

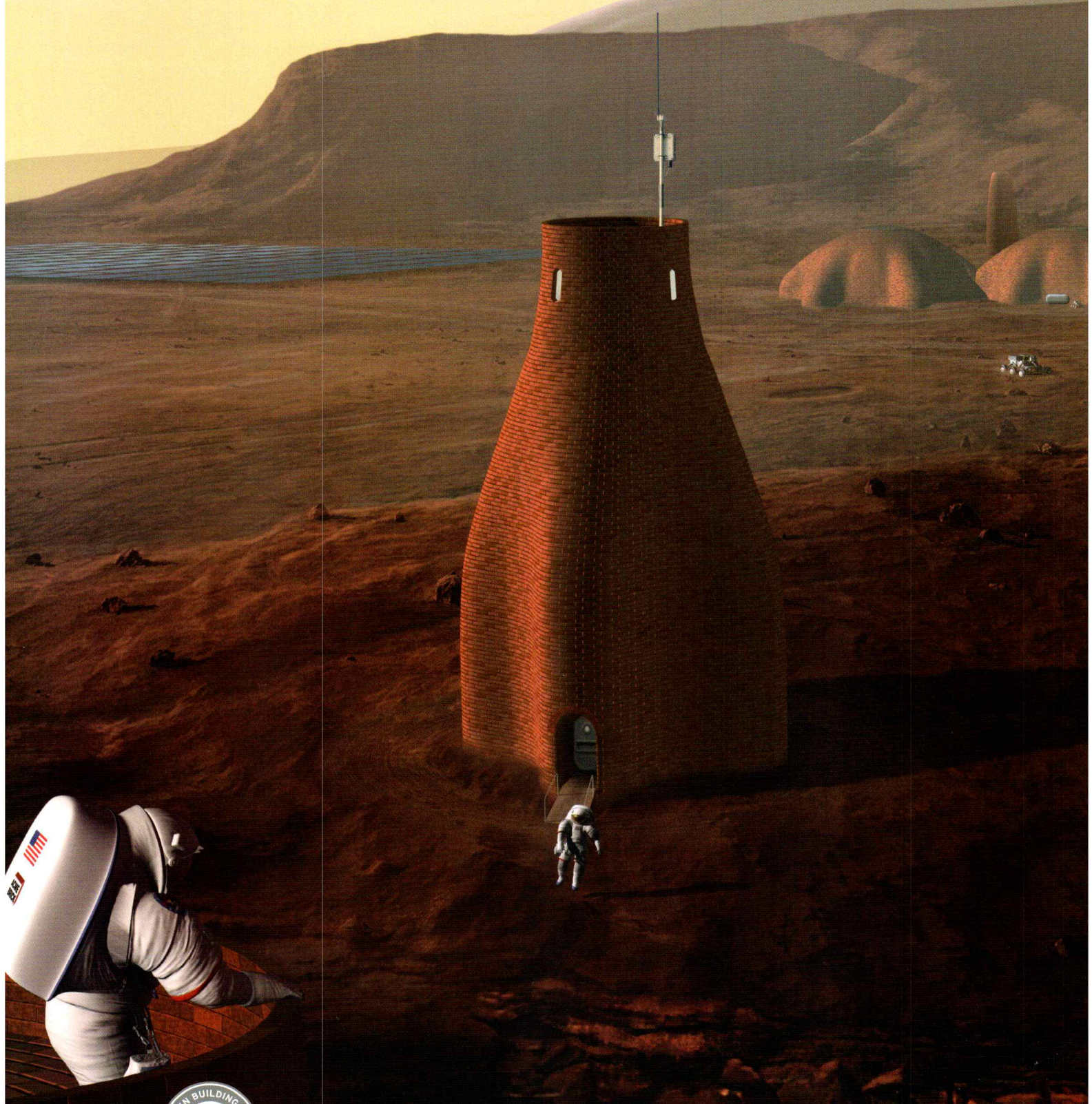
# Texas Architect





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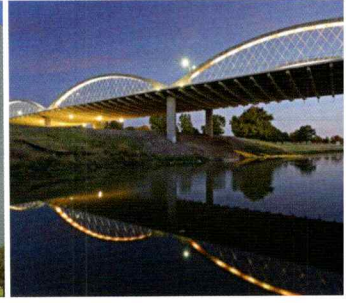
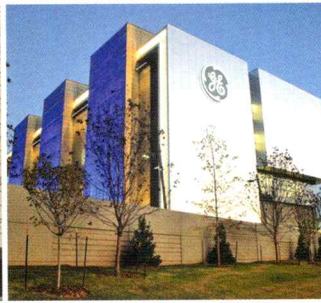
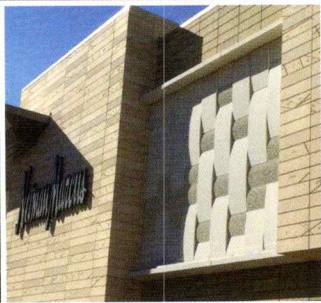
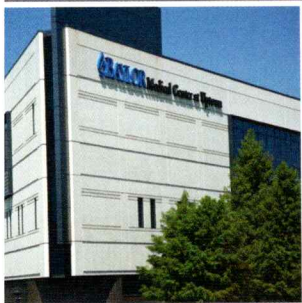
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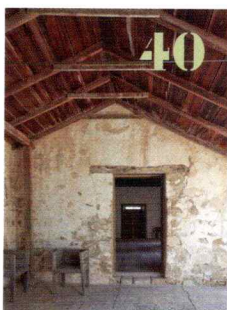
▣ [txamagazine.org](http://txamagazine.org)  
 "The future, always  
 so clear to me,  
 has become like a  
 black highway at  
 night. We were in  
 uncharted territory  
 now... making up  
 history as we went  
 along." – Sarah  
 Connor, Terminator  
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# 69 06

### On The Cover

*The Independent, by  
 Rhode Partners, a  
 residential tower that is  
 Austin's tallest building,  
 for the moment (p. 32).*

### Authenticity/Repositioning





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## Perpetual Frontier

by Aaron Seward

“Welcome to the frontier,” is what I say at the Austin airport when picking up friends visiting from out of state. It’s part humor, part deadly serious — like the urbanites here who wear cowboy hats and boots and drive big trucks. It’s been 174 years since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended hostilities with Mexico, 144 years since the Comanche surrendered to the United States Army, and 50 years since ground controllers in Houston saluted the first people to land on the moon — a moment at which President Richard Nixon said all people on earth were for the first time one — and yet all this peace and progress has not resulted in a landscape predominated by civility.

This is especially evident in Texas’ built environment and in the customs and laws that shape it. O’Neil Ford took a look around the state and saw in the profusion of cheap, thoughtless construction a corollary of the frontier mentality that motivated men to plunder the land for immediate gain without consideration of future generations. Lars Lerup, bewildered upon his arrival in Houston, saw a much older antecedent: Sparta.

Compared to Athens — the wellspring of Western art, philosophy, and politics, where the accomplishments of civilization were writ in stone edifices whose grandeur continues to impress us today — Sparta built little of lasting value, and its cities (small towns, really) sprawled across the plains of the Peloponnese. Sparta’s power was based not upon its urbane sophistication, but upon its skill at waging war, specifically the speed at which its phalanxes moved. “The similarities with the modern suburb are uncanny, and the evolution is undeniable,” Lerup writes; “the Spartan phalanx of soldiers in formation has been exchanged for the high school band, or (for a more functional simile) a loose formation of real estate agents demonstrating von Hayek’s concept of ‘spontaneous order’ by comparative price setting.”

This speed is our virtue and the terror we rain upon the world. What’s everyone in such a rush to do? Make money, obviously. But in that mad dash a lot is left out — civility, civilians, civic space. The pathway for the meteoric economic growth of the Texas Miracle has been made by a phalanx of deregulation and



*A cat enjoys its perch in an old gun port in the walls of the recently restored Treviño-Urbe Rancho in San Ygnacio.*

“right-to-work” laws. The societies of Athens and Sparta rested on cushions of slave labor. Though chattel slavery has been illegal here for 154 years, our society is being lifted up by an underclass of people, mostly Latino, who live in conditions that share some aspects of those the slaves faced. As recorded in the new Chelsea Hernandez film, “Building the American Dream,” 50 percent of construction workers in Texas are undocumented; one in five of them is being denied payment for work they completed; every two-and-a-half days, a construction worker in the state dies as a result of injuries sustained on the job.

In my childhood conception, which was informed by Hollywood and other tall tales of the Wild West, the dangers of life on the frontier were tolerated because it was also a place of great freedom. Freedom continues to be a powerful concept in the American mind. It underpins the warped reasoning of right-to-work laws: People are free to work without having to join a union, and corporations are free to exploit labor without union protections.

Perhaps what we need is a different way of thinking about frontier freedoms, one more conducive to the civilized treatment of our fellow human beings and the creation of a civilizing

built environment. For this, I suggest looking to a discipline outside of architecture, but one that is often considered in the same thought: music, namely, free music. Free music is improvised music. There are no songs, no standards, no set structures. It grew out of jazz music in the 1950s, pushed forward by musicians (including the Texan Ornette Coleman) who wanted to express themselves without the weight of the rules and regulations of the establishment that preceded them. In spite of the lack of rules, free musicians still have to play well as an ensemble, and connect to their audience. The spirit is one of intense togetherness and support, made all the more poignant by the fact that no one knows exactly where they’re going, only that they’re all along for the ride. To paraphrase the saxophone player Evan Parker, “You decide what the rules are; you have total responsibility; it’s the most difficult, most challenging, most rewarding, the most fun, the most sad, because you are the one that determines all the rules.”



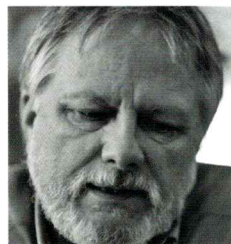
## Contributors



**Sophie Allece Hollis** is a senior architecture major at The University of Texas at Austin. She is also pursuing a minor in journalism. The newest addition to the *TA* team, Sophie currently serves as editorial intern. In this issue, she discusses Austin's new tallest building, *The Independent* (p. 38).



**Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA**, is the manager of research and innovation at Overland Partners. She serves on the TEDx San Antonio Programming Committee and is a member of the TxA Publication Committee. Read her take on the architectural drawings of Lauretta Vinciarelli (p. 20).



**W. Mark Gunderson, AIA**, has been a sole practitioner in Fort Worth for 34 years. His recent writing includes forewords for "Dallas Modern" and "Thirty Houses – Selected Residential Works of Architect Frank Welch," and he is a co-author of the newly released "Buildings of Texas, Volume 2." Read Gunderson's essay on placement in architecture on page 54.



**Andrew Barnes, AIA**, is the founder of Agent Architecture. He is an active participant in AIA Dallas and part of the leadership of Design Future Dallas, an organization of young designers who explore new visions for urbanism in their city. His article, "Nonconformist," discusses the 2019 O'Neil Ford Medal for Design Achievement recipient, Gary Cunningham, FAIA (p.48).

## Letters



*The following comments were emailed to the editor.*

**Aaron:** I wanted to send a note congratulating you on recent issues of *Texas Architect*. I really enjoy the more in-depth articles like the Kasita piece in the [July/August 2019] issue. I also thought the current issue did a good job of showing equal coverage for a TON of winners. (I assume this is the most awards ever issued in one year?) But the main thing that made me want to send this note was the editor's page in the [September/October 2019] issue. It is great to read, thoughtful, AND a thought-provoking note from the editor — not just a rundown of what is in the current issue, like some magazines include. This one in particular was poignant, and having quotes from O'Neil Ford made it even more relevant and interesting in the context of our time. Keep it up!

**Darwin Harrison, Assoc. AIA**

*Darwin Harrison Design, Austin*

**Hi Aaron** – Your aunt Patricia here. I'm just reading and check'n out all your amazing work. I just received the latest magazine today... September/October 2019. I enjoy looking thru the book and looking at all the nice, pretty pictures (buildings). So nice and clean... Uncle Jess and I are always thinking of you. Take care. Love you, Patricia. P.S. Keep up the great work.

**Patricia Moore**

*Richmond*

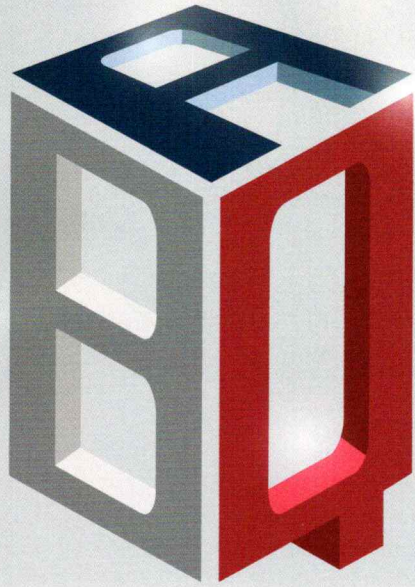
### Corrections

On p. 16 of the September/October 2019 issue, the wrong image was placed for Studio Gang's planning study for the Seaholm Intake facility. The image should be attributed to Surroundings.

On p. 60 of the September/October 2019 issue, an incorrect description for the Epoch Winery was printed. The correct description has been updated on [txamagazine.org](http://txamagazine.org).

*As with many other proposals that have been developed for the site, Studio Gang's planning study for Austin's Seaholm Intake recommends a walkway along the water's edge.*





# AUSTIN

BLOCK & QUARRY

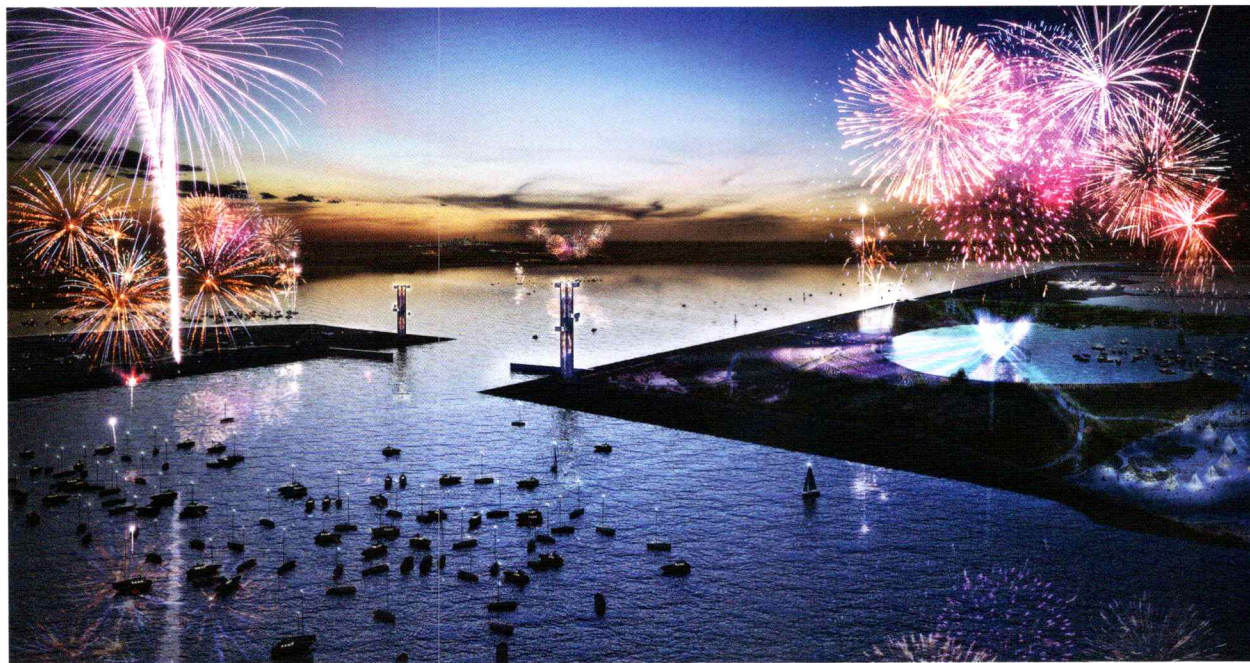
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*Celebratory nighttime view of Rogers Partners' Galveston Bay Park proposal, a potential public amenity-cum-storm surge protection infrastructure designed in collaboration with Walter P Moore and the Rice University-led Severe Storm Prediction, Education, and Evacuation from Disasters Center.*

## Time to Act

by D. Michael Hellinghausen, AIA

One year ago, I said that I saw myself as a messenger. You may have seen some of my messages this past year in the form of these president's letters. This time, I have a request.

I have alluded to some serious changes coming our way. That is an understated way of describing our situation. In reality, our world and our profession are facing truly existential challenges.

You probably already know that climate change sits at the top of the list. It is the big, scary thing coming that no one really wants to think about. But we must. There are really just three options available to us. We can achieve net-zero carbon emissions and hope the climate stabilizes; we can acclimate ourselves to a more dangerous and uncomfortable planetary existence; or we can suffer. Given the time constraints, the likeliest outcome is some combination of all three. As architects, we have a huge contribution to make to the first two options. We must now begin to do that thing we do — problem-solve through design. If ever we needed to design for sustainability and resilience, the time is now. We must begin in earnest to create resilient and sustainable buildings, communities, water supplies, food supplies, energy supplies, mobility and transportation, and ecological health.

Second on the list is technology, which is advancing at a rate nearly impossible to keep up with. Our devices are tracking our every move and our every decision. Vehicles are already driving themselves, and may soon be flying themselves. Artificial intelligence will soon begin to play a role in building design. And buildings may soon be constructing themselves — or, at the very least, they will be constructed radically differently than they are today.

This past October, at our Annual Conference in Galveston, Skylar Tibbits captivated us with his presentation on the intersection of research and practice. He is pioneering a way to print objects that can reshape themselves, or self-assemble, over time. According to Tibbits, nearly everything can be programmed, including building materials, bringing the potential to revolutionize design and construction.

Population growth and migration is the third big item on the list. The population of Texas will practically double by 2050 — a very tangible timeframe for most of us. We are expected to grow from 28 million, in recent years, to perhaps 54 million, which does not include any significant climate or political migration. Where will all of these people be? The demographic data tell us that 75 percent of them will be in our urban areas. The thought of cramming another 26 million people into Texas cities within 30 years should cause us real trepidation. The needs and demands of

such an exploded population boggle the mind. Where will they live? Where will they go to school? Where will they work and shop, and how will they get to those places? How and what will they eat and drink? And what will power all of this?

Is all of this just too daunting to contemplate? No. We're architects and designers. This is what we do. We joined this profession because we love solving huge, complex problems. This time, the project is to save the world.

No, we didn't ask for this assignment, and we might prefer to decline the job. Unfortunately, that's not an option this time. Business-as-usual will begin to disappear over the coming decade. I ask that we not argue and debate whether these things are truly happening, or ponder and consider for just a few more years. We can no longer merely watch and wait. It's time to act.

We must recognize the power of what we do, and that it is the only real answer to the challenge. We must create a different future than the one barreling down on us. We also owe it to those who came before, and to those to whom we will bequeath what we create. We must leave the world, and the profession, better than we found it, not worse.

I urge you to be heard, to be seen, and to be engaged in this work.

D. Michael Hellinghausen, AIA, is a principal and COO of OMNIPLAN in Dallas, and the 2019 TxA president.



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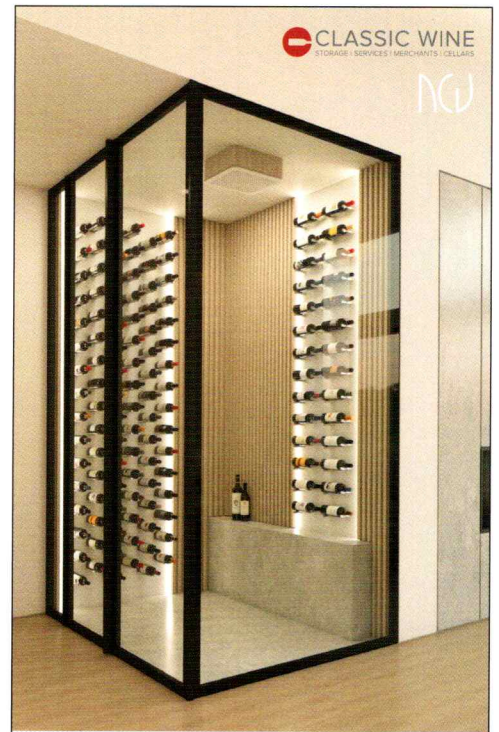
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*Gurley Place at Jubilee Park, by bcWORK-SHOP, encourages older, long-term residents to invest in a community with a shrinking population.*

### Dallas' Office of Homeless Solutions Moves to Change Perceptions of Affordable Housing

“City of Dallas putting a homeless shelter 2-3 blocks from our community” read the email subject line. The email went on to encourage residents to attend an upcoming meeting to voice concerns. The meeting, held two days later at a public library in the middle-class neighborhood of Lake Highlands, was so packed that attendees lined the lobby outside the room. The presentation got off to a shaky start with a series of technical issues: The mic didn’t work, and the informational video about homelessness wouldn’t play. Monica Hardman, director of the Office for Homeless Solutions (OHS), finally resorted to yelling her presentation, and was almost immediately beset by audience objections — fears of declining property values and increasing crime, “Send them to Highland Park!” was one comment, another bemoaned the city’s lack of innovation. Some accused the city of trying to sneak the “projects” in under residents’ noses. A week later, T.C. Broadnax, the city manager, announced that the office would put things on hold to reassess its approach.

Dallas, like many cities, has experienced an uptick in rates of homelessness. In January 2019, Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance’s point-in-time count showed a nine-percent increase in individuals experiencing homelessness in Dallas County and

an 11 percent increase in those considered chronically homeless. Of the 4,538 individuals counted, 1,452 were living on the street, with the remainder in shelters or transitional housing facilities.

Advocates agree that the solution to homelessness is homes, but despite significant population growth in Dallas, home prices continue to rise while affordable housing options remain stagnant. Dallas has been criticized for having a disjointed strategy on homelessness. Indeed, homeless services were spread across several departments with little communication until OHS was established in 2017. The same year, voters approved a \$20-million bond package (Prop J) to support services for the homeless. Many hoped the time had finally come for a visionary strategic plan.

OHS, with a multi-faceted approach to homelessness, brought about the Lake Highlands meeting. It states four goals — Prevent, Protect, Promote, and Partner. Of these, two are short-term efforts to increase the number of beds in existing shelters and clear zoning hurdles so emergency inclement weather shelters can be more easily established. Two are long-term strategies: One will implement a rental subsidy program focused on women and children. The other — the Prop J-funded track that resulted in the Lake Highlands community meeting — aims to create 1,000 supportive housing units over the next three to five years.

The idea is to disperse the units throughout Dallas to avoid concentrating a vulnerable population in one place. Land already owned by the city — 409 sites total — was prioritized, though most of these locations were removed from consideration immediately because they are in floodplains or are slated for future parks or fire stations. Sites were also evaluated for proximity to important services and mass transportation. This is how the city arrived at the 12-acre site in Lake Highlands and two smaller plots in Old East Dallas.

Spreading affordable housing throughout the city has been — and will certainly continue to be — difficult in Dallas, as it requires buy-in from each affected neighborhood. If the Lake Highlands meeting is an indication, it will be a long slog for OHS, unless they can first overhaul public sentiment, which is exactly what they hope to do. Their charge is to dispel myths about homelessness in hopes of combatting the all-too-common “not in our backyard” mentality. Stereotypes of the homeless abound, but far from being due to laziness, mental illness, or addiction, homelessness often ensues when, for example, people can’t afford rising housing costs. Health problems, sexual orientation issues, and domestic violence assaults can leave those affected without housing. While national statistics show the homeless population to consist primarily of male individuals, 33 percent are



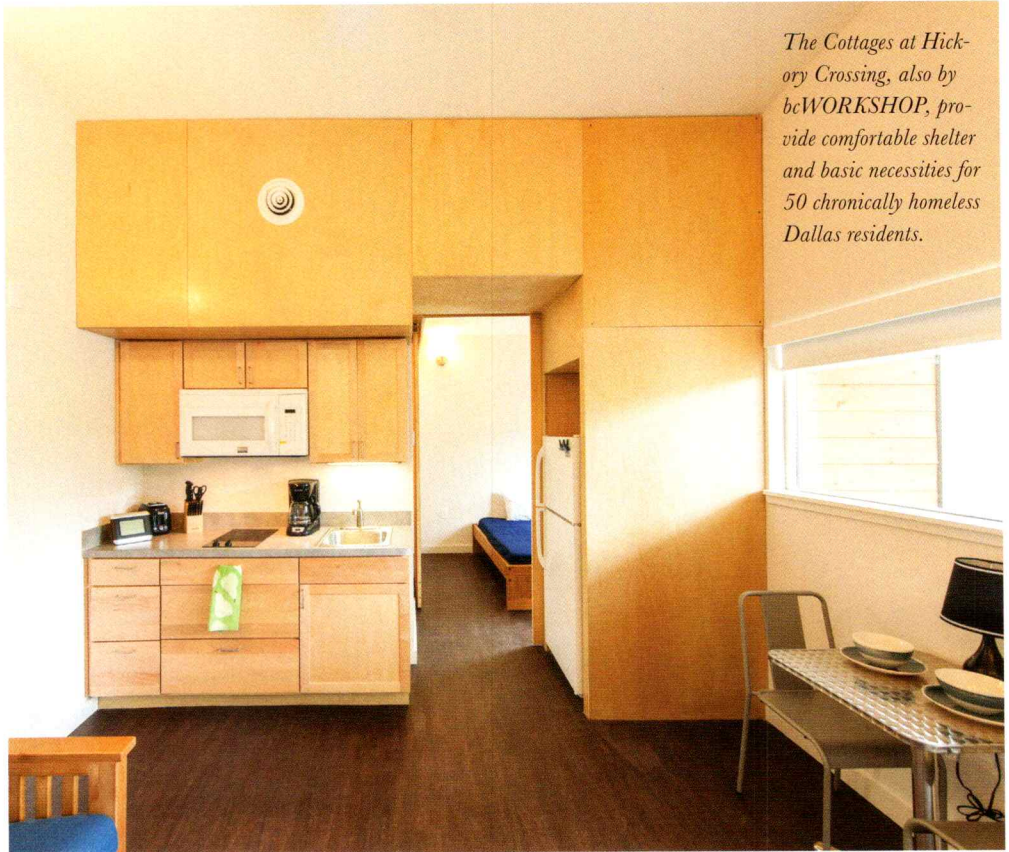
families with children, seven percent are youth, and seven percent are veterans.

Even assuming a fundamental shift in public opinion, the city would still need to educate citizens about preferred urban strategies. Terms like “permanent supportive housing” and “rapid rehousing” are too often misunderstood to mean “shelter.” At the Lake Highlands meeting, people repeatedly referred to city-proposed housing as “the projects,” and questions about rezoning reinforced residents’ limited understanding of those regulations. Groundwork needs to be laid so community input is productive — and, since housing is at issue, why are architects missing from Dallas’ process? In the early stages, architects can consult on site selection and programming; furthermore, they are valuable in gaining public support.

OHS has identified the need for partnerships to make their initiatives work; they are on a tight budget. Dallas may not be known for its examples of progressive affordable housing, but several examples exist, many built by CitySquare Housing. The nonprofit has constructed almost 1,000 units through its Housing First initiative. The Cottages at Hickory Crossing, a 2017 development designed by bcWORKSHOP, consists of 50 420-sf houses for the chronically homeless. An on-site community center offers wrap-around support services to residents. The nonprofit is responsible for several other buildings — a renovated high rise in downtown with 200 affordable units and commercial lease space, and a senior living facility in Oak Cliff. Another noteworthy project designed by bcWORKSHOP for Jubilee Park — Gurley Place — consists of 24 affordable housing units for the neighborhood’s 55+ population, which had been declining due to lack of affordable housing stock. These groundbreaking contemporary case studies illustrate the result of public-private partnerships, innovative funding, and architect-designed spaces that challenge stereotypes.

A comprehensive strategic plan to combat homelessness is long overdue in Dallas. With the establishment of OHS and taxpayer-approved funding in place, the city has taken early steps to bring new focus to the issue. As the wage gap widens, homelessness will continue to increase without action. Residents cannot afford to ignore the issue and should instead seize the opportunity to become partners in the process, changing the rhetoric from “them” to “us.”

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



*The Cottages at Hickory Crossing, also by bcWORKSHOP, provide comfortable shelter and basic necessities for 50 chronically homeless Dallas residents.*

## Q&A with Kengo Kuma

*Japanese architect Kengo Kuma visited Dallas for the completion of the new Rolex building in Harwood, which his firm designed. On August 19, Michael Friebele, Assoc. AIA, sat down with Kuma and other members of the design team to discuss his perspectives on architecture and experience designing a building for Texas. What follows is an edited version of that discussion.*

**Michael Friebele:** Why did you become an architect?

**Kengo Kuma:** The first Tokyo Olympics were in 1964 when I was 10 years old. Before then, I could not name a single architect. In fact, I wanted to be a veterinarian because I loved cats. But in 1964, my father took me to the Yoyogi National Gymnasium and I was so interested. He explained to me that Japanese architect Kenzo Tange had designed it, and I knew then that’s what I wanted to do.

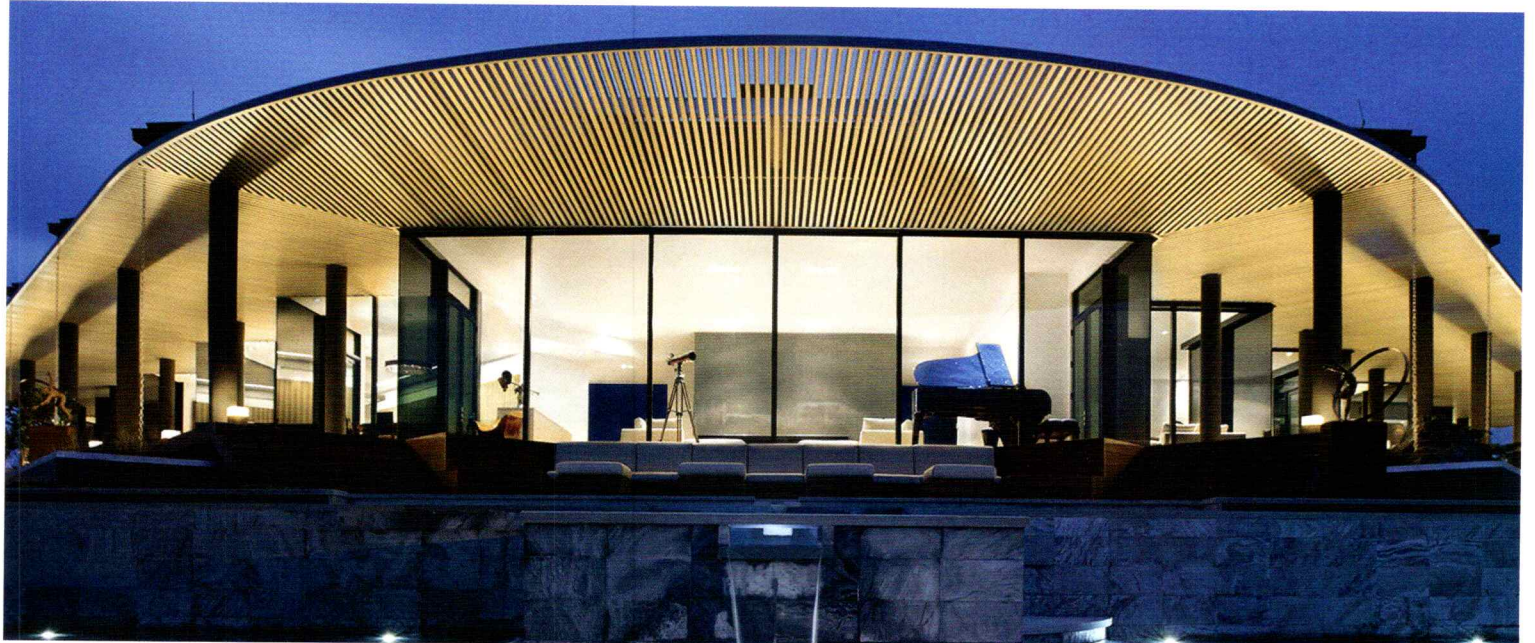
**MF:** When you first started out your practice, you made the decision to focus on craftsmanship and intimacy of scale. Could you talk about that time in your career and that decision?

**KK:** I started my practice in 1986. That year, the economy was booming, and I got many commissions. But suddenly, in 1990, the Japanese economy collapsed, and I didn’t have any work in Tokyo for 10 years. I’m very happy, though, because I traveled a lot to the countryside of Japan where many interesting craftsmen were working. During that decade, I worked with them on smaller projects, studying textures and materials. Since then, I have been able to learn from the tradition of place, the material of place and, without those experiences, I couldn’t achieve buildings like the Rolex building.

**MF:** How are you able to bring that research into practice to make a meaningful impact on the project?

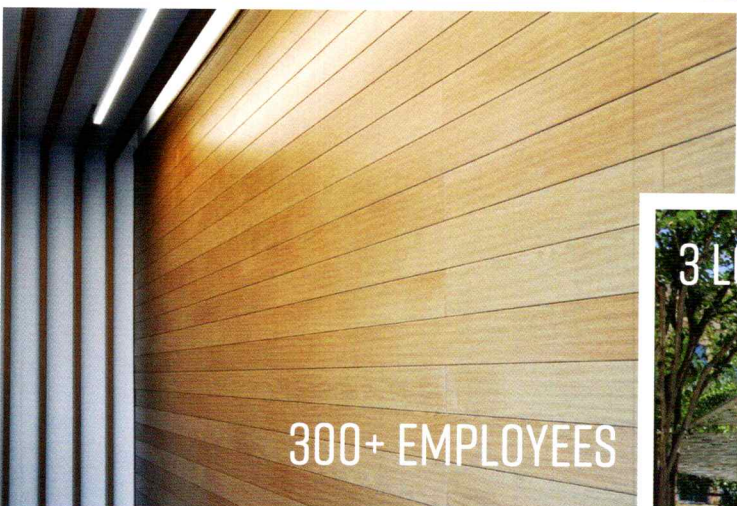
**KK:** We create a mockup for every project so I can feel the materiality. I don’t trust drawings; drawings are just lines, but mockups have material; they allow us to check effective natural light and shadow. Also, I often go to the construction site. In the 1980s, many star architects would send drawings to Japan without visiting because clients just wanted a brand, not architecture. And I saw how that produced buildings without any heart, so I try to visit the site as much as possible and communicate with locals directly.





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# Of Note

**MF:** Could you elaborate on some of the sustainable aspects and environmental responses shown in your work?

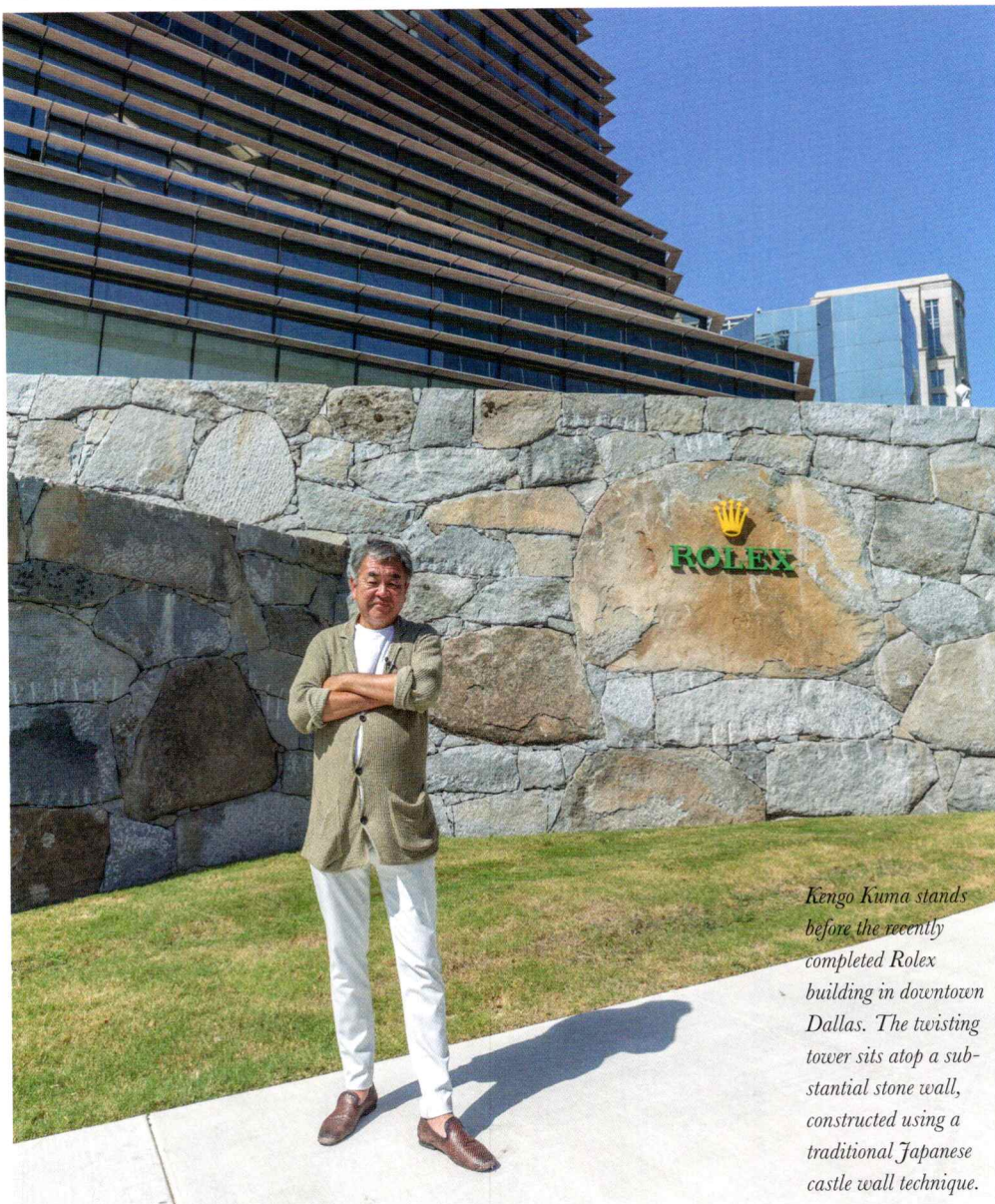
**KK:** The 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami were a big shock for us in Japan because we believed that concrete buildings could withstand natural disasters. During this time, we learned the weakness of concrete and observed the resilience of modest hill houses, designed in the 19th century with tsunamis in mind. This was a valuable lesson. We should respect nature. It should be the basis of architectural design. If we become arrogant, the building cannot survive.

**MF:** Your designs for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Stadium are presenting this new way of thinking in Japan and this new path forward. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that path?

**KK:** I felt that the 2020 stadium should be different, opposite that of the 1964 Olympics. The previous Olympic stadium was a huge concrete monument and, for that period, that kind of monument was really necessary to establish Japan's place in the world. But in 2020, we belong to a totally different period. Economy and population have changed greatly. Aging has become a very serious issue for Japan, but despite this, I wanted to find happiness in 2020. Our solution was to use local wood from every region of Japan to celebrate our country's diversity. The choice of wood as the primary material raised many questions. To counter concerns of cost and maintenance, I explained the success of the Hōryū-ji Temple in Nara. This seventh-century wooden temple has survived 1,400 years because of a thoughtful detail. Wood is used for the soffit, where it is protected from the sunlight and rain. Replaceable louvers have been carefully maintained all these years, allowing the temple to age beautifully. Once I explained that, the questions stopped.

**MF:** How do you go about understanding place?

**KK:** For the Rolex building, the most difficult issue was how to solve the gap of the site. And traffic played a part in that. It's a very noisy street, so our solution was to use a castle wall. The castle wall is part of the earth; it is part of the natural land, which creates a very different effect from a vertical concrete wall.



*Kengo Kuma stands before the recently completed Rolex building in downtown Dallas. The twisting tower sits atop a substantial stone wall, constructed using a traditional Japanese castle wall technique.*

**MF:** Upon your first visit to Dallas for this project, what were the immediate considerations?

**KK:** My first visit to Dallas was in 1985 when I was attending Columbia. My impression on my second visit to Dallas was that it looks totally different. How, in 30 years, had such a big change happened? From that, how to create a symbol for this "new Dallas" just became a theme of our project. And I think this is a very important project for American cities, because Harwood is trying to change American cities from a car culture. Harwood is trying to bring the European and Japanese city culture of intimacy and activity to the American city and showcase this philosophy in the Rolex building.

**MF:** What else have you seen change about Dallas over the last 30 years?

**KK:** What impressed me is the new food culture in Dallas. As always, antithetically, avant design is avant design and food is food. But now, however, they try to combine avant design and food culture and it's very important for future avant design. In Japan, now, we have many tourists. Every year it is increasing. Five years ago, the number of tourists visiting Japan was 15 million, but the target for next year is 40 million. And the food is very important for the tourists and for city life, and Dallas is showing a very good example of combining those two things, and the Rolex building has no restaurants, but around the Rolex building we have many eating places, and it's very important for Dallas.



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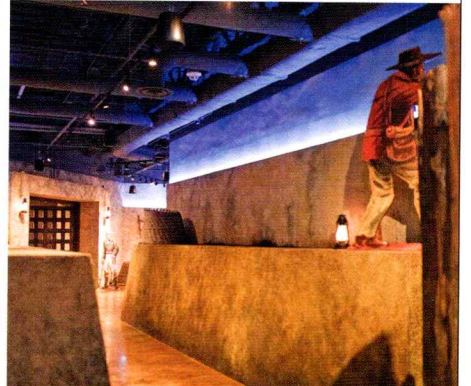
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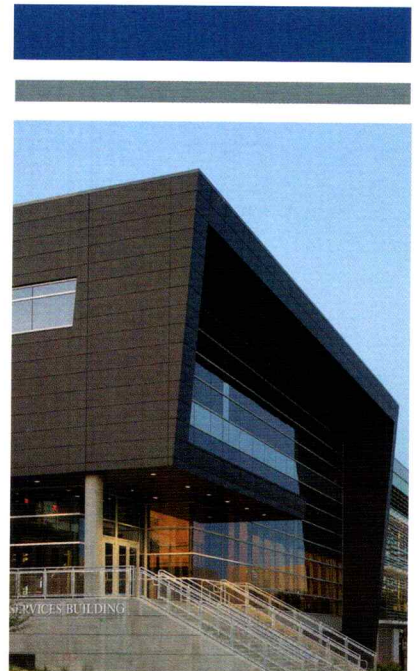


## **Battle for Texas: The Experience in Rivercenter Mall in San Antonio, Texas**

*This 22,000-square-foot interactive attraction educates visitors on the history of Texas and the battle of the Alamo through a sensory adventure. Halford Busby provided construction cost estimating services for this project.*

**ARCHITECT:** Sustaita Architects

**PHOTO CREDIT:** Battle For Texas: The Experience



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**2005**

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## NOVEMBER

### Sunday 3

#### EXHIBITION CLOSING

Miss Ima Hogg & Modernism  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Houston  
1001 Bissonnet St.

Houston

[mfah.org](http://mfah.org)

### Wednesday 6

#### LECTURES

UT Austin School of  
Architecture Lecture and  
Exhibition Series: Lydia  
Kallipoliti

Goldsmith Hall

310 Inner Campus Dr.

Austin

[soa.utexas.edu](http://soa.utexas.edu)

Rice University Architec-

tural Exhibition Lecture

Series: Farès el-Dahdah

Anderson Hall

Loop Rd.

Houston

[arch.rice.edu](http://arch.rice.edu)

### Thursday 7

#### LECTURE

Rice University Architec-

tural Exhibition Lecture

Series: Neeraj Bhatia

Anderson Hall

Loop Rd.

Houston

[arch.rice.edu](http://arch.rice.edu)

### Friday 8

#### LECTURE

Texas A&M Architecture-

For-Health Lecture

Series: Walter Marks and

Stacy Stevens

900 Houston St.

College Station

[arch.tamu.edu](http://arch.tamu.edu)

### Saturday 9

#### EVENT

Luminaria Contemporary

Arts Festival

Hemisfair

San Antonio

[luminariasa.org](http://luminariasa.org)

### Friday 15

#### LECTURE

Texas A&M Architecture-

For-Health Lecture

Series: Jeffrey Kent and

Edward Huckaby

900 Houston St.

College Station

[arch.tamu.edu](http://arch.tamu.edu)

### Tuesday 19

#### EVENT

People + Place Celebra-

tion — Design Awards

McNay Art Museum

6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.

San Antonio

[aiasa.org](http://aiasa.org)

### Friday 22

#### LECTURE

Texas A&M Architecture-

For-Health Lecture

Series: Jeffrey Stouffer

900 Houston St.

College Station

[arch.tamu.edu](http://arch.tamu.edu)

### Saturday 30

#### EXHIBITION CLOSING

Nari Ward: We the People

Contemporary Arts

Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Blvd.

Houston

[camh.org](http://camh.org)

## DECEMBER

### Sunday 1

#### EXHIBITION CLOSING

UT Austin School of

Architecture Exhibition:

Morphosis

Goldsmith Hall

310 Inner Campus Dr.

Austin

[soa.utexas.edu](http://soa.utexas.edu)

### Thursday 5

#### EVENT

Architects Black Friday

on a Thursday

AIA San Antonio

1344 S. Flores St.

San Antonio

[aiasa.org](http://aiasa.org)

### Saturday 7

#### EVENT

Annual Gingerbread

Build-Off

AIA Houston

900 Smith St.

Houston

[aiahouston.org](http://aiahouston.org)

### Tuesday 10

#### EVENT

Credit Carnival: Intel-

ligent Buildings

Architecture and Design

Exchange

325 N. St. Paul St.

Dallas

[aiadallas.org](http://aiadallas.org)

### Friday 13

#### EXHIBITION OPENING

Mix 'n' Mash

Mexic-Arte Museum

419 Congress Ave.

Austin

[mexic-artemuseum.org](http://mexic-artemuseum.org)

### Sunday 15

#### EXHIBITION OPENING

Norman Rockwell:

American Freedom

Museum of Fine Arts,

Houston

1001 Bissonnet

Houston

[mfah.org](http://mfah.org)

### Sunday 29

#### EXHIBITION CLOSING

Lily Cox-Richard: She-

Wolf + Lower Figs

Blanton Museum of Art

200 E. Martin Luther

King Jr. Blvd.

Austin

[blantonmuseum.org](http://blantonmuseum.org)

## SPOTLIGHT



Renegades: Bruce Goff and the American School of Architecture

Wright Gallery at Texas A&M College of Architecture

THROUGH December 12

Texas A&M University has announced its newest exhibition featuring the work of the visionary architect Bruce Goff and the American School of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma. Goff's legacy and teachings represent a fundamental contribution to contemporary American architecture. The exhibit was curated by Luca Guido, associate professor in architecture at the University of Oklahoma and leader of the American School of Architecture research project.



Chicago Architecture Biennial

Chicago Cultural Center

THROUGH January 5

The Chicago Architecture Biennial is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating an international forum on architecture and urbanism through exhibitions and public programs. Led by artistic director Yesomi Umolu with curators Sepake Angiama and Paulo Tavares, the third edition of the Biennial convenes the world's leading practitioners, theorists, and commentators in the field of architecture and urbanism to further explore, debate, and demonstrate the significance of architectural concepts in contemporary society. ■



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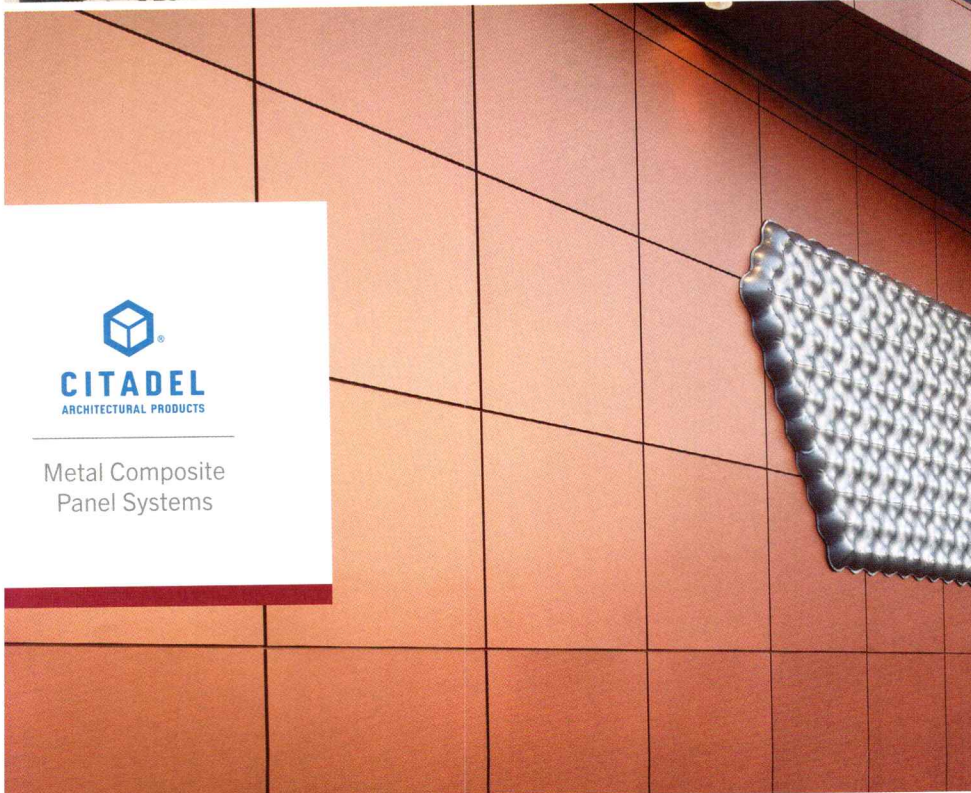
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-J. Mark Wolf, AIA, Vice President, JHP Architecture



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## Review

### Puglia Trans-Pecos

Lauretta Vinciarelli

Judd Foundation, New York City

March 30 – July 20, 2019

by Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA

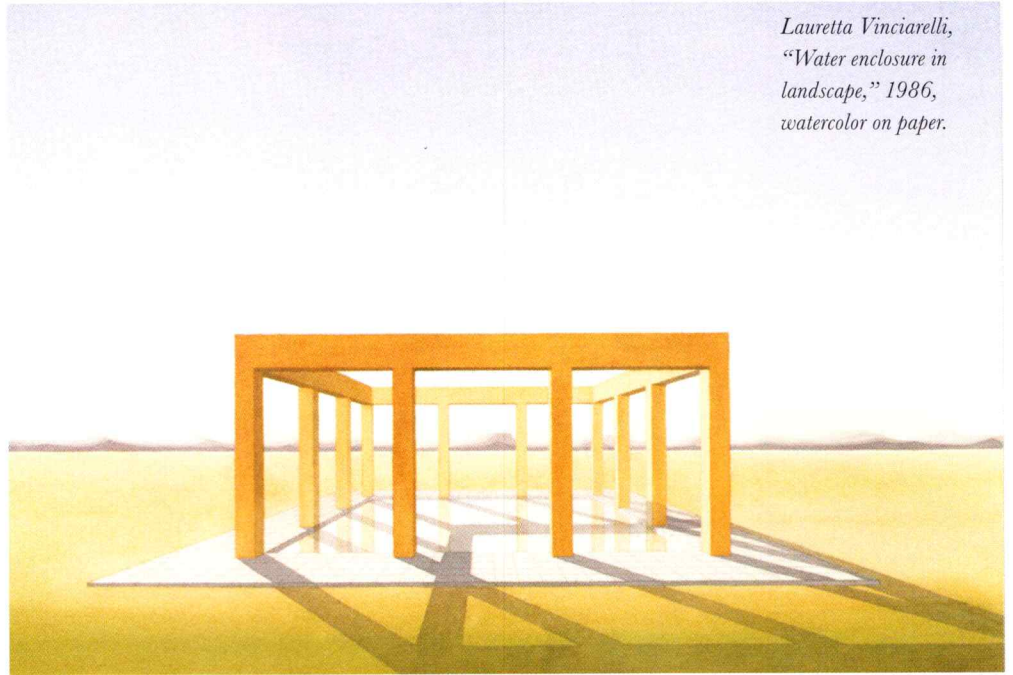
*Every landscape is, as it were, a state of the soul, and whoever penetrates into both is astonished to find how much likeness there is in each detail.*

— Henri-Frédéric Amiel

If identity is formed through thought and experience, then the drawings and watercolors featured in the Judd Foundation's recent exhibition, "Lauretta Vinciarelli," could be considered autobiographical snapshots in the life of artist and architect Lauretta Vinciarelli (1943–2011). The exhibit showcases 23 works produced from 1976 to 1986, a period marking the professional collaboration — as well as romantic partnership — between Vinciarelli and renowned artist Donald Judd (1928–1994). "Lauretta Vinciarelli is a figure in Judd's life, and in the general story about Judd that we don't often hear much about, although she's quite an important and interesting figure in Judd's thinking about architecture," says Caitlyn Murray, Judd Foundation's director of archives and programs. "We wanted to take the time to learn more about who she was as an architect, professor, and thinker."

Two key events transpired to make the exhibition possible. In 2012, Vinciarelli's husband, Peter Rowe, donated a collection of drawings and watercolors related to Marfa, which, combined with a collection of drawings purchased by Judd that were already part of the foundation's holdings, provided the content for the exhibition. Secondly, the restoration of 101 Spring Street in New York City — which hosts the Judd Foundation's only temporary exhibition space — allowed for the development of an exhibition program.

Italian-born Vinciarelli was a trailblazer for women in architecture, earning her doctorate in architecture and urban planning from the Università di Roma La Sapienza in 1971. She moved to New York City in 1969 and was the only woman to be given a solo show through Peter Eisenman's Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies. She was also an academic, teach-



Lauretta Vinciarelli,  
"Water enclosure in  
landscape," 1986,  
watercolor on paper.

ing at the Pratt Institute, the City College of New York, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Rice University, and Columbia, where she was also one of the first women to teach studio courses.

Vinciarelli studied common building typologies that persist through time, systematically analyzing them through her method of "drawing as research," as demonstrated in her drawings and watercolors produced in the 1970s and '80s. The courtyard typology in particular assumed a fundamental role in Vinciarelli's studies, dominating her research and drawings of that period. It was central to her education in Rome and a focus of her academic work in the housing studio at Columbia University.

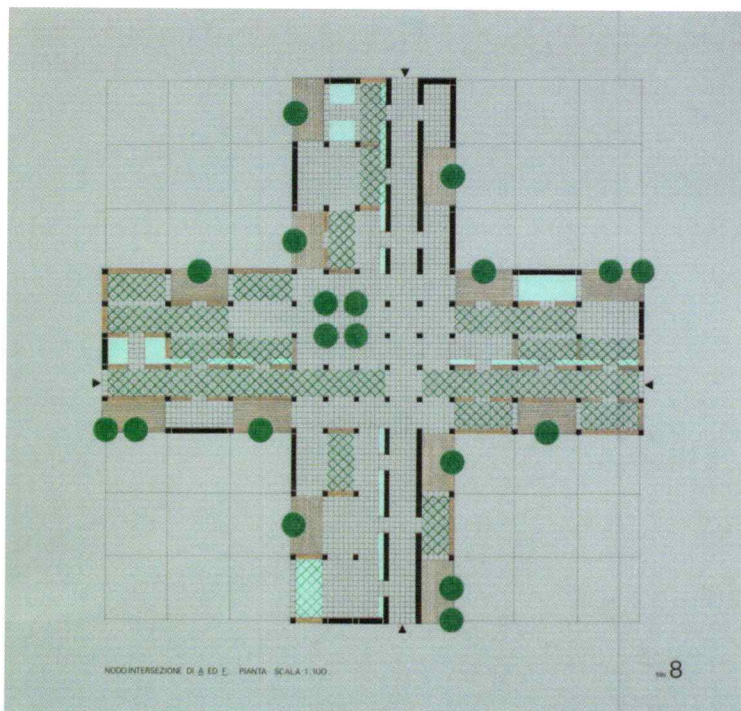
Scholar Rebecca Seifert's recent dissertation on Vinciarelli's work, which included a chapter on her collaboration with Judd, provided additional insight into the development of Vinciarelli's work during this time. Specifically, it looked at Vinciarelli's transatlantic move from Rome to New York to West Texas and how her architectural thinking was developed through her education in Rome and later manifested in her work for Marfa. Murray, who also served as curator for the exhibition, elaborates: "When I was organizing the exhibition, I really wanted to show works that gave insight into this transatlantic typological approach — one of the walls focusing on the Italian Puglia project in southern Italy and the rest of the drawings focusing on Marfa and this kind of abstracted watercolor desert — like

Marfa, but moving into more abstract shapes and abstracted landscapes."

The exhibition begins with the Puglia project (1975–1977), a series commissioned by the Puglia Regional Administration in Southern Italy and later purchased by Judd. The drawings present a series of iterative typological studies of gardens, dissecting the garden into its constituent elements — such as fences, pergolas, and passages — and studying variations on their gridded assembly. The gardens are designed as modules that can be recombined to form a variety of spatial fabrics. Many elements from the Puglia project can be found in La Mansana de Chinati, or "The Block," Judd's home and studio in Marfa.

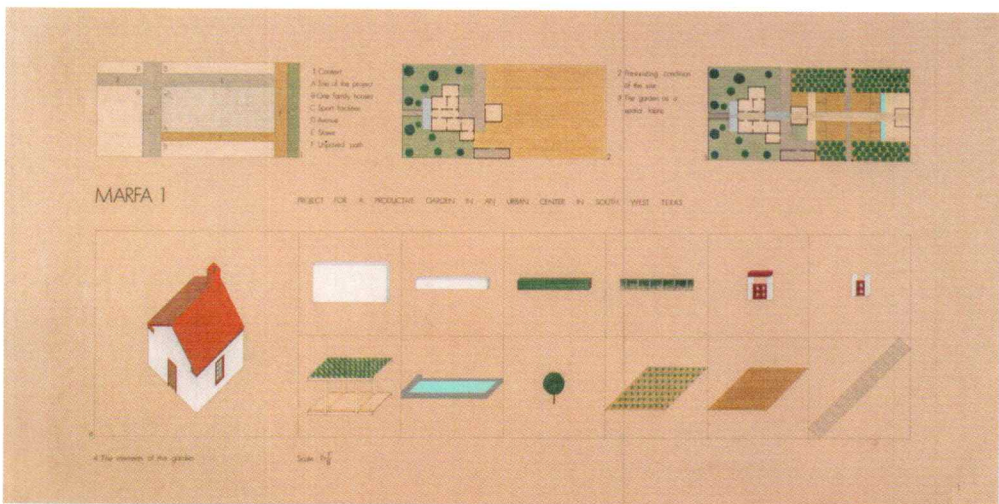
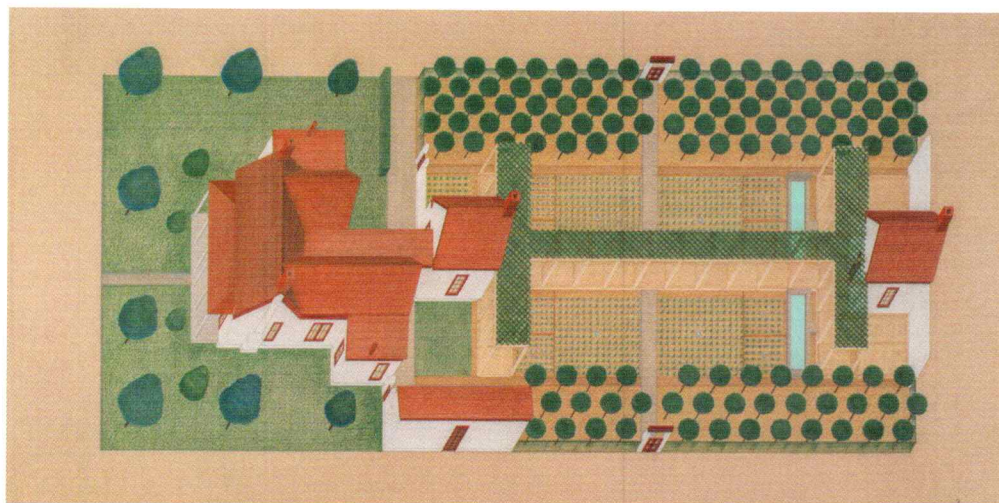
The exhibition continues with four drawings of the hangar and open and enclosed courtyard (1980), in which Vinciarelli explored variations on the hangar and courtyard typologies, noting that they could be combined and altered to suit the climate and context of Southwest Texas. Vinciarelli chose Marfa as the site for these case studies because of its small size, its mountainous desert location, and the clarity of its architectural tradition, which juxtaposes traditional Texas pitch-roofed houses with Mexican court houses, domestic buildings with industrial hangars. "Project for a Productive Garden in an Urban Center in South West Texas" (1979), a series of drawings purchased by Judd for a garden at his home, the Walker House, further expands the exhibition's body





**Left** *Lauretta Vinciarelli and Leonardo Fodera, “Puglia project,” 1975–1977, ink and colored pencil on mylar.*

**Below** *Lauretta Vinciarelli, “Project for a Productive Garden in an Urban Center in South West Texas,” c. 1979, colored pencil on tracing paper.*



of Marfa-based work. Though the project was unrealized, many elements of the proposal can be seen in structural elements that Judd realized at other sites.

Corresponding with the end of Judd and Vinciarelli’s formal collaboration, the exhibition concludes with a series of perspectival watercolors produced in 1986 that features three variations on the same water enclosure situated in a spare desert landscape. Though a departure in style and intent from the exhibition’s architectural studies, the paintings share the same iterative analytical approach present in her other works — the pool, coupled with a minimalist post-and-lintel structure, reminiscent of the architecture of ancient Rome; the pool elevated on a plinth; and the pool surrounded by a bilaterally symmetrical grove of trees.

The series marks a pivotal point in Vinciarelli’s career, where she transitioned from drawing as research to an artistic exploration of landscape, form, and mood. Seifert explains that the paintings “start to get a little more surreal. They move from the strict architectonic type of drawing into something more evocative.” This transition was evident not only in her selection of subject matter, but also in materials, moving from hard materials, like colored pencil and ink on mylar, to softer materials, such as Derwent colored pencils (a brand typically used by fine artists rather than architects) and watercolors on board.

As has happened with many other women who have collaborated with male colleagues, Vinciarelli’s contributions have been largely overshadowed by Judd’s work, and often they are entirely unrecognized by the greater design community. This show brings to light the beauty, rigor, and deeply influential work of a great architect, artist, and thinker. “One of the reasons this exhibition is so important is that we wanted to highlight Lauretta’s work on its own as a really interesting approach to architecture and thinking about space,” Murray says. “But we also wanted to better understand Judd and their work together, or ways in which his work was influenced by Lauretta’s thinking and her deep knowledge of Roman architectural forms. We were really happy to present these works and to be responsible stewards of it. For me, it’s about bringing it out into the world for people to learn about it, study, and enjoy.”

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



WHAT HAPPENED TO

# VALUE ENGINEERING?

When the concept of value engineering was first conceived in the 1940s, the aim was to find real value through careful analysis of products and components. This was accomplished by either improving performance without increasing cost or reducing cost without sacrificing performance. It was understood that value could only be created if functionality and durability remained the priority.

Today, value engineering in construction has fallen far from its origins, with products being chosen and changed out simply because they are cheaper, many times sacrificing performance and longevity. This new process is no longer about creating actual value. Acknowledging that budget is always a concern, there must still be a better way.

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by Rita Catinella Orrell

This roundup of lighting products — all illuminated by LEDs — includes an interactive, customizable light wall and a small-scaled, outdoor fixture inspired by the work of Arne Jacobsen.



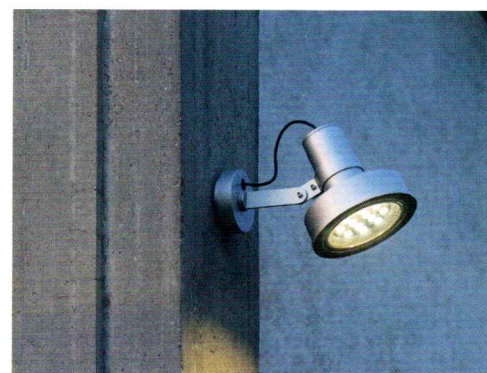
**Asana**  
Estiluz  
estiluz.com

Inspired by a form of yoga called asanas, Asana is a floor lamp composed of three multifunctional arms that can be arranged in various positions. Designed by Barcelona-based OiKo Design Office, the lamp uses an acrylic diffuser and integrated dimmable LEDs on one “stem” to provide direct and indirect light for a range of interior spaces, including lobbies, hotel rooms, restaurants, and lounges. Accessories can be added to make the lamp serve as a small table, menu holder, or lectern.



**Everbright Interactive Light Wall**  
Everbright  
everbright.io

Everbright is a screen of round dials that can be turned in either direction to create a rainbow of LED colors. The light wall can serve as an interactive visual feature in lobbies, museums, hotels, and other spaces. Everbright’s pixels were reengineered in 2018 to offer greater interactivity and performance and a more expansive color palette. While intended as an open-ended device for creativity, the wall can also run pre-set animations. It is made with a moisture- and UV-resistant, highly durable engineered wood product called Valchromat.



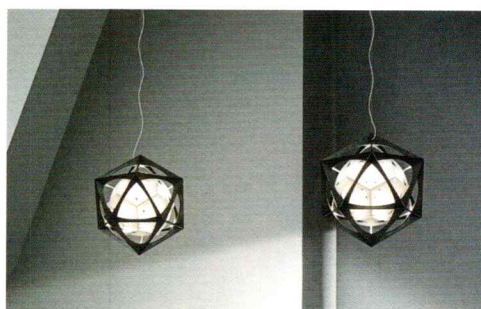
**Arne S**  
Landscape Forms  
landscapeforms.com

In partnership with Santa & Cole, Landscape Forms has expanded its Arne line of lighting fixtures inspired by the work of Danish architect and designer Arne Jacobsen. The LED lighting collection now includes the smaller scaled Arne S outdoor fixture. Multiple asymmetric and symmetric distributions, a range of mounting styles and outputs, clear and diffused lenses, indirect lighting capabilities, and shielding are available to help architects and designers accentuate architecture and create a theatrical sense of space outdoors.



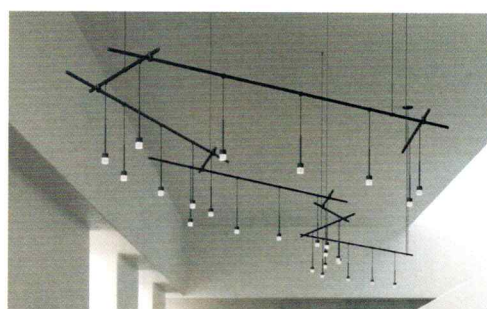
**Acoustic Trellis**  
LightArt  
lightart.com

LightArt’s Acoustic Collection offers a range of lighting products to help reduce noise distraction and mitigate privacy concerns. Ideal for large rooms with expansive ceilings, Acoustic Trellis is constructed of fins made of 50 percent post-consumer recycled PET felt in repeating angled patterns. The trellis offers an NRC rating of 1.00 and can be used in spaces where designers might have previously used a drop ceiling. The dimmable LED lamps are housed inside cylindrical frosted acrylic tubes with a removable bottom for easy re-lamping.



**OE Quasi Light**  
Louis Poulsen  
louispoulsen.com

Designed by Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, the OE Quasi Light is a large-scale pendant composed of two contrasting geometric shapes nested inside each other. The outer layer is a rigid, 90-percent-recycled aluminum frame in the shape of an icosahedron (a form with 20 faces and 12 vertices) while the inner layer is a white, polycarbonate dodecahedron (a form with 12 faces with 20 vertices) that seems to float inside. LEDs embedded at the vertices of the outer layer direct light towards the lamp’s core.



**Suspenders Power Precise**  
Sonneman  
sonnemanawayoflight.com

The modular Suspenders LED lighting system has been expanded to include 342 new components and 12 additional standard configurations. New Power Precise luminaires increase the overall output of light, doubling the lumens of previous components for the illumination of much larger spaces. Structural additions include suspended light power bars, which previously needed to be mounted directly onto the system; surface-mounted power drivers suited for lower ceilings; and a powerful, lightly scaled architectural element with an industrial modern aesthetic.



# Studio Awards

## 2019 Studio Awards

The Texas Society of Architects Studio Awards recognize real or theoretical projects that demonstrate excellence in design. Submissions from students and practitioners are judged on equal footing, and projects of all types are considered together. Each year, the jury sifts through the entries, looking for standouts that embody strong ideas critical to contemporary practice — entries that resolve these ideas thoroughly and present them clearly.

The 2019 Studio Awards jury met on Thursday, July 25, at the Brooklyn office of SO-IL to deliberate 50 entries that included proposals for affordable housing, airports, civic spaces, wild animal preserves, and typologies not yet seen.

### The Jury



Oana Stănescu  
Oana Stănescu Architect



Florian Idenburg, AIA-IA  
SO-IL

#### *From the Jury:*

*One should take into consideration the format of a competition: the presentation of a project is almost as crucial as its design. There were certainly a few projects we were rooting for that were hard to assess based on convoluted information and/or a complete lack thereof. It seems the Texas architect is busy, hardly enough time to well represent the work. The overall pool seemed to be dominated by student work. Is there no interest in the discipline anymore when we are all busy building? Clearly, the unbuilt student and conceptual work depended more on representation and therefore was stronger. It's a good reminder to all of us, that even when times are strong, we do not forget that, beyond serving our clients, it's important we serve the discipline as a whole and take the representation of our projects to our peers seriously.*

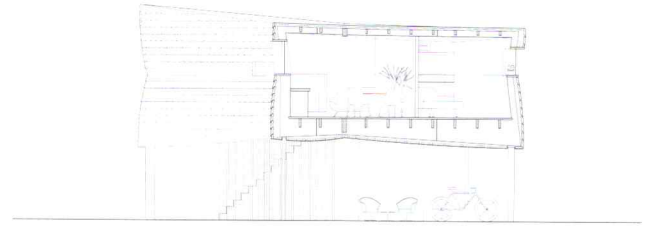


Marc Fornes  
THEVERYMANY



Mimi Hoang  
nARCHITECTS





## Accessory

Rice Architecture Construct

Assistant Professor and Co-Director: Andrew Colopy;  
Students: Francis Aguillard, Claire Chalifour, Hillary Davlin, Seth Defore, Jordan Gracia, Rachel Grady, George Hewitt, Younha Kim, Haotian Ma, Micah Piven, Lauren Turnage, Jiaying Yan

### From the Jury:

*The project feels proactive... like it's looking at an existing condition and trying to adapt it towards the future, addressing densification. The whole accessory dwelling acknowledges that family sizes are not fixed; they're expanding, contracting, and the project allows that flexibility of living.*

Accessory dwellings — garage apartments, granny flats, backyard homes — are part of a growing national dialogue. Amid rising housing costs, demographic changes, and the need for sustainability, these dwellings can provide affordable rental housing and increase urban density while maintaining the existing fabric of neighborhoods.

The accessory dwelling does pose challenges. Smaller spaces and tighter quarters test our cultural norms of comfort and privacy. Hidden away, they struggle to participate in the public sphere. And, they can't provide the economic benefits of homeownership or the same efficiencies of conventionally constructed, mass-produced homes.

Accessory is a research project to create new typologies for Houston that bring these dwellings out of the backyard and into the public sphere. Illustrated are three speculative proposals with a distinct visual presence — a counterpoint to the neighboring bungalows — that encourage a community of interactions through a network of shared spaces.

Thinking beyond the limits of any single structure, students developed adaptive digital models responsive to 35 different sites while establishing an economy of scale through an automated but nonstandard, digitally fabricated envelope design. The result is a neighborhood of buildings, collective in their diversity as much as in their common cause.



# Studio Awards

## Attwater Acclimation/Release Pen

David Heymann, FAIA; Kuan-Ying Chiu; Whitney Moore; Tim Petersen

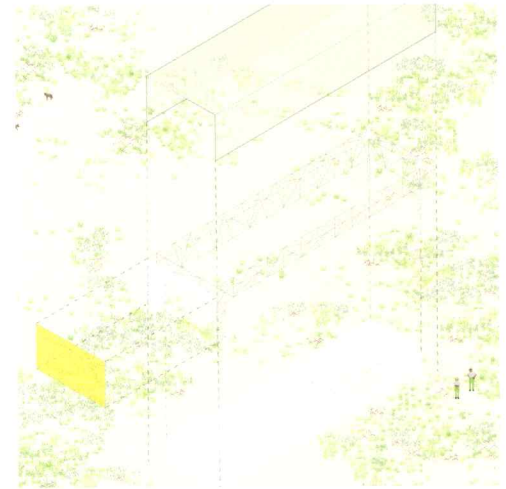
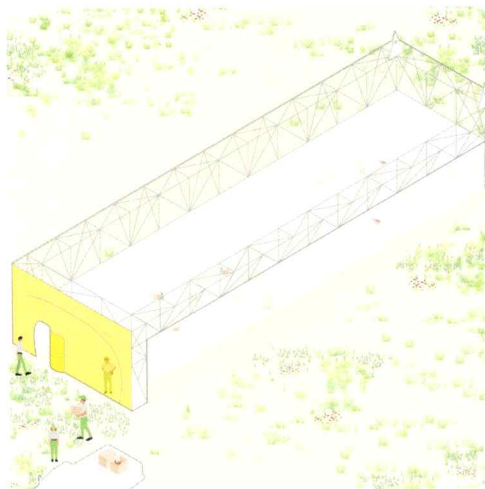
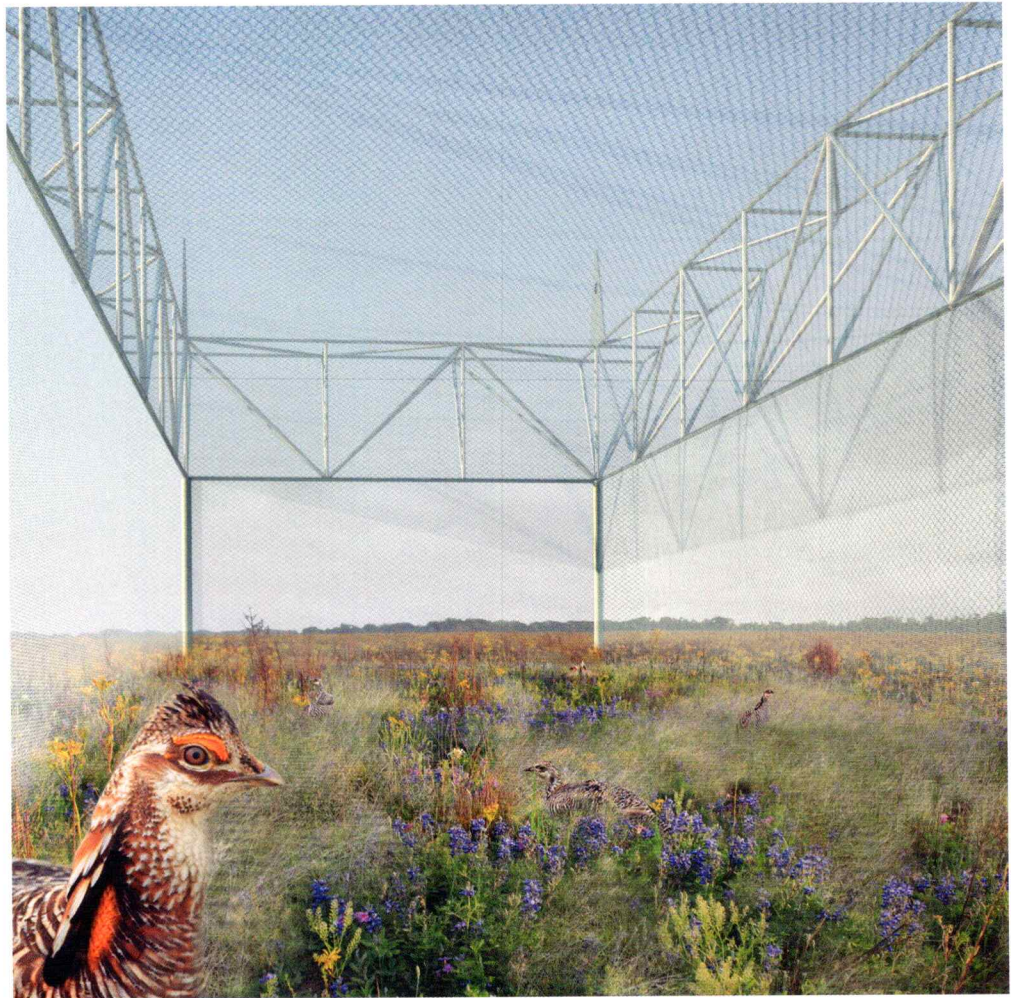
### From the Jury:

*The project deals with an existing condition, an existing issue, and they are providing a very proactive and smart solution, although it doesn't necessarily fall under the typical scope of architecture. It's really fun that they're playing with the industrial long-span typology at the scale of chickens. It's good to look at simple things. We're so used to overindulgent technology rather than simplification, but as shown, sometimes you don't need all that much.*

The once plentiful Attwater Prairie Chicken is the most endangered bird subspecies in North America. Roughly 100 wild birds remain in a wildlife refuge on remnant Texas prairie.

Attwater survival depends on the controlled release of birds bred off-site. These acclimate in on-site pens for two weeks prior to release. The pens must be transparent enough to allow socialization with free birds but require a double layer of screening to sufficiently protect against the Attwater's many predators. Acclimation/release pens are relocated biennially to avoid ground-borne diseases. However, the existing pens — each held together with 10,000 zip ties — require far too many man-hours to relocate, limiting the number of birds released and stalling the conservation plan.

Working with refuge staff, ornithologists, biologists, engineers, and material suppliers, the faculty/student team developed a unitized aluminum truss pen, sheathed in stainless steel wire fabric, that can be moved without dismantling across the site's soft soils using the refuge's excavator. The new pen design will serve as the public icon of the refuge's mission in a time of reduced financing. Funding is currently being raised to build and test a prototype of this new pen.





## Discontinuous Monument

Kalen McNamara, Assoc. AIA

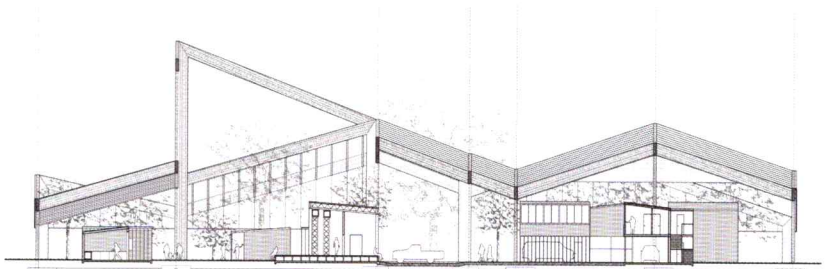
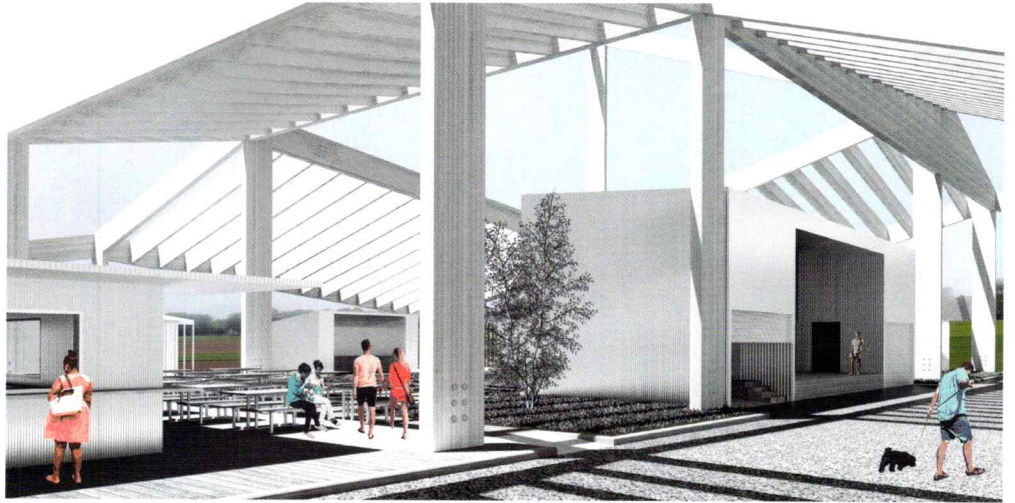
*From the Jury:*

*There's something interesting about not just looking at the usual space, but really trying to look at this other "in between" span and making it into a place, as opposed to leaving it to chance. To that point, the design is always in between two things: abstract and breathable, light and heavy, inside and outside. It fits the topic of being in the middle of destinations.*

As a series of waypoints for touring musicians traveling between major music cities across the United States, this project links disparate sites into a cultural infrastructure. Sited in the no-man's-land between the interstate highway and adjacent small towns, it creates a neutral field for interaction between road-tripping urbanites and rural residents.

Within the compound, an icehouse acts as a more fixed programmatic element to draw visitors from the nearby town, while lodging areas provide shelter to musicians who are just passing through. An outdoor performance space brings the two programs together, configured flexibly to host small shows as well as large festivals. The compound is anchored by a massive roof structure that gives visibility from the highway and projects an ambiguous monumentality with implicit vernacular resonances.

The architecture is expressed in a language that is neither urban nor rural, suspended between the purity of abstraction and the grit of reality. Separating the monumental, permanent frame from the smaller, more provisional outbuildings allows the project to establish a strong sense of place and purpose linked with the other waypoints along the network, while also nimbly adapting its program to its immediate surroundings.







## Farm at Crossroad Commons

Eddie Abeyta, AIA, and Sean Stevenson, Assoc. AIA

### *From the Jury:*

*This project uses architectural thinking, not just to produce a design, but also to organize a didactic program. This organization creates a legacy project that seriously considers how to have a positive impact on the community.*

Although individuals are mostly measured by the material items that they acquire during their lifetime, the truly impactful ones are measured by the legacy they leave behind. Dean White was the 260th wealthiest person in the United States before his passing. His life touched and impacted countless individuals in Northern Indiana and beyond. His entrepreneurship reshaped perceptions of the region, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors a year to Merrillville, a town of 35,000.

After Dean's passing, the design team was tasked with re-envisioning his legacy in physical form on a site whose history was deeply personal to the White family. The challenges in place are quite outstanding. Crime, an erosion of identity and culture, and poor health are serious issues that beleaguer the community of Merrillville. Through sophisticated integration of ecology and history, public and private spaces, innovative performance-based design, and advanced environmental systems, the project seeks to resolve these outstanding issues affecting the community by creating a new, profitable philanthropic model that mirrors Dean White's community-centric and entrepreneurial ideals. The result is a continued legacy manifested through architectural form and space intrinsically tied to the ecology of the region.





## Home is Not a House

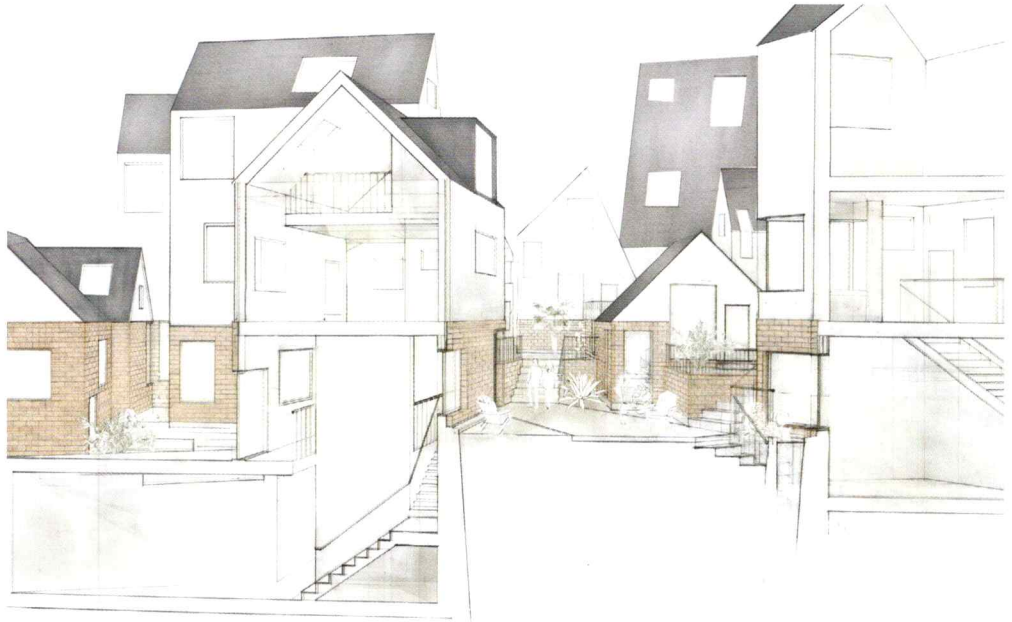
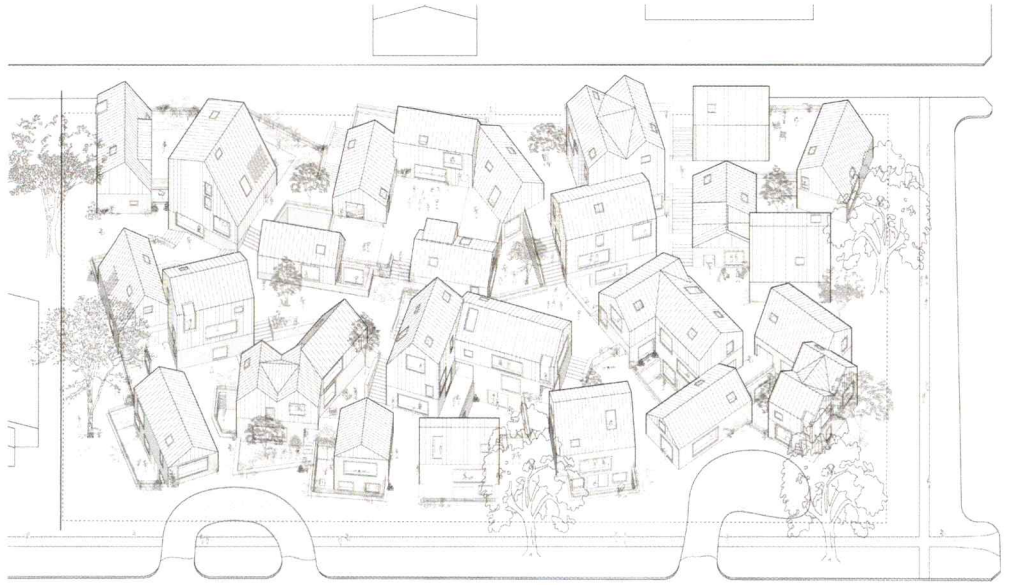
Allison Walvoord, AIA, and Krishnan Mistry, Assoc. AIA

### *From the Jury:*

*The project is strong, as it proposes an alternative way of inhabiting the city. The representation reinforces this idea by means of a scalar trick that gives the characters inhabiting the compound an otherworldly quality. The idea that these two, designed world and inhabitants, mutually affect each other sets this proposition apart. The appealing scheme and representation are complemented by a care for detail and material.*

In Austin, the ideal of the free-standing home is elevated to an excessive level under the current code. In response to this, the proposal was straightforward in presenting clear and identifiable objects, or “houses,” in the landscape that appear to be freestanding.

Upon entering, however, one notices that the units interconnect in unexpected ways, reinforcing a comprehensive and shared identity through density and integration. As a result, the community is legible at two scales: as a collection of individual objects, and as single objects that consist of many constituent parts. The spaces between buildings are tasked with unique obligations: to effect a visual and physical connectedness with the community through propinquity and situational closeness. The resultant “village” presents a new collective identity distinct from the typical suburban fantasy, creating a decisive dialogue about house-ness in the city.







**Jasmine Engineering** was the Commissioning Authority for Austin's 62-Story Building, **The Independent**-The tallest high-rise condominium West of the Mississippi.

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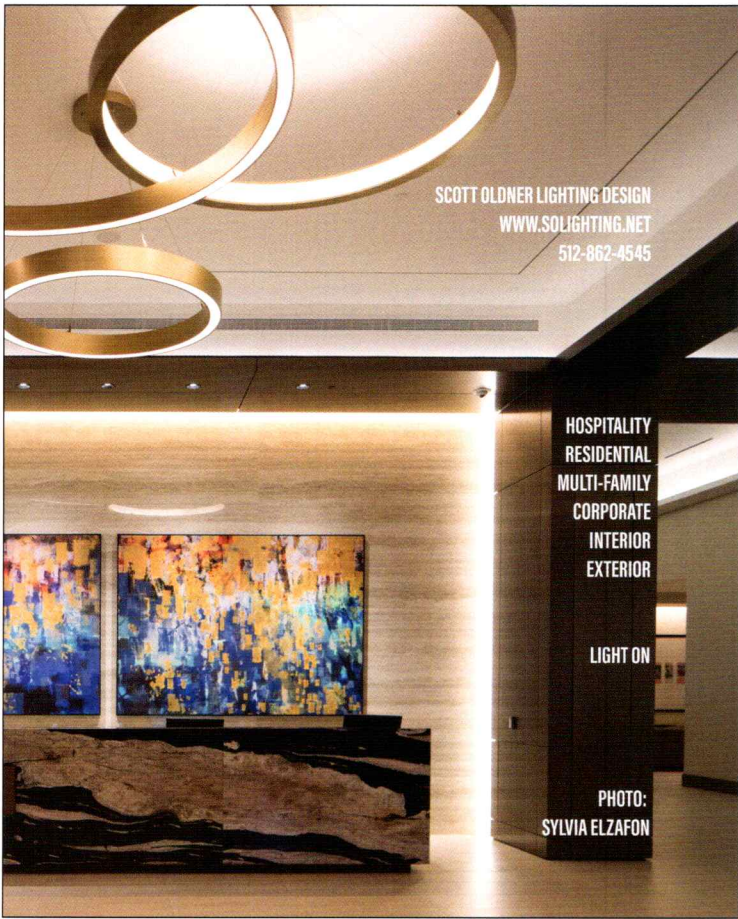
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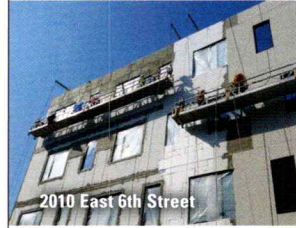
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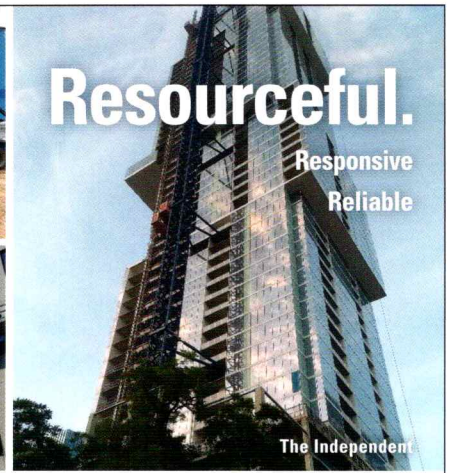
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Strahan Arena  
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**Terracon was the building enclosure consultant for Rhode Partners on The Independent, now the tallest building in Austin.**

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## Statement of Intent

For the moment, The Independent, a high-rise condominium development, is Austin's tallest building. While its form of shifted boxes rising precariously into the sky is not new to architecture, it is perhaps the first structure in Austin since the Frost Tower to aspire to icon status.

**Architect** Rhode Partners

**Client** Aspen Heights and CIM Group

**Structural Engineer** LAM-DCI

**MEP Engineer** Garza EMC

**Urban Design** McCann Adams Studio

**Landscape Architect** Studio Balcones

**Civil Engineering** Urban Design Group

**Geotechnical Engineering** Terracon

by **Sophie Aliece Hollis**

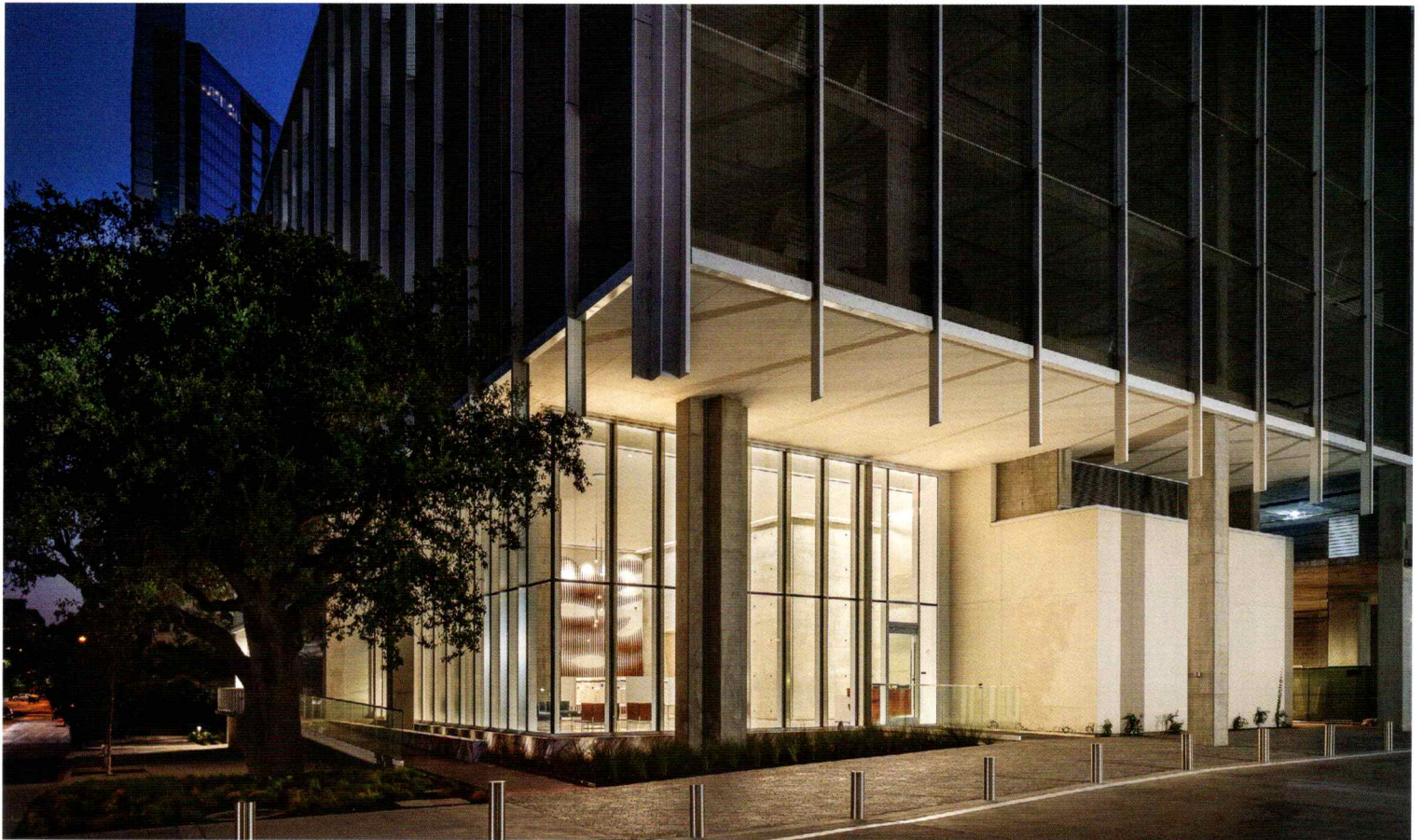
The rapid development and increasing population of Austin have created a polarity within the city. While some are eager to accept changes to the urban fabric, many are hesitant about what growth may bring: traffic, overcrowding, perhaps gross and thoughtless real estate development? Regardless, the city is expanding at an unprecedented rate and expected to do so for at least the next three decades. So, how should the built environment respond? We have already witnessed considerable sprawl. The suburbs of Lakeway, Round Rock, and Cedar Park feel closer than ever as their geographic division from the city has blurred into a host of subdivisions and strip malls. While these may absorb many of Austin's migrants, the city is also adjusting for the new urbanites. Increasing central density has pushed many architectural expressions upward, as the city's growing skyline clearly shows. Since verticality seems to be inevitable in the face of this rapid urbanization, Rhode Partners aimed to set a high standard for the future of Austin's downtown multi-family dwellings in the firm's design for The Independent.





**Facing and left** *Just minutes from Lady Bird Lake, The Independent is surrounded by many of Austin's most iconic destinations.*

**Below** *Structure is on display at the street level, where columns of exposed concrete support the double-height window wall encasing the lobby.*





# Open House

*The building's largest cantilever contains the 34th-floor amenity deck. Extending a distance of 26 feet, the overhang is supported solely by the visible structural members in the photo below.*

dent, which holds the temporary title of tallest tower in the city.

Anchored between Austin's recently revived Seaholm District and Shoal Creek, the Independent rises 694 feet, commanding attention from every direction. The series of offset volumes creates a puzzling and almost defiant statement among the city's crop of mundane high-rises. Myriad cantilevers push and pull basic residential blocks to create four distinct forms. While the concept of shifted boxes is not a new one (think De Rotterdam by OMA or the New Museum by SANAA), the building's tiers, created by the sliding and mirroring of floor plates about a central core, facilitate a variety of experiences. Rather than clustering similar apartment types, vertically increasing in scale and price, Rhode aimed to diversify each "box" by incorporating a range of floor plans that offer unique views and spatial qualities. The unobstructed floor-to-ceiling glass window wall was made possible

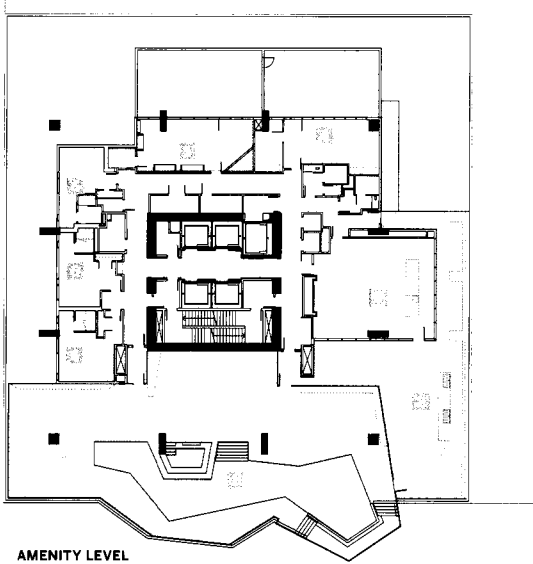
by removing all structural elements from the perimeter, allowing for unimpeded 360-degree views that are protected by Austin's Capitol View Corridor.

This feature is just one of the many examples of the "marriage of structure and envelope" that Brett Rhode, AIA, describes as a key driver for the tower's form. From details such as fritted glass that externally indicates the separation of apartments, to the sprawling 26-foot cantilever that suspends the 34th-floor amenity deck over the city below, a careful conversation between structure and form communicates the overall goal of the project: to create a building that makes a statement. "Buildings with strong formal attitudes activate skylines and capture people's imaginations," Rhode says. He hopes that the diligence apparent within this design will hold Austin's future skyscrapers to a higher standard.

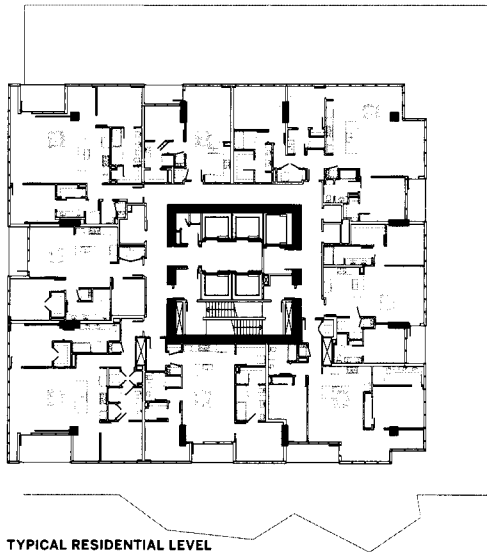
The mass migration of people to Austin creates new architectural opportunities every day. In fact, the city has approved projects compa-







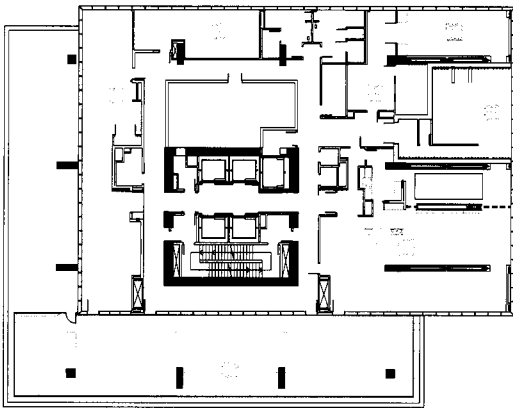
AMENITY LEVEL  
FLOOR 9



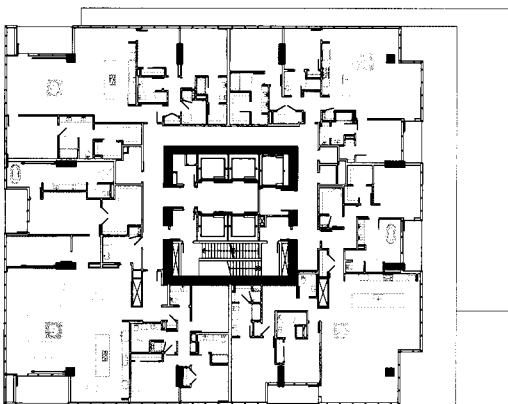
TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL LEVEL  
TIER 2



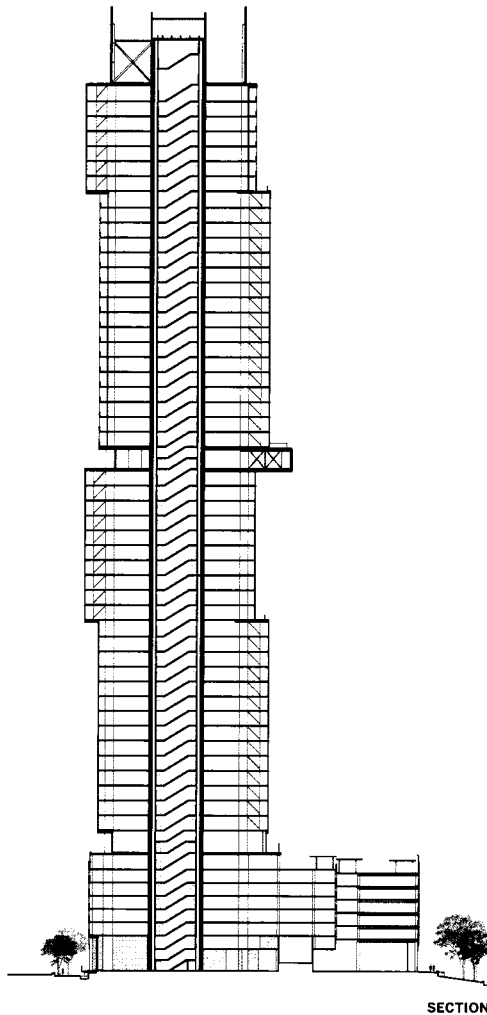
- FLOOR PLANS**
- POOL DECK
  - OUTDOOR LOUNGE
  - CLUB ROOM
  - DOG LOUNGE/DOG RUN
  - PLAYROOM/PLAYGROUND
  - GUEST SUITE
  - ONE BEDROOM UNIT
  - TWO BEDROOM UNIT
  - THREE BEDROOM UNIT
  - FITNESS
  - YOGA STUDIO
  - BOARD ROOM
  - BUSINESS CENTER
  - THEATER
  - LOUNGE
  - EXTERIORDECK



AMENITY LEVEL  
FLOOR 34



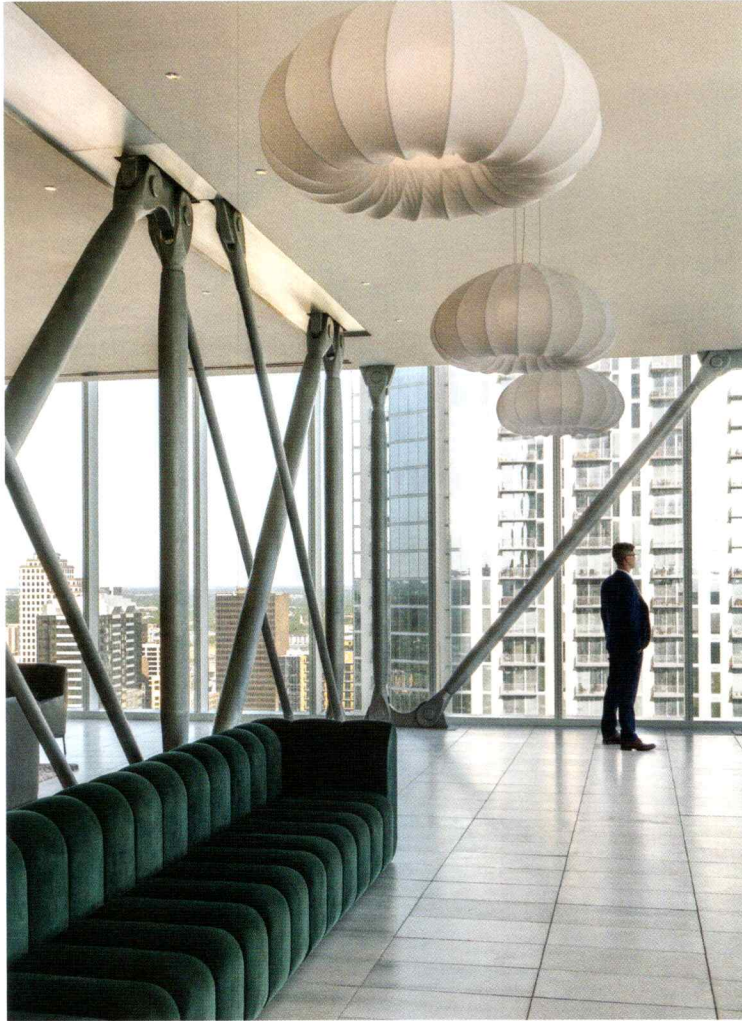
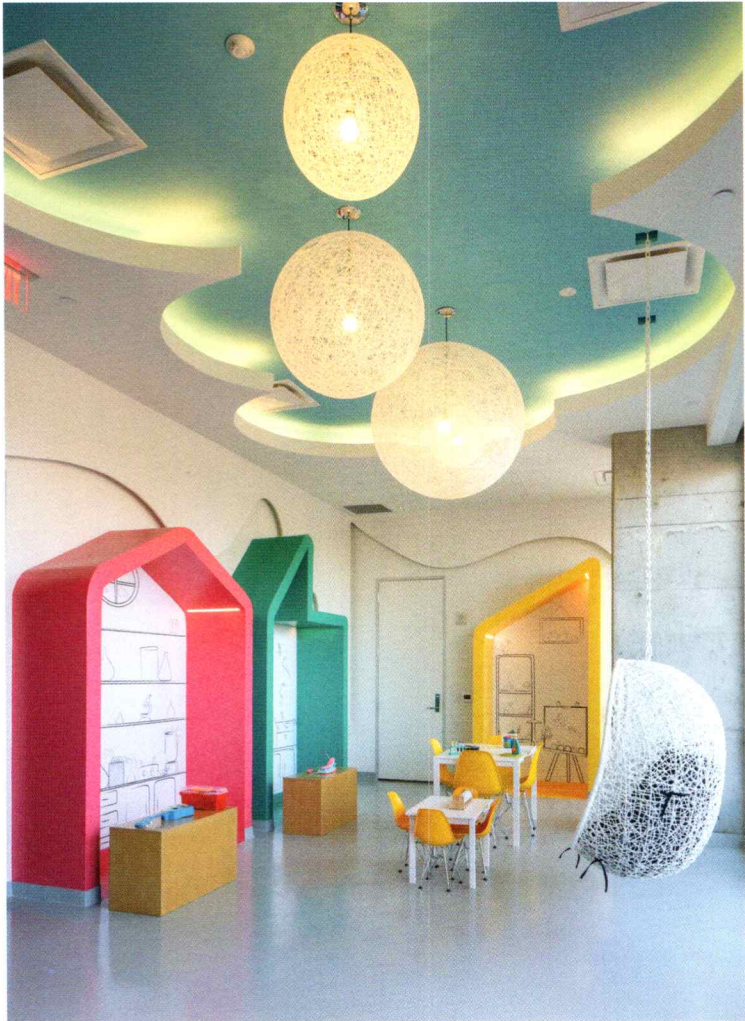
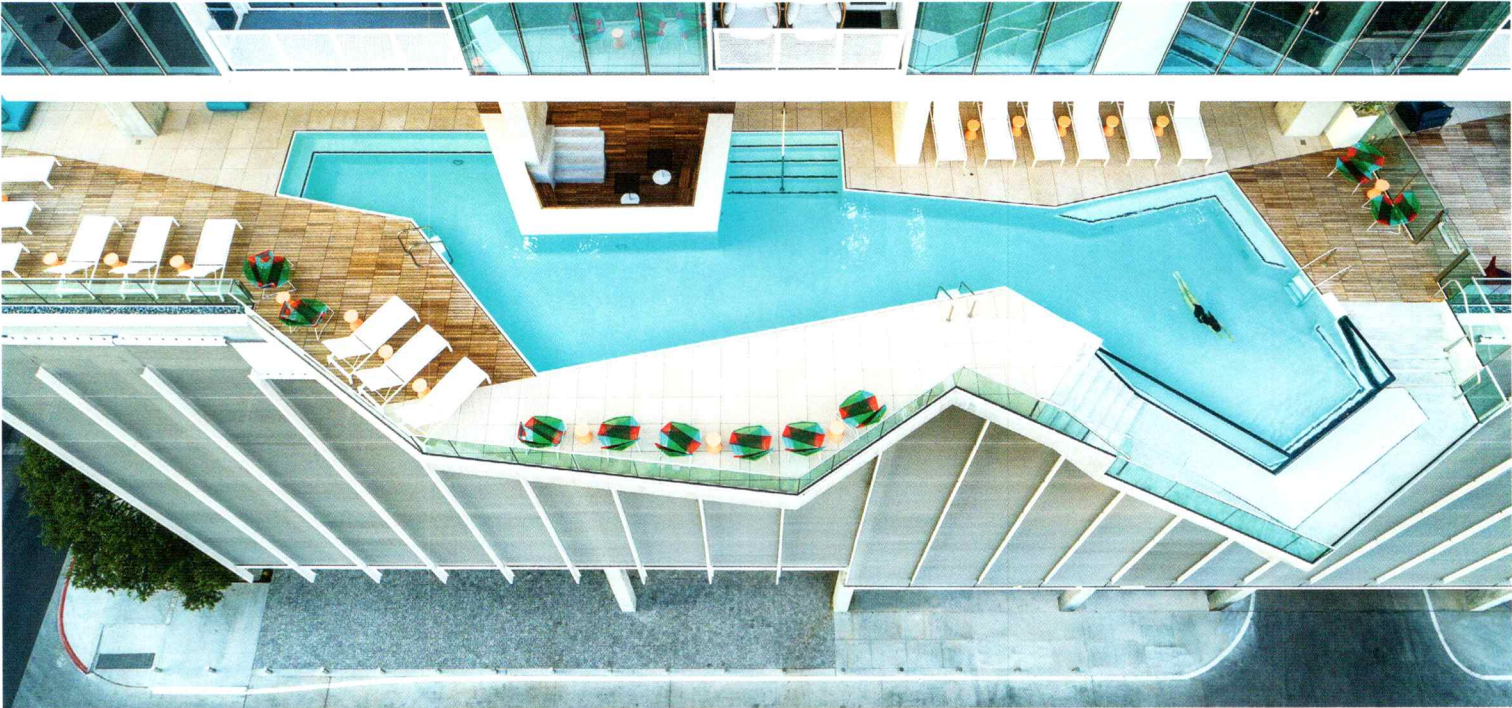
TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL LEVEL  
TIER 4



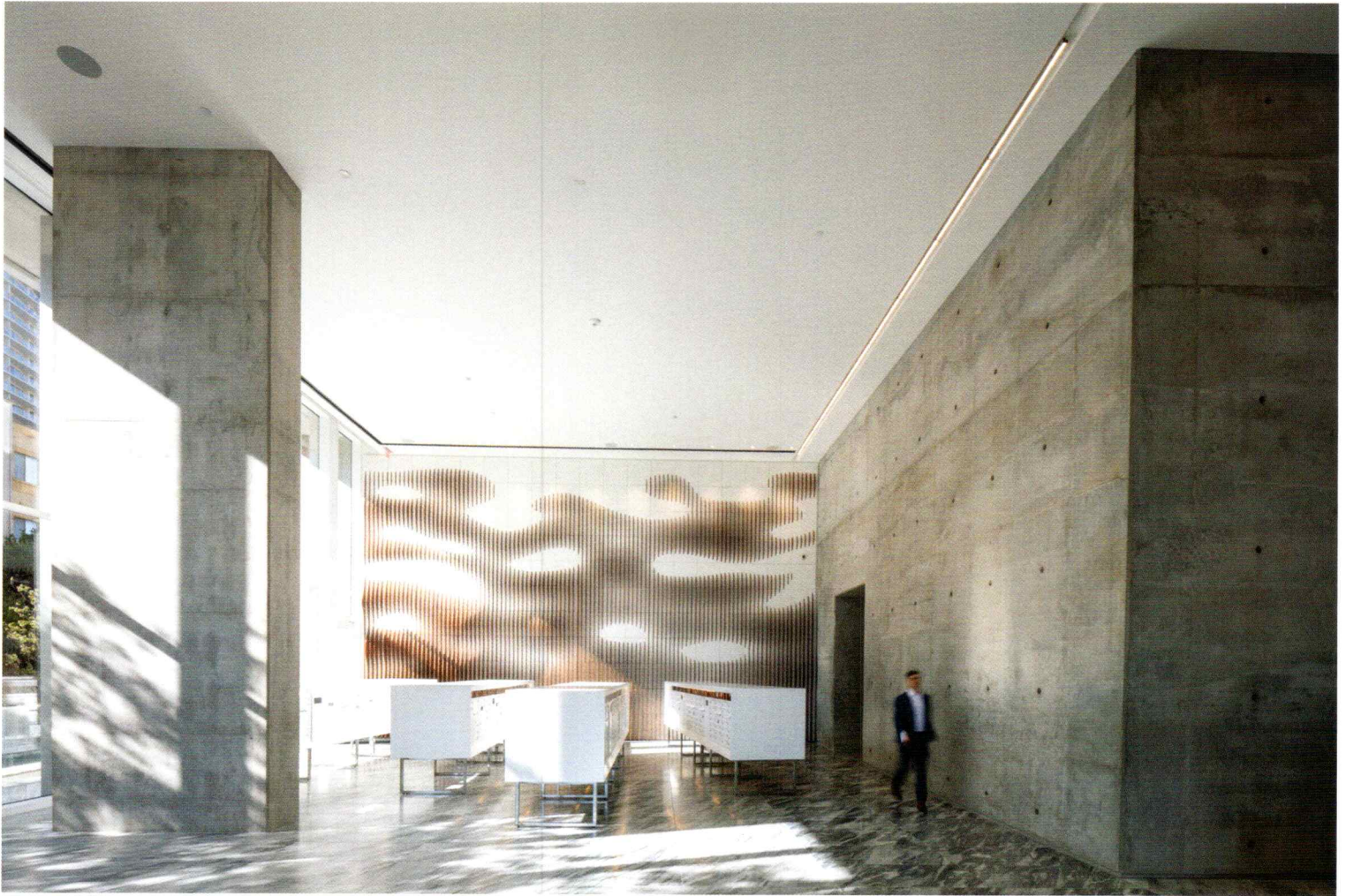
SECTION



# Open House







**Facing** *The 9th and 34th floors contain a host of amenities, including a large pool deck (top), a children’s playroom (bottom left), and an owners lounge (bottom right).*

**Above** *Heavy orthogonal elements in the lobby are balanced by a rippling wall installation and slightly offset rows of mailboxes.*

rable to, if not larger than, The Independent, including Duda|Paine Architects’ The Republic and Gensler’s 6 X Guadalupe. While The Independent has set the bar high, there are some missed opportunities to be addressed in future developments. As Austin continues to define its metropolitan landscape, activated connections at the street level are crucial. These connections are weak — if not completely absent — in most of Austin’s existing residential towers, due to parking. Multi-story parking structures tend to occupy the first six to nine floors of these buildings and, in the case of The Independent, inhibit engagement with the neighboring Shoal Creek and the Seaholm development.

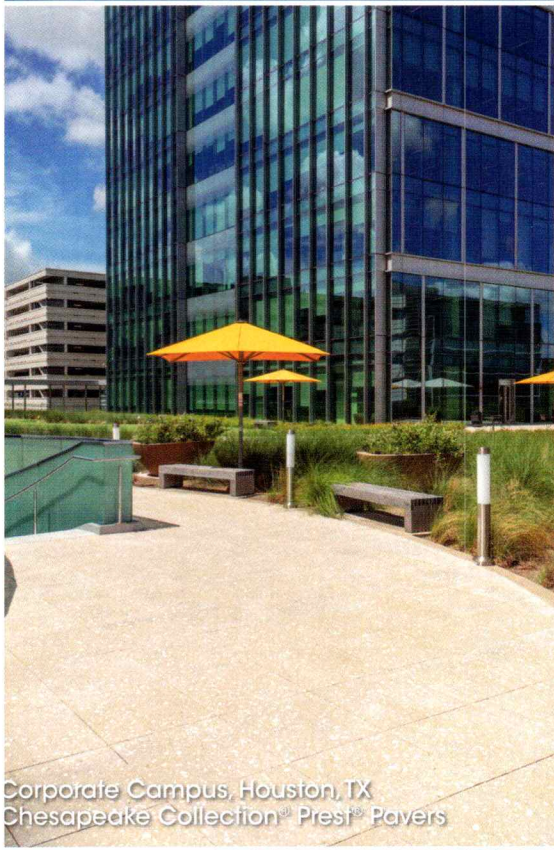
The opposite end of the project has also met substantial criticism. Many are skeptical of the area where The Independent meets the sky. Here, a woven stainless-steel mesh wraps around some of the building’s mechanical systems, including a massive liquid damper tank that keeps the 58-story structure from swaying too much in the high-altitude winds. Rhode says

he wanted the tower to be glassy all the way up, but this solution proved to be too costly for the development team. The mesh, he reasons, was a cost-effective and “honest” way to conceal the mechanical crown. However, many see the aesthetic as unfinished.

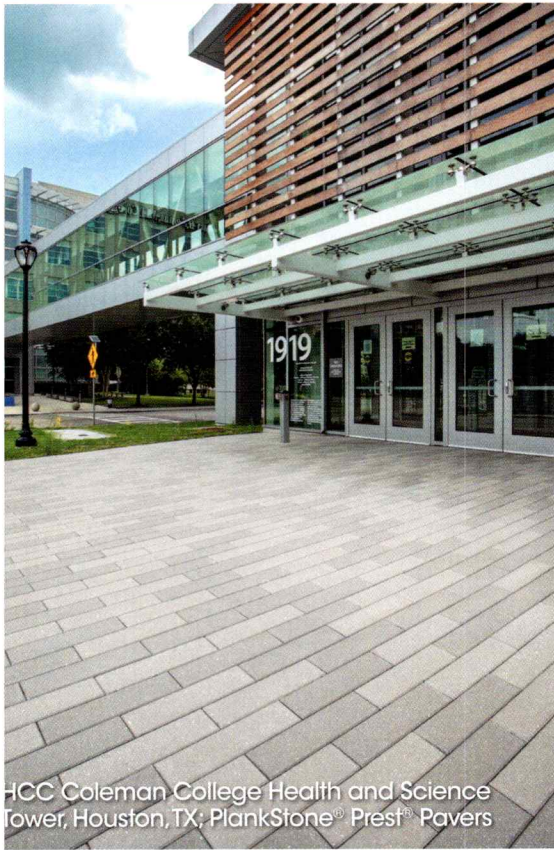
Regardless of where you may stand on the crown, there is no denying that Rhode Partners has brought an architectural asset to Austin. The Independent provides a thoughtful vertical solution to the city’s accrescent density by way of a rigorously resolved structural framework. Nearing full capacity, the tower’s 363 apartments, ranging from one to three bedrooms, provide occupants with sweeping views while simultaneously providing onlookers with a thought-provoking example of the architectural potential of one of America’s fastest growing cities.

Sophie Aliece Hollis is an architecture and journalism student at The University of Texas at Austin and TA’s editorial intern.





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*The sole fortress from which to oppose and escape the stratified and complicated city, with its high degree of informatization and concomitant bureaucracy — in which the “individual” becomes a component deprived of a sense of wholeness, and the soul is eliminated from “technique” — is a dwelling constructed for the “individual,” which is the strongest contender for a rehabilitation of humanity in the modern city ... This notion must not be implemented from “above” but should always begin from the level of the “individual,” by either placing the “individual” at the center of thought or pursuing a dwelling as personal expression founded on corporeal instincts.*  
— Tadao Ando, “Urban Guerrilla Dwellings,” translated from the Japanese by Thomas Daniell, Log 46

The English word “authentic” derives from a Greek root (*authentēs*) that means “one acting on one’s own authority.” This etymology augments the contemporary sense of the word as denoting something that is genuine or faithful to the facts; it suggests that authenticity is connected to individuality. Grand narratives — such as that which Modernism imposed upon society, or that which Neoliberalism is now pressing down from above — have a way of squashing authenticity/individuality before it can develop, per Ando’s critique above.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we present four takes on authenticity in architecture, each of which complicate one or more prevailing master narratives: one, a 19th-century ranch compound whose defensive nature continues to be appropriate for its location on the Mexican border; another, that of a Dallas architect whose honest, unedited approach distinguishes his practice from a field more commonly associated with marketing and diplomacy; a third describing the fundamentals of placing an object in space, a potential source of authenticity outside of the self; and the fourth, addressing the great profusion of suburban vernacular, which may very well be the most authentic expression of architecture in our time and place.

# Authenticity

40

**Survivors**

The Treviño-Uribe Rancho  
in San Ygnacio  
*Christiana Sullivan*

48

**Nonconformist**

Gary Cunningham, FAIA  
*Andrew Barnes, AIA*

54

**Hornbook: To  
Place**

How to put something  
somewhere  
*W. Mark Gunderson, AIA*

58

**Nu Vernacular**

While you were napping  
*Ben Koush, AIA*





## Survivors

In its nearly 200-year history, the Treviño-Urbe Rancho in San Ygnacio has endured Indian raids, political turmoil, Anglo incursion, banditry, and inundation. Recently restored and currently facing further isolation if a border wall is constructed, these markers of Texas' Hispanic colonial heritage may be facing their biggest challenge and most important moment yet.

text by **Christiana Sullivan**  
photography by **Leonid Furmanskyy**

**F**rank Briscoe wanted to get back to his roots. He started his career in architectural conservation in the Northeast after attending professional school, but had decided to return to his native Texas. He soon found himself on the border for a job, where he encountered an old regional vernacular built by early Spanish-Mexican settlers that he had never heard about.

“They are these really lovely and very well-built sandstone buildings that are part of an incredible string of forts,” he says.

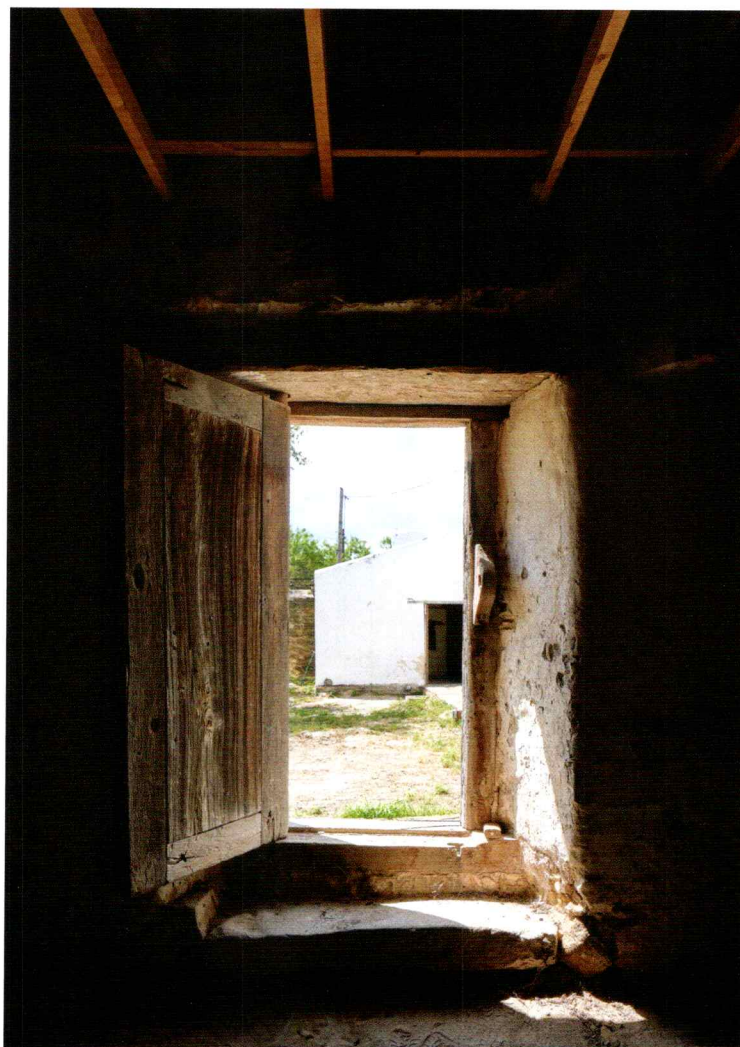
Briscoe was confounded. Why didn't he know about these buildings? Why were so many of them not being preserved? As he began to work on more projects along the border, he realized there was a widespread underappreciation of the South Texas borderlands and its architecture.

“I was genuinely upset to come down and see this incredible collection of architecture that is not in any of our history books,” he says. “You hear a little bit about some of the missions, but you have no idea — even growing up in Texas as I did — about the richness of the border architecture.”

Briscoe has been involved in numerous projects along the border since then, but he just recently finished working on arguably the best remaining example of this vernacular in the state: the Treviño-Urbe Rancho.

Built in a series of construction campaigns from 1830 to 1874 by Spanish-Mexican settlers, the ranch is a six-room sandstone compound with a Riverstone masonry wall wrapping around its exterior and enclosing a





**Facing** *The northeast corner of the Treviño-Urbe Rancho bares its riverstone and mud mortar walls, while elsewhere in the fort, the walls are sealed in white plaster to protect their structural integrity.*

**Left** *A wood-framed door opens to the compound's interior courtyard, used during various periods as a place of protection, livestock corralling, and social gathering.*

generous interior courtyard. Despite its being essentially defensive in nature in the years of its founding, the compound bears an unexpected display of craftsmanship and decorative detail evocative of the Spanish colonial era.

“Architecturally it is one of the best, most complex and fully realized examples of domestic borderlands architecture that survives from the Spanish Colonial/Mexican Period in the United States,” architectural historian Terri Myers wrote in the building’s National Historic Landmark nomination.

Since 1998, when the compound received its National Historic Landmark designation, the River Pierce Foundation has been working to preserve the building. It took 10 years to purchase the entire property from its original owners, and 10 additional years to complete its restoration. Today it stands pristinely as the founding structure of San Ygnacio, a border town composed of a tight web of persistently empty streets emanating from a central plaza wedged between Highway 83 and the Rio Grande. As of 2010, the town was home to 667 people.

Beyond its embodiment of Spanish building traditions and Mexican ranching culture, the most extraordinary thing about the Treviño-Urbe Rancho is simply that, against all odds, it has survived. It is one of the oldest buildings in the state and one of the few remaining buildings of its type along the border that has retained its original architectural integrity. To persist to this day, the ranch and its inhabitants have had to endure piti-

less terrain, indefatigable Native American raids, social isolation, political turmoil, violent banditry, Anglo economic incursion, and government-induced flooding. And, who knows? Maybe they’ll have to endure a border wall, as well.

In the current political context, where the public image of the border has been reduced to transitory migration and conflict, the 10-years-long preservation and restoration of the Treviño-Urbe Rancho is a testament to the depth of the Hispanic proprietorial and cultural ownership of the Texas border, long before it was Texas — or a border. It demonstrates the lengths to which Tejano settlers went to maintain their land and heritage, which is once again at stake under the current intransigent political administration.

“This cultural milieu is underserved, unacknowledged, under-everything — marginalized — because people don’t want to deal with it,” says Michael Tracy, founder of the River Pierce Foundation, referring to Hispanic residents of the borderlands.

Tracy is an eccentric but respected Ohio-born painter and sculptor who moved to San Ygnacio in the 1970s. He spent his early years there producing a prodigious amount of work — the quintessential isolated artist — before starting the River Pierce Foundation in 1990. It began as an education and art residency program, bringing artists from across the state to create new work and teach an art curriculum at the local elementary school. However, when one of the owners of the Treviño-Urbe Rancho



**Right top** A ceiling beam, or viga, from the parlor bears the inscription, “La Paz de Jesucristo Sea Con Nosotros — Diciembre 3 de 1871 — S. Ygnacio, Ruega Por Nosotros” (The Peace of Jesus Christ Be With Us, December 3, 1871, Saint Ignatius, Pray For Us) along with a number of flower, star, and spiral designs.

**Right bottom** The preservation team had to replace all the chipichil roofs in the rancho to preserve the aged but beautiful ceiling beams, such as those in one of the former bedrooms.





offered to sell their half of the fort to the foundation in 1998, it altered the organization's trajectory entirely.

"We had a big philosophical change about what we were doing because, all of a sudden, we became part of the stewardship of a land in a way that we didn't expect," says Christopher Rincon, the executive director of the River Pierce Foundation.

Since then, the foundation has dedicated itself to identifying, conserving, and bringing awareness to the built vernacular and cultural heritage of San Ygnacio and the Texas-Mexico borderlands, which were named one of the nation's most endangered historic sites by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

After the River Pierce Foundation purchased the remaining southern half of the complex in 2008, it applied for and received an emergency grant from the Texas Historical Commission to stabilize the building. The Foundation recruited board member Frank Rotnofsky, AIA, of Able City Architecture, along with a team of specialists — including Frank Briscoe and Terri Myers — to work on the stabilization and produce a comprehensive historic structure report detailing the building's history, context, timeline, archaeology, and architecture, along with an extensive restoration plan.

"The historic structure report let us spend a lot of time really looking closely at the building so that when the restoration funds became available, we were able to do a much more careful job," Briscoe says. "It was all about authenticity, about being able to pay attention to the nuances of the building. It was absolutely full of them."

The team was thorough. They worked with the National Park Service and utilized every available resource to fully understand the fort's sequence of construction, including invaluable documents from the Depression-era Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The documents contained photographs, measurements, and plans of the fort from 1936. For an architectural conservation and restoration project, documents of this type are precious and rare.

"We restored it to what it looked like in 1936 because that was the best documentation that we had," Briscoe says. "It allowed us to keep all of the major historic features, but take away all these accretions that were added to it after 1936."

As they analyzed each of the sandstone complex's distinct rooms and compared them to the historical record, a story emerged, not only of the building, but also of a people determined to flourish despite the perpetual challenges of living on the frontier.

It started when Spanish-Mexican settler Jesús Treviño constructed the oldest part of the complex on a strategic piece of land east of the Rio Grande in 1830, almost 10 years after Mexico won its independence from Spain.

Due to the ongoing threat of Comanche and Apache raids at the time, Treviño built a one-room stone building on a bluff overlooking the river. That 296-sf building would serve as his ranching headquarters for the next 20 years and became the centerpiece of the complex that exists today.

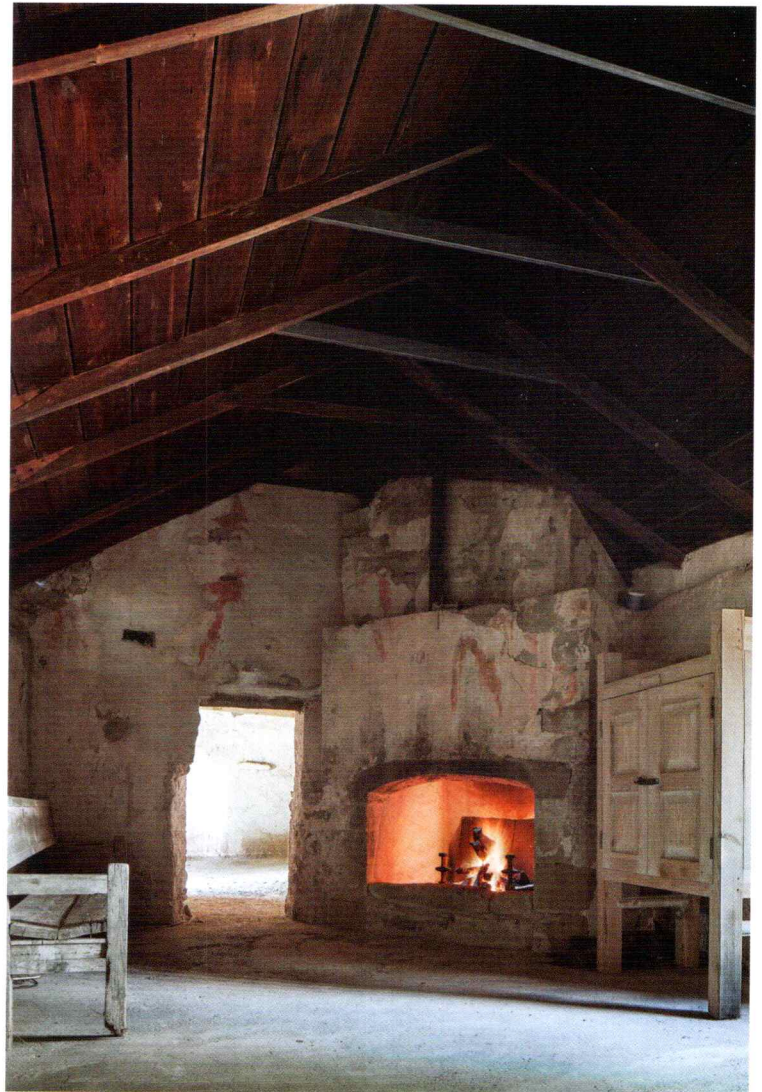
Now identifiable as the Cuarto Viejo, or old room, of the Treviño-Uribe complex, the building is a testament to the dangers of living on the frontier at that time. More than anything else, defense determined its form. It has 26-inch-thick walls, no windows, two 5-ft-tall towers with gun ports, and a flat roof with a lookout perch. The 3-in-thick south door, still in place, was constructed of mesquite with a cypress panel. Inside, the door was secured by a mesquite cross bar.

Native Americans weren't the only threat for the settlers in the region. In the succeeding two decades between the construction of the Cuarto Viejo and its next major additions, four separate governments laid claim to the region. The Republic of Texas asserted jurisdiction over the land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande after winning its independence, a claim which Mexico refused to recognize. Three years later, an ambitious group of Mexican separatists formed the short-lived Republic of the Rio Grande.

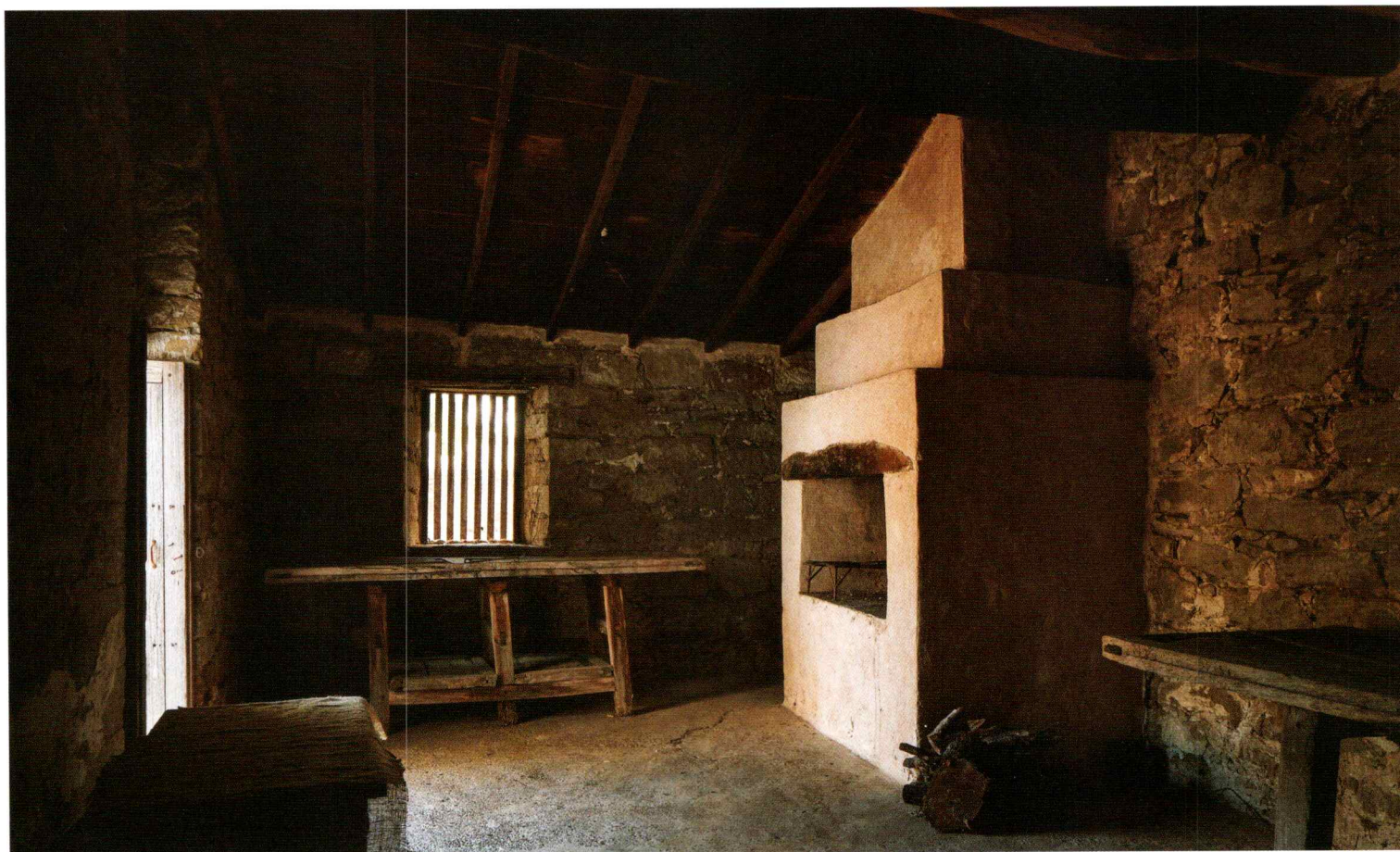
"That speaks for the kind of defiant, on-its-own region that we have here on the border," Rotnofsky says. "And we still speak of it. People don't understand this region, and we fight our government every day with the border wall."

Yet the true watershed moment for border residents like Treviño was the American victory of the Mexican-American War in 1848.

The United States annexed all land north of the Rio Grande, placing Mexican land grants in this region in jeopardy. Under English law, property ownership was recognized based on actual occupation of the land, evidenced by permanent houses and corrals. In Spanish and Mexican law, ranchers had no imperative to make such "improvements." Consequently, the U.S. Government classified many land grants along the lower Rio







Grande as unsettled because they were operated by absentee landlords, and hundreds of colonial descendants lost their family lands to Anglo Americans eager to exploit their potential.

The Treviño Ranch, however, protected itself from these massive land grabs. Treviño's daughter and son-in-law, Blás María Uribe, moved full-time to the ranch in 1850 to validate their ownership.

This initiated the Treviño-Uribe fort's most significant construction campaigns. Quickly, they transformed a stone shelter into a permanent home. Uribe built additional rooms and walls to surround the extant Cuarto Viejo and enclosed a courtyard with livestock corrals. In one of the new rooms, known as the Casa Larga, a ceiling beam bears the inscription, "*Por Paz Y Libertad Obremos,*" translated as, "Let Us Work for Peace and Liberty," dated 1854.

However, the resumption of intensified Native American raids after the Mexican-American War ensured that the complex did not lose its defensive function or features. After one of these raids decimated a nearby settlement, Uribe equipped the building and walls with protective parapets, gun ports through which they could ward off attack from any direction, and fireproof roofs made from chipichil — a mixture of lime, sand, and gravel. Soon, the Treviño-Uribe compound served as a refuge for the surrounding community.

Inevitably, new threats continued to arise for Mexican settlers north of the Rio Grande. While Anglo opportunists swarmed the lower Rio Grande Valley to invest in its new agricultural industry and buy out Spanish-Mexican settlers, residents of San Ygnacio hired communal lawyers to protect their property rights.

As the American Civil War began in 1865, outlaw activities augmented the already vigorous threat of Comanche and Apache raids. Even as Native American raids began to abate in the early postwar years, bands of both Mexican and American outlaws descended upon county ranches, stealing cattle and livestock and occasionally killing the occupants. "In many respects," the historic structure report states, "Zapata County during this period epitomized the lawless frontier of Western legend."

The final construction effort took place just as this traumatizing period began to subside. Uribe's second wife, Tomasa, encouraged her husband to undertake several significant building campaigns, including the 1871 addition of the large sandstone room known as "la casa pinta," or the parlor. The room's lack of defensive features indicates its purely social function. Along with the courtyard, it became the space in which family and members of the growing San Ygnacio community would gather to relax or hold celebrations.

Beyond this point, the fort saw few significant structural changes, even up to the modern day. Retracing this history, the preservation team saw that the Treviño-Uribe Rancho was a quite pure physical manifestation of the resiliency that life on the border required.

"One of the most striking aspects of the Jesús Treviño-Blás María Uribe Rancho is its pervasive quality of authenticity," the historic structure report states. "With only a few exceptions, each part of the existing complex reflects the efforts of its makers and residents. The Rancho evolved with its history, reflecting its early defensive role as well as periods of peace and relative prosperity."



**Facing and previous** When the Treviño-Urbe family moved to reside in their rancho after the U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War, they added bedrooms and kitchens with large furnaces to the complex to accommodate their growing family.

**Right** The doors of the compound, which were handmade from local mesquite or cypress, have all been restored.

The obligation to honor this history didn't rest easy on the Treviño-Urbe preservation team.

"You've got the weight of history on your shoulders," Rotnofsky says, "It's kind of an awesome responsibility." Considering all their research and the ample documentation afforded by HABS, Rotnofsky says, "it was really just an opportunity to get it right."

This restoration was so detail-oriented that it's hard to imagine the fort people see today is much different from the one a Treviño-Urbe descendant inhabited in the 1930s. And, remarkably, the actual restoration took a mere nine months, from June 2016 to April 2017.

They divided the work into two phases. The first six months covered big-ticket items like masonry repair, reconstructing portions of the courtyard wall, and the banquetas, or stone sidewalks, surrounding the complex. They also replaced the heavy chipichil roofs with insulated wood-framed roofs to preserve their beautiful but deteriorated cypress beams.

In the second phase, they were able to delve into the abundant details and nuances of the complex. The doors, for example, were especially evocative. Briscoe set up a conservation workshop during this phase almost exclusively for door restoration and reconstruction.

"Almost every one of them is just so beautifully made," he said. "The oldest door, which we think is original, from about 1830 — that thick mesquite door with a cypress panel — is just a gorgeous piece of construction. It was entirely made on site, I'm sure."

The doors of the Treviño-Urbe complex express the stories of the people who built them perhaps even better than the rooms do. Their craftsmanship is remarkable, with almost every one having been hand-made







**Above** *The varying rooflines of the northern elevation indicate multiple construction campaigns. The sundial that sits atop the arched zaguan gate was commissioned by an Uribe relative and survivor of an Indian raid, who used the North Star as his guide to navigate his way back to San Ignacio at night after being taken captive and sold into slavery.*

**Above right and right** *Due to the constant threat of Comanche raids, not to mention the encroachment of Anglo settlers, the compound strikes a defensive posture from every approach.*







with locally sourced mesquite or cypress. Some were painted a brilliant blue, which could be a symbolic religious reference, welcoming saints. The doors also reflect the fort's synthesis of form and function, with many of them serving defensive purposes while maintaining aesthetic qualities.

Briscoe says they had to develop all sorts of new clamps for the restoration, since they couldn't take many doors off their hinges. In the case of the enormous mesquite door on the Cuarto Viejo, the walls were actually built around the door.

"What I'm finding as an archeological conservator — it's what I live for — is that each of their vernacular buildings showed how each family had its way of solving the problems of building on la frontera," Briscoe says. "They had their idiosyncratic ways of building a tronera, framing the door, building floors."

The time the preservation team spent researching and working in San Ygnacio allowed these qualities of authenticity — the legible characters of the many authors' hands — to shine through the structure. They have created an incredibly precise rendering of the complex, yet it did not come without its challenges.

"Michael [Tracy] was far and away the most difficult client I have ever dealt with," Briscoe says. "At one point, he proposed leveling the fort complex and just focusing on the native American presence."

When the archeologists they had hired found the remains of Native Americans on the land the complex occupied, Tracy became ambivalent about the entire restoration endeavor. It seemed to him that by restoring a colonial-era structure, they were honoring the very act of colonization, of stealing people's land.

"Of course, it is obvious that the people who made this building were taking land from people that had lived here for thousands of years: Native Americans, whoever they might be. And I, of course, don't like that," says Tracy. "And that, of course, is exactly what's happening with this wall, supposedly," he adds, referring to Trump's border wall. "It's going to take people's property and turn it into something else."

Tracy contends that the colonial treatment of land — and people — along the border did not end with the Spanish. Throughout San Ygnacio's history up to today's militarization of the region, the American government and Anglo-Americans have taken measures on the border that disregard the families that have made those lands their home for centuries.

This was evident when Texas took and reallocated numerous properties from Mexican settlers following the Mexican-American War and again when Anglo entrepreneurs pressured Hispanic landowners to sell their land grants in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

But perhaps it was epitomized with the 1951 construction of the Falcon Dam, which flooded a significant portion of the Rio Grande in Zapata County, destroying hundreds of homes and numerous historic communities that dated back to Spanish settlement, along with thousands of acres of pastureland and farmland.

According to the historic structure report, the U.S. Department of State considered the residents who were displaced "as humble folk of Mexican origins, illiterate, and inexperienced in such matters." Ranchers received minimal compensation for their property. People who survived at a basic subsistence level off the land were left with little means to replace that which had taken 200 years to build.

San Ygnacio and the Treviño-Urbe Ranch, however, once again managed to survive. The town escaped the fate so many Hispanic communities faced by having 200 of its residents sign a petition to exclude San Ygnacio from condemnation, citing the town's heritage and location high above the expected maximum reservoir levels.

Not much has changed since the '50s, it seems. The state-sanctioned construction of a wall that will arbitrarily condemn the property of families who have owned their land since the original Spanish grants makes this amply clear.

The roots of such treatment reside in a history of American neglect of the borderlands and its Hispanic heritage. The fact that there are so few buildings left like the Treviño-Urbe complex that represent Texas' borderlands architecture — and that they are widely unrecognized — attests to this. These buildings complicate and even threaten the binary image of America, and Americans, as being altogether separate from Mexico.

"The roots of so much of our South Texas architecture are inextricably tied to northern Mexico," Briscoe says. "To try to say that there's a border between them is just nuts, because there's nothing that you can separate in the architecture. It is absolutely seamless."

In a period of near ceaseless squabbling over border politics, the River Pierce Foundation's restoration of the Treviño-Urbe Rancho is a tribute, not only to San Ygnacio's Hispanic heritage, but also to Texas'. And perhaps it offers hope that if this community was able to withstand so many tribulations in the past, the people of the borderlands will also be able to overcome the threats they face today.

"I don't think you can find many places more indicative of what we're capable of, that express just the range of being human, than right along that border," Briscoe says. "And especially now; this is a whole new chapter."

Christiana Sullivan is a freelance journalist based in Austin.





## Nonconformist

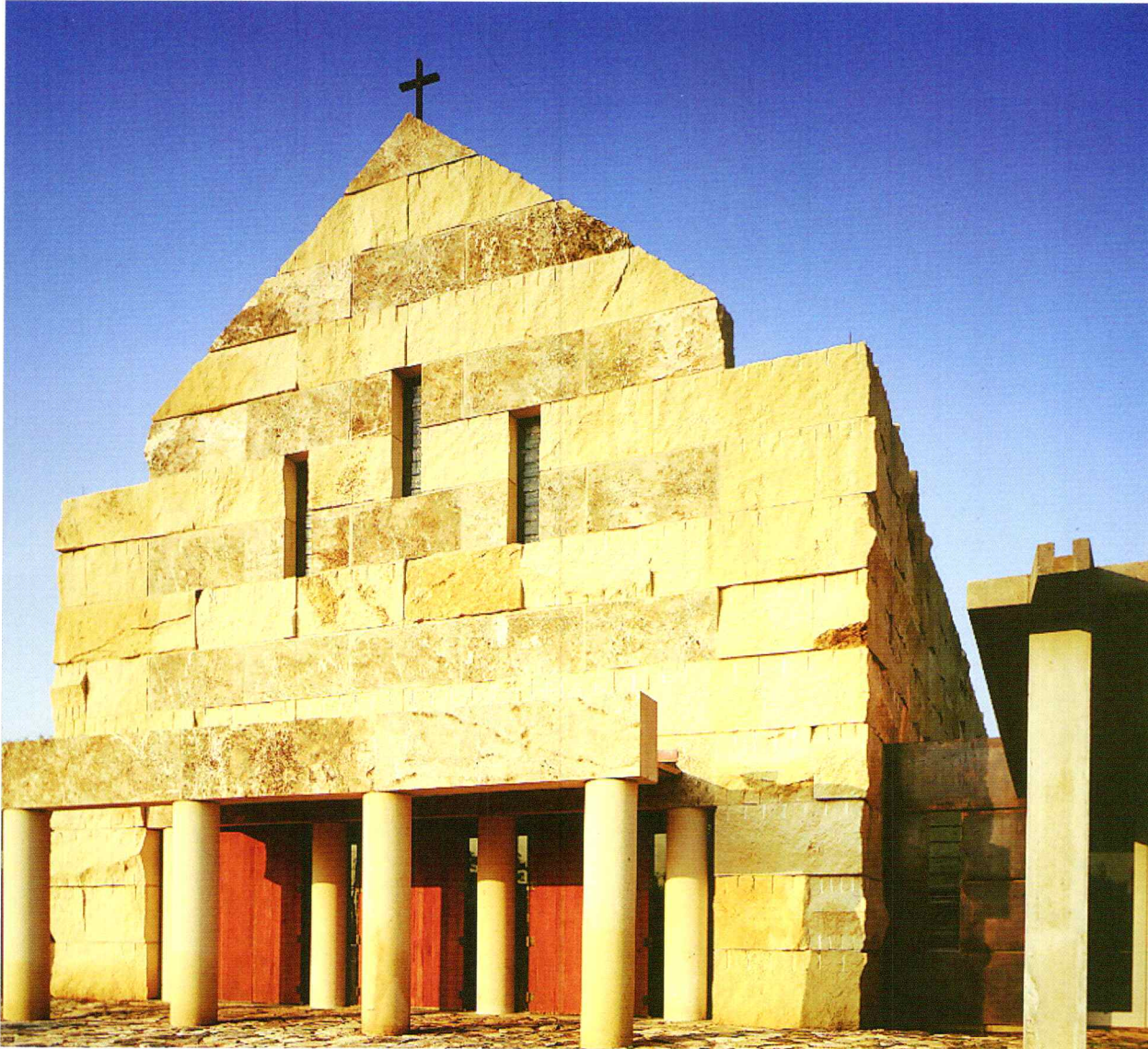
Gary Cunningham, FAIA, is the recipient of this year's O'Neil Ford Medal for Design Achievement. In nearly 40 years of practice, his firm, Cunningham Architects, has created a distinctive body of work guided by its founder's unusual and uncompromising vision of honesty and collaboration.

by Andrew Barnes, AIA

In a city like Dallas, it can be difficult to create your own voice. In a way, Dallas is a city that celebrates conformity, with an underlying sense, in the corporate world, that things will go best for you when you follow the prescribed path. (Of course, this path is often only accessible to those with the right pedigree, education, or skin color.) Everything — from the uniformity of the built environment (most emphatically expressed in downtown's crop of 1980s high-rises), to the blue button-down shirts, to the yearly performance reviews — tell us to be a part of the crowd, not to stand out. The picture of success is painted for us. With 1,500 corporate headquarters, 25 of which are Fortune 500 companies, Dallas does a lot of business. This is the culture of our city, and it manifests itself in our architecture as well, with large firms employing a significant portion of the architectural workforce. I have no qualms with large firms; they do important work and many wonderful things for the profession. In the context of Dallas, they shape the discourse, do the majority of the projects, have the loudest voice.

This article is an exploration of a unique voice that finds its expression outside of the polished world of slick marketing presentations, management hierarchies, and timesheets — a voice that could only be fully expressed in its own created world, un beholden to the dominant system and structure.





**Facing** *Cunningham designed this chapel for the Cistercian Abbey, where he went to high school. A student's grandfather wanted to donate stone from his quarry in West Texas for use in a new church. Cunningham embraced this material, using solid 2-ft-thick blocks of limestone for the exterior walls.*

**Left** *The main facade of the Cistercian Chapel, completed in 1992.*

Architects don't become well-respected, successful, and prolific by being wishy-washy. Most prominent architects are strong-willed, confident, self-assured, and can be thought of as true to themselves. Yet one architect was selected to be profiled for this feature on authenticity. Why? I think it is because even among the field of well-known and prominent architects in Texas, he stands apart.

No matter what group one is a part of, for authenticity to be perceived one has to be, in some way, distinctive. One must break the mold. It could be defined as living by one's own code, or displaying one's idiosyncratic personality in the face of dominant expectations and established norms (these can include the culture of a firm, a city's culture of design, the culture of organizations such as the AIA). If there is one Dallas architect about whom this could be said, it is Gary Cunningham, FAIA, and his firm, Cunningham Architects.

**"Ah, You Look Like a Normal Person!"**

This was the first thing Cunningham said to me when I arrived at his office, which is in an old warehouse in a post-industrial/still-semi-industrial district between downtown and the Trinity River. I was wearing a black

T-shirt and skinny jeans, my hair a weird overgrown mullet. It seemed as though he welcomed my appearance as out of the ordinary in a town replete with large offices with dress codes. It was this embrace of things just outside the mainstream that came to be a recurring theme in our talk. If there is a way "most" architects do things around here, Cunningham seems to do them the opposite way.

This includes conversation. A conversation with Cunningham can be like a treasure hunt, or an escape room where you find clues scattered around and it's up to you to piece the whole picture together. At some point in the discussion you will be confused, inspired, surprised, bewildered, hopeful, and grateful. At the end, you will want to come back and do it again. His every sentence is full of passion and intensity. Whatever he's talking about, it is the most interesting thing you could be listening to in that moment. You may start on one topic and then find yourself in a conversation about something totally different.

The first thing that I realized is the obvious passion Cunningham has for creation. His mind is constantly involved in the act of creating, or thinking about creating, whether it is art, furniture, fabrication, architecture, or drawing.





“I draw,” he says. “I’m adding up shit all the time. I’m driving down the road adding up dimensions. I’m detailing shit in my head.”

He is a driven and quirky man (as his nickname, “Corky,” suggests), and he does lead and set the tone for his office, though he is not the stereotypical strong-willed-architect-dictator. Cunningham has found a way to be a unique, passionate, creative leader, without ruling the projects with an iron fist. He allows and encourages genuine collaboration and gives his team a sense of ownership. “Design ideas can come from anyone,” he says, a comment that rings true to his employees. “It’s up to the office management to make sure people feel comfortable saying anything they feel that they should be saying,” he continues. “That goes back to the trust and respect, and not to feel like you’re going to be called stupid or be berated if you have a dumb idea. I usually have the dumb ideas!”

#### **Authenticity in Projects and Clients**

Ever since the recession, work has become more competitive. Cunningham does not try to go after every project, understanding the nature of his firm and that they will not be competitive on some work. He is very particular about whom he chooses to work with. It is essential for him that he understand the client’s values and outlook on life and work with

people he sees “eye-to-eye” with. A client he is particularly fond of is Half Price Books, which shares a similar mentality in placing a higher value on people and employees than profit. It is this alignment of values that enables a strong collaborative relationship with the client.

Cunningham is the first to say that he is nothing without his team. He makes no exclusive claims of authorship on the firm’s projects, but it seems the design process does start with him. When a project comes into the office, ideas begin to churn in his mind. For him, this appears to require some time spent in solitude, so he disappears and starts drawing out ideas freehand. Apparently, Cunningham can disappear for days at a time, and will then re-emerge unexpectedly. He’ll then present the sketches to the rest of the staff, who will begin to develop the concept into a building. One employee describes it like this: “I like to think of Gary as a chef — he puts several ingredients in a pot and walks away, he lets it develop and asks others to watch it, season it, and add more ingredients as they see fit. He comes back to the pot occasionally and adds what he thinks is missing, maybe just a little salt or maybe new ingredients to spice it up and mellow it out. He walks away and comes back over the course of the project, until the dish is ready to serve or time has run out.”



In many ways, it is Cunningham's chosen lifestyle that allows this process to take place. He says, "At one point I had my home life and work life separated, but they need to be all the same." He lives this out, having moved into an apartment behind the office 15 years ago. Gary's work is his personal life; his personal life is his work.

The firm stays involved throughout the construction process, with the Cunningham team often fabricating elements of the design in an on-premise shop. This has included a 40-ft cross for the Prince of Peace Catholic Church. Cunningham himself participates in the construction meetings, often facilitating and leading the client through what can frequently be a contentious and stressful process.

"I like that kind of stuff," he says. "I used to use the phrase, 'you can't have too many cooks in the kitchen.' For me, I'm happy to have a lot of people involved, and I'm pretty good at sorting it out. In fact, I like it, that's my deal, sorting it out. We had many meetings at Temple Emmanuel

**Facing** *The Stern Chapel at Temple Emmanu-El, completed in 2016.*

**Below** *Cunningham transformed a 1923 Dallas Power & Light electrical substation building into a single-family residence. Completed in 1988, this residence won a Twenty-Five Year Award from AIA Dallas in 2015.*







where we had 30 to 40 people in a room for two to three hours, just hashing over shit. I'm the one that had to keep the flow, and I had to come back and say, this is what we think we ought to be doing. I had to be confident enough about it that they believe me. Obviously, I had to be right about it too. I like that. Man, that keeps you on your toes, and it's stressful. It's a lot of fun, because sometimes you get amazing input out of left field like you wouldn't believe. Someone may ask a question that makes you think of something you never would have, otherwise. There's never such a thing as a dumb question. I think you should never deny anybody from inputting. That's where interesting things happen. It's not my vision; it's the collective. I think that's a wonderful thing, when a bunch of people can figure out something better than one person could ever figure out. I do believe that. I've lived it now for 30-something years, so I know that for a fact."

I have noticed that the people I know who are current or former employees of Cunningham have an intellectual kinship with their boss. He seems to have attracted people who are also just outside the mainstream, people who have a tendency to experiment and push the boundaries. And he has no shortage of compliments for his staff. "The guys that work here, that do the working drawings," he says, "they are hardcore motherfuckers. Man, they are just hard-ass. They put together a mean set of drawings. They're just the best I've ever seen." When reflecting on his past employees, he says: "A lot of firms have started out of here, and I'm very proud of it. You can pinpoint projects over the decades in this office, and you can tell who's been involved and their fingerprints are on them. They're not my fingerprints; they're our fingerprints."





**Facing** *The Addison Conference and Theatre Centre. The glass drum serves as a beacon for the box office and entrance to the theater, as well as a formal counterpoint to the adjacent low and horizontal conference center. It was completed in 1992, and received an AIA Dallas Honor Award in 1995.*

**Left** *The dining hall of Southern Ute, located in Ignacio, Colorado, completed in 2000. Cunningham remembers this project for the experience of learning about the tribe's values and customs.*

**“I Love Education.”**

Another thing Cunningham returned to again and again during our discussion was how much the firm has learned from the projects it has worked on. The way he recalled each was in terms of what it taught him; what the process was like, not the built result.

The Addison Conference and Theatre Centre, completed in 1992, was an experience of learning what was possible on a minimal budget, and what it's like to collaborate with artists. Cunningham learned a great deal about staging dramatic performances during the project, and now says with conviction: “Of all the arts, theater takes the most soul and most guts.”

The Philip Johnson-designed Cathedral of Hope, for which Cunningham was executive architect, was an experience of learning how to create a very complex building from a minimal starting point. All they received was a rudimentary plan and a scan of a 3-D model. With the help of structural engineers Thornton Tomasetti, they had to figure out how to build complex geometry and determine the appropriate materials. Cunningham met Johnson during the project and visited him and Alan Ritchie at the Glass House. (He would steal #2 pencils that Johnson had chewed and bring them back to the office as souvenirs.)

**“I Want Criticism and I Want Sincerity.”**

Cunningham is very open and does not try to present a perfect appearance to potential clients. He claims he is so up front that he tells his clients his firm's buildings do leak, and problems will happen, but that they will be there every step of the way to figure it out and make it right. In this way, he lays bare what many would consider a weakness, something to hide because

it would make most architects self-conscious. Being honest throughout the process is essential in Cunningham's approach.

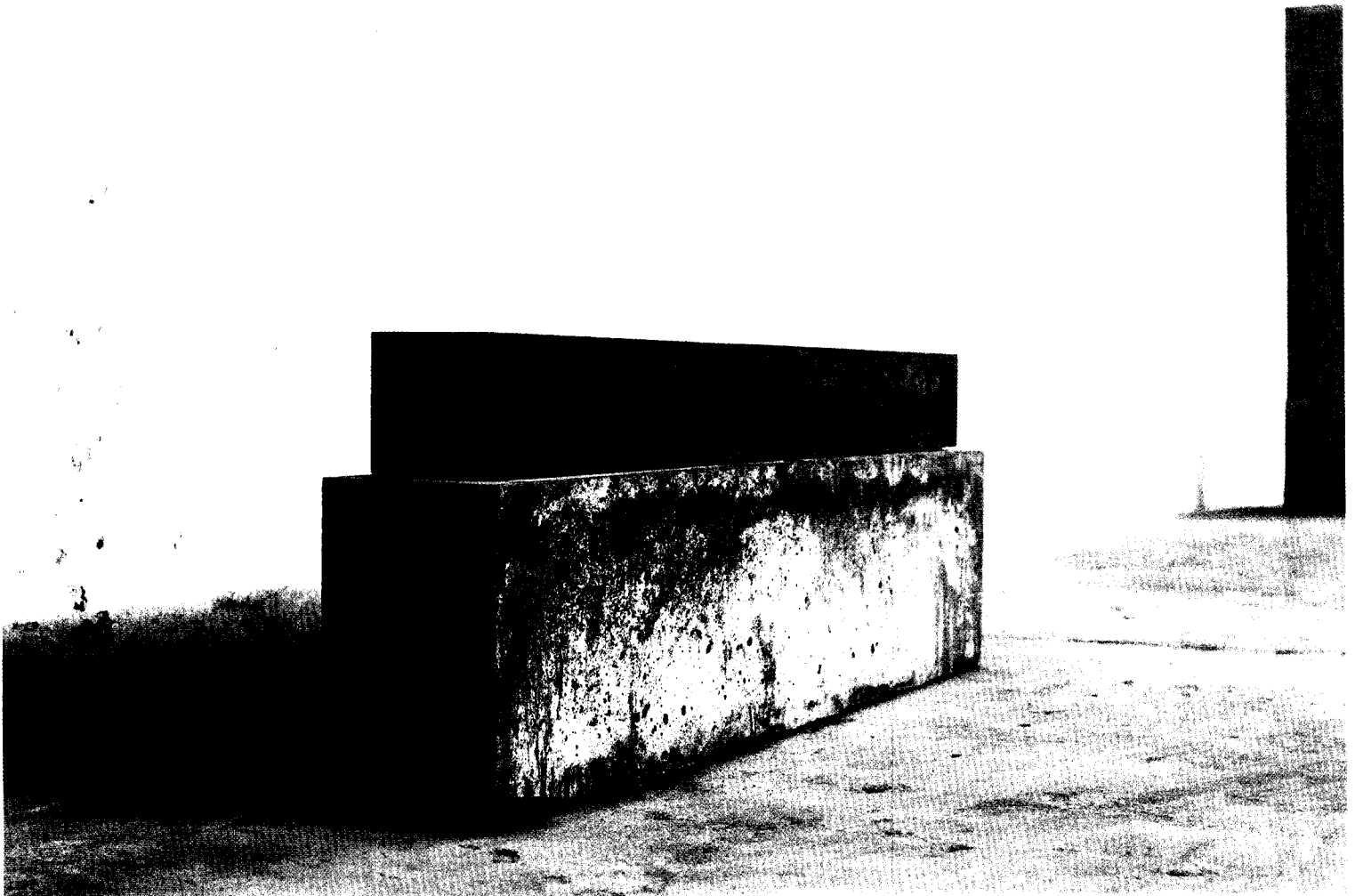
As we were wrapping up our conversation, Cunningham insisted that I add my own voice and impressions to the article, so it wasn't simply regurgitating what he had said. He said, “You can slam me, if you want.” I found this attitude extremely refreshing and invigorating. Yet even with this extraordinary license explicitly granted, I don't think a takedown piece is warranted. Where some might be careful to present a polished and very refined face for the article and worry about the nature of the final portrayal, he simply presented himself and his firm as they are, or as he sees them, and was happy to let the observer draw their own conclusions. He talks about what he is passionate about, about the way of working that he has fostered in the years of running a practice. He is not concerned with a perfectly manicured image.

I couldn't help but leave with the feeling that Cunningham has created something special, here in this old industrial building. With his firm, the shop, the other companies who share the space, it all has the feeling of a community. Not a community with strict rules or hierarchies or employee manuals, but one of authenticity, creativity, exploration, and, probably, fun.

I think this way of practicing is absolutely essential to the profession. There is room in architecture for all types of practices, large and small, rigid and loose. I sometimes worry that the new generation of architects in Dallas isn't aware that one can practice and live this way, as exemplified by Gary and those around him. As architects, it's up to us to make sure we continue the legacy of making, exploring, thinking outside the box, and doing things just a little bit differently.

Andrew Barnes, AIA, is the founder of Agent Architecture in Dallas.





## Hornbook: To Place

Architecture in large part involves placing things in space: a building on a site, a door in a wall, an object in a room. Might there be an underlying order that, when accessed, unlocks an authenticity deeper than identity, history, or the self?

by W. Mark Gunderson, AIA

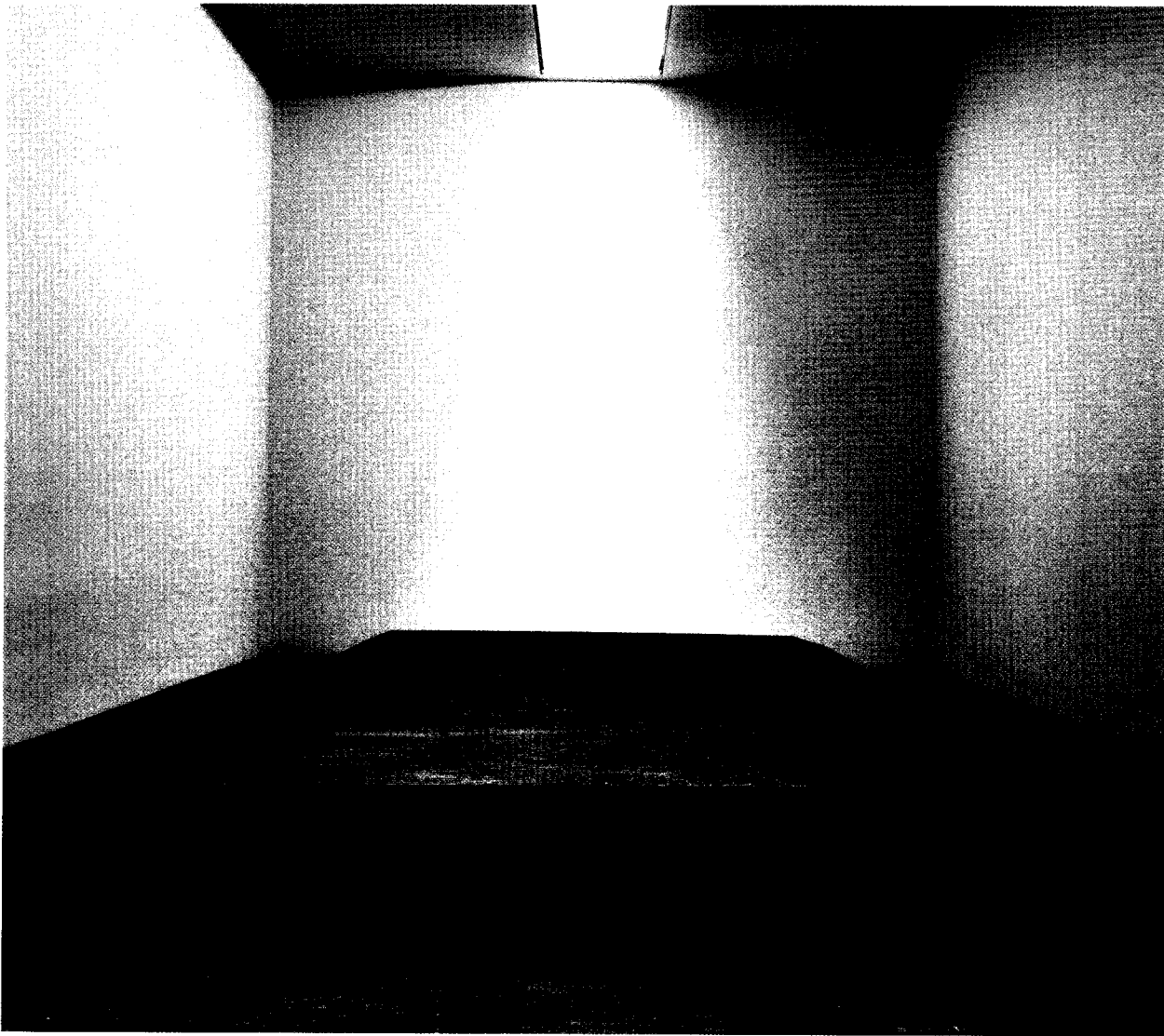
**F**irst things first. If something “goes without saying” then it should be said. It is precisely such things which become presumptions — a form of arrogance and therefore a kind of blindness. Presumption is ubiquitous, but avoidable in some ways with practice. Taking “simple” things — obvious or self-evident — for granted is a serious oversight.

As William Gass described in his elegant 1996 essay “Simplicities” (from “Finding a Form”), there are many kinds of simplicity; Kenya Hara’s new book “100 Whites” shows the same idea with respect to what most consider a simple color: Even the most rudimentary acts are in fact quite complex and rich with implication.

One might focus on “place” as verb — to place; the act of placement — rather than the usual use in current architectural discourse, as noun. As above, observations on this topic might be seen as completely obvious; hence this text.

To “place” something in space (pose / posit / position; sit / site / situation; set / settle / setting) is an act of intention — an act of curatorial discretion — and gives meaning and has consequences whether known and considered or not. We “arrange” things to meet needs or perhaps as a form of expression; an expression of form. To put forth. To find form in life, to find life in form. To find or give structure. To “place”





**Facing** Hubert Kiecol,  
*“Liegende Säule/Lying  
Column,”* 1987, concrete,  
private collection, Amster-  
dam, copyright the artist.

**Left** Richard Serra,  
*“Silence (for John Cage),”*  
2015, forged steel, 16 x  
345 x 110 inches, 40.6 x  
899.2 x 279.4 centimeters.

emphasis. Louis Kahn would say that “truly the role of the architect is that of a composer.”

Whether this is in two dimensions — something “on” a page, or “in” a frame, or frames “on” a wall; or something placed in three dimensional space: “on” a surface, or “in” a volume — the act of placement vests one, several, or many elements into a context or site with resulting consequences. The empirical qualities manifest in a given installation — by artist, curator or architect; inside or outside — might work “with respect” for the space / site, or might deliberately violate the intrinsic qualities and spatial traits or characteristics. Intention is subjective and contingent, but both require a default understanding. Kahn’s “I always begin with the square, and then look for forces which would disprove the square,” or Donald Judd’s “... art, for myself, and architecture for everyone, should always be symmetrical except for a good reason” express default “primary conditions” upon which their work was predicated.

The initial reaction for a single element might frequently be to “center” it. This might mean the exact dimensional location or might refer to an implied gravitational or spatial center which seems to suggest static balance. The visual “weight” of a thing many times gives reason for more surrounding space beneath it; space to “carry” the form. “Breathing room”



is a typical description of the space required or desired surrounding an element in order to hold it respectfully “in place.” To “lock in place” is to find a situation in which the elements and the space they occupy are held in some form of compositional unity or aesthetic stability.

This act of centering in architecture is perfectly expressed in the Pantheon’s ocular aperture, which exists at the exact axial apex of an implied spherical architectural volume. Its numinous equivalent in another way would be illustrated by Ise Shrine’s “august column of the heart” (*shin-no-mihashira*) or “heart post.” Representing the sakaki bush sacred to Shinto, the post — the “true pillar” — is hidden from view at all times. In the 20-year interim between each rebuilding of the shrine, the post is covered by a small, gabled wooden structure (*oi-yu*) in a field of white gravel (*kodenchii*); the arrangement itself being an exquisite “object in a field.”

Even a deliberate eccentricity requires knowledge or understanding of the center, just as jazz requires understanding classical form and structure. The tension between the two is implied in either direction — centered things imply dissonance, and dissonance requires an implied center. Carlo Scarpa was a master of this form of eccentric, off-center composition.

A center line of a room might determine everything regarding a work, as in Carl Andre’s wood case of poems at Chinati or his 1968 work, “35 Timber Line,” installed in a Chinati barracks gallery. Or, of course, the aperture and reflector in Kahn’s Kimbell vaults.

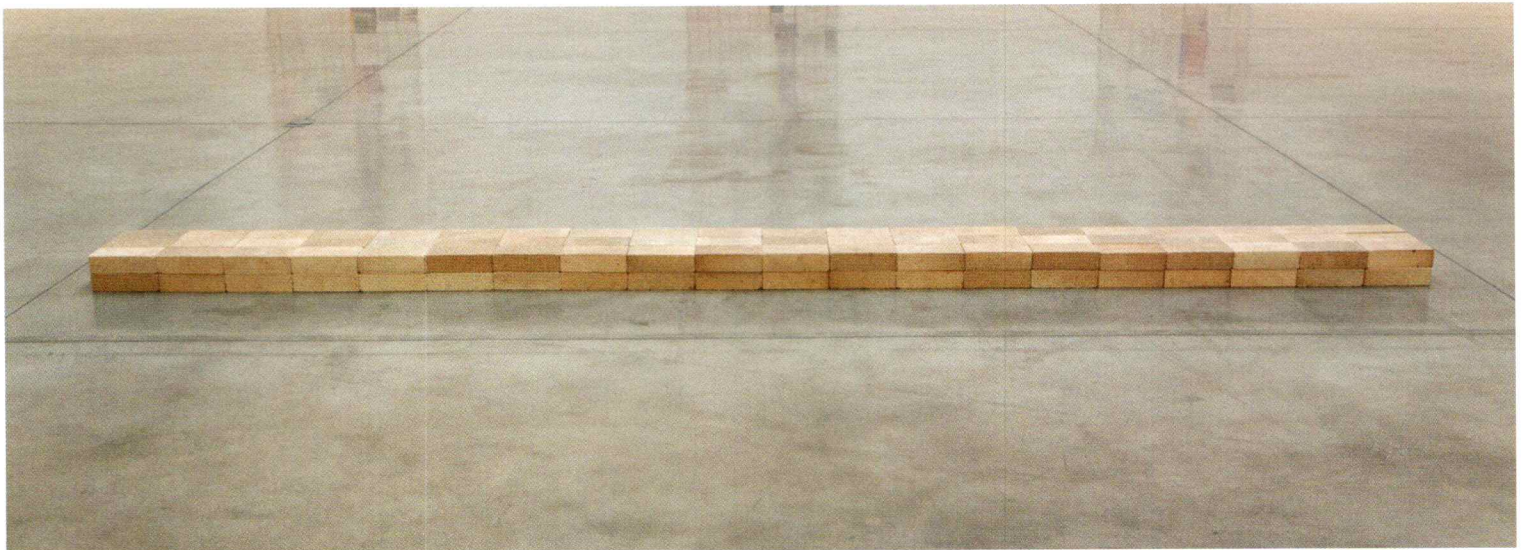
The “site” as receptacle, volume, or “contain/er” is not a neutral element. Louis Kahn believed a person had a rapport with a room, as though it were a sentient being and a singular entity. Its qualities prefigure the results of the insertion. The characteristics of the site or space will evoke a condition which might reinforce those qualities or attempt to negate them. A “figure / ground” relationship is created and is either desired — as “two things” — or, if perfected, they seemingly become a congruent “one thing.” An engagement or, if “joined,” a marriage. They resonate in some way as a whole, grafted together, differently than as two distinct elements. This vesting of one thing within another takes many forms, and the extant fabric or volume determines the qualities achieved as much as do the intrinsic qualities of the element “vested.” Even the slightest movement can affect the specific aspects considerably, as any curator hanging a work or several in an exhibit knows. The meaning of the “work” can be changed significantly by this. The effort is towards the enhancement

of both “figure” and “ground.” This is an iterative act. In art terms, “site specific” refers to this quality. Light lends aspect.

The exact dimensions of the site or space may be employed to locate the object’s “place”/ment. A superb example of this is the 1467 Rucellai Sepulchre in Florence by Leon Battista Alberti whose room dimensions and window arrangement (themselves “placed” in the wall) dictate the exact location and proportions of the figural aedicular insertion. Similar as well to much of the sculptural work of Carl Andre, Richard Serra, Robert Morris, and Donald Judd, as well as other sculptors and artists whose simple forms engage the room or space by first engaging a plane. Each considered the floor an “equal” to the wall or ceiling, and works such as Serra’s 1974-75 “Delineator” “lock” together the ceiling and floor planes in the installation. Almost the entire corpus of these artists’ works addresses such concerns with erudition and precision. All four, and many others, have works in the landscape which align with or reference the cardinal directions, such as Judd’s north / south line of 15 concrete works in Marfa, or his circular concrete works which strike a perfect level against the slope of an existing topography. Actual versus ideal, held in contrast.

Archaic geometries, ley lines, geomancy, Feng Shui and “regulating lines” all carry this ancient concern for intrinsic or “correct” placement. Richard Long’s walked lines and stones in the landscape are of this raw primordial essence, as is — with contemporary capacities for land formation — Michael Heizer’s 1969 “Double Negative.” In architecture and landscape, specifically the example of Moorish water rills on the center line of a space (such as the Court of the Long Pond or Court of the Lions at the Alhambra, or Kahn at Salk) are many and profound. One might cite any *allée*, such as Dan Kiley at the Miller garden, or Paul Rudolph and Russell Page’s glorious row of pleached oaks at the 1974 Bass Residence in Fort Worth, in which the linear aspect is both “drawn” on the ground in bluestone, and cut in the air directly above by a gap exactly the same width between the parallel oak canopies.

Placing two things creates a juxtaposition or opposition. A binary counterpoint for the purpose of didactic comparison or evocation of some form of tension. A dialogue. Pairing is of course an archaic act and can be seen in poetic form, for instance in the recently discovered “Woodhenge” a short distance from the well-known “Stonehenge.” Apparently linked





**Facing** Carl Andre, “Equivalent II,” New York 1966 (destroyed)/ New York 1969 (remade), sand-lime brick/firebrick, 120 units, 2 high x 3 header x 20 stretcher, each element: 2 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 9 inches, 6.4 x 11.4 x 22.9 centimeters.

**Right** Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan. Exact date and designer unknown — late 15th to 16th century.



by the adjacent river, the pair are now being reassessed as “one thing,” or one activity. Wood and stone have ancient and rich connotations, in this instance perhaps as a rudimentary expression of life and death. The adjacent river acting — in one interpretation — in the same manner as the idea of Greek “thirds,” in which a third element “holds” two things together (or the French idea of a marriage ...). Wood and stone, but both “henges,” or circles of columns. The archeological evidence seems to support such a reading.

To place one thing on top of another, as in Serra’s 2014 forged steel work “Dead Load,” Hubert Kiecol’s almost analogous 1987 piece in concrete “Saula Liegend” or Serra’s 2013 work “Grief and Reason (for Walter)” speaks directly to such a vertical bearing condition. Weight and gravity are rendered manifest.

The marriage of more than two, or multiple elements in a space obviously becomes an even more difficult act. The five islands arranged in raked white gravel at *Ryoan-ji* in Japan represent a congruent whole, which speaks to the many nuances of its culture and to the timeless, particularly in its use of gravel field as a metaphor for the ocean and the infinite.

John Cage wrote of “repetition as a form of change,” and seriality — lining things up — creates a construct — Judd would say “small order” — in which many factors begin to have bearing; including the odd or even number of elements, which involve differing centers. Cardinal alignments or axial references give additional meaning, bearing, and weight.

Donald Judd’s “100 untitled works in mill aluminum, 1982-1986” gives example to just how many elements can be inserted in a pair of spaces and still cohere as an idea. The structure of the two extant Artillery Sheds (recycled truck garages with Judd’s new glazing system and

roofs) determined the placement of the works. One space holds 48 works, and the second holds 52; it is not two equal conditions as one might presume. Once situated, the phenomenon of daylight causing the “dematerialization” of the pieces begins, and by the moment various pieces “come and go.” This effect was known to Judd, even if he chose not to talk or write about its obvious ephemeral aspects. (He did, however, relish the story of a visiting priest who told him after looking at his work that “they were in the same business.”)

The history of architecture, art, and our existence is replete with such examples — sacred or secular, as one chooses to understand them. If, in fact, there are such things as “givens” in our existence — default conditions that might predetermine a set of cognitive structural concerns as intrinsic and ab initio references — then these primal conceptual framing elements explain much in the history of ideas. It is not an accident that the first of things is almost of necessity “ugly” and predicated upon such rudimentary assumptions. The first airplanes, for example, were designed using squares and cubic frames before aerodynamics was understood. And it is ironic that the International Space Station is designed in the same “space frame” structures, since aerodynamics is of no concern in a vacuum.

One could argue that the sense of “authenticity” derives from such concerns, in that they might reflect, in some manner, an underlying geometry of inception — “true,” “genuine,” “valid” — and that “authority” and the autograph “hand” of the author are rooted in such deeper meanings and in their continued evocation over time and place.

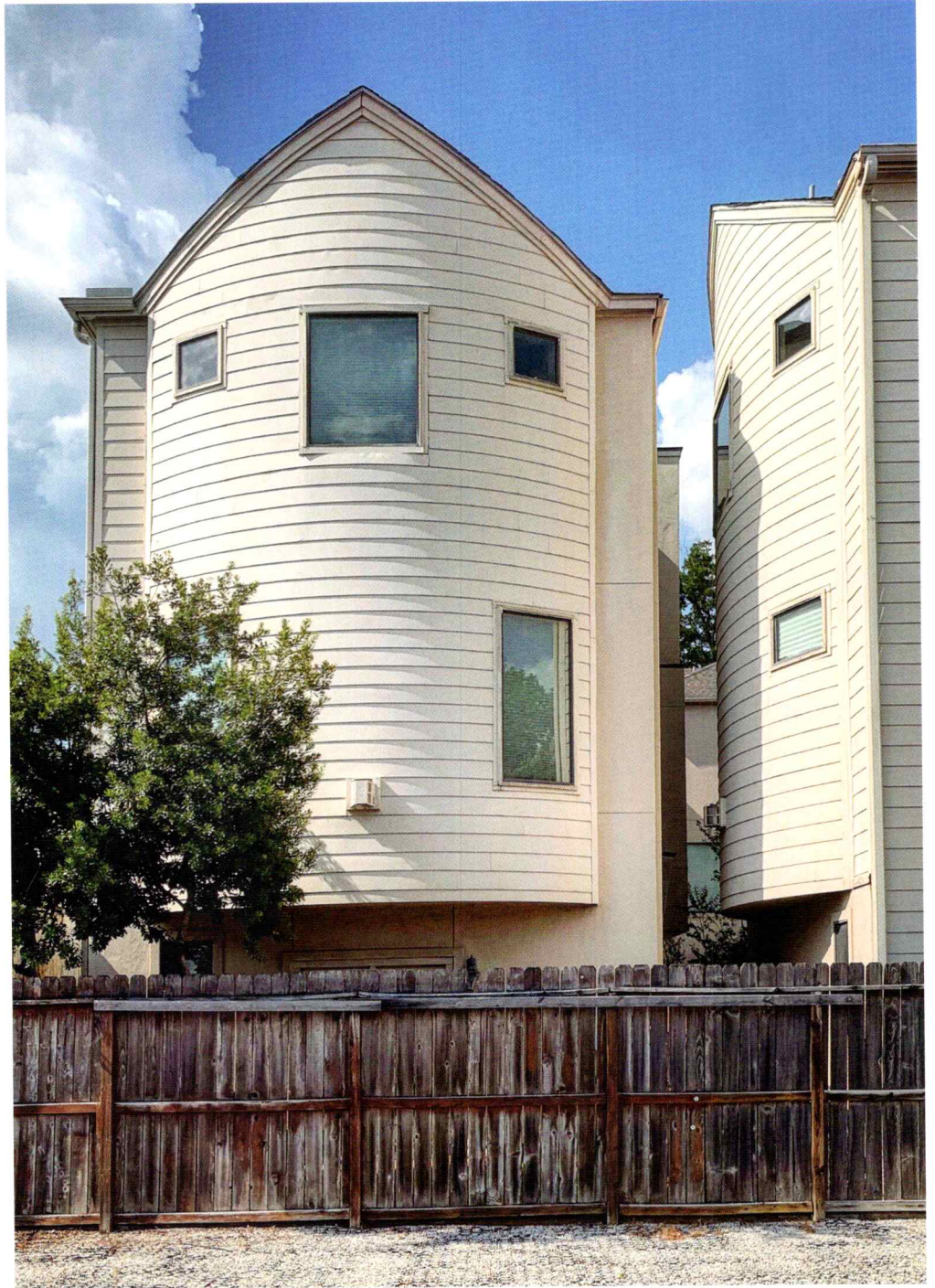
W. Mark Gunderson, AIA, is an architect in Fort Worth.



## Nu Vernacular

While we focus on Architecture, the vast majority of the built environment multiplies around us. Constructed without academicism or consciousness of contemporary discourse, this great mass of building — unseen and super populated — might be the most authentic expression of our society today.

photos and text selections by Ben Koush, AIA







## Facade Extremism

Commercialized architecture has taken the place of the traditional vernacular in the building of present-day America... What makes its study confusing is that this vernacular seems to be so unvernacular... What distinguishes contemporary consumer architecture from earlier forms is that it is consciously conceived of as imagery, as a form of environmental psychology based on marketing... It is this backdrop of pragmatism that makes consumerist buildings' fantasy components often stand out so starkly from the rest of the building. That is the startling thing about the period fronts and plain backs of rowhouses in Houston or the modernistic fronts and equally plain backs of rowhouses in Houston... Consumerist architecture differs from most earlier architecture, because its imagery does not always make a consistent or coherent whole... The underlying attitude is one of expediency, in which the inclusion of any architectural detail, any references to history or human experience are extras that may be dispensed with whenever necessary.

John Chase, "Unvernacular Vernacular," *Design Quarterly*, Issue 131, 1986.



## Postmodern Vernacular

Houston, the expanded city of a mass culture, allows the hinterland to become a part of the foreground itself, thereby creating an ambiguity about what is special and what is typical in terms of public experience or urbanity. Commonplace begins to merge with the monumental. Vulgarity surely must be examined as an essential analytical element in the pursuit of Architecture in Houston. In the choice of vulgarity as a qualifying element of a critical framework, we are free to consider the implications on one hand at brashness, ostentatiousness, and perhaps non-elitist or uncultivated responses, and on the other hand more commonly-understood, vernacular formal expression evolving from a direct response to its contextual forces. This framework may provide a wedge to break into a new sensibility, one which may encompass the lack of a hierarchical value system, pluralism, shifting priorities, change and a void in terms of precedents...Confrontation with the dialectic of vulgarity and the evolution of aesthetic standards appropriate to the formal problems of the new, emerging city is a challenge Houston provides to a designer, and in this confrontation there will arise new architectural form, changing concept of style, and revised notions of monumentality and public places.

Peter Papademetriou, "Memorandum: Dateline Houston," *Domus*, August 1974.











## Nuevo Presidio

The “gated community” is not a traditional community but a reflection of common interests such as security and economic homogeneity. Often veiled in lifestyle concepts such as golf, age, or marine activity, the human making of distance and necessity to create difference between inside and out (the home turf) is as ancient as the temenos of the first temple in the desert. This urge may be even more potent in the endless terrain vague of the suburban city. Moreover, its gates may in fact be the gates of the traditional city, revealing that suburbia has never been very far from it, perhaps only redefining what qualifies as building material. Here, lawn becomes cobblestone, trees columns, and the leaf-blower a broom. Nature is kept at a “safe” distance.

Lars Lerup, “Abecedarium,” One Million Acres & No Zoning, 2011.







## Unironic Decorated Shed

Signage has reached new stages of elaborate development in cities organized for a consumer society. New technologies have made available The Sign, larger and more intense than its neighbors and continuously programmed for everchanging displays... Common variations on the pure sign are buildings-as-sign, in which the major formal elements are actually closer to signage than to building techniques... An inversion of these is the sign-as-building, in which the sign itself is actually made of architectural motifs (piers, vaults, roof), while the rest of the real building is both expressively and literally incidental. Another variation is the hybrid half-building/half-sign, in which architectural elements... are extended as though a part of the building to provide more "frontage" to be read from an adjacent freeway.

Peter Papademetriou, "Aspects of a New Urban Vernacular," *The Harvard Architecture Review*, Issue 1, 1980.





## Shameless

Almost all buildings in Tokyo have been built within the last 30 or 40 years, utilizing contemporary technologies. These technologies have formed a background to the appearance of shameless spatial compositions and functional combinations, unthinkable in the traditional European city... How have we managed to arrive at such a different place to European modernity despite being equipped with the same building technology?... But if our footsteps are actually embedded in such a pitiful urban landscape, the idea of using famous architecture as a criteria base seems to be just an attempt to express good taste. Photographic books amplify a desire for an architecture which simply can't be found in our surroundings. In such a situation, then suddenly architectural design holds no interest anymore; the future appears depressing. If we can't try to turn "disgusting" buildings into resources, then there is no reason to particularly stay in Tokyo. Surely we can start to think about how to take advantage of them, rather than trying to run away. Shamelessness can become useful. So let's start by considering that these shameless buildings are not collapsible into the concept of "chaos," but are in fact an intricate reporting of the concrete urban situation... The buildings we were attracted to were ones giving priority to stubborn honesty in response to their surroundings and programmatic requirements, without insisting on architectural aesthetic and form. We decided to call them "no-good architecture," with all our love and disdain. Most of them are anonymous buildings, not beautiful, and not accepted in architectural culture to date. In fact, they are the sort of building which has been regarded as exactly what architecture should not become.

Momoyo Kaijima, Junzo Kuroda, and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, "Made in Tokyo," 2001.







## What Is It?

An essential failure of Modern Architecture has been its abstraction... Often forms recognizable as “modern” are generally so abstract they can be enlarged or reduced to any size, to operate at a variety of scales and contain diverse functions. This abstraction has led, rather perversely, to a kind of universal archetype, the “What Is It?” building.

Peter Papademetriou, “Aspects of a New Urban Vernacular,” *The Harvard Architecture Review*, Issue 1, 1980.





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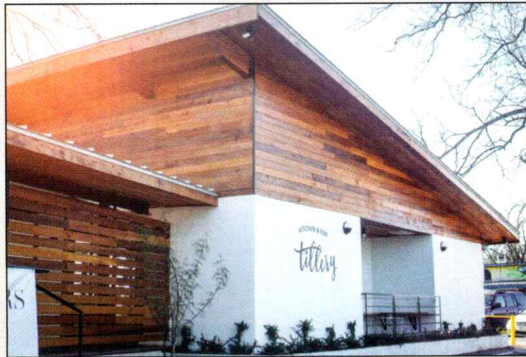
Architecturally significant construction, expertly built to make an impact in the Texas design and business landscapes.



The Commune



Hanks Austin



Tillery Kitchen & Grill

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*I've always been appalled that abstinence is the one part of the architectural repertoire that is never considered. Perhaps in architecture, a profession that fundamentally is supposed to change things it encounters (usually before reflection), there ought to be an equally important arm of it that is concerned with not doing anything. ... One of the directions that we have been trying to exploit, or pursue, in the search for an alternative to the unique, and the obligation for uniqueness, is the generic. And what we have been trying to do is see whether we could gain some initiative, not by being radically simple but radically pure.*

— Rem Koolhaas, “Preservation Is Overtaking Us”

In its trending application in the real estate and AEC industries, repositioning is the act of renovating an aging commercial property, usually an office building, to render it competitive in today's market. For the architect, repositioning — along with the related practices of preservation and adaptive reuse — offers the almost relaxing opportunity of ameliorating the built environment without the pressure of finding a form. Koolhaas reveled thoroughly in such a situation during his firm's work on the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we admire three small repositioning projects that revive old commercial structures for new, but nonetheless commercial, purposes: an old dry cleaner's turned healthy eating establishment, a locksmith shop turned co-working hub, and a Quonset hut turned office space.

# Repositioning

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MAGIC Architecture

*Jessie Temple*





## Past Futured

Vibrant, a new healthy eating establishment in Houston's Hyde Park neighborhood, occupies a 1960s building previously used as a dry cleaner's.

**Architect** Lake|Flato Architects  
**General Contractor** Parker Project Management  
**MEP Engineer** Collaborative Engineering Group  
**Civil Engineer** Ward, Getz & Associates  
**Structural Engineer** Henderson Rogers

by Jack Murphy

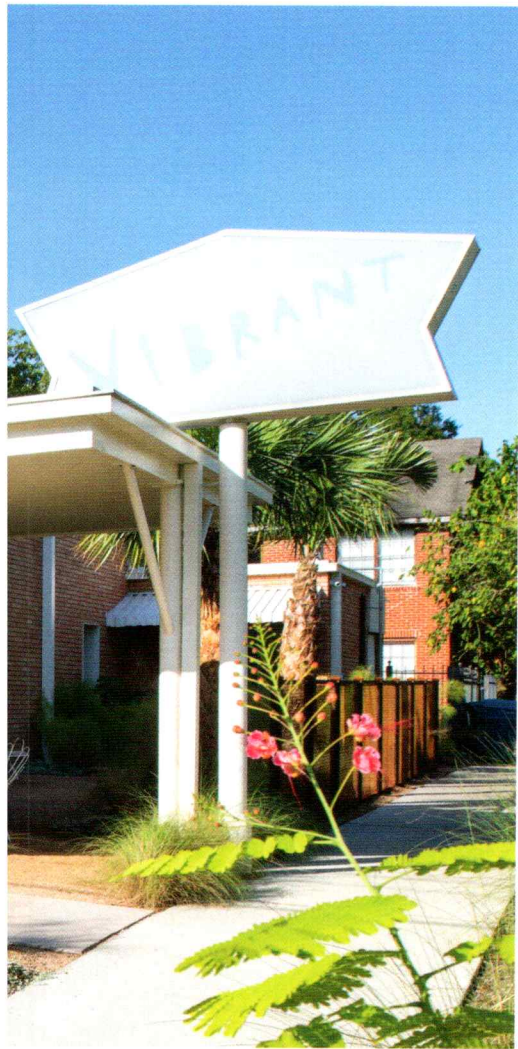
In 1961, a building was completed on the corner of Fairview and Morse in Houston's Hyde Park neighborhood. The structure was funky, with a curious clerestory window and a two-sided porte cochere. By 2016, it had outlived decades of use as McGowen Cleaners and stood empty. Environmental reports found no dangerous chemicals lurking from decades of dry cleaning, so the place stood ready for its second act.

It was just right for Kelly Barnhart's first restaurant. Barnhart, a Houston native, lives nearby and was inspired to open the business after searching for (and not finding many) healthy eating options for her daughter. The result is Vibrant, an all-day establishment where "eating is equally about well-being and pleasure," according to their website. Barnhart tapped Portland-based food blogger Alison Wu to craft the menu. The offerings are gluten-free, dairy-free, refined sugar-free, corn-free, peanut-free, soy-free, and non-GMO. The

resulting food is herbal and bright, with flowers tossed into salads and an electric green curry, all plated on flecked ceramic dishes. Houston is a food destination, but Vibrant still stands out for its artful offerings.

The architecture follows suit. "We fell in love with the building right away," remembers Lewis McNeel, AIA, one of the architects from Lake|Flato who worked on the project. The team responded to the shell's defining characteristics in designing the update. They kept the trapezoidal pop-up, but dropped the window-sill to create a large, nearly square opening. On the south side, a long line of windows, hooded on the exterior, brings direct light into the dining room that complements the even illumination from the main aperture to the north. The inset entry glazing creates a comfortable outdoor room within the original building footprint, accentuated by a skylight. The snake tongue canopy remains, now sheltering a pleasant outdoor dining area.





Lake|Flato worked closely with the owner to finish out the interior. After an entrance through the tan brick and clay tile exterior, the space is mostly off-white, with a warm wood banquette lining two walls and a stylish collection of chairs and pendants. Custom terrazzo elements with pink, orange, and blue chips mix with a bar with rolled edges, at once baroque and cave-like, perfect for Instagram. A large abstract painting adds to the muted palette, and an inflatable fabric duct adds to the softness. Even the neighborhood cat that sauntered up outside during breakfast — white paws, ginger body — was part of the color story. The room is curated with an expert eye and an attention to detail, not Texas Tuscan but Montrose Milano. I would sit here all day if I could afford to.

“Buildings like this are the future,” McNeel told me, as the most sustainable thing we can do as architects is to reuse the structures we have rather than erecting new ones. This



**Facing** *The paving at the front of the building and under the awning has been removed, replaced by seating and drought-resistant plantings.*

**Above** *The building prior to its renovation. Vibrant kept and repurposed the existing signage.*



**Right** The dining room is light, warm, and casual. A mix of pendants and cans add to the daylighting at work.

**Below** An L-shaped bar provides space for ordering and a higher surface for dining. Drinks and specials are listed on the back wall.

**Facing** The enlarged north-facing window makes the space glow for any meal during the day.

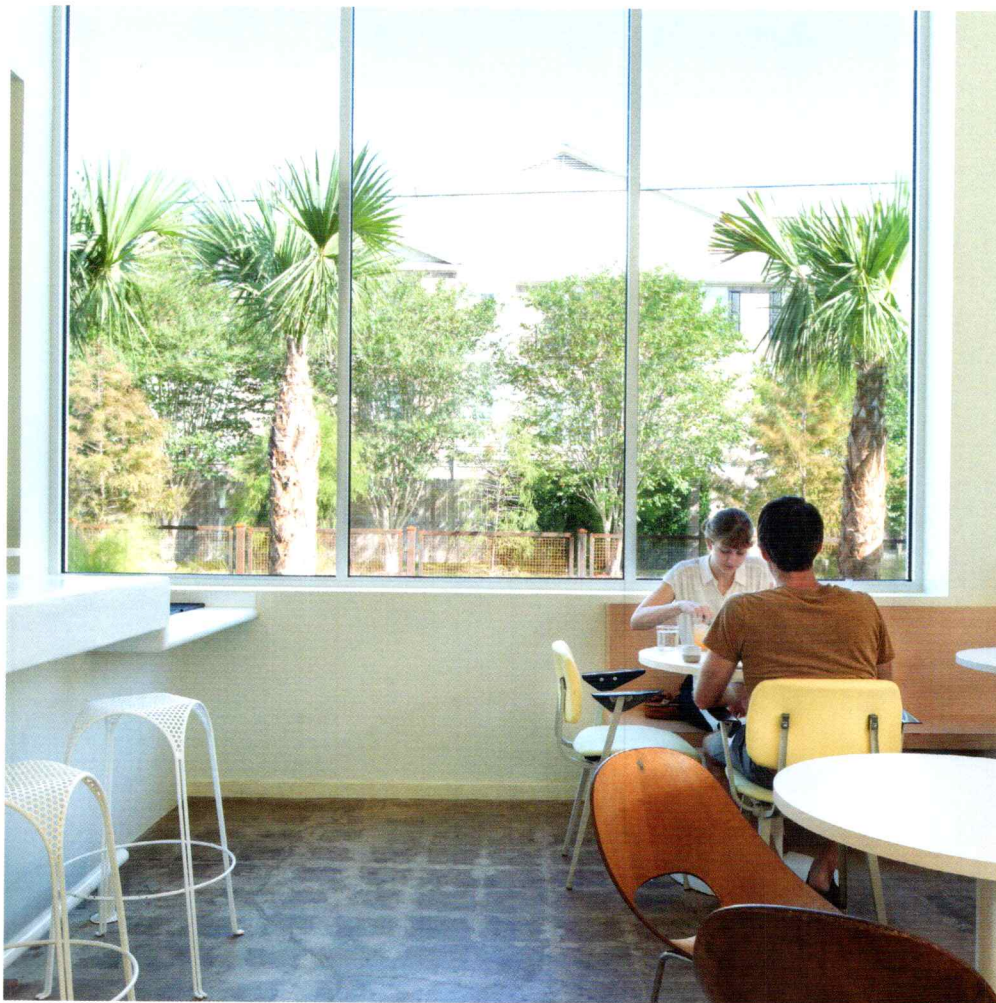






**SITE PLAN**

- 1 PATIO
- 2 DINING ROOM
- 3 BAR
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 MECHANICAL



proposition, echoing Aldo Rossi's ideas about the detachment of a building's form from its use, is a radical one. It offers a pragmatism that Lake|Flato seeks to achieve in the work they do, regularly and with success. Considering that our building stock is aging, we should not tear it down, but instead repurpose this material resource in a creative way.

The future, in its potentiality, remains a condition of the present, which is anchored in the past. McNeel said that the entry courtyard is strategic as well as processional. In order to get the new building occupancy to work with the existing parking lot in terms of code requirements, they needed to cut 25 percent of the conditioned interior, hence the outdoor room. The preciousness of the interior dims when compared to this other, the wide paved expanse for cars, a visual reminder of what has driven the form of the city for the past century. If we could work on urbanism using the same care with which we curate our food experiences, we'd be that much healthier.

In true New Age fashion, Vibrant's website offers monthly astrology advice. For September, Juliana McCarthy wrote that, "if we can see beyond our Virgoan anxiety, we might realize that we're on the precipice of great change — bringing a better paradigm into being. Now is not the time to give up, but to foster whatever we need to ground and take care of ourselves — spiritually, emotionally, and physically." This summons a line from Rossi's "A Scientific Autobiography," one that aligns with Vibrant's culinary mission of wellness: "Architecture [is] one of the ways that humanity [seeks] to survive; it [is] a way of expressing the fundamental search for happiness."

Jack Murphy is a Master of Architecture candidate at Rice.





## Bright Touch

The Commune, a co-working spot for creatives in Austin's North Loop neighborhood, occupies a 1940s commercial building that formerly housed a locksmith.

**Architect** Hunt Architecture  
**Client** Lauren Cunningham  
**General Contractor** Texas Construction & Design  
**Interior Designer** Clair Zinnecker Design  
**Fabrication** Petrified Design  
**Structural Engineer** Arch Consulting Engineers

by Aaron Seward

The block of North Loop Boulevard between Avenue F and the Austin State Hospital Cemetery is home to a novel collection of mostly single-story 1940s retail buildings occupied primarily by vintage clothing and furniture stores. With its ample neon signage, limited parking, and general shabbiness, it has for many people today something of the air of the “old Austin”: a funky hideaway for freaks and geeks. But the new Austin has arrived at this low-density neighborhood on the northern fringe of the central city, and its latest commercial representative is The Commune, a co-working space for the next crop of creatives.

Designed by Hunt Architecture with interior design by Claire Zinnecker, the project is a renovation of an existing structure that most recently housed a locksmith shop. It had, however, sat empty for a decade. Several businesses had looked at it as a potential location, but there had been no takers, mainly due to the lack of parking. Lauren Cunningham,

however, founder and owner of The Commune, saw in the plain little building quite a lot of potential. She purchased it in 2018, put in a parking variance request with the city, and, once that was approved, moved forward with a repositioning of the old structure.

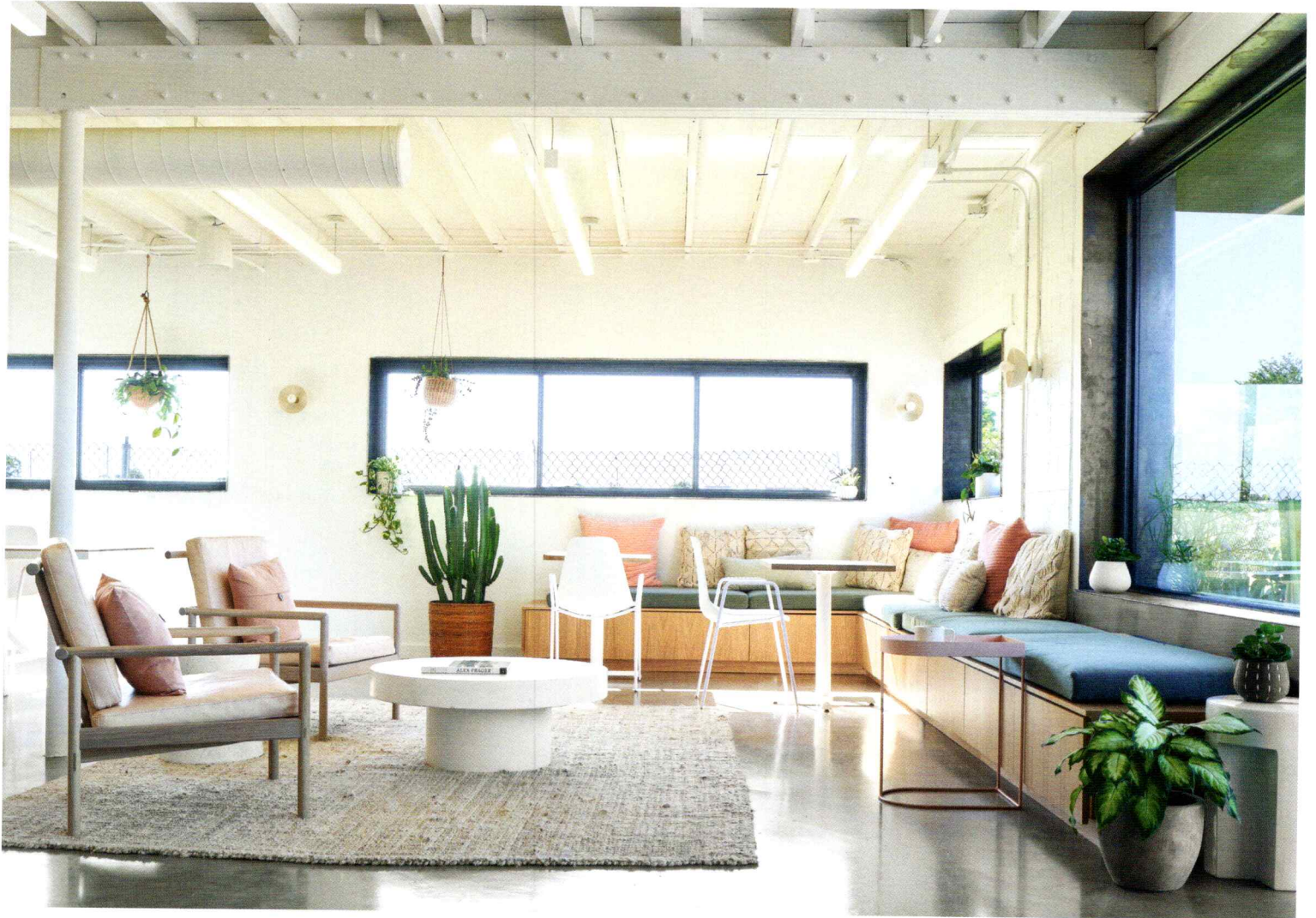
While scrapping the building and erecting a wood-framed box in its place would have been cheaper, that would have obliterated the marketing strategy. The scuffed concrete floor, steel pipe columns, exposed timber joists, and faulty CMU walls exuded a spirit that Cunningham — a graphic designer by trade — knew today's creatives would respond to, were it given the right touch.

The first step was bringing daylight into the 3,600-sf, bunker-like building. The design team added eight skylights and clerestories to the roof and opened up the perimeter with steel-framed windows, many of which are operable. The CMU walls were patched and the street facade was redone with a 3/4-inch-





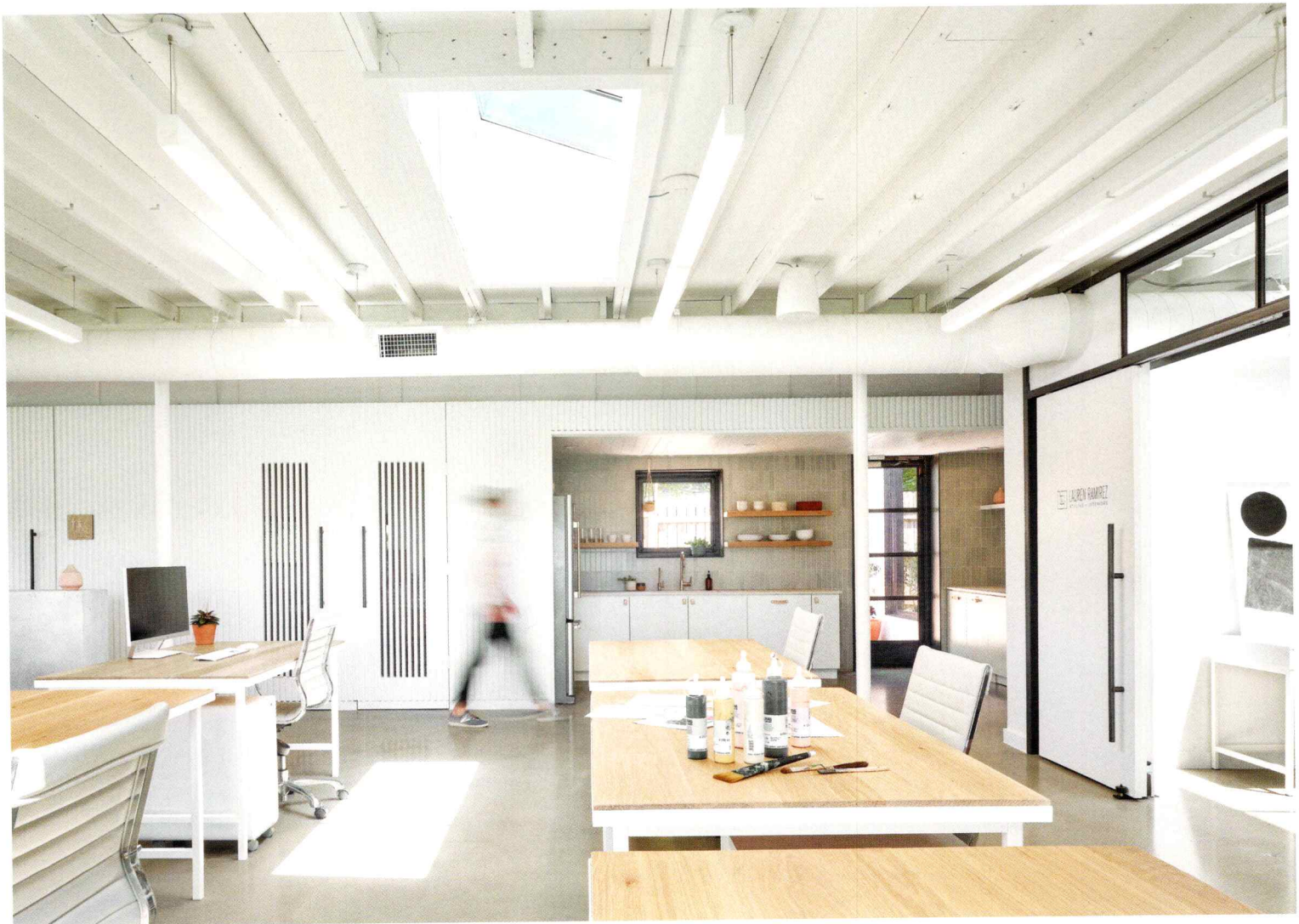
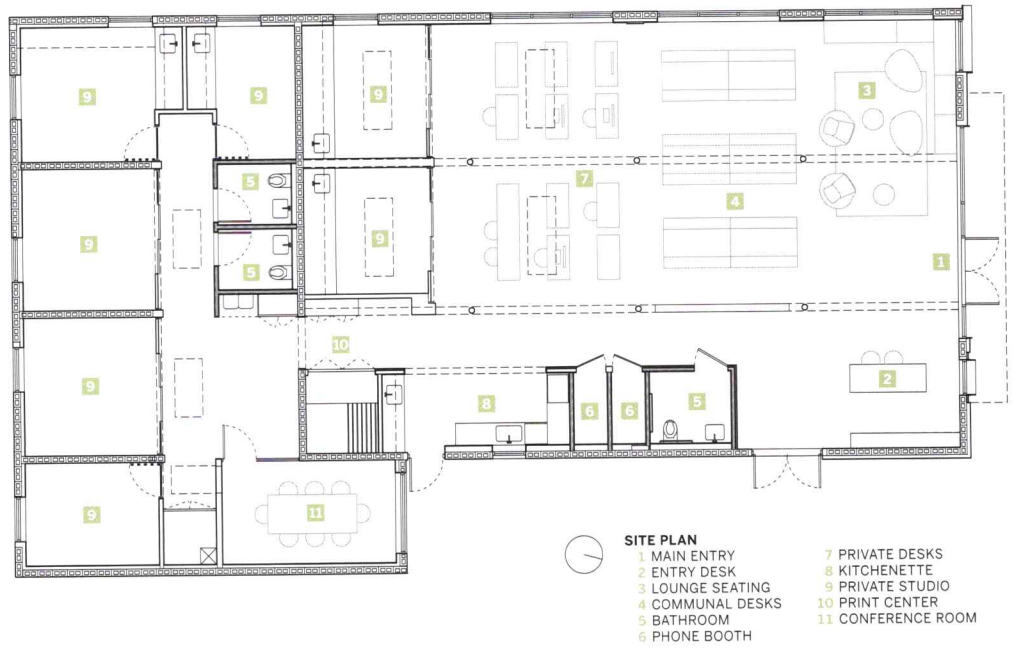
**Facing** A new 3/4-inch-thick steel fin wall wraps around the facade of the 1940s masonry building.  
**Left** The building before renovation work began. Empty for a decade, its last tenant had been a locksmith.  
**Bottom** The lounge area by the main entrance. New windows were added throughout the space to make the interior bright.





thick steel fin wall and a large entry aperture that includes a picture window. To keep things bright, the interior and exterior are painted white, with what few colors there are appearing in pastel pinks, blues, and greens. Blond wood tabletops and cabinetry, curated ceramics, and potted plants (not to mention floral aromatics permeating the space) round out the aesthetic. Windows, doors, steelwork, millwork, and much of the furniture was fabricated by local makers Petrified Design.

The interior space is divided between an open co-working area with a lounge, desks, and large, communal tables and seven enclosed studios, two of which open onto the common area with sliding operable walls. There is also a photo studio, a conference room, a design resource library stocked with sample books, a canvas storage locker, two private phone booths, and a kitchen. The Commune offers several tiers of membership, from day passes to







**Facing** Communal tables and private desks fill out the open co-working area.

**Left** The reception desk is topped by a hefty concrete slab. A steel and glass door opens onto a patio.

**Below** Sliding doors on some of the private studios offer tenants the ability to adjust their level of connection to the common area.



private studios, all of which were taken, with the wait list growing, as of press time.

Before moving to Austin two years ago, Hunt Architecture's husband-and-wife team, Nicholas and Brittany, lived in Brooklyn and worked for Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. While this is their first commercial project, in scope it closely resembles the New York City apartment renovations with which the couple incubated their practice. (They still take on such projects because the fees for a New York City apartment renovation are equivalent to those of a ground-up house in Austin.) With but a few simple moves, made in collaboration with Cunningham, who brought her own design sensibility to the process, a significant transformation has occurred, and a decrepit space has been freshened for a new generation.

Aaron Seward is editor of *Texas Architect*.





## Serious Play

The Red Velvet Events headquarters occupies a 1940s Quonset hut in North Austin that was previously used as an airfield maintenance shed, an auto glass repair center, and a discount furniture outlet.

**Architect** MAGIC Architecture

**General Contractor** DKC Construction Group

**Structural Engineer** LEAP!Structures

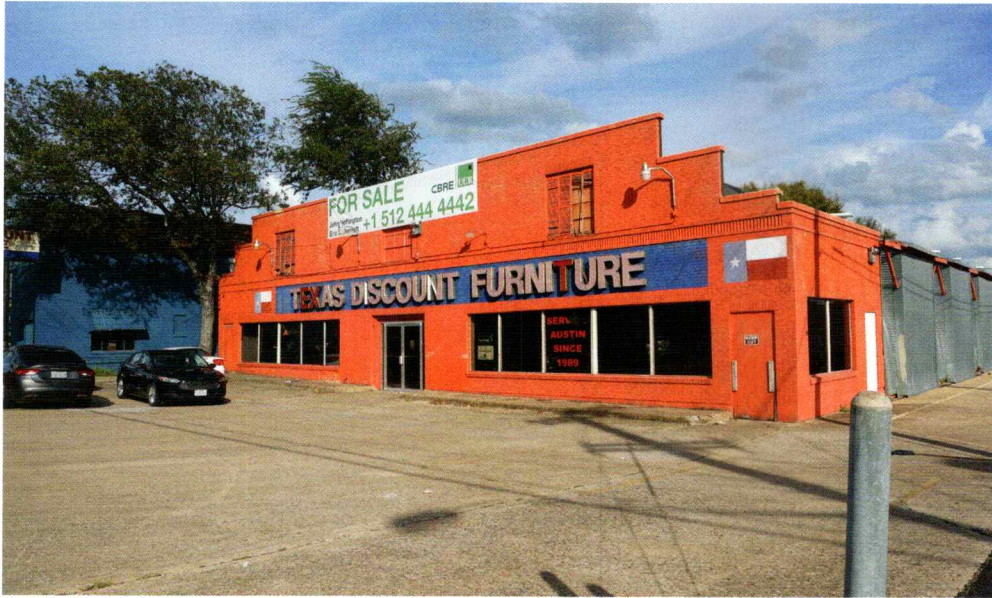
**MEP Engineer** Jordan & Skala

by **Jessie Temple**

For the better part of a century, the intersection of Austin's North Lamar and Airport boulevards has been the blue-collar counterpart of white-collar downtown. Muffler repair, furniture and scratch-and-dent appliance outlets, head shops: These businesses still occupy low-slung industrial buildings built in the 1940s and '50s. In the midst of this landscape, the new headquarters of Red Velvet Events, with its bold red sign announcing its intention to "Out-plan, Outplay, Outparty," looks like a gleaming vision of some energetic future. This may be true, but this reimagining of a 1940's-era three-bay Quonset hut as creative office space, by Scott Magic, AIA, is also keenly aware of its connection to Austin's past.

Quonset huts were designed as temporary structures for the military in preparation for U.S. involvement in World War II. Their roof section is semicircular, with metal ribs supporting a metal shell, and the result is often described as "half a



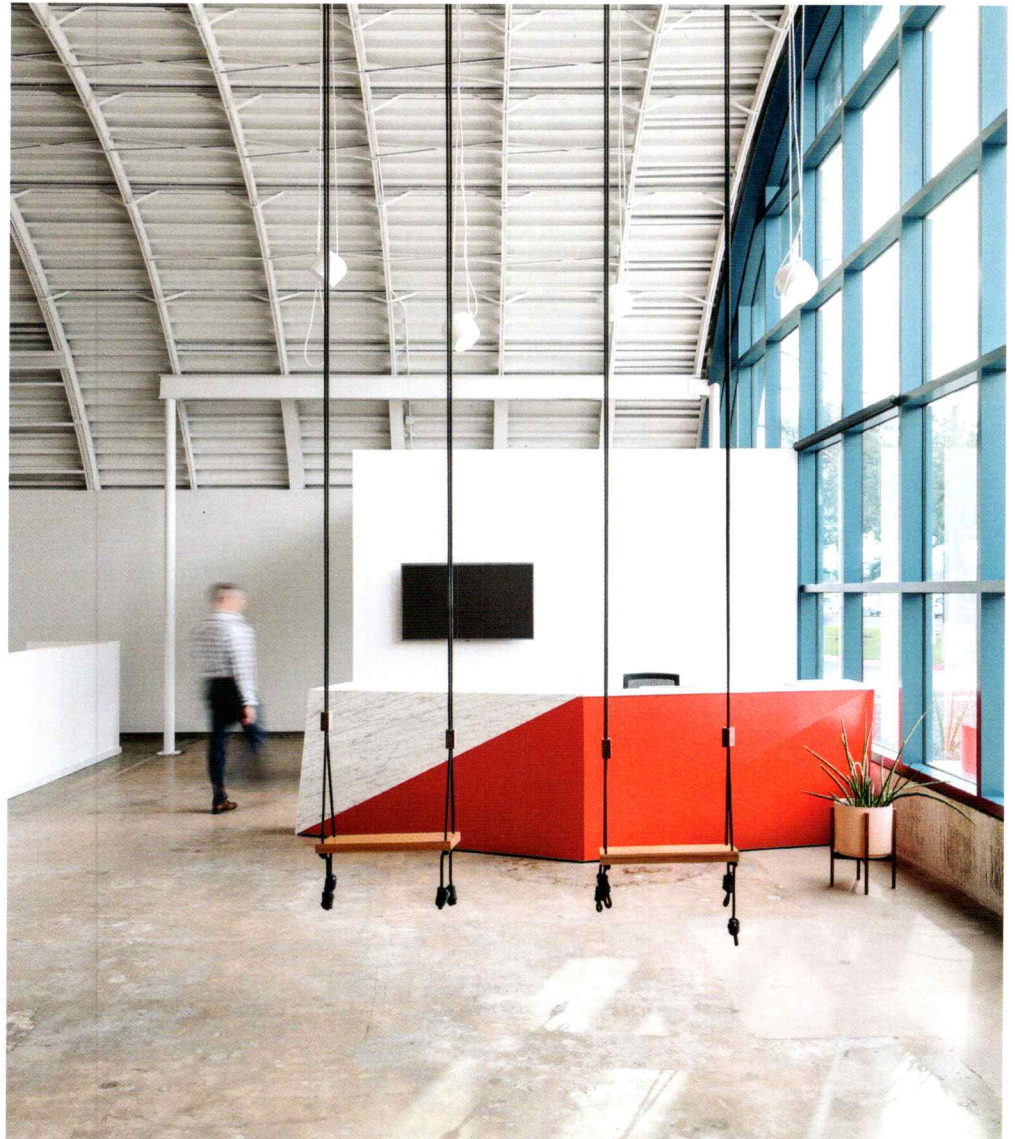


**Facing and left** *In its previous incarnation, the three-bay Quonset hut was a discount furniture store. The architects removed the facade and replaced it with glass infill that expresses the structure's form.*

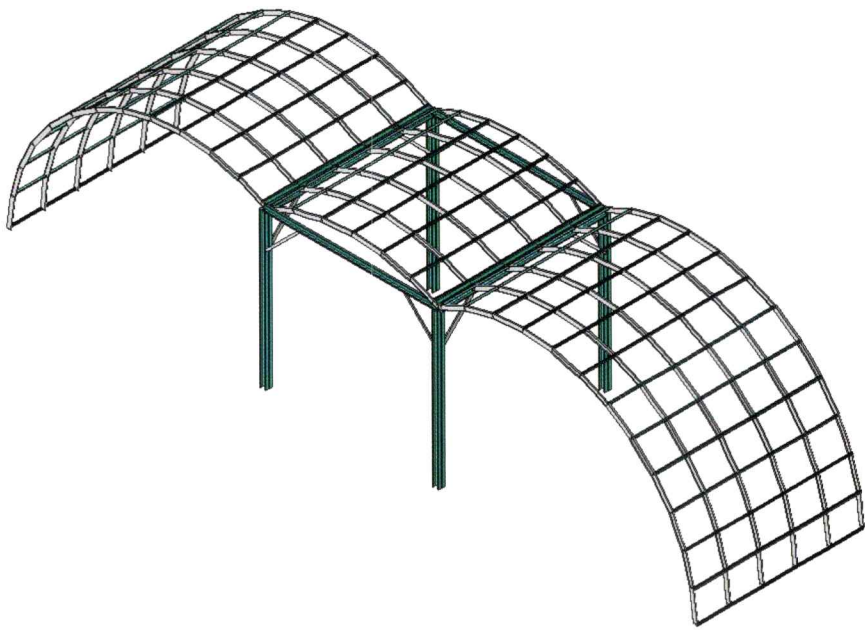
**Below** *Swings at the entryway support the theme of play. Having a client with a strong brand, Magic says, makes his job much easier. "I like making spaces that reflect the people and what they're about."*

tin can" — or, in the case of this building, three halves. Named for the aviation facility in Quonset, Rhode Island, that served as a testing ground for construction, Quonsets were designed to be quickly assembled and deployed. Later, the "huts" offered functional and affordable shelter for a broad range of uses, from postwar housing — "House Beautiful doesn't consider a Quonset an ideal house," says a magazine spread from September 1945, "but it's available." — to music recording: Some historians credit the rise of the "Nashville sound" to the acoustic effects of a Quonset.

The Quonset now occupied by Red Velvet Events was first constructed as a maintenance shed for University Airfield, which operated from the corner of Airport and North Lamar from 1925 to 1952 (aviation pioneer Emma Carter Browning and her barnstormer husband Robert trained pilots there). When the airfield closed, the Quonset served as an auto glass repair center and then as a discount furniture outlet before



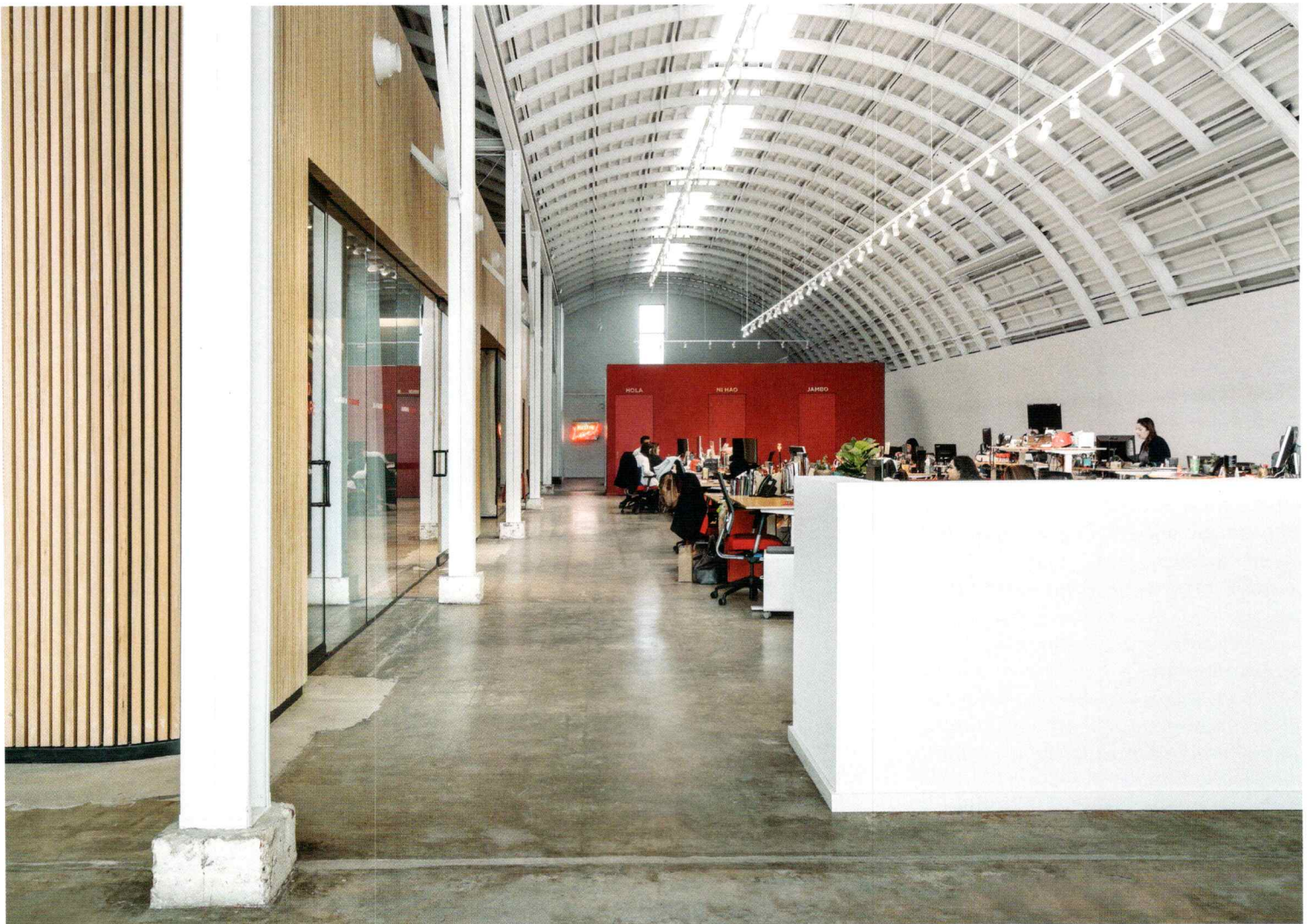




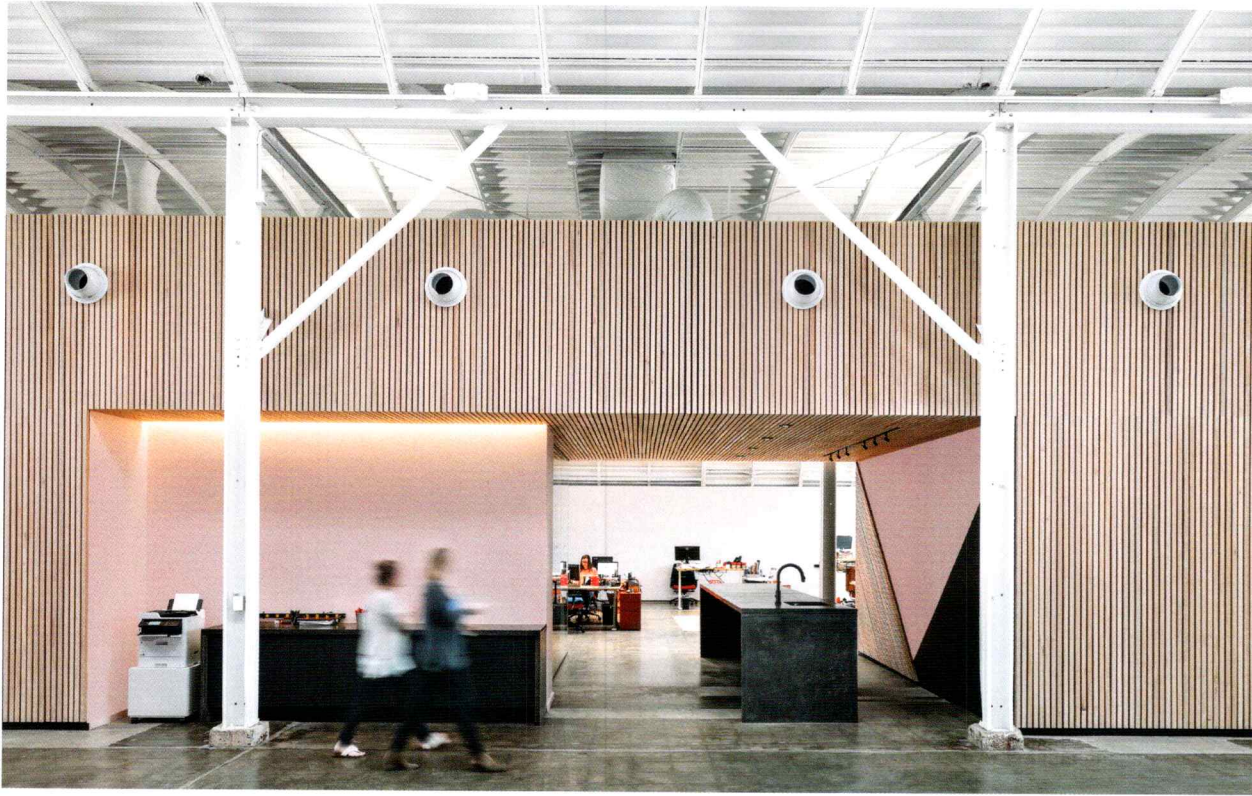
**Left** A “simple” solution from LEAP!Structures keeps the focus on form.

**Below** Skylights along the length of the building illuminate the once-gloomy interior. On sunny days, the office often goes without turning on the lights.

**Right** In the center bay, a wood-clad enclosure punctuated by HVAC vents houses louder functions and separates work areas. A pass-through doubles as a catering area.







sitting empty for several years. When Magic and Red Velvet owner Cindy Lo first toured the building, a brick facade on the exterior and a dropped ceiling inside obscured the structure. “It was pitch black inside. The only light coming in was from holes in the suspended ceiling tiles, and there were a few dead animals,” says Magic. But peering through a fallen ceiling tile, Magic saw the ribs supporting the roof. “I told Cindy, buy this thing now. This is going to be an amazing space.” Lo agreed. “I knew I needed a creative space for my team, not just more space, but a flexible space that would lend itself to creativity. It was bigger than what we needed, but I saw the shape of the building, and I saw possibilities. After all, that’s what we do for work.”

The first move, says Magic, was to expose the structure. “I thought, this is beautiful, and we need to preserve it. Buildings will never get built like this again.” The contractor gutted the building down to a concrete slab, two lines of columns, and metal ribs. Then Magic tapped Tak Chu of LEAP!Structures to help “solve the weather.” Chu’s team proposed a system of corrugated metal decking that would stiffen the building, allow for the addition of insulation and skylights, and satisfy warranty requirements.

Chu also designed the detail that would allow for the big design move: replacing the

brick facade with floor-to-ceiling glass. “Tak came up with a really beautiful detail that you can’t even see because he’s so good,” says Magic. Curved steel beams above each window transfer the load of the roof; look closely, and you’ll see that the beams are curved along the strong axis (it took some doing, says Magic, to find a steel facility willing to take that on. Eventually, they found one in Milwaukee). Chu also warned Magic that the roof structure, even when strengthened, would not support the weight of heavy equipment: no HVAC units; no hanging ducts. The delicate ribs holding up the roof were made of bent sheet metal, and to save money on metal during a wartime shortage, the builders did not use bolts. Magic points to a folded tab on a pair of ribs: “Basically, they pliered it together.” For Magic, this constraint was good news, allowing him to keep the structure clean and visible. In fact, only one wall in the building goes all the way up to the roof.

Responding to Lo’s request for flexible office space that would allow for different seating and group arrangements, Magic proposed open areas on either side of an enclosure where noisy activity, including a conference room, restrooms, and HVAC units, could be contained. Banks of telephone rooms at the rear of each office area

offer acoustical privacy and screen messy areas like the staff break room from public view.

Simple materials are offset by a few luxurious details like the brass doorplates designed by Magic and fabricated by Litmus Industries and the angled marble reception desk designed by Sophia Rozzique. Swings at the front entrance support the theme of play. Meanwhile, at the rear employee entrance, Magic carved 20 feet off one bay to create a porch shaded by an existing pecan grove. The move also reduced the square footage, putting it under the threshold at which an expensive fire sprinkler system would be required.

For both Lo and Magic, the project illustrates an attitude to the past that they wish others shared. “So much of the 1940s’ and 1950s’ architecture is getting thrown away,” Magic says. “There are a lot of beautiful structures that our grandparents built. Who knows? Someone’s grandmother might have rolled these ribs during the War. How incredible is that?” Lo herself is proud to be holding down a piece of Austin’s history. “I was born in Texas, and I’ve lived in Austin for 24 years. This building has been here all along. It’s the same cement floor. It’s the exact same building, just beautified.”

Jessie Temple is an architect and writer in Austin.





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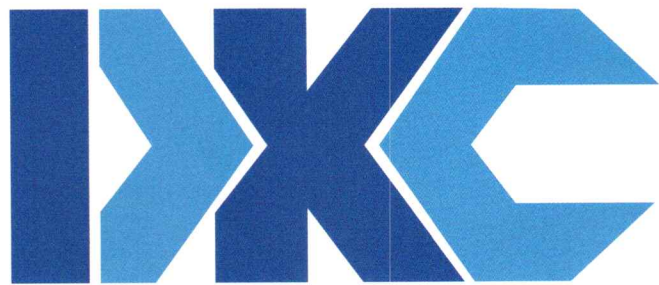
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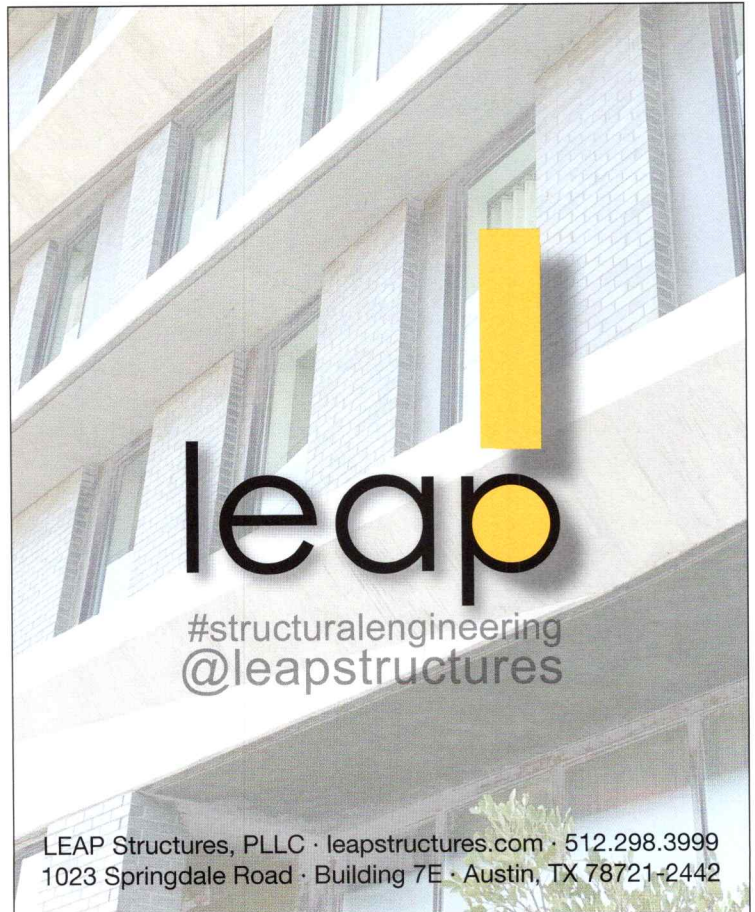
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## Texas Society of Architects Honor Awards

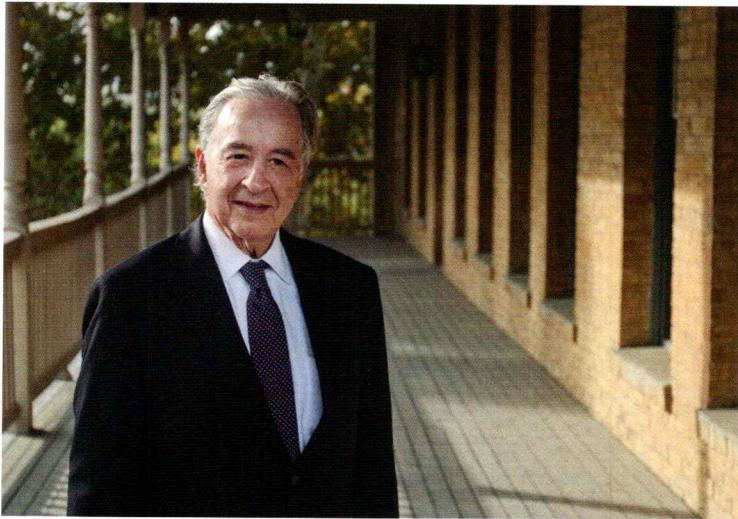
The Texas Society of Architects is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2019 Honor Awards. This program recognizes exceptional members, firms, individuals, and organizations for outstanding achievements in support of the profession of architecture, the built environment, and quality of life in Texas. Recipients were recognized at various events during TxA's 80th Annual Conference and Design Expo in Galveston.



### Architecture Firm Award

GFF

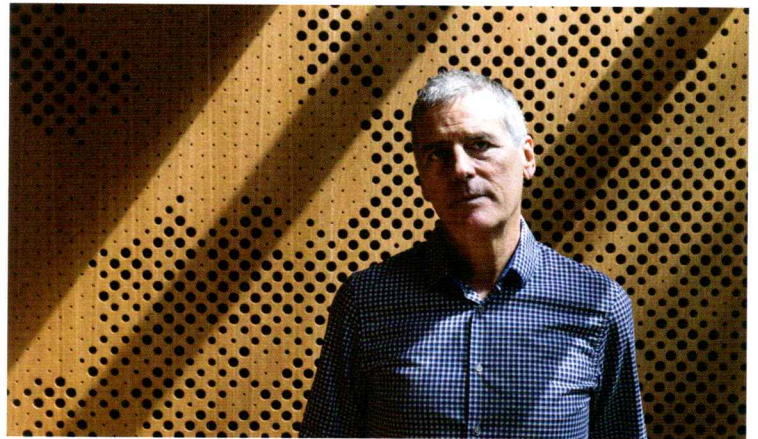
GFF is an award-winning multidisciplinary design firm based in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Austin with a 37-year history of creating memorable places through engagements for real estate development, corporate, and institutional clients. The firm is nationally recognized for its trademark design excellence, for having built a civic-minded practice whose spirit of service to the profession and the community spans two generations of leadership, and for innovation in sustainability. GFF's projects include Old Parkland Campus in Dallas, the Texas A&M University-Central Texas MasterPlan, and Camp John Marc in Bosque County. The firm also served as LEED consultant on the Perot Museum of Nature and Science.



### Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Honor of Llewellyn W. Pitts FAIA

Chris Carson, FAIA, San Antonio

Chris Carson, FAIA, served as principal and chairman of the board of Ford, Powell & Carson for more than 50 years. He joined O'Neil Ford & Associates in 1956 and was named partner 11 years later. Carson was instrumental in the development of a Southwest regional architecture and is best known for residential projects, including his seminal work, the Steves Residence in San Antonio. Carson also designed the Cowboy Artists of America Museum in Kerrville, the Robert J. & Helen C. Kleberg South Texas Heritage Center at the Witte Museum in San Antonio, and the nationally acclaimed Cibolo Creek Ranch in West Texas.



### O'Neil Ford Medal for Design Achievement

Gary Cunningham, FAIA, Dallas

Founder and president of Cunningham Architects, Gary "Corky" Cunningham, FAIA, is a visionary Texas architect whose work has evolved and developed within the context of his hometown of Dallas and throughout the state. While unmistakably modern, his designs are also regional and contextual. Cunningham has created a significant body of highly original, thoughtful, and idiosyncratic work across a wide variety of scales and project types, bringing his unique vision and commitment to craft to each of these projects. Among his most notable works are the Cistercian Abbey Church, Latorre Residence, Addison Conference and Theatre Centre, and the Temple Emanu-El Renovation and Expansion, all in the Dallas area.



# Recognition

## Award for Community Service in Honor of James D. Pfluger FAIA

1 Betsy del Monte, FAIA  
Sustainability Consultant, Cameron MacAllister Group,  
and Adjunct Professor, Southern Methodist University,  
Dallas

## Award for Outstanding Educational Contributions in Honor of Edward J. Romieniec FAIA

2 Patricia Belton Oliver, FAIA  
Dean, University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of  
Architecture and Design, Houston

## Award for Young Professional Achievement in Honor of William W. Caudill FAIA

3 Catherine Callaway, AIA, Houston

## Associate Member of the Year

4 Sandra Montalbo, Assoc. AIA, San Antonio

## Award for Excellence in the Promotion of Architecture through the Media in Honor of John G. Flowers Hon. AIA

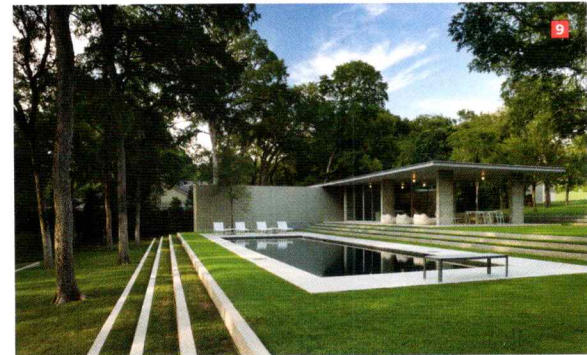
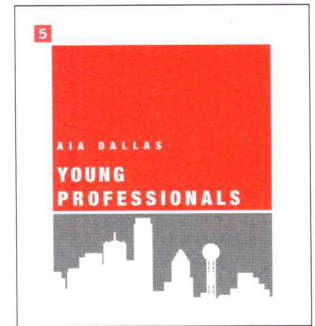
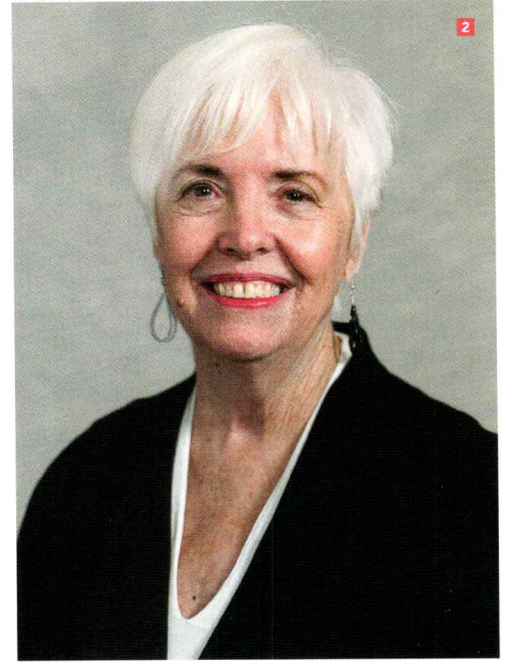
5 Mark Lamster, Dallas

## Mentorship Award

6 AIA Dallas Young Professionals Network, Dallas

## Artisan Award

7 Bridge Projects, San Antonio  
8 Jim Thomas, Owner, Thomas Studio & Foundry, Austin  
9 Sebastian Construction Group, Dallas





## Citation of Honor

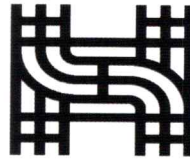
- 10 Activate Houston Street, San Antonio
- 11 Friends of the Katy Trail, Dallas
- 12 Under 1 Roof, San Antonio

## Honorary Membership

- 13 Mary Brinegar, Dallas ■

10

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13



## Minnette B. Boesel of Houston Named TxA Cornerstone Honoree

Minnette B. Boesel of Houston has been named the Texas Society of Architects' Cornerstone Award recipient for 2019. This award recognizes outstanding contributions by leaders in the community that enhance the quality of life by elevating architecture and the arts, promoting the value of community, or preserving the natural environment.

With a background in the arts, historic preservation, and real estate, Boesel has been a leader in the enhancement of the built environment of Houston for decades. In the 1980s, when the city lacked any preservation ordinances, Boesel led efforts to clean up downtown and invested in developing the W.L. Foley building to show what could be accomplished with historic properties. She served as executive director of the Downtown Houston Association, founding director of the Market Square Historic District Project, and established a real estate company, Minnette Boesel Properties, to work with developers to save and reuse historic properties.

Boesel's contributions have been an integral part of the city becoming more interested in preserving its historic past — the city now has more than 400 designated and protected landmarks and numerous historic districts — as well as in its transformation into a major urban destination focused on culture and quality of life. Boesel has served as director of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs and a member of the Rice Design Alliance and Houston Arts Alliance boards, among others. Currently, she is chair of Houston's Archeological and Historical Commission, an advisory board member for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and founding director of the Astrodome Conservancy.

The Cornerstone Award was presented to Boesel on October 26 at the TxA Annual Conference in Galveston.



# Recognition

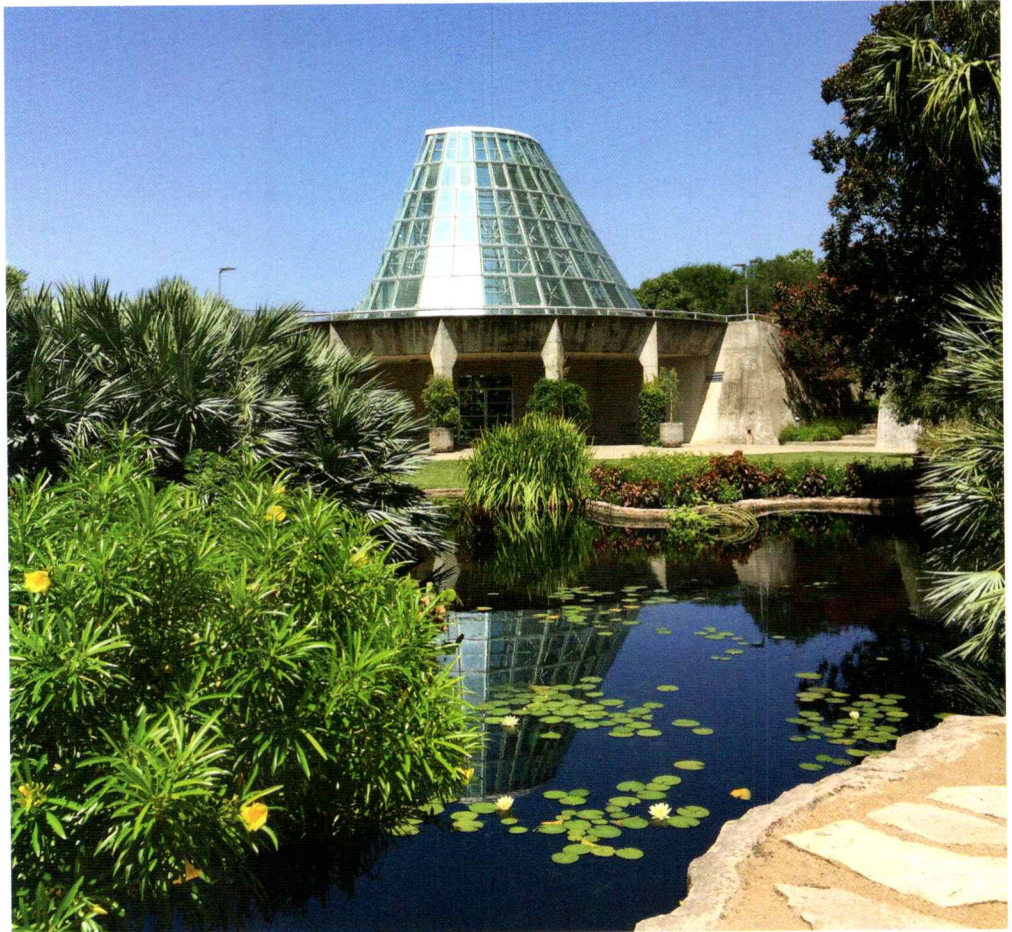


## Lucile Halsell Conservatory Receives the TxA 25-Year Award

On October 25 at the Annual Conference in Galveston, the Texas Society of Architects presented its 2019 25-Year Award to San Antonio's Lucile Halsell Conservatory. Located in the San Antonio Botanical Garden, the conservatory was designed by Argentine architect Emilio Ambasz in partnership with Jones & Kell, now Muñoz & Company.

The conservatory opened to great fanfare in 1988, its futuristic glass structures garnering awards from the National Glass Association and Progressive Architecture, and the 1990 Quaternario prize. With five glass houses linked by a central courtyard and buildings integrated into the landscape, a trademark style for Ambasz, the project revolutionized greenhouse design.

Even before construction was completed, *The New York Times*' Paul Goldberger wrote about the conservatory, calling it "at once a place for the display of plants, a ceremonial public square for San Antonio, and a poetic essay on the relationship of manmade and natural structures." Three decades later, this Texas treasure continues to celebrate human connection to the plant world.





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## Las Imaginistas' Hacemos La Ciudad

A crowd gathers around a model made of painted clay buildings, hand-drawn street grids, pieces of yarn, and other chucherias (knick-knacks) depicting a future downtown Brownsville, Texas, and its connection to Matamoros, Mexico. It's the result of months of dialogues, bike rides, and making workshops led by Las Imaginistas, an art collective. Their project, *Hacemos La Ciudad* (We Make the City), is a civic reimagining of Brownsville.

Las Imaginistas are Christina Patino, Sukhgian Houle, Nansi Guevara, and Celeste De Luna. They work with residents, city staff, and design professionals using methods that are engaging and intellectually deep. They often work on themes similar to those of city staff

and design professionals, but in ways that build more meaningful connections with residents. The *Hacemos La Ciudad* model is a remarkable product of their work, but the model is only a portion of the inspiring creative project.

Months ago, a small bicycle parade meandered through the Buena Vida neighborhood, just north of downtown. A group of singing kids greeted the parade at a public housing property, where residents were invited to donate small everyday objects that would be used to make the model. A few weeks later, residents showed up for a design charrette, bringing more objects and sharing how their city could be more reflective of them, how things would be different if they were part of decision-making processes. They discussed how the aesthetics and styles of a few prominent residents are more valued than the creative moves made by most of the city's population — how the culmination of decades of individual decisions have ended up designing

a city that makes it hard for people to live, get around, and be healthy.

Las Imaginistas also hosted James Rojas, known for his examination of Latino urbanism, in a design workshop, and held three interactive dialogues that dove deep into fundamental issues of equity in architecture and planning, including examining what decolonization looks like, how capitalism overpowers culture, and how we all intentionally and unintentionally carry on legacies of inequity.

*Hacemos La Ciudad* encourages residents to make their city by realizing how the built world impacts them and finding ways they can participate in decision-making processes. While the model shows locals the impact of their input, the long-term vision of the project is a more resident-led future.

Jesse Miller, AIA, is an architect at Megamorphosis in Harlingen. He lives in Brownsville.