

Cite

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Review of Houston

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The Rice Design Alliance

The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture, urban design, and the built environment in the Houston region through educational programs; the publication of *Cite*, a biannual review of architecture and design; and active programs to initiate physical improvements. Membership in the RDA is open to the general public.

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Rice Design Alliance - MS 51,
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Rice Design Alliance Events

LECTURE SERIES

Northern Lights:

New Canadian Architects

For its Spring 1997 lecture series, RDA has invited five Canadian architects to present and discuss their work.
Wednesdays February 26 through March 26.

February 26

Phyllis Lambert, director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.
"Mies van der Rohe and the CCA - A Personal Perspective."

March 5

John Patkau, Vancouver, British Columbia

March 12

Peter Cardew, Vancouver, British Columbia

March 19

Brigitte Shim, Toronto, Ontario

March 26

Brian MacKay-Lyons, Halifax, Nova Scotia

All lectures will be held in the Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 8 p.m. Series tickets are available in advance at the RDA office. RDA and MFAH members \$25, students \$12, nonmembers \$40. If available, single tickets will be sold at the door: RDA and MFAH members \$7, students \$3, nonmembers \$10. For further information, please call 713.527.4876.

The Houston Talks

The Rice Design Alliance, the Rice University School of Architecture, and the University of Houston College of Architecture are for the first time collaborating on a lecture series that continues in the spring. The lectures are free and open to the public. Speakers will not only give a public lecture but also spend time informally with students at both schools. In addition to Enric Miralles who lectured on October 23, speakers are:

February 3

David Chipperfield, London.
Lecture at 8 p.m. in the Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, Rice University.

February 13

William Bruder, New River, Arizona.
Lecture at 8 p.m. in the Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston.

EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

Houston Works

The Rice Design Alliance will be calling for entries for a spring exhibition at the Lawndale Art and Performance Center. RDA plans to exhibit a variety of work by Houston designers, including furniture, interior and landscape design, and architecture. *April 3 through May 17.*

Rancheros Deluxe

RDA's annual members-only architecture tour will feature the best Houston examples of the American ranch-style house, which had its heyday just after World War II and is newly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *April 26 and 27.*

To the Editor

Thank you for sending the issues of *Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*. Copies were made available to our faculty and students and sent to the Technical Reference Center. *Cite* is a first-class publication with a broad range of articles, and the layout is well thought out. I especially enjoyed the articles by Stephen Fox, Richard Ingersoll, and Michael Benedikt. All three have presented lectures to our college and were well received. We look forward to the next issue of *Cite*.

Julius M. Gribou, AIA
Head of Department, Department of
Architecture, Texas A & M University

•••

The copies of your fall issue of *Cite* arrived today, and I am still trembling from excitement. The layout and design is simply fantastic. I am especially pleased with the spread on Texas Southern University. Alvia Wardlaw did a wonderful job in capturing the essence of TSU. I know the entire university family would join me in saying thank you for including Texas Southern University. I have shared copies with our 36 student organizations, the Office of the President, our Board of Regents, and the University Archives in the Robert J. Terry Library.

Again, we thank you for having the vision, thought, and insight to include Texas Southern University. We wish you continued success with a wonderful publication.

Eva K. Pickens
Director of Communication and University
Relations, Texas Southern University

•••

The extraordinary sculptor Carroll Simms happens to be male, and thus should have been referred to by the pronoun "he" in the article about the TSU campus in *Cite 35*.

Since the campus was nominally the focus of the article, and the central plaza was recently dedicated to him, Simms's works deserved more than the passing notice they received.

His works at TSU, UH, in the Music Hall, and other locations demonstrate that his true peers are Jacques Lipchitz, Jacob Epstein, and Henry Moore.

We want to encourage everyone with an interest in sculpture to visit the Carroll Simms Plaza at Texas Southern.

Bill Howze and Jeannette Dixon, *Houston*

CITE 35 PUBLICATION PARTY



Left to right: *Cite* assistant editor Molly Kelly; Stephen Fox; *Cite* editorial committee chairman Rives Taylor; and *Cite 36* guest editor Barry Moore.

CITE OFFICE



The offices of *Cite* magazine are located in the River Oaks Shopping Center, Suite #1, 1973 West Gray, 77019 in architecturally approved space generously donated by Weingarten Realty Management.

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As a minor correction, the illustration of the University of Virginia (*Cite* 35, p. 27) shows the northern extension of the rotunda. It was added by Robert Mills in 1853. In disgust, Mr. Jefferson's ghost started a fire that destroyed it in 1895.

In its history and design, I thoroughly enjoy learning about my city from your magazine.

Lynn N. Hughes

United States District Judge, Houston

•••

In a recent article regarding playgrounds designed by Robert Leathers (*Cite* 35), the writer questioned whether children playing on the equipment at Hidalgo Park are safe. The article illustrates why the Houston Parks and Recreation Department no longer uses such playground equipment and gives us an opportunity to introduce the steps we have taken to ensure that YES, our children are reasonably safe on all of our city's playgrounds.

In February 1994, this department created five two-man teams dedicated to playground safety, maintenance, and repair. These teams inspect approximately 250 playgrounds an average of twice monthly. They have special trucks equipped with the necessary tools and parts for immediate repair of playground equipment. The supervisor of the team is a certified playground inspector as designated by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

The City of Houston has some older playground equipment that was manufactured and installed prior to the establishment of American Society for Testing Materials and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission safety guidelines. It is the responsibility of our playground safety teams to inspect older equipment and make sure it is as compliant as possible with the current safety guidelines.

The playground at Hidalgo Park was designed and constructed before the safety standards were adopted. Although the equipment has always been in fairly good repair, its age and construction present challenges in keeping it up to standard. Since April 1994, the playground has been inspected more than 70 times and over \$7,670 has been spent on repairs. Hidalgo Park is part of the Parks to Standard Program, a \$52 million renovation project designed to bring Houston's

parks up to a uniform standard of safety, security, and accessibility. In June 1996, we began renovations to provide Hidalgo Park with \$155,932 of improvements, not only to the playground but also to other facilities throughout the park.

Your article specifically questioned the condition of the wood surfaces. On October 30, 1996 our crews conducted an inspection of the Hidalgo Park playground and found that the overall condition of the wood facing appeared to be weathered but good. The inspector found only a few areas of minor splintering and noted that a recent water power cleaning may have contributed to the weathered appearance. The wood equipment is resealed annually, however, the process has been delayed this year until completion of the Parks to Standard improvements.

To avoid these high repair costs and to improve safety, we now install composite playground equipment designed to be smoother, sturdier, and made of more durable materials. The equipment at Hidalgo Park does not meet the current standards and carries a certain set of liability issues; therefore, it will probably be the last of its kind in a City of Houston park. The new Heights playground referred to in the *Cite* article is located in Donovan Park, which is privately owned and maintained.

It is important to note that one of the most common problems we have with our park equipment is vandalism. Hidalgo Park is on a routine twice monthly maintenance schedule. Our graffiti abatement program maintains a 72-hour response time. In addition, we have a 24-hour Citizens' HELPLINE (645-HELP) so that citizens can report any problems. The City of Houston has set new standards in park excellence and playground safety, and we continue to improve and upgrade our facilities. We feel that the implications in the article could have been presented more accurately if we had been given the opportunity for our input. We firmly believe that the City of Houston has gone above and beyond to ensure that we are providing the safest play opportunities for Houston's children at Hidalgo and all City parks.

William R. Smith II

*Director, Parks and Recreation Department
City of Houston*

From the Editor

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

The issue behind this Issue is capital — money — the force that makes built projects happen. As political and social changes occur in this millennial decade, *Cite* thought it was time to look at projects around us, how they are funded, and in what ways they influence our community. With the help of four new writers to our pages, *Cite* 36 examines publicly and privately funded initiatives:

- Richard Longstreth and Drexel Turner reflect on West Gray and River Oaks Shopping Center, while David Kaplan explores the Rice University Village. In both cases private dollars have been plowed back in to make older retail developments economically viable.
- Vincent Hauser writes about federal dollars put to work to preserve our architectural heritage.
- Jeffrey Ochsner examines the expenditure of Metro tax dollars that hope to transform the downtown streetscape and challenge the pre-eminence of a formidable, well-financed private tunnel system down under.
- Ann Walton Sieber contemplates the Shrine of the Black Madonna and its African American utopian mission, philanthropically funded on the disadvantaged fringes of the Third Ward.
- And, in an introspective arc, George Greanias considers the framework of the city's infrastructure, the proper role of public tax dollars in influencing the development of the private sector, and how we should frame the dialogue about public-private partnerships that shape a city.

No one person, corporation, board, administration, or referendum has autonomous power to make decisions about how money is spent that effects our public environment. Awareness and discussion might raise the level of community involvement — so that what is built around us is an accurate reflection of the public will.

Barry Moore, FAIA

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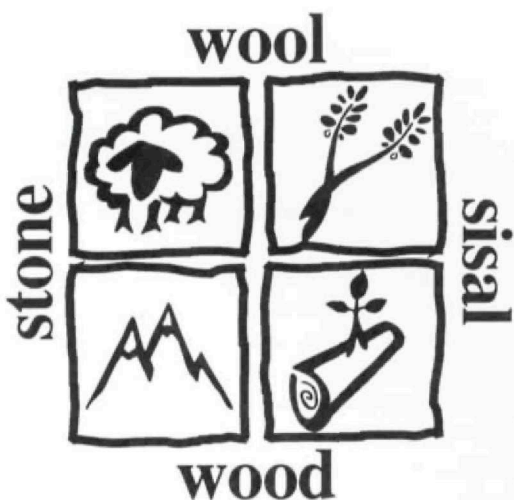
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VENEER TO ETERNITY
RDA Honors Raymond
BrochsteinRDA honoree, Raymond Brochstein, with his wife Susan Brochstein and his daughter Deborah Brochstein at *Veneer to Eternity*.

The tenth annual Rice Design Alliance fundraising gala, *Veneer to Eternity*, was held on Saturday, November 9, 1996, at the newly retrofitted Houston Industries Plaza, 1111 Louisiana. A sellout RDA crowd of 700 turned out to honor Raymond Brochstein, president of Brochsteins Inc. Raymond's friends and supporters were given a chance to admire the beautiful bird's-eye-maple veneer millwork installed by Brochsteins in the lobby spaces of Houston Industries Plaza.

Raymond Brochstein, a graduate of the Rice University School of Architecture, has carried on the fine tradition established by his father and his uncle, who founded Brochsteins Inc. in 1935. As one of the nation's leading manufacturers of architectural woodwork and custom-designed commercial furniture, Brochsteins has made an enormous contribution to the built environment by bringing impeccable craftsmanship to the interiors of corporate and professional offices, banks, retail establishments, hotels, museums, and clubs. Raymond Brochstein has worked with some of the nation's most outstanding architecture firms and has demonstrated a sensitivity to the requirements of architects and interior designers alike. His deep commitment to education is demonstrated by his support of Houston Independent School District programs as well as architecture programs at Rice University, the University of Houston, and the Rice Design Alliance. Raymond Brochstein, who this year was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, has helped make Houston a better and more beautiful place to live through both his professional work and his support of many civic and cultural efforts.

RDA president Louis Skidmore and his wife, Margaret, and gala chairman

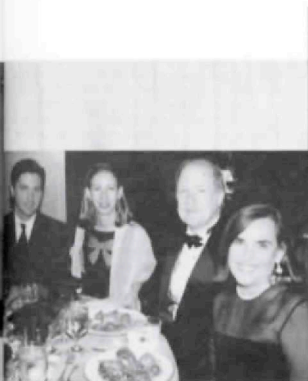


© Phyllis Hear Photography (6x 15)

Julie Baker and her husband, Jay, greeted the guests as they entered the marble, granite, wood, glass, and stainless-steel interiors of the building, which is the new corporate home of Houston Lighting & Power and its parent company. The architect, Richard Keating of DMJM Keating, flew in from Los Angeles for the gala, as did the interior designer of the elegant executive floors, Debra Lehman-Smith, who traveled with her partners from Washington, D.C. HL&P's David Barker with his wife, Carol, David George (who also served as gala underwriting chairman) with his wife, Norma, and Hugh Rice Kelly with his wife, Molly, received accolades from gala guests. Many of the professionals whose companies worked on the project were on hand as well, including Charlie Baughn of Hines Interests (development manager), Jory Alexander and Wayne Shull of Kendall/Heaton (document architect), Scott Ziegler of Ziegler Cooper Architects (interiors architect), and contractors George Miner of Miner-Dederick Constructors and Bobby Surles of the Tellepsen Corporation.

Introduced in a memorable veneer-clad invitation by graphics designer Deborah Brochstein, the gala's theme, *Veneer to Eternity*, was interpreted by architect and designer Charley Kifer with a 12-foot-high veneer Möbius strip, built and installed by Brochsteins, that guests passed through on their way up the escalator to the second-floor lobby. There auction co-chairs, Sarah Balinskas and Judy Kugle, had more than a hundred auction items on display, including a figured-maple-and-stainless-steel serving cart designed for the occasion by Debra Lehman-Smith and fabricated by Brochsteins; a week in a 300-year-old stone farmhouse near Saintes, France, renovated and donated by Taft Architects; and a tour of Hakeem Olajuwon's Sugar Land home by the owner and his architect, William T. Cannady.

For dinner, catered by Truffles & Flourishes, guests made their way down to the tunnel-level court, where each table featured its own Möbius-strip centerpiece, designed by Kifer and constructed by Rice architecture students under the direction of Brochsteins craftsmen. Following dinner, Mr. Brochstein was "roasted" by Keating, Lehman-Smith, and his longtime friend, Ben Brewer. The program concluded with the presentation by Louis Skidmore of the 1996 RDA Award for Design Excellence, a



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"Magnolia" Steuben glass bowl donated by Neiman Marcus, to honoree Brochstein, who responded with light-hearted comments.

Proceeds of \$217,000 from the gala will help support the educational programs of the Rice Design Alliance. The RDA board of directors would like to thank all of the gala committee chairmen and volunteers as well as Houston Industries for making their building available and the RDA staff for their support. We would also like to recognize our generous underwriters, whose contributions will help make possible the 1997 programs and publication of *Cite*. ■

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Left to Right:

1. Louis Skidmore, Raymond Brochstein, David George, and Julie Baker.
2. Shawn Wallis, Sara Balinskas, Jim Sanders, and Judy Kugle.
3. Louis and Margaret Skidmore, their son Christopher Skidmore with his fiancée Anne Goettee.
4. Charley and Ann Kifer.
5. Jay and Julie Baker.
6. Guests looking over auction items.
7. Möbius-strip centerpieces at the gala and under construction by Rice architecture students at Brochstein's Inc.