

Big Cité Beat



Project for Commencement Hall, Rice Institute, c. 1910, Bertram Goodhue, architect



Palace of Abraxas, Marne-la-Vallée, 1978-1982, Ricardo Bofill, architect

Ricardo Bofill: Taller De Arquitectura (Rizzoli, 1985)

Bo-philia: Catalán architect **Ricardo Bofill** has been inked to design the new \$16-million **Shepherd School of Music** at Rice. A visit to Bofill's super-columniated housing projects in and about Paris cinched the selection. The school will occupy a site beyond the Rice Memorial Center that was originally intended for Bertram Goodhue's mosque-like auditorium, aligned on axis with the sallyport of Ralph Adams Cram's administration building. Bo-peeks: Schematic designs may be in hand early next year and will be shown at the Farish Gallery. In the meantime, *cinéastes* can gaze at Bofill's brave new villes and looming aeries in *Brazil* (which will be shown at The Museum of Fine Arts, 27 March, 7 PM, as part of the RDA film series) and in Eric Rohmer's just-released *L'Ami de Mon Amie*.

Sic-transit: **O. Jack Mitchell** concludes his second five-year term as dean of the School of Architecture at

Rice in June 1988. A longtime supporter of the Rice Design Alliance and *Cite* magazine, Mitchell will devote increased time to teaching as well as professional and civic activities. A search committee has been formed to seek a new dean.

Eminence domain: The **Texas Society of Architects** conferred an honorary membership on arts patron **Dominique de Menil** at its 48th annual meeting in Houston. De Menil was cited for her vision in renewing the area of Montrose that encompasses the University of St. Thomas, Rothko Chapel, and The Menil Collection, and for the architectural company she has kept, from Philip Johnson to Renzo Piano. Investment-builder **John Hansen**, whose projects include improvements to Poe Elementary and Lanier Middle schools and the development of the Central Church of Christ to house the Montrose Branch of the Houston Public Library, was also made an honorary member. The **Armand Bayou**

Nature Center was awarded a Citation of Honor. Elsewhere, **Leslie Davidson**, a former member of the RDA Board of Directors, received the **Young Architects Award** of the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for 1987.

Côte d'Bayou: **Robert A.M. Stern** is the current architect for developer **Gerald Hines's** on-again, off-again swankiendra planned to overlook Buffalo Bayou in River Oaks. His scheme, reported to share Mediterranean propensities with Ralph Adams Cram's nearby villa for Blanche and Cleveland Sewall of 1925, succeeds an earlier project by **Michael Graves** (see *Cite*, Winter 1984, page 3).

Block-buster: November's tour of houses in Broadacres hosted by the **Rice Design Alliance** netted more than **200 new members** for the RDA. Kudos to Susan B. Keeton, Anne S. Bohnn, and Robert Morris who organized it.

Citelines

Trapping the Unseen Letting It Go

Robert Irwin prefers to find himself in the flux of visual phenomena. Resisting the easy categories of art labels, he is in a constant dialogue with issues that span across painting, architecture, urban planning, psychology, and philosophy. This dialogue flows with great ease from concept to reality, from Plato to Freud, to specific works of his own which often find their place in the environment of civic spaces.

Irwin is this year's Craig Francis Cullinan Visiting Professor of Fine Arts, Architecture, and Urban Planning at Rice University, a chair created by Nina Cullinan to honor her brother. Irwin recently visited the Rice campus to deliver his introductory lecture, "On the Nature of Abstraction," the first in a series of lectures that will continue in March, 1988 (see Winter Architecture Events, page 4). As a part of his involvement with the Rice community, Irwin proposed to devise some "interventions" for the campus grounds. After touring the campus, he settled on a project to "complete" some of the cloisters around the Academic Court using his "trademark" scrim material. Scrim is a translucent fabric used in the theater to create a kind of visual veil which obscures and softens objects by catching and reflecting light on its surface. Irwin has been using scrims for the last seventeen years. One of his most memorable installations was at a project site in Venice, California in 1980; but as early as 1970 he had installed an interior scrim in a retrospective show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The scrims hung by Irwin at Rice in October are the beginning of a work that will expand, move, and change, according to William A. Camfield, chairman of the Rice Art and Art History Department. In the spring the installations are expected to move into the interiors of some buildings. Already there is a hint of things to come in the Dean's Conference Room in Anderson Hall, where Irwin has placed a dark adhesive translucent film simulating an opening in an existing window pane.

Irwin likes to respond to the changing conditions of the sites he chooses - to create what he calls "site specific"



"Marking," cloister between Lovett Hall and Sewall Hall, Rice University, 1987, Robert Irwin

works. The architecture on the Rice campus, with its well-ordered intervals of volumes and voids, and the rhythmic punctuations afforded by doors and windows, inspired him to vary the use of the single panel scrim by incorporating into them windows, doors, and lines. Irwin likes to surprise himself with these new perceptions that are revealed by a new set of circumstances. Irwin chose the name "markings" for his works at Rice, perhaps because it has a less aggressive connotation than "interventions." Ironically, even though each of the installation sites was carefully selected so as to not interfere with the students' circulation, one of the scrims was torn down, as if in protest. According to Camfield, it became apparent upon closer examination that the scrim was

blocking the flow of an obscure path, which was not obvious at first, because one had to duck under a bush to pass through the arch. Always open to suggestions and interventions from real life, Irwin decided to make a door through that scrim when it was reinstalled.

While Irwin was working on campus, the students chatted with him. Some asked, "What is it?" - a question he refuses to answer. He says naming a thing doesn't make it any clearer. "What is it?" is simply not the right question for an art which resists interpretation and calls for direct confrontation and experience.

Irwin is more interested in dialogue than in set concepts and that dialogue involves people, structures, and spaces with

perception, change, time, reality, and conception. Using minimal means he seems to trap a threshold of invisibility. But in trapping the almost invisible aspects of phenomena, he does not fix them, as most traditional artists would. Intensely aware of the changing essence of the phenomenal works, he chooses to reveal its passage through time and circumstance, inviting continual discoveries by the viewer.

Surpik Angelini



"Marking," cloister of Physics Building, Rice University, 1987, Robert Irwin



"Marking," cloister between Fondren Library and Anderson Hall, Rice University, 1987, Robert Irwin

Winter Architecture Events

Rice Design Alliance

P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251-1892, 713/524-6297

10 Jan-27 March - "Cinemarchitecture," a film series organized by the Rice Design Alliance and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Sundays at 7 PM; fee is \$2 for RDA and MFA members, students, and senior citizens; \$3 others.

10 Jan: *The Belly of an Architect* (Peter Greenaway, 1987).

17 Jan: *Gaudi* (Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1985); *Mammame* (Raul Ruiz, 1985).

24 Jan: *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914).

31 Jan: *The Fountainhead* (King Vidor, 1949).

7 Feb: *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967).

21 Feb: *Dodsworth* (William Wyler, 1936).

28 Feb: *Fury is a Feeling Too* (Cynthia Beatt, 1983). *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).

6 March: *L'Architecture D'Aujourd' Hui*

(Pierre Chenal, 1931); *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* (Jean Renoir, 1935).

13 March: *The Architecture of Mies van der Rohe* (Michael Blackwood, 1986); *Strangers When We Meet* (Richard Quine, 1958).

20 March: *L'Inhumaine* (Marcel L'Herbier, 1924).

27 March: *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1984).

1988 Shartle Symposium - Presented by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in cooperation with the Rice Design Alliance, the Shartle Symposium will focus on buildings for art museums. Pontus Hulten, director of the Palazzo Grassi museum of modern art in Venice, and founding director of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and the Pompidou Center in Paris, will give the keynote address Friday evening, **25 March**. The following day will be devoted to

presentations by architects Hans Hollein, Arata Isozaki, and Charles Moore and panels including critics and museum professionals. The symposium will coincide with the exhibition of new museum architecture from the Federal Republic of Germany at the Farish Gallery.

For information about both events, telephone the Rice Design Alliance.

Farish Gallery

M.D. Anderson Hall, Rice University, 713/527-4870

7-31 Jan, 1988 - "Alexander Rodchenko: Works on Paper." Drawings, collages and photographs by the Constructivist artist from the Shchusev Architectural Museum, Moscow, and other collections.

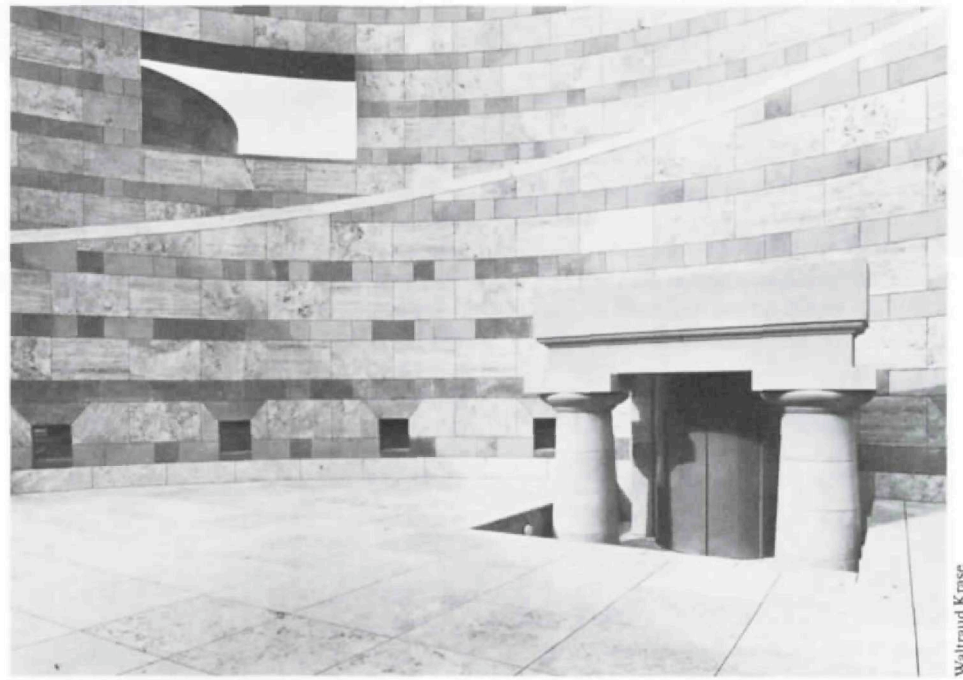
4 Feb-2 March - Exhibition of color photographs of buildings in northern Italy by Danny Samuels.

8 March-15 Apr - Exhibition: "New Museums in the Federal Republic of Germany." Models, drawings, and photographs of buildings by Stirling, Hollein, Ungers, Meier, and others. Organized by the Museum of Architecture, Frankfurt, and circulated by the Goethe Institute.

School of Architecture, Rice University
713/527-4870

Dean Search Lecture Series - Ten nationally recognized architects and academics will give presentations on successive Mondays from late January until April (exact dates to be announced); 8 PM, Sewall Hall, Room 301, Rice University campus; admission free.

7, 14, 21, and 28 March - Craig Francis Cullinan Visiting Professor Robert Irwin Lecture Series, 7 PM, Sewall Hall, Room 301; admission free, open to the public.



New State Gallery, Stuttgart, 1977-1982, James Stirling and Michael Wilford, architects; interior of rotunda with sunken porch, from exhibition at the Farish Gallery, 8 March-15 April.

Greater Houston Preservation Alliance
Guided walking tours of the Main Street-Market Square Historic District usually scheduled the third Wednesday of every month; group tours available upon request. Fee is \$1; meet at noon at the corner of Preston and Milam. For more information, call Barthel Truxillo at 713/861-6236.

Reclaiming Houston Downtown:

New Directions for the Main Street-Market Square District
21-22 Jan, 1988 - Public conference. Economic diversification and promotion of new investment opportunities in downtown commercial historic districts will be addressed. Participants include Dana Crawford (Larimer Square, Denver), Paula P. Turner (West End, Dallas), Don S. Vaughn (Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Council),

Richard Andrews (National Endowment for the Arts), and Anice Read (Texas Main Street Office). Concluding the event will be a series of discussion groups focused on specific problems and potential of Main Street-Market Square district, coordinated by private and public sector leaders, in which attendees will participate. Organized by Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, Houston Archeological and Historical Commission, Houston Chapter/AIA, RDA, DiverseWorks, Central Houston, Inc., and Downtown Houston Association. Registration fee \$25. For information, telephone Houston Chapter/AIA, 622-2081.

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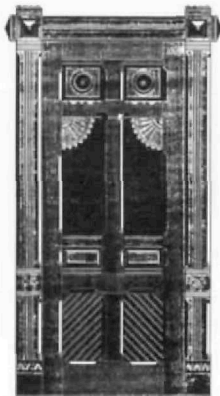


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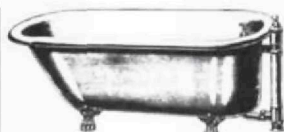
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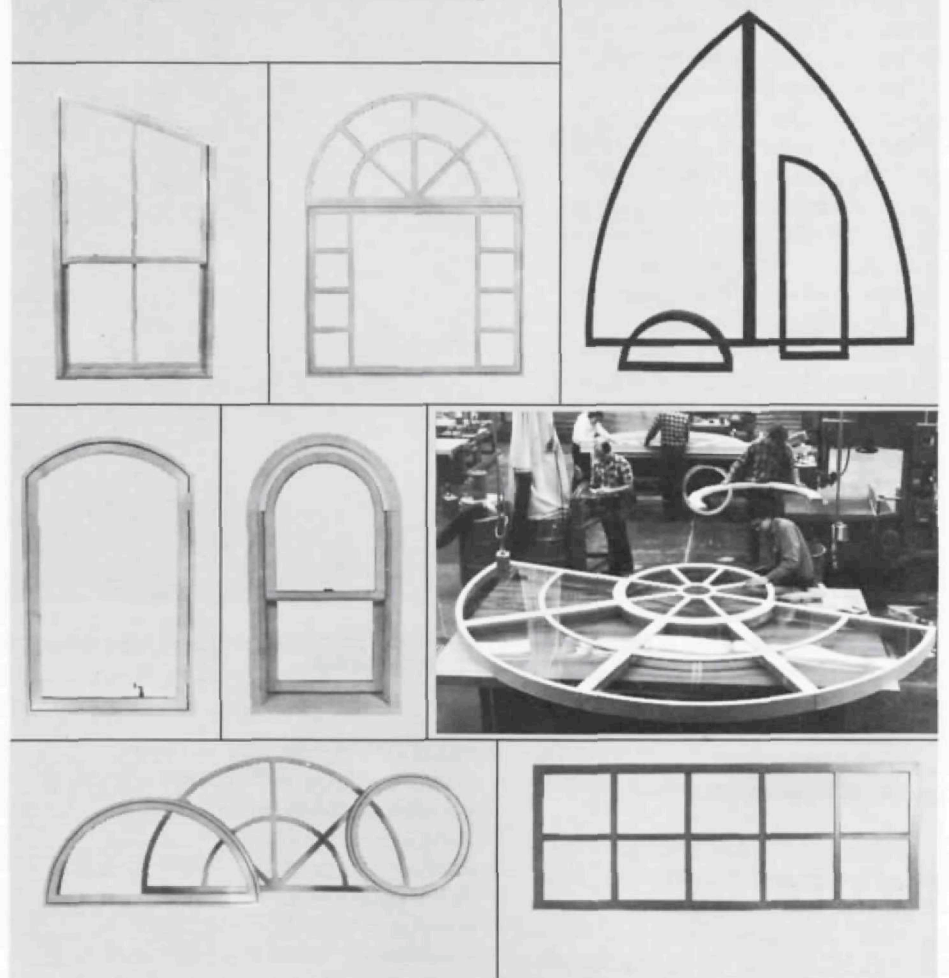
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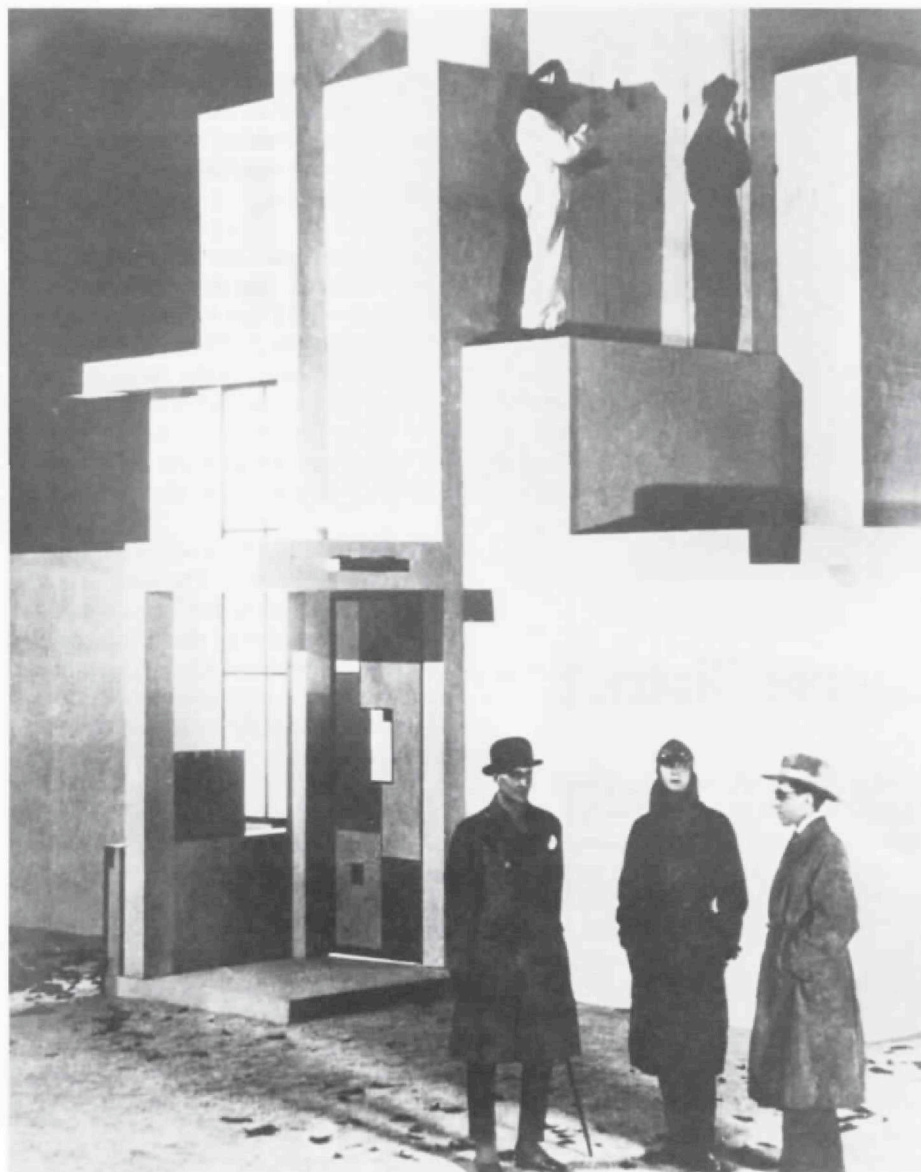
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Cinemarchitecture

Cinemarchitecture, a film series organized by the Rice Design Alliance and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will be viewed every Sunday at 7 PM from 10 January through 27 March 1988. The 11-week series proposes to examine the theme, architecture in cinema, from three points of view.

First is the architecture of set design: the illusion of past, present, or future as conveyed by the sets is often a compelling and dramatic element of the story. In Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) the great Italian operatic tradition informs the exquisite re-creations of ancient Carthage and Rome in which the original macho-man, Maciste, is given room to flex. The romance and horror of a future in which the man-made environment takes over is a recurring film theme, initiated most strikingly in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and brought to a paroxysm in Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1984). Modern styling, giving a film the feeling of being "more now than now," was successfully introduced by Marcel L'Herbier in *L'Inhumaine* (1924), with decor by Rob Mallet-Stevens, Pierre Chareau, and Fernand Leger. A decade later Hollywood got caught up in an art direction of streamlined modernism; films such as William Wyler's *Dodsworth* (1936) were particularly successful at developing character through environment. Jacques Tati's *Playtime* (1967) uses architecture as the plot device by satirizing the foibles of modern construction. Two avant-garde films, *Mammame* (1987) by Raul Ruiz and *Fury Is A Feeling Too* (1983) by Cynthia Beatt, rely on a piece of architecture as a structuring device for the narrative.



Set for *L'Inhumaine*, 1924, Rob Mallet-Stevens, designer

The second theme is less common: the architect as hero. The prime example is King Vidor's *The Fountainhead* (1949), in which Gary Cooper plays the architect Howard Roark, Ayn Rand's vessel for the philosophy of egotism. The "modernist" sets outraged many American architects. The dialogue, a weird blend of dogma and melodrama, makes this the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* of architecture films. Richard Quine's *Strangers When We Meet* (1960), set in a contemporary suburb, is a much more realistic portrayal of the problems with loving an architect. Peter Greenaway's *The Belly Of An Architect* (1987) mixes the glories of Rome and the French 18th-century visionary Claude-Nicolas Ledoux with the chaos of a contemporary American architect's life in America.

The final theme is architecture in the documentary. In Pierre Chenal's *L'Architecture D'aujourd'Hui* (1931) Le Corbusier lets loose his strident doctrine for the reform of architecture and urbanism. Michael Blackwood has produced some of the best films about contemporary architectural luminaries, including *Mies* (1986). Perhaps the best architectural documentary ever filmed is Hiroshi Teshingahara's *Antonio Gaudi* (1984), a film without a text that relies solely on the union of camera and subject.

A piano accompanist will perform for the silent films. RDA and MFA members will receive a discount on series tickets; please see "Winter Architecture Events," page 4, for the film schedule.

Richard Ingersoll

Sixth Ward Park

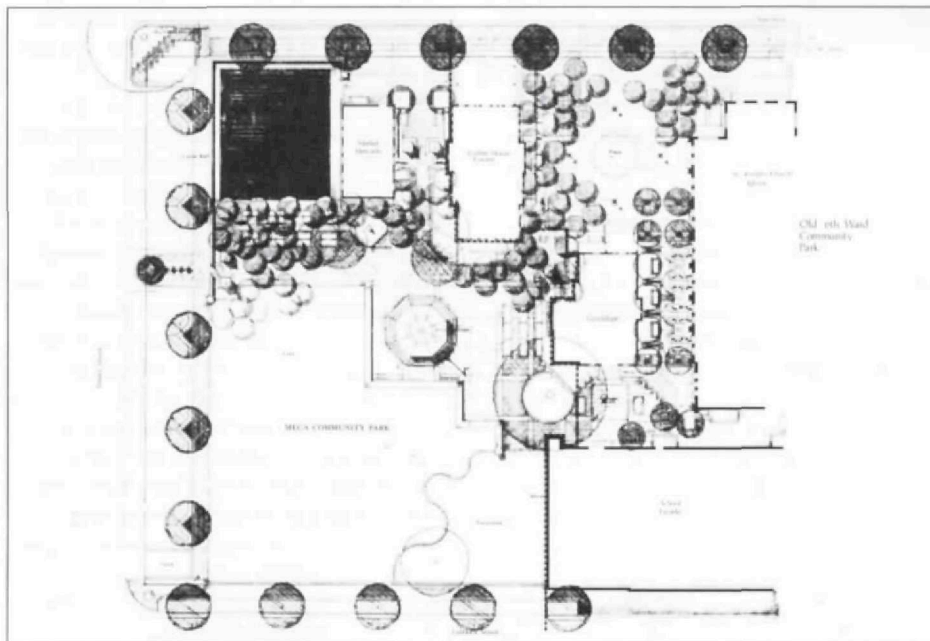
With slow and steady determination, Sixth Ward, the historic neighborhood composed of Houston's oldest extant Victorian houses, is making progress towards the creation of a new public park. The park both commemorates the past and envisions the future. The site has been officially designated as an "art park," a showcase for public art such as the monumental mural, "A United Community" (Sylvia Orosco and Pio Pulido, 1985), next to St. Joseph's Church, which is presently its focal point. Projects planned for the future include sidewalk art, a sculptural fountain, more murals, and a pavilion stage for performances.

The idea of an "art park," however, is just another prop on a stage already impressively set. The boundaries of the Sixth Ward offer a panorama of significant periods in the history of Houston's settlement: to the east, Allen's Landing, Market Square, and the soaring corporate towers of downtown; to the north, Washington Avenue; to the south, Memorial Drive and Buffalo Bayou; and to the west, Glenwood Cemetery, the burial ground for members of some of Houston's oldest families. The park itself, bounded by Kane, Lubbock, Trinity, and Houston streets, shares a block with St. Joseph's Church, the oldest church building in the Sixth Ward.

The real drama of Sixth Ward Park is found in the unlikely collaboration of many generous and talented persons, which began two years ago. Instead of

developing the site as a commercial venture (i.e., a parking lot), St. Joseph's congregation decided to give the lot to the neighborhood for a park. The church leased the land to the Multi-Ethnic Cultural Arts Committee (MECA), a social outreach group that organizes special education programs for the Hispanic community. A class of landscape architecture students from Texas A&M University developed a program and schematic design for the park based on information gathered from the neighborhood's residents. The students addressed themselves to a larger project than simply the design of the park itself, integrating the church grounds and buildings into the park site. The students' plan transformed the block into a multipurpose community center, serving as a meeting place and playground, combining in the design aspects of the ceremonial and informal. The concept was made a reality through design services donated by Scott Slaney, of the Slaney Santana Group, and the contributions of numerous other consultants. MECA turned to the Sixth Ward for manpower and enthusiasm, resourcefully using the park as an opportunity to train and employ young people in the neighborhood. So far, these efforts have resulted in the completion of a basketball court, the renovation of two small houses donated to MECA for the park, and the construction of several colorful entry pavilions.

After a long period of neglect, the Sixth Ward, which has been at one time or



Sixth Ward Park, Slaney Santana Group, landscape architects, 1987

another home to every ethnic group that ever settled in Houston, is finally beginning to be rehabilitated. Private homes, shops, and institutions are being rejuvenated. Long before St. Joseph's Church was built, the Diocese of Galveston-Houston had established a presence for a church in the neighborhood by setting up a school in an old house on the present site. The school became a meeting place and a parish, surviving the hurricane of 1900, the Depression years, and later, the flight of its white, middle-class congregation from the inner city. The spirit of preservation and restoration in the Sixth Ward was reborn ten years ago, in the midst of rapid commercial displacement in the neighborhood, with the institution of the St. Joseph's Old Sixth Ward Multi-Ethnic Festival. Annually the church grounds and surrounding streets become the site for a city-wide celebration of Houston's cultural diversity.

The completion of Sixth Ward Park will reinforce and solidify the sense of social

cooperation fostered by the festival, symbolizing the efforts of MECA to involve the community in the planning and construction of this vision. The area around the park portrays a different vision: a synagogue turned into a bail-bonds business, speculative office buildings, parking lots interrupting the fabric of the neighborhood, and metal shed buildings standing on weed-choked lots. History in Houston is indeed a series of sharp discontinuities, of the abandonment and subsequent rediscovery of ideals.

Sixth Ward Park is fortuitously located in the heart of the neighborhood it serves. Its siting demands that the park be more than just a piece of greenery. Furnished with the ruins and the monuments of the neighborhood, it promises to be a reminder of the Sixth Ward's history, as well as a focal point of public art and social change.

Ingrid Go

Pope and Circumstance

Event-specific structures occupy a rarely discussed sector of architectural production. Such structures, set in the context of an incident or episode of public importance, usually exist for only a short period of time. Yet they often exhibit uncommonly forceful architectural ideas.

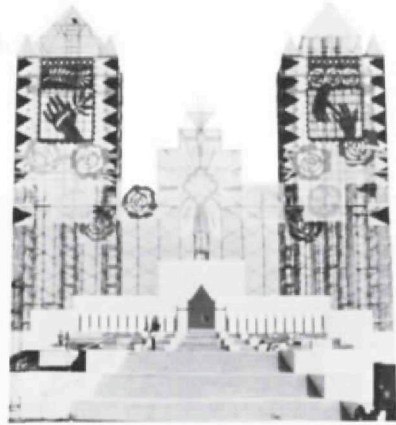
The realized, but sadly never used, background for the Papal Mass in San Antonio was just such a structure. The "tower scheme," designed by Alamo Architects and McChesney Design of San Antonio, challenged the reductive way most buildings are designed at a time when the social significance of figuration is receiving less and less attention.

The frontispiece was erected for the nationally televised Mass of Reconciliation celebrated by Pope John Paul II during his visit to the Archdiocese of San Antonio. It was essential that the design express regional architectural traditions and at the same time recognize symbolically forms that evoked Roman architectural traditions.

The flanking towers imply familiar European church forms while embracing the regionally derived mission form of the central section. Scaffolding and banners avoided the problem of mimicking permanent construction with impermanent materials and reinforced the double reading of the structure: backdrop-building and Rome-San Antonio. The linearity of the scaffolding, which appeared "as a drawing in the air," was modulated by the fabric banners. This created a stained-glass window effect that worked well to anchor the platform and make it seem bigger on the flat, open site.

The colorful, cut-paper, folk-art imagery of the banners contributed to the meeting of European and New World traditions. Roses, a universal symbol of welcome, referred to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the New World; they cascaded down the banners to the center cross which represented the Holy Spirit. Hands - helping hands - represented "unity in the work of service" and referred to one of the most salient aspects of mass, the manual action of the hands of the celebrant. It was an unusually powerful collaboration of graphic and architectural design. All forms were inflected toward the center of the platform and were scaled to present a consistent visual impression from many distances.

Forty-eight hours before the arrival of the Pope a freak wind tumbled the towers but spared the platform. An earlier design,



Frontispiece for the Papal Mass, 1987, Alamo Architects and McChesney Design, architects

constructed from pylon banners intended to mark access to the site, was substituted as a replacement for the backdrop. Although it stood for only a couple of days, the ingenuity of the "tower scheme" extracted more from less without a sacrifice of coherence and meaning.

D. Andrew Vernooy

Banner District

What began out of a concern for the uninspired tinsel trees that have adorned Houston's central business district every holiday season for many years, has, through much lobbying, fundraising, and design effort, given downtown its present corridors of color. The banner program, brainchild of Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc.'s Street Decorations Committee, headed by Antony Harbour, managing principal of Gensler and Associates/Architects, was inaugurated two years ago during the holiday season. The original intent to improve city-owned Christmas decorations was coupled with a desire to unify downtown's diverse streetscape and provide a festive atmosphere throughout the year. Since its inception, the program's scope has tripled its original 40-banner set to the present collection of six different graphic design iterations.

There is a long history of using fabric and color to decorate streets. Pictorial evidence of tapestries adorning streets on special occasions survives from as far back as the 16th century. Museums and theaters have long used on-site banners as advertisements. Chicago was one of the first cities to install banners announcing events at public institutions along city streets. But in Houston, with the new sign ordinance, there was initial sensitivity toward allowing "signs" in the public right-of-way, especially if they could be construed as carrying an advertising message. For this reason, the city's legal department closely scrutinized the parameters for banner design, and determined that words would be allowed only if they constituted an essential part of the graphic design and could not be

construed as advertising. Houston City Council passed an ordinance establishing the "Banner District" concept, overriding the sign ordinance within designated areas.

For the most part, the banners have been event oriented. The initial holiday set of December 1985 was followed by banners coinciding with the Olympic Festival, the Wortham Theater Center opening, the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, and the Italian Festival. A "Celebrate Houston" set, which is not event specific, was in place during the Houston Festival.

The program has been subject to some technical difficulties. The wind, which can be violent along the Louisiana Street corridor, consistently shreds banners in front of the Tenneco, One Shell, Allied, and Interfirst buildings, resulting in an unfortunate gap in the visual continuity of banners along that street. The sun also has a deleterious effect, causing color fading, a problem exacerbated by requiring a background color which is not available in the most durable acrylic fabric.

Financed entirely by private-sector monies, solicited and coordinated by Central Houston, Inc., the banner program has grown substantially in the past two years. There is talk of expanding the installations to the Market Square area, as well as creating a banner district for the airport corridor. One possibility currently under discussion creates a tax assessment district, assessing all downtown building owners for the maintenance and expansion of the banners. This would ensure perpetuation of the program and spread the cost equitably within the district.

An evaluation of the the current banner program yields these thoughts. The banners are most effective when they create a visual compression of a street's axis. This requires positioning in tight succession on both sides of the street for several blocks. Strong field colors generally work better than pastels or white; the latter can be lost against sky and buildings. The bilateral composition of the banner framework makes symmetrical designs problematic, as the center of the composition is occupied by a light pole.

There are many challenges for this form of street decoration. Beyond the technical problems - the continual requirement for financial sponsorship and the trial-and-error nature of the production process - there is also the need to cycle the banners.



Santa Claus arrives at Smith and Texas

At best, the banners provide a sense of newness, change, and excitement downtown. These qualities may be less forthcoming in the near future, as a period of major public-building openings and centennial celebrations comes to a close. One current proposal shifts the design orientation of the banners from events to seasons. Such an approach could provide a continual source for renewal.

Suzanne Labarthe

Around the Bend

On 27 September, Dreyfus Construction Company began breaking ground on the banks of Buffalo Bayou just below the Wortham Theater Center. In roughly two years, according to schedule, the initial phase of Houston's Sesquicentennial Park will open, and the city's first public project awarded through a design competition will become reality (see "The Sesquicentennial Design Competition," *Cite*, Fall 1986).

Team Hou, the winning architects, have designed the park as a series of "episodes." At The Grand Entrance, sited adjacent to the Wortham's Ray C. Fish Plaza, a path, beginning at The Buffalo Pavilion, proceeds along The Promenade at the base of the theater's west façade, encircles The Commons at the rear of the house, and crosses the bayou over the Preston Avenue Bridge to end, on the opposite bank, at The Bicentennial Drum.

The Grand Entrance, constituting the park's initial phase, has undergone a few changes since the competition. The Buffalo Pavilion, which defines this main entrance, initially contained the sculpture of a white buffalo for which, according to tale, the bayou was named. However, the final design for the sculpture has not been determined, and it will not be in place when Phase I is completed. A gatehouse offered as an additional package to the initial phase has been funded and will serve to orient entrance from Texas Avenue to the pavilion as well as to mark the landing for bayou craft.

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Phases I and II of the park are undergoing study and are being revised.

In the catalogue of the Sesquicentennial Park Competition (published by Central Houston Civic Improvement, Inc., the non-profit group managing the park's design), Robert Campbell, architecture critic for the *Boston Globe*, points out that the bayou, in its present state, is so different from downtown Houston that they create a dialogue with each other. This complexity, typical of the unaddressed city edge, is an essential characteristic of Houston. As the Buffalo Bayou Task Force and Central Houston, Inc. continue to develop the Linear Park Plan along the bayou and construction continues on the Sesquicentennial Park, it will be interesting to see to what extent this complexity and the mystery of Buffalo Bayou remain.

Douglas Sprunt

The UH Drawing Collection

For the past nine months, members of the faculty of the College of Architecture at the University of Houston have been working to establish an archive of drawings by significant architects. Funds for the collection are a part of the budget from the university's art acquisition program, which sets aside 1 percent of the construction cost for new buildings for the purchase of works of art. The majority of the Architecture Building's art allocation fund was used to purchase the pair of pink Laurentian granite benches by Scott Burton, which flank the entrance to the building. Although the collection of drawings will provide an opportunity to see significant art work for those who use and visit the building, its primary goal will be that of a teaching tool. Students will be able to view different drawing techniques, resulting from a variety of issues and design processes that are a part of important architectural projects.

The faculty has been contacting internationally recognized architects who have made important contributions to the College of Architecture, to the City of Houston, or to the profession of architecture, through their classroom or professional work. Each architect is being asked to donate a drawing of his or her selection, while the college pays for framing and curatorial costs.

To date, 38 drawings have been acquired from 29 architects (some donating more than one drawing). Commitments from an additional 23 architects also have been received. The college's goal is to achieve a collection of approximately 120 drawings, representing the leading architects from around the world.

The Drawing Collection will be exhibited in the spring, and a symposium in architectural drawing will be held. The college has received a \$6,500 grant by the Braitmaier Foundation to be used for a catalogue of the collection.

All of the drawings are placed in secure frames in public places (the library, studios, student commons, and corridors), making them accessible to student and faculty on an everyday basis as a resource for developing a deeper understanding of how architects shape their work.

Robert Timme



View south, Kirby Drive

Walking Houston



View north, Kirby Drive

And just as one inhabits an apartment, and makes it comfortable, by living in it instead of just using it for sleeping, eating, and working, so one inhabits a city by strolling through it without aim or purpose. . .

— Hannah Arendt

In this sense, in the way in which Hannah Arendt means it, Houston is a mostly uninhabited (and perhaps uninhabitable) city, since almost no one seems to stroll through it either by day or by night, taking one's time to explore and enjoy it, leisurely looking around and peering into windows and arcades. The central emblematic figure of Walter Benjamin's work, the 19th-century Baudelairean character of the flâneur — the aimless walker, the man committed to purposeless strolling — seems obsolete and faintly suspicious in a city like Houston. The two climates (one natural, one economic) make the walker in this city seem like an old-fashioned concept, slightly comical or even vaguely European, an outsider, a tourist of our reality. To be on foot is to be miniaturized and noticeable, something to be remarked upon, an isolated figure in a grand, man-made landscape. The city tends to extend out into wide-open space or else to veer skyward suddenly — in either case, it dwarfs the person on foot and makes him seem out of place. To be sure, walkers exist in Houston, but from the city's point of view they are negligible and don't count since they are mostly accidents and mistakes: the stubborn, the inconvenienced, the poor. Sidewalks may exist, but Houston doesn't lend itself easily to aimless strolling.

It seems that even our neighborhoods, supposedly our most habitable places, are ambivalent about walkers. In my own neighborhood, for example, on the outer skirts of The Village, the sidewalks extend only in one direction. They run east and west but not north or south, as if we were meant to promenade one way

and not the other, to go up and down our block but not to cross into other people's. Does this mean that we are only half a neighborhood? To get to The Village itself — that nostalgic, one-story, commercial emblem of a previous time — one has to brave the intermittent traffic on Morningside on foot, or else decide to get into the car and drive. Most people choose to drive.

Of course, most of us do like to walk in the city at one time or another. I myself like to stroll into The Village late at night, though only the photocopy place and the drugstore stay open 24 hours. In the daytime, I sometimes like the mildly perverse pleasure of walking the strip on Kirby, between Holcombe and Richmond, a man with a briefcase moving alongside the traffic past the low commercial structures and the drive-in banks, the gas stations, and the long row of fast-food joints, the tiny strip shopping centers that once were wooded areas. I like the energy and the relentless urban quality of walking on Kirby, but it's certainly not an inviting or a common walk. In fact, aside from a few desultory teenagers, I seldom pass anyone else on the sidewalk.

My point, obvious to anyone who either visits or lives here, is that Houston doesn't belong to the walker; it doesn't give itself up to him. This isn't a value judgment; it's a reality we have created. We drive everywhere — even to take our walks. We drive, for example, to walk in the park or through the zoo. We drive in order to stroll through the bird sanctuary behind the church on Memorial Drive. We drive so that we can linger amongst the stone angels in the beautiful little gated cemetery on Allen Parkway. We drive to go on architectural tours of downtown.

Walkers exist in Houston, but from the city's point of view they are negligible and don't count since they are mostly accidents and mistakes: the stubborn, the inconvenienced, the poor.

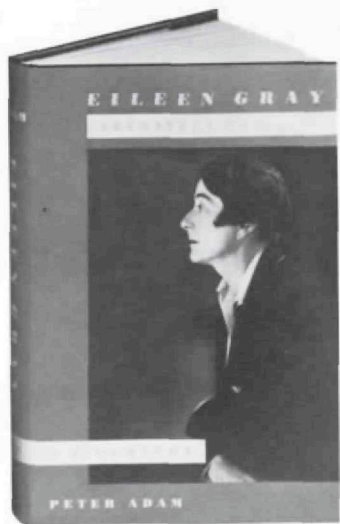
To find a reasonable number of other walkers, one almost has to join the hip teenage sideshow that bottles up Westheimer on Friday and Saturday nights (a special case), or descend into the maze of downtown tunnels on a weekday lunch hour (though, even then, the nature of the shops discourages lingering), or drive to one of the shopping malls on a weekend afternoon. (I am thinking of leisurely strollers, not those intent quasi-athletes in headphones who walk for exercise, stretching out along the bayou or circling the Rice campus like joggers moving in slow-motion.) Though I personally prefer the low-level strip center, the large indoor shopping mall is clearly one of the genuine places of refuge for other people who like to walk — teenagers, women with small children, retirees. It is a place where people congregate in order to stroll around idly. If, as Walter Benjamin thought, the department store is the last practical joke on the flâneur, converting his leisurely curiosity into commodity circulation, then surely the Galleria is a full-fledged, five-act comedy.

After we leave the mall, we usually get back into our automobiles and drive through the city. And maybe that is the way we really inhabit our place — through windows. One sees Houston best from moving cars or from the windows of office buildings, singular moments of steel and glass, a radiant, moody, opaque, postmodern beauty looming up in the distance or declaring itself dramatically from the highway.

Edward Hirsch

BRAZOS BOOKSTORE

Eileen Gray Architect/Designer: A Biography



by Peter Adam

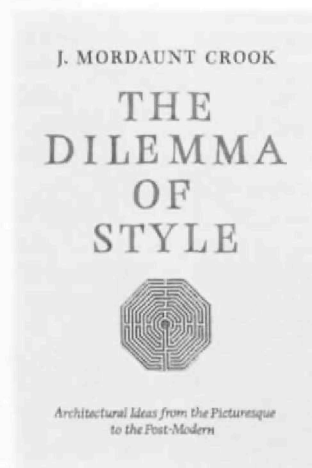
While Eileen Gray's achievements as designer and architect are history, little has been known about her life. Using previously-unpublished letters and journals; 300 photographs, designs and architectural plans; and a catalogue raisonne of her work — this full-scale biography is the first to fully illustrate and document Gray's contribution to 20th-century style.

400 pages; 335 illustrations, 35 in color.
7½ × 10¾". \$39.95

Harry N. Abrams

The Dilemma of Style

Architectural Ideas from the
Picturesque to the Post Modern



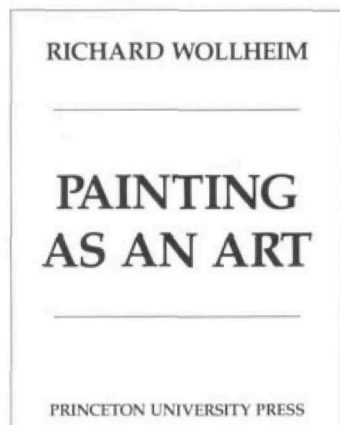
by J. Mordaunt Crook

Not another history of English architecture, this is instead an encyclopedic narrative of architectural ideas, an exploration of the ways in which generations of British architects and theorists during the last 200 years have searched for a key to the conundrum of style.

340 pages; 217 halftones. 6¾ × 9¾". \$45.

University of Chicago Press

Painting as an Art



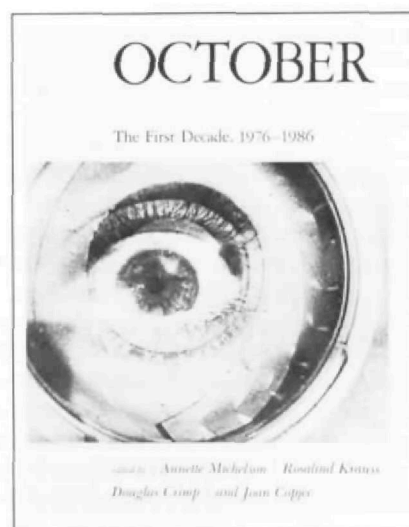
by Richard Wollheim

To grasp the nature of painting practiced as an art, we must view it from the vantage point of the artist: that is the central theme of Richard Wollheim's latest book. The author argues that the art of painting has two parts to it, which are distinct yet inextricably related: the transformation of a physical material into a medium, and the production of meaning. Professor Wollheim argues that a fundamental difference exists between pictorial meaning and linguistic meaning. Wollheim distinguishes different kinds of pictorial meaning, and he illustrates them by means of a series of highly original interpretative studies of Titian, Poussin, Ingres, Manet, Picasso, and de Kooning.

384 pages; 330 illustrations, 30 in color.
7½ × 10¼". \$45.

Princeton University Press

October The First Decade, 1976-1986



Edited by: Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss,
Douglas Crimp & Joan Copjec.

An avant-garde quarterly journal devoted to "Art/Theory/Criticism/Politics," *OCTOBER* has, since its inception in the 1970s, presented innovative and provocative texts that cover the range of contemporary art within its social and political contexts. Here are 24 important and representative articles, organized under the categories: The Index, Historical Materialism, The Critique of Institutions, Psychoanalysis, Rhetoric, The Body.

456 pages; 160 B&W illustrations. 9¼ × 7¼". \$19.95

The MIT Press

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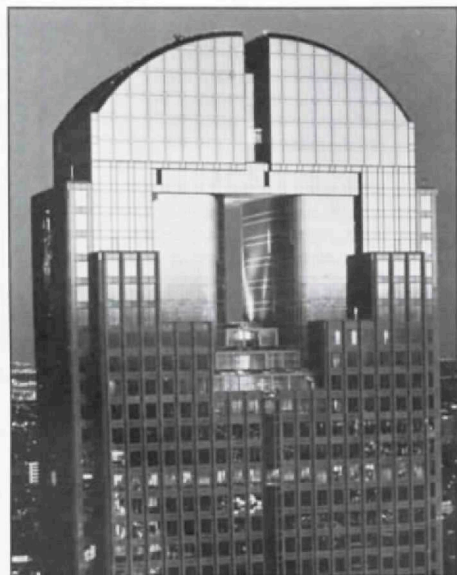
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The Texas Commerce Tower

Joel Warren Barna



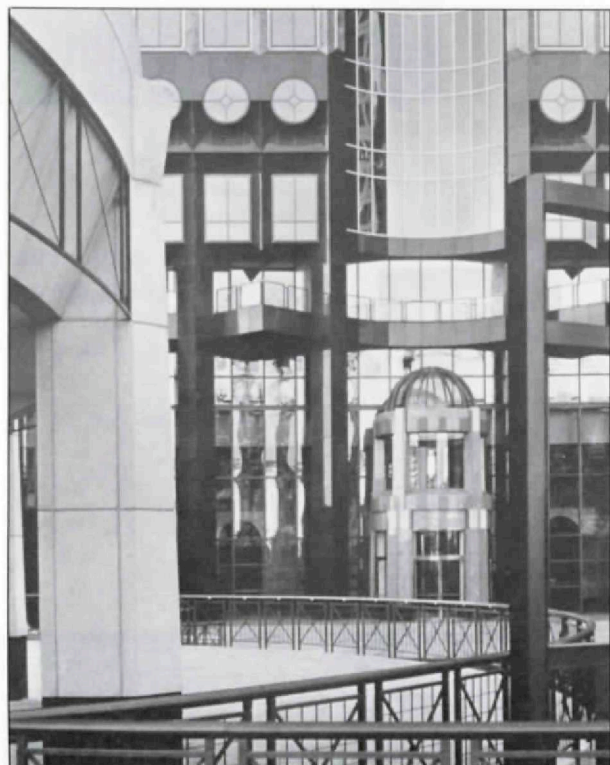
Wolfgang Hoyt

Aperture at top

The Texas Commerce Tower at 2200 Ross Avenue in Dallas is a 55-story, 1.2 million square-foot tower designed by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill of Houston and built by the Trammell Crow Company. Begun in 1984 and officially opened in September 1987 (a few weeks after Cadillac Fairview's big, bland Momentum Place, designed by John Burgee Architects with Philip Johnson), it probably will be the last major building to go up in a Texas downtown for some time. All the better, because Texas Commerce Tower, while not entirely on target from top to bottom, is a remarkable building.

Start at the top: its sculpted glass-clad curves and its racy 74-by-27-foot keyhole. None of the classical or neo-Gothic references employed by other postmodernists here – SOM went straight for a more viscerally entertaining effect, somewhere between sci-fi fantasy (like its unsuccessful entry in the Southwest Tower Competition in 1982) and the Japanese Metabolist school of the 1960s. It is a riskier, but more successful, top than the pyramid of glass adorning the nearby LTV Centre, designed by SOM for the same clients and completed in 1984. One wonders, though: Who is supposed to look through the void at the top? And at what?

The middle stretch of tower, between the top and the six-story, mahogany-colored granite base, finished precisely and soberly in rose-gray Salamandra granite and pinkish glass, is perhaps a trifle broad and boxy in front elevation, although the side elevations are pleasingly slim. The base and mid-tower section, with their SOM-signature precision, work well in balancing the vaudeville of the roof. And they incorporate a number of references to the context of the building that make it a little less idiosyncratic looking. These include columns set at a 45-degree angle to the surface of the base, which, like the angled vertical stripe of glass rising from base to top on the front and side elevations, recall the prismatic skin of the LTV Centre; a concave glass façade element above the entrance and rondels echoing features of The Crescent, facing



Wolfgang Hoyt

Detail of entrance

Texas Commerce Tower across the southern edge of downtown; and window proportions that harmonize with the adjacent St. Paul Tower. At ground level, there are even chunky concrete flag-pole pylons that recall those at Dallas's City Hall, at the opposite end of downtown.

Along with these flag poles, the best and most problematic features of the building are at ground level. In a 1.5-acre plaza between Ross Avenue and the tower base, topiary gardens (with what will one day be 12-foot-tall hedges) are carved by paths and seating areas, and a grass lawn slopes toward an 11-foot-high, 50-foot-long water wall. At the southwestern corner is a 17,000-square-foot domed rotunda, planned for a restaurant. The building's connections to other buildings, through skyways and underground tunnels, are dramatized by curved exterior stair ramps, to attract and stimulate foot traffic (a basement-level subway station also has been contemplated). This landscaping forms an important link in the chain of public spaces along Ross Avenue, including the sculpture garden of the Dallas Museum of Art, with its powerful fountain wall; the welcoming oak grove at

Southwest Life Insurance, dating from 1964; the slightly too-imposing sculpture garden at the LTV Centre; the 1986 Lincoln Plaza, with its grove of oaks; and the water gardens at Allied Bank Tower at Fountain Place. Together these features make Ross Avenue, which forms one edge of the emerging Dallas Arts District, the most humane downtown street in the state.

But the ground-level features of the Texas Commerce Tower, on a recent rainy Monday, with the plaza and building all but unoccupied, seemed raw and strangely proportioned, the concrete elements grossly overscaled, and the metal elements a blunt paint-can blue-green. Habitation and use should change that: it's a site with a carnival atmosphere, and needs some activity to work.

A prediction: in 10 years Texas Commerce Tower will look dated, but then so does everything a half-generation away. People used to chuckle at the excesses of the Neils Esperson Building and Philip Johnson's University of St. Thomas campus. In 20 years, however, people will point to Texas Commerce Tower and say, "That was Dallas in the good old days." ■



Wolfgang Hoyt

Texas Commerce Tower, Dallas, 1987, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, architects