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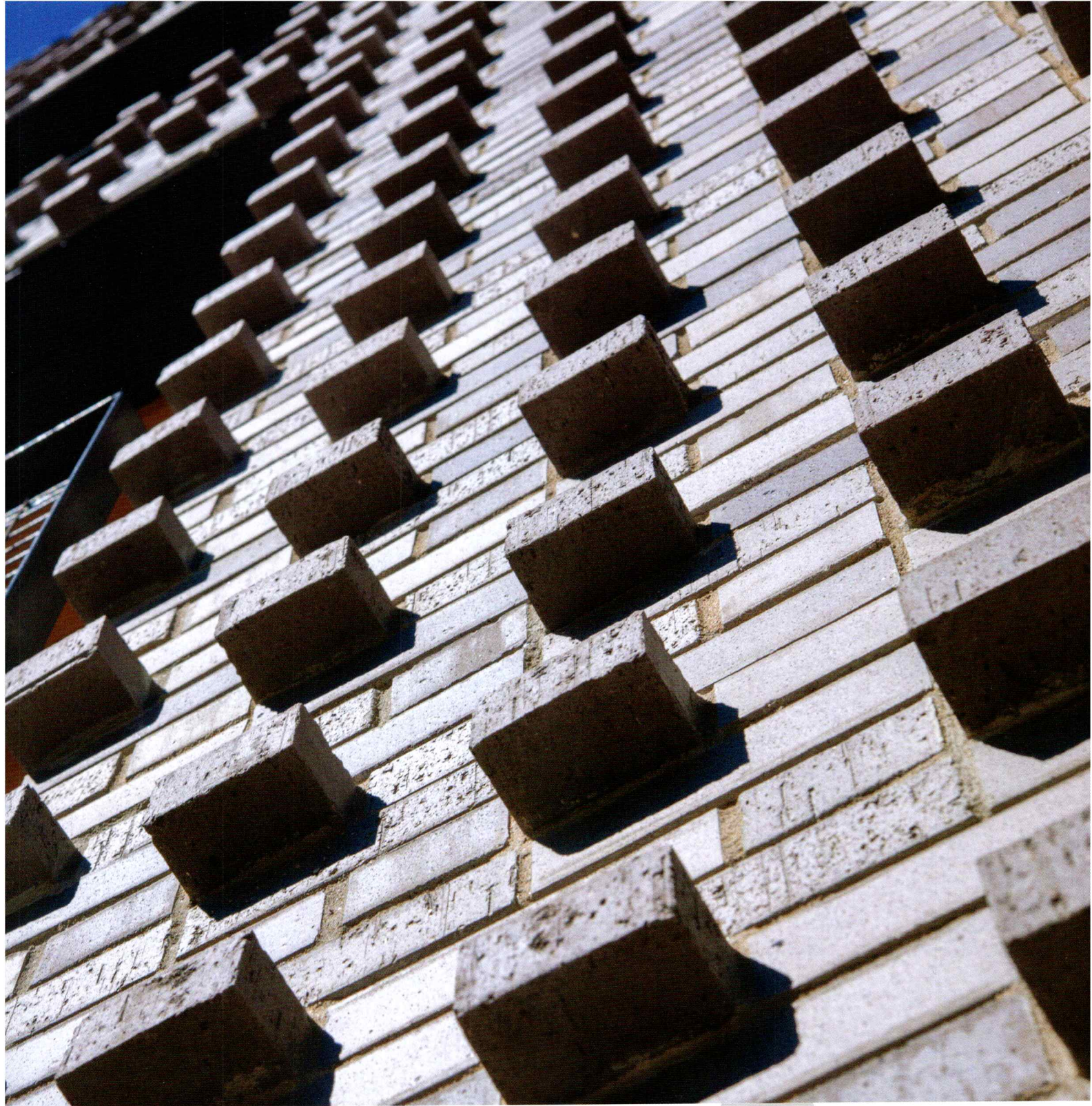
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Check in for important updates on the coronavirus pandemic. Also, TxA is now accepting Honor Award nominations and Studio Award entries.

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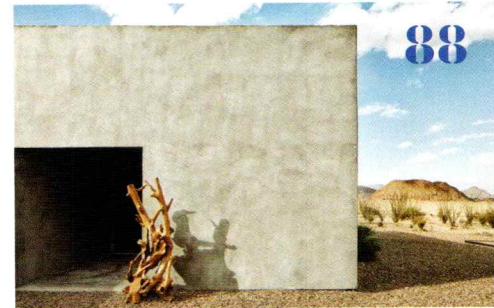
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Detail of the Arrive Hotel in East Austin, designed by Baldrige Architects (p. 82).

Impermanence



Hotels



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Halford Busby served as the construction consultant on this project, providing cost estimates and negotiating with the contractor and sub-contractors on the project. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/2QItSIC>.

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Passing Through

by Aaron Seward

These days, with the advent of each next global crisis, members of the architecture and design profession ask themselves what they can do to make things better. The ongoing Coronavirus pandemic is no different. In the past month, we've seen online tools to assess alternative COVID-19 care sites, webinars on 3D printing medical devices, open-source templates for making emergency face masks and shields, AI designed to monitor and keep construction workers at safe distances from one another, a proposal for turning container ships into floating hospitals, and even a design for a park with hedgerows that would ensure visitors maintain six feet of separation.

I'm sure many more design-related solutions are in the works, and that's a good thing. The World Health Organization has already noted an increase in infectious diseases around the globe, and only expects the situation to worsen as the climate continues to warm. So, along with the now-normal escalating occurrences of devastating heatwaves, storms, droughts, and wildfires (not to mention dwindling biodiversity and swelling social inequity), it seems we may have to grow accustomed to pandemic as well. Policy precedes design, so let's hope that architects and designers are called on early and often as we decide how to shape the built environment for this new world. Who else should we count on to ensure that the measures society puts into place are as effective and equitable as can be?

But, in the meantime, while we're all cooped up, working from home if we're lucky enough to still have a job, nursing our own version of the dystopian present, and waiting to see what the world will be like after shelter-in-place orders are rolled back, let's take a moment to recount the last time Texas Architects gathered face-to-face to share camaraderie and enthusiasm for the life of design: the 2020 Design Conference in El Paso, which took place February 28 to March 1 and was aptly titled "Passage." There isn't space here to recap all of the stimulating tours and lectures (they pack a lot into these events), but here are a few highlights.

Activities kicked off a day early with an optional architectural tour of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, led by historian Stephen Fox. About half of the 80 conference attendees came along for the ride to see such notable locations as the empty site of a possible Herzog & de Meuron-designed



*Henry C. Trost House
(1908), El Paso.*

Catholic community center; the house of deceased singer Juan Gabriel; the Pedro Ramírez Vázquez-designed museum of art (1963); the Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral, which was most recently rebuilt in the 1970s by Oscar Sanchez Cordero, and the neighboring 17th-century Franciscan mission; and the Kentucky Bar, a remnant of the Prohibition era, when several Bourbon distillers moved their operations to Juárez. The city is still in rather shabby condition and barely out of the shadow of the years-long narco war that turned it into the murder capital of the world, but signs of revitalization are percolating. While we were there, wandering around downtown on foot, workers were repaving the main drag, by hand, with stone — possibly to accommodate the hordes of Americans who flock across the border each year to purchase affordable prescription medication.

Back stateside, we found downtown El Paso in the midst of its own revitalization. Several of the city's Trost & Trost-designed monuments are being renovated as residences, offices, and hotels, and a brand-new streetcar is in operation. As William J. Palmore, an El Paso native and associate professor of architecture at the New York Institute of Technology, told us in his lecture, El Paso has its own "Medici" responsible for most of this urban reinvestment: Paul Foster, who made a bundle in the refining business and doesn't mind laying some of it down on civic-minded philanthropy. The question remains as to what will happen to Segundo Barrio, the

neighborhood beside downtown that is home to an historic immigrant community and the tenements that were erected by avaricious landlords to pick their pockets. Look for Palmore's essay on the tenements in the next issue of *TA*.

The other three lectures by practicing architects took us to Tijuana, where Jorge Gracia of Gracia Studio runs a hands-on, design-build practice and an architecture school; the 2018 Venice Biennale, where Jorge Ambrosi of Ambrosi Etchegaray showed their design for the Mexican Pavilion, a geographical survey of Mexico that essayed to "see beyond the physical reality of the territory to the social"; and points around the world with Elaine Molinar (another El Paso native) of Snohetta, who walked us through a number of projects, including the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, the renovation of 550 Madison (Philip Johnson's famous "Chippendale" building), and the El Paso Children's Museum, a typology that has blossomed in recent years as concerns have grown about the stunted cognitive development that often accompanies sedentary childhoods. It should wrap up construction in 2022 — if, by that time, we're again allowing children to run and play freely with each other.

Michael Sorkin, 1948–2020

The nightmare of the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly afflicted the architectural community. First, from Italy, came the news of Vittorio Gregotti's passing, at age 92. Then, on March 26, from New York, we learned that renowned architecture critic Michael Sorkin had succumbed to the deadly virus. He was 71 years old.

With a career spanning 40 years, Sorkin was a towering intellectual figure and the most recognized architecture writer in the U.S. Often labeled as “radical,” “fierce,” and “acerbic” because of his incisive and witty style, Sorkin's writings consistently focused on his fight for cities to become more equitable, sustainable, and humane. The fact that these are hardly considered radical goals in today's urban design discussions is one of his contributions to the field.

Sorkin was both an architect and an urban designer, and he clearly understood architecture and the city to be inextricably connected. For him, the city was “the source of architecture's meaning.” He also advocated for architecture that is, above all, for people's benefit. “Architecture for architecture's sake is just narcissism,” he used to say. There is nothing radical about these statements either.

Sorkin started his career in the 1980s, serving as the architecture critic of *The Village Voice* when he was still in his 30s. He quickly established himself as a fresh new voice in the architecture world. Founded in New York City in 1955 and considered the first alternative weekly, *The Voice* was the perfect venue for Sorkin to freely express his stinging and provocative opinions, especially in the context of Ronald Reagan's conservative presidency.

“Exquisite Corpse: Writing on Buildings,” published in 1991, collected his columns for *The Voice* and brought him wide recognition. His writings in other publications, such as *Architectural Record*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, were compiled in other books: “Some Assembly Required” (2001), “All Over the Map: Writing on Buildings and Cities” (2011), and “What Goes Up: The Right and Wrongs to the City” (2018).



Michael Sorkin (right) with Juan Miró, FAIA, in 2009.

Sorkin wrote passionately about New York City, his home. An admirer of activist Jane Jacobs, he continued her advocacy for social justice and livable, pedestrian-oriented cities. He was particularly focused on defending public space and routinely took to task architects, developers, city officials, and politicians for their role in slowly turning Manhattan into what he called “the world's largest gated community.”

Supremely gifted as a writer, he was equally comfortable with ultra-academic parlance and the latest popular culture jargon. He could write beautifully about anything that piqued his interest. His columns were rich in vocabulary and full of memorable one-liners, akin to Oscar Wilde's epigrams. And, just like with the Irish genius, Sorkin's writing was always both insightful and witty. Unapologetic for his bluntness and razor-sharp criticism, he was also generous, warm, down-to-earth, often self-deprecating, and unafraid to share self-doubts.

Michael was my friend and mentor for the last 30 years. He was my professor at Yale School of Architecture in 1990, and,

not surprisingly, he proposed an intellectually intense studio topic. When reviewing my work, he sensed that it would be easier for me to write about it, rather than to talk about it. I was puzzled, as my English was very limited at the time. “You can write,” he insisted. He was right, and my writing became essential to the development of the project. As good teachers do, he opened a door for me that I did not know was there, and to this day, every time I venture through it, I am grateful that he did.

I am also honored that Michael wrote about the professional work of my firm, Miró Rivera Architects. The first piece he did for us was for the catalog of our exhibition in the Aedes gallery in Berlin 10 years ago. More recently, he wrote the introduction for our forthcoming monograph. To the world, it will be one of Sorkin's last pieces of published writing. To me, rereading it will be a humbling reminder of gratitude and admiration for a brilliant man. Thank you, Michael.

Juan Miró, FAIA, is co-founder of Miró Rivera Architects in Austin and the David Bruton, Jr. Centennial Professor in Urban Studies at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture.



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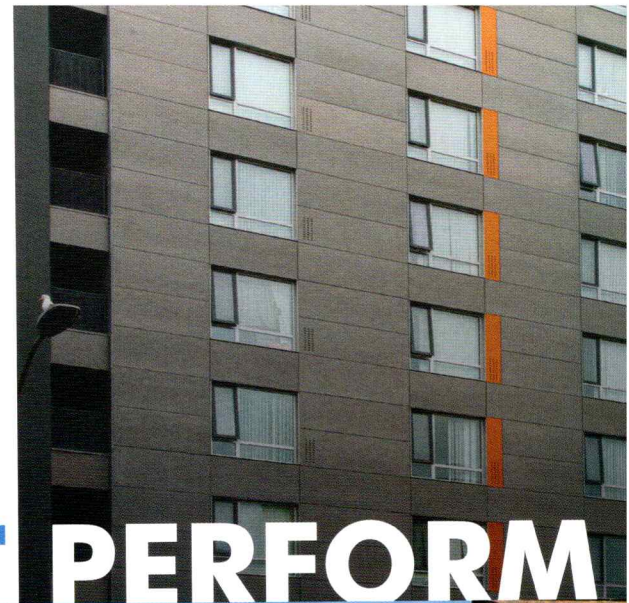
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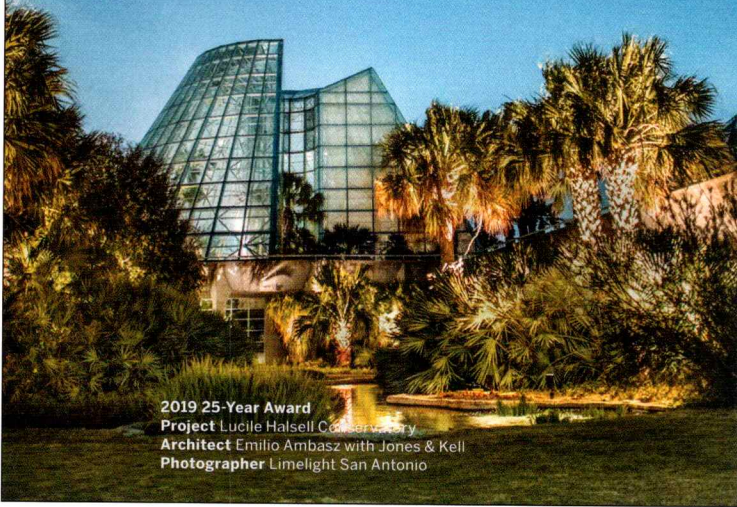
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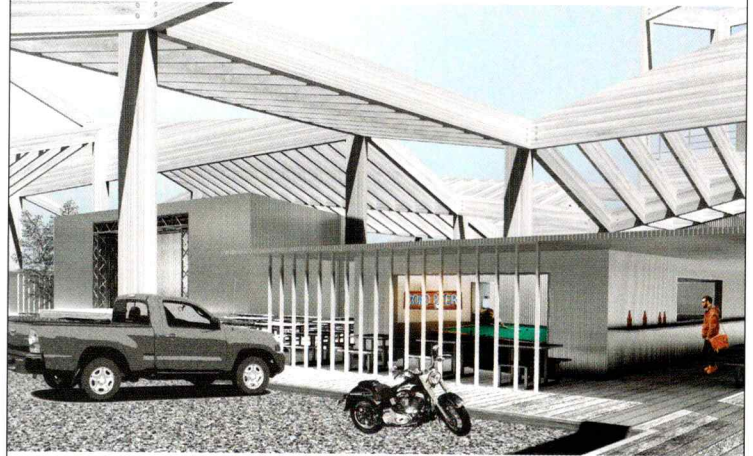
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The facade of The Avenue responds to the sun with punched windows on the east, west, and south sides, and a sheer glass face to the north.



New Downtown Austin Hotel Preserves History and Pushes Progress

At first glance, this upcoming Austin high-rise hotel by Nelsen Partners has all the trappings of its hyper-developed, post-contextual tower contemporaries. Over the last half-decade, a collection of nondescript hotel monoliths has cropped up across downtown Austin at a startling rate, and the announcement of yet another has Austinites bracing themselves for more of the same. But take a closer look at The Avenue - Hyatt Centric Hotel, and you will see a building that is, in fact, deeply rooted in its time and place. Far from being just a striking facade or another gleaming cube, this development is actually a preservation project with a progressive urbanist heart. By means of a single tower, Nelsen Partners resolves a typical Austin dichotomy: its desire to grow and modernize, while at the same time protecting its ... *weirdness*, if you will.

As a new addition to Austin's rapidly developing skyline, The Avenue will distinguish itself from the surrounding shiny rectangles and postmodern relics through the clever implementation of a stereotomic facade and a striking set of proportions. The building frontage along Congress Avenue — the primary axis of downtown Austin — is just over 43 feet wide, setting off a sliver of a building that tops out at 32 stories. The hotel is organized vertically

according to a traditional base-mid-top scheme. A Capitol view corridor and dominance zone setback at 90-foot-high dictates The Avenue's lower-level massing, and the pedestrian experience is enhanced at the first four levels, which comprise an askew cube of sleek vertical mullions, a curtain of glazing that peels back from the corner to create and foster an active public space. In the words of Carson Nelsen, the project's head designer, this glass box is a secondary piece of architecture, inserted beneath the lifted primary expression of the tower. "It gives the building its street identity and contextual scale," he says. The lightness of this cut-out base matches the proportions of the neighboring Stateside at the Paramount, and its shifted orientation reveals the theater's art deco parapets and marquee, which have been fairly obscured by the clunky awnings of the building currently located on the site. Overhead, the hotel's north facade has ribbons of glazing and spandrel glass, while its other three sides are a testament to the sun: articulated walls of punched window openings recessed in bright white metal paneling — a rare emphasis amid Austin's ever-expanding collection of sleek, modern towers.

Clearly, The Avenue is designed to preserve the neighboring Paramount and Stateside theaters (built in 1915 and 1932, respectively). Brad Nelsen, AIA, Nelsen Partners' president, owned the property at the point of the project's conception, and

he secured the air rights from both historic Austin theater buildings, submitting all three properties under a unified development agreement and site development permit, forever tying them to one another. By combining the floor-area ratios (FARs) of the three sites, Nelsen not only benefited by more than tripling his available building height beyond the usual 8:1 FAR maximum of Austin's Central Business District (CBD); he also all but guaranteed that the diminutive theaters, now locked at their current heights and massing, would be protected from the piqued interests of developers in the future. In addition to this, Nelsen created a 99-year lease agreement with the theaters for their offices and support functions to occupy the entire fourth floor of the new building at an honorary rate of \$1/year, with the Stateside Theatre also occupying the entire basement level. This additional real estate allows each theater the flexibility to proceed with much-needed renovation and restoration projects of their own in the coming years.

Aside from the preservation efforts of its designers, The Avenue is also a compelling case study in progressive urbanism for downtown Austin developments. Since we live in Central Texas and most developers subscribe to so-called "market-driven" parking minimums, it is likely that the first thing you will hear about this new building is that it has zero onsite parking. The main reason for this is, of



Above *The design seeks to respond to datums set by pre-existing buildings on the block, including the Stateside and Paramount theaters.*

Right *The street facade is pulled back in deference to the building's storied neighbors. By purchasing the air rights above the theaters, the hotel encourages their future preservation.*



course, the site's narrow dimensions, which make any efficient parking layout nearly impossible.

After more than a year of conducting unsuccessful feasibility studies of this site for more traditional hoteliers, Nelsen worked alongside the historic neighboring theaters and purchased the property, making himself the client. When Nelsen Partners became the architect-as-developer of this project, their original design was an apartment building with some office space and retail/restaurant below. Nelsen imagined this building as an “affordable alternative to the otherwise high cost of a CBD apartment” for the individual or family who wanted to live downtown and did not want to own a car. But when Hyatt purchased the property and all of its new entitlements, they kept the building form and program, asking only that Nelsen Partners convert the efficiency apartments and office floors into hotel rooms. These hoteliers already knew that their Hyatt Centric Hotel model would work well here, because it could rely on Austin's revitalized downtown culture to provide most of the amenities to the hotel guests. The central location of The Avenue, sited in the heart of Austin's historic yet frenetic downtown district, will be its amenity.

Christy Taylor, AIA, is a project architect at Chioco Design in Austin.

Architect-Designed Luxury Developments in Port Aransas Weather the Storm

The Texas Gulf Coast is home to some of the most affordable beach communities in the country. In Port Aransas, set along 18 miles of beachfront on Mustang Island, the average 50-ft gulf-front lot costs less than \$1 million, while similar coastal properties in California and Florida can cost more than \$5 million. The new development centers around such high-end luxury communities as: Cinnamon Shore, a 60-acre master-planned beachfront that will soon add a 240-acre expansion known as Cinnamon Shore South; Palmilla Beach Resort & Golf Community; and Sunflower Beach Resort, which has nearly completed the first phase: 25 luxury one- and two-bedroom beach cabins at The Camp.

Developer Jeff Lamkin, CEO of Sea Oats Group, began laying streets for Cinnamon Shore in 2006. “The Texas coast doesn't have a fair reputation,” says Lamkin. “It's a beautiful place. Port Aransas and Mustang Island, where we are, are amazing. Great restaurants. Good entertainment. A lot of fun. Fabulous fishing. Great beach. Everything you would want in a beach town. But

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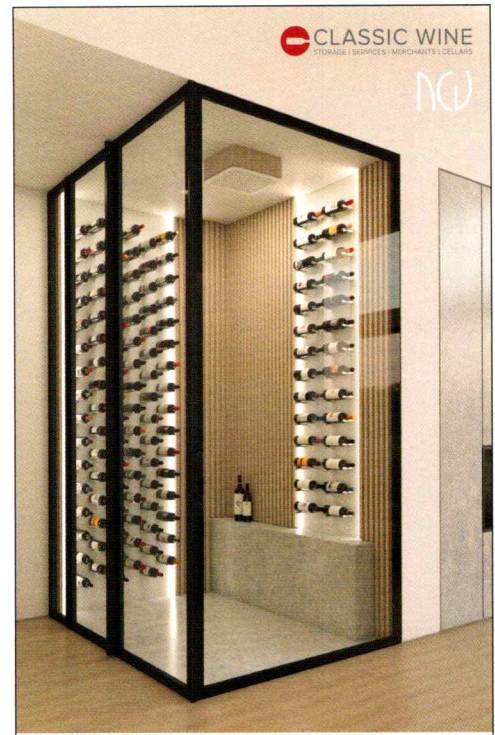
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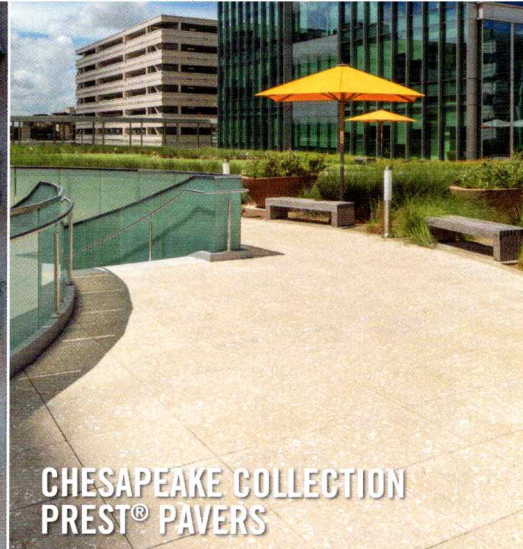
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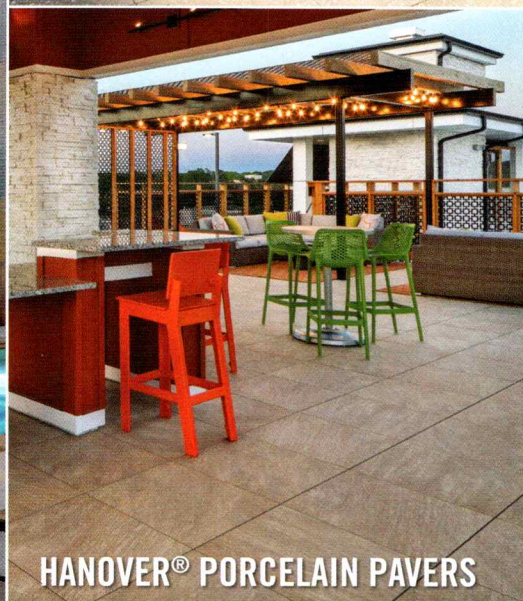
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Cinnamon Shore incorporates designs from several Texas architects, including Kissling Architecture, Cornerstone Architects, LK Design Group, and Davies Collaborative.



it kind of stopped developing around the oil crisis 20-some years ago. I wanted to bring world-class beach design, architecture, and land planning to the Texas coast. We designed what is arguably one of the most successful developments in the country from the time we got started. We made our first home sale in 2008, which, if you recall, was a tricky time to be taking on an aspirational new beach town, and it's been really well received."

Lamkin and his competitors are modeling their developments after New Urbanist communities that have sprung up in the last 25 years in Florida — WaterColor, Seaside, Rosemary Beach, and Alys Beach — but with an added twist of Texas vernacular. While they are planned communities, Lamkin hopes to maintain a more authentic feel by working with a variety of architectural talent. He says, "If we had one architect do the whole place, it would be beautiful, but it would look like apartments — it would be too orchestrated. It wouldn't feel like a real place."

Principal architect Jim Kissling, AIA, of Kissling Architecture has spent much of his career working along the Texas Gulf Coast and has designed projects in Cinnamon Shore, Palmilla Beach Resort, and several other communities in the area. He began work with Lamkin in 2009, when "everything was going belly up," and 11 years later has completed nearly 40 projects.

"Because these are people's second or third homes, the market for these is different," Kissling says. "80 percent of the homes are designed for rental purposes. It's a whole different mindset than what you would design for a normal house. Typically, two or three families will rent one of these 3,000-sf homes, and there's enough room to sleep 20 people. That's been a fun program because it's all about how you interact and facilitate camaraderie."

But designing for the Texas coast isn't always a walk on the beach. Texas hosts one of the harshest environments in the United States, and buildings must withstand not only the occasional hurricane-force winds that inevitably hit, but also the day-to-day onslaught of the elements — brutal sun, gulf winds, and tidal rhythms, coupled with acidic waters and air. As a result, structures are designed for longevity: Siding is typically a cement fiber composition. Treated lumber, composites, and rainforest hardwood are used for most exterior trims. Fasteners and hardware are predominantly stainless steel.

"If you're on the beachfront, it is truly amazing," Kissling says. "With that constant mist that comes off the beach, all the houses that front it really do take a beating. Part of the challenge there is designing something that is going to withstand the elements 365 days a year, and then withstand the occurrence of the hurricane. It's not a matter of if they're going to come, but when, so everything is designed for that

purpose. All the structures that we designed and built from the ground up withstood the hurricane [Harvey] without any major damage."

Many of the properties did, however, sustain minor damage due to the impact of airborne debris shed by less robust structures, and recovery and repair efforts remained the focus for the first 18 to 24 months following Harvey. New construction has begun again only in the last six months. But Kissling is more confident than ever of his ability to build safely along the coast. "The houses that were built to the new windstorm standards all seemed to make it through the storm pretty well. The ones that were not, they were either completely destroyed or were damaged to the point that we needed to take them to the ground. These new codes work. They're a pain, and they do add cost to the project, but they really save the structure."

Other notable design points include the need for doors that swing outward. When strong winds blow, doors that swing inward loosen seals around the frame and allow for water infiltration. Additionally, hurricane-proof windows, while highly effective, are good for only one event before their warranty is void. "This is something the insurance companies are not disclosing," Kissling says. "I found this out in the last six months, which I thought was kind of interesting. That is something that is not out there, and I'm finding it out the hard way."



Top *Palmilla Beach* was designed by *Cornerstone Architects* and *Merriman Pitt Anderson*.
Bottom *Sunflower Beach* includes designs from *Michael Imber Architects* and *Page*.

Another complication is the lack of affordable housing in the area — a problem facing numerous communities throughout the U.S. — and many of the older, more financially accessible homes along the coast bore the brunt of the storm damage. With luxury development comes the need for affordable housing for employees and support staff — “affordable,” in this case, referring to residences priced at \$200,000–\$300,000, still above the U.S. median home price. Additionally, because structures require additional fortification, construction costs are typically 20–30 percent higher than they are in other parts of Texas. Lamkin and Kissling note that demand is growing for smaller luxury cottage homes around 1,000-sf, but as Kissling points out: “That’s still not affordable housing; that’s an affordable second home. It’s not affordable for people who are working in the restaurants and the hotels, the fishing guides, people like that.”

“If you go down there right now, you would be amazed at how many RV parks are in the Rockport-Port Aransas area. That has become the affordable housing,” Kissling says. “I had spoken with Jeff [Lamkin] a long time ago, because part of the challenge was bringing in trades and finding a place for them to stay. This was a problem that was there before the hurricane, and it was compounded when the hurricane hit. You had all these people coming to work, and there was no place to stay. I think that’s where the RV park kind of became that answer.” He points to communities like Jackson Hole, Wyoming — which require an equivalent number of affordable housing units in all new developments — as potential models for addressing the situation.

Yet despite the havoc wreaked by Harvey, the market has been better than ever. Lamkin reports that they’ve had their best years, both in volume and in price points, post-Harvey. While a few homeowners sold off following the event, many saw how well the structures fared in the storm, and this has instilled confidence in buyers, resulting in growing demand for Texas beachfront property. “The one thing that has been constant with Jeff is his vision,” Kissling concludes. “He’s really kept it focused on providing a family-oriented experience — and at a high level. He’s engaging the community, along with making the community beautiful. It’s all these things that help build the experience and memory for these families. It’s been a constant on his end with his team. And for them to keep that going — my hat’s off to him.”

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

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Texas Midcentury Hotel Renovations Follow Fad and Government Incentives

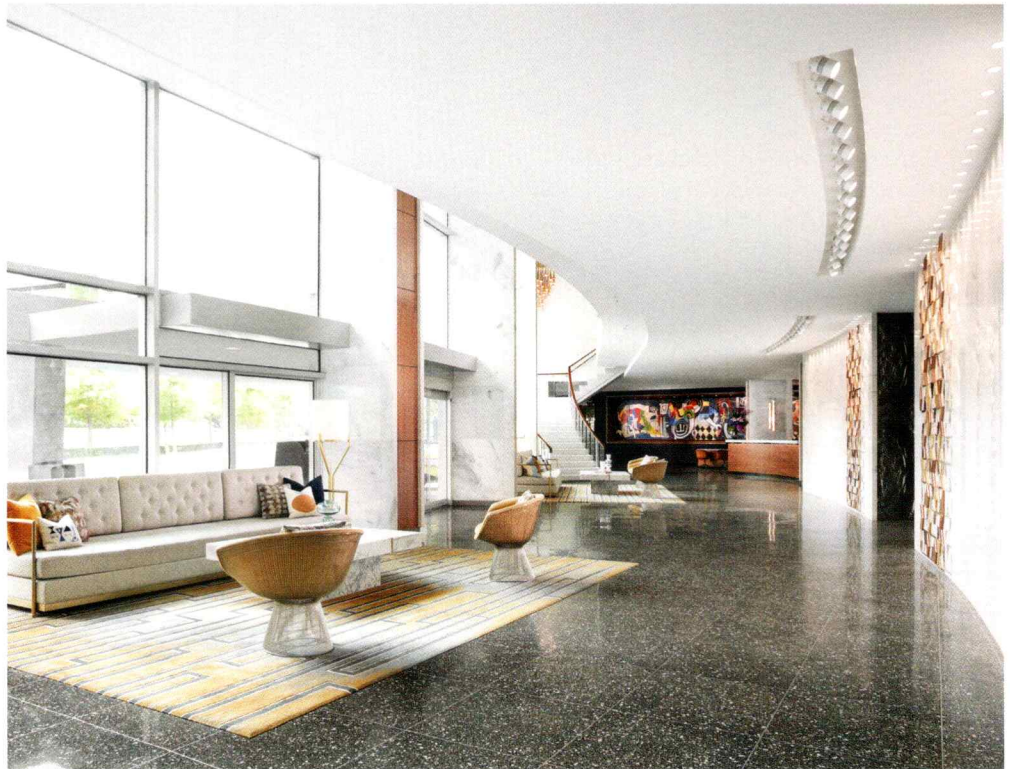
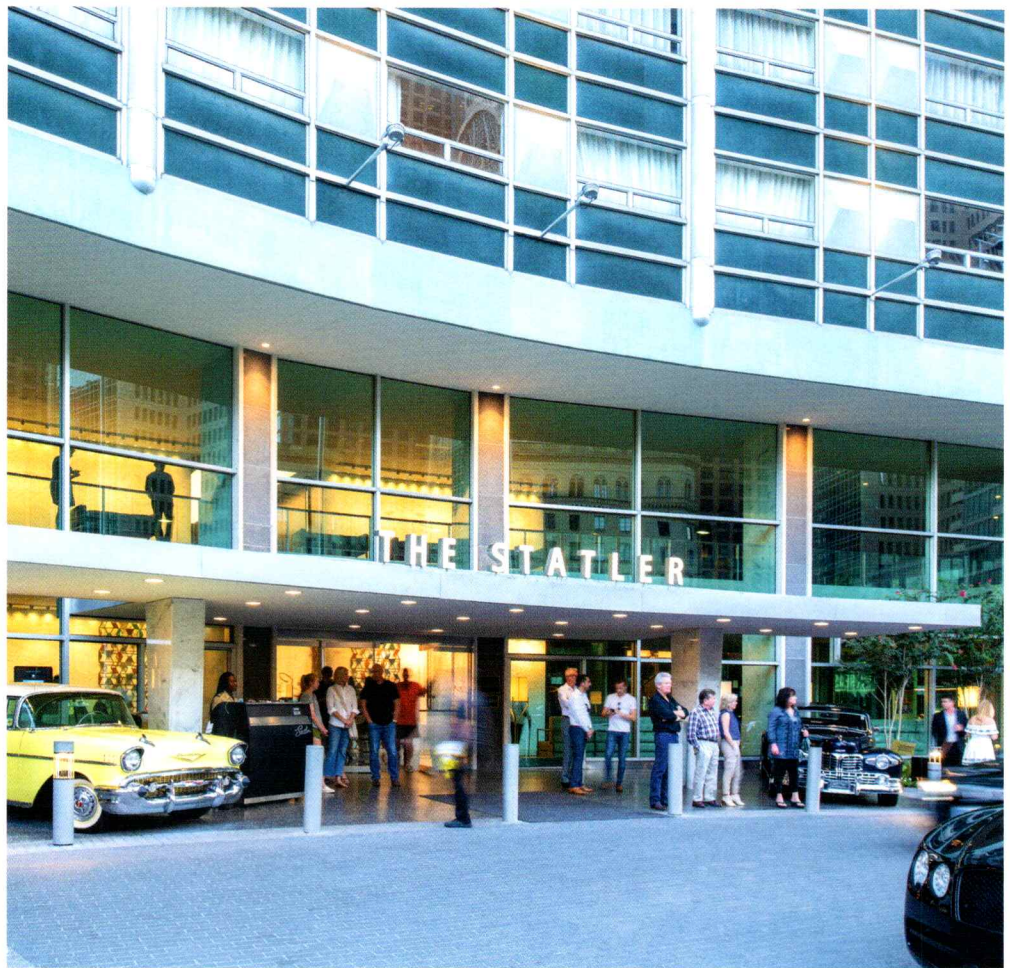
In the downtown districts of Dallas, Houston, and even smaller Texas metros, a movement is on the rise to rescue midcentury modern buildings from would-be wreckage and redevelop them as destination spaces for major hotel chains. Developers have gone digging for these gems, chipping off decades of dust, polishing them up, and turning them about, spinning a story to beguile new guests. Architects have been called on to leverage the buildings' storied histories to make midcentury modern — by today's standards.

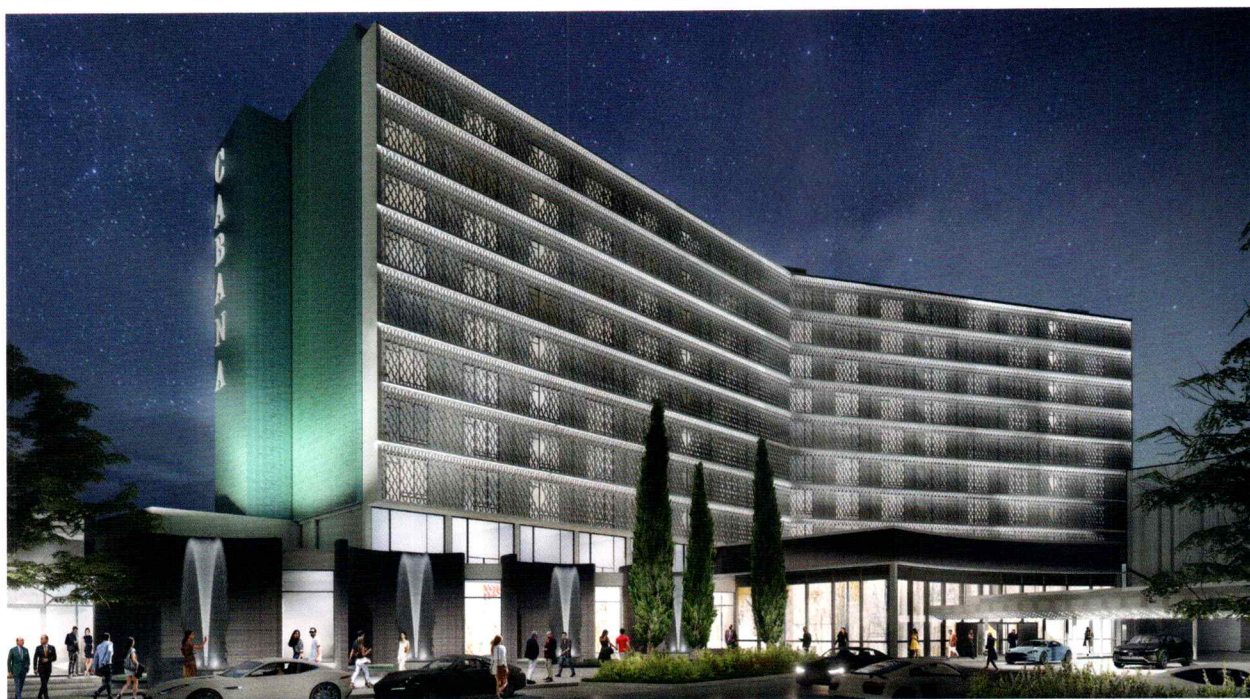
In Dallas, The Statler Hotel (which opened its doors in October 2017) and its sister project, the Cabana Hotel (still in progress), are recent revivals of midcentury properties — iconic, both in design and reputation. The Statler opened in 1956 as a 1,000-plus-room hotel and convention center designed by New York architect William Tabler with a first-of-its-kind, thin-skinned glass and aluminum curtain wall. The building was purchased in 2014 by Centurion American Development Group, which hired Merriman Anderson/Architects for the remodel. The grand re-opening featured a performance by 91-year-old Tony Bennett, one of the original hotel's famed patrons.

Centurion also retained Merriman Anderson to revive the former Cabana Motor Hotel on Stemmons Freeway. It was opened in 1962 by Las Vegas hotelier Jay Sarno (of Caesars Palace and Circus Circus fame) and designed by architect Melvin Grossman. Iconic features include a swirling latticework concrete brise-soleil, colorful terrazzo, and swanky pool decks. The Cabana's litany of famous guests includes The Beatles and Raquel Welch. Construction on the renovation was set to start in April.

In Houston, redevelopment projects include Le Méridien (1952), the Westin Houston Medical Center hotel (1954), and the AC Hotel (a historic 1914 building, rebuilt in 1966).

Midcentury revivalism is nothing new: We've been worshipping the genre's minimalism and moxie for decades for its reprieve from digital-age clutter. Midcentury is touted as the aesthetic of choice for upwardly mobile millennials, but it's also widely marketable. Merriman Anderson principal and founder Jerry Merriman, AIA, comments: "Midcentury seems to appeal to everyone — the Baby Boomers, because they grew up with it, and millennials, because they like the 'Mad Men' feel. It's got a cool factor, and it's different and unique."





Facing *The Statler Hotel in downtown Dallas was designed by William Tabler and opened in 1956. A recent restoration by Merriman Anderson/Architects preserved existing architectural elements such as the black terrazzo and white marble on the interior.*

Left *The Cabana Motor Hotel on Stemmons Freeway in Dallas was designed by Melvin Grossman and opened in 1962. It is in the midst of a restoration, also by Merriman Anderson.*

But there's another reason for the current trend: money, in the form of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program and the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program (which went into effect in 2015). In order to qualify for funds, buildings must either be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (meaning they must be at least 50 years old) or else be a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

According to Merriman Anderson, The Statler and the Cabana will receive both types of tax credits. The Statler, vacant since 2001, is on the National Historic Register and was included on "most endangered places" lists by both the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Preservation Texas. It sits on a city block that Adam Jones, principal and team leader on the Statler project, calls "one of the greatest examples of midcentury architecture in this part of the country." However, many of the buildings on that stretch have already been demolished, with the land turned into a park. The preservation community feared The Statler would be considered a tear-down, and yet the glittering 19-story hotel center persisted, like a Golden Age starlet awaiting her comeback.

The Cabana has strayed a bit farther from its glitzy, mid-'60s roots, most recently having served as a prison. The Dallas County Commissioner was quoted in 2008 as saying, "I don't ever see it reopening." But the redevelopment community

saw possibility beneath the layers of jail bars and concrete. The Cabana was listed on Preservation Dallas's 2015 Most Endangered Historic Places list — and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in May 2019.

The Statler, a \$230 million project, and the Cabana, estimated at \$100 million, benefit from a 20 percent income tax credit on qualified rehabilitation expenditures through the federal program, as well as a 25 percent credit on eligible costs from the state.

The three hotels in Houston also qualified for incentives. The AC Hotel, designed by Mitchell Carlson Stone, was restored in 2019 with an approximately \$1.2-million economic grant from the Downtown Redevelopment Authority, as well as help from state and federal programs. Just around the corner, the 21-story Melrose Building (1952) reemerged in 2017 as Le Méridien under The Beck Group. In addition to state and federal help, it received \$15 million from the federal EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program. The Westin Houston Medical Center hotel (1954), which also qualified for state and federal tax credits, was restored by BRR Architecture and reopened in early 2020.

Incentives come with caveats. Reviving historic buildings means working under the strictures of the National Park Service (NPS) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to preserve historical character while bringing the buildings up to date. Merriman Anderson conducted studies on the existing properties to explore ideas

for working within midcentury lines to create a contemporary destination space.

One of the challenges of multistory midcentury properties is the low floor-to-floor heights typical of the time period. Squeezing contemporary systems into that space required some finagling. Merriman Anderson also worked with NPS and THC to reconfigure the building for multiuse (apartments and hotel). The preservation groups wanted the building's corridors offset, as they had been originally, meaning you'd have smaller units on one side and larger ones on the other. However, the architects negotiated to get a centered corridor for the residential sections that would provide equal-sized units on both sides, accommodating a usable depth for apartments. "But if you were a guest or an apartment-dweller, you'd never know the difference," Jones says. "When you get off the elevator and get on the corridor, it really all looks the same."

The exterior amenity decks presented another design challenge for both of the Dallas projects: NPS and THC mandate that buildings should look no different at street level than they did in their heyday. In order to add the must-have rooftop lounges and pool bars, the architects pushed everything back from the parapet and used glass rails to minimize visual impact. The Statler team repurposed the original upper-rooftop mechanical space to create an indoor-outdoor bar and cut away the masonry behind the hotel sign, where riders exiting the elevator get a discreet view of the downtown skyline. The Cabana has a number



The Cabana peaked in the mid-'60s as a lavish destination for A-listers before falling into debt by the end of the decade. It was converted into a prison in the mid-'80s.

of lower-rooftop decks, so turning those into mingling spaces, as planned, will be a design feat.

Where there is challenge, there is also opportunity to give inimitable architectural elements a new life. Beneath the Cabana's layers of concrete flooring, the team found swaths of original terrazzo. Intricately tiled walls and marble sinks were still intact in the bathrooms. There are curious mushroom-like concrete umbrellas on the pool deck that will be remade in a "Palm Springs" image. The lobby's famous grand staircase is being rebuilt according to the original drawings to restore the elegance of the indoor space.

Restoration at The Statler was careful and comprehensive, down to the zig-zag butterfly canopies on the lower levels and the cantilevered porte cochère. Degraded marble elements were replaced with matching stone from the original quarry. Bringing midcentury up to date was not much of a departure for The Statler. The hotel

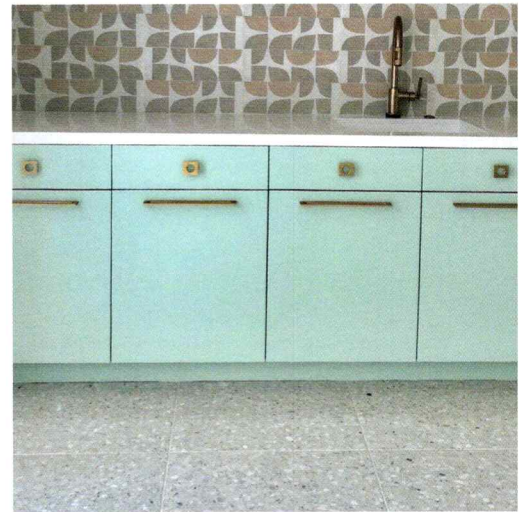
was the first to feature elevator music and install Westinghouse TVs in every room. "We were really trying to maintain the kind of cutting-edge, modern design that was original, but to bring it forward," Jones says. The next-generation iteration takes high-tech to a new level, with automation (curtains, lights, and temperature) and the "fastest Internet in the city."

While this midcentury redux in the Texas hotel space aligns with new opportunities, it's also lagging slightly behind a national trend. Moteliers across the country popularized the aesthetic in the later 2000s by buying up derelict midcentury motor inns and rebranding them at a premium. Jennifer Picquet-Reyes, principal and team leader on the Cabana, helps us draw the throughline: "Modern travelers are looking for a unique experience — they don't want to go where everyone else has been; they don't want to go to the chain hotel," she says. "They

want to go to something that they can't get anywhere else, and I think that is giving rise to this boutique aesthetic. There's some nostalgia associated with it, because a lot has gone away. So with the revival of these buildings, people can experience something that they maybe couldn't have 10 [or] 15 years ago."

The higher-end hotel industry now sees its chance to capitalize on the boutique experience at scale, but it's the interplay of different interests that has given rise to the boom in Texas: developers attracted to incentives; hoteliers looking for opportunities to create the boutique experience; preservationists who force the hand of authenticity; and architects willing to draw inside the clean lines of these midcentury properties to tell their own stories.

Janine Marie Stankus is a freelance writer and editor based in Austin.



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LIVING IN A MODERN WORLD



Of Note

Right *The design of the Columbus Land Port of Entry highlights the importance of using low-maintenance, durable materials and native vegetation in the arid desert environment.*

Below *Daylight floods the interior through clerestory windows, while plentiful eye-level glazing provides a feeling of transparency and openness.*

Facing *The architects pulled colors for the building from the surroundings as an interpretation of the landscape.*

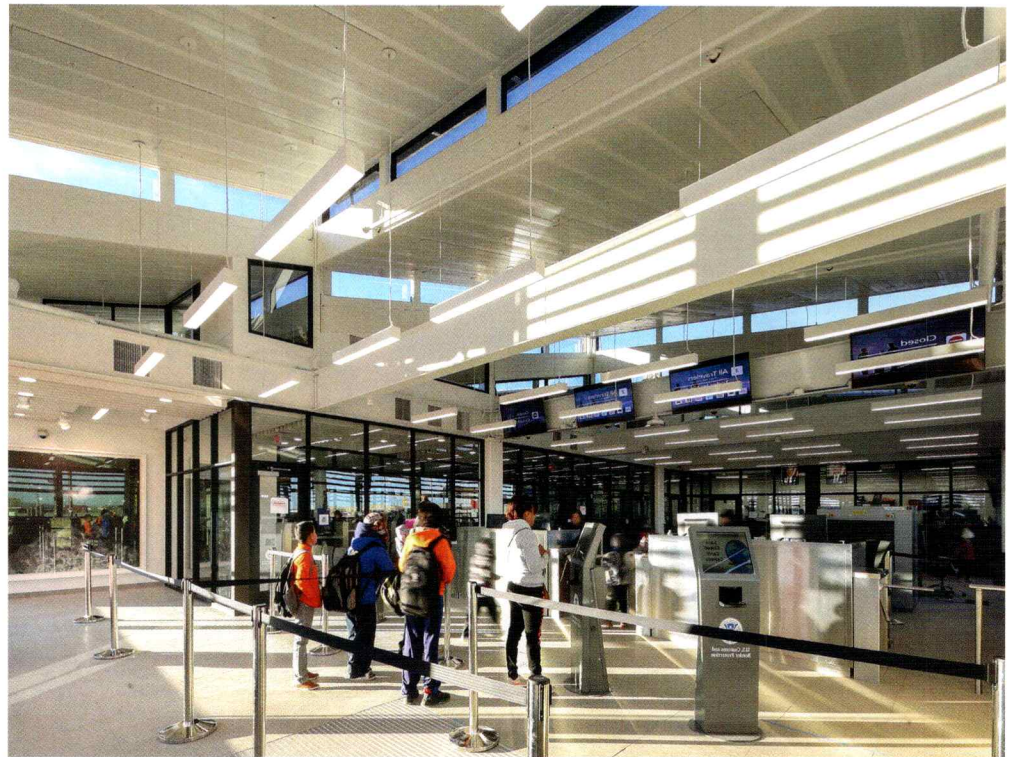


Richter Architects-Designed Port of Entry Humanizes Border Crossing

The long expanse of desert grassland stretches out some 30 miles, changes in ecozones painting bands of color in the distance. Occasional mountains, formed by volcanoes eons ago, accent the scene with purple hues.

The manner in which Richter Architects, out of Corpus Christi, has conceptualized their LEED Platinum Columbus, New Mexico, land port of entry project paints a vivid picture of this part of the Chihuahuan Desert.

As David Richter, FAIA, and Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA, describe it, this border crossing, one of three in New Mexico, sees many types of people coming through. Each day, over 800 K-12 students cross from Palomas, Chihuahua to go to school in nearby Columbus and Deming, New Mexico. Commercial trucks bring a never-ending supply of mainly agricultural goods from Mexico, the highlight being when you can smell the chilies in the air as the



trucks wait at the border during the harvest season. Senior citizen snowbirds wintering in nearby mobile home communities cross to Palomas for prescriptions, dentistry, and recreation. Occasionally, a cyclist group will pass through, as this crossing is popular with transcontinental riders.

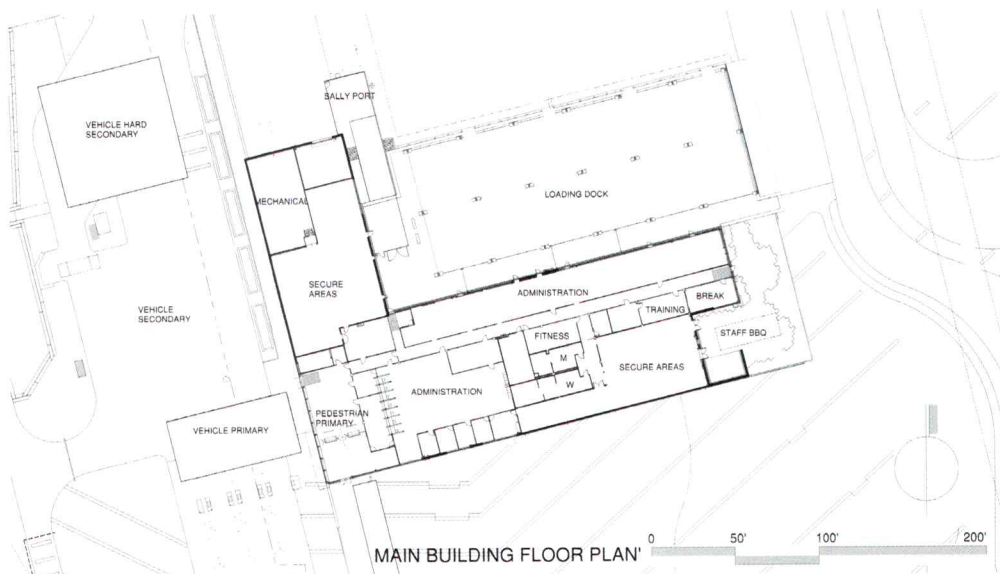
Richter Architects was brought onto the project via the General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, owing in part to the firm's experience with such ports of entry as Tornillo, Texas, and Ysleta in El Paso. The task for the Columbus port was to design the replacement of an existing facility built in 1989. The previous port had all traffic cross the border at one place, putting non-motorized traffic at a disadvantage. The new design creates three access points, increasing processing capacity and safety for both pedestrians and vehicles.

Entering the U.S. can be a tense experience, thanks to unpredictable wait times and occasional enhanced inspection procedures. Similarly, the job of an agent can be stressful yet tedious. The architects approached these realities by taking cues from the vivid landscape and finding opportunities to foster dignity and respect in the border-crossing process.

Mexican foot traffic proceeds along a shaded walkway alongside a welcoming garden full of desert plants, a reminder of the importance of water to this often-parched area. When there is rain, it falls in abundance, usually between July and September, and taking advantage of these rainy moments is crucial for survival: The architects use the landscape as a teachable moment. Pedestrians are met by a series of counter-sloped terraces edged by gabion retaining walls, each terrace sloped slightly backward to retain stormwater. These retention areas serve as a positive example of recharging the local aquifer.

Up ahead, the main building — brick veneer, topped with roof monitors integrated with photovoltaic panels and clerestory windows — is designed to blend into the landscape. The brick coursing exhibits a variety of colors pulled from the hues of the expansive grasslands. The solar panels have a purple tint that mixes with the sky's reflection. The result, when viewed from a distance, is a literal interpretation of the landscape: the brick fading into the desert grasses; the roof reflecting the indigo of the distant mountains.

Plentiful glazing and the clerestory windows make for what Richter describes as “a luminous

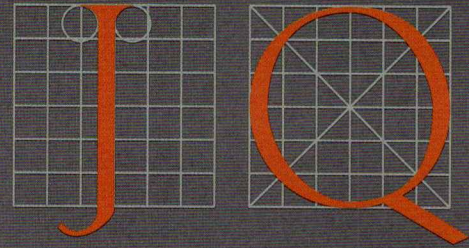


feeling that brings cheerfulness to the place.” On a more functional note, windows allow agents to keep an eye on things without pedestrians feeling constrained. Outside, the canopy covering the cargo inspection area is pulled away from the main building, enabling convection and helping to create comfortable air movement.

In the decade prior to the realization of this project, a border wall went up, turning an imaginary line in the sand into a physical barrier between

neighbors. It was an effort lacking in humanity. In contrast, Chu Richter says she views the Columbus port of entry project as a place where two communities come together, where the ecology of the place is accentuated. It's an effort to connect people with the land they inhabit and to create a space where crossing the border can be celebrated, once again.

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



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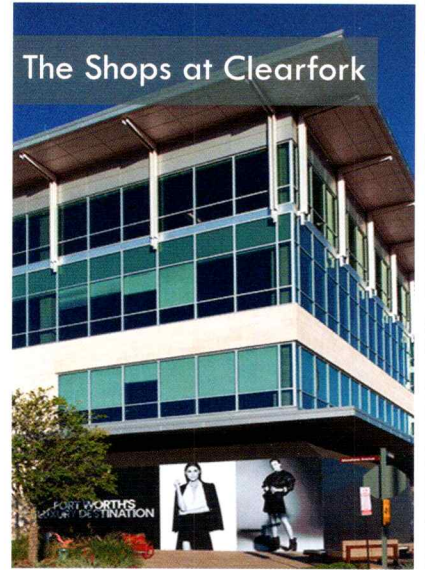
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Given the uncertain future of events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, *Texas Architect* has put together a list of cultural spots that readers can explore from home as they physically distance and self-quarantine. Google Arts & Culture has partnered with thousands of museums and galleries across the globe to provide virtual walk-throughs of the world's most treasured cultural destinations. The following are TA's picks showcasing various art and architectural styles from Texas and beyond.



Nasher Sculpture Center

Dallas
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Open since 2003 and located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculptures in

the world, the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, featuring more than 300 masterpieces. The longtime dream of the late Raymond and Patsy Nasher, the museum was designed by world-renowned architect Renzo Piano in collaboration with landscape architect Peter Walker. The Nasher Collection includes masterpieces by Calder, de Kooning, di Suvero, Giacometti, Hepworth, Kelly, Matisse, Miró, Moore, Picasso, Rodin, and Serra, among others, and continues to grow and evolve.



Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Houston
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Established in 1900, the MFAH is the largest cultural institution in the region. The majority of the museum's presentations

take place on its main campus, which is located in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Nearby, two house museums — Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens and Rienzi — present collections of American and European decorative arts. The encyclopedic collections of the MFAH are especially strong in pre-Columbian and African gold; Renaissance and Baroque painting and sculpture; 19th- and 20th-century art; photography; and Latin American art.



Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Fort Worth
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The Amon Carter Museum of American Art was founded in 1961, fulfilling Amon G. Carter's (1879–1955) desire to establish

a museum, free and open to the public, to display his collection of art by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell. During the ensuing decades, the Amon Carter's holdings expanded to include a broad array of American art, and today the museum houses more than 200,000 objects. The Amon Carter is one of the premier museums of American art in the nation and has been a Fort Worth institution for more than 50 years. At any given time, there are about 400 works of art on view, ranging in medium from grand paintings to delicate works on paper, rare books, dynamic sculpture, and photographs from 1840 to the present day.



Dallas Museum of Art

Dallas
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Established in 1903, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) is among the 10 largest art museums in the country, and is distinguished by its commitment to research, innovation,

and public engagement. At the heart of the museum and its programs is its global collection, which encompasses more than 24,000 works and spans 5,000 years of history, representing a full range of world cultures. Located in the nation's largest arts district, the DMA acts as a catalyst for community creativity, engaging people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse spectrum of programming, from exhibitions and lectures to concerts, literary events, and dramatic and dance presentations. Since the museum's return to free general admission in 2013, the DMA has welcomed more 3.2 million visitors.

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Regular Day Schedule	2nd Period Start	Band/Choir/Drama and 5 more...	8:10 AM	Short Bell	Archived
Regular Day Schedule	3rd Period End	Band/Choir/Drama and 5 more...	10:15 AM	Short Bell	Enabled
Regular Day Schedule	4th Period Start	Band/Choir/Drama and 5 more...	10:20 AM	Short Bell	Enabled
Regular Day Schedule	4th Period End / Start Lunch	Band/Choir/Drama and 5 more...	11:20 AM	Long Beep	Enabled

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MOMA curator Paola Antonelli presented “Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival,” highlighting a range of international architecture and design projects that underscore the concept of restorative design.

A World Apart

The World Around Summit
Organized by Beatrice Galilee
Times Center, New York City
January 25

by Ibai Rigby

Imagine the world around you. What comes to mind? Might it be the space around the couch or desk from where you’re reading this? The trees and buildings surrounding your home or office? Or are you already on board a trip from the microscopic scale of the bacteria in your hands to that of the Milky Way galaxy, as in the film “Powers of Ten”? What role does architecture play in that world?

Following this thread, British curator Beatrice Galilee organized a gathering of global voices to discuss the “now, near, and next of architecture” under the rubric “The World Around.” Inheriting the quick-fire presentation format of “A Year of Architecture in a Day,”

which she hosted at The Met during her tenure as the museum’s associate curator of architecture and design, the re-christened event took place at the Times Center in New York on January 25. The buildings, films, publications, exhibitions, and installations presented on stage, all completed in 2019, promise to “reconfigure our relations to architecture ... and propose ways of working and living that are full of promise and optimism.” That is, at least, what the handout says. “Thank God it is not going to be a whole day in the dark!” my neighbors in the audience observed. “What a surprise to find natural light and a view to the street inside an auditorium!” — referring to the venue’s layout, designed by Renzo Piano.

MoMA architecture and design curator Paola Antonelli shot the starting pistol. “When things break,” she argued, “they’re never the same again.” Her last exhibition, “Broken Nature,” explores what architects and designers could do to remake the world. Sparing us from the growing shopping list of dreadful catastrophes we’re getting used to seeing in the news, she

recited the full catalog of ships that participated at her armada in Milan: Birdsongs, fatbergs, cyborg landscapes, robot baristas, lithopias, plastiglomerates, siphonophore manifestos, and octopi interacting with long-extinct shells set the tone for a conference that was only beginning. Following Antonelli’s litany, artist Michael Wang brought us back to Manhattan with his installation “Extinct in New York.” His show, a catalog of flora and fauna known historically from the natural environments of the city, is presented in a space not dissimilar to an intensive care unit. The natural environment Henry Hudson had encountered while searching for the Northwest Passage to the Orient no longer exists outside a museum. What is nature, then, if it cannot thrive without human scaffolding?

Australian designer and environmentalist Julia Watson suggested looking at non-industrialized cultures for answers. From the *sawah tambak* aquafarming system that cultivates both rice and fish in East Java to the *waru waru* raised terraces and canals that increase soil fertility at Lake Titicaca, Watson discovers techniques and



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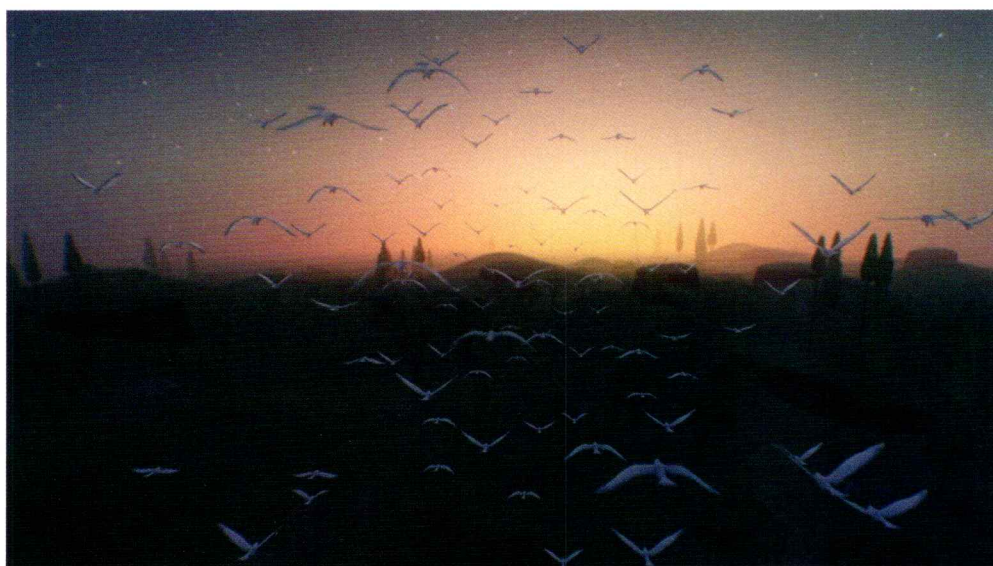
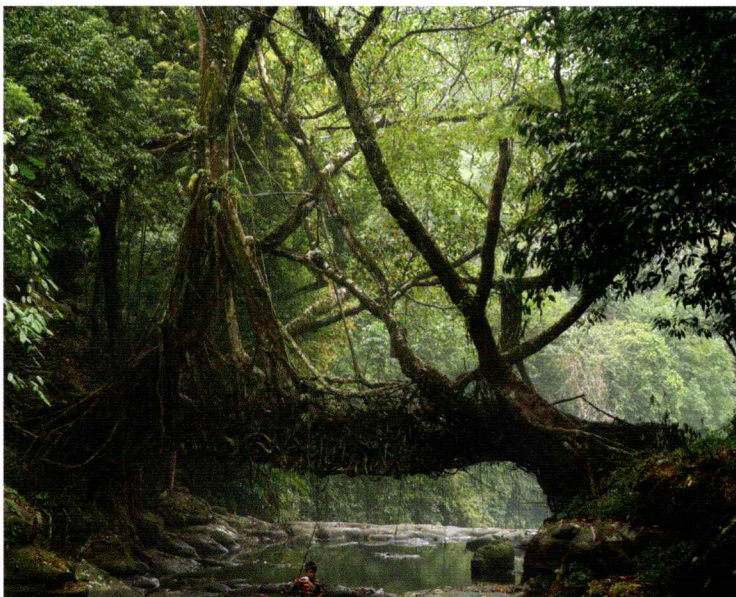
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Above One of the four greenhouses at Michael Wang's exhibition "Extinct in New York."

Right A living root bridge of the Khasis in India, presented by Julia Watson. Living root bridges are better suited to the wet conditions than any artificially constructed infrastructures.

Below David O'Reilly's simulation game "Everything" recreates basic processes of nature.



philosophies from all around the world that help us "identify as one with nature." There's plenty to learn from Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or "Lo—TEK," as Watson has branded her research. But beware: Adopting the knowledge of indigenous communities without engaging in their struggles for survival borders on cultural appropriation. Not irrelevantly, the namesake book, recently launched by big print-run publisher TASCHEN, is already a top bestseller in the categories "individual architects" and "sustainability and green design."

From Watson's antipodes, Bruce Mau vilified those who think the times were better in the past. In his opinion, we should be designing Eden instead. "If we are in trouble, it is because we succeeded," and, quoting Hans Rosling, he continued: "We failed where we failed to design." Unfortunately, Mau failed to give any illustrative example on stage of his own harvest, though his new book, whose cover arrived just in time for the presentation, was announced as available for pre-order from Amazon. The World Around started to smell like a book fair.

Activist and journalist Caroline Criado-Perez doubted the power of design as long as it is done solely by men. While apologizing for her PowerPoint presentation, which did not match the aesthetic refinement of the previous speaker, she gave several examples of how design typically benefits males more than females. In a car crash, women are 47 percent more likely to get badly injured, and 17 percent more prone to be killed. More women die of heart attacks than men, since an emergency Google search for symptoms or first aid will prioritize results for males. So much for the promise of design.

On the other hand, the idea that nature is broken and needs to be fixed "is a colonial one," believes video-game developer David O'Reilly. What needs to be fixed instead is our failure of attention. For this purpose, O'Reilly has created "Everything," an interactive documentary, creative sandbox, nature simulation, and video game where playing the role of God will help you identify with nature and pay more attention to the limits of your perception. You will definitely find there is no such thing as harmony in the environment when you look through the eyes of an ant.

Despite the view over the commotion around the Port Authority Bus Terminal beyond the stage, courtyard, and lobby of the New York Times tower (Renzo Piano definitely must have read Jane Jacobs), the audience was bereft of new stimuli to keep awake after a long session of



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talks. Smart scheduling finally took us for a ride through 20,000 satellite images over the U.S.-Mexico border, assembled by Josh Begley in his film, “Best of Luck with the Wall.” Afterwards, with borders still in mind and Brexit Day around the corner, Eva Franch i Gilabert pattered about her mission as the new dean of London’s Architectural Association School of Architecture, “home to students and staff from 81 different nationalities bringing with them a whole world of their own.” Building on that great cultural resource, she presented “Architecture in Translation,” a project that will study the use of different languages in the production of architecture. Alas, the institutional tone sounded as mechanical as a ballerina music box designed by Oskar Schlemmer — a reminder that successful choreography can actually prevent you from being identified by artificial intelligence-equipped CCTV cameras, as we learned later in

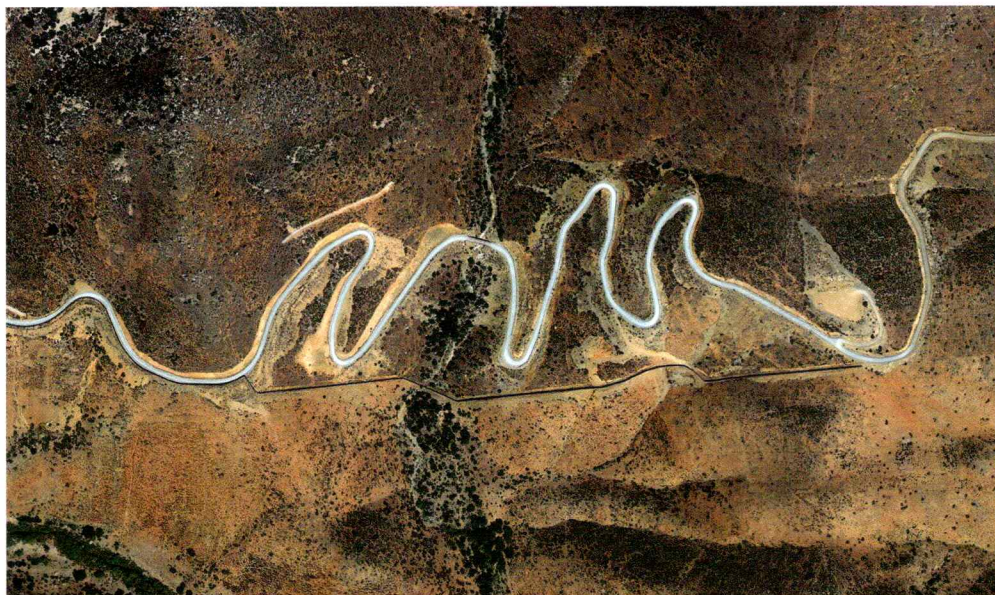
Liam Young’s film “Where the City Can’t See.” Unfortunately, though, you will not go unnoticed by human beings following guidance from the Ministry of Silly Walks.

Dystopia permeated the symposium’s only debate, in which art curator Shumon Basar and Caroline Criado-Perez warned about the dangers of technopatriarchs feeding racial and gender bias into machine learning as part of an ongoing battle for hegemony. Also on the panel, Gilabert desired to end her commercial with hope, but Basar blatantly cut her short. In the age of the “extreme self,” in the age of earthquakes, in the age of Australian bushfires and the Chinese (now global) coronavirus, and definitely in the age of Brexit, there’s no such thing as hope, he replied. Meanwhile, moderator Nick Axel never abandoned his “electric friends.” At this point, some of you might even wonder if the event had anything to do with

architecture. Wait no more: The afternoon was entirely committed to buildings.

Having discovered the psychedelic work of Bolivian architect Freddy Mamani during Galilee’s event last year at The Met, I personally expected to encounter new voices challenging the aesthetic regime of the Swiss, Belgian, and Japanese architects who currently dominate the global scene. I was left wanting. Apart from Emmanuel Pratt’s humble interventions in Chicago, and the timid rural projects of Chinese practice DnA presented by Xu Tiantian, which involved some sort of community engagement or programmatic design, most of the brick-and-mortar projects that followed were just that: brick and mortar — or, more precisely, concrete and glass.

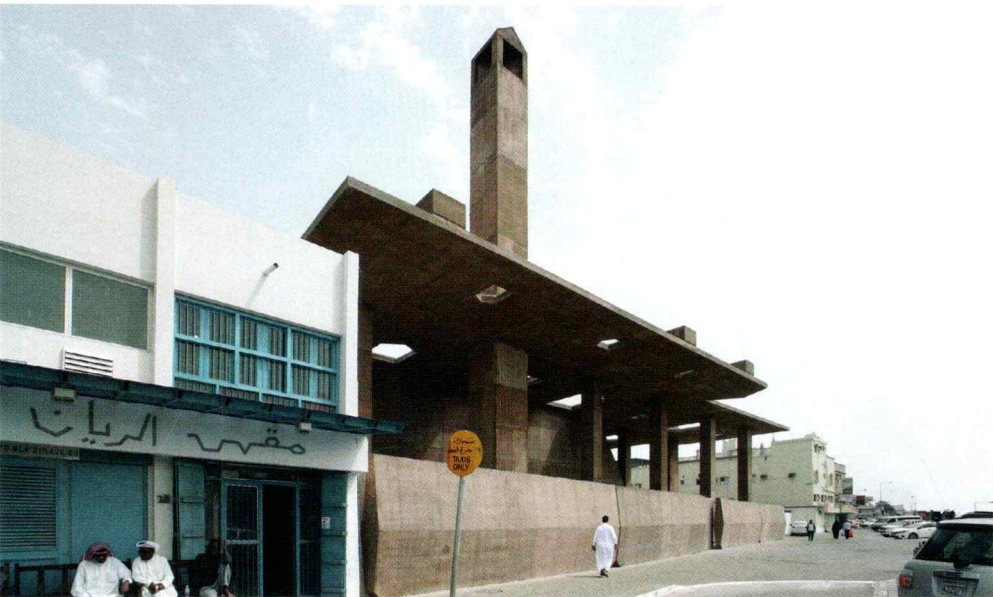
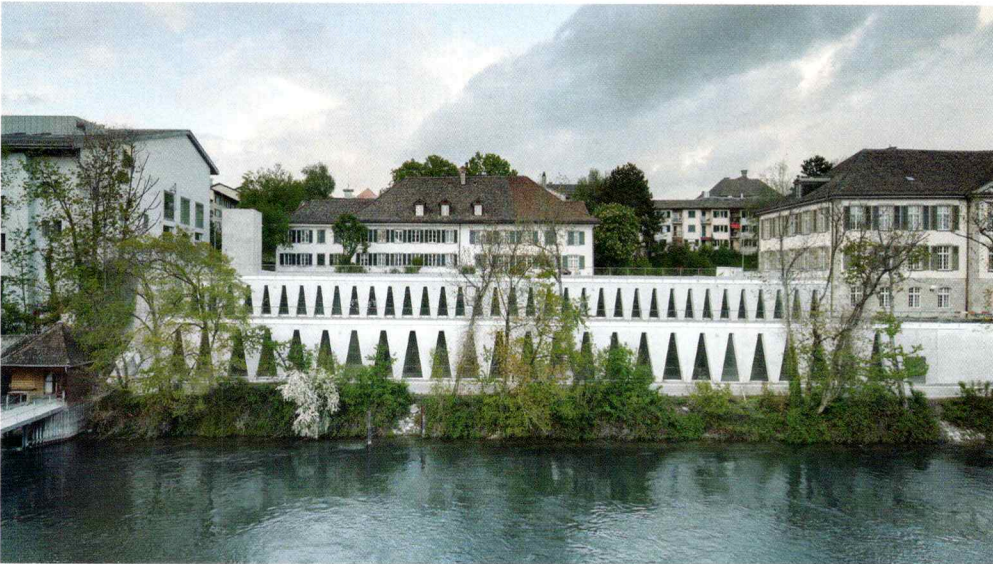
The umpteenth new Victoria and Albert Museum promises a sublime experience to East Londoners, shuffling them into the midst of the



Above left “Where the City Can’t See,” directed by artist Liam Young and written by author Tim Maughan, is the first fiction film shot entirely through laser scanning technology.

Above right Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s project for the new V&A East collection and research center is organized around a central multipurpose hall.

Left Josh Begley’s short film “Best of Luck with the Wall” uses 200,000 satellite images from Google Earth to reveal the complexity of the U.S.-Mexico border.



collection's warehouse; Diller and Scofidio test here the post-curatorial approach they employed in The Shed. In a faraway island (where vehicles nevertheless also keep to the left), the Art Biotop replaces a forest which previously replaced a paddy field that itself had a long time before replaced meadowlands. Trees jump to an adjacent empty lot, freeing space for small, interconnected water ponds clustered among the remaining trees. The ponds house waterlilies in spring, reflect the blue sky and tree canopies during summer, clog with leaves in autumn, and freeze during winter. Junya Ishigami augments reality here with no need for an app. The garden reads like a piece of Japanese poetry that laments a world that we're about to destroy. Right in the middle of the European continent, the Tanzhaus Zürich behaves like a good Swiss neighbor. The recycled concrete structure sits quietly on the banks of the Limmat River as if it had always been there; with its hanging gardens, it looks like a ruin in a postindustrial landscape. Barozzi Veiga shaped it so carefully that its raw walls deflect sound without the need for phono-absorbing materials — a lesson on simplicity, on doing more with less. Miles away to the south, raw concrete is also used to bring new life to Cecilia Puga's Palacio Pereira in Chile, and to the old pearl city of Muharraq in Bahrain. In the latter, Head of Architectural Affairs Noura Al-Sayeh is stringing a necklace of buildings, public squares, and a bridge along the Pearling Trail. An abstract hypostyle hall welcomes visitors and protects the ruins of a UNESCO World Heritage site where the structure performs shadow puppets through cut-out shapes in its roof — a folk music hall dresses and undresses itself for the job. The walls of the 2015 Bahrain Pavilion at the Milan Expo rose again as a botanical garden nearby. The architects seem to be chosen by their shade of concrete: Swiss Red (Valerio Olgiati), Belgium Grey (OFFICE), and Hollandaise White (Anne Holtrop). Back in New York, OMA plays catch-and-hide with SANAA at the New Museum.

And yet, beside all their qualities (which are plenty, don't get me wrong), these buildings feel dated. None of them embodies the zeitgeist described by the earlier presentations. Monumentality, public space, sculptural forms, adaptive reuse, and *béton brut* are all well-known tools from the profession's top hat. If you're looking for an example of cutting-edge technology — or, for that matter, an example of new, imaginative ways of using traditional techniques (stone, timber, and mud, for example) that could help bring carbon emissions down or improve indoor

Facing top *Junya*

Ishigami's dream-like Art Biotop Water Garden in Nasu, Japan.

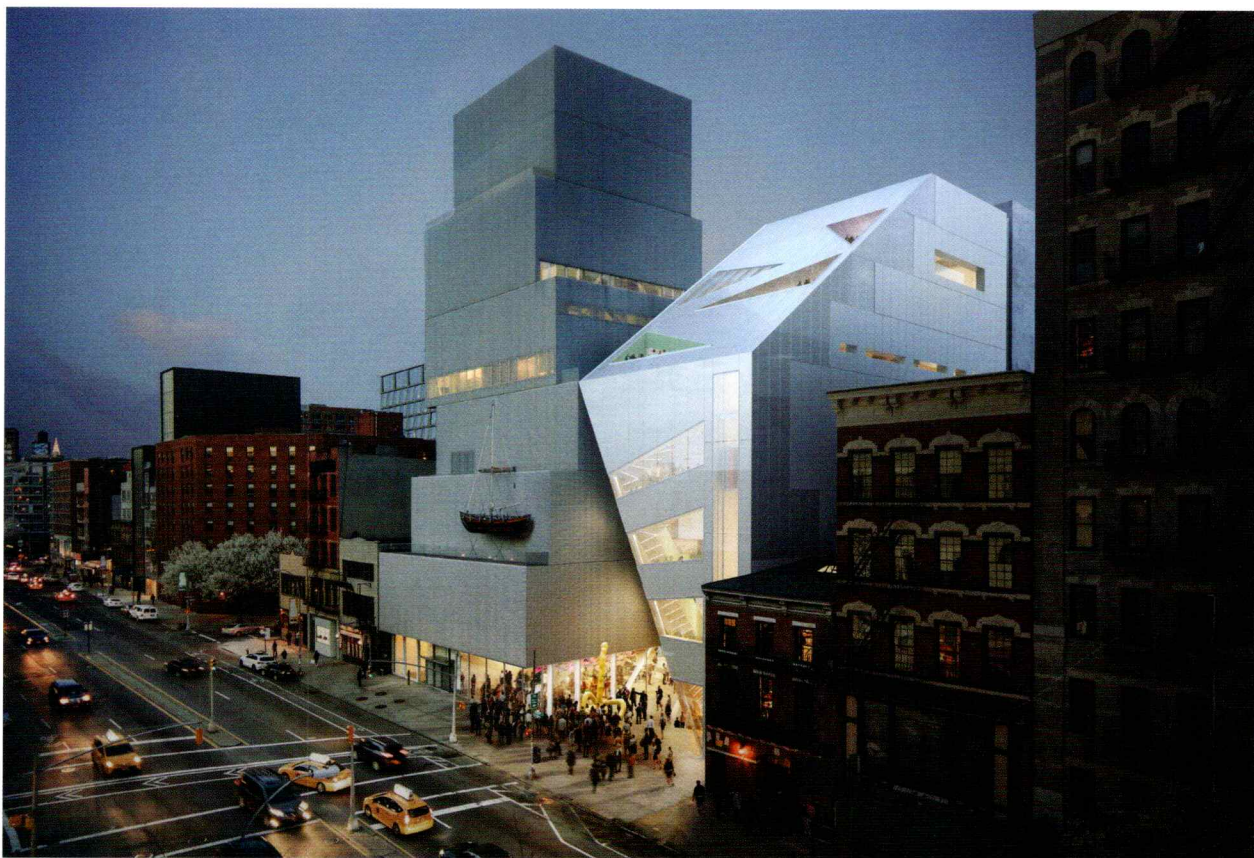
Facing middle *Ex-*

terior view of Barozzi Veiga's recently completed Tanzhaus Zürich, one of the most important centers for contemporary dance in Switzerland.

Facing bottom *Exterior*

view of the Pearling Path Visitors Centre, part of the Muharraq Revitalization Project, by Noura Al Sayeh-Holtrup.

Right *Rendering of the New Museum expansion in New York City designed by OMA.*



air quality — you have to search elsewhere.

Architects usually take shelter in blaming clients for their lack of interest in research and development strategies when not for the failure of design altogether. If that is the case, architects should instead redesign how projects get funded. There is no lack of examples of how architectural excellence has taken advantage of alternative ways of sponsorship, from crowdsourcing to participatory budgeting. Cooperative housing, as executed by Kraftwerk in Zürich or Lacol in Barcelona, are just a couple of illustrations of how bringing architects in earlier and closer to the table of decision-makers has generated new solutions at economic, social, technological, and formal levels. Nonetheless, being earlier to the table also challenges the concept of authorship, something that few architects on the stage of *The World Around* would probably consent to.

Overall, despite the organization's global ambition — and the pervasive British accent signaling its curator's origins — the event made clear the schizophrenia in which architects operate in the United States. Those working in the art world or academia feel satisfied rendering visible the contradictions of the profession or pursuing effete conversations about style and form, for which a complete autonomy from the building site is neces-

sary. A world apart, those complacent building Domains of Arnheim take any questioning of their job as an accusation that they are destroying the world. It doesn't need to be that way.

In her most recent book, architecture historian Beatriz Colomina explains how tuberculosis, which at its peak was killing one out of three in cities like Paris, made modern architecture possible. In her thesis, the quest for hygiene got rid of dusty ornamentation, brought sunlight inside buildings — and saved lives. The current spread of COVID-19 should serve as a reminder of architects' genuine responsibilities, and act as a catalyst for an architecture beyond Byzantine discussions of style. It is praiseworthy that Galilee shared her vision of the world with the help of investors, real-estate developers, and the likes of Facebook: decision-makers expecting architects to act as trusted advisers. We can only hope that future editions of *The World Around* force them to put more flesh on the bones. As Fredric Jameson argues in his last book: "The glory of the Anthropocene ... has been to show us that we can really change the world. Now it would be intelligent to terraform it."

Ibai Rigby is a trained architect and editor at *urban-Next.net*. He lives in Austin.

Myth-Breaker

Flintstone Modernism, or The Crisis in Postwar American Culture

Jeffrey Lieber
MIT Press, 2018

by Stephen Fox

Design historian Jeffrey Lieber, assistant professor of art and design at Texas State University, is the author of a brilliant, provocative, idiosyncratic book, "Flintstone Modernism, or The Crisis in Postwar American Culture," which critically interprets modern architecture of the post-Second World War "American Century" period. Handsomely designed in a crisp, neo-modern format, "Flintstone Modernism" examines the aspirations of leading postwar modern architects to define the social goals of architecture in an American context and the contradictions they encountered in doing so. Lieber begins by observing the current popular cultural fascination with the mid-century period and its distinctive styles (he cites "Mad Men" and the mid-century modern preservation movement as examples). He proceeds to revisit major buildings, their architects, the ways architects

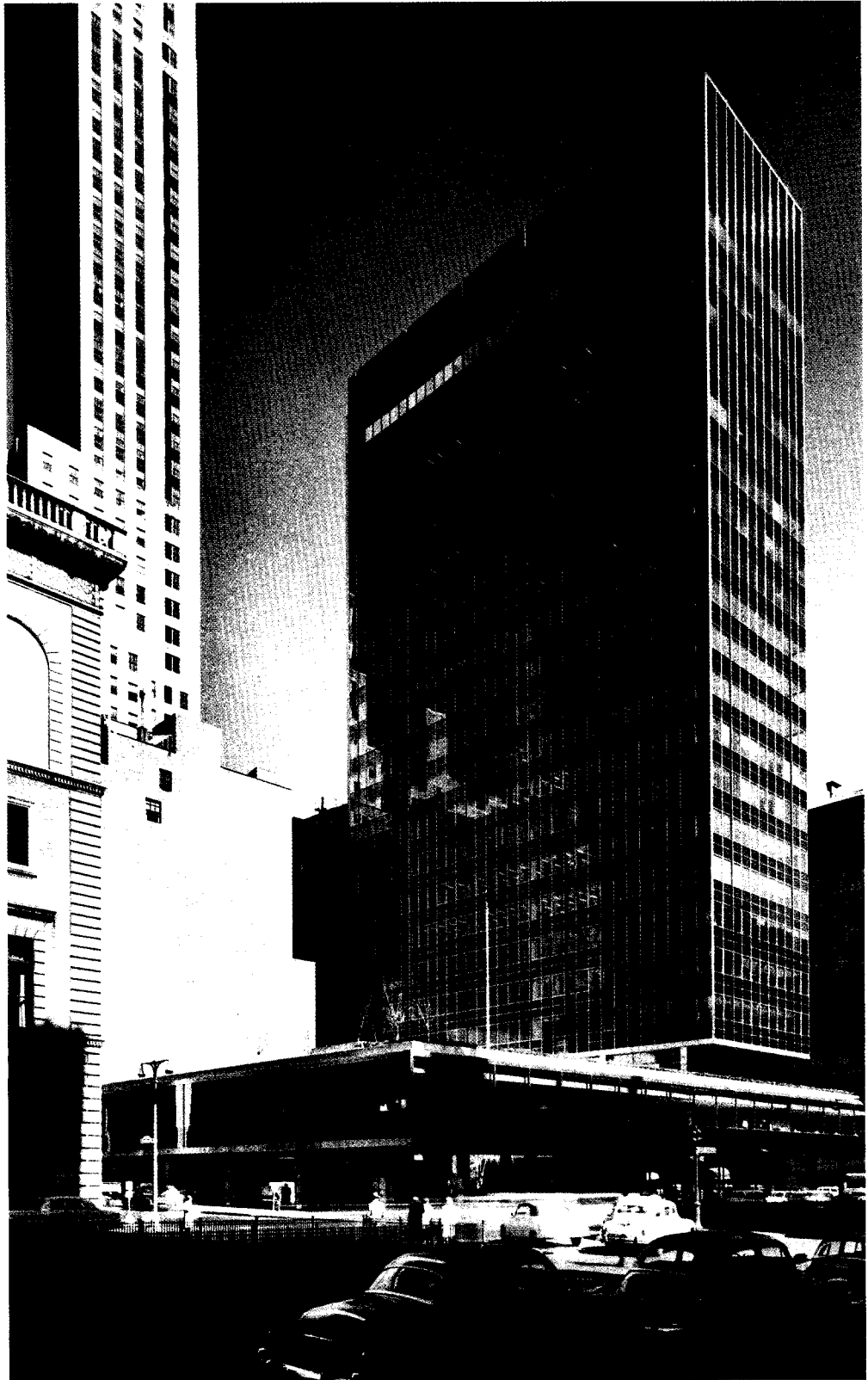
Reviews

and others presented these buildings, and period media imagery — especially building product advertising, fashion photography, and Hollywood films and television (hence, “Flintstone”) — to discern the broader landscapes of cultural imagination in which these buildings were ideologically constructed. Lieber marshals an impressive array of cultural commentators — Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Fortune*, *Life*, *Architectural Forum*, and *House and Home* magazines, philosopher Hannah Arendt, critic Susan Sontag, and writer Truman Capote — to ground his deductions about how architecture registered the crisis on which postwar culture turned: How was the U.S. to conduct itself as a global power that was democratic yet also imperial?

Lieber announces in the first chapter that the book primarily addresses questions of interpretation. Interpretation is a field in which he excels. His inspiration is Susan Sontag, from whose writings of the mid-1960s — “Notes on Camp,” “Notes on Style” — he quotes. Lieber combines Sontag’s curiosity about cultural phenomena with the cultivated intelligence she brought to her analyses and her willingness to frankly discuss the cultural contexts in which these phenomena were occurring — in her case, acknowledging the leading role of homosexuals in formulating camp attitudes and dispositions. Lieber draws not only on contemporary queer theory but also on media studies, film and photography critique, and other forms of critical inquiry to interrogate American architecture and architects of the 1950s and 1960s. Landmark buildings by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, Edward Durell Stone, and Philip Johnson are the focus of Lieber’s critical eye. His analyses often deal with how buildings by these architects were reflected in fashion photos, contemporary journalism, product advertising, and television productions and movies of the period (the movies “A Woman’s World” and “The Best of Everything” sound like fascinating reflections on modern corporate architecture).

As members of America’s “power elite” (the term coined in the 1950s by social critic C. Wright Mills) speculated about the role the U.S. should play in global leadership, culture and architecture emerged as strategic instruments. Lieber advances both Henry Luce (who coined the term “American Century”) and Jacqueline Kennedy as avatars of American style, representatives (in Luce’s case, explicit; in Mrs. Kennedy’s, ascribed) of how the U.S. ought to present

*Gordon Bunshaft/
Skidmore, Owings &
Merrill, Lever House,
New York, 1952.*







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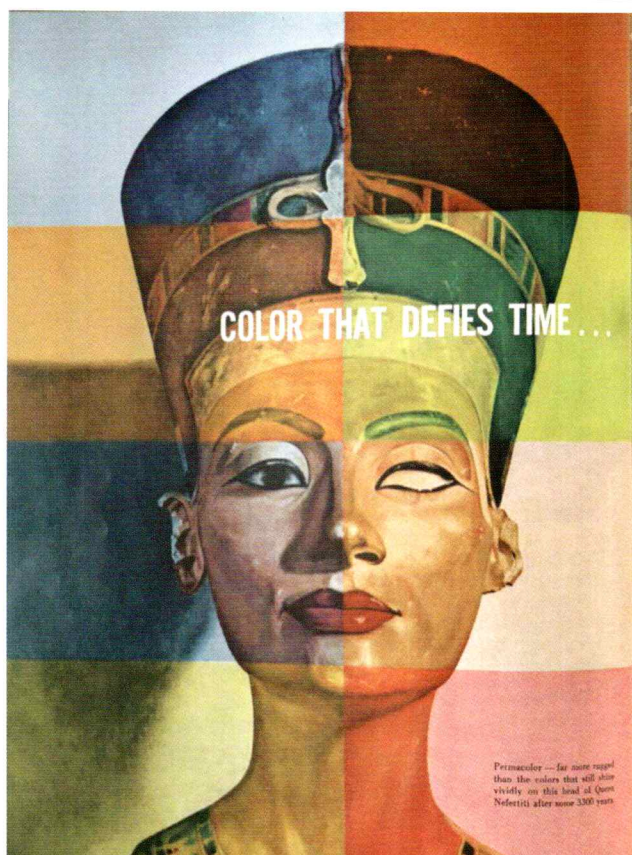
Left Knoll Planning Unit, Board of Directors' Conference Room, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Arts & Architecture, 1958.

Below Eero Saarinen, TWA Terminal, Idlewild/JFK Airport, 1962.

Facing "Color That Defies Time," Virginia Metal Products, Architectural Forum, July 1958.

itself to the rest of the world, and to history. Architecture, because of its capacity to materially and spatially make imagined worlds real, figured large in this process. Whether as spatializations of corporate power (SOM's Lever House and Connecticut General Insurance Company), diplomatic power (Saarinen's U.S. Embassy in London), or cultural power (Stone's Huntington Hartford Gallery on Columbus Circle in New York), mid-century modern architecture was fashioned to project symbolic associations in addition to satisfying functional requirements. Lieber pursues this monumentalizing imperative, first articulated by the historian Sigfried Giedion in the mid-1940s and expanded upon by the historian Vincent Scully during the 1960s. Lieber is keenly aware of the increasingly grandiose appropriations of historical metaphor evident in SOM's Air Force Academy, Stone's U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, Lincoln Center in New York, and Breuer's St. John's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota. The ways in which the hubris of modern monumentality was deflated by camp in the second half of the 1960s — by deriding its pretensions and mocking its earnestness — was paralleled in the succession of Abstract





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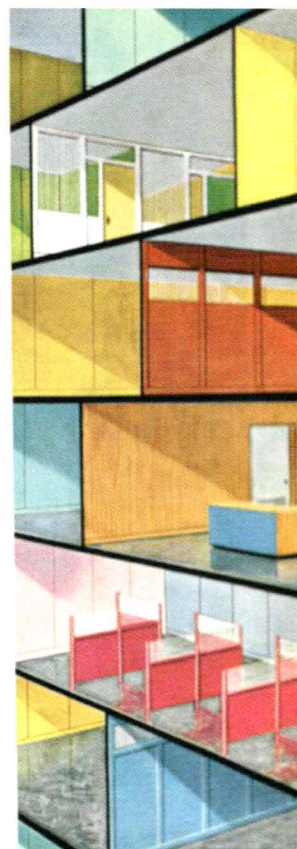
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Lieber's "interrogation" of the buildings Phillip Johnson designed in the early 1960s stands out for its interpretive virtuosity. Deploying queer theory to dissect Johnson's role as an arbiter of postwar modern taste, Lieber highlights his consistent effort to dissolve the identification of modern practice with ethical performance, substituting formal play as the force motivating design. What Lieber discerns is Johnson's uncanny ability (15 years after his death) to still "get under the skin of modern architectural historians" (p. 200) for scorning the mid-century modern consensus on what could, and could not, be said about architecture.

Surprisingly, Lieber does not address the postmodern critique of the architecture affiliated with what Stone's museum client Huntington Hartford called the "American Style." Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and the radical subversion of modernist doctrine that Venturi's polemic, "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture," launched in 1966 don't figure in Lieber's account (Charles Jencks stands in as postmodern accuser). Lieber concludes with disconcertingly sincere appreciations of the architecture of Louis I. Kahn and Paul Rudolph,

even though their buildings are as deeply implicated in the crisis of modern American representation as were those of SOM, Breuer, Saarinen, and Johnson. It is indicative of the emotional pull that many of the buildings Lieber examines still exert that they remain exemplary works of architecture despite their questionable premises (Breuer's St. John's Abbey Church for one: It is terrifying in its brutal scale and concreteness, yet profoundly compelling as a work of modern architecture). What remains unsettling is how architecture of this period — reflecting the attitudes that Lieber identifies — sought to affirm democratic individualism and corporate imperial hegemony without acknowledging the contradiction between these two positions. Colin Rowe, in the mid-1950s, observed how American modern architecture was rife with contradiction, which architects either could not or would not acknowledge. This refusal to acknowledge contradictory impulses is what makes Lieber's interpretation of the cultural dilemmas of the mid-20th century so pertinent today, when architecture has staked its claim to relevance on pursuing the awesome and spectacular in a world of income inequality and climatic uncertainty.

Jeffrey Lieber belongs to a generation of young Texan scholars — Kathryn O'Rourke at Trinity University, Kathryn Holliday at The University of Texas at Arlington, Michael Kubo at the University of Houston, Paula Lupkin at The University of North Texas, Fernando Lara and Monica Penick at The University of Texas at Austin, and Scott Colman at Rice University are among his peers — who are re-examining 20th-century modern architecture with methodologies that critically dissect architectural histories rather than constructing the sort of developmental narratives that most people think of as "history." For those who have lived through the episodes Lieber writes about, and for whom the architects in his account are not remote figures, the value of "Flintstone Modernism" is that it seeks to externalize the subjectivities (What kind of person does this building want me to be?) and identities (With which community does this building want me to affiliate?) that works of architecture project. In "Flintstone Modernism," Lieber explores the mythology of mid-century modern architecture with wit, imagination, and perceptiveness.

Stephen Fox is a Fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.

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by Rita Catinella Orrell

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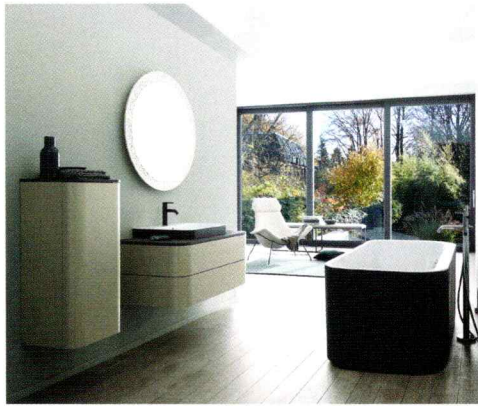
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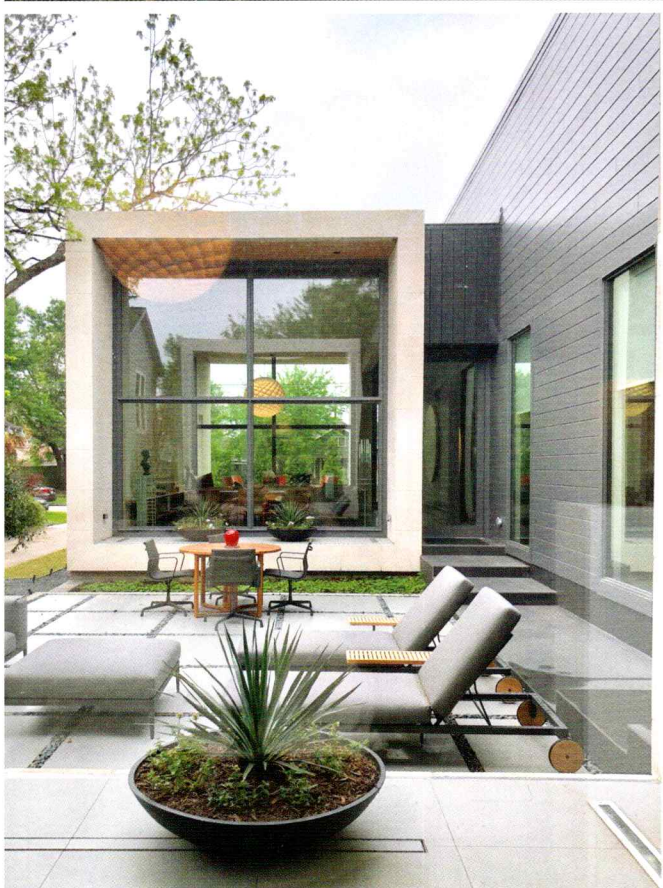
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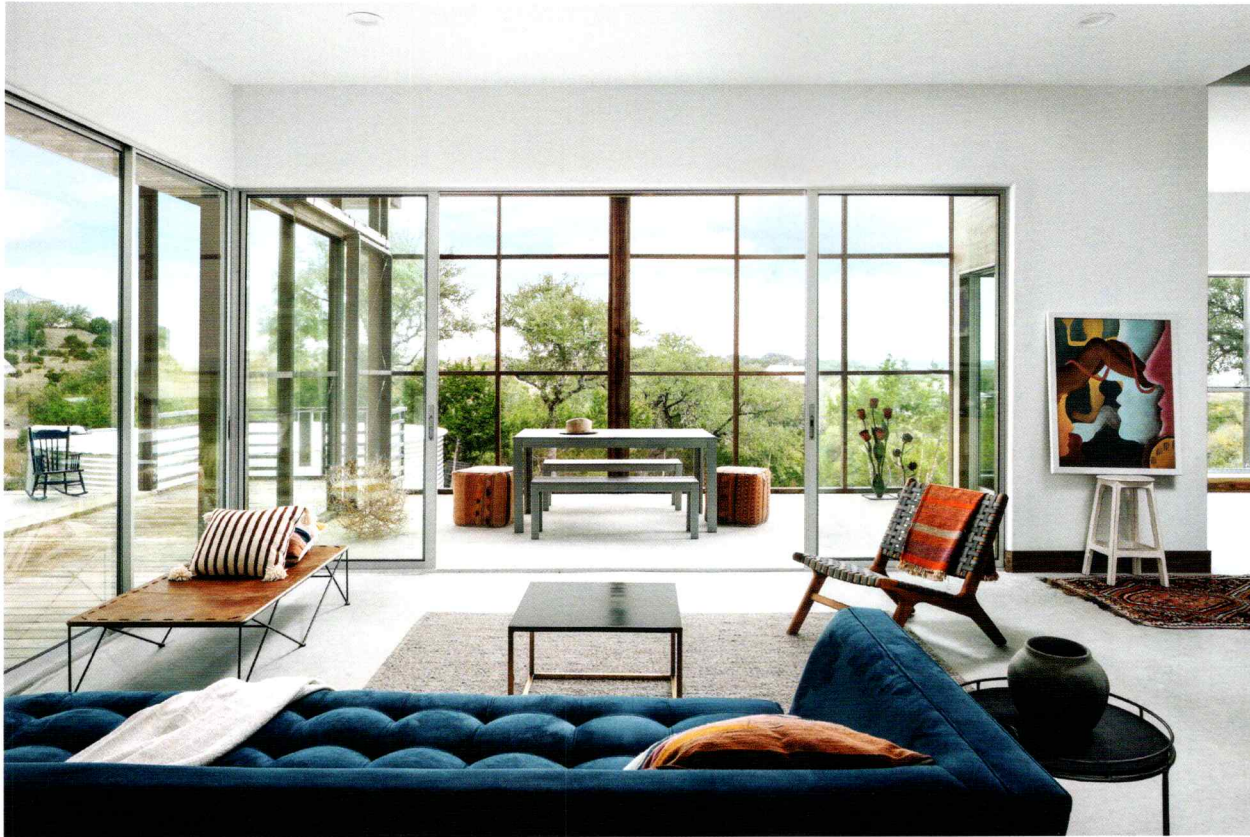
by Aaron Seward

An architectural truffle hunt through the Hill Country west of Austin will reveal, tucked in among the weeds, a plethora of glistening goodies. These villas, many of which have appeared in the pages of this magazine, are sterling examples of upper-crust residential design — materially rich and finely detailed buildings in a variety of styles, everything from neo-Tuscan limestone piles to post-Miesian glass boxes — that take advantage of the landscape's raw beauty and proximity to the mushrooming tech hub that is Austin. By and large these homes are highly designed retreats for their patrician residents that turn their backs on the problems of the urban-dweller in favor of blissful isolation in Arcadia — the sorts of places where most people would probably love to live, if they could afford to.

It's much rarer to find a house in these parts that actively seeks to address some of architecture's most pressing issues of the day: housing shortage, equity in design, climate change, and ecological depredation. It's very rare anywhere, in fact, to find a house like the Dakota Mountain

house, which is as much an essay in 21st-century architectural prudence as it is a place of dwelling.

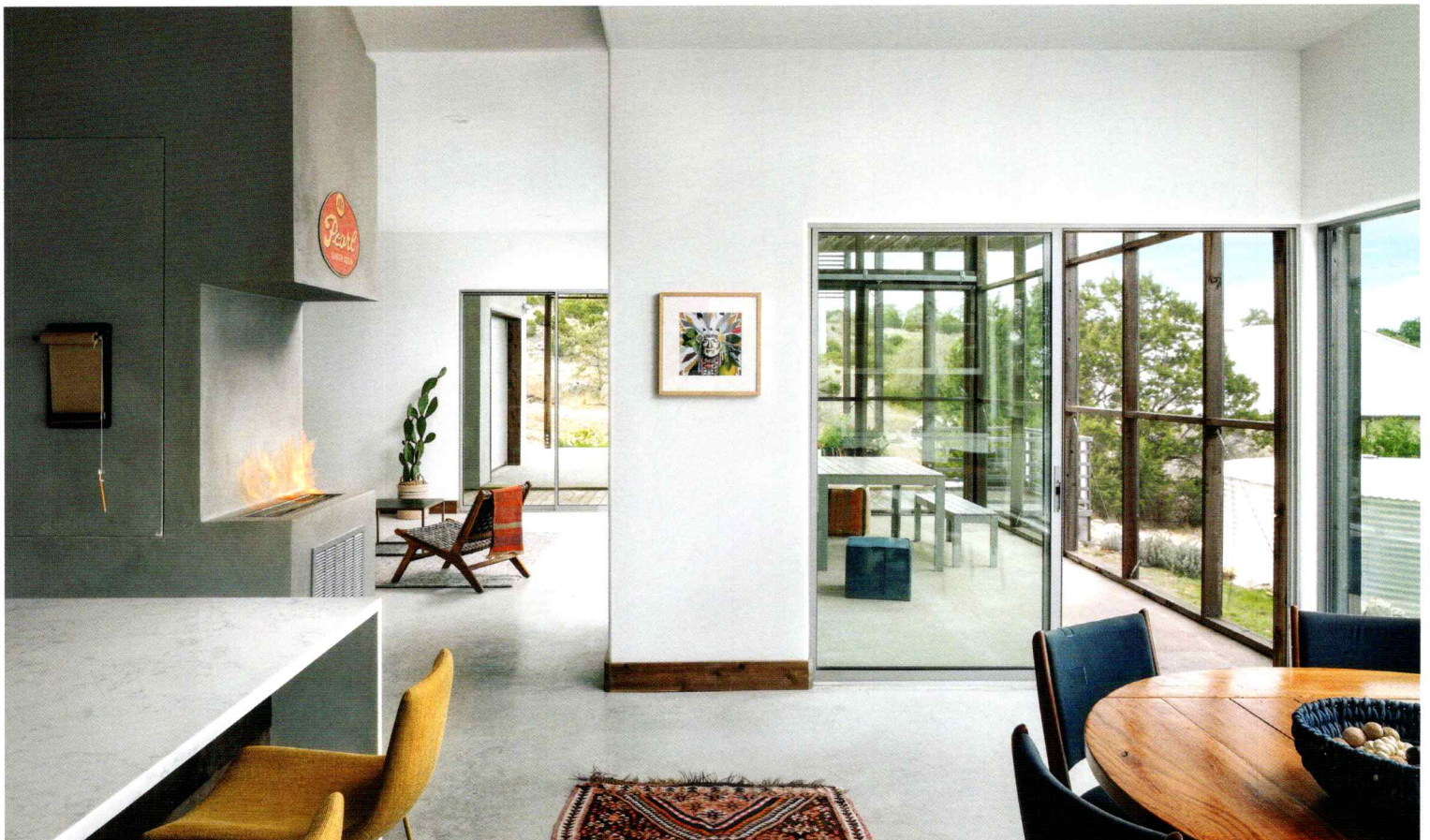
The house was designed by Low Design Office (LOWDO), a collaborative practice headquartered in Austin and in Tema, Ghana, and run by co-founders Ryan Bollom, AIA, and DK Osseo-Asare. The pair met while studying for their master's degrees at the Harvard GSD and based their studio on a simple premise: to do more with less. This ethos is on display in a city that LOWDO designed for eastern Nigeria, called Anam City, which combines urban density and technology with agricultural production zones to create an ecologically conducive environment in the resource-strapped region. It's also exhibited in a series of houses the office has designed in Central Texas: Garden Street House in East Austin, which combines green building moves with an extrapolated framing system that defines areas on the interior; River House, on the floodplain of the Guadalupe River, which serves as a gathering spot for three siblings and their families, providing spaces for



Facing *The double roof structure provides protection from the sun, creating a ventilated microclimate for the building enclosure.*

Left *Beneath this canopy, indoor and outdoor spaces, including a screened porch, flow together comfortably.*

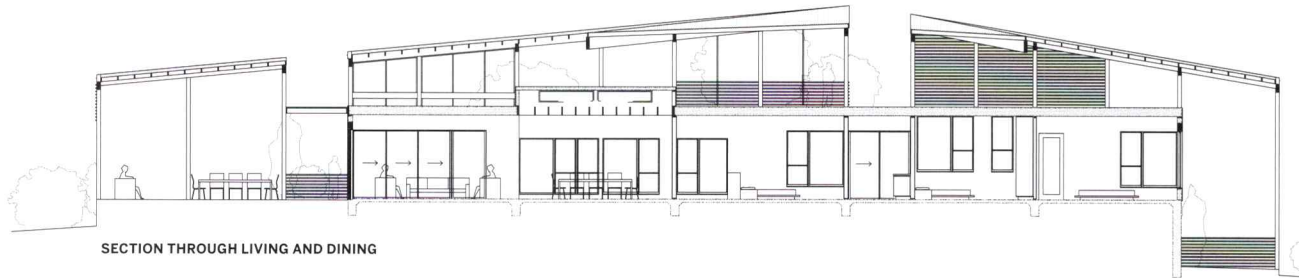
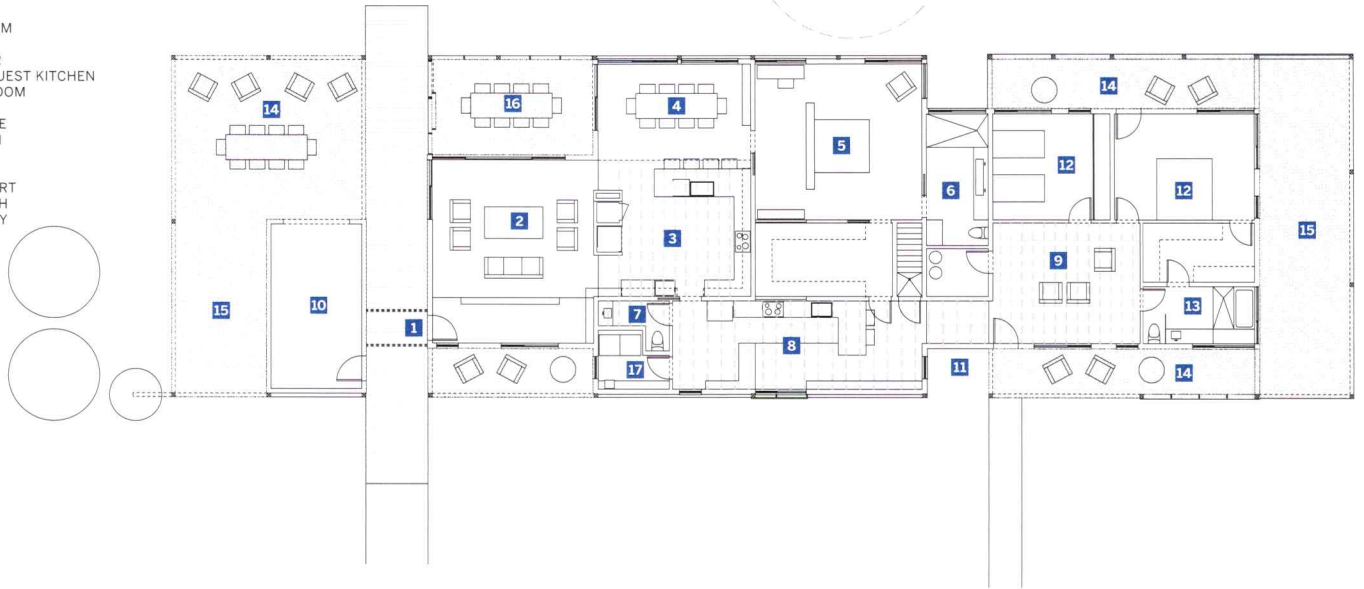
Below *The kitchen and living room of the primary residence enjoy sweeping views of the Hill Country.*



Open House

GROUND FLOOR

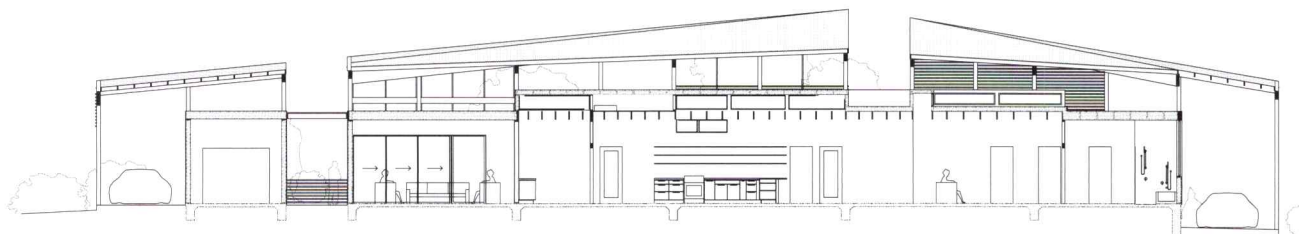
- 1 ENTRY
- 2 LIVING
- 3 KITCHEN
- 4 DINING
- 5 MASTER BEDROOM
- 6 MASTER BATH
- 7 SHARED POWDER
- 8 OPEN PANTRY/GUEST KITCHEN
- 9 GUEST FAMILY ROOM
- 10 STORAGE
- 11 GUEST ENTRANCE
- 12 GUEST BEDROOM
- 13 GUEST BATH
- 14 COVERED PATIO
- 15 COVERED CARPORT
- 16 SCREENED PORCH
- 17 SHARED LAUNDRY



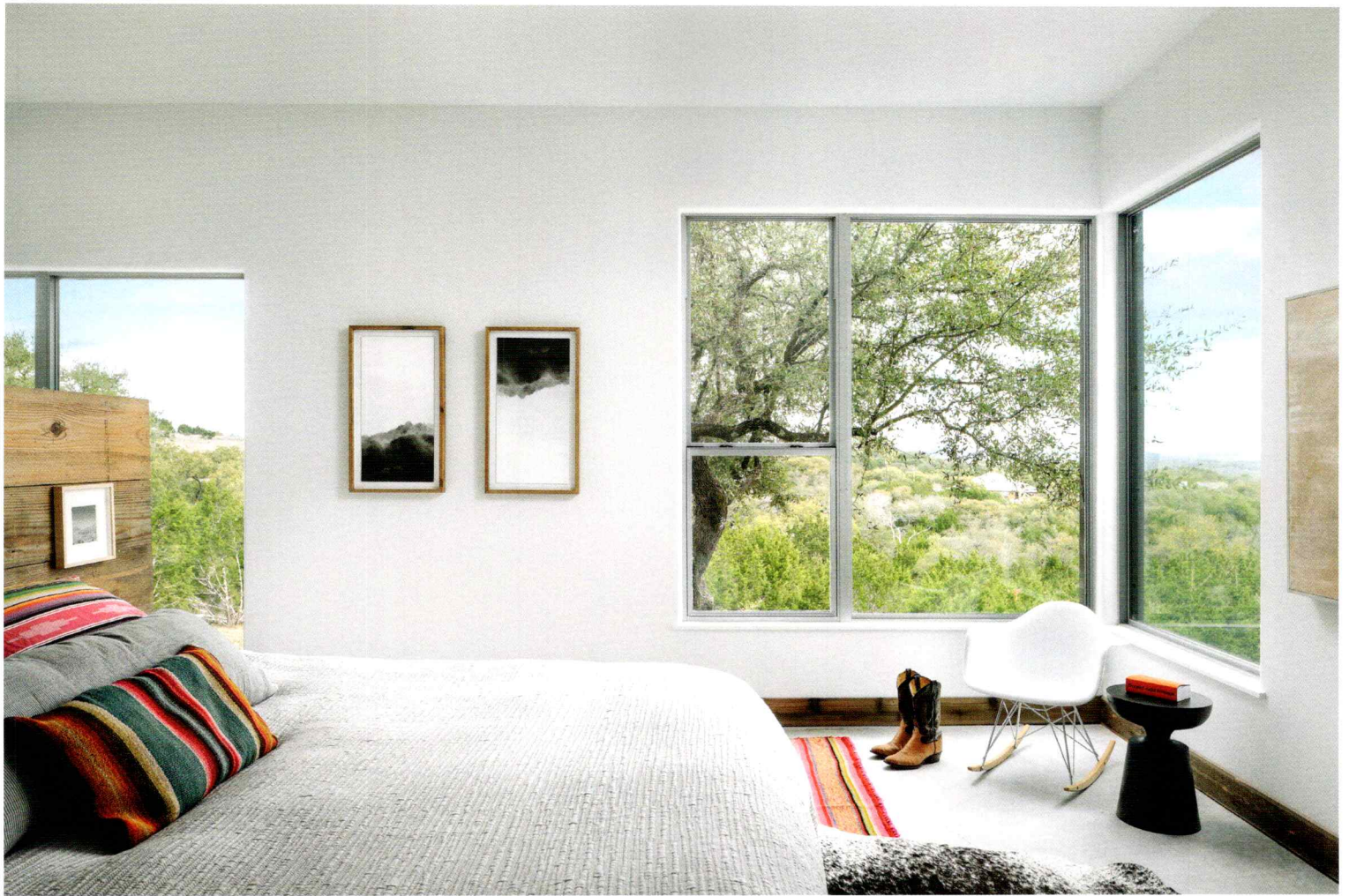
SECTION THROUGH LIVING AND DINING



SECTION THROUGH KITCHEN



SECTION THROUGH PANTRY/KITCHENETTE



connection and retreat; and now, the Dakota Mountain house, which synthesizes LOWDO's explorations in sustainability, co-living, and affordable construction.

All three of these projects deconstruct the local residential building vernacular and deploy it in ways that are more suited to living comfortably in predominantly hot Texas while relying less upon air conditioning than is currently the status quo. The key element is the roof. "In our East Austin house, and again in the Guadalupe River house, it was an experiment in how to create a roof that can protect from the sun and create outdoor living spaces," Bollom says. The Dakota Mountain project builds on that idea with a double roof: An overarching canopy, framed with cedar timbers and topped by galvalume panels, shelters the long, rectilinear enclosure of the house, a wood-framed stucco box with a flat, thermoplastic polyolefin roof, as well as surrounding and interstitial outdoor living spaces, including a screened porch. The house is sited

for ideal solar orientation, with narrow ends to the east and west, and long faces to the north and south. This siting also meshes well with the topography, which slopes down to the north, opening up sweeping Hill Country views that the house takes in with ample glazing on this facade. The prevailing breeze, which is almost constant, also comes from this direction and ventilates the space between the canopy and the house, where there is a covered roof deck.

The canopy roof form is a hybrid between a shed and a hip that has been sculpted to optimize rainwater collection — the building's only source of water. It collects 3,300 gallons for every inch of rain via a 12-inch gutter on the south edge that feeds into a 33,000-gallon tank. According to Bollom, throughout the course of two summers of occupancy, the water level in the tank hasn't dropped below 75 percent. The hipped planes of the roof slope down to cover the narrow eastern and western exposures with long overhangs that protect the house from low-angle sunlight while keeping the outdoor spaces they shelter more

The master bedroom. Cedar trim on the interior picks up the material language of the canopy and exterior trellises.

Open House

Right *The secondary residence flows into the primary with exposed pine joists, which allow daylight from a clerestory to reach the interior.*

Below *The passive solar design keeps all glazing shaded even when the sun is low in the sky.*

Facing *Although the site is sloped, the entire interior of the project sits at one level to ensure easy mobility.*



intimately scaled than if it were a standard shed. A gap near the middle of the canopy reduces the mass of the building and signals the two distinct but connected living spaces below.

Bollom, who grew up north of Houston, designed the house for his parents — a retired schoolteacher and a retired contractor who had a minimal budget to spend but ample trust in their architect son — and his sister and her family. The 3,230-sf interior space is divided between an 1,810-sf primary residence, a 920-sf secondary residence, and 500 sf of shared space.

“Co-living is something I’ve been interested in for some time,” says Bollom, who taught a studio on the subject at UT San Antonio. “How can we bring at least two family dwellings together that could operate separately but also be connected? There’s a lot to consider in this idea when thinking about housing for the future,

as it gets more expensive and less available for the average person.”

The primary residence, where Bollom’s parents live, is on the west side of the building and connects with the secondary residence to the east via a large, shared pantry. Exposed pine joists articulate this connector-space and admit daylight from clerestory windows that ensure every room in the house is naturally lit. Each residence has its own entrance and car port, which is also covered by the canopy roof. Everything is on one level, with no steps anywhere, to ensure that it will continue to be a viable abode for its residents as they age. The long but relatively narrow volume of the house also promotes cross-ventilation. Bollom reports that it remains comfortable inside well into the summer months, long after the neighbors have turned on their air conditioners, and energy use records support this. The 2030 Challenge Zero

Tool indicates that in its two years of occupancy, the house operated at a 72 percent reduction of the electricity compared to a similar sized house in this climate. “I’d say it’s performing very well,” Bollom says, “especially considering only passive design strategies are driving this.”

A sustainable house, indeed, but not an expensive house. Averaging out the cost of everything contained beneath the canopy roof, and adding a percentage for the labor and general contracting services Bollom donated to project, the price comes out to about \$162 per sf. That figure is competitive with most local production homebuilders. Include a design fee, and it’s competitive with most custom homebuilders. But what the house offers as a piece of architecture and as a solution for the future of sustainable development is worth so much more.

Aaron Seward is editor of *Texas Architect*.





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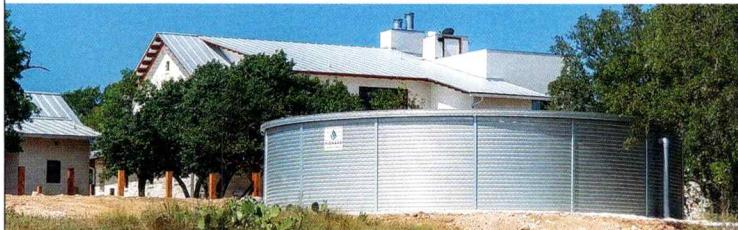
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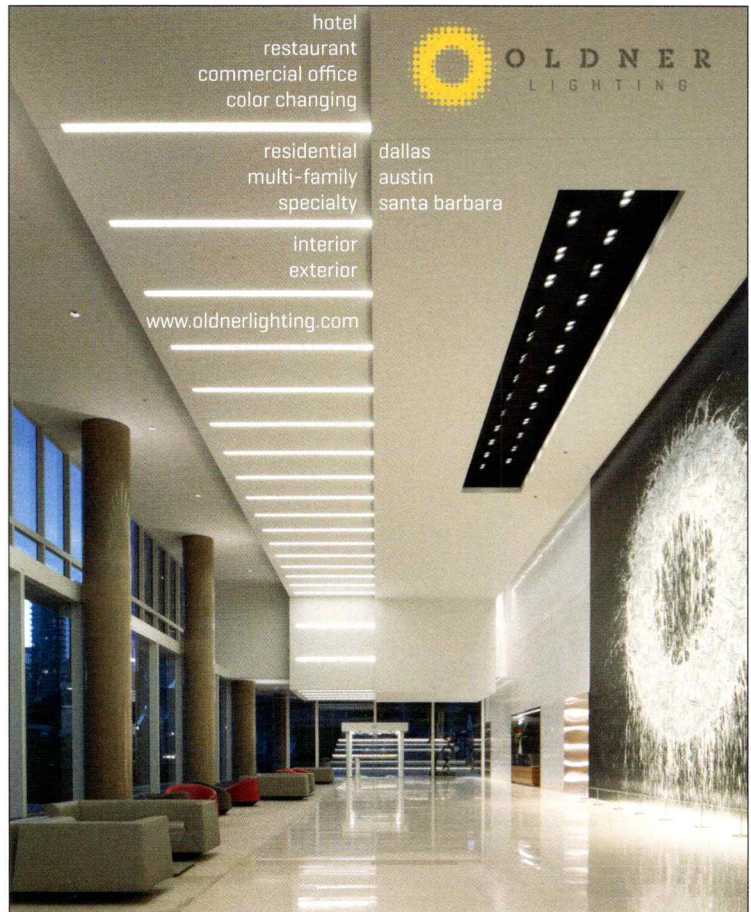
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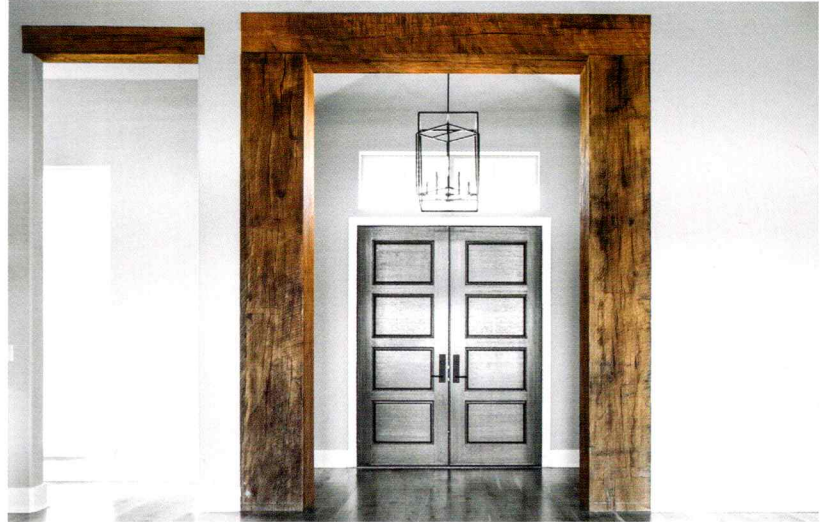
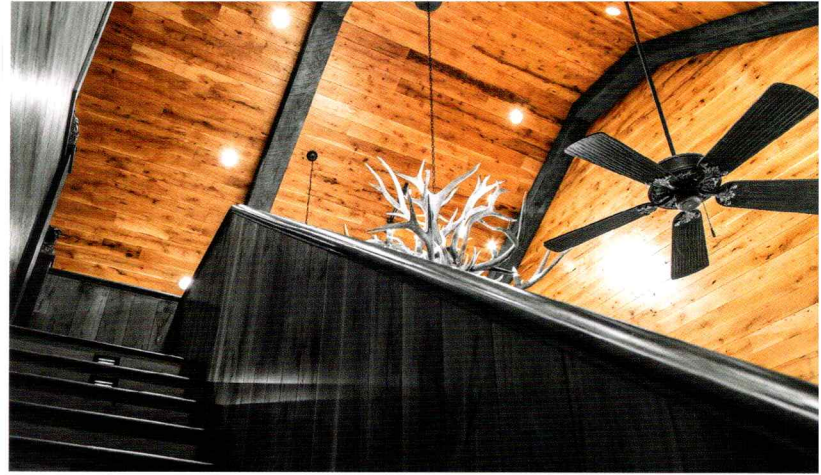
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After 57 years it is time to update the Guiding Principles [for Federal Architecture] to make Federal buildings beautiful again. Federal architecture should once again inspire respect instead of bewilderment or repugnance. New Federal building designs should, like America's beloved landmark buildings, inspire the public for their aesthetics, make Americans feel proud of our public buildings, and, where appropriate, respect the architectural heritage of a region.

— *Making Federal Buildings Beautiful Again, Draft Executive Order*

On February 4, Architectural Record reported on a leaked draft executive order that would mandate classical stylings on Federal Buildings in the D.C. area and all federal buildings over \$50 million throughout the nation. The report caused a stir in the architecture community — the AIA issued a statement saying it “strongly opposes” the order — that crossed over to the mainstream press, with publications like *The Atlantic* (“The way to get people to stop constructing ugly public buildings with government money is to insist that they use government money to design handsome buildings instead.”) and *Salon.com* (“Architect Phineas Harper also makes a subtle but important point that today’s love of classical and traditional architecture often masks a fondness toward traditional European culture — and, by extension, an aversion to ‘the other.’”) weighing in on the implications of a national style.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, rather than take sides and throw mud, we seek to find common ground between classical and modern architecture, while meditating on questions of style in architecture in general. First, Editor Aaron Seward talks to San Antonio classical architect Michael Imber, FAIA, about his reply to the AIA’s oppositional statement. Then, we listen in on two DFW architects — one, a man in his 60s; the other, a woman in her 20s — as they discuss matters of style across their generational divide.

Style Wars

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A conversation with Michael Imber, FAIA
Aaron Seward

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Generational Divide

Two DFW architects discuss questions of style
Greg Ibañez, FAIA, and Andrea Gonzalez, AIA



Above and facing
Delta Gamma,
University of Arkansas
by Michael G. Imber,
Architects, 2019.

About the Continuum

Michael Imber, FAIA, is principal of Michael G. Imber, Architects in San Antonio. Imber, a self-described “modern classicist,” submitted a letter, dated February 17, to AIA President Jane Frederick and CEO Robert Ivy in response to the AIA’s statement regarding the draft executive order “Making Federal Buildings Beautiful Again.” Texas Architect Editor Aaron Seward talks with Imber about the points in his letter and about the principles shared by modernists and classicists/traditionalists.

Aaron Seward: Let’s get started by reviewing some recent history: Architectural Record leaks a supposed draft presidential order mandating classical stylings on federal buildings. The AIA issues a response saying it is opposed to mandated styles, that it supports diversity in every way. And you respond with a letter to the AIA saying that’s not quite true, and, in fact, the AIA for decades and decades has been pushing modernism as a style, over classicism and traditional vernacular styles.

Michael Imber, FAIA: I think, number one, as you stated, the purpose of the AIA letter is to say that they’re against mandating a style for federal architecture. That’s not what I was in disagreement about. What I was in disagreement about was their reasoning — what they stated as facts. And that their position was very slanted. So, that’s what I was trying to address with my letter. As a traditionalist, I didn’t feel like it was evenly representational. And I felt they made statements that were simply untrue. So I was trying to set the record straight.

AS: One thing that’s come up in both your response and in other responses from the classical camp has been that the presidential draft order reduces an entire philosophy of architecture to a surface style. What is the classical philosophy of architecture, and how is that different from what we call modernism?

MI: The difference between a style and a philosophy is that style is more transient. It’s not something that relates specifically to us or our principles. And that’s where I have an issue with the presidential statement asking for a style. If it had stated a set of principles, much like the earlier guidelines for the GSA [General Services Administration], I think that would have been much more successful and much more meaningful. If we look at what classicism or what traditional architecture is all about, it’s an understanding of history and how that history embodies cultural meaning. It’s an architecture that’s been developed for thousands of years and has been adapted by many cultures, and many politics, and many philosophies.

I think when we look at classical architecture, it’s a matter of basic principles that are humanistic in their nature. They are elements that have been derived



from nature and proportioned in the built form, so they're relatable. They form a language that we're familiar with — a language that represents stability. We find beauty in these buildings. And we know people react to the language of classical architecture and its expression of beauty.

If you look at the principles of classical architecture, going back to Vitruvius — commodity, firmness, and delight — they lead to buildings that are useful and adaptable. They're buildings that express stability, which is something that the 1962 GSA guidelines asked for.

And, a lot of those principles can be applied to modern architecture, as well. So, for us to get into this battle between whether it's classical or modernist, to me, is meaningless. What we need to be talking about is general principles of architecture, and those principles that resonate with everybody, and not just the few.

AS: It seems that in this style war between classicism and modernism, we're overlooking the fact that there's actually quite a bit of common ground to both approaches, and that architecture itself transcends questions of style.

MI: Right.

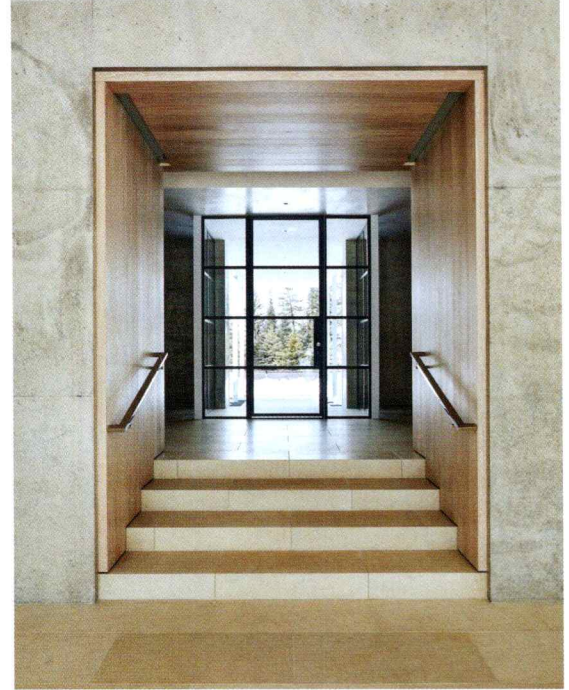
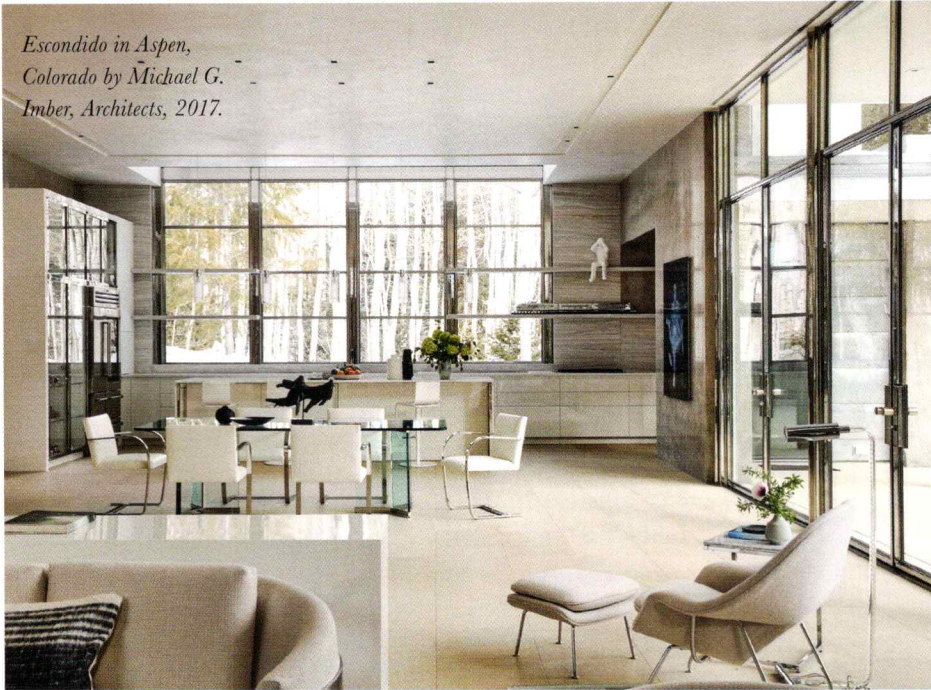
AS: I'd like to go back to the idea of beauty. Beauty is something that modernism used to speak about in the mid-century period. neo-modernists, however, have let go of beauty as a talking point. As an architectural journalist, I don't think I've ever heard a contemporary architect use the word beauty to describe something that they were seeking to achieve in a project, whereas classicists and traditionalists speak about it all the time without any sort of self-consciousness. I'm wondering if you could speak about what is the basis of beauty and what makes beauty universal?

MI: Well that's a difficult question. And I wish I was a philosopher instead of just a practicing architect. I think part of the problem that we have in today's architectural schools is that, as modernism tries to divorce itself from classical principles and from history, [it has] a hard time defining what beauty is. And so what ends up happening is it becomes defined individually, by each and every architect, and becomes less a communal definition than it does an individualistic expression. The more it becomes an individualistic expression, the more it gets lost on the general public, and the more we have misses in terms of the public being able to understand the architecture at all, and often they reject it.

AS: So this goes back to classical and traditional uses of historic forms that have been around for a long time, and the reason they've been around for a long time is that people like them?

MI: Well, yeah. It's like, you have your diet. If you eat something you like, you're going to keep eating it. Something you don't like, you're going to discard it. Mankind has been reverberating these classical principles over the millennia because they're meaningful and we respond to them. The problem is, as modernists keep trying to find an expression of beauty that is not embodied in those principles, there are going to be times when they hit it and times when they miss. There are architects that are modernists who understand and are able to get a positive response from their architecture. And there are architects that even try to find those points which they find the public reacting to in a negative way. I guess that's why you see me responding in my letter to Thom Mayne's Federal Building in San Francisco. He actively tries to agitate.

*Escondido in Aspen,
Colorado by Michael G.
Imber, Architects, 2017.*



AS: There's this strain of the avant-garde that continues to run through modernist expressions of architecture, I think exemplified by Mayne, that is intentionally challenging, intentionally confrontational, maybe even intentionally ugly. It goes back to this idea of defamiliarization, of making things strange, to kind of snap us out of our torpor. Which, you know, is questionable, whether or not that's ever an operation that actually happens, but it is an intriguing idea.

MI: Well, it is an intriguing idea, and it has its place. But does it have a place in the GSA? I keep going back to the 1962 GSA guidelines, which say a major emphasis should be placed on choosing styles that embody the finest contemporary American thought, but that sentence is in the middle of a paragraph that also says buildings should reflect dignity, enterprise, vigor, and the stability of the national government, and specific attention should be paid to designs that reflect the regional architectural traditions of the part of the nation in which the buildings are located. You know, we have a tendency to cherry-pick the language that we want to use and ignore the rest of it.

The other place that I had a real issue with the AIA's letter was where it said that classical buildings cost more, which is a blatant mistruth. I do classical buildings. I have to work within the same budgets that modernist buildings do. I don't have a choice of going to a university and saying, well, I need a budget that's three times higher because my buildings are classical. I'm given a budget, and I have to work within that budget. And, in fact, my last classical project, on the University of Arkansas campus, was under budget — and LEED-certified.

The other thing is the experimentation that you get with a lot of the GSA buildings that modernists are putting out there. With that experimentation, both in terms of the technology and building materials, you have maintenance issues — sometimes long-standing maintenance issues — which end up costing millions of dollars after the buildings are built. And, again, if you go to the GSA guidelines, it says designs must adhere to a

sound construction practice and use of materials, methods, and equipment of proven dependability. Buildings must be economical to build, operate, and maintain. And that's ignored.

AS: Yeah. But, would you say that the classical approach will always produce a watertight building? It seems like, in some ways, there's an issue of commissioning here, and the actual execution.

MI: You know, of course not. It always depends on the constructability of a building. But the fact is that classical buildings are relying less on steel, glass, silicon, and plastics than modern buildings are. And when you're using more stable materials, then the chances that the building is going to be longer-lasting, if built properly, are much higher.

AS: Now this touches on a direction in which I want to move this conversation, which is this idea that modern architecture is a response to our technological age, and a lot of its forms are derived from both new building typologies of the modern era, as well as technologies that go into the buildings, like air conditioning. At the same time, those modern technological advancements have gotten us into an ecological situation that may be ending the world as we know it. So in some ways, I think now might be a good time to look back to classical architecture, to architecture that was built in an era before air conditioning.

MI: [laughs] Yeah, if you want to be sustainable, get rid of air conditioning.

AS: Exactly. So it's really easy. And, you know, also, significantly decreases the budget of your building.

MI: Here's the problem I have with those comments: As long as we're building innovative buildings for the sake of innovation, we'll always be

chasing our tails. Because once an innovative building is built, then it's obsolete and you're moving on to the next innovation. The other issue with that is, if you're relying on innovative technology, who's to say what ends up being tried and true in terms of that technology? If you're building innovative technology, then who's to say how you're going to maintain that building 10 years from now, when technology has moved on to something completely different? And what's the cost of that maintenance going to be? So, to me, that's a complete fallacy, when we start saying that buildings should reflect innovation and innovation alone.

AS: Another thing that influenced the acceptance of modern architecture at its birth was sanitation — and this is very relevant right now with the COVID-19 crisis. Modern architecture got a leg up because it was seen as a cleaner form of architecture — it let more light inside. Tuberculosis, I think, was the going concern at the time, and a lot of early modernist buildings were in fact sanitariums. Also, Corbusier wrote about the need to clean up Paris, and modern architecture, or modern city planning, was a response to that. I wonder if you have any thoughts about sterility, sanitization, health, and classical architecture?

MI: I've never been in any modern classical building that feels dirty or isn't lit with natural sunlight. So I think any well-designed building is going to take into account sunlight. As far as cleanliness, I think that's referring to the original modernist premise that if you have moldings, they're going to catch dust, and therefore, you're going to have a dusty atmosphere, and that's going to be unhealthy. Well, look at Thom Mayne's federal building in San Francisco and tell me there's not some dust shelves in that building. It's off the charts!

AS: For sure.

MI: So, I don't know. That was an argument in early modernism. I don't know how relative or meaningful that argument was. All I can do is speak for what we're doing today with our buildings and our awareness of these things, whether or not you're a classical practitioner or modernist. I don't think any modern classical architects are building unhealthy buildings.

AS: Earlier in my career, when I was still in New York, I was interviewing Robert Stern about a new high-rise that was going up in Lower Manhattan, near the World Trade Center site. Unlike the skyscrapers at the World Trade Center, which are all glass curtain wall buildings, this was a residential building. It was done with a stone facade, punched windows, and kind of like this classic idea of the New York skyscraper expression. We were discussing that — and Stern is an architect that will design both a glass curtain wall building and a contextual stone-clad building — and what he says is, "Look, this is a modern building in terms of its structure, its systems — it's reinforced concrete, and it's air conditioned, and has elevators — but it has a facade, an expression, that speaks to the qualities of the golden era of New York City high-rise design."

MI: That's exactly right, and that's another issue I had with the AIA letter, which said that classical buildings cannot adapt to modern technology, which is just bunk. I'm not a political guy. I'm not one to throw my hat in the ring and start writing letters. But when the AIA is sending official letters that state these sorts of things, it's hard to stand by as a member and not refute it.

AS: I'm friends with a lot of young architects, and many of them don't seem to have any sort of revolutionary furor, or any sort of allegiance to a style. A number of them have said that they'd love to work for a classical architect doing, you know, Palladian buildings, if they were doing them well. But not a lot of people are coming out of school these days with that training, and not a lot of people are doing it well.

MI: You're right. And that's a problem. I think, as architects, we should all be trained to understand traditional architecture and understand architectural history. I think that's the basis for our knowledge. Where we go from there is another matter. I purposely sent you our project Escondido-Aspen to show you that, even though we're classical architects, we can design in the modern idiom.

A lot of schools today don't teach the principles of classical architecture, but fortunately, we have some schools that do. Most of our employees come from Notre Dame and like-minded programs. But the fact is, you've got some schools today that don't even teach drawing. It's hard to understand how we can think holistically about architecture if we don't have that training. I mean, for instance, when you look at an AutoCAD screen, there's no scale reference. When you're dealing with classical architecture, it's all about scale.

AS: In your office, do you produce most of your design by hand?

MI: Conceptually we do, and then we quickly move on to the computer, where we do 3-D studies. We use all the modern tools that we have at our disposal, but it starts by hand. The hand-to-mind connection to our creativity is where it starts.

AS: My background is in literature...

MI: Could you imagine if you'd never studied literature of the past?

AS: [laughs] This is what I'm saying! To this day, I'll read the classics. I was just reading Ovid's "Amores" to my girlfriend, and she couldn't believe it was a 2,000-year-old text and said it sounds like it was written by My Cousin Vinny.

MI: [laughs]

AS: The same concerns of the heart; the same humanistic landscape — it's continuous. And it seems like there is a corollary to this in architecture.

MI: And that's why we feel strongly about the continuity, and you'll hear classicists talk about that continuum consistently. It's what connects us as human beings; it's what connects us to our past; and it's what connects us to our future. If we're always designing for the now, we'll always be disconnected.



Generational Divide

Two architects — one in his 60s, the other in her 20s — discuss questions of style in architecture. Andrea Gonzalez, AIA, is a San Antonio native. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies from UT Austin and received her Master of Architecture from Cornell University in 2015. She has spent the last five years at DSGN Associates in Dallas. Gregory Ibañez, FAIA, received his Bachelor of Architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1980. He is a principal at Ibañez Shaw Architecture in Fort Worth. The conversation took place against the backdrop of the Coronavirus crisis. The discussion was held at a safe “social distancing” range in the conference room at the DSGN office, and via email.

Greg Ibañez, FAIA: I assume that you have heard about the proposed executive order that mandates classical architecture for new federal buildings. What do you think about that?

Andrea Gonzalez, AIA: So, [laughs] that's a pretty heavy question. I think that, generally, it's a huge setback for our field, and it really undermines the value of our contributions to society — our problem-solving approach, our role as public servants, and the value of innovation in shaping the future we see for ourselves.

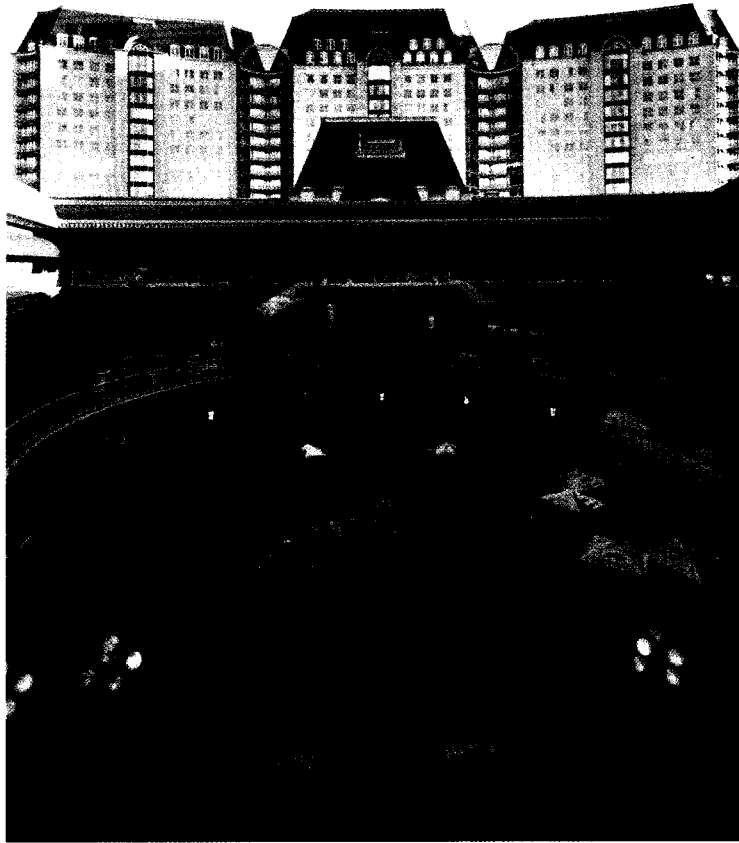
GI: The concern is that imposing an official style — particularly a neoclassical style of some sort — has been a hallmark of 20th-century dictatorial regimes. The most conspicuous example was Albert Speer in Nazi Germany. His architecture was universally viewed as inhuman and was intended to curry favor with Adolf Hitler, who had apparently wanted to be an architect. In the same era, Mussolini had his favorite architect, Giuseppe Terragni. His most famous building is Casa del Fascio, which is today a widely admired and influential [modernist] building. So in a way, it's kind of interesting that we architects say, "Oh, well, that one is okay."

I won't appoint you to be the spokesperson for your generation, but I suspect that younger architects have never really dealt with historicism. Is that something you ever thought about?

AG: I remember taking my first introductory architecture class at UT — "Architecture in Society" with Larry Speck, FAIA — and learning that several years before, he had resigned from his position as dean because of a disagreement with how the university had treated the design for the Blanton Museum of Art. Apparently it didn't "fit in" with the architectural style of the campus.

GI: I'm glad you brought that up. Herzog & de Meuron were selected, and they made quite an effort to satisfy the irrational demands. UT Regents Tony Sanchez and Rita Clements led a successful effort to get rid of them, which was outrageous. Having visited a number of H&dM buildings, I rank the Blanton as a massive missed architectural opportunity for both Austin and Texas.

AG: I thought that it was interesting that we had this renowned professor (and



Left and facing *The Crescent* in Dallas by Johnson/Burgee Architects, 1986.

former dean) who felt so passionately about his position, that he took it upon himself to resign. It made a statement. So I think that was my earliest understanding of the "citizen architect," and I remember how that changed the perception of my own role in architecture — it made me realize how important it is to advocate for and support the work we think is "good."

GI: I find it very depressing because I thought the "style wars" ended a long time ago. I attended IIT in Chicago in the late '70s, and postmodernism had just burst on the scene, dominating the pages of *Progressive Architecture*. We were sitting in this Miesian temple, and we just felt so uncool and passé. Did you have any experiences like that personally? Did you ever design a project in a historicist mode?

AG: Absolutely not. I can't ever remember the discussion of "style" being part

of desk crit, and if it came up during a review ... that was not a good thing. Even in the profession today, you hear more architects say, "We don't design to a certain style, and that's why you should work with us." This is a selling point for the innovators! I even feel like it's the kind of question you get more and more from non-architects, or someone who doesn't really understand what we do. "Can you design me a house in X style?" Well, maybe ... but why would you want that? Trump's executive order seems to demonstrate the same surface level of understanding.

GI: The National Civic Arts Society people behind the executive order apparently believe that modern architecture is at least partially responsible for what they see as the decline of American civilization. On one hand, we can at least be hopeful that they consider architecture to be influential.

AG: Trump is not new to using architecture to display his position in society, so in a way, I'm not really surprised that he's falling in line with this idea of trying to solidify his presidency in an architectural way through this executive order.

GI: When I moved to Dallas in 1980, every new building seemed to need a "hat." Tom Wolfe had a best-seller called "From Bauhaus to Our House," which crudely satirized modernists as blind, obsequious followers, which has parallels to today, maybe [laughter]. Unlike this current proposal, it wasn't the government mandating it, this was the private clients mandating it. Which, of course, they have the freedom to do. Historicism and PoMo became all the rage. You may be familiar with the AT&T Building in New York — the "Chippendale" — which was on the cover of Time magazine.

AG: Yes.

GI: Its architect, Philip Johnson — who, by the way, went through a Nazi phase, which is discussed at length in Mark Lamster's "The Man in the Glass House" — went all in on historicism. His Crescent project in Dallas struck me as the apex of the trend, being the most prestigious development of the time. When you look at the Crescent today, what do you think?

AG: For me, the Crescent is a caricature of its time. I can appreciate the building because it carries a sense of irony. I do think that without an understanding of the context of its time, the value of its contribution can easily be misunderstood. I realize that, for many, it is a representation of all the things they know about classical architecture, including power, prestige, and wealth.

GI: It's a validation.

AG: Absolutely.

GI: As I recall, the inspirational project that marked the end of that era was the Federal Reserve Bank by Kohn Pedersen Fox. It was modern, geometrically rich, and used regional materials. Ironically, it was a federal project. It pointed to a way forward, and I think it remains as fresh and vibrant today as ever. What are your impressions of that building?

Right and facing *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas by Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates, 1993.*



AG: When was it built? The early '90s? I actually agree with your sentiments here. The design has aged quite nicely and still feels fresh for a building that's nearly 30 years old. For me, this building's adaptation of the simplicity of the international style with the local materials addresses the issue of placelessness often associated with modern and postmodern architecture and starts to feel more like the attitude of a contemporary architectural response.

GI: What I resent the most about this whole thing is architectural "style" becoming another political wedge issue. And it's like so much of our politics today in that you're forced to go to one edge or the other. You either hate modern architecture or you hate classical architecture. To me, that's so dispiriting that we're in this place with architecture, just like everything else.

AG: Totally agree. I was shocked to see that the title of the executive order is "Make America Beautiful Again." That broke my heart. It even singles out familiar contemporary buildings specifically —

like the U.S. Courthouse in Austin — but I'm actually kind of proud of that. Unfortunately, I think it almost follows suit for this presidency to create this divisive executive order and draw this line — "us or them." It's really unfortunate.

GI: I'm a "big tent" architecture person, to use a political analogy. I may not agree with the premise of a building, but I can get beyond that and then evaluate how successfully it was done. So I can respect work people do that I would never do. I have visited several Michael Graves buildings, expecting to hate them, and I found that I really admired them.

AG: To your point about being able to evaluate work that you wouldn't necessarily have done — I think that's something that is very much a part of architectural education: developing a point of view and providing a critique. That's the other thing that gets to me with the wording of the executive order — it tries to pinpoint what architecture is "good" and what architecture is "bad," and, in a way, advocates for a point of view that's unable



to see the other side. It's one more attempt from our administration to divide us around something that is, at its best, in fact, inclusive.

GI: How do you and your contemporaries view the prominent postmodern buildings that remain? Dallas and Austin contain many hard-to-miss examples.

AG: Honestly, I feel far enough removed from the postmodern movement that these buildings are relics of their time. I can appreciate the movement for its rebellion and kitsch — appreciating the irony of things is something I think my generation has learned to do pretty well.

GI: During that time, clients would ask for a building that was “timeless,” which meant traditional. I take it that you don't see buildings from that era as “timeless.”

AG: Yes and no. I feel like postmodern architecture inherently faces a much harsher criticism than other eras of design, but despite that, there are certainly some buildings that we've come to know as postmodern classics. I think it's fair to say these are timeless, but probably not for the same reason that your clients initially requested.

GI: Do you think the contemporary buildings of today will stand the test of time better than those?

AG: Absolutely. I think approaching architecture with a purely aesthetic, or stylistic solution is a strategy of the past. The contemporary response to architecture is one that addresses so many things — location, context, culture, and human experience, on top of the real-world issues (like climate change) that we're faced with today. At this point, it's hard for me to imagine that architecture that successfully addresses these issues will go out of “style.”

GI: On a more fundamental level — since this is intended to be an intergenerational dialogue — I can't speak for my entire generation, but, as one of them, I will offer an apology for the horrible state of affairs that we're leaving to yours: Global warming, the environment, and dysfunctional government. Sorry about that.

AG: I really don't forgive you [laughs].

GI: Understood. I wouldn't forgive us, either. I came of age in the '70s, and I didn't forgive the older generation then either. When you think about that architectural style and the things that are paramount to it, how do you do daylight har-

vesting in a re-creation of the Parthenon? In that language, how does sustainability work?

AG: Unfortunately, it's not a priority for this administration to begin with, so it's easy for them to overlook. I think if we had to design to a certain style of architecture, the majority of the energy we put forth on a project would be trying to do that and trying to do that well. Then, on top of that, we'd be working to conceal all of today's modern conveniences in a “classical” shell — we'd be working backwards! I honestly don't know how we'd start to address any sort of sustainable measures here — I think that as creative problem-solvers, we could probably rise to the challenge, but it would be unfortunate for that to be the next focus of our problem-solving — we're good for so much more than that!

GI: So it's going to be different when your generation is fully in charge? Do you think your generation will put a stake through the heart of this?

AG: You can tell — and especially with the executive order — that Trump is really scrambling to do everything he can to solidify his legacy and make sure that his ideals carry into the future, and that is really the worst-case scenario. I'm optimistic and hopeful that in the near future, this will change.

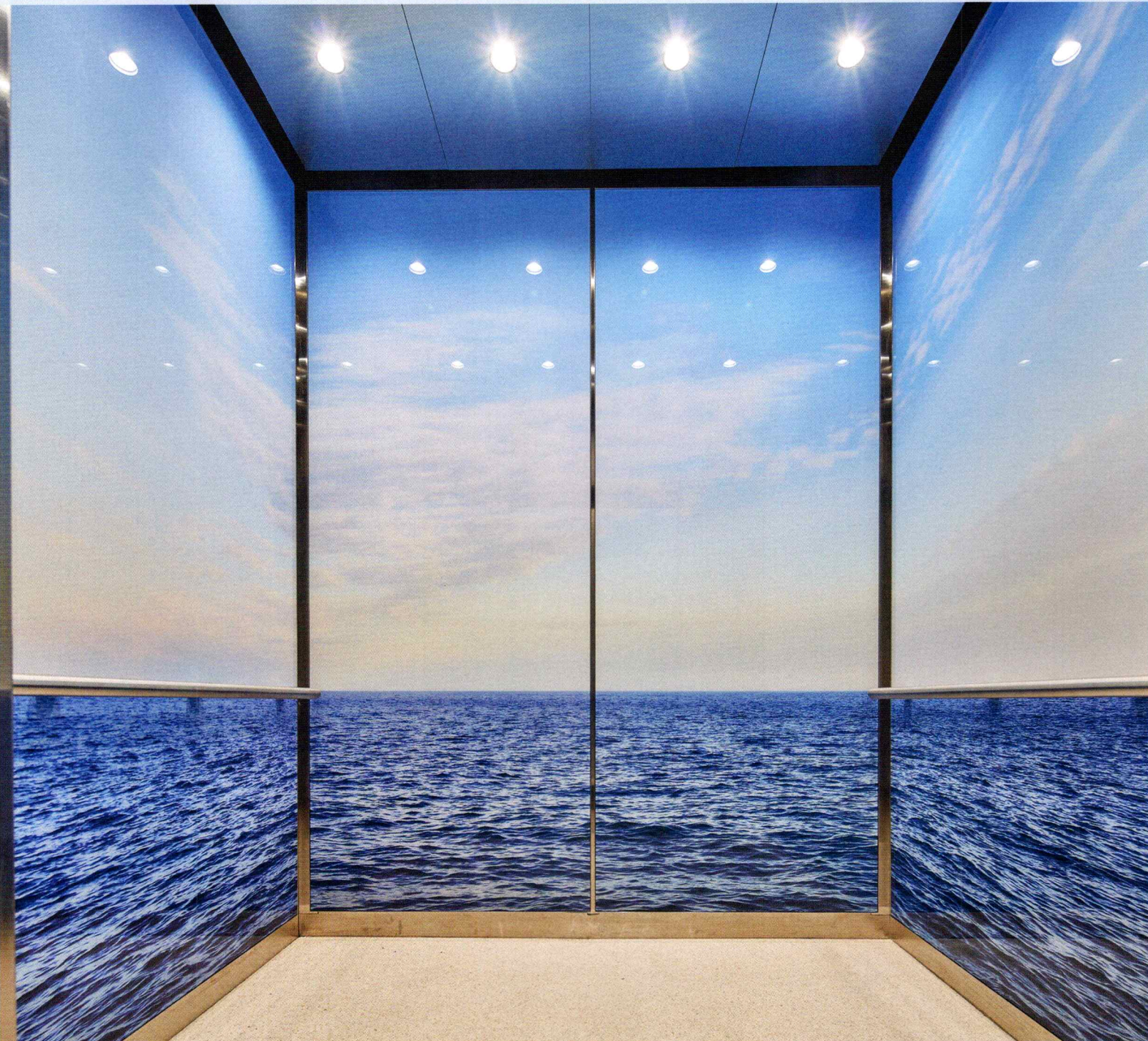
GI: But your generation wouldn't put up with this, in your mind, when you're in charge?

AG: I mean, I can't really speak on behalf of my entire generation. I know where I stand, but it'd be naive of me to think that there's not going to be that one person who's willing to do it.

GI: So you're not optimistic that your generation might not fall into the same trap? As the designated “old geezer” in this conversation, I actually have a lot of faith in your generation.

AG: I appreciate it, but you almost have to! It's the only happy ending to this story. I feel like after Election Day 2016, I can only give a semblance of cautious optimism here, but I do think if we can turn all of the opinion and outrage into meaningful action, we'll be better off for it.

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*When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."
— John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"*

We expect of architecture that, if nothing else, it will last. Firmness, after all, is one of Vitruvius' three pillars of the art form. And yet, architecture often does not last as long as is intended. Neglect and catastrophe abound, spelling death to buildings. Growth and profit also frequently swing the scythe, felling one architecture in favor of another. We may design and build with the best intentions, but sometimes, well-laid plans are the very recipe for destruction. In a way, it's a relief. Keats' "Grecian Urn" may drift through the millennia blathering about truth and beauty, but who today feels that level of confidence in the enduring power of their design?

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we consider impermanence in architecture. First, we look into various structural systems in the state and ponder how long we might expect them to hold gravity at bay. Then, we listen to a heart-wrenching story about an architect who designed a house so robustly that the fire department couldn't get inside when a conflagration started. And, finally, we hear a proposal to beat time and changing mores at their own game with an atypical monument.

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Time Tells

In today's rapidly developing Texas cities, it's common to see large apartment blocks being constructed entirely of dimensional lumber. At a glance, they appear flimsy, as though a strong wind might blow them away. Is it true? And does it matter?

They just don't make 'em like they used to.

Why has this sentence become ingrained in our collective consciousness? Surely we have all seen or perhaps owned an old appliance, vehicle, tool, or even building, that has endured to the present. The idiom is true in that the means and methods by which things are made and buildings are constructed have changed over time, but are buildings built many years ago really superior to contemporary structures in terms of longevity? One only has to drive around any of Texas' biggest cities to see large buildings being constructed with dimensional lumber (stick-framing), when the same buildings would have utilized load-bearing masonry decades earlier. Do the methods and systems employed to construct buildings today create long-lasting structures? Does the contemporary development climate prioritize longevity? Is building for longevity always desirable?

Historically, people constructing buildings had to work with what was readily available in their immediate environment. This does not just begin with the European settlers, for people had been building in Texas long before their arrival. The Caddo and Wichita peoples, who inhabited North and East Texas, built large, circular-shaped houses — wood structures covered in thatch — due to the abundance of timber in the immediate vicinity. This locally adapted building technique predated the arrival of Europeans by hundreds of years, and yet seems to have played very little part in informing the building techniques of those settlers.



Facing *A typical contemporary dimensional lumber-framed apartment building, the likes of which could be seen in any American city. This one is on East Riverside Drive in Austin.*

Left *A traditional Wichita grass house. This photo was taken by Edward S. Curtis in 1927.*

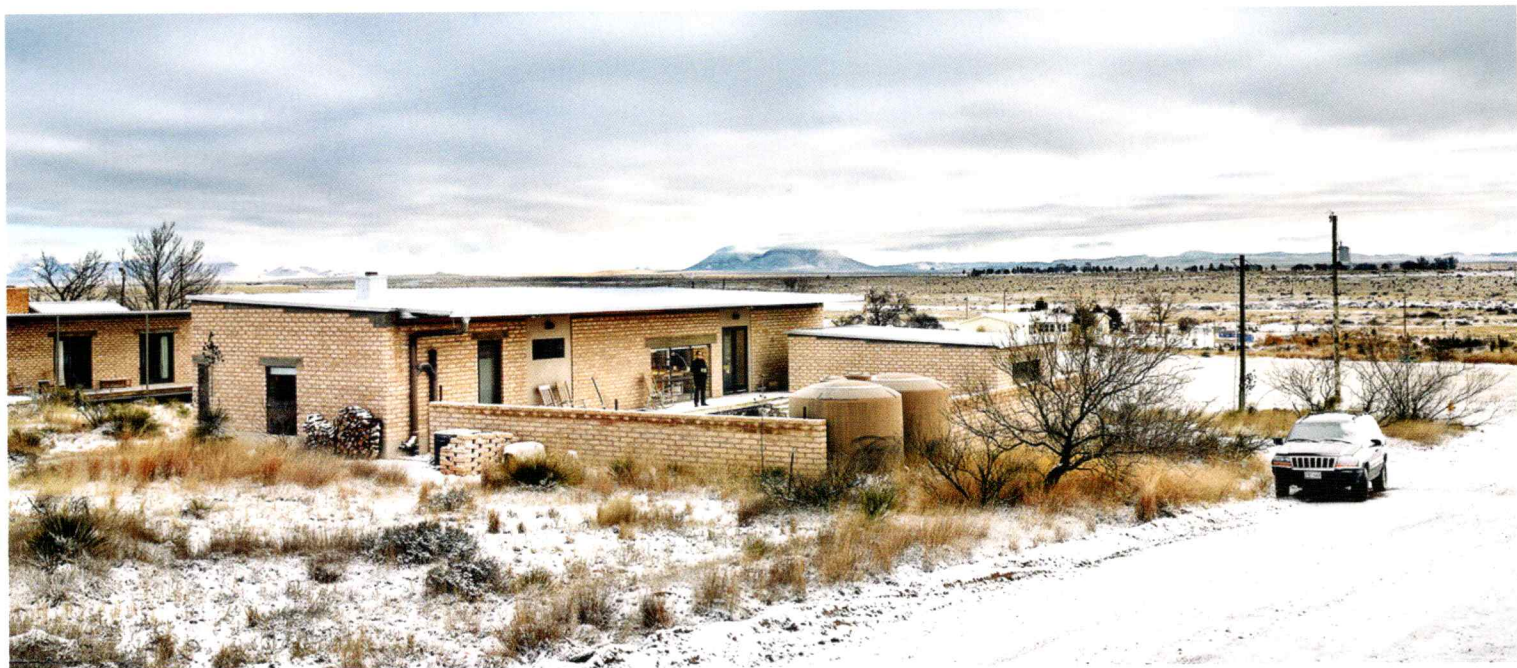
The Pueblo people of the Southwest (including areas of West Texas) built with adobe. This material is extremely locally focused. They shaped mud into bricks, then left them in the sunshine to dry before using them to construct dwellings that are quite well suited to the desert climate. Often, plaster was applied to the interior and/or exterior face, further preserving the adobe bricks. Wooden beams supported wooden roofs. There are many adobe ruins still standing, and the material is still used for buildings in the region today, a testament to the longevity and continued relevancy of this building method, which, because it is unfired, has a low carbon footprint. Other examples of contemporary unfired earth construction, in the form of rammed earth, though somewhat rare, can be found as far east as Central Texas.

As Texas was settled by Hispanic and then Anglo immigrants, in the 17th and 19th centuries respectively, these people employed construction techniques imported from their homelands, adapting locally available materials to their purposes. European settlers in East Texas, for example, may have rejected the natives' built forms but readily utilized their local timber, building rectangular one- and two-room homes from logs. Another and much more recent example of local sourcing and adaptation can be found in El Paso, where, in the early 20th century, the first high-rise buildings were constructed with reinforced concrete. This was quite innovative for its time, as the high-rises in cities such as Chicago and New York were being constructed with steel framing. Due to El Paso's relatively remote location, shipping large

steel members was cost-prohibitive, whereas rebar was much more economical, and the remaining materials for concrete were much more readily available locally. The El Paso firm Trost & Trost was responsible for many of these innovative buildings throughout the Southwest. The lack of availability of traditional building components forced this local innovation.

As the 20th century progressed, building components such as dimensional lumber and metal framing began to be mass-produced. This development greatly increased the speed of construction, leading builders to favor these systems over those relying on time-consuming load-bearing masonry or unnecessarily robust concrete. Additionally, the country's transportation infrastructure improved, making shipping building materials long distances less onerous: Local innovation was no longer necessary as economical materials became widely available regardless of a proposed building's location. Often in historical construction, the use of systems we perceive as more "robust," "permanent," or "solid," were simply the most economical systems available to the builders at the time.

Today, when a building is being contemplated, the priorities of the initiating party dictate the constraints by which the building method/material/system is selected. Stephen Price, a structural engineer and principal at Datum Engineers in Dallas, says that, for projects he has been involved with throughout his career, "it is very rare that the owner's top two priorities are not budget and schedule." This is why it is uncommon to utilize solid masonry or extensive poured-in-place concrete for a typical



single-family home. The speed with which a stick-framed house can be put up — and its relatively low cost when compared to other options — make it difficult to eschew this technique in favor of more expensive systems. It is only when owner/builder priorities shift that a different or nonconventional solution can occur. If, for example, one lives in Tornado Alley and wishes their home to withstand a direct hit, they will build with reinforced concrete or steel framing in order to resist the extreme wind loading. But this will come at great sacrifice to budget and schedule.

Used for residential construction for nearly 200 years, dimensional lumber framing is not inherently temporary. We have many examples of historical homes built with dimensional lumber that still stand today. The difference, here, is one of maintenance, which becomes extremely important for a stick-framed building. The protection from moisture becomes paramount as one seeks to maximize the longevity of this construction type. One must take a great deal more care for dimensional lumber-framed buildings than, for example, a concrete structure. This being said, when asked what construction method he would choose to build his own home with, Price said, “There’s nothing wrong with stick framing, assuming it is done correctly.”

Concrete, in many forms, is a very common building material in Texas. It is solid, hard as rock, and gives the impression of permanence that wood construction can lack. Concrete is favored by architects for its ability to be molded into any shape, for its aesthetic qualities, and for its strength and durability, often achieving much thinner sections than a comparable wood or metal structure. We have all seen the images of the abandoned concrete pillboxes along Normandy’s beaches, and the prefab concrete ghosts of Pripyat, Ukraine, near Chernobyl, the concrete seeming to outlast all other man-made elements. It is not invincible, however; proper maintenance and protection from moisture are essential for concrete structures as well. Moisture infiltration can result in rusting and swelling of the rebar, which causes the concrete to spall. It may be able to resist more moisture infiltration and neglect than wood, and it may deteriorate much more slowly, but, in the end, it will suffer the same fate.

Concrete’s durability, however, must be considered alongside its high environmental cost. The concrete industry worldwide emits more CO₂ than

any country besides the U.S. and China. It also requires large amounts of another precious resource: water. With extended droughts becoming more frequent, diverting large amounts of water to concrete production, especially in dry regions, can be problematic for ensuring a reliable drinking water supply. Sand is also heavily used in concrete production, and sand mining is its own environmental catastrophe, responsible for 85 percent of all mineral extraction from the earth. Sand mining, largely undertaken to feed the demand of the worldwide building industry, destroys the natural ecosystems of lakes, rivers, and coastlines around the world.

This is a challenging issue in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where the required fire ratings and local contractors’ proficiency and familiarity with concrete often lead to its selection as the primary structural material. It is often cheaper than steel framing in this market.

One “new” — yet incredibly old — system just beginning to make its resurgence in Texas is heavy timber. Heavy timber, primarily in the form of glue-laminated structural sections, provides a welcome alternative to the binary choice between steel and concrete for commercial buildings. While this method is currently not standard practice, there are now multiple examples of heavy timber buildings recently constructed in the state, including: the Soto Building in San Antonio by Lake|Flato with BOKA Powell; First United Bank Fredericksburg by Gensler; and 901 East 6th in Austin by Delineate Studio and Thoughtbarn.

The reality is that any construction method, including stick-framed buildings, can last for hundreds of years, given proper maintenance and protection from moisture infiltration. However, sometimes old buildings are compromised by other sources. In North Texas, often what leads to an old house’s demise is not the deterioration of its framing system, but rather the inadequacy of its foundation. It is not uncommon to see old wood-framed houses dipping and sagging as if they are riding a wave. There is not much that can be done for these buildings.

As catastrophic events that were once exceedingly rare become more commonplace, architects, owners, and all involved in the creation of new buildings will need to be prepared to evaluate their priorities. Instances such as the Dallas tornado of October 2019 and Hurricane Harvey and



Facing *This contemporary adobe house in Marfa, designed by Larry Doll, AIA, is stabilized with an 11 percent mix of Portland cement.*

Left *A typical stick-framed single-family house.*

Below left *The neo-classical Hays County Courthouse in San Marcos (1908), constructed of load-bearing masonry.*

Below right *The Art-Deco O.T. Bassett Tower in El Paso by Frost & Frost (1930), constructed with a reinforced concrete frame.*





This page Heavy timber construction is making a comeback in commercial building with cross laminated timber, seen here in the Soto Building in San Antonio by Lake|Flato (above), and the First United Bank in Sherman by Genster (right).

Facing The ubiquitously used green ZIP sheathing, seen on this stick-framed apartment building in Austin, forms the weather barrier responsible for keeping the wood structure underneath dry and structurally sound for the life of the building.



its destruction in Houston and other Gulf Coast communities have clearly made the case that the way we typically build is not capable of withstanding nature's destructive forces. If we did not have to contend with these events, then buildings erected using any viable construction system and properly guarded against moisture infiltration would endure for many years.

However, in our context, we must now be aware of these increasingly frequent hazards, and we cannot simply hope our building will not be affected. Rating systems such as RELi (from the USGBC) contain guidance on how to address challenges posed by increasingly severe natural events in the design and construction of our buildings. If and when a building does come to the end of its life, either through destruction via natural forces, age, or intentional demolition, the resulting pile of rubbish must go somewhere. We have to consider the component parts of our buildings, and ideally, we choose elements that do the least harm once the building is gone. Can we ensure that the majority of this pile is able to be reused?

However, a pile that was once a building, even if its contents are able to be recycled, cannot stand as a reminder of the past. Buildings form our physical connection with history, and once one is removed, society's connection with its particular contribution to the past is severed. History becomes an academic exercise, not something that is seen, felt, and experienced. For this reason, the longevity of all building types is of cultural importance. One Dallas neighborhood experiencing this reality is the Tenth Street Historic District, a former freedman's town. Slowly, over the years, houses were torn down (often by the city) rather than repaired, and now this neighborhood with vast historic significance has been all but erased.

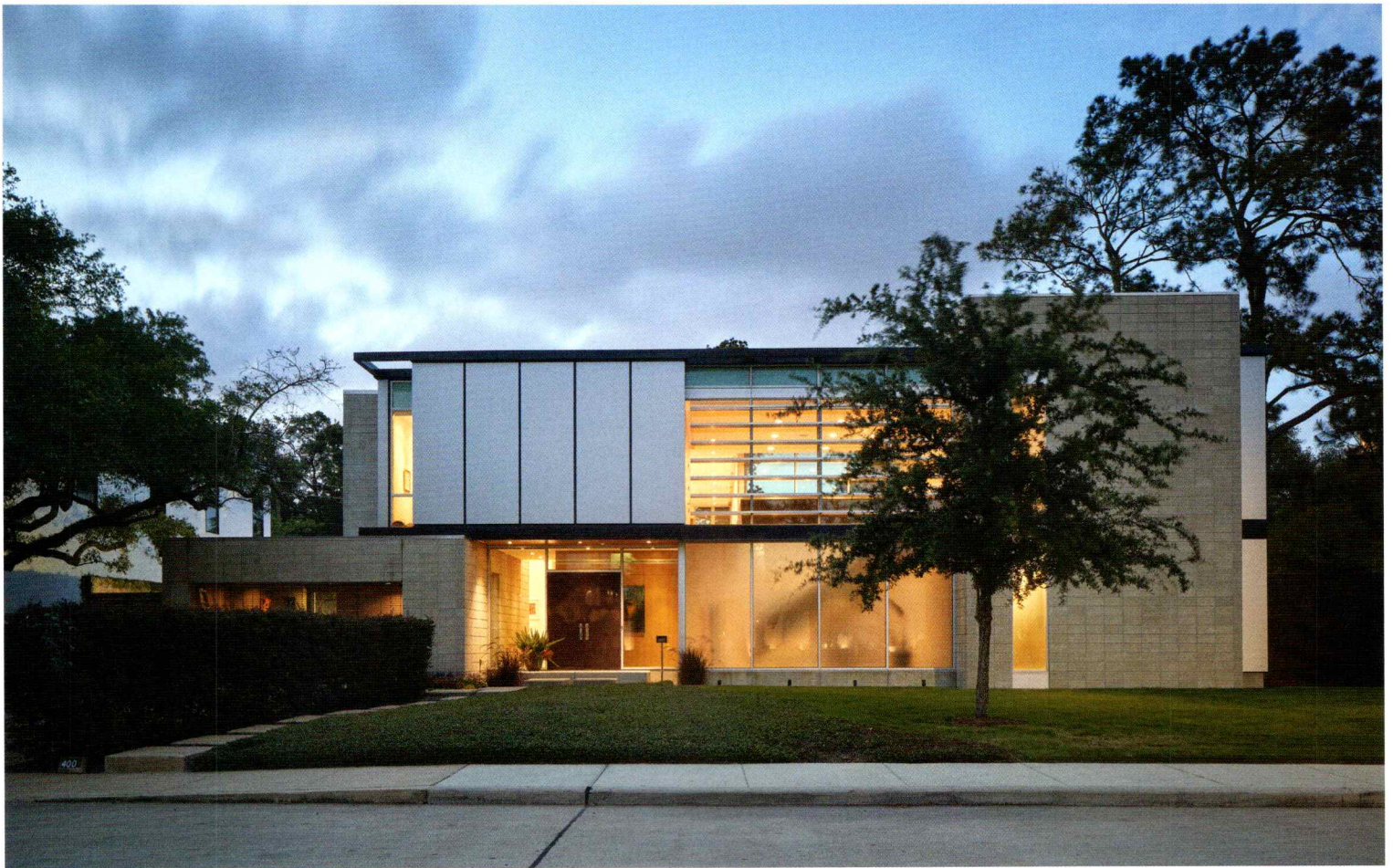
The reality is that most residential buildings are constructed using the "humble" method of stick framing, so it becomes extremely important to

ensure their longevity by correctly implementing all waterproofing and flashing, and ensuring necessary maintenance over the building's lifespan. This building type is the most prone to deterioration or destruction, and therefore requires the most effort, time, and money to make it last. For families and neighborhoods where resources are scarce, this is extremely difficult. Therefore, over the lifetime of these buildings, this construction type disadvantages individuals and neighborhoods with limited financial means. As architects, we should be aware of this as we design for the future, especially if we are providing design services to nonprofits, community development corporations, and the like. Think about resilience and future longevity. Think about the state of the neighborhood in 50 or 100 years.

After researching and writing this article, I am convinced that "they don't make 'em like they used to" is in fact true, but also quite nuanced. Yes, certain aspects of historical construction were more robust (2x4s were actually 2x4s at one point, and load-bearing masonry was more common), but modern construction can have every chance of being as long-lived. We have more tools at our disposal today to ensure our buildings' longevity; we simply must make sure they are employed correctly. However, often they are not, and we do need to consider the reality of the built structure, not simply how viable the construction method is theoretically. Getting inventive with materials and asking questions regarding priorities at a project's onset are ways to begin moving the needle. If we can create places that are able to withstand extreme natural events, the passage of time, and extended use by people, then perhaps we can redeem the saying, and "they don't make 'em like they used to" can instead become a compliment to new construction.

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





Meadowlake Is on Fire

When a museum-quality residence catches fire, the architect finds that best-laid plans don't always turn out as expected.

by Mark Schatz, FAIA

This awakens me: my partner and wife, Anne, nudging, and repeating. It's been a long day in an already long week, and I've fallen asleep sitting on the couch, still wearing construction work clothes, down to the boots. Our kids have just gone to bed, and the quiet of our typical nights is just starting. But this will not be a quiet night for me.

"Surreal" is not the right word for that moment. The correct term would reflect more of an immediate sense of falling through space, like awakening back to the conscious world and finding the ground is missing beneath your feet. That sense you get leaning back just a little too far in a chair, right before it starts to tip over. And there is that fraction of a moment of disbelief, but as I straighten up, I see she is holding her phone, and the look on her face is also one of emergency, shock, and disbelief. She's just heard from a colleague who has a house right down the street. Their client has called them to call us. Then quickly on the road; speeding badly; turning over in my mind my own disbelief; wondering if — hoping that — the owners are not home; desperately going through all the "what-ifs" I can think of... "How is it even possible it could be on fire?" — which I still don't really believe at that point, thinking it must be an exaggeration. Driving, thinking all that, and then, if it actually was on fire, how it might possibly be coming apart.

This I can't think of clearly, really, but it looms in my mind in parallel to hoping everyone is safe. We had designed three museum-quality homes in that neighborhood, two of which got built. Meadowlake was the first, and it was a real jewel and a hat trick of design realization. The other built one is, I think, a great house, but I thought there might be a mistake as to which house was actually on

Facing Meadowlake in the summer of 2017.
*Meadowlake on the night a two-alarm fire started
in the mechanical room.*



fire. However, Life is cruel that way: I can see from a distance, getting to the neighborhood by all the light, it is indeed Meadowlake that is on fire.

It would turn out to be an electrical fire, and, ultimately, the building would end up destroyed, but in a very different way than this initial moment portended. More on that later.

The night sky is illuminated. Awash in bold broad strokes of grey, it seems like a fog, but it's a massive local dispersion of smoke making its own diffuse cloud that hovers over the block. Reds and yellows are filling against and amongst it with intensity, striking and fading on the grey, and I can tell from several blocks away that it is bad, very bad, as the number of emergency lights mushroom the closer you get, blushing with intense spectacle.

I am running down the sidewalk, and it is crowded with neighbors, the street in front full of water and fire hoses. The first people I encounter don't know the owners, don't know if they were home. Rapidly, after that, small group after small group that know the owners, but no, they haven't seen them. More. Same. The first firefighter I reach waves me back from the invisible line I just crossed. He doesn't know anything about the owners, but points me to the local commander. The field commander also doesn't know anything about the owners, which shocks me, and a glint of anger flares in my mind, as I want information, and no one seems to have any. It is a chaotic scene, and feels even more so. I tell him I'm the architect, I tell him how the building is built and what the layout is. It doesn't matter at that point.

The front lawn is full of firefighters and equipment, and there is a ladder truck towering over the center of the building, dousing parts of the metal

roof. I will later learn that the fire had escalated into a two-alarm event, bringing in extra trucks and manpower. The main two-story glass wall facing the street is grey, the building still supercharged with smoke. I will also learn later the problems the fire department had trying to ventilate the building, and why it was seemingly still chokingly full of smoke when I arrived. And I will also learn that there had already been a mayday call for a firefighter who ran out of oxygen and was overcome by smoke.

Back to person after person out front, and no one knows anything about the owners. And then I see her. In a small group I'm passing so fast that I have to turn heel. And there is a fraction of a moment where I see her before she sees me, and the look on her face is not just one of shock, it's also a stunned look of disbelief and loss at the same time. And this is the first real moment of tangible pain I start to feel, standing there, losing the little bit of remaining abstraction away from the gravity of loss underway right in front of us all, as the building is still very much on fire.

We stand together, and I don't remember what I said in the first flush of recognition, just a moment of eye contact. I then somehow ask what happened, which I immediately realize is the stupidest thing to say. I tell her the field commander doesn't know they are here, and we move over to where the commander is and make introductions. And then I see him, too. Coming up the sidewalk from down the street, arms out and a slight tilt of head, which I read as almost a... "Life" comment, as he has that kind of personality, the other owner. We hug, and that is something of weight, as I'm the most socially awkward person I know, often making mental effort just to shake hands. But that is immediately what I feel, a need to connect

with these wonderful people that we had done this remarkably special home with and for. We stand together, and time evaporates. The fire diminishes, flares back up, gets tapped back down; neighbors step in and out of conversation with both condolences and generous offers of immediate help, as there are now the practical issues of where to stay, how to shelter the pets, and all those sorts of things. The fire department begins the long process of packing up gear, and then it's around 1:00 in the morning, just standing there, looking at it across the street. And, oddly, equipment leaving — to look at it you'd not guess the calamity that just occurred over the past three hours. The building is still completely standing, and, aside from soot on one of the upper burnished CMU block walls, you'd have to really look at it to see that it had been on fire for hours. This would be true the next day as well, in daylight, where, with a casual glance, it was hard to tell from the outside that the building had been badly damaged.

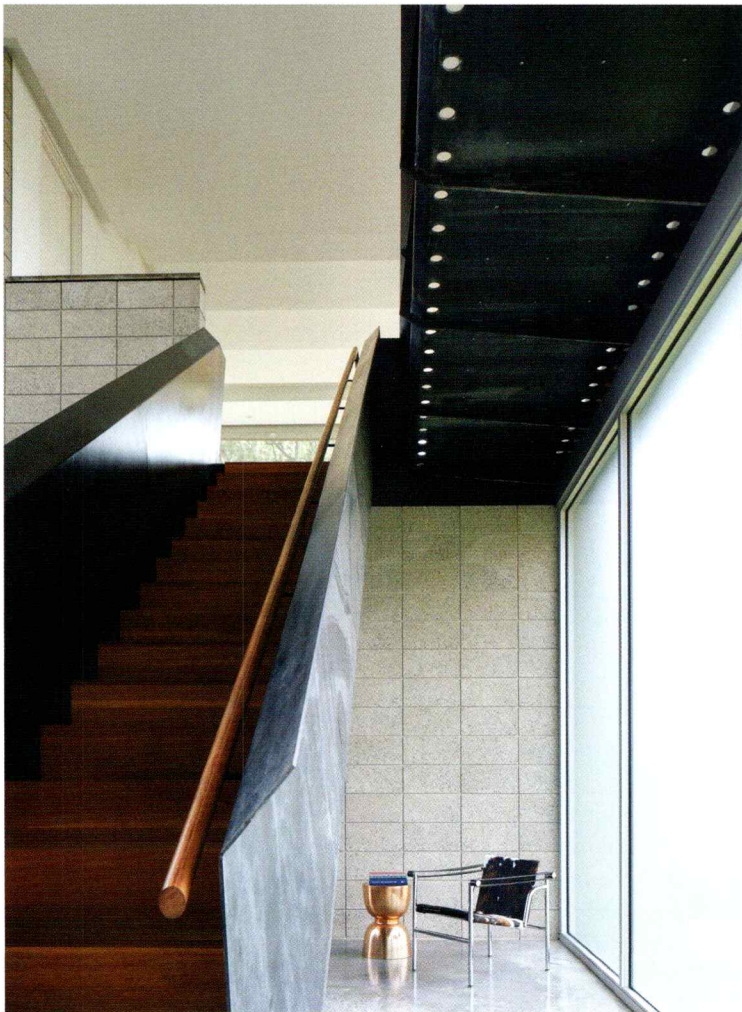
Meadowlake was designed in 2009–2010, and built in 2010–2011. We were both the architect and the builder. The clients were every architect's dream client: adventurous yet pragmatic; decisive; intelligent; with a refined taste that was of an epicurean type. Meadowlake was a very unique, bold, and dramatic house, and yet had no pretensions about it. It had real presence without any egoism. I like to think it reflected the owners well: open, ordered, disciplined, refined, clear, yet with bold iterative and gestural flair. It was a building filled with light, varied scale, dynamic and flowing space, worked out to the last detail, and all about Life and just

living well without either pretense or apology. For me, as the architect, the house represented a seamless blend of art and intellect, speaking to both our own sensibilities and those of the owners.

It was one of my favorite projects, for all those reasons. It occupied a prominent corner in Houston and was a well-known house. Even during construction, people noticed. When I described it to our drywall contractor, he told me I didn't need to tell him about it, as most of the people he dealt with were already talking about it: "...Have you seen what is being built on Meadowlake?" It was that kind of house.

The day after was tough. I was there all day, photographing all the details and inventorying all the "as-built" conditions and materials, as we had bumped up the level of detail execution during construction: Many of the details existed only as field sketches for refinements that were worked out in place, a byproduct of the way our take on architect design/build actually works. But there were also positive moments during that tough first day: the owners finding that their wedding photos had survived, as had a few other irreplaceable personal family things. That was the first moment that offered any relief to me since the night before. A bit of Good shines through.

That day also saw a series of Houston firefighter groups going through the building. I ended up speaking to several of them as they were bringing teams in to review and discuss in pedagogical fashion: They also couldn't believe the building was still standing, badly damaged but intact after being on fire for hours. I can say it is a bizarre thing to be complimented by





Facing left *The central gallery contained a folded steel plate stair and catwalk system.*

Facing right *The design of the catwalk hindered firefighters during zero-visibility smoke conditions.*

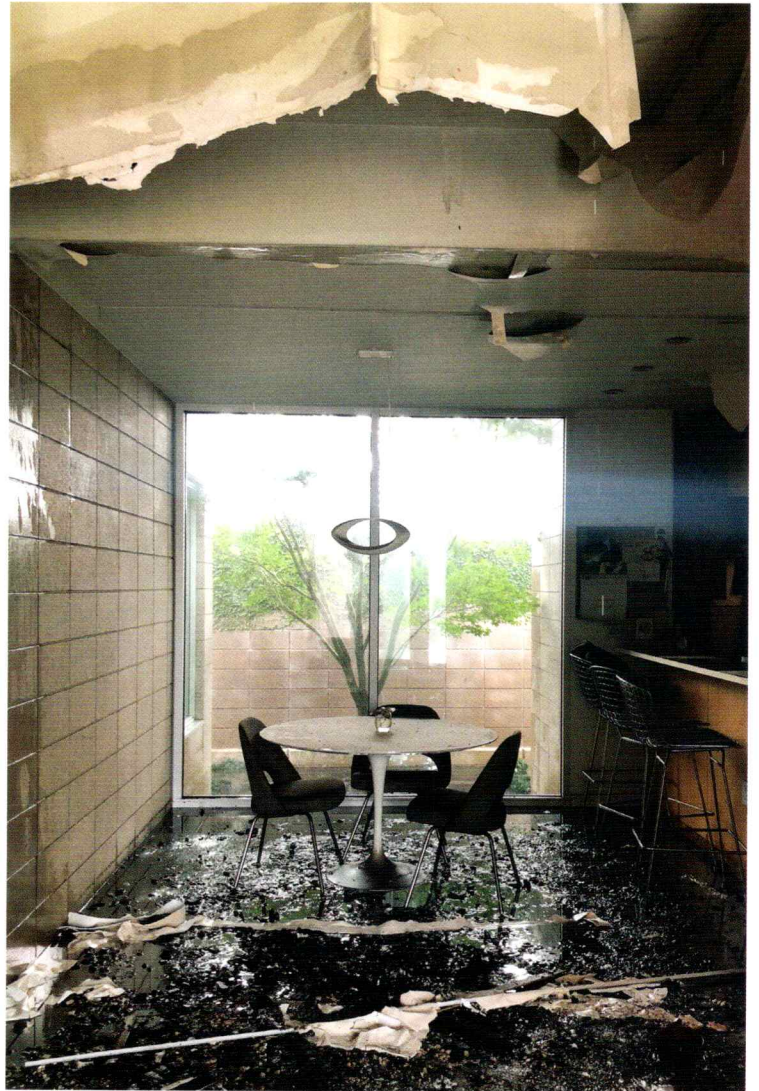
Left *The demolition team left steel frame of the house intact, in hopes of a rebuild.*

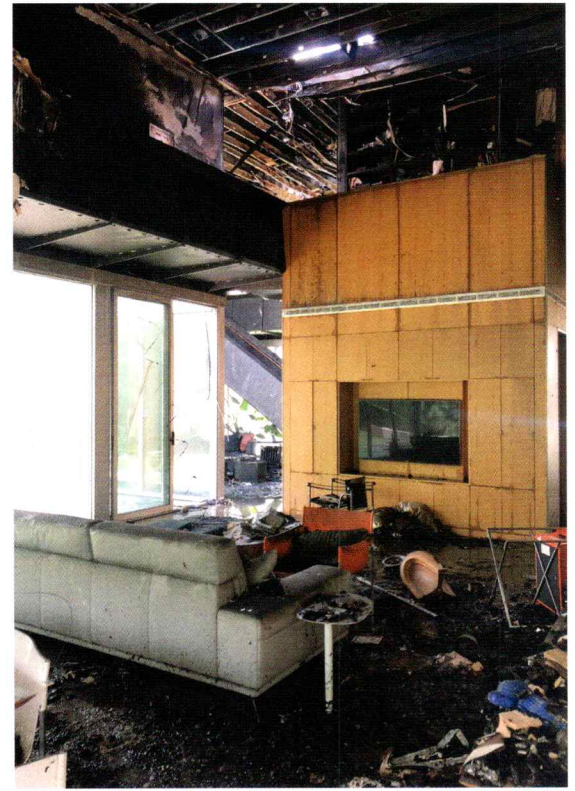
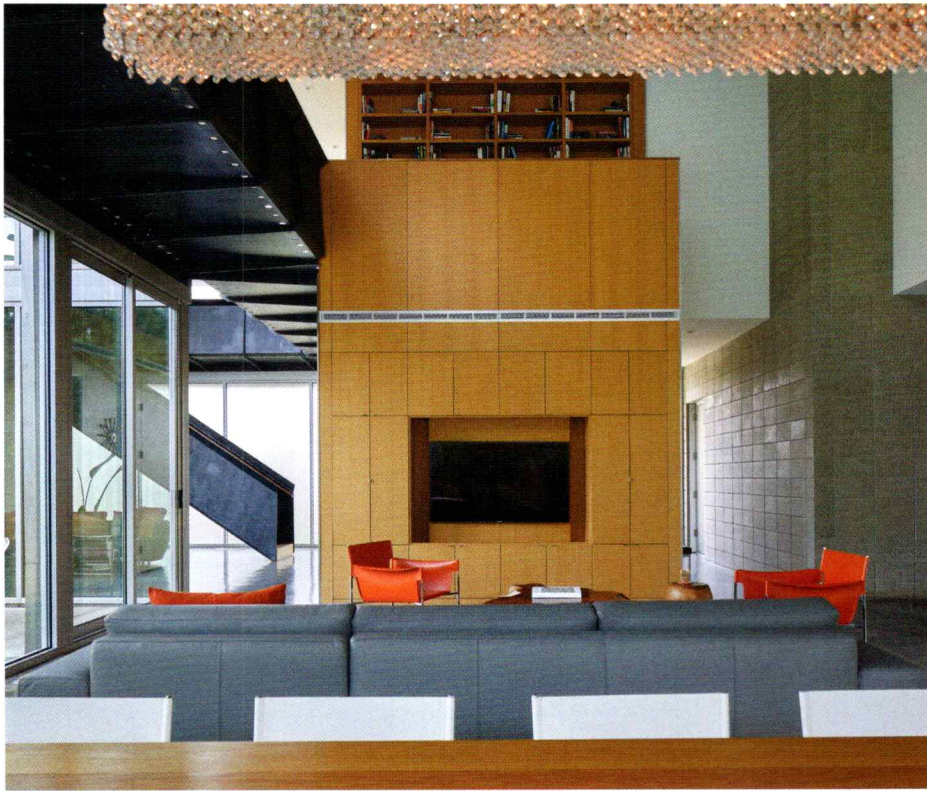
Below *The breakfast and garden court off of the kitchen, directly below the mechanical room, where the fire began.*

firefighters on how well your building was built as you stand in the middle of a burned-out interior. But what I learned from those conversations truly shocked me: So many things about the building that made it superior construction in the event of things like hurricanes made it inversely problematic for fire, at least from a firefighter's perspective.

Meadowlake was a steel frame hybrid with cee purlin roof framing tied back into both red iron and conventional wood framing, depending on where you were in the building. The fire started out as an electrical fire in the mechanical room. One of the air handlers caught fire, which eventually caught the spray foam insulation on fire, even though it was covered with an intumescent ignition barrier, and then, slowly but surely, the fire migrated horizontally through the roof structure. The cee purlin framing was pushed beyond its elastic limit, but it stayed together, and the metal roof stayed intact and together, even as the fire burned up all of the foam insulation and plywood subdeck materials. It was an eerie thing to be in the next day and look up and see the underside of the standing seam metal roof and metal framing, charred and twisted, but still in place. It was also odd to think that, if the roof had collapsed, which it didn't, they might have been able to get to the fire faster than they eventually did: This was something I heard from several firefighters — that the structure was so robust it made it extra difficult and unique to attack.

These, and other things, turned out to be real problems the night of the fire. I also learned that when a building is on fire, they cut holes in the roof and then force air into the building with high-powered fans to evacuate the smoke and create a small positive pressure window where the air is





clearer, where people can get in to see and fight the fire before the added oxygen from this initial ventilation fuels additional spread. That window is small, and very time-critical. Meadowlake had a metal roof: They couldn't cut a large enough hole fast enough through the standing seam. The metal framing below also didn't help: Meadowlake was designed around several site sound attenuation issues, as it fronted two very high-traffic streets. Some of the glass was laminated, and what wasn't laminated was extra-strength, two things that proved problematic, as the fire department had difficulty breaking windows to aid in the ventilation effort. Several of the rooms also had sound-deadening gypsum, the kind with the laminated interlayer. This also proved problematic, as that type of gypsum product, while superb for sound control, is also exceedingly impact-resistant. The firefighters had trouble in some areas, not being able to get their hooks to penetrate the gypsum, and when they did get the hooks through, the lamination layer still held the sheets together, so they couldn't easily pull down the ceilings to get to the fire in the attic space. And so the building burned.

For me, the worst of that first day after was two-part: Meadowlake had a folded steel plate catwalk system and was a spatially unique building. The firefighters, in zero visibility, had no real understanding of the catwalk or floor plan, and this created delays in access. And, beyond that, the worst of the worst: They didn't realize there was an exterior door to the mechanical room from the lower roof, where they could have just opened the door, ventilated the house, and been at the exact source of the fire. I have a lot of respect for those guys, and no decision in a crisis is ever perfectly right, but I did challenge them that first day as to why they didn't just open the door, and it sadly just seems they didn't realize there was a door there with a straight path to exactly where they needed to go, with about 10 feet they would have had to travel.

I still think about that a lot.

While that first day was tough, the days after that were much, much worse. Initially, there was the sense of, just get in, get everything documented, focus on the rebuilding. Days later, however, a heavy depression came down, and walking through became a living sadness. I went nights with hardly any sleep, week after week. It was like a close friend had died.

The saving grace was the owners' desire to build it back as it had been. That was the initial plan. We took it as maybe the highest compliment we've ever gotten. The owner told me she had a colleague trying to cheer her up with the notion of thinking positive, that now she had the opportunity to get what she really wanted — but she said she already had what she wanted — and that is what was lost.

The true sad turn in the story was the protracted process of dealing with an insured loss like this, where many parties and many issues, such as subrogation, demolition, cost analysis, and so forth, all ended up working away at the initial glimmer of rebuilding as days turned to weeks, weeks to months, and complications began to overrun energies.

In the end, almost eight months after the fire, with endless fatigue at the protracted process to just start rebuilding, the owners ultimately decided to close the chapter and move on.

I know I will think about that a lot, for a long time to come. But I understand. At some point, you have to move forward with your lives, and the process of trying to reclaim what is lost to the past can become too much for the necessary demands of the now.

So, Meadowlake is gone, and I am still depressed. But I am reminded always of the possible, of perhaps new futures for our lovely clients, as I know my own sadness is but a raindrop to theirs. But I still remain optimistic for some possible future that may yet be found down the road. To quote Edmund Spenser: "For there is nothing lost, that may be found, if sought."

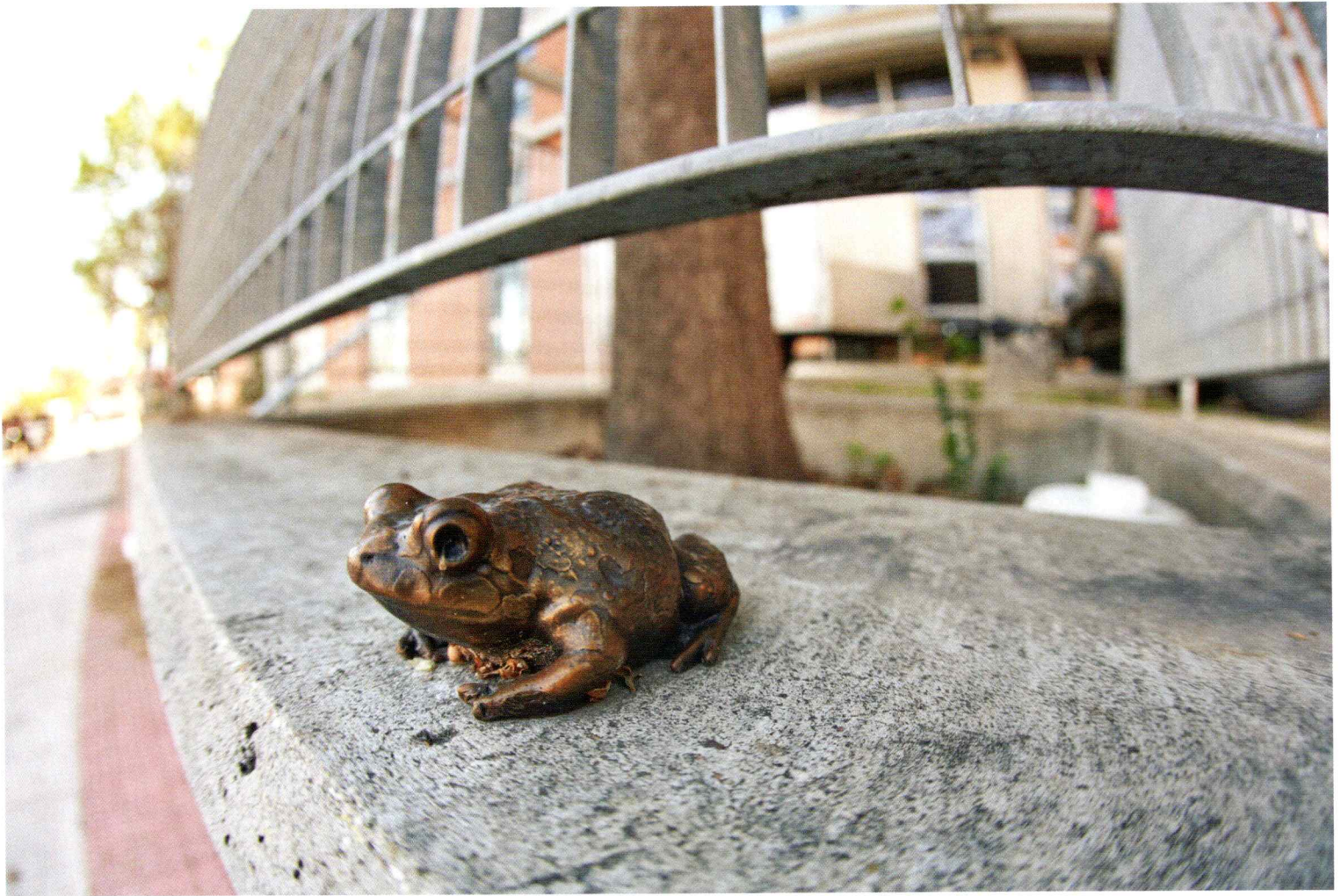
Mark Schatz, FAIA, is co-founder of m + a architecture studio in Houston.



Facing left *The steel catwalk overlooks the double-height living and dining area.*

Facing right *The fire moved horizontally through the ceiling assembly. It burned up the foam insulation and wood decking but left the steel framing intact and standing, though badly damaged.*

Left *The gallery after the demolition team removed all major glass elements.*



Discreet Monument

Legge Lewis Legge's "Amphibious" is a new kind of monument for the city of Austin. Composed of 35 life-sized bronze castings of various frogs and toads placed inconspicuously along Sabine Street, it memorializes vulnerable species whose survival is very much in question.

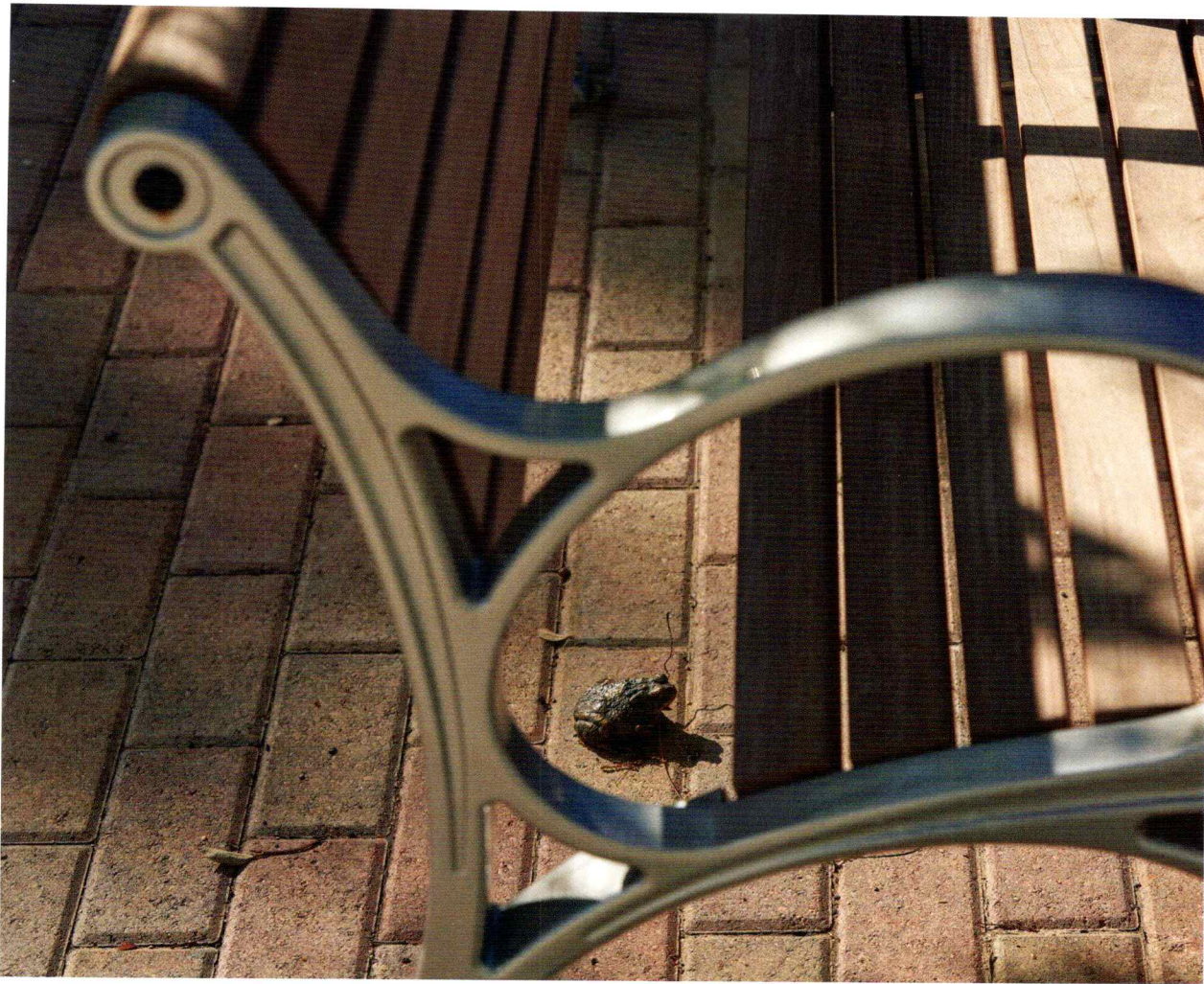
by Murray Legge, FAIA

Late at night, in the spring, when the humidity is high and the air is warm, one can hear a bright chirping in the trees and bushes.

A person hearing this might mistake it for a bird singing in the night air, as the sound merges with the distant sound of live music and the mellow hoot of an owl on a power line. It's a sound so common in parts of Austin that it has become the city's background noise, weaving itself permanently into the earth. It's transient, but enduring. Through its persistence, it shapes our experience of the city.

This night chirping is made by the Rio Grande Chirping Frog, which is common in Central Texas. It is just one of many vulnerable species of frogs and toads that sing and croak in the night. These small amphibians are found in the dense, brushy areas along the edges of the city's creeks and streams. Most of the year, they're teasingly elusive. If you begin to walk toward their sound, they go quiet. But at the peak of spring, if the weather is just right, they become so voluble that they can no longer hear your footsteps approach. If you stroll down the street on those special nights, you may have a small, slick, hopping visitor — or two, or three.

A sonic map of the chirping frogs and the city would reveal their proximity to the wilder riparian zones, like Shoal Creek and Waller Creek — waterways that wind north to south through the middle of Austin. The sounds radiating out from these zones just north of downtown form a fuzzy outline of the watersheds that cut through the grid of the city. They mark a sonic boundary of Austin's wild spaces.



Facing *Couch's Spade
Foot Toad.*
Left *Texas Toad.*

The original urban plan of Austin, from 1839, reveals a rigid grid laid out just north of the Colorado River. Waller Creek flows south from Austin's northeastern edge, cutting through the urban framework as it makes its way down to the Colorado. This century-plus-old plan inaugurated a legacy of naming Austin's north-south streets after creeks and rivers in Texas, such as Rio Grande, San Jacinto, Red River, Colorado, and Sabine. As a counterpoint, Austin's east-west streets were named after native trees. Over the years, the tree streets were reassigned numeric titles, while the river streets have endured.

Looking at our sonic map would also reveal the range of the night singers trailing off toward the center of the city. As the creeks arrive downtown at denser, more restricted quarters, they've been channelized and stripped of their verdant, living edges — which serve as habitat for the frogs, toads, and many other aquatic species.

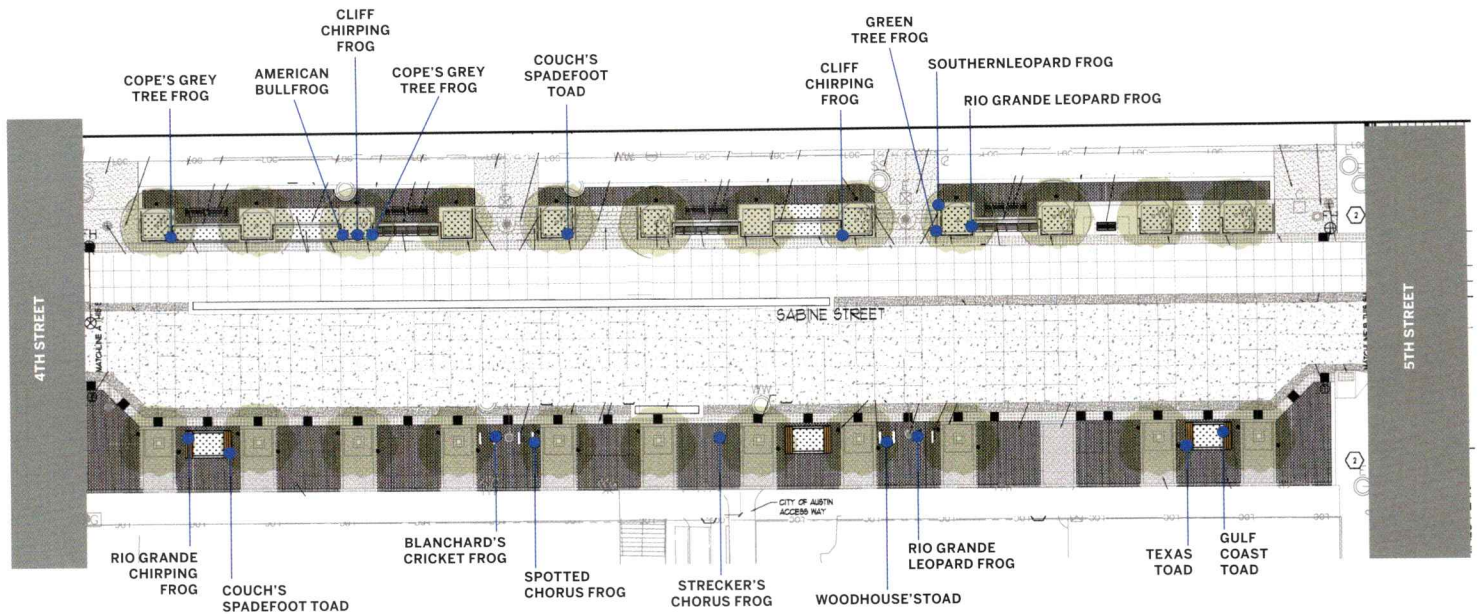
For years, portions of Waller Creek and Shoal Creek have been preserved as (relatively) wild and undeveloped landscapes, but they are far from pristine. These creeks are a contrasting mix of the natural and unnatural. Storks and turtles can be seen wading through pools of water mixed with the detritus of the city as it washes its way into the creeks. Mix in some oil and plastic, and you have a mash-up of wilderness space and urban drainage ditch. These wild spaces in the heart of the city have always felt unpredictable and out of control, and, at times, they are even dangerous. They are a kind of terrain vague — a mutant space that is part

city infrastructure and part untamed realm, whose flooding has taken cars, buildings, and lives.

The City of Austin has been built up — and, in the process, often built over — these fragile riparian edges from its first urban plan. Waller Creek itself, whose water is supplied by its watershed, is but a small part of the larger ecological system. The lifeblood of the creek comes from the surfaces and structures that have been built over the watershed; thus, the watershed is fed with a toxic brew of oil, windshield-washer fluid, coolant, plastic, and garbage that collects on the city surface. The creek has historically been subject to a flood-and-drought cycle, but certainly not at the scale we see today, when much of the watershed has been paved and built over, increasing the volume of water that moves through the creek on a rainy day.

Due to this pileup of pollution, the loss of ecology in Austin's watersheds has been enormous. Only winged and the hardiest of water-dwelling creatures have survived in the downtown areas. The frogs and toads — some of nature's most vulnerable species — are long gone from the creek's edge in downtown Austin.

Civic monuments in the city, such as figurative bronze statues, serve as a bulwark against loss. Traditionally, they attempt to carry collective values and meaning forward in time. These statues rise in the wake of a loss — the loss of something of value that a culture wants to retain. They attempt to fix ideas and memories in time and space. Commonly, they take the form of a cherished artist, or a war hero (often on a horse), and they honor the figure's



contribution by freezing them in time. However, any culture's attempt to distill collective values is naïve. Ideas and values change.

There is a clear language to the traditional civic monument. Bronze is typically used for its permanence and durability as a material. The subjects are often scaled larger than they actually were in real life. They are often placed on a base or pedestal, and they are set in a prominent location, such as a city square.

"Amphibious" is Austin's first civic monument crafted to honor a vulnerable species. It is located along two blocks of Sabine Street in central Austin, just a block from Waller Creek. The new monument is composed of 35 life-sized bronze castings of the various frogs and toads that inhabited the creek and its lost riparian edges in the past. It is meant to act as a field guide to lost frogs and toads of the area. Sabine Street, one of Austin's north-south streets, was named after the Sabine River in East Texas. This street is only three blocks long and runs parallel to Waller Creek from Sixth Street to Fourth Street.

A traditional goal of civic monumentality is to be conspicuous, to be seen, and to honor the most visible members of civic life. "Amphibious" is inconspicuous and hidden. The tiny monuments are located under benches, on curbs, and in other unexpected places. A toad on a downtown street is not expected, just as one does not expect to see a civic bronze work of art under a bench. This monument is meant to be hidden in plain sight — to be discovered. It is permanent and built for the ages, but unassuming.

"Amphibious" was commissioned by the City of Austin's Art in Public Places as part of a street improvement project. The portion of Waller Creek next to Sabine is the most urbanized portion of the creek. It has been reduced to something like a drainage channel. However, cities are fluid and ever-changing things. Waller Creek is slowly undergoing a major transformation, not back to what it was, but into something new.

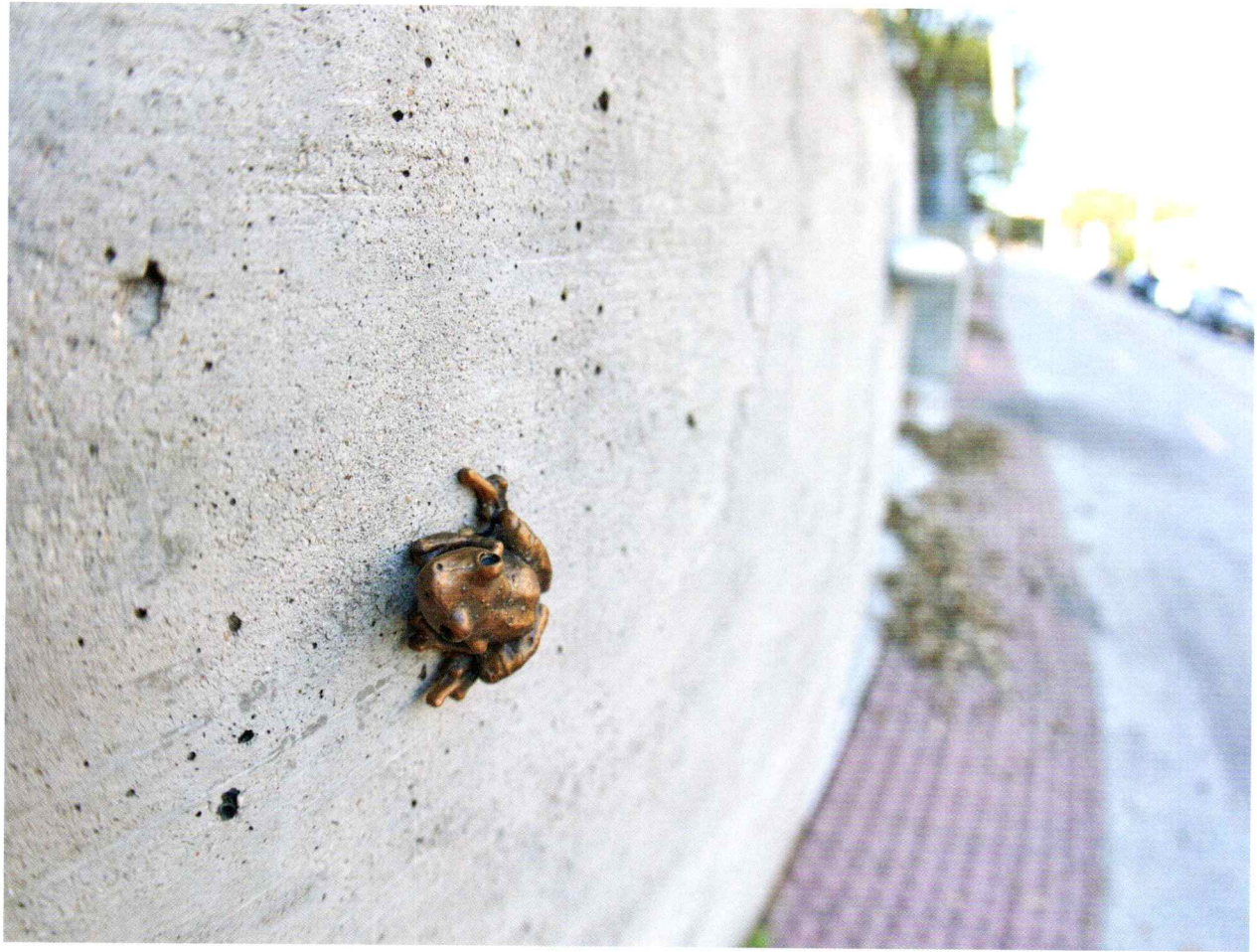
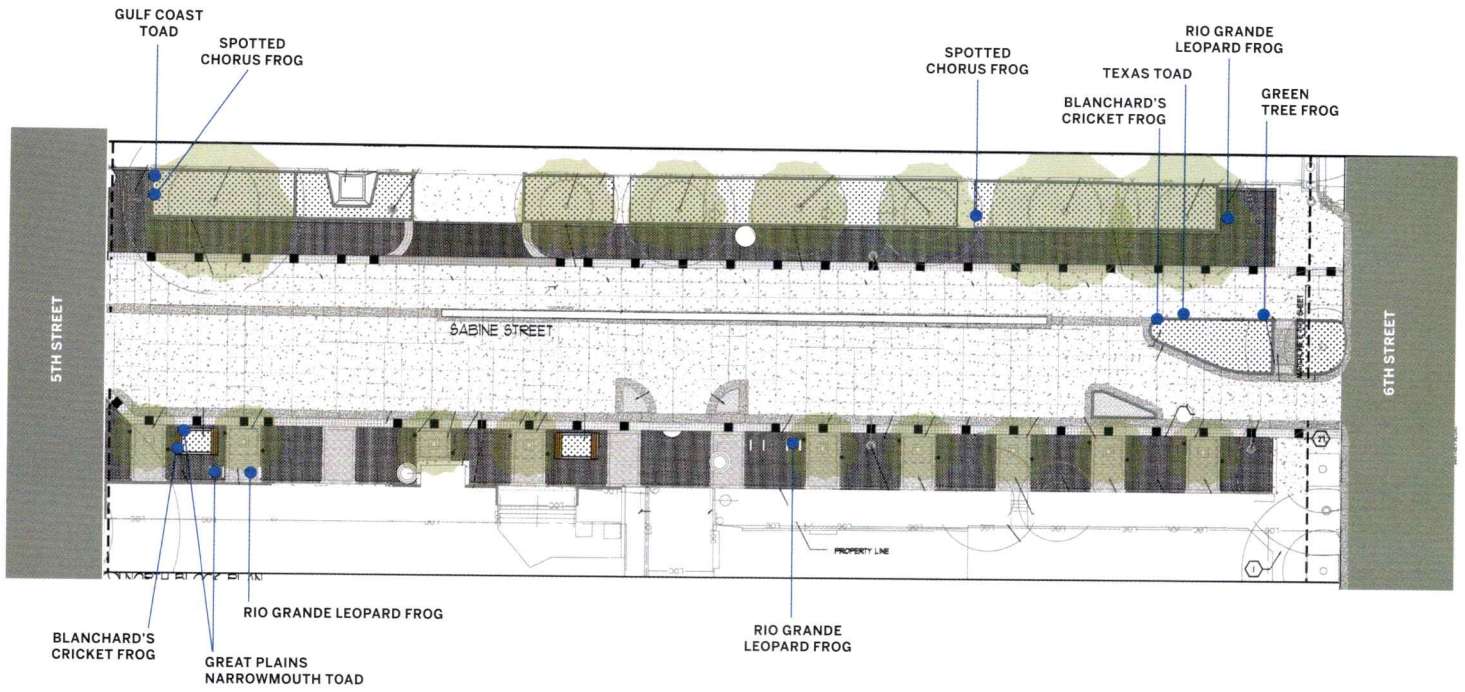
The strange reality is that to bring a more balanced natural condition back to the creek requires an enormous amount of built infrastructure. The Waterloo Greenway, a massive new linear park and green space project for Austin, is set to create a kind of new hybrid zone, a greenway that is highly controlled yet more habitable to a wider range of the biological life — both flora and fauna — that lived in the creek before it was urbanized. The first step in this transformation was to install a 20-ft-diameter drainage pipe under the creek, from the north of the city through downtown, to the Colorado River. This will allow the drainage of waters upstream to be routed underground, leaving the downstream portions safe from intense flooding.

The result will be something that appears natural but is actually a controlled environment. This new stabilized natural system will also allow the creek to connect a chain of parks along it with the idea of creating a new active useful park system for city-dwellers, along with restored riparian zones for wildlife. This will be an important new civic space in the city.

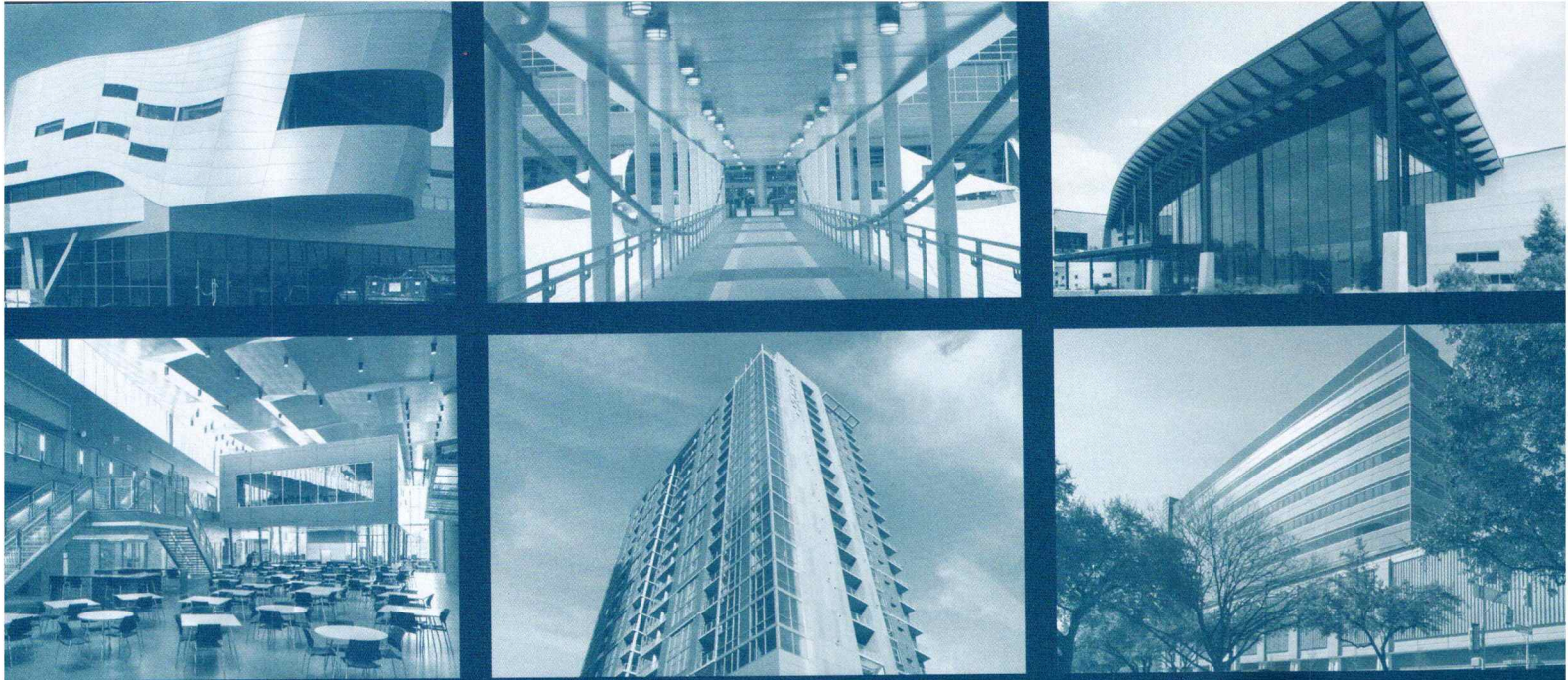
As the creek undergoes its transformation to the urban greenway and linear park, there is the possibility the creatures will return. In this sense, the monument "Amphibious," along Sabine Street, anticipates a possible future outcome while also commemorating a loss. It is a monument stuck between the past and the future.

Cast in bronze, the tiny memorialized creatures of "Amphibious" will last more than 1,000 years — a blink of the eye in the history of the earth, but enough time to make it hard to imagine how the city of that future will look. Over that time period, "Amphibious" will witness unimaginable changes. It will either become a monument to something lost or a tribute to something living that continues to shape the experience and sonic memory of the city. Let's hope it's the latter.

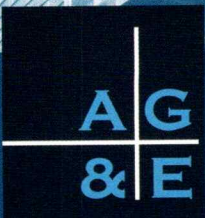
Murray Legge, FAIA, is principal of Murray Legge Architecture in Austin and co-founder of Legge Lewis Legge.



Left *Cliff Chirping Frog.*



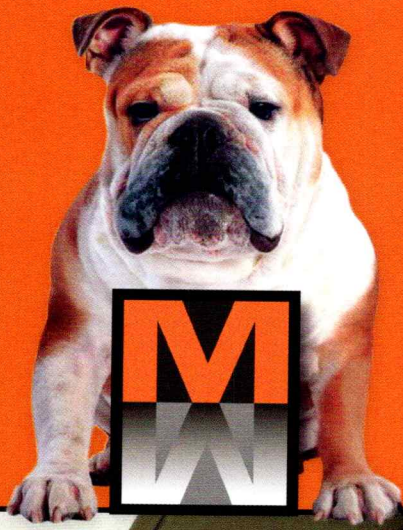
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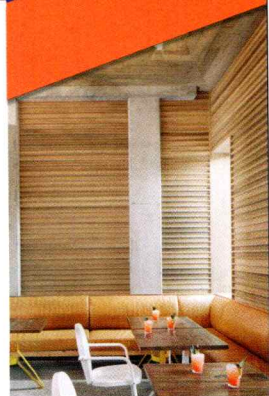
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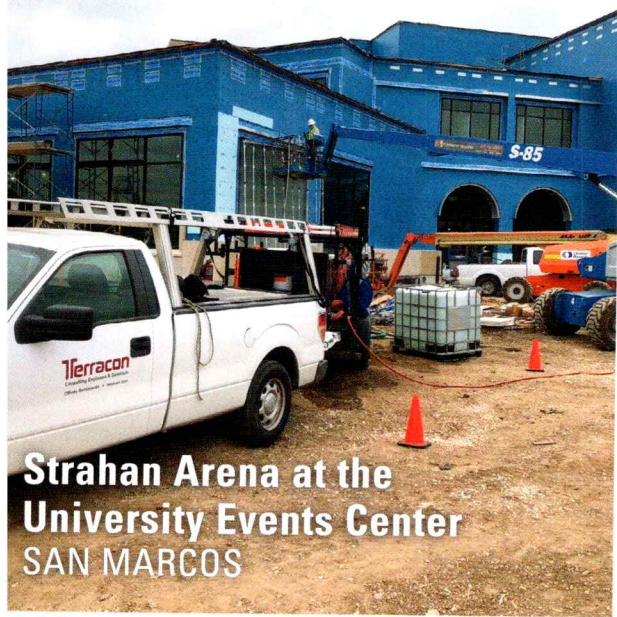
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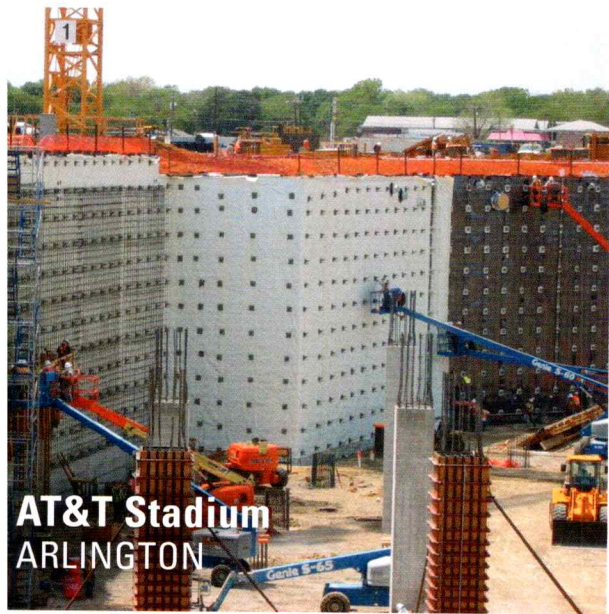
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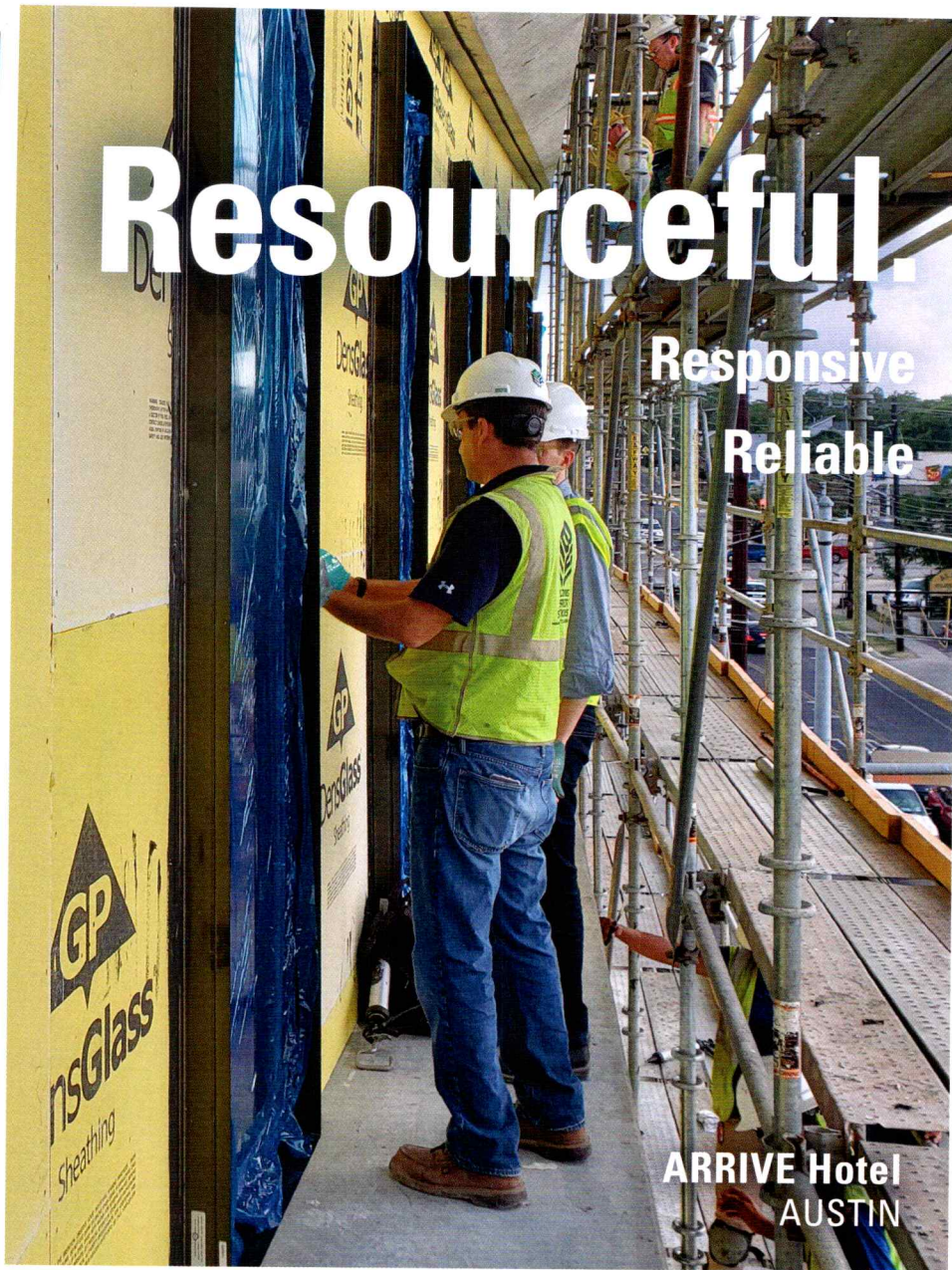




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At one o'clock in the morning, Carl, the night porter, turned down the last of three table lamps in the main lobby of the Windermere Hotel. The blue carpet darkened a shade or two and the walls drew back into remoteness. The chairs filled with shadowy loungers. In the corners were memories like cobwebs.

— Raymond Chandler, "I'll Be Waiting"

Hotels concentrate human intersection. In these buildings, people from far-flung places come into contact with each other and with locals. While the gilded era of the grand hotel is well behind us — when the lobby served as a bedecked stage upon which the drama of life played out, where people circulated among potted palms and cigar smoke to the sound of the orchestra, looking for someone in particular, or just looking to be seen — hotels still deliver a heightened version of normal life. The lobbies may be stingier and the surfaces slipperier, but the concentration still occurs: Stories still accumulate within them, like dust.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we check into two hotels that recently opened in the state. The first is a new monument on Austin's East Side that signals the neighborhood's evolution into a nightlife district and tech hub. The second is a desert retreat in Terlingua, whose elemental charm is as seductive as the Trans-Pecos landscape.

Hotels

82

No-tel

The Arrive Hotel in Austin,
by Baldrige Architects
*Jessie Temple and
Greg Esparza*

88

Together Individual

Willow House in Terlingua,
by Lauren Werner
Sophie Aliëce Hollis



No-tel

The Arrive Hotel disguises its identity behind an aggressive architectural screen and a wrapper of wining and dining, fitting perfectly within the burgeoning tech district and nightlife destination that is East Austin.

Architect Baldrige Architects

General Contractor Austin Commercial

MEP Engineer EEA Consulting Engineers

Structural Engineer Leap!

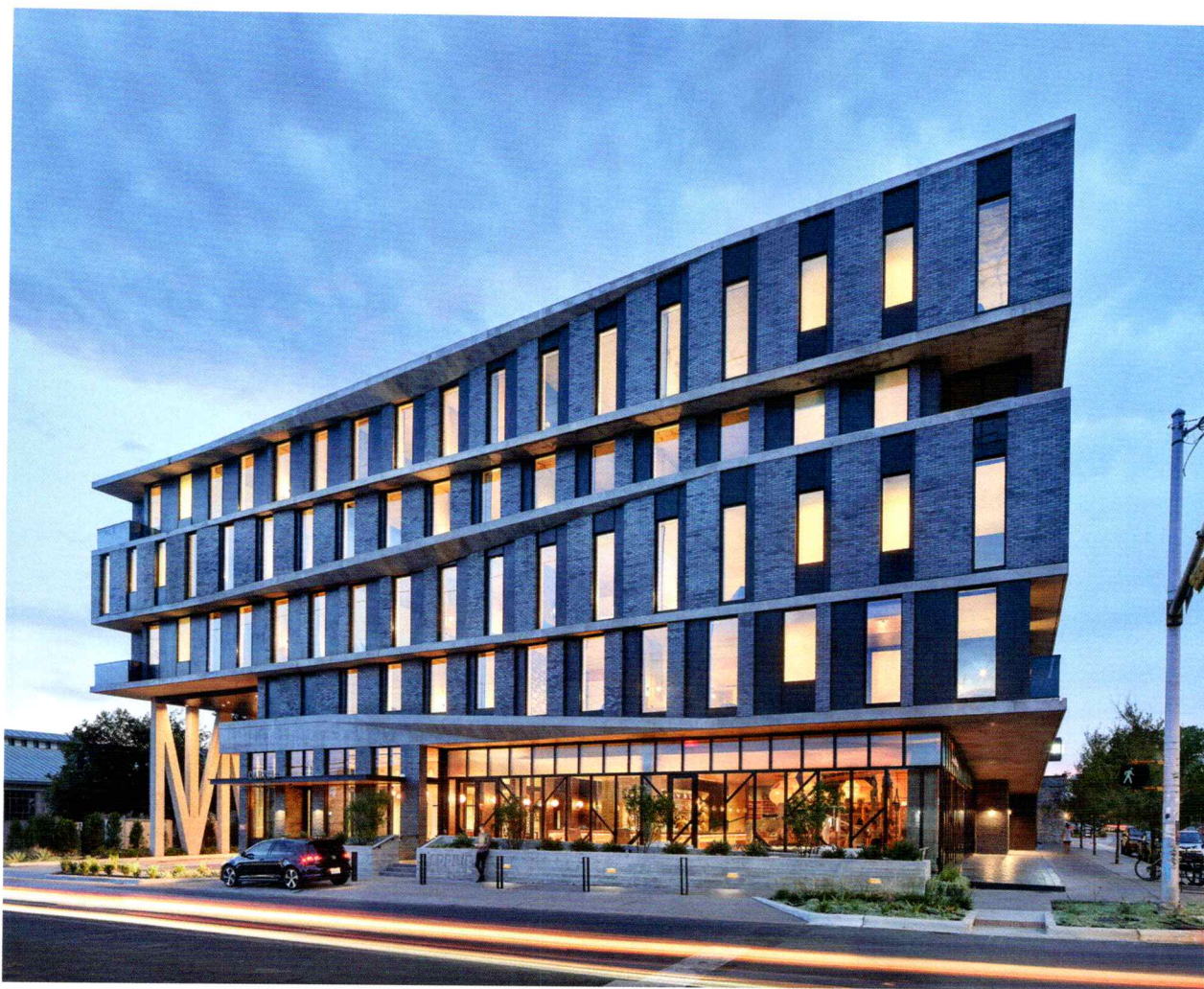
Landscape Architect dwg.

Waterproofing Consultant Building Exterior Solutions

by Jessie Temple and Greg Esparza

At the Arrive Hotel on 6th Street in East Austin, you might find yourself wondering where you are. There are no music posters, no mention of Willie Nelson, not a single cowhide to signify Texas. There are no signifiers of it being a hotel either: no signage, no lobby. Yet, the push and pull between the fade-to-black approach of the hotel's identity and the sculptural flexing of the building itself makes a strong statement. For Burton Baldrige, AIA, founding principal of Baldrige Architects, the building is responding less to Austin's past than to its current moment. It's built for, and around, the Austin that is right outside its windows or — until the recent outbreak of COVID-19 — sitting at the bar. "Ours," says Baldrige, "is more an ethos centered around understanding the 'why' of a project, given its physical (and in the current case, cultural and historical) surroundings."

Located in the rapidly developing Plaza Saltillo neighborhood just east of downtown Austin, the 83-room hotel was shaped by several



Facing From E. 6th Street, the facade reveals little about the building's function, while openings at the pedestrian level invite further investigation.

Left *The clients led with precedent images of sculptural brick buildings, but Baldrige Architects approached the building as more facade than object. "We didn't want you to read so much that this was a regular group of hotel rooms," says Burton Baldrige. "We were trying to give it a more dynamic read."*

"whys": a growing hospitality brand, Arrive, looking to differentiate itself in a competitive market; highly prescriptive architectural guidelines; and a remarkably dynamic neighborhood context characterized by bedraggled and beloved dive bars and new mixed-use and creative office developments.

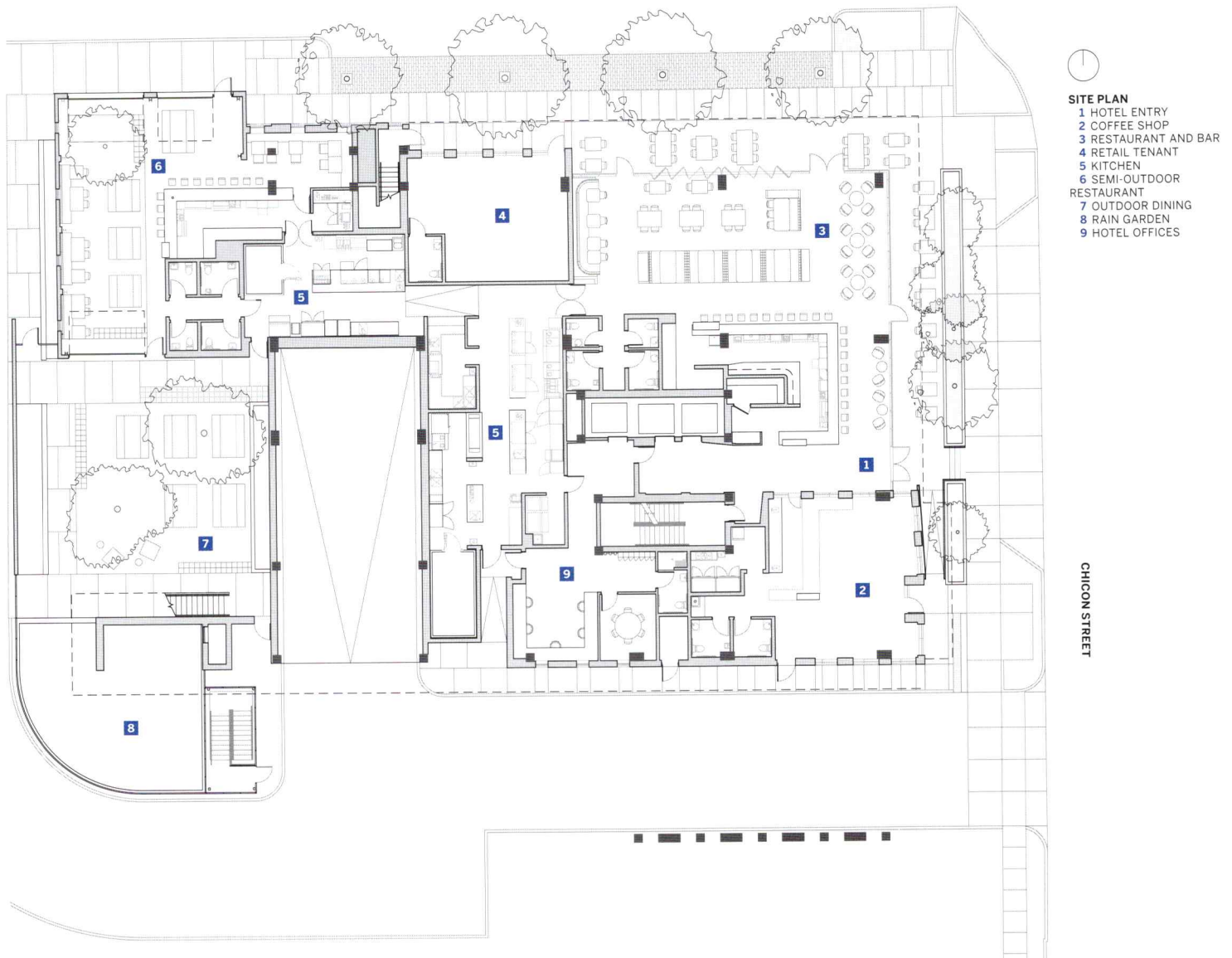
The Arrive partners, with one hotel in Palm Springs under their belt, were looking to expand into other markets. As a "brandless" brand, their preference is to repurpose existing buildings with some charm. In Austin, the best they could find was a corner lot, home to a former Goodwill training center and an old brick warehouse, on a street of what had been mostly one-story restaurants and businesses. The neighborhood had recently been designated a Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) zone and, overnight, Baldrige says, "the whole street went 60 feet tall." That height increase was useful for the program, but came with design stipulations, including a two-ft notch to articulate the street-facing facades.

When asked about the evolution of the building's form, Baldrige describes the dramatic gesture and basic material palette of the architecture as a response to the paired (and arguably opposing) directives to blend in with the hotel's locale while also channeling Austin's mold-breaking spirit. The concrete frame and brick are a nod to 1920s-era warehouse typology, the longest-lasting buildings in the neighborhood. (The Texas Society of Architects is housed in one, next door to the hotel on Chicon). "We took three stabs at the exterior of this building. For the first one, we were definitely deferential to the budget." The clients were not impressed. "They said, 'We love the way this is programmed. We hate the way it looks. It looks like an '80s bank. Come on, this is supposed to be Austin. Really show us what you've got.'"

What the Baldrige team had, it turned out, was a design that pushes the formal and structural conventions of Austin's typical mid-rise commercial construction and raises the bar for the project size and scope that the firm had been

accustomed to. "Our ambitions were giant," Baldrige says. "This is what a small firm in Austin can do. This is what Austin at its best does. We were striving to create something that served its program and context but that was unassumingly world-class. It was an attempt to make good (on a small scale) on this city's outsized myth."

From a block away, it's not easy to decipher the building. There's no conspicuous hotel signage on the principal structure. The building's main entrance is indicated by a pink neon sign for Vixen's Wedding, a Goan-inspired restaurant from Austin-based restaurateurs Todd Duplechan and Jessica Maher, whose dining room looks out over 6th Street. Cartel Coffee Lab, in the same structure, is deliberately separate from the hotel, but the refurbished brick facade of the adjacent old warehouse (structurally stabilized at great expense during the construction and now housing a bar, Lefty's) provides another point of entry. Above street level, the concrete "ribbons" of the building's structure cant and slide to form deep overhangs



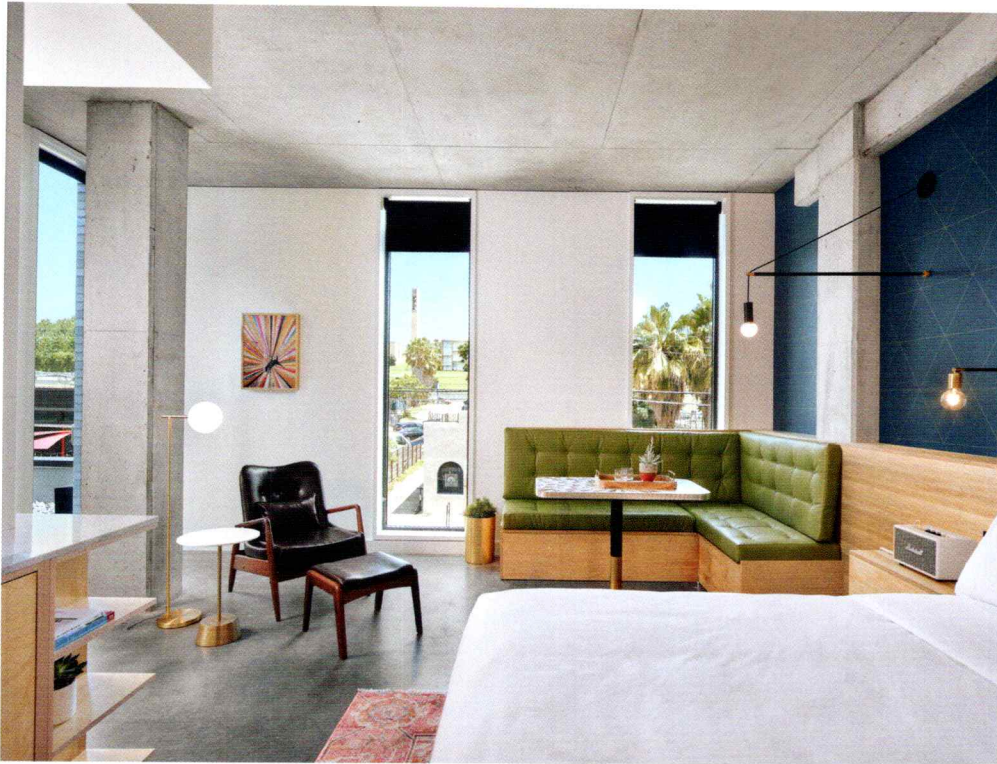
and corner balconies, while a sequence of materials in shades of black — a faintly iridescent brick, vertical windows, and smooth plaster — infill between the concrete horizontals. Baldrige described the staggered pattern of brick-window-plaster that wraps around the facade as a “weird kind of Fibonacci series” that disguises the programmatic monotony of a row of rooms. Many of the corners and edges of the building extend provocatively into space without the presence of corner columns. The dramatic projection of the upper three floors to the south is supported by a sculptural truss of concrete columns; the entry to the parking garage and valet pickup are neatly accommodated under this projection.

To a degree, the building’s striking form was code-driven: That southern projection, for example, accommodates a pad-mounted transformer.

The apparently canted floor plates, meanwhile, are in response to the TOD requirement to break up the facade. Baldrige acknowledges the pedestrian-friendly intent of the requirement, but is dismissive of the “notch” that usually results. “We broke out the plates like a scissor to the tune of about 30 inches, and that gave us all these weird room shapes,” he says. “If you go corner to corner, you can pull out the relief in the facade. We then connected all of those to form balconies.” At this point, Baldrige says, he and project architect Michael Hargens, AIA, started thinking, “This looks expensive. But what we figured was, this was the building they were asking for, and at that point, if we crapped out, we were going to get fired anyway, so at least we’d walk out with some nice renderings, right? And then we decided to lift the ribbons in the Z-axis, and

then facet them and tie them together. That was probably not the most cost-sensitive gesture we could have come up with. But it’s kind of what makes the building cool.” The Arrive partners were thrilled, Baldrige says, and they upped the budget. (The contractors, Austin Commercial, were equally excited by the technical challenge.)

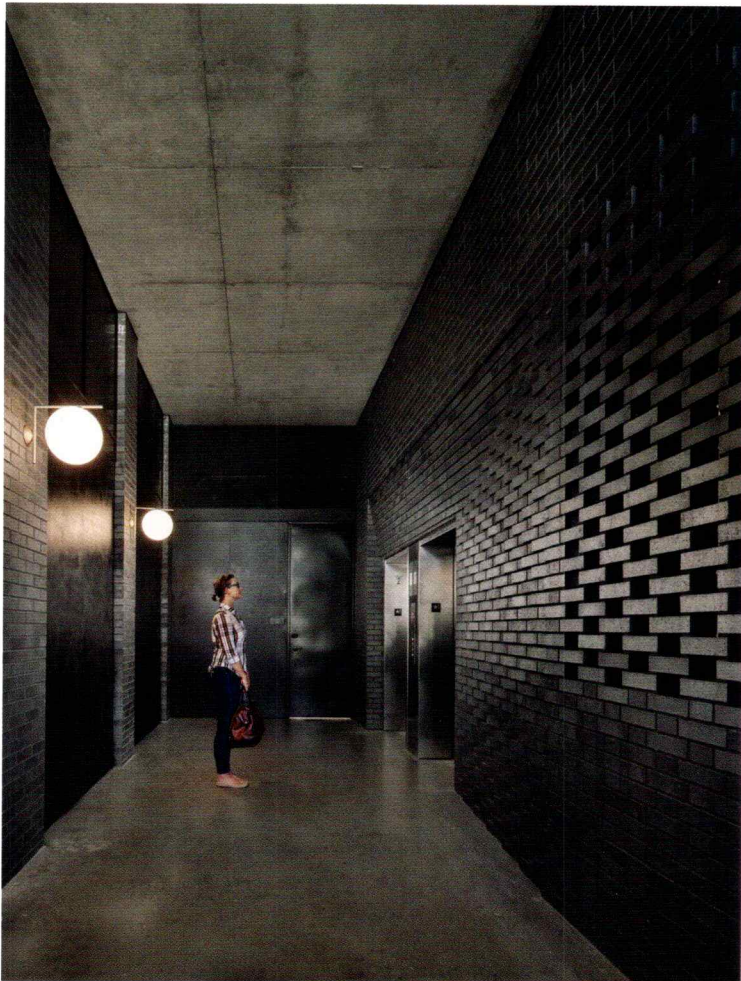
The unusual efforts to architecturally camouflage the hotel program were driven by the Arrive partners, says Baldrige. “Arrive specifically wanted a building that suppressed its identity as a hotel. The ground-level establishments are less hotel amenities than they are public amenities that happen to have hotel rooms above.” Chris Pardo and Peter Karpinski, the original founders of the Arrive group and veterans of the hotel industry, were eager to discard the public interior spaces and face-



Facing *The first floor plan shows a permeable perimeter, including separate entries for four food and beverage establishments (the “conjoined kitchen” is linked at the dish pit). Access control for the hotel starts at the elevators.*

Left *In contrast to the dark hallways, the hotel rooms are bright and airy. Here, too, the reading of the window grid is confounded by the push and pull of the facade.*

Below *The clients wanted a hallway that felt like an urban experience, not a corporate corridor. Endicott brick in Manganese Ironspot brings the exterior inside.*



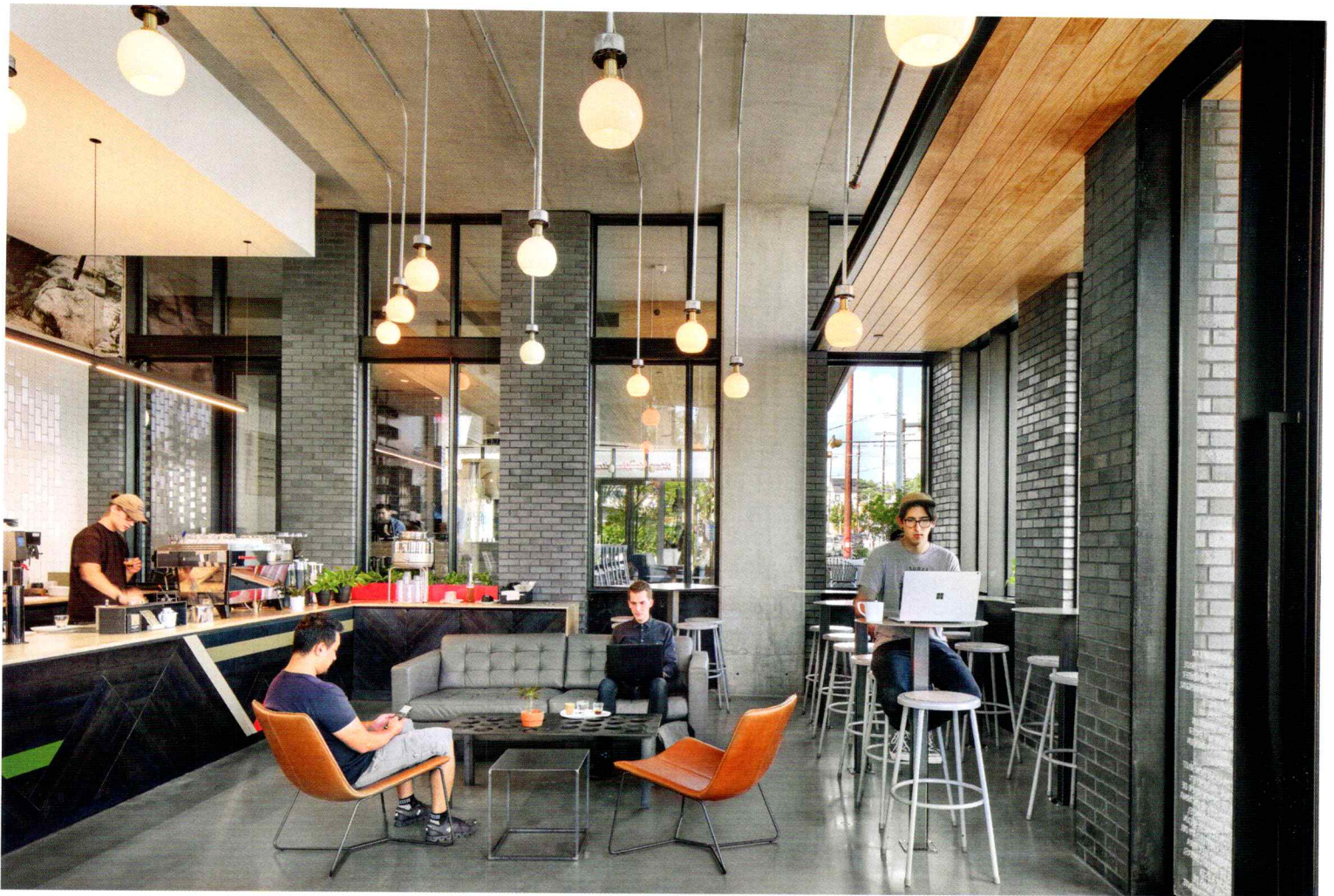


Left Hotel patrons check in at the bar and get a drink along with their room key. Says Baldrige: “This is as much of an entry as they wanted, and they kept saying, make it smaller, make it smaller, make it less.”

Below The second level hides Gin Bar, also operated by Todd Duplechan. In another turn away from traditional hotel space planning, a small conference room opens to the patio and can be used as a stage for musical acts.

Facing The brick and concrete language of the exterior carries into the interior at the Cartel Coffee Lab. Multiple stakeholders were involved in the design of the interiors, but a strong architectural concept provides continuity.





to-face processes that are part of the typical hotel. Grand lobbies, for example, take up a lot of room and, in their view, don't do much for the neighborhood. Here, there's no lobby, no check-in desk, no concierge: You communicate with the hotel (and even tip the housekeeper) via text, and your room key is waiting for you at the bar, along with a drink. "Everywhere you turn, there's a place to get a drink," Baldrige quips. Actually, he's not joking; it was a programmatic requirement, and the complex floor plan shows how the building effectively outsources both lobby and first-glance branding to its restaurant and bar. (The interiors for Vixen's Wedding were designed by local firm McCray & Co.; Arrive partner Chris Pardo also designed portions of the hotel interiors.

Even with the efforts made to mute the perception of Arrive as a hotel from street level, the pedestrian point of view is the most striking. From here, the architecture is felt as much as seen, as the pushes and pulls of the concrete floor plates and the infill walls create several

surprising spaces. On the inside, however, the visual presence of the concrete and brick superstructure retreats into the background while the identity and design of each restaurant or bar takes the lead. The architecture provides a quiet throughline from the buoyant and buzzed foot traffic on E. 6th Street, through the lively choreography of the bars, up to the privacy of the hotel rooms. The dark hallways, lined in the same glazed brick as the exterior, have the effect of a sensory deprivation chamber, providing a visual and auditory cleanse prior to retiring. The hotel rooms are airy and eclectically appointed, with art by local artist Sarah Presson. The final stop of the hotel's promenade, however, is the balconies that extend from some of the hotel's corner rooms, providing a strikingly unmediated view of both the canted floor plates and of the changing neighborhood: the Planned Parenthood; the craft brewery; the payday loan shop; the construction cranes.

The "why" of this particular hotel in a growing city with a strong job market and lively

restaurant scene is obvious. Now, the view from the street-level windows has changed totally. But buildings of this robustness often outlast the cultural conditions that birthed them. Take the Driskill Hotel in downtown Austin, a landmark from another golden era of Texas history. Built in 1880 by cattle baron Jesse Driskill, the hotel switched hands after a drought decimated the family fortune, got traded to a California actor, and then sold at auction — all before 1898. The building went on to weather two world wars, the Spanish flu and the parties that followed, booms and busts, bear markets and bull. Throughout it all (with a pause for Prohibition), the Driskill has offered up leather seats and whiskey to patrons in need of a respite. We'll need similar comforts soon, too. The Arrive building and its celebration of Austin's right-now best got here just in time for whatever era of Austin is next.

Jessie Temple is an architect and writer in Austin. Greg Esparza is a partner at Moontower Design Build, also in Austin.



Together Individual

The design of Willow House in Terlingua sets an intriguing mold for hospitality: a gathering of concrete boxes that can make guests feel entirely alone and yet part of a close community.

Maker/Client Lauren Werner

by Sophie Aliece Hollis

The tiny town of Terlingua, Texas, has grabbed national attention more than once in its tumultuous history: first, in the 1920s, as the Chisos Mining Company grew to prominence, producing over 40 percent of all the United States' quicksilver; then, again, in the 1940s, when the mines played out and the company filed for bankruptcy, leaving behind a ghost town fit for a John Wayne western. Twenty years later, tourism began to breathe life back into the abandoned village when two rivaling chili connoisseurs deemed Terlingua a neutral site for an annual cook-off, which attracts upwards of 10,000 visitors each year. Now, in 2020, the modest town (population 80) has once more made headlines, this time for a rather unexpected hotel concept: Willow House, an elegant

Facing *The staggered layout of the casitas equips each with privacy and unimpeded views of either the Chisos Mountains or the Santa Elena Canyon. This covered patio and fire pit are two amenities found at the communal main house.*



yet understated desert retreat, which allows for a luxurious experience of the breathtaking, raw terrain of far West Texas.

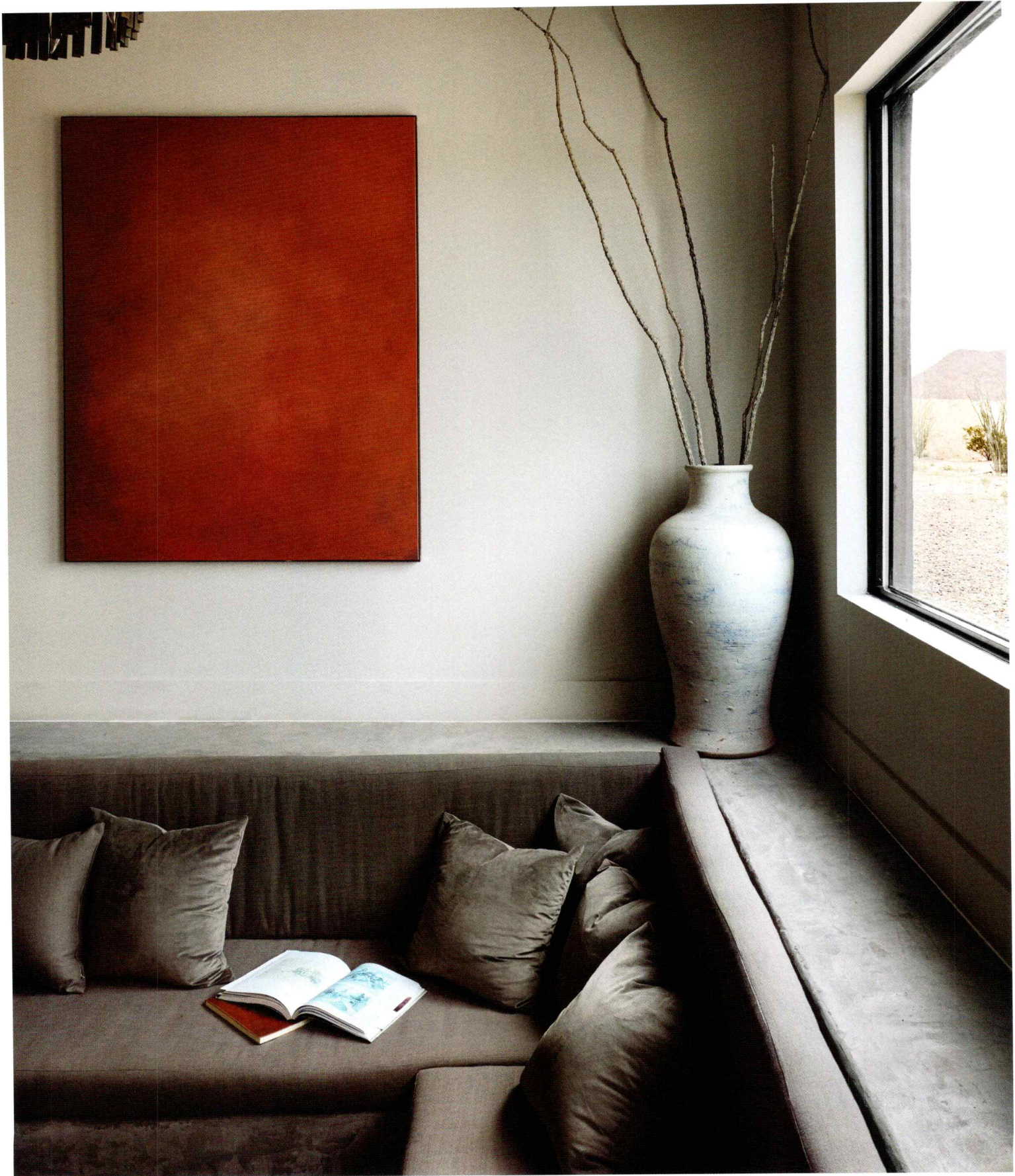
Willow House is located on a 287-acre property situated at a unique vantage point just six miles from the entrance to Big Bend National Park. The hotel's designer, owner, and innkeeper, Lauren Werner, is a Southern California native who worked in Dallas development after graduating from SMU. In 2015, she took a road trip to Big Bend and immediately fell in love with the region. Noting the lack of refined accommodations from which to enjoy the area's astounding beauty, Werner set about looking for land, though she was unsure of what it would lead to. She eventually found the perfect property a year and a half later, and her knowl-

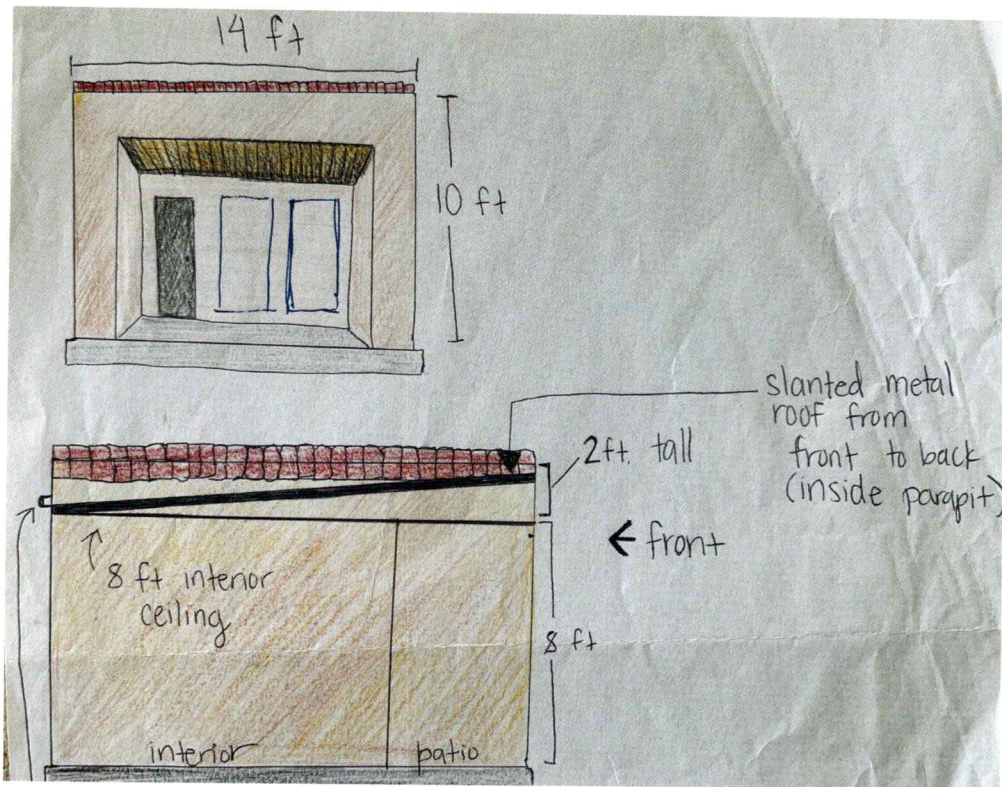
edge of the development industry, combined with both an ambition to start a business and a family background in construction, led her to take on the challenge of designing and building a hospitable getaway in one of the most remote locations in the Lower 48.

Although Werner's background certainly was a driving factor, grit is what got her through the experience. The looser architectural regulations of the unincorporated area may have allowed Werner to achieve her goals without any formal architectural training or licensure; however, the isolated terrain of Terlingua created many unforeseen obstacles.

"Getting water and electricity to the property was half the battle," she says. There was a two-year waiting list to be tapped into

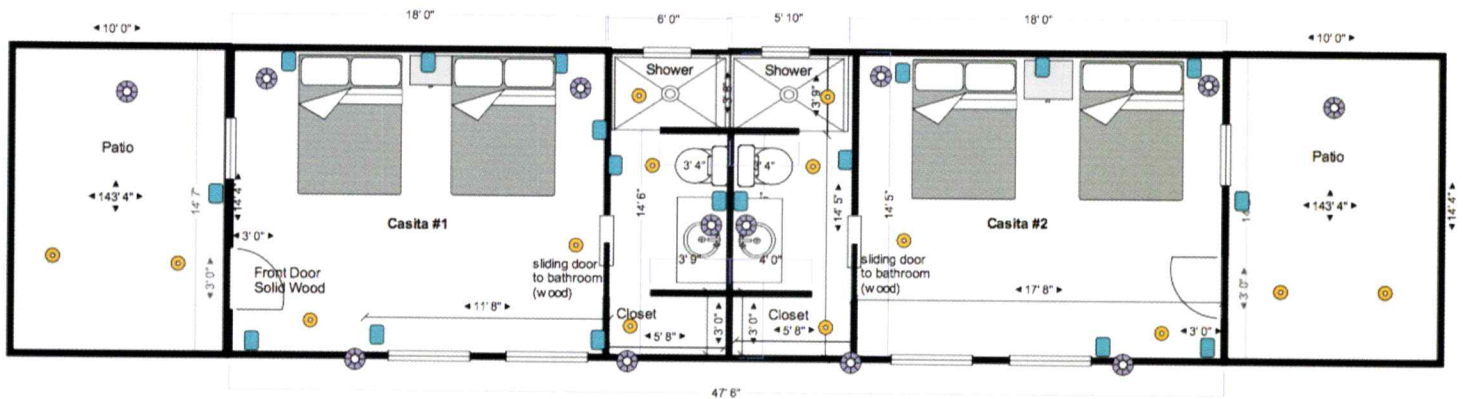
the local water supply, so Werner decided to drill a well; however, as the property's reverse osmosis system was not yet assembled, the unfiltered water's high sodium content caused issues with the concrete composition. With minimal phone service and the nearest airport well over three hours away, intense planning was essential at every phase. One hiccup could set construction back days, even weeks. Nevertheless, Werner, her sub-contractors, and local craftsmen managed to turn over construction in just under two years. And the result is stunning — so stunning, in fact, that Architectural Digest's online write-up received unprecedented Internet traffic, securing the Willow House article a spot on the magazine's homepage for several weeks.





Facing A sunken seating pit at the front of the main house allows guests to mingle without obstructing the views of the dining and kitchen areas.

Left Much of Werner's design unfolded and evolved through iterative hand sketches.



With the Chisos mountain range and Santa Elena Canyon directly to the southeast and southwest, respectively, Werner emphasizes that “the views and the land were the biggest factors” in the design of the project. Each of the hotel’s 11 single-story, stick-frame and concrete casitas, along with the communal main house, are oriented to frame uninterrupted views of the surrounding geological formations. The rectangular volumes, unique in both dimension and design, sit atop slightly-above-grade concrete slab foundations, allowing the facades of each cubic form to rise subtly from the flat desert mesa, while avoiding flash floods during monsoon season.

The placement of the buildings reads like a series of figure-ground studies: punched rectangular fenestration, recessed patios, extruded bathrooms. Made of carefully curated materials and tones, the structures themselves fade into the arid landscape. “Light colors and pitched roofs stick out in the desert,” Werner says, “so in order to respect the land, and our neighbors, we left the concrete unfinished and employed flat, parapet roofs.”

The buildings feature eight-inch walls with seven-inch foam insulation to combat Terlingua’s unforgiving climate, where temperatures frequently exceed 100 degrees in the summer months and winds can reach speeds of up to

80 miles per hour. Even during periods of extreme weather, guests can still enjoy the land via covered patios.

The interior spaces similarly harmonize with the landscape. The 1,500-sf main house and each unique casita, ranging from 250 to 600 sf, incorporate carefully curated furniture, textiles, art, and found objects in a subtle collection of earthen hues. Ocotillo branches and stones from the property sit alongside African ceramic vases and Peruvian alpaca blankets. Experiencing the décor at Willow House is like rereading a good book: There’s always an exciting new detail hiding among the familiar pages. But even



amid the abundance of interesting accessories, the spaces maintain a refined elegance. The combination communicates an elevated yet personal experience, far from the cold, corporate character of most hotels.

This message of comfort contributes to the overall ambition of Willow House: to provide a bespoke stay to any guest. The freedom here defies the confines of typical travel. A communal kitchen allows guests to bring and

prepare their own meals or mix cocktails with strangers. The property's location provides easy access to restaurants when cooking isn't in the cards. The main house doors are open 24/7, allowing conversations — and a spectacular alternative playlist — to flow, well after the mesmerizing desert sun sets. Bring your own firewood (and marshmallows) if you'd like to hang out under a starry sky free of light pollution. Or, just escape to your private

casita and enjoy its many amenities: soapstone showers, plush robes, views for miles. Facilitated by Werner's considerate desert design, the careful balance between community and privacy at Willow House affords an unforgettable experience to any traveler looking to venture out West.

Sophie Aliece Hollis is an art and journalism student at UT Austin and *TA's* editorial intern.



Facing *The retreat's largest casita boasts an outdoor shower and a private patio.*

Left *Stones found around the property line an antique wooden door that leads to Werner's office.*

Resources

The Statler, Dallas

Consultants ACCESSIBILITY: BDA Accessibility; AV/TELECOM: Terra Bridge; CIVIL: RLG; BUILDING ENVELOPE: Curtainwall Design & Consulting; FOODSERVICE DESIGN: Shepherd Food Equipment; LANDSCAPE: La Terra Studio; LIGHTING: 2CLighting; MEP: Basharkah Engineering; ROOFING/WATERPROOFING: Curtainwall Design & Consulting; STRUCTURAL: Hunt & Joiner; EXTERIOR CONTRACTOR: Hill & Wilkinson; INTERIOR CONTRACTOR: TriArc

Cabana Hotel, Dallas

Consultants MEP: Summit Consultants; CIVIL/STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Viewtech; ACOUSTICAL: RBDG; WATER-PROOFING: CDC

United States Land Port of Entry, Columbus, New Mexico

Contractor Hensel Phelps Construction

Consultants STRUCTURAL: Walter P. Moore; CIVIL ENGINEER: Jaster Quintanilla Dallas; MEP ENGINEER/SECURITY CONSULTANT: IMEG; LANDSCAPE: MRWM Landscape Architects; COST CONSULTANT: Project Cost Resources; FIRE PROTECTION CONSULTANT: Jensen Hughes

Resources CONCRETE PAVING: Ultimate Concrete; PRECAST CONCRETE: Tectura Designs; MASONRY: Summit Brick (Beaty Masonry Company); PORTLAND CEMENT, LIME & SAND MORTAR: Amerimix; METAL SOFFIT PANELS: Alucobond; INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL WOOD WORK: Formica; THERMAL & MOISTURE PROTECTION: Thermafiber – Owens Corning; DOOR HARDWARE: Assa Abloy (Cornerstone), Pemko, Best; WEATHERING STEEL METAL PLATE WALL PANELS: ProClad; PAINT: Sherwin Williams; SPECIALTIES: Cornerstone; LOADING DOCK EQUIPMENT – OPERATIONS AND

MAINTENANCE DATA: Serco; VEHICLE LIFTS: BendPak; TIRE CHANGERS: Ranger Products; SITE FURNISHINGS: Landscape Forms; FIRE SUPPRESSION: Metron; PLUMBING EQUIPMENT INSULATION: Aeroflex; ELECTRIC UNIT HEATER: Trane; ELECTRIC DUCT HEATER: Warren Technology; AIR CONDITIONING UNITS: Daikin; ELECTRICAL: Lightning Protection Systems; POWERED VOICE COMMUNICATIONS: Norcon Communications; SECURITY ACCESS & VIDEO SURVEILLANCE: Superior Alarms; FIRE ALARM: Honeywell; PIPE & COUPLING: Tyler; VEHICLE SERVICE EQUIPMENT: BendPak; FACILITY LIQUEFIED GAS PIPING: Anvil International; WATER UTILITY DISTRIBUTION EQUIPMENT: Cla-Val Company; EMERGENCY GENERATOR: Cummins

Dakota Mountain, Dripping Springs

Contractor Low Design Office

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Persyn Engineering

Resources CONCRETE FOUNDATION: Austin Ready Mix; INTERIOR PLASTER: American Clay (TerraPura); STRUCTURAL STEEL POSTS AND CONNECTIONS: South Austin Metals; CORRUGATED GALVALUME METAL ROOF: Mueller; ALL FRAMING LUMBER AND FINISH WOOD: East Side Lumber and Decking; TRANSLUCENT CORRUGATED ROOF PANELS: Mueller; TPO ROOFING: ABC Supply Company; MOISTURE PROTECTION: East Side Lumber and Decking; OPEN CELL SPRAY FOAM INSULATION: Hinkle Construction Services; SLIDING GLASS DOORS: Metal Craft; WINDOWS: Don Young Company; ALL WOOD TRIM AND WOOD CEILING FINISH: East Side Lumber and Decking; KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS: Silestone (FSC Granite); KITCHEN, BATH, AND UTILITY CABINETS: Midcontinent (Factory Builder Stores); CARRIER GREENSPEED SERIES, 20 SEER, VARIABLE SPEED HEAT PUMPS WITH VARIABLE SPEED AIR HANDLERS: Carrier (Garner Air Conditioning); COMMUNICATIONS: Spectrum; EARTHWORK: American Tree Service; RAIN WATER COLLECTION SYSTEM: Harvested Rain Solutions;

DESIGN SOFTWARE: AutoCAD LT 2014, Rhinoceros 3D

Highland Village Residence, Houston

Contractor m + a architecture studio

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Gessner Engineering

Arrive Hotel, Austin

Contractor Austin Commercial

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Leap!; MEP ENGINEER: EEA Consulting Engineers; WATERPROOFING CONSULTANT: Building Exterior Solutions; LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: dwg.

Resources FORMWORK: Skyline Forming North Texas; REINFORCING: Harris Rebar Nufab; CONCRETE MIX DESIGN: Texas Concrete; BRICK MASONRY VENEER: Endicott Clay Products (Upchurch Kimbrough); EXTERIOR METAL PANELS: Vision Enclosure Walls; MISCELLANEOUS STEEL: MSI; WATERPROOFING: Tremco; CONTINUOUS INSULATION: SMARTci Systems (Wade Architecture); TPO ROOFING: Carlisle; GARAGE DOORS: Clopay; DOORS: Assa Abloy (LA Force); CUSTOM STOREFRONT THROUGHOUT: Drophouse Design; WINDOWS: Thermal Windows (WDI); EXTERIOR PLASTER: Masterwall; KITCHEN FLOORING: Protectall Flooring; HOTEL UNIT MILLWORK: Dovetail Custom Woodworks; EXTERIOR TILE FLOORING: Concrete Collaborative; CUSTOM COUNTERTOPS: Newbold Stone; ELEVATORS: Kone; HOTEL UNIT FIXTURES: Hansgrohe; GREASE INTERCEPTOR: Comal Concrete Products; HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC): AIRCO; LIGHTING FIXTURES THROUGHOUT: Spectrum Lighting; DIMMING CONTROLS: Fresco (Spectrum Lighting); FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS: Siemens Industry

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Architectural Engineers Collaborative 8 512 472 2111 pbrockie@aecollab.com aecollab.com	Hanover Architectural Products 14 800 426 4242 info@hanoverpavers.com hanoverpavers.com	Salsbury Industries – Mailboxes.com & Lockers.com 28 800 624 5269 salbury@mailboxes.com/ salbury@lockers.com mailboxes.com / lockers.com
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Curtain Wall Design & Consulting 17 214 234 4908 bheake@cdc-usa.com cdc-usa.com	Master Wall 77 800 755 0825 ryanwhiting@masterwall.com masterwall.com	York Metal Fabricators 95 800 255 4703 grantyork@yorkmetal.com yorkmetal.com
Dalgleish Construction Company 30 512 346 8554 dalgleish.net	Mitsubishi Electric US – Elevator/ Escalator Division 58 800 988 8474 mitsubishielelevator.com	
DesignPay 7 866 985 2455 experts@designpay.com designpay.com	NCV Custom Wine Rooms 13 713 711 0181 info@noscavesvin.com noscavesvin.com	
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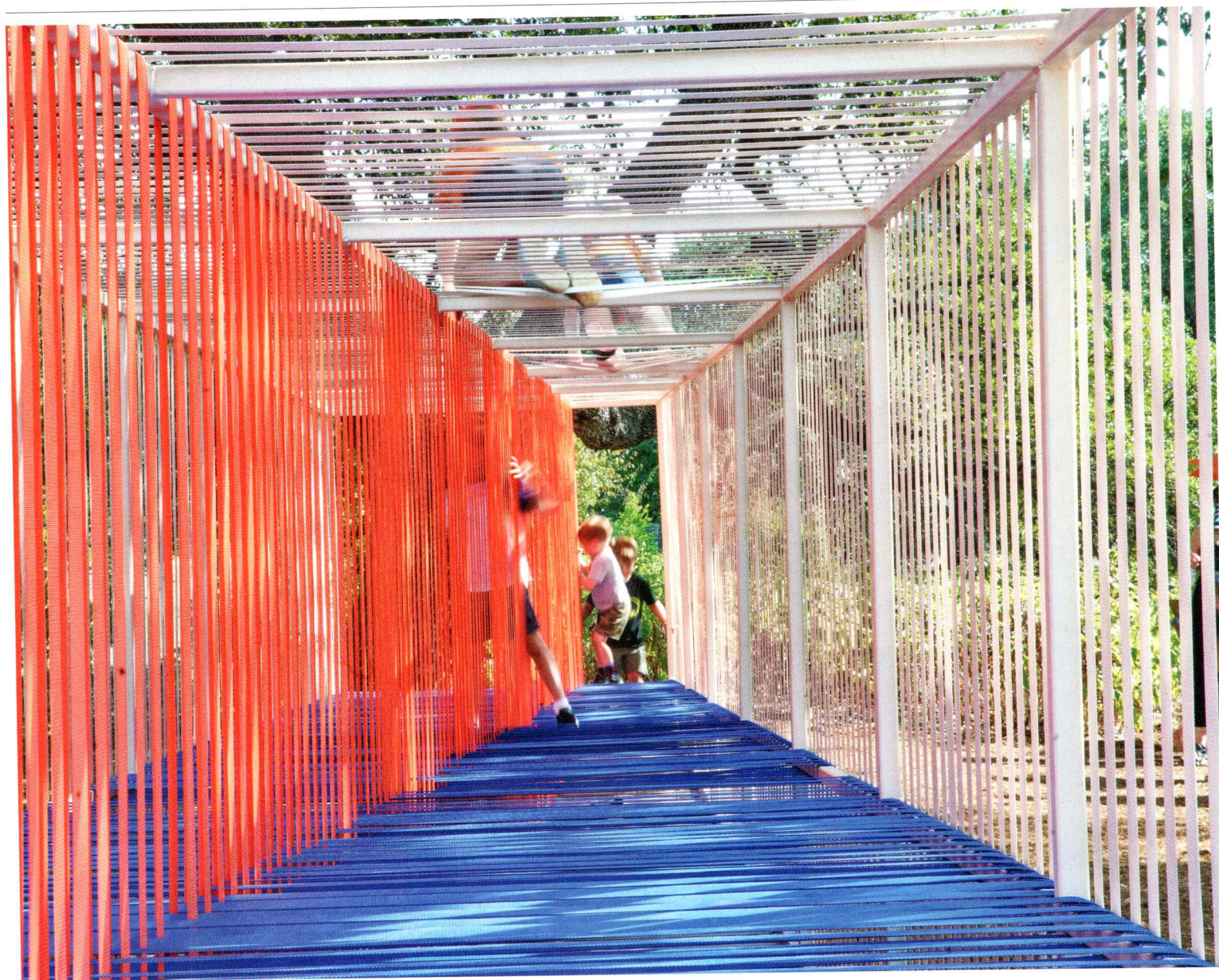
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Faye and Walker's Architecture's Color Trail

On a sunny weekend in October, under the dappled light of several sprawling oaks, Sean Guess, AIA, of Faye and Walker Architecture watched as his latest completed project, “Color Trail,” was overrun by a small army of children and their parents. They wove, hung, jumped, and bounced through the little pavilion, one of 10 temporary installations commissioned by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin for “Fortlandia,” an annual event designed to foster curiosity and play through the built environment.

The installation was simple: Seven linear 6-foot-by-6-foot bays of 1.5-inch white tube steel created a 42-foot-long open rectangular prism slightly lofted from the ground below. Attached to the white frame was a rigorous series of 2-inch-wide white polyester webbing that ran continuously up and over all four sides, creating an occupiable, porous shell. Inside the shell were two more canted planes of polyester bands, one running horizontally on a slight incline, and one running vertically from left to right. These inner intersecting planes popped with blue and red hues, colors derived from the Texas bluebonnet and Indian paintbrush, two of Lady Bird Johnson's favorite wildflowers.

“As an ethos, we are always trying to be very editorial with our work, from small renovations

to new residences,” Guess says. “An installation piece such as this, with little to no program, allows us to distill our formal goals into an architecture that can be a little more experimental and uniform in its expression, allowing the environment to activate the object to provide its dynamism.”

Fabricated onsite by Alejandro Razo, the structure was up for three months. Then the steel was reused by a local contractor, and the polyester bands were donated to Austin Creative Reuse, where they are now available to the public for any applications to which they may be well suited.

Christopher Ferguson, AIA, is an architect at Clickspring Design and co-founder of DO.GROUP.