

# Big Cité Beat

Bissonnet Village, under construction, M. Nasr and Partners, architects (photo by Paul Hester)



Magic Island, under construction, Michael von Furstenburg, architect; ex-Wilson's Furniture Showroom, 1971, Wilson, Morris, Crain and Anderson, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)



Center Four, 1983, Basil Narun Interests, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)



King Tut's eternal gaze now watches over the Southwest Freeway and even the most humble strip shopping centers sprout giant keystones and Baroque broken pediments. Two projects nearing completion — **Magic Island** and **Bissonnet Village** — and another finished last summer — **Center Four** — demonstrate the vitality of the postmodern mode in Houston. Michael Graves may be on **W's** "out" list for 1984, but in Houston the mail always has been slow in arriving.

Among the works commissioned for this year's Houston Festival was a short story by writer **Donald Barthelme** (son of architect **Donald Barthelme**) on the subject of moving back to Houston from Manhattan. Called "Return," Barthelme's tale blithely mixed Philip Johnson with the Azalea Trail, the Galleria, and "acres and acres" of Totally Nude Live Girls on South Main. Another commissioned work, poet **Lorenzo Thomas's** five-part "Liquid City," also took an architectural perspective on Houston: the "City of glass, a place of material dreams . . . A town where high school children on the bus/Discourse on architecture . . . The 1950s realized at last." One of the festival's concluding events was a SUMfest-sponsored public lecture by **Aldo Rossi** at the University of Houston.

**A building with a difference:** A local bank recently published a brochure that included the following under the subtitle "The Ability to Meet and Handle Situations." "ResourceBank offers some creative ways to handle the challenges of today's financial environment. Of course your deposits are insured by the FDIC up to \$100,000. But to further guarantee the personal security of ResourceBank, we have arranged a unique and highly effective security force. Members of the Sikh religion, a Hindu sect founded in the 16th century who are trained in the martial arts and widely respected for their dedication to duty, establish an atmosphere of safety that pervades the building. Their presence, and the ample number of safe deposit boxes available to secure your valuables, make ResourceBank the safest place to be."

**Flood control, Texas style:** While Houston has its flood-prone bayous, and San Antonio its RiverWalk, Lubbock has only parched West Texas prairie. This dry situation, however, may soon change as this latter city seeks to emulate its more water-logged Texas cousins. According to recent reports, Lubbock has ordered a river. Making use of irrigation water that has already been once recycled from sewage-treatment plants, this city plans to fill up run-off lakes and release the overflow into the Yellow House Canyon, a big ditch that runs through the town. Taking advantage of this idea, couldn't Houston solve one of its problems, too? Why not use our technological know-how and build a pipeline direct from Brays Bayou to the Yellow House Canyon, thereby making what is dry, wet, and what is now wet, dry?

Last fall the **University of Houston College of Architecture** cleaned out studio space located on the ground floor of Building Z (1955, Cato, Austin, and Evans Architects, Edmund Furley, associate), washed off the plate-glass windows and set up an exhibition space, **The Furley Gallery**. The Gallery's name honors both the Furley family and Edmund Furley, long-time associate dean and professor emeritus of the College. Shows held during the past academic year included an exhibition of drawings by Richard Ferrier, University of Texas at Arlington College of Architecture professor, and recent works of the Houston office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. The most provocative exhibits, however, have been those which display student work done at the College of Architecture. Many of the exhibits increased the viewer's understanding of what architecture looks like and how it is defined. While those with conservative architectural tastes may find much of this work at best puzzling and at worst meaningless, the high standards of draftsmanship, craft, and evident originality validates the student production in and of itself. The future may be presaged by the present at The Furley Gallery. For more information on exhibit schedules and gallery hours, contact the University of Houston College of Architecture, (713) 749-1187.

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