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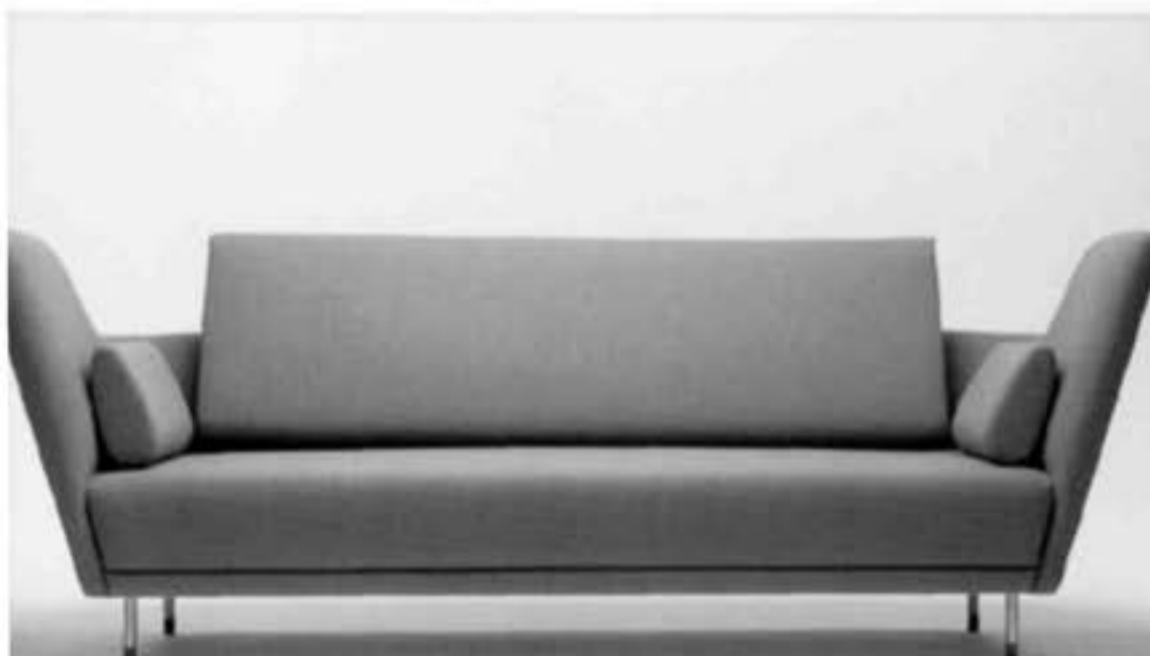
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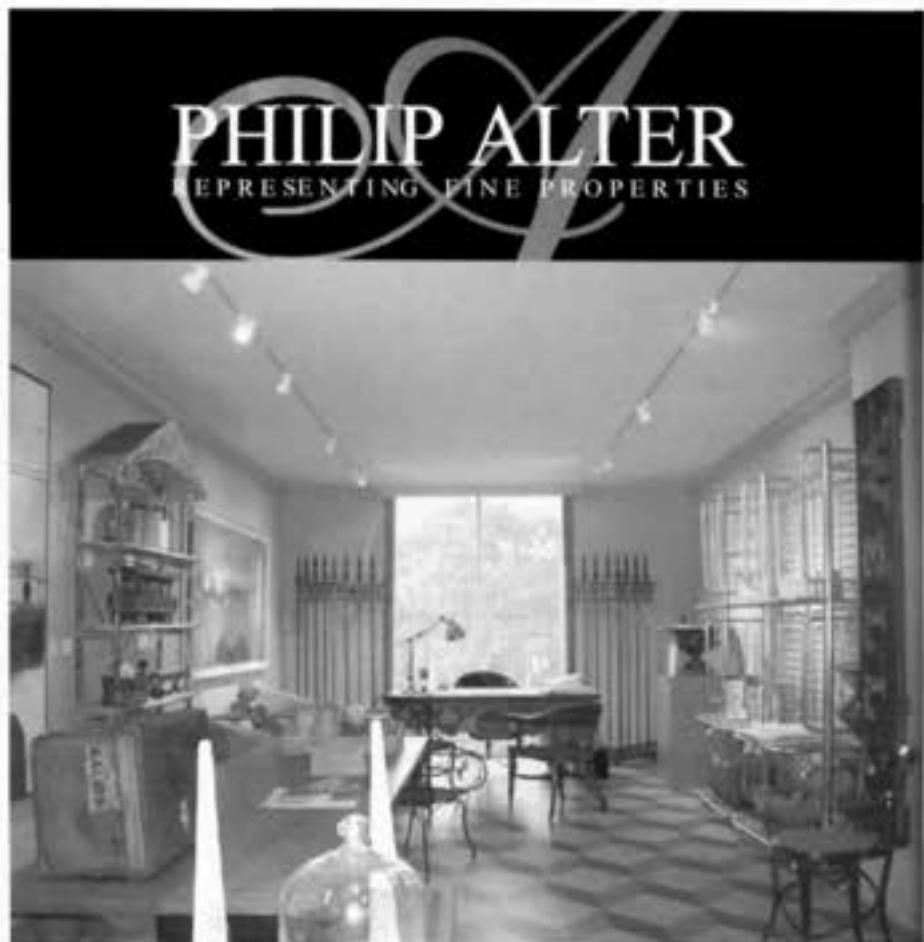
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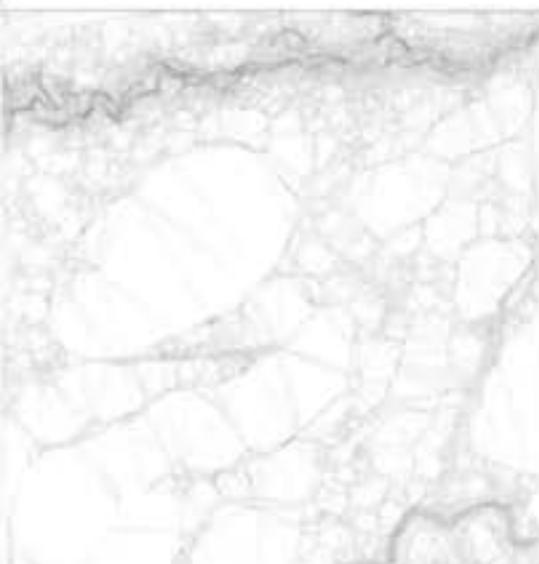
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# RDA GALA 2004

## MAN IN MOTION



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### Photos by Phyllis Head and Gail Williams

1. Larry and Jayne Lander
2. Rice University President David Leebron and wife Y. Ping Sun
3. Gala chairs Gerald and Anita Smith
4. Jeff and Barbara White Bryson
5. Sylvie and Rondell Walker
6. Robyn and Bruce Webb
7. Gala underwriting co-chair Dianne Lester with Mike Lewter
8. Linda Sylvan, RDA executive director; Lisa Simon, Cite managing editor; Barrie Scardino, executive director, AIA Houston chapter
9. Mitzi and Michael Morton and Jennifer Pfeiffer
10. Barbore Amelio and Randy Roberts
11. Melanie Wong and David Andrews
12. Auction chair Stephanie Gibson and Chad Nuzum
13. Rice architecture student volunteers
14. Andy Farkas and Karen Lantz
15. Former METRO head Shirley Delibero and METRO's John Sedlik
16. Marilyn Archer and Jack Eby
17. Gala underwriting co-chair Judith McClain with Rice University School of Architecture dean Lars Lerup and Adriane Pinedo
18. Emily Sing and Erick Ragni
19. Steven Hecht and Deborah Brachstein
20. Julie Kierzelman and Christopher Tribble
21. Jim and Jo Furr
22. Tim and Kimberly Deboer
23. Gala environment chair Louann Rottet
24. Honoree Ed Wulfe and wife Lorraine
25. Andrea and Bob Crammer
26. Russell and Rana Hruska
27. Kico and Sera Taver
28. Dennis Carpenter and Carrie Rushing

The 18th annual Rice Design Alliance Gala, held on Saturday, November 13, honored developer and civic leader Ed Wulfe and Houston's Metropolitan Transit Authority. The evening, chaired by Anita and Gerald Smith, included dinner catered by Jackson and Company, music by El Orbitz, and a silent auction. The venue was the new METRO Headquarters Building (PGAL, 2004) at the Downtown Transit Center, 1900 Main Street. Nearly 1,000 RDA supporters arrived by rail and automobile and were taken up to the 13th floor, which afforded a 360-degree view of the Houston skyline. Manhattan Construction Company prepared the still-under-construction building for the Man in Motion Gala.

Environment chairs Lauren Rottet and Erick Ragni of DMJM Rottet, and graphics chair Herman Dyal of fd2s, transformed the raw space into one that evoked light rail. Video shot from a moving train was projected on the walls, and the table decorations recalled landscaping along the Main Street line. Guests collected the party favors, chocolate coins with an image of the Man in Motion, Ed Wulfe, in small banks in the shape of the light rail cars, provided by METRO.

As chairman of Citizens for Public Transportation, Ed Wulfe led the effort that resulted in the successful passage of the referendum in favor of Houston's light rail development. Wulfe serves as chairman of the Main Street Coalition and has led the redevelopment of Houston's Main Street Corridor into a signature boulevard. His company's award-winning redevelopments of Gulfgate Shopping Center and Meyerland Plaza have been credited as catalysts in helping to improve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Nearly 1,000 architects, designers, engineers, contractors, developers, and RDA members attended this annual event. Sighted in the crowd were Margaret and Louis Skidmore, Benji and Erica Levitt, Manhattan Construction's Leonard Rejcek, METRO's Frank Wilson, John Casbarian with wife Natalye Appel, and Jane and Ken Page. The gala raised \$390,000 in underwriting (chaired by Judith McClain, Kay Lentz, and Dianne Lester) and ticket sales, and the fabulous auction, chaired by Stephanie Gibson, raised nearly \$55,000. These funds will support the 2005 RDA programs and Cite.

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# CALENDAR

## LECTURES

### INTERCONNECTIVITY: BUILDING

Monday, March 7, 6 p.m.  
Louise Harpman, Principal,  
SpechtHarpmann  
Gerald D. Hines College  
of Architecture Theater, Room 150  
713.743.2400 or [www.arch.uh.edu/news](http://www.arch.uh.edu/news)

### DESIGN MODELS, FIGMENTS, AND THE ORIGIN OF THE AFTER IMAGE

Monday, March 14, 5 p.m.  
Ben van Berkel, Principal,  
UN Studio, Amsterdam  
Rice School of Architecture Farish Gallery  
713.348.4864 or [www.arch.rice.edu](http://www.arch.rice.edu)

### INTERCONNECTIVITY: SUSTAINABLE MODERN

Monday, March 28, 6 p.m.  
James Garrison, Garrison Architects  
Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture  
Theater, Room 150  
713.743.2400 or [www.arch.uh.edu/news](http://www.arch.uh.edu/news)

### SALLY WALSH LECTURE

Thomas Phifer, Thomas Phifer  
and Partners  
Wednesday, April 6, 7 p.m.  
Presented by RDA; The Houston  
Architecture Foundation; and the  
American Institute of Architects, Houston  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Brown Auditorium  
713.348.4876 or [www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

### 2004 AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE

Sunday, April 10, 2 p.m.  
Peter Rowe, Dean, Graduate School  
of Design, Harvard University  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Brown Auditorium  
[www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org)

### IN SEARCH OF A PLOT

Monday, April 11, 5 p.m.  
Bjarke Ingels and Julien de Smedt,  
Principals, PLOT, Copenhagen  
Rice School of Architecture  
Farish Gallery  
713.348.4864 or [www.arch.rice.edu](http://www.arch.rice.edu)

### RDA LECTURE: BUILT IN BRAZIL

Lauro Cavalcanti  
Wednesday, April 20, 7 p.m.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Brown Auditorium  
713.348.4876



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10911 Willowspur Drive, William E. Jenkins, 1956 (see RDA Annual Architecture Tour, opposite page).



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5203 Stomper Way, Harwood Taylor, 1955.

### ALAIN BUBLEX: PLUG-IN CITY

Thursday, April 21, 6 p.m.  
Bruce Bégin, lecturer in philosophy,  
University of Picardie, Amiens, France  
Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture  
Theater, Room 150  
713.743.2400 or [www.arch.uh.edu/news](http://www.arch.uh.edu/news)

### POPULATION THINKING AND MATERIAL PRACTICES

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.  
Peter Trummer,  
Berlage Institute, Rotterdam  
Rice School of Architecture Farish Gallery  
713.348.4864 or [www.arch.rice.edu](http://www.arch.rice.edu)



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4160 Meyerwood, Wilson, Morris, Creak & Anderson, 1968.

## OverCite

The advertisement for modus vivendi (page 9, Cite 62) was designed by Dearwater Design ([www.dearwater.com](http://www.dearwater.com)). Cite regrets any confusion that may have resulted from the placement of [www.minordesign.com](http://www.minordesign.com) near the ad.

## SYMPOSIA

**CULTURING NATURES: THE KENNON SYMPOSIUM / MODULATIONS, SESSION II**  
 Friday, April 1, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Manuel Delanda, Evan Douglass, Keller Easterling, Helene Furjan, Ulrika Karlsson, Sean Lally, John Maeda, Chris Perry, Michael Speaks, Bruce Sterling, Mark Yim, J. Meejin Yoon  
 Rice School of Architecture  
 Farish Gallery  
 713.348.4864 or [www.arch.rice.edu](http://www.arch.rice.edu)

**GULF COAST GREEN 2005 SYMPOSIUM ON BUILDING**  
 Friday, April 29, 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.  
 George R. Brown Convention Center  
 713.426.7473 or [www.gulfcoastgreen.org](http://www.gulfcoastgreen.org)

## EXHIBITIONS

**THE BOSQUET HOUSE, BY DONALD BARTHELME**  
 March 12-April 26  
 Gerald D. Hines  
 College of Architecture Archives  
 713.743.2400 or [www.arch.uh.edu/news](http://www.arch.uh.edu/news)

**SUSTAINABLE MODERN: THE WORK OF GARRISON ARCHITECTS**  
 March 14-April 14  
 Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture Gallery  
 713.743.2400 or [www.arch.uh.edu/news](http://www.arch.uh.edu/news)

**TERRY ALLEN: SELECTIONS FROM DUGOUT**  
 April 15-June 11  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**ALAIN BUBLEX: PLUG-IN CITY**  
 April 21-June 11  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**RDA PARTNERS: FRESHFORUM2**  
 Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.-10 p.m.  
 Open-call exhibition of emerging design professionals' recent work  
 Intexure Architects  
 1315 Sterrett Street  
 713.348.5583 or [www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

**POPULANCE**  
 June 24-August 27  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**METRAMORPHOSE**  
 April 14-April 30  
 Works by French visual artists inspired by the newly completed Bordeaux Light Rail  
 The Willow Street Pump Station  
 University of Houston-Downtown  
 811 San Jacinto Street  
 713.221.8000

## EVENTS

**ANT FARM 1968-1978**  
 Wednesday, March 2, noon  
 Brown Bag Gallery Tour with Garth Jowett, Professor, School of Communication, University of Houston  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**RDA HOMETOWN TOUR: MEXICO CITY**  
 March 16-March 20  
 713.348.4876 or [www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

**RDA ANNUAL ARCHITECTURE TOUR WITH HOUSTON MOD: MODERN MODE: HOUSTON ARCHITECTURE AT MID-CENTURY**  
 Saturday, April 2, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sunday, April 3, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.  
 6328 Brookside, Allen Williams (1950); 3981 Del Monte, Donald Barthelme (1941); 315 Teakwood, Marvin K. Gordy (1967); 10923 Kirwick Street, Caudill Rowlett Scott (1963); 5203 Stamper Way, Harwood Taylor (1955); 4156 & 4160 Meyerwood Drive, Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (1968); 10911 Willowisp Drive, William R. Jenkins (1956)  
 713.348.4876 or [www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

**RECEPTION: TERRY ALLEN: SELECTIONS FROM DUGOUT**  
 Friday, April 15, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**RECEPTION: ALAIN BUBLEX: PLUG-IN CITY**  
 Thursday, April 21, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**ALAIN BUBLEX: PLUG-IN CITY**  
 Wednesday, April 27, noon  
 Brown Bag Gallery Tour with Bruce Webb, Professor of Architecture,  
 Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**RDA HOMETOWN TOUR: SEATTLE/VICTORIA**  
 June 15-June 19  
 713.348.4876 or [www.rda.rice.edu](http://www.rda.rice.edu)

**RECEPTION: POPULANCE**  
 Friday, June 24, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
 120 Fine Arts Building  
 713.743.9530 or [www.blaffergallery.org](http://www.blaffergallery.org)

**IIDA 50/50 SALE**  
 Saturday, May 21, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
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 The Resource Center  
 7026 Old Katy Road  
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The Plaza Apartment Hotel, as it was known at the time (Joseph Finger, 1926), circa 1945.

## New Life for an Old Hotel

In a city that seems to dispose of things as soon as the taint of age is on them, the Plaza Hotel at 5052 Montrose Boulevard is an interesting anomaly. Although it was abandoned for more than 20 years, powerful Houston forces are now working to bring the old hotel back to life as the Plaza Medical Center. In the next 12 to 18 months, the Plaza will be remade to support high-end medical office space, with each floor of the small hotel footprint devoted to one or at most two practices' offices.

The Plaza's resurrection is the result of a timely confluence of creative architectural design, real estate talent, and leading-edge mechanical, electrical, and data information technologies. Most relevant of all, however, is the Plaza's proximity to the Texas Medical Center.

As land around the medical center has become increasingly expensive and the surrounding streets increasingly congested, medical facility sites north of Hermann Park have come to be considered viable. The prime Montrose Boulevard location of the Plaza is close enough to the TMC to be "in the medical center," and close enough for the medical staff to move

quickly among office, hospitals, and lecture halls. For the patient, the site has a well-known address and is highway-accessible, but is far away from TMC traffic headaches and parking expenses.

The costs of renovating the Plaza are supported by the expected high medical office rents. However, the architectural challenges have required some extremely creative thinking. Previous efforts at renovation were stymied by the small hotel floor plate and equally narrow central circulation hall-to-wall depths, elevator hoistways, and stairwells. Just as daunting were the city's ADA codes and off-street parking requirements, which could not be met by the aging small garage to the west of the building.

The architectural team, led by Cisneros Architects with the developer Greenberg & Company, is demolishing the garage and central elevator core of the old hotel, and redesigning this parking and vertical circulation relationship to bring the building up to code. The new garage structure will contain 250 spaces. Each of its floors will link to a corresponding medical office floor and elevator

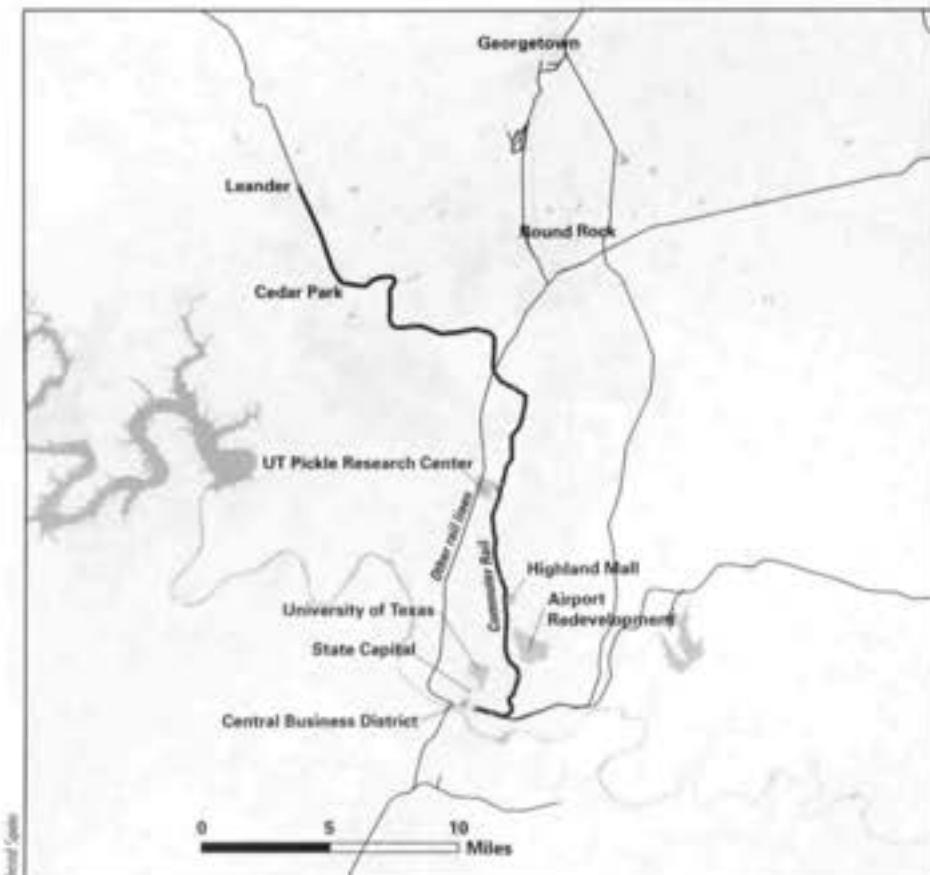
lobby so that a patient can go in straight to the floor of his appointment from the garage—in a wheelchair if necessary. In this way the front door avoids having to accommodate access ramps, and the parking structure does not have to accommodate multi-level movement to the ground.

The new elevator banks, sized to meet medical office building codes, will be located in the northwest notch of the Plaza footprint, linking the new garage and the rejuvenated office floors. This allows the current too-small elevator shafts to be used as vertical chases for mechanical and information technology distribution. With one or two office suites per floor, fewer parking spaces are needed compared to equivalently sized business offices or residential units with the same footprint. To further facilitate parking, the garage will use new information technology similar to systems employed at the TMC. A kind of reserved parking, the technology will match office appointments with available parking spaces on that floor, and a patient will be told when making an appointment where her space will be.

The Cisneros team—primed by a number of recent, challenging renovations of tight, older buildings—has structured the small floor plans to accommodate the realities of modern medical offices. Hallways are minimized with access and emergency egress in mind. They are located on the outer north or west edges of the floors, with views and daylight (a nice hallway environment), and thus allow the waiting rooms, patient rooms, support spaces, and doctors' offices to occupy the full remaining floor space.

The rejuvenated external form of the building will be similar to that of the Plaza's heyday, with the weaknesses of age repaired. The developer plans to use double-pane windows that match the original double-hung profiles. The prominent elevator penthouse on the roof will be replaced. The front plaza and porte cochère will be redesigned to serve as the entry for only the ground-floor functions (the upper floors being served directly from the garage). The ground floor is likely to be the site of those medical practices and medical ancillary services, such as pharmacies, that will enjoy the high ceilings and the "front door" presence. While the building may come to house the growing retinue of cosmetic surgery professionals in the city, this rejuvenation of the Plaza is anything but skin deep.

—Rives T. Taylor



## Suburban Rail Carries the Day in Austin

In November, voters in Austin approved a commuter rail line, 62 percent to 38 percent, only four years after rejecting a light rail proposal, 50.5 to 49.5. Austin will now join Dallas and Houston in having rail transit. But Austin is taking a different path.

The Austin plan calls for diesel-powered railcars serving nine stations along a 32-mile rail line that Capital Metro already owns. Using existing tracks keeps costs low, but it also means the trains go where the tracks already are. The line does not go anywhere near the Capitol or the University of Texas, and the single downtown stop (at the convention center) is blocks away from the business district. Most passengers will need shuttle buses to get to their final destinations.

Like Houston's Main Street light rail line, Austin's commuter rail line is billed as a "starter" line, but it's much less of a start. Houston runs trains every six minutes during rush hour and 12 otherwise; Austin will have a train every 30 minutes during rush hour, with perhaps only a single mid-day run. Houston is boarding 30,000 people a day; Austin expects 2,000.

But the Austin line will cost only \$60 million—one-fifth as much as Houston's. That was Capital Metro's strategy: win over voters put off by the \$1 billion price tag of the 2000 plan. It worked, but it's an interesting counterpart to the METRO Solutions plan in Houston, which passed narrowly in 2004 by building support in the central city. An *Austin Chronicle* commentary before the 2000 election said that the alternative to rail was Austin becoming like Houston—in other words, suburban sprawl. Now Austin is building a rail line to help suburbanites commute into

the city, while Houston is building a system that connects inner neighborhoods.

Many rail proponents reluctantly backed the commuter rail proposal, convinced it was not enough but hoping that it will lead to more. Capitol Metro will study extensions. Some are obvious, like a spur into the mixed-use redevelopment on the old airport site and a downtown extension. But the diesel trains are not as well suited to an urban, street-running line, and the fear remains that if the original line fails to stand on its own, it may doom future rail plans.

Capital Metro's plan is expedient, but it's not visionary. In that sense, it is symbolic of a bigger shift in Austin politics. As Joel Barna noted in 2002 ("The Rise and Fall of Smart Growth in Austin," Cite 53), a political consensus built in Austin in the late 1990s to encourage denser development in the inner city as an alternative to sprawl fell apart with the tech bust. Light rail was part of that Smart Growth vision; future rail corridors on busy streets like South Congress and Guadalupe were shown on the city's planning maps.

But many in the inner city did not want growth; some environmentalists opposed rail for that reason. Austin grew anyway, and it has continued sprawling. Now the political debates center on building more highways to deal with traffic jams in the suburbs. In July, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization approved a plan calling for \$2.2 billion in new toll roads that essentially will double the area's freeway network in 20 years. Transportation spending is an investment in a vision of the future; Austin seems to be choosing sprawl. —Christof Spieler

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## Mall Eats Mall



Survival of the fittest: Town and Country Mall turns to dust, while down the road Memorial City thrives. Below, the big cheese stands alone: Only upscale retailer Neiman Marcus will remain on the Town and Country site once demolition is complete.



What suburban malls once did to America's main streets, they are now doing to one another. In the dog-eat-dog world of commercial excess along the I-10 corridor in far west Houston, a newly reinvigorated Memorial City Mall has all but gobbled up its congenitally underperforming cousin, Town and Country Mall, now under deconstruction a few miles down the road.

A mall variant with anomalous beginnings and upscale pretenses, Town and Country never became a big success, despite its high-end Memorial neighborhood. Before the mall there was Memorial Village: a collection of detached shopping blocks floating in a large, landscaped parking tract in the pattern of postwar suburban centers. The development won a 1967 Municipal Arts Commission citation for landscaping. A Joske's department store joined the village milieu in 1969 as one end of a tree-lined axis, with a miniature Sakowitz store at the other.

The Village with its two department stores did well; building on success, plans were launched in 1981 to turn 90,000 square feet of shops and parking space into a new mall. The mall literally grew in two directions from the freestanding Joske's (soon to become Dillard's). Neiman Marcus and Marshall Field's joined as additional, distinguished anchors. The scheme had an awkward (some say hopelessly), narrow, three-story configuration that left many of the tenants sitting with the gods. The most interesting

feature of the design was the roof: a tautly stretched translucent fabric construction that was said to transmit 80 percent of the ambient light while reflecting 80 percent of the heat. It was the first roof of its kind to be installed on a regional mall.

Consensus thinking was that the mall had poor exposure to the freeway and was difficult to get to. It was hemmed in behind a line of large buildings along the freeway and a parking garage that faced the massive, multi-level Sam Houston Tollway stack. Unlike the advantages that accrue to commercial locations on street corners, malls don't do well at freeway intersections (Gulfgate is another example), where cognitive complexity is at its greatest. But clearly, too, this was a case of a rivalry among unequal. Town and Country had the pedigree (Saks, Neiman Marcus, Dillard's), but the more formulaic Memorial City had ambitions.

As Town and Country steadily lost business (Saks and Penny's bolted in 2000 and 2001, respectively), MetroNational, a Houston-based real estate investment, development, and management company, was pumping steroids into the 36-year-old Memorial City Mall it had purchased in the 1990s. Memorial City was only one story, and as ordinary and middlebrow as a mall can be. But MetroNational had big plans to convert it from a mall into a town center. Then they went to work trying to figure out what that meant. They courted an aquarium as a possible attraction. But they ended up with an ice

skating rink and, more important, their anchor store constellation: Dillard's, Foley's, Lord and Taylor, Sears, Target, and Mervyn's. Several office buildings (including a new, nine-story professional tower built by MetroNational), medical care facilities, and a fringe of detached restaurants and commercial strips also reside on the 200-acre site—a veritable textbook example of Joel Garreau's Edge City.

The fate of Town and Country was more or less sealed when Dillard's, the most dependable of the Town and Country stores, announced its intent to join the mix at Memorial City; in the process they transferred ownership of their Town and Country store and controlling interest in the mall to MetroNational. MetroNational sold the hot potato to Bob Yazdani, who brought the property under unified ownership and sold it to Midway Cos., the company that is presently demolishing the mall.

When the demolition dust clears, only the Neiman Marcus store will remain. Plans are not entirely fixed for the redevelopment of the site, but it's likely that it will resemble the village concept that first occupied the site and operates successfully on the south side of the site hugging Memorial Drive. So in roughly 25 years Town and Country has gone from village to mall and back again to village, trading up from Joske's to Neiman Marcus in the process.

—Bruce C. Webb



Menil House, Philip Johnson, 1951; renovation and conservation, Stern and Bozek Architects, 2004.

## Good Bricks Honor Preservation Excellence in Houston

Greater Houston Preservation Alliance (GHPA) has recognized 13 projects and individuals with 2005 Good Brick Awards for excellence and leadership in historic preservation. The awards were presented on January 28.

GHPA has awarded Good Bricks since 1979 to honor exceptional preservation projects and the people who make them happen. A jury of design and preservation professionals and community leaders selected the winning projects, which range from late Victorian cottages to a post-World War II industrial plant.

"We were very impressed with the variety of the nominations. The winners include individual homeowners who did all of the work themselves and major public institutions that brought in nationally known consultants," said GHPA Executive Director Ramona Davis. "So often we hear that there is nothing historic left to preserve in Houston. The number of preservation projects being completed certainly disproves that belief."

— David Bush

### Maloney, Martin & Mitchell, LLP; WLS Interests, Inc.; and Southcorp Realty Advisors, Inc. for the Clocktower

**Building, 3401 Allen Parkway.** The renovation and adaptive re-use of the former Rein Co. Building preserves an important part of Allen Parkway's rapidly disappearing architectural heritage. The former printing company was built in 1928 in the popular Spanish Colonial style. Now

known as the Clocktower Building, the project is a visible historic preservation success. The project architect is Cisneros Design Studio.

**Heights Industrial Center for 22nd Street Lofts.** After a long period of neglect, this 110-year-old former textile mill and mattress factory is finding new life as a residential development. A sensitive renovation enhances the building's straightforward industrial design while maintaining the courtyards and green spaces of the 19th-century factory complex. The project architect is Nonya Grenader, FAIA.

**Carl and Carrie Corson for 308 Cordell Street.** The owners of this 1910 bungalow in the Brooke Smith Addition met the challenge of adapting a small historic house to modern lifestyles, while preserving the home's original materials, detailing, and character. The owners did much of the critical work themselves, including selecting quality materials to maintain the home's integrity.

**Bill England and Minnette Boesel for "Rosecroft."** Built in 1916 at 4809 Walker, this Craftsman-style home is one of at least four California-inspired houses built in Eastwood by artist Charles T. Sherman. The sensitive renovation of this house restored Sherman's original painted frieze and maintained the distinctive built-in Arts & Crafts-style fixtures.

### Geoffrey and Karlene Poll for 1605 Heights Boulevard.

In 1918, Alfred C. Finn, architect of the San Jacinto Monument, designed this impressive home for an oil company executive. The house eventually was divided into apartments, and a period of neglect compromised the architect's vision. The current owners used quality salvage materials and Finn's original blueprints in their faithful restoration of this National Register-listed property.

### University of Houston-Downtown for the Willow Street Pump Station.

Portions of the 1902 Willow Street Pump Station and adjacent 1915 City Incinerator were on the verge of collapse when the Workshop for Historic Architecture at the University of Houston College of Architecture and the Engineers Council of Greater Houston adopted the site as a project. Today, the Romanesque Revival-style structures at the confluence of White Oak and Buffalo bayous have been preserved as a community conference and exhibition facility and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Gensler was the project architect.

### 220 Venture Partners, LP and Benchmark Hospitality for Hotel ICON.

The 1911 Union National Bank Building had stood vacant and deteriorating for almost 20 years when new owners began the two-year process of transforming the 12-story neoclassical building into a luxury hotel. Restored to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this local landmark is now a vital part of Houston's revitalized Main Street/Market Square Historic District. Mitchell Carlson & Stone, Inc. was the project architect.

### Avenue Community Development Corp. and Anthony Colca for the Summer Street Project.

Nine historic cottages dating from the 1870s to the 1940s have been renovated as affordable housing through the efforts of an innovative non-profit organization and a concerned property owner, Avenue CDC, which develops affordable housing and promotes historic preservation in Houston's First Ward, and Anthony Colca, who had inherited the properties and still lived in the neighborhood, were determined to preserve the area's historic character and protect long-term tenants from displacement.

### Texas Medical Center for the John P. McGovern Campus.

When Nabisco's Houston Bakery opened in 1949, it was said to be the most modern bakery in the United States. More than 50 years later, the Texas Medical Center chose to preserve the building and convert its 11 acres of floor space to a multi-use medical office building. Transformed "from cookies to caring," the building today houses traditional office space, medical research

and educational facilities, laboratories and a telecommunications center. W.O. Neuhaus & Associates were the project architects.

### Roger Wood and James Fraher for Down in Houston: Bayou City Blues.

This comprehensive book documents the evolution of Houston's unique form of the blues through evocative photography and extensive interviews with performers, club owners, record producers, and audience members. At the same time, it celebrates the vibrant African-American community in the Third and Fifth wards that produced this distinctive sound. Published by the University of Texas Press, *Down in Houston* is available for purchase through the GHPA Bookstore at [www.ghpa.org/bookstore](http://www.ghpa.org/bookstore).

### GHPA Preservation Partner in Print Award to Houston House & Home Magazine.

**Magazine.** Since founding this monthly magazine, Publisher Mike Harrison and Creative Services Director Tim Beeson have offered extensive coverage of local preservation projects. Their personal commitment to preservation is exemplified by the transformation of the 1950s cinder-block building at 931 Yale into the magazine's headquarters, which enhances their historic Heights neighborhood. Their generous support of GHPA includes contributing design services for the organization's newsletter.

### Stewart Title Award to the Menil Foundation for the Menil House.

In 1951, completion of this International-style house provided a home for John and Dominique de Menil's art collection and introduced architect Philip Johnson to Houston. On inheriting the property, the Menil Foundation was faced with many difficult decisions but ultimately decided to preserve and conserve this important building. By preserving this landmark, the Menil Foundation is helping explain the history of modern architecture in Houston and the de Menils' unique contributions to the cultural life of the city. Stern and Bozek Architects supervised the project.

### GHPA President's Award to Minnette Boesel.

Longtime preservation advocate Minnette Boesel is being recognized with GHPA's President's Award for her leadership, dedication, and years of volunteer service. A former GHPA president, Boesel was one of the first to promote downtown revitalization through the adaptive re-use of historic buildings as residential lofts and apartments. She remains a leading proponent of downtown Houston's redevelopment and has also been a driving force in the revival of Eastwood, having renovated several historic homes in that neighborhood. ■



2910 Lazy Lane (Hugo V. Neuhaus, 1950), photographed for *House & Home*, July 1952. The Neuhaus House, as it is also known, has sustained major renovations, but remains a fine example of the modern style. In 2004 it was honored with a landmark designation.

## New Owners + Neuhaus House = Modern Landmark



Interior view, *House & Home*, July 1952.

The Neuhaus House at 2910 Lazy Lane is one of Texas' finest Miesian modern houses. Although it has suffered greatly from inappropriate alterations over the years, enough of its original architectural character remained for it to be designated a Landmark of the City of Houston in 2004. The landmark status should bring public awareness to modern architecture in general—and this house in particular—as an integral part of the city's cultural patrimony.

Hugo V. Neuhaus designed the house as his own residence, living there from April 1950 until his death on July 21, 1987.<sup>1</sup> During this period he made a number of modifications to the house. Prior to February 1954, he added two new servant's bedrooms to the north side of the

house and converted the single existing servant's bedroom adjacent to the dining room into a storage room.<sup>2</sup> According to the extant architectural drawings, a second renovation was undertaken in 1957. At this time, he added a second bathroom near the servant's bedrooms and cut a door from the new storage room to the dining room.

Mary Wood, Neuhaus' first wife, died in 1979. After Neuhaus' marriage to his second wife, Olive McCollum, in 1985, he collaborated with former employee Graham Luhn (who had worked under him from 1966 to 1970 before starting his own firm) to rearrange the sleeping areas. They converted the son's bedroom on the southeast corner of the house into a new master bedroom, recast the former nurse's room adjacent to the new master bedroom as the master dressing room, and expanded the former master dressing room adjacent to the living room by moving the exterior wall and filling in part of the porch to create a new auxiliary bedroom.

Mrs. Neuhaus continued to live in the house until April 1992, when she sold it to Neil and Carol Kelley, who made no known changes to the house. James and Chantal Ghadially owned the house from March 1995 until September 2002, when they sold it to Robert and Mica Mosbacher. The Ghadiallys undertook a series of additions and alterations that diluted the Miesian clarity of the house,<sup>3</sup> including covering reveals with crown molding (thus destroying an essential detail), painting a brick entry wall white, overhauling the master bath, converting part of the master bedroom into a den, and adding a family room between the kitchen and garage.

When the Mosbachers moved in in 2002, they made a few cosmetic alterations. Gypsum board was placed over the brick walls at the entry because, according to Mrs. Mosbacher, it was not possible to

remove this paint.<sup>4</sup> The brick wall at the entry, which was so crucial to establishing the series of solids and voids that characterized the rigorous architectural design of the house, was replaced with a black, faux wrought-iron fence. A decorative wainscot was tacked on to the dining room walls, and a rustic, textured plaster finish was applied to the wine room walls. In the den created by the Ghadiallys, a large dark wood millwork piece was added. Similar millwork was installed in the former master bedroom, now the son's bedroom, and the former servant's bedrooms, now used by Mrs. Mosbacher as offices. A bay window was added at the opening of the master bedroom wall cut by the Ghadiallys. On the exterior, white lattice has been affixed to several brick walls.

Even so, the Mosbachers (with the assistance of historic preservationist Anna Mod) were instrumental in having the house designated as the first modern landmark in Houston. One hopes that as they reside in the house, they will continue to maintain it for future generations to admire and appreciate. — Ben Koush

1. "On Lazy Lane In River Oaks," *Houston Chronicle*, Sunday, February 12, 1950, Section C, p. 8.

2. "In Texas, An Air-Conditioned Villa," *House & Garden*, February 1954, pp. 50-53, 114-155.

3. 2910 Lazy Lane River Oaks, Sales brochure printed by John Drueher Realtors, No date.

4. Conversation with Mica Mosbacher, November 16, 2004.



Corner of Main and Lamar, 1940: A building in the ornate Spanish Renaissance Revival style could bring stylistic diversity downtown.



Corner of Main and Lamar, today: The building still stands, but the historical facade lies covered up by unloved travertine panels.

## What Lies Beneath

**The redevelopment of downtown**  
Houston is uncovering more than new business and residential prospects—it is also bringing to light some of our hidden architectural history. Main Street, the focus of much of the recent development in Houston's central business district, is home to a number of "slipcovered" buildings—structures that have been sheathed in newer materials that partially or completely mask their original facades, along with their character, composition, detail, and ornament. Now some of these covers are coming off, allowing the classic styles beneath to shine.

Slipcovering was a national phenomenon in the decades following World War II. In the postwar period, architectural styles that had been popular at the beginning of the 20th century came to be considered passé. An obsession with the new led to the alteration of countless Victorian, Classical Revival, Art Deco, and other early 20th-century American commercial styles. When total reconstruction of a prewar structure was not practical, the cosmetic alteration of an older facade gave buildings a new appearance on a budget.

The slipcovered buildings in Houston run the gamut from small two- and three-story Victorian structures near Market Square to high-rise office buildings farther south on Main Street. The slipcover materials vary as greatly as the buildings they cover. Plaster and marble were popular materials, but their installation often caused extensive damage to the original facade beneath. Grille work, like that encasing the West Building at the corner of Main and Walker, was more lightweight, hung out farther from the original face of the building, and did not require as much of the original ornamentation to be removed.

A fire at the partially occupied West Building in 1999 revealed what had been a secret for years: Behind the gold grille

work encasing the top three quarters of the building was a 1912 facade of brick and stone. Since then, the building's owner has removed the remainder of the grille work and has plans to restore the facade to its original appearance.

The degree to which the slipcover alters the appearance of a building also varies. The slipcovering of the 1879 Stegeman Building at 502 Main hid the upper facade but did not obscure the ornamental brackets and cornice. In contrast, the exterior face of 905 Main was completely sheathed in granite panels. Great care, it seems, was taken to infill the window openings with concrete block and cover them from both the interior and exterior sides. The primary clue that this was a slipcovered building came from the historic photographs that depicted a building of identical massing. Despite the damage inflicted by the slipcover, the facade of 905 Main recently underwent a meticulous reconstruction to restore the building to its original appearance. The Krupp & Tuffly Building next door, a fanciful Art Deco edifice designed by prolific Houston architect Alfred Finn, suffered the same fate. The only hint of what lies behind the current dull monolithic facade is the Deco detailing, visible from the street, that decorates the elevator penthouse.

The upper facades of smaller, low-rise buildings often were completely covered—including windows—in order to create a cleaner appearance. The resulting large, unobstructed area could then serve as a billboard-size space to identify the occupant of the building, as in the case of "The Home of Easy Credit" and "The Hub" on the 300 block of Main. Unlike 905 Main, in many of these buildings, the windows—as well as the back of the slipcover—are visible from the interior.

A visit to the unoccupied second floor of the unimpressive commercial building at Main and Lamar—formerly

home to Everitt-Buelow Clothiers—led to the discovery of intact arched steel sash casement windows behind storage shelving lining the outer walls. These windows had been hidden from exterior view for years by a slipcover of travertine panels. Upon further investigation of the 16-inch space between the original facade and the newer stone panels, glimpses of glazed terra-cotta acanthus leaves, medallions, Corinthian pilasters, and other ornate architectural detailing were seen. Photos taken of the building sometime in the 1940s confirmed that behind the blank travertine there was an exquisite Spanish Renaissance Revival facade.

Attorney Scott Arnold was one of the first building owners in downtown to reverse the modern alterations made to his Victorian storefront. Arnold says that he knew intuitively that there was more to the bland plaster facade at 310 Main than met the eye when he was looking for a building to house his law offices in 1994. Like those of the Everitt-Buelow Building, the windows on the second and third floors of Arnold's building had been completely covered—at least from the exterior.

"We were able to get up to the second floor...and get up to the front of the building. Then of course we could see the back of the windows," explains Arnold. "About that same time I think I had acquired a [historic] picture of the building, so I had a pretty good idea of what it looked like originally and what was likely underneath."

Since larger commercial buildings were typically occupied by offices that relied on access to natural light, it was not practical to cover their windows. The nondescript office high-rise now known as 806 Main was originally a 16-story structure built in 1910 by Samuel Carter—the tallest building in Houston at the time. The building was called "Carter's Folly" during construction

by skeptical Houstonians who scoffed at the idea of a building so tall. Despite its critics, the Carter Building proved so successful that six additional stories were added in the 1920s. In 1969, the building was sheathed in Georgian marble. Remnants of the original Beaux Arts detailing are still visible at the corners where the slipcover did not completely hide the brick quoining. The elaborate conference room on the second floor, originally serving as the Second National Bank Board Room, remains intact, betraying the attempts at modernization of the rest of the building.

Slipcovered buildings are not limited to Main Street, or to downtown. Many more await attention or even discovery. Unfortunately, on some buildings too much historic fabric has been lost in the process of slipcovering to justify restoration. Preservation philosophy may also influence the treatment of a building's slipcover: Some historians and preservationists view the slipcovers as part of a building's history and evolution. The lathe and plaster slipcover that hides the Richardsonian Romanesque facade of what was originally the Kiam Annex building is itself about 50 years old. The current owner of the building has no intention of removing it, and in fact has recently completed a restoration of the slipcover.

Although many have come to appreciate the value and character of older buildings, we are now in danger of repeating the errors of the past. The irony is that many worthwhile examples of modern architecture are being, if not slipcovered, altered in ways that are dramatically inconsistent with their original appearance in an effort to make them look more traditional. Buildings of architectural merit add richness and texture to our cityscape and should be respected for what they are, regardless of their period.

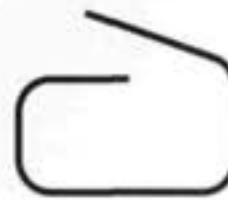
—Paul Homeyer



*Womb Chair and Ottoman. Eero Saarinen, 1948*

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## Philip Johnson 1906 - 2005





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Merri Condominiums (EDI Architects, 2003) in the Galleria area: Apartment as composite, parking lot as pieces.

Let high-rise apartments really catch on and some imaginative entrepreneur will rent the San Jacinto Monument and have it converted by Christmas.

—Larry McMurtry, 1968

**WITH ITS MINUSCULE** population density and predilection for a diffuse form of urbanism that distributes itself over a vast metropolitan region, Houston never developed much of a need for high-rise living. This is a city where the single-family house on a suburban lot reigns as the prime marker of domestic aspirations. When high-rise living was thought about at all, it was framed by a bias that such substandard forms of habitation probably belonged to overcrowded cities up east or in other parts of the world; either that or as a temporary living arrangement.

But Houston has been changing. People no longer see the suburban commute as a necessary price to pay for the good life. In a graph prepared by Stephen Klineberg for his annual Houston Survey, the rising trend of suburbanites interested in moving into the city crossed the falling trend of city-dwellers interested in someday moving to the suburbs at around 36 percent. It's not so much the commute that explains these trends, Klineberg notes, but that many people in the suburbs are eager to live near urban amenities, cultural and recreational venues, and to feel a sense of solidarity with the ethnic diversity of the urban scene. In other words, Houston's population is becoming more urbane, and at the same time the city itself is solidifying its identification with images of a more urbanized setting and lifestyle.

As the market for inside-the-Loop housing has increased, so too has the value of scarce inner-city land in premium locations, making traditional, low-density development patterns less of an affordable option. And while Houston's high-rise buildings haven't reached the 70- or 80-story heights of super-tall residential projects in some parts of Asia and North America, 20- to 30-story residential towers—the height of the classical modern apartment block—have become a more prominent part of the skyline.

Density and land values don't entirely explain the fascination with tower living. This is exemplified by the case of the Price Tower (1952), the most romantic tall building of them all, which rises 220 feet over the nearly empty prairie in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Frank Lloyd Wright designed this 19-story mixed-use "needle on the prairie" for oilman H.C. Price—a testament to Wright's prodigious talent for romancing clients like Price, who had approached the architect with a modest proposal to build something

## Friends in High Places

Locals are discovering a new way to look down on Houston

BY BRUCE C. WEBB

like a two- or three-story office structure, with parking for ten or 15 vehicles. Wright pronounced the proposal "inefficient" and countered with a design for a 37,000-square-foot tower that included apartments on each floor in one quadrant of an intricate pinwheel plan. (The Price Tower is a pint-sized version of the three-tower St. Marks' in the Bowery, an unbuilt project Wright designed in 1929 for New York City, and similar to the towers he liberally dropped into plans for Broadacre City, as punctuation points in the undifferentiated suburban landscape he envisioned for America.) Wright, who called the Price "a tree that had escaped from a crowded forest," seemed to fully understand the power of the totemic gesture on the landscape, and the oneiric experience of being able to work and live high above the relentlessly flat and nearly featureless landscape below—an experience available to tourists now that the tower has been converted into a 21-room boutique hotel.

Talk to an agent for a Houston residential high-rise building and you will hear plenty of other reasons why people might want to make their home in the sky:

**Convenience:** "It's like living full time in a hotel. You have someone here to do everything for you. Park your car. Carry your groceries. Take care of your pets and water your plants when you go away." "It's a way for busy people to simplify their lives."

**Amenities:** Swimming pool, gym, television theater, party room, wine storage—all of it an elevator ride away. "It's like living inside your own private club."

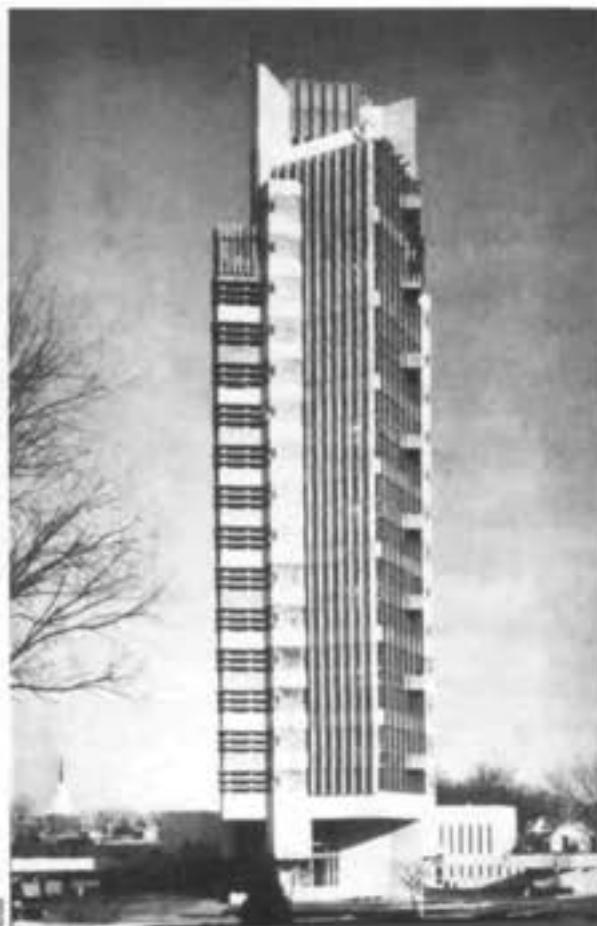
**Trendiness:** "People are just getting more sophisticated today. They've been to other cities and they know how people live there. Then they come to Houston and they say, 'Why not here?'"

**Cachet:** "The baby boomers equate high-rise living with success. It's like having a mansion in the sky. High-rise living symbolizes a busy life and people on the way up."

"Location, location, location" is the mantra of the real estate business, and high-rise living, unlike its proletarian, walk-up cousins, tends to nearly always show up in places of high desirability. Historically, downtowns were natural locations, and Houston's early examples, such as the

Beaconsfield and The Savoy Apartments (which architectural historian Stephen Fox calls the first high-rise apartment building in Houston), date from the first decades of the 20th century and were on the southern fringe of the central business district. Houston House (Charles Goodman Associates with Irving R. Klein and Associates), a 33-story slab tower atop a parking garage and ground-level retail, has been a prominent part of the freeway landscape just south of downtown since 1966. More recently, as an emphatic signal of progress in achieving downtown revival, the Rice Hotel, heart of the city's social life for most of the 20th century but shuttered since 1977, was transformed into the Rice Lofts by developer Randall Davis and is now a high-profile success story. Capitalizing on the growing popularity of living in the central business district, Commerce Towers, a chunky downtown office building recently was redeveloped into 125 condominiums with parking, retail space, and connections to the downtown tunnel system. And across from the Rice Lofts, on a full block at Main and Texas, construction is expected to begin soon on the 32-story Shamrock Tower, heir to the name of Houston's largest hotel, now demolished, where Frank Lloyd Wright received his Gold Medal from the AIA. The Shamrock will be the first residential high-rise to be constructed from scratch in downtown Houston in 25 years. Both Commerce Towers and the new Shamrock relish the hemmed-in feeling of a dense downtown environment, where views are often gazed into neighboring buildings or onto reflections of the one you're in.

But in Houston, downtown isn't always where the action is, and indeed, the residential tower, as Wright proffered, works best in less encumbered settings like Hermann Park, where the Park Lane (1986) and the Spires (1983) enjoy the city's grandest park as their front yard. Montrose Boulevard, Houston's most sophisticated urban street, which tapers into Hermann Park, has been fertile ground for high-rise living. The Park IV and Park V apartments (now condominiums) designed by Jenkins Hoff Oberg and Saxe, architects, provide a neatly packaged, congenitally scaled example dating from the early 1960s that reflects the economies and austerity of the modern movement's attitudes about housing—especially when compared to the conspicuous excesses that would follow.



Price Tower (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1952) on the Oklahoma prairie near Bartlesville.



Museum Tower (Jackson & Ryan Architects, 2003), part of the changing skyline of Montrose Boulevard.



Downtown view from Museum Tower.



© 2005 Nelson + Associates  
Museum Tower model apartment interior, looking west.



© 2005 Nelson + Associates  
Concierge's desk in the lobby of Museum Tower.

At the southern end of the boulevard the city's museum district created the occasion for several high-rise projects that have greatly altered the appealing Montrose street scale, which used to be delineated by modest hotels and several prominent church towers. The hulking, 22-story concrete tower with barrel-shaped corner balconies at 5000 Montrose Boulevard muscles out the graciously scaled but long empty Plaza Apartment Hotel, a former Montrose fixture designed by Joseph Finger (1926). The Plaza was itself a residential hotel and home for a time to Edgar O. Lovett, the first president of Rice Institute, among others. Farther south, near the Mecom Fountain roundabout (the city's most prominent lesson from the City Beautiful movement), another hotel and condominium have struck up an acquaintance: Borrowing its name from the 12-story Warwick Hotel (1925), Warwick Towers (Golemon and Roofe and Werlin, Deane and Associates, 1983) is a pair of 30-story pre-cast concrete slabs whose most distinctive features are the living room bridges that span the upper stories and loom over their predecessor.

With proximity to the arts district, Rice University, Hermann Park, the Texas Medical Center, and now METRORail, lower Montrose has plenty going for it—all of which is noted with much adjectival enthusiasm in the brochures

for the Museum Tower (Jackson & Ryan Architects, 2003), the boulevard's latest apartment tower. Inside a stodgy-looking package, apartments in the Museum Tower sport designer-jeans images of what realtors call a "soft loft" look—14-foot ceilings, job-finished oak hardwood flooring, and concrete ceilings with exposed ducts and conduits. There are also plenty of upscale features: gourmet kitchens and granite counter tops, stone-tile bath floor and granite vanity tops, and large balconies with great views (once you get above the tree line).

The market success of high-rise apartment buildings on Montrose Boulevard more or less ensures that more will follow, creating what may well become Houston's most densely settled residential quarter. Even longtime establishments like The River Café, which closed a few months ago, are subject to displacement: A poster on the door announces the advent of a new, 13-story residential building ironically called the Riparian (Irving Philips, architect) on the site.

Out along the edge of the West Loop, where there is less in the way of historic and cultural attractions to tap into, developers have had to make up appealing contexts of their own in which to site their residential towers. Lacking the venerable charms of established, near-in places like Rice Village to plug into, developer Giorgio Borlenghi, Post Oak's pro-



View of pool deck from upper apartment balcony, Museum Tower.



Four Leaf Towers (Cesar Pelli, 1982) on San Felipe near the Galleria.

digous imagineer, created Uptown Park, "Houston's European Style Shopping Center" (Ziegler Cooper Architects, 2000). A movie-set pedestrian village, done up in a vaguely Tuscan but mostly Esperanto style, Uptown Park serves as the setting for Villa d'Este (2000) and Montebello (2004), two 30-story luxury condominium towers. In a brochure for Montebello, a café society scenario describes how "residents of Montebello will need only step out their front door to enjoy fabulous food, have a cappuccino or a smoothie, and share an Italian gelato with friends." With the West Loop in the background, Village living along the Loop doesn't come cheap: A 2,090-square-foot unit on the second floor that goes for \$540,000 will cost \$740,000 on the 28th, both with a monthly assessment of \$1,235.

In Four Leaf Towers (1982), an earlier Borlenghi project, architect Cesar Pelli neatly wrapped a pair of 40-story towers containing 400 units in a striking polychromatic curtain wall woven in a tartan pattern. To provide it with a proper setting in the inchoate Post Oak environs, Borlenghi had Houston landscape architects the SWA Group create another idealized, scenographic setting—in this case a ten-acre formal garden and an entrance plaza featuring Beverly Pepper's striking sculpture "Polygenesis" as its focal point.

One of the stranger spectacles on the far west Houston skyline is the Mercer Condominiums (EDI Architects, 2003), much noted for its extremely skinny side elevations and lack of windows, which from certain vantage points make it look more like a tower from San Gimignano than a modern high-rise. The comparison is more than skin deep—employing bearing-wall construction formed through a continuous "tunnel forming" process, the Mercer has unusual solidity and physical weightiness for a high-rise. With only a small site to work with, the building has a small footprint and accommodates an unusual plan arrangement where the 26th through 30th floors hold only one 5,082-square-foot residence each, and the other floors two 2,301-square-foot residences. Because of its unusual thinness, the Mercer offers windows on the north and south sides of each unit, favoring the gentler north side with generous balconies and window walls and bulking up the south with the thermal mass of fire stairs, elevators, and services. Viking kitchen stoves along with gas-fueled fireplaces are featured in each unit—the rental agent surprised me by firing one up with the push of a button. The management is quick to let you know that the present building is now properly known as Mercer I, and a second tower with a similar footprint soon will be added on an adjacent site.



View from Villa d'Este (Ziegler Cooper Architects, 2000): scenographic formal gardens, like those also found at Four Leaf Towers.



Montebello (Ziegler Cooper Architects, 2004), left, and Villa d'Este, overlooking Uptown Park.



West Loop view from Villa d'Este.



Uptown Park from Montebello: stonographic village as setting.

High-rise living in Houston traces its roots back to residential suites and apartments in posh hotels such as the Rice, the Lamar, and the Warwick (George and Barbara Bush established Texas as their official residency with a suite in the Houstonian during his presidency). Later, pioneers from River Oaks and Memorial, looking to ease their retirement by giving the mansion to the kids and moving into something more convenient but still in the neighborhood, found refuge in the Houston Willowick (1963), Lamar Towers (1965), and later the Huntingdon (1983).

The same reasons of convenience and urban sophistication lure many of today's customers to high-rise residences. The high-rise is associated with a more intense form of living in the city, but this isn't necessarily the case here. Rather than being more plugged in, Houston's high-rise apartments and condominiums can feel much more detached from the city than an inner neighborhood can. Part of this estrangement can be attributed to the awkwardness of the building type, which usually accommodates a considerable amount of parking in its lower haunches, creating blanks for the lower floors.

However it is marketed, the home in the sky is a paradigm of orderliness—self-contained, inviolable, guarded by the concierge, totally under control, and without even the intervening public-private space of a lawn to take care of. Anonymity allows each person to retreat to his or her own demi-utopia, where the balcony is the vaunted, privileged vantage of a detached observer for whom, as Roland Barthes observes in his essay on the Eiffel Tower, the city is spread out like a map—and with sunsets playing their heart out like they never do from the ground below. It's a high-tech space ship, novelist J.G. Ballard writes in his chilling novel, *High Rise*, in which the high-rise apartment building is metaphor for contemporary society: a vertically divided caste system nurtured by a machine "designed to serve not the collective body of tenants but the individual resident in isolation." As such it may well represent the ripest expression of society today, a nation of tiny utopias where an individual can live surrounded by a self-confirming world of support, comfort, privacy, and fulfillment, and with a tariff high enough to keep out the riffraff. But in Ballard's story, this depen-

dency is a tenuous basis for social order: Life in the high-rise begins to unwind over growing technological malfunctions and problems with neighbors until the residents are engaged in a class war with one another.

The high-rise residential tower is the most compressed, abstract object of real estate marketing and consumer lust, served up in a self-fulfilling form. The economics of the locational matrix are absolute; both horizontally on the city map and vertically in the building section, the value of floor area corresponds to one's place in the world. In a wooded site just off Memorial Drive, where it will look down on Memorial Park and "the magnificent mansions, grand estates and ancient oak trees in legendary River Oaks," New York-based Tarragon Corporation is building the Orion, perhaps the current *ne plus ultra* in high-rise living. A sales office for the \$425 million luxury condominium has been established on-site, complete with a full-scale mock-up of a 5,000-square-foot residence resplendent with heavy neoclassical décor (matched by "classically trained Claire d'or concierges"), promises of pastoral landscaping, and high-tech gadgets to rival Coleridge's opium dream of Xanadu. The brochure prose stops just short of a passionate denouement: "With the touch of a button, the drapery closes, lights dim and the fireplace begins to spread its magical glow. Another touch and the music pours forth, setting the mood for a perfectly beautiful evening." Construction has not yet begun, but the National Sales and Marketing Council has bestowed awards on the Orion in the following categories: Best Brochure over \$500,000, Best Color Ads, Best Sales Office, Best Signage, Best Attached Urban Community, and Best Logo Design. With a completion date set for spring 2007 for the first tower, 106 of the 180 units reportedly have already been sold, including the \$5.3 million penthouse. ■

## 6 rms hou vu

BY BARRIE SCARDINO



© 2005 Helix + Helix  
Brochure depiction of the future Orion towers (Ede Nemeth, architect) along Memorial Drive.



© 2005 Helix + Helix  
Balcony of Mercer Condominiums looking toward the Galleria.



© 2005 Helix + Helix  
Williams Tower from bathroom spa, Mercer Condominiums.

When I moved back to Houston from New York last year, living in a high rise seemed to be the sensible thing to do. Most people in New York City live in some kind of apartment or condominium, and after a few years I became used to elevator waits, cooking smells in the halls, and dogs barking (or worse, babies crying) next door at midnight. But the good outweighs the bad: 24-hour security, valet parking, groceries, newspapers, and dry cleaning brought to your door; packages and mail received when you weren't at home. But it was the gym that really sold me. I could work out or swim anytime, day or night, right in my own building. In no time, I reasoned, I'd be healthy, svelte, and full of energy.

I started looking for the perfect Houston apartment in the perfect building in the perfect location. I consider myself an urban adventurer—not to mention a preservationist—so I started looking downtown, hoping to find a sexy loft in a remodeled old building. There were some wonderful lofts to be had, but they were smallish and (horrors!) no doors, no rms, no vus. "What do you think a loft is?" my real estate agent asked me. Well, I admit the ones I had seen in New York were pretty much just one big room with freight elevator access and no doorman in white gloves. But that was New York—young people lived there, artists lived and worked there. I was a grandmother for goodness sake—and apparently not as cool as I wanted to be.

So I decided to explore possibilities at the other extreme. How about a lovely apartment overlooking Hermann Park? Perfect. The doormen were wonderfully pleasant, and public transit made it right to the front door. But the public spaces smelled like a candle shop and looked like a showroom at Suniland. (Remember Suniland? Over-polished mahogany, brass, patterned carpets...) Besides, the apartments had too many little rms. It was just too nice, maybe too River Oaks. Not quite edgy enough for me. But they had a gym! I couldn't totally write off the old-style Houston high-rise apartments, but they seemed conspicuously full of grandmothers. I

may be one, but I don't want to live like one. So my quest continued. I had wanted to buy, but I realized that to expand my choices I would need to consider renting as well.

One of the curious things about apartment hunting in Houston is that the sales and rental agents were more apt to pitch the advantages of high-rise living in general rather than the qualities of their particular building—as though the whole concept needed explaining. Unlike New York, Houston high rises are in direct competition with on-the-ground houses in good neighborhoods at about the same price—many customers have spent most of their lives in a house on a lot with little or no experience of high-rise living. In any case, all the high rises here have pretty much the same amenities, and after a while one looks like the other.

Then I discovered the soft loft. Edgy but comfortable, without the drawbacks of true lofts, but including the exposed pipes, concrete, and ductwork. Most of all it didn't look like it had been worked over by a neo-classical-crazed interior designer. This was for me. I knew I couldn't live somewhere my architecture friends and colleagues would scoff at—you know where I mean. So I had to dig deeper into my soul (and my pocketbook) to come to terms with my real values. What was really important? It turns out it wasn't the gym or the doorman. Maybe the security. The space—sure, the balcony and the vu—yeah. But what came up number one on my list? I am almost ashamed to tell you: It was image. I wanted to live in a high rise because it looks and feels more sophisticated to me, more urbane if not urban. It's a feeling I try to deconstruct while I sit on my balcony overlooking the traffic and the skyline view silhouetted by the sunset. There are enough of us to support a healthy, steady growth in Houston's apartment industry. Developers know the score, and more than a few new residential high rises are on the drawing boards. It will continue to grow, maybe until all the good vus get used up. ■



Urban Loft Townhomes (Robert Cosore, 2004) at US 59 and Macrose.

## Freeway as Landscape : Living on the edge

BY NONYA GRENADER

IT TAKES A CITY LIKE HOUSTON, with its love of all things new, to turn the freeway into landscape. In the absence of natural topography, the rise and fall of overpasses has begun to fill a picture-window view, however improbably. How did a transportation system long shunned by neighborhoods for its traffic noise and attendant air pollution move to front and center?

When the Gulf Freeway opened its initial section in 1948, it was admired as a convenient way to "get us there," but only if you were located at one of its ends. Being "near there" or "on the way to there" meant accepting the freeway's aesthetics and consequences. Whether path to or edge of, the freeway had the power to obliterate homes, divide communities, alter property values, mobilize neighborhoods, and activate environmental groups.

The Eastex Freeway (US 59 North) opened in 1953, cutting a swath through the eastern edge of downtown, obliterat-

ing landmarks such as the West End Ballpark and slicing through the residential Fourth Ward. In his comprehensive study *Houston Freeways*, Erik Slobohm documents the development of this complex transportation network. While generally praising Houston's system, he makes small but significant note of the anti-freeway movement in the '70s: "Opposition to the Gulf Freeway expansion focused on the displacement of homes in the predominantly black, low-income neighborhood adjacent to the freeway." But the fervent opposition did not halt the momentum.

Later freeways continued to indiscriminately cut through the city's established neighborhoods. The West Loop divided parts of Bellaire, looming over backyards and causing such an outcry that massive "sound walls" were devised to soften the blow. Never mind that sound, regardless of a barrier



wall, finds its path. Though these neighborhoods continued to prosper, the lots closest to the freeway suffered a loss in property values.

Even a historic pedigree did not ensure protection. The former Ross Sterling house at 4515 Yoakum Boulevard (originally built in 1916 by the Russell Brown Company as a speculative venture) was situated at the end of a once secluded and picturesque street. When Sterling moved in several years later, he commissioned Alfred C. Finn (and Finn's designer, Jordan Mackenzie) to design a grand porch. In *The Houston Architectural Guide*, Stephen Fox describes the distinctive addition as "a wide-span, reinforced concrete structure bracketed by a cantilevered canopy on the north end and an inglenook on the south, framed by a bulbous concrete column." Currently preserved and occupied by a law firm, the once privileged outlook of that porch is

now a view into the underbelly of US 59 South. Separated by approximately 50 feet and 50 years, the column supports of both porch and freeway are rendered in the same material and address ideas about mass, but they couldn't be more different.

The Sterling house is literally faced with the visual noise that accompanies freeways. A hundred-foot-tall light tower rises across the street, and an intimidating "Houston Gets Dumped" billboard dominates the backyard. Gatsby's valley of ashes with Doctor Eckleburg's "persistent stare" comes to mind. Recently (and thankfully for this distinguished but beleaguered house), the aesthetic and environmental arguments for rebuilding the freeway below grade have won out, and a new view is beginning to be realized along this stretch of 59.

The presence of a freeway may compromise quality of life on residential edges, but it also provides the muscle to

generate development along its periphery. For a retail strip, fronting the freeway is a plus—each store is its own advertisement, at eye level with passing cars. And the closer to an entrance or exit it is, the more desirable the location. Residential development coming in after the freeway has tended to turn its back, but in recent years a significant shift in attitude has occurred between the sacred and the profane. A view of the freeway has become not only acceptable but also profitable for developers.

Directly behind the Sterling house, Urban Lofts Townhomes has embraced this trend with industrial-strength facades bravely facing US 59. The units, with horizontal metal cladding and saw-tooth roof profiles, mimic the traffic flow. Urban Lofts has multiple locations at Houston's freeway edges and has expanded to other cities such as Dallas and Atlanta. Developer Larry Davis

welcomes the design challenge of working on these sites. (As a measure of his success, Davis notes that he has recently sold to his 60th architect.) He confronts the freeway noise with details such as a double-pane window system (laminated with tempered glass) and additional strip soundproofing in the walls. In his own office on the freeway, he says he enjoys the visual activity of a constantly changing scene, "remarkably, without the accompanying noise."

At its largest scale, the freeway has sociological implications: "Inside the Loop" or "outside the Loop" has become a measure of one's affinity for city living versus suburban living. Now there is "on the Loop."

At the intersection of US 59 and the 610 Loop, the upscale Broadstone Uptown Lofts dominate most of a block. At the Broadstone, roughly half of the units face an interior courtyard/swim-



MacGregor Apartments (Feinberg Design Collaborative, 2004) on State Highway 288.



Broadstone Uptown Lofts (Steinberg Design Collaborative, 2003) at US 59 and the 610 Loop.

"Inside the Loop" or "outside the Loop" has become a measure of one's affinity for city living versus suburban living.



ming pool and are named for impressionist painters. The brochure describes these inward-facing units as "a more traditional picture of urban living to enhance your personal privacy." Though the freeway is downplayed in the marketing material, the units facing US 59 and the West Loop are described as "modern, large scale lofts [that] paint a more abstract approach to apartment living" and are named for contemporary artists. A prominent corner loft, "the Rauschenberg," has a freeway vista. Though it is doubtful that Rauschenberg would approve of his name on the unit, he might appreciate the view.

The edge of the vast MacGregor apartment complex runs parallel to State Highway 288. The sales packet describes the development as "Sophisticated. Smart. Upwardly mobile. A welcome, tranquil escape for busy inner loop professionals." Unit types are dispersed throughout the project, and apartments on Highway 288 range from a one-bedroom at \$900

to a two-bedroom, two-bath at \$1,575 per month. These apartments do not shy away from the view with their large windows, operable French doors, and abbreviated balconies.

What has caused this change in attitude? Has the desire to live close in created a housing market so lively that the search for sites has extended to more marginal areas? Though it seems that freeway frontage might offer a more economical tract of land, developer Davis has not found that to be one of the advantages. With a 25-foot setback, the available building envelope on the freeway is more restricted than other possible sites and, in Davis' experience, the price per square foot at the freeway's edge is equal to many comparable interior lots.

Could there be a more progressive rationale in which developers and dwellers have come to appreciate the aesthetics of a concrete-filled scene? Reyner Banham, in his 1986 book *A Concrete Atlantis*, reflected on the influence of fac-

tories and grain elevators and celebrated the pioneering engineers who envisioned these modern and elegant concrete structures. Could the freeway, as an extension of that industrial landscape, offer compelling vistas? In the absence of a front yard or a more pastoral view, the freeway could become the inner city's panorama.

After all, given an appropriate proximity (in spite of screening walls, window coverings, and double-pane glass), the presence of the freeway will relentlessly penetrate interior space. Fifteen years ago, the architectural firm Wittenberg Partnership designed a house that innovatively allowed and even welcomed the freeway to saturate the view. The house site was on Vassar Street, at the edge of a neighborhood that had suffered from the noise and visual imposition of US 59 South.

Wittenberg Partnership took a feisty "if you can't beat it, join it" approach and wisely realized that the freeway, full of energy and brawn, was a force too

formidable to ignore. The design features large windows with views to US 59, celebrating the landscape much like Ed Ruscha's photographs honor the Sunset Strip. Unlike some recent apartments and lofts that treat the implausible placement as a sort of default position driven by economic potential, the Wittenberg design perceptively framed the continuous horizon of lanes as urban scenery.

It remains to be seen if this recent development along the freeway's edge (with an exit ramp at your doorstep) will continue at its current pace. In his book *A Sense of PLACE, A Sense of TIME*, J. B. Jackson, the astute observer of places ranging from the garage to the wilderness, acknowledged that roads belong in the landscape. But it continues to be a conflicted role. When Jackson noted, "In time, we will find our way and rediscover the role of architecture and man-made forms in creating a new civilized landscape," it is doubtful he was anticipating densely packed condominiums perched above foothills of concrete. ■



© 2005 Walter + Starkie  
Sterling house (Alfred C. Finn, 1916) adjacent to US 59.



US 59 facing Sterling house.

Now there is "on the Loop."



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1906 Vassar Street at US 59 (Wittenberg Partnership Architects, 1989).



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Nguyen Family compound (HMC Architects, 2004). flooded courtyard with ancestors pavilion.

## East Meets West in the North Heights

In the pond, what is as beautiful as the lotus?

Green leaves, white petals cradle the yellow heart

Yellow heart, white petals, green leaves

Grows in the mud, but does not have its smell



BY RAFAEL LONGORIA



Section through courtyard looking north.

## The Nguyen family compound

**IN TYPICAL HOUSTON FASHION**, architecture has appeared where it was least expected. West 26th Street, just inside Loop 610 in Houston's North Heights, now offers two architectural destinations: In addition to the Live Oak Friends Meeting House—the site of weekly pilgrimages to observe the sunset as framed by artist James Turrell's hole in the ceiling—there is now the Nguyen family compound, by MC<sup>2</sup> Architects.

The predominantly Hispanic North Heights has an almost rural quality. Streets, lined by open ditches and piney foliage, are very dark at night. Out of this darkness, the Nguyen house emerges like a brilliant apparition, unexpected and magical. Night or day, the Nguyen residence is one of the most interesting recent buildings in Houston. It is the first significant architectural manifestation of a Vietnamese diaspora that has already left an indelible mark on Houston.

Brothers Chung and Chuong Nguyen founded MC<sup>2</sup> Architects in 1995. Their story—a classic immigrant's tale—contains multiple cinematic elements: war, split families, boats, refugee camps,

strange lands, evangelical churches, hard work, university degrees, and finally, economic success. The Nguyen family fled Vietnam in the '70s, leaving their father, a South Vietnamese army officer, behind in a prisoner of war camp. After initially settling in Alabama, the Nguyens made their way to Houston, setting up home in Stafford. Led by their formidable mother, all seven siblings became prosperous professionals. Chung and Chuong Nguyen studied architecture at the University of Houston and went on to complete their educations at Columbia University and Yale University, respectively. Their father eventually reunited with the family.

Their biography has never been as relevant to their work as it is in this most personal of projects. The Nguyen residence is designed for multiple generations: Three live there now, but many more generations are remembered in an ancestors' pavilion. A nursery rhyme remembered from their Saigon childhood is cited by the architects as the inspiration for the project's most dramatic feature—a flooded courtyard:

*In the pond, what is as beautiful as the lotus?  
Green leaves, white petals cradle the yellow heart  
Yellow heart, white petals, green leaves  
Grows in the mud, but does not have its smell*

Two L-shaped buildings totaling 4,500 square feet surround the flooded courtyard. The first, a two-story, three-bedroom house for Chuong Nguyen and his young family, fronts the street and defines the northwest corner. A second building wraps around the southeast corner, containing a single-level, two-bedroom house for his parents. The focal center of the composition is the boat-shaped ancestors' pavilion, which seems to float in the middle of the pond.

The pavilion's banana-leaf-shaped roof is an architectural tour de force. The roof's complex curves were achieved with inexpensive construction techniques. The interior of the pavilion is reminiscent of Fay Jones' Thorncrown Chapel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, with slender vertical structural components that extend past the X-shaped trusses. Its stark whiteness is a reference to the unsullied lotus flower of the nursery rhyme. The space functions

as a ceremonial center for the extended family. On the anniversaries of their ancestors' deaths, the family gathers here to commemorate them with a shared meal. This is where the Christmas tree is displayed during the holidays. It is also where visitors are received and where parties take place. (It is conveniently served by an open-air kitchen across a short bridge.)

The open-air kitchen adjoins the grandparents' house and is in daily use—a traditional solution to control smoke and cooking odors in Vietnam and most places with benign weather. The architects call the outdoor facility the "Vietnamese kitchen," while the more conventional kitchen in the larger house is referred to as the "American kitchen."

The design follows a strong axial composition. The stove of the open-air kitchen and a flat-screen television in the main living room are the foci of the east-west axis that crosses the floating pavilion, marking the traditional and contemporary hearths. The longitudinal axis is terminated by the matriarch's bedroom at the south end and by a wood shop at



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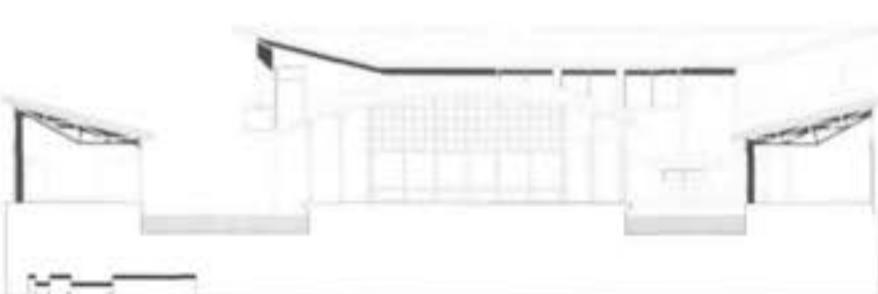


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South elevation of main house.



© 2005 Hines + Nolte/HC



Section through courtyard looking west.

the north end, exalting the primordial virtues of motherhood and work.

The Nguyen residence recalls the spirit of the California case-study houses—particularly in its integration of indoor and outdoor living spaces, the lightness of the construction, and the multiple transparencies and reflections generated by the glass and water of the courtyard. Those California projects owed much to Japanese architecture, and so in a circuitous way, the Asian influence comes to this project from two directions.

The peripheral gardens are also modern and traditionally Asian at once, with meticulously maintained colored gravel and grass surfaces used to great effect. The treatment of the slate-lined drainage ditch at the front of the house shows the influence of John Zemanek, an inspirational teacher to generations of architecture students at the University of Houston, who excels at the fusion of the pragmatic and the poetic.

The Nguyen brothers distinguish themselves from most local architects by being active in real estate development

and general contracting as well as design. Professing "the belief that the design and construction process are intrinsically linked," they built this house themselves, including much of the furniture. That hands-on involvement has allowed them to experiment with cost-saving materials and assembly methods, such as the pre-fabricated wood trusses used upside-down.

The buildings are laid out on a nine-foot-by-nine-foot grid on a foundation of concrete slabs on drilled piers. The framing is conventional wood stud construction with steel reinforcement as needed. Seeking hardness and economy, MC<sup>2</sup> employed standing seam metal for the roofs, and covered the exterior walls with cementitious lap siding painted Menil-gray.

Particularly noteworthy is the use of sheet-metal trim profiles around the bays of lap siding. Manufactured for corrugated metal assemblies, their effective application here is destined to be replicated. Also interesting is the use of sheet-metal profiles to create sun-shading louvers for the west-facing clerestory windows.



© 2005 Bahn + Bahn

View from the mother's bedroom.

Less effective is the selection of split-face masonry for use both inside and outside the house. The rustic pretensions of these creamy concrete blocks trivialize what is otherwise a convincing and straightforward use of materials.

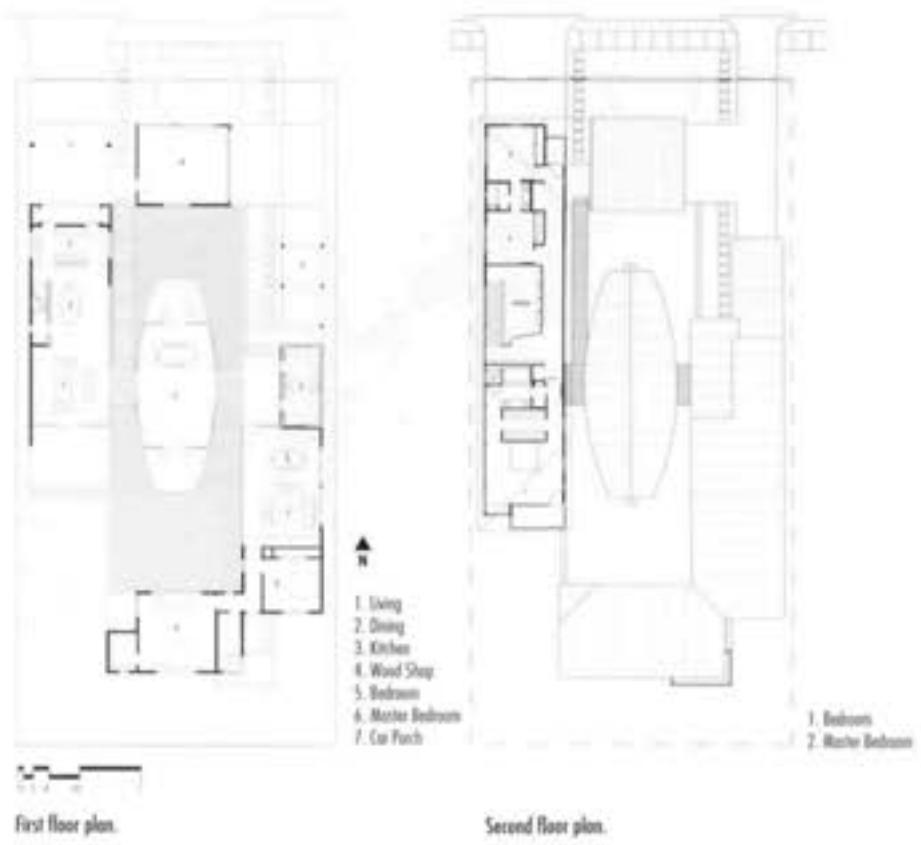
The strict expression of the structural grid at times comes into conflict with the architects' predilection for local symmetries. This sometimes results in awkward elevations, most notably at the front façade. But more often than not, these formal conflicts simply add a layer of complexity to the buildings.

The project is an unqualified success in the variety and quality of the views it creates both to the courtyard and to the neighborhood. It is a delight to see through multiple transparent walls in various directions at once; or to look down at the fish swimming in the pond from the back balcony; or to enjoy the often-surreal framed views of neighboring buildings and trees; or to walk over the pond at night, when reflections abound. One can only imagine the spectacle of a heavy Houston rainstorm channeled to

the pond by the complex curves of the pavilion's roof.

While the architects did not start with the intent of creating an overtly Vietnamese building, the program, location, and construction economies made a hybrid inevitable. The Nguyen residence fits comfortably with the modest wood houses that still predominate in the neighborhood, though the area is rapidly being invaded by the same sort of expensive but mediocre houses that homebuilders are putting up elsewhere inside the Loop. Like the lotus flower of the nursery rhyme, this house smells—and looks—better than its surroundings, without being out of place. Another nursery rhyme from the architects' childhood encapsulates the aspirations of this project:

*This house is our house  
With great sacrifice, our ancestors built it  
The children must care for it  
For thousands of years,  
it will be our home ■*





Mobile home (Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1970) located in Lago Vista, Texas: A gloss, prow-shaped end breaks the box of the traditional mobile home.

## Breaking the Box

### A mobile home worth preserving



At home at a trade show in the early 1970s.

BY ANNA MOD

**IN 1970**, 11 years after the death of Frank Lloyd Wright, the famous American architect's legacy firm, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, collaborated with National Homes Corporation of Lafayette, Indiana, on a program called "Modular on Wheels," creating manufactured housing units that would qualify for standard 15- and 30-year bank mortgages, incorporate the efficiencies of mass-produced housing, and provide a quality, permanent housing product. Nicknamed "Mod on Wheels," the project focused on three manufactured housing types: mobile homes, panelized, and modular housing.

Mobile homes, by definition, are wood frame structures built on top of a steel chassis and fabricated in an assembly-line fashion. Wheels are placed under the chassis for the trip from the factory to the site and then removed. In contrast, panelized housing is built on-site on a permanent foundation utilizing preassembled panels, kit house-style. The third type, modular housing, is assembled in a factory and delivered to the site via a flatbed truck and then placed on a foundation. (The latter is often seen along Houston freeways and state highways.)

Lago Vista is a small community on Lake Travis, 20 miles northwest of Austin. In the early 1970s, a developer purchased three of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation-designed mobile homes to

promote and market the resort community. Of the three homes, one retains a significant amount of its architectural integrity, is in excellent condition, and merits preservation as a surviving example of the "Mod on Wheels" collaborative.

The example mobile home is a one-story, wood-frame-on-steel-chassis structure clad with vertically crimped vinyl siding with evenly spaced rivets and hex bolts. Notable design features include the strategically placed window banks along the long walls and the floor-to-ceiling windows in the two prow ends. The flat roof and drip cap, composed of three rows of horizontal metal siding, form the prominent horizontal lines of the structure.

Adjacent to the primary long facade is a wooden deck with trellis that has a linear and horizontal emphasis, mimicking the prow ends of the mobile home. The deck widens toward the full-width, angled front steps. The deck railing has the same crimped vinyl as the mobile home.

The floor plan is typical of this housing type, with rooms arranged to fit the constraints of the narrow 14-foot width. From end to end are the living room, dining room, kitchen, front bedroom, bath, laundry area, and rear bedroom. The placement of a large mirrored wall opposite the floor-to-ceiling window banks in the living room, along with the windowed prow end, gives the Wrightian feeling of



Interior looking through the living room prow end.



View into living room from dining room and kitchen.



"breaking up of the box." Extant original furniture includes the couch, two armchairs, and small square side tables that double as stools. There are also two end tables that mimic the prow ends. The wood-burning stove is a later addition.

New Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) legislation in the late 1960s allowed for traditional mortgages for manufactured housing; subsequent legislation in the 1970s specified higher construction standards. This legislation set the stage for the collaboration between the National Homes Corporation and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation to provide quality manufactured housing products to a new and growing market. The "Mod on Wheels" program was in development and production from 1970 to 1973.

The National Homes Corporation had a factory in Temple, Texas, and it is assumed that the three mobile homes at Lago Vista were assembled there. It is unknown how many mobile homes were produced during the "Mod on Wheels" program and where other examples are located.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation-designed mobile home at Lago Vista clearly displays design elements pioneered by the firm's founder, such as the horizontal lines and the large grouping of box-breaking windows. This mobile home was con-

structed in an era when there was a major shift in the acceptance, both legislative and financial, of manufactured housing as an affordable permanent housing option. The "Mod on Wheels" program was a design response to this changing climate and a marketing attempt to reverse the stigma of this maligned and little-studied housing type. ■

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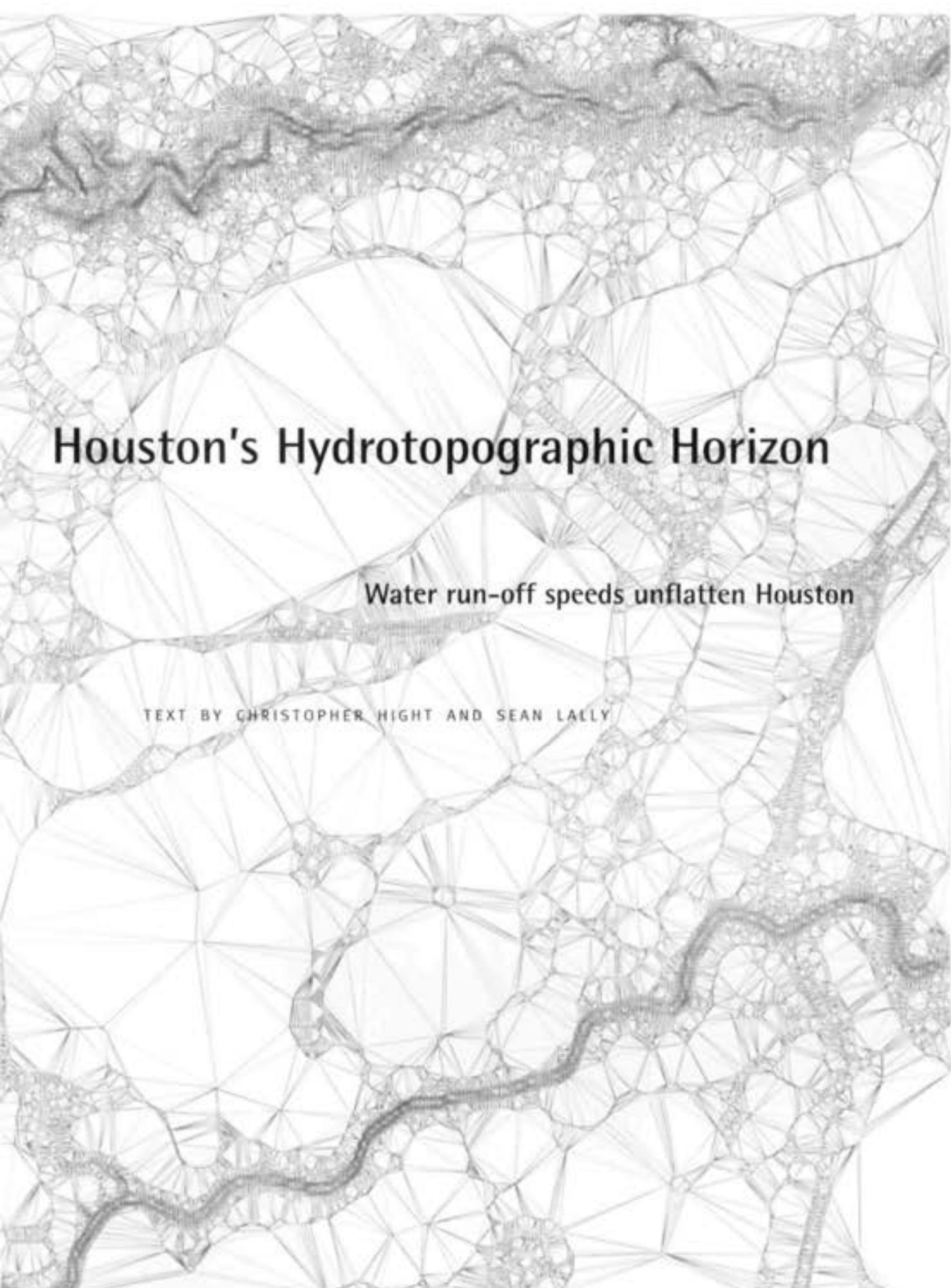
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Interior B, Lago Vista



Interiors from the trade show model (top and above)



## Houston's Hydrotopographic Horizon

Water run-off speeds unflatten Houston

TEXT BY CHRISTOPHER HIGHT AND SEAN LALLY

Bounded at the top by Buffalo Bayou and at the bottom by Brays Bayou, Houston is remapped as a network of flows in which the size of the mesh indicates water run-off speed calculated using a parametric modeling of the web of relationships that underlie this topography at any given point. Map by Joel Gillum, Anthony Sinkewich, and Ricardo Supicche.

[Networks] are not objects as such but projects, dreams, endeavors, even entire societies.

— Bruno Latour

Infrastructure networks are involved in sustaining what we might call "sociotechnical geometries of power."

— Graham and Marvin

**MODES OF MAPPING** and representation determine the way we understand and operate within our world. Yet the tool kit available to architects and urbanists is mostly derived from figure-ground gestalts epitomized by the 18th-century *Noli* plan. Such tools favor the city as an artifact, whose order is understood and planned around a dialectic of the public and private. But the territories of the contemporary metropolis are delineated not simply by walls, streets, and envelopes, but by access points, baud rates, and signal attenuation. Today's built environment literally radiates and pulses with information.

Moreover, vast top-down infrastructures (transportation, sanitation, electrification) are now complemented by the sublimity of miniaturization, molecularization, and the proliferation of bottom-up organizations. Monumental typologies are being displaced by peer-to-peer communities; the public replaced by demographically targeted smart mobs of consumers at wi-fi Starbucks stores, RFID tagging of every product from televisions to chewing gum, and "smart dust" (tiny information-collecting robots) dropped from airplanes to instantly set up vast surveillance networks.

This suggests that the urban field should be approached as a network of heterogeneous, discrete systems—"small worlds" of social, political, and economic organizations that are linked by different degrees of connectivity and velocity across the globe and locally. Unlike the *Noli* plan's supposition of public contiguity, network systems are determined by degrees of separation between nodes. It is possible under these criteria that two buildings that stand adjacent to each other geographically actually operate within incongruous networks. The "accidental" relation between these geographically adjacent but effectively disjunctive local-globals and global-locales is a shear space. More than a metaphor, shear is a material, dynamic model for the spatial relationship of social, economic, and political forces that cannot be understood simply through the 18th-century categories of private and public.

The relevance of a network process approach is not limited to the "new" information infrastructures; it is equally important for renovating our understanding of existing material systems. "Hydrotopography" is a project within the research agenda of the graduate urban research studio at the Rice School of



## Material and Programmatic Alterations

### Zone 1

> Housing	> Plastic
> Transportation	> Metals
infrastructure	> Carbon Fibers
> Public areas	> Concrete
> Parks	

### Zone 2

> Environmental infrastructure	> Marsh/Pond
> Parks	> Tallowgrass
> Fields	> Meadow
	> Lawn Grass

### Zone 3

> Housing	> Concrete and asphalt
> Transportation infrastructure	> Permeable pavement
> Commercial	> Gravel/Rocks
> Walking areas	> Sand
> Parking lots	

### Zone 4

> New Bayou	> Lawn Grass
	> Concrete

Architecture, Shear Space: global locales, local global (the complete project and other projects of the studio are available online at [www.arch2.rice.edu/wiki](http://www.arch2.rice.edu/wiki)). Noting that Houston's success has been forged from successive natural disasters,<sup>1</sup> the team researched the sciences and politics of flooding as well as so-called flood management. Seemingly flat Houston, it turns out, has a topography when one considers it not as a static terrain, but as a hydrodynamic process.

Flood management is itself a hybrid network of practices—science, engineering, politics, and economics—putting the architect in a prime position to intervene. Historically, as many of Houston's artificially banked and straightened bayous evidence, flood management has meant top-down engineering of water flow based on efficiency. This project seeks to develop the potential of bottom-up approaches to create global transformation. In the wake of the epochal flooding caused by Tropical Storm Allison, the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) has redrawn flood maps based on probability

of flooding and aggressively buying properties within developed areas of the flood plain, converting them to different uses. At the same time, it is acquiring property in undeveloped fringes of the county in what is called the Frontier Program. This gives HCFCD non-regulatory power to leverage subsequent private development. The student team proposed synthesizing these two strategies by defining a frontier within the city based on thresholds of water speed and flooding probability (suggesting that HCFCD become Houston's largest real estate developer).

This research and its projections required supplementing the conventional architectural and urban representations of the city. The hydrodynamic topography diagram (opposite page) remaps Houston as a network of flows—literally water run-off speeds. In this drawing, the smaller patches of triangulated mesh indicate high-velocity flow and vice versa. Variations of the mesh record changes in speed, force, viscosity, and flow. Formal systems of description are thus embedded within the material processes they

describe. The group used a parametric generator equation to calculate the web of relationships between the forces that underlie this topography at any given point. Altering certain parameters in particular order at a number of key points can radically transform the global figure. Thus, discreet alterations at a small scale can have global effects.

The problems of flooding can be engines for innovative urban design and can renew the agency of the architect within social and political networks. Under the team's speculations, the power exercised along this intensive frontier could radically transform the organization of Houston real estate development and its civic spaces (see figure, this page).

The instruments of Houston's hydrotopography demonstrate that seriously confronting urban problems requires a fundamental re-conception of the built environment as a complex network of highly interdependent dynamic systems, wherein design decisions made on the most local of scales can have global effects. ■

### Project Credits

Course: Shear Space: local globals, global locales (Architecture 504, Rice University, Spring 2004)

### Student Team Members:

Joel Gilliam, Anthony Sinkewich, Ricardo Supicic

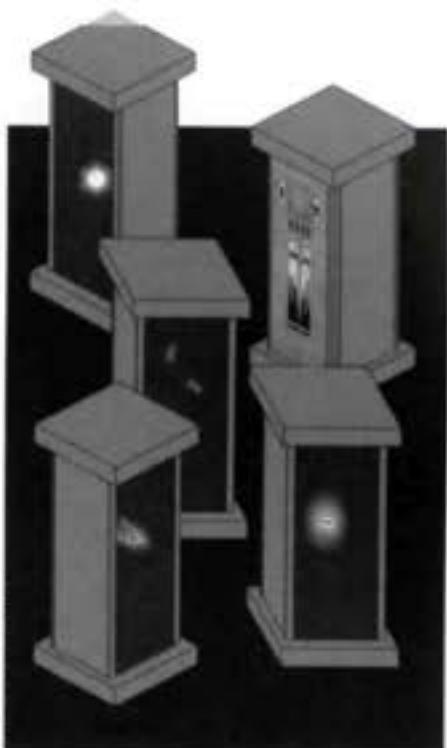
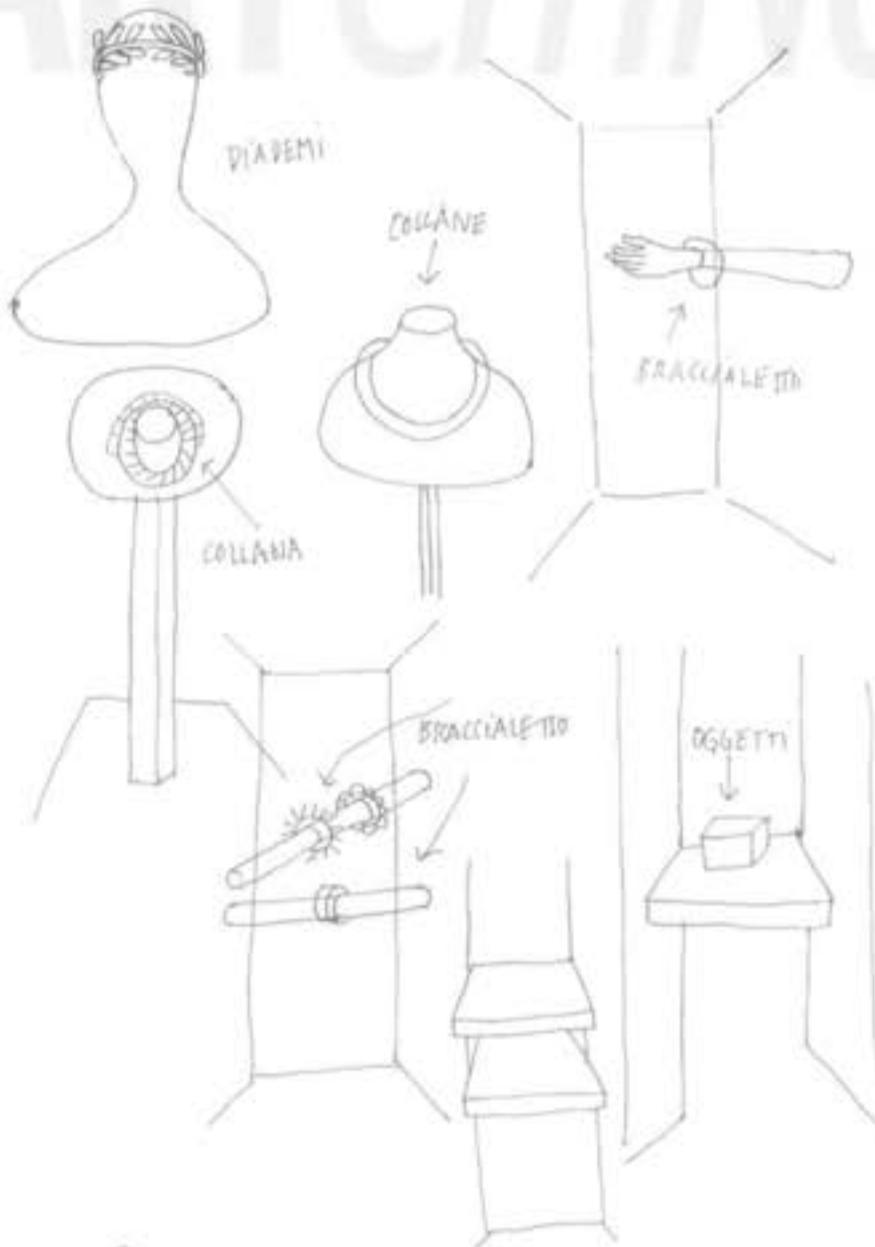
### Instructors:

Christopher Hight (assistant professor), Sean Lally (Wortham Fellow)

### Consultants:

Philip B. Bedient, Herman Brown Professor of Engineering, Rice University; Will Meyers, Harris County Flood Control District

1. An observation made by Barrie Scardino, "HOUSTON," *Cite* 46.



Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

## Jewelry Boxes

*"Cartier Design Viewed by Ettore Sottsass"*

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
October 31, 2004 – March 27, 2005

Reviewed by Carolyn Fouge

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston has mounted a powerful decorative arts show with "Cartier Design Viewed by Ettore Sottsass." The concept—an iconoclastic designer presenting a collection of fine jewelry—provokes questions about the nature of exhibitions and authorship. Particularly, what happens when aesthetics rather than expertise drives the make-up of a show?

Sottsass has had a long and distinguished career in product design and architecture, but he gained special fame in the early '80s for his role as founding member of Memphis, the Milan-based collective of designers whose willfully graphic furniture broadcast the ideas of postmodernism to the general public. At the exit to the Cartier exhibit, the museum shows three newly acquired Sottsass furniture pieces, one of which—the iconic Carlton room divider—is from his Memphis period. This piece—a totemic assembly of multi-colored, plastic laminate shelves joined at 60- and 90-degree angles—offers physical evidence of Sottsass' famed irreverence toward modernist design standards such as the oath of truth to materials, the goal of formal rigor, and the commitment to rational function. The Carlton demonstrates a selective view of preciousness, one that values clever assembly over material purity and wit over beauty.

The unrestrained preciousness and earnest beauty of Cartier's jewels tested Sottsass to construct his own world in a foreign land. In published interviews he acknowledges his unfamiliarity with Cartier at the time he was approached by the company in 2000 to interpret its in-house collection of over 1,200 items. Instead of rushing to become a fine jewelry historian, however, Sottsass chose to trust his eye when selecting 209 of the collection's pieces, created during the years 1902 to 1975. Further, he wanted the museum visitor to have a similar experience: to connect viscerally with jewels presented as art objects rather than study them as cultural artifacts. What comes

through in the exhibition is Sottsass' faith in the ability of an object to speak for itself and in his own ability to set the stage for such a soliloquy.

Sottsass transformed two of the museum's generous ground-floor gallery rooms into cavernous black-box spaces, lit only by fiber optics in the casework and, in turn, by the glowing jewels housed within. Wall text is absent, except for small numbers on pedestals that key into a reference booklet. Entering the darkened exhibit from a bright gallery of surrealist paintings with well-informed wall plaques next to them feels like crossing a threshold from a museum of high art and scholarship to an aquarium of luminous creatures and scenography.

In each room, more than 20 black phone booth-sized vitrines are wired together at their tops to form a curved peninsula on the gallery floor. This arrangement of cases, in which the gallery walls are pointedly ignored, creates a science-fair effect, where viewers follow a path through the visions that came to Sottsass via Cartier. The display reads as a linear series of composed portraits to behold singly rather than a spatial landscape of sights to wander around in.

The design of the individual vitrines underscores this staging tendency. Behind full-height glazing, matte-black pedestals—often theatrically attenuated—reach from the floor of a typical cabinet to lift the pieces to eye level. The pedestals reflect light and cast strikingly graphic shadows in the lower part of the case, marking the presence of a designer. The chunky base that is seen in much of Sottsass' work appears here along with an equally heavy crown to weigh the vitrines down. It is a telling moment—a reveal at the base and crown would have allowed the case to quietly levitate and the viewer to look right past the casework to its contents.

In the exhibit, Sottsass expresses his own love of beautifully designed and well-crafted objects with spectacular clarity. His strategy of downplaying historical context demonstrates a trust in the intrinsic charisma of Cartier's work to command attention. However, his forceful director's hand reveals a skepticism of the viewer's own resources to experience the work without some sort of script. Perhaps when such a curator does not have history at his disposal to frame his subject, he is compelled to use himself. ■



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From Metropolis: Oriental Pearl TV Tower (left) and Jin Mao Tower, Pudong, Shanghai, China; undated (original in color).



From Sticks and Stones: New Orleans, Louisiana, 2000.

## Local vs. Global

*Sticks and Stones: Architectural America*  
by Lee Friedlander, essay by James  
Enyeart. Published by Fraenkel Gallery/  
DAP, 2004. 216 pp., \$85.00

*Robert Polidori's Metropolis*  
by Robert Polidori, with Martin C.  
Pedersen and Criswell Lappin. Published  
by Metropolis Books, 2004. 144 pp.,  
\$65.00

Reviewed by Maria Morris Hambourg

It would be hard to find two more different, superb books on architecture by leading contemporary photographers.

Friedlander's book—the result of many car trips around America over the past decade—displays a collection of vernacular and frequently undistinguished buildings seen through chain-link fences; festooned with wires and shadows; and intercepted by telephone poles, traffic signs, and other street furniture. The square photographs—brilliantly reproduced in black and white—offer variation upon variation of a particular kind of neatly patterned picture that fuses near to far by virtue of some special tricks like graphic rhyming and spatial telescoping, achievable with monochromatic film and a smart eye behind the camera. Eugène Atget and Walker Evans invented this genre of picture in the early part of the 20th century, but Friedlander has made it his own. Such pictures about the happy intersection of parts of a scene Atget called a *coin pittoresque*, or picturesque corner. Most of these photographs are just this, in modern American guise.

The book moves from rural structures and suburban yards to urban views, and most of the buildings that are framed are anonymous or blandly corporate. Sometimes these sharply seen segments of the ordinary have a lonely air, but just as frequently they are droll. Rather than lament the lack of beauty in these American scenes, Friedlander prefers to laugh, so he fashions his private jokes from parallel phrases, matched tones and textures, and surprising doubled notes; he punctuates with staccato rivets and untoward reflections and finishes with the lyrical line of a windshield or a scrawled sign.

The photographs tell much about what we sense but rarely articulate: the

way history, geography, ethnography, climate, local jurisdictions and zoning, commercial agendas, and the particular angle of the sun impart an emotional and physical tenor to a place, a distinct character that, Friedlander shows us, is as detectable on the sidewalk as in the autographic towers of the skyline. While the pictures teach these lessons idiomatically and nearly subliminally, they are only tangentially about places. Severally, as an extended sequence, they are a long solo riff showcasing Friedlander's wry, cerebral vision and unequalled appetite for ever more elegant puzzles. The ones in this survey are the work of a virtuoso, the great American jazzman of photography, jamming for half a century.

*Robert Polidori's Metropolis* contains less than half the pictures of *Sticks and Stones*, but their scope and the volume's horizons are much wider. Whereas Friedlander is focused on the intimate pictorial relation of accident and intention, Polidori is photographing public architecture in its ambient space. Friedlander prowls about familiar territory with a hand-held camera to locate his unsuspecting prey, while Polidori flies into a foreign country, scouts the city and its world-famous buildings with a small digital camera, and then returns the next day with a big stand camera on a tripod. Although Houston's 1400 Smith Street (formerly the Enron Building), New York's Citicorp Tower, and other recognizable landmarks do crop up in Friedlander's frames, their

identities are irrelevant to the photographer's purpose, which utilizes a wide angle to bend the space and forge new pictorial relationships. Polidori's goal was to make an arresting photograph that convincingly conveys his subject's most characteristic qualities, seen in the best light.

Polidori is an architectural portraitist, and a great one. Like a society portraitist, he works on assignment, and his results are beautiful and telling even when the rich and famous client, in his eye, is neither. If his pictures sometimes earn extra points from the luscious colors of dawn and sunset, glittering electric lights, or the silky embrace of fog, they are also intelligently resolved as to structure, lighting, and point of view. To depict Shanghai's Jin Mao Tower, for example, Polidori had to stand far enough away that the picture included considerable ground-level space, which he chose to furnish with indigenous old dwellings in demolition (with people picking through the rubble), a spindly pine, and a utility pole slung with wires. These elements provide the human scale, historical introduction, and proscenium from which the sharp glass-and-steel tower rises like a rocket from its blasted pad.

*Metropolis* is a delight to peruse. The photographs are large and sumptuous, and the buildings are too. The sites range from capitals of the ancient world, such as Alexandria, Leptis Magna, and Petra; to anonymous and vernacular buildings in Jordan, Yemen, and India; to prominent

architecturally distinguished mosques, cathedrals, airports, hotels, and offices. Polidori excels with buildings that clearly embody certain meanings, and he treats them theatrically: temples enshrining light (Roden Crater), electric power (The Tate Modern), culture (The British Museum), luxury goods and style (LVMH Tower), democracy (The German Chancellery), and even authoritarian megalomania (Ceausescu's House of the People, Bucharest). Some of the most interesting photographs are of sites that enshrine the very idea of modernity—Brasilia in the mid-20th century, and, today, as symbols of the future, Dubai and Shanghai.

The accompanying text consists of discussions that are refreshingly unvarnished and enlightening. Polidori frankly dislikes Le Corbusier while he has only praise for Oscar Niemeyer; his photographs of their work tell the same story. His nimble mind goes a mile and a millennium a minute as he scampers through history and architectural practice and hops from cultural critique to photographic process. Assuming a general knowledge of architecture and global culture on our parts, his uneven but often insightful and endearingly personal guidance is a great relief from the usual texts. Even if we disagree with Polidori about questions of taste, reading his commentary as we view the impressive work in this handsome book is like having the artist at our elbow, enlivening the experience. ■

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One symbol to heal them all: A rendering of Daniel Libeskind's competition-winning Freedom Tower shows how his design echoes the country's most famous icon of freedom, the Statue of Liberty.

## Democracy and Design

*Up from Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of New York*  
by Paul Goldberger. Published by Random House, 2004. 274 pp., \$24.95

Reviewed by Terrence Doody

Eric Darnton wrote *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center* after the first terrorist attack there on February 20, 1993. The Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki (who also designed the infamous Pruitt-Igoe project in St. Louis) designed the WTC, and his remorseless minimalism was never seen as an improvement over the old neighborhood the complex displaced. Yamasaki's design, Darnton wrote, had a "chilling perfection," and he drew this cold-eyed correlation between the architect and the terrorists:

"This analogy between those who seek to destroy the structures [the architect] thought it rational and desirable to build becomes possible by shift-

ing focus momentarily to the shared, underlying predicates of their acts. To attempt creation or destruction on such an immense scale requires both bombers and master builders to view living processes in general, and social life in particular, with a high degree of abstraction. Both must undertake a radical distancing of themselves from the flesh-and-blood experience of mundane existence 'on the ground.'

Paul Goldberger's *Up from Zero: Politics, Architecture, and the Rebuilding of New York* is an account of the early stages of the planning to rebuild the World Trade Center after the attacks of September 11, 2001. In it, the architects are the good guys, but they are by no means the only ones. Everyone wanted to do the right thing, but no one knew what that was. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani wanted to dedicate the entire site to a memorial; the developer Larry Silverstein, who had just purchased the lease, wanted to rebuild immediately—a gesture of

defiance, he said, that was interpreted as greed and denial; and the heads of the Port Authority, which owns the property, wanted to ensure its future profitability. The survivors of the attacks wanted their say, too, as did the families of the victims, the living confederates of the dead rescue workers, the tenants of the office complex, the inhabitants of the neighborhoods like Tribeca that had finally grown up around the WTC, engaged citizens from all over the city, urbanologists from inside the academy as well as off the streets—all in addition to the architects.

And all of them did get their say, because although there was no one quite in charge, there were meetings, forums, organized discussions, and competitions, sponsored by various newspapers, magazines, and public entities, which were inclusive of an unprecedented number of people. Goldberger's phrase "the rebuilding of New York" is a pardonable hyperbole; closer to the truth, perhaps, is the rebuilding *by* New York—and

interested parties. When he claims the project was "to carry a symbolic weight far greater than that of any other building project of our time," he is stating his theme and staking his claim: Because of the "complex politics and...widespread sense of passion" that marks this project, it has become "the most challenging urban-design problem of the twenty-first century."

Goldberger's narrative consists of three woven threads. First is the account of the struggle for control among politicians, developers, and governmental agencies—this is the power-and-money story, in which the names of the players likely will be unfamiliar to non-natives. Second is the story of the architectural competitions, in which the names of the star architects—eventual winner Daniel Libeskind, Norman Foster, Rafael Viñoly, Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, Peter Eisenman, Steven Holl, David Childs of SOM, among others—are more widely known; their differences more visible,

more open to viewers at a distance. Third is the story of the relationship of everyone else to these first two groups—it is the messiest, the most unexpected, and the most hopeful story. "Everybody else" refers to the experts in "living processes" and social considerations that political exigency, profit taking, planning-from-on-high, and sacred and secular theories tend to ignore. Public outcries made two major competitions necessary, because "everybody" objected to the results of the first. Goldberger frames this third thread as the triumph of the spirit of Jane Jacobs over the ghost of Robert Moses. All of it ends still in *media res*, with a great deal left to negotiate and do, but on a note more optimistic than not: "Idealism met cynicism at Ground Zero, and so far they have battled to a draw."

But there are a couple of other lessons, too. The first is that the democratic process itself is not necessarily conducive to good design. The Washington Monument and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial were not developed in committee. "Everybody else's" passionate ideas and requirements are not created equal. The second lesson is that it is still far easier to design a good building than to realize an adequate symbol. Not only do symbols comprehend and resolve conflicting desires and intentions, but their meanings evolve over time.

Because the World Trade Center was never the financial or social success that the Rockefeller interests intended it to be, its second iteration—in addition to everything else—must be redemptive.

Goldberger likes Libeskind's winning design very much, but he argues that one of the reasons it won was because Libeskind was so eloquent in explaining his design's meaning. Not what it does mean, but what it would mean, in language more spiritual than architectural. The last photograph in the book is a wonderful rendering of Libeskind's Freedom Tower from an angle that holds the Statue of Liberty in the foreground. The design by itself is a somewhat angular abstraction, but in this context it is an obvious and beautiful allusion to one of our most powerful national icons.

The 21st century is, we have to realize, only five years old. Other cities—Bombay, for instance—present some formidable challenges to urbanologists of every stripe. The many opinions, the chaotic forums and contests, the egos and in-fighting, all together may not guarantee a good design, but they do oppose the imperious abstractions and life-denying laws that are often a part of urban planning and always a part of war. The fight to make the new World Trade Center ennobling and useful is a good one. ■

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"It's just junk": Detail of Cleveland Turner's Third Ward yard show.



Turner's Alcoholics Anonymous sobriety certificates.

## Transcendent Shelter

Cleveland Turner's house contains the whole world

BY LISA SIMON

A house is often much more than where you hang your hat. Its location, style, and the appearance of care (or disregard) convey something about the people who live there. Once you enter the perimeter of a private home, the sense that the inhabitants are trying to express themselves through aesthetic signs increases. Visitors are meant to "read" a home's yard and entryway—the occupants have designed them (or hired someone else to do so) for just that purpose.

But what can be made of a house that seeks to engage you on seemingly every topic—history, culture, childhood, self-expression, waste, transformation, spirituality, transcendence—and right this instant as you pass, stop, stare?

The house at the corner of Francis and Dowling in the Third Ward was once run-down and unassuming. Now it's downright forward: The house intrudes into its context as much as any downtown superblock. You can't miss it. Cleveland "Flower Man" Turner, one of Houston's longest-enduring yard-show artists, has made sure of that.

The exterior is painted a yellow somewhere between lemon and school bus. The two- to mildly three-dimensional objects Turner has fastened onto the outer walls pop against it. (It's hard to imagine another background that would achieve the same effect—solar panels? LED?) Even though the color pounds at the retinas, it is homey, still humble, and not unnatural.

It's the color of the center of a daisy, writ huge. Has Turner intended for it to call down some giant, supernatural bee? Is his house shouting for our attention, or for the attention of the higher power that has kept the artist sober for the 22 years he's been working on his yard shows?

Children's toys—dolls, skates, all manner of molded plastic—are a recurring motif in his assemblages. But the juxtapositions Turner subjects them to tend to send the narrative spinning off. *Sesame Street's* Grover shows off a capital "G" to the right of Buddha's head (which has been made up with lipstick and earrings). Thumb-sucking baby dolls settle inside the upturned arms of a glass tulip lamp. Another doll reclines on a pipe that dives into the ground like an elephant's trunk, or an anthropomorphized oil derrick, working to enrich its youthful rider.

A refugee from Houston's fiberglass Cow Parade perches on the roof, recalling the freedom of imagination offered by a child's plastic farm set. Cow on the roof? Why not? And from the ground, the whole display seems to shrink for a moment to the scale of a toy or a nativity scene, as if Turner had merely walked out there one morning after his Cheerios and picked up the eight-foot-by-five-foot, 100-pound cow, thinking it looked better up there than in the barn.

Turner's explanations of his compositions often seem just that spontaneous, as if there were no filter of planning between

idea and execution, just logistics. His reasoning also underscores the sense of unreality and transcendence that runs through all of his preparations. "The cow on the roof makes me think of old Westerns," he says. "They're running up through the smoke in the sky. They run through the clouds and come out the other side."

Another recurring and always startling device in Turner's yard is his use of mirrors: Bits of mirrored ball are nestled in flower beds, sheets of mirrored tile are draped over his chain-link fence, and mirror shards stand against the sides of the house, awaiting inclusion in some future configuration. They catch the sun and the colors of the yard, winking up at the eyes no matter where you turn. Writing on forms and historical significance in African-American art, art historian Robert Farris Thompson points out, "Mirrors and flash throw back envy,"<sup>1</sup> offering protection to those who stand inside their perimeter. But for Turner, again, there's more to it. "A mirror is not natural on the outside," he says. "When you look through a mirror on the outside, you're looking into heaven."

And yet the terrific din of objects does seem to shield the house and yard from something, even if it is only ordinariness. What would an ordinary Third Ward life look like for Cleveland Turner? Would he still be a drinker? Would he have survived to reach the age of 70, as he will this year? Would he enjoy the support of

Project Row Houses and the respect of the larger folk art community?

The layers of miscellany coat the site of Turner's house like a suit of armor, a protective shell. If he could carry the place with him when he goes to his West University gardening gigs, would he? In fact, he almost does: The flower-covered bicycle he rides to work and around town is a clear-cut indication of his desire to be always decorated, to throw back manic beauty to the eyes of all who pass.

Cleveland Turner turns the judgments of people inside out. If you want to pick apart his aesthetic choices, he will tell you, "It's just junk." If what he has done to his house offends your sense of sanctity, he'll say, "My house doesn't look real without all this stuff." He is slippery, elusive, dodging the forces that have brought him pain and discouragement. And taking a tip from the very best infiltrators and spies, he is hiding in plain sight, waving his arms.

Turner's house will not be ignored; it will never just slip by unnoticed. His house shouts into public space, like a preacher on a street corner: You will hear it, even if you don't listen. ■

1. Thompson, Robert Farris. "An American Classic," posted in *The Art of John Biggers: View from the Upper Room*. Abrams, 1993.



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# Architecture Month April 2005

## Events Calendar

Date	Event	Description and Location	Information
<b>March 14 - April 23</b> M-F, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>Architectural Exhibition</b> Houston MOD UH School of Architecture	Bosquet House, Donald Barthleme, Architect Gerald D. Hines Architecture Building, Archive Gallery	<a href="http://www.houstonmod.org">www.houstonmod.org</a>
<b>March 31</b> 7:00 p.m. Exhibition open daily/mall hours April 1 - 30	<b>Architecture Matters Opening</b> AIA Houston Young Architect's Forum	An exhibition of recent work by Houston Architects Memorial City Mall: "Meet us by the Fireplace"	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org">www.aiahouston.org</a>
<b>April 1</b> 7:00 p.m. Exhibition	<b>Art by Architects Opening</b> AIA Houston Small Firm Round Table	An exhibition of artwork by Houston Architects 1 Houston Center: Lobby	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org">www.aiahouston.org</a>
<b>April 1 - 29</b> , 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>Architecture Book Sale</b> AIA Houston Historic Resources Committee	A treasure-trove of architectural books will be on sale AIA Offices: 3000 Richmond Avenue, Suite 500	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org">www.aiahouston.org</a>
<b>April 1</b> 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>Kennon Symposium</b> Rice School of Architecture	Culturing Natures/Modulations, Session II	<a href="http://www.arch.rice.edu">www.arch.rice.edu</a>
<b>April 1 - May 7</b> M-F, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sat: Noon - 5:00 p.m.	<b>Art Exhibition</b> Lawndale Art Center	Exhibition (---), by Mick Johnson: Borders, boundaries and the "seam" – the space between and contained by the architecture of the Main Gallery Also, exhibitions by Julia Dusley, Ellen Francis Ruchman and I. Hill	<a href="http://www.lawndaleartcenter.org">www.lawndaleartcenter.org</a>
<b>April 2 &amp; 3</b> Noon - 6:00 p.m.	<b>27th Annual Historic Heights Home and Garden Tour</b> Houston Heights Association	Historic Heights Home and Garden Tour (7 locations) Advance and day of show tickets available Candlelight Tour, Dinner & Auction, April 1, 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	<a href="http://www.houstonheights.org/hometour.htm">www.houstonheights.org/hometour.htm</a>
<b>April 2 &amp; 3</b> 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>RDA Architecture Tour</b> Rice Design Alliance	Modern Mode: Houston Architecture at Mid-Century	<a href="http://www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/">www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/</a>
<b>April 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28</b> 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	<b>Discover Houston Tours</b> Discover Houston	Tunnels, Trolleys & Trains, Oh My! Tours start at Information Desk at Food Court (3rd Floor) of the Shops at Houston Center	<a href="http://www.discoverhouston-tours.com">www.discoverhouston-tours.com</a>
<b>April 6</b> 7:00 p.m.	<b>Sally Walsh Lecture</b> Houston Architecture Foundation Rice Design Alliance	Thomas Phifer The Museum of Fine Arts, Brown Auditorium	<a href="http://www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/">www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/</a>
<b>April 9 &amp; 10</b> 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>23rd Annual Bellaire Home Tour</b> Nature Discovery Center	Benefiting the programs of the Nature Discovery Center Advance and day of show tickets available	<a href="http://www.naturediscoverycenter.org">www.naturediscoverycenter.org</a>
<b>April 11</b> 5:00 p.m.	<b>Rice University Lecture</b> Rice School of Architecture	In Search of a Plot Bjarke Ingels and Julien de Smedt: Principals, PLOT, Copenhagen Rice University, Anderson Hall, Farish Gallery	<a href="http://arch.rice.edu/modules/indexwin.php">http://arch.rice.edu/modules/indexwin.php</a>
<b>April 18</b> 10:00 a.m.	<b>Seminar: Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture</b> AIA Houston	John Eberhard, FAIA, Director of Academy Location to be announced	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org">www.aiahouston.org</a>
<b>April 20</b> 7:00 p.m.	<b>RDA 2005 Spring Lecture Series Built in Brazil</b> A lecture by Lauro Cavalcanti Rice Design Alliance	The evolution of modern architecture in 20th Century Brazil The Museum of Fine Arts, Brown Auditorium	<a href="http://www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/">www.rice.edu/projects/RDA/</a>
<b>April 24</b> 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	<b>Architecture Walking Tour</b> Greater Houston Preservation Alliance	Starting location to be determined, Tickets go on sale at 1:30 p.m. the day of the tour: \$10 - Adults; \$7 - Students; 11 & Under - Free	<a href="http://www.ghpa.org">www.ghpa.org</a>
<b>April 28</b> 5:00 p.m.	<b>Rice University Lecture</b> Rice School of Architecture	Population Thinking and Material Practices Peter Trummer, Amsterdam Architect and Research Coordinator, Berlage Institute, Rotterdam Rice University, Anderson Hall, Farish Gallery	<a href="http://arch.rice.edu/modules/indexwin.php">http://arch.rice.edu/modules/indexwin.php</a>
<b>April 29</b> Time TBA	<b>Michael G. Meyers Scholarship Awards Presentation</b> AIA Houston	Houston area high school student design competition for a community bike shop on a site adjacent to Project Row Houses in the Third Ward	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org/mgmc/index.html">www.aiahouston.org/mgmc/index.html</a>
<b>April 29</b> 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	<b>Gulf Coast Green 2005 Symposium on Building</b> AIA Houston Committee on the Environment	Featuring local and national speakers; in-depth look at Green Building in the Texas Gulf Coast region George R. Brown Convention Center	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org/cote/gulfcoastgreen/">www.aiahouston.org/cote/gulfcoastgreen/</a>
<b>April 30</b> 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	<b>Celebrate Architecture 2005 Gala</b> Houston Architectural Foundation AIA Houston	Honoring Dominique and John de Menil and Benefiting the Houston Architectural Foundation Schlumberger Vehicle Assembly Building 5000 Gulf Freeway	<a href="http://www.aiahouston.org">www.aiahouston.org</a>



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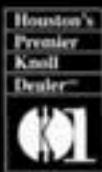
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