



The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse.



The Fox and the Lion.



The Wolf and the Crane.



The Frog and the Ox.

John Hejduk, *Aesop's Fables.*

Twice-Sold Tales

The House That Bob Built retold and illustrated by Robert A. M. Stern and Andrew Zega. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 32 pp., illus., \$17.95

Dorothy in Dreamland by Tracy Tiggerman and Margaret McCurry; illustrated by Stanley Tiggerman. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 32 pp., illus., \$17.95

Aesop's Fables told by Joseph Jacobs; illustrated by John Hejduk. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 32 pp., illus., \$17.95

Beauty and The Beast retold by Charles Perrault; illustrated by Charles Moore. New York: Rizzoli, 1991. 32 pp., illus., \$17.95

Reviewed by Laura Furman

In a good illustrated children's book — *Goodnight, Moon* or *Where the Wild Things Are*, for example — the text provides narrative clues that work in concert with the illustrations to tell a complete story. Rizzoli recently published four children's books in which illustrations rather than text are the main event, not for the quality of the pictures as much as for the quality of the illustrators — famous architects one and all. The four are handsome books of a pleasing size. What is lacking in three of them is an opportunity for the text to work in concert with the illustrations.

Two of the books, Robert A. M. Stern's *The House That Bob Built* and Stanley Tiggerman's *Dorothy in Dreamland*, have original texts, the former a takeoff on "The House That Jack Built," the latter a reordering of familiar children's stories, with a heroine saving the characters from the disasters and dangers that made the tales interesting in the first place. The other two books, *Beauty and the Beast* illustrated by Charles Moore and *Aesop's Fables* illustrated by John Hejduk, use traditional stories — in Hejduk's case the exact text of a 1934 edition of Aesop. All four books are designed by graphic artist Milton Glaser, which is about as distinguished as book design gets. So here we have four children's books, among the thousands published each year, whose claim to our attention is that they are illustrated by architects. We have seen teapots, china, and bed linens designed by architects; why not children's books? No particular reason against it, and no particular reason for it.

The most successful book on the whole is Hejduk's, with its attractive earth-colored illustrations that resemble primitive pottery drawings. Facing every illustration is a fable, so that each double spread is a complete reading experience. Unfortunately, the illustrations seem more appropriate for adults than for children. It would be difficult for a child to enter them and get lost in an imaginary journey. This book might be a coffee-table book that actually gets read; for a reader with a limited attention span but a desire for wisdom, *Aesop's Fables* might be the perfect book.

The most successful drawings for children are those by Andrew Zega for Robert A. M. Stern's *The House That Bob Built*. The illustrations are credited to Zega, the book design is the product of Glaser, and the text is copyrighted by Rizzoli; one is inclined to ask, "Where does Stern come in?" His role is that of choreographer of a lifestyle to be experienced in the beautiful seaside house through which the reader is led. Reading the book is like being allowed to wander through a historic house whose owner — presumably a distinguished artist, a politician, or a millionaire — has just stepped out for a walk. Our only companions on the tour — this is where the children come in — are an owl and a teddy bear. For a very young child, the enjoyment of reading *The House That Bob Built* is likely to come from locating these two characters in the watercolor renderings of beautiful rooms and vistas. For the adult in charge of page turning, the pleasure is to be derived from dreaming of life in such houses, even learning from the book how such a life ought to be lived. Stern's tale is not simply a children's book; it is an etiquette manual telling us not which fork to use but which overstuffed, loosely upholstered armchair will proclaim our ease and the richness of our lives.

Charles Moore's drawings in *Beauty and the Beast* are in a way the most architectural because they rely for interest on dramatic, angular renderings of the Beast's palace and Beauty's home. The illustrations are reminiscent of drawings for stage sets; they leave room for the viewer's imagination. At times the drawings seem unpopulated. There is no owl or teddy bear here, and the human figures are not detailed or particular enough to engage

a young viewer. The text is too complex for a very young child, full of words such as *murmured*, *anxious*, and *evidently*. The Beast looks more like a fellow with a dandelion for a head than a creature so hideous the other characters find it hard to look at him, but this may have been a wise decision on the illustrator's part.

Stanley Tiggerman's book was a family undertaking, with his wife and daughter writing the text. Though it provides the most original text of the four books, *Dorothy in Dreamland* doesn't offer the satisfaction of Aesop or the retold *Beast*. Dorothy, dreaming, saves Hansel and Gretel from the witch, teaches the Three Little Pigs superior building techniques, and performs other services for familiar storybook characters. The moral presented is that "sometimes your memory of something can be very different from what really happened." For the text to work at all, the reader needs to recall clearly all of the twists and turns of the original stories. Even so, the pleasure of such stories has always been a result of feeling fear and then coming through safely. The fact that Dorothy rushes in and helps everyone has its own sweetness, but provides no sense of fear or conflict that would bring satisfaction to readers of any age. Children may either be beyond or not ready for modernist thrills. Tiggerman's drawings are like attractive, clever, but unchildlike children. ■

Sharing the Garden

Making a Middle Landscape by Peter G. Rowe. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991. 325 pp., illus., \$39.95

Reviewed by William Sherman

Screened doors open on a lawn bordered by planting beds and a fence, a typical suburban back yard. On a quiet Saturday afternoon, you can imagine this small parcel of earth to be a private, pastoral paradise, a place to dwell peacefully in nature. The hum of the freeway in the distance barely intrudes on the consciousness. A jet traverses the canopy of trees. It no longer startles, but serves as a

reminder of human technology, provoking a moment of reflection about the connections between this plot of ground and the larger world. Water, sewer, and gas lines pass below; electric, telephone, and cable television lines connect above. Streets interconnect to bring mail, newspapers, and automobiles. Like a smoothly executed theatrical production, the illusion of self-sufficiency in this pastoral dream is supported almost invisibly by a vast modern infrastructure.

Peter G. Rowe's new book, *Making a Middle Landscape*, is a critical examination of those places where our interdependence in the "metropolitan mosaic" cannot be denied. As isolated products of private development, residential neighborhoods, corporate office parks, and shopping malls are conceived as independent phenomena, functionally connected by the order of the freeway system rather than the traditional middle landscape. The public infrastructure of streets, plazas, and parks has given way to barren parking lots, sterile corporate landscapes, and concrete wastelands that are as much a part of our everyday experience as our private oases. They are the gaps in the theatrical veneer.

Peter Rowe taught architecture at Rice University for 13 years and is now the chairman of the Department of Urban Design at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. He brings his planning expertise and research on cities as diverse as Houston and Boston to a discussion of the type of city we have been building over the past 40 years, a city without conceptual precedent. Through an analysis of two contrasting suburban examples — Framingham, Massachusetts, and Sharps-town, here in Houston — and discussions of recent architectural and planning projects, he develops the concept of "modern pastoralism" as a way of thinking about the suburban landscape. Rowe argues that modern life and our desire as a culture to dwell in nature may not be mutually exclusive. Modernity and pastoralism, while seemingly contradictory concepts, may qualify each other to enhance our experience of both.

Building upon the distinction made by Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden* between sentimental pastoralism and a more self-conscious, potent version, Rowe acknowledges the deep roots of our

Domestic Arrangements

Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscapes, Houses, Interiors, 1824-1914 by Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton, Barrie M. Scardino, Sadie Gwin Blackburn, and Katherine S. Howe. Foreword by William Seale. Houston: Rice University Press, 1991. 387 pp., illus., \$49.95

Reviewed by Peter Flagg Maxson

"Someone is building a tasty cottage, on the corner of Capitol & Fannin . . . It is time to abandon the miserable old fashioned box houses for the larger and more elegant Italian villa style," chirped the *Houston Daily Telegraph* of 13 July 1870. And since that time, Houston architects and their clients have indeed rejected "miserable old fashioned" architectural styles in favor of "larger and more elegant" ones. The resultant city will be remembered by future generations as the archetypal late-20th-century boomtown, but a town utterly lacking tangible reminders of its first century.

To those of us accustomed to glass towers and suburbs without number, it comes as a shock to realize that in fact Houston was one of the great Victorian cities of the South. The remote, speculative settlement on the bayou grew to be the fourth largest city in the nation, its population usually nearly doubling from one census to the next between 1850 and 1970. Some Houstonians go for weeks without seeing a structure built before World War II; it is tempting to believe that the city sprang up full grown shortly before the eighties bust.

However, the story of a century's worth of rich domestic architecture has at last been resurrected in *Houston's Forgotten Heritage*, a collection of essays sponsored by the Junior League of Houston. Four disciplines are covered by four qualified authors: landscape by Sadie Gwin Blackburn, president of the Garden Club of America from 1989 to 1991; architectural history by preservation consultant Barrie Scardino; decorative arts by Katherine Howe, curator of decorative arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and domestic life by longtime civic volunteer Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton. The interdisciplinary approach with separate authorship is generally workable — each author has her own perspectives and expertise, and the result is laudable. Comparable works written by architectural historians tend to slight landscape, decorative arts, and social history, even while including all building types. *Forgotten Heritage* provides a more balanced, if restricted, approach.

The authors here compiled a staggering amount of information on Houston — long-forgotten architects, unknown buildings, even whole neighborhoods unknown to all but the most ancient Houstonians, from frontier homes of Allens and HARRIS to mansions of early oil barons. The pace of development was striking: Judge James A. Baker built a fine Greek Revival house



The Tortoise and the Birds.

pastoral myths while demanding recognition of our modernity. Planning ideas that rely on a sentimentalized view of 19th-century townscapes fail to acknowledge the profound changes modern life has brought. At the other extreme, technological utopias fail to recognize the symbolic importance of nature. The implicit critique, which would benefit by being made more explicit, is directed at a conception of the middle landscape that has already developed as a market force: public places and residential enclaves as theme parks, where modern technology is placed in the service of a sentimental, nostalgic, and ultimately hollow urban vision.

This is a book of encyclopedic scope, touching on a tremendous range of issues facing the contemporary city. But in structuring the book around the proposition of a "solution" to the "problem" of the middle landscape, Rowe obscures the complexity of the issues revealed by the analysis. Recurrent words in the discussion of modern pastoralism such as *coherence*, *order*, and *rationality* and the discussion of poetic systems betray his underlying theme: planning in relation to the right criteria will resolve the problem of an incoherent middle landscape. But the terms of modern pastoralism cannot begin to reflect the diversity of the American city. Formed of the residue of colonial experiments, theocratic orders, agrarian democratic ideals, pragmatic industrialization, and free-market land speculation, the American city has always defied simple definition. Resistance to unity and the tendency to extremes, like the proverbial permanence of change, characterize our middle landscapes, and it is these qualities that distinguish them positively from their revered European counterparts.

The order of the middle landscape in America may never represent singular ideals. But Rowe's diverse examples of architectural and urban design projects illustrate how collective significance may be found in intelligent, provocative design. From rich or modest private gardens to public settings of distinction, buildings and landscapes may provoke powerful responses when they resonate deeply with their cultural setting. As a contribution to our knowledge of these artifacts, *Making a Middle Landscape* is a valuable document. ■

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Constancy and Change in Architecture

Edited by Malcolm Quantrill and Bruce Webb

Since the mid-1960s, Postmodernism has been sending shockwaves of controversy through the world of architecture. Denying the values of simplicity, clarity, and originality of form espoused by Modernists, Postmodernism espoused eclecticism and even flaunted the earlier, formal rules of design and building. In doing so, it raised important questions of what architectural elements can continue to have relevance and how the theories and practice of architecture might vary from the constants that ordered it in the past.

Addressing those questions in this volume are some of the most important minds in architectural theory today. They include Christian Norberg-Schulz of Oslo; Karsten Harries of Yale University; Kenneth Frampton of Columbia University; Marco Frascari, Claudio Sgarbi, and Joseph Rykwert of the University of Pennsylvania; Alberto Perez-Gomez of McGill University; Grey Gowrie of Sotheby's; and Stanford Anderson of MIT. Their work is brought together and introduced by Malcolm Quantrill, of Texas A&M University, and former *Cite* editor Bruce Webb, of the University of Houston. 9 1/2 x 9 1/2. 168 pp. 34 b&w photos, 13 line drawings. \$50.00

Constancy and Change in Architecture



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in 1875, but his son, Captain James A. Baker, chose a Wrightian residence in the next generation.

The essays address a variety of topics and vivify our understanding of 19th- and early-20th-century Houston. Ms. Blackburn tells, for instance, of John James Audubon likening Orange Grove Plantation at Morgan's Point unto "some of the beautiful parks of England." Ms. Scardino reveals the architectural pattern books consulted by Victorian-era Houstonians. Ms. Houghton discusses the influence of the Progressive movement on the development of Houston bungalows, and Ms. Howe informs us that "muddy streets, mosquitoes, and yellow fever epidemics notwithstanding, there was [by 1860] an undeniable feeling that Houston was, at least in some fortunate circles, a civilized place to live on the edge of the frontier."

Forgotten Heritage is not without flaws. It does not succumb to a moonlight-and-magnolias view of Houston's past, but does focus on upper-crust homes and habits. Further, Ms. Howe and Ms. Blackburn mention Houston in the national context, but little is said by anyone about the Texas context. Arguably the greatest defect, however, is that the photographs are placed in the center of the book, inconvenient to the entire text. In a book whose illustrations are critical to an understanding of the text, their placement is regrettable.

The photographs, however, are well chosen. Many of the homes you've heard about and never seen appear, such as the Cooley House on Heights Boulevard and the Waldo House before the move. There are unexpected sights – the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, for instance, surrounded by columns; Inglenook, the John Henry Kirby estate, is graced by everything from a Moorish corner to a vast natatorium with ballroom above; Masterson grandchildren frolic in the boxwood maze of the handsome Colonial Revival family home, since razed to make way for the Southwest Freeway.

Alas, few of the photographs bear the notation "Extant." Historic buildings in Houston have fared badly, and the city rivals only Dallas and Corpus Christi in Texas for wholesale obliteration of its 19th-century architecture. What Ms. Scardino cites as Houston's "lack of loyalty to place" is an underlying theme of Houston architecture. Only one great Victorian mansion, the Waldo House, survives today, and even it was moved, modified, and reassembled in Westmoreland Place in 1905. All the others have vanished. The Charles Shearn House, one of the premier Second Empire-style houses in Texas, was flattened for a Humble service station. The flamboyant Queen Anne-style Jemison Lester House was built around 1903 and razed barely 20 years later. Landscapes and interiors have proved even more fragile. One hopes a sequel to *Forgotten Heritage* covering the 90 years after 1914 will record fewer fatalities; if not, may those lost buildings be as well documented as the first century's are here. ■

Long Look

AIA's Main Street Charrette

Reviewed by Rives Taylor

The Main Street Charrette, sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, and the schools of architecture at the University of Houston and Rice University, convened for four days in September at UH's architecture building. Conceived by chapter president W. O. Neuhaus III and past president Frank S. Kelly, the charrette was convened to address the long-neglected 16-mile stretch of our city's main thoroughfare and to create a new sense of community spirit among present and future planners and architects of Houston. On the opening day Neuhaus stated that there could be no more opportune time for this design effort to fall on a receptive city.

The first phase of design investigation came about after months of debate and research into the history, aspirations, and potentials of the "street of streets" that ties most of the diversity of Houston together. For the remainder of 1991, studios at both schools will continue the design investigation. In January 1992 an exhibition (and attendant publication) is slated for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. From there, the AIA's Main Street Steering Committee will search for practical means of implementing select visionary aspects.

Over the charrette weekend 16 interdisciplinary teams took an intensive look at Main Street, aided by delegates from numerous city and state agencies as well as presentations by historian Stephen Fox and sociologist Stephen Klineberg (whose address in edited form appears in this issue). Hard-working city of Houston participants included the Planning and Development Department's Donna Kristaponis and members of her staff, John Sedlak of Metro and members of his staff, Houston Police Department representatives, city controller George Greanias, Councilman Jim Greenwood, Parks and Recreation Department staff, community representatives, and historic preservationists. Mayor Whitmire paid a visit to the troops on Sunday.

The 16 teams, consisting of both students and practitioners, investigated either a specific geographical segment or a thematic notion evident along the entire length of Main Street. The geographical groups advocated various "Houston-style" urban renewal notions of revamping residential and commercial neighborhoods. The theme groups – examining such issues as mass transit, zoning, residential typologies, institutional presence, open space, historical preservation, and parking and automobile conditions – tended to address the larger questions of Houston's future character. The interlocking visions that resulted ranged in scale from Texas-size parks readable from space (Tom Colbert's South Main vision) to Lucite-encased art cars on permanent exhibition (Patrick Peters's group) to sections of Main festooned with a tunnel of lights (the institutional group, led by O. Jack Mitchell). ■