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Cite

the Architecture and Design Review of Houston

Gertrude Barnstone:

The Art of Entry

plus

EXPLORING THE EAST END

AUSTIN'S BLANTON MUSEUM

and

WALKING THE BLUE BAYOU

69>

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AND DESIGN REVIEW
OF HOUSTON

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contents

Above Left: A six-panel pool screen created for Gayle Degeurin by Gertrude Barnstone. Photo by Beryl Striewski.
Above Background: Street plan of Simms Woods in the East End. Courtesy Ben Koush.
Cover: Detail of Gayle Degeurin's pool screen. Photo by Beryl Striewski.

space city style

2006 rda gala

Grooving to the sounds and sights of the Sixties

For its 20th annual Gala, the Rice Design Alliance turned the clock back 40 years, to the time when the Bayou City was becoming America's Space City. The 2006 RDA Gala, Space City Style, was a celebration of Houston's modern architecture of the 1960s, as well as the Houston architects who defined that architecture as something bold, sleek, and cool.

And what a cool night it was! On Saturday, November 11, some 1,000 guests gathered at the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel, many of them wigged out or dressed in their favorite 1960s fashions. Men and women in tuxedos and dinner dresses mixed with others in pegged jeans and miniskirts. Gala chairs Joan and David Spaw joined RDA President David George and his wife, Norma, to greet partygoers as they made their way to a retro photo booth and an amazing auction that featured more than 250 unique designer items. Jennifer Batchelor, Auction chair, and her auction committee had worked throughout the summer to gather the city's best art, fashions, furniture, trips, parties, and entertainment to offer Gala guests. The bidding on the items was hot and heavy throughout the evening. Mike Lewter won an exquisite Medusa vase donated by Lalique, and other lucky bidders got to choose from over 60 artworks selected by Sarah Balinkas, Cindy Reid, Catalina Montaño, and Austin James. One of the most contested offerings was a dinner in the home of Marley Lott, served by designer Carlos Jimenez and architectural historian Stephen Fox.

Special guests for the evening included William Peña, Frank Lawyer, Charles Lawrence, Arthur Jones, Harry Golemon, and Harold Goldstein, each of them a principal in one of the seven large firms active in the 1960s that were being celebrated. Those firms—Caudill Rowlett Scott; Golemon & Rolfe; Irving R. Klein & Associates; Lloyd, Morgan & Jones; Neuhaus & Taylor; George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce; and Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson—did much to give 1960s Houston its distinctive look. Throughout the evening, images of iconic 1960s buildings such as Jesse H. Jones Hall, Houston Intercontinental Airport, the Astrodome, and the Houston Independent School District Administration building, to name just a few, were projected onto large screens in the ballroom. At the same time, images from 1960s issues of *Life* magazine provided a running cultural and historical account of that memorable decade.

Under the direction of Environment chairs Lauren Rottet and Kelie Mayfield, assisted by Graphics chairs Alan Krathaus and Fiona McGettigan of Core Design and designer Rebekah Johnson of Bergner and Johnson, the Hilton's Ballroom of the Americas was transformed into a groovy 1960s nightclub. Tables were covered in Pucci-style fabrics reminiscent of '60s style, with the prominent colors being hot pink and green. Colorful gerbera daisies formed the centerpieces, and Space Brownies were the party favors. Underwriting chair Chuck Gremillion was all smiles as his committee set new records for the number of tables sold at the highest giving levels.

Specially designed banners sheltered the Reunion Underwriter tables, which were next to the dance floor, which was filled throughout the evening. The guests grooved to the music of the Fab Five, who entertained the crowd with Beatles music, as well as three costume changes that reflected the various stages of Beatles history. Two caged go-go dancers, one on each side of the stage, kept up a frenetic gyration, their pace matched by those on the dance floor until the last note of the last song faded at midnight. And then the far-out, funky evening ended on a very high note.

1

2

3

4

5

Photos 1 through 13 by Gael Cunningham Williams. Photos 14 through 30 by Phyllis Ward.

1 Norma and David George • 2 Joan and David Spaw • 3 Jana and Chuck Gremillion • 4 Charlotte and Larry Whaley • 5 Melanie Wong and David Andrews


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20


21


22


23


24


25


26


27


28


29


30

• 6 Andrea Crowner • 7 Meng Yeh and Camila Prera • 8 Lars Lerup (left) and John Casbarian • 9 Danny Samuels (left) and Burke Windham • 10 Adrienne Johnson (left) and Catalina Montalvo • 11 Kimberly Hickson and Ian Rosenberg • 12 Blakely Bering and Austin James • 13 Susan and Mike Wolf • 14 Frank Lawyer (left) and Willie Pate • 15 Courtney and Philip Tardy • 16 Susan and Sanford Criner • 17 Kelle Mayfield and Jeff Wolfel • 18 HSPVA student Joaquin Thompson as Go Go Dancer • 19 Darlene Clark and Edwin Friedrichs • 20 Jo and Jim Furr • 21 Margaret Skidmore (left) and Y. Ping Sun • 23 Nonye and Jonathan Grimsdale (left) and Sarah Balkwill and Jeff DeBevec • 23 Yvonne and Scott Ziegler • 24 Elizabeth Swift (left) and Laura Roach • 25 Carol and Sean Nolan • 26 Deborah Brochstein and Stephen Vecht • 27 Jennifer and Brent Batchelor • 28 Joyce and Larry Lander • 29 Diane and Mike Lewter • 30 Melanie Nerz and Christ Pramecone

The Rice Design Alliance would like to thank the following contributors to its 2006 Gala:

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CALENDAR

LECTURES

::

RDA SPRING LECTURE SERIES: DESIGN GOES MAINSTREAM
Suzanne Trocmé on Wallpaper*
■ Wednesday, January 17, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RDA SPRING LECTURE SERIES: DESIGN GOES MAINSTREAM
Donald Strum on
Michael Graves Design Group
■ Wednesday, January 24, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RDA SPRING LECTURE SERIES: DESIGN GOES MAINSTREAM
Lars Engman on Ikea
■ Wednesday, January 31, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RICE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE LECTURE
Lisa Iwamoto
Principal, Iwamoto Scott Architecture, San Francisco, Assistant Professor, University of California at Berkeley
■ Monday, February 5, 5 p.m.
Farish Gallery
Anderson Hall, Rice University

AUSTIN SCENE ARCHITECTS
■ Tuesday, February 6, 6 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

RDA SPRING LECTURE SERIES: DESIGN GOES MAINSTREAM
Byron Merritt on IDEO and Nike
■ Wednesday, February 7, 7 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Brown Auditorium
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

RICE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE LECTURE
Peter Testa
Principal, Testa & Weiser, Santa Monica
■ Monday, February 19, 5 p.m.
Farish Gallery
Anderson Hall, Rice University

THE ARCHITECTURE OF ELADIO DIESTE
Stanford Anderson
■ Tuesday, February 20, 3 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

WORKS OF CHRISTOFF:FINIO
Taryn Christoff and Martin Finio
■ Tuesday, February 27, 3 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

THE CARCERAL CITY: AN ARCHITECTURE OF RESTRAINT
Thomas Colbert
■ Tuesday, March 6, 3 p.m.
College of Architecture Theater
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

RICE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE LECTURE
James Carpenter
Principal, James Carpenter Design Associates, New York
■ Monday, March 19, 5 p.m.
Farish Gallery
Anderson Hall, Rice University

All photos courtesy Donna Kacmar

EXHIBITIONS

::

ACCOMMODATION IN HOUSTON: BEER, BURGERS, AND BARBACOA
Exhibit and Reception by 2006 Initiatives for Houston Grants Program recipient Donna Kacmar
■ Wednesday, December 6, 5–7 p.m.
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture Gallery
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

THE CARCERAL CITY: AN ARCHITECTURE OF RESTRAINT
By 2006 Initiatives for Houston Grants Program recipient Thomas Colbert, with Shannon Stoney
■ February 26–March 24
University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture Gallery
713.348.5583 or rda.rice.edu

HOUSTON: FUTURE FORM
Plans, maps, models, and images of ideas on the drawing board for Houston's near future. The exhibition will be organized into five key areas: bayous, parks, transportation, public art, and architecture. This is part of the grand opening of AIA Houston's new Architecture Center.
■ Thursday, January 25, 4–8 p.m.
315 Capitol, Suite 120
713.520.0155 or aiahouston.org

Above: Photos top and above are from Donna Kacmar's exhibition, *Accommodation in Houston: Beer, Burgers, and Barbacoa.*

APPRECIATING BAILEY

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the photo essay "Remembering Houston: Seeing the City Through the Eyes of Bob Bailey" [by Steven Strom, *Cite* 67]. Although I was one of the many people who was upset when the Bailey Collection was acquired by the University of Texas, I really enjoyed seeing the selection of Bailey images in *Cite*. Almost every photograph brought back memories of a vanished Houston. I was even happier when I learned that UT is making the effort to digitize outstanding photos from the Bailey Collection. I had a great time scrolling through the selection of Bailey photographs that is already available online.

Cite has an excellent selection of articles in each issue. I look forward to seeing the historical photographs that you publish, and hope that you will continue to include photo essays like the Bailey piece in future issues.

Michael O'Donnell
Houston

NOT WELL CRAFTED

If *Cite* is going to publish reviews, scholarly expertise is necessary to maintain professional standards for future research validity. The craft show review in the previous issue ["Arts and Crafts," by Kelly Klaasmeyer, *Cite* 68] is regrettable.

The extensive dither of craft/art is passé. Any dictionary can provide useful definitions of art and craft. If people in Racine, Wisconsin, can create an internationally acclaimed craft museum, perhaps the Contemporary Craft Center here might also become significant in the field.

In fact, categories of decorative arts, architectural design, ethnic art, and folk are also exist. People understanding such distinctions create collections, professional organizations, and even galleries and museums to celebrate such work.

To gain understanding in such matters, the Central Houston Public Library and the Hirsch Library at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, have copies of *American Craft* available for scholarly research and your pleasure of seeing.

Awareness of the legendary British weaver Peter Collingwood is essential to ever writing or speaking on contemporary rugs. Juror Suzanne Ramlijak did not award Deborah Harrison's rug, but she did award both of Jo Zider's truly well crafted, original artworks that Kelly Klaasmeyer chose to ignore. Unfortunately, this review is the only documentation of the exhibit except for the show checklist.

We normally do not credit people who reinvent the wheel. There is credit for creating new techniques and executing intricate processes well—often looking quite simple—while creating delightful, useful forms that materialize and matter. Thus the need for editorial integrity to preserve usefulness of this publication rather than reiterate ignorance.

Jana Vander Lee
Houston

BROWNFIELDS UPDATE

I am always pleased when I find *Cite* in my mail at home. I was particularly pleased to find the fine article about the Brownfields Redevelopment Program ["Filling in the Gaps," by Mitchell J. Shields, *Cite* 68]. Your article will definitely help us "get the word out" and move the program forward.

For your information, we now have 54 properties in the program. That was enough participation so that we were able to expend all of the $100,000 from the "old" grant that expired on September 30, 2006. And we have a few ongoing projects at which we are spending money from the "new" grants, $400,000 that will expire in September 2008.

Our primary mission is to improve the quality of life for Houstonians by redeveloping brownfields. And, as you correctly noted in the article, one of our goals is to "have more applications for money than we have money to give." I anticipate that your article will stir some interest in the community so that we will have more new applicants for environmental site assessments funded by the currently remaining grant money.

For those interested in more information on the program, I'd like to note that we have changed our website to www.houstontx.gov/brownfields.

Ron Sandberg
Brownfields Program Manager
Mayor's Office of Health & Environmental Policy
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.*

All photos by Eric Hester

Public Architecture

With its new Architecture Center, AIA Houston opens up

In November, when AIA Houston moved into its new Architecture Center downtown, it went public in a way that the organization has rarely done before. The Architecture Center, located on the first floor of the second phase of Bayou Place and across Capitol Street from the Hobby Center, replaces headquarters that had been tucked away on the fifth floor of an anonymous office building on Richmond. At the Richmond location it was almost unheard of for people to simply wander in. At its new home, that's something AIA Houston hopes happens regularly.

"The issue is getting back down to a more public presence, to becoming more of a public institution," says Jeffrey Brown, AIA Houston's 2006 president and a principal in Powers-Brown Architecture. "There's a feeling among some that we don't address design enough, that we're too much a professional organization. Of course, that's something we have to be, but that doesn't mean we can't be more open to the general public as well."

Among the things that the new Architecture Center will offer that the old AIA offices did not is an exhibition area that can be used for the display of architectural photos, drawings, or models, among other things, as well as room for events from lectures to parties. As it happens, the square footage of the new facility is about the same as the square footage of the old one. The difference is that in the new Architecture Center more space is given over to public space.

Houston AIA's decision to create an Architecture Center reflects a trend among the American Institute of Architect's larger chapters. It's a trend that began in Seattle and, most notably, New York, where the 2003 opening of the Center for Architecture on La Guardia Place in Greenwich Village helped change the image of what had been seen as a relatively staid organization into something more on the leading edge of architecture. The success of the New York venture helped prompt action in Houston, as did the fact that the lease on AIA Houston's Richmond offices was running out.

"New York led the way, finding how to become a more public presence and an organizing influence regarding other professional and affiliate organizations," notes Brown. "But what works in New York doesn't necessarily work in Houston. We'd started thinking about what would work here when our lease came due, and we had to decide if we wanted to stay where we were or try something different."

It wasn't hard to decide that the latter choice was the better one. But implementing it was a different issue. The original hope had been to find a building to buy along the light rail route downtown and renovate that into AIA Houston's public face. That, though, could take a few years to accomplish, and Brown says AIA Houston wanted to move faster. "We didn't want to get caught up in what I term analysis paralysis, which has hampered some other big AIA chapters," he says. "They spend so much time trying to figure out exactly what they want to do that they don't end up doing anything."

At about the same time that AIA Houston began looking for a new home, the second phase of Bayou Place was seeking tenants. The Cordish Company was facing a deadline to get the second half of Bayou Place renovated and open, which meant AIA Houston was able to negotiate favorable terms, and do so in a part of Houston that attracts a large number of visitors.

"Bayou Place is in the theater district, which puts it on the school bus tour route, and Cordish gave us an opportunity to have a ground floor space, which gives us more of a street presence," Brown says. "One of the advantages was that

Opposite Page: Front entrance to AIA Houston's new Architecture Center in Bayou Place Two.
Left: The Architecture Center's back section overlooks Buffalo Bayou.
Below: Part of the Architecture Center's public space, where exhibitions and lectures can be held. Interior design will be by Kirksey and Kendall-Heaton.

we were able to get a very flexible lease, which lets us keep our options open. The new location gives us a chance to learn just how an architecture center is going to work for Houston, and as we learn how to program a center, as we learn what our market is, as all those things evolve, we can still get out and into our own building whenever we want. We've really pushed the idea that this is a way for us to learn how to be a center, so we can evolve into where our final location is."

Though talk of a new Architecture Center began some three years ago, the actual decision to leave Richmond Avenue and move downtown was made barely a year ago, which meant a lot of work had to be done in a short time to get the place up and running. "We had a lot of help from the development, brokerage, and legal community to make this all work," says Brown. "And we've had good input from the contractor community as well. D.E. Harvey is doing the build out, and Randall Walker at Kirksey as well as people from Kendall-Heaton designed the space in the shell building."

The Architecture Center's grand opening will be in January, after which Brown hopes visitors start dropping by. Already an exhibition of photos by Richard Payne from his book *Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture* is up for viewing, and in January another exhibit focusing on maps and models of developments planned for Houston's near future will be on display. Other projects set for the Architecture Center include a high school competition in which inner city students will be brought in for a one-week intensive boot camp on architecture.

"What we hope to do is evolve to become more of a cultural institution," says Brown. "We'll always have our professional services, of course, but this is something we'll be adding. In talking to people at other architecture centers while we were researching ours, we hear over and over again that there were more casual users, more people wandering in to ask about architecture. In our old offices there was never that sort of discovery by the public. If you didn't know where we were, you never found us. But now we're going to have much more of a public identity." — *Mitchell J. Shields*

Houston's Virtual Past

The biggest museum in Houston is under construction, and no one knows how big it will be, when it will be finished, or how much it will ultimately cost. But everyone involved, including the major funders, could not be more pleased, and no one is looking back.

The Museum of Houston, or more officially, museumofhouston.org, is our first digitized, on-line museum. Its ultimate purpose is to contain everything related to the history of the city. Even though the museum is still in the drawing up of documents and signing of agreements stage, the organization is very much in place, including the major players—Rice University, University of Houston, Texas Southern University, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among many others.

The idea is that anyone wanting to know anything about the history of Houston need only go to www.museumofhouston.org, and connect there to any number of collections—public, institutional, private, memoirs, scrapbooks, ledgers, church records, public documents, family photographs, you name it. This visionary project expects to be an endless and bottomless site. And it will be interactive; there is software planned that will allow anyone to record their own archival information and insert it into the museum "collection."

The organization is also buying equipment, such as portable scanners, to help institutions that do not have the necessary hardware and software to record their materials. Think of it as an on-going, open-ended collection without a stopping point. History, after all, is simply anything that happened before today. It is happening all the time.

So where did this brave new idea come from? David Bush, director of communications at the GHPA, is credited with the original local inspiration. The group putting together Houston's virtual collection also has outside models, chief among them a website being developed with great success by the state of Maryland. Thanks to the generous backing of the Houston Endowment and the Herzstein Foundation, the Houston site is already up, running, and building under the direction of its steering committee. "Money raising for this project is a top priority for GHPA," says GHPA Executive Director Ramona Davis. But she also acknowledges no one really knows what the final costs will be.

That's the way it should be. The Museum of Houston is a truly collaborative community project. Rice University is providing the server space to host the enterprise, with active participation by Chuck Henry, vice provost and director of Fondren Library. The museum fits exactly into Rice President David W. Leebron's vision for the 21st century, to get the university beyond the hedges and into the community. GHPA, meanwhile, has hired and given office space for a project manager/on-line tech person.

It can be frustratingly challenging to raise enough money to construct a big museum building and attempt to fit all pertinent archives inside it, only to then find yourself limited by the physical space you have. With the virtual museum there's now an alternative. So, are you interested in Houston history? Some of it, or all of it? Just by dropping by the website and checking out the progress you could be a sidewalk superintendent of this amazing construction. It is a chance to watch the city accumulate its collective history. Just stay connected. — *Barry Moore*

Womb Chair and Ottoman, Eero Saarinen, 1948

A QUESTION OF SIZE

The Blanton Museum gives Austin a notable art collection, but a less notable building to house it

Above: Front view of the Blanton Museum of Art's Mari and James Michener Building (Kallmann, McKinnell, and Wood, 2006). **Below:** View from the University of Texas campus, looking toward the state capitol.

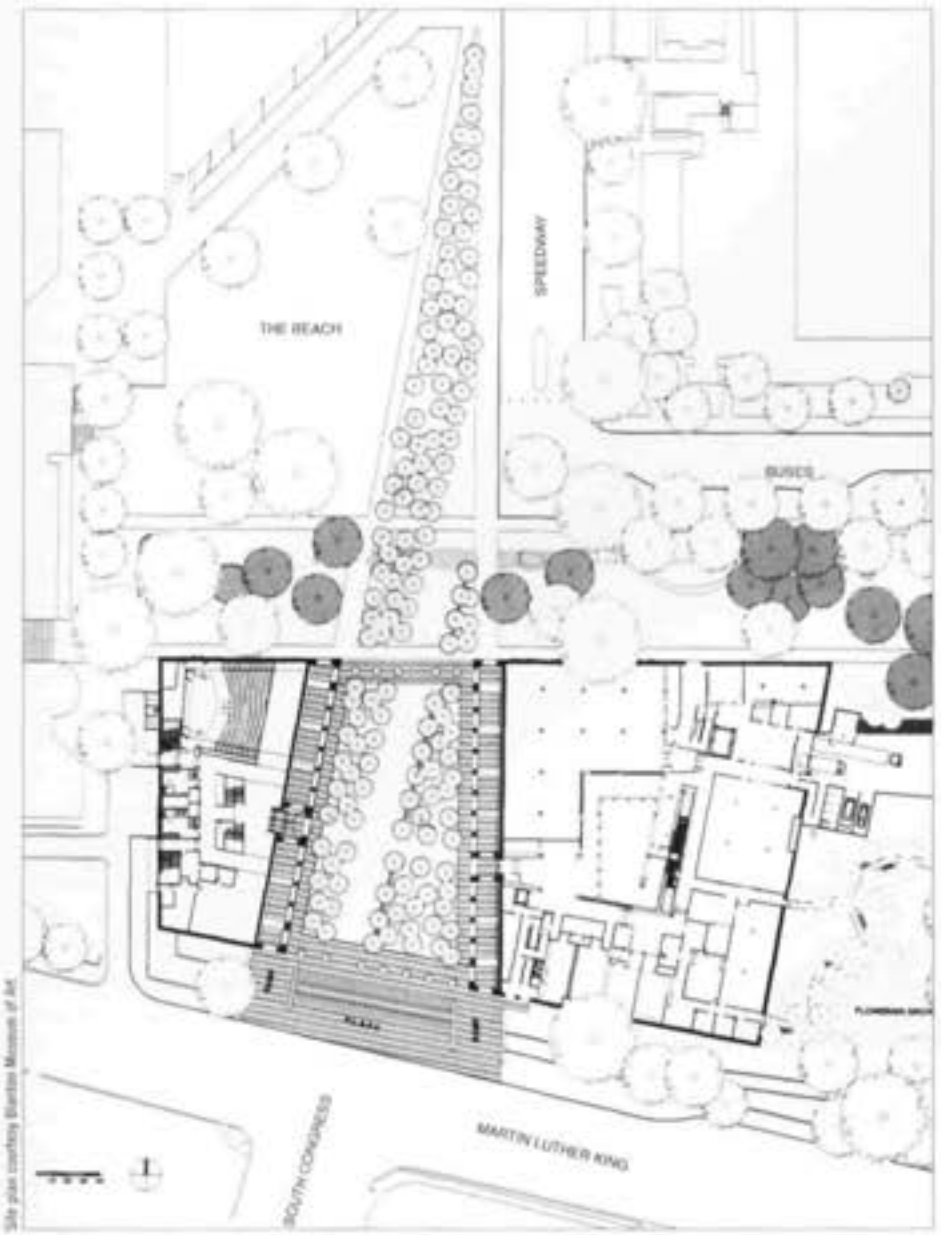
BY RICHARD R. BRETTELL

Although many of America's great private universities have art museums with world-class collections, public universities in the U.S. have been ambivalent about the efficacy of the visual arts and art collecting for general education. The history of art was taught to "gentlemen" first at Harvard, then Yale, and gradually spread as far west as Stanford, before becoming "co-educated." As if to stress this last point, several of the Seven Sisters to the old Ivy League have superb art museums. The idea implicit in this is that art connoisseurship is appropriate to the education of the elite, but not to the masses that can only afford public education.

So too in Texas, where the flagship of the state's universities, the University of Texas—one hardly need say "at Austin"—struggled for years to form an art collection worthy of a major building to house it. But form it they did, both from gifts of existing private collections such as those of Mari and James Michener, Barbara Duncan, C.R. Smith, and Leo Steinberg, and with major purchases, such as the acquisition (a gift-purchase) of the famous Suida-Manning Collection of Old Master paintings and drawings, which over a period of three generations migrated from Vienna to New York to Austin. This purchase was truly epochal for the university, and justified the construction of a large art museum.

The Blanton Museum of Art opened the Mari and James Michener Building, the larger of the two buildings in its complex at the southern edge of the University of Texas campus, in April. The second building, the Edgar A. Smith Building, will open next fall. Both are part of an ambitious $83.5 million master-planned museum campus designed by the Boston architectural firm of Kallman, McKinnell, and Wood. Michael McKinnell served as the design partner, while the Dallas firm of Booziotis & Company Architects was the local architect. Peter Walker and Partners of Berkeley, California, did the landscaping as part of their comprehensive landscape plan for the entire university campus. The selection of these nationally prominent figures reflects the ambition of the university and its donors.

The question is how well that ambition was realized. In terms of size, it would seem to have succeeded. The Michener Building is truly immense. It has



Site plan courtesy Blanton Museum of Art.

Site plan showing the Edgar A. Smith Building (Kallmann, McKinnell, and Wood, opening 2007), rows of live oaks, and the Michener Building (right).

four masonry-clad walls, the longest of which is more than 230 feet in length and 42 feet in height; an immense Spanish-tiled roof cantilevered vertiginously over those walls; towering interior ceilings on both levels; a vast arcaded interior courtyard with skylights; an 8,000 square foot "black box" for temporary exhibitions; a state-of-the-art suite of rooms for the museum's nationally important collection of prints and drawings; and two large suites of classically proportioned, naturally lit galleries for the permanent collection.

With an E-gallery for new media, bathrooms, an information desk worthy of the Queen Elizabeth 2, two well-equipped seminar rooms, and large facilities for storage and exhibition preparation, the building has more than 124,000 square-feet of space, making it what the university calls "the largest university art museum building in America." And with the completion of the 56,000 square-foot Edgar A. Smith Building next year it will be.

So it is big. But how good is it? Let's begin at the urban level and think about the complex in terms of Austin itself. The Blanton is located on Martin Luther King Boulevard, the street that is, in essence, the dividing line between "town" and "gown." The selection of the site was of crucial importance to the institution, suggesting that, unlike other UT facilities, the Blanton was built as much for the general public and tourists as for the university itself. In this, UT followed the Yale model of urban accessibility of art collections rather than the Harvard-Princeton model of an art museum imbedded inside a campus, ritually closed to all but insiders. And when one adds to this the fact that the Blanton is directly across the street from the equally immense, if architecturally lamentable, Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, hats off to the urban planners in their encouragement of institutional synergy.

The only criticism I have of the Blanton complex in urban terms is that the entrances to the museum's two buildings are all but invisible from the street. While the location and position of the buildings makes a positive contribution to the city, the relative invisibility of their entrances undercuts this contribution.

The site for the Blanton's two buildings is, in fact, a pair of sites separated by a former city street that has been closed and pulled into the complex through Peter Walker's appropriate, if unimaginative, rows of live oak trees. In order to allow expression of the street, the Blanton had to be divided into two unconnected buildings—the larger one for art and the smaller one for offices and services. Hence, the auditoriums (large and small), the restaurant, the museum shop, the art classrooms, and the offices for a staff of 60 will be in the Smith Building to the west, a short walk away on an oddly informal stone pathway from the Michener Building, where the works of art are exhibited.

A neat juxtaposition of life and art—or commerce and pure esthetics—is thus enforced by architecture, although it may seem unusual to visitors that the temporary exhibition area is in the art building, completely removed from the café, museum shop, and auditorium, which normally are fed by temporary exhibition attendance. Art and life were apparently thought a better division than permanent and temporary. The only curatorial inhabitants of the art building are those in the Julia Mathews Wilkinson Center for Prints and Drawings, who, I take it, could not be pried away from their art. As a former curator whose office was steps away from his galleries, I heartily approve of their decision.

The most flattering view of the Blanton's two-building campus is from the university side, near the vast neo-Corbusian Perry-Casteneda Library. This view is centered on the wonderful granite double-drum dome of the Texas capitol at the end of Congress Avenue, which is aligned at an angle with the closed street between the buildings. This urban composition is utterly compelling, and is, in some ways, justification enough for what is probably a functionally flawed division of what otherwise might have been an integrated institution.

The Michener Building is an immense, tile-roofed box with almost completely planar walls of variously colored materials—brick, stones (I counted three different colors and degrees of hardness, "structural polychromy" in Post-Modern guise), stucco, wood, glass, and metal. The back, or the side facing the parking garage, is the low-budget side, dominated by brick, rather like Tom Beebe's failed modernist back sides of the neo-Baroque Harold Washington Library in Chicago or his classical baroque Meadows Museum in Dallas. The Blanton's expensive front, facing the closed street, is almost completely stone, although the granite and limestone pieces are so small and thin that the wall seems like a mosaic over an invisible structure rather than a weight-bearing masonry façade that can visually support the immense, overhanging roof. When compared to any of the superb Beaux Arts facades on the UT campus by Cass Gilbert, Paul Cret, and Mark Lemmon, it fails at the most basic level of architectural integrity, indicating that we are so accustomed to disguised structure that we no longer expect masonry walls even to look as if they support a roof.

The Blanton's site, which is a huge rhombus, suggested two rhomboid rectangles for its buildings. The Michener Building juxtaposes two right-angle corners—at the northwest and the southeast—with acute and oblique angled corners on the northeast and southwest sides. The entire building is arranged around a large courtyard that is, therefore, a rhombus as well. A staircase opposite an L-angled colonnade with modernist remakings of Roman arches and Mycenaean—or Italian 1930s neoclassical—columns leads up to the galleries. With a totally modernist series of triangular north-facing lanterns on the ceiling, this space seems more like a vast opera set awaiting performers than a welcome center where one sits, reads a map, and plans a visit. For the impaired among us, there is an elevator placed near the front door that goes to a landing above the entrance that is diagonally opposite the staircase landing. So much for consistency. The two types of visitors—those who elevate and those who walk—will have forever different experiences of the museum narrative, each with a different beginning and a different sense of historical and cultural time.

The two landings divide the piano nobile into what are effectively two museums, the smaller and more successful of which is devoted to European pictorial arts from the Renaissance through the 19th century. This is on the northwest corner of the building, and consists of two parallel and integrated suites of galleries, the larger of which is devoted to painting and the other to the graphic arts. Each wall linking to another gallery is punctuated by a centrally placed door, with the enfilade of doors ending, in each case, on a work of art or an exit door. The galleries are designed and detailed as skylit paintings galleries on the Beaux Arts model perfected in the United States by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge in Chicago in the 1890s and reaching an apogee in John Russell Pope's National Gallery of Art building from the 1930s. However, the lay-light cove system within the Blanton's galleries is not surmounted by the wonderful glass roofs of the Beaux Arts prototypes, probably because the Texas sun, as we all know, is very bright. Rather, the architect disguised clerestory windows in the roof, thereby allowing only powerfully directional light into the space above the lay-light. This produced a dim glow from the lay-lights when I visited on a brilliant October day, almost as if the building was more afraid of natural

Top: An example of the Wichener Building's smaller galleries, which are given over to European pictorial arts.
Above: One of two large skylit galleries devoted to the Blanton's collection of American and Latin American art of the late 19th and 20th centuries.
Right: Main lobby and "grand" staircase.

two absolutely immense skylit galleries, with single uninterrupted walls 18 feet high and 150 and 97 feet long respectively. The long walls are topped by decorative semi-circular coves held in place by flat lay-lights. These rooms are so large and so commandingly formal that they render all but the largest works placed in them visually insignificant. Major paintings by great masters of American modernism, most of which were intended for small spaces, line the walls like pinned butterflies acting as specimens for the viewer. Many of my favorite paintings by Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Tworkov, Paul Gottlieb, Helen Frankenthaler, and others look like curatorial playing cards. They are arranged in a room that so enervates them that they appear weak, almost like slides or photographs rather than powerful objects designed for close aesthetic encounter. These huge galleries would also swallow up the groups of students and faculty for which they were presumably built. They are, in effect, more like basketball courts or classical bank lobbies than modern art galleries.

Indeed, with the exception of the stolidly traditional works in the C.R. Smith Collection, which are all crammed into one small room, and an almost hilarious circular gallery of plaster casts from the famous Battle Collection, which are devoted to European art but are inexplicably placed in the American galleries, the majority of the works in the Blanton's collection of the Americas is 20th century and modernist. We know a lot about the visual conditions for which these works were made—bright incandescent light, white walls, asymmetrical spaces, side lighting (if any natural lighting), and low ceilings. To design galleries for them suited for huge Baroque paintings and rooted in the Old Master museum architecture of Paris, Berlin, Dresden, St. Petersburg, and Vienna is fundamentally to misunderstand both the art and the role of the museum in presenting it. This problem reaches its apogee as you approach the huge corner gallery in which a dramatic installation by the Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles, an installation designed for a small, dark room, has been suspended in a high space in which the windows and the skylight have been closed to accommodate it. This work would have looked infinitely better placed in the flat-roofed, unlit temporary exhibitions spaces below. Here, architecture and art are in open conflict.

It is tempting to rush to the smaller and equally Beaux Arts galleries that parallel the two vast spaces and say, "Aha! These are much better!" But they are only better scaled. They, too, exhibit a misunderstanding of the art they contain. The superb easel paintings of Marin or Davis or Bywaters, to name just three artists, would have looked

light than in awe of its power to animate works of art.

In spite of its flaws of lighting and its profusion of centrally placed doors—many galleries have doors on three walls, thereby relegating the art to the corners—the Blanton's suite of galleries for European pictorial arts is beautifully proportioned and very conducive to the sensitive hanging by the curatorial staff. There is no doubt that it is the best suite of galleries devoted to Old Master paintings, drawings, and prints hung in a media-integrated fashion in any American university museum. The octangular corner gallery with its tall, vertical walls and veiled windows is a wonderful oasis in the midst of the smaller rooms, with their highly concentrated and comparative hangings. The hang is perfectly suited to what we used to call "a teaching collection," and it is easy to imagine groups of undergraduates learning about attribution, iconography, condition, national schools, and the like directly in front of works of art by such masters as Durer, Veronese, Rubens, Vouet, Guercino, Claude, Rembrandt, Tiepolo, and Piranesi. Even the founders of the Fogg Museum at Harvard would be impressed.

This suite of small and medium scaled galleries exists in a dramatically imbalanced relationship with the other L-shaped wing, which is mostly devoted to the Blanton's large and nationally important collection of American and Latin American art of the late 19th and 20th centuries. This area is dominated by

better in modernist installations. The efforts of modernist compositional balance are based on the principals of what artist and scholar Jay Hambidge called "dynamic symmetry," by which he meant calibrated asymmetry. The placement of works by modernist artists in symmetrically planned, coved, Beaux Arts galleries is, in powerfully subliminal ways, a form of aesthetic entombment.

It is precisely this modernist historicism, a form of simplified Beaux Arts architecture, that is the central problem of the Blanton as a building. It also raises serious questions about the intentions of its architects and their clients. Few can forget the bracingly Corbusian and powerfully brutalist building for the Boston City Hall that made Kalmann and McKinnell famous in the 1960s. And their sublimely tough parking garage nearby that injected such life into the architecture of the automobile is one of late modernism's masterpieces.

It is likely that no reasonably knowledgeable person could identify the Blanton Museum of Art with any of Kalmann and McKinnell's epoch-making masterpieces. In fact, McKinnell's particular brand of post-modern historicism, as embodied at the Blanton, is an utterly compromised kind of architecture that will appeal to purists on neither side of the great ideological battle—neither the neo-modernists nor the post-modern historicists.

The Blanton had a troubled history long before its first brick was laid. The controversy surrounding the rejection of the Herzog and de Meuron design for the museum in 2000 (see "A Flaw in the System" by Mark Gunderson, *Cite* 47) left many deeply suspicious of the university's intentions. I must confess, though, that although I was partly horrified by the logic of the UT regents in rejecting the Herzog and de Meuron design, one side of me cheered them. Having taught at UT from 1976 until 1980 as a confirmed modernist, I derived much more pleasure from the pre-modern campus buildings by Gilbert, Cret, and Lemmon than from the state-financed modernism that added such mediocrity to the campus in the 1960s and 1970s. I also feel that there are historicist architects who could have done a building much more sympathetic both to the UT campus' brilliant Mediterranean historicist architecture and the wonderfully provincial classicism of the Texas State Capitol.

Yet it is precisely what some have called the "turn-coat historicism" of formerly modernist firms such as Kallmann, McKinnell, and Wood that creates buildings as flawed as the Blanton Museum of Art. With greater inventiveness and more nuanced use of historical referents, I could imagine a campus of smaller, interconnected buildings with a courtyard accessed from both the campus and Martin Luther King Boulevard that would have welcomed students, faculty, Austinites, and tourists into a people-filled and truly "Mediterranean" patio with a fountain, plants, chairs, food, and drink; a separate L-shaped building for European art with greater attention to historical detail and more atmosphere; a completely modernist building designed to display the 20th century collection in dynamic and exciting spaces suited to it; a classroom and "virtual education" building with access both to the web and all the virtual museums imaginable; and offices for the people who work with art scattered throughout the complex near their areas of expertise rather than arranged in a penthouse suite designed to look like "work spaces" for a small suburban corporation.

University communities are among the most open and dynamic of any in the world, and with the superb faculty and staff at the University of Texas in mind, it is easy to imagine what could have happened to the Blanton museum with the creative design input of scientists, engineers, art historians, artists, architects, literary theorists, psychologists, and others brought together to energize the conception of a truly 21st-century art museum. Instead, the university has built a state-of-the-art museum for a 19th-century city anxious to prove its civilization. Its grandeur of scale and reliance on the architecture of the Beaux Arts makes us believe that no creative university think tank had any part in its design.

Yet all of that said, I must conclude on a more up-beat note. The University of Texas at Austin now has an art museum that, as a facility, is and will be for a long time the envy of any state university in America. It is not as adventurous architecturally as I.M. Pei's museum for the University of Indiana or those brilliantly associationist, yet utterly modernist, museums by Antoine Predock for Arizona State University or the University of Wyoming. But with its nods to tradition and its position between the UT campus and the city of Austin, it brings art to a modern metropolis and its university in an ambitious, expensive, and utterly mannerly way. Its failures are not easily correctable, but in the end neither are they fatal to the functioning of the institution. It will serve its audiences well for at least a generation.

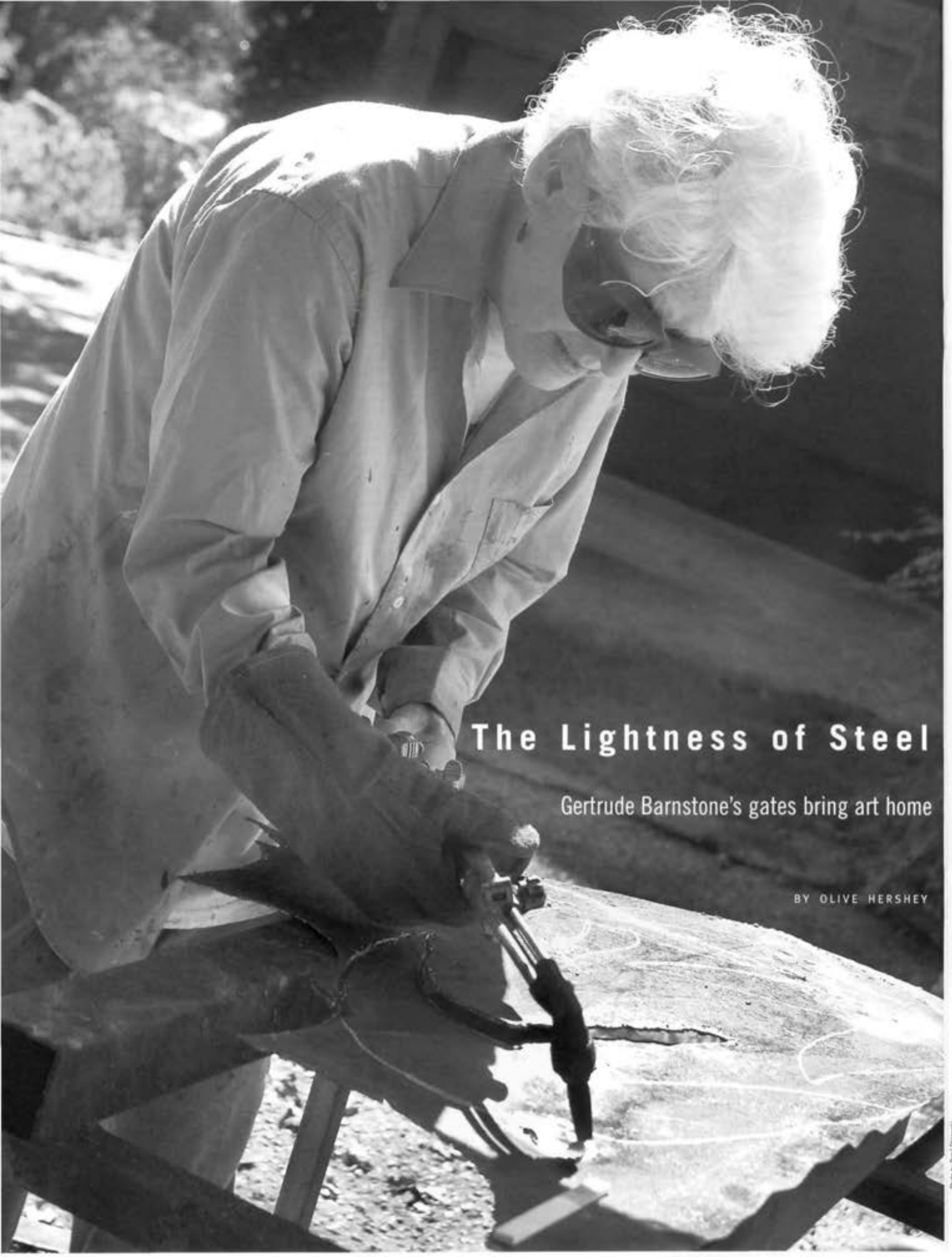
But what will happen to it by 2030 is anyone's guess. The Blanton's galleries are already overfilled; a good many works from the Latin American and American 19th and 20th century collections are already in storage. So the museum will have to evolve as its collections, and audiences, grow. I hope that it does so quickly, so that the ambitious effort at the Blanton can be rethought and made as great as the university and the city it serves. ■

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1. ATRIUM
2. CONFERENCE/BOARD ROOM
3. SEMINAR ROOM
4. STUDY ROOM
5. CENTER FOR PRINTS AND DRAWINGS
6. GALLERY
7. TEMPORARY EXHIBITION GALLERY

2ND FLOOR PLAN, SHOWING GALLERIES, ALONG WITH

1. E-LOUNGE
2. BATTLE PLASTER CAST ROTUNDA



The Lightness of Steel

Gertrude Barnstone's gates bring art home

BY OLIVE HERSHEY

Photo from *Look* magazine. Courtesy Gertrude Barnstone.

Photo courtesy Gertrude Barnstone

Photo by Beryl Shereshewsky

Photo by Eva Arnold. Courtesy Gertrude Barnstone

Opposite page: Gertrude Barnstone at work on one of her gates.
Below, Left to Right: Gertrude and then husband Howard Barnstone, cycling with their children down North Boulevard; portrait of a young Gertrude; Gertrude today in her garage studio; Gertrude and Howard at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, sometime in the 1960s.

LOOKING NOT AT ALL like Rosie the Riveter, Gertrude Barnstone weighs in at about a hundred pounds. She is five feet four inches tall, slender, feminine. Her short hair curls silvery white around a heart shaped face, and her eyes—one real and one fake, the result of a recent accident—are a clear, piercing blue. For Barnstone, an artist whose work is scattered all across Houston, enlivening both public and private places, each day glitters with visual miracles. She only has to wake up and watch for them: a hawk in a tree down the street, the leaves on her avocado plant, the sunlight sifting between branches.

Since the mid-1970s, Barnstone has been fabricating welded metal pieces that animate the city's architectural environment. Driving through Houston, one can easily recognize her sculptural pieces, unmistakable because of their strong gestural shapes, their rhythmic lines, and their bold color. Over the years her unique vision has grafted her joyful, polychrome steel to private houses, their interiors, and their gardens, as well as to public and commercial spaces, where her work interacts with that of Houston architects and designers of the urban landscape.

During the past few years in particular, Barnstone's gates and screens have seemed to sprout and bloom in Houston's private gardens. Animals and birds of unlikely colors leap and perch and soar amid the foliage. It is almost as if the concrete and steel metropolis was being reclaimed, in some small part, by plants and animals whose impulse is ever to play. In an otherwise doggedly traditional section of West University Place, Patsy Cravens' splendidly pink garden gate teases the eye of pedestrians, inviting them to enter her luxuriant front landscape. When Gayle Degeurin needed a visual screen for her pool, Barnstone constructed six detachable sections with abstract leaf patterns. Plantings have grown so high around the screen that one has to look closely to distinguish steel from foliage. Martha Claire Thompkins, on the other hand, needed to fill an ugly sterile space behind her townhouse and asked for Barnstone's help. Thompkins describes Barnstone as a contemporary version of Morgan Le Fay. Her tiny backyard wasteland, she writes, was transformed by Barnstone into "a vine, a screen, a vision of solids, spaces and shadows." On Vermont Street, Betsy Siegel's front garden is filled with Barnstone sculpture, much of it appearing to creep under bushes or crawl onto a leaf.

Save for short periods when she threw herself into the political arena, Barnstone has been making art all her working life. Though she was married to one of Houston's most famous architects, Barnstone has always preserved her identity as a notable artist. Her reputation preceded her marriage, and has continued long after it. "She's one of my champions," notes Robert Morris, an architect with whom Barnstone has collaborated. "I don't think I've ever seen her in a negative frame of mind."

James Thurber, beloved writer and cartoonist of rumpled dogs and doughy men, who went blind in his fifties, once famously said, "What a writer needs is handicaps." Refusing to indulge in self-pity following the slip and fall that resulted in the loss of her right eye, Barnstone, now 81, ordered shatter-proof spectacles and got back to welding as fast as she could. Earlier this year, as spring was flaunting its full glory, you could see the artist at work most mornings if you drove along Yupon Street. Barnstone would be seated just inside, or just outside, of an open bay of her garage/studio, wearing white cotton trousers well-spattered with paint, a long sleeved shirt to ward off mosquitoes, and her welding helmet and gloves.

In a tiny child's chair, she bends over a section of steel gate. Sparks fly; the air heats up, crackles. There's a strong scent of brimstone and danger. Behind a cyclone fence enclosing her back door and side yard lean pieces of blue and green and yellow steel sculpture so nearly the same hues and shapes as the shrubs and trees that they're easy to miss at first. Tall, unpainted sunflowers with jagged steel petals catch the morning sun on their metal edges. At a front corner of the house an antic steel cat is climbing a tilted ladder. Tendrils and leaves of sculptures made years ago, their acrylic paint faded now, weave in and out of dark green foliage.

In this busy atelier every flat space is dedicated: the driveway to storing stacks of sheet metal, steel rods, and scraps of perforated metal, the steel work table inside the welding bay to holding mismatched pairs of welding gloves, drawings, paintbrushes, and bits of colored glass. In the back of the garage, a washing machine and dryer are crowded with work shirts, towels, rags, pencils, more fragments of glass, and clippings from newspapers and magazines. Inside Barnstone's bungalow every flat space is layered with pens, drawings pencils, letters, photographs, magazines, books, paintings, and other tools of her trade. As Texas artist and friend Richard Stout observes, "Gertrude has never spent time on frivolous things." She makes a point of never cleaning house. Nothing in her universe is wasted.

Architecture has always informed Barnstone's work, and for the last quarter century she has collaborated with two Houston architects, first with Robert Morris and then with Cameron Armstrong. She welded and painted a steel

Photo by Beryl Shereshewsky

Lolly Jackson's gate, above, was the first one Gertrude Barnstone created, and marked a dramatic change in her career.

gate for Houston's first Spark Park, which Morris designed at Booker T. Washington High School. Another Morris design that Barnstone complemented was the Durbin family's Bellaire house on Sunburst. The first steel house in its neighborhood, it has a steel wall around it, behind which Morris placed a garden. Barnstone added a gate, which highlights the steel barrier between garden and street and invites the attention of passersby. The second Morris project for which Barnstone made a gate was Cindy Toles' steel house on Blossom and Reinerman, where Barnstone's striking steel entry provides both elegance and security. In both these gates, Barnstone inserted large chunks of colored glass, adding facets to the surface.

In 2000 Cameron Armstrong collaborated with Barnstone on a house built of three blocks, each a different color. Barnstone's panels cover the front door and provide a screen for an interior pool. Leaf shapes fly free inside the frame of the gate, and in the upper right quadrant gleam five pieces of iridescent glass. The exterior walls of the house are white, and the powder-coated panels are painted gray or silver. From the street one feels lighter, cooler, as if the house were exhaling its air-conditioning onto the sidewalk.

"When I work with an architect," Barnstone says, "the things I think of are, what is the architecture doing? What are its shapes and feeling? How can I do something that interacts, that is not an embellishment? Corbusier showed in the Chapel of Ronchamp—and Frank Gehry later picked up—architecture as sculpture, the importance of light moving, changing. The architecture becomes a part of nature."

Almost since she was born in 1925, Gertrude Levy Barnstone has been making art in Houston. Her parents, Gisella Schwarz Levy and Arthur Levy, gave their only daughter an education uniquely designed for an artist. And because she grew up in Houston in the late 1930s, when a vigorous art scene thrived in spite of the Depression, Barnstone's education as dancer, actress, painter, and sculptor took place in a rich aesthetic stew. She began her education at a preschool, the Garden of Arts, where toddlers learned poetry, painting, music, and drama.

By the time she was 13, Barnstone was reading plays by Ibsen and Shakespeare with a community theater group that met on the banks of Buffalo Bayou, where the city jail is now. The recreation director had hired Margot Jones to direct a municipal theater group that became the Community Players, a haven for the teenager. Barnstone vividly recalls Jones' passionate advocacy of regional art and the interrelatedness of the arts. Today, more than a half century later, Barnstone voices that same core belief. "Art is an inner need and an inner response of all people," she says. "So it needs to be everywhere."

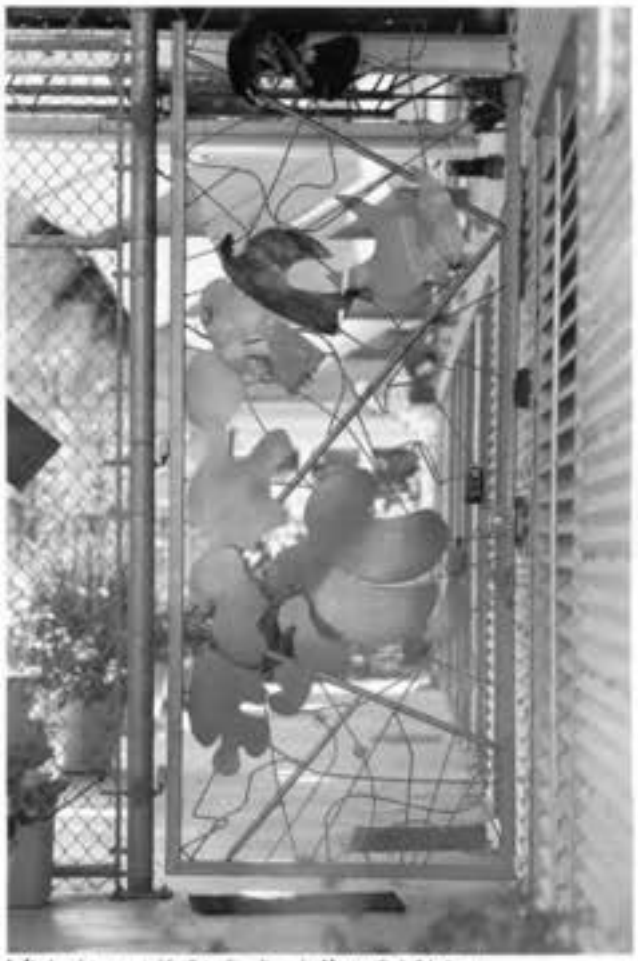
At the Museum of Fine Arts School Barnstone studied with Robert Preusser, Lowell Collins, and Robert Joy. After college she took art classes, painted, and acted in dramatic productions at the Little Theatre and Nina Vance's Alley Theatre. At one point she nearly signed a contract with RKO Pictures, but changed her mind because, she recalls, she feared the film people would try to control her life, something quite out of the question for a fiercely independent woman. *Houston Chronicle* critic Anne Holmes wrote of Barnstone in 1953: "... a dancer with flair, an actress of charm, and an artist of considerable stimulation." Even then, Holmes observed, it was "difficult to discern the subjects to which she lends her most thorough artistic concentration." As Barnstone puts it, "I loved the idea of using all my muscles all the time."

In the early 1950s, Barnstone's interest in architecture prompted her to apply for a commission for a large public sculpture at the S and H Green Stamp building on Holcomb. Barnstone won the commission, and designed two sculptures. The first was an aluminum ribbon five inches wide and one foot thick that wound around tall pylons. The second was a long aluminum tube snaking across a wall.

"I wanted to do something that the sun would catch, movements of light relating to the pylons and the wall," she says. "The metal sort of played with the wall, with the architectural elements of the building."

This was Barnstone's first large pieces of public sculpture. It marked a departure from her earlier work and provided a prologue to the many other public pieces that followed. The word "play" seems central to all Barnstone's sculpture, and seems to relate to her view of objects and materials as having a spirit, a motivating desire of their own. At times she asks questions of her materials in a playful way. Nearly every piece she makes portrays creatures who seem to dance, leap, fly, or swim through their kaleidoscopic steel medium.

In 1955, Gertrude Levy paused long enough to marry a rising young architect named Howard Barnstone, whose ambitions matched her own. The Barnstones joined a circle of artists, actors, directors, and architects that flourished in the boomtown Houston society of the 1950s and 1960s. During these years Howard Barnstone was designing houses and apartments and teaching at the University of Houston. He invited noted architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller to lecture to his students, and the Barnstones and Fuller became lifelong friends. Gertrude Barnstone regards Fuller as one of her mentors, recalling that he wrote to her often about her work, praising her as an artist to be reckoned with.



Left: A sculpture created for Betty Siegel's yard. **Above:** Cindy Tolles' gate.

Photos this page and facing page by Beryl Dzierzak

In 1968, Howard and Gertrude Barnstone separated. Gertrude attended welding school for two years, then sought a welding job so that she could support herself. Southwestern Plastics hired her to weld aluminum frames for Plexiglas skylights, and every night after work she took home scraps of Plexiglas and made them into interesting shapes.

Barnstone held her welding job until Southwestern Plastics closed down in the mid 1980s. During that time she continued to create large, freestanding scultures, some for private homes, others for public or commercial spaces. In 1976 she hung long, looping swatches of blue and yellow fabric, 250 yards of it, above the Hermann Park reflecting pool. The swatches blew with the wind, constantly shifting their shapes, playing a billowy visual music. Later came *Sun Comb*, constructed of multiple waves of red and white scalloped steel, which was installed on the lawn of James Calaway's home on Courtlandt Place. Barnstone was interested in the play of light through the metal "comb" as the sun moved east to west. A favorite installation at San Jacinto and McKinney that she calls *Tunnel Bird Out* was made of several large painted arcs of steel forming a tunnel through which a tiny bird escapes. Pedestrians could follow the bird's little black prints along a wooden deck and through the arches. As with many of Barnstone's sculptures, *Tunnel Bird Out* kindles a feeling of transcendence as a fragile, trapped bird frees itself and rises toward the sun.

Barnstone's career path changed dramatically in the mid 1980s with her first commissioned gate, an instance of lucky happenstance. "Lolly Jackson was looking for someone to build a gate for a gigantic aviary she was building on Saddlebrook," Barnstone says, "Lolly's gate got me started.

This first gate, still installed in Jackson's garden in Old Braeswood, is striking in its delicate intricacy. And because the paint has faded now, it is the beautiful curved outlines one notices. As Richard Stout puts it, "When I think of Gertrude, I think of her line." Barnstone's line moves through the gate like a living thing. More than any other, this gate echoes the art nouveau curves of Parisian ironwork by 19th-century artist Hector Guimard. Like Guimard, Barnstone achieves flowing steel pieces with the aspect of growing living beings or organic compounds in the process of metamorphosis.

Jackson's gate quickly became famous among her friends. Barnstone then inquired at a store named Surroundings about selling the candlesticks she had started making, and the owner agreed, adding the suggestion that she also begin making tables. Soon Barnstone was building all sorts of usable objects: tables, chairs, gates, screen doors, burglar bars, balustrades, stair railings, standing lamps, chandeliers, garden sculpture and, always, her signature candlesticks. Barnstone accepted commissions requiring favorite animals—cats, dogs, lizards,

Left: Durbin family's gate on Sunburst. **Above:** Booker T. Washington High School's Spark Park gate.

and birds occasionally in attitudes of play and repose, but mostly in antic motion. Even the leaves and petals in her gates and screens and railings seem to be either moving or at the point of moving. In Barnstone's work of this period, the dominant quality is verve, energy, speed. Her steel is anything but immobile and inanimate; it is all verbs.

If you search for them you begin to notice Barnstone's outdoor pieces all over town, from Meyerland and Evergreen Street on the west, to the neighborhoods of Bellaire, Southampton, Rice University and Montrose. The sculptor has created garden and driveway gates in the Fourth Ward and all the way north to Booker T. Washington High School. Most, though, seem concentrated in or near the Museum District, in Montrose and Southampton, allowing explorers to drive or bike around the neighborhoods to view her pieces from the street. (See sidebar, page 23.) Most are brightly colored, all create animated conversations with the homes and apartments they intersect, and each one is alive, organic, and filled with movement.

In 2001 Barnstone made a screen door for a metal house designed by Scott Ballard. What the house's owner, Judy Chapman, most remembers about Barnstone is how small she is. "That little tiny woman doing this hard man's work," Chapman says. "Yet she's very feminine. I found that fascinating." The other notable thing, Chapman says, is Barnstone's sense of excitement about what she was going to do, that enthusiasm for work that is her trademark.

In 1965, Barnstone put on fishnet stockings in Day-Glo colors and smoked cigars, just for the fun of shocking conservative members of the Houston Independent School District Board. She served on that board for five and a half years, campaigning tirelessly for desegregation, convinced that without integration public schools could not provide any child a complete education. She was also convinced that art is a universal human need, and that funding for arts education is imperative. In 1975, after losing an ill-advised race for the Texas Senate, Barnstone retired from politics and went back to her art.

Most of the steel pieces she has been fabricating recently reflect an equally bold, outspoken attitude. They are a strong assertion of vitality, hope, and, above all, humor. Before the accident in early March that cost Barnstone an eye, five clients had paid her deposits on substantial welded steel projects. Since losing the eye she has completed and installed two of those projects, both decorative panels for homes.

On a hot July morning Barnstone was fretting about the weather. Wearing her welding visor over shatterproof glasses and seated in her tiny chair, she bends over her torch, her gaze riveted on one small section of tubular steel. One of her larger pieces requires hundreds of such welds, which is why she needs months, and sometimes as much as a year, to complete a gate.

Ray Castro, Barnstone's assistant of 15 years, explains how complicated the task is. Inside a frame that Castro makes for Barnstone, she bends thin steel rods into sinuous patterns, creating a foundation for whatever comes next. Then she cuts out shapes of sheet metal, expanded metal, or perforated steel and welds them to her pattern. When the biggest pieces are ready to be galvanized, Castro lifts them into his one-ton pickup and delivers them to Southwestern Galvanizing. Barnstone admits she couldn't make her gates without Castro's help. "He's a perfectionist," she says, "a problem solver with a very good eye, a fantastic sense of materials."

It's 11:30, and Barnstone's garage studio is crowded with pieces of work, large panels in various stages of completion. Out in front of the garage, Mark Muhich, a friend from Galveston, is welding large pieces of steel for the largest panel. Sparks fly against the closed garage door. Inside, Barnstone sits at a worktable mixing yellow primer in a glass jar. She screws a top on the jar so a spark from the welding torch won't cause an explosion. Everything in the garage is flammable. She walks out onto the bricks between her garage and the back door of her house and places a portable humidity gauge near a 12-foot primed panel painted on one side. Because it is possible to paint only when the humidity is below 75 percent, muggy weather throws the work schedule off. Today, majestic, billowy cumuli float overhead. Everyone is sweating. KTSU is playing cool jazz.

On the unpainted side of a second panel, Willie, a handyman who works in the neighborhood, is daubing a brush with another batch of primer. Gertrude glances at her watch, issues orders.

"Willie, five more minutes. Now drink your water," Barnstone says, then complains about the rust removal process. "Darn stuff. You put acid on. Then you wash it off. Then you let it dry but prime it quickly, because if you leave it in the damp it rusts. Mark, better take a break. Now we're getting somewhere."

One long panel forms part of a balustrade for Barnstone's son George.

Enormous round flowers bloom there, deep rose, hot pink, some of their sheet metal petals bent inward as if dancing in a breeze. On the second panel, which is leaned against the cyclone fence, a turquoise and pink peacock cut from steel mesh struts in full flamboyant display. The steel flowers blow. Their leaves sway. The warm wind moves through the leaves of the 50-foot avocado tree beside the back door. The door opens; Barnstone walks down the three stairs followed by her Yorkshire terriet, Athena.

"Time for her walk," Barnstone announces, and the two stroll carefully across the crowded patio, taking pains not to trip on anything that looks like art.

On a morning in August, the painted balustrades created for her son George are secured in Barnstone's and Castro's trucks. There's not a breath moving the leaves as Castro and Willie wait in Gertrude's driveway for her to lock the gate, pat the cat, make sure she has brought all the nuts and bolts needed to secure the panels to the balcony they'll decorate. "I had to go to the hardware store for longer ones already," Barnstone says ruefully. She is dressed in a purple T-shirt and jeans. She has been up since 6 a.m., and feels the heat, though she doesn't complain. Somehow, when lashed to the two trucks, the three panels with their pink flowers and proud peacock seem diminished. On the side of the street opposite Barnstone's driveway people are bringing chairs and tables out to the street for a garage sale.

The two pickups pull into a driveway in front of 1216 West Gray, a large, blue, two-story house with a balcony above the door. Castro and Willie lift the pieces out of the trucks. Barnstone sits on the front steps next to a cooler filled with Gatorade. A hush comes as Castro climbs up a ladder. The men tie ropes on the two smaller panels and hoist them up to the balcony.

"Keep your fingers crossed. I measured it three times, and it has to be perfect," Barnstone says.

The patch of shade she is sitting in shrinks as the sun climbs. Castro is cutting the old balcony railing with a metal saw, lowering it with ropes in sections. Now he is ready for the middle panel, the one with the peacock. It's the heaviest of the three, and someone suggests using the ladder as a ramp, pulling the panel along it to the balcony. Barnstone is muttering about places on the panels where she's missed painting.

Castro yells down from above, "I'll have a piece up in the air and she'll be painting between my fingers."

Gertrude's son George drives up with his wife, Francine.

"How do you like it, George?" Barnstone asks.

"Beautiful, Mother," George says, and offers everyone a beer.

Nearly finished, Castro yells from the balcony that he needs one more piece of steel to attach the third panel to the building. Barnstone gets into her truck to pick it up and returns a few minutes later.

"You got it?" Castro asks.

"No, I picked up all kinds of other things, but I left the damned thing at home," Barnstone says. She shrugs as she climbs back into her truck.

"Ay, que vida," she says.

What strikes artists and friends about her work, as about her persona, is Barnstone's boldness. She has no truck with dull wits or respect for received dogma. She doesn't hesitate to express outrageous or even blasphemous opinions. Eyes flashing, she defends all things alive. There's a fire inside her, a lightness about her slow steps, a toughness and strength in her thin, arthritic hands. She laughs like a longshoreman. Barnstone possesses a wonderful naiveté, as if she might have arrived from another planet and finds our dicta about decorum simply amazing.

Jack Massing, one half of the Art Guys, calls her an older person with a youthful mind. She is always ready to try new things, he says. She's a lifelong student. Artist and friend Tobey Topek speaks of Barnstone as someone who continuously transformed herself when the need arose.

"The amazing thing is as she got older she took on things that were more daring and complicated and dangerous," Topek says. "She knows a secret in life: Your work is everything."

Although Barnstone has moved freely between types of art, changing media as naturally as a snake sheds its skin, from the beginning there has been no doubt she had serious intentions. Early on the entries in her sketchbooks show a strong spirituality based in a powerful affinity with the natural world. Next to detailed drawings and notes about the summer solstice, with north and south poles clearly tilted toward and away from the sun, she wrote: "The many realities in which we exist. Simultaneously the absolute oneness of all things … so many layers of sleep within us—must wake them all up and hear see feel what it is we are all a part of."

Barnstone tells this story: "When I was very small, six or seven or eight, I looked at an apple, and saw all these tiny white spots. I thought, if it looks like that on the outside, it must be like that on the inside, composed of very small particles. That sort of stuck with me." The idea of an object's structure being composed of very small identical particles is pervasive in Barnstone's thinking.

And in one of her sketchbooks from 1978 this entry: "Years ago Bucky Fuller said that he foresaw a great band of energy coming down through part of the country, through Texas. He felt that this would be the spot of vitality, energy, creation. I think a lot of people feel that now. We're going to go with it as it happens as well as helping it happen… The biggest thing about Texas has always been that it is so unfinished—nothing is settled, so everything is possible. We can and will make it happen in art where we live."

Barnstone rode this wave of energy and made it palpable in her intricate, fluid designs. Her body of work is large and enormously varied. It is fundamentally art for people: sometimes functional, sometimes decorative, but always striving to bring to the world more life, more magic, more light. ■

A BARNSTONE GUIDE

The door, gates, and yard sculptures that Gertrude Barnstone has created enliven houses all across Houston. Some can be seen by passersby, others require an invitation from the house's owner for viewing. Below is a small guide to some of Barnstone's more accessible works.

Photos this page and facing page by Beryl Striewski

Above left: Balustrade on West Gray featuring a salamander design. **Above right:** Patsy Cravens' gate.

1. Lolly Jackson Gate, 7505 Morningside: Installed in Jackson's garden this gate is striking in its delicate intricacy.
2. Booker T. Washington High School Spark Park Gate, 119 East 39th Street: The gate can be seen on the north side of the school.
3. Gayle Degeurin Pool Screen, 2106 Persa: This sculpture, created in six sections, can be seen under a large oak tree in front of the house.
4. Betsy Siegal Front Yard Sculpture, 1900 Vermont: This work is easily visible from the street.
5. Judy Chapman Screen Door, 2217 Colquitt: Of a piece with architect Scott Ballard's metal house, the door is a muted silver gray.
6. Balustrade, 1214-1216 West Gray: This colorful piece decorates the landing of the ACLU of Texas office.
7. Rubenstins Door, 2154 Dryden: Created for a house designed by architect Cameron Armstrong, this door consists of panels that provide a screen for an interior pool.
8. Garden Gate, 4535 Sunburst: Barnstone's gate here separates the street from a backyard garden designed by architect Robert Morris.
9. Cindy Toles Gate, 5201 Blossom: Another Barnstone/Morris collaboration, for which Barnstone created a steel entry in which she inserted large chunks of colored glass.
10. Patsy Cravens Gate, 3605 Sunset: This pink garden gate, located on the west side of the house, teases the eye of pedestrians. ■

All photos this page by G. Lynn Photography

BY BEN KOUSH

By the Wayside

THE AREA OF HOUSTON'S East End along South Wayside Drive between Lawndale Avenue and Harrisburg Boulevard contains a surprisingly rich collection of well-designed buildings and fascinating urban developments. This Wayside corridor developed rapidly in the first half of the 20th century. From the 1900s to the 1940s a number of important cultural, social, and commercial institutions and developments were located in the area. In the late 1940s and early 1950s a surge of construction, which included several significant examples of modern architecture, coincided with the 1951 completion of the Gulf Freeway to Wayside Drive. Then things began to change. Most new development shifted south, and in 1957 the last remnants of the area's genteel origins symbolically disappeared with the removal of the Houston Country Club to far west Houston. The decades following were a period of slow decline as middle-class inhabitants began to move to outlying subdivisions.

By the 1970s the East End had become almost completely Hispanic. The Wayside corridor was no different. But what was interesting about the area is that while in much of the East End the ethnic shift meant as well a shift from middle-income to lower-income families, in the Wayside corridor middle-class desirability was retained, only with a new Spanish-speaking majority.

This section of Houston has been buffered by a variety of relatively large, long lasting commercial and institutional developments such as the Houston

Above Left: Aerial view of the Houston Country Club, circa 1941. Winding paths to the right are those of Forest Park Cemetery; wooded area to the left is the newly developed Houston Country Club Place; streets at lower right are those of Idylwood. The Ship Channel turning basin is faintly visible at top center.
Above Right: The former Houston Country Club Clubhouse (Sanguinet & Staats, 1909).
Opposite Page Top: Dinner Bell Cafeteria building, 1955.
Opposite Page Center: Levy House in Idylwood (Harry A. Turner, 1940).
Opposite Page Bottom: International Derrick and Equipment Company of Texas Building, 1944-45.

A model of urban development in the East End

Country Club, the Hughes Tool Company, Forest Park Cemetery, and the Villa de Matel. Because they acquired sizeable tracts of land for longterm use, they helped the area remain relatively stable, with a rate of change that has been gradual compared to other sections of the East End. Interspersed among these developments were comparatively small, middle-class residential subdivisions. These subdivisions were small enough that residents felt a sense of solidarity and commitment, even as surrounding areas declined.

Driving today along South Wayside Drive between Lawndale Avenue and Harrisburg Boulevard one notices the pleasant, suburban atmosphere: large areas of greenery at the Villa de Matel, a series of stone gates at Idylwood, the fairways of the former Houston Country Club, the large Willow Oaks of Houston Country Club Place, and remnants of the commercial development once limited to the blocks around the intersection of Harrisburg Boulevard and South Wayside Drive. In a city where most of the urban field is a disorganized patchwork of incompatible uses, this coherence is notable. As such it presents an effective model of urban development in a suburban, automobile centered city, a model whose history deserves to be more widely known and understood.

In 1903 the Houston elite built Houston's first golf course, the Houston Golf Club, on a 45-acre tract along Buffalo Bayou that had been leased from the Rice Institute. The original nine-hole course was on the south side of the bayou west of downtown, where today the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas now stands. In 1908 the club renamed itself the Houston Club and purchased 156 acres of rolling terrain along Brays Bayou bounded to the west by South Wayside Drive between Capitol Avenue and Lawndale Avenue. According to the city map of 1913, the first golf course on the new site had nine holes. By the time the 1920 city map was published the course showed 18 holes. The Houston Country Club was accessible from downtown via the Harrisburg streetcar line, and members often played a round of golf during lunch breaks. Prominent early members of the club included Will C. Hogg, Howard R. Hughes, Jesse H. Jones, Hugo V. Neuhaus, and Ben Taub.

The original clubhouse, located on the northern section of the property, was a rambling, two-story Craftsman style building designed by Sanguinet & Staats and completed in 1909. It was remodeled in 1921 at the behest of Hugo Neuhaus, who commissioned New York architect Harrie T. Lindeberg to design a swimming pool with pink stucco bath houses and shaded arcades modeled on classical Roman baths along three of its sides. The clubhouse was remodeled again in 1939, this time to the design of member Kenneth Franzheim. Today none of the buildings are extant. In 1957 the Houston Country Club relocated to Tanglewood. Club member Gus Wortham purchased the abandoned location and renamed it the Houston Executive Golf Club. In 1973 the City of Houston acquired the course and renamed it the Gus Wortham Golf Course. The existing clubhouse dates to this period.

Partly because of the attraction of the Houston County Club, the area was briefly considered to be a potential location for luxury residential development. In 1910 the Forest Hill subdivision was laid out to the design of Kansas City landscape architect Sid J. Hare. This subdivision, located directly east of Brays Bayou across from the Houston Country Club, was accessible from Forest Hill Boulevard, which began at Harrisburg Boulevard between 72nd and 73rd streets and proceeded directly south through undeveloped land before it crossed Brays Bayou and entered the subdivision. Forest Hill was the first subdivision in Houston to break from the orthogonal grid street pattern, being notable for a curving street pattern that took the form of concentric arcs.

A few large houses were built in Forest Hill, notably the Colonial revival house designed by Dallas architects Lang & Witchell at 1766 Pasadena Avenue of 1911 and the Mission style bungalow designed by W. A. Cooke for his own habitation at 1724 Alta Vista Avenue of 1912. Unfortunately, Forest Hill never fulfilled its backers' expectations. It could not compete with the development along south Main Street that included Rice University and the Shadyside subdivision of 1916. The majority of the existing houses in Forest Hill date from second half of the 1940s, when the large, one-acre properties were reduced in size and redeveloped.

After the collapse of the Forest Hill project, little residential activity took place in the surrounding area. To the north, between Harrisburg Boulevard and Buffalo Bayou were the Magnolia Park Addition of 1909 and the Central Park Addition of 1912. Here a large number of modest dwellings intended for Houston Ship Channel workers were built in the 1910s and 1920s.

Large-scale residential construction did not resume south of Harrisburg Boulevard until 1928, when the Kansas City architecture firm Hare & Hare designed Idylwood subdivision, which was developed by John A. Embry directly south of the Houston Country Club. Idylwood, with its streets sensitively responding to the undulating topography of Brays Bayou on its eastern border, was designed for middle-class professionals who managed the industrial operations of the Ship Channel. It was a relatively large development of 319 houses. However, the Depression hindered construction. Most of Idylwood's houses date from the late 1930s through the 1940s. Early advertising brochures described Idylwood as "Houston's East End Residential Park."

The multiple entrances to the subdivision along South Wayside Drive are marked with rustic stone walls, thus setting it off from the surrounding neighborhoods. Several notable early modern houses were built in Idylwood. The Lawler House of 1937 designed by Swenson, Heidbreder & Bush at 6653 Wildwood Street was made of Vibrex Tile, a material that was described in the

Map by Ben Knoll

A map of the Wayside Corridor section of the East End. What was once the Houston Country Club is now the Gus Wortham Golf Course.

All photos this page by G. Lynn Photography

Houston Post on April 11, 1937, when the house was opened to the public, as "absolutely waterproof, completely fireproof, lightweight, exceedingly strong, varied textures adaptable to architectural detail and unlimited colors.... This type of home is not to be confused with the concrete block type of construction." The Lroy House of 1940 designed by Harry A. Turner at 6748 Meadowlawn Street was a two-story Moderne extravaganza. The interiors still possess a wonderful mural painted on plaster of magnolia blossoms and a fallout shelter installed in the 1960s.

At about the time that the Forest Hill subdivision was still seen as a good idea, Colonel Edward F. Simms, a Kentuckian who made his fortune in the oil fields of Texas and Louisiana, settled in Houston. Sometime after 1910 he purchased several tracts of land adjacent to the west side of the Houston Country Club along what would become South Wayside Drive. According to Marguerite Johnston, author of *Houston, The Unknown City 1836-1946*, "...he built a mansion with a library, living room, dining room, and a breakfast room, on the first floor, a maid's room off the kitchen, a wine cellar and furnace in the basement, and seven bedrooms and five bathrooms on the upper floors, as well as a big upstairs sleeping porch. He built gardens, stables, greenhouse, reflecting pools, lakes and one of Houston's first swimming pools—a big one set some distance from the house. The estate required eight gardeners and five house servants to maintain. He called it Wayside."

Simms' stucco-clad main house at 900 South Wayside Drive was accessible by a winding gravel drive. Fire insurance company maps, which were last updated in 1969, showed several additional smaller houses, an extensive collection of outbuildings, and an irregularly shaped concrete swimming pool that was designed to look like a pond.

Simms's stepdaughter Bessie married architect Kenneth Franzheim, whose office designed many of the important commercial buildings in Houston from the 1930s through the 1950s. During the years that the Franzheims were in residence at Wayside it was often the scene of prominent social gatherings. In March 1949, for example, during the American Institute of Architects' national convention in Houston, Bessie entertained a delegation of the wives of architects from Cuba and Mexico at the house. At its peak from the 1920s through the 1940s, the Simms estate was one of the largest, most elaborate residential compounds in Houston. Over the years, though, the family sold parcels of the estate, notably the southern sections along Lawndale Avenue, which became the Houston Country Club Place subdivision and the Simms Woods subdivision.

The Houston Country Club Place subdivision was begun in 1941 by developer C.E. King. The 49 acres King purchased from the Simms heirs at the corner of Lawndale Avenue and Wayside Drive constituted about half the Simms parcel. The street plan comprised long, gently curving east-west oriented blocks reminiscent of such earlier Houston subdivisions as Garden Oaks. The main entrance to Houston Country Club Place was at Villa de Matel Road and Lawndale Avenue. It was marked by two matching, monumental, red-brick gate piers. The two houses on either side used the same brick veneer, and together with the gates made an unusually impressive architectural statement for a modest subdivision. The western gate collapsed in 1999 when a water main under it burst. The second gate was also in danger of collapse, but due to the efforts of the Houston Country Club Place Civic Club it was stabilized and repaired in 2005. Development in Houston Country Club Place was delayed due to the outbreak of World War II, and most of the houses there date to the immediate postwar years.

The small, 20-acre, 47-house Simms Woods subdivision was developed in 1946 by R.S. Collins, president of the Texestate Corporation. Its streets connect directly with those of the adjacent Houston Country Club Place, and most visitors fail to realize they are two separate developments. Simms Woods would be an unremarkable postwar subdivision were it not for several architect-designed houses built along Brookside Drive. William N. Floyd designed some of the earliest houses of his career in Simms Woods. The brick veneer Sharp House at 6327 Brookside Drive is one of his, and was one of the first six houses to be built

All photos this page by E. Lynn Pennington

in the subdivision. Floyd would later make a name for himself as the Houston equivalent of progressive California developer Joseph Eichler for his involvement in several Memorial area subdivisions from the mid-1950s that had large concentrations of modern and contemporary houses.

Another architect-designed house in Simms Woods is the Miller House of 1951 at 6315 Brookside Drive, the creation of Phillip G. Willard and Lucian T. Hood Jr. Willard was one of the most prolific contemporary architects in Houston in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He associated himself during his Houston years with Hood, a 1952 graduate of the University of Houston architecture program. According to an article in the *Houston Chronicle* from the time, Willard and Hood's "distinctive" Miller House was "planned to be built entirely of masonry materials throughout its structural frame, employing the use of cavity walls, tile partitions and joistile ceiling and roof structure. The cavity wall is of 4-inch face brick and 4-inch tile, with two inches of air space in the center. The roof is insulated with rigid fiberglass insulation board before the finished roofing is applied. The design employs large plate glass openings, one-way pitched ceilings, cove lighting and the latest in electrical appliances and air conditioning."

The third architect associated with Simms Woods was Allen R. Williams Jr., who designed the Minella House (see sidebar, page 28).

Simms Woods and Houston Country Club Place were also unusual in that they quickly became a close knit Italian-American ethnic enclave. About 60 of the 156 houses in Houston County Club Place were owned by descendents of Italian immigrants, and many of these families built large houses on corner double lots in both subdivisions, dubbed "Italian houses" by local residents.

In 1922, Forest Park Cemetery was created on 49 acres of land carved out of the moribund Forest Hill subdivision along Brays Bayou. Between 1930 and 1950 it was expanded to the south across Lawndale Avenue and today comprises 350 acres with 127,000 burials. Its designer was probably Hare & Hare. Sid J. Hare, who began the firm in 1910 and was joined in partnership with his son S. Herbert Hare, was a noted expert on cemetery design and had served as the superintendent of Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City from 1896 to 1902.

In the East End's Forest Park Cemetery one of the more notable buildings is the neo-Gothic, limestone-clad, reinforced-concrete framed Abbey Mausoleum, built in 1928. The wings to the north and south of it are later unsympathetic additions. The contemporary Funeral Home in the new section of the cemetery was built in 1963. Notable Houstonians buried at Forest Park Cemetery include Neils and Mellie Esperson, Jesse H. Jones, and axe-murderer Carla Fay Tucker.

In 1927 the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word moved from Galveston, where they had been located since 1867, to 70 acres of forested land south of Lawndale Avenue and east of South Wayside Drive. Maurice J. Sullivan was commissioned to design the order's new motherhouse, novitiate, administrative buildings and chapel at 6510 Lawndale Avenue. According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the conventual chapel "is the grandest church

continued on page 30

Above Top Left: Radetzki House in Forest Hill (Long and Mitchell, 1911).
Above Bottom Left: Cooke House in Forest Hill (W.A. Cooke, 1912).
Above: Ville de Marie Conventual Chapel (Maurice J. Sullivan, 1927).

East End Modern

Two years ago, I bought a house in the East End. It had been built for Angelo and Lillian Minella, Italian-Americans from Massachusetts who came to Texas in the 1940s. The Minellas, who owned and operated an East End plumbing supply company for decades, moved into their house in 1950, and they lived in it until they died, first Angelo in 1982 and then Lillian in 1991. In the years following it was rented out to various tenants, but by the time I saw it in 2004 it was relatively unchanged from its original state.

The happy fate of the Minella House represents a story that occurs much too rarely in Houston, a city often characterized by merciless economic speculation. The Minellas themselves altered little during their time in the house, and while some changes were made during the period it was rented out—a fire in the closets separating two bedrooms ruined the finish of the wood parquet, which was replaced with beige vinyl composition tile, and air conditioners were added by cutting into windows of two bedrooms and the living-dining room as well as cutting into a wall of the sun porch—they were minor. The result is that more than 50 years after its construction the Minella House remained a significant example of modern residential architecture as it evolved in mid-20th-century Houston.

The Minella House is significant in part because of its contemporary design by Houston architect Allen R. Williams Jr., and in part because of its unusual all masonry construction. It is what was known as a Century Built Home, a representative of a an intriguing, if ultimately futile, effort on the part of a group of progressive modern architects and builders to reform American residential construction in the years immediately following World War II. Industrial mobilization for the war effort had led to such impressive results that there was, in the postwar years, a sense that similar results could be achieved on the domestic front.

In Houston, the local newspapers presented a number of proposals by Houston architects and businessmen hoping to develop new residential construction techniques. These postwar architects took a pragmatic approach that stood in contrast to the hard-line stance of prominent prewar modern architects. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House project of 1928, for example, a circular metal house suspended off the ground on a large hollow mast that contained a utility core, was such a ruthlessly logical application of technology that its final result was alien and unacceptable to the general population. In comparison, the more conservative architectural design of the Century Built Home revealed a realistic attempt to accommodate American middle-class desires, albeit with an improved and unconventional product.

Many Houston architects were involved in schemes predicated on the use of load-bearing masonry walls for residential construction. The most commonly cited reason for the use of masonry systems was that they were fireproof. Other positive characteristics were masonry's permanence, durability, and ability to deter rats and termites. For modern architects, drilled in the necessity of honesty of materials, the fact that masonry could be left exposed or simply painted rather than requiring a second layer of cladding was another reason for its appeal.

Phillip G. Willard and Lucian T. Hood, who built a number of contemporary houses between 1945 and 1952, seem to have been the most prolific of the masonry inspired architects. Anthony Luciano, a native of Italy who "did advanced study in concrete in Naples," also designed several projects using a variety of masonry schemes in the early 1950s. Dunaway & Jones designed a house in MacGregor Terrace using a "cellular concrete" system in 1950. Thomas E. Greacen II designed the Tucker House at Post Oak Lane and Lone Star Drive of 1952 that used a "chemical process in the concrete [that] creates bubbles and produces lightweight material with insulating quality." And Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson designed the Emerson House of 1955 with walls made of three-inch-thick Styrofoam planks sprayed on each side with one inch of concrete.

Given that the systems receiving the most coverage in the architectural press were based on lightweight steel frames, the best example of which was

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Floor Plans by Ben Koush

Opposite Page: Minella House in Simms Woods (Allen R. Williams, 1950).
Above: Living room.
Left: Floor plan, following renovation.
Below Right: The Minella House under construction in 1950.

the iconic Eames House of 1949 in Los Angeles, this group of Houston modern architects interest in masonry building systems seemed to be unusual. The Eames House, with its web of thin steel members, presented nearly the opposite appearance of this group of substantial, low-set Houston houses.

These Houston architects were also notable for their concerns with climatic adaptation in design. Many of their projects included references to proper cardinal orientation for the Houston region and provisions for such things as sun shading and cross ventilation. The most publicized Houston modern architects of the time were those working in the patrician Mieisan mode, and producing buildings where formal design was in the foreground, sometimes as the expense of construction and climatic considerations. This suggests that the all but forgotten group of architects who used masonry systems were trying to create a regional modern architecture for Houston, one that focused on durable construction methods and designs that took into account the unique geographical characteristics of the upper Gulf Coast, while treating formal and stylistic concerns as secondary.

Among those architects was Allen R. Williams Jr., the designer of the Minella House. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Williams devised a scheme for standardized all masonry houses that he termed the Century Built Home. His other work seems to have been more conventional. In 1951 he designed about 15 houses in the Lamar Weslayan subdivision for developer W. E. Keep. These relatively costly $25,000 houses were described in the November 25, 1951, *Houston Chronicle* as "bungalow-type homes with many ranch features" and were the result of "scientific planning from floor layout to exterior designs." The other building with which he was associated was his own house of 1958 at 4603 Ivanhoe Street. This expansive two-story house was clad with light brown brick veneer and wood board and batten siding. Its most arresting features are its large sloping roof covered with brown pressed aluminum shingles that descended to within a few feet of the ground at the entry and its tall, lozenge-shaped brick chimney. Williams' house is an idiosyncratic yet compelling mixture of the conventional 1950s ranch house, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Spanish influenced architecture of the American southwest.

How Williams devised the scheme for the Century Built Home is unknown. In fact, not a great deal is known about Allen R. Williams Jr. He seems to have shunned publicity. But according to his wife, Thesalone Williams, he was graduated from the school of architecture at the University of Texas and came to Houston in 1946. He became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1948, and from 1949 to 1952 appears to have worked and lived on South Shepherd Drive. In 1953 he was listed as a partner in Williams & Reed with Mack G. Reed, a Rice Institute graduate. This partnership lasted until 1954, after which Williams worked alone for the remainder of his career. According to Mrs. Williams, her husband worked with Houston architects such as Cameron Fairchild and Staub, Rather & Howze, as well as for subdivision developers such as Roy Harris, for whom he designed "hundreds" of houses in the Ripple Creek subdivision, Tynewood subdivision, and others. He died in 1978.

In the Century Built Home he left behind an intriguing legacy. The premise of the Century Built Home was the use of a 12-inch by 8-inch by 5-inch lightweight hollow concrete wall tile set on a 4-inch thick reinforced concrete slab foundation with a continuous 2-foot 2-inch by 10-inch grade beam and 12-inch diameter bell bottom drilled piers 8 feet on center for walls and a system of 2-foot wide by 2-inch thick lightweight reinforced concrete slabs for the roof with 6-inch thick concrete filler tiles held in place by heavy gauge steel channels. Exterior walls were painted. Vertical joints were flush and horizontal joints raked to create a horizontal linear emphasis. Interior walls and ceiling were covered with a 1-inch layer of cement plaster. The built up roof covered with coal tar and light colored gravel was set over a 1-inch fiberglass insulating board on top of the concrete structure. Windows were standard metal casements. Doors and casings were standard sizes and made of wood. The flooring was a combination of oak veneer tongue and groove parquet in the living and sleeping areas, asphalt tile in the kitchen, and thin set hexagonal glazed ceramic tile in the bathrooms. The wood veneer parquet and asphalt tile were directly attached to the concrete slab with black mastic. Electrical wiring was run through metal conduit embedded in the center of the walls. The house had central heat, but was not air-conditioned. It did have an attic fan at the end of the corridor nearest the bedrooms.

Other Century Built Homes included the Pickens House of 1949 or 1950 at 851 West 43rd Street in Garden Oaks and the Carl Stallworth House of 1951 at 6648 Merry Lane in Idylwood in 1951. According to Stallworth, who still lives in the house, there was a fourth Century Built Home off Campbell Road north of Old Katy Road. This house is no longer extant and its exact address is unknown. A fifth Century Built Home was the Sarf House of 1950, planned for the corner of Tangley and Rutgers streets in West University but apparently never built.

The Century Built Homes were variations on a standard design, of which the Minella House seemed to be the most fully resolved. The plan of the Minella House had a living-dining room at the front of the house facing north. Along its east side was a sun porch. To the west was the kitchen, with it own exterior door and stoop. A corridor beginning at the rear of the living-dining room led to a bathroom, two small bedrooms, and a master bedroom with its own bathroom. The plan of the Sarf House and the Stallworth House were both very similar to that of the Minella House.

All of the Century Built Homes had large, Roman-brick clad front chimneys with built-in planter boxes and Roman-brick cladding on the interior around the fireplace. The living-dining area was covered with a tall shed roof, while the kitchen, sleeping areas, and bathrooms had a lower flat roof. All the houses had metal casement windows, and none had central air-conditioning. The cost of the Century Built Homes appears to have been moderate. The approximate construction cost of the Sarf House was listed at $11,000; at the time, an equivalent wood-frame house in Oak Forest, Houston's largest early postwar subdivision, was selling for about $9,000. Although the design of the Century Built Home was modern, both the Minellas and the Stallworths furnished their house with conventional furniture and interior decorations. This suggested that the masonry construction of the house was its most appealing feature to them, not its architectural design.

Nonetheless, Century Built Homes such as the Minella House are an important example of a development of modern architecture in Houston. They are a reminder of a time when a group of architects were bold enough to attempt to reform conventional suburban building practices, and to infuse even the most modest houses with a sense of place and permanence. As such, they should be a model for future architecture in the city. — *Ben Koush*

All photos this page by G. Lynn Photography

continued from page 27

built in Houston during the 1920s. It is detailed with neo-Byzantine décor. Sullivan employed exposed aggregate concrete mosaic for the wall surfaces and Guastavino tile vaults for the chapel's ceiling. Numerous varieties of polished and colored marbles are used. Sullivan designed the stained glass windows, which were fabricated in Munich." These buildings, known as the Villa de Matel, remain in good condition today.

Another staple of the area, the giant Hughes Tool Company, was founded in 1909 by ex-Spindletop well drillers Howard R. Hughes and Walter B. Sharp. In 1917, Hughes bought out his partner and relocated to the East End. Shortly thereafter the company entered a period of great expansion. Eventually the Hughes Tool Company's industrial complex in the East End encompassed the land between Polk Avenue, Hughes Street, the Evergreen Cemetery, and Capitol Avenue. Its entrance was at 300 Hughes near Slaughterpen Bayou.

Several notable parts of the complex remain, among them the former International Derrick and Equipment of Texas Company building of 1930 and 1944-45 at 5425 Polk. This polychrome exercise in Moderne architecture was rehabilitated by the City of Houston for city government offices.

Due to increased production at the Hughes Tool Company during World War II, William G. Farrington built the Lawndale Village Apartments in 1944 on Lawndale Avenue at the southeast corner of Forest Hill. Because steel was unavailable, the foundations of these two-story garden apartments were made of extra-thick concrete with no reinforcement. The exterior walls were made of unglazed cream and glazed yellow ceramic tiles. The interior walls were also made of ceramic tiles covered in plaster. They are a good example of the high quality of site planning, architectural design, and construction of multi-family residential projects during this era.

Howard R. Hughes Jr., who inherited ownership of the company at his father's death in 1924 and was well known for eccentric schemes, began an interesting side business in 1933 at the behest of R. C. Kuldell, the president of Hughes Tool. That side business was the Gulf Brewing Company. The brewing plant located at 5301-3 Polk Avenue produced Grand Prize beer until 1963. Belgian born brewmeister Franz H. Brogniez, vice president in charge of production at Gulf Brewing and father of noted Houston architect Raymond H. Brogniez, designed the layout for a large warehouse and bottling plant in 1946, from which architectural drawings were prepared by Lloyd & Morgan.

The new plant, capable of handling 660,000 bottles a day, was described in the *Houston Post* as a "model of the newest and most efficient brewing and bottling operations." The building, clad in corrugated asbestos panels and brick veneer, was located in the northeast sector of the complex facing Capitol Avenue. Today it is only partially used and in a state of advanced disrepair.

In 1987 Hughes Tool Company merged with Baker International to become Baker Hughes, the third-largest well services company in the world after Halliburton and Schlumberger. Baker Hughes has since reconfigured part of the original Hughes Tool complex as the Central City Industrial Park and now leases their old buildings to a variety of small industrial manufacturing concerns.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s there was substantial commercial development on the blocks around the intersection of South Wayside Drive and Harrisburg Boulevard between the working class subdivisions to the north and the middle-class subdivisions to the south. Sears & Roebuck hired Kenneth Franzheim to design a new store and auto service station on the block bounded by Harrisburg Boulevard, South Wayside Drive, Capitol Avenue, and 69th Street. Completed in 1947, the building shared many traits with Franzheim's better known buildings from late 1940 through the 1950s such as the Foley's department store of 1947 at 1100 Main Street, the Prudential Building at 1100 Holcombe Boulevard of 1952, the San Jacinto Building of 1952 (formerly at 822 Main Street), and the Bank of the Southwest Building of 1956 at 910 Travis.

While the formal design of these buildings was retardataire, they were remarkable for the way that Franzheim and his designers ingeniously accommodated complex programs using the

Top Right: The former Wayside Sears Building (Kenneth Franzheim, 1947).
Bottom Right: The former Industrial State Bank (MacKie & Kamrath, 1949).
Opposite Page, Top Left: Lawler House in Idylwood (Swenson, Heidbreder & Bush, 1937).
Opposite Page, Bottom Left: Miller House in Simms Woods (Phillip G. Willard and Lucien T. Hood, 1951).
Opposite Page, Top Right: The Weisenthal Clinic (George Pierce–Abel B. Pierce, 1949).
Opposite Page, Bottom Right: The Bettis Corporation Building in Supply Row, 1948.

Photo from *Shopping Centers, Design and Operation*, 1951. Courtesy Ben Koush

Photo by Dorsey & Peters

latest technology and exceptional tectonic detailing. Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Furnaro described the parking system for the Wayside Drive Sears building in their 1951 book *Shopping Centers, Design and Operation* as having, "a controller high up on the store to oversee the whole parking area. When one-way aisles (with 60° stalls) are as long as this, it becomes exceedingly difficult for the arriving motorist to see from one end if there is an empty stall. So at the entrance of each aisle is a traffic light managed by the controller. As long as there is a single empty stall in the aisle the light at its end will show a green arrow. When the aisle is full the controller will switch that light to red. Were it not for this control it would scarcely be feasible to economize in space by emptying the aisles directly on to a public street, instead of having a service road with the site." The building is no longer extant.

In 1949, when the Industrial State Bank by MacKie & Kamrath at 6756 Capitol Avenue opened diagonally across the street from the Wayside Sears store, the *Houston Post* noted that it was "said to be one of the most modern banking buildings in the United States." The steel-framed, brick-clad building was distinguished by its drive-in banking windows facing the parking lot. Those windows were protected by a five-foot cantilevered concrete overhang. Inside there was a saw-tooth arrangement of teller cages to simplify standing in line. Today the bank has been altered almost beyond recognition.

At 200 North Wayside Drive, two blocks past the Wayside Sears, George Pierce-Abel B. Pierce designed the Weisenthal Clinic of 1949. The front wall and planting box of this charming building was made of Arizona pink ledge stone veneer, while the side and rear walls were clad in corrugated asbestos panels. It appears to be in relatively good condition today, except for the incongruous faux stained-glass front door and scalloped shingles in some of the window openings.

An early office park prototype development with 17 properties, Supply Row Center, was laid out by the Texestate Corporation along Supply Row at about the same time that Simms Woods was being developed. It was located between Polk Avenue, South Wayside Drive, Capitol Avenue, and Hughes Street—close, but not directly accessible, to the Hughes Tool Company complex. Today it contains a collection of substantial modernist commercial buildings in various states of repair housing a variety of small businesses. A good example is the Bettis Corporation Building of 1948 at 320 South 66th Street. Perhaps the most architecturally significant building in Supply Row Center, though, was the Kay Manufacturing Building at 440 South 66th Street of 1953, built for a manufacturer of steel mattress springs. Its architect is unknown, but according to *Houston* magazine, "The big factory building is the first completely pre-cast concrete building in the entire Southwest to utilize prestressed members ... the entire structure of 64,000 square feet costing approximately $750,000 was erected in about a week's time." The Kay Manufacturing building also featured one of the earliest installations in Houston of tilt-up concrete wall panels.

At 960 South Wayside, below Harrisburg Boulevard and between the Simms estate and Houston Country Club Place, Lloyd & Morgan designed the Parker Memorial Methodist Church of 1949. Of this $400,000 church, William Ward Watkin said in his 1951 book *Planning and Building the Modern Church* that, "It seems to have all the simpleness of form that was characteristic of the Colonial types, yet it is definitely a modern design." Over the years the congregation shrank, and the building was finally abandoned in 1984. It was later sold to the Houston Independent School District, which demolished it to make way for the postmodern Edna M. Carillo Elementary School of 1993.

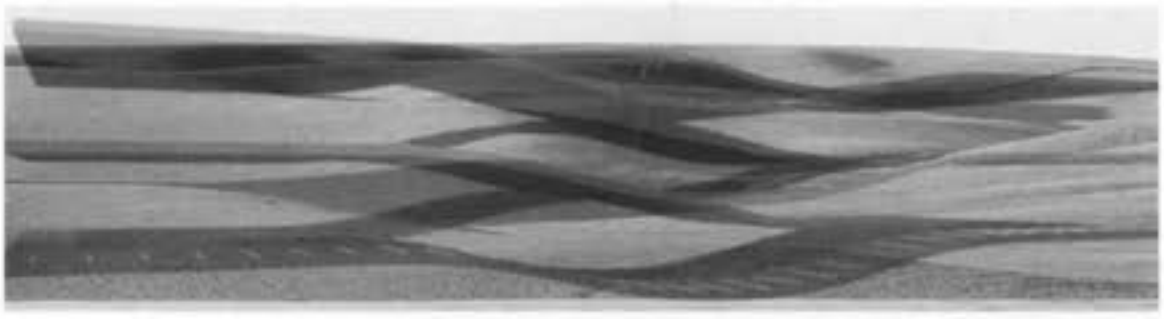
In 1955 an unknown architect designed the shopping center at 6525 Lawndale Avenue that contains the Dinner Bell Cafeteria (a picture of which can be seen at the beginning of this story). A true East End establishment, it has been in continuous operation for over 50 years. The design of this restaurant and adjacent shops is quite sophisticated. The end closest to Lawndale, with its pink brick veneer laid in a stack bond with integrated planters and narrow clerestory windows under a large overhang with a raked fascia, gives an idea of how the entire center must have originally looked. The interiors of the Dinner Bell are a trip, and the food is not bad either.

In the 1960s and 1970s the area entered a period of decline, and several large apartment complexes were built on land purchased from the former Simms estate north of Houston Country Club Place. The Royal Wayside Apartments of 1963 at 1010 South Wayside Drive and the Lawndale Gardens Apartments of 1975 at 910 Fairoaks Drive are a series of two-story, brick-veneer tenement barracks. When they're compared to William G. Farrington's tree-shaded Lawndale Village Apartments of 1944, it is apparent how much architectural design sensitivity was lost over the three decades that separate them.

One positive event that occurred in the area during the 1970s was the cancellation of the ill-conceived Harrisburg Freeway. In 1969 the Texas Transportation Commission accepted the Houston City Planning Commission's 1960 proposal for a new freeway to connect the La Port Freeway to the Central Business District Loop—U.S. 59. Community activist Richard Holgin led a seemingly quixotic fight against the city and the Texas Department of Transportation to stop a freeway that promised to decimate the low-income Hispanic neighborhoods along the Harrisburg corridor. In 1976 the Harrisburg Freeway was officially suspended, and in 1992 it was at last deleted from the City of Houston's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan. Thus the East End was spared the disastrous effects of freeway construction that decimated the Second Ward and First Ward. Today, Harrisburg Boulevard retains many of its old buildings, and is an active, if in some places shabby, commercial corridor.

In a city where developers are the ultimate arbiters of taste, the Wayside corridor has benefited doubly. Not only was the planning of its developments superior, but it supported a collection of distinguished examples of conventional and modern architectural design that was almost unparalleled in Houston. Other parts of the city could do worse than learn from its example. ■

Unpaving the City Surface



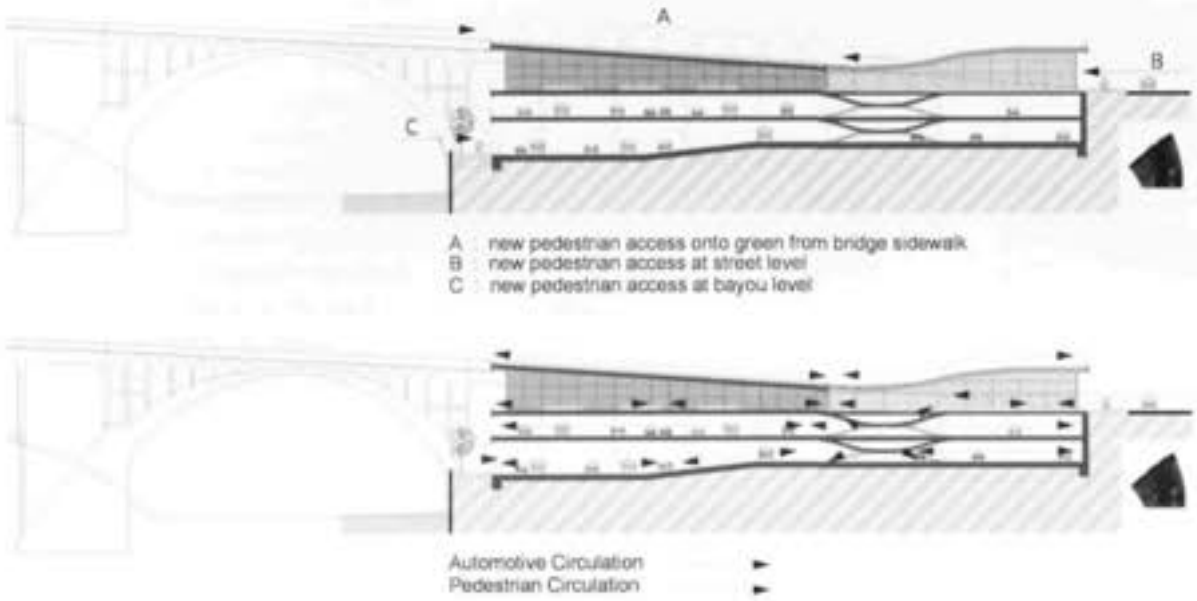
A study suggests that in many places, parking could give way to parks

Drawings, sections, and maps courtesy Marc

BY MARCUS FARR

Discovery Green, the new 13-plus acre downtown park being built in front of the George R. Brown Convention Center, has generated considerable attention in both the press and among the public in recent months. Much of that attention has had to do with the park's prominent location, and in the unusually large—for Houston, at least—amount of money raised for its construction. But the park might well deserve attention for another reason: It could be a model for similar parks throughout downtown, helping turn an urban center notable for its lack of public green space into something more attractively lush.

That model hinges on what was actually a late addition to the project, an underground garage that replaces the parking spaces lost to Discovery Green itself. Since it's unlikely that Houston is going to abandon the car anytime soon, regardless of how well light rail or other mass transit might do, striking an accommodation between park land and parking spaces is a necessity if downtown is to expand its public green space, and especially if it's going to expand as Discovery Green did, by taking over acreage now devoted to the existing surface lots that dot Houston's urban center.



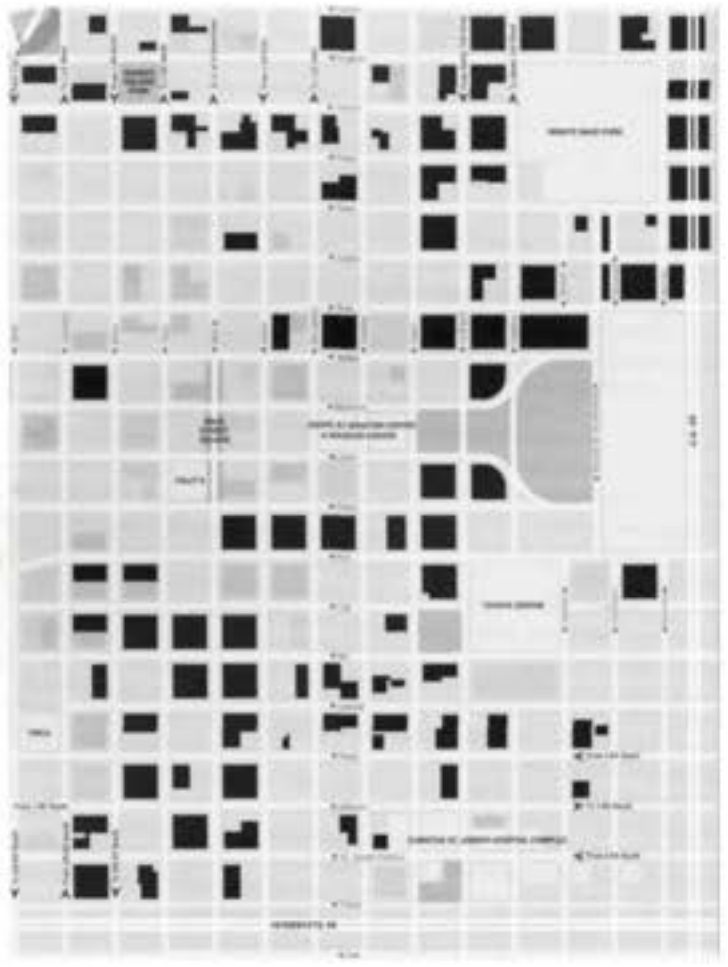
Opposite Page: Graphics from *Houston (Green) Space City* showing how a paved form, top, can be transformed into a green surface, bottom.
Left: Sections of a suggested park over a parking lot next to the University of Houston Downtown, from the *Houston (Green) Space City* project.
Bottom Right: A map of downtown Houston, showing location of existing parking lots and parking structures (areas in black), and the parks possibilities they offer.

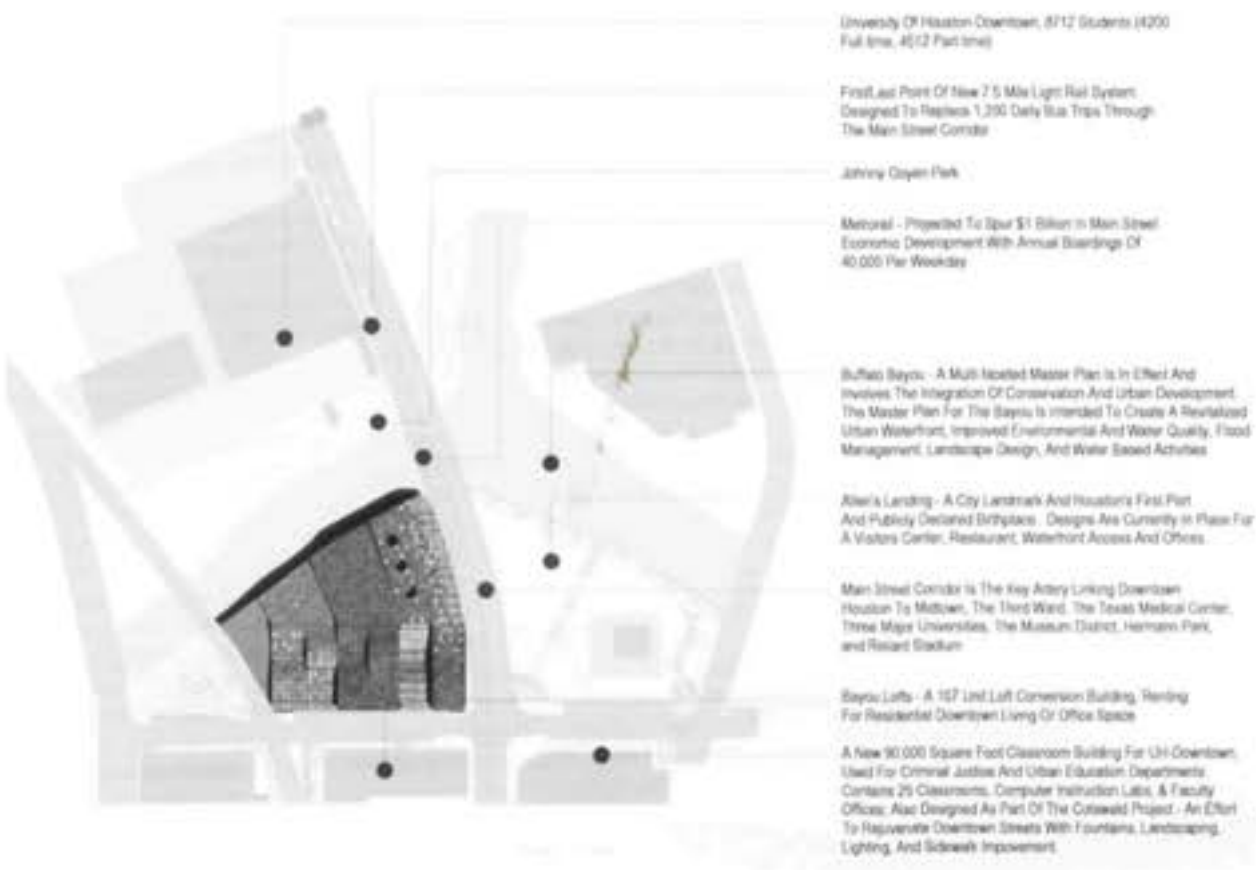
This idea is something I began looking into for a 2004 Initiatives for Houston Project titled *Houston: (Green) Space City*. The project, funded by the Rice Design Alliance, is an architectural design and accompanying research document studying the places downtown where "Park/parking" design can be introduced as a catalyst for the betterment of the city and our interaction with it. The study suggests that there are a number of current parking structures and surface lots that could be made into effective urban parks. Using landscape urbanism, architectural renovation, and environmental installation, a hybrid condition can be established where the widespread formation of paved parking lots can be successfully blurred with the public and pedestrian realm. This union has the potential to transform city spaces deadened by the automobile into vibrant, thriving promenades and public domains.

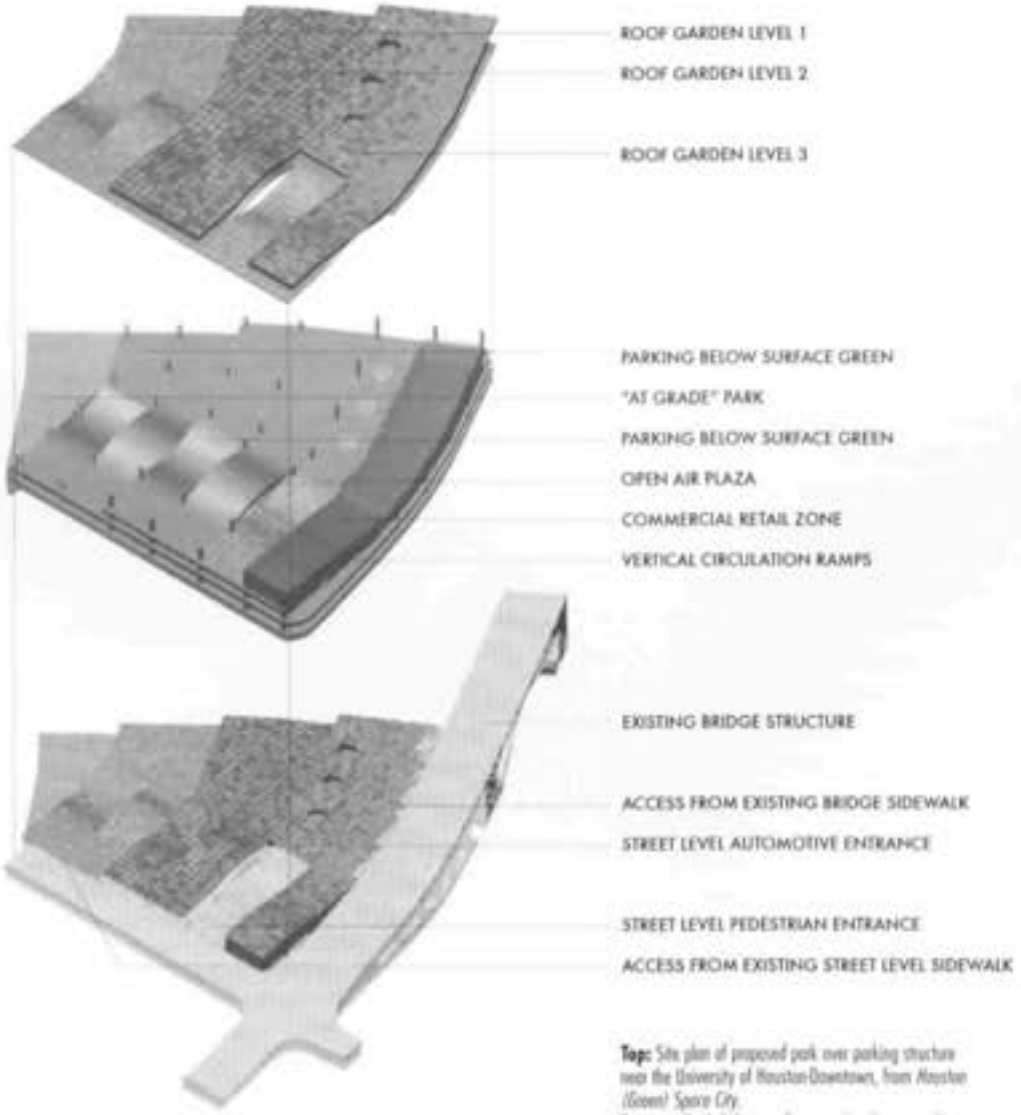
Of course, placing parks or other public gathering spots over parking garages is hardly new. Jones Plaza and Tranquillity Park have already done that in Houston, with mixed success. But in other cities we have begun to see an emerging symbiotic relationship between urban parks, parking garages, and the automobile. In Dallas, The Office of James Burnett is designing an urban park over the Woodall Rogers Freeway that will link the city's expanding arts district. Grant Park and Millennium Park in Chicago, Mellon Park in Pittsburgh, the Boston Common, and Market Square in Alexandria, Virginia, all have successful "garage beneath urban park" situations.

One of the most successful case studies is Post Office Square, where the largest parking garage in Boston exists beneath 1.7 acres of accessible and well-used downtown green space. This is a particularly interesting case study, given that prior to the construction of Post Office Square the site contained only a dingy five-story garage structure, one that was avoided by pedestrians and contributed to an area void of outdoor activity, even though it was in the heart of the financial district.

Houston is at a point where a study of downtown parking lots with the potential for rebirth as urban green spaces needs to be done. It would be an informational tool that could help inform the revitalization now underway. In American cities, urban infrastructure and useable pedestrian green spaces typically exist as separate entities. Conventionally,







Top: Site plan of proposed park over parking structure near the University of Houston-Downtown, from *Houston (Green) Space City*.
Bottom: Exploded view of proposed park over parking structure.

these systems are not designed in unison but rather as separate typologies with different functions. It's a strategy that seemed to make sense when using a traditional mindset that had each entity being designed at different times in a city's life, but it's an unfortunate strategy when faced with rapid urban growth.

It would be better to move past a conventional, utilitarian strategy and look at both infrastructure and green space in a way that could integrate Houston's aesthetic and functional needs. We need to view our city in a way that empowers new social uses and allows for emergent architectural forms that can heal and engage the urban fabric.

Houston is no different than most American cities undergoing urban revitalization. What we experience in our day-to-day lives consists of urban fields where several infrastructural systems come together. Our experiences are very much a part of the residual space left in the wake of these collisions, often in the form of large expanses of concrete that create heat sinks and deny aesthetic beauty. The relationship between these sprawling lots and the urban landscape offers a window of exploration, and the potential to learn something new about how design can create cohesion in fragmented areas.

In a study a few years back, Sustainlane.com found Houston to be the least sustainable of the nation's 25 largest urban areas. The study gathered data in 12 categories, among them green space, water, air quality, transportation, and recycling. Houston ranked close to last in every aspect. Categories where Houston ranked poorly included parkland per city acre and heat islands—the latter an especially important category for Houston because of the intense heat it experiences for up to half the year. The term heat island refers to urban air and surface temperatures that are higher than nearby rural areas. Many U.S. cities and suburbs have air temperatures up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the surrounding natural landscape. In Houston, the heat island temperatures can reach 149 degrees Fahrenheit. This can be lowered by replacing heat-absorbing surfaces with plants, groundcovers, small trees, and with green roofs—and by reducing the amount of surface parking lots.

While putting together the *Houston: (Green) Space City* study, I attempted to identify locations within the downtown area where infrastructure is contributing to the division of the urban fabric. One place I found a surplus of surface lots was at the northern edge of downtown, around the areas of Main Street, Travis, and Commerce. These lots occupy an area between an urban bayou used for flooding and water runoff, University of Houston-Downtown academic buildings, and the northern downtown business and theater

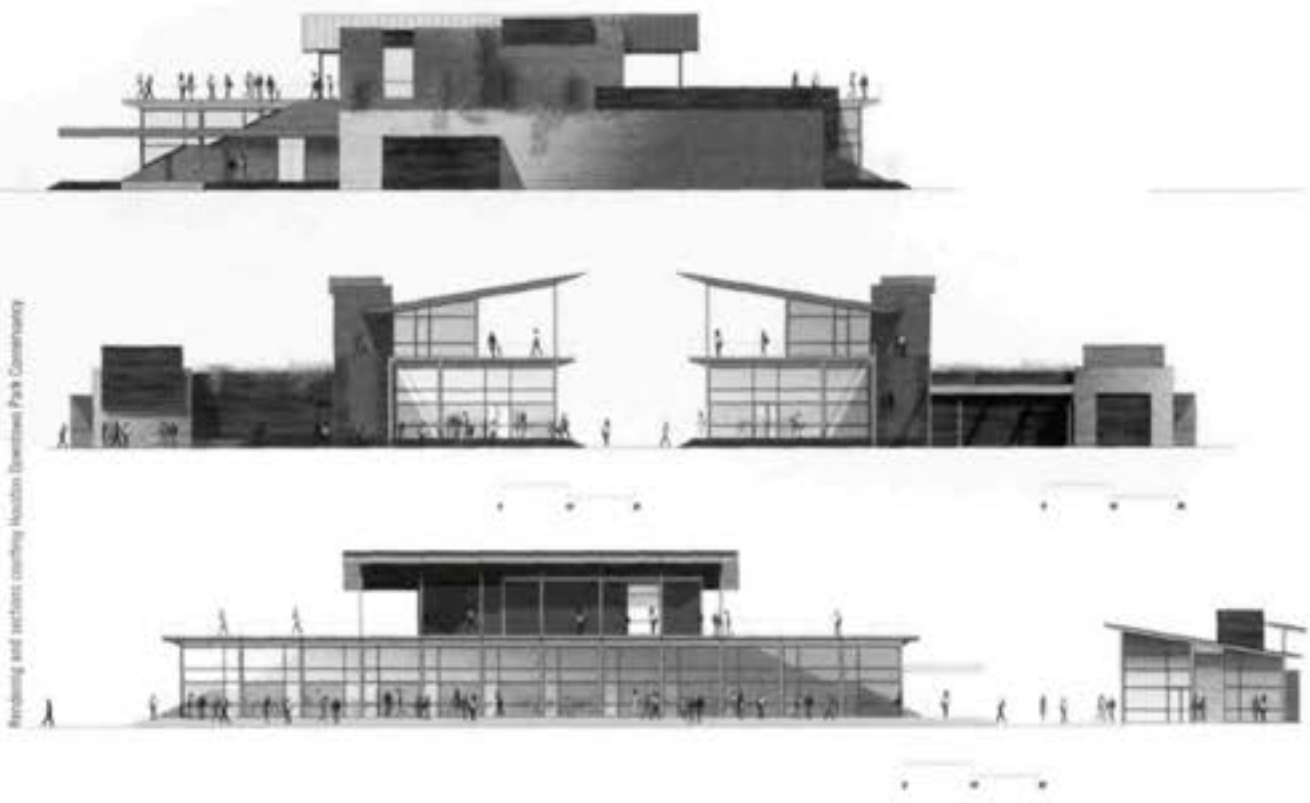
district. These lots are disparate and scattered, and provide little order or lack of cohesion at the pedestrian scale. While these lots are in frequent use by commuters, they remain aesthetically undesirable and ultimately create a poor environment for pedestrians.

In my study I acknowledged the potential of the area, which is kept active day and night by students and professionals. The usage patterns of the area, though, suggest that when moving from point A to point B, people typically skirt the massive void created by the surface parking, walking only along the perimeter sidewalks. The study suggests that if the concrete void were absorbed by a hybrid structure in which the existing parking is moved beneath a open, walkable green that is accessible from all points along the sidewalk, then a healing of the city and the urban public would occur almost immediately.

The design absorbs the surface lot from sidewalk to sidewalk, bayou to bridge, and morphs upward to achieve unison with the Main Street Bridge sidewalk as it moves across the Bayou. This allows for a park that is accessible from any point along its perimeter, even as the existing sidewalk becomes a bridge over the bayou. By absorbing these lots under an anamorphic green space, the site becomes a large-scale urban park engaged and linkable from all pedestrian trajectories. (See illustrations.) The heat island would now be a green island. Besides creating a condition of scale and beauty at the pedestrian level, the green space would contribute to heat island reduction by replacing heat-absorbing surfaces with plants, shrubs, and small trees that cool the air. The urban green would be cooler than a rooftop constructed from traditional heat-absorbing materials.

The hybrid condition of "green" park and "car" park allows for the metropolitan fabric to accommodate the aesthetic needs of the city without sacrificing needed cohesion. *Houston: (Green) Space City* was intended in part to be a suggestion of what could be done in downtown Houston. Discovery Green is, in a much more practical and emphatic way, providing a similar suggestion. As Discovery Green promises to show, going from parking to parks may not be easy, and may not be cheap, but it isn't impossible. The possibilities are clearly there. The question is whether there's the vision, and the will, to make those possibilities into realities. ■

More information about the Houston: (Green) Space City *study can be found at www.marcusfarr.com/index_initiatives.swf.*



Rendering and sections courtesy Houston Downtown Park Conservancy

Top: Side, front, and rear views of formal restaurant planned for Discovery Green.
Right: Rendering of what the view from the restaurant's terrace into the park would be like.

Park Building

Discovery Green has been touted as distinguishing itself from other parks in downtown Houston through its programming, which is designed to keep the area filled with activity that will draw in passers-by. While a good portion of that activity will be generated by the park's water features and landscaping, more than a little will be dependent on the park's built structures, which include two restaurants, one a full-scale, white-table-cloth facility and the other a smaller, casual dining operation, and a park administration building that will contain a conference room along with offices and storage areas.

Indeed, one of the main ideas driving Discovery Green was that it be not just a green space in the city, but a structured environment with substantial built elements. According to Lawrence Speck, a principal in PageSoutherlandPage and the lead designer on the park's buildings, the concept was to "create a highly programmed, well conceived, complementary set of activities, just like you would have in a building."

"It's hard for me to see the actual buildings as separate from the outdoor spaces," Speck adds. "And even the buildings incorporate enormous amounts of outdoor space. There's probably as much built outdoor space in the buildings as there is air-conditioned space. Because we're very interested in this indoor/outdoor connection, we have a lot of glass. We want people to feel like they're in the park, and not in a building separated from the park. So a lot of the design is about dissolving that architectural boundary."

Another element of the design is the creation of strong, perpendicular forms that will draw visitors off the Crawford Promenade, a walkway that will replace the closed section of Crawford Street and act as the new park's spine. Originally there was thought of having the park buildings face the promenade, but it was quickly realized that doing so would focus too much attention on that one element, to the detriment of the rest of the park. As a result, the orientation of the buildings was rotated 90 degrees so that their lines would pull people off the promenade and into the rest of Discovery Green.

Those lines are emphasized through the use of a monopitched roof on each of the buildings. "Our idea was to tie all the buildings together through material and general vocabulary and attitude," says Speck. "And the three buildings really do have quite a similar vocabulary. They're basically made of a sloped roof form that is sloping down on the south side and up on the north side, to let us bring in north light."

Construction elements include a coastal clay brick from Louisiana that is similar to the brick found in many of Houston's earliest buildings. The south sides of the buildings will contain the brick volume, which will be used in a textural fashion with a strong, horizontal line that will emphasize the lines of the roofs.

"One tough thing about doing buildings in a park is that you don't have any backs," Speck notes. "Every side will be visible, so every side has to be able to attract people in. We're really conscious of that, of how the building has to work as part of the greater whole of the park, and not just on its own. It means a real collaboration with the landscape architects and the rest, which is something you don't always have."

If the park is going to succeed, Speck notes, the buildings have to work. And if the buildings are going to work, the park has to succeed. It can be a real challenge, he says, but when it comes together it's worth it. — *Mitchell J. Shields*

Tales of the City

Passages: Explorations of the Contemporary City by Graham Livesey. Published by the University of Calgary Press, 2004. 146 pp., $22.95.

Reviewed by Bruce C. Webb

Like the lady in the singles bar who has heard it all before, by now we should have learned to beware of books that begin with a statement about the "seemingly chaotic and incoherent evolution of contemporary cities" and how recognizable urban spaces have given way to an emerging "new type of urban development."

In *Passages: Explorations of the Contemporary City*, Graham Livesey, director of the architecture program at the University of Calgary, has packaged a kind of seminar in print, drawing on a veritable compendium of quotable sources to meditate on his subject. The essays are loosely related. Livesey first sets out to survey the urban landscape since World War II in essays on space ("the heterotopic dimension") and buildings ("the anomalous condition"). He sides with French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Henri Lefebvre in advocating "difference" as the characteristic of new architecture that can respond to new situations, and of a heterogeneous urban structure that can respond to the diversity of the city's inhabitants. Not surprisingly, his architectural preferences run to Rem Koolhaas, Steven Holl, Bernard Tschumi, and Will Alsop—architects who are "deconstructing the rules, building new reference systems, searching for new architectural typologies, or establishing a choreography of events." But much of what follows about "the production of heterotopic space" reads like headings in an outline, or a series of topic sentences that are waiting to be developed. There is an annoying lack of follow through and specificity: statements such as "Le Corbusier or Frank Gehry strive for ... difference in order to expose or reveal some idea, condition or experience" obligate the author to tell us just what these ideas, conditions, and experiences are.

Of greater value and interest to Livesey, I think, are linguistic expositions on narrative, metaphor, and gesture. Livesey knows this subject well. In the literary view, the city and its buildings are not mere things; rather, they are subjects of literary reflection, active and representative—like the word "passages" in the title, which unites a constructed entity with the action of movement. Links to literary thought, to narrative and metaphor, have animated the work of architects such as Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, and especially John Hejduk. Livesey's essays on the subject would make reasonable primers for getting into this mode of thinking, and I found myself wishing for more development of these themes instead of a stretching for others. A concluding group of essays examine formal "structures": "Points, the Proliferation of Intersections"; "Lines, the Cartographic Ideal"; and "Surfaces, the Role of Memory."

The author has shuffled in a small collection of his own evocative black and white photographs of various city scenes. By printing each photo twice on subsequent pages, once in sharp focus, the other as though it were seen through a fog or scrim, Livesey shows how there are new discoveries to be found in the complexities of mimesis. Similarly, when he wants an illustration of "the city of collective memory," he doesn't present us with scenes of Rome or Paris, but with Italo Calvino's description of the metaphorical city of Zaira: "a city that does not tell its past but contains it like the lines of the hand ... every segment marked with scratches, indentations, scrolls."

Livesey's work isn't entirely new to me: 15 years ago I was an outside reviewer for a thesis paper of his at McGill University. It was titled "Narrative, Ephemerality, and the Architecture of the Contemporary City." I remember being absorbed in the paper's originality, and in its depth and poetic speculations. There, too, the idea of passages appeared ("the architect establishes passages between reality and the imagination ... the permanent and the ephemeral ... secret openings through which to pass into secret corridors") along with the preponderance of literary interpretations ("the royal entry and the modern novel are forms that provide for possible interpretations of the city") and interest in the ideas of Paul Ricoeur ("the necessity for architecture to engage the narratives implicit in the world").

I'm pleased to see that Livesey's interests have remained the same, though I feel some disappointment in the present offering, which is overstuffed with the words of others and leaves too little room for Livesey's own keen observations. But I think he has sketched out enough territory for several future works that I look forward to seeing.

Small Town Values

Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture by Richard Payne, with a forward by Stephen Fox. Published by the Texas State Historical Commission, 2006. 200 pp., $49.95.

Reviewed by Thomas Colbert

Richard Payne's architectural and fine art photography are both well known to Houston's design community. In this volume, Payne brings his passions together to capture not just a moment of Texas history, but also a personal vision of the Texas small town. Unlike *The Galveston That Was*—a book to which *Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture* will surely be compared—Payne's volume of photos is not simply about the town of the past. It is also about the historic town of today, and the sadly evident future of these places, places important to the history of the state and familiar to many Texans. Payne's photos, all black and white and all exquisitely reproduced, were taken over a 12-year period. They document dozens of small Texas towns, exposing the richness and vulnerability of this vein of our state's architectural heritage.

In his preface, Payne writes appreciatively about the railroad-driven building boom of the late 19th century and the architects of that era whose designs defined town squares from Fort Stockton to Anahuac. But his photos are concerned with far more than well-known buildings. Rather than focusing on the most impressive work of trained architects and master craftsmen, Payne chose to look at a broad range of subjects, including streets and squares, leftover and abandoned urban spaces, aging commercial buildings, industrial facilities, and, most poignantly, the shop interiors and shopkeepers behind the façades of the town square. While there are stunning photos of county courthouses, banks, libraries, and public monuments, these are shown together with the street signs, power poles, encroaching weeds, and detritus of ordinary life that encompass them. County courthouses in particular are frequently shown as background to the seldom noticed but ubiquitous back lots and side streets that surround the town squares.

Many of the buildings Payne has photographed are boarded up or have missing windows. Sometimes the storefronts have survived while the stores themselves have been demolished. The streets and squares of many towns are empty, but Payne's pictures of the people who remain reveal vivid individuals whose presence fills the settings in which they are photographed. In his preface, Payne relates a brief story about each person he photographed, letting us know a little about their lives and who among them has passed away since their picture was taken. These stories inform the photos, bringing the portraits to life, just as the people he photographed give life to the environments they inhabit.

Payne is known for the masterful clarity and directness of his photography. As a virtual member of the F64 group, he makes sure that every detail is always in crisp focus. Each image embraces the full tonal range of film and paper. But Payne's modernism is lyrical rather than rigidly formal or symmetrical. Many of the photos in *Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture* achieve a remarkable intimacy, giving the work a deeply personal quality, one that may well come from Payne's childhood in Clarksville, Texas.

In describing his childhood adventures, Payne suggests the origins of his fascination with the subjects he chose and his familiarity with them—Fourth of July parades, courthouses, back alleys, grown-ups at the checkout counter, and the nooks and crannies of places where a boy might roam with a BB gun. In this book, Payne brings his experience as an architect and architectural photographer to bear in creating a contemporary portrait of the Texas town of his childhood. In the process, he reveals a vision of the Texas town and the role that architecture has played and continues to play in the lives of those who live there. Payne does this in a way that conveys the richness and beauty of the towns of Texas—and the tragedy of their continuing decline.

Not Forgotten

Leavin' a Testimony: Portraits from Rural Texas by Patsy Cravens. Published by the University of Texas Press, 2006. 303 pp. $34.95.

Reviewed by Anna Mod

"You're not a photographer. You are an artist with a camera," Patsy Cravens recalls being told by a professional photographer friend. It is this creative approach that comes across again and again in her book *Leavin' a Testimony: Portraits from Rural Texas*, a collection of portraits and stories of Colorado County citizens. At first glance, this book could easily pass as another glamorous coffee table volume. Yet the pages inside reveal stories and photographs of such straightforward honesty they can bring a reader to tears. The tales Cravens has gathered give us insight into the lives of ranchers, farmers, sharecroppers, the local butcher, rodeo stars, artists, a naturalist, cowboys, domestics, blue-collar workers, blacks, whites, and Hispanics. They are both joyful and tragic, and speak of hard work, hard times, the love of God, the land, and family, and the realities of life in a rural county.

The stories are engaging and at times painful. They speak of prison and of backbreaking work in cotton fields. At the same time there exists an undying hope and a proud satisfaction of lives well lived. The foreword by historian John Boles sets the stage for the stories. The importance of the book, notes Boles, is the preservation of stories that are now "a permanent part of our state's history." In his afterword, Bob Patten, Rice University's Lynette S. Autrey Professor in Humanities, weaves the words "black" and "white" through the 19th-century history of photography, engraving, and etching, then interlaces the two words into the 20th-century human condition: "Nuancing the binaries of race, these pictures tell us about colorful lives—lives of hardship and humor, field work and singing, flirting and families, religion and lynching."

Patsy Cravens has been visiting Colorado County, located a short distance west of Houston, since the 1950s, when her parents bought a farm near Weimar. The book project started innocently enough some 20 years ago when she visited neighbor Ivory Steward armed with a camera and a tape recorder. Steward, nicknamed "Pie" (his older brother's nickname was "Sweetie," so "Pie" seemed only natural), provided the initiation that led Cravens to record the stories of more than 100 of the county's citizens. Some of the portraits and stories she collected were shown in the traveling exhibition *Colorado County Memories: Everybody Has a Story to Tell*. Others were recorded for the 1995 oral-history documentary *Coming Through Hard Times*.

The book is a continuation of the exhibition and video. A black and white photograph of the narrator in his or her element—on the porch, near the river, with horses, in the butcher shop—accompanies each story. Cravens gives everyone his or her own voice, using their original words, dialect left intact. The result is fun, straightforward, and never condescending. "We knowed as soon as we seen you, you'd wanta take our pictur," remarked the dashing sisters Ethel and Hattie Lee Wilson. We meet Charles Trefny, who grew up around the Colorado River and knows all of its sandbanks, submerged tree trunks, and the changes to the river brought by upriver dams. And there is Eva Mae Glover, who speaks of the lynching of two black boys, wrongfully accused of rape in 1935, one of the county's darker secrets. Pearl Ray Bremby tells a story of being ignored by a white sales clerk. After feeling the burn of racism, she offers this wisdom: "That's my prayer—every day I say my prayers—let me treat people and love people like I want them to love me, and I don't have no hatred in my heart against nobody, nobody."

Some photographers catch glimpses or moments in the lives of their subjects. Patsy Cravens has no subjects. The success of the book is her artistic sensibility and awareness to echo the lives and memories of friends she came to know. Of the more than 100 people interviewed during the project, less than a dozen are still living. But thanks to Cravens, their testimonies are now a powerful and moving piece of Texas history. ■

Cite

COMING IN CITE 70

> INSIDE THE FRAMEWORK HOUSE

> REMEMBERING THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILYARDS

> A TALK WITH ARTHUR JONES

PLUS, A DESIGN COMPETITION FOR MANDELL PARK, A REVIEW OF *THE PERFECT $100,000 HOUSE*, AND MUCH MORE

Photo courtesy The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Sitzmaschine, Model 670, by Josef Hoffmann. Made by Jacob & Josef Kohn. Designed c. 1905, made c. 1908. Beech and metal. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The American Institute of Architects Houston Design Collection, museum purchase with funds provided by AIA and gift of friends of Martha Murphree.

The Art of Architecture

American Institute of Architects Design Collection
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Ongoing

Reviewed by Luisa Orto

In 2000, members of AIA Houston established a collaboration with the Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design Department of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. With the intention of highlighting design objects created by architects—and thereby demonstrating the creative spectrum of the architect's profession—the American Institute of Architects Design Collection at the MFAH was born. Parameters for the collection were broad to allow for the richest range of acquisitions possible, although the *de facto* emphasis has proven to be the modern and contemporary period, roughly the late 19th century to the present. In addition, each object had to be "architect designed," an equally broad designation proffered to allow for few restrictions in developing the collection.

The initial bridge between the AIA and the MFAH was built by architect Ernesto L. Maldonado, then president of AIA Houston, and architect Carrie Glassman Shoemake, who was closely involved with the MFAH as a member of the Decorative Arts Subcommittee, an advisory group for museum acquisitions. With the support of AIA executive director Martha Murphree, Maldonado and Glassman Shoemake brought their idea to MFAH design curator Cindi Strauss, and together, following nearly two years of discussions with the AIA board, the three established a unique collaboration of architect, museum liaison, and curator. Together, they pursued the notion that a greater awareness of the architect's *métier* could be demonstrated by highlighting works of design created by architects. Such works would also reflect the problem solving on a small scale that is often part of the process of an architect's large-scale involvement with a design idea.

The AIA collection's seed funds came from a charmingly appropriate source: the proceeds of the 2000 AIA sandcastle competition in Galveston. With $5,000 in hand, AIA members voted on what to buy. And so, a silver flatware service for eight designed by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen in the late 1920s and three aluminum vases designed by Italian architect/designer Andrea Branzi in the 1990s established a collaboration that would serve to enrich Houston's cultural resources.

While the AIA sandcastle competition has funded subsequent acquisitions, this resource has been augmented by donations from AIA members to the AIA/MFAH Fund. Some AIA members have made monetary contributions in honor of longstanding clients, a colleague's birthday or benchmark achievement, or to recognize a firm's anniversary. Other AIA members have made direct donations of works. For example, in 2001 the collection was enriched with *Executive Desk Prototype*, designed by Sally Walsh and donated by Raymond Brochstein and Brochstein's, Inc., and *FOG Chair Prototype*, designed by Frank Gehry and donated by Knoll. These gifts sent a call to Houston's architectural community underlining the support for the AIA Design Collection. Other gifts have followed, including several metal and enamel brooches designed by associates of Memphis Design and donated by Jeffrey A. Shankman.

Beginning in 2004, AIA members settled on a process to bring new works into the collection while also honoring a Houston architect. Each year, curator Strauss identifies a number of design pieces that merit inclusion in the MFAH. These works are then considered by an AIA committee to determine which ones should be presented to the annual AIA honoree. The honoree makes the final choice of which piece enters the design collection in his or her honor. After the honoree has selected the piece to add, there is still opportunity for AIA members to raise funds to ensure that the other works that had been under consideration can also be made part of the collection.

The works comprising the AIA Design Collection are regularly included in MFAH design exhibitions. This past spring, visitors to the museum had a chance to admire a recent AIA acquisition: the beechwood and metal reclining *Sitzmaschine Chair* designed in the early 1900s by Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann. Donated in honor of former AIA Executive Director Martha Murphree, this addition seems particularly appropriate to the spirit of the AIA Design Collection in light of architect Hoffmann's embrace of the notion of the *gesamkustwerk*, or "total work of art," which upheld the premise that architects should address the complete built environment, including design objects therein. Hoffmann's chair is a fine example by an architect involved in creating design objects that relate harmoniously to their surroundings.

In 2005, S.I. Morris was recognized for both his imprint on the Houston skyline and his collaborative spirit. To honor Morris, the AIA purchased two seminal works by Hungarian architect/designer Marcel Breuer—a lounge chair and a stool made of tubular steel, upholstered in the original eisengarn fabric and designed while Breuer was at the Dessau Bauhaus leading experiments in standardized furniture. The 2006 addition to the collection was to be chosen in December by Anderson Todd, this year's AIA honoree. Given that among his other accomplishments Todd served as liaison to Mies van der Rohe in the realization of Cullinan Hall at the MFAH, a Mies designed work might serve as an appropriate *homage*.

So far, the collaboration has contributed more than 20 objects to the MFAH's collection. Works in metal abound, among them the Saarinen and Ponti flatware sets, the Branzi vases, a De Lucchi carafe, a Gehry chair, a Bel Geddes cocktail shaker, and a Louis Sullivan stair baluster. So too, do works in wood, including a Paul Frankl pine coffee table, a Borge Mogensen oak chair, and a Brazilian pinus wood *Favela Chair* designed by the Campana brothers.

European, Scandinavian, and American designers are well represented, but there is an absence of examples representing Asia. With the exception of Maarten van Severen's *Low Plastic Chair*, designed in 2002, there is a dearth of contemporary or conceptual pieces as well. This collection would be a greater public resource, and more inspiring to architecture and design students, if there were more contemporary design examples that embrace new materials and processes. Furthermore, although individual works in the AIA design collection are frequently cycled through exhibitions, this collection needs to be housed in a more permanent, more readily accessible venue. A "collection" that is diffused throughout a museum's storerooms is hard to access, so as the MFAH envisions another expansion, it would be a real step forward to allocate more space for a permanent display of modern and contemporary design.

Still, the AIA Design Collection represents a unique and successful collaboration between architects and a major cultural institution. In creating the AIA Design Collection, the city's architects have set an example: play well together and we will all reap rewards. In little more than half a decade, the collaboration between AIA Houston and the MFAH has managed to bring together disparate factions of the Houston art and architecture community, amass a collection of significant and didactic design items that reflects the wide-ranging practice of the architect and make them available to the public, and, according to several of its members, give senior and junior members of AIA Houston a common sense of purpose. The lack of a museum of architecture in Houston has, in part, begun to be addressed by Houston architects themselves. ■

Thousands gathered this summer for the opening celebration of the Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade.

Photos by Matt Sinclair

The crowds at the Aurora Picture Show may be small, as is the venue, but the interest in the movies screened is large.

Night Lights

BY NONYA GRENADER

A few years back, German filmmaker Wim Wenders observed a phenomenon about development in Houston that exists somewhere between invention and magic: the notion of discovery in unlikely urban spaces. As Wenders had it in his 1993 poem *Once*: "I spent some time in Houston,/a strange place./Its new downtown area/had just been conjured up out of nothing."

Houston has a well-established tradition of creating somethings from apparent nothings, as attested to by beloved and improbable environments such as the Orange Show and the Beer Can House, to mention only two well-known examples. That this tradition isn't limited to the past can be seen in a pair of more recent examples, the Aurora Picture Show and, at a larger scale, the Sabine-to-Bagby Promenade along Buffalo Bayou. More mysterious than Jeff McKissak's exuberant homage to the orange or John Milkovisch's collage-like appreciation of aluminum beer containers, both offer unique settings where art and architecture converge. The Aurora, a micro cinema housed in an old church, is an intimate environment of personal expression. The Promenade is a vast gathering space attached to a formerly neglected network of bayou and freeway. Created by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, it expresses less a personal vision than a public one.

It has, nonetheless, a sense of surprise. Fabricated from the stretch of bayou between Sabine and Bagby streets, the Blue Bayou Promenade (as it is also known) seemed to materialize with theatrical effect and, in a city with too few public spaces, its summer opening was a welcome event. Ten thousand Houstonians gathered to celebrate the mix of landscape and lighting and stream down to the bayou edge to walk, eat, and listen to music. Light fixtures along the trail that track the lunar cycle by changing from white to blue and back each month indicated the evening's full moon. The opening events, which included a floating cinema with a 20-foot screen, activated the bayou fully.

Though opening night was festive, the Promenade is meant to offer a year round experience. Its real success will be determined by whether people return regularly to stroll along it. There's good reason for them to do so. By day, the native plants take Houston's heat, and by night the tall grasses catch a breeze. Each evening, blue lights attached to the freeway overhead illuminate its ribbed structure. Though the light source is bold, the strategy of placement is subtle—it takes a few minutes to realize how site specific the lighting is, with the illumination mapping the bayou's path. Not only effective from bayou level, the light can also be understood at a larger city scale. As you approach the area at 35 miles per hour along Allen Parkway, a blue vapor glow wafts from the freeway's edge, foreshadowing the bayou promenade below.

It is this connection to context that distinguishes the Blue Bayou Promenade from Houston's other gathering spaces. The nearby Aquarium has its share of blue neon and is positioned to attract the public, but the two couldn't be more different. The Aquarium, with its frenetic activity, seems plopped into the downtown context, as if part of the former Astroworld had migrated north. In contrast, the Blue Bayou Promenade's lights, plantings, and pathways take their cue from urban infrastructure and topography. At bayou level, the city becomes surprisingly pastoral and quiet. Even the intermittent sound of cars passing above the walkway can be thought of as exhilarating or unsettling, depending on your point of view.

On any night, small groups of people wander the Promenade as an occasional bike glides by, activity refreshing in this formerly untapped stretch of bayou. Pausing at the Promenade path below the Hobby Center's massive garage, it is striking to note that these bayou and freeway edges were previously thought of as nothing more than back elevations, with views to be avoided.

Several miles away, and at a much smaller scale, another sort of urban invention occurred when the Aurora Picture Show transformed an aged wooden church into a 100-seat cinema. Founded in 1998 by Houston-based media artist Andrea Grover, the cinema was created as a venue to champion short films and videos, to host visiting film/video makers and curators, and to encourage active audiences. Much more modest than the Blue Bayou Promenade, Aurora was produced through volunteer labor and equipment donations.

Since its beginning, the Aurora Picture Show has invited curators to present screenings based on their area of specialization. Former Rice architecture professor Keith Krumweide and visiting critic Luke Bulman assembled a group of short films about interaction with the built environment that ranged from Charles and Ray Eames' *Blacktop: A Story of the Washing of a School Play Yard* to Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting*. Such inventive pairings continue to thrive at the Aurora, where audiences sit in the original church pews and appreciate seeing subjects not available in more typical venues.

When Grover discovered the church on Aurora Street in Houston's Heights, she says, "It was an impulse buy—I fell madly and deeply in love with the place." Influenced by her interest in New York live/work spaces of the 1960s and 1970s, she envisioned the building as a place to combine her professional and personal interests. Currently Grover, her husband Carlos Lama, and their children Lola and Gigi live behind the movie screen in a three bedroom habitat that often accommodates visiting artists. The screen literally and figuratively divides, yet blends, Grover's creative pursuits.

It may have been more than a coincidence that the floating cinema that helped celebrate the opening of the Blue Bayou Promenade was co-curated by Grover. In this single degree of separation, these two inventive endeavors came together. These environments show good promise of joining the ranks of Houston's idiosyncratic, but treasured, places conjured from unexpected sites.

The Blue Bayou Promenade has a vision for celebrating neglected arteries of the public realm, connecting two undeniable urban forces, the bayou and the freeway, in a delightfully unexpected alliance. The Aurora Picture Show inserts innovative art in an historic setting. They each influence the way we view and take care of city spaces often thought residual and disposable rather than habitable. And like all good forms of magic, they are both best viewed at night. ■

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