# MARK WAMBLE

t will come as no surprise to architects in the United States that the affirmation of a public realm, and by definition a political realm, comes largely if not exclusively out of the endeavors of the private sector. What may be surprising in the five domestic projects reviewed here is the degree to which each blurs the lines that distinguish public and private. While these projects are programmed as private houses, each informs1 the city by telling a story. A credit to the insights of both architect and client, these stories reveal an inventive building process that began to unfold before pencil and paper were ever to meet.

What do stories have to do with architecture? Many dismiss the assimilation of building into written or spoken discourse, contending that architecture should not pretend to be more than a relationship of space, material, and light: architects achieve great works when they master these phenomena. It would follow that alternative criteria only serve to dilute architectural resolve. In a world of changing conditions of gender, ethnicity, age, class, environment, nation, and region, building is construed as pure and exempt, having an essence and a solitude beyond topical concerns. I will argue that these sentiments are political in nature and the product of reductive thinking.

In the attempt to define architecture (i.e., professionalism) there is an unfortunate irony. The more precisely terms are set forth regarding the boundaries of architecture, the more an architect's abilities those necessary for criticism, vision, and invention - are compromised in the practice of architecture. A radical defense of professionalism, through the perpetuation of conventions that structure and name2 criteria of propriety, also impoverishes architectural work by separating architects from their clients' unique circumstances. While this relationship between architect and client should promote the recognition of a need for change - as told through one's own personal story - professionalism limits and predetermines the nature of that change by confining it to the status quo.3 Certainly issues of safety and performance are a valid concern to all. However, there is a broader definition of performance that enables architecture to go beyond the criteria of style, efficiency, commodity, and resalability. While professionalism also regards the internal evaluation of colleagues as necessary and good, through the more subtle practice of naming, works are either included or excluded pending their review by regulating bodies, the media, or the academy. Consensus through naming consolidates power and unifies an endeavor. Any preoccupation with activity outside the traditional criteria of firmness, commodity, and delight is often perceived as marginal and extraneous to the acceptable scope of architecture - a perspective that serves to discredit or even dismiss alternative activity as insignificant achievement. Anything perceived as being "out there" is a professional liability.4

# **FIVE HOUSES**

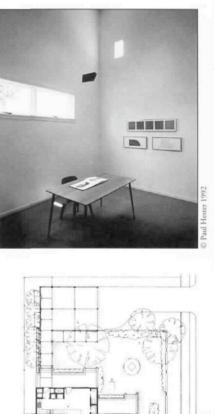
A World of Difference. Houston was recently described to me as "the city of towers and rubble," suggesting that if a broader practice of architecture is to occur in this haptic landscape, we must first recognize the myth of the isolated event. Architecture manifests the interface of difference: of that which is *resolute*, of that which is *contingent*, and of everything that falls between. The question put to architecture then becomes, Where is the resolution and where is the contingency of the always already condition of urban life, given the predominant tabula rasa ideologies that have dominated architecture up to the present?

Most architects visiting Houston view this city with great curiosity. No government has more faithfully refused to question or constrain the practices of private development in terms of collective goals or public agendas. In addition, there are few topographic obstacles or geological constraints that require costly engineering, nor has there been a history of corporate flight or industrial restriction resulting in



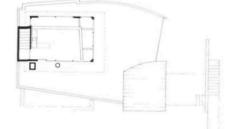


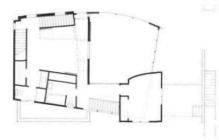
Stern House, 1991, William F. Stern & Associates, Architects. *Clockwise from top:* Street elevation; living area looking through three-story central volume; small gallery at the top of the stair.

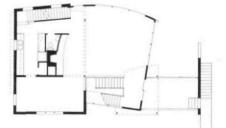


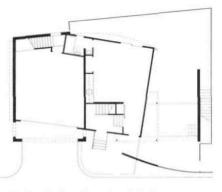
First-floor plan, Stern House.











#### Bottom to top: Plans, levels 1-4.

economic decline - certainly none greater than in other North American cities. Yet the general scope of architecture is myopic rather than full. There persists a physicality of disarray, brought about, it would seem, by the extremes of private interest. As a result, the systematic dereliction of the street, aside from the occasional kitsch appreciation of strip architecture, is both the cause and the effect of one bounded enclave after another - some are towers, some are rubble - each proposing a hermetic version of *decidability* and resolution. A decidable work is one purporting a single meaning versus many, the "framing" of privileged references in order to exclude other references by marginalizing or repressing their legibility. Undecidability, therefore, is simply the recognition of meaning in its contingent and provisional status. The conditions that produce any meaning at all can also produce many meanings simultaneously. While decidability in regard to professional practice is desirable, undecidability is by definition immanent.5

Contemporary American cities are experiencing a shift in self-perception, forgoing the arrival of a long-awaited City Beautiful. It would be a mistake, therefore, to dismiss a city of towers and rubble, ascribing the prevailing perception of decidability to negligence and defeat. For within this darker perception lies the content of the other, where architecture embraces uncertainty and acknowledges undecidability in contemporary culture.





How might this shift affect the production of architecture? Western culture shares a bias for clarity, paring away, rejecting, or ignoring the circumstances of an endeavor that cannot be put in a logical place. The repression of undecidability serves a common cultural preference for wholeness and resolution (as evidenced by the current debate over zoning in Houston). Whether it is the selective wholeness of a modernism rejected by Robert Venturi in Complexity and Contradiction or the "difficult" wholeness he nominates,6 each version takes refuge in a structure of language that is interior and specific, thought to be complete and analogous. Any architecture conceived as such - from a stylized house to an awning wrapped around retail lofts to an isolated suburban office complex – constitutes and iterates a discrete version of isolation. This refuge of interiority urbanistically and philosophically renders destitute anything outside its formal perimeter - a tendency that, with great rigor, repeats itself time and again.

Not only in architecture, but in all endeavors, there is the unspoken and accepted belief that a condition of rigor in one's work ethic produces a superior product, transparent in meaning and process.

**rigor** [ME. *rigour*, lit. stiffness, to be stiff]. Harsh inflexibility in opinion, temper, or judgment: severity, strictness. RIGOR MORTIS: temporary rigidity of muscles occurring after death.

But to be a participant in the built environment requires boundless conduc-

tivity. To architect could be defined as circumstance and intelligence marking their overlap through the affirmation of their becoming. This is the smooth space of difference. To ride difference is to embrace exteriority. It is not "sedentary' but "nomadic" thought that enables production in a diverse landscape where architecture can no longer "immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority." Given this view, the constitution of architecture exclusively through internal logic is reductive, sedentary, rigorous. An architecture of the contingent, the nomadic, and the circumstantial rides difference and embraces that which is always already the body of architecture.7

Different Stories. The processes of difference permeate our existence. In a culture of storytellers, for example, one rarely regulates conversational skills with rules of efficiency or economy. Elaboration and rhetoric always seem to be in order when one is asked the simplest of questions, and for good reason. The complexity of a story not only conveys a set of facts, it also brings the listener into a process of exchange initiated by the teller. As events unfold, the rituals of inquiry and clarification open up the particulars to new territory, in excess of an initial subject (the importance of which one rarely recalls with the same urgency). Digressions are not illegitimate tangents; they are the recognition of subtle facets. They are different stories.

#### STERN HOUSE

Regarding a house designed for himself in Houston's museum district, architect William F. Stern of William F. Stern & Associates describes a set of contextually generated concerns regarding materiality and orientation sympathetic to a small 1920s residential development, a neighborhood of bungalows now bereft of its original scale and continuity. Responsive to the scale of more recent three-story, fourplex condominium structures nearby, and unlike the few surviving bungalows, the interior of the Stern House features a double-height space displaying a collection of later-20th-century paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, and sculptures. Circulation through the house highlights a lateral interplay of gallery and living spaces, while simultaneously forming a vertical transition from public spaces to private spaces by way of variations in light, Finnel House, 1990, Wittenberg Partnership. *Top:* Exterior facing street. *Bottom:* Third-story bedroom.

enclosure, and scale. On the outside, two courtyards of crushed granite and paved surfaces anchor the structure, offering views and access from the dining and living areas. According to his description, Stern followed a series of precepts regarding the specific patterns of the immediate neighborhood, existing trees, natural light, and the viewing of artwork.

### FINNEL HOUSE

In a neighborhood adjacent to the museum district, on a site next to a depressed stretch of U.S. 59, Susan and Gordon Wittenberg of the Wittenberg Partnership designed a house for Gil Finnel, a professor of law at the University of Houston. A vacation on the West Coast was the client's introduction to the work of Frank Gehry and Morphosis. Finnel requested that a similar sensibility toward materials and geometry be used by the Wittenbergs, expressing his interest in how a house might respond "urbanistically" to an unlikely combination of domestic and infrastructural adjacencies. The Wittenbergs incorporated both industrial and traditionally domestic materials into a design whose diagonal views organize space from room to room and take advantage of the downtown skyline beyond.

#### SCHIEBL HOUSE

The Schiebl House, designed by Val Glitsch of Val Glitsch AIA Architect, ponders the "consciously casual lifestyle" of the Memorial area of Houston. The siting of this asymmetrical house makes use of its 28 remaining trees (only two were lost, according to the architect), providing a natural sunscreen for the bedrooms and living spaces. A less desir-able view, considered in this case to be the street, is designed out of the scenario in order to isolate the house and appropriate the trees. Internal site conditions are addressed through partial plan shifts. A shed structure housing the living and sleeping spaces is oriented to the west toward the wooded portion of the site. With its shortest end facing the street, the long, gabled core structure houses the stair and support spaces, separating an attached shed structure from a semidetached garage and workroom shed. Alternating gray stucco (coding the sheds) with white stucco (coding the core), Glitsch finished the enclosure to indicate its interior zoning. A standing seam metal roof is used to unify the ensemble of volumes.

#### CHADWICK HOUSE

Just a few blocks north of Interstate 10 in the Heights, a house designed by Carlos Jiménez of Carlos Jiménez Architectural Design Studio occupies a lot reportedly bought by the owner for a song. The Chadwick House was designed for yet another single occupant, in this case a writer. The house is sited deep into the 33-foot-by-135-foot lot, creating a garden space in the front along the street and saving the only large tree on the property. The house unfolds around a volume of continuous vertical space. Starting on the ground floor next to the study, the space spirals through the double-height living

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room into a bedroom on the third floor. The rear of the house provides views to the south, where the open space of a parking lot and a railroad right-of-way permits an unobstructed view of the distant downtown skyline. The house was constructed within a strict budget, utilizing raw concrete floors, salvaged floor slats from a demolished church, painted plywood, gypsum wallboard, and stained "two-by" lumber.

## WETCHER HOUSE

South of Houston, beyond the strip vernacular of the Gulf Freeway, lies Bay Oaks, a subdivision of Clear Lake City, an expanse of redeveloped prairie now depleted of its former Humble Oil reserves. By searching deeper into this oblique landscape, Peter D. Waldman of Peter Waldman Architect designed a house for the Wetchers, two psychologists practicing nearby. The house is situated between a golf course and a cul-de-sac amidst a catalogue of familiar domestic styles. Like other houses on the street, the Wetcher House acknowledges design constraints and local restrictions regarding front setbacks, materials, and roof profiles. Unlike the surrounding houses, it is organized around a courtyard, into which program spaces look and gain access.

Isolation and Contingency. Discussion of these houses revolves around the circumstances of the creative act. In The Savage Mind, Claude Lévi-Strauss describes the creative act as a contingent moment residing somewhere between what is "sensible," though not yet explicable, and what is "achieved by the natural sciences" and therefore considered traceable, axiomatic, essential. The sensible has qualities of a familiar nature but not of obvious or apparent origins. On a phenomenal level one might refer to them as "brute" qualities - undeniable yet inexplicable. Lévi-Strauss structures this contingency where the sensible and the scientific intersect by suggesting that we use "myth" or "the magical" to act as a temporary explanation of the unknown; that is to say, until science has time to catch up. This is the "science of the concrete," in which myth is the result of a more uncompromising demand for determinism than science, and magic suggests new fields of science based upon an "aesthetic" sensibility. For Lévi-Strauss the creative act is thus an "interlocutor" or intermediate step holding open a space for future scientific determination.8

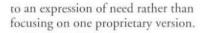
Like many architectural conventions, this basic structuralist position pretends to eliminate contingency by identifying when, where, and how that which is contingent may occur or be identified - a conditional contingency, if you will - preconditioning the creative act. Accepting the limitations of the Lévi-Strauss argument, one could translate, but not limit, the case for architecture in terms of four moments of contingency. In order to look closer at the implications of contingency, I will narrow the scope to this example: (1) There is first the initial contingency of the work whereby the architect projects a scenario for the object, focusing on the anticipated result. This contingency occurs anterior to the work,

transcending any immanent or locally circumstantial form of execution. (2) The second contingency arises during the production of representative objects, such as models, drawings, diagrams, or specifications. The second form of contingency recognizes a connection between the method of representation and both the limitations they can impose and the opportunity a method imparts as an instrument of exploration.9 (3) A third contingency arises during the actual execution of a design, when construction procedures reveal unanticipated and often interesting dimensions of a work of architecture. This third contingency suggests the possibility of a method that circumvents the limitations of representational drawing, employing instead a series of diagrams to explain actual assembly relationships and procedures, leaving the final product open to the circumstances of field conditions. (4) The fourth moment of contingency occurs after a "completed" work affects and is affected by its context(s). This contingency acknowledges the solitude of buildings,10 pointing to the futility of a preconceived notion of resolution and the indeterminacy of building in regard to expectation and control.

In response to the first moment of contingency, four of the five clients represented here have taken a courageous considering that their clinic and residence are located there. According to Dr. Kenneth Wetcher, he and his wife, Dr. Goldie Rappaport, have become involved in their community through social activities, including a community theater group and local business organizations. For the Wetchers, Clear Lake City is a viable and autonomous community rather than a refuge from Houston proper. Responding to this commitment, Waldman's design plays through different scenarios from their lives with symbolism, theatrics, and allegory, marking events by enacting a series of narrative fictions elaborating on the architect's favorite interpretations. Although Kenneth Wetcher contends that there were no surprises in the house, the architecture entices a broad and more undecidable version of fantasy, keeping in motion the contingent urbanity of Clear Lake City and the play of existing local architectures. About his built work and his academic research, Waldman is fond of saying he prefers a glass to be half full

rather than half empty, suggesting an architecture that can provide many responses

Schiebl House, 1991, Val Glitsch AIA Architect. *Top:* Front covered entry porch. *Bottom:* Dining room looking toward den.



From the street one enters through a gate in the garden wall along the side of the house facing the golf course. This approach leads to the front porch and the body of the house. From the porch the entry straddles a large double-height space used for dining and entertainment, terminating in a steel-and-glass stair that ascends to a landing overlooking the courtyard and pool. From the outside, the shape of this stair resembles the neck of a horse clad in patinated copper - a Trojan horse, no doubt - perhaps symbolic of the Wetcher House's presence in the midst of the otherwise unsuspecting neighborhood (or the arrival of the architect in an otherwise unsuspecting household.) There are countless references specific to the circum-stances of the project and personal to the Wetcher family, including a breakfast room shaded by the bill of a baseball cap, a fur closet shaped like the Statue of



First-floor plan.

position regarding their investment in a house, and the potential impact a private project has on a community. By conventional standards of resale and marketability, these houses constitute a risk. However, alternative houses such as these are a commitment to the inevitable circumstantiality of domestic life. The inevitability of contingency and risk go hand in hand. To ride difference does not mean pick up and leave when circumstances change. It is a collective attitude that recognizes the limitations of commodification, the result of an exploitative objectification of property. Therefore, when considering the number of personal fortunes that are lost to the perils of real estate, the risk in the case of these five houses is no greater, while a collective quality of existence is acknowledged and improved.

Moments of Difference. The Wetcher House is as much a commitment to the Wetcher family as it is to Clear Lake City,

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Liberty, king and queen bathrooms in the shape of chess pieces, and a pool in the form of a dinosaur. Assembled throughout the house and in the courtyard, this inventory of animated form portrays a private stock of domestic dreams. Meanwhile, the symbolic presence of the Trojan horse casts a curious shadow of doubt across the dream's resolution.

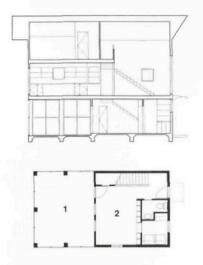
The Chadwick House recognizes and responds to the contingencies of investing in a marginal neighborhood. This threestory wood-frame and wood-sided house finds and articulates a daring prospect in what most lending institutions would consider an otherwise risky financial circumstance. On the other hand, the Heights is interesting because it is content; while modest gentrification is ongoing, prevailing local attitudes discourage largescale speculative development and the inevitable prospect of frequent property turnover.

In the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots, Ricardo Lacayo wrote in an article titled "This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land" that the efforts of personal initiative and private investment can combine to reduce inner-city crime and ethnic division. Instead of Community Development Block Grants, it is the commitment of small-scale private initiative that tethers incentive to responsibility in communities commonly considered marginal by lending institutions, insurance

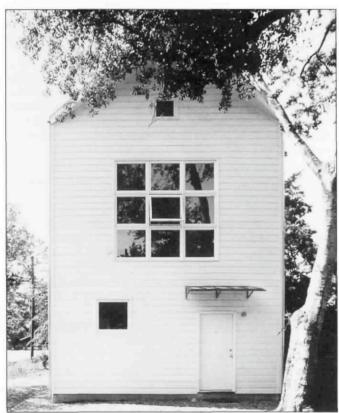
companies, and representatives of the real estate industry. Therefore, in the absence of guidelines for development, enlightened architects and entrepreneurs (educated by the architect) can affect building in ways regulation never could.11 As if to confirm this sentiment in the Chadwick House, Jiménez repeats the scale, orientation, materiality, and assembly procedures of adjacent houses in simple acknowledgment of its location. On the other hand, private elements such as the garden are placed in good faith to the front of the lot, while the interior organization turns an eye to the back, toward the distant downtown skyline. Throughout the house, materials and construction techniques reflect necessity as much as aesthetic appeal. The architecture becomes residual, an intersection of local and distant influences combined to create a measured sensibility, indicative of both and overly conscious of neither.

By contrast, the Schiebl House perpetuates a suburban trend, further dividing the interests of an increasingly heterogeneous culture. While the space, material, and craft of the house are impeccable, the project is unresponsive to local circumstances beyond their simple reiteration, thus relegating its impact to tokenism in the Memorial enclave. Critical development of its conceptual criteria, aside from a desire to save existing trees, is missing. The position it takes regarding the stake of architecture betrays the individual and collective ability of architecture to affect the environment, forgetting that no other participant in contemporary culture will take responsibility for the qualities of the built environment if the architect does not. The circumstances of the Schiebl House, like any form of building, are contingent not only upon the needs of a client, but also upon the needs of a diverse public unable to exercise a will of its own, yet implicated by the politics of its isolation. As mentioned above, the Wetcher House too is an introspective work, yet it does not pretend to be a work in isolation. Nor is the architecture limited to a narrow proposition of program. It is inspired as much by the local conditions of Clear Lake City and the Wetcher family as by the broader questions of domesticity, urbanity, commodification, and by the opportunity of the architect to participate in a critical manner by continually redefining the nature of these questions.

The Finnel House informs the circumstances of its becoming. Initially pushing aside the constraints of space, material,



*Top:* Longitudinal section. *Bottom:* First-floor plan with screened porch, study.



assessing the conditions of the site, implicating lot proportions, adjacent freeways, billboards, and power lines. At times these elements are referred to literally, while the more subtle aspects of the house deterritorialize their relationships to reconfigure traditional dualities of interior/exterior, front/back, and surface/ volume. Weaker moments in the project are attributable to the overt formal aspect of plan kinetics and the appropriation of form according to its collageability, a costly preoccupation limiting the architects' budget for finish materials. The metaphor of "house as theater" was explained in terms of solid/void plan relationships, where an audience (bedroom, study, dining room, and hearth) views the stage (living space) and a proscenium of the Houston skyline beyond. This proposition, without prior knowledge, is hardly legible upon visiting the house; instead it is a rhetorical device serving to condition the organization of the plan. On the other hand, the house continues to evolve as it did during construction. Recalling the third moment of contingency, a combination of unforeseeable criteria outside the architects' control and drawings left purposefully incomplete due to budget constraints enabled the process of construction to be an extension of design. One such example concerns a space on the fourth level, above the bedroom, that remained programmatically unaccounted for in an early massing diagram and throughout construction. During code inspection it was determined that access to the space limited its code classification to an extension of the bedroom, contingent upon new openings being cut in the bedroom ceiling to connect the two spaces. What results is a positive manifestation of unforeseeable conditions attributable to the visual and acoustical contiguity of the loft space with the bedroom, living room, and entry, as

and budget, the Wittenbergs began by

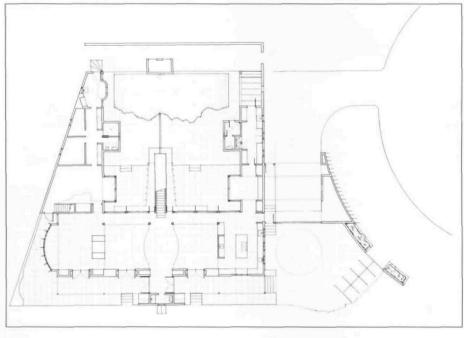




*Top:* Street façade and entry of Wetcher House in Clear Lake City, Peter Waldman Architect, 1991. *Bottom:* Two-story living space with gallery above.

the fulfillment of its promise. In this room, facing a single table and chair, a sparse collection of framed prints hangs in view of an always absent audience. Above a large window too high to see through and below a smaller window elevated further toward the peak of the truncated space, the suspended form of a triangular extrusion hovers as if frozen in alternative bands of the electromagnetic spectrum. The space, through its program of use and conspicuous contents, floats with an acute sensibility alien to the rest of the house. This sublime allowance on the part of the architect anticipates the proposition of closure to formalize contingency in the face of a more conventional interpretation.







#### First-floor plan.

When viewed from a different perspective, the issue of naming in the context of architecture is side-stepped by the infinitive: to architect. With this twist of the frame the subjects, concepts, objects, and representations of architecture acquire a latitude to reorient and respond to evolving criteria. Physical objects left behind become temporal and spatial modulations in a landscape of seamless context. To attach a style or the term avant-garde to new design criteria is a tendency in our culture, leading to an architecture "co-opted" by the same institutional constraints established to repress a world of difference. To avoid commodification, "architecture" becomes residual to the manner by which architects encounter difference and make adjustments in the midst of complexity. After all, the circumstances and contingencies of participation in any field of counsel delineate the interest and accomplishment at stake. Thought of in this way, a drawing is no more a representation of concepts than the movement of the hand that draws. An object of representation is no more the object than the hand, or the mind that guides the hand, or the circumstances that unite the pen and the hand in the first place. Each embodies the potential of architecture in many ways more than the one of the name.

- In his book *Le Pli, Leibniz, et le Baroque* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1988), Gilles Deleuze describes the endless passing over and into of form, accounting for work produced by, and indicative of, its physical and philosophical contexts, seeing the two as inseparable. Therefore the theory of the *inform* unfolds a way of building and designing, within a seamless continuum where isolated events cannot occur.
- 2 The issue of the name concerns the territorialization of endeavors, where the inclusion of one activity defines any distinguished version of that activity as secondary or peripheral, and marked by another name.
- 3 Lebbeus Woods, "Architecture Is a Political Act," Architecture and Urbanism, no. 260 (May 1992), p. 3.
- 4 Cornell West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in Russell Ferguson et al., eds., Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), p. 32.
- 5 Jeffrey Kipnis, "Nolo Contendere," Assemblage, no. 11 (April 1990), p. 55.
- 6 Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), p. 16.

- 7 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 474.
- 8 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 20.
- 9 The translator's notes of Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus* point out (p. xvi) that the act of *drawing* requires that "what is drawn does not preexist the act of drawing." Drawing is an active search, to blaze a trail or to open a road not only to represent, but to be represented as well by, the hand and the mind behind the act. Both are discovered through drawing.
- 10 Rafael Moneo, unpublished address to the student body and faculty of the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, fall 1985.
- 11 Time, 18 May 1992, p. 32.
- 12 Brenda Richardson, *Mel Bochmer: Number and Shape* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976), p. 37.

well as combined sounds and views of the exterior, including the highway, the Houston skyline in the distance, the adjacent rooftops of the neighborhood, and the street. Finnel confirms the profound impact of this room, where everyone seems to gather during social events. No doubt the ongoing transformation of U.S. 59 will also continue to affect the Finnel House, as was intended from the start.

On the exterior, the Stern House asserts a stylistic bias in combining the broad gestures of contemporary wood-frame construction with middle-tech ornamental sunscreens - a juxtaposition employed by Renzo Piano on the Menil Collection museum. Not unlike the hardware-store classicism of its Los Angeles counterpart, this architecture represents, on the exterior, its contextual circumstance in decidable form, appropriating an index of contextual elements to ornament its traditional methods. However, unlike its counterpart's, the interior of the Stern House is a different story. On the interior there are works by Mel Bochner, Agnes Martin, Don Judd, Dorothea Rockburn, Robert Mangold, and Stephen Keister, with a Sol LeWitt Wall Drawing commissioned as a permanent installation. In an obscure corner of the third level, a Mel Bochner drawing takes an inconspicuous place on the wall - one of a series, produced in the mid-seventies, of small geometric studies that culminate a decade of Bochner's explorations into the relationship of color and shape. Bochner's interest in this series grew from an earlier project titled Axiom of Indifference, a mathematical version of this graphic shape and color project. Like many artists in the Stern collection, Bochner developed his work by following an analytical process of clarification and refinement, until, as the artist would claim, the work "reduced to its most essential and telling aspects." At the same time, Bochner understood that each project was an eventual discovery of "that point [where] both closure and a new beginning are implicit," thus enabling contingency to take its inevitable place in his work. As always in the case of Bochner's work, structure was integral, if only subliminally perceived by the viewer.12

A critical version of the Stern House objectifies these perceptions, implicating the artist as a welcome influence. Like Bochner, Stern established criteria from the outset. As was mentioned above, issues of scale, orientation, material, light, and view figured into an endeavor of resolution. Following this scenario through the house, one encounters the precision at work until reaching the top floor, where a "storage" room occupies a pivotal place between the principal atrium and bulk storage and mechanical rooms. With the Bochner drawing opposite its entrance, this room terminates a stacked sequence directed by the orientation of the stair and initiated a priori with the kitchen on the ground level and the office on the second level. The interval of movement through the interior establishes this space as critical to the understanding of its pervading order and