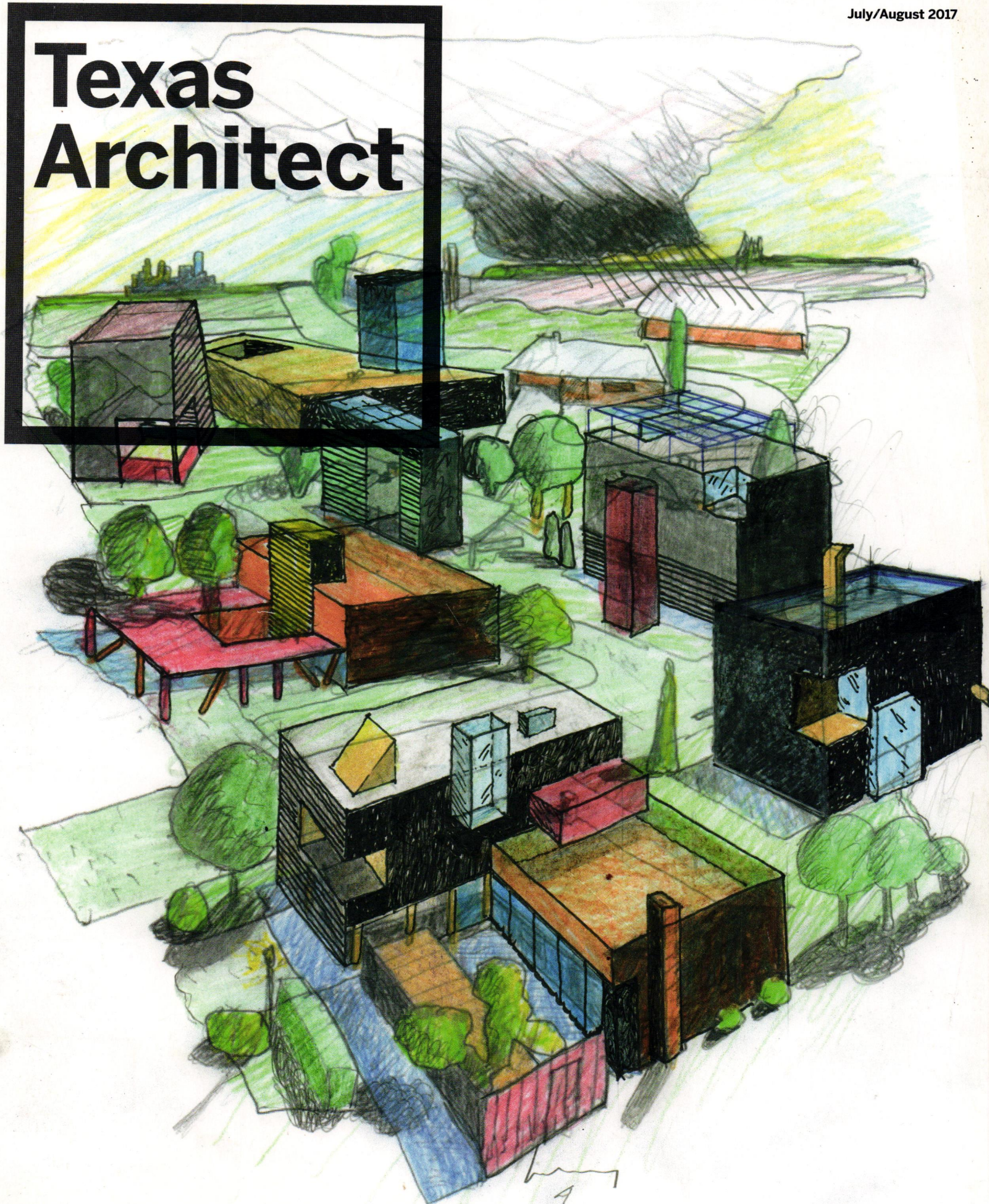
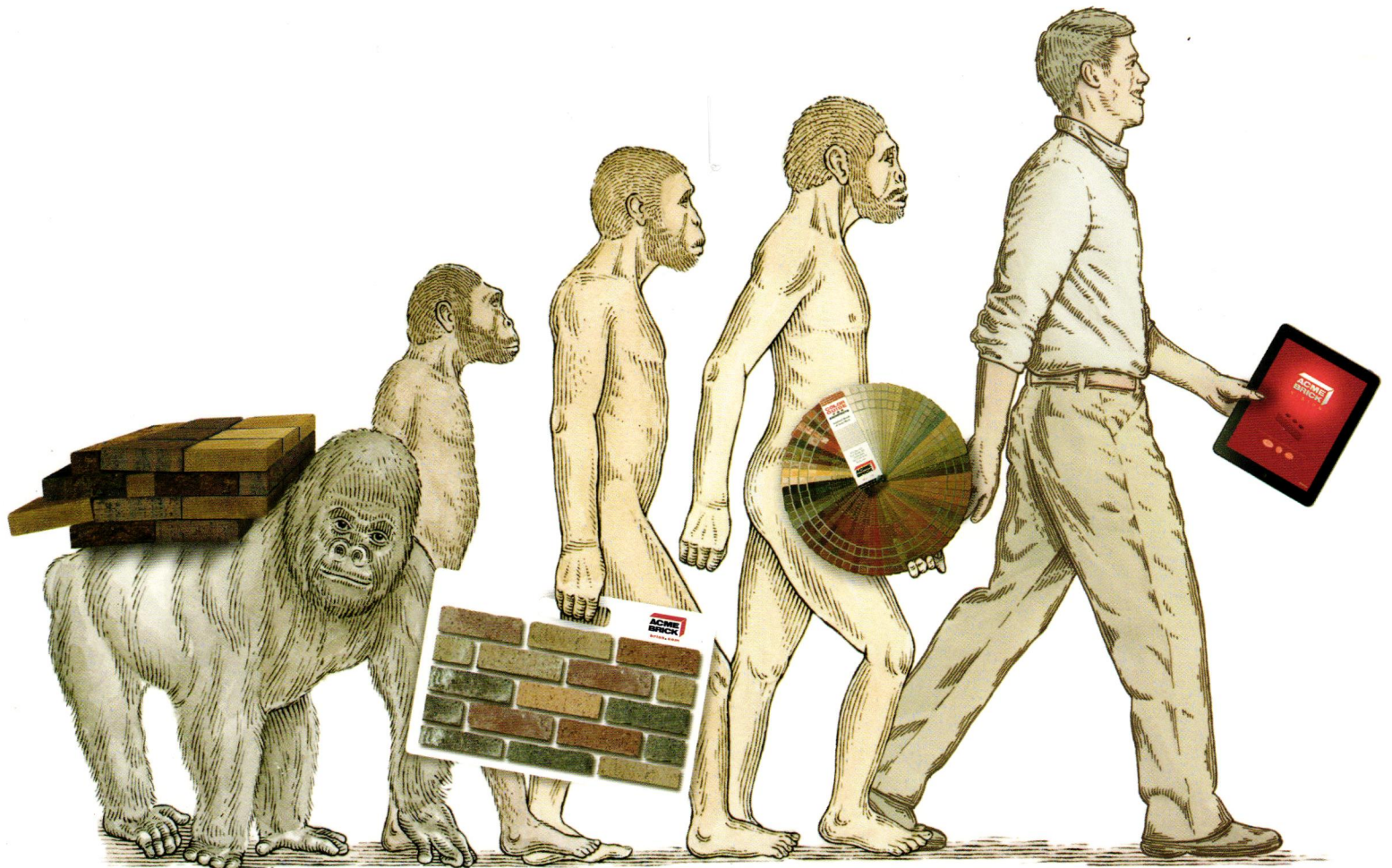


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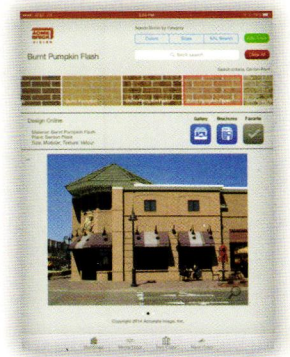
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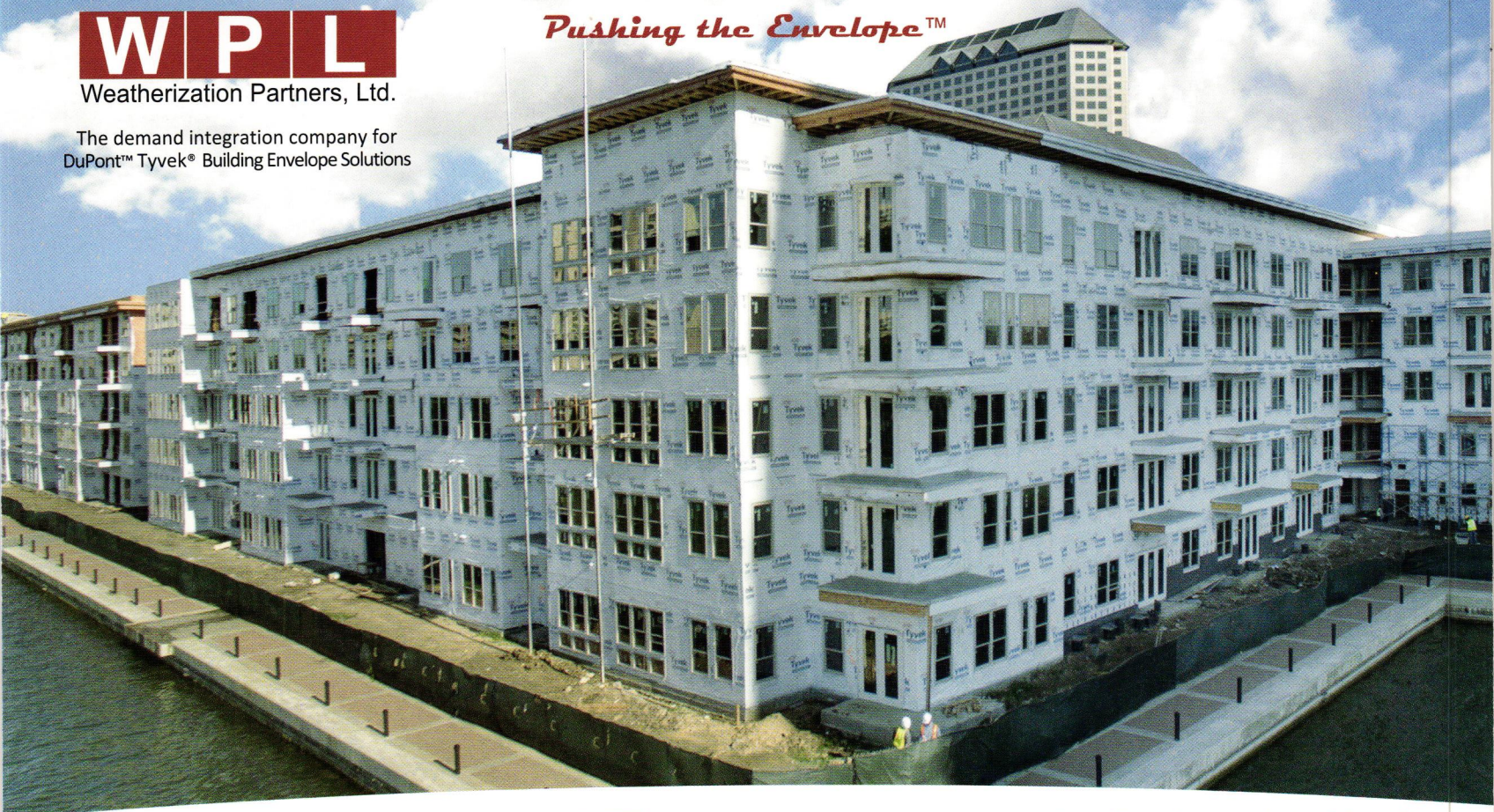
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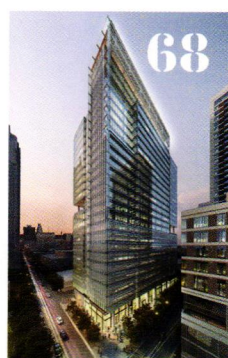
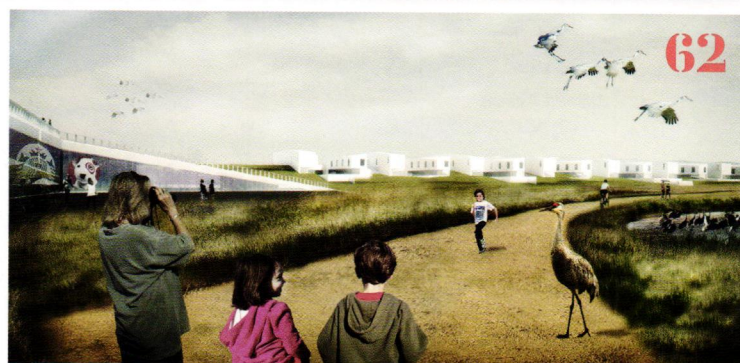
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Spend an evening in the whimsical dog houses of AIA Dallas' annual Bark + Build contest. Find out the future of Lone Star bathrooms from David Lancaster, Hon. AIA, as he updates us on the Texas Legislature's special session. And look at two sculptures by Ai Weiwei during their time in Austin.

67 04

On the Cover

Lars Lerup's drawing of a possible future adaptive reuse of a suburban subdivision: "A group of designers, subscribing to Donald Judd's admonition against building on virgin land, seeking to flee the steep prices of the speculative housing market in the inner city, form a loose collective and, employing a form of under-the-radar land banking, purchase a dilapidated subdivision next to a freeway intersection. The old subdivision becomes unrecognizable." See page 48.

Density/Sprawl



Portfolio



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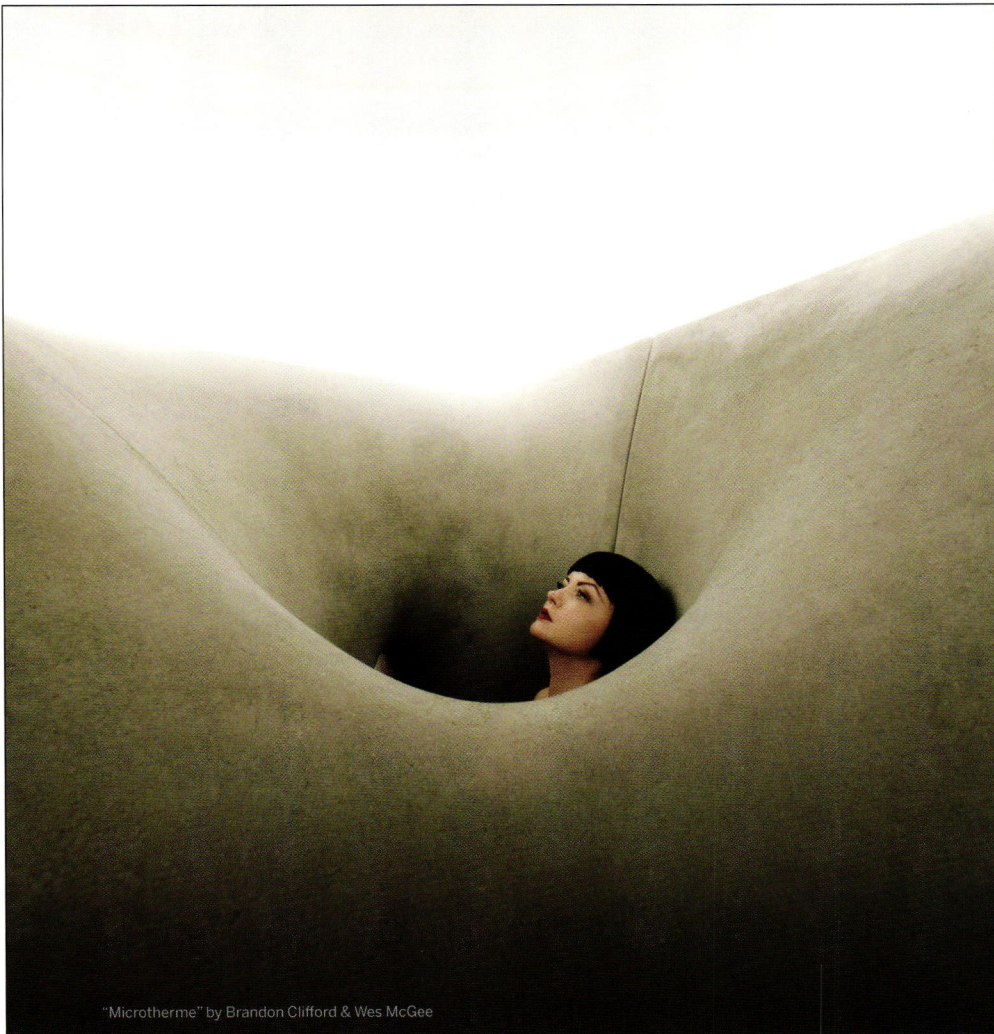
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"Microtherme" by Brandon Clifford & Wes McGee

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Elemental Forces

by Aaron Seward

This spring, I had the opportunity to interview three of contemporary architecture's bright lights — Mark Foster Gage and Patrik Schumacher, before their debate at Texas A&M in April, and Alejandro Aravena, during his appearance at St. Edward's University in May. All three architects are dedicated to progressive architecture, but they have come to diverging conclusions about the pathways along which architecture, and society, should progress. While you can get a good introduction to the ideas that underpin the work of Gage and Schumacher by reading the transcript of our discussion, on page 21, here is a summary of my encounter with Aravena:

Addressing the audience at St. Edward's, Aravena said that architects do forms, and then asked, "What informs these forms?" His answer: "Many forces. We try not to leave any out, but to translate the forces at play into a building." The forces that shaped the dormitory his firm, Elemental, designed at St. Edward's included the basics of the program, the client's aesthetic expectations, and international as well as local precedent. Finding no local dormitory building to use as a model, Aravena instead drew on the natural limestone bowl that is Hamilton Pool, making the building into a "Cartesian canyon" that shelters its glazed inner courtyard from the sun.

When questioned about his experience working on social housing projects, as well as the fact

that some architects feel cynical about architecture's ability to address inequality, even feel that it is a wasteful diversion with negative impacts on architectural production, Aravena was explicit. He said that humanitarian issues are the most pressing problems of our time. While he added that architects have little influence over the wider social and economic factors that create inequity — these being the domain of governments and others who shape policy — he felt that the profession does play a role in synthesizing the complex forces at play in designing buildings that seek to do some good in this arena.

As an example of the sort of contribution that architects can make to low-income housing (in the context of Chile's social housing policies), Aravena pointed to Elemental's first project, Quinta Monroy in Iquique (2004). Before designing anything, the architects decided that location was key to the success of the project. They selected a site in the center of the city, where the inhabitants — roughly 100 families — had already been squatting and would be able to easily access a wide variety of employment prospects. Paying for the central location, however, ate up an outsized portion of the budget, which was \$7,500 for each house (\$7,200 in government subsidy and \$300 in family contribution), a figure that had to cover the real estate, infrastructure, and building. Here is where Elemental came up with the innovation that made it famous and won Aravena the Pritzker Prize: The architects took an incremental approach, designing row houses that provided half a house under the initial construction package, and a framework for the family to build out the other half in the future, as they were able. Elemental has since rolled this concept out on a number of other projects.

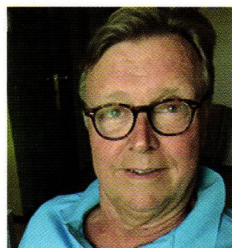
Aravena believes that social housing should be an investment, like any commodity, and Chile's social housing policies back this up. After five years, total ownership of the housing units transfers to the families who live there, meaning that they become like any other piece of real estate on the market. While most families who initially moved into Quinta Monroy have stayed, Aravena did say that he heard recently that one family has sold their property — for \$75,000, a nice little return on investment, considering that their initial contribution was a mere \$300.

Alejandro Aravena in Austin at St. Edward's University this May.



PHOTO BY WHITNEY DEVIN, COURTESY ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY

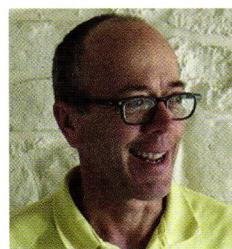
Contributors



Lars Lerup is a professor and dean emeritus at Rice School of Architecture. He has written several books, including “After the City” (2000) and “One Million Acres and No Zoning” (2010). Forthcoming titles include “The Life and Death of Objects” and “The Continuous City.” Betts Project, London, represents his artwork. Lerup collaborated with Rice colleague Colman on a piece about the future of suburbia (p. 48).



Scott Colman is an assistant professor at Rice School of Architecture. He is writing two books: one on the theory, practice, and intellectual friendship of the German-American architects Ludwig Hilberseimer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and the other an intellectual biography of English-American architect Colin Rowe. Coleman collaborated with Rice colleague Lerup on “One Step Closer to Arcadia?” (p. 48).



Craig Kinney, AIA has spent the past 20 years in San Angelo, where he started Kinney Franke Architects. Previous to that he worked in Houston, Washington, D.C., and New York City. In this issue he writes about a proposal by William Truitt, AIA, and Marsha Bowden, AIA, which outlines a more ecologically sensitive way to develop the cities of the Great Plains (p. 62).



Hannah Ahlblad is an M.Arch '18 candidate at The University of Texas at Austin. Her independent and collaborative design work has been published on ArchDaily and Dezeen, and exhibited at the Dallas Center for Architecture, the MIT Media Lab, UT Austin, and ArcoMadrid. Read her take on two of Austin's latest urban projects on p. 68.

Letters



Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University, designed by Michael Maltzan Architecture.

The following letter to the editor is in response to the May/June 2017 Feature “Moody Blues.”

Applause to Ben Koush for his unusually clear-eyed and brave appraisal of the Rice/Maltzan building in the May/June *TA*. Probably like many of my colleagues, I poured over the photos and enjoyed the hip design moves. But what good is being architecturally entertained if it ultimately contributes to the unraveling of things (in this case one of the nation's most remarkable and pleasant campuses). Stylishness may speed us to cool design solutions, but this is often at the expense of thoughtfulness. Perhaps if more commentators would speak this truth, architecture might return to mending this rattled world.

Max Levy, FAIA

*Max Levy Architect
Dallas*

The following comment appeared on txamagazine.org in response to the May/June 2017 Of Note “Verses on Clarity: The 2017 TxA Design Conference.”

What a great way to summarize this wonderful event. I truly appreciate the quotes as take-aways. You captured the beauty and the burden that is Marfa.

Cheers.

Sean K. Garman, AIA

*Mitchell Garman Architects
Dallas*

The following comment appeared on txamagazine.org in response to the May/June 2017 Of Note “Student Design Competition at Texas A&M Explores a Museum of Waste.”

The concept is striking and I applauded the student for winning this contest. However, what this resulting design signals to me is that architecture schools are failing to teach its students to care about the human form and human experience at the street level. As with this design, these large-scale projects look great from the perspective of a bird or plane, but are almost entirely inhospitable to people at the sidewalk. This has been true since the mid-20th century since we started caring more about the skyline than our eyeline. We have got to do better than this.

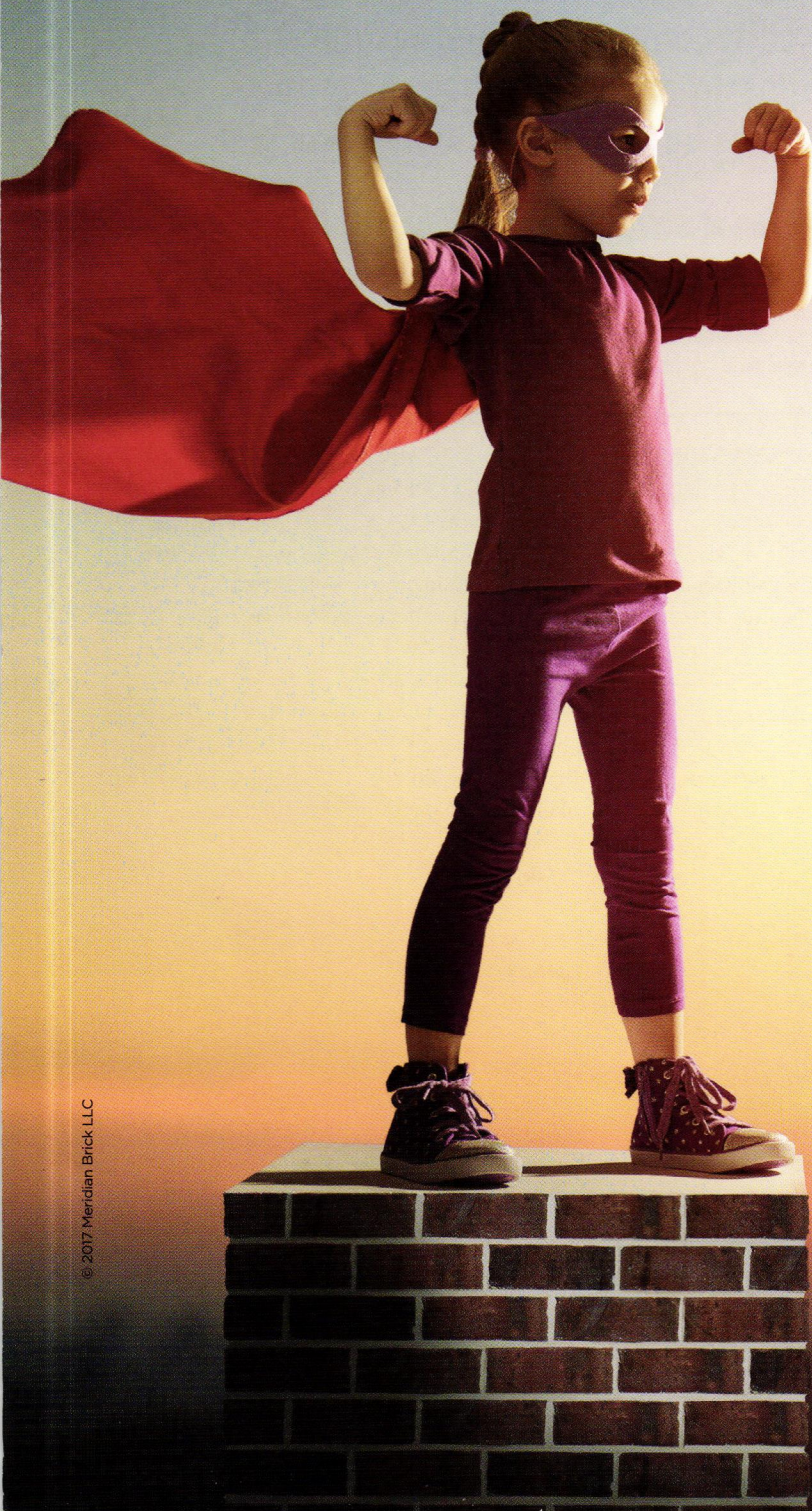
Chris L

The following comment appeared on txamagazine.org in response to the May/June 2017 Feature “New Sacred Geographies.”

It's too bad that this article explores “sacred geography” through predominately Western religious expression, and particularly Christianity. While I am a Christian myself, I know eastern and Native American spiritual and religious traditions have profound connections to, and reinterpretations of, physical geography which would have greatly deepened and balanced this exploration and the article.

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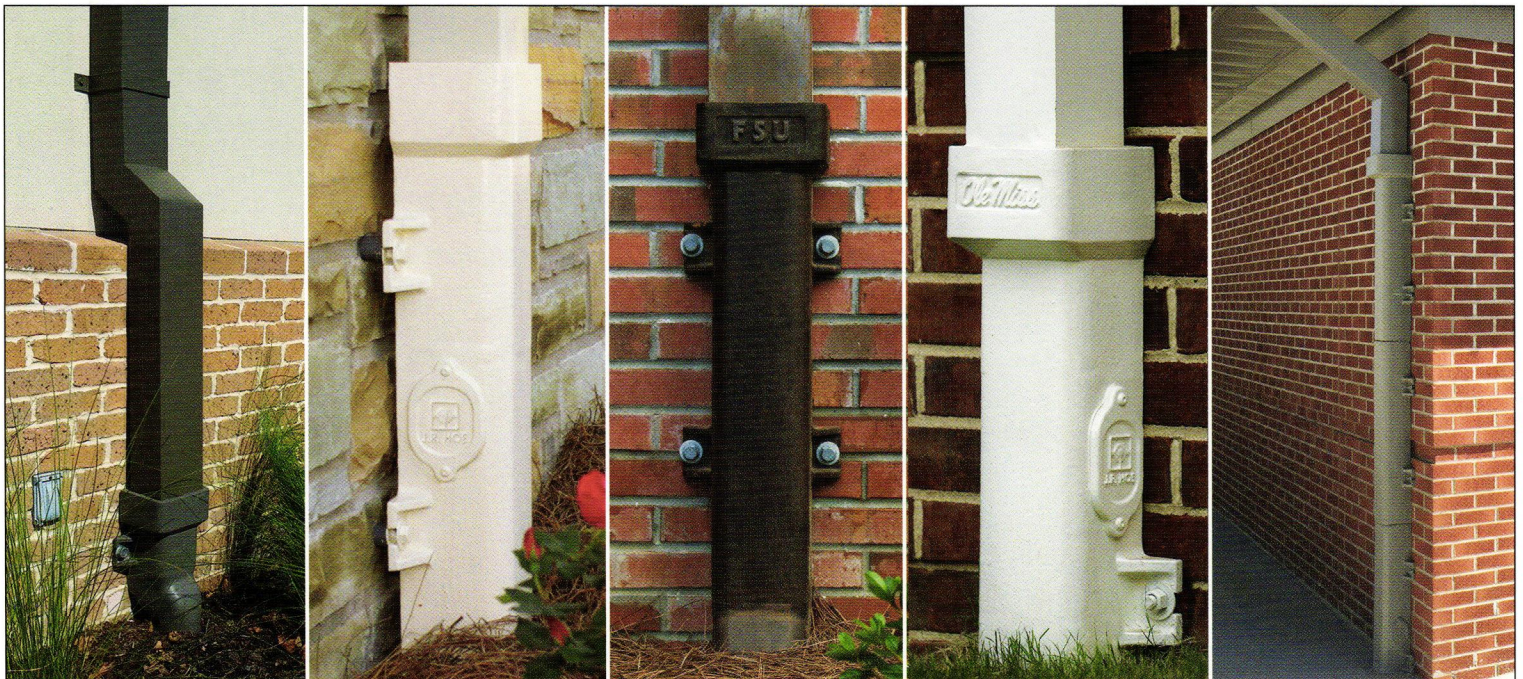
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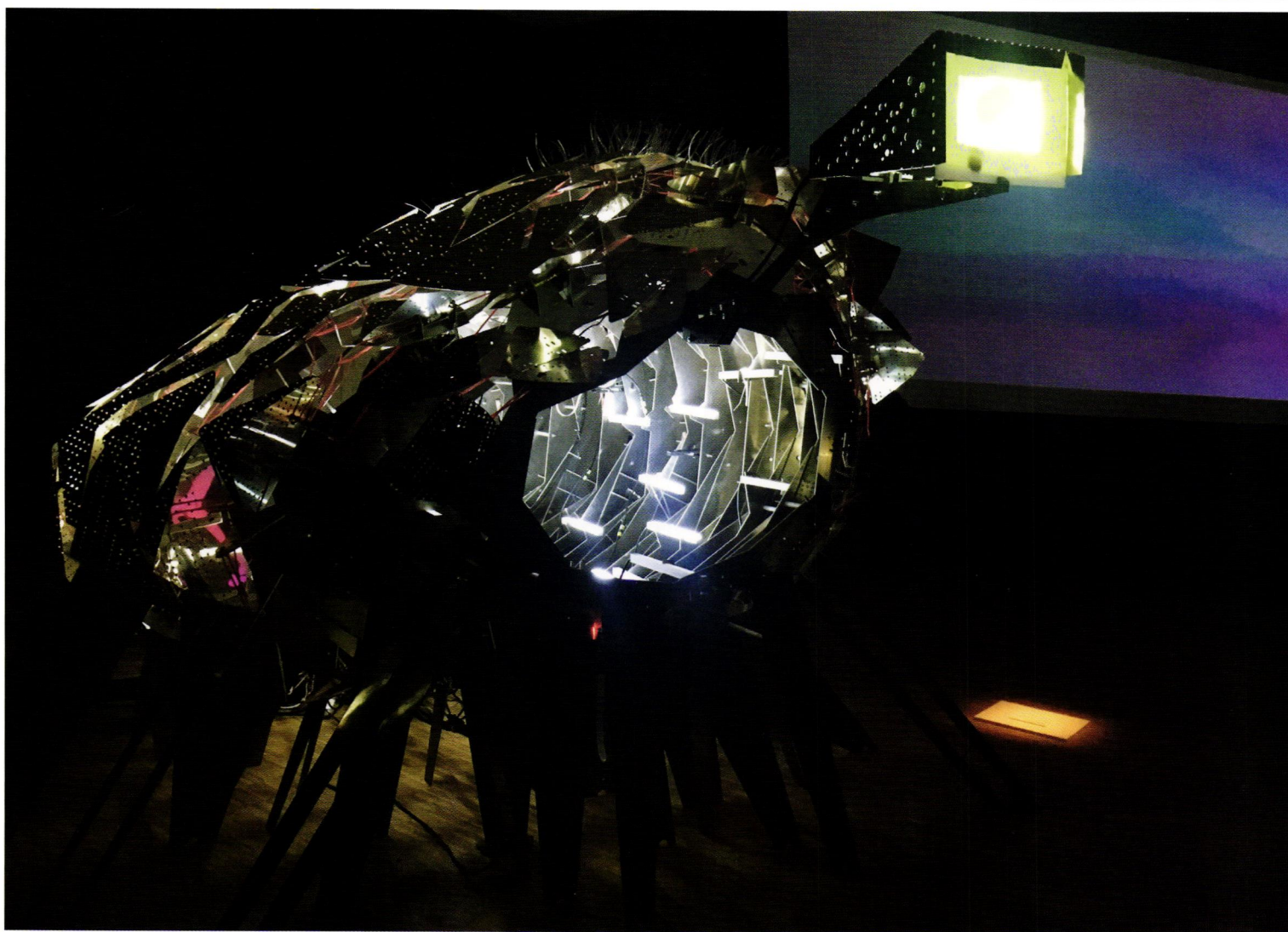
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UT Austin Professor Clay Odom's Flowering Phantasm Featured at UNESCO Data City Exhibit in Paris

The gallery is intimate and dimly lit, its periphery a little unclear as one's eyes adjust to the space. A low rumbling fills the room, the sound overlapping onto itself in a vaguely familiar, mechanical cadence. Or is it biological? The groan of a great beast or the sound of a distant jet engine? Rumbblings of elephants, combined with the pulse of a fusion reactor? All of the above?

Just as enigmatic is the source of the cryptic melody: a tessellated, eggplant-shaped, glowing husk, lofted by an army of shiny, caterpillar-like fins that meet the ground at varying angles. Squatting over a pool of its own light, the roughly car-sized, biomorphic sculpture elegantly walks a tightrope between foreign and familiar, highly crafted and prosaic, approachable and aloof.

"Flowering Phantasm" is the brainchild of Clay Odom, assistant professor at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture and principal of StudioMODO. The installation has seen multiple iterations featured in global exhibits, to date, but the latest, "DATA CITY," holds special significance, not only for the designer, but also for the City of Austin — as well as for the United States.

Hosted in the Parisian suburb of Enghien-les-Bains, DATA CITY is a collective exhibition that seeks to feature innovations in new media art. In total, nine exhibits are selected to represent their respective cities and countries of origin: Austin (United States), Dakar (Senegal), Enghien-les-Bains (France), Gwangju (Republic of Korea), Linz (Austria), Lyon (France), Sapporo (Japan), Tel Aviv-Jaffa (Israel), and York (United Kingdom).

Each participating city holds the designation of a "City of Media Arts" by the United

"Flowering Phantasm" rests with a curious poise, blurring the boundary between organism and machine.

Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Austin earned this designation in 2015 when the city was accepted into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and it continues to be the sole representative from the U.S. in its category.

Launched in 2004, the Creative Cities Network boasts 116 member cities representing 54 countries and covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music, and Media Arts. The stated agenda to “assert the role of culture as [an] enabler of sustainable development,” and Austin’s inclusion represents an opportunity to foster an exchange of ideals and media while also offering local artists a launchpad for global exposure.

“Austin is already a hub for innovation,” says Meghan Wells, manager of Austin’s Cultural Arts Division. “Whether it’s film, music, technology, video games, or art, this exhibition and future endeavors allow us to explore where our programming efforts overlap with other global cities.”

Wells is optimistic that, as momentum builds behind initiatives such as this one, Austin’s elevated profile will enable more opportunities to support local artists at home and abroad. Her office is especially focused on affordability issues that affect all residents, yet hit artists and people in other creative disciplines especially hard. The potential for international artist exchanges,

worldwide visibility, and opportunities to contribute to a global dialogue between similarly aligned cities will, it is hoped, position Austin well, in this regard.

Flowering Phantasm is particularly well-suited to showcase Austin’s place at the intersection of art and technology. Its formal presence is not just evocative; there is a clear effort to celebrate the marriage between technology and experiential transcendence.

Its hollow interior reveals a layered assembly, starting with an interior structure of 3mm water jet cut aluminum fins which meet the ground and combine to give the piece its overall shape. These are bolted together via an egg crate system and assembled on site. Additionally, the frame supports a computer-controlled LED light array, several internal camera and projector elements, and two birdlike prosthetic video armatures that protrude from either side of the piece (according to Odom, their displays represent an evolutionary abstraction of vision).

Gold anodized perforated aluminum panels, which Odom calls “petals,” are fastened to the main structure with connecting feeders and simple, bright red zip ties. The perforations allow the petals to be penetrated by more than 3,000 feet of blinking, LED fiber “hairs” that blur the boundaries of the object when viewed at a distance. An earlier iteration showcased at the Amsterdam Light Festival also featured

a series of inflating and deflating fabric bags supplied by Arduino — controlled blowers that allowed some petals to slowly undulate, as if they were breathing.

Despite its exposed mechanical heroics, the combined effect of the composition makes it hard to imagine that the piece isn’t, in some way, alive — or perhaps sentient.

Arguably, the success of Flowering Phantasm stems from its deft maneuvering between these contradictory realms. Likewise, as Austin’s cultural landscape continues to experience the inevitable growing pains of a booming city, city-led involvement in initiatives such as UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network will become an increasingly valuable resource to the local creative talent that has shaped Austin’s ethos for decades.

Christopher Ferguson, Assoc. AIA, is a designer at Clickspring Design and cofounder of DO.GROUP DESIGN.

Exhibit Review

Blow the Doors Off

BREACH

AGENCY Architecture

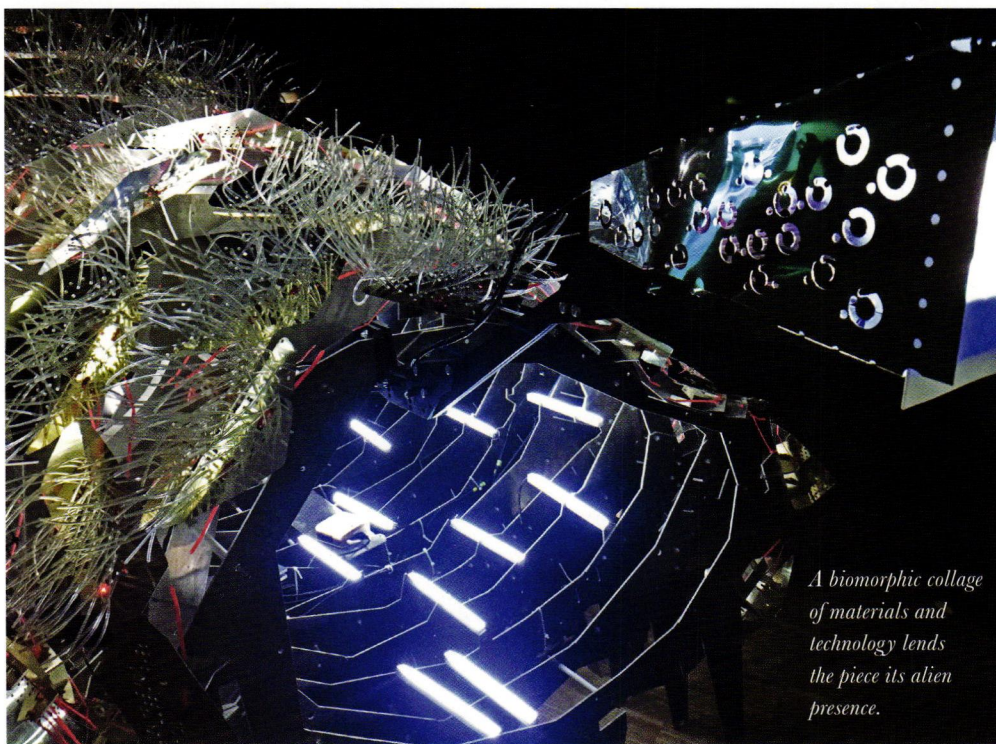
WUHO Gallery

Los Angeles, California

BREACH | Material Rituals of the Securocratic State

An exhibition that draws attention to the sublime architectural results of the destructive power and methods behind military “breaching” techniques, revealing a disturbing delight in how a rational mind might seek to understand a building if given the chance to forget how a door works and who might have lived inside.

The front door of the WUHO (Woodbury University Hollywood) Gallery neatly bisects the interior space. As the narrow room beyond stretches back from busy Hollywood Boulevard, it’s possible to understand the curatorial premise of this exhibition, and why it’s a good match for the gallery. On the one side, doors are leaning against the wall, ripped, torn, disfigured by intense physical force; on the other side, photographs show tables still laid for dinner in rooms blown open, sunlight streaming in, and impeccably stuccoed walls punctured not only by win-



A biomorphic collage of materials and technology lends the piece its alien presence.

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The hanging at WUHO pits “breached” doors, blown or pried off their hinges, against sublime images of the buildings they once separated from the desert.

dows, but also by precisely located and roughly cut holes of near-human size. In between, the visitor looks back and forth, grappling with the juxtaposition of the intense violence that must have taken place, with the peaceful, even sublime, objects left in its wake.

AGENCY Architecture — the practice of Texas Tech College of Architecture professors Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller — has put together an exhibition of photographs, artifacts, and drawings that dwell on the role of the military on our own shores, and how buildings are somehow both complicit conspirators in, and innocent victims of, a type of warfare that relies on novel ways to understand space, quickly and with extreme prejudice. “Seeking productive anomalies in the overlooked, the under-represented, and the everyday” — as they describe their methods — has resulted in a blunt and genuinely fascinating view into the rigorous world of military training, but also into our own ethics and imaginations as we try to work out just what the role might have been

for certain holes in a wall (To climb through? To poke a gun through?). What could possibly be the significance of this color of tablecloth employed in this one room, and what were its inhabitants thinking? (That the hasty 2 X 4 door bar would stop the might of the United States military?)

These questions simmer while we consider the violated doors opposite. Detached from buildings, they are just evidence, with some expert testimonial available in the accompanying texts — the technocratic nature of which is all the more distancing from the readily apparent energy discharged. AGENCY has indeed forced us to consider the ethics behind, and in front of, this door.

At the back of the room, the speculation and nascent design work begins. Maps depict all known sites of this type in the U.S., with figure-ground drawings that call attention to the urbanity, but also to the collective “scalelessness,” of these buildings. We come to understand that here is where future work might be focused, but

Right *A crumpled door rests against the wall.*

Below *Photographs of rooms show domestic furnishings, disturbed by previous breaching exercises.*



it also provides the main public-facing component of the exercise, which is AGENCY's own technocratic and rationalized online database of these places, serving both to connect us all to their presence and to render them as banal as other government buildings.

Kripa and Mueller have assembled astonishing firsthand research, and it is a testament to the power of their work that it leaves the visitor gripped by intrigue and not a small amount of anguish. Leaving the way we came in, we walk back past the photographs and crumpled doors and re-emerge onto Hollywood Boulevard somewhat traumatized but energized by an unanticipated empathy.

Man-Yan Lam is an architectural designer at Rachel Allen Architecture. Alastair Stokes is an architectural designer at Gensler.

Houston Aspires to Boost its World-Class Status with Plan Downtown

The Houston Downtown Management District (Downtown District) has announced Plan Downtown: a 20-year vision that will outline recommendations for development within and around the city's core. Led by Asakura Robinson with Sasaki Associates, Traffic Engineers, Inc., and HR&A Advisors, the plan aims to build on recent improvements that make downtown a better place to live, work, and play, as well as a destination that will attract more international businesses and tourists. It will address mobility, congestion, and connectivity issues and promote sustainable development and networked public green space. "Downtown has come an incredible way with changes compounding year over year and plan over plan," says Zakcq Lockrem, principal at Asakura Robinson.

The last time Downtown District implemented a comprehensive plan was 2004. The new plan will address the way downtown has evolved since then and anticipate large infrastructural changes in the pipeline, such as TxDOT's proposed reroute of I-45. "This is a major planning effort with a 13-year gap," says Lonnie Hoogeboom, Downtown District's director of planning, design, and development. "A lot of planning has happened on a localized level, but not at this level. How do we think about the edges and pull it together?"

Main Street in downtown Houston, which is serviced by light rail, now offers a variety of attractions for residents, office workers, and visitors. Plan Downtown seeks to encourage more of this throughout the rest of the city's core, addressing occupancy, mobility, sustainable development, and connective green spaces.



Downtown District is made up of a 30-member board of directors whose primary mission is to leverage public funds with private resources to accelerate improvements above and beyond the level provided by local government or voluntary efforts. Past projects include a South Downtown Plan; improvements to the George R. Brown Convention Center with Houston First; a retail task force; efforts for Super Bowl LI; and various capital projects with METRO for Main Street, Allen Parkway, downtown wayfinding, and a downtown living initiative.

Some of Plan Downtown's initiatives come out of those outlined in Plan Houston — the 2015 goal and vision statement that is the city's first general plan. Patrick Walsh, director of the City of Houston's planning and development department, has been working closely with Downtown District. "Plan Houston was a high-level plan that laid out broad principles — goals and strategies — for making Houston a better city," he says. "Plan Downtown, like many of our master plans, will serve as one of the implementation arms of Plan Houston, describing how to take those principles and turn them into reality. I think of downtown Houston in many senses as the heartbeat of the region, and Plan Downtown is critical to keeping downtown vital and healthy — and therefore critical to the region's success,

as well. Downtown Houston is one of the few places in the region where real walkable urbanism is possible: grid pattern of streets, a wealth of pedestrian opportunities, and increasingly diverse land uses, including restaurants, entertainment, and more residential areas. How can we build on these successes to make downtown into the kind of attractive, vibrant, world-class place that will draw in people and companies from around the world?"

The project team is currently working on a draft plan and anticipates completion by late fall 2017. To further flesh out the draft, they will lead a series of group meetings, steering committee workshops, topical small group discussions, and public workshops. The public will also be invited to participate in planning efforts by website and text-based visioning exercises. "Plan Downtown gives us a chance to weave into the planning process with public input," says Bob Eury, executive director of Downtown District. "The timing is really perfect, in terms of capturing this opportunity with major infrastructure proposals."

Downtown District is partnering with Houston First Corporation; Central Houston, Inc.; Downtown Redevelopment Authority/Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) No.3; Buffalo Bayou Partnership; City of Houston;

Harris County; and Theater District Houston. Neighboring management districts — East Downtown, Greater East End, Greater Northside, Midtown, and a 150-member steering committee — are also informing the planning efforts.

Florence Tang, Assoc. AIA, is an architectural designer, manager, and journalist based in Houston.

Dallas Architecture Forum Panel Examines Evolution of Suburban Corporate Campuses

As architects, many of us spend our lives in urban centers and turn our backs to the low-density landscape sprawling out around us. While the vitality of urban centers is increasing, one cannot ignore the extraordinary growth of suburban cities in North Texas and around the country. Frisco and McKinney are numbers two and three respectively on a list of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S., based on the Census Bureau's latest population estimates. It is a simple fact: The suburban growth in North Texas and many other places throughout the nation is outpacing the redevelopment of urban areas.

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This was the subject of “The Urban Burbs – Corporate Campuses and Suburbia,” a panel discussion this May at the Dallas Architecture Forum. Moderated by Gensler Dallas Design Director Ian Zapata, AIA, and featuring Jim Tousignant, director of real estate at Verizon; Peter Braster, director of special projects at the City of Plano; and Steve Brown, real estate editor of the Dallas Morning News, the conversation focused on how large suburban corporate campuses are changing in the 21st century.

With Toyota, Liberty Mutual, State Farm, JP Morgan Chase, and Boeing, among others, setting up shop in the North Texas suburbs, the character of their campuses merits discussion. The corporate campus model has transformed over the years from closed, inwardly focused and isolated buildings to the open campuses we see today (à la BIG’s proposal for Google’s new HQ) that engage with their surroundings to varying degrees. As work trends moved from a sterile office-only environment to remote working, companies were forced to rethink their campus designs to lure talented employees who valued the variety and collaboration of being out in the community.

As Tousignant stated, for Verizon, the primary drivers for locating in North Texas are a low cost of living and the availability of a talented workforce. To attract this workforce, the new campuses are recognizing the value of the “urban” experience; that is, being close to entertainment, shopping, and cultural offerings. Corporate campuses are being located next to developments such as Plano’s new Legacy West, which offers numerous restaurant and shopping options. These developments, while automobile oriented, strive to create an “urbanism” for a few blocks that approximates streets in New York or San Francisco, bringing the appearance of a lively city block to the middle of suburbia. Often, they create islands of walkability amid seas of parking, but they do reflect a shift in thinking.

The panelists agreed that parking is a paramount issue — now, and in the future. With driverless cars as a potential mitigator of traffic, and Zipcar as a stepping stone, the act of driving and car ownership may look very different in the near future. Smart developers are thinking about how to reuse parking garages. It is concerning, noted Tousignant, when new developments all include new 1,000-car garages, as such structures will likely become unnecessary. However, Brown surmised that Dallas would be one of the last cities to see

Corgan’s State Farm Headquarters in Richardson demonstrates the desire to create lively spaces in the suburban context.



a drastic drop in car ownership. Working in tandem with the revolution in auto use is the increase of transit. Verizon is planning a massive development on Hidden Ridge, in Irving, near Las Colinas and across the street from its current regional headquarters. A new DART stop is integral to Verizon’s vision for the site. Transit was also noted by the panelists as the cause of the recent resurgence and development in Las Colinas, which was for many years an all-too-empty monument to 1980’s single-use planning.

A reduced role for automobiles will require housing to be made available adjacent to these new campuses. The young professionals that corporations hope to attract are more and more delaying home-buying, and seem to prefer to rent. However, in Plano, according to Braster, there has been “tremendous push-back” from residents regarding rental apartments. This underscores the tension many similar cities face between development and growth, and the desire of residents to preserve the character of their city.

As the landscape changes, one area of enormous opportunity will be, according to Tousignant, underperforming suburban strip retail centers. These ubiquitous developments will need to be creatively reimaged to be relevant in a 21st-century environment.

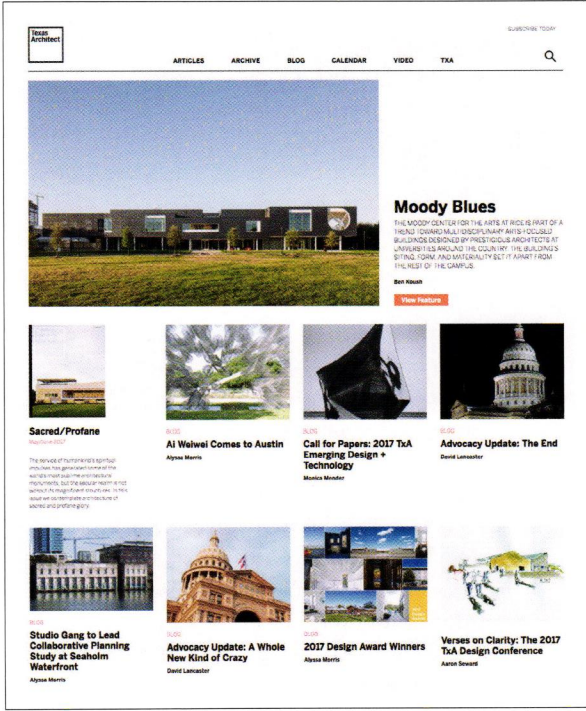
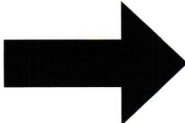
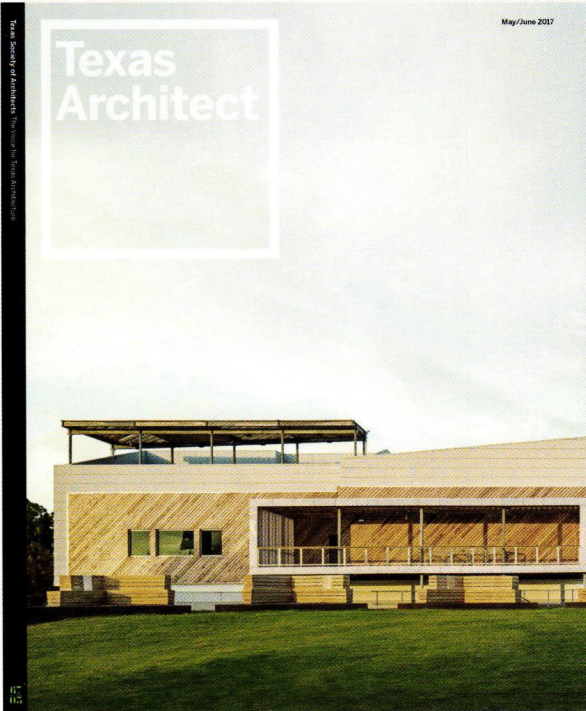
As the suburbs continue to grow at a breakneck pace, we can be assured that more dense nodes will spring up, often with office uses as a significant component. The development of the suburbs is a complex prospect, where competing concerns and priorities will continue to coexist; however, the overall trajectory of the suburbs, according to the panelists, suggests increased density and walkable nodes, supplemented by transit and supporting office use. It will be incumbent upon future developers and designers to thoughtfully create integrated and dense areas within the suburban context.

Andrew Barnes, AIA, is an architect in Dallas and recently launched his own practice, Agent Architecture.



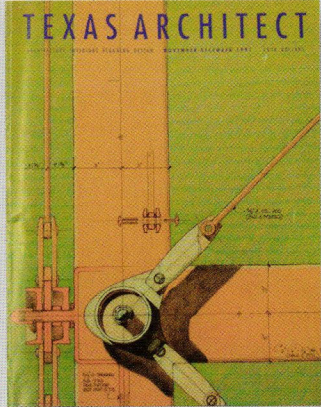
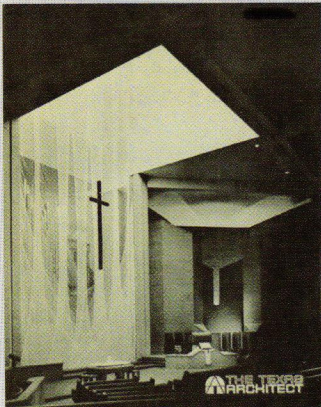
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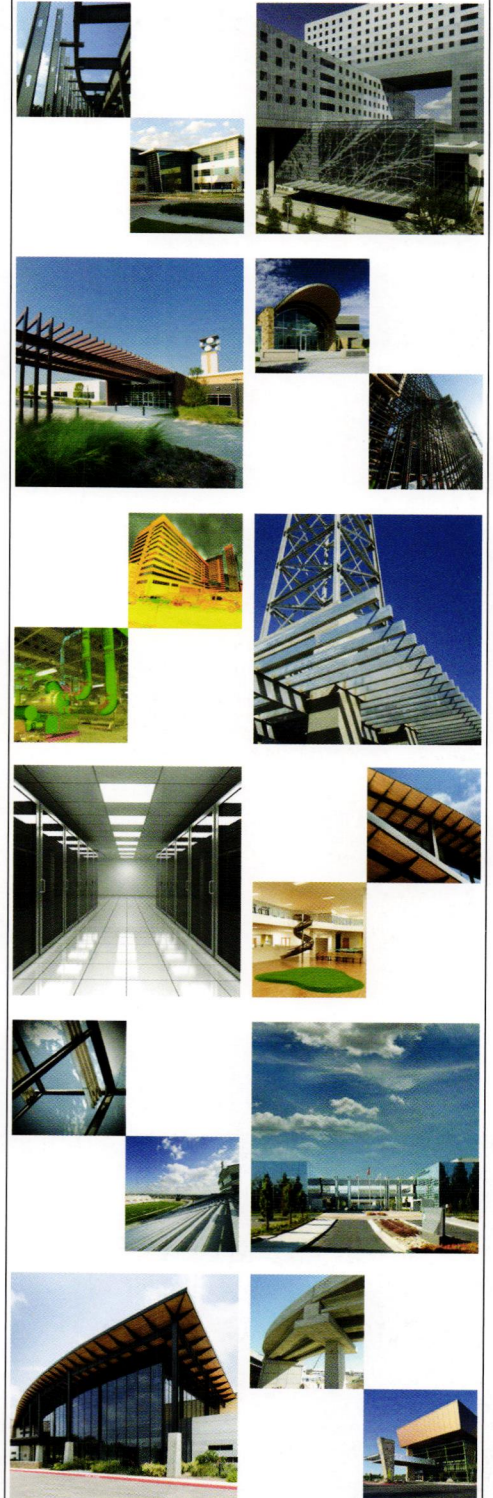
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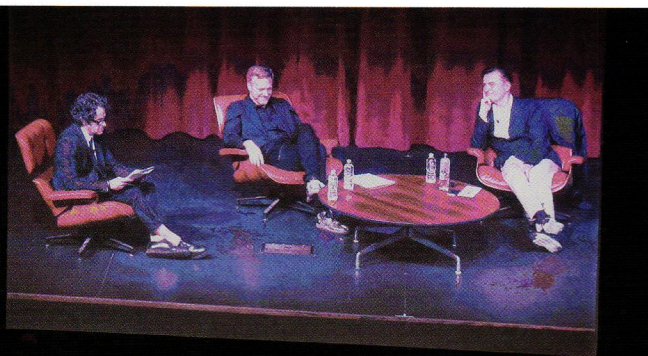
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Texas A&M professor Gabriel Esquivel (left) on stage with Mark Foster Gage (middle) and Patrik Schumacher (right).



Q&A with Mark Foster Gage and Patrik Schumacher

On April 21, the Texas A&M University School of Architecture hosted a debate between Zaha Hadid Architects principal Patrik Schumacher and Mark Foster Gage, who runs his eponymous firm in New York City and is assistant dean of the Yale School of Architecture. The spirited discussion, moderated by A&M associate professor Gabriel Esquivel, focused on the architects' diverging views on urban land-use policies, instigated by Schumacher's controversial keynote to the 2016 World Architecture Festival in Berlin, in which he advocated a privatized, market-based approach to urban development. Gage added his voice to the chorus of opposition in the press and on the internet in the wake of Schumacher's comments, but he came to the architect's defense when the responses became diatribes. Before the debate at A&M, *Texas Architect* editor Aaron Seward had the opportunity to speak with Gage and Schumacher about their views on architecture and contemporary society, a discussion that took its own spirited turn. Following is a transcript of that conversation, edited slightly for clarity and length.

Aaron Seward: Gabriel has framed this debate as a sort of Battle Royale between two contrasting views. I think that you do have contrasting views, but also you both seem to be working toward something very similar, which is regaining some power for the architecture profession. Mark, you have this idea of object-oriented ontology and how that might apply to architecture to regain the building's legitimacy as an object. And Patrik, you have a system or theory of architecture called Parametricism. So I'd like to start out by asking each of you to describe what you mean by these viewpoints and how they present pathways for the profession.

Mark Foster Gage: The reason architects started looking at object-oriented ontology is because we realized that architecture was starting to be justified because of its narrative, not because of its qualities. I think that's something that Patrik and I are allied on. You get an architect like Santiago Calatrava, who says that his train station is like a bird, and the train station looks like a bird, and it's valued for its ability to reflect its birdness. In philosophy that's a form

of correlationism. The architecture gets its value because of its relation to something else — in this case, it's a metaphor.

Object-oriented ontology is a philosophical idea that emerged about 10 years ago, that was a return in interest in looking at objects for their qualities, not for their relationships. In that sense, it was very much against an idea that says architecture is good because it's a bird, or it's good because it's humanitarian, it's good because it uses recycled materials — and instead we're looking at qualities that architecture actually produces.

That also has the spinoff effect of being opposed to Parametricism, which it wasn't designed to do. It's just an aftereffect, because object-oriented ontology places less importance on relationships than on the objects themselves.

The interest in empowerment for architecture is part of this discourse of object-oriented ontology. The philosopher who developed it, Graham Harman, bases a significant portion of his philosophy on this Heideggerian idea called the tool analysis. What that states is: I'm holding this bottle of water, and I'm about to drink it, and because it functions so well and the water isn't leaking, I don't notice it — it's not at the foreground of my attention. It's only when an object breaks, when this water bottle starts leaking, that it comes to the foreground of my attention, and I look: "Oh, my hand's getting wet; where's it leaking from?" I take more of an interest in the bottle itself. It comes to the front of my attention and reveals qualities that I didn't previously realize. That means that objects have qualities that are normally withdrawn from your access or attention. These qualities are sometimes eternally withdrawn or temporarily withdrawn. It's very interesting to think of architecture, say, even a building, as something that is not static, but has qualities that are withdrawn and are only accessible in certain ways. It makes buildings the sources of curiosity, rather than one-liners, such as "birdness."

You combine Heidegger's tool analysis with Louis Sullivan's statement, from 1896, which is "form follows function." If form follows function, and all architecture looks like what it's supposed to do, then, according to Heidegger, we're making an effort to make architecture seem invisible to its users. If architecture looks like its function and doesn't have any other ambitions, then there's no reason for it to come to the foreground of your attention, which means that it doesn't have any aesthetic power.

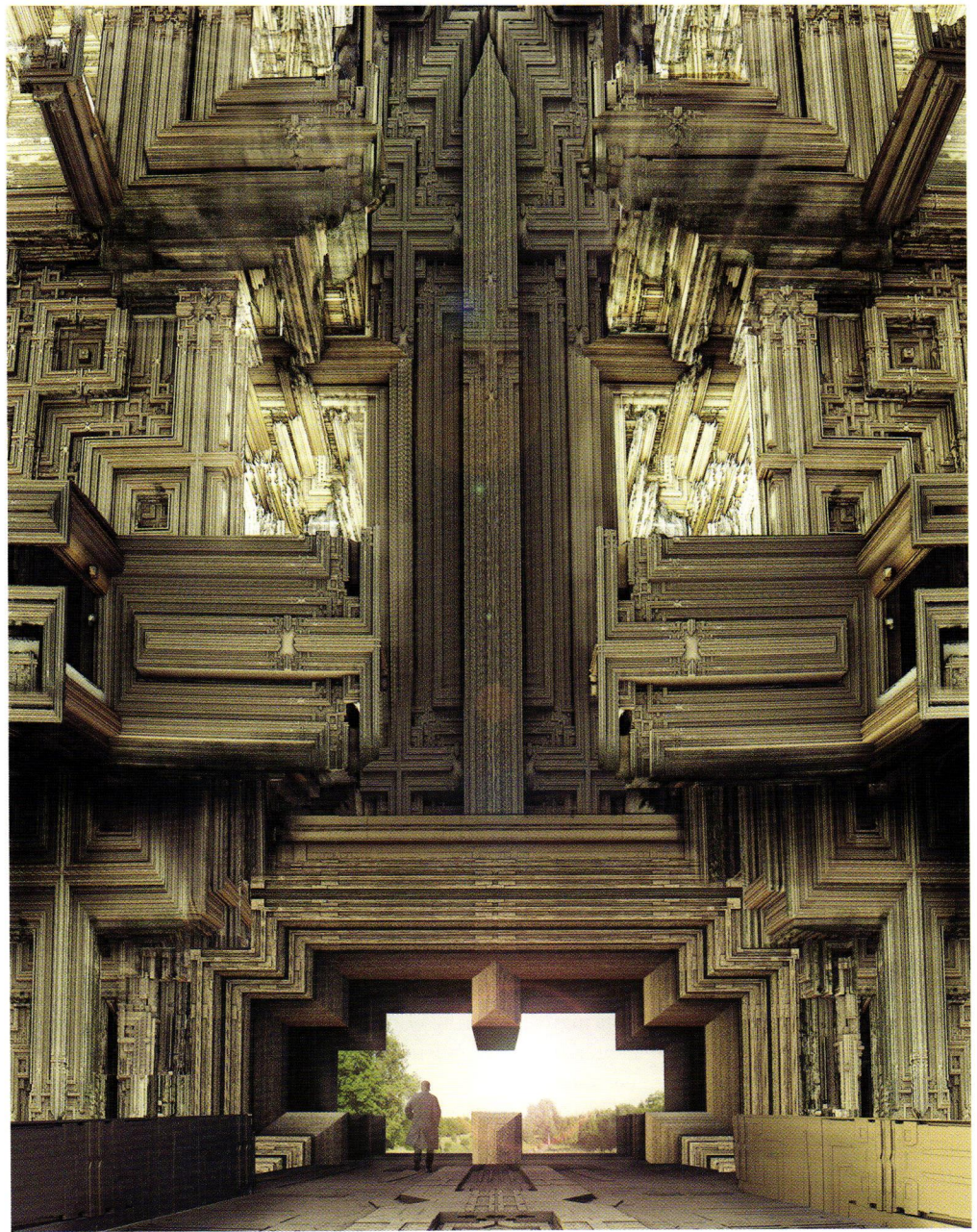
Of Note

We're interested in looking at object-oriented ontology as a way to bring architecture back to the foreground of your attention — not necessarily making it nonfunctional, but thinking of ways which could reintroduce it to the public, to give it what well-known philosopher Jacques Rancière calls estrangement, or a “returning of innocence to the eye.” And that’s where the philosophy of object-oriented ontology, the renewed interest in aesthetics, and ideas like estrangement all come together to form a foundation for an architecture that isn’t based on relations, isn’t valued for its relations, but is valued for its qualities that come in and out of attention — that parts are withdrawn, even strange: not necessarily strangeness for the purpose of being strange, but maybe strange because it questions your idea of reality, or strange because it calls new attention to architecture and what architecture can do, as opposed to relying on past conventions that we’re all very familiar with.

AS: There’s an architect here in Texas who contributed an article to *Texas Architect* recently, arguing for architecture returning to one of its original purposes, which was that of a mass-broadcast medium to tell stories and to communicate. I wonder if that at all plays into your ideas.

MFG: I think that’s something that Patrik is more interested in. I’m not inherently against the idea. I think that we do run the risk of — if architecture is intended to communicate a single thing, then that’s an authoritarian position, because it gives the architect the right to demand what other people read into the architecture. So in my own work we use lots of symbolic forms, but we do it at such a high level of complexity that no singular reading is required. There’s the possibility of multiple readings, and none of them are right. So we never say our building looks like a bird or our building is valuable because it’s humanitarian. The narrative becomes secondary to the thing itself, and there’s no authority that tells you what’s intended to be communicated. So I would say that communication is a tertiary interest in my project, while it probably forms more of a primary interest in Patrik’s.

Patrik Schumacher: Architecture’s ambition of withdrawing over-familiar motifs and introducing elements of ambiguity, which maybe stir creative conditions that aren’t fully prescribed — these discussions we had under the flag of



These projects by Mark Foster Gage — National Science and Innovation Centre of Lithuania (above) and House on Ile Rene-Levasseur (left) — employ complexity as a means of creating buildings whose aesthetic presence impacts the user without imposing a singular or authoritarian reading.

RENDERINGS COURTESY MARK FOSTER GAGE ARCHITECTS

Deleuze and Guattari's reading of virtuality and actualization. A lot of what I see in the architectural discourse surrounding triple-O merely looks to me like a rebranding of quite familiar tropes and insights and methodologies we've had and explored with Parametricism.

MFG: Which ones?

PS: Well, for instance, the idea of multiple readings, making strange for the purpose of stirring innovation. For me, it's not about drawing attention; it's about the unfamiliar as invitation to break routines for the sake of mutation, something which stirs evolution. That's what we saw when we reinhabited the old cities, when old factories were reappropriated for other purposes, so you are confronted with a strange juxtaposition, which is often very fertile: for lofts, for new forms of art display, new forms of raving events that needed that shock of the Other. But then, of course, it's not something which is forever just shock upon shock, but there's shock, inspiration, utilization, and then re-routinization — for instance, when East Berlin was opened up. In the '80s, we've been doing this. Eisenman was talking about this: the machinic process. It's kind of an aleatoric interpretation and appropriation process. These ideas are incredibly familiar to me.

I do treasure to some extent that we can have that disruptive otherness — of strange spaces and forms becoming conspicuous, confronting us with wonder and curiosity — but it's one ingredient, which needs to be applied in measured doses, like a pharmaceutical. There needs to be also that easy, nearly invisible environment, where you don't want to pay attention. You have purposes and things to do, and you want that to be easy going. Architects need to achieve legibility in the face of complexity. City-dwellers want to achieve more during the day — to have more interactions, more variety of interactions — and need to be able to orient themselves within a complex scene full of offerings. We want to see a rich diversity of lives congregating in the city, and this new societal complexity is what Parametricism caters for. In Parametricism, there are new vocabularies for creating an ordered variety and for building up complex relational situations. You pull things together for the sake of interacting, cooperating, being stimulated — being in a network condition where what we do is calibrated with what everyone else is doing and is continuously updating. This contrasts with modernist, suburban spreading out and separating

out of lives where we have been beaver away in isolation, working on something we know and are instructed to do.

I'm thinking about the general societal historical conditions under which new regimes of complexity can become interesting, and also that need for continuous reinvention. For me, this ties in with market processes. In a centrally planned society, that kind of complexity and reinvention will not be tolerated. Of course, the left is very conflicted about the conception of democratic allocation plans, versus the more bottom-up, autonomous, spontaneous, anarchist versions, which I think have more truth and historical pertinence. This anarchism comes through to philosophies like Deleuze and Guattari's, as well as in the philosophy of the speculative realists. These philosophies are kind of abstract machines, in themselves, that actually don't have a proper theory of society, or indeed any theory of anything, but they are offering kind of a repertoire of concepts, an algebra of terms, tropes, and analogies drawn out of complexity theory, and drawn out of the new kind of left-wing formations like the autonomia movement that abandoned the ideal of the Leninist Cader Party and celebrated the free flow of struggles, assemblages of agency. These conceptions were abstracted and generalized in Deleuze's philosophy and can be reinterpreted within architecture: smooth versus striated, assemblage versus organism, rhizome versus the arborescent. There's a whole series of categories and concepts that had been introduced into architecture by the generation of architects that make up the movement I call Parametricism; namely, the above-mentioned concepts, as well as the concepts of "machinic processes," and "the diagrammatic," understood as the open-ended, inexhaustible potential of forms and spaces. Especially these last-mentioned concepts are now being rehashed and rebranded by the architects working under the flag of object-oriented ontology.

MFG: Yeah, except object-oriented ontology is nearly precisely oppositional to all of those discourses you mentioned. Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari are discourses of becoming, are discourses of things never being things, but always on the route to becoming other things. Object-oriented ontology is a realist philosophy that says exactly the opposite — that what this thing is going to become is irrelevant to what it is now. So we're looking at things for their qualities at this moment in time, rather

than their trajectory as part of some larger set of relationships. Graham's fundamental ideas of overmining and undermining are contra-Deleuze. It's a very quick way to dismiss object-oriented ontology, to just say that it's something you already read, but if you'd read object-oriented ontology you'd know that it's, while not reactionary to, it is significantly against Deleuzian discourses of becoming. To make connections between the two is just ignorance.

PS: You are presenting triple-O as a radical contrast and antithesis to Deleuze and Guattari's work, and I am saying it is just a kind of nuanced re-emphasis and rebranding.

AS: I'd like to direct this discussion to something that you said in a recent interview, Patrik, which is an objection to the discursive, anything-goes mode that the profession has been in for some time now. You're advocating a central theory of how architecture should work, something that we should all share.

PS: Exactly. That's why we have to stop the rebranding and relabeling, because we share a lot of ambitions and criticisms. We should be criticizing the routine architecture of stereotypical conditions.

MFG: But how is Parametricism not the architecture of stereotypical conditions? Every Tuscan suburban house in America is parametrically designed.

PS: We have very similar critiques of, for instance, Modernism, and even more so with more traditional conceptions. We should see those alignments. The things you've been saying about offering a plethora of formalisms and potential symbols without fixed meaning — read Brian Massumi on the concept of the virtual and the way it works into architecture; look at the competition of the virtual house in the mid-90s, which was presented through ANY magazine: This is nothing other than what you've just been saying.

MFG: If this has all been done before, why is, for instance, Graham listed as one of the hundred most-influential people in the art world? Is it just a reinvention?

PS: It's a rebranding.

Of Note

MFG: So the art world and the architecture world have just had the wool pulled over their eyes?

PS: Yeah, it's a rebranding, a relabeling.

MFG: But Parametricism holds all the answers for the future of innovation.

PS: Well, it's very, very open and abstract.

MFG: Yeah, and it's also a meaningless distinction.

PS: No; it's not meaningless. It excludes Minimalism; it excludes Chipperfield; it excludes Postmodernism and asserts that Postmodernism is atrocious!

MFG: You could absolutely have a parametricist Chipperfield.

PS: No; that's not what I call Parametricism. Then you haven't read my books.

MFG: Then what do you mean by Parametricism? Do you mean smooth surfaces?

PS: Well, you should read the work.

MFG: I would, if it was legible.

PS: Read the writing. Read the heuristics. Read the points. It's a clear distinction: It's not Postmodernism, it's certainly not Minimalism, it's not Deconstructivism.

MFG: You're using Parametricism to mean something stylistically, not in its technical terminology meaning?

PS: It comes with a methodology, but it is also recognizable in its phenomenology and physiognomy. But it's also quite diverse and rich.

MFG: But it needs to have no figural outline, no right angles, no straight lines.

PS: Not necessarily.

MFG: But that's what you wrote.

PS: No, no. There can be degrees of orthogonality, and field conditions from the orthogonal into the more multi-angled, and into the curvilinear. There can also be layers. It works out of Deconstructivism, in that it has layering and

interpretations, but these layers now no longer just conflict with each other; instead, they resonate with each other: One is inferred from the other, so the composition becomes more information-rich, more navigable via inferences, as well as more complex, more subtle. Gradients are a new condition that didn't exist, but it isn't the one gradient, the one single surface, anymore, which dominated the early versions of Parametricism. I call it "Foldism," now, in retrospect. Foldism evolved into "blobism," and now we are talking about something which is more sophisticated in its integration of multiple systems. I call it "Tectonism."

MFG: So give me an example of the more sophisticated Parametricism.

PS: For instance, our Dongdaemun building in Seoul, our Baku building [Heydar Aliyev Centre], perhaps.

MFG: But that's entirely smooth. I thought you said smoothness was a condition of early Parametricism. Baku is the smoothest building ever built in the history of the world.

PS: It has multiple conditions.

MFG: What do you mean by that?

PS: It has a series of layers. Smoothness was a very potent and powerful and radical—

MFG: Deleuzian term.

PS: —radical innovation, which really shocked us into new conditions never given before.

MFG: Never given before? What about [Frederick] Kiesler? If you're going to accuse me of rehashing old things, then we have to look at smoothness in architecture as not being entirely contingent upon the digital.

PS: It wasn't realized before. There were maybe intuitive precursors.

MFG: [Kiesler] called it the "Endless House," because it was smooth and endless.

PS: Maybe it is a precursor.

MFG: Okay, so if Parametricism has precursors, then having a precursor isn't necessarily a bad

thing, and you can't destroy triple-O for having roots in Deconstruction.

PS: No, I'm not saying that. But you have yet to tell me what's the critical advantage of triple-O? What's the innovation? I haven't seen any advantageous heuristics coming out of triple-O. There *is* something different, but I think that difference is actually a negative — for instance, the idea that the relation to human purposes is not to be of particular concern. And then you use a label like anthropocentrism, which means something very different, to try to denigrate something which we should be able to take for granted, which is that we invest our labor, efforts, and our resources into buildings so that they serve our human purposes.

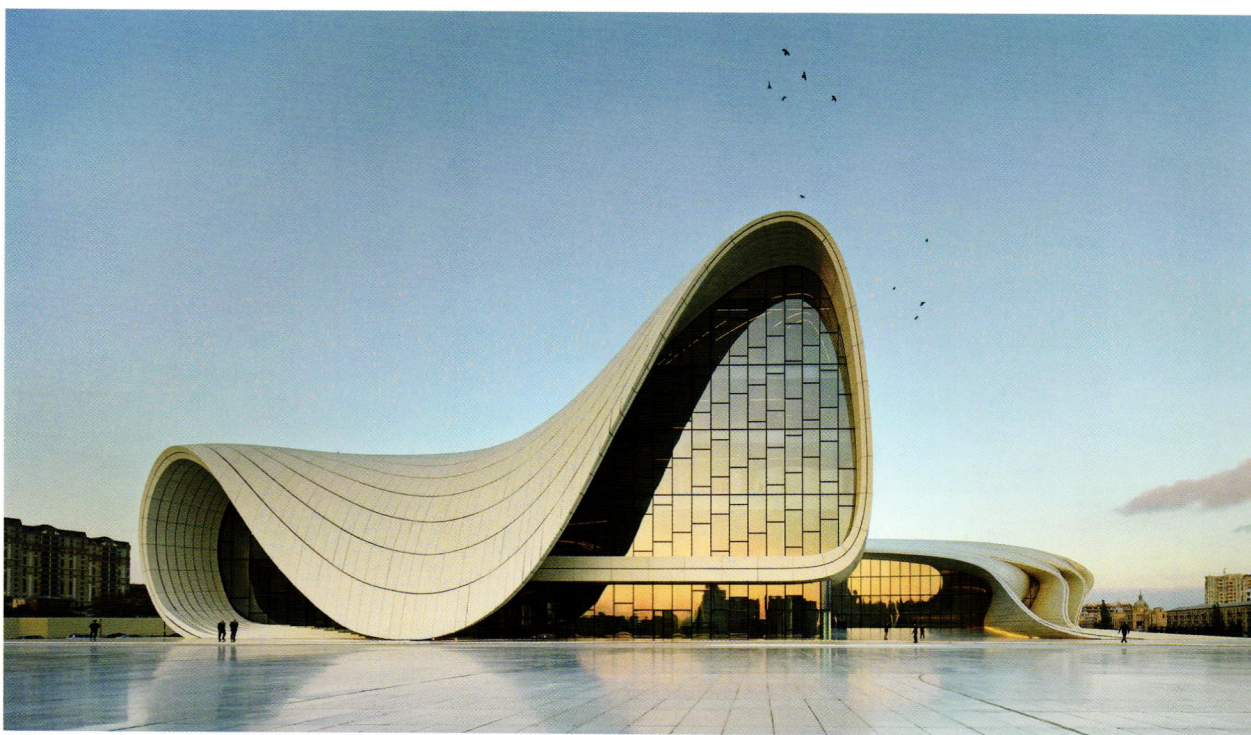
AS: The architecture profession in general is having a lot of trouble communicating its value to the public. One of the ways that some people have tried to correct this is through extending the architecture project beyond the building itself, into the landscape, and to invite more disciplines into the architecture practice: landscape architecture, urban planning, et cetera. How does this approach of connecting to the public to try to communicate architecture's potential fit with your views?

MFG: Well, there's certainly an ambition now to denigrate the designer and say that designers no longer design things. Design is now "design intelligence." I see positive aspects and negative aspects of that. My worry is that it's very fashionable right now for architecture to be about politics, or for architecture to be about the natural use of, or design of materials, or even about nonhumans — dealing with birds and bees and stuff. That's fine, and maybe that's interesting for people, but at a certain point someone has to do the built environment for humans. If architects abdicate their responsibility towards that and it becomes unfashionable to deal with buildings and urbanisms, then we're really screwed.

AS: Is this part of the undermining of architecture that you've written about?

MFG: Yes, absolutely.

Continued on page 90



The Heydar Aliyev Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan, by Zaha Hadid Architects is a performing arts and cultural facility that breaks from the country's Soviet-era built environment with its forward-looking form. A prime example of Schumacher's Parametricism, here complexity and layering are employed to inform usage, facilitate circulation, and bring people together.

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The Bullock Museum
1800 Congress Ave.
Austin
thestoryoftexas.com

Thursday 13

EVENT
North Texas Sustainable Showcase
Plano Event Center
2000 E. Spring Creek
Pkwy.
Plano
ntxsustainableshowcase.com

Friday 14

EXHIBITION OPENING
Biennial 600: Architecture
Amarillo Museum of Art
2200 S. Van Buren St.
Amarillo
amarilloart.org

Saturday 15

EXHIBITION OPENING
Nature/Culture
Amon Carter Museum of American Art
3501 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
cartermuseum.org

Monday 17

EVENT
Design Lecture: BIG Little Houses
Dallas Center for Architecture
1909 Woodall Rodgers Fwy.
Dallas
aiadallas.org

Saturday 29

EXHIBITION OPENING
2D/3D
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora St.
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

FILM SCREENING

City Lights
The Paramount Theatre
713 Congress Ave.
Austin
austintheatre.org

AUGUST

Thursday 3 and Friday 4

EVENT
AIA Austin Summer Conference
Norris Conference Center
2525 W. Anderson Lane
Austin
aiaaustin.org

Friday 4

EVENT
Shoot 'N' Skoot
AIA San Antonio
aiaasa.org

Sunday 6

EXHIBITION CLOSING
California Dreaming:
Works by Ruscha, Hockney, and Others
McNay Art Museum
6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.
San Antonio
mcnayart.org

Sunday 13

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Ron Mueck
Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston
1001 Bissonnet
Houston
mfah.org

Friday 18

FILM SCREENING
Makers: Women Who Make America
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

Saturday 19

EXHIBITION OPENING
Annabeth Rosen: Fired, Broken, Gathered, Heaped
Contemporary Arts Museum Houston
5216 Montrose Blvd.
Houston
camh.org

Sunday 20

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Iris van Herpen: Transforming Fashion
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood St.
Dallas
mma.org

Thursday 24

EVENT
TxA Prosperity Conference
Waco
texasarchitects.org

Saturday 26

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Dan Scanavino: Repeater
Moody Center for the Arts
6100 Main St.
Houston
moody.rice.edu

Sunday 27

EXHIBITION OPENING
Casanova: The Seduction of Europe
Kimbell Art Museum
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

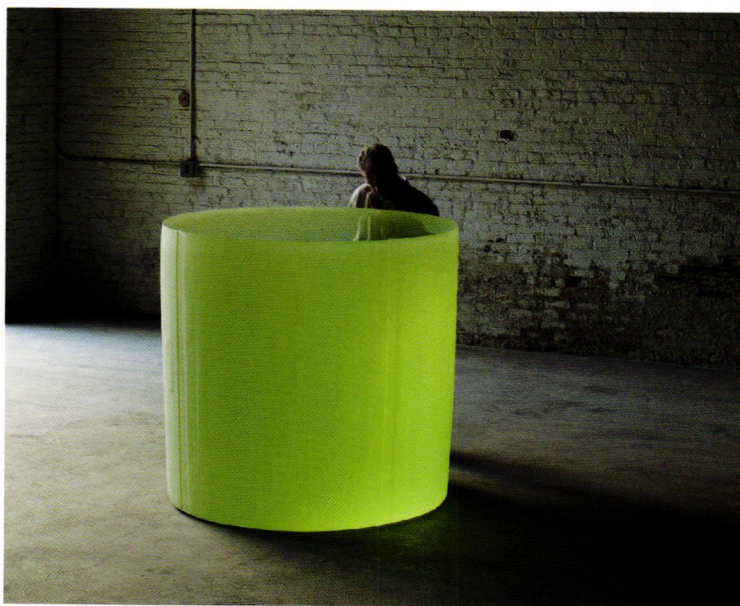
FEATURED



Pipilotti Rist: Pixel Forest and Worry Will Vanish
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
mfah.org

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 17

Two works by Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist have been acquired by MFAH. Rist's work tends to be immersive, centered primarily around video and digital media. "Pixel Forest" (above) comprises thousands of LEDs changing in sequence with video signals. "Worry Will Vanish" is a dreamlike projection soundtracked by musician Anders Guggisberg. The two installations, which were conceived independently, are here presented together, forming a new synergy as they synchronize into a greater whole.



Roni Horn
Nasher Sculpture Center
nashersculpturecenter.org

THROUGH AUGUST 20

Eight large, glass-cast sculptures by American artist Roni Horn occupy the main gallery at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas. Infused with the natural light that filters into the Renzo Piano-designed museum, the glass forms reveal their reflective and translucent qualities. The series defies traditional definitions of glass art, expanding the genre into the realm of sculpture laden with weight and presence. ■

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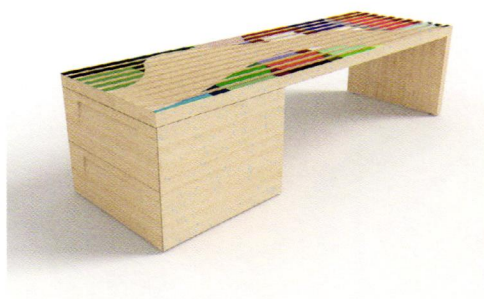
by Rita Catinella Orrell

Our focus on containers of all shapes and sizes includes a New York City water tower for your desktop and a shipping container that's been transformed into a plug-and-play swimming pool.



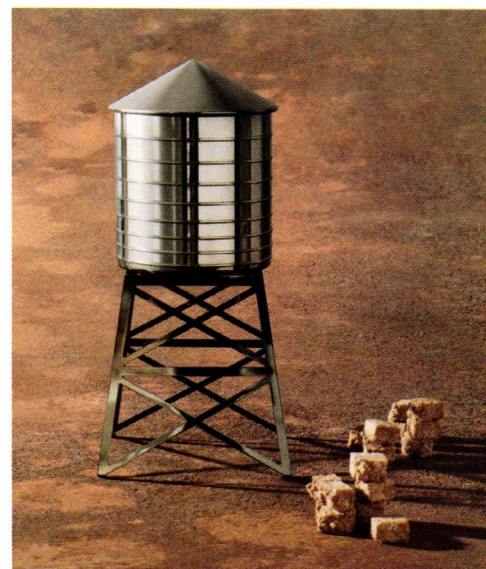
Flow Bowl Collection
Alias
alias.design.com

Designed by the Japanese firm Nendo for the Italian brand Alias, Flow Bowl is a new system of coffee tables and furnishings in different shapes and sizes with tabletops that seem to melt and flow down to form a container below. The pieces, ranging from side tables to vases, have an enameled steel structure and tops of lacquered polyurethane in a range of neutral colors.



Hedy Bench
Dan Brunn Architecture
danbrunn.com

Designed by the Los Angeles-based architect Dan Brunn, AIA, the limited-edition Hedy Bench features wooden slats with a vividly hand-painted abstract graphic inspired by one of his personal paintings. Made of solid European beechwood, the bench features two 18-in-deep drawers that hold approximately 3.3 cubic ft of space. Each bench is hand-numbered and signed by the architect, and measures 18 in wide by 18 in tall by 60 in long.



Water Tower
Alessi
alessi.com

Inspired by the legacy of Aldo Rossi, architect Daniel Libeskind has created a miniature work of architecture for the table that is an interpretation of the iconic American water tanks seen on New York City rooftops. The Water Tower's mirror-finished cylinder of stainless steel sits atop a lattice-structure base, capped by a pointed lid. It can be used to store sugar cubes at the kitchen table, or to stash other items on the nightstand or desktop.



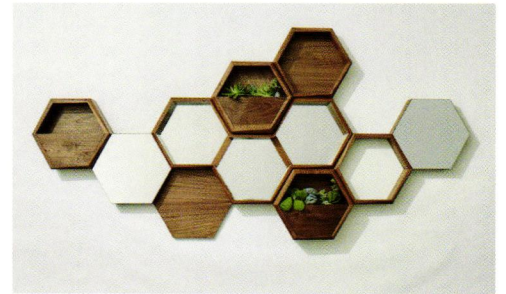
Modpools
Modpools
modpools.com

Unlike conventional pools that can take weeks to pour and cure, a Modpool can be up and running within minutes of its arrival. Made in Canada from modified shipping containers, Modpools measure 8 ft X 20 ft or 8 ft X 40 ft and can be installed either above or in-ground. Water temperature, jets, and color-changing LED lighting can be controlled via a tablet or smartphone app. The containers feature a side-viewing window and can be relocated as well as transformed into a hot tub with the addition of a special divider.



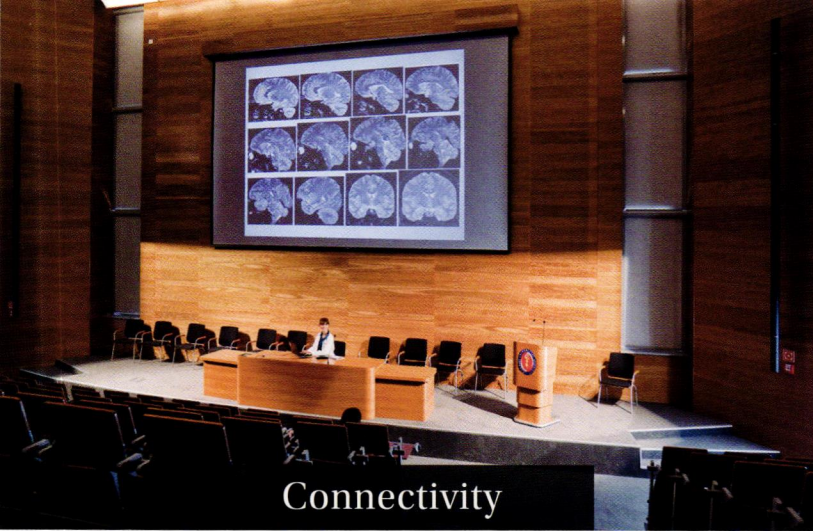
Open Collection
Hastings Tile & Bath
hastingsstilebath.com

The Open Collection of bathroom vanities includes tall storage cabinets and a range of sink-height cabinets with open shelves, solid-surface countertops, and one or two drawers. Drawer fronts are available in 36 colors with matte or glossy finishes or in 10 wood finishes ranging from a light Primitivo Chiaro to a dark Wenge. The insides of the open shelves can be specified in different colors for more design options.



Wall*nut Hexagons
Think Fabricate
thinkfabricate.com

Created in collaboration between the Brooklyn-based design studio Think Fabricate and its affiliated architecture studio Doban Architecture, this series of sculptural shelving modules and decorative wall hangings can be outfitted with mirrors, plant-holders, baskets, and small-scale shelving. Made of wood (walnut, maple, and MDF), teak, and mirror, the hexagonal forms are available in a minimum order of three and can be customized and combined in different compositions to create wall installations for residential and commercial projects.



Connectivity



Control



Scheduling



Collaboration

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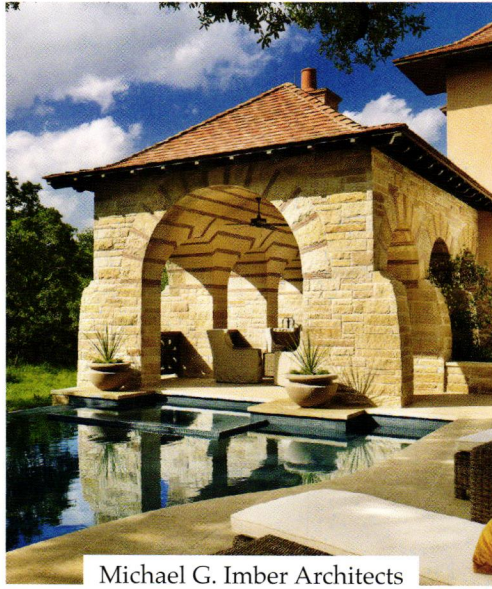
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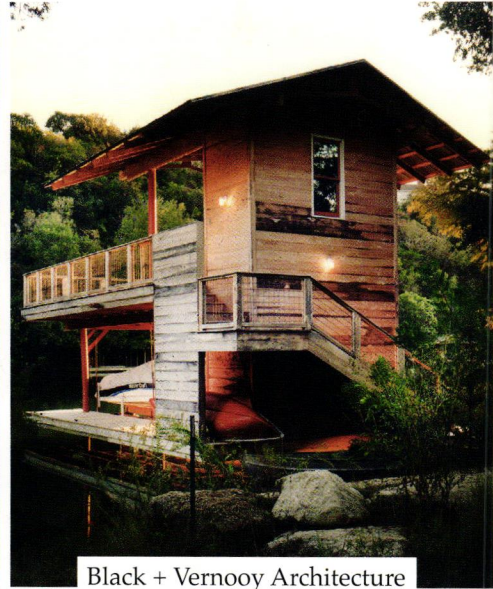
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Michael G. Imber Architects



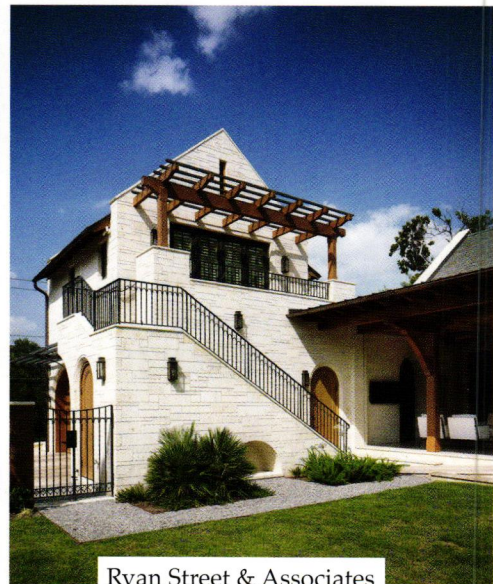
Black + Vernooy Architecture



Furman + Keil Architects



Jessica Stewart Lendvay Architects



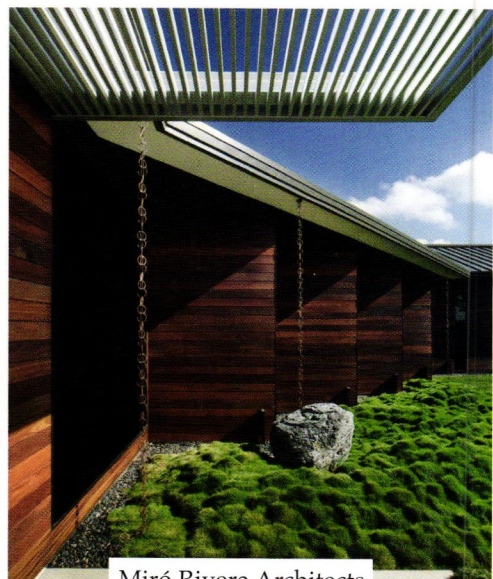
Ryan Street & Associates



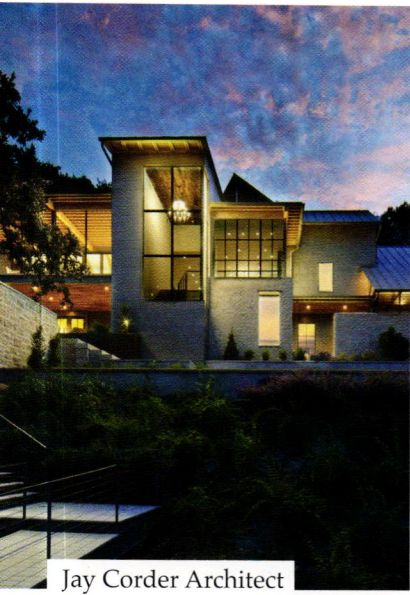
Shiflet Group Architects



Lake Flato Architects



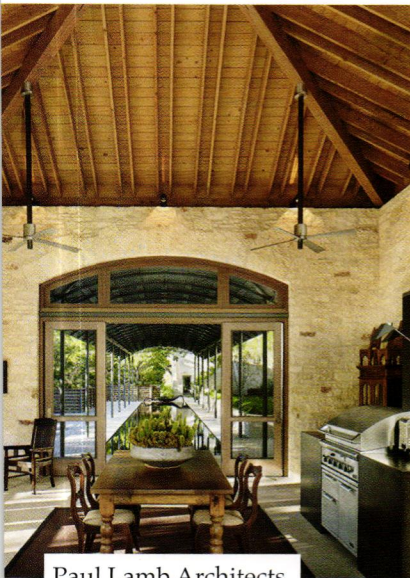
Miró Rivera Architects



Jay Corder Architect



BGK Architects



Paul Lamb Architects

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www.dalgleish.net



The plan calls for converting neighboring buildings into a museum with an observation deck overlooking the reconfigured space.

Research the Alamo

A new Alamo Plaza Master Plan has stoked controversy in San Antonio, and for good reason: It proposes closing streets, limiting the use of space to approved activities, and creating an expansive unshaded plaza surrounded by a glass wall. Where does the city fit in? An examination of the site's history offers some context to the growing debate.

by Kathryn E. O'Rourke

Perhaps the best thing about the Alamo Plaza Master Plan — developed by the Texas General Land Office, the City of San Antonio, and the Alamo Endowment and unveiled this spring — is that it has ignited a public conversation about urbanism and history.

Billed as “a new vision for sacred ground,” the plan proposes dramatic changes to the narrow, roughly rectangular parcel of land between Houston and Commerce streets on the north and south, the 19th- and 20th-century commercial buildings on the west, and the Alamo and the Menger Hotel on the east. The centerpiece is a large, treeless plaza between the Alamo and a proposed water channel in front of the buildings directly opposite of it. These buildings' facades would be retained as the spaces behind them are converted into a museum with a rooftop observation deck. The plaza would be framed, on the ground, with structural glass to permit views of the earth and archeological artifacts below. Panels of the same glass would surround most of the plaza on the north and south sides, and shape a monumental arch on the south end, which is imagined as the main entrance to the site. Pedestrians would arrive at this “gate” from a wide, paved walkway beginning at Commerce Street. The area in front of the Menger Hotel would be planted with trees and drought-tolerant plants.

In San Antonio, responses to the design — by George Skarmneas, AIA, of Philadelphia-based

Preservation Design Partnership — have been varied and voluble. Albeit for widely differing reasons, no one seems particularly happy about the scheme. Leading voices in the profession have registered their concerns publicly, and the AIA chapter has reminded passionate citizens that a master plan is always only a beginning. Why is it so hard to get Alamo Plaza right?

In part, it is because its character has never been fixed. Since the establishment of the site as a mission by Franciscan priests in 1744, its form and use have changed numerous times. First developed to evangelize and solidify a colonial foothold in a remote region of New Spain as Iberian control of the Americas began to weaken, the space was later used for military purposes. After the Civil War, it became a transportation hub, then a thriving commercial center, and was ultimately reborn as the most important tourist destination in the state. Even the term “plaza,” which had a very specific meaning in Spanish colonial urban planning,

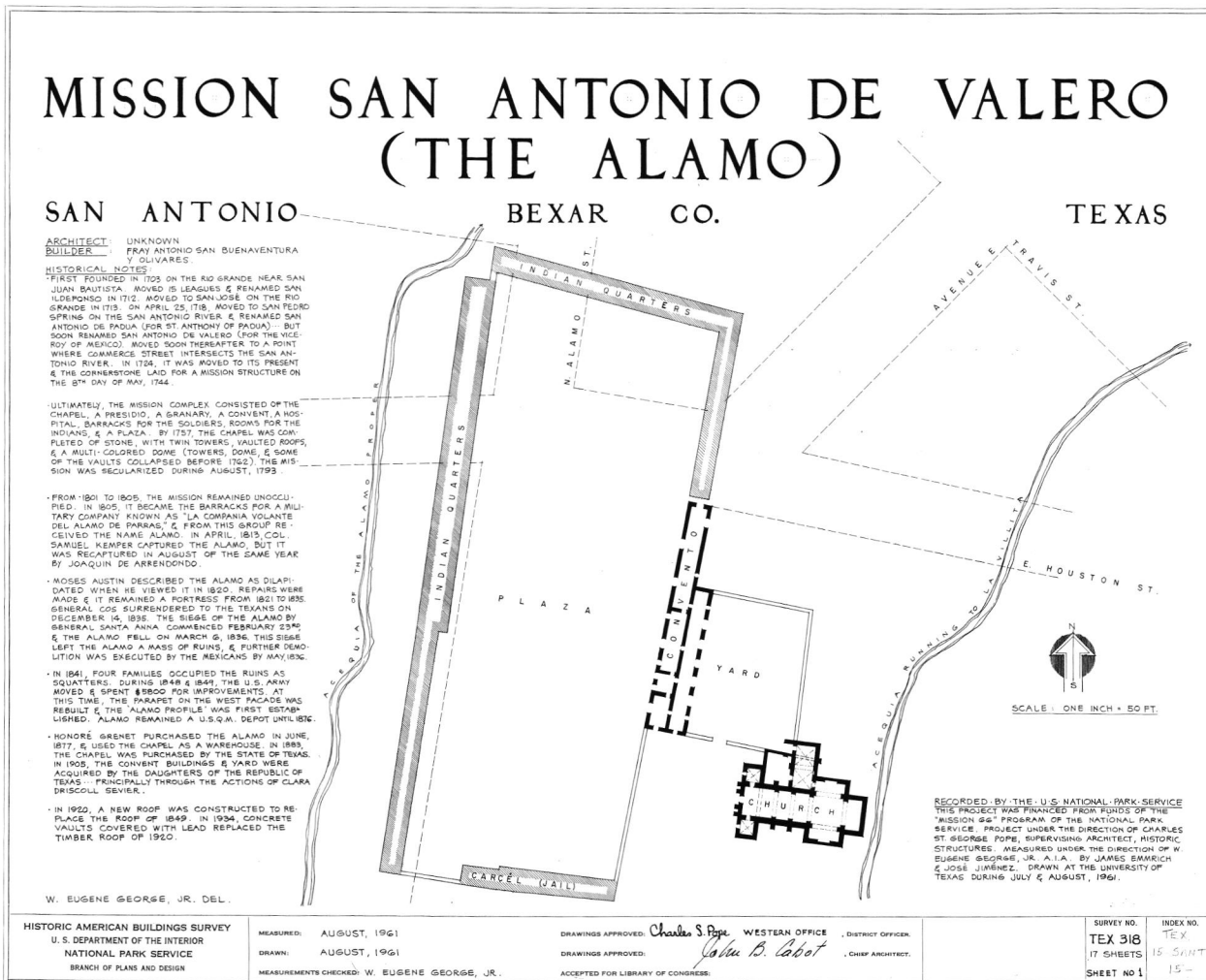
dictated by custom and the Laws of the Indies, is misleading. In 1930, a small plaza-like space in front of the Alamo was created, and in the late 1970s, the city closed the street that ran directly in front of this space and built the limestone-paved “plaza” that is there today.

As a locus of aspirations for and anxieties about the character of the city and the state, Alamo Plaza is unrivaled. For some, it is among the preminent symbols of a long, heroic effort to spread the ideals of American democracy west across the continent and is *the* icon of Texan exceptionalism. For others, it represents a destructive, largely unexamined, racialized jingoism that underpins 21st-century prejudices. Despite visitors’ often-repeated complaints that the Alamo is “smaller” than they had expected and that the space in front of it is “hard to understand,” the Alamo is the foremost embodiment of San Antonio’s Faustian bargain with the tourist industry.

The site area was first developed as the second location of the Mission of San Antonio de Valero,

which was founded on the west bank of the San Antonio River in 1718. The mission was moved east of the river, to the present site of the Alamo in 1724, after a hurricane. Its church, built 20 years later, collapsed in 1756. Thereafter, the building we know as the Alamo was begun. W. Eugene George, FAIA’s 1961 drawings for the Historic American Buildings Survey gives an excellent idea of the mission as it was likely to have existed in the third quarter of the 18th century. Like 16th-century missions in central Mexico, San Antonio de Valero had an enclosed atrio, or forecourt, in front of the chapel. Walls were of stone, adobe, and wood. But unlike in the earliest colonial missions, this three-acre atrio was positioned at some distance in front of the church. A narrow, two-story cloister with arches ran along part of the eastern perimeter of the atrio and opened onto a yard whose southeastern corner abutted the church. Like other Texas missions, San Antonio de Valero’s residential character also differentiated it from its predecessors closer to Mexico City.

W. Eugene George, Jr.,
Alamo Survey, 1961.
Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service.



Essay

People of different indigenous groups were housed in dwellings arranged along the west, north, and eastern walls and in apartments organized in five rows roughly at the north-central end of the plaza. The main entrance to the atrio was through the south wall. Two irrigation ditches ran roughly north-south on either side of the complex. San Antonio de Valero was one of the most significant regional adaptations of a 16th-century Mexican mission, which itself was the most important new building type in colonial New Spain.

Less than 20 years after it was built, however, the mission was secularized. Beginning in 1773, a New Spanish cavalry unit used the compound irregularly as a fort. The still unfinished chapel served as a military church, and baptisms were recorded as early as 1803. Although it was meant to have a two-story retablo facade and a pair of towers, only the lower story, with its now-iconic portal, stood. In 1813, a battle for Mexican independence from Spain, and its bloody aftermath, took place at the fort. After the battle of 1836, Mexican soldiers destroyed what remained of other buildings but left the debris-filled chapel in place. In 1850, the U.S. Army modified the chapel for use by the quartermaster corps and had possession of it until 1876, except during the Civil War. The army raised the walls, added windows and a roof, and commissioned John Fries (who designed the first Menger Hotel in 1858) and David Russi to create the beloved parapet.

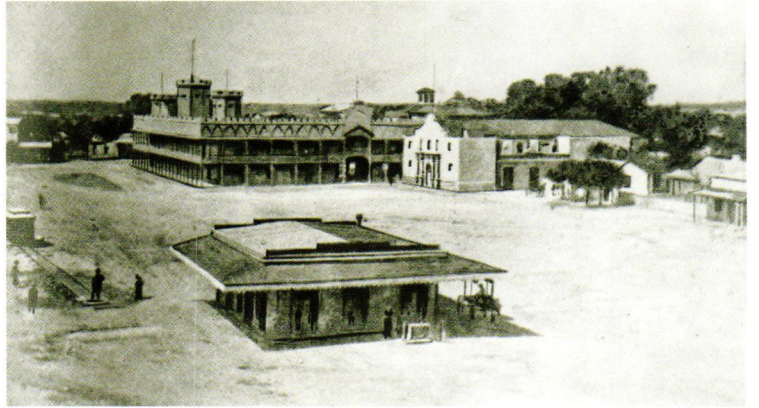
Over the course of the second half of the 19th century, the space west of the Alamo took on the character of an urban commercial plaza. To its east and south were the modest vernacular houses that later inspired O'Neil Ford, FAIA. In 1880, the two-story Hugo and Schmeltzer store occupied the former site of the cloister; a modest meat market was in what had been the atrio. By the 1890s, the city we know today had come into view. New three- and four-story commercial buildings, including Alfred Giles's four-part Crocket Block and an opera house stood on the west side of Alamo Street. To the north was James Riley Gordon's Romanesque Revival post office. The plaza had been paved (with mesquite blocks), and an oval-shaped landscaped park with winding paths, a bandstand, and a rock-encircled "Mexican cactus" garden was installed.

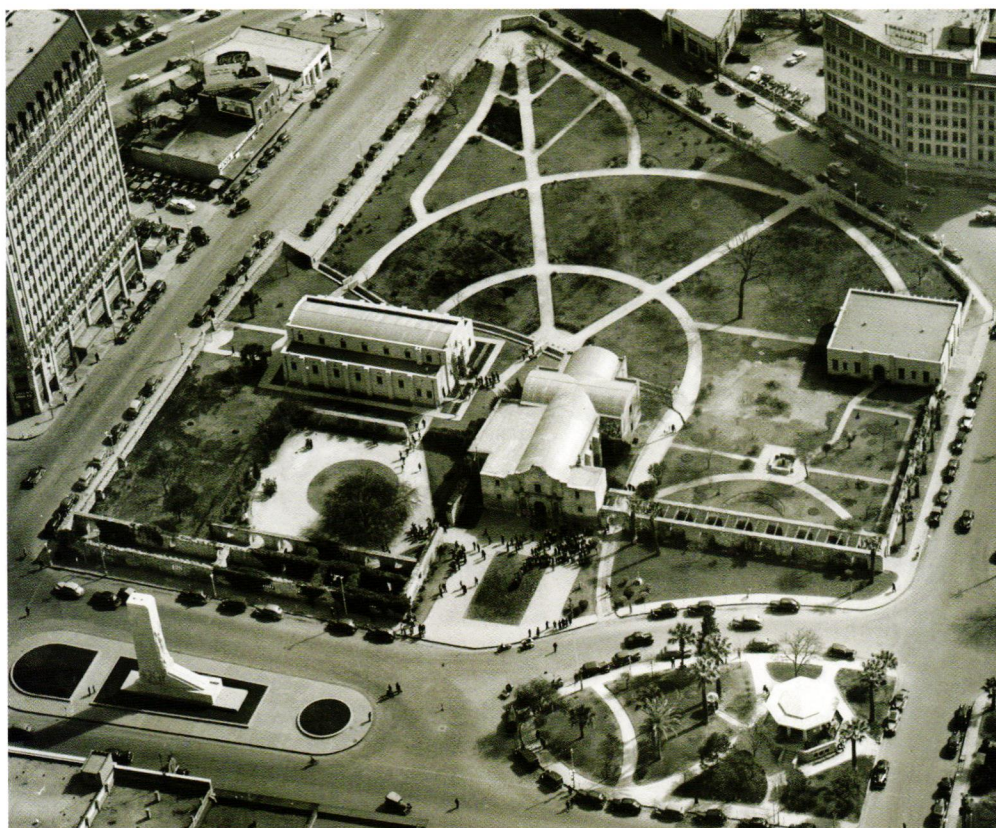
This park was still in place when the plaza and Alamo grounds were fully integrated into a dense urban fabric in 1918. The Hugo and Schmeltzer store had been dismantled in 1913 for the rebuilding of the lower walls of the cloister, following a fierce 1905 debate about whether

Right *Around 1880, a meat market stood in the plaza.*

Below *In approximately 1890, a garden filled the space.*

Bottom *An aerial view from 1918 shows the plaza's relationship to the growing city.*





Top Alamo Plaza Park with its second bandstand and cactus garden, c. 1924.

Above In 1936, the garden east of the Alamo was installed. The cenotaph is at lower left. Photograph, c. 1940.

the Alamo should be commemorated chiefly as a battle site or as a mission. In the 1920s, “Alamo Plaza Park” embodied the informality and genteel rusticity that were hallmarks of San Antonio’s spaces of leisure in the early 20th century. A new octagonal bandstand with classical columns on a rock base replaced the old one, and a small faux-bois bench by Dionicio Rodriguez stood among palm trees. Images of the park appeared on countless postcards, suggesting that it was an important destination in

its own right. In 1926, Ralph Cameron, FAIA, wedged the towering, 12-story Gothic Revival Medical Arts Building into what had been the northeast corner of the atrio, transforming the scale of the space dramatically.

The Alamo Cenotaph, which the new master plan calls to have relocated, was dedicated in 1940 on a narrow strip between Alamo Street and the cloister wall. By then, the park was bisected to accommodate vehicular traffic along Crockett Street. The land behind the Alamo, between Houston and Bonham Streets, had been developed as a park, a change that contributed to the denaturing of the Alamo itself as part of the city and anticipated the catastrophic demolitions throughout downtown San Antonio in the decades to come.

Alamo Plaza is one node of a historically shifting constellation of important spaces in San Antonio. Its symbolic and emotional charge makes it easy for one to lose sight of this aspect of its history. The conundrum of how to shape it today reflects one of the curiosities — and opportunities — of downtown San Antonio: There is not a single “center.” Today, there are three important plazas. In the 18th century, San Antonio de Valero, with the Cathedral of San Fernando and the settlement later known as La Villita was one of the three places that defined the town. A century later, planners understood Alamo Plaza in relation to Main Plaza, as well as to San Pedro Park to the northwest. (In 1729, land around the springs there had been designated for public use, and in 1858 City Council inaugurated the modern park.) Streetcar lines ran between the plaza and the park, and when Alamo Plaza got its new bandstand, the old one was taken to San Pedro Park, where it remains. At the time the city installed the garden in 1888, it also created one at Main Plaza. Alderman A.W. Wulff, who immigrated to San Antonio in 1850 from Germany, had suggested these horticultural beautifications.

Seen in light of the plaza’s history and 21st-century realities, the new master plan is baffling. It proposes evoking the site’s life as a working mission, presumably to satisfy those who desire greater acknowledgement of the experiences of indigenous Texans, and to create a space in which it is easier to visualize a battle. The absurdity of creating wide expanses of unshaded, impermeable surfaces in San Antonio is surely plain to anyone who has ever been in the city long enough to leave the airport. As downtown slowly recovers from the loss of so much historic fabric to parking



Left and below right
The plan calls for partially enclosing the site with glass walls that would shape a south-facing “gate.”

Below left *The current view down Alamo Plaza with the cenotaph seen on the left.*



lots and HemisFair, the argument for creating more vastly scaled space and then walling it off from its surroundings is equally puzzling. The effect of the proposed barrier would be particularly pronounced on the north end, where Cameron and Paul Cret, AIA’s Hipolito F. Garcia Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse stands, with its major WPA mural, “San Antonio’s Importance in Texas History.” A more compelling scheme would find ways of integrating Alamo Plaza with the city around it, spatially and symbolically. It might do this by clarifying the plaza’s relationship to the San Antonio River, whose banks beyond downtown have been so effectively reshaped, and by creating a less specifically programmed space that supports a wide variety of activities, memories, and fantasies. Such a design should more powerfully acknowledge climate and climate change, and it

must grapple with the political context in which it was born.

Alamo Plaza cannot be only for tourists and reenactors. It must belong to San Antonians. Although the master plan was in the works long before undisguised prejudice against Mexicans helped propel a wall-obsessed man to the presidency, history will judge it in light of that event. We need symbolically rich, broadly meaningful public places more now than at any time in the last half century. Fifty-seven percent of San Antonians are Mexican-Americans; in 2020, more Texans will be Latino than white. Building walls is the last thing we should do.

Remarkably unchanged in 250 years is the iconic portal of the Alamo itself. It is mentioned and reproduced less often than is the parapet, yet is the most potent material reminder of a story even more extraordinary than the invention of

Texas. Shaped partly by indigenous hands, it is a regionalized baroque interpretation of the classical triumphal arch that Sebastiano Serlio first illustrated in “Tutte l’opere d’architettura, et prospetiva,” in 1540. The portal is a sign of the long reach of the Italian Renaissance — across the Atlantic Ocean, through Mexico City, all the way to a remote, dusty site in the province of Coahuila y Tejas. It puts the challenge of the plaza design in perspective. At its core, ours is a struggle to realize more perfectly our inheritance of the humanistic ideals first articulated in the Renaissance. With the portal, the plaza’s changing form reminds us that the movement of ideas and people at the heart of our shared history is what makes it heroic.

Kathryn O’Rourke is an associate professor of art history at Trinity University.

Durable Color

Multi-Color Metal Roof Creates a Lively Experience



Destin Commons, Destin, FL

Owner: Turnberry Associates

Installing contractor: Roof Specialties

Architect: JPRA Architects

Distributor: CRS - Commercial Roofing Specialties

Profiles: Snap-Clad

Colors: Arcadia Green, Slate Gray, Terra Cotta

Destin Commons, a premier open-air lifestyle center, is clad with Snap-Clad metal roofing panels in three complementary PAC-CLAD Cool Colors. Petersen's premium 70% PVDF finish is available in more than forty colors on steel and aluminum.



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P E T E R S E N

(Sub)Urban Home

DESIGNED BY TOD WILLIAMS BILLIE TSIEN ARCHITECTS, THE CHEATHAM RESIDENCE WAS THE FIRST HOUSE BUILT AT DALLAS' URBAN RESERVE. THE OWNERS ALSO DEVELOPED THE NEIGHBORHOOD — AN ENCLAVE OF 50 MODERN HOMES THAT SEEK TO FOSTER AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS.

by Michael Friebele, Assoc. AIA

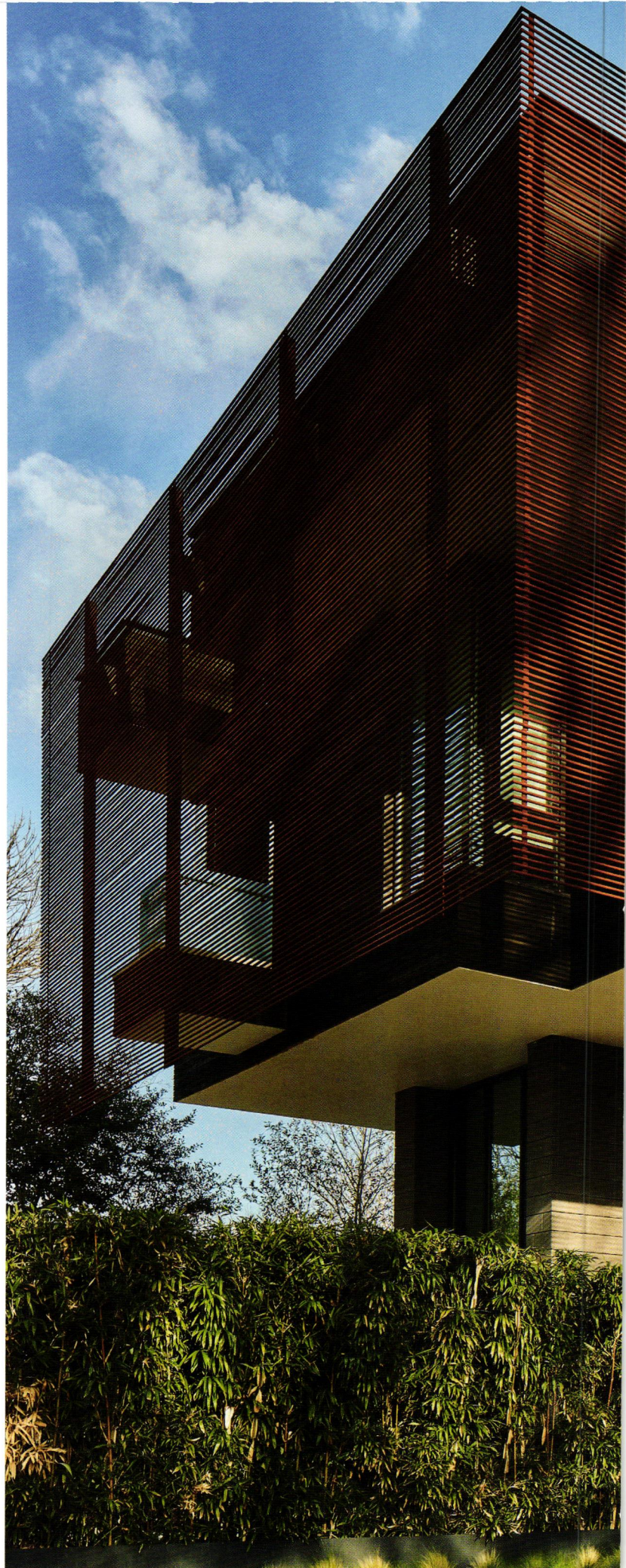
Project Cheatham Residence, Dallas

Client Diane and Chuck Cheatham

Architect Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners

Design Team Tod Williams, FAIA; Billie Tsien, FAIA; James Chavel

Photographer Craig Blackmon, FAIA







From outside, at certain angles, the Cheatham Residence is screened from view by vegetation. Visitors catch just an enticing glimpse of the exterior screen, where it rises above the treetops. Below the leafy boughs, the CMU-clad superstructure appears, a solid base for the floating mass of the house. On the sidewalk, joggers and families skirt the occasional curious architecture fan.

This residence and its relationship to the surroundings epitomizes the development Diane Cheatham envisioned when she established the Urban Reserve — a neighborhood of 50 sustainably designed, contemporary homes located on a sliver of land between the commercial thoroughfares Forest and Royal lanes in North Dallas. The DART train line runs along the west side of the community, separating it from Cottonwood and White Rock Creeks. Beyond is a typical expanse of mid-century suburban sprawl. In such a setting, creating a “reserve” is no small feat.

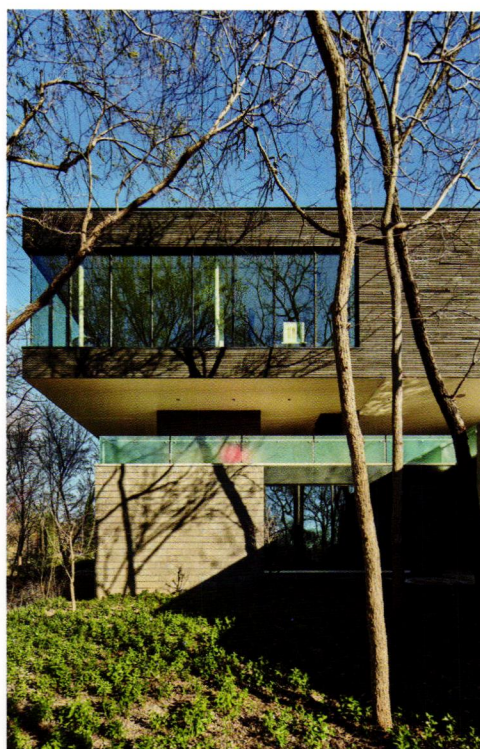
Having completed a number of projects in Oak Lawn and other Dallas neighborhoods, Cheatham turned to creating a community steeped in modern design. “In the Urban Reserve, every house does not have to be an award-winning design,” she says. “Modern housing in the 20th century established many things that benefited our community and way of life. The development sought to connect people based on the things they love.”

Each of the 50 lots in the development has two edges: an “urban” edge and a “natural” edge. In 2006, Cheatham worked with Robert Meckfessel, FAIA, of DSGN and landscape architect Kevin Sloan to create a series of design standards and site requirements to ensure that any home built at Urban Reserve adheres to the values of the community.

The Cheatham Residence, set at One Vanguard Way near the entrance to the neighborhood, expresses the community’s vision on a personal level — Diane designed and built it for herself, and she lives there with her husband, Chuck. When it came time to find an architect that would match their direction and passion for the development, Diane and Chuck were drawn to Tod Williams, FAIA, and Billie Tsien, FAIA. They met at a lecture that Tsien had given in Dallas, and discovered a deep, mutual respect for design. “The Urban Reserve is a very well-rounded development with a strong sense of social responsibility,” Williams says. “Out of the requirements, the development became very meaningful for the city.” Tsien says: “Diane developed the Urban Reserve out of a clear love for the community.”

Since 2008, Chuck and Diane have inhabited the result of this productive collaboration. Their satisfaction and pride are evident. “I like the main part of the home,” comments Chuck, referring to the massive, third-floor living space. “It is a pleasant space to be in, with the quality of light through the trees.” The main portion of the home soars above the second floor — which is mostly outdoor space — and the ground floor, with its guest quarters. It has been compared to a (very luxurious, extra-special) treehouse. “The house had no real views to speak of,” Williams says. “Therefore, we opened the home to views of the canopy of trees.”

The organization and articulation of the house create a clear link between the urban and natural edges of the site, and this relationship is expressed in the building section. The first level, clad in sandblasted concrete block, anchors the architecture visually to the ground. This base contains (among other things) two guest rooms, the garage, and the stair and elevator that lead to the upper floors. Each guest space has its own

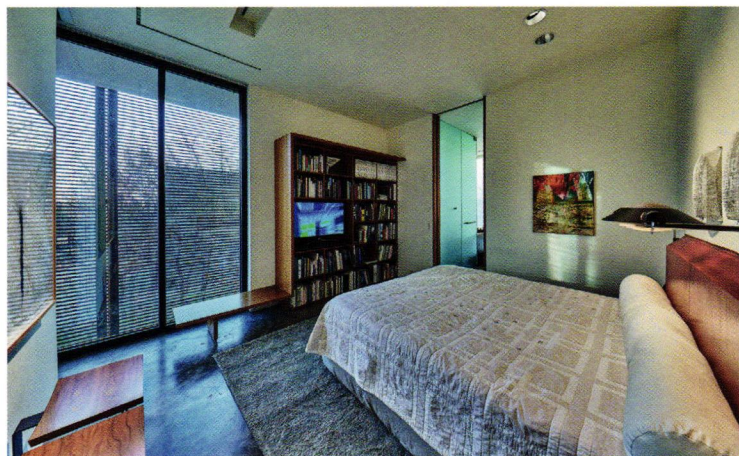


Previous and facing
Materiality and transparency define the public/private massing of the home. A metal screen shades east and south faces.

Clockwise from top left
The house's "urban edge" as seen from Vanguard Way. The house's "natural edge" elevation is composed of concrete at the base and wood above, responding to the transition between ground and tree canopy. The main exterior stair keeps residents aware of the house's relationship with the site. A generous reveal admits daylight to the koi pond in the guest quarters.



Open House



sitting area, bathroom — and access to and from the house without passing through the hosts' quarters. Framed views of the wooded ravine complement the cast-in-place concrete finish. A central koi pond and Japanese garden punctuate the silence and the solitude.

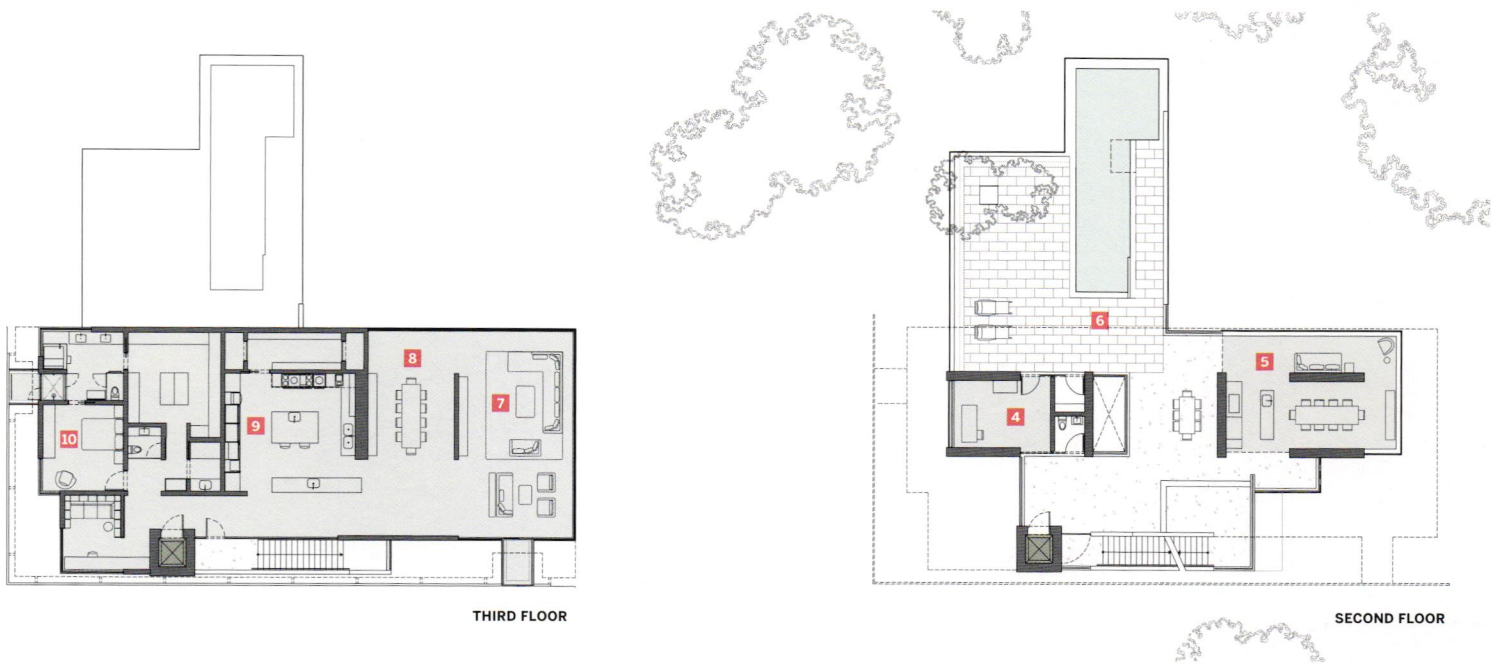
A second-level terrace, shaded all around by an overhanging main floor, focuses on the connection with the outside. This is where “urban” meets “natural” in the most literal way. There is an office space on this level, but its main function is to entertain guests and experience the landscape. A pool, jutting westward, captures the sunset on the horizon with the tree canopy below, and affords a passive cooling method for the dining area, which is tucked underneath the volume of the third level.

An expansive metal screen wraps the south and east sides of the house. This armature links the overall composition visually with the scale of the neighborhood and shades the home and the eastern exterior stair. Williams and Tsien likened the interior program to a private city condo — only in the woods, and with enough space to accommodate the couple's way of life. Diane's love of cooking and her conviviality influenced the placement of the kitchen at the heart of the third level. Living and dining rooms that are open in plan with views of the trees on all sides flow to the north. Diane's office and library, the master bedroom, and supporting private spaces are located to the south, with ample shading from the screen and framed views of the rest of the Urban Reserve development. The entire floor is linked by a circulation spine that runs along the eastern edge of the house, where the couple's art collection is on display.

The Cheatham Residence is the tallest of the Urban Reserve houses, yet it does not shout about its position in the community. Rather, the architecture is understated and in balance with the surroundings. Williams and Tsien's tectonic treatment — an essential aspect of their work — makes this possible. The form is a play of response and definition, seen in moments like the subtle balcony that extends from the Cheathams' private space on the upper floor, or the articulation of the facade within the treehouse volume, which addresses the sun and the need for privacy. As is required of all homes in the Urban Reserve, the materials are sustainable and were sourced regionally. “We were always in dialogue with Diane about what materials could be available locally,” Williams says.

As the build-out of the Urban Reserve approaches completion, each of the 50 homes has a story to tell. At One Vanguard Way, the relationship between architect and owner proved to be the most important aspect of the design. The give-and-take dialogue required constant collaboration and just as much input from the owner as from the architect. Project architect James Chavel recalls Cheatham as someone who “was amazing at making decisions about the selection of things.” He says, “Diane's input was a big part of the design process.” Williams further explains: “It was great that Diane had a passion for the house. We came to expect something very similar out of the project.” Diane is currently embarking on another Urban Reserve development, which will no doubt yield more collaborative architectural projects and another fine piece of Dallas' built environment.

Michael Friebele, Assoc. AIA, is a project designer at Perkins+Will in Dallas.



THIRD FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

- FLOOR PLANS**
- 1 ENTRY
 - 2 KOI FISH POND
 - 3 GUEST QUARTERS
 - 4 OFFICE
 - 5 ENTERTAINING
 - 6 POOL TERRACE
 - 7 LIVING
 - 8 DINING
 - 9 KITCHEN
 - 10 MASTER SUITE

Facing clockwise from top left The kitchen is located at the heart of the home. The Cheathams' personal bed and bathrooms face south with openings that frame views of specific landscape features. The living room faces north, its glass walls peering through the tree canopy.



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We must change the consistency of suburbia to produce a fully integrated omelet city. The operative, divisive logic of 20th-century urbanism must be overcome.

— Lars Lerup and Scott Colman, “One Step Closer to Arcadia?” (p. 48)

The going narrative in architecture and urbanism circles tells that, in the 21st century, American cities are growing in population while becoming denser and more walkable, with better access via multiple modes of transportation. The return to the urban core initiated by Generation X at the end of the 20th century has been consolidated and secured by the millennials, who have sanitized the once-dilapidated terrain vague left in the wake of white flight with coffee shops, bike lanes, and farm-to-table restaurants. What was once old is new again. What was once edgy and dangerous — fuel for the nightmares of suburban parents — is now quaint, cutesy, unaffordable.

The narrative isn't wrong, but it ignores the fact that, all this time, the suburbs have also been growing. The overall trend of urbanization in the United States (according to the 2010 census, 80.7 percent of the population now lives in urban areas) is in large part due to more people moving to the suburbs.

Here in Texas, land of the automobile, this truth is difficult to ignore. Our two largest cities, both in the midst of inner-urban revivals, are cases in point. The suburbs of Dallas are burgeoning with an influx of national and multinational corporate campuses, while the prairie surrounding Houston continues to be paved over with a profusion of subdivisions serviced by the ever-expanding hub-and-spoke freeway system.

In this feature on density and sprawl, we examine Texas (sub)urbanism in the 21st century; imagining how emerging technologies and cultural evolutions might change the aspect of sprawl; suggesting how the mechanisms of mass-market production could be harnessed for more diverse architectural expression; proposing a more ecologically sensitive way of developing cities on the Great Plains; and assessing two of Austin's attempts to create pockets of density.

Density/Sprawl

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One Step Closer to Arcadia?

What will become of suburbia in the age of global warming and driverless vehicles?

*Lars Lerup and
Scott Colman*

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Computational Suburbia

Current means of mass production could be used to make better architecture.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA

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On the Beach

The cities of the Great Plains are short on water. Here is one proposal for developing more responsibly in arid lands.

Craig Kinney, AIA

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Drive-Thru Density

The Domain Northside and 500 West 2nd Street are two versions of contemporary Texas urbanism.

Hannah Ahlblad



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One Step Closer to Arcadia?

CLIMATE CHANGE. ENVIRONMENTAL DEPREDATION. POPULATION EXPLOSION. DWINDLING RESOURCES. THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT: THE EXISTING MODE OF SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT MUST CHANGE. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE SOCIETAL ADJUSTMENTS THEY PROPAGATE ARE OFFERING SOME CLUES AS TO HOW OUR DIVIDED CITIES MIGHT BECOME MORE INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE.

by Lars Lerup and Scott Colman

Drawings by Lars Lerup

Housing Subdivision *Developers erroneously refer to a subdivision as a “community,” but the only commonality in the subdivision is the economic status of its residents. In a process of division, the developer introduces a sacrosanct distance — between tracts, plots, dwellings, ownership, and responsibilities — that ensures the expression — the apparent preservation — of “rugged individualism.” The sketch is adapted from a sales brochure exemplifying a standard subdivision of single-family houses.*

The Subdivided City

While city boosters boost, global warming slips by. Suburbia is rarely seen, despite the glaring light of day. For myopic urbanists, suburbia is terra incognita. But when you come to realize that the vast majority of Americans live there, suburbia can no longer be written off as mere sprawl.

When the suburban project began in earnest in the late 1940s, it was a complex and fortuitous juxtaposition of social change, postwar euphoria, emerging markets, banking, legislative policy, real estate coups, dissatisfaction with urban conditions, segregation, and technology. In Levittown — the poster child for these developments — the suburban project obtained its potent formulation: The American Dream of the detached single-family house. The lateral shift from the cramped tenement at the center to the isolated dwelling on the periphery constituted at once the emancipation and the explosive atomization of the city.

In the subsequent 70 years, our cultural obsession with suburban home ownership has scarcely been questioned. The liberated house remains on its pedestal — a private plot of land, with a front yard in which to park the new car, a back yard for the customary barbecue, and side yards to keep neighbors at a certain distance — while the costly side plots (car dependency, commuting time, traffic problems, infrastructure cost, food deserts) dogging these “communities without propinquity” (Melvin Webber) have been dismissed as externalities.

The suburban lifestyle inhabits a dimension of apparently endless time and space. While the effects of decentralization on the center have been carefully monitored and the necessary (mal)adjustments of the central city made, the suburban conception has remained blithely unchanged. Steadily growing, subdivision by subdivision, emptying the city of tax revenue and population, hiding from societal responsibility behind county lines, the suburban mindset comfortably assumes legal and ethical isolation.

There has been little pressure for change. Most developers have had no motivation to reconsider the suburban blueprint. They concentrate on refining the business model, not reforming the project. Aside from the rare opportunity to design the odd house, alteration, or addition, architects — self-ascribed change agents — have given little thought to this realm. With the architectural and urban models calcified, our suburban landscapes petrified and the advertised American Dream became a cartoon.

There has been little apparent need to worry — until recently. Between window shutters fixed for looks, detached homes still peer into the doldrums with a fenestrated blank stare. But the frozen smiles that our “housey-houses” now cast across the crew-cut, “crabgrass frontier” (Kenneth T. Jackson) are increasingly robotic. Lights now turn on and off by themselves. Televisions make suggestions. Screens proliferate and expand. Alarm systems scan. Thermostats surveil. Garage doors open and close remotely. Car heaters anticipate commutes. Increasingly sophisticated leaf-blowers and ant-killers maintain the Garden City’s quasi-English atmosphere. Perhaps only gadgetry and buffalo grass evolve in suburbia.

But look closely and you will see the social realm drifting, too. In the isolation of suburban life, the tedium once anesthetized by TV and alcohol is now also opiated by YouTube and devastating chemicals. Between increasingly rare jobs, few hunker down in the garage to invent. Should the gizmo work, the mythic innovator moves to Silicon Valley, Austin, or some other suburban exception to float an IPO. While the ‘homemaker,’ today a rare ornament in the shrinking middle class, goes to yoga (no longer the bridge club) once in a while, most have no time to get bored; they’re exhausted, struggling long hours in the vain hope of making a living wage.

While most have been reduced to ‘the help,’ the ‘lucky ones’ are trapped within the corporate hothouse. Pick any large company that began its migration from the center in the 1970s. By placing the back office in the suburb, the company could tap a well-educated workforce of mothers-at-home. Work and services followed the migrating labor markets. While the suburbs slept, in a process much like cell division, the traditional downtown spawned a new generation of sub-centers, abrogating the long-standing hierarchy of city center and suburban periphery. The morphology of the city — still fiscally, legally, and conceptually a fried egg — no longer perpetuated the established binary relationship. Office parks, strip developments, and shopping malls (advertising pseudo-civic engagement) dropped into the urban pan, introducing new, pale yolks into the white consistency. With this radical atomization, the city and the large corporation entered the polycentric stage. Division by division, sub-center by sub-center, the polycentric city spread its richness and its problems over the entire planet.

Today, while the main office consolidates in a world-city, the branch office is under siege. It is no longer a privilege to work at home; minimizing overheads for the employer, it is the ‘preferred’ mode. The subdivision is the new workplace. The continental ‘eight-hour day,’ extending from coast to coast, demands attention from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Our global digital connectiv-

While these virtual commotions knock at suburban lifestyles, the polycentric universe proliferates and, whether oblivious or petrified, suburbia offers its ever-present grin.

ity eliminates downtime entirely. Without dress code or commuting time, the four-dimensional, multi-tasked workspace of email, virtual conferencing, chat apps, telephone calls, texting, and tracking ensures surveillance. Face-to-face is, for better or worse, fading into the past — or is being replaced by the pixelated screen — even as the intensity of the city virtually invades the home. We window-shop in browsers, forage along the infinite shelves of online retail, and socialize in apps. A cadre of ‘concierge’ businesses, from roaming maids to Amazon and DHL delivery, service the privileged domestic interface with well-packaged products and missives from the business ecosphere. Drones have appeared on the horizon. The distinction between work and leisure has disappeared. A precarious part-time workforce has emerged. The world continually buzzes in our pockets, interrupting cohesive thought. Physical isolation, stratification, and segregation intersect with unceasing connectivity, an unrelenting electronic bombardment, and the constant chase for work. An overheated, stormy atmosphere of attention, instant response, constant performance, over-reaction, paranoia, misinformation, and fear dominates our politics and our problems.

While these virtual commotions knock at suburban lifestyles, the polycentric universe proliferates and, whether oblivious or petrified, suburbia offers its ever-present grin. But, more than anything else, one simple “inconvenient truth” undermines our capacity to keep up this facade: Suburbia is an unsustainable energy-sink. As climate change begins to affect our health, our budgets, our insurance costs, our economy, our global political stability, and our prospects, even the most somnolent suburbanite will slowly wake, unable to ignore the facts lapping — or shimmering, as the case may be — at their doorstep.

Suburbia Defrocked

The rising generation has demonstrated a greater affinity for metropolitan life. Fewer are driving. Fewer uproot their nascent urban lifestyles to plant kids in the fields. Nationally, migration to the suburbs has begun to ebb. In growth areas like Texas, this may not yet be the case. In Houston, 60 percent of the population lives in single-family houses. But the construction of detached dwellings is now outpaced by that of multi-family units. Although these developments lack the yard-worlds the suburbanite once expected, they seldom provide adequate compensatory collective space. Normally, the amenities of the densifying inner ring provide compensation. But in suburbs such as Katy, far-flung from the historic center of Houston, extraordinary compactions of stick-built density rise, scarcely accompanied by public facilities. The four-story, football-fields-long housing developments emerging out of the prairie attract those desperate for affordability. The bucolic field of small houses and private landscapes is becoming an open, windswept plain of gigantic domicile boxes.

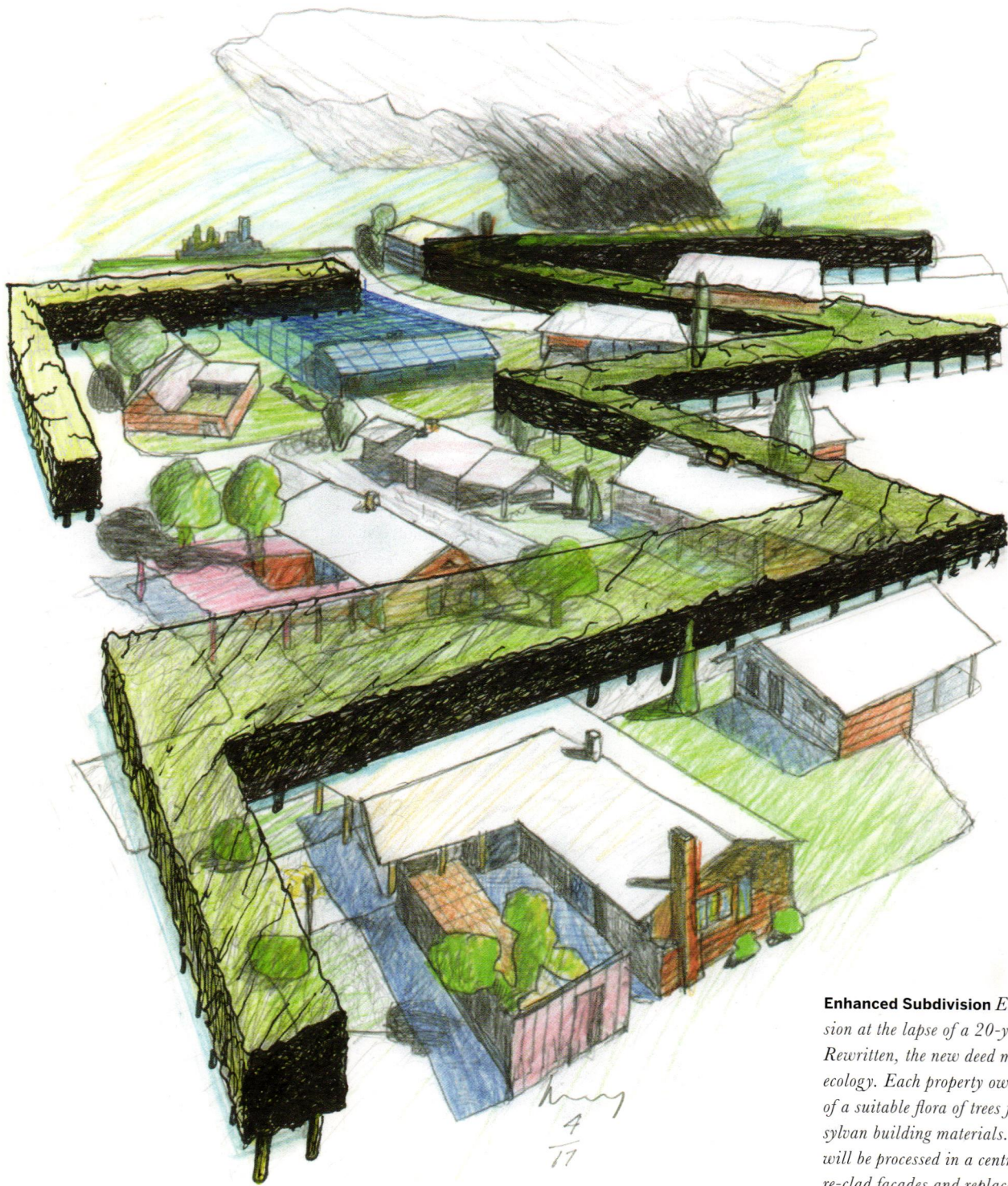
Many now proffer their services by constantly circulating from dwelling to dwelling or moving from location to location, attending to the maintenance of one technical device or another. Some still travel 20, 30, 40 miles to a node in the polycentric sprawl. Others, ‘fortunate’ to labor from home, are ensconced in a modicum of outdoor space and an abundance of air-conditioning. In any event, the once idyllic and convenient suburb is increasingly and rapidly becoming a chore and an inconvenience. Peaking above the sprawling rooftops of historic growth and casting long shadows from newer developments is a dawning realization: The seemingly benign and long-ignored externalities of suburbanization, in all its forms — from the emerging nouveau-riche suburbs of the oil patch to the creeping expanses of our established cities — are the culprits in the unfolding drama of our environment.

Although it may not be immediately obvious amid the false hopes and convenient haze of sprawl, things have changed. It is high time we took a closer look at the suburbs. In order to engage the reality of our declining suburban lifestyle, we must see the suburbs as a critical component of the city equation. We should do so, not just because it is blatantly unpopular to argue that we must all live in “the culture of congestion” (Rem Koolhaas) but, more profoundly, because the potential for an enhanced suburbia will contribute to the resilience of society and the planet.

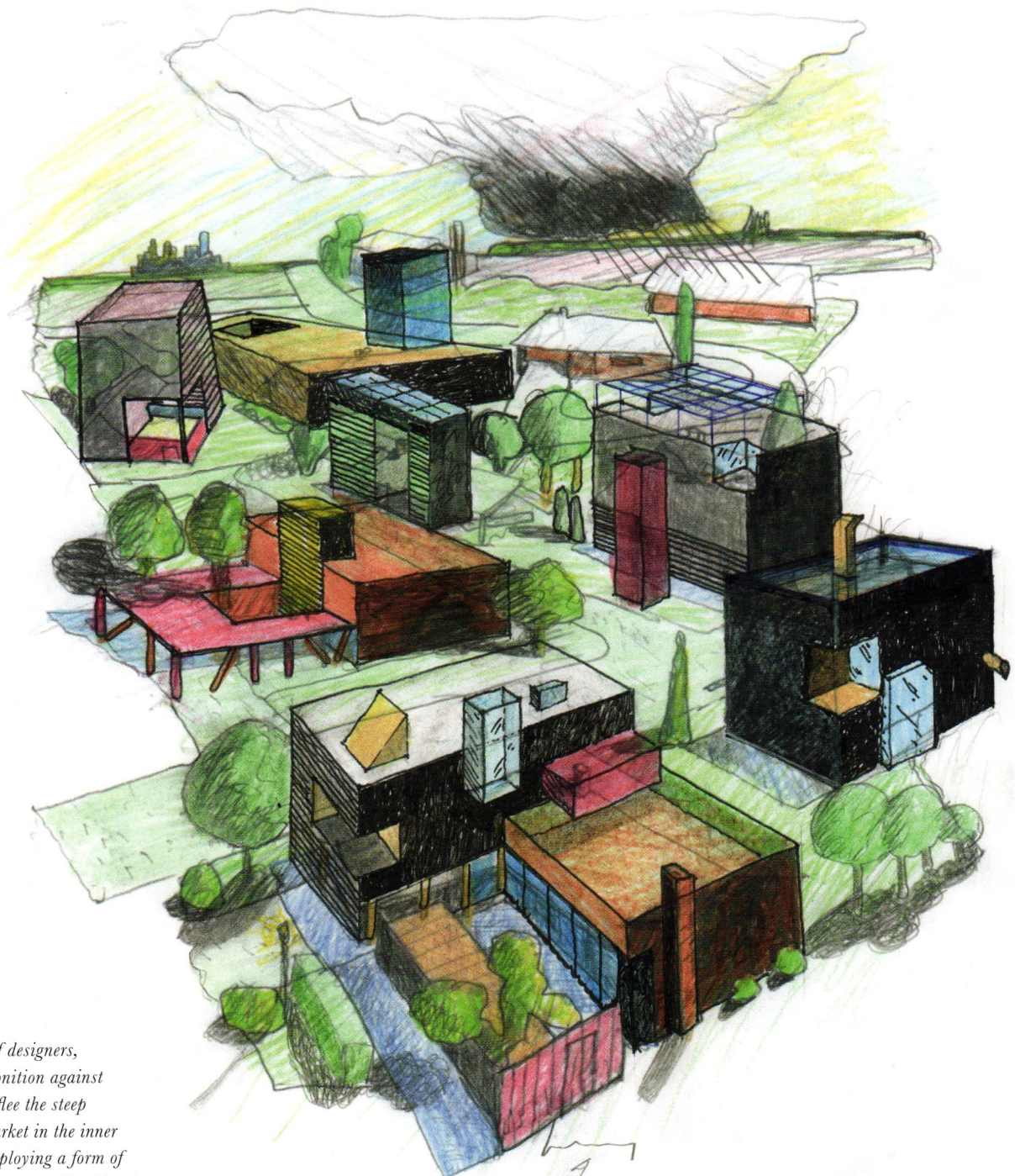
A reformist attitude may not be necessary. Given the immediacy and the implications of the issues we face, suburbia will be forced to change.

Beyond Subdivision

If you acknowledge that the resources we rely on — from land to energy — are finite, then you realize that the American Dream is in for hard times. The commonplace supposition of ‘sustainability’ is that suburbia can be upgraded, tweaked, and retrofitted toward energy efficiency, in pace with changing energy costs and our developing expectation for creature comforts. We should be suspicious of the ease with which ‘sustainability’ has been adopted as the fix. Even if we develop the will, it is highly unlikely that suburbia can be re-engineered to meet our environmental demands in this way. The scale of cuts in energy expenditure required to stabilize our planetary atmosphere cannot be attained by individual or piecemeal adjustments. They necessitate a fundamental re-conception of the distributed city itself.



Enhanced Subdivision Eco-buffs purchase a subdivision at the lapse of a 20-year “deed restriction.” Rewritten, the new deed mandates a progressive ecology. Each property owner invests in the planting of a suitable flora of trees for the purpose of producing sylvan building materials. The harvested materials will be processed in a central lumberyard and used to re-clad facades and replace failing building elements with sustainable alternatives. With time, the hard-scapes of suburban streets, cul-de-sacs, and driveways are replaced by permeable paving that preserves access for lightweight driverless vehicles while facilitating natural ground cover. There is a concerted effort to rejuvenate the topsoil by eliminating pesticides and planting naturally pest-resistant grasses. Leaf blowers and lawn maintenance equipment become quizzical artifacts of yesteryear.



Subdivision Rethought A group of designers, subscribing to Donald Judd's admonition against building on virgin land, seeking to flee the steep prices of the speculative housing market in the inner city, form a loose collective and, employing a form of under-the-radar land banking, purchase a dilapidated subdivision next to a freeway intersection. The old subdivision becomes unrecognizable. Existing houses are demolished and recycled, and a new housing type is developed that triples the former density. With natural HVAC systems and a radical change in lifestyle, energy use plummets. Promoting collective innovation, the subdivision develops new forms of neighborhood life and creative collaboration — what Michael E. Porter calls a “cluster,” a form of “subdivision corporation” — developing new products in a communal “garage” for

the emerging digital economy. With time, the collective becomes a political concord unified around a “design philosophy” straddling the customary division between Left and Right. This mini-democracy gains considerable political power in the county and becomes a model for a suburban politics that radically transforms the divisions of the old polycentric city into an integrated field of collaborative relationships.

While the basic consistency of our suburban fabric has remained the same, we must recognize that the mid-20th-century conception of the city (a frying egg, with a coherent center and a clear periphery) was long ago subsumed by a polycentric field (a pan of frying eggs), extending as far as topographic limits would allow. As we turn up the heat on the city in the 21st century — as population increases, unbuilt land becomes scarce, and the atmosphere intensifies — the existing conception of the suburbs will need to be upended. We must change the consistency of suburbia to produce a fully integrated omelet city. The operative, divisive logic of 20th-century urbanism must be overcome.

In the single-family house, the consumptive ills of detachment have long been recognized. But the subdivision has been the fundamental agent of divisive growth in the dispersed city. House, landscape, and infrastructure have always been inextricably bound. Agglomerated, this assemblage now forms the vast majority of inhabited space. Our Rice University colleague Albert Pope calls the “ladders” of vertebrate streets ending in cul-de-sacs the “deep structure” of the suburban conception. Oriented to a central spine, the ladder turns its back on the world. Placed beside each other, two ladders or ladder sets (subdivisions) always leave an unattended gap, a frazzled no-man’s land, between them. Unconsciously, the car skips across these voids, displacing geography with energy and speed.

We can no more eliminate this (at present, wasteful) interstitial territory than we can wholly abandon the suburban infrastructure everywhere tattooed onto the planet. But, with no solution to sprawl, we can accept its existence and begin anew. We should no longer conceive the subdivision as an island in isolation.

Frank Lloyd Wright forged a remedy for suburbia before the fact. In 1932, Broadacre City already displayed an answer. Although he never realized his plans, Wright untiringly advocated his dream of an Arcadian city. In Broadacre, Wright incorporated the essential dependencies of human habitation, such as agriculture (glaringly absent in suburbia) and the ‘city’ (which appears in Wright’s proposals as recreation facilities, apartment buildings, laboratories, factories, and discrete civic institutions), that, strategically combined with shaped open space, annihilate the unattended displacements of sprawl. No doubt met by the bemused smirks of his audience, Wright boldly injected hybrid cars and drone-like flying vehicles into his sweeping panoramas. Little did we know that, in suburbia, Wright pursued not nostalgia for the past but a dream of what now seems like an attainable future.

Ever since the development of the spinning jenny, work has been transferring from hand to machine. Today, this transfer occurs with dizzying speed. The messenger of change is about to slip through the gates of the subdivision — not by means of the private automobile that made the subdivision possible, but in a strange new vehicle with no steering wheel and no controls. If the car begat suburbia, this upgrade may lead to its resurrection: The autonomous car is at the door. The pivotal technology of the coming ‘Mobility Internet,’ this self-driving robot will, like the smartphone, transform our sense of distance and time.

Although the exact details and ramifications are guesswork, it is probable that, with a subscription and the touch of an app, hands-free transportation will arrive at the doorstep with the convenience of a horizontal elevator. Operating 24/7 with coordinated guidance, these vehicles will require a fraction of our current parking and road space, drastically

reducing, if not entirely eliminating, future garage and road construction, upending land values, and requiring us to rethink our relationship to infrastructure. Yet another of suburbia’s foundational structures is shaken: The home garage and the parking tarmac out front become redundant. Acres of strip mall asphalt will await repurposing. With the home office in place, the commute is already in question. For those who still go to the office (now a reverse commute), work will begin in the fully loaded autonomous car. Distracted by our personal devices, our movement becomes seamless, an unnoticed jump cut. Cars — lighter, smaller, nimbler, and safer — penetrate buildings. As an augmented pedestrian, movement becomes continuous and mobility intensifies. Public transportation may remain crucial, even more necessary, on the more intense routes, and the private vehicle may still dominate the rural landscape. In both cases, however, sites of modal transfer will warp the urban fabric in new and unexpected ways. The urban road network — the platform of a few monopolistic transportation providers — once it is no longer a broadly shared conduit, will have its public maintenance called into question. With the ‘network neutrality’ of the street under threat, the very idea of public space will require defending or re-conceiving. The autonomous vehicle is going to turn the world inside out and upside down.

Since we climbed up on horses, humans have been in the driver’s seat. But it’s not only the soccer mom that is about to lose her job. To give just one example: Otto, the trucking and logistics company, joined by the beer company Budweiser, is testing self-driving trucks. Robot-trucks don’t get tired; their performance is consistent; and they don’t have to stop to take a break. For the moment, the trucker is relegated to backseat driving, no doubt thirstily eyeing the cargo. Soon, the teamster will wait, immobile, hopping into the cab only at the loading and delivery points, if he or she retains a job at all. But it is not just drivers that are being put out to pasture by automation; this has already been the fate of factory workers, miners, agro- and energy-workers. Even the white-collar landscape — from bank tellers to doctors — is being decimated. Work is rapidly becoming a scarce commodity, a privilege for those who can find it.

So what will happen to our vast galaxy of bedroom communities? Will the prairie return or a New Broadacre City appear? Will the social and civic programs and facilities arrive to satiate a disaffected and precarious multitude? Will an intelligent density be grafted into our indelible suburban infrastructure? Will we cultivate the redeemable topsoil between subdivisions? Might robots tend to fields of solar collectors? As old combine harvesters rust in the fields, will mini-autonomous tractors cultivate our suburban green strips? Is it possible that our suburban terra incognita will turn colors?

The coming technologies will not determine our future. How we choose to deploy them will. We must return to the collective project, beyond the subdivisions of identity politics. To open the terra incognita beyond technological determinism is to consider the eternal question, “How do we live together?” We cannot abandon what we’ve wrought, but we can accept it, see it clearly, and begin anew. Whether any of the states envisioned in the accompanying images is “one step closer to Arcadia” is anybody’s guess. Paradise is always a moving target.

Lars Lerup is a professor at the Rice School of Architecture, where he was dean from 1993 to 2009. Scott Colman is an assistant professor at Rice.

Computational Suburbia

THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FORCES THAT CONTINUE TO SHAPE THE AMERICAN SUBURB ARE LARGER THAN ARCHITECTURE. BUT THE PROFESSION COULD PLAY MORE OF A ROLE IN INFLUENCING THE AESTHETIC IMPACTS OF SPRAWL. MASS MARKET ALTERNATIVES, BY JOHN SZOT STUDIO, IS ONE SUCH PROPOSAL. IT APPLIES ALGORITHMIC ARCHITECTURAL ASSEMBLIES TO TRACT HOUSING WITH THE GOAL OF INCREASING SUBURBAN DIVERSITY.

by Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA

Images by John Szot Studio



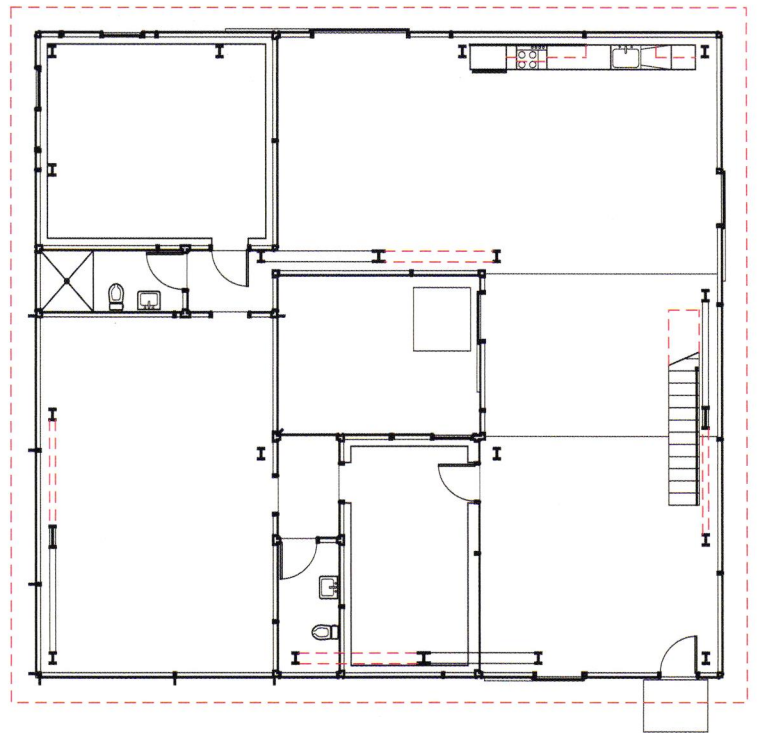




At times, the cry of “Texas Forever!” is heard across the state. The phrase, lifted from “Friday Night Lights,” also describes the endless fabric of Texan cities. After World War II, our major urban areas ballooned, with suburbs marching out along the fresh highways, resulting in a supposedly homogeneous space with all sorts of associations. This is sprawl, the doughy ring around the downtown void that came to define late-mid-century American urbanism. But now it is 2017, and the sprawl goes on. How can architects engage with this economic model of real estate development in progressive ways?

One commendable effort is Mass Market Alternatives (MMA), a proposal by Brooklyn-based John Szot Studio (JSS) that connects algorithmic architectural assemblies to the realities of tract home construction. It is an exercise that aims to bring “diversity to the suburbs through design.” In short, it delivers an alternative vision of sprawl aesthetics.

Szot, pronounced “zot,” grew up outside the loop in Houston. For him, “living in a suburban subdivision in Texas meant having access to country and city environments,” though his experience was more rural than urban. He earned his bachelor’s degree in architecture at The University of Texas at Austin in 1998, and since then has periodically returned to lead studios at the school. He also currently teaches at the Pratt Institute. Teaching a graduate studio at UT Austin in 2001 stimulated Szot’s interest in suburban housing. Over the following decade, he kept photos in his studio that documented residential construction in the outlying areas of Houston and Dallas, looking for “signs of life.” “We ruminated on the serialist quality of the homes’ side and rear elevations,” Szot says. “Despite the lack of care in composing them (or perhaps as a result), they showed such daring and wit that they ultimately inspired us to take action. That’s when we made the connection between the economics of suburban home construction and the true aesthetic nature of designing for the suburbs: Variety is more important than coherence.” The importance of perceptual uniqueness within a larger uniformity suggested that a computational approach might be a way to investigate these structures.

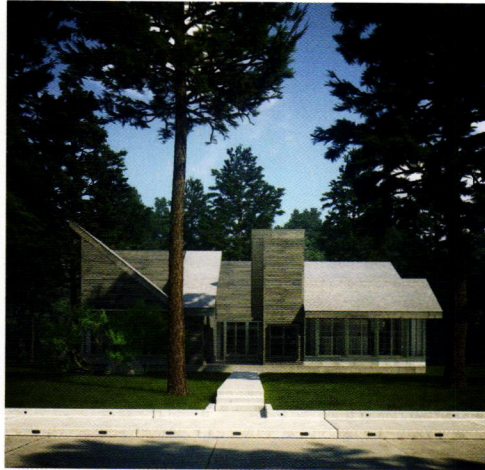
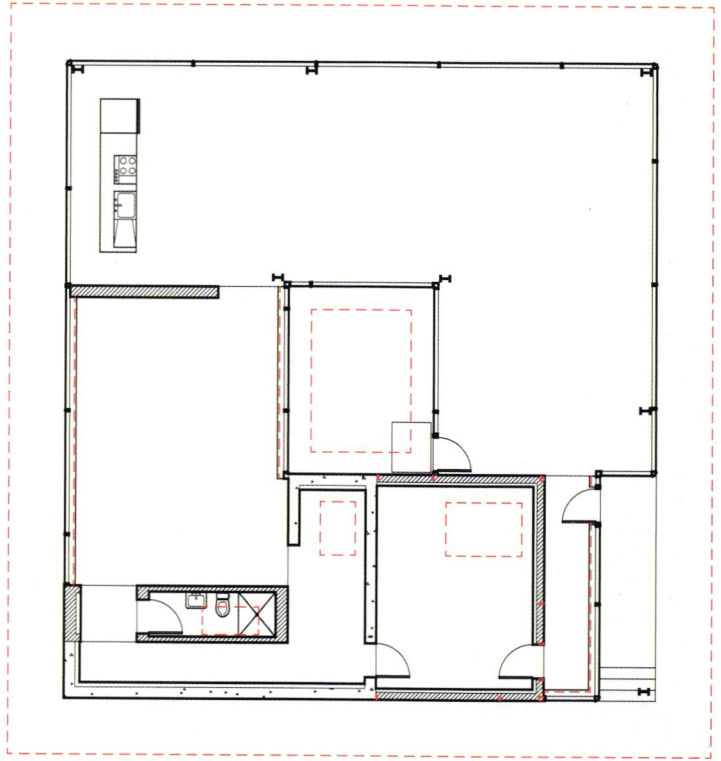


The MMA residences are conceptually sited in Houston, somewhere between the 610 and 99 beltways. Each subdivided lot in the imagined development is one acre in size (large, for many of today’s subdivisions) so that “windows might be more generous and inhabitants would be less inclined to keep them covered around the clock.” Each home is oriented inward around a courtyard, as “a foil to the infamous formality of the suburban lawn, and to reduce the need for a backyard perimeter fence.” This means that, instead of the front/back dichotomy of typical tract homes — which leads to an elaborate street facade that takes priority over the side and rear elevations — there is only the split between “inside” and “outside.” Shared garages located along property lines reduce the number of cars parked on the street. The rest of the land behind the residences is preserved by means of generous easements, so as to leave undeveloped

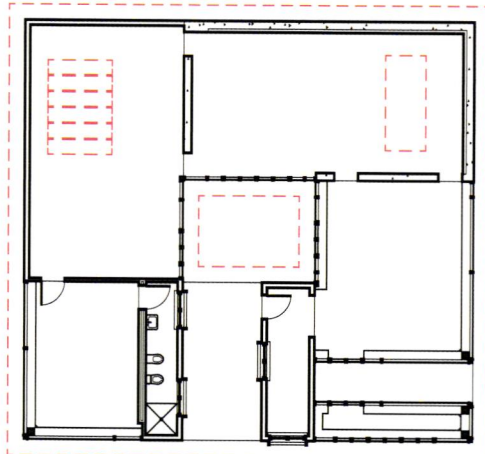
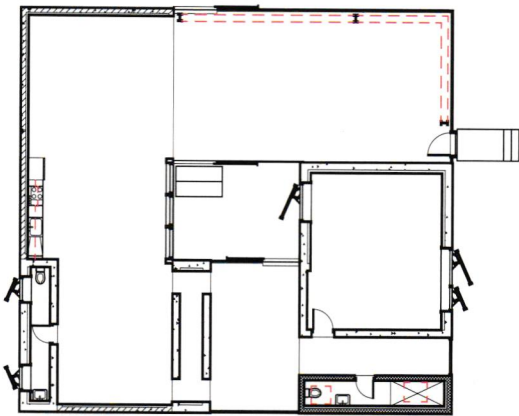
The importance of perceptual uniqueness within a larger uniformity suggested that a computational approach might be a way to investigate these structures.

areas accessible for exploration by neighborhood children. Though MMA emerges from suburban economics, these three initial conditions — one-acre lot with easement, courtyard typology, and shared garage — set the stage for a development that looks radically different from what the market currently provides.

To begin, JSS started with the “s” word: style. They isolated four housing “lines” to develop: precast, patio, loft, and ranch. They aimed to “produce sets of homes that were a clear aesthetic break from the vernacular pastiches that dominate the market. Each style was distilled into a collection of wall sections that became the construction vocabulary for the homes belonging to that line.” JSS has made films about archi-



Previous spread
HOUSE A031, from the patio series. The sidewalk units integrate services and lighting into their design.
Facing *Rendering and plan of HOUSE A061, from the loft series.*
Above *Rendering and plan of HOUSE A032, from the patio series.*
Far left *Rendering and plan of HOUSE A024, from the precast series.*
Left *Rendering and plan of HOUSE A115, from the ranch series.*



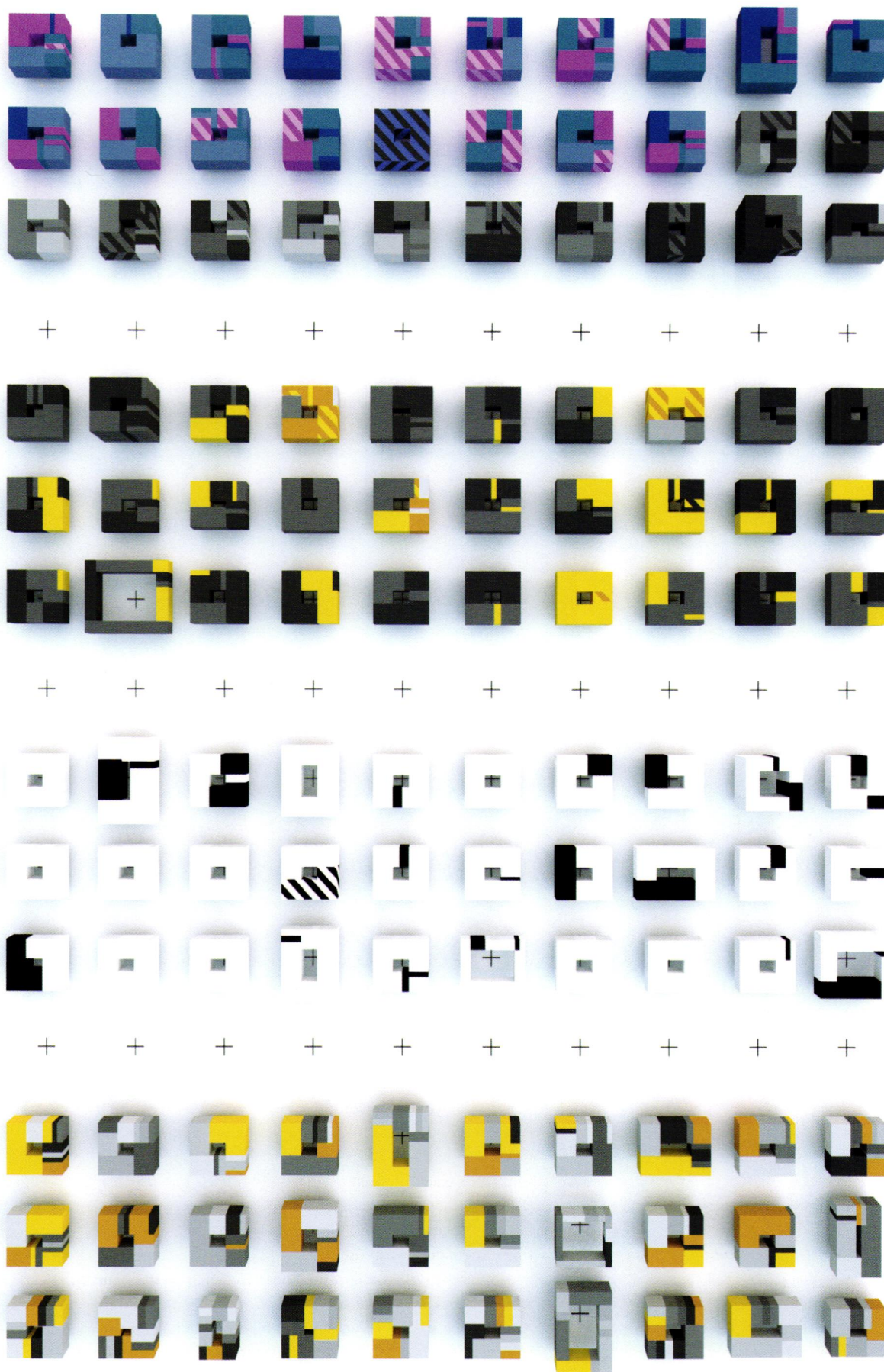


ecture, and the “Shibuya algorithm,” an operation borrowed from its recent work “Architecture and the Unspeakable,” provided the generative mechanism to produce the ring-shaped patterns. Each colored division represents elevational expression, and 30 patterns were created for each line (120 unique houses in total). Then, each pattern was translated into a floor plan by matching the different bands with the corresponding wall section for that pattern. “Through careful tuning of the math driving the proportions of the patterns’ components, the algorithm’s output translates quickly to a set of occupiable spaces,” Szot says. “With the algorithm dictating the home’s general arrangement, a basic floor plan can be produced in under an hour.”

Renderings of buildings isolated on lawns beneath pine canopies showcase the genetic language of each stylistic line. Unlike the frontal expressions of many McMansions, the cut-up parts don’t stand out as superfluous or poorly detailed in their transitions, as the problem of joining different building components was resolved early in the process. Seen together, the pieces of architecture relate to each other with pleasing coherence, but each individual home is unique in plan, resulting in a different living

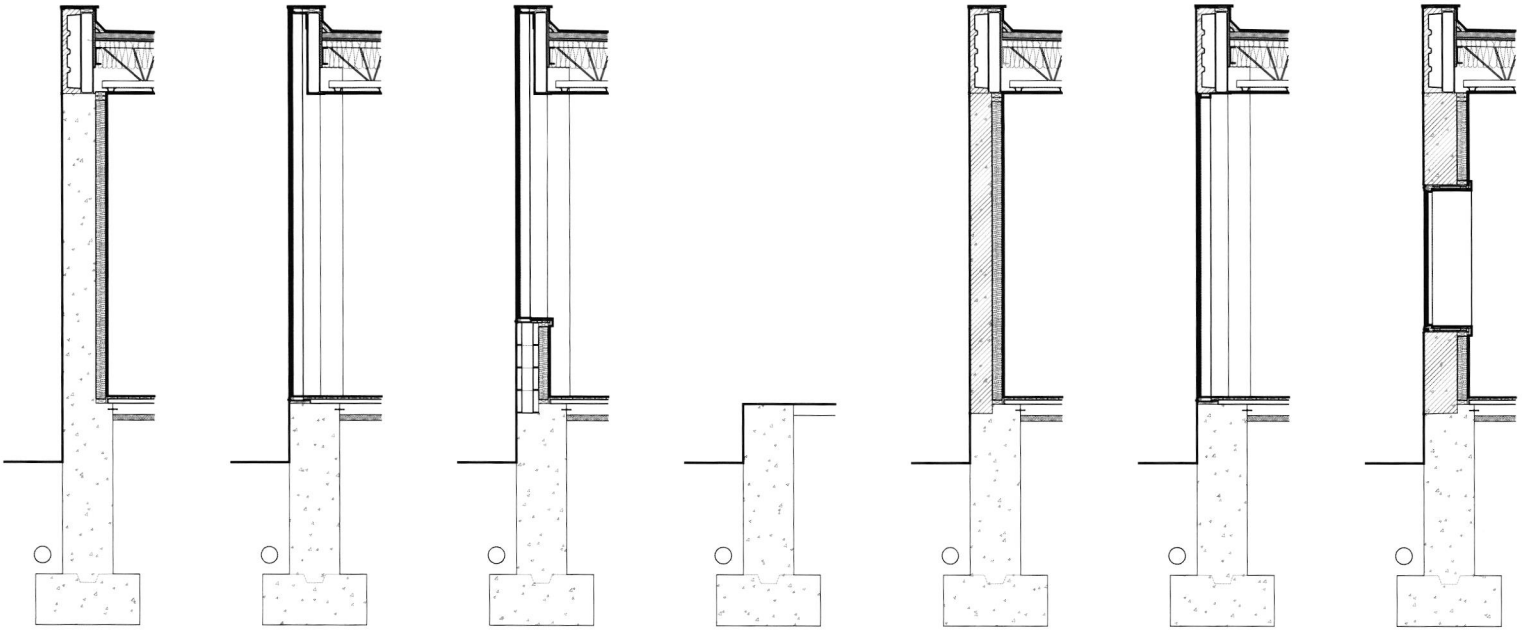
experience for each resident. The overall read — maybe seen from a car that would cruise the cul-de-sacs, windows down — is one of individuality. But a higher level of consistency emerges, a result of the formal palette at work. “Bringing the kind of architectural integrity and diversity one finds in Houston’s central districts to its suburbs without disrupting its underlying economics seems like it would hold a lot of value for Houston,” Szot says. He also believes that “there is an underserved market of potential buyers who would seriously consider suburban life if they could find a home that reflects their values.” MMA, then, is a provocation that explores how to invite more citizens to the suburbs to find a place that suits their tastes without aesthetic judgment. The proposal is “intended to provide a foothold for those willing to start a new conversation about what kind of community the suburbs could be if they supported some deviation from the majority mindset.”

Sprawl began with certain values that shaped its unfurling. While some suburban enclaves were progressive in nature, others were exclusionary (or outright racist). But values can change over time, adjusting to the complexities of the American Dream in the 21st century. Today’s suburbia, for



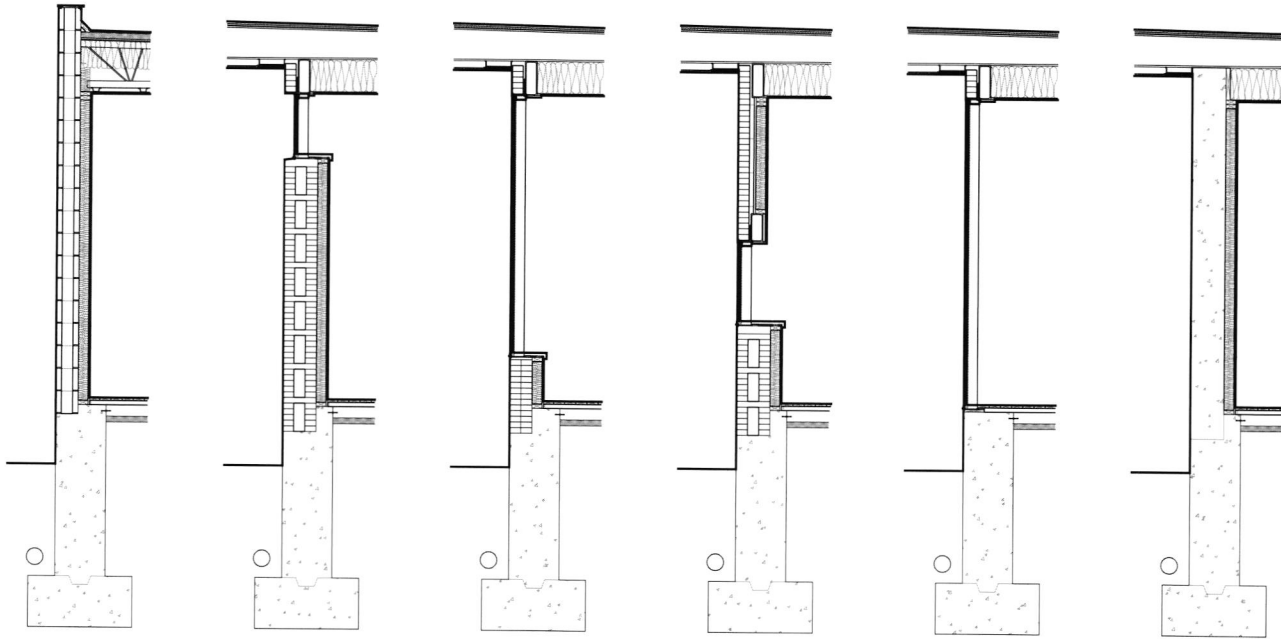
Facing A conceptual site plan for Szot's development updates a typical cul-de-sac arrangement with new features: the courtyard house typology, shared garages, and generous backyard easements to preserve open space.

Left The exercise generated 30 designs for each stylistic line of housing, 120 in total. From top to bottom, the lines are: ranch, loft, patio, and precast. Each colored slice represents a unique wall section. In these diagrams the basic vocabulary of each line can already be discerned.



Seen together, the pieces of architecture relate to each other with pleasing coherence, but each individual home is unique in plan, resulting in a different living experience for each resident.

In this project, wall sections were the primary medium of stylistic elaboration. These sections were “swept” along the perimeter of the generated plans (seen in the colored diagrams on the previous page) to create facades.



instance, can be poverty-stricken or can offer footholds into the middle class for growing segments of the population, all while still maintaining its historic image as home to the idealized nuclear family — it accepts many narratives. “For better or worse,” Szot says, “suburbia has provided us with an extraordinary example of how industrialization and economics shape cultural values through architecture and urban planning.” He explains: “This is because large collections of similar homes ultimately become political blocs, making a suburban subdivision a powerful means for testing the relationship between aesthetics and politics at a civic scale. Because protecting one’s return on investment means catering to the largest demographic, suburban communities will become increasingly homogeneous through these practices without willfully intervening on behalf of those with alternative tastes and values.” The effort is progressive but not revolutionary; for Szot, the key question is “How can the suburbs be made more diverse without demanding a sea change in the economic system that supports them?”

Sprawl also arrives with environmental impacts that should not be understated or ignored. For Szot, “it seems like the solution lies in sensitive land management practices so that the footprints of our suburban communities don’t strangle natural ecosystems.” He adds that it also lies in “implementing a clean energy infrastructure that can support the added burden of sustaining commerce and social bonds over greater

distances without adverse environmental effects.” Hence, in Szot’s proposal, large swaths of land are preserved for ecosystemic and recreational purposes (the clean energy issue is an infrastructure problem bigger than the scope of one architectural proposition). “Unfortunately,” he says, “architects are not in a position to reverse the political and economic mechanisms of real estate development, but they do have an obligation to voice their objections about how land use practices and construction techniques threaten our environment.” Still, he believes architects can address these issues “without dismantling one of the few places where America’s faith in capitalist economics became a cultural precedent in which architecture plays a critical role.” In this sense, MMA plays by the rules, but, through design, bends them to deliver a new vision of how the suburbs could look — with attractive results.

This spring, MMA was shown as an installation at the Pinkcomma Gallery in Boston, and future exhibitions are being planned. So far, there have been no bites to develop land in this manner, but there’s still time, as Houston’s housing boom continues apace. Szot said the proposal is a work in progress, and that “future improvements are sure to bring changes.” The same optimistic outlook could be applied to the suburbs themselves, and with MMA, it seems possible.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA, is an architectural designer currently based in Austin.

On the Beach

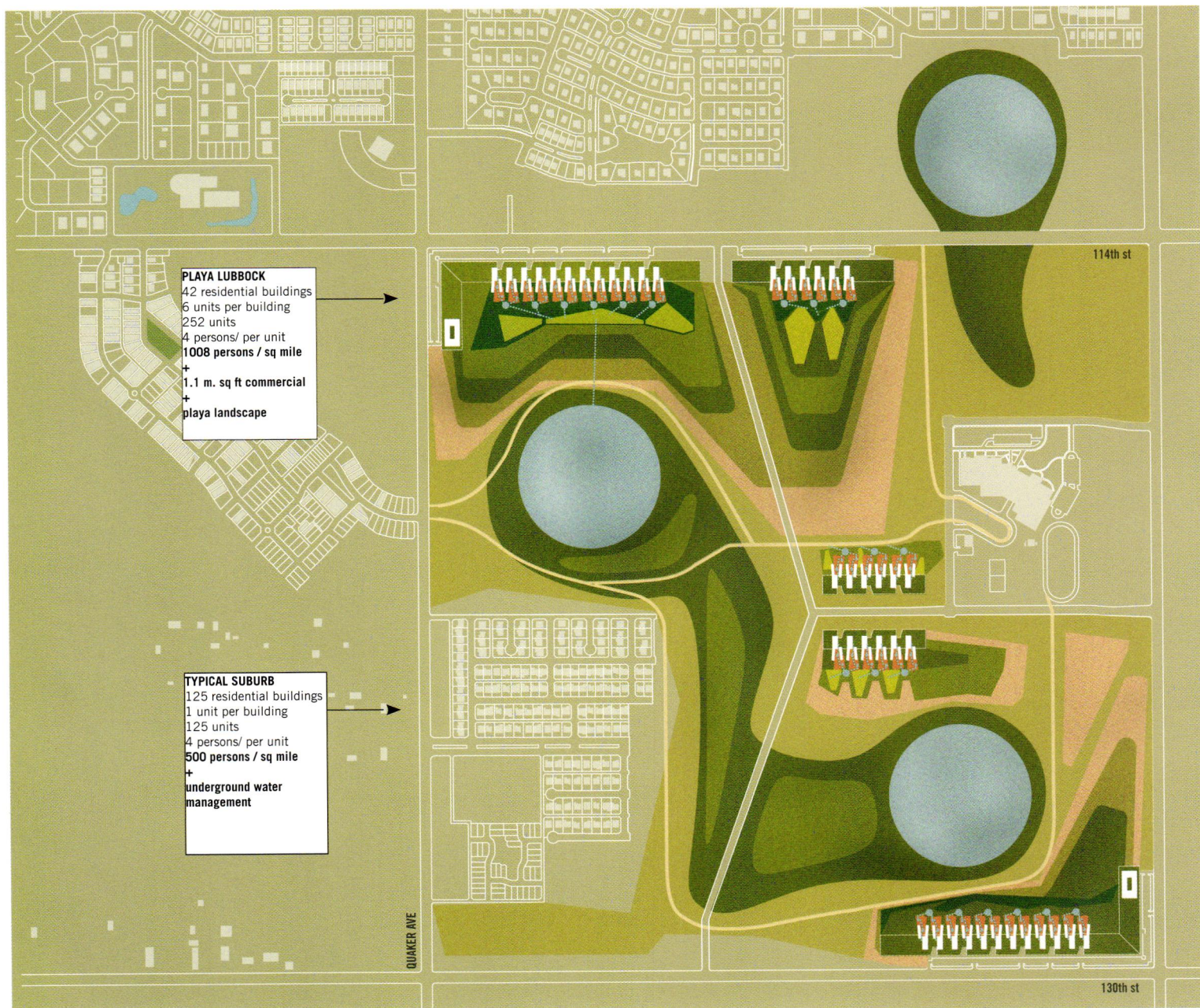
"PLAYA LUBBOCK," A PROPOSAL BY WILLIAM TRUITT, AIA, AND MARSHA BOWDEN, AIA, SUGGESTS A MORE ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE MEANS OF DEVELOPING THE WATER-STARVED CITIES OF THE GREAT PLAINS, WHILE HELPING TO RECHARGE THE DEPLETED OGALLALA AQUIFER.

by Craig Kinney, AIA

Images by William Truitt, AIA, and Marsha Bowden, AIA







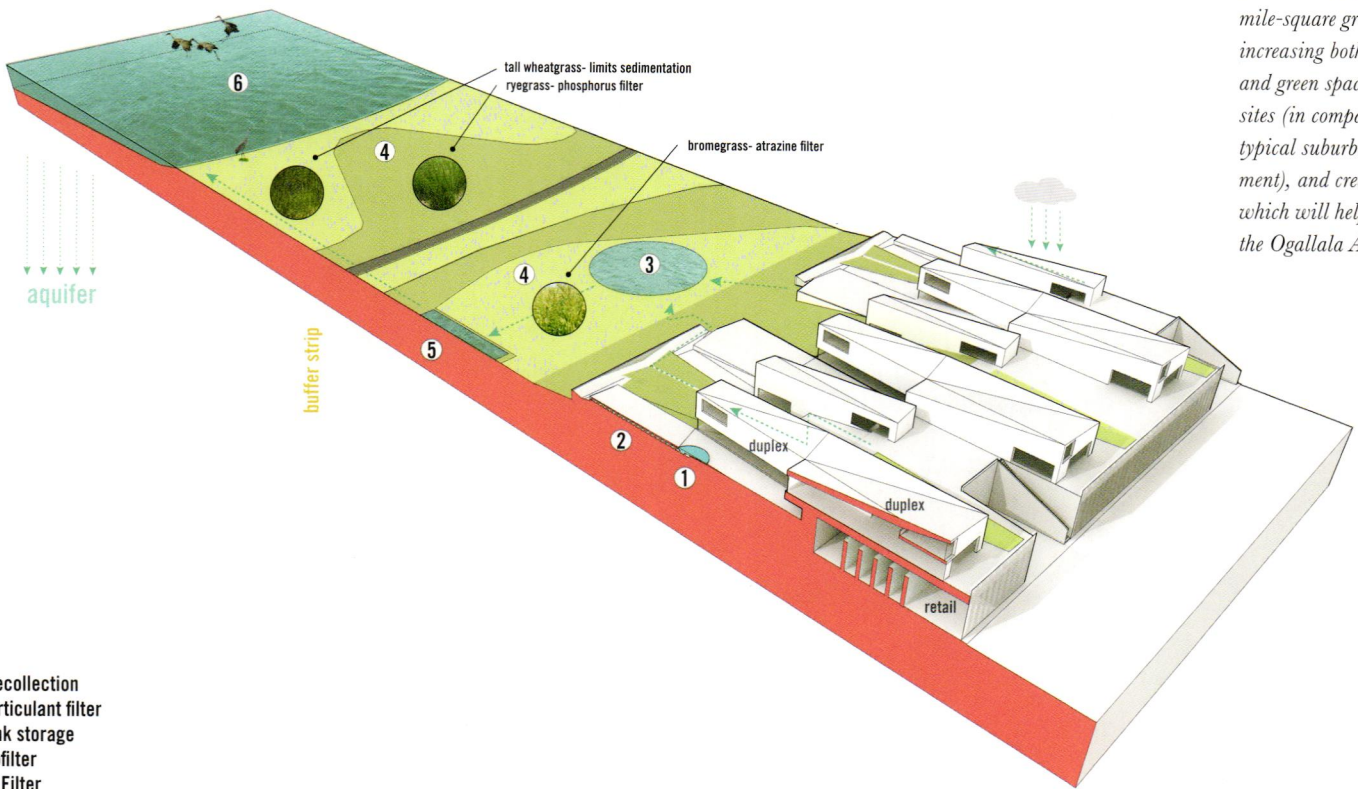
West Texas is loosely defined as the part of the state that lies west of the 100th meridian, the geographical line that forms the eastern edge of the Panhandle. West Texas encompasses arid and semiarid lands with classic names such as the Trans-Pecos, Llano Estacado, Rolling Plains, and the Edwards Plateau. The major metropolitan areas include El Paso, Lubbock, Abilene, Midland/Odessa, and San Angelo. These cities have a common denominator: Water is precious.

In light of this fact, William Truitt, AIA, and Marsha Bowden, AIA, have created an elegant and specific direction for new growth in Lubbock, showing a way forward through thoughtful design. Truitt, an associate professor at the University of Houston and design director at Morris Architects, along with Bowden, a former student (now a colleague at Morris) has been studying how the rapid urbanization of cities throughout the world might overwhelm their respective environments. For the past 10 years, they have studied numerous locales, including Mumbai

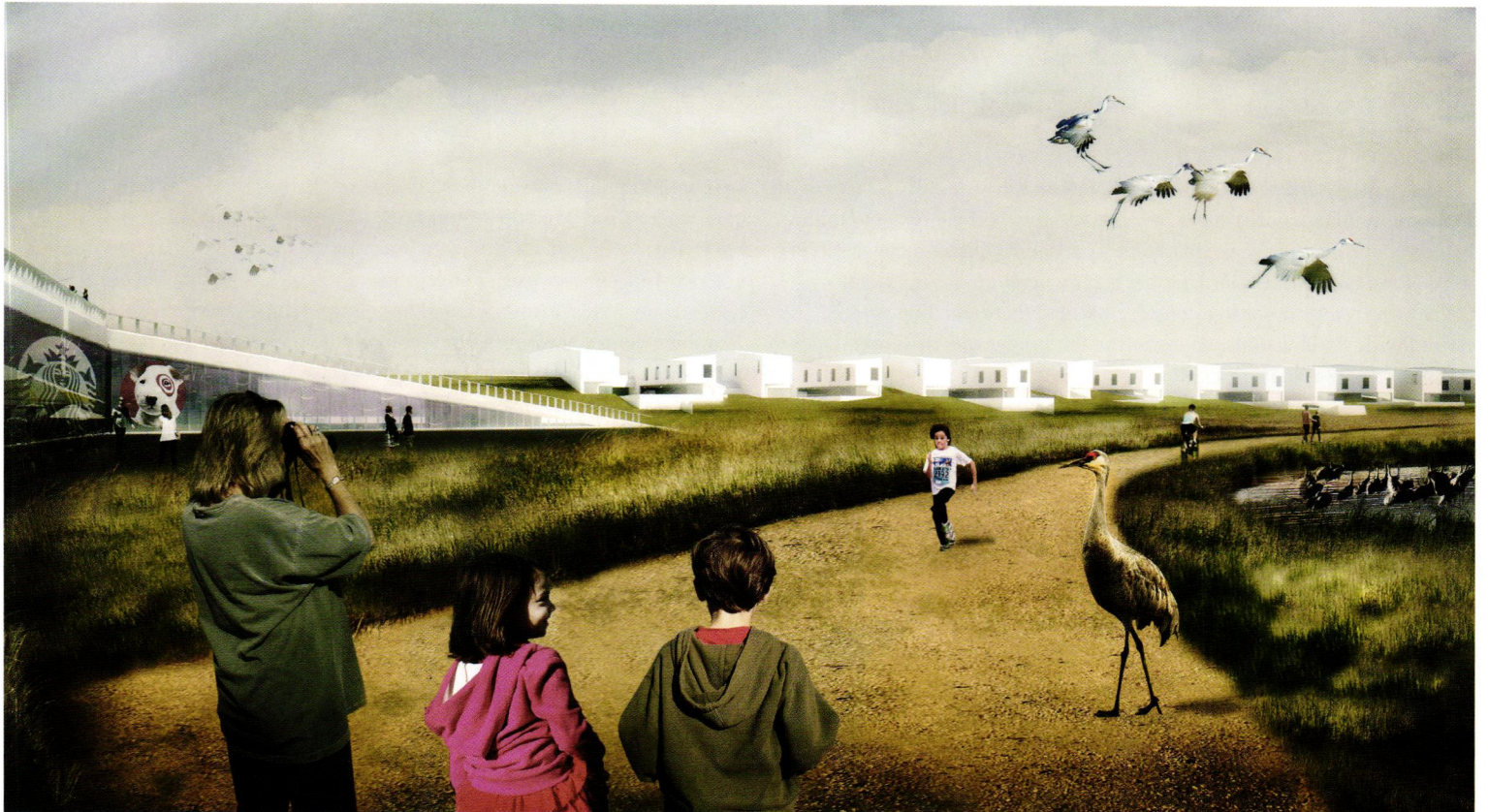
in India, Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, and Houston. Their work focuses on how modern technological interventions in urban areas are rapidly put into place in order to overcome problems associated with urbanization, and how these interventions are playing out in the long term. Most recently, they entered a competition that was organized by the Los Angeles-based Arid Lands Institute. The competition sought newer, better, more sustainable ways of dealing with the increasing desertification of cities west of the 100th meridian. Where most entries in the competition addressed cities far west of the line (in California, Nevada, and Arizona), Truitt and Bowden were intrigued with the city nearest the line: Lubbock.

“Playa Lubbock,” their entry, was accepted for exhibition and is a compelling look at a troubling phenomenon. Using layered graphics and a genuine understanding of the history of urban sprawl, they argue that, when Lubbock was settled, around 1890, 19th-century attitudes reflecting

“Playa Lubbock” works within the existing one-mile-square grid of roads, increasing both density and green space on these sites (in comparison to typical suburban development), and creating playas which will help recharge the Ogallala Aquifer.

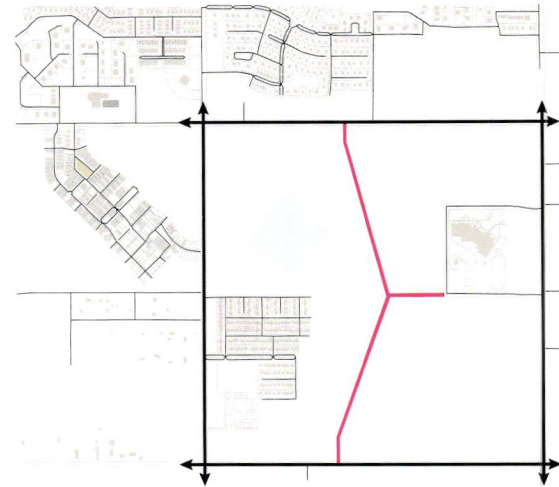


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- ③ Tank storage
- ④ Biofilter
- ⑤ UV Filter
- ⑥ Tank Storage

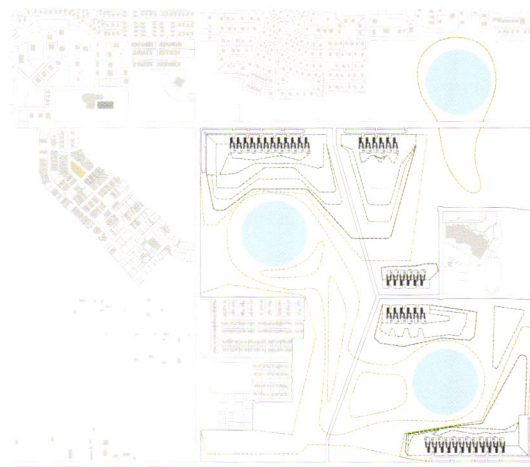




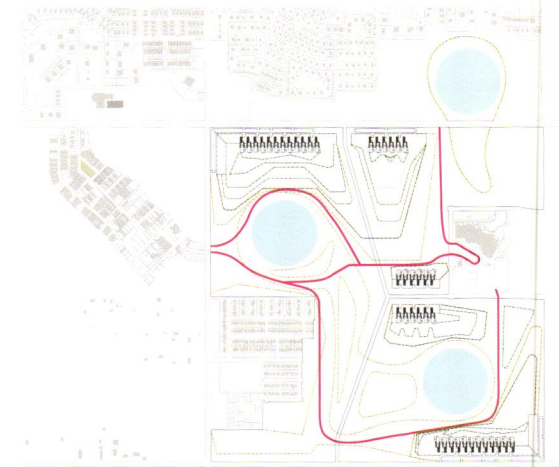
EXISTING CONDITIONS



NEW ROAD



PHASE 3: ADD HOUSING



ADD PATHS

mastery of the natural world were imposed on the wide-open spaces of the Panhandle. The major avenues of Lubbock were laid out on a one-mile grid, a convenient measure that holds a certain Enlightenment sensibility, as it allows easy division for land use and ownership.

However, a grid doesn't consider natural features. The area is dotted with shallow depressions in the flat landscape, misnamed *playas* (beaches) by the Spanish explorer Coronado as he headed west in search of gold. These playas have served to filter rainwater and to recharge the Ogallala Aquifer, which stretches from Texas to Nebraska. The aquifer has been the mainstay water source for the region since it was settled, but its level has dramatically declined in the past 50 years to meet the demands of urbanization and agriculture. The nearby Brazos River and the reservoirs that were built and used to supplement the aquifer are very low or mostly dry.

Through the decades, as the gridded land began to be developed, the playas were treated as obstacles to overcome. Many were turned into parking lots, small parks, golf courses, or irrigated farm circles. When the rains do come, the impervious surfaces of the city's sprawl trigger serious flooding. To alleviate this problem, the City of Lubbock has invested in large-scale and costly underground infrastructure that takes the stormwater away from flood-prone neighborhoods and moves it to

retention ponds outside the city. A result is that the water fails to trickle down and recharge the aquifer.

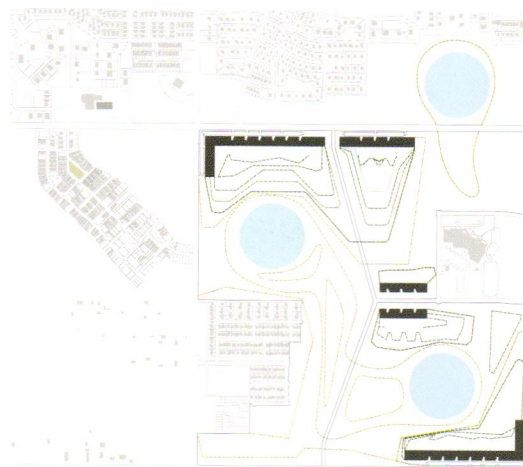
This seemingly insignificant intervention on the land has had unintended effects over time. For example, growing and irrigating crops where once only native grasses existed has allowed the city to flourish, but the water required no longer supports both the population and the crops. The non-native species of grasses and crops that were planted to sustain livestock and develop agriculture ended up requiring larger, mechanical means of irrigation. As the region became a hub for the supply of livestock to the beef industry around 1950, crop irrigation increased exponentially. Tapping the aquifer was an easy mechanical solution and was treated as a permanent fix in an inhospitable landscape. With the land seemingly mastered, development of the square mile grid has continued with little planning involved, much like Houston. Crop circles exist next to suburban houses, next to retail strip malls, next to golf courses. The occasional New Urbanist townhome subdivisions, while creating pockets of density, are private, gated enclaves that don't attempt to respond to the gridded street edges.

Playa Lubbock proposes a way to improve the relationship of built space to the natural ecology, while retaining the pattern of the grid. It leverages the existing slight topography of the land along with

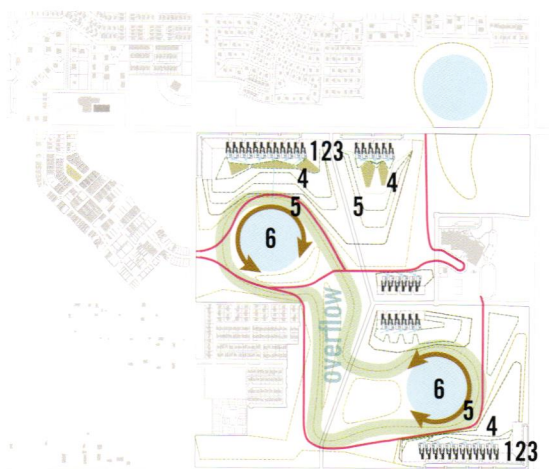
The proposal is set up to be implemented in phases, allowing for the gradual accumulation of infrastructure and architecture.



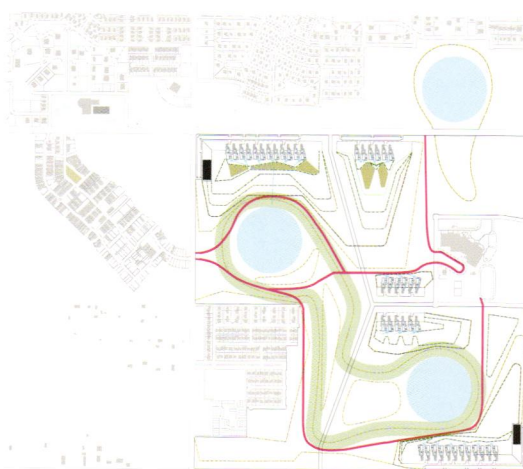
PHASE 1: CUT + FILL



PHASE 2: ADD COMMERCIAL HUBS



ADD WATER TECHNOLOGY / ECOLOGY



PHASE 4: ADD MIDRISE

developer-driven urbanization, creating a new direction for growth. A simple and direct investment in a visible infrastructure combining technology, native landscaping, urban development, and aquifer regeneration appears to trump a costly, unseen mechanical engineering system. The graphics show a series of phases for development, allowing the gradual habitation of the gridded land alongside existing and proposed playas. The current urban and rural road network, laid out in square miles, provides the background for a network of independent water retention landscapes. This allows for density at the intersections between the square miles — something that was planned in the initial rural structure set in place in the 1890s, but that was ignored in the suburbanization of the city.

Additionally, compact residential and commercial space, planned at the corners, allows for large-scale landscapes instead of small parks and golf courses. Each developed grid square builds a passive graywater system into the slope between commercial and residential space. Water accumulates in aquifer-recharging playas after passing through a series of natural filters and tanks. The system has the ability to absorb individual differences within a site, be they geographic or constructed. The approach here could be a model for similar Great Plains cities with increasing population demands and typical suburban development.

Having been raised in perennially dry West Texas, I find that most towns and cities in this part of the country are struggling with similar issues: How does infrastructure meet our growing needs? How can we afford the infrastructure we must have? Can we grow intelligently in the midst of resources becoming more scarce? How will climate change affect us? And most importantly, where will we get our water?

“If we continue to grow,” Truitt says, “we can only modernize ourselves out of a problem for so long.” He and Bowden wrote in their proposal: “There are ways of developing the landscape and working with the resources we have, while also developing infrastructure that allows for habitation increases on par with projected rates. The Playa Lubbock project uses the natural shallow tank to show that infrastructure and living space can rest together within the standard property division of one square mile. They are not mutually exclusive.”

With the population of Lubbock slowly but steadily growing, and with the continued drilling of wells into the aquifer to irrigate large-scale farming operations, current models of growth seem inadequate for the days ahead and appear unsustainable. My hope is that Playa Lubbock will awaken us to a different way of thinking and initiate a new direction for development.

Craig Kinney, AIA, is an architect in San Angelo.





Drive-Thru Density

THE DOMAIN IS A MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENCES, SHOPPING, AND OFFICES THAT CREATES A NODE OF WALKABLE DENSITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF THREE MAJOR FREEWAYS IN NORTH AUSTIN. MEANWHILE, DOWNTOWN, THE LATEST ARRIVAL TO THE 2ND STREET DISTRICT IS A MODERN CLASS A OFFICE TOWER WITH RETAIL ON THE GROUND FLOOR AND 13 LEVELS OF STRUCTURED PARKING BEHIND THE SLEEK GLASS CURTAIN WALL. CONSIDERED TOGETHER, THEY EMBODY TWO VERSIONS OF CONTEMPORARY TEXAS UTOPIA.

by Hannah Ahlblad

Images courtesy Gensler

In 1857, Frederick Law Olmsted published “Journey Through Texas; or, a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier,” in which he records the people, nature, and urban patterns along his road trip south from New York through Nashville, across the eastern pines and Austin, and into West Texas. At Austin, he describes the imposition of the Capitol’s soft cream limestone under construction, “towards which nearly all the town rises,” and Congress Avenue, between the river and the Capitol, where the city’s density appears as stacks of wood logs and stone. Olmsted remarks on the sparse distribution of one- and two-story bungalows in the surrounding area; the Texas capital had been located on a “thinly-settled frontier,” rather than an existing population center (Olmsted 1857: 110).

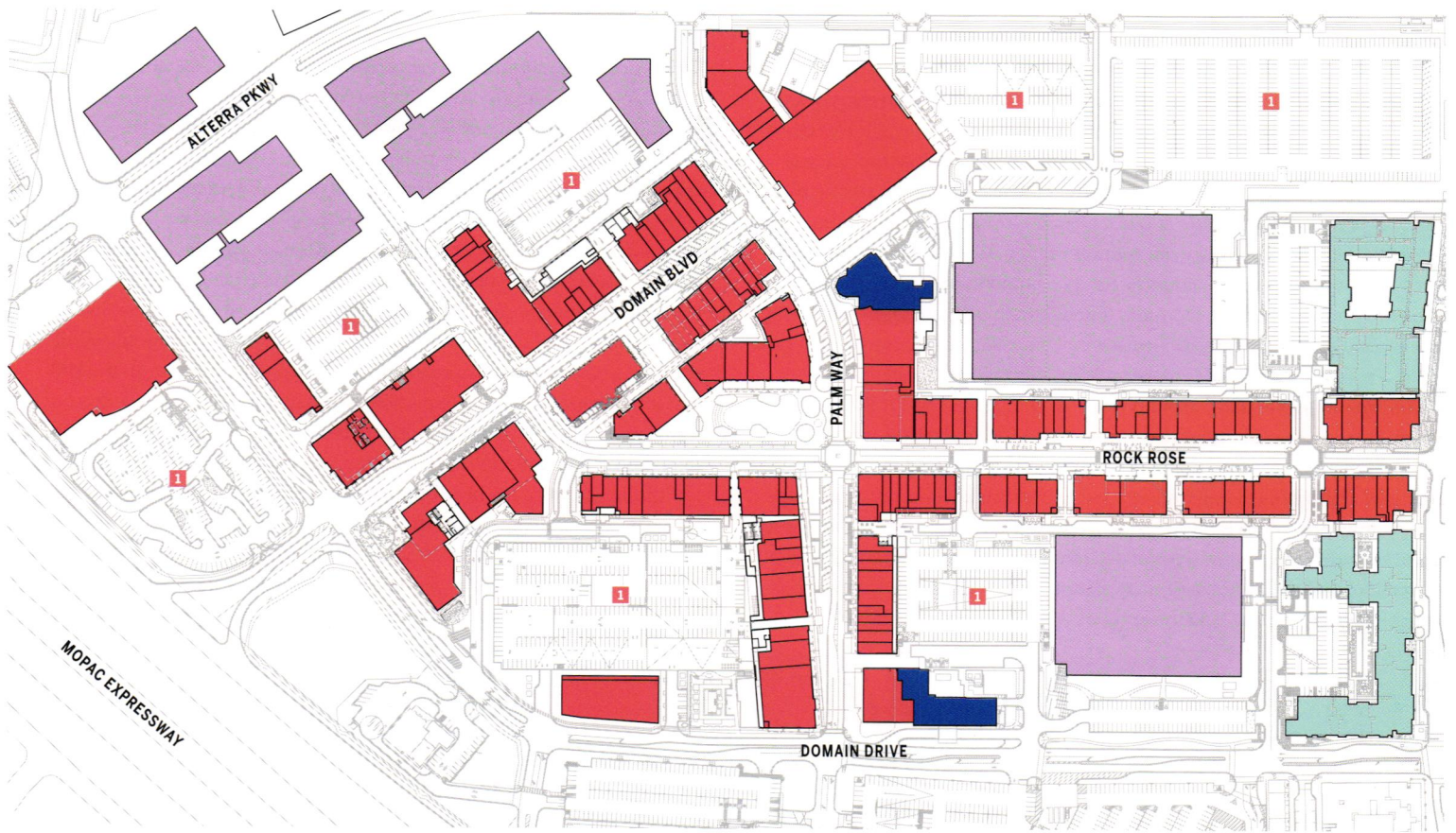
In 1857, according to the Texas Almanac, the population of Austin within city bounds approached 3,000 residents. In the 2016 census, nearly 160 years later, Austin’s population was 926,426, and for the last several years the city has experienced one of the highest population growth rates in the nation. In the past 15 years, what once caused Olmsted dismay (the sprawling, sleepy town that doubled as a state capital for a territory covering more than 250,000 square miles) has become surprisingly dense — for Austin. It’s been a process. Town centers and urban cores arose in late-19th- and prewar 20th-century Texas cities like Dallas, Houston, and El Paso. Then, in the postwar economy, the suburban dreams of middle-class America dispersed these populations. Since the turn of the 21st century, a surge in the number of job opportunities

has induced a growing number of young professionals to choose Austin. They come for employment, but they stay for Austin’s image. As a result of her history, Austin straddles the divide between centralized city and diffuse urban oasis, littered with houses. As George Blume, design director at Gensler’s Austin office, puts it, “Architecture in Austin often tries to fit into the image of Austin, but in fact that image is intangible and still difficult to discern, aside from the limestone.” Austin is confronted with pressure to meet, or at least aspire to meet, the aesthetic demands of the utopian vision that brands it.

The Domain’s NORTHSIDE, developed by Endeavor Group, opened this past year. In another part of town, construction began on Austin’s largest Class A office building, 500 West 2nd Street, developed by the Trammell Crow Company. The projects embody two conditions of urban growth: One is an oasis in a sprawl of highways; the other is a monumental glass tower in a downtown urban center. Both are in the hands of Gensler Austin.

Despite their geographic disparity, the timing of construction on the two projects make them an excellent comparative study for determining the state of urbanization in Austin. The Domain came largely from the imagination of its developers. Second Street emerged from the Great Streets Master Plan, which was championed by architects in order to encourage pedestrian activity, transit, access, and place making in the center of town. As artifacts, the projects also make manifest the impact of national franchises and multinational corporations on architecture and the urban realm.





- SITE PLAN
- RETAIL/RESTAURANTS
- OFFICES
- RESIDENTIAL
- HOSPITALITY
- 1 PARKING

Facing Planters along Palm Way separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Previous and left Aerial renderings of The Domain **NORTHSIDE**, whose urban design — not the individual buildings — creates a new experience among the car-centric sprawl of North Austin.

The sidewalks are clean, wide, and manicured. Agave plants and desert vegetation obediently spring from the Corten steel planters that form buffers between building and sidewalk, between sidewalk and street. Gleaming windows, refreshing restaurant signage, and clever storefronts relieve the eye of Austin's ubiquitous snarls of graffiti murals, while replicating its playfulness — this time, within a frame. Along these sidewalks at The Domain, the cheerful babble at bar entrances, restaurants, and along sidewalks belongs to young professionals of Gen X and Gen Y. The patrons are a mix, a hipster-techie-country-finance homebrew employed by the offices in and around The Domain. The Domain is an example of density — elegant, chic in a modern, Texan way — and yet, it lacks diversity. This is not a lack of diversity of program and building form — the mixed-use arrangement, particularly around the new Domain NORTHSIDE, is enormously successful and pleasant to stroll through. Rather, it lacks the natural diversity of contradictions — between natural and man-made, rich and poor, straight-laced and disheveled — that make an urban landscape.

Inside a coffee shop at The Domain, the gossip, casual meetings, and clicking of keyboards are reminiscent of any place downtown or in any of Austin's "tentacles," as Ben Bufkin, a developer from Endeavor Group, refers to East Austin, South Congress, and the areas of West Sixth and North Lamar.

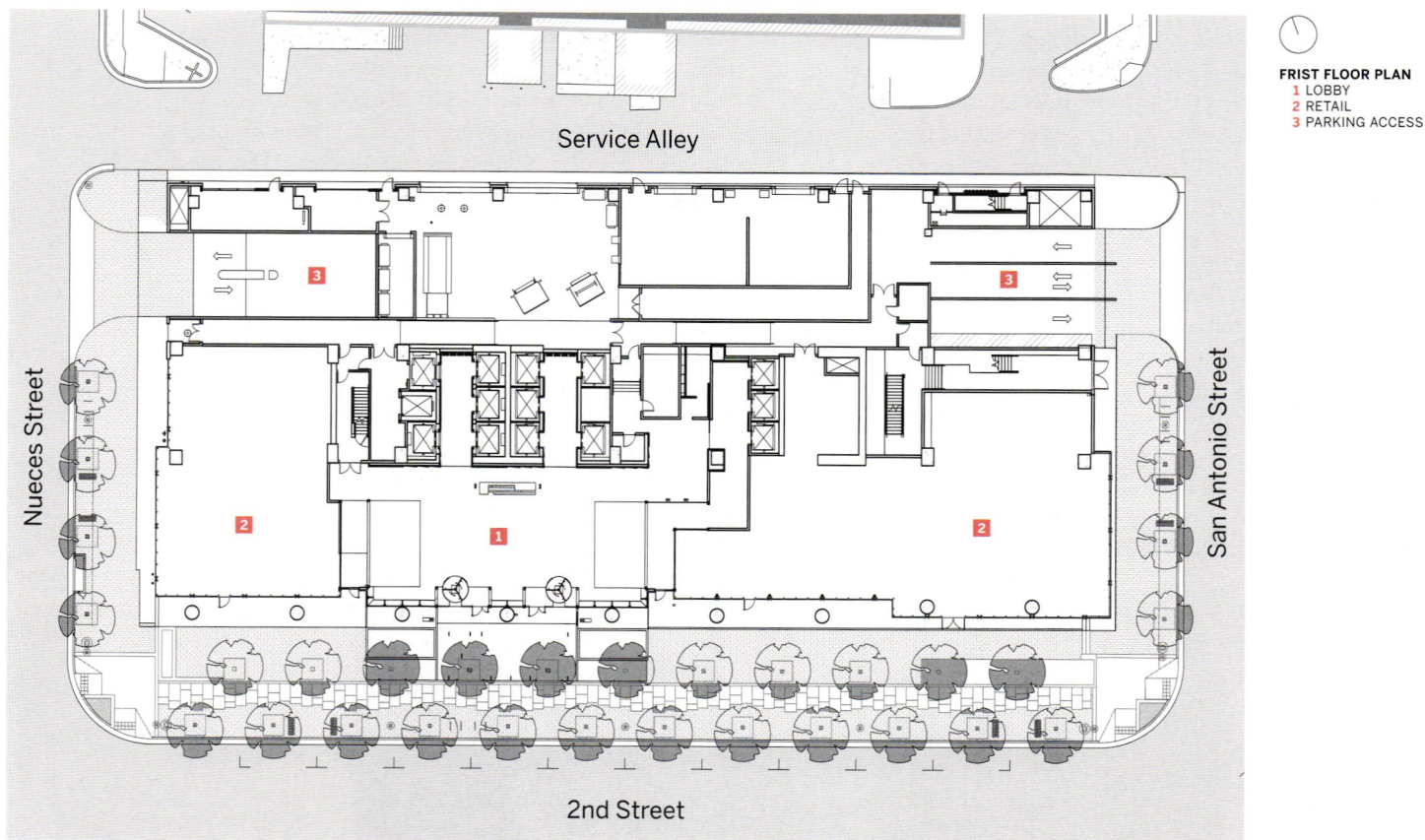
A comparison and contrast with grittier South Congress and East Austin makes us conscious of what we crave, what is essential to "urban comfort."

Bufkin commends the work of Gensler, with whom Endeavor Group collaborated on Domain NORTHSIDE: "Considering it's all built as one thing there are a lot of different design elements," he says. "It looks more organic than what we would normally see for a project like this."

He is right. Lined up, often without side property setbacks, the retail, dining, and entertainment venues on Rock Rose are like classmates from diverse households: The new buildings have different facades, thresholds, openings, typography, and colors, but they all got there at the same time. And this shows in their perfectly coordinated relationship to the sidewalk. While the architecture of the public space offers nothing revolutionary, in the Hill Country of North Austin perhaps there is something radical in architecture redirecting some of its boldness to satisfy the simple desire of young professionals and their families in the American suburbs to meander around several blocks insulated from the highways, the homeless, and the other harsh realities of the city. The Domain's modern Texan village culture and Gensler's rapidly rising West 500 2nd Street and 2 Shoal Creek — a neighboring building in the Green Water Development — transform the lifestyle of high-density areas into a pleasing, accessible, quick commodity for an abundance of young Austinites.

500 West 2nd Street occupies its own urban block. The project displays Gensler's elegant stereotomic operations with the tectonic building blocks of modern skyscrapers: glass panels and metal frames.





When asked about the importance of context to architecture in Austin, Blume comments on The Domain: “Austin should be design-aspirational. Given The Domain’s lack of a well-defined periphery, a context, it is difficult for it to aspire to fit into anything, and thus its aspiration is internal.”

Professor David Heymann, FAIA, who teaches site design at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture, tells students that a building does not always need to aspire to fit into a site. That is, architects have the authority to design without an after-the-fact obligation to tie a project to context. Walking by the construction site of 500 West 2nd Street, the airy lobby, storefront glazing, and polished stone tiles are all in place. One future tenant, Google, marks its territory with its logo at the entrance. 500 West 2nd Street recalls the glossy grand interiors of any corporate office building in Dallas or Manhattan — as well it should, having been described by the architects and promoted by developers as a Class A office tower. The tower steps in and out, with open-air terraces and open-plan office and conference spaces. A high-rise modernist sculpture of glass panels and concrete floor slabs, it may soon fade into the sea of reflected blue sky and clouds that decorate the facades of downtown. The building’s real rigor and richness come from the interior-exterior relationship and a strategic mix of high-tech offices, collaboration spaces, and retail, all well illuminated with natural daylight. Interior finishes like golden wall panels and wood floors at the elevators warm the building’s lobby.

Although The Domain receives accolades from its project team and its users for its internal aspirations, the floor-to-ceiling glazed 500 West 2nd building suggests the same “internal aspiration” for its tenants, whose brand identities refer to a national and/or international imagination. At the building’s edge, 2nd Street becomes a mixed-use aisle of crystalline,

sharp-edged lobbies, retail stores, restaurants, street trees, and well-placed benches. In a city known for its weirdness and creative wit, 500 West 2nd Street shares a dissociation from place with the Domain NORTHSIDE: Both produce a manufactured density and urbanity.

Manufactured density does not change the culture, but instead cultivates density within the existing pedestrian-transport orientation of the city. In the case of Austin (and Texan) car culture, even the pedestrian areas concede generous space allocations to the automobile’s omnipresence. All architects and developers I interviewed for this article remarked on the attention to parking. In the case of 500 West 2nd Street, in spite of the pedestrian-first ethos of the streetscape, there are 13 parking levels within the building. In the blind crevices of The Domain, structured parking lots stand at the height of the neighboring buildings. The two-way vehicular streets overwhelm and contradict the intention to create an intimate pedestrian village. Not all areas that are accessible to pedestrians are accessible to cars, but the pedestrian areas are landscaped only if cars (non-service vehicles) are expected to share them. Thus, it is implied in the site design that the pedestrian should only go in parallel to the car, and that car and man are inseparable. Manufactured density operates on and perpetuates a positively accepted and marketed image of the city, and time and budget inhibit the architect from challenging tastes and typological conventions.

Travis Albrecht, AIA, and John Mapes, AIA, from Gensler’s architectural team agreed that high-density, mixed-use projects in Texas not only benefit the residents, but also the sprawling population that uses these amenity nodes. The qualities of The Domain — which Bufkin says resemble the ubiquitous tradition of drive-ins and drive-thrus across the American South and Texas — explain how isolated high-density centers satisfy the car

500 West 2nd Street's north elevation towers above Ballet Austin. The building marks the current western edge of the Great Streets corridor, where the urban fabric transitions to the older downtown Austin reality of surface parking lots and wide open spaces.





Above *Sunset appears twice: once from the exterior on low-emissivity glass panels, and again seen from within.*

Below *A cafe on one of the office floors opens to an exterior terrace, giving employees an opportunity to enjoy the weather without leaving work.*



culture's sprawl as opposed to challenging it. Instead of making the miserable highway trek downtown, a family can drive to The Domain and enjoy a greater number of restaurant and entertainment options within a short walk of their parked car, experiencing shorter waits, and a more walkable shopping experience. While The Domain functions as a 24/7 city spot, 2nd Street has experienced more challenges in maintaining small businesses at street level because of higher rental rates.

The success of The Domain and downtown Austin comes from the courage of Texan real estate developers and architects to try something instead of car-only sprawl. Public transportation routes serve both areas, and while the car may remain king, it has lost some of its prominence.

In February, I spoke with Robert Shaw, a former Dallas Cowboys center who has become a real estate developer. Shaw's group, Columbus Realty, developed almost all the residential property at The Domain. When questioned about the width of the driveways and scale of the car in relation to the streets at The Domain, Shaw describes the focus on reducing the presence of parking, not eliminating it. "It is a balancing act," he says. "People aren't getting out of their cars in the reality we live in." In both the new Domain NORTHSIDE and the Green Water Development downtown, developers and architects opted for structured parking instead of surface parking, finding more occasions for shared parking, using less space, and developing a master plan that mitigated the physical and visual impact of parking. However, this experimentation with dense, mixed-use projects shies away from a radical challenge to norms, and instead embodies an appreciation for the existing car culture of a sprawling state with a strong identity.

Construction fences of the Green Water Development butt up against 2nd Street, a lively street, an urban node within an incongruous downtown of parking lots, office buildings, and construction zones. Today, the rich energy of the Great Streets Master Plan that culminates around City Hall and the W Hotel screeches to a halt at 500 West 2nd Street, where the sidewalk ends. I have to navigate around a giant gap between construction workers' trucks, amid dust and noise, in order to pick up another "urban node" route headed west. The walkability of the west end of Second Street will change as the development reaches completion. However, the architectural character of Austin's glass corporate buildings remains an internally imagined reality. I fear that the new occupants of 500 West 2nd will inhabit a world of their own. The city around them easily becomes an exterior ornament to validate their interior experience. Is the glazed tower the corporation's answer to the ivory tower of academia?

As the sun sets after my last exam of the semester, I return to The Domain — by bus — to buy Mother's Day gifts and treat myself to a celebratory Italian dinner. Google Maps helps me navigate curving streets designed to wind and produce a romantic, village-like spirit. Suddenly, a giant Suburban honks behind a pick-up truck, the two hulking vehicles stuck in this commercial utopia between the Louis Vuitton storefront and the perfumery Diptyque Paris. Groups of construction workers push summer plants in wheelbarrows in the direction of the larger landscape planters.

Notwithstanding the irony of hardy Texas truckers stuck in traffic in Austin's idyllic Stepford paradise, The Domain succeeds in its goal. In the ordered landscape of flowers, it provides a haven of shopping, living, working, and entertainment in the middle of Austin's sprawl — a placeless escape from our place in the world.

Hannah Ahlblad is a graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture.

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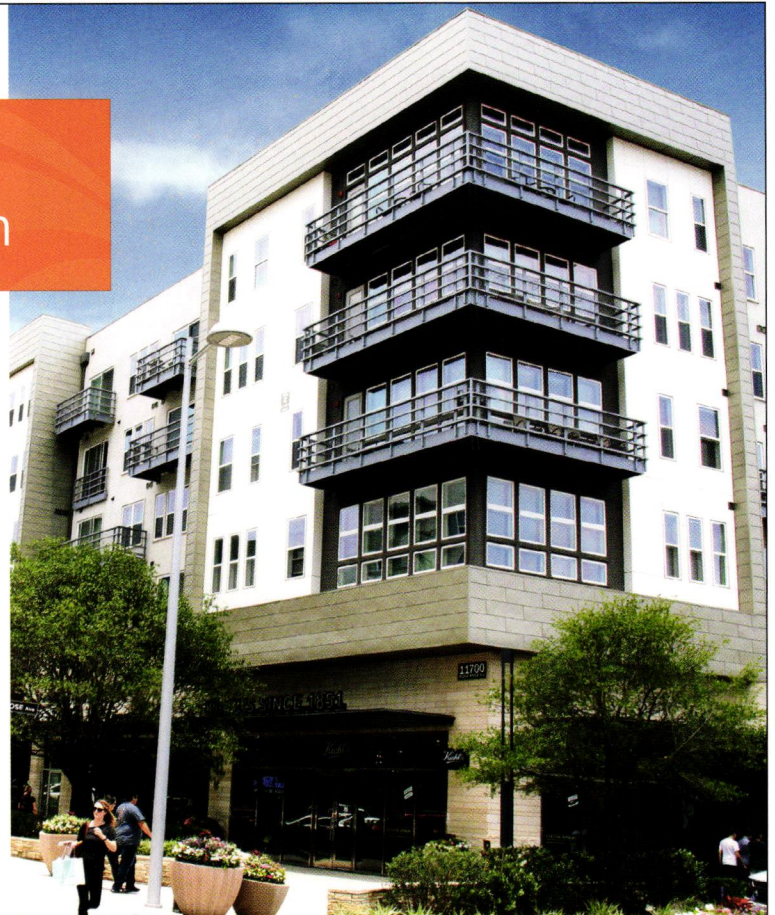
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Mall traffic is sagging. Department store sales have been in decline since 2001. Most retailers are loaded up with debt. Many have been losing money. Now they're running out of options. Store closings numbered in the thousands last year. This year they promise to get much worse. "Zombie malls" have become reality, their vast parking lots rented to car dealers to store their excess vehicle inventory.

—Wolf Richter, "I'm in Awe of how Fast Brick-and-Mortar Retail is Melting Down," *wolfstreet.com*

According to most analysts who watch the sector, brick-and-mortar retail is in trouble, and has been for some time. There is the competition from online purveyors, although according to the Wall Street Journal e-commerce makes up less than 10 percent of total sales. And then there is the overreach of the 1980s and 90s — the building booms that littered the American horizon with a profusion of thinly occupied malls and strip centers that were hobbled even before their Grand Openings.

While market processes go to work dismantling this depressing residue, transforming these stillborn or perishing monstrosities of modernism into lifestyle centers, corporate headquarters, server farms, and blight — all of uncertain appeal — we turn our attention to what architecture might do for the old-timey storefront.

In response to dying malls and debt-ridden big-box stores, we offer small-box retail: jewel boxes that could be inserted into any human-scaled urban fabric, whose designs create spaces where people want to be, interacting with their fellow human beings and spending money.

Shopping

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Rows of designer glasses highlighted against the boutique's pristine white walls.

Through a Lens, Brightly

Tiny and glossy, like a piece of hard candy, this Austin eyeglass boutique designed by Baldrige Architects projects an aspirational message.

by Alyssa Morris

Austin is the fabled home of musicians, creative types, assorted hangers-on, and a seemingly unending number of high-end glasses boutiques to supply them with the requisite artistic eyewear.

Optique, an independent, family-owned optometrist's office, has two locations less than two miles apart on Lamar Boulevard: a larger office at the Seaholm Power Plant development, and a 1,067-sf storefront at Lamar Union. Each is bright and modern, and distinguished by candy dishes filled with treats that shoppers can serve themselves using miniature wooden spoons. The walls are lined with a curated selection of decidedly high-end sculptural frames.

Baldrige Architects designed the Lamar Union shop, setting out to use the location's slight size as a feature rather than a hindrance. "It's tiny," says Burton Baldrige, AIA. "We could do something that would be striking with it."



Left Tape lights help transform the storefront into a billboard, a stark contrast to the dark facades of the neighboring shops.

Below Concrete floors, marble counters, and Venetian plaster walls elevate the spare material palette.



The architects' process for the project was quick, with a mere two weeks needed to produce drawings and renderings. Simplicity was key in preventing the space from being overwhelmed by the architectural installation.

Complicating matters was the fact that the architects had to accommodate two examination rooms in addition to the boutique component. They hid the rooms, as well as additional storage, at the back of the store, tucked on either side of a narrow, wallpapered hallway.

Situated among Lamar Union's black, steel, and Ipe-clad facades, Baldrige wanted Optique to stand out. The shining white storefront glows brightly, like a chic spaceship, aided by tape lights that line the window in a shining halo. It functions much like a sign, itself, beckoning passersby to stop in. After all, it is a fact universally known that it is impossible to try on just one pair of glasses.

But the main architectural feature of the space is the enormous mirror that covers the

back wall. It performs an adept sleight-of-hand, creating the illusion that the interior is twice as big as it actually is, and reflecting Lamar Union's courtyard back on itself.

The material palette — chiefly marble and Venetian plaster by Sloan Houser — contributes to the jewel-box-like atmosphere. Patrons might linger for only a few minutes, trying on a few pairs of glasses before catching a movie at the nearby Alamo Drafthouse, but the experience is designed to be memorable. "You need to be able to read this immediately — in one gesture," Baldrige says.

Optique is selling an aspirational vision, reflecting back infinite possibilities. The glossy surface pairs perfectly with the stylish glasses, themselves signifiers of a particular kind of identity. The store's blank canvas invites transformation. Picture yourself, the mirror says, a new person.

Alyssa Morris is web editor of *Texas Architect*. She wears glasses.



The Pax & Parker logo inspired the geometry and sharp lines of the store fixtures and architectural elements.

Hip to be Square

Bart Shaw Architect arranged a few minimal elements in his design of Fort Worth clothing boutique Pax & Parker, creating an elegant and unique space on a budget.

by **Audrey Maxwell, AIA**

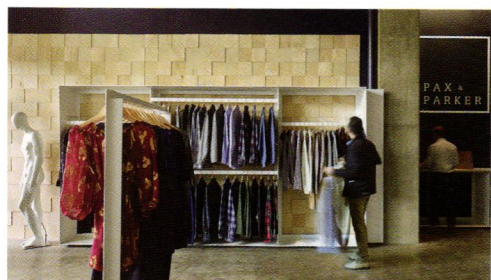
When Bart Shaw, AIA, met young entrepreneurs Alari Paxson and Winston Parker Ley, they had a clear concept for their men's and women's wear store, Pax & Parker. The two business partners had secured a lease space in Fort Worth's West End, begun curating their fashion collections in earnest, and had even commissioned a logo. Their vision for the architectural space was less defined. It was presented to Shaw as a collection of disparate inspiration images pinned to a Pinterest board. The architect would be charged with crafting the look and feel of the flagship location, helping solidify the retailer's identity. Shaw decided to keep it simple. Using the square logo as inspiration, he built on both its geometry and its sharp lines.

The square motif occurs throughout the space, beginning with the entry. The storefront is rendered in stacked courses of square format masonry units. Punched openings adhere to the module, maintaining alignment with the coursing. Deep steel plates interrupt a large expanse of

Right Wire clothes hangers were woven together and suspended to create a gauzy screen between the sales floor and fitting rooms.

Below Modest materials were artfully assembled to give the store warmth and texture without overshadowing the merchandise.

Bottom The Pax & Parker square is referenced again on the storefront with stacked square masonry units and a white steel frame around the window.



glass, creating a square frame around the display window and providing a platform for mannequins on the interior. Even the door pull conforms to the square geometry and — something only an architect would notice — matches the masonry dimensions precisely. Inside, a tailored composition of eight-in square plywood pieces in varying thicknesses forms textural wall panels. The display fixtures and cash wrap continue the theme, reflecting the clean lines and geometry of the logo.

The start-up retailers had a tight budget for their first store, further challenging the architect's task. Shaw responded with a series of clever design decisions that reduced expenses while maintaining quality. The masonry cladding was surplus from another job and purchased at a discount. Plywood was chosen in lieu of milled wood veneer panels. The custom store fixtures were conceived as minimal frames assembled from standard steel

The wire hanger screen has become a recognizable feature, prompting the owners to integrate it into their branding materials.

profiles, and the team enlisted a welding instructor from Tarrant County College to fabricate the components on-site. The most notable element is the screen between the sales floor and the fitting rooms. Here, Shaw concocted (and personally installed) a modular assemblage of mundane wire clothes hangers that are supported by vertical aircraft cables. The gauzy backdrop evokes a delicate spider web and counterbalances the crisp lines that dominate the space.

The store has become a crucial part of the retailer's brand identity. Instagram photographs feature the season's new arrivals hanging from the custom display fixtures or against the plywood-paneled wall. The wire hanger screen has become a recognizable feature, prompting the owners to integrate it into their branding materials. More importantly, Shaw has created a space that embodies the retailer's values. Customers shop in an intimate, uncluttered, and light-filled environment. Minimalist fixtures and a restrained material palette play a supporting role to the merchandise, allowing the carefully curated apparel to shine. Sophisticated without the pretense, Pax & Parker is anything but square.

Audrey Maxwell, AIA, is a principal at Malone Maxwell Borson Architects in Dallas.





Paloma's interior features different seat groupings and a series of screens to subtly divide the space.

Subtle Thresholds

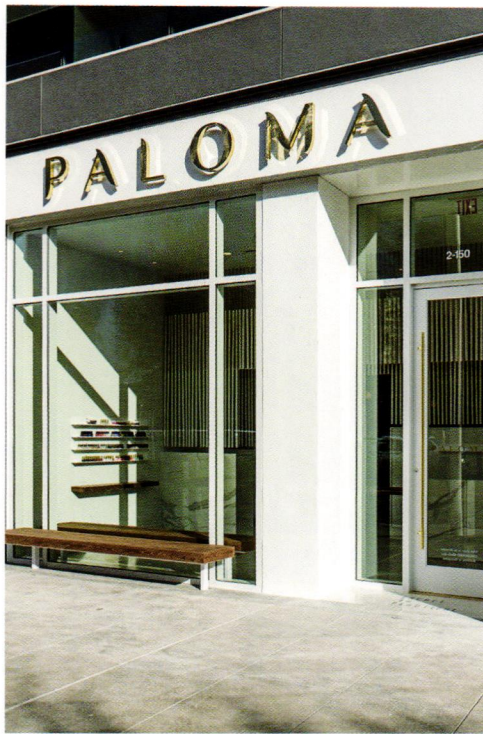
CONTENT Architecture's design for a nail salon in a Houston mixed-use development breaks the long, thin space into smaller areas while allowing daylight to filter to the back.

by Renee Reder

The quintessential framework for individual retailers in today's plazas is a long, thin, rectangular unit, which is challenging for natural light. Paloma, a non-toxic nail salon at BLVD Place in Houston, transforms the typical unit into an "Escape to Beautiful" — continuous space that uses subtle thresholds to create smaller, private areas.

Owner Maryam Naderi's friend had hired CONTENT Architecture to design their house, and her experience with that building convinced her to partner with the firm on Paloma. "We are so busy: Time is our biggest commodity," Naderi says. "I have a high standard for the space, for our techs, so clients have not only beautiful nails but a great experience and boost of self-confidence."

Houston-based CONTENT designed a series of screening elements that divide individual areas while also allowing light to filter inside. "Using our experience with the Eye



Top left *The wallpaper on the rear wall suggests a sunrise/sunset, creating a warmth that pairs well with the furniture and coordinates with Paloma's graphics.*

Top right *Set back from the sidewalk to mask the vents, Paloma's glass facade and reflected bench help dissolve the threshold between interior and exterior.*

Above *Nail polishes are displayed at the small retail entrance where natural light and a series of thin white shelves highlight the various color options.*

Gallery [another shop in the same plaza], we wanted to create a space that connects to the outside, transitioning and layering light in the deep spaces," CONTENT partner Jesse Hager, AIA, explains.

The facade, white with gold lettering, is slightly set back to cleverly mask overhead intake and exhaust vents behind a thin strip of white perforated panel. The ducts inside are hidden behind a white ceiling plane. Outside the entrance is a wooden bench. An identical bench mirrors the first just inside the storefront, as if the glass between has dissolved. The purpose, says CONTENT's Eric Hughes, Assoc. AIA, is "to capture the energy inside and connect to passing pedestrians."

Once inside, the small retail entrance features natural light on white surfaces to make it easy for clients to pick a polish. To divide it from the salon services beyond, a vertical screen of bare brass extends from the ceiling, thickening into white wood rods that become a short wood-topped wrapping wall. Another short wall hides a small service area, transitioning into the salon. A series of blue Eero Saarinen womb chairs are set up for pedicures, arranged so that large groups can sit side by side along one wall and smaller groups can opt for facing pairs. Moving deeper inside, light fixtures are increasingly paired with wood surfaces in the manicure area to create warm, individualized spaces. The most private space at the rear, the bathroom, uses wood and lighting that are an extension of the rest of the salon.

"The space is meant to be hygienic and clean, but also approachable," CONTENT's Gail Chen explains. It also integrates the graphics, according to both Hager and Naderi. The pedicure chairs are elevated on a platform so tools can be stored underneath and techs can reach clients' feet easier. The walls are decorated simply, with reflected light from below and plants lining the short wrapping wall. The experience of the techs was also considered: CONTENT designed the ergonomic furniture with wood and touches of brass.

During the day, the reflection from inside is a gradually dissipating white. At night, when the light within emits outwards, the nonwhite, wallpapered rear wall evokes a sunrise/sunset. These warm colors reflect forward toward the facade to reveal Paloma's interior: a long, deep space.

Renee Reder works for Metalab in Houston.



More Than Before

Clayton&Little Architects' adaptive reuse of a San Antonio bottling plant for a home decor retailer takes cues from the existing structure without being too constrained by the precedent.

by **Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA**

Just north of the Pearl development in central San Antonio stands what appears to be an Art Deco gem — but the building hasn't always evinced such restrained elegance. What had originally been an industrial bottling plant later served for decades as the kitschy, faux-stone-clad Haunted House of Grayson. As the success of the Pearl development drew attention to the neighborhood, architects Clayton&Little, along with interior designer MBH Architects and architect of record Villa Park, were commissioned to create a fresh image for the next incarnation of the building.

The original structure was rather unremarkable, but a hint of its Deco past could be found in the black tile detailing and rounded corners of the front facade. The designers took cues from these details and transformed the building — not back into what it had been, but, perhaps, into what it should have been all along. “You take the building and the program you’re trying to put in it,” says project architect Jonathan Card, AIA, “and the building tells you what it wants to be.”

It now serves as the home of West Elm, a modern furniture and home decor retailer that prides itself on creating unique identities for each of its stores, dozens of which have been settled within adaptive reuse projects. In this case, the existing building consisted of three volumes: a two-story office space fronting the street, a bow-trussed warehouse tucked behind, and, immediately adjacent, a second warehouse space with a pitched roof whose volume was completely obscured behind a rectangular blind facade.

The first steps of the renovation involved removing many of the interventions that had accumulated over the years. The secondary warehouse space was stripped down to its steel frame, creating a cool, breezy area that would become covered parking. The first bay was also peeled away to reveal the Deco detailing along the corner of the adjacent structure. The second floor of this front two-story volume was removed to create a lofty, double-height space, and the rear volume was repaired but largely left unaltered beyond the addition of partition walls to separate

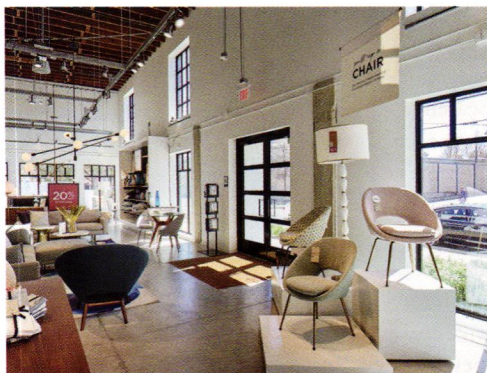


Facing Black and white encaustic tile work references the city's Mexican heritage.

Above Before and after: the fenestration of the front facade was reconfigured to create a more elegant rhythm and prominent entryway.

Left The secondary warehouse space was stripped down to its steel frame for a covered parking lot. The first structural bay was removed to reveal the Deco detailing along the corner of the adjacent structure.

Below left The second floor of the front volume was removed to create a lofty, double-height space.



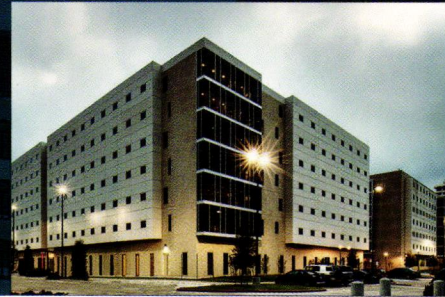
service areas from display. Though leaks had abounded, only the damaged ceiling boards were replaced, allowing the contrast in patinas of the wood to express the story of old and new.

The fenestration of the front facade was reconfigured to create a more elegant rhythm as well as a more prominent entryway. The existing industrial steel windows inspired the new custom door and steel windows. The architects replaced the original black tiles with nearly identical tiles, and used them to tie the first- and second-story windows together, creating strong vertical

elements that provide a sense of continuity. Black and white encaustic tile work was added along the spandrels in a reference to the Mexican-influenced history of the city. "We played off what was there, but we weren't a slave to it," Card says. "We didn't embalm the building, but we let it inspire what we did. I think the story is that even nondescript existing buildings have a story to tell, and if you can save them, we ought to."

Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, works at Overland Partners in San Antonio.

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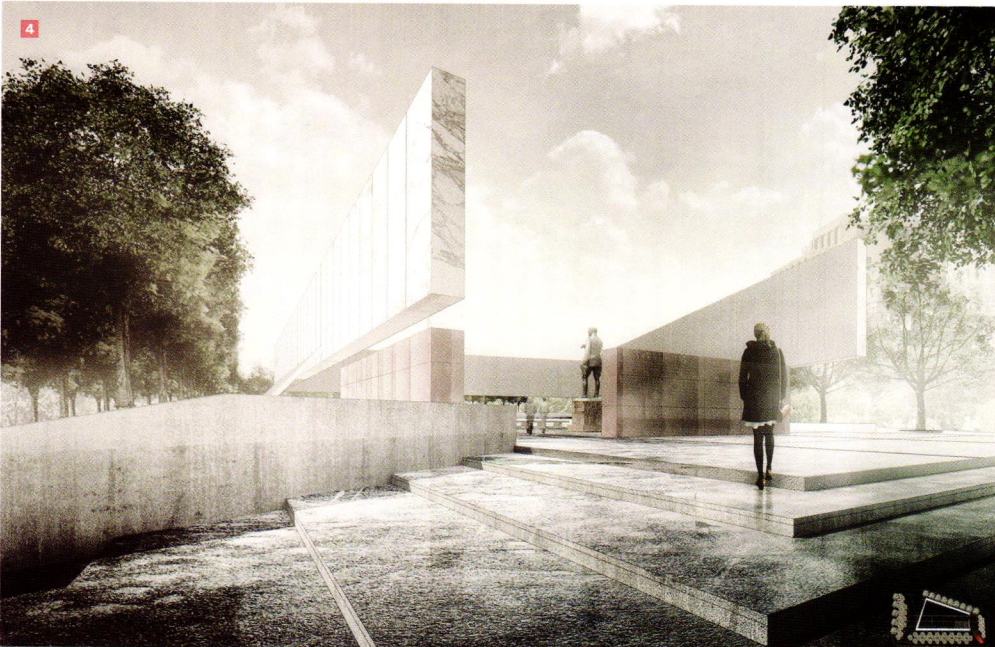
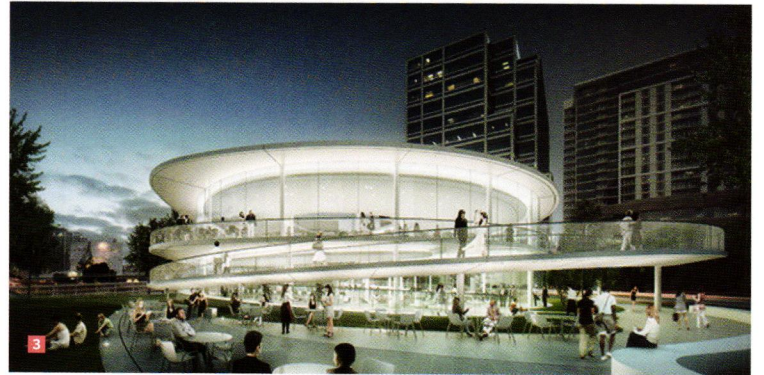
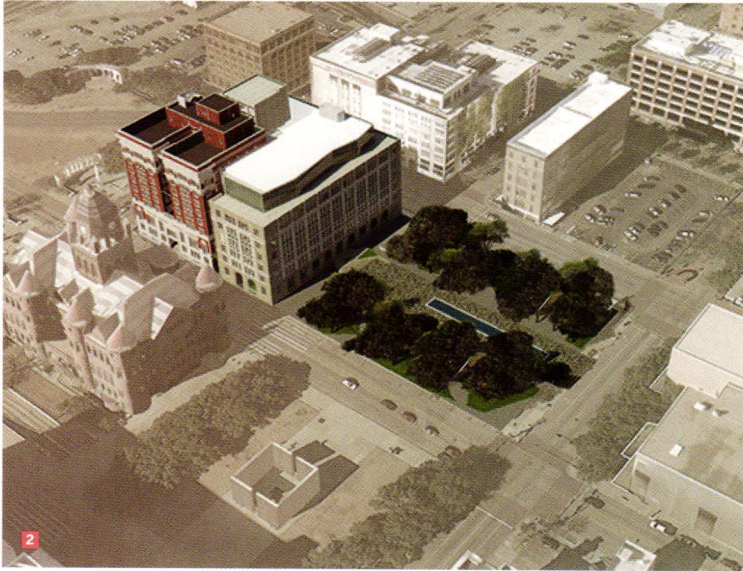
AIA Dallas 2017 Unbuilt Design Awards

AIA Dallas announced the winners of its 2017 Unbuilt Design Awards at a ceremony and exhibition held on May 18. Jurors Stephanie Lin, William O'Brien, Jr., and Tom Wiscombe, AIA, selected three honorees from among 43 entries. A People's Choice Award, voted on by event attendees, was also presented. While the entries included projects from around the world, the juror-selected winners were all proposed projects in Dallas. The jury commended the designers' efforts to enhance the city's downtown core by making it more walkable, dense, and sustainable.

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Recognition



The approach into the Memorial shows the dialogue the new structure creates with the existing, and preserved, Pershing Memorial.

- 2 **Dallas County Records Building**
Gensler
- 3 **Klyde Warren Park Promenade**
Gensler

People's Choice Award

- 4 **National World War I Memorial**
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"rolyPOLY" by Andrew Wit

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Continued from page 24

PS: I agree with that. To consume the whole morphology of a building for a one-liner metaphor — that's a massive waste. Or to use buildings that should tell us what they are offering to us users, to become a storyteller of another message — that's absurd. However, when I'm talking about the built environment communicating, it communicates about its own order of things for the sake of informing utilization, because utilization, the workings of buildings and built environments, relies on human agents navigating, orienting, grasping, understanding, and finding and handling the uses on offer. Communication is thus a kind of user facilitation. That's a useful, even necessary form of communication. That's why I'm reinvigorating and refounding architectural semiology, which was started under the flag of Postmodernism in the '60s and '70s, continued into the '80s, and was then kind of left behind because there were serious critical problems with the way this was conceived and delivered at the time. It was very clichéd, with historical motifs telling fixed

stories, and there was also overreach in telling all sorts of mythologies through buildings. I'm trying to reground and refound the project of architectural semiology, where the building is designed to talk about itself because, as it becomes complex and varied and layered, it's no longer so easily self-transparent; it's no longer trivial, what you have in front of you and what's on offer. That demands some deliberate problematizing, first of all through perceptual grasp and cognitive decomposition, where important features must be made conspicuous, and then it also demands a semiology where users are informed about the differentiated interaction offerings through formal vocabularies. So that's what I'm working on.

MFG: But you wouldn't say that architecture's primary responsibility is communication?

PS: I would say so, nearly. Of course, we are still organizing, laying out, distributing into proximity and distance and opening pathways, and so on. That's, of course, our task, too. But we can't just leave it at that, because these organizations

might be a dead letter if they remain illegible, if these pathways aren't discovered, if these adjacencies are overlooked, and the programmatic designation misunderstood. So [communication] nearly becomes something I want to foreground, especially since we particularly haven't developed that explicit intelligence and capacity to talk about and elaborate and design the built environment as a system of signification, whereas, with respect to the organization part, there has been work under Bill Hillier and Christopher Alexander, and there are techniques of grasping and measuring — for instance, the permeability and networking structures embedded in spatial relations. That's been achieved and delivered. I'm now wanting to make similar progress on the level of phenomenology, perceptual penetration, cognitive grasping, as well as on the level of semiology and communication. That's my project. When it comes to program grasp, I'm working on what I call "life forces modeling," to enhance crowd modeling for the sake of, not only circulatory forms of penetration, but for all types of occupancy patterns in a complex institution of multiple audiences — where

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they interact, gather, disperse, reassociate — to show that the kind of buildings we envisage have more potency and fertility to enable the social networking that brings us all together in the city in the first place.

MFG: But you're giving architecture legitimization through its ability to network people—

PS: Yep.

MFG: —and I would position my school of thought against that and say architecture is valued for other reasons.

PS: Which are?

MFG: Aesthetic.

PS: That's very, very hard to translate, or to defend. I mean, then it becomes a fetish, because you make [aesthetics] an endpoint.

MFG: You have a very dated idea about aesthetics. You always think about it in terms of Pater

and Wilde's late-19th-century aestheticism, where aesthetics are separate from the marketplace — protected from commerce or acting as an actual, not decorative, part of society.

PS: Then aesthetics is just a means for something else. But what is that, if it's not the life process?

MFG: Rancière describes aesthetics as the distribution of the sensible. And to be sensed is a political act. The ability to be heard defines your position in a political spectrum. Aesthetics is what defines your ability to be seen and be heard.

PS: So, in the end, it leads to an attempt to facilitate some kind of social interaction, a communication process. So it's not an endpoint, and you feel compelled — and you must be feeling compelled — to think it through to the point of societal facilitation. That's what you're just trying to do.

AS: Let's talk about politics. Patrik, you recently famously waded into politics.

MFG: Stepped in it is a better term.

[Laughter from all parties.]

AS: And you were treated very unfairly, I must say.

MFG: I came to your defense.

PS: Thank you.

AS: Mark, I wonder if you would see politics as being yet another narrative that undermines the legitimacy of the architectural project?

MFG: I mean, that's a tough question. The reason Patrik was vilified is because he articulated a very pro-neoliberal position, which is about deregulation, which is about privatizing parks, privatizing sidewalks, moving people out of social housing, having no such thing as social housing. Neoliberalism has been around since the formation of the Mont Pelerin Society at the end of World War II. So this isn't a new



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idea. It's a popular idea — we just elected it into office, this idea of total and complete deregulation. I'm not sure of architecture's place in it, at the moment. I'm sure it has one, but I haven't completely sussed it out. Patrik has advocated a position of deregulation and the elimination of social housing. And I think — while it certainly frees up a lot of space for innovation, particularly in places like London, which are overzoned and overcalculated — it also has the danger of creating a homogenized environment, where it's the same Marriott, the same Gap, the same Starbucks, the same shitty beige brick buildings with similar curtain wall products. I actually see social housing as something valuable, not because it's humanitarian, necessarily, but because it's another system, and the two are forced to weave through each other. In the neoliberal agenda, someone gets to live in the center of London because they are, more often than not, lucky: They've inherited money; they come from money; or they made a great deal of money. Social housing just offers another form of luck to a different constituency. So if you happen to be in the right place and inherit a social housing estate, that's no more or less valuable than the person who was born into a rich household who can afford a London townhouse. I think having multiple systems producing architecture according to different constraints and limitations for different populations is valuable.

AS: Your ideas, Patrik, didn't create such a stir here in Texas. You go just down the road to Houston and you'll see a deregulated city. It has no zoning whatsoever, and yet not a lot of creative consciousness behind the built environment either. So deregulation itself can't be the only answer. There also has to be some sort of cultural backing behind design that will disrupt our assumptions of what the built environment can be and do.

PS: For me, the market is a discovery process through entrepreneurs and through market participants' choices. If we eliminate a lot of this choice because we have a prescribed set of offerings, that's one thing I'm criticizing.

MFG: I agree with that.

PS: The standards are ridiculously minute [in London]. We have a prescription of what exact quantum of housing needs to be built

where, what the unit mixes are, how big these units must be, how big every room must be, what facilities you have to have, how many balconies, how many flats on a core — I mean, it's absurd. But also, these land-use maps, they're decades old. Those sites that have been allocated to residential become windfalls for the landowners, because we are not living in a socialist system; we're living in a strange mix of government intervention and market processes that generates a lot of unfair inequalities.

I trace it back to these interventions where market mechanisms are blocked — where you have all the financial sector bailouts after the crash, and these kinds of irrational land value rifts. On the allocation side, the social housing side, this is not for poor people. These are people with relatively large incomes — up to 90,000 pounds annual income — and it's rationed for those who are in the know; it's mostly for public sector employees. We might have a nice idea of being supportive to those who have had it hard and compensating for some of the luck which is at play in market processes, but I think there is far less arbitrary luck in market processes than in government processes, where, for instance, you have to be lucky to land with a rent-controlled apartment. Some of the anecdotes about who is getting brand new “social” apartments allocated — you want to pull your hair out, because you've been killing yourself for decades to afford to live in a place like this. So there is this nirvana fallacy, the idea that government would indeed fulfill these good ideas.

A lot of the imperfections attributed to market processes are actually to do with that compromised condition where the state interferes and doesn't allow the market rationale to come through. The market isn't perfect, but as it is now, market failures are not actually market failures; they're government failures.

So that's my intuition. There's been a learning curve for me, particularly since 2008, to try out some of these explanations, to run with them, to see where they go, to probe them and read into those libertarian discourses. It's a very sophisticated discourse. I was brought up on the left. In your normal educated upbringing, you're sort of eased into leftist ideologies. You take that nearly with your mother's milk, and you rarely question this. And that's why you don't read these [neoliberal] authors: because you've been castigated; you've heard they're right wing and there's no intellectual merit in them.

MFG: Well, I grew up as a Republican from Nebraska, so I'm coming from a different place. He started out left and went right, and I started out right and went left.

PS: So for me, it was a discovery. [Friedrich] Hayek is a super-sophisticated writer. He's a political economist and philosopher. And there's this whole world which I discovered and find useful.

When we did Parametric Urbanism, we wanted to have order and variation. It seemed at first as if we needed more government backing — more empowerment of these visions of a more intricate order. And then we had moments on master plan projects where we realized that we don't get that backing [from the government]. So I started rethinking: Is there a way of creating urban order via a bottom-up process of distributed decisions?

I imagine myself in the position of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, with Kubitschek, and I'm getting handed that power to lay out, rationally and beautifully, the egalitarian, ideal city of Brasília. Why did that process of development run into crisis? Why did this form of running society and laying out the urban landscape stop? Why was it substituted? Why did we have a [Margaret] Thatcher? Because Britain was switching the light off, basically!

I'm fascinated to think that the agility of a bottom-up, responsive elaboration through multiple authors could generate a coherent, nature-like urban texture.

MFG: Are you calling neoliberalism bottom-up?

PS: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, neoliberalism is a bit compromised. I'm much more radical than that, more libertarian with an anarcho-capitalist vision of society. Or at least moving toward that direction, changing the system by withdrawing some of the regulatory and redistribution powers, and leading back to bottom-up actors. This could be charities; this could be not-for-profits; this could be free associations, as well as entrepreneurs.

MFG: Well, you want to dial it back in London, but if you look at a place that never had them, like Houston, you wouldn't advocate for cities all becoming Houston.

PS: I'm not sure.

MFG: You're flying out of Houston tonight, have you been there before?

PS: No, I have not.

AS: Oh, you have to see Houston.

PS: The London we love wasn't a creation of a strong government, of a social democratic government. The London we love is a creation, actually, of private planning. It was the Great Estates. It was planning, but it was private planning. It was competitive. It was some kind of market process, and managed market process, let's say, but privately — there wasn't a strong state in the 18th century, 19th century in London.

AS: In my view, if it's going to be a bottom-up process, there is some cultural work that needs to be done in order to develop a consciousness that would want an architecture that would be progressive in some way. I think the ideas of the left in this country are positioned to protect these ideas of progressivism. But I suppose if you have ideal clients, they'll want to do something new.

PS: What I find interesting, if you look at this milieu around the tech clusters in Palo Alto and around the Bay Area, [is] where are they going, politically? There's a lot of libertarianism.

MFG: And mostly terrible architecture. That libertarian streak produces 20-year-olds who want a Tuscan house that's pre-filled with Pottery Barn furniture the day they buy it. Those guys are not investing in urbanism and architecture. The urbanism in Silicon Valley is among the worst.

PS: They are into progress. What you find when you look at places like Google and the startup cultures is very, very flat hierarchies, very open networks — it's very much self-directed work.

MFG: —often cited as misogynist, anti-urbanist—

PS: No, no, no. Hey, hey, hey. Come on. You look at Google: 20 percent free time; you work 80 percent on an allocated project under some internal management alignment, and 20 percent just gifted, and given to network —

MFG: That's not free time. That's 20 percent free time to work for Google — on ideas that ultimately benefit them. They're very explicit about that.

PS: I think one thing that we all aim for is prosperity — which is material freedom to work less, to have more — and self-directed work. Nobody wants a line manager or boss breathing down their neck. You want to explore. You want to be creative.

MFG: It's cynical. Putting beanbags and ping-pong tables and beer in your office so people spend more time at the office, and you think that's free time? That's cynical.

PS: I'm talking about something else. I'm talking about, if you have 20 percent — that means one day a week; whether you overwork or not, that should be up to you. If you have eagerness, you have passion, you want a career, you want to retire at 45, why not give yourself 16 hours? Who is this idiotic, empty bureaucrat who feels bad, maybe, because he's only putting in six hours, who wants to prevent somebody else to work 16 hours? That's an absurdity! It's unmanageable. It's not helping anybody. So let's get it out of the way. The vilification of Google, for me, is an absurdity. Because Google is the biggest prosperity engine of this planet, and we all live all the better for it.

MFG: But I would hardly consider it as utopian as you do. I wouldn't vilify Google, but I also wouldn't say it's—

PS: The research they're investing in. The excitement of all these projects they're doing.

MFG: For every one Google, there's a thousand corporations that are demanding a six percent return every year, which requires all middle management to work 60 hours a week.

PS: But what I'm talking about is a new era and the empowerment of a culture which needs these regulatory straightjackets out of the way. The problem is, with all of these startups, once they hit a certain number of people, new rules kick in, which kill these firms. And who's that helping? The left is desperate. They want to talk about self-exploitations of the cognitariat, but they're not going to get demonstrations out in the street, the cognitariat protesting their self-exploitation. Are you kidding? They're on their last leg. They have nothing to do. Their audience is running away from them, and they're clinging on, desperately, and they become ever more aggressive. For me, the left are the last Mohicans of a dying, desperate, turning-violent group. And nearly all my old activist comrades and left intellectual friends

— I was on the left — are moving with me, and pulled away from socialism. I'm not the only one. There's a whole new intellectual ferment.

MFG: Like Dick Cheney, Steve Bannon—

PS: No, no. It's all the ex-Trotskyites who end up becoming libertarians. That should tell you something.

AS: It's true. You have places like U.C. Berkeley, where you can't even go speak if you don't toe the line.

MFG: Yeah, we both feel the same way about that. There are no arguments; there's no discourse — ironically — in places that are historically defined by it.

PS: There are no arguments. There's only vilification.

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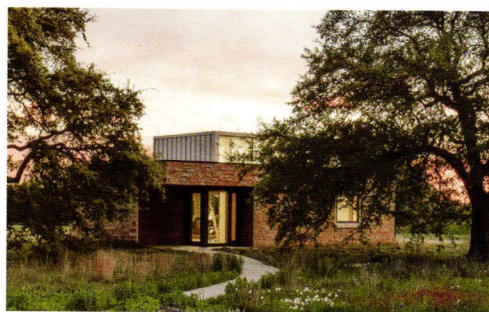
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Studio, Prairie Chapel Ranch by David Heymann

The studio's south wall opens up, providing a view of the landscape. A winding walkway connects it to the main house.



Located near Crawford, the Prairie Chapel Ranch is the retreat of George W. and Laura Bush. For a period of eight years, it was popularly known as the Western White House. Architect and UT Austin professor David Heymann, FAIA, designed the ranch's main building while W was running for president. The Bushes wanted it to be a discreet getaway, a place to recover from frenetic political life and spend time with friends and family. One story tall, clad in rough-cut Lueders limestone, and capped by a standing-seam metal roof, it is indeed unassuming. Russian leader Vladimir Putin evidently razed Bush over the home's modesty. But the structure's sustainable design — which includes geothermal heating and cooling, rainwater collection, and passive solar measures — was cutting edge for its day, and its careful siting, gently curving plan, covered outdoor circulation scheme, and lack of an obvious main entry (every room in the house opens to the outside)

present a lifestyle proposition that is something beyond the ordinary.

After leaving office, W famously took up painting, and he recently hired Heymann to design an art studio for the property. Sited a stone's throw from the main house, the new building is a clear relative of the existing structure — though with a tad more formal adventurousness. Clad in the same stone, it is topped by a light box with north- and south-facing baffled clerestory windows that fill the interior with diffuse daylight. An electrical lighting system replicates this quality of light at night. Heymann designed what he calls “little distractions” into the building: side windows that provide views back to the main house, so that W can walk over and see what's going on. But when he's in the painting area, underneath the light box, the artist can be utterly immersed in his work. And should he choose to paint from nature, the north wall slides away into pockets, and sliding glass and screen doors open up this section to a shaded patio and a sweeping view of the landscape.