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Richard R. Brettell is a professor of aesthetic studies at the University of Texas–Dallas, where he directs the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Museums. His books include *Modern Art, 1851–1929* and *Capitalism and Representation*.

Michael Brichford is a resident of Memorial Bend.

Terrence Doody is a professor in the English Department at Rice University.

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

Lisa Gray is managing editor of *Cite*.

Nonya Grenader, an architect, teaches at the Rice University School of Architecture.

David Hay, a freelance writer, lives in Los Angeles.

Michael Kimmins writes the Brazos Bookstore newsletter.

Lars Lerup is the Harry K. and Albert K. Smith Professor of Architecture and dean at the Rice University School of Architecture. His most recent book is *After the City*.

Alex Lichtenstein is an assistant professor of history at Rice University.

Anna Mod is a historic preservation consultant in Houston and a lecturer at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston.

Barry Moore is an architect at Gensler. He is also an adjunct professor in the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston, and directs its Workshop for Historic Architecture.

Janet Moore, a freelance writer, lives in Houston.

Ann Rosenwinkel is an architect at Pfluger Associates.

William F. Stern is an architect and a principal in the firm of Stern and Bucek Architects. He is an adjunct associate professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston.

Mary Swift is the Rice Design Alliance's membership coordinator.

Celeste Williams, a lecturer at the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, won an Initiatives for Houston Grant from the Rice Design Alliance in 2001.

Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

A Publication of the Rice Design Alliance

57: Spring 2003

Cite (ISSN: 8755-0415) is published quarterly by the Rice Design Alliance, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005-1892. Individual subscriptions: U.S. and its possessions: $15 for one year, $25 for two years. Foreign: $30 for one year, $50 for two years.

Cite is indexed in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals.

 Publication of this issue is supported in part by grants from the Susan Vaughan Foundation, the City of Houston, and the Texas Commission for the Arts through the Cultural Arts Council.

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

WebCite: www.rda.rice.edu

Cover: The new Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Photo by Hester+Hardaway.

Cite

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CALENDAR

RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE CIVIC FORUM
THE GREENING OF HOUSTON: PART I
Wednesday, May 21, 7 p.m.
Brown Auditorium
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
713.348.4876 or www.rda.rice.edu

This panel discussion will address what we have lost, what we have, and our future in terms of green space and parks in Houston.

RDA HOMETOWN TOUR
Our Kind of Town: Chicago
June 5-8, 2003
713.348.4876
In June RDA guests will travel north to Chicago, the most vibrant city between the coasts.

RDA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Monday, June 9, 6 p.m.
Alley Theatre, Center for Theatre Production
615 Texas Avenue
713.348.4876 or www.rda.rice.edu

RDA members will be treated to a reception and tour of the Alley's new Center for Theatre Production. The 75,000-square-foot facility is the envy of theater groups around the nation. During a brief business meeting, the 2003-2004 officers and board members will be elected.

RDA PARTNERS DESIGN CHARRETTE
Saturday, August 9, 8 a.m.–6 p.m.
University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture
713.348.4876 or crushing@ruf.rice.edu

For "HOUSeTOwN: Launching the Energy-Wise Dwelling for Houston," participants will design houses that address concerns such as indoor air quality, flood control, and pollution. Co-sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Council – Houston Chapter, and by the AIA Committee on the Environment.

RDA HOUSTON TALKS LECTURE
"Preserving Cuba's Modern Architecture"
Wednesday, September 3 or 10
(to be announced) 7:30 p.m.,
Brown Auditorium
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

EDUARDO LUIS RODRÍGUEZ, author of *The Havana Guide: Modern Architecture 1925-1965*, is a practicing architect, historian, critic and an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Arts and Letters at the University of Havana. Rodriguez is a leading advocate for the preservation of Cuba's modern architecture and will address the problems and opportunities of saving his country's 20th century buildings and cities. The lecture is co-sponsored by Rice and the University of Houston College of Architecture.

From "Preserving Cuba's Modern Architecture": top, House Naval Cueto (Mario Romanach, 1949); bottom, National School of Ballet (Vittorio Garatti, 1961-1965).

RDA FALL 2003 LECTURE SERIES
Different by Design: Modern Architecture and Community
Brown Auditorium
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
713-348-4876 or www.rda.rice.edu

What role does architectural design play in community identity? This lectures series examines four places where architecture, and especially modern architecture, was intended to be a key component of communal identity.

Wednesday, September 17, 7:30 p.m.
MICHAEL SORKIN, of City College of New York, speaks on "Growing Up Modern: Hollin Hills."

Wednesday, September 24, 7:30 p.m.
KEITH L. EGGENER, of the University of Missouri-Columbia, speaks on "Luis Barragán and the Jardines del Pedregal."

Wednesday, October 1, 7:30 p.m.
DAVID DILLON, architecture critic for the *Dallas Morning News*, gives the speech "Columbus: Different by Design?"

Wednesday, October 8, 7:30 p.m.
NED CRAMER of the Chicago Architecture Foundation speaks on "Selling Style: The Houses at Sagaponac."

MENIL COLLECTION
May 7–August 31
713.525.9400, www.menil.org

"Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk" is a tribute to the visionary who approached architecture not as a practical matter, but as an emotional, spiritual exercise akin to narrative painting or choreography. (He designed buildings with hair, beaks, eyes and legs. He also designed angels.) The show opens with a public program at 3:30 on May 4, with lectures by Nora Laos, Francois de Menil, Carlos Jimenez, Rafael Longoria, and K. Michael Hays.

LETTERS

We are in receipt of your Winter 2003 publication of *Cite* magazine.

In the past, I have viewed this publication as a credit to the construction industry, illustrating the advancements our industry has made throughout the years. I once thought *Cite* was a class act publication. That is, until the most recent publication arrived with the shadow of a nude woman on the cover. I find this extremely offensive personally, offensive to the construction industry, and offensive to the trucking industry as well. I further find it degrading to women in general.

Shame on you for your crude thoughtlessness. I would think your members, sponsors, benefactors, patrons, underwriters and donors deserve better.

Richard M. Young, President
Elite Plumbing Corporation

Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

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The Rice Design Alliance
The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1972, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture, urban design, and the built environment in the Houston region through educational programs; the publication of *Cite*, a quarterly review of architecture and design; and active programs to initiate physical improvements. Membership in the RDA is open to the general public.

Individual Membership $35
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Invitations to "members only" events
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Participation in the annual architecture tour

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RDA News

On the Border

Last February, 30 RDA members toured the Texas-Tamaulipas border. Led by architectural historian and Brownsville native Stephen Fox, and architect and Nuevo Laredo native Rafael Longoria, the group visited architectural treasures on both sides of the Rio Grande, including examples of Colonial, Victorian, Early Modern, and Contemporary styles.

The ruins of Guerrero Viejo, a historic city in Tamaulipas, was a favorite. The site was remarkable, as was the journey there, which included a flat tire, a band of *federales*, and a bull grazing in the middle of the road. — *Mary Swift*

Front row: Ann Jones, Karen Lantz, Andy Farkas, Charlie Burgess, Pat Burgess, Donna Hahus, Nancy Thompson, Gaye McCullough, Cynthia Toles, Sharon Cunningham, Lily Smith, Arthur Smith. Back row: Bill Stern, Arthur Jones, Surpik Angelini, Minnette Boesel, Donna Kacmar, Marley Lott, Karen Kingsley, Kathy Heard, Rafael Longoria, Tyler Todd, Yvonne Victory, George Cunningham, Karen Schenk, Stephen Fox, Mary Swift, Hill Swift, Ed McCullough, Lynn Kelly.

Money, Money, Money

The Rice Design Alliance is accepting applications for its fourth annual Initiatives for Houston, a grant program for students and faculty at the Rice University School of Architecture, the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, and the Prairie View A&M College of Architecture. The program supports projects that focus on Houston's built environment — its history, present condition, and future development. A variety of projects will be considered, including historic research, speculative studies and documentation of the city and its architecture. Separate awards of up to $5,000 are available for faculty and student projects to be completed in one year. More than one proposal may be funded. Applications are due June 15, 2003, and awards will be announced on August 15. Applications are available at www.rda.rice.edu.

Houston in a Nutshell

The 2003 architecture tour

The Rice Design Alliance's 2003 architecture tour, held March 29 and 30, focused on an adjoining pair of Houston neighborhoods and the range of houses they contain. These are the N.P. Turner Addition (now better known as the Museum District) and West Ranch Estates. They represent two distinct approaches to the development of residential neighborhoods. Both have undergone substantial new residential construction since the 1980s, making the pair a microcosm of Houston architectural trends of the 20th century.

The tour included:

1117 Milford Street (c. 1917). One of the earliest houses built in the Turner Addition, this is a bungalow, the most representative Houston house type of the 1905–1925 period, and exhibits the "boxcar" arrangement of rooms-in-a-row typical of Houston bungalows, with bedrooms aligned on the east to catch the prevailing breeze. A 1994 addition by Natalye Appel+Associates discreetly expanded the house's compact interior.

1112 Milford Street (1925), by C. B. Schoeppl & Co., has an unusual plan for a two-story Houston house of the 1920s. Major rooms are aligned parallel to the east property line in order to ensure access to the prevailing breeze. In the 1960s, Houston landscape architect C.C. Pat Fleming designed gardens that took advantage of the property's linear organization. The bay window facing Milford was added in 1959, when Milton McGinty enclosed the front porch.

1117 Banks Street (1931) by J. T. Rather, Jr., with alterations/additions of 1993 by Cameron Armstrong, architect, is an ingenious miniaturization of a "country house" on a single town lot. Because the original interiors were destroyed when the house was used as a medical clinic, Armstrong installed new spaces that not only recapture but enhance the spatial intimacy of the lost originals. April Cohen and Pam Sawyer were interior designers and Ruckel-Dillon-Wright were the landscape architects.

1338 Milford Street (1948) is one of the original houses in West Ranch Estates. Rather than demolish it, the owner rehabilitated it in 1992 with landscape architect Reed Dillon of Ruckel-Dillon-Wright and interior designer Richard Branch. Preserving original room divisions, they demonstrated the flexibility and continued livability of the ranch house.

1319 Banks Street (2001) in West Ranch Estates is by the New York architect François de Menil. This serene, white stucco house was designed so that indirect sources of daylight provide much of its internal illumination. Floor plans are intricate. Yet one's experience is of light, calm, and buoyancy because of the subtle control of interior coloration and the manipulation of light and view.

1214 Berthea Street (2002) by Jay Baker is a modern condensation of a French provincial manor house. Spaces inside range from awesome to intimate. Julie Watkins Baker is interior designer, Thompson Hanson are landscape architects, and Peck & Company executed the wrought-iron detail.

4714 Yoakum Boulevard (2003) by the Wittenberg Partnership is 21st-century Houston urban version of a 1950s Los Angeles Case Study house. The house is configured in an L plan around an interior, south-facing courtyard. The Wittenberg Partnership used industrial construction techniques and industrial materials to build and finish this house. Hinged panels allow walls to be opened like doors and ingenious approaches to passive heating and ventilation are incorporated.

The Turner Addition and West Ranch Estates display approaches to suburban development typical of Houston in the first and second halves of the 20th century. They also contain singular works of architecture that animate the neighborhoods and endow them with beauty and distinction. — *Stephen Fox*

4714 Yoakum Blvd.

1117 Milford St.

1117 Banks St.

1319 Banks St.

1112 Milford St.

1338 Milford St.

1214 Berthea St.


The Corinthian: Grand new stairs in a grand old space.


Preservation at a profit: 2421 Brentwood.


Cafeteria style: 4916 Main, formerly the Weldon Cafeteria.

Good Bricks

The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance salutes the year's most heroic rescue operations


2337 Blue Bonnet: Back to International Style splendor.


The McCrory Building at Main and Prairie: One of Spire Realty's many projects.

In February, more than 400 fans of historic architecture gathered for the Good Brick Awards, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliances's annual recognition ceremony. In the dark days of the 1980s, entire years passed without even one Good Brick being awarded. This year, seven juried awards recognized a whopping 12 buildings — including several sleek, Modern buildings, of the sort only now beginning to be considered historic.

This year's winners included:

Fred Garvey and Jackson Hicks for the Corinthian. In 1905, the eight-story First National Bank, at 201 Main, was Houston's tallest skyscraper. The bank expanded the neoclassical building twice, and later converted the majestic 40,000-square-foot banking lobby — which extended a full city block — into office space. Drop ceilings interrupted the 35-foot-tall Corinthian columns, and cubicles cluttered what had once been a marble floor. In the early '90s, owner Harris County considered demolishing the building, but after the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance intervened, the county used it instead for storage. In 1999, developer Fred Garvey bought the building and began converting its upper stories to residential lofts. The lobby, though, was trickier: Who but a major department store could handle such a large, grand space? Jackson Hicks, Houston's best-known caterer, proposed to use it as a full-service "special events venue," a place for large-scale parties and weddings. Now known as The Corinthian, the huge, high-ceilinged room boasts restored columns, a replica of its original marble floor, and First National Bank's original. An impressive new double staircase replaced the single stair First National Bank had used to limit access to the mezzanine.

The Good Brick Awards party was held, appropriately, at the Corinthian.

Courtney and Fred Steves, and Glassman Shoemake Maldonado Architects for 2337 Blue Bonnet. In 1937, architect Howard Calhoun escorted his clients, Mr. and Mrs. L.D. Allen, to the Chicago World's Fair, where they admired a sleek, pared-down house designed by Walter Gropius. Besotted by the International Style, the Allens hired Calhoun to design them a similar house, and the result appeared in national magazines. But over the course of decades, the house suffered the indignities of age, such as leaky windows and worn cabinetry, In 2001, owners Courtney and Fred Steves hired Glassman Shoemake Maldonado to restore the home to its former glory — and to design an addition that detracted from neither the front facade or the main living areas.

Bill Caudell and Randy Powers for 2421 Brentwood. Between 1927 and 1930 Katherine Mott designed many Houston's most distinctive large houses — all in English styles, all with intricate brickwork, casement windows, and asymmetric plans. In the 1970s, the Mott house at 2421 Brentwood belonged to Houston power broker Bob Lanier; around that time, it suffered an awkward addition that doubled its square footage. By 2001, the house was considered a teardown.

Powers, an interior designer, and his partner, preservation enthusiast Caudell, bought the house, moved in, and threw themselves into its restoration. They hired preservationists, researched Mott's work, and took pains to make the addition look like a Mott original from the '20s, complete with her signature ironwork, intricately patterned brick, and fossilized limestone floors. Less than 18 months after buying the house, the couple sold it at a profit — possibly setting a record for the highest price per square foot ever paid in River Oaks — and proving that preservation can be profitable.

Ray + Hollington Architects for 4916 Main Street. McKie and Kamrath Architects designed the dramatic, cantilevered Weldon Cafeteria, which opened in 1949. Later tenants significantly altered the building, but Ray + Hollington, which



1602 Westheimer: Before (left) and after (right).


3843 N. Braeswood: After (above) and before (below).

leased the space to serve as a studio, restored the original interior design.

Steven Courtade, Sherry Hill, and the Alidade Group for 2010 Kane Street. Owner Courtade recognized the dilapidated 1890s shotgun house as a historic gem, but it measured only 800 square feet. He hired architect Sherry Tseng Hill to design an addition that would triple that square footage. To minimize the addition's effect, Tseng placed the new construction behind the house, where it appears to be an overgrown carriage house. The Alidade Group executed the design.

Spire Realty Group for six downtown projects. Spire, an early practitioner of downtown preservation, remains one of the most active. The award recognizes six projects: renovation of the Sam Houston Hotel, at 1117 Prairie Avenue; conversion of 915 Franklin Avenue, originally the office of Southern Pacific Railroad, into Bayou Lofts; preserving the facade of the 1907 Topek Building, at Travis and Commerce, while erecting an 88,000-square-foot parking garage behind it; rehabilitating the McCrory Building, at Main and Prairie; renovation of the two-story building at 509 Main Street, once home to Foley Bros. Dry Goods Company; and renovation of 708 Main Street, where powerbroker Jesse H. Jones once officed.

Colby Design and Kaldis Development Interests, for 1602 Westheimer. Andrew Kaldis, a developer with a long interest in preservation, knew that underneath its unimpressive modernized facade, the Imperial Plumbing Supply Building at the intersection of Westheimer and Mandell was the work of architect Joseph Finger. Stripping away layers of plaster revealed the original brickwork; removing the drop ceiling revealed the original tin ceiling; and Kaldis installed large, wood-framed windows where the original store windows had been. The elegant result is now home to Hugo's, Hugo Ortega and Tracy Vaught's much-praised Mexican restaurant.

Gingrich Associates Architects for 3843 N. Braeswood. Most Houstonians don't consider 1960s buildings as historic treasures, but architect Kerry Gingrich saw that the best way to rescue this Modern office buildign, which had recently served as a hair-restoration clinic, was to restore it to its Bauhaus roots. Paul Homeyer, who chaired the Good Brick jury, notes that the judges were divided on this award. "It's different from our usual Craftsman-bungalow Good Brick," says Homeyer. "We decided that we wanted to encourage that kind of preservation, to get people thinking about what counts as history." — *Lisa Gray*

Where the '50s Were *Fabulous*

A DRIVING TOUR OF MEMORIAL BEND

Memorial Bend is home to one of Houston's largest concentration of 1950s modern houses. In 1955, builders Howard Edmunds and Robert Puig paid $3,000 an acre for a 200-acre plot of land off of Memorial Drive. Due to a lack of funds, they enlisted the help of three investors to form the Memorial Bend Development Company. One investor was William Norman Floyd, an architect whose work helped define the residential look of Houston from the 1940s until the late 1960s. Floyd designed more than 500 houses and commercial buildings in the Houston area, several of which are located in Memorial Bend. Other architects — including William R. Jenkins, Norwood Taylor, and David Brooks — also placed their mark on Memorial Bend. (During the early years of their careers, Jenkins and Taylor both worked for Floyd as draftsmen.) The investors' commitment to making Memorial Bend unique enabled these architects to provide the subdivision with a character and style not found in other postwar Houston-area neighborhoods.

Memorial Bend's good design attracted notable architects and local celebrities to the neighborhood. Earle S. Alexander, Jr., moved into the neighborhood when he was just a draftsman; he eventually became a partner in the firm Pierce, Goodwin, Alexander and Linville. Caudill, Rowlett and Scott founders such as Bill Caudill, Wallie Scott, Charles E. Lawrence, and Tom Bullock moved into the neighborhood in the late 1950s following the firm's relocation to Houston. The neighborhood was also home to Harold Oberg of Jenkins, Hoff, Oberg and Saxe; Gunter Koetter of Koetter, Tharp and Cowell; and Gilbert Thweott of Welton Becket & Associates.

During the neighborhood's early years, several Memorial Bend homes were featured in magazines such as *American Builder, House & Home, Practical Builder, Better Homes & Gardens,* and *House Beautiful*. Floyd's designs, often inspected throughout the neighborhood with changes in the façades, received recognition from the national press and the National Association of Home Builders. Though many traditional houses are also located in Memorial Bend, flat, low-pitched, and butterfly roofs, clerestory windows and the post-war spirit define this west Memorial neighborhood. Today, a drive through the neighborhood shows why early advertisements proudly claimed, "Memorial Bend: Home of Prize Winning Contemporaries… more good Contemporaries than any other subdivision in Houston."

More information on Memorial Bend's historic houses can be found at users.ev1.net/~michaelb/bend/bend.htm.

Photos © 2003 Steven J. Pettitbone

311 Electra

1958/William N. Floyd

Bill Caudill, founder of Caudill Rowlett Scott, chose this William N. Floyd-designed house as his first Houston residence. Floyd was one of Caudill's college classmates, though they never saw each other after their studies. The brick façade stresses privacy and features a catilevered overhang that shields the home's entry. The rear of the house includes floor-to-ceiling windows that offer views of Rummel Creek. It is said that Caudill added the large boulder on the front lawn during his stay in Memorial Bend.

330 Electra

1958/William N. Floyd

This house appeared in home plan magazines such as *New Homes Guide* (Fall 1960) but is the only known example of the design in the Houston area. Floyd remarked that this was his favorite design in Memorial Bend, particularly because of its three distinctive barrel vaults.

334 Electra

1958/William N. Floyd

Also featured in *Living Now*, this low-pitched-roofed house features a hexagonal master bedroom. The interior was redesigned with a unique and whimsical touch by the current owners using their own remodeling company. The garage is a later addition.

503 Electra

1958/William N. Floyd

Two other examples of this post-and-beam house are found in Memorial Bend, but this architect-owned home is the best preserved of the three. The façade features clerestory windows and exposed beams supporting a cantilevered roof. Wing walls extend beyond the home to provide added privacy. The interior once featured a skylighted garden room and Shoji screens to separate common areas. Next to this house is one of the entrances to the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary.

12923 Butterfly

1956/William N. Floyd

With this house, Floyd's main goal was to provide the owners with privacy. Even today, it is very difficult to tell what lies behind the façade of this butterfly-roof house — located, appropriately, on Butterfly.

12942 Hansel

1958/William N. Floyd

"The Contemporama," as it was advertised in 1958, is a variation of Floyd's award-winning design at 12923 Hansel and 12918 Figaro.

12923 Hansel

1956/William N. Floyd

This low-pitched-roof house received a special award of merit in the 1958 Best Model Homes contest held by the National Association of Homebuilders. Slightly different versions of the plan can be found throughout Memorial Bend, including 12942 Hansel and 12919 Figaro. Articles and photographs of the house later appeared in *American Builder* and *House & Home*.

12902 Traviata

1959/William N. Floyd

The long, sleek façade of this post-and-beam house tries in vain to keep at bay evidence of the nearby Sam Houston tollway.

12923 Traviata

1956/William N. Floyd

Practical Builder labeled this home the "Contemporary Texan" in its October 1959 issue. The striking design of this house features dihedral roof planes and post-and-beam construction with clerestory windows. The side and rear of the house wrap around a courtyard. The security gates are a later addition.

BY MICHAEL BRICHFORD

12931 Traviata
1959/William F. Wortham
Wortham, known for his design of Westbury Square, designed only one house in the Bend. The owners worked closely with Wortham to incorporate design features such as wing walls adjacent to the entry, Phillippine mahogany throughout the house, and recessed lighting visible from the street.

12919 Figaro
1959/William N. Floyd
Charles E. Lawrence, the second of the four founders of Caudill Rowlett Scott to move into Memorial Bend, lived in this understated modern house. Floyd's clean design features exposed posts on the brick façade and a side-facing entrance. (Tom Bullock lived at 12814 Figaro before selling his house to fellow CRS founder Wallie Scott. That Floyd-designed house was later demolished to make way for the Sam Houston Tollway.)

12923 Figaro
1959/William N. Floyd
One can't help but admire the way Floyd designed this house to take advantage of its wide peninsula-shaped lot. The front screen wall hides an impressive series of floor-to-ceiling windows in the vaulted living room. Save for one ranch-style house, every house built on the 12800 and 12900 blocks of Figaro was designed by Floyd.

315 Isolde
1964
This is one of the newer houses in Memorial Bend. The owners played a significant role in the look of this house as they incorporated design features of other contemporary houses from the 1950s and 1960s. A striking white concrete-block screen with black posts supports the house's carport. The interior includes a sunken living room, original terrazzo floors, modernist furniture, and countless floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a ravine lot.

307 Isolde
Early 1960s
Prior to striking it rich in the energy industry, Bob McNair, owner of the Houston Texans NFL franchise, was the original owner of this traditional house.

303 Isolde
1959/Brooks & Brooks
David George Brooks designed this secluded house for Murray Getz, a well-known Houston photographer. On the front of the house, Brooks mixed floor-to-ceiling windows with clerestory windows. The rear of the house makes use of tall windows and sliding glass doors in each bedroom to provide plenty of natural light and views of a large ravine lot.

410 Gretel
1959/William N. Floyd
A flat roof provides a different take on a house plan found throughout the neighborhood. Floyd built several low-pitched versions of this house, which was apparently one of his more popular house plans. Examples include 331 Electra, 406 Isolde, and the larger, somewhat modified houses at 12806 Figaro and 431 Electra.

12831 Tosca
1956
This small traditional house was once the residence of architect Gunter Koetter. Koetter was a co-founder of Koetter, Tharp and Cowell, an architectural firm known for numerous buildings in the Houston area. The firm helped shape the look of the Memorial area in the 1950s and 1960s as it designed nearby Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, Memorial Drive Lutheran Church, Tallowood Baptist Church, and Memorial High School. Koetter also served as president of the Houston AIA and later merged his firm with Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam.

12807 Tosca
1958
It's not certain whether Floyd or William R. Jenkins designed this house, which has characteristics of both their designs. An eye-catching butterfly roof with broad eaves and clerestory windows makes the house a standout.

402 Mignon
1956
The only house in Memorial Bend constructed entirely of wood, this flat-roofed house was originally built as a sales office for the Memorial Bend Development Company. It was later occupied by the architect Harold Oberg, a partner in the firm Jenkins, Hoff, Oberg & Saxe.

458 Faust
1955/William N. Floyd
When architect Earle S. Alexander, Jr. was shown the advertisement for this house, he commented that it was too far from town as nothing was past old Camp Hudson, a Boy Scout camp. Alexander's wife must have been very persuasive; the family was one of the first to move into the neighborhood. Alexander, then a draftsman, eventually become a partner in the firm Pierce, Goodwin, Alexander & Linville and served as te president of the Houston AIA.

12835 Memorial Drive
1957/William R. Jenkins
William R. Jenkins designed several houses in Memorial Bend, including this house for Howard W. Edmunds, one of the neighborhood's developers. Edmunds had Jenkins add several "modern" touches to the house, such as a black-and-gold Vermont marble fireplace and an all-steel kitchen. The house's exterior has been tarnished by the modification of the original built-up roof.

12647 Memorial Drive
Gulf States Machinery Laundry Company
1961/Don J. Tomasco & Associates
This building once housed Interurban Pharmacy, one of the original tenants of the Floyd-designed Memorial Bend Shopping Park. The pharmacy appeared in the October 1961 issue of *Arts & Architecture*, but was later incorporated into a building now occupied by the Gulf States Machinery Laundry Company. The exterior arched walkway still provide a glimpse into a modern take on a 1960s pharmacy.

Design at the edge — of the street: The Crate and Barrel store on Westheimer (2001). Design: Crate and Barrel. Architect of record: Good Fulton & Farrell.

MOVING FORWARD AT HIGHLAND VILLAGE

Crate and Barrel does retail right

BY WILLIAM F. STERN

Sunlight fills the spacious interior.

ONE CAN HARDLY MISS the Crate and Barrel store on Westheimer. Its strong architectural imagery, sculptural in its minimalism, contrasts boldly with the bland, beige stucco of the surrounding Highland Village complex. Indeed the Crate and Barrel store, completed in November 2001, presents an exciting alternative to the look-alike strip-center architecture found on Houston's miles of thoroughfares and freeways. With few exceptions, much of Houston's recent retail architecture appears to follow design guidelines that specify neutral brick or stucco, expressed cornices, arches, pediments, columns, and other popular classicizing elements. Variations include clay tile roofs with Mediterranean touches here and there.

Opened in 1952, Highland Village — like its predecessor, the River Oaks Shopping Center — was built on both sides of the street as a series of one- and two-story brick buildings, with ample parking provided in front. The only remnant of the original Highland Village is the high-fashion clothing store Tootsies. In recent years, all the other buildings have been renovated or rebuilt, and bear no resemblance to the homogeneous modern design of the 1950s.

Because Crate and Barrel contrasts so emphatically with the surrounding buildings, one might assume that it was developed independently of the Highland Village ownership. Surprisingly, Highland Village Holding, Inc., owns and built the structure on land previously occupied by the restaurant La Madeleine. Crate and Barrel, which sells housewares and accessories, had been leasing space in the Galleria. Wanting its own building for an

A concrete-block wall disguises the loading entrance off Drexel.

expanded store that would include home furnishings, Crate and Barrel approached the owners of Highland Village, who were eager to add a high-profile retail establishment to their complex.

Now leased to Crate and Barrel for 15 years, the Highland Village store was designed by Crate and Barrel's in-house architectural team, with the construction drawings executed by the Dallas firm of Good, Fulton and Farrel. As client, the Highland Village management supported the design team in taking a direction independent from the rest of the center, with a store that would stand out and attract the passerby.

Headquartered in Chicago and founded in 1962, Crate and Barrel began by selling well designed, modestly priced housewares in stores generally attached to shopping malls. In 1990 the company opened its first stand-alone store on Chicago's Michigan Avenue as a "home store" whose inventory included furnishings. Each of the new stores, some stand-alone and others part of larger retail centers, is designed by in-house architects led by Jacques Verlinder, who has been designing Crate and Barrel stores since 1986. Unlike other retail establishments with locations nationwide, Crate and Barrel does not use a prototype design, choosing rather to customize each store for its site, surrounding conditions, and programmatic requirements. Interestingly, the Crate and Barrel store in Cambridge, Massachusetts, occupies the building that housed Design Research, a predecessor to the Crate and Barrel concept.

Not just another big-box store dependent upon graphics for attention, the Houston Crate and Barrel announces itself through its building. Rather than placed far back from the street, in a fashion characteristic of many Houston stores, Crate and Barrel is positioned right next to Westheimer, with the parking to the side, at the rear, and in a shared garage. This approach to site planning draws comparisons to shopping streets in Los Angeles, where buildings line the street to reinforce a pedestrian and vehicular edge. Much of Houston's retail developments seem predicated on the assumption that quantities of visible parking must separate the street and the store. Even on older sections of Westheimer, where there is an established relationship of buildings close to the sidewalk edge, that pattern has eroded as new anonymous-looking strip centers are built far back from the street, fronted by parking.

The Crate and Barrel building sits as an island tightly bound by busy Westheimer to the south, a side street (Drexel) to the west and parking on the north and east. Access has been fluidly addressed with a vehicular drop-off facing Westheimer and a sheltered pedestrian entrance to the side set among a series of display windows that face the adjacent parking lot. On this side, the first floor is recessed beneath the second floor, which projects out at an angle to protect the generous walkway below. Service access along Drexel has been handled discreetly, hidden from view by a split-face, natural-colored concrete-block wall set back from concrete columns that support the second floor.

A play of geometric forms differentiated by cladding juts in and out above the street level façade to beckon the passerby. The combination of claddings includes enameled white metal panels, horizontal corrugated siding, and scored painted stucco. This renders a lively expression to the building form, articulating on the outside the plan arrangement of the inside. The geometric composition of shapes is further enhanced by window openings that penetrate the surface of the taut skin, revealing activity within. At the main façade along Westheimer, a two-story window wall, protected from the glare of sunlight by a stack of horizontal perforated panels, opens the store's activity to the fast-moving street traffic. Behind the window wall, an escalator, especially visible at night, connects the first and second floors in an expansive double-volume space. The liveliness of the outside is reiterated on the inside with an open plan set among white cylindrical columns. In this open field, display areas are defined on both levels by flooring materials that change from stained concrete to strip maple to glazed tile, and by pine plank ceilings, some painted white and others with a natural finish, that are dropped or raised to adjust the sense of scale and volume throughout the store.

Augmenting the overall sense of spaciousness is a flood of natural light from windows that vary in size and are scaled appropriately for the spaces within. Such an expansive use of glass runs contrary to the norm in retail design, where windows are essentially banished in favor of the maximum use of exterior walls for the display of merchandise. The usual almost suffocating atmosphere of the windowless box store crammed from floor to ceiling with goods for sale is challenged at Crate and Barrel, where natural light and views to the outside mix, not only enhancing the perception of products for sale but relieving the tedium that can accompany the shopping experience. With light pouring in at all times of the day, products look and feel the way they would in the domestic settings for which they are intended.

At the Crate and Barrel store in Houston, good architecture becomes sophisticated marketing. In a society that expects a high level of design in everyday products ranging from cellular telephones to coffee makers, it is surprising that retail outlets so often lack the innovative spirit of the products they sell. Not so at Crate and Barrel, where the building matches the company's philosophy of design. This highly controlled, tightly designed building sets a new standard in Houston, and challenges its neighbors to do better. With both the store's relationship to the street and with its striking assemblage of geometric forms, Crate and Barrel has transformed a corner of Westheimer, suggesting a whole new way of thinking about retail design for Houston's commercial strips. ■

2903

2925

3101

THE RICHMOND CORRIDOR: WHERE DEVELOPER GERALD HINES WENT TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

2626

2900

2990

3000

3100

From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, historic preservationists across the country struggled to save the commercial and residential buildings of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The success of sleek, clean-lined Modernism often came at the expense of the previous century's heavily ornamented buildings, which seemed passé — old, but not so old as to be historic.

Fifty years later, a similar fate is befalling Modernist buildings. Now, some of the best architecture of the '50s and '60s is threatened with destruction or, almost as bad, "modernization" with the latest style of architectural slipcovers.

The Richmond business corridor, which stretches down Richmond Avenue from Kirby to Weslayan, contains a rare concentration of 30 such buildings. The street's early suburban office buildings are of great quality; few have been altered; and most face an uncertain future.

In the fall of 2002, fifth-year students in the University of Houston's Workshop for Historic Architecture surveyed the historic resources of the Richmond Corridor. The survey began with several assumptions: that this unofficial office park contained the first spec buildings in the Houston suburbs; that there was a consistent architectural vocabulary; that there were functional floor plans; and that there was a formalized relationship of parking to buildings. But as the research progressed, a more richly nuanced story evolved — not as much about architecture per se as about the growing sophistication of Houston's real estate development, and about the evolution of design in response to market forces.

Developer Gerald D. Hines built the earliest buildings along Richmond for the cheapest tenants — the fire and casualty companies that occupied 2925 and 4234 Richmond. The buildings are little and low, with restricted areas of glass discreetly covered by masonry screen walls.

As office equipment companies moved to Richmond, Hines and the companies themselves erected a new generation of slightly more expensive buildings with nods to both curb appeal and worker satisfaction. The earliest example is 2903 Richmond, built in 1959. Horizontal windows and a deep roof overhang give it a dash of style. As development on Richmond began to accelerate, so did architectural experimentation. The most distinctive type was the building raised on columns with parking underneath. Examples include 3118 Richmond, designed by Wilson, Morris Crain & Anderson, and three Richmond buildings by Neuhaus & Taylor: clean 2626, elegant 3121, and 3322, with those Bette Davis hoods.

3121

3311

BY BARRY MOORE AND ANNA MOD

3118

3322

4234

3336

Dramatic cantilevered roofs were often the defining feature.

More experimentation led to a cluster of buildings with masonry façades and vertical slit-ty windows. Neuhaus & Taylor started the trend with 3100, their first tall (five-story) building, and repeated the theme at 2990, and 3101. Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson weighed in with 3000 and 2900.

The motivation for all this energy-conscious design was not conservation, but rather a drive to reduce energy costs so as to be more rent-competitive, according to real estate broker Coach Gavrel and Hines alumnus Al Keller, both of whom worked on Richmond Corridor deals. The real story of the Richmond Corridor may be that Richmond Avenue served as an MBA course for Gerald Hines (Hines Interests) and arch-competitor Kenneth Schnitzer (Century Development). In the 12 buildings Hines built on the street, it is possible to trace the development of modules and standards that prepared him to be one of the foremost high-rise developers in the country. Richmond was the testing ground for features that are now common: the full-height solid-core door; the integrated aluminum door-and-frame system; lever hardware; nine-foot ceilings; and highly finished lobbies, elevator cabs and restrooms. Here also was the proving grounds for the the 33-foot lease depth, which accommodated small tenants, and for mullions spaced every five feet along the windows, a standard that made space planning easier. By the time Hines had completed his six-story building at 2990 and Schnitzer had finished the highly popular and successful Jefferson Chemical at 3336, both were ready for big-time high-rise developments.

Hines was able to concentrate his efforts east of Buffalo Speedway by leasing land as needed from a large chunk of a family-owned estate — making him the first Houston developer to pursue projects on leased land rather than land that he bought. But Schnitzer cut off Hines to the west by securing 42 acres from R.E. "Bob" Smith and Lumberman's National Bank — the future Greenway Plaza. Thus blocked from expanding on Richmond, Hines took his finely tuned expertise to West Loop, and within ten years had produced Post Oak Tower and the Control Data Corp. Building, as well as One Shell Plaza downtown.

The early Modern buildings on Richmond are an important link in that development. As a group they represent excellent architecture built for satisfied clients. And in their own incremental way, they helped shape the future of high-rise commercial development in the United States.

A complete copy of the students' field notes is located at the Houston Public Library, in the Architectural Archives of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center. An architectural guidebook based on this research, *City Houston/Style Modern*, was published by the Upper Kirby District, and received an On the Boards award from the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Perhaps this little book will raise public awareness of the quality and unique character of the Richmond corridor. It could become Houston's first Modern Historic District. ■

Speedzone

BY LARS LERUP

Kirby Drive, from Upper Kirby (top) south to the Rice Village.

A JUMP CUT AWAY from the stillness of the subdivision, action and speed pick up. The passage from stillness to speed is made almost smooth by a zone somewhere obscurely between the two. Still housing, but denser housing, and with an occasional commercial building, this buffer zone anticipates the speedzone. The traffic is heavier, the speed increases, and the real estate market is softer, more fluid. The pace of change, imperceptible in the subdivision, is here visible if not yet striking. The canopy of trees thins out; streets stop their meandering; street humps are introduced to slow the increase of traffic and speed; building density increases, and therefore activity. We are at the edge of the speedzone.

Speedzone Kirby

The commercial swelling of an avenue like Kirby Drive is typical of tributaries of the feeder systems around the freeway network. Like a meal that causes a python to bulge, the speedzone gently impinges on the adjacent subdivisions, and in the case of Kirby, pushes deeper into the suburban fabric. Since there is no zoning, buffers seem to emerge naturally. Precisely how this occurs is buried in real estate history, yet the transition zone appears natural (compared to planned areas that give the impression of being hard-lined, one against the other). But there are hidden constraints. In the transition zone, the speedzone's development freedom slowly morphs into the constraints of the deed restrictions or zoning of the adjacent subdivision.[1] The view changes — from the cinematic to the photographic, from movement to stasis. This range from flux to fixity reflects the pragmatics of this highly volatile corridor of activity. Fused yet separated, both firmness (deed-restricted or zoned subdivisions) and let-go (along the speedzone) live comfortably together. There is a great lesson to be learned from this elasticity of operation.

Ebb and Flow

It may only be after a catastrophic event that a city's internal connections become apparent; behind an apparently obscure cacophony of actions lie vital mechanisms that, when interfered with, can halt the entire enterprise. However, while the city chugs along in its everyday ways, there is virtually no evidence of the underlying mechanism. In fact, as we look closer at the speedzone, only tiny events appear — thousands of simultaneous but independent actions, the ebb and flow of bodies (humans and vehicles) and artifacts (from soap to hamburgers). All are apparently totally disconnected from each other; each action on its own errand; each event oblivious to any other. Much like a Beckett novel (such as his first, *Watt* of 1953) the speedzone's actors (and their paraphernalia) seem haplessly thrown to chance and irrationality. Yet because of common physical limitations and jurisdictional purview, manifested in the particulars of the street and lot system, and in habits and mores, our actors are all functionally similar. Complex nested networks of actors, connected by friendships, work habits and chance, build a rich mix of activity. As we look closer, the complexity increases. Next to the laundry, a small Thai restaurant produces astonishingly different behaviors, attitudes, smells, gestures and sounds. In unison, hundreds of tiny uses and associated events combine in an observer's mind to form a symphony of sights, sounds and smells that no plan could duplicate. These micro-activities are purposeful, determined and supported by a myriad of regimes, such as financial institutions, know-how, deliveries, service mechanisms, habits, and desires.

The speedzone hosts a multitude of highly diversified human events. A dense set of stimuli occurs simultaneously and without friction, aside from tiny hesitations in entryways and at intersections. This lack of serious friction can itself be seen as an expression of internal dispersion — of just enough space or leeway (and always parking) to go about your business. (This kind of natural proxemics, or spacing, was expressed by E.T Hall in an image of a flock of birds resting equidistant on a telephone line.) It is the density of stimuli that is of particular import. Nowhere in Houston but downtown, the Galleria, and the Texas Medical Center is that density roughly equal. However, here is also where the similarity ends. In all the before-mentioned settings, behaviors and actions are unified into families of activity: business, shopping, and health. Along Kirby, the divergence of events and behaviors, thoughts, and speech is the norm.

Enterprise Zone

As in a toppled Tower of Babel, thousands of tongues are wagged (not only in different languages but also with totally different intentions). Superficially, these scenes may be quaint and charming,

much like a small European city, but behind them hover democracy and equal opportunity. Here in the nooks and crannies of this visually discombobulated microcosm, careers are made, enterprises started, bodies trimmed, stomachs satisfied, risks taken, affairs consummated, business transactions conducted, liens delivered, tax returns prepared, apartments cleaned, high fives exchanged, coffees bought and imbibed, children taught to read, hair cut, nails polished, cars washed, shoes mended, art sold, books signed, clothes fitted, TVs tuned, loud music played, beer drunk, wine tasted, barbecue smoked, cars valet-parked, wallets misplaced, petty crimes attempted, parking tickets given, umbrellas opened, winks exchanged, kisses thrown, cell phone messages delivered, cell phone calls taken, barbells hoisted. The speedzone is its own distinct ecology.

The density and complexity of the microphysics of activity are a communal good — something for any metropolis worth its name to aspire too. This is the complex machinery of emancipation that the open city yearns to deliver. This is the power filigree — the multitude of human interactions, short on capital but essential for the life of small entrepreneurs — that makes democratic cities worth their salt. It is a shame to lose these zones where giant real estate interests have stayed away. As a naturally evolved enterprise zone, this corridor may be as important to cherish and preserve as national monuments, wilderness areas, and wetlands.

Challenges

A peculiar threat to the productive instability of the speedzone comes in a most unlikely form. In the '80s no expert would have predicted that the Inner Loop would ever grow again, and grow, as is the case now, faster than the edge city. The thrust of this surge of development is housing, the staple of the suburban metropolis. Since the development ground is wide open, the search is on for areas of exploitable softness. Like truffle pigs, real-estate agents leave no stone unturned, and both soon and naturally the speedzones come to their attention. Since it is hard to agglomerate large parcels of land here — too many small and independent landowners — the footprint is adjusted. Consequently, upscale housing, in the form of townhouses at the softer edges and in the transition zone, and a very occasional high-rise building, has invaded the central corridor of the Kirby speedzone. The high-rise building appears truly idiosyncratic and otherworldly in the mostly low- and mid-rise environment. The total lack of public open space in the speedzone makes housing the least natural addition. Yet this is the nature of a world in flux, and with the speedzone's habit of adaptability, the new residents may not find parks but plenty of stimuli to partake or kibitz in. Since there is no risk that the high-rise development will reproduce, the real disunity occurs in the vicinity of a flock of townhouses at the edge and spilling into the transition zone. Here David rather than Goliath is the agent, since with low-rise owner-occupied housing comes organization and deed restrictions (we want to protect our real estate values!), which in turn will lead to the calcification of the speedzone. As always there is no protection against invasions. One can only hope that the elasticity of the speedzone will prevail.

As a naturally evolved enterprise zone, this corridor may be as important to cherish and preserve as national monuments, wilderness areas, and wetlands.

Feeder Zone

Downriver from the elastic tributary, things are changing. Turning from Kirby on to the feeder parallel to the freeway, we enter the franchise corridor. Here another calcification is taking place: the relentless repetition of the national and global players of commerce. Like Muzak, the same tune is repeated over and over

in an endless loop. The speed picks up; the search is easier because the signs are larger, brighter, and more conspicuous. The feeder is the transmogrification of the commercial strip, now attached like an elongated saddlebag between the freeway on- and off-ramps. Here is where the big fish school. Here changes are first manifest on the big board in the New York Stock Exchange, and on the ground as mere repercussions.

Speeding

Once back on the freeway behind the wheel of a ton of steel careening — pedal to the metal — at five miles over the speed limit, our experience of speed is complete. In fact, the advancement of car technology allows the driver to retain 50 cubic feet of buffered stillness inside his cockpit — shipped, as it were, from the subdivision — while outside top speed prevails.

The lore of speed in American literature, film, and video is immense, overtaking many times over the stillnes of photography. The freeway car chase (shown on the first instance of reality television on a Los Angeles freeway) is ingrained on our minds, and repeated, hysterically, over and over again, in our children's video games (rudely interrupting the stillness of the suburban house). The frustrations of the endless commuter traffic jams going into town are visibly juxtaposed with the heady line of flight going out of town. Such is the metabolism of freeway life — a type of artificial life best understood as a computer simulation that even the most sophisticated catastrophe theory cannot explain.

Inside the cocoon of freeway life, the dynamics are predictable yet hard to fathom. "Rarely," I wrote in the conclusion of my book *After the City*, "cars align across the four lanes, and when three cars do, they stay together for a second only: A certain distance at work, independence and cooperation.[2] Six to seven cars slide back and forth inside my focus, held apart by mutual and mild aversion, while being held together by proxemics: the equation of car size, lane width, freeway geometry, speed, habit, rules and surveillance. A dance, a swarming, motorized prowess..."[3]

Sparta, I argued, "may have had its revenge on the city right here on the superhighway, but the drifters' apparent directional resolve leading to a common destiny beyond my vision is deceiving. They will all disperse." Sparta prefigured suburbia, while Athens was the epitome of the city. Freeway life is of course emblematic of the modern version of the Spartan metropolis. Like the Spartans, the freeway drifters are athletes, some more than others, wielding SUVs instead of swords in their battles to be first. But the freeway is also the most blatant expression of the unforeseen consequences of the enormous agglomeration of subdivisions and their service components. Ameliorative, the freeway attempts to cope with, and by the ease and smoothness of drive, cover up the ordeal of a commute that, measured in man-hours for all of Houston, totals 34 years a day. Simultaneously, the freeway is productive as it spearheads further development at the edge of the network. The speedzone is a highly complex suburban artifact replete with its own technologies, its own life, its own hopes and desires. Financed and run by the cooperation of federal government, state government, and private contractors, it is an enterprise on its own independent errand — fueled by an astonishing hubris, amassed over the years by all the various actors of car culture, evenly spread. as it were, over thousands of miles of concrete and steel in Houston alone. ■

This text is an excerpt from "Speed: On the Photographic and the Cinematic in Suburban Striations," a chapter from a book manuscript titled Another Suburbia.

[1] In the case of Kirby Avenue, the side inside the Houston city limits is deed-restricted, while the side inside West University is zoned.
[2] "Transportation is in a very cool spot between a social system and a physical system," explains Christopher L. Barrett at Los Alamos National Laboratory. His colleague Steen Rasmussen adds, "The elements [or vehicles widely distributed over space] that interact with one another are like biological systems. They are dynamical hierarchies with controls at many different levels, like organelles, cells, tissues, humans." (From "Unjamming Traffic with Computers," by Kenneth R. Howard. *Scientific American*, October 1997, p. 87.)
[3] *After the City*. MIT Press, 2000, p. 175.

QUEEN

GUILTY

PARENTS

QUEEN

SEE A STRIP POKER PARTY

EXPOSING THE LOS ANGELES LOVE NEST

MEN ONLY

MOST SENSATIONAL FILM EVER PRODUCED

GUILTY PARENTS

WOMEN ONLY

NO CHILDREN ADMITTED

Guilty Parents

EXPOSING

LOVE NEST

QUEEN THEATRE

Now Showing

WOMEN ONLY

"GUILTY PARENTS"

MEN ONLY

Positively No Children Admitted

Bob Bailey

Left: The Queen Theater (C.D. Hill and Company, 1914) distinguished itself with risqué ads.

Right: The Isis Theater (C.D. Hill and Company, 1913), front facade under marquee.

Fade to Black

Houston's Lost Movie Palaces

BY CELESTE WILLIAMS

With the recent surge of vivid nightlife in downtown Houston, some may find it surprising that 70 years ago there was an equally luminous convergence on Main Street. At one time Houston boasted a score of movie theaters, both urban and suburban, with the grandest lining Main Street.

The 20th century began with the age of vaudeville and nickelodeon houses. The movie industry was in its infancy, and theater design reflected this with an array of types reflecting its performing-arts origins. By 1923 these theaters had evolved into highly specialized, experiential dream palaces.

The Isis and The Queen

In 1913, the Isis Theater opened at Main and Prairie to enthusiastic reviews. Designed in the Houston office of the Dallas architectural firm of C.D. Hill and Company for Herman Fichtenberg, the theater was composed of a lobby, a projection booth, and an auditorium space fitted with wooden seats and embellished with Egyptian ornamentation. Due to safety concerns posed by the volatility of the nitrocellulose film stock, the projection booth was situated on the street, with a separate entry door and window for venting. The projectionists could make a speedy exit in case of fire or smoke.

For its time the Isis' lobby was impressive, with its mosaic tile floor, crystal chandeliers, and entry marquee. Stylized lotus motifs enhanced the balusters of its grand stair, which connected a lower service level to the ground-level auditorium. Although sparely equipped, the voluminous rectilinear auditorium had a decorative frieze of Egyptian bas-relief masks, which cleverly disguised ventilation ducts. On hot summer nights blocks of dry ice were placed directly behind the ducts' grilles to provide a cascade of cool air in the eerie mist that emanated from behind the masked idols' eyes.

The Isis' major competitor, the Queen Theater, opened the next year, 1914, at Main Street and Capitol. Also designed by C.D. Hill and Company (this time for E.H. Hulsey), the Queen was the first Houston theater containing a Wurlitzer organ to accompany silent films and live acts. The music and sound effects produced by the organ soon made the instrument an absolute necessity. The Queen Theater also distinguished itself with risqué ad campaigns. In one, life-sized cut-outs of masked beauties in abbreviated swimsuits stood under the marquee, advertising the film *Guilty Parents*. For ten years, the Isis and the Queen set the pace for their competitors.

The Majestic

The Majestic Theater on Rusk Avenue and Travis Street ushered in a new level of urban competition. It was the brainchild of Dallas theater magnate Karl Hoblitzelle, his architect John Eberson of Chicago, and Houston businessman Niels Esperson and his wife Mellie (who later commissioned Eberson to design the Niels Esperson Building, 1926, and Mellie Esperson Building, 1941). Eberson, an Austrian-trained architect, had risen to prominence quickly in the 1910s, gaining the nickname "Opera House John" for the imaginative theaters he designed throughout the South between 1909 and 1922. Working with Hoblitzelle, Eberson had recently completed the Majestic Theater in Austin (now the Paramount), and the Majestic Theater in Dallas, both capable of staging live productions and screening films.

Now he was poised to develop a unique theater experience: the atmospheric theater, a typology he pioneered to international acclaim. An atmospheric theater simulated the experience of being in an exotic environment, usually a Mediterranean courtyard or garden, above which an azure sky gleamed, creating the illusion of the outdoors. Thanks

Top: The Majestic (John Eberson, 1923) was the crown jewel in Houston's theater world. One auditorium masqueraded as an Italian terrace.

Left: The palatial interior of Loew's State Theater (Alfred C. Finn, 1927).

Above right: Detail from the Loew's State Theater's organ loft.

to the new Brenograph projector, clouds drifted lazily across cerulean heavens on the ceiling, and as the film began, a sunset reddened to mauve-violet, unveiling the pattern of constellations twinkling above the audience. Part luxurious stage, part planetarium, the unified design of the auditorium and lobby combined with the equally exotic subjects and locales of 1920s films to produce a phenomenally integrated experience.

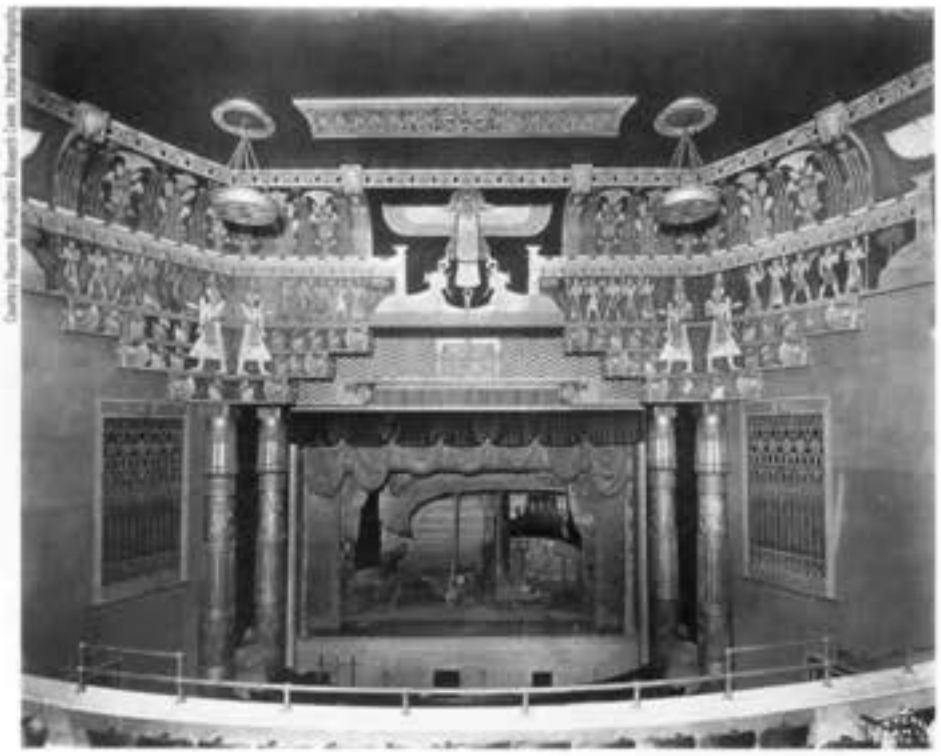
The Majestic was the crown jewel in Houston's theater world in 1923. Sporting a grand tapestry brick façade with classical friezes and statuary, its classical exterior was thematically consistent with its classical Roman Mediterranean garden interiors. A polychrome frieze of dancers and musicians capped triple pediments over portals on the upper level, which were flanked by engraved stone panels. Beneath the marquees on Rusk, the public entered the ticket lobby through glazed doors.

Behind the double vaulted "carriage hall" lobby, the theater auditorium had a squared configuration, with a large balcony, or "family circle," extending over half of the orchestra-level seats. Above the balcony to the right of the elaborate proscenium arch was the Italian Terrace level, the sculptural elements of which, stretching along the auditorium's side walls, provided depth and dimension. Marble statues of mythological beings encrusted the Majestic's interior, and an asymmetrical arrangement of the Roman Palace theater organ grilles on the left proscenium wall enhanced the "authenticity" of the experience. Tunnel entries under a caryatid porch framed views of the Italian Terrace or Roman Palace, and made roaming through the theater a joy. Equipped with luxurious ladies' lounges and men's smoking rooms as well as a nursery, the Majestic contained every amenity for its patrons.

For the nominal price of entry, guests could experience grandeur and be treated like royalty.

The Metropolitan and Loew's State

Between 1925 and 1927, Jesse H. Jones developed an entire city block — Main Street between McKinney and Lamar — with the Lamar Hotel, the Democratic Building, and side-by-side twin cinema palaces. One was for Hoblitzelle's Interstate theater chain, the other for the Loew's chain. Alfred C. Finn, Jones' favorite architect, designed both.



Above: The auditorium and proscenium of the Metropolitan (Alfred C. Finn, 1925–27) offered an Art Déco take on Tutankhamen's tomb.

Right: The Metropolitan's lobby.

In correspondence dated 1925, Finn requested from his engineer the most current data available for ancient Egyptian temple structures. The country had been in the throes of Egyptian fever since November 1922, when Howard Carter discovered the sealed tomb of King Tutankhamen, and Finn embraced the trend with abandon. The first of his two palaces, the Metropolitan, was ornamented with plaster bas-relief and ornate early Art Déco chandeliers suspended from an articulated plaster ceiling, known as a "hard top." The theater featured plush seats and tiled entry courts, lotus-formed door frames, and stairs replete with Egyptian murals. Sphinxes induced visitors to climb the stairs and enter the inner auditorium chamber. Inside a long rectilinear plan with both mezzanine-level boxes and balcony levels, a splendid temple interior was created. Cow goddess Hathor sofas borrowed from the tomb of Tutankhamen added to the perception of depth along the upper side walls. Organ grilles with perforated cypress screens resembling a *mushrabbiyah* provided for acoustic integration of the classic Wurlitzer organ with all its bells and whistles. A later consultation with John Eberson led Finn to add acoustical dampening through woven textiles and hung Persian carpets. The latest Brenkert carbon-arc projectors gave films new luminosity and clarity.

The Metropolitan's auditorium was matched in size and shape by the luxurious Neoclassical Loew's State next door, which shared a firewall and entry passage with the Metropolitan. As opposed to the dark, mysterious, earth-toned Metropolitan, Loew's State's auditorium had a brightly gilded palatial interior. To create an air of grandeur, the Loew's chain originally furnished the theater with antique furnishings from a Vanderbilt mansion in New York. Loew's State was configured like the Metropolitan, with an elongated rectilinear floor plan, and could seat more than 2,000 — a capacity used to full advantage by Loew's promoters. Hollywood stars accompanying lavishly advertised new releases felt comfortably at home.

None of that interior opulence showed on the outside. The principal exterior architecture of both the Metropolitan and Loew's State consisted of carefully composed brick façades with the discreet neoclassical style shared by the Lamar Hotel and its surrounding shops and businesses. Only after traversing the tunnel-like entry under the marquee did one enter the realm of the fantastic.

Contemporaries

In the absence of Houston's movie palaces, one can still visit two graceful examples of the genre: the Fox Theater in Atlanta and the Ki Mo Theater in Albuquerque.

In 1973, when the Fox was threatened with demolition, concerned citizens in Atlanta raised funds for its rescue. Thirty years later, the result is one of the most treasured theaters in America, restored to its former grandeur with Moorish architecture and Arabian, Egyptian, and Moorish interiors. Designed in 1929, six years after the Houston Majestic, by the Atlanta architects Mayre, Alger and Vinour, the Fox auditorium features a floor plan similar to that of Metropolitan and Loew's State, as well as ornate articulated side walls, and an atmospheric sky with constellations reflecting those seen from the Saudi Arabian peninsula. Above the balcony, a draped Bedouin tent canopy made of ferro-concrete completes the effect.

The Fox boasts an on-site preservation department headed by preservation architect Molly Fortune and staffed by archivist Michele Schuff and a host of restorers who keep the Fox in shape as well as research and catalogue its extensive furnishings, lighting fixtures, and ornaments. It is not difficult to imagine the thrill of the Fox's public during a recent appearance by the magician David Copperfield, who played off the Fox's interior to portray himself as a 21st century Houdini.

In Albuquerque, the Ki Mo, America's only hard-top movie palace based on Native American motifs, is a jewel box designed by Boller Brothers of Kansas City. Rehabilitated by the architecture firm Kells & Craig, the Ki Mo was resurrected by integrating restored original features with Steve Kells' skillful redesign of critical stage and fly-space areas destroyed in a fire. Quiet and intimate, the Ki Mo's lavish details, based on Native American spiritual figures in their original brilliant polychrome colors, create a feeling of the presence of Albuquerque's early inhabitants. Murals in the lobby of the mythic Seven Cities of Cibola are based on actual pueblos. Combined with totemic cow-skull lanterns, they take the viewer back in time. Owned by the city of Albuquerque, the Ki Mo now hosts everything from traveling live performances to films to university graduations.

Remnants and Vestiges

Houston's three great movie palaces — the Majestic, the Metropolitan, and Loew's State — were demolished in a period known as "the slaughter" of 1971-73. The Main and Lamar site remained empty for nearly 30 years. Despite these jagged holes rent in the fabric of downtown, a determined urban archeologist can still find some remnants of Houston's lost movie palaces. Although the Queen Theater was unfortunately also demolished, the Mercury Room inhabits the former Isis Theater building. Architect Gary Whitney has revived the Isis' interior bas-relief friezes in the Boaka Bar, where patrons still enjoy the lotus railings, now referred to as the "martini glasses." One can also attempt to identify the original Isis mask from which the others were duplicated.

At Houston Community College, Theater Organ Society members led by Richard Willson work weekends to restore the Metropolitan's Wurlitzer, which has been relocated there. It's used for performances several times a year, sometimes with film accompaniment.

Independent Los Angeles filmmaker Jon Schwarz, who well remembers seeing *The Ten Commandments* in the Egyptian surroundings of the Metropolitan, retains one of the best personal photographic archives of the two Finn theaters, as well as velvet ropes once used to guide theater patrons.

Should one desire to venture further, a road trip to San Antonio will provide an atmospheric revelry in John Eberson's last great movie palace, the Spanish-Mediterranean San Antonio Majestic. Currently under restoration by architect Milton Babbitt and maintained by Las Casas Foundation, the San Antonio Majestic features traveling Broadway shows and other live entertainment. Its original *Sweet Grapes* bronze will be restored to a niche recreated to Eberson's lobby design by the precise artisanal skills of Tom Battersby.

Finally, the dedicated architectural and photographic archivists of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Andy Hempe and Joel Draut, preserve the documents and photographs of the theaters that once were. Though they exist now only in vestiges and archives, Houston's movie palaces retain the power to spark our imaginations. ■

Natural light floods a concrete gallery bay in the Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art, by Tadao Ando and Associates with Kendall/Heaton Associates (2002). Floor sculpture: *Slit* by Carl Andre.

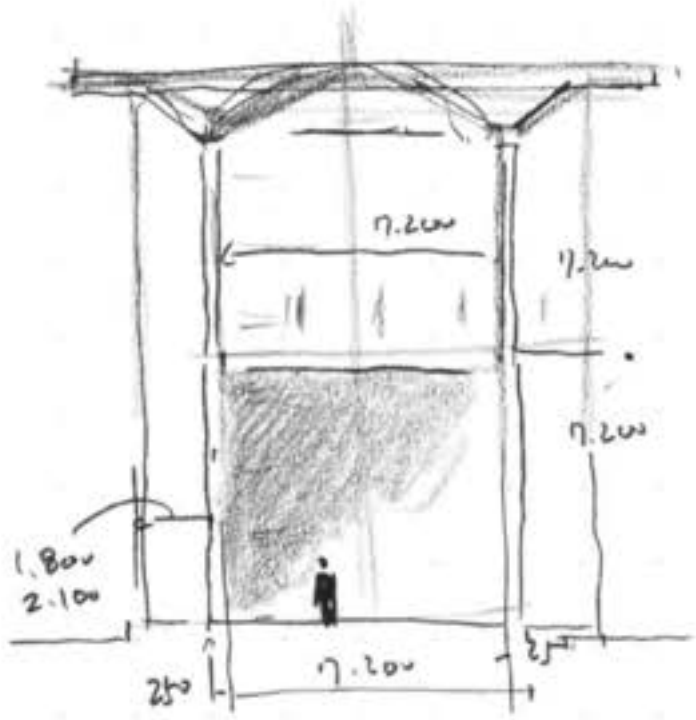
Ando's Modern : Reflections on Architectural Translation

Tadao Ando designed a sublime building for the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. As built, it's merely great.

BY RICHARD R. BRETTELL

Tadao Ando's competition model showed eight lucite lozenges floating on a blue reflective surface.

Ando's competition rendering revealed a light-filtering roof, intended to be realized in glass and steel.



Competition sketch by Tadao Ando.

Ando's competition site plan.

TADAO ANDO'S BUILDING for the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (henceforth "the Modern") opened to unprecedented — almost universal — accolades. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Ando's Modern is the most important museum building in Texas since Renzo Piano's Menil Collection, and in the world since Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Its seriousness of purpose, architectural purity, and ambition are unquestionable. It yearns, in fact, to be in the company of the ur-museums of art: Sir John Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery, Friederich Schinkel's Altes Museum, Adolphe von Klenze's Alte Pinokotek, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's National Gallery in Berlin, and Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum.

As ambitious as Ando's building is, it could have been better. This review will consider Ando's masterpiece in three ways: 1) its position in the competition from which it emerged, 2) the translation of the concept to actuality, and 3) the relationship of the Modern to other museums of modern art.

The Competition and Ando's Winning Entry

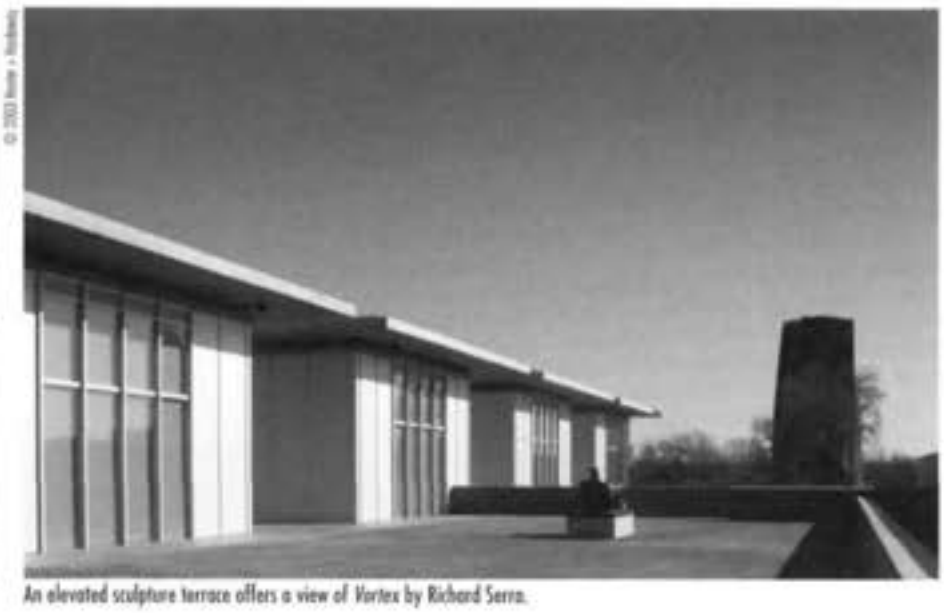
In 1996, the architectural review committee for the Modern chose six architects to compete: two Japanese (Tadao Ando and Arata Isozaki), one Mexican (Ricardo Legoretta), and three Americans (Richard Gluckman, Carlos Jimenez, and David Schwarz). Why this bouquet? The most unusual aspect of the selection was how relatively non-trendy it was — no fashionable Europeans, no chic Americans, no tried-and-true architects. Indeed, among the group of six, only two, Isozaki and Legoretta, had internationally recognized careers (Ando had not yet built a major building outside Japan), and all but one of the rest, though potentially exciting, had reputations as thoughtful architects who needed an important building. No Gehry, Holl, Hadid or Libeskind — or no Pei, Meier, Piano, or Foster — was invited to compete in Fort Worth.

Each of these architects was given a general building program and information about the newly acquired site and asked to submit preliminary plans and a model to the Modern. These were carefully studied by the museum's committee and submitted to public scrutiny in an exhibition held in the museum's galleries. Having seen this exhibition, read the local criticism, and discussed the competition with many prominent regional citizens, I can say that there was a consensus that Ando's design was superior as a work of architectural imagination. Neither the regional/modernist designs of Legoretta and Jiménez nor the cerebral minimalism of Gluckman struck a chord in Dallas-Fort Worth, and David Schwarz's generic Beaux Arts galleries were thought repulsive by almost everyone. To me, Isozaki's plan was much more compelling than it was considered to be by either museum insiders or the public. Had it been selected and constructed, it would have been more adventurous in museological terms — and more decidedly modernist — than Ando's completed building.

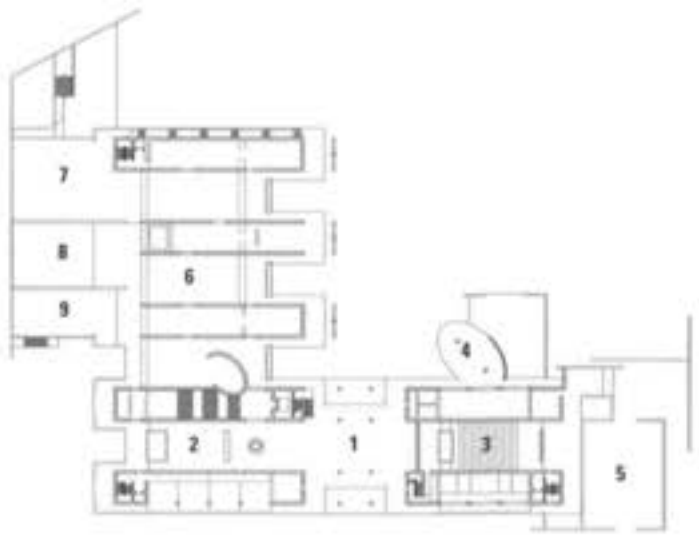
Ando's competition model was a series of eight gorgeous lucite lozenges (four of which were connected longitudinally in pairs to form six bays), floating on a blue reflective surface. Its shimmering ambiguities of surface combined with its lucid geometry to be utterly compelling, and most viewers of the model attempted to "visualize" it as an actual building with little success. Ando's basic idea was a museum of parallel two-story concrete galleries, 24 feet wide and 144 feet long, each encased in glass (roof included) and topped by a horizontal "brise soleil," or sunscreen, to modify the extreme Texas light. The sunscreen itself was not delineated and appeared in different forms in various drawings. The ends of the gallery roofs were supported by Y-shaped columns placed inside the glass wall, with vertical members of concrete and diagonal members of steel. Between these concrete galleries, Ando proposed 40-foot-wide bays given architectural form by non-structural walls, presumably covered in practical painted sheetrock. Most of the drawings made in connection with the competition dealt with the relationship between concrete, glass, and reflecting water on the north and east sides of the L-plan building. Few details of the facade facing the Kimbell were apparent. Ando, unlike his countryman Isozaki, allowed the Modern's building to be taller than its distinguished neighbor and to face south, rather than west toward the Kimbell, effectively undercutting a face-to-face comparison.

The entire effect of the model was of floating pavilions that were, in themselves, reflective, and, thus, markedly different from Ando's by-now familiar architecture of massive concrete walls intersecting with the ground and horizontal sheets of water. In the original plans for the Modern, the only direct meeting of concrete and water occurred in the oval restaurant pavilion, which pushed from a glazed pavilion into the water with a Corbusian force. The competition drawings also suggested that the second-floor

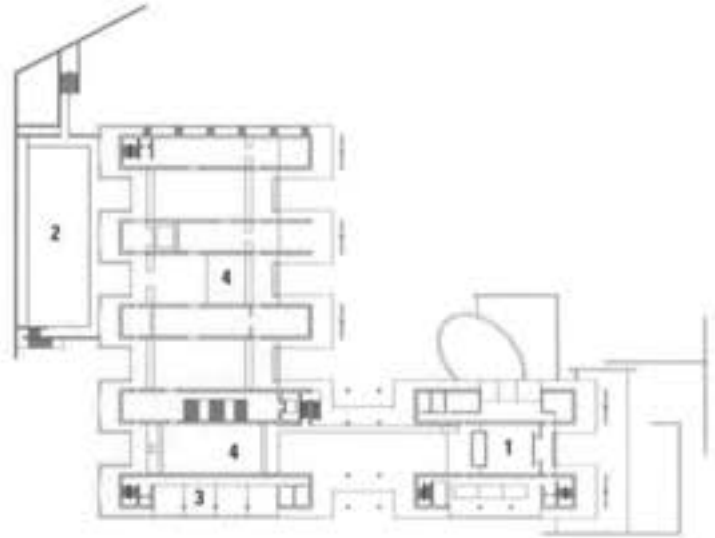
The entrance facade, composed of glass and aluminum panels.



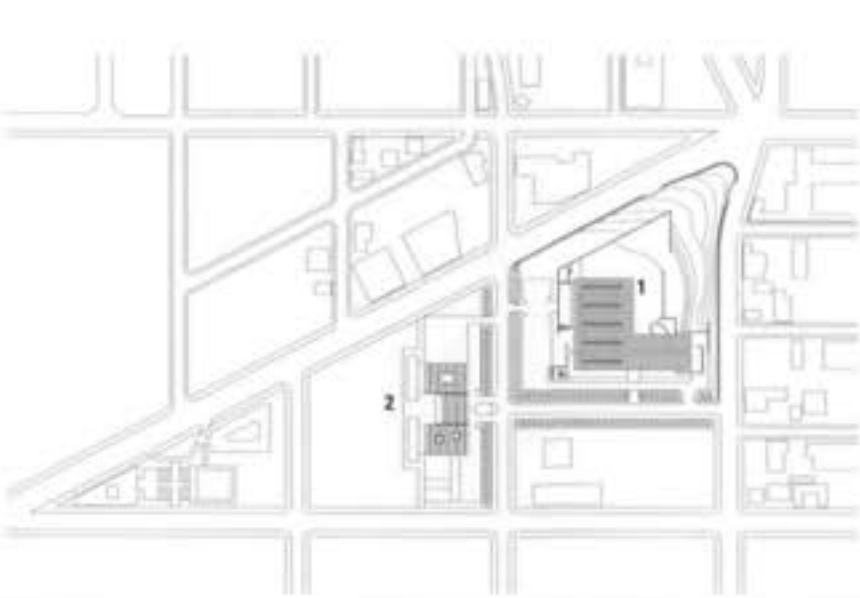
An elevated sculpture terrace offers a view of *Vortex* by Richard Serra.



First-floor plan. 1) Entrance hall. 2) Shop. 3) Auditorium. 4) Café. 5) Parking. 6) Galleries. 7) Storage. 8) Loading. 9) Workshop.



Second-floor plan. 1) Offices. 2) Sculpture terrace. 3) Classrooms. 4) Galleries.



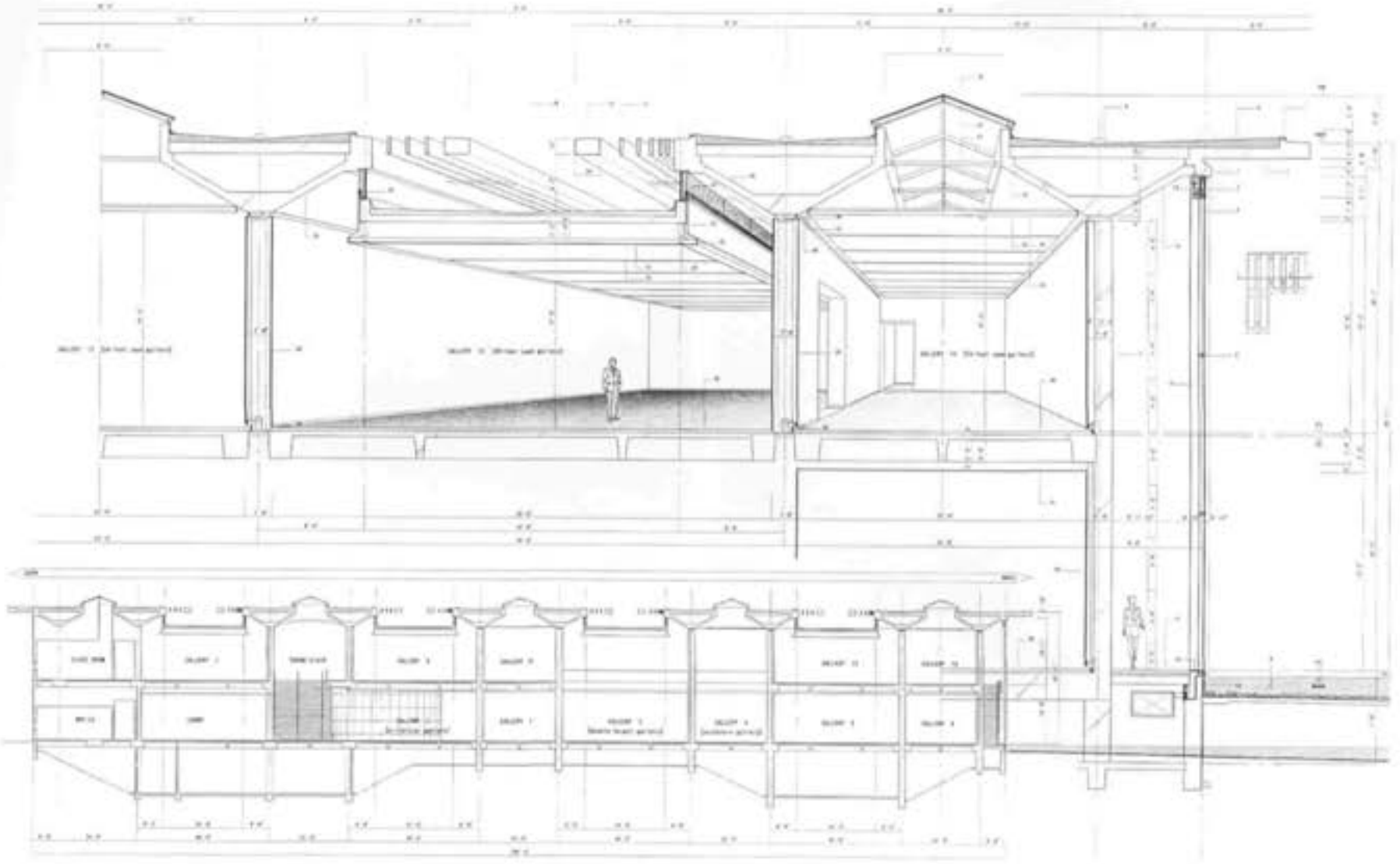
Site plan. 1) Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art. 2) Kimbell Art Museum.

galleries would be lit with natural light from above, in the manner familiar to students of Beaux-Arts painting galleries. Those on the lower galleries would, presumably, be artificially lit with natural light leakage through doors and light wells and from the glazed viewing platforms in between the concrete gallery structures and the side light reflected off the water through the curtain wall. Ando also separated art from life by confining the galleries to four parallel bays, while all social, administrative, and educational functions were arranged in two longer entrance bays. In fact, the entire effect of the building was of transparent metal "roofs" floating above mullion-less walls of glass, through which one could see the concrete structures. Nothing like it had appeared in Ando's published work. Clearly, the chance to conceive a large-scale museum across from Kahn's Kimbell inspired Ando to new heights of visual poetry.

Ando's competition entry for the Modern was a building opposite in character from its esteemed neighbor. The effect of the Kimbell is of a solid building with very small slits for light. Ando's submission was a completely open building of metal and glass. In this, one thinks immediately of the first internationally important museum building in Texas, Mies van der Rohe's addition to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The Brown Pavilion placed contemporary art in a curved, glass-walled structure that appeared to float — not on water, but on a recessed limestone base. Another nod to Houston was the echo of Renzo Piano's buildings for the Menil Collection. Both these buildings have glass roofs under or over which Piano positioned floating sunscreens to control the intense Texas sun. Also, in the case of the building for the Menil Collection, Piano separated art from life in a manner comparable to that of Ando. Ando effectively subsumed in a single building the materials and architectural solutions of the very best art museum buildings in Texas.

How Ando's Competition Designs Became an Actual Building

The day after Tadao Ando was hired as the architect for the Modern, the board of trustees hired a prominent project manager to work with Ando. This man, architect Peter Edward Arendt, had performed a similar function for the developers of Dallas's Crescent Court, designed by Johnson/Burgee, and more recently, for



Building sections.

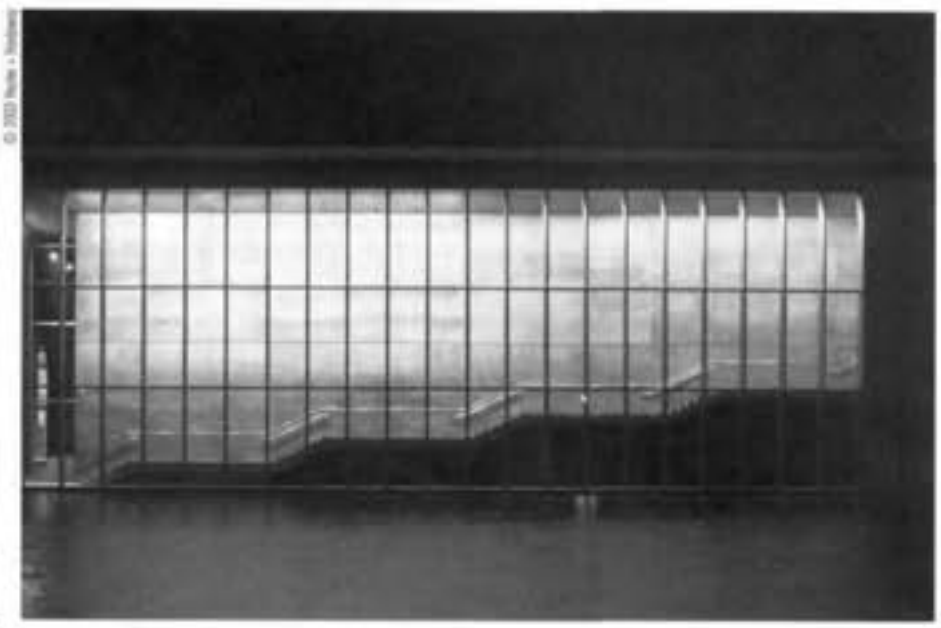
Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, designed by I.M. Pei. In each case, Arendt effectively acted as an informed intercessor among three forces — the architect, the client, and the contractor. For the Modern, the latter, Linbeck Construction of Houston, was selected early in the process, and this decision was one of the only controversies associated with the building. Linbeck is a well respected firm for large-scale commercial construction, but the company is not primarily known for its work with major architects. Many devotees of architecture in Dallas-Fort Worth had assumed that the revered local firm Thomas S. Byrne, which had built the Kimbell and important Dallas buildings by Steven Holl, Richard Meier, and Antoine Predock, would have received another much deserved job. This did not occur, and in conjunction with the appointment of Peter Arendt, the retention of Linbeck signaled the Modern's decision to maintain local control of the project through Arendt and to insure that it was cost-effective through Linbeck.

Ando's poetry ran the risk of becoming prose as the building went from concept to reality. That this happens frequently in architecture will come as no surprise to anyone. That it happened in Fort Worth — with its major buildings by Johnson, Kahn, Pei, Rudolph, and others — came as a surprise to many. The complex process of transformation was well underway when the tornado of 1999 swept through Fort Worth, just missing the Culture District and the building site of the Modern, but devastating glass-clad buildings throughout downtown and the area between downtown and the museum district. Wind destroyed entire sections of industrial curtain wall, and the storm's proximity to the museum must have been chilling to many donors who had already made substantial pledges to the completion of Ando's privately financed, glass-wrapped building.

What happened as a result of all these factors is that Ando's design changed in subtle but profound ways. A simple list of the most notable changes will suffice:

- The floating metal sunscreens over the glass roofs in the competition design became virtually solid planes of concrete with small perforated sections and slits virtually invisible to the viewer. The entire system of skylighting was transformed as a result of the decision to jettison the glass roofs of the original design.
- The essentially mullion-less curtain walls of the competition drawings (with no horizontal and very thin vertical members) became a standardized wall system with a large cage of aluminum mullions, including two prominent horizontal mullions, supported by coated I-beams, all of which protrude significantly from the plane of the glass — both inside and outside.
- The glass in the curtain walls was significantly reduced on the south and west walls facing the Kimbell. A system of aluminum panels replaced the glass.
- The Y-shaped supports for the roof were transformed from those described above, located inside the curtain wall, to very large reinforced concrete elements cast in two parts and located outside the glass wall, hence becoming major elements of the building's image.
- The parking garage beneath the administration/education/entrance bays was replaced with street-level parking.
- The six bays of the original design (two of double length), the same number as the bays in Kahn's Kimbell Museum of Art, were reduced to five.

The effect of these changes is greater than one might think. A building that was essentially light in character became heavy, more opaque, and more structured. A concrete plane replaced open-work metal for the roof; in the original vision, light would permeate the building from the top; in the revised version, none appears to come through. Thin horizontal planes of glass, almost free of apparent support and with no structural function, became a large aluminum-and-coated-steel grid, in-filled with glass and aluminum panels. To many viewers, the grid seems to support the cantilevered concrete roof. The concrete Y columns became dominating forms in front of glass, rather than the concrete-to-metal, tree-like supports of a transparent metal screen. As drawn in the competition designs, the Ys literally represented a tree, with a cylindrical trunk of concrete, twin branches of steel, and leaves of metal floating on a grid. As built, there is a touch of the Gothic in the angle, and the redesigned elements read almost as buttresses of the roof, which becomes a thin concrete plane against the weight of the sky. At this stage, it is important to consider the reasons for the transformation of Ando's glass pavilions. Peter Arendt



Clockwise from top left: Entrance at night; stair at end of concrete gallery bay; entry foyer looking toward administration offices; second floor gallery adjacent to main stair.

graciously met with me to discuss the period of translation. One of the Modern's earliest decisions was to nix the wrap-around glass, which was neither energy-efficient nor good for the protection of light sensitive works of art. An aluminum panel was selected as a material that would have the visual character of glass, but would be opaque and energy-efficient. It seems that the panel's proportions determined the character of the curtain wall. Therefore, the glass panels took on the same vertical proportion as the metal panels, necessitating Ando's design of a consistent grid with two horizontal mullions (to create a tripartite vertical division) to contrast with the doubled aluminum panels. Then, due to reasons both of energy and light requirements, the glass itself became a triple sandwich. To support this weighty element, Ando elected to use Miesian H-section mullions. Because these mullions were directly attached to the aluminum grid, they had to be coated with an aluminum-colored surface so as not to clash chromatically. These two systems, when combined, produce a structure of such visual dominance that the glass itself seems caged.

In the weeks after the Modern opened, many visitors wondered about the visual weight of the mullions. I have asked several architect friends about alternatives such as the Pilkington System, a curtain-wall system used often by I.M. Pei and Edward Larrabee Barnes. It consists of sheer vertical sheets of thick glass separated by glass mullions set at right angles. The glass walls in the double-height lobby of Harry Cobb's Fountain Place in Dallas and of Barnes' Carnegie Institute of Art in Pittsburgh are virtually the same height as those of Ando's museum in Fort Worth and maintain the shimmering weightlessness that Ando sought. Yet the Modern's staff and trustees' desire for optimal conditions for the conservation of works of art (in terms of ultraviolet light and temperature gradients) ruled out an architectural solution in keeping with Ando's original design. The necessity for opaque panels and for a thick sandwich of variously coated glass made Pilkington's system — acceptable in Pittsburgh's cooler climate — unacceptable in Fort Worth. This logical interest in the preservation of work of art in optimal conditions drives much of current museum design. Perhaps the day will come when someone with authority in art museums will question the ultimate wisdom of this approach and think as much about the optimal viewing conditions of works of art as about their millennial survival.

Another absolute rule of architectural development in the automobile-obsessed United States is that any institution must provide easy-to-find and well-lit parking accessible to the entrance. This has lead urban art museums into contortionist real-estate deals and, in certain cases, to build their own parking garages. Several of the competition entries to the Modern proposed underground parking, and like the others, Ando protected the primacy of his architecture from the visual pollution of the automobile by designing covered parking under the administrative/educational/social wing. This decision would have ensured that the Ando building was viewed from a landscape podium on the west and south to counter the watery "anti-podium" to the north and east. It would also have rhymed with Kahn's skillfully disguised exterior parking, which is completely invisible from the street. (It is interesting to note that Kahn too had originally designed the Kimbell with underground parking, but in his redesign, managed to hide it.) Ando's redesign is not so felicitous. For a series of highly practical reasons, the Modern's parking was placed out-of-doors on both the west and south sides of the building. Thus, a visit to The Modern has the comforting familiarity of a visit to one's doctor or accountant in a suburban office complex.

Just as the exterior of the building was transformed during the process of translation, so too were the interiors, particularly the galleries. Ando's competition envisioned a clear alternation of 24-by-144 foot concrete buildings placed 40 feet apart with larger-scale intervening spaces that accommodated freer internal partitioning. This alternation of confined rooms and free space was intended to give the building

Concrete-and-glass gallery bays.

Interstitial gallery on second floor.

an architectural rhythm that permits the installation of works of varying scale, style, and material in spaces appropriate to them. It was also designed both to break up and to organize exhibition conditions so as to minimize museum fatigue. On the upper level, this double nature was stronger because of the alternating systems of natural light that are, to my mind, the most important contribution of the building to gallery architecture. The confined galleries are lit directly from above, and the light filters through a curved, opaque glass ceiling light that fills the ceiling completely. By contrast, the long east-west walls of the free spaces (those outside of the confined galleries) are lit by rows of clerestory windows, the light from which is directed onto the walls by curved surfaces based on the traditional coves of Beaux-Arts galleries. Hence, the ceiling in these larger, freer spaces seems to be suspended between planes of a light-struck wall and is dark by contrast with the pure light ceiling of the gallery rooms.

Ando intended normal shifts in natural light to enliven the interplays of light-to-dark ceilings and naturally-to-artificially lit walls. Any visitor to the naturally lit galleries in Kahn's Kimbell museum experiences shifting light temperature and direction as the day progresses and clouds drift across the sky. Due to the rigorous intervention of the Modern's light consultant, George Sexton, the natural light of north Texas has been so effectively filtered that it is difficult to experience as natural light. Sexton developed a stunningly simple "double gradient" of apertures for natural light above the opaque glass ceiling lights in the second floor galleries. These vary gradually from minimum to maximum apertures as a direct result of the screen's distance from the light source — a long slit in the roof, invisible to the viewer and similar in scale to that in Kahn's Kimbell Museum of Art. This system results in light of almost complete uniformity and chromatic temperature, making the ceiling seem to many visitors as if it is artificially lit. In the gallery spaces, where the other system of light is a clerestory, there is a good deal more sense of variable natural light.

On both the lower and upper floors of the galleries, all the wall surfaces on the interior of the concrete buildings are white-painted sheetrock, like those in the Menil Collection and the Dallas Museum of Art. There is little attempt to differentiate between the concrete buildings so fetishized on the exterior and the intervening spaces. This is a pity, because, had the exterior walls of the concrete buildings remained concrete, works of art could hang easily against them, as they do against the travertine of the Kimbell Art Museum, and be washed by the natural light from the clerestory windows. The rare places in which works of art *do* hang on concrete (on the second level off the sculpture garden), they look superb. Instead, the museum's consistently white walls homogenize an experience that the architect intended to be differentiated. This is particularly problematic on the lower level, where the differences of ceiling treatment caused by skylights and clerestory windows are nonexistent. I also found the partitions of the free spaces to be more intelligent and architecturally integral in the competition plans than in the final building. It is likely that the explanation for this regularization of gallery wall surfaces was a demand of the curatorial staff, who wanted uniformity so that they could install work with maximum flexibility. If so, this is a pity. Uniformity and flexibility are not qualities of great architecture.

In the press and among visitors to the Modern, there has been much discussion about Ando's mastery of concrete. The tales told by the staff, docents, and other tour guides about the expensive Finnish plywood forms are now legend in the area, and visitors know to caress Ando's silky walls. The tactile effect is extraordinary, even to those of us who knew Louis Kahn and who had the chance to work with him and the form workers at his various projects. Kahn's

Grand stair to second floor.

Stair at end gallery bay.

waxed plywood forms, his lead plugs, and his insistence on sharp corners must be the source for Ando's even more refined systems of pouring and freeing the walls from the molds. Yet, to the eyes of many who have visited other Ando projects, the problem with the concrete at the Modern is neither its surface texture nor its razor-sharp corners, but rather the color and its consistency throughout a wall. Texas is filled with concrete buildings of real refinement (Pei's Dallas City Hall and Johnson's Thanksgiving Square Chapel, for example, are extraordinary in color, consistency, shape, and line). For that reason, and because of the proximity of the Kimbell Art Museum, it is possible to wonder about Ando's obdurate, and to my eye, deadening mid-value cool gray color. Also, in numerous instances the building suffers from visually disruptive color variations within the wall. If the building had a *béton brut* quality, such chromatic differentiation would be desirable. But in a building of such overarching refinement, such accidental-looking variation doesn't work to the building's advantage. The Pulitzer Foundation and Ando's wonderful house in Chicago have concrete walls both lighter in color and more consistent than that in Fort Worth.

Ando's Museum in Context

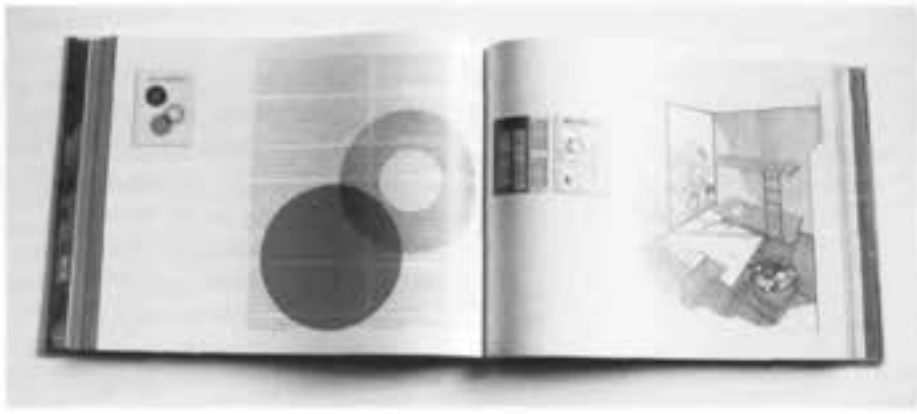
The Modern's monumentality and architectural ambition must be considered in relationship to the architectural traditions of the modern-art museum. In 1939, the New York Museum of Modern Art erected its first building, whose high modernist street façade protected artificially lit galleries with low ceilings. This building's system of small rooms, non-load-bearing, brightly lit white walls, and efficient staircases came to be associated with an aesthetic of the Modern. In many ways, the rooms of the Modern, as first installed by Alfred Barr, led to the white-walled commercial galleries of '40s and '50s New York. This domestically scaled and unpretentious form of modernism persisted in the design of spaces for modern art throughout the mid-century and was broken in 1959 by the brilliant entry of Frank Lloyd Wright's late masterpiece for the Guggenheim Museum (which he originally designed to be reddish-brown!). For Wright, and for his patrons and their advisors, modern art constituted such a fundamental break from historical art that it needed spaces as experimental as the art. New York became a battleground in the fight between the cool, modestly domestic and neutral modernism of MoMA and the architecturally aggressive modernism of The Guggenheim.

Generally, modern art museums in the United States have followed MoMA's model of restrained elegance and modesty. To this has been grafted a tradition of placing contemporary art in raw spaces created for industrial use in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries, and this trend, started in Europe, now plays well internationally. The rationale of both neutrality and rawness is that experimental modern art is best seen in spaces that are adaptable, inexpensive, and well proportioned. The quality of light and the neutrality of color are more important than an interactive architectural character or an interplay between the formal qualities of art and those of architecture. The other subtext of this notion is that modern art is not to be associated with bourgeois luxuries and thus, with the decorated interiors of what might be called the Beaux-Arts museum.

During the past generation in both Europe and the United States, modern art has so completely triumphed over Old Master paintings in both the market and the public imagination that museums designed to house it began to ennoble modernism. When considered as a group, the recently completed museums of modern and contemporary art in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago (or, outside the country, in Maastricht, Hamburg, or Monterrey), have become modernist palaces raised on podiums that are, in effect, Beaux-Arts museums without the ornament. If modern or contemporary art is housed in buildings of this splendor and ambition, surely this art must be as great as that of the Old Masters. Pollock, Rothko, Sherman, and Kiefer become Raphael, Rembrandt, Poussin, and Chardin. It is clear that the Modern in Fort Worth is part of this tradition of ennoblement. Of all the buildings in the competition, Ando's was the most architecturally ambitious and the most monumental. Yet far from being aggressive, Ando's building has a serenity and subtlety of massing that might be mistaken for architectural modesty. This building, as we have seen, is anything but modest, and its imagery of floating pavilions whose roofs are supported by thrusting columns dominates utterly. Modern art is great art at Ando's Modern.

Conclusion

The Modern contributes much to the debate about modernity and contemporaneity in art. Yet the building raises as many questions as it answers with its inaugural installation of the Modern's impressive but spotty permanent collection. On the lower level, works by canonical artists of the mid-century are housed in spaces with no natural light — a strange choice, since paintings by Rothko, Motherwell, Guston and Pollock would benefit from daylight. The second-floor galleries are filled with experimental art — often photographic, hence light-sensitive — of the past decade or two. The placement of these works in galleries of such expense and refinement forces the viewer to accept them as great works rather than to recognize that they, like all recent works of art, must withstand at least a generation of criticism and exhibition before they are effectively canonized. Yet for me, the biggest disappointment of the Modern is not that the collection has weaknesses (no Johns or Rauschenberg, for example, and not a single work of modern art from before 1940), but that a building conceived with such brilliance was not realized with a respect equal to that brilliance. We know from comparison to the Kimbell that the installation at the opening can be completely transformed and improved through time. Yet we must remember that it was Louis Kahn who completely redesigned the Kimbell so that it could be built within budget. One suspects that it was less Ando who undercut the Modern than Peter Arendt, Linbeck Construction, and their bosses, the museum's generous donors and its senior staff. A sublime conception — one of the very greatest in the history of museum design — has become a great building that could have been sublime. ■



California Dreamers

Case Study Houses: The Complete CSH Program, 1945–1966. *Edited by Peter Goessel. Introduction by Elizabeth Smith. Taschen America, 2002. 440 pp., illustrated, oversized. $150.*

Reviewed by David Hay

John Entenza's Case Study House program, famous for its coolly rational Modernist solutions to residential design, began as a clarion call for innovation following World War II. "What man has learned about himself in the last five years will, we are sure, express itself in the way he wants to be housed in the future," wrote Entenza, an editor and pubisher, in January 1945. For the next two decades, he published the plans for the program's 36 prototypes in his magazine, *Arts & Architecture*. But by 1966, the social imperative that spawned the idea — the quest for affordable and coherent design for the millions of homes needed for the burgeoning workforce of the post-war economy — had faded. So, too, had the idea of building a single-family residence oneself. Such a decision was now firmly in the hands of suburban developers, most of whom showed scant interest in the glass and wood and steel houses with egalitarian floor plans espoused by architects in the Case Study program.

By the early 1970s this almost mathematical design ideology fell afoul of the Sixties generation, many of whom, ignorant that the houses promoted equality of social relations, resented their conceptual tidiness. I recall one of the contributors to the Case Study House program, Pierre Koenig, exploding at the excesses of this period, accusing its adherents of nothing less than bringing down Modernism.

By the late 1980s, however, the thoughtful elegance of the designs created by these architects, most of whom were based in Southern California, began to be recognized again. But it wasn't developers or first time homebuilders who re-popularized this design tradition. Rather it was cultural sophisticates, again mainly in Southern California, whose ranks grew to include Hollywood stars and fashion designers. The acquisition of such Modernist icons was now a sign of savvy good taste.

Given such an audience, it's not surprising that the most comprehensive accounting of this program, Case Study Houses — with an introductory essay by Elizabeth A.T. Smith, many a wonderful photograph by Julius Shulman and others, and edited by Peter Goessel — is being sold for $150.

For those who want a superbly rendered, highly detailed archive of this program, the book is well worth its price. Smith's short introduction goes beyond mere description, arguing that renewed interest in Entenza's vision has led young contemporary architects to be excited once again by the experimental possibilities of residential design. Some of the photographic treatments, especially that of Case Study House #8 — the Eames House — are breathtaking. Even Entenza's original manifesto is reprinted in the same typeface as it was in *Arts & Architecture*.

Each design comes with the exact sober introduction that it was given in the magazine — along with a small text by Smith — and also spread around are the delightful pop-Modernist covers of the issue in which each house is featured.

But this seemingly comprehensive, archival approach has its limitations. It fails to acknowledge the extensive critical commentary already afforded Entenza's program. Much of this has come from Elizabeth A.T. Smith herself, currently the chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. In late 1989, Smith, then at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, assembled the seminal exhibition, *Blueprints for Modern Living*, a show about the Case Study houses. Two of its most inspired designs, Koenig's #22, and Ralph Rapson's Greenbelt House, #4, were reconstructed inside the then Temporary Contemporary. Rapson, a Minneapolis-based architect, envisioned a house whose open courtyard joined the bedrooms with the living area serving as a critical social space. This radical, somewhat impractical design was published in *Arts & Architecture* but, like many of the prototypes, was never built.

It was an outstanding show and its catalogue, *Blueprints for Modern Living - History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses*, which included essays by Smith, Thomas S. Hines, and Reyner Banham, among others, illustrates the shortcomings of the new Taschen publication. The latter eschews any examination of the success or failure of Entenza's program, its historical antecedents, and its debatable contribution to housing design in the mass market. The Case Study House program never satisfactorily addressed the economics of scale with regard to, say, lot size, materials, and community organization that ventures such as Levittown attempted to solve.

It is odd that the editors at Taschen would overlook this. In Taschen's earlier but similarly expensive *Neutra — Complete Works*, author Barbara Mac Lamprecht provides fresh conceptual insight into her subject. She writes fluently of the architect's embrace of 'biorealism' - his profound curiousity about the human species as a guiding force in his design — as well as his always-present social concern. Thus prepared, I approached the textual introductions and handsome illustrations with considerable zeal.

I felt the same way after reading the first book on Entenza's program, *Case Study Houses 1945-1962*, recently reissued by Hennessey + Ingalls. Written by Esther McCoy, its reproductions are less than sharp and have none of the visual impact of the Taschen volume. (The latter's lush images glorify the houses in ways that mimic photographs of European palaces, giving off a grandiosity not entirely appropriate for a program that had, at least in its origins, the idea of creating housing for the mass market.) The wit and verve of McCoy's commentary captures the excitement of its subject. Similarly, she places this innovative program in a context and sees its death knell — who wants an individually designed house when a developer can offer you a much cheaper one? — as a warning sign.

Interestingly, Taschen's book offers further evidence of the uncritical nature of respect heaped on the Case Study house program, although in the form of an epilogue written by Julius Shulman and carefully tucked away on page 436. Shulman, who photographed 15 of the 24 realized Case Study Houses, takes issue with those who see Entenza's program as providing a definitive blueprint for low-cost housing. He notes that many houses, paid for by clients, many reasonably well-heeled, suffered from inevitable compromises and did not adhere to some of the program's imperatives. Further, Shulman viewed Entenza's choice of architects to be included as often quixotic and exclusionary. Shulman says, for instance, that Entenza never gave a nod to Gregory Ain, the architect most interested in low-cost housing in Southern California, owing to Entenza's disapproval of Ain's left-wing leanings. The photographer further argues that public reaction to these houses, while staggering in numbers — in the first three years of the program, 368,554 people toured the initial six homes — was less than laudatory, remaining cautious, if not critical.

With this all this information in mind, I turn the pages of the new book with greater curiosity, understanding, and some pain, knowing that even with the best of intentions, the Case Study House program was a valuable but mixed success. Nonetheless, such knowledge brings these houses to life, situates them in design history and adds excitement to the otherwise definitive but strictly literal treatment given them in Case Study houses.

California Nightmare

Dead Cities: A Natural History *by Mike Davis. New York, NY: New Press, 2002. 288 pp. $26.95 hardcover.*

Reviewed by Alex Lichtenstein

Mike Davis stands out as one of the most original thinkers on the current intellectual scene — part social historian, part urban theorist, part cultural critic, part apocalyptical environmentalist seer. Best known for *City of Quartz*, his 1990 tour de force portrait of Los Angeles, Davis possesses an uncanny ability to capture the intricate workings of contemporary urban political economy. In his work, the abstractions of capital flow and urban design decisions have a concrete impact on the everyday world in which new immigrants and dispossessed working people struggle for dignity. Not since Carey McWilliams wrote about Southern California in the 1930s and 1940s has a social critic so unerringly captured the tension between radical social possibility and rampant capitalist greed that has shaped the region's social history and urban ecology.

Dead Cities, a collection of Davis's essays from the last decade, offers the opportunity to trace the evolution of his thinking since the appearance of City of Quartz. Recently, Davis has turned his attention from the urban to the natural landscape, turning away from the social disasters of disinvestment, so-called urban "renewal," and the assault on working class communities that characterized the remaking of L.A. in the 1980s, to face the ecological crisis gripping the urbanizing American West ("ecocide in Marlboro Country," in his telling phrase). Bringing these newer concerns together with his older work, these essays allow us to take the measure of Davis's cultural critique and to evaluate the dire pronouncements that characterized his previous efforts to "excavate the future" of southern California.

The sledgehammer prose that made Davis so much fun to read in situ holds up less well over time; some of his essays have become historical artifacts rather than the precise inventories of disaster they seemed at the time. Davis's imagination is currently captivated by what he terms "neo-catastrophism," the notion that sudden, cataclysmic events can rupture the fabric of social and natural history. In retrospect, this apocalyptic feel is what always gave Davis's descriptions of L.A.'s past and his prognoses of its future so much power. Ten years down the road, however, the sky has not yet fallen. One can't help but wonder how the past decade has borne out, or refuted, his early writings' millenialist vision of imminent urban collapse and social anarchy.

For example, Davis proclaimed in a 1990 essay reprinted here, that "the social costs of [L.A.'s] downtown growth will rise steeply in the next decade." But though the assertion could easily be measured, there is no indication whether it proved correct. Similarly, the giant sinkhole that opened at the intersection of Hollywood and Vermont in 1991, described then by Davis as "the biggest transportation fiasco in modern history," has been paved over and now anchors a trendy mixed commercial, residential, and ethnic enclave, which Davis doesn't acknowledge. And his brilliant 1992 "autopsy" of L.A., which charted the racial and class resegregation of the city in the wake of Reaganism, cries out for an update that notes the recent (thwarted) attempt of the San Fernando valley to secede from the city, or recent signs of genuine grassroots renewal of the labor movement. In general, a bit more self-reflection on Davis's part, historicizing the context of these essays, as well as updating their significance a decade after the L.A. riots, would have made *Dead Cities* a stunning achievement. Now it stands mostly as an inventory of Davis's uneven oeuvre.

That said, there is no one else so able, with a few telling anecdotes, to capture the social and ecological blindness that afflicts the avatars of urban development in the American West. "Las Vegas," Davis argues convincingly, "demonstrates the fanatical persistence of an environmentally and socially bankrupt system of human settlement," a system "stupefied by the ready availability of artificially cheap water, power, and land" — a system for which Los Angeles remains the template.

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Ironically, while Davis's dystopian catastrophism merits an update, his "aging socialist's" heart still clings to stifled utopian possibility. In a thrilling essay, written just last year, Davis offers some autobiographical musings, describing the alienation and rebelliousness that animated white working-class teenagers in the southern California of his youth (circa 1960), and sparked a series of "teen riots." This was not the incipient New Left of Berkeley or Cambridge. "We seethed in jealousy against everyone who lived at a beach, spent their nights in a coffee house, or went to an elite university," Davis recalls. Yet despite such class resentment, he and his friends still caught the wave of "the possibility of free time and space beyond the program of Fordist society" that was "the vital cultural substrate of the sixties."

In the end, it remains difficult to match this brief glimpse of an alternative history of California with Davis's relentless pessimism about the possibility of a humane urbanity. Yet, in one of the closing pieces in *Dead Cities*, Davis examines the imaginative fiction of urban destruction, post-apocalyptical narratives of flowers blooming from the ruins of modern London. So too, from beneath the rubble of Los Angeles's failed dreams, perhaps hope and renewal may still sprout.

Xtremely Fabulous PreFab

Xtreme Houses *by Courtenay Smith and Sean Topham. New York: Prestel, 2002, XX pages, illustrated. $29.95 paperback.*

Prefab *by Bryan Burkhart and Alison Arieff. Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2002. 160 pages, illustrated. $39.95 hardback.*

Reviewed by Janet Moore

"We are all architects," boldly proclaim Courtenay Smith and Sean Topham at the start of their new book, *Xtreme Houses*. The authors explain that although they really are not architects, they have shaped various abodes to meet their individual needs throughout their lives. This, they conclude "makes us architects along with everyone else who has made a decision about the place they call home."

With this introduction *Xtreme Houses* launches into a clever and interesting foray into the world of on-the-edge architectural design, focusing on houses that challenge traditional methods or attempt to solve problems. Similarly, in *Prefab*, Allison Arieff and Bryan Burkhart examine how the "prefab" market has enlarged from mere Quonset huts to include creative, customized and often upscale options. Both books reveal some of the architectural community's current solutions for social ills such as homelessness and overcrowding. They also discuss how consumers are using technology to take a more hands-on role in the architectural design of their abodes — even the prefabricated models.

Because the books cover similar topics, they occasionally and predictably overlap. Both highlight Rotterdam-based architect Kas Oosterhuis to illustrate how clients can customize prefabricated modules over the Internet. His web-savvy clients become virtual co-designers of their own "Variomatic Houses" by using his interactive web site. They can personalize their prefabricated dwellings by

selecting from an online menu of room dimensions, construction materials, and the like. Oosterhuis' clients can order a scale model or a set of drawings of their planned house — and even apply for building permits — online.

Both books also look at the cutting-edge work of environmentally conscious Japanese architect Shigeru Ban. *Prefab* examines how Ban uses wooden bookshelves to support his Furniture House, making the 176-pound prefabricated shelving units the home's main structural support. Readers of *Xtreme Houses* will see how Ban actually supports his famous Paper House with large, inexpensive paper tubes of recycled cardboard.

Like Ban, many of the featured architects experiment with inexpensive, environmentally friendly building materials. For example, *Xtreme Houses* describes how London-based architect Sarah Wigglesworth incorporated cheap straw bales into her own house, fireproofing the straw with lime and then protecting it from the elements with corrugated sheeting. Similarly, Michael Reynolds has helped clients from countries as disparate as Bolivia, Canada and Scotland to fashion used tires, bottles and cans into independent biospheres, or "earthships." Not only do these huts use discarded waste as construction materials, but they also maximize heat efficiency.

Some designers are even trying to create housing from abandoned metal containers. In *Xtreme Houses*, artist Vito Acconci turns six hollowed-out cars into a crazily stacked abode complete with a kitchen and bathroom. On a more practical note, in South Africa architect Michael Hoenes wires together surplus soda cans to create inexpensive modular shacks. Coated with anticorrosion paint and resting on a foundation of concrete-filled cans, the buildings cost a mere $800, compared to the $2,400 cost of a less-well insulated concrete-block hut. Similarly, "Global Peace Containers" addresses Jamaica's homeless problem by turning shipping containers into cheap housing.

Shipping containers occasionally also appeal to the upscale market. According to *Xtreme Houses*, the group LOT/EK altered one into an additional bedroom and patio for an existing New York penthouse. The Guzman Penthouse project thus managed to recycle an unwanted shipping container and simultaneously create additional housing out of a cramped urban space.

Like the Guzman Penthouse, Swedish civil engineers Annika and Hakan Olsson have experimented with prefabricated penthouses for tony London neighborhoods. *Prefab* explains how the luxury modules are assembled in Sweden, shipped abroad and then hoisted by crane onto London rooftops. Once plumbed and outfitted to the buyer's specifications, these units sell for upwards of $4 million. The units' magnificent London views supposedly justify their high price. It's no surprise that the Olssons also hope to try their luck in New York.

And then there's Stefan Eberstadt's solution to urban overcrowding for the less affluent set: the Rucksack House. Literally hung outside an apartment window by nylon straps, this plywood, aluminum and Plexiglas box gives apartment residents 80 additional square feet of living space.

Both books demonstrate that the niche market for portable private spaces is growing. *Prefab* shows a number of houses that are easily transported because they rest on stilts rather than permanent foundations. For a mere $50,000, a purchaser can buy KFN Systems' "SU-SI" model; not only will a customized contemporary mobile home on stilts be manufactured and delivered in five weeks, but once unloaded from the truck, this dream home can be assembled in a mere five hours.

True to its title, *Xtreme Houses* features more outlandish examples of mobile housing, such as the inflatable "Instant Home" developed by Valeska Peschke. This Berlin-based artist carts her 150-square-foot vinyl house around on a truck, and blows it up in about two minutes. Thanks to its portability she has camped out easily in both deserts and parking lots.

Crossing into the fashion realm, Parisian Studio Orta invented "refugee wear" bodysuits that convert into tents. The studio's founder, Lucy Orta, is quoted as saying that "clothes are fully entitled to become architectural dwellings." In case several travelers want to turn their clothes into a communal architectural statement, her "Modular Architecture" model allows nomads to zip their individual suits into a single shelter.

And for those who just need a quick retreat from the world, the Parisian group PO.D has created prototypes for retreat pods. Made of protective pillows, the pods can be packed away in a backpack, then easily inflated into a comforting, albeit temporary, private space.

So what inspires these architects to design such non-traditional dwellings? Sometimes it's personal experience, like that of Los Angeles architect Jennifer Siegal. Her stint selling hot dogs from a portable kiosk, as her grandfather had done, stimulated her "Portable House" design. Sometimes it's an architect's personal commitment to the environment and desire to solve societal problems. Sometimes it's the sheer challenge of taking a seemingly mundane concept like "prefabrication" and creatively stretching it. And sometimes it might just be to have a bit of fun. In *Prefab* and *Xtreme Houses* we learn that even unglamorous prefabrication, in the most "xtreme" case, can be far-out, frivolous, fascinating and, occasionally, pretty fabulous.

New and Notable

Sanctuaries: The Last Works of John Hejduk *by K. Michael Hays. Whitney Museum of American Art/Abrams, 140 pp., $29.95.* This catalog for an exhibition that opens at the Menil in May highlights the later work of architect John Hejduk (1929-2000), in which he shifted from mathematical concerns toward a carnival-esque mode that he called architectural "masques." Ranging stylistically from geometric forms to biomorphism (buildings that seem to have hair, beaks, eyes, and legs) to variations on theaters, chapels, and labyrinths, Hejduk employs allegorical images of angels, animals, and machines to depict architecture as sanctuary — for art, for culture, for enduring rituals, and for the human spirit itself.

When Brazil Was Modern: A Guide to Architecture, 1928-1960 *by Christopher Alexander. Princeton Architectural Press, 468 pp., $34.95 paperback.* This comprehensive guide takes us on a tour of over 125 buildings designed between 1928, the year of Gregori Warchavchik's historic Paulista House, and 1960, when the capital Brasilia was inaugurated. Works by 33 architects, including renowned figures such as Oscar Niemeyer and Paulo Mendes da Rocha, as well as lesser-known practitioners, are profiled in photographs, drawings, and brief descriptions. Not only does this survey fill a crucial gap on the subject; it sheds new light on the aesthetic and social underpinnings of Brazil's modern architecture.

Herzog & de Meuron: Natural History, *edited by Philip Ursprung. Lars Müller, 460 pp., $65.* More than any of their contemporaries, Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron are challenging the boundaries between architecture and art. This exhibition catalogue gathers projects by the pair in six thematic portfolios that suggest an evolutionary history: Appropriation & Reconstruction, Transformation & Alienation, Stacking & Compression, Imprints & Moulds, Interlocking Spaces, and Beauty & Atmosphere. Accompanying the portfolios are essays by more than 20 artists, scholars, and architects.

Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects: Architecture, Art, and Craft *by Paul Goldberger. Monacelli, 304 pp., $45.* For the past 35 years, this Seattle-based firm has created a body of architecture characterized by a relaxed modernism attuned to the unique climate and dramatic landscape of the Pacific Northwest. Each of the projects featured — particularly the firm's work on art museums and art collectors' residences — exhibits a striking use of both natural and highly refined materials, a masterful modulation of light, and a careful balance between monumentality and intimacy.

Rafael Viñoly *by Joan Ockman. Princeton Architectural Press, 400 pp. $85.* In a series of major commissions, Viñoly has transformed conventional projects — conference centers, recital halls, sports facilities — into unconventional works of beauty, notable for their lucidity and technical prowess. This encyclopedic monograph, the architect's first, includes projects in the United States, Argentina, Egypt, Korea, and Japan. Featured are the recently opened Kimmel Performing Arts Center in Philadelphia, Princeton University Stadium, and the Tokyo Forum, which Herbert Muschamp of *The New York Times* called "an absolutist building, perfectly realized."

Mini House *by Alejandro Bahamón. Harper Design International, 192 pp., $29.95.* The increased demand for space has created a shortage of land on which to build. This book presents 25 small houses designed by architects who have demonstrated ability to use every square foot. Ranging from 344 to 1,291 square feet, projects include the Keenan Tower house, a home office in New York, a villa nestled among the slopes of Mount Fuji, the Phillips House in Chicago, a summer house/gallery in Denmark, a residence in Finland that straddles a small river, and a converted garage in Los Angeles.

ARO: Architecture Research Office *by Architecture Research Office. Princeton Architectural Press, 176 pp., $40.* Faced with the design of something as simple as a wall, ARO takes an investigative approach very different from that of most architects. What makes a wall? Need it be flat? Continuous? Impermeable? Might it be made of small pieces of paper that lock together? This approach is evident in ARO's work, which manages to be simultaneously thoughtful and sensual. Their first monograph features self-directed research, exhibition design, commercial interiors, and the popular Armed Services Recruiting Station in Times Square.

Dwellings: The Vernacular House Worldwide *by Paul Oliver. Phaidon, 288 pp., $59.95.* The architecture of ordinary people represents more than 90 percent of the world's buildings, including some 800 million homes. First published in 1987 and now expanded, *Dwellings* documents the construction and decoration of traditional structures that are built by their occupants or by members of a community. Taking into account developments in geography, gender studies, sociology, and anthropology, Oliver surveys how communities cope with climate, migration, development, and symbolic and cultural meaning in architecture. — *Michael Kimmins*

Sidewalks and Civility

Bartlett Street: A natural place for the introverted to dwell.

BY ANN ROSENWINKEL

The 2300 block of Bartlett Street is populated by vintage late-1930s asbestos-clad cottages on lawns that slope gently up from the street in a pastoral way. There are also people living there. For a long time it was hard to tell that these houses actually were inhabited. With no sidewalks for accidental conversation this was a natural place for the introverted to dwell. When I moved here in the fall of 1992, the residents were mostly those who had built these houses. I met very few of these elders. Occasionally I'd see a window blind move and feel comforted to know that someone was in there. There was a feeling on the street of the spirit withdrawing to some other place prior to death.

The first thing I did when we moved in was to build a solid wood gate. I could close it and make a safe place for my toddlers to play. No one could see them from the street. They couldn't meander into the front yard and be snatched or hit by a car. My children were half the kid population on the street. The other half were fast-growing pre-adolescents. Our social activities took place away from home at pre-arranged times at places we drove to in our minivan.

As time passed we became friends with Marguerite and Fredrick, the post-octogenarian couple who lived next door. They noticed when we went away for the weekend, and we noticed when one of them was laid up in bed. When Fredrick died, we were sorry and missed him. After that my girls and I would go visit Marguerite to show off their newest dress-up schemes. And she would show us all of her old stuff which she had lots of. She told us about growing up in Galveston. And she told us how she and Fredrick had lived next door to each for years here on Bartlett Street and then finally fell in love too late to have children. We were sad again when she died.

Their empty house was shortly filled first with a young couple and then their baby, too. Soon they announced they were expecting another child and moving "out to Egypt," meaning Sugar Land, to find a bigger house. At the same moment the neighbors on the other side decided thirty years of lawn care was enough for them and they were moving to a high-rise.

So it seemed I turned around one day and six new kids had moved on to the street. Now I look out through my blinds and see glimpses of one or two of these young neighbors playing cops –and robbers. We parents watch them carefully during the late afternoon rush hour. Drivers, happy to find a way out of the frustrating stop-and-go of Houston city traffic, zip down our side street. Mothers brave the morning medical center cut-through traffic to escort children to school. New families with strollers and dog owners jump into the yard for a chat to avoid being mowed down. And some one has called the city to request a sidewalk be put in.

I found out about this proposal from one of my original neighbors one evening as my young daughters and I enjoyed our dinner. The force of her knock threw open our back door. She was filled with ardent purpose. As we looked up, amazed, from our pizza, she made her case. The crime rate on our street was about to rise, and our property values were on the verge of a dive. Finally, she argued (we weren't sure with whom), the lovely bucolic quality of our street would be ruined. There was a plan afoot to put in sidewalks.

My daughters were taken in by her strident words. They still haven't changed their minds. Sidewalks are an anathema to their logical sensitive girl natures. They haven't experienced a sidewalk as the stage for childish activities: lemonade stands, bike-riding, hopscotch, wagon trains or simple daydreaming on the possibilities hidden within the Rorschach-like cracks. To them sidewalks mean the paving over of more dirt and grass, the decimation of tiny habitats, the cutting of the roots of beautiful old trees… and change.

To me a sidewalk is just the right thing to mark the changes that have already occurred on our street. We have faced that awkward moment where we look up from our self-absorbed comfortable urban isolationism and see that another shares our path. Out of human obligation we greet one another. And it is possible that we may brush shoulders, even bump into one another as we pass by. Apologies are muttered with a deferential nod of heads. The way is made for the real hellos at the next meeting. Sidewalks are the place for that. ■

stelton

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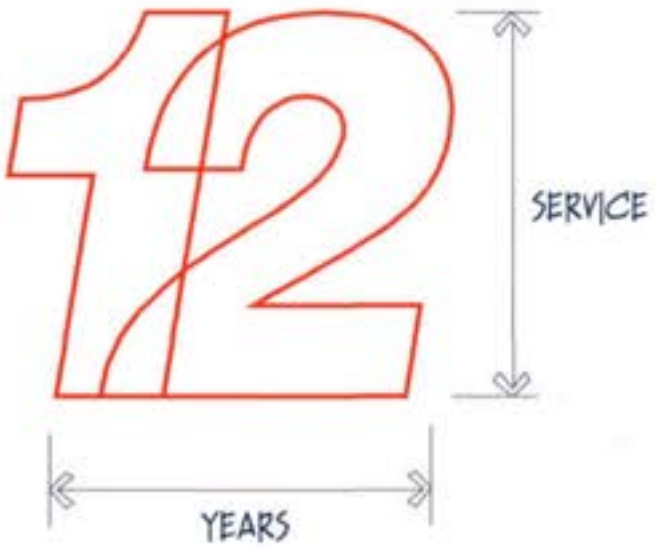

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