

Texas Architect





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Texas Architect

THE VOICE FOR TEXAS ARCHITECTURE

Texas Architect is the official publication of the Texas Society of Architects, the state component of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Texas Architect (ISSN: 0040-4179) is published five times a year by the Texas Society of Architects (1515 E. Cesar Chavez, Suite 220, Austin, Texas 78702). Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Texas Architect*, 1515 E. Cesar Chavez, Suite 220, Austin, Texas 78702.

Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright 2026 by the Texas Society of Architects.

WEBSITE

magazine.texasarchitects.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Visit website. Annual rates: US \$50, Students: \$40, International \$80.

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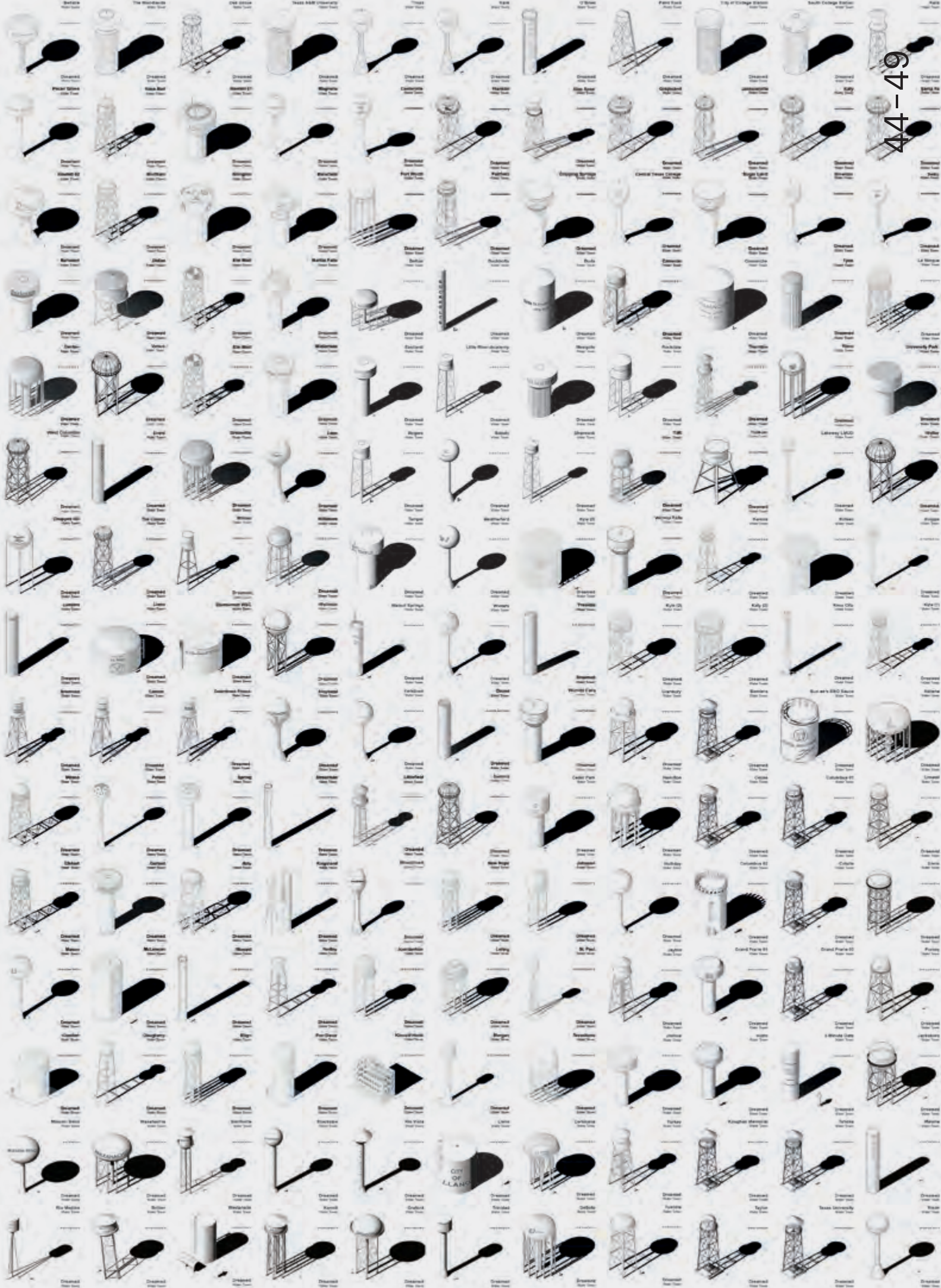
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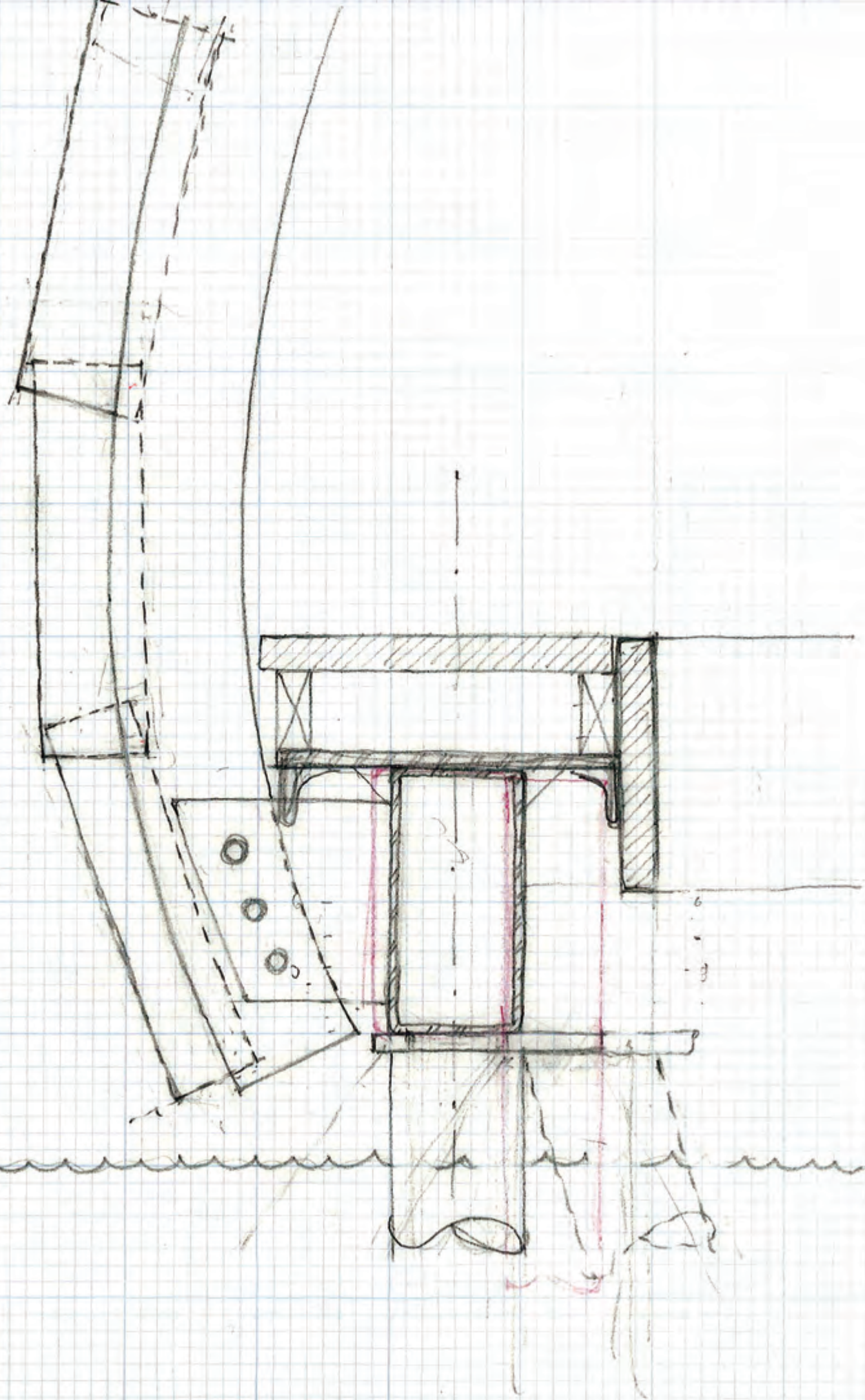
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- 18 **AT THE WATER'S EDGE**
Krystyn Haecker, AIA
- 18 **BUFFALO BAYOU EXPANDS EASTWARD WITH TURKEY BEND**
Murrye Bernard, AIA
- 20 **"DEFERRED MAINTENANCE" ENDANGERS CIVIC HERITAGE**
James Russell
- 22 **REMEMBERING PAUL KINNISON JR., FAIA**
Mike McGlone, FAIA
- 23 **O'NEIL FORD AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY, 75 YEARS LATER**
Lawrence Speck, FAIA
- 105-120 **DEPARTMENTS**
- 106 **VOICES**
Q&A WITH DAVID SELLERS, AIA
Mahnoor Fatima
- 110 **TOOLKIT**
THICK BUILT: THE WHY AND HOW OF A RAMMED EARTH ENCLOSURE
Lauren Stanley, AIA
- 112 **BOOK REVIEW**
URBAN SHORES: TOWARDS LANDSCAPE-BASED COASTAL ADAPTATION
Cole Von Feldt, Assoc. AIA
- 114 **PRODUCTS**
KITCHEN AND BATH
Rita Catinella Orrell
- 116 **CALENDAR**
- 118 **RESOURCES**
- 119 **AD INDEX**
- 120 **BACKPAGE**
OTTINE MINERAL SPRINGS

- 36 **RANCHO TOMA TRES**
SAN JOSÉ DEL CABO, MEXICO
Nyx Valerdy Marquez, AIA
- 44 **EMERGING WATER CONSERVATION POLICIES AND PLANNING IN TEXAS**
Jes Deaver, AIA
- 50 **DIFFUSE DOCK**
AUSTIN
Christopher Ferguson
- 56 **THE DATA ON DATA CENTERS**
Cameron Klepac, Assoc. AIA
- 62 **1 HOTEL**
HANALEI BAY
KAUA'I, HAWAII
Ben Parker, AIA, and Erin Voss

70

FLOATING BOX POOL PAVILION *WEST LAKE HILLS*

Abigail Thomas

76

WATER SHORTAGE IN THE COASTAL BEND

Texas Architect Contributor

82

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON RAD CENTER *HOUSTON*

Pooja Desai

90

ROCKPORT CENTER FOR THE ARTS *ROCKPORT*

Stephanie Aranda, Assoc. AIA

CONTRIBUTORS



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ON THE COVER

Diffuse Dock on Lake Austin, by Miró Rivera Architects.
Photo by Rafael Gamo.



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Dal Cucchiaio alla Città

Cabinetry as Social Infrastructure

Monna Italian Luxe

"Ars adeo latet arte sua." So completely does art lie hidden by its own art.

Ovid, Metamorphoses X, 252

In 1952, Milanese architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers articulated the principle that would define Italian design's singular ambition for the century that followed: dal cucchiaio alla città, from the spoon to the city. The proposition was not metaphorical. It was structural. The same intellectual rigor that governs the object governs the building. The same human purpose that shapes the room shapes the city block. Scale is not a variable. It is a constant.

A decade later, Joe Colombo, trained simultaneously at the Accademia di Brera and the Politecnico di Milano, gave that principle its most radical material expression. His 1963 monoblock kitchen system, awarded the Gold Medal at the XIII Milan Triennale in 1964 and today in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, proposed something the profession had not yet found language for: the kitchen as an autonomous object, independent of its architectural context, designed not for a room but for human behavior itself. Colombo called his broader vision Total Living Units. The name is precise. The unit does not serve the architecture. The architecture serves the unit.

This piece was born from that conviction, and then asked a new question: What if the object itself could move?

Within Monna's broader collection, cabinetry systems defined by adaptability, engineered to respond to any program, any footprint, any architectural language, this system occupies a categorically different position. It was not designed to configure. It was designed to perform.

The Milanese tradition has a term for a form this resolved: forma compiuta. But what distinguishes this system within that tradition is that resolution and motion coexist within the same object. The base is a pure parallelepiped, an uncompromising geometric volume that announces its presence with the authority of a sculptural installation. That volume is then divided into two counter-rotating blocks, each containing storage and appliances, each capable of fixing into position to present a different spatial configuration depending on the aesthetic of the space and the will of the user. A table surface, integrated into the upper block through a precise horizontal slot, slides on one axis and rotates on another, independently of the blocks themselves.



This produces something genuinely rare in kitchen design: two distinct and simultaneous levels of flexibility. The first is architectural, established at the point of installation, when the configuration is set in dialogue with the space and the client's program. The second is quotidian, available every morning, when the user decides how the table rotates, how the blocks face, what the kitchen becomes for the hours ahead. The object is never the same twice. And yet it is always itself.

As Andrea Branzi observed of the Italian sistema d'arredo, the integration of functions into specialized volumes responds to idealistic impulses as much as to real production needs. (Domus, 2023) Here the idealism and the engineering are the same gesture. The movement is the design.

The kitchen is the oldest argument for gathering in the Western world.

Before the dining room, before the salon, before the lobby — there was the surface around which people organized themselves. The Roman culina was not a service space. It was the center of domestic gravity. What Italy understood, across centuries of living and then across the full rationalist tradition of the twentieth century, is that this gravitational logic belongs to the object, not to the room that holds it.

This system knows that. Its rotating blocks reveal contrasting materials between outer and inner skin, surfaces that are hidden until the object opens itself to the room, creating a material event out of everyday use. The moment a block rotates is the moment the kitchen declares its mood. Preparation, display, conversation, retreat — the same object, conducting different registers of life without moving from its position on the floor.

Above the parallelepiped, the ceiling becomes fully inhabited. A rhythmic sequence of profiles with inset LEDs creates a changing field of elegant hanging space, units that slide down from the overhead framework on demand, functioning simultaneously as display, storage, and illuminated architecture. The ceiling system does not light the kitchen. It completes it — a vertical counterpoint to the horizontal drama below, the two registers in constant compositional dialogue.

Whether the program is a private residence or the defining common space of a building, an object with this degree of formal and kinetic authority is not a specification decision. It is a curatorial one. It is the piece that tells every person who encounters it — on the first day and on the thousandth — that someone thought carefully about how life here could be lived.

Two thousand years before the profession gave it a name, Ovid understood what the finest objects do. The craft disappears into the form. The mechanism disappears into the gesture. What remains is not the making. It is the meaning.



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18	President's Letter
18	Houston's Turkey Bend Transformation Embraces Waterfront's Industrial Past
20	Texas Cities Weighing Preservation Against Redevelopment
22	In Memoriam: Paul Kinnison Jr., FAIA (1938–2026)
23	The Architectural Legacy of Trinity University

AT THE WATER'S EDGE

by Krystyn Haecker, AIA



WATER HAS THE ABILITY to connect and to divide in equal measure. It shapes the way we experience our communities, sometimes quietly by fostering moments of reflection or *gathering*, and other times as a force that is impossible to ignore. That force was made clear to me during Hurricane Harvey in 2017. I, like so many of my fellow Houstonians, woke up to find four feet of water surrounding the apartment building where I lived, a road I drove every day transformed into a flowing river. What was once familiar became unrecognizable overnight.

In the days that followed, the water's impact extended far beyond what I could see from my window. It separated people from their homes, disrupted entire neighborhoods, and exposed vulnerabilities across the city. Communities were fractured in ways that were both immediate and lasting.

Yet, within that disruption, a collective response began to take shape. Images of residents rescuing their neighbors by boat, people clearing debris from loved ones' and strangers' homes alike, and families opening their doors to others showed how even in the face of the division caused by disaster, people found ways to come together. Hurricane Harvey was a shared experience, one defined not just by loss but also by resilience and connection.

In Houston, water also shapes some of the city's most meaningful public spaces. Buffalo Bayou is designed with the understanding that it will change over time and with changing conditions. Trails, open space, and *gathering* areas that are active and full of life one day may sit under water the next, their periodic flooding an intentional part of the design. I spent years walking my dog Moose along those trails, watching the landscape shift with the rhythms of the bayou and the weather. The bayou is not simply

infrastructure or a waterway that expands during storms. It is a place where people walk, exercise, spend time with family, *gather* with friends, and reconnect with nature.

These types of spaces reinforce the responsibility architects carry in shaping environments that can withstand and respond to forces beyond our control. Water is not only a design constraint, but a reality that requires thoughtful consideration. How buildings protect, how communities recover, and how systems support people in moments of disruption all matter. At the same time, water continues to offer opportunities for connection across scales. From civic spaces to neighborhood amenities, places shaped by water can also become settings where shared experiences begin to take hold.

A force that demands respect, water shapes our cities and communities in ways that are both visible and unseen. As architects, our role is not only to protect against it, but to understand and design in harmony with it in ways that support resilience while also creating spaces that foster connection. In doing so, we can help shape environments that respond to change while continuing to bring people together, even in the face of uncertainty. □

Krystyn Haecker, AIA, is a principal and partner at Mirador Group in Houston and the 2026 TxA president. The TxA26 Annual Conference & Design Expo, themed "Gather," will take place October 15-17 in San Antonio.

← Looking west toward downtown across Buffalo Bayou following flooding by Hurricane Harvey, with Travis Street on the left side of the photo.

PHOTO BY PETER MOLICK

BUFFALO BAYOU EXPANDS EASTWARD WITH TURKEY BEND

by Murrye Bernard, AIA

HOUSTON HAS ALWAYS negotiated with water—through shipping infrastructure, flood control systems, and the bayous that shaped the city long before highways and warehouses obscured them. Along Buffalo Bayou's industrial East End, Turkey Bend, a new landscape project by Reed Hilderbrand with NADAAA, attempts something more nuanced than restoration: the design of public space that works with water, industrial history, and community memory rather than against them.

Part of Buffalo Bayou Partnership's eastward expansion efforts, Turkey Bend extends public investment beyond Buffalo Bayou Park toward Houston's historically industrial waterfront. Located near Navigation Boulevard on a former barge terminal, the project occupies a protected oxbow of Buffalo Bayou where freight once moved inland through warehouses and onto trucks bound for Houston's broader logistics network.

The site carries decades of industrial residue: timber wharves, gantry cranes, rail infrastructure, graffiti-covered surfaces, and the character of a waterfront built for labor rather than leisure. Rather than clearing away those traces, Reed Hilderbrand, the landscape architecture firm with offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and New Haven, Connecticut, made them foundational to the project.

"The goal was to preserve as much of the existing large infrastructure as possible," says Adrian Nial, principal at Reed Hilderbrand. "We wanted to make sure that the identity of the place as this old industrial relic wasn't lost and that we brought in these other narratives on top of that about nature [and] community."

Part of the challenge involved restraint. Nial describes extensive efforts to determine the minimum interventions necessary to stabilize existing structures while retaining their character, even preserving deteriorated paint and weathered surfaces where possible.

"Nothing should ever feel precious because of that industrial character," he says.

→ The Turkey Bend master plan reimagines a former industrial waterfront as a network of trails, boating facilities, gathering spaces, and flood-adapted landscapes.

IMAGE COURTESY REED HILDERBRAND



Water proved equally formative. Positioned within an active floodplain, Turkey Bend treats flooding not as failure but as a recurring reality. Materials, circulation systems, and planting strategies accommodate inundation rather than resist it.

"It was never about trying to fortify," Nial says. "It was always more about: How do you accommodate? And then how do you kind of rebound after?"

That approach shaped more than engineering decisions. Flood elevations informed circulation and the spatial experience, creating multiple ways for visitors to encounter Buffalo Bayou across changing conditions.

Fellman describes designing simultaneously for "low-water [and] high-water scenarios," creating what she sees as one of the project's defining experiences: movement between elevated landscapes and direct encounters with the bayou's edge.

Community engagement revealed another challenge. Many nearby residents had little relationship with Buffalo Bayou despite living only blocks away. Historically, the Greater East End and Fifth Ward have been separated from the bayou by industrial uses and infrastructure that limited both physical access and visibility.

"A lot of people we talked with said, 'We just never knew the bayou was right behind those buildings,'" Fellman says.

Turkey Bend responds with boating access, trails, gathering spaces, and multiple points of engagement intended to reconnect surrounding communities with both the water and its ecology. Its protected oxbow condition—unusual along Buffalo Bayou—will establish Turkey Bend as a boating hub, creating opportunities to experience Houston's waterfront from the water rather than solely from its banks.

At Turkey Bend, Houston's industrial waterfront is not disappearing. Instead, the project proposes another possibility for the city's edge: a landscape that accommodates water, preserves memory, and creates room for public life alongside both. □



↑ Flood-tolerant landscapes and elevated pathways provide access to Buffalo Bayou across both low-water and high-water conditions.

IMAGE COURTESY REED HILDERBRAND

That approach extends adaptive reuse beyond architecture. Existing waterfront infrastructure, reclaimed materials, industrial artifacts, and even graffiti become active design elements rather than remnants to be erased.

Claire Fellman, associate principal and research director at Reed Hilderbrand, describes an approach centered not only on preservation but also on repurposing.

"What do we preserve? What do we remove?" Fellman says. "We also would add to that: What do we repurpose?"

Murrye Bernard, AIA, LEED AP, is a North Texas-based architecture writer.



← Dallas City Hall: The iconic Brutalist structure may face the wrecking ball—and for all the wrong reasons.

PHOTO BY LEONID FURMANSKY

“DEFERRED MAINTENANCE” ENDANGERS CIVIC HERITAGE

by James Russell

IF “DEFERRED MAINTENANCE” is the government’s version of the excuse “the dog ate my homework,” then some Texas cities may need to repeat their sophomore year. Deferred maintenance is no longer simply a question of keeping up with repairs. It has instead become a pretext in many cases for erasing architectural and civic heritage in favor of development.

The pattern is playing out differently in Dallas, San Antonio, and Fort Worth, but the logic is remarkably similar.

In Dallas, city leaders are hearing arguments for and against abandoning, selling, and demolishing one of the most debated civic buildings in Texas.

The public is supposed to buy the case for abandoning and tearing it down because repairing it would cost too much. According to one city-commissioned report from consulting firm AECOM, repairs would cost up to \$1 billion.

The subtext is that some of Dallas’s most powerful businesspeople want to tear it down to build a mixed-use development and a new stadium for the Dallas Mavericks. (The Mavericks chose the former Valley View Mall in far North Dallas as the site of their new arena.)

There’s a lot of irony in the debate.

Following President Kennedy’s assassination, Mayor Erik Jonsson and a task force of civic leaders, including developers as well as the dean of MIT’s architecture school, worked to reframe Dallas as a world-class city. After going through a series of finalists, they settled on Pei, who later designed the softer Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. The sloping, cantilevered building covering an open plaza opened in 1978. In rare form, Brutalism in the South was treated as a sign of progress. Years later, *Dallas Morning News* architecture critic David Dillon called it a masterpiece and a testament to Jonsson’s bold vision for downtown and the city.

Flash forward to this year, when Dillon’s successor, Mark Lamster, won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism, in part for his passionate, detailed arguments defending the structure while skewering those who want to demolish it. Developers, in fact, were to blame for the sordid state of that end of the central city. Once bustling, “now it is plagued by countless empty surface lots where buildings once stood,” wrote Lamster in November 2025. “What happened? Developers demolished them, hoping for newer, bigger, more profitable projects, only to have the economy and their hubris undermine their fantasies.”

AIA Dallas executive director and past president Zaida Basora, FAIA, is a former city employee and zealous opponent of the teardown. In op-eds and at town halls, she’s refuted the billion-dollar price tag and argued, with maps, facts, and research to support it, that City Hall and a mixed-use complex anchored by a stadium and surrounded by vibrant development can coexist. She’s part

James Russell is a journalist in Fort Worth writing about art, the built environment, and politics. His writing has appeared in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, *CityLab*, *Arts and Culture Texas*, and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, among other publications.

of a group of past chapter presidents known as the “Ten Presidents” who have joined forces in framing the messaging and an alternative.

But she’s had to keep up with the fast-changing timeline, which seems to swiftly react to whatever opponents of demolition argue. Last year, a plan to fund upgrades to the facility became a plan to possibly move out, leaving the building up for grabs. Then came AECOM’s report spitballing the high price tag.

In a short and ferocious period, opponents have moved away from the historic preservation argument, which, Basora said bluntly, “did not resonate with city leaders,” and instead have begun making their case with hard numbers.

The strategy seems to be catching on. What she and her colleagues have proposed is a 10-year phased plan that, even considering inflation, could cost roughly \$70 million to \$100 million. Combining the sky-high cost of demolition—an estimated \$60 million—with the renovation or construction of new facilities and relocation could cost the city more.

Downtown Dallas has taken a beating recently. AT&T announced plans to move its headquarters to Plano, and Victory, another downtown mixed-use development meant to bring people back downtown and home to the Mavericks’ current arena, is dead save for concerts and games. A mixed-use development, Basora said, is necessary. “There has to be more housing, more connectivity, more walkability of that whole area of downtown. We also believe that there’s no reason to leave the building.”

In the face of lawsuits and uncharacteristically forceful pushback, city leaders may be opening up to the idea of staying downtown. New consultants have pitched different plans, including a similarly phased repair schedule. But that the option was there, and the building’s history ignored, is still alarming.

Dallas is hardly alone. Across Texas, public institutions and civic landmarks are increasingly being judged less on their cultural value than on the redevelopment opportunities beneath them.



Farther south, San Antonio prides itself as the home of the Alamo, “Military City USA,” and a fantastic historic preservation community. So it’s baffling that significant civic structures in the city have also faced similar fates. The demolition of the former Institute of Texan Cultures building is a case in point.

Built as the Texas Pavilion for Hemisfair ’68, the building eventually became a colorful history museum documenting the full Texas experience. A study commissioned by The University of Texas at San Antonio, who managed it since 1973, was its death knell: Repairing

it would cost \$178 million. Heritage was in the way of development. The San Antonio Spurs want a new arena, and developers see a chance for a new mixed-use development.

The simple rectangular inverted pyramid hanging over a plaza may not have stood out like Dallas City Hall, nor been tied to a big name like Pei, but the Brutalist structure had a voice of its own. It was also the only downtown building designed by a Mexican American architect. William Peña of Caudill Rowlett Scott was dubbed the father of architectural programming, and his work was too important to lose.

The board of Latinos in Heritage Conservation, in a letter supporting its designation as a state landmark, called it “a testament to the resilience and contributions of the Latino community in San Antonio” and said: “It exemplifies our community’s resilience and cultural heritage. For generations, it has been a place of learning, inspiration, and connection.”

It got the designation, then was torn down.

If San Antonio’s example demonstrates how preservation protections can prove surprisingly fragile, Fort Worth offers a different version of the same story: civic institutions left to languish until deferred maintenance becomes the dominant narrative.



In Fort Worth, what were once sites of civic pride have been all but abandoned. The Lawrence Halprin-designed Heritage Park Plaza on the edge of downtown has been closed since 2007 for deferred maintenance, but is set to reopen in the future. However, the more recent focus has been on the closing of the Fort Worth Community Arts Center, originally built for what’s now the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

The arts center opened in 1954 in a small building designed by Herbert Bayer, an Austrian who became best known for his quirky graphics. In 1966, local architect Joseph Pelich designed the William Edrington Scott Theater next door, a 468-seat thrust stage. In 1974, O’Neil Ford and Associates designed the third expansion. After the museum moved to its current home, designed by Tadao Ando, local arts booster Arts Fort Worth took over.

What made it unique was not the design but its character. It was a gritty incubator for artists and experimentation. It showed what other spaces shouldn’t, wouldn’t, or couldn’t. In a defeat for local artists, it closed last year after a study estimated it needed more than \$30 million in repairs. A task force formed to solicit proposals to make it into a “world-class cultural hub.” They received four proposals, which were all rejected.

Failing grades indeed. □

→ Fort Worth Community Arts Center: Despite its history as home to the first art museum in Texas, the center is permanently closed, with no plans yet in place to rehabilitate it.

PHOTO BY BOB ROWAN

→ Institute of Texan Cultures: Neither lawsuits nor designations could save the only building in the city’s core designed by a Hispanic architect.

PHOTO BY BEN KOUSH

REMEMBERING PAUL KINNISON JR., FAIA

by Mike McGlone, FAIA



PAUL KINNISON JR., FAIA (June 3, 1938–February 11, 2026), was born in San Antonio, the eldest of three children, and raised in a military family that moved throughout his early life. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Texas A&M University in 1961, and after serving two years as a commissioned officer in the Army, returned to Texas to begin a 50-year career in architecture. Early years included time at Logston & Voelter in Temple and prominent San Antonio firms Ayres & Ayres, Phelps & Simmons, Reginald Roberts, and O’Neil Ford. While in Ford’s office, he worked on several prominent projects and was sent to New York to be the on-site project manager for both Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs and Marymount College in New York City. In 1978, he established Kinnison & Associates, which over its 35-year history was well known for thoughtful design and renovation projects in San Antonio and South Texas, as well as at military installations all over the United States and the world. Paul was also known for mentoring young architects.

As a young architect, Paul began a deep involvement with the AIA through the San Antonio chapter, Texas Society of Architects, and AIA National. He held every leadership position in the AIA San Antonio chapter, served as the chair of numerous Texas Society of Architects committees and as vice president of the organization, and was the chair of the AIA’s 1984 national convention hosted by AIA San Antonio. In addition, he was a frequent representative and spokesperson for the profession and the AIA in front of City of San Antonio commissions, boards, city council, and the state legislature. In 1988, he was elevated to the College of Fellows in recognition of his service to the profession and community.

His contribution to the community was quiet yet profound in ways still affecting San Antonio to this day. Recognizing the role of preservation and urban design as instruments of protection, Paul was a tireless advocate for the past and the future over the expedient. As a lifelong resident of the Monte Vista National

Historic District, he served on the architectural review committee for more than 30 years as a member, chair, and facilitator, always seeking to balance respect for history with the relevance and appropriateness of new ideas. Generations of San Antonio architects owe him an enormous debt for the input and guidance he provided to redefine the selection process of design professionals by the city.

Beyond the typical role of architects, he was a quiet but passionate leader throughout his life, addressing difficult and often uncomfortable challenges such as the lack of basic city services—water, sewer, transportation, and affordable housing—in the inner city. He led the local chapter in establishing a Community Design Center and supervising VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteers. He ensured design assistance to hundreds of underserved San Antonians through the development of the private nonprofit San Antonio Community Housing Development Corporation.

While I wasn’t one of the young architects who came through his office, I came to know Paul’s commitment and integrity through a shared sense of purpose in the historic church we both attended and served. He was a fine architect, but a finer citizen of San Antonio. □

Mike McGlone, FAIA, was the 2018 president of the Texas Society of Architects.

O'NEIL FORD AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY, 75 YEARS LATER

by Lawrence Speck, FAIA

IN 1983, I wrote an article for *Architecture* magazine titled “O’Neil Ford’s Caring Campus,” describing the work done for Trinity University in San Antonio between 1951 and 1976 by a partnership between the offices of O’Neil Ford and Bartlett Cocke, with consultation from William Wurster. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the beginning of that auspicious era, it is inspiring to see how the campus has matured and developed into one of the most significant ensembles of buildings in Texas.

For several decades after the initial flurry of building in its first 25 years, Trinity took some time to settle into its new home. The lush, green landscape designed by Arthur and Marie Berger grew in and began to envelop many of the beautifully sited buildings, making them look like they had always been there. Although a few buildings were added and many had modest renovations, there were minimal transformations in the second 25 years of the campus’s history.

Then in 2002, Trinity took what many Texas architects considered at the time to be a serious misstep. The university razed the campus’s oldest building, Northrup Hall, and replaced it with the new Northrup Hall, designed by the New York-based firm Robert A. M. Stern Architects.

The demolished Northrup Hall was a technologically innovative building for its time, utilizing the Youtz-Slick “lift-slab” method of construction. Massive floor slabs were poured one on top of each other on the ground, jacked up to appropriate floor heights after curing, and welded into place on steel columns. Structure, skin, and joints were immaculately detailed with steel sash windows that were hung on clips stud-bolted directly into the concrete above, exposing the clean plane of the slabs as clearly as possible. It was an economical building—a landmark of simplicity and technical finesse that demonstrated O’Neil Ford’s design strengths elegantly.

After five decades, old Northrup Hall was certainly showing its age. It was deemed functionally outmoded

and inadequate to serve as the central administrative hub of the university. In 2004, construction of the new Northrup Hall, a much larger four-story building sheathed in the same “Bridgeport pink” brick as the rest of the campus, was complete. Its stack bond and mitered corners stood in strong contrast to the solid, tectonic material treatment of the Ford-era buildings. Its more monumental scale marked a distinct departure from the legacy of intimate and nurturing buildings that had helped to shape Trinity’s institutional ethos.

Perhaps in response to the outcry that came over the loss of the original Northrup Hall, Trinity began thereafter to value its architectural heritage more highly and to find innovative and economical ways to preserve and reuse the buildings of its seminal campus. In 2006, the northeast sector of the campus, containing two of the finest Ford-era buildings, Ruth Taylor Theater and Laurie Auditorium, became the focus of substantial expansion and renovation. The resulting Ruth Taylor Fine Arts Complex combined buildings from various eras, including the new Dicke Art Building and the Smith Music Building. Kell Muñoz Architects, which had descended from the old Bartlett Cocke firm, led much of the project, sensitively knitting together elements from old and new to form a fresh, cohesive



↑ The Ford-era Ruth Taylor Theater sits in the northeast quadrant of the Trinity University Campus.

PHOTO BY BEN KOUSH

↓ Laurie Auditorium became the focus of substantial expansion and renovation, along with the Ruth Taylor Theatre.

PHOTO BY BEN KOUSH



First, the plan suggested a new entry and front door for Trinity off a major arterial, East Hildebrand Avenue, on the north side of the campus to replace the difficult-to-find entry on tiny Stadium Drive to the east.

Second, a new north/south “academic corridor” was proposed to connect the new entry, in a meandering way, through the upper academic part of the campus and down through the lower residential campus, where parking lots would be replaced by playing fields and public outdoor spaces.

Third, the plan addressed the longstanding barrier of “Cardiac Hill,” the bluff at the edge of the old quarry that had predated the campus on the site. Separating the upper and lower campus, this barrier had long bifurcated student life into academic and residential segments. In an era of project-based learning and less rigid demarcations between work and leisure, the separation had become a negative educational issue. The master plan proposed an integrated architecture/landscape solution, creating a Hill Connector that would maintain the topographical feeling of the bluff while easing vertical movement and unifying the campus as a whole.

Fourth, Trinity committed to place the Ford-era core of its campus on the National Register of Historic Places, creating a district that acknowledged the importance of the university’s powerful architectural heritage. In addition, the designation opened the university to receive state tax credits that could help fund maintenance and rehabilitation of its significant historic buildings.

Since the initial completion of the master plan, Trinity has moved expeditiously to execute its goals. The new entry off Hildebrand now gives the university a much more appropriate visibility in the city, and a cluster of new and renovated buildings is just wrapping up that will create the desired new front door.

↓ The new mass timber Dicke Hall by Lake Flato Architects

PHOTO BY ROBERT BENSON

whole. In the following decade, the remarkable Center for the Sciences and Innovation (CSI) was built in three complicated phases from 2010 to 2014, demonstrating an impressive commitment to preservation alongside a clear desire to create the most up-to-date academic facilities for research and teaching in demanding technical fields. The project involved substantial renovations in the Ford-era Cowles Life Science Building and Marrs-McLean Science Center and the addition of a large two- and three-story structure linking the two. The new portion featured state-of-the-art labs that could not be fit into renovated buildings and a light-filled landmark atrium. RVK Architects and EYP, who collaborated on the project, did an impressive job of maintaining a clear architectural identity for both old and new components while also creating a varied yet cohesive character for the whole complex. New components embodied the same architectural values of material integrity, sensitive detailing, and tactile scale as the older Ford-era parts. The project immediately became both a social and academic hub for the campus.

Shortly after CSI was completed, Trinity embarked on the creation of a long overdue master plan—the first one done since the Ford era. Led by Page (now Stantec) with Architexas as a preservation consultant, the plan generated four bold new directions for the continued advancement of the campus.





↑ Rendering of the future Trinity University Welcome Center by Overland Partners
IMAGE COURTESY OVERLAND PARTNERS

Per the master plan, two Ford-era buildings, Chapman Hall and Halsell Hall, at the north end of the campus, have been beautifully rehabilitated in an effort led by Lake Flato Architects. Chapman, especially, has some striking interior spaces with carved doors crafted by Lynn Ford, O'Neil Ford's brother, which have been lovingly preserved.

Lake Flato also designed the new Dicke Hall, adjacent to Halsell, which manages to be very compatible with the Ford-era buildings while also being very innovative in terms of sustainability goals. Its mass timber structure is quite distinctive on the campus but is also remarkably consistent with the structural innovations that have been a constant inspiration for architectural design all the way back to the original Northrup Hall. Together, Chapman, Halsell, and Dicke form a Business and Humanities district made up of both historic and new buildings similar to the earlier Fine Arts district developed in the 2000s and Sciences and Innovation district developed in the 2010s.

Completing the new front door for the university, a Welcome Center and an Events Building designed by Overland Partners are just being occupied as this issue goes to press. Like Lake Flato, EYP, RVK, and Kell Muñoz before them, Overland Partners has created yet another ensemble of buildings that draws heavily on the legacy architectural character of Trinity—with its Bridgeport pink brick, sensitively placed expanses of glass, daring structure, and impeccable detail—while also finding a fresh, new interpretation of that vocabulary.

Trinity President Vanessa Beasley is enthusiastic about the way her campus has developed since the Ford years and sees the architecture of the campus as a key feature in helping to advance her institution. She finds it difficult to separate campus design from the furtherance of Trinity's educational mission.

Though President Beasley has an admiration for college campuses that follow traditions like Collegiate Gothic or Georgian architecture, she finds Trinity's modernism much more compatible with her institution's goals to be accessible to students of all different kinds of backgrounds, some of whom might be put off by the negative associations connected to more traditional vocabularies. She finds the large amounts of glass in both early and recent campus buildings welcoming, and notes they are very effective in providing glimpses of what goes on in different spaces and linking life inside and outside the buildings. The modernism at Trinity seems to match beautifully the bright, open-minded, unpretentious students that go there.

After 75 years, there remains a powerful caring evident in the building of Trinity University—caring about the institution's distinguished architectural legacy, caring about remaining relevant and progressive in a rapidly changing world, caring about the sensual pleasures available from sensitive use of light, texture, scale, and materials, and caring about the everyday interactions of a community of people inhabiting a place. □

Lawrence Speck, FAIA, is a practicing architect and a professor at the School of Architecture at UT Austin.



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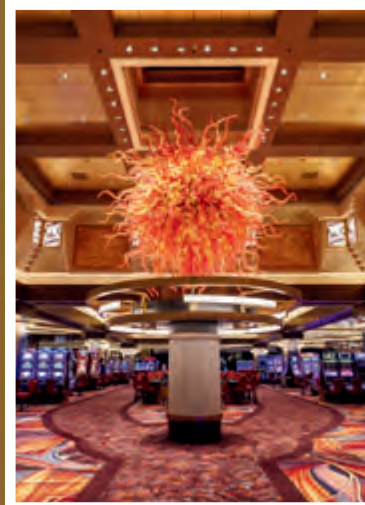
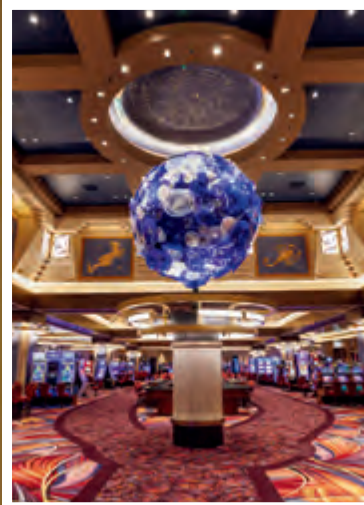
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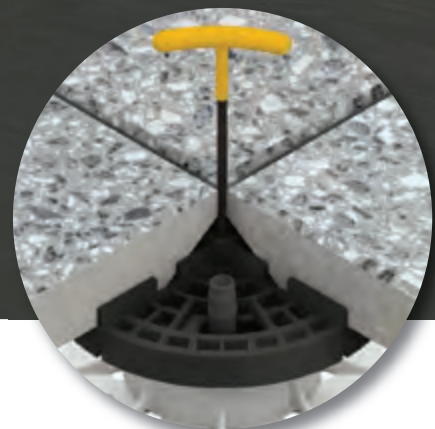
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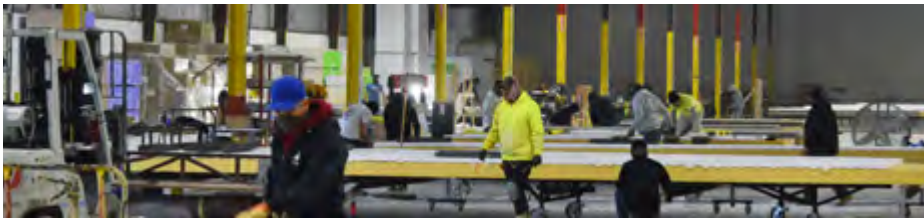
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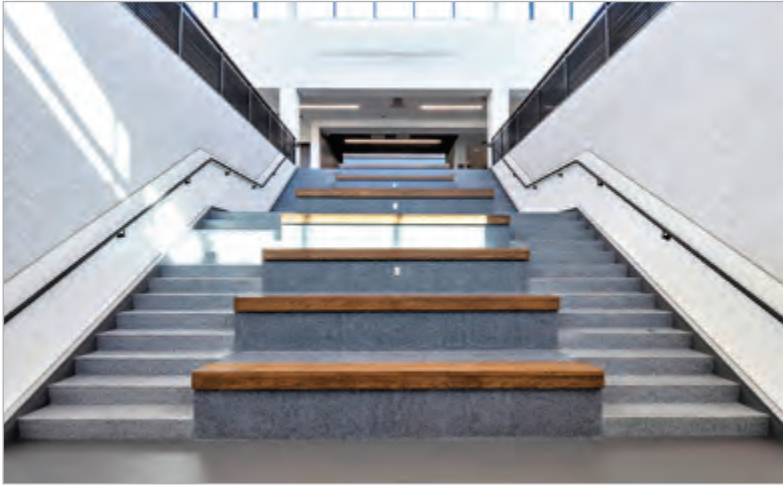
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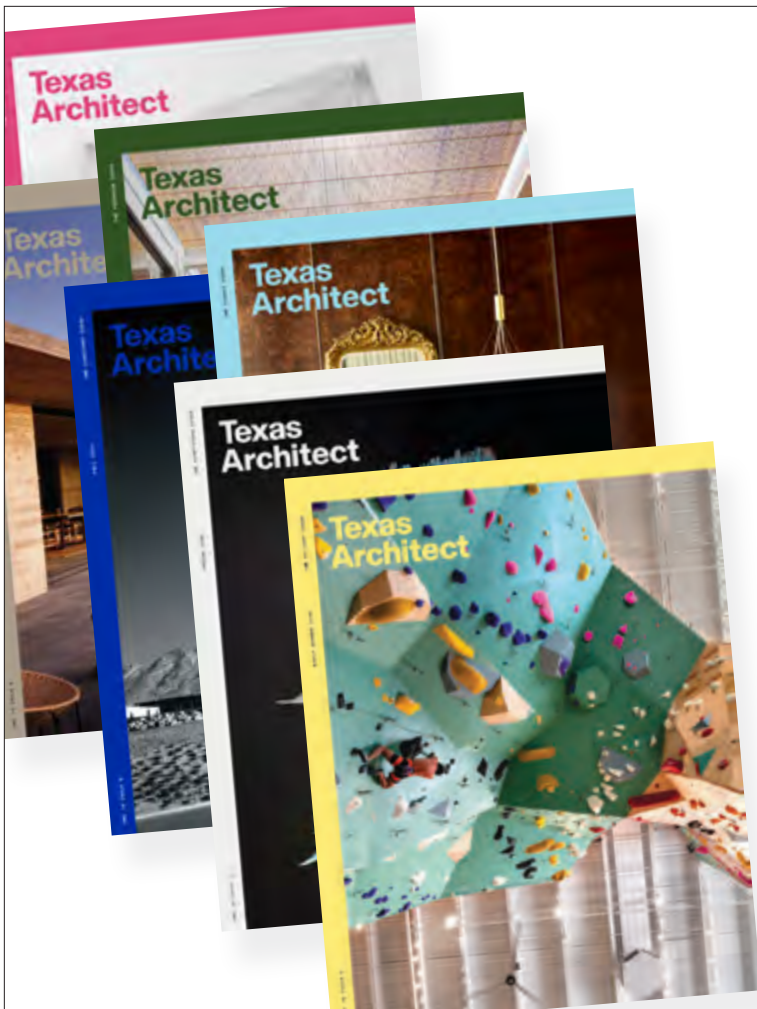


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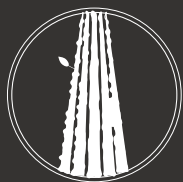
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- 36 Rancho Toma Tres by Candid Works
- 44 Emerging Water Conservation Policies and Planning in Texas
- 50 Diffuse Dock by Miró Rivera Architects
- 56 The Data on Data Centers
- 62 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay by Lake Flato Architects with G70
- 70 Floating Box Pool Pavilion by Baldrige Architects
- 76 Water Shortage in the Coastal Bend
- 82 University of Houston RAD Center by Perkins&Will
- 90 Rockport Center for the Arts by Richter Architects

The background of the image is a close-up, high-resolution shot of water ripples. The water is a deep teal color, and the ripples create a complex, organic pattern of light and dark lines that catch the light. The overall effect is one of movement and texture.

WATER

“If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in water.”
—Loren Eiseley, American anthropologist

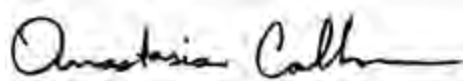
Without water, there is no life. This clear, flavorless, amorphous substance fundamentally shapes our bodies, our landscapes, our cities, and our economies. Roughly 60 to 70 percent of the human body is composed of water, a visceral reminder that our dependence on this precious resource is both intimate and absolute. Yet water is also capable of tremendous destruction. When balanced, it nourishes communities and ecosystems, but in great quantities—or when absent—it can just as easily overwhelm through drought, flood, and sea-level rise.

Few places understand this paradox better than Texas.

Across the state, issues surrounding water are becoming some of the defining challenges of our time. Population growth, aging infrastructure, changing climate patterns, and increasing demands on finite resources are forcing communities to reconsider how water is managed, conserved, distributed, and shared. The questions are no longer simply technical or environmental; they are civic, economic, and increasingly moral.

In this issue, we explore the many facets of water and our entangled, sometimes fraught, relationship with it. We look at emerging conservation policies and planning efforts in Texas municipalities, consider the growing demands for water and energy in data centers, and investigate the ongoing water supply challenges facing the Coastal Bend. We also revisit communities rebuilding nearly a decade after Hurricane Harvey, where design has become a tool for recovery and adaptation. Together, these stories reveal how decisions made today will shape the resilience of communities for decades to come.

But despite these high-stakes scenarios, the projects featured in these pages—from waterfront retreats and gathering spaces to thoughtful interventions along rivers and coastlines—also demonstrate the myriad ways architects engage with water to nourish the body and lift the human spirit. Whether scarce or abundant, tranquil or destructive, water is never static and remains a source of fierce beauty and inspiration—of magic.



THE FORCE OF WATER



Desert, sky, and ocean converge
at a remote retreat in Mexico.





IMAGINE A PLACE where three immense elements meet—an intersection at which, no matter where you look, you can contemplate the magnitude of nature and feel an invitation to connect with it. What seems to be an endless desert on the Baja California Sur peninsula comes to an abrupt stop at the light sands and blue waters of the Pacific Ocean beneath an expansive sky. Hidden within this landscape, Rancho Toma Tres stands as a place of respite—a place for contemplation where the owner, family, and guests step away from daily life.

The meeting of sea and desert creates a unique climatic condition. While the desert is hot and arid, the ocean provides a continuous cooling breeze that is captured at the heart of the project. From cross-ventilation in the main living room to the chimney effect in the guest houses, strategically placed openings allow hot air to escape occupied spaces, making it possible to avoid active cooling systems for most of the year.

Careful attention is also paid to vernacular materials and passive design strategies. Candid Rogers, FAIA, the project's design architect, vividly recalls arriving at the remote site after a long drive from San José del Cabo along unmarked dirt roads exposed to the sun. Upon arrival, he noticed a wild horse sheltering beneath a torote blanco, or Baja Elephant tree. The image became central to the project's shading strategy. Later site investigations revealed how fragmented branches of another tree, the Esperanza—known locally as Palo de Arco—were used as screening devices, inspiring the shading system for the west facade. Rather than relying on foam insulation, the building envelope uses shadow and airspace to reduce heat gain while welcoming cooling breezes.



SITE PLAN

- 1 CASA LIVING
- 2 MAIN CASA
- 3 GUEST AREA
- 4 CASITA 1
- 5 CASITA 2
- 6 CISTERN/OBSERVATION DECK



Rancho Toma Tres is organized into three primary volumes connected by exterior circulation, along with two standalone guest bedrooms. Visitors ascend screened stairs that carefully frame views of the landscape before arriving at the second-floor entrance. At the center of the project is a breezeway that serves as the shared living, dining, and kitchen space while channeling cooling air through the house. The main bedroom features a private lounge, a tequila and mezcal bar, and a corner for music punctuated by a cozy volcanic rock fireplace. The sleeping quarters remain separate from the public areas, allowing for both privacy and direct engagement with the surrounding landscape. Throughout the project, occupants remain connected to water, desert, and sky.

At Rancho Toma Tres, water operates in many ways—most immediately as an attraction and resource. The Pacific Ocean, home to roughly 25,000 marine species, and the Gulf of California, known as “the aquarium of the world,” support extraordinary marine diversity and have long attracted both wildlife and people. Access to surfing was one of the client’s primary requirements, and the site was selected for both its proximity to quality waves and its distance from development. Although the property sits more than half a mile from the shoreline, it maintains expansive ocean views.

The main public space occupies the second level and opens through removable glazed partitions to an infinity pool overlooking the ocean in one direction and the

desert in the other. The pool serves more than a recreational purpose; it contributes evaporative cooling to the cross-breeze moving through the living and dining spaces. While the client was drawn to the location by the area’s surfing opportunities, it is the ocean view and cooling breeze that define the daily experience of the house.

Water also functions as a powerful environmental force that continually shapes the landscape in various ways. The site receives only seven to 13 inches of rainfall annually, but it is concentrated within a short rainy season. Though limited, these storms are often intense enough to reshape the landscape, and seasonal flows reinforce existing waterways known as arroyos, which remain dry for much of the year but become active corridors during storms.

Rather than interrupting these natural patterns, the design accommodates them. The owner’s appreciation for the landscape led the design team to preserve as much of the site as possible in its natural state. This objective shaped the organization of the house. Ground-level enclosed spaces are limited primarily to service functions, while the principal living spaces, pool, and primary suite are elevated above the landscape. Carefully positioned cantilevers create shade, reduce disturbance to the terrain—and thus to wildlife—and allow water to continue following its natural course. Gravel surfaces beneath shaded outdoor spaces reduce erosion while maintaining the character of the site.

← Like a horse sheltering from the sun beneath a tree, the concrete rests in the shade cast by the Palo de Arco screen. Openings at the stair landing and in the main living area create visual connections to the surrounding landscape.

↓ Evaporative cooling moves inland from the Pacific, across the arroyos and infinity pool, through the main living space, and out through openings in the Palo de Arco screen.

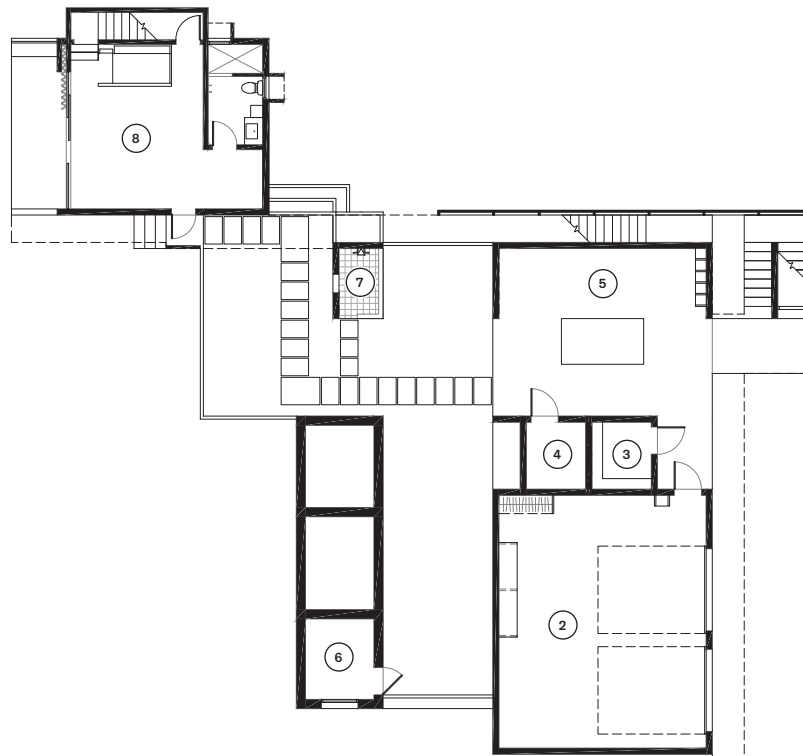




↑ The main living space opens completely to the patio, overlooking the infinity pool, arroyo, desert, and Pacific Ocean. Surfing waves not pictured.

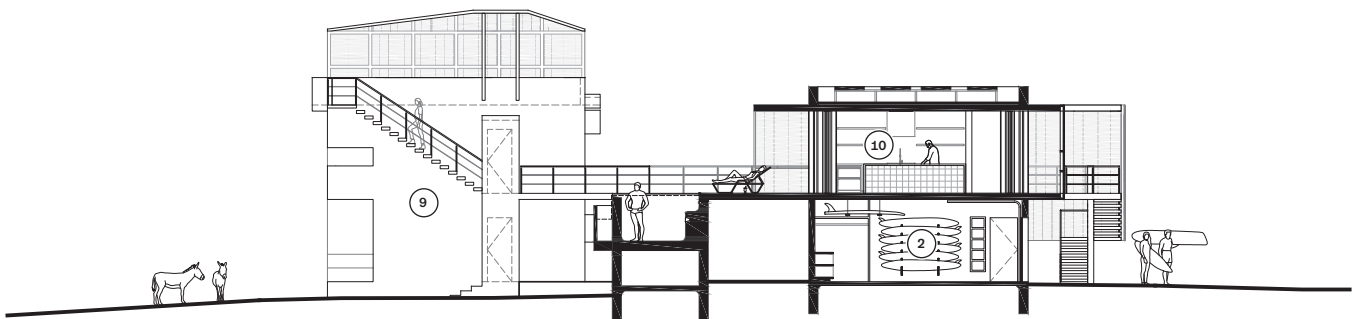
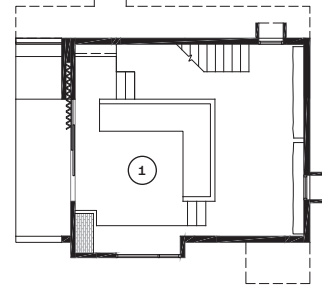
→ Framed openings in one of the bedroom balconies offer a place to contemplate the meeting of sea, sky, and desert.





➤ LEVEL 1 PLAN & ➤ SECTION

- 1 SUNKEN LIVING ROOM & LIBRARY
- 2 GARAGE
- 3 UTILITY ROOM
- 4 MECHANICAL ROOM
- 5 BREEZEWAY
- 6 POOL MECHANICAL ROOM
- 7 OUTDOOR SHOWER
- 8 BEDROOM
- 9 GUEST AREA
- 10 KITCHEN





↑ The conical cistern is visible between the screen and the desert. Note the floating concrete step leading to the observation deck. Hurricane shutters and an operable glass partition disappear into the concrete threshold.

→ Architectural volumes emerge from the landscape, grounding in place yet softly providing shade from the sun and channeling cooling breezes to provide relief from the heat.

The house is designed to withstand more extreme weather events as well. Although major hurricanes are relatively uncommon, tropical cyclones remain a reality along the Baja California coast. Rammed earth was initially considered as a building material, but cast-in-place concrete ultimately proved more practical and resilient. Concrete is celebrated throughout the project in both its rugged and refined forms. The walls reveal the imprint of their formwork, while polished surfaces, soft to the touch, appear in benches, observation decks, and countertops.

Additional protection comes from hurricane shutters concealed within wall pockets. Their effectiveness was tested during construction when a Category 1 hurricane struck the site. The wind bent reinforcing bars, but the concrete walls remained standing.

In addition to its potential for destruction, water also acts as a catalyst for renewal. The rainy season coincides with Pacific hurricane season and transforms the surrounding desert landscape. Palm trees, cacti, shrubs, and Palo de Arco trees wait months for moisture. Before a storm, the terrain appears almost lifeless. Within days of rainfall, however, the landscape becomes lush and green—a magical awakening overnight. Witnessing this seasonal transformation reinforced the decision to preserve the existing ecology. Rather than imposing a heavily modified landscape, the project allows natural cycles to remain visible.

Because annual rainfall is limited, large-scale rainwater harvesting was difficult to justify. Instead, the rainfall is allowed to just replenish the land. Additional water is trucked to the site and stored in a cistern that doubles as an observatory from whose summit visitors can see the meeting of ocean, sky, and desert. Ascending the floating concrete stair produces an unexpected experience: Each step creates a resonant tone reminiscent of the sound produced by a finger circling the rim of a partially filled glass. Whether intentional or not, the effect calls to mind how water can shape experience in ways that extend beyond its physical presence.

The cistern serves as both infrastructure and symbol. Its conical form expresses the importance of water in this environment while directing attention toward the sky. A circular seating ring surrounds the structure, creating a place for stargazing and reflection. Sitting there heightens awareness of one's place within a larger natural system.

Even limited rainfall sustains an abundance of life. Birds, squirrels, lizards, rabbits, wild horses, wild burros, and other species inhabit the surrounding landscape. Their presence also motivated the client's desire for minimal intervention. Water nourishes this ecosystem, while architecture provides shelter from which to observe it.

At Rancho Toma Tres, water also serves as a connector, through the arroyos that border the property. Formed by seasonal rainfall, these channels cut through the mountains and lead toward the beach. Though dry for much of the year, they become conduits for both water and movement. For the client and family, access to surfing was essential, and the arroyos provide a direct connection between the house and the Pacific Ocean. In many ways, the project owes its existence to these pathways carved by water.

Ultimately, water becomes a source of meditation. Sitting beside the pool, attention drifts from the keyboard

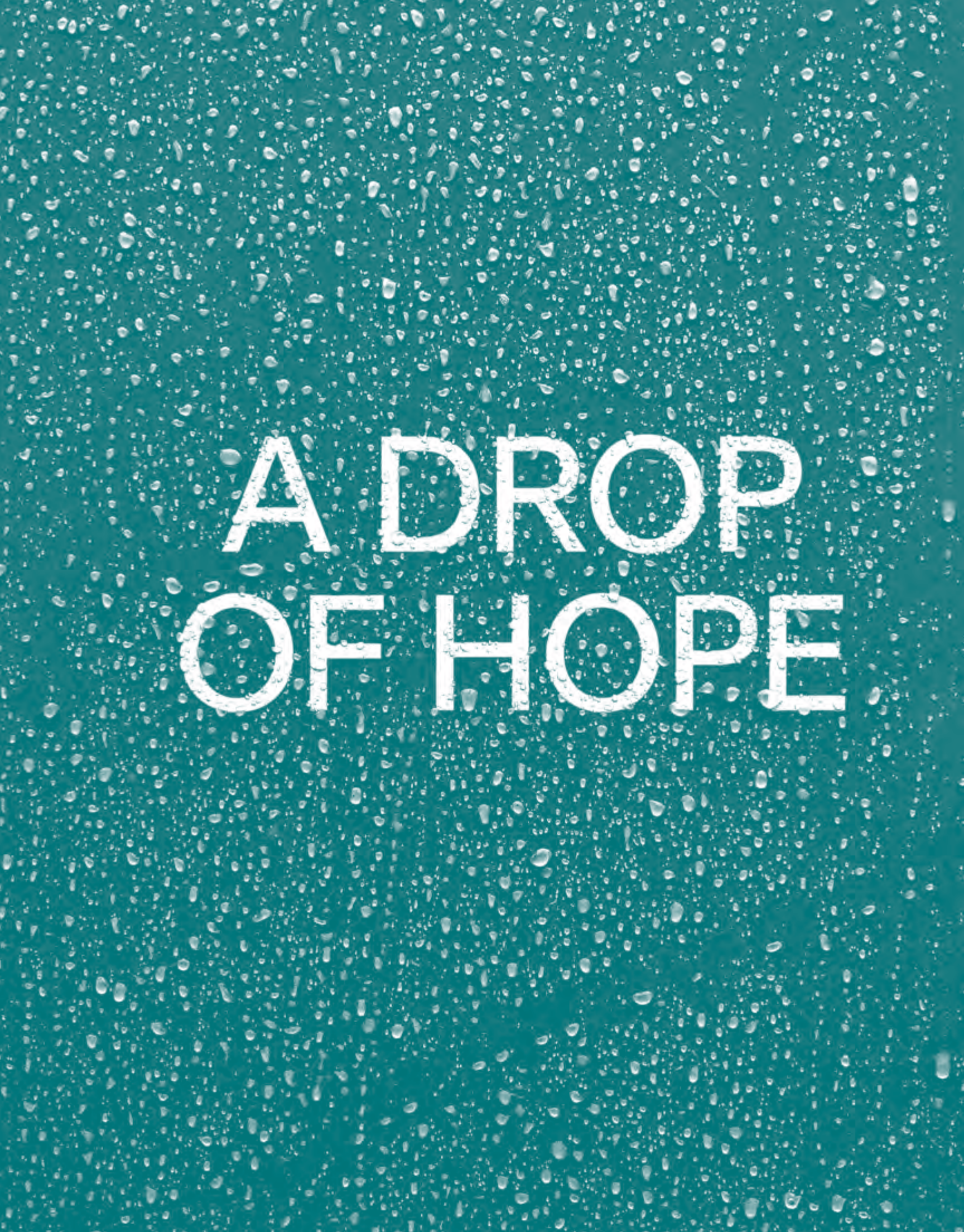
to the sounds of birds moving through the landscape. Sparrows, cardinals, and doves harmonize together, providing a soundtrack carried by the breeze. Looking up, flashes of red appear among the branches of the nearest Esperanza tree as a small flock of cardinals passes overhead.

It is remarkable how thoroughly the architecture integrates with its surroundings and how naturally contemplation emerges. Water moves through this project much as it moves through the desert itself—with intention, shaping the landscape and inviting pause. Rancho Toma Tres demonstrates an architecture of contemplation in which water is not merely managed but celebrated as the life, risk, and rhythm of the place. □

Nyx Valerdy Marquez, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP, is an architect at the Perkins&Will Houston studio, where she works on science and technology projects. She is also interested in neuroscience and well-being, which inform her study of how people navigate their environments.

PROJECT	Rancho Toma Tres
LOCATION	San José del Cabo, Baja California Sur, Mexico
ARCHITECT	Candid Works
DESIGN TEAM	Candid Rogers, FAIA, Fernando Morales, Rogelio Rodriguez, Douglas Long
CONTRACTOR	Roca Arquitectos y Construcción
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING	Roca Arquitectos y Proyectos
PHOTOGRAPHER	Leonid Furmanskyy





A DROP OF HOPE

PLUNGING INTO TEXAS WATER CONSERVATION

MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, I was a vast, unbound ocean, home to vital waters that provided refuge for multitudes of phylum Brachiopoda, cephalopods, graptolites, and trilobites. My beautiful seabuds, the blastoids. In the Triassic, wild rivers crossed my land, feeding the gaping maw of hungry phytosaurs, desperate Triopticus primus, Postosuchus, and other archosaurs. There are species still hidden in the mysteries of my ancient Capitan Reef that will never be found. Seas rose to meet the peaks of the Hueco Mountains down to the Llano Uplift, and beyond to the ebbing coastline, gifting this place, this land, with an abundance of anemones. Across the fossil record, from the Precambrian to the Pleistocene epoch, I have provided and I have witnessed change. Further down this timeline, cities bulge with life, towns glisten with vapor-thick air, and brilliant discoveries reveal wonders behind every drop. I am as old as my hope is young.

Sip water, and remember what matters. Who matters. We share this space together, partners in the outcome of each choice we make.

—The Voice of Texas

A drop of water falls in a rivulet down the curved spine of a leaf, diving expertly to the thirsty soils of the Edwards Plateau. It disappears in an instant, chasing an invisible river 60 miles east, emerging through a karst limestone crack. Water is a vanishing and complex friend, pulled by gravity and dedicated to its ancient pathways. Beneath Texas's diverse geology exists a hidden labyrinth of waterways stretched thin by growth and a

volatile climate. Two hundred million years since the last archosaur roamed the riparian shores of Texas, blistering days turn to shivering nights with floods, droughts, and too little groundwater, exposing a precarious moment in history. The unglamorous reality of water in 2026 A.D. alludes to tomorrow's fossils and the stories they will surface.

The Lone Star State contains roughly 191,000 miles of streams and rivers, 196 major reservoirs, 188 major water-supply reservoirs, 8 million acres of wetlands, 1,990 square miles of bays, and 3,879 square miles of Gulf waters along 624 miles of coastline. It boggles the mind. Texas also recognizes nine major aquifers and 22 minor aquifers covering different regions of the state. It's no secret that, like many parts of the world, our state is getting hotter, drier, and more populated, placing strains on the water systems etched into all aspects of life.

According to the Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) 2022 Texas State Water Plan, water supply is projected to decrease by 18 percent by the year 2070, while demand is expected to increase by 9 percent. Municipal water demand is also projected to exceed agricultural irrigation use for the first time by 2060. Today's third graders will be 42 years old. As withdrawal continues to outpace recharge across most major systems, there is an impending threat to both agricultural viability and long-term water security. Despite this bleak, data-driven outlook, there are solutions that can rewrite the next chapter for Texas water health. Joined by a shared belief in the power of technology, science, design, and storytelling, these methods are buoyed by human ingenuity.



FILTERING

Jennifer Walker is the director of the Texas Coast and Water Program at the National Wildlife Federation. She focuses on statewide water policy issues, with an emphasis on water planning, infrastructure funding, urban water management, and bay and estuary protection. Her passion for sustainable water sources for fish and wildlife led to her professional and volunteer citizen work with the City of Austin's Water Forward policy.

"It's one of the things that I'm really proud of," she states. "It changed the trajectory of how our community is going to meet our water needs in the future. We were at a fork in the road, and we went down the path of living within our available water supply. It's the more complicated solution, but the more resilient one."

What began as a drought from 2011 to 2015 exposed water-supply reservoirs at lower levels than ever before and led city leaders to explore emergency supply measures. With only six weeks to propose actions, Walker and the other members of the group worked tirelessly toward reductions and alternatives until, surprisingly, the rains came. Saved from implementing their emergency measures, the group faced the realization revealed by their research: Austin relies on a single source of water, and to become sustainable as the city grows, it would have to diversify its water supply.

The result was Austin's 100-year water-resource management plan, adopted in 2018, focused on conservation, reuse, and supply diversification. This is Water Forward.

Austin has long recognized the need for emergent innovation in water policy. The purple-pipe system in place since the 1990s allows the city to use reclaimed water from sources like air-conditioning condensate, washing machines, and kitchens for nonpotable uses such as irrigation, toilet flushing, and cooling towers, all flowing through a separate "purple" pipe system. Wastewater piped through purple-colored mains reduces demand on potable water supplies.

Water Forward complements the purple-pipe reclaimed-water structure as an integrated water-resource management system that treats rainwater, stormwater, graywater, and wastewater as resources rather than waste. The plan provides for widespread onsite nonpotable systems in new large-building projects. As Austin updates its plumbing, building, and land-development codes to implement Water Forward, architects must design buildings that physically incorporate dual plumbing, treatment rooms, and space for tanks and mechanical equipment. The plan focuses on aggressive conservation and efficiency, utilizing new developments and public buildings as anchors to the system.

In March 2024, Austin City Council approved Go Purple, a major amendment to the Water Forward package. Go Purple makes water reuse mandatory for most new developments larger than 250,000 square feet. If projects are located within 500 feet of existing purple-pipe infrastructure, they must either connect to the reclaimed system or build an onsite reuse system.

← Visitors enjoy a quiet moment while visiting Headwaters at the Comal, designed by Lake Flato Architects with Ten Eyck Landscape Architects.

PHOTO BY DROR BALDINGER, FAIA

Incentives such as reduced fixed charges, expedited permitting, cost-sharing, low-interest financing, and Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) assessments are provided by the city to keep projects financially feasible, with certain exemptions for qualifying affordable housing.

Impacts from these measures are invigorating water stewardship in both the built and natural environment. In North Austin, at Apple's new campus, more than 60 percent of the property is landscaped and includes a 50-acre nature and wildlife preserve open to the public. Apple's 2026 Environmental Progress Report shares a robust water strategy using "tools like the World Resources Institute (WRI) Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas to gain insights into local watershed health, such as baseline water stress."

Their recently completed onsite water facility at the Austin office prioritized low-water design while improving local watershed health. The 225,000-gpd system uses condensate recovery and stormwater capture, limiting potable water use to potable purposes only. The 60 million gallons of freshwater saved annually by using wastewater for cooling equates to 28 million kilowatt-hours per year in energy savings.

The report states: "We focus on the critical link between energy and water consumption in cooling systems. Careful analysis of this relationship can present opportunities for dual savings and minimized trade-offs. We investigate ways to improve our cooling systems and evaluate alternative technologies that could replace existing methods."

The Water Forward plan is the first in Texas with a 100-year timeframe, which could mean incredible shifts if commercial and industrial buildings begin to think about water the way they do energy. "We want to live within our water footprint, upstream and downstream," Walker explains. This positive vision for an interconnected, water-forward future is blossoming across the state.

RESTORING

Along the banks of the Comal River, 57 miles northeast of San Antonio, the next generation of water conservationists is learning to go beyond resource resilience to celebrate what water means. Headwaters at the Comal is New Braunfels Utilities' (NBU) conservation legacy project on a 16-acre site in the Edwards Plateau. Located where Comal Springs—the largest artesian springs in the southwestern United States—meets Blieders Creek, archaeological evidence and oral histories reveal the story of more than 500 generations of Tonkawa, Lipan, Waco, and occasionally Karankawa, Kickapoo, Coahuiltecan, and Comanche peoples.

NBU's foresight in inspiring a deep appreciation for the land, water, and cultural history that make the region special led to a thoughtful, phased approach that favored simplicity and subtraction.

Sixteen years ago, NBU was thinking about what would be needed 20 years into the future. The notion of rewilding and teaching the community how to be smart with water was ahead of its time. Principal Matt Wallace, AIA, co-leads the Lake Flato Eco-Conservation Studio, where he works on projects that honor the complex ecologies of their sites, like Headwaters at the Comal.

Polypropylene Mesh

Water Tank

Solar Panels

Operable Roo

Operates by opening and closing to prevent to conserve as much water as possible. Pot exists below to collect water from the hun

Live Oak Trees

Wheat Plant

Big Bluestem

Coral Honeyuckle Screen

White-Tailed Deer

Tree Lantana

Live Oak Trees

Live Oak Trees

Cattle

Muhache

Subsurface Drip Irrigation

Insect Hotel

Runoff Water Retention Pond

To create a refuge for insects and other small animals, a corrugated steel structure wraps around the lower level of the tower. Inside perforations, natural materials are selected that make excellent habitats for these creatures.

Runoff water from fields that slope towards retention pond are collected in the basin in addition to rain water. When needed, this water is pumped from the pond to the tank in the tower.

This highly water efficient irrigation technique utilizes tubes underground that dispense the water to crops to reduce water loss from evaporation.

Provides excellent shade, berries, and serves as a water source and is a natural habitat for many species, including birds, insects, and small mammals.

Wheat plant is a staple crop in the region, and provides excellent shade for other crops, serving as a natural habitat for many species.

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Phase 1 began with the large-scale removal of impervious ground cover and the reseeding and propagation of native plants. Alongside Ten Eyck Landscape Architects and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Ecosystem Design Team (now the Blackland Collaborative), Wallace and his team at Lake Flato Architects worked to restore ecosystems, establish native plants, and develop smart uses of water.

The multiphase project focused on reusing structures and existing building pads on the property to reduce the carbon footprint while restoring as much of the site as possible to the memory of its natural state.

“The story about this project is the whole system of water,” says Wallace. “A building that highlights ecosystems, starting with pillowy clouds above that capture rain and funnel the rain underground. The water filtering into Edwards Aquifer below percolates out, funneling larger step pools that bring you to the entry and speak to the journey of the Comal River all the way down to Corpus Christi and then to the Guadalupe and the Gulf.”

Raised on the shores of the Mississippi River, Wallace learned to listen to the land, asking questions about how buildings heal the landscape and where architects spot sensitivities. At first blush, it seems obvious to look at the historical ecology of a site. What Wallace understands, however, is that human interference in the environment drives restorative solutions. “It’s time architects jumped in the back seat instead of always trying to drive. We aim to build on the worst part of the landscape to preserve what is already there.”

Ecological restoration is a science-driven methodology that intertwines the expertise of ecologists, geologists, and biologists, strengthening the work of designers. Land recovery processes such as reclamation look to make land usable through leveling or neutralizing contaminants. Revitalization is usually seen in urban environments and connects aesthetic and social needs, such as transforming abandoned lots into vital public parks. Ecological restoration rebuilds natural processes. It examines water cycles, plant succession, soil and microbial life, as well as the return of fauna. By uncapping a major springhead at Headwaters at the Comal, riparian zones were cultivated and a struggling habitat revived. This is a profound level of regeneration, which is why it is often the hardest and longest process to realize.

SURFACING

Time is exactly what architects must address. It’s easy for people to lose interest and hope in projects that promise change too far in the future to shape their current lives. Training future architects to master discouragement and strengthen the hope of others is what we need to pull us back to the surface.

Architect María Peñalver Izaguirre, of Estudio Brava in Cartagena, Spain, came to Texas A&M University two years ago as a visiting professor of practice, where she lived very close to one of Texas’s iconic water towers. The super-scale and ubiquity of the structure led her to question how we look at ordinary things and see something extraordinary.

Her studio, Dreamed Water Towers, led students through a process of cataloging, speculative worldbuilding, utopian architectural design, and public dissemination. By focusing students’ attention on existing infrastructure and challenging them to see a catalyst for imagination, the studio asked them to reconcile their perception of water as more than storage and distribution.

Izaguirre explains, “Water towers are a political, cultural, and ecological artifact.”

Phase two of Izaguirre’s studio shifted from observation to strategic foresight, asking each student to imagine a scenario for Texas in the year 2050. They each wrote a short journalistic article from the vantage point of a future present. Students then translated their stories into speculative *Texas Monthly* magazine covers.

The prompt offered a long view of the future, asking students to describe specific events, policies, or social transformations and trace impacts across humans, landscapes, animals, and plant ecologies. Many of the stories and images were dystopian in response to the “controlled exaggeration” of reality.

From Izaguirre’s recently published paper, “Dreamed Water Towers: Speculative Pedagogies for New Environments”: “Translated to architectural pedagogy, this approach encouraged students to question not only what futures are imagined, but how representational tools shape belief, credibility, and persuasion.”

In other words, what we consume—movies, books, news, media—and what we imagine, interpret, design, discuss, and create shape the world we will all inhabit tomorrow.

The third phase asked students to take their narratives and view them through the lens of utopian architecture, not as a tool for idealism but as something to aspire toward. Each proposal adapted the water tower to one of three concepts: environmental monitoring nodes, multispecies refuges, or playful civic infrastructures.

Among the students’ conclusions was the realization that they could do more than simply design buildings. They also observed how important empathy was in the design process, as opposed to control—a critical component of ecological restoration.

In 2024, economist and Brookings senior fellow Carol Graham studied “a growing body of evidence [that] suggests that the single most consequential component of subjective well-being is hope, as it is critical to future outcomes for individuals and society.” Her work examines ways to prevent the next generation from falling into despair.

The environment—and specifically the very real consequences of climate change and subsequent resource insecurity, amplified by excessive media exposure—is playing a significant role in how humans interpret their worldview.

In her article “Hope, Despair, and Long-Term Outcomes,” Graham writes, “Hope is optimism combined with the belief that one has the agency to make things better.”

So the question becomes: How will architects design with hope to nurture agency in the conversation around water? When businesses, institutions, municipalities, developers, scientists, nonprofits, utility companies, educators, students, and architects focus on addressing even just one drop of water, it turns out the ripples can quench us all. □

Jes Deaver, AIA, is an architect and writer in Central Texas.

← Detail drawings produced by one of Peñalver Izaguirre’s student teams illustrate the architectural proposal developed from speculative scenarios.



Where form and
atmosphere converge

VANISHING POINT





COMING INTO FOCUS over the water, the metallic, undulating form does not immediately register as a boat dock. At a distance, the enclosure flattens almost completely into the glare and texture of Lake Austin, its perforated surface scattering reflections in various directions. Upon approach, some portions of the dock appear dense and opaque while others dissolve almost entirely, making it seem caught in a curious exchange with the water itself.

Behind it, two looming eyeballs applied to a screened facade—a private commission by French artist JR—peer outward over the lake. The dock, by contrast, remains difficult to identify, its legibility varying with changing light and reflection.

Many of the docks peppered along the shorelines of Lake Austin function as floating extensions of the architectural vocabulary set by their adjacent homes, often repeating their rooflines, materials, and stylistic language. Diffuse Dock, designed by Miró Rivera Architects and fabricated by Drophouse Design, instead presents a foil.

“When you go along the lake, one can see that there’s a tendency to extend the language of the architecture of the house into the boat dock design,” says Juan Miró, FAIA. “We wanted this dock to be an absolute departure from anything related to the house, like a creature emerging from the water.”

The site conditions supported that vision. Because the lake was too shallow near the shore, the boat dock needed to be placed farther out than normally allowed, reinforcing the architects’ impulse to conceive the structure as something belonging primarily to the water itself.

Projects operating this close to sculptural intent risk collapsing into image-making. Diffuse Dock, however, achieves a pragmatic utility while remaining both formally enigmatic and technically restrained.

Early studies emerged through hand sketches and physical mock-ups rather than elaborate digital modeling.

“We are very low-tech in the way we think,” Miró explains. “We first drew the boat dock by hand with pencil. We then cut two full scale panels out of chipboard and curved them to fit into ribs built with foamcore.”

A central construction logic followed: a series of steel ribs supporting folded stainless-steel panels capable of bending into curved geometries without requiring compound fabrication.

Rather than relying on heavily customized formed panels, the enclosure was developed around thin stainless-steel “scales” that were pre-rolled at the shop, curved into their final shape by the installer’s handwork, and friction-fit into channels embedded within the ribs themselves.

Fourteen steel ribs in total span nearly 30 feet across the slips below. Each rib is assembled from layered steel plates that create a continuous channel used to receive the perforated stainless-steel panels, allowing the skin to attach without relying on heavily exposed fastening hardware.

Hidden horizontal bracing stiffens the assembly laterally while maintaining its unusually clean silhouette, and the rib assemblies bear onto hollow steel beams supported by piles driven into the lakebed below. Much of the dock’s complexity lies in the tautly resolved relationship between these elements and the enclosure stretched across them.

The perforated panels vary in openness across the dock, becoming increasingly porous near the waterline in response to city transparency requirements and to allow airflow and floodwater to move through the structure freely. The architects note this also allowed the dock to feel lighter and reinforces the feeling of the structure emerging from the water.

From the beginning, cost and constructability shaped the process. Drophouse prepared a full-scale mockup to study how the panels would interact with the rib structure and to develop the attachment strategy before fabrication began.

“There are 880 unique panels because each panel requires a unique connection to the structure,” says Drophouse principal Matt Satter.

Though the enclosure reads as continuous from the water, each rib follows a slightly different path in elevation, altering the geometry between panels. This required a highly coordinated digital workflow in Rhino, Grasshopper, and Revit before moving into laser-cut fabrication, with each piece labeled according to its intended onsite location.

“It was a very complicated design with hundreds of unique parts,” Satter says, “so it became a digital fabrication-driven project.”

← A framework of steel ribs supports the dock’s perforated skin, allowing the structure to continually shift between object and atmosphere.

↓ The dock deliberately departs from the architecture of the adjacent guest house, prioritizing its relationship to water and light.



Its achievement lies less in generating complexity than in suppressing it. Despite the number of unique conditions embedded throughout the dock, the fabrication process repeatedly reduced variation into repeatable operations: flat panels instead of compound curves, paired rib assemblies, digitally indexed parts, friction-fit connections, and prefabricated sequencing designed to minimize installation labor over water. Much of the dock's visual coherence depends on hiding the extent of that variation altogether.

Even so, assembly remained intensely physical. The 14 ribs were welded in pairs offsite before being transported and craned into place over the lake.

Within a week, the primary steel framework was standing. Over the following six weeks, the perforated panels were individually installed and adjusted across the curved surface. Prefabrication reduced as much onsite labor as possible, but field alignment and tolerance management still unfolded incrementally over the water itself.

"Our favorite project types are the ones you look at and go, 'I don't know how you're gonna do that,'" says Drophouse founder Christian Klein. "We like to exist in a narrow window between art and architecture, and how you actually build it."

Diffuse Dock's atmospheric lightness depends on an enormous amount of concealed coordination, fabrication, and physical sequencing, much of which disappears entirely in the finished work, and its precision is deployed in service of a kind of uncertainty. Despite the rigor embedded within its design and execution, the project reads as contingent rather than fixed.

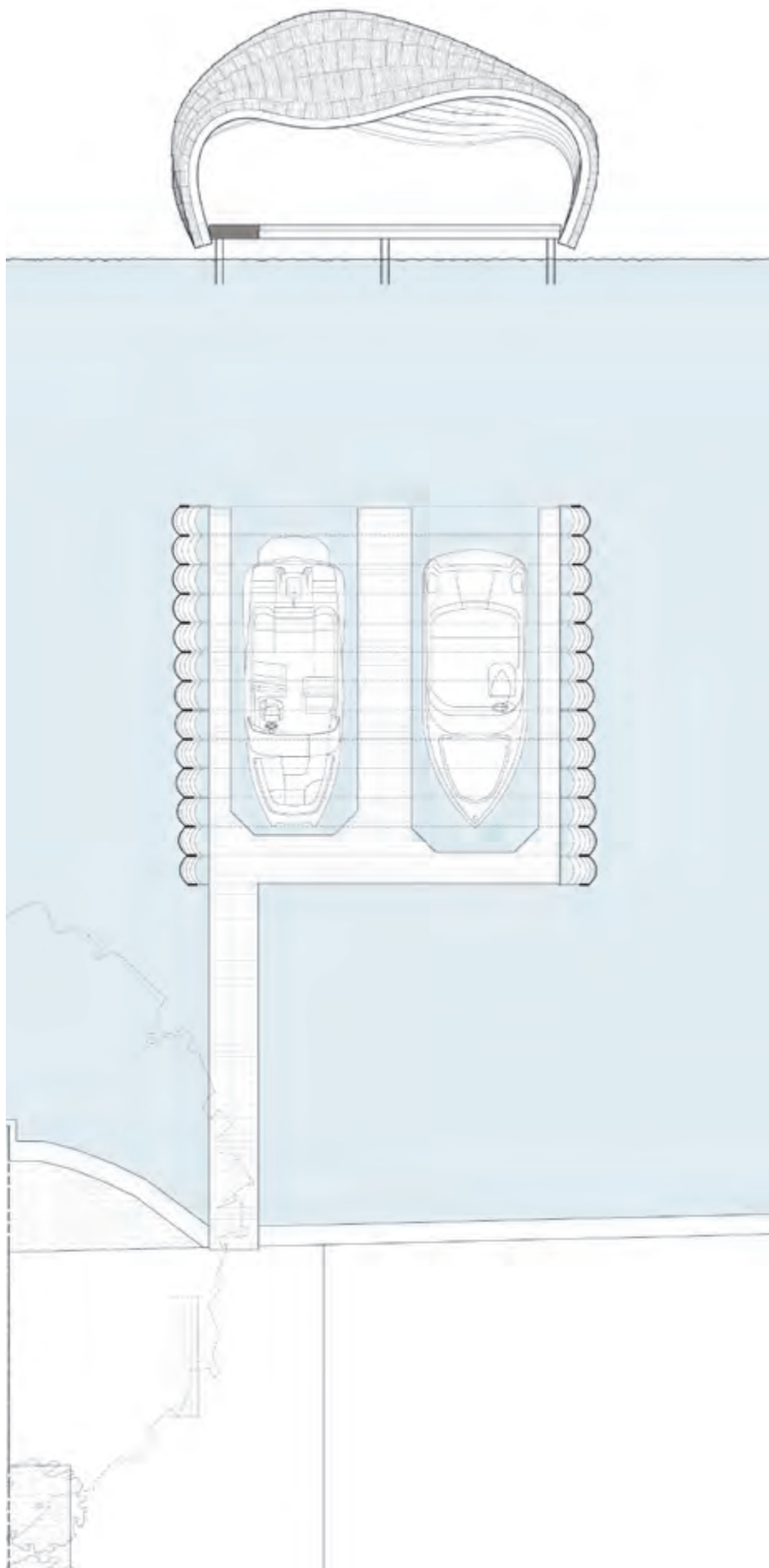
Like the reflections that continually alter its appearance, the dock resists settling into a single identity. It remains suspended somewhere between object and atmosphere, defined less by permanence than by continual visual exchange with water and light. □

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

PROJECT	Diffuse Dock
LOCATION	Austin
ARCHITECT	Miró Rivera Architects
DESIGN TEAM	Juan Miró, FAIA, Miguel Rivera, FAIA, Matthew Sturich, Harrison Marek, Nick Steshyn
CONTRACTOR	Tripathi Builder
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	MJ Structures
CIVIL ENGINEER	Janis Smith Consulting
ARCHITECTURAL STEEL	Drophouse Design
LIGHTING	Arc Light Design
PHOTOGRAPHER	Rafael Gamo

⇒ The enclosure becomes increasingly porous near the waterline, satisfying transparency requirements while allowing air and floodwater to move freely through the structure.

PLAN & ELEVATION





The background of the image is a solid teal color, overlaid with a pattern of white, wispy clouds that resemble smoke or steam. The clouds are more concentrated on the right side and bottom, creating a sense of movement and depth.

MISSION CRITICAL

DESIGNING DATA CENTERS FOR A RESOURCE- CONSTRAINED FUTURE

FOR ALL THE NOISE surrounding data centers, there is, ironically, very little data—or reasoned discussion—on the subject. Data centers fit the bill of most industrial architecture: resource-heavy, sparsely inhabited, and prone to sustainability concerns, including various kinds of pollution, especially noise and light pollution. And much like other industrial forms of architecture—power plants, factories, and the like—people usually don’t like to have them built next to their communities.

Essentially digital processing plants, data centers are the new mission-critical archetype powering your Google searches, cloud storage, and any AI you may be using, knowingly or unknowingly. They are also increasingly part of Texas’s water conversation. These buildings do not simply consume land and electricity; depending on their cooling systems and energy sources, they can also require significant water. In a state already struggling with drought, groundwater stress, rapid growth, and aging infrastructure, the question is not whether data centers use water. They do. The more useful question is how much, where, under what design assumptions, and compared with what other demands.

Watching AI inhabit—or invade, rather—nearly every industry in the span of two years has been a lot to catch up with and to stay informed on. Data centers are the foundation that allowed this to happen, but it’s worth noting that they are far from a new project type. Data centers have been around for as long as digital servers have, the first established at the University of Pennsylvania in 1945.



In Texas, there are currently about 300 data centers, the exact figure depending on definitions. In total, though the exact number varies quite a lot, there are about 5,000 data centers in the U.S. Of course, AI and the potential use of generative AI in everyday work tasks have substantially and quickly caused a data center boom. Of the 300 or so Texas data centers, more than half have been built since 2020, and more than 150 are already planned by 2028—more than half of them in the Dallas–Fort Worth metro area.

To put this growth in perspective, by 2030, Texas is expected to have built more data center infrastructure in this decade than existed on Earth prior to 2020. Regardless of the explosive growth of data centers, their core design strategies—and our need for them to support digital infrastructure—have remained fairly constant for many years.

Speaking with experts on the topic—Josh Moore, a director of design technology, and Chris Sanders, a data center practice leader, both in Gensler’s Dallas office—it seems that this trend is nothing new to those involved in the mission-critical side of architecture. Moore and Sanders have both been involved in the DFW data center design scene for years, prior to the explosive rise in centers.

To them, the data center design trend, as well as its multitude of potential issues, started in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. This makes sense, considering the entire world essentially went online for two years, and the work-from-home model became a standard, where it had previously been considered impossible, or at least impractical, at both the infrastructure and employee-employer levels.

However, the transition online was relatively smooth, at least as far as society-wide emergencies go, and infrastructure to support that shift was rapidly put in place to support an indefinite, potentially long-term, online presence for everyone.

Again, data centers had been around for decades, but their explosive rise to the top of revenue streams began when much of the developed world went digital during the pandemic. And so, the work on data centers was being done long before they reached mainstream discussion. The only thing that has changed significantly with the rise of AI is scale; quite simply, data centers need to be much larger than they used to be, and as such, they require more resources.

This issue of scale is among the biggest challenges regarding new construction, according to Tom Earp, a principal and engineering director at Stantec. The formula has not changed fundamentally in terms of data centers’ needs and challenges; it has grown to support the increasing prevalence of AI systems, which are much more energy-intensive than previous servers.

According to a 2025 analysis by SolarTech republished by the Independent Alliance of the Electrical Industry, traditional server racks tend to consume anywhere from 5 to 15 kW, while new AI-based server racks tend to consume anywhere from 40 kW to more than 100 kW at the top end. For large data centers, like those under Google, Amazon, and others, this industry shift is extreme, as those centers support millions of servers worldwide. It is no exaggeration to say that some centers could easily consume the full output of a traditionally mid-sized power plant.

The technology is also constantly changing as everything is being developed, making efficient, future-proof centers difficult to design. Earp explains, “As designers, we are put in this constantly interesting challenge of: How do we design a building that’s

highly efficient based on what we know today about servers, and also recognize that this facility should still be relevant 15 or 20 years from now?”

Consequently, many of the larger centers are being built with that in mind, shooting for too much space rather than too little to suit their needs in the near future. Again, the issues we face seem to be an issue of growth and scale, rather than of the typology itself.

Speaking of resources, we should clarify the doom and gloom that often comes along with discussion of these new centers. Data centers do indeed use a lot of resources: Approximately 70 percent of their running costs come from electricity alone, and they use billions of gallons of water each year. This sounds terrifying, but there is context missing from these statistics.

First, although we are talking about running out of water in Texas, existing data centers account for a small share of the state’s total water use—roughly one percent today, with projections approaching three percent by 2030. To put this in perspective, Texas Water Development Board estimates for 2023 found that water use by industrial manufacturing and processing accounted for about eight percent of Texas’s water use, which is where that current one percent lies—alongside petrochemical plants, factories, and so forth. Household water accounted for 35 percent, and agricultural irrigation for a staggering 49 percent. The remaining percentage is broken into smaller categories, including mining, ranching, and other niches. While the water use of data centers is a real and delicate issue, it is far from the heart of the water crisis in Texas.

Additionally, recent regulation has been put in place to track water use. Beginning this year, data centers will be asked to report their water use to the state, whereas before reporting was optional. This is in addition to Senate Bill 6, passed in 2025, which addresses large electrical loads and grid planning in response to data centers and other high-demand users.

The centers themselves are also adapting, with many designs shifting toward closed-loop cooling systems instead of standard open-loop cooling systems. The difference is that closed-loop systems reuse and recirculate water before it either evaporates or is discharged as wastewater. This change can save a data center anywhere from one-third to 70 percent of its water use—so although data centers use millions of gallons of water, they have already made steps to cut back.

And while they also use a considerable amount of electricity, as we have seen, many are being built in Texas because the state has some of the cheapest and most abundant electricity in the world, a significant share of which comes from renewable energy sources like wind and solar. Furthermore, 2025 legislation requires certain large-load users, including many new data centers, to help fund upgrades to Texas’s energy grid in order to operate. (Ironically, we may have data centers to thank, in part, to a more resilient grid.)

Steve Amsbury, of Eaton, a supplier for data center energy systems, makes the point that data centers are too financially reliant on infrastructure to abuse it the way traditional industrial buildings often do. “Data centers are, after all, mission-critical facilities,” he says. “They are designed to operate 100 percent of the time, regardless of how things may go wrong. If a data center’s operation goes down, even for a minute or two, millions of dollars are on the line.”

So where does the disparity lie between public consciousness and the reality of data centers? There is no single clear answer, but from what I can tell from my research, much of it has to do with two main ideas.

← There are currently about 300 data centers in Texas, and more than half have been built since 2020.

IMAGE COURTESY GENSLER



The first is that data centers have been conflated with cryptocurrency farms, which are abundant in Texas because of cheap energy and cheap land. Crypto farms, for those unfamiliar, spend an obscene amount of water and energy running computations for the chance to bring in cryptocurrency by verifying transactions and other bookkeeping items. This is how Bitcoin operates, and many other currencies follow this formula with some variation.

At one point, it was thought that crypto would replace traditional currency for its ability to be securely and privately tracked via the blockchain, as well as for the blockchain's ability to store information securely, like digital licenses, deeds, signatures, and so on. But so far, these speculative uses have failed to become mainstream.

In reality, these "farms" consume a substantial amount of energy and contribute little back to Texas. Ironically, some farms made more money selling their power back to the grid during emergencies than they did running their operations, which says a lot about that industry. And unfortunately, these farms look much like the data centers built by Google, Microsoft, and other multinational tech companies that have legitimate utility.

The second disparity stems from a convergence of infrastructure issues coming home to roost just as these facilities are being built. Data centers are taking the blame for problems that have gone unaddressed for years because they are new—and because there are so many of them.

For decades, oil refineries, industrial farms, and semiconductor facilities have strained Texas's infrastructure while polluting the environment. Long before the rise of data centers, these industries consumed far more water and electricity than data centers do today, even accounting for projected growth. They have also operated for decades with relatively limited regulation. Waste from refineries and industrial farms has been a longstanding problem, as has their continued withdrawal of water from sources such as Lake Corpus Christi.

This brings us to a very hard-to-swallow fact about sustainability and the way we've structured society. If you have ever owned and driven a car—which likely includes most readers—you have almost certainly caused more environmental damage and contributed more to climate change than any AI super-user.

For perspective, using the per-query consumption figure shared by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman (.34 watt-hours of electricity), you would need to make several million AI queries, depending on the intensity of the task, to generate a carbon footprint equivalent to that of an average car over its lifetime, including its production, maintenance, and fuel consumption. While that estimate is controversial and the exact number of prompts hard to say, the point stands that our issue is not with electricity consumption, but with electricity production via fossil fuels. And the above estimate is for a single vehicle. Most people will own several cars over their lifetime, potentially pushing the equivalent number of AI prompts further into the millions. It is also worth remembering that we are still in the earliest stage of AI development—the technology's least efficient and least productive phase. Since large language models became publicly available, their efficiency has steadily improved.

To be clear, I am not an advocate of AI, and I am deeply concerned about the way it has been developing. There are plenty of issues with AI beyond sustainability, many of them freighted with ethical considerations. However, the

reality is that AI is not a significant contributor to the environmental crises we face; our dependence on fossil fuels is.

This also brings us to another uncomfortable reality for architecture. As we all know, the built environment is a major contributor to climate change, with building construction and operations accounting for more than a third of global CO2 emissions. Designing unsustainable buildings—whether through the unnecessary use of concrete, steel, and glazing or by shipping materials instead of using what is locally available—put us in a precarious position long before the data center boom.

Architects have played a far greater role in creating this situation than data and technology companies, and it is a reality that the profession needs to confront more directly. Fortunately, many industry leaders have begun to do just that.

Gensler, for example, is working toward a carbon-neutral operations and production by 2030, and its work on data centers is no exception. Microsoft recently collaborated with Gensler on data centers in Virginia that use mass timber rather than the concrete-box aesthetic that dominates much of the sector.

This may come as a surprise given Microsoft's role in advancing AI and digital infrastructure, but the company has set an even more ambitious goal than carbon neutrality, aiming to become carbon negative. Stantec, which recently absorbed Page and has emerged as one of the major players in the data center boom, has adopted a similar trajectory. The firm is targeting carbon-neutral operations by 2030 and embodied carbon neutrality by 2040, with its data center portfolio included in those commitments.

As in politics, it is easy to identify a scapegoat and assign blame. The more difficult truth is that responsibility for the crises we face is widely shared. Whether the issue is infrastructure, resource management, climate change, or another society-wide challenge, we all play some role in shaping priorities—whether as designers specifying concrete or as citizens who drive cars.

That does not mean data centers deserve a free pass; it means they deserve better design. Their environmental impact will depend less on the abstract fact of their existence than on the choices made around siting, cooling, energy sourcing, water reuse, and grid integration. A data center built in the wrong place, drawing potable water from an already stressed basin and relying on a fragile grid, is not the same proposition as one designed around closed-loop cooling, reclaimed water, renewable power, waste-heat reuse, and measurable infrastructure investment.

Data centers are not simply technological objects or industrial sheds at the edge of town. They are architectural and infrastructural systems, tied directly to the future of water, power, land, and climate resilience in Texas. The question is not whether we can stop the digital world from needing physical buildings. We cannot. The question is whether we will design those buildings as another extractive layer on already strained systems—or as an opportunity to make the interdependence of energy, water, and architecture more visible, more accountable, and ultimately more responsible. □

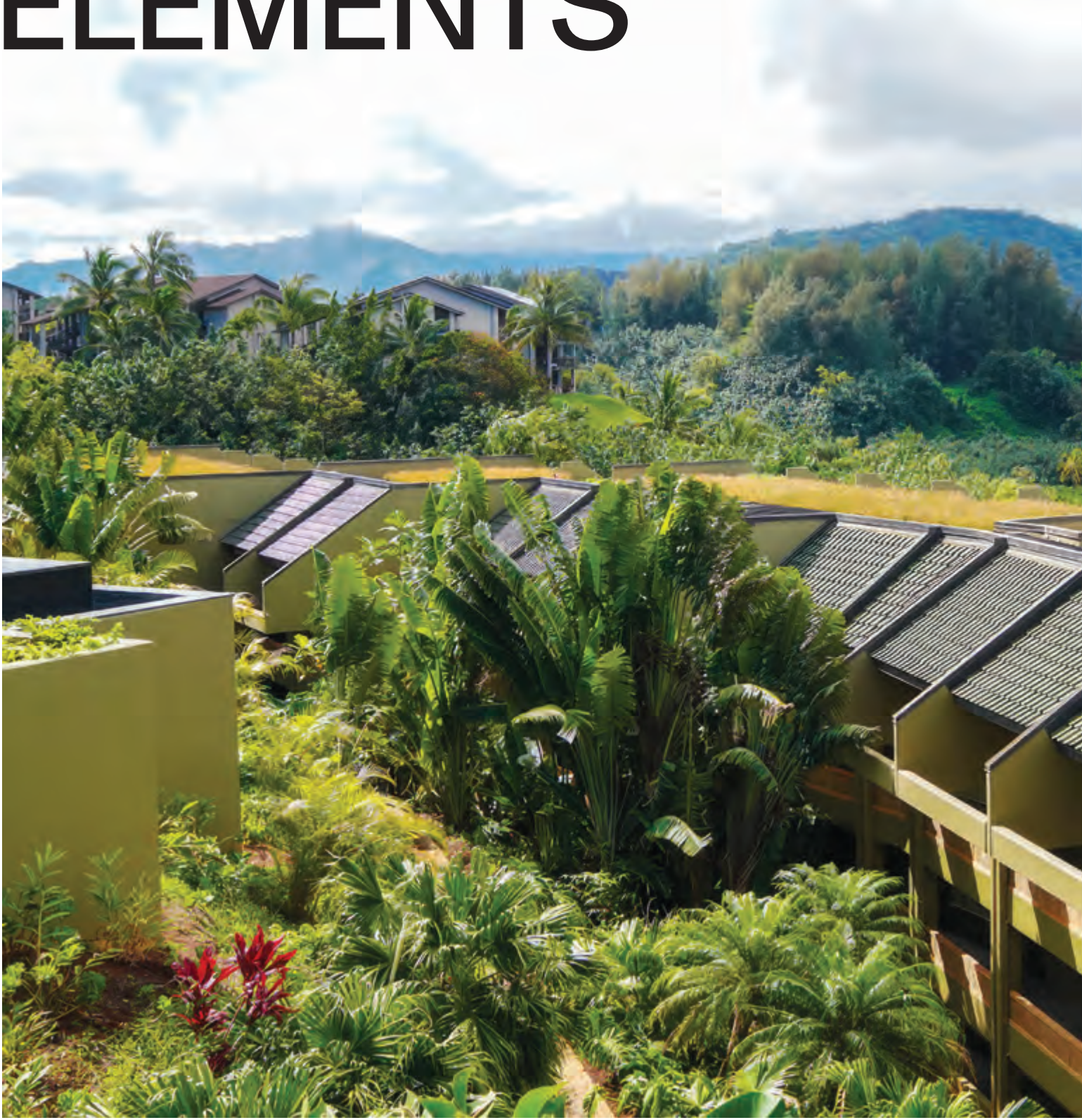
← Closed-loop system design can reduce a data center's water consumption by up to 70 percent.

IMAGE COURTESY GENSLER

Cameron Klepac, Assoc. AIA, holds degrees in civil engineering and architecture and serves on the Texas Society of Architect's Publications Committee. They are faculty at Blinn College, teaching courses in architecture, as well as yoga classes from time to time.

RETURN TO THE ELEMENTS

Words by BEN PARKER, AIA, AND ERIN VOSS



A luxury resort is made smaller and greener.



↓ Aerial view of the existing structure. Area in orange was removed and converted to outdoor space.

IMAGE COURTESY LAKE FLATO ARCHITECTS



BEFORE BECOMING the 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay, this property on the northern coast of the island of Kaua'i lived several different lives. Originally opened as the Sheraton Princeville Resort in 1985, the hotel rebranded as the Sheraton Mirage Princeville after hurricane repairs in '92 and was known as the St. Regis Princeville when it battled a huge storm in 2018.

Misunderstanding water hasn't been the direct cause of the building's turbid fortunes. But neither are the two completely unrelated. Kaua'i is the wettest place in the United States by over 200 inches per year. When developers were making Princeville into a luxury resort district during the Carter and Reagan years, they weren't thinking about protecting watersheds, maintaining water quality, or adapting to sea-level rise. But if there is anywhere water should be a first principle of architectural design, it's here.

So what should we do with the ponderous concrete hulks left over from that era? As Frank Lloyd Wright famously said, doctors can bury their mistakes; architects can only advise their clients to plant vines.

Planting vines is not to be sneered at, and it is one step the design team used to reorient the hotel back toward nature. But the first step was much more radical.

The original building "had a lobby that felt more like it belonged in Las Vegas than Hawai'i," says Lake Flato Architects principal David Lake, FAIA. "There were no windows, no connection to the environment. I said to the owner, 'I know you've paid a lot of money per square foot for this building, but we really need to remove the roof and create an entry courtyard.' And he looked at me like I was crazy, and said, 'Do you realize how much I paid for this?' And I said, 'I do. But, you know, it needs to be connected to the landscape and feel like it's situated in the environment of Hawai'i. And to the owner's credit, he leaned into the vision, collaborating closely to evolve the building's original structure into one that feels deeply rooted in Hawai'i's landscape and culture.'"

Now, when visitors arrive, they see a delicate timber trellis emerge from a jungle of 'ulu, kukui, 'ape, and other native and introduced plants. A planted hill screens the hotel beyond, with a tree carved into the shape of the number one serving as the only signage. The road is narrow, curbsless. These effects compound to deliver a sense of simplicity. A return to basics.

The timber entry trellis is the most overt architectural feature of the project. Exuberantly tectonic, it is made of FSC-certified cedar, prefabricated in British Columbia. It curves along the road with a roof that slopes gently inwards, the form inspired in part by local vernacular structures. When it rains—and it usually does—visitors can watch the droplets cascading off the edge, mimicking the many waterfalls visible on the distant verdant mountains.

Once they hand their keys off to the valet, guests pass through the trellis and into a lush garden fronting the spa entrance. Plants here are those customarily used for Hawaiian cultural practices like kapa (bark) dyeing, lei making, and thatch weaving, grounding the design in place. Sunlight reflections from a lava-rock water feature dance across the natural, muted material palette, bringing a calm, cheerful energy to the reception space. The density of planting, the presence of wind and water, and the enclosure of the hotel walls on either side evoke the understory of a tropical valley.

Another effect of removing so much of the previous structure is that, by the time you get to the check-in area, you have already pierced through the building to gain framed views of Hanalei Bay and the waterfalls beyond. The lobby is open to the elements, with horizontal wooden screens continuing the language of the entry trellis—more successful when they stand alone, less successful when they are screening existing interior windows. Looking *makai*—towards the ocean—just above the various cafes and eateries, the rest of the hotel beckons.

The project also added a second pool, redesigned the restaurants, bar, and other public areas, and added rooftop gardens along the room blocks. When we visited in May, the new head chef was growing garnishes on the roof, with plans to expand into more fruits and vegetables. The spa and guest room interiors were also renovated, with only minimal changes to the architecture, including the addition of horizontal sunshades.

↓ Mass timber trellis at the entrance drive.

PHOTO BY KURT WESTERLUND





↑ Lush garden area directly adjacent to the lobby, made possible by demo-ing a significant section of the building
PHOTO BY SHARLENE PENNINGTON

↑ View of garden from lobby
PHOTO BY SHARLENE PENNINGTON



SITE PLAN

- 1 ENTRY
- 2 FRONT DESK
- 3 RAIN GARDEN
- 4 CAFE
- 5 LOUNGE/BAR
- 6 DINING
- 7 LAP POOL
- 8 SPA/Wellness
- 9 EVENT
- 10 GUEST ROOMS





↑ Relandscaped pool area
PHOTO BY SHARLENE PENNINGTON

← Meeting room with view of
Hanalei Bay
PHOTO BY MIKKEL VANG



Sustainability has been mainstream long enough that it is fair to interrogate its seriousness on any project, especially when the branding is so overtly green. Is replacing the marble fountains and gold-plated accents of a 1980s upmarket resort with the lush plantings and water features of a 2020s upmarket resort simply responding to changes in elite taste? Or is the very idea of a “sustainable luxury hotel” co-opting sustainability into a dominant ethos of well-being, in which *feeling good* is the determinant criterion of any design choice, regardless of its material impact?

Fortunately, we have metrics to help answer such questions. Removing the enclosed marble entrance and replacing it with native plantings restored about 35 percent of the property’s footprint as greenspace and native habitat. Most of the watering needs are covered by a 7,400-gallon rainwater cistern, which, along with smart planting choices and efficient systems, contributes to a 75 percent reduction in irrigation water use. Capitalizing on the abundant, natural supply of water is only one of the reasons for the building’s LEED certification: Energy

and material use also played significant roles. By upholding both performance and experience as mutually constitutive goals, this project avoids the two traps most common to sustainable-forward projects. It is not a sleekly branded marketing package that talks a good greenwashing game with no backup, but neither is it an overengineered, eco-gadget more interested in the data it generates than in the habitat it provides for human beings. Overall, it testifies that the best projects consider performance and experience as an integrated problem, especially when renovating existing structures that are deficient in both.

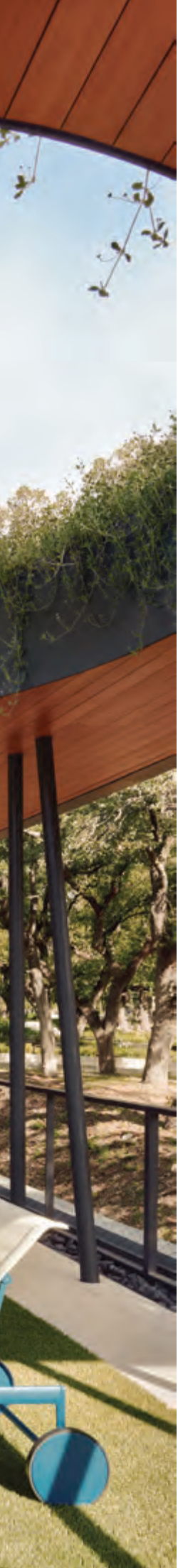
The building has softened its environmental impact, as proven by the data but also by simple observation. Seen from across the bay, the vigorously growing nanea (*Vigna marina*) vines trailing down balconies are beginning to help the bunker-like room blocks blend into the hillside and existing canopy. The new planting around the pool—replacing manicured lawns—transitions the private space to the public beach more gently. Less building, more plants: The project offers a deceptively simple solution for the next incarnation of outdated buildings. □

Ben Parker, AIA, is an assistant professor of architecture at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and leader of OBP Design.

Erin Voss is an assistant professor of landscape architecture at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

PROJECT	1 Hotel Hanalei Bay
LOCATION	Kaua'i, Hawai'i
CLIENT	1 Hotel
DESIGN ARCHITECT	Lake Flato Architects
ARCHITECT OF RECORD & CIVIL ENGINEER	G70
DESIGN TEAM	LATE FLATO: David Lake, FAIA, James Thoreen, Darby Prendergast, AIA, Jonathan Smith, AIA; G70: Linda Miki, AIA, Ken Nukui, AIA
CONTRACTOR	Layton Construction & Nordic PCL Construction
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	BASE
MEP ENGINEER	Interface Engineering
INTERIOR DESIGNER	NICOLEHOLLIS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT	PBR HAWAII & Associates
ELECTRICAL ENGINEER	Albert Chong Associates
WATERPROOFING	WJE
ADA	LCM
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Sean O'Connor Lighting
SUSTAINABILITY/LEED CONSULTANT	Brightworks Sustainability
MPF ENGINEER	Dorvin D. Leis
POOL (DESIGN-BUILD)	Pacific AquaScapes
LOW VOLTAGE AND TECHNOLOGY	Engineering PLUS
KITCHEN	TriMark Raygal
PHOTOGRAPHERS	Sharlene Pennington, Mikkell Vang, Kurt Westerlund





PARADISE BUILT

A room for every season



DURING A BLISTERING TEXAS SUMMER, the longest distance between two points is the stretch lacking the forgiveness of shade. For the residents of Austin’s well-known Floating Box House, an absence of shade prevented them from enjoying their spacious backyard and pool during the city’s many hot months. To remedy this, Baldrige Architects designed a 3,300-sf pavilion that facilitates a year-round relationship between the owners and their pool, allowing their lives to flow seamlessly into and around the space no matter the season.

The original home, built between 2002 and 2006, is most famous for its gravity-defying western facade. Designed by Peter L. Gluck and Partners (now Gluck+), the main body of the house is partially submerged underground. Its above-grade portion is supported by a large truss that permits the glassy first floor to remain unencumbered by traditional support columns. Burton Baldrige, FAIA, now the principal of his own firm, was the on-site architect and general contractor for the project during his time working for Gluck. He has a deep connection to the property and has spent a significant portion of his life working on its various additions and improvements. “There wouldn’t be a Baldrige Architects without this house,” he insists.

One of the primary design goals for this project was minimizing its impact on the appearance of the original structure. “Drawing from earlier versions of the primary home’s design, we proposed an unconditioned plane drawing from the lines of the existing home,” says Baldrige. Indeed, from the opposite side of the house, it is nearly impossible to see the pavilion at all. Its minimal profile and deferential design language allow the pavilion to effortlessly blend into the background. Its form and position were inspired by a wing on the opposite side of the house that was envisioned during the initial design of the home but never built. The pavilion mirrors the placement of the would-be wing, sitting perpendicular to the main volume of the house.

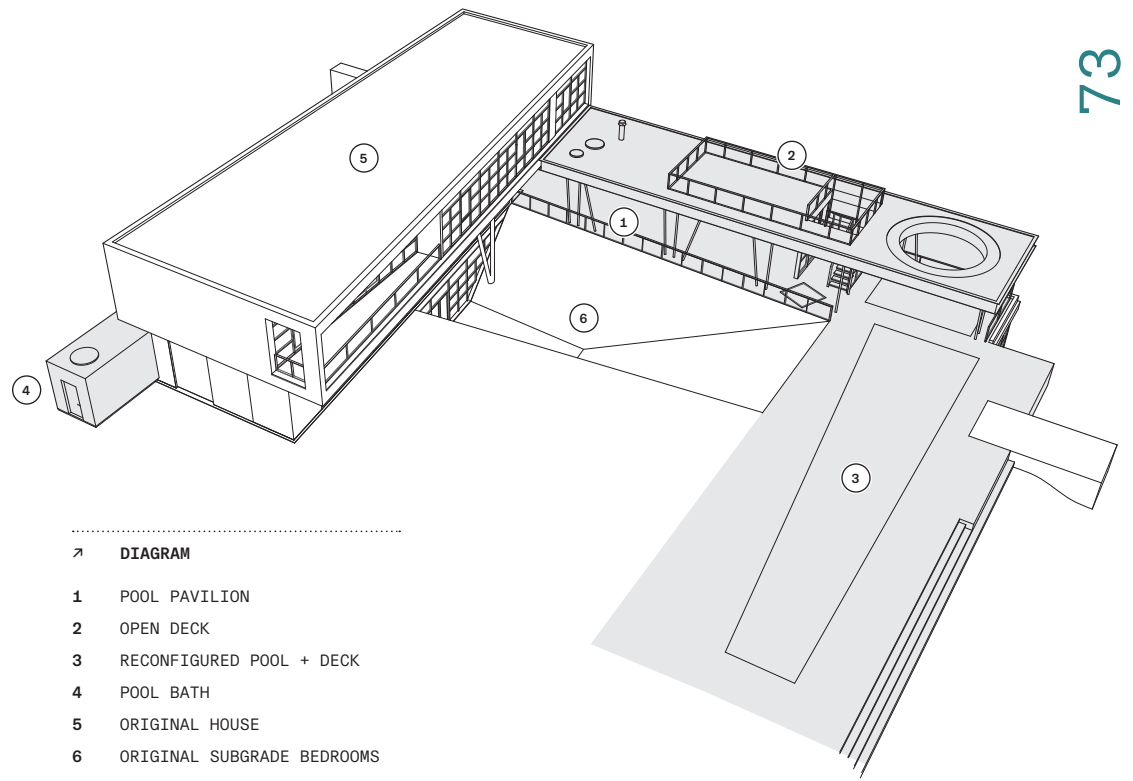
The clients wanted their new shade structure to perform a host of functions and accommodate dining, lounge, kitchen, and bathroom spaces. Underlaid with suspended limestone pavers, the pavilion is organized shotgun-style, beginning with a comfortable living room that opens into an adjacent kitchen. The kitchen is designed to read as furniture rather than built-in components, helping the pavilion maintain an air of lightness and ephemerality. The oculus at the easternmost end of the pavilion, inspired by Mexican cenotes, provides a place for sunning next to the pool. While lounging, the residents can gaze up through the oculus at the surrounding plantings and sky beyond. A small staircase, sandwiched between the kitchen and lounge spaces, leads up to an uncovered roof deck. From here, the owners can enjoy unobstructed views of Austin’s ever-changing skyline.

The design team made one notable change to the clients’ programmatic request: They did not include a bathroom in the pavilion. “We understood the project wanted to be as dematerialized as possible—it would not



← The pool pavilion is designed to remain nearly invisible when approached from the main house.

↓ Designed as a flexible, multifunctional outdoor living space, the pavilion is equipped for year-round use.





↑ A system of raked columns and roof drains echoes the vertical elements of the original house.

← Retractable glass panels partially enclose the pavilion during windy or rainy weather.

easily accommodate an enclosed bathroom,” Baldridge explains. Instead, the bathroom was concealed inside a brace frame for the original home. Formerly used for storage and mechanicals, the space is now a vibrantly tiled bathroom accessible directly from the backyard.

At ground level, the pavilion seems to be completely separate from the main house, with a clear gap between their rooflines defining them as two distinct constructions. However, the pavilion is actually built on top of habitable space, connecting to the structural frame of an underground wing directly beneath it. The size and shape of the shade structure is defined by the 14-foot on-center steel framing below. The design team used a system of raked columns to disguise the regularity of the pavilion’s structure and mimic the articulation of vertical elements within the original home. Some of these canted columns are actually roof drains, painstakingly integrated with the existing roof drains of the subterranean wing, which now drain into a concurrently built rainwater detention pond.

The project provides the family with the amenities to maintain an outdoor lifestyle all year round, which enables them to live more sustainably overall: While they relax and entertain guests outside, the interior of the main home does not need to be heavily conditioned. The ceiling, clad in sustainably harvested Douglas fir planks, conceals a TV and built-in speakers in the outdoor living room. The inclusion of a hanging fireplace and infrared heaters equip the pavilion for use during the cold winter months, and hyper-efficient LED lights contribute to year-round energy efficiency. Retractable glass panels along the northern edge of the structure enable it to become semi-enclosed on windy or rainy days.

Although the pool pavilion is small in comparison to the original house, it performs a crucial function that has dramatically altered the owners’ daily routines by facilitating a strong connection with their pool and backyard. With its flexibility to accommodate various weather conditions, this multiuse outdoor living space allows an entire day’s worth of activities to take place alongside the water, regardless of the time of year. The subtle pavilion honors the existing house, respectfully expanding upon its programming to support the outdoor lifestyle of its active residents. □

Abigail Thomas works at McKinney York Architects in Austin.

PROJECT	Floating Box Pool Pavilion
LOCATION	West Lake Hills
ARCHITECT & INTERIOR DESIGNER	Baldridge Architects
DESIGN TEAM	Burton Baldridge, FAIA, Laura Grenard, AIA, Malati Vasudevan
CONTRACTOR	Warriner Construction
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	Architectural Engineers Collaborative
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS	Design Workshop, Word + Carr Design Group
PHOTOGRAPHER	Casey Dunn

↓ The outdoor bathroom is strategically located within a brace frame of the main house.



↑ The pavilion is structurally integrated with an underground wing of the main house.

RUNNING DRY

CORPUS CHRISTI'S WATER CRISIS REVEALS THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING FOR GROWTH.

IN THE SUMMER AND FALL OF 2025, I spent nearly every weekend standing in line at 6 a.m. with dozens of other residents, each with a truck, trailer, and water tank, waiting at a local wastewater treatment plant. We were there to receive effluent water in hopes of keeping the landscaping around our homes alive after the city enacted drastic water-conservation measures in fall 2024 that prohibited irrigation. We remain in severe drought—a drought that has exposed a long-developing water-supply shortage for both my city and the broader Coastal Bend region.

During those early morning hours, I found myself thinking not only about the immediate crisis but also about the lessons it might hold for other cities beginning to see signs of water stress. I also wondered whether architects could play a larger role in helping communities anticipate such conditions and develop long-range solutions. Our profession has spent decades grappling with conservation, sustainability, and resilience at the scale of buildings and sites. As water shortages become increasingly common, perhaps those same skills can be put to use on a broader civic scale.

The city of Corpus Christi and the surrounding seven-county region of roughly 300,000 residents now find themselves in a water-supply crisis. It is rare for a US city of this size to face a shortage of this magnitude. Significant rainfall in April and May finally interrupted the current drought and delivered short-term relief. Local leaders have effectively been granted additional time to make difficult—but necessary—decisions about the region's water future with fewer immediate punitive consequences than seemed likely only a few months ago.

As of June 2, the Corpus Christi City Council again delayed action, tabling a decision on the Inner Harbor desalination plant—a seawater desalination facility planned along the Corpus Christi Ship Channel—until September. Whether the city can successfully navigate both its near-term water shortage and the longer-term challenge of securing a resilient water supply remains uncertain.

How did we get here? The answers are anything but simple. A sustainable long-term solution will require collective recognition that this is a shared problem demanding shared responsibility. Each new water source will likely come at a higher cost than the last, making conservation not only environmentally prudent but economically necessary.

Corpus Christi and the greater Coastal Bend economy are built on a balance of diverse industries. The region depends on a substantial industrial base that includes refining and petrochemical production, liquified natural gas (LNG) transport, and numerous businesses supported by the energy sector. This industrial base has grown significantly over the past decade and is served by what has become one of the nation's largest energy-export ports.

Another major economic driver is the geography of the Coastal Bend region itself, which supports agriculture, tourism, fishing, hunting, birding, and other forms of coastal recreation. The region's robust coastal ecology and marine life support several significant research and educational institutions, including the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi, the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, and the Texas State Aquarium, which is now part of the Oceans and Wildlife Institute. The long-standing coexistence and collaboration among industry, business, and the marine-science community reflect the interconnected nature of life and work along the Texas coast and are a testament to the dedication of the region's residents who lead these industries and institutions.

Corpus Christi's potable water supply shares characteristics with many other Texas cities in that it has historically relied on surface water. Until the late 1990s, the city depended entirely on its western reservoirs, the Choke Canyon Reservoir and Lake Corpus Christi. These reservoirs are fed by a watershed extending west of San Antonio into southern portions of the Hill Country. The Frio and Nueces rivers and their tributaries form the primary arteries of this watershed and have historically received a portion of their flow from the Edwards and Carrizo aquifers. The Nueces River ultimately delivers the watershed's output to Corpus Christi.

The past 100 years of the river's history tells the story of a watershed in decline. From 1915 through the mid-1970s, average flow rates exceeded 500 million gallons per day. Since then, flow rates have never returned to those levels, and over the past two decades have averaged less than 220 million gallons per day. This sustained decline may also indicate broader changes affecting the Hill Country aquifers that support much of Central Texas.

A prolonged drought during the early and mid-1990s forced Corpus Christi to accelerate plans that had been in the works since the 1980s to secure an additional water source from a less drought-prone region. The result was the construction of the Mary Rhodes Pipeline, named for the former mayor who relentlessly shepherded the project. The pipeline extends approximately 100 miles east to Lake Texana and entered service in 1999. An additional 42-mile extension to the Colorado River was completed in 2016.

These eastern supplies have since become the city's primary source of water, providing more than 70 million gallons per day from Lake Texana and the lower Colorado River. Maintaining uninterrupted operation of this pipeline system is therefore paramount. At present, there is little redundancy or storage capacity associated with this portion of the regional water-supply network.

According to the City of Corpus Christi's website, the regional industrial base collectively consumes approximately 60 percent of the potable water supply for the Coastal Bend. This figure has led some residents to argue that industrial users should bear the primary burden of future reductions.

Historical water-use data, however, suggest a more complicated picture. Reductions in industrial consumption during the 2010s appear to have largely offset demand from newer



industrial users. Overall industrial water consumption today remains comparable to levels seen in the 2000s despite significant industrial expansion since 2020.

A SINGLE-SOURCE MODEL

One of the more unique characteristics of the Coastal Bend's water system is its reliance on a single supply network delivering a single type of water to nearly all users.

Until recently, residents, businesses, and industry alike depended almost entirely on potable water. Historically, this arrangement made sense. Surface-water supplies were the most economical source available, and operating a single distribution system was far simpler than maintaining multiple networks for different grades of water.

Over time, however, this approach evolved into a municipal and regional system that supplied all users with potable water regardless of end use. The city consequently became financially dependent on what utility managers often describe as a single-rate model: one type of water delivered through one distribution system.

At the turn of the century, rising operating costs were becoming unsustainable for local golf courses. Several sought lower-cost irrigation alternatives and found one in treated effluent water—water that has been through the municipal supply and sewage treatment systems, is partially treated, and would otherwise be discharged into natural waterways. Effluent is suitable for irrigation and certain other nonpotable uses. Courses located near wastewater treatment plants were able to connect directly to effluent discharge lines and purchase water at roughly half the cost of potable supplies.

This arrangement effectively established an alternative water rate model for the region. The primary obstacle to broader adoption is the need for a separate distribution system, and constructing those systems is expensive.

The adoption of the alternative supply for golf courses eventually encouraged industrial users to pursue similar arrangements. For large-volume consumers, the economics were compelling. The cost of constructing new pipelines could be offset over time through lower water rates, while reduced reliance on potable water offered broader public benefits.

Yet implementation moved slowly. For more than a decade, the city's dependence on potable-water revenue created little incentive to expand alternative supply systems. Today, however, the severity of the crisis now outweighs the concern for revenue loss.

Effluent supplies have the potential to offset 20 to 25 percent of potable-water demand for industrial users able to connect to the system, according to a presentation made by Corpus Christi Water to City Council. Companies including Valero and Flint Hills Resources are now racing to complete infrastructure projects intended to reduce their dependence on potable water before curtailment measures become necessary, which could occur as soon as this year.

Curtailment—the mandatory reduction of water consumption across all user groups—remains a possibility. Early projections suggest that unilateral reductions of up to 25 percent

may be necessary. The economic implications of industrial curtailment are complex and uncertain, particularly for industries tied to refining and energy production, but the effects would extend well beyond the Coastal Bend.

← A resident walks down a fishing pier behind his family's home that used to be waterfront on Lake Corpus Christi.

PHOTO BY MERIDITH KOHUT/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

GROUNDWATER AND THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL SUPPLY

In hindsight, planning for the region's next major water project was arguably already behind schedule when the final phase of the Mary Rhodes Pipeline was completed in 2016. Around that time, city leaders began exploring seawater desalination and initiated a permitting process that would ultimately take more than a decade to complete. Seawater desalination is complex, energy intensive, and costly but also one of very few options that can provide the scale of water production necessary to reliably fill the void left by drought.

Before discussing desalination, however, it is worth considering another common source of potable water—groundwater aquifers. Many regions of Texas rely heavily on aquifers for potable water. Yet scientists continue to acknowledge that groundwater systems remain less thoroughly understood than they should be given the number of Texans who depend on them. In many areas, aquifers are showing signs of increasing stress, including the Nueces River, noted previously.

The Coastal Bend sits atop the Gulf Coast Aquifer. Although large in area, spanning much of the Texas Coast, it lacks the consistently high water quality found in some other Texas aquifers. Salinity levels vary considerably by location. Some rural communities have enjoyed access to fresh groundwater for decades; other communities have found it altogether unusable; and many have found something in between, using reverse osmosis treatment systems to remove low levels of salinity to make the groundwater usable.

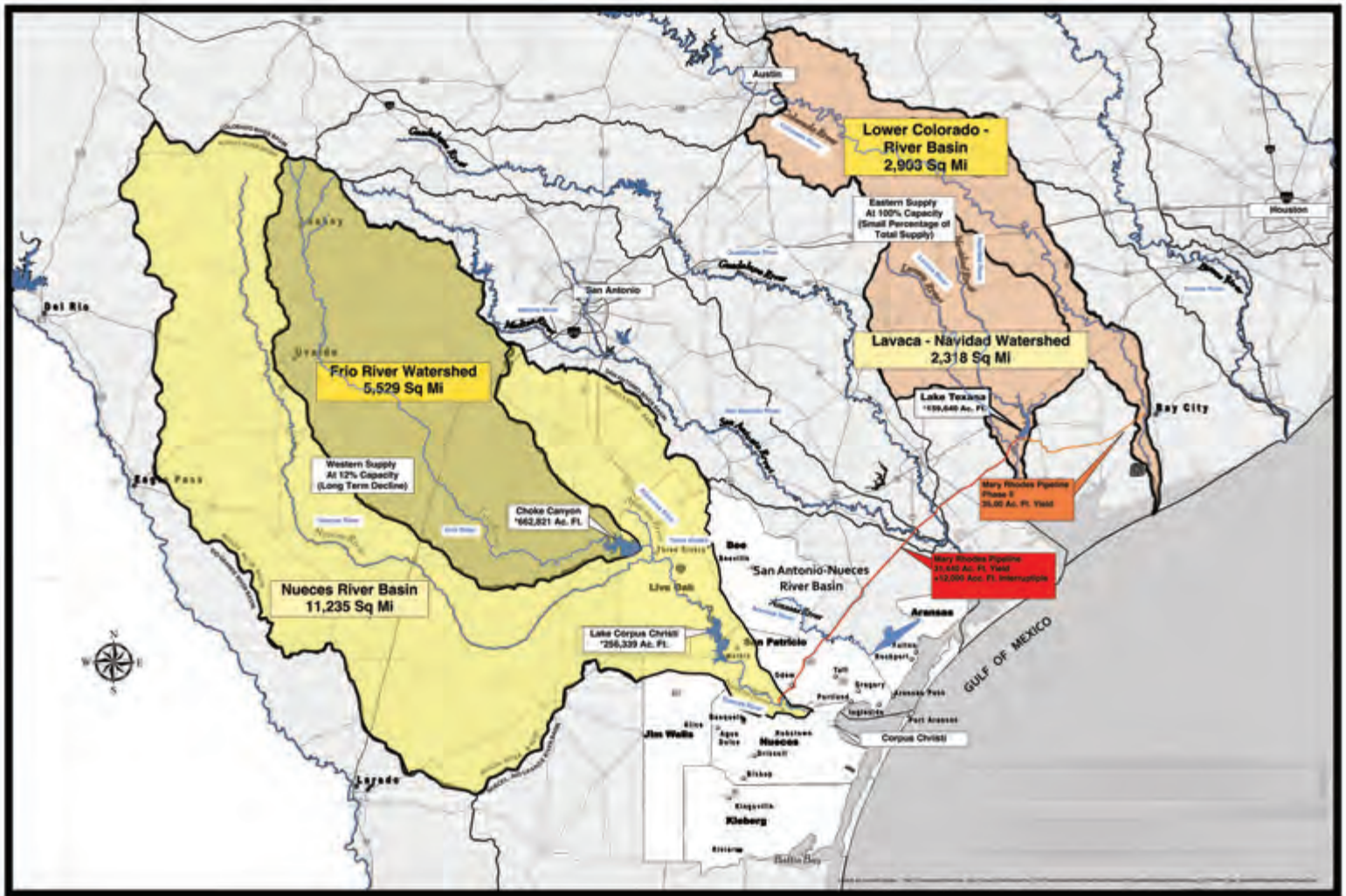
Corpus Christi is now in the difficult position of attempting to rapidly secure groundwater rights and develop well fields capable of supplementing existing supplies. Rural residents and small communities that rely on the Gulf Coast Aquifer are opposing well leases, fearing that a much larger water user tapping into the aquifer could jeopardize water quality and well performance.

At the time of writing, Corpus Christi was bringing its first well field online and constructing a reverse osmosis (RO) facility to treat the water. City leaders continue to search for, evaluate, and negotiate the acquisition of additional groundwater rights for potential future production. Many water experts remain skeptical that large-scale well field projects can provide sustainable long-term yields. Nevertheless, some level of groundwater production will almost certainly be necessary to help the region address its near-term water shortages.

DESALINATION AND LONG-TERM SUPPLY

This brings us back to the most controversial component of Corpus Christi's water future: seawater desalination. It is also the only source currently capable of consistently producing potable water in the quantities necessary to ensure a stable long-term supply. Seawater desalination is a proven technology that is being used around the world, particularly in densely populated regions with limited freshwater resources. While the technology is more common in other parts of the world, its use in the United States continues to grow.

The largest desalination facility in the United States, located in San Diego, California, is now negotiating delivery contracts with communities in Arizona, where population growth is placing increasing pressure on traditional water supplies. Tampa, Florida, also operates a successful desalination plant located in a geographically similar back-bay environment to that of the proposed Inner Harbor desalination facility in Corpus Christi.



↑ Coastal Bend Regional Water Supply Map

DEVELOPED BY AUTHOR FROM BASE MAP BY THE CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Clearly, traditional surface-water and groundwater sources remain the preferred options, particularly with respect to energy consumption and production costs. Yet in some regions of the country, growing demand and recurring drought have placed increasing pressure on these conventional supplies. Whether through conservation, expanded groundwater production, desalination, or a combination of approaches, communities such as Corpus Christi are being forced to consider new strategies for maintaining a resilient and reliable long-term water supply.

Environmental concerns are an equal—if not greater—consideration than cost. Evaluating potential environmental impacts has been a fundamental part of the permitting process for the currently approved Inner Harbor site along the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, a process that began more than a decade ago. To obtain permitted status, the project underwent federal and state review through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), respectively.

A key component of that review has been a theoretical analysis known as "far-field modeling," which attempts to predict the potential effects of highly saline brine discharge from the desalination process on the receiving body of water. This analysis has become a focal point for critics of the project. Although the studies conducted to date—including a recent study commissioned by the City Council—have not projected significant negative impacts on the bay system, some scientists and community

members remain concerned about the limits of modeling and the difficulty of predicting ecological effects over time.

The most recent study was subsequently subjected to peer review by a joint team of local scientists from the University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) and Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi's Harte Research Institute. Their review concluded that the modeling was insufficient to support a definitive opinion and recommended the inclusion of dissolved oxygen modeling as an additional metric. According to available information, incorporating this metric presents significant technical challenges. This author was unable to determine whether oxygenation modeling is routinely included in the environmental evaluations conducted for other desalination facilities.

As with any environmentally regulated facility, continuous operational monitoring will be required throughout the lifespan of the plant to ensure that environmental impacts remain within the parameters established during the permitting process. Permitting does not eliminate uncertainty, but it does establish a regulatory framework for measuring and responding to potential impacts. Concern and vigilance are appropriate whenever a new technology or industry is introduced into the environment, whether the issue is groundwater extraction, surface-water use, or seawater desalination. Every source of potable water carries environmental consequences, and each requires responsible management to balance the needs of the community with the protection of natural resources.

THE COST OF WATER

Having a realistic understanding of project costs is critical to success, particularly for publicly funded infrastructure projects. One of the factors that makes seawater desalination controversial is the difficulty of comparing its costs directly with those of traditional surface-water and groundwater systems. Passive infrastructure such as dams, reservoirs, and pipelines typically requires substantial upfront investment but can be amortized over a long service life, with relatively modest long-term maintenance costs.

Seawater desalination, by contrast, combines significant initial capital costs with higher ongoing operational and maintenance expenses due to its energy requirements and greater construction and maintenance complexity. As a result, the cost of providing the reliable potable water on which we all depend is likely to increase substantially in the years ahead. For the Coastal Bend, that future has already arrived.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Responsibility for addressing the current water crisis ultimately rests with the City of Corpus Christi, even though the consequences of those decisions extend well beyond city limits. Much of the Coastal Bend region depends on the city's water system, meaning that residents, businesses, and industries throughout the region are affected by decisions made by local elected officials and city staff.

Like most Texas municipalities, Corpus Christi operates under a system in which a professional city manager and staff oversee day-to-day operations while the mayor and city council establish policy and provide oversight. Over the past decade, successive city councils and professional staff invested significant time and resources in evaluating future water-supply options, including seawater desalination. The current Council is on the brink of walking away from years of groundwork laid by their predecessors. The current debate over the Inner Harbor project reflects both the scale of that effort and the challenges of making long-term infrastructure decisions amid changing political, economic, and environmental conditions.

Recent City Council votes have revealed a closely divided governing body, with disagreements centering on project costs, environmental uncertainty, permitting, and alternative water-supply strategies. Those debates continue as city leaders weigh immediate water-supply concerns against longer-term planning objectives.

Harbor Island, another proposed seawater desalination project led by the Nueces River Authority (NRA), has emerged as a potentially viable option, albeit one with a longer development timeline and significantly higher infrastructure costs. The proposed facility would be substantially larger than the Inner Harbor plant and could potentially serve multiple regions.

For many critics of the Inner Harbor facility, a key distinction is Harbor Island's proposal to draw seawater and discharge brine far offshore in the Gulf. The assumption is that this approach would present less risk to the salinity balance of the bay system and the aquatic life it supports.

Harbor Island is proposed as a public-private partnership (P3), a procurement model that introduces additional complexity regarding financing, governance, and long-term water costs. Private equity investors typically seek a return on investment, raising questions about how future costs would be structured and managed. At the same time, debate surrounding the Inner

Harbor project has largely centered on environmental concerns, particularly the uncertainty associated with brine-discharge modeling. As a result, the two desalination proposals are often framed as competing alternatives, despite their differing scales, timelines, and intended service areas.

The ongoing discussion reflects the difficult balance between addressing immediate water-supply needs and evaluating longer-term alternatives. Environmental impacts, project costs, permitting requirements, and implementation schedules all remain central considerations as regional leaders assess potential paths forward.

Although the original permit modeling satisfied state and federal regulatory requirements, the Corpus Christi City Council has voted to commission additional brine-discharge modeling to address concerns raised by some stakeholders.

Cost considerations have also influenced the project's development process. The City Council has approved a change in developers in hopes of reducing overall project costs. The new developer has projected savings compared with the original proposal; however, a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) cannot be established until the project advances further through design and procurement.

The project's financing is also tied to approximately \$750 million in low-interest state loans specifically designated for the Inner Harbor facility. These funds were secured through the efforts of a bipartisan coalition of state legislators working with the governor's office and reflect broader state concerns regarding long-term water security.

The debate surrounding the Inner Harbor and Harbor Island projects also raises broader questions about water governance in Texas. As population growth, infrastructure demands, and environmental considerations become increasingly interconnected, policymakers may need to evaluate whether existing governance structures are sufficient to address long-term regional water-supply challenges. The scale and complexity of these issues often extend beyond individual municipal boundaries, requiring coordination among multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders.

THE ROLE OF DESIGN AND LONG-TERM THINKING

As architects, we are not typically in positions to directly influence broader governmental decision-making. However, our training, knowledge, and problem-solving skills can provide valuable perspective to friends, colleagues, and leaders who are. Architects can also help shape the future of their communities by serving on planning commissions, design review boards, watershed and conservation committees, and other civic advisory groups. As politics across the spectrum becomes increasingly divisive, professions that bring analytical thinking, collaboration, and clear problem-solving capabilities are more important than ever.

In the long run, it is difficult to see how the cost of providing a reliable, high-quality water supply will not increase. Water rates will rise. Conservation will become increasingly important for individual consumers. And the need for thoughtful, collaborative problem-solving—across disciplines, institutions, and communities—will only continue to grow. Architects have an important role to play in those conversations, helping connect the design of individual buildings to the broader systems that shape our cities and regions. □

Note: The author of this article has been identified to the editor but has requested to remain anonymous.

Reimagining a campus landmark after Harvey



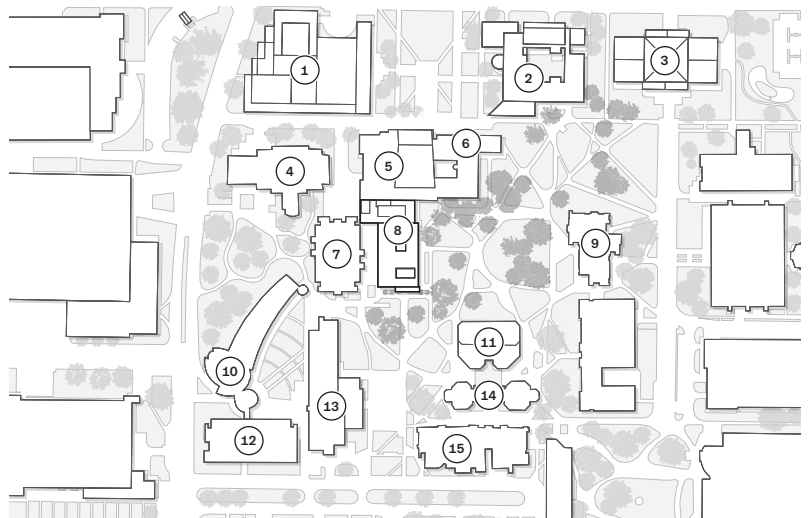
HIGHER

GROUND

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON has reimaged the Student Center Satellite, a 1970s below-grade, flood-prone dining hall that was taken out of commission after sustaining severe damage during Hurricane Harvey. Rising from the footprint of the former Satellite, the new two-story Retail, Auxiliary, and Dining (RAD) Center lifts the student experience up to grade through a light-weight mass timber structure with light-filled interiors. Positioned behind the arts buildings, the RAD acts as a free-flowing connector within the campus and provides students with additional dining options and informal study spaces. It exists as a softer, more transparent counterpart to the surrounding monumental academic buildings and features local operators, including Burger Joint and Taco Stand, alongside a campus coffee shop and a market.

Designed as a “lantern in the woodlands,” the RAD Center welcomes students into a glowing space set among the trees, where the building reflects—both literally and metaphorically—the vertical rhythms of the surrounding nature and art. Vertical fins and glazing form the facade in a pattern informed by solar analysis, reducing glare and heat gain while balancing reflectivity and transparency. Some of the metal fins are meant to cast shadows and maintain a delicate rhythm of the facade, while others serve as environmental shields. From far away, the trees are mirrored on the facade, but as one moves closer to the building, the sky increasingly fills the glazing. By pulling the adjacent nature to the surface of the building, the glass continues the language of the woodlands area and highlights the designers’ careful attention to landscape.

The RAD Center’s material palette follows the campus standard but flips the proportions. It distinguishes itself from the brutalist academic buildings anchored around it by reversing the formula of stone and dark metal trim to achieve a lighter presence. Glass and metal take prominence, while stone is used more selectively to designate entryways and establish the building’s connection to the ground. The metal detailing extends to the interior elements—ductwork, railings, and light fixtures—complementing the light wood of the timber structure. This lean palette creates a building that feels light and permeable, along with a ground plane that smooths the boundary between inside and outside.



SITE PLAN

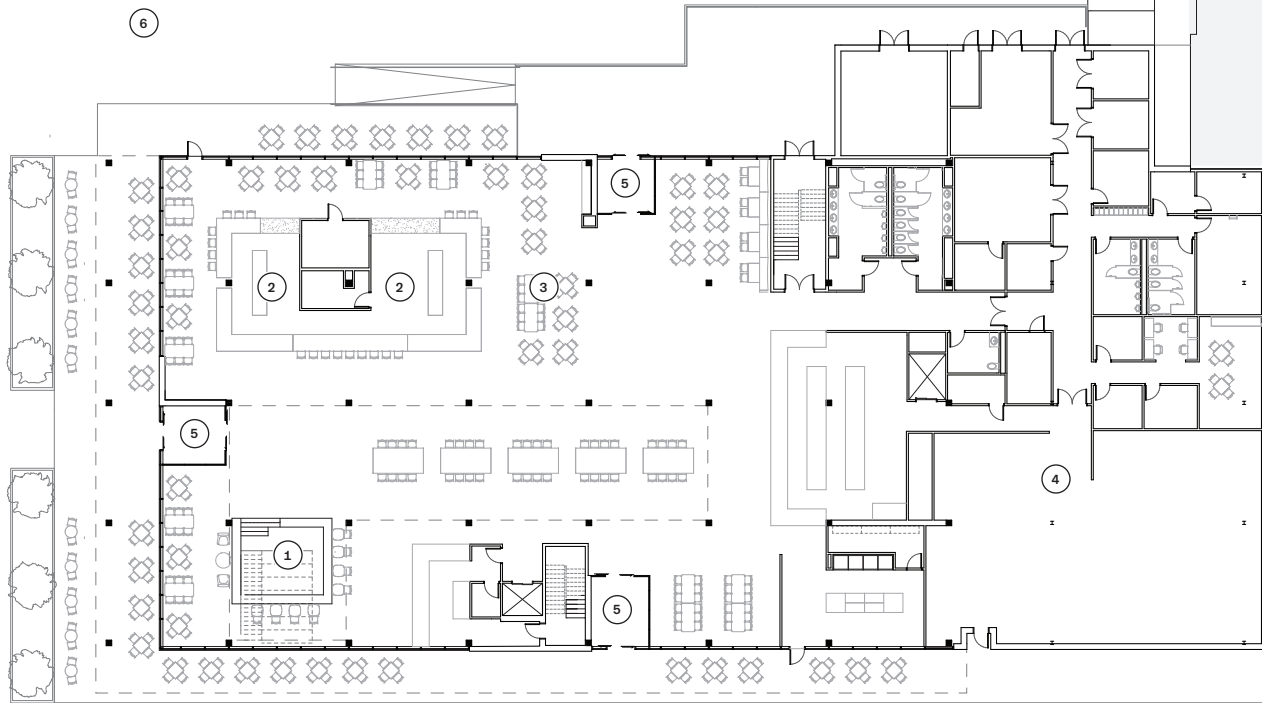
- | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | MOORES SCHOOL OF MUSIC | 9 | COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES |
| 2 | BLAFFER ART MUSEUM | 10 | SCIENCE & ENGINEERING CLASSROOM BUILDING |
| 3 | GERALD D. HINES COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN | 11 | GRADUATE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK |
| 4 | UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SCIENCE CENTER | 12 | SCIENCE & ENGINEERING RESEARCH CENTER |
| 5 | CYNTHIA WOODS CENTER FOR THE ARTS | 13 | SCIENCE AND RESEARCH 1 |
| 6 | JACK J. VALENTI SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION | 14 | AGNES ARNOLD AUDITORIUM |
| 7 | SCIENCE AND RESEARCH 2 | 15 | AGNES ARNOLD HALL |
| 8 | RETAIL, AUXILIARY, AND DINING (RAD) CENTER | | |



↑ The RAD Center welcomes students into a glowing space set among the trees—a lantern in the woodlands.

→ Vertical fins and glazing form a facade pattern informed by solar analysis. The metal fins create depth and shadow, while the glazing reflects the surrounding landscape.





LEVEL 1 PLAN

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | MONUMENTAL STAIR | 4 | KITCHEN |
| 2 | FOOD VENDOR | 5 | ENTRY |
| 3 | DINING | 6 | FLEX LAWN |





↑ The building offers a variety of flexible seating and spaces, ranging from more social areas to quieter, independent study settings.

↓ A translucent ground floor better positions the building as an “attractor,” absorbing and connecting campus movement.

Ron Stelmarski, FAIA, the design principal on the Perkins&Will team, notes that the building doesn’t necessarily want to be a “big, monumental building” but rather “an attractor,” absorbing and connecting the movement of the campus. The RAD becomes one of the few places where circulation paths converge, allowing it to serve students as both passage and gathering space. As construction updates are being made to the science buildings to the south, the RAD strengthens the connection between the university’s science and art/engineering areas. “This building is one of those where you want to have as much influence beyond the edges of the building,” Stelmarski remarks about the building’s connectivity.

Although the mechanical needs are high for a building with dining services, those are blended seamlessly with the interior. No electromechanical systems are located on the rooftop or below grade. This was made possible by placing some of the mechanical equipment on the second floor in lieu of the rooftop, and by an existing underground utility tunnel providing chilled water. The strategy was to “hide the necessary systems in plain sight” to maintain the lightness of the building. Most of the duct work is grouped above its related food service area to minimize visibility, but the rest travels noticeably along the ceilings in neat lines. However, there are tasteful moments where these typically concealed elements are left on display to show what it takes to bring a building like this to life.

During finals week, the RAD Center was nearly filled, its range of seating options clearly meeting strong student demand. The building program, which offers flexible spaces for events, studying, and quiet reflection, was shaped by student insight gathered during the visioning process about the kinds of spaces they wanted on campus. Students occupied individual seats overlooking the treescape, gathered around the large communal table on the first floor, sat along stepped seating reminiscent of that at Student Center South building on campus, or moved to the outdoor balcony to take in the early May weather. The variety of choices—social or independent, sunlit or shaded—create a full spectrum of ways to inhabit the space.





The organic energy designed into the spaces was also meant to connect the building's two floors as seamlessly as possible. Above the bustling dining space, acoustic panels emulating the colors of the surrounding nature provide sound control and clerestories bring plentiful light deep into the building with minimal glare for studying occupants.

The original foundations of the former Satellite building, which previously supported only a roof plane and plaza, now serve as the foundation for the RAD. Rather than using a steel or concrete structure, the architects selected mass timber. This "elegant solution" resulted in a structure light enough for reuse of the existing foundations, columns, and beams, avoiding the need for approximately 420 cubic yards of additional foundation concrete and significantly the resulting carbon footprint. In collaboration with Perkins&Will, Walter P Moore and Martinez Moore Engineers developed a strategy that reused 66 existing foundations and required only 11 new belled piers. The RAD's ground floor was built above the 500-year floodplain, adhering to standard Houston residential code and addressing the major flooding issue on the university campus. The Satellite's sunken landscape remains to the east of the new building as a storm detention area.

On the south facade, a large cantilever projects over a patio and an outdoor balcony where occupants can experience the mass timber past the columns and witness its ability to span long distances and support large loads. It becomes a dynamic vantage point over the building's connection to the rest of the campus, framing a view of the buzzing student activity below. The 9-ply CLT slab, about a foot thick, is only exposed on the underside. Along with the exterior timber columns, it is clad in metal to protect against the Houston environmental extremes of heat, humidity, and rain. Across the building, all exterior elements are protected with metal; the interior, however, has the freedom to fully express the structure, making it central to the building's architectural identity.

According to Walter P Moore, the design strategies collectively reduced embodied carbon by an estimated 650 tons while saving over \$1 million in construction costs. With the AIA 2030 Commitment (a pledge by architecture and design firms to achieve carbon-neutral buildings by 2030) as a driver, the building's Energy Use Intensity is 84 percent lower than comparable projects, and in its first year alone it saved enough energy to take 472 cars off the road. As the first mass timber building on campus, the RAD signals a shift in how the university envisions its built environment.

Stelmarski notes this is just the first of its kind—the buildings that follow will be even better. He says: "These are just stepping stones, helping campuses understand how students want to learn and connect, and qualities like natural light and warmth make those experiences more meaningful." Designed to adapt alongside the evolving needs of the university and its students, the RAD prioritizes flexibility, openness, and student experience. As students make their way into the RAD, they walk past the gently sloping knoll that was once occupied by the former Student Center Satellite. The landscape now rolls upward to meet the edge of its successor, a subtle commemoration of the site's transformation. □

↓ A 9-ply CLT slab cantilevers over the south facade, creating a patio that showcases mass timber's ability to span long distances and support large loads. It serves as a dynamic vantage point, highlighting the building's connection to the rest of the campus and framing views of the student activity below.



Pooja Desai is a landscape designer at SWA Houston and a Master of Landscape Architecture candidate at the Rhode Island School of Design.

PROJECT	University of Houston RAD Center
LOCATION	Houston
CLIENT	University of Houston
ARCHITECT	Perkins&Will
DESIGN TEAM	Ron Stelmarski, FAIA, Diego Roza, AIA, NOMA, Joe Wilfong, AIA, Jeff Stebar, AIA, Julie Gauthier, Francisco Silva, AIA, Jeremy Cheng, Joshua Medina, AIA, Nyx Valerdy Marquez, AIA, Harshita Batra, Bri Ortiz, Rachel Flanagan, Hillary Gee, AIA, Deborah Madera, AIA, Xuehao Yang
CONTRACTOR	Turner Construction
STRUCTURAL & CIVIL ENGINEER	Martinez Moore Engineers
MEP ENGINEER	Henderson Engineers
CODE CONSULTANT	Jensen Hughes
ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT	Jaffe Holden
TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT	DataCom Design Group
FOOD SERVICE CONSULTANT	Ricca Design Studios
COST CONSULTANT	Project Cost Resources
LEED CONSULTANT	GreenNexus Consulting
LIGHTING CONSULTANT	G2LD
MASS TIMBER FABRICATOR	Timberlyne
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT	Clark Condon
PHOTOGRAPHER	James Steinkamp

CULTURAL ANCHOR

Words by STEPHANIE ARANDA, ASSOC. AIA

A center for the arts sustains
Rockport's creative community.







ROCKPORT, TEXAS, does not announce itself as an arts destination; it reveals it slowly. Along with its marinas, bait shops, and modest storefronts, this Gulf Coast town carries an unassuming but deeply rooted creative culture. Artists create at an easy pace. Galleries emerge from everyday buildings. Creativity exists as part of the rhythm of daily life.

For decades, much of that energy has centered around the Rockport Center for the Arts, whose original headquarters in a small Victorian structure became a cultural anchor. “It is more than an art center,” says Richter Architects principal David Richter, FAIA. “It is a charitable organization that holds the community together. It has a social and cultural role.”

From its inception, the center established itself as a gathering place where artists shared work, exchanged ideas, and built lasting relationships. Modest in scale but significant in spirit, it served the community until it was destroyed by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. While its loss

was deeply felt, it also created an opportunity to reimagine the art center and create a building as resilient as the Texas coast.

The new Rockport Center for the Arts expands the organization’s mission considerably, creating space for painting, sculpture, ceramics, drawing, photography, lectures, and community events that extend well beyond traditional gallery programming. Designed by Richter Architects, the building responds to both the realities of the coast and the spirit of the community it serves. The result is a structure that embodies resilience, creativity, and connection.

Set along the main street, the building feels open rather than monumental. Though significantly larger than its predecessor, it avoids overpowering the scale and character of the town. While the original center occupied a quieter setting near the marina, the new location places the institution directly within Rockport’s urban fabric. The move to a more central location represents a subtle



↑ The sculpture court stitches together the center's buildings while transforming stormwater infrastructure into civil space.

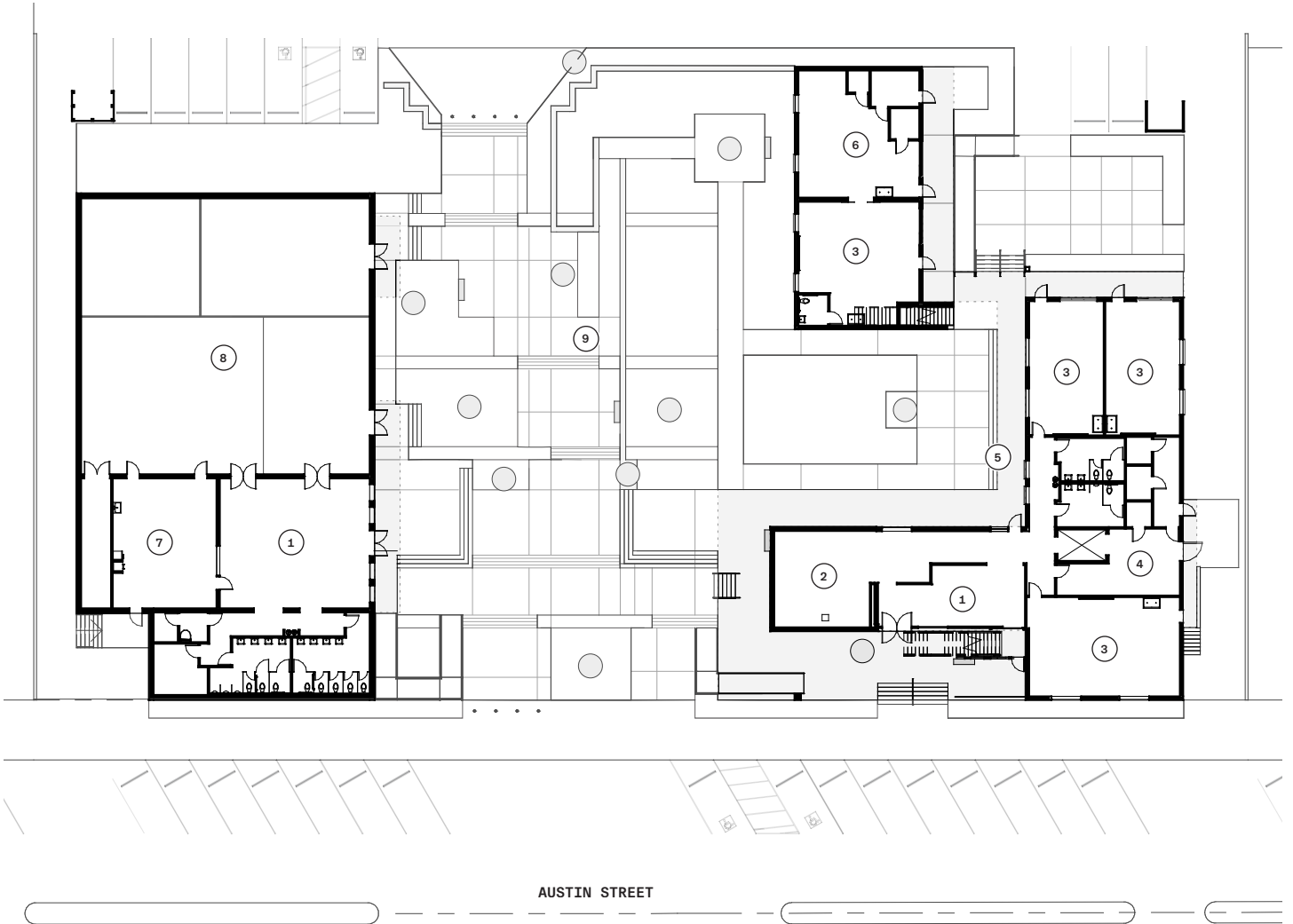
→ Positioned between the town and water, the Rockport Center for the Arts draws energy from both.

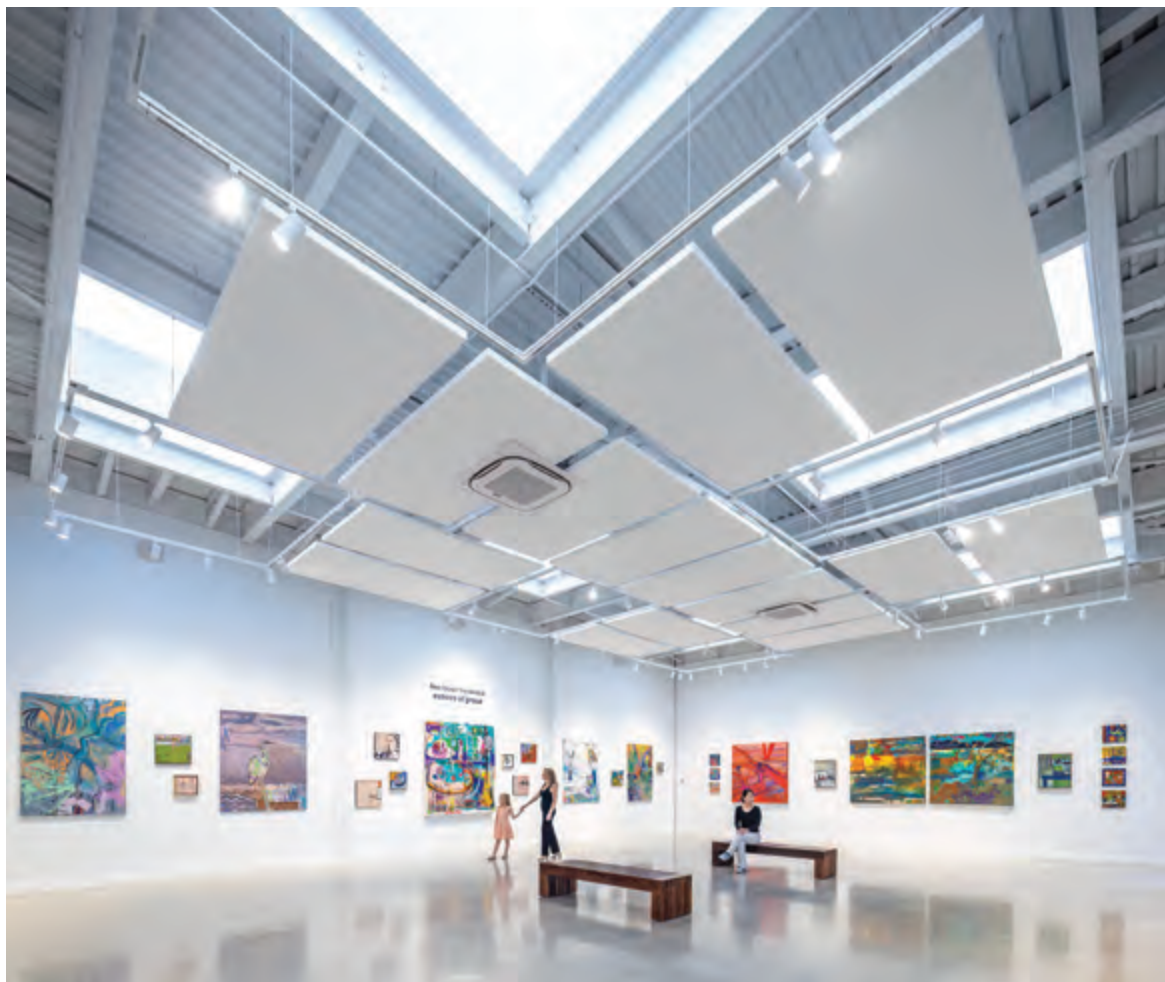
but meaningful shift in the organization's relationship to the community. "The old site was more pastoral and somewhat isolated," says Richter. "The new site allowed us to connect more explicitly to the life of the city."

The downtown location enabled the creation of new public-facing spaces, including a sculpture court, while making the center easier to discover. Rather than existing solely as a destination, the building forms part of Rockport's pedestrian experience. "It feels more fluid," says Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA. "People discover it as part of moving through the city."

From the sidewalk, the architecture unfolds gradually. A shaded porch extends outward, offering relief from the heat and creating a place where people naturally pause. Rather than concealing creativity behind opaque walls, the building reveals glimpses of the activity within. Students move through classrooms carrying canvases and supplies. Gallery visitors drift intentionally between exhibitions. Artists work in devoted concentration. This







← LEVEL 1 PLAN

- 1 FOYER
- 2 GALLERY
- 3 CLASSROOM
- 4 SUPPORT
- 5 LOGGIA
- 6 CERAMICS
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 MULTIPURPOSE
- 9 SCULPTURE GARDEN



↖ The sculpture court creates a soft threshold between public life and the museum experience.

↑ Daylight enters the gallery through a series of north-facing clerestories, washing the space with even illumination for optimal art viewing.

openness defines the character of the center—an arts institution that invites curiosity and welcomes the public.

That relationship becomes especially visible in the circulation spaces between galleries and within the sculpture court, which quietly draws in curious passersby. Rather than feeling detached from the city, the sculpture court creates a soft threshold between public life and the museum experience while performing a critical environmental function. Raised perimeter walls double as storm-water detention, temporarily holding and slowing water during heavy coastal rains before releasing it gradually back into the site. In this way, the architecture transforms resilience from hidden infrastructure into a visible and integral part of the design.

Similarly, one of the building’s most memorable moments occurs within the egress stair. In public buildings, this space is often purely functional and hidden from view. Here, however, the fire stair forms part of the gallery experience. Artwork lines the ascent, with openings framing views to the community beyond. Visitors move upward slowly, pausing between floors to view the art and look out into the town. The stair does not simply move people through the building. It encourages them to remain present within it.

This attentiveness to place extends beyond the spatial experience into the technical realities of building along the Gulf Coast. In Rockport, water exists in many forms, from persistent humidity to heavy rainfall, flooding, and storm surge. Salt-laden air and hurricane force winds introduce additional challenges. Rather than approaching these conditions as isolated problems to defend

against, the architects understood water as an environmental force that would act on the building continuously throughout its lifespan.

Material selections reflect that long-term perspective. Concrete, fiber cement siding, stainless and galvanized steel, aluminum, and impact-resistant glazing form a palette designed specifically for durability in a corrosive coastal environment. At the level of architectural detailing, rebar is inset deeper into the concrete to slow salt intrusion; admixtures strengthen the concrete against moisture penetration; and structural connections are carefully designed to withstand uplift and prolonged exposure to the elements.

These decisions are not dramatic when viewed individually. Most visitors may never notice them directly. Yet together they shape the building's ability to endure. The architecture acknowledges an important truth about coastal environments: Exposure cannot be eliminated. It can only be understood, anticipated, and carefully managed over time.

Inside the building, the material palette reflects restraint and clarity. Concrete floors are exposed but polished, revealing their aggregate beneath shifting daylight. The exterior walls, constructed of CMU, are not concealed entirely behind layers of finish. A thin skim coat of concrete softens their surface while still allowing the faint grid of the underlying blockwork to register. The effect is subtle but richly atmospheric, introducing texture into an otherwise sleek architecture. Avoiding excessive refinement and deliberate rawness, the space feels calm, grounded, and breathable. Nothing competes unnecessarily with the artwork or the people inside, who continually shape the life of the building.

Resilience at the Rockport Center for the Arts extends beyond materials and detailing. The organization's recovery after Hurricane Harvey required an extraordinary collective effort from board members, donors, volunteers, and community supporters. The result was remarkable: When the center opened its doors, it did so debt free.

"The resilience wasn't only in the building," reflects Chu Richter. "It was in the people and the organization. They bounced back. They raised the money. They secured grants. They made it happen." That human resilience mirrors the architectural response. Both the institution and the building were designed not simply to survive adversity, but to continue evolving and thriving through it.

During an unannounced visit by the architects, they encountered artists, instructors, and community members in their daily routines. Conversations were candid. A ceramics instructor described the studio as her "happy place." Board members spoke of the frequency and variety of use, from workshops to concerts to gatherings.

For the team at Richter Architects, this experience was a rare affirmation. To return to a building and see it not as an object but as a living environment is to witness architecture extending beyond its drawings. It becomes something dynamic: A cycle of water moving through site and structure. A cycle of light entering and transforming space. A cycle of creativity flowing through the people who gather here. The building, once an idea, becomes part of the daily rhythm of Rockport, allowing the cultural landscape of Rockport to remain resilient and endure. □

↓ Strategically placed windows offer passersby glimpses of exhibitions, classes, and other artistic activities.



Stephanie Aranda, Assoc. AIA, is a designer, educator, and writer whose work explores architecture as both built form and cultural artifact. She was named the Texas Society of Architects 2023 Associate Member of the Year.

PROJECT	Rockport Center for the Arts
LOCATION	Rockport
CLIENT	Rockport Center for the Arts
ARCHITECT	Richter Architects
DESIGN TEAM	David Richter FAIA, Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA, Aaron Geiser, Assoc. AIA, Elissa Ling Richter, AIA, Toan Q. Huynh, AIA
CONTRACTOR	Teal Construction
STRUCTURAL & CIVIL ENGINEER	JQ Engineering
MEP ENGINEER	Stridde Callins & Associates
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT	adla
PHOTOGRAPHER	ShauLin Hon @ Slyworks Photography

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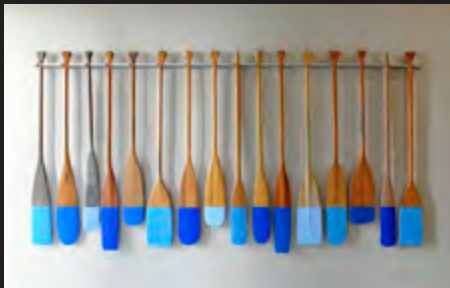
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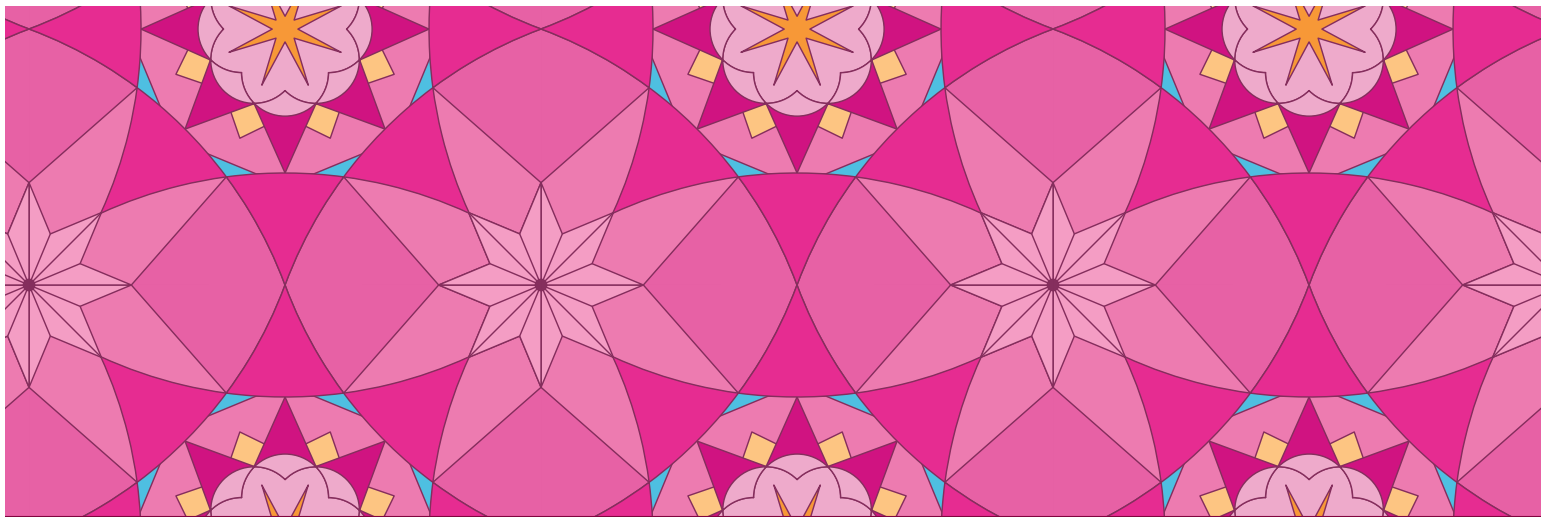
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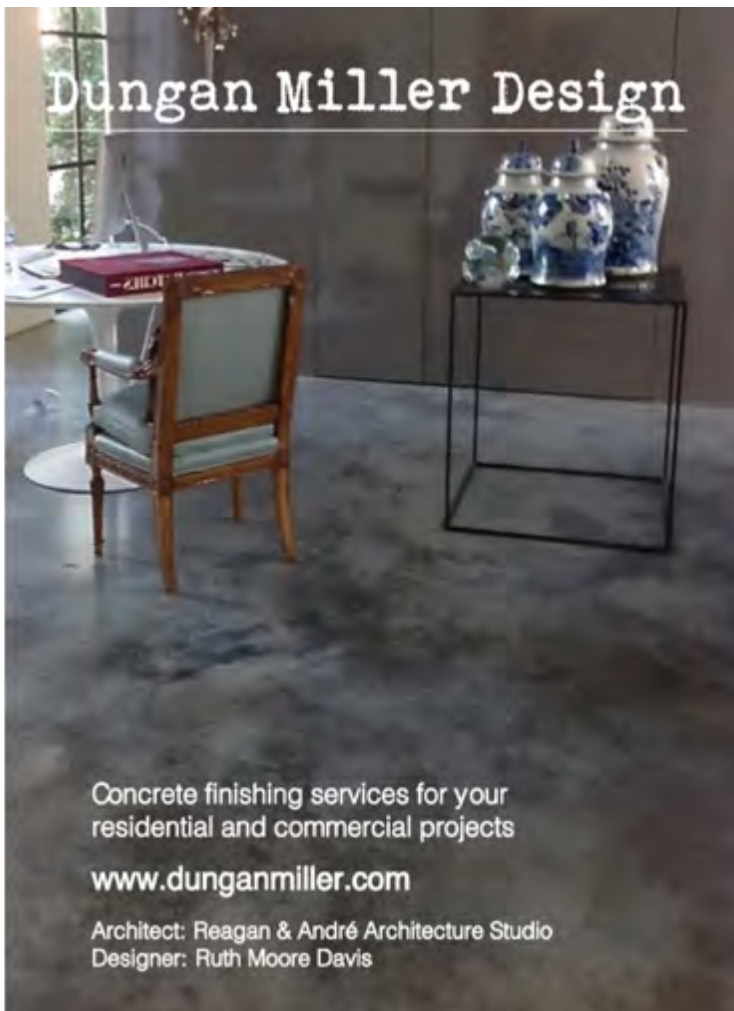


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Carved Into Place

Perched in the hills of West Austin, 201 Terrace Mountain Drive is defined by the quiet elegance of Alkusari Stone Mezzo Taupe limestone. Its soft, layered tones and precise detailing shape a residence that feels both timeless and deeply rooted in place.

The limestone is quarried locally in Abilene, Texas and features a refined blend of light grey and warm beige undertones. The stone strikes a balance that feels both modern and timeless and complements wood, steel, and glass with effortless ease.

“We are the quarry and the factory, therefore our masonry units (wall cladding) aren’t limited to standard formats; we offer custom sizes and finishes across six different stones,” said Noah Alkusari, of Alkusari Stone. “That means the architect can carry the same stone seamlessly from exterior to interior flooring to cladding, cobblestone, flagstone, and hardscaping - allowing for seamless design continuity throughout the space.”

Used throughout the project, from 4” x 3” x 48” diamond-finished masonry units on the walls to the flooring, pool

decking, and step stones, the material creates a seamless visual language across interior and exterior spaces.

“At Terrace Mountain, the Alkusari stonework operates seamlessly at both the scale of mass and detail, giving the limestone volumes a sense of weight and permanence while maintaining a level of precision that holds up in close view,” said Ryan Burke, AIA, Principal of A Parallel, the architect on the project.

This precision is the result of close collaboration.

“Working closely with Alkusari from initial selection through shop drawings allows us to shape the stonework at every stage, resulting in a truly bespoke expression aligned with the architecture,” he said.

Built by Arrowhead Construction, the project demonstrates how a thoughtfully selected, locally sourced material can unify design, delivering both durability and a refined, contemporary character.



“Working closely with Alkusari allows us to shape the stonework at every stage, resulting in a truly bespoke expression aligned with the architecture.”

Ryan Burke, AIA
PRINCIPAL

A PARALLEL ARCHITECTS

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106	Voices: Hawaii Off Grid's David Sellers, AIA
110	Toolkit: Rammed Earth Sanctuary
112	Book Review: <i>Urban Shores: Towards Landscape-Based Coastal Adaptation</i> by Anna Aslaug Lund, Ole Fryd & Gertrud Jørgensen
114	Products: Kitchen and Bath
116	Calendar
118	Resources
119	Ad Index
120	Backpage: Ottine Mineral Springs

Q&A WITH DAVID SELLERS, AIA

by Mahnoor Fatima



David Sellers, AIA, is the co-founder of Hawaii Off Grid Architecture & Engineering (HIOG) and a leading advocate for sustainable and resilient design in Hawaii. His path to architecture began aboard commercial fishing boats in Alaska, where he worked as a ship's engineer to finance his studies at Texas A&M University, gaining hands-on expertise in energy, water, and mechanical systems that continues to inform his work today. He later earned a master's degree in Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Science from the Technical University Delft in the Netherlands before heading to Hawaii to join The Nature Conservancy, where he led the internationally recognized Palmyra Renewable Energy Project, transitioning the Palmyra Atoll research station from diesel power to a renewable microgrid that saves more than \$1 million annually.

Since co-founding HIOG in 2015, Sellers has become a prominent voice in resilient architecture and disaster recovery, serving as president of AIA Maui in 2024 and playing a key role in wildfire recovery efforts following the Lahaina fires. He currently serves on the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity Maui and has helped champion the adoption of mass timber construction and other innovative building technologies across the Hawaiian Islands.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Mahnoor Fatima You have had an interesting career path: studying in the Netherlands, working on a remote Pacific atoll, and building a career in Hawaii. Despite everything, though, you are still a Texas A&M Aggie. What does Texas mean to you, and does it show up in your work? What led you to these other destinations?

David Sellers It all started in Texas, and the state was a big influence, obviously, on my life. It was a unique opportunity growing up in East Texas in the oil patch, with the revenue from the oil business funding the public school system. I went to Texas A&M University, which is a big land-grant university, and had many opportunities there. I tell people all the time, "We've got to do things a little differently, and we should look

at Texas as an example." And people are like, "What?" I'm like, "Well, look at it. They have more wind power than anywhere in the world. This year, they're going to surpass and have the most photovoltaics deployed in the nation. The last several years consecutively, they've had the most housing starts."

I owe my architecture background to, one, going to school at Texas A&M College of Architecture, and then, two, being able to go see amazing buildings—whether it's the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, the Menil Gallery in Houston, or the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.

MF Speaking about building and exploring, you've spent quite a long time proving that off-grid, net-zero design is a viable way to build instead of a niche experiment. Hawaii

is a pretty specific laboratory, with an island geography and limited resources. What has Hawaii taught you about building that you couldn't have learned anywhere else?

DS Hawaii is unique. It's the most isolated archipelago in the world, and we have the most microclimates in a small radius anywhere in the world.

When I finished my master's degree and got licensed in Holland, I took the opportunity to come here and run the Nature Conservancy's Palmyra Atoll program.

At that time, I thought climate change would be something further in the future. I looked at Hawaii and thought it would be insulated by the ocean, so climate change would not affect it as much. Well, I'm not a climate scientist. It turns out that as sea temperatures and jet streams change, without big landmasses in the way, there is no insulation. We've got more shoreline per capita than anywhere in the United States. I'm seeing weather systems shifting, with exacerbating effects.

As I look at data and think about passive design in architecture, I am realizing old standards are not applicable anymore. The buildings we're designing today, many of them should still be functioning in 100 years. What will our climate look like then?

Best-case scenario would have been to reduce carbon emissions a couple of years ago and get back on track so we'd be at seven degrees warming from our historical average beginning in the pre-Industrial Revolution. Today, seven degrees represents the average temperature swing between day and night in Hawaii. What you had planned on for the daytime temperature is now your nighttime temperature. Passive cooling of a building doesn't work anymore.

I'm trying to figure out, if I can't use the historical data and strategies, how do I take the data and apply it to a future that we're not sure about? It's been a little bit upsetting, from a philosophical architectural standpoint, but it's also an amazing challenge and opportunity.

As architects, we're at the tip of the spear, and we have a chance to help provide solutions—ones that build stronger communities while also improving our personal resilience and businesses.

I've found new revenue streams that didn't exist 10 years ago in architecture. We design, engineer, and install our own energy systems in our buildings. When we started designing the full systems 10 years ago, either people didn't understand what we were doing and could not perform the work, or they could do the work and their profit was more than what we had charged for the

entire design. So, being from Texas, being a can-do person, I was like, "Well, we will just get it done."

MF You described how sustainability is a necessity and not a luxury. For a lot of people, it is still unattainable. If sustainability becomes the standard, what does that world look like, and how far away are we?

DS I'm a big proponent of, and I don't mean this in a way that it can be construed incorrectly, capitalism. I admire capitalism because of its power to do things. Sometimes it does very bad things; sometimes it does good things. You have a high propensity for entrepreneurship in architecture. I grew up in a house that was built in 1951 with air conditioning, which at that time was a luxury. Houses that were built 10 or 20 years earlier didn't have central cooling. If you wanted to retrofit your house that was built in 1935, it was very, very expensive. But in 1951, it was maybe two or three dollars a month on your mortgage to cover the cost of it. Today, we need to be thinking about evolving mechanical systems.

For example, my brother has a golf cart on his ranch that he uses to drive his twin boys around. For his birthday, I bought him a solar panel and a charge controller for the cart. Since then, he hasn't had to plug it in. Later, I added an inverter, which allowed him to use the golf cart's battery system to power a small cabin. So even though he has a huge diesel truck and is a rancher, he's like, "Oh, this stuff actually works." As architects, we have to sell and show that sustainability isn't about feelings; it isn't about political opinions. It is about performance. We always focus on design. It has to be beautiful. We want to make beautiful architecture that is

good for the environment and responds to its local context.

MF Considering you witnessed the Lahaina fires in Hawaii, and you're familiar with the 2021 Texas freeze and the floods last year, how has your experience shaped the way that you design for resilience? When you apply it to the work you've done in Hawaii, do you think there are principles that could be similarly applied in Texas, despite the different geographies?

DS Of course, contextual architecture and passive design strategies are applicable to both places.

It's really unique here because humans haven't lived in Hawaii for a very long time compared to North America or Asia. Yet the transition in architecture and building practices has been very rapid. Polynesians came to Hawaii a thousand years ago, and then, 200 years ago, we had Western contact, which caused a huge change in design and building. I don't feel that Hawaii ever got to establish its own vernacular of architecture naturally. It has had a lot of external influences.

In Texas, you see more examples of vernacular architecture developed from years of habitation responding to the environment: thick walls, adobe, masonry, houses that have thermal massing, big overhangs, porches that shade the building and help protect it from solar gain in the summertime, which is important, but are sized appropriately so that in the winter they can get solar gain and they can heat the house.

I consider our Surfblock houses our vernacular architecture. We're using a local material. We don't have the same resources here in Hawaii, but what we do have is trash.

The Olowalu Surf Block Project offers novel fire-resistant construction for the city of Lahaina. PHOTO COURTESY HIOG





Waste material from surfboards is deconstructed and poured into molds for building blocks.

PHOTO COURTESY HIOG



We have Styrofoam from our surfboard industry. Surfing was invented in Hawaii 1500 years ago, and now it's what we export to the world. It's kind of our natural resource: a cultural practice of surfing.

We're taking the waste from that industry and we're making houses that are more resilient. They're highly insulative, so we can get an R-40 wall assembly; it's double the code requirement. It's hundreds of times stronger than a wood-framed wall because it's a concrete-grid shell inside of it. It's impervious to molds and mildew, which in the tropics can be a problem. And it's impervious to termites, which we have in Texas as well. It's a tougher product and is, I believe, a vernacular material, even if it isn't natural. It is also fire resistant, and its strength helps resist hurricanes and earthquakes.

Texas is so big that generalized climate strategies don't reflect the reality of the many geographies and ecologies. If you're in northeast Texas, that's one climate characterized by its proximity to Oklahoma and Arkansas. But things change dramatically if you're out west, in the Davis Mountains; in the Panhandle, where it is flat prairie; or down on the coast, where it's hot, muggy, and more of a tropical temperate climate. You have to both look and know what to look for to see how buildings respond to local climates in different places.

MF You've worked on Alaskan fishing boats, and then you ran a research facility on this remote Pacific atoll, and now you're on an island, and water is such a constant presence in your life. When you work with architects like Shigeru Ban and Olson Kundig, also known for buildings that are contextually responsive, when do you talk about water?

In your off-grid designs, how does water factor into the way that you design?

DS Well, first let me say how amazing it is as a small-town Texas kid to get to work with one of my heroes and world-renowned architects. Every day, I kind of pinch myself about it.

Water is the most important thing to humans and to civilization. Most early settlements were on water, but at the same time, water is the nemesis of an architect. A leaky roof is the last thing that you want. Water intrusion into a wall assembly is terrible.

When we start a project, we think about water from the very beginning. Whether it's an infill in downtown or it's a greenfield site that's never been built on, we look at the climatic data—wind, rain. We've developed a rainwater calculator based on what I learned at Texas A&M from the agriculture program. When we look at designing an off-grid house, we need to do a couple of different things. We need to make sure that we're providing the energy that people need to live modern lives. When we're thinking about water, we're looking at how big the roof needs to be. The rainwater calculator is a spreadsheet I've been building and modifying since my days at Texas A&M. We record monthly historical rainfall data, demand for indoor water, demand for irrigation water, and rate of evapotranspiration based on temperature and humidity. The data informs the design.

There's been such a big change in the last 15 years in how we can harvest water. It's amazing. And the things that I'm doing now in architecture, I could not have done 20 years ago. The technology didn't exist.

With water, for example, if we're in a very hot, dry, low-rainfall area, that's going to dramatically influence how we design a building.

You want to have big overhangs to keep the sun from coming in, keep the house cool, keep the ground around the house cool so that if you do have passive ventilation, you're not just sucking in hot air from sun-scorched earth or hardscaping. But I take it one step further and say, well, if we have to provide 300 gallons of water a day because that's what our water demands are, then we can check what the historical rainfall has been. And now we can calculate what size the roof needs to be in order to capture that much water. Maybe the client says, "Well, we want a two-story house. We've always wanted a two-story house." I'm like, "Okay, but you need a big roof. You typically have half as much roof if you have a two-story house." So now we're responding to the environment, and the building that we're creating is directly influenced by the environmental factors.

MF I feel like I just got a peek inside your brain. It's also a somewhat different way to think about designing and feels very refreshing.

DS Well, I was in special education when I was in elementary school. I was doing really well until third grade, but when we moved to doing more spelling tests, they figured out that I have a form of dyslexia. I don't see things in two dimensions. Math is very hard for me because the numbers and the equations are in three dimensions. So in my mind, the equation is totally backwards. Ultimately, I went from special education in elementary school to gifted and talented in high school. In my gifted and talented history class in Longview, Texas, at Longview High School, I met my first architect, Jim Bowie, principal at Allen Bowie Partnership. I didn't realize that architects were people who lived in your community. I thought they all lived in New York City, and I thought they just did skyscrapers.

MF You were running for AIA National president at a moment when climate resilience and housing affordability are defining issues for the profession. What was the argument you were making to the broader membership?

DS We have a real existential crisis at hand: the affordability and attainability crisis for housing. I was barely able to get a mortgage that I could afford. Of course, I had to build my own house. And then now, 10 years later, it's even harder for younger emerging professionals. It's harder for the broader community. Today, we're sitting here, and gas prices are the highest that they've ever been.



The Kailua Project Design integrates, rather than detracts from, the landscape.

PHOTOS BY TRAVIS ROWAN

That's impacting people. What I want everyone to know and what I want to show from our experience is we can change all of that. And we can deal with, combat, and reverse the other big elephant in the room, the other crisis that is at our doorstep now, which is climate change. We can build our way out of the affordable housing crisis with innovation and creativity. And we can do that while utilizing strategies and systems that combat climate change as we make buildings—it's completely possible, and we have the tools to do it.

We're doing it every day in our practice. We can have buildings that sequester more carbon than they will ever release, so they're carbon positive. And we've made money doing that. And we've been successful doing that. We've been so successful that we were able to donate, either at a reduced fee or pro bono, up to 30 percent of the work that we do.

I call it prosperity through resiliency. We can be prosperous as a profession. We can do good while we're being prosperous. So that's why I was running for AIA president, partly. The other part is that I feel that it's an organization with an amazing group of professionals who come together to donate their time and energy to advance the profession. I also want to see it become more of a community-based organization. After the Lahaina fires, it was the AIA that stepped up, providing support, guidance, and education. That experience also gave me the gravitas to be able to interface and feel confident working with state and local officials to help our community rebuild. AIA has an amazing opportunity to continue to grow and be more relevant than ever. And I wanted to see what I could do to help and assist that progress, to give back for what the AIA's already given to me.

MF That's a really good answer. Thank you for your time.

DS Thank you so much. We always keep an open desk in the office. So if you want to come out to Maui, come on by! □

Mahnoor Fatima is a writer and multidisciplinary designer from Austin. She currently runs her practice at Studio Mahfa.



THICK BUILT

The Why and How of a Rammed Earth Enclosure

by Lauren Stanley, AIA

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN often reflects trending concerns for human health and restoration. It frequently manifests in biophilic terms, incorporating natural materials (bio- and geo-based) as key components in making space feel like refuge. Home is the embodiment of sanctuary: safe, peaceful, holistic, and conducive to a good night's sleep. For the design and construction of my most recent house, we chose rammed earth as a defining element to create a restorative retreat.

As is typical of an architect's house, the design went through many iterations. Yet one driver remained consistent: The house needed to be a buffer and foil to urban noise, heat, and the amped energy of an adjacent busy corridor. It needed to hold space for a much calmer interior. Its form and materiality would work together to produce a quiet green oasis. A monolithic masonry system could act as a thick shell and allow for a reflective and transparent center, like a geode defense system.

Rammed earth holds an immediate appeal with its heft, tactility, legibility, continuity of mass, and truly evocative beauty. The idea of building literally with earth is elemental and intriguing. It offers low carbon inputs and regionally sourced ingredients, the use of local skilled trades, the flywheel effect of a thermal mass, formidable sound insulation, and wall breathability to filter air and balance

moisture. It has an inexact organic aesthetic that belies an exactness and care in its composition. Wavy lift lines showcase its making by human hands and telegraph a record of decisions, a building process visibly frozen in time.

Deceptively straightforward-looking, rammed earth needs crisp detailing to pull it off well. Like proficient smooth-formed

Crew wields a handheld hydraulic hammer to compact dampened soil mix evenly inside the wall cavity. PHOTO BY STANLEY STUDIO



concrete, it requires the nuanced understanding and experience of builders versed in this construction to make what seems rough-hewn into something well-articulated and functional. Through leads from peers in the natural building world, including the Earthen Construction Initiative, we found our collaborators in De La Tierra and Texas Rammed Earth. Our structural engineer,

Native soil was placed in narrow accent bands per builder's careful field notes.

PHOTO BY STANLEY STUDIO



Michael Donoghue, PE, also familiar with earthen construction, was never shy about expounding on the molecular composition and dynamics of the mix. The three-person build crew, all family members, had mixed, placed, and compacted earth inside narrow formwork for years. Because we (my partner, Lars Stanley, FAIA, and I) served as owner, architect, general contractor, and steel fabricator, we kept the team small and nimble and were able to field on-the-spot decisions.

Enamored with its literal expressiveness, we opted to take a purist approach. There is no nougat center—the earth runs through and through, shrouding no other systems. Thus, the 18-inch-wide walls have no insulation, sheathing, vapor barrier, air, or water-proofing layers; no sheet or liquid finishes; and no utility runs. The higher first cost of this construction type is substantially offset by omitting the usual suite of components in composite wall assemblies. Embedded elements are limited to steel and concrete bond beams, lintels, and “joint jumpers” to translate lateral loading between the one- and two-story building blocks. A humped-stem wall acts solely as a key, holding wall to footing.

The carefully considered mix brought together locally sourced limestone and granite in an aggregate size of less than three-eighths of an inch. White Portland cement at approximately seven percent content optimally expresses the natural aggregate color and allows it to stand with no additional treatments. Discovering our native alluvial site soil had viable properties for rammed earth, we screened and used it in continuous darker accent banding across the combined roughly 100-foot linear run. Running long as

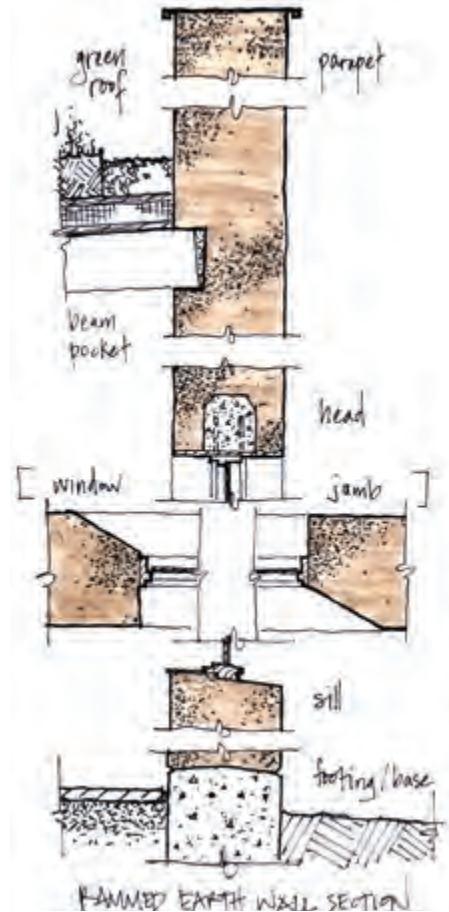
a parapet or stopping short at an overhanging second floor, rammed earth walls are typically accessorized at edge conditions with steel. Steel plate lines the underside of lintels, interior window sills, and the sloped parapet cap. Exposed steel beams and small, recessed trim angles sit atop the walls.

In two months, the walls of this primary enclosure went up. The build was methodical and incremental from one end to the other. Heavy steel vertical trusses kept the smooth board forms plumb as the routine of mixing, moistening, lifting, placing, and ramming (with a small handheld hydraulic hammer) proceeded. Openings and leave-outs took special care: Clean-cornered window flares and beam pockets at the parapet wall required skilled carpentry. The mix was adjusted slightly to accommodate trickier sill and beam pocket conditions. Corner chamfers could be no bigger than the aggregate size. These were all things for which we greatly valued the craft of our builders.

The lived-in result, even in a hybrid, partially framed project, is palpable. We hear, see, and feel an unmistakable atmospheric difference—a hush—descending the stairs into the living space enclosed by earthen walls. This material solution is not for every project, but the lesson it offers urges us to look more broadly at material systems and consider ones that place human, environmental, and local economic health as top value propositions. Rammed earth did many things in one fell swoop in this project, and with a commanding presence. □

Lauren Woodward Stanley, AIA, is co-owner of Stanley Studio in Austin.

Wall section showing conditions at typical window and parapet/beam pocket at green roof

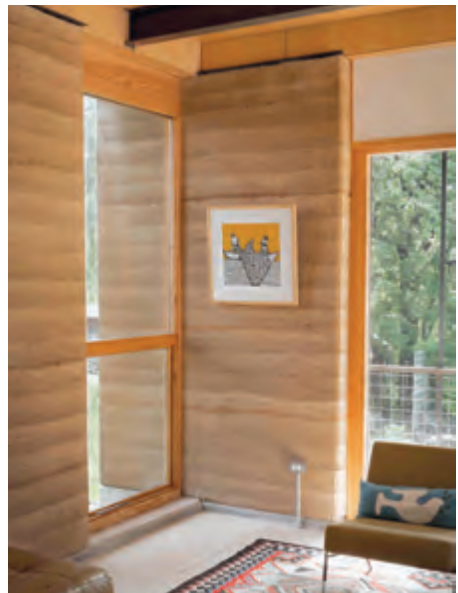


The watering step in proper curing

PHOTO BY STANLEY STUDIO



Rammed earth walls extend and pull away at building corners for circulation and apertures to site. PHOTO BY MARCUS MCKENZIE



COASTAL FUTURES

Urban Shores: Towards Landscape-Based Coastal Adaptation

Anna Aslaug Lund, Ole Fryd & Gertrud Jørgensen

Danish Architectural Press
2025

by Cole Von Feldt, Assoc. AIA

“Globally, close to one billion people currently live in the low-elevation coastal zone,” write the authors of *Urban Shores: Towards Landscape-Based Coastal Adaptation*. This spells trouble for those one billion people as flooding, erosion, and sea level rise will transform, and potentially submerge, the cities they call home. Based on research by University of Copenhagen scholars, this book explores three main coastal change dynamics—erosion, storm surge, and sea level rise—in various cities.

The first few introductory chapters provide context to the interface between land and sea, the effects of climate change on urban coastal landscapes, and an explanation of landscape-based approaches. Within these chapters, an understanding of the importance of “reading the landscape” and its intertwined history with urban layouts begins to surface. The publication analyzes this from medieval eras, where the core urban functions were placed at a higher elevation “while the low foreshores of wetlands were used only for functions that were flood tolerant, temporary, and specifically related to the presence of water.” This is in contrast to the value and development of coastal lands today. The introductory chapters also point out that the recurrence of storm surges will

quickly ramp up, turning what is currently a 100-year storm-surge event into a nearly annual occurrence in many coastal cities by 2100. Such a projection is troublesome for Texas and Louisiana, which are noted as global hot spots of coastal erosion, with annual rates of up to 16 meters (about 52 feet) per year.

Chapters four through nine chronicle the six landscape-based adaptation measures—green dikes; dunes, sand nourishment, and sand engines; barrier islands and reefs; coastal wetlands; retreat and relocation; and avoidance and nature preservation. These are structured identically with an introduction of the typology complete with definitions and accompanying visual explanations, followed by subcomponents on cultural heritage, biodiversity and mitigation of climate change, spatial potentials, and international examples and trends. Two or three case studies give broad overviews within the categories of background, planning, spatial experience, narratives, ecology, synergies and values, and lessons learned.

In these chapters, the reader gains a high-level understanding of each landscape-based approach by category, with tangible locations and descriptions to help differentiate between them. For example, within the “Coastal wetlands” chapter, seagrass meadows, marshes, and swamps are explored adaptations. One of the two case studies within the “Green dikes” chapter is Hunter’s Point South Park, situated in Queens, New York, across the East River from Manhattan. The area was initially part of the city’s bid for the 2012 Olympic Games and was slated to house the Olympic Village. Upon losing the bid, the city continued its

many urban visions for the future of New York, including Hunter’s Point neighborhood. The realized park is unique in its dual coastal protection with integrated recreational qualities, all within a dense urban environment. The authors note that this project proves the potential for green dikes to create recreational connections within the limited space of urban contexts.

The authors have successfully grounded their research in one of the most important and diverse ecological zones on the planet: coastlines. Since most of the world’s largest cities are situated along coasts, together with critical infrastructure including power plants, oil refineries, and freight terminals, there is a serious climate threat to the basic functions of global society. The authors do not oversimplify the precariousness of the climate crisis. As global mean sea level rises and flooding catastrophes increase in severity, many coastal cities and regions will drastically change, if not disappear. When discussing a “reinterpretation of [a] historical fortification ring” in Sweden, the authors note that “where the enemy used to be foreign armies, the aggressor is now the rising sea level and the impacts of climate change,” emphasizing the dire risk faced by coastal populations worldwide. The severity of the situation is furthered through a striking and well-composed array of photos throughout the publication—nearly all of which are devoid of humans to enhance the emotive loneliness of coastal degradation. The photographs compel the reader to empathize with the beauty of the landscape in the pursuit of protecting the ecological fragility of each case study and the broader world.

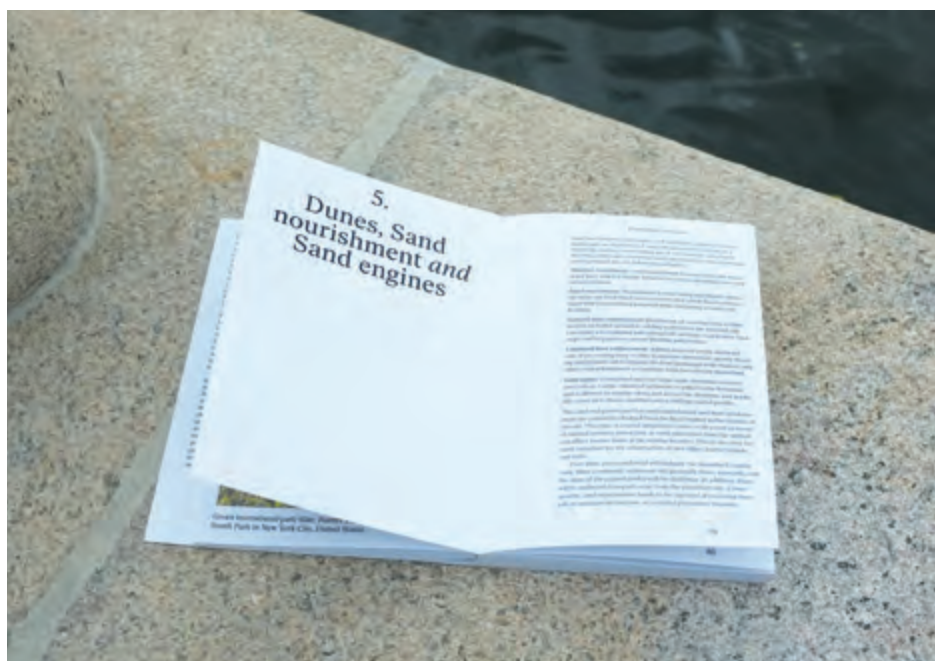


While the publication is compelling in its material as an introduction to the topic, the authors acknowledge the limited geographical scope of their research, as all case studies are from Europe and the United States; seven of the eleven are from the Netherlands or New York. Unfortunately, this creates a blind spot in the landscape-based approaches happening elsewhere in the world and furthers the widely perceived narrative that Global North scholars prefer to focus on Western ideology and societies; any talk of Indigenous practices in relation to flood mitigation is essentially absent. There are trace mentions of adaptation measures elsewhere in the world, but these seem to be included as a grasp at broader connection.

While the first three chapters provide valuable context, they are essentially all introductory and create slight fatigue among readers who might question when the meat of the text will begin. Within each case study, there is a shift toward black-and-white photography which, in comparison to the richer colored photographs throughout the rest of the book, is a disservice to the abundance of color within the chronicled ecologies. Similarly, the case studies use a sans-serif font for their body of text, which differs from the serif font type in the rest of the publication. This is a troubling design decision as sans-serif is not typically used for large bodies of text due to its lack of horizontal continuity for extended reading, which serif enables. Together, the black-and-white photography and the switch in font type are a poor graphical attempt at differentiating the case studies from the remainder of the text; cohesion with the rest of the book would have been more appropriate. Another point of confusion is the sources, which are located at the end of each chapter but not displayed within the text itself. This decision weakens the book's academic rigor and unfairly forces the reader to manually match sources with the text.

As a whole, *Urban Shores* is successful in its aim to introduce the reader to the subject, techniques, and approaches associated with landscape-based coastal adaptation. It is clear that society must stop expanding cities into low-lying, flood-prone areas and return these landscapes to nature. I especially recommend this book to anyone whose work intersects with the built and natural environments as this highly valuable read provides a rich baseline of adaptations that can be implemented to help safeguard coastal communities and their populations.

Cole von Feldt, Assoc. AIA, is a designer, urbanist, and writer with a transcontinental educational and professional background between the US and Europe.



Earthy, warm hues, such as amber, terracotta, and violet, bring a grounding touch to these new kitchen and bath products.

by Rita Catinella Orrell



↑ **BALCOON**
Duravit USA
duravit.us

Marking the first collaboration between Duravit and architect/industrial designer Patricia Urquiola, Balcoon is a mid-range price bath series offering accessible luxury for residential or hospitality projects. Inspired by architectural forms, the sinks, furniture, and tubs in the collection combine cubic and cylindrical shapes in white gloss, white satin matte, or a brand-new Clay Terra Matte finish. Each piece features Duravit's DuraShield protective coating, which is proven to eliminate 99.99% of bacteria.

↓ **BLUESTAR 2026 COLOR OF THE YEAR: PURPLE VIOLET**
BlueStar
bluestarcooking.com

Handcrafted in Pennsylvania since 1880, BlueStar cooking, refrigeration, and ventilation products are for home chefs looking for restaurant-quality results. BlueStar's 2026 Color of the Year, Purple Violet (RAL #4007), is a bold hue chosen by Evanston, Illinois-based Shumaker Design Associates for its rich, vibrant quality that embodies warmth and togetherness. Selected to reflect a shift toward deeper, earthy-adjacent hues in home design, Purple Violet is recommended to be paired with materials like antique brass and dark woods.



↓ **EGO**
Abimis
abimis.com

The Ego system is the centerpiece of a kitchen in this historic Sicilian residence punctuated by small openings and exposed wooden beams. Architect Filippo Walcher, together with the homeowner and the Abimis technical team, chose a tailor-made solution from the Ego line, made of hand-crafted mirror stainless steel orbitally polished to a warm, textured hue. One side of the system houses the washing and preparation block with an integrated refrigerated waste bin, while the other side is the cooking area.





↑ CAESARSTONE ICON

Caesarstone
caesarstone.com

Caesarstone's new ICON category of surfaces is inspired by opalescent stones, marble veining, and the reflection of water ripples. ICON is made of approximately 80% recycled materials and is crystalline-free, reducing the risk of fabricators inhaling silica dust, which can lead to serious health issues. The advanced fusion surfaces are available in 19 quartz products as well as in a selection of new Caesarstone ICON designs, making it one of the largest assortments of crystalline silica-free products currently available on the market.

↓ SCULPTURA SOAKING TUB

Empava
empava.com

Crafted from premium semi-transparent resin, this 76-inch soaking tub comes in Amber Yellow, Emerald, or Wine Red finishes that glow warmly under light, creating a unique visual depth. The 85-gallon capacity tub features an irregular, stone-inspired exterior surface and a dramatic oval silhouette that makes it a statement piece for modern bathrooms. Customizable color options are available.

↓ CIMA PUFF & CORK STEP

Hastings Bath Collection
hastingsbathcollection.com

Offering a cozy perch for bathrooms, vanities, or walk-in closets, the Cima Puff is upholstered with a 98% recycled polyester fabric derived from post-consumer plastic bottles. Available in four neutral colors—Gray, Sage Green, Steel Blue, and Terracotta—the seat measures 15 3/4" wide, 15 3/4" deep, and 16 1/8" high. The Cork Step can help users safely get into a deep bathtub or reach a sink. Moisture-resistant and thermally insulating, the step is made of matte, sustainably harvested black cork.



AUGUST

MONDAY 3 - FRIDAY 7

Houston X Design Week

Presented by AIAH Interior Architecture Committee

Various Locations

[Houston](#)

[architecturehouston.org](#)

SUNDAY 9

EXHIBITION CLOSING →

Garden Party: Nature on Paper

McNay Art Museum

6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.

[San Antonio](#)

[mcnayart.org](#)

Humans cultivate patches of earth for many reasons including aesthetics, safety, and sustenance. This exhibition considers the different ways modern and contemporary artists explore the complex relationship between humans and nature. The works presented highlight emotional pleasures of the garden and the underlying tension between human control and nature's formidable power.

EXHIBITION CLOSING

The Gift of Drawing: Cy Twombly

The Menil Drawing Institute

1412 W. Main St.

[Houston](#)

[menil.org](#)

MONDAY 10

EXHIBITION OPENING

Fragility

The Menil Drawing Institute

1412 W. Main St.

[Houston](#)

[menil.org](#)

WEDNESDAY 12

EXHIBITION CLOSING

Ken Roberts Memorial Delineation**Competition**

AD EX

325 N. St Paul St., Suite 150

[Dallas](#)

[dallasadex.org](#)

THURSDAY 13

2026 Central Texas Regional Preservation**Summit | Buildings on the Move: Case****Studies in Relocating Historic Structures**

Historic Old Town

1300 Church Hill Dr.

[New Braunfels](#)

[preservationtexas.org](#)



VINCENT VALDEZ, CHAVEZ RAVINE, CA. 2009. SCREENPRINT. GIFT OF HARRIETT AND RICARDO ROMO, 2011.303. © VINCENT VALDEZ, COURTESY MCNAY ART MUSEUM.

SATURDAY 15

EXHIBITION OPENING ↓

The Statue of Liberty from Bartholdi to Warhol

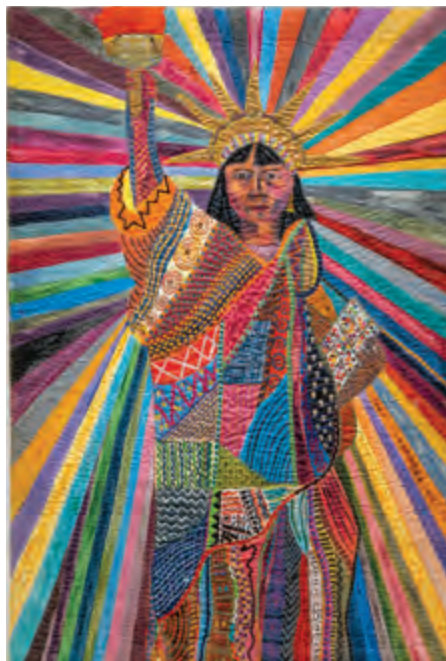
Amon Carter Museum of American Art

3501 Camp Bowie Blvd.

[Fort Worth](#)

[cartermuseum.org](#)

On view during the USA's 250th anniversary year, this exhibit highlights the Statue of Liberty's continued relevance, examining the statue's various representations in visual culture—from an artistic muse to a pop-culture icon to a symbol of immigration, patriotism, and resistance.



PACITA ABAD (1946–2004), L.A. LIBERTY, 1992, COURTESY PACITA ABAD ART ESTATE AND WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS, COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS, T. B. WALKER ACQUISITION FUND, 2022, 2022.87, © PACITA ABAD ART ESTATE, COURTESY CARTER MUSEUM OF ART.

SATURDAY 22

EXHIBITION OPENING

Adriana Corral: As Long as Life Endures

Blaffer Art Museum

120 Fine Arts Bldg.

University of Houston

[Houston](#)

[blafferartmuseum.org](#)

SUNDAY 23

EXHIBITION OPENING

Picasso Beyond the Canvas

Meadows Museum

5900 Bishop Blvd.

[Dallas](#)

[meadowsmuseumdallas.org](#)

THURSDAY 27 - FRIDAY 28

Design Excellence Conference

UT Austin Commons Conference Center

J.J. Pickle Research Campus

10100 Burnet Rd., Bldg. 137

[Austin](#)

[aiaaustin.org](#)

SATURDAY 29

AIA Fort Worth 80th Anniversary Celebration

Acme Brick

3024 Acme Brick Plaza

[Fort Worth](#)

[aiafw.org](#)

TUESDAY 1

11th Annual Sporting Clay Classic
Elm Fork Shooting Sports
10751 Luna Rd.

[Dallas](#)
[aiadallas.org](#)

FRIDAY 4

EXHIBITION OPENING
Radiant Geometries: Vectors of Knowledge from the Indigenous Americas
Moody Center for the Arts
Rice University
6100 Main St., MS-480
[Houston](#)
[moody.rice.edu](#)

SUNDAY 6

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Contemporary Project 16: Tammy Nguyen
Blanton Museum of Art
200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
[Austin](#)
[blantonmuseum.org](#)

EXHIBITION CLOSING
untitled: 20 Years of Collecting Contemporary Art
McNay Art Museum
6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.
[San Antonio](#)
[mcnayart.org](#)

MONDAY 7

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Ernesto Neto: SunForceOceanLife
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet St.
[Houston](#)
[mfah.org](#)

FRIDAY 11

Empowering Conference
Pegasus Park
3000 Pegasus Park Dr.
[Dallas](#)
[aiadallas.org](#)

FRIDAY 11 - SATURDAY 12

Building Communities Conference & Trade Show
South Padre Island Convention Center
7355 Padre Blvd.
[South Padre Island](#)
[lrgvaia.org/bcc](#)

SUNDAY 13

EXHIBITION CLOSING ↓
Picasso-Klee-Matisse: Masterpieces from the Museum Berggruen
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet St.
[Houston](#)
[mfah.org](#)

Highlighting the careers of Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee, as well as Henri Matisse's signature cut-outs, Alberto Giacometti's haunting sculptures, and the works of Georges Braque and Paul Cezanne, this exhibition explores the relationship of famed gallerist and collector Heinz Berggruen with the artistic community of postwar Paris and beyond.



ARNOLD NEWMAN, PABLO PICASSO, 1954, GELATIN SILVER PRINT, THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON, GIFT OF ADAM AND SUSAN FINN. © ARNOLD NEWMAN PROPERTIES VIA GETTY IMAGES, COURTESY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON.

FRIDAY 18

Clays & Q Shoot
National Shooting Complex
5931 Roft Rd.
[San Antonio](#)
[aiasa.org](#)

SATURDAY 19

EXHIBITION OPENING
Bruce Nauman: Identical
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora St.
[Dallas](#)
[nashersculpturecenter.org](#)

SUNDAY 20

EXHIBITION OPENING
Canstruction 2026
North East Mall
1101 Melbourne Rd.
[Hurst](#)
[aiafw.org](#)

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Helen Frankenthaler: The Joy of Color
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet St.
[Houston](#)
[mfah.org](#)

FRIDAY 25 - SATURDAY 26

WaterWork 2026
Seaholm Intake Facility, viewed from Lady Bird Lake and Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail
[Austin](#)
[aiaaustin.org](#)

SUNDAY 27

EXHIBITION OPENING
Haas Brothers: Uncanny Valley and The European Avant-Garde: From Monet to Picasso
Blanton Museum of Art
200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
[Austin](#)
[blantonmuseum.org](#)

EXHIBITION CLOSING ↓
Art in Every Corner: The Works Progress Administration (1935-1943)
Blanton Museum of Art
200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
[Austin](#)
[blantonmuseum.org](#)

The WPA supported artists who created paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and murals for the American public. After the program ended in 1943, federally sponsored artworks were distributed to institutions across the country, including what is now the Blanton. The museum's collection is displayed alongside works made by WPA artists before and after their federal employment, highlighting the program's lasting impact on American art.



DONATO RICO, SUBWAY DRILLERS, CIRCA 1937, BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, DEPOSIT FROM THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION, UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, G 1943.1.25

EXHIBITIONS CLOSING
Highlights from the Modern's Collection and Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
[Fort Worth](#)
[themodern.org](#)

1 HOTEL HANAIEI BAY

SEE PAGE 62

LOCATION

Kaua'i, Hawaii

CLIENT

1 Hotel

DESIGN ARCHITECT

Lake Flato Architects

ARCHITECT OF RECORD & CIVIL ENGINEER

G70

CONTRACTOR

Layton Construction & Nordic PCL Construction

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: BASE
MEP ENGINEER: Interface Engineering
INTERIOR DESIGNER: NICOLEHOLLIS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: PBR HAWAII & Associates
ELECTRICAL ENGINEER: Albert Chong Associates
WATERPROOFING: WJE
ADA: LCM
LIGHTING DESIGNER: Sean O'Connor Lighting
SUSTAINABILITY/LEED CONSULTANT: Brightworks Sustainability
MPF ENGINEER: Dorvin D. Leis
POOL (DESIGN-BUILD): Pacific AquaScapes
LOW VOLTAGE AND TECHNOLOGY: Engineering PLUS
KITCHEN: TriMark Raygal

RESOURCES

CEMENT PLASTER: Dryvit
MTL-31 PUBLIC SPACE METAL: Jayco Hawaii
STANDING SEAM METAL ROOFING: Old Country Millwork
FLASHING & SHEET METAL: Firestone Building Products
HEAVY TIMBER & WOOD ROOF DECKING: Fraserwood
OTHER WOOD: Bruce Matson Company
SHEET WATERPROOFING - MIRADRI 860: Carlisle Coatings & Waterproofing
COLD FLUID-APPLIED WATERPROOFING: Hydrotech
UNDERSLAB VAPOR RETARDER: Johns Manville
BUILDING INSULATION: Stego Industries
PENETRATION FIRESTOPPING: Hilti, Specified Technologies
OBDYKE CEDAR BREATHER: Benjamin Oddyke
STANDING SEAM METAL ROOFING: Kloeckner Metals
TPO MEMBRANE ROOFING: Firestone Building Products
TAPERED INSULATION IN COURTYARD: Dupont
HOT FLUID-APPLIED RUBBERIZED ASPHALT WATERPROOFING: Hydrotech
FIREPROOFING: Isolatek
EXTERIOR WALL JOINT SEALANTS: Dow Silicoes
ACOUSTICAL SEALANT: The Dow Chemical Company
SILICONE SEALANTS: Sika Corp Industry Products
CERAMIC TILE SEALANT: Laticrete
MODIFIED BITUMEN VAPOR RETARDER: CertainTeed
BURLAP CEILING: Decorators Express
POOL BAR COUNTERS: Concreteworks
FIBERGLASS REINFORCED WALL PANELS: Marlite
OTHER COUNTERTOPS, STONE, AND TILE: BML Construction
CABINET PULLS: C2C Designs, Bruce Matson Company
WATER FEATURE & POOLS QUARTZITE: Pono Stone

DIFFUSE DOCK

SEE PAGE 50

LOCATION

Austin

ARCHITECT

Miró Rivera Architects

CONTRACTOR

Tripathi Builder

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: MJ Structures
CIVIL ENGINEER: Janis Smith Consulting
ARCHITECTURAL STEEL: Drophouse Design
LIGHTING: Arc Light Design

RESOURCES

STEEL PILES: A-Tex Boat Docks
ARCHITECTURAL STEEL & PERFORATED METAL PANELS: Drophouse Design
WOOD DECKING: Accoya
LIGHTING FIXTURES: GVA Lighting
BOAT LIFTS: Reimann & Georger

FLOATING BOX POOL PAVILION

SEE PAGE 70

LOCATION

West Lake Hills

ARCHITECT & INTERIOR DESIGNER

Baldrige Architects

CONTRACTOR

Warriner Construction

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Architectural Engineers Collaborative
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS: Design Workshop, Word + Carr Design Group

RESOURCES

WOOD SOFFIT (DOUGLAS DIR): US Lumber Brokers
ROOFING: American Hydrotech (LS Decker)
SKYLIGHTS: Lamilux (475 High Performance Building Supply)
MOLEANOS GREY LIMESTONE: Marmi Natural Stone
SILVER CLOUD GRANITE (SPA): Blackhill Granites
RECESSED LIGHTS: Lucifer Lighting (Bell & McCoy)
CERAMIC HEATERS: Bromic Heating
FIRE ORB: Fire Orb Coolwarmth Company
WEBNET (HANDRAIL): Jakob-USA

RANCHO TOMA TRES

SEE PAGE 36

LOCATION

San José del Cabo, Baja California Sur, Mexico

ARCHITECT

Candid Works

CONTRACTOR

Roca Arquitectos y Construcción

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Roca Arquitectos y Proyectos

RESOURCES

PALO DE ARCO WOOD SCREEN: Local Fabricator
CERAMIC LIGHT FIXTURES: Heather Levine Ceramics
TILE: Kismet Tile
WOOD ART PANEL: Glassford Moncada

ROCKPORT CENTER FOR THE ARTS

SEE PAGE 90

LOCATION

Rockport

CLIENT

Rockport Center for the Arts

ARCHITECT

Richter Architects

CONTRACTOR

Teal Construction

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL & CIVIL ENGINEER: JQ Engineering
MEP ENGINEER: Stridde Callins & Associates
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: adla

RESOURCES

CEMENT BOARD SIDING: James Hardie
ENTRANCE SHADE CANOPY: AVAdeck
METAL PANEL FOR ROOF MONITORS: Berridge Manufacturing
RUBBER ROOF PAVERS: Dura Strong (Rain King)
FLUID-APPLIED AIR BARRIER: Perm-A-Barrier by GCP Applied Technologies (Cretec Waterproofing)
ROOFING - PVC: Sika (Rain King)
PGT WINDOWS AND DOORS: PGT Custom Windows & Doors (Evans Glass Services)
PAINT: Sherwin-Williams (Aldana Painting)
CERAMIC TILE: Daltile (Majek Tile and MarbleCo)
ROLLER WINDOW SHADES: Draper (Longhorn Blinds)
WATER CLOSET, URINAL, LAVATORY: American Standard (Ferguson Plumbing Supply)
ACOUSTICAL PANELS: Noise Control Specialist
CUSTOM BUILDING SIGNAGE: Corpus Christi Stamp Works

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON RAD CENTER

SEE PAGE 82

LOCATION

Houston

CLIENT

University of Houston

ARCHITECT

Perkins&Will

CONTRACTOR

Turner Construction

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL & CIVIL ENGINEER: Martinez Moore Engineers
MEP ENGINEER: Henderson Engineers
CODE CONSULTANT: Jensen Hughes
ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT: Jaffe Holden
TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT: DataCom Design Group
FOOD SERVICE CONSULTANT: Ricca Design Studios
COST CONSULTANT: Project Cost Resources
LEED CONSULTANT: GreenNexus Consulting
LIGHTING CONSULTANT: G2LD
MASS TIMBER FABRICATOR: Timberlyne
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Clark Condon

RESOURCES

ALUMINUM COMPOSITE MATERIAL: Alucobond (O7 Specialties)
GLAZING: Viracon
CURTAINWALL: Kawneer (Spring Glass & Mirror)
COMPOSITE SOFFIT: WoodN
METAL PAN STAIR: Lapeyre Stair
DECORATIVE METAL WALL PANELS: Roomi Group
MASS TIMBER: SmartLam
ROOFING: Soprema
SOUND ABSORBING WALL UNITS: Acoufelt (Clunn Acoustical)
WOOD FLOORING: Prime Productions
VERGE™ DECK-MOUNTED SOAP DISPENSER, 346: Bradley (Fast Track Specialties)
HAND DRYER: XLERATOR (Fast Track Specialties)
RESTROOM MIRRORS: Spring Glass & Mirror
GLASS MARKERBOARD: Claridge Products (Fast Track Specialties)
WOK RANGE-D72: Jade Range (TriMark)
HAND SINKS: TriMark
CUSTOM STAINLESS MILLWORK: Stainless Fixtures (TriMark)

2026 EDITORIAL CALENDAR

SPRING 2026

FEATURE	Adaptation
PRODUCTS	Lighting
EDITORIAL	Closed
RELEASED	March 2026

EARLY SUMMER 2026

FEATURE	Delight
PRODUCTS	Hospitality
EDITORIAL	Closed
EST. RELEASE	May 2026

LATE SUMMER 2026

FEATURE	Water
PRODUCTS	Kitchen & Bath
EDITORIAL	Closed
EST. RELEASE	July 2026

FALL 2026 (AWARDS)

FEATURE	The Awards Issue
PRODUCTS	Best of Show
SPECIAL INSERT	TxA26 Design Expo Exhibitor Guide
EDITORIAL	Closed
EST. RELEASE	October 2026

WINTER 2026

FEATURE	Identity
PRODUCTS	Contract Furnishings
EDITORIAL	Jul. 17, 2026
EST. RELEASE	December 2026

CRAFTING YOUR PITCH

We value diverse perspectives and welcome many content types that support our mission. Project types of any kind may be submitted for consideration.

The theme for each issue is intentionally broad and open to interpretation. We recommend that you consider how your project or article idea might align with an issue when crafting your submission.

Because we receive more submissions than we can publish, we often must decline strong proposals due to space limitations or because they're not distinct enough from other articles. Pitches received earlier in the editorial cycle have a greater likelihood of being accepted. Strong pitches that we receive that we do not have an immediate placement for may be used to inform the development of the editorial calendar the following year. If we don't have an immediate placement for an article, we may in the future.

These are some of the qualities we look for when evaluating what to publish:

ALIGNMENT – We seek content that supports each issue theme, TA's mission, and TxA's strategic priorities.

ORIGINALITY – We appreciate new perspectives on fresh and historical topics alike.

RESEARCH – This may be original academic research, interviews, or secondary references.

ENGAGING WRITING – We look for topics that are not only informative but pleasurable to read.

SPECIFICITY – Avoid ideas that are too broad. Most professionals will already be knowledgeable about general design and sustainability principles.

Have a compelling story or new project that would be a great fit for one of our upcoming issues?

Submit pitches online at:
magazine.texasarchitects.org/submitting-materials

AD INDEX

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ALKUSARI STONE Austin: 512 339 2299 austin@alkusaristone.com Houston: 713 843 7122 houston@alkusaristone.com alkusaristone.com	2, 104	CITYSCAPES ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATIONS 877 727 3367 contact@cityscapesinc.com cityscapesinc.com	97	HANOVER ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS 800 426 4242 info@hanoverpavers.com hanoverpavers.com	27	MONNA ITALIAN LUXE 512 581 6369 info@monnaitalianlux.com monnaitalianlux.com	13	TIMBERLYNE 888 489 1680 info@timberlyne.com timberlyne.com	29
ASTERISK 512 371 1618 info@asteriskdesign.com asteriskdesign.com	100	DUNGAN MILLER DESIGN 713 447 1720 david@dunganmiller.com dunganmiller.com	103	INGRAINED BY NATURE 512 357 3807 nick@ingrainedbynature.com ingrainedbynature.com	31	PIONEER MILLWORKS 713 203 4130 stevenh@pioneermillworks.com pioneermillworks.com	32	T. Y. LIN INTERNATIONAL Austin: 512 472 2111 San Antonio: 210 890 4200 tylininfo@tylin.com tylin.com	100
BAKER TRIANGLE 972 285 8878 babaker@bakertriangle.com bakertriangle.com	28	EPIC METALS 877 696 3742 info@epicmetals.com epicmetals.com	98	KPK LIGHTING DESIGN 281 819 6739 info@kpklightingdesign.com kpklightingdesign.com	26	SOUTHWEST TERRAZZO ASSOCIATION 877 355 4400 sharon@southwestterrazzo.org southwestterrazzo.org	30	WARRINER BROUGHTON CONSTRUCTION 512 680 7316 howdy@wbc.build wbc.build	99
BILCO BRICK 972 227 3380 info@bilcobrick.com pro.bilcobrick.com	16	EVERGRATE 800 245 5521 info@evergrate.com evergrate.com	15	KRAFTSMAN COMMERCIAL PLAYGROUNDS & WATER PARKS 800 451 4869 info@kraftsmanplay.com kraftsmanplay.com	28	STAZON ROOFING 214 357 0300 info@stazonroof.com stazonroof.com	103	YORK METAL FABRICATORS 800 255 4703 grant@yorkmetal.com yorkmetal.com	103



FLOW STATE

Ottine Mineral Springs is marking its first anniversary with new amenities and expansion plans that continue the transformation of the historic Central Texas property into a wellness destination.

The 40-acre retreat, formerly known as Warm Springs, reopened in June 2025 following a revitalization effort that built on the site's long history as a destination for therapeutic bathing. Located adjacent to Palmetto State Park and near the San Marcos River, the property combines mineral soaking pools with wellness programming, including yoga and sound bath classes.

The site's history dates to 1909, when a 107-degree artesian spring was discovered on the property. During the 1930s, the Gonzales Warm Springs Foundation used the waters to provide therapeutic treatment for children with polio, establishing a legacy of healing that remains central to the site's identity.

Designed by Vanessa Francis of Francis Design Studio in collaboration with ownership, Jack Sanders of Design Build Adventure, Maggie Goen Buckley of Goen Buckley Design, and Ebbn Milks of Aqua Builders, the retreat centers on five spring-fed mineral pools ranging in temperature from 40 to 104 degrees. Named after native Texas plants and trees, the pools are fed by an artesian well that reaches 1,554 feet into the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer.

The property recently introduced a reservable private courtyard featuring two mineral pools, a sauna, cold plunge, hammocks, and space for groups of up to 20 guests. As part of its next phase of development, Ottine plans to add an air-conditioned indoor soaking and lounge area, a larger sauna, and a pop-up bar. A full-service restaurant, retail component, and future hotel are also in development. The restaurant and retail space are expected to open in early fall 2026.



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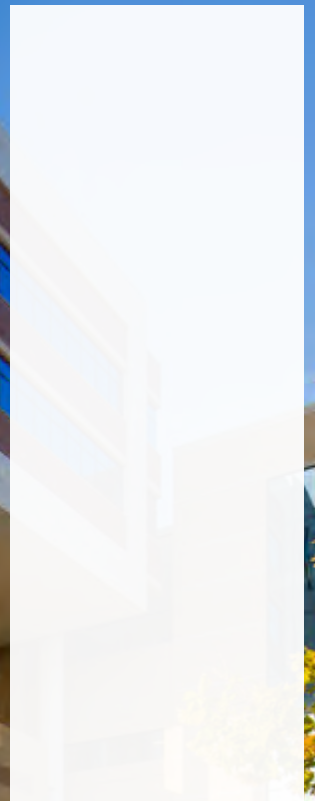
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