

PLACES

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Awards 2004

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Places, a Forum of Environmental Design

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Dorlyn Lyndon

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Volume 16, Number 3

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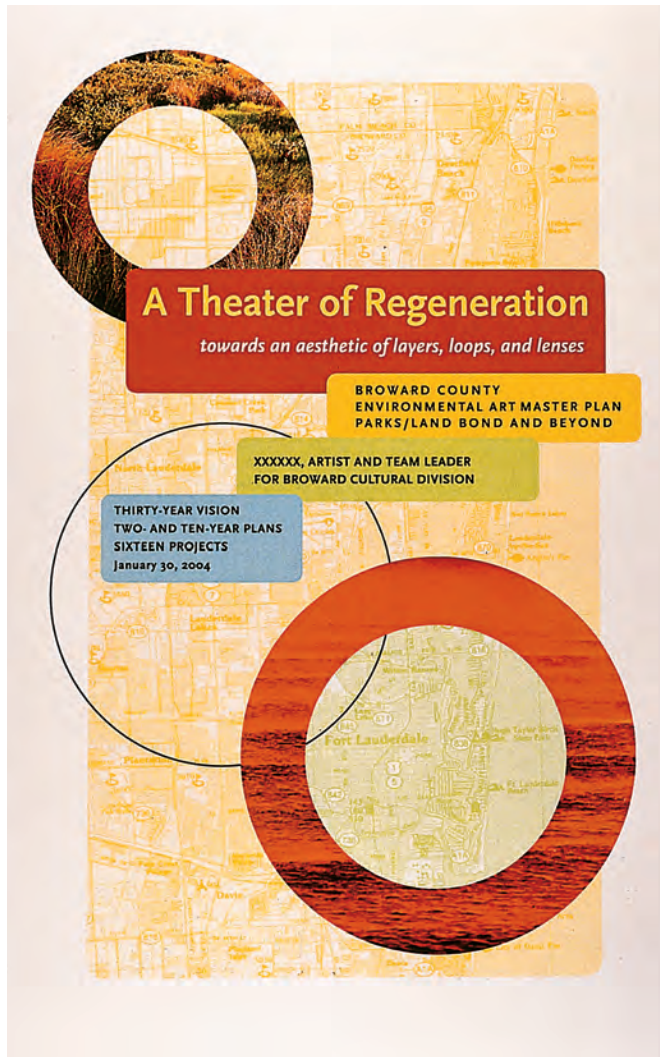
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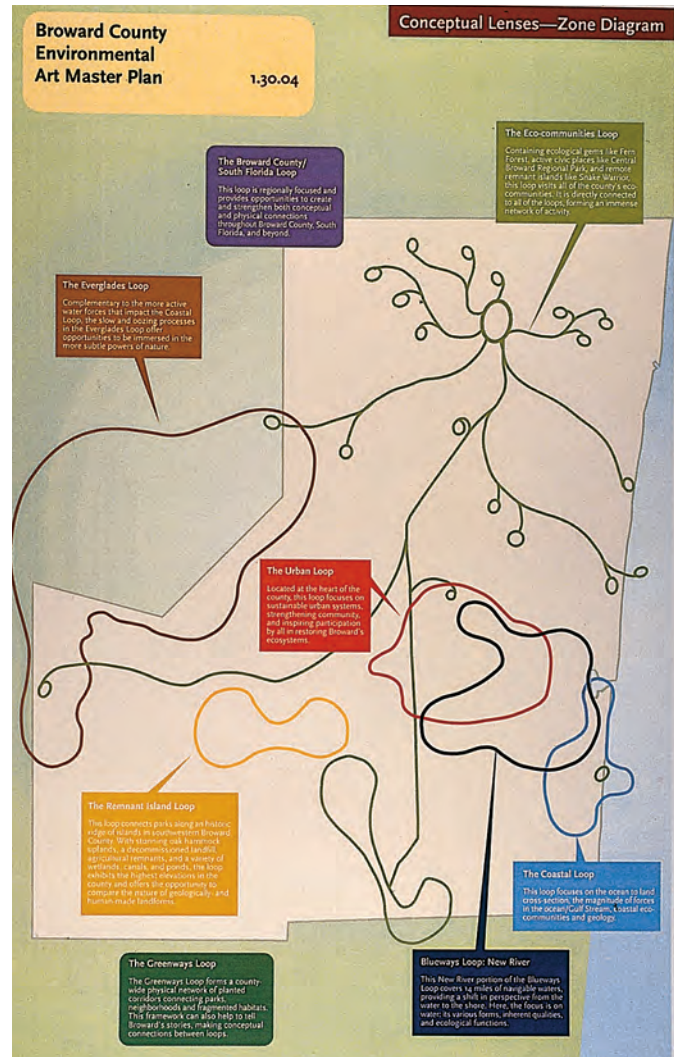
Theater of Regeneration: An Environmental Art Master Plan — Broward County, Florida

Lorna Jordan Studio



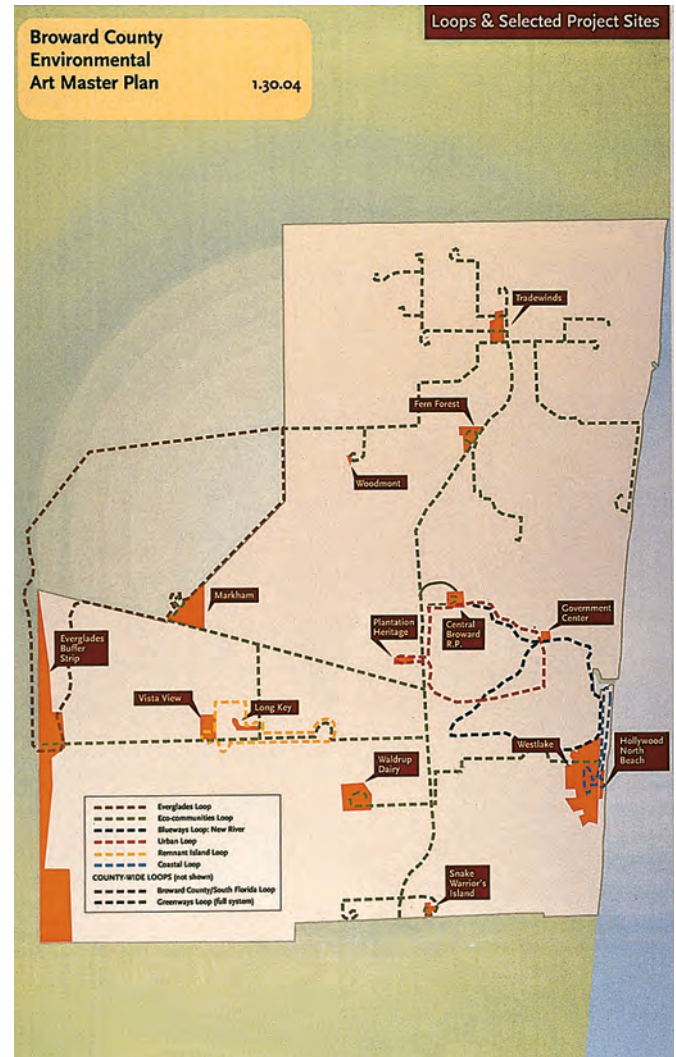
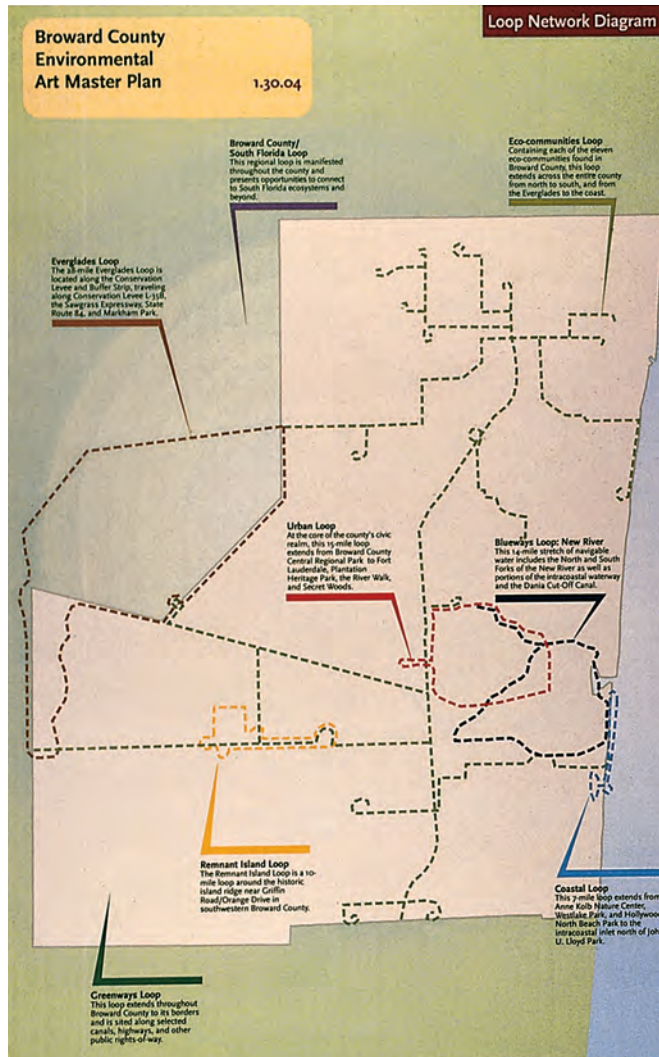
Fifteen years ago, Phoenix's groundbreaking public-art master plan posed a simple question: how could the city's public-art program help residents make sense of their ever-sprawling cityscape?¹ That plan, by Morrish, Brown and Mouton, documented the visual traces of Phoenix's underlying urban, landscape and cultural patterns, and provided a detailed strategy for interpreting them through public-art projects generated by the city's capital program.

In the years since, about forty local public-art agencies have engaged in similar planning efforts. At one level, this new type of plan has helped determine which public-art projects are likely to have the most resonance, which will make the best use of available resources, and (in some cases) which are most likely to avoid controversy. But at their best, such plans may also serve as de facto urban (or civic) design frameworks. And in this capacity they have



demonstrated a capacity to translate public-art programs to the scale of the city (or regional infrastructure like an airport, highway or transit line), shifting from incidental “percent-for-art” approaches to comprehensive strategies for building the public realm and addressing public narratives dispersed through time and space. In the process, they have drawn on knowledge of ecology, cultural geography, and social history to transform the way we look at cities — much the way City Beautiful plans imagined a new urban order a century ago.

“A Theatre of Regeneration,” prepared for the Broward County Cultural Arts Division and park agency, is perhaps the best example of this new genre of planning to date. It digs aggressively into the environmental and social history of this particular corner of Florida. More than most plans, it also reaches beyond simple capital-improvement strate-



gies to set out a proactive agenda for engaging a range of city and infrastructure-planning processes. Finally, it proposes a particularly ambitious concept for deploying public-art projects, attempting to use public art to bring landscape patterns to view that convey new layers of experience and meaning.

A Plan and a Process

In terms of institutional origins, “A Theater of Regeneration” was developed as a tool to implement Broward County’s Safe Parks and Land Preservation Bond. This measure raised \$400 million to preserve and reclaim open space and repair and enhance the county’s aging park system.

In attempting to fulfill its obligations toward this bond measure, Broward’s public art program (which dates to

1976) sought an artist-led planning team experienced in such disciplines as environmental art, ecology, planning, landscape architecture, and greenway development. It then charged the team with producing a thirty-year vision that would identify both a tier of projects that could be accomplished in the next two years and a second round that could be accomplished within ten years.

The team members, led by Seattle artist Lorna Jordan, worked through much of 2003, visiting Broward County and taking measure, as they put it, of the “stories, processes, ecologies and events that explain the landscape’s complex mosaic.” In particular, the team focused on understanding how Broward’s history is intertwined with the presence, mystery and infrastructure of water. But their efforts also included documenting a series of “eco-communities” — patterns of natural and constructed settings

that serve as habitat for humans, wildlife and vegetation. In addition, four community meetings helped the team learn about the county's "hidden processes and forgotten histories," as well as "which outdoor experiences the residents consider important."

Building on this research, the plan then imagined a diverse range of artistic responses to the particular place structure of Broward — from site-integrated sculpture and architecture to living theater/performance and ecological infrastructure. However, rather than identifying discrete projects, the plan recommends areas of intervention — some as specific as parks; some as ambitious as newly imagined "loops" and trails; and others related to inherited infrastructure such as canals, or emerging systems such as greenways. For each area, the plan lists a range of environmental considerations, experiential possibilities, and linkages to planning and public works projects that can become the focus of work by artists and planners. In this regard, the plan is open-ended and flexible, a stimulus to individual creativity within a larger order.

Designing at the City Scale

Clearly, Broward's plan itself is also a piece of art, an attempt to interpret the complex processes that underlie the inhabitation of this section of Florida. Physically and graphically, the plan is a lavish, accomplished document — colorful, memorably designed, and printed on heavy, oversized paper stock — atypical for public agencies.

Combined with Broward's strong tradition of funding public art, the plan also provides an ample basis for developing extraordinary art projects. But "A Theater of Regeneration" sets its sights higher, and in doing so, revisits a fundamental challenge that Morrish, Brown and Mouton struggled with in Phoenix: can a cohesive civic or environmental narrative be made legible through art projects spread over a wide area?

Jordan has considered these issues before. In "Waterworks Garden," an eight-acre garden in Renton, Wash., she created a sequence of environments, or rooms, linked by a modest path, that enable viewers to contemplate the various stages of a natural process for cleansing stormwater runoff.² For Broward County, which covers hundreds of square miles, the challenge, of course, was far more daunting. In response, she has proposed a system of "loops of physical and process-based connections," routes that people may follow "to experience the layering of forces, land uses, activities and phenomena," and so bring the plan's narrative structure to life.

No matter how strong the impact of an individual artwork may be, however, the cumulative effect of several, or

many, is harder to anticipate. Jordan and her team imagine all manner of ways to bring the loops to life: repeated infrastructure elements, linear landscape projects, events like parades or flotilla, even "worldwide-web-ways" as connective tissue.

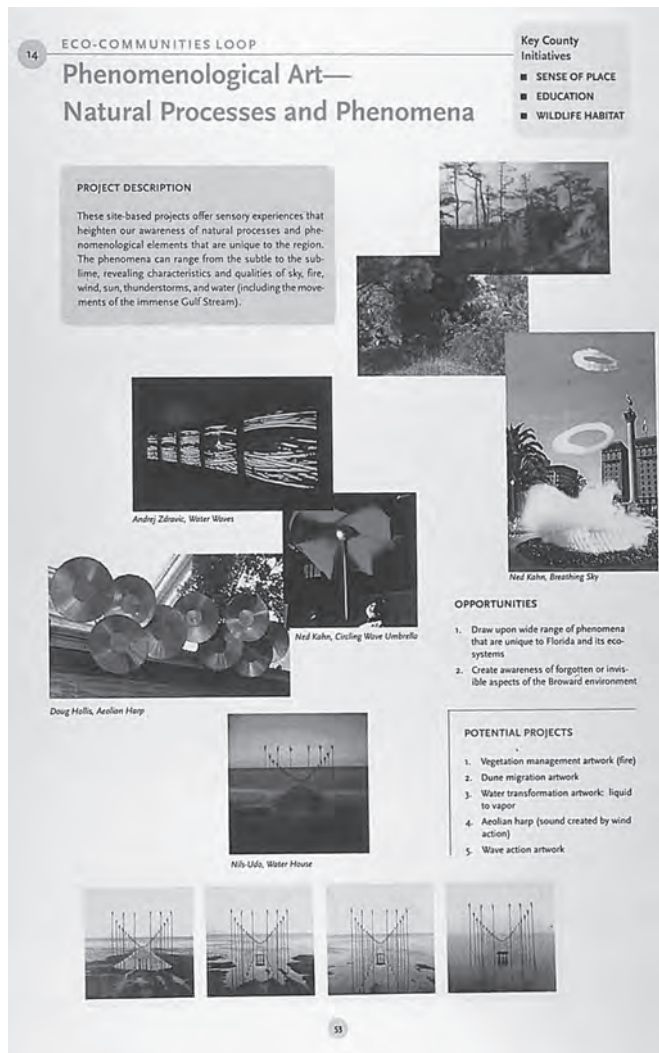
Indeed, the plan's main flaw may be that it only thinks expansively without coming to closure on specific initiatives — a handful of concrete, doable, schedulable projects that could serve as demonstrations of its broader concepts. It's easier to imagine the creative energy this plan might unleash than it is to understand how its proposals might actually be accomplished.

EDRA/Places and Public Art

This award reflects the close attention EDRA/*Places* juries have tended to pay to the work of public artists. The first EDRA/*Places* jury recognized not only Jordan's "Waterworks Gardens" but also the "Radnor Gateway Enhancement Strategy." In recent years juries have also recognized "New•Land•Marks," "Cultural Landscape Goitzsche," and the "Rosie the Riveter" memorial.³ All these projects have sought to break the mold of "percent-for-art" projects, and re-engage people in important civic places or serve as "acts of atonement" for the construction of heavy-duty infrastructure.

In its awards over the years, then, EDRA/*Places* juries have clearly been tracking a critical discourse — but not so much in terms of how public art engages place as in terms of how public art engages wider strategies for shaping city form. In this context, "Theater of Regeneration" raises the bar. Ten years from now, the editors of *Places* might very well want to organize a "place debate," as they did for the Phoenix plan, to take measure both of the art projects this plan has inspired and the way these have collectively shaped a new understanding of public space in south Florida.

— Todd W. Bressi



JURY COMMENTS

MISS This is one that I felt very quite strongly about. It is altering the ways central arts projects are done. Traditionally, you build a new building and you put a little thing in front of it, and it doesn't work — it's terrible. Broward County is attempting to take funds that are generated by percent-for-arts programs and see how they can do art projects throughout the county that add up to something more. I think it is really an important precedent.

GRATZ I also like the idea of using art as both a wayfinder, a place-maker, and a way of defining the landscape. It reminds me a little bit of Barcelona. When anybody tells you about what was done in Barcelona for the Olympics, they tell you about the art — that they used it to mark places around the city. This is in many ways an environmental project, but art is defining it. It brings everything together, and art becomes the thread. I also think the presentation is absolutely superb. I think this is innovation with a capital "I."

SMITH Of all the projects we've picked, this is the most holistic. You can actually see some of the traditional planning stances: working at a big scale, understanding soils

and circulation and precedents, and putting together a proposal to deal with it. It's really a traditional planning document, but because of its arts perspective, it is a different type of planning than we're used to.

MISS And it's building a role for artists in the development of an environment. I think artists can affect the way we look at our environment and respond to it. They aren't just commentators. This puts artists in a shaping role rather than a responding role.

GRATZ And it really reconnects the disciplines — instead of the art is here, the planners are there, and here are the architects — and at some point someone will put it all together badly.

TIMBERLAKE It premiates collective intelligence. I also think one of its great strengths is that it doesn't end with the analysis. The analysis supports the next step in the process. That to me is a great strength of a planning project. A lot of them just end with "here's the analysis." Here is a conclusion.

NASAR But it does bring the analysis to bear on this special sector — this special planning question of how are you going to deal with art in a region? They bring all the analysis to bear on it, and that is good planning.

GASTIL I think what made me excited about it was the way comprehensive planning has turned to art. Even in good projects, people normally just say "let's do art along the highway." But even those people only think about it in a linear way. They never think about it through an entire watershed or an entire county system of roads and development. So you have to applaud the county that's spending money on this type of initiative. You are celebrating not just the people who ran the planning study but also the government that backed this.

Notes

1. See William R. Morrish, Catherine Brown and Grover Mouton, "Western Civic Art: Works in Progress," *Places*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Fall 1988); and various authors, "Place Debate: The Phoenix Public Art Master Plan," *Places*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Summer 1996), pp. 52-63.
2. Donald Canty, "Waterworks Garden," *Places*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Fall 1998), pp. 16-19.
3. "Cultural Landscape Goitzsche: Bitterfeld, Germany," "New•Land•Marks: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," and "Constructing Memory: Rosie the Riveter Memorial, Richmond, California," *Places*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Fall 2002), pp. 14-17, 18-21, 34-37.

Project Credits

Lorna Jordan Studio (Lorna Jordan, artist and project lead;
Karen Janosky, Fred Young)
Becca Hanson, Landscape Architecture/Planning/Facilitation
Steve Badanes/Jersey Devil, Landscape Architecture/Planning/Facilitation
Wendy Brawer, Green Mapping
PBS&J (Dale Siska, Erin Degutis, Patrick Siler), Engineering/Permitting
Steve Moddemeyer, Sustainable/Community Design
Steve Gatewood, Environmental Science
Aron Temkin, Artist
Kovacevich Design (Joseph Newland, Olga Owens), Graphic Design
and Editing

Caring for Places

As though on cue, following the Republican convention in New York City, the *New York Times* ran an article on impending changes in the skyline of Manhattan, featuring prominently and approvingly a slender tower made up of staggered \$30 million condominium units. The *Times* hastened to assure us in a subhead that these and their like are “the new Vanderbilt mansions, far removed from the little miseries of everyday life.”

Presumably, they are even further removed from the gut-wrenching miseries of Iraq’s daily life, where thousands are displaced from basic human security by lawlessness, violence, and the deliberate destruction of infrastructure, while its “liberators” talk vainly about progress toward democracy and stability, consolidate corporate power, and divert funds for reconstruction.

Little miseries, indeed. Like hunger, fear, powerlessness and shame that our country has lost its bearings. But what of Vanderbilt mansions?

A half century ago the American Institute of Architects commissioned for their Centennial *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History*, written by John Burchard, Dean of Humanities at MIT, and Albert Bush-Brown, former President of the Rhode Island School of Design. The book scarcely mentioned the fabled mansions, save as home to “enclaves in the halls of Vanderbilt, where the throbbing pulse of America could not be heard.” “It was inevitable,” the authors observed, “that the first class achievement [of Richard Morris Hunt’s Vanderbilt design] could have no important place in serious architectural history.”

An exhibit now traveling through Canadian schools of architecture documents a different thrust of attention, architecture that seeks to hear the pulse of daily life (both the throbbing and the quiet pulse) and to ease the “little miseries” of those with little means. It shows professionals taking steps, small but engaged steps, toward a better life for all. The exhibit documents the work of Sanford Hirshen, recently retired Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and a group of friends and colleagues, who began their work at Berkeley in the early 1960s. The show highlights a continuing search for ways to make dignity accessible, to care for the mundane, not the sensational. That search included not just solving problems posed by clients, but exploring means of working more effectively for understudied groups and creating buildings with limited means that yet yield graceful accommodation. It is an elegant, purposeful body of work made possible both by the dedication of its authors and by a society then politically intent on broadening, not hoarding, the reach of its benefits.

What will take hold in a serious assessment of our times will be the similar efforts of many to consider everyday life — the lives traced by myriads of individuals and groups through landscapes of both wonder and desolation — as the source of creative energy. The pulse of our society beats not with a single ecstatic rhythm, but with a multiple, nuanced and variable cadence, a broad resource that can prompt imaginative action and give purpose to investment. Positive change in our future will come from seeking many subtle but pervasive adjustments to the expectations that we bring to our environment.

Care for the common realm, for the multiple ways in which we build the fabric of our lives together and with one another, must — yes, will — be the foundation of our freedoms and our responsibilities.

— Donlyn Lyndon

To Rally Discussion: The Chelsea High Line

Hugh Hardy, FAIA

New Yorkers are known for their aggressive and pragmatic view of the world, but their countervailing romantic outlook is seldom recognized. When a place, such as Times Square, reaches the apogee of commercialism, rather than acknowledge its raw commitment to pushing products, they romanticize its electric splendor and call it “the Crossroads of the World.” Although the commercial structures of downtown Manhattan have been built as a random jumble of towers and boxes that compete with one another for height and corporate identity, the public voices concern about new development’s “effect on the skyline.” They believe these existing buildings represent a sacred profile that defines the city, instead of representing the venal results of marketplace dominance.

It is in the city’s parks where New Yorkers’ pragmatic and romantic sides most obviously confront one another. A balance between recreation and contemplation is not easily achieved, and with the advent of private entities operating public city parks, the tussle between commercial and noncommercial uses of parkland becomes intense. Add to this struggle the desire to prove the urban environment can offer a progressive forum for solving environmental problems, and you get passionate public debate. Converting the Chelsea High Line for public use has been no less contentious, and resulted in a multiphased design-team selection process administered by Friends of the High Line and the City of New York.

This redefinition of what were once elevated freight-train tracks from a utilitarian right-of-way to a community amenity is taking place during a time of a great change on the West Side of Manhattan. After decades of inertia, developers are converting vacant lots and warehouses into new high-rise housing, and property adjoining the High Line itself is undergoing major transformation, with unpredictable results. All this requires a plan of considerable flexibility.

At ground level, the High Line’s 1.5 miles of elevated, linear structure pass overhead without attracting much notice, bridging streets with beefy steel frames. On top, however, an astonishing vista appears, as the former trackbed glides through the city independent of its street grid. A remarkable metamorphosis occurs here, as the traffic roar and the city’s noise abate. Built to sustain heavy loads, the structure has survived without maintenance since the 1930s and also now sprouts a healthy growth of weeds, which offer a tempting alternative to conventional ideas of parkland.

As set out in the High Line competition the challenge of converting this space involved a number of tasks: proposing a vision that could be realized incrementally; exercising

environmental awareness; offering access in all seasons of the year; and considering what happens underneath as well as on top. In their responses, the design proposals of the four finalists were quite different. One promoted nature over structure (TerraGRAM Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates with D.I.R.T. Studio and Beyer Blinder Belle). Another was more concerned with built form (Zaha Hadid). The two others (Steven Holl with Hargreaves Associates and HNTB, and Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro) better balanced the natural world with the physical structure to produce a sequence of places for varied activities. The latter team’s winning entry, in particular, represented a thorough series of alternative environments with multiple access points that could be realized in phases.

Stephen Holl Architects with Hargreaves Associates and HNTB

This design connected the High Line with the Hudson River, giving access from the water inland as well as leading from the new park to the river. It addressed the experience of being underneath the roadway by both opening up portions to the sky and illuminating others with LED programming. A series of incidental landscape events, some temporary, enlivened the length of the structure on top, using the existing roadway as a base. Contemporary artists were included, to respond to various community uses. This proposal enjoyed an ad hoc character, implying that the place will change over time, adapting to different activities — some not yet imagined. An ambitious groundwater treatment plant was also included to filter and recycle water for use in the park and the neighborhood.

TerraGRAM Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates with D.I.R.T. Studio and Beyer Blinder Belle

Taking a more matter-of-fact approach, this team was more concerned with giving the structure back to nature, encouraging the growth of forests, meadows, and grassland along the roadbed. Staircases and elevators would bring visitors up to the trackbed level, where nature would take over. Recommending techniques that apply to cleaning up “brown fields” instead of superimposing a new identity, this proposal worked directly with the existing nature of the place.

Zaha Hadid Architects

The existing structure was to be used as an armature for a totally new environment. A ribbon-like curvilinear structure made of an unknown material would wrap around the High Line’s steel bridges. It would create changes in spatial



volumes along the roadway, but remain a consistent, seamless whole. Experimental art organizations would be given places to explore their ideas, and the general nature of the result would unfold as something in direct contrast with the surrounding urban environment, making new public spaces for “the everyday life of local residents.” More a built intervention than a landscape solution, this proposal to a large extent ignored the natural world.

Field Operations with Diller Scofidio + Renfro

The winning design proposed a systems approach that layered various types of places with different natural environments to create a rich series of experiences. Perhaps offering the greatest variety of spaces, the proposal included a thoughtful combination of physical and natural components. Its physical elements included pit, plains, bridge, mound, ramp, and flyover, while the natural environments were marshland, tall meadow, wetland, woodland thicket, mixed perennial meadow, and young woodland. All these places and ecologies would be connected by an angled series of boardwalks along the length of the composition, offering a diversity of access points.

A lively panel discussion and presentation of the four schemes was held with the designers at the Center for

Architecture. It was a sold-out success, proving that New York benefits from the public’s interest in the design of communal places. Although the winning scheme will take time to realize, its flexibility permits phased implementation that will, over time, bring a novel amenity to public life in New York.

The chosen solution seems to strike a balance between recreation and contemplation, public and private, commercial and noncommercial, urban and environmental. The public’s newfound interest and participation in the city’s design is well served at the Center for Architecture, with a mini-exhibition that encapsulates New Yorkers’ penchant for both confrontation and romance.

Editors’ Note: *Places* first reported on the High Line in the Fall of 2001 (Vol. 14, No. 2), when we published a portfolio of photographs of this remarkable urban space by Joel Sternfeld. Since the above commentary on the design competition was written, the city has signed a contract with Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro to produce a master plan, and it has committed \$43 million in capital funding for the project.

Above: The winning High Line proposal imagines an elevated landscape interweaving places of activity with a variety of natural environments. Competition images courtesy of Friends of the High Line.

Density without Disruption

Roberta Brandes Gratz

For years the control of density has been one of the most powerful rallying cries of neighborhood activists across the U.S. Yet, ever since the onset of urban-renewal, highway-building era following World War II, the lowering of residential densities in American cities and towns has been one of the most significant causes for the declining quality of life they offer. Few public officials and citizens recognize this. Fewer still realize how their well-meaning efforts have often created insurmountable obstacles to the very community reinvigoration they profess to support.

Density is the most crucial, misunderstood and ignored ingredient of a successful community. If real estate's mantra is "location, location, location," urbanism's should be "density, density, density." Someone once said: "it doesn't matter how dense you make it, it is how you make it dense." That is only half right. It matters both how dense you make it and how you make it dense.

Density Wrongly Blamed

As a bugaboo of planners and housing theorists since the middle of the twentieth century, density has at one time or another been blamed for nearly every urban difficulty and social problem. Yet if you look at the cities people find fun to visit — New York, San Francisco, Boston, Seattle, Savannah, Portland — they all have something in common, lots of people living close together. A dense residential population is their anchor — a magnet for new businesses, cultural and entertainment activity, and overall vitality.

Invariably, popular residential neighborhoods in these cities were once connected to commercial areas by street-car and planned and designed for the convenience of the transit-traveling pedestrian, not the urban motorist. These popular neighborhoods also exhibited residential densities higher than any we are building today. And they were composed of an assortment of housing types: multiple- and single-unit buildings, owner-occupied and rental units, high-rise and low-rise.

Of course, density in and of itself is not an automatic plus. A series of sterile high-rise towers may provide density but be unaccommodating to the diverse activities that provide the basis for real community life. The key is in the design.

Perhaps Jane Jacobs said it best forty-odd years ago when she wrote in her now-classic book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, "One reason why low city densities conventionally have a good name, unjustified by the facts, and why high city densities have a bad name, equally unjustified, is that high densities of dwellings and overcrowding of dwellings are often confused. . . . The census definition of overcrowding is 1.5 persons per room or

more. It has nothing to do with the number of dwellings on the land, just as in real life high densities have nothing to do with overcrowding."

Many more dense neighborhoods have self-regenerated against the accepted wisdom of housing and planning experts since Jacobs wrote her first book in 1961. Georgetown, Back Bay, Park Slope, the Mission District, Pioneer Square, the Pearl District, and historic rowhouse neighborhoods around the country stand witness to this trend. Such neighborhoods have been revived despite retaining their pre-war densities and they still do not seem overcrowded. Similarly, many old manufacturing, warehouse, and office districts in dense urban cores are being transformed into popular new neighborhoods.

Overcrowding and Density Are Not the Same

In 1961 Jacobs also pointed out, "Today we are much more apt to find overcrowding at low densities than at high densities. Nor does slum clearance as practiced in our cities usually have anything to do with solving the problem of overcrowding. Instead, slum clearance and renewal typically add to that problem [by lowering the density]."

Today federal housing policies continue to buy into this myth that lowered densities will solve the underlying problem of overcrowding. With or without Section 8 vouchers, the poor rarely find accommodations anywhere but in the next marginal neighborhood.

Federally funded Hope VI projects purposely exhibit lesser densities than the mistakes they are replacing. Some may be architecturally appealing and of mixed incomes — a laudable combination. But in any architectural format, they are the antithesis of community building. If the essentials of community were truly understood, these places would add density, reuse existing nearby commercial streets or provide new ones, allow for mixed uses (whether a corner store or light manufacturing), and leave open the possibility that unanticipated uses might emerge.

Local policies have made present federal policies an even worse mess. A demolition derby seems to be underway in cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, and New Haven, where the notion is that deteriorated housing should be torn down and the land beneath it left vacant pending the arrival of some private developer on a white horse. Such demolition inevitably leads only to further decay and an accelerated cycle of clearance. The hidden agenda is no better than the days of slum clearance during which Jacobs was writing.

Of course, it is impossible to generalize about density. But as Jacobs pointed out: "Proper city dwelling densities are a matter of performance." By contrast, all over the

country today, we are building suburban projects in urban settings — with the garage door more important than the front door (a trend damaging in either an urban or suburban setting). Such suburban models are being rationalized as “what people want,” when in fact they are simply what is most expedient to produce.

The truth is that what people want is a decent place to live, not just a suburban version of a decent place to live. Neighborhood shopping and efficient transportation — something all cities once had and could have again — these things don’t stand a chance in the world we are creating.

Solutions Emerge

It was within this context that the jury selected the Accessory Dwelling Unit prototype of CCS Architecture for a planning award. Such work stands as a provocation to cities everywhere that they can do a better job of community building.

In any existing residential district, the most acceptable strategy for adding density will usually be infill design that does not require neighborhood disruption. In this regard, most neighborhoods with some measure of single- or two-family housing could increase the number and diversity of residents by allowing an additional, self-contained housing unit that is secondary to the main residence. In many neighborhoods, existing garages can be converted. But even where no accessory structure already exists, the CCS design shows how a “good-neighbor” ADU is a worthy (and attainable) challenge that allows a reweaving of more community-friendly patterns.

The CCS prototype shows other things as well. As a design strategy, it illustrates how to accommodate a variety of recycled and renewable materials and encourage green-building techniques. And it shows how increased density can be achieved with only low-rise building, another overlooked or misunderstood reality. In fact, low-rise structures dominate many of the most in-demand dense neighborhoods today. Interesting combinations of two-, three-, and four-family housing, built close together and mixed with slightly higher but still small apartment houses, can produce considerable density without seeming overcrowded. Throw in streets of mixed-use buildings and converted white elephants that combine affordable and market-rate apartments, and one has the basis for true urbanism.

The CCS prototype is further interesting because it is particularly (but not exclusively) suitable for an alley location, a traditional feature of many single- and two-family home districts prior to World War II. Such a unit can easily serve as a live-work space, a “granny” or “in-law”

unit, an apartment for a student or young single person, or space for seasonal visitors. These are often just the kind of people an established community will want to house if it also wants to maintain a nearby walkable shopping district. And as a public-policy response, an ADU program tied to published prototypes is easier for existing residents to accept than the abstract mechanism of a zoning change, which increases potential density without providing any real sense for what the results may look like.

The jury deliberated over whether the CCS prototype, and by extension the entire City of Santa Cruz ADU program, could be applied elsewhere in the country. In Santa Cruz it is true that home values have accelerated beyond average incomes for a number of local reasons — growth pressures from increasing enrollment at the University of California Santa Cruz, the city’s proximity to Silicon Valley, and its status as a summer beach town, to name a few. But the fundamental wisdom of the city’s commitment to a program of infill housing, as a way to provide new affordable rental units producing additional income for sometimes marginal homeowners, carried the day.

True, Santa Cruz may have more single-family housing than other cities, and there may be a built-in market for ADU-type housing. But conditions always vary from district to district, city to city. With a little imagination, the CCS approach was deemed eminently adaptable to urban districts elsewhere, particularly ones with underappreciated and underused alleys.

Willamette River Water Treatment Plant — Wilsonville, Oregon

Miller/Hull

Public works were once a source of pride in a community, designed with prestige to proclaim the dignity of public needs. But in the last half century such projects have lost much of their pride of place. Stripped of all design expression other than explicit functionality, they are often tucked away in forgotten corners of towns, or hidden behind fences that disguise their important public purpose.

Designed for the utmost economic efficiency, such facilities are today likely to be perfect nonplaces, largely identical across the country, with little to inspire a community or express local identity.

In their design for the Willamette River Drinking Water Treatment Plant in Wilsonville, Oregon, MWH Global teamed up with Miller/Hull and landscape architect Bob Maruse to create a project that attempts to put the “public” back into public works.

Infrastructure as Place

The story of the Wilsonville treatment plant began in routine fashion. Faced with a building moratorium because of an inadequate water supply, the city, located south of Portland, was faced with the need to build a new facility if it was to continue to grow. Following a predictable course, it hired MWH Global, a design/build engineering firm with lots of experience constructing such facilities in the northwest and around the world.

The preliminary design/study for the plant followed the status quo for such projects. It proposed a series of anonymous boxes hidden behind a fence, a design whose very purpose was to be obscure. Yet, considering the Willamette’s long history of use for logging and agriculture, the idea of treating its water for municipal use was fairly revolutionary. Furthermore, when the decision was made to go ahead with the project, the city council directed that the plant should become an asset, not a detriment, to the neighborhood in which it would be located. That was when the public works department asked MWH Global to hire Miller/Hull of Seattle as a design partner.

It was under these circumstances that architect Robert Hull, along with landscape architect Bob Maruse, developed the idea of bisecting the site with a “garden wall.” In practical terms, such a wall might allow separation of space for current and future water-treatment equipment and a public park and information center. But it would also provide a bold form in the landscape that would proclaim the plant’s importance as a source of community pride.

Today the project bears witness to a fruitful collaboration between specialist and nonspecialist, engineer and designer. The site is divided along an 800-ft. cast-in-place concrete wall that runs perpendicular to the Willamette. To the east, between a small berm and the wall, the site houses the 15-million-gallon-per-day drinking-water

EDRA/*Places* Awards 2004

In this issue we present the EDRA/*Places* awards for 2004. These awards, in design, planning and research, highlight the multiple and diverse efforts that are today helping build a basis for our professional and academic endeavors and change the culture of accomplishment. They embody the imaginative, disciplined, persistent thought that will transform our respective fields and improve our environments—not by edict, not in a flash, but with patient meticulous care.

The jury for the 2004 EDRA/*Places* awards was held April 2–3 at the University of Pennsylvania. EDRA and *Places* would like to thank the Graduate School of Fine Arts there, and its dean, Gary Hack,

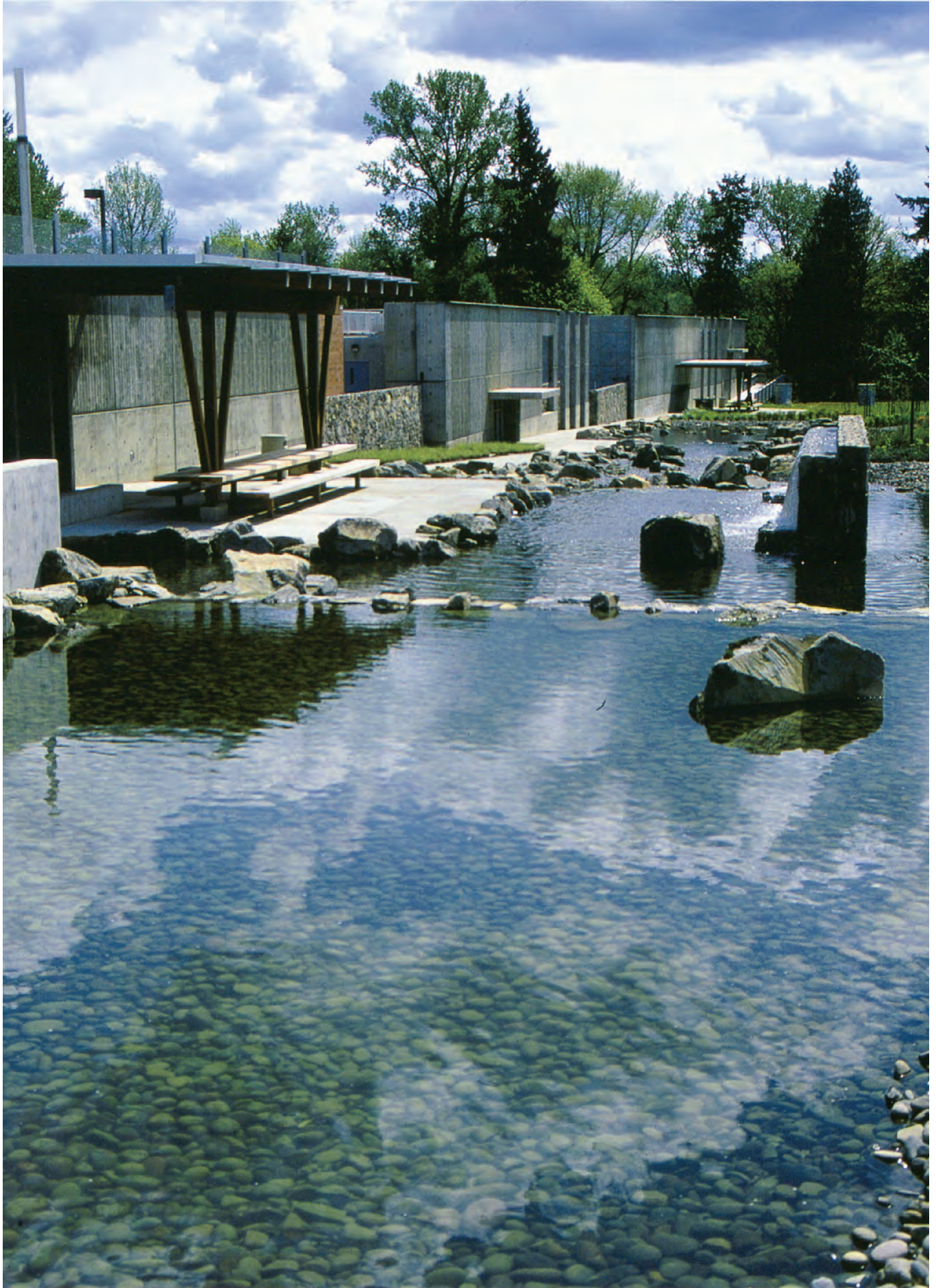
for serving as host, and for continuing to support the awards program. The 2004 jury was composed of:

Ray Gastil, Executive Director, the Van Allen Institute
Roberta Gratz, Author, *The Living City* and other books
Jack Nasar, Professor of Planning, the Ohio State University
Mary Miss, Artist, New York City
Ken Smith, Ken Smith Landscape Architects, Harvard University
James Timberlake, Kieran Timberlake Architects, University of Pennsylvania.

In recognition of the superior quality of design entries in 2004, the jury chose to award three design prizes, two planning prizes, and one research prize. The selection also

reflected the jury’s view that much good ongoing research was not submitted to the competition in 2004. They pointed to a particular lack of entries from the technological side of architecture, from such areas as low-income housing, and in the area of behavioral research as applied to design.

Asked to sum up the 2004 awards, several jurors commented on the provocative nature of the projects selected. As provocations, they challenge established ways of viewing the built environment and conceiving of changes to it. Their wide geographic location and topical focus also reflected the great range of entries received. EDRA and *Places* would like to thank all who entered their work in the 2004 awards cycle, and encourage future submissions.





facility. Water is pumped up from the river and then flows down behind the wall through a series of filters and purification tanks. At the end of its journey it is stored in an underground tank, where it is pressurized and sent to the homes of Wilsonville.

Meanwhile, the west side of the site is open to the public as a park, and incorporates a number of community facilities and interpretive elements. These include a meeting room attached to a 6,000-sq.ft. laboratory and administrative building that is available for public use in the evenings. Then, moving toward the river, a series of small windows allow residents to look into the treatment facility, and display boards explain the processes that make the river water safe to drink: ozone generation, sedimentation, ozonation, filtration, and clear water storage.

The public side of the wall also houses two shaded picnic pavilions with tables large enough to be used by student groups. These are linked by a path that terminates in a viewpoint over the river, from where a trail through a natural area also provides public access to the river. The city has designated the banks of the Willamette as public green space, and trails link the water-treatment park to other parks and community spaces in the city.

Along the garden wall are also a series of plant-filled ponds that collect stormwater from the site, and which expand the river's riparian zone and wildlife corridor. As in the purification area, water is pumped to the top of this area. It then flows down through a series of ponds and waterfalls to provide a natural metaphor for the artificial processes on the other side of the wall. Jeff Bauman, Public Works Director, says the water feature has also been a big hit among local residents because it drowns out noise from the nearby Interstate highway bridge.

The Future of Public Works

As a public works project that both teaches and entertains, Wilsonville residents today recognize their treat-



ment plant as a special place. It celebrates the link between the town and the river, and the quality of its details and site design are a source of community pride. Furthermore, according to MWH, perceptions of the water quality in the town have risen now that the public can see where its water is coming from.

In an era when such facilities are seen as possible terrorist targets, it is curious that the first inclination of many cities would be to make them even more anonymous. Should the possibility of terrorism threaten the relationship between the public and its public works? Or should it rally public agencies to want to strengthen this relationship? Greater awareness of public works can be seen as an attribute because it brings them more into the public eye.

The Willamette River Treatment Plant is typical of a new trend in infrastructure design that seeks to give presence to the hidden processes of public life. As evident here, the best of such facilities are also allowing residents to become more aware and knowledgeable of the dichotomy between the artificial technologies and natural processes that make their common life possible.

—Chris Sensenig

Above Left: View from the bottom of the park to the glassed conference room in the facility's administrative building. The room is also used as a site for after-hours community meetings.

Above Right: The 800-foot-long concrete wall defines the slope of the site by keeping a constant datum line. It begins 4 feet high and grows to 20 feet. The wall is 10 inches thick and capped with a galvanized plate to prevent rain from staining the concrete, an important detail in the northwest climate.

Previous: Pools and cascades of water are used in the public park area to refer to the artificial purification processes taking place on the other side of the wall. The picnic shelter is at the left.

JURY COMMENTS

GRATZ I think this is fabulous. It's a great design. It's involving the public.

It's turning a sow's ear into a silk purse, if that can be said to be done.

SMITH It's not cutesy. It doesn't do trick stuff. It's infrastructure.

MISS I think it's too designy. But I do like making the wall into a constant with the river alongside it. I'd be more interested in what it would be like to just walk along the wall.

SMITH The comment I made in my notes is that the photographs didn't do it justice. They are all architecture magazine photographs, and there wasn't a single one that really captured that experience of seeing through the windows into the plant. There wasn't a single photograph that actually did what the project was about.

GRATZ I wouldn't penalize it for having the wrong photographs. If we can see what an experience is going to be, then the project is speaking for itself.

MISS I think they have really made that point clearly.

TIMBERLAKE You can see the dichotomy of what happens to the water. I think that's striking.

GRATZ The whole idea of being able to design well the transformation of a water treatment plant into a real place where they are obviously holding meetings, as well as a place for different experiences...it's an incredible lesson.

SMITH They're not hiding it, they're not redecorating it. They're revealing it. It may be a bit overdesigned, but basically they do all the right things.

GRATZ It's a direction that's very useful for all sorts of infrastructure. A redesign of negative infrastructure into positive places.

Right: The site plan shows how the wall divides the project between park and treatment plant. To the east, future expansion of the facility is possible by adding new equipment perpendicular to the wall.

Project Credits

Architect: Miller/Hull, Seattle, WA

Robert Hull, FAIA

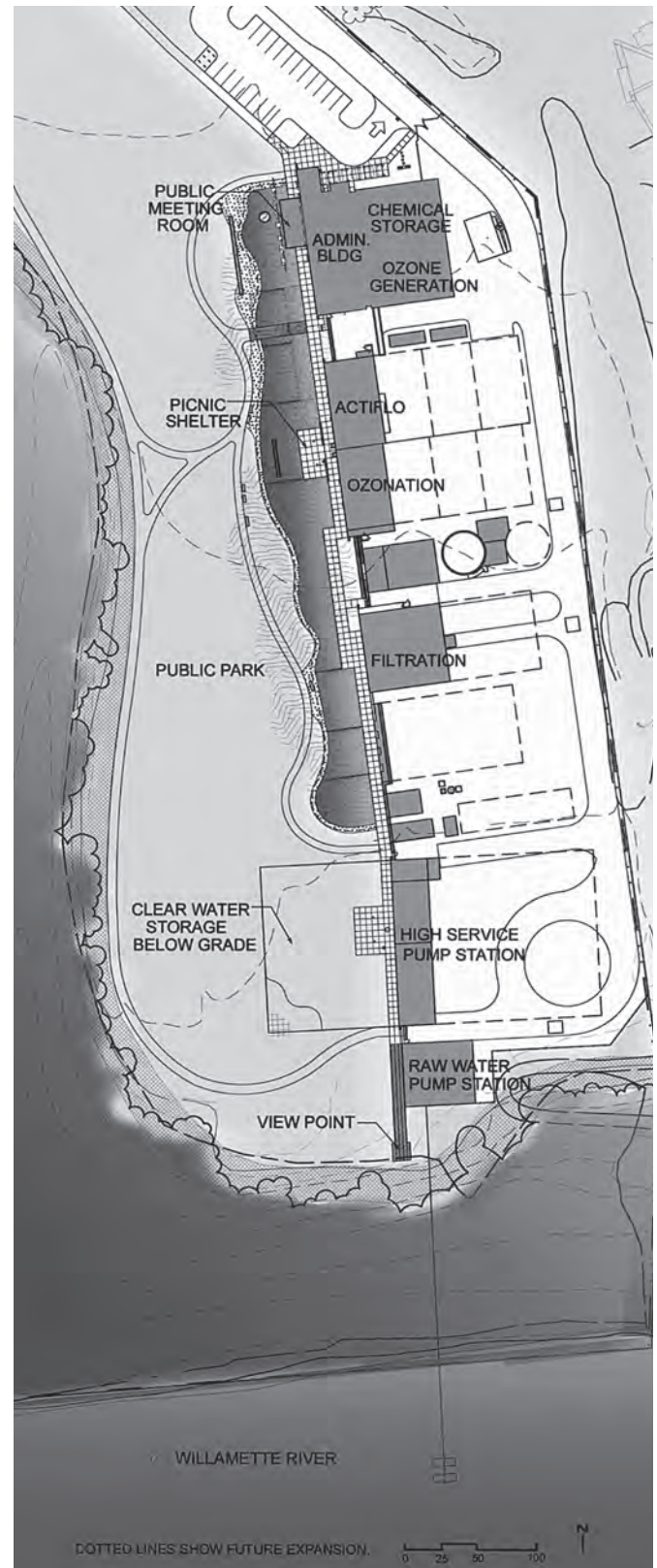
Joyce Too, Project Manager

Engineers: Montgomery Watson Harza, Portland, OR

Landscape Architect: Murase Associates, Portland OR

General Contractor: Montgomery Watson Harza, Portland, OR

Photographers: Eckert & Eckert, Portland, OR



Yuhu Elementary School and Community Center — Lijiang, China

Li Xiaodong

For centuries the ancient city of Lijiang in China's south-western Yunnan province has served as the cultural center for the Naxi minority group, and today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Architect Li Xiaodong remembers when he first developed a fascination for the Naxi and their mountainous homeland. In 1988 a school classmate gave a slideshow on the Naxi and their distinct cultural blend of local, Chinese and Tibetan influences. However, it wasn't until 1997, as leader of a research trip from the National University of Singapore, that he was able to visit the area himself. What struck him then was how perfectly the area's fusion of local materials and technology, landscape patterns, and cultural values defined the idea of a vernacular tradition developed in harmony with place.

After that first visit, Li, a Beijing-born designer and educator, returned to his overseas teaching job in Singapore. As an advocate of the theories of critical regionalism promoted by Kenneth Frampton and Alexander Tzonis, however, he remained haunted by the idea of engaging Naxi building traditions through a project of his own. As this project took shape in his mind, he envisioned it both as research into local building practices and a means to help sustain such cultural inheritance in the face of China's rapid modernization.

Over the next several years Li promoted these ideas in correspondence with local officials, and eventually, he arranged a second trip to Lijiang in 2002. During this visit Li and a Ph.D. student conducted more focused research and began searching for a building site.

Ultimately, that search led to the village of Yuhu, 15 kilometers outside Lijiang itself. Here, Li was shown an elementary school in need of repair and expansion. His subsequent project for the school was completed in February 2004 at a cost of \$29,000 — an amount he personally raised from foundations in Singapore, friends, and local government agencies.

Echoes of “Shangri-La”

At an elevation of some 2,760 meters, Yuhu sits at the foot of the dramatic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. In the 1920s its cool, dry climate and dramatic scenery attracted the National Geographic writer/photographer Joseph Rock to build a house there. Rock was known as an expert on the cultures and geography of far-southwestern China, an area of towering mountains and deep river valleys that gave rise to the myth of Shangri-La.

Yuhu's great claim to outside fame was that Rock built a house there and lived in it off and on during the 1920s and 30s. Otherwise, Yuhu was, and still is, home to some 1,300 villagers, mostly farmers.

Li believes that in such places vernacular building practices often develop in a way that gives enduring form and texture to the world. Thus in Yuhu he found “an almost perfect balance between landscape and human settlement.” In fact, “one feels strongly that the culture is actually part of nature,” he explains. But Li is also well aware of just how fragile such a balance may be. And this is nowhere more evident than in other parts of rural China, where the country's opening to the outside has caused many similarly ancient dwelling patterns to be scrapped for the convenience and supposed prestige of more standardized, “modern” practices.

Clearly, the vernacular cannot solve all problems, and Li describes this problem in a statement about his Yuhu project: “Vernacular design basically repeats tradition; changes in lifestyle and production method are usually not [accounted for].” By contrast, he wanted his project to serve as a tool to “derive continuity, beyond mere repetition, by reinterpreting tradition for its sustainability within a modern context.”

For the layman, Li says, this means that as an outsider concerned with vernacular sustainability, “you have to bring something new. You have to preserve the best of the old while adding a beneficial increment of modern knowledge.”

Three Areas of Innovation

The project itself consists of an 830-sq.m. village cultural center and school expansion — encompassing eight rooms in two buildings, a semi-enclosed exhibition space, and two courtyards. Li explains there were three areas in particular where he hoped to extend local practices in productive new directions.

The first was structural performance. Lijiang sits in a region of known earthquake hazard (the existing government-built school in Yuhu was damaged by quakes of magnitude 7.0 and 5.6 in 1996 and 1998). Village buildings have traditionally been constructed of local stone, timber and earth. But in his design for the school, Li attempted to marry local stone construction to a new method of internal steel reinforcement and a continuous concrete foundation. In addition, the stone walls in the Yuhu school are not load bearing; the roof and floors are supported on a heavy-timber frame, designed at each gable end to resemble local grain-drying racks.

A second area of innovation was spatial structure. Li

Right: View across existing basketball court to new school and community center. The former residence of the writer Joseph Rock is just out of sight to the right.

points out there was no local prototype for a building large enough to accommodate 160 students and village-size gatherings. The typical Naxi courtyard house was also too small and intimate to be expanded to suit this purpose. But by siting two buildings in a zigzag manner and using the rear wall of Rock's former residence as a third bounding element, Li was able to develop a new spatial vocabulary that fulfilled the need for "public" space. The design also provides all the classrooms with natural light from two sides.

Li's third area of innovation was aesthetics. Because of budget, the challenge here, he says, was "to use unprocessed local materials to produce a contemporary visual effect." In this case, local materials were limestone, cobblestone and wood.

As the project developed, supervised by two Ph.D. students from Singapore, Yeo Kang Shua and Chua Kenhua, facing stones were carefully selected and trimmed to produce straight, clearly defined edges. But a certain roughness was also encouraged, both to account for the varying

quality of local craftwork, and to create contrast with the clean, neat lines of the large new windows used for the classrooms. The overall effect was a fresh, dynamic treatment of traditional elements through exaggeration and simplification. However, within this design approach, even such dramatic elements as a self-supporting exterior stair were designed to emphasize their roots in local practices.

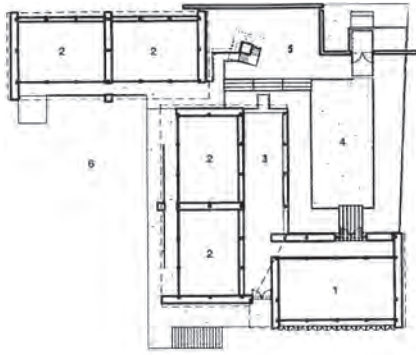
Joining Worlds

Li's goal of cultural sustainability also involved bringing students together with local villagers. He believed both groups could benefit from a project that rethought and revalued local building traditions: the villagers could benefit from the intelligence and idealism of the students, while the students could learn something of enduring design values from the villagers.

Students at the National University of Singapore were involved as researchers throughout. In addition, students in a third-year Masters workshop helped produce working drawings at the end of 2002. Many of these same students







First Story Plan

were supposed to travel to the site in April and May of 2003 to help with construction, but were prevented from doing so by the Asian SARS outbreak.

Meanwhile, in the village, Li realized that his ideas would not have lasting impact unless the local population were able to reproduce them on their own. Thus, he insisted that the villagers be involved in all phases of the construction. Some ideas were more difficult than others to get across. For example, it was hard to convince villagers of the benefit of a largely invisible and expensive continuous concrete foundation. For years, shallow stone foundations had been the norm in the village, but these offer little protection against ground movement during an earthquake.

Likewise, while the entry courtyard with its reflecting pools and its semi-enclosed exhibition space may at first have seemed odd to the villagers, Li says most now feel “fresh and excited” about it. Li hopes to install daily-use objects from the village in the exhibition area. The use of water was meant both as a symbol of life and of the close relation between village culture and surrounding nature. Indeed, a complex locally developed system for channeling water to villages and fields is one of the marvels of the Lijiang region.

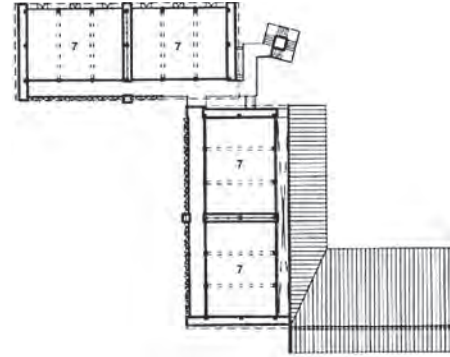
Reviewing the overall product, several jurors noted how Li's building seemed at home in both the modern and traditional contexts, and embodied both great authenticity and innovation. They also observed how it would serve as a provocation to all who believe that China's modernization must inevitably involve a cheapening of its vernacular heritage.

— *David Moffat*

Left: Construction of the school relied on villagers. A worker adjusts the rail on the entry courtyard's freestanding stairway.

Below: View through the semi-enclosed exhibition space to the freestanding stairway in the entry court.

Above: The school and community center are organized in a zigzag manner around two courtyards. The entry courtyard (right) contains reflecting pools and exhibition space; the community courtyard (left) opens to the surrounding landscape. The basketball court is at the bottom. 1) Museum; 2) Classroom; 3) Exhibition Area; 4) Community courtyard; 5) Reflecting pool; 6) School courtyard; 7) Staff room.



Second Story Plan

JURY COMMENTS

GASTIL This is a sophisticated, contemporary architectural eye working very respectfully with traditional buildings systems.

SMITH When you go to China you see beautifully restored historic stuff and really bad contemporary architecture. You see very little of this kind of stuff.

MISS I think it's great, the way it uses the traditional building methods and transforms them.

TIMBERLAKE I think the craft of it is extraordinary.

SMITH And the typology of the outdoor spaces, the way they continue to have the building defining the outdoors.

MISS But also it sets an important precedent that they can go ahead and build with these cheap traditional materials instead of crummy [modern] ones.

NASAR And to me it succeeds in [addressing] the question of design research and design outcomes.

GRATZ It shows how we can use local everything in an appropriate way, combine it with a modern sensibility.

SMITH And look at the fragility of that [staircase]. They didn't cop out and do it in metal and weld it together. There is such an authenticity to that, but yet it's not the totally traditional way.

MISS I think it is so important as a precedent to keep them from coming in and putting tin sheds up in places like this. They use materials they've been using for years. They've got them; they're accessible. Do it, and do more of it, and do it like this.

SMITH And these world heritage sites, they're really vulnerable.

TIMBERLAKE I was just in China eight weeks ago. I think this is an important statement coming at this point from the jury.

GRATZ It is a beautifully crafted design using totally local materials. It's sustainability. It's vernacular. It's involving students in a time and place where just the opposite is happening. I don't see a downside.

Project Credits

Architecture: Dr. Li Xiaodong (principal); Yeo Kang Shua, Chong Keng Hu, and Lee Tse Chen Stanley (designers). Team: Ong Chiew Wan (leader), Boh Tze Lan Charmaine, Chen Yunru Eunice, Chin Li Nah, Gwee Tong Mui, Lee Wan Ming, and Tay Yew.

Structural Design: D. Lim Guan Tiong (principal).

Team: Tan Jia Yee (leader), Goh Jih Huei, and Koh Xio Hui.

Landscape Design: Ng Ker Min (leader), Tan Hui Ching Janice, and Wee Hiang Yew Carl.

Quantity Survey and Cost Analysis: Yan Ruobi Esther (leader), Tang Wee Leng Adrian, and Woon Hui Ting.

Model making: Goh Yonghui and Tan Eng Khay.

Photographer: Tan Hua Jin Melvin.

Construction Team: Yeo Kang Shua (project manager), Li Mulei (site foreman), Li Xiaoyuan (head carpenter), Zhao Xuedian (head mason)

The Heidelberg Project — Detroit, Michigan

Tyree Guyton

First, let's talk about shoes.

As a kid in a broken family, Detroit artist Tyree Guyton wore old shoes. When the soles wore out, he had to mend them with cardboard. However, this was not the only association that opened his eyes to the iconic power of shoes.

His grandfather, Sam Mackey, was also an artist, and gave Guyton his first paintbrush. He also told Guyton stories of his ancestors who had been sold into slavery and never seen again. And he told him about lynchings from the trees.

"You couldn't see the people," Guyton remembers his grandfather saying. "But you could see the soles of their shoes."

Today such troubled meaning pervades "Soles of the Most High," one of the most powerful elements of the Heidelberg Project, Guyton's evolving environment of art installations on the street where he grew up and still lives. To make it, the artist threw hundreds of pairs of shoes into the branches, where they hang, symbols of the lynchings.

Once again, you can only see the soles.

New Life Amid Devastation

When Guyton was a child, Detroit burned; he still remembers the city on fire. Now, as the camera pans along streets of abandoned buildings and overgrown lots in *Come Unto Me*, an award-winning film by Nicole Cattell about the Heidelberg Project, he narrates: "It looks like a bomb was dropped . . . a reflection of the people. That's crazy, this is madness."

It was his grandfather, a commercial painter, who also encouraged Guyton to study art at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. But afterwards, instead of moving to New York or Los Angeles, Guyton returned to Heidelberg Street.

Over the next five years, as neighbors watched in amazement, the street became a showplace for installations such as "Soles of the Most High." His artistic method was based on weird juxtapositions and transformations of found objects. Along with paint and imagination, he used discarded car hoods, barrels, chairs, sinks, clothing and dolls to decorate the houses, vacant lots, trees and street. He explained it as his way, as an artist, of reclaiming a neighborhood forgotten by civil society.

Guyton's work made powerful use of myth and symbol, building on traditions of African American art. But it did so in a way that often looked harsh and uncompromising. In particular, it targeted the many serviceable wood-frame houses that had been abandoned since Guyton's youth. Not only were these sites of drug dealing and prostitution, but they spoke of the forces of racism, neglect, and social



pathology that had overrun inner-city Detroit and many other once-viable urban neighborhoods.

Such confrontational work did not make him popular with certain community groups and local political leaders. In particular, in the early 1990s it pointed out the ineffectiveness of then-Mayor Coleman Young in stemming the tide of urban decay. One day in 1991, Young sent in the bulldozers. By the end of the week the houses and the installations they supported had been carted off to the dump.

Above: The impact of art on the lives of children has long been a concern of Guyton's Heidelberg Project. Photo by Larry Peplin.

Right: The Project makes use of all manner of discarded items to call attention to place. The tree at left is part of the work Guyton has called "Soles of the Most High." Photo by James R. Cliff.



Reborn, and Reborn Again

In a *Detroit Free Press* article in September 2003 Guyton acknowledged how the Heidelberg Project has been fueled by an underlying anger and determination to dramatize the unsupportable conditions of the city around him. But it is also intended to generate discussion and a voice for the community. Moreover, Guyton has repeatedly stressed its importance as a beacon of hope for local children — who he frequently recruits to help work on it.

After the 1991 demolition, these principles, and the untimely death of his grandfather, and sometime collaborator, Mackey, only strengthened Guyton's resolution, and he set about rebuilding the project in a newly barren landscape. In his own words, he set out to turn vacant lots into "lots of art." He also began his now-famous campaign of polka dots.

"Grandpa introduced the polka dots," Mr. Guyton says in *Come Unto Me*. First, Guyton brought in a 1955-era bus — the type Rosa Parks might have ridden — and decorated it with dots. Then he started polka-dotting abandoned houses throughout the neighborhood. The implied

challenge was obvious: How could the mayor's office tear down the Heidelberg Project while doing nothing about 30,000 abandoned houses throughout the city?

As might have been expected, the city (which technically owned the houses but was doing nothing about them) fought back. It brought a criminal case against Guyton for trespassing. But Guyton's lawyer successfully argued that polka dots were no different than the political advertising the city allowed on the buildings. As a result, polka-dotting has today become a staple strategy among activists city-wide, who joke that it is the surest way to get the city to demolish problem structures.

By the mid-1990s the art world was also beginning to take notice of Guyton's work. Not only were tourists flocking to his installations on Heidelberg Street, but he was being invited to contribute pieces to neighborhoods and shows in other cities.

By the mid-1990s a new mayor was also elected in Detroit. At first, Dennis Archer happily hailed Guyton as "Detroit's native son." He even contributed a pair of shoes to "Sole People," a commissioned project in St. Paul, Min-



nesota. Nevertheless, in 1999 when it came to protecting the Heidelberg Project from a second round of demolitions (this time ordered by two longtime foes on the city council), Archer remained silent.

Once again, the bulldozers and dump trucks returned. But, once again, the project has now been reborn.

"The project has now had three different metamorphoses, and each time it comes back stronger," says Jenenne Whitfield, who now serves as executive director of the Heidelberg Project. Furthermore, she explains how the most recent addition — an archive, visiting-artist residence, and center for children's art — also indicates a maturing of Guyton's vision.

The present installation is being made by completely covering a building, previously devoted to the injustices of the O.J. Simpson prosecution, with pennies. According to the *Free Press*, this new work has even received the guarded approval of a previously opposed community group. Whitfield says she and Guyton are also hopeful about the commitment of a new mayor, Kwame Kilpatrick, to the Heidelberg Project.

Recently, Guyton has also turned his attention to international collaborations, and in October 2004 he was invited to Sydney, Australia, to play a major role in a project called "Singing for that Country." An outdoor multimedia art event that took place in several city parks, it made use of several Heidelberg-inspired elements, including painted polka dots throughout the park and on donated shoes. As part of his contribution Guyton also encouraged children from Australia and the United States to paint their

shoes and include a note inside as part of an exhibit entitled "If my shoes could talk. . . ."

Conflict of Values

In reviewing the project, several jurors expressed concern with its impact on the lives of other residents of the area. Indeed, over the years some have made no secret of their belief that it is little more than a disturbing eyesore.

Several jurors questioned whether the titillation afforded the out-of-town visitor might be far different from the day-to-day experience of living in such a public art environment. But the jury was eventually won over by the provocative power of the work and by testimony of those such as Whitfield. She was a banker with a well-paying job when she first encountered the work.

"When I first drove down Heidelberg Street, I said, 'What the hell is all this?'" At the time, Guyton was sitting on the curb. She remembers rolling down the window and asking him: "What would make you take polka dots and put it all over a house?"

"Why do commercial painters come and paint a house one color?" Guyton answered.

Above: Polka-dotting became an important strategy to call attention to the effect of abandoned buildings. According to statistics gathered in support of Guyton's lawsuit against the city, the Heidelberg Street area has lost 71 percent of its housing since 1960. Photo courtesy of Heidelberg Project Archive.

Right: City officials have twice ordered in bulldozers and dump trucks to demolish the Heidelberg Project. But each time it has been reborn in new forms. Photo of 1999 demolition courtesy of Heidelberg Project Archive.



“Because it’s supposed to be one color,” she said.
“Is it?” he asked.

Soon after, Whitfield quit her job at the bank to become executive director of the project.

Clearly, this work is not only about what you see. It’s about the dialog it engenders. In this regard, Guyton uses the material world as a front to an underlying spiritual message.

The Heidelberg Project offers an alternative vision to young children in one of America’s most blighted urban areas; it broadens community awareness of the power of art; and it brings a new sense for important social realities to the consciousness of visitors.

Guyton’s work is art that makes a difference.

—*Jack Nasar and David Moffat*

JURY COMMENTS

NASAR I can tell you a little about the presentation separate from the movie. This has been a brilliant extension of art into the community. When he rebuilt the project [after 1991] he attracted 275,000 visitors a year. Now, West Philadelphia and other places around the world have picked up this idea. Also, in the movie, you can actually see him talking with people who say “you’re destroying the neighborhood.” But it turns out that afterwards some of these same people have come to appreciate it.

GRATZ He also makes the point that he’s not bothered by this because it has provoked them to talk. And it’s not just that he took all these found items from the dump and assembled them. Some of the individual artworks he has crafted could stand on their own.

TIMBERLAKE This is important because it cuts across grassroots politics, art, education, taking community action, pushing back against authority. Arts and Humanity in Philadelphia is a little like this, trying to take over abandoned buildings and regenerate the community. But, arguably, this does more for inner-city Detroit because it’s a provocation.

MISS It also bears out the argument that artists have another way of looking at things. They bring another kind of definition to place. It’s so wonderful to see this kind of interior life brought forward to the public domain.

SMITH You could get an army of professionals and a bucket-load of federal money and it wouldn’t be nearly as good.

GRATZ It celebrates the idea of one person making a difference . . . a community person changing the place in which he lives, and changing the perception of that place to the outside.

SMITH You go to places and hear people complaining that their city isn’t good, that if only they had the answer. “Oh, we’ve got to plan for this, but it’s never happened.” And this is the most hopeless place there is, and this guy just did it himself.

MISS But it’s important to recognize that this isn’t just an outside artist. He did go to art school. He’s taking what he learned there and coming back. People are never willing to give artists credit for being experts at something.

GRATZ As a tourist place it brings people into a reality they would never see anywhere else. They have to drive through the worst of urban America to see this. And so from the inside it is using art to articulate a common tradition. But it is also drawing people from outside to see an art object, and they are going out with a different view.

MISS Without imagination we’re doomed. That’s what defines us as human. It’s being capable of feeling our lives and our difficulties and expressing that in a potent way.

GRATZ Ironically, if I were a neighbor I would probably welcome all the people and attention. It’s a lot better than the attention they would get from the drug dealers and drive-by shooters.

Going Beyond the Plan: The Bandwidth That Is Stephen Willats

Marcia McNally

For more than forty years Stephan Willats has been going “beyond the plan” as a way to consider and then counteract plans that have been made for him and society. Reacting to the social visions manifest in the postwar housing estates of the London suburbs, he set out to develop a “meta language” in which he and residents could communicate with each other about their everyday environment. Beginning with a piece called “Man from the Twentyfirst Century” and continuing today, Willats has carefully examined how people adapt the repetitive and alienating dwelling units that characterize public housing from this era. Through photography, discussion, and sometimes even field adventure he has chronicled these personal landscapes, both interior and out-of-doors.

If that project sounds familiar, you are right. His methodology is uncannily reminiscent of Kevin Lynch, Clare Cooper Marcus, and Lawrence Halprin — pioneers in the fields of social factors and experience-based participatory design. However, I asked Willats if he knew of these people; and I asked Cooper Marcus, a fellow Brit, if she knew of Willats’s work. The answer from both was no.

Willats’s premise is that the artist can operate within the fabric of the community and does not have to be bound by a gallery. Starting in the 1960s he began to experiment with cybernetics and various learning theories in order to “transcend restricted language codes . . . to demonstrate a practice of art that would be meaningful to people outside that world.” To accomplish this, he employed various participatory approaches, a primary device being what he calls “the question.” “Make a map of your neighborhood showing how it relates to existing social facilities, such as shops, libraries, schools, sports clubs, etc. . . . How would you reorganize the above map in order to make the social facilities serve what you consider your neighborhood needs to be. . . . Describe and draw a map,” he asks of his participants. They write essays in response; there is a dialogue between the artist and the participant; a series of photos are taken that characterize key ideas to be represented; and a poster-like or collage-like work is produced and displayed.

In the recent project chronicled here Willats had residents pair up and walk through the neighborhood on a predetermined route and record what they perceived. The pairs of participants then worked together to prepare a display to represent a “meeting of minds” on what is out there. The late Kevin Lynch, a professor of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT for thirty years, developed similar methods. His interest was in legibility and wayfinding — he wanted to know what districts, patterns and landmarks contributed to a citizen’s recognition and image of the city. Lynch argued that a positive image of everyday place con-

tributed to emotional well-being.

In the world of community planning, designers use these kinds of activities as a starting point for making change. Participatory projects in Japan, for example, often start with “town watching.” In the Kano neighborhood of Gifu, an old and rundown area, planner Jeremy Liu knew that he had to reconnect residents with their pride in place before he could start a discussion about change. To do this he had them walk the neighborhood and then create a iconographic postcard of it. In the Misyuku neighborhood of Setagaya, Yoshiharu Asanoumi used a similar device, giving citizens red picture frames to hang on places they considered to be landscape treasures. The Kano adolescent girl makes a postcard of herself on a swing, reading a book in front of a landmark castle. An old man in Misyuku frames a tree limb emerging out of a stone wall.

My partner Randy Hester and I have developed numerous participatory design techniques that involve posing a question about place attachment and giving the participant a camera with which to photograph these valued places. This process was developed borrowing heavily from Ken Craik and the environmental psychologists here at University of California, Berkeley — as well as from Lynch. For the Chesapeake Bay/EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) program, we used this technique as the basis for training staff to work with communities to identify the local sacred structure. Photographing and mapping these places formed the basis for land use decision-making within sub-watersheds of the Bay drainage.

We also use a step-by-step process in our design work that involves a phase of “introducing the community to itself.” After a period of intense investigation (which typically involves interviews, site analysis, and a review of existing documents and data), we formally present to participants what we have learned about the place in question. This is transactive communication — it means we have listened. It also means we have an opinion about what we’ve heard, or more to the point, we think there are certain things that need to be exhibited and discussed before we can move forward on design thinking. Willats’s use of photographic essay as “bandwidth” for language is a similar step in the meta dialogue. He develops a neighborhood language that includes icons of place that are so recognizable they transmit a code embedded in the representation of these landscapes. In a sense his art pieces say “I am speaking to you using your unique spatial language. Respond.”

One of the striking things about Willats is his deep knowledge of the lives of his participants. I asked if he kept in touch with them or if he followed up to see if their

lives had changed as a result of involvement in his art. The answer was interesting. First he told me that when he embarked on a new project he would advertise them in neighborhoods where he had worked before. Apparently, past participants routinely would come to take a look at the new pieces. “They made the effort to maintain contact.” Perhaps they were checking the bandwidth. But that was the limit of his contact. Said Willats: “I only interviewed people about their reaction to the experience once, and did so reluctantly. My work hopefully develops a mutualism with participants; it is not research using people as guinea pigs. This changes the relationship.” Those of us involved in postoccupancy evaluation can take heed.

We discussed the importance of mutualism in his practice and in mine. Willats emphasized that he has been trying to demonstrate a new approach, one in which, “small, self-organized groups cooperate in completing a problem . . . one where participants see each other complexly rather than objectifying or competing with each other.” I responded that in my work community members often come to the table with a self-interest, but if the participation is genuine and real exchange occurs, it is unavoidable that participants come to know each other richly, deeply. The challenge is to translate this symbiosis into form.

So what has Willats learned through this process? The London housing estates in some cases were made tolerable through small acts of individual adaptation — art on the walls, the arrangement of furniture. These acts have helped residents escape anomie and envision a better world, contends Willats. He interviews Garry, Dave, and Liz, who move into a flat and paint the entire interior matte black, filling it with elements symbolizing death and night. They are part of the Post Punk generation, about which Willats says, “. . . their own personal poverty made the transformations they created inside their flats even more significant.” He tells us they sought to separate themselves from other occupants. This stands in contrast to the story of the residents of Charville Lane Estates. To overcome isolation, residents formed an association and started a family-night disco in the estate center. To pay for it, they held a mini-market where they recycled household items. The community-building activities snowballed.

Willats finds through these works “extended space” that is “symbolically transformed to be socially and psychologically possessed.” This type of unprogrammed space is something Margaret Crawford and others have observed being made by new immigrants to Los Angeles. Her chapter in the edited book *Everyday Urbanism* features a series of photographs depicting how Latino residents have used

the driveway, fence, abandoned lot, and sidewalk to sell wares. This is done regularly, not only to sell things, but as a way to create space in the neighborhood for everyday exchange. They take standardized infrastructure and transform it, giving it “self-organization” and a human face.

Alas, many of Willats’s examples provide a tragic window into the neighborhoods and lives of his participants. Few places seem to be loved, individually or collectively. It is sad to learn that the British response to postwar housing pressures produced so much that was dehumanizing. In the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles I have been studying the relentless miles of subdivisions, “scientifically planned on a grand scale” to meet American postwar demands. Equally undesirable housing came out of it, but over time much of it has been transformed, personalized, and as a result loved. I suspect the fact that these are owner-occupied makes all the difference — as does the fact that it is detached, single-family housing. These neighborhoods are beloved despite their boring-ness. They are less fondly viewed when they change into racially mixed and income-mixed neighborhoods (read: influx of low-income immigrant renters occupying higher-density apartments).

Lynch and others believed that rather than passive consumption of place we must play an active role in changing it to meet our needs. In participatory design in the U.S., we hope that participants will come to the table to dream about the future, allowing place to become the medium for discussion and change. Even if Willats is reluctant to do so, I would like to ask his participants if their involvement in the art has caused them to stick it out, work with others to make more comprehensive changes to their living conditions; go “beyond the plan,” as it were.

Last he heard, Pat Purdy, a teenager he worked with in a series of makeshift “glue-sniffing camps” built to escape the West London housing blocks in which they lived, was tending bar in the Canary Islands. Garry, Dave, and Liz told Willats that in their vision of the future, “We will live like this forever.” Within a month they moved out.

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Incremental Urbanism: The Auto and Pedestrian Reconsidered in Greyfield Reclamation — Atlanta, Georgia

Michael Gamble and W. Jude LeBlanc

Every city in America has them — aging strips of development that once served as vital commercial corridors during the post-World War II suburban exodus, but which have today fallen on harder times. As many of their functions have been consolidated elsewhere, they are symptomatic of what might “better” be characterized as post-sprawl.

To describe such conditions, the Congress for the New Urbanism coined the term greyfield. In development jargon, brownfields are contaminated urban sites, and greenfields are previously undeveloped lands. Greyfields are the underutilized places in between — often derelict shopping centers and strip commercial sites surrounded by seas of asphalt. In their 2001 report “Greyfields into Goldfields,” the CNU proposed reclaiming these leftover sites by rehabilitating existing structures and adding new mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-oriented activities.¹

“Incremental Urbanism: The Auto and the Pedestrian Reconsidered in Greyfield Redevelopment” is two architects’ attempt to give substance to these ideas.² For the jury, it also represented an attempt to bring the tools of formal analysis to bear on the complex political, social and economic discussion of what to do with such leftover places.

The jury also praised the report for departing from “sweeping, fly-over” strategies of traditional planning. “One of the great things about this particular study,” said one juror, “is that it takes on a problem that is prevalent in all fifty states and says, ‘Look . . . the fabric can be [re]knit through these more modest space-making elements.’”

A “Fierce” Realism

The authors of “Incremental Urbanism,” Michael E. Gamble and W. Jude LeBlanc are professors at the Georgia Institute of Technology. They note that contemporary architectural practice is in many ways antithetical to the notion of the city. While most practitioners are content to sit back and criticize this situation, out of “frustration,” they decided to roll up their sleeves and dig into the relationship between land planning and physical form.³

Individually, architects are only interested in context to the extent that it informs the design of their individual buildings. But in a recent article, Gamble and LeBlanc argued that “within the context of today’s compromised suburban environment, the design and implementation of a singular building does very little to answer the question: How can we as design practitioners be ambitious, committed, and fiercely realistic about one of the most significant challenges to the profession, the rehabilitation of America’s default greyfields?”⁴

Gamble and LeBlanc began by grounding their research

in a specific place: the eight-mile Buford Highway Corridor, fifteen miles northeast of downtown Atlanta. Although the highway has its own local character, they felt it was representative of the dysfunctional structure of contemporary America. Since much of its single-use, low-density, car-oriented development had also declined to a point where it represented a greyfield, it was ripe for “corrective” action.

In aerial views it is easy to read the course of Buford Highway as it negotiates a mire of development sandwiched between two Interstate highways — the Northeast Expressway (I-85) and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (I-285). Such a spatial dynamic will be familiar to residents of most American cities: a primary road that once connected Atlanta to its northeastern suburbs was relieved of much of its former importance following construction of the faster, parallel routes and the development of a new generation of regional shopping centers.

From the air it is easy to trust such a detached reading of sociology and economics. But on the ground a very different story is unfolding. Here, taking advantage of low costs, immigrant and migrant workers have moved into apartments along the strip, and after two decades of steady population growth, the occupancy rate of rental housing is nearly 100 percent. However, given that 10 percent of these 75,000 people do not own cars, the lack of pedestrian amenities has created a treacherous daily ritual of pedestrian-auto confrontation.

Gamble and LeBlanc begin their report with a series of snapshots that reveal the full human dimension of this problem. A young man, clutching a recent purchase, races across six lanes of oncoming traffic. Negotiating her way along a “sidewalk” barely the width of her body, a woman hugs the side railing in spite of the interference of overgrown trees. Another young man, his body stiff with fear, uses a center turn lane — the “suicide lane” — as a pedestrian refuge.

The Coding of Auto-Centricity

Gamble and LeBlanc soon found such hazardous conditions are actually built into the very fabric of the Buford Corridor by local zoning and subdivision regulations. Among other things, these codes of auto-centricity identify and separate uses, specify block sizes, establish building setbacks and parking requirements, locate utility infrastructure, and determine the nature of all improvements to the public right-of-way.

As a county road, Buford Highway is governed by DeKalb County’s street-type regulations. Gamble and LeBlanc began by making sectional drawings of the hierarchy of twelve types used by the county. With speed of

auto travel the primary determinant between these, they range from “collector” at the slow end to “parkway” at the fast end. Interestingly, on paper, DeKalb County provides every roadway with bike lanes and sidewalks; but Gamble and LeBlanc clearly found otherwise in the field. As a result of this missing pedestrian infrastructure they also found the rate of pedestrian fatalities along Buford Highway to be alarmingly high — eleven from 1998 to 2003 — with many more seriously injured.

“The complex functions of roads in traditional environments are reduced in the arterial paradigm almost exclusively to traffic flow,” Gamble and LeBlanc assert in their report. As a remedy, they propose filling in the slow-to-fast continuum with many more classifications, arguing that a more fully fleshed-out paradigm might recognize Buford Highway as a place used both by cars and pedestrians.

In addition to tackling street types, Gamble and LeBlanc translated the county’s building-setback regulations into graphic format. The resultant diagrams depict allowable building configurations (including a 60- to 75-foot front setback, and 20 feet to the sides and rear). They also showed how disconnectivity is guaranteed at every level: from building to street, building to building, and use to use.

As architects, Gamble and LeBlanc naturally focused on physical features of the study area. But other members of their team examined the region’s declining health and shifting demographics. In particular, they examined the applicability of a 2003 study by the Center for Disease Control documenting the adverse effects of poorly planned places on the mental and physical health of their residents. Other research team members included representatives from the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD); faculty from the Georgia Tech Department of City Planning, and the Center for Geographic Information Systems; and the former planning commissioner for the City of Atlanta.

Reknitting the Fabric: Incremental Growth

Building on their research, Gamble and LeBlanc next proposed a series of prototypical, incremental interventions. For example, to eliminate the hazards of walking along Buford Highway, they propose a “highway to boulevard” strategy to introduce new speed limits and physical features. After analyzing the highway in terms of its material assembly and spatial proportions, this took the form of a kit of parts to be added where applicable, as conditions permit: a center median, planting strips, bike lanes, wider sidewalks, etc. In addition, Gamble and LeBlanc sketched out proposals for pedestrian bridges and bus shelters



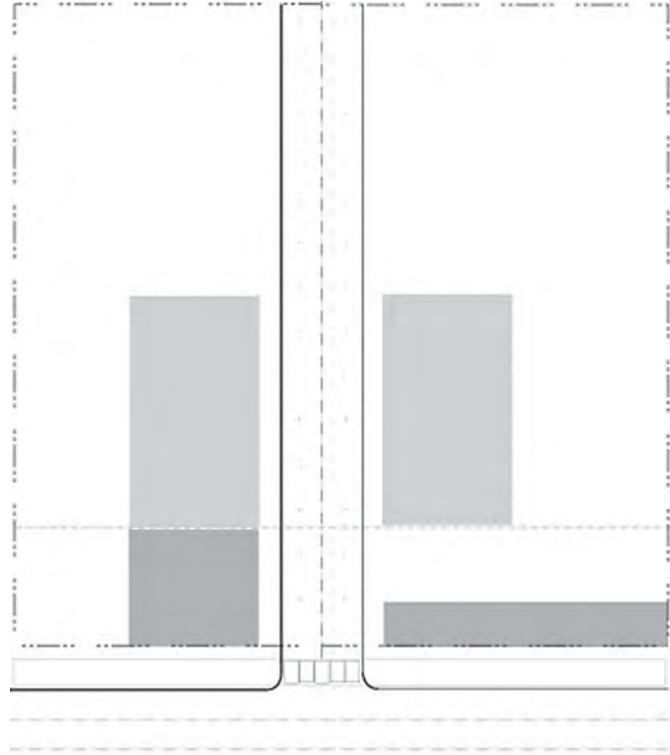
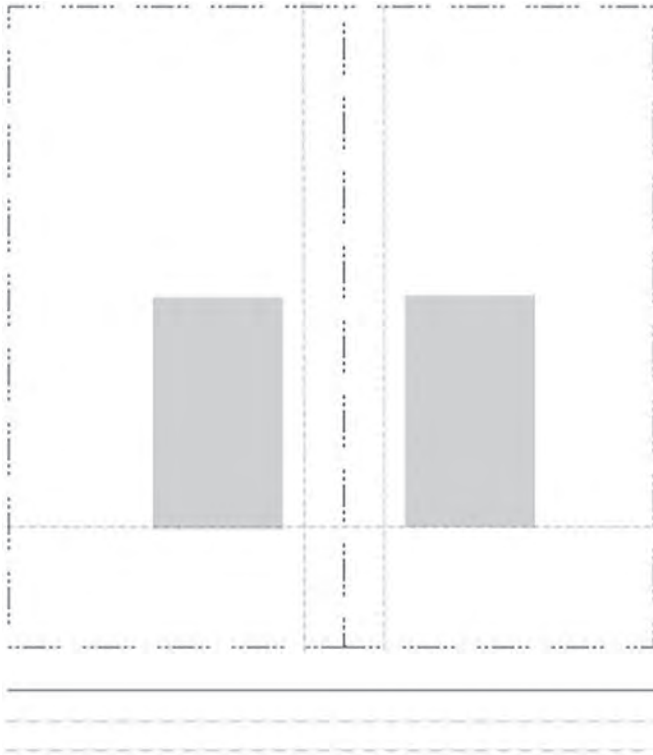
wrapped in (and presumably paid for) by a mix of private and public advertising.

Gamble and LeBlanc next chose to examine how one area bordering the highway might change over time in response to changes in local development regulations. Parts of the Buford Corridor fall within the City of Chamblee, the City of Doraville, and unincorporated DeKalb County. For their purposes, they chose the “superblock” housing Doraville’s main municipal buildings and a regional train station.

Gamble and LeBlanc examined two possible development scenarios for the area. One, based on a redevelopment master plan, would require a municipal agency to acquire land and reorganize buildings and infrastructure to create a recognizable city center. But Gamble and LeBlanc point out that this strategy is unrealizable in most

Above: Without proper crosswalks, pedestrians must dash for safety across six lanes of traffic.

Below: Photomontage of the Oreo building along an existing section of the Buford highway.



cases because of complex patterns of ownership and poorly planned infrastructure.

Their second approach assumed only that the city would provide economic incentives for aggregation along the edges of privately held parcels and develop a more sophisticated network of streets to improve pedestrian and vehicular access. While Gamble and LeBlanc recognize that such an incremental approach would be “slightly awkward,” they also argue it would not require the demolition of existing buildings or the taking of property.

Reknitting the Fabric: A Return to Thin

As architects, Gamble and LeBlanc were also attracted to the role new building types might play in such an incremental approach to reclaiming greyfields. They were particularly intrigued by the possibilities of thin buildings.

They write, “In the United States, where the large floor plate first flourished, we now see a correspondence between the increasing girth of our bodies and of our buildings. If our bodies are fattening because we have yet to address the impact of processed food in our diet, then the increasing girth of buildings is related to planning freedom given us by a processed environment.”⁵ Perhaps facetiously, Gamble and LeBlanc then propose “The Oreo” as a way to curb cravings for thick buildings.

The “Oreo” prototype would sandwich a layer of parking over at-grade commercial and retail uses and under third-floor offices and restaurants. Such a building might prove particularly useful in reclaiming the wide front setbacks typically required in existing commercial areas.

Another prototype might be a twenty-foot-wide “liner” building (the depth of one parking space) that could serve as a “social edge” to a parking area. It would be composed of structural pylons defining a pedestrian arcade at grade,

with office, retail and commercial space above.

Gamble and LeBlanc also propose thin residential buildings to provide a buffer between shopping areas and green space; an L-shaped corner gas station moved up to the sidewalk with the pumps located behind; a multistory parking garage wrapped with a thin layer of mixed-use space. Rediscovery of the value of such thin buildings might revitalize commercial activity through increased pedestrian activity and interconnection, they write. Imagine all this — and still having a place to park!

Fiercely Realistic = “Actually Useful”

Preexisting bias will always be implicit in a language of “correctives” and “rehabilitation” such as that employed by Gamble and LeBlanc. Yet one juror expressed relief the report largely avoided “the inherent moralism” employed by New Urbanists. The jury was also impressed with the fresh quality of the research and its ability to tie abstract data to real proposals for change.

The jury noted the work was not without problems. Some parts seemed redundant and others incomplete; overall the report also lacked a clear sense of methodology. One juror noted: “What an architecture studio calls research isn’t what others consider research — this is a problem. I would say, transparently, that this proposal comes from architectural knowledge. . . . I’d be happy if I was proven wrong.”

Architectural “research” too often emerges from a culture of self-referentiality and avoids being “fiercely realistic.” Meanwhile, the forces shaping the American environment are largely social, economic and political, and

Above: Existing and proposed building-setback regulations show how smaller changes can lead to incremental great changes along existing sections of the Buford Highway.

the people who make the decisions — planners, politicians, sociologists and economists — are rarely impressed by formal analysis.

Yet until architects actively step into highly public, interdisciplinary conversations which will drive the remaking of America's greyfields, it will remain of little significance how loudly they discuss such issues among themselves. To this end, Gamble and LeBlanc's research validates and makes known an architectural understanding of the physical environment as a powerful mode of observation and analysis.

—Julie Kim

Notes

1. Congress for the New Urbanism, "Greyfields into Goldfields: From Failing Shopping Centers to Great Neighborhoods," 2001. The report can be found online at http://www.cnu.org/cnu_reports/.
2. The research is an ongoing activity and the submission to this year's EDRA/*Places* awards represented the group's work thus far. Since submitting their report to the awards program, Gamble and LeBlanc have changed its subtitle to "New Models for the Redesign of America's Commercial Strips."
3. The project was funded by a grant from the Center for Quality Growth at The Georgia Institute of Technology.
4. *Harvard Design Magazine*, No. 21 (Fall 2004), pp.51–57
5. Ibid.

JURY COMMENTS

TIMBERLAKE This project rejects the notion that you have to study the special roads of the world. It attempts to look at patterns of behavior, relative between car and pedestrian, and then address it through some specific prototyping strategies — that are speculative, of course — but begin to address the analysis they've done.

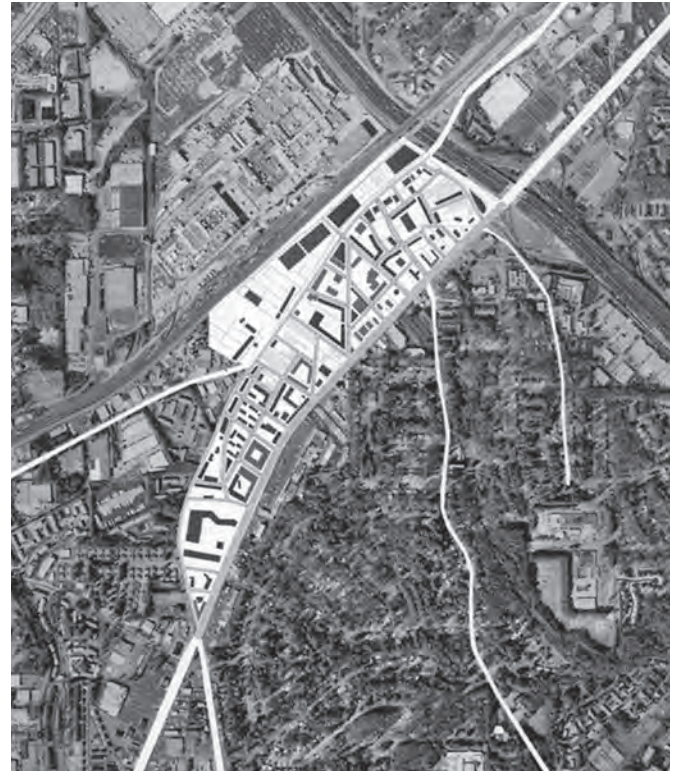
SMITH I've been reading about migrant workers being killed along the highways because they're undocumented, they can't get driver's licenses, they can't afford a car, there are no lights, there are no sidewalks. . . . This report is one of the first I've seen to deal with it.

MISS But I also like the title — "Incremental Urbanism." I think that's capturing something very important. They've gone into a specific situation — documenting it, responding to it. Through small-scale examination in detail the implications are huge.

SMITH It's a planning process we were all taught, upended. It's inductive. It goes from the bottom up.

GRATZ And they've really gone out and looked to see what's wrong. They've got images of people pushing baby carriages on the side of the highway: candidates for death. Everything that's wrong in terms of the environment is brought to life.

TIMBERLAKE It certainly isn't the usual knee-jerk Neotrad approach. It says "Look, what potentially are some of the merits of this? Where are the problems? How can we solve them?"



SMITH It's very hands-on and practical. It doesn't beat you on the head and tell you you're wrong.

GASTIL I think one important part is the combination of the conceptual and the experiential. It provides a bridge between planning culture and design culture. I don't think this is the end. There's a long way to go. But we should celebrate this type of project that actually lets the different parts of the design and research world work together.

GRATZ Perhaps most significant for me is that it's an incremental solution. Here is a corner, here is a block. Whether in Georgia or California, every place has a street like this, and here is an image of what it could be. . . . When you're dealing with such a massive problem, the inclination is to come up with a grand solution. This takes the massive problem and offers an incremental solution.

SMITH the research method is also incremental. They used incremental methods to come up with incremental solutions. The whole thing is completely integrated in that way.

MISS And the typical research or planning report is done in the most banal way. I think that research that doesn't extrapolate, that doesn't take it a step further, is problematic because we keep coming up with research reports that say the same things, that have good intentions. But then people don't get how it can be implemented.

Above: Doraville study area — simulated buildout. Through incremental actions such as economic incentives and street improvements, the study predicts areas along the Buford corridor may be rebuilt more effectively than through traditional redevelopment master plans.

Accessory Dwelling Units — Santa Cruz, California

Cass Calder Smith Architecture

The notion of “granny” or “in-law” units has been around for many years. In many cases, such accessory units take the form of garage conversions, small backyard cottages, or basement apartments where sloping sites permit separate access. Many cities frown on such units; others allow them only in limited circumstances. Few have made them the centerpiece of community development strategy. Nevertheless, three years ago, following a housing-options study, the City of Santa Cruz decided to pursue ADUs aggressively as a way to solve a variety of community-development problems.

The Cass Calder Smith ADU prototype submitted to the 2004 EDRA/*Places* competition is one of several outcomes of this far-reaching ADU initiative. To date, the city has also supported development of six other ADU prototypes; it has published a comprehensive “how-to” development manual; and it has begun a program of loans and grants to assist homeowners build ADUs and hire women contractors. Much of the effort has been underwritten by a \$350,000 state grant.

In selecting the prototype for a planning award the jury deliberated at length about whether the CCS design was broadly applicable to communities across the U.S. While some jurors had doubts on this matter, they all agreed that the idea of an proactive ADU program was long overdue in planning circles. And they agreed that the CCS design was a perfect fit with such a program, since it hinted at the potential of individual designs without being overly restrictive in its specifications.

A Crisis of Affordability

The City of Santa Cruz originated as a regional market center and seasonal beach town at the north end of Monterey Bay, south of San Francisco. Home to a campus of the University of California, it is also a college town. However, since it is largely built out and its policy is to remain compact, with clearly defined boundaries, its housing problems are far more significant than simply a shortage of student apartments. Most significantly, the city’s website notes that only 6.9 percent of Santa Cruz residents can easily afford to buy a median-priced home.

According to the website, “ADUs provide an excellent opportunity to increase the amount of affordable rental housing in the community while providing homeowners with a chance to supplement mortgage payments, thus making their own housing more affordable.” The ADU program was also seen as a way to discourage the proliferation of illegal, poorly constructed ADUs, a source of neighborhood complaints.

The Santa Cruz ADU initiative also follows in the

wake of a 2003 California state law requiring that cities and counties incorporate processes for developing ADUs into their zoning ordinances. Santa Cruz already had an ADU ordinance on the books, says Norman Daly, the city’s Housing Programs Coordinator, so it did not need to develop a new one or accept the state standard. “What we did was tweak our ordinance to provide further incentives.”

To develop its initiative, the city also applied for and received a grant from the Sustainable Communities program of the state Pollution Control Financing Authority. As part of that cooperative agreement, the city will share its ADU research and development free of charge with other California municipalities.

Among the city’s first steps under the grant was to issue a request for qualifications from architects. Meanwhile, it identified typical conditions around the city where ADUs might be developed. It also hired a professional planning consultant, Bruce Race, to facilitate public meetings and coordinate the work of the seven architects selected to design prototype ADUs to meet these conditions (selected from a pool of about thirty who responded to the RFQ).

As a result of this arrangement, the designs present a deliberate variety of styles and configurations. Some are one story, some are two. One is a straight garage conversion; two others are built over an existing garage. One is a garden cottage, another utilizes prefabricated components, and another has a sod roof. Plan sets for all have now been published by the city in a single spiral-bound large-format book.

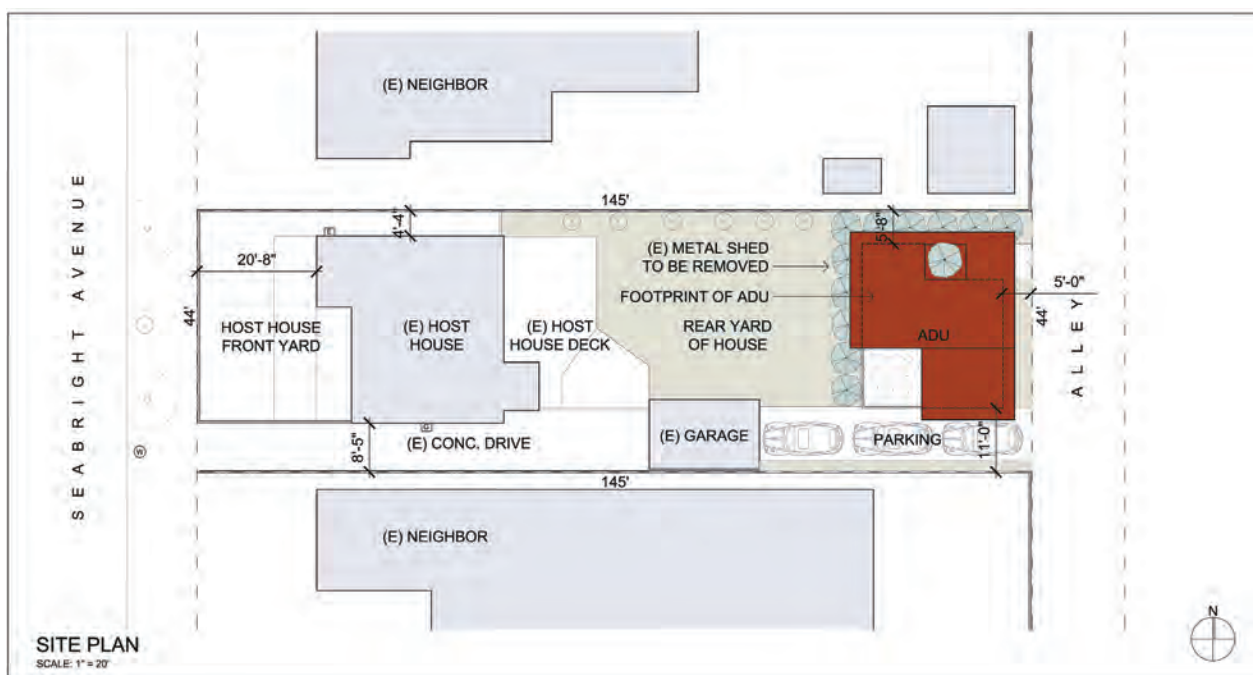
The city initiative also includes a program of low-interest (4.5 percent) loans (up to \$70,000) to homeowners who agree to maintain their units as affordable. Technical assistance grants of up to \$100 are also available to hire building professionals for consultations. Finally, money is set aside to promote the hiring of women construction workers.

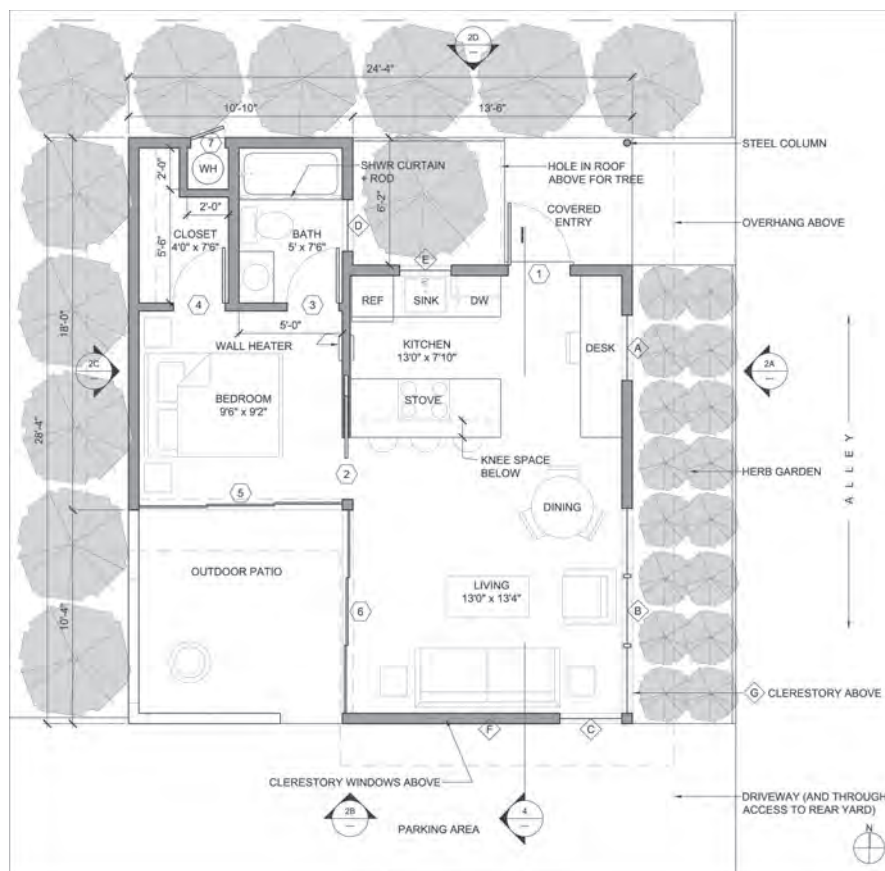
A Strategy of Prototypes

Cass Smith, principal of CCS, worked on his firm’s prototype with Claire Beasley and Aaron Maret. He says the firm was paid a flat fee for what amounted to a “light-weight” permit set — one previewed by a structural engineer and a city building inspector but not yet approved for construction. Since the prototypes were designed with actual sites in mind, in many instances they should require only minor customization, he says.

Of the typical conditions that the city identified in which ADUs might be developed, Smith’s firm was chosen

Opposite: CCS Architecture prototype for an ADU on a Santa Cruz alley. Rendering and site plan.





to work on an alley location. The firm later added a variant to its basic design, called the “eco-ADU” since it incorporated a variety of energy-saving elements.

Eventually, the hope is that the prototype approach will eliminate a great number of the hurdles that homeowners face in building ADUs. And to further promote the program, the city eliminated any requirement that homeowners go through a public hearing before adding an ADU. Currently, any Santa Cruz homeowner who follows the city guidelines can build an ADU “by right” — without being blocked by the city, neighborhood associations, or other property owners.

Of course, there are still a number of basic restrictions in the law. For example, the ordinance requires, rather vaguely, that ADU designs be “compatible” with the design of the main house. A lot also must be at least 5,000 square feet in size.

Beyond this, however, the program does away with several poison pills contained in other cities’ ADU ordinances. Most importantly, even though it requires an additional off-street parking space for the ADU, it allows this to be “in tandem” with that for the main house (i.e., one may be in front of the other in a driveway). It also does away with an existing city requirement for covered parking where the ADU is created by converting an existing detached back-yard garage.

Progressive Civic Vision

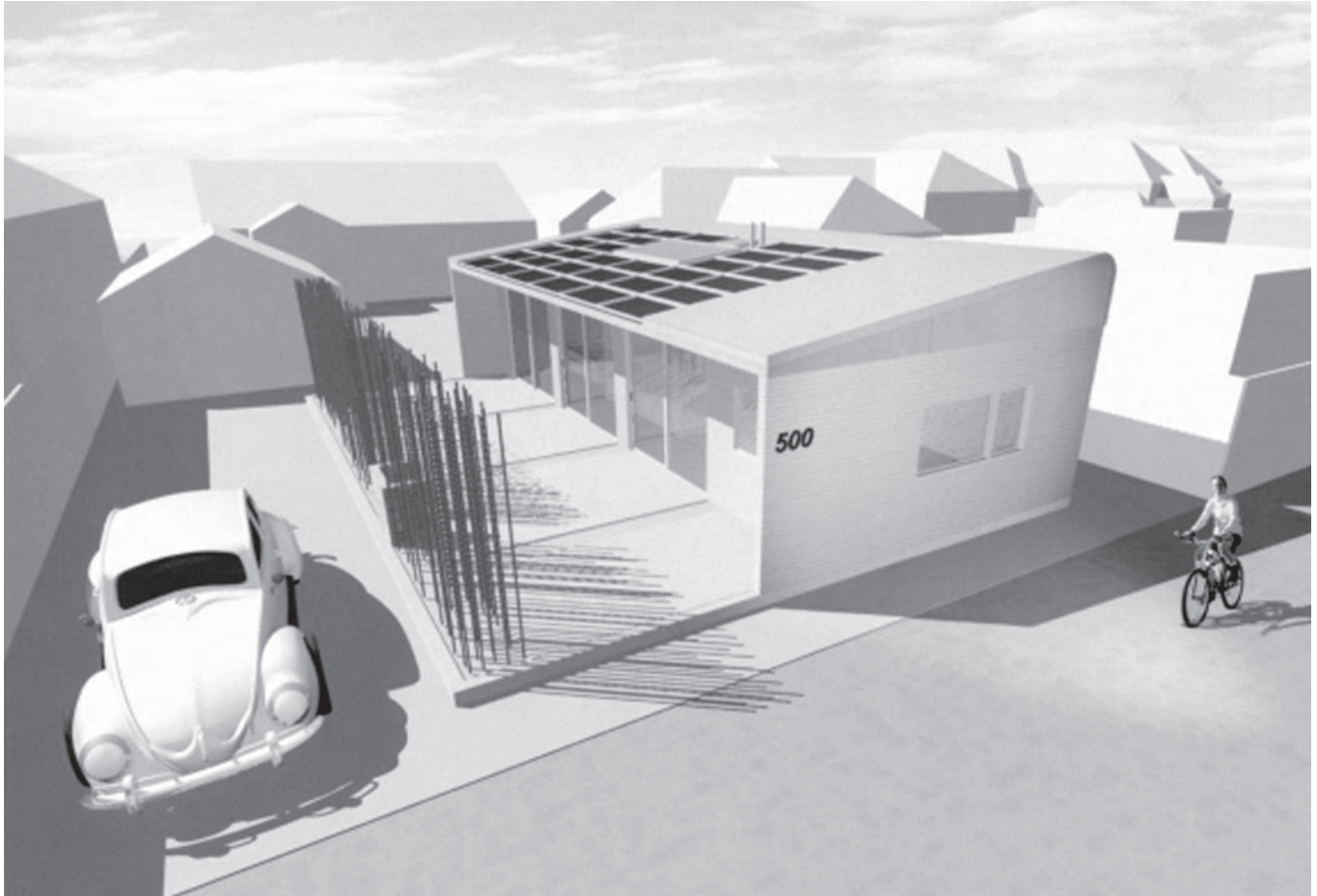
Smith notes there are several aspects of the Santa Cruz

program that have yet to be proved practical. Indeed, if ADUs are truly to be developed as an affordable housing solution, such issues as general construction cost, utility upgrading, and sewer connections may still present challenges. But Smith said it was a pleasure to work for a city with the vision to support an ADU program. As a boy of ten he had lived in Santa Cruz, and he still retained some appreciation for its “beach-town urbanity.”

On the city council the program was championed by Mark Primack, Ed Porter, and Scott Kennedy. Primack, an architect, also contributed a basic garage-conversion prototype pro bono. Other designs came from David Baker and Partners (San Francisco), Boone/Lowe Architects and Planners (Santa Cruz), Peterson Architects (San Francisco), Eve Reynolds Architect (North Hollywood), and SixEight Design (Germany/Santa Cruz). The program was supported by Housing and Community Development Manager Carol Berg and Director of Planning and Community Development Gene Arner.

Daly notes that since the prototypes have been published, the city has received calls from all over the country, and several hundred copies of the plan books have been sold to Santa Cruz homeowners at \$22. The development manual and more information on the program are available at <http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pl/hcd/ADU/adu.html>.

— David Moffat



JURY COMMENTS

GRATZ This is a very important plan that can get the conversation going. It's a way of adding density in a comfortable way without intruding on a district; a way of giving people the opportunity to stay in their own homes by having the rental property. I thought it was very interesting that one of the prerequisites was that the main house be owner-occupied — it will not be a slum landlord. It's an affordable housing provision for seniors, students, disabled — whatever. It is what every community should be thinking about.

SMITH The other thing I thought was interesting is that it is done in a prototype way. It's not overly specific. The beauty of the design is that it captures your imagination without defining what you have to build.

GASTIL It crosses all three categories. You can define it as a design. They have put it in the planning category. But it could even be defined as research.

SMITH It was not the traditional planning report. It does not say we have to re-create the old-time stuff, or reorganize the streets. It's a very strategic way to increase density within the situation we already have. It's very simple, very sweet, yet it can have a profound impact.

GRATZ And its accessible to the very population it is trying to provoke, which is the homeowner with the space to build ADU.

NASAR I would like to talk a little about limitations. I think the idea that this has broad national application is both accurate and inaccurate. It will apply nationally to places like Santa Cruz, where there are students and a demand for these small kind of housing units, but I don't think it's going to apply necessarily to the affordable housing question.

GRATZ Oh, I disagree completely. This is a design that visualizes a concept that is critical and applicable everywhere — adding a dwelling unit to a single-family house in existing neighborhoods. This is the suggested form. What this does is show a design solution which does it well and modestly on a particular classic-size lot.

SMITH I totally believe that it has that application, but their particular study really

looked only at one typology, the alley.

GRATZ But it focuses on the alley in a way that no one is really doing. Alleys are a very valuable piece of infrastructure that is undervalued and underappreciated. The only limitation here is that they're only finding this as a residential resource when it could also be a live-work place or even a workplace.

TIMBERLAKE I actually think it has universality. And I look at it less as a design than as a plan to provoke. There really is a housing crisis in the United States. What this affords is an opportunity to begin bring of some of this back within the boundaries of existing places. There are not going to be fifteen of them on every block. It's one cog in a wheel of solving the larger problem. The Midwest would be well served by that. Where I grew up the continuation of sprawl is a death knell to some of the core main streets. This is an opportunity to really have some regeneration.

Opposite: Floor plan for ADU prototype.

Above: The Eco ADU variant employs a number of inexpensive building and siting strategies to reduce energy consumption.

Via Costa Masciarelli: A Question of Values

Allan B. Jacobs

We are walking on the Via Costa Masciarelli, in L'Aquila, on a Sunday afternoon in early October. It is about 6:30 and the pavement is wet from daylong off-and-on-again rain. There is still plenty of light. Via Costa Masciarelli leads down from and perpendicular to L'Aquila's main street, Corso Vittorio Emanuele, and its central piazza toward a city gate that soon comes into sight after a modest turn. Our purpose is nothing more than a late Sunday afternoon stroll with friends who live in a nearby village, Collimonto.

L'Aquila is a city of about 100,000 people, in the Abruzzi, north and east of Rome, about one and one-half hours, by bus, up in the Apennines. It is an administrative center without significant industries — a bit too far to attract commuters to Rome, too close and off the beaten track to attract tourists in large numbers: a provincial city. Say to friends that you have spent the weekend in L'Aquila and they are likely to ask you where it is. Nevertheless, the air is clear, there is skiing nearby during the winter, and the old castle is elegant and well worth seeing, as is a chapel in Santa Bernardino, with quite wonderful glazed terra cottas by one of the della Robbia clan. There is also a city orchestra, a city theater, a central piazza, and many smaller ones, and good places to eat.

After a first long compelling look down Via Costa Masciarelli to a recently restored, buff-colored city gateway, our attention focuses on the sloping pavement of the street itself. The street section is divided into five lineal bands. There are two bands of sloping steps, 1.5 meters wide (5.9 feet) and one meter long (3.28 feet). These are bounded by three sloping surfaces, one along each row of buildings that define the street edge, and one in the center between the two sets of steps. This central paved way is more for drainage than for walking. This is a street for people on foot, not for automobiles or other vehicles.

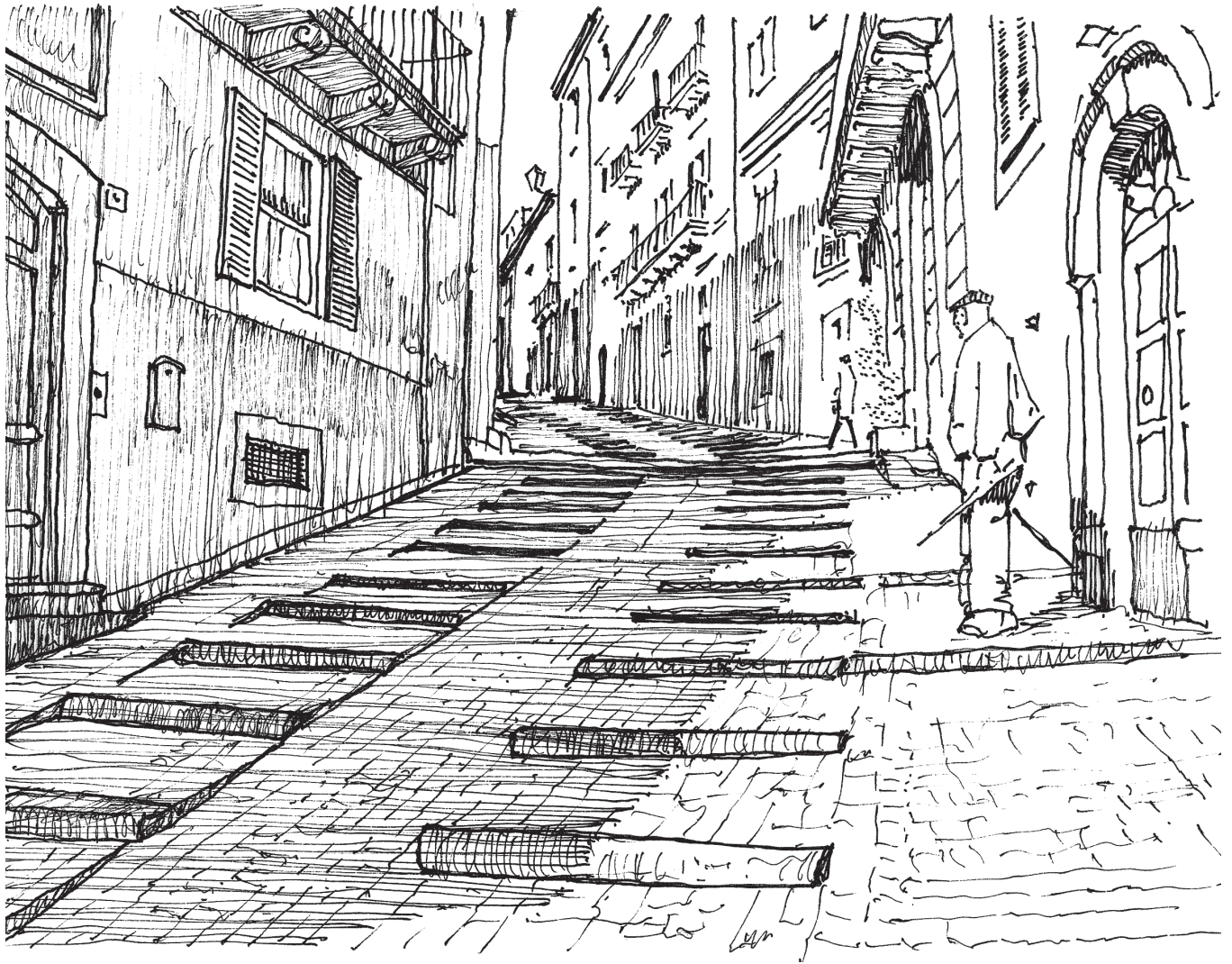
At the moment, however, our close attention has nothing to do with autos, or the lack thereof, but with the slope, even of the steps, and of the wet stone paving, suggesting the possibility of a slippery downhill surface. Walking downhill on wet steps is often cause for a degree of care, it seems, if for no other reason than the steps are further away from one's eyes than when walking uphill. So we are paying attention to our steps and to the stone paving, so clean, actually off-white stone square insets, and we conclude that the whole street has recently been rebuilt. Specifically, we notice how each of the walking paths is composed of a sloping surface made of small white stone squares leading to a step, also of stone, that drops down to the next sloping surface. Each of the three unstepped surfaces (the two next to the buildings and the one for drain-

age between the walking paths) is made of the same white insets. Meanwhile, the grout or cement between each stone is a light tan, sand color, and the actual risers on the sloping steps are of buff-colored stone.

To someone accustomed to walking on concrete sidewalks in modern cities or even on the black stone cobbles of central Rome, the paving of Via Costa Masciarelli is a very attractive and well-executed walking surface. It is also new and looks to be expensive. The design quality, the newness, and the assumed cost prompt a central question from which others spring: Why did they do it this way? Weren't there less costly, more economical ways to rebuild the street? Is this a wealthy city, more so than we had been led to believe? Why this particular street? Is there community power here? Was it done for tourists (doubtful, as L'Aquila is not noted as a major tourist city)? Were less expensive alternatives considered? Assuming there were adequate funds for the project (it is built, after all), what if there had been less money available?

Maybe, just maybe, this is the way they do things in L'Aquila, and, by extension, the way things are done in other Italian cities, small and large alike. The black stone paving blocks of central Rome seem to be a constant, and we are advised that some, maybe all, now come from China. In reality, that is our hypothesis; it's just the way they do it. Italians are no dummies. They know there are other, less expensive ways of paving a street, even one of importance, but those ways would not be appropriate, not "right." That is the answer we'd like to be closest to the truth: a question of values — not so much (or really very much at all) of monetary or economic values, but of historical, deeply held cultural values.

Even as we think this, though, we imagine economist colleagues shaking their heads in disagreement if not disbelief, holding that costs and benefits and available fiscal resources had everything to do with the rebuilding of the street, and that design aesthetics were made to fit economic reality. And we imagine a lot of economic theory, to boot. The whole endeavor may be called into question. Did the street designers or those who approved the project not give a whit for the whole city or all of its streets — to say nothing of important uses other than street paving to which the funds could more usefully be put? What about costs and benefits? Were not fine but less expensive designs possible? Why wasn't Via Costa Masciarelli paved with asphalt and precast concrete steps? Or, why not use large handsome, precast pavers, attractively set, as we observed on a recently executed major public way in Massa Maritima? These were more expensive than asphalt but a lot less so than what we are seeing in L'Aquila. These reactions, questions really,



crowd through our heads as we enjoy the walk down to Via Fortebraccio, where we turn left, rising as we go toward S. Bernardino. This street, too, is well paved. We would like to find out why the Via Costa Masciarelli was refinished the way it was. Perhaps we can come back, if only for a day or two, to find some answers.

L'Aquila is a Roman city. A clue to the historic importance of Via Costa Masciarelli is its focus at one end on an old city gate; not too many streets do that. Less obvious, on the ground, is that, together with Via Paradiso (or Via Cimino, or Strada di S. Domenico), it forms a major east-west spine of the city, meeting the more important Corso Vittorio Emanuele at the city's main piazza, Piazza Maggiore (or Piazza Grande, Piazza del Duomo, or Piazza del Mercato, depending on what plan or map one is looking at). After we begin our search for answers we are also told

that the city was destroyed in the middle of the thirteenth century.¹ It was rebuilt with some speed, starting in the early fourteenth century. As was so often the case in the building of Italian cities, L'Aquila's builders quarried stone from the "old" Roman City to build the new one, widening its streets. And indeed the more recent design and reconstruction of Via Costa Masciarelli did focus on making the street as much as possible as it had been in earlier times. To put it simply, being a very important historic city street, the aim was to rebuild it the way it had been.

It helps, of course, to know what the street and city had been: to know its importance, and to have a model to shoot for. There are for L'Aquila historical references, if not of the details of street paving, certainly of the historic growth of the city and even of typical building conventions, as expressed in detailed drawings.² From these, and from

discussions with L'Aquila's architect-town planner we eventually come to understand that the redesigners of Via Costa Masciarelli knew full well that it would be expensive to carry out, but knew as well that the state, through the Superintendenza Archeologica, not the city, would pay, to do the street "right."³

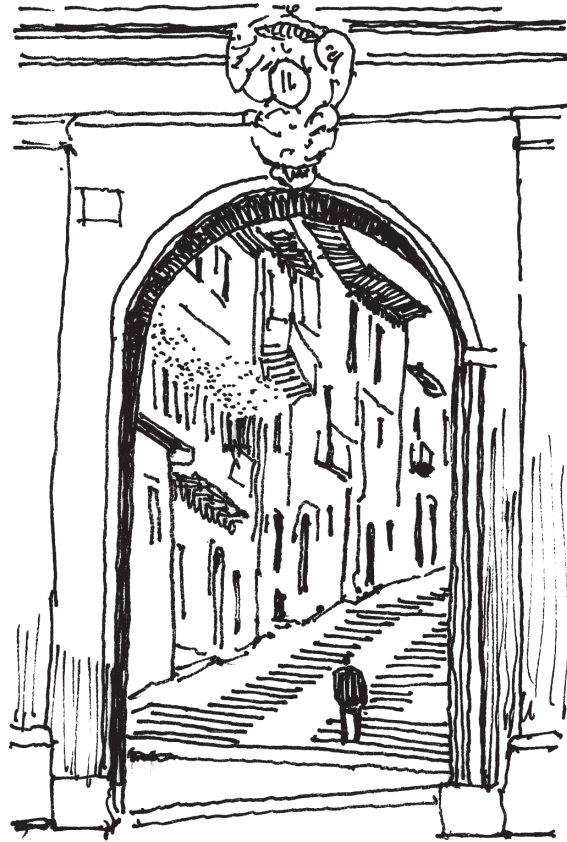
When we pursue these issues, we ask what would happen if the state didn't or doesn't have the money? The answer is uncompromising: "They find the money." If they can't find the money, then the street will not be fixed. Or, the city will find private people who will pay for the design in exchange for glory: a carryover from the days when great art was connected to the church. We are shown a piazza outside the architect's office, newly repaved with lower-quality stone, and are reminded that it is "not as good." In reality, isn't that the answer? Without adequate funds, even on Via Costa Masciarelli, the work would be done less expensively, and perhaps less well. But it would be of some importance that there would be community knowledge and memory that the street repaving is not of the quality it should be.

In our local inquiries, we sense a reluctance to deal with the question, hypothetical or not, of "what if" there hadn't been enough money. Maybe there is some defensiveness about a job so well and expensively done. Finally, after some thought, we are advised that the repaving of Via Costa Masciarelli, and by extension other public places, is a matter of community identity, that identity remains important in L'Aquila. If money isn't there now to "do it right," they will either not do it at all, or if they have to, they will do it less well, but with a knowledge and memory that the work will, some day, have to be done again, right.

In our discussions, it is difficult to get to the question of economic value in this matter of public works. Eventually, we are advised that economic value is relative. In the market of public works, we are told, the value of identity is held to be stable (even if we know this to be untrue). Economic value, on the other hand, changes. In comparison, the identity value is always superior — or at least, so goes the explanation; it is a short way of saying that cultural values, remembering and honoring the past, are important in L'Aquila. Perhaps, in the end, what is important is to be able to remember what is good and to continue an insistence on the best.

Notes

1. Interview with Pierluigi Properzi, October 2003.
2. Mario Centofanti, Raffaele Colapietra, Cladia Cenforti, Pierluigi Properzi, Luigi Zordau, *L'Aquila: Città Di Piazze* (Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni, 1992).
3. Interview with Pierluigi Properzi, October 2003.



All drawings of Via Costa Masciarelli are by the author.



Meeting of Minds

Stephen Willats

“Meeting of Minds” was developed in response to an invitation from a tenant’s group in Liverpool and the nonprofit Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT). Liverpool today is one of most economically deprived areas of Britain, but it is also home to a strong sense of history and culture. The idea was to involve people living in tower blocks on the outskirts of the city in an artwork that might fundamentally transform their view of themselves and their society.

After a reconnaissance visit, I determined that the group of tower blocks at Sefton Park was the best site for such a work. It offered direct physical connection with the extensive gardens, wooded areas, and monuments in Sefton Park, which also contains the historic, restored Palm House, and it offered community rooms in a nearby cricket pavilion that could be used to work with residents.

I first presented and discussed a conceptual model of the work at an open meeting of the local tenants association in January 2003. I showed slides and films from previous works, and explained how the project was open to anyone living in the tower blocks interested in producing exploratory artwork with a partner he or she did not previously know.

As in the past, I wanted to explore the process of seeking agreement between individuals that allows a self-organizing “society” to evolve. In this sense, “Meeting of Minds” was less directly about the physical environment than relationships between people and the idea of community. By opening the residents to a multiplicity of views and per-

ceptions, the work aimed at creating more sociability in an isolating environment.

Engaging with the Environment

The first exploration took place over seven weeks from late March to mid-May, as each pair of residents attended a workshop that lasted about four hours. During this time they made a journey together, starting outside York House in the middle of the tower complex, and walking exactly the same route along footpaths across the estate and into Sefton Park to the Palm House.

During the course of this journey each participant pair was invited to respond to each other’s discoveries and recordings of signs, symbols, objects, textures, etc. — especially any that had personal meaning. When one participant found a sign or object, etc., and recorded it with a camera, the other would try to guess what his or her partner was perceiving. He or she would then record this realization from their own point of view using the same media.

The idea was to use such points of contact in the familiar, local environment to propel people’s imaginations. Even small things like sidewalk drawings, or bricks that had started to crumble, or a plastic bottle rammed into the fork of a tree might trigger meaningful associations.

Both still photography and Super-8 film were used by each participant pair in the course of their journey. Then, immediately after returning to York House a tape-recorded discussion was held to elicit the personal meaning of what they found.

Art as Social Practice

Stephen Willats

The expression of a social- and community-founded art practice that celebrates collaborative, informal social networks is an important way for artists to develop frameworks for viewing the future of society. But to actualize such a model, a strong contextual binding between language, meaning, location and audience must be established to create clear parameters of form. In “Meeting of Minds” this meant purposefully tying the work to a particular setting, the highrise housing towers of Sefton Park on the outskirts of Liverpool. In its very fabric, this setting

contained signs, symbols, norms and values representing the polemics of life in contemporary society.

Agreement between people is the basis for mutual society, and arriving at a state of agreement formed the main activity of “Meeting of Minds.” The work was conceived as a sequence of participatory events between pairs of tower residents previously unknown to each other. These were articulated so as to facilitate imaginative transformations in the way participants viewed their local environment.

Although the transformations were personal and discrete, they were externalized through the action of the work. At the end of the

process, they were also brought fully into the public domain by being physically placed back into the context from which they were derived through a series of displays mounted in the foyers of the housing blocks.

The work embodied the belief that art should be a part of the fabric of society and should use a language familiar to its audience. There are four audiences for a work like this: the participants themselves; other local people like them; people outside the locality who hear about it and come to see it; and those far away who may be inspired to do similar work.



Liverpool has many Victorian Historical monuments, and the work naturally had much to do with the past speaking to the present and the future. There is a Peter Pan monument with its head chopped off and no arms; a lake with no water and no boats; an aviary with no birds — only rats; a bandstand with no roof, and no band. Such dereliction is meaningful to people, especially if you are sixty and know how it used to look.

Although initially only a small group wanted to participate, by the end I had to turn people away. This showed how the work was operating over time. You don't just come in and change perceptions; there has to be a context created internally. At the same time, I became something of a figure, and people relaxed with me because I was an artist, not a social worker or an official from the local council. I find it is important to be amateurish in such a situation so that people can gain confidence, the sense that the work is on their own level.

Presenting a Work

One month after the initial explorations all the information was gathered and brought to a two-day workshop attended by all the participants. Working in their original teams, each pair created a symbolic metaphorical journey from a creative reworking of their original material. Each partnership thus expressed the imaginary journey as a form of agreement, combining individual perceptions and meanings into artwork that would be presented on a display board.

This took place in a large room with work tables and a variety of facilities to stimulate discussion, comparison and agreement. Several computer engineers helped capture images from the films. There was sound-editing equipment and typewriters and various media for making marks on the presentation boards.

As a facilitator, my role was to enable participants to go beyond their initial perceptions. I made no effort to mediate or criticize. The whole process was social and informal.

The final step was a public presentation of the work. The display boards and actual films the participant pairings made were installed in the foyers of the various tower blocks at Sefton Park. Two display boards and two video monitors playing the original participant films from the first workshop were situated in each tower block.

The installation was provided free of charge three days a week for a month, with a representative from FACT on hand to discourage theft and vandalism and explain the show to visitors and residents. On opening day, a walk was also held to let others experience the route that participants took. After the installation was removed, the display



boards and original material associated with the making of the work were deposited in an archive at the local public library.

Although the work is intimately related to the perception of place, it had no specific design intent. Indeed, I didn't know at first if it would have any productive outcome at all.

What the work didn't do was try to take a green door and change it to a red one. At the same time, it was intended to re-create a kind of spirit, a spirit of society between people, a self-organizing society, that has been lost.

Previous: Pairs of participants from the Sefton Park tower blocks were asked to record elements of their environment. Photo courtesy of author.

Above: After working together to arrive at a "meeting of minds," the resulting art boards were exhibited in public areas of the tower blocks. Photo courtesy of author.

Opposite Left: In "Meta Filter," an early work by Willats, two participants interact through a common interface to resolve problem situations. A public register of previous responses is posted on the walls behind them.

Opposite Right: "Living Tower," made with residents of Linacre Court, Hammer-smith, London, October 1992. Residents and visitors could take the lift to the top floor, and then walk down the stairwell to see the installation of boards on various floors. Such integration of meaning, context and audience allowed the work to function independently of any existing institution.

Event-Places in North America: City Meaning and Making

Dennis Frenchman



Every Saturday evening, rain or shine, spring through fall, the torches appear. The flames are passed, sometimes this way sometimes that, to dark figures in a waiting boat that moves out onto the river. Tracing a ritual circle, they light bonfires on the water, over a hundred of them stretching a kilometer under bridges and past buildings, as music gradually fills the space. Opera, Gregorian chants, a Himalayan folk song set the mood and the pace. And people come — a few, or tens of thousands — to watch the sparks, walk, talk, feel the heat, smell the wood, and be together in the city.

This event and place, “WaterFire,” is transforming the image and sense

of Providence, R.I., into something much different than it was. But so are a growing number of other events and places in North America and Europe — some traditional, others newly invented. In Lyons, France, lights and projected images wash the streets, facades and air of the city, some controlled by participants thousands of miles away. In Calgary, Canada, chuckwagons serve breakfast in the streets downtown then compete in a hell-bent stampede before a hundred thousand spectators. For a time each year in Girona, Spain, flowers are meticulously arranged to fill every private and public architectural space. Even in Washington, D.C., amidst

the monuments, the National Mall is transformed each summer into the setting for the sounds of different cultures, celebrating the diversity of American life.¹

Questioning Values across Disciplines

Scholars and social anthropologists have long studied traditional festivals and events as a window into culture. In the same manner, architects and urban designers have studied the shape of public spaces to understand how they perform. But little work has been done on the intersection of civic events, their places and communities. To fill this gap, collaborators



at Spain's Universitat Polytechnica de Catalunya and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have been examining "event-places" which make powerful linkages between physical and social phenomena.

The interdisciplinary research team was curious about three critical questions: What are the links between successful events and successful places and communities? How do events

shape a sense of place and give it meaning? What role can they play in city design?

In seeking answers across two continents, it is now becoming clear that event-places embody far more than entertainment or an urban design frill. They are contributing to the identity, livability and economics of cities. They can help attract new residents and investment. Most importantly, they are evolving in scope and significance and will become, we predict, an ever more powerful rationale for shaping urban places and development in the future. This is a particularly meaningful trend in the North American context, where event-places are reaffirming the value of shared experiences and spaces in the city, contradicting the popular notion that we are losing our civic life.²

Understanding American Event-Places

One only has to think of some of the world's great festivals to realize how inseparable such events are from their spatial settings. Think of the Palio on the Campo in Siena or Mardis Gras in New Orleans. Intuitively, one realizes there is a deep and meaningful dialogue between such events and their settings. But how does the relationship between events and places really operate? And are there lessons that designers, event planners, and city officials can learn from studying it?

As the MIT team began to address these issues, we began to discover some shared characteristics among North American event-places that differed from their European counterparts. These characteristics, reflective of a different culture and urban experience, also provided insight into the general nature and workings of event-places.

Originality. The urban history of North America is obviously rather brief. Thus, many American events are not the product of ancient traditions, but have been more recently invented.³

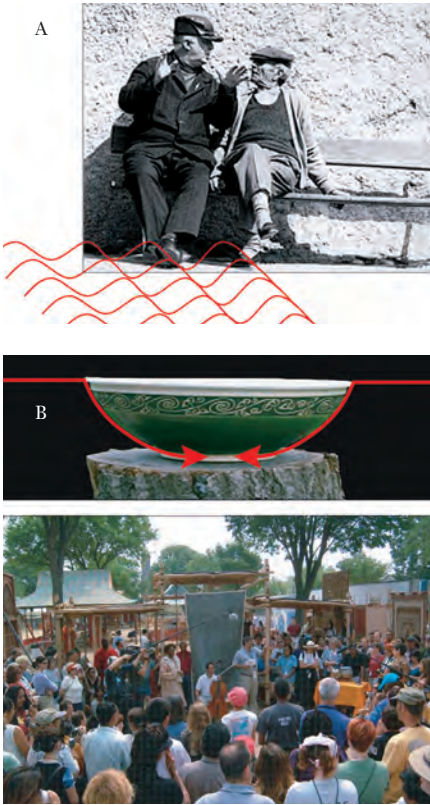
Providence's WaterFire is perhaps the best example of an art piece with no antecedent, invented to celebrate a new physical setting. However, when events do connect to older traditions, such as Philadelphia's Mummers Parade, most have been thoroughly reinterpreted in the American setting. Once initiated, few North American event-places of any kind have remained static. Most have undergone continual change and evolution.

Inclusive Themes. North American event-places tend to involve broad cultural and place themes. By avoiding narratives that relate to a specific religion, or moral allegories of good and evil, such themes appeal to multiple groups.⁴

The Bangor National Folk Festival and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which celebrate American cultural diversity, are good examples. So is the Calgary Stampede, which commemorates values and traditions associated with settling "the western frontier," a heritage shared by a huge region. WaterFire achieves broad cultural inclusion through the embrace of universal symbolic archetypes.

Expanding Scale. Given their inclusive themes, most North American event-places attract broad audiences and have tended to grow in physical size and attendance. The Calgary Stampede and Smithsonian Folklife Festival involve over a million participants and vast sites. Of course, many small-scale local events survive, and new ones are invented every year; but as with many things in America, there is a tendency to measure success by popularity.

Above and Opposite: WaterFire in Providence, RI, is typical of the new event-places in North American cities that are once again giving residents and visitors cause for celebration. The map shows its central location on the Providence River. The view at left is from the north across the central basin to downtown. Photograph: Barnaby Evans, Waterfire Providence.



When events outgrow their locations, difficulties can arise. In Calgary, Stampede Park has swallowed large pieces of the surrounding neighborhood causing negative impacts on homes and businesses. In New York City, the Halloween Parade has grown from a children's procession through Greenwich Village into an extravaganza down Sixth Avenue involving 30,000 participants and two million spectators. In the process, the original idea of the parade — that everyone could participate — has been lost.

Development Role. In Europe, many events emerged out of their communities, commemorating past happenings

or reenacting important rituals and stories that celebrate and sustain local culture. In North America, many cities have used such events proactively to attract new residents, visitors, and investment. Successful event-places can benefit a city financially, while enhancing its image, livability, and cultural status.

The power of events to build communities is illustrated by the National Folk Festival in Bangor, which has shown the viability of the waterfront as a people-oriented destination, reviving prospects for private development there. WaterFire is credited with enhancing the image of Providence as a livable city, attracting new business, residents, and real estate development. The Calgary Stampede contributes almost \$140 million a year to the local economy.

Professional Management. As North American events have grown and taken on new roles, they have generally become more professionally organized, advertised, and commercialized than their European counterparts. Beginning as informal private initiatives, successful projects may evolve into nonprofit corporations to more effectively organize volunteers, raise funds, and seek sponsorships. Eventually, many retain permanent staff to manage the event. Cities support the effort with services and parking and often substantial physical improvements to accommodate the event.

Virtually all of the major cases we studied involved corporate sponsors of one kind or another, from local banks to national brands. But sponsors were viewed as problematic once advertising became so pervasive that it began to detract from the theme of the event.

Above: Lessons for design and planning. A) Good event-places allow dialogue between people and their setting. B) Compressing space into a bowl and allowing participants to share the stage are two ways to create intimacy. C) Galveston's Mardis Gras gates create the sense of event territory.

Case Study: National Folk Festival, Bangor, Maine

Lessons for Design and Planning

It became clear from the research that successful event-places offer many benefits to communities. But, as we were coming to see, not all event-places were trouble free. In many communities event-places were a source of problems as well as opportunities.

Our attempt to understand these phenomena eventually led to a series of lessons regarding how to better design and plan for them.

1. Interweave Form and Activity

Good event-places support a dialog between people and their physical setting; one is incomplete without the other; and a change in one creates a change in the other — be it in mood, shape, tempo, color, scale, or some other quality. Across cases, we observed several powerful patterns of interwoven activity and physical form that energized places and their associated events. These patterns could form the basis for guidelines to design and program future event-places:

Territory. Event-places demarcate a special phenomenon that is set off from everyday life. The ability to create this sense of separation is closely related to location within the physical fabric of a community. Good territories have defined edges, and can be separated in space or time from the common terrain.

Urban waterfronts can make good event-places, because they typically have distinctive character and strong edges. The Mall in Washington, D.C., is ideal territory for an event of national prominence like the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, since it is contained by the museums and monuments at its edges.

But event territories may also be created out of common spaces, like a neighborhood street, by using



This three-day event is held each August to celebrate traditional music, folk arts, and culture from across the U.S., with a particular focus on the state of Maine. Initiated in 2002, the event is being sponsored for its first three years by the National Council for the Traditional Arts, with the expectation that it will continue on its own after that (when national sponsorship will move on to another location). Attracting more than 100,000 people in its first two years, this “dispersed” event occupies tents

and temporary structures located in underutilized spaces along the Penobscot River waterfront in downtown Bangor — a former industrial area the city would like to see transformed into active use. Five key venues, linked by a path paralleling the water, provide space for performances, workshops, an arts marketplace, food, and support activities. So far the Folk Festival has succeeded in bringing people back to downtown Bangor, demonstrating the potential of its waterfront, and energizing efforts toward redevelopment.

Photograph courtesy of Bangor National Folk Festival.

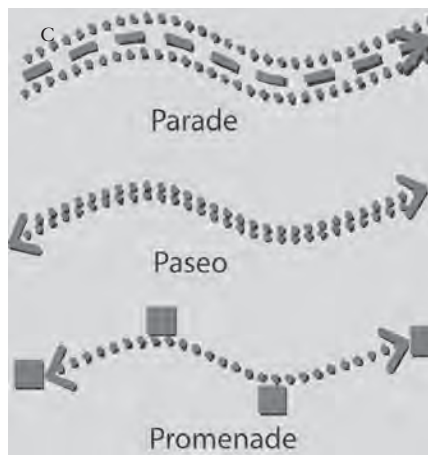
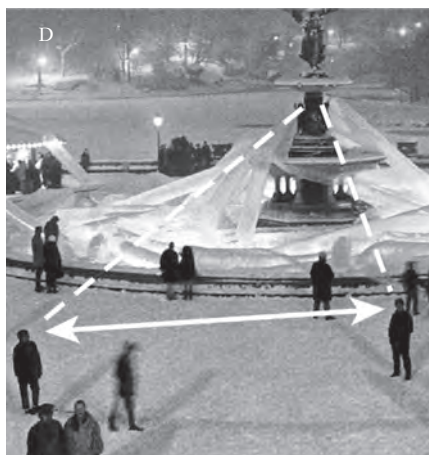
darkness or decorations. The original Halloween Parade in Greenwich Village is a good example. The Galveston Mardi Gras, where the event-place has been marked off by spectacular gates, is another.

Creating territory in these ways allows people to separate themselves emotionally from everyday life and give themselves over to the event. This process may be reinforced in traditional festivals by what Falazzi calls “valorization” — rites that “purify the setting, delimit its boundaries, and forbid its use for everyday purposes.”⁵

Intimacy. Good event-places create a social and emotional bond between the event and the individuals involved. Space can facilitate intimacy by providing a sense of enclosure and limit to the event, and by compressing activity and people together. We called this the “bowl effect” because a sloping topography may be particularly effective in allowing people to survey a scene as they are gently pulled to its center.

Another approach to intimacy is “sharing the stage,” allowing performers and participants to occupy the same space. In this way, event-places contrast to theaters and auditoriums with their deliberate separation of performer and audience. Finally, intimacy can be facilitated by focus, where attention and views are directed by landmarks, lighting or circulation towards others participating in the event.

Granularity. Good event-places accommodate multiple nodes of activity and groups. Events are not monolithic; and one should be able to experience them at many levels. Barnaby Evans, creator of WaterFire,



has used the term “granularity” to describe a layering of potentials for interaction both within the space and throughout the event: from personal interaction with the content and sensation of the event, to civic interaction with the larger urban setting and the crowd.

Granularity can be aided by designing the event-place as a nesting of spaces or a series of experiences. At WaterFire, for example, there are small spaces low to the river with limited views where individuals or small groups can sit and feel the heat of the fires, and there are large spaces farther back and higher up where groups can dance, eat, or shop, with the fires below and the city skyline above.

Similar granularity was offered by the original route of the Philadelphia Mummers Parade down Broad Street, where parade-goers sitting on the curb were brushed by individual

costumed figures, while others on stairs or balconies could take in the whole scene. Indeed, the lack of such granularity on Market Street, with its sterile, widely spaced commercial buildings, was one reason that route was less successful.

Triangulation. William H. Whyte observed that interaction, or a sense of community, between two strangers in a public space is encouraged by a third activity or object they can both share.⁶ This might be a fountain, a performance, or even music they can both hear; but “triangulation” is an essential feature of all good event-places.

As events grow in size, triangulation can become more difficult to achieve, precisely because the third apex can be overwhelmed by the crowds. One challenge to event-place designers is to keep the focus in view. This is not a problem at the Smithsonian Folk Festival, where the

Above: Lessons for design and planning.

A) Granularity; B) Movement (Photograph: J. Mark Schuster); C) Types of movement; D) Triangulation (Photograph: Karin Bacon Events).

Case Study: WaterFire, Providence, Rhode Island

Washington Monument provides a constant point of reference. The fires of WaterFire provide both an intimate point of focus for couples and spectators and a broader transformative experience for a larger crowd.

Movement. An essential difference between event-places and other types of public activity — performances or convocations — is that the participants are free to move about. Good event-places are dynamic. They facilitate, and even promote, movement and participation.

The cases illustrate several common types of movement, each with their own physical and programmatic demands. In a Parade, stationary observers watch moving performers. Although, as at the Mummers and Stampede parades, observers may join in or move from one vantage point to another. In a Paseo, such as WaterFire, observers become the performers, watching each other as they stroll through the place encountering both social diversity and spatial variety. In a Promenade, participants move from one stationary activity to the next along a defined path, such as at the Bangor and Smithsonian Folk Festivals.

Scale. Good event-places balance the size of the event and the place. When events get too large for their place, intimacy, granularity and triangulation can be lost. The typical response of event planners is to move to a bigger venue to accommodate more people. In North America, this is often mistaken for a mark of success, but it usually isn't. Changing physical scale and setting can dramatically change an event and destroy the very qualities that made it popular.

The effect of this miscalculation can be seen in Philadelphia and Greenwich Village. One might also mention Chicago, where the St. Patrick's Day parade, and many other such celebrations, were recently



The three rivers that converge in downtown Providence provide the setting for WaterFire. For much of the twentieth century, the rivers were covered over and forgotten, but in the late 1980s roadways and parking lots were removed and a new, pedestrian-oriented waterfront was designed and built. The new setting inspired artist Barnaby Evans to conceive of WaterFire in 1994. During the event, bonfires are lit within steel braziers over the water and music fills the new public spaces along the riverfront. A linear event, boats move from bonfire to bonfire feeding wood to the flames as

people sit and watch or stroll along the riverfront paths. Since its inception, WaterFire has grown enormously. Currently, the event takes place most Saturdays throughout the summer and into the spring and fall, with more than one hundred bonfires being lit along two-thirds of a mile of river. A typical performance begins at sundown and continues until 1 AM, and may attract as many as 70,000 people. WaterFire has become synonymous with the rebirth of Providence and has helped to rejuvenate the once-abandoned core of the city with new private development and support activities.

Photograph: Thomas Payne, WaterFire Providence.

moved from their traditional routes to Columbus Drive — a broad, clean thoroughfare where there are no confining buildings, the access is great, policing is efficient, and crowds have lots of room; but where the individual character of the events has diminished. Fortunately, an effort is now afoot to bring the parades back to their original, more intimate places.

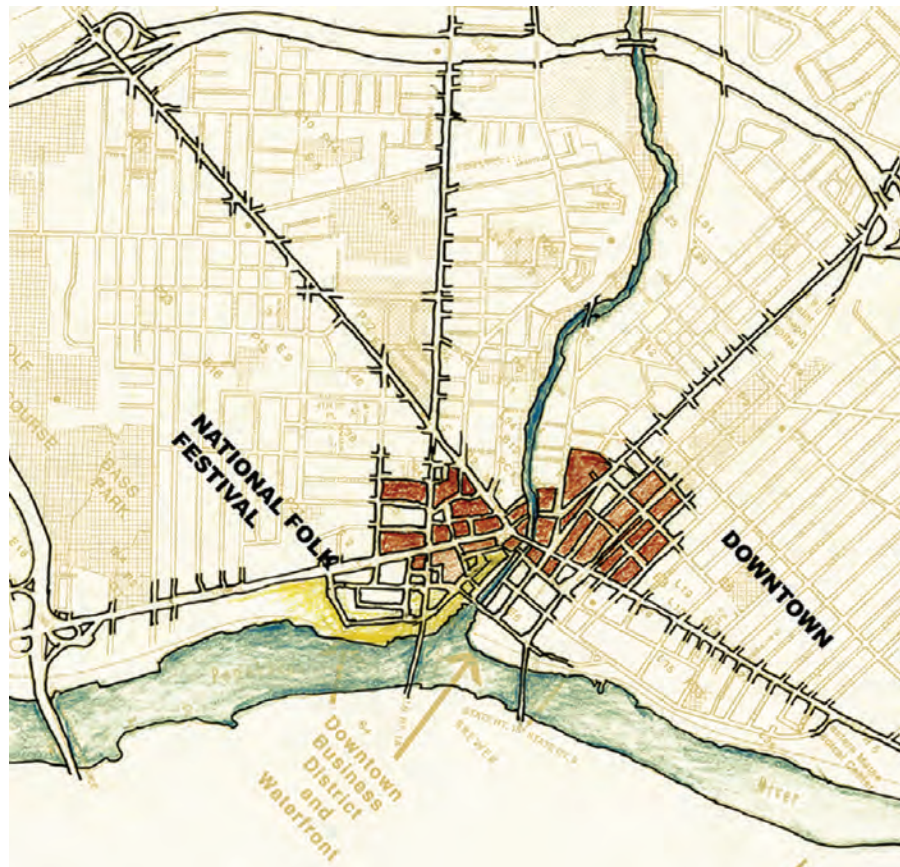
When attendance grows, communities should resist the impulse to move an event. It is often better to reconceive an event in place — by redesigning the event-place but retaining its scale. At WaterFire and in Calgary subsidiary venues and activities were created to draw off some of the people and provide variety in newly created spaces. Alternatively, the event may be repeated to accommodate demand, like the famous Palio around the Campo in Siena, which is held twice each summer. WaterFire has also been increased in frequency to reduce crowd density.

Sensuality. Good event-places are fundamentally sensual. They artfully engage all of the senses: the feel of movement through space, warmth, or cold; the sound of music reverberating off a wall; the smell of burning wood; the taste of food; the sight of costumes and color, blended by the imagination into an unusual experience.

Such sensations appeal to us as individuals. But, more importantly, they are magnified by groups into a shared sense of community. The strength of these merged sensations can transform a place and change the emotional resonance of participants with the site.

2. Build Social Capital

Place-based events are affirmations of community and can help sustain and build communities. Indeed, the highest-quality, most enduring celebrations are of the space and the place.



Such events validate both participants and places, helping to build social capital. This is because urban communities and neighborhoods do not exist as abstract groups of people; they are strongly defined by their place.

Robert Putnam, in his book *Bowling Alone*, defines social capital as “connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that

arise from them.” And he argues that social networks are breaking down in America weakening communities and shared values. We suggest that an antidote to this is to build new venues for public interaction. “Interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric.”⁷

Bridging and bonding are essential to the development of social capital.

Case Study: Mummers Parade, Philadelphia

All of the cases we studied bridge gender, age, and social class, bringing together different groups to share and claim a common place. In this way, events can help redefine how we feel about our community, or assert the presence of a community some people may have forgotten.

The success of an event in building social capital also depends upon the ability of its organizers to nurture and tap local volunteers. These people may range from high school kids to bank presidents, but the commitment of volunteers helps to bind together a diverse community.

Cities that are highly unionized seem to be difficult to plant the legacy of a festival in, for example, because labor is organized and paid. The same can be said for commercialization, where outside sponsors pay for an event in return for advertising. Both of these circumstances discourage volunteers and can disassociate the event from the community.

The depth of volunteer effort is a good measure of local social capital. In Bangor, for example, the Folk Festival is reinvesting people in the riverfront, giving impetus to improving it but in different ways than previously imagined. In Providence, WaterFire volunteers have expanded their efforts to include park and river maintenance and outreach projects involving many new communities in the city including the mentally and physically disabled and minority groups. In other cases, event organizers have morphed into community development corporations who not only produce events but also build places and facilities to support them. By engaging people and committing them to their place, events have transformative power. They are



This famous parade originated in early Swedish and German settlements, where parties of men welcomed the New Year by walking from door to door wearing face paint and ringing bells. The tradition blossomed in the immigrant, working-class area of South Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century when clubs of “Mummers” competed for prizes with ever-more-elaborate costumes and performances. In 1901 previously dispersed events were organized into a parade along Broad Street, an axis leading through its neighborhoods to City Hall. For eight or more hours “Comic Clubs,” “Fancy Clubs,” “Fancy Brigades,” and “String Bands” enter the route at different

points, strutting to their particular music, stopping at key locations to perform, and finishing by walking past the judging platform at City Hall. From a peak of more than 2 million attendants in the 1940s, the parade declined as older ethnic minorities moved from South Philadelphia to be replaced by a newer group of black, Asian, and Latino residents. Several years ago, the parade was moved to Philadelphia’s main commercial thoroughfare, Market Street, in an attempt to appeal to a more “regional” audience. But that effort largely failed, and now the Mummers, 12,000 strong, have returned to Broad Street, vowing to involve local residents and rebuild their tradition.

Above: Event-places have caused a rethinking of space use in both Bangor, Maine (above), and at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (below).



the rites and rituals of community that assert community.

People seem to be seeking this kind of community affirmation across North America, if the growth in civic events is any indication. Some communities, lacking volunteers or capacity, are even hiring events. One of the more interesting developments we uncovered is that the Disney Corporation is now making a business of packaging local events and parades featuring Mickey Mouse and Disney characters. While this kind of commercialization may call attention to

a town, it will not build community. Rather than bind people together, such packaged events tend to focus on a single group or target market, and in effect they treat a town's own residents as tourists at their own festival.

We would argue that in the long run, such packaged events are unsustainable. As more and more places have the same event or theme, they will lose value. In the end, successful events are of a place, and they communicate with its people. If you design for the citizens of a place, tourists and investment will follow.

3. Evoke Memory and Continuity

None of the event-places we studied were anonymous. All connected in some way to the shared heritage, culture, and experience of the place, providing a common thread among attendees. Good event-places gain additional meaning in this way by being agents of collective memory.

Many event-places achieve these qualities through their themes, replaying traditions and icons of local heritage. The Calgary Stampede is a good example. Here the costumes, characters, and folkways of the old rural west provide a touchstone for the modern city.

Such a western theme has been claimed by many places, but it is played out in Calgary in a distinctive way, as the highlight of the ten-day event is a series of chuckwagon races, celebrated throughout the city with pancake breakfasts served on the streets from the back of roving wagons. Meanwhile, the Stampede grounds, themselves, while filled with modern facilities, are kept deliberately rough and ready, recalling their humble origins.

Memories can also be preserved

Case Study: Calgary Stampede, Alberta

in stories associated with a place or its people. These are most clearly seen in the American tradition of reenactments. At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, key scenes in the pivotal battle of the American Civil War are replayed every year. To facilitate the reenactment, large pieces of the 17,000-acre battlefield have been restored to their precise configuration on July 1-3, 1863.

Narrative event-places can bridge time and space. In Brooklyn, the Giglio celebrates an event that took place in the town of Nola, Italy, in 409 AD: when the young men of town were miraculously returned from captivity, they were greeted by the townspeople bearing lilies, giglio, on top of fantastic towers. Today, the community of immigrants who brought the event to New York is largely gone; the Italian church that sponsored it is gone; and the neighborhood has been split in half by an elevated expressway. But the Giglio lives on — with a new meaning. Today it symbolically reknits the community, as crowds pushing towers move from either end of the neighborhood to meet under the expressway.

Such themes and stories can be magnified by physical qualities of place. Thus, in Providence, the new waterfront was not designed as an anonymous space, but with voluptuous details and qualities reminiscent of Renaissance piazzas in Italy. And such connections can be reinforced by the event, as for example, in Philadelphia where marchers stop and perform in front of longstanding community institutions like the “Mummers Hospital.”

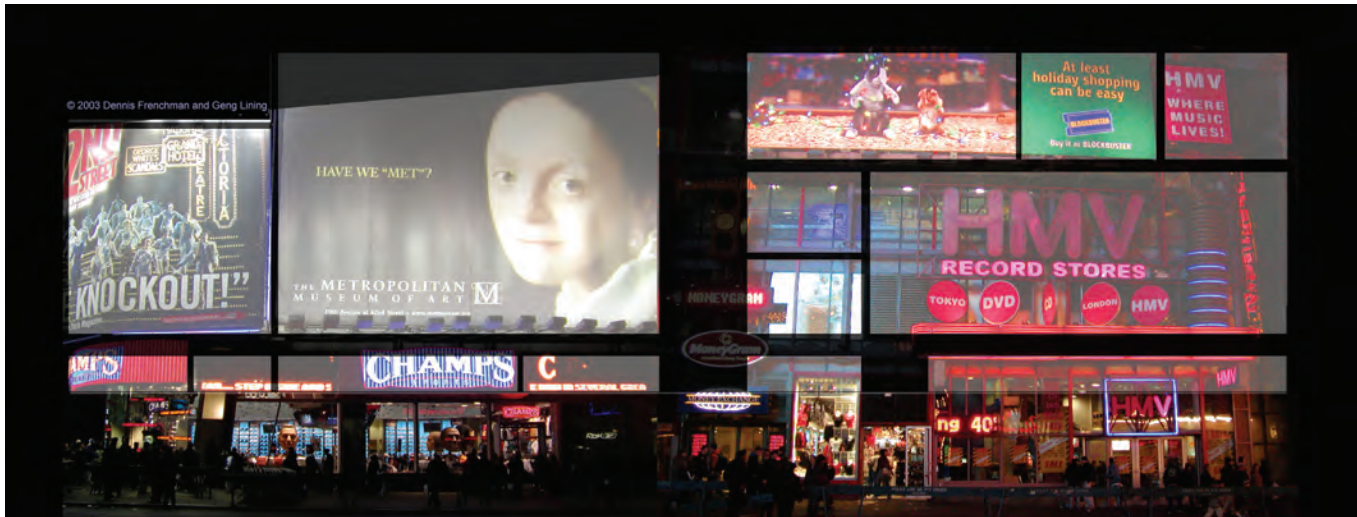
Opposite Left: Dye is used to turn the Chicago River green on St. Patrick’s Day. Photograph courtesy of J. Mark Schuster.

Opposite Right: The Giglio festival was transplanted from Italy to Brooklyn.



Beginning in 1884, the Stampede has grown with the city of Calgary, reflecting and promoting its frontier heritage and values. It now attracts more than a million people over eleven days each July and bills itself as “The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth!” The event begins with a 2.8-mile “stampede” parade through the city streets comprising horses, cattle, cowboys, Native Americans, wagons, antique cars, floats, and finally Stampede and rodeo queens. Approximately 4,000 people and 800 horses participate. Activities then move to Stampede Park, where exhibitions, musical performances, rodeos, chuck wagon races, and other competitions are held over the next ten days. A

137-acre complex on the Elbow River near the heart of the city, the park includes exhibition halls, corrals, a grandstand and track, the Saddledome arena, an Indian village, and many other facilities. As the Stampede has grown over the years, Stampede Park has expanded, encroaching on the surrounding neighborhood. One of the most depressed areas of the city, it is now filled with parking lots and abandoned buildings. The city is currently seeking ways to share the major economic benefits of the Stampede with the surrounding community, while making better use of Park facilities as year-round cultural and entertainment venues.



Finally, events are ephemeral; places are not. Thus, places may retain evidence of an event even when the event is over. In WaterFire, the braziers remain in the river, gently rocking with the waves the morning after the fires, or caught in ice during the winter.

Physical evidence of recurring events in the cityscape triggers both memories and anticipation, bridging the gap between performances. It also adds detail and a layer of meaning to the everyday use of the space, enhancing the urban experience. Such evidence may be embedded in the peculiar shape of a space, in sculpture, graphics, pavement, or common elements like light fixtures that change and come alive during an event.

Some event-places never rest, but expand and contract to match the rhythm of the event. In Philadelphia, for example, the Mummers are evident not only on Broad Street,

but also on Second Street, where many of their clubhouses are concentrated. On the day of the parade the groups emerge from their clubhouses, assemble in the street, and travel along various routes to join the parade at their appointed spot. After the parade the clubs retreat to Second Street, where they can be seen all year round, practicing, making ready costumes, and building new floats for the next parade.

4. Resonate with the City

Good event-places are more than local; a greater community embraces them. Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development for the Mayor's office in Chicago, argues that such resonance is the most important benefit of event-places. They can build "civic morale" — a sense of belonging, and a stake in a city, region, or even nation.

Many government officials don't

understand this connection between event-places and the growth of their cities. Thus event-places often lose support when budgets are tight. Based on our research, we would argue that good event-places are not frills, but part of the core fabric of a good city. They are also one of the most effective means to attract and retain people, businesses, and investment. And the more that people and groups from across the city are involved in sustaining an event-place, the more powerful its benefit will be.

Achieving such resonance and connection between the local and a wider context is one of the greatest challenges of event-place making.

Above: Programmable signage in Seoul's Digital Media City. The rise of event-places has been paralleled by a renaissance of sorts in the public environment fueled by advanced media and communications technology. Photographs courtesy of Dennis Frenchman and Lining Geng.

Case Study: Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C.

The struggle to meet this challenge was evident in each of the key cases we studied.

WaterFire has brought national acclaim to Providence, which in turn should help to sustain the event in the face of a weak economy and competing demands for public and private financial resources.

The National Folk Festival has brought new life to an abandoned area of the Bangor and a voice to Maine culture. The challenge now is to grow the city around the event, creating a permanent event-place on the waterfront.

Over the years, the Mummers Parade lost its local base in Philadelphia, along with much of its resonance in the city and region. But now that the parade has been returned to Broad Street, a serious effort is needed to connect it to new constituencies.

In Calgary, the Stampede grew in scale with its city, but this led to its consuming the very community around it. The challenge now is to make this event-place serve the community again — by getting more out of the event-place throughout the year.

In Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian Folklife Festival has now reached beyond the Mall to resonate across the country. As expressed by director Richard Kurin: “The Festival is tied to our freedom. It is both a vehicle as well as an indicator of an open national cultural conversation.... The festival is a symbol of our ability as a nation to find strength in our diversity rather than insist on a homogeneous, singular nation, or yet worse, human culture.”⁸ But there are challenges to make the event more relevant to local culture as well.



The use of the National Mall for the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival epitomizes the evolution of American event-places. In his original plan for the city, Pierre-Charles L’Enfant conceived of the Mall as a passive view corridor linking Capitol Hill to the Potomac River. However, when the Smithsonian Institution moved to its southern edge in 1846, the Mall was reconceived as a horticultural exhibit and park. Then, in the early twentieth century, with the completion of the Lincoln Memorial at the river end, it became a formal public space, and gradually, its edges were lined with major public buildings. More and more, as the Mall has come to symbolize American life and culture,

it has also become an event-place of national significance. This accelerated in the 1960s, when it served as the site of major civil-rights demonstrations, and in 1967 the Smithsonian initiated its annual Folklife Festival there, celebrating American cultural diversity. The event takes place over a two-week period around July 4th, as the Mall is transformed to hold temporary structures housing musical performances, interactive programs, crafts, visual arts, storytelling, cooking shows, and dancing that attract some one million visitors. During this time adjacent museums also open their doors to offer special programs, events and exhibits.

Photograph courtesy of Smithsonian Folklife Festival.



A Final Word

In the final analysis, we concluded that good event-place-making represents more than successful urban design or civic boosterism. It is a powerful means of city building that is being employed by more and more cities across North America. In part, this is because event-places create both social and physical capital and can contribute to the local economy. But these benefits don't wholly explain the growing number and scale of North American event-places. We suspect their popularity has more to do with a search for meaning in American

public life and a yearning for community. After a generation of increased alienation, perhaps we are tired of "bowling alone."

As the momentum for event-places accelerates, so will the desire for new forms. Already, we have seen advanced communications and digital media being integrated into traditional events and spaces. These will provide new ways of expressing mood and message and connecting people to place. At the same time, more flexible venues are being created that can accommodate sequential or simultaneous events using combina-

tions of public and private space. Such innovations are changing the nature of the public realm. For designers, they represent the opportunity for a new civic art, which can build communities through more powerful and effective event-places.

Above: Braziers in the frozen Providence river recall WaterFire performances of the previous summer and remind residents of their return in the spring. Such installations, even when inactive, can provide powerful symbols of continuity. Photograph courtesy of the *Providence Journal*.

Exploring Event-Places

Dennis Frenchman

Notes

1. The events referred to include respectively: WaterFire, Providence, R.I.; Lumière Festival of Lights, Lyons, France; Calgary Stampede, Calgary, Canada; Temps de Flors, Girona, Spain; and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C.
2. A longer version of this article was presented as a paper at the conference "From Event-Places to Cultural Landscapes," Barcelona and Terrassa, Catalunya, January 23–25, 2004, and appeared in the project final report, "Event-places," MIT-UPC, September, 2004. It is based on a collaborative research effort between the City Design and Development Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Department d'Urbanisme i Ordenació del Territori at the Universitat Polytechnica de Catalunya. The work was sponsored by a grant from the Generalitat de Catalunya and support from the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the MIT Council on the Arts.
3. Some European ones were invented also. See, for example, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
4. Note, though, that some event-places, such as Philadelphia's Mummers parade, can be racially divisive. A 2004 MCP thesis at MIT (Annis Whitlow, "The Racial Politics of Urban Celebrations: A Comparative Study of Philadelphia's Mummers Parade and Odunde Festival") makes this point cogently.
5. Alessandro Falazzi, *Time Out of Time: Essay on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).
6. William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York: Project for Public Spaces, 1980).
7. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
8. Richard Kurin, *Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Culture of, by, and for the People* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 1998).

All uncredited images courtesy of Dennis Frenchman and the MIT event-places study team.



To study the phenomena of event-places in Europe and North America, research teams were established at both the Universitat Polytechnica de Catalunya and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At MIT, work began with an initial scan of almost one hundred North American events and festivals. The team eventually focused on a shortlist of ten key cases, of which five are summarized here.

The team was interested in neither events nor places, per se, but what we came to call "event-places," where one aspect is synonymous with the other. The cases were chosen to provide a cross-section of different scales and kinds of event-place, including three basic typologies: nodal — where the majority of activity takes place in a single location; linear — where activity focuses on a procession or movement; and dispersed — where activity involves multiple locations connected by a theme. Investigations were supplemented by a semester-long set of activities held in the City Design and Development Group, including an Event-Places Forum (a series of public lectures by leading event producers, designers, and scholars in the United States), and an Event-Places Seminar

(a graduate-level course involving discussions and papers on the event-place theme).

The MIT work was paralleled by similar studies in Europe, culminating in an international conference on the urban role of event-places, held in Barcelona in January 2004, sponsored by UPC and the Architectural Association of Catalunya.

One problem with the study of event-places is that it cross-cuts many disciplines — event management, urban design, public policy, anthropology, the arts, and media, among others. As a result, at MIT we had trouble finding a language of event-place-making that could be shared by, for example, festival planners (who typically have little concept of scale or space) and architects and urban designers (who typically receive no training in the staging of public activities or the importance of cultural expression). Our solution was to organize the research group from a cross-section of disciplines: festival planner, artist, cultural-policy planner, and architect/urban designers. Together, we began to build a common vocabulary, and ultimately we came to understand the physical and social qualities that make a successful event-place.

The MIT research team was directed by Dennis Frenchman, Professor of the Practice of Urban Design, and J. Mark Schuster, Professor of Urban Cultural Policy. The team also included Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development for the mayor's office in Chicago; Barnaby Evans, Producer of WaterFire and MIT Artist-in-Residence; and research associates Lining Geng, Kelly Houston, Susanne Seiting, and Karla Solheim. The UPC team was directed by Joaquim Sabate i Bel, Professor of Town and Regional Planning.

Bones, Skin and Spirit of a City

Kate Milford

When the Brooklyn Bridge was finished in 1883 Brooklyn was the third largest independent city in the U.S. Strategically located between the farms of Long Island to the east and New York harbor to the west, it had its own vibrant downtown — with shops and grand buildings and theaters. However, it was consolidated into greater New York in 1898, and ever since, as a borough, it has had to struggle for recognition in the shadow of its more famous neighbor, Manhattan.

Today, the Manhattan Bridge and Brooklyn Bridges spill their constant traffic out two long blocks away from each other onto broad avenues that diverge like the start of a V. The streets nestled between these avenues, and bound by Atlantic Avenue to the south, make up downtown Brooklyn. It is a snarl of five-cornered intersections and dead-end streets — abrupt endings tacked onto old street patterns, the stubborn imprints of earlier ages. Within this area are stops for almost every NYC subway line and a terminus for the Long Island Railroad. Buses begin and end their routes at the Fulton Mall here. And until 1941 the elevated trains started here, too, heading out to new “sub-urban” communities along Myrtle and Flatbush Avenues.

Because of its history, downtown Brooklyn is a hub, but today it also remains something of a no-man’s land. To its west, just beyond the courts and government buildings, is the wealthy, relatively stable enclave of Brooklyn Heights. And around its other margins are the bustling neighborhoods of Fort Greene, Cobble Hill, and Boerum

Hill. To call the new activity and investment in these areas “gentrification,” however, seems to recognize only the tip of an iceberg. Plans are afoot in downtown Brooklyn for a stadium (designed by Frank Gehry), a performance-art library (designed by Santiago Calatrava), and a skyscraper office building and park on top of a parking lot. Sooner or later people will come to claim that this area is ready for a new life. And in a way, it is.

But still it lives. For years I have walked through downtown Brooklyn — largely to get from one side to the other. But I have also been drawn to the mix of old and new signage, the fashions and music on the street, and the noble dis- or mis-used buildings (not to mention the funky, boarded-up, flimsier ones hung with flags for fast-food joints, and wearing as scars the names of their former incarnations). The Underground Railroad passed through some of these streets, though there’s scant evidence of it. And a set of four, older residential buildings designated as landmarks appears incongruously against a backdrop of commercial blocks, having been transplanted from two blocks away to make room for just such brooding anonymity.

How do you find the life in a place like this? Is it best seen in the architecture, the colorful advertisements, the people hawking wares or passing through? It must be some combination — the bones, skin and spirit of the city — all there, ready to be reborn.





Above: Intersection of Flatbush Avenue, Nevins Street, and Fulton Street.
 Right: Johnson Street Houses (now Duffield Street).
 Opposite: Hoyt Street, north to Fulton Street (through parking structure).



Milford / Bones, Skin and Spirit of a City





RESAURANTS™

At the Cross the Millennium™

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Pizza Hut

LONDON Character SHOE

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LAB ON PREMISES

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METROPOLITAN
DENTAL
ASSOCIATES

Pizza Hut

PAWN SHOP

453 PLANET CELLULAR

453 PLANET CELLULAR

TATTOO

TATTOO
BODY PIERCING



Fulton Street facade (with sunglasses vendor).



Fulton Mall

BOND ST

NO STANDING
7 AM - 7 PM
MON - FRI
EXCEPT
AUTHORIZED
VEHICLES
DEPT OF FINANCE

SPEED LIMIT
15





Intersection of Fulton Street, Bond Street, and Dekalb Avenue (Dime Savings Bank building).

Tenant to Tenant: The Art of Talking with Strangers

Sharon Irish

“Meeting of the Minds” is only the most recent example of many collaborations that artist Stephen Willats has had over the last four decades with residents of public housing estates in England, Paris, Berlin and Helsinki. Informed by communication theory and psychology, Willats has made challenging and fascinating work by asking residents to reflect with him on their living environments.

As far back as 1967 Willats wrote of his approach: “The audience is not considered as an afterthought . . . but as the essential reason for the development of a work.”¹ Throughout his long career he has been remarkably consistent in giving priority to the audience. His work has also remained fresh because he has insisted on investigating the rich material of human interaction within the context of the built environment.

In 1988 Willats wrote about his fascination with “symbols of modern living” — in particular the residential tower block and the office computer. “[W]hether you live in a tower block or not, or use a computer or not, is not a precondition for having strong associations about them, for knowing their controversial status in modern life.”²

In “Meeting of the Minds,” highrise housing again assumes a central position. But in line with his earlier practice, Willats focuses less on the examination of actual form, than on the different ways such environments may be perceived. Like many of Willats’s previous works, “Meeting of the Minds,” therefore, locates its search for the hidden qualities of place in the most personal aspects of perception, as tenants share their individual responses with others in words and images.

Take the phrase, “do it yourself,” often shortened to DIY. In Britain, DIY has been primarily a postwar practice that describes how people individualize spaces or objects to suit their particular tastes. Willats recognizes DIY as a way

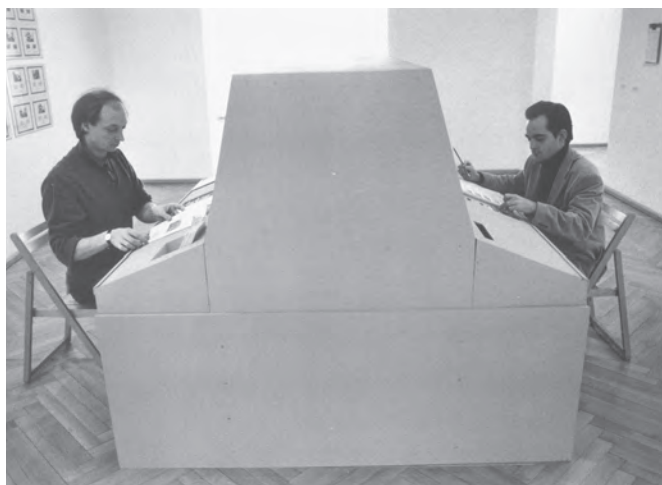
in which people customize their mass-produced environment to reflect themselves. He calls this impetus to rearrange, “self-organization...the ability of a system to change and determine its own relationships between the elements that comprise its various parts.”³ Participants in “Meeting of the Minds” thus organized for themselves the elements in their environment, individualizing their places.

From Conceptual Designer to Co-Creator

In April 2003, when I knocked on the door of Willats’s London flat, his tall figure bent forward under a low doorway to greet me. Now sixty-one years old, he beckoned me upstairs, where we had tea in his efficient but tight space. Here he moved from kitchen to seating area to typewriter in one or two great strides, as a collection of angular and colorful desk lamps, all turned on, brightened the afternoon.

Willats began by telling me of his early interest in cybernetics and self-organizing systems. Working in a London gallery in 1957, he became acquainted with the Israeli painter and sculptor, Yaacov Agam (b. 1928), whose works quite directly involve the viewer as a participant in creating meaning. Gordon Pask, author of *The Self-Organising System of a Decision Making Group* (1965), was another early influence, fostering in Willats the realization that human interaction is the meaning of a work, and that there is no overall controlling factor, particularly not the artist.

In these early years, Willats worked for a time at a think tank run by Pask, Systems Research, where he met a number of cyberneticians. He also founded *Control Magazine* in July 1965, a publication which he continues to write for and edit, and in 1971 he launched the Centre for Behavioural Art in London. In keeping with his ideas about



Living without the certainty that I will see someone tomorrow.



For company I usually have to wait until people come to visit me at my place.
What do you propose is the way for me to form new relationships within this isolated tower.



My code.

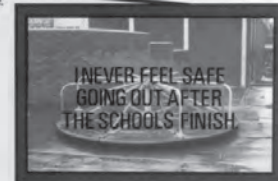
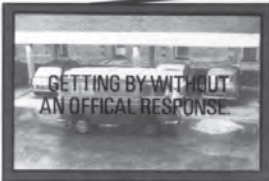


My intention.



My behaviour.

My attitude.



intelligent systems, until about 1964 he did not identify himself as an artist, but rather as a “conceptual designer.” Even after he began to call himself an artist, he refused to attach his name to his work until the mid-1970s.

An early work by Willats is revealing of these theories. “Meta Filter” (1973–75) was an installation made with engineer-collaborators. It consisted of a computer, a slide projector, two viewing screens back-to-back, and a problem. Two people operating the apparatus simultaneously were asked to agree on an interpretation of slides as they were shown, using words from a thesaurus. If the pair could not agree in six attempts, “Meta Filter” selected another slide set. If the pair did agree, “Meta Filter” would offer a new problem based on the word they had both selected.⁴ Through such works, Willats has sought to explore ideas derived from social psychology, using visual representations of human interactions to model how people interact as a “communication network” — an artistic take, if you will, on group-performance studies by social psychologists like James H. Davis.⁵

In addition to works like “Meta Filter,” Willats also began surveying residents of housing developments, those other “symbols of modern living.” He knew he wanted to work in a “consistent environment,” and he found such settings in and around London. Enormous energy and resources had been expended in Britain building high-density housing following World War II, fueled in part by the 1956 Housing Act, which subsidized the construction of towers (more money for more stories) by local councils.

The mass-production approach employed in such projects dovetailed perfectly with the political and social circumstances of the 1950s and 1960s. In addressing the postwar housing shortage, modernist designers employed up-to-date architectural language and theory; politicians appeared to be getting the job done; and builders could create entire communities by stacking them vertically. Furthermore, as Julianne Hanson recently explained, English social housing guidelines of the era assumed all people used space in similar ways.

A systematic approach, with standard plans and checklists, certainly allowed construction of a great number of projects. But Hanson also noted these designs “failed to account for the variety of ways in which people were actually living at the time.” In fact, people were “encoding” their spaces with very particular information about themselves.⁶

Instead of trying to understand these subtle attempts at placemaking in academic terms (as Hanson and her colleagues were eventually to do through spatial syntax research), Willats wanted to engage the occupants them-

selves in an examination of their physical surroundings. In the process, he allowed the occupants to make evident their own creativity and thoughtfulness, celebrating the do-it-yourself attitude.

Highrise Interconnections

Initially, Willats would drive to different estates around London, surveying the entire project and talking to a lot of people before eventually selecting a location for his work. As he noted in an interview with critic Grant Kester in 1992: “The selection of the actual building for these installations is a very important part of the process for me. The building is a kind of polemical symbol of the institutional aspirations of society.”⁷

Starting in 1974, Willats also began searching for a way to bring his work in neighborhoods and highrises into a gallery setting. Instead of courting marginalization, he says, his intent was to transform the way galleries work in the community by bringing new concerns and audiences to them. To make that connection, he eventually decided to photograph individual spaces and link the images to transcribed text from interviews with their creators.

For example, in the 1978 work “Living with Practical Realities,” he introduced an older woman resident of a highrise apartment block (Skeffington Court in West London) in three panels — “Living within the confines of my new home”; “Living with the present day limitations of a small income”; and “Living without the certainty that I will see someone tomorrow.” The panels presented her in her apartment, moving through her daily routine, both inside and outside the multistory brick building.

As part of the display, a photograph of the woman’s rectilinear U-shaped apartment block was placed in the center of each panel as the defining reality of her existence. Each panel then posed a question to prompt viewers to think from her vantage point. For example: “What do you propose is the way for me to form new relationships within this isolated tower?”⁸

Willats reflected: “While, like so many others, I was excited by the symbolism of modern building, by the out-face of its mass and presence in the city, I was also becoming aware of another aspect to these buildings, a dark side, as reflected in the hidden, segmented structure of their interiors.”⁹

Willats spent two years in Berlin in the late 1970s, producing works featured in the 1980 exhibition, “4 Inseln in

Opposite: The third of three panels that comprise Willats’s “Living with Practical Realities,” January 1978. Photographic prints, ink, Letraset text, gouache on card.

Berlin [4 Islands in Berlin]." This, of course, preceded the 1989 destruction of the Berlin Wall.

During this period, while collaborating with residents of Märkisches Viertel in North Berlin near the Wall, Willats saw graffiti on the lower surfaces of the buildings, made by youth who lived there. “These drawings were so often a poignant critique of the surrounding modernist environment, a comment on daily life, that I became fascinated,” he recalled.¹⁰ Upon further investigation, Willats learned that children worked together to make the drawings, and he began to document them. Unlike the Hungarian Brassai, who in the interwar years in Paris photographed anonymous graffiti, Willats communicated with the child creators. He viewed their inscriptions as transformations of the rigid spaces; the drawings helped them escape psychically.

If you look at the buildings that I work in, the anonymity of the building is a sign system, the building itself is a sign. The very concrete walls are signs. They're an ever-present background to people's lives. So people react against that; they layer themselves on the building, they attack the building, they break into the building, they make holes in the building, they put drawings on the building, they put rubbish on the floors. In a way they're saying, we exist, this is our presence, this is a statement of our identity.¹¹

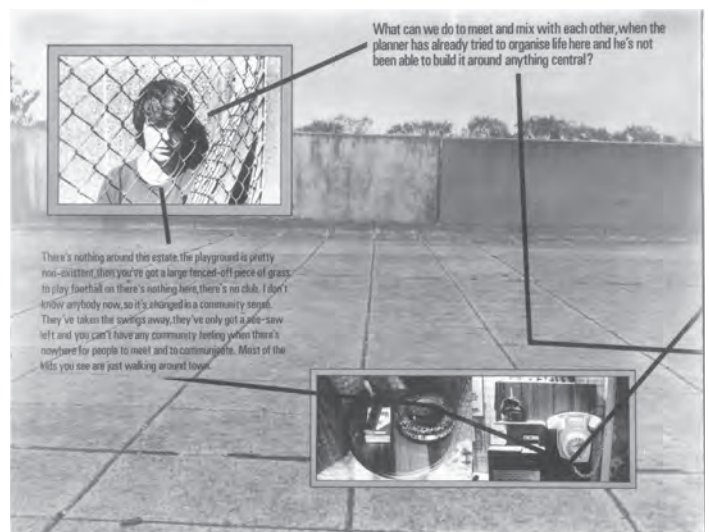
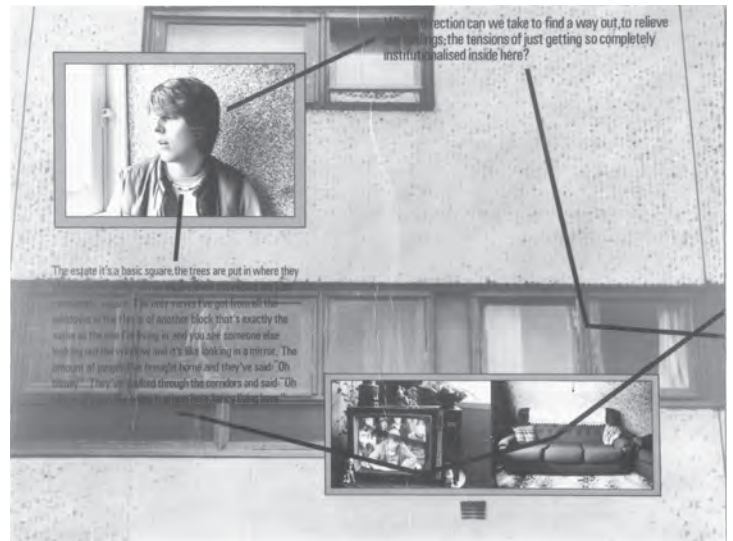
Personalizing institutional space was also the focus of a collaboration that Willats had with residents of Harvey House in Brentford, outside London, in 1986, in a piece called “Brentford Towers.” Harvey House was one of six tower blocks in the estate. Here two large windows open from the living room of each flat. People used these to visually connect with an object or view within the frame of the window, and thereby enlarge their space, at least mentally.

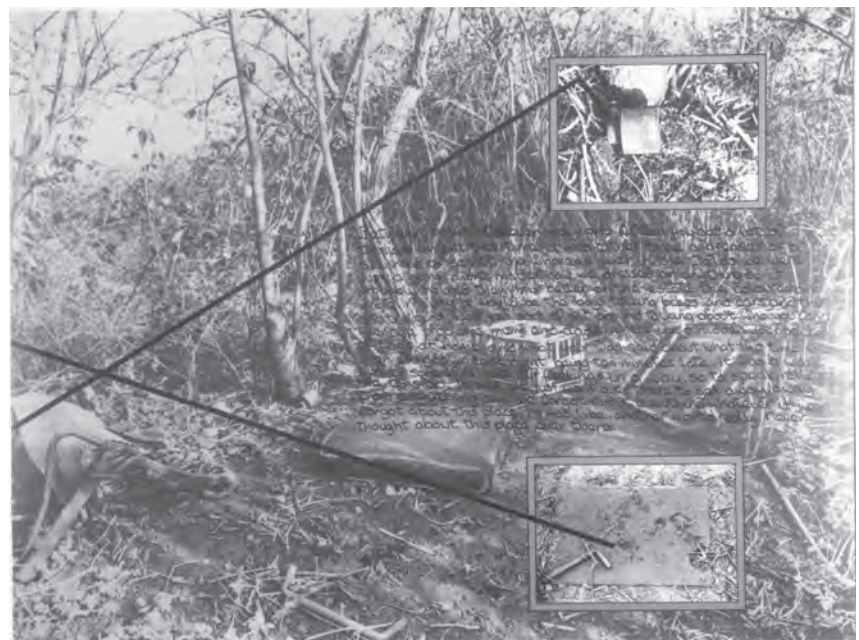
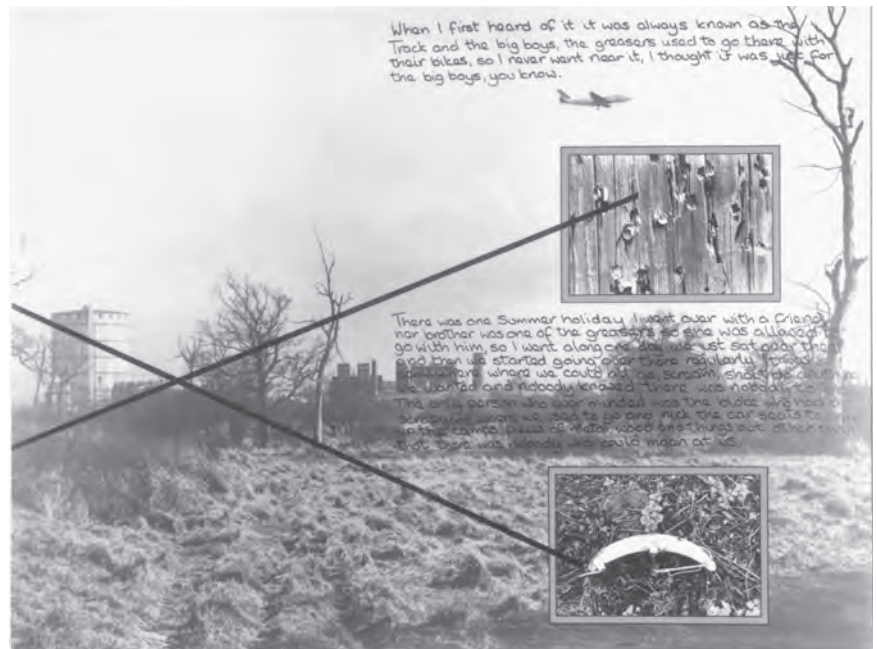
Objects in their living rooms often helped people make links to the outside. Willats collaborated with them to identify these connections. Thus, household plants would connect the resident to green space outside; or a stationary bike was used to pretend the owner was riding through a park, many stories below.

Twenty-four display boards were ultimately placed on landings in the towers for a month-long period in 1987.

Transforming Places

Willats recognized early on that people resist or reclaim spaces that have been provided for them as a way of asserting their individuality. Rather than viewing this reaction as destructive or negative, he saw this self-organization as





Above: "Pat Purdy and the Glue Sniffers Camp," January/September 1981. The entire work consists of four triptychs presented as a sequence. Triptychs one and

four are shown here. Photographic prints, photographic dye, gouache, Letraset text, ink, felt tip pen on card with objects found in Lurky Place, Hayes, West London.



creative and positive. According to Willats, “self-organization coupled with the ability to transform — to see that one thing could be another, both in meaning and in function — were fundamental components of creative behavior.”¹² The ability of residents in a housing project to reconfigure or alter their living spaces could thus activate a “dialogue” with the building, transforming both the residents and the building “in meaning and in function.” It also, to an extent, could undermine the hierarchy of provider and provided-for, essentially empowering those who are often assumed to lack any power at all.

Some of the challenges of living in these tower blocks include lack of privacy and space, noise, and social isolation. Other work by Willats, in Berlin and London, examined what happened when people literally escaped the confines of these highrise flats. Some claimed space in nearby vacant lots, as at Avondale Estate in West London.

Above: “Ich lebe in einem Betonklotz Märkisches Viertel Berlin,” part of Willats’s 1980 exhibition of work from Berlin in the late 1970s.

Of this location, Willats noted:

The inside of the slab blocks on the Avondale Estate were very isolating and depressing to anyone visiting, let alone living there, with their long corridors of uniform front doors, no natural light and grey concrete. So perhaps it was to be expected that contexts would be created in the buildings which could be personalized by various activities such as wall drawing, carving or making holes into the fabric of the walls, by scavenging old car tyres, discarded bits of furniture and placing them around the space.¹³

When you don’t feel at home when you are at home, where do you go? Many of the young people living at Avondale Estate went through the parking lot, behind the garages and through a hole in the fence to create their own spaces, hidden from the view of others (sometimes dug into the ground). “The Lurky Place,” as residents called it, was a large open space surrounded by factories, junk and rail yards, a school and public housing.

Willats wrote: “...I had seen that the wasteland must have had an enormous pull and role as an available resource in people’s lives there, especially for younger residents...”¹⁴ With one teen in particular he explored the makeshift camps where youth gathered, often to sniff glue. “At the point I came to work on the estate, most of the services associated with its upkeep had been withdrawn or were seriously depleted and so the various groups of younger children and teenagers were more or less left to themselves.”¹⁵

Willats has returned to the Lurky Place numerous times over the years, creating about ten works in total.

Activating Housing Groups

When the British government began to cut back on publicly financed housing around 1980, “housing associations” made up of groups of tenants sometimes began to support construction of private rental units, and they received a measure of government support.¹⁶

Another model for present-day housing action is the Liverpool Housing Action Trust (LHAT). Formed in 1993, it has attempted to serve as catalyst for the physical and cultural redevelopment of a city buffeted by economic downturns and cuts in municipal budgets, and among other initiatives it has teamed up with tenant groups to upgrade older housing estates.

According to urban planner Chris Couch, from 1967 on, Liverpool witnessed nearly every experiment in urban policy: from educational endeavors to industrial development; from housing cooperatives to militant Labour Councils.¹⁷ The LHAT initiative, for instance, has sought

to bring artists into the community to steer Liverpool in new directions.¹⁸

It was within this context that the Liverpool-based Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) coordinated the visit by Willats that ultimately led to “Meeting of the Minds.” FACT had been working with LHAT and tenants’ groups to commission a series of events that linked “new media artists” to communities in the Merseyside region.

Sefton, the site of “Meeting of the Minds,” is perhaps best known in design circles for its late-nineteenth-century Palm House, designed by Mackenzie and Moncur. But the tower blocks at Sefton Park, where Willats ultimately chose to work, present an environment of a totally different, monolithic, character.

At Sefton Park, Willats proposed convening a series of workshops in which interested highrise residents might explore their physical environment together, sharing their perceptions of it using photography, film and sound recordings. Central to his conception was a close interaction between pairs of residents previously unknown to each other, which would allow them to help him create art by inserting their imaginations into the hierarchical, controlling spaces of their daily environment.

Eventually Willats teamed up with twelve residents in September 2003 to compose collages on boards and video interviews that were exhibited in the foyers of the buildings at the estate (York House, Rutland House and Buckingham House).

Expanding Places with Imagination

Donlyn Lyndon, Charles Moore, and Gerald Allen asserted thirty years ago that “to extend your imaginative life into the everyday, the place that you live in should allow for the everyday to become exceptional.”¹⁹

Stephen Willats has collaborated with tenants in Britain, Scandinavia, France, and Germany to discover the exceptional in the everyday, and often to celebrate that distinction. His openness to the creativity of his co-creators and his recognition of their counter-consciousness in building parallel worlds is art in the best sense — art that expands human possibilities.

Notes

1. Clive Philpot and Andrea Tarsia, *Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965–75* (London: The Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2000), p. 161.
2. Stephen Willats, *Conceptual Living* (London: Victoria Miro Gallery, July 2–31, 1991), n.p.
3. Stephen Willats, *Beyond the Plan: The Transformation of Personal Space in Housing* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2001), p. 5.
4. Philpot and Tarsia, *Live in Your Head*, p. 161; see also Stephen Willats, *Art and Social Function* (London: Ellipsis, 2000), pp. 211–24.
5. James H. Davis, *Group Performance* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1969).
6. Julienne Hanson with Bill Hillier, *Decoding Homes and Houses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 109.
7. Grant Kester, “Starting from Zero: Stephen Willats and the Pragmatics of Public Art,” *Afterimage* (May 1992), p. 10.
8. Willats, *Beyond the Plan*, p. 17.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 24; see also Stephen Willats, *Between Buildings and People* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), pp. 32–57.
11. Kester, “Starting from Zero,” p. 12.
12. Willats, *Beyond the Plan*, p. 5.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
16. Chris Couch, *City of Change and Challenge: Urban Planning and Regeneration in Liverpool* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 134.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
18. “Housework,” Liverpool Housing Action Trust, http://www.liverpoolhat.org.uk/a_main.php?nav=3&snID=86122, accessed April 14, 2004.
19. Charles Moore, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lyndon, *The Place of Houses* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 140.

How Far Are You from the Farm: A Mile or a Generation?

The Agricultural Art of Laura Parker

Terri Cohn

My fields have become a crazy quilt of cover crops, a wild blend of patterns, some intended, some a product of nature's whims. The different plants grow to different heights and in different patterns, creating a living appliqué. The casual passerby might not notice my art. . . . But the farmer walking his fields can feel the changing landscape beneath his boots, he can sense the temperature changes with the different densities of growth, and smell the pollen of blooming clover or vetch or wildflowers. . . . Just as a quilter may stitch together emotions with each piece of fabric, I weave the texture of life into my farm.

— David Mas Masumoto¹

Relationship to place is powerful and fundamental to human experience. Each of us was born somewhere and has an ancestral lineage that connects us to that place, or to distant locales, known and imagined. We crave the experience of travel, and we insert visual notations of our journeys into our everyday lives with bits of natural detritus, mementos and photographs. Each object, relic or image, imbued with the distilled essence of its place of origin, is reframed by and reframes its new surroundings. Although we may appreciate a saved pebble for its essential qualities as a stone, it also holds its own history and has the potential to evoke deeply personal, experiential memories.

Artist's expressions of their relationships to place have long served as important indicators of the shifting formal innovations and philosophical tenor of their times. The Impressionists' aspiration to capture the transient light and color in a landscape with fleeting brushwork and a subjective palette was central to their desire to represent modernity in the nineteenth century. For the emerging middle class at that time, the rapidly changing urban world had stimulated a desire for scenes of rural landscape and life. Such scenes reassured them there were still places where timeless values could be found. The duality of this situation opened the possibility for a technically and conceptually innovative avant garde, and as artists expanded the paradigm for modern subject matter throughout the twentieth century, some began to merge formal radicalism with social commentary about the changing landscape.

The importance of the relationship between nature and culture intensified during the late 1960s, as artists began to eradicate the boundaries between form, process and meaning, shifting their relationship to the location and presentation of their work. Two major trajectories eventually emerged. Land- or Earthworks artists asserted their relationship to nature with performance-based works or large-scale sculpture in remote locations. Minimalists responded to this institutional shift and telluric urge by transporting

earth and other natural materials into the white cube of the gallery. As artists embraced this new aesthetic, their work also evolved to incorporate formal eclecticism, performative practice, and the primacy of conceptual expression.

The legacy of this period has been a generation of artists who have adapted these methodologies to establish ideational, emotional and aesthetic bridges between the personal and public. Their confrontation of the not-so-delicate balance between nature and culture has compelled many of them to create works that commingle elements of the natural world with personal narrative to showcase issues that might otherwise be overlooked.

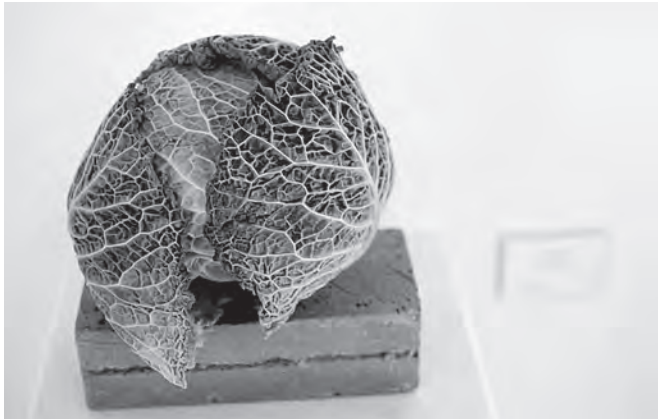
The Farmer as Artist

Among the artists currently working with this paradigm is Laura Parker. She has spent several years investigating the role of the farmer as artist and the notion of fruits, vegetables, and living herbage as art objects. Typical of this work was her project "LandScape: The Farmer as Artist," which first was shown at the Jewett Gallery, San Francisco Public Library, Main Branch, in 2001. It includes sculptural installations comprised of earth, hydroponically sustained vegetables, and a living pasture; photographs of farmers with whom she has collaborated; and paintings based on her responses to the natural landscape. As she explained to me during our conversations over the past three years, it forms a sort of self-portrait which grew out of her childhood summers spent on her family's farms in the Midwest:

As the city kid, I was always the one sent to the garden to harvest for dinner and for supper. I learned to love what it means to pick things when they're ripe. There had to be one for me and one for the basket so that I really knew what I was taking into the house. I think it was during those times when I was in the garden by myself, picking and looking and feeling the soil between my toes, that I became totally enamored with the farm. I would take books out and read them, laying in the dirt. It was heaven to go and lay in the beans between the rows and have the sun on my back, reading my book. . . .

Parker's direct artistic engagement with natural materials also grew out of her belief in the essential nature of fruits and vegetables, which she discovered through a decade of using them as models for drawing. She describes how viewers of her pastels typically comment on the beauty of the rendered pear or peach. To this, she often replies, "Yes, it was an incredibly beautiful pear. It's the beauty of the original pear you're seeing, not my drawing."

For Parker, the significance of such an exchange is



both artistically and ideologically motivated. She wants her audience to “see” what she sees — the mystery of the living things farmers cultivate for physical and emotional sustenance as aesthetic objects. She explains: “As a culture we denigrate farmers, what they do, and what they grow. Ironically, we value food when someone else is reinterpreting it — the chef or the artist — but the appreciation is not about food in its original form.” This experience motivated Parker’s desire to put vegetables and fruits in a gallery, next to paintings, so that people would look at them and think, “oh yes, those are art too!”

There are beautiful onions grown by Phil Foster from Hollister. His soil is a black clay, but it’s coarse — lots of little clods and things. When the light hits his onions they have a golden patina on the skin around them. I wanted them to stand up and hold the space, like sculpture. All I needed were two onions that just sat perfectly against each other. No sculptor could have made anything more remarkable than these two onions.

Natural Materials as Art Objects

Parker’s deep artistic and philosophical connections to the materials of nature is shared by a growing number of contemporary artists involved with liberating natural materials from their utilitarian identities and presenting them for aesthetic, symbolic and scientific contemplation. Among them is Wolfgang Laib, whose art is largely concerned with gathering pollen, which he exhibits as material and art object. Laib’s sensibility is similar to Parker’s in that he allows the pollen to retain its own character and meaning. His process of gathering it also mimics the bee’s rites of collection.

Laib’s holistic attitude toward his primary material, the creatures that cultivate it, and his reference to nature as “his monastery” have poetic resonance with Parker’s empathy toward the land, its output, and place.² But Parker also



says her “personal hunger to have connection with the land is a form of spirituality.” She speaks of her paintings, which reduce the landscape to geometrically patterned fields of color, as “more about the spirit of the land than a direct replication of it.”

The material and pieces that speak most deeply of Parker’s connection to the land are those that are comprised of earth or that tell stories about it. For several years she has been collecting soil samples from various farms, which she uses as subject and medium. “The soil is really the palette, and you can’t make anything if the soil isn’t of quality.” During her exhibition’s opening, Parker glamorized the experience of soil quality by setting small portions of damp soil in wine glasses for people to test its aroma. For “Palette,” she displayed small samples in see-through containers in a box, creating an earth palette of assorted colors and textures.

One particularly meaningful soil sample was gathered from her partner’s family farm in France, which “had not been disked or turned over for a hundred years. There was something poignant to me about these people living on their land, who don’t turn some of it over; who don’t impact it in any major way. I loved that soil and the idea that there’s a place where people don’t mess with the earth.” Parker’s personal identification with the soil is distilled in “Clod,” a chunk of earth which floats serenely atop a transparent Plexiglass pedestal, as her emblematic alter ego.

The World of Dirt

The form and content of Parker’s work have been inspired and sustained by her collaborative relationships with the farmers and scientists who understand its organic

Left: Cabbage on a pedestal.

Right: “Palette.”



composition and logic. One such protagonist has been Tom Willey, a farmer and soil expert, who stimulated her desire to showcase the diversity of land belonging to different farmers she has known. As part of this process, he introduced Parker to USDA maps, which explicate the various types of soil on individual farms. She describes the Soil Survey books inspired by the experience:

I have soil from what was originally an Indian campground at The Apple Farm. Right next to that is a flood plain and the soil is totally different. One is black and loamy and rich and the other one is also rich, but it's gold and copper. It has a little more rock in it. I decided to glue the soil down and then build a book that opens out so that you have a topography and it becomes three dimensional. With the soil survey maps you can, in fact, read the soil. The number of books I made about a farm are the number of different kinds of soil there are on that farm. . . . The point is looking not only at the specific soil, but the environment around it as well. All of those things impact how that soil became that soil, and in some way, how we become who we are.

Parker's interest in the stories embodied in the earth was intensified one evening while she was sharing a meal with Willey and his wife denesse. As she describes it, during a conversation Tom leaned across the table with his hand open and said, "There are more microorganisms, more living things in a palm full of dirt, than there are people on the planet."

Parker was astounded by the microcosmic/macrocsmic implications of this statement: that a two-inch circle of dirt on one's palm could contain billions of microorganisms. It motivated her to contact a soil biologist to obtain their names, which she intended to write on the gallery walls as part of her installation. However, when she received the extensive list, she decided to write their names, layer upon layer, in ink on earth-stained canvas, to emulate the vertical strata of the microorganisms in nature. The legibility of the names was not as important as the way the surface became progressively dense over the weeks of writing them. Parker realized that the process was "like a record of the soil growing. It's like when you make your own compost and put it into the soil: it just continues to grow. So this painting may never be finished."

Farmers and Artists: Interchangeable Roles

The collaborative nature of Parker's project, which reflects the communal necessities of farming, is evident in



Top: Hydroponically sustained beets.

Bottom: "Cover Crop." A section of living pasture.

the relationships she first felt compelled to cultivate with the subjects and materials of her art, and later with the stories they have inspired in her audience. She discovered that when she brings certain living organisms indoors to maintain hydroponically — especially beets and grass — they stop growing after a few days. She also learned that despite being mechanically fed and watered, their ability to flourish is directly proportional to the amount of attention they receive: the more people visit the gallery, the more they seem to thrive. As Parker explains, “Outside they get a lot of attention from the insects and the environment: the wind caresses the grass many times every day.”

Visitors have had somewhat erratic responses to their discovery that the beautiful object they are viewing on a pedestal is a real cabbage or onions; and sometimes they express frustration or anger that “it’s not art.” Yet, when asked “How far are you from the farm: a mile or a generation?” many seem to reach an epiphany about Parker’s intentions and become willing to contribute their stories to her project.

The outcome of this process has implications that are poetically communicated by and transcend Parker’s artistic intentions. On one level, such work creates a somewhat unsettling metaphor for the human ability to sustain and dislocate natural processes, a factor which has contributed to the burgeoning artistic involvement and interest in work like Parker’s. By cultivating her audience’s empathetic interest in her stories as well as stories of farmers and the land, she has also been able to communicate the political implications of our estrangement: the loss of family farms, the alimentary ramifications of corporate agriculture, and the threats posed to the land as well as world nutrition by genetic engineering.

By choosing to spotlight farmers who are themselves artists, Parker also reveals the inherent similarities between the two. Among these people are Kristie Knoll, who is a soprano; Paul Buxman, who is a painter; and Karen Bates, who is a designer and chef, and whose family runs The Apple Farm. These choices reflect Parker’s respect for Wendell Berry’s philosophy:

*The good farmer, like an artist, performs within a pattern. He must do one thing while remembering many others. He must be thoughtful of relationships and connections, always aware of the reciprocity of dependence and the influence between parts and whole.*³

There is a certain irony in this body of work that so beautifully delineates the strong affinities between artists and farmers. Both have had great difficulty existing within

the structure of American society, suffered financial marginalization, and share the experience of having their work taken for granted. Laura Parker turns the mirror around, using art to urge us to reconsider the bigger picture: our personal relationship to food, the significance of the natural landscape, and how we are not going to get any closer to Eden. As she so simply and eloquently states it, “place can be an emotional space where you are fully present, and can appreciate something as simple as a pear.”

Notes

1. David Mas Masumoto, *epitaph for a peach* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 11.
2. Linda Weintraub, *Art on the Edge and Over* (Litchfield, CT: Art Insights, Inc., 1996), p. 43.
3. Wendell Berry, “Whose Head is the Farmer Using? Whose Head is Using the Farmer?” in Wes Jackson, Wendell Berry, and Bruce Colman, *Meeting the Expectations of the Land: Essays in Sustainable Agriculture and Stewardship* (Berkeley: Northpoint Press, 1984), p. 28.

All photos are courtesy of the author.

Cities for People

Neil Hrushowy

With its legacy of forty years of improvements to the pedestrian environment, Copenhagen, Denmark, provides a living testament to both the feasibility of the walking environment and the quality-of-life improvements communities can expect if they promote it. The decision to hold the fifth Walk 21 conference there, and to title it “Cities for People,” was intended to drive home this relationship between good urban design and good walking environments.

Walk 21 is a global partnership of experts whose aim is to raise awareness of walking issues.¹ But this year’s conference was also hosted by the Center for Public Space Research, with major funding from the Real-landia Foundation.² The Center’s director, Jan Gehl, has long argued there can be no vitality on the streets of any town or city without exchange between people. Gehl, whose report “Public Spaces, Public Life” won an EDRA/*Places* research award in 1998, believes public-space designs that do not explicitly take the human body into account cannot possibly produce an urban environment of high quality.

“Cities for People” therefore challenged participants to address the sterile streetscape and public spaces typical of new development, and expand discussion on the benefits of walking beyond issues of health and obesity. Gehl said he felt these issues had been thoroughly explored at the last Walk 21 conference in Portland, Oregon. In Copenhagen he tried to steer the discussion toward such other themes as social encounter, joy and exploration, childhood cognitive development, environmental quality, and tourism — to name the concerns of only a few of the more ambitious presentations.

Reclaiming Pedestrian Space

Keynote speakers at the conference recounted their experiences in a number of cities that have pursued a vibrant public-life agenda, including walking, through better design.

Rob Adams’s presentation described how strong political support, even within the constraints of a limited budget, may produce incremental, yet substantial change in the built environment. Adams is Chief Architect of Melbourne, Australia, a city that decided to change its Central Business District to a Central Activity District in the mid-1980s. The decision has resulted in a fifteen-fold increase in the number of housing units there, a renewal of interest in the conservation and retrofit of historic buildings, and an explosion in sidewalk café seats from zero to almost five hundred today. The last change was achieved despite repeated warnings by skeptics that Melbourne’s climate and culture were not amenable to displays of public life — a critique strongly reminiscent of opposition to Copenhagen’s decision to pedestrianize streets in the Central City forty years ago.

A second keynote examined the transformation of Bogota, Colombia, a city now celebrated for innovation by urban planners. Enrique Peñalosa, its former mayor, explained how much of this success has derived from strong and sustained political support for the rights of pedestrians. Bogota’s pedestrianization campaign helped renew trust in government, produce a dramatic drop in violent crime, and repopulate the city’s public spaces, he said. At a time when it is inordinately difficult to persuade U.S. politicians to invest in the public realm, Peñalosa argued the example of Bogota demonstrates how good design, especially when tied to a commitment in social equity, can improve the quality of life

for all residents.

A third keynote speaker was Barbara Southworth, an urban designer for Cape Town, South Africa, and winner of the 2003 Ruth and Ralph Erskine Award. The award, which comes with a prize of \$10,000, is given once every three years to individuals, groups or organizations working in innovative ways to produce socially progressive architecture or urban design.³

Southworth spoke of her efforts to create new and vibrant public spaces in her country’s predominantly black townships. During the Apartheid years, there was almost no public investment in these areas, and as a result there were very few public spaces in the townships where people could gather, shop, or exchange goods and ideas. To remedy this situation, Southworth had to contend with distrust among many segments of the citizenry. But she credited a combination of passion, purpose, respect for the opinions of township residents, and a strong program of public input for her success.

Today Southworth is particularly encouraged by the ways a previously ignored constituency has taken ownership of both the new spaces and the processes of creating them. Among other things, this commitment has demonstrated to politicians that urban design can become a true vehicle for public concern — and votes.

An International View

The keynote presentations were typical of the broad geographic and topical scope of research shared at the conference. Conference organizers structured this work under three themes: Achieving the Vision, Urban Quality of Life, and Architecture and Design. Presenters in the first area focused on political structures that need to be in place and economic



arguments that need to be won if walking is to be successfully integrated into public design strategies. In the second, they examined ways to better involve residents in the planning and evaluation of the urban environment. The third area included presentations of specific strategies to create and sustain walkable spaces, as well as successful case studies from around the world.

Taken as a whole, the talks demonstrated the broad spectrum of physical, cultural, economic and political challenges facing advocates for pedestrian space. The perspectives of many different users were also represented: children, the elderly, the politically and economically disenfranchised, the tourist, the shopkeeper. But these remained tied to an understanding that, worldwide, pedestrian-oriented environments must meet common design challenges, irrespective of culture and history. Each place will demand its own solutions, ones that are sensitive to local context, but the human body's relationship to its environment remains constant across space and time.

Some of the hurdles that advocates of walking face have more to do with states of mind than physical constraints. Toward this end, David Engwicht and Daniel Sauter organized a lively preconference discussion called "Mind Matters." Engwicht is an advocate of traffic-calming efforts in Australia and North America, and Sauter is a Zurich-based pedestrian-space researcher. Together, they argued that design is not enough (or perhaps not even necessary) to achieve

a more balanced relationship between the driver and other users of public rights-of-way. Among the examples of strategies city residents can employ to reclaim their streets without the time and expense of urban design are "street-reclaiming parties," at which they may celebrate such car-defying activities as street painting, placing seating in parking spaces, and creating interesting artwork along the edges of the street.

The Example of Copenhagen

The conference, however, offered more than just presentations and poster sessions. It also provided participants with many opportunities to experience Copenhagen firsthand through a series of (mis)guided walks, bike rides, canal tours, and metro rides.

"Mis-guiding," was the subject of a presentation at the conference by Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith, Cathy Turner, and Tony Weaver, and was adopted by attendees as one of its quirkier themes. A mis-tour deliberately takes participants to lesser known, but equally interesting, parts of a city, and can include performances. According to the Mis-Guide website: "Mis-Guides are like no other guides you have ever used before. Rather than telling you where to go and what to see, a Mis-Guide gives you the ways to see your town or city that no one else has found yet. A Mis-Guide is both a forged passport to your 'other' city and a new way of travelling a very familiar one."⁴

For a first-time visitor from North America, the display of life splashed

across Copenhagen's public realm can be intoxicating. But having had the previous four months to become enmeshed in the flows of the city, I felt I bestrode two worlds — one mind firmly set in the pragmatism of American planning, the other swept up into the realm of possibility. Perhaps other participants experienced this same exciting duality and will use the resulting energy to jumpstart local pedestrian-advocacy efforts in their home cities.

"Cities for People" generated the type of discussion and dialogue that should continue to build the pedestrian space movement. The next Walk 21 Conference will be held in Zurich, Switzerland in September 2005.

Notes

1. The name is a reference to issues of walking in the 21st century.
2. The stated mission of the Realdania Foundation is to improve the quality of life in Denmark by creating new qualities, and preserving existing ones, in the built environment. The conference was also made possible with assistance from Dyrup, a paint company, and Copenhagen X, a partnership between the city of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg Municipality, and the Realdania Foundation.
3. More information on the Erskine award is available at http://www.d-a-z.hr/ostalo/nagrade/ralph_erskine.htm.
4. <http://www.mis-guide.com/mgmain.html>

Left: More than a kilometer of red carpet was used during the conference as an interactive art display to invite walking in the city. Photo by author.

Right: Bicyclists are a typical feature of Copenhagen's morning commute. Photo by author.

Senses of Place: Urban Narratives as Public Secrets

June Williamson

"Indigenous residents as well as colonizers, ditchdiggers as well as architects, migrant workers as well as mayors, housewives as well as housing inspectors, are all active shaping the urban landscape," Dolores Hayden wrote in *The Power of Place*.¹ In this tradition, stories of the powerful and the meek were the subject of presentations by scholars of geography, sociology, philosophy, architecture, performance studies, literature, political science, and urban planning at the conference "Senses of Place: Urban Narratives as Public Secrets." Participants in the one-day event April 16 at Pace University's Institute for Environmental and Regional Studies (PIERS) were united by an interest in the increasingly visible field of place studies. But the "secrets" they related often involved political issues of class, race, gender and economic injustice. Sessions at the conference were designed to flesh out this problematic by focusing on such themes as community identity, religion, performance, poetry, politics, nature, and the public interest.

In a keynote address, Ned Kaufman, chair of the newly organized Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at Pratt Institute, spoke of ways the study of place remains a "public secret." We don't yet really know what place is or how to describe it, Kaufman began, but we know it when we experience it, and we can easily distinguish between different types of places. When describing specific spaces, we often use a vocabulary of immediate sensory perception, he explained. But this method is inadequate for evoking the histories associated with these places. Alternately, we may rely on a vocabulary of collective or community memory to describe experiences embedded in specific places. But this vocabulary, too, is inadequate. It fails

to fully recognize the individual acts of transmission from person to person required for the meanings and stories attached to places to persist. Furthermore, such narratives may be variable and contested.

Kaufman argued that an improved vocabulary for describing such phenomena would aid debate about the use, preservation, and design of places. Especially in the face of contemporary pressures such as globalization and instantaneous communications, such a project could create common ground for preservationists, environmentalists, designers and planners, groups with goals that are often similar.

Kaufman's overall concern was the way that conflicting notions of place are often tied to different narratives of cultural identity. But such conflict is not inevitable. For example, in the debate around land use in the western U.S. some environmentalists have found common ground with historic preservationists in recognizing the strategic value of cattle ranching as a culturally appropriate activity that impedes more environmentally destructive land uses such as sprawl development.²

Diverse Views

Of the sessions that followed, the one on "places of performance" provoked particularly lively discussion. Several speakers addressed the importance of place-based cultural rituals to the formation of ethnic identity, and the ease with which they can be flattened into simplistic myths. Architect Lisa Henry Benham (Graduate School of Architecture, University of Utah) analyzed maps of New Orleans to chart the migration and transformation of the bounding, and limiting, rituals of Creole culture. She then commented on ways this affected relationships between gender, race and cultural identity. Blagovesta Mom-

chedjikova (Department of Performance Studies, NYU), told of her role as a guide for the model of the City of New York on view at the Queens Museum of Art in Flushing, the site of the 1964-65 World's Fair. In that role she became acutely aware of the myriad, complex dislocations between the real city and the model one.

Hune Margulies (Pace University) then presented a theoretical overview of what he considers a "continuum" between space, culture and ethnicity. He argued for the importance of elevating the role of space in this continuum — and for redefining ethnicity, since the use of race to determine ethnicity elides issues of class and the importance of neighborhoods. Margulies also presented an interesting expansion of the notion of neighborhood, one that recognized important ties between people in non-contiguous places, such as Dominicans in the Dominican Republic and New York City.

Papers in a session on nature and culture also described some of the places of contested narrative to which Kaufman alluded in his opening remarks. Geographers Harvey Flad and Craig Dalton (Vassar College) told an engaging story of a beloved butternut tree in Poughkeepsie, New York. When the massive tree was threatened by development, neighbors campaigned to save it. Eventually, one of the women in the activist group fighting to save the tree went on to become the city's mayor.

There has been no similar happy ending yet for "Site Summit," the former Nike missile facility overlooking Anchorage, Alaska. Geographer Laurel Hummel (West Point) described battles between the military and local government to determine the future status of that place, an important relic of the Cold War already listed for inclusion on the

The Art of Modern Transit Station Design

David Moffat

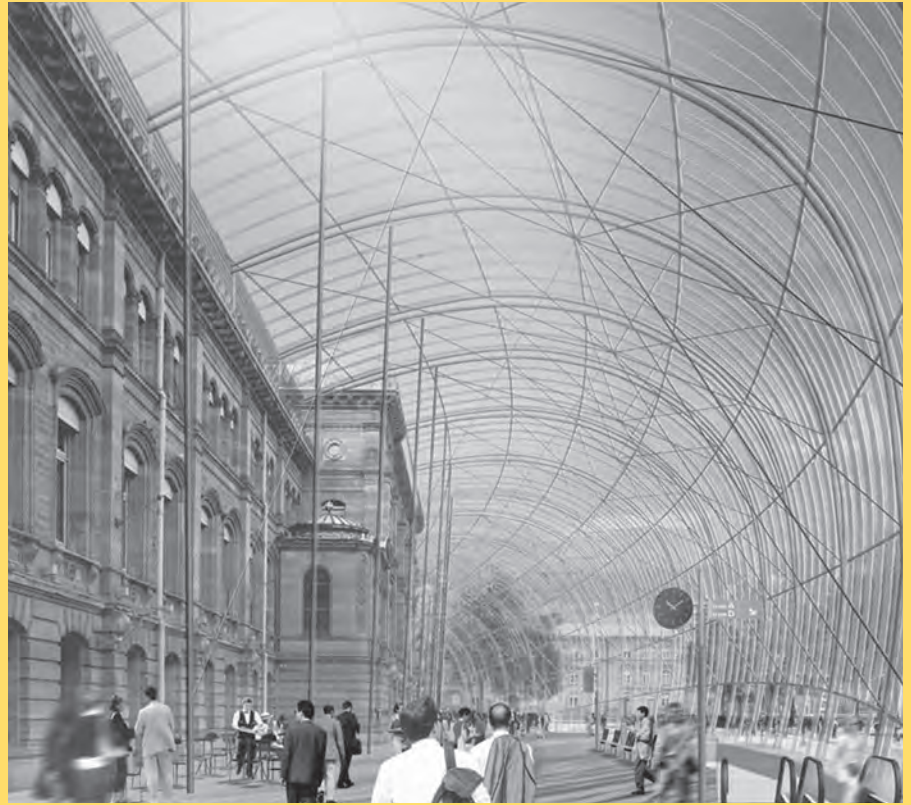
National Register of Historic Places. With arguments about responsibility, funding, access, and security unresolved, the surface-to-air missile bunkers there sit empty, slowly deteriorating. Hummel's narrative also provided an intriguing glimpse into the secretive workings of the U.S. military, custodian of so much of this country's open land.

An Ongoing Program

"Senses of Place: Urban Narratives as Public Secrets" was organized by Robert Chapman of PIERS. In addition to sponsoring conferences, PIERS offers a visiting scholars program.³ The Institute, at Pace's lower Manhattan campus, defines its mission as "to provide leadership in the study of the complex interrelationships between human culture and nature with special emphasis on the Hudson River bioregion and its diverse ecological, social and cultural values."

Notes

1. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 15.
2. Kaufman also alluded to controversies surrounding the preservation of the Audubon Ballroom in New York City, where Malcolm X was assassinated. See Ned Kaufman, "Heritage and the Cultural Politics of Preservation," *Places*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter 1998), pp. 58-65.
3. For more information about PIERS, the visiting scholars program, and conference proceedings, contact Prof. Robert Chapman at rchapman@pace.edu.



The point has been made before, but it bears periodic repeating. To understand the elements of great transit-station design, one has to look to the great precedents. The placemaking qualities of structures such as New York's Grand Central Station or the late-nineteenth-century train stations of Paris and London are inherent in their status as civic crossroads. Extensions of the cities around them, they provide common ground for a common purpose and they give dignity and excitement to thousands of individual ceremonies of departure and arrival each day.

In the second half of the twentieth century such great public gateways largely gave way to the more hermetic "airport experience" — long corridors and commercial concourses in out-of-the-way places that look pretty much the same from one city to the next. Even where the designs of indi-

vidual terminals might incorporate engineering excellence and the latest in architectural materials, they often spoke more of a new international uniformity of experience and expectation than any distinct sense of local pride or identity.

"The Art of Modern Transit Station Design," second in a series of symposia on transportation infrastructure sponsored by the UC Berkeley Transportation Center, was based on the premise that transit stations have now been rediscovered as generators of iconic form, urban identity, and redevelopment energy after a long period of disinterest and neglect. Elizabeth Deakin, Director of UCTC, noted on the first day of the two-day event April 29-30, that

Above: Proposal for TGV station on Strasbourg.

Next Page: Stations of the French TGV. A) Lille;

B) Montparnasse in Paris; C) proposal for Marseilles.

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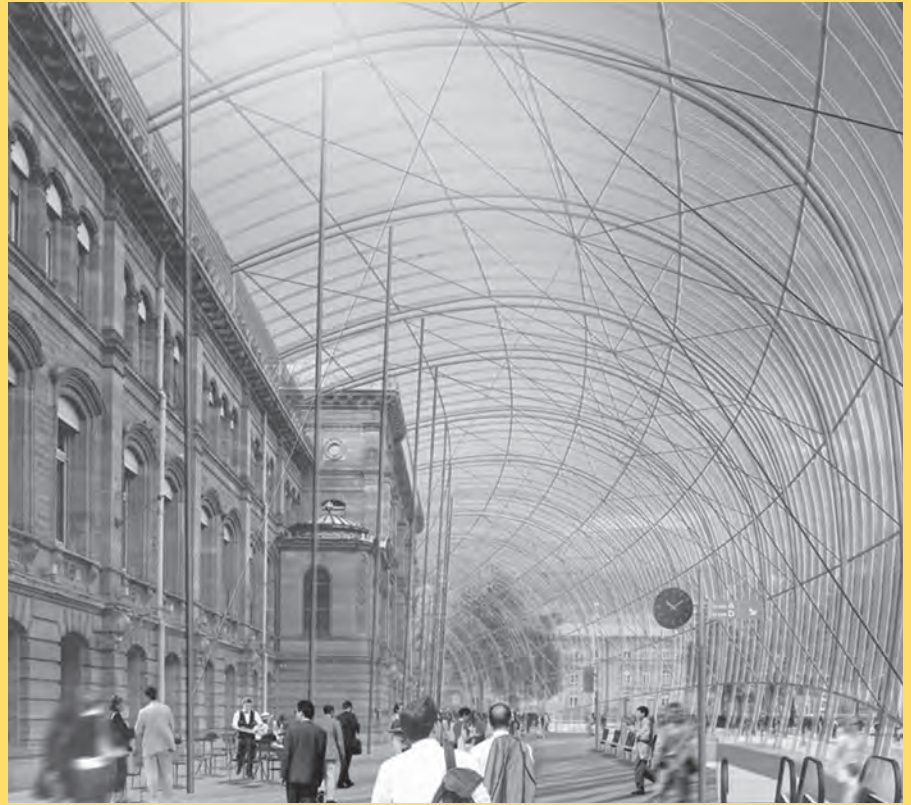
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such buildings are once again being viewed as a source of “beauty, excitement and fun.”

The TGV as a Model

The keynote speech at the symposium was given by Andreas Heym, Co-Director of the AREP, the station-design arm of the French National Railways (SNCF). His presentation examined the massive station-building effort that has accompanied construction of the national high-speed (TGV) rail system, now spreading tendrils out in four directions from Paris.

Heym’s presentation hit on many technical themes of the conference. Good stations need transparent, functional simplicity, and they need to integrate well into the urban fabric. But for the TGV, a new mode of travel also required a new building prototype, one that might once again give architectural expression to the “dream of travel.” To accomplish this, he explained how his office first had to rediscover what a train station looked like. “Stations that look like stations” was an idea that seemed to have gone out of fashion forty years ago.

The Montparnasse station in Paris was the first project the office took on. Here they began by cutting holes in floors to open up space and allow people to see where they were going. Vertical articulation allows people to understand space and use it more easily, Heym pointed out; but it also conveys dignity and excitement. “It’s all clear to us now,” he recalls, but at that time the plans were criticized because they eliminated commercial space.

By bundling station-building money with other sources of public funds, later TGV stations have come to embrace a number of more ambitious urban initiatives. In Lille, the station complex linking the TGV and



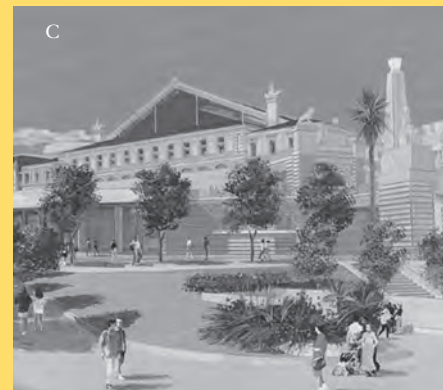
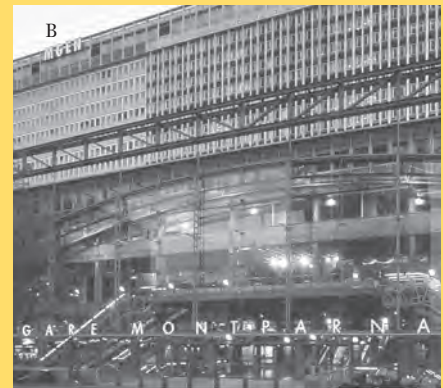
local lines was treated as a “roofed part of the city.” In Marseilles, a new TGV terminus and bus depot is being planned as part of a larger effort to recover an entire city district from crime and grime.

Meanwhile, stations outside city centers have taken on sculptural qualities that express local climatic forces. The double curving roof of the station outside Avignon expresses the need for shelter from the mistral winds of the Rhone Valley. The complex wood sunshade at nearby Arbois (outside Aix en Provence) evokes another Mediterranean precedent, the Arab *mashrabiyyah*.

Perhaps most dramatically, plans for a new station at Strasbourg call for a giant glass canopy to extend an extremely narrow station building beyond its existing facade. Once that bold glass shell is in place, plans call for the rest of a currently barren *place* in front of the station to be transformed into an urban forest and garden.

Other Examples

In the United States one of the most high-profile transit center projects will be a new Pennsylvania Station in New York City, planned to occupy the great Neoclassical Farley Post Office, across Eighth Avenue from the site of the city’s original and beloved Penn Station. The demoli-



tion of McKim, Meade and White’s grand train shed and reception hall there in the early 1960s was one of the most celebrated disasters in American architecture. The present station occupies the dismal basement of the Madison Square Garden complex that replaced it.

In presenting plans for the new station, Marilyn Taylor of SOM showed how a curving glass atrium will slice the Post Office building in half, bringing natural light down onto new subterranean platforms and announcing the presence of the station within the city. Ironically, Taylor explained this bid to restore some of the sense of drama and dignity that graced the original Penn Station has run afoul of the very preservationist movement the demolition of the original building helped create.

Taylor’s presentation revealed how glass is also the material of choice

in the design of many new transit terminals. But the integration of “engineering art” into building design to create iconic new forms is also a major focus of European work. This was clearly demonstrated in two projects by the British firm Nicolas Grimshaw & Partners.

Vincent Chang, Head of Operations for Grimshaw’s U.S. office, told how his firm is currently working on a design for a new subway interchange at Fulton Street in Lower Manhattan. Here, a number of lines converge in a major subterranean complex of cramped pedestrian tunnels and platforms. To open up this space, the design envisions an oculus with moveable heliostats (mirrors) reflecting natural light down four stories from street level.

Grimshaw is also working on plans to enclose the Spenser Street commuter rail terminal in Sydney, Australia. Here computer modeling was used to study conflicting wind patterns and design an irregularly undulating metal roof to allow the natural exhaust of diesel fumes.

Complexity and Uncertainty

The complexity of spatial problems involved in inserting multimodal facilities into dense urban settings can be extreme. At the end of his presentation, Heym pointed out how it is no longer possible to think primarily in terms of the plan of such structures. One must begin with section drawings that detail complex linkages of human, mechanical and vehicular systems.

To illustrate this point, he described work on the Gar Du Nord in Paris — an underground “octopus” linking TGV, buses, local trains, commuter rail (RER), the Paris Metro, and parking, all beneath the streets and blocks of an historic nineteenth-century neighborhood.

One of the most important

design parameters in such a project is minimizing the “stress of being underground,” he said. To do so, sightlines must be clear, daylight must be brought in wherever possible, and appealing materials must be used selectively to make the experience as pleasant as possible.

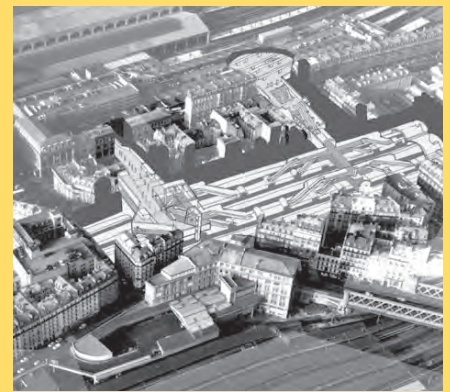
In the U.S. the difficulty of such designs was nowhere more evident than in planning for the replacement of the PATH train station under the World Trade Center. Robert Davidson, Chief Architect for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, explained how the design of this facility literally began the morning of Sept. 12, 2001. In the months that followed, decisions on a bewildering variety of design and planning variables had to be made before it was known what form the redevelopment of above-ground space would take.

In the end, this process led to the selection of a design by Santiago Calatrava for a structure of movable glass some have referred to as “Angel’s Wings.”

Issues of Local Concern

There was an important local angle to the symposium. San Francisco is currently planning to replace its aging and neglected downtown Transbay Terminal. When originally built in the late 1930s, the terminal handled commuter trains arriving from fast-growing East Bay suburbs over the lower deck of the Bay Bridge. But since these tracks were torn up and the regional BART system bored beneath Market Street, the terminal’s place in the city has been diminished to little more than a glorified bus depot.

It has long been the dream of local planners to replace this concrete behemoth with a new multilevel facility linking long-range and commuter buses, commuter rail from the



Peninsula, and — most importantly — new high-speed train service linking the city and the rest of the state. Today, planning for such a facility also includes redevelopment of surrounding lands to create a high-rise mixed-use district.

“It is not an everyday activity that you get to design a transit station as the center for a new neighborhood,” said Judith Trilling, the conference organizer. And in a final panel discussion the out-of-town experts were asked often-pointed questions about the feasibility of such a project.

Above: Multimodal stations in Paris often involve an octopus of passages beneath the historic city. Within such complicated, highly engineered environments, attention to spatial volumes and lighting can be used to minimize the stress of being underground.

All images are courtesy of Andreas Heym and AREP.

Contributors

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Terri Cohn is a San Francisco-based writer, independent curator, and art historian. She has been a Contributing Editor to *Artweek* magazine for fourteen years, and is a contributor to numerous other publications including *Release Print*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Art Papers*, *Camerawork*, and the on-line magazine *Stretchr*. She lectures widely, and currently teaches in the graduate program at the San Francisco Art Institute, and at the University of California, Berkeley, Extension.

Dennis Frenchman is a Professor of the Practice of Urban Design in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Urban Studies and Planning, where he currently directs the City Design and Development group and chairs the Master in City Planning program. He is also on the faculty of the MIT Center for Real Estate.

Roberta Brandes Gratz, a New York journalist and author, was a member of the 2004 EDRA/*Places* awards jury. Her books include *Cities: Back from the Edge* and *The Living City*. She was a founder and the first chair of the Jane Jacobs Center for the Study of the Living City, and is a member of the NYC Landmarks Commission.

Hugh Hardy is the founder of H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture, known for design of new buildings, restoration of historic structures, and planning projects for the public realm. His current commissions include the Brooklyn Academy of Music's restored facade (Brooklyn, NY); Theatre for a New Audience with Frank Gehry (Brooklyn, NY); restoration of the Baseball Hall of Fame (Cooperstown, NY); and a U.S. Federal Courthouse (Jackson, MS).

Neil Hrushowy is a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Design in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. He spent the spring semester in Copenhagen teaching two courses at the Centre for Public Space Research. His dissertation concerns ways the political-culture of a planning system affects the decisions governing, and investment in, pedestrian spaces; and how a fragmented pedestrian space network affects the pedestrian patterns of residents.

Sharon Irish is a Research Scholar in the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her current work focuses on the intersections of public policy, performance, and urban architecture. Her monograph on the architect Cass Gilbert was published in 1999; her next book on the contemporary artist Suzanne Lacy should come out within two years.

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Julie Kim is in her second year of the M.Arch/MCP concurrent degree program at UC Berkeley. She grew up, bored, in a bedroom community in New Jersey, and has spent most of her adulthood in cities, making up for lost time.

Marcia McNally is an Associate Adjunct Professor in the Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning.

Kate Milford is a photographer based in New York City whose work has appeared in *The New York Times* *Sophisticated Traveler*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *The Village Voice* and other publications. She teaches a course on documentary photography at the College of New Jersey. This photo essay is taken from a yearlong project documenting Downtown Brooklyn.

David Moffat, Managing Editor of *Places*, is also a Berkeley, California, architect and planner.

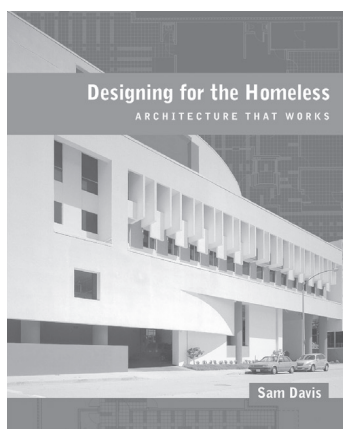
Jack Nasar (AICP, Ph.D.), Professor of City and Regional Planning at The Ohio State University, is editor of *the Journal of Planning Literature* and former chair of the Environmental Design Research Association. His published books include *Design Competition: Making Design Competition Work* (1999), *The Evaluative Image of the City* (1998), and *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research and Application* (1988).

Chris Sensenig is Assistant to the Editor of *Places* and a graduate student working toward a joint Masters of City Planning and Masters of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. He is currently studying the role of participation in place making.

Stephen Willats is a London artist and author. His books include *Between Buildings and People* (1996) and *Beyond the Plan: The Transformation of Personal Space in Housing* (2001). He is represented by the Victoria Miro Gallery, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW, U.K. (www.victoria-miro.com).

June Williamson is a practicing architect and urban designer in New York City. She is working on a case-study book about retrofitting suburbs.

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On the cover: WaterFire in Providence, RI, is one example of what researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Spain's Universitat Polytechnica de Catalunya have recently called

"event-places." This issue contains an extensive report of the MIT team's findings on how event-places are being used to reshape the experience of North American cities. Photograph: Thomas Payne, ©2002.

Call for Submissions**Eighth Annual EDRA/*Places* Awards**

Places and the Environmental Design Research Association announce the eighth annual EDRA/*Places* Awards for Place Design, Planning, and Research. We seek nominations for exemplary work from practitioners and researchers in any environmental design or related discipline.

Awards will be presented at the EDRA annual meeting, in April in Vancouver, B.C. Winning projects and commentary will be published in the Fall 2005 issue of *Places*. **The postmark deadline for submissions is February 7, 2005.**

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For more information about the awards program, prospective entrants are encouraged to visit **www.places-journal.org** and/or **<http://edra.org>**. Past award winners have appeared in *Places* 12.1, 13.1, 14.1, 15.1 and 16.1. To receive an entry form, please contact:

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