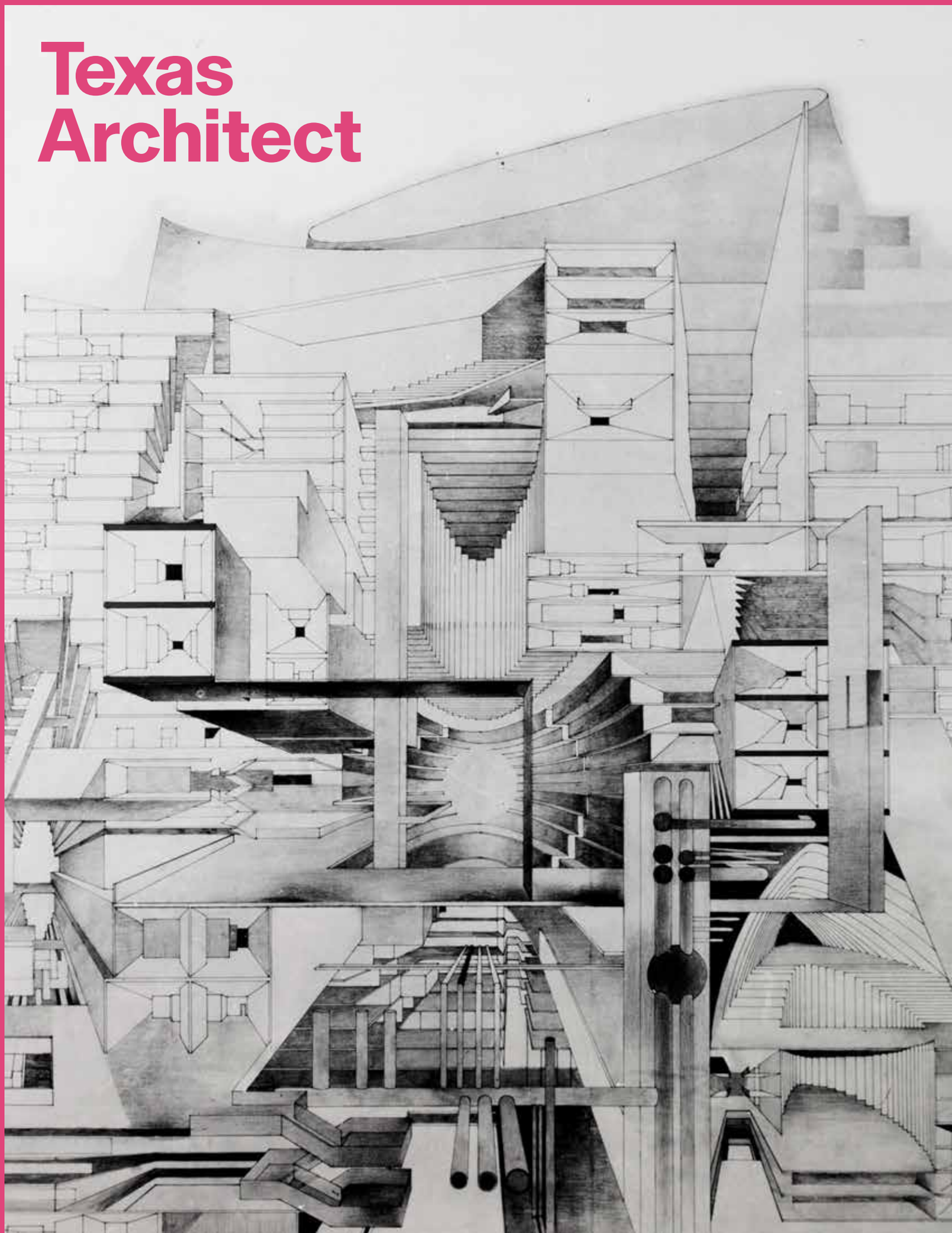
Texas Architect



VOL 75 ISSUE 1 WINTER 2025 THE UTOPIA ISSUE

Acme Brick Bridges History and Healing at San Antonio State Hospital

Architect: HKS, Inc., Dallas, TX
General Contractor: Vaughn Construction, Universal City, TX
Masonry: Shadrock & Williams Masonry, Ltd., Helotes, TX
Brick: Acme Elgin Plant Monte Carlo Modular & Elgin Butler Glazed Modular Brick
Photography: Joe Aker, Lou Curtis

In a groundbreaking effort to modernize Texas psychiatric care, the San Antonio State Hospital has undergone a remarkable transformation. This collaborative project between state agencies and the University of Texas Health Science Center creates a therapeutic environment that honors local heritage while enhancing patient recovery. The facility's patient-first design includes open spaces, natural light, and private rooms – all intended to honor patients' dignity and inspire hope. Communal areas for therapy and gatherings clad in Acme Brick form the heart of each patient building. Inspired by San Antonio's Spanish colonial missions, HKS's design creates welcoming entryways and sun-dappled corridors, echoing the city's UNESCO World Heritage site. Each carefully laid Acme Brick contributes to a homey atmosphere, banishing the cold, institutional feel often associated with hospitals. By blending modern care with San Antonio's rich history, the renovated hospital sets a new standard for mental health facilities. To learn more about Acme Brick's role in this transformative project, visit brick.com and explore our detailed case study on the San Antonio State Hospital.

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Photo: Mock Installation Wall,
Masonry Units, Levant, Travertine,
Raw Finish, 4" X 4", Random Length

Texas Architect

THE VOICE FOR TEXAS ARCHITECTURE

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Texas Society of Architects

VOLUME 75 ISSUE 1
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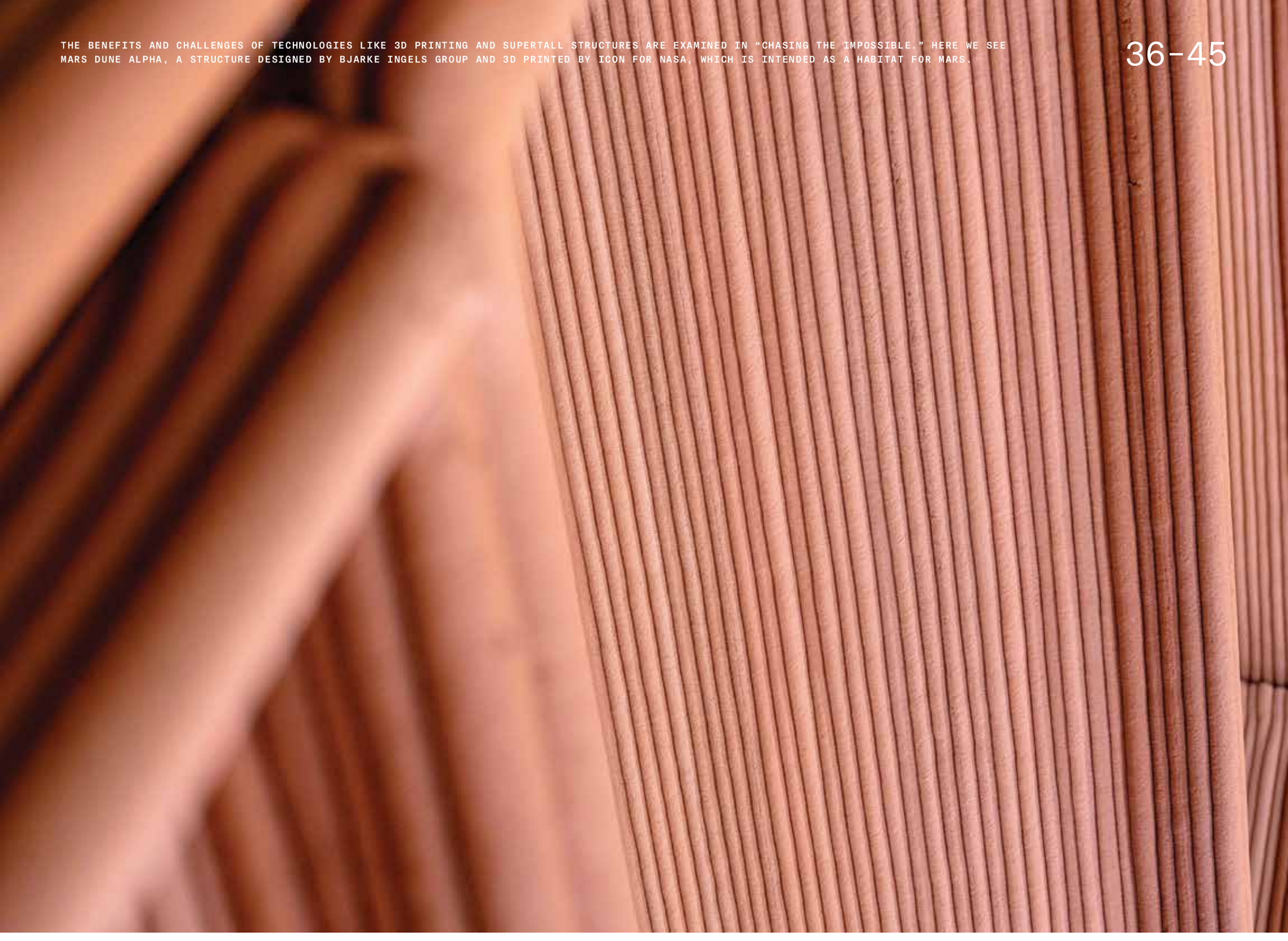

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGIES LIKE 3D PRINTING AND SUPERTALL STRUCTURES ARE EXAMINED IN “CHASING THE IMPOSSIBLE.” HERE WE SEE MARS DUNE ALPHA, A STRUCTURE DESIGNED BY BJARKE INGELS GROUP AND 3D PRINTED BY ICON FOR NASA, WHICH IS INTENDED AS A HABITAT FOR MARS.

PHOTO COURTESY ICON

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

"PATCHWORK UTOPIA" LOOKS AT THE PARADOX OF HOUSTON'S SPRAWLING, UNPLANNED DEVELOPMENT. DESPITE ITS LACK OF COORDINATION, THIS UNIQUE GROWTH PATTERN REFLECTS A DYNAMIC, ASPIRATIONAL VISION THAT CHALLENGES CONVENTIONAL URBAN PLANNING IDEALS.

IN “EXPERIENCING UTOPIA,” WE SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM GRAND SOCIETAL DREAMS TO THE CREATION OF MICRO-UTOPIAS—SMALL-SCALE, PERSONALIZED SPACES THAT ENHANCE DAILY LIFE AND TRANSFORM THE WAY WE ENVISION UTOPIA.

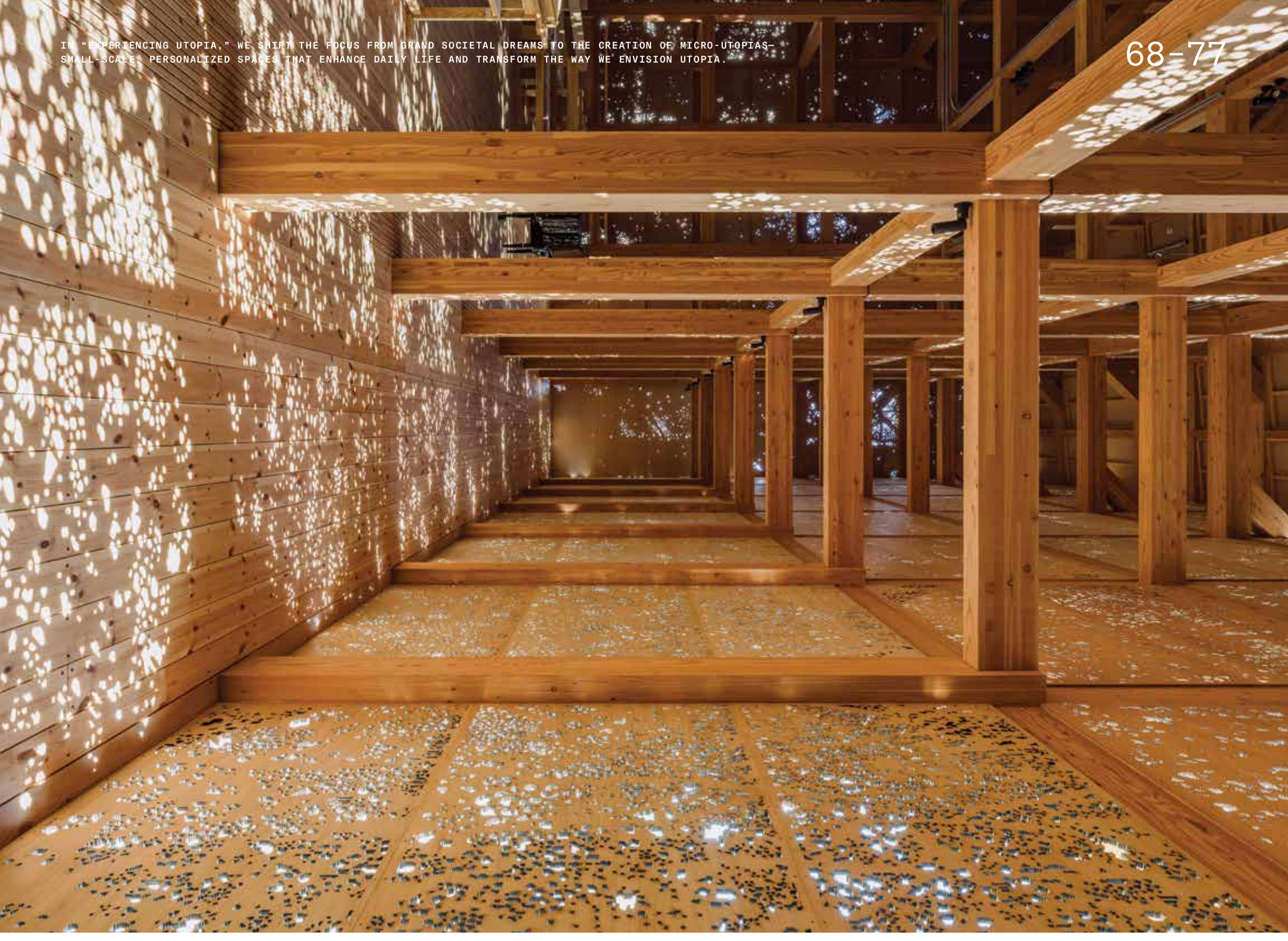

PHOTO BY KATSUHISA KIDA / FOTOTECA

PHOTO COURTESY DOUGLAS HILL

“THE ARCHITECTURE OF IMAGINATION” INVESTIGATES THE INTERSECTION OF ARCHITECTURE AND SCIENCE FICTION. A PRIME EXAMPLE IS THE BRADBURY BUILDING IN LOS ANGELES, DESIGNED BY GEORGE WYMAN AND SUMNER HUNT, WHICH BECAME AN ICONIC BACKDROP IN RIDLEY SCOTT'S *BLADE RUNNER*.

“BIG MOVES” TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT A FORWARD-THINKING TOWER PROJECT IN HOUSTON, REIMAGINING THE WORKPLACE TO FOSTER A DEEPER CONNECTION WITH NATURE AND COMMUNITY.

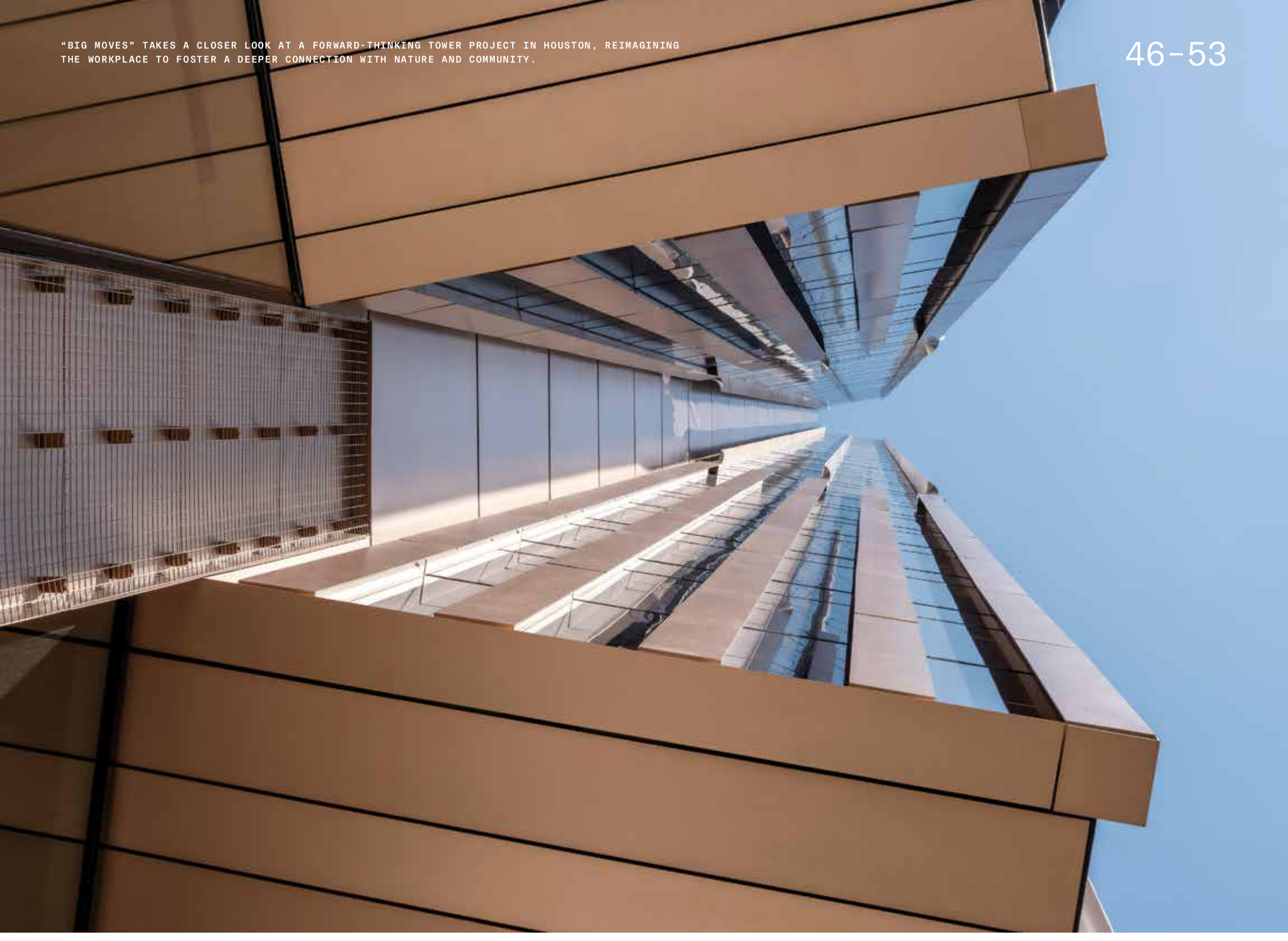

PHOTO BY LEONID FURMANSKY

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY HURSLEY

IN “SETTING THE STAGE,” WE EXPLORE A MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN FORT WORTH THAT CHAMPIONS THE POWER OF PUBLIC SPACE, EMPHASIZING ITS ROLE IN HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN AND OVERALL WELL-BEING.

CONTRIBUTORS

TANVI SOLANKI , AIA is a Houston-based architect who works with sustainable design and laboratory planning. She is passionate about promoting sustainable design practices and educating student groups about the architectural profession.

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JES DEAVER, AIA is an architect, writer, and filmmaker exploring how the future, ecology, and built environment connect us to one another. She is a principal at the Austin-based firm of Nick Deaver Jes Deaver Architecture.

CORRECTIONS

On page 72 and 73 of the September/October 2024 issue, process and construction photos of Bahamas Cottage were inadvertently used. Photos of the completed project can be found online at https://magazine.texasarchitects.org/2024/09/04/bahamas-cottage/

On page 82 of the September/October 2024 issue, in the Design Awards article about Hightower Middle School by Kirksey Architecture, Jody Sergi, AIA, was inadvertently left off of the list of design team members.

ON THE COVER

Sinturbanizam is a long-term project of the Croatian architect, artist, and theorist Vjenceslav Richter and one of the many urban techno-utopian proposals of the 1960s. *Sinturbanizam* (Synthurbanism). 1962-63. Vjenceslav Richter (1917-2002). Perspective section of Ziggurat. Exhibition copy, 43 3/8 x 39 3/8 in. (110x100 cm). Photo courtesy Vjencesslav Richter Archive, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zabgreb

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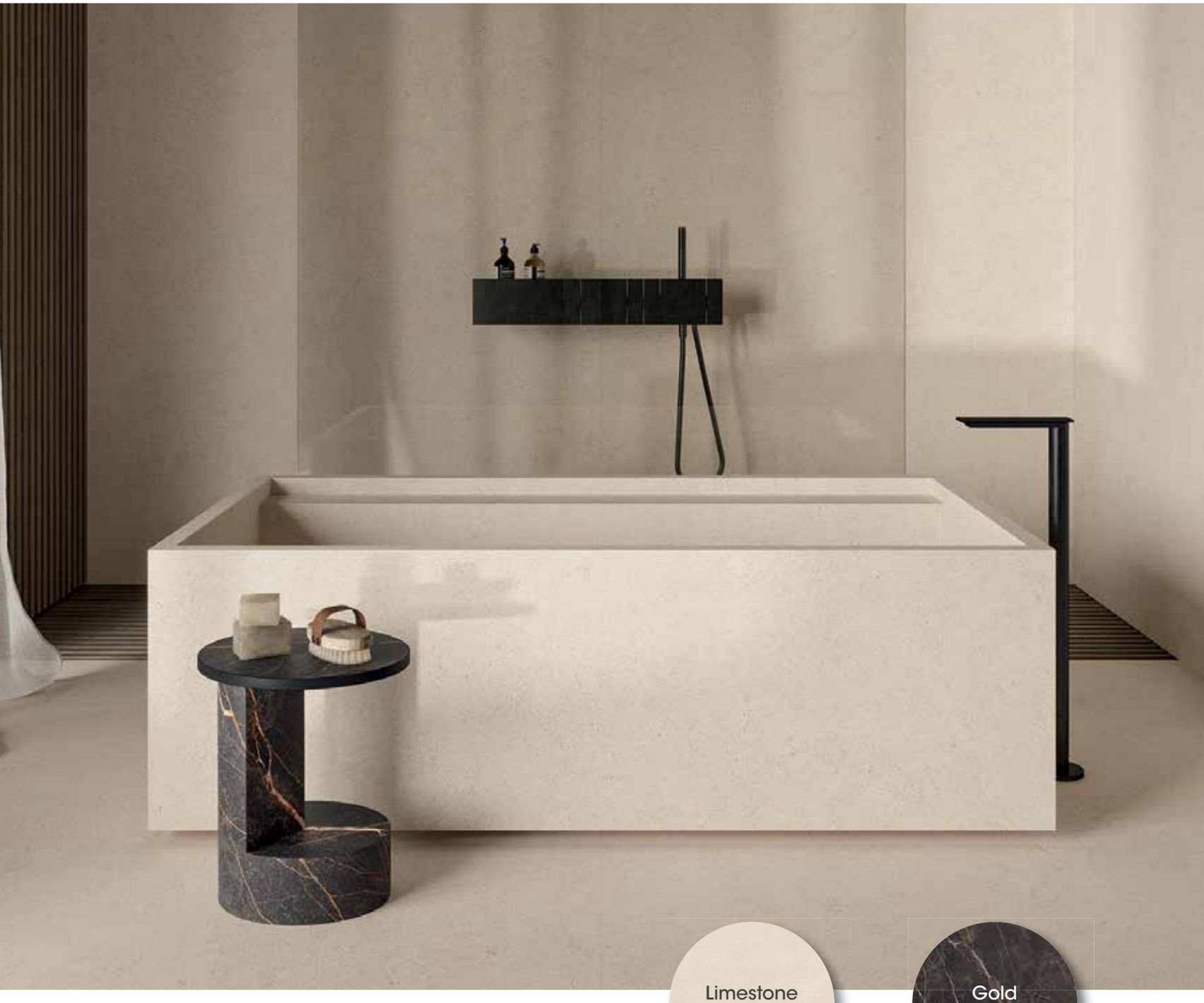

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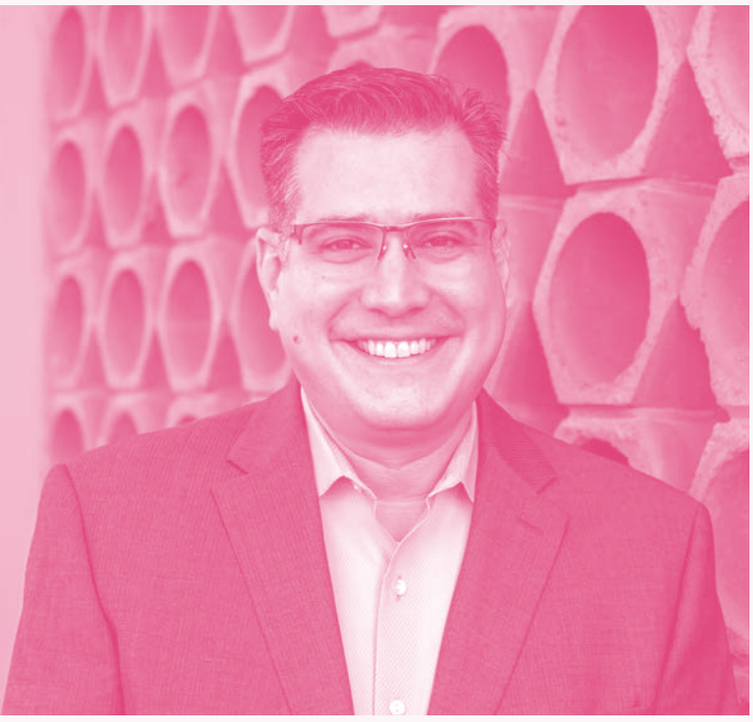
GIVING BACK

by Jason Puchot, AIA



I remember a day I spent with my grandfather in the summer of 1988. He wanted to stop by a local bookstore just north of downtown San Antonio, and I, eager to add to my Green Lantern collection, immediately headed for the comic book racks when we arrived at Half Price Books at 3207 Broadway. As I flipped through the rotating shelves, I heard my grandfather calling me from the other side of the cramped store—he was in the architecture section.

He told me how much he loved my sketches and my endless doodling, and how he always noticed my fascination with the colored wooden blocks at his house whenever I visited. Then, as we flipped through a book together, he asked, "What do you know about architecture?" That simple question sparked a lifelong passion in me, and from that moment, I knew I wanted to become an architect.

My grandfather was not only one of my greatest mentors but also an incredibly important figure in the city we both called home. Dr. Herbert Calderon, who grew up on the west side of San Antonio, graduated from the University of Texas Dental School in 1950. After serving two years in the Air Force, he opened a private dental practice in the downtown community, where he worked for 49 years. Along the way, he became president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and in 1965, he was elected to the San Antonio City Council, where he served for six years, even becoming Mayor Pro Tempore.

Dr. Calderon passed away in the summer of 2014, but before he did, he left me with these words: "No matter where you are in life, you can always give back to others." He explained that it was this principle that drove him to serve on numerous committees, boards, and councils. Those words have shaped many of the decisions I've made in my own life, inspiring me to always look for ways to help others. Whether it was assisting new members in becoming registered, encouraging Fellows to mentor young architects, or coaching youth hockey, I've always believed in the power of service.

As I begin my presidential year in 2025, I'm committed to continuing that legacy of giving back. This year is about advancing the Texas Society of Architects' mission and being the voice for Texas architecture. With the support of an incredible executive committee, board, and staff, I'm confident we're poised for success in the year ahead. I encourage everyone to find ways to give back and promote our wonderful profession. Now more than ever, we need to mentor the next generation of architects—at all levels, from K-12 to college, and in our offices every day.

I often replay the story of my grandfather in my mind, especially when I drive by the old bookstore. Sadly, in 2024, that Half Price Books location I remember visiting in my youth closed after 53 years. While both the store and my grandfather are gone, his reminder to always give back will live on forever. ☐

Jason E. Puchot, AIA, is senior vice president at RVK Architecture in San Antonio and the 2025 TxA president.

RON WOMMACK, FAIA 1950–2024 A TEXAS GIANT

by Eurico R. Francisco, AIA

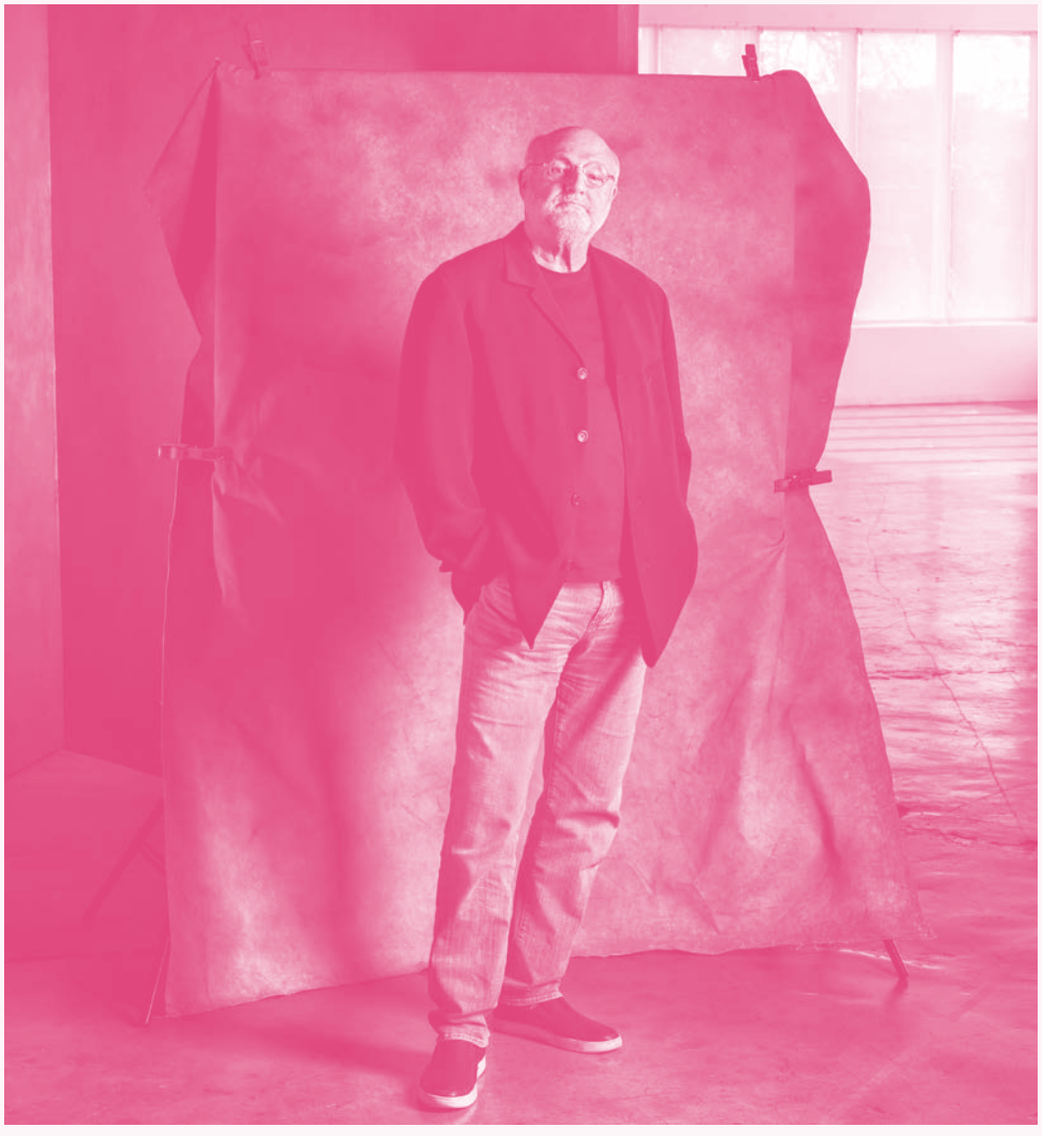


PHOTO BY KENT BARKER

Texas has lost one of its architecture giants. Ron Wommack, FAIA, one of the most celebrated architects in the state, and a beloved friend, died on June 30, 2024. He passed away suddenly, at his home, while casually talking with his wife, Joy, about his favorite subject: architecture.

Ron was born in 1950 and grew up in Abilene. He graduated from Texas Tech University in 1976, and following years of apprenticeship with Frank Welch and with the Oglesby Group, Ron established his own practice, Ron Wommack Architect, in 1990. He kept his practice small, sometimes working solo and sometimes collaborating with colleagues and assistants. Despite the modest size of the practice—or perhaps because of it—Ron's work was recognized by his peers at AIA Dallas and the Texas Society of Architects with numerous design awards. For the last several years, it seemed that everything that he did was bound to win an award. The simple elegance of his architecture was appealing and enduring, rooted in a solid understanding of construction materials and techniques, and on a refined sensibility for light, proportion, and rhythm.

Ron worked across different project types, but he showed superb command of scale in his residential work. His houses and townhomes have a lyrical character in the way that they are assembled and in how they relate to their site and context: a graceful corner here, some dappled light over there, a cadence of volumes, spaces, and geometries that was never accidental, but rather choreographed to bring a sense of delight and reassurance. Being in one of Ron's buildings reminds you of the essential values of architecture, values that eschew trends and go instead for what endures and is permanent.

And isn't it interesting how buildings at times reflect their designers' characters? Am I the only one to have noticed how a certain well-known and circumspect architect has created work that is austere and precise? How another, keen on philosophical musings, gave us buildings that ask to be analyzed and deciphered? And how yet another, who was socially minded, left us work that promotes the collective over the individual? Likewise, I like to think that the lyricism in Ron's buildings was a reflection of his own character. Those of us lucky to have known him will remember the endlessly curious mind, the generous heart, the bluntly honest—and sometimes unfiltered—opinions on the profession, the devoted mentor to younger peers, the teacher, the loyal-for-life friend. Same in character as in architecture, what you saw is what you got: open, inspiring, honest, expressive, delightful. Or, in one word, lyrical.

A true lover of books, Ron was a voracious reader. His personal library is legendary, and he shared it generously with many. It wasn't uncommon for Ron to show up for a meeting, dinner, or coffee chat with a new book, either as a gift or as a conversation starter. It was he who, a long time ago, introduced me to the work of Juhani Pallasmaa. Pallasmaa's critique of contemporary architecture, calling for a holistic and enlightened take on our profession and our craft, resonated deeply with Ron. He also delighted in finding out and learning about other architects; Ando, Chipperfield, RCR, and, most recently, Neri&Hu, were among a long list of his personal heroes.

Ron served our profession generously and was in turn recognized by peers for his achievements. He was a Fellow of the AIA, an adjunct professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, a visiting critic at Texas Tech, and a past president of the Dallas Architecture Forum. He also chaired a number of committees at AIA Dallas, including the Design Awards Committee, Small Firms Roundtable, and 2024 Fellows Network. Ron's firm was recognized as the AIA Dallas 2006 Firm of the Year, and his work garnered more than a dozen design awards throughout his career. Last year, the Texas Tech University Huckabee College of Architecture honored Ron posthumously with its Distinguished Alumnus Award. He would have been so proud.

Texas has lost one of its architecture giants—but a gentle giant. Ron loved life, he loved his profession, and he loved his friends, who in turn loved him back and will miss him forever. →

Eurico R. Francisco, AIA, is a design principal at Perkins&Will and a contributing editor to *Texas Architect*. Originally from São Paulo, he has called Texas home for 25 years.

→ Ron Wommack designed his own home in Dallas. Despite its small footprint and the diminutive urban lot, generous glazing shaded by a steel-pipe trellis and tall bamboo bring in beautiful light and create a sense of serenity. Ron loved this house.

PHOTO BY CHARLES DAVIS SMITH, FAIA

At the 2020 TxA Design Conference in El Paso, I was standing in a courtyard of a home with a spectacular view, typing emails into my phone as I dealt with a (seeming) project crisis. Ron quietly approached and said, "Is that more important than this view? You will never experience this moment again." As usual, he was right—about being present in the moment and looking deeply.

—GREGORY IBAÑEZ, FAIA

A brilliant man with a big heart, a true philosopher who loved design and brought great vision to his projects, Ron was president of the [Dallas Architecture] Forum Board (2003-2005) when I became the executive director. I vividly remember when Ron called me on behalf of the Forum Board's search committee and offered me the position almost 20 years ago. I enjoyed working with him and learned so much from Ron through the years, and his legacy will continue to impact the Dallas design community.

—NATE EUDALY, HON. AIA

I met Ron 42 years ago when we both worked at the Oglesby Group. He lived an architectural life, reflected in his deep love of buildings, the city, and people; reflected in his extraordinary personal library; reflected in the fact that at any architectural gathering (lecture, tour, exhibition), there he was, quietly beaming with enthusiasm.

Ron cultivated his architectural inspirations as an antidote to the headwinds we all battle; he wove them into his beautiful work and daily life, and then shared them generously with all his friends and colleagues. You might say he helped all of us keep going.

—MAX LEVY, FAIA

I'll never forget the first time he came to my studio. He was looking at my paintings and sculptures and asking a lot of fascinating and somewhat challenging questions. I always looked forward to his philosophical questions and his wealth of knowledge. His childlike humility, all wrapped up in that big old bear of a body, made me feel so comfortable sharing my thoughts, questions, and fears. The most important aspect of our friendship was, I believe, a spiritual connection. I'm not saying we talked at all about religion, and, to be honest, I don't even know what Ron's thoughts were about it, but we talked about very big things, mysterious things, spiritual things, and Ron pushed me and encouraged me. I was really devastated when I learned of his sudden death, and although there is now a void in my physical experience, I just have to think about Ron, and I keep painting. It's a spiritual thing.

—JIM WILSON, AIA

My earliest memories of Ron are from our architecture school days at Texas Tech in the 1970s. Being a year or two behind him, I was taken by his willingness to engage and encourage me as an underclassman, which was something I will never forget. It was an element of his character that he carried throughout his life.

His tenure at the offices of Frank Welch and Bud Oglesby sharpened his focus as a designer, reinforcing a talent and sensibility that he continued to refine in his own practice. His humble, self-effacing demeanor belied his willingness to quickly engage in a well-informed discussion of the design topic at hand.

My last memories of Ron were at the most recent TxA Design Conference in Arkansas. More than once, we found ourselves on a bench resting our aging knees and enjoying each other's observations about the exceptional architecture (by the likes of Fay Jones and Marlon Blackwell) we were experiencing. Those were the eternally bonding moments that will endure when I fondly remember Ron. He will be truly missed.

—MARK T. WELLEN, FAIA

Ron was a vital member of the architectural community in Dallas. His passion for modern architecture was contagious, and he has left us with an oeuvre of memorable and striking residences and projects.

—WILLIS WINTERS, FAIA

My friend Ron was obsessed with his beloved profession of architecture. I state that as both an observation and in admiration of such fervor.

We all know and admire peers who can "talk the architectural talk," yet only few can also so keenly "walk the walk." Ron was rarefied in his mastery of both, interweaving his vast curiosity, research, and accrued knowledge with an innate skillset that he channeled so beautifully into his deft designs.

As one's architectural profession inevitably draws to conclusion, Ron in turn found complementary avenues to "recharge" his architectural battery via teaching, posting inspiring architecture, advocating for a new Dallas architecture school, chairing the AIA Fellowship committee, and other advocacies. Such ventures weren't just personal, but for and in the spirit of the profession and community at large. May Ron's zest inspire us to keep recharging.

—JOE MCCALL, FAIA

When I moved to Dallas as a young architect, I was eager to learn about the local architecture scene, and Ron Wommack's townhome projects in Uptown and Deep Ellum quickly caught my attention.

When I finally met Ron, I realized that he was not only an incredible architect whose sensibilities around scale, light, and space were so fine-tuned, but that he was also an amazing human, always willing to share his knowledge and eager to learn from everyone around him. During our coffee meetings, I wanted to slow time down so I could take more notes, ask more questions, and hear more about his thoughts on architecture and life.

He was excited to be involved in different things and committees, curious about everything, always present, always listening and observing, even in ordinary scenarios. Ron was one of the kindest souls, and his presence was felt everywhere he went.

Dallas lost a phenomenal architect, and the architecture community lost a teacher and a colleague. And some of us lost a life mentor and a friend. He is missed beyond words.

—ANDREA ALVAREZ

I knew Ron for 51 years, after meeting in 1973 in the Texas Tech Department of Architecture where he was several years ahead of me. Nonetheless, we became part of a group of pre-computer students whose convictions were not focused on business but rather on ideas and their material existence. My college term "poetechnical" attempted to describe this mutual embodiment and complex depth of meaning.

Over the years, our friendship grew, and our world view was always "larger" than the usual Texas practice. As small firms (mostly sole practitioners), we shared interests in firms around the world and their work as published in renowned monographs and journals. *Abitare*, *Lotus*, *Casabella*, *Electa*, and others from the '70s and '80s—prior even to Spanish journals like El Croquis—were to be discussed and appreciated. In the Panhandle deficit of the time, these were like rare candy to aspiring professionals.

Ron's interest in Harley-Davidson Sportsters and annual rallies in Sturgis tied conceptually to the freewheeling aspects of his sensibility. He juggled such things, and we talked when possible while deep in work.

His smile was infectious to me, his talents immense, and I will miss him very, very much.

—W. MARK GUNDERSON, AIA

COUNCIL ON TALL BUILDINGS AND URBAN HABITAT OPENS TEXAS CHAPTER, TO HOST 2026 AMERICAS CONFERENCE

by Mide O. Akinsade, AIA, NOMA

There may be no place on Earth better suited to address the questions of modern urbanism than Texas. Despite global trends of economic volatility, high downtown vacancy rates, digitization, AI, climate change, and more, the Texas Triangle of Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston continues to boom. Year after year, these metropolitan areas each vie to be among the fastest growing in the US, and Houston inches closer to overtaking Chicago as the nation's third most populous city. With space at an increasing premium, Texas finds itself in a unique position to define the essential character and function of the 21st-century metroplex.

It is with this in mind that the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) recently established its newest chapter in Texas. Originally founded as an authority on building statistics (it's website will tell you, for example, that Houston will likely become the nation's third tallest city as soon as it becomes its third most populous), CTBUH has since flowered into a nonprofit focused on sustainable, densified, healthy urban growth. Through conferences, research, publications, and advocacy, the organization engages a member network of more than 2 million professionals working in all building industry sectors worldwide.

The significance of the Texas chapter has been rapidly recognized by CTBUH. In 2026, the CTBUH Americas conference will be held in Austin. Here, the organization seeks to provide a forum all those invested in tall buildings and urban habitat—policymakers, urban planners, architects, owners, and developers—to gain insights into the latest thinking in sustainable development.

At the 2023 CTBUH global conference in Singapore, 1,200 attendees met under the banner of "humanizing high density." Singapore has been a leader in this space, wedding investments in affordable housing and integrated communities with incentives to create public space "at height." Iconic designs such as the CapitaSpring skyscraper, with its almost 100,000 sf of greenspace, showcase the vision of the "garden city" as a true urban landscape. Last year, CTBUH met in London and Paris to discuss the challenges of new versus renewed buildings. With the United Nations projecting nearly 70 percent urbanization by 2050, CTBUH seeks to learn from lessons at a global scale—proactively, rather than reactively.

Texas has weathered economic shifts in its history—in cotton, cattle, and lumber. At the wake of the global green transition, AI, and the "work-from-anywhere" office model, similar shifts may loom for the energy and service markets. Houston, our largest and most lateral city, is a case study. With the city facing unprecedented increases in both office vacancies and population growth, nascent developments like More Space: Main Street and the long-planned I-45 rebuild look to reassess Houston's essential urban character. Having found its fortune between the Gulf and the stars, Space City now turns its attention to all the space chartered between. What should go between the on ramp and the off ramp? Between the lobby and the penthouse? How do we marry "city as economic engine" with "city as urban habitat"? CTBUH Texas seeks to get ahead of these questions.

At the upcoming Austin conference, CTBUH will look to the future of sustainable, densified urbanism in Texas. The organization seeks to host quarterly events that rotate around Austin, Dallas, and Houston, as well as roundtable discussions with like-minded organizations. Read more about the Texas Chapter at www.skyscrapercenter.com/city/austin/events. ☐

Mide O. Akinsade, AIA, NOMA, is the design director at the Houston studio of Perkins&Will, and co-founder and board chair of the Texas chapter of CTBUH.

↗ CTBUH tours the rooftop gardens of CapitaSpring in Singapore during the 2023 International Conference. The upcoming Americas Conference will be held in Austin in 2026.

PHOTO COURTESY MIDE O. AKINSADE, AIA, NOMA

→ East River Phase II, Houston. The master plan leverages Houston's waterways—once little more than an extension of the Ship Channel, and some of the last significant space available to major urban developments—as densified, mixed-use space.

RENDERING COURTESY PERKINS&WILL

AIA-LRGV CHAPTER CONFERENCE TOUR: THE GOLDEN AGE OF HARLINGEN ARCHITECTURE

by Stephen Fox

On Thursday, September 5, 2024, 45 architects toured the mid-20th-century modern architectural highlights of Harlingen as part of the 2024 Building Communities Conference & Tradeshow, organized by Lower Rio Grande Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects and held the first weekend of September on South Padre Island. Chapter president Nestor Camacho, AIA, conference committee chair Sergio Láinez, AIA, and executive director Maria Sustaeta coordinated the day-long tour of nine sites.

Harlingen may not immediately spring to mind as a hotbed of modern architectural production. But like many communities in Texas, it was home to exceptionally inventive architects during the postwar period. John G. York (1914-1980) and Alan Y. Taniguchi (1922-1998) are the two best-known Harlingen modernists. But York's sometime partner, Walter C. Bowman (1912-1966), and Bowman's subsequent partners, E. Lester Swanson (1927-2023) and James W. Hiester (b. 1929), as well as Taniguchi's short-term partner Charles B. Croft (1927-2017), were also important contributors. Bowman's firm would become SHW Architects.

The tour began with a stop in downtown Harlingen at the law office of McCullough & McCullough, built in 1983. Chronologically, 1983 is a bit of a stretch for "mid-century," but the McCullough building embodies the outstanding attributes of 1950s Harlingen modernism. It was constituted by its concrete tilt-wall construction system; it demonstrated environmental responsiveness in its incorporation of a north-facing skylight that illuminates an interior patio; and it relied on architectural ingenuity to resolve such issues as providing for views out while inhibiting views from the street into the interior. The architect was Gustavo de Roza, a Chinese-Portuguese immigrant based in Winnipeg, Canada, who was briefly involved in a

← Interior of Cocke, Bowman & York's 1952 John G. York House, Harlingen, restored by Megamorphosis.

PHOTO BY JESSE MILLER, AIA

Harlingen architecture partnership in the 1980s. The tour then visited two religious spaces completed in 1962. One was the chapel of Kreidler-Ashcraft Funeral Directors, the other Bowman Swanson Hiester's Wesley Methodist Church. The architectural character of both buildings grew out of their architects' expressive use of glue-laminated timber ribs to shape vertical interior spaces.

A stop at a house designed in the mid-1950s by Alan Taniguchi demonstrated how he rotated its plan so that major rooms faced south (toward the side property line and a garden patio) rather than the east-facing street front. Taniguchi used a windowless plane of limestone to wall off the house's street front while serving as a backdrop for the site's profuse subtropical vegetation.

Lunch was at one of Harlingen's midcentury icons, Taniguchi & Croft's flamboyant Casa del Sol (1962) downtown, built as a municipal event center. What makes the Casa del Sol iconic is its radial, 16-bay, thin-shell concrete roof structure. The catenary profiles of the two-inch-thick roof plate, folded over protruding, curved post-tensioned beams supported on sculpturally faceted columns, give the roof a draped, fabric-like appearance belying its concrete construction. Harlingen architect John Pearcy, AIA, spoke about recent efforts to persuade the City of Harlingen to recognize the building's architectural significance and improve its maintenance.

Following lunch, the tour moved on to a flat-roofed, steel-framed, one-story suburban office building constructed in 1950 as Cocke, Bowman & York's design studio. The exterior of the small building shows how John York experimented with exposed structure, various surfacing materials, and climate-responsive spatial organization to produce a new building type for Harlingen: the garden office building. As participants noted, the diminutive building (now occupied by Green, Rubiano & Associates, a structural engineering firm) retains steel loops projecting from the roof fascia designed to support an exterior shading device.

The tour bus drove past other examples of suburban office buildings, one by Croft featuring paired concrete upstand beams carrying a concrete roof plate, the other a subdivision of one-story medical buildings (several designed by Taniguchi). These demonstrated the suburbanization of the professional workplace in the 1950s. Participants dodged rain showers while admiring a one-block street of houses that Taniguchi designed in 1952 at the beginning of his Harlingen career. The small houses (one owned by Harlingen modern preservation activist Michael Dailey) orient rooms to the south and away from the street. They also treat their architecturally exuberant carports as surrogate front porches.

The tour's final stops were in Harlingen's elite, midcentury garden suburban neighborhood, Laurel Park, developed along the north bank of the Arroyo Colorado in the early 1950s. There, John Pearcy led participants through two houses his firm, Megamorphosis, restored. One was the house of Laurel Park's developer, John W. McKelvey. The other was architect John York's own house of 1952, a South Texas version of the Eames Case Study House. The York House is steel-framed. Pipe columns and bar joists are exposed inside. All spaces in the one-room-deep house are lined up along a screened east-side breezeway running the length of the house. Pearcy described how he and the home's current owner, Matthew Nichols, tore away bad additions and cheap alterations to recover the house's stunning, radical design. Interior colors were restored using rare color photographs published in *Progressive Architecture* magazine in 1955. The restoration of the York House is as consequential as Lawrence Lof's 2008 restoration of Richard Neutra's Kraigher House in Brownsville.

The AIA-LRGV's 2024 study tour examined and analyzed how mid-20th-century architects extracted inventive architecture from the material and budgetary limitations that still confront architects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. By looking at building design, materials, structural issues, sustainability, and preservation in the environmental context of a hot, humid climate, the tour group assessed and learned from the profession's move from designing for passive ventilation in the 1950s to designing air-condition-dependent buildings by the 1960s. What stood out was the extraordinary innovations that York, Taniguchi, Bowman, Croft, and their peers were able to build into their economical, site-specific designs. ☐

Stephen Fox is an architectural historian and a Fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.

UT AUSTIN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE PRESENTS *THE BLACK HOME AS PUBLIC ART*

by Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, NOMA

The Black Home as Public *Art* exhibition and symposium, hosted by the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture and organized by Associate Professor Charles L. Davis II, explored the intersections of Black identity, architecture, and public art in the United States during the postwar period. The exhibition, which ran from August 30 to November 15, 2024, presented eight artist-led projects that reimagined the Black home as a site for social activism, creative intervention, and public engagement. These interventions, carried out by prominent artists and designers like Theaster Gates, Tyree Guyton, Rick Lowe, Smokehouse Associates, and Amanda Williams, employ adaptive reuse and public art strategies to transform traditional residential spaces of working-class neighborhoods into meaningful expressions of Black culture, resistance, and empowerment. The exhibition also included work by activist and theorists Huey Newton and Bobby Seale of the Black Panther Party, as well as playwrights June Jordan and Amiri Brakaka and the philosopher Angela Davis.

↓ Symposium panelist Scott L. Ruff studies the work presented at *The Black Home as Public Art* exhibition hosted by UTSOA.

PHOTO BY ANYA MITCHELL

Notable projects included Gates's *Dorchester Projects* (Chicago, Illinois) and Williams's *Color(ed) Theory Houses* (Chicago, Illinois), both of which utilize architecture to challenge and expand the narrative around urban living, public space, and racial uplift in Black communities. Other projects, like Guyton's *Heidelberg Project* (Detroit, Michigan), incorporate large-scale installations into residential neighborhoods, encouraging new relationships between the private home and the public realm.

These creative interventions speak to the broader goals of promoting a more inclusive understanding of the built environment. By addressing the intersection of race, space, and activism, these artists expand the traditional view of architecture and urban planning as tools for social change. The exhibition demonstrated how Black artists and designers used their practices to challenge the dominance of traditional architectural forms and create new models for engaging with public space.

Accompanying the exhibition was a symposium held on September 11–12, 2024, at the Mebane Gallery. This event brought together scholars, designers, historians, and curators to explore the significance of these artist-led interventions in the Black home and their broader implications for architectural theory and practice. The symposium featured presentations by Komozi Woodard (Sarah Lawrence College), Scott L. Ruff (RuffWorks Studio and Pratt Institute), Curry J. Hackett (Wayside Studio), and Aisha Densmore-Bey (Boston Architectural College), as well as a keynote address from historian and architect Dell Upton (UC Berkeley and UCLA).

A closing discussion, moderated by Davis, focused on the importance of pluralizing the architectural canon and explored how these artist-led projects reshaped the way people thought about the built environment and its relationship to race and social justice.

One of the most compelling ideas that surfaced during the roundtable was presented by Ruff on the need to elevate spatial literacy among the public as well as and the importance of reclaiming agency in the built environment, particularly for those from marginalized communities. Davis expanded upon this position, arguing that as the U.S. becomes a nation of renters, with more people experiencing spatial disenfranchisement, a larger segment of the population will begin to understand the significance of agency within the built environment. Recognizing one's ability to shape the spaces we inhabit is a powerful tool for driving change.

The Black Home as Public Art marks the inaugural symposium in a three-part series that will lay the groundwork for the Black Space Archive, a project focused on documenting and supporting Black-led creative interventions in architecture. The exhibition and symposium provided invaluable insights into artist-driven interventions within Black spaces, offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of race, culture, and the built environment. These events, alongside future symposia in the series, are poised to make lasting contributions to the evolving discourse in architectural history and criticism. ☐

Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, is the editor of *Texas Architect*.

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN P. WHITE, AIA MEMBER EMERITUS, 1933–2024

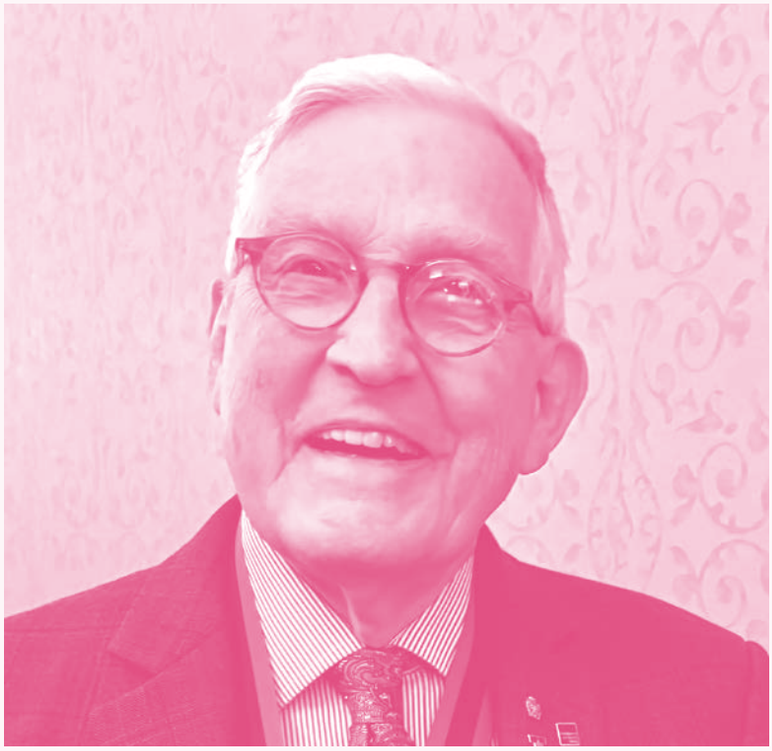


PHOTO COURTESY TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

by Urs Peter Flueckiger

In the fall of 1998, I got to know John Poston White as a senior colleague, mentor, and friend, and later as a neighbor. Together, John and I advised many students on their theses, typically students' last major project before graduating and entering the profession. During these advising sessions I was able to get to know John not merely as a colleague occasionally passing by; I was able to learn of his deep knowledge of architecture, keen sense for history, and, perhaps most importantly, his extraordinary sense of pedagogy and way of critiquing a student's work in a constructive and optimistic manner.

John's interests were in all aspects of architectural design and in his specialty of historic preservation. John was curious and kind. Few of us get to live such a long and distinguished career in architectural education. John joined the Texas Tech University Department of Architecture in 1973 and stepped down from full-time teaching in 2018. John's presence never left the college. He actively participated in our lecture series and came to the local AIA meetings.

John was an active member in the American Institute of Architects and in the Historic American Buildings Survey. His scholarly pursuit in historic preservation made him an authority in the state and the nation, demonstrated through his engagement in the National Park Service and his expertise in documenting architectural structures of historic significance through drawings.

In the first decade of this century, John was at the center of the college's historic preservation program. He established a vital culture of combining his research interest in historic preservation with teaching, enabling students to travel and visit landmarks around the nation and beyond. John's connections made it possible for TTU to scan the Statue of Liberty in New York, perhaps John's most prominent preservation project, which placed the college and TTU on the national map.

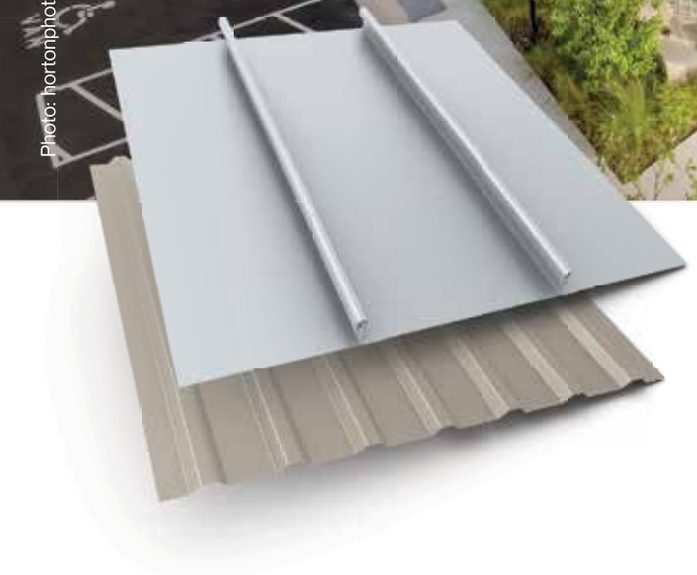
Other prominent projects of his are the Charles Goodnight Ranch House, the Four Sixes Ranch House, a site in Big Bend National Park, a structure in Puerto Rico, a historic location near Chaco Canyon, and George Washington's tent, among others. John was ahead of his time; for John it was self-evident to combine his research interests with his teaching. He inspired many colleagues to follow his example. John was one of the first who set an example for the college on how to collaborate, being awarded grants and instilling a culture of research and teaching to the benefit of all—students, colleagues, and the disciplines of architecture and historic preservation.

For over five decades, together with his twin brother, James "Jim" E. White, AIA Member Emeritus, John attended the TxA Annual Conference and was a fixture at our alumni reception, reconnecting and maintaining friendships with other alumni and inquiring about their latest professional accomplishments. Colleagues from other schools in Texas stopped by our reception—many specifically because of John, who looked beyond one's alma matter and whose expertise was well known among the Texas schools. John's kindhearted personality knew no boundaries and naturally attracted those who sought his expertise. Having served the college for 45 years is special; to have taught thousands of students, mentored dozens of colleagues, and worked in the state, the nation, and around the globe is truly exceptional. ☐

Urs Peter "Upe" Flueckiger is an architect in Lubbock and the dean of the Huckabee College of Architecture at Texas Tech University.

Industrial Revival

Photo: hortonphotoinc.com



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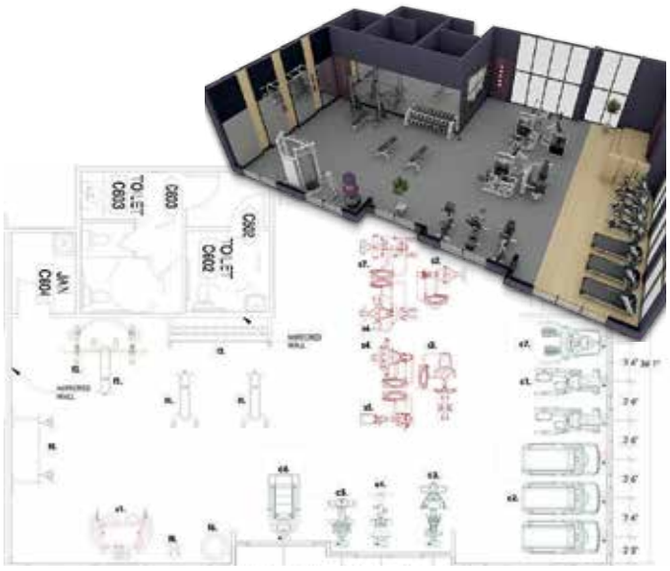

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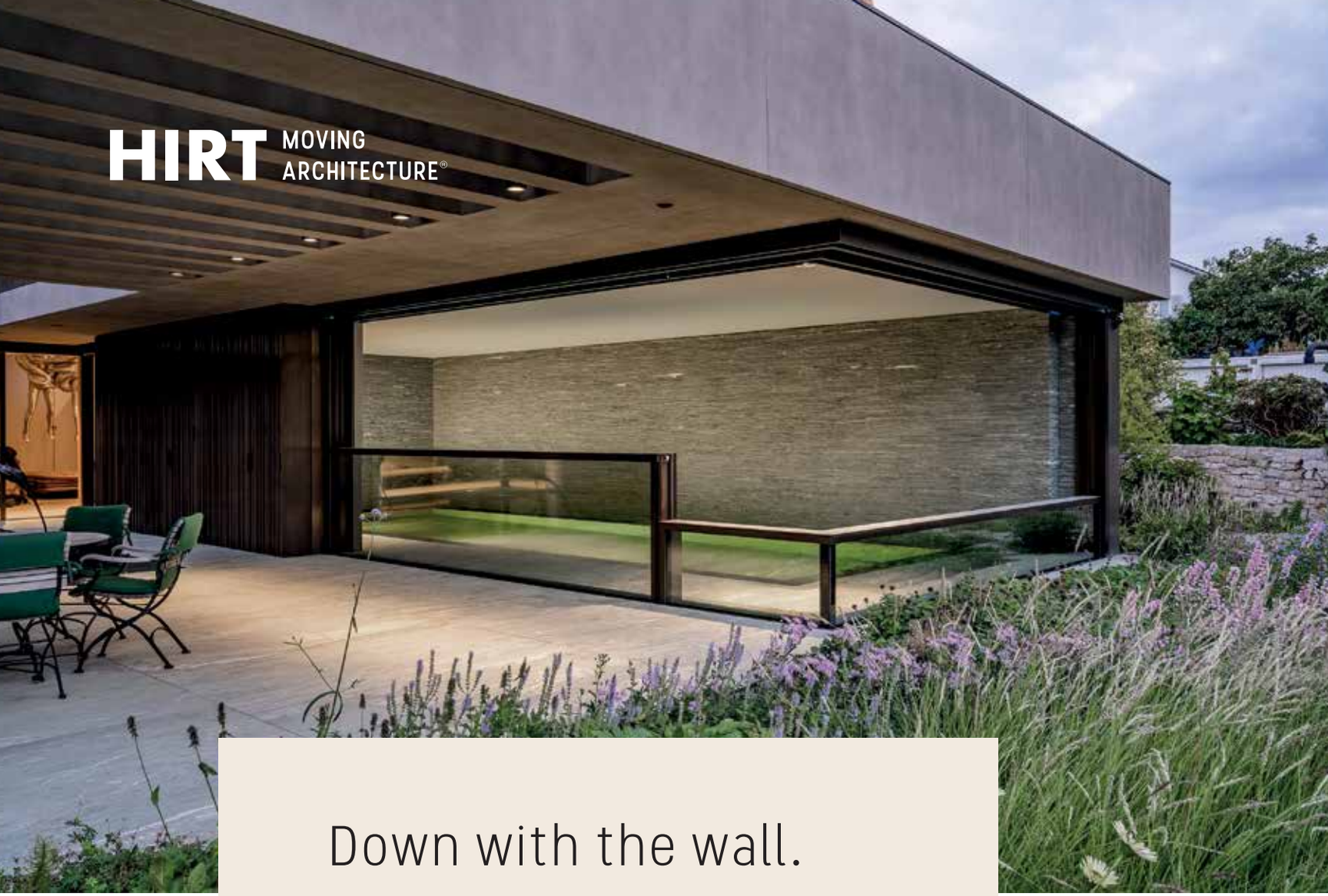

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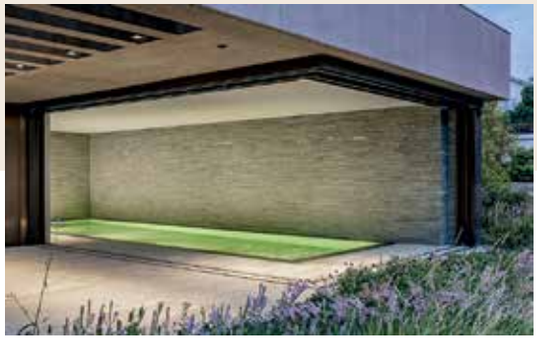

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Utopia, a concept first introduced by Thomas More in his 1516 work *Utopia*, has captivated philosophers and intellectuals for centuries, reflecting the values, anxieties, and technological advancements of the times. More's vision of an ideal society, where social harmony, justice, and equality prevail, laid the groundwork for what has since become a deeply ingrained cultural aspiration: the creation of a perfect world. However, utopia has not only been imagined as a blueprint for the future but also as a critique of existing societal flaws, shedding light on the contradictions and inequalities of our current reality.

For centuries, architects have played a key role in this vision, recognizing the built environment's profound influence on social systems. From early modernist communal experiments to the utopian cities envisioned by Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, architecture has been central to shaping ideals of a better world. Yet, these visions often come with challenges, revealing a paradox: the structures designed to liberate us sometimes end up constraining us. A true utopia is a dynamic, ongoing process that must adapt to the complexities of human life. It is not enough to create spaces for equality and freedom; these spaces must remain flexible, responsive to changing social, cultural, and technological contexts.

Today's utopian frameworks must acknowledge this complexity. Rather than proposing singular solutions, architects must design environments

OPIA

that encourage diversity, autonomy, and interaction. Urban spaces should facilitate mobility, social engagement, and exchange. Technology, too, plays a crucial role: modern innovations like digital tools, smart cities, and artificial intelligence offer profound opportunities to reshape society, but they must do so in a way that enhances freedom over control. While technology can democratize information and foster inclusive decision-making, it also carries risks of surveillance and homogenization.

In this issue of *Texas Architect*, we explore the concept of utopia through a series of essays and architectural projects that examine how architecture can embody utopian ideals while also highlighting the complexities and contradictions involved, emphasizing the need for flexibility, critical engagement with technology, and a balance between idealism and the messiness of real life. In the 21st century, we must rethink not just how we build, but why and for whom. Creating spaces that foster human flourishing—promoting creativity, collaboration, and equality—requires a commitment to social justice, sustainability, and innovation. Only then can we begin to build the world we truly aspire to create.

Words by CAMILLE VIGIL and TANVI SOLANKI, AIA

CHASING THE IMPOSSIBLE

How Technological Feats Fuel Our Utopic Visions

> "With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."
>
> —Marco Polo, *Invisible Cities*

WORDS BY CAMILLE VIGIL AND TANVI SOLANKI

Throughout Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo recounts tales of fantastical cities imbued with elements worth yearning for. Each encounter with a place unfolds as a continuum of impressions and reactions, shaped by where we've been and where we are going. Some cities boast intricate spiral staircases, bustling bazaars, or windows that frame breathtaking views. Yet, upon closer inspection, these seemingly idyllic places reveal themselves to be destitute, disconcerting, or utterly unremarkable. Some cities stand abandoned, while others deteriorate, leaving their inhabitants trapped in complacency or dejection. Marco Polo journeys through many cities, some ripe with utopic possibility; yet none achieve that ideal, and most serve as symbols of humanity's endless desires.

From building sandcastles on the beach to exploring the gravity-defying illustrated worlds of Dr. Seuss, the environments we imagine as children often shape our dreams. These early visions carry a sense of fondness that lingers into adulthood, influenced further by movies and literature that perpetuate shared societal ideals and stereotypes about certain places. Media and popular culture frequently romanticize cities like New York, Paris, and London, fostering subconscious desires to experience these iconic settings. Even without firsthand encounters, these spaces—defined by their sights, forms, and characteristics—can evoke powerful, cathartic emotions. Times Square, for example, may initially captivate with its bustling energy, but over time, its luster eventually fades as its imperfections, like crowded tourist attractions or dirty streets, are revealed. Ultimately, our preconceived notions shape both our aspirations for built environments and the ways we experience them once they become real.

The architectural design process offers its own glimpse into dreamy, unbuilt worlds. Architects, by the very nature of our work, strive to predict the future, designing spaces that are yet to be realized. This act of envisioning the future is like chasing a mirage—an image that remains perpetually at a distance. At the outset of a project, conceptual renderings or illustrations often cast an idealized, almost cinematic vision. Visualizations can easily be embellished on a screen with throngs of people or unexpected elements like hot air balloons or even elephants. While renderings heighten suspense and anticipation among clients and stakeholders, they should do so carefully, ensuring they do not overpromise or set unattainable expectations.

Though the concept design and design development phases aim to set a project's trajectory as high as possible, as the project progresses, it is inevitably tempered by practical constraints like climate, budget, and code, filtering out its most utopian elements.

Often, these idealistic aspects—the ones that inspired the design's earliest stages—are the first to be sacrificed. Although the final design may represent a fair compromise of competing factors, it has likely strayed from its initial rose-tinted vision. Of course, the true test of a building comes once it is operational. How will it fare through inclement weather and unexpected conditions? How will it be received by the community? What will its long-term legacy be?

Advancements in construction technology in recent years have given humanity the ability to bring futuristic designs—many that have been dormant for decades—out of the conceptual phase and into reality. Building taller, larger, more unconventional shapes—even constructing on extraterrestrial grounds—is now in the realm of possibility.

Supertall structures—buildings standing 984 feet or taller—seem to have originated in the imaginations of past generations, having often appeared in film and other media around the globe. Today, marketed as a housing solution, they represent one of humanity's latest materializations of advancement. Despite facing critics and controversy along the way, those involved appear to be proceeding with cautious optimism, hoping that these structures live up to their promised innovation. However, we have yet to see a full life cycle of any of these supertall edifices.

We are, however, beginning to see some of their limitations. Towering at almost 1,400 feet high, 432 Park Avenue in New York City touts itself as the tallest residential tower in the Western Hemisphere. When its condos became available for purchase, the building's luxury residences were quickly snapped up. However, despite paying millions for a spot in the tower, residents are already plagued with problems: leaks damaging their apartments, elevator outages, and building movement causing loud creaking noises—a supposed hallmark of supertall structures.

↰ Interpretation of Italo Calvino's city of Zobeide from *Invisible Cities* by Alicia Chen and Tanvi Solanki.

IMAGE BY ALICIA CHEN AND TANVI SOLANKI

→ The supertall residential tower at 432 Park Avenue in New York City by Rafael Viñoly Architects.

PHOTO BY MIKE MCLAUGHLIN PHOTOGRAPHY

← At 1,022 feet, Austin's Waterline, designed by KPF and HKS, is set to become the tallest building in Texas and the state's first "supertall" structure when it reaches completion in 2026.

RENDERING BY ATCHAIN

↑ Millennium Tower in San Francisco stands as a living testament to the gargantuan problem-solving needed to remedy building issues of its scale.

PHOTO BY DEAD.RABBIT VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, CC BY 4.0

At first glance, such problems may seem commonplace in any residential environment. However, it is apparent that as the scale of buildings increases, so do the scale of the problems—and the difficulty in solving them. Standing at 645 feet, Millennium Tower in San Francisco does not technically qualify as a "supertall" building, but it certainly exemplifies the way physical size correlates with escalating challenges. Less than a decade after its construction, the luxury residential skyscraper encountered a structural issue, which was addressed only after its foundation sank nearly 18 inches. This settlement caused an initial 14-inch tilt at the top of the tower, leading to cracks and the eventual closure of a garage elevator. To provide stability that the original foundation, built on soft soil, could not offer, engineers devised a plan that included installing concrete piles into the site's bedrock. Although the repairs have been deemed complete, the damage was already done, as the valuation of the condos sank alongside the foundation. Plumbing backups, window failures, and various lawsuits may have further tarnished public perception of the so-called high-end living experience, likely contributing to the devaluation of the residences.

Soon, supertall structures will stake their place in Texas, too, and their impact will be observed in real time. When completed, Waterline in Austin will be the tallest building in the state, rising over 1,000 feet. Capitalizing on its proximity to the city's natural features, the mixed-use development claims that "wellness" and "healthful living" are fundamental to the project. To reinforce this focus on well-being, the project will offer a variety of gym facilities, green terraces, and ample natural light throughout its spaces. But will unforeseen architectural challenges lead to headaches and stress for its users as they have with other supertall structures? Time will tell if this caliber of structure will one day be lamented as a misguided attempt to advance construction science and urbanism, much as historical visions of the future have often been considered outlandish in retrospect. Technological advancements are only as effective as the humans who maintain them; deferred maintenance and other neglect threaten the lofty promises of supertall buildings.

↓ Buckminster Fuller's students construct a tessellated dome at Black Mountain College in Black Mountain, NC, circa 1948-1949.

PHOTO FROM THE BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE RESEARCH PROJECT PAPERS, VISUAL MATERIALS, NORTH CAROLINA STATE ARCHIVES, RALEIGH, NC, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Supertall buildings are only one architectural approach to fulfilling utopian aspirations. A notable pioneer of construction technology was Buckminster Fuller, a visionary whose ambitious concepts were not only conceived but somewhat successfully realized. Fuller spent much of his life searching for innovative solutions to complex design problems. He brought the geodesic dome into public view, presenting it as a practical tool to address global issues such as housing shortages and sustainability.

One of Fuller's most eccentric proposals was the Dome Over Manhattan, envisioned as a solution to sustainability challenges. His Montreal Biosphere (1967) demonstrated the potential of geodesic design, but its promise of durability fell short when its acrylic shell caught fire during welding renovations. Ultimately, economic, social, and practical concerns prevented the widespread adoption of the geodesic dome as a viable design option—at least not at the mass scale of modular production Fuller had intended.

In 1991, Biosphere 2 was established in Saddlebrook, Arizona, aiming to resurrect Fuller's utopian pursuit. Designed as a self-contained environment replicating Earth's ecosystems, the facility also served as a prototype to prove the feasibility of potential space colonies. Between 1991 and 1994, two experiments were conducted, isolating eight participants within the biosphere. Both attempts failed due to issues such as oxygen depletion, the collapse of the ecosystem, and inadequate emergency medical care for the participants. While Fuller's posthumous influence endures, it remains largely symbolic. His Fly's Eye Dome, envisioned as a solution for housing and rainwater collection, now stands in Miami as an art installation.

At best, his works remain as memorials and reminders of what he hoped might have been. However, society was enamored by the ideas encapsulated in Fuller's career. Despite never reaching fruition in the practical sense, Fuller's tessellated domes became a symbol for a futuristic society, serving as the inspiration for the many self-contained dome cities found in science fiction literature and film. Pauly Shore's *Bio-Dome* (1996) directly parodied the Biosphere 2 experiment and the chaos that inevitably ensued. Other movies like *Logan's Run* (1976), *House of Tomorrow* (2017), *Spaceship Earth* (2020), and *Biosphere* (2022), and even episodes of *The Simpsons*, explore similar themes of containment and domed living. Likewise, novels such as Ben Bova's *City of Darkness* and Stephen King's *Under the Dome* utilized the dome as the backdrop for their respective dystopian societies.

Although not *about* a dome, Darren Aronofky's film *Postcard from Earth* (2003) explores futuristic themes of space exploration and colonization, all while being screened in a near-360-degree cinema housed *within* a dome known as Sphere, an entertainment arena located in Paradise, Nevada, just outside of Las Vegas. Sphere has captured public attention not only for its awe-inspiring domed structure, encased inside and out with LED pucks, but also for the immersive experience it creates. There is something distinctly utopian about such experiential technologies. But beyond the captivating optics and aesthetics lies the real challenge of making these ideas function as intended—as isolated, self-contained, and highly controlled environments. The commonality shared by these examples is the desire of crafting a future in which we can control and manage our environment to ensure continued success and homeostasis.

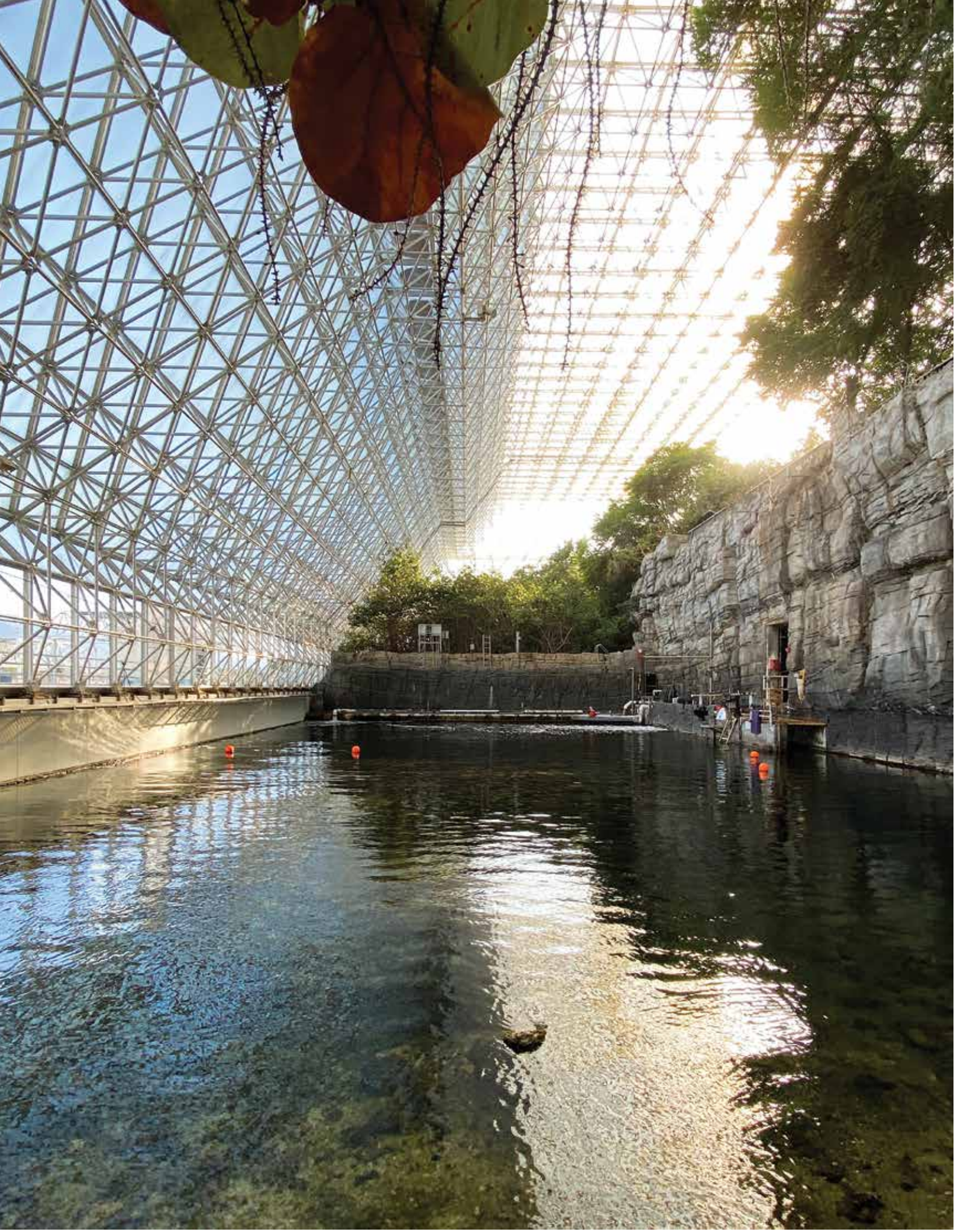
→ First intended to be a testing facility for a self-sustaining colony on another planet, Biosphere 2 in Saddlebrook, Arizona, now serves as a facility for environmental and sustainability research.

PHOTO BY KEVIN DOOLEY VIA FLICKR.COM, CC BY 2.0

↓ Buckminster Fuller's Dome Over Manhattan envisioned a giant structure encapsulating New York City as a speculative approach to sustainability, circa 1960.

PHOTO COURTESY RBF ESTATE

WORDS BY CAMILLE VIGIL AND TANVI SOLANKI



WORDS BY CAMILLE VIGIL AND TANVI SOLANKI

Humanity's pursuit of a self-contained, highly controlled world as a solution for the future has culminated in its most ambitious expression to date through NEOM, an innovative and hypertechnical development in northwest Saudi Arabia. The name NEOM is derived from a mix of Greek and Arabic, with "neo" meaning "new" and "mustaqbal" translating to "future." This "new future" reimagines sustainability, industrialization, and entertainment through five different regions: Magna, a high-end coastal city; Oxagon, an advanced industrial hub; Sindalah, a luxury island experience; Trojena, a mountainous tourist destination; and THE LINE, a 170-km-long urban development.

THE LINE, perhaps the most well-known region of the venture, is a self-proclaimed sustainable development that, in the words of the NEOM team, will contain "no roads, cars or emissions…and everything its nine million residents could ever need within a five-minute walk." This new city takes a paradoxical approach to sustainability, importing the contents of a city into a seemingly empty, desert landscape. The intent, as described by NEOM's own website, is to combine all the lessons learned from other cities to create "a new city from scratch." While the buildings may be "smart" and incorporate lush, self-sustaining landscaping, the opportunity cost of moving hundreds of thousands of tons of materials to shove a city into a naturally desolate environment directly contradicts its purported sustainability goals.

THE LINE is eerily reminiscent of Superstudio's speculative drawings in The Continuous Monument from 1969-70, which were thought to be so imaginative that

↖ A rendering of THE LINE, part of the NEOM development, which promises to fulfill a futuristic vision of sustainable development in Saudi Arabia.

IMAGE COURTESY NEOM

↑ A speculative drawing from the series The Continuous Monument. Superstudio, The Continuous Monument, Nel deserto del Sahara, 1969.

they could only be perceived at the time as a dreamy, impossible world. This endeavor critically illustrated what Superstudio described as "the absurdity laid bare"—a radical future in which ornament and human sensibilities are stripped away from the built environment, leaving only that which serves the utilitarian requirements of an anonymous, factory-esque society. Coincidentally, THE LINE's most widely circulated images show its massive, mirrored facade camouflaging itself in the desert, resulting in a similar expression of anonymity and highlighting its isolation from the world at large. Other images of the development show self-contained webs of interconnected blocks, evoking the dystopian, industrial environment of *The Matrix*, where humans experience a false reality in their minds, and their physical bodies are arranged within an "ant farm"-like structure in a massive silo.

Interestingly, THE LINE bears a closer resemblance to this dystopian setting than the movie's depiction of Zion, the last remaining "real world" where genuine human experience is allowed. Unlike NEOM's vision of success, the radical worlds depicted in The Continuous Monument and *The Matrix* are presumed to be failures. With cutting-edge technology and some of the world's most renowned architects, engineers, and planners involved, NEOM stands to become a real-world case study of these hypothetical worlds, along with their financial, geographical, and diplomatic implications. Regardless of whether NEOM succeeds or fails, the irony remains that these so-called socially responsible spaces are built against a backdrop of manipulated natural features of mountains, coastlines, and greenery.

↓ NASA's simulated Mars Surface Habitat, Mars Dune Alpha, designed and 3D-printed by BIG and ICON, respectively.

PHOTO COURTESY ICON

Construction technology has advanced rapidly in recent years, reshaping how we envision building the future. 3D printing, in particular, has emerged as a promising innovation, resulting in various ventures in the Texas area. One notable example is Mars Dune Alpha at the Johnson Space Center, a space designed by BIG and 3D-printed by ICON and intended to simulate the environment of Mars. NASA uses this habitat to simulate equipment and communication challenges astronauts may face, helping to inform how extraterrestrial problems can be addressed to support future missions exploring the final frontier. What once was only possible in sci-fi movies and books is now becoming a reality. As this vision takes shape, the question remains: Is this futuristic dream truly achievable, or is it just a "pie in the sky"?

Such 3D-printed projects raise obvious technical questions—particularly concerning the constructability and adaptability of additive manufacturing in the context of unprecedented environments and different atmospheric conditions. They, also pose profound ethical questions: What will the human experience be like beyond Earth? What will happen to the traditions and culture that have been tied to architecture since the dawn of mankind? Will the human species start afresh with a clean slate? For now, we can only speculate whether building civilizations on celestial bodies could indeed lead to a new utopia.

And the most important question of all: Although anything may be achievable, is it truly desirable?

Architecture is always striving for a utopian ideal. Whether it is a space depicted in popular media, a speculative structure imagined by visionaries, or a futuristic project built to integrate with ever-changing technologies, designers are driven by the pursuit of optimistic outcomes. Architects can gather information based on the client's anticipated needs and industry trends, but there is no guarantee that the space will be experienced as intended, especially if the project takes years to construct. As prophesied by Rod Serling, the same utopian ideal that we pursue, when taken to extremes, can result in unintended negative perceptions and consequences.

> *"A scared, angry little man who never got a break. Now he has everything he's ever wanted, and he's going to have to live with it for eternity, in the Twilight Zone."*
>
> —Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone*

Although the goal of these endeavors is to achieve something extraordinary, no project is without its faults. The term "utopia" translates literally to "no place" in Greek; perhaps hinting that no such perfect place exists. □

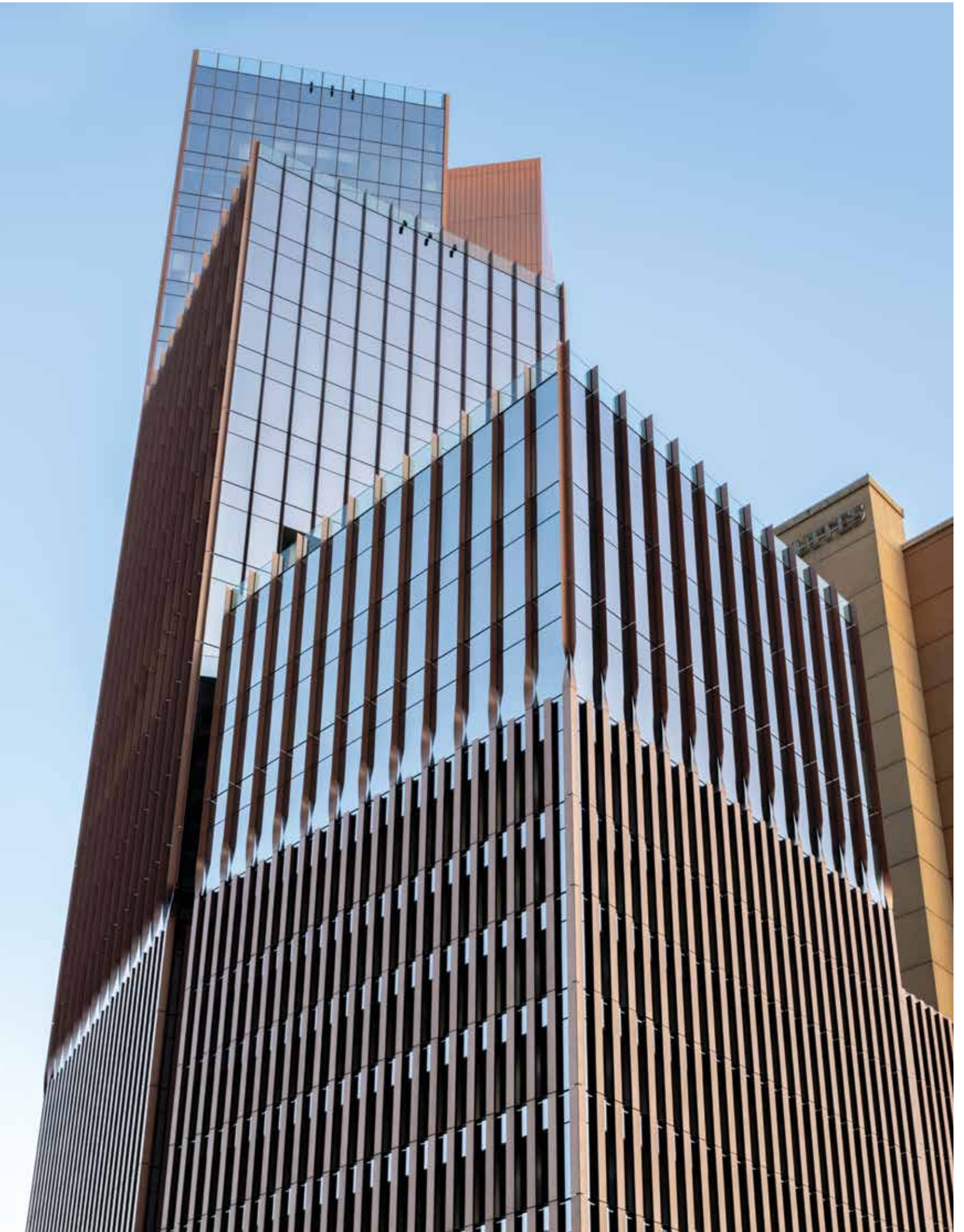
Camille Vigil is an architect in Dallas who works primarily on faith-based projects.

Tanvi Solanki, AIA, is a Houston-based architect who works with sustainable design and laboratory planning.

BIG MOVES

AN AMBITIOUS OFFICE TOWER REDEFINES URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Words by RODRIGO GALLARDO
Photographs by LEONID FURMANSKY



In a city where skyscrapers symbolize ambition and expansion, the Norton Rose Fulbright Tower emerges as a transformative icon that harmonizes sustainable design with the vibrant urban landscape of Downtown Houston. Designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) and developed by Skanska, this downtown midrise redefines what it means to be an office tower in the 21st century, showcasing a commitment to environmental stewardship while fostering public connection. The building's innovation lies in its ability to serve as a workspace while also connecting people with nature and their surroundings, creating an integrated experience for both employees and visitors alike.

The project is located adjacent to Discovery Green, Houston's largest downtown park, and its positioning is fundamental to its architectural narrative. The tower's design philosophy revolves around deliberate interventions to blend the natural and built environments. "We wanted these moments to not only beautify the space but to create points of connection between the people inside the building and the city beyond," explains Martin Voelkle, AIA, a designer at BIG. The vision is achieved by blurring the line between inside and outside, between public and private spaces. This connection is crucial as it creates an environment where the boundaries between the building and its urban setting become fluid, encouraging interaction and engagement at all levels.

In the works since 2019, this project has faced numerous hurdles. The design phase began with community engagement meetings, which allowed the team to gather valuable input from local residents. "The kickoff workshop was essentially us bringing in Legos, Play-Doh, and cards with reference images," Voelkle explains. "We spent a day with about 40 people from different backgrounds in the city, trying to understand what the priorities are for Houstonians." These sessions allowed the design team to gain insight into what the community valued most in the development of this project. The team also went through various exercises, including a master planning activity that, according to Voelkle, established "the mindset and programming" and took about two months. This step was vital in shaping the early stages of the design. However, just as this phase concluded in late February 2020, the world shut down due to COVID-19, creating new challenges for the project.

PROJECT	Norton Rose Fulbright Tower
LOCATION	Houston
CLIENT/CONTRACTOR	Skanska USA Commercial Development
ARCHITECT	BIG with Kendall/Heaton Associates
DESIGN TEAM	BIG: Bjarke Ingels, Martin Voelkle, AIA, Jenna Dezinski, AIA, Ziad Shehab, AIA, Blake Smith, Thomas McMurtrie, AIA, Julian Ocampo Salazar, Rasam Aminzadeh, Deb Campbell, Brandon Cappellari, Kate Cella, Emily Chen, Alana Goldweit, Sang Ha Jung, Mackenzie Keith, Gil Kilmo Kang, Florencia Kratsman, Tom Lasbrey, Jan Leenknegt, Morgan Mangelsen, Jamie Maslyn Larson, Corliss Ng, Francesca Portesine, Hector Romero, Oliver Thomas, Margaret Tyrpa, AIA, Kig Veerasunthorn, Autumn Visconti, Marcus Wilford, Siqi Zhang; KENDALL/HEATON ASSOCIATES: John O'Connell, AIA, Rich Kaul, AIA, Jason Tanton, AIA, Huong Nguyen, Jung Yee, AIA, David Oliver
INTERIOR ARCHITECT	Michael Hsu Office of Architecture
STRUCTURAL AND CIVIL ENGINEER	Walter P Moore
MEPFP ENGINEER	Wylie Engineering
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT OF RECORD	SWA Group
PARKING CONSULTANT	HWA Parking
VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION	Persohn/Hahn Associates
SUSTAINABILITY	NORESCO
GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERS	Ulrich Engineers
EXTERIOR BUILDING ENCLOSURE	Morrison Hershfield
FACADE ACCESS	Lerch Bates
FITNESS CONSULTANT	The Risher Companies
ACOUSTICS CONSULTANT	Cerami & Associates
AV/IT/SECURITY CONSULTANT	HMA Consulting
GRAPHIC CONSULTANT	D|G Studios
LIGHTING CONSULTANT	Dot Dash
WIND AND REFLECTIVITY CONSULTANT	CPP Wind
LEED COMMISSIONING CONSULTANT	Cogent Commissioning
PHOTOGRAPHER	Leonid Furmansky

→ The Norton Rose Fulbright Tower overlooks the pond at Discovery Green, showcasing a design that highlights its three distinct masses. Each stepped recess is enhanced by lush rooftop gardens, seamlessly blending the building's architectural form with the surrounding landscape.

WORDS BY RODRIGO GALLARDO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEONID FURMANSKY

WORDS BY RODRIGO GALLARDO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEONID FURMANSKY

“In a city that is often characterized by its sprawling highways and car-centric design, the tower is part of a pivotal shift toward a more sustainable and people-focused approach.”

↑ SITE PLAN

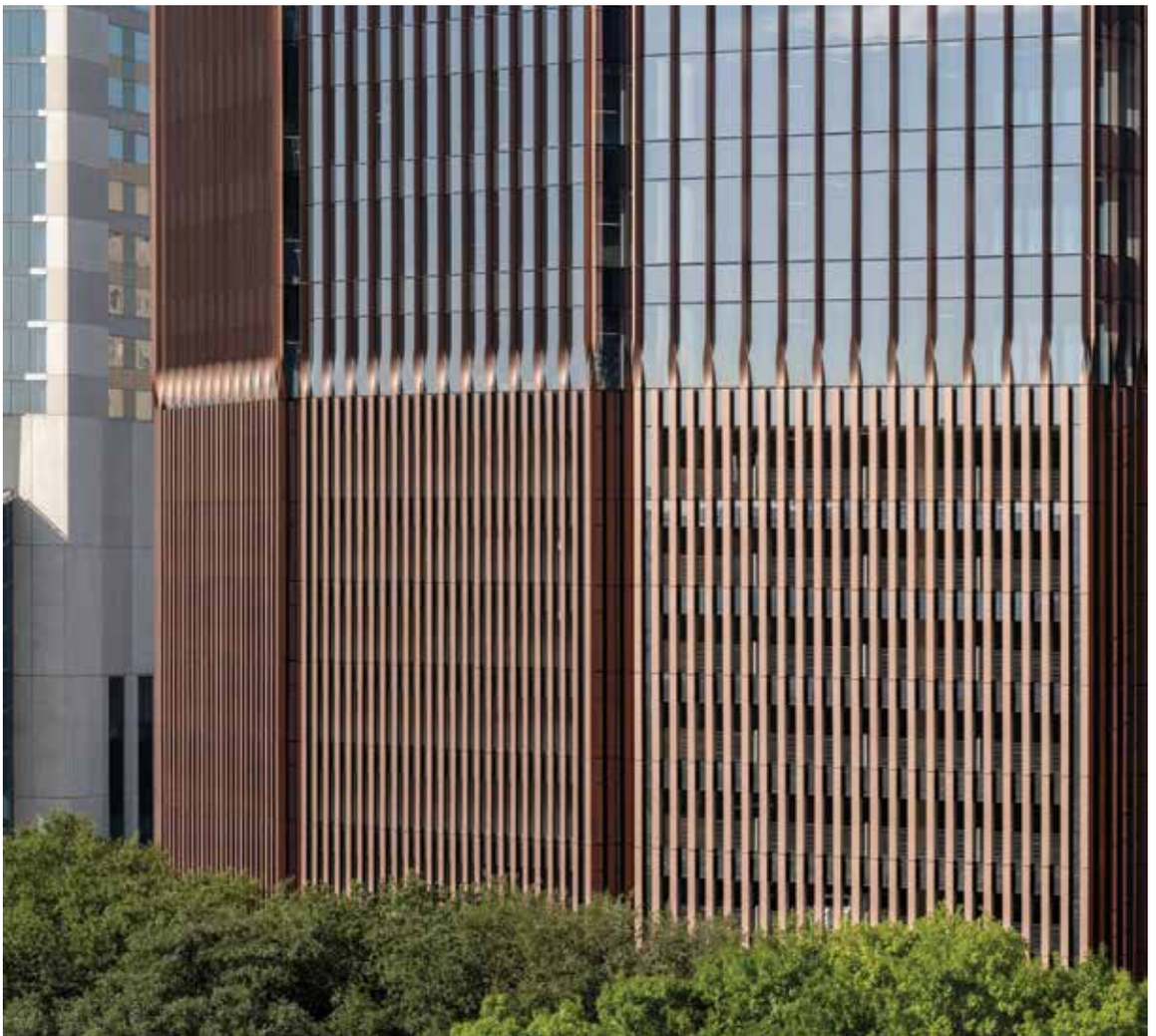
1 OFFICE LOBBY
2 MAIN ELEVATOR LOBBY
3 GARAGE ELEVATOR LOBBY
4 RETAIL
5 BIKE ROOM
6 MAIL ROOM
7 LOADING DOCK
8 RAMP TO PARKING
9 EXISTING HOTEL

The pandemic brought uncertainty around the future of workplace design, leading to questions about how to adapt to a rapidly changing world. As the concept of office work started to shift and be reimagined, the Norton Rose Fulbright Tower became BIG's first office building in Texas and its first fully remote project. The circumstances of the pandemic forced the design team to adapt and evolve the project in ways they hadn't anticipated. The design began to reflect new priorities. By offering a space that blended comfort, health, and productivity, it aimed to create an office experience that made coming back into the workplace worthwhile. The project also incorporated the latest technology to address health and wellness considerations. Elements like advanced air filtration systems were integrated to ensure that the building met the new demands of a post-pandemic world.

The project's side-core design stands out in a city dominated by traditional central-core structures. This approach not only facilitates panoramic views of Discovery Green but also enhances the spatial quality by allowing the primary facades to engage more dynamically with the urban context. "Given the narrow footprint of the site, we had to rethink how to organize the building's core," explains Voelkle. This decision opens up the interiors, maximizing natural light and fostering a sense of expansion. The side-core layout also transforms how tenants experience the city, enhancing connectivity both within the office environment and with the surrounding urban space. The openness created by this design allows for a more immersive experience of the city from inside the building, where tenants can enjoy uninterrupted views and a sense of connection to the outside world.

The Norton Rose Fulbright Tower's main entrance faces Lamar Street, with six connected volumes of varying heights radiating outward toward the park. These volumes are elevated at different levels to accommodate the lobby and commercial spaces that border the park. The variation in height continues at the top of the building, where a staggered form opens into outdoor terraces. The terraces provide a vital connection between the building and its natural surroundings, encouraging people to step outside and engage with nature. When viewed from the park, the raised parking areas sit between the commercial spaces on the ground floor, with office floors rising above. The facade design remains uninterrupted by this stacking, as vertical elements extend seamlessly upward, breaking only at the parking levels to allow natural light to filter in. This attention to detail in the building's form and facades helps create a seamless flow between the lower and upper levels, maintaining a cohesive aesthetic throughout.

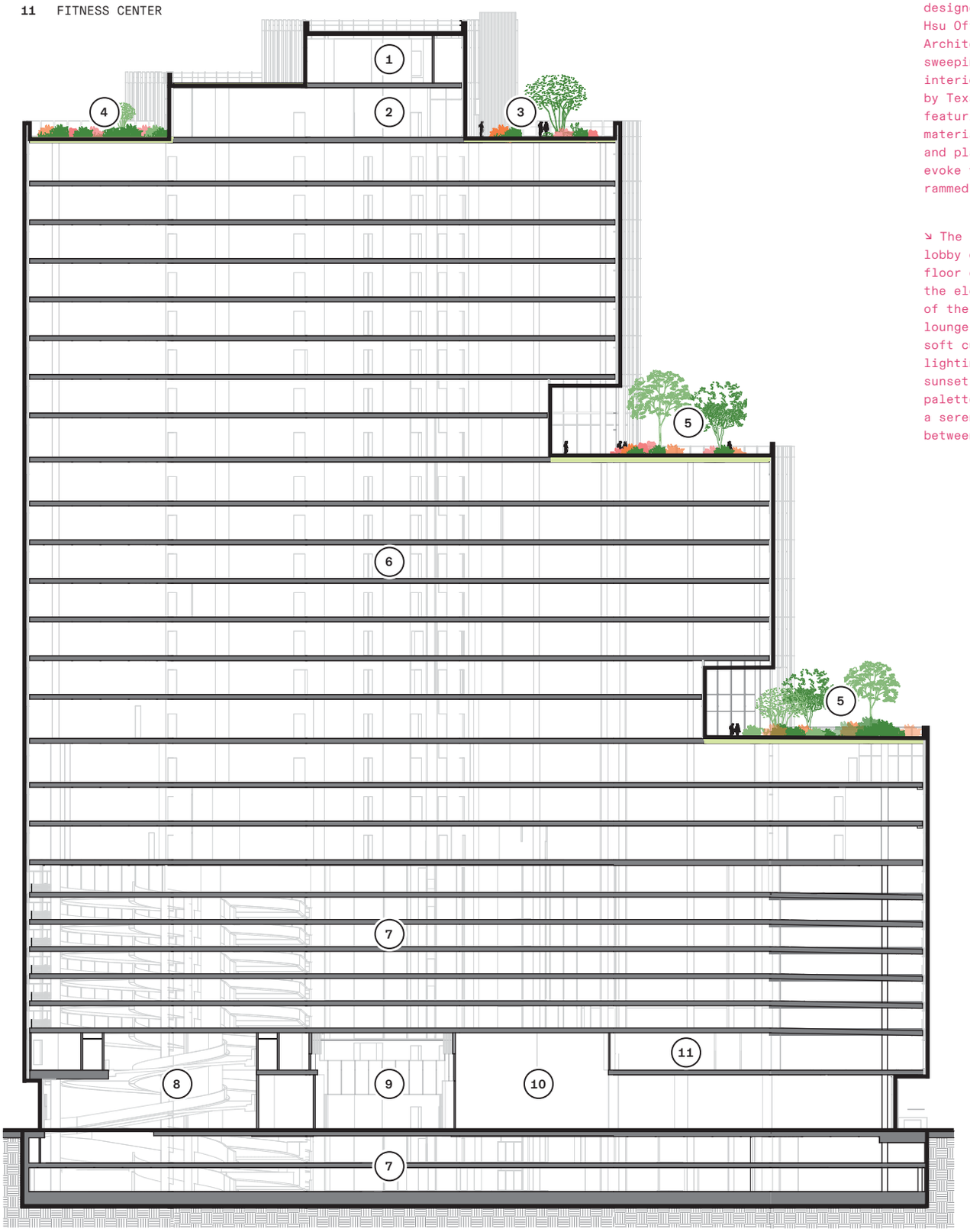
The Norton Rose Fulbright Tower represents a significant stride toward sustainability, shown through Skanska and BIG's commitment to reducing the building's carbon footprint. Utilizing the Embodied Carbon in Construction Calculator (EC3), the team tracked and minimized the carbon emissions of building materials, achieving a reduction of over 9,700 tons of embodied carbon. This achievement highlights the forward-thinking nature of the project, which prioritized environmental impact at every stage of development. Beyond its carbon-saving strategies, the building features a 48,000-gallon rainwater collection tank for irrigation and a district cooling system to optimize energy efficiency. It has obtained LEED Platinum v4 and WELL Platinum certifications and is pursuing Fitwel Three Star



→ The vertical members emphasize the connection between the parking garage and office spaces, establishing a rhythmic continuity that defines the facade.

↓ **SECTION**

1 MECHANICAL PENTHOUSE
2 AMENITY EVENT SPACE
3 AMENITY TERRACE
4 VIEWING GARDEN
5 TENANT TERRACE
6 OFFICE
7 PARKING
8 PARKING RAMP
9 OFFICE LOBBY
10 RETAIL
11 FITNESS CENTER



→ From above, the rooftop garden by SWA stands out with its clean geometric design and thoughtful use of native plants, blending architecture and landscape into one seamless outdoor oasis.

↘ On the 28th floor, the rooftop lounge designed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture blends sweeping views with interiors inspired by Texas sunsets, featuring natural materials like wood and plaster that evoke the warmth of rammed earth.

↘ The elevator lobby on the 28th floor continues the elegance of the rooftop lounge, featuring soft curves, warm lighting, and a sunset-inspired palette that creates a serene transition between spaces.

WORDS BY RODRIGO GALLARDO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEONID FURMANSKY

certification. These accolades position the tower at the forefront of Houston's green building movement.

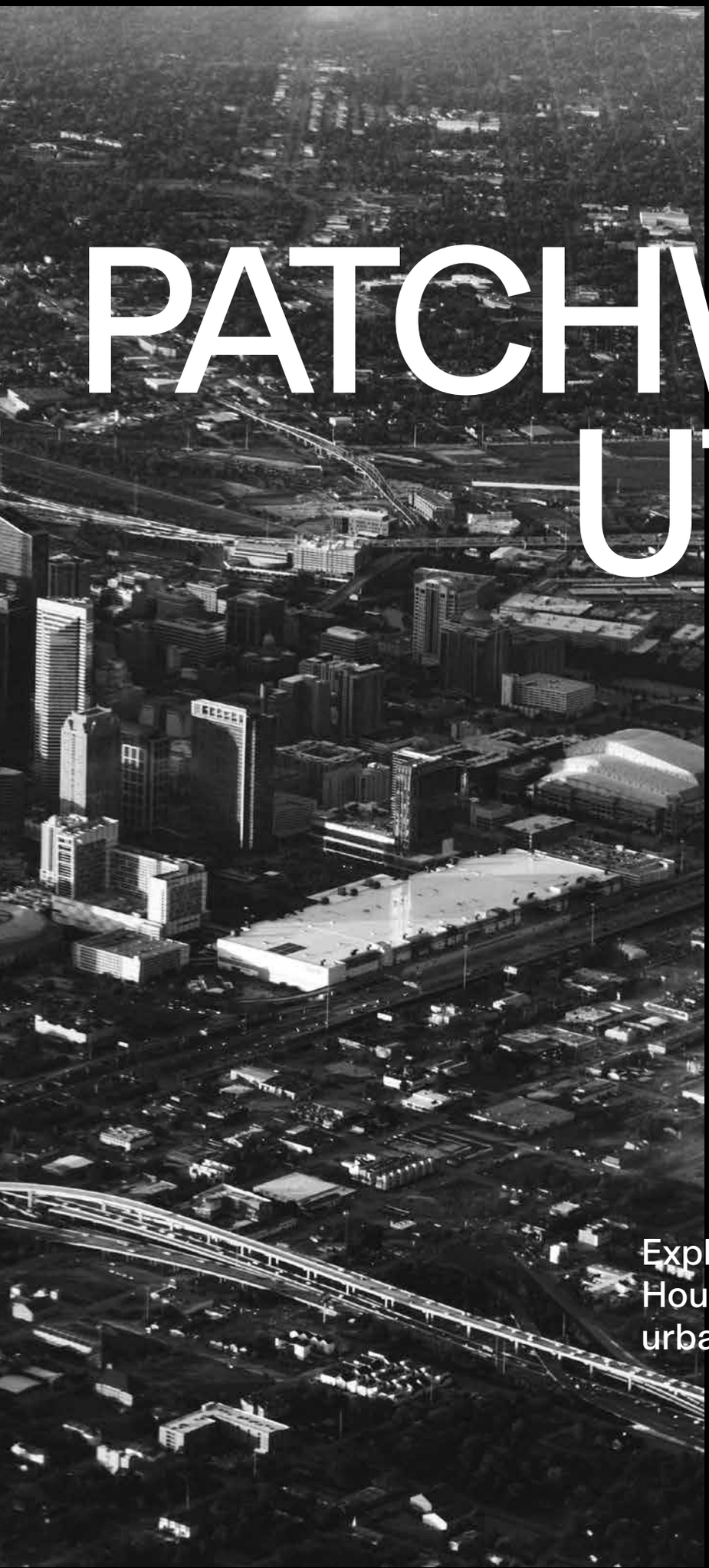
The interior design further emphasizes this innovative ethos, featuring flexible floor plates, optimized corner offices, and strategically placed windows in elevator lobbies and restrooms to flood every corner of the building with natural light. The infusion of daylight connects tenants to the natural rhythm of the day, creating a sense of uplift no matter where they are. Natural light plays a central role in creating a healthy and energizing work environment, something that is especially important in a post-pandemic world. A standout feature of the Norton Rose Fulbright Tower is its terraces, thoughtfully designed by BIG with SWA Group as the landscape architect of record. Each reflects a local biome—woodland, floral garden, and arid garden—celebrating Houston's rich ecological diversity. These terraces bring elements of Houston's natural environment up into the sky, encouraging people to step outside and appreciate the city from new perspectives. The ability to experience different natural settings within the building itself enhances the overall experience for tenants and visitors.

The 28th floor features an expansive rooftop event space that offers sweeping views, creating a unique amenity that invites tenants to engage with their surroundings. The rooftop lounge and fitness center interiors were completed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture and draw inspiration from the colors of Texas sunsets, incorporating natural materials like wood and plaster inspired by rammed earth. On these levels, a palette of blue, brown, amber, and orange tones enhances the connection between the building and its vibrant environment, echoing the warmth of sunsets over Discovery Green.

The building champions urban connectivity with oversized sidewalks along Lamar Street and direct access to METRO lines and bike paths, encouraging pedestrian interaction and enriching the downtown experience. Retail spaces flanking the lobby promise to enliven the street and integrate the building into the fabric of the community. The ability to walk or bike to the office and engage with retail spaces along the way helps create a more vibrant and connected downtown experience. As Houston continues its evolution towards a walkable, interconnected, and sustainable future, the Norton Rose Fulbright Tower stands as a benchmark for innovative design. It is not merely an office building; it embodies a holistic vision for urban development that prioritizes the relationship between architecture, nature, and community.

In a city that is often characterized by its sprawling highways and car-centric design, the tower is part of a pivotal shift toward a more sustainable and people-focused approach. Reflecting on the trajectory of Houston's architectural landscape, it becomes evident that projects like this will inspire a new generation of designs that can accommodate growth while elevating the quality of urban and office life. The challenge remains for future developments to embrace this ethos, ensuring that the fabric of Houston's architecture reflects the aspirations of its diverse personality. □

Rodrigo Gallardo is a graduate of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design at the University of Houston and a current SMArchS Computation student at MIT.



PATCHWORK UTOPIA

Words by KAEDE POLKINGHORNE

Exploring the perils and delights of Houston’s irreverent approach to urban development

Sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic at the US 59 South and I-610 interchange feels like the furthest a Texan can get from utopia. In fact, many things about Houston seem to fly in the face of any ideal commonly held to be "utopian." Concrete batch plants belch and smoke next door to subdivisions. When it rains, depressed freeways swell with water, and quaint drainage ditches do little to protect residents' homes. The inner and outer loop draw concentric circles that suggest a sort of garden city sensibility, but this is only perceivable from satellites far above. On the ground, there is no such thing as the middle of Houston. Houston has tens of "middles." It isn't that Houstonians don't dream of utopia, it's just that we tend to do so in isolation.

Former *Cite* editor Jack Murphy has written that "Houston started as a utopian real estate scam." Entrepreneurial brothers Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen bought the land that today makes up the city's East End in 1837 for a little under $10,000. In 1850, there were only 2,396 Houstonians. Many of them had been lured to the swampy, humid settlement by grandiose advertisements that depicted Houston as a lush and civilized paradise. One such advertisement, put forth in the *Telegraph and Texas Register* in 1836, describes Houston as "handsome and beautifully elevated, salubrious and well watered" and declares that "there is no place in Texas more healthy, having an abundance of excellent spring water, and enjoying the sea breeze in all its freshness."

Despite the Allen brothers' enthusiasm, it would take nearly a century for Houston to establish any sort of regional magnetism. When it did, it was not by way of its handsomeness or beauty, but rather the liquid gold below ground. In 1901, crude black oil gushed out of a well in Spindletop, just southeast of Houston. With Galveston still in ruins following the deadliest hurricane in United States history, Houston quickly became a critical nexus for the oil economy. Cultural institutions, public infrastructure, and industry rapidly proliferated. By the 1930s, Houston was the most populous city in Texas.

Yet, while New York City aligned development with the 1929 Regional Plan for New York and Its Environs and Chicago looked to Daniel Burnham's 1909 comprehensive plan, Houston was already a city of developers by the time comprehensive planning came into vogue. Getting a planning commission off the ground and formalized proved a challenge in the first half of the 20th century. Zoning ordinances were proposed and rejected five times between 1929 and the 1990s, at which point they were infamously abandoned altogether.

A young city full of young money, awash in oil and growing in parallel with the prevalence of the automobile, Houston unrolled as a disjunctive patchwork of more or less realized desires. It's unsurprising, then, that when celebrated critic Reyner Banham visited Houston in 1986, he described it as "an urbanist's nightmare." It seems paradoxical, though, that he also cited it as "the most Miesian city in North America [next to Chicago]." While Houston was establishing itself as a character of interest on the national—or at least Southwestern—stage, modernist ideology was being codified into an architectural

↰ Houston's aerial view illustrates the city's sprawling and haphazard development.

PHOTO BY CARLOS ALFONSO VIA UNSPLASH

→ Image of Lucas Gusher on Spindletop Hill on January 10, 1901, when oil was first discovered at the site.

PHOTO BY FRANCIS "FRANK" JOHN TROST, COURTESY TYRRELL HISTORICAL LIBRARY

→ Demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis

IMAGE SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

style. Utopia as a timeless, placeless ideal undoubtedly anchored the exploits of modern architects. More than capturing an aesthetic quality, modern architects sought to create a new world free from social ills.

Luckily for Houston, though, the plug-and-play International Style sidestepped any need for sensitivity to context or a regionally shared vision when creating such a new world, and after World War II a few renowned architects were willing to play ball. For two decades beginning in the 1940s, Houstonians microdosed utopia by simply buying buildings that looked like they might belong in an ideal world and placing them here instead. The result was a number of cherished works. Cullinan Hall and Brown Pavilion at the Museum of Fine Arts actually *were* designed by Mies van der Rohe, and Allen Parkway Village (formerly known as San Felipe Courts and now mostly demolished) demonstrated a willingness on the part of the public sector to buy into his common modern ideals. Even in middle-class residential areas, the swathes of ranch homes mass-developed during this period hold clear modernist sympathies.

Of course, every cluster of suburban enclaves demanded a freeway to downtown, and this period was marked by brutal urban renewal projects in Houston and across the country. As the years bore on, modernist projects that naively attempted to remedy social ills in plan and section did not deliver on their promises of utopia. Critic Charles Jencks wrote that "modern architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972." On that day, the City of St. Louis demolished the first three of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project's 33 towers. The carnage of World War II had already brought on an unshakeable disillusionment with modernism—in architecture and in culture more broadly. Still, the literal destruction of Minoru Yamasaki's disgraced superblocks is a powerful illustration of the cynicism that had set in by the early 1970s. Modernism, both as an aesthetic and as a speedway to utopia, was out.

Houston did not get the memo. As St. Louis continued demolition on Pruitt-Igoe in 1973, our city was poised to finally acquire the wealth and cultural capital to build "real" architecture. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Companies' embargo against the United States, enforced in retaliation to the country's continued material support of the Israeli military, led to a high demand for domestically produced oil; prices soared and most of the country suffered bitterly. In Houston, though, the population grew 40 percent between 1973 and 1985 as job seekers flowed into the auto-centric metropolis. For those invested in oil, the city *was* a utopia, totally free of the cynicism afflicting the rest of the United States, and they were eager to buy an image to match.

Gerald D. Hines led the charge, hiring Philip Johnson to design Pennzoil Place, Republic Bank, and Transco Tower (among others). However, the developer's largely actualized delusions of grandeur pale in comparison to some of the paper projects that were dreamt up. For example, in 1970, the Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation developed a conceptual plan for Houston Center. The megaproject would have covered 33 blocks. At this point, the City of Houston was still unable to adopt or enforce any sort of comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance, yet a corporation was nevertheless publishing site plans and renderings for the better half of downtown.

These oil boom years motivated Houston to feverishly annex more and more land, fueled by blind optimism for infinite future growth. Tract homes endlessly spilled from the city's undeveloped edges, creating a patchy but expansive fabric between the inner loop and the beltway. Although the municipal Planning and Development Department was established in its final form by the 1940s, mandatory development regulations would not be put in place until 1982, so there was little standing between developers and their dreams.

The bubble had to burst. By the mid-1980s, crude oil prices had tanked. Hundreds of thousands of jobs evaporated. Ongoing architectural projects were hurriedly and cheaply wrapped up or abandoned altogether.

↑ Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation's proposed Houston Center

IMAGE COURTESY THE HOUSTON HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER, HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

See-through office towers empty of tenants and devoid of interior partitions adorned the freeways. Houston Center amounted to one building at the intersection of Fannin and Walker Streets. Finally, Houston was being faced with the impossibility of utopia—and the cynicism it had thus far deferred.

When Lars Lerup arrived in Houston in 1993 to serve as dean of Rice University's School of Architecture, Houston had been clawing itself out of a recession for the better part of a decade, with limited success. With the perspective of a besotted outsider, Lerup set in on understanding Houston—a task to which few if any urban thinkers had singularly dedicated themselves for any extended period of time. Frank Lloyd Wright spoke frankly and for many when he quipped in 1957 that "Houston is an example of what can happen when architecture catches a venereal disease." Lerup was in many ways the first urban thinker to hold our hand in public.

← Pennzoil Place was designed by architects Philip Johnson & John Burgee and S. I. Morris Associates. The twin-towered, 36-story office building was completed in 1976.

PHOTO BY LEONID FURMANSKY

What Lerup came to understand about Houston was first published in an article titled "Stim and Dross" (1994). Stims, in Lerup's reading of the city, are "pools of cooled air … precariously pinned in place by machines and human events," while dross is "the ignored, undervalued, unfortunate economic residues of the metropolitan machine." Rather than dismissing Houston as a misstep in urban development, Lerup advises that it is time to "close the book on the City and open the manifold of the Metropolis." In this reading, Houston becomes more than an eclectic combination of misguided investments, instead inspiring an almost sublime terror as the paradigm for the sprawling, decentralized urban centers of our future.

"Stop trying to make Houston a great American city and start trying to support what makes Houston great!"

↑ "Suburban Houston with Downtown on the Horizon." Drawing by Lars Lerup published in his book *One Million Acres & No Zoning*.

IMAGE COURTESY LARS LERUP

While he acknowledges the many ways that Houston fails to meet urban studies' long-established benchmarks for a "successful" city, Lerup takes Houston seriously. He offers us another framework for approaching the city that at least begins the task of appraising Houston's many centers. These nuclei are precarious, formed as they are by the unintentional overlapping of planned and unplanned systems, but they are also delightful. Lerup's writing is more observational than instructive. However, action-oriented readers may tease out an implicit admonishment: Stop trying to make Houston a great American city and start trying to support what makes Houston great!

In his introduction to *One Million Acres & No Zoning*, published nearly two decades after "Stim and Dross," Lerup writes: "I often find myself wishing for a different city, not out of dissatisfaction, but out of affection for what the city *promises.*" Surely, most Houstonians can relate to this. We want a city that is more equitable, walkable, affordable, serviceable, beautiful—and we see the redemptive promise of this city in the traces of utopian intent that haunt our tunnels, towers, and townhomes. As we endure to make our city "better," Houston's urbanists would do well to take what is already here seriously and honor the utopian echoes that anchor the city's irreverent and enduring appeal. □

Kaede Polkinghorne (they/she) is thinking about the Gulf South, embodied labor, and participatory public sector planning processes at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

BANKING ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

A FAMILY'S LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE.

Words by ANASTASIA CALHOUN, Assoc. AIA, NOMA
Photographs by DROR BALDINGER, FAIA


AS
3BT

↰ The State Bank of Texas sits at the corner of North O'Connor Boulevard and the West John Carpenter Freeway in Irving.

→ SBT is located along the Mandalay Canal Walk in Las Colinas. The exterior features a mix of honed and flamed Brandy Crag slate by Burlington Stone.

WORDS BY ANASTASIA CALHOUN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DROR BALDINGER

Located at an unassuming intersection in Las Colinas, the new headquarters of the State Bank of Texas marks the fulfillment of a family dream decades in the making. The bank's founder, Chan Patel, arrived in the United States in 1965 with little more than his parents' life savings—$600—to study at Stanford University. After transitioning to Dallas and working as an engineer for Braniff International Airlines, Patel's entrepreneurial spirit took hold. Inspired by the success of fellow Indian immigrants in California's hotel industry, he made his first hotel purchase in 1976, eventually expanding his holdings to 17 properties. Over time, Patel realized that many immigrant entrepreneurs faced barriers to obtaining business loans due to cultural differences, prompting him to create a lending institution tailored to the hospitality sector. On October 19, 1987—Black Monday—Patel founded the State Bank of Texas. While the financial world was in turmoil, Patel laid the foundation for what would grow into one of the most successful banks in the United States.

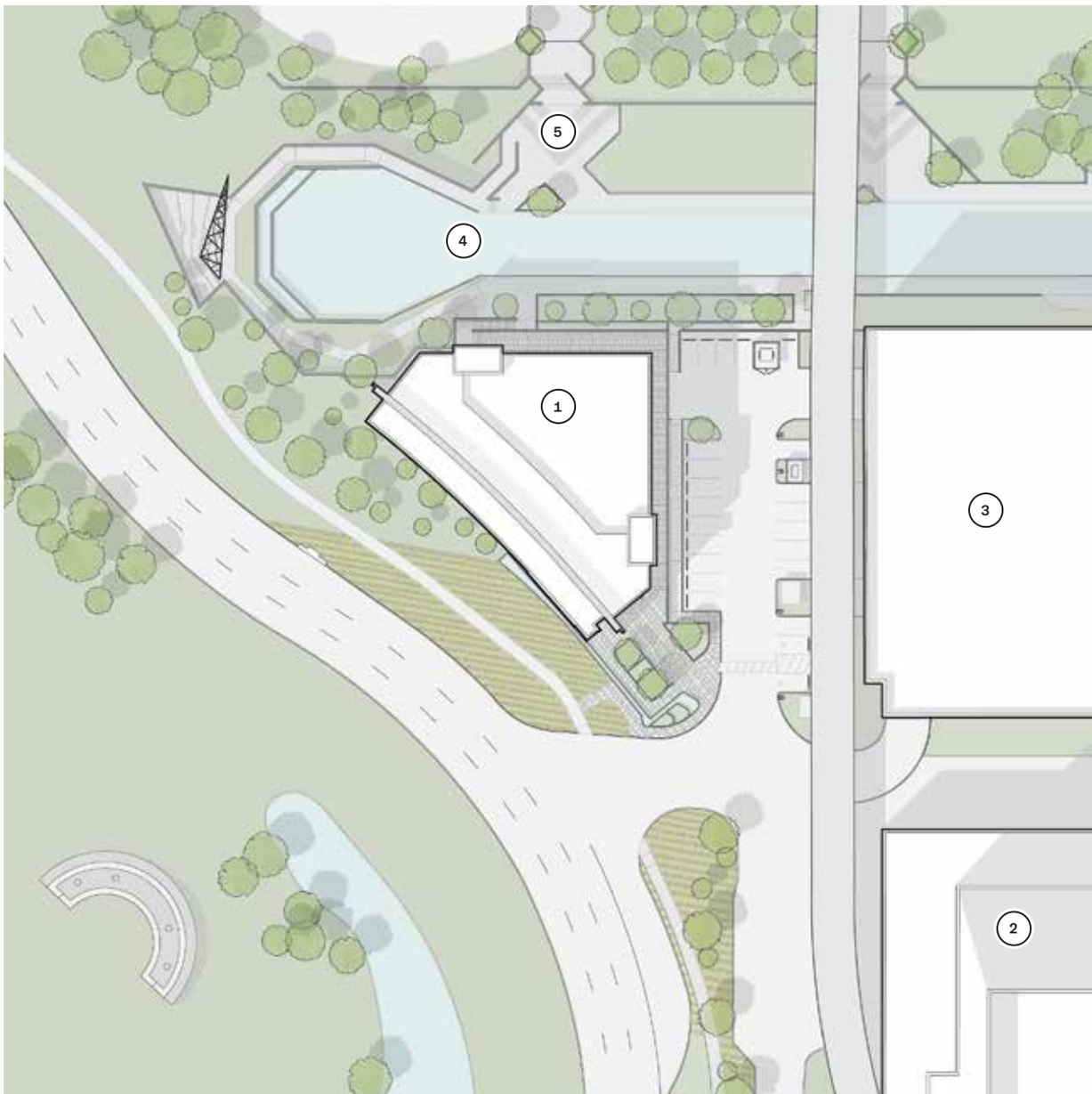
SBT is a transparent, family-focused institution grounded in a deep, hands-on understanding of hospitality operations. Its first home was in the building of a failed bank in Oak Cliff in Dallas. Rather than investing heavily in brick-and-mortar, founder Chan Patel chose to direct

LOCATION	Irving
CLIENT	State Bank of Texas
ARCHITECT	Malone Maxwell Dennehy Architects
DESIGN TEAM	Michael Malone, FAIA, Paul Dennehy, FAIA, Audrey Maxwell, AIA, Landon Williams, AIA, Victoria Cooper, AIA, Miller Matlock, Assoc. AIA, Lauren Lake, Larkin Penn, Justin Stanley
CONTRACTOR	Linbeck
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	Stenstrom Schneider
MEP ENGINEER	V3 Consulting Engineers
CIVIL ENGINEER	Glenn Engineering
BUILDING ENVELOPE CONSULTANT	Curtainwall Design Consulting
AV CONSULTANT	Acuity

capital toward hotel lending—a strategy that paid off. Sushil Patel, Chan's son and the current CEO, reflects on the bank's success: "For the last two years, we've been ranked number one in the country in terms of bank performance. We're consistently in the top 10. It's not something we strive for… but it's a byproduct of us just doing what we do."

Over time, SBT's outstanding performance made it clear: what began as a small family bank had transformed into a financial institution of significant stature. It was no longer enough to operate out of a modest space; it needed a physical home that on par with its new standing. Sushil Patel first identified the site for what would become SBT's headquarters in 2016. Situated at the corner of North O'Connor Boulevard and West John Carpenter Freeway, the plot had remained undeveloped for 30 years. This busy intersection is frequently traveled by members of the Patel community—while those with the Patel surname are not necessarily related, they all trace their roots to the same 50-mile region of India or are descendants of those who came from there. Just down the street is the community center frequented by the Patels, home to roughly 1,500 families, many of whom pass by the site after religious and cultural events. Given Chan Patel's leadership and pioneering role within the community, it was only fitting that SBT's new headquarters be located here, where it could serve as a literal and symbolic cornerstone of the Patel community.

Designed by Dallas-based Maxwell Malone Dennehy Architects, the 49,000-sf building features a distinctive pentagonal footprint, comprised of a triangular extension to the north and a gently curved facade facing the John Carpenter Freeway to the south. The northwest facade overlooks the Mandalay Canal Walk at Las Colinas. Clad in a glass curtainwall system, Burlington stone, and horizontal aluminum panels, the exterior emphasizes transparency, maximizing visibility throughout. The partially subterranean parking structure is wrapped in a perforated metal grid, and a runnel directs water through the site. As the landscape matures, vines will gradually conceal the parking structure, while the growing trees will provide shade for the ground-level terrace.



→ **SITE PLAN**

1 STATE BANK OF TEXAS HEADQUARTERS
2 CHRISTUS OFFICE BUILDING
3 SHARED GARAGE BUILDING
4 LAKE CAROLYN CANAL
5 URBAN TOWERS

The material palette is simple, exquisite, and impeccably detailed. “We wanted to convey the quality, integrity, and permanence of the building,” explains Sushil Patel. “If we had used stucco or fake stone, it would have come through in the building—people might not be able to pinpoint it, but they’d sense it. Here, visitors can walk through and immediately know this is the real deal.” Paul Dennehy, FAIA, a principal at MMD, adds, “The commitment to the honesty of materials—the stone, wood—is evident. It’s not something cheap that will age quickly. It’s a commitment to quality and reflects the family’s values.”

The main entrance is situated at the eastern end of the building. For both the exterior cladding and interior flooring, two types of Burlington stone products—sourced from the same English Lake District quarries used by the Romans—were chosen, ensuring a subtle coherence throughout the entire project. The stone panels are arranged in an intricate pattern based on the Golden Ratio, demanding meticulous attention to detail in their installation. Insulated glass units and bands of fritting strategically placed along the glazing help reduce solar radiation to an optimal level, without compromising the building’s transparency.

The building’s interiors are where the design truly comes to life. Upon entry, visitors are welcomed by a striking double-height lobby that evokes the spirit of mid-century Scandinavian design, drawing clear inspiration from masters like Alvar Aalto. Light, natural materials dominate the space, with Canadian maple used prominently throughout, and the soft, curved forms and gentle, rounded corners creating a sense of warmth and flow. The columns are especially unique, taking a lenticular form with cut-out ends in plan, their verticality accentuated by a rhythmic repetition of vertical wooden slats. Dark gray Burlington stone flooring anchors the otherwise luminous space, offering a grounding contrast.

“This building could easily last 100 years with just normal maintenance. The level of material integrity is just outrageous,” says MMD principal Michael Malone, FAIA. “It was really a pleasure to work at that level because you don’t always to get to do that.” At the heart of the lobby, the organically shaped bank teller desk is clad in Carrara marble, while behind it, maple wood fins are cut and arranged to form the bank’s logo. The space is further enlivened by a living green wall, complete with a drip irrigation system that helps purify the air while strengthening the connection to the natural environment outside.

The bank branch offices are discreetly located behind the teller desk, while the rest of the ground floor remains flexible, with a portion reserved for future build-out of a banquet hall with a commercial kitchen for community events. A striking family wall, adorned with video screens and historic documents, serves as a focal point. The custom carpets designed in collaboration with Scott Group seamlessly bridge the tones of the floor and wood, visually unifying the space. The real handwringer of the project, however, lay in the subtle curve of the southern part of the building, which required meticulous adjustments to the stonework and carpeting, ensuring the surfaces aligned perfectly along the splay.

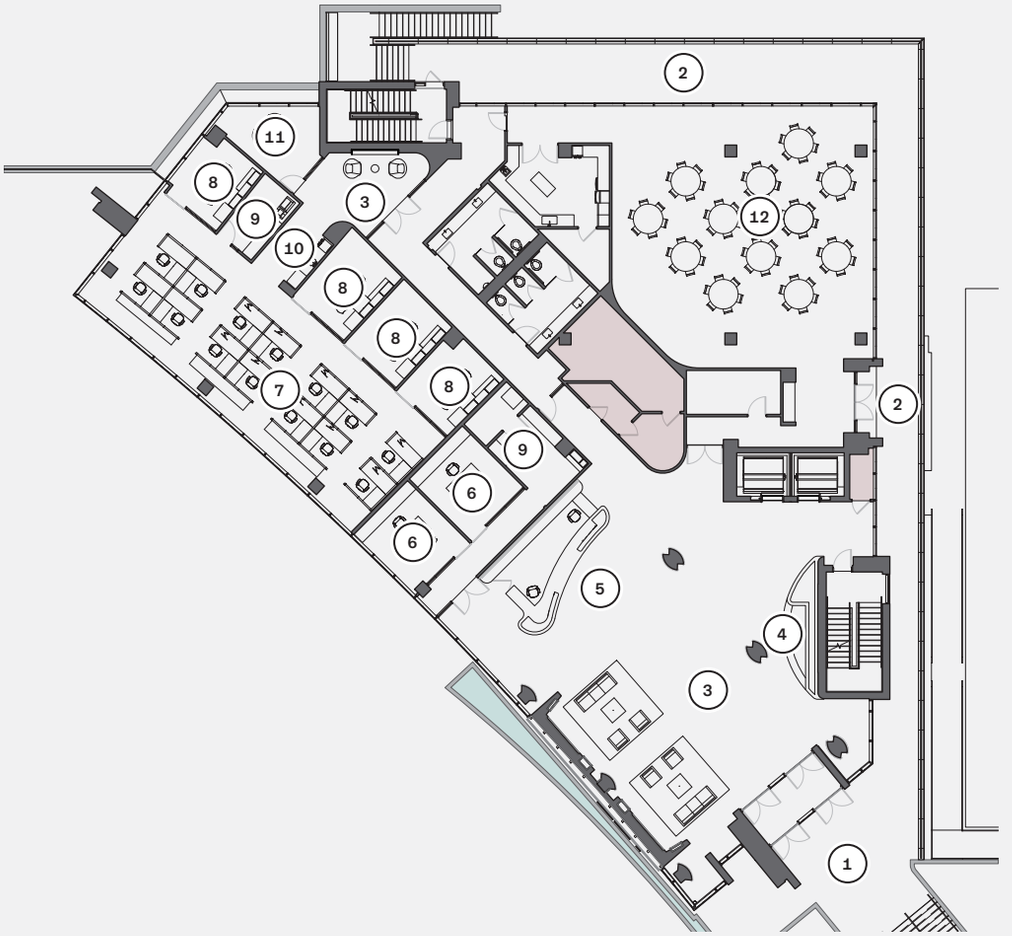
A trio of white artichoke pendants hovers above a 3/8”-thick blackened steel staircase, seamlessly

WORDS BY ANASTASIA CALHOUN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DROR BALDINGER

↑ → The curvilinear forms and ample use of wood recall the design language of Scandinavian modernism and, in particular, the work of Alvar Aalto. The light interiors contrast with the dark Kirkby slate floors, also by Burlington Stone.

↑ Located on the fourth floor, the executive suites employee glass partitions to reflect the bank's commitment to transparency. Custom maple millwork provides privacy where needed.

→ Even the break rooms offer stunning views and use the same elevated design language and material palette as seen in the more public areas of the project.

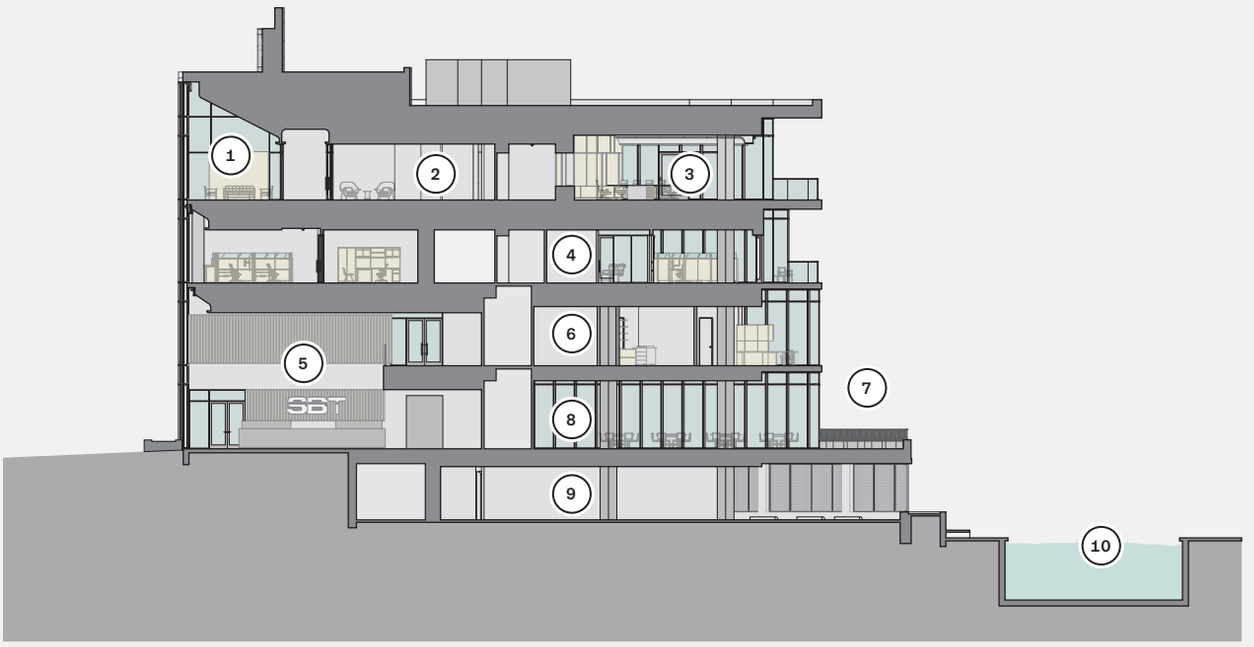


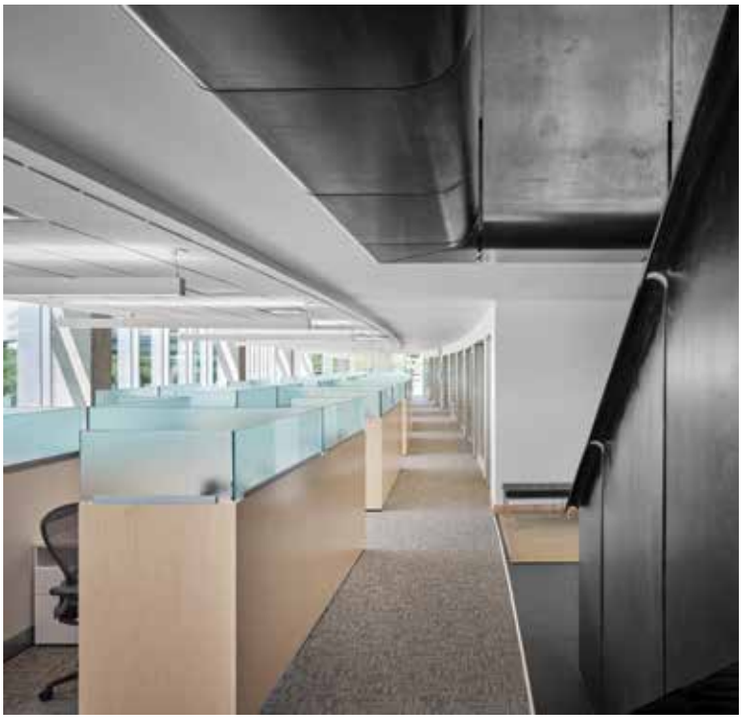
→ **SITE PLAN**

1 ENTRY PLAZA
2 TERRACE
3 LOBBY
4 GREEN WALL
5 RECEPTION/TELLER
6 BANK OFFICE
7 OPEN OFFICE
8 MANAGER OFFICE
9 WORK ROOM
10 BREAK ROOM
11 MEETING ROOM
12 BANQUET HALL

↓ **SECTION**

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE
2 RECEPTION
3 BOARD ROOM
4 OPEN OFFICE
5 LOBBY
6 TENANT SPACE
7 TERRACE
8 BANQUET HALL
9 PARKING GARAGE
10 CANAL





↑ Frosted glass panels sit atop Knoll workstations and provide privacy while admitting natural light. The curve of the footprint is visible here and required careful detailing to execute.

↑ The wall and ceiling panels in the boardroom reference the stone pattern on the exterior feature wall.The cantilevered Carrara marble tabletop is supported by a concealed steel base.

connecting the ground floor with the floors above. The second floor is primarily designated for future tenant spaces, while the third floor accommodates the majority of staff offices. This open-plan office features workstations along glass curtain walls and glass-fronted offices at the interior. The workstations are Knoll systems outfitted with sit-stand desks and frosted glass panels to provide privacy while allowing natural light to filter through. Conference rooms are strategically distributed throughout the floor, and the break room's northeast-facing balcony provides a relaxing outdoor seating area.

The design language and material palette of the building carry seamlessly into the fourth floor, home to the executive offices and boardroom. The lightness and transparency of these spaces create a sense of effortless uplift, as if ready to take flight. The ceiling above the central corridor is dropped before gradually rising toward the glass curtain wall, enhancing the airy, loft-like atmosphere. Glass partitions define the spaces, while maple millwork behind desks offers privacy between offices without compromising the sense of openness.

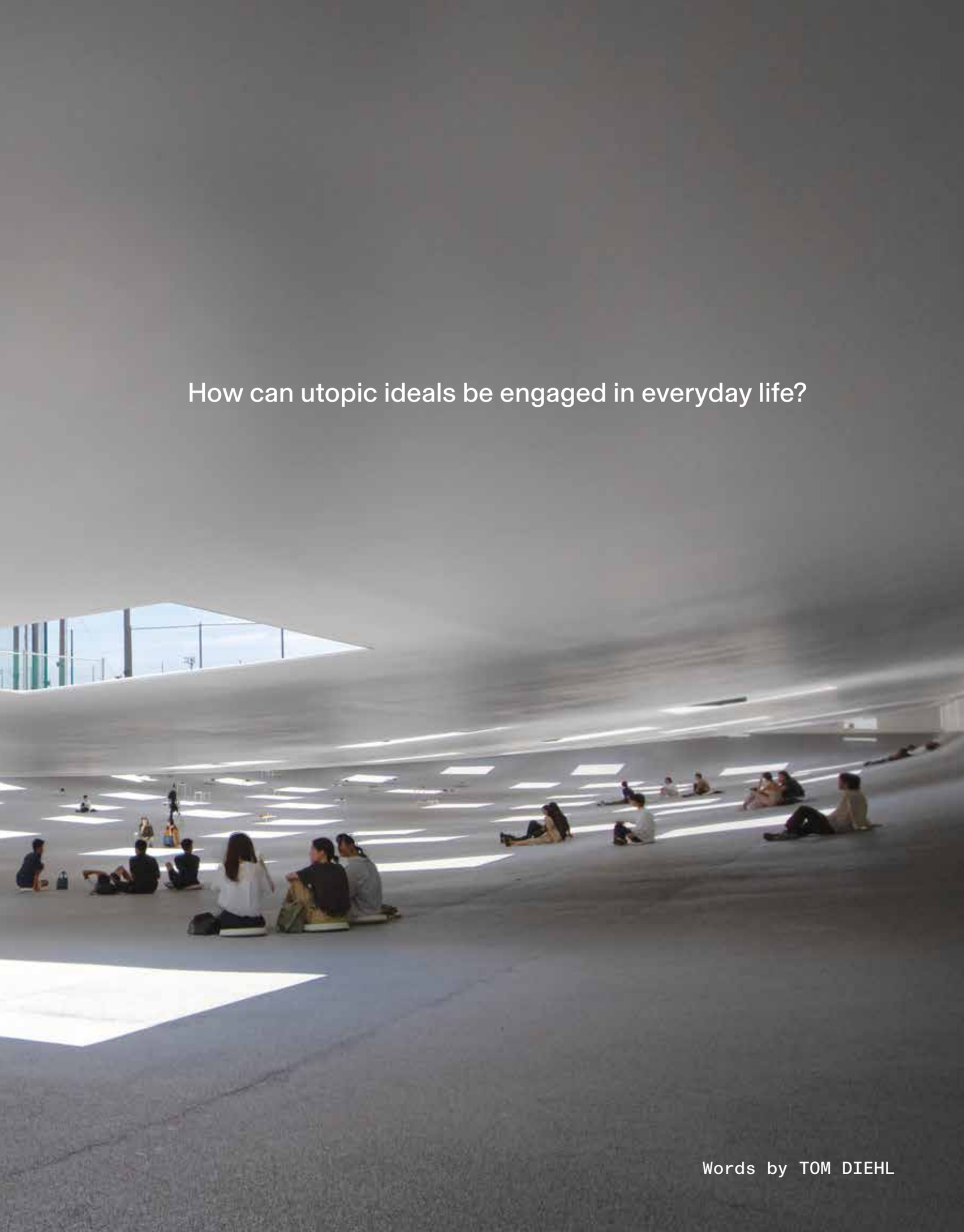
The executive conference room is a notable achievement in design, distinguished by its unique triangular shape. From a practical perspective, it offers ample space to accommodate the entire board, predominantly made up of extended family members. At its center is an expansive, custom triangular table designed by the architects to seat the entire board. The concealed steel base offers robust support for the massive, cantilevered Carrara marble tabletop, which is both a functional centerpiece and a masterwork of design. Its precisely incised edge adds a sense of lightness to an otherwise substantial piece of furniture. Linear strip lighting reinforces the room's modern design language, while cove lighting casts a soft, atmospheric glow along the walls. "We don't get to do this on all our projects, but the projects where we get to literally touch everything is pretty special," says MMD principal Audrey Maxwell, AIA. "That's why the building looks the way it does. Every inch of it was coordinated."

The new headquarters of the State Bank of Texas stands as a powerful testament to the vision, perseverance, and values of the Patel family. From Chan Patel's humble beginnings to his pioneering role in creating a bank that caters to immigrant entrepreneurs, the institution's growth mirrors his dedication to community and quality. The design of the building—rooted in integrity, transparency, and timeless materials—reflects both the bank's strong foundation and its ambitious future. Serving as both a functional space for banking operations and a symbolic cornerstone for the Patel community, the headquarters is a legacy built to endure for generations. □

Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, is the editor of *Texas Architect*.

EXPERIENCING UTOPIA

How can utopic ideals be engaged in everyday life?



Words by TOM DIEHL

It is neither wealth nor splendor; but tranquility and occupation which give you happiness.

— Thomas Jefferson

Modernism is the expression by individual human beings of how they will live their own present, and consequently there are a thousand modernisms for every thousand persons.

— Octavio Paz
Nobel Prize Reception Speech

↰ Kanagawa Institute of Technology (KAIT) Plaza, Kanagawa, Japan, Junya.Ishigami +Associates, 2020

Discussing the relevance of utopia in contemporary life may seem like a first-world privilege, yet the idea of utopia has persisted through various eras and cultures. The origin of the word dates to 1516 from a book of the same name by Sir Thomas More, predating our contemporary divisions of first, second, or third world. Numerous utopian movements and societies have existed across time and around the globe: Palmanova, Venice, Italy, 1593; Royal Arc-et-Senans, France, 1779; and Penedo, Brazil, 1929, to name a few. Most aspired to create societies and establish communities where ideals of egalitarianism and a particular form of cultural order were sought, even if they were not explicitly defined as "utopia." Analysis of past utopian societies indicates they found direction by looking "backward or forward," writes Tom Hodgkinson in his 2016 *BBC* article "How Utopia Shaped the World." "They celebrated an old-fashioned ideal of community or envisioned a future paradise where the machines did all the work." A social scientist, however, is not required to validate the failure of overarching utopian visions. These utopic experiments typically met their demise due to consequences of the original vision: incomplete or inadequate planning, rigid top-down organizational structures, the vision being undermined by a hyper-socialized engineering of individual lifestyles, or the gradual dilution of the vision's value over time.

Considering the pressing need for positive discourse and cultural advancement in today's world—fraught as it is with a decidedly non-utopian increase in social division, confusion over what is true, and normalized political conflict—credit is to be given to the editors of *Texas Architect* for proposing an exploration of utopia's value in relation to lives, livelihoods, and design today. Due to the societal transformations, economic improvements, and increased personal autonomy that have occurred in the United States and beyond since the end of World War II, it is now possible to explore the experience of "utopia" on a more individual level, as opposed to earlier, collective interpretations that were tied to larger social or ideological constructs. As society and architecture evolve to respond to increasingly diverse and unique perspectives, it is only logical that the defining characteristics of utopian ideals should be recalibrated from collective visions toward more individualized experiences that reflect today's socially atomized world.

Before exploring what a "modern" utopia might represent in relation to individuals and, in turn, to architecture, it is appropriate to define its boundaries. Two come to mind. Thomas Jefferson, architect, author, inventor, and president, speaks to a fundamental type of utopia—happiness—and structures it in a very personal manner defined by tranquility and occupational pursuits. A different boundary is identified in the presentation Mexican poet and philosopher Octavio Paz gave during his Nobel Prize for Literature acceptance in 1990. In it, he suggests that modernism is a compendium of how individuals "will live their own present." What can be more utopian than everyone following their individual paths toward fulfillment?

The profession of architecture is well situated to respond to both Jefferson's and Paz's defining themes of an ideal nature. Involvement in an occupation that permits explorations of art, technology, science, and social/cultural issues, among others, as a part of its ethos is not a bad gig, if, as Jefferson suggests, wealth and splendor are not key components of a utopian equation. Similarly, Paz's definition of modernism as a compendium of individual activities relates to a utopia achieved through the freedom allowed via the diverse and individual pursuits that animate much of modernism and modern architecture.

But what about examples of utopia that are more "realized," ones that users and society actually experience? Two notable recent examples are Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti and the Seaside community by Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, FAIA. These projects, though differing in their balance of occupation, tranquility, and individualism, both aim to create utopian destinations with similar goals, but they do so through radically different approaches. One remains largely conceptual, while the other is fully realized.

Arcosanti, located less than 100 miles north of Phoenix, Arizona, incorporates two primary themes—complexity and miniaturization—as strategies for constructing a utopian live-work environment and identified by Soleri in his book *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?* Originally conceived in the late 1950s, with construction beginning in 1970, Arcosanti represents a critique of city planning based upon an approach to urban design that is similar in spirit to the founding principles of New Urbanism, whose themes are articulated in Florida's Seaside community. In planning Arcosanti, Soleri wove together multiple public destinations with adjoining residential districts to create a more compact and walkable town, to the point of excluding cars.

Soleri's vision of "arcology"—combining architecture and ecology—can be appreciated as an early foray into sustainable urban design, emphasizing density and ecological strategies. Architecturally, it aspires to celebrate communal living by integrating abundant public gathering spaces and to minimize sprawl by condensing residential domains. Originally planned for a community of 5,000, it has continued to develop at a slow pace for over 50 years, with a current population of around 150 residents primarily engaged in activities focused on light manufacturing, workshops, and tourism. Its lackluster growth is the result of Soleri's top-down thinking, which overlooked various externalities including its remote location, overreliance on unpaid labor, and his own demonization of the automobile. These were coupled with an overly socially engineered approach that did not allow for flexibility or options.

"The orthodox version of utopia typically involves a significant rethinking of the world as we know it, with the intent to transform existing conditions."

← East Crescent Complex surrounding the Colly Soleri Amphitheater at Arcosanti, Arizona, Paolo Soleri Architect, 1970–1989

PHOTO BY ROB JAMESON

← Seaside, Florida, Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk Architects, construction started 1981

PHOTO COPYRIGHT DPZ CO-DESIGN

Seaside, though contrasting with Arcosanti in many ways, shares some key attributes. Built along Florida's panhandle next to the Gulf of Mexico (construction began in 1981), Seaside suggests a utopian vision that aligns with ideas from Jefferson and Paz, despite its more traditional appearance. Its scenographic tranquility is partly achieved through the exclusion of certain programmatic elements, like industrial facilities and essential services, forcing inhabitants to travel to less idyllic destinations for the purchase of items necessary for living. This creates a "lifestyle utopia" achieved through a form of economic segregation, a feature common in many large-scale utopias, which tend to cater to specific economic, occupational, or value-based groups, limiting their appeal to a narrower audience.

Although Seaside follows a unifying, rule-based design aesthetic rather than celebrating the individualistic style preferred by so many architects, it still reflects an aspect of Paz's form of individualism. Its success as a utopian typology stems from Duany's understanding that individuals, when given a choice of where to live, often choose towns over cities and suburbs. Combining a town-based aesthetic and an organization that privileges people over automobiles, the utopia once considered lost is regained in the form of a memory-based tranquility supported by the wealth generated by individual work occurring elsewhere, echoing Jefferson's idea of happiness.

Arcosanti and Seaside are diametrically different both in concept and in their methods of creating utopian communities. The architecture of Arcosanti reflects its visionary, idealistic approach—as well as the liabilities identified earlier—while Seaside was generated, in part, through an aesthetic appearing more knowable, thus relatable, by incorporating manifestations defined by a compendium of idealized memories of design norms. Both share themes of successful living as defined by Jefferson and Paz yet achieve them through different approaches to densification, and both rely on exclusion—whether cultural, lifestyle-based, economic, or ideological—to establish their vision.

This recognition of exclusion as a feature of many realized and failed utopian visions led to possibly the most utopian of utopian visions—one not experienced but envisioned by Buckminster Fuller. Fuller advocated for a utopia based upon the "great transformation" of man's physical capabilities through scientific industrialization, which would allow for "doing more with less." Through a revolution in science and technology, he said, utopia could be achieved in the present day, not by extensively altering the conditions by which man lived but by "helping him to become literate." Man could use his innate cerebral capabilities to at least achieve physical survival at a "utopianly successful level." Utopia then, and admirably defined by Fuller in *Utopia or Oblivion*, "must be, inherently, for all or none."

If Fuller's idea of utopia represents the peak of the utopian project—one that includes everyone and benefits all—it is limited by being a generalization of what science, technology, and man can accomplish together. However, as an expression of Fuller's ideal for humanity, can our profession develop design strategies to bring "utopianly successful" outcomes into everyday life, creating more tangible, foundational ways to enhance and anchor people's daily experiences?

WORDS BY TOM DIEHL

The orthodox version of utopia typically involves a significant rethinking of the world as we know it, with the intent to transform existing conditions. From a design perspective, could a reimagining of architectural utopias (aka agendas)—ideas often tied to larger movements or the "isms" that move regularly through our profession—shift toward micro-utopias? Instead of a radical change in our location or transformation of lifestyle, could we focus instead on creating utopian enhancements of our local environment and everyday experiences? Starting with small-scale improvements in how space is designed to elevate daily life could be a practical approach. Addressing fundamental areas of design, like materiality and lighting, could lead to better outcomes that can be experienced by all. This is because architects are chiefly organizers, and organization when imbued with intention can create an order that is more experiential, not just functional. Add ideas that connect to deeper representational concepts, and themes emerge that can lead to designs that feel more connected and impactful, offering new ways to experience and understand utopia in our lives.

While the term "order" is not referenced as often as it was in the past, its relationship to organization reflects a basic human need for stability, or as architectural historian and theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez puts it, for "psychosomatic health." After years of architects treating order as a form of normative coherence—focused on functionalism, structural grids, standardized material components, and other "correct" approaches to design—there's value in rethinking how we define it. Design approaches legitimately centered on performance and economy can be expanded to realize more humane and graceful conditions that inspire us. Order and organization—when aligned with designs intended to free us from traditional ideas of grids, windows, and walls and move us into experiences where enriched expression of space, light, and materials lyrically reveal themselves—do provide opportunity for reimagined moments. This shift away from over-reliance on standardized solutions can lead to outcomes that do more than just "work" but that also inspire, creating moments of unexpected beauty and meaning.

A clear example of this is provided by John Patkau of Patkau Architects when he explains their interest in conceptualizing the use of light: "We intended (to use) light as if it was like the sun shining through a small clearing in the forest—otherwise one just has skylights." Admitting light though skylights is certainly not an inappropriate design approach. However, conceiving the experience of light in the manner described for Strawberry Vale gets us closer to new ways we might craft experiences through organizational strategies and representational conceptualizations rather than through a standard understanding of light and similar phenomena.

Recent trips to Japan with architecture students from the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design have also provided examples of designs focused on light, materials, and space with outcomes that inspire and uplift. Chief among Japanese approaches to design include the concepts of *ihyou* and *ma*. Ihyou translates into design that elicits a feeling of surprise or awe, or expresses something that is seemingly impossible. Ma relates to space but more as an interval—a gap that adds meaning to the whole by creating a sense of place and possibility. In a sense, it builds on the intrigue we experience through anticipation, not necessarily completion. This contrasts with contemporary design approaches employing "industrialized" languages—standard organizations of standardized components that offer little to uplift the human spirit.

The presentation space of the Mokuzai Kaikan building in Tokyo, designed by Nikken Sekkei Architects, serves as an example of how a utopian vision might be successfully achieved through the re-envisioning of a space in a way that elevates the spirit. The space uses the concept of ma and, in its design, redefines the role of wood. A material that has too often been standardized and used in default applications, here wood is reintroduced as a medium of creativity and celebrated for its expressive and experiential qualities. A screening wall made of wood "sticks" serves as a backdrop that allows viewers to see both the forest and the trees rather than merely

← Skylight detail of Strawberry Vale Elementary School, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, Patkau Architects, 1996

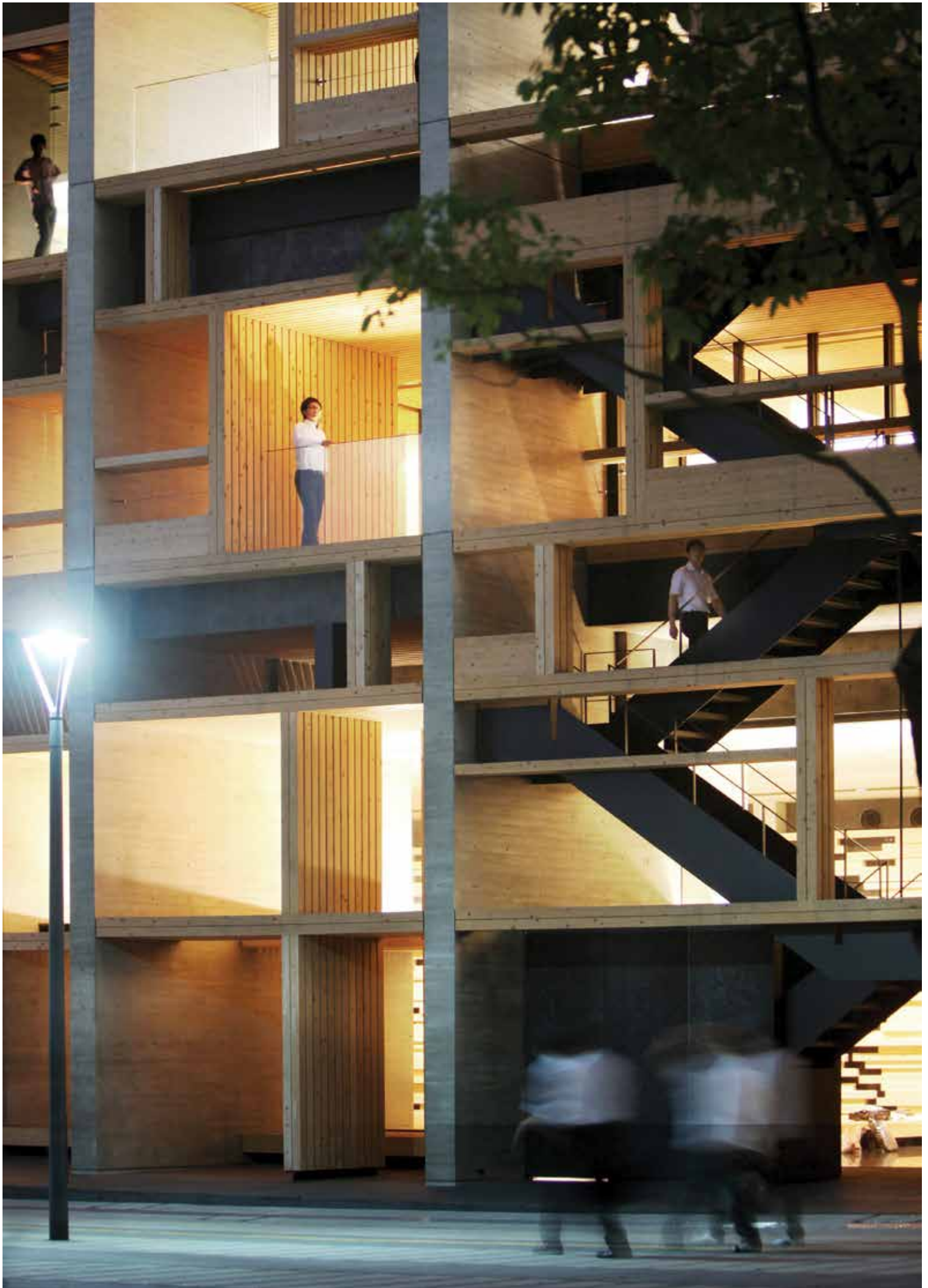
PHOTO BY JAMES DOW / PATKAU ARCHITECTS

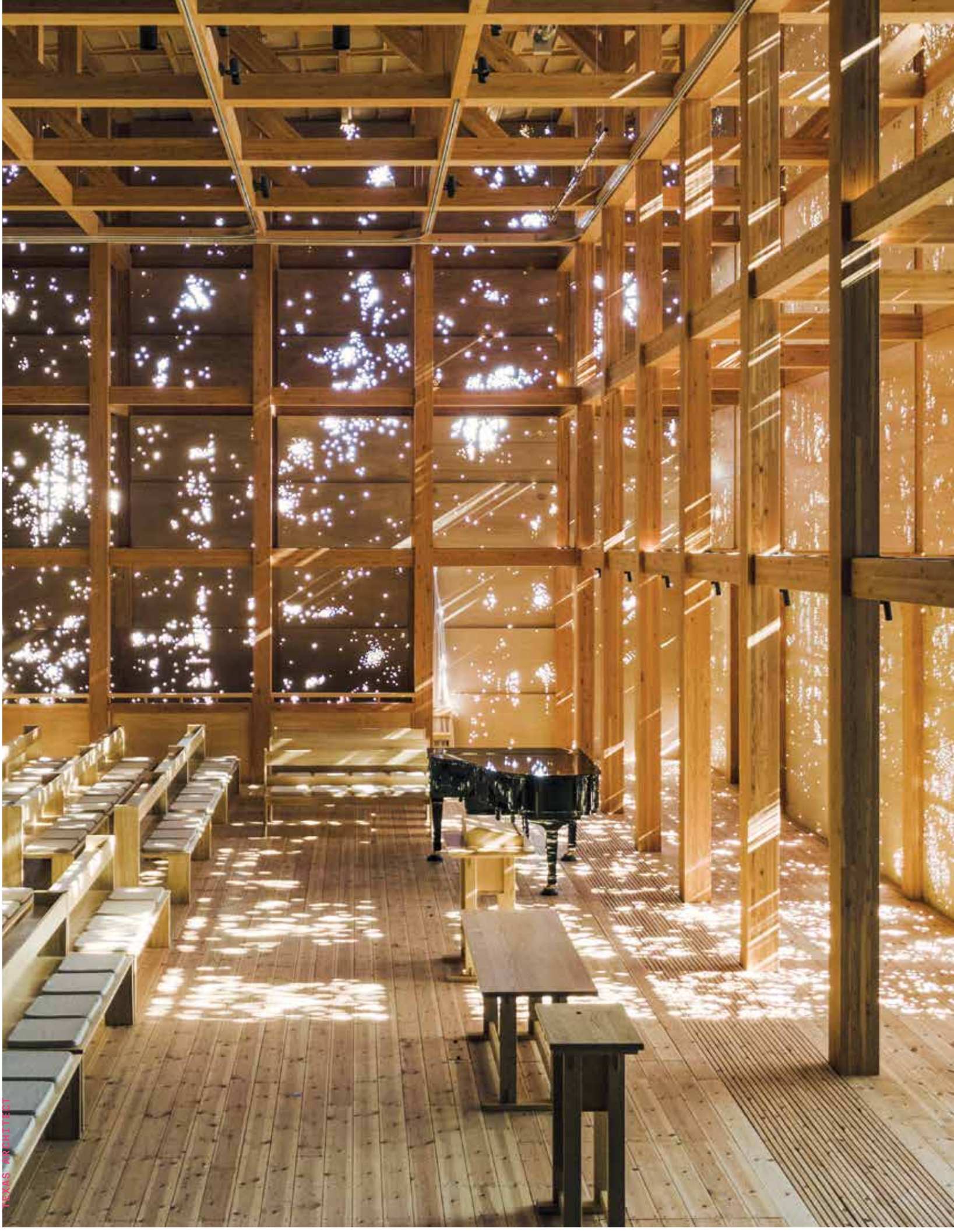
← Interior "wall" of presentation room in Mokuzai Kaikan, Tokyo, Japan, Nikken Sekkei Architects, 2009

PHOTO BY JON DOMINGUEZ

→ Exterior facade of Mokuzai Kaikan, Tokyo, Japan, Nikken Sekkei Architects, 2009

PHOTO BY GANKOSHA, HARUNORI NODA





← Kanagawa Institute of Technology (KAIT) Workshop, Kanagawa, Japan, Junya. Ishigami+Associates, 2008

PHOTO COPYRIGHT JUNYA. ISHIGAMI+ASSOCIATES

a panelized representation of these. This innovative use of wood transforms our perceptions of the wall into an expression of lines and space, challenging expectations and offering a new understanding of what a "wall" can be.

In their design of the Niijima Forest Chapel, Tezuka Architects reimagines one of the most prosaic of industrialized materials—plywood—into a celebration of illumination. Each plywood panel is perforated, allowing light passing through to act as pixels that collectively create an image depicting the Garden of Eden; the structural grid is transformed into a forest-like space augmented by the dappled light penetrating the metaphorical tree canopy. Similarly, two projects by Junya Ishigami for the Kanagawa Institute of Technology demonstrate design solutions intended to stimulate creativity. The institute's website states: "KAIT Workshop is established to realize the hope and dream of making creative goods freely." The workshop was conceived as an open "place to make creative goods in the woods," its design forgoing internal walls that would separate the various components of the program. Utopian in aspiration, the realization of the workshop does inspire. One wanders from domain to domain through an indeterminant field of steel columns, sidestepping those that interrupt your path. At other times a spatial counterpoint is provided through an absence of columns—a "clearing." The design elicits awe not only visually through spatial experience but also cognitively as one realizes that each of the 305 columns used to support the roof have a different orientation and size, with 42 columns carrying compressive loads and 263 post-tensioned, acting as mini shear walls. The workshop is indeed utopia experienced, both through a rethinking of space and material expressions and as a realized vision of a place of education.

Expressing an even greater ihyou factor through the reimagination of space, material, and light, though, is the adjacent plaza. Blaine Brownell, FAIA, director of the School of Architecture at UNC Charlotte, describes his experience of it, stating: "Stunned we gaze, transfixed at an otherworldly void." Statements such as this suggest architecture's ability to elicit experiences of a utopian level by reconceptualizing our designs rather than relying on proforma standardizations.

Embracing inclusive methodologies, such as ma and ihyou-like approaches, activates the human spirit and enhances experiential outcomes. By enriching natural phenomena like light and materiality through design, we evoke a utopian sense of awe, rather than diminishing it through reliance on standardized, conventional components. If a life well lived as defined by Jefferson and Paz is connected to an enrichment of our lived daily experience, the potential for utopian advancement emerges. Through design, let Jefferson's ideals of happiness and tranquility be more fully experienced at our places of work and Paz's insights on individual talents guide us towards Fuller's call for utopianly successful design solutions enjoyed by all. □

← Interior of Niijima Forest Chapel, Takasaki, Japan, Tezuka Architects, 2020

PHOTO BY KATSUHISA KIDA / FOTOTECA

Tom Diehl is an associate professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design at the University of Houston and a practicing architect. He recently published a book entitled *Internal: Developing Informed Architectural Languages*.

SHORE THING

PICTURE-PERFECT CHARM ALONG THE TEXAS GULF COAST.

Words by KAREN BRASIER, AIA

↰ From Highway 361, Grand Boulevard extends through Town Center to a dune crossover and the beach at Cinnamon Shore North.

↓ Three cottages, designed by Dibello Architects, form a courtyard on Escape Street at Cinnamon Shore South.

Just off Highway 361—the vehicular corridor that runs down Mustang Island, a thin barrier island situated along the Texas Gulf Coast—two clusters of white cottages emerge above a wood privacy fence. These cottage homes offer the first glimpse for those traveling by car of Cinnamon Shore, one of Texas's preeminent beach home communities. Here at the south end of the development, completed houses with manicured landscaping are sprinkled among a collection of construction sites, vacant parcels just released for sale, temporary buildings housing staff, and a smattering of signage promising future amenities. Following nearly two decades of construction, Cinnamon Shore continues to grow and evolve.

Established in 2007, the project shares a design ethos with Florida's Seaside and Rosemary Beach communities, with New Urbanism planning principles guiding the neighborhood's development and growth. As in Seaside, walkability and connectivity are key, and realizing this requires a certain building scale, density, and infrastructure that permeates the project. Everything from the porch railings to the buildings' size, shapes, and colors contribute to the community's charming feel and style—a distinct Gulf Coast vernacular described by the project's urban designer Mark Schnell as "Southern cottage writ large, on steroids."

The deliberate composition of the community's image and identity is evident: A page on Cinnamon Shore's website titled "Landmarks and Instagram Ops" recommends select architectural backdrops like the Dune Crossover, Splash Pad Wall, and Town Center as backgrounds for the perfect selfie. Pier and pavilion structures, amongst other public paths and shelters sprinkled throughout the development, are themselves a study in wood detailing, with a variety of rafter tails, trusses, brackets, and railings displayed. Such curated moments, framed by the architecture of Cinnamon Shore, illustrate carefully defined building scales and land use. "This sounds cold, but the right product mix is a really big deal," says Schnell, referring to the combination of individual homes, condos, retail, and amenities like pools and open spaces that would be most appealing to the market.

Currently Cinnamon Shore is composed of two blocks of land: North and South. North, established in 2007, is now receiving its finishing touches. Most of the 225 home sites are complete, and the town center is now being filled in with mixed-use buildings to further activate the already popular common spaces such as the great lawn and numerous swimming pools. North's most recent addition, Six Town Center, was completed in October 2024 and is a four-story building composed of luxury condominiums atop ground-floor retail. The building is constructed with materials less common at Cinnamon Shore—for instance, an aerated concrete panel structure and some exterior stone veneer—while it includes the expected wood trim details characteristic to the branded development. South, the newer subdivision, is midway through construction. Homes started going up in 2018, and it will stand at nearly four times the land area of North when complete.

"Cinnamon Shore is and always has been intended as an exclusive vacation community. It reflects the desires of second-home buyers to have a place to escape, an idyllic environment in which to make family memories."

Mark Schnell reflects on the initial need for strict design rules: "Eighteen years ago, it was kind of the Wild West," he says, recalling some of the early home plans that crossed his desk. Once he put the design code firmly in place, it guided the design-build process toward a decidedly higher level. Schnell refers to the book *Get Your House Right: Architectural Elements to Use & Avoid* by Marian Cusato as one source of ideas he referenced for creating the guidelines; the publication outlines tips to improve the quality of architecture in simple, straightforward ways. The results can be seen in porches with openings centered in equal column bays, complementary massing and proportions, and prescribed locations for features like cupolas and towers. Since the community's inception, Schnell has personally reviewed every home and other building design submitted for compliance with the guidelines. "People in the business kinda freak out when I tell them I'm just a lone guy doing this."

The layout of streets, pathways, and views is also a key part of elevating the design quality of individual buildings. Strong axial views are established and accent the sense of connection throughout the neighborhood. Pavement patterns are used to define pedestrian paths and other areas. Though striving for walkability, Cinnamon Shore is still shaped by the management and flow of vehicles. Typical detached single-family home lots at Cinnamon

WORDS BY KAREN BRASIER

↓ Shade structures frame activity at the Neighborly Square Pool and display characteristic decorative wood detailing informed by the neighborhood's design guidelines.

↓ Aerial View of Phase 1 at Cinnamon Shore South. Pavement patterns define parking, driving, and walking areas.

Shore—some as small as 45'x45'—are required to accommodate two-car parking spaces on site, and while not required, many owners also want space for parking a golf cart. Architecturally this translates to ground-level parking structures oriented along the streetscape among the pedestrian-scaled front porches. To mitigate the negative effects of this, Schnell wrote design guidelines indicating that less-than-ideal front-loading garages should be pushed back from the street and tandem single-car-width parking incorporated with it. While this earned pushback from homeowners who didn't want to have to shuffle their cars around, it helped preserve the design integrity that contributes to property value.

The streetscape notably changes from North to South, with a reduction of sidewalk landscape buffers and the addition of more prevalent "shared streets." Daniel Mazoch, the general manager of development at Cinnamon Shore, worked with the city to get the infrastructure approved. He explains that the city decided to "peel back" its previous approvals for lanes and alleys measuring less than 20 feet wide to allow more comfortable fire truck access. Mazoch has seen other New Urbanism communities maintain narrower streets by experimenting with smaller fire truck size but notes that compromising on roadway width addresses the city's fire safety concern and allows for pedestrians and more parking. Homes on either side of the lanes and alleys still maintain close physical proximity, in keeping with New Urbanism principles.

The axial views set up by the streets create places for what Schnell describes as "killer look-at-me buildings." Destinations within the neighborhood are key to how it works. The Neighborly Square Pool is one such terminus, which Mazoch notes as a particularly successful project within the area. This recently completed amenity was designed by Sommer Design Studios, whom Mazoch met at a town building conference as part of the ongoing effort to expand expertise and elevate the quality of architects approved to work in the development. The pool's minimal structures exemplify the design intent of the buildings to serve as a backdrop for activity while being differentiated by subtle detailing. Painted wood pergolas with decorative cut rafter tails provide shade for lounge chairs, and simple one-story rooms house restrooms and equipment while lending definition and privacy to the space.

Recent work at Cinnamon Shore juxtaposes the in-progress construction of South with the more fleshed-out section of North, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the community's design and development processes. Ongoing expansion and iteration is in store by the developer Sea Oats Group, who owns 114 acres of land on the bay side of Hwy 361 and another parcel adjacent to North on the Gulf side of the highway. The development is ambitious—and successful, notes Schnell, in the sense that "people keep coming back." It can be just that simple.

Like its Floridian precedents, Cinnamon Shore invites easy critique as an exclusive community for the wealthy that, one could argue, commercializes and undermines the true intent behind New Urbanist philosophies. At the same time, the manufactured authenticity works here. Cinnamon Shore is and always has been intended as an exclusive vacation community. It reflects the desires of second-home buyers to have a place to escape, an idyllic environment in which to make family memories.

In spite of that, the work at Cinnamon Shore includes notable efforts that are promising as true assets to the region moving forward. The developer and urban designers' consistent effort to engage accomplished architects from around the state and nation brings new talent, thought, and attention to environmental and community design issues specific to the Gulf Coast. Insistence on continuously improving quality of construction, and ongoing work with governing bodies to develop codes that encourage a pedestrian-friendly street can have lasting positive impact beyond the boundaries of Cinnamon Shore. □

Karen Brasier, AIA, is an architect and design director at Brickmoon Design Hill Country.

PROJECT	Cinnamon Shore
LOCATION	Port Aransas
CLIENT	Sea Oats Group
URBAN PLANNER	Schnell Urban Design
DIRECTOR OF DESIGN	Mark Schnell
ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN FIRMS	Various including: Davies Collaborative, Kissling Architecture, H Square Design, Dibello Architects, Kimmel Studio Architects, LK Design Group, Allison Ramsey Architects, Katheryn Lott Architects, Trademark Home Design, Blaire Austin Studio, Michael G Imber Architects, Board + Batten Architecture & Design
CONTRACTORS	Various including: Seven Custom Homes, Surf Coastal Homes, Waggoner Custom Homes, El Arbol Custom Homes, Conner Coastal Homes, Lloyd Winston Homes, South Texas Home Builders, Seabreeze Construction, Sterling Creek Builders, Brandon Lafayette Homes
CIVIL ENGINEER	Urban Engineering
PHOTOGRAPHY	Courtesy Cinnamon Shore

SETTING THE STAGE

PS1200 BUILDS A BACKDROP FOR PUBLIC LIFE.

Words by JAMES ADAMS, AIA
Photographs by TIMOTHY HURSLEY

↑ In PS1200, Quonset huts articulate the roof form in a design that pays homage to the Kimbell Art Museum.

Innovation within the architectural profession often results from the consistent creation of purposeful solutions combined with the use of unexpected materials and methods. It is not usually a dramatic epiphany, but rather an evolution that can be traced linearly through the work or research produced by an individual, a firm, or an academic institution with the support of committed clients willing to look beyond the status quo and push boundaries.

In Fort Worth's burgeoning Near Southside neighborhood of Magnolia Village, PS1200 leverages the absence of necessity to build densely while eroding the urban edge and elevating the space in between the structures to create a mixed-use development that both thrives independently and plays nice with the context around it. It represents innovative, low-density, urban design thinking relying on somewhat ubiquitous concepts.

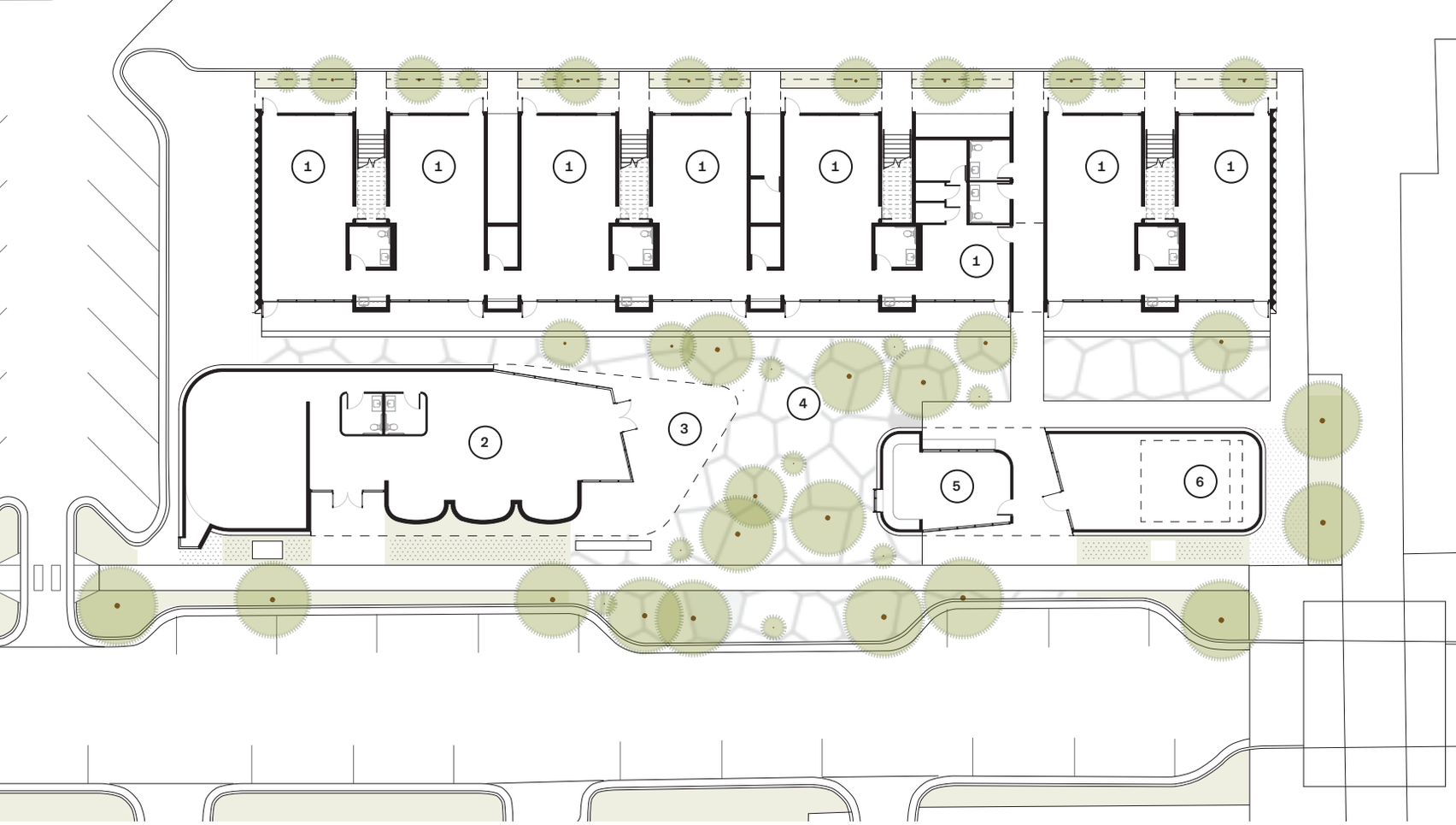
Building on a portfolio of sensitive infill projects in Detroit, Philip Kafka, president of the real estate development firm Prince Concepts, engaged Marlon Blackwell Architects for PS1200. Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, appreciates Kafka's approach, noting: "His concept of leveraging emptiness to develop pockets of urban vitality is smart. It's a social construct. He starts with public spaces and creates private-public interfaces." Blackwell says the philosophy aligns perfectly with the firm's ethos as "a place-based firm." He adds: "We see place as a canvas. Architecture is the medium. Nature and public life are the constructs for a local form." PS1200 comprises eight apartments, 5,521 sf of modular office space, and 3,400 sf of retail and restaurant space, all within a half-acre site. Dedicated green public space, with more than 40 trees, occupies one third of the site. A distinct sense of space is furthered by the architecture's unique yet familiar form—an homage to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth's most iconic building. Quonset huts, lightweight prefabricated-steel structures with semicircular volumes, articulate the roof form and inform the adjacent restaurant and retail spaces, creating a human-scaled dialogue between the buildings and across the site.

Initial design diagramming did not incorporate the Quonset hut, but Kafka encouraged Blackwell to move in that direction as he has employed the huts previously. Blackwell embraced the idea, describing the utilitarian construction system as liberating. "We serialized the units as the backdrop and set the stage for life to happen in the plaza," he explains. Together, Blackwell and Kafka approached the design through a deep study of the Kimbell, during which they discovered the masterpiece was, in fact, inspired by the Fort Worth Stockyards. Kahn "ennobled the prosaic to transcend the vernacular," says Blackwell.

↰ The ground-up mixed-use development combines retail and apartments with inspired public space.

Evident throughout Blackwell's portfolio is elegant nuance of form with creative use of materials. Simple yet sophisticated, his designs respond to programmatic and structural needs while elevating architectural articulation through abstract beauty and unexpected shifts. At PS1200, this elegance is most evident not in the eight serialized residences, but rather in the retail components at the edges of the block. Using the same heavily corrugated steel sheets that make up the Quonset hut, the two retail spaces are playful foils nestled along Sixth Avenue. Generous curves, inherent to the material, characterize the forms of the buildings and shape engaging and delightful spaces. The result is something that is unconventional yet familiar.

WORDS BY JAMES ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIMOTHY HURSLEY



↑ SITE PLAN

1 OFFICE SPACE
2 RESTAURANT
3 OUTDOOR DINING
4 PUBLIC SPACE
5 ICE CREAM PARLOR
6 COFFEE SHOP

PROJECT	PS1200
LOCATION	Fort Worth
CLIENT/CONTRACTOR	Prince Concepts
ARCHITECT	Marlon Blackwell Architects
DESIGN TEAM	Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, Meryati Blackwell, AIA, Spencer Curtis, AIA, Ethan Kaplan, AIA, Scott Kervin
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	Datum Engineers
MEP ENGINEER	Root Engineering Services
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS	D.I.R.T. studio, Studio Outside
WATERPROOFING CONSULTANT	Exterior Consulting Innovations
PHOTOGRAPHER	Timothy Hursley

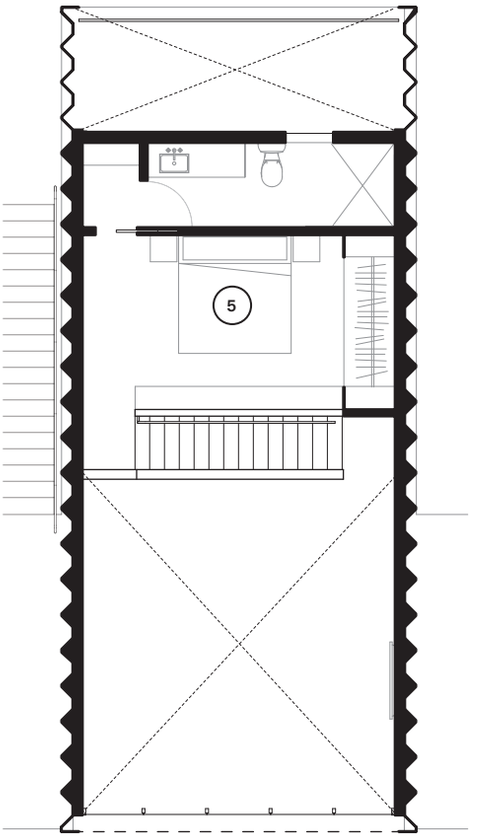
← Heavily corrugated steel sheets are used throughout, with the curves inherent to the material characterizing the buildings' forms.

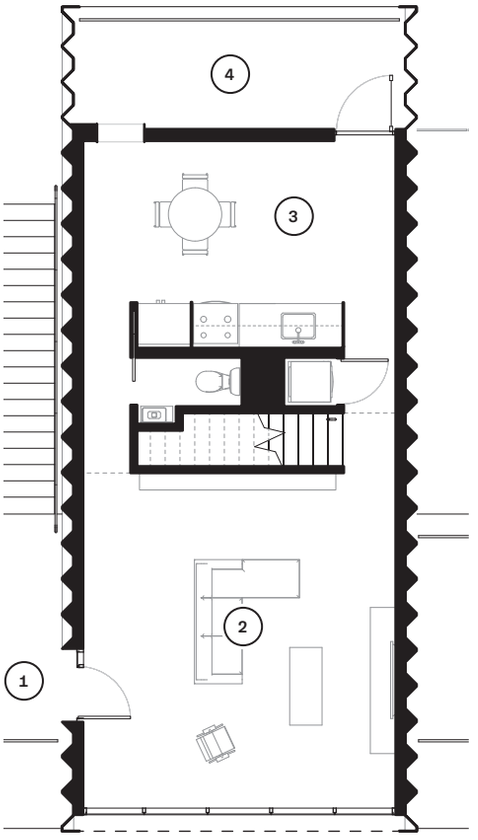
↓ PS1200 includes 3,400 sf of retail and restaurant space. Among its current tentants are a vegan dessert shop and a coffee/ gallery/bookstore.

→ The design encourages pedestrians to leave the sidewalks and inhabit the green space, which includes more than 40 trees.

↘ LEVEL 2 → LEVEL 3

1 ENTRANCE
2 LIVING ROOM
3 KITCHEN
4 PATIO
5 BEDROOM





Blackwell's commitment to a simple palette reinforces the beauty of the design in a remarkable way without being austere nor inappropriately scaled. Atypical to most of the firm's projects, here the galvanized finish of the metal panels dominates the hue of the development—there is a complete absence of vibrant color. Paired with the informal, lush landscape design created by Julie Bargmann of D.I.R.T. along with Studio Outside, the composition is balanced and reaches toward a simple utopian aspiration. Pedestrians are passively encouraged to leave the sidewalk and meander through the trees, interacting with the porous storefronts. The whole space feels carefully poised yet flexible, allowing for a discourse between the built elements and the people who occupy and traverse this space.

The project's design also reflects Prince Concepts and Marlon Blackwell Architects' shared commitment to a passive approach to sustainability. The facade structure was 83 percent recycled steel. This material also shields southern and western solar exposure. The large glass facades are predominately eastern facing. Additionally, the low, dense development maximizes a pervious ground material minimizing watershed and limiting contributions to the urban heat island effect that dominates the neighborhood.

Before construction was completed, preleasing of apartments, office, and retail successfully secured a majority occupancy. While some turnover has occurred since opening, the development has little vacancy—a good indicator of the value of the project in a volatile economy.

Ultimately, the success of PS1200 will be measured over time as the surrounding neighborhood continues to redevelop and responds to the project's low-density approach. The luxury of significant public spaces at PS1200 is evident and, hopefully, will encourage thoughtful community engagement in future developments. The simple forms, proportions, and materials are likely to endure, only improving with age. PS1200 should become a case study revisited many times over by designers, developers, and the Fort Worth community. □

James Adams, AIA, is a vice president with Corgan in Dallas.

WORDS BY JAMES ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIMOTHY HURSLEY

→ The eight residential units feature 20' ceilings and a full glass wall overlooking the park.

↓ A plywood-fronted structure houses a kitchen, bathroom, and storage; it also hides the stair leading to the private spaces of the bedroom and full bath.

THE ARCHITECTURE

OF IMAGINATION

Exploring the Parallels Between Science Fiction and Architecture

Words by JES DEAVER, AIA

“Storytelling, for both scientists and architects, serves as a powerful tool to move beyond mere visioning of positive futures, enabling them to communicate more compellingly and accessibly with the public.”

↓ Ridley Scott's 2012 film *Prometheus* brings distant worlds together as humanity collides with their desire to understand creation. Artificial intelligence and technologically advanced beings are set against moody settings like the Dettifoss Waterfall in Iceland's Vatnajökull National Park and the Wadi Rum Nature Preserve in Jordan.

SCOTT FREE PRODUCTIONS, BRANDYWINE PRODUCTIONS, DUNE ENTERTAINMENT, 2012

Somewhere just beyond our solar system, an asteroid is terraformed by a xeno-species we cannot recognize. Using an adaptive atmosphere held up by a network of super towers, the lifeforms create a flourishing ecosystem. What can we learn from them? Wild questions like these are at the foundation of the most gripping problems facing humanity, and our imaginations are the superpower we hold to solve them.

The merging of architectural visioning with narrative storytelling has the potential to go beyond provocative solutions to provide what the world needs most—inspiration. Writer and historian Cody C. Delistraty's 2014 article in *The Atlantic*, "The Psychological Comforts of Storytelling," traces the origins of narrative tradition as an evolutionary strategy that evokes empathy and offers a sense of control over a chaotic world by providing important instructional blueprints for survival. "Stories are a form of escapism, one that can sometimes make us better people while entertaining," writes Delistraty. While communities here on Earth grapple with life-changing technology and climate shifts, architects are uniquely positioned not only to imagine better futures but to help make them a reality.

Dr. Johanna Nalau is a social scientist, an advisory committee member for the US State Department's Increasing Climate Resilience via the Private Sector Investment project, and an adaptation scientist based at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. She sees imagination as transformational. As part of the 2019 negotiations in Madrid for the Resilience Frontiers (RF) Initiative, a program for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that brings together eight key pathways to accelerate the world towards global resilience, she uncovered something astonishing.

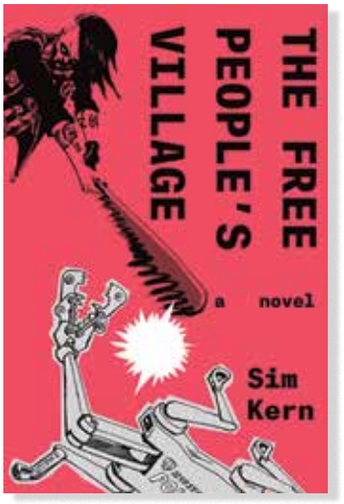
Says Nalau: "We had a RF pavilion where we discussed ideas each day with a different theme. But [two questions were] always the same: 'What does the world look like in 2030 and beyond if we fail?' and then 'What does the world look like in 2030 and beyond when we have succeeded?'" The first question examined dystopian visions of the future. Participants answered with comments about lack of water and ecosystem destruction, among other things. When she flipped the question to ask what the world would look like if humanity succeeded in finding balance with nature, the pavilion fell quiet. "I think, for me, the silence was not necessarily [because] people did not have ideas on how to take action on climate change," explains Nalau. "It was more about [a lack of] collective imagination and the difficulties in seeing something bright and different in a conversation where often we focus on the failures and drastic outcomes."

Parallels can be seen between Nalau's observation and the onslaught of the 24-hour news cycle and explosion of media streams feeding the public an endless supply of dire news and data. The human mind is a powerful tool for both imagining and drawing boundaries around what is possible. Nalau continues, "My research on climate adaptation heuristics (rules of thumb that we have developed about adaption) is very much focused on how we imagine something to be and how that often drives the decisions we make and options we think are viable."

Architects engage with this concept by expanding and educating their clients, cities, and communities about the potential of design. Storytelling, for both scientists and architects, serves as a powerful tool to move beyond mere visioning of positive futures, enabling them to communicate more compellingly and accessibly with the public. Film and science fiction (sci-fi), in particular, act as cultural barometers—reflecting society's hopes, fears, and evolving sensibilities. Nalau agrees. "It is the role of film and literature to open our imagination for different possibilities and maybe learn something also in the process about how we can handle the future."

↓ *The Free People's Village* by Houston based environmental journalist, activist, and author Sim Kern is an alternate-timeline sci-fi novel exploring the failures of neoliberal climate policy in a 2020 where Al Gore won the 2000 election and declared a war on climate change. Their novel explores Houston places that are equal parts familiar and foreign, offering an unsettling view on "green" utopian cities.

LEVINE QUERIDO, 2023

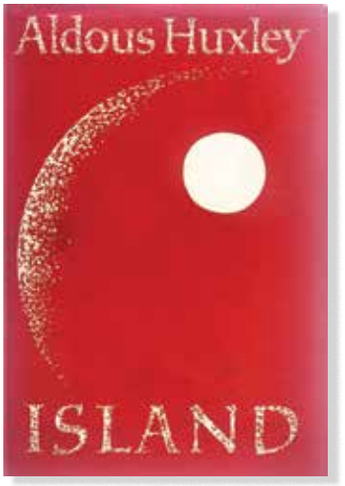


↓ From 1966 to 1969, a glimmer of hope filled American television screens with provocative visions of the future. *Star Trek*, an episodic series created by Gene Roddenberry, was set on a Constitution class heavy cruiser called the USS Enterprise (NCC-1701) and set circa 2266-2269. Art director Matt Jefferies designed the starship Enterprise and used his experience as an airman during World War II to design a functional and ergonomic bridge layout.

PARAMOUNT GLOBAL, 1966-PRESENT

↓ *Island* by Aldous Huxley serves as a utopian counterpoint to his earlier dystopian novel, *A Brave New World*, published in 1932. It explores technology and idealism, taking readers to a "forbidden island" where culture, societal roles, and biomimicry are seen in a fresh light.

CHATTO & WINDUS, 1962



ALTERNATE REALITIES

Houston environmental journalist, activist, and *USA Today* best-selling author Sim Kern explores an alternate reality in their 2023 novel, *The Free People's Village*, which depicts a scenario where Al Gore won the 2000 presidential election, leading to a 20-year "War on Climate Change." Kern explores economic contrasts through architectural concepts, juxtaposing suburban homes and rewilded front lawns with toilets imported from Japan, or green skyscrapers with private orchards made possible only by razing neighboring homes rather than retrofitting them. Says Kern, "There are solutions that are green on the surface, but when you dive more into it, you have to ask yourself, is this really sustainable?" The story follows an unreliable narrator named Matty who benefits from green infrastructure, carbon-cutting, and lush high-rises as she explores Houston's fictional Eighth Ward. In a warehouse-turned-music-venue called "the Lab," she falls into a social movement and experiment that changes the entire city.

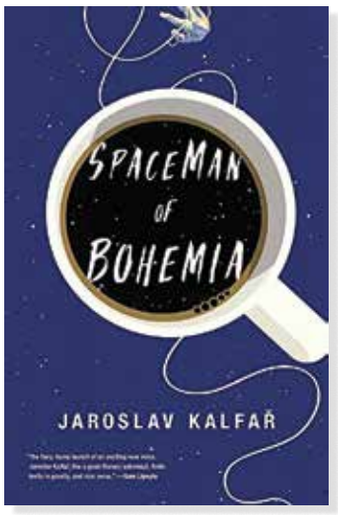
> *"I breathed easier rounding the turn onto Calcott, spotting the Lab up ahead, silhouetted by the last of the sun's rays. Light and loud music spilled from the old red-brick warehouses's windows and doors, every hole in that lovely, ugly face thrown open, filled with people of every race, gender, style and subculture you could imagine, all of us so young—young enough to have no idea what kids we all were."*
>
> —Excerpt from Sim Kern's *The Free People's Village*

The Lab starts out in the characters' minds as a beacon of hope, a utopic place full of possibility and wonder. But the more they learn, the more they realize that a spectrum of utopias exists. "The Lab was inspired by a real place that I knew in my twenties," Kern recalls. "It was a brick fourplex where they would throw shows and parties. We would skateboard inside and draw over the walls of this clubhouse that eventually fell into ruin and was torn down to make way for luxury

WORDS BY JES DEAVER

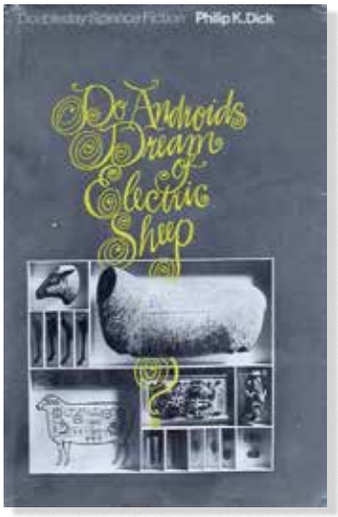
↓ Jaroslav Kalfař's *Spaceman of Bohemia* follows an astrophysicist who agrees to an eight-month mission exploring a cloud of space dust. The story uses the setting as a metaphor for human-scaled issues focusing on a tight plot that looks at longing, loneliness, and reality in an uplifting piece of literary science fiction.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., 2017



↓ Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* examines empathy as an essential trait of being human and contrasts it against the detachment of androids. The visceral story has influenced science fiction since its publication, becoming an essential piece of literature set in a futuristic urban environment.

DOUBLEDAY, 1968



↓ *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott, took Philip K. Dick's neo-noir novel and married it to architecture with settings like Frank Lloyd Wright's Mayan Revival Ennis House. Another location, the Bradbury Building designed by George Wyman, was itself inspired by the sci-fi novel *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy. *Blade Runner* is now a classic of modern cinema and cinematography.

WARNER BROTHERS, 1982

apartments and townhomes." Stories don't need to offer a binary experience; the best ones challenge readers to develop new perspectives on the world around them. Understanding a range of viewpoints is essential for designing better places, and storytelling can shape the way architects engage with and communicate diverse ideas of what those places might be.

Utopia and its counterpart, dystopia, are common themes in science fiction. Utopias have long fascinated writers, as seen in the television franchise Star Trek, Aldous Huxley's 1962 novel *Island*, and Jaroslav Kalfar's 2017 novel *Spaceman of Bohemia* (later produced in 2024 as the film *Spaceman* directed by Johan Renck). These stories get to the heart of what makes science fiction so uniquely suited to imagining futures.

They depict places with expansive and iconic architecture, building on principles of awe and wonder, which have been prevalent throughout human history and architecture.

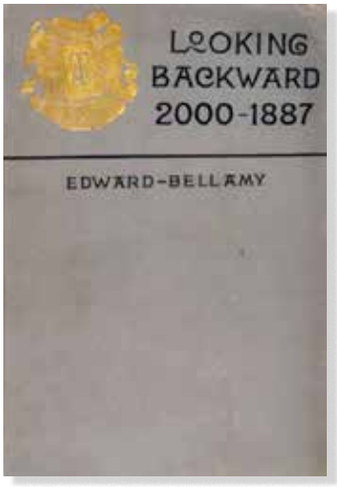
In the 1950s, author Ray Bradbury called science fiction, "the one field that reached out and embraced every sector of the human imagination, every endeavor, every idea, every technological development, and every dream." As a genre, it conveys to the audience that there will be futuristic elements centering on science and technology in the story, but that is not necessarily what the story is *really* about. Speculative science fiction might feature alien species inhabiting the same world we currently live in, for example, but on a deeper level, it may actually be a story about free will, time, and language.

Notably, utopias are harder to find, and many stories that begin as utopias devolve into dystopias, providing plenty of examples of failures of both architecture and society. While few can easily imagine their own version of an ideal society—as seen in the groups from the RF pavilion—almost everyone can name a dystopian story that offers a bleak vision of the world.

Classic examples include Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, adapted into the 1982 neo-noir film *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott. The film prominently featured iconic locations such as the Bradbury Building, designed by George Herbert Wyman, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Ennis House. According to the City of Los

↓ American journalist and writer Edward Bellamy's utopian sci-fi novel *Looking Backward* influenced intellectuals and culture, with "Bellamy Clubs" cropping up across the country. In addition to social commentary, his descriptions of crystal courts inspired the architecture of the Bradbury Building, designed by George Wyman.

TICKNOR & CO., 1888

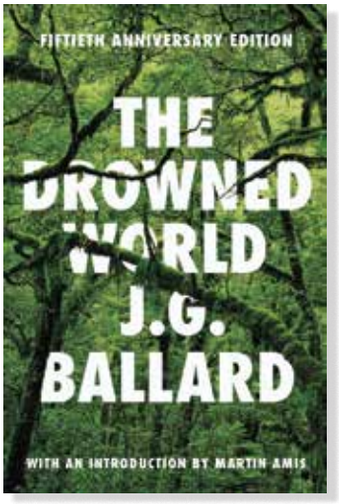


↓ The enthralling setting of many scenes in Alex Garland's acclaimed sci-fi motion picture *Ex-Machina* were filmed at the Juvet Landscape Hotel and a private residence in Valldalen, Norway, designed by Jensen & Skodvin Architects. The frameless connections between nature and home allude to the disappearing divide between humans and technology.

PHOTO BY NILS VIK

↓ J.G. Ballard helped create the science fiction sub-genre "climate-fiction," which presents future environmental issues as a catalyst for narrative. His vision of an abandoned London, drowned by floods and preyed upon by pirates paints a nuanced view of apathy and loss. Luxurious hotels, rendered inhospitable by climate change, bear the grandeur and decay in a fight for survival.

BERKLEY BOOKS, 1962



Angeles, Wyman's design was inspired by Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel *Looking Backward*, which imagined a future of cooperative housing and shared workspaces organized around crystal courts. Wright's, on the other hand, drew inspiration from Mayan architecture, exploring how it conveyed permanence, utility, and beauty.

More recent dystopian narratives, such as Alex Garland's 2014 *Ex Machina*, continue to use architecture to reflect themes of wealth, power, and technological advancement. Filmed in a futuristic, minimalist setting—a merger of the real-life Juvet Landscape Hotel and Fjora House, both designed by Norwegian firm Jensen & Skodvin Architects—the location symbolizes extreme wealth and egotism in a world grappling with the ethical implications of artificial intelligence.

Climate fiction, or "cli-fi," is a subgenre of science fiction that explores environmental crises and their impact on humanity. From J.G Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) to Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), these novels grapple with how people adapt to extreme shifts in the ecosystem. Johanna Nalau advocates for reading cli-fi to better understand the potential of environmental storytelling, citing *Artificial Wisdom* (2023) by Thomas R. Weaver as a prime example of the genre's impact on imagining future possibilities.

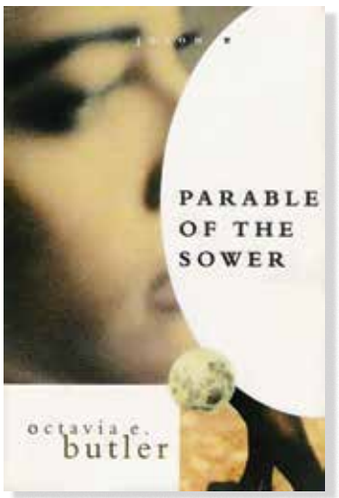
In Weaver's novel, a closed-door mystery unfolds within a globe-trotting thriller. The story follows UK journalist Marcus Tully, who investigates political intrigue surrounding the world's first artificial intelligence, an "Artilect," running against a human candidate for the role of climate dictator. This figure is tasked with steering humanity through an impending environmental collapse.

Weaver's rich, cinematic descriptions immerse readers in a world set 25 years in the future. While many scenes, such as a London bedsit or a luxurious penthouse, remain grounded in contemporary architectural design, the novel also introduces fantastical settings—like New Carthage, a floating metropolis modeled on classical architecture. This city, enclosed in a self-sustaining dome, drifts across the globe, offering the wealthy a refuge from climate disruption. The dome creates its own microclimate, allowing its elite residents to maintain their lifestyles with minimal interruption. The name "New Carthage"

WORDS BY JES DEAVER

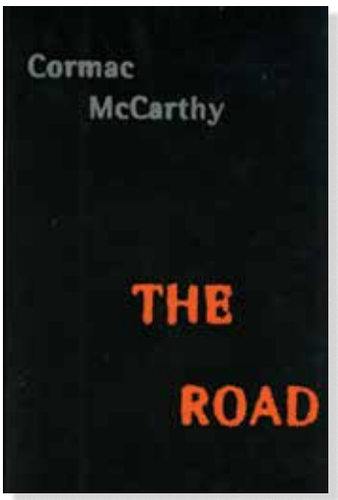
↓ Challenge is part of the process for renewal in Octavia Butler's prescient 1993 novel, *Parable of the Sower*, which is set in 2024 on a post-apocalyptic Earth heavily affected by climate change and social inequality. Here, a satellite neighborhood of Los Angeles is destroyed by fire, plunging the characters into a trek into unknown territories and terrifying realities.

FOUR WALLS EIGHT WINDOWS, 1993



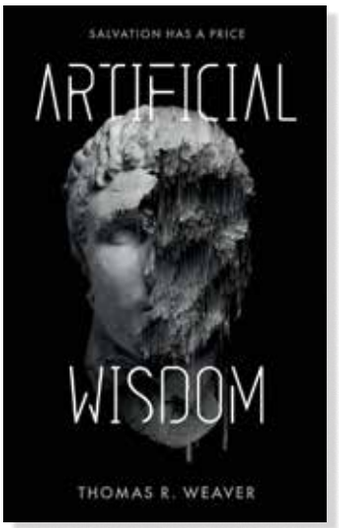
↓ Cormac McCarthy's bleak novel of loneliness and violence in a ravaged landscape follows a father and son in a desolate post-industrial future. The author has said that his inspiration came from visiting El Paso with his son and imagining what the city might look like in 50 or 100 years into the future.

ALFRED A. KNOPF, 2006



↓ Who will lead the world forward when climate change results in imminent danger? Thomas R. Weaver, a London-based author and tech entrepreneur, constructs a cinematic novel with futuristic settings that range from urban communal bedsits to floating utopian cities.

CHAINMAKER PRESS 2023



and the classical design of its buildings evoke a sense of permanence and power, reflecting an effort to avoid dissent in an otherwise unstable world.

> *"Even the birds must have been imported, confined to the dome covering the island. He shook his head. It was too artificial here, too perfectly designed; a high-end, luxury hotel-village where everything was manufactured for the pleasure of its guests. But like any holiday, after a week you just wanted to be back in your own bed."*
>
> —Excerpt from Thomas R. Weaver's *Artificial Wisdom*

Architecture *is* sci-fi—defined by the unknown and driven by an enduring optimism for the future. The parallels between the field of design and the imaginative realms of science fiction offer fresh perspectives on how we can understand the built environment and integrate emerging adaptive technologies. From industrial warehouses in Houston to visionary floating cities, science fiction crafts intricate worlds that present new possibilities for addressing some of society's most urgent challenges.

As the world grapples with the uncertainties of both the built and natural environments, science fiction may provide a roadmap for new solutions. Architects are increasingly drawing inspiration from sci-fi, while sci-fi writers are influenced by architectural concepts. More than mere backdrops to a narrative, science fiction worlds illuminate our humanity—our hopes, fears, and the enduring impact of the spaces we create. By viewing design as a form of storytelling, architecture can become a powerful tool for change—shaping more beautiful, resilient, and thought-provoking futures. In this way, the boundaries between architecture and science fiction blur, inviting us to imagine and build a world that is not only functional but also deeply transformative. □

Jes Deaver, AIA, is an architect, writer, and filmmaker exploring how the future, ecology, and built environment connect us to one another.

CLARA FUTURA

WORDS BY JES DEAVER, AIA

Star Land was built by thousands of choices that favored money over people and progress before research. The only option now was survival. Ojawan, the city architect watched through the storefront window as people rushed across asphalt oceans, clad in loose fitting solar deterrents, drowning in the rays of a buttery sun. Despite his title, he was really hired to design the virtual mirror of Star Land. They needed his expertise in foresight, coding, and regenerative architecture to create an immersive escape for the roughly 4 million citizens. His passion for science fiction was a bonus.

Ojawan left the gruesome site of his decaying corner of the world. Cities are supposed to patina over time and weather their traumas with dignity, but Star Land was past saving. He entered the black box theater illuminated by a luminescent grid on every surface. His break was over, and he only had a few more days until the mirror world went online in the largest event the city had ever seen. He poured the haptic skin over his body, letting each living agite slip to its assigned pore. When fully immersed, wearing it felt like wet velvet, giving it the nickname, “dolphin suit.”

He inhaled deeply, allowing the links to build down into his respiratory system. Once connected, he jolted forward, each hair on his forearms saluting. The display connected to his optic nerve and synchronized with his cochlea.

Welcome, treasured citizen.

Ojawan wasn’t sure if the opening was too formal or too intimate. It could go either way. He plucked the top of the letters that spelled out c - u - l - t - u - r - e, revealing a pass key entry point. Ojawan entered his private Sci-corps encryption, and the darkness transformed into a modern rail station.

In front of him stood an old-fashioned turnstile, and in his right palm he held a neon yellow ticket. Tossing the ticket in the air moved him through the passage to the main concourse. Here, everything felt expansive. Large open-air bays ran along both sides, revealing where stratosphere seemed to meet mesosphere in a crescendo of deepening blues. Matte stone tiles led to gardens with birds and peastone walking paths. Wood benches wrapped in tight laces of leather supported the waiting area despite the wait time always being within three minutes. Background characters and programmed staff stood paused in mid-motion awaiting him to activate their sub-layer.

A breeze rushed past his cheek as a white and glass train appeared. Its movements were so fast it felt disorienting, and Ojawan stumbled. He opened the code index and set the train’s speed to quarter time so that a human could process its deceleration. He stroked each metal railing, checking its temperature, the plaster walls for texture, and the clothes on his body for movement. No matter how many times he worked on a particular part of the virtual city, it would never feel completed. What he needed was 10 more architects, but the council didn’t want to deal with any more NDAs after the last incident. Stepping from the stone concourse to a luxurious navy carpet inside the train, he opened the holographic map of the city and selected the Hotel Phlox.

Named for the delicate star-shaped flower, the hotel blended art nouveau with utopian optimism. As the train pulled into the city-center platform, Ojawan looked out over the river that snaked along the edge of the city. Twinkling lights from the other side promised even more adventures, but for now it was nothing more than a digital scrim. The architect turned back to Hotel Phlox. Gold balconies embraced narrow, walnut-paneled windows with French doors up the facade. A background gardener stood paused, ready to water the red bougainvillea vine that wrapped the columns at the front entry. Ojawan was proud of designing the stained-glass ceiling over the interior lobby that displayed vibrant colors in a Mondrian pattern, but the lounge needed to have a distinct look that related to the natural, romantic themes of the Phlox. The hotel and the lounge should look like partners while reflecting their individuality, like siblings. It comes down to *purpose*.

Jazz feels like romance. He started by laying out a stone entry, but it felt too ordered, so he adjusted the stone dimensions into a surprising staccato as the space deepened. He stepped on the stones one at a time, enjoying the feeling of skipping around at varying cadences. What if it wasn't random, but from a song. His favorite compositions created unbalanced patterns, his synapsis lighting up as he flipped through beats and imagined them as stone patterns. After a few minutes he hit upon the 1961 bebop jazz "Epistrophy" by Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane, which fit perfectly into his vision of a futuristic lounge.

Hours snaked by as one inspiration led to another and the nagging fatigue of his agite shroud began to warn him to take a break. The architect quickly disabled the warning. No one would come looking for him, and he needed to finish before the grand opening in—he checked his virtual watch—two days. He decided to work through another solar cycle. Who would miss him, he reasoned. If he could just design a little more detail, he would be done with the lounge, then he would log out.

If he could just find the right material or the proper plantings… While trying to decide the best layout for the garden terrace lighting, the architect wondered if he was building this all in vain. What if people enter, walk around, and then leave disenchanted. What if it didn't feel authentic? The city's investment depended on him, and it was clear that building a perfect mirror city was much easier than fixing the real one. I've got one shot to make sure the title of City Architect won't die in obscurity. He busied himself adding small touches. Visuals in a virtual world were expected to be perfect, but what truly set apart his mirror city from the gaming environments everyone was accustomed to was touch, taste, and smell. Freesia arrangements were powerful at first then tapered off the further you moved from the flowers. Fire from the candles on the tables felt warm but could never burn visitors. Forest-green bucket Paulistano chairs were supple and smelled of aged leather. Even the food worked with the agites to provide millions of flavors.

This was Clara Futura.

The architect shivered with excitement. Creating a city inside a virtual sphere was an exercise in vanity without the critique of users. Ojawan snapped the code bar and was transported to a riverfront promenade. Elevated boardwalks swung out over the water's edge, walking trails clung to the banks, opening into wide integrated seating, and boats of varying sizes and styles drifted slowly under a necklace of constellations.

Perhaps the marble library, garden restaurants, and alleyways lined with paper lanterns was disjointed or worse, too homogenous. Orange trees lined the plaza, and live oaks wound their gnarly roots into the river's edge. Buildings of varying

material facades were partially obscured by blankets of green moss, ivy, and plants spilling down their sides. Ojawan chewed his lip for a moment thinking of what a genuine public reaction might be. Virtual spaces use a lot of energy. Typically, the city was powered in whichever part he happened to be in, working on a grid that veiled the uninhabited sectors behind masks that made the rest of the city appear to be illuminated. Having so many guests roaming about required a different system. He brought up the root map that controlled power system settings and set up a switch box for multiple users. The visual world stuttered for a moment then returned to normal parameters. Everything was on the solar bank now.

The main event for opening night was an architecture biennale with pavilions, a street market, performers, and artists woven throughout the city. He laid out a map of events that would take visitors through the completed zones of his city. String lights shimmered overhead, with outdoor seating, tables, and kiosks for sharing food and wine. Virtual experiences were rarely open to the public, often ticketed, curated, and limited in their participation. The Clara Futura Biennale would be a first of its kind, free and open to all citizens of Star Land.

Architects, vendors, chefs, and artists were allowed entry first to set up their stations and get a feel for the enormity of the wondrous city. Each pavilion represented explorations of time and ranged in material and size. Fixed twilight painted the city in tender light, and a chorus of “magnificent,” “glorious,” and “unbelievable” rounded each corner. The architect basked in the glow of his creation from the balcony of the library.

The city could use a test run, but time was up. After 48 hours he knew that he would just have to manage the issues as they came. Ojawan unlocked the code that allowed users to enter the main portal. Guests materialized at the rail station coordinates, whisked away instantly on a tour of the city extents. They rode through courtyard-hugging residences, community gardens, and narrow cafes; past partially buried glass conservatories exploding with flora-like geodes reaching out from the strata; and into urban forests designed to feel isolated and wild.

Music and laughter tinkled in the car-less streets past dawn. Ojawan, asleep in his Star Land studio was awakened by an alert for the sunrise sequence. He quickly logged back in hoping he hadn’t disrupted everyone’s circadian rhythms by falling asleep. Many guests were curled under tree canopies and along grassy knolls at the river to rest.

In the 20th hour of the greatest public event ever virtually orchestrated, he realized that he could never close Clara Futura again. The council held an emergency meeting and determined that the mirror city would remain open permanently, and a new department would be hired to oversee and manage the daily coding.

With the higher powers satisfied, Ojawan was finally given the green light to allow outside architects the opportunity to attach their own code, expanding the neighborhoods and building types. Vowing to never leave his virtual city again, he designed a home using the rough layout of his office. Every step, door, countertop, desk, bathroom, and chair. This way he could stay in the virtual space to go get something to eat or use the facilities. Within the limitations of his building footprint, he re-envisioned his office as a concrete penthouse with slim, steel factory windows. The beat-up chairs in the waiting area became Eames loungers, and his tired wooden door drafting table morphed into a gleaming cherrywood desk. He raised the ceilings from 8 feet to 15 feet. and covered the concrete floors with elaborate vintage rugs he borrowed from memories of castles he visited as a student in Scotland.

Years passed and the urban party mellowed into daily life. Someone created dogs and cats, which became mascots for families. An architectural historian developed an entire sector modeled after the circular medieval streets of Baghdad circa 762 CE. It housed a menagerie and aviary like none ever seen before. Money was unnecessary and resources endless. It became the utopia that society longed for, yet something was missing. Ojawan couldn't figure out what felt off about the city. He tried different variations, events, and lighting. New tastes, smells, and vistas were added each day.

After nearly a decade inside Clara Futura, he made the decision to take a brief leave to see if he could discover something in the real world that would scratch the itch that nothing he created would ever feel "real" enough. He left his cabinet of architects in charge and gingerly paused his virtual haptic set. The dolphin suit slipped over his pale, atrophied limbs back into their port. Alone in the black box, he went to the door, took a deep breath, and entered his actual office. Light blazed through dusty windows as he saw all the spots his robotic vacuum routinely missed. He went to the main door and touched the metal handle. It felt colder than he remembered. Everything smelled muddled together. Despite all this, it was thrilling reentering the natural world.

Ojawan opened the door and stepped outside to find a very unexpected sound. Birdsong. It was a bright, cheerful, melodic avian symphony! The architect ran to the end of his street. Cars were parked neatly in their driveways and along the curb. A gentle rain was misting across the ground creating puddles that reflected vibrant colors all around him. He shivered and rubbed his eyes unsure what he was seeing. The many years in calculated light levels had taken their toll on his pupils, making it hard for them to adjust quickly. He shaded his brow and scanned the buildings in front of him. Tall grasses rose from the ground and weeds broke through every crack in the concrete sidewalks. Laughter tumbled out of his throat, and Ojawan stumbled down the street towards the main road.

Businesses, long abandoned by the population, were managed by a handful of robotic assistants in quiet orchestrated movements. It smelled like spring, and the air was fresh, untamed. Clean. The architect filled his lungs with it, running his hands along the imperfect brick of a nearby restaurant. Plants, hungry for sunlight, stretched up onto buildings using their facades as an armature to reach as high as they could. He knelt and caressed a divot in the road where time and transportation left a hole, now filled with water. A family of ducks bathed in it. They did not move in response to his presence, unaware of any danger he might impose. Rustling in a nearby tuft of grasses caught his attention, and he met the gaze of a coyote. The architect walked for several hours taking in the city he once despised. Everything felt raw and unpredictable.

Suddenly, like an arrow to the heart, the architect knew what Clara Futura was missing. The inhabitants of the real city were living virtual lives inside a non-space. They were gone, and along with them went their memories. A metropolis is meant to be a collection of stories that tell how the city was born, how we lived our lives, and the dreams for our future. When the artisan worked their steel, orbital sander vibrating in powerful motions, their hands created a precious touch only a maker could leave. The scar of work and sweat. The mark of care. Each blemish bearing unimaginable and unique beauty. In his search for perfection, the architect fell in love with a fantasy that was devoid of memories and scars. Clara Futura would never rival the splendor of reality, because a string of code can't replicate the sensation of living. □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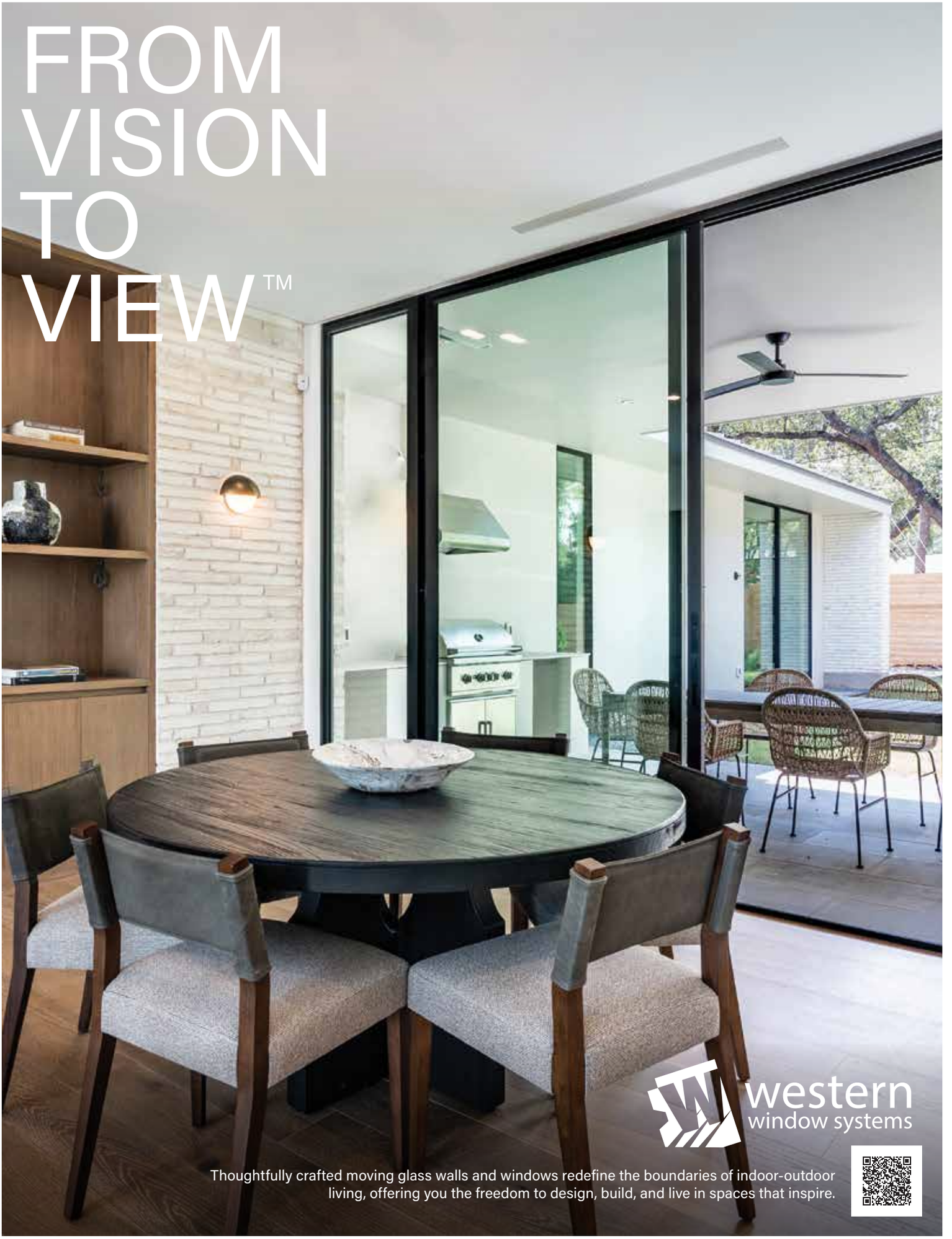
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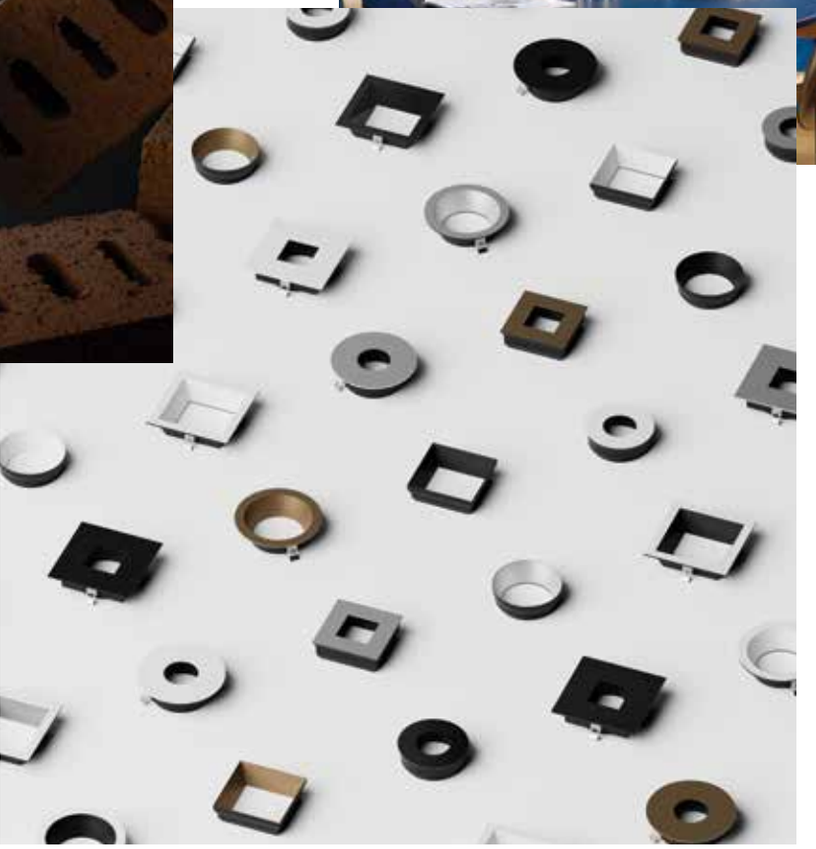


OG BRICK LIGHT
Omar Gandhi Architects
omargandhi.com/og-brick

Originally conceived for architect Omar Gandhi's own residence, the OG Brick Light can seamlessly integrate light into the fabric of a masonry wall. The dimmable light comes with a bronze finish that blends into a textured, buff brick wall in a traditional common bond pattern. Available in two sizes—single-width and double-width—the OG Brick Light is designed for both interior and exterior applications. Encased in metal and protected by a delicate mesh, the fixture softly diffuses light, casting a subtle vanishing effect during daylight hours and a warm glow at night.

PHOTO BY GWENAEL LEWIS.

KETRA D2 AND RANIA D2 DOWNLIGHTS
Lutron
lutron.com

Ketra and Rania architectural downlights are now available in a new 2-inch aperture. Both the Ketra D2 and Rania D2 work seamlessly with Lutron's premium lighting controls and shades to create personalized spaces and are wirelessly controlled, reducing the space needed for panels. The Ketra D2 comes in a variety of trims, colors, and ultra-slim housings ideal for maximizing ceiling heights, while Rania replicates natural white light via a breakthrough three-channel emitter.

CLEAR COIL COLLECTION
LightArt
lightart.com

The Clear Coil Collection is the industry's first set of optically clear, 3D-printed fixtures that harness molecular recycling technology to upcycle discarded materials like carpet fibers, dense plastic containers, and packaging into six pendant shapes. Compared to the traditional mechanical recycling process, which is limited to specific sources of plastic waste that can be recycled a finite number of times, molecular recycling can break down a much broader range of waste an infinite number of times. The Coil Collection Take Back Program supports the company's closed-loop system, encouraging customers to return their Coil fixtures at the end of their lifecycles.

MUSHLUME LIGHTING
The Terrace Collection
mushlumelighting.com

Available in versions that expand outward and inward, the Terrace sconce collection of UL-certified incandescent surface-mounted luminaires is an homage to the natural beauty of terraced landscapes. Handcrafted in Brooklyn, NY, this bio-fabricated lighting collection is grown, not manufactured, from hemp combined with rapidly renewable mycelium. In just a few days, the mycelium cultivates a thick network of hyphae that binds to the hemp substrate, solidifying into a solid structure within the custom lampshade molds. After the mycelium has fully matured, the lampshades are demolded, dried, and heated, creating a stable, inert, and 100% biodegradable product.

DEAD CITY COLLECTION
Mutuus Studio
mutuus-studio.com

Seattle-based multidisciplinary practice Mutuus Studio, along with their in-house fabrication shop, Mutuus Made, has released their first line of lighting fixtures. Inspired by Mutuus partner and artist Saul Becker's landscape paintings and sculptures, the lights in the Dead City Collection offer a timeless ambient glow for residential or commercial spaces. Each fixture is handmade with linen micarta and brass and references a lost city: Dead City Pendants (available in two sizes), Petra Sconce, Tikal Armed Sconce, and the half-round Daro Sconce. The lights are UL Listed for dry locations only.

WOODEN LIGHTING PANELS
Form at Wood
formatwood.com

Any of Form at Wood's wooden panels, no matter the shape, can be transformed into a light fixture with the addition of an integrated lighting system. The edges of the illuminated panels are equipped with an advanced LED strip that softly illuminates the surrounding panels, creating a 3D geometric visual effect. Controlled via remote or a smartphone app, the panels feature built-in lighting effects and mood modes, an adjustable light color range from 2700K to 6500K, and smooth light intensity adjustment up to 1300 lumens.

MARCH

SATURDAY 1

EVENT
AIA Fort Worth Awards Ceremony
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
aiafw.org

MONDAY 3

LECTURE
Rice Architecture Lecture Series Presents Salvador Macías, Magui Peredo, and Diego Quirarte: El Papel de los Proyectos
Rice School of Architecture
Farish Gallery, MD Anderson Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

LECTURE
UTSOA Lecture Series Presents Ananya Roy of UCLA
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture
Goldsmith Lecture Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING
Is Housing Still Housing?
University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design
Mashburn Gallery + Architecture Theater4200 Elgin St.
Houston
uh.edu

FRIDAY 7

EVENT
Rice Architecture Symposium: *Fiber Futures*
Rice School of Architecture
Farish Gallery, MD Anderson Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

SATURDAY 8

EVENT
ALNY x HOU: An Intergenerational Conversation
Rice School of Architecture
Farish Gallery, MD Anderson Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

SUNDAY 9

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Mónica de Miranda: Path to the Stars
Blanton Museum of Art
200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Austin
blantonmuseum.org

Artist Mónica de Miranda's video explores the legacy of anti-colonial resistance in Angola. It follows a protagonist from dawn to dusk as she journeys down the Kwanza River. Past, present, and future bleed together through various scenes and characters connected to the river. The poetic journey is situated in a space of imagination and liberation that is at once real and utopian.

MÓNICA DE MIRANDA, PATH TO THE STARS (STILL), 2022, HD VIDEO (PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SABRINA AMRANI GALLERY)

WEDNESDAY 12

LECTURE
Book Talk: *Inverse Utopia*
Rice School of Architecture
Faculty Atelier, William T. Cannady Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

SATURDAY 15

EXHIBITION OPENING
Feeling Color: Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
themodern.org

FRIDAY 21

EXHIBITION OPENING
What Drawing Can Be: Four Responses
Menil Drawing Institute
1412 W. Main St.
Houston
menil.org

SUNDAY 23

EXHIBITION CLOSING
teamLab: The World of Irreversible Change
San Antonio Museum of Art
200 W. Jones Ave.
San Antonio
samuseum.org

MONDAY 24

LECTURE
UTSOA Lecture Series Presents Wyatt Armstrong of Architecture Workshop
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture , Goldsmith Lecture Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

WEDNESDAY 26

EVENT
***Is Housing Still Housing?* Symposium I**
University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design
Mashburn Gallery + Architecture
4200 Elgin St.
Houston
uh.edu

FRIDAY 28

EVENT
Gulf Coast Green—Symbiotic Resilience: Building Better Growth
TMC Helix Park
7255 Helix Park Ave.
Houston
aiahouston.org

SUNDAY 30

EXHIBITION OPENING
Modern Art and Politics in Germany 1910–1945
Kimbell Art Museum
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

MONDAY 31

LECTURE
UTSOA Lecture Series Presents Eric Bunge of nARCHITECTS
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture
Goldsmith Lecture Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

LECTURE
UH Architecture Lecture Series Presents Gabriella Carillo of Colectivo C733
University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design, Architecture Theater
4200 Elgin St.
Houston
uh.edu

APRIL

WEDNESDAY 2

LECTURE
UTSOA Lecture Series Presents Shannon Nichol of GGN
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture
Goldsmith Lecture Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

FRIDAY 4 – SUNDAY 6

EVENT
Symposium: *Art in Context--Art, Architecture, and the Middle Landscape*
The Chinati Foundation
1 Cavalry Row
Marfa
arch.rice.edu

MONDAY 7

LECTURE
UTSOA Lecture Series Presents Brigitte Shim of Shim-Sutcliffe Architects
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture , Goldsmith Lecture Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

WEDNESDAY 9

LECTURE
Rice Architecture Lecture Series Presents Vanessa Grossman: Design as Ontology: The Constructed Geographies of Paulo Mendes da Rocha
Rice School of Architecture
Faculty Atelier, William T. Cannady Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

Architect, historian, and curator Vanessa Grossman reflects on the expansive contributions of Paulo Mendes da Rocha, a luminary of modern architecture whose legacy is housed at Portugal's Casa da Arquitectura. Her lecture draws from the acclaimed exhibition and catalogue *Construction Geographies: Paulo Mendes da Rocha* (May 2023–September 2024).

PHOTO COURTESY RICE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

EVENT
***Is Housing Still Housing?* Symposium II**
University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design
Mashburn Gallery + Architecture Theater
4200 Elgin St.
Houston
uh.edu

FRIDAY 11

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Jaguar Lens
University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture
Mebane Gallery at Goldsmith Hall
310 Inner Campus Dr.
Austin
soa.utexas.edu

SUNDAY 13

EXHIBITION CLOSING
When You See Me: Visibility in Contemporary Art/History
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood
Dallas
dma.org

MONDAY 14

LECTURE
Rice Architecture Lecture Series Presents Konstantin Grcic: Man Machine: My Story About Human-Tech Creativity
MATCH—Midtown Arts and Theater Center
3400 Main St.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

In this keynote lecture, Konstantin Grcic will trace the arc of his celebrated design career, which began in the 1990s and evolved alongside the rapid transformation of tools and technologies. Grcic will share personal reflections on the transition from analog methods to the digital revolution, from a time before CAD and the internet to the advent of 3D printing and generative AI. Framing design as both a practice and a response to sociopolitical realities, he will explore the challenges and opportunities of creative work in an increasingly complex technological and cultural landscape.

PHOTO COURTESY RICE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

SATURDAY 19

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Tacita Dean: Blind Folly
The Menil Collection
1533 Sul Ross St.
Houston
menil.org

The first major museum survey in the US of work by British European visual artist Tacita Dean (b. 1965), this exhibition spotlights her career-defining approach to creating art through unmediated and chance-based drawing processes across a variety of mediums. The show's title reflects Dean's desire to let the behavior of her mediums dictate the results of her work.

TACITA DEAN, *BEAUTY*, 2006. GOUACHE ON BLACK AND WHITE FIBRE-BASED PHOTOGRAPH MOUNTED ON PAPER, 141 × 147 IN. (358.1 × 373.4 CM). SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART; PURCHASE THROUGH A GIFT OF RAOUL KENNEDY IN MEMORY OF PATRICIA A. KENNEDY. © TACITA DEAN. PHOTO: TENARI TUATAGALOA

THURSDAY 24

LECTURE
Rice Architecture Lecture Series Presents Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi: Architecture of Migration: The Dadaab Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Settlement
Rice University Humanities Building
College Way
Houston
arch.rice.edu

MONDAY 28

Rice Architecture Lecture Series Presents Lorenzo Ciccarelli: Renzo Piano, Dominique de Menil, and the Artifice of Intimacy
Rice University School of Architecture
Faculty Atelier at William T. Cannady Hall
Loop Rd.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

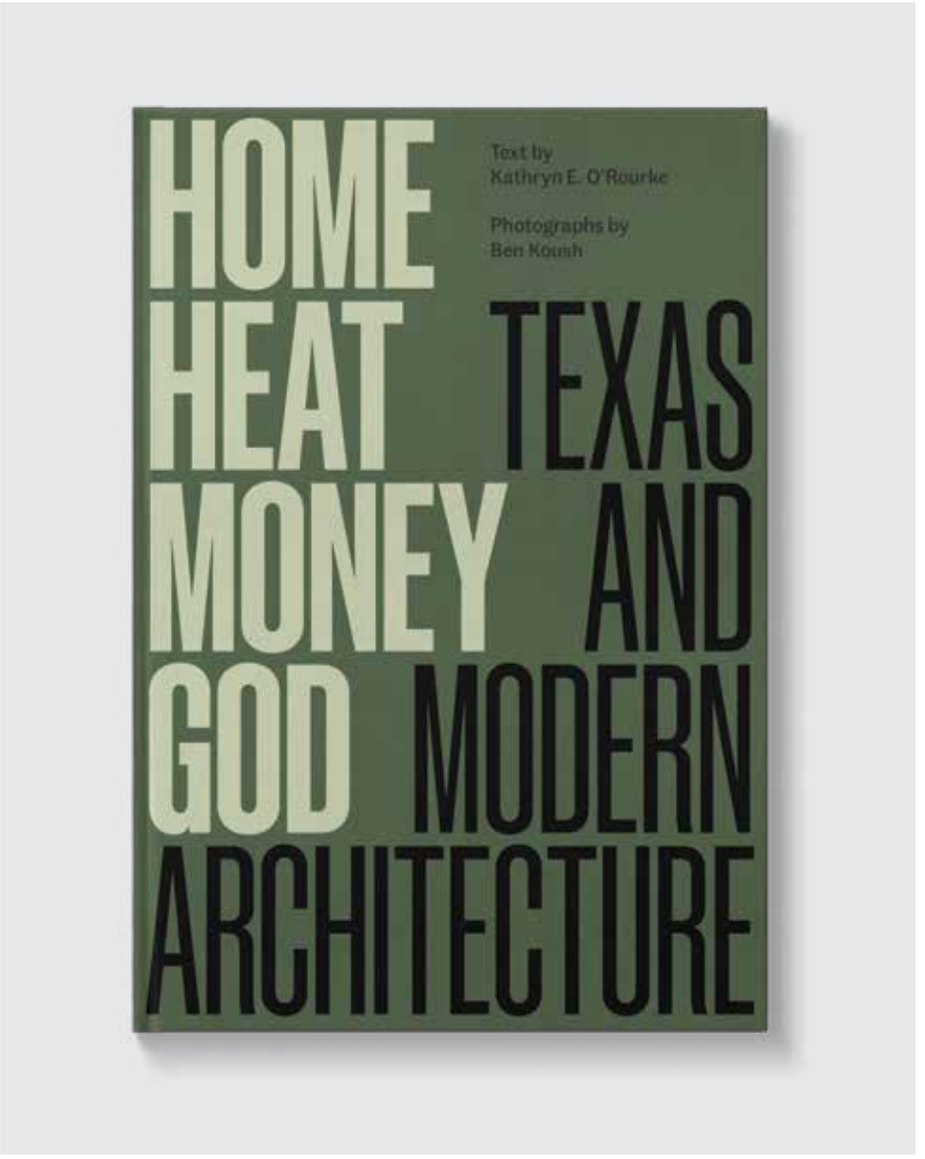
To submit calendar items for consideration, email event details and/or a link to more information to communications@texasarchitects.org.

TEXAS MODERNISM REVEALED

Home, Heat, Money, God: Texas and Modern Architecture

Text by Kathryn E. O'Rourke
Photographs by Ben Koush
University of Texas Press, 2024

Words by COLE VON FELDT, ASSOC. AIA

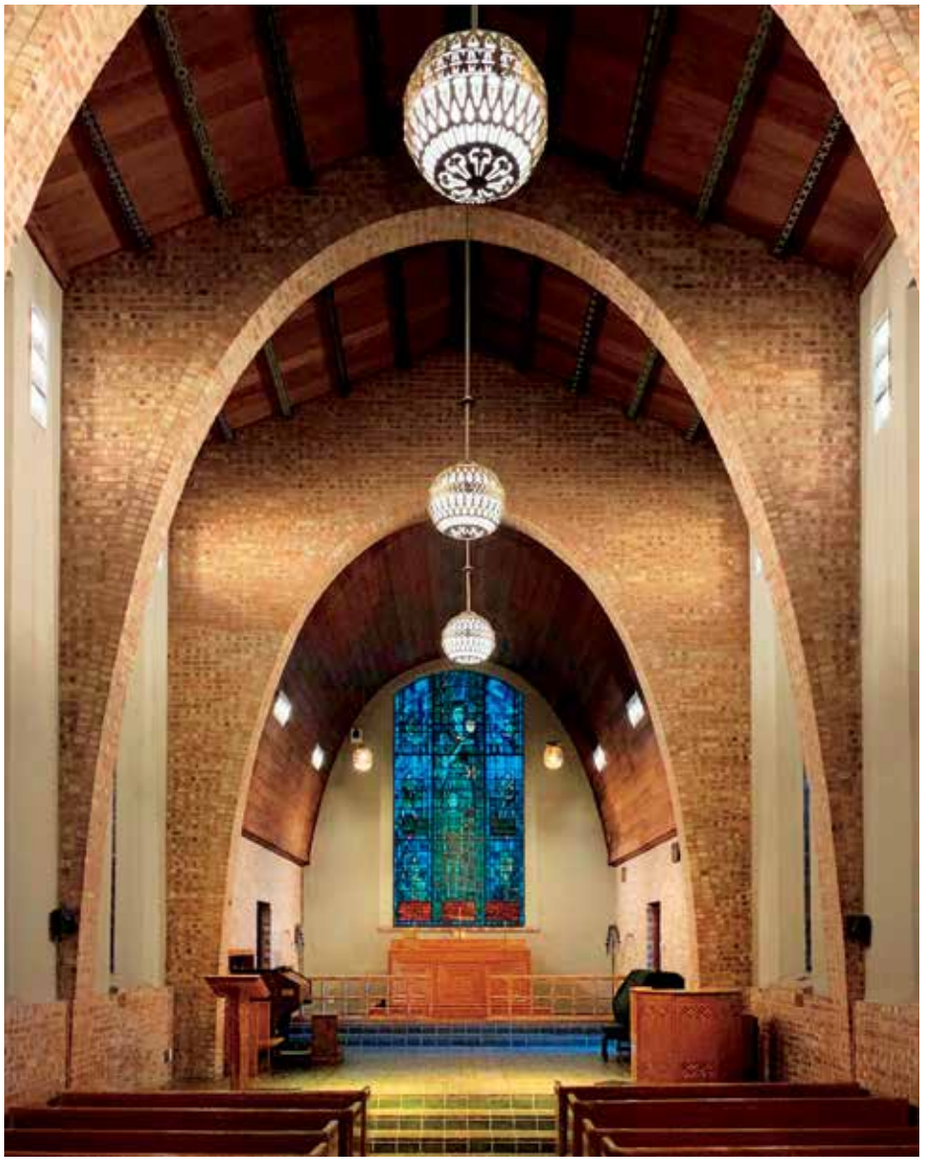


To an outsider it might seem that the state's tenets are reflected in the title of architectural historian Kathryn O'Rourke's latest book, *Home, Heat, Money, God*—a collaboration with Houston-based architect and photographer Ben Koush. Yet despite the catchy title, O'Rourke reveals a deeper truth over the course of 400 pages, highlighting 12 distinct typologies of Texas architecture in the context of their local and regional roots. Koush's photographs add depth and context to the narrative.

O'Rourke details the importance of Texas's modern architecture, cementing its vastness and significance in the discussion of modernism in the US, which is most commonly associated with Southern California and Florida. The buildings discussed are grounded in their specific temporal, social, political, and environmental contexts and in their long-lasting influence on regional design culture. Many regional architects make multiple appearances, including the ever-influential Texas modernist master O'Neil Ford, FAIA, and the state's first Black registered architect John S. Chase, FAIA. Philip Johnson, FAIA, and Paul Rudolph, FAIA, are also routinely referenced for their contributions to the Lone Star State's architectural landscape.

The book's first chapter, "Home," discusses housing of all types, with a particular emphasis on the importance of the single-family residence as the historic nucleus of Texas society that evolved into a place for hosting and entertainment. In the following chapter, "Heat," which also focuses primarily on residential architecture, brise-soleils, louvers, and other sun-mitigating devices are discussed as near necessities due the state's hot climate.

Gears shift to a broader corporate and commercial design discussion in "Money." This chapter showcases banks and office buildings whose erection is a direct result of the industry most synonymous with 20th-century Texas: oil. Of note are Lubbock's Great Plains Life Insurance Company skyscraper and First National Pioneer Building, which stand sparsely amongst the arid West Texas landscape. Questionable, however, are comparisons of these two buildings with their far more elegant and superior East Coast predecessors: the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society and United Nations Secretariat Building. In a deviation from the highrise typologies, O'Rourke highlights William Lescaze's



↑ Little Chapel in the Woods, located in Denton and designed by O'Neil Ford and Arch B. Swank, Jr, 1939. The chandeliers, pews, pulpit, altar, and stained glass windows were designed by an all-woman student cohort.

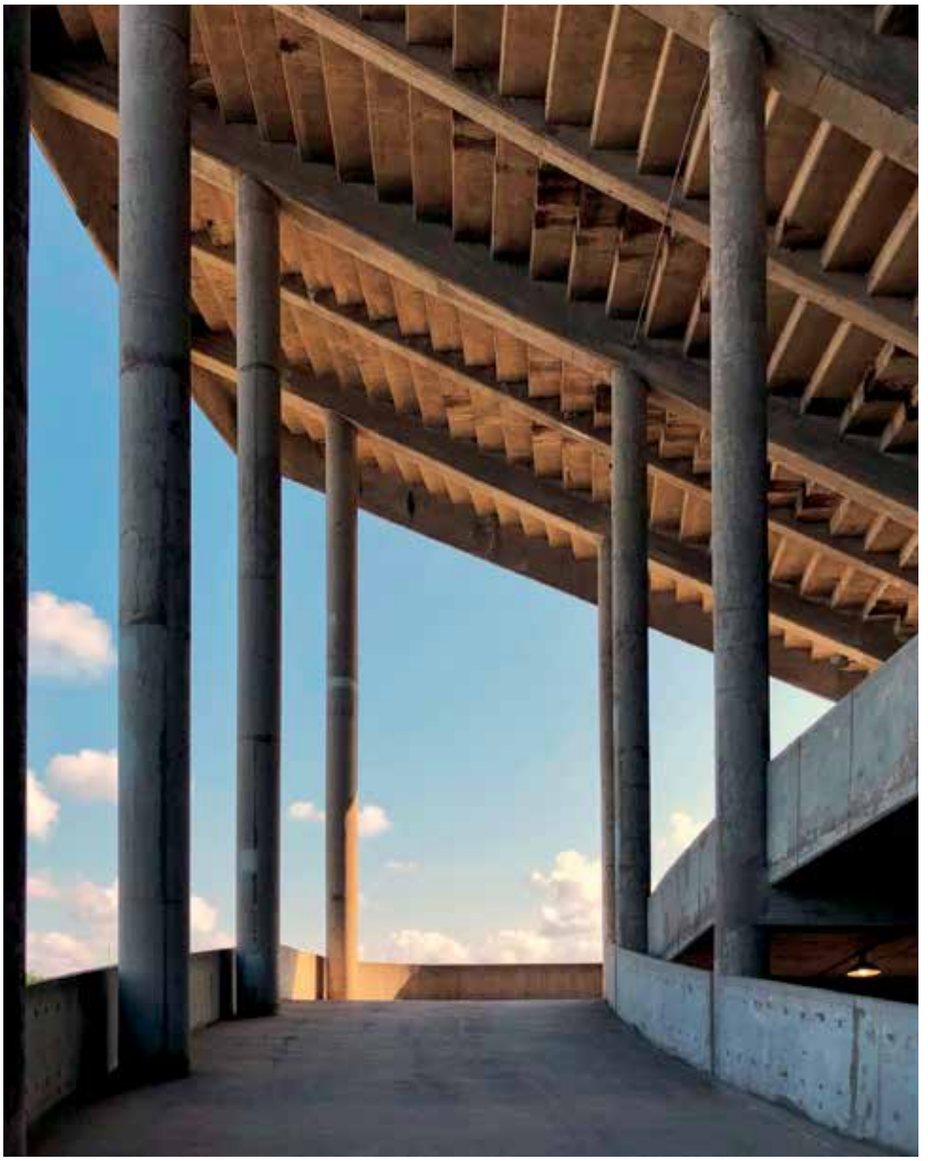
← Rothko Chapel, located in Houston and designed by Philip Johnson, Howard Barnstone, and Eugene Aubrey, 1971. Barnett Newman's sculpture *Broken Obelisk* sits in the reflecting pool in the foreground.

geometrically elegant two-story Magnolia Lounge in Dallas's Fair Park. While not an office tower or bank, the pavilion—designed for the Texas Centennial Exposition in 1936—was a direct result the oil boom, as it was commissioned and funded by the Magnolia Petroleum Company.

The presence and influence of religion in Texas fittingly warrants its own chapter: "God." Christianity's stronghold in the state is well documented; however, the willingness of universities to indulge in experimental architecture for campus chapels is not. While Houston's equally famous Rothko Chapel and Rice Memorial Chapel are spoken of at length, O'Rourke's special admiration for the Little Chapel in the Woods cannot be overlooked. The author describes O'Neil Ford's chapel, which is located on the campus of Texas Woman's University in Denton, as "one of Texas's greatest buildings" due to it being "one of the finest examples anywhere of the entwined effects of the Arts and Crafts movement and industrialization on modern architecture."

Another chapter examines the importance of sports and leisure spaces, both of which blossomed in mid-20th-century America. Mentions of the Joan Means Khabele Bathhouse at Barton Springs Pool in Austin and Whataburger's famous A-frame structures join cinemas, ballrooms, and private clubhouses in the discussion of where Texans spent their leisure time. Sports stadiums—a sacred building typology in our football-crazed state—are detailed, including as the backdrop for President John F. Kennedy's famous "We choose to go to the Moon" speech, delivered a year before his death in another Texas city, at the Rice University Football Stadium. No discussion of sports in Texas would be complete, however, without inclusion of the Astrodome—the world's first air-conditioned sports stadium—and O'Rourke and Koush appropriately dedicate more text and imagery to that building than nearly any other project within the book.

In the book's conclusion, in an essay aptly titled "What We Save and Why," O'Rourke discusses the urgency of preservation and adaptive reuse of buildings in the wake of a deteriorating climate. The final building chronicled in the book is the former Brazos River Authority Headquarters. Home of the first such agency in the country responsible for managing an entire river basin, the building now serves as the office of the Waco Housing Authority and Affiliates. It is fitting that a building created for an organization dedicated to preserving the environment would not be demolished but instead be repurposed to address another equally pressing social concern .



↑ Rice Football Stadium, located in Houston and designed by Lloyd and Morgan with Milton McGinty, 1950. The humble, symmetrical concrete stadium was profound when it was built.

← The Astrodome, located in Houston and designed by Lloyd, Morgan and Jones and Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, 1965. The famous rainbow seats have sat empty since the Astros moved into a new stadium downtown in 2000.

Home, Heat, Money, God is crisp and meaningful, endearing and reflective, sobering and superb. O'Rourke's writing is grounded in sharp analytical commentary of the built environment and the forces behind its construction, embodying forthright objectivity. In one instance, she takes aim at 20th-century greed using Midland, and West Texas in general, as an example:

"Skyscrapers shoot up suddenly from the almost incomprehensible flatness of fields of oil and cotton, against expansive skies, and yet in a hauntingly frank relationship with the earth below, whose pillage and destruction they were built to support and by which they are sustained."

O'Rourke's brutal honesty and candor are not only appreciated but warranted and necessary as an analysis of architecture, its connection to the people it serves, and the environment from which it emerges. She also champions the importance of photography for architects and historians alike, noting that "photography bolsters architects' careers, and architectural historians' selections and judgements of their subjects can be shaped by photographs."

It is no surprise that the major cities have the most representation: Houston dominates with 40 projects while Dallas comes in second with 22. The discussion flows nicely to smaller cities throughout the state, including Van Horn, Fredericksburg, and McAllen. Likewise, handsome images from these more remote regions speak to Koush's extraordinary photographic efforts—and sense of urgency—to create a larger record of the architectural heritage across the state before future demolitions.

Commendably, O'Rourke does not shy away from topics of segregation and immigration. She discusses the user experience of Black and Mexican Texans differing from that of their white counterparts and highlights the significance of many architectural marvels built explicitly for minority groups, particularly as social and religious spaces. Likewise, there is appreciated discussion of the influences of Mexican architects Félix Candela and Juan O'Gorman, given the boundless presence that the neighboring country has on the state. Equal emphasis is given to the world-class art museums in Texas, which are often overlooked on a national scale. Surprisingly, though, apart from the discussion of the Astrodome and Rice Football Stadium, there is an unfortunate lack of athletic facility architecture depicted, considering how the state is famously known for its intense sports spectatorship. I also wish that certain buildings mentioned were accompanied by photographs, notably San Angelo City Hall and Austin's J.J. Pickle Federal Building, which O'Rourke writes about with much fervor.

← Brazos River Authority Headquarters, located in Waco and designed by Robert S. Bennett, 1960. The hexagonal honeycomb solar screen contrasts pleasantly with the elongated form.

↙ Great Plains Life Insurance Company, located in Lubbock and designed by David S. Castle, 1955. The tower emerges from the landscape out of scale from its surrounding context.

At its core, *Home, Heat, Money, God* is a well-timed catalogue of Texas modernism. As many buildings throughout the state become outdated, fall into disrepair, and are threatened with demolition by local municipalities, O'Rourke and Koush's contribution cements the architectural, historical, and contextual importance of modernist designs within the state.

For Texas architects, designers, or historians, this book holds the potential to be deeply personal. For me, it brings back countless memories: many drives past the now-demolished American Bank in Bellmead on I-35, numerous walks past the Rio House Apartments in Austin during my time as a student, and frequent studies of Houston City Hall at both its ground-level promenade and from the window of an adjacent skyscraper during my years in the Gulf Coast. As I read, my personal experiences with many of the buildings discussed inspired a constant nostalgia and appreciation for the state's strong architectural heritage. *Home, Heat, Money, God* deepened my connection to these buildings and their histories, and will no doubt spark similar introspection amongst fellow Texas-centric designers.

O'Rourke and Koush created a magnificent book which, thanks to its cataloguing nature, is a rich chronicle and call to save modernism in Texas. □

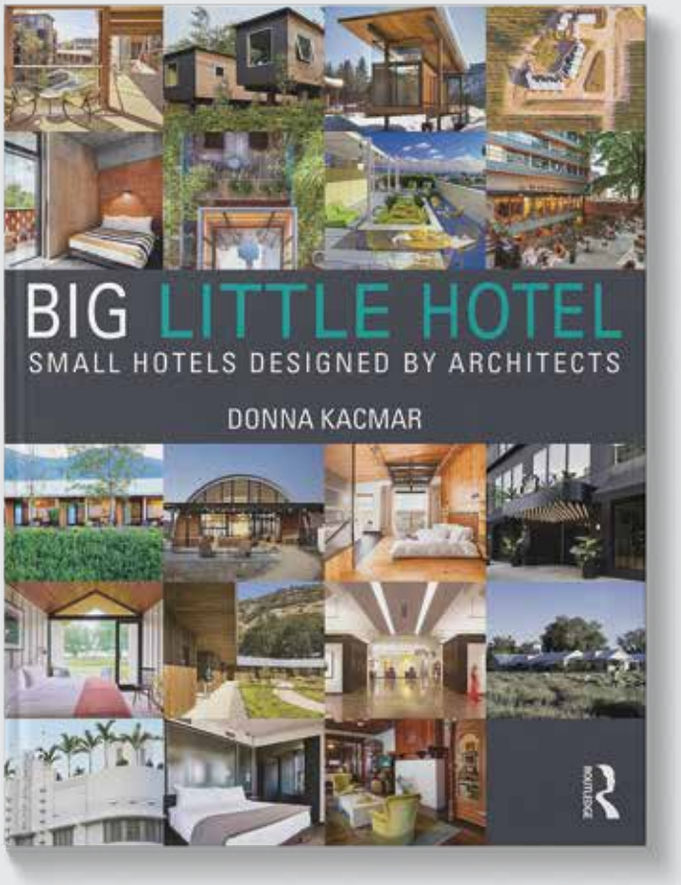
Cole Von Feldt, Assoc. AIA, is a designer, photographer, and writer educated in Austin and Copenhagen and trained in New York and Houston. He currently lives and works in New York.

HOW TO DEAL WITH STRANGERS

Big Little Hotel: Small Hotels Designed by Architects

Donna Kacmar, FAIA
Routledge, 2023

Words by CHRISTOPHER FERGUSON



There is a terrific nostalgia in recalling the humid, chlorinated air of an indoor swimming pool from a childhood family vacation. Years later, it may still arouse feelings of excitement, anxiety, or adventure, a sensory bookmark deeply informed by the experience of a transitory time and place.

That deep, emotional potency, as described by Donna Kacmar, FAIA, in the preface of *Big Little Hotel: Small Hotels Designed by Architects*, is an ephemeral trait that helps make hospitality architecture a uniquely compelling typology of building.

The book, taut and well-researched, charts the rise and evolution of hotels in the United States as a catalyst for social and technological change, as well as a response to shifting economic dynamics driven by an emergent middle class that created demand for new methods of accommodation.

Of particular focus is a sensitivity to projects that respond directly to their unique locale and an emphasis on projects with smaller footprints in general. That approach builds upon Kacmar's previous book, *Big Little House: Small Houses Designed by Architects*, published in 2015, also by Routledge, which looked at how residential architects approached issues of material, light, space, and enclosure at scales of efficiency.

In its first pages, *Big Little Hotel* aims to establish a historical context that serves to place today's contemporary works within the complex and overlapping churn of centuries of societal progress. Kacmar opens the section by quoting an essay by Julian Pitt-Rivers framing the concept of hospitality as "the problem of how to deal with strangers."

Fundamentally, the architecture of hotels exists in service to the reciprocal rituals of hosting and being someone's guest. That trust-based relationship transcends variances in time period, culture, geography, technology, and economy, yet the confluence of these elements often reveals much about the priorities of those offering and receiving accommodation. In this way, hospitality architecture can be perceived as a mirror of society itself.

Kacmar's exploration goes beyond the aesthetic and functional aspects of buildings; she investigates the philosophical underpinnings of the typology as a whole, discussing how hotels have historically acted as microcosms of technological advancement and social change—from the advent of electricity, elevators, telephones, the personal automobile, and air conditioning to the rise of digital connectivity and sustainability. The book posits that hotels are not just passive structures but active participants in shaping both cultural narratives and economic landscapes.

→ Viewed from the main pool deck, the Carpenter Hotel's industrial roots resonate in exposed concrete, raw wood, and terra-cotta masonry, all tucked beneath mature pecan trees and dappled light.

PHOTO BY CHASE DANIEL

↓ Drawing inspiration from Austin's 1970s lakeside culture, Lake|Flato's indulgent outdoor spaces at Hotel Magdalena feature deep, open-air walkways, lush courtyards, and abundant natural light.

PHOTO BY CASEY DUNN

Kacmar's research is presented with clear, measured prose and complemented by commentary on current trends influencing boutique hotel design today. She addresses the growing demand for individualized experiences, the impact of globalization on local identities, and the increasing importance of sustainable practices.

Additionally, she explores the uncertain future of the industry, as global corporate consolidation further removes the guest from his or her relationship to a host at a time when app-based direct rental services, such as Airbnb and Vrbo, seek to reestablish that perception of intimacy under new service models.

Through these discussions, the book invites architects and designers to consider how their work can contribute to a more thoughtful and interconnected world, while simultaneously opening that world to architecture and travel enthusiasts at large through a curated collection of 19 contemporary case studies, presented via indulgent, image-heavy spreads and featuring the work of the country's top architects and architectural photographers.

The case studies, which comprise the majority of the publication's page volume, offer more than a cursory glance at many artful interior spaces. Through a varied project selection that spans both coasts, the Midwest, and the South, Kacmar summarizes the architecture through the lens of the owners and architects who brought each project to fruition. Novel details are not simply called out; they are helpfully contextualized by the book's emphasis on the history of hospitality, presented up front.

Two projects in Texas are featured, both well known and located in Austin.

Hotel Magdalena, by Lake|Flato Architects, leads the section of case studies and is distinguished by its embrace of mass timber construction—one of the first hotels in North America to do so. The design pays homage to Austin's lakeside culture of the '70s, blending indoor and outdoor spaces with open-air walkways, lush courtyards, and abundant natural light.

The Carpenter Hotel, designed by Specht Architects, is celebrated for its adaptive reuse of a 1940s carpenters' union hall, cleverly retaining much of the original building's industrial character through expression of exposed concrete, raw wood, and locally sourced terra cotta masonry from D'Hanis, Texas. Set amidst mature pecan trees, the hotel unites a minimalist indoor aesthetic with verdant outdoor spaces, exemplifying sustainable urban development in Austin.

Taken as a whole, the book succeeds in presenting an array of complex themes that feel accessible to both architects and enthusiasts alike, avoiding the trap of oversimplification while maintaining an abundance of generous, well-curated photography and drawings. □

Christopher Ferguson is an architect, photographer, and writer who has lived in Austin since 2008.

THE COMPLEXITY OF PEI

I. M. Pei: Life Is Architecture

M+ Museum, Hong Kong

by Ben Parker, AIA

1963 was a bad year for Dallas. After JFK and Governor John Connally were shot on Elm Street, and the president's assassin shot in the basement of city hall days later, new mayor Erik Jonsson needed to turn around the city's hated image. He declared a raft of "Goals for Dallas," including construction of a new city hall. When it came time to choose an architect for this landmark, what better olive branch than to select the rising star whom Jackie Kennedy had already picked to design Jack's memorial library?

Such was I. M. Pei's entrée into Texas, where he would go on to design eight buildings, mostly during the booming growth of Dallas and Houston in the '70s and '80s. Nevertheless, Pei's Texas oeuvre forms a minor part of his overall legacy, at least as told by the retrospective recently on view at the M+ Museum in Hong Kong (completed by Herzog & de Meuron and Farrells in 2021 and itself worth a visit). This expansive exhibit traces Pei's eight decades of practice through a rich variety of media, adding texture to a life some may know only from one or two museums.

For Pei superfans and casual museumgoers, the exhibit plays through the greatest hits: the architect's winning persistence in the epic "battle of the Louvre," his mingling with presidents and dignitaries, and his homecoming to China through the Fragrant Hill Hotel and the Suzhou Museum. For visitors that come cautious of Pei's legacy—associated, however tenuously, with urban renewal, construction issues, formal rigidity, or undue focus on a solitary hero architect—there are challenges to any easy dismissal. In particular, Pei's sensitivity to nature and culture were ahead of their time and are deserving of closer study by scholars and practitioners today.

The design of the exhibit is quasi-chronological, moving through six themes that begin with Pei's formative years in China and Massachusetts. Here, the space is compressed and the walls are black, suggesting the mists of the past and the protean depths of origin. In the next theme, "Real Estate and Urban Development," the walls are grey, coding his early work for developer William Zeckendorf as an incubation period. Then, after a knife-edged turn, the room erupts in light and space. The walls are bright white, and the remaining themes of art, patronage, innovation, and history wind around Pei's pyramidal Louvre extension as a centerpiece. The borrowed views, triangular geometries, and crisp alignments of the exhibit are cues deftly taken from the architect's own work. The message is that Pei—and you—have arrived.

Within the six themes, some projects repeat. Pei's museum in Doha, Qatar, shows up under "Reinterpreting History through Design" and also under "Art and Civic Form." Dallas City Hall first appears in "Power, Politics, and Patronage," then again around the corner in "Material and Structural Innovation." This repetition adds drag that a show this exhaustive should work to avoid, all the more because it is unnecessary. A host of projects are entirely absent from the exhibit, most conspicuously the Meyerson Symphony Center, Pei's best-known Texas work. Projects like Meyerson or the Javits convention center in New York could have been included to eliminate duplicates and further capture the breadth of Pei's incredible

↑ I. M. Pei with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and guests at Fragrant Hill Hotel's opening in 1982, Beijing, China

PHOTO COURTESY M+ MUSEUM

↑ View from the public promenade, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar

IMAGE COURTESY M+ MUSEUM

range of work, even if they are not his most lionized projects.

The repetition of projects is relieved by the cornucopia of media used to represent them. There are drop-dead gorgeous ink-on-vellum plans that will make any architect swoon. There are thumbnail sketches and construction details, historical models, newspaper clippings, and films. There are sculptures and paintings by artists with whom Pei collaborated. Most evocative are the scraps that bear traces of the man himself: a letter he wrote to his father while a student, an early sketch of the Luce Memorial Chapel, an index of historical precedents covered in annotations. While these, and a profile of the family retreat he designed in 1952, provide a small glimpse into his personal life, Pei's intimate character remains elusive, subordinate to the public Pei of magazines, documentaries, and papers (there is a breakout section just on "Pei in the News"). Dazzled by his celebrity, I found myself eager for more of the small details of his life: what he was like to work with, how his desk looked, what he kept in his pockets.

The exhibit commissioned new photographs of Pei's buildings around the world and worked with Hong Kong architecture students to build large models, many of unbuilt projects. Pulling Pei's legacy forward in this way was a curatorial masterstroke. The photographs connect the work to the present, igniting a conversation about permanence and change. Some of Pei's projects have aged poorly or been demolished, while others—mostly museums—are as pristine as the day they opened, anchors of permanence in changing cities. The student models, in turn, project Pei into futures both hypothetical (what if Grand Central Station had been demolished and replaced by a hyperboloid skyscraper?) and imminent (what architecture will these students, touched by Pei, go on to create in their own careers?).

These photographs and models imbue the show with vitality, addressing the challenge posed to any retrospective: why should we care, now? Pei's graduate thesis of nearly 80 years ago—an art museum for Shanghai—brought to life by two new models, would look at home in the portfolio of an up-and-coming Chinese firm today. Decades before the syntactical gymnastics of postmodernism, this thesis sought to find a design expression that was contemporary yet culturally specific. Even more electric is Pei's undergraduate thesis at MIT, a prototypical communications pavilion, made of bamboo, to be deployed in villages across a chaotic wartime China. This project is thoroughly documented in the exhibit, with original drawings, the written thesis text, and two huge models by students at Hong Kong University. It reveals a young I. M. Pei alive to urgent social issues, deeply concerned with context, exploring alternative materials, and eager to push architecture beyond its own comfort zone. In other words, he is much like the architecture students I meet today.

This shock of recognition, of finding the new in the old, is both triumphant and disquieting. How triumphant to discover Pei's prescience, his sensitivity to issues we often mistake as new, a vindication against critics who would dismiss Pei as too elite, too sterile, or too focused on form. Yet how disquieting to see time as a flat circle, to be reminded of the stubbornness of the world's problems and the limitations of architecture to fix them. When today's outstanding architecture students begin to receive prestigious commissions, will they be drawn away from the issues they wrestled with in school, to be absorbed by work on museums, office buildings, and private homes, leaving the world's intractable problems to the next crop of wide-eyed adolescents? How disquieting to be reminded that, likely, they will.

It is in fully unfolding the complexity of Pei's life, work, and legacy that "Life Is Architecture" reaps its greatest success. This is eloquently captured at the end of the show by Pei himself. After a whirlwind presentation of projects, decades, characters, and continents, there he is, projected onto a wall that is once again painted black, dressed as impeccably as always, sitting under a tree, and speaking directly to the camera: "You mean, [what's it like] to see one's own buildings? Mixed feelings!" Then you exit, the same way you came in. □

I. M. Pei: Life Is Architecture *will next tour to the Power Station of Art in Shanghai and Qatar Museums Gallery, Al Riwaq in Doha in 2025.*

Ben Parker, AIA, is an independent architect based in Guangzhou, China.

↑ Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, D.C.

IMAGE COURTESY M+ MUSEUM

↑ The exhibit as seen through the Expo '70 Taiwan Pavilion model by Hong Kong students

PHOTO BY BEN PARKER, AIA

NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT TOWER

SEE PAGE 46

LOCATION

Houston

CLIENT/CONTRACTOR

Skanska USA Commercial Development

ARCHITECT

BIG with Kendall/Heaton Associates

CONSULTANTS

INTERIOR ARCHITECT: Michael Hsu Office of Architecture

STRUCTURAL AND CIVIL ENGINEER: Walter P Moore

MEPFP ENGINEER: Wylie Engineering

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT OF RECORD: SWA Group

PARKING CONSULTANT: HWA Parking

VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION: Persohn/Hahn Associates

SUSTAINABILITY: NORESCO

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERS: Ulrich Engineers

EXTERIOR BUILDING ENCLOSURE: Morrison Hershfield

FACADE ACCESS: Lerch Bates

FITNESS CONSULTANT: The Risher Companies

ACOUSTICS CONSULTANT: Cerami & Associates

AV/IT/SECURITY CONSULTANT: HMA Consulting

GRAPHIC CONSULTANT: D|G Studios

LIGHTING CONSULTANT: Dot Dash

WIND AND REFLECTIVITY CONSULTANT: CPP Wind

LEED COMMISSIONING CONSULTANT: Cogent Commissioning

RESOURCES

CURTAIN WALL: Arrowall, VS1

PRE-CAST CONCRETE: Gate Precast

STOREFRONT: Kawneer

LOUVERS: CS Louvers

EXTERIOR PAVERS: Hanover

INTERIOR PAVERS: Formigari

INTERIOR STONE: American Stone

COPPER NICKEL AND DOUGLAS FIR VENEER: Dovetail

STATE BANK OF TEXAS

SEE PAGE 60

LOCATION

Irving

CLIENT

State Bank of Texas

ARCHITECT

Malone Maxwell Dennehy Architects

CONTRACTOR

Linbeck

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Stenstrom Schneider

MEP ENGINEER: V3 Consulting Engineers

CIVIL ENGINEER: Glenn Engineering

BUILDING ENVELOPE CONSULTANT: Curtainwall Design Consulting

AV CONSULTANT: Acuity

RESOURCES

EXTERIOR STONE CLADDING: Burlington Stone (J + E Commercial Construction)

ACM PANELS: Alucobond (KSC)

CUSTOM STEEL STAIR: Big D Metalworks

INTERIOR ALUMINUM DOORS AND WINDOWS: Frameworks (Dallas Door)

ALUMINUM ENTRANCES, STOREFRONT, AND CURTAINWALL: Kawneer (Denison Glass and Mirror)

ARCHITECTURAL WOOD DOORS: VT Architectural Wood Doors (Dallas Door)

ARCHITECTURAL MILLWORK: Brochsteins

INTERIOR ALUMINUM DOORS AND WINDOWS: Frameworks (Dallas Door)

ARCHITECTURAL WOOD DOORS: VT Architectural Wood Doors (Dallas Door)

INTERIOR STONE FLOORING: Burlington Stone (Sigma Marble & Granite)

CARRARA COUNTERTOPS: Sigma Marble & Granite

LIGHTING: Halo, Cooper, Poulson, Elemental LED, Gammalux, Neo Ray, Coronet, Moda, McGraw Edison, Metalux, Sure Lite, Quasar, Ligman, Efficient Tech, Moda Light (Texas Lighting)

PLUMBING FIXTURES: Sloan, Kohler, Axor, Elkay, Toto (Venture Mechanical)

GLASS RAILINGS: Viva Railings

ARCHITECTURAL MILLWORK: Brochsteins

CUSTOM RUGS: Scott Group

CUSTOM CONFERENCE TABLES: Solid Details

WORKSTATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DESKS: Knoll (GL Seaman & Company)

SEATING: Herman Miller

CINNAMON SHORE

SEE PAGE 78

LOCATION

Port Aransas

CLIENT

Sea Oats Group

URBAN PLANNER

Schnell Urban Design

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN FIRMS

VARIOUS INCLUDING: Davies Collaborative, Kissling Architecture, H Square Design, Dibello Architects, Kimmel Studio Architects, LK Design Group, Allison Ramsey Architects, Katheryn Lott Architects, Trademark Home Design, Blaire Austin Studio, Michael G Imber Architects, Board + Batten Architecture & Design

CONTRACTORS

VARIOUS INCLUDING: Seven Custom Homes, Surf Coastal Homes, Waggoner Custom Homes, El Arbol Custom Homes, Conner Coastal Homes, Lloyd Winston Homes, South Texas Home Builders, Seabreeze Construction, Sterling Creek Builders, Brandon Lafayette Homes

CONSULTANTS

CIVIL ENGINEER: Urban Engineering

RESOURCES

FACADE MATERIALS: James Hardie, Allura, Azek

METALS: Simpson Strong-Tie, Aluminum or SS Flashing

ROOFING: 100% Aluminum

WOODS, PLASTICS, AND COMPOSITES: Azek, Trex, Kiln-Dried Southern Pine

THERMAL & MOISTURE PROTECTION: Ice and Water Shield, Liquid Applied Membranes (LAMs) from Various Manufacturers, Self-Healing, Self-Sealing, Self-Repairing Roll Membranes from Various Manufacturers

PAVERS: Pavestone, Belgard

AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE: Hebel

PS1200

SEE PAGE 86

LOCATION

Fort Worth

CLIENT/CONTRACTOR

Prince Concepts

ARCHITECT

Marlon Blackwell Architects

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Datum Engineers

MEP ENGINEER: Root Engineering Services

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS: D.I.R.T. studio, Studio Outside

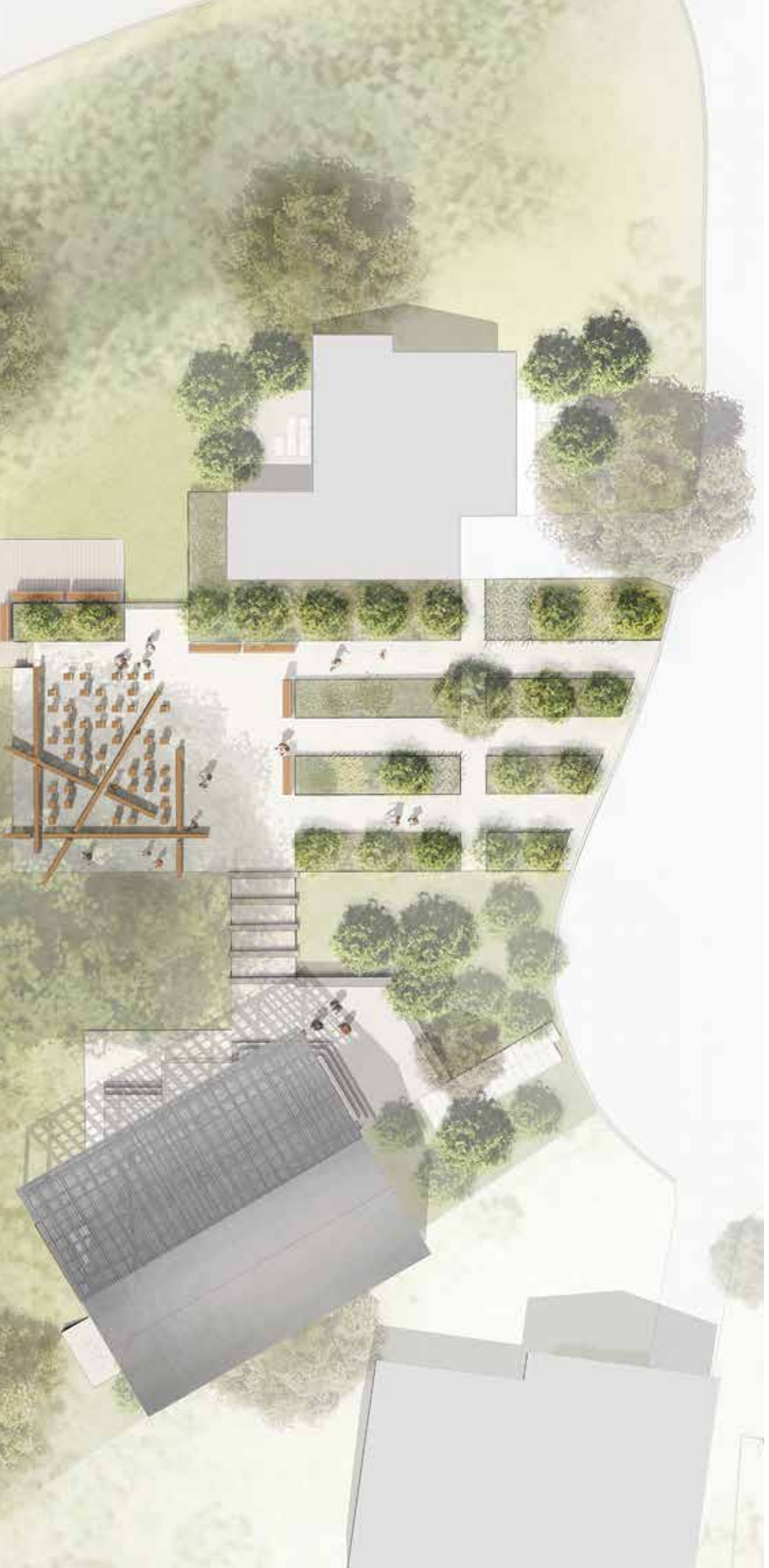
WATERPROOFING CONSULTANT: Exterior Consulting Innovations

RESOURCES

QUONSET HUTS: Steel Master

STOREFRONT: Commercial Storefronts Windows & Doors

AD INDEX



NEW GATHERING SPACE AT CASA MARIANELLA

Founded in 1986, Casa Marianella is an Austin nonprofit providing shelter and support for asylum-seeking refugees and other immigrants. Low Design Office (LowDO), FORGE Landscape Architecture, and Fort Structures have come together to design a new community dwelling, garden, and playscape for the organization's Posada Esperanza campus in East Austin.

Posada Esperanza serves women and children from countries across the Americas and Africa who have fled domestic or cultural violence. Its programs promote self-sufficiency by offering a temporary home and case management services to assist with schooling, employment, and adjusting to life in a new culture after an often-traumatic journey.

The architects at LowDO led a series of onsite engagement workshops that used visual cards and translators to facilitate conversations with staff and residents about their experiences and priorities for the design.

The result is a structure and landscape that tie together the four existing homes on the site by providing a much-needed, shared gathering space. Modest bedrooms upstairs will increase Posada's capacity, while an adaptable "great room" below will connect directly to an outdoor covered porch and landscape, maximizing opportunities for gathering and connecting while providing flexible areas for services and tutoring.

FORGE's landscape design includes a central community agroforestry garden featuring edible and medicinal plants identified by current residents as culturally desirable. Adjacent to the garden is a nature-based playscape to encourage creativity and exploration for children.

The design integrates multicultural elements throughout, striving to create a cost-effective building that can come to symbolize "home" for diverse groups of women and children. Shady overhangs, semi-conditioned spaces, and climate-resilient plantings all contribute to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the project, which is being funded by community donations and aims to break ground early this year. □

For more information, visit casamarianella.org.

THE HISTORIC

PHILLIPS FOREST PRODUCTS

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MILLED IN DE KALB, TEXAS

PROJECT: WERNERFIELD ARCHITECTS / CASA CAMPO

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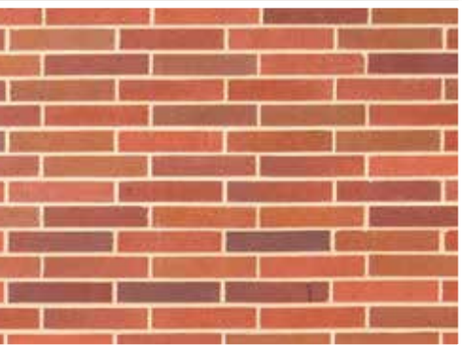
BRICK
INTERSTATE & GLEN-GERY BRICK
SPECIAL BLEND & MOCHA VELOUR

PROJECT
CENTRAL FIRE STATION
PROSPER, TEXAS

AWARD WINNER
Government/Institutional
GTA Honorable Mention
HM



MASON CONTRACTOR
Skinner Masonry, LLP

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Pogue Construction Co., LP

U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL MEMBER
Build Green, Build Better: Blackson Brick.

BLACKSON BRICK Co.