☞ I Could Have Danced All Night: The **RDA Gala** on 26 March - the centenary of the birth of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe - was celebrated in festive style at the Architecture Building at the University of Houston. Co-conspirators **Burdette Keeland** and **Mariquita Masterson**, who whipped up the event, were joined by chairfolk **Toni** and **Isaac Arnold**, and 137 guests to dance, feast, and view an exhibition of photography of **Philip Johnson** and **John Burgee's** newest works by **Richard Payne**. **Johnson** himself put in an appearance at what is already being called UH's Palace of Architecture to receive an honorary doctorate of humane letters on 17 May.

☞ Brain Drain Continues: **Lorraine P. Roberts** has resigned as executive director of the Rice Design Alliance. **Richard Keating** exits the Houston office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in October to become partner in charge of the Los Angeles office of SOM. **Dana Cuff** likewise has succumbed to the lure of the Golden West; she will join the planning faculty at the University of Southern California in the fall.

☞ New Kids on the Block: **Rodolfo Machado** has signed on for a stint at Rice University's School of Architecture. Rumor has it that **William J. R. Curtis** will be appointed to the architecture faculty at The University of Texas at Austin to teach architectural history.

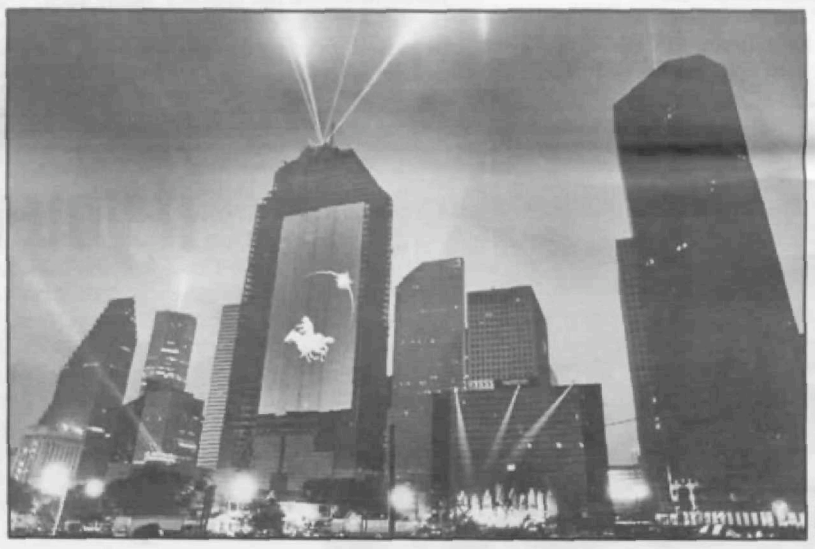
Welcome back to *Artscene*, the ambitious and stimulating quarterly tabloid that **Anne H. Roberts**, **Bert L. Long, Jr.**, and crew have reincarnated to focus critically on visual and performing arts, locally and statewide.

☞ The Envelope Please: Architect **Hugo V. Neuhaus, Jr.** and writer **Donald Barthelme** were among those honored with Mayor's Arts Awards for outstanding contributions to the city's cultural life on 7 May. Taking First Honorable Mention in the 1986 Houston Discovery Prizes for prose writing, sponsored by PEN Southwest, was *Cite* contributor **Elizabeth McBride**. **Peter C. Papademetriou** copped a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1986 to continue work on his book on the life of Eero Saarinen.

☞ **Continental Airlines**, as its Sesquicentennial gift to Houston, will dedicate a portion of each fare sold for flights departing from Hobby Airport between 1 June and 1 December 1986 to the restoration of the **Houston Municipal Airport terminal**. This 1940 modernistic landmark, designed by **Joseph Finger**, was Houston's first permanent airline passenger terminal. Located on the western edge of Hobby Airport, it has been closed to traffic since 1954, when the present Hobby terminal opened. Continental estimates that its gift will amount to $250,000.

Citelines

Jean-Michel Jarre Sheds New Light on Downtown



Bill Pogue

I have never been in love with Houston. The skyline, whose picturesque drama holds many in awe, has always represented to me a sign marking the speculative consolidation of capital (in the form of rentable square footage) by individuals. Thus, I've seen it as an insult to traditional city life.

But as I walked down West Dallas Avenue the night of Jean-Michael Jarre's performance of "Rendezvous Houston: A City in Concert," the apocolyptic vision that confronted me altered not only my perceptions, but my expectations of this city as well. In choreographing lasers and fireworks to synthesized music, Jarre proposed another way of understanding the urban milieu that is Houston. To view the city as scenography, as a backdrop for a continuous sensation of light, color, and sound, and to create an altered awareness of the urban realm, one of mythic proportions: that, it seems, was his intention.

For a moment, two hours really, Houston had a center, but more important, a locus. As the high-rise buildings convulsed in a simultaneous ejaculation of fireworks, I and perhaps a million of my fellow citizens were transfixed. Together, we watched as the gods dueled with laser wands and thrashed about from high atop this new vision of Olympus. We hung out of the windows of the houses of our neighborhoods, camped out on rooftops and carhoods, abandoned our autos on I-45, and we walked like pliant and servile subjects down streets we had never walked before, and in whose glow we saw the city itself.

When it was over, when the last drop of blood had been drained from our mythic protagonists, we separated, and I walked back up Dallas Avenue, past the same crumbling shotguns of the Fourth Ward that only an hour and a half earlier had seemed such an intimate and significant part of the urban realm, but whose ephemeral beauty was, like Cinderella's, hidden by neglect.

Behind me Cullen Center and its siblings reveled in an afterglow of spectacular purple and green light. The city center, familiar and banal, was no longer. The Fourth Ward, isolated and forgotten, was gone as well. Having been *defamiliarized* with the city I had new expectations - and hopes. I had seen the citizens engage in civic life. I had joined them in watching and listening to a man's artistic production and in so doing had witnessed a vision of the city of tomorrow. My view, however, was not the one resembling the sets of science-fiction movies, but the one in which Houstonians, acting collectively, experienced the city and each other. Perhaps, like the handsome prince in the fairy tale, in which ragged shoes become glass slippers and a pumpkin transforms into a carriage (even if only for a few hours), I and my fellow citizens were, in this moment of hyperstimulation, moved to consider the reclamation of such a vision. Like Cinderella's fairy godmother, Jarre has given Houston a wonderful gift. As long as there is memory it will continue to bring joy.

Neal I. Payton

The Galveston Arches: An Editorial

Galveston Arch, 1986, Michael Graves, architect

From early February to late July 1986 the city of Galveston is host to seven triumphal fantasy arches designed by seven renowned architects. The works of Stanley Tigerman, Cesar Pelli, Charles Moore, Eugene Aubry, Michael Graves, Boone Powell, and Helmut Jahn rise above or near a mile-long stretch of Galveston's Strand Historic District.

The 19th-century commercial district has undergone a fantastic transformation due to these so-called exotic ceremonial arches that both adorn the public realm and commemorate a particular event. These public arches have been sponsored by private parties, spearheaded by Mr. and Mrs. George P. Mitchell and J. R. McConnell.

The highly individual arches have more in common than their fantasy elements. The arches span the street; they span 40 years of the absence of the seasonal festival whose occurance they celebrate; and they span centuries of collective memory deep inside the individual observer. The arches manage to bring together the people and the city as they talk about urban rituals for all classes (as in the civic-minded festival pavilions and arches built in American cities during the 19th century).

The arches are temporary. They will be there for only an instant in the history of the city of Galveston, and for that brief period of time it makes us look at the city as something that belongs to the people. For the common observer the arches become anonymous. They are very public, very abstract entities that interact with buildings and with people in a similar fashion, and independently of their own "meaning." By their sheer presence they increase an awareness of the urban built environment and by their historical and traditional nature they reinforce the concept that a city belongs to the people through time. Even their temporary condition tells about a city that lives beyond the life of the individuals within it.

With this in mind, we come to the conclusion that the architects who designed the arches are unimportant to the common observer, as are the builders or patrons who allowed this to happen. Once built, the arches become city and they become part of any and every one in that city. They represent an urban gesture, an attitude towards city and city-life. They are the city; they become part of the collective memory of the children and their children.

We have slowly forgotten the nature of monuments, of entities that, independent of their reason to exist, become an instrinsic part of the public domain. No matter how private or public, generous or egotistical, ignorant or enlightened, or simply incomprehensible their origins seem to be, such entities, sooner or later, are inherited by everyone who lives in the city where they are built. For an instant they make some of us long for a city with which we can interact as individuals and as members of a society; a city that will provide us with a very public identification and a very private interpretation of such identification. A city that takes from us and gives to us in a balanced way. A city that touches us and that we can touch and possess. Imagine how many opportunities for places there are in any city for this to happen.

Eduardo Robles

Galveston Arch, 1986, Boone Powell, architect

Shamrock Hotel, 1949, Wyatt C. Hedrick, architect

Saving the Shamrock: Some Viable Alternatives

In a year of heightened interest in Texas history and memorabilia, the announcement that the Shamrock Hotel has been sold to the Texas Medical Center, Inc. and potentially is faced with imminent destruction seems particularly incongruous. Purchased by the Texas Medical Center for $46 million, the Shamrock might well be one of the most expensive sites for a parking lot in this city.

For 37 years the Shamrock has been a prime location to display the often ostentatious exuberance for which Houston is famous. The very size and audacity of Glenn H. McCarthy's dream of the late 1940s holds its place in Texas legend. Although the hotel's architectural presence has been a favored subject of discussion by inhabitants and visitors alike, the Shamrock has become both a part of Houston's life and a good neighbor.

With the "final St. Patrick's Day" celebration this year (the hotel opened spectacularly on St. Patrick's Day 1949), it appears that the local news media has written-off the grand lady of Houston. Not so a spirited band of citizens led by the brothers Don and Kirk Speck, who have barraged newspapers and airwaves with a general call to arms. Citing great support in the Medical Center and in the hotel's neighborhoods, the organizers called for a "citizen parade" to ring the block around the Shamrock on Sunday, 16 March. An estimated 3,500 people of all ages, sporting agitprop T-shirts that read "Tearing Down the Shamrock Would Be Like Tearing Down the Alamo," arrived to demonstrate their concern about the future of the hotel and sign ubiquitous petitions. The speakers of the afternoon, lawyer Charles D. Maynard, Jr. of Kennerly and Maynard, publisher Lute Harmon of *Houston City Magazine,* and HISD boardmember Brad Raffle, called for action rather than nostalgia.

In discussing the future of the Shamrock, Harmon and Don Speck emphasized the need to think beyond parking lots. While the non-profit Texas Medical Center, Inc. is primarily a management group concerned with coordinating maintenance, traffic, and parking within the Texas Medical Center, its board of directors can lease or donate the Shamrock for medical-oriented services, or sell the property at no profit to a third party. The health-care possibilities include housing for the elderly (several such projects have been proposed for West University Place), a joint institute of biotechnics with Texas A&M University, a general admitting hospital, student dormitories for the medical and nursing schools within the Texas Medical Center, or a residential hostel similar to the Ronald McDonald House. In fact, this sort of charitable hotel complex for family and patients (pre- and post-hospitalization) is currently proposed on a nearby site by the Rotary Club of Houston and M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute. This project of 306 rooms is budgeted for $30 million. A more intriguing future for the Shamrock is to capitalize on the hotel's high visibility and maintain the existing, and profitable, convention business, linking it to a scaled-down hotel (the Shamrock currently has 850 rooms). The rest of the extensive building complex can then be opened to publishing, tourist, and international organizations eager to have the address and location. "Why not capitalize on the tourism industry?" asked Harmon. The Shamrock in effect could become the convention and tourist headquarters for Houston.

The major financial constraint to rehabilitating the Shamrock for any adaptive reuse stems from bringing the building up to fire codes. Yet even further out-of-date structures have been imaginatively redesigned and financed. The feasibility and compatibility of any number of these proposals also need to be explored before the green-lit tower disappears from the Houston skyline in July.

Rives Taylor

Down in the Dumps: Houston's Solid-Waste Disposal Discussed

The disposal of solid waste in Houston has become a matter of increasing concern, and it's no small problem. Solid waste consists of municipal garbage and industrial hazardous waste. In the 13-county area including and surrounding Houston, over 2.5 million tons of municipal waste are generated each year, according to the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 10 million tons of hazardous wastes are generated annually in the Houston area.

Recently, two meetings were held in Houston concerning solid waste issues. The Institute for Public History at the University of Houston sponsored a seminar entitled "Dumps, Landfills, and the Neighborhoods" on 24 January, and the Texas Water Pollution Control Federation organized the "Solid and Hazardous Waste Symposium" on 14 February. Speakers at both meetings pointed out effects that solid waste, particularly landfills, could have on risks, rights, and plans for land use.

Most solid waste is disposed in landfills. In 1983, the Texas Water Commission (TWC) and Texas Department of Health files listed 62 municipal landfills in the Houston area. In addition to these, the EPA estimates that there are currently about 230 potential hazardous waste sites in and around Houston. Thirteen of these are listed on the EPA's National Priority List as candidates for Superfund clean-up.

There are risks associated with these landfills. Some are largely economic, consisting of threats to the value of neighboring tracts of land, as evidenced in the siting controversy concerning Browning Ferris Industries' proposed 600-acre municipal landfill in Ford Bend County. Other risks are related to public health. The Superfund site at the former United Creosoting property in Conroe is located partly under a subdivision and thus could pose a threat to local public health. Milton Russell, assistant administrator for policy planning and evaluation for the EPA, pointed out that risk is unavoidable, and zero risk impossible (the Food and Drug Administration has established one-in-a-million probability as *de minimis* risk). Russell said that it is important to recognize risk as a given, and try to establish acceptable levels of risk. A representative from an insurance company and a lobbyist for the Chemical Manufacturers Association noted that it is very difficult to quantify risk and determine what is acceptable. How do the probabilities of exposure from negligent design or chance accidents compare? Are the health risks of exposure best calculated from epidemiological or toxicological data?

Peter Bowman, hazardous waste coordinator of the Texas Chapter of the Sierra Club, argues that statistically calculating and covering a risk is not as important as respecting an individual's right to understand and perhaps volunteer for a risk. Bowman noted that many people seemed willing to accept risks if they could exercise personal control, if the potential perils of exposure could be weighed against long-term benefits, and if the problems involved with exposure were well understood and widely known. Unfortunately, the neighbors of proposed landfills often are not given enough information about, nor are involved in, planning for the proposed disposal sites.

Because of the risks of operating a landfill and safely accommodating neighbors' rights, existing sites are dwindling. The 1983 total of 62 municipal landfills in the Houston metropolitan area is expected by the HGAC to drop to 11 by the year 1990. Out of a state-wide total of 140 to 150 properties that handled hazardous waste on-site, 24 chose in 1985 to stop accepting waste, according to Bill Colberg at the TWC. Conventional methods of planning for future landfills and managing older sites do not seem to work well now, largely because they are often unilateral and generic and do not consider the issues specific to each site. Currently, there is no single operator large enough to make decisions alone (the City of Houston handles only 40 percent of all municipal waste in the city). No site is typical enough to represent the many different sites that might be considered (Jack V. Matson, associate professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Houston, estimates that there could be as many as 1,000 landfills in Houston).

To avoid these kinds of problems, recently developed groups have used collaborative, site-specific planning methods. Matson described the Keystone process as one promising planning method for finding new landfill sites. The Keystone process enables site applicants to work directly with affected communities, and has been used in the review of a potential Low-Level Radioactive Waste Facility site in Dimmit and Hudspeth counties. In the case of existing landfills, Clean Sites, Inc., a national, non-profit group, has been able to accelerate clean-ups by allocating responsibility among involved parties, negotiating an agreed upon clean-up method, and coordinating with the EPA and state agencies. Jan Power reported that Clean Sites is coordinating the clean-up of abandoned waste dumps at the Bailey site in Bridge City, and at the Motco site in La Marque.

The Keystone process and the Clean Sites approach distribute risks and protect rights in a reasonably even way and allow people to come to agreement over disposal sites and practices. However, the risks continue, and many of the rights are inherently incompatible. A permanent solution will rely on limits to the amount and hazard of wastes generated, and on improved disposal methods, such as incineration or recycling.

David Todd