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**ON THE COVER:** The RTKL offices, Dallas, are part of this issue's portfolio. Photograph by Blackmon-Winters.

**COMING UP:** Texas in the 1920s



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EDITOR: As one of the 266 entrants in the 1987 TSA Design Awards competition (TA Nov/Dec 1987) who did not receive a citation, I sincerely thank you for your gracious editorial (i.e. explanation) as to the reason so few awards were given this year. Your embarrassment for the few numbers is understood. As a public-affairs awareness program, the 1987 Awards Program has failed.

Mr. Good's statement that "excellent architecture was simply overlooked" has to be the understatement of the decade. It appears that he was so embarrassed by the low number of awards that he felt it necessary to present 11 entries the jury passed over.

The next time TSA makes a \$23,205 investment (figuring 273 entries multiplied by the \$85 entry fee), let's see if we can realize more.

*Jim Wofford  
Wofford and Wofford  
El Paso*

EDITOR: I have read with interest Michael Meyers' article (TA, Sep/Oct 1987) concerning interior architecture. In that article he refers to a "registration process that virtually excludes interiors" and to the Intern Development Program and the registration examination focusing everywhere but on interiors.

The legislature charged TBAE with safeguarding life, health, property, the public welfare, and protecting the public against the irresponsible practice of architecture (Article 249a, V.T.C.S.). The protection of the interests of the profession of architecture are those of the individual architect and professional organizations such as the Texas Society of Architects and not those of a registration board.

It is understood that your comments are presented in the interests of the profes-

sion of architecture as you deem appropriate: the focus on interior architecture.

I write only to emphasize that the interest of TBAE must rest with the public and not that of the profession: the Intern Development Program and the Architect Registration Examination, therefore, focus on architecture as it relates to the protection of the public and not to emphasize or de-emphasize any aspect of the practice of architecture beyond those guidelines.

I fail to clearly understand Meyers' [implication that] IDP [does not focus] on interior architecture. That program does not focus narrowly on any type of practice but rather on the procedures common to all types of practice: programming, schematic design, cost analysis, code research, design development, construction documents, specifications, bidding and contract negotiation, observation, etc. Are these procedures not conducted in the practice of interior architecture?

The examination has been designed to respond to challenges in court of the relevancy of the examination to architecture as it is currently practiced today. NCARB circulated questionnaires to its certificate holders throughout the United States asking them what they did in their architectural practice. From that response the current examination format was designed. The proportion of concern for architecture that was particular to interiors would have been included in the examination; therefore, [the] concern that the examination neglects interior architecture would suggest that it is neglected only to the extent that it is commonly practiced by architects [in the U.S.]

*Robert H. Norris, AIA  
Executive Director  
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## ITALY IN HOUSTON SHOWCASES THE PRIMAL ART

Every architect knows that Italy is the spiritual, if not the formal, progenitor of the art of architecture. The primacy of architecture, and its Italian genesis, was reasserted in Houston last October during "Italy in Houston," a gift without equal to the Bayou City from the gifted peninsula. For the month of October, the city was filled with plays, marionettes, dances, movies, and urban light displays. And architecture provided the setting for many of the performances.

*Giustino*, a seldom-heard Baroque opera by Antonio Vivaldi, was performed in Jones Hall by the all-female company from Vicenza's Teatro Olimpico. The three-act opera had one set: the architectural backdrop, with its receding-perspective avenues, created for the Teatro Olimpico by Antonio Palladio. The otherwise-empty stage was carpeted in red, and the performers wore red-on-red costumes. Such graphic boldness illuminated the structure of Vivaldi's music, at the same time that it showed the elegance, appropriateness, and naturalness of the human figure within the proportions of Palladio's architecture.

A small exhibit at the Menil Collection illustrated recent work on the medieval Basilica at Vicenza, which was remodeled by Palladio in 1549. It is currently being studied by Renzo Piano so that officials can add a large music hall, a theater, spaces for dance and art exhibits, a study center, a library, shops, restaurants, and municipal offices. While the acoustics of the large, barrel-shaped wood-roofed hall are excellent for Renaissance and Baroque music, the interior is unbearably hot in summer and cold in winter. The first stages of Piano's project included air-flow diagrams, thermal and



"Luminarie" transformed downtown Houston as part of a month-long festival called "Italy in Houston."

acoustical studies, and lighting schemes. Nothing in the studies showed the character of Piano's plans for the venerable structure, but the delicacy of the problem is reflected in his comments:

"...first required [is] an extended period of silence and contemplation; during this long-distance conversation over four centuries, the game calls for greater patience than usual; one must study, listen, and capture the essence of the spaces, of ancient rules, of poetry, of places.

One must go forward with prudence, but also with courage; but where does one draw the law between courage and arrogance? Beyond which point does intuition become violation; and where, conversely, does prudence become cowardice?"

The most wonderful part of "Italy in Houston," however, was "Le Luminarie," large Baroque trellis structures, covered in tiny lights, that were displayed in downtown Houston parks. These orna-

mental fantasies from the Puglia region of southern Italy are used on festival days to line narrow streets and piazzas, and thus formed a completely new and transfiguring element in downtown Houston. The stranded apparitions made City Hall a cathedral of light, and washed One Shell Plaza, across the street, in the blazing light of a setting sun.

Most of "Italy in Houston" focused on performing arts, but it was the architecture, intended as a backdrop, that stole the show. Unfortunately for Houston, the celebration was short-lived: the Luminarie were gone long before the start of the Christmas season. But the sense of place they imparted to downtown's canyons and underutilized piazzas won't be forgotten by those who saw them.

—Gerald Moorhead

Contributing Editor Gerald Moorhead is principal of Gerald Moorhead, Architect.



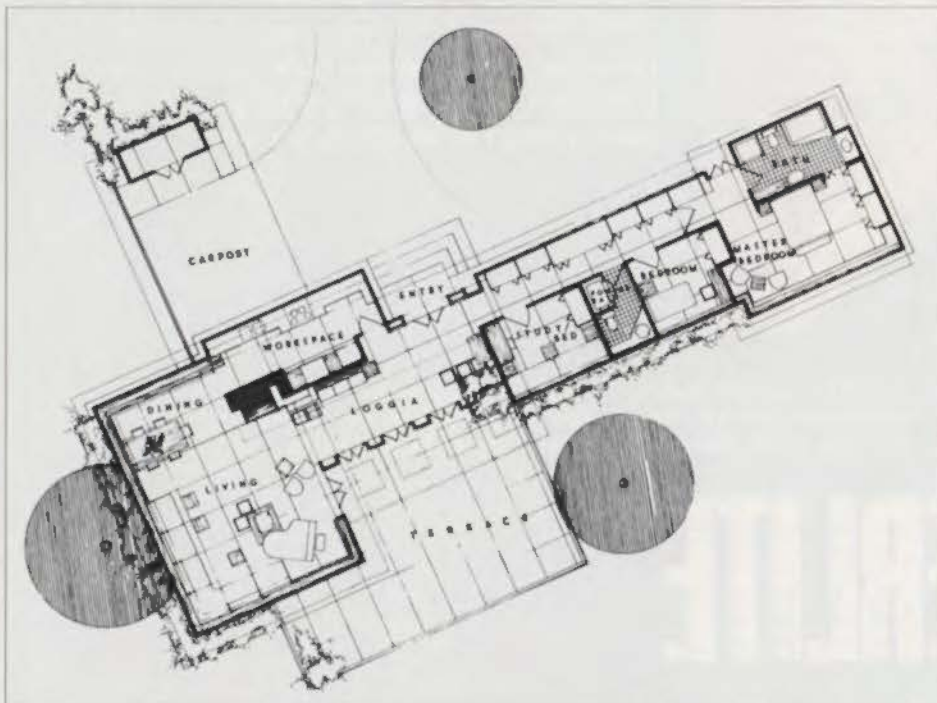
## WRIGHT EXHIBIT OPENS NATIONAL TOUR IN DALLAS

The Dallas Museum of Art and the LTV Center Pavilion will play host starting in January to the national opening of *Frank Lloyd Wright: In the Realm of Ideas*, a major exhibition examining the design principles of the modern master.

The exhibition will contain approximately 160 objects, ranging from photo-



Interior of a Usonian Automatic House: the Wright exhibition will feature a similar replica.



Plan for a Usonian Automatic House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, to be built at the Dallas Museum of Art; it will give the public a chance to experience the master's treatment of three-dimensional space.

graphs to furnishings and original drawings. Also included will be architectural models for such projects as the Guggenheim Museum and the Arizona State Capitol, a work station from the Johnson Wax Administration Building, and furniture and glass from private residences, all installed in a "Wrightian" environment that complements the principles outlined in the exhibition. Organizers say that half the objects on display will illustrate structures that were never built—architecture that remains "in the realm of ideas."

The exhibition is organized into four sections that show the underlying principles of "organic architecture," the harmonious relationship of parts to each other and to the whole that Wright sought to achieve in his work. "Destruction of the Box," the first section, examines Wright's creation of flowing interior and exterior spaces. "The Nature of the Site," featuring Fallingwater and Taliesin West, examines the architect's careful attention to natural surroundings, while "Materials and Methods" examines Wright's belief in "Architecture as the triumph of human imagination over materials." The final section, "Building for Democracy," will explore Wright's belief in human dignity and individual freedom and will feature such projects as the Arizona State Capitol and the Dallas Theatre Center.

The highlight of the exhibition promises to be the Usonian Automatic Exhibition House, an 1,800-square-foot house designed in the 1950s (but unbuilt) as part of a series embodying the "Usonian Automatic" principles that Wright formulated as appropriate for modern American families. The exhibition house, constructed on the museum grounds under the supervision of Taliesin Associated Architects, is a lightweight, demountable adaptation of Wright's original cement-block design. It will allow museum visitors to experience Wright's ideas in a three-dimensional space.

Gerald Nordland, art historian and former director of the Milwaukee Art Museum, is the curator of the show, which was organized by the Scottsdale Arts Center and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and supported by grants from the Whirlpool Corporation and Kohler Co. On display in Dallas from Jan. 19 through April 17, the exhibition will also travel to Washington, D.C., Miami, Chicago, Scottsdale, and San Diego.

—Joel Warren Barna

## AUSTIN CIVIC CENTER PROJECT GAINS MOMENTUM

During the real estate boom of the early 1980s, Austin gained a certain notoriety among developers as a tough nut to crack. People wanting to build big office buildings downtown seemed to get their way, but putting pressure on the beloved hills or neighborhoods of the city was another story. If it wasn't a confusing web of ordinances blocking a project, it was a headstrong citizens' group, or, some developers charged, an uncooperative city staff. At the same time, major public undertakings fared even worse than private ones.

An attempt by the city in 1985 to build a much-needed municipal office complex succumbed to the vagaries of Austin politics, in spite of a design competition that included the work of national luminaries. Hopes are now tied to the most ambitious municipal project Austin has ever dreamed of, a multi-million-dollar "civic

NEWS, continued on page 11



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center" that would serve as a combination convention center and urban centerpiece.

Like other revenue-hungry cities across the country, Austin is turning to the convention center as a way to attract a low-cost source of revenue to the local economy. Tourists spend money, but they don't have to be supported in turn by schools, roads, and utilities. Civic-center boosters also point out Austin's unique position as a state capitol with a ready convention market—the headquarters of virtually every trade association in Texas.

Among other Texas cities that have recently expanded or built convention facilities is Houston, where the George R. Brown Convention Center was completed in September. The \$105-million, 25-acre complex, was first criticized for its location—facing an undeveloped part of downtown—but later applauded for opening itself to the city and for stimulating the area's revitalization.

As the Brown Convention Center demonstrates, cities have to do more these days to attract conventions than build a sprawling downtown complex with all the architectural affability of a suburban shopping mall. To compete effectively as a convention city, observers say Austin must build a facility that alludes to the city's urban character and attributes. What happens inside the convention center is important, but of equal importance is what happens where the convention center meets the sidewalk and street.

The Austin civic center proposal first gained momentum in October of 1986, when the city council sought to find a site for the complex, basing its decision on a series of studies by the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. SOM had identified and evaluated 11 possible sites around town, eventually narrowing those to five in the central business district. SOM conducted feasibility studies on four of the sites that seemed to offer the most promise.

The idea from the outset was to combine a convention center with, if not a city hall complex, at least an assortment of cultural facilities—concert hall, theater, "festival market," public plazas—that would soften the edges of the convention center and make the entire complex a

more integral part of Austin.

When the city scheduled a series of public hearings on the project and set a date for a final decision, real estate brokers, landowners, architects, and neighborhood groups came out of the woodwork, pitching their own ideas about where the civic center should go and how it should go there. Charges soon began flying that many of the players, with fi-

### ***Austin officials have chosen an architect-engineer team for the proposed convention center.***

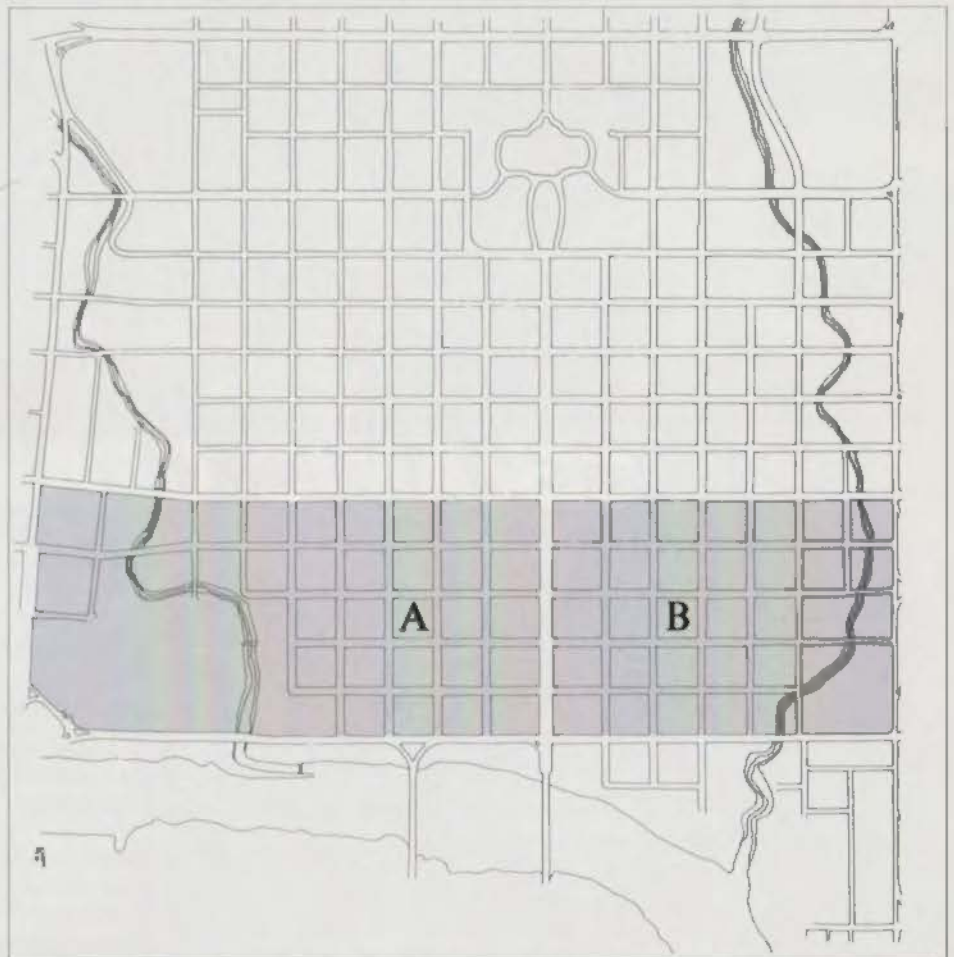
ancial interests in the areas under study, had less-than-noble motives.

For a while, it seemed that the civic center project would go the way of the municipal office complex (MOC in local parlance). And it may yet. But momentum appears to be building again. After months of rethinking the issue, the city council issued three requests for pro-

posals—one for a project manager, one for an architect-engineer team, and one for a financial planner. The council also scrapped all specific sites under consideration and designated two general areas downtown as official civic-center planning districts, passing the onus of selecting the site to the yet-to-be-assembled team of consultants. By Thanksgiving, the city had selected all three. As architect-engineer, a joint-venture firm called The Austin Collaborative Venture was chosen from among 10 teams responding to the architect-engineer RFP. (These included Murphy/Jahn, Inc., of Chicago and St. Louis-based Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum.) Many observers thought the most-marketable group vying for the job was the team of Ford, Powell & Carson of San Antonio, Austin architects Black Atkinson Vernooy (winner of the ill-fated MOC commission), and Charles Moore, FAIA, who holds the O'Neil Ford chair in architecture at UT Austin.

The council's choice surprised many.

NEWS, continued on page 24



*Either the west zone (A) or east zone (B) will be home to the new Austin civic center.*



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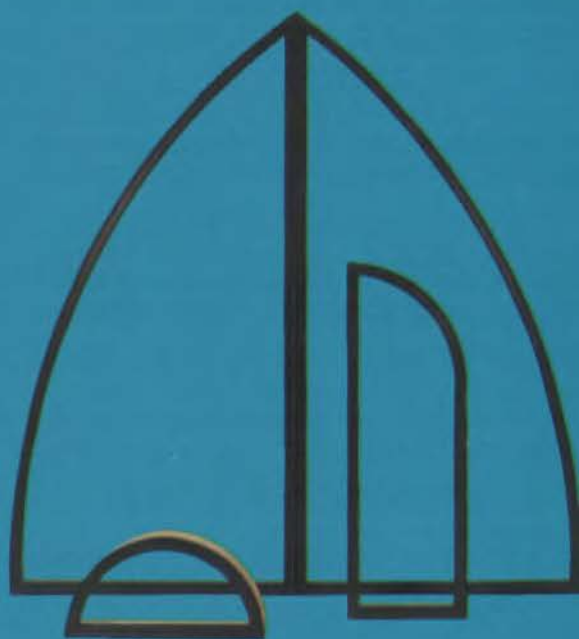
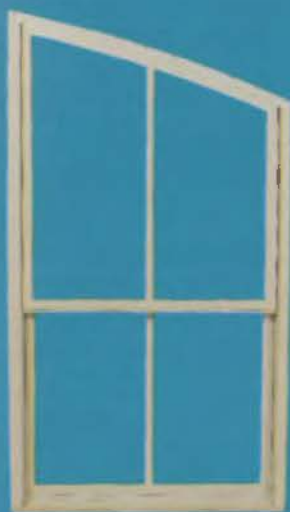
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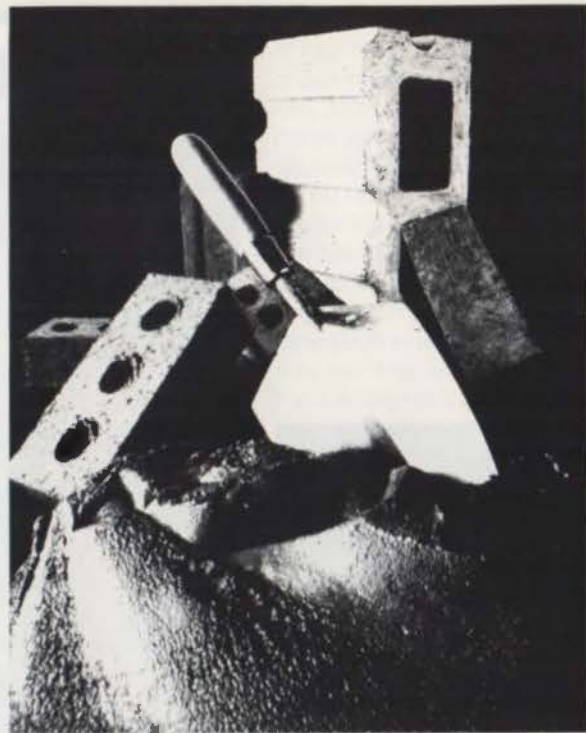
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# ARCHITECTS PREPARE FOR PRACTICE IN THE 1990s

By Joel Warren Barna



Mark Ross

The Van Mossman Merchandising Showroom in New York is one of a number of projects that represent a change planned for by architecture/engineering giant CRSS. Bruce Wilkinson, CRSS president and chief executive officer, says the firm will "be a leader in specialized building types," but predicts that interiors commissions will grow in importance relative to basic architecture.

In nature, scientists say, populations of organisms are shaped to a state of optimal adaptation by changing environmental forces. As Darwin wrote, "It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working."

This evolutionary rule also applies, if metaphorically, to the architectural profession. The business environment often forces firms to modify not only the services they provide and the markets they serve, but how they organize to meet market demand.

And it must often seem that the market conspires to make the professional life of a typical architect or firm, in the words of philosopher Thomas Hobbes, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Not only are most buildings designed and constructed without architects, but clients seem to be constantly inventing ways to pit architects against each other over prices—competition that can damage victor as much as loser.

The latest bad news in this regard comes from the *Professional Services Marketing Journal*, which predicts that the next decade will see the wholesale extinction of mid-sized architectural firms (two to 10 times larger than the 10-person-or-less firms that account for 65 percent of the Texas market, but smaller than the multi-hundred-architect giants) that have flourished in Texas. They argue that single-city developer work is drying up nationwide and that higher technology will favor firms with large capital reserves; in order to sur-

vive, firms large enough to handle office buildings and other big jobs must be able to support offices in several locations. On the other hand, demand for design of residential and small commercial facilities will keep small architectural firms active. A more or less evenly distributed market will be squeezed from the middle until it resembles a dumbbell, divided between well-capitalized giants and the much more numerous "boutique" firms, with almost nothing in between.

## TEXAS FIRMS PREPARE FOR THE NEXT DECADE

The services architects provide and, perhaps even more important, the ways architects organize to practice their profession, are both under pressure. To survive under today's conditions, Texas architects must not only be good, but nimble. And, as the current shake-out in the design and construction fields shows, many firms are proving to have the qualities needed. In giant and middle-sized firms and sole-practitioner offices, architects are looking for ways not only to deal with the business world they face today and tomorrow—they are finding ways to increase the role of architects in society, to expand the pie, instead of fighting over smaller and smaller slices.

## FROM DESIGN TO EQUITY OWNERSHIP

The firm showing perhaps the most dramatic recent change over the last decade is Houston-based CRSS, Inc. Caudill Rowlett & Scott, a partnership that began in College Station in the 1950s, has developed into what is now the second-largest architectural/engi-

neering/construction firm in the world. In 1971, the firm became a publicly traded corporation. An even greater change came in 1983, when CRS merged with the engineering firm J.E. Serrine, Inc. At the time of the merger, the firm's architecture division—large enough to handle designing whole new towns in the Middle East—contributed only about 27 percent of the firm's billings. That percentage has decreased, according to CRSS president and chief executive officer Bruce Wilkinson, and now represents about 20 percent of the total. And recent developments—creating a capital division that invests in power plants and underwrites insurance—may move the firm even farther from its architectural roots. By the end of the decade CRSS officers predict that capital invested in power plants in the Northeast and Midwest will bring in more revenue than the architectural division.

What's the future for architecture at CRSS? "We will be a leader and innovator in specialized building types, such as research-and-development centers" says Wilkinson. "We will also stay active in health care and in educational work—there's been a resurgence in California, Florida, and Texas—and in public buildings such as civic centers and performing arts halls." At the same time, says Wilkinson, renovation and interior architecture are becoming more important relative to basic architecture. "There's hardly a community in this country that you wouldn't call overbuilt. And virtually every industry I'm familiar with spends time trying to develop ways to work better with fewer employees. That



being the case, it's hard to see a forever-expanding world of new building. What we'll be doing is bringing out-of-date buildings up to speed."

#### AN INSIDE JOB

Architect Neil Lacey of the Dallas firm PLM Design, which was founded in 1973, says his firm has stressed continuity and stability in contrast to the dramatic growth (and equally dramatic contractions) experienced by firms like CRSS. The staff, now numbering 22, has never been above 24. The firm also settled on three areas of specialization that have been the mainstay of the steady growth over the last decade: corporate interiors, design of industrial buildings, and residential design. "It looks like a strange mix, but our clients recognize that our corporate interiors and industrial design all amount to the same thing: corporate work," says Lacey. In addition, corporate officers found PLM's designers easy to work with on offices and plants and commissioned them to design or remodel their private houses, he adds.

The emphasis within the firm has been on "efficient communication with clients," according to Lacey. "We have a project architect and a designer who stay with each project from the first client contact completely through the life of each project. We treat each project as if it were a little office in itself, although the team may be handling several at a time. That gives clients the personal contact they want."

That desire for personal attention is what's shaping the market for architectural services, Lacey says. Instead of pushing middle-sized firms to get bigger, he says, the business climate of the next decade will push them to break into small firms organized to provide personal attention. The role of middle-sized firms will be filled, Lacey predicts, by ad hoc joint ventures put together at the request of clients to match the design skills of one firm with the administrative expertise of another. "This is something we're seeing more and more," Lacey



*Corgan Associates has new offices in an adapted Dallas warehouse building.*

says. "It gives the client the best of both worlds."

#### TRANSITION AND POSITION

Jack Corgan, principal of Corgan Associates Architects, Dallas, says predictions of the death of middle-sized firms are premature. "We've always done projects in competition with firms bigger than we are," says Corgan. "We feel like we are a small big firm, not a medium-sized firm."

Corgan says that his firm has also weathered a change that breaks up many other firms: a transition from first- to second-generation ownership. The change began about 10 years ago, Corgan says, and it has affected most aspects of the practice: the number of principals increased from three to nine; the staff grew from 15 to around 70. The one thing that did not change was the client base.

"Under the original partners, we had developed a good relationship with a number of corporate clients. When the time came for the transition, the first thing

we did was talk to the clients and ask them how we could best serve them," says Corgan. "We needed to see what they valued, to let them give us a blueprint for the future." They learned, he adds, that their clients wanted to be listened to. The new partners and new staff of the firm were built with young practitioners. "It was risky," Corgan says. "We could have had a discontinuity between the 60-year-olds and the 35-year-olds. But we thought it would be better to start with new people and get the goals and ideals of this firm rooted in their work lives." The gamble has paid off, he says: the firm is well positioned for continued growth throughout the rest of the century.

#### DESIGNING MANAGEMENT AND MANAGING DESIGN

Other firms are exploring new ways to build revenues from the architect's overall knowledge not only of design but of programming and planning for complex projects. Some of the most innovative explorations in this area have been by the Houston office

of Llewelyn-Davies Sahni, an international design and planning firm. LDS, for example, produced design guidelines and is providing design-management services for the Downtown Triparty Transportation Improvements project in San Antonio—a \$40-million package of transportation and streetscape improvements designed both to increase traffic flow and bring new pedestrian life to a congested, decaying 70-block area near the Riverwalk.

It is a project of labyrinthine complexity. There were three major client groups—the city, the local transit authority, and the downtown business owners' association—and four funding sources. In addition, the often-fractious San Antonio public was actively involved. Acting before any designers were chosen or the scope of services was defined, LDS had to devise a methodology that would bring together the physical and aesthetic desires of client groups and the general public, as well as to define ways that the design process could bolster both diversity and a unified imagery in the project area. In addition, the guidelines had to be presented without any graphic representation of the design intent, says Jonathan Smulian, Director of Planning at LDS. "This might have been interpreted as an invasion of the purview of the designers by the design managers," according to Smulian. The guidelines and the design-management process have been successful, Smulian says. In the last year, design has proceeded on the various aspects of the total project, and even under intense public pressure, the different parts display the desired qualities of diversity and compatibility. And LDS has won the American Planning Association's Texas Chapter 1987 Planning Award for the project.

"This is an important area that we as experienced architects are uniquely capable of handling, and it's an important new area of growth for our firm," says Smulian. "What we can offer is expertise, sensitivity to the process designers go through, and the objectivity of seeing things from both



*The new headquarters of the French Alliance of Houston is a project of The Waldman-Genik Studio. Christopher Genik, a principal in the firm, is among those architects who prefer to practice in a small office, saying a small office is better suited to focusing on design.*



sides of the table.”

Another architect exploring the market for specialized planning and programming services is Jeff Waters, head of Houston-based Space Consultants, Inc. In the 1970s, Waters worked at Caudill Rowlett & Scott, where he contributed to programming-pioneer Willie Peña's seminal book, *Problem Seeking*. He established and directed programming departments at 3D/International and Morris/Aubry Architects before starting his own firm in 1984. Space Consultants was founded on the premise that many design firms would encounter projects that required specialized programming expertise. But it has grown in another area as well: Waters has turned his programming skill to producing “needs profiles” for real-estate management and development clients. The needs profiles are grounded in the analysis, strategies, and language of management instead of the designer's visually oriented, diagrammatic working style. The firm's product, Waters said, helps both designers and

managers know that design will be firmly tied in with a program that accurately reflects the needs and goals of the client and that fits into a long-term strategy of facilities management. This speciality will grow, Waters predicts, as developers and corporations come to realize that design and build-out costs of several hundred thousand dollars for a large facility begin to seem insignificant when compared to the millions that a sound facilities-analysis and -occupancy strategy could save over the term of a 15-year lease of the same space.

#### STAYING SMALL

For every firm exploring new ways to grow and new services to present to the public, however, there are several whose principals want to remain firmly in the mainstream of Texas architectural practice.

Most Texas architects are in small firms or solo practice, however, and to them, new services and the fortunes of big firms are less important than the opportunity to design buildings for what-

ever clients they have, at whatever scale the clients need.

One such practitioner is Christopher Genik, an assistant professor of architecture at the University of Houston's College of Architecture, who recently earned a Master of Architecture degree from Rice University and who is a principal of The Waldman-Genik Studio, with a growing reputation as one of Houston's most respected young designers.

Design is what matters, says Genik, and designers are not merely playing visual games. On the contrary, designers have a crucial mediating role to play for the whole of society, particularly in such a relatively new place as Texas. “Houston is so fascinating because it's just becoming an inhabited place. There are two worlds that are reaching parity: the industrial world, with its giant scale and its scaleless daily activities, and the genteel, garden world of the old South, a familiar way of life based on classical values. These worlds clash, and the architect has to help achieve resolutions between them.”

Genik says he is determined to work not only in Houston but on both the East and West coasts and eventually in Europe. Will his small, design-driven office grow into a large business to handle the work he is determined to do?

“Absolutely not,” says Genik, who sees a limit to the size a firm can reach and still maintain the open, questioning stance required to maintain good design. “I would want to work with a small group of people who are responsible for their own tasks, who meet periodically to discuss the discoveries they have made along the way. It's important that it be an interactive process between me and the people working with me. That's how I see my career developing.”

Architects as diverse as Bruce Wilkinson, Jack Corgan, Neal Lacey, Jonathan Smulian, Jeff Waters, and Christopher Genik show that architecture is a house with many mansions. It is a business, but it is also an art, and balance between the two can accommodate a wide range of aptitudes, predilections, traditions, and explorations. ■



# WORKING WORKPLACES: FIVE ARCHITECTS' OFFICES

By Joel Warren Barna

Blackmon-Winters



Surprisingly placed objects break up the regularity of RTKL's office grid.

Blackmon-Winters



RTKL office, exterior



Blackmon-Winters

Blackmon-Winters



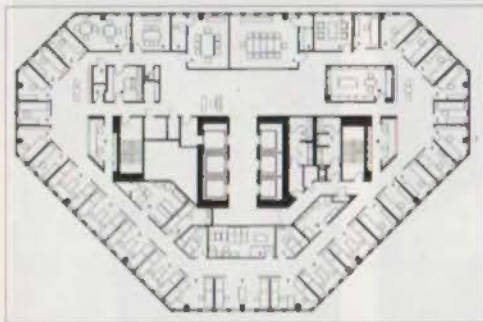
RTKL's foyer, with its curved, banded walls, Corbusier chairs, and art by Texas artists, shows some of the surprising juxtapositions the firm offers its clients.

The Dallas offices of RTKL Associates, Inc., on the second and third floors of a building the architects designed when they reworked the Quadrangle mixed-use center, are united by an apse-ended glass shed roof. Admitting natural light, it supplements the light of industrial lamps mounted on custom-designed frames—examples of the type of lighting this firm often creates for its numerous retail clients. The potentially static regularity of the office is subverted by surprising objects, such as the file-storage pavilions and the stairs to the third floor, that break the grid. ■





White walls, bleached oak floors, and the absence of fluorescent lights help give Omniplan, Inc., a serene, loft-like air.



Omniplan floor plan shows studios around perimeter.



Studios feature custom-made glass and lacquer screens.



Kathy Heard Design is housed in a former rug laundry.



"Tongue-in-cheek" art is used to enliven the economical, minimal space.

Dallas architects Omniplan, Inc., say the offices they have occupied for the last two years embody a unique philosophy and attitude toward design.

"We wanted everyone to have a studio," explains E. Ann Hamilton, Omniplan's Director of Interiors. "Senior staff members have single studios, while junior staff members share double studios." All are arranged around the building perimeter, leaving the core of the building for such shared support spaces as sample, slide, and file storage rooms.

Besides using space efficiently, the arrangement of studios at the window wall also made it possible to avoid using standard office-building fluorescent lighting. "It's a much more pleasant place to work without fluorescents," says Hamilton.

"We find that on most days people don't need to use electric lights at all in the studios. And using incandescent downlighting, along with the daylight, provides the most wonderful changing shade and shadows."

Bleached oak floors, white walls, and custom-built screens made of glass and white lacquer help give the offices the serene, personable feeling the architects were aiming for—between that of a loft space and a museum.

Kathy Heard Design is a prize-winning one-woman architecture firm specializing in restaurant and hospital design. Heard's offices are housed in a

2,200-square-foot two-story former rug laundry south of downtown Houston. Working with a former partner, Heard reworked the interiors using inexpensive

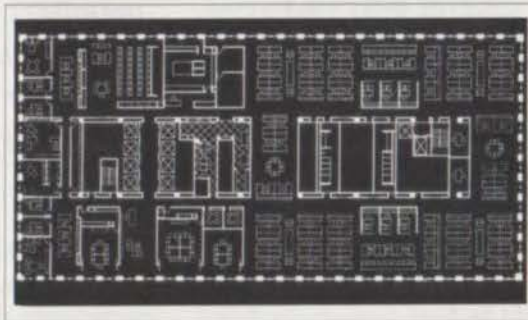
materials. Paint cans, for example, became light fixtures, the concrete floors were stained black, and metal shelving and damaged doors became a desk

system. "Tongue-in-cheek" art, including plastic-flower paintings and '50s beauty parlor portraits, is used to enliven the space.





The offices of Gensler Associates, ABOVE and BELOW LEFT, provide flexibility and an appropriate image for the firm.



**G**ensler and Associates Architects chose a strongly formal Miesian geometry for their 30,000-square-foot Houston offices. It provides functional flexibility, maximum reuse of furniture from previous office space, and an image appropriate for the firm's business style.

The public areas are spacious and flexible. The lobby introduces an uncluttered reception area open to natural light. Sliding panels permit conference rooms to be grouped together or used one at a time.

The design studio is organized into activity nodes with one side of the floor plan mirroring the other. Open conference areas, with "tackable" wall surfaces, invite teamwork. Pods of private offices, which share meeting rooms, are located to either side of the building core. Millwork surrounds disguise existing secretarial desks and computers stationed behind central file areas. The resource center, lunchroom, printroom, and supply area, with their brightly colored accents, are centrally located.

The entire office is dressed in neutral colors and rich textures, which act as a background for displays of presentation materials and work in progress.

**T**he offices of Good, Haas & Fulton in Dallas's LTV Center are intended to present "a corporate image consistent with the philosophy" of this growing 25-person firm, combining "stylish design and lasting value."

The 7,500-square-foot, L-shaped space was laid out with a clear, direct plan. Two studios occupy the legs of the "L." The architects took a cue from the building lobby as a way of resolving the problems created by the differences in alignment—a curving wall is used to define client-contact areas, in contrast to the rectilinear, equally sized studio spaces in the legs of the "L." Each studio has a "small-office" ambience, with its own service, clerical, and conference spaces.

The architects used "datum



A curved wall establishes "public" areas in the Good, Haas & Fulton offices.

lines," spaced 16 inches apart (recalling the horizontal banding of the adjacent Dallas Museum of Art) to discipline the vertical ordering of the base, doors, walls, columns, and systems furniture

throughout the offices. Construction costs for the project averaged \$21.50 per square foot, the architects report.



A partner's office anchors the corner formed by two interlocking studios at Good, Haas & Fulton.



# A MODEST PROPOSAL: GET POLITICS OUT OF DESIGN

By Douglas P. Harvey

Architecture assumes many, often contradictory, guises. It is a business, a technology, a social science, a professional service. But while it consciously embraces all of these, underneath it is still a plastic, creative art. The other plastic arts are largely "personal," conceived through and representing an individual's private energy and internal analysis. In breadth and complexity, architecture is unique.

Architecture's artifact is a peculiar hybrid, both instrumental and expressive, an immensely expensive construct that is fundamentally collective in its creative roots and use. Although there are other collective arts, only opera and motion pictures approach its complexity, and cost.

Architecture's distinctive social character appears at the very beginning of the design process. In the usual genesis of a preliminary design, many ideas arise and are explored during or following an interchange among several people. The psychology of the individuals involved in the project therefore define the limits of possible outcomes. Also, the nature of social interaction translates the design process, which otherwise would depend on drawings and models, into a second form: words. Almost from the first, design, which we still tend to imagine as an individual, private act, takes place in the realm of public discourse.

## FROM DESIGN TO PERFORMANCE

Think of the process of generating design ideas in terms of the parties involved. In the first possible state, the solitary designer working alone follows the "artistic" model. The resulting design is unquestionably that one designer's. Where two people are present at the inception of a design, however, there are three possible creative outcomes: the process is dominated by "A" or "B," or a synthesis of their ideas emerges. In any creative interaction, "A" proposes and "B" responds. This completes a simple cognitive exchange—a "transaction." Each transaction adjusts the individual contributions towards a collective idea whose separate ancestors are often untraceable. Architects do this every day and come to take such a method for granted, forgetting that other artists almost never work this way.

Where three or more participate in the design process, matters become even more complicated. First, there is the impact of competing pathways. Any party may take up an idea generated by any one of the others; the possibilities increase faster than the number of participants, enriching the process but also complicating it and slowing it down. Where several people participate, a new entity is created: an audience made up of those who are not part of any given statement-response transaction. And where there is an audience, there is a "performance" designed to en-

gage the agreement of the audience. When "A" and "B" exchange ideas in the presence of third parties, they engage in a performance as well as a conversation, and the "actors" at least subconsciously recognize that the dual nature of their role as performers will inevitably affect subsequent thoughts. The audience will end up judging the performance as well as its content.

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*When two people exchange ideas in the presence of third parties, they engage in a performance as well as a conversation, and both are judged by the "audience." Once the members of a design group begin to exploit the structure of the performance, they have begun to permit group politics to take precedence over design issues.*

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## FROM PERFORMANCE TO POLITICS

The performance itself—psychologists call it a recursive interaction because each element is based on the previous accumulation of elements in the dialogue—is not integral to the group's goals. But, as architects soon learn, it is inescapable, a factor to be anticipated. Performance then is able to influence the event as well as the selection and expression of ideas. It creates a second level of recursiveness, wherein the outcome of each performance affects the next. Once the members of a design group begin, systematically and with premeditation, to exploit the structure of their interaction so as to influence its outcome, this second level of recursiveness has turned into politics.

This may not be the first dictionary definition of the term, but it is still politics. The design performance becomes, to a degree, both a negotiation and a factional struggle on behalf of one's ideas, with the unspoken goal not only of getting a superior result but of establishing the primacy of one's ideas, gaining the high ground, becoming the hero.

In a political environment, the exploration of ideas unavoidably takes a course different from the one it would otherwise follow. Whenever audience reaction may diminish the standing of a participant, that person must consider the risk that he or she may appear ignorant or obtuse. Further, others may seek to portray that person's contribution as such, regardless of the "objective" situation. This consideration, if it leads to modified statements or



responses, is the parent of political self-censorship and the arch-enemy of creativity.

The medium for design activity is usually verbal; spoken exchanges supplant visual ones and literary analogues for architecture shape responses, in spite of the fact that architecture remains fundamentally a spatial and material language, not a drawn one—and certainly not a written or spoken one. Interpreting design ideas through the mist of language can create its own set of problems. But one cannot escape substituting words for other interpretive forms. This becomes evident when you consider how deeply the identification of “language” with “verbal forms” penetrates into artistic criticism. In architecture, the semiotic model of criticism deploys concepts from linguistics in design analysis. The literary model posits that architects have “vocabularies” and buildings have “dialogues.” But there are no comparable analytic concepts operating in reverse. The limits of communicative form condemn us to “talk” about art, even though it would seem absurd to “sculpt” about literature.

### FROM POLITICS TO SOCIOBIOLOGY

This critical distancing from the intended and ultimate language of the artifact increases the influence of the performance at the expense of the core of reality nominally underlying the process. The performance may become more important than the building being designed. At the same time, decision-making becomes political in another sense: its outcome is influenced by the power relationships of the group’s members. Formal relationships (who has authority in the organization), informal relationships (the previously established “pecking order” of the individuals involved, whatever their formal relationships), even instantaneous relationships (which can allow an articulate draftsman to out-argue a partner-in-charge), also determine how the design process works out.

The political aura of design decisions exemplifies the core hypothesis of sociobiology: “dominant” individuals, through their control over design, are able to propagate themselves artistically at the expense of other participants. The dominance may be projected through formal, informal, or instantaneous relationships, or a mixture, all presumably based on individual ability and experience. But it’s hard to be sure: one of the prerogatives of power is the ability to enforce assent that one holds power through merit.

Among architects, dominance especially involves wielding authority over design decisions. But in a process as complicated and synthetic as architecture, the prerogatives of power do not necessarily generate informed and responsive design; instead they tend to make it an element of the political structure of the organization, often producing superficial and contradictory decisions. In the final step, the political context of the organization is established from outside, by the “taste culture” of various clients that are assimilated as stylistic absolutes. We might term this extreme condition “political design,” the antimatter twin, in architecture, of “personal design,” which is the traditional pathway of artistic creativity.

### THE RETURN TO DESIGN

Any degree of performance activity in the design process begins to test the personal integrity of the parties involved. Artistic

resonance can arise only when the participants are able to trust and benefit from each other’s perceptions and share a common intuitive perspective. But trust is a delicate flower—to nurture it, the parties must resolutely abjure any opportunity for political gain, a most difficult task. Where the competitive imperative is all paramount, all methods—insight, logic, bombast, eloquence, ridicule, endurance, or threats—are equally valid. Naturally, many will choose to seize victory by any available means.

One element of a potentially healthier design climate would be new ground rules. If the audience pressure of political design makes insight and clear thinking difficult, eliminate the audience. Develop all design ideas, as the Germans say, “under four eyes.” When design issues are discussed between only two people at a time, decisions may still reflect serious dispute. They may be imposed by one party, leaving the conflict unresolved. But they will stay private, where disagreements can remain focused on artistic or technical judgments and insulated from the social and political relationships of those participating.

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***One improvement would be to eliminate the audience and develop ideas, as the Germans say, “under four eyes.” When issues are discussed between only two people at a time, decisions stay private. Disagreements can remain focused on artistic or technical judgments, insulated from social and political relationships .***

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Carried to its extreme, the personal-design rule would mean no juries in architecture schools, or at least no juries involving lengthy exchanges, because it is the recursiveness of performance that permits political forces to subvert the legitimate goals of public evaluation. That would be a serious sacrifice, to be weighed against the potential benefits. A less-radical modification might have a single critic review a group of student projects, or a jury meet privately with each student. Simplifying the audience by limiting it to one peer group instead of two would reduce the political aura.

Within the office, personal-design principles can still guide the design process. Groups of people can still participate. They must simply work in groups of two, on the basis of a series of design consultations conducted by the responsible design architect, who would be charged to rely on his or her own judgment and experience in incorporating or rejecting the results of those interviews. In professional practice, the reality of deadlines and collective clients may make such an arrangement unfeasible for many projects. Still, the principle survives: privately originated design ideas are predictably closer to the core issues, and thus intrinsically more valid, because they are likely to represent personal artistic and technical judgments rather than political ones.

---

*Texas architect and writer Douglas P. Harvey now works for The Hillier Group in Princeton, N. J.*



but it was a good one. Lead firms in the venture are all local, cover a broad spectrum of local politics and specialties, and enjoy solid reputations. They are: Page Southerland Page, one of the state's oldest and best-established firms; Lawrence W. Speck Associates, Inc., the award-winning office of the professor who heads the University of Texas Center for the Study of American Architecture; and Villalva-Cotera-Kolar, a well-connected minority-owned firm that wins praise for good design.

According to Walt Marquardt with Gilbane Building Co., project manager for the job, contract negotiations with the architect-engineer and financial planner were completed in early December. Consultants will spend early 1988 selecting the site, developing the program, and figuring out the financing. A definitive timetable or cost won't be known until all that is hammered out, Marquardt says.

Austin's civic center proposal has regained momentum, but it still has a long way to go. Although everyone pretty

much agrees that such a facility would be good for Austin, no one wants it close to his near-town neighborhood, and resistance could surface once a site is picked. Also, the whole idea of building a convention center to invigorate a city might be misplaced, particularly when other urban needs, such as adequate infrastructure and city services, are going begging. And in the midst of Austin's economic doldrums, the question of how to pay for the thing could make the financial planner's task the toughest of the three.

Then there is the municipal office complex, which the city still needs, but which lingers as a bitter memory. Although time will certainly tell, the demise of the MOC was such a politically charged debacle that some observers doubt whether Austin can ever build a significant civic complex of any kind.

—Michael McCullar

*Michael McCullar, a former associate editor of TA, is architecture writer for the Austin American-Statesman.*

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## SPACE STATION IS GOOD NEWS FOR HOUSTON ARCHITECTS

The recent NASA announcement of \$5 billion in contracts to build a space station by 1995 was important news for Houston architects Larry Bell and Guillermo Trotti. Their firm, Bell & Trotti, a subcontractor for Boeing Aerospace Co., won the contract from NASA for the first of four space station "work packages." The contract, worth \$750 million, covers fabrication of laboratory and crew modules and development of life-support systems.

Bell says his firm will be working with Grumman Corp., a primary subcontractor for Boeing, on the detailed development and fabrication of the internal life support environment, including sleeping quarters, galley, and shower. The firm, he says, will move to a new, larger office and triple the current staff of 10 over the next year. The group may also open an office in Huntsville, Alabama, where NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center will be managing Work Package 1.

The announcement of the space station work packages was also good news for another Bell and Trotti endeavor: Space Industries. The two men are co-founders of the Houston-based company, which plans to build a small orbiting laboratory that will allow on-site supervising of programs and experiments.

Bell says the privately built orbiter will be important to NASA for many reasons. It will allow testing of space station parts, provide power to the Shuttle (which will be able to dock with it), and warehouse some space station parts, in addition to serving as something of an outer space "construction shack" for astronauts.

If it clears funding battles in Congress, the space station could be the brightest star in Houston's future. Estimates indicate that Texas could gain 3,600 much-needed related jobs, virtually all of which would be located around Johnson Space Center in Houston. Bell agrees the future is brighter. "We expect a tremendous opportunity for growth," he says.

—Charles E. Gallatin

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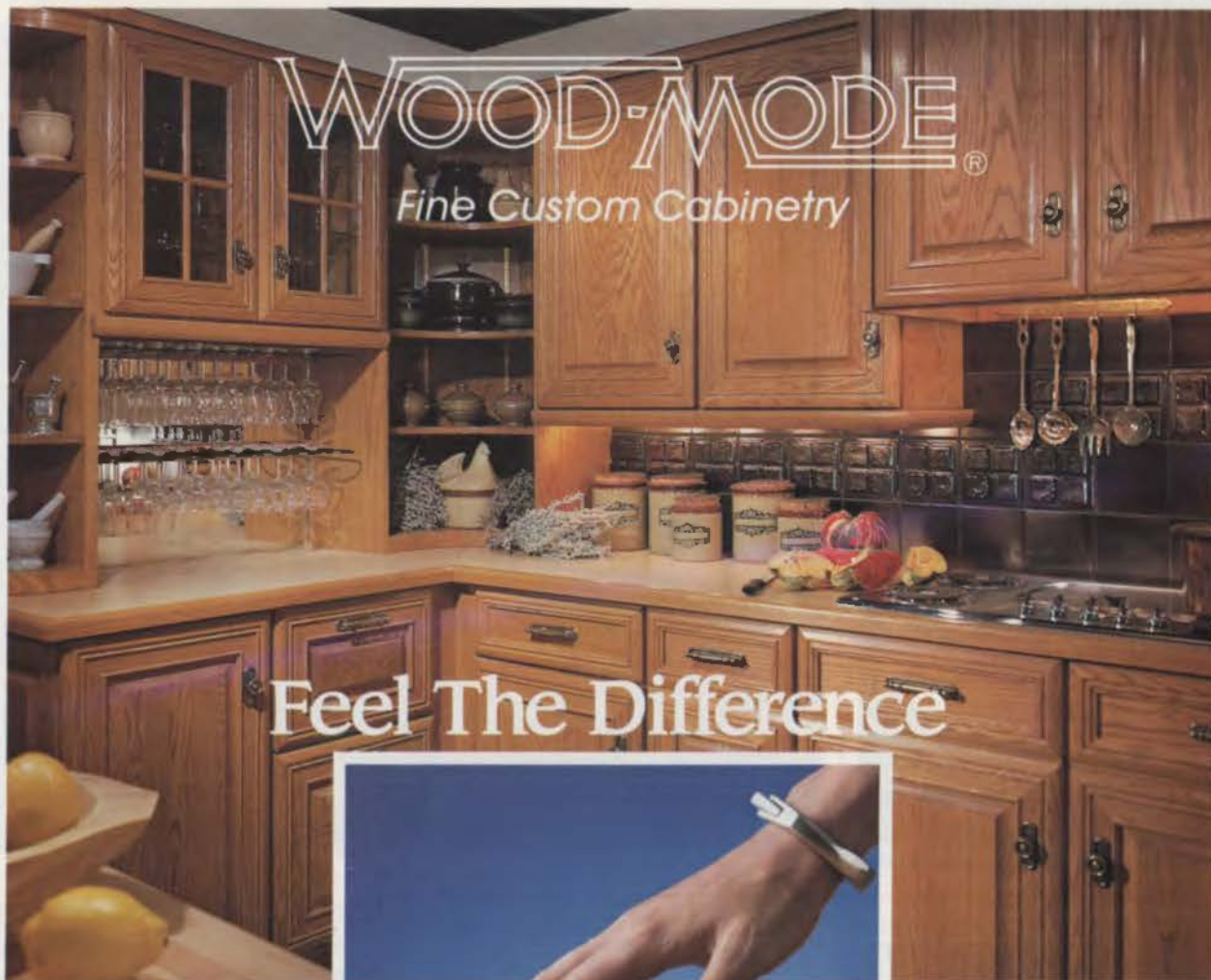
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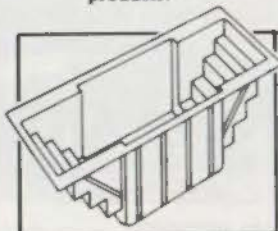


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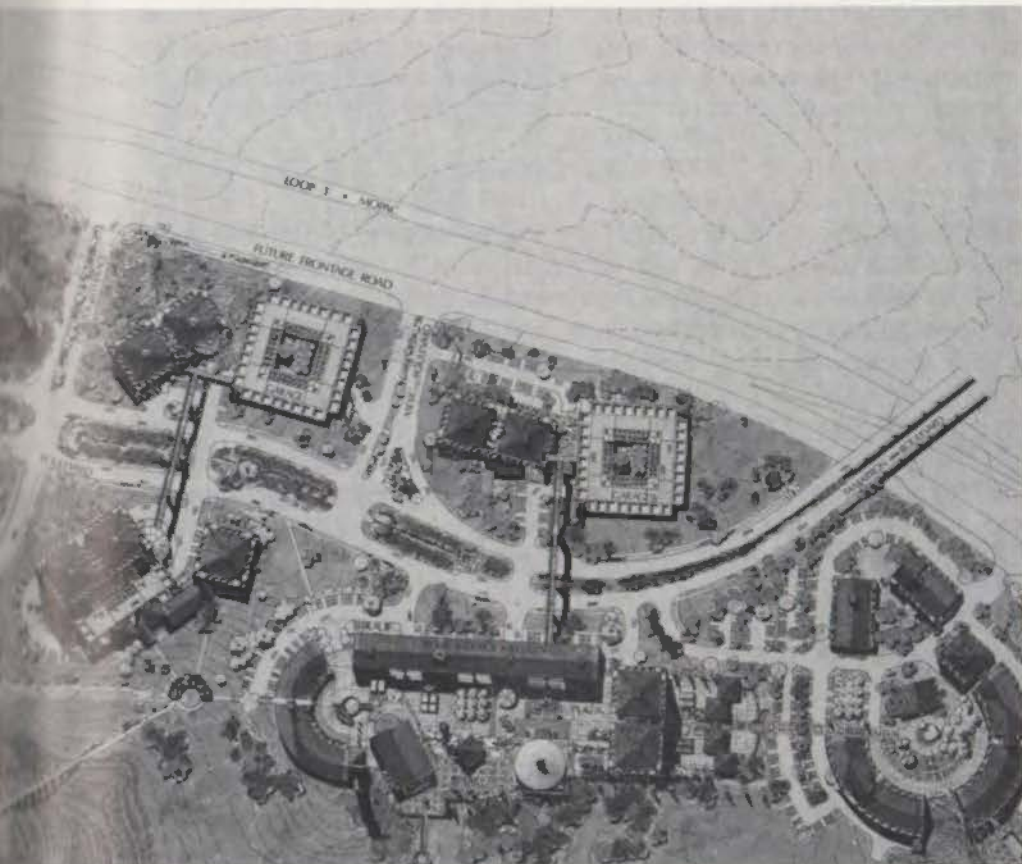
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tial units.

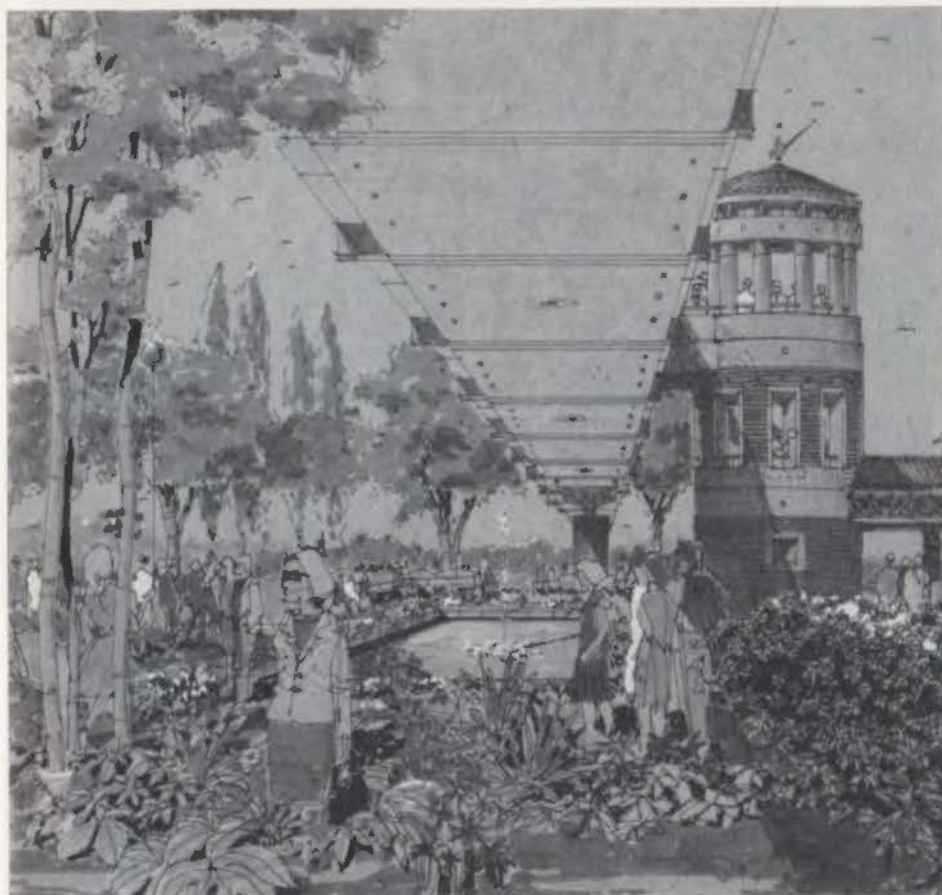
Hoping to avoid opposition from  
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—Joel Warren Barna





ABOVE: *The Terrace is sited to minimize environmental impact, but retains a strong character.*



*The Terrace features dense clusters of residential, retail, and office buildings in a Mediterranean style.*



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## SCHOOLS

Four students at the **University of Texas at Austin** School of Architecture have won grants to engage in research abroad under the Fulbright exchange program. Rolf Pendall, Frederick Wells, and Andrew Wheat will research planning for community-based economic development in Peru. A fourth student, Barbara McDade, received a Fulbright award for her work in Africa. She will explore small business development in Ghana. The Fulbright program awards approximately 7,000 grants yearly to U.S. students, teachers, and scholars to conduct research abroad, and to foreign nationals to engage in similar activities in this country.

The **American Institute of Architecture Students, Inc.**, (AIAS) and the GE Specialty Materials Department are sponsoring a national student design competition to design a hypothetical addition to the Des Moines Art Center using granite and marble as the main construction elements. Registration for the competition opens Jan. 15, and entries must be

submitted by April 22. Prizes totaling more than \$20,000 will be awarded, and the first place winner will receive a week-long trip to Italy fully funded by GE. For more information call the AIAS at 202/626-7472.

The AIAS is also sponsoring a national student design contest with the Lehigh Portland Cement Company. The challenge is to design an airport terminal facility for a growing metropolitan area utilizing white cement as the principal design material. The winning student will receive \$5,000, with \$3,000 and \$2,000 going to second and third place students respectively. Registration closes Feb. 22, and competitors will have eight weeks from registration to complete their design. 202/626-7472.

## EVENTS

**Feb. 19:** Deadline for the "President's Historic Preservation Awards," and the "National Historic Preservation Awards," sponsored by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Projects or Pro-

grams completed during the last 10 years are eligible. The work submitted must have resulted in the preservation of one or more historic properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. For more information call 202/786-0503.

**Feb. 27:** Deadline to submit work to "Hypothesis," the Architectural League of New York's seventh annual Young Architects Forum. Projects are sought which demonstrate the development and testing of an individual hypothesis for generating architectural form and ideas. The competition is open to architects, designers, and planners nationwide who are ten years or less out of graduate or undergraduate school. 212/753-1722.

**Mar. 1:** Deadline for Du Pont's "1988 Hypalon Excellence" awards. The award recognizes buildings completed in the U.S. or Canada within the past five years that incorporate single-ply roofing systems based on Du Pont Hypalon synthetic

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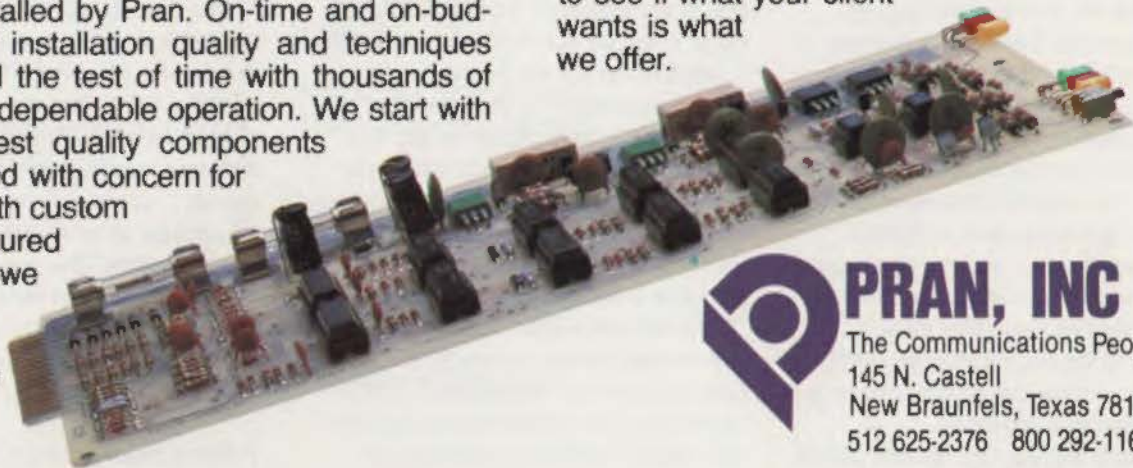
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*Designing Dreams:**Modern Architecture in the Movies*

by Donald Albrecht

Harper & Row in collaboration with  
The Museum of Modern Art, 1986

Reviewed by Yolita Schmidt

**D***esigning Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies* is a study of modern architectural sets in cinema from the mid-1920s through the late '30s and their relationship to the history of modern architecture. Instead of simply documenting and explaining these film sets, Albrecht analyzes and compares them to the "utopian visions" of the modern architects writing and building at the time.

The "official" account of architectural history offered by architects and professional historians is that modern design was brought before the public by books, expositions, and exhibitions. Albrecht, however, maintains that the link between acceptance of modern design by the few and mass cultural assimilation was the movie set. The paths of film and architecture converged in the 1920s and 1930s. The newest ideas in design went directly from books and magazines to film sets, translated by designers who were often as talented as their architectural counterparts. We are still affected today by positive and negative associations with the forms of modern architecture developed at this time. This puts a different, more complex light on architectural history and public awareness.

Although the first modern film sets were designed by European artists and architects in direct contact with the modern movement, soon modern film sets were being designed by art directors not directly associated with the modern movement, who knew the modern movement second-hand. The egalitarian goal of modern architecture, that of a society where good design would be available to all, was never pursued by these film makers. Typically, in the early European films, modern sets symbolize progressive taste and confidence in the future.

As modern architecture became part of

the public consciousness, the "utopian vision of an egalitarian society of workers living in hygienic housing, working in sunlit factories, and exercising in spotless health clubs" was lost. Modern architecture became the symbol of affluence, upward mobility, and progressive taste. The workers' housing gave way to penthouse apartments, the factory to the executive suite, the health club to the nightclub.

***Contrary to official history, movies played a greater role in advancing the cause of modernism than books, expositions, and exhibitions.***

An all-encompassing style that was used easily in residences, office buildings, nightclubs, hotels, ocean liners, skyscrapers, and cities of the future, the modern style fit with plots that, in reaction to the Depression, were often optimistic, rags-to-riches stories. Technical considerations also made modern sets attractive to film makers. The development of the three-dimensional set, along with the development of sound stages, allowed designers to experiment in creating space, free of the structural, economic, and climatic restraints that bind other architects.

Modern design did develop a second set of associations, as the symbol of the fearful possibilities of the future. This negative meaning was used whenever modernism clashed with conservative social ideas, such as in treating the emancipation of women. The "new woman" was shown in a modern bedroom or bath.

The ultimate expressions of this duality in meanings was in science fiction/futuristic city movies. "Metropolis," (1927) showed the city of the future as an inhuman place. Conversely, however, in

"Things to Come" (1936) presents a future in which rational thought and technology save civilization from extinction.

By the mid-1930s modern sets had lost their appeal, perhaps simply because interests and fashions had changed. Americans were rejecting the city and moving to the suburbs. Movie nightclubs became country clubs. The optimistic plots with light and sparkling interiors changed to the shadowy *film noir*, and on-location realism gained favor. The modern movement itself became fragmented. Frank Lloyd Wright reemerged as an architectural force, bringing a preference for such "warm" materials as wood and stone. Colonial Revival became the dominant style. Movie sets of the 1940s and '50s would typically feature a cross between these two styles. As the world moved towards war, the romance of modern was gone, the negative connotations came to the front.

Albrecht claims the last film to use modern sets was "The Fountainhead" (1949). By this time modern sets only worked within a plot about architecture, not as a natural expression of film design. If the subject had dealt with any other profession, modern sets would have been impossible to use, Albrecht says.

Very little construction took place in the 1930s and the movies kept the images and dreams of a progressive future alive until the 1950s. But the dreams were twisted: as Albrecht writes, "the modern architect's message of a collectivist agenda [was] transformed into a fantasy of privilege to be enjoyed only by the celluloid wealthy. This was not what the fathers of the modern movement envisioned. But as Albrecht's fascinating book shows, it was a crucial link in the development of modern culture.

*Yolita Schmidt is an architect in Houston.*



rubber. The competition is open to all U.S. and Canadian architects. Winners in two categories, new construction and reconstruction/restoration, win \$10,000 each. For more information write to The Du Pont "Hypalon" Excellence in Architecture Awards, Suite 300, 150 Monument Road, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004.

**Mar. 4:** Deadline for the "Sixth Annual Antron Professional Design Award," sponsored by Du Pont. The competition is open to commercial interiors completed since June, 1985, and incorporating carpet of 100 percent Antron, Antron XL, or Antron Precedent nylon. Grand prize is an all-expense paid trip for two to the Milan Furniture Fair. For more information call 800/448-9835.

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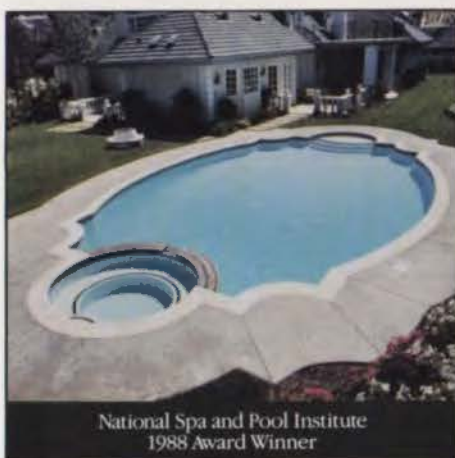
How can an architect choose just the right swimming pool builder for their project? We at California Pools and Spas would like to offer some advice. Listen carefully to how different pool builders answer these questions.

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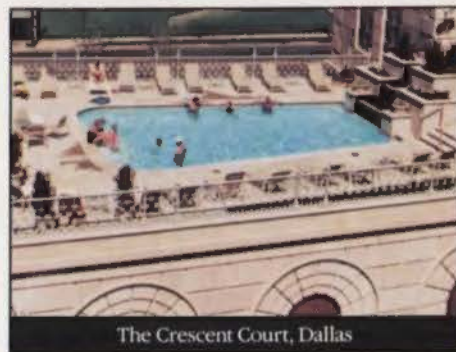
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