creating the feeling that in the Crescent Court hotel you can have an elegant good time. This is nowhere more true than in the Beau Nash brasserie, with its assured balance of lighting, darkness (mahogony), and color. Once inside the hotel – the entry court with its tempietto has too much parking for the right effect – you are, indeed, in another place. But it is the interior design and not the architecture that transforms both place and people. And there are tough jostlings of intention between these two realms, although I fear that much of this vulgar struggle is lost on the usual guest. In the great entrance hall, for instance, the circulation across to the second court is rudely interrupted by the intrusion of the second-floor gallery, like a piece of intimate apparel fallen from its proper place. But the marble floor of this space must be seen to be believed and is a material triumph over mere spatial and architectural adversity.

In the Beau Nash brasserie, the struggle is between the ceiling and the arched windows on both sides, in which the windows are defeated and depressed by the sheer weight of the mahogany beams that might easily have been omitted along the wall spans. But this is a space that is already popular with local residents and therefore always busy and noisy with the enjoyment of its excellent cuisine. Dinner and Sunday brunch bring back memories of the best smaller European restaurants; while breakfast in the greenhouse is ritzy in the true sense.

The elevators are by far the most efficient to be found anywhere. They deliver you into a crescent-shaped corridor, of course, where perspective is canceled out by the illusion of infinite distance. Long stays are not suggested by the layout and furnishings of the rooms, however, which are nevertheless very comfortable if undistinguished. One expects each room to have its French window but this, alas, opens onto a shelf rather than a balcony. Putting a hesitant foot out you soon realize why. The view from the room, unlike those down the corridors, is strictly one-point: you are intended to look across the courtyard and not up and down the crescent. If you break the rules, the illusion is destroyed, because the crescent is open-ended and the urban fragment not a complete entity in itself.

The harsh reality of the urban landscape intrudes beyond the garden wall to the right and the swimming pool to the left.

Returning to the townscape viewed from the museum gallery, I am reminded of the way in which the skylines of both Dallas and Fort Worth are delineated by profiling buildings with light bulbs. This magical transformation of a city's form at night is achieved by a simple and *vulgar* device – the very same one used in the interior of Dallas's N.J. Clayton-designed Santuario de Guadalupe Cathedral to accentuate the arches. In the case of the skyline, distance is the essential component of the illusion. There is no illusion in the Santuario, however; it is impossible to escape its reality. In the case of The Crescent, distance does not aid the illusion: the *hôtel* is frankly too surreal to be believed. But at close quarters the Crescent Court is more accommodating in its interior imagery. This may not be architecture – it avoids being monumental in spite of itself – but it's a great backdrop for fun and games. And it is just possible to be in Dallas and glimpse Paris through Mr. Johnson's looking glass. That is, if you are willing to play at mistaking the image of *la jeune fille* for that of *la belle dame mondiane*. ■

Cite**ations**

New York 1930 and LA Lost and Found

New York, 1930, Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars
Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins with David Fishman and Raymond W. Gastil, New York, Rizzoli, 1987, 847 pp., $75

LA Lost and Found, An Architectural History of Los Angeles
Sam Hall Kaplan, New York: Crown Hall Publishers Inc., 1987, 224 pp., $27.95

Reviewed by Stephen Fox

At 847 pages *New York 1930*, successor to Stern, Gilmartin, and Massengale's *New York 1900*, is not a quick read. It is a voluminous account of architecture built in New York (principally in Manhattan, but also including the outer boroughs), between 1917 and 1942. This is organized by building and institutional types – public buildings, entertainment and retail buildings, residential buildings, and tall office buildings – and concludes with a short section on urban improvements and the World's Fair of 1939. The book is illustrated with a stunning array of period photographs (some of them a bit muddy in printing) and fewer architectural drawings than one might wish. Although urbanism figures in the subtitle, it is to architecture that the book is dedicated; typological organization virtually ensures that the text becomes a catalogue of buildings.

The cultural trajectory that Stern, Gilmartin, and Mellins trace through buildings is dramatically inclined. It spanned from the end of the Progessive Era, with its "high" concept of civic grandeur, expressed in the nobility of classical architecture, to the raucousness of the Jazz Age and its delight in the sophisticated novelty of art deco (or what Stern, Gilmartin, and Mellins prefer to call Modern Classicism), to the crisis of the Great Depression, which propelled a renewal of engagement with sociological problems and lent the Modern Movement in architecture a certain moral urgency upon its American appearance. Underlying this trajectory the authors discern two gradual but inexorable trends: the dissolution of what they call the "metropolitan ideal" of 1900 before the tendency to suburbanize and domesticate, and the supplanting of the Progressive notion of civic virtue with financial speculation and social engineering.

In the chapters on theater, retail, and exhibition design especially, the authors' compilation of examples enables one to follow clearly the leading developments in taste, techniques, and attitudes that characterized this trajectory. In other chapters, however, these themes emerge less clearly as the authors seemingly race from subtype to subtype and example to example. In citing then-contemporary assessments of building projects, a critical dimension is introduced, along with some unanticipated revelations (for instance: the general opprobrium that Rockefeller Center encountered when first announced). But although it is evident that the authors regret the rejection of Progressive civic and architectural standards in the interwar era, they do not articulate a coherent critical interpretation of this epoch that might bridge between evaluations in the past and evaluation from the perspective of the present.

Houston's favorite New York architects crop up from time to time in the narrative. Alfred C. Bossom is mentioned, although none of his buildings are illustrated; John Eberson's three major contributions to New York's body of movie palaces are recognized; Harrie T. Lindeberg turns up on Beekman Place; and Kenneth Franzheim's 22 East Fortieth Street, a 42-story office tower completed in 1931 for Jesse H. Jones, is illustrated with a Berenice Abbott photograph. The Houston architect William Ward Watkin makes several surprise appearances in his role as an occasional commentator on the course of American architecture in the early 1930s.

Berenice Abbott, Museum of the City of New York

22 East Fortieth Street, 1931, Kenneth Franzheim

New York 1930 is not the concise social-historical profile that its title might seem to imply. It is, however, a rich, discursive chronicle of the ways that social and cultural circumstances affected building development and intersected with architectural trends during the 1920s and 1930s.

Any temptation to criticize *New York 1930* for its profusion of detail is checked by a quick flip – and there's no compelling reason to slow down – through *LA Lost and Found* by Sam Hall Kaplan, design critic of the *Los Angeles Times*. Kaplan merely repackages what Gebhard, McCoy, Winter, Banham, Hines, Polyzoides, Chase, and Hess have already written about architecture in the Los Angeles region, stringing it all together with some light-weight and often repetitious anecdotal historical detail. In dealing with periods of LA architectural history that have not been written about, like most of the 19th century, Kaplan's limp grasp on American architectural history becomes apparent. Equally frustrating is his curt dismissal of the current SCI Arch-Santa Monica-Venice school, which he describes as "funky and punk designs" of "strained geometry and perverted materials" satisfying only "an often parochial, preconceived view among critics and peers of a spaced-out, LA architecture scene." What Kaplan doesn't seem to understand is that this work is appreciated not because it "represents" Los Angeles, but because it is ingenious, inventive, and lyrical. Kaplan exhibits as little feeling for the city as its history. One gets no sense of the diversity, texture, or patterns of development that characterize the place or of the multiple architectural cultures, and their sources of patronage, that often have occurred simultaniously in Los Angeles and the many distinct towns that surround it. The book is sustained only by Julius Shulman's architectural photography. There are no architectural drawings.

Architectural histories of American cities are needed. Too much has been lost and too little is remembered, even of buildings and architects that in their own time achieved some degree of critical recognition. *New York 1930* redresses the general lack of knowledge, but it is over-ambitious and unwieldy; the cataloguing of buildings (a commendable enterprise in itself) constantly competes with the accounts of historical developments. *LA Lost and Found* is too superficial and unresearched to communicate an adequate sense of historical particularity. M. Christine Boyer's *Manhattan Manners, Architecture and Style, 1850-1900* (Rizzoli, 1985) provides a more appropriate model for an architectural history of a city (or an epoch in the city's development). It does not include every notable work of architecture built in or proposed for New York in the last half of the 19th century, but it does examine, quite cogently, patterns of development and redevelopment through architecture, supplementing textual information with maps and charts that condense data graphically to support the textual findings.

If urban architectural history is to have a public agenda – informing citizens why cities have developed as they did, identifying important works of architecture, and serving as a catalyst for historic preservation (one of the stated purposes of *LA Lost and Found*) and urban conservation – then greater methodological discipline than is evident, for opposite reasons, in *New York 1930* and *LA Lost and Found* must be brought to bear on the presentation of historical material. ■

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The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna

Donald J. Olsen, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, 341 pp., 150 illus., $35

Reviewed by Diane Y. Ghirardo

One rarely receives a book to review which is both a delight to read and an informative compendium of a wide range of material. But both are true of Donald J. Olsen's *The City as a Work of Art*. By conventional standards of scholarship, Olsen's book is a fine work. But he moves in treacherous waters and risks, I believe, finally succumbing to a riptide.

Olsen examines three cities – London, Paris, Vienna – from the early 19th century to 1914. Not only did they undergo major physical transformations during this period, they also exploded in size and population. Rapid growth ushered in as much poverty as progress, which in turn stirred up long-standing anti-urban antagonisms. Olsen argues that these three capital cities developed in defiance of the Industrial Revolution; indeed, they were much more than industrial centers. Beyond the economic and technological imperatives, they were works of art in which one can read values, systems of thought, and morality.

Olsen explores the obvious interventions in the three cities – Haussman in Paris, Soane and Nash in London, and the Ringstrasse in Vienna – but he also explores the housing, entertainment, and architectural aesthetics characteristic of each in some detail. He quite properly eschews easy explanations for the changing appearances of the cities. The dramatic shift in the standards of beauty which swept England in the early 19th century, for example, have been attributed to industrialization, a shift from aristocratic to bourgeois values, and a willful abandonment of classical values – but Olsen finds each unsatisfactory. He maps out a more complex account of the motor forces of change, their physical realizations, and the responses of citizens in the three capitals.

The discussion of 19th-century architecture is particularly illuminating. As Olsen points out, contemporaries saw only heterogeneity and incoherence, and so have subsequent historians. Although no stylistic unity underlay the three cities, Olsen argues that nationalism – common to all three – may have shaped their respective architectural styles more than anything else. Another common denominator was the belief that architecture was a language of representation and expression, a language which served the public good and private morality. Olsen cautions against a facile reading of that language: was Vienna's Ringstrasse a bourgeois monument, as Carl Schorske argued, or still an aristocratic one, as Arno Meyer concluded? In this most treacherous terrain, Olsen concedes the multiplicity of readings and the tenuousness of interpretations. But not, alas, sufficiently. Would that he had followed his own advice more carefully.

Olsen is willing to assert that Londoners emphasized the house and domesticity more than their neighbors on the continent, which accounts for the relative paucity of grand monuments in London by comparison with the ostentatious opulence of Vienna's buildings. But such an account fails to uncover the problematic critical issues: one could easily see this emphasis on domesticity as yet another stratagem for suppressing women, as other historians have (most recently in Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*).

Or one might wonder at Olsen's claim that the equality-minded 20th century is uncomfortable with the 19th century's obvious visual expression of social and economic hierarchies. He asserts that we brand such things as "elitist," and he suggests that although such hierarchies still exist, we are somehow "better" because we choose not to render those differences obvious. If distinctions must be made, I find deception ultimately more treacherous. Such is the case with Houston's own Allen Parkway Village. Were it located on the remote periphery (hence largely invisible), it would be far less troublesome than it is in its present location – eminently visible from River Oaks, the Buffalo Bayou Parkway, and the corporate towers of downtown. Make no mistake: the issue under discussion here is not improving the lot of the poor, but banishing them from sight.

My quarrel with *The City as a Work of Art* rests less with Olsen's treatment of the 19th century – safely past and impervious to change – than with the endorsement this kind of history seems to grant for complacent self-satisfaction toward city building strategies and rationales today that differ little in intent and victims from those of the 19th century. City beautification in the 19th century can be interpreted with equal validity as the concealment of excess and the garbing of greed in gracious gowns. Olsen tells us that the buildings last long beyond the intentions of the builders, as they indeed outlast those of "nasty and brutish" life who never savored their riches. It is not the talk of history to perpetuate these inequalities, but to bring them to our attention. ■

Financing, Designing, and Locating Housing for the Elderly

Presented by the University of Houston Center for Public Policy
Cosponsored by the UH Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Social Work, College of Architecture, Handicapped Student Services, College of Hotel and Restaurant Management; Murray Gilderbloom; Mary-Ann, Jim, and Holly Gilderbloom-Ross; and the Foundation for National Progress, Housing Information Center
University of Houston, Hilton Hotel Conference Center
4 May 1987

Reviewed by Peter Wood

"Rub Vaseline on your glasses, stuff cotton in your ears. Put on a pair of heavy work gloves, a 40-pound backpack and shackles on your ankles. Spend a day that way and you will begin to know what it's like to be old."

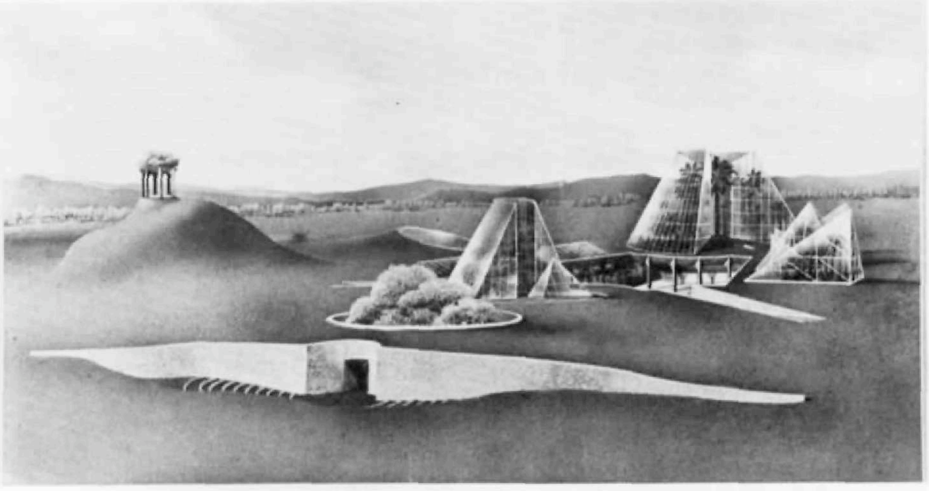
For those old enough to remember a time when architects concerned themselves with social responsibility as well as tasteful design, this day-long conference on housing the elderly and disabled brought back memories. The difference: in the '80s, social responsibility can also mean market opportunities.

"Close to a third of the disabled and elderly population makes more than $25,000," conferees were told. "With the depressed economy, it is easy to pick up a good property cheap and convert it for elderly housing. . .The elderly are good tenants: they stay longer, have a lower turnover rate, and will pay more because the marketplace has not been able to provide adequate alternatives."

One might turn cynical and say that this is typical of the crass commercialism of the 1980s. But more appropriately, one might observe that without state or federal support for special populations, market viability is a critical part of any solution to the problems of housing the elderly and handicapped.

The bottom line is the same as it was 20 years ago. Something needs to be done. Many of the elderly are often spending in excess of 50 percent of their income on housing. And there are few, if any, alternatives other than a nursing home. The problem is multifaceted, including design, access, finance, and legislation, suggesting the need for the involvement of many different professions. This conference, supported by the work of Professor John Gilderbloom and others in the academic community together with the City of Houston and the Metropolitan Transit Authority, was a good start at defining the problems and beginning to look for realistic solutions. ■

Glass Houses for People and Plants



Artist's rendering of the Lucile Halsell Conservatory, San Antonio

Sponsored by the Ewing Halsell Foundation
San Antonio, 15 June 1987

Reviewed by Natalye Appel

At first reading the title of this symposium promised a panel of eminent architects taking a straightforward look at architectural glass in two distinct applications. But moderator David Dillon, architecture critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, had a more ambitious scenario in mind; something as unlike a glass-class as the Halsell Conservatory is unlike a traditional greenhouse. Taking cues from the Halsell's crystalline prisms and cave-like earthen rooms, he focused the symposium instead on architecture's capacity to embody the archetypal models of Arcadia and Utopia – complementary visions of the ideal existence in the garden and in the city of man.

Emilio Ambasz, architect for the new conservatory, spoke first. He began by discussing glass in the context of St. Augustine's Heavenly City, redefining it as a "material of the mind" which has the power to sublimate the reality of a structure to the ideal at its source. Revealing the conceptual origins of his design for the conservatory, he described the project in terms of the dualities inherent in a dialogue between man and nature.

In Ambasz's narrative, a Fern Room, complete with mist and fiberglass rocks, is seen as "a secular temple. . . a place for redemption." A lone tree marking entry to the courtyard "grows unaided as at the beginning of time" (in the Garden of Eden), in contrast to the Palm Room, spiraling towards heaven, representing the antithetical position of the Tower of Babel. These polarities are intertwined in the courtyard, where the geometrical construction of human culture both surrounds and is subsumed by the forces of nature, manifest in the free-form pond and the vines meant to cover the architecture completely. Ambasz concluded with a children's tale, "Fabula Rasa," poetically restating the profound notions in the work.

Cesar Pelli extended the speculation on the sublime, elaborating on his belief that architecture is "that which celebrates life. . . the difference between a flower and a rock." He presented several houses for people and for plants, including the Wintergarden at the World Financial Center in Manhattan. Here, he stated, is "a recognition that we share the world with other species" and a celebration of that coexistence. He suggested that because of this role, to honor something beyond ourselves, the conservatory is becoming the building type that expresses our highest aspiration today, assuming the role of the church in a secular society.

Returning to the subject of the Halsell Conservatory, Edward Larrabee Barnes questioned whether glass could really almost disappear into the realm of the mind. The reading of the sharp geometric prisms in juxtaposition to earthworks depends on the absolute materiality of the skin. A contrast in spatial qualities as well as skin emerged when Barnes's own work was compared to the Halsell. The greenhouse clusters of the Chicago Horticultural Center and the flexible hexagonal modules at the New York Botanical Garden's Plants and Man Building exemplified the modernist idea of universal space, while Ambasz's design uses highly articulated, precisely programmed "rooms" to manifest his ideal.

The final speaker, Alan Y. Taniguchi, concentrated on our active relationship with the natural world. He proposed that while even minimal modification of the environment for one species is not always easy, a house for both people and plants should be sensitive to the many essentials beyond physical necessities for survival and comfort. Agreeing that architecture should give deeper meaning to the experience of communing with nature, he said that this is exactly what separates Philip Johnson's Glass House from any greenhouse: plants are housed in glass because they must have light. For people, this choice is based on intellectual constructs, on aspirations, on ideals.

During the discussion session, the audience attempted to move the panel to more practical concerns with questions on technical issues and commercial applications. Questions about the realities of *atrium* office buildings (Dillon: "Don't say that word!"), the quality of materials (Barnes: "Mirror glass looks like Jell-O."), and even the use of glass within other surfaces (Barnes: "Punched openings are just a nuisance."), revealed how these matters may taint the perception and understanding of glass structures, making it impossible to see them in a more noble light. Nonetheless, the theme of the ideal – from house to garden to city – was the lofty precinct in which each speaker dwelt throughout the symposium. After all, imagining the Halsell Conservatory as Ambasz envisions it – "a series of little theaters of climate and culture with the civilizing effect of cathedrals" – is much more interesting than discussing the specifications. ■

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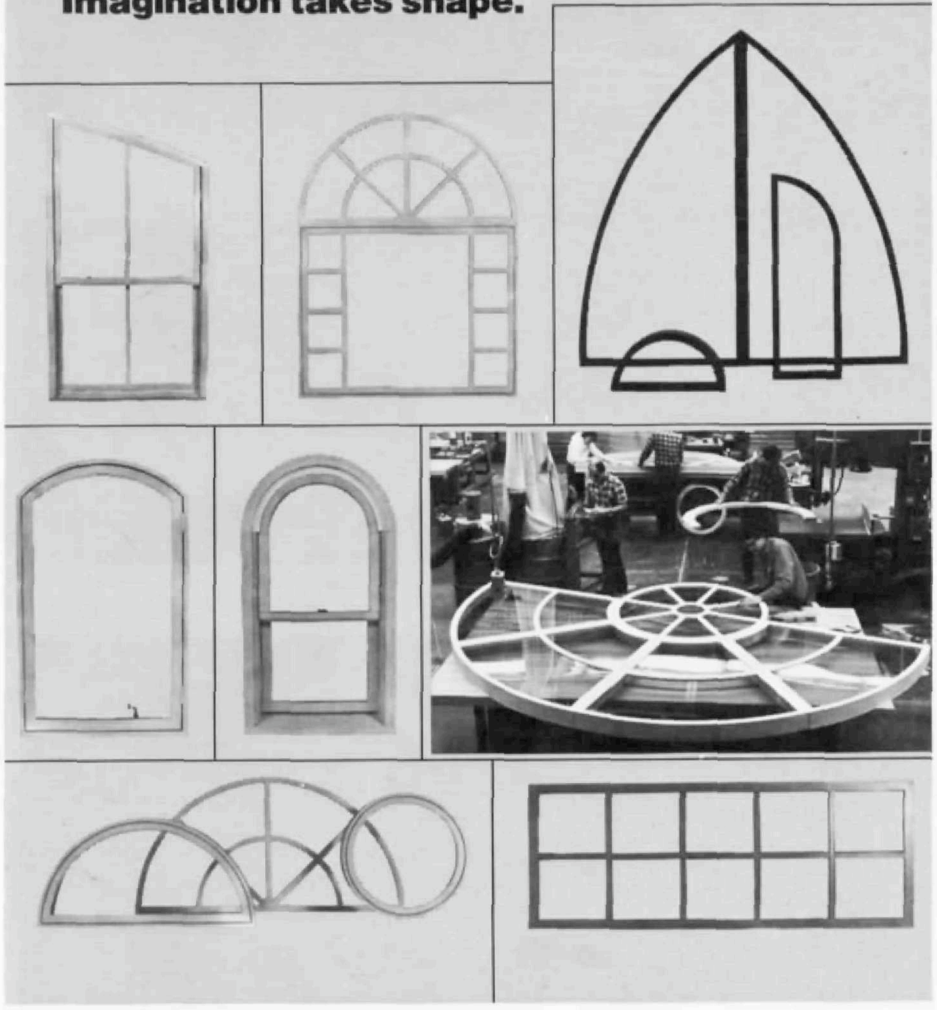

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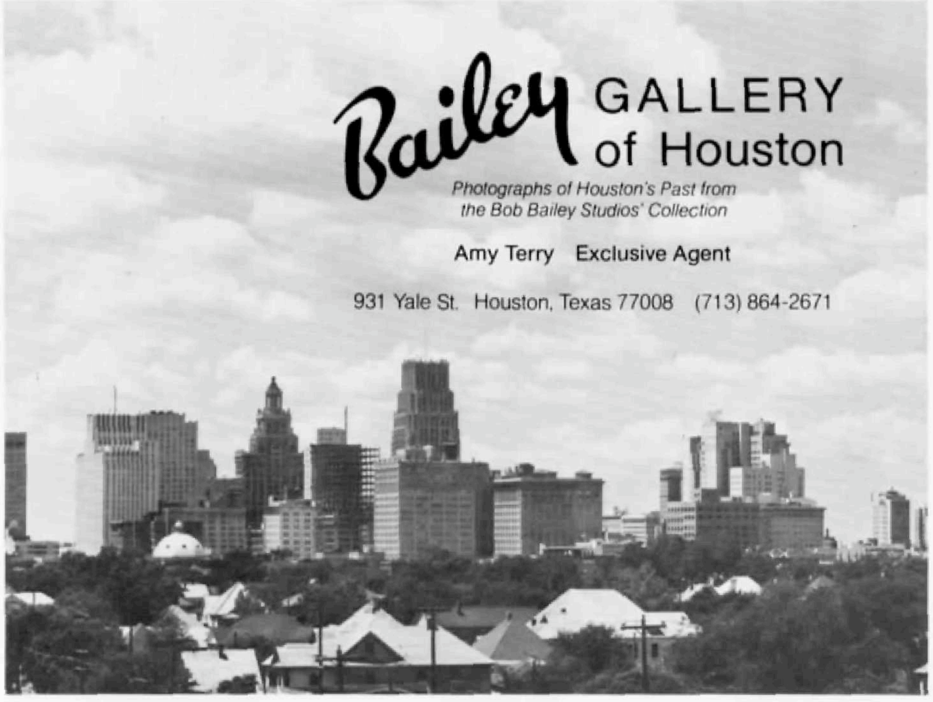

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Design Thinking

Peter G. Rowe, Boston, The MIT Press, 1987, 229 pp., illus., $25

Reviewed by Thomas Colbert

In *Design Thinking*, Peter Rowe tells us his intention is "to fashion a generalized portrait of design thinking." He opens the book with three case studies, or "protocols," in which individual designers reveal the precise steps they go through and the specific mental activities which are, for them, involved in approaching particular design projects. The author uses annotated sketches and concept drawings effectively to illustrate detailed, step-by-step discussions of the early stages of the design process.

Unfortunately, this elegant approach to the study of design thinking – actually examining the content of the designer's mind while he is designing – is not followed throughout the book. One wishes it had and that this study had been extended to include at least the first phase of design development, some discussion of program (literal and figurative), and a greater number of protocols. Instead, an intriguing beginning is relegated to the role of "backdrop for later theoretical discussion."

While the first section of the book, called "Designers in Action," is interesting and informative, it does not inform or otherwise engage the rest of the book. Like the next and the last three sections ("Procedural Aspects of Design Thinking," "Normative Positions That Guide Design Thinking," and "Architectural Positions and Their Realms of Inquiry"), it presents several disparate points of view regarding approaches to, and areas of study of, the design process, without firmly developing the links between them. Indeed, what is disappointing about this book is the weak sense of what holds it all together.

On the dust jacket we are promised that the author "treats multiple and often dissimilar theoretical positions. . .as particular manifestations of an underlying structure of inquiry." However, what we are given is not a clear thesis or well-developed narrative structure. Instead, the loosely developed theme "design thinking" is used as a sack into which reports on a wide range of theoretical discourse on design are thrown like groceries.

If we are not given what we are led to expect, we aren't turned away entirely empty-handed either. The many synopses of schools of thought from stucturalism, phenomenolgy, and the Gestalt School, to information processing, problem-solving theory, typologies, and environmental relations, constitute an admirable survey of theoretical thought about design and design-process studies. The fact that *Design Thinking* is not structured or referenced as a survey somewhat diminishes its usefulness in this regard, for it is as a survey or catalogue that I will save this book and occasionally recommend it to others.

One further point must be made. While it is never quite fair to comment on the readability of anything written by an architect, it has to be said that this book earns particularly high marks on the obfuscatory index, and particularly low marks on the somnambulist register. It will be heavy reading for anyone who isn't fully reconciled to the academic use of language. ■

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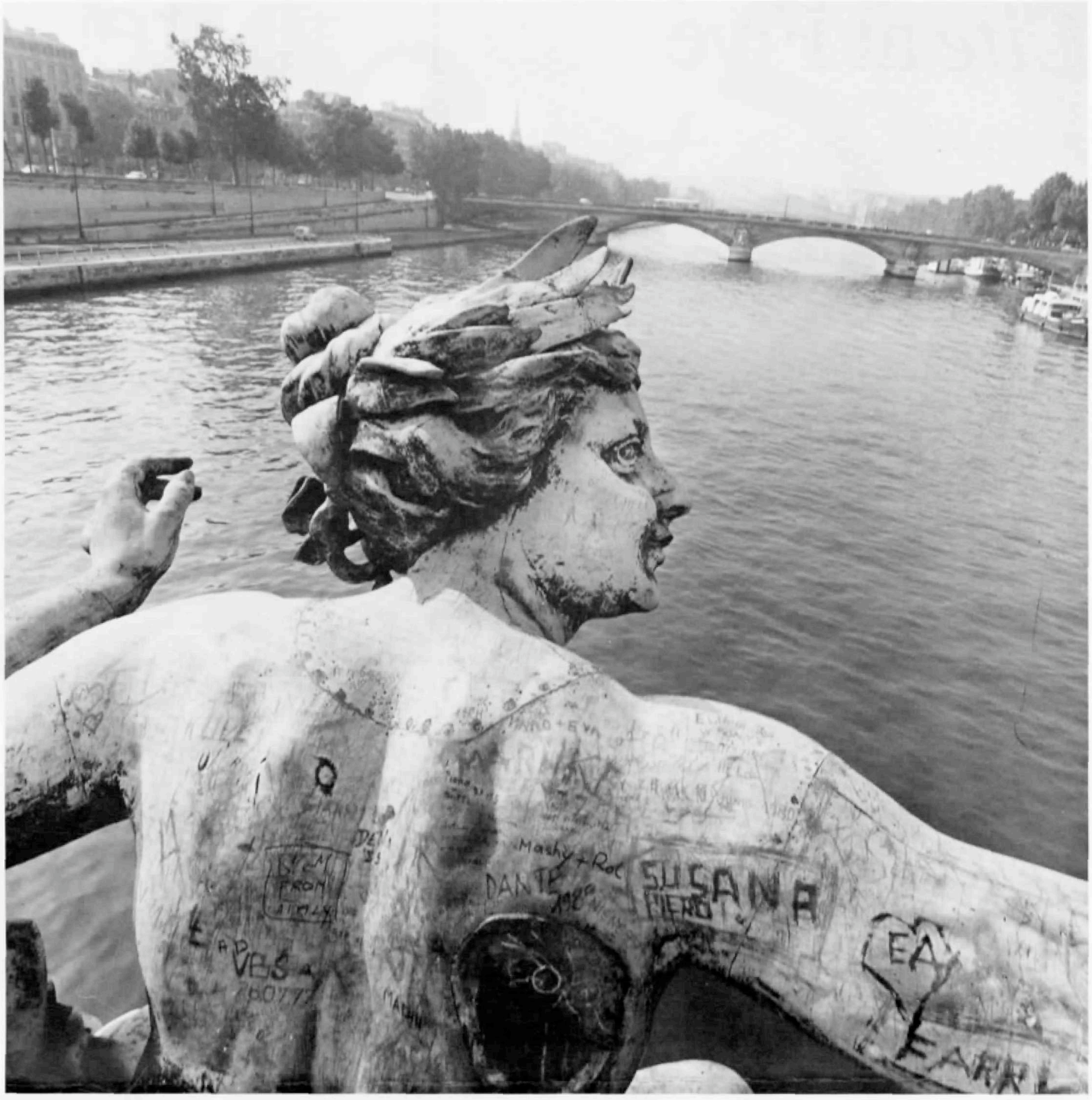

"Detail and Graffiti at Point Alexander III," by Richard Payne

Past and Present Treasures: Sculpture and Gothic Architecture in Europe

Sponsored by the American Institute of Architects
Innova, Houston
14 May-12 June 1987

Reviewed by Thomas Colbert

Photographer Richard Payne is well-known to followers of the architectural scene both locally and nationally. Those who don't recognize his name might recognize many of the images he has brought to our attention. Photographs for two books on the work of Philip Johnson and John Burgee, as well as for *Historic Galveston*, *Landmarks of Texas Architecture*, and numerous contributions to journals and periodicals are testimony to his faultless professionalism.

Commercial work, however, does not necessarily describe a photographer's deepest aesthetic ambitions or abilities. That goal is achieved most fully only when the photographer is released to work for himself – when the choice of subject and technique are his own. It was, therefore, an exceptional occasion when Payne recently showed his latest work for himself.

The exhibition "Past and Present Treasures" was the product of Payne's acceptance of an invitation to stay at The American Center in Paris during the fall and winter of 1986. An apartment and studio were provided, giving him the opportunity to explore Europe at length, and to consider his ambitions in photography. One hundred remarkable pictures from France, Italy, Greece, and England demonstrated the diligence with which he pursued personal photography during this time.

Payne rejected the popular notion that photography is essentially an interpretive art. Like Michaelangelo unearthing figures contained in stone, Payne says he worked "to present and celebrate the beauty and drama which are already there." He also rejected the tawdry, ironic, and shocking subject matter which he regards as the primary canon of vanguard photography. Instead, he chose to photograph "the best things man has built" directly and straightforwardly, and to produce the best crafted prints of which he was capable.

The images fell into three categories: reenactments of Eugene Atget's famous 19th- and early 20th-century photographs of Versailles, images that tell a tale, and architectural shots.

The Atget reenactments took Payne more time to shoot than any of the photographs in the show. He found the exact places where Atget stood and duplicated the angle of view, time of day, and quality of light that Atget recorded. These photographs have an extraordinary sensuousness and presence which, despite Payne's strenuous efforts to be as faithful as possible to his beloved predecessor's style and technique, mysteriously indicate the hand of a more modern artist at work. Differences in detail between shots by the two photographers give a wonderful sense of constancy in a landscape subtly affected by change.

Among the photographs that tell a tale, two stand out. The first is an artfully composed, timeless portrait of a statue along the river Seine, with Paris beyond. It is the sort of photograph one is accustomed to interpreting as representing a timeless condition. But closer inspection reveals that the statue is covered with graffiti. Lovers have left their mark, as well as tourists with names like José, Eric, and Ricardo, reminding us that as with the landscape, all forms of aesthetic delight are subject to perpetual reinvention.

Another story photograph shows an elegantly dressed and perhaps too-poised young woman sunning herself and reading the paper in a Parisian park. The dark silhouette of a man under a tree in the near distance and a brilliant white statue are in the background. The newspaper is a *Herald Tribune* and the lurking Parisian is clearly interested in this American exotic. The statue looks on with bemused humor, a silent reflection of the photographer's view.

But it is the architectural images, clearly and simply composed, which stole the show. Space, light, texture, and context are presented with a refreshing compositional clarity and directness. The sculpted head of a ferocious dog, two lovers in marble, Nôtre Dame, the Acropolis, a decaying pavilion in Brighton – each is brought to life in a manner that bespeaks the character of the object itself.

Radical invention was not apparent in this exhibition. One was never startled or disturbed. The photographs were merely exquisite. Their seductive charm springs from the deceptive simplicity and intensity of Payne's vision. One hopes that the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects will arrange a state tour of the exhibition, and perhaps publish a catalogue, before these superb photographs are lost to private collections. ■