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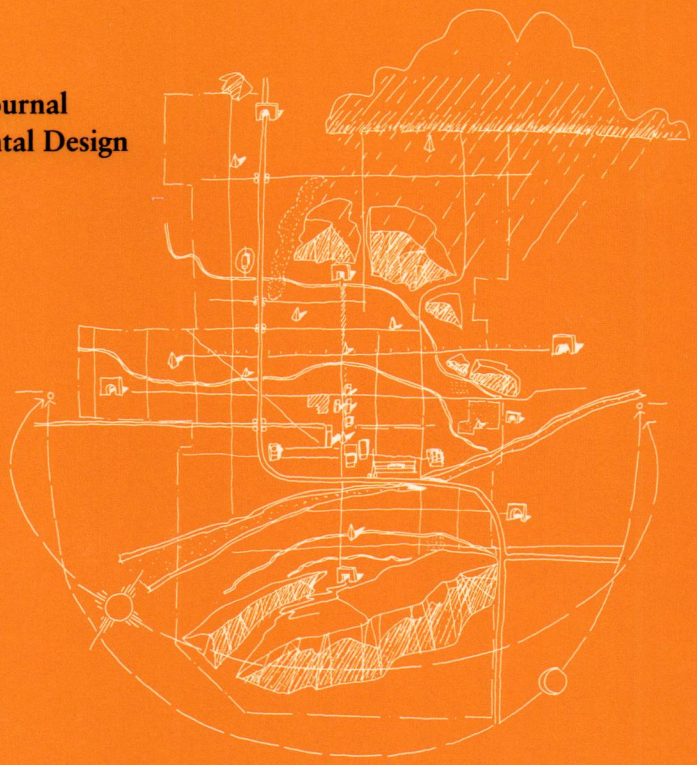

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Volume 5, Number 4

Caring about Places: In Public

Place has come back into American public life. The demand for distinction in the places where we live is heard in many corners and it begins to bring results. Murmurs of alienation are being replaced by articulate insistence. Architects are using their skills to shape an intelligible public realm. Vacuous spaces are being filled with the tangible presence of civic intention.

Or at least some are.

The Back Bay/South End station in Boston projects civic intention in a light-handed way, with close attention to the nature of its site. The structures of the station merge images of arrival with subtle, particular forms that meet the stringent demands of the site yet reward attention in many ways. It could not be the same in another place.

Rowe's Wharf, also in Boston, steps out into the water at the edge of downtown. It is bonded to its site. Its materials include the brick and granite that have characterized downtown; its great vaulted entry would be bombastic anywhere but at the link between a great harbor and a tightly knit city.

In California many small towns that have recently prospered have plans for ambitious new civic centers that stake out their particular identities. In Mountain View these buildings are cast as memorable landmarks around a public plaza linking pioneer park and main street. But renewed interest in the public character of the place does not stop with its monuments. In Mountain View this reformulated identity will be extended through the center of the town by an inventive street design. Carefully formed edges and fixtures will wrest main street away from the conventional geometries of traffic and drainage and proclaim its importance as a distinct place for human encounter.

Urban design practice is inexorably changing. The bland assumption that sweeping renewal should clear the way for unfettered and sterilized development is being replaced by respect for the parceled, contested patterns of the traditional city. These patterns build places in increments, with streets that are avenues of exchange, building types that relate to the known fabric of the city, and public access to spaces with recognizable character.

In this issue Anne Vernez Moudon traces the course of such practices in plans for Södra Station, Stockholm and Mission Bay, San Francisco. John de Monchaux argues for an enthusiastic recognition that cities are, after all, places of incubation and change, destined to be messy—and better for it.

William Faulkner invented a landscape of such scope for his novels. Yoknapatawpha is a fictional place modeled closely on the Oxford, Mississippi, of his lifetime. Tom Hines shows how, with close observation and deft words, Faulkner entwined the lives of his characters with traditional aspects of the place.

Katie Traeger, writing several generations later and from the indeterminacy of Los Angeles, uses the austere singularity of the Museum of Contemporary Art as an anchor point for meditation. The intense abstraction of its forms prompts reflections that are at once unpredictable and poignant.

The public art plan for Phoenix, Arizona, is intended to bind places of intense revery to a larger construct of the inhabited landscape. This extensive program, reaching out into the desert with the publicly funded systems of the city, sets out to capture an order that is unique. Artists, community groups, and sponsors working within the plan will be participants in a civic intention scaled to the landscape of the locale.

The design of places can engage communities in profoundly constructive dialogue. Vision sparks debate; a sense of direction can mobilize disparate forces to a common goal; the threat of dislocated memories can bring forth a demand for articulated constraints. This issue ends with material from The Mayors Institute on City Design, conferences sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, in which those who are politically on the line discuss ways in which design ideas can serve their cities.

The prospects are promising.

Donlyn Lyndon

The Station and the Wharf, Boston

Donlyn Lyndon

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1 Back Bay/South End station in Boston. The venting towers, the main hall, and the brick exitway kiosk viewed from Columbus Avenue looking west. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

2 Main hall and station entrances as seen from Clarendon Street looking west. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

3 Inside the main hall. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

Two recent buildings in Boston may be seen as heralds of a renewed concern for the specifics of place. Back Bay/South End station by Kallman McKinnell & Wood and Rowe's Wharf by the Chicago office of Skidmore Owings & Merrill both occupy significant points in the structure of the city, and each is crafted to the conditions of its site.

Back Bay/South End Station

The Back Bay/South End station is located at the point where railroad lines leading out of Boston diverge and set out for New York and Western Massachusetts respectively, severing the city geometrically into two distinctly different areas. Copley Square, the setting for several of Boston's most distinguished buildings, is a few hundred paces to the north in Back Bay, and an enormous new shopping mall, deceptively named Copley Place, is just to the west.

That there is a station for Amtrak near Copley Square, only minutes from the end of the line at South Station, is itself remarkable, a fortuitous residue of the history of Boston's linkage to the development of the rail system. The importance of the station was reinforced by the recent decision to relocate the Orange Line of the transit system to the rail corridor and to combine the stations.

That the station is called Back Bay/South End, rather than simply Back Bay Station, as its predecessor was, is also remarkable. At one level this is only an acknowledgment of the relocation here of the transit line

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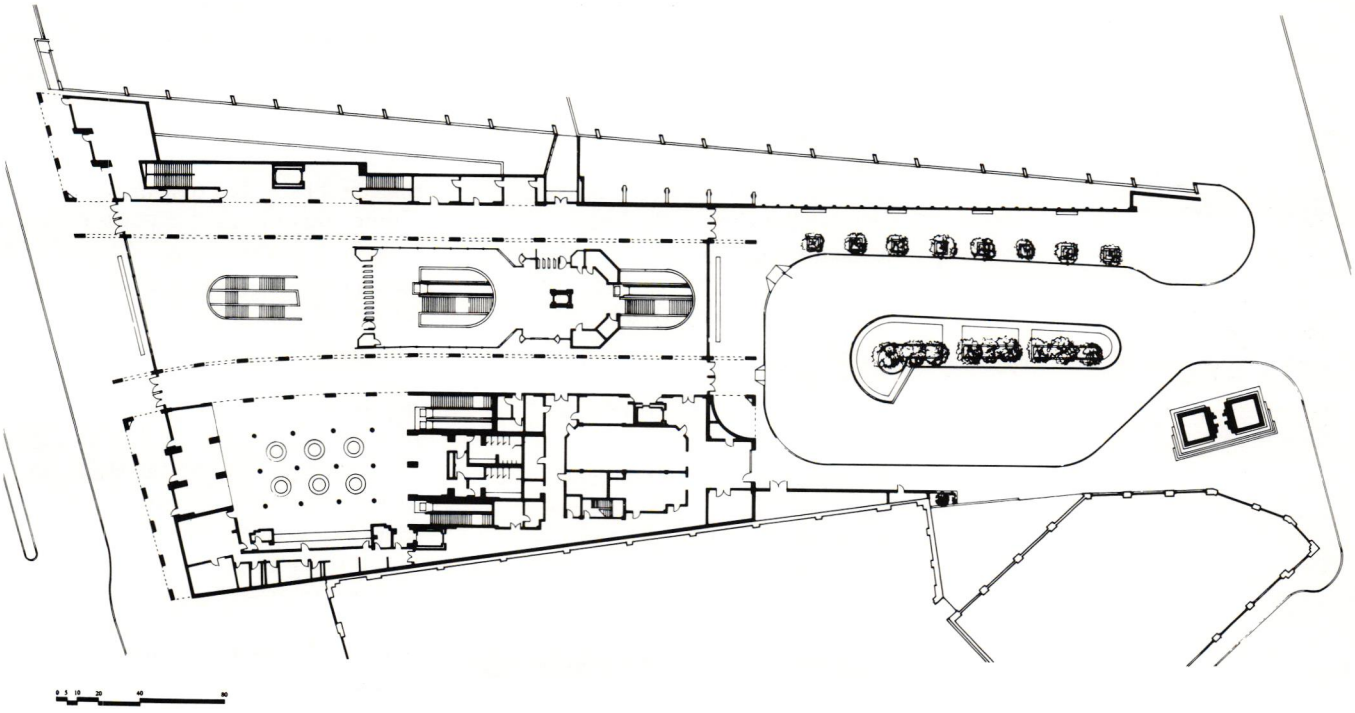

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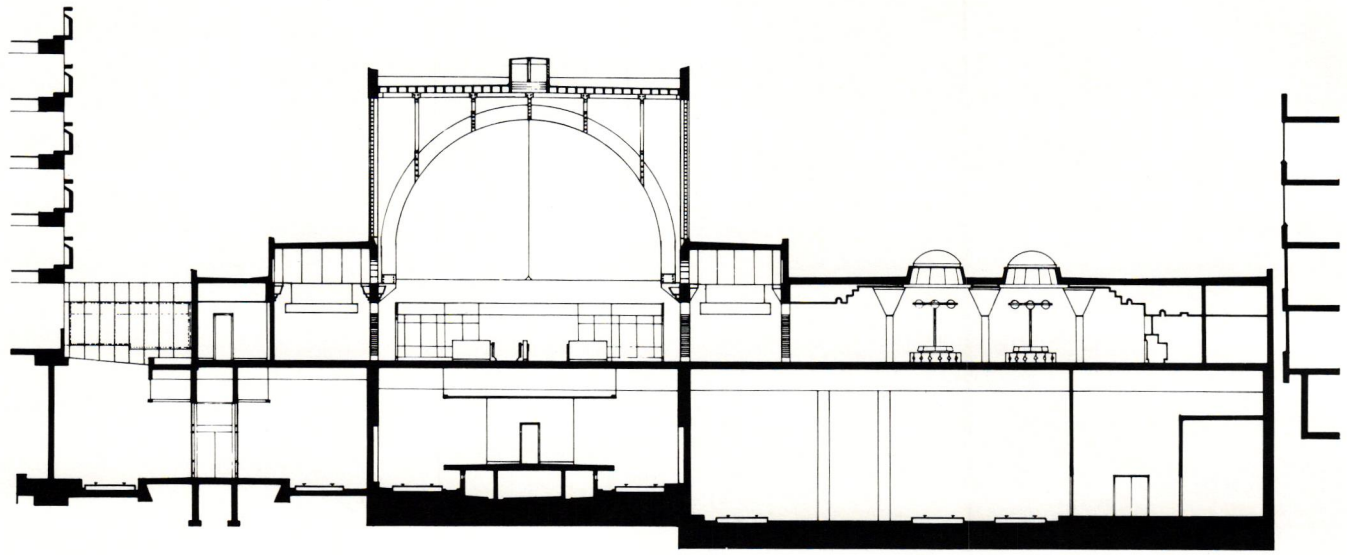
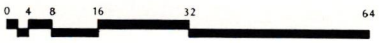
4 Dartmouth Street entry viewed from the south. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

5 Street level plan of the station between Dartmouth and Clarendon Streets. Drawing courtesy of Kallman McKinnell & Wood





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that traditionally served the South End. In another sense, however, this reflects the profound change that has been brought about in the area, in part through decades of community activism. The southwest transit corridor, once a divisive gash in the city, has been covered over in this section of the city and transformed into a linear neighborhood park. The city (and its gentry) have reinvested in the once derelict South End, and it is being reintegrated into the establishment's perceptual map of the city.

The station itself is wonderful, the result of a masterly balance of impulses. It is at once a monument and a shed, at once durable and playful, at once rigorous and accommodating. It is airy, clearly organized, meticulously crafted, bold and subtle. The main hall of the station is itself a corridor, a lofty covered passage elegantly shaped by glue-laminated wooden arches. These lithe wooden members suggest the ponderous arches and vaults of traditional rooms of arrival while slyly supporting a light, flat, wooden roof.

Walls of concrete with inset panels of glass block track the length of the corridor, paralleling the train lines beneath. At either end the walls and arches pass on beyond glass enclosures to form large welcoming porches. These ends of the passage are, of course, what reach the streets of the city, with their arches scaled to announce public entry without pomposity.

There is more to the station, however, than the light-hearted, sun-dappled hall. Exitways and venting structures string out along the tracks. The way in which these take their place in the fabric of the city is one measure of the skill and imagination these architects bring to a task. Rather than being obsessed, as so often designers are, by the wish to make their work be all of a piece, they have let each part be informed by its surroundings.

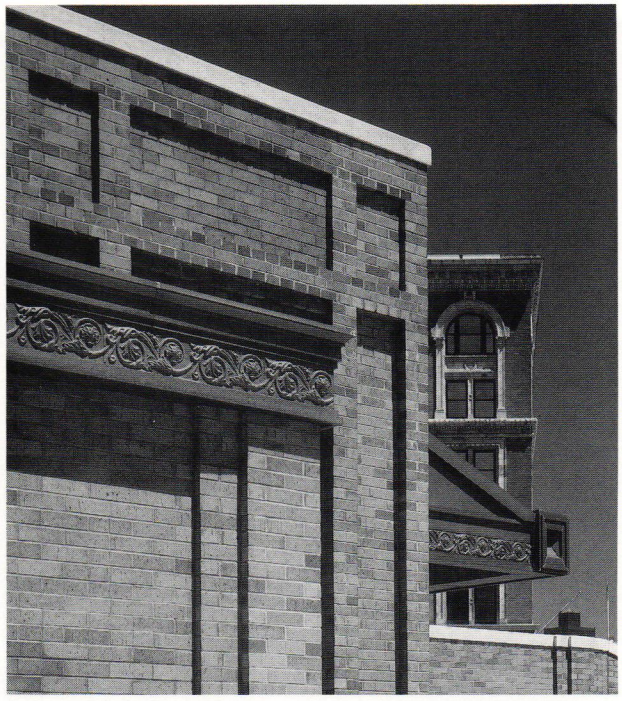
The walls of the hall themselves are a very light, well-cast concrete that is easily affiliated with the earlier parking garage to the north. They gather that much larger mass into the composition—as though the garage had always been meant to have a fine urban passage completing its south side. The south wall of the hall curves slightly to the south as it follows the tracks

6 Section through the main hall, waiting and ticket area, and the track platforms. Drawing courtesy of Kallman McKinnell & Wood

7 Detail of exitway kiosk, showing reuse of architectural fragments saved from previous station building on the site. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

8 Urban benches as the base of the venting towers. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

beneath. This ties the structure precisely to its site, giving a subtle liveliness to the building. Light modulates on the curving wall, and the arches on the inside change configuration slightly from one end to the other, becoming wider and elliptical as they approach Dartmouth Street to the west.



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At street level, inside and out, the lower walls that you pass along are brick, with inscribed arches in their concrete upper sections that set a traditional measure to these surfaces. The exitway kiosks, which are separate from the station, are executed all in brick, with bands of relief and fragments of detail rescued from the previous station building on the site. The brick and its detailing on these kiosks carry the themes of nearby South End buildings into the complex without replicating any stylistic forms. They could easily have been built at another time, and they seem perfectly at ease appearing incidentally along the street. Farther along the tracks a set of utterly simple wood sheds cover the tracks in a way that is thoroughly unassuming and melds into the utilitarian character of the transportation corridor, which by this point is uncovered.

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Train stations underground need massive amounts of ventilation. Ducts that carry smoke exhaust must, like chimneys, rise above adjoining buildings. The smoke stacks here have been transformed into an obscure urban monument that resides like a campanile in a small entry plaza for taxis and short-term parking at the eastern end of the station. The paired

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stacks, each roofed with a half-gable wooden shed at the top, rise from a common base at the bottom. This base is surfaced in granite and is shaped, like that of the Boston Public Library nearby, as an urban bench. Technical requirements that inevitably would have loomed large in the place are here transformed into a handsome and urbane landmark that takes its own place in the city.

Rowe's Wharf

The buildings at Rowe's Wharf occupy a site in the city that is both exhilarating and difficult. The site is fronted on one side by the harbor, on the other by a snarl of surface drives and elevated highway. The area available for building was quite narrow, the developer's ambitions quite expansive.

The adjoining wharves are used for several commuter ferries that ply the harbor, and a new water shuttle service scurries across regularly between the wharf and the airport. All this and the presence of a hotel, office spaces, and residences make for a modest but persistent flow of pedestrians intermingling with the passing boats, trucks, and automobiles.

Pedestrians move through a truly extraordinary portal, an open domed space with arches five stories high soaring across the passage amid a lantern rising up through the center of the five more stories of building above. The vaulted space is so large and its location between downtown and the harbor so pertinent that it seems like an obvious piece of the landscape. It takes a moment of reflection to realize just how unusual it is. By creating such an enormous aperture for snapshot glimpses of the water beyond, it distracts attention from the great

9 The venting towers. Photograph by Steve Rosenthal

10 Entrance to Rowe's Wharf and the Boston Harbor from downtown. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon

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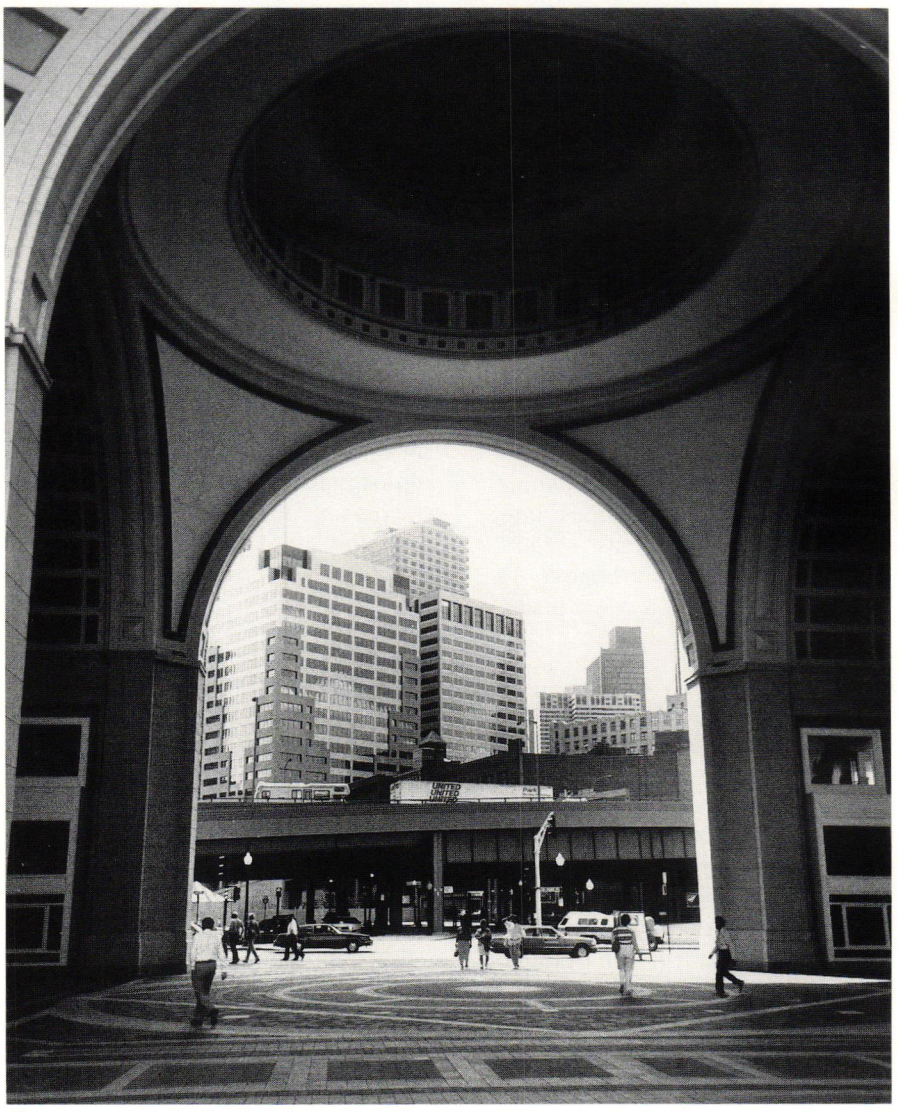

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11 Waterfront view of Rowe's Wharf as seen from the airport water shuttle. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon

12 Domed portal framing a glimpse of the city beyond. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon

13 Passageways between Wharf buildings connect commuter ferry terminals to downtown. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon

14 Downtown buildings nearby have a distinct urban character. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon.

15 Urban passage bordering the Wharf. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon.

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wall of building through which it passes.

This wall of building, though, is a genuine extension of the urbanity of downtown. Its walls are articulated, as those of the financial district are, with a substantial granite base, visibly durable materials, and molded surfaces that could easily be mistaken for those on buildings built during the 1920s a few blocks inland. Apartment and office entries intermix around the periphery of the building, and hotel public spaces cling to the edges of a tight, carefully made, urban passage that borders the wharf. It is all very urbane, redolent of the drama of well-heeled urban life celebrated in film several decades ago and traced in the walls of Boston's establishment streets.

Rowe's Wharf is a major investment, an investment in the city, not just in real estate. Its builders have transformed a shaggy pier into a landmark that extends the character of the city, carrying it to the edge of the water as no waterfront park could. They have built for private gain and they have made a place that must feel most comfortable to those who are affluent. Yet it is a public place, more accessible than many of the older wharves and destined by its nature, I would guess, to be important in the imaginative life of the city.

16 Pavilion by the harbor. Photograph by Donlyn Lyndon.

Mountain View, California: Fiat Res Publica

Gregory Tung

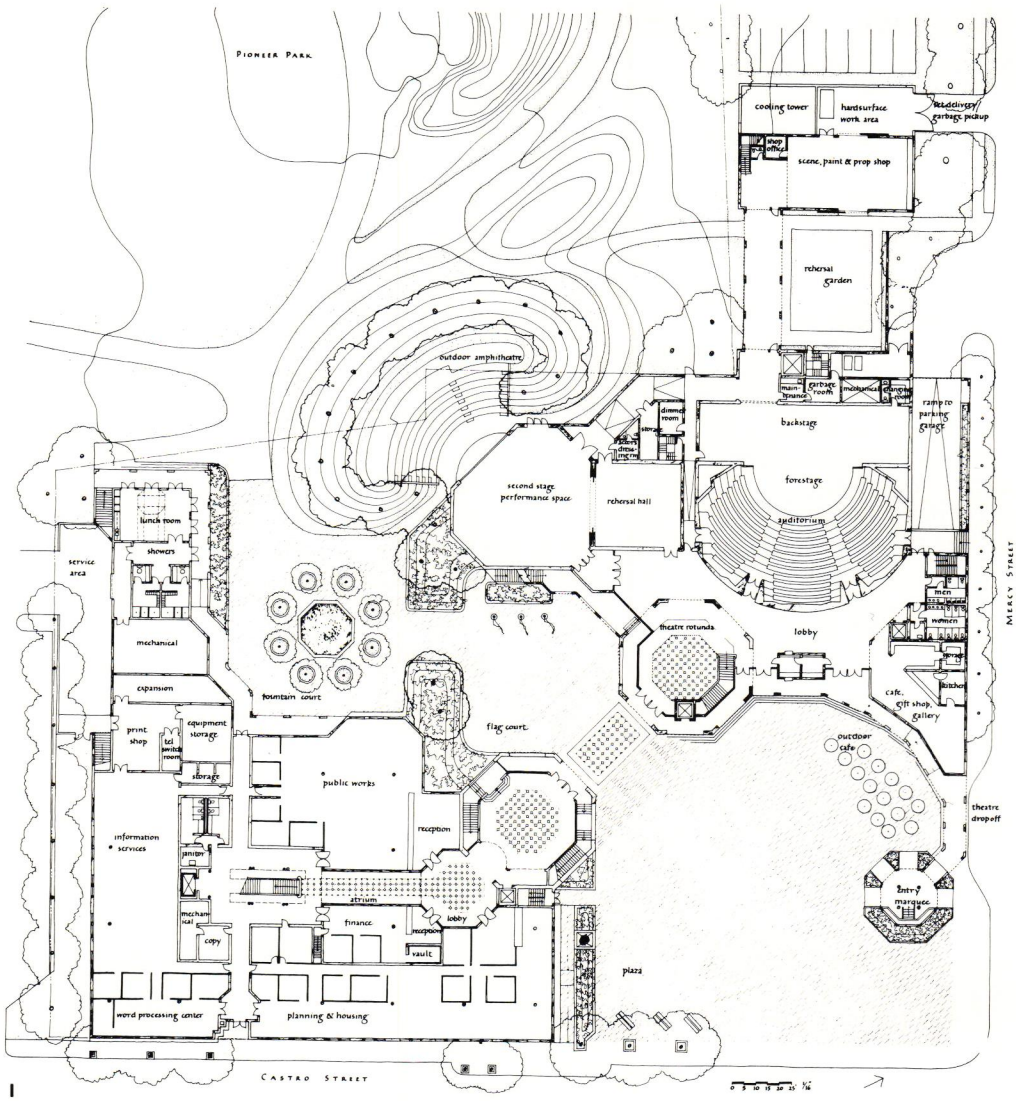
Historically, American cities on the up-and-up have remade themselves toward a new, usually commercial, vision. Lithographed nineteenth-century aerial views of prairie street grids, bordered by images of local businesses and monuments, remind us of the boosterism of communities that try to be distinguishable from their neighbors in order to draw new settlers and entrepreneurs. With the 1980s phenomena of suburban gridlock and "urban village," however, the landscape of metropolitan regions is now both saturated and undifferentiated. In Mountain View, California (population 63,000), the "mush" of tilt-up chip assembly plants, freeways, and cul-de-sac tract housing developments of Silicon Valley have overgrown the cherry orchards of the recent rural past. Its original city identity, bound up in the hierarchy of its main street cluster and rural boundary, is nearly indiscernible as one drives the El Camino Real strip up the Peninsula toward San Francisco.

Some Bay Area communities such as Walnut Creek, Napa, and adjacent Palo Alto have embraced no-growth policies in frustration over the perceived loss of cherished small-town virtues. But other cities are finding it difficult, realistically, to hold back change when the entire surrounding region is changing. Fortunately, Mountain View is avoiding a "just say no" policy and is attempting to reconcile widespread dismay over disorderly growth with recognition of its market's extraordinary development opportunities. By harnessing development through enhancement of, and investment in, its public realm, the city intends to create a "there," a new locus for public pride and city identity.

It was not a sudden realization that brought the Mountain View city staff and council around to this vision. A series of opportunities for educating and opening a dialogue on design and place-making issues came our way, beginning in 1984. Several field trips were made and dozens of slide shows and talks were given on what makes a memorable district, the ingredients of a successful main street, the importance of public buildings in civic imagery, and related topics. These efforts gradually and sometimes quickly changed perceptions of what could be done to improve the city. We have found and continue to find this educative aspect of our approach to be the most powerful (if typically the most neglected) tool for achieving real change in city design. It is a different avenue toward a lost art of city building, of helping to make a public realm. The process differs from, yet remains dependent upon, the separate activities of project design, economic development, and plannerly regulation.

A long-standing concern with revitalizing the somnolent downtown of Mountain View became tied to this new awareness. The new vision of making downtown once again an economic, social, and civic destination took over the previously fragmented motions toward sporadic beautification or parking lot paving. But we had to proceed with a watchful awareness of the competing context of business parks, regional shopping malls, and commercial strips, lest the effort end up like the failed pedestrian malls of a decade past.

During this introductory period, a common planning snafu precipitated one of the necessary changes to Mountain View's district-making process. The city found itself having to permit construction of what seemed an inappropriate office building design of the suburban business park type, on the main street, across from the old city hall. The plans had passed uneventfully through the existing design review process. The review process's shortcomings awakened realization of the need for better control of the increasing volume of development in the downtown, leading to new downtown site plan and architectural design guidelines tailored to the public space needs of a


Pioneer Park
cooling tower
hardsurface work area
scene, paint & prop shop
rehersal garden
outdoor amphitheatre
backstage
forestage
auditorium
second stage performance space
rehersal hall
lunch room
showers
service area
mechanical
expansion
fountain court
print shop
equipment storage
storage
public works
flag court
theatre rotunda
lobby
cafe, gift shop, gallery
outdoor cafe
information services
janitor
reception
atrium
finance
lobby
vault
plaza
word processing center
planning & housing
Castro Street
Mercy Street
theatre drop-off
entry marquee

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particular type of district. The guidelines are aimed at architecturally harmonizing an expanded and redefined downtown and encourage new, mostly larger developments to observe the scale and rhythm of the blocks of older storefront buildings. But the city leadership quickly began to understand that major change must be coaxed and wrought as well as regulated into being. It gradually took on a more activist role in both encouraging private investment in downtown and setting higher standards for building projects.

Presently under construction in the downtown are several resultant large-scale civic, commercial, and residential building projects. Prominent among these is the project for a new City Hall, Performing Arts Theatre, and Civic Plaza. Mountain View determined that renewing the civic presence in the downtown would be important in making it more meaningful to its citizens. By this time, they were particularly concerned with making a great public place in the heart of the city. Through an involved process of research and discussion, a city hall committee prepared a detailed master plan design program for a city hall complex. Two civic buildings would frame a major urban plaza, leading from the main street to a historic park; the city hall would be located on its predecessor's main street site. A competition followed in 1986, held among mostly California architects. William Turnbull Associates' winning design was selected from among schemes by Charles Moore, Christopher Alexander, Jack Diamond, and Tony Carrasco. Its two flamboyant towers and grand corner plaza, forming a diagonal gate to downtown's Pioneer Park, manifested the city's conscious desire to make a bold civic statement. With its lively facades and unfolding sequence of public indoor and outdoor spaces, it has signaled Mountain View's aspirations toward a distinct city identity as much for potential developers as for its local citizenry. Other large projects have been collaboratively shaped by the city's design review teams and developers to enhance public space as well as provide high-density housing, offices, and recreational facilities, in order to expand the mix and cycle of downtown activities.

The city staff also realized that to rebuild a district would take more than a few isolated projects, that the public investment had to be better distributed through the district as a more continuous and sometimes subtle presence. Some main street improvements such as adding the typical brick crosswalks and street trees had been undertaken in years past, but these had not really changed the nature of how one perceived and used the downtown. The first hint of how this could be accomplished was a 1985 project that highlighted

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1 Plan, Mountain View City Hall and Theatre for the Performing Arts (William Turnbull Associates).

2 Perspective View of Plaza and Mountain View City Hall and Theatre for the Performing Arts (William Turnbull Associates).

3 Parking lot alleyway arch structure and improvements, downtown Mountain View. Photograph by Michael Freedman.

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a different way to enter downtown. In the three blocks of "historic," small-parceled main street, the previously dowdy alleyways that connected rear-of-shop public parking lots to the storefronts are now well marked by large ornamental ironwork arch structures paved with patterned granite and lit by closely spaced light standards. The arches have caught local imagination, celebrating this typically American and generally neglected passage from the parked car to the main street.

These small enhancements to the spatial structure of the city, along with the design guidelines and revised design review process, have been nudging new private sector projects toward supporting a district identity. But, as on many American main streets, some blocks on Mountain View's Castro Street are not exclusively lined by small storefront properties. Most of the blocks south of the original, older core are characterized by larger parcels assembled for the bigger development increments typical today. The increasing scale of development parcels, combined with the varied renovations and modernizations of the last 40 years, makes for a downtown building stock of styles and scales for which heterogeneous is a kind term, something no set of guidelines can affect quickly and substantially.

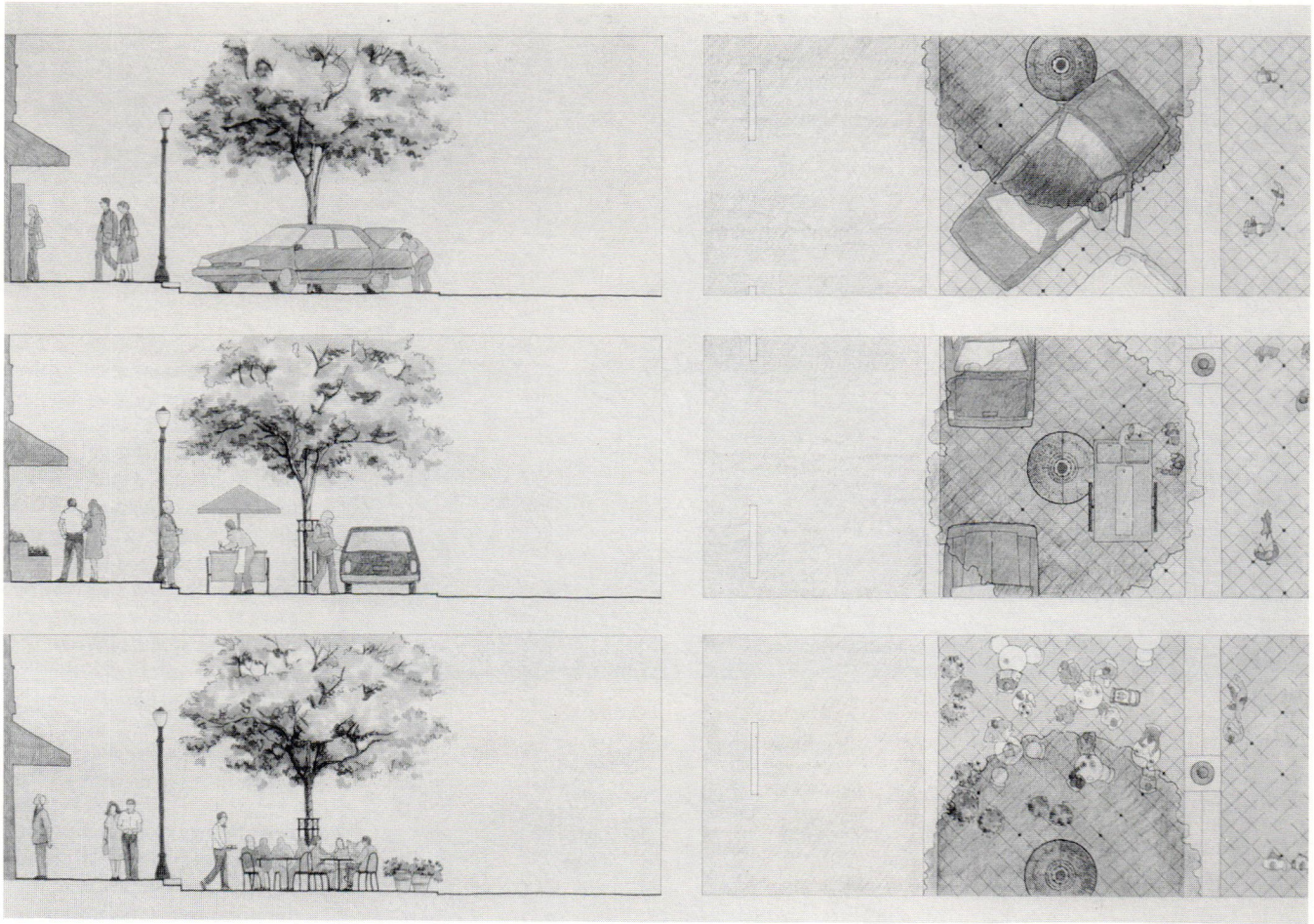
As people realized that Mountain View could not emulate Santa Barbara and impose a unitary style to its architecture in pursuit of a unique character, the redesign of the main street right-of-way became a major thrust of the effort to make an identifiable city center. Like the improvements to the parking lot passages, the new street design would attempt to ornament, intensify, and make legible a main street district structure and character. By strengthening that character, it would also help to quiet the disunity of the downtown buildings.

In addition to educating and advising, we were now charged with designing the main street improvements. We began by attempting to address the limitations of the American main street as a public place. The 1960s saw many well-intentioned but ineffective efforts to create active downtown districts by eliminating the friction between pedestrians and cars. The resulting segregated innovations seemed to create an unfamiliar brave new urban world. Many of the new plazas that resulted proved to be improperly sized or enclosed, or they were cut off from street activity, or people did not quite know how to use them; and pedestrianized main street malls mysteriously lost their clientele to shopping malls. We have observed that American main streets derive much of their vitality and spatial definition from the presence of parked cars and people entering and exiting them, particularly when the parking arrangement is on the diagonal. This is most important in smaller towns and cities, where downtowns are predominantly made up of local service businesses. On the other hand, we have found too many main street right-of-ways designed as if they were sewer pipes, with sections created for maximum flow, rather than following a riverine ecology, with shoals and eddies as well as fast moving water. An example of the latter is the way St. Mark's Place in Manhattan works for pedestrians, with its repeating split-level brownstone storefronts set back from the sidewalk by a zone of entry stairs and submerged spaces. These pockets create rich casual opportunities for sitting on steps, pausing comfortably to fumble with change, or having sidewalk conversations, making that street itself a destination.

Castro Street's typical existing right-of-way dimensions, 90 feet wide with 10-foot sidewalks, gave most of its width to the four and sometimes five lanes of traffic and two rows of parallel parking. Here was the sewer pipe effect at work, cars lording over public space, leaving only slivers of passageway for pedestrians and trees along the base of

4 Castro Street in the historic core (existing), Mountain View, California. Photograph by Michael Freedman.

5 Market Street sidewalk, San Francisco. Photograph by Michael Freedman.



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the buildings. Strolling or lingering are inconceivable in this environment. But widening the sidewalk alone, without the foot traffic to justify it, is no answer.

We devised a new section for the street by decreasing the lanes to three, reducing the asphalt crossing from 70 feet down to 34 feet. The newly gained width went to a flexible parking and pedestrian activity zone on each side of the street, 18 feet wide, between the sidewalk and the moving traffic. Uplit street trees would be regularly spaced along the street at 30-foot intervals. A powerful architectural cadence would be established for the corridor day and night, unlike the effect created by the existing, irregularly spaced trees. The trees would center in the activity zone, pulling the line they form further toward the right-of-way center and visually claiming more of the street section for pedestrians.

Pairs of cars would park diagonally between trees, but they would be interlopers on pedestrian turf. The 15-inch-square concrete pavers they rested on would also tile the 10-foot primary sidewalk. The pattern of pavers, set in a 45-degree grid, contains smaller, accent pavers in a geometric pattern (as opposed to painted striping) to mark parking stalls. A "stair curb" of two steps between sidewalk and zone, interrupted by plinths every 30 feet and streetlights every 60, both stops car tires and provides an additional architectural element to define the spaces.

Most importantly, the space between roadway and side-

6 Sections and plans, proposed Castro Street improvements concept (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran). Cars may be diagonally parked, parallel parked, or removed altogether, to create space for pedestrian activities. Street trees are 30 feet apart and centered in this flexibly used area.

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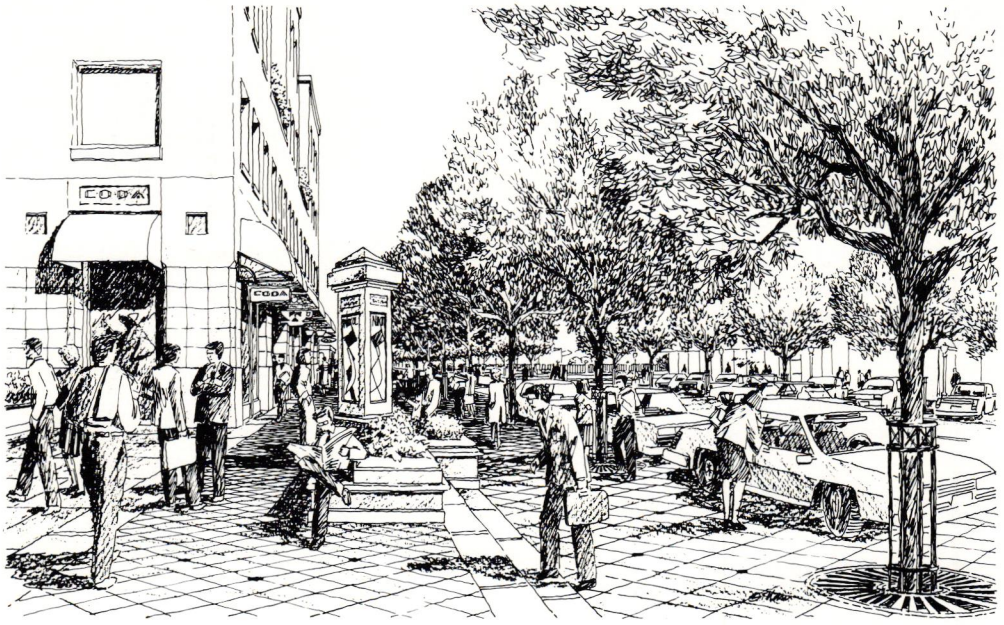

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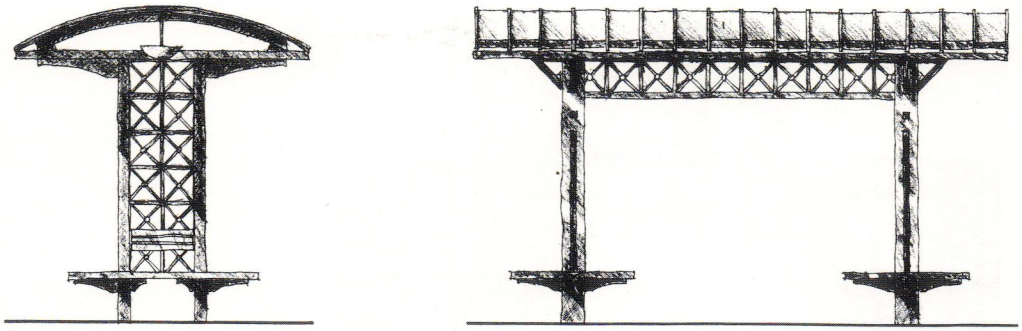
walk operates as a "flexible zone," where the cars may also be parallel parked so as to allow additional pedestrian space and activity, or totally removed to allow the space to be occupied by tables and chairs for outdoor dining at the city's discretion. Here the parking space and pedestrian space borrow from each other according to determined need, allowing new space to be "found" in an existing non-negotiable width of right-of-way.

The absence of the sidewalk café in California is striking, considering the climate and the popularity of outdoor eating. It is an example of the poverty of our activity options (and our perceptions of them as well) in the American public realm, and of the excessive spatial division one experiences when moving between public and private property. The provision of outdoor eating capabilities for Castro Street was also suggested by the many existing downtown restaurants. Although we may disparage the recent spread of cappuccino and croissant culture as a passing affectation, we should consider the opportunity it provides for relegitimizing street life, helping to make that life safe and acceptable by American perceptions (particularly in the suburbs). Also essential to that street life is the mix of activities located there. One of the most successful revitalization projects in Mountain View thus far was not an urban design feature—rather, it was

7 Castro Street outside of the historic core (existing), Mountain View, California. Photograph by Michael Freedman.

8 Perspective view of sidewalk and flexible area, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran). Parallel parking is shown in the foreground.



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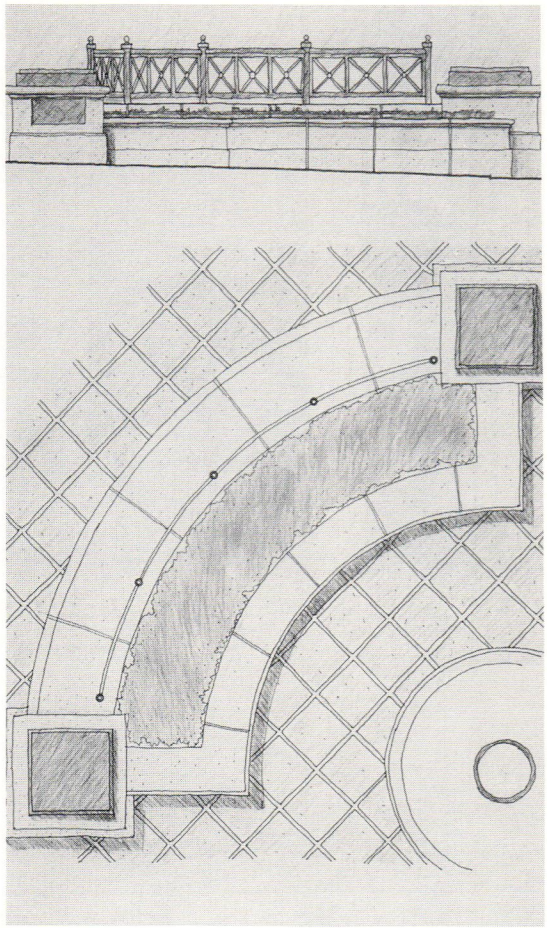
the successful inducement of a bookstore/coffeehouse to open a new location on Castro Street.

In counterpoint to the usual practice of strewing catalogue street furnishings along the curbside, we are experimenting with combining furniture functions to make a more substantial "architecure of the street" itself. A family of specially designed street furnishings supports the changes to the street section. They are made with a palette of precast concrete, cast and fabricated metalwork, and work with squares, circles, rectangles, X's and arc shapes—bus shelters, kiosks, planters, seating, tree grates and guards, and hybrid combinations of these. One ironwork pavilion, marking the intersection of a major public paseo from a large new commercial and residential development with the main street, is an elaborate domed cross-barrel vault, an amplified version of the existing parking lot alleyway arches. The street furnishings are placed in geometrically composed and consistent locations, integrating with corner and midblock crosswalk designs.

The emphasis on clear and regular geometry and spacing, and the avoidance of soft S curves is not merely a formal preference. It is an attempt to wrest the indication of who the street is for from the random parabolas and "pork chop" islands of traffic engineering, to orderly



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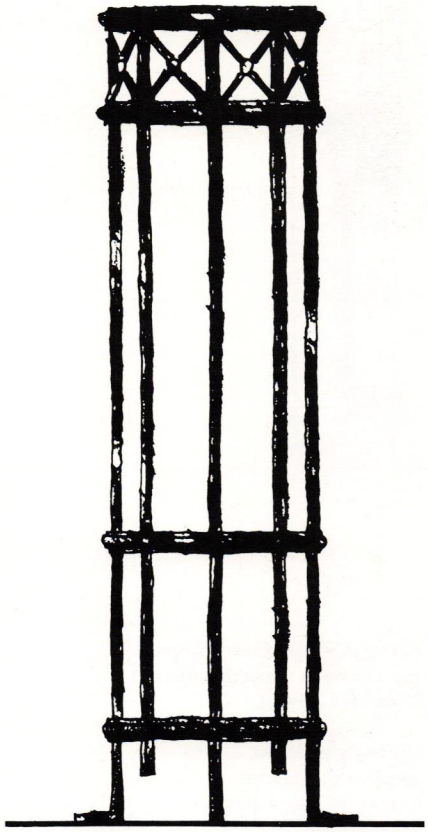
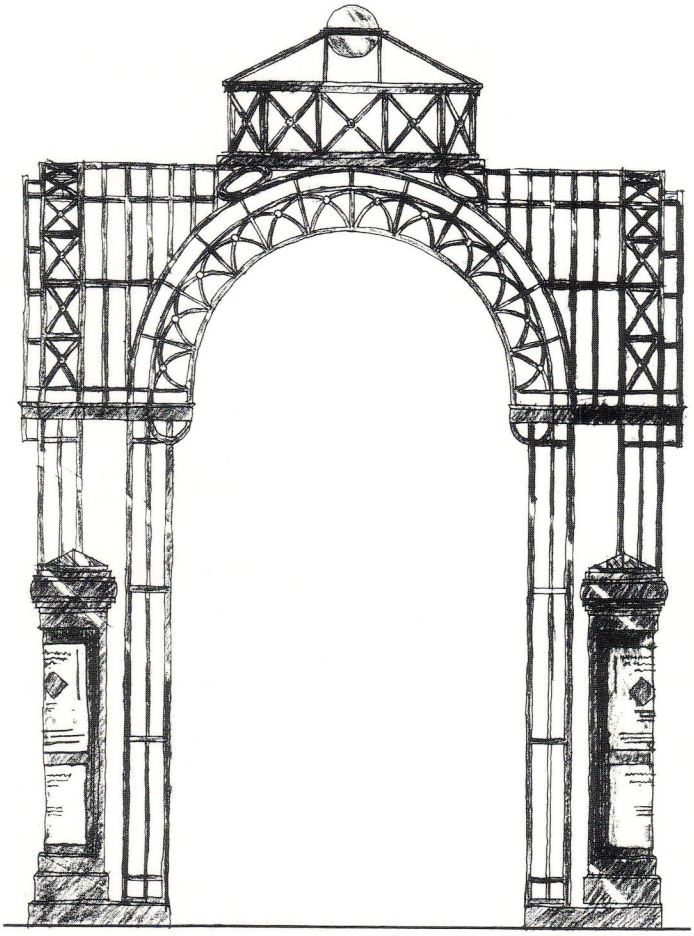


11

9 Bus shelter, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).

10 Plan and elevation, curved planter bench with globe lights, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).

11 Tree guard, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).



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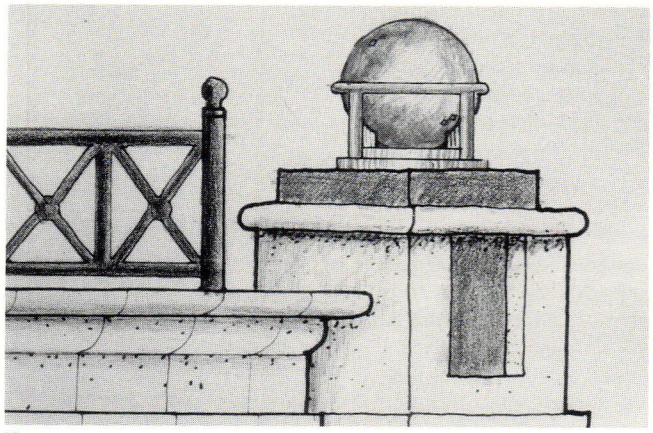

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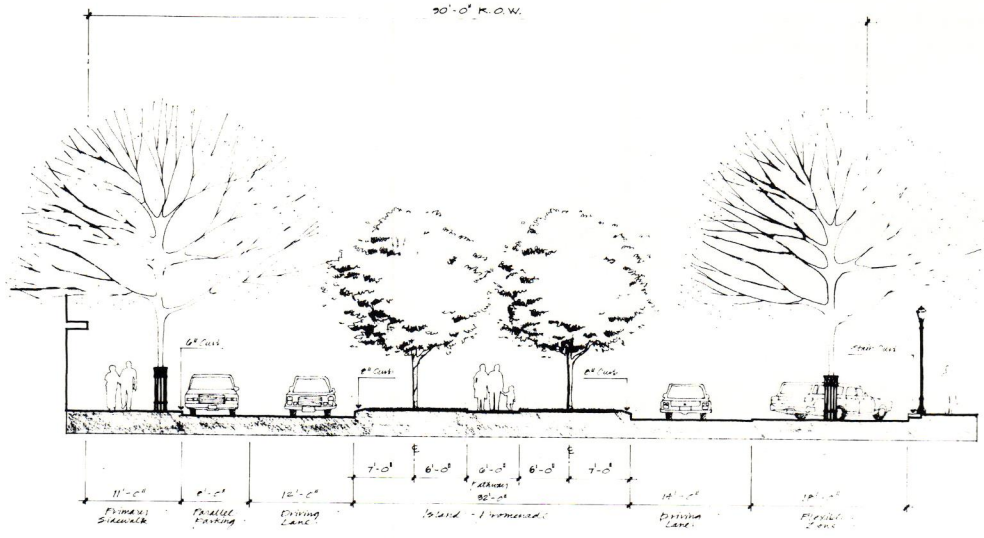

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12 Paseo pavilion, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).

13 Globe light detail, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).

14 Street section at island promenade, Castro Street improvements (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran).

15 Downtown Castro Street and surrounding buildings, Mountain View (Freedman Tung Ashley & Cochran). The historic core of contiguous storefronts with midblock alleys to parking behind can be seen at the north end, close by the Southern Pacific tracks. City Hall Plaza is visible just south of the center. Large-scale developments predominate south to the district edge, El Camino Real.

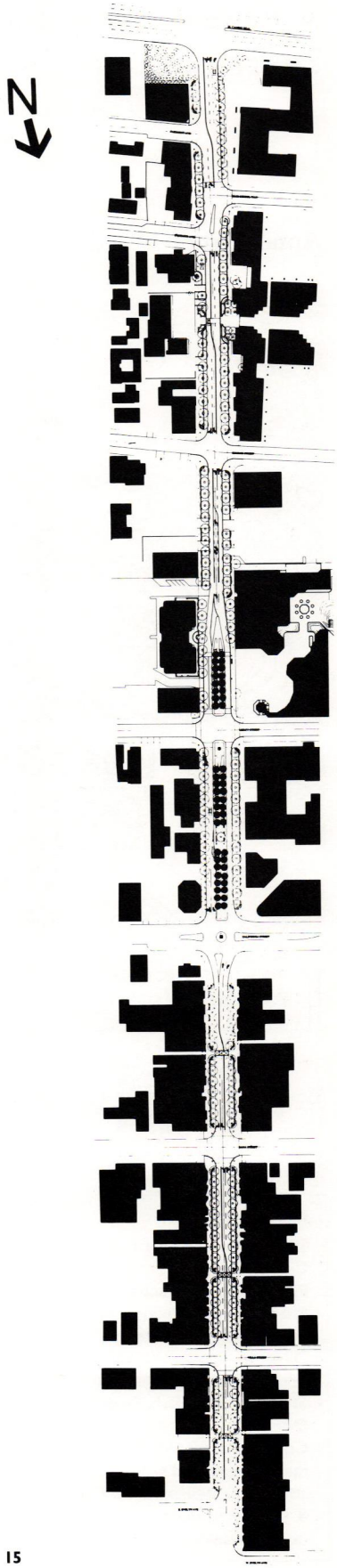
shapes pleasingly recognizable at walking speed. Similarly, the classicist organization of the furniture composition, with simple interpretations of copings and bases and small parts that support larger compositional figures, is an attempt to reflect the architecture of the body, rather than continue the 1960s public works design idiom of stripped down, visually indestructible furnishings suitable for asylums. When it was necessary to select catalogue furnishings, we tried to avoid Victoriana, the ubiquitous street furniture industry alternative. Our belief has been that publicness, as a design quality, has a temporal quality, on which the sense of authenticity depends, hence our reluctance to use nostalgic period reproductions.

Another essential element in making the street memorable is the inclusion of mysterious pieces within the orderly matrix, like the backlit, copper-framed, solid glass sphere lights that mark the crosswalks, inspired by library floor globes.

Merely unrolling the new street section through the downtown would be insufficient as the district armature. We felt that it must also create a hierarchy, a sense of having places-within-a-place. Having noted that the new city hall complex would be a block south of the major downtown intersection, we proposed a change to the street section to help mark a civic core.

In the center of the major intersection, we proposed a 60-foot monumental tower, on a 25-foot-diameter island. Spanning from there to the city hall plaza, a fortuitous building set back the length of that one block allowed us to propose two 32-foot-wide, tandem, grass-covered islands with a cherry-tree-lined, decomposed granite promenade, on axis with the tower. The cherry trees group into three equal-length bosks, the one furthest from the tower forming an edge to the city hall plaza.

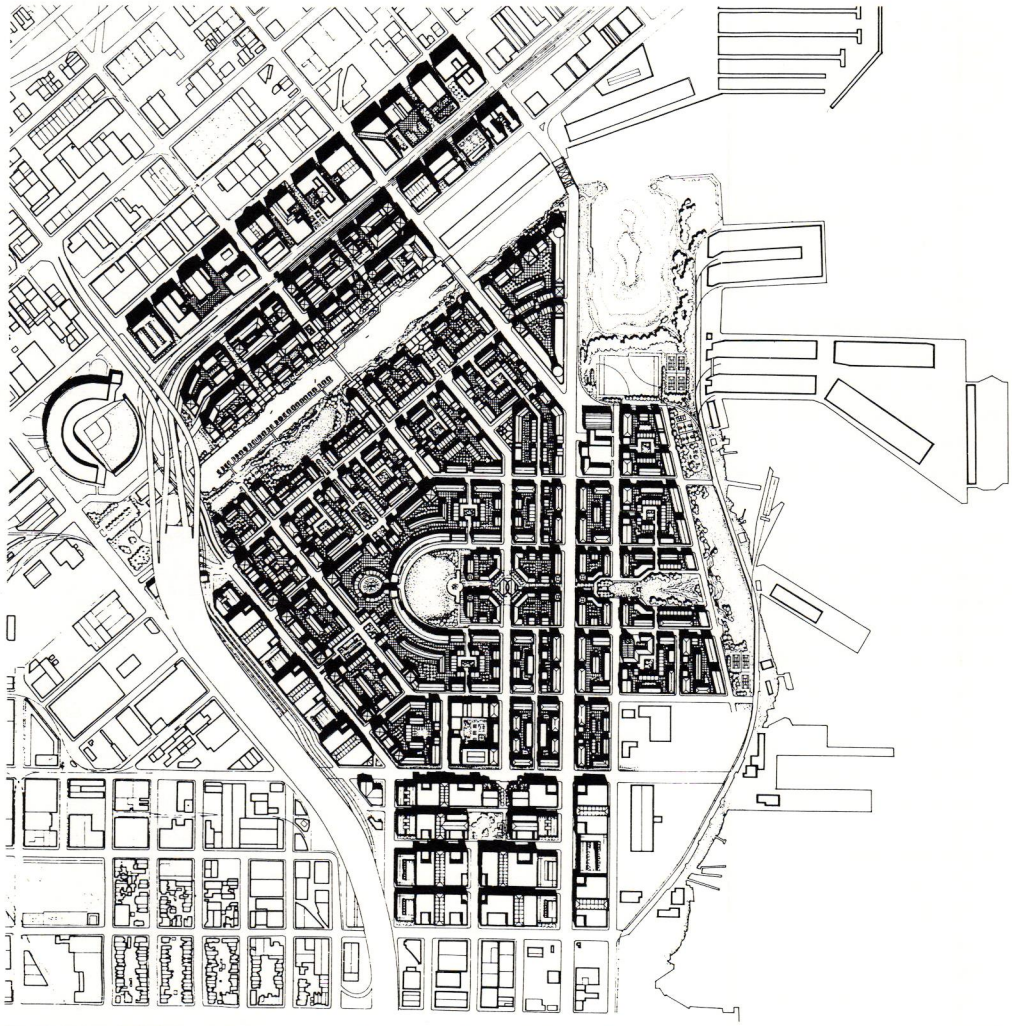
Despite the usual compromises and difficulties, the street improvements are slated for construction in 1989, though some items such as the intersection tower are to be postponed for later funding and community review. Looking at the street design, the city hall, housing developments, and small renovations, we can feel an urban structure that capitalizes on the district's existing features slowly beginning to emerge. In the long process of educating the participants (ourselves included) on what could make the small and medium-sized city a better place, in consolidating those community visions through extended dialogue and interaction, and in learning to exploit the latent design potentials of the gridiron street matrix and the linear main street, the notion of attempting to build a public realm has begun to seem not quite so unlikely or impossible an idea.



15

Is Urban Design on the Right Track? A Review of Two Large Projects in San Francisco and Stockholm

Anne Vernez Moudon



Mission Bay Plan

Sponsor: Santa Fe Pacific Realty Corporation.
Planning: Department of City Planning, City and County of San Francisco (Dean L. Macris, Director, George Williams, Assistant Director Plans and Programs, Alec Bash, Project Director).
Consultants: EDAW, Inc. (project management, land use planning, streetscape design); ELS/Elbasani & Logan Architects (urban design); Danadjieva & Koenig Associates (open space, landscape, design); Gabriel-Roche, Inc. (housing feasibility); Daniel Solomon and Associates (housing design); Carl Anthony & Associates (community services); McGuire & Company (economics); Robert L. Harrison (transportation); KwanHenmi (research and development design); Philip Williams & Associates (hydrology); Wetlands Research Associates (wetlands ecology).

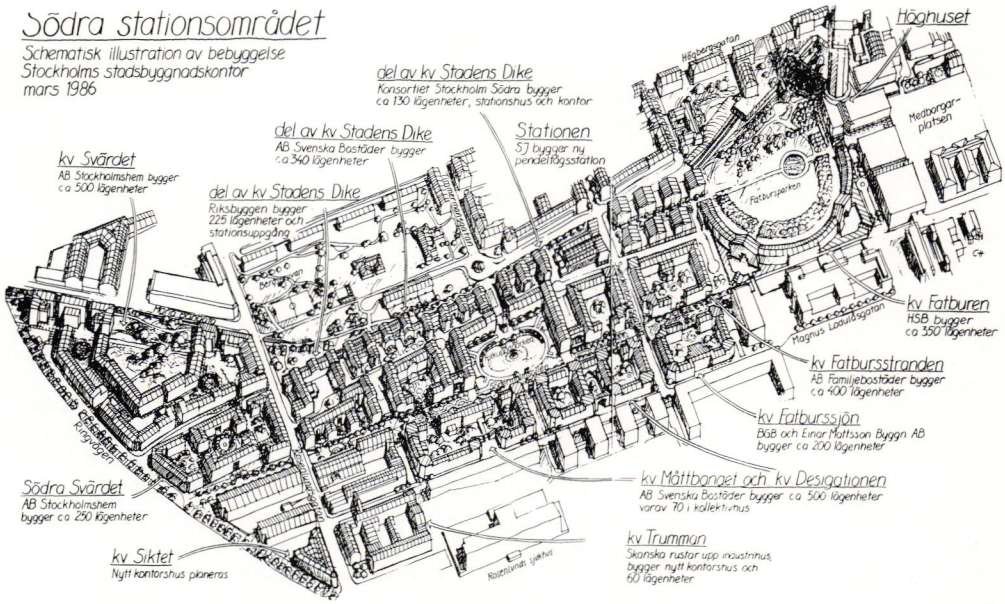
Two landmark plans provide a view into the state of urban design in the 1980s: Mission Bay, the Southern Pacific/ Santa Fe railroad's 294-acre, 8000-unit, mixed-use development in San Francisco, and Södra Station, a 23-hectare (56-acre), 3000-unit, mixed-use project in Stockholm. Located on landfills turned into railroad yards, these projects are bold attempts at urban land reclamation for much-needed residential areas in their respective cities. They synthesize the best of urban design today. In both cases the approach to the design of urban form marks a return to "premodern" urban design practices (meaning primarily eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practices, as illustrated in Benevolo's *Origins of Modern Town Planning*).[1] Yet in neither project are the historical urban forms mindless reproductions of the past: they are adapted to contemporary needs and reflect a serious, nonpolemical critique of modern principles of city-making. Despite all the good design ingredients found in each project, however, I remain skeptical as to their ability to become dynamic urban districts, fully integrated into their venerable surroundings.

Assessing the Plans

The backbone of the design approach used in Mission Bay and Södra Station consists of laying out premodern city streets and

blocks, which carefully continue the geometry of existing grids. Bold public open spaces structure the new districts with a hierarchy of boulevards, squares, neighborhood parks, and in the larger Mission Bay, a regional waterfront park. Buildings frame these opulent spaces, flashing telling images of the schemes of Cerdá, Sitte, Olmsted, Haussmann, and even Burnham. They are statements of born-again, wealthy, bourgeois urbanity. And the designs dig even further into history, with both projects boasting a prominent crescent in the John Wood's tradition—in Södra Station, architect Ricardo Bofill has secured the commission for the crescent. Have the *Ville Radieuse* and its postwar progeny, the urban renewal projects, vanished miraculously?

Unlike urban renewal projects, which recycle areas thought to be socially destitute, Mission Bay and Södra Station seek to reuse land whose previous uses have been made obsolete by technological development. Rejuvenating land uses was also a preoccupation of nineteenth-century planning: crumbling medieval walls and their related "fringe areas"—the no-man's-land that had characterized areas between *intramuros* and *extramuros* development—were the primary target. Today, anachronistic railroad yards and erstwhile in-



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Södra Station

Sponsor: City of Stockholm. Planning: Stockholms stadbyggnadskontor (Jan Inghe, Chief Planner).

Developers, builders, and architects: see credits for various parts of the project in the illustrations.

1 Mission Bay illustrative plan. Note the scale of existing residential fabric in the southwest corner of the plan, and the larger elements of industry surrounding the site (Mission Bay Proposal for Citizen Review, Department of City Planning, City and County of San Francisco, January 1987, A-19).

2 Södra Station plan, March 1986. General massing and distribution of design and building units throughout the site—names correspond to the different developers or builders (Stockholms stadsyggnadskontor, *Stockholm bygger, om 1980-talets byggande i Stockholm* (Stockholm: Liber Förlag, 1986), pp. 76–77).

dustrial waterfronts have become, in both Europe and the United States, the front lines of reclamation efforts.

Return to Old Forms

A quiet but promising revolution in urban design is reinstating civic design and other "old-fashioned" ways of designing cities. This revolution has been eclipsed somewhat by the parallel rise of postmodernism in architecture, which it resembles in its love for historic reference. Yet the changes occurring in urban design stem less from the rejection of modern design principles, reflected chiefly in the return to festive decoration, than from a renewed love for the city, the pre-1920 city in particular. As Julia Trilling has noted, "Post-Modern buildings are usually just as unrelated to the city as the boxes of the Modern movement are."[2] The return of the traditional city has far-reaching impact. Such modern trademarks as isolated towers are "out," as are monolithic slabs of apartment buildings, with their single east-west orientation. The bulky forms typical of past centuries shape an unquestionably urban environment, where the street becomes once again the generic element of public space, opening up periodically into outdoor rooms, such as parks and squares.

The apparent defection from principles of modern design and planning has resulted from a complex set of events during the last 20 years.[3] The primary force, however, was an irate public, who convinced design professionals to support the nature and character of existing, individual cities as rich and varied contexts for urban design. The rapprochement between public and professional values has been gradual, and is still in process.[4] In some celebrated cases such as the town of Bologna, Italy, the West-Berlin Tier Garten and Kreuzberg projects, New York's Battery Park City, and Paris's Le Marais, old-fashioned city design is returning in force. Yet in other instances, modernism prevails. An early competition for the Södra Station development yielded at least one proposal for slabs-in-the-park from a team led by architect Bernt Rosengren. The most farsighted and antimodern response came from Léon Krier, who advocated filling the vacant and underutilized land scattered in the surrounding area of Södermalm with all the program elements. This allowed him to return the railroad yards to their original open-space state. The current plan for Södra Station is a compromise solution that continues to pay some tribute to modernism.

As for Mission Bay, an earlier I. M. Pei award-winning scheme boasted a neo-Renaissance design, complete with a grand axis and large open spaces carpeted with opulent gardens. Intermittent towers adorned a background of street-wall architecture, reaching a sculptural crescendo at one tip of the axis. San Franciscans loathed this sleek, though historicized, version of Miami Beach. In the plan reviewed here they made sure that the mini-downtown was deleted, along with the marina, which extended the Old China Basin. They wanted a neighborhood compatible with the surrounding ones, and with public access to the Bay shore. The current plan is certainly more responsive to these desires.

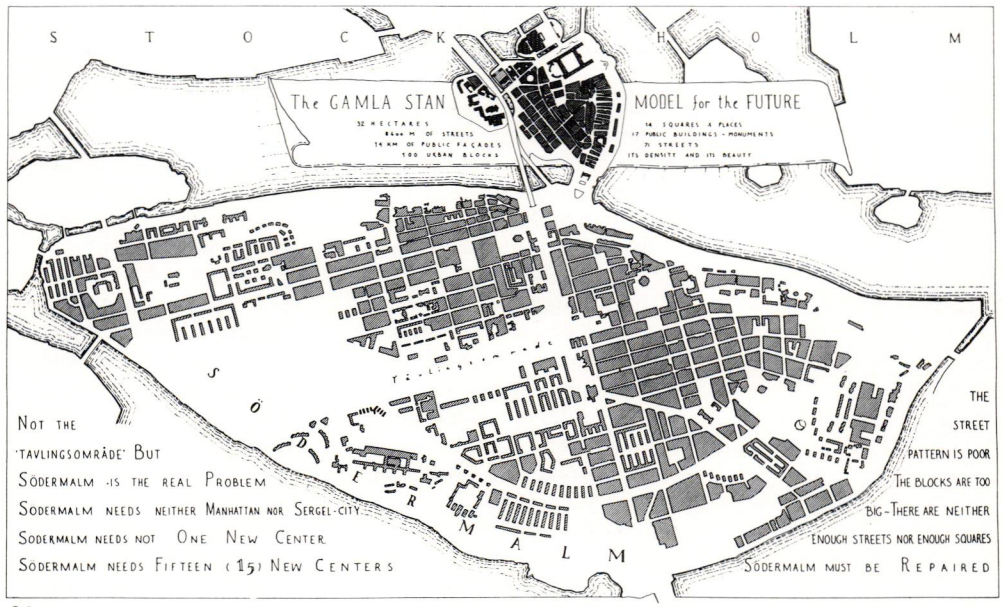
Negotiating with Modernism's Legacy

The current plans of both Mission Bay and Södra Station are not, however, mere replicas of the past; they negotiate with many of the progressive principles of the *Ville Radieuse*. The least exciting of modernism's influences are found at the detailed land-use level of the Mission Bay plan. The plan does not achieve the intricate mix of residences and workplaces that was intended. Land uses are generally segregated in large chunks of land. An attempt to re-create a typical San Francisco neighborhood core, the mixed-use axis along Third and Long Bridge streets (with ground-floor shops and residences above), fails to include office spaces, which are at the edge of

3 Léon Krier's proposal for scattered development within Södermalm. (a) Existing built form; (b) proposed infill. Note Södermalm's proximity to Stockholm's medieval center, Gamla Stan. (Christopher Berk, master's thesis, University of Washington, 1988, p. 184; and *Lotus International* 36 (1982): 110–111)

the site along an existing elevated freeway. Although no longer the high-rise mini-downtown proposed in I. M. Pei's 1984 award-winning plan, the office zone still awaits corporate-sized, mid-rise structures, the majority of whose users will not be able to afford to live in the adjacent neighborhoods. Meanwhile, corner grocery and other convenience stores, those staples of everyday urban life, are absent from most of the pristine residential enclaves. Finally, a commuter transit stop serves the office district well; but in its location at the edge of the residential areas, near the environmental vacuum of the elevated freeway, it resembles a park-and-ride suburban station more than its exciting urban nineteenth-century predecessors.

Yet excellent propositions are made to "modernize" block design. In both projects pre-twentieth-century block forms have been manipulated to incorporate many contemporary ideals: for instance, a strong hierarchy of street uses assists the consolidation of superblocks, in clear reference to the Garden City tradition. Also, the historical block forms take on new functions and meanings. Consolidated blocks in Mission Bay borrow from alley developments of early nineteenth-century Washington, D.C., or Edinburgh: higher-density buildings face the main streets, while



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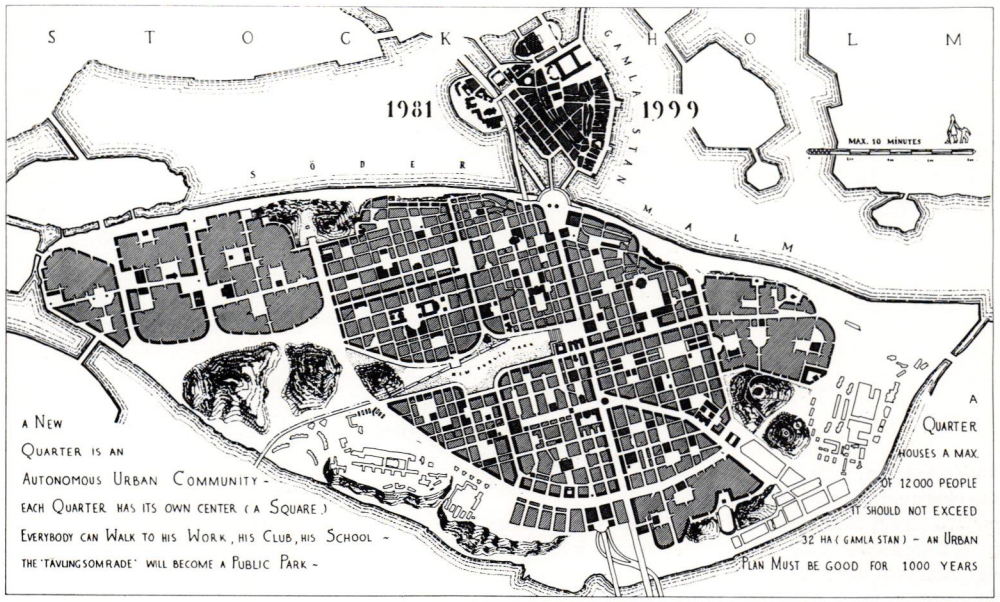


3B

lower-density buildings are set around an inner-block collective space serviced by narrow lanes. But here the protected inner blocks will house not the servant classes, but the more privileged residents. Also, the inner-block open space in Mission Bay is highly structured, with neat, orderly parks surrounded by driving lanes. In Södra Station cars are allowed to intrude on only three sides of residential blocks, and mid-block open spaces take on an informal, romantic chartacter.

The plans handle vehicular and pedestrian traffic differently. Mission Bay projects a more urban image, despite an overall density approximately half that of Södra Station's, because pedestrians share most streets with cars and only back alleys are reserved for local traffic. This traditional mix of wheeled and foot traffic is avoided in most of Södra Station. There, a decidedly modern stance combines automobile-oriented streets with large, quiet, and bucolic inner blocks, which are aligned along a longitudinal pedestrian axis.

The strict distinction between fronts and backs, private and public land in Mission Bay will facilitate the subdivision of the inner-block space into traditional, small, privately controlled gardens. But Södra Station's large expanses of open space inherited from the modern movement will require a central, collective maintenance apparatus. Such large semipublic open spaces have not fared well in most American projects, but in culturally and socially more homogeneous Sweden, they have been successful: they are friendly to the host of pedestrians, who can either use the well-defined public pedestrian lanes or wander into the more private, looser spaces of the residential inner blocks. In Mission Bay, on the other hand, pedestrians are kept on structured paths in the fronts of residential areas—reflecting, again, the culturally engrained need for guarded privacy, made increasingly acute by the widening gap between haves and have-nots in American society.

Local Architectural Character

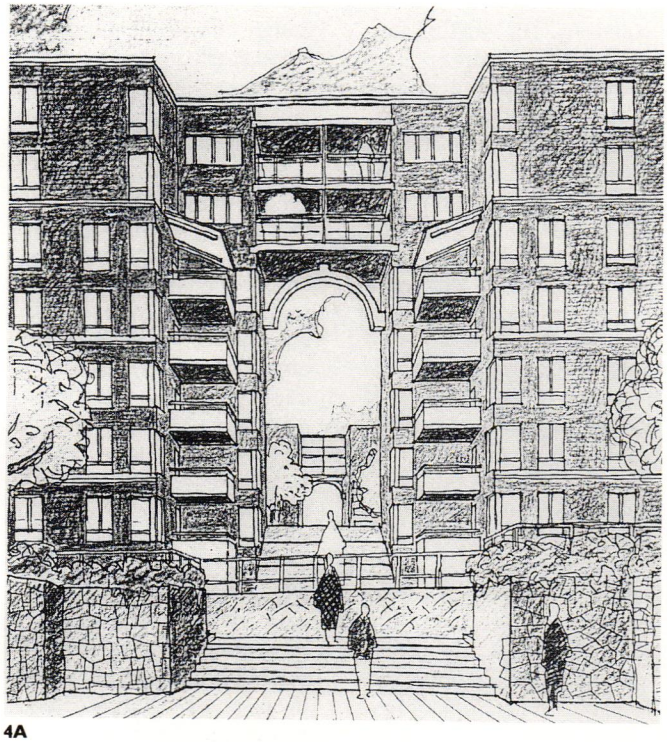
What will it feel like to walk, drive, live, and work in Mission Bay or Södra Station? For all their similarities in geometry and spatial organization, these plans provide very different experiences. In a significant departure from premodern practices, which sought to impose in redeveloped areas a unifying architectural order of a neoclassical nature, urban designers have relied on existing ordinary buildings to define the character of the two projects. Detailed regulation of architectural form is intrinsic to both plans, and each refers to buildings typically found in the respective cities. The creeping homogenization fostered by the International Style may at last be checked, and the environments created are likely to fit the expectations of their users because they resemble what is there already.

Relating to the local architecture is particularly challenging in Mission Bay: the high densities required to make new residential construction economically feasible are not easily fit into San Francisco's fine-grained fabric of single houses and small apartment buildings. On the other hand, Stockholm's primarily eighteenth- and nineteenth-century urban building stock of compact courtyard apartment buildings more easily accommodates today's large buildings. The Mission Bay plan responds with a rich assortment of residential building types. In keeping with the City Planning Code, building entries occur in regular, small increments along the streets to preserve the character of the existing fabric. Curb cuts and access to structured parking are restricted to break down the scale experienced by the pedestrians and the residents. The number of families using the same entry, lobby, or landing is limited to entrust residents with a "defensible" piece of the environment.

Parking

Parking is a significant urban design problem without precedent in premodern

4 Södra Station, different developments within the project. (a) AB Stockholmshelm, Coordinator Arkitekter AB, architects; (b) Riksbyggen, Riksbyggen Konsult, architects; (c) AB Svenska Bostäder, EGÅ Arkitektkontor AB, architects; (d) Konsortiet Stockholm Södra, Fabege AB och Folke Eridson Byggnads AB, Arkitektgrupp 4C, architects (Stockholms stadsbyggnadskontor, 1986, pp. 79–82).



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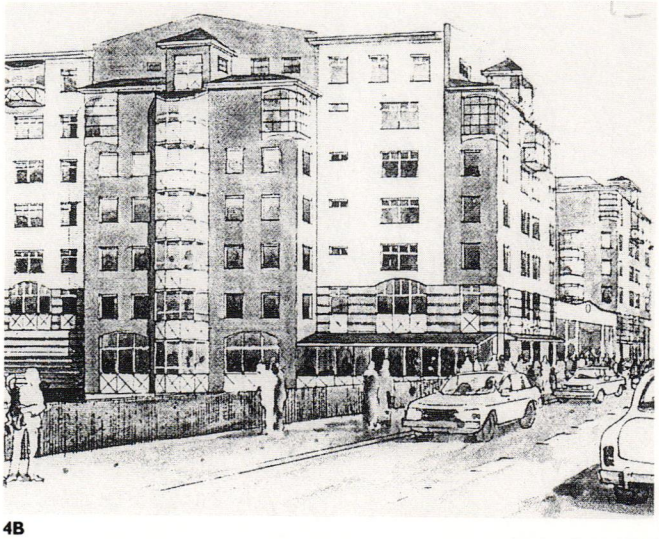

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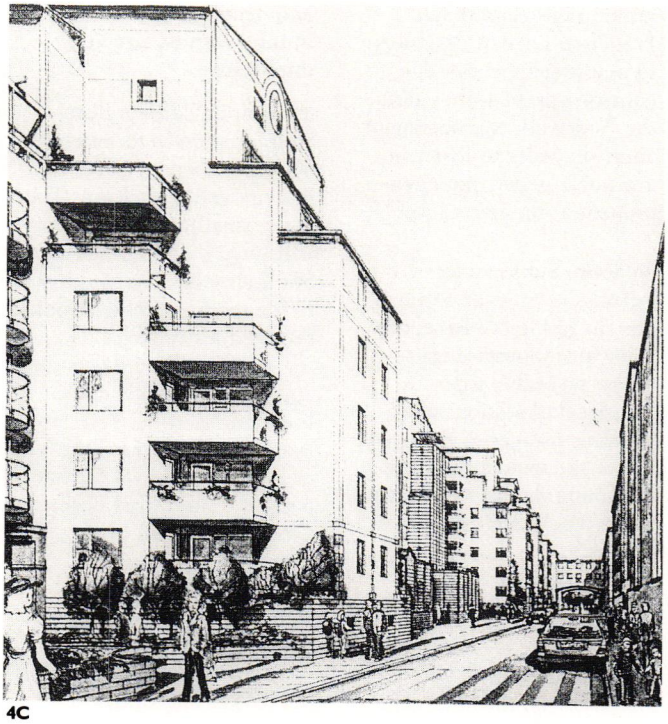

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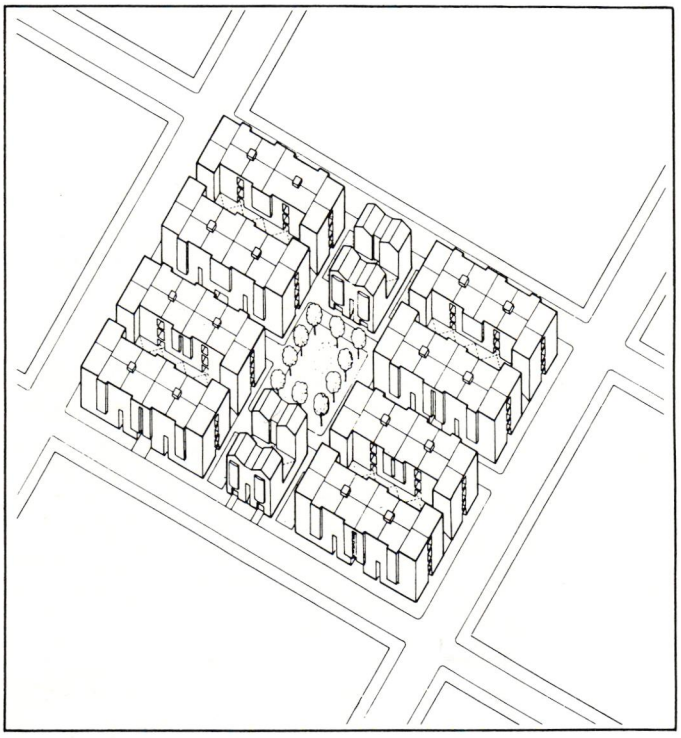

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5 Mission Bay prototypes. (a) Typical block of three-story walk-up prototypes; (b) low-rise walk-up prototypes (Department of City Planning, San Francisco, 1987, pp. 3–34, 3–35, 3–39).

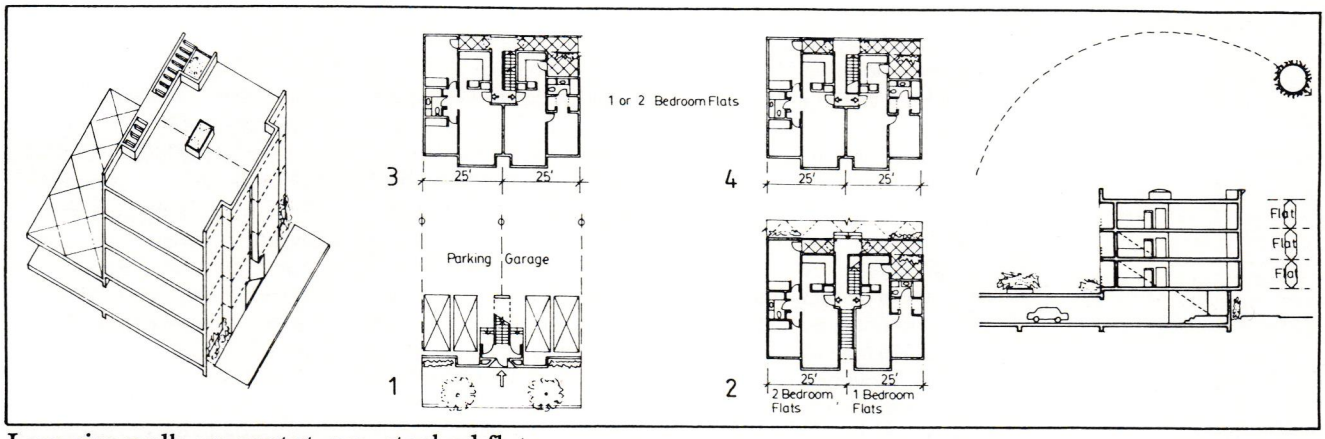
solutions. The Mission Bay plan, with its focus on private housing and its cup-to-lip relationship between house and car, has dedicated virtually all of the residential ground floor to a parking platform—podium is the term used in the plan. The podium limits the configuration of the many nonelevator buildings of the plan: two-story dwellings sit atop one-story apartments because of the assumption that people will not walk up more than two stories unless the additional story occurs inside the dwelling. This arrangement prevents the larger, family-oriented units from having direct access to the garden level. The concrete slab holding the garden level also restricts planting. The pervasiveness of the podium has caused San Francisco's urban designers to devise stringent design controls for what they term the "sidewalk encroachment zone" in order to foster an amenable pedestrian environment at the street level.[5]

In Södra Station a less permissive attitude toward the car has led designers to look for innovative solutions: favorable topographical conditions allow parking garages to be placed under the main streets, thus liberating the backyards and inner-block open spaces for greens.[6]

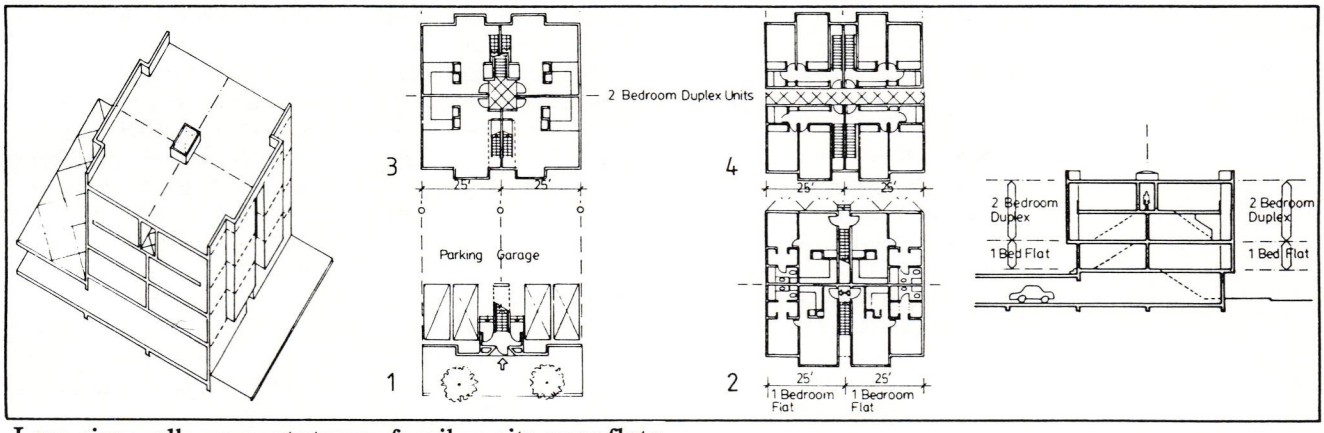
Open Space

If open space is plentiful in both Södra Station and Mission Bay, the landscape designs remain bland, somewhat simplistic, and unconvincing: neither the nostalgic reproductions of untouched nature nor the pristine, over-domesticated greens of the Renaissance meet the need for exciting, colorful, public, and collective open spaces. One senses some discomfort and indecision vis-à-vis the role of the urban green or outdoor space, though perhaps it is just a lack of concern or resources. Yet, as we have become almost exclusively urban societies, as our relationships to wilderness and to agriculture have changed radically over the past century, what has become of the imagery and symbolism projected by our open spaces? Unfortunately, neither project offers a rich and detailed set of ideas in tune with its size and importance.

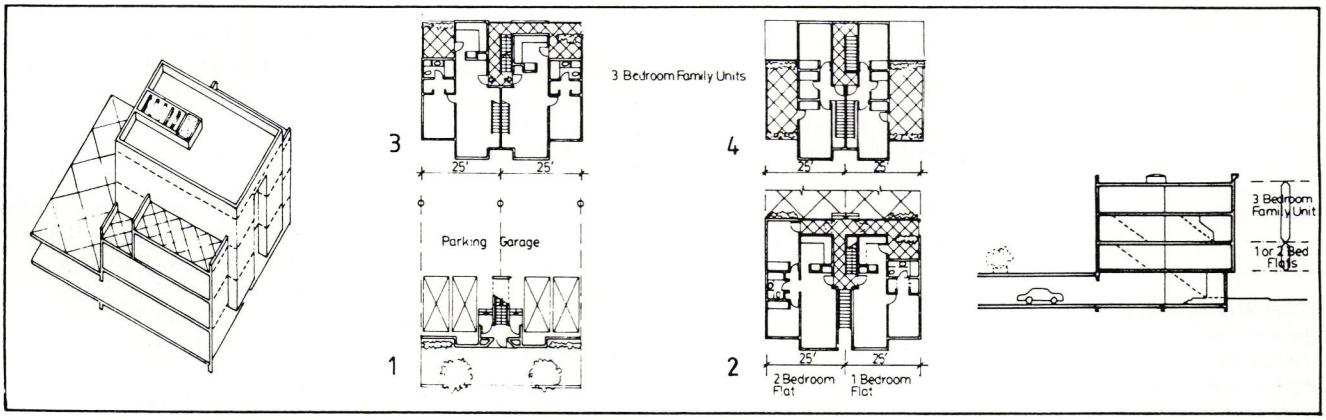
Mission Bay differs from Södra Station in its extensive network of open spaces and in its prized waterfront. The many small urban parks will serve their community, but their weak relationship to the main streets overlooks the need for linkages. Even the obligatory jogging trail appears in a lonely, monofunctional setting. Perhaps most objectionable is the treatment of the waterfront park and the China Basin Canal, a remnant of the area's swampish origins. Both spaces take on a romantic character that clashes, rather than contrasts, with the urbanity of the parks. The China Basin



Low-rise walk-up prototype: stacked flats

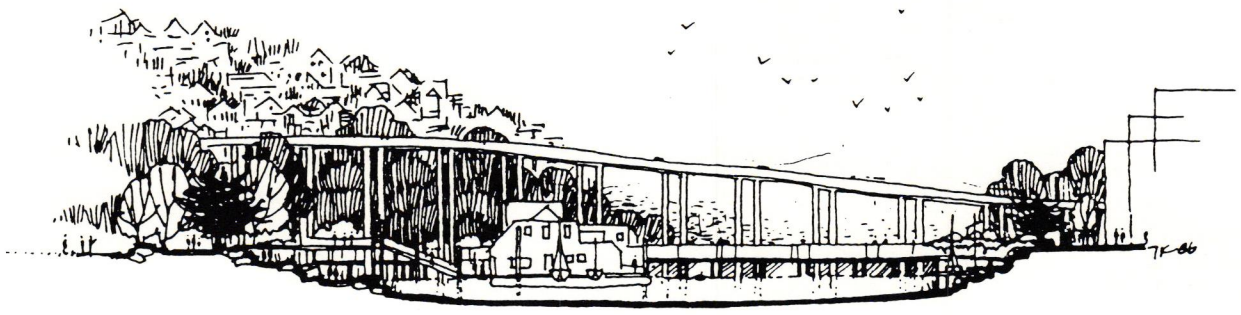


Low-rise walk-up prototype: family units over flats



Low-rise walk-up prototype: duplex units over flats

5B



6

Canal might be better in the neighborhood as a Venetian canal than as the weepy, anachronistic pond-cum-houseboats that is intended. And while an urban wild is a good idea in San Francisco, it would need to be a sizable "park" to have the desired impact. Finally Mission Bay's streets do not receive the detailed design attention they warrant. How will cafés, bus stops, newspaper stands, street vendors, benches, and so on, be accommodated? Streets are the most public and dynamic part of an open space system, demanding careful and innovative approaches to their design.[7]

Principles of open-space design for Södra Station are even less explicitly documented than for Mission Bay. The collective greens in the inner residential blocks are likely to cater to children and families because of their easy access and protected character. But the pedestrian spine may actually compete with the street as a draw for pedestrians, leaving the latter at the mercy of cars.

Taking Stock

Can we feel confident that the blend of old and new city-making techniques in these two projects is a step in the right direction for contemporary urban design? Have the principles of urban and architectural form been mastered to support a person-oriented, community-minded urban life? Are the remaining issues only technical—parking, pollution, refined approaches to land uses, etc.? I suspect that urban design practice of the late twentieth century will look to our descendants like no more than skillful stage-making: the forms and images are strong and enticing, but the play is dull. We may have learned, once again, how to *design* cities, but we have a long way to go to *make* them. That people are no longer packed in enormous, look-alike caserns covering acres of urban land is a credit to the new plans. The smaller buildings, the more varied, tradition-bound architecture, the friendlier streets and open spaces all contribute to a better urban environment. Yet, for all their good design, the new residential environments will remain "projects": houses and neighborhoods will be built, run, and maintained by large institutions, as if they were hotels or convention centers.

Diversity and Aging

Two issues that are essential to the livelihood of residential environments have not been properly addressed in these projects: diversity and resilience. These two qualities are best ensured in a fine-grained urban fabric: units of land ownership must be small to decentralize the control of design, building, and management decisions. Yet in Södra Station the units will range from 130 to 500 dwellings and in Mission Bay from 200 to 500 dwellings—unusually large chunks of residential development by either city's standards. This means that one to five of the superblocks planned will be controlled by a single entity at a time, whether private in the case of San Francisco or quasi-public in the case of Stockholm. The tight web of design regulations that urban designers have tailored to inject variety and individualization may counteract some of the impact of the development's oppressive scale. But a tract-like appearance will be difficult to avoid since within each unit of development the same aesthetic and spatial characteristics are likely to predominate, even if the scale of the buildings is reduced. Furthermore, because of the large development parcels, the projects will mature uniformly, unlike ordinary neighborhoods, where each building, each garden, each nook and cranny, is subjected to a different treatment and modified according to the varied needs of different owners and residents.

Since World War II the development of most large tracts of centrally located urban land has been granted by city management to large developer-builders specializing in such projects. This is in contrast to premodern projects, in which both implementation and management were by ordinary developers and builders, who operated

6 Mission Bay open space. China Basin and soft edge treatment along water (Department of City Planning, San Francisco, 1987, pp. 7–92,7–93).

within a pattern of land ownership usually based on parcels of 100 by 150 feet, or smaller. Over the years this fine-grained framework for building and land ownership has permitted the fabric of cities to change and to adapt in different ways, at different paces, from property to property, within, and sometimes in spite of, the overall project design.

The Lot as an Instrument of Urban Design

Ironically, large, premodern plans and projects were attempts to *unify* an urban landscape that at the time was perceived (perhaps correctly) as "unorderly" because it was made of so many small units! But until the end of the nineteenth century, such efforts did not go beyond the control of facade detailing, followed, in some cases, by the actual building of facades. Since then urban design and planning have pursued a course of increasing unification of the urban landscape. In the process they have come to advocate the elimination of the private lot as the primary cause of urban chaos and blight.[8] The "antiplot" campaign has been so successful that many designers and planners today are unaware of the influence of the lot on urban form and design; platting and subdivision design are now regarded as unglamorous, technical tasks, and are left for the engineers. This is why recent calls for design diversity, and their accompanying regulatory apparatus for fostering a return to an *architecture of lots* (the Mission Bay plan reliance on building types is particularly explicit in this regard; see "Notes on Battery Park City," this issue), have been met with an institutional vacuum. Public-sector designers and planners are unable to provide fine-grained ownership structures and are unwilling to enter the maze of ordinary developers and landowners, who, nonetheless, continue to build and manage the greater share of our cities. In the name of efficiency, they turn to large entities that may or may not have had prior experience in large-scale building and management. Yet, while such practices may have been attractive in the past under the guise of innovation and economies of scale, experience has shown that extremely unresponsive environments have resulted.[9]

Units of 100 or more dwellings are common in private-sector housing in Stockholm, where a relatively homogeneous population has, in the past three decades, adjusted to a highly regulated life-style. Yet some 30 percent of Stockholm's residents still own or reside in houses, which is considered a privilege. Furthermore, Stockholm has a history of quasi-public management of projects with thousands of dwellings. Successful in such new towns as Vällingby, this practice has been tarnished by recent problems: for instance, for many of the dwellings of the 1960s million-unit program, three times the initial investment is now being poured into necessary "modernization"; and even Dalen, a 1970s low-rise, high-density project, is plagued with a variety of use and maintenance problems. For Americans, and San Franciscans specifically, units of ownership have traditionally been much smaller. In the United States there is little experience in managing large, dense urban projects successfully over a long period of time. (See "Notes on Battery Park City," for a discussion of exceptional conditions in Manhattan.) Therefore, few, if any, precedents warrant the scale of development proposed in San Francisco and Stockholm.

Other aspects of the plans will hinder the graceful aging of the districts. Both plans exude a self-contented finality, which reflects the power of institutional forces, but bodes ill for a lively future urban environment: the neatly packaged, tightly dimensioned spaces leave little for the imagination. There will be no surprises, no left-over or unclaimed spaces. Within a few years of construction, both projects will be denser (in buildings and in people) than most existing neighborhoods in their respective cities. Yet the

same density would take decades to achieve if development were to occur without the benefit of a plan.

Institutional Shortcomings

City-making issues are, at this point, less architectural than institutional. The outdated decision-making processes and mechanisms that govern Mission Bay and Södra Station remain essentially unchanged since the era of the infamous urban renewal and large modern development projects. Södra Station is the latest course in Stockholm's 50-year, bold and systematic town planning and building feast. Conceived in the early 1980s, it is being built in toto (planned completion for 1991) by several quasi-public developers and housing corporations, under the strict control of the City of Stockholm Planning and Real Estate Offices. The project's development machinery is a direct descendant of the modern, large-scale, centralized city-making organizations that plagued the post–World War II reconstruction of European cities as well as the ill-fated redevelopment schemes in America in the 1960s.

Mission Bay's development is more reminiscent of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practices: its plan, complete with strict design regulations, is directed at a primary private-sector landowner.[10] A subject of controversy since the mid-1970s, the plan has been negotiated by the landowner and the city's Board of Supervisors, in conjunction with the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission. The project lies outside the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency—the only agency with a lasting track record of neighborhood development. But it does follow the Planning Department's much-acclaimed Downtown Plan and meshes with the city's aging, but politically powerful Urban Design Plan and the Planning Code regulating residential zoning. If Mission Bay's multifaceted planning process contrasts with Södra Station's top-down decision process, it is only a reflection of a complex set of public and private forces attempting to find a common ground, and not an antidote for the large institutional and corporate entities in charge. In neither case do the design and management decision-making structures provide an institutional framework that is responsive to the needs for diversity and change of neighborhoods.

Conclusions

Icons Versus Control

In both Södra Station and Mission Bay, urban designers have questioned old models and ideals and have probed the indigenous forms of their cities. Correcting many past design mistakes, they have adapted familiar forms to contemporary needs. But icons are only one side of the formula for making good environments. Building practices and management structures are the other side. Good design cannot exist without the support of appropriate clients. Unfortunately, urban designers in both cities have moved ahead in the face of essentially unchanged and out-of-date planning and management structures: the designs have created discrete, decentralized environments, but the building and management techniques relate to megaprojects.

Buildings, neighborhoods, cities are more than physical representations of our societies. They are long-lasting tools for better living. How environments as tools will be handled *over time* must be an integral part of our plans.

The building of urban districts in recent decades has taught us to calibrate and refine our policies to reduce the adverse impact of planned, large-scale development. We now value mixed land uses. We are integrating different income groups by subsidizing families in need and are providing dwellings of different sizes and characters to encourage families with different structures to live close to each other. In Mission Bay private developers are required to make room for affordable housing and to provide small retail and service facilities, which are unlikely to come to expensive new developments without appropriate incentives. The time has come to accommodate small developers and owners and to ensure their participation in the making of planned residential districts. In San Francisco this means the inclusion of developments of less than 100 units—the kind commonly found in the city today. It may be more difficult to find small developers in Stockholm, where municipal housing companies and quasi-public housing cooperatives are so large. But the impact of the cooperatives' scale could be reduced if they were given scattered sites within the district and required to use different architects and autonomous management structures to run and maintain each property. In both Stockholm and San Francisco the new districts could be sprinkled with smaller lots that would appeal to other types of developers and owners. In operational terms, the units of development and maintenance can be broken down by including an old-fashioned plat or a plot plan as an integral part of the general plan.[11] Ideally, the street frontage of a typical lot should be less than 50 feet in San Francisco and 100 feet in Stockholm to fit the existing urban fabric. But 100- and 200-foot frontages

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7 Mission Bay revised plan, May 1988, by John Kriken at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

could be accommodated to introduce a new, yet still congenial scale of development in each city.

The costs for such procedures need not be high: the specific controls established can serve 100 developers as well as three. The only added concern is to negotiate agreements and monitor the work of a greater number of outfits as development takes place. But the long-range benefits are apparent, particularly in the light of enormous costs of delayed maintenance and adaptation now being paid for the "modernization" of large housing projects built after the 1930s.[9] Decentralized ownership and management will not only instill more design diversity initially, it will also create environments where owners and residents can cooperate easily in the management of the properties, making changes as they go without major capital requirements.

Weaving in the Time Element

Institutional shortcomings aside, more can be done in the realm of design and planning to leave room for change. Pergolas, verandas, and large balconies, which are typically tailored by residents to suit their needs, could be required details in projects where the units of development and ownership remain large. Roofs can be designed to facilitate expansion, and front yards can be made generous for the same reason. It is now accepted that ground-floor units should have their own direct access in addition to the collective access leading to the upper floors. The detailed design of these individual access points can also encourage people to take control of these spaces.

At a larger scale, elements of surprise and variety can be fostered by carefully planning the project's incremental development over time. Current revisions to the Mission Bay Plan include a conscious effort to group the different phases of development around a significant public open space, which will act as a readily identifiable center for the different communities within the project.

An astute phasing plan can simulate old-fashioned urban development. Rather than allocating large chunks of land for each phase, smaller parcels of land to be developed at a later date can be interspersed strategically in the neighborhood without threatening the continuity of the new setting. For instance, increased densities can be introduced gradually: vacant parcels in the middle of superblocks can be treated as small urban wilds while awaiting development. Parcels can also be left vacant inside blocks without jeopardizing the integrity of the block; for instance, blocks can be shaped initially by two rows of buildings along the main streets, while the parcels along the side streets are left undeveloped at first.

Designers and planners need to become skilled at weaving into their plans the time element so important to the quality of cities. Such skills will require detailed, critical knowledge about the history of city-making, something more than a selective memory for past icons.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Marina Botta, Christopher Berk, Jan Inghe, Leif Blomquist, and the BOOM Group for their help in gathering the information during my brief stay in Stockholm; Daniel Solomon, George Williams, Alec Bash, Allan Jacobs, and John Kriken for discussions regarding the Mission Bay Plan.

Notes

1 Leonardo Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971 [1963]).

2 Julia Trilling, "A Future That Looks Like the Past," *Atlantic Monthly* (29 July 1985): 28–34.

3 Foremost is the public disapproval of modern schemes. Many modern projects built between the 1940s and 1960s in Europe and the United States remain partially occupied despite subsidies to their tenants, while older projects have long waiting lists (the latest examples are found in France, Sweden, as well as Newark, New Jersey, and Kansas City). Parallel to this is the public endorsement of historic preservation. Studies influenced by the rise of the social sciences in design and planning have shown the problems associated with some of the staples of modern design: the negative effects of high-rise buildings on middle-class families, particularly when low-rise housing types prevail in the community; the impossibility of using and maintaining the large open spaces; and the destructive social effects of automobile-dominated streets (Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space, Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* [New York, Macmillan, 1973]; and *Community of Interest* [Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980]; Clare Cooper-Marcus, *Easter Hill Village* [New York: Basic Books, 1975]; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* [New York: Random House, 1961]; Donald Appleyard, *Livable Streets* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981]). Historians have been able to describe the value of old cities for contemporary needs (Josef W. Konvitz, *The Urban Millenium* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985]; Spiro Kostof, "Cities and Turfs," *Design Book Review* 10 (1986): 35–39; John Reps, *The Remaking of Urban America* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965]). Some urban designers have never espoused modern designs out of love and respect for traditional cities (Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972]; Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning From Las Vegas* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972]; Denise Scott Brown, "Between Three Stools," in *Education for*

Urban Design, edited by Ann Ferebee [Purchase, N.Y.: Institute for Urban Design, 1982]); others have eventually rejected once-accepted approaches to city design (Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964]).

4 Paul Goldberger, "Reinventing the City," *New York Times Magazine*, Part 2 (26 April 1987): 18–21, 56–60.

5 Some of these issues are now being reconsidered in the current revisions of the plan. Lower-density housing (deemed more marketable and less expensive to build) will reduce the size of the parking podium to the building footprint, thus freeing more space for gardens and greens.

6 In Skarpnäck, a project preceding Södra Station, Stockholm's planners avoided the first-level parking platform by integrating handsome parking structures that look like market halls within the residential fabric of each block. A few of these structures actually house a market facility on the ground floor.

7 In the current revision of the plan a street and a plaza are being added along China Basin, making it readily accessible to the public. Street hierarchies are redefined to accentuate actual and perceptual links between public spaces inside the project and the waterfront—an important issue in what could be the only site in San Francisco that, because of its flatness, does not relate immediately to the water (fig. 8).

8 Efforts to unify city form precede the Age of Enlightenment. The reasons and mechanisms used for controlling city-making have changed over the course of history, sometimes repeating themselves (J. W. Knovitz, *The Urban Millenium* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985]). The condemnation of the private lot as a hindrance to proper city planning can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century. I have discussed antiplot attitudes during the Garden City movement in "Platting Versus Planning" (*Landscape* 29:1 [1986]: 30–38). Jacques Lucan's "The Terrain of Architecture" (*Lotus International* 36 [1982]: 5–19) extends the discussion into modern times. Quoting Le Corbusier's characteristic extremism, "there can be no modern planning without the unification of the land," Lucan retraces the evolution of planning thought which led to the elimination of the plot. While a number of Le Corbusier's contemporaries rejected the principles of modern architecture, they called for "improved Haussmannism," whereby the city block and the street layout became the basic units of planning. Lucan shows how "to see the block as the most important unit in planning operations meant revolutionizing the form of property."

9 Anne Vernez Moudon, "Platting Versus Planning: Housing at the Household Scale," *Landscape* 29:1 (1986): 30–38.

10 After an aborted attempt to develop a plan privately, the primary landowner decided to "hire" the city to develop an acceptable plan, which is now being submitted for citizen review. The city has recently contracted a prominent law firm to work out a development agreement with the landowners. The latter, who have yet to approve the plan, have hired John Kriken, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's partner in charge of urban design, to critique to city's document. This critique is now being discussed and incorporated in a revised version of the plan.

11 This device has been used recently in the development of East Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the redevelopment plan calls for relatively small parcels. The plan, now some six years old, has attracted a number of commercial and office developers, who have both rehabilitated and built anew a variety of vital projects. It will take another 10 years to complete the plan, at which point the East Cambridge area will have undergone close to an ordinary process of development and will be integrated, once again, into the Cambridge and Boston metropolitan area (MIT/Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies, Rice Center for Research and Development, *Lessons from Local Experience* [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1983]). See also "Notes on Battery Park City," this issue, and John L. Kriken, "What's Wrong with Small Projects?" (*Urban Design Review* 6 [June 1983]: 2–3).

Getting Things Done in Messy Cities

John de Monchaux

Cities are messy places, and on the whole they work well because of that messiness. As urban designers and planners we confront this attribute of cities with a mixture of respect and dismay. Our respect flows from a sense of wonder at the richness of pattern and opportunity presented by the city. Our dismay arises when we contemplate the demands of getting done the kinds of things we want to see happen in the midst of this messiness. My proposition is that more effective ways of getting things done are more likely to emerge if we accept and use in a positive way the fact that cities are intrinsically messy places. In putting forward this idea I am seeking a construct for the city that more aptly captures its complexity without constraining the realm of actions that can be taken to make it a place of greater quality and opportunity. The construct used in thinking about cities shapes the evidence we seek of the condition to be solved and through process of association implies the nature of remedies that might be adopted. I would argue that the messy city provides a departure point for our imaginations that can lead to more complex, more enabling urban design.

A first association with the notion of cities as messy places could understandably be toward the negative connotations of the word "messy." Indeed the formal definitions of the word seem to support such a reaction:

1. "Marked by confusion, disorder and dirt," such as an untidy room;
2. "Lacking in neatness or precision," such as slovenly thinking; and
3. "Tryingly difficult of execution," such as a lawsuit.

To reveal the positive or creative side of messiness, let me turn each of these definitions around:

1. A seemingly untidy room may be more creatively seen as one organized to afford an accessible, serendipitous environment, one in which the juxtaposition of objects, their associations in memory, one with the other, their visibility and the ready access to them all are attributes of, and congruent with, quality in a city.
2. Something that lacks apparent neatness or precision as we value or expect it to be can in fact be displaying the power and order of chaos, and as a number of recent authors have shown us, there are rich and telling explanations for the world to be found in constructs that accommodate chaos.
3. A process that is tryingly difficult can in itself be a description of the very real and necessary complexity of relationships and of the hard work that has to go into addressing that complexity if we are to achieve consensus.

Thus, I would like to encourage a positive or creative view of messiness. If we can foster an affection for messy situations and engage with the city as an intrinsically messy artifact, then I believe we will be better placed not only to find more appropriate ways to intervene to achieve quality in the built environment, but also to extend the

This article is adapted from an address presented at the Annual Conference of the Royal Town Planning Institute in Cardiff, Wales, on June 15, 1988.

repertoire of our interventions. Seeing the city constructively as a messy place will caution us against single-dimension interventions that might, for example, be about tidying it up such as urban renewal or the segregation of housing by income level or tenure type.

Let me reinforce the argument a little by reference to a recent article by Professor Tom Malone of the MIT School of Management that addresses the subject of "the messy desk."[1] In it he demonstrates, with a good deal of plausibility, the many virtues of a messy desk including, for example, ways in which the "piles and files" on the desk allow us to spontaneously reorder information and understandings to suit new priorities. He suggests that the way in which a messy desk is kept allows easy access, consistent with memory and association, as well as unexpected and sometimes quite fruitful accidental relationships.

Messy places are complex. They are the products of freedom and change across time. They are the fruit of exhausting negotiations and sometimes painful trade-offs. They are the work of many authors using many criteria.

Let me contrast messy places with places acknowledged as unattractive in cities, the waste dumps, the billboards, the graffiti, or the web of overhead power lines. The difference is that these places, which are unsightly, are much more likely to be the products of singular events. They are the works of single authors, using simple criteria, freer from the weight of negotiation and trade-off, producing results that are regarded uniformly as negative and not contributing to the quality of the city. I do not want to confuse unsightly places with the construct of the city as an intrinsically messy place.

Not only can city places and forms be seen as messy in a positive way, so too can city-making processes be positively regarded as messy. We all see public involvement processes, such as the conduct of an environmental-impact review or the procedure for interdepartmental examination of a project, as intrinsically messy. These are complex processes, engaging many, involving trade-offs across plural value systems. They are messy processes from which we extract an order to reduce the problem to terms around which agreement can be reached. By contrast, a process that we regard as unsightly or unseemly, such as graft, is a much tidier process involving a very limited number of participants and relying upon easy agreement to a single value system.

If we think of the city as an intrinsically messy place, what might be the corresponding ways to "get things done"? As urban designers and planners we need to understand and recommend practical approaches to achieve change in the messy city. Four examples of such approaches seem to me to be a good match for the complexity of the messy city. I have named them as follows:

1. The bold but long-term gesture
2. The trading-floor approach
3. The garden-fence negotiation
4. The high-yield intervention

The Bold but Long-Term Gesture

There is an abiding case for the skilled introduction of larger systems of infrastructure to bring an elegant ordering frame to the messy city. Such large-scale elements of infrastructure are often the most appropriate way to address the abuse of some of the city's natural systems such as its air or water quality. But we must be prepared to conceive of these pieces of infrastructure as needing sustained support across generations of citizens and planners. The logic and robustness of their design need to be unassailable, and they need also to carry a boldness and coherence that can capture the imagination again and again.

Two examples in Boston come to mind. One is the massive park and drainage system conceived by Frederick Law Olmsted in the nineteenth century, to which we give the name "The Emerald Necklace." This sophisticated but deeply imageable combination of hydraulic and access infrastructure took two generations to establish in recognizable form and required extraordinary patience and resilience on the part of its advocates. Another, more recent example in Boston is the newly completed Southwest Corridor transit line and its associated opportunities for development in the poorer areas of Boston. This is a transit line on an

alignment purchased 25 years ago for a freeway. It is also a linear park occupying the surplus right-of-way between the narrow path required by the transit line and the wide swath originally set aside for the highway. The process leading to the public commitment to build the park and transit line was bitter and protracted—i.e., messy. The result brings a remarkable set of new opportunities to a previously underserved area of the city.

The Trading-Floor Approach

If we see the city as a web of complex transactions not always understood, not always revealed, the mechanisms that help sort out the information used, that help reveal the values that influence the trade-offs, that leave a clear trace of the actions taken, are more likely to be fruitful ways of getting things done.

In conditions where decisions are to be taken by many individuals, each with access to a great deal of information, it has been suggested that hierarchical approaches to decisions work far less well than decision mechanisms that emulate the working of a market, where it is possible to gather and exchange information with great economy and to share this with many others in a common currency. We then enable better informed decisions by all participants in the process.

One historic example that comes to mind in this regard is the introduction of the Torrens system for recording title to land. This system is universal, accessible, and extraordinarily direct, yet it records sufficiently, but no more than sufficiently, the data needed to reassure purchasers of a piece of land of their entitlement to it.

A mechanism of recent invention in Boston to address the complex nature of the transactions that go into an urban design decision is the creation of the Boston Civic Design Commission. The Civic Design Commission acts as an accessible public forum for the consideration of all comments and reactions to new guidelines for urban design in the city. It also holds a public review of all new development proposals from the public or private sector that will have a significant impact on the public realm. The Commission has no statutory powers and is to render its advice to the mayor in an entirely advisory way. The ordinance that created it, however, does require that if the mayor chooses to ignore the Commission's recommendations, he or she has to provide a written account of the reasons why.[2]

This is a mechanism of exchange and response, each event in which leaves behind a clear trace of argument and reason relating to urban design proposals. The buildup of a web of argument and counterargument will, it is hoped, provide a rich body of case law on urban design matters for the city that is accessible, defended, and subject to continuing change and responsiveness.

The Garden-Fence Negotiation

A third type of mechanism to get things done in the messy city are mechanisms that allow the resolution of an issue to occur at a very fine grain of consideration without requiring reference to unnecessarily ponderous and possibly arbitrary public decision processes. Obviously such mechanisms should apply to matters that are relatively free from wider externalities—that don't involve effects on the community as a whole. Pearce, writing in 1981 in *Town Planning Review,* suggested the possible nature of such mechanisms, in his article on the use of development rights, rather than development control, wherein exchanges can take place between consenting parties that will shape those aspects of a new development such as covenants for access or rights to light.[3] Another mechanism that has the attribute of allowing for very fine grain resolution of complex problems is the use of the tools of mediation and negotiation, currently enjoying a great deal of favor in the United States for the resolution of environmental disputes. In a messy city it may well be the case that there is no right answer to a development proposal but only an answer that through patient negotiation reconciles the widest set of contending views.

The High-Yield Intervention

A fourth type of mechanism appropriate to getting things done in messy cities are those that achieve a high yield for relatively low effort.

If in a messy city we observe actions that many people take or motives that many people share and we can attach a system of rewards or sanctions to the actions that are taken by many, then the yield in terms of the quality of urban design can be enormous. The 1968 historic preservation tax legislation in the United States is a current example of such high-yielding, low-effort, incentive mechanisms. With a very small increase in staff at the Internal Revenue Service and tax code changes such as to the depreciation period that applied to investments in historic buildings, the prospects for the survival of such buildings were changed overnight with remarkable and positive results. Information strategies are another example of a mechanism that achieves high yield on low effort. The Essex County *Design Guide* is of course a classic example of such an information strategy, which placed an accessible and engaging document in the hands of designers, builders, and reviewers of new residential buildings to very positive effect.[4]

Summary

These four approaches to getting things done, and there are certainly others, share a number of attributes. Each seeks to inspire and inform rather than threaten; the latter three are all aimed at a fine grain of action and transaction; each calls for extensive sharing of reliable information about the actions contemplated and their effects; and each relies upon determined patience and clear vision.

As urban designers and planners a potentially rewarding perspective we can have of the city, if we seek change and improvement and a greater certainty of achieving it, is to think of the city as an intrinsically messy place. It is, incidentally, a perspective that can be shared by all of the city's people as well as by those working for it and toward its improvement. The complexity of messiness enables a wider view of problems and a wider inventory of plausible interventions by time, resources, and place, as well as by wit and imagination. To think of cities as messy places will properly caution us against the use of exclusive, unidimensional, or egocentric actions. To respect the messiness of cities encourages the opportunity for pluralistic actions that not only will serve the very diverse interests of the city's people, but in the end, I maintain, will give greater delight and reward.

Notes

1 Thomas W. Malone, "How Do People Organize Their Desks? Implications for the Design of Office Information Systems," *ACM Transactions on Office Systems,* vol. 1, no. 1, January 1983, pages 99–112.

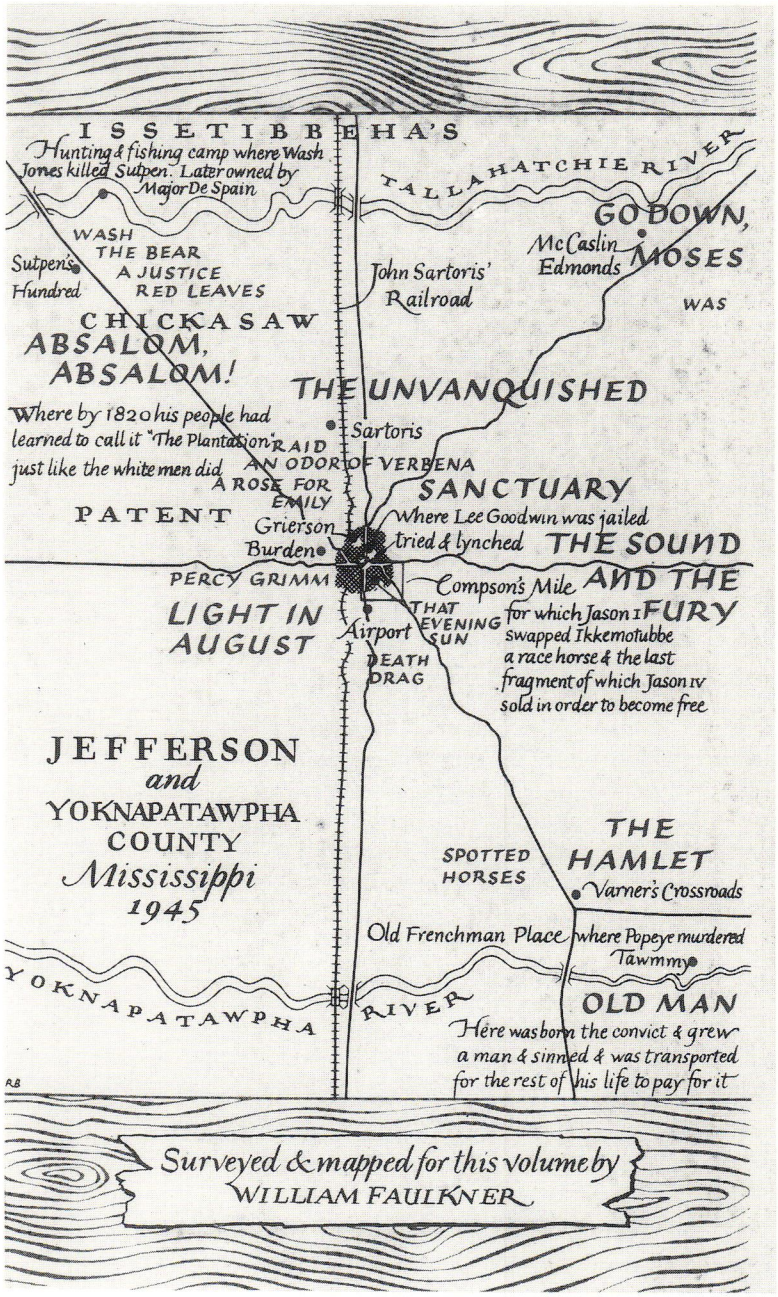
2 Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code (approved in June 1986) sets out the role and composition of the Boston Civic Design Commission. As of September 1988 the Commission is still awaiting passage of state legislation that will enable it to meet without risk of contraventing Commonwealth of Massachusetts conflict of interest laws.

3 B. J. Pearce, "Property Rights vs. Development Control: A Preliminary Evaluation of Alternative Planning Policy Instruments," *Town Planning Review,* vol. 52, no. 1, January 1981, pp. 47–60.

4 Essex County Council, *A Design Guide for Residential Areas,* May 1973.

Architecture and the Tangible Past: The Built Environment of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha

Thomas Hines



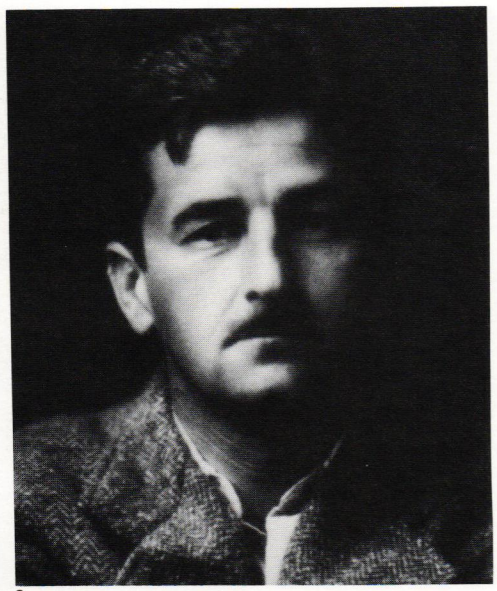
I Yoknapatawpha, from *The Portable Faulkner* (Viking, 1946).

Photographs by Thomas Hines except where noted

In 1982, somewhat exhausted from years of work on a book and museum show on the modernist architect Richard Neutra, I began to think about what I might do "just for fun" as a respite from my steady trade of architectural history. The diversion I wound up choosing was a systematic, though casual, re-reading of all of the work of William Faulkner, whom I had known as I was growing up in Oxford, Mississippi. I had read him then—because he was "there"—with great pleasure but with less than total comprehension. Now, in mature middle age, I would treat myself to a richer and more resonant reading of the work. But, as I began to read, I soon realized that as a son of the Calvinist work ethic, I could never do anything that vast just "for fun." Almost furtively at first and then unabashedly, I found myself underlining the architecture passages. I was amazed at the extent of Faulkner's treatment of architecture, and I began to have hazy, academic thoughts of getting "a nice little article" out of it to assuage my guilt for having so much fun. The result was a lecture at the annual Faulkner conference in Oxford and this essay on Faulkner's literary architecture.

I dedicate this effort to my sunny California children, Tracy and Taylor, in the hope that it will help to remind them that they are also children of Yoknapatawpha.

In William Faulkner's second novel, *Mosquitoes*, a character "leaned nearer to see the paper. It was a single sheet of a Sunday magazine section: a depressing looking article in small print about Romanesque architecture. . . . 'Are you interested in architecture?' she asked intently. . . . So many people waste their time over things like architecture and such. It's much better to be a part of life, don't you think . . . than to make your life barren through dedicating it to an improbable and ungrateful posterity. Don't you think so?' 'I hadn't thought about it,' Pete said cautiously."[1]



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But it is obvious that Faulkner *had* thought about it and that he believed that the art of architecture—like the art of literature—was indeed a "part of life" and *did* contribute to the culture and civilization of a not "ungrateful posterity." Architecture was important to Faulkner personally. He had a keen eye and sense for the form, structure, and meaning of buildings in his surroundings. And he used those elements of his Mississippi environment as the models for the architecture of his invented world: the town called "Jefferson" and the county of "Yoknapatawpha."

Much has been said and written on the place of nature in Faulkner's work—the woods, the bear, the natural landscape—but relatively little has been done on Faulkner's almost equally great interest in the built

3

2 Faulkner, by J. R. Cofield, ca. 1930. Courtesy, Cofield Collection, Oxford, Mississippi.

3 Aerial view of Oxford, ca. 1945 (Philip Mullin; courtesy, Cofield Collection).

4

environment—the opposite of nature—as metaphor and symbol of larger issues, attitudes, and moods. Three of his novels have architectural titles: *Sanctuary, Pylon,* and *The Mansion. The Hamlet* and *The Town* have architectural implications; and the first, discarded title of both *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom* was *Dark House*. Numerous short stories have architectural titles or themes, and architects appear as characters throughout the stories and novels.

Faulkner's fellow Mississippian, Eudora Welty, observed that "place has a more lasting identity than we have . . . fiction depends for its life on place. Location is the cross-roads of circumstance."[2] And of all the masters in the history of literature, Faulkner was one of the greatest in his ability to see, to evoke, to explicate, to use the details—as well as the essence—of the physical environment. In these gifts, he was equalled only by Flaubert, Hardy, Joyce, and Henry James. "It sometimes seems to me," wrote Malcolm Cowley of Yoknapatawpha in his introduction to *The Portable Faulkner,* "that every house or hovel has been described in one of Faulkner's novels."[3]

Architectural historians have done reasonable justice to the certified "monuments" and to the great urban centers, but they have had more trouble getting at the smaller, more rural, more parochial places. Perhaps Faulkner and other writers of fiction can, through their special kind of imaginative probing, help us to locate and explicate the sense and meaning, the smell and ambience of the more elusive architecture of the "Jeffersons" of the world.

Faulkner was born in 1897 in New Albany, Mississippi. His family then moved back to Ripley, the ancestral hometown, before they moved permanently to Oxford in the early twentieth century. Although Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha are composites of several north Mississippi towns and counties, Ripley and Oxford are the dominant prototypes. William went to school in Oxford, attended Ole Miss sporadically, and then ventured out, first to Canada during World War I, then to

4 "Dog-trot cabin," Lafayette County, Mississippi.

5

New Orleans in the early 1920s, and then in 1925 to Europe, where he had the traditional *Wanderjahr.* Upon returning to America, Faulkner lived a while longer in New Orleans, where he was especially influenced by the older writer Sherwood Anderson, then living in the French Quarter. In the novel *Mosquitoes,* "outside the window, New Orleans, the vieux carré, brooded in a faintly tarnished languor, like an aging yet still beautiful courtesan in a smoke-filled room, avid yet weary too of ardent ways . . ." (pp. 10, 14).

Anderson recognized Faulkner's talent, but he was not sure that the city was his metier. "You're a country boy," he told him, "and all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from." And ultimately Faulkner himself realized that "my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and . . . that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal, I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have. . . ."[4]

"Primitive" architecture pervades Faulkner's world, the buildings that elude and transcend chronology and reach from the earliest to the most recent times. Hard, tough structures, symbolic not only of the meanness of life for some, but also of the patience and persistence and endurance of the people who used them. In *As I Lay Dying,* the house was of "rough logs, from between which the chinking has long fallen. Square, with a broken roof set at a single pitch, it leans in empty and shimmering delapidation in the sunlight, a single broad window in two opposite walls giving on to the approaches of the path."[5]

In *The Hamlet,* Mink Snopes, after he has murdered one of his neighbors, returns to such a house. "It was dusk. He emerged from the bottom and looked up the slope of his meager and sorry corn and saw it—the paintless two-room cabin with its open hallway between and a lean-to kitchen, which was not his, on which he paid rent but not taxes . . . just like the one he had been born in, which had not belonged to his father either." Faulkner then juxtaposes Mink's house to the

5 College Hill Store, Lafayette County, Mississippi.

6

7

6 Lafayette County Courthouse, Oxford, Mississippi (as rebuilt after Civil War).

7 Courthouse Square, Oxford, late nineteenth century (courtesy, Cofield Collection).

sprightlier environment of Jefferson, which Mink glimpses briefly upon being taken to jail, a richer world to which his brother, Flem, will gravitate at the end of the novel. The contrast is shattering. The surrey moved "now beneath an ordered overarch of sunshot trees between the clipped and tended lawns where children shrieked and played in small bright garments and the ladies sat rocking in the fresh dresses of afternoon and the men coming home from work turned into the neat painted gates toward plates of food and cups of coffee in the long beginning of twilight."[6]

Yet it is structures such as Mink's that take us back to the actual beginnings of Jefferson, as described in the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury:* "a solid square mile of virgin North Mississippi dirt as truly angled as the four corners of a card-table top (forested then because these were the old days before 1833 when the stars fell and Jefferson, Mississippi was one long rambling onestorey mud-chinked log building housing the Chickasaw Agent and his tradingpost store.)."[7]

They are similar, these primitive houses, to the stores in Faulkner's work: social as well as commercial buildings, places to see and meet other people, to transact business, personal and commercial; important stages in Faulkner's world, of comings and goings and crucial transitions, and for the most rural people, a primitive window on a larger world. In the story "Barn Burning," Faulkner evokes the penumbral attributes of buildings, especially the smells, much in the manner of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past:* "The store in which the Justice of the Peace's court was sitting smelled of cheese. The boy, crouched on his nail keg at the back of the crowded room, knew he smelled cheese, and more. . . ."[8] In *The Hamlet,* we encounter a store's "now deserted gallery, stained with tobacco and scarred with knives" (p. 83).

To his grandest characters, and to Faulkner himself, the most favored architecture was the neoclassical, especially the local version of the Greek Revival of the mid-nineteenth century, the symbol, even in decay, of the better impulses of Southern civilization. It recalled not only the glories of ancient Greece, but also the early nineteenth century Greek war of independence, which brought to America and the whole Western world a deference and passion for everything Greek.

The most important building in all of Faulkner's work was the neoclassical Yoknapatawpha County courthouse, not only the symbol of law and justice, but spiritually, psychologically, architecturally, the center around which life revolves. In one story,

Faulkner called the building "a dream dreamed by Thucydides." A crucial description in *Requiem for a Nun* links it to the Square surrounding it and to the larger town and county, one of many examples of Faulkner's interest in urban design: "the courthouse came first . . . and with stakes and hanks of fishline, the architect laid out in a grove of oaks opposite the tavern and the store, the square and simple foundations, the irrevocable design not only of the courthouse but of the town too, telling them as much: 'In fifty years you will be trying to change it in the name of what you will call progress. But you will fail . . . you will never be able to get away from it . . . a Square, the courthouse in its grove, the center; quadrangular around it, the stores, two-storey, the offices of the lawyers and doctors and dentists, the lodge rooms and auditoriums, above them; school and church and tavern and jail each in its ordered place; the four broad diverging avenues straight as plumb-lines in the four directions, becoming the network of roads and by-roads until the whole county would be covered with it. . . .'"[9]

For the building itself, "eight disjointed marble columns were landed from an Italian ship at New Orleans, into a steamboat up the Mississippi to Vicksburg, and into a smaller steamboat up the Yazoo and Sunflower and Tallahatchie, to Ikkemo-

8 Old Shipp Place, Lafayette County, Mississippi, ca. 1850.

9

tubbe's old landing which Sutpen now owned, and thence the twelve miles by oxen into Jefferson: the two identical four-column porticoes, one on the north and one on the south, each with its balcony of wrought-iron New Orleans grillwork, on one of which—the south one—in 1861 Sartoris would stand in the first Confederate uniform the town had ever seen, while in the Square below the Richmond mustering officer enrolled and swore in the regiment which Sartoris as its colonel would take to Virginia . . ." (p. 39).

Yet the greatest quantity of neoclassical buildings, and, next to the courthouse, the largest and finest, were the Greek Revival houses of the Yoknapatawpha gentry, symbols for Faulkner of a quality of life and a quality of people he admired despite their flaws—and despite the flaws of the society that reared them, based upon slavery and a black-white caste system.

The most typical regional form of the neoclassical house was a nearly square rectangular box with a relatively small four-columned porch on one or more sides. Above the front door there was frequently another door leading on to a small balcony. Faulkner was especially intrigued with them in ruin, a symbol of social, cultural, and spiritual decay. In *Sanctuary,* for example, "The house was a gutted ruin rising gaunt and stark out of a grove of unpruned cedar trees . . . a landmark known as the Old Frenchman place, built before the Civil War; a plantation house set in the middle of a tract of land; of cotton fields and gardens and lawns long since gone back to jungle, which the people of the neighborhood had been pulling down for firewood for fifty years or digging with secret and sporadic optimism for the gold which the builder was reputed to have buried somewhere about the place when Grant came through the county on his Vicksburg campaign."[10]

9 "Roanoak," home of William Faulkner, 1848, Oxford.

10

11

The building, the decay, and sometimes the destruction of these houses are crucial both to the plots and to the ambience of Faulkner's work—from the Old Frenchman Place in *Sanctuary* to similar houses in town of the Compson, Sartoris, and DeSpain families, to the house and plantation, "Sutpen's Hundred," in *Absalom, Absalom.* It is especially difficult to imagine that novel without the prominence Faulkner gave to Sutpen's house, the symbol for Thomas Sutpen of the status and security he craved and worked for, a status denied him earlier at another grand house when he had been asked by a haughty servant to go around to the back door. Sutpen's Hundred survived the war but not its aftermath, its "rotting portico and scaling walls, not invaded, marked by no bullet or soldier's iron heel, but rather as though reserved for something more: some desolation more profound than ruin. . . ."[11]

Architectural historians are frequently asked to demonstrate the effect of architecture on people. That is not easy, but in the story "Barn Burning," Faulkner helps us by suggesting the effects of a great house on someone who did *not* live in it: "Presently he could see the grove of oaks and cedars and the other flowering trees and shrubs where the house would be, though not the house yet. They walked beside a fence massed with honeysuckle and Cherokee roses and came to a gate swinging open between two brick pillars, and now, beyond a sweep of drive, he saw the house for the first time and at that instant he forgot his father and the terror and despair both, and even when he remembered his father again . . . the terror and despair did not return. Because, for all the twelve movings, they had sojourned until now in a poor country, a land of small farms and fields and houses, and he had never seen a house like this before. 'Hit's big as a courthouse' he thought quietly, with a surge

10, 11 Ruins of Estes Place, Panola County, Mississippi, ca. 1850.

12

of peace and joy whose reason he could not have thought into words, being too young for that" (p. 10).

The Greek Revival architecture of Yoknapatawpha County was indeed the perfect setting for Faulkner's Greek tragedies.

The neo-Gothic movement of the mid-nineteenth century was in one sense a revolt against the centuries-long domination of the neoclassical. Yet as another manifestation of Victorian Romanticism, it had much in common with its Greek Revival cousin. The Benbow house in *Sartoris* was one of several neo-Gothic buildings in Yoknapatawpha: "From the gate, the cinder-packed drive rose in a grave curve between cedars . . . set out by an English architect of the '40s who had built the house (with the minor concession of a veranda) in the funereal light Tudor which the young Victoria had sanctioned" and around which "even on the brightest days lay a resinous exhilarating gloom."[12]

The finest public neo-Gothic building in Oxford is St. Peter's Episcopal Church (1854–1860), attributed to Richard Upjohn, the architect of Trinity Church, New York. "There is a small Episcopal church in Jefferson," Faulkner wrote in *The Town,* "built by slaves and called the best, the finest . . . by the northern tourists who passed through Jefferson now with cameras, expecting—we don't know why since they themselves had burned it and blown it up with dynamite in 1863—to find Jefferson much older or anyway older looking than it is and faulting us a little because it isn't"—almost a recognition and premonition, on Faulkner's part, of the fame Oxford had acquired and of the tourists it would draw because of him.[13]

St. Peter's, Faulkner's family church, also evoked this reverie in the story, "Knight's Gambit": "Then he was home: a paved street-crossing not very far from the house

12 Thompson-Chandler House, Oxford, ca. 1850.

13

he had been born in, and now he could see above the trees the water tank and the gold cross on the spire of the Episcopal church . . . his face pressed to the grimy glass as if he were eight years old, the train slowing . . . and there they were, seen as the child of eight sees them, with something of shock, set puny yet amazingly durable against the perspective of the vast . . . earth."[14]

After the Civil War, even in the South following Reconstruction, people built buildings the same way they did business—with a grand, acquisitive, predatory zeal. This was the age of Thorstein Veblen's Conspicuous Consumption and Vernon Louis Parrington's Great Barbeque. The architectural results were the styles of High Victorian Gothic, mansardic Second Empire, Queen Anne, and their local variants. Faulkner did not care for these styles. He used them to symbolize the varied anxieties of the postwar New South. The actual house of his own great-grandfather in Ripley reflected this state of mind, as did the home of Miss Emily Grierson in the memorable story, "A Rose for Emily," in which, as the writer Elizabeth Spencer has noted, a sweet little old Southern lady poisoned her lover and "kept his corpse around as a playmate."[15] Miss Emily lived in "a big squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood, only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores."[16]

Faulkner, the literary modernist, was least sympathetic to the Modern Movement in architecture, which proclaimed and celebrated the twentieth-century machine age. The only modern

13 Airliewood, Holly Springs, Mississippi, ca. 1845.

building that Faulkner portrayed sympathetically was, significantly, connected with aviation. The New Valois airport in the novel *Pylon* was "modernistic, spatious, suave, sonorous, and monastic," the latter adjective a reference to its minimalist austerity. Its murals presented the "furious, still, and legendary tale" of man's conquering of "the infinite and impervious air."[17] With the exception of the airplane, Faulkner professed to hate machines: the automobile, the radio, and television. Modern architecture, which he correctly associated with these, finally reached Oxford in a splendid City Hall of 1938 by James Canizaro, built in the then-shocking style of "WPA Moderne." Faulkner, himself, detested it. He liked to use modernist images to suggest evil and hollowness. In *Sanctuary,* for example, Popeye "walked, his tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernistic lampshade" (p. 6).

Faulkner seemed to regret not only the appearance of modernism, but even more the disappearance of the world it replaced. He was upset in the 1940s by the demolition of the second-floor porches around the Oxford Square and by the needless destruction of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. To protest the latter, he refused for years to enter the modern Kroger grocery store that replaced it.[18] In *Requiem for a Nun,* he mourned the losses: "Gone now from the fronts of the stores are the brick made of native clay in Sutpen's architect's old moulds, replaced now by sheets of glass taller than a man and longer than a wagon and team, pressed intact in Pittsburgh factories and framing interiors bathed now in one shadowless corpseglare of fluorescent light . . ." (p. 210).

Exceptions to Faulkner's antimodern bias seemed to lie only in airports and in his fascination with very tall buildings. In *The Sound and the Fury,* he wrote with apparent pleasure: "Father brought a watch charm from the Saint Louis Fair to Jason: a tiny opera glass into which you squinted with one eye and saw a skyscraper."[19]

Indeed, he came closest to being seduced by modernism in the excitement of the traffic and the architecture of the city. In *Sanctuary,* and more particularly in a story called "Dull Tale," he seemed to enjoy the modern, urban environment: "Where Madison Avenue joins Main Street, where the trolleys swing crashing and groaning down the hill at the clanging of bells which warn and consummate the change of light from red to green, Memphis is almost a city . . . At Main and Madison . . . where four tall buildings quarter their flanks and form an upended tunnel up which the diapason of traffic echoes as at the bottom of a well, there is the restless life and movement of cities; the hurrying and purposeful going to-and-fro."[20]

Though in general he disliked and disapproved of modernist architecture, Faulkner took an even grimmer view of literally rendered antique reproductions, the sphere of the upstart, parvenu Snopeses. In *The Mansion,* he drolly described the Snopes's renovation of the old DeSpain house, which, with all its new "colyums," still "wouldn't be as big as Mount Vernon . . . but then Mount Vernon was a thousand miles away so there wasn't no chance of invidious or malicious eye to eye comparison."[21]

Faulkner was less defendably snobbish in his disdain for the subdivision of the old estates and the building of small, respectable tract houses for families of modest income, as in Avent Acres, Oxford. In *Requiem for a Nun,* we learn "there were new people in the town now, strangers, outlanders, living in new minute glasswalled houses set as neat and orderly and antiseptic as cribs in a nursery ward, in new subdivisions named Fairfield or Longwood or Halcyon Acres which had once been the lawn or backyard or kitchen garden of the old residencies . . ." (p. 215).

Yet the quintessential statement of Faulkner on architecture, on urban design, on the look and the layout of Jefferson, had come much earlier in a single passage from *Sartoris,* a passage that takes us back to the Square and courthouse—the center, the navel of Yoknapatawpha: "They drove on and mounted the shady, gradual hill toward the square, and Horace looked about happily on familiar scenes" as "streets opened away beneath arches of green, shadier, with houses a little older and more imposing as they got away from the station's vicinity; and pedestrians, usually dawdling Negro boys at this hour or old men bound townward after their naps, to spend the afternoon in sober futile absorptions."

"The hill flattened away into the plateau on which the town proper had been built these hundred years and more ago, and the street became definitely urban presently with garages and small shops with merchants in shirt sleeves, and customers; the picture show with its lobby plastered with life episodic in colored, lithographed mutations. Then the square, with its unbroken low skyline of old weathered brick and fading dead names stubborn yet beneath scaling paint, and drifting Negroes in casual and careless O.D. garments . . . and country people in occasional khaki too; and the brisker urbanites weaving among their placid chewing unhaste and among the men in tilted chairs before the stores."

"The courthouse was of brick too, with stone arches

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17

14 City Hall, Oxford, 1938.

15 Home of Col. W. C. Faulkner, Ripley, Mississippi, ca. 1870 (collection of author).

16 Store fronts reflecting Confederate Monument, Oxford.

17 Main Street, Memphis, Tennessee, 1920s (courtesy, Cofield Collection).

18

rising among elms, and among the trees the monument of the Confederate soldier stood, his musket at order arms, shading his carven eyes with his stone hand. Beneath the porticoes of the courthouse and on benches about the green, the city fathers sat and talked . . ." (pp. 142–143).

For a writer as obsessed with time as Faulkner, the loss of time, the passage of time, the crisscross of time, the presence of the past in the present, architecture offered, if not a stopping of time or prolongation of time, at least a way of carrying through time, of projecting over time, a very tangible part of the past. Faulkner saw and used architecture as the tangible past, the visible past. Buildings, Faulkner knew, were designed and constructed and observed and used by particular people in particular times, but he also knew that, if preserved and cared for, they could outlast the people who conceived them, outlast the generations that brought them into being, the generations for whom they stood as monuments and markers of identity. Faulkner was, of course, an architect of books, not of buildings, and he used words to do many of the same things. But he appreciated the fact that architecture and literature were very different art forms—in their tangible relationship to historical actuality.

Even the chaos of *The Sound and the Fury* ends in a final passage that suggests a kind of order, a suggestion rendered in architectural terms. Here, as elsewhere, Faulkner evoked, with words, the layers of connections between people and the built environment—relationships that cannot always be documented in visual representations. The passage centers on the Jefferson Square, based upon the Oxford Square, where, for most of the twentieth century, traffic has drifted generally to the right in a counter-clockwise direction. But in the early twentieth century, one could go to the left or to the right. Yet Benjy, the idiot son of the Compson family, had an aversion to the clockwise

18 Avent Acres, Oxford, 1940s–1950s.

19

20

19 North Lamar Street looking toward Courthouse, Oxford.

20 Stores, Federal Building, approaching Courthouse Square, Oxford.

21

21 Vegetable Market,
Courthouse Square, Oxford.

direction—a strong need for the anticlockwise course, a metaphor of Faulkner's for Benjy's problems with time: "They approached the square, where the Confederate soldier gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand into wind and weather. Luster . . . gave the impervious Queenie a cut with the switch . . . and swung her to the left at the monument. For an instant Ben sat in an utter hiatus. Then he bellowed. Bellow on bellow, his voice mounted, with scarce interval for breath . . . as Jason came jumping across the square and onto the step. 'Don't you know any better than to take him to the left?' he said. 'Yes, suh!' Luster said. He took the reins and hit Queenie with the end of them . . . Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again . . . and at once Ben hushed . . . and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place" (pp. 335–336).

Thus, in work after work, Faulkner answered resoundingly the question from *Mosquitoes* in asserting and demonstrating that architecture was not only "a part of life," but an art that shaped and reflected its contours. And that in Jefferson, the town, it was surely among the things that made up the quest for what Jefferson the man, Jefferson the architect, had called "the pursuit of happiness."

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 William Faulkner, *Mosquitoes* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), pp. 106–107. All further references to this work appear in the text.

2 Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," in *The Eye of the Story* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 118–119.

3 Malcolm Cowley, "Introduction," in *The Portable Faulkner* (New York: Viking, 1951), p. 5. Since the completion of this essay, a noteworthy monograph by a literary scholar has appeared on this subject: William T. Ruzicka. *Faulkner's Fictive Architecture: The Meaning of Place in the Yoknapatawpha Novels* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Press, 1987).

4 Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 415, 526.

5 Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Modern Library, 1946), p. 339.

6 Faulkner, *The Hamlet* (New York: Viking, 1956), pp. 219, 257. All further references to this work appear in the text. See also the analysis of these passages in Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 192–193.

7 Faulkner, "1699–1945, The Compsons," appendix to *The Portable Faulkner,* edited by Malcolm Cowley, p. 737.

8 Faulkner, "Barn Burning," in *Collected Stories of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, n.d.), p. 3. All further references to this work appear in the text.

9 Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. 34. All further references to this work appear in the text.

10 Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (New York: Vintage, n.d.), pp. 7–8. All further references to this work appear in the text.

11 Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom* (New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 136.

12 Faulkner, *Sartoris* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 145. All further references to this work appear in the text.

13 Faulkner, *The Town* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 306.

14 Faulkner, *Knight's Gambit* (New York: Vintage, 1978), p. 241.

15 Elizabeth Spencer, "Emerging as a Writer in Faulkner's Mississippi," lecture at the "Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha" conference at the University of Mississippi, August 1982.

16 Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily," in *Collected Stories,* p. 119.

17 Faulkner, *Pylon* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, Inc., 1935), pp. 37–38.

18 Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography,* pp. 71–72, 550, 1069, 1084, 1227.

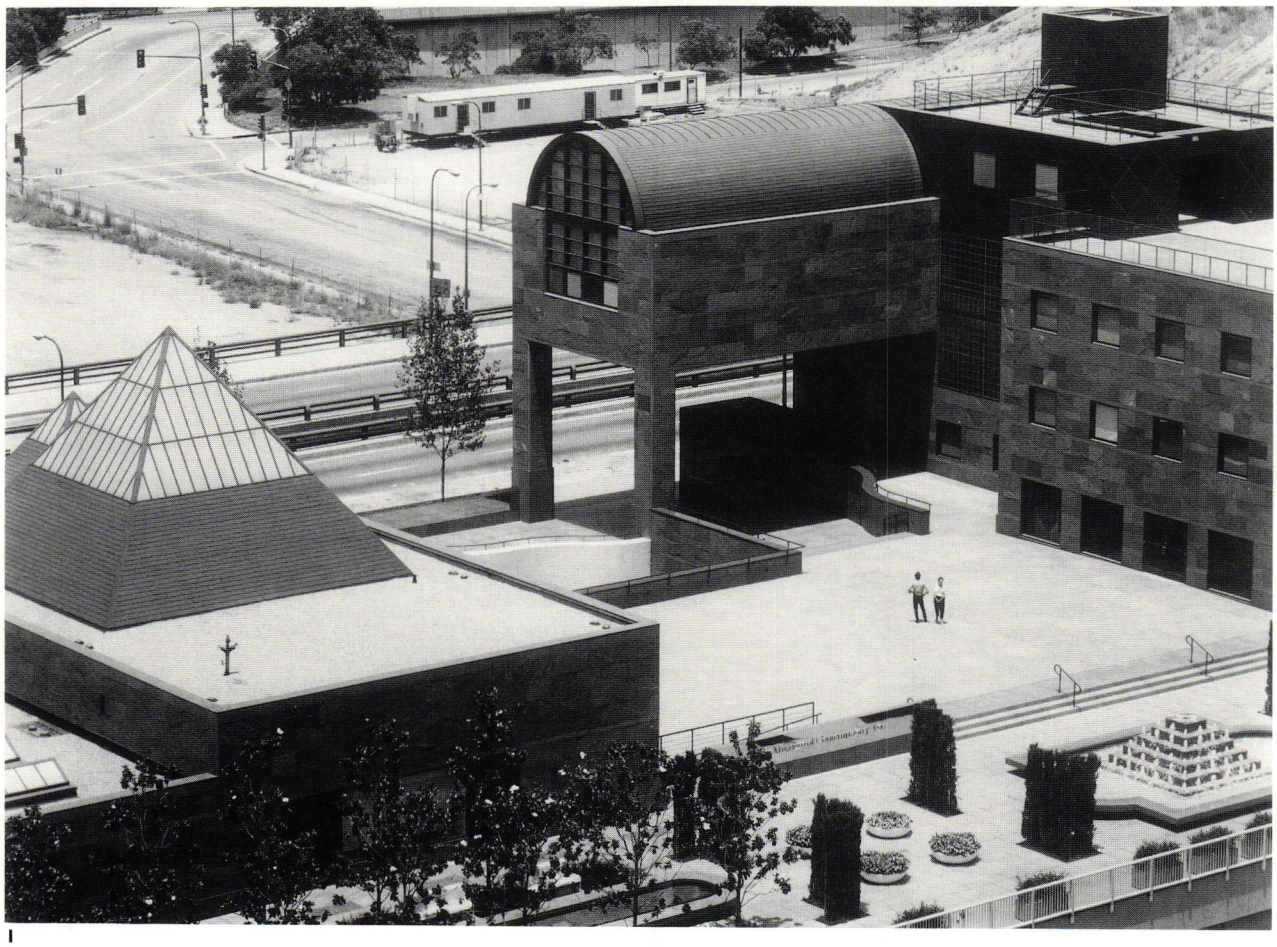
19 Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), p. 99. All further references to this work appear in the text.

20 Faulkner, "Dull Tale," in *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner,* edited by Joseph Blotner (New York: Vintage, 1981), p. 529.

21 Faulkner, *The Mansion* (New York; Vintage, 1965), p. 154.

Isozaki's MOCA

Katie Traeger



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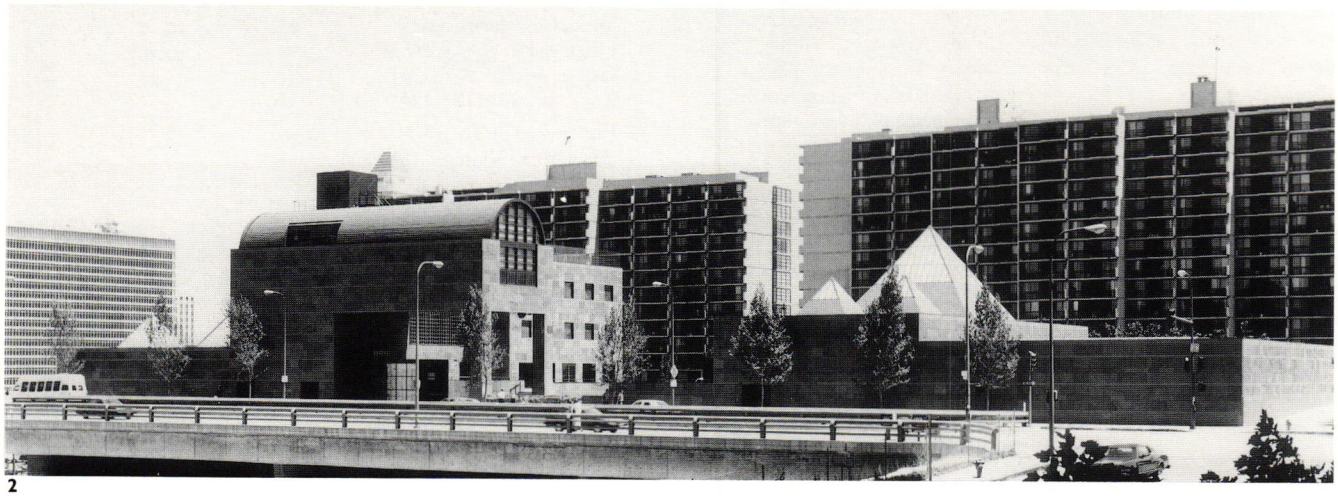


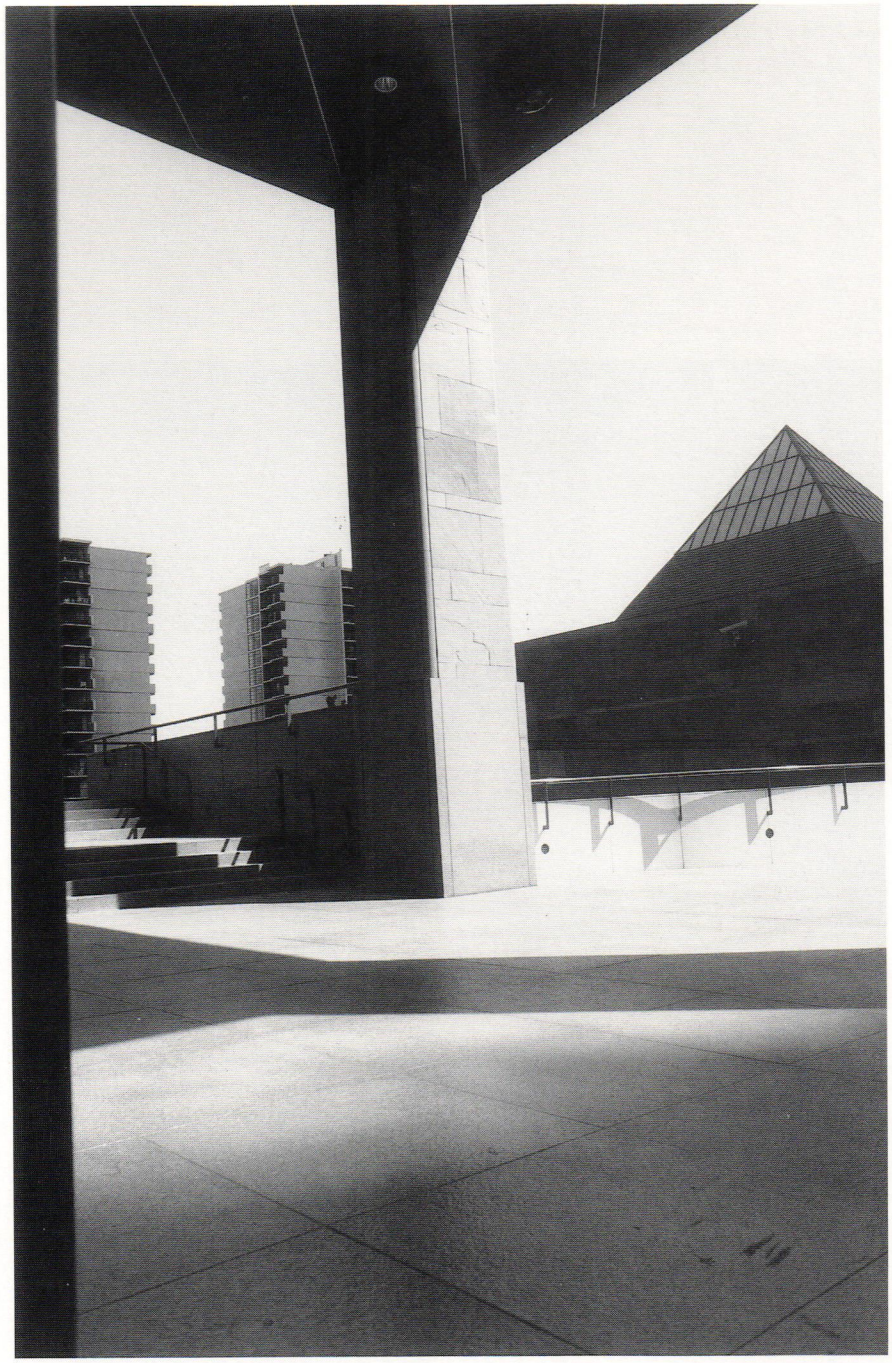
2

We always enter a new place intent upon a certain kind of silence. At the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, briefly pinned by the rotating shadow of the vault, we follow the silence up steps onto a courtyard while the building happens all peripheral.

A ledge of light, while the building happens all peripheral. Closed up on two sides by the dreamlike surface stare of the museum and the blankly mirrored towers, the ledge drops off quietly in between. At the point of entrance it attaches itself to the street, dropping away multiple times and returning, now as the distant elevated ledges of the freeways, far into the distance. We are in the midst of two valleys, closing infinitely wider. An intense little microcosm. Guarded and revealed. Taut emptiness. Calm anxiety. Very LA. At home in the angst. Closed openness. Deep surfaces. Imperturable motion. Density unfolded.

It is a pristine platform, yet through its gates washes a mass of the city. We cut open the exquisite sense of being entirely removed, of holding it all at bay, while simultaneously letting it all in. Our grasp of both removal and acceptance slides around in a supple space we cannot quite formulate. It is a tension in perspective, in feeling, toward which we must adopt one posture, then another.

We are unsure, in this dreamscape, whether we are indeed removed, inside a framed space, the walled-in contemplative garden, near the mystical center of emptiness, or somewhere outside in the neutral

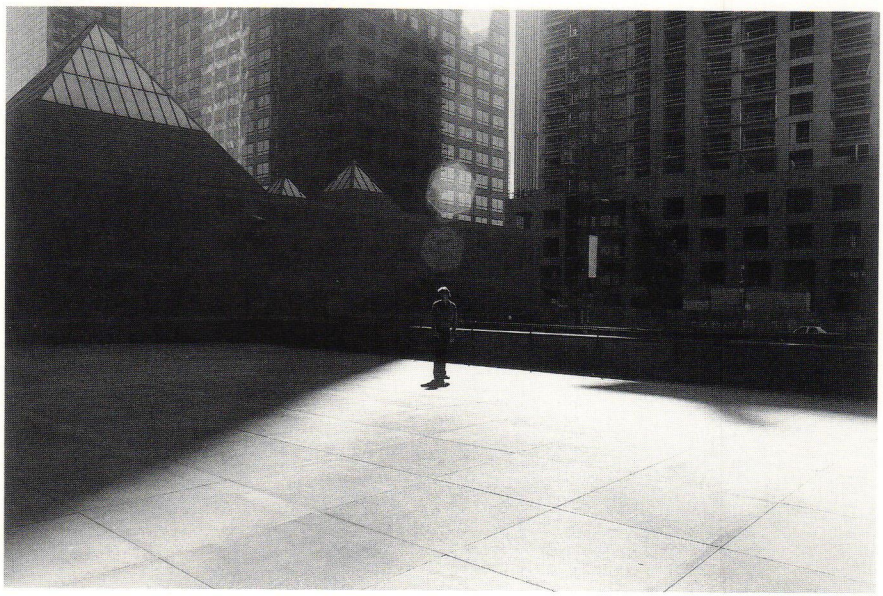


3

1 MOCA, view from the east. Courtyard in the center, garden in foreground, galleries to the left. Photograph: copyright Tim Street-Porter, courtesy Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

2 MOCA, view from the west. Photograph: Michael Moran, courtesy Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

3 Briefly pinned by the shadow of the rotating vault . . . Photograph by the author. All photographs not otherwise credited are by the author.



4

world. Dense transparencies connect the framed and unframed in position, time, and space.

The stone floor flares like sand against the earth-tone walls. Leaves twist against the sky. An alabaster vault glances sunward. Water pours forth over liquid pools of granite. A huge dark wall of apartments presses in on our front. It comes forward, attempting to close up the complex, forming the "third side." Yet it floats eternally out of reach, across the abyss of the parking lot, part of the world against which this one is measured. What is screened out becomes the screen.

Slices, whole dimensions of steamy vastness, long views of dust, dirt, and noise. The "outer world," farthest point against which this one is measured, come transparently through to its center.

They participate in the inner atmosphere. The empty places between alternately find and lose their power.

The ground underfoot communicates ambiguously. We enter part of the continuous city floor, then reach a plateau and begin to look out, to contemplate. But the farthest parts participate in our structure. We start using them, arranging them, bringing them in. They tower over us. Surrounded, external plateau is sunken garden.

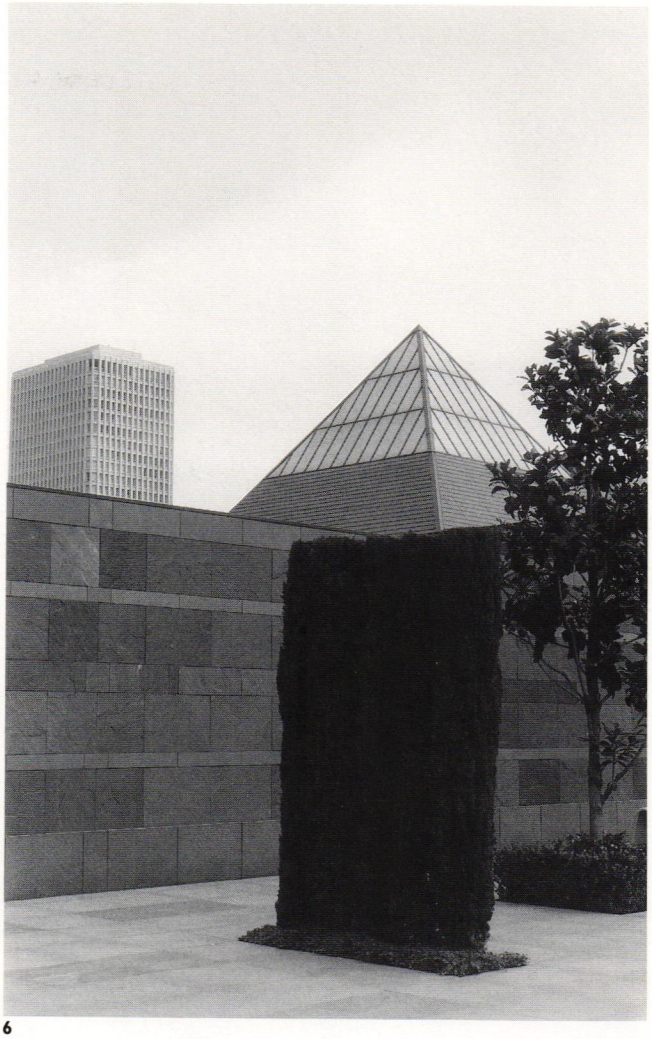
We cannot pass in, through, and out along a simple perspective. Our path is suspended at the edge of the garden, stopped at its side, only to flow around the edge of the museum at the other, back to the street. Our sense is one of shifting sides, angles, edges, walls. Space itself ranges before us in a series of interpenetrating planes: freeways extend onto the floor, the plane of apartments closes in the front. We slip in and around two-dimensional space, providing, ourselves, the ever-changing point of third dimension.

Dense volumes surround us: cube, cylinder, pyramid. Self-contained, geometrically perfect, they stand mute, blank-faced. What are these deep, unknowable volumes? With what do they resonate?

Their density, though, is a density of surface. They cast out layers of transparency. Surfaces glide out from them, bands, gridded colors, ratios of texture float into the space beyond. These acts of transparency—volumes becom-

4 A ledge of light . . .

5



6

ing surfaces; settings, horizons, becoming objects in the midst of closer settings—this silent interpenetration of object and setting, surface and volume, reveals to us, momentarily, something arbitrary and eternal about our Being. It is a transparency that tracks in a space of both order and chaos, of emptiness and fullness.

It is a transparency that extends both outward and inward. It yields an abstract remnant of a sacred garden, patched with great looming pieces of city, threatening apocalypse. And yet it seems about to magnetize everything in its visual path, irradiating unlikely depths of the city, revealing that place, enclosure, beauty are really qualities of arrangement, perspective, wider and more transparent than we had thought. It is a deep transparency, shadowing "Presence," and a hollow one—threatening disappearance. We cannot quite resolve the contradiction here. Loss, absence, hierophany, presence, shift equally before us.

It is the strength of the place that it keeps us on the edge of this double-sided transparency—a credit to its silence, its balance, and its poetry.

Being is transparent. In those other places, at the top of some open roof, in the midst of some dark alley constellation, at a momentary break in the road, we will suddenly recognize it—a horizon, a vision, a condition.

The image of a place that can no longer hold us, a court that can no longer locate us, will haunt us in all of our secret gardens henceforth.

5 Closed up on two sides by the dreamlike surface stare . . .

6 Dense transparencies connect the framed and unframed . . .

7

8

7, 8 Abstract remnant of a sacred garden . . .

Conversely, through all our wanderings among smoldering pockets of fading cities, it is for clues, flashes, sounds of the silent tracking we have felt here that we will look. It is the spatial shadow of this shifting garden that will tempt us.

Exactly where we are, and how we are, remains here a problem of contemplation, of perspective, of being. In this half-open setting, we feel the question peculiarly modern in its circularity and fluctuations, rare and richly alive. We come back to feed on it.

* * *

The silence spreads out. The taut emptiness of the courtyard gives way to a ripple of white porcelain.

Inside, the earth reds give way to something else, white, going on. Something recognizable from above, an edgy quality, silence, stretched calm. The inside of the building has retired to its edges. It waits for something.

Light comes in and through a huge pyramidal skylight. But space comes down, locked in by the tiny steel point. We progress from room to room, along a path whose meaning is almost, but never clear. The rooms are perfectly proportioned: at once rooms of the mind, and scaleless universes. The paintings hang in these microcosms of supercharged calm—extending infinitely beyond their borders. Scale and boundary become creatures of mood.

The silent music of the spaces is deafening. There is only a thin

space around the edge where one can escape for breath. "Painting" has become object, hung on the periphery, to be meditated upon, considered, from the center. The paintings are seen too close or too far. Thoughts are of inches of canvas, or of painting in general, and they come across huge distances.

Colors take on a life of their own, apart from painting. A look around and a woman's sweater grates audibly. A red canvas strikes in and around the space, making intervals. Yellows, reds, blues, in concert for a fantastic instant. It is dance, music, meditation, theater.

These are spaces with their own time and perspective. Art has to come through an extra dimension here—the thickness of the fragmented dramas. And we are caught, netted, somewhere here in this thickness, the thickness of viewing, not of what is viewed.

The space suspends us in some great eternal gaze, which both overwhelms and ignores the art. But sending off flashes and threatening to ignite our seeing is the more compelling possibility of some huge other depth that threatens to do in the art. We do not know whether it is merely some shadow passing across the opening overhead, or some darker counterpart of the dying garden above, some metaphysical darkness behind the thick light which reveals that art, too, is hung in a space of fragile constructs.

We search for the origin of the strings we see here only darkly,

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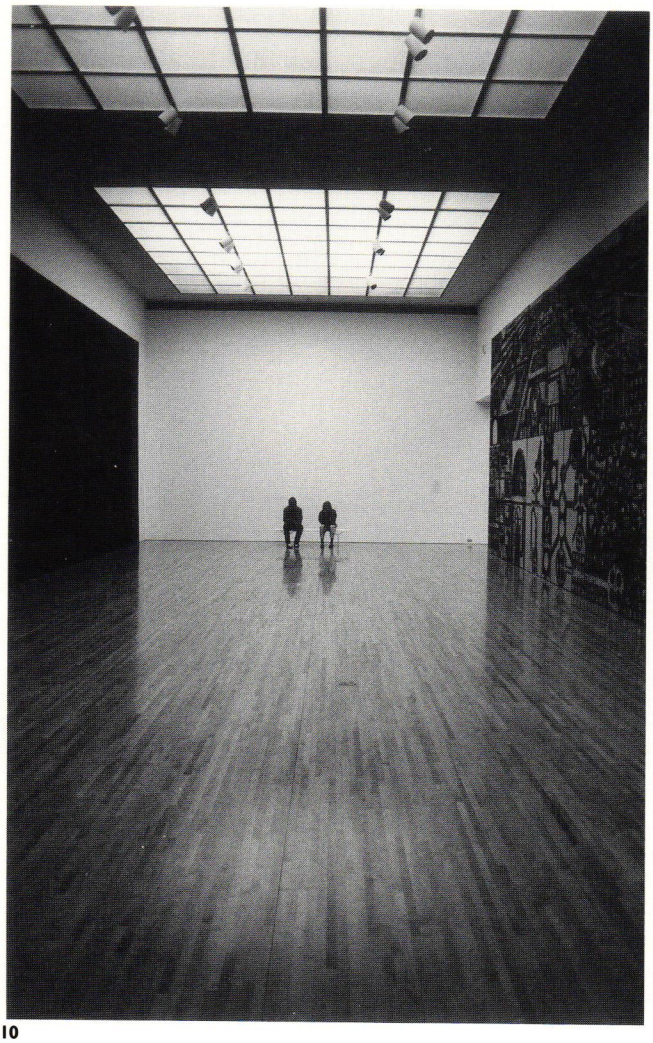
9 The image of a place that can no longer hold us . . .



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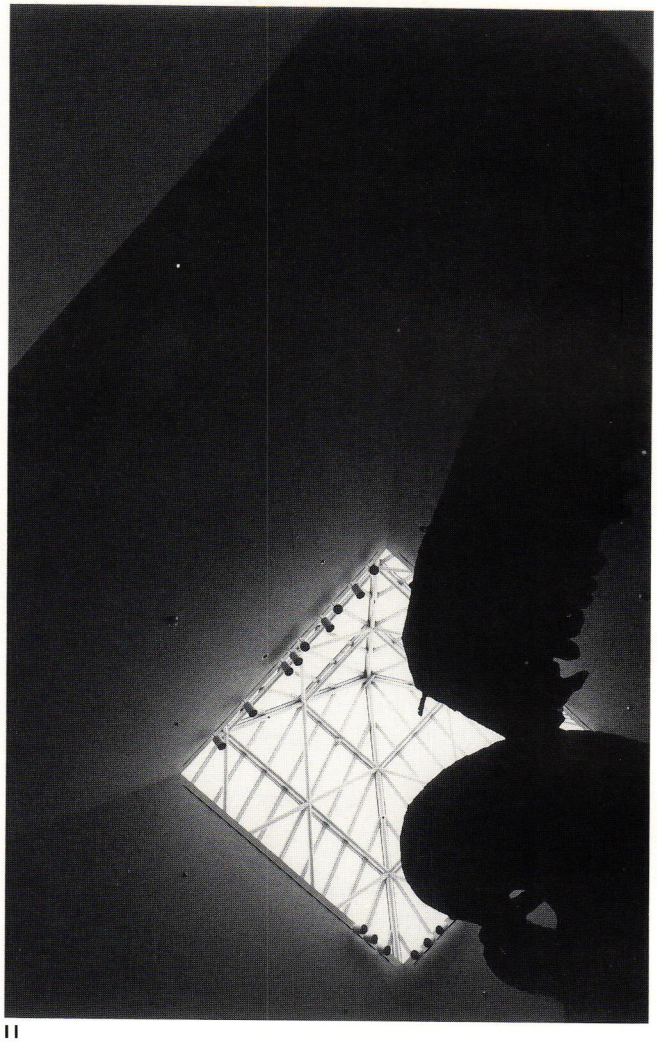

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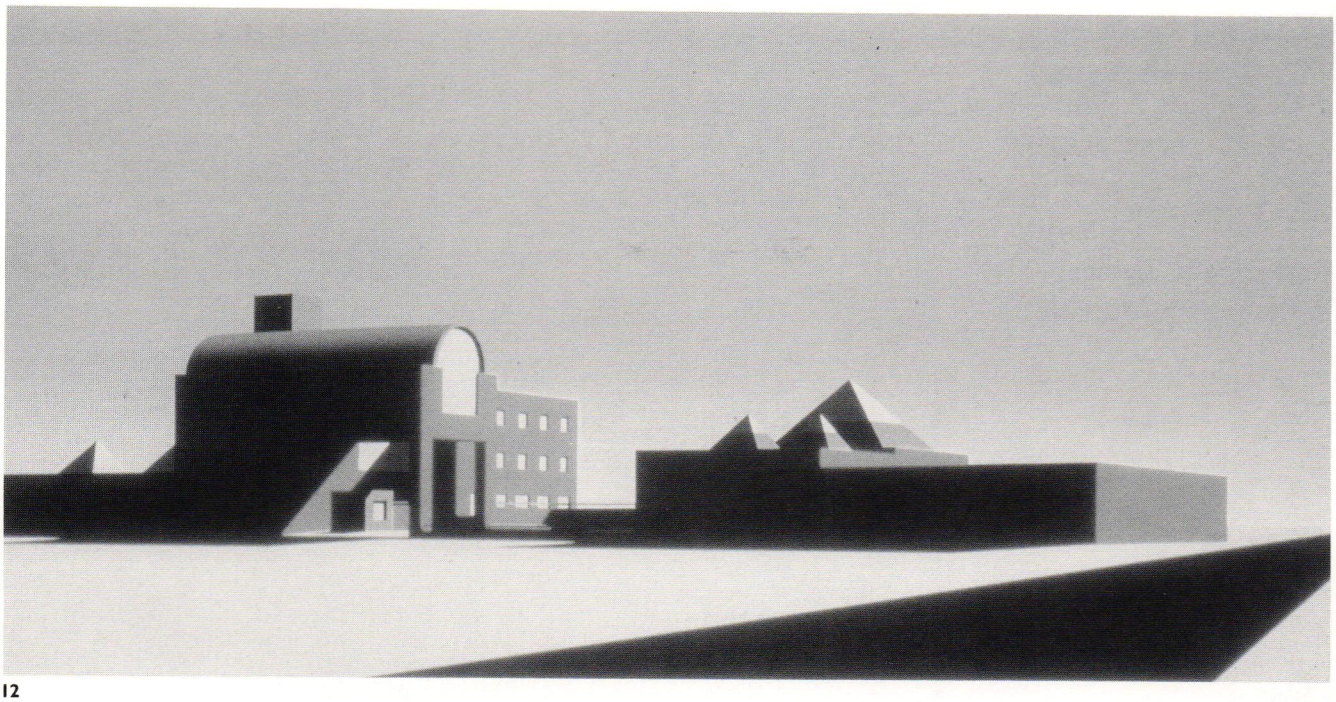
10 Scaleless universes . . .

11 We search for the origin of the strings we see here only darkly . . .



12

some reason for the contingency, something in the culture, in our seeing, in the space. The art burns with a kind of strange intensity. We gasp at the sparks.

But the conflagration does not occur. It is held in, like the light, and the space, by the steely point of the pyramid. There is a ring of hollowness to the silence, which sooner or later we have to escape.

We take what we have seen back up to the courtyard to see how its nets have been recast by our new knowledge. But we find no single revelation, no connection, only a magnification and a complication of the fragmentary drama. We are about to lose ourselves upon the endless possibilities of our own seeing.

Momentarily, we glimpse an unexpected resolution: an architecture more self-sufficient and *un*seeing than we had thought. Does it form no secret ally to our anxiety, that happening unseen and unacknowledged? Perhaps anxiety is inappropriate. It deepens.

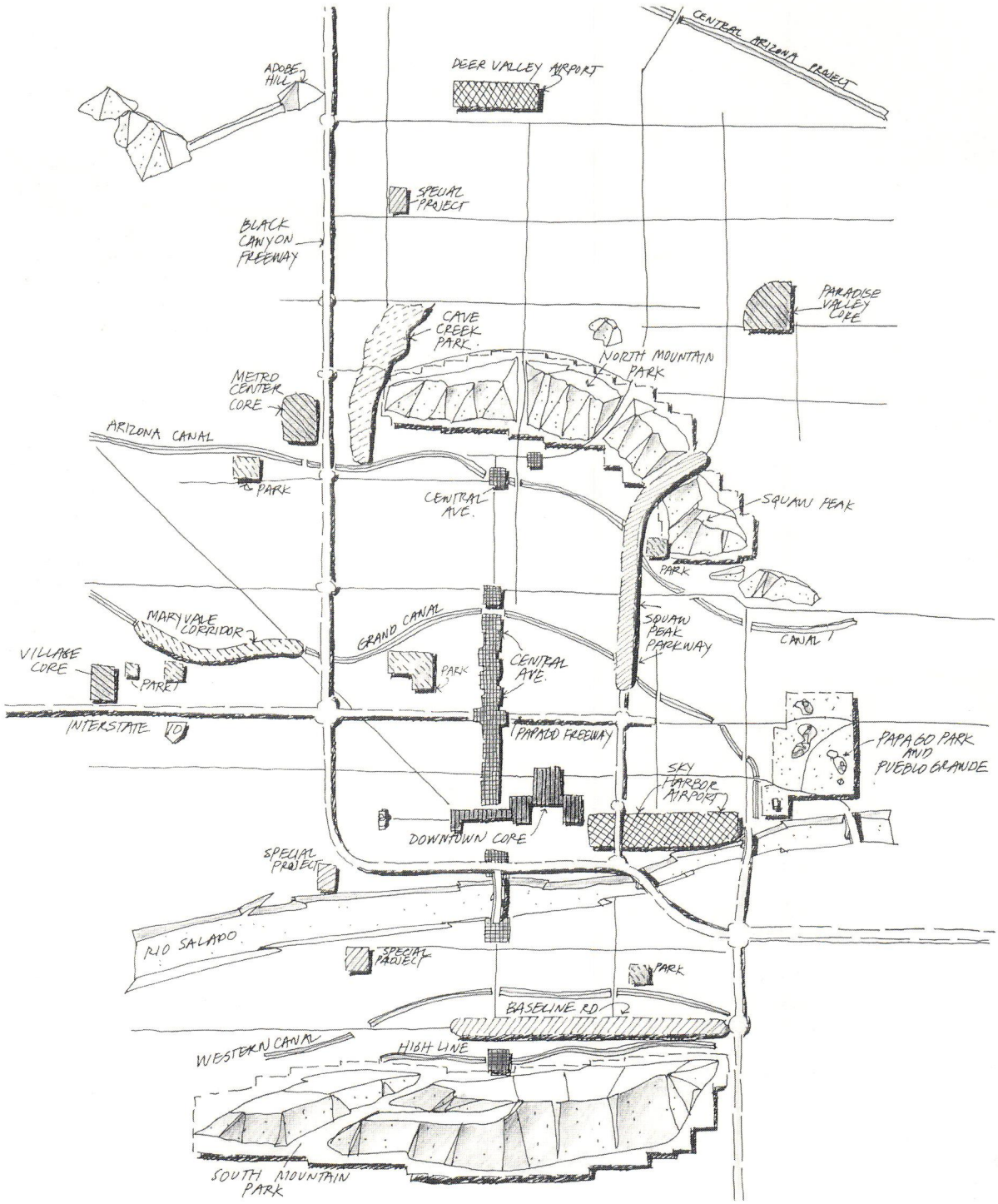
We look again to see whether it is not in fact some technological abstraction at the core of this blankness that, in other lights, seemed so metaphysical a foil for the fragile, wild civilization going on around it. Whether, were we to inhabit the stark, silkscreen image used to represent the museum, we might not fall somewhere closer to the computer than to De Chirico. Whether our whole dense revolution of perceptions does not threaten to collapse—to drop out somewhere like irrelevant data during the wheel of contemplation that turned suspiciously outside our grasp anyway.

But the place gains final victory. It has shifted the floor of our questions. Space and time, still densely faceted, unfold with endless lights. We take our questions out with us, but they remain, partly in light and partly in shadow, to be taken up, reconnected, later, in the silence.

12 Silkscreen, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Silkscreen, by Arata Isozaki. Copyright by, and courtesy of, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Western Civic Art: Works in Progress

Catherine R. Brown
William Rees Morrish



From the air, the form of Phoenix almost makes sense. Set on a desert floor punctuated by mountain-sized rock outcroppings, a tracery of drainage washes, and a most subtle plant palette, the lines and points of the built city give an obvious counterpoint. About a million people live within the city's 375 square miles, on land parceled out literally along the most standard north-south survey grid used in the American west.

Within this gridded pattern, private introverted oases growing from the winter resort tradition provide a vivid celebration of the desert, its climate and lifestyle. Outside these enclaves, however, one too often confronts another reality formed by the explosive growth of look-alike streets and awkward developments across the flat city floor. Facing this, the observer of the city is soon overwhelmed and disoriented by vast distances and long lines of formularized development that obliterate any sense of the original beauty of the desert.

Growth is not about to stop. As much as 100 square miles will be annexed at the northern and western frontiers of the city. Despite this, public revenues are at a minimum and are focused primarily on catching up with private developments to provide adequate public infrastructure. To build the necessary roads, sewers, utilities, and public facilities to support this expansion, the voters approved in May 1988 a $1 billion capital improvement bond issue.

Budgets of $1 billion plus are standard in American cities today. However, as designers and civic design advocates in these cities have discovered, comprehensive urban design proposals are seen as luxury items in the face of utilitarian engineering demands. Ironically, infrastructure projects are not usually seen by designers or public officials as opportunities for building cities that are both functional and beautiful.

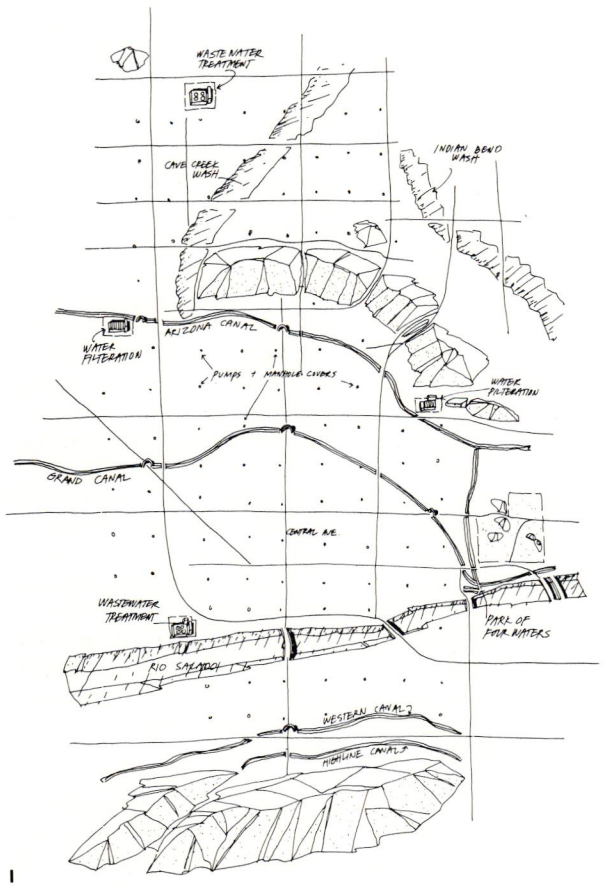
In Phoenix neither the citizenry nor the public officials have been willing to dictate aesthetics or visions for most of the new growth—a position not unique to that city. Like most progressive American cities, Phoenix does have a "General Plan," which specifies such things as land use, transportation corridors, and village core planning concepts. Apart from the traditional planning documents and policies, however, there is no unified aesthetic or physical urban design plan for the entire city, no articulated vision, no philosophical statement about building a city in the desert.

Interestingly enough, it is the Phoenix Arts Commission, through its Percent for Art program, which has inherited a leading role as aesthetic urban designers for the city. Originally Percent for Art ordinances were enacted by public agencies to require that private developers spend a percentage of their construction budgets in redevelopment projects for fine arts. Later, with varying percentage formulas being applied, the idea was expanded in many cities to require that a portion of all public dollars spent for capital improvements be set aside for art projects.

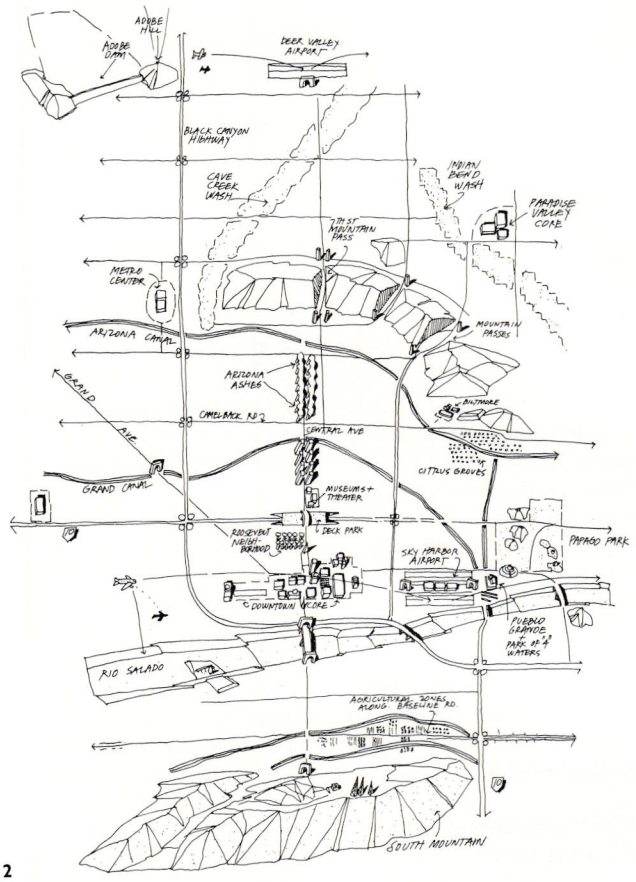
In Phoenix, the Arts Commission is articulating and implementing a vision for the city, through public art projects that pull together a diverse group of public agencies, citizens, artists, and designers. Funding is provided by an unusually broad Percent for Art ordinance approved by the City Council in 1986, which sets aside for public art one percent of the budget on virtually all future public buildings and infrastructure projects paid for with public dollars. This makes the Phoenix Public Art Program unique in that it extends, along with roads, utilities, and new buildings, to the entire city and its suburban frontiers, not just to traditional downtown redevelopment areas. The emphasis on public infrastructure projects provides an unparalleled opportunity for city-building on functional and artistic levels simultaneously.

In 1987, the Phoenix Arts Commission appointed our firm, CITYWEST, to prepare the master vision for the Public Art Plan that would establish the framework for current and future projects. In the simplest terms, the charge was to survey the city and recommend good sites for public art from an urban design viewpoint. To ensure that the sites selected were also "good" from an artist's viewpoint, Grover Mouton, an artist, was invited to join the study team.

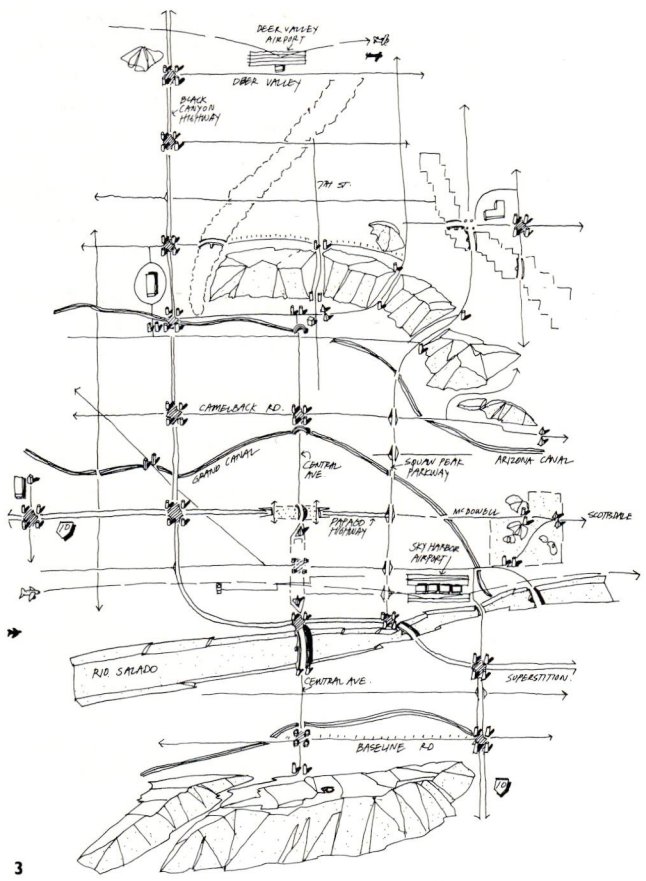
Relying on our previous knowledge of Phoenix, an unlimited-mileage rental car, and the new-to-Phoenix eyes of artist Grover Mouton, we began. The team's twofold goal was to identify and select the project art sites and to ensure that collectively all selected sites (with their artworks) would form a comprehensive system which would create a clearer sense of orientation and place within Phoenix. Our notion was that the form and structure of such a comprehensive arts plan system might contain formal characteristics similar to the pattern of public infrastructure systems. Both systems were seen as containing single elements and extensive supporting networks serving various functions all woven together into a complex urban fabric. This was further reinforced by the fact that as infrastructure is funded and built, money is then available to build the public art projects network parallel to the first system.


WASTE WATER TREATMENT
CAVE CREEK WASH
INDIAN BEND WASH
ARIZONA CANAL
WATER FILTERATION
PUMPS + MANHOLE COVERS
WATER FILTERATION
GRAND CANAL
CENTRAL AVE.
WASTEWATER TREATMENT
PARK OF FOUR WATERS
RIO SALADO
WESTERN CANAL?
HIGHLINE CANAL?

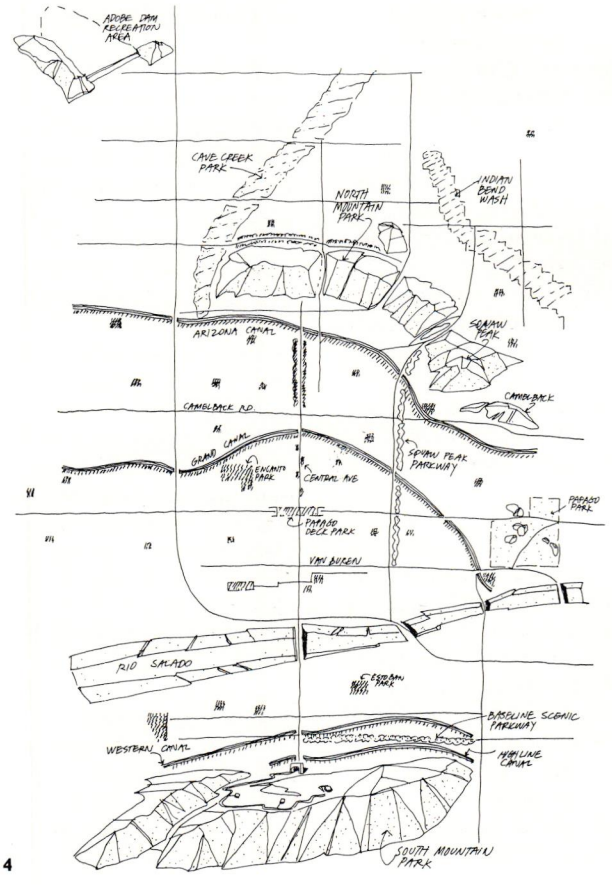
1


ADOBE DAM
ADOBE MTN.
DEER VALLEY AIRPORT
BLACK CANYON HIGHWAY
CAVE CREEK WASH
INDIAN BEND WASH
PARADISE VALLEY CORE
7TH ST.
METRO CENTER
ARIZONA CANAL
MOUNTAIN PASSES
ARIZONA ASHES
CAMELBACK RD.
GRAND AVE.
CENTRAL AVE
BILTMORE
CITRUS GROVES
GRAND CANAL
MUSEUMS + THEATER
ROOSEVELT NEIGHBORHOOD
DEER PARK
PAPAGO PARK
SKY HARBOR AIRPORT
DOWNTOWN CORE
PUEBLO GRANDE PARK AT 4 WATERS
RIO SALADO
AGRICULTURAL ZONES ALONG BASELINE RD.
SOUTH MOUNTAIN

2


DEER VALLEY AIRPORT
DEER VALLEY
BLACK CANYON HIGHWAY
7TH ST.
CAMELBACK RD.
GRAND CANAL
CENTRAL AVE.
SQUAW PEAK PARKWAY
ARIZONA CANAL
PAPAGO FREEWAY
MCDOWELL
SCOTTSDALE
SKY HARBOR AIRPORT
RIO SALADO
CENTRAL AVE.
SUPERSTITION
BASELINE RD.

3


ADOBE DAM RECREATION AREA
CAVE CREEK PARK
NORTH MOUNTAIN PARK
INDIAN BEND WASH
ARIZONA CANAL
SQUAW PEAK
CAMELBACK
CAMELBACK RD.
GRAND CANAL
ENCANTO PARK
CENTRAL AVE.
SQUAW PEAK PARKWAY
PAPAGO PARK
PAPAGO RACE PARK
VMI BUREAU
RIO SALADO
ESTRELLA PARK
BASELINE SCENIC PARKWAY
WESTERN CANAL
HIGHLINE CANAL
SOUTH MOUNTAIN PARK

4

An earlier art plan prepared by the Seattle Arts Commission for its city core had used the work and vocabulary of Kevin Lynch's book *Image of the City* to map and identify key public art sites. For workshops in Phoenix, the study team built upon this work and prepared a series of cognitive-type maps which pulled the city layers apart in a series of abstract diagrams and drawings for presentation and discussion.

Continued work on these diagrams isolated a basic spatial system of the city. Five primary systems were identified and mapped for Phoenix as being those with the greatest potential for integration of public art within the urban design context: Water, Oasis Park and Open Space, Vehicular, Landmark, Pedestrian. The highlighted areas were found to be the primary "peopled" areas of the city and were thought to be the places at which public art would hold both meaning and position in the viewers' mental map of the city.

In a city gridded for real estate speculation, there exist many available development "parcels." The team quickly realized that the plan must transform these remnant parcels, which are by nature isolated, disconnected, unprepared, and lacking in valued meaning. The transformation to be accomplished by the plan is from designation as a parcel to a "site." Sites, by our definition, are linked to a larger network or system, connected, prepared, and endowed with meaning and values. Artists and designers who are later commissioned to develop these "sites" will transform them once again into collectively held public "places" through their works.

To understand the more specific characteristics of sites, a number of site drawings were prepared. Each site was scrutinized for those hints and fragments that, if properly defined, can lead future artists into a "whole area of magic." The team was looking for situations or moments in these sites where a special artistic intervention present only in Phoenix could be found.

Identification of the critical places, themes, ingredients, images, situations, moments, etc., became known as the search for "signature opportunities." The team consciously sought to identify and articulate those elements that make Phoenix visually unique and contribute to that amorphous and fleeting sense of place. Once identified, these would be the start of developing a truly unique-to-Phoenix public art program that would celebrate and give reference to the desert city's inherent character.

The "signature" opportunities identified are illustrated in the accompanying sketches. Those we felt most strongly about were the lines of water—the canals that diagonally cross and relieve the grid; the stone desert mountains; palm and citrus trees; native vegetation and climatic responses. Of a less tangible nature but of equal importance were two other strongly held themes: reinstatement of ties to history through reinforcement of existing remnants of past cultures and demarcation of the delicate edge between desert and city.

For implementation of the Public Art Plan the recommended sites were organized into 15 "working zones," which are the priority work areas for public art projects. There are two major types of working zones. The first group of zones designates a specific geographical area of Phoenix, such as Papago Park, and there are eight of this type. The second group of working zones is made up of networks and systems spread throughout the city, such as canals, roadways, mountain parks, and neighborhood parks. Within each of the 15 zones there are multiple art sites covering a full range of project types.

Working zones order a complex and at times overwhelming range of project types spread all over the city into "bite-sized" implementable packages. The working zones establish the framework of priority work areas for the next three to five years. Boundaries for each are loosely defined and can expand or contract depending on circumstance. Each year, based on the city's annual Capital Improvement Plan, the zones are updated. Over time, as projects are completed within a given geographical zone, that zone will be phased out and new zones will replace old. The network-type working zones are likely to remain as permanent zones.

Propelled by a strong economic base and an emerging civic consciousness, Phoenix is at a threshold of maturity. Leaving the boomtown state and emerging as a more cosmopolitan city, Phoenix seeks to become a culturally rich and aesthetically beautiful city—a city with distinctive colors, rhythms, textures, and a memory of both urban and desert landscapes. Together these landscapes provide a rich palette for the artist and urban designer. The Public Art Program is one mechanism to transform this palette into a set of individualistic artistic expressions and a collective system of works that speak for both the uniqueness of the place and the new accomplishments of building a city in the desert.

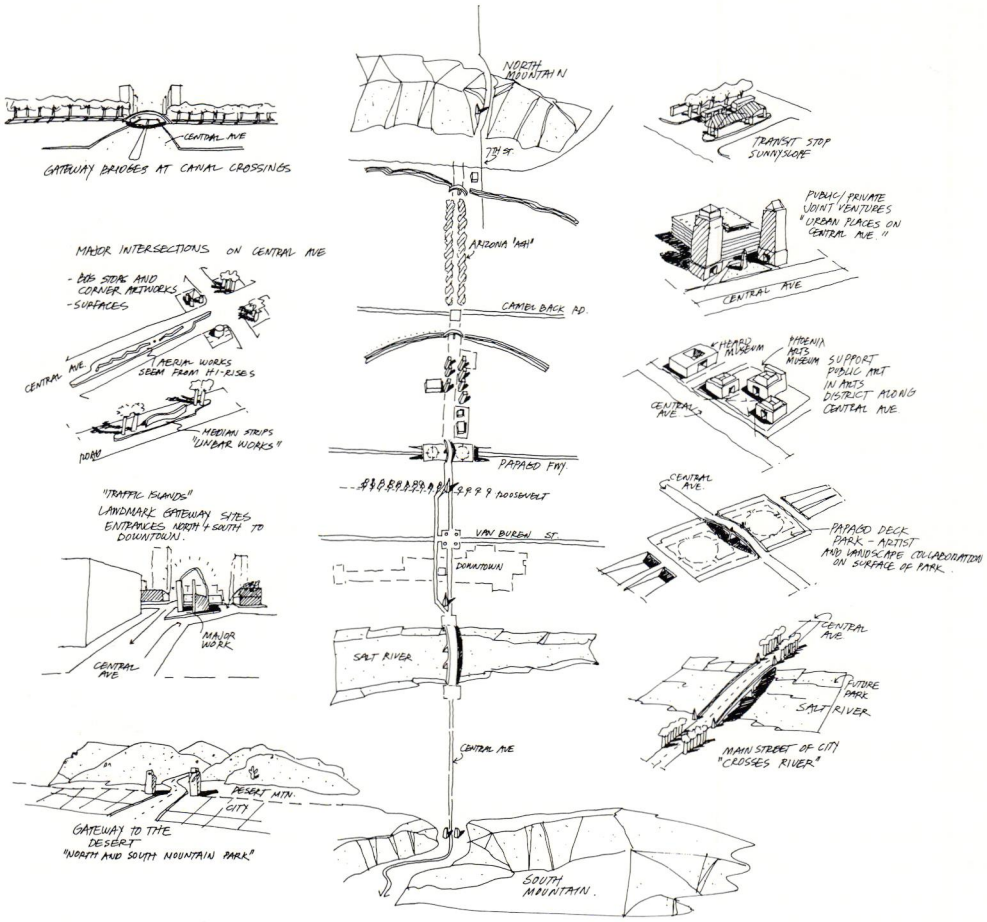
1 Water System

2 Landmark System

3 Vehicular System

4 Park and Open Space System

Central Avenue (Working Zone 2.0)



Zone Description: One to two block wide zone running parallel to Central Avenue from South Mountain Park north to the Arizona Canal.

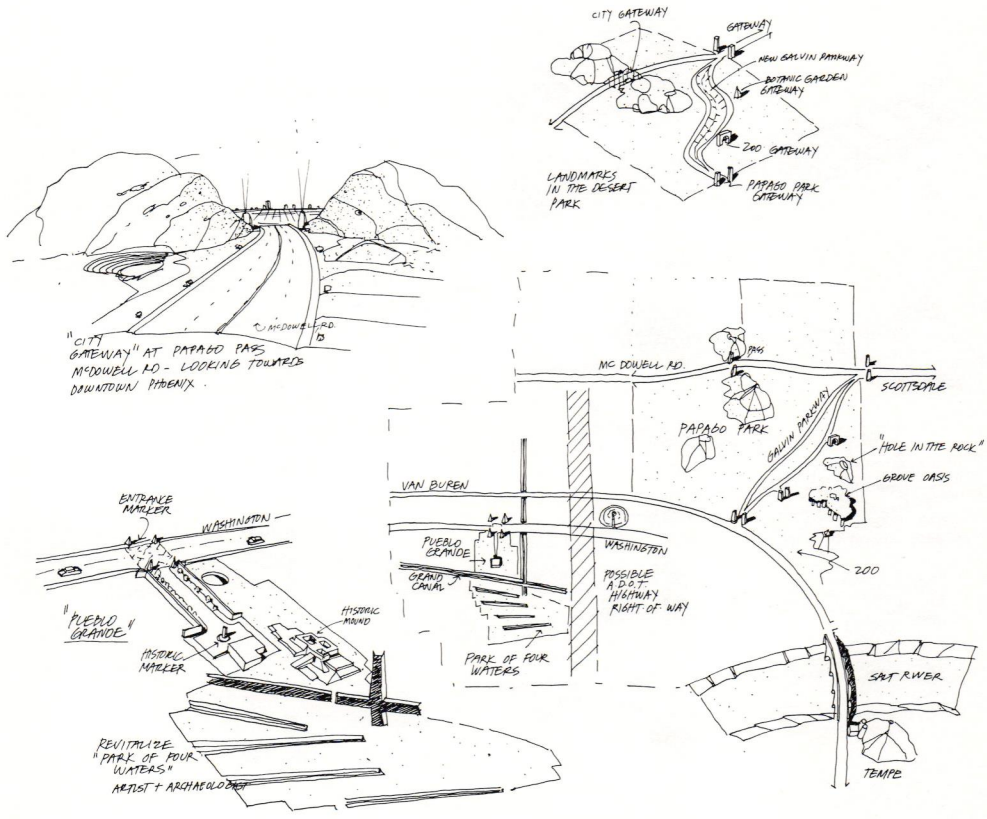
Observations: Central Avenue is a street for the whole city. Historically the north/south axis of Phoenix, Central Avenue serves as a super scaled main street, the linear heart of the city, the parade route for civic festivities. The Central Avenue Corridor Image Study describes it as a linear assemblage of rooms clustered along an axis running from North Mountain to South Mountain. Serving as the location of the Heard Museum, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Little Theater, the Main Library, and other cultural facilities, Central Avenue is a cultural experience formalizing itself into a truly unique urban street. Public art can help to demarcate this space as well as embellish and enhance the positive elements which presently exist.

Papago Park/Pueblo Grande (Working Zone 4.0)

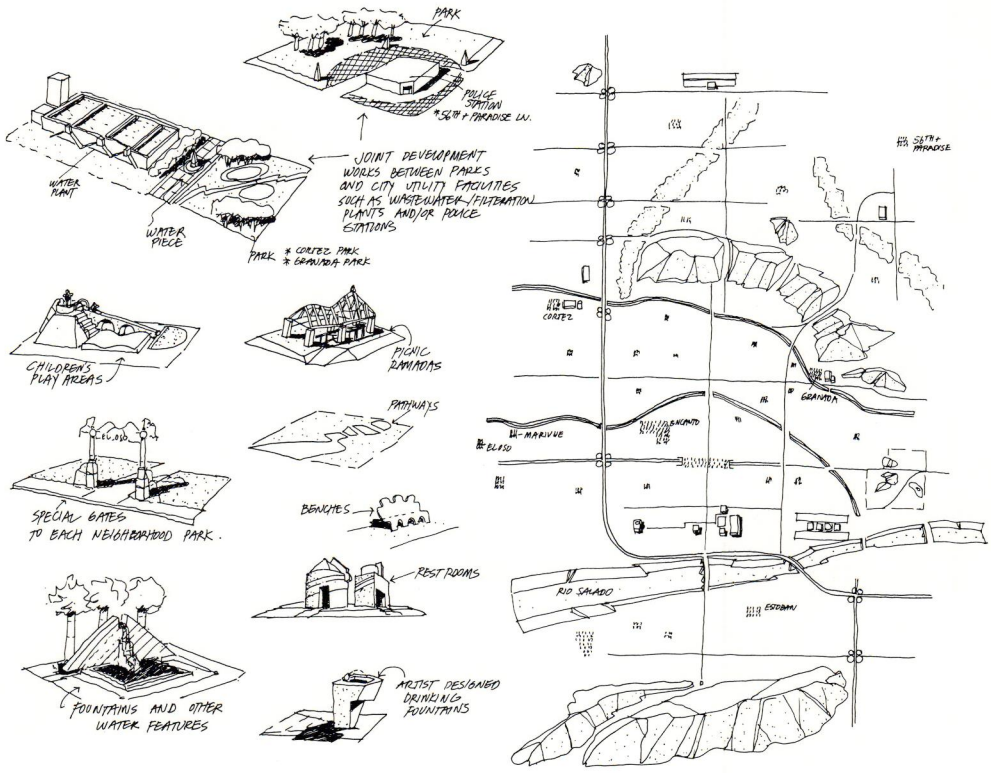
Zone Description: Zone includes all of Papago Park and Pueblo Grande Park.

Observations: Pueblo Grande is one of the first urban settlements in the valley and is the historic urban center of the city. Presently, its identity and location within the city is lost amongst the industrial and commercial uses of the area. In the near future construction of a new highway will pass close by to the eastern edge of Pueblo Grande. This urban historic site must be reinstated into the public consciousness. To the south of Pueblo Grande is an old abandoned area which was once called the Park of Four Waters, a place where the historic irrigation canals intercepted the water of the Salt River that was then carried into the city. This site also needs to be revived in the public consciousness.

Papago Park and the forms of its natural topography create a unique landmark in the city. Public art should be integrated into this landscape for a dual purpose. The first is to heighten the sense of arrival and experience of this place through the placement of markers in the landscape, defining edges and points of reference in the open land. Secondly, art can help to create an entrance into Phoenix from Scottsdale and Tempe.



Neighborhood Parks (Working Zone 10.0)



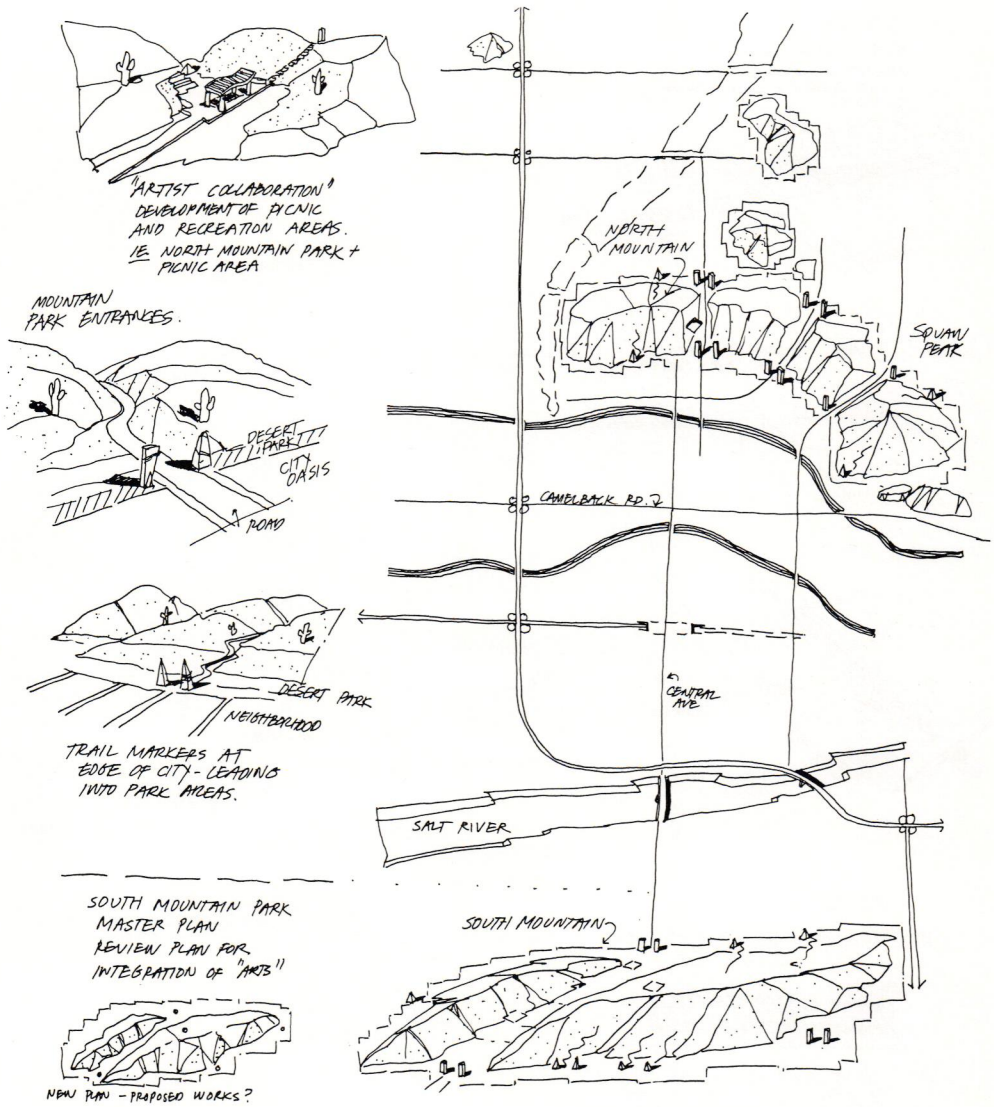
Zone Description: Neighborhood Parks are designated, developed public parks included on the Parks, Recreation and Library Department's facility map and are scattered throughout Phoenix.

Observations: Neighborhood parks are points of concentrated pedestrian activity throughout the city. They are publicly owned and are a logical place for public art projects. Envisioned projects include water elements, landscaping, playgrounds, picnic areas, paths, benches, gateways, restrooms, drinking fountains.

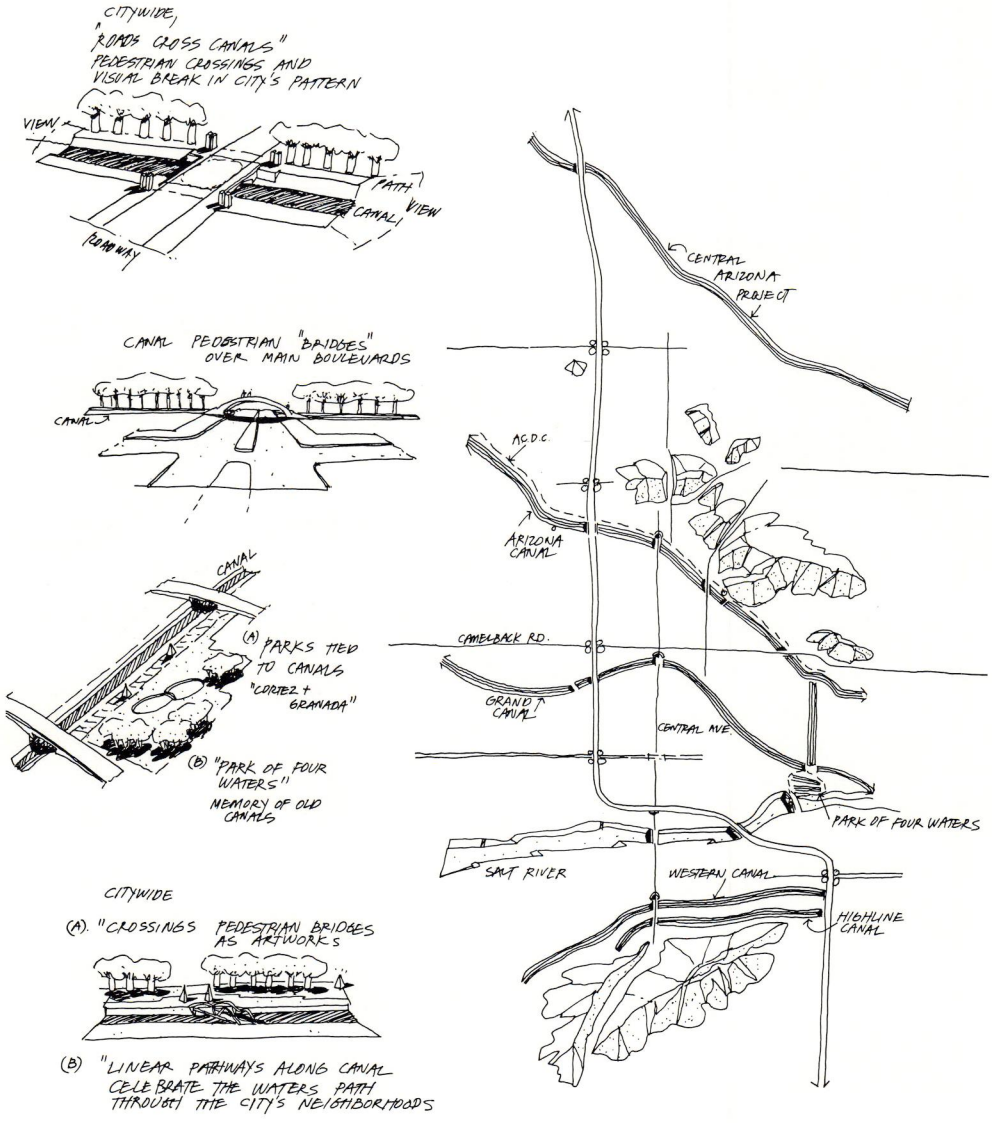
Mountain Parks (Working Zone 11.0)

Zone Description: Unique to Phoenix are the magnificent mountain parks that frame the city's vistas. The parks include North Mountain, Squaw Peak, and South Mountain Park.

Observations: Forming a semicircular ring around the valley of Phoenix are rocky desert mountains. They are key landmarks in describing Phoenix as a distinctive urban place. Without intruding into preserve lands, art works can be used to heighten the experiential quality of these gigantic islands which rise from the urban sea. Artists can help define the gateways and boundaries of the parks, as well as collaborating in the design of the functional elements for areas of the park that are to be developed for recreational use.



Canals (Working Zone 12.0)



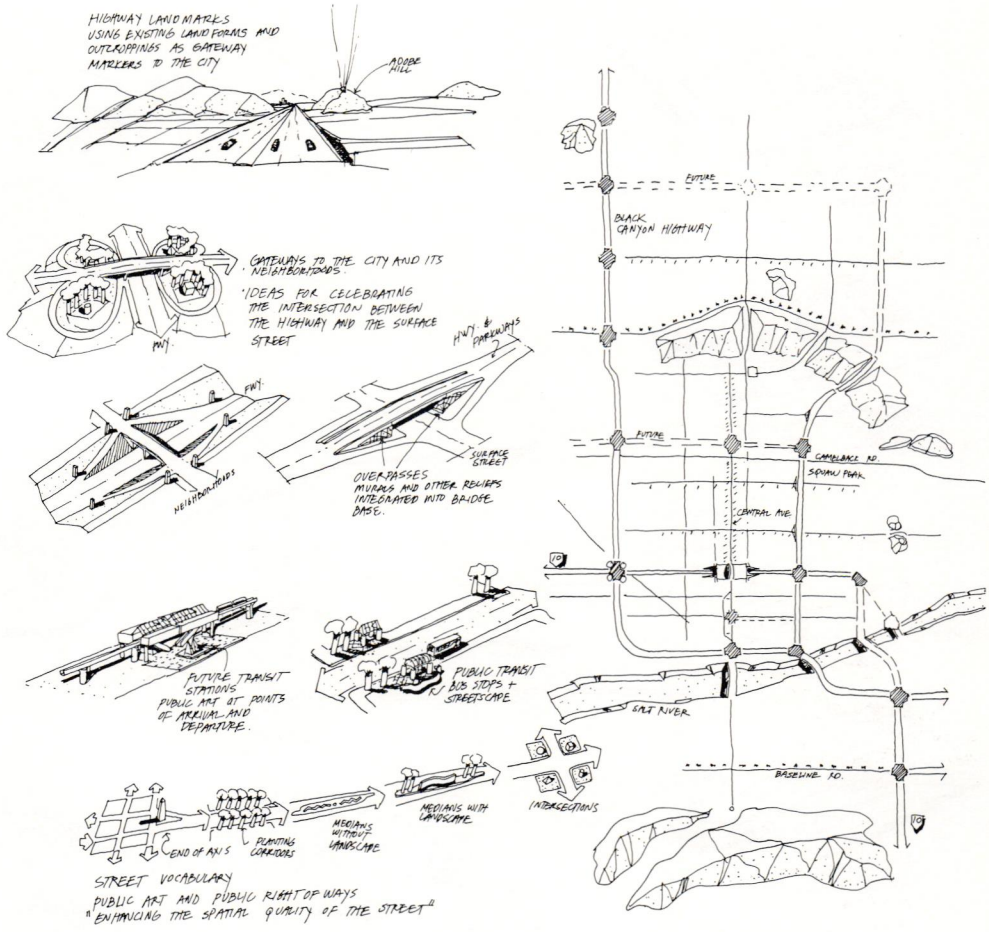
Zone Description: Canals carry water and cut diagonally through the grid of the city. The major canals are Central Arizona Project, Arizona Canal, Grand Canal, and Western Canal.

Observations: The canal system that passes through the village is one of the oldest urban systems in the city. Within the canal, the city's lifeblood, water, flows to its various destinations. The development of sites and works along the canal routes is seen as a mechanism to heighten the presence of the system within people's perception of the city and its history. It is a unique event, when traveling across the sprawling grid of the city, to suddenly cross a canal flowing diagonally under the street. It is projected in city plans that the canal levees will be developed as pedestrian trails. Art works can enhance this pathway system providing interesting destinations or creating functional elements such as seating, shade, and drinking water rest stops.

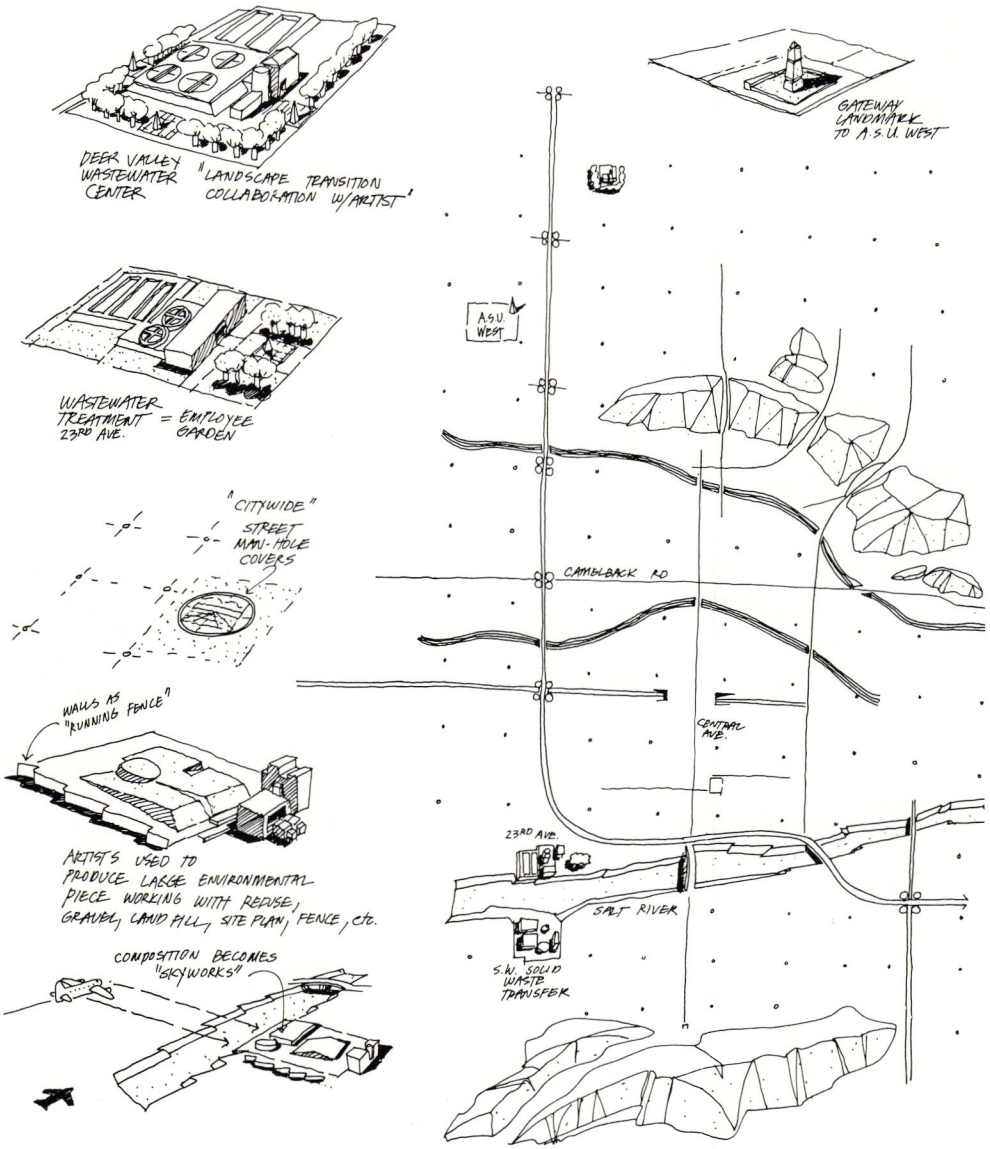
Roads, Freeways, Transit (Working Zone 13.0)

Zone Description: Major traffic routes across the city in all three categories.

Observations: Roadways crisscross in a grid-like fashion across the valley floor. They have mainly been perceived as utilitarian viaducts for moving traffic efficiently between destination points. This strict utilitarian rule is beginning to change as new development emerges along their right-of-ways. People are becoming concerned not only about what the view to the road is; just as important to them is the view from the road. Because the city, county, and state are involvedin an extensive revamping of the road network, there exists a unique opportunity to introduce the sensibility of the artist in an attempt to enhance the sense of movement, space, time, and orientation experienced in our daily travels. The first step is to explore this idea through design studies in order to define the appropriate design vocabulary and project descriptions.



Special Projects (Working Zone 14.0)



Zone Description: Any project that does not fall into the previous 13 zones, located anywhere in the city.

Observations: Special projects is a working zone category that contains sites which are primarily "one of a kind" projects scattered throughout Phoenix. Currently the individual sites are envisioned as one-time-only developments; however, they may emerge as the first prototype for future working zones.

Drawings

Grover E. Mouton III

Anyway, I did these drawings. I do a lot of little crazy drawings that end up being a personal vocabulary. The idea is that your context is so well defined it has its own definition, and it gives birth to the kinds of spaces that artists can get involved with.

I did these drawings to show how an artist might take a look at the site, showing the fragments of the earlier life. These tiny little hints, which are very much a part of the historical background of the site, the historical analysis of Phoenix, can lead an artist—properly defined and directed—into a whole area of real magic.

Grover Mouton

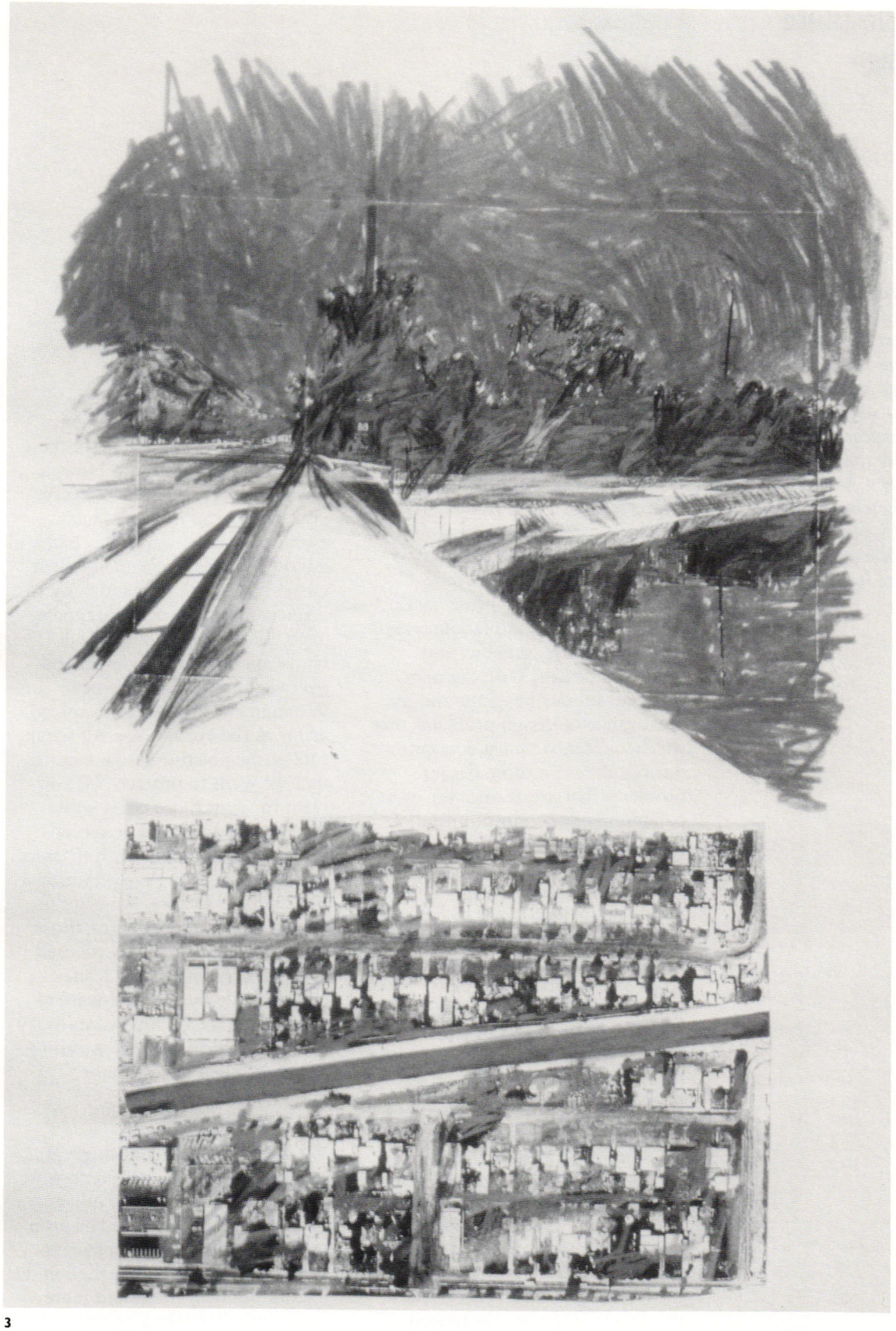
1

1 **Roosevelt Neighborhood**

2

2 Central Avenue

3 Roads and Canals



3

The Mayors Institute on City Design

Preface

With the exception of the introductory articles by Adele Chatfield-Taylor and Robert Campbell the following material is excerpted from papers, talks and discussions that took place at several sessions of the Mayors Institute on City Design, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, Design Arts Program. Sketches are from the notebooks of Laurie Olin, except those of Olin and Sensenbrenner, which are by Allan B. Jacobs.

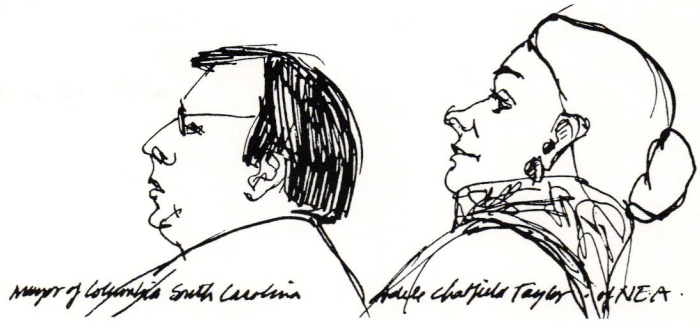
Adele Chatfield-Taylor

The National Endowment for the Arts sponsors The Mayors Institute on City Design as part of its mandate to foster excellence in, and access to, the arts in the United States. The Endowment's Design Arts Program is charged specifically with fostering design excellence and public awareness of design. We are concerned with nine design arts, all of which contribute to the quality of places and the artifacts within them: architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, urban design, urban planning, and interior, fashion, graphic, and industrial design. With the many demands on our program and the great range of design problems that we encounter, we must concentrate our resources on those design problems that are at once the most common and the most in need of fresh thinking.

Perhaps the most demanding of all the design problems we have in this country is the design of our cities. It is clear that as Americans we design some things very well—blue jeans, jet planes, computers, and running shoes, for instance. It is also clear that one thing we design less successfully is our cities. We simply do not think enough about cities in design terms. This is true for all types of places, from the smallest village that is in the throes of balancing historic preservation with modern expansion, to the largest metropolis that is attempting to rescue and rehabilitate its core at the same time that it is decentralizing. It is true also for the newest kind of city that is now filling up the countryside from coast to coast, a shapeless, leaderless type of development, which no one seems to understand or like, but which is engulfing us nonetheless.

A few decades ago, designers thought they were the only ones interested in the design of all these different kinds of places. Now, it seems every citizen is. Not every citizen may call it design, but everyone is able to point to bad and good examples and to name their effects. All speak of maddening traffic jams, the sudden disappearance of familiar buildings and landscapes, and the ugliness and overwhelming size of the new development that seems to spread as far as the eye can see. All speak, too, of the positive design features that we want to protect. We now want to savor those cities with distinguished historic or special architecture, or with natural assets like nearness to the mountains or the desert or the sea. We want to maintain, perhaps enhance, those towns and cities that we are used to, places too important to be carried away by the tidal wave of change. All speak, finally, of the need for growth, but for meaningful growth and not just more development.

We are at the end of a century in which there has been more loss of life and property than in other periods of history. There has been more degradation of the environment in the last 30 years than in the history of civilization, and more built since 1950 than between 1607 and 1950. As we think about this past century, we are at a turning point for the future.



So these issues suddenly are not just the domain of designers; they are the concern of everyone. Most important of all, they have become the concern and the responsibility of the central person in each city who can identify with the people who live there, and the one who has the leadership to direct the future. This one person is the mayor, who through his or her power to shape the environment, is the de facto designer of every urban place.

Mayors are responsible not only for the thinking and the vision behind city planning, but also for the construction and other implementation that actually turn thinking into design, and design into bricks and mortar. They may operate through intervening abstractions such as zoning laws, preservation ordinances, or tax incentives; but in their effects, mayors' decisions are design decisions.

Our experience is that good design need not take more money from city budgets, but that it does take more thought. Mayors must understand what design is all about so that it can be properly incorporated into the systems of business as usual.

It is because mayors often don't have enough time to focus on design—or may lack access to the designers who could help them—that the Design Arts Program created a new forum called the Mayors Institute on City Design. Our partners are The University of Virginia School of Architecture, the Jefferson Institute, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston, in particular, called on the Design Arts Program because he and his fellow mayors have nowhere else to go to discuss the design issues or to study the design process. From the other side, designers have nowhere to go for information about the challenges that mayors face, challenges that eventually affect the city's design. Designers have nowhere to go to learn about the desire, the political mandate, or the demand mayors feel to do something for posterity. With the Mayors Institute, we aimed to provide a forum for both groups, the mayors and the designers.

Currently run by the Design Arts Program, the Mayors Institute works simply. Twice each year, spring and fall, seven or eight mayors and seven or eight urban resource people come together in an oval room designed by Thomas Jefferson in the Rotunda of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. In the beautiful setting of Jefferson's university, away from the demands of daily business, each mayor presents to the group an urban design problem from his or her city. They may not receive answers to their specific design questions, but all have a chance to learn one another's point of view. This exchange, we think, is the most valuable thing the Endowment can offer.

The Endowment commits itself to this effort because, of all the things we can do, sponsoring the Institute is one of the most important for encouraging design excellence for the long term. Each mayor is a person with a constituency and the ability to affect change. Their decisions are real, encompassing, and powerful. When one mayor leaves the Institute with a better sense of good design, that insight will affect thousands. For the Endowment, this is a significant and vital investment.

The history of design success in cities doesn't just have to do with good ideas, it has to do with that peculiar concatenation of people, a moment of time, willpower, and luck.

Jaquelin Robertson
Dean, School of Architecture
University of Virginia

The City Is More than Contingent

Robert Campbell

(The following comments are excerpted from remarks made by Jaquelin Robertson, Dean of the School of Architecture, University of Virginia, at Mayors Institutes convened in October 1986 and April 1987.)

Every mayor and every business and every planner and agency should ask one another every week, what kind of town do we want? What kind are we likely to be able to have, given our location, conditions, and so forth? What are the physical characteristics of these wish lists that we make up? Because if you say that you want sunshine in the streets and lots of trees and you don't have those, there's a mismatch.

A first generic problem is size and limit, and many of us have talked about it. I think avoiding that issue is impossible. Definition and legibility—does the city have an edge? Are its entry points identified? Is there a center? When you say I have arrived in Norwalk, where have you arrived? What is the place that says this is Norwalk?

Feeling in the center or at the edge has a lot to do with density. How are the FAR [floor-area ratio] standards of your central business district arrived at? Are they based on population growth projections, special use, absorption rates, available empty land at the core of the city, paid-for infrastructure? Almost none are. But how would you arrive at them if they weren't based on that? What are acceptable and attractive residential zoning densities? Allan Jacobs and I have talked about this—15 to 30 dwelling units per acre? You know that you can do quite good things with 15 to 30, it's quite dense.

As important perhaps as anything that we talked about is the balance between the natural and the built worlds. I don't think in the United States you can have good cities without that balance between trees and parks and buildings.

And something we didn't talk about: public monuments and the ways in which cities commemorate and rewrite their own history over time. These are physically necessary for every culture.

The design of public spaces is the central design concern of architects. In the end, architects were intended to design cities. Buildings come very easily if you know what the design of the city is. It becomes impossible if you have no idea, because then it's just willful shapemaking.

In short, the most desirable communities in the next 30 years are going to be those that know what they want and can put that down in easily understood laws that are extremely rigorous with respect to amenity and development and growth control, because the rest of the world around is going to be a wasteland of people savaging one another.

If there is an essence to the Mayors Institute, I think, it is simply a belief in the primacy of the physical world. The Institute is an attempt to introduce a set of physical priorities into the thinking of a group of people—American mayors—who are conditioned to think of the world almost exclusively in terms of abstract, nonphysical value systems, especially those of economics, politics, and social welfare. It says nothing against the importance to our lives of those three disciplines to maintain that the physical world also exists with its own independent set of values. One can argue about what those values are or should be. The important thing is to recognize that they exist. The physical built world is more than the outcome and expression—the visible graph—of underlying abstract forces. It is more than contingent.

There is, of course, a reciprocal to this idea. If mayors, pressed by human and economic needs, can become blind to the physical environment, then designers are at least equally apt to get so fascinated by visual and sculptural games that they become blind to social realities. The larger purpose of the Institute is thus to bring together two subcultures—that of design and that of political leadership—in the hope that both can learn.

The mayors, from a designer's point of view, have proved to be extremely quick learners and extremely articulate people, although one can't tell how deep the learning goes or how long it is retained.

Often they have been just as aware of issues in urban design as any of the designers. What they are also keenly aware of is the great force of circumstance, the great inertial mass of legislation, vested interest, and cultural habit. Often they seem to feel themselves to be powerless or, at best, to be brokers among the forces of circumstance.

A common phenomenon has been for the mayors to hear, from the designers, an expression of the same common-sense values (often "old-fashioned") in which they themselves believe, but which they have been hesitant to assert against the perverse advice of shallow expert specialists. The Institute thus has the effect of giving the mayors permission to trust their own instincts and experience in the field of urban design. Most of the designers invited to the Institute sessions have been generalists; there is therefore a tacit assertion that design decisions are best made by generalists, integrating and evaluating the advice of experts, rather than by experts themselves. Mayors are, by the nature of their jobs, generalists. The hope is that they will leave the sessions not only better educated but also feeling empowered to assert their own intuitions.

It is difficult to judge what the impact of the Mayors Institute has been or will be. Because the designers have tended to support the positive qualities of more traditional forms of urbanism, the sessions have undoubtedly improved the morale of mayors of older cities, who perhaps regarded their existing fabric as outdated. If this is true, then the Institute may also have strengthened the sense of self and of local culture. More important, the Institute has perhaps suggested that design is another kind of language in which to talk about cities, a language different from the language of budgets or service-provision. Design can be an alternative way of thinking about the city, a fresh way of framing a particular urban problem. It can be a tool for a creative mayor, a way of catalyzing people, a way of relating the present to the future, a way of creating a self-image for the community.

For the designers, the Institute experience teaches that design is not a game we invent and play among ourselves but something much more important, something that deals with very real, very important, and very difficult issues. Questions of architectural style or individual reputation vaporize quickly in the heat of the real-world problems and conflicts that are presented by the mayors to the sessions. Professionals are encouraged to address what really matters and to think and talk about design clearly enough to be understood. Surely they take this lesson away with them. They learn, too, from one another and sometimes feel ratified in their own views in the same way that the mayors do. They meet one another and form useful friendships. In listening to the mayors, they learn something about how decisions are made in cities; and in reviewing the problems the mayors present, they perceive recurrences from one city to another, recurrences that suggest patterns and generalizations about our cities.

As far as specific impacts, it is too early to judge the Institute. Some of the mayors have requested that designers make follow-up visits to their cities, either to advise on particular problems or to present, perhaps to the planning staff or aldermen, the same message heard earlier by the mayor at the Institute. One mayor issued an RFP [request for proposal] for an urban-design study based in part on the advice he received at the Institute. Others have asked for recommendations of consultants.

It is unlikely, it seems to me, that this kind of specific intervention will ever amount to a great deal. There are too many cities and problems and too few Institute-affiliated designers. The Mayors Institute should be thought of, instead, as a long-term educational exercise. Some of the mayors will undoubtedly go on to higher office; others will remain influential in their cities for decades to come. Many of the designers will perform important work.

It is said that one can learn only what one already knows but has not yet articulated. Part of the experience of the Mayors Institute has been the discovery of how much the mayors and the designers know in common, but have as yet failed to articulate to each other or to themselves.

The *Civitas* of Seeing

Richard Sennett

I want to talk about one problem in particular—probably the most vexing issue now in urban studies—which is how to see socially and morally. First, I will try to define what we mean by "public," as a social and moral term; second, I'd like to share with you some worries I have about the way in which the term "public space" is abused so that it doesn't convey a social or moral dimension; and finally, I will talk about the public realm as a social and moral dimension of city life.

"Public" meant to the Greeks *synoikismos,* which is also the word for "making a city." The first part, *syn,* is a coming together; and the second, *oikos,* was a household unit in Greece, something between a family and a village—maybe the word "tribe" captures it, with its slaves, services, and so on. Greek cities were formed when these *oiki* migrated into a central place. They did so for two obvious reasons—as long as they were exposed out there on the Greek hills, they could be annihilated; and their economies never grew, unless they grew together.

What *synoikismos* denotes, however, is a peculiar problem; it isn't just putting people together functionally. The term literally means to bring together in the same place people who need each other but worship different household gods. The public problem for the Greeks was how people who needed each other functionally, but didn't share the same values, who didn't worship the same gods, could live in the same place. That's a public problem that persists in all Western cities: How can we let people live together who worship different household gods? How do differing people find a means of using the word "we"?

The meaning of the word "public" has been pretty debased. Most practical use of the terms "public" and "public spaces" in cities connotes spaces where people go to buy things. We think about shopping malls, downtowns, and so on, in terms of consumption, pleasure. What's missing is any sense of the Greek notion of *polis,* which is that there's something more consequent, more political, about different people being concentrated together in the same place.

How will people learn from each other's differences? Most shopping malls depend on constant circulation of traffic. If people sit down for two or three hours, as they might in a Parisian cafe, and just discuss, they're using the space, but they're not using it economically. One of the tricks of the people who design malls is not to provide many places to sit very long. Also, laws against loitering are enforced in malls. These are ways of preventing the kind of social action, interaction, in a public place that gets beyond the circulating and consuming.

The second thing *synoikismos* connotes is how people know they're in the center of some place. For the Greeks that came out of the problem of having to be with people who are unlike yourself; that is, the center is the place where all of you feel that the moment for confronting difference occurs. For them, it was the *agora,* a place of talk, discussion, and shopping. (The market function was intermittent—the markets had closed by nine in the morning—but the *agoras* were still used.) To put it another way, the center is turf that people have fought for and in some way suffered for. It's the sense of belonging that people in London had after the Second World War—turf that mattered because something important had been lived there. To have a meaningful city center, something has to happen there politically. That's what the Greeks discovered, and it's a very simple and profound principle.

But we don't know how to make this work in the modern world. We have two reflex actions, which are each self-defeating. One is to simulate past models of what "public" looks like, and the other is, oddly enough, to privatize the public realm. The plan of Williamsburg, for instance, came out of a whole sense of establishing a colony in the midst of an alien and very threatening wilderness. That play of right angles in its spaces has to do with the expression of protection; you've created a center by being in a hostile place. You'll find people who will tell you, "We'll do a Williamsburg, this is a time-tested morphology, right?" It's what cities used to look like, but we can't recreate the social and economic circumstances that made those models—they were lived experiences.

We copy the morphologies, but we could never go back and copy the political and social circumstances

that gave birth to them. In other words, it's DisneyWorld as public space, and it's no accident that DisneyWorld is the most apparently successful simulated public space created in the 1970s in the United States. It's a place where nothing painful happens, a place that completely depoliticizes your experience of all you see.

Alternative to that is a privatization of public space. If you want to put together where people work, where they live, and where their schools are, so that, for instance, workers can have day care for their children, you go outside the city, find a piece of land, and build a campus. There's some housing, a school, medical facilities, and one factory. But that's not public, that's a company town; it doesn't confront the fact of difference. You must have something in it that's dissonant, that requires people to say, "This is one way to live, but that's another"—then you've created a public realm. We're in trouble intellectually in urban studies because we can't really think of forms of the public realm that are, as it were, appropriate to the pains of our society.

Three specific problems emerge as a way to think out these issues. They're all problems that result in different kinds of space. The first, and most elemental, is how to use public space so that people who are unlike actually get to talk to one another; how to use space as a forum for discourse. The kinds of places that aren't public are those that you look at in silence. Things that seem to us to be the minutiae of planning, that parks departments delegate to some junior person, turn out to be incredibly important when you begin thinking about the city as a place where people have to learn to talk to others. How do you design things that seem trivial, such as street architecture, benches, and planters: how do you get to a design where the benches don't face out, but face each other? This issue has all sorts of implications for how police, for instance, deal with loitering. Police, today, and this is not their fault, are trained to think that when somebody gets up and starts talking to a crowd of people, they've got a crazy on their hands. Rethinking the practices of urbanism is involved in creating a place in which people can talk to each other, and this is a huge issue. You can't have a public realm, you can't have *synoikismos*, if people don't exchange with one another, and the element of exchange is talk.

The second issue is the geography of justice; that is, how we study the ecology of the city in terms of questions of justice. David Harvey, in his wonderful book *Justice and the City*, puts forward the notion that at the seams of cities, where areas join, is where all the action takes place publicly. Where unlikes join is where *synoikismos* should happen. But we have found a whole language for sealing off the edges, the social edges of cities, because we're afraid of what might happen at those seams. What's the best way to deal with a potentially explosive situation? Segregate the people by fast-moving traffic, right? That depoliticizes the city, and everybody loses because it means that

You move into an area that all of us had an agreement on: until you get housing downtown, rich people living downtown, as well as poor people, you won't have a downtown. Housing is absolutely a sine qua non *to cities.*

Master plans are political documents as well as physical documents—who gets rewarded, who is disenfranchised, whose interests are represented and protected?

Jaquelin Robertson
Dean, School of Architecture
University of Virginia

differences don't interact. We need a way to reconceive the city so that we can locate the geography of justice and injustice. How about capitalizing on *synoikismos* by manipulating the edges where poor and rich people are, where business and commerce meet? How about finding ways of making the city what it actually is, a place where those who are unlike find some sense of mattering to each other?

The third issue we're bedeviled by—and this is most philosophical, and that means most practical—is how space can serve the community's moral purposes. Space is subject to the moral constraints of community. The problem is we don't know how to translate the ways in which we think ethically into any kind of visual equivalents.

An example is the question of drugs, which becomes a spatial problem in cities. Drug dealers essentially require a territory that only they occupy; in New York, parks such as Washington Square or Union Square are territories that drug dealers colonize, gradually moving the other people out; they become homogenized spaces. How does one regain such a space by getting rid of the people who have colonized it? How can the space become a place where there are lots of different people?

It takes one in some odd directions. I, who was born left-wing and will die left-wing, have become a proponent of police harassment. I now understand the logic of daily arrests. The dealer who is arrested, even if he's out on the street the next day, hasn't been doing business for eight hours, and eventually the people who buy from him may move on as they find their supplies disrupted. But the issue of how you create a space that operates morally is visual as well. In New York one of the best park designs is Union Square. It was essentially a podium park, up three feet seven inches from the ground, and ringed with a very nice fringe of boxwood—which meant that from the ground you couldn't see very much inside. For many years it was a happy haven for cocaine dealers. But the city cut the box hedges down, ripped out trees, and cut into the podium. They opened it up so that now the sight line from any part of the park is clear across. That gave old people, of whom there are many in that area of the city, the confidence that they could get in without being subjected to the dealers.

Now that's a kind of terrible example of the way in which moral values can be visually enacted; that is to say, you create visibility so you can displace the population that had colonized the space. There are many more positive ways of looking at this issue. For instance, how do we create ways of protecting, not just poor people, but lower middle class people, and middle class people, in and near the centers of cities, so that they are not subjected to pressures to leave where they've lived—turf they've dedicated their lives to—for two, even three generations. Suddenly all this cash is coming into their neighborhoods—the dollar amounts look incredible—and their communities fall apart. How, through zoning, moral zoning, do you protect a community from gentrification? It's the people who, in the 1940s and 1950s, were left behind to tough it out in the urban core who are now the ones subject to these processes.

There are then a whole host of political, economic, and zoning questions that all come back to looking at the city as a moral community. Not moralizing, but moral: a city in which people have the feeling that something really important, something that's absolutely critical in their lives, is happening because they're in a certain place.

It's very hard for Americans to have a sense of place in that way. The difficulty we've had with our cities is making place matter in this political sense. A city isn't just a place to live, to shop, to go out and have kids play. It's a place that implicates how one derives one's ethics, how one develops a sense of justice, and most of all how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how a human being becomes human.

The problem of public space in this country is a really difficult one, because we are so placeless; but it's the kind of problem that urbanists are trying to put their hands on in a way that is neither a simulation of past models nor a withdrawal into an ideal little community where everything is controlled, a campus where at last one does one's work in private. What I want to see is public work done in cities, and in public.

The Design of Cities

Spiro Kostof

There are two kinds of cities, conventional wisdom asserts—those based on a conscious design, set down at one moment in the name of some overseeing authority; and those others that grew naturally, subject to no master scheme but the passage of time, the lay of the land, and the daily life of their occupants.

The first are masterminded by rulers, political figures and colonial administrators, by military experts, by religious groups, by reformers and paternalistic industrialists, and by agencies like railroad or land development companies. The design itself might engage the skills of ordinary surveyors, engineers, architects, or more recently, members of the discrete profession of city planning. Cities of the latter sort, those that come about without benefit of designers, are called "irregular" or "unplanned" or "spontaneous" or, most often and perhaps least accurately, "organic."

It is not hard to tell these two kinds of cities apart. Palmanova, with its nine-sided and strictly radial plan, is one thing; the labyrinthine complication of Venice, which established Palmanova as a military outpost in 1593, is another. Often the two versions of urban arrangement end up side by side. In Europe, new additions to the dense medieval cores of historic towns were always regular; and modern colonial powers overwhelmed the intricate native pattern of North African medinas and the ancient towns of India and Indochina with grand geometric designs, quickened by single-minded diagonals and accented by formal squares.

The issue, then, seems to be order and its corollary, control. And so, depending on your view of things, you will either favor the planned city over the unplanned for its formal discipline, or else deplore its rigidity. Again, you might fault the random ways of the unplanned city, or find praise for its celebration of an eventful topography, the responsive, indeed instinctive evolution of its form and its native ease with the rhythms of communal living.

Even so, this simple and obvious duality does not take us very far. It has to be seriously qualified.

First of all, no city, however random it may seem to us, can be said to be unplanned. Beneath the strangest twist of lane or alley, behind the most fitfully bounded public place, lies an order beholden to prior occupation, to long-established conventions of the social contract, to a string of compromises between individual rights and the common will.

Look at the map of New Orleans. Those peculiar, fan-shaped street clusters west of the Vieux Carrée are not a planner's fancy. They memorialize the "long lots" of the original French plantations, squeezed between the curves of the Mississippi and the backswamp. Look at the mazelike street plan of Old Delhi. Its order is not the calculated visual order of geometry, true, but it has order nonetheless. Inscribed within the tangled network of the indigenous quarter is a coherent social structure of

I thought that it was very stimulating to listen to the significance of the horizontal face of the city; there is a tendency in many of us to think about capital improvement projects and urban development in terms of vertical growth, and yet at the same time we seem to neglect what happens at the horizontal level.

Baltasar Corrada Del Rio
Mayor, San Juan, Puerto Rico

I mentioned impact fees earlier on; I think we've just begun, in this country, to see the beginning of taxation for social purposes.

Robert O. Cox
Mayor, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

inward-looking neighborhood clusters. These are based on the extended family and on ethnic or occupational identity, and they are separated by the linear markets along the primary streets.

And a second important qualification has to be registered here. We make a habit of reading the nature of a city's form from its plan alone. We decide whether the city is "planned" or "unplanned" purely on the evidence of a two-dimensional diagram of lots and streets. But this diagram reveals nothing about urban character, nothing about the quality of urban spaces. The design of cities has to do precisely with how we flesh out the diagram, which is to say, how we articulate its lines in three dimensions.

On paper, a grid is a grid is a grid. But Savannah's grid is not like Chicago's or Philadelphia's, let alone New York's. The differences appear above ground. They have to do, among other things, with the height of buildings and their materials, the size of blocks and the presence or absence of alleys cut through them, street width in relation to street walls, the frequency and shape of open spaces, landscaping, and architectural styles.

This is not to say that the initial lines laid out by a planner or a planning agency are neutral. They are in fact the graph of an *intention*. Even as prosaic a formula as the stingily gridded plat of those hundreds of railroad towns of the second half of the nineteenth century said something—I am out to sell land as quickly and expeditiously as possible, it said, and I am not going to waste this profit-rich resource in urban design frills, or the charitable provision of public land for parks and squares. The Puritan township of colonial New England, on the other hand, was nothing less than the matrix for a pious society that was entering therewith into a covenant with God.

Or again, take L'Enfant's plan for Washington, D.C. We know from pronouncements of the designer himself that, far from being an innocent reordering of prior settlements, it had imperial pretensions. Vast beyond the reasonable prospects of the young nation, the plan charted symbolic relationships among the institutions of government, and provided commanding positions for their architecture. "The plan should be drawn on such a scale," L'Enfant wrote President Washington in September 1789, "as to leave room for that aggrandisement & embellishment which the increase of wealth of the Nation will permit it to pursue at any period however renote." And he has proved right.

It is this potential of a city plan to guide the future shape of a community that Daniel Burnham had in mind a hundred years later when he said, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble diagram once recorded will never die."

Yet Burnham, as a planner of cities, also knew better. He knew that without constant vigilance and the citizens' abiding belief in the original premises of their association, the plan, however, noble, had no chance of survival. L'Enfant was lucky, and Washington was a special case. A striking Baroque plan that went him one better, drawn up by Judge Augustus B. Woodward for Detroit in 1805, had no such luck. It had reverted to a commonplace, but practical grid within 10 years.

The forces that modify this diagram, sometimes precipitously, are various. The needs of a population increase, social and political shifts, pressures of land speculation, the type of urban transportation and the volume of traffic are among them. William Penn did not foresee the additional narrow streets that began to split the generous blocks of his plan for Philadelphia very soon after it was laid out, in 1683. Nor did L'Enfant foresee the alleys carved inside his residential blocks in the 1880s.

It was crowding that brought about the subdivision of the original Philadelphia scheme. It was greed at work in Washington, as well-off property owners built rental alley dwellings in their backyards to house poor black families who poured in after the Civil War. The disavowal of Penn's intentions had its good side; it helped to extend home ownership to many more Philadelphians than his land division would have allowed. In Washington the infiltration of the blocks produced shameful, covert alley slums.

Power designs cities, and the rawest form of power is control of urban land. When the state is the principal owner, it can put down whatever pattern it chooses. This was true of the royal cities of ancient Persia, imperial capitals of China, and the Baroque capitals of European princes. It was true of company towns, and it is still true in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, where the rights of private property are severely curtailed. The centralized planning that undisputed authority of this sort promotes is clear-cut and hierarchic. The urban form is unambiguously legible.

In the long history of cities that stretches for more than five millennia, from Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley to the new towns of today, this exercise in totalitarian design has limited currency. Most of the cities created by fiat quickly revert to multiple ownership, as the lots are sold or alienated to settlers. The vast bulk of the world's cities, moreover, do not go back to such single-minded beginnings. The power that comes of owning urban land, is, as a matter of course, broadly shared—therefore city form is a negotiated and ever-changing design. This involved, continuous process presupposes another kind of power—the power of arbitration. The law sets limits on the freedom of property owners to do what they please with their holdings, and municipal effort coordinates the shared aspects of urban design, such as the street network and systems of utilities.

There are as many variants of this public control as there are cities. At one extreme stands the model of the traditional Islamic city. Here physical form was freely improvised, subject only to the respect of custom and the Muslim's right to visual privacy. You were not told what to do, what kind of city to design; you were only enjoined from doing things that threatened accepted social behavior. The concern for privacy, for example, determined where doors and windows would go on building fronts, and how high buildings would rise.

At the other extreme is the Western model of the legally binding master plan and its supporting codes and regulations, according to which city form is coercively revised. In this instance, everything, from street widths and zoned uses to signage and balcony size, is minutely determined by law. The power of eminent domain wielded in the name of the public good can redraw property lines, raze entire neighborhoods, and thereby affect the social structure of the city along with its physical form. This is how the Paris of Napoleon III and Mussolini's Rome were designed.

Americans, by and large, have been unsympathetic to public intervention in the design of cities. We were content to let private property rights and speculative forces guide the development of urban form. In the absence of hereditary princes and with our deep-felt aversion to

authoritarian government, we allowed the public realm of the downtown to be shaped by private business, and the city edge to spread at the whim of land speculators and developers. The courts routinely turned down official zoning attempts until the teens of this century; eminent domain was not exercised on a large scale until the federally encouraged urban renewal program of the 1950s.

The public good in our case was gauged by public opinion. Our first nationwide awareness of civic beauty was painfully ushered in by hundreds of hardworking improvement societies between the Civil War and the First World War. They found their membership in cultural circles, women's clubs, universities, and businessmens' associations, and they launched a tenacious campaign of public education for the sake of tree-planting and street furniture, sewers and flowerbeds. They called townspeople to "civic rallies," and ran postcard campaigns to pressure town fathers on street paving or the cleaning up of the waterfront. Their successors were city-planning commissions, which started out as independent citizens' groups before they began to be authorized by legislative act.

This spirit of participation has flared up intermittently since then. It was the public outcry of the 1960s that put an end to the licentious destruction of older neighborhoods, under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, in the name of slum clearance and urban renewal. The same passionate concern for the wholeness of our cities stalled the urban freeway program, beginning with the successful efforts of New Orleanians to beat back federal plans for a Riverfront Expressway, which would have severed the Vieux Carrée from its waterfront.

Urban designs is extraordinarily more complex now than it was at the turn of the century, perhaps the high point of community involvement. City form has its legions of experts, and municipal authority can provide for the unempowered, if it chooses to, on a scale that private effort cannot. But the case for our participation in the design of cities is as strong now as it was in the days of civic art societies and the City Beautiful.

The principal debate today concerns growth, because growth, too long considered an unequivocal blessing, is inseparably bound up with the quality of urban life. While private interests are entitled to seek their advantage in the urban fabric, and city authorities and their experts are paid to find wholesale planning solutions to the problems of unfettered growth, it is the citizens as a collective voice who must ultimately decide the shape of their city. The aesthetic vision of how cities will look will always be supplied by professional designers. It is perfectly appropriate, indeed imperative, for the citizens to decide the limits of that vision.

Within our pluralist tradition, and a system of government that instinctively believes in the efficacy of checks and balances, the design of our cities cannot be consigned unquestioningly to planners, nor delegated to the private world of corporations and developers. Community opposition to the Columbus Circle project in New York, the San Francisco skyline ordinance of 1985, and the many other no-growth or slow-growth initiatives are perfectly legitimate responses of an involved citizenry. If we still believe that the city is a cumulative, generational artifact which harbors our values as a community and supplies the setting where we can learn to live together, then it is our collective responsibility to oversee its design.

Urban Design and the Political Realm

Allan B. Jacobs

At the moment of decision to build or not build the Embarcadero Freeway along San Francisco's waterfront as an elevated structure, and thereby to block views of the landmark Ferry Building and its tower and to create at least a visual barrier between the land and the water's edge, the mayor of San Francisco understood and made clear the choices. He is reported to have said that he understood that while the proposed freeway would not be an attractive, aesthetically desirable structure, it was necessary to have progress; you couldn't stop progress and that the city had to move ahead. Some years later, in the mid-1960s, San Francisco had what some have referred to as the country's first freeway revolt. Voters made it abundantly clear that local elected officials in favor of extending the elevated Embarcadero and one or two other freeways would find it difficult to gain or hold office. In large measure, though certainly not wholly, it was the design quality of what had been built and what might be coming that was the focus and rallying cry against the freeway. (There were other issues as well: the effectiveness of freeways as traffic and congestion problem solvers was seriously in doubt, and their extensions were pointed toward a lot of middle-class homes as well as toward parks and toward more of the waterfront.)

Still later, in the 1970s, public policy was directed, and still is, to the removal of that freeway. Twenty to 25 years is not a long time in the life of a community.

So, there are periods in time when the design of urban places—that is, the physical arrangements of what we build and plant in relation to the quality of people's lives and their aspirations and in relation to the natural environment—are terribly important. Inevitably, when they are important, the design issues get played out in the political realm. Increasingly, it would seem urban design is more and more a public concern in U.S. cities.

Often urban design issues get entangled with social and economic concerns and almost always with what people consider to be quality-of-life issues. Often, too, it is the physical form issues that are graspable and imageable, things that people feel they can do something about. People may not feel, for example, that they can control the pace of economic development, or they may feel threatened by expanding commercial development or by ever-increasing traffic, all very complex issues, hard to deal with. But building-height controls, which may or may not have anything to do with these matters, are understandable and allow people to feel in control, and may be symbolic of the other issues.

In the early 1970s, San Franciscans put two citywide height control referenda before the voters. The issue was only partly one of height. Almost certainly it had more to do with the amount, pace, and scale of development. It is sometimes said that the historic preservation movement is in part a reaction to the pace of change, a desire to go

We don't look at that big scale. We call the planner to say, not, "What are we going to do with this area?" but, "How are we going to fix this street?" And this is the most important educational tool, almost, to teach this group of mayors when to call the planner.

Robert O. Cox
Mayor, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

I can't wait to get back home and start redesigning my city. In fact, and this is the truth, right after lunch I called City Hall and told my planning director, my director of community development, any plans or projects that were in process are now on hold until I get back.

Joe Daddona
Mayor, Allentown, Pennsylvania

The real client is the unintended client, whether for buildings or gardens or cities; that is, it's not the person who writes the check and pays the bill and gives you the brief, it's the unintended public that 50 years afterward uses the product—they don't remember you, the mayor, the zoning ordinance; they don't care what your intentions were; all of that disappears. They live with the product. So never think that the end product of planning is the process—it ain't.

Jaquelin Robertson
Dean, School of Architecture
University of Virginia

more slowly, more deliberately. One way or the other, when they do arise, urban design issues can be very powerful, can be contested with deep passions, and are felt to be controllable in many respects by active citizens. Understanding that and planning accordingly—that is, engaging the issue as early and as clearly as possible—would seem to make sense.

Urban design as a city planning concern and as a political issue has been important in San Francisco since the mid-1960s. It remains so today. I use it as a case in point because I know it more intimately than the other cities and because the issues have been so clearly focused. Other cities, I am sure, could provide equally good examples. Perhaps the San Francisco freeway revolt was the first indication of a major concern of residents over the design of their community, albeit it was also linked to social concerns, to the prospect of people being displaced and to a growing mistrust of experts, particularly highway and traffic engineers. But it wasn't the only manifestation of that concern.

At about the same time, as the result of a citizen-initiated referendum, people voted to save the cable cars. Their continued existence was ensured by a new provision in the city charter. The period also saw two bulky high-rise apartments built on the waterfront, thereby breaking an unwritten rule that called for low buildings at the water's edge to ensure views of hills and water. The somewhat timid official response was a 40-foot height limit for a small area along the waterfront. More noteworthy was the conversion of the Ghirardelli Chocolate Factory into a commercial center by an eminent civic-minded San Franciscan, proving the economic viability of adapting older, worthy buildings and setting off a wave of such projects across the country.

During this period, the city's official plans could fairly be described as classic, two-dimensional land-use plans with almost no reference to physical form or design. The staff was simply not oriented to design.

There were other design-related issues as well. If you sat, week in, week out, at zoning hearings, you could not help but hear the complaints about the new "plastic apartments" that were taking the place of more comfortable and better-built, older, usually less dense buildings. Density was a concern, more units replacing fewer, but so were the design quality and the placement of what was being built. There were, as well, increasing conflicts over major new development proposals, some, but certainly not all, in redevelopment projects. And when people felt they had been done wrong, they showed an increasing propensity to file law suits, dooming some projects and raising confusion in public policy circles.

It was in this environment, feisty to say the least, that the City Planning Department undertook what was to become its citywide Urban Design Plan. One selling point to elected officials asked to finance the work,

to be done by the local staff, was the prospect of clear plans and proposals for design that might eliminate all those costly knock-down, drag-out fights over individual projects. In essence, that two-year undertaking was a plan to deal with the physical form and design of the city. It dealt with a lot of things that were clearly of concern to the people and some that the planners themselves knew to be important. Its subjects were the appropriate height and bulk of new buildings, views, color, preservation of historic buildings, city-wide landscaping and lighting, open space, preserving and honoring the natural environment, ways to ensure that new development fit in with the old, traffic at local, neighborhood levels, and more. The plan was clear, easily understood, attractive, and backed by a lot of very thorough, highly professional work. Perhaps more important, key elements of the plan could be easily translated into very specific legislation.

The plan met with overwhelming success and support. Indeed, the people's response was to challenge the planners to make the plan a reality, to follow up. Within a year, very specific citywide height and bulk legislation was passed, as were historic district designation and measures to prevent those plastic apartments. Rezoning also followed, and two years later the voters passed a major continuing funding proposal for open-space acquisition and development called for in the plan. This, too, was a measure initiated by voters, but one to implement a publicly prepared plan. For some years citizens brought their copies of the plan to meetings and were not beyond quoting it, chapter and verse, sometimes to the chagrin of those who had prepared it.

The Urban Design Plan did not solve all of the city's design-related problems and concerns. Solving one problem can reveal others. Newer, more sophisticated plans have been necessary to deal with design issues that are directly related to people's comfort and safety, such as ensuring sunlight on sidewalks at the most important hours and slowing traffic at intersections. There is a more highly refined plan for the downtown, one in which design plays a major part. San Franciscans have voted on these matters, too, just as they have started to vote on measures related to the ultimate size of the city. Increasingly, we see citizen initiatives on physical form and growth questions in other cities as well.

To be sure, this matter of the physical form of the city, its design, is not of equal importance to the people of all cities. To some cities, such as San Francisco, it would appear to be constant and continuous, though one might wonder where the concern was in the 1950s. In other cities design is a sporadic issue. For still others, it may not be a concern at all or is lying dormant, to be set off unexpectedly.

When and where urban design is an issue, though, it can be very powerful, a matter of considerable passion, and certainly it will be played out in the political realm.

Design of the Urban Landscape

Laurie D. Olin

Landscape design, put simply, is the design of land for human purposes. It includes shaping the earth, manipulating land-form and its surfaces, shaping spaces, creating rooms outdoors, and using plants and architectural elements—all to form environments of various kinds.

At its simplest, landscape design consists of three activities. First is conservation, which has to do with what's there, what should be saved and what should go, and how to husband resources. Second is editing, which has to do with how to move things around: this would be nice, we'll keep it, but we'll move it over here. Then there is that troubling, terrible, most difficult part, invention: bringing to a place new things that have not existed there before.

The palette that we work with in our parks and gardens, in our plazas and squares, in our cemeteries and sacred groves, through time, is a very simple one, and very old-fashioned: just stones and earth, a few plants, water and the sky, things like that. It's a very archaic business: the construction methods are primitive compared to the rest of our society. We don't use titanium; we don't do strange welds with electronic devices. Yet it seems our choices are almost limitless.

Landscape design has, in the hands of its greatests practitioners, embraced the spectrum of human emotion and embodied the whole range of our aspirations, from delight and humor to ceremonial splendor, grief, and the honorific.

One of my favorite places is the Park of Sceaux, a French chateau now swallowed up by the suburbs of Paris. Here one encounters a very formal landscape, of Lombardy poplars planted in rows along a canal. Although it was built for people who held great power and maintained dictatorial control over their fellow men, today it is a people's park much delighted in by contemporary society. The order and structure of this landscape possesses a beauty and power that transcends its origins and enhances the life of everyone who uses it, whether they be ministers of a king and his court, or a couple of blue-collar guys fishing for pike on their day off.

The so-called informal or natural style has caused great confusion because it is really an invention, an artifice and an unnatural phenomenon. Parks designed in this style are gracious in their accommodation of our behavior; they provide rich and pleasurable settings for our lives, for courtship, for recreation, for rest and conviviality. They are so skillfully done that we believe they are natural, or assume they always had been there; we forget the effort that went into their making. So too with the restructuring of cities all over the Western world in the nineteenth century, the invention of the public realm as we know it. We forget that those great public works are really designs; we assume them.

Landscape design is an activity that can range from regional planning on the one hand, to the design of detailed parks and gardens on the other. Landscape design has helped shape spaces that are shared by all of our citizens—what we call the public realm.

What would our cities be without parks? Their creation is one of the most optimistic acts of our society: the desire to bring natural elements into the heart of cities for health and for other social benefits is something that we find in the work of our nineteenth century ancestors. Our parks were created at enormous cost and with great energy, and often from leftover, marginal lands and wastes at the edge of cities. You couldn't go to social scientists and come up with a program for Central Park—Olmsted and Vaux invented it. There's a generosity of spirit, a social vision; not mere nostalgia for a lost pastoral era. There was a can-do attitude on the part of the city planners and politicians of the nineteenth century, who built most of the great public works that make New York habitable today.

It was Olmsted and his colleagues who further developed the concept of regional planning for park systems. Their famous Emerald Necklace in Boston exploited the characteristics of the region and linked communities and very disparate land uses with an interconnected network of roads, parkways, parks, preserves, forests, harbor islands, etc. It was a phenomenal invention, ahead of the urbanization that eventually infilled the entire region.

As cities grew, the forces at work became gargantuan, the errors became more drastic, and the swings of natural forces moving through urbanization became more pronounced. Landscape architects concerned primarily with ecological issues began developing larger scale techniques that were less whimsical, less personal, less idiosyncratic, and more replicable. Ian McHarg, for instance, asked questions about where we should build and how we should conserve particular resources and how to maximize opportunities not only for development but also for the perpetuation of whole ways of life.

This generation of landscape designers started with the notion that the professional's first responsibility is to the citizenry, with the obligation to preserve life and to enhance the community's ability to function. In the last 20 years or so, there has been a great body of work concerning land and the conservation of land, which is, I think, profound—one of the achievements of our time. The Environmental Protection Agency, its requirements, and that entire list of things that our citizens now demand of their government in terms of the quality of the environment are fairly recent inventions.

Landscape design consists of many different activities. What differentiates it from other design disciplines is its focus upon the use and manipulation of natural phenomena and elements, of plants and people, of living things.

For instance, a large measure of the suburban dream we have created

lies in the foliage of these environments. Riverside and Oak Park near Chicago; Beverly Hills, Westwood, Santa Monica, and Malibu in Los Angeles are desirable not so much for their architecture or roadways, but for the landscape and vegetation that has been carefully built up and planted about them, maximizing the illusion of benign and encompassing natural surroundings. Part of the appeal is that natural materials keep us in touch with the cycles of nature, giving us pleasure in their visual and sensual properties of color, light, texture, form, and smell and in the reassurance of both their continuity and their change.

Yet my assertion is that landscape design is not a perfume that can be added to a project after it's done. It's much deeper. It is intrinsic in the planning of a project, in the arrangement of the parts, and in the grouping of elements. Landscape design has to do with the proportion of spaces between buildings as well as the shape and the dimension of streets, with the layout of circulation, and with the positioning of buildings in space—the positions they take toward the world and toward one another. In the design of the spaces and how one moves through them, you orient people to where they are and how they feel about other parts of the city. If part of architecture concerns the relationship between individuals and society, part of landscape architecture concerns the relationship between individuals and their environment. If architects struggle with problems of permanence and creating things that will be lasting, landscape architects have to understand things that will be perpetually in motion and changing and dying, with lives of their own.

How do these ideas translate into the urban context? The same issues apply: understanding the place where you are, what time it is, the relationship to the surrounding fabric, to historic elements, to landmarks, to important social or cultural activities. You rely on the same activities of conservation, editing, replacement, and the introduction of elements, some of which may harmonize with, and some of which may be in contrast to, what already exists. Where you are and the nature of a place are two things a good designer always tries to understand about landscape problems.

Let's take streets. Streets may be the most important open spaces in our cities, yet they often are hideous. A few years ago, our office participated in a collaborative effort to create a transitway along 16th Street in Denver. There were two harmonious goals. One was a transportation goal—to improve movement within the city and access to the downtown core, to give a quality ride so people would not use their cars. The second was an urban design goal—to give downtown some sort of urbanity, to make a thing that was 12 blocks long and 80 feet wide into a *place*, a park. Could a street in modern downtown America be beautiful? Could it act as a promenade, a place of refreshment, a place of social interaction? Of course, the answer was yes. We decided to do very little, to empty this space out, to see it fresh. We loved the buildings; we didn't want to obscure the buildings. We needed the transportation; we wanted lots of people. We thought, make it simple, and then let the people decide how to live in it. So we did something very simple. We made a paving pattern, wall to wall, end to end, just like a great carpet. We placed trees, very simple, that alternated with lights; we scattered loose furnishings out and let people push them around. The story since is that several hundred million dollars worth of construction have developed alongside of it. Local downtown organizations now tax themselves to maintain it and have hired extra people for the task. It is immaculate; there are now restaurants and cafes and so on.

A wealth of beautiful buildings does not alone create the ambiance of the major cities of Europe. Great works of architecture grace the most highly regarded of these, but they are exceptions; the special architectural event is not the norm. What distinguishes these cities is their arrangement and the exterior spaces. Buildings are used to make spaces, not to usurp and occupy them, and the spaces that result have been planted and paved with great care. The fabric of these cities is calm, normal, practical, and suited to human needs and comforts. Their urban spaces provide shade in the summer, sun in the winter, protection from rain, and ample places to enjoy views of people.

Mayer Sensenbrenner
Madison, Wisconsin

It's proper that there be public debate about the design of public space in a democratic society, because how we choose to apportion amenity in the public realm is a matter of debate. Landscape architects shouldn't be surprised when they discover everything they do turns out to be political, in that someone loses, someone gains. But it's hard to get it right sometimes, hard to please everyone; we just can't.

Today, in Manhattan's Bryant Park, we have been engaged in a four-year process of public debate, which I think is proper, over the reconstruction of the park. We are working on a scheme to deal with what in some ways is a restoration; there's some rearrangement of parts, some demolition, we're eliminating some things, and there will be new elements introduced. It's all controversial. And it's important—this space is very important to New York—that we do somehow get it mostly right.

This space has a great sacred grove: overgrown, and in many cases sick plane trees that we have to take care of somehow. In the middle is a great law, essentially the mid-day beach of Midtown. It's a sanctuary in the middle of towers, a marvelous sunny spot, a pleasant lunching and assignation place. It's a place for gregarious activity.

Out on the Fifth Avenue side of the New York Public Library, which sits in this park, we've managed to get through all the committees and reviews and managed to tear down everything that was there except a railing, cut down all the trees without anyone noticing, and totally rebuild it, reorganize it, rearrange it. I think we've actually rescued the front terrace from drug dealers and from social malaise. At this moment it is a completely redesigned space (hardly anyone seems to have noticed), and there is now a cafe terrace of popularity and a kind of benign spirit on Fifth Avenue—the best cappuccino outdoors that I know of in Midtown Manhattan, and superb food.

Some years ago J. B. Jackson wrote that every American is entitled to an environment that is biologically wholesome, socially just, and spiritually rewarding. My colleagues and I have been concerned to do this in urban environments, because that's where Americans live today. Yes, we are suburban, but we aren't rural, we aren't agrarian, we are urban in some strange and wonderful way. The problem is how to respond to the needs of this new urban America, both as a group, and as individuals.

Landscape design is about a lot of things. It allows us to take people out of their routine. It tells you where you are and allows you to act out something about your own character and your own nature. It gives people the stimulus of society and the tranquility of themselves and access to natural phenomena in the heart of our urban creations.

This is really what landscape design is all about.

Contributors

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