

CiteSurvey

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

The saga of Simms Bayou is approaching a happy ending. Since the 1940s, the Corps of Engineers, which moves very slowly (thank goodness) has had a project on the books to channelize Simms Bayou in a 300-foot-wide swath — solid, straight-across concrete, not just at the bottom of the bayou. Even though it has been public knowledge that the bayou would be swallowed up in this way, subdivisions and commercial buildings had gradually built up over time, sometimes constructed in the bayou right-of-way.

Around 1991, bayou neighbors were called to action by public bid announcements for the concrete job. A full set of working drawings had even been completed, and public hearing had been held over 10 years before and been forgotten. This time neighborhood activist and environmentalist Evelyn Merz did an amazing job of organizing opposition. Through the courts, the Corps of Engineers was forced to study alternatives; the agency found none.

After stalling the \$400 million project but failing to change or cancel it, the Merz group got the ear of Houston Congressman Mike Andrews, who was on the House Ways and Means Committee. Andrews brought in landscape architect Kevin Shanley, who subsequently has spent hundreds of volunteer hours on the Simms Bayou project.

Shanley, who had been promoting a 200-year plan for Houston's bayous, was given two weeks to come up with a workable alternative. He admits to pulling a rabbit out of a hat. In exercising condemnation rights, the Corps of Engineers had acquired an extra right-of-way because many buildings were condemned even if they only encroached slightly. Shanley's idea was to use the whole right-of-way and make the channel much wider, enabling it to hold flood waters when necessary.

Houston's bayous have always been little more than sewers and storm drains. The Corps of Engineers, and its partner the Harris County Flood Control District, wanted only two things from the bayous — for the water to move as fast as possible, and for it to move in channels that were as inexpensive as possible to build. The environmentalists, on the other hand, have wanted to slow the water down and treat these waterways more like rivers, leaving them to nature. Shanley was able to find a compromise solution.



Simms Bayou at Broadway, laid back to prevent flooding and allow natural vegetation to reestablish itself.

Simms Bayou is 22 miles long, flowing from Buffalo Bayou to Missouri City. Along its banks native Live Oaks and Bald Cypress trees were clear cut at the turn-of-the-century for farm land and rice fields. The trees presently growing in the flood plain have all grown up since the subdivisions were established. Shanley's wide-channel proposal necessitated taking out all these trees, much to the chagrin of neighbors.

In the geomorphology of rivers, flood benches are formed naturally over time as flooding periodically occurs. Imitating nature seemed to be the best solution, so artificial benches were proposed with the promise that trees would be added back on the upper terraces. The typical southern forest has 600 trees per acre, and that was the initial goal. With budget reductions, only 14 trees per acre are to be planted now, but the possibility of supplemental planting will always exist.

The banks of Simms Bayou are being laid back, with no concrete, in reaches of about two miles each. The first reach, around Broadway near Hobby Airport, is almost complete. Construction will take at least another five to ten years, working its way slowly upstream.

Shanley is happy with the direction that this project has taken. He says, "It shows that we can work in partnership with neighbors and engineers to make our bayous living things within the urban fabric. There is great possibility for Houston's waterways to become an integral part of our lives."

The Bayou Preservation Association has regrouped with a focus on creating long-term policy. To participate or receive further information, please call 713.529.6443.

CAMP VITRUVIUS

Forty students representing 27 area high schools took part in the first Summer Discovery Program for High School Students at the College of Architecture, University of Houston last year. The students were taught by professors from the architecture schools of both the

University of Houston and Rice University and by local practicing architects as well as experts in related fields. This five-week introduction to the architectural profession included field trips, college-level studio work, and several hands-on design projects. The summer session culminated with a show of the students' work. A lot of interest (over 100 applications were received) and positive reviews have led the UH College of Architecture to offer this summer school program again this year.

The 1996 program benefited from an unusually talented and dedicated group of teachers, many of whom will return this year: studio critics Rob Civitello,



University of Houston summer program student in the chair he created for the second week project.



University of Houston students show and tell at the exhibition of student work at the end of the summer program.

Nonya Grenader, Gabriella Gutierrez, Carlos Jiménez, Donna Kacmar, and David Thaddeus; teaching assistants Wayne Andrist, Hector Garcia, and Nina Murrell; and guest lecturers Leonard Bachman, Betty Bollinger, Joe Colaco, Margaret Culbertson, Stephen Fox, Deborah Grotfeldt, Barry Greenlaw, Nora Laos, Paul Lodholtz, Barry Moore, Patrick Peters, Jeff Ryan, Danny Samuels, Suzanne Theis, and Dean Bruce Webb. Major gifts from the Elkins Trust, Exxon, the Atrium Society of the College of Architecture, and the Rice Design Alliance were joined by contributions from HOK, Morris Architects, W. O. Neuhaus, and Ziegler Cooper Architects. Individual scholarships were underwritten by the Junior League of Houston, Inc., Mrs. Jackson Hinds, and Jose Molina.

The second annual Summer Discovery Program for High School Students will take place this year from June 16 to July 25. Students entering the 11th or 12th grades or the first year of college are eligible to apply. Tuition is \$285, including field trips and supplies. Scholarships are available on the basis of need.

Applications must be completed by May 1, 1997. *Drexel Turner*
For information, call 713.743.4000

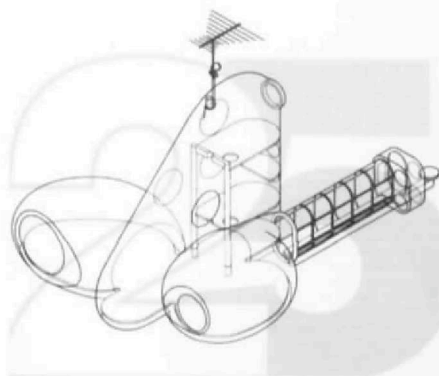
MORE MOORE

Last September the Charles W. Moore House and the Moore/Andersson architectural offices built in 1984 in Austin were finally put into the hands of the Charles W. Moore Foundation to be opened at a museum. The foundation was established after Moore's death at age 68 on December 16, 1993. The generosity of Austin residents, particularly Mr. and Mrs. Willard M. Hanzlik; Moore's nephews, Lawrence, David, Steven, and Bruce Weingarten; and Arthur W. Andersson, Moore's architectural partner, helped saved this legacy of late-20th-century American architecture. For almost three years, architects, students, and clients have been working to preserve this landmark as a memorial to Moore's work and whimsey.

In Moore's sprawling house his collections of toys, books, dolls, masks, drawings, and architectural models are part of the architecture of his life and his work, not mere interior decorations. In the *New York Times* (October 20, 1994), Paul Goldberger wrote that the hacienda like compound (two houses, two studios) "sums up Moore's architectural ideas



Charles Moore House interior, Austin, Texas, Moore/Andersson Architects, 1984.



House of the Century, Ant Farm, architects, 1972.

brilliantly: it is a tiny village that wants to be a cathedral. A cluster of small shed buildings arranged around a courtyard containing a small swimming pool, it is deceptively simple on the outside." Saving this remarkable house and its contents will give the public an American house museum equivalent to the John Soane Museum in London.

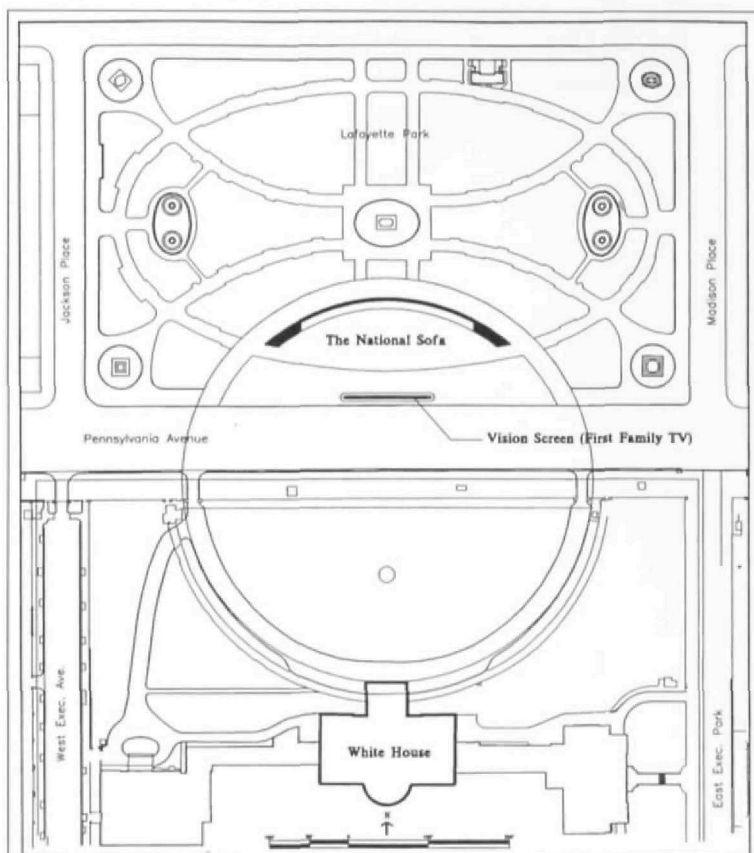
Significantly, the Weingarten family has also donated the Charles W. Moore Archive to the University of Texas at Austin. A monumental record of Moore's career, this archive consists of 100,000 slides, correspondence, drawings, watercolors, and manuscripts. Moore's exceptional architectural library, also donated to the University of Texas, will remain in the house.

Kevin Keim, director of the foundation, says that the house at 2102 Quarry Road, Austin, Texas 78703 is now open by appointment (call 512.477.6660). Tours are \$10 per person but free for students.

HOC 25

To celebrate the House of the Century 25th anniversary, a party will take place at the Mojo Lake site in September 1997. The HOC was designed in 1972 by Ant Farm architects (Richard Jost, Chip Lord, Doug Michels) for Houstonian Marilyn Oshman. An Ant Farm press release states: "The Brazoria birthday bash will be featuring a futuristic cake, ethereal lighting with swamp gas, Ant Farm multimedia performance, and a live Mojo music soundscape. In coordination with the live on-site event, an HOC25 design exhibit is scheduled to open in Houston featuring original HOC concepts, design drawings, 3-D architecture models, and a private photographic history of this secluded Brazoria County Dreamhouse over the past 25 years. *HOC 25 Myth Management: Curious Relic or Forgotten Masterpiece?* You decide . . . <www.hoc@25.com>."

On April 10, 1997, two of the architects, Jost and Michels, will join owner Oshman at the University of Houston for a colloquium on this unusual project. See *Cite* Calendar in this issue (p. 3).



THE NATIONAL SOFA (James Allegro and Doug Michels, architects, 1996) is intended as "an icon of freedom and an interactive monument of the future." The architects would like to see the curved 300-foot marble sofa built across from the White House. The idea is to be a living symbol of American democracy, where cameras located throughout the White House could beam live images of the First Family to a floating screen in front of the National Sofa, where American couch potatoes could have two-way, impromptu conversations with the President.

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