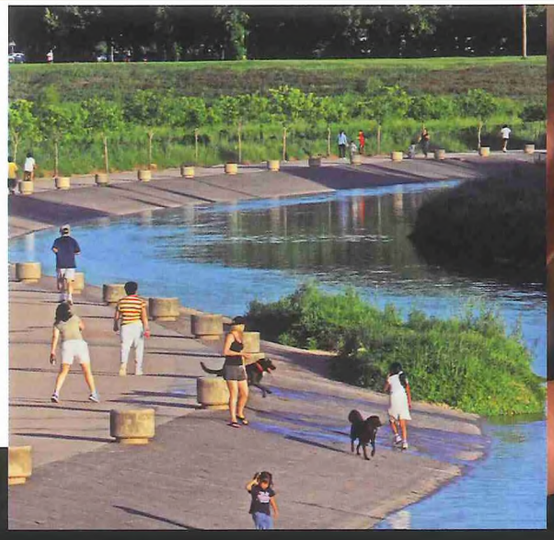
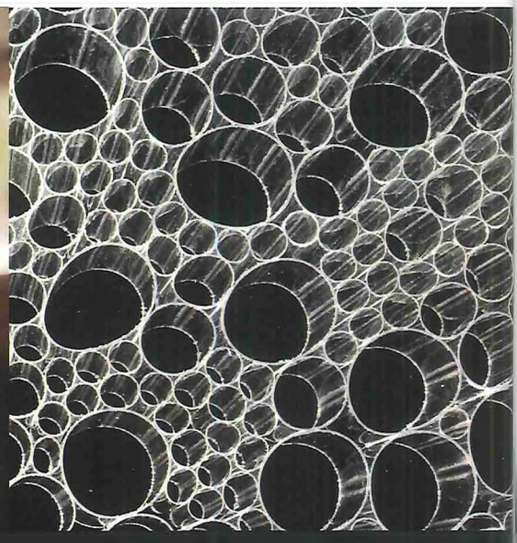
WEB SITE THRIVES

The Rice Design Alliance website features commentary and podcasts from RDA civic forums and lectures, a calendar of RDA events and events sponsored by other area organizations, travel journals from RDA city tours, and several resources including links to OffCite.org, the *Cite* blog, and CiteMag.org, a new website featuring free access to the archives.





FROM LEFT: Art Storey Park serves as a model for multiple uses of flood control basins; RDA's Fall 2010 lecture series will focus on innovative and cutting-edge materials.

LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD: RDA FALL LECTURE SERIES

The annual fall lecture series will take place September 29 through October 20 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The series, titled "A Material World," will focus on innovative and cutting-edge uses and practices of materials in the built environment. The speakers will address various topics, ranging from what "green" buildings and materials really consist of and how they fare throughout their lifecycles, to how different materials are chosen for a particular project and how materials function both aesthetically and practically.

The tactile and aesthetic qualities of materials have always been integral to construction and architectural experience, but emergent materials and their associated technologies are rapidly altering the way designers work and the way end-users engage buildings. This series seeks to address the expanding world of materials and their incorporation into our built environment. All lectures will be held at 7:00 p.m. in Brown Auditorium in the Caroline Wiess Law Building of the MFAH. Pre-lecture receptions, graciously sponsored by Brochsteins, Harvey Builders, SpawMaxwell, WHR Architects with E&C Engineers and Consultants, Inc., will be held at 6:00 p.m. in the museum lobby. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is located at 1001 Bissonnet (enter via the Main Street door).

2010 INITIATIVES FOR HOUSTON GRANTS WINNERS

This year's winners of the eleventh annual Initiatives for Houston grant program encompass a wide range of focus, from enhancing Houston's cultural identity to improving the city's infrastructure.

Proposal titles include "Enhancing Infrastructure: Highways and Energy" submitted by Prairie View A&M visiting professor Ross Weinert; "Urban Aeries" submitted by Rice University architecture graduate student Melissa McDonnell; "Make Houston Colorful?" by Robert Hadley, an architecture graduate student at the University of Houston and Samuel Jacobson, an undergraduate architecture student at Rice University; and "Scavenge" a proposal submitted by Jorge Galvan, an undergraduate student in Industrial Design at the University of Houston.

Galvan's project was awarded $2,500 to document Houston neighborhoods' trash output, and create neighborhood identities based on the kinds of trash a particular neighborhood produces. Like archaeologists, Galvan wants to trace local neighborhood histories via their discarded materials, documenting the process, and ultimately creating neighborhood emblems created from the trash to serve as a material identity. Galvan will choose up to seven distinct neighborhoods based on the socioeconomic and demographic makeup of each area chosen, and hold an exhibit of his found materials to conclude the project.

CHARRETTE

Led by RDA Partners, RDA's 2010 design charrette competition will be held at the Rice School of Architecture on August 7.
A charrette is a period of intense design. In past years, teams have included students, professionals, and creative people from outside the architecture profession. While the exact goals must remain a mystery until the day of the competition, this year's charrette will focus on Willow Waterhole. More details to follow soon at ricedesignalliance.org.

ART STOREY PARK COURTESY HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT. MATERIALS COURTESY MATERIALS CONNEXION

RDA GALA TO HONOR ART STOREY

The 24th annual Rice Design Alliance gala will be held at the Hilton Americas Hotel, 1600 Lamar, on November 13. RDA will honor Art Storey, PE, Executive Director of the Harris County Public Infrastructure Department and past director of the Houston Flood Control District. Storey has played a lead role in changing the treatment of Houston's bayous. Under his leadership, Flood Control and partnering groups established trail systems around several bayous, planted thousands of trees, and removed the bayous' concrete linings, providing surrounding communities with more green space. In addition to honoring Storey's work, the gala will include dinner, dancing, and a silent auction for attendees.

Visit **ricedesignalliance.org** to join 1,000 architects, design professionals, engineers, contractors, developers, and RDA members at one of Houston's most anticipated events.

Write for Cite

Cite is greater Houston's forum for architectural, design, and planning issues. Articles should address a broad audience and include reviews, essays, analyses, and commentaries. Article ideas and proposals are reviewed by the editorial committee and are welcome in one of three forms:

TIPS: Tell us your ideas.

DETAILED ARTICLE PROPOSALS: Include context about the subject, an explanation of why the article would be of interest to the *Cite* audience, and a writing sample.

FULL MANUSCRIPTS: Send manuscripts for consideration by peer-review.

OffCite.org is an additional venue for timely coverage and short pieces as well as an opportunity for writers to start establishing themselves as part of the pool from which the magazine draws. Send all submissions and questions to **citemail@rice.edu** or to the *Cite* mailing address:

CITE MAGAZINE - MS 51
P.O. BOX 1892
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77251-1892

RDA ADOPTS CITE CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

In order to avoid conflicts of interest in the selection of *Cite* articles and authors, the editorial committee and the RDA board adopted a set of procedures and guidelines. For more information, visit the *Cite* website: **citemag.org/about**

CORRECTIONS

The trellis of the Trahan house was never anticipated to have photovoltaics as claimed in the article "Making It Right" in *Cite* 81. The New Living advertisement on the inside back cover of *Cite* 81 was not reproduced correctly due to error on the part of the publication.

LETTERS

MAKING IT RIGHT?

Once I learned that the latest issue of *Cite* (81) was going to feature a review of the New Orleans Make It Right initiative, a response to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, I was brimming with anticipation to enjoy another great issue of the magazine.

While the article successfully depicted the key players and complexity that made this ambitious design project a reality, I was surprised and dismayed that the BNIM Architects project—the only Houston team invited for round one—was not reviewed at all by the author, neither in words, images, nor sketches. Yet it is clear from the summary box on page 17—the only place where BNIM and Houston appear—that the project has been very well received from the outset by the community of end users, being one of the most selected schemes by the qualified families, and represents an important catalyst for increasing urban density and quality of life in the recovering 9th Ward neighborhood.

Although I am no longer with BNIM, I feel fortunate to have led the 2007 BNIM Houston team in generating a vernacular, affordable, and sustainable solution for 9th Ward families. The entire design process and final scheme were crafted by the BNIM team in Houston with the critical contribution of the NOLA native project designer, James Anderson, who shared his knowledge of the 9th Ward context and culture.

Is it polemic on my part to speculate that because our end product was neither "floating" nor "upside down," but a mere 21st-century reinterpretation of the affordable shotgun house, the design was not deemed to be newsworthy? No, I am certain that the author sees the value of real-world, implementable design solutions like that proposed by the BNIM team.

BNIM Architects has been actively involved in our community since the Houston office opened almost 10 years ago, including leadership and service roles within the Rice Design Alliance. Headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, with over 40 years of national architectural, planning, and sustainable experience, BNIM Architects has always been on the forefront of good design for social change and should have not been so clearly omitted from the article.

Filo Castore, AIA, LEED AP

CALENDAR

LECTURES

RDA FALL LECTURE SERIES:
MATERIAL WORLD
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Wednesdays, 7pm Brown Auditorium
ricedesignalliance.org

The public and RDA members are invited to hear the following speakers during the series:

BLAINE BROWNELL
September 29
Transstudio
St. Paul, Minnesota
transstudio.com

JOHN FERNANDEZ
October 6
Associate Professor
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
architecture.mit.edu

VICTORIA BALLARD BELL
October 13
Architect
Raleigh, North Carolina
ballardbell.com

ANDREW DENT
October 20
Material ConneXion
New York
materialconnexion.com

CHARRETTE

Topic: WILLOW WATERHOLE
Saturday, August 7, 2010
Rice School of Architecture

GALA

HONORING ART STOREY
Saturday, November 13, 2010
Hilton Americas-Houston

ARCHITECTURE

MEXICO CITY SURGING: D.F. ARCHITECTURE

RDA's 2010 spring lecture series, *Mexico City Surging: D.F. Architecture*, began the new year with talks by a quartet of young Mexican architects from the Distrito Federal. The timing not only marked the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of the Mexican Revolution and the bicentennial of the beginning of Mexico's war of independence, but also underscored Houston's proximity to one of the most fascinating and complex megacities in the world. Each of the four architects shared an infectious and provocative enthusiasm for D.F., as Mexico City residents often call their city.

LAS DISTANCIAS APARTAN LAS CIUDADES

THE ARCHITECTS' CUMULATIVE REMARKS DEPICTED a place shaped by extreme contrasts, opportunities, ambitions, and, yes, miracles—the fertile ground from which these designers probe the potential of architecture to build the city. Although Mexico City is often portrayed as an overwhelming reality couched in unsettling statistics, these architects see their city as a territory of innumerable possibilities whose inexhaustible literature has to be read and appropriated on a daily basis, from street corner to street corner, from wall to wall.

I have visited Mexico City numerous times over the course of 35 years—sometimes alone, sometimes with colleagues, students, or friends.

LEFT: CB-30 residential building in Polanco, Mexico City, Derek Dellekamp, 2006.

All occasions have been memorable, but I recall a particular visit in the spring of 1991 when Robert Venturi received the Pritzker Prize at the Palacio Iturbide, a marvelous building in the heart of the historic district. Venturi was in awe of what he had seen and discovered on that momentous trip, and while delivering his acceptance remarks, he marveled at the caliber of Mexico's Baroque architecture. It was not clear to the audience whether this was Venturi's first trip to Mexico City or just an enthusiastic reverie on his part; neither provoked offense as the next act turned out to be a surprise performance by the legendary singer Lola Beltrán. As a tribute to Venturi, Beltrán sang "Las Ciudades (The Cities)," a beautiful song whose lyrics were lost on the befuddled Venturi. After singing two more songs, the dazzling diva left the room just as she had entered it: an emissary from an ancient and regal city. Beltrán's performance momentarily suspended time and space, and although she was not born in Mexico City, she reminded the audience that she possessed its indefatigable spirit. I was reminded of Beltrán's spirit as I listened to the architects from Mexico City deliver their lectures at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Perhaps it was their confidence as enterprising global citizens that impressed me the most. Yet this independence of mind did not cause them to shy away from fervor for their beloved city, a place where everything is possible even though the impossible might be more the order of the day.

Jose Castillo, principal of arquitectura 911sc, began the series with a succinct and informative overview of the rapid development that has overtaken Mexico City during the past five decades. Castillo praised in particular the sociopolitical fulcrum of Mario Pani's activities in the 1950s and '60s. Pani was an architect who built on a scale commensurate with the emerging metropolis, always with the urban dreams of Le Corbusier and Ludwig Hilberseimer before him. Castillo, himself a passionate architect, urbanist, and critic, then gave ample evidence of his own explorations in a variety of projects at multiple scales. Collaboration is critical to Castillo's diverse practice, as could be seen throughout his description of his firm's works. For instance, at CEDIM (the Monterrey Center for Advanced Studies in Design), a project in Mexico's second-largest city undertaken in collaboration with Fernanda Canales, the architects delivered an imaginative solution while contributing an essay in spatial flexibility and urban improvisation. In another collaborative project, this time with Javier Sánchez, Castillo elaborated on the virtues of accepting history, not as an obligatory background, but as a charged foreground. Their Spanish Cultural Center in Mexico City's historic center elevated the discourse on how to best intertwine a many-layered history with a demanding contemporary program.

Javier Sánchez roams his beloved neighborhood of Condesa tirelessly, venturing forth as a developer, social worker, and visionary. Judging from the many buildings that he presented in his animated lecture, Sánchez has found in Condesa a mutually beneficial enterprise at all levels—economic, social,

LEFT TO RIGHT: Four buildings by Javier Sánchez—Amsterdam 322 (1999); Interior remodel of Museo del Estanquillo (2006); 13 de Septiembre (2003); and Hotel Condesa (2005).

and cultural—an enterprise that led to his winning the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2003. The account of Sánchez and his team demonstrated how instrumental the relationship of vision and action can be when targeted on an urban zone in need of both.

Derek Dellekamp was the only architect in the group who referred to Mexico City as more of a launching pad to pursue works farther afield: as far away as Ordos, China, and Sully, Switzerland, places where projects might eventually see the light of day. Two built works in Mexico gave us a glimpse of Dellekamp's deft hand and minimal strokes: the graceful CB-30 residential building in Polanco (2006) and the poetic rest station titled "Circle Sanctuary" (2008). The latter is one of two projects that Dellekamp designed for the Pilgrim's Route master plan in the state of Jalisco, the second being the Open Chapel of Gratitude. These two projects demarcate particular points along the pilgrimage route venerating the Virgin of Talpa. What is remarkable about these works is their universal legibility and their economy of form. They are iconic gestures that transcend their elemental traces to bind a group of pilgrims suffused by faith.

Frida Escobedo delivered the last lecture in the series, conducting a meticulous journey through her handful of intriguing works. Escobedo explained her office's desire to pursue "the residual and the forgotten: from decadent suburbs that are being subdivided, to rundown tourist spots, to unused roofs and basements." This wish to embrace the marginal and informal has found insightful expressions in such projects as the Boca Chica Hotel renovation in Acapulco, the Casa Negra, and Casa 24. The last is an ingenious articulation of how much providence a rooftop can foster in the hands of an imaginative architect, while the Casa Negra appeared in images like a strange, yet oddly familiar object serenely anchored to its rugged garden and sloping site.

Mexico City Surging was an enlightening cultural exchange between cities. As comfortable in Houston as they would be in Shanghai or Rio de Janeiro, these well-traveled and well-educated architects from D.F. conveyed a refreshing sense of ease with their global pedigree. Though proud of their Mexican heritage, their presentations were a distant cry from the clamor of nationalistic zealotry. The works of these architects are not simply an emerging wave, but rather a reminder that each new generation must surge confidently from its origins to claim the world.

– Carlos Jiménez

IMPRESIONES DE HOUSTON

"IN HOUSTON, LIKE MEXICO CITY, WHERE THERE is no clear land-use plan, the architect has the greatest capacity to transform urban spaces through ambitious projects that emphasize public space," Jose Castillo explained like a professor as he snapped a photograph of the METRO train traveling on Main Street. I asked the four architects visiting for RDA's Mexico City series about their impressions of Houston and found, surprisingly, that there are many similarities between the cities.

Castillo showed maps in his lecture to explain that Mexico City grew drastically in the period following 1950. Looking at maps of Houston from around this same time, marked changes occurred in its own topographical distribution. Houston is a new city, forged by developers who say that you do not have to know anyone to get ahead. Mexico City, on the other hand, is rich in colonial heritage, and corruption is taken for granted. Yet I discovered through the architects that each city can learn from each other as they continue to grow.

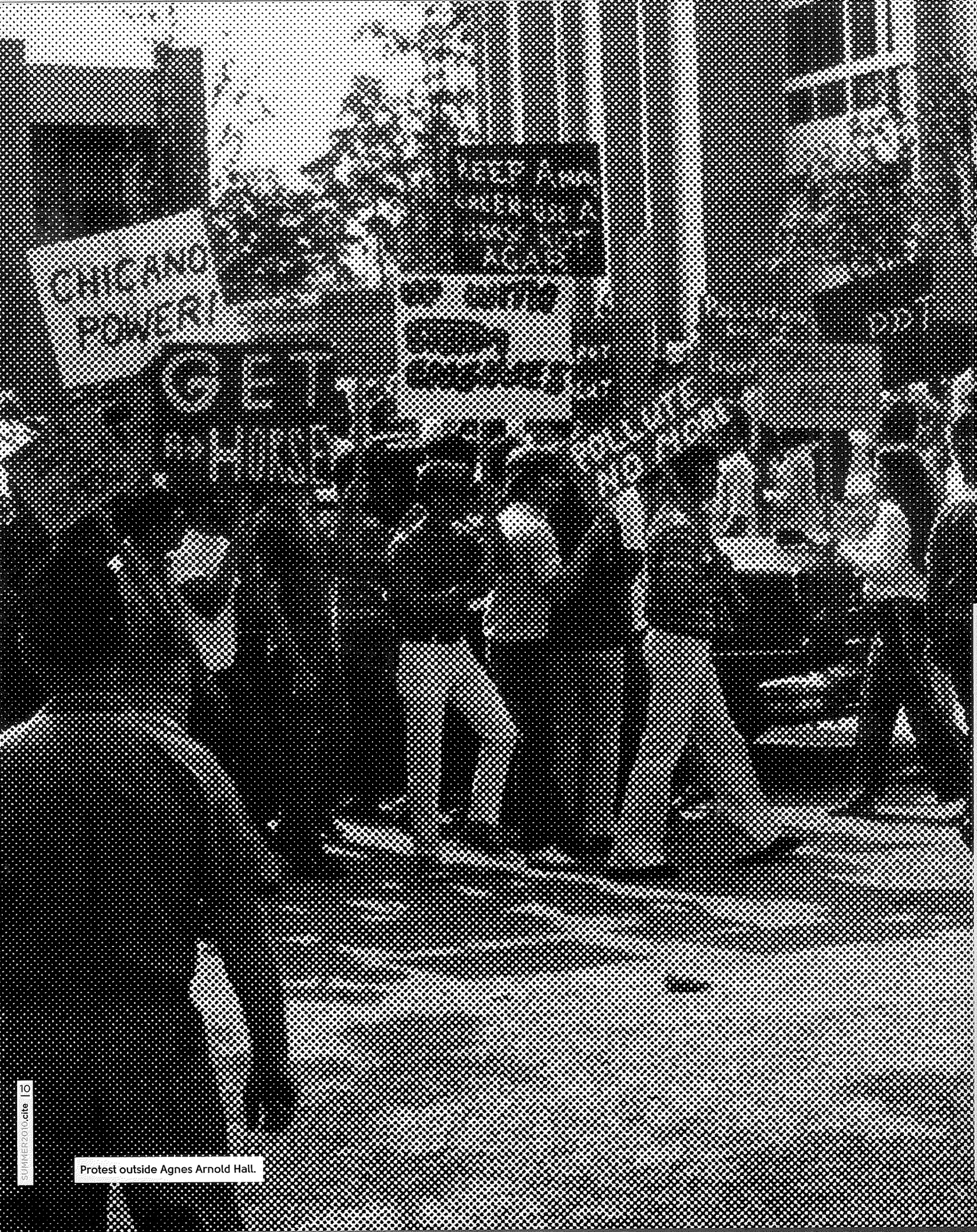
"I spent summers on a farm in Indiana with my father," said Derek Dellekamp in an American accent, "so I prefer to travel to more natural environments rather than cities. But when I travel to cities, I love those where you do not need a car to get around." While Mexico City is larger than Houston in terms of population, it is not a very dense city; its outlying areas reach much beyond the original boundary of the Valley of Anahuac. And like metropolises in developing countries, Mexico City is feeling the pressure to embrace the car culture. Dellekamp believes it must find ways to reduce its dependence on the automobile for mobility.

Although Mexico City spreads out more than many large cities in the world, it is denser than Houston. Javier Sánchez was surprised by the low density of Houston's townhouse developments. Through his projects in the Condesa neighborhood, Sánchez has created highly efficient developments that the middle class can afford. He calls them "urban acupuncture," these site-responsive, and sensitive, intrusions in the urban landscape. When I asked Sánchez about D.F.'s notorious traffic, he responded in a-matter-of-fact voice, "I live and work in the same neighborhood; that is the only way to avoid spending the day in traffic."

As we drove down Allen Parkway, Castillo wondered why the U.S. chose multi-layered freeway systems with feeder roads instead of parkways. The former has become the model for freeways in developing countries, and yet it is an inefficient use of space where emphasis is placed on the automobile rather than the pedestrian. "Javier's work is wonderful because it places value on the pedestrian zone rather than the car," says Castillo, a close friend of Javier Sánchez.

Frida Escobedo brought her students with her to Houston because her class is looking at the growth of Houston with no zoning as an example for what Mexico City can become with its lack of regulations. In the free-for-all city of Mexico, the immense metropolis, one can find a never-ending network of oasis-like parks and neighborhood squares, populated by informal vendors and performers. The diagonal boulevards converge and lead to new parts of the city, and hidden in the metropolis is evidence of the urban acupuncture of these great architects. In Houston, too, we have our hidden treasures. Both cities are places you grow to like, as Castillo said—acquired tastes.

–Camilo Parra



Protest outside Agnes Arnold Hall.

COUNTER CULTURE U

Discontent and Liberation at the University of Houston

by Bruce Webb

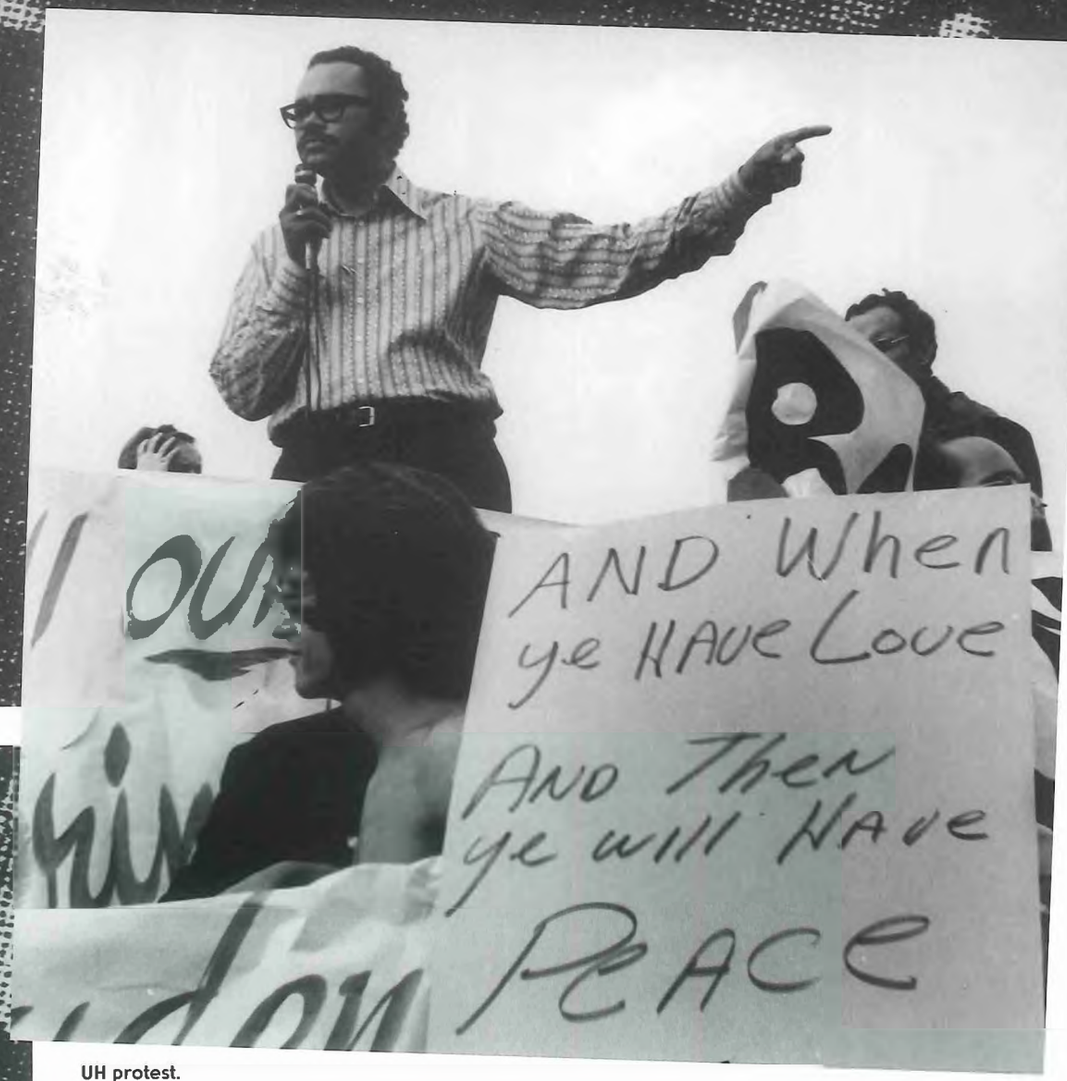
Like a Houston synecdoche, the University of Houston was raised up in the 20th century pretty much in lockstep with the city whose name it bears.

Its short history mirrors Houston's in form, structure, architecture, and culture. The campus quickly outgrew the gracious academic courts of the 1930s and '40s, as well as the buildings in a shapely Moderne-style architecture executed in seashell-fossilized Texas limestone. By the '60s the campus was following a modern grid plan with ever-enlarging peripheral parking lots surrounding it like asphalt moats. With no gracious hedge to hide behind, no gates or ivy-covered walls, it instead gathered together hard-to-love cast-in-place concrete and buff brick buildings in the utilitarian style of the period, giving the place the dubious charm of postwar "New Towns" in Britain. Yet this perfect proletarian setting, almost entirely unmarked by privilege, hosted a full-range, Texas version counterculture of the sort fixed in history and film at places like the University of California at Berkeley.

University of Houston students in the College of Architecture, including future Dean Joe Mashburn (pictured lower left), call for submissions to a student publication. During a time of upheaval, often fomented by students, they confronted faculty with "basic questions."

In an interview for the Houston Oral History Project Tatcho Mindiola, a UH student during the late 1960s and now a sociology professor, recalls a local version of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement: "Every Wednesday in front of the University Center, they had something called 'Sound Off,' where they would put a mic there, and students would go and sound off…Blacks would get up there, African-Americans would get up there, a lot of anti-Vietnam stuff. But I'll never forget one young man got up and announced that next Wednesday he was going to burn a Bible. He gave this big spiel about the Bible was nothing but paper and so forth…It created this big uproar on campus. The next Sound Off was the biggest crowd ever. But the police were there with their fire extinguishers. The young man attempted to burn the Bible, but he was prevented from doing so."

African-American students organized a group called African Americans for Black Liberation (AABL). It was a part of the Black Power movement. Mindiola recalls members using that group's raised fist salute in classes and meetings with administrators. Gene Locke, a lawyer and 1969 graduate of UH, was on the AABL committee. He remembers how students interfaced across campuses: "Almost every demonstration started at the University of Houston and went through Texas Southern University and ended up at its point of destination. While it was fashionable for students at Columbia and other schools to take over buildings in the administration and hold those buildings until their demands were met, that never was a strategy that we felt we had the luxury to entertain."



UH protest.

"While it was fashionable for students at Columbia and other schools to take over buildings...**that never was a strategy that we felt we had the luxury to entertain.**"

The University was seeking to establish itself both as a place and an institution. Throughout the seventies, as the population of the city and campus grew at a rapid clip, the university continued to add buildings. Some of the new buildings had an experimental spirit, featuring exterior circulation systems, escalators, and elevators. Farish Hall (1970), the education building designed by Morris Architects, a four-story, modern concrete bunker, harbored an open classroom plan, one of the innovations being championed at the time by the Educational Facilities Lab. Within a few years, however, like most of the elementary and secondary schools built on an open plan, Farish Hall had reverted to conventional walled rooms. Most of the real innovations, in fact, were gone in the next generation of buildings. As occurred generally for architecture at this time, UH took up the mantle of postmodern formalism, nowhere more dismally than in the numbingly historicist architecture school building Philip Johnson dropped at the north entrance to the campus in 1985.

The UH architecture school inhabited a decidedly less bombastic compound when I came there to teach in the early 1970s. Architecture back then was housed in a trio of inauspicious, modestly scaled metal buildings (labeled rather than named X, Y, and Z) that had been assembled by Assistant Dean Edmund Furley with students C. R. Lively and Joe Skorpea using hand-me-down windows and a steel framing and panel system. Drexel Turner in *Open Plan: The History of the College of Architecture, University of Houston, 1945–1995* credits the trio with being the university's first architect-designed "modern buildings." The mainly white metal boxes were spiced up with two enigmatic elements: one, a glass box that sat under the college's second-story administration suite, was variously used as a gallery, a studio, or faculty offices—sometimes all three simultaneously—while the other, a squat, cylindrical concrete block pavilion, known as the silo, was appended to the studio building for a succession of uses including a shop, a studio, a student lounge, and, since there were no windows, a variety of clandestine activities. A plumpish totem, it was painted over many times as, among other things, a Maxwell House coffee tin and an American flag. A female student who covered her body with lavender-blue paint, then stamped multiple images of herself on the curved white surface was the first to embellish the silo, according to Fred George, a student in the College of Architecture in the late sixties.

The college's roots were mostly pragmatic: it was founded in response to some requests from returning World War II vets who were looking to get a degree in architecture and get on with their interrupted lives. But by the late 1960s it had developed an intoxicating aura of anarchy. Donald Barthelme Sr., a respected architect of iconoclastic disposition, provided founding principles and a goal to "produce persons with no stock answers for any problem however common." Howard Barnstone joined the faculty in 1948 and promoted an alternative model of education that sought to make a silk purse out of the underfunded and facilities-poor college. Barnstone wrote a letter to Dean Richard Lilliott making the case for rejecting the model of hiring prominent architects that was being followed by more prestigious schools. "Instead," he wrote, "UH should follow the opposite tack, that of having a group of outstanding young practitioners acting together in a vigorous way consulting with one another and with a sympathetic administration." Barnstone's tone was often polemical; in his conclusion, he declared that "wisdom, daring, inventiveness" were attributes to which the school should aspire.

Dean Lilliott himself became an issue when the college was threatened with losing its accreditation. Campuses at the time were hotbeds of dissension, and *Progressive Architecture* included several reports about incidents at UH in its feature on student unrest in architecture schools. In fall 1966 the magazine reported that UH students had been joined by some faculty members in walking out of a meeting with the university administration because the latter wouldn't turn over the results of a recent accreditation visit. Threatened with a bigger campus-wide boycott of classes, the university capitulated and released the complete report. By Easter of the following year, Lilliott had resigned. But things got worse rather than better for Lilliott's replacement, Eugene George, Department Chairman of Architecture at the University of Kansas, who took over the deanship in 1968. George quickly alienated the already revved-up students by

Radical Roots of Leisure»
Sundry School

In the early 1970s, Sundry School appeared on the University of Houston campus as an educational alter ego of the university, one of four such programs in the city reflecting the interest in alternative education of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* generation. Ted Weisgal, Houston's open university guru, was a campus activities adviser when he was hired as Sundry School's director. As he tells it, he got the job (in part at least) because his credentials included having been arrested at San Jose State University during a student protest. Weisgal was a journalism and leisure management major who spent his junior year as a Vista volunteer in Baltimore. Back at San Jose State, he teamed up with a Peace Corps veteran to teach a course on the politics of Vista and the Peace Corps in the experimental college there. Sundry School's grassroots approach to lifelong learning was grafted onto the UH infrastructure, where it made ample use of university facilities, particularly the relatively new student center. Some 250 courses were offered in everything from belly dancing to yoga, photography, the law, and do-it-yourself car repair (one version dealt exclusively with the Volkswagen beetle and micro bus). Since the whole program was based on a desire to learn something rather than to fulfill requirements, there were no grades, no tests, and no real requirements. You just signed up, paid a nominal fee, and started attending classes, usually at night or on the weekend.

Eventually the program ran up against a familiar UH snag when university administrators decided the Sundry School students, especially the ones who weren't also enrolled in the regular programs of the university, were getting too much of a free ride. To level the field, they decided to start charging parking fees to Sundry School students. As it is today, parking was a perennial problem at UH. Weisgal, who had strong views about the importance of keeping the costs down and Sundry School as open to the public as possible, found his negotiations with the university going nowhere. So he left UH, first ending up at the University of St. Thomas, which had its own version of the open university called Classes a la Carte, then founding an unaligned program that today is a full-blown small business called Leisure Learning. Leisure Learning has been around for nearly thirty years; with an ambitious program and loyal teachers, some of whom have been involved with it for many years, it offers some 500 classes each year to 33,000 students.

this was the serious, socially engaged side of the counterculture.

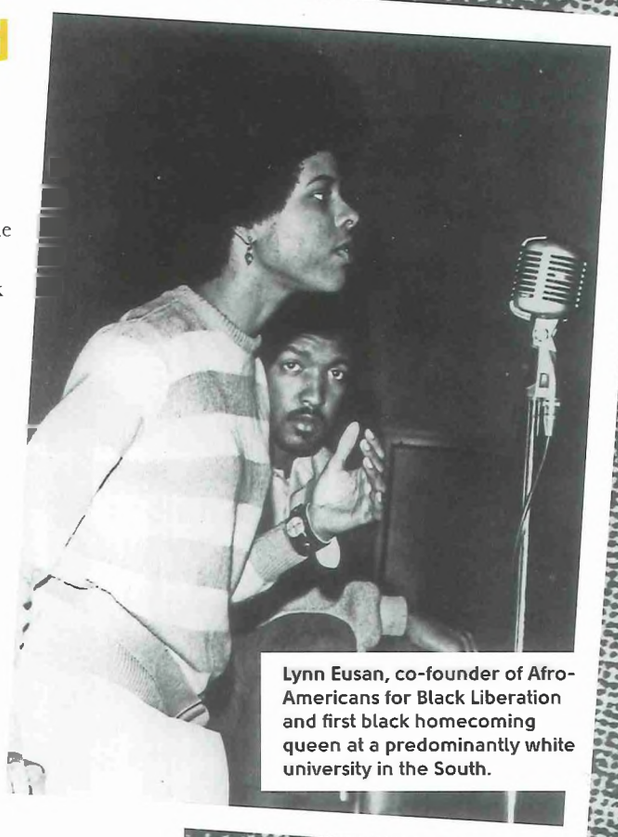
dismissing certain faculty and pushing to restore order in the college. The students produced propaganda materials arguing the case for jettisoning George, and a bomb threat phoned into the college prompted him to move his office to a secret (and secure) location.

By the following year, George also had resigned, and William R. Jenkins, a faculty member who had somehow managed to stay beneath the fray, became the college's third dean. It was New Age decision making: John Perry, longtime professor at the college who at the time was a new hire, recalls showing up nervously in Galveston and sitting in a circle with his new colleagues in an encounter session run by university facilitators where the administrative transition was hatched.

Things like this were happening all over the country. The more prestigious the university, the greater the press coverage (e.g., "Stop the Harvardization of Cambridge"). In 1970 Taylor Culver, a tall, imposing Howard University architecture student and president of the national student chapters of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), commandeered the AIA convention in Chicago and pressed the architects to become more socially involved, challenging them to donate ten percent of their business earnings, estimated at $15 million, to set up design centers in the ghettoes and train more minority architects.

For its part, UH took its studios to the street, establishing a community design center in the Fifth Ward that undertook several low-budget assistance projects that *Progressive Architecture* featured under the headline "Urban Renewal with Paint." John Zemanek, who started the Fifth Ward program, took his design studio to Bordersville, a community annexed by Houston in 1965 and considered one of the worst pockets of poverty in the city. There UH students built the 3-H Services Center, a compound of nine small buildings providing a range of community social services. For his efforts Zemanek was awarded a medal from the AIA, a sign the professional institution was beginning to acknowledge more humble efforts. This was the serious, socially engaged side of the counterculture.

Another equally powerful force bubbled in the zeitgeist of the Age of Aquarius—cultural and artistic experimentation that both entertained and outraged mainstream America. UH had Ant Farm guru Doug Michels, who came from San Francisco to join the faculty on a part-time, ad

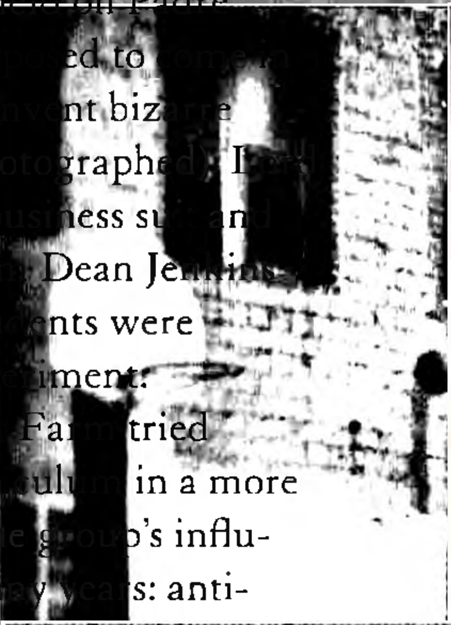


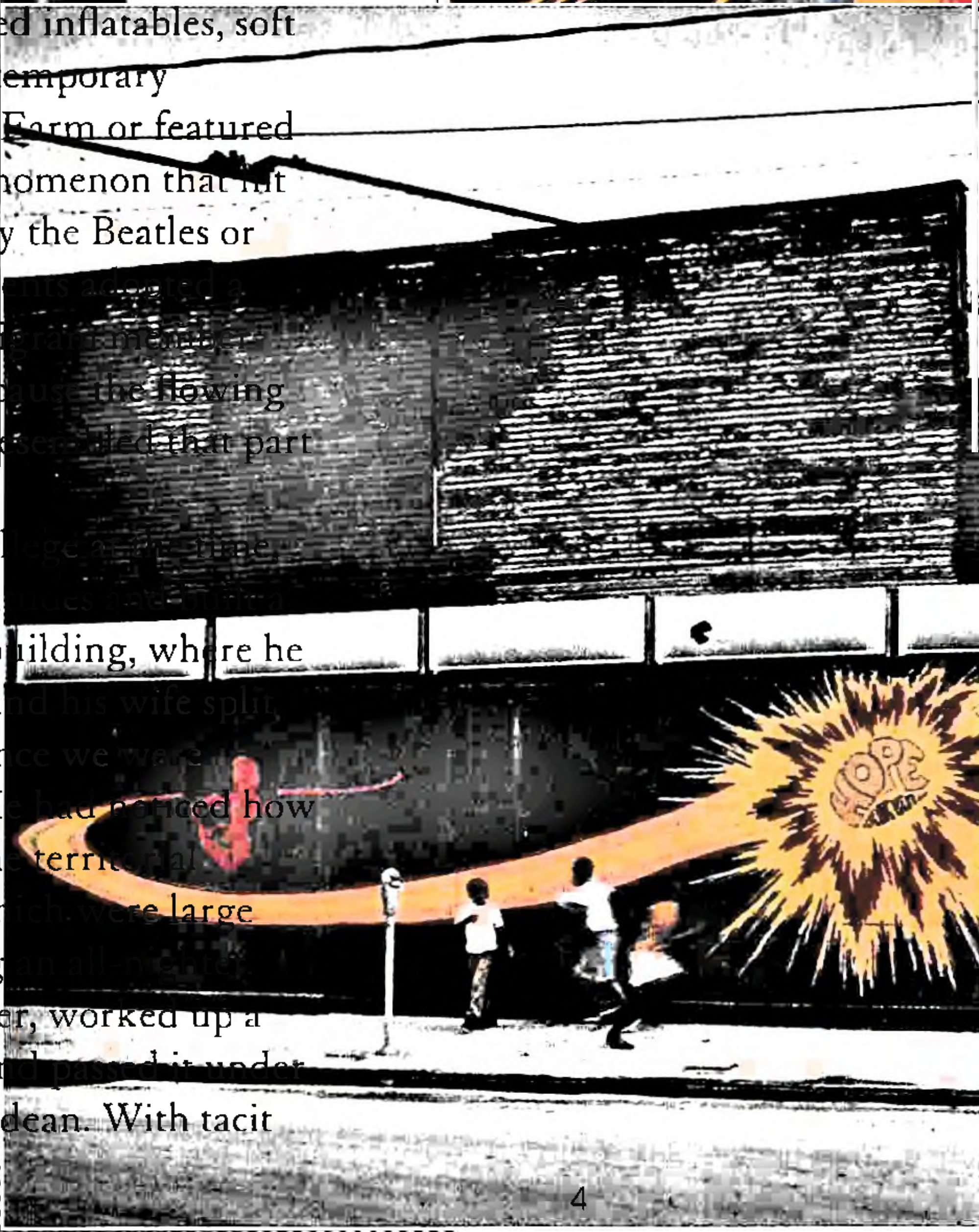
Lynn Eusan, co-founder of Afro-Americans for Black Liberation and first black homecoming queen at a predominantly white university in the South.

they improvised temporary, air-supported, kinetic structures, dubbed air clouds, that served as shelters, a screen for projecting images, and a soft mountain to climb on. "Time Slice" events revolved around a nomadic lifestyle and experimental multimedia image making. At a "Freak Out" held on Padre Island on July 4, students were supposed to come in "magical outfits" and prepared to invent bizarre rituals (that could, of course, be photographed). [illegible] recalled that Michels dressed in a business suit and carried a briefcase with a letter from Dean Jenkins explaining that the architecture students were participating in an educational experiment.

Following the beach events, Ant Farm tried unsuccessfully to infiltrate the curriculum in a more permanent way. But a residue of the group's influence persisted in the college for many years: anti-formalist design excursions included inflatables, soft architecture, superstructures, and temporary buildings, ideas influenced by Ant Farm or featured in the British magazine *AD* (a phenomenon that hit U.S. schools of architecture the way the Beatles or Rolling Stones did in music). Students adopted a distinct style of drawing that Archigram member Mike Webb called "bowellism" because the flowing tubes and body organ-like lumps resembled that part of the anatomy.

Fred George, studying in the college at the time, took advantage of the loosened attitudes to build a loft inside the architecture studio building, where he lived for a period of time after he and his wife split up. It made sense, George said, "since we were practically living there anyway." He had noticed how some upperclassmen had built some territorial boundary structures, or lockers, which were large enough to lie down in after pulling an all-nighter. George pushed the idea a bit further, worked up a proposal for an actual living loft, and passed it under the noses of the dean and assistant dean. With tacit

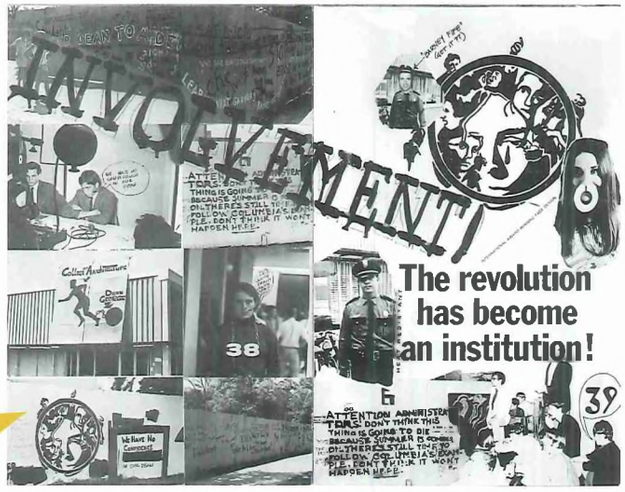




...for a time the UH architecture school was a bit of **La Rive Gauche in Houston.**

This page
1. UH student and future Congressman Mickey Leland speaks into a microphone.
2. Ant Farm inflatable at Freeport, Texas, 1969.
3. Building X with silo addition. Edmond Furley, architect, 1953.
Opposite
1. Dilapidated site at 2620 Lyons in Pearl Harbor, a Fifth Ward neighborhood, before collaboration between Human Organization for Political and Economic Development (HOPE) and John Zemanek's UH fourth-year studio.
2. A game of basketball at Pearl Harbor site after Project Hope.
3. Fourth-year student handpainting a graphic.
4. Exterior logo on wall at Pearl Harbor site after Project Hope.

1. Two pages from *Zero* document agitation by architecture students against university administration.
2. Detail from *Zero*.
3. Pages from a student publication entitled *Concepts of Educational Mobility: A Report to the United States Office of Education*.
4. UH architecture student Fred George built a loft suspended inside the architecture studio building.
5. Fred George's loft exterior.



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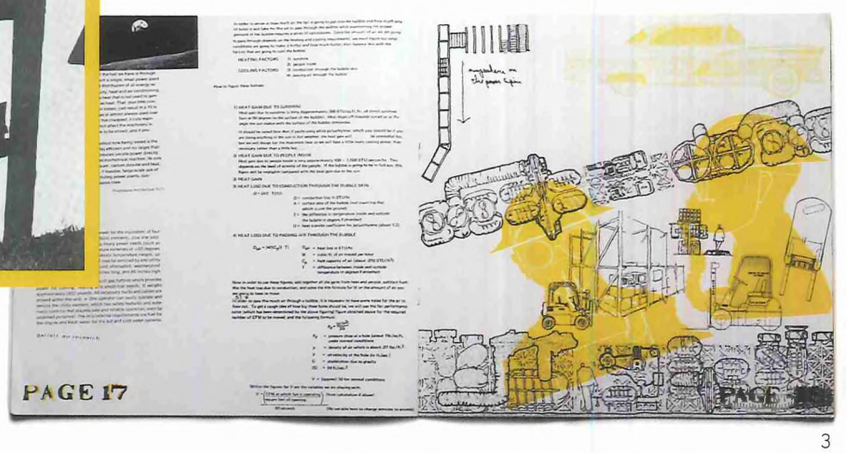

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approval from administrators ("the less we know about this, the better"), George rounded up cast-off materials, including a demo truss from a structures class and bundles of plywood rescued from the engineering department, which was constructing a wind tunnel, and assembled them into a makeshift loft installed over the studio spaces. He moved in, cooked his meals in an electric skillet, showered at the University Center, worked in the lab, and slept in the loft. It was the perfect parasitic arrangement, teasing out available space for ad hoc living. Then the university discovered what he was doing and George was evicted.

Like the counterculture itself, the places changed by those times gradually were absorbed into the mainstream and became less differentiated. Today UH tussles with goals like achieving Carnegie I status, and the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture is a corporate edifice that the fire marshal visits regularly to make sure no one is breaking the rules. But for a time the UH architecture school was a bit of La Rive Gauche in Houston. It may be a testament to the resilience and openness of American universities that they became a bivouac for the counterculture in the 1960s and '70s. It may also be the case that a revolutionary spirit and a sense of social justice and involvement, along with a hedonistic avant-garde, were shaped and softened in these proxy cities by keeping aesthetic distance from the real thing outside.

It may be a testament to the **resilience** and **openness** of American universities that they became a bivouac for the counterculture in the **1960s** and **'70s.**


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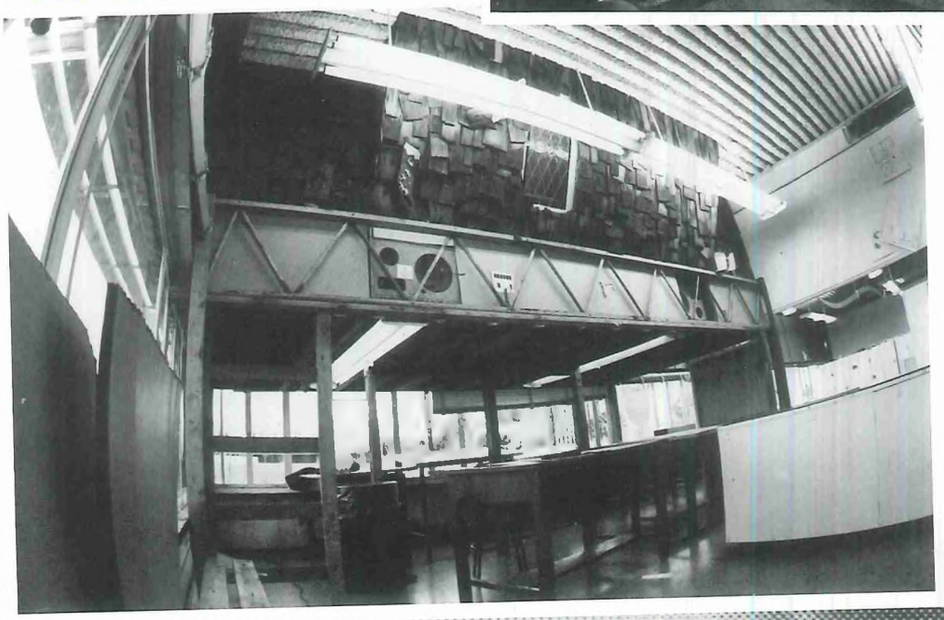
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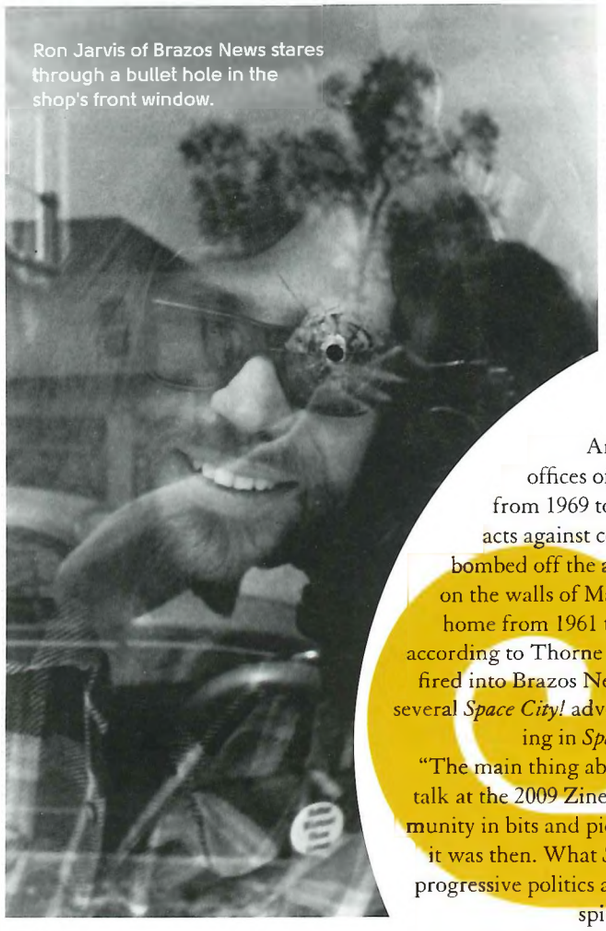
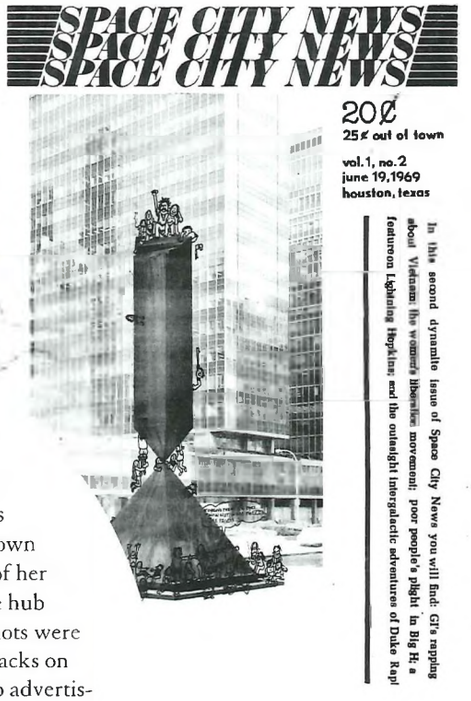


Ron Jarvis of Brazos News stares through a bullet hole in the shop's front window.

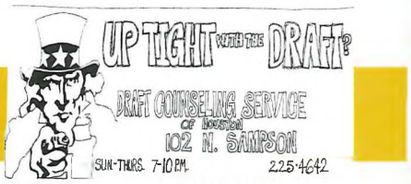


"The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is watching you."

An arrow bearing that note was shot into the offices of *Space City!*, an underground paper published from 1969 to 1972. The incident was one among many violent acts against countercultural groups. The KPFT transmitter was bombed off the air twice. Bullets were shot at and yellow paint thrown on the walls of Margaret Webb Dreyer's gallery, which she ran out of her home from 1961 to 1975. The gallery had served as a counterculture hub according to Thorne Dreyer, her son and an editor of *Space City!*. Six shots were fired into Brazos News late Friday, April 9, 1971, during a night of attacks on several *Space City!* advertisers. All received calls saying, "If you don't stop advertising in *Space City!*, you'll lose more than just a window."

"The main thing about Houston was that it was all spread out," Dreyer said in a talk at the 2009 Zine Fest Houston. "There was no Houston there, [only] community in bits and pieces everywhere. Houston is much more of a city now than it was then. What *Space City!* did was to help to identify all these pockets of progressive politics and kindred spirits, and pull them together into a cohesive spirit…a network of countercultural stuff."

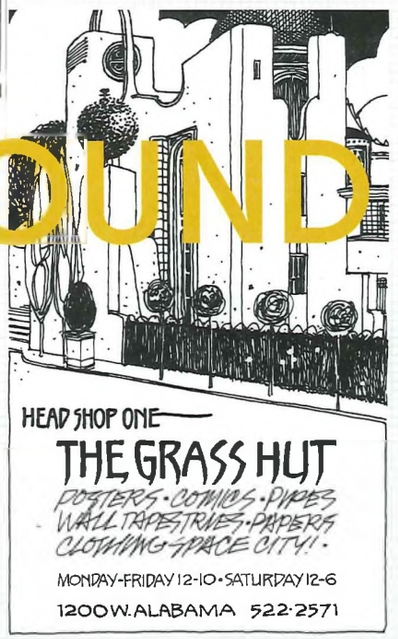
Underground in H-Town, an exhibition at the Museum of Printing History organized in partnership with the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, presents *Space City!* and other alternative press. *Voice of Hope*, *El Papel Chicano*, *Breakthrough*, and others are on view until July 24, 2010.



by Raj Mankad

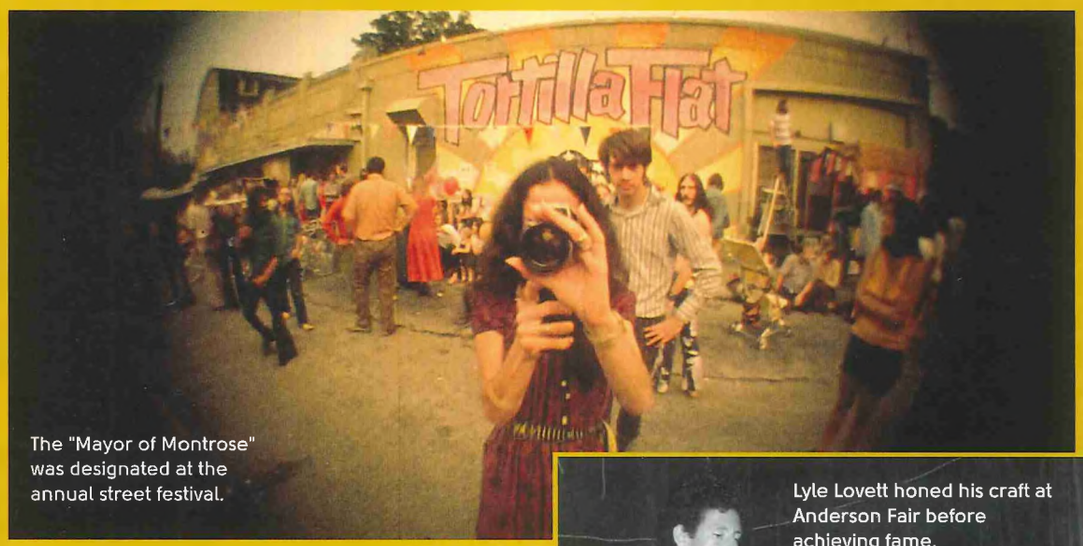
SPACE CITY! UNDERGROUND

DANIEL BOONE CYCLES
5318 Crawford 526-7011
JOY BOONE and SARAH PIPAS
Women who know bicycles

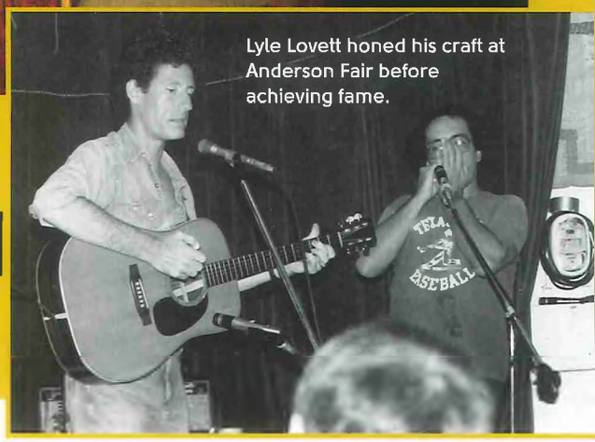


Pictured is a gathering of the paper's staff outside the *Space City!* office at 1217 Wichita. Front row, from left: Victoria Smith, Sherwood Bishop, Tanya Phillips (on Sherwood's shoulders), Susie Le Blanc, Molly Bing, Tina Phillips, Thorne Dreyer, Mark Wilson. Top row, from left: Russ Noland, Bobby Eakin (with lampshade), Sue Mithun Duncan, Tom Hylden, Bryan Baker, Bill Narum, Lynne Bateman, Kerry Fitzgerald, Vicki Gladson, Ernie Shawver, [Unidentified], Judy Gitlin Fitzgerald, Jim Shannon. Above lampshade: Connie Mendez. *Space City!* photo by Jerry Sebesta.

IMAGES THIS SPREAD: HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER



The "Mayor of Montrose" was designated at the annual street festival.


Lyle Lovett honed his craft at Anderson Fair before achieving fame.

Artists, Activists, and Weirdos

The Anderson Fairy Tale

by Hank Hancock

Grant Street, just one block east of Montrose Boulevard, is a discontinuous little road that acts as a sort of buffer between the boulevard and the narrow residential blocks to the east.

Its three separate segments include doglegs, oblique intersections, and many full stops created by a north-south freight railroad line that once ran through Montrose. In its middle section, a single square block just south of Texas Art Supply, for more than 40 years the revered acoustic and folk music venue Anderson Fair has let its freak flag fly.

Anderson Fair was founded as a restaurant in 1969 by partners Marvin Anderson and Gray Fair. Their friend Pat Stout cooked simple dishes, a limited menu of one or two offerings per day, soft tacos or spaghetti dinners for example. Very quickly, a community of hippies, artists, writers, activists, queers, and weirdos claimed the place as their own. The putative business was really more of a community hangout, playing host to progressive and countercultural ideas percolating within the Montrose neighborhood. McGovern leftists, opposing the war in Vietnam and exploring the possibilities of electoral politics in Houston, considered Anderson Fair their home base.

Some participants remember the early days of Anderson Fair as a family or a village, often insular but always generous. This community has been essential to the survival and relevance of Anderson Fair. To this day, the Fair is staffed and operated by volunteers.

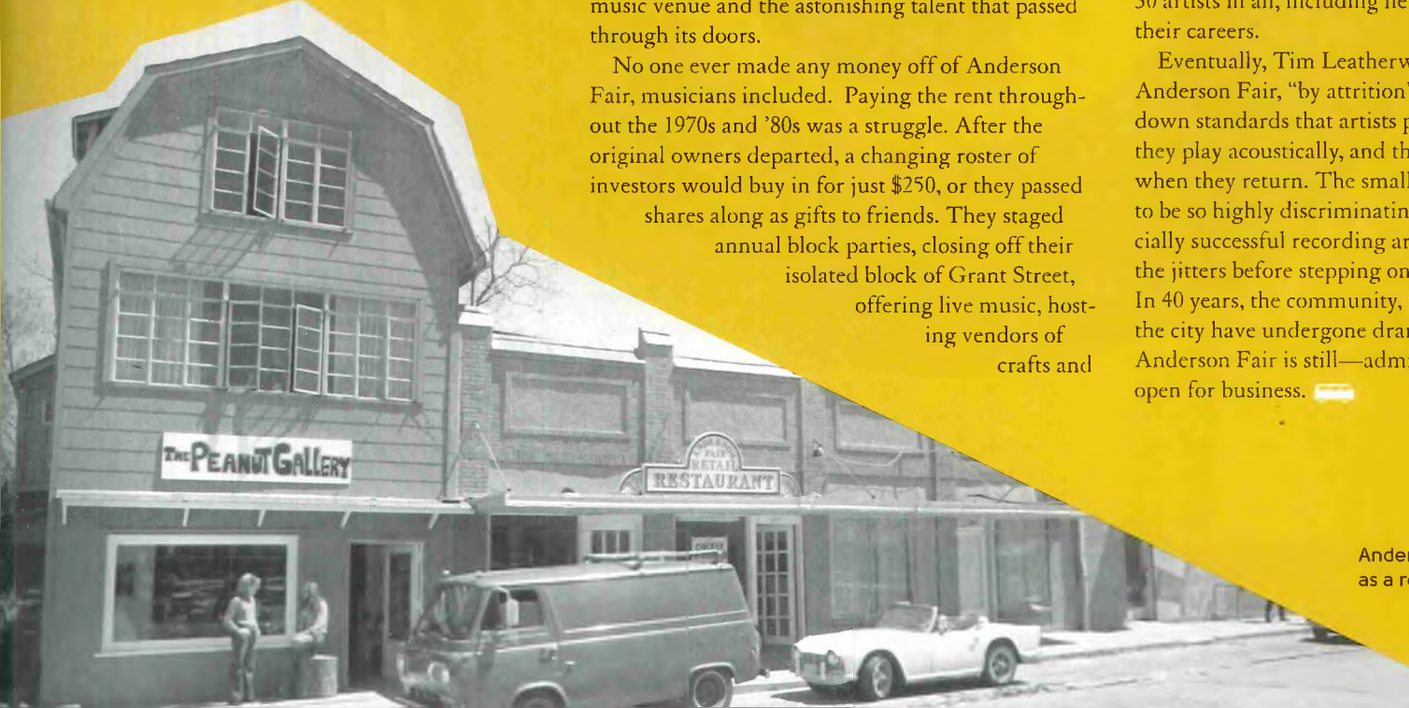
Within a few years of its founding, the focus of the enterprise had changed to live music. Until then, poets and singers would simply stand in a corner of the tiny dining room to sing or read for tips. Volunteers tore down the back wall, expanded the brick floor, and built a stage, using recovered timbers, glass, and fixtures. The improvisational structure stands today as a testament to amateur enthusiasm and DIY ingenuity.

The documentary **For The Sake Of The Song: The Story of Anderson Fair** by Jim Barham and Bruce Bryant, which made its debut in March at SXSW in Austin and first played in Houston at Worldfest on April 10, collects some of these memories through interviews with key participants, and then goes on to offer a long, loving tribute to the music venue and the astonishing talent that passed through its doors.

No one ever made any money off of Anderson Fair, musicians included. Paying the rent throughout the 1970s and '80s was a struggle. After the original owners departed, a changing roster of investors would buy in for just $250, or they passed shares along as gifts to friends. They staged annual block parties, closing off their isolated block of Grant Street, offering live music, hosting vendors of crafts and underground news and comics, and raising enough money that way to make rent and repairs. From time to time, music-loving benefactors would step in.

While Anderson Fair was an indispensible part of the Montrose community throughout its heyday in the 1970s, it has made its name as a premier venue in Texas and across the country for singer-songwriters. Once the folk revival of the 1960s had faded, Anderson Fair continued to feature stalwarts like Townes Van Zandt and Dave Van Ronk, and then went on to foster the talents of later generations of songsters, including Lyle Lovett and Nanci Griffith. The documentary film includes profiles of 30 artists in all, including newer artists just starting their careers.

Eventually, Tim Leatherwood took charge of Anderson Fair, "by attrition" as he puts it. He laid down standards that artists play original music, that they play acoustically, and that they bring new songs when they return. The small audiences are known to be so highly discriminating that even commercially successful recording artists can't help but get the jitters before stepping onto the modest platform. In 40 years, the community, the neighborhood, and the city have undergone dramatic changes, but Anderson Fair is still—admirably, impossibly—open for business.



Anderson Fair was founded as a restaurant in 1969.

sites of

Domestic Environments Between **Protest** and **Poetry** 1968-1977

ersion

fig. 1

John Zemanek, Residence at 1723 Colquitt, 1968.

by **Michelangelo Sabatino**

During the **1960s** and **'70s** a number of experimental, subversive domestic environments that conflated protest with poetic responses to the political and social upheavals of the Age of Aquarius were constructed by architects, builders, and entrepreneurs in Houston. Although these sites spoke different architectural languages, they shared a countercultural desire to experiment and defy convention.

The architect John Zemanek designed his house in Montrose (1968, **fig. 1**) by embracing an aesthetic of modesty, materialized in his skillful deployment of untreated wood and cement board panels. Joe Mashburn, Jerry Lunow, and Charles Keith, while working for Charles Tapley, adopted an anti-architecture mobile stance for their award-winning project "Take Me to the Mountain" (1970, **fig. 2**) that proposed a flexible dwelling for their client, Camille Waters, involving a Volkswagen van on a site in the Texas Hill Country. The architect Eugene Aubry championed the hybrid with his Roy Avenue Townhouses (S. I. Morris & Associates, 1974, **fig. 3**) in Houston's West End, where he appropriated corrugated, galvanized sheet iron siding from the neighborhood's industrial vernacular buildings to create a loft-like domestic environment, somewhere between gallery and workshop. In the suburban neighborhood of Southampton near Rice University, architect Barry Moore grafted a zome (Steve Baer's version of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome) onto the back alley garage he designed for the brothers Albert and Tim Maher (**fig. 4**). Hippie builder Jon Patrick Lewis and his wife, Cheryl, relied on Fuller's formulas to economically build a quirky geodesic dome in the fields southeast of Houston (1977, **fig. 5**). During the same years, John Milkovisch, a retired upholsterer for the Southern Pacific Railway, transformed an ordinary working-class bungalow of the 1920s with a flattened-beer-can patchwork (1974, **fig. 6**).

Whether single-family houses or additions and alterations to extant buildings, and whether anti-establishment or environmentalist in approach, these initiatives were premised on a rejection of the mainstream modernist fixation on "good design." Working against the grain of large-scale commercial and institutional projects as the Astrodome (1965), NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center (now the Johnson Space Center) (1964), and the Galleria (1969-71), these small, subtle domestic environments found a receptive constituency, marking Houston as a center of counterculture activity. Relatively low real estate prices helped, as did an environment characterized by the coexistence of high and low cultures in close proximity to each other, a juxtaposition made possible by Houston's opportunistic embrace of "de-regulation" (i.e. no zoning) and only occasionally countered by government sponsored large-scale initiatives and neighborhood "covenants" that establish limited forms of control over development.

An Architecture of Modesty

During the late 1960s and '70s, it was not uncommon for architects to romanticize the primitive ingenuity of vernacular builders in reaction to positivist visions of a future that had surrendered to science and space travel, a world in thrall to "progress." Architecture schools, led by Yale, developed design-build practicums aimed at breaking down the barriers between studio education and the realities of the construction

PAUL HESTER

This embrace of "on-the-road" dwelling culture (campers, vans, and motor-

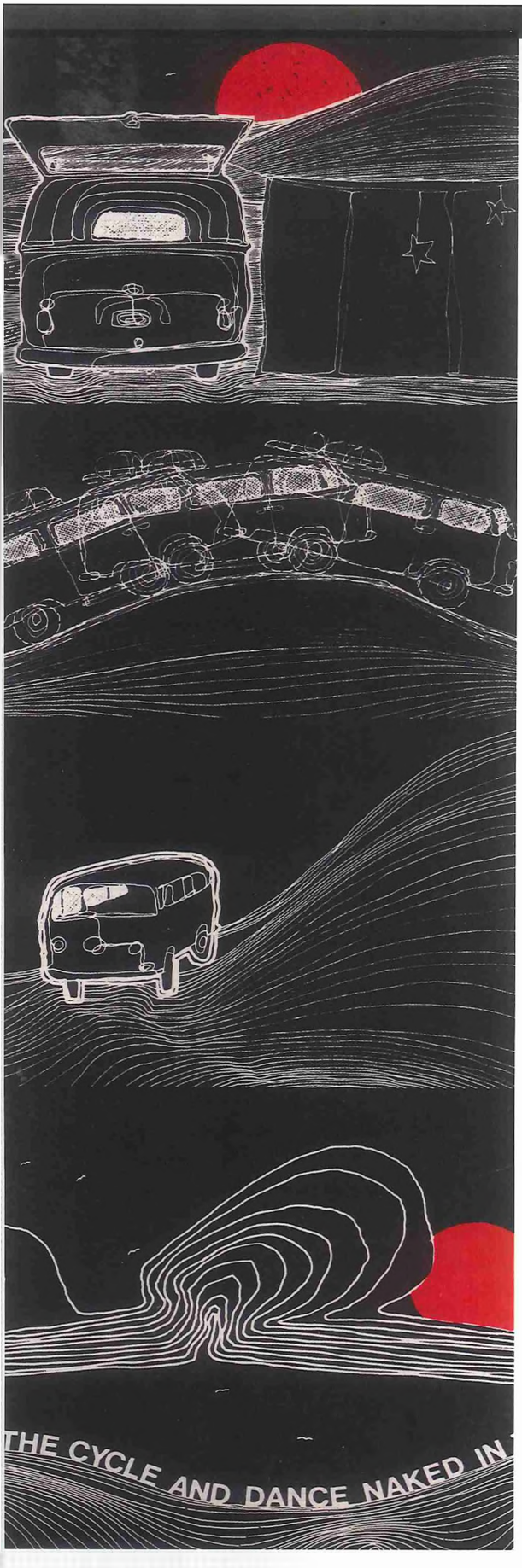


fig. 2 **Presentation Drawings, "Take Me to the Mountain," Charles Tapley and Associates (Joseph L. Mashburn, Jerry M. Lunow, Charles A. Keith, and Camille Waters), 1970.**

site. Charles W. Moore, Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, initiated the program in 1967, travelling with students to New Zion, Kentucky, to build community structures designed in consultation with New Zion residents, which is documented in Richard W. Hayes's *The Yale Building Project: The First 40 Years* (2007). A similar effort unfolded when John Zemanek, Professor of Architecture at the University of Houston, was asked by Houston's Mayor Louis Welch to design and build the 3-H Services Center for Bordersville, a rural African-American community near Humble. Completed in 1977, the project won Zemanek and his collaborators a national design award from the American Institute of Architects. The University of Houston fourth-year studio student-led initiative (supported and developed by Zemanek) for the auspices of HOPE (Human Organization for Political and Economic Development) was completed in 1970 and covered by C. Ray Smith in the November 1970 issue of *Progressive Architecture*. It involved restoring a ramshackle building (and adding a playground) on Lyons Avenue in Houston's African-American Fifth Ward neighborhood. Together with the students, Zemanek demonstrated that architects teaching at public institutions could (and should) subvert mainstream expectations and contribute to counterculture with concrete initiatives that carried a political message.

For his own house on Colquitt (1968, **fig. 7**), Zemanek's plans and sections combined the materiality and spatial qualities of the modest, yet dignified agrarian buildings familiar from his youth in Fort Bend County—"Pioneer Texas Buildings," to use the title of Clovis Heimsath's 1968 book—with the spirituality of the temples, gardens, and houses he had discovered in Japan. Between 1951 and 1952, Zemanek worked for the American architects Raymond & Rado, best known for their poetic integration of European and Japanese building principles. Leaving behind the slick corporate modernism of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) who completed a number of tall-buildings in Houston during the late 1960s and '70s and the media-savvy presentation that made Ant Farm's House of the Century (1972, **fig. 9**) outside Angleton a countercultural icon, Zemanek chose introspective silence over performance. His decision to employ wood (mainly left untreated and "raw") as the primary structural and four-by-eight-foot and ten-by-twelve-foot cement boards for the house led Zemanek away from the crisp industrial steel and glass aesthetic that dominated mid-century modernism, modeled on Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House of 1951. Though its expression aligned itself with the vernacular modernism of Condominium One at The Sea Ranch, completed in 1965 by Moore Lyndon Turnbull Whitaker (MLTW), Zemanek's austere approach to designing and building his three-pavilion, 1,500-square-foot house echoed the ethical precept that Mies had so famously pronounced: "Less is more."

Toward an Anti-Architecture

Commenting on the *Progressive Architecture* (P/A) Award jury's decision to present a design award to Joe Mashburn, Jerry Lunow, Charlie Keith, and their client, Camille Waters, for their hand-drawn scheme "Take Me to the Mountain," juror Edward Larrabee Barnes stated: "I feel a little as though we are jumping on something that is a fashionable bandwagon. But this is something that you want to have people see. It is on the way to something—as a way of life. I think this is being cited for a process—we are not judging a finished design." The central ecological concerns of "Take Me to the Mountain" led to its anti-architecture stance. (During that same year, Ant Farm's "media van and self-contained life support unit" was deployed by the group to do research for their "Truckstop" project, an initiative promoting a lifestyle of frugality and mobility.) When Waters expressed the desire to live on her 55-acre Hill Country property (**fig. 8**), the three architects (all working for Charles Tapley & Associates, under whose name the project was submitted for the P/A Award) suggested that instead of constructing a house, she could temporarily inhabit three different sites by using a Volkswagon van and elements such as a tent and hammock. Rather than setting out to transform the site with "irreversible design," the four architects took an approach that synthesized rural ingenuity and urban sophistication. Not by coincidence, their title echoed the 1969 album *Take Me to the Mountain* by the Austin psychedelic-rock group Shiva's Headband (the band continues to perform in Austin under the name of Shiva's Headband Experience). In an interview for the July 23, 2009, issue of *Architect Magazine*, Mashburn, the head designer and project coordinator, reported that Waters eventually built "a very small, un-plumbed cabin" and continued to maintain the site unaltered until she sold it.

This embrace of a "on-the-road" dwelling culture (campers, vans, and motor homes) speaks to the valuing of discovery and freedom over convention and immobility. To some extent the project was aligned with the counterculture

IMAGES THIS PAGE COURTESY JOE MASHBURN. OPPOSITE PAGE: ROY AVE TOWNHOUSES BY SERGE AMBROSE; ZOME COURTESY BARRY MOORE; BEER CAN HOUSE DETAIL BY

nes) speaks to the valuing of discovery and freedom over convention and immobility.

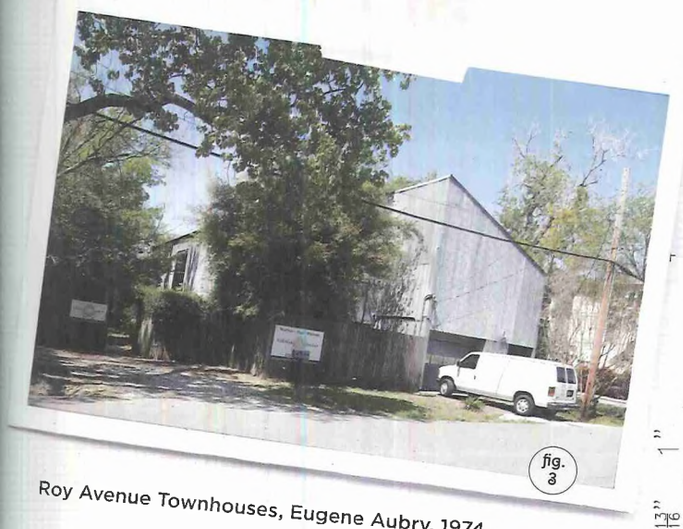


fig. 3

Roy Avenue Townhouses, Eugene Aubry, 1974.

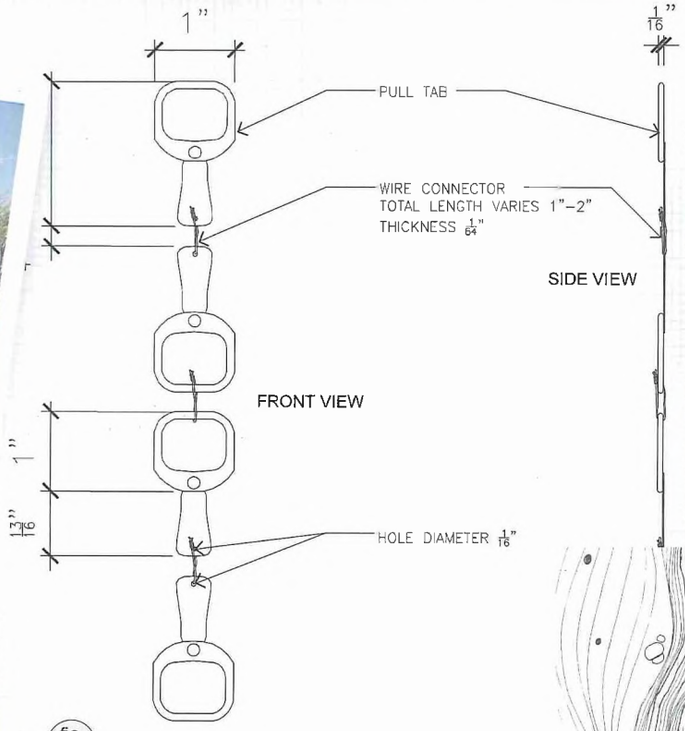


fig. 6

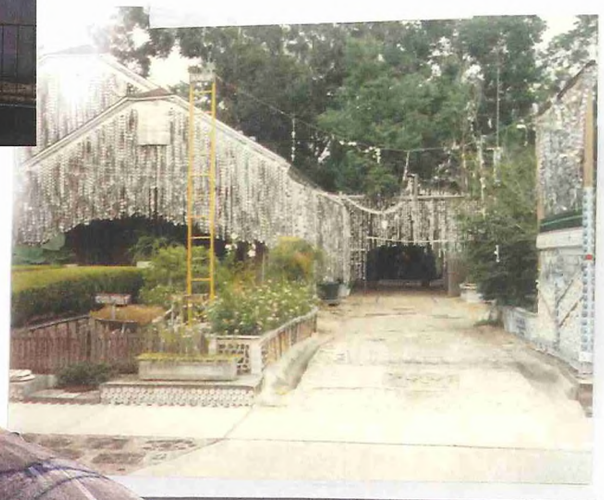
Beer Can House, John Milkovisch, 1974.

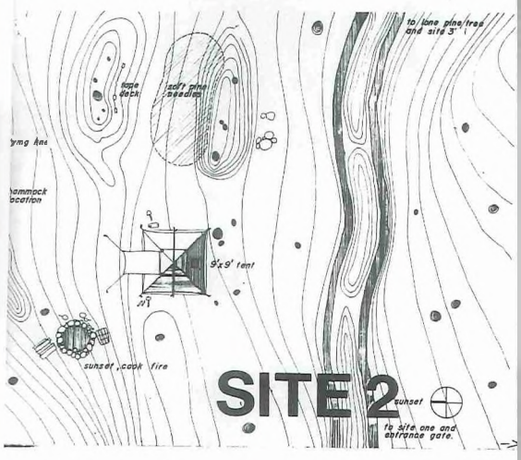
fig. 7

John Zemanek Residence, Interior.

fig. 4

Albert and Tim Maher Zome, Barry Moore, 1971.





Jon Patric Lewis, Geodesic Dome, 1977.

fig. 5

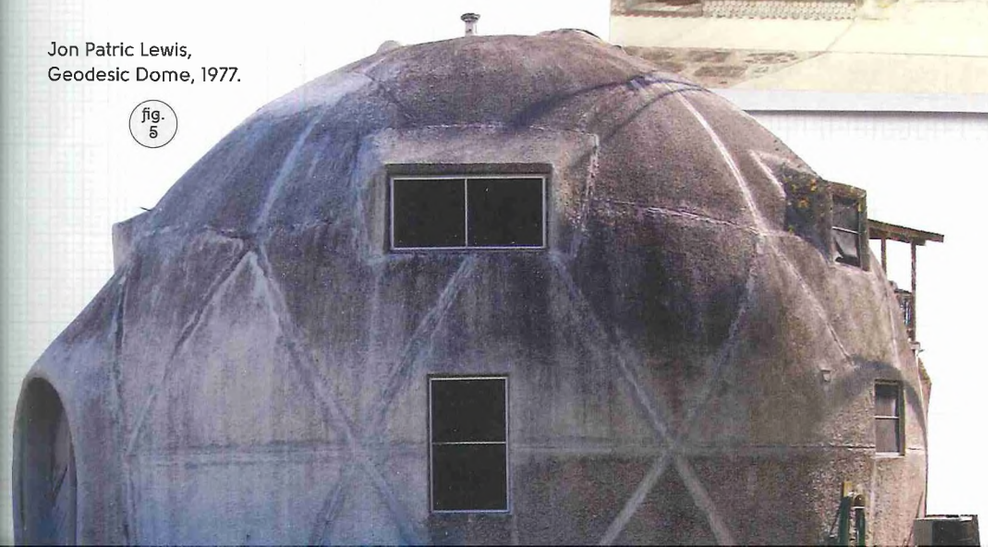
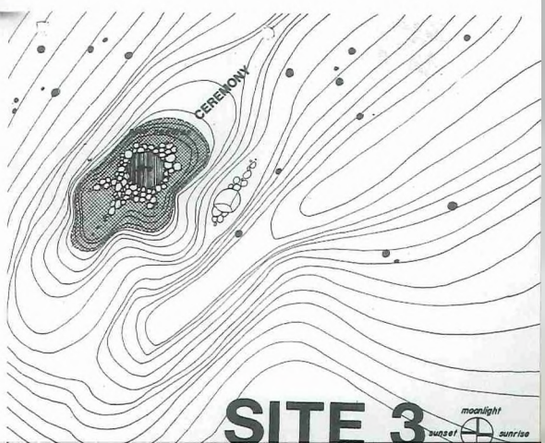


fig. 8

Presentation Drawings, Site 1, 2, 3 - "Take Me to the Mountain," Charles Tapley and Associates



zeitgeist: an anti-corporate "architecture without architects" self-reliance had prompted the publication of a profusion of do-it-yourself manuals in the late 1960s and '70s (fig. 10). For example, *Shelter*, published in 1973, was a scrapbook of dwelling environments ranging from tree houses to adobe structures, gathered and edited by Lloyd Kahn (followed by *Shelter II* in 1978). In response to Reyner Banham's "architecture of the well-tempered environment" and Rachel Carson's environmentalist call to action with *Silent Spring* (1962), *Shelter* and *Whole Earth Catalog* (1969)—followed by *Last Whole Earth Catalog* (1971) and *Whole Earth Epilog* (1974), among other editions—became bibles for off-the-grid, counterculture, "green" enthusiasts around the country who understood that they were the custodians of a "limited planet," to use Jon Naar and Norma Skurka's term. It is worth recalling that environmental activist organization Greenpeace was founded in the early '70s.

Less concerned with cutting-edge architecture than with the beneficial impact of master planning, the independent oilman George P. Mitchell founded The Woodlands in 1974 well north of Houston. The environmentalist attitude of Mitchell's primary planning consultant, the Philadelphia landscape architect Ian McHarg, guided development of The Woodlands, intended to offer a soothing "green" alternative to Houston's visual and spatial chaos.

An Architecture of Hybridity

Furthering the idea that drove the design of the Menil-sponsored "Art Barn" and Rice Media Center at Rice University (1969–70, designed with his then partner Howard Barnstone), Eugene Aubry of S. I. Morris Associates made utilitarian space the new residential chic in Houston. Commissioned by his sister-in-law, the art dealer Fredericka Hunter, along with her partner Ian Glennie and Simone Swan, then Vice President of the Menil Foundation, Aubry appropriated the material and spatial qualities of the pre-engineered metal industrial buildings built in the city's West End for his design of two houses sharing a party wall (fig. 11). Clad with galvanized sheet iron (years before Frank Gehry combined corrugated metal and chain link for his Santa Monica residence, 1977-78) and defined by boxy volumes capped by shed roofs, the loft-like houses' understated exterior gave way to abstract, rather monumental gallery-like interior spaces sheathed in drywall.

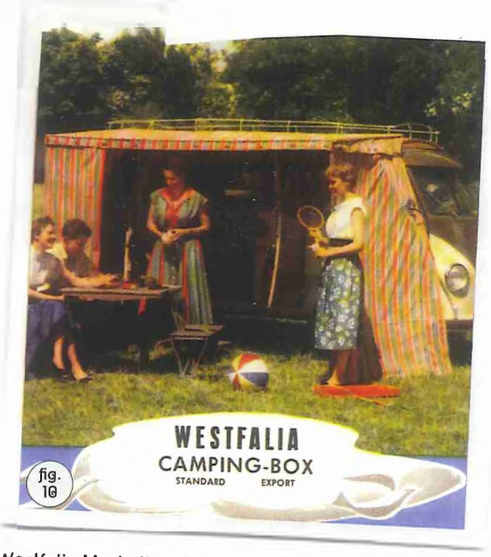


fig. 10

Westfalia Marketing Brochure, 1955.

Walter Hopps, the first Director of the Menil Collection, and his wife, Caroline Huber, subsequently lived in the house built for Hunter, contributing to the transformation of the West End into a hotbed of political and artistic activism in the 1980s and '90s. This hybrid of industrial and civic building types was also evident in the sleek stainless steel panels of the Contemporary Arts Museum (1972), designed by Gunnar Birkerts. In *Gunnar Birkerts: Buildings, Projects, and Thoughts 1960-1985*, Birkerts described his minimalist museum as "caught between residential and commercial" and asserted that the stainless steel walls were meant to "reflect and deflect traffic." Aubry's use of metal surfacing was purposefully not sleek, however. Its raw look aligned what Hunter humorously nicknamed the "Tin Houses" with the working-class landscape of the West End, an anti-domestic hybrid of the neighborhood's humble dwellings and its spaces of production.

Toward an Adhoc Architecture

In the wake of the excitement over the economic and spatial potential of geodesic domes and zomes, the brothers Albert and Tim Maher charged architect Barry Moore of Harvin C. Moore & Barry Moore with rehabilitating a 1920s house in the Southampton neighborhood near Rice University, which included adding a backyard garage with a zome on top. Moore recalled their visit with Steve Baer, the residential designer

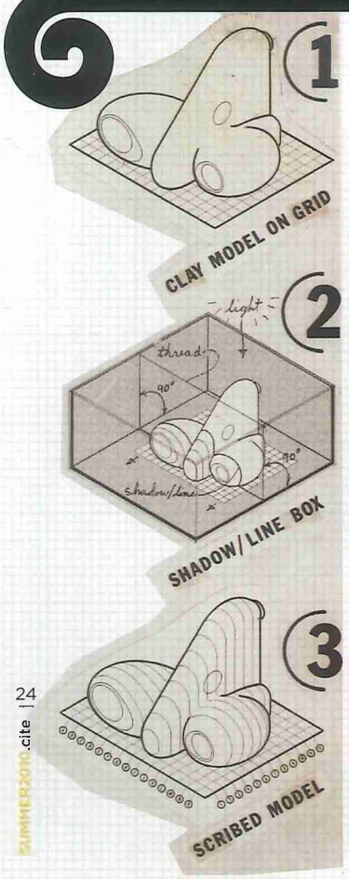
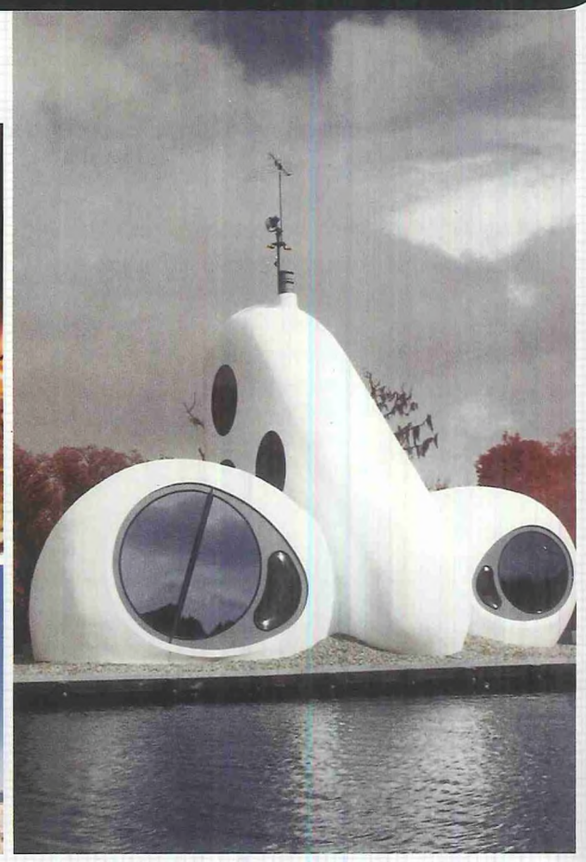



fig. 9 Ant Farm's House of the Century, 1972.



BROCHURE FROM COLLECTION OF GREG NOBLE. DIAGRAM FROM *ZERO*. INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR COURTESY CHIP LORD

These initiatives were premised on a rejection of the mainstream modernist fixation on **"good design"** ...

fig. 11

View of Roy Avenue Townhouses, Eugene Aubry, 1974.

who invented the multifaceted geometric zome: "We flew to New Mexico in [the Mahers'] father's Lear jet and spent two days with the inventor—enough for me to figure out how to work with the system and get a building permit." Today, the zome still stands, although it is somewhat difficult to spot amid the now profuse vegetation.

During those years, thanks to his friendship with Howard Barnstone, Buckminster Fuller visited Houston and interacted with the students of the University of Houston. Under Fuller's supervision, undergraduate architecture students John R. Dossey and Guillermo L. Trotti designed "Counterpoint—A Lunar Colony," entirely based on principles of "space architecture." In the preface of the students' thesis Fuller wrote on April 18, 1974: "You are thinking and formulating in ways I discipline myself to pursue. Don't loath to discard your 'beautifully complex' solutions and substitute your undramatically simplest solutions and do that again and again until it all looks so obviously simple that everyone will say 'anybody could design that.' And they will never know what you went through how much God went through before evolving his hydrogen atoms and blades of grass and eggs."

Decidely not as "beautifully complex" but nonetheless ingenuous in its realization, some years later, Cheryl and Jon Patrick Lewis built their own geodesic dome in Webster, just minutes from NASA's Johnson Space Center. Today the dome stands, although it is in a state of disrepair that threatens its survival.

During the 1960s and early '70s, domes (and zomes) were viewed as the next frontier, especially by the hippie generation, whose members rejected the middle-class conventions of privacy identified with their parents: the dome and zome design offered clients (who were oftentimes the builders as well) an opportunity to forego subdividing houses into discrete rooms and thus promote informal, collective living. The most noteworthy experiment that involved domes and zomes was the artists' community called Drop City in Trinidad, Colorado. In 1966 Buckminster Fuller gave it the Dymaxion Award, citing its "poetically economic" response to the need for dwellings. In the introduction to *Domebook 2* (1971), Lloyd Kahn wrote: "This is a story of a new indigenous architecture in the deserts, valleys and mountains of America. This book is an information net among builders and communities, a sharing of our experiences with these new shelters, which approximate curves."

An Outsider Architecture

Combining a sensitivity to handcraft and cladding (a skill he developed during years of employment as an upholsterer) with the offbeat material of ordinary aluminum beer cans, John Milkovisch made his "outsider" contribution to Houston's countercultural dwellings of the period. The Beer Can House, a 1920s bungalow sheathed in flattened beer cans and garlands of the same material, brings an Airstream sensibility (**fig. 12**) together with the whimsy of ready-made Adhocism, a concept developed by Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, incorporating both modern and anti-modern attributes. Milkovisch, a self-trained artist who turned to his masterpiece after retiring from his full-time job, is quoted on beercanhouse.org: "some people say this is sculpture, but I didn't go to no expensive school to get these crazy notions." Houston postman turned artist-inventor Jeff McKissack, who began building the Orange Show in 1956 and worked on it until his death in 1980, echoed this "architecture without architects" sentiment when, as quoted at orangeshow.org, he asserted, "You could take 100,000 architects and 100,000 engineers and all of them put together couldn't conceive of a work like this." The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art acquired the Beer Can House after Milkovisch died. Mark Bradford, a nationally acclaimed art car artist, lived in and maintained the house until the Orange Show began its conservation work, then created his own version of countercultural domesticity on Heights Boulevard across from the Art Car Museum (the house was recently demolished).

Today it is difficult to find contemporary examples of the experimental architecture that generated the counterculture sites of the past. The excitement and unease of those times has largely disappeared, retaining little power or influence on our present lives. Yet those who attended the most recent RDA architecture tour and saw the single-family house designed by Strasser/Ragni Architects with Emily Sing have evidence that the counterculture has not been forgotten altogether. Several posters from *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*, the 1968 play by James Rado and Gerome Ragni, adorn its walls. Although the luxurious minimalism of the house shares little with the experimental qualities of the 1960s counterculture architecture discussed in this article, these posters bring us back in time to the Age of Aquarius, when tribes of men and women (and architects) combined protest with poetry to produce sites of domestic subversion.

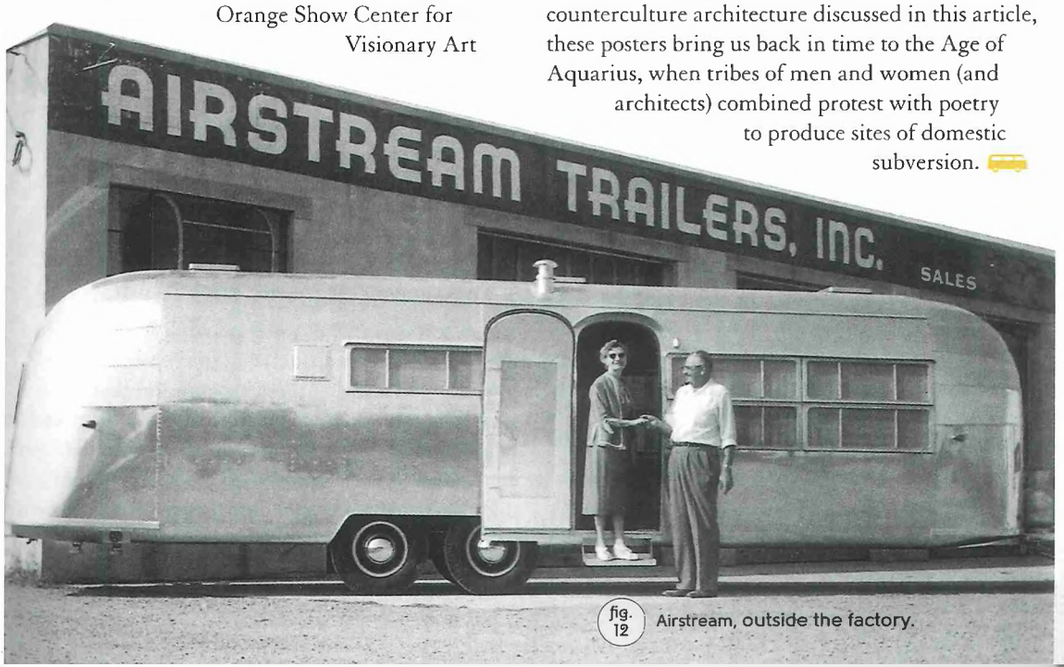
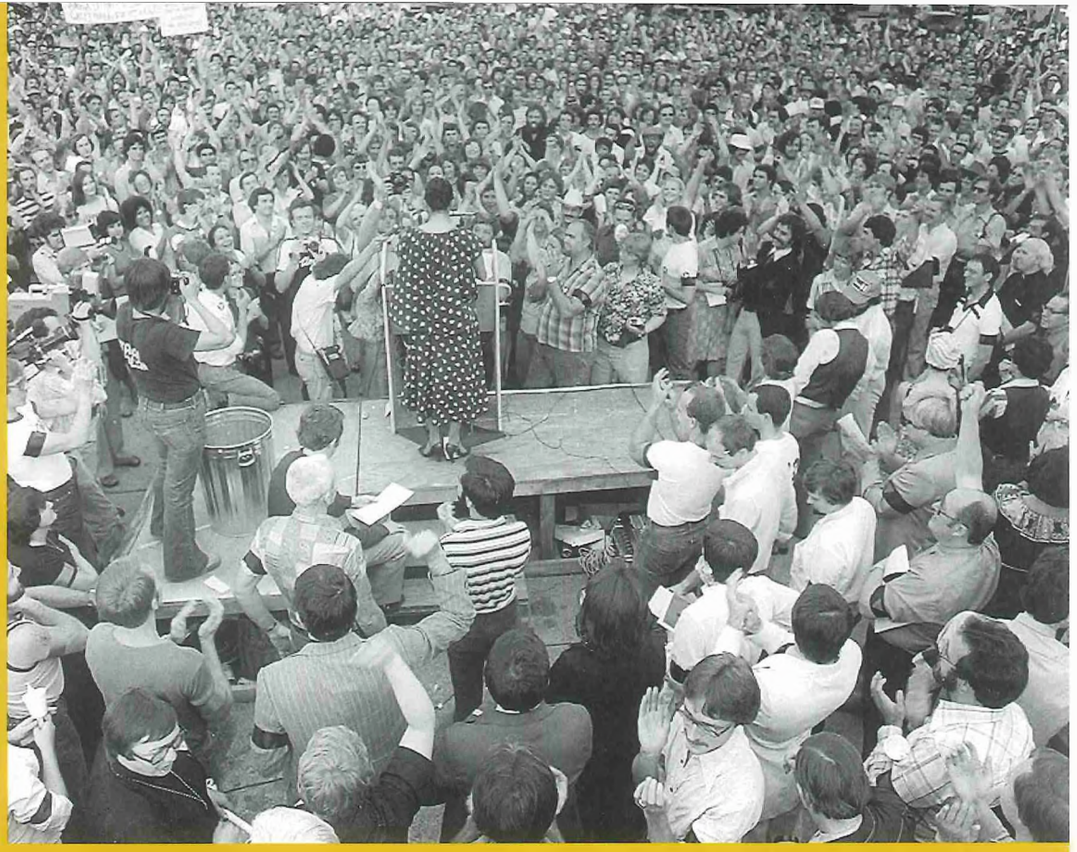


fig. 12 Airstream, outside the factory.

ROY AVENUE TOWNHOUSES PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGE AMBROSE; "OUTSIDE THE FACTORY" FROM BURKHART AND HUNT, *AIRSTREAM*, 25



Liz Torres, an actress in the hit TV show *All in the Family*, addresses a June 16, 1977, rally.

The Evolution of Queer Space in Houston

A Testimony from Ray Hill

Recorded by Raj Mankad

Thursday December 3, 2009, 2 p.m.
Berryhill Baja Grill at Montrose and Hawthorne

Testing one two three. My voice does carry. Been the blessing of my life.

I was in high school when I came out, and I was a football player. The cheerleaders were interested in me, but I just wasn't interested in the cheerleaders, at least not the female ones. Nobody knew what I was talking about because I didn't match the stereotype. Anyway, we beat Pasadena that year. That's the school's number one rival. If you go to Galena Park and your team beats Pasadena, you are a hero, if you are the quarterback, and I was the quarterback.

I started coming into town because I heard there were other gay people in town. I thought I had a budding career of being a street hustler, but that didn't work out. I gave too much product away.

Pretty quickly I fell in love. But I didn't do that right either. This was 1959 and '60, and I fell in love with a black guy who was also a high school athlete. We had a great time, but we didn't have anywhere to bump. We couldn't go to his grandmother's house with whom he lived over in Third Ward. She lived in one of those shotgun houses, and we tended to get carried away. We'd knock that house off its foundation. We could go to my house, but from Downtown to where I lived in Northshore, we had to catch a bus, go out to McCarty drive. There was a trolley out that way that ran between Houston and Baytown. They didn't have a stop, but they'd let you off and you'd have to walk a mile to the house. By the time we got there, it's time to start back because he had to work at the Texaco station Downtown at eight o'clock in the morning. We couldn't go to the hotel because the world was segregated. We couldn't go to the YMCA because they had a YMCA for me and my kind, and a YMCA for him and his kind.

So the only place we could bump was on the front porch of [a church Downtown]. They've got this brick fence across the front of the porch behind which is a lot of space [...]

In those days, screwing was a felony. You could go to prison for that. It wasn't until 1973 that the law changed, and it became a Class D misdemeanor where you would get a citation, and presumably left to what you were doing before you got the ticket. I met five old men, who because of multiple convictions—if you got convicted for sodomy three times then another law kicked in called the habitual criminal act, and you could get life—with a life sentence in Texas prisons.

Going to prison was a very real fear. Gay bars in that era were not like South Beach, J.R.'s, and "The Mine." There was the Pine Lounge at the corner of Holman and Almeda. Basically it was a garage apartment where the house had either burned or they had torn it down. So they turned that it into a parking lot, made a bar out of the garage without much improvement. The guy who owned it lived upstairs.

There were no nice bars. Every place was sleazy. Ken Ray's Red Devil at Southmore and Almeda was down in a strip shopping center. There were people who wouldn't go there because you could see the front door from the street. The China Gate and the Lounge Royal were very popular places because the door was around in back, and nobody could see you going in if they were passing by. And nothing had been purpose-built as a gay bar. Drinks were more expensive than they were in anybody else's bar. They were taking profits, and you were pretty much a captive audience.

But in the mid-60s, the real gathering place was not in the bars because bars were dark and the music was loud. After the bar closed, everybody would go to a restaurant where you would actually meet and talk to people, carry on conversations about issues of the day and where you worked and what you did. And the restaurant that was most convenient in that era was Cokin's restaurant. The building is still there on Main Street near where Wendy's is under the freeway. It's now a beauty parlor or something. It was owned by a guy named Bernard Cokin, who had actually inherited the restaurant from his ancestor. He never married, and he didn't want anybody to think he was queer. He would intermittently decide he didn't want us there. We'd be ready to go meet our friends, we'd go running to the restaurant, and they wouldn't let us in the door. So we organized a committee to find a new restaurant.

COURTESY HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER, PHOTO THIS PAGE FROM ROD GUN 8-12-77, HOUSTON POST COLLECTION

THE ONE-LEGGED, QUEER, EX-CONVICT RADIO HOST OF *THE PRISON SHOW*, RAY HILL, IS AN INEXHAUSTIBLY PROVACATIVE RACONTEUR

There was Simpson's Diner, which was one of those railcar diners at Main and Bell. But it wasn't big enough to hold us. We looked around and found the building where Katz's is now. It was owned by a fellow named Art Wren who was also a single gentleman up in years. It only operated weekdays and Saturday until about three o'clock in the afternoon. We needed a place that was open when the bar was closed. So Paul Stewart, Joey Bosh, Carl Huff, and I—Joey and Carl were drag queens, and Paul Stewart was an advertising genius for Neiman Marcus, a design man but very out and in-your-face rambunctious big loud guy, which I suppose you'd have to be to work for Stanley Marcus—went to talk to Art Wren.

He said, "Naw, I don't want to do that. First, I'd have to hire a short-order cook, and that costs money, and it might not work." So finally, we hired the cook. It didn't take about a couple of months where he realized he was going to make a lot of money here. We went about spreading the word. On our way over here, gay people, most of which lived on the other side of Main Street on the northern end of Third Ward, began to notice there were garage apartments, inexpensive duplexes, and boarding houses to live in over here.

Montrose dead-ended into Westheimer. Just went to Westheimer and stopped. Right there was what apparently had been at one time a very grand house. The first really nice bar was in that house, rearranged so that there was an entertainment space, a lounge, and relaxing bar or two. It was called May Britt's. It was a show bar. Drag queens could come in there and perform. It was a nice place. It was a well-done place.

In the old days [before the transition to Montrose] we would go dancing only on Sunday afternoon. They would have a "Tea Dance" at Hazel's Dessert Room on McGowen between Austin and Caroline streets. Hazel was one of these straight women who owned the gay bars of the era. When the cops would come, since I was the only one not old enough to drink, I would run back and Matt, the black bartender, would hide me under the sink where he washed the beer glasses until the cops left. And the cops came frequently in those days.

After we moved to Montrose, somebody said we really needed to have a private club where you had to be a member to get in. And they could serve mixed drinks instead of just beer and wine, and we could dance. So the Encore Club opened where California runs into Westheimer, now the location of a gyros place. That was the dancing bar.

Montrose is in pretty good shape compared to the condition it was in when we came. The largest population group in Montrose in the '50s and '60s seemed to be widowed women living in the houses their hard-working husband executives had built or bought for them. Slowly we began to occupy the space in Montrose, and Montrose took the place of Almeda Street. It didn't happen overnight. Gay guys with saws and paintbrushes, and some lesbians with saws and paintbrushes, went out looking for work. And they work for relatively cheap. Gay folks actually began to buy property over here. Gentrification began.

But until June 16, 1977, the words "gay community" meant the part of town where the bars were. It was a geographical reference.

Anita Bryant was to come to Houston to perform at the Bar Association State Convention at the Hyatt Regency. Jane Ely of the *Houston Post*, a large everybody-knows-she's-a-lesbian-closeted-dyke, was a columnist for the *Post*. She wrote a column called "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

I forget some people don't understand about Anita. Anita Bryant was a runner up Miss America. After her beauty pageant career, she became a fundamentalist Christian singer. She settled in South Florida. Broward County passed a non-discrimination ordinance against gay people. Anita started a crusade, which she named Save Our Children, to overturn that ordinance. It was picked up by the wires and carried all over the country so everyone knew what was going on in Miami. By the time she comes to Houston, she is a national icon.

We had over a month to organize. Given the proper tools—I had a radio show, we had a newspaper that came out every week, there was a bar rag called *This Week in Texas* came out every week—you can organize anything in a month.

Since I was the only ex-convict there, I dealt with the cops. B.G. "Pappy" Bond was captain of special ops. He says, "Well, how many people do you expect at this demonstration?"

I said, "Well, about 500."

He said, "That ain't possible. We've had demonstrations all over. Civil rights. Anti-war. All kinds of things. We've never had a demonstration with 500 people."

I said, "You better plan on it anyways."

We had 12,000. We marched from a gay bar called Depository II at the corner of Bagby and McGowen.

The plan we had agreed on expecting 500 people was that if we actually got that many, we would use the sidewalks on both sides of the street on Smith and Louisiana. That would put us going around the hotel where Anita was performing. We could have our rally between the library buildings next to City Hall. All that was agreed and planned. We worked it out. We couldn't close the street because there was no ordinance that allowed you to close the street at night.

When the crowd [got] to be 12,000, of course they had already started their journey, gone three or four blocks. This attractive young officer's radio went crackle crackle mumble mumble. "Mister Hill, Captain wants to talk to you."

I said, "OK." I took the radio. I said, "what can I do for you, captain?"

He said, "Take the goddamn street."

I said, "Well, captain, we've got two streets, which one?"

"Take both the mother***s."

The young officer heard that and said he would radio the other police.

I said the crowd is not going to do what your officers tell them to do. They're going to do what my marshals tell them to do. For marshals, I had these fairy-like gay guys and these little butch dykes. Why? Because they are instantly identifiable. You know they mean business because they look like they're queer. I called some of them, "You run down this row, you run down that row, you tell them to take the streets." And so here we've gone four blocks and we own turf that we did not have. You have any idea what that does to a crowd?

An early gay pride parade.

And then we get down to the hotel. Everybody's got to go around the hotel a couple of times. Chanting. We raise such a ruckus, Anita is just performing and they can't hear her sing. How much screaming do you have to do to kill the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" inside the hotel?

On our way back to our cars, because we had to come back from there after the demonstration, I realized that the words "gay community" no longer meant what part of town where the bars were. It meant a group of people with common goals and aspirations. We had literally become a community that night.

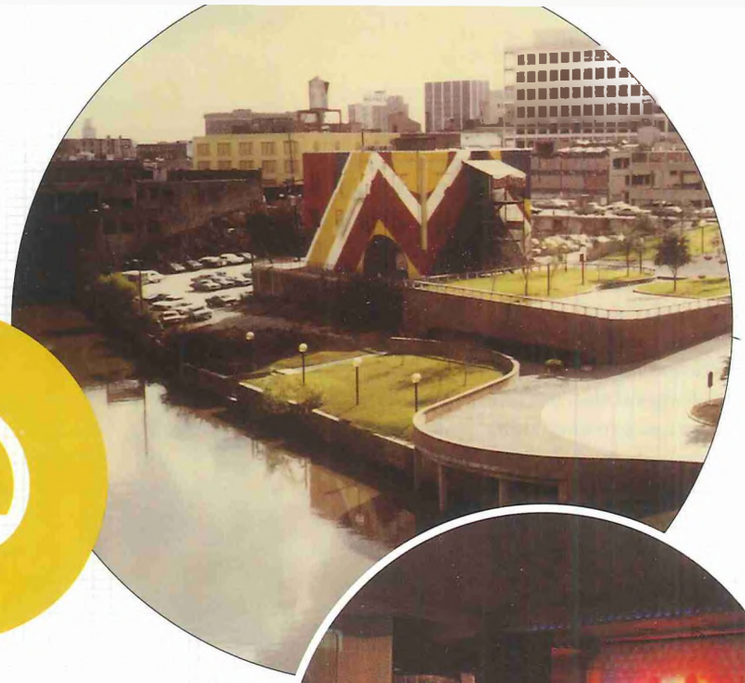
I then realized we didn't have any institutions to sustain a community. So I called Houston Town Meeting I. It was a Roman numeral, meaning there were going to be future town meetings. The Montrose Counseling Center, Montrose Clinic now Legacy Health Services, Gay Community Center, Gay Activities, and Montrose Sports Association were all formed in 1978. All of that grew out of Community Meeting I. Those institutions are still serving us. So if you've got a community suddenly out of nothing, you need to create institutions.

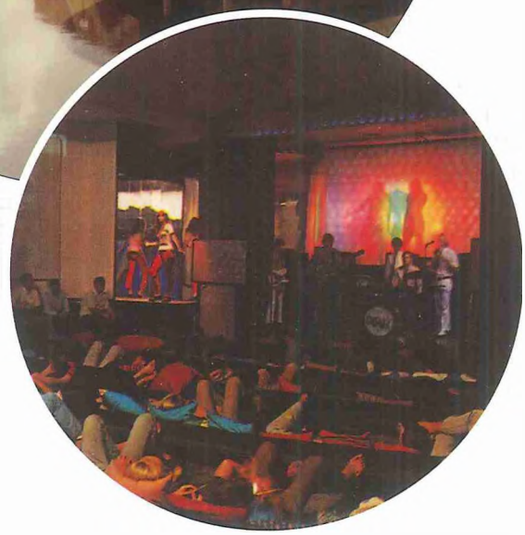
He said, "That ain't possible. We've had demonstrations all over...We've never had a demonstration with 500 people." We had 12,000.

hippie landing

LOVE STREET LIGHT CIRCUS FEEL GOOD MACHINE

by Catherine Essinger





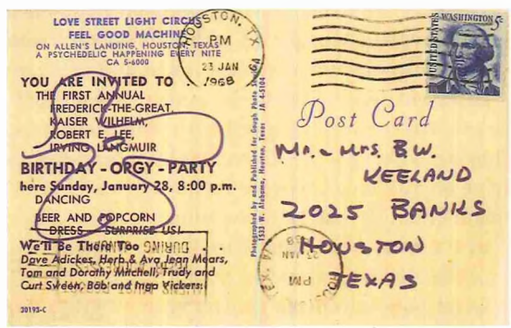
The International Coffee Building has reached its centennial this year, but no one is celebrating. The last warehouse left standing on Allen's Landing was built in 1910 when ships unloaded their goods directly into downtown Houston. The building's history was one of steady decline until 1967 when it experienced a rebirth and briefly became the central gathering point for an artistic crowd of Southern hippies.

The Houston Chamber of Commerce made this possible in 1963 when it created a committee to beautify the bayou and turn Allen's Landing into a park. University of Houston architecture professor H. William Linnstaedter served on the committee and designed the park with the involvement of his students. Burdette Keeland, Linnstaedter's colleague at the UH College of Architecture, and two financial partners hoped to capitalize on Linnstaedter's revitalization and purchased the two last warehouses on Allen's Landing: the International Coffee Building (sometimes called by its later name, the Sunset Coffee Building) and the W.D. Cleveland Building, which was probably constructed around 1880. They intended to tear down the older building and renovate the other into an upscale mixed-use facility designed by Keeland. The properties first housed conventional establishments like the Rio Posado Restaurant, where Keeland met with fellow architects (including Charles Moore) and business associates. One of their first renters, however, pulled them in a more colorful direction.

In 1967 artist David Adickes returned from a trip to San Francisco hoping to create a light show similar to one he saw at the Filmore Auditorium. He opened the Love Street Light Circus Feel Good Machine on the top floor of the International Coffee Building. It was a psychedelic rock club featuring a liquid light show, dancers, and the best rock bands in the region. Patrons could dance or lay back on pillows in the "Zonk Out" to watch the show. Adickes says he considered the club only a summer project. He sold it to Cliff Carlin in late 1967. Carlin, a retired Master Staff Sergeant in the Air Force, managed the club with his son, an architecture student at the University of Houston. As a result of this additional connection, Love Street became a regular hangout for UH architecture students. The regular performers at Love Street were legendary. The 13th Floor Elevators played often and could pack the house through word of mouth alone. Lightning Hopkins and Johnny Winter were other regulars. ZZ Top played their first gig at Love Street. They also blew out all the windows at a later show when a roadie used too much flash powder in a pyrotechnic effect. Once Jefferson Airplane stopped by after an arena show in Houston and asked if they could jam at Love Street after the scheduled band was finished.

At this time hippies were already congregating thickly at Market Square, where curious Houstonians would visit to observe the wild things in their native habitat—a form of cultural tourism that also occurred in San Francisco and Greenwich Village. The club drew them out to Allen's Landing, as well. Soon Keeland and partners were renting space to head shops that sold drug paraphernalia and other youth-oriented establishments like the Mind Mart Shop. Some of the existing venues couldn't survive the new market. The speakeasy-themed club, The Warehouse No. 1, was sometimes drowned out by the rock and roll on the upper floor. Keeland opened a gallery in the Cleveland Building called The Museum, which sold the creations of UH faculty and students. It was managed by future UH College of Architecture Dean Joe Mashburn and sold the original prototype of Doug Michaels and Bob Field's Tank Chair, later profiled in *Progressive Architecture*. The crowd in Allen's Landing couldn't afford such items, however, and the gallery closed within months. Mashburn and others remember the area becoming rough. Drug arrests in the area were reported in the local newspapers.

In 1970 Carlin closed the club to become more involved in International Artists Records. Keeland and his business partners tried unsuccessfully to revive plans for a more upscale retail area. They razed the Cleveland Building in 1971, but never followed through on plans to erect a new building in its place. The Bayou City Banner lamented the destruction of the building and implied that the "hippie invasion" kept other businesses from moving in. The partnership pulled out of the property when it was no longer financially viable.



FROM TOP: International Coffee Building at Allen's Landing, Love Street concert, and postcard invitation.

The International Coffee Building has endured forty years of neglect and now sits windowless, but otherwise solid, atop a revitalized Allen's Landing. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership has new plans for the building, however. After receiving a $600,000 grant from the Houston Endowment Inc., the Partnership hired Lake/Flato to design a renovation with BNIM. The 21st century International Coffee Building is scheduled to become a recreational and cultural center. Like many of its former patrons, its appearance will soon bear no trace of its late-sixties indiscretions.

Mary's is closed for good. Now only "Keep Out" signs and realtor placards jostle for attention at this former hub of Houston's gay bar scene. Its passing, however, did not go unmarked. Shortly after the bar was locked down in late October 2009, local activists put up a Facebook page, "'Mary's Naturally' Closed," to organize a historical salvage effort. Richard Connelly of the *Houston Press* picked up the story. *After Hours* on KPFT featured an interview with members of the family that owns the land at 1022 Westheimer. Even Fox 26 News ran a segment spotlighting the closure, timed to air on the eve of World AIDS Day.

Just looking at the property, you might sympathize with the newcomer to Houston who is hard pressed to understand all the fuss about a cinderblock building tacked to the front of a two-story, wood-slat house that peers out above a sun-faded fence enclosing what might be taken for an unkempt backyard. Talk to those who knew Mary's, though, or take a look at the famous photograph-plastered bar tops, and you begin to get a sense of what the place meant—and still means.

Many Houstonians, even those who never went inside the bar, remember the mural by the parking lot. For much of the 1990s and into the last decade, it was a window into the kind of social space Mary's strove to be: a scene where drag queens raise a glass with the leather–Levi set, where enjoying the sensuality of it all is maybe even more important than starting that pool game, and where the much loved bar cat Mr. Balls has a stool all to himself. In 2006, however, passersby and denizens alike were surprised to find the mural painted over with fluffy cartoon clouds, leaving Mr. Balls perched alone in a heaven so un-Texan it offered but a single bottle of beer.

While various stories circulated about the new façade—some say the gentrification of the neighborhood created pressure on the bar to "clean up," à la Giuliani in Times Square, while others say the bar was planning to create a new mural with input from its patrons—the change seemed only to continue the trend that began with the late 1980s crackdown on the sexually oriented businesses that once lined lower Westheimer and the '90s taming of the Westheimer Street Festival. So when Mary's seemed about to close for good in 2002, Cathy Matusow of the *Houston Press* captured the bohemian nostalgia at the forefront of Houston's collective memory, writing about the deliciously seedy, raucous bar where motorcycle clubs convened, dancers swung from a trapeze bar, and patrons' underwear hung from the ceiling.

Yet Mary's was more than Houston's homage to *laissez les bon temps rouler*. It was also where the gay community got organized in the 1970s and '80s. Cliff Owens, a regular since 1976 and co-owner of the business from 1991 to 2002, recalls that the two-story house behind the main bar was the first meeting place for the Gay Political Caucus, now the venerable Houston GLBT Political Caucus. Mary's also provided space for a host of motorcycle, leather, and social clubs. Andy Mills, manager of the bar from 1976 to 1986 and Pride Parade Grand Marshal with Marion Coleman in 1982, credits Mary's with providing over $80,000 in 1978 to start the Montrose Symphonic Band, the precursor to today's Houston Pride Band.

Beyond fostering social and political activism, though, Mary's is most often remembered for the central role it played as HIV tore through Houston's gay community. Ray Hill recounts that Mary's was where the first plans were hatched for the Kaposi's Sarcoma Foundation, which would later become the AIDS Foundation Houston. As the crisis unfolded, the bar also became a community memorial where Houstonians mourned and celebrated the lives of those lost to the virus. The fenced-in yard at the back of the property, affectionately called the "Outback," contains the buried or scattered ashes of many patrons and employees of the bar, as well as trees and shrubs planted in memory of others. Among the more than 200 Houstonians memorialized there is Jim "Fannie" Farmer, who bought the bar in 1972 and whose ashes were buried there in June 1991.

Though the countercultural space that was Mary's has faded, the institutions it spawned have endured to make Houston a vibrant city. So if you happen to go by 1022 Westheimer, take a cue from the tradition of the Pride Parade and bow before Mary's. The old queen deserves it.

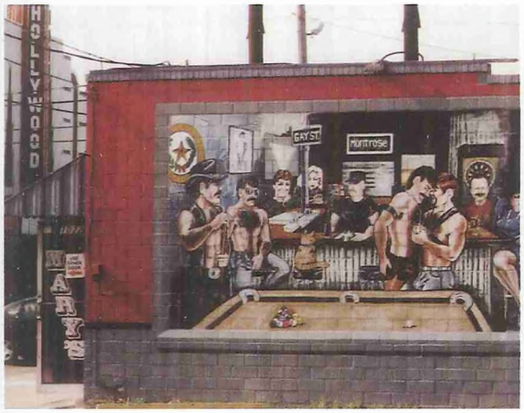
BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT: The Mary's mural once loudly announced Montrose as Houston's "gayborhood"; the mural painted over with fluffy cartoon clouds; detail of Mr. Balls the kitty from a poster version of the mural.

there's something about

MARY'S

WHERE **LEATHER** PICKED UP **POLITICS**

by Brian Riedel



FROM LEFT: RAJ MANKAD; HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER; GULF COAST ARCHIVE AND MUSEUM OF GLBT HISTORY

Lee Otis Johnson rallied students at Texas Southern University.

FLASHPOINTS ON THE ROAD TO BLACK AND BROWN

POWER

SITES OF STRUGGLE IN HOUSTON IN THE 1960S AND 70S

Houston has a long history of segregation and racial violence. From the lynchings of George White in 1859 and Robert Powell in 1928, to the hanging of black soldiers who rebelled at Camp Logan in 1919, to the rise of the local Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, racist actions have periodically threatened to tear the city apart.

The political struggles of the 1960s and '70s changed the city. In the 1998 movie *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow*, historians explain how the end of segregation in Houston came relatively quickly and, due to a media blackout, without fanfare.

Highlighted in this piece are important milestones that dispel this oft-repeated myth that Houston's quiet desegregation prevented riots, rebellions, or open conflict; moments of community indignation (anything but polite and restrained) that lead to concrete action on the road to political power for people of color in the city. Many more events have been left off—the University of Houston riot in 1969, for example—but the sites selected can serve as initial entries into an often ignored history.

by **John Pluecker**

Lee Otis Johnson Affair
1968
Emancipation Park, 3018 Dowling Street

Lee Otis Johnson was one of the student leaders at TSU during the run-up to the May 1967 police action and in the years following. Arrested in 1967 and later expelled from TSU, he became the face of the militant civil rights movement in Houston, appearing on television with his brash, no-holds-barred attitude. On April 14, 1968, at a memorial service for slain leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Emancipation Park, Mayor Louie Welch attempted to address the crowd; the audience booed, and Johnson stood up to speak out forcefully against the mayor. Three days later he was arrested for trumped-up charges of passing a small amount of marijuana to an undercover policeman. In August 1968, Johnson was convicted of possession of drugs. Harris County DA Carol Vance, who personally tried the case, sought a sentence of 20 years, but the all-white jury went further, giving Johnson 30 years. Five years later, following protests and appeals by his supporters and lawyers, Johnson was released by a federal judge who ruled his Houston trial unfair. Johnson became a symbol of radical activism in Houston, and his arrest a cautionary tale of the city's crackdown on dissent.

Police Attack TSU Students
1967
TSU Campus

In the late sixties, TSU student activists began organizing in new ways, their radicalization influenced by the Black Power movement and largely pushed along by a group of student activists identified as Friends of the Southern Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The students were protesting police brutality and seeking to shut down the portion of Wheeler Avenue that bisected the campus. A series of rallies in early 1967 (including one led by Stokely Carmichael) culminated in a police siege of TSU as the city sought to quell the increasing anger and organized protest on campus. On May 16, 1967, police invaded the campus. Students fought back as officers axed their way into dorm rooms and took everyone outside, beating many of them brutally. Police fired thousands of rounds of ammunition. By the end of the day, they had arrested 480 students and one officer was dead (*Time* magazine said it was probably from a stray police bullet).

A crowd protests on April 6, 1967, in front of the Harris County Courthouse against the police crackdown on the TSU campus that culminated the next month.

ALL PHOTOS THIS SPREAD HOUSTON METROPOLITAN RESEARCH CENTER, LEFT MSS.0105 THORNE DREYER COLLECTION;

1965

Black Students Boycott the Public Schools
Wheatley High School, 4900 Market Street

To protest the slow pace of integration in the public schools, despite its being court ordered in 1960 and again in 1962, 85 percent of the students boycotted five black high schools in Houston in 1965. Rev. William Lawson, minister of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, organized the students to assemble at the South Central YMCA. In his words, "We had this bunch of kids starting the march, but the good news was the HISD headquarters was downtown on Capitol, so we went down Dowling Street, and while we went down, there were people who came out of the houses and out of the businesses and joined us. So we ended up with at least hundreds if not thousands of people." The boycott and march were instrumental in making the superintendent of HISD push desegregation along faster.

Students jubilantly raise fists.

Chicano Protesters Take Over Houston School Board Meeting
1970

Hattie Mae White Administration Building, 3830 Richmond Avenue

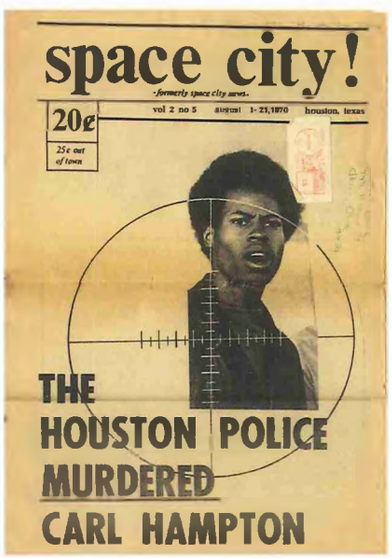
The Justice Department filed suit against the Houston Independent School District (HISD), alleging that it continued to segregate its students. In response, HISD instituted a desegregation plan that mixed Mexican-American and African-American students, but left Anglo students largely unaffected. (The League of United Latin American Citizens had previously fought for Latinos to be officially designated as white to prevent their segregation.) To resist this ploy, a number of community groups began to push for Latinos to be recognized as "brown, not white" (chronicled in Guadalupe San Miguel's 2001 book of the same name). The Mexican American Educational Council organized a *huelga* (strike) of schools around Houston. The conflict came to a head when the HISD board refused to hear from a group of Chicano parents, students, and activists, including members of MAYO (Mexican-American Youth Organization). In protest, the group took over the meeting, grabbed the microphones, and stood on tables as they chanted, "Chicano, Chicano, Chicano," and loudly demanded change. Partially as a result of this action, HISD agreed to the community demands for recognition, and by the end of the year, the boycott had ended.

The Killing of Carl Hampton
1970

2800 block of Dowling Street

Toward the end of the 1960s, organizers were radicalizing—in the Chicano community with MAYO and in the black community with the People's Party II. Carl Hampton was a leader in Houston's chapter of People's Party II, modeled along the lines of the Black Panthers. According to Charles Freeman, another organizer active at the time, Hampton had returned to the party headquarters on Dowling Street when he saw a Houston police officer harassing a member selling Panther newspapers. The officer and Hampton (who was carrying a legal, unconcealed weapon) briefly faced off against each other. Hampton and his compatriots then holed up in their headquarters as police gathered. Ten days into the standoff, Hampton spoke to a gathering of community members and student supporters. After this rally, police officers standing on top of nearby St. John's Baptist Church opened fire on the party activists, wounding four people and killing Hampton. The story of Hampton's killing has been largely erased from Houston history; in recent years increasing efforts, largely by black community activists, have drawn attention to what happened, making sure that Hampton and his murder are not forgotten.

˅ Alternative press spread the word about events largely occulted in the two dailies.



LEFT: Police amass at Moody Park to stave off the riots. BELOW: Firefighters attempt to put out the flames from a car overturned in the 1970 riots.

1978

Moody Park Riots
Irvington Blvd. and Fulton St.

A year after Torres's death, a commemorative event in Moody Park led to violence as the community fought back when police officers tried to make an arrest at the park. All of the anger, fear, and rage of the past year boiled up, and the park became the epicenter of rioting that spread around a 10-block area in the Mexican-American Northside. Organizer Travis Morales, who was present at the park, recalls that young people were chanting, "Joe Torres dead, cops go free, that's what the rich call democracy." In the end, 15 people were injured, cars and businesses were burned, and the relationship between police and communities in Houston was forever altered. The riots sparked a process of reform within the Houston Police Department (HPD), and increased communication between communities of color and the HPD led to large numbers of people of color joining the force.

José Campos Torres Drowning
1977

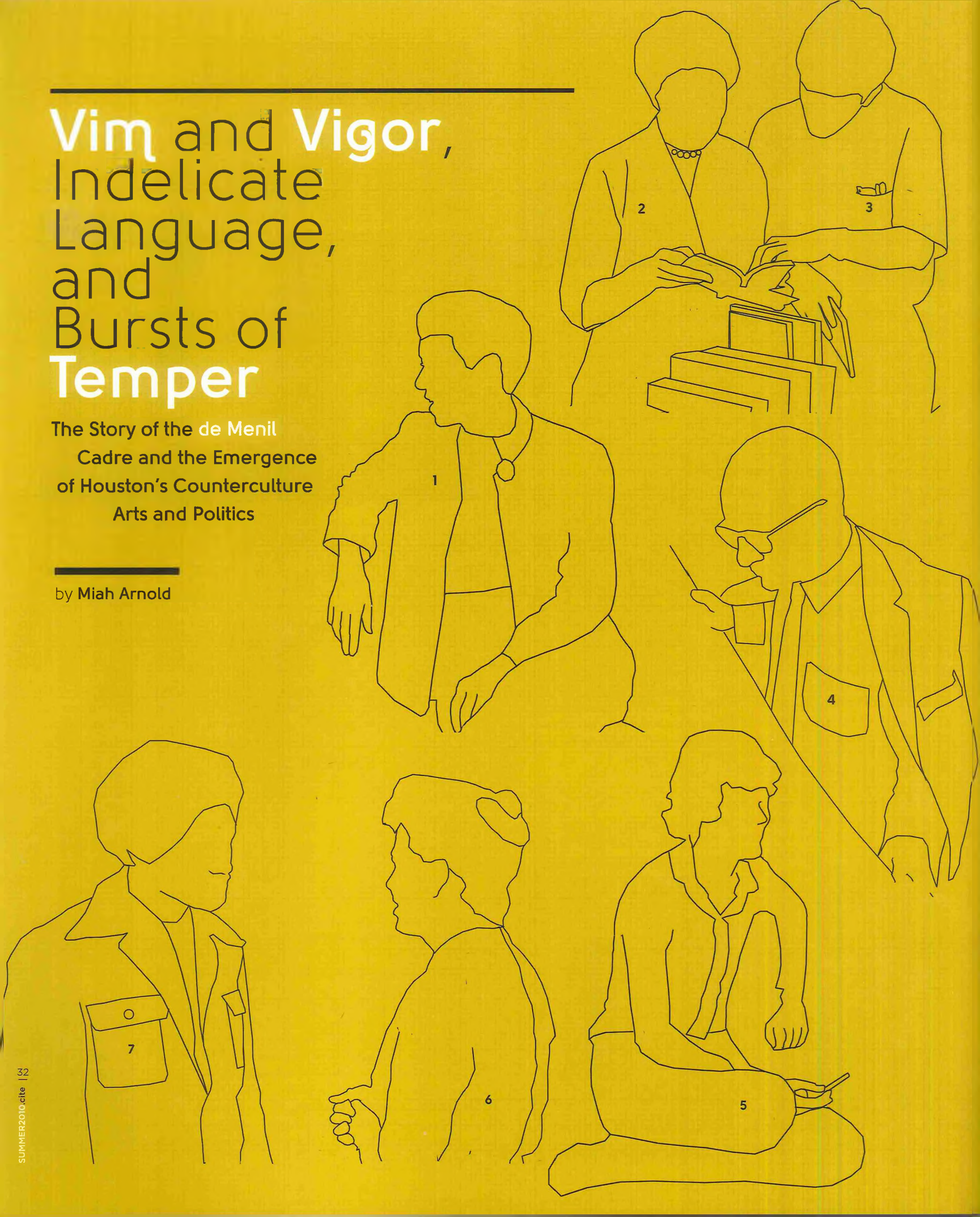
Buffalo Bayou between Allen's Landing and the McKee Street Bridge

José "Joe" Campos Torres, a 23-year-old Mexican-American Vietnam vet, was found floating in Buffalo Bayou on May 8, 1977, two days after his arrest by Houston police officers following an alleged bar fight. The officers had arrested the vet, beat him, and then left him at the jail. The jail staff told the officers that Torres needed to go to Ben Taub because of his injuries. Instead they threw Torres into the bayou, where he drowned. Eventually, after community outcry, the officers, including Terry Denson, were brought to justice. The sentence of a year of probation and a fine of $1 each prompted more community anger and a federal civil rights trial, which resulted in a year of prison time for some of the officers.

Vim and Vigor, Indelicate Language, and Bursts of Temper

The Story of the de Menil Cadre and the Emergence of Houston's Counterculture Arts and Politics

by Miah Arnold



» It was 1971 and Dominique de Menil was at it again. The show she had curated at the Rice Museum was called "Some American History," but it was not the kind of history many of Mrs. de Menil's River Oaks peers much appreciated. The most prominent piece—one by co-curator Larry Rivers—featured four life-size plywood cutouts of African American men dangling by nooses above a grotesquely rendered sculpture of a blond, buxom woman with her legs spread wide open. It was called "Lynching." As Jane Blaffer Owen relayed to Dominique Browning for an article in the April 1983 *Texas Monthly, "*The de Menils were sympathetic with the poor blacks, but so were we. I was a Southerner, but my family fought the KKK. My daddy's family had slaves, but he was kind and wonderful to them. That show was terrible."

Before they brushed their great gray wings across an otherwise ordinary neighborhood of bungalows in lower Montrose, before their place in Houston's history felt as ordained as the live oaks, and before Houstonians began trading stories about sightings of a thin and ethereal woman seated in front of her museum's great paintings, there was simply a couple: John and Dominique de Menil. A pair of émigrés who fled France after the Nazi invasion with their three small children in tow. A couple whose wealth, a prominent Houstonian once told Grace Glueck for a May 18, 1986, *New York Times Magazine* article, was "really peanuts," when measured on the same scales as Houston's old oil aristocracies. A couple whose story is as much about Houston's coming of age during a time of social upheaval as it is about their pushing a cadre of visionaries to accomplish the extraordinary wherever an institution gave them the space and freedom to act. To recall just a few of the details of this story is as much an elegy as it is a celebration.

What happened around the de Menils in Houston will never be repeated.

Dominique de Menil's

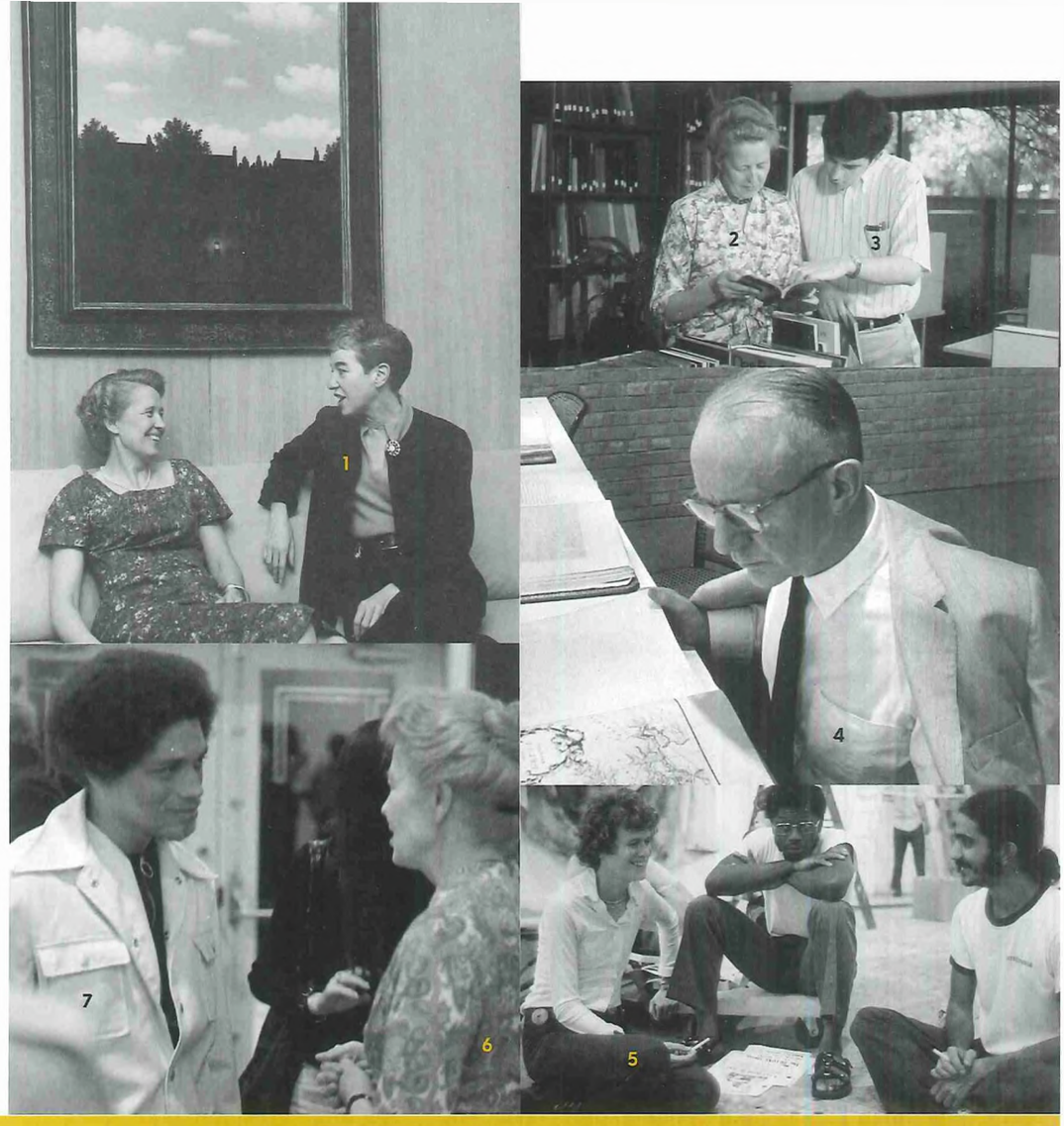
family's money came from the textile industries. Her father, Conrad Schlumberger (pronounced "slumberjay"), was a geophysicist devoted to perfecting a device that could measure the separate frequencies of different kinds of ore when lowered into a hole; by the time Dominique was a young woman majoring in both mathematics and physics at the Sorbonne, her father's invention could also detect oil deposits. This process became known as well-logging—or logging a Slumber Jay, as they still say on the oilfields—and it catapulted the family into enormous wealth.

John de Menil's childhood was not so privileged. Napoleon had granted the de Menils a baronage for their military service, but by the early twentieth century, they were poor enough that when his two elder brothers were killed in World War I, John (née Jean) quit school to care for his parents and other siblings.

The two met at a Versailles party that both had dreaded attending, and they married in 1931. Dominique de Menil embarked on a path of self-discovery, first by converting from her family's blend of atheism and Protestantism to John's Catholicism, and soon after by joining her husband in purchasing their first works of modern art. At the suggestion of architect Pierre Barbe, they hired the young Max Ernst, renowned for painting birds, to decorate a wall in their apartment. Dominique is quoted in the *Texas Monthly* piece as saying that when the couple "saw the kinds of birds this fellow did, though, I hated them… We suggested he paint a portrait of me." But the de Menils thought so little of Ernst's painting, they left it wrapped in brown paper, atop a wardrobe, to weather the Nazi invasion without them.

From such tentative beginnings, their artistic tastes grew. In France they were influenced by Father Marie-Alain Couturier, a priest obsessed with updating Catholic chapels with modern art. More than a decade later, in 1945, John de Menil ran into Father Couturier on a business trip to New York and, on his advice, purchased a small Cézanne painting. After that, not only did the couple begin seriously collecting, but by 1952 their sensibilities had changed so much so that they sponsored Ernst's first museum showing in the United States at the Contemporary Arts Association (CAA; now the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston), where they were volunteer curators.

As their interests in collecting burgeoned, they sought to include their friends and associates in Houston. For their academic and art world colleagues, they began a print club where prints by Robert Rauschenberg or Andy Warhol might be had for a couple hundred dollars or less. For their friends with pockets $10,000 deep, the de Menils began a collector's circle. They amassed members' money and used it to purchase a number of works from New York and European galleries. The art rotated among different members' houses every three months. Jim Love explained to Sarah Reynolds in *Houston Reflections: Art in the City, 1950s, 60s and 70s*, an online text available at cnx.org, if a family fell in love with something they could buy it from the group—and if they liked it not so much, it's rumored, they could and did bury the piece deep in a closet for the duration of its tenure in their home.



clockwise from top left: Dominique de Menil and (1) Jermayne MacAgy speak under René Magritte's 1954 *L'empire des lumières*; (2) Dominique and (3) Karl Kilian at the University of St. Thomas Art Department library; (4) John de Menil, with coat draped over shoulders, at the exhibition *Through the Porthole*; (5) Helen Fosdick takes a break with an artist and a TSU representative at the Deluxe Theater; (6) Dominique speaks with (7) Mickey Leland at the opening of *Some American History*.

Today a visit to the Menil Collection might convey an image of the de Menils as nothing more than rich art collectors. That may be what is most beguiling about the clapboard building Renzo Piano designed, which is monumental in a strangely modest and anti-monumental way. However, pieces like René Magritte's *the Rape*, with its breasts for eyes and vulva for a mouth soon begin unraveling the museum's subversive history.

If her father Conrad Schlumberger had learned to divine oil, Dominique and John de Menil divined artists, provocateurs, and visionaries. One of the most influential figures in Dominique's life was a woman named Jermayne MacAgy—today Dominique rests between John and Jermayne in the Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery. In 1952 the CAA invited curator Douglas MacAgy to assess the organization, but he was too ill to travel and sent instead his wife. Jermayne recommended the CAA board hire a full-time director. They were so impressed by her that they hired her for the position in 1955.

MacAgy was already the art world's answer to Rosie the Riveter. In 1941 she had been working at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco when the museum director left to join the Navy, and she took over as acting director. A 1983 brochure on an exhibit of her gifts to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art described MacAgy as "a wonderful comet… [full of] vim and vigor and gusto," and as a woman "given to indelicate language and bursts of temper." She was also, by all accounts, a genius curator. "There is probably no museum in the United States where the art of displaying art has been developed to so fine a pitch," a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter once wrote of the Legion under her tenure.

It wasn't just that she showed the work of vanguard artists like Mark Rothko, Georgia O'Keefe, Clyfford Still, and Yves Tanguy. Her exhibitions were explorations that often juxtaposed similarly themed pieces from different moments in art history. By defamiliarizing objects, removing them from their expected places in a museum, she allowed patrons to see them anew. In her four years at the CAA, and on a budget of less than $20,000, MacAgy put on 29 shows. She is most known for *Totems Not Taboo,* a 1959 exhibition staged in Cullinan Hall, the new Ludwig Mies van der Rohe-designed wing of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The two-story gallery is notoriously inhospitable to most exhibitions. According to many people in Houston's art scene, MacAgy is one of only two people who have *ever* successfully filled the space (the other is James Johnson Sweeney, another great mind brought to Houston by the de Menils in the sixties).

Despite these successes, the CAA cited financial strains and chose not to renew MacAgy's contract in 1959. Since the de Menils would gladly have funded her salary, it was clear the board was uncomfortable with the amount of influence the de Menils themselves were exerting upon the museum—a complaint that would become common to other institutions the couple became involved with.

The de Menils later saw their difficulties with the CAA as a happy accident. Years earlier, the Basilian Fathers at the University of St. Thomas had asked John de Menil's advice on an architect for their campus. According to Karl Kilian, "a typical John said, 'I'll help you, but I'm going to make the rules. I will give you a list of architects you ought to consider, and I will pay to have some initial sketches done, but you have to agree to use one of those architects.'" The Fathers chose Philip Johnson's design, based on Thomas Jefferson's plans for the University of Virginia. So when the CAA grew displeased with the de Menils, they withdrew financial support and offered it—and MacAgy's talents—to St. Thomas.

In those days, what is now the business building at St. Thomas had a giant Alexander Calder mobile hanging in the foyer, and the university hosted friends of the de Menils from throughout the world, including visiting artists like René Magritte and Rothko. The art department soon filled with promising young art historians like Karl Kilian, Fred Hughes, and Helen Fosdick—students the de Menils liked to "trot out" for guests. It was not unusual, Kilian says, to be invited out for cocktails with [Marcel] Duchamp or dinners with [Roberto] Matta.

MacAgy was the center of this world. She taught a small generation of students—as well as Dominique de Menil—about art with a method that was as playful and rigorous as her exhibitions. Fosdick remembers MacAgy requiring her to be able to name the different paintings in the different halls of European museums as if on a sort of virtual walking tour, or MacAgy would describe an obscure painting "someplace in Florence, and I would have to find it."

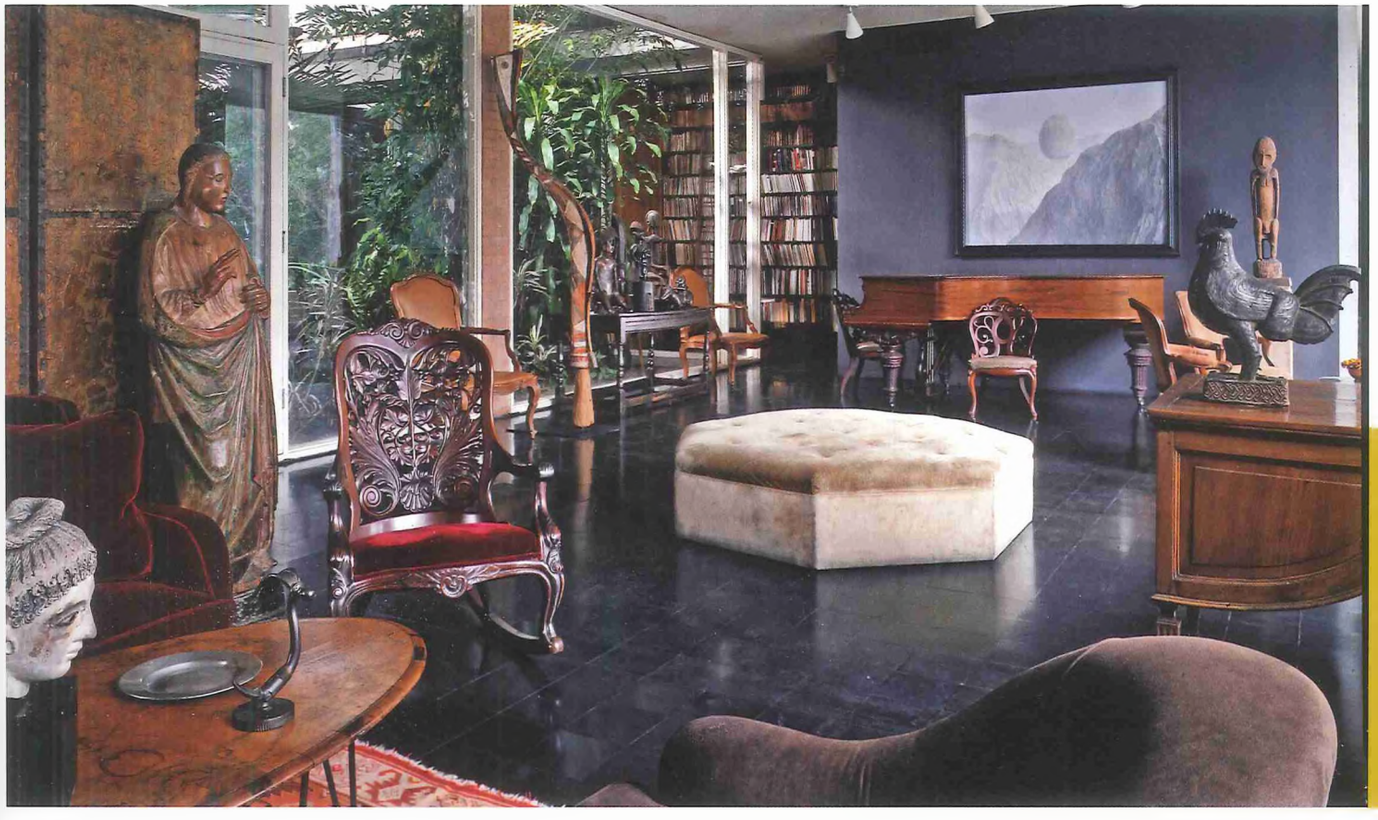
MacAgy made it a joy to learn about art and had at her disposal a large chunk of the de Menils's art collection, which was then called the Young Teaching Collection. According to Fosdick, "We always had [the art] in our hands, and it was a very great thing." Indeed, the Young Teaching Collection was a radical enough idea in 1969 that it was lauded by *Art Journal.* (Kilian says he still can't get used to not touching the art on display at the Menil, and Fosdick only half-jokes that on occasion she *can't* refrain from touching the sculptures.)

While teaching, MacAgy continued with her wondrous exhibitions, which often scandalized parts of Houston society even when the art was in no way obviously offensive. At an exhibition MacAgy organized for the opening of Philip Johnson's gallery at St. Thomas, a member of the John Birch Society claimed to see a hammer and sickle in a painting by Mark Tobey. The Basilian Fathers strained to defend the radical curator who would later become the university's art teacher, and the de Menils themselves were threatened with a possible Congressional investigation for communist sympathies because of just these sorts of happenings.

"Art is sometimes scary to people because they don't understand it," Fosdick muses when asked about those times. "But it's one of the greatest energies mankind can give to the world. It's always there to give back freely just by our experiencing it."

MacAgy was 50 years old in 1964 when she

In those days, what is now the business building at St. Thomas had a giant Alexander Calder mobile hanging in the foyer, and the university hosted friends of the de Menils from throughout the world, including visiting artists like René Magritte and Mark Rothko.



The ottoman at the Menil home, similar to what is now in the Menil Collection foyer, served as a make-shift desk for John and Dominique, who would kneel in front of it with papers spread out.

died of diabetic shock, devastating her admirers, especially Dominique and John de Menil. Grieving, Dominique helped finish MacAgy's last exhibition, prophetically entitled *Out of This World*. Then, emboldened by what her friend had taught her about how to conceive and install exhibitions, Dominique took over as chair of the art department at St. Thomas. William Camfield had been hired by MacAgy months before her death to teach art history to the students. Eventually the faculty would include photographer Geoff Winningham and activist/documentary filmmaker James Blue. The movies screened during this period were controversial enough that students at least once—during the screening of Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*—locked the theater doors as soon as all the moviegoers arrived, fearing a police disturbance.

In 1967 the ecumenical vision of the de Menils began to clash with the conservatism of the Catholic university. When they attempted to broaden the university's base by bringing lay people to its board, the Basilian Fathers resisted. So John and Dominique de Menil decided to separate from St. Thomas, retrieving the Teaching Collection in exchange for real estate; they then took their art collection and all the people they had hired for the art department to Rice University. They founded the Media Center at Rice, and artists like Jean-Luc Godard, Andy Warhol, and Roberto Rossellini screened films there.

The de Menils's arrival at Rice coincided with the opening of *The Machine Show,* an important exhibition from the Museum of Modern Art they had scheduled to show in Houston. With no time to construct a proper building for it, they built two "temporary" structures out of corrugated metal that today house the Rice Media Center and the Continuing Studies Program.

Even though John de Menil was a hard-nosed capitalist, a formal man whose idea of relaxation on Sundays, recalls Kilian, was to rest the jacket of the seersucker suit he wore every day of the week over his shoulders instead of putting it completely on, he was also an Old World radical. His own upbringing and brush with European fascism hardened his resolve, and the de Menils spent a great deal of energy, money, and time working against the staunch racism they encountered when they moved to Houston. Thus, their ambitions were not restricted to the art world, and their work in Houston did not reside entirely within existing institutions.

Just as they took an interest in young art students, they sought out and supported up-and-coming young African-Americans in a number of professions. They also bankrolled politicians with social agendas they believed in. In the case of Mickey Leland, who became the first African American Congressman from Texas, they did both.

Their association with the young activist began in 1969. The de Menils had ambitions to bring the modern art that was finally taking hold in Montrose into communities that ordinarily had little contact with it. They wanted to remodel the crumbling but once grand De Luxe Theatre in the Fifth Ward as a space for art. They contacted Leland to act as liaison between community leaders and themselves and hired artist Peter Bradley in 1971 to curate a show of 19 contemporary painters and sculptors, including Michael Steiner, Richard Hunt, Larry Poons, and Kenneth Noland—the first racially integrated exhibition of contemporary art in the country. The wildly popular show ran for a few months, and afterwards the site hosted a large portion of the de Menil African art collection.

Though the Black Arts Gallery at the De Luxe Theatre closed just a couple of years later, the relationship between John de Menil and Mickey Leland grew. John acted as the young man's patron, introducing him to well-connected people from throughout the world and supporting his political ambitions. "I went to breakfast, lunch, and dinner at their house," Leland once recalled. "He wanted me exposed to every aspect of their life that would give me a chance to do things for my community. They helped make a black militant who hated white people into a humanitarian."

Once John de Menil received a call from a raging man accusing him of being a communist for supporting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "Listen, my friend," he gamely replied when the fellow had calmed down, "why don't you come to my house for a drink? Then you can see how a communist lives."

For the general public today, the de Menil name signifies a soothing campus of art museums, galleries, and chapels. The gray clapboards of the Menil Collection building seem as inevitably a part of Houston as the odd

No two people describe Jermayne MacAgy's most famous exhibition, *Totems Not Taboo,* the same way, and photographs don't do the show much justice. It entailed over 200 pieces of Pacific Northwest and other indigenous art displayed on pedestals—some low to the ground, some soaring up toward the ceiling, some placed in piles of gravel, and some resting along a staircase beneath which gold and jewels were displayed. Everything appeared to be floating, observers have said.

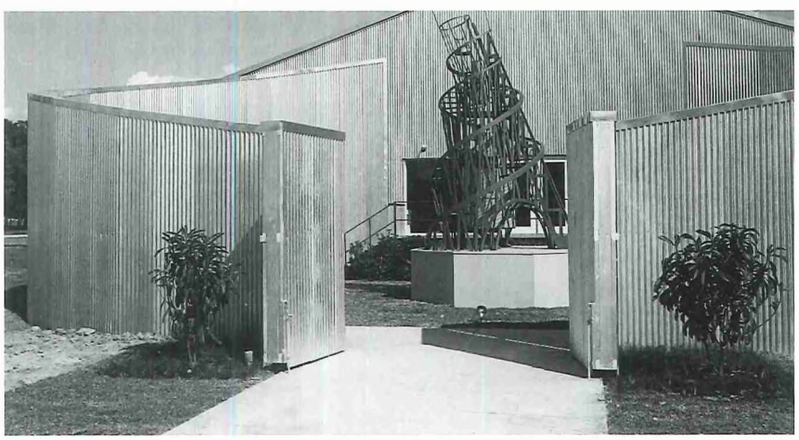
Karl Kilian and his friend Fred Hughes (who later became Andy Warhol's manager) chanced upon the MacAgy exhibition.

"Across the front there were these pedestals that these huge Nimbi masks were on, these things you wear that come over your shoulders," Kilian recalls. "There were contemporary sculptures by Jim Love that were affinities, but you almost didn't notice them. It was the tribal pieces you saw: African and Oceanic, Northwest Coast, American Indian, that's what most of it was." "All those emblematic MacAgy things—plants, beautiful plants, rhododendrons...elephant ears—surrounded the installation. There were pieces of white marble crushed into wood...I'd never seen that much art in one place. No paintings—they were all sculptures; they were objects. It was like the apotheosis of a particular kind of art. It felt sacred in some way, awe inspiring. It made you quiet."

Kilian's astonishment was shared by some of the most influential people of the time: the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Rene d'Harnoncourt, would later say this was one of the three greatest exhibitions he had ever seen. The world-traveling futurist, architect, and engineer Buckminster Fuller telegraphed MacAgy his congratulations, naming *Totems Not Taboo* his "personally most excitingly important exhibition experience."

above: Jermayne MacAgy exhibition at MFAH.

clockwise from top: De Luxe theater rehabilitation and exhibition participants; two works from *Some American History* exhibition; Rice Museum.



marriage of progressivism and oil-driven capitalism that served to define the city. When interviewed in March 2010, Kilian gestured to the clearly de Menil-inspired elements in his house—from the modern furniture in his living room to the abstract paintings and tribal masks on his walls—and mused, "I didn't even notice it all becoming precious in my life." This sentiment seems right for the city of Houston itself.

In 1991, on the 20th anniversary of the Rothko Chapel, President Jimmy Carter and Dominique de Menil presented the Carter–Menil Human Rights Prize of $100,000 to the university that had been home to the six Salvadoran Jesuits murdered in 1989 for championing human rights. Nelson Mandela, just released from more than two decades of political imprisonment, was the keynote speaker. To hold the hundreds who wanted to attend, a large tent was constructed next to the Chapel with seating, a stage, and large screen for projecting a live stream from the Chapel.

The tent's enthusiasm for the event was carnival-like in comparison to the silence of the crowd in the Chapel's interior. When the program was over President Carter and Bishop Tutu came to greet the tent crowd who clapped and greeted them as they walked to the edge of the stage and started shaking hands. A minute later, however, the crowd erupted into a cheering, standing ovation that confused the men until they turned around and realized what had happened: Dominique de Menil had stepped out into the crowd's view. The crowd that would greet two of the world's most revered heroes with polite applause could not hold back for their own Dominique, Houston's patron saint of underdogs and artists. The men brought her to center stage and the crowd cheered more.

To the people who had known Dominique and John de Menil since the 1940s, this moment was striking in more than the obvious way: it signaled that five decades after making Houston their home, Houston had finally fully claimed the de Menils as its own.

While teaching, MacAgy continued with her wondrous exhibitions, which often scandalized parts of Houston society even when the art was in no way obviously offensive.

The Menil Foundation is publishing Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil, *a book scheduled for an October 2010 release, that features essays by civil rights activist Deloyd Parker, architectural historian Stephen Fox, artist Mel Chin, and many others. The Houston Artists Fund is also sponsoring a biography of John and Dominique de Menil.*

the mad mix

MONTROSE, THE HEART OF HOUSTON

by **Thorne Dreyer** | **Illustration by Kerry Fitzgerald**

The Montrose was and is a uniquely Houston-kind of bohemia, a mad mix made possible by the city's no-holds-barred, laissez faire form of growth. And, ironically, it may fall victim to the very same zoning-phobic mentality, as so many of the area's old sites are being replaced by townhouses-from-Hell.

When Al Reinert and I wrote about the Montrose for the April 1973 *Texas Monthly* (they subtitled it "The Strangest Neighborhood East of the Pecos"), we sure didn't have to put in for mileage. We were already there—hanging at Prufrock's and Zorba's and Anderson Fair.

In many ways, Montrose was the heart of Houston back then. It had a social vitality and a sense of community and a tolerance for diversity that you didn't find elsewhere in this sprawling adolescent metropolis-on-the-make. It had lots of weirdness, and as we would discover, was steeped in history…

Like the legendary intersection of Montrose and Westheimer, where the underground newspaper *Space City!* was peddled to passing motorists, demonstrators protested the Vietnam War, and long-haired hitchhikers just in from the Haight caught a burger at Prince's…

The eclectic mix of cool old houses (from Victorian Epic to Ramshackle Plywood) and vintage clothing shops and galleries and strip clubs and health food stores and junk shops and newstands and radical collectives and artist studios…

And the rock emporiums. I first heard the 13th Floor Elevators at Jubilee Hall and Bruce Springsteen at Liberty Hall—and Townes Van Zandt at Anderson Fair (where we had block parties and crowned the "Mayor of Montrose")…

Houston's vibrant gay community, home to Montrose Gaze and the Gay Liberation Front, and more than three dozen gay bars, including Mary's Lounge, and Bayou Landing, thought to be the largest gay dance club between the coasts…

> It had lots of **weirdness**, and as we would discover, was steeped in history…

The Westheimer strip, called by some Houston's Left Bank, drawing hipster suburbanites and River Oaks slummers to five blocks of European-style restaurants and sidewalk cafes…

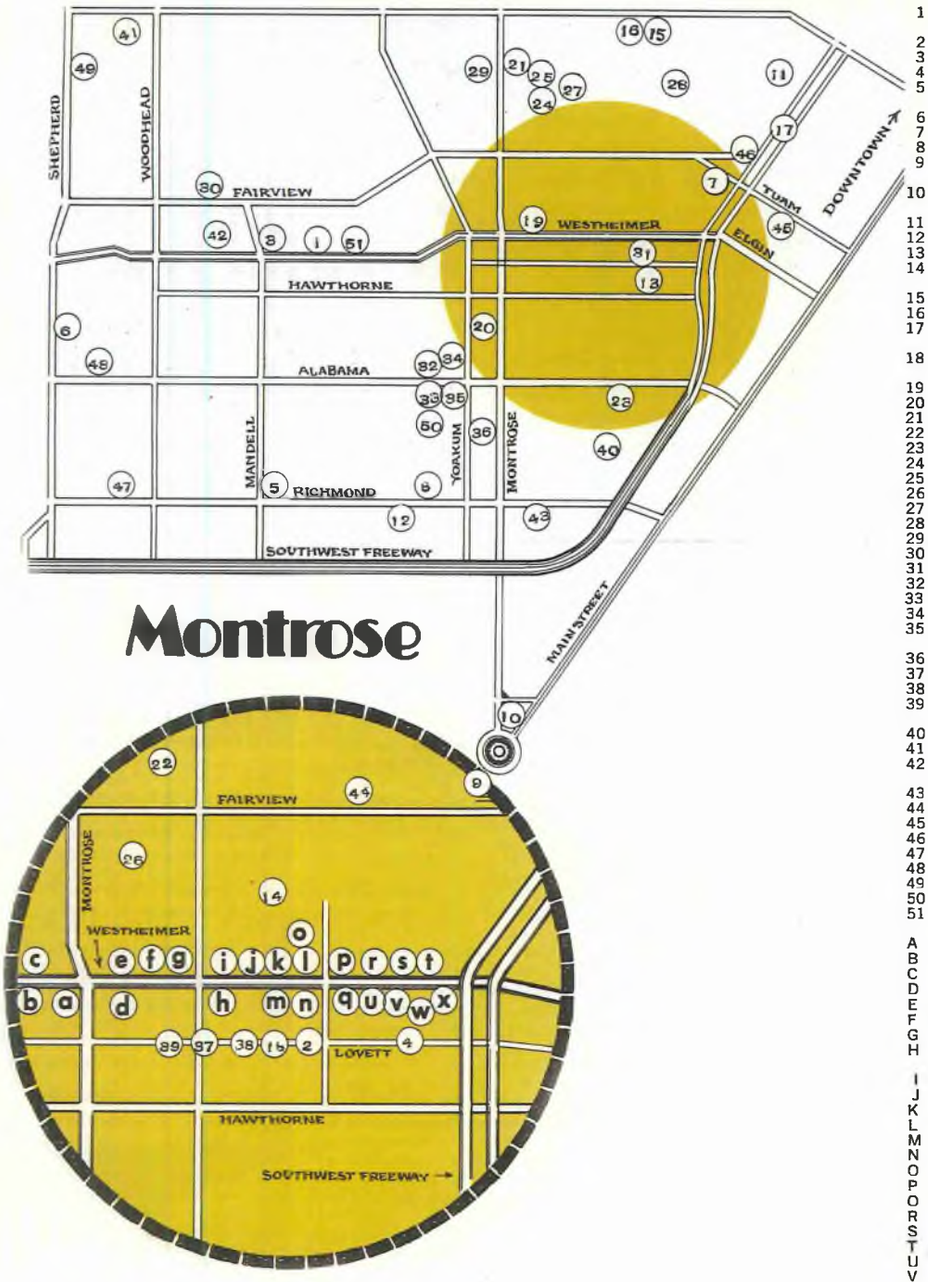
The Westheimer Art Festival that drew thousands of tourists, dogs, kids, and street performers into the neighborhood; the Greek Festival outside the historic Greek Orthodox Church; and the massive Gay Pride Parades that rivaled New Orleans for flash and fashion…

Radio Row on Lovett Boulevard where FM stations KLOL and KILT (Radio Montrose) were pioneers of "underground radio"–and KPFT, the infamous listener-supported Pacifica station, helped birth the "Cosmic Cowboy" movement, and was twice bombed off the air by the KKK…

The old house with the odd turrets and built-in birdhouses where Clark Gable took acting lessons–and Howard Hughes' boyhood home that's now the Modern Language Building at St. Thomas University…

And of course the Pagan Church, with its papier mâché statues and hand-done signs advertising nude meditation and other esoterica. Above the door was written: "Our religion doesn't teach sin, shame or hypocrisy. So don't blame us for your dirty mind. With love all things are possible."

Montrose native Thorne Dreyer was a founder and editor of Space City! *He now lives in Austin where he edits* The Rag Blog *(theragblog.blogspot.com).*



Montrose

1 Oak Tree Health Bar (healthy libations)
2 KILT AM & FM (Radio Montrose)
3 Ari's Grenouille (first sidewalk cafe)
4 Boccaccio 2000 (frenzied chic)
5 Van's Stampede Ballroom (cowboy hangout)
6 Bayou Landing (gay boogie)
7 Zorba's (the original article)
8 Lille Skool (free school)
9 Contemporary Arts Museum (modern cul-char)
10 Museum of Fine Arts (old timey cul-char)
11 Abraxas (underground paper)
12 Sand Mountain (folksaingin')
13 LBJ's house (historical site)
14 Dr. Webster's (where Clark Gable learned acting)
15 Lincoln High School
16 Zerk's (a delli)
17 The Family Hand Restaurant (historical site)
18 Hare Krishna Temple (Unconsciousness III)
19 Art Wren's (alias the Silver Dollar)
20 Greek Cathedral
21 Texas Art Supply
22 Carnaby's (was Natural Child)
23 Down Home
24 First Pagan Church
25 Anderson-Fair Restaurant
26 Inlet (community drug care)
27 Ebeneezer's (hi-camp restaurant)
28 Food co-op (community-owned)
29 Paisley Co. (early head shop)
30 Cardet's Cafe (Cuban exiles)
31 Prufrock's (a hangout)
32 Grass Hut (head shop)
33 Mockingbird (underground newspaper)
34 Libran Books (like the name sez . . .)
35 Hamburgers by Gourmet (hangout for non-gourmets)
36 University of St. Thomas
37 School of Yoga
38 Esoteric Philosophy Center
39 Peyton Place Antiques (Sunday auctions)
40 Slug's (discotek)
41 Damian's (beer, pinball & hip-eyes)
42 National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)
43 American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
44 Montrose Gaze (a USO for gays)
45 Community Garden (plant your seeds)
46 Jubilee Hall (old times)
47 Richwood Food Market (all-niter)
48 Staff of Life (health foods)
49 Hobbit Hole (meatless goodies)
50 Rothko Chapel (soul food)
51 Joseph's Wine Shop (libations)

A Liberty Bank
B Tower Theater
C Mary's Lounge (gay bar)
D Ruggles (eggs benedict)
E Moveable Feast (health food)
F Felix Mexican Restaurant
G Art Wren's Silver Dollar Diner
H Bacchanal Greek Restaurant (& belly dancing)
I Phoenix Books
J Mini-mall I
K Happy Buddha Steakhouse
L Honest Threads (recycled jeans)
M Roundtable (gay bar)
N Prufrock's (hangout)
O Las Brisas Mexican Restaurant
P Il Padrino restaurant
Q Michelangelo's Italian restaurant
R Club L'Amour (exotics)
S Lillan's Maison d' Crepes
T Alexander's restaurant
U Cafe de la Paix restaurant
V Sally Williams Antiques
W Mini-Mall II
X Just Ice Cream (Pizza too)

Map by Bill Narum

ANT FARM, THE MOVIE

Space, Land and Time: What If, Why Not? The Underground Adventures of Ant Farm (Directed & Produced by Laura Harrison & Beth Federici)
www.antfarmthemovie.com

by Celeste Williams

Ant Farm, showing at festivals Fall 2010. Premiering at last year's Cinema Arts Festival Houston, *Space, Land and Time* has the subtitle *What If, Why Not? The Underground Adventures of Ant Farm*, which better describes this film's exploration of the group's significant contribution to pop culture.

Directors Laura Harrison and Beth Federici trace the career and friendship arc of the core Ant Farm group—Chip Lord, Doug Michels, and Curtis Schreier, along with diverse colleagues and friends—as they tune out, turn on, and trip together through the counterculture of the 1960s and early '70s. The genius of Ant Farm lay in their ability to identify, codify, and eventually claim as their own quintessentially American iconography, whether Cadillacs, televisions, or the future as portrayed through the space race.

The filmmakers do a thorough job of documenting the gamut of classic Ant Farm works, from *Cadillac Ranch* (1974) and *Media Burn* (1975) to the lesser known but significant *House of the Century* (1972) and *Eternal Frame* (1975), primarily through their editing of Ant Farm's own archival video and the addition of clever animations to the original illustrations.

Although several Ant Farm members originally trained as architects, Lord makes it clear that in the 1960s, unless one were willing to embrace what had become petrified corporate modernism, the alternative for fledgling architects was to completely reinvent the field. At that time there was a great interest in structures that could be quickly erected, utilized, then dismantled, often in connection with music concerts or "happenings." With first parachutes, then inflatable structures, an organic, fluid, and oftentimes floating temporary architecture was used to create incomparable, ethereal spaces. While this foray into portability was influenced by Jack Kerouac's 1957 *On the Road*, the group's nomadism was also tied to concepts of temporal architecture, such as *Instant City* (1969–70), envisioned by the English group Archigram.

Through cooperation with groups like this and their inventive, tongue-in-cheek publications, Ant Farm attracted an inspired and passionate roster of supporters who would sponsor their most iconic works. One of their strongest early interactions with a client came out of the commission to build the *House of the Century* for Marilyn Oshman Lubetkin in Angleton, a small community south of Houston. In a pre-digital era, with little building experience, and by sheer force of will, Ant Farm tapped the innovative approaches to building provided by Richard Jost and Peter Eichenlaub to execute a full-scale model of a house whose architecture really belonged to the 21st century.

One of the film's most controversial moments comes in the segment presenting the dramatic work *The Eternal Frame*, presented here as a cathartic "Stations of the Cross" for the media age. This video recreation of the famous Zapruder film of President Kennedy's assassination, with the ride through Dallas's Dealey Plaza faithfully reproduced by Ant Farm right down to Michels's dressing in drag as Jackie Kennedy in a pink pillbox hat, is a record of one of the seminal events of the 20th century. It is heart-rending at times to see the raw emotion on the faces of people as they witness this reenactment of the seemingly "made for TV" assassination. A crowd grows, some people are weeping, and even the police stop traffic to help. The few frames of the Zapruder film repeated on an infinite loop, sequentially reenacted, convey Ant Farm's amazing ability to hone in on the key events that make up our national identity.

The strength of the movie at its most authentic lies in the firsthand testimonials of both the members of Ant Farm themselves and their clients, who still are firmly with them 40 years later. In the film, Marilyn Oshman discusses the intriguing ideas and drawings that engendered her supporting the *House of the Century*, their first fully realized building. But the ebullient and eccentric Texas millionaire Stanley Marsh III practically steals the show; his kooky personality mellowed a bit in the years since his *Cadillac Ranch* commission. This singular work, a row of Cadillacs buried at an angle, nose first, in the desert along Interstate 40 near Amarillo, still attracts the public today, indicating the enduring interest in unorthodox art projects in Texas.

Less effective in the film, although somewhat necessary for its continuity, were the myriad academic talking heads, as if the blessing of the New York establishment was really necessary to validate the work. Considering that *Cadillac Ranch*, *House of the Century*, *Eternal Frame*, and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston's 1972 *Time Capsule* occurred in Texas, and Michels was a faculty member at the University of Houston College of Architecture, it is refreshing to have the commentary of the Art Guys, Houston artists who claim to be the spiritual successors to Ant Farm's unorthodox methodology.

The "elephant in the room" of this film goes by the name of the Dolphin Embassy. Schreier hints at the demise of Ant Farm as a group at the conclusion of the film when he speaks of Michels's Rockefeller grant for the Dolphin Embassy, later adapted into his Blue Star project, which involved research into interspecies communication through the observation of dolphin and whale pods. Shortly after receiving the grant, a disastrous fire in the Ant Farm studio at San Francisco's Pier 40 forced the group to reassess their collective future. Eventually several members settled into careers in an arena they were frequently drawn to as artists, taking positions as university academics. Michels's pursuit of dolphins and whales in their own environments would be cut short by his untimely death in an accident in Australia, forever closing the chapter on a possible reunion.

Architect Jennifer Siegal of Office of Mobile Design does an excellent job of wrapping up, describing Ant Farm's effect on the art and architecture community and providing ample evidence of their ability to discern trends far ahead of the curve. Many years later it is satisfying to see how the technology has caught up with Ant Farm's visionary take on architecture and to observe the fully built fruition of this legacy.

Space, Land and Time: What If, Why Not? The Underground Adventures of Ant Farm is not just for those yearning for a nostalgic trip, but definitely offers something to young architects seeking inspiration today.

An image from the documentary showing the Clean Air Pod performance at Sproul Plaza, University of California, Berkeley, to highlight environmental consciousness on the first Earth Day.

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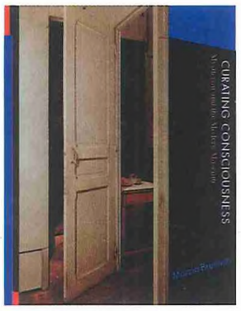

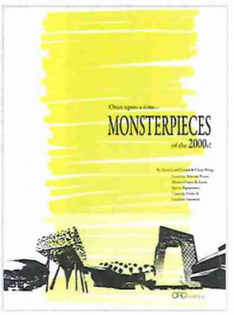

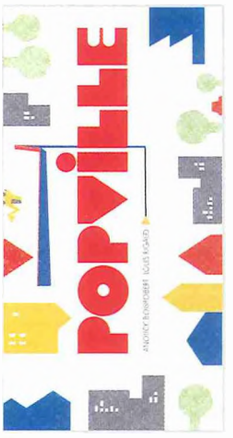

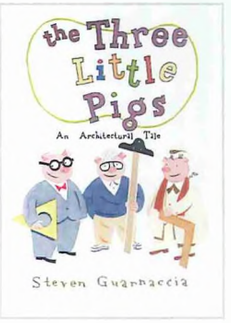

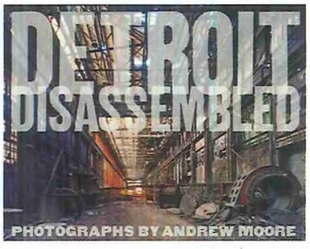

CURATING CONSCIOUSNESS
MYSTICISM AND THE MODERN MUSEUM

BY MARCIA BRENNAN

This new book offers a stimulating and thoroughly researched history of James Johnson Sweeney (1900-1986), director of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, from 1961 to 1967. While the book discusses Sweeney's pivotal role in shaping the arts in Houston during his tenure as an innovative director and collector, its aims are more ambitious. Since Sweeney's career straddled New York, Europe, and Houston, Brennan places the Bayou City within the predominant currents of American and European modernism at the mid-century and offers a compelling overview of its distinctive presence within a broader national and international scene. Together with *A Modern Patronage: de Menil Gifts to American and European Museums* (2007) and the forthcoming book *Art and Activism - Projects of John and Dominique de Menil* (2010), Brennan's book adds an important contribution to recent efforts.

$29.95 / $23.96 FOR RDA MEMBERS

DETROIT DISASSEMBLED

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MOORE

Moore locates both dignity and tragedy in the city's decline, among postapocalyptic landscapes of windowless grand hotels, vast barren factory floors, collapsing churches, offices carpeted in velvety moss and entire blocks reclaimed by prairie grass. Today, whole sections of the city resemble a war zone, its once-spectacular architectural grandeur reduced to vacant ruins.

$50.00 / $40.00 FOR RDA MEMBERS

ONCE UPON A TIME
MONSTERPIECES OF THE 2000s!

BY AUDE-LINE DULIERE & CLARA WONG

Monsterpieces is a reinterpretation of contemporary iconic forms and the contemplation of the future states of these masterpieces, or more fittingly, Monsterpieces. In this book, two Harvard architecture graduates, rebellious daughters of the Koolhaasian 1990s advised by Sanford Kwinter, challenge their minds, un-learning architecture history. This fiction tells the story of building forms that do follow function. In this fabular manifesto, each eccentric form finds its justification in a speculative function, with surreal and dystopian connotations.

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JUNK JET 3
FLUX-US! FLUX-YOU!

This third issue of German magazine *Junk Jet* asked for fluxing architecture, boogie, buildings, rolling rocks, flying architectures, provisory pyramids and temporary eternities; for all kinds of practical concepts and conceptual practices, for stable happenings and unstable thoughts. For lifted cellars and dug-in landmarks for curtains, mobiles, house boats, bubbles, zeppelins, flying saucers. Contributions by Hussein Chalayan (Airmail Dress), Tom Ngo (Architectural Absurdity), Jim Venturi (Saving Lieb House), Aristide Antonas (The Hotel Bus), Taizo Yamamoto (Shopping Carts), Isabelle Willnauer (Living Toolbox), SPY (Projects for Flux), Mimi Zeiger (Blue Lobsters) and many others.

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! AND BECAUSE DURING THE SUMMER, MORE THAN USUALLY, ARCHITECTS NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR KIDS, HERE ARE TWO BOOKS TO READ AND HAVE FUN WITH THEM...

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS
AN ARCHITECTURAL TALE

BY ILA BERMAN, MONA EL KHAFIF

In this quirky, artsy retelling of "The Three Little Pigs," the pigs and their homes are nods to three famous architects—Frank Gehry, Phillip Johnson, and Frank Lloyd Wright—and their signature homes. Each house is filled with clever details, including furnishings by the architects and their contemporaries. Of course, not all the houses are going to protect the pigs from the wolf's huffing and puffing.

$18.95 / $15.16 FOR RDA MEMBERS

POPVILLE

BY ANOUK BOISROBERT & LOUIS RIGAUD

Discover Popville! Watch a city grow right before your eyes. Open this ingenious and stylish pop-up book and see houses, apartments, factories, and power lines appear as you turn the page. Stylish retro design and clever paper engineering make this the must-have pop-up book of the year.

$16.99 / $13.59 FOR RDA MEMBERS

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Floating Along

In search of creative friction

by José Solis
illustration by Amir Kasem

I WAS BORN IN THE MID '70S, STILL IN MY DIAPERS WHEN policemen killed Vietnam veteran José Campos Torres; when J. Gary Van Ooteghem, Ray Hill, and thousands of others marched Downtown for gay rights; when John Zemanek's students designed and built the 3-H Services Center; and when James Surls worked out of the original Lawndale warehouse. I see the origins of my everyday activities in the radical instability of that era.

The back-to-the-Earth movement has become my weekly trip to the Midtown Farmers Market. The Eastern mysticism has become my morning yoga class. Lawndale, DiverseWorks, Menil, CAMH, and MFAH exhibitions are on my calendar on a regular basis. I have served on the boards of organizations that were founded in the more tumultuous days of the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s and have had others as my clients. *The Whole Earth Catalog* has become my LEED credentials. And as I write this article in the middle of a very busy Discovery Green on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, there isn't even a flicker of racial tensions flowing through this culturally diverse crowd.

In my twenties, I spent many a Friday and Saturday night on Pacific Street in the heart of gay Montrose. The murder of Paul Broussard was recent enough to haunt our revelry. Now, one of the activists to come out of that period is in the mayor's office. Shortly after the election, I was featured with eleven other gay Houstonians in a handout produced by The Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau to attract gay tourism. Counterculture meets big business.

In many ways, we are all living the results of this earlier more tumultuous and more experimental age. Houston, with its vast developed area, lends itself particularly well to allow this relatively accepting temperament to exist unchecked. Unlike much denser cities like New York or Chicago, there really is room for you to do your thing over there and for me to do mine over here. All you have to do is drive along major streets like Holcombe/Bellaire, Hillcroft, Long Point, or Harrisburg to see different ethnic groups continually creating their unique ideas of the city. The gay community has expanded from the traditional bases of Montrose and the Heights to neighborhoods like Westbury, Oak Forest, and Eastwood. The gritty West End has become a magnet for upscale restaurants, clubs, and townhomes. The more peripheral neighborhoods with their quiet, uniform cul-de-sacs allow people to live relatively free from external scrutiny.

Today, there is much more of a tendency for people, myself included, to work within the system than to challenge it externally or in a radical manner. After witnessing the sustained mass protests last year in Tehran, comprised largely of students and young adults, against a perceived stolen election, it is hard to imagine what would mobilize the majority of students at Rice, UH, or TSU to hold anything larger than a moderately attended rally for an hour or two. Student protest is more likely to mean joining a Facebook group.

Many of the solutions I saw at a recent final review of an architecture studio at Rice University differed only in form from the theoretical urban solutions proposed by groups such as Archigram in the 1960s and '70s. Their concepts and intents were relatively familiar. Although artist run spaces might be considered on the forward, more experimental edge of art in Houston, achieving 501(c)3 IRS not-for-profit status is frequently one of their first activities. Important urban planning issues in Houston like historic preservation or zoning are pursued in what have now become fairly traditional activist approaches as opposed to more radical actions. The spark that charged people to push harder seems to have been lost somewhere.

The stories and events from Houston in the 1960s and '70s reflect struggles within society against very entrenched dominant viewpoints. From the tin house Eugene Aubrey designed that spawned the geographic and aesthetic redevelopment of the West End to Ray Hill's Town Hall Meeting I that galvanized the gay community—all of these activities created lasting change for the city of Houston. Because the social challenges and cultural upheaval were more intense, the creative results were that much more dramatic.

The major challenges the city of Houston faces today— flood control, urban sprawl, demolition of historic buildings, mobility, education, economic growth, global warming—come across as mundane, even impersonal, in the face of the open and sometimes violent racial discrimination of the recent past. Many of these new challenges inspire indifference rather than passion in the typical Houstonian. Imagine how many people would show up at a rally protesting flood control or congestion. Fights over the alignment of the University light rail line and the construction of the Ashby Highrise take place in courtrooms or the City Council chamber. The only evidence of them on the street is the yard signs.

What external forces or events might shake us out of our complacency and push us to do more experimental work?

Has this relative calm dulled the drive to push the envelope of creativity? What external forces or events might shake us out of our complacency and push us to do more experimental work? The city might be more interesting if we gave up some of the social stability we've achieved for a little more creative friction. Comfort is good, but not at the expense of inspiration. Given the real challenges our city still faces, inspiration is sorely needed. It's time to shake things up.