

## Citations

### This is Our Home—It Is Not For Sale

*A documentary produced by Jon Schwartz, music by Arnett Cobb, 180 minutes. Premiere December 11, 1987, 7 PM, Rice University Media Center, to benefit the Media Center and the Southwest Alternative Media Project.*

*Reviewed by V. Nia Dorian Becnel*

Jon Schwartz has produced a significant documentary film on the trials and tribulations of Houston's Riverside community located in the southeast section of the city, along Brays Bayou. Riverside boasts spacious, manicured lawns, winding, tree-lined streets, and stately houses which have been and continue to be the homes of many of Houston's leaders. Some of those leaders are the subjects of this nearly three-hour long film, giving testimony through oral interviews on how the issue of race can affect the development of a community.

The film begins with an informative and well-presented glimpse of Brays Bayou as it appeared during the early stages of its development after 1836. Historical photographs along with the perspectives of German dairy farmers, the area's first settlers, are used effectively to create a portrait of the area's early settlement. The photographs show the bayou as it was: a lush, almost tropical waterway, with dense overhanging foliage along the irregular natural banks of the slow-moving water.

Upon this historical base, the film moves to the 1920s, describing the events that culminated in the establishment of Riverside Terrace. At this point, the film begins to rely heavily on oral interviews, and one of the major flaws in the film's format becomes apparent immediately: the viewer is not privy to the questions to which the person being interviewed is responding. Thus the viewer constantly faces the task of attempting to infer the question from the content and tone of the response. Despite this annoying flaw, the film begins to use the interviews to construct the historical narrative.

The Guardian Trust Company, developer of Riverside, offered spacious lots with an abundance of trees along the natural banks of the bayou. Although the earliest residents of the newly formed community were not primarily Jewish, Jews soon became a visible presence within it. Wealthy Jewish families congregated in Riverside partly because of their de facto segregation from River Oaks, Houston's most exclusive residential neighborhood. Schwartz uses this historical tableau as a backdrop for interviews with former residents and, in some instances, their now-adult children.

Surprisingly or not, there was reluctance on the part of former residents and their children to admit that Riverside's growth was attributable to the fact that they were excluded from River Oaks. Other reasons, such as not having the sun shining in their eyes as they drove to work in downtown, were given as a justification for having "chosen" Riverside over River Oaks. Only after several interviews did one of the former residents frankly admit that Riverside was primarily a Jewish community, and that realtors usually would not even respond to requests from Jews for available listings in River Oaks.

The affluence and quiet comforts of the community were apparent as former residents sat on their resplendent lawns and extolled their classic middle-class values, nostalgically discussing the "wonderful" lifestyle that existed in Riverside. At this point one begins to wonder if the style of living was so wonderful, why the former residents

elect to sell and move to other areas?

The answers become evident as the film moves to events of the 1950s, the decade during which there was an influx of black professionals into the nearby and recently established Texas College for Negroes, now Texas Southern University. These upwardly mobile blacks desired a higher standard of living and had the funds required to purchase homes in an affluent area. And inevitably, they pursued the acquisition of residences in the nearby Riverside community. As anti-Semitism had lurked beneath the surface, blocking Jewish entry into River Oaks, racism raised its ugly head first to impede and later to advance the transition of Riverside from a primarily middle-class Jewish community to one inhabited principally by the black middle class.

Members of the Jack Ceasar family were the first black residents in Riverside Terrace. Ceasar was a successful cattleman who moved his family to Riverside in 1953. The film goes to great lengths to chronicle the shock and apprehension registered by white residents, in part because the Ceasar family moved into their new home in the middle of the night.

The film provides valuable insights into the factors that caused the subsequent white (Jewish) flight from the community. The interviews expose the "block-busting" tactics of real-estate brokers who manipulated the area by actively soliciting listings from apprehensive residents. They also exposed the shame and fear of owners who often showed and sold their houses to blacks after dark, shielding the transaction from neighbors. Once a tranquil and idyllic community, Riverside suddenly found itself embroiled in the dilemma of attempting to preserve the community as it was, while at the same time accommodating the radical changes occasioned by the arrival of black families.

Out of this stressful situation a movement was launched to foster the peaceful integration of the area. Residents gave testimonials declaring their intentions to stay in their homes, and posted signs stating "This is Our Home, It Is Not For Sale." But the flight continued, and, slowly, Riverside became primarily a black community.

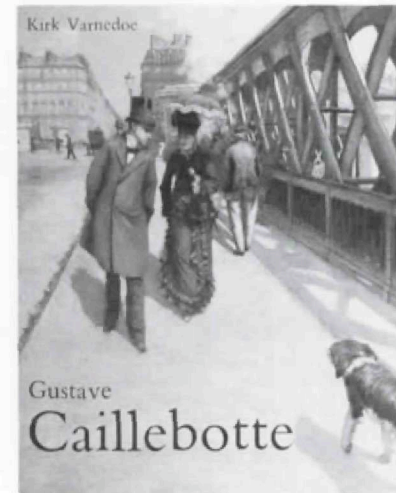
Schwartz then focuses on the return of whites to Riverside in the late 1970s and hints of its possible gentrification. New white residents cited the low cost of luxury housing and the quality of life as reasons for returning to Riverside. Several black residents voiced concern about this influx of whites back into the area, showing the similarity in the response of people of different races when faced with a similar threat to their homes.

Using the controversy surrounding the location of the Harris County Psychiatric Hospital on the southwest edge of Riverside, the film then examines the conflicts that accompany encroachment. Again, the issue was divided along racial lines. At this point, the film begins to lose some of its clarity. The interviews fail to provide a clear understanding of the issues or the justifications for maintaining given positions relative to them. The segment rambles; coming at the end of a very lengthy film, it is rather tedious to sit through and diminishes the overall impact of the presentation.

Although the film provides some very poignant interviews, the format creates several unnecessary problems. In addition to omitting the interviewer's questions, it also fails to provide the names or occupations of residents being interviewed. (Continued on page 24)

## BRAZOS BOOKSTORE

### Gustave Caillebotte



by Kirk Varnedoe

Based on the pioneering exhibition he organized in 1976 for The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Varnedoe's book examines the distinctive role Caillebotte played in Impressionism and in early modern art.

216 pages; 200 B&W illustrations, 72 color plates.  
10 x 11". \$39.95

Yale University Press

### Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe

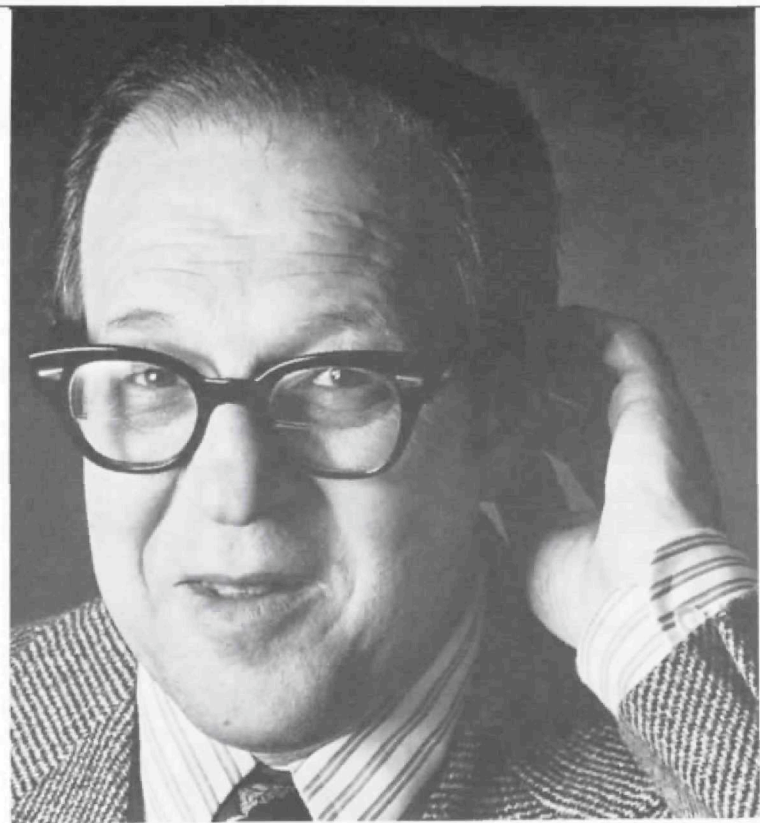


by Jack Cowart, Juan Hamilton, & Sarah Greenough

Catalogue for the centennial exhibit now at The National Gallery that in addition to 110 works of art, features 120 letters written by O'Keeffe that speak to her life and her art.

307 pages; 120 color plates, 11 B&W photographs.  
10 x 12 3/4". \$50

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(Continued from page 23)

This knowledge would have been useful to interpret correctly the information and perspectives given by the residents.

Despite these deficiencies, *This Is Our Home - It Is Not For Sale* gives solid

historical information on the Riverside Terrace and Brays Bayou area and documents the conflicts that have beset the community. As a case study, Schwartz's historical footage provides social historians with an excellent educational resource. ■

## Frank Lloyd Wright and the Johnson Wax Building: Creating a Corporate Cathedral



Courtesy of Johnson Wax

Great Workroom viewed from south mezzanine, circa 1959, Frank Lloyd Wright, architect

An exhibition organized by the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University  
Farish Gallery, Rice University, Houston  
24 August - 11 October 1987

Reviewed by William F. Stern

For all of Frank Lloyd Wright's deserved fame and status as a pioneer of the 20th century, much of his work is little known, often rarely seen, and not easily grasped. The most widely known of his buildings, the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, was designed and completed late in his career and is not, by most critical standards, his finest work. Other famous buildings, such as Falling Water, the Robie House, or the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (now demolished), are known to us mostly through a photographic image.

If we cannot visit Wright's buildings directly, the next best opportunity is for part of the building to come to us. Just that happened in Houston recently when a segment of the Great Workroom at half-scale from Wright's 1939 Johnson Wax Administration Building was assembled in the Farish Gallery in the School of Architecture at Rice University. Under the umbrella of "mushroom" columns, the workplace was replicated complete with a sampling of the desks and chairs Wright designed for the workroom. Drawings, models, and samples of letters which passed between the architect and client filled the Farish Gallery space, offering a complete picture of the making of the building. The exhibition was curated by Jonathan Lipman for the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University and is accompanied by a book-length catalogue published by Rizzoli.

The story that unfolds to us through the exhibition and catalogue is a fascinating one which serves to explain how the Johnson Wax buildings were a seminal event in Wright's career and among his most influential buildings in advancing the cause of modern design. We learn, for instance, that the Research Tower, an image that has become indelible as the signature for the Johnson Wax complex, was actually a later addition (1950) to the earlier completed Administration Building (1939). Although Wright was opposed to architecture as monument, with the Research Tower he created a strong and distinctive symbol for the complex and the Johnson Wax Company by reworking inventions and creative strokes realized in the earlier completed Administration Building. Still, Wright never intended a monumental expression for his corporate cathedral and begs us to see it otherwise. We learn through a comparative

examination of two earlier office buildings, the Larkin Soap Company in Buffalo, New York (1904) and a design for the *Capitol Journal* newspaper in Salem, Oregon (1931) that Wright already had set the stage for the Johnson Wax Administration Building. The exhibition neatly clarifies the diagrammatic order of these three buildings through the use of three-dimensional, see-through Plexiglas floor plans. Like Larkin and Capitol Journal, the Administration Building for Johnson Wax is inward looking. If we previously associated Wright's work and its relationship to its setting as outward stretching, clearly the position he took with his houses, we now realize that when Wright felt separated from a natural setting he chose to make an internal world quite apart from anything outside. This is the position Wright would later take in the design of the Guggenheim Museum, and, through an examination of the Johnson Wax Administration Building at this exhibition, we gather a much clearer understanding of Wright's attitude towards public and corporate buildings.

It is not only our understanding of Wright and his work that is sharpened. The collection of artifacts and documents also provide a look into some of the problems in constructing this innovative building. We see Wright and the relationship with his Medici-like patron, Herbert Johnson, through their often heated correspondence. There is a movie that dramatically shows load-testing of a freestanding mushroom column with Wright and Johnson looking on as well as photographic images of construction in progress. Other projects that relate to Johnson Wax are shown through lithographic plates, and a house Wright designed for Herbert Johnson in 1937, Wingspread, is also documented.

The greatest joy of this exhibition, besides the scaled version of the Great Workroom and its furniture, comes from seeing firsthand the original sketches, renderings, and construction drawings for the buildings and furniture. The perspective drawings, in both sketch and finished form, capture the architect's intentions and as the sketches evolve we come more and more to feel the effect of streamlining and movement that would come to express the building form and its furnishings. We see the development of construction details from sketch to final drawing, gaining an understanding of the inner relationship of the buildings' architecture to the furniture design.

Wright's dream of a workplace in the bucolic setting of his visionary town, Broadacres City, would have to wait, eventually to be realized by others. But the

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Johnson Wax Administration Building became the model for the post-World War II suburban office building. Moreover, Wright anticipated the open office plan and the modular furniture that eventually would populate offices throughout the nation.

With the Johnson Wax buildings Frank Lloyd Wright achieved an unparalleled

inventive brilliance through a complete synthesis of all the parts of the building: design, program, and technology. It is that piece of creativity that this exhibition captures, and though we are still far away from the actual place and buildings, we are able to come a little closer to understanding the mind of America's master builder of the 20th century. ■

## Architecture as We Approach the 21st Century

*Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, Southwestern Region, Annual Meeting*  
22-23 October  
Texas A&M University

Reviewed by Peter Wood

From the keynote address to the meeting's end, the ACSA annual meeting stayed true to its title and tried hard to look to the future. In separate sessions devoted to history, technology, practice, and education, papers by faculty from within the region (Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas) and beyond were presented to an alert but seldom contentious crowd.

Paul Leinberger, a veritable jack-of-all-trades from Minneapolis, started things off by letting the group in on his underway book – a sequel to, and subsequent tracking of, the subjects of *The Organization Man*. With a number of stinging observations, Leinberger let everyone know that not only do the design professions need to worry about the future, they are not all that much in tune with the present. He illustrated his point by citing that the design professions – particularly architects and planners – are still designing for the "Ozzie and Harriet" family while only 14 percent of

us live that way. He suggests that the design professions want us to return to that idyllic age but warns that "Americans can never go back" and that perhaps the architects need to begin to design environments that fit a new sense of reality.

After that, the remainder of the sessions were smoothly interesting. A highlight of the evening session was a presentation of a 15-year labor of love, "The Plan of St. Gaul: A Master Plan for Monastic Settlements of the 9th Century A.D.," by Walter Horn. The scholarly lecture was followed by a visit to an exhibition of the reconstruction model and drawings of St. Gaul at the Exhibit Hall of the J. Earl Rudder Complex.

As with all discussions and presentations of the future, this conference tended to get one thinking, but not much else. The reluctance of the presenters to risk a forecast was evident in almost every presentation and there was very little suggested about the future that isn't already obvious. But, since this year's kindergarten class will wear high-school class rings with '00 on them, maybe the year 2000 is not really that far away – maybe the conference was only speaking to tomorrow. ■

## The Woodlands: New Community Development, 1964–1983

*George T. Morgan, Jr. and John O. King, College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1987, 162 pp., illus., \$27.50*

Reviewed by Peter Wood

The Woodlands (the place) is a collection of people (22,500), houses (9,600), bike paths (40 miles), jobs (6,350), and land (25,000 acres) located about 30 miles north of downtown Houston. *The Woodlands* (the book) is a 162-page effort that doesn't tell us a lot more than that.

Written by two history professors, this tidy little volume chronicles the development of The Woodlands in a concise, easy-to-read, magazine-like journalistic style. The book takes us through the life of George P. Mitchell from his days on the tennis courts of Texas A&M to the thoughts that brought him to building a new community – "If you were going to take Memorial and wipe it all out and do it over again, how would you do it better?" In subsequent chapters the authors take us through the land acquisition and planning, the opening, the struggles with the economy, the problems with the funding sources in Washington, and finally some tales about the continuing activities and the social goals of the community.

The book is an easy read and it captures and documents much of the history of The Woodlands that might have otherwise been lost. The book also presents a reasonable bibliography as a good starting place for those interested in new communities and it does try to make some sense of the intricacies and problems within the federal programs that supported the new communities.

But with a prologue that begins, "Visitors to The Woodlands, Texas, leave Interstate 45 approximately ten miles south of Conroe. . ." the reader has to wonder why

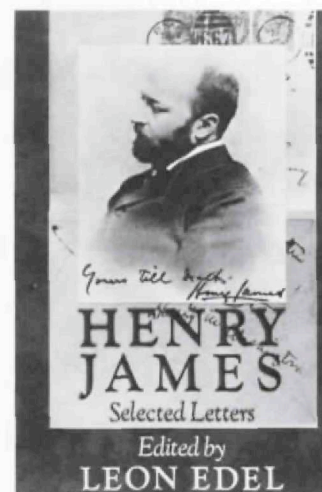
and for whom this book was written. (There are a lot of people in Houston who don't have a firm fix on where Conroe is.) Lamely supported by numerous, uninspired, black-and-white photographs of questionable value (i.e., page 148, "George and Cynthia Mitchell and Ian and Carol McHarg at The Woodlands' tenth anniversary celebration, October 20, 1984"). The book does not offer enough depth to be of much use to anyone seeking more than a superficial understanding of the community. The historic setting, physical plan, development problems, precise financial accounting, economic context, and the people who caused The Woodlands to be built remain as mere skeletons with no flesh. Lacking a clearly stated purpose, *The Woodlands* (the book) leaves one feeling cheated of any sense of the realities of The Woodlands (the place).

In all fairness, it's hard to write a book about a continuing story. At its present population, The Woodlands is only about 12 percent on the way to its "final population" of 150,000–175,000. This state of change and growth means that even the epilogue becomes flawed by the passage of time and changing events when it speaks of the completion of a major shopping mall in the spring of 1987 which has, as yet, not suffered its ground-breaking ceremony.

So what we have here is a book of good scholarship and good reading, but lacking in depth. While not providing the epic volume on new towns in America, nor even on The Woodlands itself, the slim volume won't take up much room on your shelf. But if you want many of the same pictures in color, a lot of the same words, and the history (without the detail), there is one of those "hotel room" books (complete with corporate advertising), *The Woodlands: New Town in the Forest* (Pioneer Publications, Inc., 1985) for about \$10 that will more than suffice. ■

# BRAZOS BOOKSTORE

## Henry James: Selected Letters



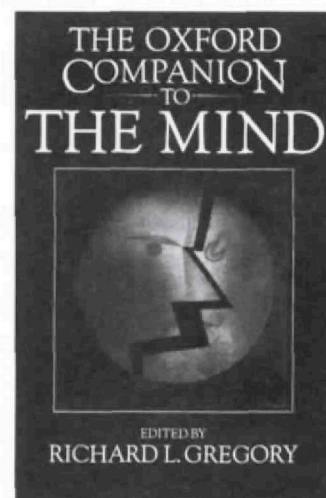
Edited by Leon Edel

Leon Edel, who won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for his monumental 5-volume *Life of Henry James*, has gathered from James's voluminous correspondence a selection of letters which especially illuminate James's writing, his life, his literary theories, and his great friendships.

448 pages; 15 halftones. 6 1/8 x 9 1/4". \$29.95

Harvard University Press

## The Oxford Companion to the Mind



Edited by R. L. Gregory

With 1000 entries — brief definitions to substantial essays — *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* takes the reader on a tour whose parameters span many disciplines within the broad compass of philosophy, psychology, and the physiology of the brain. The text is supplemented by a glossary of specialist terms and by biographies of figures who have contributed to our understanding of the mind.

896 pages; 160 illustrations. 6 1/8 x 9 1/4". \$49.95.

Oxford University Press

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## Liquid City: Houston Writers on Houston

Rita Sayers, editor; photography by Paul Hester; San Antonio, Corona Publishing Co., 117 pp., 29 illus., \$14

Reviewed by James Hoggard

One of the nerviest things a civic-minded organization can do is to commission a group of well-seasoned writers to address the place they're in. That is exactly, however, what the board of the 1987 Houston Festival did. The result is a provocative, coolly reflective, yet many-voiced anthology that warrants repeated attention. Although several pieces substitute mannerism for sensibility, far and away most of the work was done by writers who were honorable enough to push themselves toward depth of insight as well as excellence of execution.

As a unit this collection of prose, verse, and interpretive photography defines Houston as a complex of incipient identities. Both jagged and contemplative, the book suggests that Houston's fortunes have been too varied, raw, and transient for it to have become nostalgic about itself the way, for instance, a major portion of Dallas has.

Pieces in the book, however, move obliquely rather than directly from specific detail to generalization. Similarly, Paul Hester's illustrative photographs blend reportage with art.

A number of the works - in particular those by Rosellen Brown, Phillip Lopate, Beverly Lowry, and Susan Wood - are studiously contemplative, whereas the works by Donald Barthelme, Vassar Miller, Ntozake Shange, and Lorenzo Thomas are more aggressive in tone, sometimes even jagged. Gentle but

satirical, Max Apple's "Venice" forms a tonal transition between the other voices. Poems by Cynthia Macdonald and Stanley Plumly evoke a guarded, even self-protected, approach to their subjects.

In keenly focused personal essays, Phillip Lopate and Rosellen Brown evoke a range of visual textures, from those one sees driving to those one has to kneel in weeds to find. In these works, one moves from a sense of anonymity to recognition of connection with presences outside self.

In her sometimes archly studied "Us," Beverly Lowry names the dimension of apartness created by Houston's movable identity. "We are no longer essentially Texan or Southwestern," she writes. "We never were Southern. There is no Sunbelt, never was." Her notions are debatable, but her insistent, distinctive voice is authentic.

Parallel rhythms echo throughout the collection, even in pieces as different from each other as Donald Barthelme's wonderfully entertaining and slyly incisive "Return" and Ntozake Shange's funkily oppugnant "Ridin' The Moon In Texas." A repatriated expatriate, the narrator of Barthelme's story shoots an azalea in the heart but plans to make amends for the slaughter with a 900-foot-high stainless steel commemorative statue. Shange's sassy, multivoiced piece also handles social criticism indirectly, as intimated by the beginning of one of its sections: "Houston Rodeo & Livestock Show ain't never seem the same since we come riding in from Arcola. All colored and correct."

Similarly, the peroration closing Max Apple's "Venice" undercuts a common contemporary limit, namely the smallness

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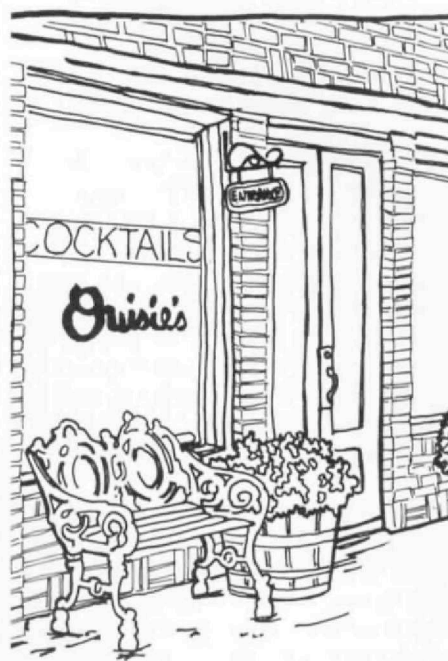
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"Pedestrian Bridge, Texas Medical Center," by Paul Hester

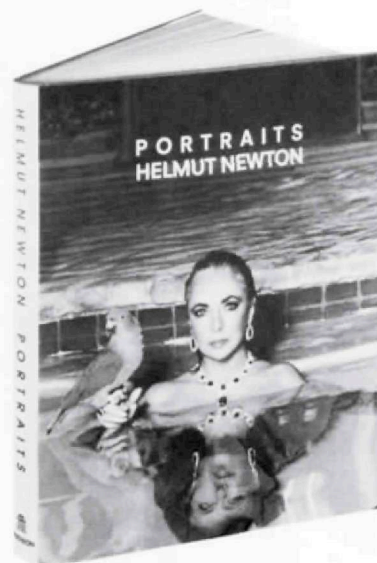
of spirit that comes when a society defines itself exclusively in secular terms: "We drink to Yemen. We drink to Houston. We drink to the cities named for gods and to the cities where no divinity has wandered. We drink to Venice. We will be our only shrines."

In both meditative and whimsical modes, the works in *Liquid City* remind us that reflection is necessary if vision is to

develop in the polis and vitality is to grow. A symbolically valuable gesture of self-knowledge, *Liquid City* shows interesting minds articulating their city's growing self-awareness: wholeness in tension with assortments of parts. ■

# BRAZOS BOOKSTORE

## Helmut Newton: Portraits

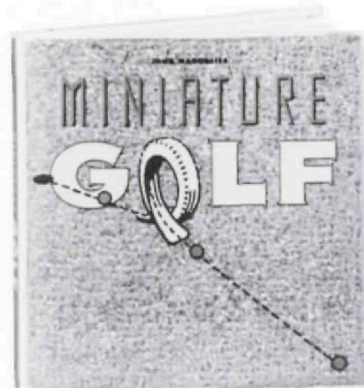


Introduction by Carol Squiers

240 pages; 23 color, 169 B&W photographs.  
9 1/6 x 10 3/4". \$39.95

Pantheon Books

## Miniature Golf



Photography by John Margolies  
Text by Nina Garfinkel & Maria Reidelbach

In its survey of 100 miniature golf courses built country-wide (including ones on hotel rooftops, vacant lots, and private homes), the history of this archetypally American sport is illustrated with vintage photographs, cartoons, drawings, and documents that begin with the late 1920s. Astroturf cover.

96 pages; 232 color illustrations. 9 x 9". \$19.95

Abbeville Press

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