wamble positioned students on both sides of the tables and treated the teaching station as one among many. Computer monitors are depressed so that they don't block views: students look at each others' faces rather than the back of each others' heads or at computer monitors other than their own. Hard drives and cables are collected in enclosed shelves below the counter surfaces. Wamble provided ample room between monitors and on lower keypad counters for spreading out books and papers. The work stations and instructor station are all visible from a pair of video cameras, so that classroom sessions can be broadcast to, and interact with, offsite locations.

The entryway projects into the Symonds Laboratory from a photocopying machine station in the library, inviting those using the library to casually observe activity in the Symonds Lab. Wamble de-emphasized the perimeter of the room, which consists of wall planes irregularly faceted in plan, specifying two shades of gray and a light yellow to accentuate planar recession. He used task lighting to focus on the work stations rather than ambient lighting, reflecting off and emphasizing floor and wall surfaces. Abundant baffling produces quiet ambiance. This enables students to talk among themselves at work stations without distracting others; microphones at each work station amplify exchanges in class discussions. Suppression of a single center, and the provision for multiple views, pools of light, an ambiguous perimeter, and an aura of calm imbue the Symonds Teaching Laboratory with a sense of spatial expansiveness and composure, despite its actual confinement.



Symonds Teaching Laboratory, plan.

Learning from his experience working in Peter Eisenman's studio, Wamble provided the Symonds Laboratory with an ancillary space that opens into the principal space, but can be closed off by means of a faceted wall of sliding glass doors. This space is equipped with the second of the laboratory's two large-format projection screens, two video cameras for transmission, and an irregularly shaped table that pivots, so it can be rotated out of the middle of the space if desired. For Wamble, the value of this space is its role as an un-programmed retreat. It emphasizes his conviction that the Symonds Teaching Laboratory had to be more than a warehouse for equipment if it was to encourage students and instructors to test new ways of learning.

Because of the laboratory's experimental nature, Wamble had the opportunity to design all the fixed furniture: the serpentine tables, the pivoting table in the video teleconferencing space, and a credenza in the teleconferencing space, all of which were fabricated by the Wood Plane. These contribute to the unassertive architectural consistency that sets this interior apart from those of Rice's most recent new campus buildings, where there is a clear demarcation between architect-designed surfaces and specified furniture.

Paradoxically, this designed interior has become a neutral backdrop for video-telecast performances, as Wamble describes some student-initiated events occurring in the Symonds Laboratory. It was also the setting for a telecast press conference featuring Rice professors Robert Curl and Richard Smalley, when they were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in October, 1996.

As an indication of how successful Wamble's efforts have been, he has been commissioned to design a second electronic classroom at Rice (in John Outram's Duncan Hall) and an electronic classroom for James Stephen Hogg Middle School in Norhill.

Wamble's commitment to designing for people and their activities, and not primarily for the equipment, suggests why the Symonds Teaching Laboratory has met with such an enthusiastic response in its first year of operation. Because Wamble and Rice's Center for Technology in Teaching and Learning were open to exploration in design, the Symonds Teaching Laboratory demonstrates that classrooms (even windowless classrooms) don't have to be prosaic and oppressive. It is an encouraging reminder that there is no excuse for thoughtless architecture, even in the most deprived of settings. ■

courtesy Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth

Ando proposal, site plan showing Kimbell Museum at left.

courtesy Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth

Winning proposal, Todoo Ando.

HARMONIC PROGRESSION

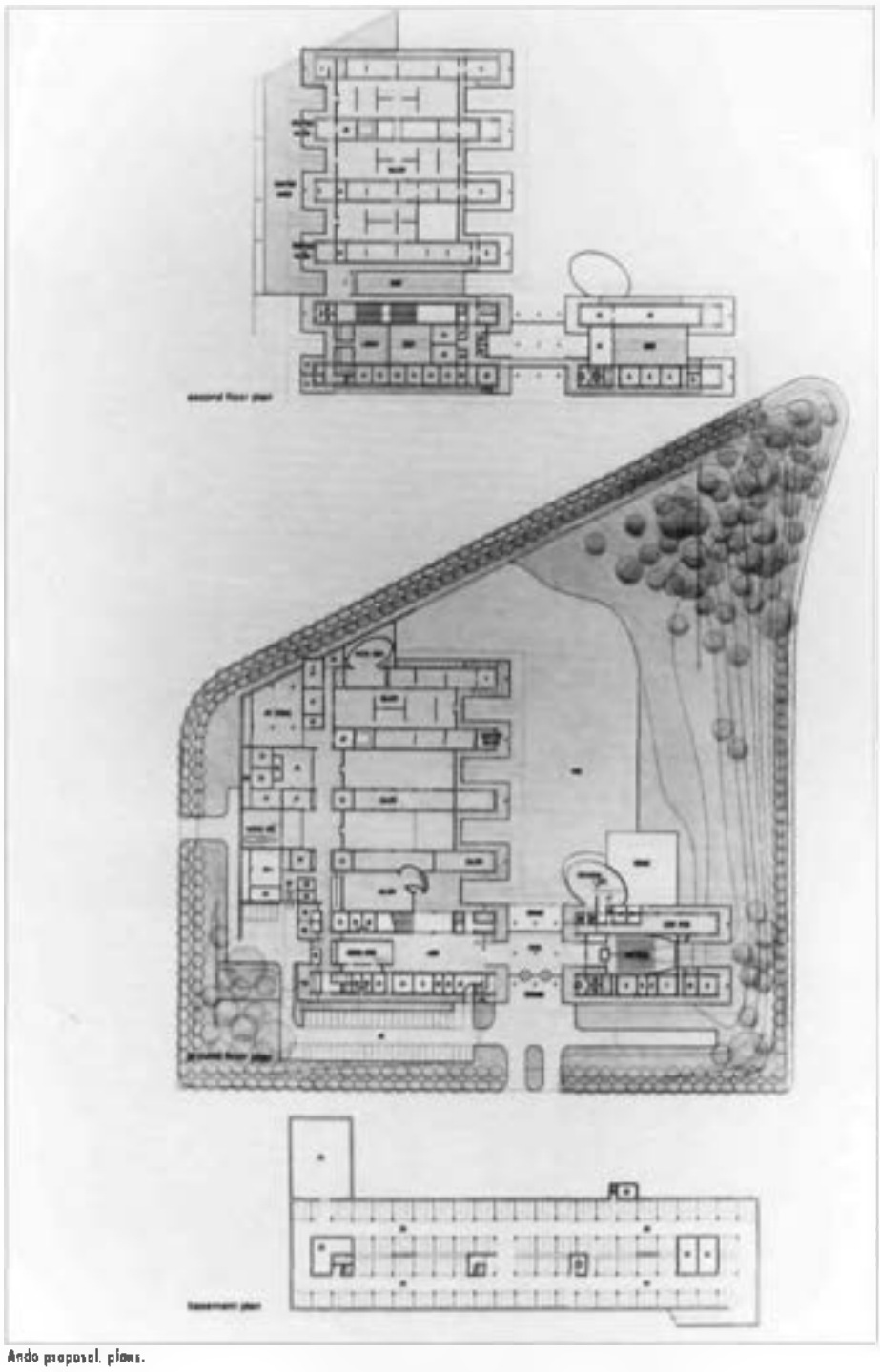
courtesy Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth

Ando proposal, photograph of model.

Barbara Koerble

Fort Worth and its Cultural District took a significant step forward when the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (MAMFW) announced on May 6 that Tadao Ando will design its new building. The art museum will be Ando's first major commission in the United States. Ando competed against five other architects, including Arata Isozaki, Tokyo; Richard Gluckman, New York; Carlos Jiménez, Houston; Ricardo Legorreta, Mexico City; and David Schwarz, Washington, D.C. The architectural review committee chairman, Anne W. Marion, commented, "We had six wonderful proposals to consider, and we thank the architects for their excellent submissions and presentations here in Fort Worth. The committee was moved by the beauty of Mr. Ando's concept, his responsiveness to our program, and his poetic handling of the site."[1] The cost of museum construction will be covered by private funds. Marla Price said that she was "not sure" if funding is in place yet, however this suggests that substantial donations from trustees and other museum supporters have been promised.

The new Modern Art Museum will be located close to the Kimbell on a 10.96-acre site bordered by Darnell Street, Arch Adams Street, Camp Bowie Boulevard, and University Drive. Now occupied by a brick apartment complex built in 1944, the site was purchased in July 1996 by Fort Worth's Burnett Foundation, whose president, Anne Marion, was asked to head MAMFW's architecture review



Ando proposal, plans.

FORT WORTH'S NEW MODERN ART MUSEUM BY TADAO ANDO

committee. The Modern's present museum, at Montgomery and Lancaster streets, predates both the Kimbell and the Amon Carter museums. It was designed in 1954 by Herbert Bayer who, after teaching at the Bauhaus in the 1920s, immigrated to the United States in the 1930s and built a successful career as a graphic designer. The Fort Worth Art Center was one of his few buildings. The Scott Theater was added to the north side of the museum, and later additions by Ford, Powell & Carson (1973–74) largely obscured the Bayer façade.[2] The motivation for construction of a new building stemmed from limited gallery space. There is not enough room to host special exhibitions and keep the permanent collection on view.[3] Richard Gluckman, known for his remodeling of existing buildings for gallery space, was asked to evaluate the Modern's existing building to determine whether a renovation or expansion would be feasible on its present site. Gluckman found the old building too confining and recommended that the MAMFW construct a new museum.[4]

Museum Director Marla Price and Chief Curator Michael Auping were responsible for recommending a preliminary list of architects. They traveled extensively to evaluate buildings that architects under consideration had designed. Price's recollections of their trip to Japan are particularly vivid. The work of several Japanese architects, including Ando, Isozaki, and Kenzo Tange were on their itinerary, but Ando's Water Temple of Hompukuji and the Chikatsu Asuka Historical Museum were, for her, among the most compelling. The Historical Museum exhibits burial mound artifacts in dark, tomblike rooms. "It hits you in the stomach — you can't speak for hours after visiting it," Price said of her experience at Chikatsu Asuka.[5]

Price and Auping compiled a list of 25 architects for the review committee to consider. Six finalists were selected by secret ballot and announced on September 20, 1996. Because the voting was secret, why some architects did not make the cut is a matter of conjecture, but Price speculated that Rafael Moneo and Renzo Piano, having designed museums in Houston, were not considered for that reason. Also, Richard Meier, heavily involved with the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, may have been thought to be overcommitted. Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas were discussed at length, Price explained, but their work apparently did not correspond to the more conservative sensibility of the committee.[6] Neither was Robert Venturi seriously considered. One also suspects that the list of competitors purposely excluded any architect who might have challenged the preeminence of the Kimbell in the Cultural District's pecking order.

The finalists were given the program in mid-November and proposals were due April 1, 1997. Each was awarded $25,000 to defray the cost of design preparation and travel. On April 21 and 22, the review committee reconvened to hear one-and-one-half hour presentations by each team. The designs were previewed by the press on April 24, and shown in a public exhibition that opened on April 26. The committee met again on May 5 and voted unanimously to commission Tadao Ando for the new museum.

The role that the Kimbell Art Museum played in the competition proposals cannot be overstated. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Kimbell. With hindsight, it is obvious that this relatively small museum set a new standard for American art museums. In fact, the architectural program for the new Modern Art Museum quoted from the Kimbell's program of 1966: "A visitor's experience should be one of warmth, mellowness and even elegance. They should be charmed. The spaces, forms and fixtures should maintain a harmonious simplicity and human proportion between the visitor and the building and the art observed. The creative strength of the building should lie in simplicity and directness of approach to the uses of the building, clarity of the disposition of parts, harmony in the relationship between visible form and means of construction, taste in the proportions of those forms, quality of materials and exquisite craftsmanship in putting the materials together."[7]

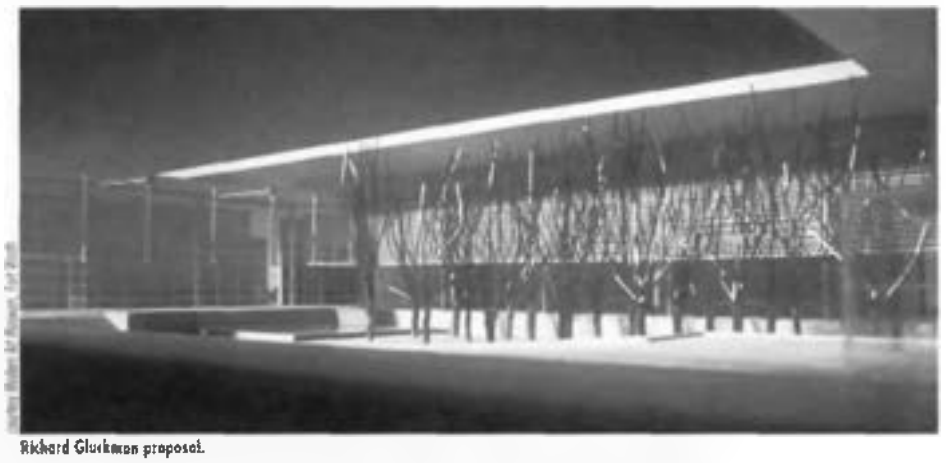
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1309 Montgomery Street, Herbert Bayer, architect, 1954.

The architectural program did not specify where the museum was to be placed on the site, so the architects had the option of orienting it toward the Kimbell Art Museum on Arch Adams or toward the commercial strip on Camp Bowie Boulevard. All six finalists placed an entrance to the museum on Darnell Street. Ando and Schwarz oriented their museums toward the Kimbell; the other architects chose to address the Camp Bowie Boulevard side of the property, and Isozaki also made gestures to University Drive. The architects were not given a budget, which accounts for disparities among the submissions, including parking arrangements, which were proposed for both above grade and below.

The new building will more than quadruple the 40,000 square feet of the museum's present building. Gallery space will increase from 15,000 to 75,000 square feet, placing the Modern Art Museum among the largest contemporary art museums in the country. Not surprisingly, all of the competition entries dwarfed the Kimbell in size. Because of the overhanging canopies, the size of Ando's museum is exaggerated on the site plan, even so, it was the largest at

Ricardo Legorreta proposal.

Arata Isozaki proposal.



Richard Gluckman proposal.

230,000 square feet. Price said that although no budget has been set for the building, it can be assumed that the final size will be around 175,000 to 200,000 square feet. She pointed out that Ando's design could be built in phases. Isozaki included a visual demonstration of the size disparity when he overlaid two models in his presentation. A site plan that includes a three dimensional Kimbell is partially inserted into a blown-up section of one of the gallery spaces. The Kimbell is so small that it looks like a sculpture displayed within the museum. Perhaps Isozaki was alluding to the reverence with which the Kimbell was treated in the competition.

Ando's proposal sought to match the serenity of the Kimbell and to respond in the same architectural language, continuing a polite dialogue rather than interrupting a train of thought. His design consists of six rectangular boxes, divided into four exhibition wings and two long public areas. The building is of double-layered construction, which Ando refers to as a "double skin," an internal two-story concrete wall surrounded by a glass wall envelope. A floating canopy roof of aluminum slats is supported by columns and Y-struts. Ando describes the concrete and glass elements of the structure: "Through their simplicity, they resonate in harmony with the water and greenery, and inside are resplendent with a variety of spaces, allowing the introduction of the life inherent in the act of creation."[8]

Ando proposes that the end wall of the museum's auditorium be all glass, similar to his Church on the Water. Curtains and slide screens could be lowered as needed. Ando emphasizes integration of the building with nature to reduce museum fatigue. At all levels and areas of the building visitors will be able to step out of the gallery into the enveloping glass corridors from which views of the pools and the surrounding landscape can be seen. At some points, the glass walls will seem to disappear into the reflecting pool. Among the first concerns that Price says the committee will want Ando to address is how the HV/AC system will handle the demands placed on it by the large expanses of glazing as well as the framing system for the window walls. Ando's display panels propose that a "natural ventilation system," apparently utilizing air circulation over the water, will cool the glazed areas with a swamp-cooler effect.

Price describes Ando's planning of exhibition space and support services as "a professional's dream of a system; the best I've ever seen."[9] Unlike some of the competitors, who struggled with planning truck access points for art shipments, Ando's scheme makes loading directly to the sculpture garden and exhibition spaces feasible and provides direct access to all support services.

The site plan devised by Ando deals with the problematic, highly-trafficked intersection of Camp Bowie Boulevard and University Drive on the northeast corner of the site. A dense grove of trees covering this triangular wedge will open to reveal rectangular wings along Camp Bowie Boulevard. These wings are surrounded by a pool of water on the southern side. It was this integration of landscape and structure that strongly impressed the committee. Ando described his proposal as an "arbor for art." The woods created at the intersection of Camp Bowie Boulevard and University Drive, Ando explains on his text panel, is symbolic, serving as a starting point for the cultural precinct as a whole. By surrounding the site with trees and water, Ando's museum offers, as does the Kimbell, a peaceful counterpoint to the city itself. In 1984 Ando wrote: "I do not believe that architecture should speak too much. It should remain silent and let nature in the guise of sunlight and wind speak."[10]

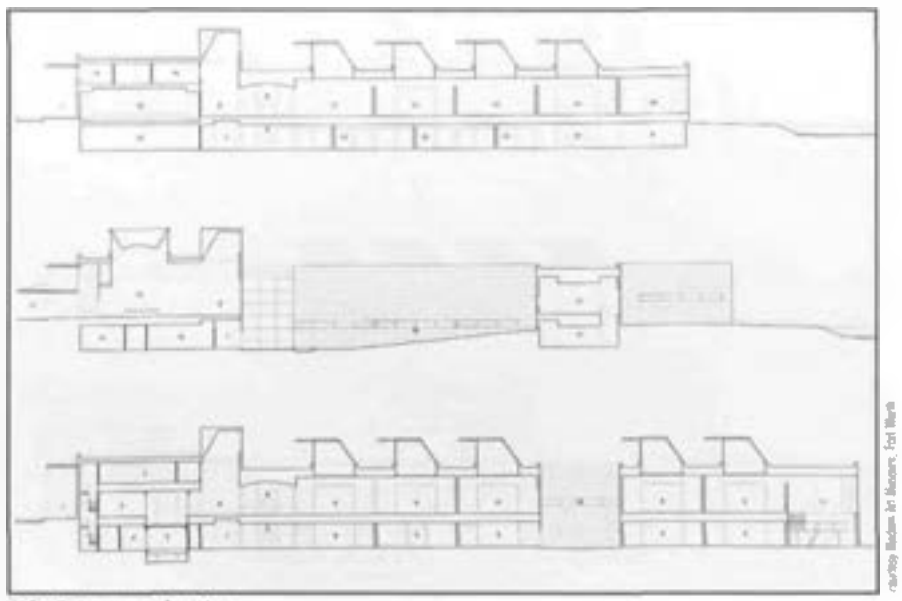
The influence of Vitruvius can be seen in the Ando scheme where elemental simplicity is underscored by the use of Y supports, referring to an ancient structural form used in primitive huts. Vitruvius wrote: "At first [the men of old] set up forked stakes connected by twigs and covered these walls with mud."[11] Ando told the review committee during his competition presentation that he named his dog Le Corbusier in homage to the great modernist architect, but critics have generally compared Ando's work to that of Louis Kahn.[12] While Ando's eloquent expression of concrete, glass, and light is reminiscent of Kahn, Ando works in a more purely modern vein, exhibiting fewer of the classicizing or Beaux-Arts tendencies that mark Kahn's later buildings. However, neoclassical echoes from Edward Durell Stone's Kennedy Center are also vaguely evident in Ando's entry. Consciously wishing to avoid a design that would soon appear dated, the committee and staff agreed that Ando's proposal would age gracefully.

Of all the competitors, Ricardo Legorreta was the most demonstrative, although he did not stray from his signature style. His artistic renderings made his presentation the most appealing to the public, but they gave short shrift to the illustration of staff/service spaces. The renderings of a 48-foot entry tower, which is perforated and lit from within by colored lights, depict interior patterns of light and shadow on the blank walls. The glowing tower would be a beacon for pedestrians at night. A counterpart to the nearby tower of the Will Rogers Coliseum, this was the only feature of any of the entries that was over two stories high, and, in that context, seemed daring. Legorreta created a sprawling physical complex, like a city, taking full advantage of the large site. His museum was surrounded with formal gardens and groves of trees. His was the most overtly referential entry showing historical precedents such as the Alhambra. Some of Legorreta's spaces, though, were overly dramatic spatially, such as the special exhibition pavilion with its rotated corbeled pyramidal ceiling.

Isozaki presented a proposal that reacted against the formality of the Kimbell. He described his *parti* as: "a turbulent flow [that] intersects with the orthogonal grid system of the Kimbell Art Museum to create the geometry of the Modern Art Museum."[13] Yet in the exterior form of Isozaki's building, most of the intended disorder is concealed by the overlying rectilinear form of the building screened by a repetitive two-story colonnade. Bulging extrusions on the east side intended to house special events and the auditorium and curvilinear walls on the Camp Bowie Boulevard façade may be Isozaki's response to the program's request that the museum serve as an introduction to the whole district. These more organic forms are uncharacteristic of Isozaki's previous museums, which have been primarily composed of severe volumetric forms.

Richard Gluckman, who gave up the opportunity to redesign the Museum's old building, won the favor of the curatorial staff with his appealing layout of gallery spaces and well-integrated service facilities. In addition to adaptive reuse projects in existing buildings for the Warhol Museum and the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum (a project of Mrs. Marion and her husband), he has designed gallery spaces for several prominent New York dealers. But, his design for the Modern Art Museum was his first for a free-standing building. It had some of the most varied and complicated elevations, which were unified by a continuous canopy roof. Due to the complexity of the design, Gluckman's exterior lacked the iconic clarity of the Ando design.

Carlos Jimenez proposal.



Carlos Jiménez proposal, sections.

David Schwarz proposal.

Carlos Jiménez's project was notable for its parallelogram-profiled light monitors and its fingerlike gallery wings, which addressed the site with more delicacy than most schemes, including Ando's. Jiménez's volumetric expression was characteristic of his other work, particularly the Central Administration Building of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Spencer Studio Art Building at Williams College. His entry not only employed a formal economy of means but would have been the least expensive to build and maintain.

David Schwarz decided to out-module the Kimbell. He must have recalled the shrinking of Kahn's museum during design development and decided to hedge his bet by presenting three alternative schemes from a baby-size museum to a papa-size one.[14] His schematic manipulation of the module, complete with a morphology diagram, was intended to show flexibility for gallery additions. In reality, his galleries would have offered too many choices in traffic patterns. His model interiors show tentlike, vaulted galleries acting as circulation spines with openings to adjacent flat-ceilinged rooms. Even though ceiling heights vary, oversized contemporary works could not have been hung on the slanted, vaulting walls. There was no incorporation of two-story display space, as in several of the other schemes. The least convincing aspect of Schwarz's presentation was the Darnell Street elevation showing a flat-roofed modern wing juxtaposed with pitched-roof pavilions. The overall impression of Schwarz's entry was that of a building with a split personality, straddling historical periods. Due to the presence of several Bass family members on the review committee and the fact that Kit Monerief, another committee member, is president of the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame now being designed by Schwarz, there was local concern that the competition might unfairly favor Schwarz. While these and other connections might have helped him, the review committee would have had difficulty justifying the selection of Schwarz based on his submission.

Problems that Ando will have to resolve include how to handle parking so museum security is not compromised. How much the Modern Art Museum is willing to pay for underground parking remains to be seen. Current figures estimate above ground parking at $5,000 per vehicle, while underground may run as high as $30,000 per vehicle.[15] Parking space is at a premium during major events such as the Stock Show or the Kimbell's blockbuster exhibitions. Moving into the Kimbell sphere will make parking an important issue for the museum. A six-acre tract east of the Kimbell is owned by the Fort Worth School District and is occupied by its administrative office building. Kimbell Director Ted Pillsbury has indicated that this is the logical place for expansion of his museum.[16] However, the school district's deed stipulates that the property will revert to the heirs of the donor if its use is not school-related.[17] There had been discussion about closing Arch Adams Street during the Kimbell's ill-fated expansion project.[18] Were Arch Adams Street closed to through traffic now, the northern half could be used for access to parking areas for the museums. The southern section of the street could be used for future Kimbell expansion or as an inexpensive addition to existing parking.

The competition process used by the Modern Art Museum worked very well. It satisfied the public's curiosity, invited response, and promoted fair play. Carlos Jimenez commented, "the competition was handled very professionally. They were careful to treat everyone equally."[19] By sharing the competition entries with the public as both an entertaining exhibition and an educational tool, the museum almost guarantees interest and enthusiasm for its project. The most frequently heard criticism by architects about the competition was the less than adventurous list of invited participants.

Ando's design is in part indebted to Kahn's revitalization of the language of modern architecture, which persists as a vital expression thirty years later. The success of Ando's competition design reflects the continuing vitality of modernist architecture, and pairs the work of a respectful follower with one of his mentors. Construction of the Ando museum will provide an extraordinary opportunity to view the work of mentor and disciple side by side. His proposal promises a serene environment for art, and it should be an important addition to Texas's museums. ■

1. Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, press release, May 6, 1997. Other members of the committee were Lee M. Bass, Nancy Lee Muse Bass, Perry R. Bass, Cornelia Blake, Kay Fortson, William P. Hallman, Jr., Edward R. Hudson, Jr., John L. Marion, Kit Monerief, and Marshall Monerief. Ex-officio members were Dr. Marla Price (Director, MAMFW), Michael Auping (Chief Curator, MAMFW), and advisory members Dr. Edmund Pillsbury (Director, Kimbell Art Museum) and Dr. Mark Thistlethwaite (Kay and Velma Kimbell Professor of Art History, Texas Christian University).

2. Founded in 1892 as a gallery in the downtown Carnegie Library, the MAMFW is the oldest art museum in Texas.

3. Janet Kutner, "Fort Worth Modern Art Museum Plans Move," *Dallas Morning News*, July 19, 1996, p. 31A.

4. MAMFW, press preview, April 24, 1997. Herzog DeMeuron also gave MAMFW officials an assessment of the existing building, but they were not considered for the new commission as Gluckman was.

5. Marla Price, Fort Worth Chapter, AIA, Tour of MAMFW competition exhibition, May 20, 1997.

6. Ibid.

7. Richard Fargo Brown, "The Kimbell Museum Architectural Program," 1966.

8. Tadao Ando, panel text, competition entry. "Two features are characteristic of my work: a use of limited materials, which have their textures exposed, and an ambiguous articulation of the function of space. I believe that these attributes enable me to produce effective spatial prototypes." (Tadao Ando, "A Wedge in Circumstances," *The Japan Architect*, 243, June 1977).

9. Price, FWAIA Tour.

10. Tadao Ando, *Buildings, Projects, Writings*. (New York: Press, 1984).

11. Morris Hicky Morgan, translator, *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), p. 39.

12. Francesco Dal Co, Tadao Ando: Complete Works (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), pp. 10, 13.

13. Arata Isozaki, panel text, competition entry.

14. This presentation recalled the "pick-your-style" elevations Schwarz prepared for the Texas Rangers Ballpark competition. See Barbara Koerble, "Squeeze Play," *CITE*, Spring 1992, pp.16-21.

15. Price, press preview, April 24, 1997.

16. Kutner, p. 31A.

17. Price, FWAIA tour.

18. Barbara Koerble, "UTA Architects, Others Offer Expansion Ideas," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 18, 1990, sec. 6, p. 5.

19. Telephone conversation with author, 1997.

2 MORE COMPETITIONS

School of Nursing and Biomedical Sciences Building, University of Texas, Houston; winning competition proposal, Patkau Architects.

1 School of Nursing and Biomedical Sciences Building, University of Texas, Houston

Stephen Fox

On February 19, the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center (UTHHSC) announced that Patkau Architects of Vancouver, British Columbia, were winners of a limited architectural competition for the design of a new School of Nursing and Biomedical Sciences Building in the Texas Medical Center. This marks the first time the UT system has used an invited competition to select an architect. Rives Taylor, campus architect for UTHHSC, and Brian Yeoman, associate vice president of support services, initiated the idea of the competition. Lawrence W. Speck, dean of architecture at the University of Texas, Austin, served as the competition adviser and recommended the six firms invited to participate. The entries, exhibited in Austin at the School of Architecture's Mebane Gallery in April and May, were submitted by the winners, Patkau Architects; Lake/Flato Architects of San Antonio; Steven Holl Architects of New York; Rodolfo Machado/Jorge Silvetti of Boston; Taller de Enrique Norten y Asociados of Mexico City; and Tod Williams Billie Tsien & Associates of New York.

Jurors for the competition were Dr. James Broaddus, director of facilities, planning, and construction at the University of Texas, Austin; Carolyn Grant Fay of Houston; Harrison Fraker, dean of the College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley; Richard Ingersoll, associate professor of architecture at Rice University and editor of *Design Book Review*; Donna Robertson, dean of the College of Architecture, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago; Donald L. Stull, architect, of Boston; and Cynthia Weese, dean of the School of Architecture, Washington University, St. Louis.

The School of Nursing presently occupies remodeled space in the former Prudential Building (Kenneth Franzheim, 1952) on Holcombe Boulevard, now part of the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. Despite its architectural and historical importance, M. D. Anderson is considering demolition of the Prudential Building, perhaps within the next ten years, which will require relocation of the school. Also, during an in-house planning effort in 1993–94, the University of Texas determined that the nursing school needed updated facilities. The site chosen for the new building is on a prominent corner owned by the Texas Medical Center between Holcombe Boulevard and Bertner Avenue adjacent to the UT School of Public Health (MacKie & Kamrath, ca. 1978). The two-story building now on this long narrow sliver of land will be demolished. To the east of the site is Grant-Fay Park, a landscaped area with old trees facing Holcombe, which is all that remains of Grantlands, the childhood country home of juror Carolyn Grant Fay.

The six competing architects were given an extremely detailed brief for a ten-story building to house the School of Nursing, the School of Allied Health Sciences, and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences as well as a commons for UTHHSC. Architects were instructed to include unprogrammed shell space for future expansion and were encouraged to propose sustainable design approaches to make the building energy efficient and environmentally responsive.

The Patkau design (like those submitted by Lake/Flato, Machado/Silvetti, and TEN y Asociados) fills the entire building site. Patkau proposed a ten-story building, faceted in plan at its narrow north and south ends, giving the tall slender building a prowlike leading edge at the Holcombe-Bertner corner. Interior courts are opened up inside the building, rising through floors one through four and floors six through ten. These provide occupants of the upper floors with easy access to the outdoors. A massive tank on the ninth floor is for the storage and distribution of grey water (untreated rain water utilized for toilets and other nonconsumption purposes). The long east and west walls of the building are faced with closely spaced horizontal louvers. Large-scale cutouts penetrate the louvered screen walls. Atop the building are ranks of south-facing solar panels. Patkau's model, with its emphasis on slatted louvers, has already prompted a nickname for the new building: the Popsicle-stick building.

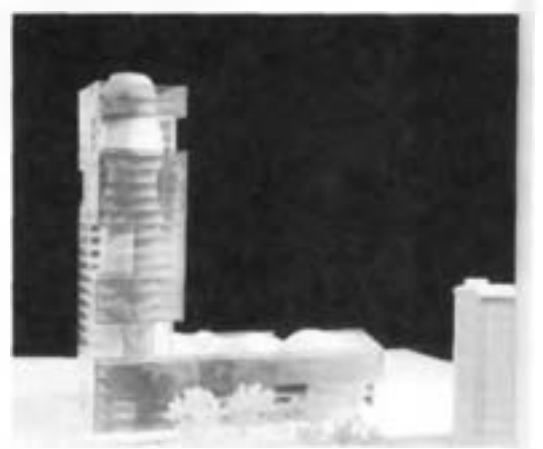
Lake/Flato were the only competitors to propose a detailed landscape plan for the space between the new Nursing School Building and the exiting School

Rodolfo Machado/Jorge Silvetti proposal.

Taller de Enrique Norten y Asociados proposal.

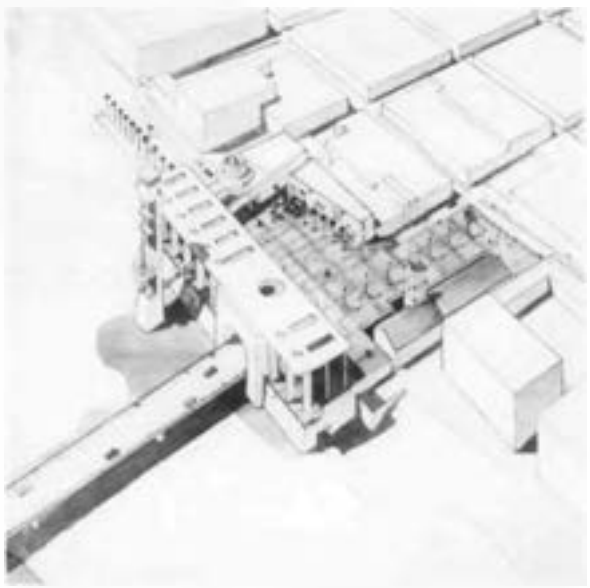
Lake/Flato Architects proposal.

Tod Williams Billie Tsien & Associates proposal.



Steven Holl Architects proposal.

2 El Portal: Laredo/Nuevo Laredo City Embraced by Two Countries



El Portal: Laredo/Nuevo Laredo International Bridge, winning competition proposal, Rebecca Angus and Stephanie Jackson.

The City of Laredo awarded first prize to Rebecca Angus and Stephanie Jackson, architects from East Fremantle, W. A., Australia, in an open competition for an urban design proposal to reconfigure the approach to the Bridge of the Americas, the downtown pedestrian and vehicular bridge linking Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The competition results were announced on April 19, 1997, in Laredo, and all competition entries — 33 from architects in the U.S., Mexico, France, Australia, Egypt, and Italy, and 28 from students and interns — were exhibited at the Laredo Center for the Arts until May 14.

The competition program called for a ceremonial entrance on the Laredo side of the bridge. Competitors had to work with a constricted urban site abutted by properties that the City of Laredo does not control and confusing traffic patterns that bring large numbers of pedestrians into conflict with heavy vehicular traffic. The Angus-Jackson design used the site's downward slope toward the bank of the Rio Grande to route pedestrian traffic underneath the street, which is used by incoming vehicles, and through a landscaped, amphitheaterlike terraced park at the river's edge. Pedestrians can either follow a ramp up to the bridge leading to Nuevo Laredo or climb to a viewing platform on the Laredo side of the Rio Grande.

Second place in the competition was awarded to Longoria/Peters of Houston and third place to the team of Charles A. York, Odell Thompson, and Sharon Fleming of Austin. Honorable mentions were awarded to Kimberley and Richard Miller of Philadelphia; Steven K. Quevedo of Dallas; the team of Maria Eugenia Calderon, David Graeber, Carlos Mejia, and Ovidio Cavazos of Laredo and Austin; the team of Gevork Harroonian, Bernardo Gogna, Lisa Chu, Shaowen Wang, and Rafaela Bortuluzzi of New York; and the team of Ignacio Quinonez Pena, Juan Antonio Medina, Alejandro Quinonez, and Florentino Medina of Nuevo Laredo.

A separate set of commendations was awarded in the student-intern category. First place went to Monica C. Rokicki and Mario A. Reyes of the University of Houston; second place to David Williamson of the University of Texas, Arlington; and third place to the team of Allan Henderson, Benjamin Jennings, Ian Venegas, Edmundo Palacios, and Carlos Nunez of Ball State University and the Instituto Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. Five honorable mentions were also given in the student-intern category.

Jurors for the competition were the architect Abraham Zabludovsky, Mexico City; architect, theorist, and teacher Livio Dimitriu of the USA Institute, New York; Joseph Rosa, chief curator of the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.; Laredo City Council member Consuelo Montalvo; Laredo art collector Rosi de Anda; and Laredo businessman Evan Quiros. Laredo mayor Saul Ramirez said that funding to develop the urban design plan could come from federal sources earmarked for downtown revitalization. Webb County judge Mercurio Martinez pledged the financial support of the county to ensure construction of the improvements.

The competition was cosponsored by a host of Laredo institutions. Professional advisers were Laredo architects Viviana Frank and Frank Romofsky. *SF* ■

Second place competition proposal, Longoria/Peters.

of Public Health. Their design reads architecturally as two buildings. TEN y Asociados also split the building in two, treating the components as parallel slabs (rather than side-by-side, as Lake/Flato did) separated by a central court.

Machado/Silvetti emphasized the slablike nature of the building by contrasting small-scaled windows with much larger penetrations and giving it a pronounced directional thrust with a pedestrian bridge spanning Holcombe (called for in the program, but not included by other competitors). The two New York competitors proposed buildings taller than ten stories. Williams Tsien & Associates designed a 16-story tower to minimize the impact of the building on its small plot. Steven Holl's submission was the most unconventional. He juxtaposed program spaces configured as biomorphic blobs with a rectilinear, cagelike tower containing the blobs.

The University of Texas-Houston Health Science Center must now raise approximately $60,000,000 to clear the site and construct the new building. The architects, along with local associate architects and other consultants, still have considerable design work to do. Certain elements of the competition, especially the environmental paraphernalia (encouraged by the university but scarcely addressed in its otherwise extremely precise and prescriptive program), may well prove vulnerable to the value engineering that will ensue as design development goes forward.

Despite uncertainty, the university's decision to stage an architectural competition has proved rewarding. It has enabled the university administration, faculty, and staff to see how its programming can be variously interpreted by different architects, and it has given the university the courage to hire out-of-state architects of exceptional design ability, promising the Texas Medical Center a caliber of architecture that has been too rare in its 50-year history. ■

Deerwood Apartments, Kauffman & Meeks, architects, Courtyard, 1992.

Houston's *drive-in*

apartments

Keith Neu and Drexel Turner

Today in a curious reversal of fortune, the highest and best use of land in Houston is the high-density, low-rise apartment or condominium, not the gleaming office towers once beloved by portfolio managers of insurance companies and pension funds. It also follows that a developer's success in profiting from this less glamorous, downtime building type should benefit from an efficient (land-saving), convenient (step-saving), and pleasing (sight-saving) disposition of on-site parking.[1] Yet the results show varying degrees of cleverness and its opposite.

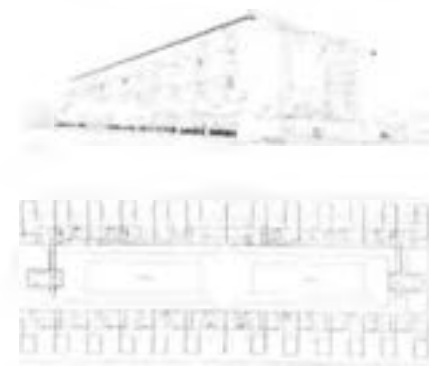
At one end of the spectrum looms the perverse novelty of detached multi-level garages emulating the preferred relationship of parking to office totem. At the other extreme lie ostensibly more benign efforts to build multiple dwelling units on platforms above parking, a strategy advanced in Le Corbusier's Immeubles-Villas project of 1922 for Paris, which proposed to stack one-hundred-and-twenty rent-purchase maisonettes in five double-stories atop underground parking, all deployed around a courtyard with two tennis courts to carpet the center of the parking platform.

The practical advantages of arranging parking from the bottom up are of course well known to any renter who has lugged multiple sacks of groceries from an outlying parking lot to a sheet-rocked pied-a-terre in some pool-pocked Versailles-by-the-month on the gilded prairies of southwest Houston. But with land being so plentiful, flat, and cheap, integrated parking of any kind has tended to be the exception, rather than the rule. As Peter Papademetriou noted in his 1980 reconnaissance of Houston's garden apartments, the operative analogy for "the relationship between individual units and parking [was that of] the motel. There is generally no accommodation of parking within the architecture and no correspondence between vehicles and their location with respect to individual units."[2]

Even so, the phenomenon of the parking basement had been tentatively introduced to Houston in the 1920s, in a series of two-story tenements on the fringes of what was then the fashionable South End. Three of these survive as the semi-depressed (geographically and schematically) **Holman apartments**, the long, narrow clerestory-lit hallways of which align with dimly-lit pass-through parking aisles below. **The Gardens** at Hyde Park and Montrose enlarges considerably on this theme, with a platform-top courtyard planted in its middle and a series of canapé-wedged balconies arrayed along its east side. The most impressively up-scaled exposition of the semi-depressed parking principle skirts the carriage-trade zip-codes of River Oaks in the Finger Company's 220-unit **Avalon Square Apartments** on Westheimer Road near Kirby (1973). Here, three levels of apartments congregate around five courtyards (two with swimming pools, none with tennis courts), surmounting a half-depressed parking stratum obscured only by modesty hedges. The liveliest example of the type, however, is the A-frame winged, Ed Stone-grilled **Greenway Court** (1967).

But in a city where intermittent flooding makes the purchase of high-riding sports utility vehicles an act of prudence rather than indulgence, street-level, below-stairs parking arrangements are generally preferred — sometimes camouflaged, sometimes not. On the side of openness, one finds stark, one-car deep extrusions in alleylike situations off Montrose and Richmond and also the **Vassar Place** apartments (Howard Barnstone, 1965), where individual carports are set among crepe myrtles and glass-doored entries with a delicacy that makes the almost total coverage of the bow-shaped site a non-issue. Less delicate, but still civicly negotiable by Houston standards, is the compressed, higher-rising semi-tropical rationalism of the **1220 Milford Street** condominiums (Arquitectonica, 1984) half a block distant. Here, the lot-line to lot-line parking loggia manages to keep corner views open in what is essentially a party-wall extrapolation of Le Corbusier's stilted, freestanding Citrohan House type of 1922.

The **Georgian Square** apartments (ca. 1950) almost succeeds in having it both ways. The main spine of the building, one car deep, is hollowed out from behind at ground level as a rear-view only carport, while the fan-windowed courtyard front admits glancing views of parked cars through two perpetually open doors to either side of a central staircase. Taking a somewhat cramped slice out of the Immeubles-Villas project, the **Metropolis Loft Condominiums** (Page Sutherland Page, 1997) near the



Top and above: Immeubles-Villas project, Le Corbusier, 1922.

River Oaks Shopping Center stacks four levels of cavelike, double-height lofts atop a double loaded tandem parking plinth.

By far the most stylish example of auto-driven sectional functionalism and its concealment occurs off Westheimer Road near Tanglewood in Venturi and Rauch's 80-unit **Park Regency condominiums** (1980–82). Here the ghosts of John Nash and Ebenezer Scrooge vie *mano a mano* in a high-concept, bottom-line struggle with a quintessentially marginal site and budget. A lunette-windowed, rusticated parking crypt provides most of the vehicular holding capacity for the larger of two three-story buildings, with dwelling units organized around a courtyard in the center of the parking platform. Circulation is achieved internally through a partial series of balcony-corridors, leaving the exterior elevations open to whatever views lie beyond — none of which, as entrepreneurial license would have it, involves parks.

The terrace-housing-over-parking approach of the **Park Regency** has been followed, less adeptly, in the **Gables River Oaks**, nee Remington, Apartments (Clifford Wong, 1993), where 228 units are extruded across the former site of a Frost Brothers (before that, Battelstein's) specialty store. Three three-level buildings rise from a rusticated base of double-loaded parking, meandering in a series of bowel-like formations, while the spaces in between present a promenade of freestanding, single-car garages. Lest this be misinterpreted as an isolated incident, individual garages are now one of the surest lures in marketing apartments throughout the city. The Finger Company's **City West Apartments** (1995) on Westheimer near Dairy Ashford, actually integrates individual garages and living units in such a way that one drives in, the overhead door closes, and one ascends directly to the living space above in the time-honored manner of non-party-wall suburban living.

But the most extraordinary integration of apartments and parking is to be found on the north edge of Tanglewood in the 184-unit **Deerwood** (Kauffman & Meeks, 1992) at Bering and Woodway. There, a lightly-stuccoed, four story ribbon of apartments immures a four-story concrete parking garage, in lieu of the garden-variety palazzo courtyard. The garage is entered through a double-height, arched sallyport and topped off with a tennis court. The apartments are single-loaded off windowless, motellike balcony corridors that communicate with the corresponding garage level, yielding the city's, if not the world's, first multi-level, drive-up apartments. ■

1. Lettice Stuart, "Apartments Boom in Downtown Houston," *New York Times*, April 6, 1997, 33A.

2. Peter Papademetriou, "Magnificent Fountains, Beautiful Courtyards: Garden Apartment Housing in Houston," *VIA III Culture and the Social Vision* (1980), p. 141.

DRIVE-UP

Deerwood, 5800 Woodway.

Deerwood, plan.

STREET-LEVEL

Georgian Square, 1420 Colquitt.

The Place at Greenway, 3333 Cummins.

Georgian Square, parking.

5103 Mt. Vernon.

SEMI-DEPRESSED

Holman Apartments.

The Gardens, 2507 Montrose.

Holman Apartments, 1630 Holman Avenue.

Beerwood, garage top and tennis court.

Park Regency, 2333 Bering Drive.

Gables River Oaks, 2111 Welch.

Metropolis Lofts, 1914 West Gray.

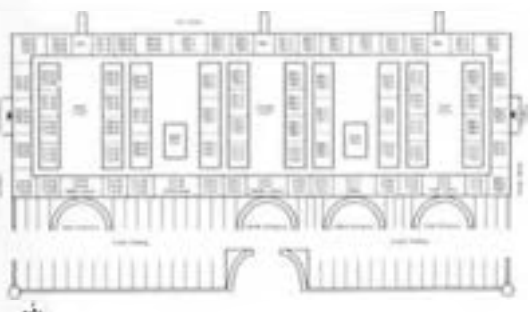
Park Regency, garage.

Gables River Oaks, plan.

Metropolis Lofts, plan.

Avalon Square, 2400 Westheimer.

City West, 2828 Hoyes Road.



Avalon Square, plan.

Greenway Court, 3500 Timmons.

Greenway Court, parking ramp.

Above: Civitello House, 619 Asbury, Houston; Rob Civitello, architect, 1996. Right: front entrance, from garages.

DOUBLE PARKED

The Civitello House, Houston

Malcolm Quantrill

Close to the heart of Houston near Memorial Park an intriguing architectural statement recently took shape. It is the home of architect Rob Civitello, his wife, Tricia Tusa (author and illustrator of children's books), and their two young children, Theo and Rhe. Civitello, who designed the house and acted as his own general contractor, describes the neighborhood as "a grid of narrow streets bounded by drainage ditches and lined with front-porch cottages in varying states of repair — close to town, yet far away in personality." Metal-shed workshops are interspersed among small wood-frame houses, and, more recently, artists and architects have begun to explore the low cost, low maintenance, and high durability of galvanized metal, building their houses in what is becoming an enclave of two-Volvo, galvo-clad urban homesteading in Houston's west end.

In this almost-urban milieu, the Civitellos chose a mid-block site at 619 Asbury for the opportunity it presented to live among the mature oak trees growing there. For the architect, "the big idea was to slip between the trees and compose the house through a variety of spatial experiences in and around, under and within the tree trunks and shading canopy." The house stretches along the northern edge of the site, facing south, turning its side to the street with a short 20-foot face loosely the scale of old shotgun house fronts.

Significantly, Civitello refers to his house as being "parked between two trees in what was the driveway to the old house," suggesting its affinity with recreational trailer homes — long, narrow, and semi-sleek, neatly lodged on a sliver site, the far end cut higher to create bed space over the coupling area between the trailer and its engine. Such a utilitarian overlapping of plan and section reveals constructional discipline as the driving force behind this architectural composition.

At the metaphorical juncture of house

and vehicle, allusions to the Swiss-French master (and Voisin mobile home enthusiast) Le Corbusier, particularly his *maisons* La Roche and Jeanneret, are revealed. The atelier model Le Corbusier exercised for Ozenfant et al., with its double sandwich providing artist space, or atelier, reinforced by bed, bath, and kitchen areas underneath. But, on the ground in its compact form, Civitello's trailer-cum-atelier has come to rest in its metal siding as a hybrid recollection *genre plutôt façile* (the rather simple type) of its French progenitor. Civitello's plan speaks of trailer domesticity in combination with a Corbusian section. But these conjectures are generated by diagrammatic, strategic, and conceptual thrusts, whereas the interior spaces talk rather in the *patois* of a rough-hewn farmhouse. Certainly, this Civitello vehicle is not based on the Air Stream model, nor does it resemble Corbusian aspiration. Rather, Civitello seems to be telling "A Hand-Made Tale," for any industrial theme intimated here is romanced by a level of craftsmanship that frustrates mechanical precision.

From the exterior, this long, skinny, L-shaped house is fixed to the site by its tower element at the west end. The cladding, while mostly metallic, is not entirely so. A stuccoed, rear appendage extends perpendicularly from the tower as a living area/studio in the manner of the salon/gallery of the Maison La Roche and is similarly roof-terraced to take advantage of the umbrella of the largest oak on the lot.

Handcrafted detailing, both inside and out, determines the design's degree of originality. Although the house may conform to the metal-shed esthetic through certain notions of concept, form, and material, it becomes its own thing through the insertion of its handmade pieces. Individuality and originality are not, of course, the same, but there is a hand-forged link evidenced here in a bricolage of familiar and unfamiliar, a composition in a way harmonious, yet intermittently discordant.

One enters the Civitello house at mid-section via a rudimentary wooden stair that both echoes a trailer stoop and is reminiscent of Alvar Aalto's underplayed building entrances. Once inside, we are immediately projected into the kitchen/dining area, a long narrow space that, while hinting at atelier, also bespeaks farmhouse hospitality, possibly haunted by the trailer ghost.

The atelier idea is again recalled by the towerlike, two-story feature that overlooks both the kitchen/dining area and the bowed living area/studio. This perch, evoking a nautical, command-station image, functions as a computer work station from which much of the interior can be surveyed and perhaps controlled. But, apart from its overseer's role, this box lends no special dynamic to the drama of the interior volume; but it is from this upper level that we can appreciate the aggregation and fragmentation of the house's internal anatomy.

The two volumes (the tower section and a linear bedroom wing) are linked by a more literal and precarious open-work bridge, which offers substantial clues about the sources of the work. Functionally, this connector mirrors the Maison La Roche, but it looks elsewhere, past Chareau and even Albini, for its techno-poetic license.

Throughout the house, eclectic *objets d'art* from paintings to hooked rugs assert their rights of domain within this latter-day, post-modern collage. "Simplicity," Le Corbusier wrote in his essay *The Plan of the Modern House*, "is derived from richness, from abundance, by choice, by selection, by concentration." All of this can be discerned in the Civitello House, which may not yet have achieved complete synthesis, but possesses a provocative and rather witty spirit of its own in the marriage of skill and happenstance. ■

Civitello House, view looking northwest from Asbury street.

Middle and above: Civitello House, view of cockpit, bridge and dining area.

Civitello House, axonometric drawing.

First floor

Second floor

Third floor

Civitello House, floor plans.

PARIS WAS TOMORROW

Paris in the Twentieth Century: The Lost Novel *by Jules Verne. Translated by Richard Howard, introduction by Eugen Weber. New York: Random House, Inc., 1996. 222 pp.; 6 black-and-white illus. by Anders Wennгren; $21.*

Reviewed by Nora Laos

Written in 1863 but unpublished in his lifetime, Jules Verne's account of Parisian life in 1963 is a wry social dystopia in which technology, science, and wealth are glorified to the detriment of the humanities. He envisions a world where machines need beauty rest, people need safety valves, and capitalism is alive and well. Bookstores are stocked with titles such as *Meditations on Oxygen* and *Decarbonated Odes* while Victor Hugo is an unknown name, and the works of Sallust and Livy crumble on the shelves of the Hachette editing house (where, ironically, the recently discovered manuscript was first published). Verne would be relieved to know that the likes of Balzac are now available on CD-ROM and that even the printed page is extant. On issues of technology, he was possessed of an admirably farsighted vision. Among other inventions, Verne heralded electric and photographic telegraphy (the telephone and fax machine), gas-powered vehicles, and a suspended railway system with driverless trains powered by compressed air.

Despite his uncanny talent for imagining technological devices, Verne's novel was rejected by his publisher, Pierre-Jules Hetzel, who was unconvinced that anyone would believe the prophecies. The manuscript reappeared in 1989, discovered by Verne's great-grandson in a family home. The pages were quickly authenticated, matched with the refused manuscript, and, finally, published in Paris in 1994 under the title, *Paris au XXe Siècle*. Eugen Weber informs us in his introduction that 200,000 copies of the French text were sold in 1994, and 30 translations are currently underway or already published. Richard Howard's excellent English version, reviewed here, is among them.

The story revolves around the orphaned student, Michel Dufrenoy, a lost humanist in a Paris seduced by machines and money. Michel is present at the Prize Day (graduation) of the Academic Credit Union where he is to receive an award. The A.C.U., *the* university in Verne's Paris of 1963, is a complex of tall buildings around the Champ de Mars, an open quadrangle, entered through a monumental arch. Imagine the skyscrapers of La Défense flanking the Eiffel Tower (1887–89), built as a monumental arch-tower entrance to the Universal Exhibition of 1889, and voilà — Verne's techno-campus. The Champ de Mars was a convenient location for this new university since its purpose as a military training ground had been superseded due to the dissolution of the military — Verne's most significant lapse. He predicted that soldiers, by the mid-twentieth century, would be replaced by cumbersome robotic warriors, which had nothing to do with courage: ". . . indeed, machines have killed bravery, and soldiers have become mechanics." Verne also incorrectly proclaimed the obsolescence of journalism (no more politicians), doctors (no more disease), and lawyers (who compromise cases rather than plead them). Industry, commerce, and finance are all that's left and thus, Paris is portrayed as the *chef-lieu* of a capitalistic technocracy.

Michel receives a first prize for Latin verse, and is duly presented with jeers from the crowd and one copy of the latest *Factory Manual*. So begins this poor wanna-be poet's foray into the real world. He moves in with his spiteful uncle, Stanislas Boutardin (could this name be composed of *boudin* — sausage — and *batard* — bastard?). His wife, Athénaïs, and their son, Athanase, chief associate of the Casmodage and Co. Banking House, complete the triad of "an eminently practical family."

Stanislas is ashamed of Michel's dreams of becoming a poet and, to discourage this ridiculous desire, offers Michel a job at his son's bank. Michel is assigned to Calculating Machine Number Four, but, alas, he is incapable of mastering it. He is reassigned to dictate to Quinsonnas, the bookkeeper in charge of inscribing the daily activities of the Bank.

In Quinsonnas, secretly a musician, Michel finds a friend and an ally who introduces him to Jacques Aubanet, secretly a soldier. The "three drones" spend their free time together, dreaming of the future. Michel unexpectedly rediscovers another uncle, Huguenin, who invites Michel to dinner with his former literature professor, Richelot, and Richelot's beautiful daughter, Mademoiselle Lucy. Michel and Lucy fall in love (of course). Infected by the lightheadedness of love, Michel unfortunately distracts Quinsonnas one afternoon by

requesting his opinions on women. Disaster strikes, the two are dismissed from the bank.

Michel tries the real world once more, this time as a dramatist for the *Grand Entrepôt Dramatique*, the government-run theatrical warehouse, "lawfully recognized as an establishment of public utility," which furnishes Paris's 50 theaters with plays. "The *Entrepôt* is organized and administered just like the Casmodage Bank and has five divisions: comedy, drama, vaudeville, opera, and pantomime. Verne must have been hard-pressed to admit the possibility that the theater might have completely died by the 1960s, and thus he creates a centralized organization, administered like a financial institution, where employees receive monthly salaries to produce "collective works, of an average appeal." Verne envisioned the extinction of "Bohemian poets, those erratic geniuses who seemed eternally to protest against the order of things." By extinguishing artists' personalities, the government was able to provide the public "precisely the amount of literature necessary to its needs."

As at the bank, here too Michel is shuffled from division to division as he repeatedly fails his given duties. He finally descends to the Vaudeville Division where he is given the job of curtain raiser at the Palais-Royal theater for performances of *Button Up Your Trousers!* Eventually, he comes to the conclusion that he would rather starve to death and starve he does. His world freezes, and he freezes with it. Like Aldous Huxley's Savage in *Brave New World*, Michel succumbs to Nature's ultimate destiny, one that neither technology nor money can overcome.

Along the journey, Verne presents a rather sordid view of Paris. Although he anticipates its sophisticated and extensive public transportation system and the Eiffel Tower in the form of a 152-meter-high electric lighthouse, he less accurately depicts a vast commercial and industrial seaport along the Seine. The city fabric itself is presented as a dull and repetitive network of streets. Here the author implicitly criticizes the destruction and transformation of much of Paris by Napoleon III and George-Eugène Haussmann, who was then prefect of the Seine (1853–69). Verne's Paris of 1963 (much like Paris of 1863) is a labyrinth of public buildings, open squares, and wide boulevards; the poor have been pushed to the outskirts into tiny apartments in tall buildings, *sans* elevators.

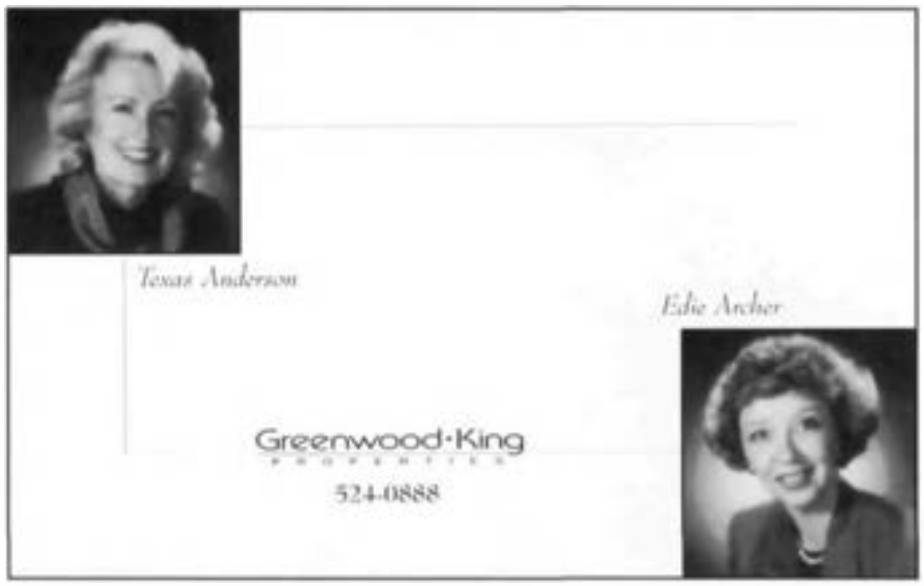
This pessimistic outlook was not far from the truth 35 years ago and Verne's predictions are, in some cases, continuing trends. The number of cultural and civic buildings in the city center has increased, due to François Mitterand's completion of most of the *Grands Projets*, while the poor remain housed in slums and subsidized residential towers in distant suburbs.

Julian Barnes criticized Verne's social prophecy as "hopelessly, ridiculously wrong" (*New York Times Book Review*, January 26, 1997). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the concurrent death of the arts, politics, medicine, war and law in such a culturally enriched nation as France. Barnes also discredits the social status of Verne's characters, as well as the relationships among them, as myopic visions based on nineteenth-century social values: "His characters behave in 1960 as if members of a very conventional mid-nineteenth-century novel."

However, rebellious children, authoritarian elders, and starry-eyed lovers are universal portraits. Furthermore, Michel, as a blond, long-haired, idealistic student would have made a prototypical 1960s hippie who could have fit perfectly into the mass demonstrations that erupted in Paris in 1968. Since hindsight is always accompanied by an auto-focus lens, it is perhaps more just to consider Verne's prescience. He was alarmingly accurate in his predictions of the roles of commerce, money, and technology. Business administration and finance were popular career choices already in the 1960s, while computer science has since exploded. In fact, as Verne forecasted, technology, both virtual and explicit, has come to dominate our lives in general.

Verne's attitude toward Americans is also rather astute. His French woman of the 1960s had become Americanized (contaminated). "She speaks seriously about serious matters, she takes life seriously, she rides on the rigid saddle of modern manners, dresses poorly, tastelessly, and wears corsets of galvanized tin, which can resist the most powerful pressures. . . . they have switched gender and no longer deserve the artist's gaze or the lover's attention!" So, the French woman has become a polite and hopelessly clad feminist. Few French women, in fact, fit this stereotypical description. On the other hand, Verne's criticism of the fast pace of American life has certainly infiltrated the Parisians' quotidian routine: ". . . from their hurried gait, their peremptory manner, their American 'dash,' it was apparent that the demon of wealth impelled [men of the 1960s] onward without mercy or relief." Verne would hardly be surprised to find that the statutory two-hour lunch has slowly been cast aside in favor of a quick sandwich in front of the computer screen. Nor would he flinch in a "gas-powered cab," racing along the ten-lane *Peripherique* that now rings Paris.

Verne also accurately predicted the corruption of "the fine French tongue" by an infestation of English vocabulary. What would he have said if offered *un Big Mac et un Coca* at one of the nearly 50 McDonald's restaurants now gracing Paris's city streets? "*Quelle horreur!*" ■



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International Arrival

Carlos Jiménez, Buildings. *Houston: Rice University School of Architecture and Princeton Architectural Press, 1996. Introduction by Raphael Moneo; essay by Stephen Fox; postscript by Lars Lerup. 136 pp.; 12 color, 71 black-and-white illus.; 35 drawings. $40.*

Reviewed by Diane Ghirardo

Upon moving to Texas in 1983, one of the first things I noticed was Houston's unusually hospitable climate for architecture. Certainly my current hometown, Los Angeles, does not value its architecture or architects to anything approaching the same degree.

The value of this attitude lies not in its index of cultural snobbery, but in an environment that nurtures architectural talent. However degraded parts of the city are, and however much destruction was wrought by the forces of unimpeded development, fine architecture on several scales has flourished relatively free of fashion's fetters. This may come as a surprise to the many who see Houston largely as a center of toxic waste. In this century, Houston has developed an impressive tradition of excellence in design and supported two impressive schools of architecture that both enjoy significant reputations in the national architectural community.

Of the current crop of Houston architects, the one most clearly launched toward an international career is Carlos Jiménez. In certain respects, his architecture is also the most enigmatic. *Carlos Jiménez. Buildings*, published to celebrate the opening of the Spencer Studio Art Building at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, both illustrates some of his work and helps unravel the enigma.

A native of Costa Rica, Jiménez graduated from the University of Houston College of Architecture and remained in Houston to launch his architectural practice. His first built work from 1984, his own house/studio, drew immediate attention for its subtlety and simple elegance. Indeed, as this book makes clear, the transformations this simple building has undergone with the addition of two more studios and a residence across the street represent a constantly evolving documentation of Jiménez's own growth as an architect.

The book is not a comprehensive catalog of Jiménez's work; rather it consists of a representative selection of eight mostly public and commercial projects (including the house/studio complex). It opens and closes with moving and respectful tributes by architect Rafael Moneo and Lars Lerup, dean of the Rice University School of Architecture.

Of particular interest are the excellent illustrations, the work of gifted photographer Paul Hester, and the essay by Stephen Fox. Fox and Hester, both of whom demonstrate unusual sensitivity to Jiménez's work, have an uncanny ability to convey its nuances in image and text. Hester has documented Jiménez's work since the early house/studio in luminous photographs that clearly reveal the craft and the intelligence behind the architecture. The photographs share the simplicity and elegance of the buildings, setting them securely in context, while demonstrating how they hold their own, regardless of surroundings.

Other than Jiménez himself, perhaps no one has thought more carefully and extensively about his designs than Stephen Fox, Houston's resident architectural (and cultural) historian. Fox recognized Jiménez's burgeoning talent from the beginning. His essay allows us to identify diverse influences on Jiménez's work from the vernacular buildings of his homeland to the film, poetry, and music that are so much a part of his life. The sensibilities that animate Luis Buñuel, Leonard Cohen, Gustav Mahler, Pablo Neruda, and Octavio Paz (among others) find a congenial soul mate in Jiménez, who elucidates his own sympathetic version in his buildings. As Fox points out, Jiménez also draws inspiration from a broad range of architects — Luis Barragán to Alvaro Siza to Aldo Rossi — without ever reducing the inspiration to banal stylistics.

Although fully capable of offering a detailed genealogy of Jiménez's designs, Fox passes quickly beyond this, turning attention to the architecture itself. And it is here that Jiménez astounds with the maturity and nuanced complexity of his talent.

From the upper transoms at the Museum of Fine Arts administration building to the rhythmic pattern of windows at the Lynn Goode Gallery, Jiménez affords even the most pedestrian spaces with subtle surprises for the visitor, always mindful that experience is bound by space, time, and setting. Windows are of great importance to Jiménez, as are connections between spaces; together these two elements help define much of what is unusual and fresh in Jiménez's architecture.

As both Fox and Moneo remark, Jiménez treats all of his projects with the same degree of care and attention, simply ignoring the vagaries of fashion that have so convulsed architecture in the United States over the last three decades. He found the many versions of post modernism alien to his concept of architecture and its role in society. Instead of a preoccupation with style, Jiménez turns his attention to exploring the difficult conjunction of function and art. He treats disparate functions with respect by setting them in spaces of comparable dignity — exhibition or storage space, museum director's or secretary's office. The significance of this attitude is made all the more clear by comparison with the architecture of most post modern architects whose work has been celebrated without being fully analyzed.

It is a delight to review a book that includes the work of five people for whom I have much respect, and to find myself learning from each of them. Unlike most architectural monographs produced in recent years, this one will stand the test of time as surely as will the architecture of Carlos Jiménez. ■

Spencer Studio Art Building, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, Carlos Jiménez, architect, 1995.

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