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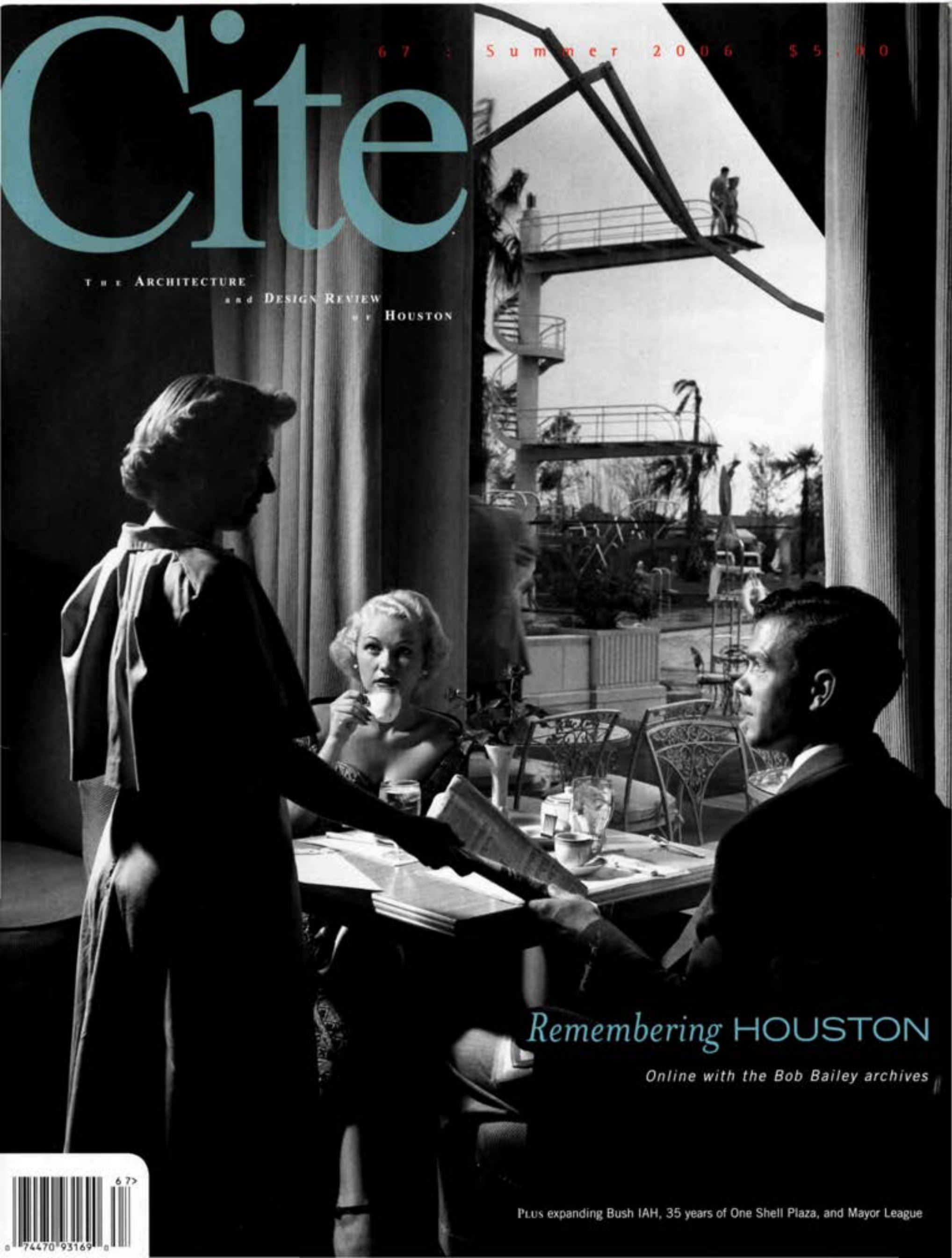
THE ARCHITECTURE and DESIGN REVIEW of HOUSTON



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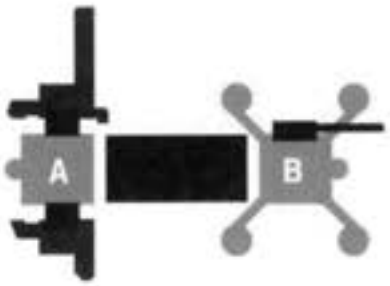

Cite

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OF HOUSTON

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contents

Left: Detail of Jim Love's *Figure* (1959). Photo courtesy Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Cover: Bob Bailey Studio photo of guests at the Shamrock Hotel, early 1950s. The Shamrock Hotel, designed by Wyatt C. Hedrick, was ultimate Glen McCarthy's paean to excess. Opened in 1949 at a cost of $20 million, the hotel for many years symbolized Houston's "big money" set to the rest of the nation. In the background of the photograph can be seen the diving board of the Shamrock's famous Olympic-sized swimming pool. Early hotel publicity billed the pool as "the world's largest, most glamorous hotel swimming pool." It was well known as a gathering spot for celebrities staying at the Shamrock. Photo © Bob Bailey Studio Photographic Archive, Center for American History, the University of Texas at Austin.

LETTERS

FOLEY'S FAN

I am writing to you re: the *Cite* article "Modernism for the Masses" [by Steven R. Strom, *Cite* 62]. Although the article appeared in the Fall 2004 edition of *Cite*, I hope that my words of praise will still be of value to you in planning future issues.

I work out of town for long periods of time, and when I return to Houston I love to go to the Public Library's Texas Room and catch up on Houston-related periodicals. When I ran across "Modernism for the Masses," I realized that it was just such articles that make me anxious to read each issue of *Cite*. Mr. Strom wove the past and present in his text in a way that makes it easy for general readers like myself to understand why it is so important to maintain our historic structures instead of demolishing them. As a former Foley's customer, I had no idea that so much effort (and theory) was involved in the planning for the downtown store. And who knew that the philosopher Walter Benjamin could be used to analyze Houston's history?

Thank you for publishing this fine article and for your fine publication.

Sincerely,
Mark Carley
Houston

Have a criticism, comment, or response to something you've seen in Cite*? If so, the editors would like to hear from you. You can mail your comments to Letters to the Editor,* Cite, *Rice University, Rice Design Alliance–MS 51, PO Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892, or e-mail them to citemail@rice.edu.*

Photo courtesy the Buffalo Bayou Partnership

OVERCITE

Through an editing mistake, one of the photographs in the *Cite* 66 CiteLines article "A Pleasant Promenade" was not correctly identified. The photograph shown above—which was the center left image on page 9—had the cutline, "A pedestrian takes in a section of the half-mile long promenade." It should have been noted that this is a "before" picture, one that shows the Buffalo Bayou Promenade as it was prior to landscaping, not after. *Cite* regrets the error.

Photo by Geoffrey Lyons

Barbara Amelio, Valerie Bugayong, and Caryn Mims at Fresh Forum 3.

Fresh Forum 3 at Kirksey

RDA Partners held its third annual Fresh Forum event at Kirksey this year, featuring the work of 14 artists. Valerie Bugayong and her committee of volunteers made over the Kirksey space in order to house fresh works, among them furniture, painting, textiles, installation, photography, jewelry, and architecture. More than 200 people attended the party. Drinks were sponsored by RU Vodka and Partida Tequila, and provided by *Texas Monthly*.

Photo by Lynn Kelly

RDA tour members gather in Charleston's Joseph Manigault house.

RDA Members Visit Charleston

In June, 30 RDA members journeyed to Charleston, South Carolina, for a four-day tour of the historic city. Led by architectural historian Stephen Fox and tour director Lynn Kelly, the trip offered an in-depth look into Charleston's rich historic past, its architectural landmarks, and, of course, its remarkable cuisine.

Former Houstonians Pat and Bob Prioleau welcomed the group to the "Holy City" with a reception in their historic home on the Battery. Friday gave an introduction to the landscape, with tours of Drayton Hall and Middleton Place Gardens, both former plantations along the Ashley River. The day ended with a reception and private tour of the Roper House, the first house to be built on the Battery. Landscape architect Amanda Barton Graham highlighted Charleston's unique garden traditions, and Dewey Ervin, a Rice graduate student and Charleston tour guide, led Saturday's walking tour, providing insight into the perspective and scale of the Grand Modell—the original town plan—and the remarkable heritage of architecture left for the enjoyment of future generations.

The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality, and Charleston has adopted that symbol as its own. RDA was welcomed everywhere with gracious Southern charm.

No RDA tour would be complete without extensive study of local cuisine, and Charleston offered many opportunities for enjoyment! Can you say grits?

RDA Membership Meeting Has the Power

The 2006 Rice Design Alliance annual membership meeting was held Thursday, June 1, in the lobby of the CenterPoint Energy Tower downtown. The evening began with a reception catered by the Post Oak Grill and jazz music performed by Sea Breeze. Outgoing RDA president Barbara Amelio, principal at Debner+Company, addressed the crowd of RDA members, recognizing the volunteers and programs that had made the previous year such a success.

RDA past president and nominating committee chair Larry Lander, principal of PDR, called the roll of outgoing board members, returning board members, and a class of new board members, all of whom were elected by the membership. New officers for the 2006-2007 year also were elected, and include David T. George, Director of Corporate Real Estate and Facilities Management, CenterPoint Energy, Inc.; President-Elect Nonya Grenader, Principal, Nonya Grenader, Architect, and Professor in Practice and Associate Director, Rice Building Workshop, Rice University; Vice President Lynn M. Herbert, Adjunct Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum; Treasurer Stewart O. Robinson, President, Conine & Robinson; and Secretary David Spaw, Chief Executive Officer, SpawMaxwell Co.

After the business meeting, RDA members were treated to tours of some of the most well-appointed offices in the building, including the CenterPoint Energy executive floor, designed by Lehman-Smith Mcleish; Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, LLP, designed by Gensler; Howrey, LLP, designed by Lehman-Smith Mcleish; and Watkins, Hamilton & Ross, Architects, designed by WHR, Architects.

CenterPoint Energy Tower was originally designed as the 1100 Milam Building in 1973 by JV III (a joint venture of Koetter, Tharp & Cowell, Caudill Rowlett Scott, and Neuhaus & Taylor). The building was developed by Tenneco and the Prudential Insurance Company of America and built at the same time as the Hyatt Regency Hotel and the Regency Parking Garage. In the mid-1990s, Houston Industries (now known as CenterPoint Energy) commissioned DMJM Keating to redesign the exterior of the building.

The stunning makeover included post-modern granite panels at the base of the building and a six-story top hat perched on the building's summit. Many local firms participated in the reconstruction project, including Hines, Kendall Heaton & Associates, Zeigler Cooper Architects, Miner Dederick Construction, Tellepsen Construction, and Brochsteins. The 1996 RDA gala was held in the building upon completion of the renovation.

2006 Initiatives for Houston Grants Winners Chosen

Two assistant professors at the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and three Rice University undergraduates were the winners of this year's Initiatives for Houston grants. This Rice Design Alliance grants program is for students and faculty of the Rice University School of Architecture, the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, and Prairie View A&M University, and supports projects that focus on Houston's built environment, its history, present condition, and future development. The proposals were evaluated in terms of their potential for making a significant contribution to our understanding of the city.

The Rice undergraduates' project, titled "Urban Ecology of Houston," was awarded $2,000. The students—Jean Daly, Katherine Dankberg, and Benjamin Regnier—proposed identifying and indexing existing ad hoc urbanisms in order to assemble a "tool box" for the creation of an urban ecology of competing identities, then projecting a strategy for identifying the Pierce Elevated area of Houston.

Donna Kacmar, an assistant professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, received a grant of $3,000 for "Accommodation in Houston: Beer, Burgers, and Barbacoa." Kacmar will study Houston's version of public accommodation through several non-traditional ritual sites, such as ice houses, burger joints, and taco stands.

Thomas M. Colbert, an associate professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, received a grant of $5,000 for "Documentation and Analysis of Prison Architecture In and Around Houston." Colbert proposes an investigation of Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities in order to develop a clear picture of these facilities, the architectural differences between them, the ways that these places can be understood as architecture, and the role of the design professional in shaping them.

CALENDAR

LECTURES

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OBJECTS
Bernardo Gomez-Pimienta
■ Tuesday, August 29, 6 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater,
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines
College of Architecture

RDA LECTURE: LAKE I FLATO
■ Wednesday, August 30, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

PREFAB LECTURE: MAKING MODERN ARCHITECTURE AFFORDABLE
Rocio Romero
■ Tuesday, September 26, 3 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater,
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines
College of Architecture

RDA FALL LECTURE SERIES: RESURFACING THE CITY
James Corner
■ Wednesday, September 27, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

EXHIBITIONS

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PROJECT: BRAYS BAYOU IN HOUSTON'S EAST END
■ July 7-August 10 (Reception Tuesday, July 11, 6 p.m.)
Ripley House
4410 Navigation
■ August 14-September 15 (Reception Tuesday, August 22, 10 a.m)
Frost Bank
1001 Broadway

THE ARCHITECTURE OF HARWOOD TAYLOR: A HOUSTON MOD EXHIBIT
■ August 19-September 19 (Reception Saturday, August 19, 5:30–7:30 p.m.)
AIA Houston Gallery
3000 Richmond Avenue, Suite 500
713.520.0155 or aiahouston.org

DESIGNING DOMESTICITY: INDUSTRIAL DESIGN FOR MODERN LIVING, 1930-1960
■ September 1-October 28 (Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.)
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines
College of Architecture Gallery
713.743.2400 or
www.arch.uh.edu/news

EVENTS

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RDA CIVIC FORUM: THE PUBLIC REALM—SLICES OF LIFE, PART 1
■ Wednesday, July 12, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RDA PARTNERS DESIGN CHARRETTE: TALKING TRASH
■ Charrette: Saturday, August 5, 8 a.m–4 p.m.
■ Reception: Monday, August 7, 6 p.m.–8 p.m.
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines
College of Architecture

RDA CIVIC FORUM: THE PUBLIC REALM—SLICES OF LIFE, PART 2
■ Wednesday, August 9, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RDA CIVIC FORUM: THE PUBLIC REALM—SLICES OF LIFE, PART 3
■ Wednesday, September 6, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

Renderings and section courtesy Ziegler Cooper Architects

Renderings of four interior views of the new Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart give a sense of what it will look like. Above left: Nave looking south toward main entrance. Above right: Transept looking east across main altar, with dome above. Opposite page, left: Oblique view of main altar, with chapel to side. Opposite page, right: Looking north from upper choir loft toward main altar.

The Light Inside

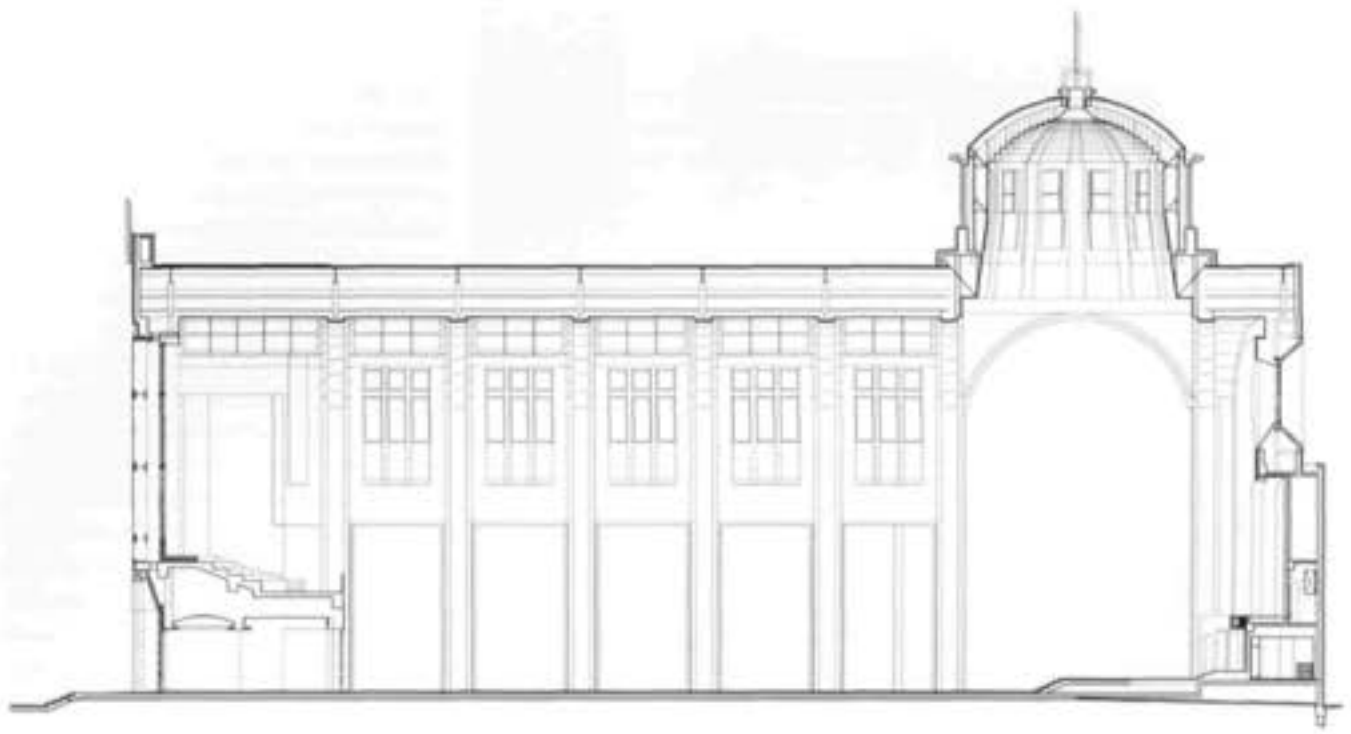
Its roof in place, work begins on the interior of downtown's new Co-Cathedral

Photo by Sky Cam Aerial Photography, Inc.

Aerial view of the new Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (Ziegler Cooper Architects, 2007) after placement of dome.

This spring, workers for Linbeck Construction lifted an 80,000-pound dome up into the air and placed it securely on the highest point of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston's new Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, effectively topping off the structure that fills the downtown block bounded by St. Joseph's Parkway, Fannin, Jefferson, and San Jacinto. Though the Co-Cathedral still has a long way to go before it's finished—completion is scheduled for September 2007—the installation of the dome was seen as a benchmark, in part because it signaled the end of major exterior construction. But it also meant that the last of the roof was in place, and that as a result serious work on the Co-Cathedral's interior could begin.

What that interior will look like has not been widely publicized, though archdiocese officials and their architectural



Longitudinal cross-section

firm, Ziegler Cooper Architects, have been thinking about it before the first foundation was poured in May 2005. According to Tony Rourke, construction manager for the archdiocese, the architects were told to try for what then Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza described as "noble simplicity."

The result, at least judging from the early renderings of the interior space, has been to use limited decoration and muted colors. Though there will be a large stained glass window over the main entrance and rose windows on each end of the transept and above the main altar, as well as three shrines along each side of the nave, the primary intended impression will be of the Marianna-cream plaster and limestone along the walls and interior columns, and the way the light plays off them. The concept, according to Ziegler Cooper, was to be more streamlined and contemporary while retaining the Romanesque tone of the building in general.

"The idea of how the light will fall into the space was of a fair amount of importance in directing our hand through the initial design process," notes Ziegler Cooper Architects principal Scott Ziegler. To determine what that light should be, trips were taken to study cathedrals in Italy. The most successful Italian cathedrals, Ziegler Cooper decided, featured a simple white light. So the decision was made to depend on clear clerestory windows for illumination rather than windows with colored or stained glass.

Those windows run in tall rows high on the walls along both sides of the nave, and contain a shelf to help bounce light up toward the ceiling, which is rippled to create different reflective surfaces. According to Ziegler Cooper, the purpose of the ripples is to to make the ceiling an active part of the design and draw visitors' eyes up toward it. Studies conducted by the architects indicated that the ceiling's angles would make it appear to contain a variety of colors as the light changed throughout the day.

"We created these slits of windows to allow the light to come in not directly, but indirectly, and light some of the niches," says Ziegler. "We're far from being done, in fact we've barely started, but even now if you walk around the Co-Cathedral at different times of the day you can see the light, see how it changes. It is already doing some of the things we wanted it to do."

Other design elements include a foreshortened nave, in order to create a sense of closeness to the altar. The foreshortening also means that when parishioners come in they will get an immediate sense of where the transept crosses, along with a sense of the height leading up to the dome.

Since the Co-Cathedral was announced in 2001, there have been a few changes in its design. A 200-seat crypt church was lost early in the planning, but more major was a reduction in the Co-Cathedral's size. Originally it was to rise to a height of 116 feet in the nave and 180 feet over the altar. However, that has been reduced to 72 feet in the nave and some 117 feet over the altar up to the dome. As a result, the proportions of the space have changed from a two to one height-to-width ratio to approximately 1.75 to one. That may well lessen the monumentality of the space, but it does make it easier to illuminate using primarily natural light. — *Mitchell J. Shields*

Photos courtesy Ballroom Marfa

Two views of Victor Lundy's installation at Ballroom Marfa. Seen in the foreground is *Rock Space Roof Cloud*, a wooden sculpture that Lundy describes as his "first three-dimensional work as a response to Marfa." In the background are drawings and models of various architectural projects.

Victor Lundy in Marfa — A show recalls when architects could draw

It's not uncommon for architects to talk about being artists, but few have more right to make that claim than Victor Lundy, who along with his wife Anstis is the subject of an exhbition this summer in Marfa.

Known among architects for, among other things, the U.S. Tax Court Building in Washington, D.C., St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Sarasota, Florida, and an inflatable building created for the Atomic Energy Commission, Victor Lundy trained at Harvard under Walter Gropius, and in the 1950s was associated with a group of architects who came to be known as the Sarasota School of Architecture.

His first commission, however, was initiated not by his architectural skill, but rather his artistic talent. Shortly after moving to Sarasota, Lundy entered a watercolor of Notre Dame Cathedral in an art show, where it was seen by Karl Bickel, formerly president of United Press. Impressed, Bickel asked Lundy to do a series of watercolors of a proposed chamber of commerce building. The paintings convinced Bickel that Lundy was the architect for him.

Over the next half century, as his career took him from Sarasota to New York to Dallas to Aspen to Houston, Lundy never strayed far from his artistic roots. While he designed buildings, he also drew them, and when he toured the world—whether to design a U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka, or as one of five architects traveling to Russia as part of an Architecture U.S.A. exhibit—he carried with him sketchbooks that he filled with artistic notations of what he saw.

A number of those notebooks fill one wall of the show in Marfa. The other walls are covered in large charcoal drawings of selected architectural works, drawings that range in size from five by eight feet to five by ten feet, as well as original working drawings, renderings, and photos of both built and unbuilt works.

The large charcoal drawings were all created specifically for the exhibit, and celebrate, according to Lundy, "a time when drawings were done by hand and not computer."

That, notes the show's curator Suzanne Dungan, was to her one of the revelations of the Marfa presentation. "In going over his work, I realized Victor is one of the most artistic architects I've ever seen," she says. "I'm not an architectural curator, but I've been an art consultant for many years, so I was able to see the artist in the architect. Not all architects have Victor's amazing drawing ability, or think of architecture as art in the way he does."

When Dungan came up with the idea for the show—which she describes as not just a look at two married artists, but also a look at how they consciously and unconsciously influenced each other—she had a better understanding of the work of Anstis Lundy. Anstis, who studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art before embarking on a career as an architectural draftswoman, only took up painting again when she was 55, after she and Victor had moved to Houston. Anstis studied under watercolorist Arthur Turner at the Glassell School of Art, rekindling an interest that had lain dormant for close to three decades.

But she quickly developed a reputation, one Dungan knew about when she found that the Lundys had moved to Marfa, the small, west Texas town that over the last few decades has become a gathering spot for artists. Dungan and her husband had built a home in Marfa some years before, and she felt one way to welcome the Lundys was to display their work in Ballroom Marfa, an exhibition space that featured works by area residents.

Most of the Ballroom Marfa shows, Dungan says, focused on younger artists, and with the Lundys she thought she had an opportunity to not only display the art of some notable newcomers, but also to emphasize that creativity didn't have to diminish as an artist ages.

With Anstis Lundy, says Dungan, she knew what she was going to do. She was familiar with how to display watercolors of the sort Anstis painted. But with Victor, she admits, she was less sure of herself. "I had to figure out how to showcase his work," Dungan says. "I knew I didn't want just photos and blueprints and renderings of buildings. I wanted something more artistic."

It didn't help, she admits, that Victor was skeptical of the enterprise, at least at first. But he did invite her to his studio, and what she found there, says Dungan, was revelatory.

Lundy had kept drawings and plans of almost every building he'd ever had built or imagined having built, and those papers were rolled up and tucked away in cubbyholes. As she pulled plan after plan out and saw the drawings that led up to them, Dungan was amazed. It wasn't simply the architectural imagination that impressed her, it was the quality of the sketches and charcoal pictures themselves.

Since, given the restriction of space in the Ballroom Marfa gallery, there was no way to do a meaningful retrospective of Victor's works, the decision was made to focus on nine projects and have him do large charcoal renderings of them, renderings large enough to give visitors a sense of the architectural scale of what they represented. Accompanying those would be smaller photos, drawings, and a selection of sketchbooks.

The result, in Victor Lundy's words, is "one collaged art work," an assemblage that combines new drawings, old sketches, photographs, and the rest into a single, coherent piece of art. The result also shows the interconnection of Victor and Anstis, according to Dungan, who says the curvaceous quality of Victor's sketch of his inflatable Atomic Energy Commission building reflects the curves of his wife, while Anstis' watercolors of lingerie draped over stern modernist chairs reflects the meeting of her softer artistic imagination with Victor's harder one.

The Ballroom Marfa space is split in two, with half the space going to Anstis and the other half to Victor. Both sections showcase the imaginations of the respective artists, says Dungan, but Victor's half also does something else. It remembers a dying skill.

"People don't do buildings this way anymore," Dungan says. "It's all on computer now. So what you see in Victor's drawings is not just great art, but what is almost a lost art form."

— *Mitchell J. Shields*

For more information on The Art and Architecture of Anstis and Victor Lundy *call 432.729.3600 or visit www.ballroommarfa.org. The show will be on view through July 30 at Ballroom Marfa, 108 East San Antonio Street/ Highway 90 West, Marfa, Texas.*

Photos by Gerald Moorhead

Above: The Schudy Clinic (MacKie & Kamrath, 1956). Below: Hard Rock Cafe on Kirby (Tigerman Fugman McCurry, 1986).

R.I.P. Schudy Clinic, Kirby Hard Rock

In the condominium race-for-the-sky taking place along Kirby Drive, Houston has recently lost two signature buildings, one an early modern gem and the other a post-modern curiosity.

West of Kirby, the diminutive Schudy Clinic at 2615 Cameron is gone. MacKie & Kamrath designed the building for its orthopedic surgeon owner in 1956. True to Karl Kamrath's trademark Taliesen style, the clinic sported dramatic horizontal roof overhangs, butted glass corner windows, geometric wood detailing, and deeply scored horizontal brick coursing—a full range of "organic" Wrightian entities.

As a small consolation, while the building itself has given way to an empty lot, it survives in two-dimensional form in the MacKie & Kamrath Collection in the Architectural Archives, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, at the Julia Ideson branch of the Houston Public Library.

Barely a block away from where the Schudy Clinic once stood, the demolition derby has also eliminated the Hard Rock Cafe at 2801 Kirby. The Hard Rock said goodbye this past winter, in its 20th year. It had been among the earliest of the restaurants built following Hard Rock founders Isaac Tigrett's and Peter Morton's 1982 decision to franchise the food-meets-rock-and-roll concept. The Houston Hard Rock was opened by Morton in 1986, and for him the Tigerman Fugman McCurry firm of Chicago, teamed with local architect of record Ray Bailey Architects, produced a colonnaded, Deep South rotunda facing the street.

While the building itself didn't impress everyone—in the *Houston Architectural Guide* it's described as "almost non-descript"—it did provide the background for a truly memorable piece of public art. That art, the *Save the Planet* pylon, capped by a 1963 Thunderbird that rose high above the traffic passing along Kirby, was designed by former Ant Farm guys Doug Michaels (memorialized in *Cite* 59 following his June 2004 death), Hudson Marquez, and Chip Lord.

The fate of the Kirby Hard Rock may well have been sealed when Bayou Place opened its own Hard Rock Cafe. The older Hard Rock was closed, then the space was used to house various new restaurants, none of which managed to flourish. Now the building is gone completely, and the only memento of this lost piece of architecture might be an old T-shirt showing the rakishly tilted Thunderbird on a pylon and reading "Hard Rock Cafe-Houston." — *Barry Moore*

Photo by Michael J. Sheridan

The Main Street Sears (Nimmons, Carr and Wright, 1939) was once Houston's premier retail outlet. But since the late 1960s, when its Art Deco design was covered under a cloak of brick and beige metal, it has declined in appearance and appeal.

When Good Buildings Go Bad

Though you can't tell by looking, the Sears store at Main and Wheeler is still open. How long that will be the case, though, is anyone's guess. The parent corporation is reportedly going to close the store soon due to poor economic performance. Not that the poor performance should be any surprise to Sears executives. How, after all, do they expect to attract Target and Wal-Mart customers to shop at one of the least attractive and uninviting stores in town?

It wasn't always so. Underneath all that present ugliness is an Art Deco gem—underappreciated, largely unrecognized, and terribly threatened. The store opened on November 16, 1939, to great acclaim. With three stories and a basement, 194,000 square feet, free parking for 700 cars, and a construction budget of $1 million, the Main Street Sears was a bombshell. It was Houston's largest department store, it was in the "windowless style" (air conditioning and controlled lighting obviated the need for fenestration), it had the city's first escalator, capable of carrying 6,000 people per hour, and across Fannin it had the city's largest service station, with 16 gas pumps and 12 mechanic's stalls.

But the real impact lay in the Main Street Sears' positioning as a large, first-tier department store not located in the central business district. Easy to get to, quick to get in and out of, with free parking, it was an instant success, and a kind of petri dish for Houston's postwar boom in suburban shopping centers.

Aside from its impressive statistics, the store had a deserved architectural reputation. Designed as a modern prototype by the Chicago firm Nimmons, Carr and Wright, the Houston project had Art Deco siblings in Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, and Glendale, California. Alfred C. Finn was the local associate architect, and Knutsen Construction Company built it. With a structure of reinforced concrete, the store had a projecting base that incorporated show windows that were surrounded by granite cladding. The mezzanine roof was utilized for special promotional displays or Christmas decorations. The upper floors, clad in stucco, featured triple vertical glass block accents, and the roof parapet was elegantly articulated by a simple "pie crust" crenellation. On the main floor, artist Eugene Montgomery provided a series of heroic murals depicting Texas history from the time of the Spanish to the present.

The architectural provenance of the site reaches back to the 19th century. When "The Country Place," with its outstanding craftsman-style interiors, was built in 1895 at 4301 Main Street, the site contained 35 acres and featured landscaped gardens and tennis courts. After the Walter B. Sharp family vacated the house in 1917, it was leased to R.L. Blaffer, whose family lived there while their own house was under construction in Shadyside. In the late 1920s the building was converted to offices, whose prestigious tenants included a Who's Who list of Houston architects: John Staub, Kenneth Franzheim, Harry D. Payne, Maurice Sullivan, Birdsall Briscoe. In 1938 the property was sold to Sears and Roebuck and cleared for construction.

Sears really was a flagship store for Houstonians, and made customers feel wonderful—from the free popcorn at the door, to the best Santa Claus and toy department in town, to the well-trained and courteous sales staff. It didn't hurt that customers nationwide considered the company's appliances and hardware stock to be the best.

What happens to cause good buildings to go bad? In the case of Houston, it was the threat of race riots. In the tumultuous aftermath of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968, local Black Panther activist Lee Otis Johnson organized an 8,000-person strong memorial march, which unsettled much of the business community. Sears, watching from a Chicago torn apart the same summer, reacted by bricking up almost all the Houston store's show windows and cladding the elegant upper stories with beige metal. And so Fort Sears has remained ever since, hiding from an evolving international city and culture, and wondering where all the shoppers went.

As the slip-covered deco building awaits its uncertain future, it is worth recalling the dedicatory remarks uttered by Robert E. Wood, then Sears' chairman of the board, on that opening day in November 1939: "We are loyal to our customers and to our employees. And we want to be good citizens." It seems, somehow, so long ago. — *Barry Moore*

Womb Chair and Ottoman, Eero Saarinen, 1948

Photos by Earl Cunningham Williams

Mayor League's lecturers, from left to right: Joseph P. Riley, mayor of Charleston, South Carolina; Maurice Cox, formerly mayor of Charlottesville, Virginia; John Norquist, formerly mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Bill White, mayor of Houston; and Mark Robbins, dean of the School of Architecture at Syracuse University.

Politics and Design

BY SUSAN ROGERS

"Houston," noted Mayor Bill White at a recent lecture, "is a city redefined from generation to generation." That is unquestionably true. In fact, perhaps the only truly permanent thing about American cities in general is change. Over the last decade population growth, immigration, rapid urban and suburban development, and shifting demographics have substantially transformed the built environment of our cities, as well as our political and social landscapes. This is as true in Houston as it is throughout the world. For the first time in history more than half the world's population resides in cities, and this concentration is expected to grow. So while the 20th century was defined as a period of rapid industrialization, the 21st century will be the age of the city. The quality of our urban environments will increasingly define the quality of our lives, and perhaps even of our civilization. Our future will be lived in cities.

It was with this as background that in January and February the Rice Design Alliance sponsored a series of lectures whose topic was the city. Titled "Mayor League: Reconsidering the City," the series brought five speakers with a deep connection to urban issues to share their knowledge and experience. The lecturers were Joseph P. Riley, mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, and co-founder of the Mayors' Institute for City Design; Bill White, mayor of Houston; Maurice Cox, formerly mayor of Charlottesville, Virginia, and currently professor of architecture at the University of Virginia; John Norquist, formerly mayor of Milwaukee and currently president of the Congress for New Urbanism; and Mark Robbins, formerly National Endowment for the Arts design director and currently dean of the School of Architecture at Syracuse University.

The current and former mayors, leaders, and designers explored the forces shaping the 21st-century city and provided their audiences a glimpse into their perspective on the vision, processes, and politics of city change. Uniting the lectures was a concentration on quality of life and the necessity to merge design and politics for the overall good of cities and their citizenry. Through their talks the speakers demonstrated that mayors are often the stewards of their cities, and designers often their visionaries, but the public is the beneficiary of good decisions and good design. The talks illustrated the need for strong leaders, vision, and a commitment to the messy process of struggling toward consensus in a diverse society. Correspondingly, the lecturers discussed the city as both an artifact and as a setting for democracy, as a stage for our public as well as our private lives, and as a place that grows wealth but also inequity. Design, economics, policy, and participation were all addressed as playing essential roles in shaping, both positively and negatively, the public realm and our built environment at large.

In considering the city as an artifact, the speakers pointed out that design is clearly one strategy for change. Unquestionably, design strategies have been applied to the "problem" of the city over the course of history. Baron Haussman's Parisian Boulevards, Daniel Burnham and the City Beautiful Movement, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement, and the universal design proposals of the modernists led by Le Corbusier are all examples of this approach. These utopian ideals held in common the position that design had the power to change our perception of the city and the quality of our cultural and civic life, and that through beauty the city and the life of its residents could be improved. Historically, the focus on physical space had positive and negative impacts, as John Norquist pointed out. On the one hand it led to the development of park systems, garden cities, and tree-lined streets, elements of the urban environment that today many appreciate. On the other hand it led to massive freeways, displacement, sprawl, and a disinvestment in the public realm.

In recent years utopian thinking has returned, largely through the practices of the New Urbanists. Designers, planners, and politicians are increasingly focused on a city's physical form. As was the case with utopian thinking in the 19th and 20th centuries, these efforts have generated substantial improvements, including enhancing the quality of pedestrian environments, improving the quality and density of urban housing, and generating renewed interest in both a strong public realm and the city itself. But the question of whether design and beauty can be singularly defined, or universally applied as a strategy to improve not only the physical condition of our cities but also our social lives, has not been answered. Over the last 100 years, design-focused approaches

The lecture series "Mayor League" explores the forces shaping the 21st-century city

have most often been used to enhance areas of a city for the benefit of the middle and upper classes, inadvertently or intentionally leading to displacement of the poor.

In his talk, Charleston Mayor Joseph Riley argued instead that design should be employed to ensure that all citizens and all places in a city were loved and beautiful, commenting that "everything built should add to the beauty of the city." Former NEA Design Director Mark Robbins was more skeptical, stating that "vibrancy is not determined by décor, but by how people can occupy space and use it freely without regulations." The "Mayor League" talks failed to answer whether a healthy city is built on good design alone, though it was clear that design can add value and uncover opportunities. And as both John Norquist and Maurice Cox pointed out, design can also envision alternative futures. The consensus seemed to be that the American city is truly too complex for simple solutions, though design certainly makes a difference.

Design is shaped and heavily influenced by two factors, economics and policy. This fact was emphasized by the lecturers who focused on the need to look beyond design to the messier question of how design is financed and regulated. They underscored the idea that design strategies cannot be discussed in a vacuum, and that in particular design strategies cannot be discussed without considering the questions of marketability and the policies that regulate design.

Few would argue that economics is the lifeblood of design, the engine of private and public enterprise that takes its cue from the market, but also takes design from imagination to realization. In the "Mayor League" talks the market was described both as a generator of change and as a system that cannot be depended on in the planning of our cities—conflicting and contradictory positions. Former Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist suggested that good urbanism itself has a high market value, and given the going rate of a downtown loft in Houston, this belief is hard to deny. But dependence on the market alone can create problems. As Mark Robbins pointed out, "The highest and best use [of a property] is not always the most profitable. It might be a park." Joseph Riley concurred, suggesting that if we depend on the market alone to plan our cities we might be sacrificing both diversity and the "democratic zones where people practice their citizenship."

Riley went on to advocate for intervening in the market, and in fact in the process of development itself, as a means to ensure high quality development that benefited all of a city's residents, whether a project was for affordable housing, public space, or private office development. Historically, Houston has largely placed its fate in the hands of the market. But the city's leaders are currently testing Robbins' and Riley's advice with the development of the new downtown park fronting the George R. Brown Convention Center, a park that will substantially enhance the public realm, and with a commitment to public transit, which will profoundly shape development. Both of these public initiatives add economic value to Houston and promise to be catalysts for new private development. But they also require major public investment, both financially and politically.

Such an investment in the future of America's cities can also be accomplished through enlightened policy. Policy shapes design. Policy shapes the quality of streets, blocks, communities, and ultimately cities themselves. Developing clear priorities for policy initiatives and understanding the implications of these initiatives is an important strategy for improving cities. Following the lead of the late urban thinker Jane Jacobs, John Norquist pointed out that you have to encourage "complexity of urban form." It is then, he said, that "you end up with a city." This type of complexity was largely eliminated by post-World War II American urban policy, which was influenced by the visions of Le Corbusier and Ebenezer Howard, both of whom advocated a strict separation of uses rather than a vibrant mix, a separation between the pedestrian and the automobile and people and their workplaces. After more than 50 years we are beginning to recognize that this compartmentalized approach to city design has birthed streets designed solely for cars and trucks, sprawling landscapes with often unbearable commutes, setbacks that destroyed pedestrian environments, and parking requirements that eliminated the possibility of small-scale urban infill projects and left gaping holes in the urban fabric.

While it may be tempting to replace one set of policy standards with another, several of the "Mayor League" speakers

Photos © 2006 Eric Vester

Houston, with its emerging light rail system (top) and increased activity in its urban core (top and above, outside Jones Hall) is facing many of the issues addressed by the "Mayor League" lecturers, among them, how do you balance the push for growth with the need for more public spaces and protection of the environment?

suggested that it might be better to instead work towards developing flexible policies that relate to a number of different contexts, and are guided by a shared vision created by residents and stakeholders. Flexible policy has the potential to meet the needs of citizens and enhance the quality of all our spaces, from historic districts to edge cities, strip shopping malls to dense urban mixed-use districts, and suburban enclaves to downtown neighborhoods. Each of these landscapes requires a different approach. As Mark Robbins pointed out, policy could benefit from innovative creative processes used in the design professions and enlightened and participatory politics. We live in the 21st century, Robbins noted, and "we drive cars, we have drive-ins and parking garages. We need new strategies for the city… Design and policy should be combined."

As design is the vision behind city change, policy the regulator of that design, and economics the controller, politics is the formidable force behind making the vision a reality. The political process is where the design professions—architecture, planning, and development—meet city officials, where the public meets its leaders, and where the values of both use and the market need to be reconciled. It is the platform for debate that serves to protect the public realm and help ensure that all participants are heard. The political process of city design requires, as former Mayor of Charlottesville Maurice Cox noted, that we all be "public citizens" and engage in debate and compromise. In fact, Cox stated that the only reliable method for turning a vision into a reality was participation. The other "Mayor League" presenters agreed that when you add participation and consensus to a vision for the future, it develops brawn.

"Our cities," Robbins said, "must respond to our complex cultures." This requires that everyone participate in the process and lend their time and opinion to the question of how to create a vision of the city—or, alternatively, multiple visions—that respect, nurture, and build on strengths such as diversity and openness, even while addressing problems such as a lack of equity and an unloved and uncared for public realm. He went on to caution that mayors cannot look for the quick fix, "a stadium, an arena, or a building by Frank Gehry." They must instead search for participatory strategies and plans that build on the uniqueness of their individual places, and strengthen their existing assets.

This is Houston's dilemma. Houston's challenges, as Mayor Bill White pointed out, include a lack of planning as well as dealing with issues of quality of life, public transit, the need for more public spaces, protection of the environment, and equity. These are big issues, issues that can be framed across the entire city and across the full breadth of the agencies, institutions, professions, and organizations that concern themselves with the city. How these issues are defined, connected, and addressed could significantly impact Houston's future.

The question is, will Houston lead or will it follow? Will the shapers of the city take their cues from a formulaic approach to city design, or will we develop new forms and strategies that build on an "open city of opportunity," as Mayor White suggested at "Mayor League." Perhaps the lecture series will have a lasting impact on the relationship between designers, civic leaders, and the larger public in Houston—and ultimately on the role of design, as both a process and a product, in making Houston a shining example of the 21st-century city. ■

Remembering Houston

Seeing the city through the eyes of Bob Bailey

BY STEVEN R. STROM

Eight years ago, when the University of Texas' Center for American History announced it had acquired the Bob Bailey Studios photograph collection, a sigh of despair was heard from Houston's historical research community. And with good reason—few commercial names resonate with Houstonians as much as that of Bob Bailey Studios. The studio began operations in 1929, and in the six plus decades that it was in business, thousands of Houstonians had their portraits taken by Bob Bailey and his brother Marvin, or hired them to shoot their homes, new businesses, civic buildings, Christmas celebrations, birthday parties, and other events. The Baileys were, in a way, the city's family photographers, and Houstonians had hoped to keep their piles of pictures, and with it the memories they evoked, at home.

Sadly, that didn't happen. An attempt was made to have the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, located in the Houston Public Library's Julia Ideson Building, house the Bailey archives, but in the end the acquisition and storage costs proved too much. So the University of Texas stepped in to become the host for this nationally notable collection of photography.

Though in the opinion of some Houstonians the Center for American History (CAH) was a depository of last resort—one respected Houston historic preservationist remarked that the mere thought of losing the Bailey Collection to UT-Austin made her "blood boil"—it was nonetheless an institution that recognized the collection's importance and had the resources to care for it. For the University of Texas, acquiring the Bailey Collection represented a major institutional investment. And contrary to local folklore, the CAH did not arrive in Houston in the middle of the night and then sneak out of

town with the Bailey Collection in tow. As CAH director Don Carleton remembers it, "After we conducted a close and detailed evaluation of a wide sample of the images in the Bailey Collection, it became crystal clear to us that these photographs not only were a significant resource for state and local history, but also a treasure trove for research in the urban history of the United States during the 20th century."

CAH photographic archivist Linda Peterson has nicely summarized the studio's achievement: "The Baileys were able to push their equipment in new and exciting ways that document in an historic sense, as well as an artistic sense. Their collection is astonishing both in the range of its subject matter and the artistry of its visual style."

Still, more than a few Houstonians were less than happy. Researching the archives now meant traveling to Austin, and once there, poring over voluminous ledgers to locate photographs. Even after they were identified, the pictures could be difficult to retrieve from the collection's temporary storage area. Only the most stalwart and dedicated researchers were willing to face the task.

But after years of chafing over the collection's move to Austin, there's now good news for Bailey-enamored Houstonians. Last year, the CAH announced that images from the Bailey Collection had been digitized and would be made available on the Texas Archival Resources Online website. Before long, some 5,000 of the Bailey Studio's best images will be available online.

This may seem less than perfect, given that there are an estimated 500,000 pictures in the collection (though only some 20,000-25,000 are considered to constitute the collection's core). But in truth, this makes the Bailey photos more easily available to more Houstonians than ever before.

In many instances Houston researchers will be able to view needed Bailey images on their computers and order copies without ever leaving town. And as researchers request additional images that haven't been digitized, those pictures will be added to the online collection. Ultimately, the entire Bailey Collection could end up only a mouse click away.

If that happens, the Baileys' record of Houston as it moved through the 20th century will have come home again after all. Even now, it is possible in the Bailey Collection's online offerings to trace the growth of the city.

Following are a few representative images from the online collection. These pictures reveal an artistry that is surprising for a commercial studio. ■

To access the Bailey Collection images, go to www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/00451/cah-00451.html.

SANTA ROSA THEATRE, 1946 (PREVIOUS PAGE)

This photo was taken just prior to the theater's opening. The image conjures up the severe postwar decline in the movie industry that would soon take place following the widespread introduction of television. The Santa Rosa was a part of the Texas-based Interstate Theatre chain, which was highly influential in the growth and expansion of Houston movie theaters, and was typical of Interstate's neighborhood theaters. It was also the chain's last indoor movie theater to be built in Houston until 1965, when construction began on Interstate's Clear Lake Theatre. Because the Bailey Studio was regularly hired by Interstate to record not only the construction of its Houston theaters, but also movie premieres and promotional events for new films, the Bailey Collection is invaluable for film historians.

SAN JACINTO HOTEL, MAIN STREET

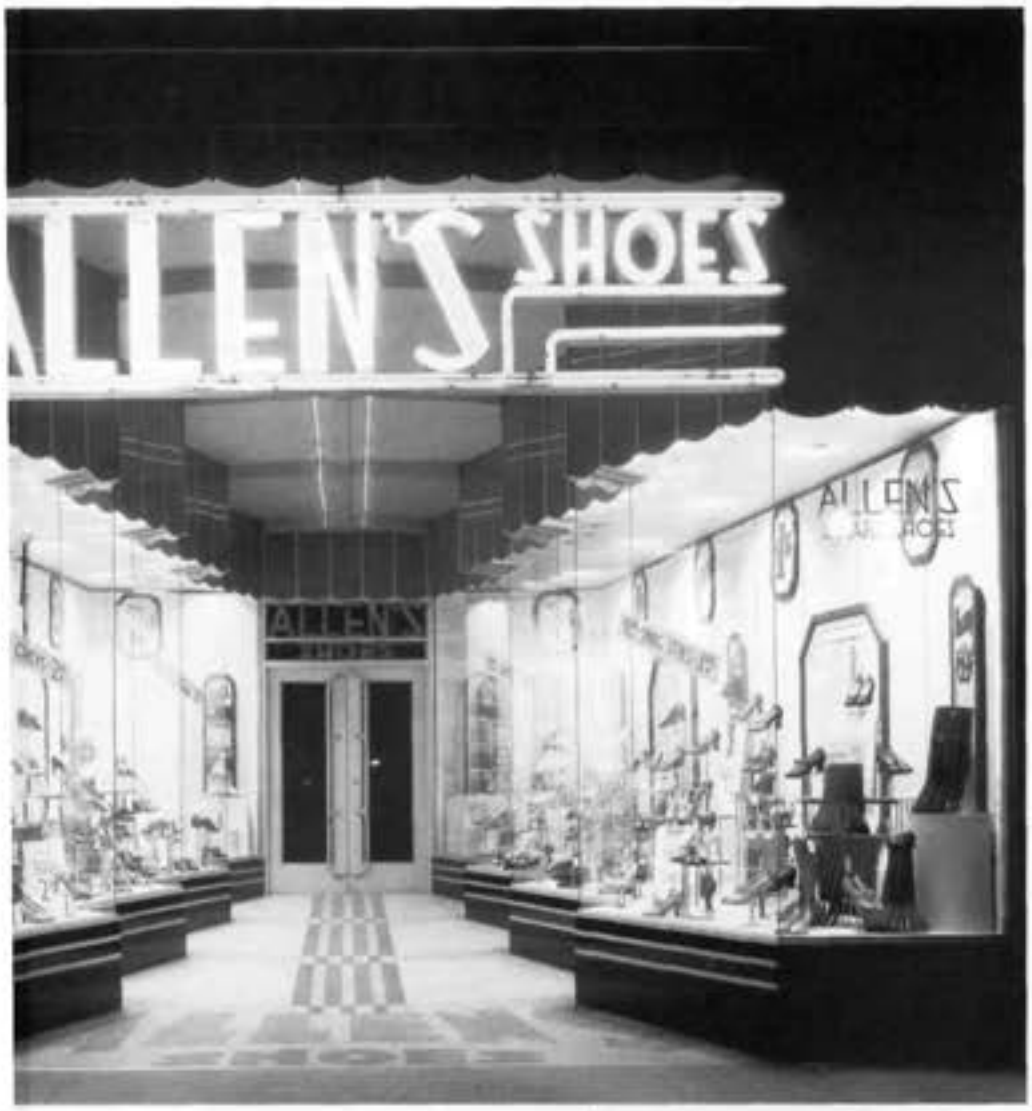
In the foreground can be seen the San Jacinto Hotel, at the corner of Main and Walker. The ten-story San Jacinto Hotel was originally constructed as the Bender Hotel by Houston businessman E.L. Bender and contained 285 rooms. It was typical of the buildings along Main Street, which lent an air of importance to the city's principal commercial corridor in the early 20th century. When the hotel opened in December 1911, it was extensively advertised as "the only hotel in the South with an electric grill," and it was known for its ornate ornamentation. Like other Houston hotels that catered to traveling businessmen, the San Jacinto contained a wide range of on-site service facilities, including a cafeteria, a Turkish bath, and a drug store. The hotel was converted into offices beginning in 1950.

HOUSTON CITY HALL AND CIVIC CENTER, 1957

In the left foreground, the construction of the west wing addition to the Houston Public Library's Julia Ideson Building, completed in 1958, is visible. In front of City Hall, finished in 1939, the original landscaping by Hare & Hare landscape architects can be seen. In the background is the now-demolished Sam Houston Coliseum and Music Hall, presently the site of the Hobby Center. The Bailey Studio photographed Houston's City Hall during all phases of its construction, providing outstanding documentation of the art moderne city landmark designed by Joseph Finger.

MAJESTIC THEATRE MARQUEE, 1936

Advertised in bright light is comedian Joe E. Brown's feature film *Earthworm Tractors*. The Majestic was designed by noted theater architect John Eberson, and was his first "atmospheric" theater, a style that became his trademark. Completed in 1923 for Karl Hoblitzelle of the Interstate chain, the Majestic was located at 908 Rusk. The Majestic was one of downtown Houston's "big three" movie palaces, along with Loew's State and the Metropolitan. It was torn down in 1971.



ALLEN'S SHOES, MAIN STREET, 1935

The Bailey Studio's visual record of the city's show windows—including the elaborate displays of Foley's, Sears, Sakowitz, and other department stores—are one of its notable legacies. This picture of Allen's Shoes' window display is representative of the many times when the Bailey Studio took what might have been a mundane assignment to record some routine aspect of a Houston business and wound up creating a photo of considerable artistic merit.

STRIKERS, 1937

Here, an employee of Loew's State Theatre has taken advantage of a picket line to carry her own placard advertising the film *Woman Chases Man*, starring Joel McCrea and Miriam Hopkins. Bailey photos often chronicled, inadvertently or not, multiple layers of Houston's history. This particular shot, in addition to capturing the actual event—a strike by the air conditioning engineers union—and the accompanying humor of the Loew's employee, gives a hint as to the condition of the labor movement in late 1930s Houston. In the pro-labor atmosphere of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal America, Houston's labor force became increasingly unionized and militant, an almost unimaginable situation in today's pro-business atmosphere. By the end of the Great Depression, virtually every sector of Houston's workforce was unionized to some degree, including theater employees, city and county employees, maritime workers, and even taxi drivers and harbers. The power of organized labor became so great that in 1946, when a strike by municipal employees garnered sympathetic walkouts by many local unions, a demonstration at City Hall of some 10,000 union members resulted.

GULF FREEWAY, 1950

The development of Houston's increasingly complex transportation system is a recurring theme in the Bailey Collection. Construction began on the Gulf Freeway in 1946, and the first stretch to Telephone Road opened in 1948. Its completion in the early 1950s precipitated an explosive growth in suburban development along the freeway's route, some of which is clearly visible in this aerial image of the freeway south of downtown. Virtually no thought was given to the urbanizing effects the Gulf Freeway, which is now I-45, would have along its route, and forecasts for its future use were far off the mark. By 1950, the number of cars using the freeway had already exceeded the estimates projected for 1960 usage.

HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TERMINAL, CIRCA 1953

Completed in 1954, the four-level, 100,000-square-foot terminal for what is now Hobby Airport cost $5 million and was inaugurated with flight displays by the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels jet team. The facility, designed by Wyatt C. Hedrick, was described by the *Houston Chronicle* as "a functional and beautiful eyeful." The airport was renamed for former Governor William P. Hobby following the opening of the present Intercontinental Airport in 1969.

FLOOD OF 1935

This aerial shot of the 1935 flood, the most devastating in Houston's history, shows its impact along the banks of the Buffalo Bayou near Allen's Landing. The M&M Building, site of today's University of Houston-Downtown campus, is in the center background. The Bailey Collection documents the importance of water to the growth and shaping of Houston, sometimes negatively, as here, and sometimes in a positive manner, particularly in the chronicling of the development of the Port of Houston. Much of downtown was flooded in the 1935 deluge, which caused millions of dollars in property damage and the loss of eight lives. A coalition of influential Houstonians, led by Congressman Albert Thomas, joined forces with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop an elaborate flood control system that included the construction of dams and the channelization of local waterways. ■

Above: One Shell Plaza (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Wilson, Morris, Crain, & Anderson, 1971) as viewed from Hermann Square.
Opposite page: Joseph Colaco at the base of One Shell Plaza.

35 Years of One Shell Plaza

Once the world's tallest concrete building, One Shell Plaza still has lessons to teach

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH COLACO BY WILLIAM F. STERN AND CHRISTOF SPIELER

When it was finished in 1971, One Shell Plaza was the world's tallest concrete building. The 715-foot, 50-story building, which fills the block bounded by Louisiana, Smith, Walker, and McKinney, was also Gerald D. Hines' first project in downtown Houston, and it drew attention not only for its size, but for the close collaboration between design architect and chief engineer. As principal and founder of his own firm, CBM Engineers, and as a teacher of engineering to architecture students at the Univeristy of Houston, Joseph Colaco knows structural engineering firsthand. He worked as project structural engineer on One Shell Plaza, and watched as its structural innovations took root. To mark the 35th anniversary of the building, Cite editorial board members William F. Stern and Christof Spieler sat down with Colaco to talk about One Shell Plaza, the collaboration between architects and engineers, and how that has changed since the building was constructed.

CITE: Looking back on it now, what does One Shell Plaza mean to you?

JOSEPH COLACO: It means a whole lot to me for a whole lot of reasons. One was that at the time it was built it was the tallest concrete building in the world. It was a very innovative structural system. There was a great deal of research done on this project, research that has served the industry well over many, many years. And then when I moved to Houston in 1969, the building was just about finished. For the last 35 years, I have been involved in whatever tenant work and changes that have been made on the project. So it has been a project that I have been associated with for almost 40 years now.

CITE: How does One Shell Plaza fit into the evolution of high-rise structures?

COLACO: Dr. Fazlur Khan, my boss at SOM [Skidmore, Owings & Merrill] at the time, essentially developed the catalog of structural systems based on general heights of buildings. For heights up to about 30 stories, we could generally use what we call a frame type structure. Once you get up in the 50-story category, you have to tie two structural systems together and do a shear wall with a frame, what he termed the tube-in-tube type system. And once you keep getting higher than that, you get closer to 75 to 100 stories tall, you do what we call a tubular design, which is where all of the resistance is put on the exterior of the building. One example of that design is the John Hancock Center in Chicago. Another is the World Trade Center, which unfortunately collapsed. That was a frame tube, where you have columns and beams welded together at very, very close spacing. The World Trade Center had columns that were three-feet-four-inches on center on the outside and a very deep spandrel beam. Essentially, you could look at the façade as a sheet of steel with punched rectangular windows. It was built as a column/beam system, but it was actually just a sheet of steel with openings. In that respect, it was similar to One Shell Plaza. If you step back and look at One Shell Plaza, the columns are six feet on center with a very deep spandrel, just with rectangular openings, so it is a perforated tube on the outside. The difference between One Shell Plaza and the World Trade Center was that we also have a core in One Shell Plaza made of concrete walls. And in the World Trade Center, there was no core. The entire resisting system was in the perimeter of the building. One Shell Plaza, being 50 stories, falls in the intermediate category where you have a tube in tube. You have a shear wall core, which forms one tube, and then you have a perimeter column and beam system, which is a frame, and forms a perimeter tube. In the pantheon of structural systems, it's right in the middle.

CITE: How has this catalog of systems changed since One Shell Plaza was built?

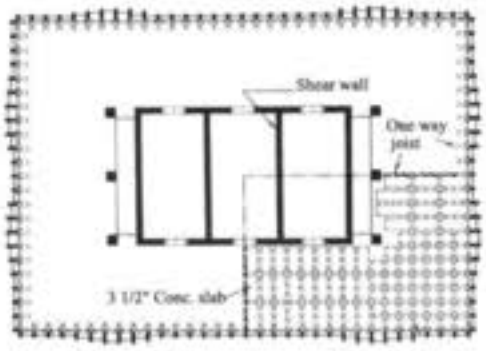
COLACO: The biggest change was when the post-modern movement came about. Before that we had basically a Miesian-type design, which some call International Style. Buildings were fairly regular. They were rectangular, they pretty much went straight up and down, and so you could develop a whole family of structural systems that suited that kind of design. When you have the post-modern type architectural expression, you very seldom get the opportunity to do a perimeter frame system, because the structure does not go up straight from top to bottom. So you have to come up with different types of systems.

CITE: One Shell Plaza is concrete, while most of the buildings Fazlur Khan is known for are steel. What led to the choice of material?

COLACO: SOM had done a 38-story building called the Brunswick Building in Chicago. It was an all-concrete building. And what that developed was a style that combined structure and architecture into one expression. When you can develop a combined architectural/structural system, not only is it aesthetically pleasing and makes sense, but you get the benefit of having the architectural elements, like the skin of the building, provided in the structural frame. You develop a lot of economies. So when they started talking about One Shell Plaza, that theme

Photo courtesy Joseph Colaco

Photo courtesy Joseph Colaco



Top: One Shell Plaza under construction. The sign touts it as the "South's tallest building" at 50 stories.
Above: Concrete trucks line up to pour the foundation of One Shell Plaza.
Left: Floor framing plan, One Shell Plaza, showing the major structural elements: the shear wall core, the exterior wall with its distinctive waviness, the one-way joist system at the sides, and the two-way grid system at the corners.
Below, left: Engineer Fazlur Khan (left) and architect Bruce Graham with a model of the John Hancock Center, one of the buildings they collaborated on.

Photo courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP

of combined architectural/structural expression came about. If you look at the design, you will see that the building is clad with travertine. And right behind the travertine is a concrete frame that exactly mirrors the travertine exterior system. The glass is essentially placed within the concrete frame, so you do not have to provide an expensive aluminum system to hold the cladding in place. The concrete structure, in effect, is the backup system for all the travertine and glass.

CITE: Tell us about the way the building curves out at the corners.
COLACO: The reason the building curves out at the corners has to do with the way the gravity loads and the weights of the floors are transmitted to the exterior columns. One Shell has got very closely spaced columns. They are six feet on center along the façade, and going through the building you have 36 feet between the outside column and the core. The core is 60 feet deep, and another 36 feet on the other side. When you come to the corners, you have a two-way system, and when you have a two-way system, the loads that come from the floors get concentrated in the column bands that are at the ends of the grid and not in the corners. If you accumulate this load over 50 stories, those columns have much heavier loads than the columns going towards the corner on the façade, and so they have to be made bigger in order to keep the stress level on the columns all the same, which is a guiding principle of tall building design. In this particular case, the decision was made to express that difference. And that became the expression of the building. So you have a slight waviness of the façade, because the columns are bigger.

CITE: What was your role on the project?
COLACO: I was what we call the project structural engineer. Fazlur Khan worked primarily with the design architect, Bruce Graham. They collectively decided on the shape of the building, the structural system, and the materials from which the building was going to be made. And once these decisions were made, in conjunction with Hines of course, my job was to implement that concept all the way to working drawings and construction services.

CITE: How did you decide that you wanted to be a structural engineer?
COLACO: I was in college at the University of Bombay in India. My father was head of the English department at the same university. I was interested in becoming a medical doctor, but in my freshman biology classes I found that the sight of blood makes me very nervous. So I told my dad that that was not for me. I was good at mathematics, though, and when my father asked what I wanted to do, I said that engineering sounds like a thing I could fall into. And so my dad went to check with some of his friends, and India was in a tremendous kick at the time with construction projects coming out all over the country.

CITE: When was this?
COLACO: I'm talking about 1955-1957. By the second year of college I'd pretty much decided to go to engineering school. I got admitted to another college, also in Bombay, and the nice thing about that college was that there were all different branches of engineering—civil, mechanical, electrical, textile, and chemical. All these had the same curriculum for the first year. But by the second year I had to choose. And very quickly I came to the conclusion that civil and structural were where I wanted to be because I liked buildings, and I liked to be outdoors, and I liked to see things finished. After I graduated I worked for a year for a British company in India. Basically my job was to set up a pre-cast concrete factory in Bombay. And then I came to the University of Illinois for graduate work. And that's where, when I was finishing up my PhD dissertation, Dr. Fazlur Khan called. His former advisor was my advisor. That was in 1965.

CITE: Fazlur Khan is probably one of the best-remembered structural engineers in U.S. history. What can you tell us about him?
COLACO: Dr. Khan was an engineer working at SOM in Chicago. He got his PhD at the University of Illinois, I think in 1955. And it just so happened that his thesis advisor was the same advisor I had ten years later. He had called down to the University of Illinois looking for an engineer to help him out with the design of the John Hancock Center, and I was sitting with my advisor at the time. So he suggested I go to SOM and talk to Dr. Khan. I worked for him for four years. He was, by far, the most innovative engineer I've ever met. And even to this day I can make that statement without any second thoughts. He was also, few people know, one of the hardest working engineers I've ever seen. Even when I worked for him, he had me doing essentially three jobs. Dr. Khan was also an adjunct professor in the college of architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and he had me helping him over there. Then when one of his friends called up and wanted someone to teach at the University of Illinois, he had me running over there teaching a course. And all the while he wanted me to do research and write technical articles and give speeches and so on and so forth. He did that himself. He was a workaholic. I have very, very fond memories of him. On a

personal note, when I decided to get married, I asked him to raise the toast at the wedding. He was very flustered, because he was a very good technical speaker, but didn't know much about social things. He agreed to do it, and I wish I had recorded his talk, because it was one of the most brilliant talks I've ever heard at a wedding. He was just a very brilliant man.

CITE: What kind of relationship did Khan have with the architects at SOM?
COLACO: With Bruce Graham, One Shell Plaza's architect, he had a very, very intimate relationship. At first it started off being a straight professional relationship with an architect and an engineer. As things evolved, Bruce began to see that Fazlur was a very innovative gentleman, and he would actually try to develop the building jointly with Fazlur. Earlier, you asked a question about why we have a slight waviness in the base of One Shell Plaza. Well, that was a structural thing. Fazlur explained to Bruce, "We have these columns with different loads, why don't we express this thing?" Bruce said, "Okay, let's try it. You come back to me with a diagram that makes the most structural sense, and I will see if we can express it architecturally." So they became a team. It was a very close connection. It was not a hand off type situation between an architect and an engineer, but one where they could collaborate, where they would bounce ideas back and forth off one another. And that relationship was unique. Fazlur and Bruce Graham became almost a single entity when they talked to each other.

CITE: How did One Shell Plaza fit into the overall arc of your career?
COLACO: I joined SOM in 1965 and started working with Bruce Graham and Fazlur Khan on the John Hancock Center. We were just finishing that up when Gerald Hines came to Chicago with his proposal for One Shell Plaza. So my second job at SOM was to work on One Shell Plaza. After that, I did a lot of buildings for SOM. In the South I worked on Two Shell Plaza, the Control Data Building, and the One Shell Square project in New Orleans. In Philadelphia I worked on a big stadium called the Spectrum. In Chicago I worked on the Picasso Sculpture and worked on the transit system. There were a variety of projects that came across my desk in the four years I was at SOM.

CITE: What prominent Houston buildings were you the structural engineer on?
COLACO: Maybe I should do this chronologically so I can think of all of them. One of the first tall buildings I did downtown was One Allen Center. Then I did Dresser Tower, which is now I believe the Kellogg Tower. Then I went on to work on the Pennzoil Building. The Republic Bank is now the Bank of America. Texas Commerce Bank is now JP Morgan Chase. The Wortham Theater downtown. Then the United Bank Building, I don't know what it's called now. Remodeled the 1100 Milam Building into the headquarters of Reliant Energy. 1100 Louisiana building, did the Holiday Inn downtown. Several buildings like that. I worked on the Transco Building, which is now the Williams Tower. And many, many other buildings that are on the West Loop.

CITE: You talked about the impact of the expressed structure on One Shell Plaza. Are there any others that you worked on where the structure is manifest?
COLACO: The closest one is the 75-story JP Morgan Chase Building, for which I.M. Pei was the design architect. What you see there is the structure and the architecture marrying perfectly. That was the closest collaboration I have had since I left SOM.

CITE: Why did you leave Chicago to come to Houston?
COLACO: There were a lot of reasons I left SOM. One, in order of priority, they proclaimed themselves to be architects and then engineers. Even Fazlur Khan was not being promoted to be a partner. I finally began to see the handwriting on the wall. I left SOM in 1969 and moved to Houston and joined a small company, and then helped start 3D/International. From 1972 to 1975 I was on the board of 3D/International. The original name was Diversified Design Disciplines, and they shortened it to 3D/I. In 1975, I started my own firm.

CITE: What is happening now with your practice?
COLACO: I'm slowing down my practice, to be honest. I'm spending less time with my practice, spending more time with the University of Houston, just balancing it all.

CITE: You're relatively rare among engineers in that you have relationships with architects and teach in an architecture school. How did that happen?
COLACO: When I was working at SOM, Dr. Khan was an adjunct professor at IIT. So he very frequently called me in to help him with the classes and students. At SOM I was working with the architects on their projects. So it was a natural move to work with architects at an academic level. When I came to Houston, I tried to maintain that same relationship. I tried at Rice, and they would not take me at Rice, because they already had Nat Krahl. So I started teaching at the University of Houston in the college of architecture as an adjunct professor. Eventually I also taught at Rice when Professor Krahl passed away.

CITE: You've been involved with architectural education and hired structural engineers straight out of school. Do you find the students prepared to collaborate?
COLACO: There's very little training that architects get on structural matters. I'm trying at the University of Huston to integrate that right now. But generally, unless universities have courses that are well-grounded in engineering principles, engineering materials and, more important, engineering concepts, architects do not get very well-grounded in that field. And unfortunately, in the post-modern movement the general feeling is that technology becomes secondary. It is not at the cutting edge of things that are required. The icons that modern students have are probably of a different generation of people who believe that technology is really secondary. I've tried hard to disabuse them of that notion. And we've succeeded. Most of the students that I've dealt with over the last 30 years have come away with the feeling that if you know technology, you'll be a better architect for it.

CITE: You described the common relationship between architects and engineers as a "hand off." Do you wish it were more like it was on One Shell Plaza?
COLACO: Yes. You just don't have the same creative juices going when you just hand off a project. Then the structural engineer's goal is to essentially be sure that you develop a structure that is safe, which is a necessary goal, but you don't have a hand in the creative process. The creative process is much diminished. You are trying to make something fit an architectural mold. It is different from being called in at the front end and saying, "Come, let's work this together."

CITE: Is there a reason it has to be this way?
COLACO: In America, development is in a post-modern movement. In the 1960s to 1980s, when we had more the International Style, more the Miesian style, there was a logical evolution of structural system. There was a rationale where people in the building business understood that a building has got a lot of important elements to the design, and one of them is structure. As a building gets very tall, the structural design controls a great deal of the cost of the project. And if you have an integrated system between the architect and the engineer, you can develop something that is unique and very satisfying from an overall standpoint. In the post-modern design, the building shape and design results from less rigorous engineering methodology, and then you are always making sure you can come up with a reasonable, economical system, and make it stand up.

CITE: Are there any architects you'd be happy to work with again and again?
COLACO: Well, the ones that stand out the most are I.M. Pei and Cesar Pelli, for a whole lot of different reasons. I.M. Pei is, in my judgment, one of the most consummate architects, because he understands not only architecture, but he is also very involved in technology. He knows how to ask the question that excites engineers. For example, he wanted to know about motion perception.

CITE: About what?
COLACO: Motion perception. How or why people get seasick in very tall buildings. This is something that every tall building engineer knows, but very few architects ever ask about. And he immediately came out and asked, "How are you going to take care of motion perception?" You get an architect who asks you those fundamental type questions, and you say, "Wow." Cesar Pelli, on the other hand, is wonderful to work with. Not only is he a very warm-hearted and generous person, but he's also very, very sharp. When you sit down and explain something to him, his mind immediately focuses on, "How can I do this?" These are two of the architects that I find very exciting to work with, and I am still working with them in some places.

CITE: Returning to One Shell Plaza, I should ask about the antenna.
COLACO: Since at the time One Shell was the tallest building in Houston, the antenna was part of the program to take care of electronic transmissions. And we had to provide an antenna tube, which was close to 200 feet tall above the roof of the building. It was an extremely heavy antenna tube—six feet in diameter, with two inches of steel wall thickness for the tube. And that was required not so much for strength as to control the sway of the antenna, which is required to prevent distortion of electronic signals. Well, it outlived its usefulness, and about three or four years ago, the question came up from the building manager, can we take it down? We spent quite a few months thinking how to take down an antenna tube that weighs almost one ton per foot off of the top of the building. And after a great deal of study, it was decided that it would be impractical to do it. The next alternative was to leave it in place, retrofit it, clean it up, take off all the rust spots, and so on, and then have it essentially painted and left in place, primarily because the building, over the last 35 years, had that antenna tube, and most people see it as one of the elements of the building. So there it sits right now. The antenna tube is still on top of the building. ■

Photo by Christof Spieler

Terminal Approach

BY CHRISTOF SPIELER

IT WAS JUST A LITTLE over a year ago that one of the biggest construction projects in Houston's history drew to a close. At a cost of some $3 billion, the project had a budget sufficient to build two Minute Maid Parks, two Reliant Stadiums, two Toyota Centers, and two Main Street light rail lines—with enough left over for 3,600 Perry Homes townhouses. This was by far the most expensive set of buildings built in Houston in the past decade, and perhaps ever. And it all took place at Bush Intercontinental Airport Houston (IAH). Between 1998 and early 2005, almost every part of the airport was transformed. It was in many ways a remarkable undertaking.

But perhaps even more remarkable is that only a few months after the massive expansion of IAH was completed, the Houston Airport System came out with a new master plan for the facility. And that master plan recommended that almost everything that had been built be torn down, and rebuilt again.

Here's what IAH says about Houston: We're quite good at raising a lot of money. We have the engineering skill to take on large and complicated projects. We have the architectural skill to design quite striking buildings when we feel like it. But when it comes to planning, or anticipating the future, we're not that smart.

An airport is not like a building; it is more like a city. The scales involved are immense. At IAH, the terminal area occupies as much land as do downtown's skyscrapers. Airports also resemble cities in their resistance to planning. Every airport starts as a simple diagram of access roads, terminals, gates, taxiways, and runways. But as the airport grows, that simplicity crumbles before the demands of expansion and the ever-changing airline industry.

Intercontinental was born in the 1960s, at the dawn of the modern era of airport design. By that time air travel had been transformed from a small-scale industry catering to the elite into transport for the masses. As a result, the single-terminal airports of the 1940s had become obsolete, and planners were searching for new airport types. The major goal of 1960s airports was to minimize the distance that passengers had to walk from their cars to their plane. Perhaps the most radical solution was implemented at Washington Dulles in 1962, where wheeled lounges boarded passengers at a terminal only 200 feet from the curb, then rolled across the tarmac to dock to the planes. Most airports, though, built terminals that planes could pull directly up to, boarding passengers through jetways—invented in 1959—that jutted out from the buildings and attached to the aircraft. The wingspan of the planes, then, dictated the size of the terminals. Gates tended to be spread across multiple terminals, each with its own automobile access. Some airports circled their terminals into a ring; others arranged them along a long axis.

At IAH, which opened in 1969, the original plan was for a conventional ring of terminals. But the final plan was something more unique: a pair of terminals located between two access roads, with four "pods" of gates protruding from each terminal onto the tarmac. Each pod was connected to its terminal with an enclosed pedestrian bridge. The two terminals were essentially self-contained airports, with their own parking garages, drop-off areas, pick-up areas, check-in halls, and baggage claims. The result was wonderfully convenient: departing travelers could be dropped off right in front of the ticketing hall. If they parked themselves, they were only an elevator ride away from the counters. With a ticketing hall in the center of each terminal,

Photo courtesy Houston Airport System

Opposite page: A floor-to-roof glass wall at one end of the Terminal E concourse lets visitors know what city they are in. In the distance, Houston's skyline can be seen peeking above the trees.
Left: *Countree Music*, Terry Allen's metal sculpture of a leafless tree, provides travelers a point of reference, and a bit of visual relief, in Terminal A's south concourse atrium.

After billions in reconstruction, Bush IAH is ready to start all over again

each of the gates was only a short walk away. And the whole complex had a clarity that was readily apparent to anyone, whether they were stepping off a plane or approaching the airport by car.

But it turned out that this futuristic airport was built for a future that didn't come. Intercontinental was built when most flights were still point-to-point. There were stopovers, but few transfers. Then in 1978 the government stopped assigning air routes, and the major airlines all moved to hub-and-spoke systems. In hub-and-spoke, transfers are common. Carriers pick up passengers in different cities, bring them to a central location, and shuffle them from plane to plane to help increase passenger load. In 1982, Continental Airlines made Houston a hub operation by merging with Texas International. This meant that the airport now handled many passengers who were simply changing planes, so they didn't care how close they were to parking or to ticket counters. What they did care about was how easily they could get from one gate to another, or one terminal to another. And the original plan for IAH didn't make that easy at all.

The original plan for IAH turned out to be flawed in another way as well. When Intercontinental was originally built, airline security was not a major concern. But by 1973, a wave of hijackings led the federal government to require security checkpoints be placed between all gates and the ticketing halls. When this happened, the simplicity of the original design, in which a passenger could easily go from one pod of gates through the main terminal and out to another pod of gates, became a liability. Each pod now required its own security checkpoint, which had to be crammed into the tight confines of a sky bridge. And each pod became, in effect, a separate security zone, isolated from each of the others.

Hub and spoke air travel, as well as the need to arrive early to deal with airport security, meant that travelers now spent more time in airports. That meant that amenities such as food, shopping, and airline lounges became more important. Here, too, IAH's original terminals were flawed. They had been built for quick pass through, not lingering. And while the ticketing halls had some space to add amenities, the gate pods could accommodate only one small food counter each.

Before it was ten years old, IAH had become functionally outdated. The first new terminal added to the airport—Terminal C, which opened in 1981—retained the original concept of a central ticketing hall, but replaced the four pods of gates with a pair of linear gate piers, one on each side of the main terminal, that were both accessed through a single security checkpoint. In 1990, Terminal D, then known as the Mickey Leland International Airlines Building, opened. It reverted to a much more conventional layout, with the ticketing hall and gates in a single building that sat on one side of an access road.

Through the 1990s, as traffic doubled and Continental rebounded from bankruptcy, IAH continued to rely on 20-year-old facilities. It was clear that something major needed to be done at the airport if it were to compete with more modern airports such as Atlanta, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, and Chicago O'Hare. A massive expansion program was clearly in order. It began in 1998, and by January 2005, when the current International Arrivals Building opened, new construction had transformed practically every part of IAH.

The scope of the airport expansion is without question extraordinary. What's less clear is how the airport expansion stacks up as architecture.

Photo by Christof Spieler

Photo by Christof Spieler

Photo courtesy Houston Airport System

Photo courtesy Houston Airport System

Above: Three ticketing halls illustrate the evolution of IAH. Terminal A's ticketing hall, top, is from 1969, and was one of the best public spaces in the original airport. Terminal D's, middle, is from 1991, and is starting to look dated rather than elegant. Terminal C's, above, is the result of renovations in the 2000s, and is spacious and daylit.
Right: Intercontinental Airport as it appeared when it opened in 1969. At the time it seemed futuristic, but the future it anticipated never came.

Airports are one of a handful of building types in which modernist architecture is generally accepted. The renovations at IAH fit that mold, with exposed structure and mechanical systems, crisp white walls, perforated metal panel ceilings, terrazzo floors, and prominent signage.

The interiors of the new gate areas are a vast improvement over the old ones. The original gate pods were crowded and dark, with low ceilings, earth tones, and only a strip of windows around the edge to let light in. The new gates in Terminal A—designed, along with the renovations in Terminal B, by Gensler—aren't a radical departure, but they are more spacious and have wider circulation areas, brighter finishes, and improved lighting, which results in a less claustrophobic experience. The Terminal A food court is also an improvement. Its wide open space is filled with illumination from a skylight above, and artist Terry Allen's *Countree Music*, a bronze sculpture of a leafless tree set in a terrazzo map of the world, is a welcome moment of visual relief after the security checkpoint.

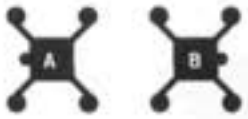
But the true revelation is found in Terminal E. There the gates are arranged along an extraordinary, triple-height atrium topped with skylights. A floor-to-roof glass wall at the end of the concourse reveals both the tarmac and the woods beyond, with glimpses of highrise buildings in the distance. Inside Terminal E the light shifts with the weather and the time of day. It's a grounding moment amidst the geographic and temporal isolation of air travel. A passenger from Montgomery waiting for a flight to Belize can tell at a glance that he or she is in Houston, it's late afternoon, and it's raining in the distance.

Terminal E has other magical moments. Where the concourse meets the passageway to security, the ceiling opens up into a skewed oval atrium, lined with shimmering metal panels lit from above by daylight. Windows reveal business travelers taking advantage of the wireless internet connections in Continental's President's Club lounge above. A strip of television monitors below their feet play a hypnotic installation by the Art Guys. Arriving international passengers are led along walkways that line the second floor of the concourse and provide views of the gates below and the skylight above. The walkways cross a sky bridge into a bright and airy immigration facility designed by PGAL, and then into a baggage claim punctuated with flashing translucent suitcases. The suitcases make up *Travel Light*, another installation by the Art Guys, and one of the many pieces of art punctuating Terminal E. (For more on the art, see sidebar, page 32.)

It's not an accident that Terminal E is so much better than the rest of the airport. It was built not by the city, but by Continental Airlines, which hired their own architect, Corgan Associates. With Terminal E, Continental asserts that architecture does matter. Airlines are in heated competition for the lucrative frequent business travel market, and Terminal E suggests that Continental considers good design a weapon in that battle.

Of course, the typical Continental passenger changing planes at IAH may not be thinking about design, though they will probably be in a better mood if their gate is spacious and well lit. Where design is concerned, the average passenger really cares about the simple things: Is there enough seating? Can they find the restrooms? Is there a pleasant food court with food worth eating? By those measures, the new IAH looks good. The food offerings include known quantities such as McDonald's and Starbucks, but also local options such as Papadeaux's and Drexler's BBQ. The restroom signs

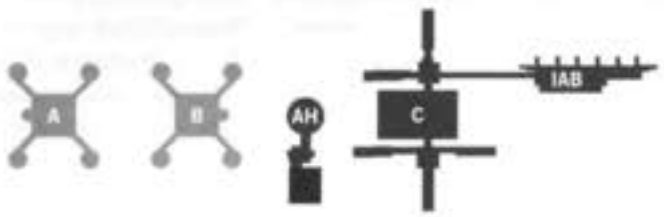
1969



Terminal A, 1969
Goleman & Rolfe and George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce

Terminal B, 1969
Goleman & Rolfe and George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce

1998

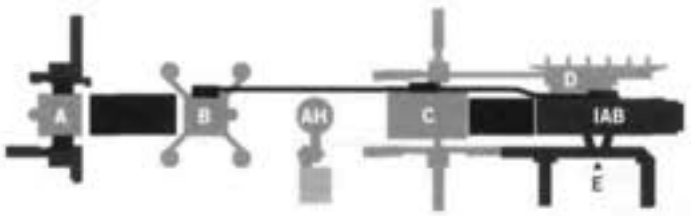


Airport Hotel, 1971
William B. Tabler & Associates;
addition 1981 Goleman & Rolfe Associates

Terminal C, 1982
Goleman & Rolfe Associates and Pierce Goodwin Alexander

International Airlines Building (now Terminal D) 1990
Harry Goleman Architects and Pierce Goodwin Alexander Linville

2006



New gate wings and renovations at Terminal A, 1997-2001
Gensler Associates

Renovations to Terminal B, 1997-2001
Gensler Associates

Renovations to Terminal C, 2000-2005
3D/International

Terminal E, 2004
Corgan Associates

International Arrivals Building, 2005
Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville

Long-Term Plan

Maps by Christof Spieler

As shown in the maps above, Both IAH has grown over the last 37 years by adding to what was there before. The airport's next stage, however, may require tearing down much of its past. The new master plan, released last October, calls for remaking IAH along the lines of the airports in Atlanta and Denver. The plan, seen at left, calls for two central terminals, one for domestic flights and the other for international, connected to a series of parallel concourses. It would leave standing very little of the current IAH.

are big. IAH is a perfectly respectable modern airport, and that matters.

Airport design is all about circulation—the movement of planes, the movement of cars, and the movement of people. Among the most important goals of IAH's makeover was changing the way passengers move through the airport.

Today, 88 percent of the passengers passing through IAH fly Continental, and most of those passengers are simply changing planes. Continental and Continental Express operate out of Terminals B, C, and E, and Continental has code share agreements (where one airline sells tickets on another airline's planes) with Delta in Terminal A, Northwest in Terminal B, and Air France and KLM in Terminal D. Thus many of IAH's passengers are required to switch terminals. But in this regard, IAH, despite its improvements, can't compete with airports designed from the ground up to be hubs.

Denver and Atlanta represent the modern model of airport design. (Of course, if the industry changes again, this model may become outdated too.) They have a single main terminal that's used by those leaving from or arriving at that particular city, and that main terminal is connected by an underground train to a series of smaller, midfield terminals that contain the gates. It's efficient: many transferring passengers can stay in one terminal, while the rest simply walk to the center of the terminal they arrived at, catch a train to the center of the terminal they'll depart from, and walk to their gate.

IAH was among the first airports to use a train to connect terminals, but that original train, which runs on a curvy track along an underground walkway, was designed to service only the small numbers of passengers switching planes in the pre-hub world. When the security checkpoints went up the underground train was left outside the secured area, reducing its usefulness even more.

In his excellent book *Infrastructure: A Guide to the Urban Landscape*, Brian Hayes points out that for the purposes of airport security, the world consists of three zones: the secured zone, the "foreign" zone outside of customs and immigration, and the rest of the world. Every airplane is in the secured zone, as is every airport gate. People can travel from Houston to Honolulu without ever leaving the secured zone. But they can leave it just by walking out an exit alongside a security checkpoint.

Before the recent renovations, IAH had ten secured zones. Four were in Terminal A, four were in Terminal B, one was in Terminal C, and one was in Terminal D. For a hub airport, so many different security zones is a problem, because traversing them is both time consuming and cumbersome. Atlanta and Denver, in contrast, each have one security zone. The new IAH has three: two in Terminal A and one that includes all of Terminals B, C, D, and E. That change was made possible by a new airport train that's located completely within the security zone, and has stops at Terminals B, C, and D/E. (See diagram, page 34.)

That is unquestionably a big improvement. Still, it's hard to rebuild an airport into something it wasn't designed to be. The new airport train is elevated above the north access road, which puts it next to all the north gates. But the south gates are a long way away. For example, Gate E19, the one closest to the panoramic view of downtown Houston, is a full third-of-a-mile walk from the train.

In fact, the entire layout of the reworked airport is awkward. When you land in Atlanta, you immediately know where you are. If you're in Terminal

Continued on page 34

Art On The Fly

At Bush IAH, a rush of public art greets those coming and going

Photo courtesy Dixie Friend Gay

The George Bush Intercontinental Airport Houston may not boast cutting-edge architecture, but it does have an art collection that's worth taking a look at. Art collection, you ask? Well, yes. Surprisingly enough, there are moments during the travails of travel when it's possible to find a moment to enjoy a work of art, and even to find that art a welcome diversion from the stress of a journey. Over the last few years, the Houston Airport System (HAS), often with the help of the City of Houston and Harris County's Civic Art Fund, has put together one of the city's better selections of public artworks. Many of these works are by some of Texas' most renowned contemporary artists, and they creatively tackle the challenges that today's air travel, security issues, and resulting architectural requirements pose.

While Bush Intercontinental opened in 1969, it wasn't until almost three decades later, in the late 1990s, that art became a real consideration. The first serious round of commissions were for Terminals A and B, and included such notable works as Dixie Friend Gay's 73-foot-long glass mosaic *Houston Bayou* and Terry Allen's metal sculpture *Countree Music*. Filled with local flora and fauna, *Houston Bayou* greets visitors along the wavy walls of a walkway that connects Terminal B to a parking garage. *Countree Music*, a 25-foot cast bronze tree in Terminal A, surprises passersby who don't expect to see such a tree in an airport concourse, much less one that pipes out tunes by Joe Ely and David Byrne. Other art commissioned for Terminals A and B include Leamon Green's *Passing Through*, which fills the glass walls connecting a garage to Terminal A with etched drawings of travelers passing through different parts of the world, and Rachel Hecker's kite-box-inspired cladding and cobalt-blue downlighting at two elevator bays in Terminal B, which turns the bays into a pair of memorable monolithic guardians.

As intriguing as these pieces can be, and as well as they take on the challenges that airport architectural requirements can present, they are nonetheless scattered. On its official map of airport artworks, HAS shows four artworks in Terminal A, two in Terminal B, one in Terminal C (David Adickes' sculpture of the airport's namesake, George H.W. Bush), and two in Terminal D. It is only in Terminal E, which opened in 2003 and 2004, and the adjacent International Arrivals Building, which opened last year, that the number of artworks explode. Continental Airlines and HAS set out simultaneously to build Terminal E and the International Arrivals Building, and these two large projects created opportunities for a number of different artworks. Once again, the City of Houston and Harris County helped through the Civic Arts Fund, while the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County aided in the selection process by putting forward the names of artists for Continental and HAS to consider.

The first piece to go in was the Art Guys' elliptical *Video Ring* in the Terminal E concourse. It's a "ta-da" kind of work, animating a dramatic and soaring oval-shaped space, a rare architectural flourish in the airport's campus of buildings. *Video Ring* turns entering Terminal E into a grand event. For an airport setting, *Video Ring* is an ambitious work in scale, media, and upkeep. Monitor after monitor, one after the other, circles the space overhead, with video and sound programming streaming through them all. To its credit, Continental Airlines has embraced the piece, the artists report, maintaining it, taking care of technical difficulties when they arise, and proving to be admirable custodians of the work.

Not all of the new pieces are so grand in scale or design. Leslie Elkins' and Bert Samples' *Passages 1, 2, 3, and 4* sneak up on you, making their discovery all the more rewarding. As you walk through the glassed-in walkways that form the "secure and sterile" corridors between Terminals D and E, you find yourself surrounded on both sides by celestial drawings etched into the glass. As the patterns ease you through these bridge-like corridors, suddenly your carry-on luggage seems a little bit lighter. You also can enjoy the etchings from your car as you drive underneath them, should you find yourself circling the airport waiting for an arrival.

For those who have to endure the International Arrivals lobby, with its total lack of seating, much less a convenient display offering information on the status of the flight you're awaiting, Jim Hirchfield and Sony Ishii have created *Beads*, a family of enormous, toy-like abstract figures. It's the lone high point

Photo courtesy the Art Guys

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BY LYNN M. HERBERT

in this otherwise aggravating space. The work's over-the-top playfulness helps keep the blood pressure down.

Behind the electronic doors in the International Arrivals lobby, the experience for the arriving visitor is one of extreme highs and lows. First comes the cavernous passport control hall, like so many the world over. Exhausted from a long flight and fighting jet lag, you have to stand in an endlessly weaving line, often for an hour or more. This would have been the perfect spot to welcome world travelers to Houston, to get things off on the right foot, so to speak. It is a real chamber of commerce opportunity. However, in Houston's passport hall there is no art; there is nothing to welcome the weary vagabond.

Almost as if to make up for this unduly unpleasant experience, once your passport is stamped you proceed to a baggage claim area that is, by comparison, like entering a magical kingdom. It is as energized, colorful, and welcoming as the passport control hall is depressing and drab. On the surrounding walls are Sandra Fiedorek's *One Bounce, Two Bounces*, a suite of brightly colored screened prints on glass that feature a series of circular forms. Embraced by Fiedorek's Pop Art-like grid of balls, you enter into a symphony of color to discover the Art Guys' *Travel Light*, an installation of hundreds of cast-resin, LED-illuminated "suitcases" that sit atop the 12 baggage carousels. Waiting for luggage has never been so enjoyable. The carpeting under the suitcases features blown-up images of stars and galaxies taken from Hubble telescope photographs, a play on an earlier Art Guys' work, *Suitcase in Space: A Tribute to Lost Luggage*. The *Travel Light* suitcases, filled with color and light, blink on and off and make you feel as if they are dancing all around you. Unfortunately, HAS has not been as good a custodian of this art as Continental has been of *Video Ring*. The artists prepared a program that choreographs the entire room of suitcases so that they all work together to create a whole (rather than the random blinking that exists at the moment), but HAS has yet to install the electrical wiring that would make this possible. Perhaps someday we will see *Travel Light* in its full glory, but already it is a welcoming installation.

These are just a few of the new artworks in Terminal E and the International Arrivals Building. Not all of the art at the airport is in public access areas, and travelers tend to see only the works in the terminals their flights arrive at or leave from. For those wanting to gain access to the complete collection, tours are available. A guide to Bush IAH's collection, as well as more information about the tours and the artists, can be found at www.fly2houston.com. If travel is in your future, the Houston airport may have some pleasant surprises in store for you. ■

Opposite page, top left: *Houston Bayou* by Dixie Friend Goy, located in the Terminal B garage walkway.
Opposite page, top right: A passenger walks past *Passing Through* by Leamon Green in the Terminal A garage walkway.
Opposite page, bottom, and below: The art at Bush Intercontinental Airport Houston's Terminal E and International Arrivals Building, by the numbers:

1) *Video Ring* by the Art Guys.
2) *Untitled* by Peter Max.
3) *Passages 1, 2, 3, & 4* by Leslie Elkins and Bert Samples.
4) *Beach* by Jim Hirschfield and Sonny Ishii.
5) *Leopard Sky* by Sheila Klein.
6) *Air Drops* by Kate Pedley.
7) *One Bounce, Two Bounces* ... by Sandra Fiedorek.
8) *Travel Light* by the Art Guys.
9) *Skywall* by Bill FitzGibbons.
10) *Time Line* by Ben Woolverton.
11) *Galaxy Way* by Rolando Briseño.

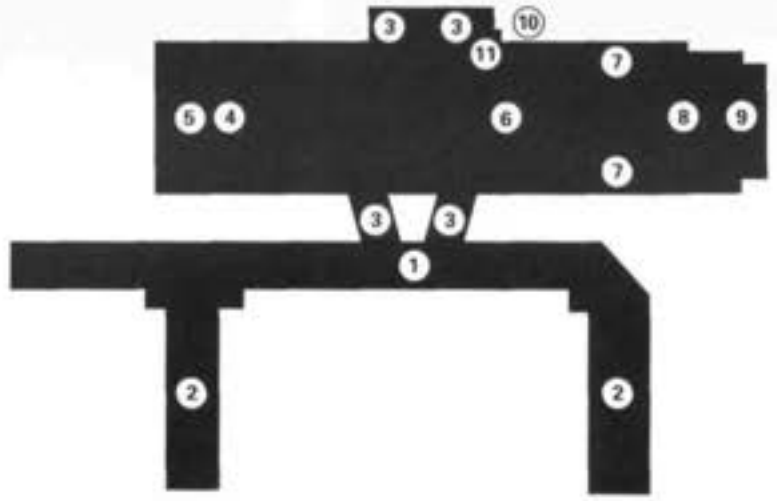


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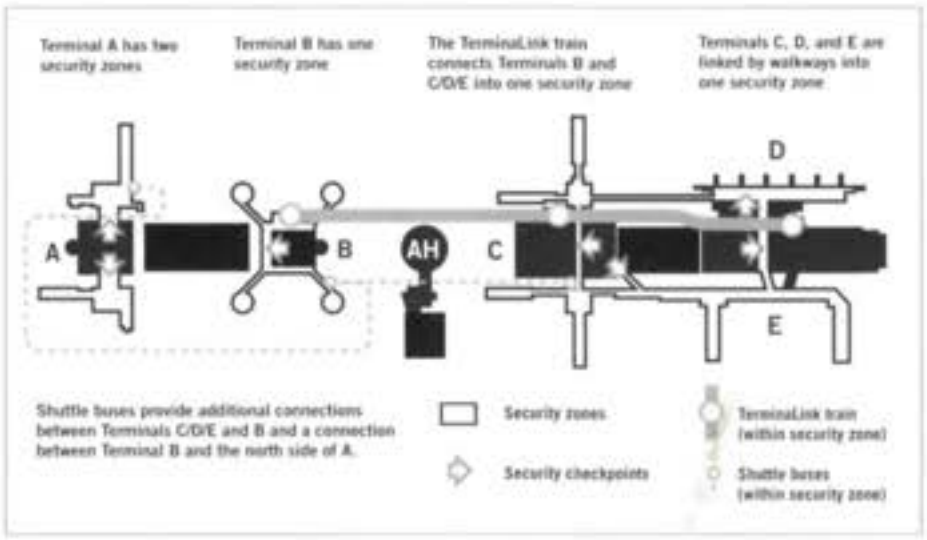
Photo courtesy the Art Guys

All photos courtesy Houston Airport System, except where noted.



Maps and photos by Christof Spieler

Top: This diagram of IAH's different security zones shows what's involved in getting from one gate to another without having to pass through a security checkpoint. Any passenger who strays into the black areas would have to go through security again before boarding his or her plane.
Middle: The TerminaLink train, running on tracks raised above street level, makes it easier to transfer between planes by never straying outside the airport's security zones.
Above: For drivers, Bush IAH can be a confusing and claustrophobic experience.

Continued from page 31

B, and your connecting flight is also in Terminal B, you simply walk left or right along the hallway in front of you. If your connecting flight happens to be in Terminals A, C, or D, you just walk to the train station in the center of the terminal to catch a train to the other terminal. At IAH it isn't nearly so simple. Terminals A, B, and C straddle the airport access roads, so each of them is interrupted in the center by a ticketing hall. Terminals D and E are on only one side of the access roads and are both connected to Terminal C. Thus, Terminal E to the north side of Terminal C is an almost seamless transition, while Terminal C to the other side of Terminal C requires walking across two sky bridges and the length of a ticketing hall. If you don't know the airport by heart, you're beholden to the signs. And while the signage is fine, good signage is no match for a layout that makes sense in the first place.

The original IAH was designed around the movement of cars. That design gave it a unique architectural presence. In general, airports are primarily about interior design. The exteriors of their buildings are seen only by a fraction of the people using the facility, and then only through tiny airplane windows. The façade facing the roadway is seen only close up, and only from a moving car.

But the siting of the original Intercontinental allowed drivers to see the buildings clearly, and the architecture responded to that. A person in a car coming up John F. Kennedy Boulevard could view the trees open up to reveal a line of buildings in a vast clearing. The road dipped under the taxiway for the airplanes, then spun around the circular Marriott Hotel. It arrived at a space between the tarmac on the right and the terminals on the left, each building standing on its own with airplanes arrayed around it as if on display. The exterior of the terminals—the square center stretching arms to four round pods, the garage ramps wrapped in bronze channels, the mass of the garages floating above the ticketing hall below—was designed to be apparent and dramatic at 35 miles per hour. The drop-off and pick-up areas were vast porticos in the sides of the terminals, framed with tall cruciform concrete columns. The sequence from the highway to the curb was clear, varied, and rewarding.

A few modern airports offer similar experiences. In Denver, the undulating fabric roof of the main terminal appears above the horizon of the high plains from miles up the highway. In San Francisco, the international terminal, with its etched glass billboard lettering, hovers above the approach ramps like a vision.

But the new Intercontinental appears from the car as most airports do—a hodgepodge of unrelated buildings from a distance, a claustrophobic and confusing experience up close. The new gate concourses form a solid wall along the right hand side of the road, and new parking garages have filled some of the gaps between the terminals on the left. The road is now in a concrete canyon lined with buildings that match in neither massing nor finish, and which flash by as a visual cacophony. The terminals have varying entrances—D to the right; E to the left after the terminal; A, B, and C to the left before the terminal. The signs needed to explicate this fill the roadside with clutter, while the new terminal train and its stations hang above on massive concrete girders.

It is from the car that what has been left behind in the airport's growth and acquisition of better facilities becomes most apparent. Ten years ago, Intercontinental stood in its clearing in the piney woods as a coherent assemblage of 1960s architecture. Now, though none of the original buildings has been demolished, that is no more. And that's a great loss.

Today's Intercontinental Airport is much more passenger-friendly than the 1990s version. It has better food, more comfortable gates, more convenient connections, less claustrophobic terminals, and much better art. Houston need no longer be embarrassed by its major airport.

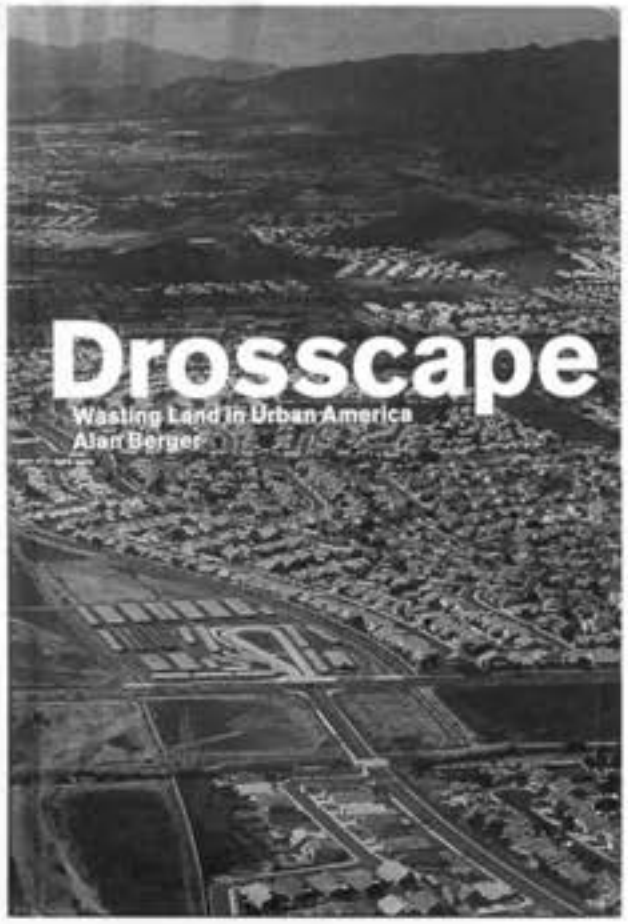
But today's IAH is still built around a 50-year-old concept, one that dates from a very different era. And while many of the original airport's merits—its clarity and its architectural integrity—are gone, the inherent limitations of its layout are not.

The new master plan, unveiled in October 2005, represents a recognition of those limitations. The master plan would level most of the current IAH and remake it in the image of Atlanta and Denver. The terminals that featured decentralized car access and check-in—the heart of IAH's original vision—would be replaced by two centralized terminals, one domestic and one international. Internal shuttles would connect those terminals, which would exist primarily for travelers originating or terminating in Houston, to a series of concourses strung out along where the current terminals now are.

The long-range plan shows these concourses as brand new, freestanding terminals tied together by a new underground train. Of the current airport, only Terminals D and E would remain. In a concession to the fact that taxpayers might not take kindly to demolishing hundreds of millions of dollars of new buildings, the plan also has an intermediate version of IAH, one that would have the new terminals, but have them connected to existing terminals by shuttle buses. Regardless, the conclusion is simple: The original vision of IAH simply doesn't work anymore, and no amount of remodeling can fix it.

And thus Houston's biggest building project leaves us with a certain lack of closure. When the original IAH opened, it was hailed as a vision of the jet age. The opening of the recent expansions really wasn't marked at all. The original IAH was a visionary attempt to build for the future of air travel; it failed not because its planners didn't try to foresee the future, but because they foresaw it incorrectly. The new IAH is reactionary. With it, we're playing catch-up with other airports, not moving ahead of them. And spending $3 billion just to stay even is not very satisfying. ■

Waste Not, Want Not



Drosscape: Wasting Land in Urban America by Alan Berger. Princeton Architectural Press, 2006. 254 pp., $34.95

Reviewed by Robert Fishman

This profoundly original book at once advances and subverts the great challenge of "thinking regionally." For most of us, this challenge means, first, an analysis of a region's assets, the distinctive metropolitan-scaled landscape that gives each region its special identity. We dwell fondly on a region's historic core, its close-knit neighborhoods and parks, its waterways and shorelines and high places, and the unspoiled hinterlands at its edge. Berger exactly inverts this procedure. His focus is on what he calls "the drosscape," that vast, fragmented metropolitan landscape of neglect and contamination that contains the wastelands the conventional regional vision refuses to see.

Berger's term "drosscape" derives from the distinction between urban "stim"—the areas within a metropolitan region of intense, concentrated activity—and "dross"—the vast in-between or peripheral areas where distance and disconnection prevail—created by Lars Lerup, dean of the Rice University School of Architecture. Berger expands Lerup's distinction into a whole taxonomy of the marginal and the abandoned. With the same precise attention that earlier landscape architects lavished on natural topography, Berger carefully classifies drosscape sites into such categories as landscapes of transition (LOTs), i.e. temporary storage centers; landscapes of infrastructure (LINs), underused rail or highway rights-of-way; landscapes of obsolescence (LOOs), such as landfills and water-treatment facilities and abandoned factories; landscapes of exchange (LEXs), obsolete malls and other retail facilities; and landscapes of contamination (LOCOs), the "brownfields" that are the signature feature of most regional drosscapes.

Berger's great achievement in this book is to weave together all these elements of dross into an overarching drosscape whose collective scale and structure within our metropolitan regions has never before been so convincingly documented. Berger has collected the best quantitative data now available from ten major metropolitan regions: Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte/Raleigh/Durham, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Houston. And he has synthesized and mapped that data onto drosscape maps and charts for each region, providing some of the best overall regional mappings we now possess.

Perhaps most remarkably, Berger has visualized the drosscape through an extended campaign of aerial photography. He chartered small planes to fly over each of the regions he studied to photograph key drosscape vistas. As Lerup himself observes in a useful afterword, these photographs are almost too beautiful for Berger's purposes. Nevertheless, they demonstrate with a visceral force the sheer scale of the drosscape. Here is the regional vision that regionalists have striven mightily not to see.

One might question Berger's motives in so carefully documenting these distressed areas. Yet there is a logic—potentially a true regional logic—in Berger's subversions. Strangely enough, it comes directly out of the heritage of landscape architecture. Despite its association in the popular mind with designing pretty parks and gardens, landscape architecture has in its most ambitious forms always been concerned with combating the polluted state of the urban environment. The very ideal of *rus in urbe*—the countryside in the city—derived from the recognition that the pollution generated by the city's crush of humanity can only be mitigated by the careful insertion of natural systems into the urban environment. In late 19th-century America, there was no worse drosscape than the polluted Boston mudflat occupying what we now know as the Back Bay Fens. It took the genius of Frederick Law Olmsted to see that, by artificially planting a salt marsh on the site, the stinking Muddy River Valley could be transformed into a beautiful "natural" park that also provided for sewerage and flood protection. Similarly, the Burnham and Bennett *Plan of Chicago* (1909) surrounded the built-up area of the city with a set of parks and "forest preserves." More important, the Chicago plan began the transformation of the drosscape of railroad yards and polluting industries that then lined almost the entire Chicago lakeshore into the great linear parks that today are the glory of that city.

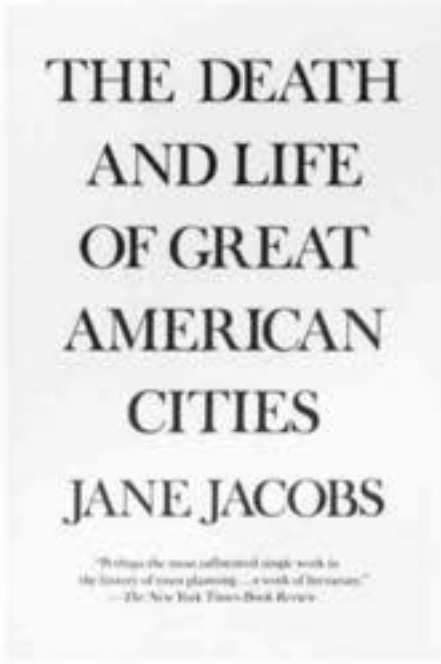
Lurking within Berger's book is a similar aspiration to turn dross into green. But as Berger recognizes in his concluding Drosscape Manifesto, the drosscape is in part necessary: every region creates waste as a product of its growth. The task is to minimize and manage the drosscape, especially the vast wastelands that have emerged as a result of the deindustrialization of many American cities. For such sites, Berger calls for an entrepreneurial, proactive approach. Since inner-city drosscapes, as he rightly observes, "have few stakeholders, caretakers, guardians, or spokespersons," designers must take the initiative in identifying and researching sites. Working from this analysis, their main task is then to find or even to create the clients who might implement a solution.

Difficult as that can be when dealing with inner-city brownfields, this method can be even more problematic for exurban sites, which have perhaps too many stakeholders rather than too few. Homebuilders and developers of offices, industrial parks, and malls all profit from their ability to waste space in huge subdivisions or big-box stores surrounded by parking lots. In the exurban context Berger denies himself the consolation available to an Olmsted or Burnham: that there exists an unspoiled natural realm just outside the limits of the metropolis. In his earlier *Reclaiming the American West* (2002), Berger powerfully subverted the idea of an unspoiled American wilderness by focusing on the massive wastelands generated by mining and the scale of the necessary remediation of abandoned mines. As he shows in *Drosscape*, the exurban drosscape is not simply the result of urban industries and land uses polluting the rural hinterlands; it is also the result of the city encountering at its periphery already-polluted and spoiled landscapes of rural exploitation.

The unresolved issue of Berger's Drosscape Manifesto—and, for me, the book as a whole—is the relationship of the drosscape analysis to more conventional regional visions, especially as embodied in "smart growth" or New Urbanism. Is the drosscape vision the negation of smart growth, or a necessary part of an effective smart growth strategy? Berger claims to stand above the sprawl debate, a claim that is supported by the sophistication of his analysis of the complex landscape elements that activists dismiss with the shibboleth of "sprawl." But what regional design strategy follows from his analysis?

What emerges most clearly for me from this book is the danger of "grand regional strategy": the attempt to revive too quickly and too easily the vanished clarity of Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace" of parks around Boston or Burnham's forest preserves around Chicago with such measures as regional growth boundaries or other solutions that look good on big maps. The drosscape must be evaluated, remediated, and ultimately re-integrated into the metropolitan landscape parcel by parcel.

And this means, in Berger's analysis, that the designer must eschew the heroic role of master planner for the more modest role of collaborator and negotiator. Turning dross into green thus requires a transformation in the design professions as well as in the brownfields. ■



JANE JACOBS 1916-2006

Jane Jacobs died this April at the age of 89 in Toronto. She had moved north to Canada decades earlier in order to save her sons from being drafted into the Vietnam War. But it was in New York City where she made her name by defending her Greenwich Village neighborhood, and neighborhoods in general, against the large, destructive ideas of urban renewal. Her 1961 masterpiece *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was a seminal book, and its influence on everyone who has thought about cities over the last 45 years has probably been unequaled.

For me, and for many like me, her legacy is particularly intimate, because in her work she defined and ratified the value of our experience as walkers in the city. And in so doing she also managed another enormously important task: She explained the role of a city's strangers.

Jacobs' real realm is not the printed page, but the fully inhabited public street and its sidewalks, which are ends in themselves as well as means—routes and destinations, forums, theaters, and markets. A symbolic site and a ceremonial ground, the street is a political space, in the broadest sense of the word, that has no equivalent.

And it is the city's phenomenal realm, the place where urban reality is most real, in the living scenes of writers such as Dickens and Baudelaire rather than in the theories and ideas of Le Corbusier or Jacobs' great opponent, Lewis Mumford. Moreover, it is on the street that Jacobs gives us the stranger in all his concrete glory. Her strangers are not professional figures like the *flaneur* or the Other. Jacobs' strangers are the people we meet on every sidewalk in broad daylight, the city's native species, its vast majority, and for Jacobs, its safety patrol.

The urban planners of Jacobs' generation accepted the Enlightenment principle that we are all essentially alike and, therefore, will always behave in the same way for the same rational reasons. Strangers, by their very nature, are unfriendly to such abstractions because they are unknowable; and the strangers we can see for ourselves are merely the leading edge of all the people in the whole, abstract, statistical city whom we never encounter and, in their number, cannot even imagine. These strangers, who hold the city's surprises and its dangers, are its irreducible mystery.

Most important is that this body of strangers includes all of us: we are all strangers. What we present to one another, in the flesh, are the limits of human knowledge that the certitudes of high conceptualization and big urban planning ignore. Jane Jacobs gave each of us, therefore, a kind of authority, a collective individual voice, which was raised most eloquently perhaps after 9/11 by everybody who wanted a say in planning the memorial to be built on the site of the World Trade Center. That this kind of negotiation between people and planners took place in her home city of New York is, perhaps, the best memorial she could receive.

So, may Jane Jacobs rest in peace, with our gratitude, as we try to keep in mind the example of her clarity and the compassion in her sense of scale.

— *Terrence Doody*

COMING IN CITE 68

- Artist Collectives at the former Jefferson Davis Hospital
- Spending Time in Huntsville's Prison Complex
- The University of Houston's new Cesar Pelli building
- Parking to Parks: Going Green Downtown

Left: Jim Love's *Little Elephant* (1959)
Below: Detail of Tree (1962)

Photos courtesy Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Remembering Love

Jim Love: From Now On
Contemporary Arts Museum Houston
April 22—July 2, 2006

Reviewed by D.E. Brown

The joyously humorous gathering of Houston artist Jim Love's work on view at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston was no mere sampling; visitors could celebrate the breadth of Love's career at its depth in every scale, chuckle as they surveyed the thoughtful array of his artistic development, and share the full poetic range of the late artist's fertile imagination and intelligence. With nearly 200 works, the exhibit profoundly affirmed Love's master status in terms of materials, technique, and over time. All the important and early "put togethers" were present, as well as a full range of his later cast and cut pieces. The CAMH's parallelogram was abundantly filled with a posthumous tribute to Love, who died in May 2005 while organizing this show, but it was in no way crowded.

There were many routes through and into this exhibit. Chronological groupings clustered in thematic sets on large pedestals and in Menil Collection-style cases (echoing Love's long association with the de Menils) around a central core of early works. One sweet trip began at *Area Code* (a large, 1962 screen on loan from the Alley Theater that inventories most of the imagery Love would develop over his career) and then circled the exhibit looking first at the smallest pieces, bouquet to bear to practice cloud to belly button to bird, and then recircled at the next size of the same items, and then circled again at the next size, and so on. Mini, tiny, small—it was a lesson in scale and proportion that reminded viewers that most things that are large in life may never be monumental. Even as it calls human designs into question, Love's art skillfully celebrates the quotidian, offering the beauty of daily items revealed and raised to a highly crafted echo of a child's trust in the world and in its critters, its crude emotional plumbing, its hieroglyphic screens, its vast aviary—those big reptiles turned small birds, trading scales for feathers and then learning to fly.

Love's touch transformed this vocabulary of images and gestures into exuberant totems that construct their own mythology as echoed humor and irony, carrying it into a rare, genuine, and alarming concern for post-industrial humanity. Using a tender humor, small scale, repetition, and evolution, Jim Love's work addresses 20th-century philosophical and political issues even as it draws attention to the gap between rhetoric and reality—that highly contested zone where thinking fuses image with its metaphors and range of interpretations, and where one hopes to step clear of cliché and trivia, the sentimental and the superstitious, to understand the noise the soul makes.

Rooted in surrealism, Love's later work often generates narrative impulses, even as it stalls those stories to ponder the juxtapositions each piece presents: warm metal, steel tenderness, language versus look, the cosmic joke or existential conundrum, inspiration or solace, triumph or survival. It is not difficult to see the icons in Love's images, but his work is so personal, courageously eccentric, and self aware that it is complicated to label those images iconic. Love seems to have never truly crawled away from the poetry of childhood optimism; he never lost that link to trust and never soured on people. Like Mark Twain, Jim Love knew that thinking opened easier as it smiled, and he left us life lessons in Texas existentialism that might help us abide during these dark days of political and military bluster. The works on display at the CAMH could bring you close enough to laugh at yourself.

The CAMH isn't the only place to see Jim Love's work in Houston. His public pieces are scattered across the city, and make an easy afternoon aesthetic pilgrimage; maps to these pieces could be picked up at the CAMH. *Can Johnny Come Out and Play?* waits patiently in the grass of the Cullen Sculpture Garden across Montrose from the CAMH, looking like a scale moon or a lost baseball. *The Portable Trojan Bear* sits in Hermann Park near the entrance to the zoo. Nearby on the campus of Rice University, *Paul Bunyan Bouquet #2* can be found in the courtyard of Lovett College. On the University of Houston's main campus, *Landscape with Blue Trees* shades the Cullen College of Engineering plaza. And many a visit to Houston begins unknowingly with the Jim Love piece titled *Call Ernie*. Sited at Hobby Airport between the parking structure and the entrance to the main terminal, the large, blue work mixes notions of flight with the familiar rags-to-riches symbol of the Texas oil fields and a convenient handle where the cockpit would be. This composite emblem of modernity proffers a talisman and a self-aware joke as a welcome to Houston.

Accompanying the CAMH exhibit is a splendid book, *Jim Love From Now On*, that contains all the pieces displayed in the show in rich, crisp duotones, as well as biographical photos and first-rate evaluative and personal essays. This beautifully designed volume also provides important chronology, selected exhibition history, and a bibliography while connecting Love's role as one of the founding personalities of the contemporary art scene in Texas with his role as inspiration to two generations of sculptors. With this volume, as well as this show, the CAMH has done Love, Houston's art community, and that community's next generation a great service. ■

Photo © 2006 Eric Hester

The twin bridges at Montrose Boulevard and U.S. 59. Rather than design a bridge specifically for a four lane road, TXDOT decided to install a pair of two-lane-road bridges side by side.

The Sum of Its Parts: Mangling Montrose

BY BRUCE C. WEBB

In the city, change is inexorable. Some of the changes—to houses, the streets, the neighborhoods—percolate up from the people who live there. But often the changes are more remotely conceived, if no less visible when they leave their mark. This was the case recently on Montrose Boulevard, which has been impacted both by activities of the state highway department—no stranger to causing upheavals in the city—and a visit from corporate America, with its commodification of nearly everything it can lay hands to.

When TXDOT began to plan the widening of the Southwest Freeway a few years ago, a group called SWAP (Southwest Freeway Alternative Project) formed to counter the highway department's proposal to build an HOV lane above ground at Montrose. It was around Montrose Boulevard that the existing freeway, which sank below grade after passing Shepherd, rose again, and TXDOT intended to keep that arrangement, only on a wider scale. SWAP pushed an alternative scheme, which was to drop the elevated section of the freeway, which crossed the four lanes of Montrose, into a trench. I would never have believed this could come to pass in Houston, since the proposal's primary purpose had more to do with improving environmental quality than improving efficiency or saving money. But it did. The elevated deck that had for years impinged on Montrose Boulevard was removed, and with it the vast field of freeway-supporting columns that crossed the city grid on the bias, creating a shadowy underworld that provided a shelter for the homeless and a shaded shortcut for cyclists.

The widening project required replacing a number of the bridges that spanned the suppressed freeway, and most people were amazed to see the distinctive set of them TXDOT installed. They weren't particularly beautiful or daring, but they were a cut above the routine spans TXDOT usually provides. I thought they looked a bit cartoonish, overly simplified in appearance and unnaturally beefed up in places where they shouldn't be. But as it turns out, their design was for the most part more circumstantial than anything else. In order to span the 224 feet between the banks of the freeway channel without interfering with the roadway below, they were designed with thin, pre-cast concrete road decks supported by cables attached to bow-string trusses.

Five two-lane bridges were planned, all of the same design. Taking advantage of this rare Houston example of uniformity, the collection was together named the Houston Gateway. To further distinguish them, architect Rey de la Reza was brought on board; he added the fins and red balls located at the ends of the bridges, street lights, and fiber-optic lights that trace the supporting arches. The project won several awards, among them a National Steel Bridge Alliance National Award and a National Achievement Award from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Partnership for Highways Quality Program.

All this was for the good. But a critical point in the scheme was where the freeway slipped under Montrose. A group of visionary citizens saw an opportunity here to give the boulevard a special bridge, a span befitting its status as one of Houston's best streets. But the idea never fully ripened. The group first contacted Renzo Piano, who on two separate occasions agreed to design the bridge. Unfortunately, in both cases TXDOT's schedule didn't match the architect's. Artist Robert Irwin was also invited in to take a look. Then Herzog and deMeuron got the call. They sent someone to meet with local officials, but soon sensed that TXDOT would be at best a reluctant client.

So the idea of having an extraordinary bridge went unfulfilled. Instead, to handle the four lanes of Montrose traffic TXDOT simply placed two Houston Gateway-style bridges side by side; it took less effort and assured that the set all matched. But the impact of the double bridges on the boulevard is less than satisfactory. Doubling up the bridges yielded an awkward, ad hoc looking ensemble. With its extra width the pairing is too low and bulky, and seems to block rather than connect the street segments. This feeling is heightened by the lengthy concrete median that had to be installed to protect the gap between the two spans. The bridges belong more to the freeway than to Montrose Boulevard, and bring to mind John Kaliski's comment in a review of Transco Tower a few years ago: "Great from afar; far from great."

If the paired bridges have had the biggest impact on Montrose, the CVS drugstore, which replaced a convenience store/gas station at the corner of Richmond and Montrose, has to be the most unwelcome. CVS is a relatively new player on the urban scene, but in a few short years the company has opened some 70 stores in Houston, many of them replacing older, established Eckerd stores. Unlike Wal-Mart, which works its big-box aggression on the edges of the city, CVS nuzzles into the urban center, looking for prominent corners on which to plant its signature buildings.

Some time back, drugstores left the city for the suburbs, where they mutated into a new form of vending-machine architecture. Now they are returning to the city in this new form: CVS desires pylon signs, a drive through window, parking for 40 to 50 cars, and an object building. A standard-issue CVS store is a collection of malformed architectural elements rendered in vague ephus tectonics. It's a smarmy kind of architecture, designed to stand out in a crowd, though in such a way that it looks like it wants to blend in, but is failing. CVS has several different designs, and each is ugly in its own way.

The one on Montrose is a red brick and dusty yellow model assembled into a kind of cartoon-suburban style. Each new addition to a street tips the balance one way or another, and the CVS at Richmond moves Montrose one building closer to becoming a highway strip.

Franchise buildings that are destined to be repeated ad infinitum should be subjected to the closest scrutiny and to design standards. But this doesn't happen, and it remains for communities to protect themselves on a case-by-case basis. Like TXDOT, which was willing to respond to a citizen's group, CVS can be adaptable. For the Las Vegas strip it produced a pop-art decorated version of their building, decorated with giant Kodak film canisters and red lips and covered in lights. In Saratoga Springs, New York, James Kuntsler used his monthly *Civitas* newsletter to rail against a CVS planned for the historic Main Street. CVS knuckled under to public pressure and provided a more contextually suitable two-story brick model, custom-made for the town. So it is possible to force a deal with the company. But it takes work.

Voters are often asked to consider the question, "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" It's the type of question that should be asked about parts of the city as well. Recognizing the importance of streets in establishing a city's character, Austin recently created a Great Streets Master Plan "ultimately to transform the public right of ways into great public spaces."

Something of this scope is probably not likely in Houston's near future, but it can be aspired to, and moved toward in small increments. One of those increments should be Montrose Boulevard, which is certainly one of Houston's great streets. Protecting its virtues, and enhancing its strengths, needs to be seen as a public project. It needs to be nurtured. ■

the public realm: slices of life.

The public realm is vast. How does an individual begin to comprehend what the public realm entails, who establishes it, and who pays for it? We tend to coosistently define it as our streets and other visual appearances, but it is more than our streets. The public realm is comprised of those disparate networks that allow us to conduct our daily lives in safety, with convenience, and with some comfort. It includes everything from fire stations, police stations, parks, bayous, and creeks to power, telephone and cable lines, to storm and sewer lines.

Just how does it work and how do we work within the public realm? And an even more interesting question: Who is responsible for the public realm? Through this upcoming series of civic forums on the public realm, RDA will focus on areas where we have experienced significant transformations (downtown), areas where change is coming and who will be involved (the bayous), and areas that highlight the complexity of coordination and multi-jurisdictional projects (the Kirby Corridor). And lastly, RDA will explore what this means to the overall community and the region.

Admission is free and open to the public.

Brown Auditorium,
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet
(Enter via the Main Street Door)

Parking at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is available for $3 in the museum garage located at the corner of Binz and Fannin.

PART 01 Wednesday, July 12, 7pm

PART 02 Wednesday, Aug 9, 7pm

PART 03 Wednesday, Sept 6, 7pm

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