

HONEST JOE'S PAWN SHOP

WHILE
You
WAIT!

GUNS
MACHINERY
SPORTING
GOODS

DRILLS
SAWS
MOTORS
FANS

TOOLS
GUNS

KEYS
MADE

NEED CASH?
SEE THE

BUY
SELL
RENT

TOOLS

"TOOTS" GOLDSTEIN'S PAWN SHOP - HONEST JOE

JOE'S GUN
And
LOCK SHOP

TOOLS
GUNS
METALS
DISTRESS
WILL
SERVE

PAWN
SHOP
DANGER

HONEST
JOE
The
LOAN RANGER

PAWN
SHOP

NEED
CASH
See The
LOAN RANGER

THE ONLY ANSWER HONEST JOE CAN GIVE YOU IS - "THE TRUTH"

SAVE TIME
& MONEY
WALK INTO
"HONEST JOE'S"
THE LOAN RANGER

DON'T PAY FINES
USE HONEST JOE'S
SAFE CROSSOVER

DIAGENES...
"The famous Greek Philosopher"
CAME TO THE END OF HIS SEARCH
at RUBY'S PLACE

PAWN SHOP

HIGHEST LOANS - ANYTHING
GOLF CLUBS - TV - RADIOS
TBOARD MOTORS - BOATS
"HONEST JOE"

ALL KINDS
OF MACHINERY
HONEST JOE

HIGHEST LOANS
"HONEST JOE"
"HONEST JOE"
"HONEST JOE"

"HONEST JOE"
"HONEST JOE"

RUBY'S
CASH



Architectural
graphics
can be as
extroverted
as people:
a pawn shop
in Dallas
illustrates
an article
by Crawford Dunn

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THE TEXAS ARCHITECT

VOLUME 15 / SEPTEMBER, 1965 / NUMBER 9

Four forces are necessary to effect community redevelopment—an enlightened government, interest and leadership of the business community, skills of architects and other design professionals, and one that must be ever-present—public demand. Affluent and beautiful communities can be created in free societies only when the people who live in them know the difference between the good and the bad—and demand the good. We have all the tools we need to do the job—a responsive and democratic political system, business leaders with a demonstrated capacity for getting things done, and design skills which can create everything from a regional land-use plan to a better street sign. The only thing in short supply is time. Now is the time to act.

“No Time for Delay”



ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHICS

a literacy test
for buildings
Crawford Dunn

Almost every building has signs on, in and around it. Some are there to *identify* it and its purposes, tenants, or owners. Others are there to *direct* pedestrian and vehicular traffic to, into, within and around it. All these signs are there to promote greater speed, accuracy, ease and safety. Such signs constitute a ruthless literacy test for that building.

When a building fails this test, it makes everyone connected with the building guilty of illiteracy by association.

Architectural graphics are as much of a legitimate requirement for any good building as firmness, commodity, and delight and, in fact, have a direct bearing upon the latter two of these attributes of "well-building." As to identificational signs, there are few buildings that can afford to forego some sort of identification by graphic means. To be sure, there are some few isolated examples of structures that, because of size, shape, or location, need no graphic identification. Generally, though, we can rarely expect a client who has allowed his architect to create a public statement in the form of good architecture to permit that statement to go anonymous. As to directional signs (signs that orient, guide, instruct, and simply *inform* people in the use of a building), these are patently necessary in some form or another for *every* building.

The solution of this twofold problem in *communication*, the satisfaction of a need for information, must be recognized as an integral facet of the overall task of the

architect of a good building. When it is not so recognized, when it is ignored, or overlooked, or sloughed off, or postponed, or minimized in any way either functionally or aesthetically, the building suffers. The ultimate responsibility for this must be borne, in one way or another, by the architect himself.

Yet, every day we see new, expensive, generally well thought-out buildings being completed in our cities that, through the default of architects, are nothing less than illiterate.

The communication to be accomplished through architectural graphics is on two levels. The first is the *conscious* level of communication. This has to do with the *content* of architectural graphics: what the signs say in words, numerals, or symbols. Those signs, of course, must be intelligible; they must make sense in clear and unmistakable language; they must say what they mean and mean what they say.

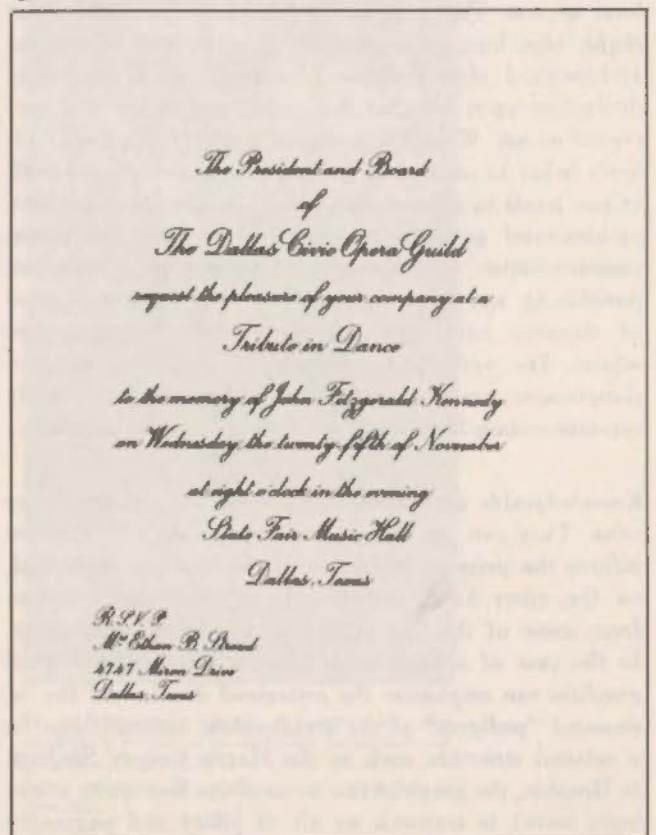
Much can be learned from the solutions afforded by the uniform traffic control devices for streets and highways. Our modern pace and density of traffic has placed brutal demands upon sure, fast communication, with no room for error or confusion. These demands have led to some excellent standard solutions. [Figure 1]

The second kind of communication is a subliminal or *unconscious* level of communication. This has to do with the *form* of architectural graphics: their shape, size, hue, value (lightness or darkness), texture, style, and location, and how they relate to the architecture. Here again, there is much to be learned from uniform traffic control devices, but in architectural graphics the problem is compounded often by a need for transmitting *impressions* suitable to the architectural environment. This can be illustrated by taking the example of the formal invitation. [Figure 2] The *data* concerning a formal affair, that is the basic information (time, place, date, host, and occasion) could easily be transmitted by means of a typewritten mimeographed sheet of paper. This would be sufficient communication of the content required; however, fine paper is used, an elegant script perhaps, and the expensive reproduction method of engraving is employed. The whole invitation is cast in an arrangement and couched in a language prescribed for such occasions, all for the sole purpose of transmitting a certain *impression* in addition to the information. When architectural graphics fail to take into account this need for both levels of communication, the result is often like that of being seen in public wearing sneakers with a business suit. There are many examples of this kind of innocent mixture of ranks of formality in architectural graphics.

1



2



In dealing with communication of whatever means, it can be helpful if one understands a fundamental concept of what has come to be called "communication theory." All parts of the message to be transmitted are referred to as "signal", the important implication being that all *signal* is deliberate, *intentional*. Any element in the communication that is introduced unintentionally, as a fault of the system being employed to transmit the message, is called "noise." Although this concept began as one used in highly technical applications of communication systems, it is widely valid in many everyday situations. Electronic engineers call the static in radio "noise"; they refer to the "snow" in television as "noise." But glare on a sign surface can be *noise* in the message; illegibility of the letter forms can constitute *noise*; too much or too little value contrast (differences in lightness and darkness between background and legend) can comprise noise; any failure to accommodate the physiological requirements of readability is, by definition, a source of noise. Much noise occurs at the conscious level, of course, but it can also happen at the unconscious (or less than fully conscious) level. For example, if a building whose architectural statement is clearly in a "machine aesthetic" makes use of graphics not in the same idiom or (to be more precise), in an idiom hostile to that of the architecture, then we have a kind of subliminal noise.

Thus, we see that *signal* is the intentional part of the communication, whether conscious or not to the viewer, and similarly, *noise* is that part of the transmission that works against communication, whether at a conscious level or not. The *form* of architectural graphics (their shape, size, hue, value, texture, location, and relation to architectural elements) can constitute signal or noise, depending upon whether the graphics designer was successful or not. When the designer is able (with the architect's help) to succeed at his task, his graphics can work at two levels to achieve the desired results. At their best, architectural graphics can achieve excellent subliminal communication to enhance architecture in a way not possible by any other means; they can heighten a sense of elegance here, restraint there, or excitement elsewhere. The very best architectural graphics can thus *complement* architecture while performing the purely communication function of informing by graphic means.

Knowledgeable architectural graphics can perform many roles. They can, on the one hand, reiterate and thus reinforce the primary statement of the building itself and, on the other hand, intentionally distract the attention from some of the less attractive aspects of a structure. In the case of a bank or a museum, for example, good graphics can emphasize the restrained drama and the insinuated "pedigree" of the architectural surroundings. In a colossal structure such as the Harris County Stadium in Houston, the graphics can be used (as they quite knowingly were) to transmit an air of jollity and pageantry

to the brutalism of the stadium itself. The crushing budget for such a building forbade any cosmetic treatment of the bold structure with its functional entrails of ducts, pipes, and conduits. [Figure 3] It remained for the graphics designer to come in and literally "fool the eye" as far as possible with manful sweeps of typography and color and thus bring to the whole scene an unmistakable human scale entirely appropriate to the uses to which the "Astrodome" will be put. (In good collaboration with the graphics designer, the architects provided him with low-noise visual surroundings by painting almost everything in some areas the same colorless grey that afforded a minimum of architectural articulation.)



It is when we see successful graphics that we realize that the good graphist must completely understand the whole architectural statement and must proceed to bring the entire situation off to best advantage. He must know what the overall problem is and must know how to solve his part of the problem in a way that enhances the overall solution. In this, he must be sensitive to the environment to be created by the architect and he must have good sense to know whether to *reaffirm* or to *contradict* that environment by means of graphic form and content in light of the final desired result. With so much that can be accomplished through architectural graphics, how is it that we so rarely see good graphic design?

There are three basic causes of unsuccessful architectural graphics. The first of these stands out among the others: this is the failure of the architect to recognize the need for proper communication on both levels in his buildings and the attendant reluctance on his part to accord graphic design the rank of a legitimate specialty. When this occurs, the need for graphic communication will force some sort of solution at a lower level of compe-

tence. The need will be met one way or the other, sooner or later, and the architect stands in danger of losing control of the strategic and tactical situations.

There is another overriding cause of bad architectural graphics; failure of the client to surrender control of the graphics to the architect. *It is clearly the duty of the architect to convince the client of the desirability of solving the graphics problems by professional means rather than merely calling in a sign fabricator to do the job.* In too many cases, the architect feels so fortunate to have been awarded the commission for a building in the first place that he is unwilling to press the client for the prerogative of controlling the graphics and is, in short, hesitant to rock the client-architect boat. The result of this timidity on the part of the architect can be ruinous. This is nothing less than a disservice to the client. To be sure, there is the frequent intractable client who is convinced in his innocence that architectural graphics are just so much "icing on the cake" of architecture, and whose mind is made up.

The third cause of illiteracy in architectural graphics is a lack of competency in those who design the graphics, either in architectural design or graphic design. This is a field in which the designer must be clearly competent in both disciplines; neither without the other is sufficient. The evolution in recent years of graphics and of architecture has left those folk artists, the sign fabricators and sign painters, far behind. When architectural graphics are left to these agencies or to a chap thumbing through a catalog of standard parts, the project is in trouble.

When either of these three situations prevails, the stage is set for the worst to happen. Inevitably, the building graphics will faithfully reflect any serious flaw in the architectural process. Makeshift, after-thought graphics, poorly conceived and poorly executed, degrade any professional excellence the building might otherwise have had, and all those involved stand discredited.

(Continued on page 11)



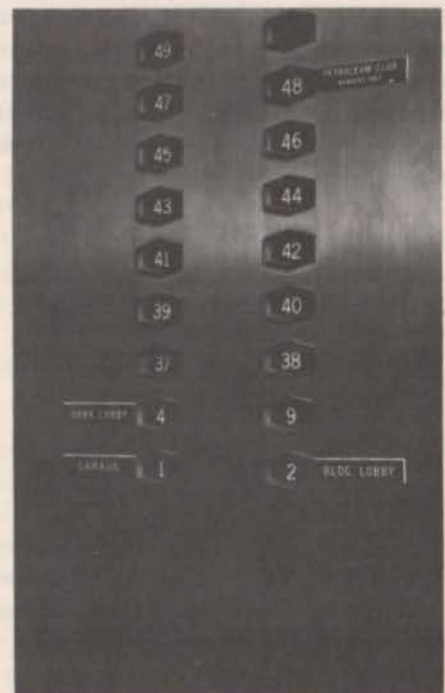
It is generally good to minimize the structure required to support architectural graphics, but there are times when a certain amount of sculptural treatment is desirable.



It goes without saying that any sculpture should relate well to the building which it serves. There is a danger of getting carried away with some currently fashionable mannerism, however, as in the aggressively overdimensioned constructivist steelwork.



Restraint is usually as much of a virtue in graphics as it is in architecture.



Afterthought graphics (those whose requirements were unforeseen at the time planning was taking place) can linger around a long time to haunt the architect: an example of the elevator control panel of a shiny new building.



A building and its graphics can present a split-personality if the graphics are bought from a catalog or otherwise sloughed off in the name of expediency or economy. This Roman style cast sign is hardly in character with the sleek modern building in which it appears. It does the architecture a gross injustice.



Temporary architectural graphics have a way of becoming permanent, like the "temporary" government buildings in Washington built during World War I and still standing (and occupied) today.



Symbols should always be subject to use in various kinds of applications to be good symbols at all. A primary requirement of a good symbol is that it have "silhouette value", that is, that it be recognizable at a distance or in small size without color being required for optical resolution. While looking somewhat like a blob of bubblegum on the side of this building; actually, it is a quite literal likeness (up close) of a fully dressed Roman lady.



A good symbol can be recognizable from a distance.

The flush-left, flush-right school of graphics also seems to be hung-up on the use of "block" letters. These letters are almost invariably composed of all capitals and the effect is to render every "message" anonymous in that it looks a lot like every other.

G R E A T
E A S T E R N
C O M P A N Y

Dallas Museum of Fine Arts

One of the most interesting and respectable of the new school, typestyles, which would conceivably be quite suitable for many applications. The contrast with the illustration above is almost explosive.

This is an age of specialization. Someone said not long ago, in this context, that today, when a physicist thinks of chemistry at all, he is very likely to think of a chemistry 30 or 40 years old, a chemistry that is as quaint as the world of Newtonian physics. It is not far fetched to draw a similar comparison concerning most people and the subject of architectural graphics.

For, in the past few years, while almost everybody was, in effect, looking the other way, the field of graphics for architecture has developed into a full-fledged specialty. It has taken its place alongside other respectable ancillary architectural services. But, because all this has taken place so quickly and so quietly, most persons are understandably unaware of all but the most rudimentary aspects of it.

For these reasons, many otherwise good buildings must be said today to be unable to pass the literacy test of architectural graphics. We say "good" buildings because not all buildings *deserve* good architectural graphics. But it is sad when an otherwise excellent architectural statement is guilty of bad grammar, a limited vocabulary, and archaic or colloquial speech in the way it communicates through its graphics.

Important buildings are the result of a coordinated collaboration of many competent professionals. In addition to the architect, there have come to be consultants in structural engineering, air conditioning, lighting, landscape architecture, and interior design. The time has come to add the graphics designer to this team, and yet, today far too many projects receive little or no attention in the area of graphic design. Too often, the result is little better than folk art, and sometimes worse.

But, when an architect is able to overcome successfully all the forces that militate against excellence in architecture and architectural graphics, he is doubly rewarded; all the bad architecture and bad graphics will only make *his* look better.

THE EMERGENCY SOCIETY AND ITS POTENTIALS

Dallas
Museum
of
Fine Arts

August Heckscher

The architect lives, like the rest of us, in an age which can only be described as creative and wonderfully exciting. All around us are signs of growth. A new spirit of equality brings with it a wide option of choice, a sense that the human being has capacities hitherto unfulfilled—or at least fulfilled by the very few. The energies which the machine puts at the service of man promise him not only untold wealth, but untold freedom from material cares.

In the midst of all this the architect has his special rewards and excitements. We are certainly in a period of great building. Within the next generation or so the face of the globe will literally be made over. The design of individual structures is giving way to the design of cities; and beyond that lies the design of the environment in the widest sense—the whole habitation of the race of man. Working on an ever-widening scale, with fresh challenges and opportunities, the architect finds himself becoming increasingly a key figure in the society he serves. It was startling—but in the future it will not seem so—that when one of our great universities recently needed a man to mediate its internal troubles and to organize its latent power, it turned to the architectural school. Thus the architect steps, once and for all, into the center of the public stage.

It is easy to become giddy with optimism. It is also easy—if one shifts one's perspective ever so slightly—to be impressed by the darker side of the picture. The machines that free us tend also to dehumanize us. The growth that intoxicates us seems always at the point of getting out of hand. The prospect of vast building efforts carries with it the threat that the architect will find himself more and more at the service of great bureaucracies and under the subjection of engineers. The mood of modern man oscillates, indeed, between optimism and pessimism, and I would suppose that the mood of the modern architect oscillates in the same way between wonder at the world laid open before him and doubts as to its underlying health.

My own conviction is that we are at a point where the forces we think most characteristic of modernity are still in a comparatively benign state of development. But those forces could quite rapidly change their aspect, becoming violent and destructive as they overflow the banks which have contained and disciplined them. It is quite fascinating, for example, to see advertisements in the New York buses which invite the crowds to come out to the World's Fair, where they may enjoy the spectacle of seeing illuminated figures chart, moment by moment, the U. S. population explosion. We can still find pleasure in the fact that we are a growing population. But how long will that be? How long will the public mood permit us to exploit for commercial entertainment a phenomenon which could suddenly here—as it has already elsewhere—become one of the grimmest and most forbidding realities of the time?

In the same way we take delight in huge building programs—not only finding them good for business, but really being convinced that they will prove good for man. Yet the growth of cities can quiet literally become cancerous. In the less developed countries, cities are already being filled with refugees from rural slums unable to shape a viable urban existence for themselves. And certainly we shall begin to take a new and more somber view of the building explosion when, like the population explosion, it begins to outrun the bounds of human values and rational choice.

To shape and reshape living communities—to create for man new homes where the old ones have proved inadequate to his hopes and needs: that is one thing. It is entirely different to build feverishly, under inhuman pressures, communities which lack vital ties with the past. To be compelled to build when the builder no longer knows with any confidence for what purpose he builds, when he has lost the deep instinctual feelings of what makes life satisfying and pleasurable, that is to be in a kind of hell. Such a fate one can indeed imagine as being that of the architect in the generations ahead.

Looking back across modern history, one sees the lines that mark the growth of civilization moving in a steady pleasant upward slope. Population, urbanization, education, science, speed of travel—these and other indices rise agreeably from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth. And then suddenly the pattern shifts. The lines of growth make an almost vertical ascent. They shoot upwards and leave us of the present age dangling and tumbling in space.

The use of familiar words still permits us to make the deep revolution that has occurred. We speak of change and of progress as if they were roughly the same thing, and we assume, therefore, that there is no essential difference between man's position today and in, say, the

eighteenth century. Actually the difference is immense. The passage from the period of the upward slope to the period of the vertical climb alters virtually everything and makes the contemporary period unique.

The question we face is simple and startling: Can the present vertical rate of change conceivably continue? If not, what will happen? Will it level off and resume the pattern of earlier centuries? Will it turn sharply downwards, with population falling off, science deteriorating, cities being evacuated? Or will it, as Roderick Seidenberg has chillingly suggested, bring us perforce to long epochs of post-history when man—as in the aeons before history began—exists in a permanent, unchanging organism, like the bees, the ants and the termites, adapted to a condition which permits of no deviation or further development?

We cannot, if we are to live and work as men, accept the hypothesis of destruction amid a final cacaphony of senseless change. Nor can we accept the equally cataclysmic vision of becoming fixed in the icy permanence of some final state. It would be nice if we could conclude that we can simply keep on growing as we are now. Yet logic tells us that the vertical and explosive rate of growth shown on all the graphs of civilization cannot extend indefinitely. The population curve alone, if projected through even a brief period of time, leads to the absurdity of an earth upon which man no longer has room to stand.

When are we then? We are at the point, I suggest, where we must begin to think very seriously about bringing under control the explosive force of modern change, and of making it answer once more to the name of progress. In place of driven formless growth we must seek patterns that make sense to man in terms of his personal fulfillment. In place of things done for their own sake, or under compulsion of anonymous forces, we must seek to do the things that minister to human needs. In this new course the architect can—indeed he must—play a crucial role.

At present the shape of the American environment is being determined, often in ways we only dimly perceive, by forces and organizations which are thinking very little about the environment itself. Recently I flew over the bay region of San Francisco where a virtually continuous pattern of settlement covers an area that quite recently was still open land. This spread has not been due to people moving out in search of greener space. It has been the result of decisions taken by vast industrial and governmental bureaucracies. The way industrial and defense plants have leap-frogged over existing communities was plainly seen from the air—these bringing in their train the network of utility and transportation facilities and the vast housing developments.

In Israel, at about the same time, I watched a different process at work, bringing about a different result. I had gone down in the early morning to see a refugee ship come in. It became evident that the dream of these newcomers, many of them from rural areas and even from the Atlas mountains, was to congregate in large cities, preferably in the seaports. But the government of Israel had taken the decision that the existing cities should not be allowed to expand indefinitely, or become surrounded by the fatal growth of slums. Each immigrant family was being taken by bus to the newer cities, many of them built out of the desert,—where a job was assured. In time the ties of association and the amenities of a newly created urban life could be expected to hold them.

It would lead us far astray if I were to enlarge upon the responsibilities of the various power structures in giving definition and form to what now seems a predominantly formless development in my country. But it is appropriate that I should carry further my hint that the architectural profession has a role to play. Let me begin by saying that I have never known a successful architectural project which did not involve a change in the program which was submitted by the client. The successful plan or design has almost invariably evolved from taking a stated program and looking afresh at the true needs implied. This approach marks the great men of your profession. It can, if extended more widely, save us all from much purposelessness and misdirected change. Throughout our society there is a fatal tendency to accept whatever is superficially thought to be necessary and then to supply it with great technical proficiency. A reevaluation of what is required in the name of humanity and good sense might help us begin to control the dizzying spiral of which I have spoken.

Second: The architect by definition deals with forms. I like to think of the word in its old Greek sense—not as the outward look or package, but as the inward impulse which established the nature of a thing. The relation between invisible purpose and visible shape—between inward and outward truth—is the secret the architect or planner seeks constantly to discover. It is a search of potentially great significance in meeting the problem of the explosive rate of modern change. What our society as a whole must find is the means of constraining and disciplining forces which tend to be cumulative and self-generative—constraining them without killing the forward impulse. It can only do this by recognizing, as the architect instinctively does, the need for form—form that represents a perilously achieved balance between energy and discipline.

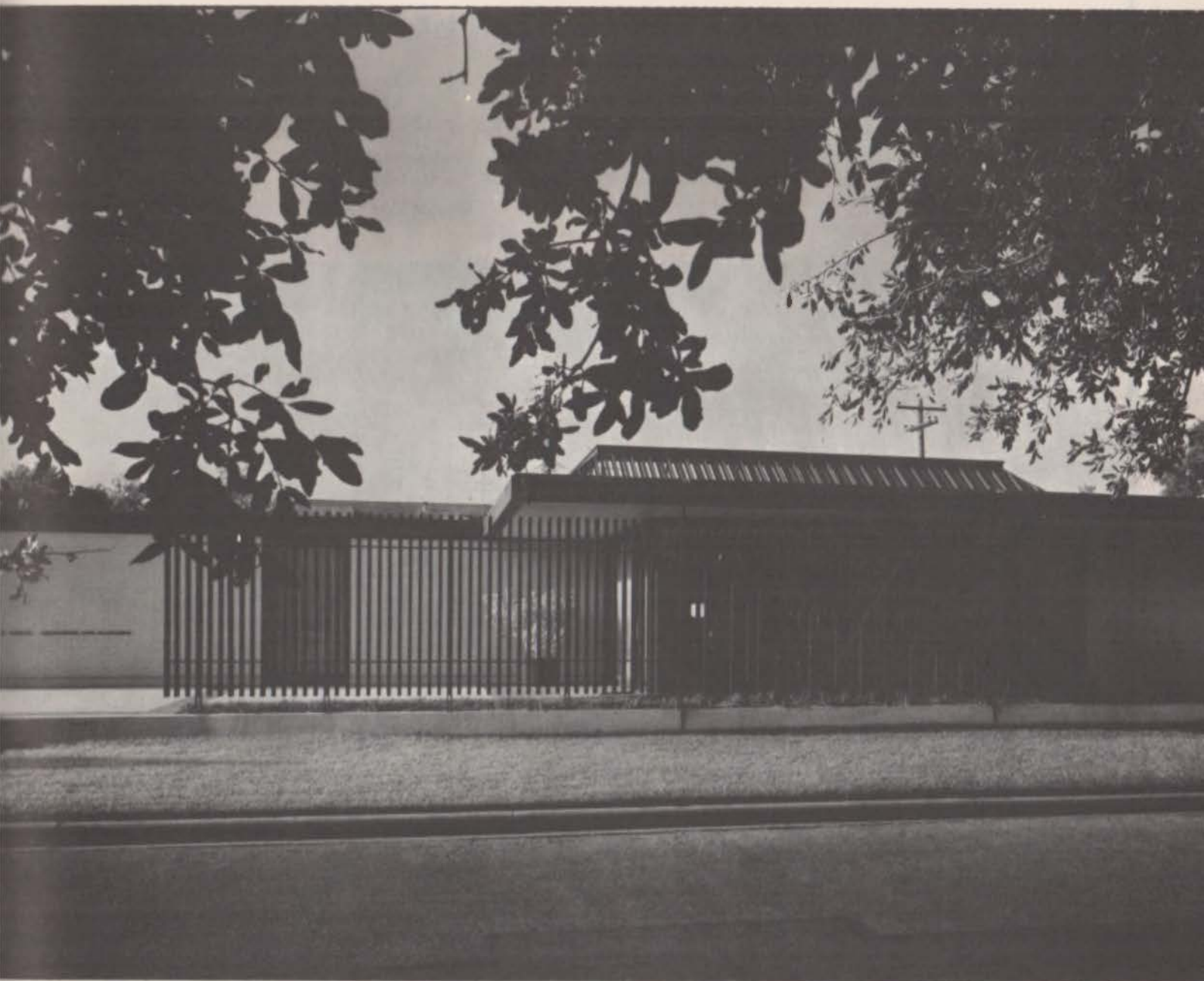
Finally the architect can never forget that he is dealing with aesthetics. I confess to being a little uneasy at the stress currently laid on beautifying our cities—or sometimes (what seems even worse) embellishing them. The true beauty of cities emerges as a kind of by-product

from efforts to make them genuinely habitable and answerable to mens needs. Afterwards, to be sure, there is much that can be done to tidy up the result, to eliminate residues, and to put light in dark corners. I suppose that is really what we were talking about at the recent White House Conference, and few will doubt that the exercise was stimulating and useful.

But the stress I lay upon aesthetics as a means of controlling senseless change goes much deeper than that. What is really wrong with the change for its own sake is that it becomes so inharmonious and so unbalanced. It permits certain parts of mans nature—essentially the technical and manipulative part—to achieve ascendancy over the rational and philosophic faculties. The result is quite literally a deformation: we draw back from it as we do from anything alive that has departed abnormally from its own nature. The aesthetic quality of architecture—particularly of modern architecture—derives from its success in bringing technical requirements into proper subjection to ideal ends. If this aesthetic sense could become part of law, of politics and business, we could well avoid moving from a state of change which I have described as benign to one that is essentially destructive. These three qualities of architecture—the reevaluation of needs, the emphasis on form and on aesthetics—are essentially the qualities of humanism. In proportion as they prevail there is hope for our civilization. And in proportion as they prevail there is hope, too, for our cities. It is in our urban centers that our very being takes visible shape; what we are, and what we may become, is told in the patterns of traffic and circulation, in the outdoor spaces for refreshment and recreation, in the form of our public and private buildings. No one could contemplate without being very much sobered the spectacle which these cities present today. Yet the very fact that the cities are so dramatic a witness to the quality of our civilization, the very fact that they are capable of being made and being made over, gives us hope.

If we can stop sprawl in the city, if we can keep the automobile in its proper place and devise means of transportation as varied as our needs; if we can provide density without reducing man to part of the mass, and areas of open space that do not invite loneliness or disorder; if we can keep the human scale and yet meet the demands for a wholly new scale of planning and building—if we can do these and a few other things I could think of, we may yet have a civilization which can look forward to its own healthy growth and development.

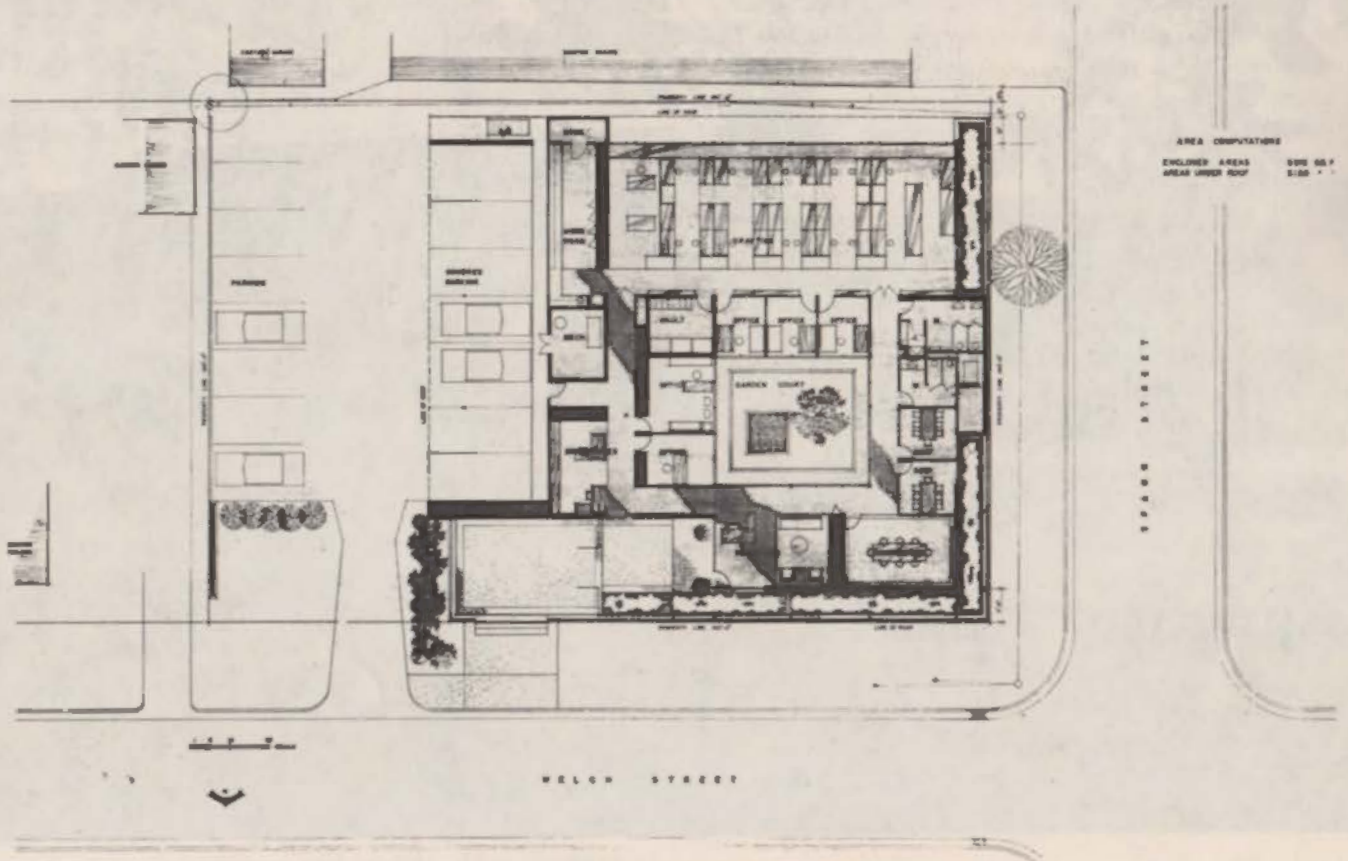
These accomplishments will prove we have learned that ends are important as well as means and that human values are transcendent. The lesson will have been learned none too soon; and it will have been largely learned—if it is learned at all—from the agony and sweat of men who practice architecture. ■



TEXAS ARCHITECTURE 1965
HONORED FOR DISTINGUISHED DESIGN

OFFICE BUILDING, HOUSTON
OFFICE OF GEORGE PIERCE ABEL B. PIERCE
ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS

THE OFFICE OF GEORGE PIERCE · ABEL PIERCE



This is a handsome, pleasant neighbor in a largely residential area; it creates an environment that is pleasant for the people who work in it; its spaces are organized to promote efficiency of operation, to display taste, dignity without frivolity, it conveys a sense of competence.

These are this buildings function. And it functions well.

It is an architect's office.

A not-too-large site and need for parking helped make the plan the way it is. While fully used, the grounds are spacious in a very urban way.



Working spaces are grouped about a courtyard, enclosed overhead by a cable-suspended grillwork of redwood, which helps eliminate glare and heat. The court heightens the sense of designed space and affords a visual relief and variety.



Plaster ceilings, brick and walnut combine to create an atmosphere, which while business-like is nonetheless quietly elegant.



The drafting room is arranged to provide privacy and promote efficiency.



Simplicity of materials and elegance of detail make this an office building that is unobtrusive and welcome in a residential neighborhood.



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