Cite

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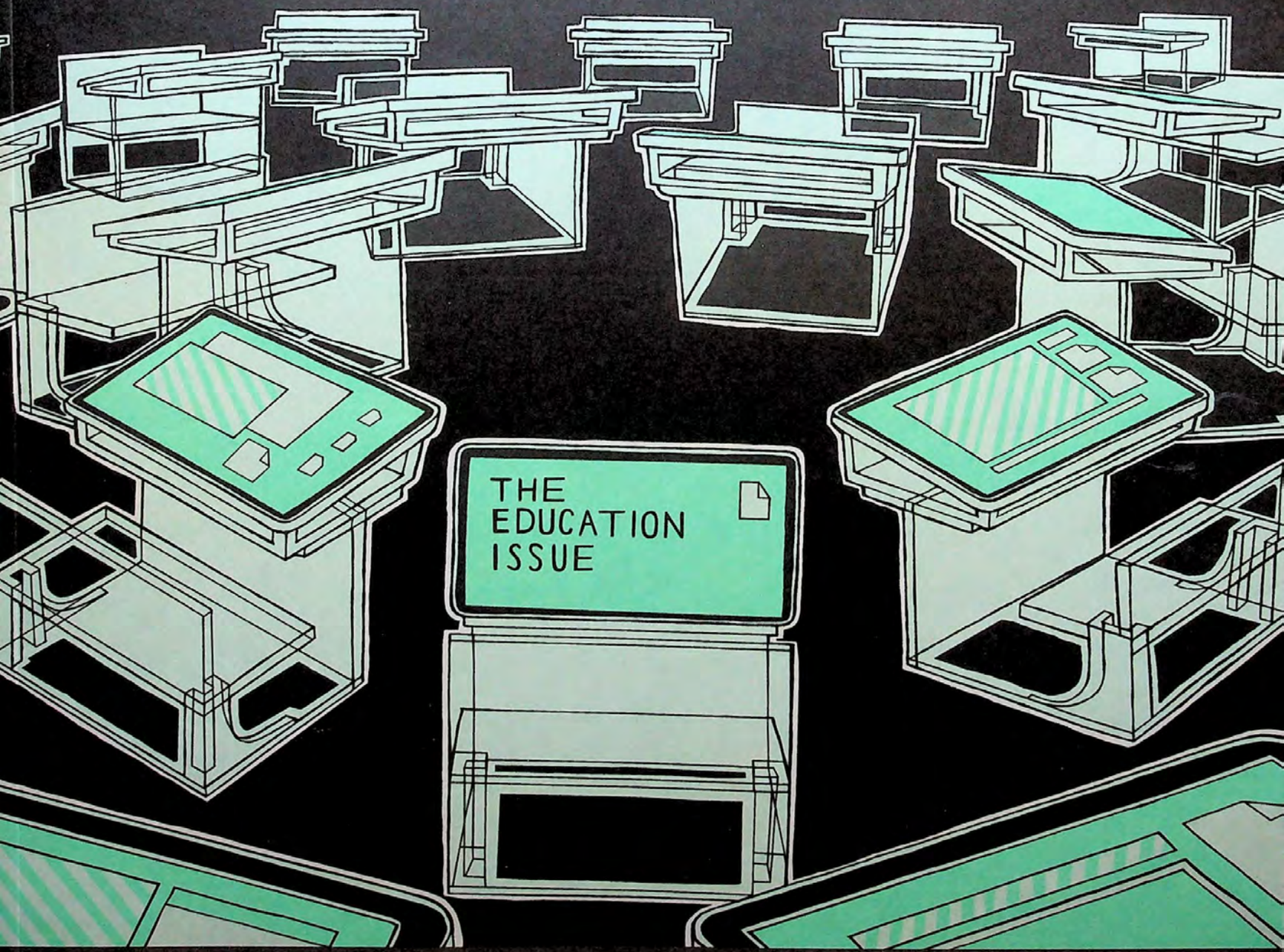
SUPERINTENDENT TERRY GRIER CALLS ON HOUSTON TO TAKE THE LEAD IN BUILDING 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DESIGN

A PRIMER FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND STUDENTS ON WHAT MAKES THE GRADE

ART ON CAMPUS

ALEXANDRA LANGE ON THE TURRELL SKYSPACE AND BLAFFER ADDITION BY WORKAC



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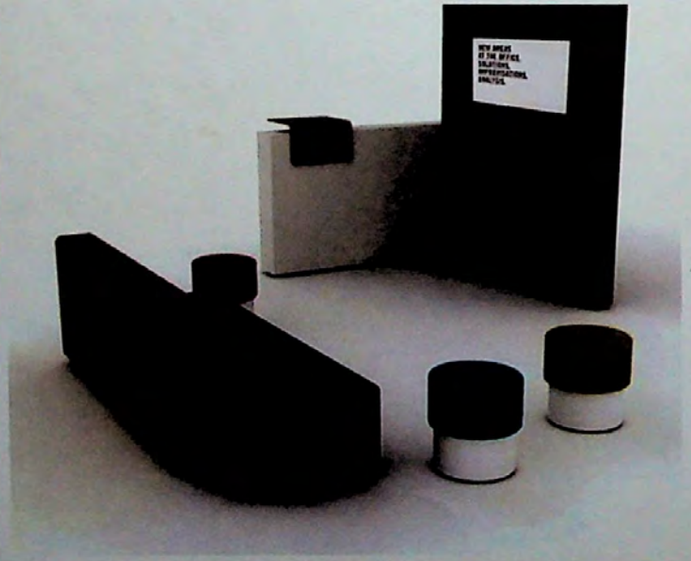

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Cite

THE ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN REVIEW OF HOUSTON

A PUBLICATION OF THE RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE

92 SUMMER 2013

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THE RICE DESIGN ALLIANCE, ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE RICE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE IN 1972, IS DEDICATED TO ADVANCING ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DESIGN, AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN THE HOUSTON REGION THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, THE PUBLICATION OF *CITE*, AND PROGRAMS TO INITIATE PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS. WE SEEK TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

RiceDesignAlliance
ENGAGING PEOPLE SHAPING PLACE

ABOUT THE COVER: Houston-based illustrator Sarah Welch was charged with visualizing the future of education based in part on the interview with Terry Grier in this issue.

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:

(1) TIPS: Tell us your ideas.
(2) 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.
(3) 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 mankad@rice.edu or to the *Cite* mailing address:

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Robert A.M. Stern is Dean at the Yale University School of Architecture.

Steven Thomson is the social media manager for *Architizer* and a recent M.S. Urban Studies graduate from University College London. His writing has appeared in *The Atlantic Cities*, *Urban Omnibus*, and the *Phaidon Atlas of Contemporary World Architecture*.

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Hannah Wolfe is a rising freshman majoring in Creative Writing at the High School for Performing and Visual Arts.

LETTER FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

"We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us," Winston Churchill once said. As an architect who designs schools, I have repeated these words many times—to both clients and colleagues—but the process of editing this issue of *Cite* has forced me to re-evaluate their meaning. When those words were said, it was a different century, when buildings served a different purpose. Buildings were institutions made of stone; impregnable, they communicated to young and old the strength of a nation.

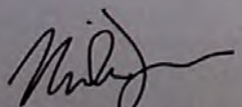
We now live in a time when the nature of knowledge and production have fundamentally changed, and as a result our institutions are more fluid and we interact differently with our buildings. We change them, and we are not simply awed by them. We may be at first shaped by buildings, but those buildings and the institutions behind them must now be more open to reshaping. This is a world where education is—and when it is not it should be—fluid and dynamic, and our schools and campuses should reflect that fluidity.

The values we put in these buildings—like environmental awareness, technological innovation, and freedom of creativity and collaboration—will be the values that shape Houston's future. The goal of this issue is not only to communicate the changes taking place at Houston's institutions of learning, but also to allow you to choose your path to contribute as well.

The $2 billion Houston Independent School District (HISD) bond of 2012 makes a de facto city planner of Superintendent Terry Grier. My interview with Dr. Grier reveals big dreams and visions that are making Houston a laboratory for school reform and design that the nation is watching. A playful selection of images from a 1970 publication by the Rice School of Architecture shows ideas far-fetched 40 years ago—schools without classrooms and students interacting with mobile devices connected to central computers. Even the future has a long history. Steven Thomson reviews a New York exhibition, *The Edgeless School*, providing Houstonians with a sense of what districts across the country are doing. MaryScott Hagle's "A Primer for School Design" identifies lessons learned, positive and negative, from four new campuses built with 2007 HISD bond funds.

Dr. Renu Khator, Chancellor of the University of Houston (UH) System and President of the main campus, also has big dreams, and has already made major strides towards turning a "commuter school" into a Tier One Academic Research University. The question must be asked: Does UH's built environment achieve such lofty goals? In her review of the new James Turrell skyspace at Rice University and the addition to the UH Blaffer Gallery by WORKac, Alexandra Lange writes, "Students think they are learning from their classes, but the college experience is so much more." Her insights ring true for all schools.

The billions of dollars being spent put the spotlight on education environments in Houston. Institutional spending is bureaucratically heavy—long in decision-making and often compromised in vision. But the Houston community has said, Yes! We have seen our rapidly growing city and we know that continued success depends on our future generations. We also know that we must get it right and we must get it right now. As parents, employers, architects, and city builders, we must help our youth imagine their future. We must help shape their values and inspire their creativity with the environments we make today.



NICOLA SPRINGER

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A shoulder carrel designed by Charles Colbert in the late 1960s incorporates "such instructional media as UHF-VHF TV, tapes, records, computer connections, two-way radio, telephone, slide projectors, and screens." See page 19 for more.

In Detroit RDA tourgoers visited Cranbrook Academy with buildings designed by Eliel Saarinen. ↑

In Portugal RDA tourgoers visited Leça swimming pools designed by Álvaro Siza. ↓

Sink and Swim, Baby

An excerpt from *CultureMap* 6.25.13

Anything That Floats hosted by the Rice Design Alliance young professional group is a competition that tests the crafty prowess of the entrants, an Inspector Gadget meets MacGyver feud with plenty of water to keep things afloat, or not.

In three hours, their mission was to transform another-man's-trash stuff, including plywood, water-proofing membranes, foam board, and 5-gallon buckets with lids, into contraptions that would travel on water for the longest period of time. To do so, the squads were permitted to bring hand tools, one roll of duct tape, rubber bands, nails, screws, string, zip ties, and staples, a jigger of luck and dash of prayer. A few towels on hand didn't hurt, either. *–Joel Luks*

Initiatives for Houston Winner

Gordon Wittenberg / Landscape Urbanism

The winner of RDA's 14th annual "Initiatives for Houston" grant program, which funds research, study, and problem-solving around Houston's built environment, is Gordon Wittenberg, Professor of Architecture at Rice University, for his proposal entitled "Linear Parks for Houston." Wittenberg will study utility rights of way that could double as hike-and-bike trails.

LETTERS *to the* EDITOR

PRAISE FOR *CITE* 91

Thank you again for sending a box of the latest *Cite*. I don't know about the rest of your audience, but the students at Carnegie Vanguard High School really respond to the design. They grabbed this issue up even more enthusiastically than they did the issue with the bright orange cover.

-Benjamin Holloway
Carnegie Vanguard High School, AP Art History

I want to compliment you on the *Cite* Spring 2013 edition. The articles were great as usual, but the presentation as a note-pad was inspired. I think it is wonderful and did make the magazine new and exciting. Thank you for the Rice Design Alliance and *Cite*.

-Leif C Hatlen

CALENDAR

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RICEDESIGNALLIANCE.ORG

AUGUST 2013

21 + 28 WED 6:30 pm

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING THE HOUSTON REGION / A TWO-PART CIVIC FORUM FEATURING NATIONALLY KNOWN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS WHO WILL DISCUSS OUR AIR, WATER, LAND, AND HEALTH.

BROWN AUDITORIUM / THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
1001 BISSONNET. BOTH ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

August 21 / Challenges of Climate Change

Dr. John Nielson-Gammon Texas State Climatologist, Regents Professor of Atmospheric Sciences at Texas A & M University

Dr. John Anderson Ewing Professor of Oceanography at Rice University and Director of the Shell Center for Sustainability at Rice University

Eric Berger Science Correspondent, *Houston Chronicle*

Mr. Brent W. Dorsey Director, Corporate Environmental Programs, Entergy Corporation

August 28 / Challenges of Competing Land Uses, Environmental Justice, and Public Health

Dr. Robert Bullard Dean and Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy, TSU

Jim Blackburn Environmental Attorney and Professor in the Practice in Environmental Law, Rice University

Dr. John Jacob Head, Texas Sea Grant

Larry Soward former Commissioner at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality; Executive Director, Air Alliance Houston

SEPTEMBER 2013

10 TUES 7:00 pm

SPOTLIGHT AWARD LECTURE
Interboro Architect and Rice School of Architecture alumna Georgeen Theodore has been awarded the fifth annual Spotlight: The Rice Design Alliance Prize. A pre-lecture wine reception begins at 6 p.m. at the Brown Auditorium, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. This event is free for RDA Members and students presenting identification; $25 others.

25 WED 7:00 pm

RDA'S FALL 2013 LECTURE SERIES - NSFW / FEATURING FOUR YOUNG ARCHITECTS CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT IT MEANS TO PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE.

BROWN AUDITORIUM / THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
1001 BISSONNET.

Sept. 25 / **Meejin Yoon,** MY Studio and Höweler + Yoon
Oct. 2 / **Minsuk Cho,** Mass Studies
Oct. 16 / **Jun Igarashi,** Jun Igarashi Architects
Oct. 30 / **Florien Idenberg**, SO - IL

OCTOBER 2013

2, 16, 30 WED 7:00 pm

RDA'S FALL 2013 LECTURE SERIES - NSFW / LECTURE SPEAKERS LISTED ABOVE

ANYTHING THAT FLOATS PHOTO BY MORRIS MALAKOFF.

NOT SAFE FOR WORK: RSA AND RDA'S FALL 2013 LECTURE SERIES

FOUR YOUNG ARCHITECTS CHALLENGING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT IT MEANS TO PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE. MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SEPTEMBER 25 AND OCTOBER 2, 16, AND 30.

a, b Meejin Yoon
c Florien Idenberg
d, f Jun Igarashi
e, g Minsuk Cho

a

b

c

d

g

e

f

PHOTO F © DAICHI ANO; PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RESPECTIVE FIRMS.

William F. Stern, FAIA (1947-2013)

BY BARRIE SCARDINO BRADLEY

PHOTO BY PAUL HESTER.

BILL STERN ARRIVED IN HOUSTON IN 1976 AT THE AGE of 29 with a Harvard education and a relative sophistication developed through his voracious reading, keen interest in art, and wide travels. As Herman Dyal described him: "He was all Harris tweed, bow ties, and Harvard polish." His mother, Mary Stern, told me that he moved to Houston reluctantly, leaving New York for a promising job with S. I. Morris. She also said he embraced his new city with an intensity his family had not expected. His architectural legacy is well known, but Bill's commitment to his adopted city went far beyond his professional life. Bill made friends easily and became an active contributor to professional and civic affairs of the city.

The fledgling Rice Design Alliance was custom-made for Bill's interests and activism. He quickly became a leader in RDA as it began its journey to bring a vitally needed urban dialogue to Houston. For decades he supported RDA and served in many roles including President (1983-84) and Vice President (1988). But it was through *Cite* that Bill exerted the most influence. He hosted the initial organizational meeting in 1982 at his Barnstone-designed apartment, and for the next 30 years *Cite* was a major part of his life. In 1994 Bill received the John G. Flowers Award for Excellence in Architectural Journalism from the Texas Society of Architects for his work with *Cite*, and in 2013 he was recognized by the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Of the early *Cite* meetings, Bruce Webb recalls, "the more we talked about Houston, the more interesting it became." I remember the excitement of the arguments that often found Bill and Bruce, who became best friends, on opposite sides of any given question. Bill was obstinate, often obstreperous, always unyielding. He had the ability to move on but never sell out. There was so much to think about, talk about, write about, and Bill's energy and passion provided a creative tension that somehow always brought out the best. *Cite* went on to attract and develop some of the best architectural writers and critics in the state, and dozens of talented and dedicated people have served on the editorial committee, but for many years Bill was the ringleader of the *Cite* circus.

Cite's key concerns were often Bill's issues: urban planning, preservation, transportation, architecture, and design. He was a serious art collector and an astute critic of art and architecture, and he wrote building and exhibition reviews that revealed a crisp and sometimes controversial point of view. He also introduced Houstonians to ideas and places that they might not have otherwise known, such as in "Donald Judd, The Project at Marfa" (*Cite* 20, 1988). The first feature Bill contributed to *Cite* was "The Lure of the Bungalow" (*Cite* 16, 1986), which gave special credibility to a building type prolific in Houston but often overlooked. After the article many of his friends called him "Bungalow Bill," a moniker he met with a smile. Bill had a ready sense of humor and laughed easily, qualities that often saved him from himself.

For the fifth anniversary issue of *Cite* Bill wrote an essay "*Cite* at 5" (*Cite* 18, 1987). Here he noted that *Cite* discussions were marked by optimism about Houston and its future. Bill was a pragmatic optimist who believed that public discourse could make a difference, and through *Cite* that discourse took form and has, as Bruce has noted, become an ad hoc history of Houston. I would go farther to say that *Cite* has not just chronicled Houston's history but affected it. Bill's part in guiding the vision, content, and rigor with which *Cite* articles were written was considerable. He influenced all aspects of *Cite* from subjects (he championed theme issues), writers, photographs, and graphic design. And he was proud to have been a co-author of *Ephemeral City:* Cite *Looks at Houston* (UT Press, 2003).

Bill grew up in Cincinnati in a modern house that he loved. In "Post-War Years Remembered" (Cite 40, 1997), he was one of the first Houstonians to call for preservation of mid-twentieth-century modern buildings. When Houston Mod was founded in 2004, Bill became one of the group's first Mod Masters. As deep as Bill's involvement was in RDA and *Cite*, he found energy to teach and serve other Houston organizations. He was a board member of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and the Menil Collection. He first taught at Rice School of Architecture with Rick Keating, his boss at Skidmore Owings and Merrill where Bill worked for three years before founding his own firm, now Stern and Bucek Architects. Then, for almost 30 years, he led studios and taught architectural history at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston.

Bill Stern's devotion to Houston and its art and architecture was most effectively exhibited in *Cite*. For three decades his commitment was absolute. For his incredible leadership I don't believe he was ever adequately thanked. Perhaps that was impossible. In "*Cite* at 5" he wrote, "I hope that *Cite* will always be a place of youthful idealism and that its vitality will never stagnate." *Cite* goes on even without Bill, who never stagnated or lost his youthful idealism. Bill is gone, but *Cite* continues with the integrity, vitality, and idealism he hoped it would. Thank you, Bill.

William D. Kendall, FAIA (1942 - 2013)

BY ROBERT A.M. STERN

WILLIAM D. KENDALL, FAIA, WAS BORN IN SHATTUCK, Oklahoma, on March 17, 1942, and died in Houston on Monday, February 25, 2013. For over two decades Bill was both a close friend and a valued professional collaborator of mine and I am pleased and honored to tell his story.

Bill earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1966 and Bachelor of Architecture degree cum laude in 1967 from the University of Houston, where he received the Alpha Rho Chi Medal. He received his Master of Architecture degree in 1970 from Rice University. After working at several firms during his college years, Bill joined Wilson, Morris, Crane & Anderson (later S.I. Morris Associates) in 1968, where he became a partner in 1973. In 1978 Bill and Hal Weatherford founded KWA after they had the opportunity with their predecessor firm to collaborate as associated architects with Philip Johnson on Gerald Hines's landmark Pennzoil Place. Bill and Hal had moved to New York to work on the Pennzoil project in Philip's office. Bill recognized an opportunity when he saw one, and with this project as a model he developed his vision of an architectural practice organized specifically to provide technical collaboration with design architects. In 1980, James Heaton joined the firm and the name was changed to Kendall/Heaton Associates. Since its founding Kendall/Heaton Associates has enabled design architects to focus on what they do best: design. Under Bill's leadership, Kendall/Heaton honed its edge as a firm that delivered excellence in construction documentation and project administration, working closely and collaboratively with premier design firms worldwide. Kendall/Heaton was named Firm of the Year by the AIA Houston Chapter in 2004, in no small part because of Bill's leadership and strength as a mentor. His office felt like a family and Bill extended that family to include clients, designers, and consultants around the world.

During Bill's long tenure as President of Kendall/Heaton, the firm associated with 28 world-class architects on projects including over 100 corporate headquarters, office buildings, and cultural, institutional, educational, and religious buildings in countries around the world. With my own firm, Robert A.M. Stern Architects, Kendall/Heaton collaborated on major commercial developments in Boston; Philadelphia; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Washington, DC; Barcelona; Mexico City; and Aspen, Colorado.

James Heaton and William Kendall.

In addition to the firm's collaborations with Robert A.M. Stern Architects, Kendall/Heaton was sought out by leading design firms around the world. Kendall/Heaton's collaborations with firms led by Pritzker Prize winners and AIA Gold Medalists includes work with Pelli Clarke Pelli, Philip Johnson and John Burgee, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo, Tadao Ando, Rafael Moneo, Pei Cobb Freed, Santiago Calatrava, Foster + Partners, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Renzo Piano, and SANAA. The firm won global recognition working as executive architect on projects including the Alice Pratt Brown Hall for the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, with Ricardo Bofill; the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House in Dallas, with Norman Foster; the Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth, with Tadao Ando; the Owens-Corning World Headquarters in Toledo, Ohio, with Pelli Clarke Pelli; and Milstein Hall at Cornell University, with OMA.

In 1995, at the age of 53, Bill was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for excellence in practice and service to his profession. He was honored as Distinguished Alumnus in 2008 by the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. He served on the Board of Directors for AIA Houston, the University of Houston Architecture Alumni Association, and the Rice Design Alliance.

Bill's legacy lives on in Kendall/Heaton, now led by his partners and supported by the global network of clients and collaborators that he and they supported.

PHOTO COURTESY KENDALL/HEATON.

Change on the Horizon for HSPVA

Students at the University of Houston reimagine our flagship arts school.

BY HANNAH WOLFE

STUDENTS AND PARENTS POURED INTO A SMALL gallery space at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (HSPVA) on May 30, 2013, to see the plans, renderings, and models that architecture students at the University of Houston created to represent concepts for a new HSPVA campus.

Thirteen students under the direction of Patrick Peters took on the feat of designing a school in a one-semester studio. To make matters more challenging, the new HSPVA has a very specific set of requirements or program elements. Each student worked with the same downtown block bounded by Capitol, Rusk, Austin, and Caroline Streets, which is between Discovery Green and the court complex. The designs featured a 1,000 plus-seat main theater, two mini black boxes, a mini-indoor commons, a music recital hall, and an art gallery space. These requirements were developed after consulting teachers, students, the principal, and HISD administrators.

"It's very important to have a good connection between the art departments and the academic, because you can't succeed at either unless you have both working together," said Eileen Montgomery, a visual arts teacher at HSPVA. "We don't want isolation at our new campus just because it is multiple stories."

In order to avoid isolation and give the school more natural light than the current building, the students came up with a range of ideas. Models and sections showed large central commons and terraces for performances and hanging out. All the proposals included one or more underground parking levels, allowing the first floor to engage the street.

One design by Long Kim Nguyen featured floors illuminated with different colors that caused many spectators to stop. For example, the first floor served as a lobby and was surrounded by LED lights. On the second floor, the theater arts section would be illuminated with a darker light than the lobby area.

The actual design for the school will be carried by the global design and planning firm Gensler. No matter what the architects and clients for the new downtown campus decide to build, the hard work of the UH studio shows the complexity and scale of the challenge, and generated useful discussions and debates.

a Section of HSPVA proposal by Aileen Yao.
b Section showing context and site of HSPVA.

a

b

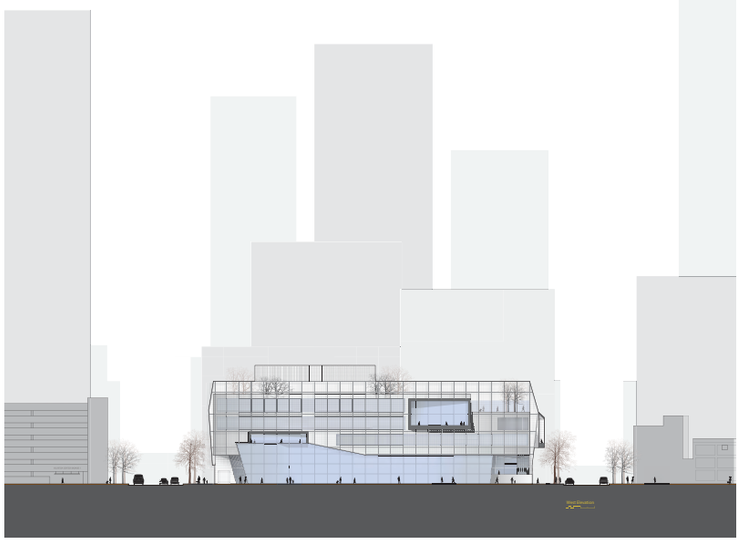


PHOTO COURTESY POPULOUS.

Thick Skin

BBVA Compass Stadium is heating up the city in more ways than one

BY COLLEY HODGES AND EMILY WINTERS

HOUSTON'S SOCCER TEAM, THE DYNAMO, COMPLETED its season undefeated at home with a 3-1 victory over D.C. United in front of a packed house of 22,101 fans in the new BBVA Compass Stadium. When Kofi Sarkodie scored during the second half, a woman in a bright orange burka rose to her feet, Latinos high-fived Brits, and Anglo Texans roared. The sun had dropped low enough that only about a quarter of the stadium was blinded by the direct sunlight that usually punishes fans and players, but the excitement over the team, its stadium, and the surrounding neighborhood is only just beginning to heat up.

On the southeast side of the stadium, buried in Walker Street, a set of burnished black rails dead-ends into the sidewalk. The short section of track, bracketed by the stadium and the start of the Columbia Tap Rail to Trail, is a reminder of the industrial heritage of the neighborhood, recently rebranded as East Downtown or EaDo. That heritage defines the stadium, both as a source of its design and as part of the area character that the stadium is intended to transform. The stadium is a study in boundaries, both urban and architectural, and it is playing a major role in the revitalization of EaDo.

BBVA Compass opened in May 2012 as the only downtown major league soccer-specific stadium in the U.S. At a total cost of $95 million, it is one of the most economical modern soccer stadiums anywhere. In spite of the limitations of its cramped site and tight budget, the stadium has already been a catalyst for change. Abandoned brick warehouses and restaurants south of the stadium form part of Houston's original "Chinatown," and to the northeast one of the city's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods provides a ready-made fan base. Bordering the stadium to the northwest, sprinkled among the industrial blocks to the southeast, are new residential complexes marketed primarily toward young professionals. As infrastructure and development continue to expand, the stadium forms a fulcrum between old and new.

The stadium is an attempt to break through the traditional boundary of East Downtown development: Highway 59. The highway runs parallel to the stadium's long axis, elevated and two blocks away, but still shedding its sound onto the site. Several additional transportation routes help further to define the stadium's context. Eventually expected to be one of the primary means of traveling to and from the stadium, METRORail's East End Line, estimated for completion in 2014, profiles the northeast side of the site. To the east, within sight of the stadium, a cluster of rail lines cuts across the city grid, and the hiss of METRO buses can be heard as they periodically stop along the #50 line running down Texas Avenue and Dowling Street. The lack of nearby parking encourages the use of public transportation, though the majority of fans still seem to park west of 59 and walk to the stadium, passing under the freeway in a steady stream of Dynamo orange. The bustling bars with "Go Dynamo" marquees along their route show early sparks of the urban revival expected for the area. Even the edges of the stadium's site dissolve the divide between stadium and street, as the landscaping and pavement gradually ramp down and fade into the concrete sidewalks.

The architecture of the stadium itself also involves the dissipation of boundaries. Its iconic, tessellated aluminum mesh skin perforates the traditional barrier between the interior and exterior of a building. The 50 percent open surface passively cools the concourse and allows sight lines, as well as a minimal amount of air, through to the field itself. The skin doesn't provide a significant sound barrier, and on game days the surroundings echo with the action of the stadium, but the faceted aluminum panels successfully connect the building to its industrial surroundings and to the sport it hosts.

"We had this concept of soccer as athletic and almost poetic," says project designer Jeff Spear of Populous, the international firm responsible for BBVA Compass as well as Minute Maid Park, Reliant Arena, and the Toyota Center. "The muscularity of the players – how do you translate that to the outside? You have to make your decisions wisely about where to spend your money, and the skin was actually really economical."

Though its striking form and function have initiated renewed interest in the area, the stadium has already received its share of criticism. The 12-acre site dictated the building's solar orientation and its 70-yard-wide pitch, small by major league soccer standards. The minimal roof, consisting of two 75-foot overhangs on the long axis and a 125-foot canopy over the south end zone, leaves roughly half of the 22,000 seats exposed to the sun. That, combined with the stifling stillness within the stadium's bowl, has earned it the nickname "The Oven."

Spear acknowledges the problem of insufficient shade, but again says it was a matter of economics. "It was a compromise. Originally there was more roof, but as the numbers came in as to how much the owners could spend, it got pared back."

Ultimately, the nickname seems more of a commentary on the Houston climate than on the building itself. As a venue for soccer, the stadium has been praised for its outstanding sight lines and the intimacy resulting from the full-spectrum seating's short setback from the field. The end zone roof and seating distribution also make the space flexible enough to host a variety of other events, including Texas Southern University football, rugby, boxing, and concerts.

THE BUILDING'S EYE-CATCHING ORANGE POLYCARBONATE ENTRANCES AND ILLUMINATION DURING NIGHTTIME EVENTS MAKE IT EVEN MORE OF A BEACON.

The limited budget could have produced a cheap traditional design. However, as Spear points out, soccer is a growing sport in the U.S., which boasts plenty of baseball and football stadiums, but does not have the precedents the rest of the world has to draw upon for soccer stadium design. BBVA Compass thus had the freedom to take on a more contemporary look. In addition to its aluminum skin, the building's orange polycarbonate entrances and illumination during nighttime events make it even more of a beacon.

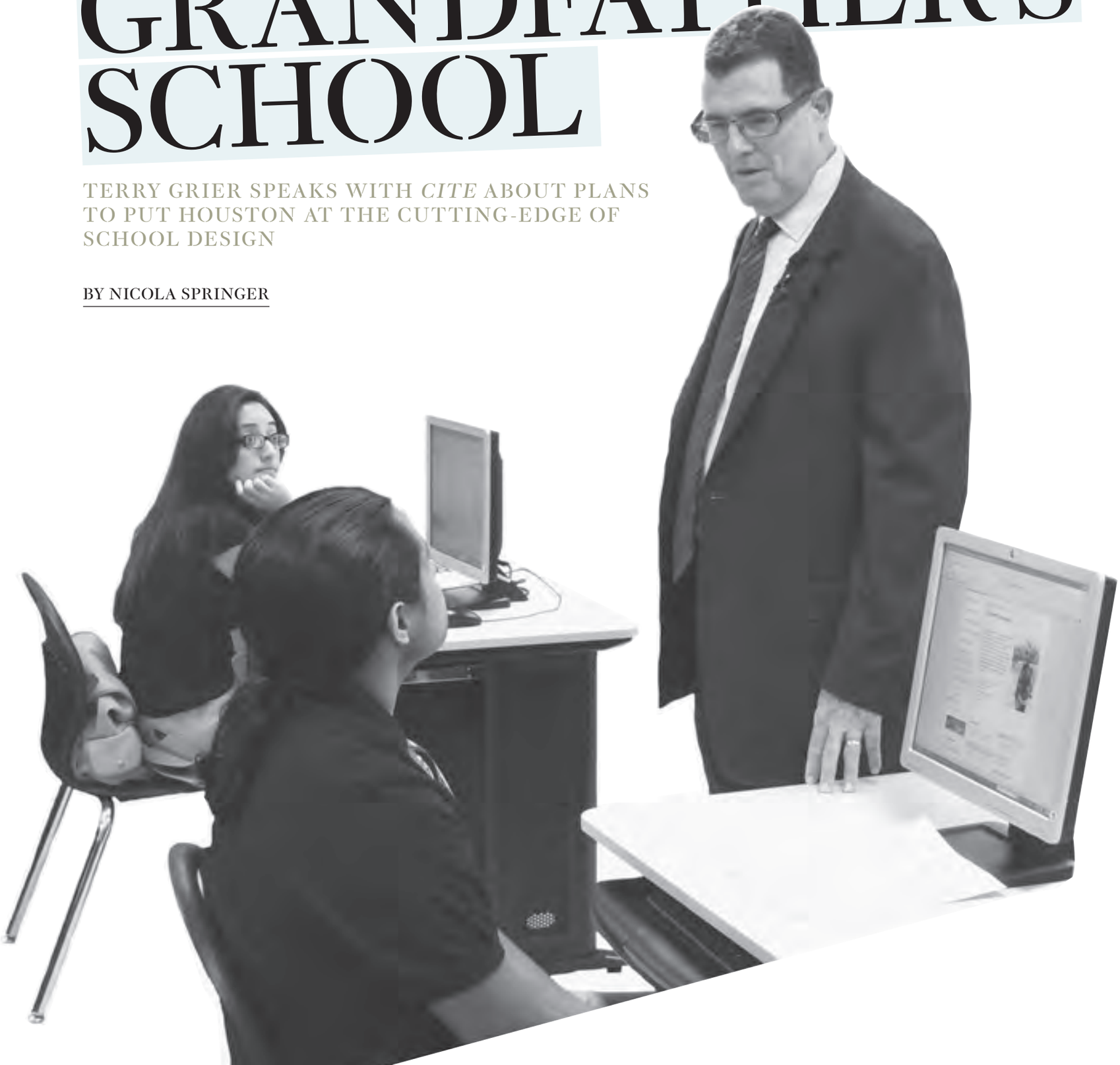
For better or worse, the stadium is inseparable from Houston. It is subject to the region's climate and it responds to the city's urban boundaries. But it is also serving as a transformative force for the area. In the end, the stadium's national influence may not be in innovation, but in approach. The dictates of a growing sport, tight urban site, and limited budget—combined with the lofty goal of revitalizing a cutoff industrial section of town—has produced a functional spectacle: one that is designed to acknowledge the heritage of the area while facilitating a revitalized future.

"These things—say what you will about them—do actually help develop areas around them," says Spear. "And Houston's now being held up as having the next model for that kind of budget facility."

NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S SCHOOL

TERRY GRIER SPEAKS WITH *CITE* ABOUT PLANS TO PUT HOUSTON AT THE CUTTING-EDGE OF SCHOOL DESIGN

BY NICOLA SPRINGER



Terry Grier, the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), spoke with Nicola Springer on March 4, 2013 to discuss what will be built with funds from the $2 billion bond passed in November 2012. Though experiments in education are taking place in public schools across the country, no district on the scale of HISD (270 campuses, 204,000 students, and 30,000 employees) has undertaken a campaign to build "21st Century Schools" and implement "blended learning" curriculum reform. In the interview, Grier explains what Houstonians should expect and what he expects out of Houstonians.

NICOLA SPRINGER: We understand that you've talked extensively to consultants and architects about what you want to accomplish with the 2012 bond and visited schools around the country. What has influenced you most, what buildings inspire you, and what helped create your vision for that bond?

TERRY GRIER: First, I didn't want to build our grandfathers' schools. If we expect these schools to last another 50 to 60 years, we don't really know what the future holds. With what's happening with technology today in our world and what will continue to happen, we have to try to rethink from a futuristic lens what space and facilities ought to look like.

In addition to being warm and inviting places where kids want to come to learn, you have to think about the functionality of the space you have. Next year we are recommending to our school board that we give all of our kids in grades 9 through 12 a laptop computer to take home—24/7 education on the fly.

Sadly, our infrastructure right now won't allow us to do that, but in about half of our high schools it would take another year to redesign the inner workings of our web design and support structure so we can spread it out in all 45 of our high schools.

If you think about what's happening with blended learning today and what's happening with online learning, we see schools being very different. I see schools 10 to 15 years from now where kids come half the day.

They are home learning the other time or they're at school half the day, they're working the other half. Employers may have online training for those kids. I know when I worked for Guilford County, North Carolina, we started a true early college high school there. It was a high school that was located on a college campus.

So as we've gone around the country and literally looked at facilities, talked to architects, and looked at designs around the world, we want something that's going to make a big difference and look different. It's going to feel different. It's going to function differently. So we're excited about that.

NS: How will the schools look differently from our grandfathers' schools?

TG: If you look at what we have now, classrooms are too small. Lamar High School was built in 1923 when class sizes were 20 students per teacher. Those classrooms now have 30 to 35 kids in them. It's like a sardine can. Honestly, I'm not exaggerating. You can't walk down the aisle ways or between the desks. It's sad. You see one biology lab, one physics lab, and one chemistry lab for 3,400 kids. That's unacceptable. We need to have classrooms and laboratories for our kids to be successful. They don't have that right now.

You may see a lot of glass, very thick glass. If you go in the [Highland Village] Apple store, and you just stop right before you go in, look at how thick that glass is outside the panel walls – it must be three inches thick.

You may see a lot of inside cubicles for study and small group projects again with walls made out of glass where you can monitor kids and watch them do their work. Or you may see classrooms in which the space is flexible. You may see folding wall partitions.

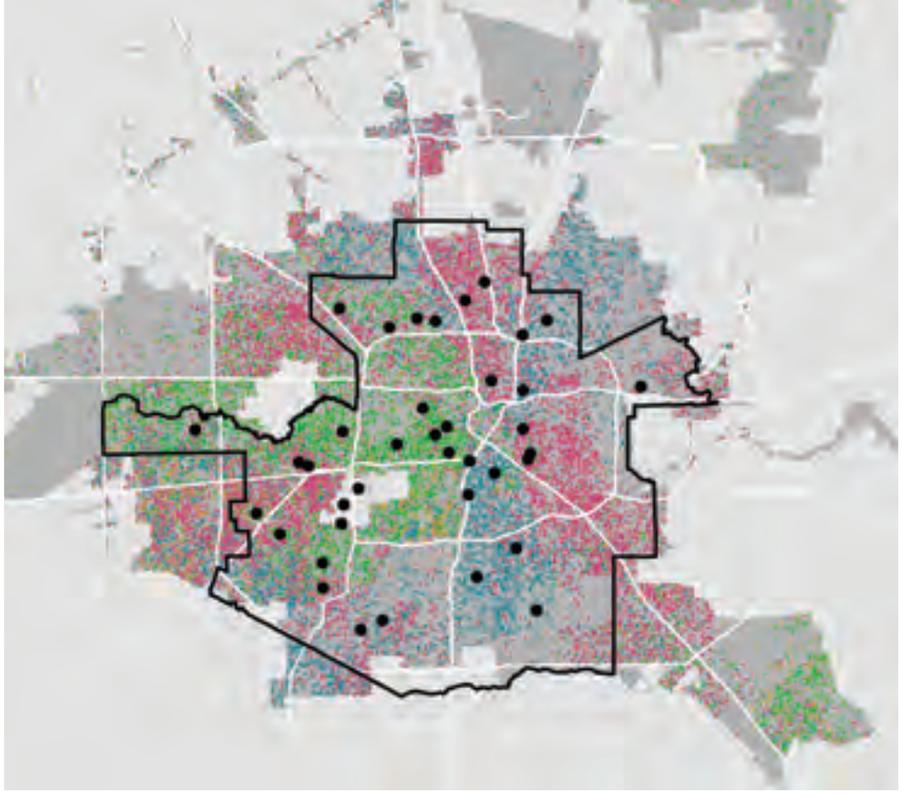
We went into a school several months ago where they had balls instead of chairs. Kids were sitting on these high-density rubber balls.

Designing schools with surround sound is very important. For kids who learn to speak English as a second language, the enunciation of the words is very important. With surround sound, the teacher wears a lapel/ear mic so that no matter where they go, kids can hear clearly.

We want schools with the capability of Skype-ing. For example, if we have a phenomenally good chemistry teacher at Lamar, we want to have the capability of Skype-ing that lesson to students all over the district. If we have a classroom large enough to hold 70 or 75 kids, we don't have to have three teachers with them. We can have two teacher assistants while the teacher is teaching.

We also want classrooms and furniture that really encourage project-based learning. Lecturing is not the way kids learn. We know that. You look at our traditional schools and they are designed for a teacher to stay in front of the room to talk to kids all day. For example, kids can leave the classroom and

OPPOSITE: Superintendent Terry Grier makes a big impression. Photo courtesy HISD.



ABOVE: The map indicates the location of 2012 HISD Bond funded schools. The black border represents HISD boundaries.

LEGEND:

- 2012 HISD Bond funded schools
- African American
- Caucasian
- Asian
- Hispanic

go in small groups to do work and everyone knows where they're going. They know that this is a project area. You have a large open area and you have seating that would make you feel like you were in Starbucks. You would have study rooms or study carrels off of each of those, maybe with the glass front.

Kids learn by doing. They learn by cooperatively sharing ideas and questioning each other's work.

NS: So you've talked a bit about the elements that are within the space. Can you talk a little bit about how you think design and aesthetics can stimulate and inspire learning? How do you see architecture contributing to that?

TG: We also need to pay a lot of attention to green schools. Since I've come to the district, all of the new schools we build are LEED certified. We're now pushing hard for platinum certification with 80 percent of the material and the schools constructed with recycled material. That's something we're going to continue to push for.

I'd like to see schools almost look like art museums. It doesn't cost more to have an innovative, creative architect to design space and create a place where kids and teachers both want to come. Somewhere they look forward to coming. They feel safe. They feel warm. They feel comfortable and it's a place where they can both relax and focus.

NS: When you say innovative, what are you thinking about?

TG: I'm thinking of flexible space where kids can meet in large groups or small groups, movable walls, partitions that are sliding. A lot of open space, high ceilings.

Again, spaces where kids can use the technology that we have today and the technology that we're going to have tomorrow that we don't even realize or understand that we will have.

NS: One thing we appreciate about HISD is that you aren't looking for cookie-cutter schools. You're looking for a variety of designs and you're looking for people to respond to the stakeholders and all the communities.

TG: We have developed an architectural advisory selection committee. Most school districts don't do that. We've never done that here in Houston before. We have the faculty of the architecture schools at Rice, University of Houston, and Prairie View A&M. They helped us go through and analyze proposals of 86 architects for 40 jobs.

NS: In previous bonds there's always been a great concern for equity and parity. When you are looking at these different innovative experiences, how do you plan to manage for that?

TG: We told architects this is not rocket science. We have scheduled 160 square feet per child and we have scheduled $200 per square foot. Now some schools, because of their size, may have to have something extra and we've been very transparent.

For example, at Lamar we put $10 million more in that budget, and we did the same thing at Bellaire, because they need parking decks.

We will build, for example, the High School for Performing and Visual Arts downtown. It will cost more to build up, to put in an underground parking deck, and to have spaces for music lessons, sound-proof rooms, and small group practice venues.

For the other schools, no matter where they are in the city, it's basically the same amount of money per child per square foot per child.

NS: Right, so the program will evolve with community involvement?

TG: Yes. So your building's space is going to look different based on whatever that community wants, such as different kinds of vocational technical programs.

NS: You mentioned blended learning. Can you expand a little bit on what blended learning is and potentially what are the other types of curriculum models that you see HISD using?

TG: Blended learning is usually when you blend online instruction with face-to-face instruction. Perhaps three days a week you're doing online work, two days a week I'm there and I'm teaching the class.

There are schools in other states called Rocketship Schools designed like a large basketball gymnasium. So on that court they have study carrels. Every kid sits in their own study carrel and has a laptop computer there. Off the side of the court, they have these study rooms and they have teachers in those study rooms. So, say, from 8 o'clock until 9:30 we're all working on social studies. And also working at our own pace on an online curriculum. There are kids from grades 9 through 12 all in there.

He may be working on U.S. government. She may be working on U.S. history. She may be working on world geography. The teacher can monitor what they're doing online, and the software now is becoming sophisticated enough so that when you get stopped, it sends a teacher an alert. So the teacher can see quickly that there are 8 students spread out in these different study carrels struggling with a particular concept. It can be math, science, whatever. So she can send you a quick email that pops up on your computer—"Please meet me in study carrel 1C." All of a sudden those kids show up. She says she is seeing that these students are having problems with square roots and so she explains that to them. She does a tutorial on square roots. You go back and you're seated.

NS: How are you going to ensure the quality of the schools being produced and make sure that lessons are being learned, that from school 1 to school 20 we're not making the same mistakes?

TG: We hired some of the best staff in the country. We've gone outside the district and have found people that have national reputations around facility design, around construction oversight. Each school will have a local oversight committee that will be made up of the principal, teachers from the high school, members of the parent-teacher association, and a student-body president.

So they will meet with the architects. They will actually have hard hats so that they can do walk-throughs. They will see the design specifications and they'll understand that the concrete is supposed to be 6 ½ inches thick, and they'll walk out there with rulers and stick it down in there to see how deep it is. They'll see that the walls are supposed to have two or three coats of paint. They can be there to watch. We hope there will be a deep community ownership as a result of being, first, very transparent and, second, being very inclusive.

> I'd like to see schools almost look like ART MUSEUMS. It doesn't cost more to have an innovative, creative architect to design space and create a place where kids and teachers both want to come.

NS: So speaking of a high school like Lamar, which obviously has a lot of historic value, what is your commitment or your understanding of preserving historic buildings in Houston?

TG: If you went in and wanted to tear Lamar down, you couldn't. You would have an uprising that you could never ever quell. People would hang you by your thumbs. So you understand the historical importance of buildings like that.

Having said that, you can keep that façade, but then you tear everything else out and gut it out from top to bottom and rebuild it like you're rebuilding a downtown office building and steel infrastructure and the whole shebang.

Yet we have other buildings that don't seem to have that kind of a historical significance or importance in a community so we're going into communities and we're saying, we're giving you a choice.

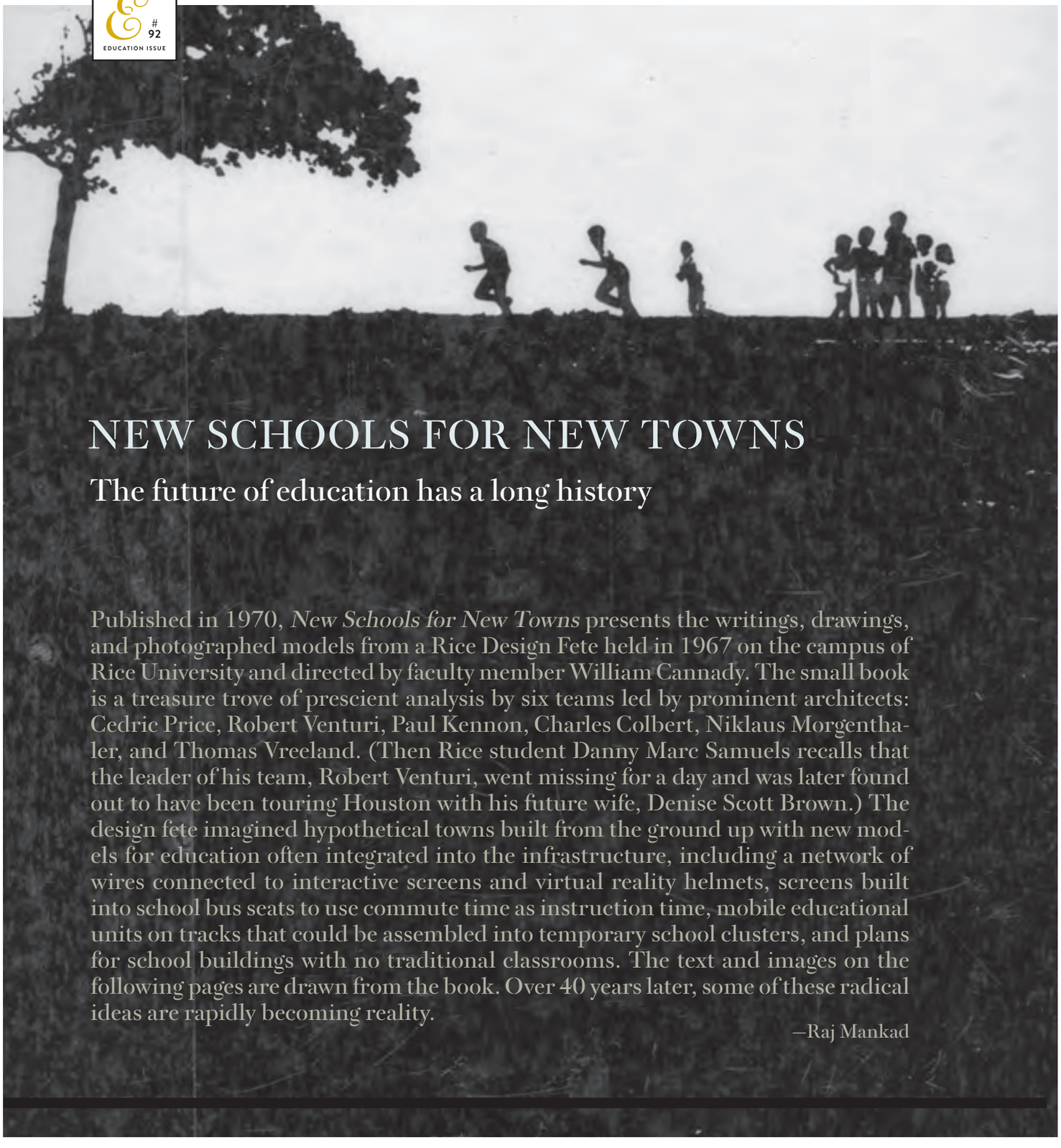
NS: In some ways, with all the construction that you're doing and the many campuses that you have, there's an urban footprint that you're making on the city as a whole.

TG: Every bit of research you read around building new high schools talks about the immediate financial impact it has on community within the 3 ½- to 5-mile radius of that school—how property values go up, how it becomes the source of pride for the community, how little mom-and-pops pop up around it, how homeowners all of a sudden start taking care of their yards and their homes to a higher degree. It has a huge impact on the city.

When we finish with this project, we're going be the only urban school district, the only large city in America, where all of its high schools have either been completely built new or completely renovated since 2000. It's going to be huge. It's going to change our city. There is no question.

The board wanted to set the bond at about $800 million. Most people don't realize that we waited until the very last day that you could legally put the bond on the ballot in Texas. I only had three votes out of nine to put it on the ballot at 8 o'clock that morning.

We ended up with an 8-1 vote. I think it's a Houston kind of thing to do. Houston has always been a city that could think big, dream big. I knew that if we could just get this thing in front of voters that they would do the right thing about the children of Houston and they did. I'm still very excited about that. C



NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW TOWNS

The future of education has a long history

Published in 1970, *New Schools for New Towns* presents the writings, drawings, and photographed models from a Rice Design Fete held in 1967 on the campus of Rice University and directed by faculty member William Cannady. The small book is a treasure trove of prescient analysis by six teams led by prominent architects: Cedric Price, Robert Venturi, Paul Kennon, Charles Colbert, Niklaus Morgenthaler, and Thomas Vreeland. (Then Rice student Danny Marc Samuels recalls that the leader of his team, Robert Venturi, went missing for a day and was later found out to have been touring Houston with his future wife, Denise Scott Brown.) The design fete imagined hypothetical towns built from the ground up with new models for education often integrated into the infrastructure, including a network of wires connected to interactive screens and virtual reality helmets, screens built into school bus seats to use commute time as instruction time, mobile educational units on tracks that could be assembled into temporary school clusters, and plans for school buildings with no traditional classrooms. The text and images on the following pages are drawn from the book. Over 40 years later, some of these radical ideas are rapidly becoming reality.

—Raj Mankad

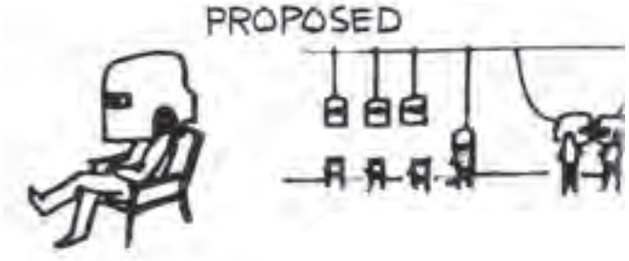
IMAGE FROM COVER OF NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW TOWNS.

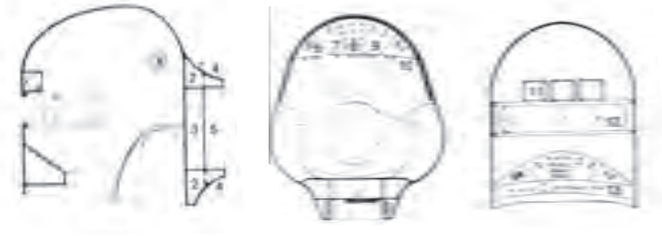
PROPOSED

THE SHOULDER CARREL

BY CHARLES COLBERT / 1967

EXCERPT: In this proposed view of education in a new town, residents assemble for individualized study in a group setting, wearing their shoulder carrels plugged into outlets incorporated in the structure of the schoolroom. The shoulder carrel is a private, air conditioned, electronically controlled booth mounted on the student's shoulders, and designed for use either at home or in school...





EXCERPT

The shoulder carrel brings to the student a vast library of data, electronically retrieved. With its individual instruction, the carrel is in direct competition and contrast with person-to-person teaching. The carrel weighs about 20 pounds, and incorporates such instructional media as UHF-VHF TV, tapes, records, computer connections, two-way radio, telephone, slide projectors, and screens.

PROPOSED

THE OPEN HAND

BY THOMAS VREELAND / 1967

EXCERPT A giant "brain" is proposed to feed information to residents of the depressed area. Through the central tower information is fed to the public via transistor radios, telephone-booth type learning units, closed circuit television in classrooms, and closed-circuit screens in traveling school buses which take learning to the neighborhoods ... The school system maintains a convoy of roving, electronically equipped and programmed buses, similar to the Volkswagen bus.

EXCERPT

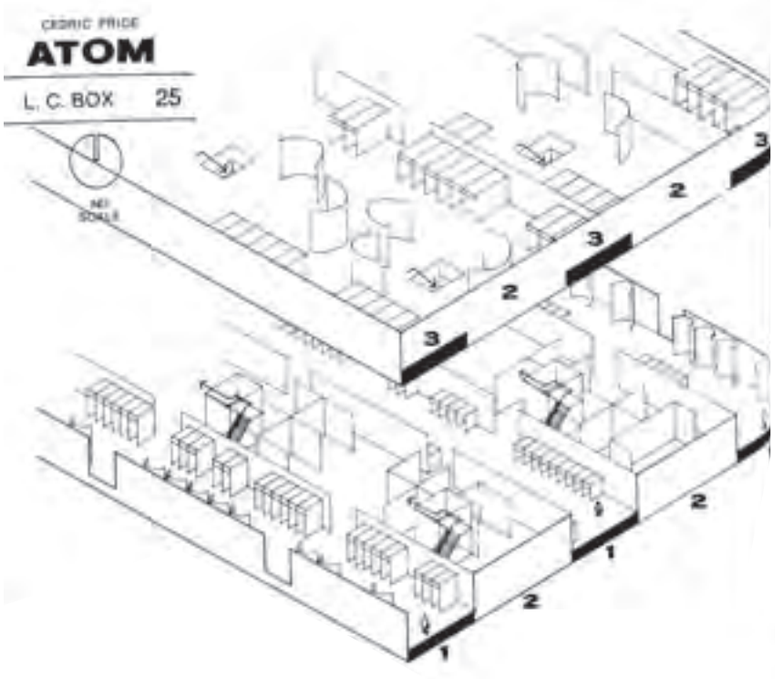
... [Vreeland's suggestion] for the rehabilitation of a depressed area within a large city ... involves the use of a familiar, easily identifiable symbol (in this case, the "Open Hand,") to identify even to the illiterate every component of the system ...

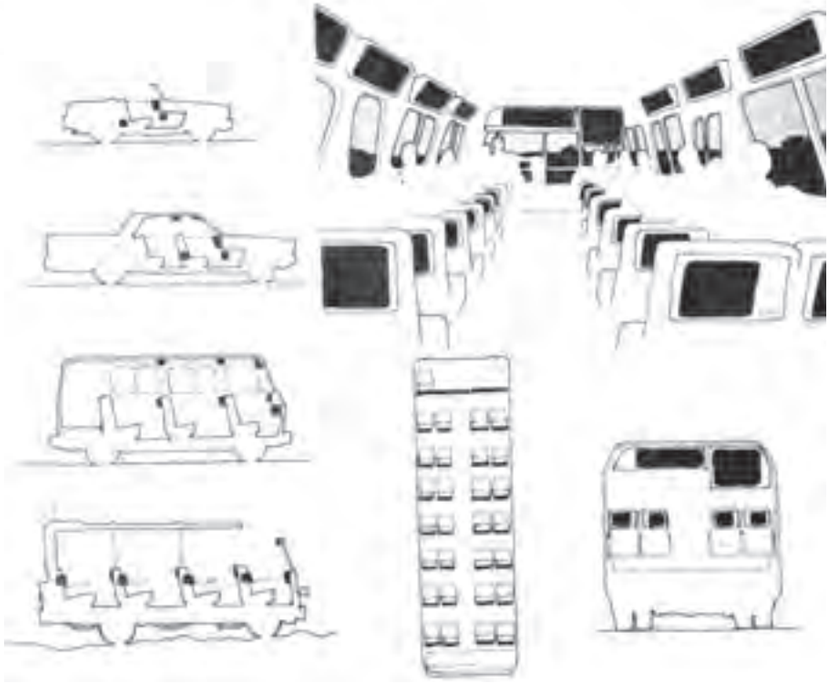
PROPOSED

KIT OF PARTS

BY CEDRIC PRICE / 1967

EXCERPT Architect Cedric Price placed maximum emphasis on electronic technology as he amassed a Kit of Parts for a decentralized education system ... for a projected new town which will be feasible by the year 1990. The parts form a complex network of facilities for education, most of which are non-structural, and are incorporated into existing facets of urban areas.





EXCERPT

The light load volumes contained between the "learning-trusses" have a large capacity for rapid volumetric variation ... Backs of seats become miniature carrels for study aboard vehicles, so that the commuting time of the student is not wasted ...

Inspired in part by the Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy (2011) designed by the Dallas office of SHW Group, this illustration by Sarah Welch depicts one future for education in which teachers transition from "sage on the stage to guide on the side," and students gain the freedom to work collaboratively and with less supervision in exchange for the constant surveillance afforded by glass.

You can learn but you can't hide.

A SCHOOL DESIGN PRIMER // WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM NEW SCHOOLS FUNDED BY THE 2007 HISD BOND?

BY MARYSCOTT HAGLE

HISD DESERVES CREDIT FOR ITS GRANULAR APPROACH TO NEW SCHOOL DESIGN. While a suburban district with ample real estate might replicate one new school template at several wide-open sites, each of Houston's distinct urban neighborhoods dictates its own particular set of design decisions. And the challenges for the district's architects extend beyond site issues. Each school community has a unique story which might be as straightforward as a cross-town move or as delicate as the blending of two historic schools with two distinct populations. Meanwhile, HISD overall is committed to building "21st Century Schools," that is, schools that embody instructional flexibility, community engagement, technological integration, and sustainability. All building projects in HISD pursue LEED certification at the highest level possible within budget and programming constraints. Architects navigating these challenges depend heavily on input from the schools and their community constituents in order to do their best work.

NOTE: Schools profiled in this article were selected by the writer and the *Cite* editor after consultation with HISD, teachers, and parents from the projects completed with 2007 bond funds. The schools represent a diversity of communities and grade levels that the school district serves. Written as an analysis of process and basic design considerations not as an independent review, this article deliberately privileges access to information and perspective over critical distance. The writer of this article is married to a principal of HarrisonKornberg Architects. Nicola Springer, a member of the *Cite* editorial committee and guest editor of this issue, is a vice president at Kirksey. Danny Marc Samuels, a past chair of the *Cite* editorial committee, and John Casbarian, former dean of the Rice School of Architecture, are principles at Taft Architects.

SINCE THE PASSAGE OF THE 2007 BOND PACKAGE THAT FUNDED CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION PROJECTS AT 180 SCHOOLS, HISD HAS CALLED FOR PROJECT ADVISORY TEAMS (**PATS**) TO MEET MONTHLY THROUGHOUT THE PLANNING, DESIGN, AND CONSTRUCTION OF A SCHOOL PROJECT. TEAM MEMBERS INCLUDE THE PRINCIPAL, STUDENTS (IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL PROJECTS), TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ALONG WITH ARCHITECTS AND HISD FACILITIES STAFF, AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO ALL PARTIES. ACCORDING TO THE DISTRICT'S 12-PAGE PAT HANDBOOK, NEWLY REVISED FOR 2012: PATS "HAVE PROVEN EFFECTIVE IN ENSURING THAT SITE-SPECIFIC NEEDS ARE ADDRESSED AND INCORPORATED INTO EACH PROJECT."

Lockhart is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) magnet school, and the U-shaped building wraps around the science garden, "a dynamic and interactive wetlands geared toward the exploration of elementary-level life science," according to HarrisonKornberg. The resulting protected courtyard is used regularly by classroom teachers, and ensures that all classrooms have ample natural light. High-efficiency HVAC systems, occupancy sensors, super-insulated walls, and light-colored roofs help reduce Lockhart's carbon footprint. (Not yet certified, Lockhart expects to receive its LEED Silver designation soon.) Eye-popping colors serve to differentiate between grade-level corridors, and the building's bright two-story lobby features a map of the solar system in the floor.

Dennis Jackson, Magnet Coordinator at Lockhart since 2008, saw the benefits of a new school building even before construction was complete: "At the district-wide Magnet Open House, parents had researched which campuses were due for renovation or reconstruction" and were directing their applications accordingly. The new Lockhart campus consolidates two smaller schools, having absorbed the old Turner Elementary, and is surrounded by a tidy neighborhood whose residents have embraced the new school, so far this year borrowing spaces in the building to host retirement parties and wakes, among other community events.

LESSONS LEARNED »

Lockhart Elementary Principal Felicia Adams took her **PAT** on tours of recently constructed schools to create a wish list for their new building, designed by HarrisonKornberg Architects and opened in Fall 2012. Some wishes were not granted – Lockhart teachers were disappointed to learn that HISD would no longer build large storage closets in classrooms like the ones they saw at Mark Twain Elementary, but the visits provided useful fodder for the committee's early meetings with the architectural team.

Regarding the construction itself, Principal Adams notes, "None of the Smart Boards worked. I didn't have a checklist telling me to go through the building and make sure every door latched, every light turned on." She urges principals going through the process not to be in a hurry, and definitely not to move into a new building until everything is complete.

Value engineering forced the elimination of the school's distinctive front canopy and exterior shades. Mixed signals from the HISD facilities department resulted in a vestibule expressed as an afterthought rather than part of the plan.

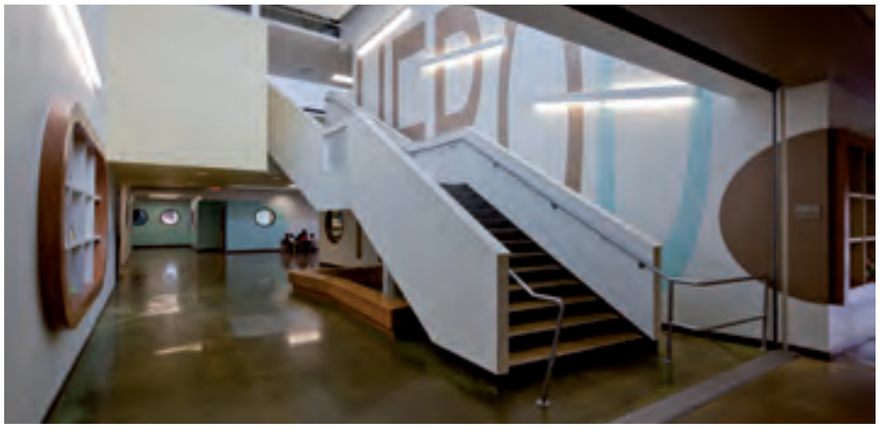
ABOVE HarrisonKornberg's U-shape plan for Lockhart Elementary protects play areas and maximizes views to the outside.

TOP Natural light from the north fills a durable, multi-use cafeteria. Exposed ducts and the bright green ceiling structure draw the eye through the indoor-outdoor transition.

ABOVE Movement and flow are possible in this colorful classroom. The desks are sprinkled through the room, not rigidly fixed in place. A generous corner window offers a focal point on the outdoors.

RIGHT The two-story lobby features clerestory windows and a map of the solar system on the floor.

PHOTOS COURTESY HARRISONKORNBERG.



TOP The simple and iconic moves of the lobby's aeronautical aesthetic were inspired by the namesake of the school, Airforce Captain Gary L. Herod.

LEFT Students in the art room create under high ceilings. Bright colors, natural light, and consistent use of shapes and material create a lively space.

ABOVE Staircases provide an opportunity to create visual drama and identity. Here the aeronautical aesthetic seems to take off.

OPPOSITE Site Plan, Herod Elementary. Rain from the roof is channeled by bioswales to storage tanks. Clerestory windows allow light to penetrate the volumes, connecting the first and second floors and creating shared community spaces.

PHOTO COURTESY KIRKSEY ARCHITECTS.

"Every child deserves a new school," says Herod Elementary principal Andrew Johnson, gravely. His 800 Pre-K through fifth grade students and their teachers seem to love their new building, designed by Kirksey Architecture and completed for the 2011-12 school year. The new Herod is an L-shaped building with school program elements expressed at different heights: a two-story bar houses the main classroom wing running east-west, while the library, multi-purpose gymnasium and cafeteria/lunch room line up as 1-1/2 story elements running north-south. Outdoor space defined by the L becomes a program element itself, and the school is flooded with natural light throughout. Principal Johnson loves this, "There's no problem if the power goes off. We just keep on going!" Herod's exterior expresses individual program elements with modular masonry and metal panels, and the interior features diamond-polished concrete floors, floor-to-ceiling classroom windows and the most elegant display systems ever conceived for showing off student work. This school is light years better than the old one – a 1965 flat-roofed building that had degenerated into what Johnson calls a "horrible, carcinogenic mess." The new building is LEED Silver certified, employing low-maintenance, sustainable materials, and rainwater management that minimizes irrigation needs.

LESSONS LEARNED »

Herod's **Project Advisory Team** met rarely, but the school had a passionate advocate in the form of then Principal Jerri Nixon. She is largely credited for the distinctive touches in the building's design, and she had so much fun with the process that she's now pursuing a Master's degree in construction management at Texas A&M. Herod's parents also provided key support for the new school, raising more than $30,000 to purchase shading devices for the playground equipment and hard top. Not all teachers were happy with their built-in desks that faced the wall, and none liked the shelving hung below their white boards which required them to lean slightly to write on them, which came about as late changes after the design process.

Pre-K sinks were mounted at the wrong height, and no book drop was included in the library plan, though one has since been added to the librarian's station. Principal Johnson urges school leaders to "become contractors, become involved, and communicate the needs of learners. We understand the learning environment."

Peck Elementary occupies a high-traffic and highly visible site along METRO Rail's coming Southeast line on MLK Blvd.,"on the banks of Third Ward" as described by Principal Carlotta Brown. Taft Architects' 2008 design uses the school's public functions to create a protective buffer for the main classroom pods. The new campus consolidates two historic campuses, the mostly Hispanic MacArthur Elementary and the almost entirely African-American Peck. Successfully blending the schools' two distinct communities became part of the design challenge, and Taft's Danny Samuels and John Casbarian conceived two cylindrical forms – an exterior entrance court with a maze-like paving pattern to represent the surrounding neighborhoods, and a round central library, the "heart of the school," encircled by a colorful mural depicting the roles of minorities in shaping Houston's history. Principal Brown commissioned the mural from students in the art department at Texas Southern University (TSU), and it is a point of pride for the neighborhood as well as the school. Determined to maximize community support for her campus, Mrs. Brown also named several rooms within the school for community leaders such as Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis, State Representative Alma Allen (a former Peck Principal), and long-time HISD trustee Arthur Gaines. These honorees have provided meaningful support to the school, in some cases donating personal memorabilia to be displayed on campus.

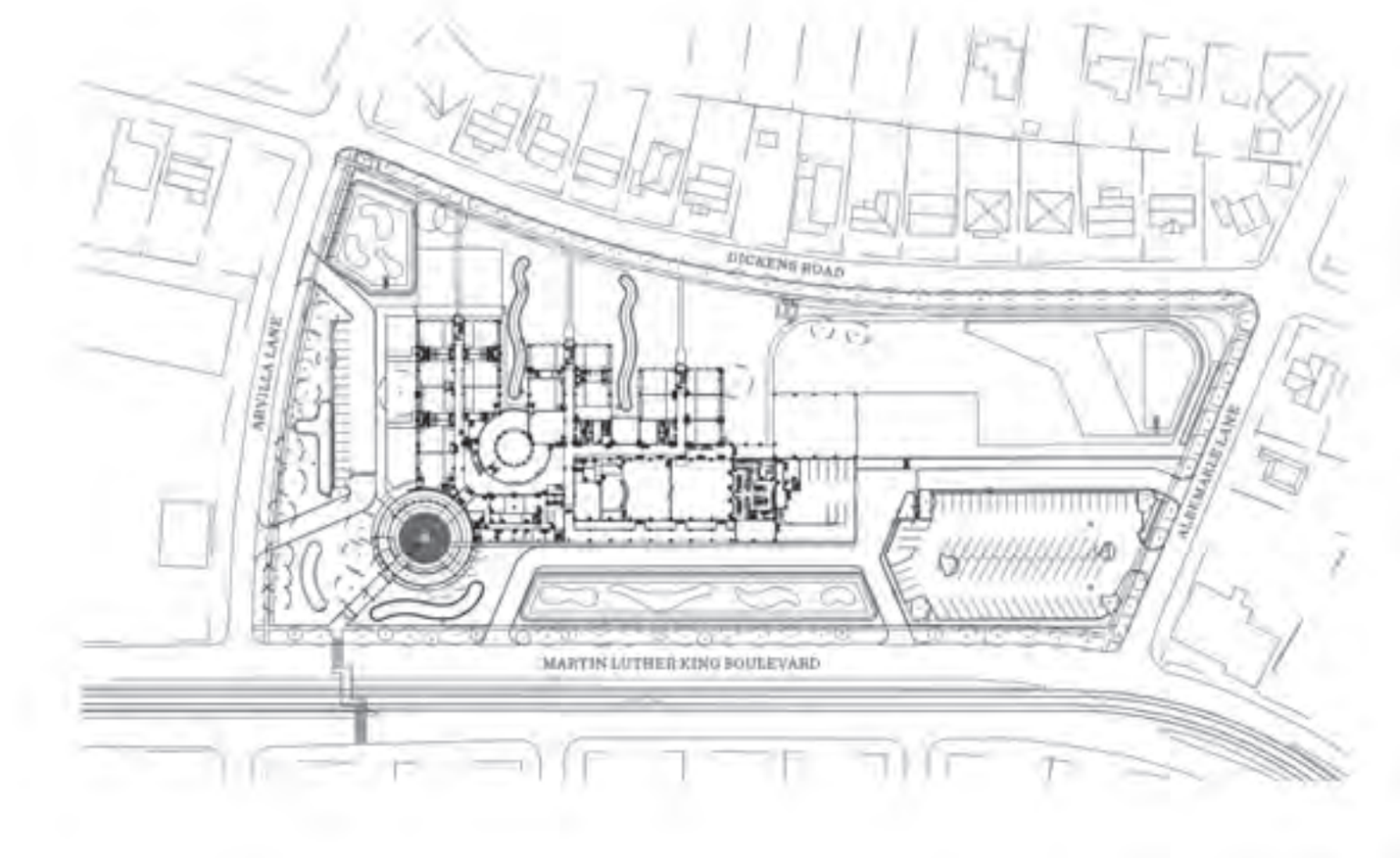
LESSONS LEARNED »

Principal Brown at Peck Elementary says, "The principal needs to be in all the meetings and on top of everything happening during construction." She described "fighting for all the money" that was promised to Peck in the 2007 bond package, and communicating her high expectations to every contractor and sub-contractor she met working on the building. Then after moving into their brand new school over Thanksgiving vacation in 2011, Peck students and faculty were forced to evacuate by a flash flood on January 9, 2012. Drainage work continues in the area along with METRO construction, and Mrs. Brown reports that the community treats the school with care and pride.

ABOVE A mural painted by students from the art department at TSU represents the Hispanic and African American communities brought together by the new school. Photos courtesy Taft Architects.

OPPOSITE TOP Two cylindrical forms define the campus, one of which is an exterior entrance court with a maze-like paving pattern to represent the surrounding neighborhoods.

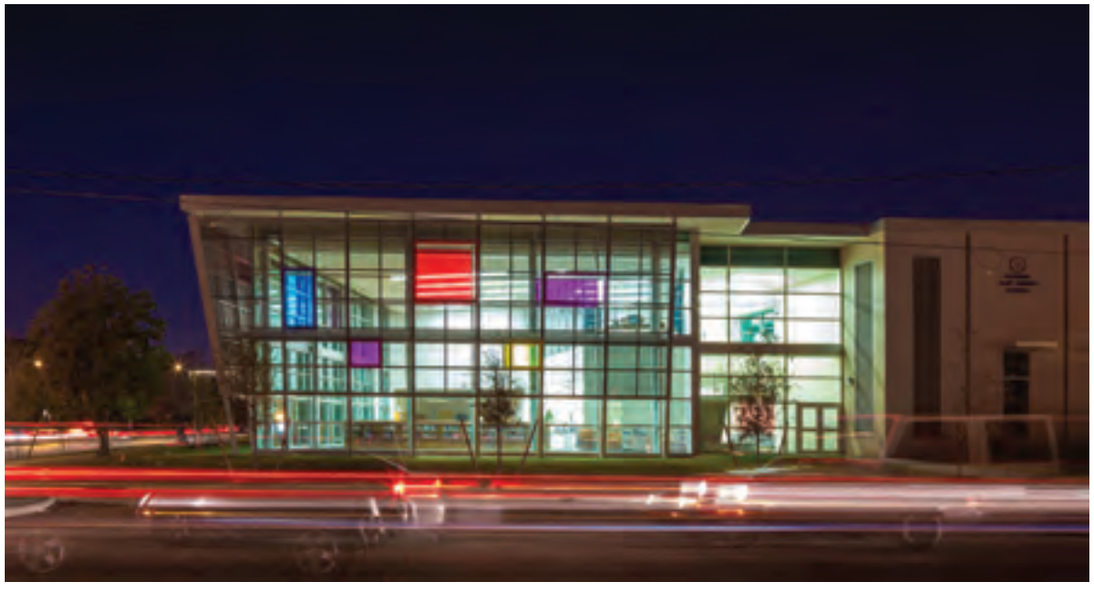
OPPOSITE BOTTOM The site plan shows a school carefully tuned to its site and transportation options. Admin and public functions form a protective buffer for classrooms. A coming light rail stop is integrated into the entrance sequence.


DICKENS ROAD
ARVILLA LANE
ALAMEDA LANE
MARTIN LUTHER KING BOULEVARD

TOP: The first-floor plan is notable for its central courtyard and inclusion of the existing historic building on West Gray that the community must raise funds to rehabilitate.

BELOW LEFT The arcs of the entry sequence and the driveway forecourt interact to create an energetic and inviting facade. Photos courtesy RdlR Architects.

BELOW RIGHT Unlike a zoned school that draws from its immediate neighborhood, Carnegie's students commute from all corners of the city. The new central location, well served by public transit, has cut students' transit times.



The new campus at Carnegie Vanguard High School is still under construction, but it has been occupied since fall 2012, and the students' affection for their new home is palpable in the hallways. RdIR Architects (formerly Rey de La Reza Architects) began involving members of the Carnegie community in weekend charrettes to inspire the design even before a site for the school was final. Students were loud and clear on one point: "We need a courtyard." The new design actively integrates indoor and outdoor spaces, and the second story "green roof" plaza with its spectacular view of downtown has quickly become part of Carnegie's identity, judging by its frequent appearances on Facebook and Instagram. Exposed building systems and durable, low-maintenance materials add an industrial feel, and the school announces itself to the surrounding transitional neighborhood via a muscular glass and steel façade and giant initials: CVHS.

Once the Taft Street site was named, the building committee and architects met with nearby businesses, churches, civic associations, and community centers to build support for the school, and the Carnegie parents kicked into gear, ultimately raising $300,000 to fund the rehabilitation of the site's existing Settegast building into a fine arts complex which was not part of HISD's budget for the project. Carnegie's new building reflects such creative innovations as a parking structure originally planned for one story that grew to two when the City of Houston offered to pitch in in exchange for community access to the school's ball fields on the weekends. Principal Ramon Moss reports that the grounds are now heavily used by players of all ages and ethnicities; might this partnership be a model for future community enhancements as HISD revs up its next round of school projects? Furthermore, the garage itself is dual-purpose: when the academic day is over and the students who park on the garage roof go home, the Carnegie tennis team takes over for practice.

ABOVE The roof garden at Carnegie Vanguard offers a stunning view of downtown and a reminder of the urban context of some HISD schools.

LESSONS LEARNED »

After moving into Carengie Vanguard High School's new campus in the Fall of 2012, Instructional Coordinator Melissa Matsu devoted about 90 percent of her time those first two months to managing the ongoing construction on campus. She quickly learned how to read architectural drawings and developed relationships with all of the contractors and subs who were in and out daily, only occasionally pausing to ask herself, "Is this normal?" Now all at CVHS eagerly await the completion of the Settegast building fine arts complex so they can fully occupy the site. And as Principal Ramon Moss says, articulating the big dream for the next wave of bond-funded school projects in Houston, "We're hoping that many more students will have the opportunity to learn in a state of the art facility like we do."

FLEXIBILITY OPENNESS SOCIABILITY TRANSPARENCY!

A NEW YORK EXHIBITION DELVES INTO SCHOOLS AS ICONIC ART SPACES, INNER-CITY FORTRESSES, DENS OF COMPUTER GAMING, AND COMMUNITY CENTERS

BY STEVEN THOMSON

An exhibition at New York City's Center for Architecture, The Edgeless School, investigates the issues that HISD and architects must take on as the 2012 bond schools are designed and built. Though the exhibition is heavy on New York schools, it includes K-12 institutions located between each coast that offer inspiration and lessons for Houston's planners. "Everyone seems to agree that this is a watershed moment for education," says curator Tom Mellins, "and no one seems to know exactly how or what that really means for design." Inside the center's gallery, Mellins has assembled displays of 19 exemplary schools that present both noteworthy architecture and embody the notion of the "edgeless" school. The curator's definition of "edgeless" is twofold: the acceptance that today's students have access to unprecedented global flows of information; and realizing schools' increasing engagement with the community beyond the classroom walls.

› THE INCONIC ART SCHOOL

The inclusion of a downtown site for a new High School for the Performing and Visual Arts on the 2012 HISD bond has generated excitement for its potential to enliven Houston's core and connect students to our theater district. Edgeless Schools offers valuable lessons.

"When organizing the exhibition, we were drawn to a disproportionate amount of institutions that were performing and visual arts schools, and it could just be that the very creative nature of this subject matter is inspiring to architects," notes Mellins.

The Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas designed by Allied Works Architecture is so dazzling that a digitized representation has been superimposed onto the exhibition's north interior wall, spanning two stories of display space. HISD can look to the school as a model in terms of its close location to the city's arts district. The gray brick is rather somber, but the wide corridors, tall atriums, and natural light could serve as a good model for HSPVA.

The Ramón C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts in Los Angeles stands as an exuberant cornerstone of the spectacle-driven, starchitect-studded downtown. Located on the same axis as Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall, Rafael Moneo's Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, and Arata Isozaki's Museum of Contemporary Art, the school's profile includes a steel-clad conical library, porthole windows, and a cantilevered tower with a ramp spiraling whimsically into the sky. Designed by the Viennese firm of Coop Himmelbau, the school presents an assault of awkward geometries driven not by the best interests of the Los Angeles Unified School District, but by the avant-garde taste of the school's benefactor—billionaire philanthropist Eli Broad, who pushed policy makers to drop a more modest design in favor of a $232 million project befitting pre-recession tastes and the opportunity to offer seductive TV location shoots.

Much more successful at delivering an inspired arts-focused educational setting is the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Astoria, Queens. Instead of succumbing to the pressure of creating an architectural icon, the school naturally benefits from its site across from the American Museum of the Moving Image, visually communicates with the local creative community via sweeping views onto the second story's rehearsal and studio spaces, and capitalizes on Manhattan skyline views with a rooftop stage that hosts events open to the public.

› FORTRESS OF LEARNING OR NEIGHBORHOOD NEXUS

The Frank R. Conwell School in Jersey City, designed by Gruzen Samdo and IBI Group, is cited in a semi-urban environment that looks similar to the trend towards low-rise, mixed-use development in Houston. The school relates to Jersey City's scale, articulated as a system of smaller structures that foreground protected outdoor spaces. In effect, the informality of the street that the school faces is ingested into the architecture as a whole.

The Conwell School's extensive glazing further fosters visual communication between the school and the city. Similarly, back on the Manhattan grid, the East Harlem School negotiates its "gritty urban setting" by offering passersby views onto the lower communal ar-

eas via translucent, etched glass, and cloaking the upper areas for individual and group learning in a pixilated skin of windows and opaque, monochromatic panels. This notion of mediated public and private spaces is mirrored in the teaching methodology, in which group projects downstairs complement the upper floors' classroom sessions, each of which begins and ends with a three-minute personal meditation. Behind the building's panels, individual tutors meet one-on-one with students, collaborating on applications to prestigious high schools.

"This is not designed to be stylistically contextual—it's meant to be a beacon," says Mellins. "But it's also meant to be a haven. There's this theme that emerges of the possibility of violence in our society, both physically or even with the idea of chaotic households, that evidences itself in school architecture."

Despite the lower floor's windows, the façade's styling appears fortress-like, perpetuating the stigma of the neighborhood as dangerous. Moreover, the East Harlem School's sensitivity to the neighborhood's large proportion of "at-risk youth" contrasts with the notion of edgeless schools as operating in a global learning community aided by technology. While the school's pedagogy aims to place its students beyond the area's perceived dangers, this attention to hyper local conditions suggests that contemporary school architecture still requires, so to speak, edges.

› THE INFINITELY FLEXIBLE DIY FUTURE

Because of the broad brief of surveying compelling U.S. school architecture, the exhibition offers less of a critique than a studied approach to how changes in pedagogy are manifesting in design. A series of videos portraying 21st-century pedagogues illuminates new methodologies, such as Katie Salen's technique of capturing students' interest by disguising assignments in video games at her school, Quest to Learn. Accepting that "game design is this generation's mode of discourse," Salen structures the curriculum along 10-week "missions" with scaffolding challenges designed to empower students.

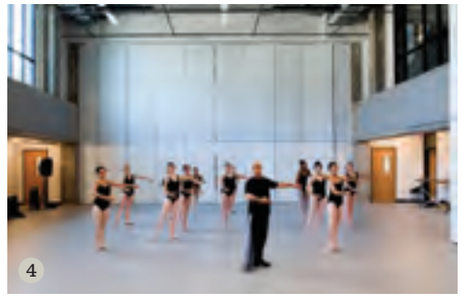
"Kids are going to have to adapt and learn constantly," remarks Salen, "and that's the type of learner we're looking to graduate."

Featured linguist James Paul Gee also recognizes the potential of computer games for honing problem solving skills in tandem with hands-on "embodied learning"—and eschewing standardized testing altogether. Echoing a common grievance among educators, Gee says, "We're not going to change the paradigm of learning unless we change the test," yet he does not suggest how this sea change could impact architecture.

Instead of defining children on the deficiencies indicated in tests, founding editor and publisher of *Make*, Dale Dougherty, argues for DIY-style (as in Do It Yourself) learning in environments that bring in the local community, saying that the physical barriers from the neighborhood are what makes students so eager to depart at the sound of the bell. Such arguments have already reached realization in places like the L. B. Landry High School in New Orleans, where the firm of Eskew+Dumez+Ripple designed an open, U-shaped campus that incorporates a media center shared with the city, public health facilities, and a vocational training technology center that educates both adolescents and local residents.

In a nod to "embodied learning" curator Mellins notes, "Seeing people taking care of themselves is an educative experience." C

1 Frank R. Conwell School 2 + 4 Booker T. Washington High School 3 Ramon T Cortinez School 5 Catalog / The Edgeless School 6 The East Harlem School



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE.

A TALE OF TWO SIGNS / Twilight Epiphany and the Blaffer Museum of Art

NEW ART SPACES AT RICE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON PROVIDE TWO EXAMPLES OF HOW ART CAN ANIMATE AND RESHAPE SCHOOL CAMPUSES.

BY ALEXANDRA LANGE

TWILIGHT EPIPHANY

Rice University

When Ralph Adams Cram planned the Rice University campus in 1910, he imagined two long arms of buildings stretching away from the Sally Port with an uninterrupted rectangular lawn bridging the gap between the shady arcades and façades of St. Joe brick. The university destroyed that vision in the late 1940s when Fondren Library closed the first quadrangle of buildings, which left a second quad running raggedly toward the stadium. Over the past 15 years, Rice has been trying to make that second space into a place. The façade of Ricardo Bofill's 1991 Alice Pratt Brown Hall, housing the school of music, provides an excellent backstop on the interior of the quad, its industrial Doric columns large enough to read at a distance (though its rear façade, twice as tall, is messy and generic). Fussy buildings by Robert A.M. Stern Architects and Hammond, Beeby & Babka pinch the quad's sides, flanking a fountain, and offering a sense of containment that is pleasant, even if the buildings feature a mismatch of size and detailing. Until last summer, however, there was no reason beyond academic ones for anyone to go down to that end of the axis. The residential colleges, the gym, even Thomas Phifer and Partners' delicate 2008 Brochstein Pavilion, intended to give the university a social mixing space for

BLAFFER GALLERY

University of Houston

Call it a tale of two signs. The sign at the recently renovated and added-onto Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston takes a different tone. "Blaffer Art Museum invites you to eat, drink, study, muse, stay a while. Come back again." The sign sits outside a new café area. The museum can't serve anything yet, not even coffee, but they have carved out a citrus-hued space, just inside the campus entrance to the museum, where anyone can take a table or pull around a pleated white, gray, and chartreuse curtain for a meeting. The museum's updated logo, now in Cougar Red, has been applied to the window. A plastic sign announces a Valentine's Day screening of John Waters's Pink Flamingos, and some dimestore plastic flamingos have been stuck out on the quad, signs around their necks, to attract attention. Everything is screaming: Come on in!

The Blaffer has been on campus since 1973, housed in a beige brick Caudill Rowlett Scott building along with several other fine arts departments. But it was hard for anyone to know it was there. The campus entrance to the museum was located at the back of the open-air Fine Arts Courtyard, shaded by the overhang of a second-story walkway. A public entrance off the vast parking lot did

students and faculty, were grouped at the other end. You could wave at the fountain in the distance, but why walk there?

In June we got a reason: the James Turrell skyspace "Twilight Epiphany," 73rd in the artist's series of transcendent light sculptures. Thomas Phifer and Partners served as architect. The skyspace, though called a "pavilion" in its full appellation—the Suzanne Deal Booth Centennial Pavilion—serves more as a solid pendant to the Brochstein Pavilion's lightness. While the latter is all glass and thin, white-painted steel rods, the former takes the shape of a 12-foot-high grassy berm, square in plan, with slanted sides. Lofted above it on round metal columns is a 72-by-72-foot roof with a 14-foot square hole in the center. The edges of this roof are thinned to a quarter of an inch, giving it the illusion of being no thicker than a sheet of white paper. Concrete slots cut into the berm lead you either up to a berm-top level or to the center: directly under the roof's hole. Look up, and the sky you were just under is transformed. The white frame, without special effects, turns up your level of perception. An airplane caught in the square can read as chilling rather than mundane. A wisp of cloud becomes a painterly gesture. Look horizontally, and you can see the fountain and the Brochstein Pavilion in one direction, and straight through the glass doors of Pratt Hall in the other. If the library hadn't turned its back on this end of campus, your gaze could keep going to the Sally Port. The skyspace and its interior are squares in a series of squares, courts, and quads, and as such fit adroitly into the remnants of Cram's plan.

Turrell's early skyspaces did little more than frame the sky. His 1986 "Meeting," at MoMA PS1 in Queens, is entered through a door in a hall like every other door. You sit on one of a square of benches under a rectangular opening. Subtle one-color artificial lighting enhances the contrast between sky and room, but in my memory I edited out the visual boost. The sky and the space did it alone. The Rice skyspace is far more ambitious, in architecture as well as light: two separate 40-minute shows, programmed to start 40 minutes before dawn and to last 40 minutes after dusk, wash the floating plane in colors ranging from fuchsia to violet, cerulean to ice. I thought the effect might be cheesy (the publicity photos, in which the whole thing looks like a space mountain waiting to beam you up, didn't help), but I was wrong.

not exist; on that side was only a blank two-story brick wall. In 2011 director and chief curator Claudia Schmuckli announced that New York firm WORKac had been hired to renovate the museum, a $2 million project to improve circulation, visibility, and the museum's mission to showcase contemporary art. Two million dollars is a small sum for architecture (the Turrell was funded in part by a $5 million donation), and the Blaffer renovation was a very small project, as befits a museum of a little less than 14,000 square feet, essentially a sign and a stair and a lot of cleaning up inside. WORKac managed to get the maximum out of that budget by combining the first two functions into one big move.

That move is Robert Venturi's "Bill-ding-board" made flesh: where once there was a blank wall, there is now a set of glass doors, announced at the scale of the parking lot by a trapezoidal addition made of translucent and transparent cast channel glass and anodized aluminum. That addition, which contains a new staircase, angles up over the door, following the slant of the underside of the steps. The void underneath creates a covered triangle. A triangular concrete wall of exactly the same dimensions looks as if it has been rotated out to form the other side of the entrance portal. The wall cleverly masks the loading dock, contains the support column for the stairs, and serves as a vehicle for the museum's identity. BLAFFER rides the top, in aluminum letters also painted Cougar Red. ART MUSEUM sits below. On the back, which is visible from a number of angles on campus, the architects and graphic designer Miko McGinty decided to run the words in reverse as a visual joke. Given its disingenuously diaphanous appearance and the way it seems to levitate off the dull façade, the addition reminded me a little bit of early Frank Gehry, straightened up.

The channel glass, which reads as ribs from a distance, solves a number of problems. From inside, it turns the parking lot into a fuzzy, moving abstraction, solving the problem of no view that troubles so many Houston institutions that have hired contemporary architects. From outside, it blurs the art and the akimbo fluorescent tube lighting fixtures that WORKac installed in both upstairs and downstairs halls. (They call it their "Mikado"

PHOTOS COURTESY RICE UNIVERSITY AND BLAFFER GALLERY.

Two tall office buildings, part of the neighboring Texas Medical Center, have exterior light shows as well, and both are visible from the skyspace's upper deck. Corporate branding or minimalist art? One doesn't usually think about these two things together. But once you are inside the berm, sitting on one of the Texas-sourced pink granite benches, head tilted up toward the opening, you don't think about any of that. The LEDs click on just before sunset, a soft yellow glow at the corners by the columns. Around you, everyday life becomes ambient noise. The interior has been designed for music performance—the first official ones will begin this year—so it simultaneously amplifies and dislocates sound. Whistles from playing fields. The crunch of stroller wheels on gravel. The man chatting to his date upstairs. Joggers. The slap of ballet flats worn by the music students who treat it as a tunnel.

First there is whiteness, the smooth expanse of white plaster tinged with yellow at the edges. The sky is light blue. Then a rosy pink inside deepens to fuchsia. For one moment, the sky is turquoise, the roof, hot pink. Palm Beach. The strip of visible sky around the top edge between berm and roof adds another color, slightly different from the center square. I begin to see the whole thing as a color theory lecture, an homage to Josef Albers.

A pause, then the roof becomes whiter than white, the sky, cerulean blue. I think of Santorini, Greece, where I've never been. Vacation postcards keep coming to mind—it must be the punched-up colors. Then the ceiling goes violet, cycling through a series of blues that leach the color from the sky and make it gray, dishwater gray, stormy gray. Sludge. You are in a horror movie, and someone has turned off the sky.

An interlude follows: sherbet colors on the interior, pink mixed into yellow. The lights go back to pink, but you can't find that turquoise in the sky again. It is literally too late. It is not quite clear when it is all over, but when you stumble out, it is dark. The campus is largely deserted. It is dinnertime.

The light installation, it turns out, is sublime and slightly unsettling—even more so at dawn, when the sport whistles are replaced by chirping birds, and you can have the place to yourself. But a number of details around those 40 minutes chip away at the experience in ways that are troubling.

To bring the seating capacity to 120, Turrell designed concrete benches that were added to the upper level. Sitting up there, it is hard to focus on the roof and sky. One looks out either at those postmodern professional schools or at the Texas Medical Center skyline, twinkling on its own. You see the LEDs change color a few feet in front of your nose. The lights are protected by acrylic on top, but screened by a piece of white-painted perforated metal on the sides. You could spend your 40 minutes just watching the bulbs. During my visit, a thin line of dirt ran around the square opening, the result of rainwater, dirty from pollution, pooling around the edge and gathering at the corners. Rice has

> Art in the form of university museums has often been part of that "much more," with study collections, free admission, and all manner of other ways to lower the bar to casual encounters with art.

pattern.) The glass seems to call out for some sort of inside supergraphic, something bold to make people outside curious—from even inside their cars. Matt Johns, the Blaffer's director of external affairs, says a program of murals by local artists may be in the works, which would likely do the trick. Johns also said that the neon lights were gelled from white to red for the grand re-opening, creating an ombré effect up the stairs.

Inside, WORKac created a new, wider front hall with a spruce plywood enclosure for the receptionist, which connects the campus and public sides of the museum. A double-height gallery, almost a cube, sits just off the hall. Behind the white paint, its walls and ceiling are reinforced for contemporary sculpture of any size. Next to that is a lower-ceilinged second gallery, no longer split in two by a staircase to the second floor. Both of these are basic white boxes with new polished concrete floors, nothing fancy, but an improvement over the old divided, brick-floored spaces. I was still bothered by the ceiling of the smaller gallery, which was festooned with vents and tracks for lighting and large movable spots. Given the low ceiling height, this infrastructure attracts attention upward away from the art. It was the same in the third new gallery stacked above this one, its ceiling bisected by a large structural beam. There is not much the architects could do about the beam, but I would have liked a cleaner, shallower canopy.

The curators all seemed thrilled with the new galleries, which also include a black-box media space and a studio space on the second floor. In the previous incarnation, the stairs led from the lower galleries to an upstairs hall, and visitors had to walk by the closed doors of the administrative offices. Now they exit the smaller downstairs gallery and walk up light, bright, new precast concrete steps, with generous treads and

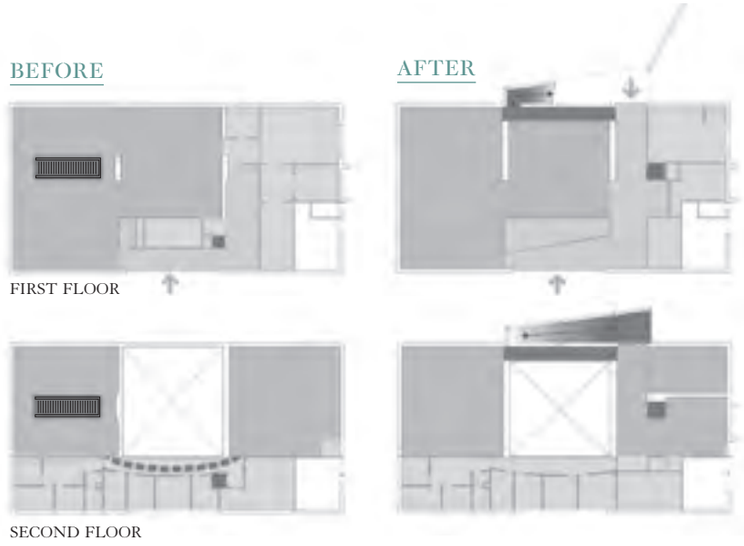
since developed a regular cleaning process and I understand the square has a white edge again.

There are other signs that the skyspace wasn't designed by Turrell to be quite tough enough. On the upper level, the maintenance staff posted DO NOT PUT FEET ON WALL in several places, in creatively spaced Helvetica capitals. Out front on the sidewalks leading inside, a pair of temporary signs asks visitors to "Please respect the art installation. **Food, Drinks, Smoking, Pets, Bicycles** and **Skateboards** are prohibited. **Photography** and **Cell Phone** usage during the light sequence is not allowed." [The boldface and caps are theirs.] Reservations are also required for the sunset show. I was told it has been packed, but on the beautiful February evening I was there, I had five companions.

What is the point of art on campus after all? The skyspace has an urban role to play, attracting people to that end. It serves as a contemplative pendant to the Brochstein Pavilion's sociability. But it also speaks to a civilizing agenda: students think they are learning from their classes, but the college experience is so much more. Art in the form of university museums has often been part of that "much more," with study collections, free admission, and all manner of other ways to lower the bar to casual encounters with art. The skyspace seems like the ideal distillation of that impulse. It is impossible to miss, easy to access, hard not to enjoy. It should be the simplest of drop-by art experiences, and that's clearly what its patron, Suzanne Deal Booth, and the university had in mind. Why the docent, the signs, and all that high-maintenance white paint? I wish the architecture had been more minimal, and toughened up, so there didn't have to be so much metaphorical shushing. Build an experience that can survive an errant soda cup.

Why not make the tunnels, stairs, and upper balcony of concrete, like the fine-grained benches? Why not let visitors distribute themselves at will? Why not banish the signs, except for a web address, and let people sack out, neck, run the steps, snack, and take selfies at will? If Quaker School taught me anything, it is that respect is earned with actions, not titles. If the point is to have more people—students, faculty, Houston residents, and art pilgrims—experience a Turrell skyscape, how much more wonderful would it be to add the sense of personal discovery? Let people Google it after they have been there, rather than before.

Turrell's lifetime project is to turn Arizona's Roden Crater into a monumental skyspace. I think he should have built an artificial crater here, something as tough as if it had been blasted from rock. Leave it there, at the ragged end of campus, to click on and click off on its own. It is programmed for every day of the year. Let it be something that can stand a little rain.



ABOVE: The move of the stair from the main gallery to the facade clarified the circulation.

thin, white steel pipe handrails. The layout is still confusing when you get to the top, though. The wide hallway on the first floor makes sense as a cut-through to campus and a major route. But the equally wide upstairs hall just leads to two closed doors and the studio around the corner. What you are looking for is the third gallery, which is reached instead down a narrow right-hand walkway. It would be easy to miss the continuation of the exhibit, even with the arrows on the wall.

The Blaffer definitely got its $2 million worth, but for the gallery to become more of an on-campus architectural presence, more needs to happen outside. WORKac's original proposal included landscape architecture for the Fine Arts Courtyard by SCAPE to give it more shape and specific programming areas. The university is going ahead with a new outdoor plan with the same goals, as part of a larger project, to be designed by SWA Group. Without more of a courtyard statement—including a permanent projection screen—it will always be a struggle for the Blaffer to make connections to the wider UH community (40,000 students use the campus each day). Johns rattled off a number of collaborations the museum has initiated with different arts departments, from the annual MFA exhibition to a wall-mounted museum store stocked with products conceived, made, and packaged by UH design students. That is a perfect use for that wide front hall, making it more like a tiny urban street. Unlocked on one side from its beige brick cocoon, the museum seems to be doing all it can (for now) to meet students where they are, and let them experience the art on their own terms.

Art on campus should be treated differently from art in the real world—even when your campus, like UH, is the size of a small city. Campus art needs to be tougher, punchier, more easily accessible in all senses of the word. Otherwise, experiencing it becomes another adult duty, easily ignored or dismissed. Students are busy when they are in school, but they are also potentially open in ways they won't be later on. Turrell's "Twilight Epiphany" at Rice is a perfect catchall for emotion, romance, spirituality, and rest, and as such, it seems suited to those odd moments. That's why, however transporting I found the light show at sunrise and sunset, the ideal experience would be to stumble upon it without preamble and museum labels. Coffee would not disrupt the view. It would be wiser to eliminate the "No" and maximize wonder. C


IN CALIDA VENENUM
THE STATUE OF TRUE LIES

TIER ONE

Is University of Houston's Campus Worthy of its New Status?

TEXT BY STEPHEN SHARPE
PHOTOS BY JACK THOMPSON

OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON WILL WRAP UP A CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM THAT HAS INVESTED $1.46 BILLION TO DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT OR RENOVATE 29 BUILDINGS ON ITS MAIN CAMPUS.

The results to date of this remarkable seven-year effort already have transformed the 667-acre campus, yet even more big changes are still to come. With a few exceptions, the completed projects don't measure up to the high level of UH's recent academic accomplishment—achieving "tier one" status. The new architecture falls short of expressing the university's determined commitment to excellence, especially along the perimeter where the campus could connect to the city and visitors get their first impressions.

Design and placemaking do not appear to be the university administration's principal reasons for undertaking the improvements in the first place. The goal was for UH to achieve top national ranking for research capabilities. Indeed, thanks in large part to the improvements program, UH attained that lofty goal in 2011 when the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching bestowed its coveted "very high research activity" classification on the campus.

Driving that successful push toward "tier one" was Chancellor Renu Khator, who took the helm of the University of Houston System in January 2008 and from the beginning was determined to propel UH into the top echelon of the nation's university research centers. And to reach that goal, Khator and her administration embarked on an unprecedented – both in terms of its cost and scope of work – improvements program intended as a comprehensive overhaul and enhancement of existing campus facilities. Today, two years after earning the Carnegie Foundation's utmost tribute, the rollout of new buildings continues as evidence of Khator's tenacity in maintaining "tier one."

Only two other of the state's public institutions of higher learning (UT Austin and Texas A&M), along with a private university (Rice), can boast of having attained that same elevated status. Like those other institutions, UH will reap many rewards for its achievement, including greater financial support from the state, which in turn allows the university to attract and retain high-quality faculty. Among the other benefits for UH and the various communities that comprise the city of Houston is the university's expanded capability – via opportunities for increased government funding – to enhance the overall quality of education on the main campus.

OPPOSITE LEFT The Art Guy's Statue of Four Lies (2010) highlights University of Houston's aspirations by outdoing the famed Statue of Three Lies at Harvard. The inscription on the wall translates as, "The world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived."

TOP A drawing of the Roy Cullen Hall tower entrance (Lamar Q. Cato, 1939)

BELOW LEFT The 1937 master plan by Hare and Hare organized buildings along well-defined quads.

BELOW RIGHT The Art Deco-style Ezekiel Cullen Building (Alfred C. Finn, 1950) is faced with fossilized limestone and decorative cast-aluminum elements.

In addition to aggressively developing new facilities that advance research activities, the improvements program will accommodate the growth of the student body from the current 40,000 students to a projected total of 45,000. Also, where earlier iterations of the campus environment were designed for a population of mostly part-time students who commuted to attend classes, the latest improvements include amenities intended for future freshmen classes required to live on campus for their first year, which will dramatically increase the approximately 6,000 current residents.

By the time the construction program winds up in 2015, a total of 15 new buildings will have been added, and 14 existing buildings will have undergone significant renovation or build-out. All told, the program will add or upgrade more than nine million gross square feet.

The improvements program is guided by a "framework" campus master plan that calls for doubling the amount of learning space to 15 million square feet, doubling the amount of living space to accommodate an additional 5,000 students in apartment-style housing, increasing the amount of parking along the periphery, developing the main campus into a network of eight precincts configured to bring together affiliated disciplines, improving existing outdoor landscape features, adding more public art purchased through a program that sets aside one percent of each new project's budget, creating "green corridors" for pedestrian interaction at the edges of campus, and the possible closure of Cullen Boulevard to traffic.

It's at the edges of campus that the ultimate effects of the completed planning effort will be most obvious, in particular at the western and southern boundaries where the Metropolitan Transit Authority's new Southeast Line will run along Scott and Wheeler streets. Crews are now installing light-rail infrastructure, including passenger platforms, with operations expected to begin late next year. The new line will connect to the downtown and numerous neighborhoods to the north and southeast of campus.

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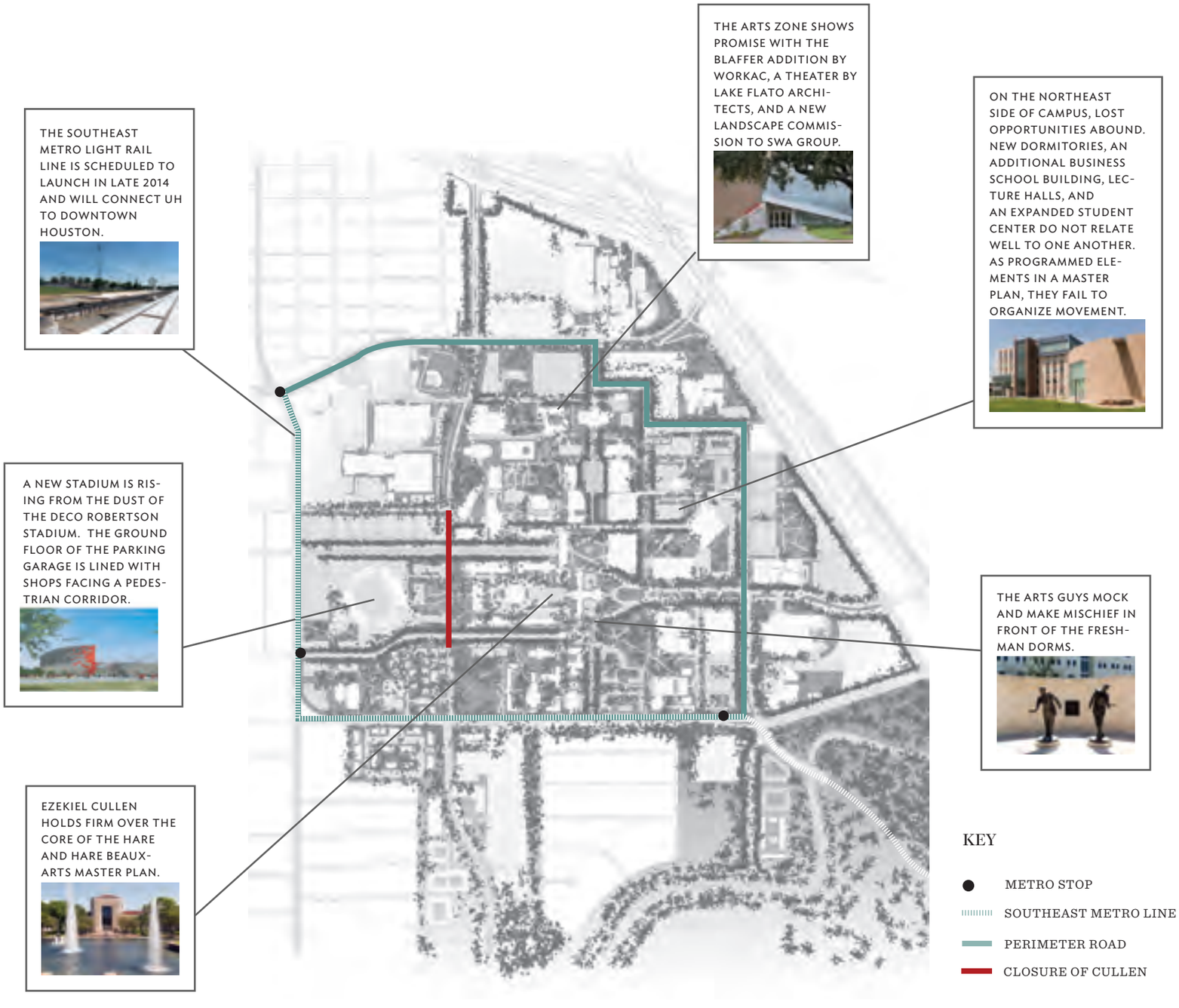

DECODING THE **FRAMEWORK:**

The "Framework" by Cooper, Robertson and Partners adopted by UH in 2006 as a master plan envisions a campus of students strolling from housing, retail, and parking garages on the periphery of campus to a pedestrian-only core. It proposes the linking of existing roadway into a loop road and a closure of Cullen Boulevard to cars, the implementation of which is in doubt.

UH has followed the general parameters of the framework, though in the current state of upheaval the campus seems disorienting. The school has commissioned studies to incorporate the light rail lines and asked DesignLAB at its own Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture to update the master plan.

The moat-like border with surrounding neighborhoods and the lack of a sense of arrival will likely continue. Parking garages are replacing surface lots. New buildings do not relate well to each other. Pedestrian circulation is often confusing. And yet UH is becoming a more convivial place with more residential students and future light rail lines.

- Raj Mankad

> By the time the construction program winds up in 2015, a total of **15 new buildings** will have been added, and 14 existing buildings will have undergone significant renovation or build-out. All told, the program will add or upgrade more than nine million gross square feet.

Today, with most of the new buildings occupied or wrapping up, the transformation of campus is slowly but steadily reaching critical mass. The outcome, however, is uninspiring in aesthetic terms, with only a few bright spots shining through widespread mediocrity. One is the Blaffer Gallery's $2.25 million renovation designed by WORKac, which was largely funded by private gifts. Two others – BNIM's 34,000-square-foot Michael J. Cemo Hall and PageSoutherlandPage's 25,000-square-foot Cougar Woods Dining Hall – represent thoughtful responses to program and context. Together, these two projects demonstrate almost polar opposites in modernist formal expression. Cemo Hall wraps its classrooms and administrative function in a taut two-story envelope primarily composed of buff brick, with a cylindrical 400-seat auditorium anchoring the east end of the otherwise rectilinear structure. Minimal glazing clearly asserts that serious study is taking place within. By contrast, Cougar Woods Dining Hall's expansive transparency readily reveals its program of convivial campus life. Floor-to-ceiling walls of glass on the north side invite students to join their peers inside where the facility's 600 seats offer views outward to a landscaped forecourt.

Beyond these exceptions and a few others, the astonishing amount of money dedicated to UH's improvements program has produced architecture that exhibits a banal appearance. The administration appears to have resolutely reined in their architects' creativity and opted for strictly utilitarian buildings. Flat and minimally detailed, the bulk of the new buildings stand in obvious contrast to their structurally articulated neighbors erected on campus decades before.

CAMPUS PALETTE

The oldest buildings on campus, those from the late 1930s through the early 1950s, are seen today by UH administrators as having set the standard for exterior materials, one to which new construction must conform. The stately Art Deco-style Ezekiel W. Cullen Building (1950, Alfred C. Finn), with its fossilized limestone facades and subtle cast-aluminum adornments epitomizes the ideal exterior. Yet this standard is not strictly imposed: the current design guidelines, originally developed in 2002 and periodically revised, are not overly prescriptive and leave some room for aesthetic license.

OPPOSITE LEFT A public courtyard at Calhoun Lofts (2008, Kirksey Architecture). The one- and two-bedroom apartments were difficult to fill during the recession.

OPPOSITE RIGHT The quad formed by the Mitchell Center for the Arts (Lake Flato, 2007) and adjacent CRS buildings are part of a landscape commission to SWA Group.

ABOVE The Business and Classroom Building (Gensler, 2012) dwarfs Michael J. Cemo Hall (BNIM, 2010).

RIGHT TOP Cougar Woods Dining Hall (PageSoutherlandPage, 2012) subtly slides into a wooded site.

RIGHT MIDDLE The Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture (Philip Johnson, 1985) still makes an impression from the highway.

RIGHT BOTTOM A rendering for the addition to and renovation of the University Center (WHR Architects).

Those first-generation buildings complemented the rigid organization devised by Hare and Hare, the St. Louis firm that laid out the original 110-acre master plan in 1937. As the campus expanded over the following decades, university officials commissioned CRS in the 1960s to design a master plan that still largely defines the campus as it is known today. In 1970, UH's own facilities staff updated the CRS plan. The next comprehensive master plan was a collaboration between two firms, 3DI and PGAL, that was initially adopted in 1977 and periodically revised through 1988. Currently, faculty in the UH Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture are using a 2006 master plan by Cooper, Robertson & Partners to address a variety of issues related to the ongoing campus improvements and the projected increase in enrollment.

While an occasional "monumental" building – such as the Cullen Building – may be acceptable, the Campus Design Guidelines and Standards recommends that most new buildings blend in with the existing architectural fabric:

> "Viewed as a whole, the UH campus is a clearly identifiable 'place' within the Houston landscape. Recognized by its clusters of large, institutional buildings grouped within a park-like setting, the campus appears as a unique environment set between the surrounding residential landscape on the south and west and the freeway and industrial districts on the north and east. At its perimeter, the visual recognition of the campus is primarily a result of three conditions. First, the scale of the campus buildings, as a group, contrasts with the surrounding urban context. Second, the building clusters within the campus are predominantly finished with masonry, stone, or concrete in buff colors. Third, these buildings are sited in a contiguous park-like setting dot-

ted by large open parking areas. These common attributes of scale, materials, and setting define the visual framework that forms the campus image at UH."

The responsibility for maintaining these standards falls on the Campus Facilities Planning Committee, chaired by Emily Messa, the associate vice chancellor/associate vice president for administration. The committee recently revised the guidelines with more specific language about the recommended material palette, including glass framing systems ("shall be natural aluminum color") and window glass ("shall be transparent low-e energy efficient"). The revision also narrowed the spectrum of acceptable color accents, noting that the chromatically spirited exterior brickwork on the Moores School of Music Building (1997, The Mathes Group), "albeit tasteful and in keeping with the palette, is perhaps the extreme limit for this campus." A vivid "Cougar Red" (PMS 186), however, is explicitly approved as an optional architectural accent and has been conspicuously incorporated into the design of some of the new general-use buildings. This bold visual cue to the UH brand is especially pronounced on the exterior of four new parking garages erected at different sites near the campus perimeter, but none so confidently integrated into the design as in Powers Brown Architecture's audaciously playful East Parking Garage.

The guidelines also address sustainable design. Since 2009, they have called for design and construction that minimizes adverse environmental effects on the land, enhances the quality of the indoor environment, and minimizes consumption of energy, water, construction materials, and other resources. While UH does not require third-party certification to verify environmentally responsible design, the guidelines mandate that all new construction meet criteria for the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver rating.

DISCIPLINED PROCESS

Equally as remarkable as the building program's $1.46 billion budget is the university administration's rigorous focus on ensuring that the outcome supports Khator's objectives, most importantly the pursuit of "tier one" status. The person directing the program is Dr. Carl Carlucci who, in addition to his title of vice chancellor for the entire UH system, is also UH vice president. (Khator likewise has a dual role, that of UHS chancellor and UH president.) As head of the university's administration and finance division, Carlucci serves as the chief financial officer and oversees plant operations in addition to the human resources and public safety departments. After the UHS Board of Regents hired her, Khator brought Carlucci to Houston in 2008 from the University of South Florida in Tampa, where she had served as provost and he was executive vice president and chief financial officer. Two years prior to Khator's arrival, the regents had adopted the master plan for the main campus, known as a "framework plan," produced by the architecture and urban design firm Cooper, Robertson & Partners in New York City. Khator and her administration subsequently fine-tuned that document to fulfill the objectives deemed necessary for UH to achieve status as a top-flight research center. (Khator earlier had led the successful effort to attain that same ranking for USF.)

The UH brand is especially pronounced on the exterior of four new parking garages erected at different sites near the campus perimeter.

The framework plan continues to evolve with the help of an in-house studio headed by Patricia Oliver, dean of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. The administration invited Oliver to engage in the process with members of her faculty, all working under the aegis of the campus studio called DesignLAB. They began in early 2010 with an assessment of existing facilities in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the Cullen College of Engineering, which was seen as a critical step toward determining what capital improvements were necessary to achieve the highest Carnegie rating for research. Another important step toward "tier one" was the university's 2009 purchase of the Schlumberger Well Services Headquarters for development as a business incubator to nurture new energy-related companies. The 74-acre complex of 15 low-rise buildings is located to the east adjacent to the main campus, although direct access is interrupted by Spur 5 and an active rail yard. Completed in 1952, the corporate office park has been rechristened the UH Energy Research Park. Renovation of some of the existing buildings also fell within the scope of the university's recent capital improvements program.

Now that UH has earned its top ranking as a research center, the administration is dedicated to maintaining it. As Carlucci stated recently in an email exchange, the improvements have shown measurable success: "The goal of our President and our Board is the support of a Tier One university. The appropriate measures of our transformation are our progress towards that goal. In aggregate, that is our progress in creating student success, growing research, and providing service to our community. We believe that we have made great strides in these areas, growing our research, which required new laboratory space; increasing the number of residential students by adding residence halls; and serving our community by adding or improving clinical and performance facilities."

How individual building projects are undertaken, he stated, begins first with the revised framework plan. "Starting with this master plan," he continued, "we then plan projects based on a program and figure out how to finance them. The programs are developed by internal stakeholders. Our facilities planning staff works with them to define their needs and produce a program with the needed level of detail. We then estimate cost based on the program and develop a plan to finance the project. The same internal stakeholders continue to work on the project, making choices along the way to live within their budget and achieve the desired goals."

Carlucci noted that the majority of the recently completed and in-progress projects are self-financed by the university. (Documents provided by UH officials show that slightly more than two-thirds of the improvements are financed by different types of bonds.) As for delivery method, Carlucci said that decision de-

pended on the type of facility. "For each building project," he stated, "we want to create a very specific educational or research environment, and we use the delivery method that will produce that result. For some buildings, like garages and simple office and classroom buildings, design-build works well and is very cost-effective. For projects requiring more complex systems, we use design-bid. Again, we self-finance so we have a very open, participatory process. We keep the users, the customers, basically those paying for the project, involved, and we respect their preferences in the design and design elements for the project."

A NEW PUBLIC PRESENCE

Perhaps the signature piece of the improved campus will be PageSoutherlandPage's football stadium now under construction on the site of its predecessor, the Robertson Stadium (1941, a joint project of the Houston Independent School District and the federal Works Progress Administration) that stood, until its recent demolition, at the far west side of campus. Renderings depict a no-frills facility with exterior flourishes of Cougar Red. Budgeted at $105 million and encompassing approximately 450,000 gross square feet, the new stadium complex will seat 40,000 spectators, with possible future expansion to add another 20,000 seats.

Around the same time the new stadium opens for the 2014-15 football season, MetroRail's Southeast Line is also scheduled to start operation. The impact of light rail will be great on the traditionally "internalized" campus, speculates Christof Spieler, a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Board of Directors and a senior lecturer at the Rice School of Architecture. "There has never been a significant amount of pedestrian activity at the edges of campus and I think the light rail will change that," he says. In particular, he notes, new passenger platforms will effectively create two gateways to campus for pedestrians and bicyclists. The platform at Scott and Cleburne streets, he says, in addition to bringing passengers to the front entrance of the new stadium, will enliven that segment of campus with increased foot traffic. Yet, Spieler surmises, the platform at Wheeler Street and University Oaks Boulevard will affect the campus even more. That station is likely to become the de facto main pedestrian entrance to campus, he says, offering access to surrounding residential neighborhoods via the existing hike-and-bike trail along Brays Bayou. (Also, a paved golf-cart path along the bayou will open a direct connection between campus and the UH Energy Research Park, which is currently reachable only by car via I-45. Two other light rail platforms–Scott at Elgin and MLK at Old Spanish Trail–will take riders to extreme corners of campus, but Spieler expects less impact to the campus as a result.

ABOVE LEFT Rendering for the football stadium currently under construction (PageSoutherlandPage).

ABOVE RIGHT Stadium Parking Garage includes retail space featuring fast food outlets along the corridor adjacent to the stadium from Scott to Cullen streets.

RIGHT The Southeast METRO light rail line is scheduled to open in late 2014. A stop at Scott and Cleburne will bring passengers to the entrance of the new stadium.

Two more major changes are being considered that will alter conditions along the outskirts of campus. One is a second light rail line, which is ready for construction when funding is available at some unknown future date. Called the University Line, the rail will ferry riders from the west to platforms along Elgin Street at the northern boundary of campus.

The second major change under consideration involves improvements to that same edge of campus, which will create a new public entrance to its cluster of arts facilities, including the remodeled Blaffer Gallery. In an initial step toward making that part of campus more welcoming to visitors, UH has commissioned SWA to rework the landscape of the outdoor space known as The Grove into a more pedestrian-friendly entry point.

All these improvements are literally restructuring the campus perimeter, as well as large swaths throughout its interior, while also serving to underscore the heightened profile of the newly Carnegie-sanctioned public university. Yet, in spite of UH expending such a large amount of time and money, the result so far seems remarkably anticlimactic. Still, there is the potential that over the program's last two years, as the final projects are wrapped up and construction fences are taken down, the disparate components will coalesce into a cohesive academic village. Perhaps then the focus will not be on individual buildings but on the campus as a collection of structures, some older and some newer, some mundane and some noteworthy, but all blending together to create a comprehensive environment for learning. One hopes that in committing $1.46 billion toward reaching academic excellence, UH's leadership ultimately realizes an equally high level of achievement in terms of its architecture.

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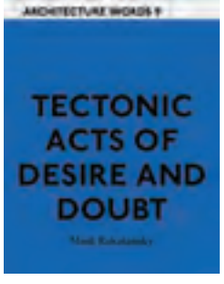

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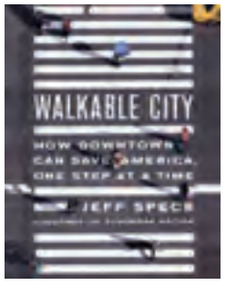

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CHICAGO UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2013, HARDBACK, 238 PAGES
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HINDCITE / *offcite.org/democratic_vistas*

BY RICH LEVY

When I think of the sidewalks of my youth, growing up on the north side of Chicago, I think of how regular they were. On the side streets of Rogers Park, West Rogers Park, Peterson Park, they were invariably of the same width, in the same relation to the curb, always separating front yards from parkway, block after block, regardless of neighborhood, whether in front of single family dwellings or apartment buildings.

I learned to walk on a sidewalk, and can still see my sister toddling down the street in front of our three-flat. We rode our bikes on the sidewalk, skinned our knees on them, played hopscotch and Chinese jump rope and freeze tag on them, red rover, Simon says, duck-duck-goose. Crossing the street at the end of the block was a rite of passage. Our neighbor Mrs. Goldstein would grumble and stagger by us, hobbling to the grocery store, bakery, drug store on Devon Avenue two blocks away, pulling her folding two-wheeled shopping cart.

Sidewalks in Chicago, at least on the far north side, didn't vary much. It is unimaginable for a Chicago sidewalk to deviate from its course because of a tree—not that Chicago doesn't have grand trees, but because the sidewalk comes first. People plant grass and trees in the parkway not because they own this strip of land, but because they want their street to be handsome.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>

In the 1950s, the neighborhood school was the key to neighborhood planning. In 1965, my parents bought their first house, a tiny two-story three-bedroom mock-Georgian in Peterson Park, west of West Rogers Park—we moved about a mile from the apartment on Richmond. To the north of Devon was Lincolnwood, the leading edge of the vast network of northern suburbs.

In the center of Peterson Park sat Hannah Greenebaum Solomon Elementary School, kindergarten through 8th grade. This physical arrangement meant that no child had to cross a major street to get to school.

Our school had a safety-patrol crossing guard along the main routes—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls helping the younger children get safely to and from school, morning and afternoon. Carpools were unnecessary and unheard of in Peterson Park. Children ate brown-bag lunches in the gym, or joined a parent (usually one's mother) at home or work for lunch.

I was a member of the safety patrol—a privilege reserved for those who were both responsible enough both to do what they were told and to not lose the belt—orange, reflective, plastic-coated, buckling over the shoulder, across the chest, and around the waist. We felt important in our safety-patrol belts, most of which were new and gleaming.

One morning the captain of the patrol, a lieutenant, and I (also a lieutenant) had finished making the rounds of the routes by bike, and we were passing the time before the final bell, when we verified the last of the patrol girls and boy were at school and then we raced there ourselves. The captain had a handful of paper clips, which he broke in half, firing pieces with a rubber band at passing cars. We were all doing it and laughing—until one hit the driver of a diaper-service step-van in the face, and he slammed on the brakes, grabbed the three of us, and dragged us to the principal's office.

Terrified, I confessed, the others prevaricated, they were dismissed from the patrol, and I was made captain. To this day, I still don't quite understand how it all happened—but order was maintained.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>

This spring I was driving north on the Hardy Toll Road early one morning, when I spotted two girls walking to school along the feeder road. It was a cool crisp morning, and they were wearing jackets and full backpacks—one about 14, the other 11. Sisters, I imagined. It was unusual to see any pedestrians on the feeder road, which had no sidewalks and along which people drove at ridiculous speeds. The girls slogged across the muddy front yards of the small homes, churches, car repair shops, on their way to Patrick Henry Middle School, at the intersection of the Hardy Toll Road and Little York Road. When I saw the girls, they had about a half mile to go.If there was a polar opposite to my bosky and peaceful Peterson Park experience, this was it. The girls paid very careful attention to wear they stepped, avoiding puddles and the edge of the road, no schoolmates in site. Of course, the school preceded the toll road—but not the railroad tracks around which the highway was built. It's hard to imagine a less pedestrian-friendly school location.

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DESIGN IS HOW IT WORKS.
–STEVE JOBS