

RDA News



BIG IDEA, SMALL HOUSE

USING A \$5,000 grant from the Rice Design Alliance, architecture students in the Rice Building Workshop recently completed the “extra small house” — a freestanding 500-square-foot house intended for one or two people.

Nonya Grenader, co-director of the building workshop, said that the tiny, low-budget house was intended to serve markets that few builders currently address. The house, she says, could serve “one or two people who might need a starter home, or someone with limited financial resources and land area,

or someone who wishes to live simply, using fewer resources.”

Grenader and co-director Danny Samuels led a class of about 40 grad students and undergrads. The students submitted ten plans to their “client,” Project Row Houses, a nonprofit public art group in Houston’s Third Ward. The chosen design, executed at 2304 Stuart St., looks much like an update of the neighborhood’s historic shotgun houses.

Deep eaves shade the house’s windows and porch, and built-in storage on the west wall further insulates the house from Houston’s brutal summer sun. The

house’s bathroom walls are clad with Polygal, a translucent polycarbonate material. During the day, the bathroom becomes a glowing “light box.”

The house was built over 36 weekends with volunteer labor, plus approximately \$15,000 in donated materials (including Hardiplank siding and the Polygal), and \$15,000 in grants. (Besides the RDA, the Susan Vaughn Foundation and the Houston chapter of the American Institute of Architects also awarded grants to the project.)

Project Row Houses plans to use the new building to house artists-in-residence.

CITE’S BEST: COMING SOON TO A BOOKSTORE NEAR YOU

EPHEMERAL CITY: CITE LOOKS AT HOUSTON will appear in bookstores this November. Co-editors Barrie Scardino, William F. Stern, and Bruce C. Webb selected 25 articles from *Cite*’s first 20 years, along with 224 black-and-white photographs, maps, and plans. The book, published in hardcover by University of Texas Press, will cost \$35.

The authors include nationally known writers and architectural historians, many of whom have been frequent contributors to *Cite*, and whose work has given the publication its flavor.

The book is divided into three sections: “Idea of the City,” edited by Webb; “Places of the City,” edited by Scardino; and “Buildings of the City,” edited by Stern. The sections are introduced with new essays by the editors, all of whom were founding editors of *Cite*. Most articles are followed by a brief update and bibliography of related articles published in the magazine.

In his foreword, Peter G. Rowe, dean of the Faculty of Design at Harvard University, describes the content of *Ephemeral City* as “common and not

so common depictions of Houston, Texas.” The editors chose this specific group of articles to explore the developmental history and architecture of a flat, sprawling, free-spirited city that is impossible to capture through any one episode or explain through any one place. By using different writers and focusing on both very broad and very narrow topics, the editors have provided a collage rather than a still life to reflect the essence of this remarkable place.

Look for future announcements about a book signing and reception featuring the editors and writers this fall.



Ephemeral City editors Bruce Webb and William F. Stern. (Editor Barrie Scardino not pictured.)



CHICAGO...OUR KIND OF TOWN!

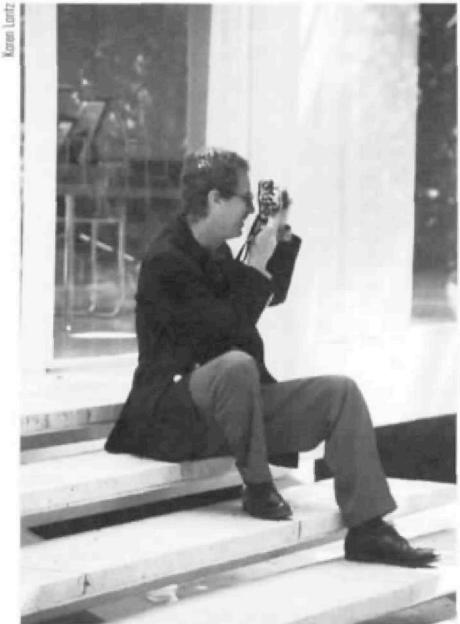
FROM JUNE 5 THROUGH 8, 31 RDA members took a whirlwind tour of Chicago, visiting private homes designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, David Adler, and Harrie T. Lindeberg.

The insiders' tour was made possible by RDA board members and friends of the RDA. Margaret and Louis Skidmore hosted the tour group for lunch at the Arts Club and facilitated visits to 860 and 880 North Lake Shore Drive. Jeff and Mary Clark (the sister of RDA board member Larry Lander) arranged visits to their neighbors' Frank Lloyd Wright homes in Oak Park. And past RDA president Liz Glassman, director of Chicago's Terra Museum of American Art, made possible the tour of Mies's Farnsworth House and Frank Lloyd Wright's Coonley House. Stephanie Sick, wife of Rice Board

of Governors member Bill Sick, helped tremendously with the planning of the group's trip to Lake Forest and the North Shore, and made possible the visit to Crab Tree Farm to see the extraordinary Arts and Crafts collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Bryan.

Architectural historian Rolf Achilles provided not only architectural information but political and social commentary as well.

One of the highlights of the tour was a pilgrimage to Mies's Farnsworth House in Plano, which is for sale and hadn't had a visitor in two years. Architectural historian Stephen Fox, who accompanied the group and planned the extensive itinerary, described the trip to Farnsworth as "going to architectural heaven."



Scenes from Chicago, clockwise from the top: Frank Lloyd Wright's Coonley House; the tour group in front of the Farnsworth House; Stephen Fox on the stairway to architectural heaven.



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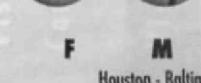
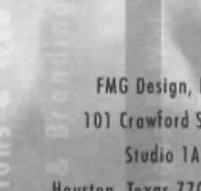
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