

Rice Design Alliance Annual Report For 1982-1983

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William O. Neuhaus, III

Report of the President

During 1982-1983 the Rice Design Alliance sought to augment its customary programs, which focus on trends and personalities in architecture and design, with stronger community involvement. These efforts "to provide a forum for discussion . . . and to provide the opportunity for examination of problems of creating a humane man-made environment" are not new to this organization, they are part of the purpose of the Rice Design Alliance as stated in its by-laws. Through these efforts, it has become apparent that as RDA matures it can stimulate discussion, provide enlightenment, and cause action. This realization has led RDA to discuss openly the potential, and the pitfalls, of becoming a forum, and the need for balance in that journey.

This past year led to the following actions that demonstrated our efforts to achieve those ideals. In August *Cite* was published for the first time. The banner issue included a critical review of the Menil Museum, an interview with Cesar Pelli, and an article on the sewer moratorium. This issue helped set the tone for the year at RDA. September saw the advent of "Classical Architecture in the South: Transformation of an Ideal," a six-lecture series. The series was given in conjunction with a symposium and exhibition of "The Classical Ideal in Twentieth Century American Architecture," co-sponsored by RDA and the Farish Gallery of the Rice University School of Architecture.

The Courtlandt Place Neighborhood Tour in October marked a

change in direction for the annual RDA tour by concentrating on a neighborhood. This walking tour in a near-town area allowed a feeling of context unobtainable in past efforts. Courtlandt Place, restored and saved from the beginnings of decay, demonstrated the positive effects of involved residents who are sensitive to their neighborhood.

In November *Cite: Special Issue* was published to inform our readers and cause discussion of METRO's plans for an elevated, heavy-rail system along Main Street. The issue did not completely alleviate misgivings about the rail system — the METRO bond referendum was soundly defeated in June.

"Design and Communication" was a highly successful series of six lectures starting in February. Delivered by graphic and environmental designers as well as architects, this series extended the customary focus of RDA programs beyond the built environment.

In April and May "Houston Options" was our most ambitious public forum concerning Houston, its future, and its relationship to other cities. The five urban-affairs symposiums confronted problems and opportunities posed by Houston's recent growth. They also illustrated the difficulty RDA has in reaching the community outside our general membership.

The annual meeting was held in May at the Orange Show, a regional, graphic, and primitive construction on the east side of

town. The location, like RDA's programs and publications, seemed to reflect the year's focus — RDA as an organization for the city of Houston, not just the South Main area.

The spring issue of *Cite* represented our most ambitious publication. It included a critical review of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown's Park Regency, an analysis of the Regional Mobility Plan, and articles on, and proposals for, Hermann Park, "Houston's equivalent of Central Park." *Cite* printing runs in the year grew from 3,500 for the first issue to 10,000 for the Spring issue.

These projects and programs have produced an excellent year. However, they were only part of the progress which took place this year. RDA now has a record 16 Corporate members thanks to a strong development committee. The treasurer's report indicated that, by a slim margin, RDA took in more money than it spent in 1982-1983. We will continue to require even larger sums of money if we are to expand our programs. How to increase RDA's effectiveness as a forum while securing the financial support of established organizations and agencies are goals that may conflict on occasion. On the other hand, RDA must not settle complacently for proven formulas lest even our regular audience of members and supporters feel that we have become predictable and boring.

The Rice Design Alliance underwent trial by fire with the loss of Betsy Griffin, our combination

executive director and mother, who departed to help with the formation of the Houston International Protocol Alliance of which she is now executive director. She was the most visible representative of RDA and provided continuity, cohesion, and serenity that made us confident of our ability. Raine Roberts, Betsy's assistant, became acting director. She was superb; as her two-week stint stretched to months, I marveled at her ability and patience. RDA thanks her for holding us together.

Melanie Young is our new executive director, and brings new talents and ideas to the position. Raine will remain, allowing Melanie more time to help with *Cite*; she has a background in publication and understands much of the organization that *Cite* will need as it grows. She is a major asset to RDA.

Under the leadership of Bill Stern, RDA should find 1984 its best year yet. With a growing membership and its expanding horizons, RDA will take its place as a more visible leader in the maturation of Houston.

William O. Neuhaus, III

Financial Report 1 July 1982– 30 June 1983

Receipts	
Memberships	\$35,872
Program Income—	
Tickets	15,680
Program Contributions	11,229
General Contributions	1,025
Restricted Grant	13,500
<i>Cite</i> —Sales and	
Contributions	2,003
House Tour	5,322
RDA Salaries and	
Fringes	7,185
Total	\$91,816
Disbursements	
Program Expenses	\$21,985
Contributions	
Sophomore Field Trip	750
Farish Gallery	1,000
Operating Expenses	9,566
Restricted Grant	
(1981-1982)	7,496
Salaries	18,311
<i>Cite</i>	17,494
Total	\$76,602
Reserve for Restricted	
Grant	\$ 8,832
Excess of Receipts Over Disbursements	\$6,382

Report of the Executive Director

The Rice Design Alliance marked the beginning of its second decade by publishing *Cite*, a journal designed to supplement RDA's well-established lecture series and to expand the role of the organization. *Cite* is Houston's only publication devoted to architectural criticism and commentary on the problems and possibilities of Houston's civic growth. The first issue was published in August 1982 under the leadership of a volunteer Editorial Board working with a professional managing editor and a volunteer design director. The publication was well-received initially, and subsequent issues appear to be reaching an increasing number of readers.

The Rice Design Alliance is indebted to the *Cite* Editorial Board chaired by Gordon Wittenberg and composed of Anne S. Bohnn, Herman Dyal, Jr., Stephen Fox, Elizabeth Griffin, Karl Kilian, O. Jack Mitchell, W. O. Neuhaus, III, Barrie Scardino, William F. Stern, Drexel Turner, and Bruce C. Webb. Special thanks are due to the managing editor, Joel Warren Barna, to Herman Dyal, who created the *Cite* format and originated the name, and to Peter H. Boyle and Richard J. Scheve, who helped with the graphics. Karl Kilian, former president of the alliance, graciously hosted a party at the Brazos Bookstore to introduce the new publication.

The first lecture series of the year examined the initial influence and the several reappearances of the classical tradition in architecture in the American South. This

series, entitled "Classical Architecture in the South," was chaired by Stephen Fox. Lecturers and their topics were Eugene George, "Hispanic Antecedents of Texas's Colonial Architecture;" James Patrick, "Antebellum Classicism: From Asperity to Romance;" Thomas S. Hines, "The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha: The Built Environment of William Faulkner's World;" Samuel Wilson, Jr., "Richard Koch and the Formation of a Louisiana Regional Architecture;" Frederick Doveton Nichols, "Monumental Richmond: The Making of a Classical Southern City;" and Andrew Batey, "Classicism and the Vernacular: A Regional Perspective."

Under the leadership of the president, W. O. Neuhaus, III, and the committee chairman, Anne Bohnn, RDA held a very successful tour of houses of architectural interest in one significant Houston neighborhood, Courtlandt Place. The tour was planned in cosponsorship with the neighborhood association led by Dr. Hal Boyleston and Mr. and Mrs. David Beck. Approximately 180 volunteers assisted with the tour. Barrie Scardino was chairman of the popular preview party, and Anne and Jules Bohnn hosted a party for the volunteers after the tour. Graphic credits for the announcement brochures go to Edwin Eubanks and Anne Bohnn. The tour earned \$5,322 for RDA.

In January and February of 1983 the Rice Design Alliance was pleased to join the Rice School of Architecture in sponsoring public lectures by Michael Graves, Kenneth Frampton, and Jorge Silvetti.

The spring lecture series, "Design and Communication," was very well received. This series of lectures by graphic and environmental designers extended the focus of RDA beyond the programs on the built environment to realms of print and film, illusion and object. William F. Stern was the chairman of this series which was supported in part by Knoll International, McIntosh/Drysdale Gallery, Monarch Paper Company, 3D/International, and Wetmore and Company Lithographers. The speakers were Richard Haas, James Wines, Colin Forbes, Stanley Tigerman, Ivan Chermayeff, and Saul Bass.

Houston's options in confronting the problems and opportunities posed by its recent growth were the subject of a five-part urban affairs symposium, "Houston Options." The chairman was Andrew Rudnick. This symposium was supported in part by a grant from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council. Speakers and their topics were Mayor Kathryn Whitmire, Royce Hanson, and Robert Haynes, "Houston in the 1980s — An Adolescent in the Family of American Cities;" City Comptroller Lance Lalor and George Peterson, "Urban Infrastructure — Too Little, Too Old, Too Late;" Lance Tarrance, Richard Murray, and Andrew Rudnick, "Power and the Urban Decision-Making Process — Lessons For and From Houston;" Alan Kiepper and Arthur Teale, "Or Lack Thereof — Mobility in Houston;" John Cater and Richard Fleming, "Public/Private Partnerships — Building Blocks For Houston's Tomorrow."

The Annual Meeting was held at the Orange Show. The chairman was Burdette Keeland. Guest speakers were Barry Moore, who spoke on the dream of Jeff McKissack for the Orange Show and the hoped-for renovations, and Peter Armato of the East End Progress Association, who spoke on the overall civic plans for improvements in the East End area. W. O. Neuhaus, III, president, thanked the former executive director, Elizabeth Griffin, for her effort on behalf of RDA, and Lorraine Roberts for her work as acting director. He then introduced the new executive director, Melanie Young. New board members and officers were elected and the meeting was adjourned.

RDA would like to thank Ann Holmes of the *Houston Chronicle* and Pamela Lewis of the *Houston Post* for their generous coverage of RDA events. Thanks to our student Board members Steven Gendler, Helene Gould, Julia Nolte, and Heather Young for their work on all our activities. A very special thank you is due to O. Jack Mitchell, dean of the School of Architecture, Rice University, for his ongoing interest and support of RDA. RDA is most appreciative of Stephen Fox for all the work he has done not only for RDA but for *Cite*. As in the past, Herman Dyal has provided graphic design for RDA publications. RDA remains indebted to The Museum of Fine Arts for its generosity in making the Brown Auditorium available for lectures. RDA would like to thank Drexel Turner who graciously assumed the responsibility for writing grant applications on behalf of RDA.

The continued growth of our membership is the strength of the organization. In 1982-1983 our membership has increased to 16 Corporate members, 2 Sustaining members, 7 Patron members, 55 Sponsor members and 453 Individual members. A major part of this effort is due to Raymond Brochstein and Richard Keating.

The leadership of the president, William O. Neuhaus, III, and a strong Board of Directors ensured not only a smooth operation but progressive programs in a year rendered difficult by a change of directors. Financially the organization remained sound and ended the year with a net balance of \$6,382.

Elizabeth P. Griffin
Lorraine P. Roberts