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Citeations

45°, 90°, 180°

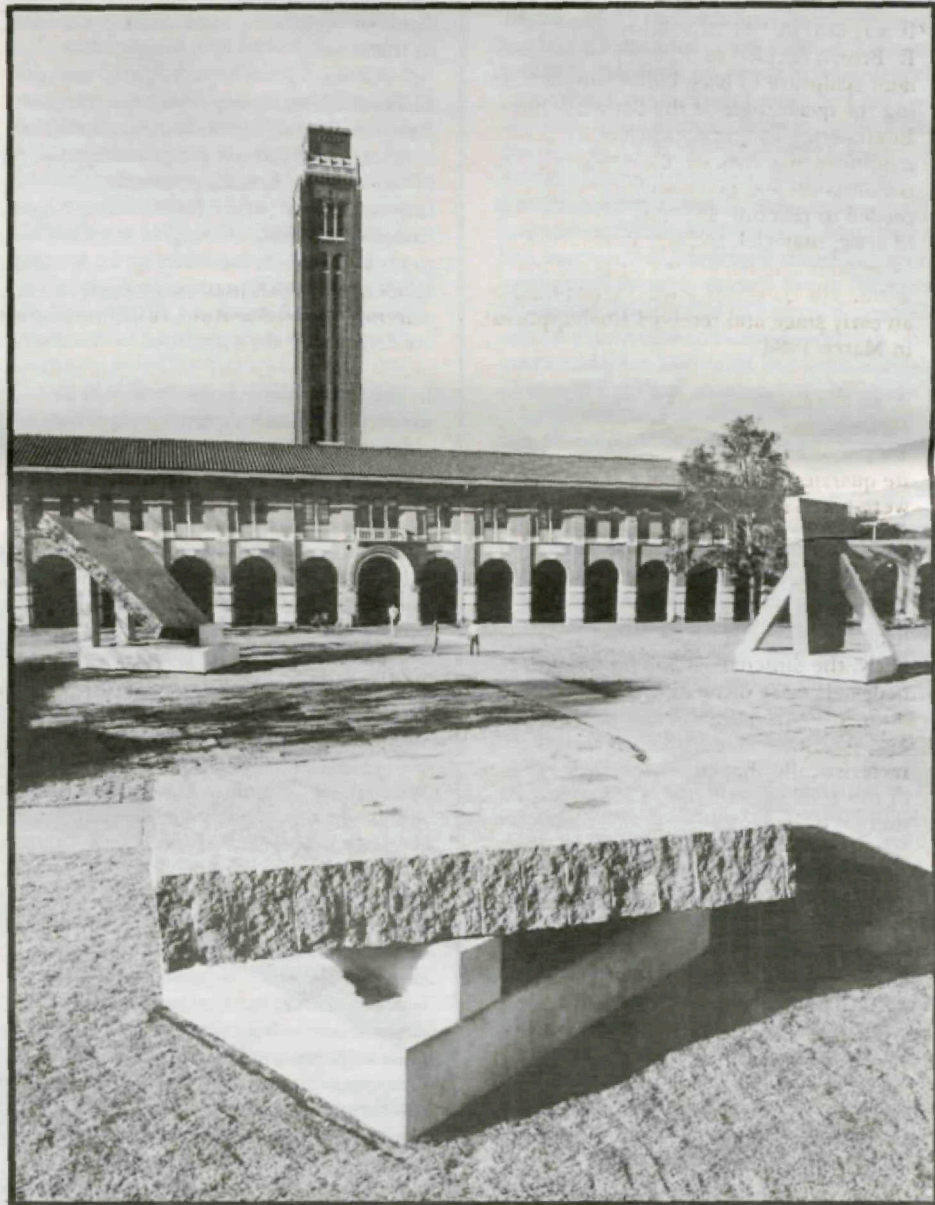
*Sculpture by Michael Heizer
Engineering Court
Rice University*

Reviewed by Alison de Lima Greene

The image of the standing stone - isolated, enigmatic, evocative - was rediscovered by the Romantic painters of the early 19th century. The German Caspar David Friedrich populated his landscapes with dolmens which acted as silent witnesses to a primordial Nordic heritage. In England, William Blake employed Stonehenge as a setting for illustrations of his poems "Milton" and "Jerusalem." John Constable also turned to Stonehenge, sketching it several times. He described the monument in the 1836 Royal Academy catalogue as "standing remote on a bare and boundless heath, as much unconnected with events of past ages as with the uses of the present, [it] carries you beyond all historical records into the obscurity of a totally unknown period." For the Romantics of this generation such imagery functioned as a paradigm of the sublime, for contemplating man's place in nature, of the conflicts of time past and present.

dramatically assertive. The sheer bulk of the installation creates an experience that is essentially confrontational: 45°, 90°, 180° is not a piece to be taken in at a glance; one must walk around it, measure oneself against it.

However, it would be a mistake to view 45°, 90°, 180° as yet another example of overblown public sculpture, a piece pumped with steroids to fit a prescribed space. The manipulation of scale and perception has been one of Heizer's chief concerns since his first mature works of the late 1960s. For example, his *Nine Nevada Depressions* of 1968, in which the dry-lake floor of the desert became the arena for a series of site-specific cuttings into the ground measuring up to 120 feet in length, is balanced by *Windows* of 1969, etched into a single basalt block of sidewalk, each cutting roughly the size of a match stick. The scheme of 45°, 90°, 180° itself has undergone a number of permutations. It had its genesis in an unrealized project of 1970-71, *Vertical Displacement*, a proposal for reshaping the rock face of a mountain (first in Switzerland, then in Montana) by cutting a block from the slope, replacing it further down the face, and allowing the spill to gather at the bottom. Out of this project grew the concept of 45°, 90°, 180°, reflecting the vertical thrust of the mountain, the plane of the earth, and the diagonal slope of the rock face.¹



45°, 90°, 180°, 1984, Michael Heizer sculpture (Photo by Ivan dalla Tana, courtesy Janie C. Lee Gallery)

A century and a half later, Michael Heizer both extends and converts this tradition. The installation of 45°, 90°, 180° on the Rice University campus invites comparison to Stonehenge or the stone circles of Brittany, Cornwall, and Scotland. At the same time, Heizer remains aloof from these precedents; unlike the artists of the 19th century, Heizer interprets the theme without nostalgia. Furthermore, as is indicated by the title, this is no random configuration; Heizer's structure is a carefully formulated geometric essay with a classical will forming the basis of the composition.

Of course the outstanding feature which distinguishes Heizer's work from the Romantic tradition is that the pieces are actual constructions. Rather than summoning an edifice from the distant past, 45°, 90°, 180° occupies a tangible and absolute present. The 66- to 70-ton granite slabs (each measuring approximately 12'8"×20'×18'×20'8" along the sides, roughly 30" thick, mounted on 12'×18'×3'6" concrete pedestals) are

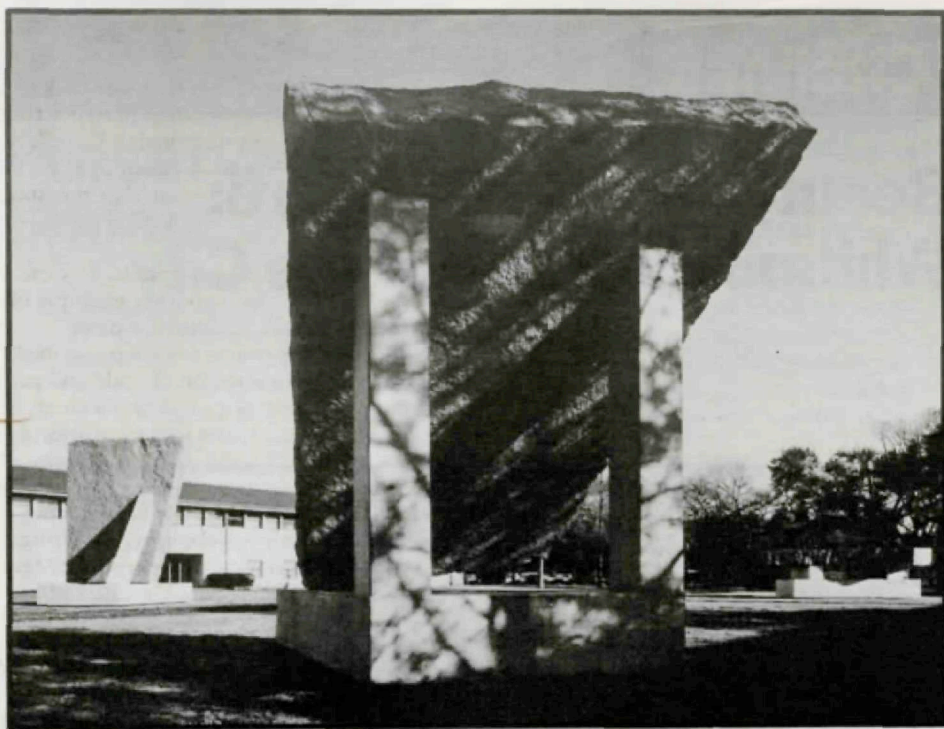
In 1980 Heizer gave shape to this concept with a cardboard model 45°, 90°, 180°/Geometric Abstraction (a model that was realized on a monumental scale for the 1984 exhibition of Heizer's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles). In this scheme all forms were purified and absolute, with prismatic and rectangular blocks arranged in a harmonic progression across a stage-like platform that terminated in a 45° slope. As a model, this piece invites reading on any scale, from a table-top piece (the original was 51" long, 13" high) to a visionary and gargantuan city plan.

Heizer returned to the theme in 1982 with six versions of 45°, 90°, 180° - three small, three large - which established the scheme found in the Rice installation. The first of this series was made of volcanic scoria with weathered-steel bases, the red eccentric rocks providing a dramatic counterpoint to the clean construction of the supports. In the fifth of the series the relationship between stone and pedestal

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Left to right: 90°, 45°, and 180°, elements of 45°, 90°, 180° by Michael Heizer
(Photo by Paul Hester)

was shifted as granite slabs were placed on diamond-plate aluminum bases; in this case the bases took on clearly industrial connotations while the stones were generally planar and discrete. It was the fourth of this series that formed the point of departure for the Rice installation.

It was also in 1982 that Alice and George R. Brown decided to donate a major outdoor sculpture to Rice University, selecting the quadrangle of the Brown School of Engineering as an appropriate site.² After a number of artists were considered, the commission was given to Heizer who proceeded to redefine 45°, 90°, 180° in terms of scale, material, and composition. The location of the tripartite composition within the quadrangle was determined at an early stage and received final approval in March 1984.

A deciding factor in the composition was Heizer's resolve to use indigenous material, resulting in the choice of Texas granite quarried at Marble Falls. The slabs were taken from a natural layer, or exfoliation, of Texas pink granite; this "virgin" layer needed no cutting other than the lateral drilling which determined the shape of the slabs, the proportions being established by the layer's natural width. Similarly, the dimensions and material of the pedestals were dictated by the choice of granite. Unlike the volcanic version of 45°, 90°, 180° in which each rock is characteristically shaped, or the later versions of the 1982 series which allowed a certain margin of irregularity, the shape of the Rice slabs is consistent throughout; variation is introduced only by the natural changes in the width of the exfoliation.

The pedestals were prepared in October and November 1984; the granite was quarried 4 December; and the installation took place 8 and 9 December. In the process of installation, the placement of the 45° slab was slightly refined: instead of being set in a prepared groove on the base, the "toe" of the pedestal was moved back so that the slab literally bites into it, providing not only greater structural security, but also greater visual tension and dynamism.

The Engineering quadrangle is quirkily sympathetic to the pieces. The rose-colored granite of the sculpture finds a close-hued echo in the brick work of the surrounding buildings, but remains a distinctive tone in the setting. The great tower of the Mechanical Laboratory rises in the background like an exclamation point, giving a strong axial symmetry to the site. Similarly, the strict horizontality of Ambercrombie Engineering Laboratory acts as a fitting counterpoint to the 180° piece. More perverse companions to the Heizer sculpture are the two small monuments to engineering previously placed in the quadrangle: the 1968 Bent of Tau Beta Pi³ and the 1956 Sigma Tau pyramid bisected by an I-beam and set in a fountain. While both occupy minor places in the quadrangle, and must be regarded as incidental to the Heizer, they act as a kind of footnote in regard to combining the ideals of engineering and a classical heritage. A more adamant presence is William McVey's 1948 neo-Assyrian relief on Ambercrombie, depicting *Man Drawing Power from the Sun and Transferring It into Energy*. This latter-day Prometheus

- engineer as creator - is disconcertingly apposite in conjunction with the new sculpture as Heizer is an astute engineer. Among the many aspects of 45°, 90°, 180° is its technical brilliance masked by apparent simplicity; only the 45° slab betrays the precariousness of its position.

The true sophistication of 45°, 90°, 180° is revealed only on contemplation. Each part of the installation contains a reference to the other parts. For example, the supports of the 90° and 45° slabs are complementary as the 45° is held up by vertical trusses, the 90° slab by diagonals. The seemingly static 180° slab is actually placed on its pedestal not squarely as a table top but at a jutting angle. The distinction between man-made bases, clearly carefully poured and smoothed concrete, and, so-to-speak, found stone also breaks down on close examination. The drill holes which read from a distance as striations on the edges of the granite, nearby reveal the deliberate and circular bite of the drill, perhaps the sexiest aspect of the installation. The great mass of the pieces is belied by the discrete and narrow inset plinth below each base so that the bases appear to be miraculously suspended just above the ground. Furthermore, the granite faces of the slabs are wonderfully responsive to changes in light: on a bright day they glitter with hard intensity, in rain they become muted, at night they take on a mysterious presence, blending into their bases, appearing both imposing and ephemeral.

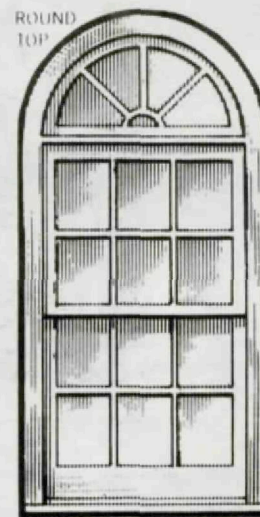
Although 45°, 90°, 180° is predicated on a classical structure of balance and harmony, the ultimate experience must be one of awe. For those of us not attending classes at Rice, a visit to the Engineering Court, one that must be made partly on foot, takes on the nature of a pilgrimage. Given the present landscaping of the campus, it is impossible to view the installation from a distance, but on entering the quadrangle the material, scale, and reflective relationships of 45°, 90°, 180° add up to a commanding presence that is at heart Romantic. While Rice is certainly not the "bare and boundless heath" of Constable's Stonehenge, 45°, 90°, 180° offers the opportunity for transcendence that the 19th-century artists sought on Salisbury plain. Heizer has manipulated this experience out of the past into a contemporary and modernist context: we do not seek the meaning of a prehistoric era in 45°, 90°, 180°, but it forces us to contemplate our place in the present. ■

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to William Camfield for pointing this out to me.
- 2 For a full description of the installation and the development of the commission see William Camfield's catalogue essay "Michael Heizer, 45°, 90°, 180°: A Sculpture for Rice University" published in conjunction with the exhibition at the Farish Gallery, School of Architecture, Rice University, 24 January - 7 February 1985.
- 3 The 1968 Bent of Tau Beta Pi has been temporarily removed.

This essay would not have been possible without the generous advice of several people. I would particularly like to thank William Camfield who made available to me his research on Heizer; Drexel Turner; Janie C. Lee; and Barbara and Michael Heizer.

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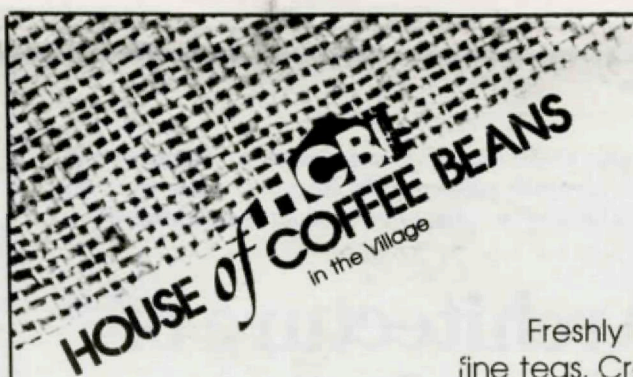


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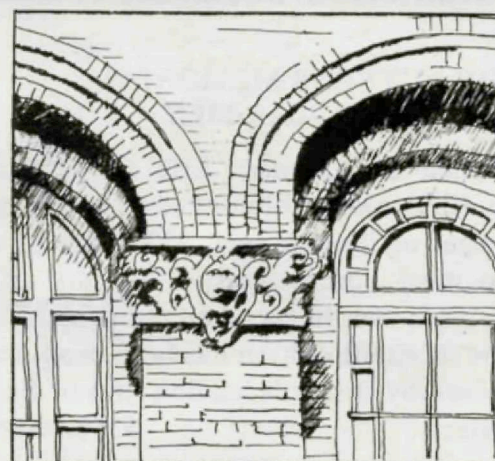
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Citations

David R. Williams, Pioneer Architect

Muriel Quest McCarthy, Dallas: *Southern Methodist University Press*, 1984, 214 pp., illus., \$35

Reviewed by Peter C. Papademetriou

Commissioned by the Dallas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, this book is essentially a *Festschrift* for a favorite son, written not as a critical study but rather to document the life, times, and career of a nearly forgotten Dallas architect. It is a credit to the Dallas AIA that such a book was undertaken, for Dave Williams (as the author observes he was best known as, and adopts as the conventional reference in the narrative) has been an underground hero to many interested in the potential of a regional dialectic within the evolution of international modernism. As the record of a specific time and events, *David R. Williams* also presents a moment which has passed: the generation of people raised in pioneer Texas who experienced its passage into an urbanized society and attempted to reconcile the contrast of values in their own lives. The book is therefore not only the story of a very colorful individual but is as well a history of an aesthetic ideology which was developed to give form to the spirit of realism emerging in American culture between two world wars.

Dave Williams was part of a generation of Texans raised during the passing of the frontier experience. He was born in a half dugout near Childress, the town which the Williams clan had helped to found. The first section of McCarthy's book describes the small-town life influenced by the advent of new technologies, such as the railroad. Railroading provided Williams with his first real travel, his first work and management experience, practical education in construction, and the financial resources to consider higher education.

The portrait of this period is that of



Elbert Williams House, 1932, David R. Williams, architect (Photo by John Rogers, courtesy Southern Methodist University Press)

events and experiences which conditioned Williams's leadership and character. "Character" is an essential aspect of the person, for he both had it and very definitely was one. By the mid 1910s, Williams was at the University of Texas at Austin, where his graphic skills at pen and ink were shown after he became editor of the *Cactus* in 1915. Enrolled in the engineering school, he specialized in architecture, but left Austin a month before graduation to work for the Mexican Gulf Oil Company in Tampico during World War I. (A childhood accident had damaged his left hand, so he was ineligible for military service.) As a kind of gringo soldier of good fortune, Williams did a variety of important jobs relative to petroleum exploration and production which caused him to be called to government service nearly a quarter century later. Also, he developed prefabricated housing systems, obtained architectural commissions, made substantial investments, and got married. Impulsively, in 1921 he sold his assets and went to Europe to study, travel, and to acquire a connoisseur's perspective of life and culture.

It was this dual experience of rough and tumble years in Mexico and those of cultural refinement in Europe that Williams brought back to Texas via a stop in New York City where he lived near Greenwich Village. A trip back to Childress contributed to his decision to return to Texas, and

establish an office in Dallas marked by substantial publicity in local papers courtesy of old college friends. More importantly, Williams became involved in innovative subdivision planning while establishing a Bohemian lifestyle in The Studio, as his office came to be known. Numerous friends and colleagues were habitués: literary, artistic, and musical friends made it a unique center. McCarthy describes a number of people and events during this period from the mid 1920s until the mid 1930s, presenting a picture decidedly offbeat. By this time Williams had divorced, and presided over this milieu which acquired the nickname "Tortilla Flats" from the John Steinbeck novel.

Over one half of the book is devoted to the few houses produced during this period. As McCarthy observes, "The most notable single contribution of David Williams's life was undoubtedly his development of a regional style of architecture for the Southwest." What is important is that this is the first significant presentation of Williams's work in any published form. While a frequent contributor to *Southwest Review*, and an associate editor by 1927, only a few images were ever published in that journal, and virtually no architectural drawings. McCarthy's book is a valuable contribution to literature in the field by virtue of the reproductions of some older photographs, in addition to a number of recent views and drawings from actual

construction documents. Williams may be seen as an architect struggling with the phenomenon of transition: validating the significance of a rural past in the face of contemporary life; and particularly mitigating the cultural pretensions of an urbanizing bourgeoisie. A "regional" imagery is clearly seen in the small number of houses undertaken from 1926-1932, with statements by Williams which almost develop into theory. Part of this translation came through observation of pioneer buildings, often in the company of his protégé, O'Neil Ford. Together they traveled central Texas and sought out, sketched, photographed, and commented on the virtues of the formal simplicity of these earlier buildings.

Williams had come to this series of works gradually, and by way of fairly flaccid works in more overtly historical styles, such as Spanish colonial revival. However, the few projects which clearly reflected his interest in indigenous culture were the only ones for which his name would actually grace the drawings. These works also contained a high level of consistent detail, and many instances of craft design are represented in unique pieces as well as motifs which are reused in a variety of themes such as the Lone Star as a decorative element.

The Depression severely impacted his practice, however, and as a result Williams entered another phase of his career. He became involved in the social programs of resettlement, planning, and mass housing through a variety of governmental service positions throughout the New Deal, and eventually got involved in defense work. His interest in prefabricated housing found an outlet in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and his interest in historic preservation (generated by his observation of old buildings) through the Works Progress Administration and National Youth Administration. It was through this that his major work began in San Antonio, particularly restoration of La Villita, with O'Neil Ford as consulting architect. In 1941 he was called to the Public Works Administration and the Institute of Inter-American Affairs; it was here that Williams acted in a role as government administrator for housing

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projects with architects such as Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, Oskar Stonorov, and Louis Kahn.

The book ends much as it began, with Williams in later years settling in Louisiana with his second wife. Not quite retired, but suffering from a wartime injury sustained in a near plane crash, he is depicted living out his last years in Lafayette, still exploring architecture in context, as well as maintaining a personal dignity within his community. In 1960 he was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1962 he died. That this book is a celebration of his memory is attested by an appendix which lists the student recipients of the David R. Williams Award since its establishment in 1963 at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

Much of Williams's life was as elusive as it was significant; McCarthy is to be commended for reassembling some of the colorful details from interviews, personal files, and obscure references. However, a significant source also drawn from is Michael G. Wade's doctoral dissertation of 1978, and perhaps many details in the narrative are "stories" and recollections which have the ring of speculation. It is unfortunate that the author did not pursue connections beyond Texas, such as material related to Williams's career in public service. Also lacking is a larger historical context, such as *why* was his interest in regionalism of any importance? The ethic of an indigenous American culture proposed by such authors as Charles and Mary Beard was a national phenomenon, and the artists and friends of Williams, such as the painter and first director of the Dallas Museum of Art Jerry Bywaters, were motivated by a strong conviction rooted in the passing of a rural phase of American culture into a new urbanizing one based on advances in technology and social change. Williams's writings and few works wrestling with this transition are not placed in this larger perspective.

Although Williams's few projects are given a welcome play as half the book's content, they are not subjected to any extensive formal analysis. No attempt has been made at examining the distance between translation of the ethic into an aesthetic, and the unresolved gap between the two which left Williams's work essentially unfulfilled. Nor are the significant parallels drawn between the formal properties of these works and the disposition of American modernism, derived from the transformation of the International Style after 1930. McCarthy's contention that he "... dramatically influenced the direction of architecture in the southwestern United States" is merely hopeful, for the fact is that he essentially did not. What he did provide was a cleansing transition between late 19th-century historicism and early 20th-century revivalism, given form in a conservative aesthetic (in the sense that it overtly meant to conserve the resources of the past), which straddled the line of taste sufficiently that its major achievement may in fact be seen as the eventual acceptance of modern design in Texas. In this sense, the legacy of Dave Williams may well be the career of O'Neil Ford, who, if anything, became the hero of postwar modern architects in the region. Unfortunately, Williams's career has been obscured by the turn of history, except to the few who have "discovered" his work over the years. Also lacking is discussion of the real importance of Williams in defense housing, one area where he acted as an institutional patron of modern architects, particularly Neutra. At this point, the aesthetic of frontier motifs gave way to a more coherent modernism, and while works such as the Multimax prefabricated house are discussed, the apparent changes in making an architecture which could get beyond allusion is lost in essentially biographical narrative. If anything, Williams's architecture was problematic and left one hoping for a resolution, a dilemma which remains today.

Presentation of original drawings, particularly straight working drawings, is a valuable contribution of McCarthy's book. For the interested designer, these help in organizing the images of the photographs, and it is commendable that so many architectural drawings are included. In this sense, the book has a life beyond the coffee table. However, as an interpretation of American architecture and the significance of Dave Williams in a larger context, the author has left us with a sentimental narrative yearning for the extension of the very work it describes. ■

Architects Speak for Themselves

*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Sponsored by the Rice Design Alliance
26 September-24 October 1984*

*Reviewed by Barbara Cochran and
Michael Underhill*

The recent Rice Design Alliance lecture series, "Architects Speak for Themselves," should have been an unusual opportunity for several first-rate architects to address some important issues in their field today. Unfortunately, it was too often an opportunity missed. Instead of discussing the intent and/or content of their work, the speakers chose merely to list work done and at times even to apologize for the state of their own art.

Frank Welch, a Texas architect, chose simply to state the who, what, and where kinds of facts of his work, avoiding any discussion of the reasons behind his design decisions. Although schooled, as Welch stated, "in watered-down Bauhaus," he built a practice responding to the needs of his clients. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong in that. However, one hopes that a certain level of theoretical integrity can be retained in spite of the need to make a living. To distill a design rationale to the statement that "the one who pays is the one who says" presents the work as nothing more than a response to a client's whim. Surely there is more to Welch's architecture than this. Some of the work itself was actually quite interesting - exhibiting not only Welch's modernist training in a thoughtful economy of means but also the influences of Texas vernacular architecture, simple barn forms, and his mentor, O'Neil Ford. It is a pity Welch did not discuss his work in light of these varied influences. Perhaps a richness would have been revealed that did not come across in the cursory overview presented.

The structure of the second lecture, by architect Harry Wolf, had the potential to address some interesting issues because Wolf limited himself to one building. This could enable him to address, in depth, his current concerns and the process by which those concerns are or are not resolved. Wolf started with the premise of "ideas meaning things and things meaning things." So in Tampa, Florida, he tried to make a building *about* something. Rejecting the trend of every city to look more and more like every other city, Wolf wanted to realize the uniqueness of Tampa in one "idiosyncratic" building. But then he proceeded to describe the design of this building in a simple one liner. Choosing the golden section as his system of proportion, he claimed it had never been found in an ugly building. An auspicious beginning perhaps, but insufficient on its own. Wolf must have considered issues other than proportion. Being so absorbed in the "mystical properties" of geometry, Wolf's methods seem shallow at best.

Architect Barbara Littenberg was the first speaker to take her audience seriously - addressing her peers about a collection of mutually reinforcing architectural ideas extruded from an established cultural lineage. This was a clear, cogent presentation of the theoretical influences, with their historical precedents, on her work today. Littenberg's overriding concern was consistency in space making - from rooms to urban spaces. She wanted to shape, articulate, and give order to things apparently random. As opposed to Wolf's one-liner approach, Littenberg was striving for a multiplicity of readings in her work. If the more one looks at a building, the more one sees, then the better it becomes. Each project Littenberg showed, from ski towns to her Les Halles competition entry to public-housing renovation in Dallas, revealed the same careful consideration of scale, composition, and user responsiveness. The clarity of her presentation left one reconsidering one's own work.

Hugh Newell Jacobsen's presentation reverted somewhat to the show-and-tell method used by Welch. A very successful residential architect, with 17 *Architectural Record* houses to his credit, Jacobsen was certainly no apologist for his work. Yet he did not bother to discuss the rationale for doing the work he does. He appears to bluster and charm his clients into the

(Continued on page 24)

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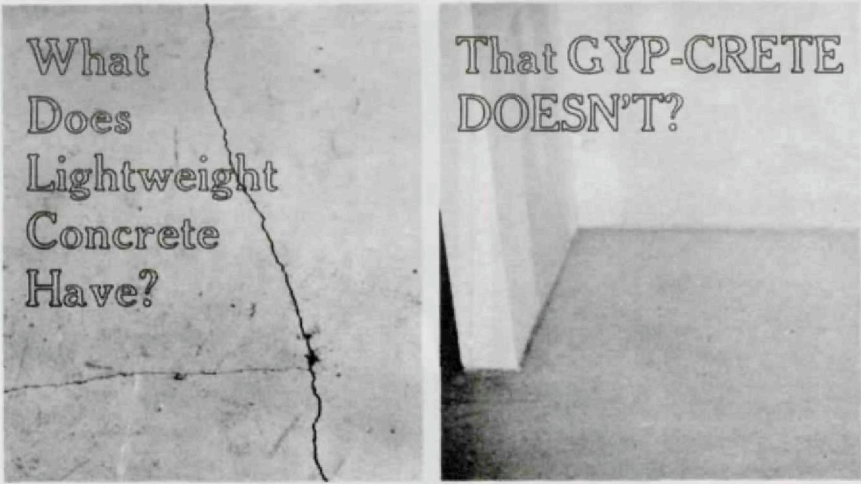
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The Arts and Crafts Movement: 19th-Century England Comes to Houston

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Sponsored by The Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston, and the Houston Chapter of
the American Institute of Architects
23 September - 2 December 1984

Reviewed by Suzanne Labarthe

The Sir Edwin Lutyens house which adorned the charming (albeit machine-made) announcement heralding the lecture series "The Arts and Crafts Movement: 19th-Century England Comes to Houston," sponsored by the Decorative Arts Department of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Interior Architecture Committee of the Houston Chapter of the AIA, was a tantalizing, if unrequited promise, as Lutyens's work went virtually unmentioned throughout the series. As the title implies, the series purported to show connective links between ideas born in 19th-century England and their transmission to 20th-century Houston. It turned out to be a non-chronological potpourri of a unique and influential movement. There was, literally, something for everyone in this series, covering small crafts to architecture, with a measure of historical insight.

The series opened with Shirley Bury, keeper of metalwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose summation of her own lecture as "a few strands of this complex web of relationships" indicates the breadth of the Arts and Crafts movement. More time was spent on tracing antecedents of the movement than delineating its influences abroad, but background detail in the first lecture of this series was appreciated. Primarily through examples of silver work, Bury traced the stylistic and philosophical evolution of the Arts and Crafts movement, inherited from the 18th-century romantic movement, with its predilection for period revivals. Of these, it was the Gothic which gained credibility in the 19th century, largely due to the efforts of A.W.N. Pugin, whose conversion to Roman Catholicism led him to preach the virtues of Gothic as the only fit style for a Christian country. While John Ruskin popularized this medievalist propaganda, the cultural establishment was forwarding the study of neo-classicism in the schools of art, as it was thought to be the easiest style to teach.

The message also spread to the continent through the popular exhibitions, where many Arts and Crafts guilds showed their work. In America, the Arts and Crafts influence came through publications and personal connections. Bury's lecture was at its best when bringing to life idiosyncrasies of the people involved, but was too long.

David Gebhard, professor of architectural history at the University of California at Santa Barbara, presented the second lecture, which focused on the Arts and Crafts movement in this country. He began with a quotation from the premier edition of "The Craftsman," by Gustav Stickley, which set forth the ideals of the movement. These included principles of simplicity, individuality, and dignity of effect. The content of this lecture was illuminating, although it meandered somewhat between American developments and European sources.

(Continued from page 23)

sculptural objects he wants, without considering the sort of issues important to an architect like Littenberg. Perhaps this is the reason each Jacobsen house remains a discrete object, unrelated to context or to any cumulative body of work. Jacobsen, by omission, illustrates the need for a well-defined ideology when making architecture.

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, replacing Daniel Solomon as the final speaker, concentrated on the relationship between architecture and landscape. Solomon argued for a return to the conceptual integration of building and landscape, whereas in modern architecture soft landscape has been used to counteract harsh building. She also was the only speaker to address the issue of drawing. Since a drawing is



The Red House, 1859-1860, Philip Webb, architect (Photo from Victorian Architecture, New York and Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1978)

In showing how the Arts and Crafts were absorbed into America, Gebhard outlined a distinction between "high art," as practiced by Prairie School architects, and "low art," as exemplified by the Craftsman Pattern Book buildings. The popularization of the Arts and Crafts is evident in the rise of individuality as expressed in "Do-It-Yourselfism" and the interest in period revivals, which sought simplicity in America's earliest built forms. Interest in historic preservation emerged concurrently, resembling the national pride which was stirring in Europe.

In drawing this distinction between high and low art, which Gebhard stated can be applied to all movements in American art and architecture, it is possible to see how idealism faded from the Arts and Crafts movement. It was not so important that artifacts actually were handmade, as long as they had the appearance of being so. This economic reality of the machine age, as expressed by the profitable manufacture of inexpensive reproductions, ultimately bankrupted the guilds. Today, as then, the audience for handmade or architect-designed artifacts is limited to those who can afford to pay a higher price for uniqueness. Such exclusivity was not the intention of the early reformers, like Ruskin and William Morris. As Gebhard sees it, the simultaneous sophistication and accessibility of the Arts and Crafts movement is an asset as well as a dilemma.

The effect of the Arts and Crafts extended beyond its apparent demise. The rustic style employed in state parks of the 1920s and '30s, as well as the proliferation of the bungalow throughout the country, gives evidence of its widespread and lasting influence.

Simon Jervis of the Victoria and Albert Museum delivered the clearest exposition of sources for the Arts and Crafts movement. He was also the most delightful speaker, peppering potentially dull historical background with enough sardonic humor and scandalous asides to shape a Gothic mini-saga.

This art-historical bartender gave us the recipe for his "Arts and Crafts Cocktail." It included the cult of honesty, a love of nature, a yearning for a medieval Eden, a desire for social and political reform, the idealization of the guild and craftsmen, and a study of English architecture and artifacts of the 16th through 18th centuries for inspiration.

As the title "The Arts and Crafts Movement in a Victorian Context" promised, Jervis elucidated the Victorian age into which the Arts and Crafts movement was born. The agricultural depression of the 1870s, as depicted in novels by Thomas Hardy, and dreadful factory conditions spawned dissatisfaction with the promise of the Industrial Age. Out of this climate, trade unions and middle-class socialist reform groups were created.

"different from being there," direct representation does not always illustrate the ideas best. She preferred drawing as an *analytique* - changing scale, extruding details, and so forth.

Solomon's drawings were beautiful and the words poetically descriptive, but this was overwhelmed by a flat presentation. If only she had spoken directly about her work and not quoted continuously from her recently published book, *Green Architecture*, the audience could have better appreciated the simple solutions and lovely juxtapositions inherent in her work.

With the exception of Littenberg, and, to some degree, Solomon, the architects who spoke portrayed themselves more as salesmen than as intellectuals. This series left one with the uncomfortable impression that, when asked to speak for themselves, architects have very little to say. ■

The seeds of an ideology for the Arts and Crafts movement had been planted for some time. Insistence upon structural honesty, derived from Pugin, led to a delight in the primitive and the unsophisticated. Incorporation of natural themes came via Ruskin, who believed all "noble ornament is an expression of delight in God's work." Hatred of the industrial landscape led to a yearning for green gardens and clean rivers, which existed in an imaginary medieval setting.

In the long run, as Jervis attested, Arts and Crafts changed the way people thought about design. As proof of this percolation of influence, he cited a P.G. Wodehouse heroine whose plan to improve her fiancé's character included a forced reading of Ruskin. Though Jervis's examples were primarily interiors and furniture, his discussion of the principles which produced them provided broad insight.

The fourth lecture, given by Sharon Darling of the Chicago Historical Society, was a straightforward presentation of how the gospel of Arts and Crafts came to America. Chicago was likened to English cities born of the Industrial Age. As in England, the Arts and Crafts movement in Chicago combined architecture, socialism, and handicrafts.



A Montrose bungalow in Houston, 1918 (Photo by William F. Stern)

While some advocated the revival of handicrafts as a substitute for the factory system, others, including Frank Lloyd Wright, felt that machines were the way of the future, and artists must control, rather than fear, the machine. We were reminded of Wright's holistic approach to design through slides illuminating his tendencies toward simplified geometric forms, repeated in exteriors, interiors, and furniture.

An interesting aspect of this lecture was the depiction of art merging with craft. Architects of this period typically worked closely with manufacturers, producing ornament and furnishings for their buildings. This legacy of the architect as a multi-faceted designer is beginning to reemerge today.

Although the movement did not alter the factory system, it did foster a renewed interest in handicrafts, allowing an expanded role for women in design, reforming general public education, and providing new products for the average home.

David Durant, a British art historian, gave the fifth lecture entitled "William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement," in which the audience became intimately acquainted with Morris and his circle of friends, complete with descriptions of infidelity and madness. Durant reiterated the context of Morris's beginnings, tracing influences as far back as J.-J. Rousseau. He credited the problems Morris encountered furnishing his Red House of 1859 with determining his career. Since he could find nothing appropriate on the market, Morris and his friends designed most of the furniture for the house. Morris and Company was formed to offer this new type of design to the public, giving rise to the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Red House was considered revolutionary, a radical departure from the white-stucco Italianate houses typical of the time. It looks back to medieval inspiration, which Morris considered ideally suited to the English countryside. Even

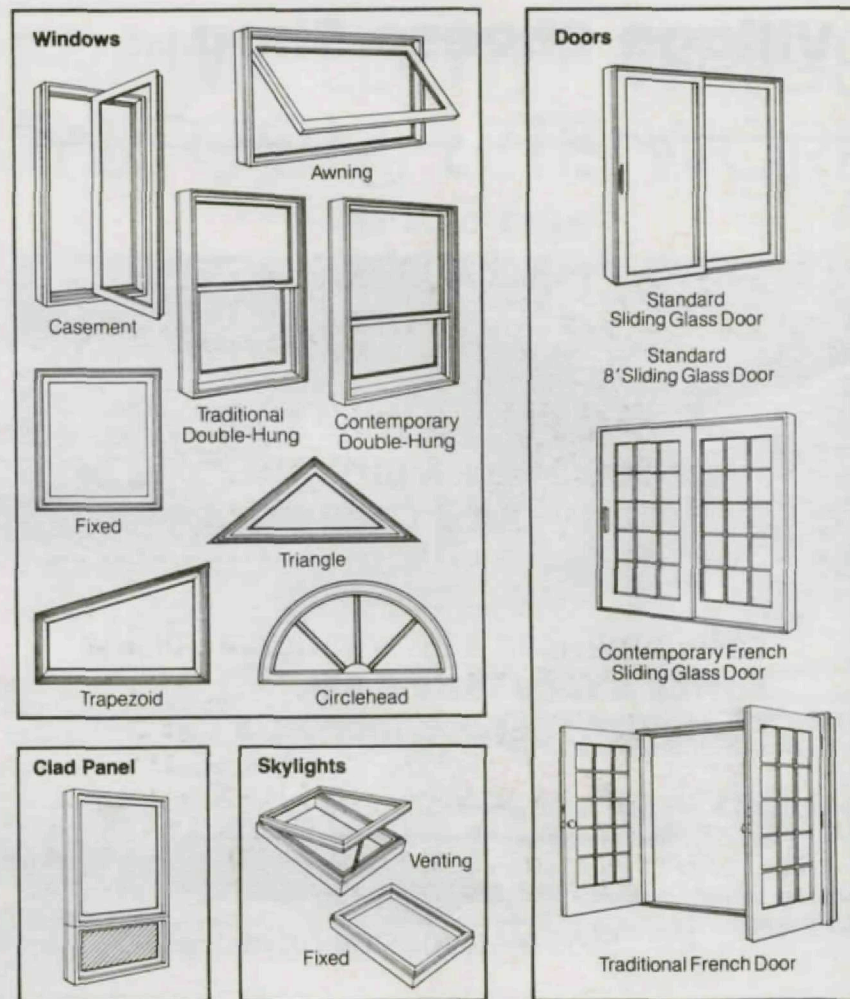
the furnishings of the Red House exerted great influence on subsequent architecture. Details such as painted doors and hand-wrought hinges in C.F.A. Voysey's house, The Orchard, can be traced to chests and wardrobes in the Red House.

Durant closed by stating that Morris's life contained two great paradoxes: that it was his wealth that allowed his socialism, and that while he sought to market his goods to every man, only the elite could afford them.

The final lecture in the series was given by William F. Stern on "Houston and the Arts and Crafts Movement." It might have been subtitled "A Critical Drive Past Beautiful Bungalows and Other Buildings." In appropriate Houston fashion, many of the images were curbside shots. The lecturer provided numerous slides, allowing us to comprehend the critical points without lengthy explanations. It is hoped that it also had the effect of creating a new interest in our local legacy of Arts and Crafts.

Stern discussed the bungalow as the house which became available to the average family in the first decade of this century. Tightly organized, climatically responsive with wide eaves and minimum hallways, and inexpensive to build, it became the

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speculative house of its time. The bungalow first appeared in Houston around 1905, and underwent numerous permutations, exhibiting diversity in style, material, and size. Considering themselves providers of the public good, some early developers even exhibited vestiges of Arts and Crafts ideology. Bungalows gave way to cottages in the 1920s. These retained some humble characteristics of the bungalow, but with less simplicity in organization, form, and detail.

From this view of modest houses, we were given a tour of architect-designed houses for Houston's gentry. Inspiration for these larger houses can be seen in the work of Richard Norman Shaw, Voysey, and Lutyens, who were influenced by manor houses, farmhouses, and Elizabethan mansions. The English Arts and Crafts adherents had rejected foreign influence, looking to their native vernacular forms to arrive at an appropriate regional style. Stern suggested that regionalism in design is thus a legacy from the Arts and Crafts movement, and showed that several Houston architects, although working within borrowed stylistic idioms, were attempting to create regionally appropriate forms. John Staub, for example, adapted the planning of his houses to meet Houston's particular climatic requirements.

Taking this argument a step further, Stern claimed that Ralph Adams Cram's design for Lovett Hall at Rice University also falls within the Arts and Crafts tradition. In searching for a style suitable to a southern college campus, Cram rejected the northern collegiate Gothic popularized at Princeton, looking instead to Mediterranean prototypes. Other architects working in Houston found the adaptation of New Orleans French or California Spanish idioms appropriate to the Gulf Coast.

At a time when the study of primarily stylistic phenomena has become commonplace, this lecture series provided a refreshing reminder that some of history's most creative periods arose out of a vision for a better society. In that respect, it presented quite a challenge. ■



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