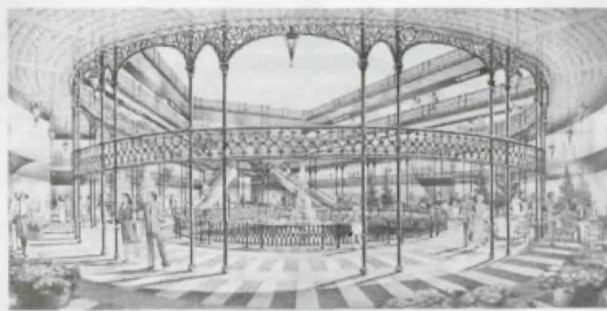


Citelines



Left: The Crescent, Dallas, central court of retail building. Below: The Crescent, perspective view from Maple Avenue (drawings by Patrick López).



Texas, built during the 1870s and 1880s. Johnson even had Houston architect Howard Barnstone take him on a tour of Galveston to absorb local color and to inspect ironwork there, a visit that paid off in detailing the cast aluminum used extensively on The Crescent's verandas, balconies, and in the retail building's central court.

Construction of The Crescent began in October 1983 and is scheduled for completion in 1986. The buildings will be clad in limestone and the roofs will be surfaced with slate. A 4,000-car garage will lie beneath the site. Developers are a joint venture of The Rosewood Corporation (which owns Dallas's Mansion on Turtle Creek and Houston's The Remington) and Dallas architect Phillip W. Shepherd. Shepherd's firm, Shepherd+Boyd/USA, and John Burgee Architects with Philip Johnson are collaborating architects. Vincent Ponte is the urban planner, Ellisor and Tanner are structural engineers, and Zion and Breen Associates are landscape architects. HCB Contractors is the general contractor.

The Crescent promises to be urbane, acknowledging both the pedestrian and the automobile with a graciousness uncharacteristic of modern developments. However, the "styling" is problematic. Neither academic nor pop, it is uncomfortably akin to the Mansardic vernacular that still persists on Texas's suburban frontiers.

Art Institute Announces New Design

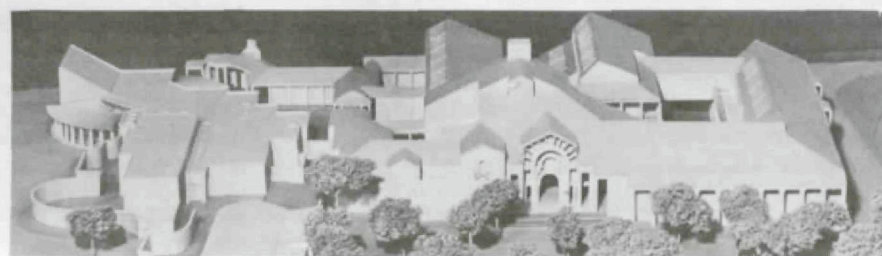
Philip Does Dallas

The San Antonio Art Institute unveiled its proposed new college of art building, designed by Moore Ruble Yudell, on 31 March at a reception celebrating Charles Moore's appointment as O'Neil Ford Professor of Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin. Located next to the institute's existing building and across from the McNay Art Museum, Moore Ruble Yudell's 50,000 square-foot building will contain classrooms, studios, and workshops for drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, print making, video, film, and computer graphics, as well as a café, library, and 300-seat auditorium. The building will be configured around a series of internal courts. Its picturesque composition is intended to maintain the village-like scale of the Art Institute and McNay Museum buildings. Ground breaking will occur in the fall with completion expected by the middle of 1986. Associate architects are O'Neill and Pérez.

When in Texas, Philip Johnson has acquired the habit of reserving his most considered architectural statements for Houston, and his most outrageous for Dallas. First Dallas got the Beck House, then the Kennedy Memorial, then Thanks-Giving Square. Now comes The Crescent, an office, hotel, and retail complex located on a 10-acre site in the city's Maple Avenue area, just north of downtown.

The architecture is Texas French. According to Johnson, it is intended to represent the notion that "Texas in the late 19th century was very glamorous." Thus, the three 18- and 19-story office buildings at the south end of the triangular site obtain a Belle Epoque treatment. The three-story retail building, at the apex of the triangle, and the 228-room hotel behind it are composed as a series of projecting pavilions and recessed galleries. But the art historical reference is not to the Louvre. It's to the Mansard-roofed county courthouses of central

San Antonio Art Institute, view of model showing existing building (left) and proposed new building (center). (San Antonio Art Institute)



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SOUTHWEST CENTER The Houston Competition

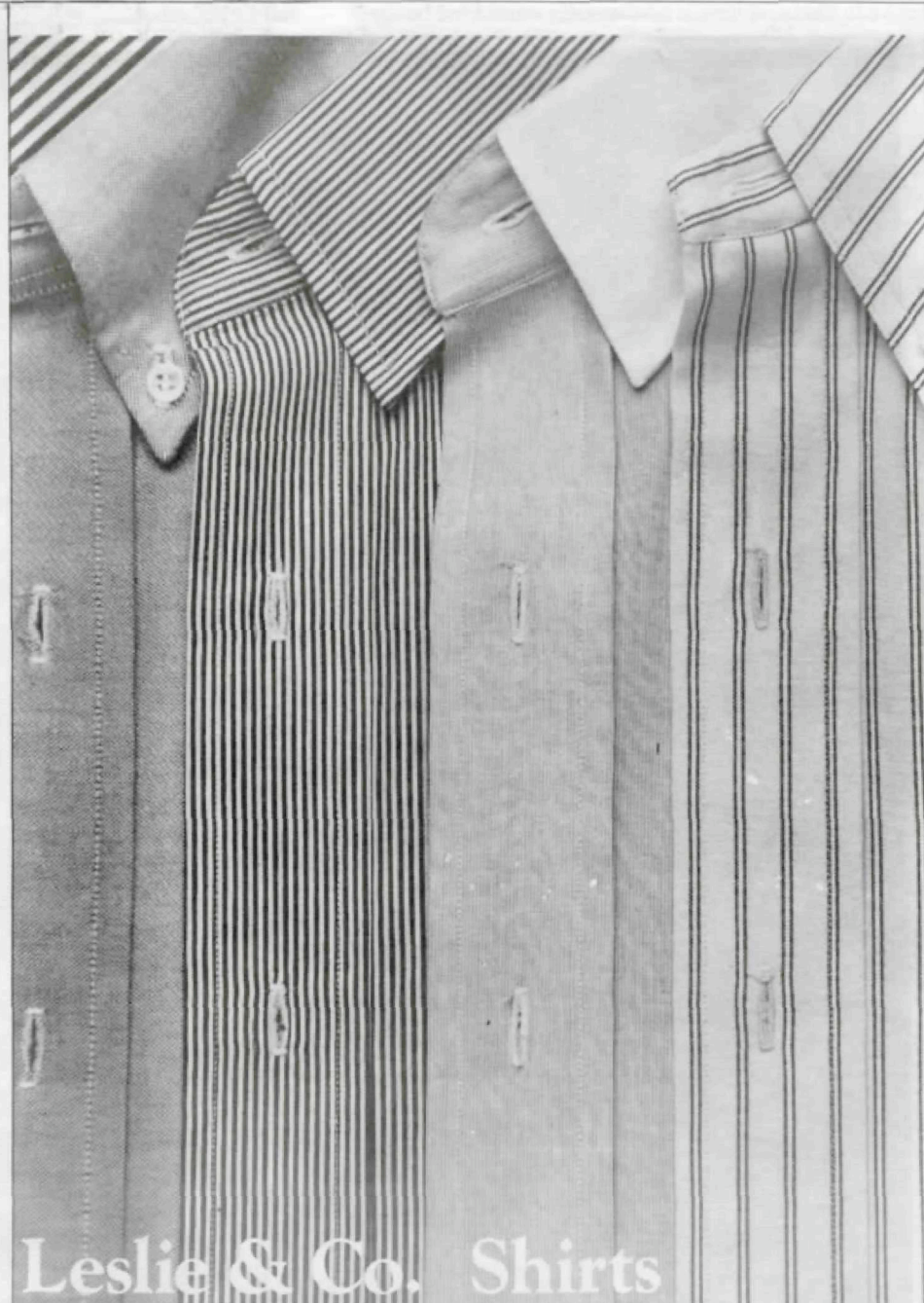
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Texpresso: Houston/Dallas Bullet Trains

After a generation of neglect, and 15 years of rail-corridor improvement in the Northeastern United States, interest in reviving intercity rail transport is on the rise across America. Serious proposals for bullet trains incorporating the latest European or Japanese technology have been made in Florida (Miami to Orlando then Tampa), Pennsylvania (Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and the Midwest), and California (Los Angeles to San Diego). In Texas, too, passenger trains may once again roll along the legs of the triangle delineated by Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio.

The Texas Railroad Transportation Company (TRTC), based in Austin and chaired by Viscount Paul de Rosière, a relocated French entrepreneur, plans to build a 750-mile, four-billion dollar bullet-train system connecting these cities along existing rail rights-of-way. For the moment, however, the TRTC is concentrating just on the Houston-to-Dallas run.

While much work needs to be done before even this initial route is any more than a gleam in the eyes of the backers, one hurdle to the acquisition of rights-of-way was recently overcome. Federal Bankruptcy Court Judge Frank J. McGarr approved a plan granting the TRTC one more year to complete feasibility studies and raise capital needed to purchase a Houston-Dallas right-of-way from the Rock Island Railroad. One half of the interest in this 100-foot wide strip of land extending between the two cities is additionally controlled by the

Burlington Northern Railroad. TRTC spokesman Tom Wagner said, however, that his company had already arrived at a mutually equitable means of sharing this property with Burlington Northern. With a \$250,000 escrow payment to Rock Island Trustee William M. Gibbons, the court agreement gives the TRTC until 31 December 1984 to raise the \$17.5 million necessary to close the sale.

If secured by this date the TRTC will control the right-of-way from Houston to Waxahachie. The final 20-mile sprint from this latter town to Dallas has been secured with an agreement from the Katy Railroad. Station locations and equipment choices have not yet been considered.

The biggest question that faces the owners of the proposed system is of course whether or not there will be sufficient ridership to justify the expected initial capital outlay of \$1.5 billion. To answer this question the TRTC hired Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas, a New Orleans consulting firm, to do preliminary market feasibility and ridership studies. Their investigation indicates that at \$40 per ticket for a one-way trip, there would be sufficient use of the rail system to guarantee profitability.

Meanwhile the Texas Railroad Commission has also applied to the Federal Railroad Administration for a grant to do a formal feasibility study of the rail triangle. Efforts have also been made within the Texas Legislature to fund feasibility studies to test the viability of rail passenger transport. These efforts, not connected to the plans of the TRTC, include a bill sponsored by Houston Representative Al Edwards. His bill would increase the Texas driver's license fee by 25 cents to finance the costs of a study. The bill, approved by the Texas House of Representatives in May of 1983, awaits action by the full Legislature.

Current plans, perhaps optimistic, call for the first trains to depart Houston sometime in 1988. Just imagine leaving your downtown office or home, walking to the Texpresso station, and riding at speeds in excess of 180 mph. Avoid the freeways, avoid the airports, and avoid the airplanes. Travel to downtown Dallas in under two hours — by train.

Randolph Jackson

Preservation Alliance Sponsors Design Competition

The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance is sponsoring a design competition for the Main Street-Market Square Historic District in downtown Houston. The competition aims to promote a greater sense of coherence within the district by proposing strategies for the treatment of vacant sites and parking lots; street, sidewalk, and public-space improvements; and connections to Buffalo Bayou and Allen's Landing. The submission deadline is 1 June 1984. Cash prizes for the first and second place entries will be awarded by a jury composed of preservationists Barrie Scardino and Truett Latimer, architects William F. Stern and Barry Moore, and Houston City Planner Efraim García. For registration information, call the alliance's office at the Harris County Heritage Society, (713) 223-8367.

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