



Edward M. Armstrong House, 1128 Bissonnet Avenue, William Ward Watkin, architect, 1923-24, after recent restoration by Roy Bailey Architects, Inc.



St. Joseph's Church, restored interior; Patrick S. Rabbitt with George E. Dickey, architects, 1901. Restoration team: John J. Dasek, AIA, architect; Leslie Barry Davidson, AIA, interiors consultant.

## Good Bricks

On October 15, 1996, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance presented its annual Good Brick Awards, which honor outstanding projects in renovation, restoration, and preservation planning. As in the past few years, the event was held in the Brown Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

For the first time Honor Awards were given to projects considered by the jury to have been particularly outstanding. The first Honor Award went to St. Joseph's Parish and the Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston for the restoration of St. Joseph's Church, the second oldest Catholic church in the city. Located just north of downtown at 1505 Kane Street, St. Joseph's was designed by Patrick S. Rabbitt with George E. Dickey in 1901. Rabbitt trained in Galveston with N. J. Clayton, and Dickey was Houston's foremost architect in the 1890s. In 1995, while the restoration was underway, fire seriously damaged the building. Despite this setback, the parish renewed their commitment to the project. Each part of the church was carefully restored to its original splendor by architects John J. Dasek and Leslie Davidson and Fretz Construction Company.

The second Honor Award went to the law firm Moriarty and Associates for adaptive use of the buildings in the 1100 block of Bissonnet. Architects for the project were Ray Bailey Architects, and the

contractor was Fretz Construction. The two main buildings that now house offices were built as residences in 1924 by William Ward Watkin, professor and head of the department of architecture at the Rice Institute. The exteriors of the Watkin buildings were carefully cleaned and restored to their original appearance. Two other buildings in the same block were also renovated. The parking area, sensitively located on the interior of the site, is screened by extensive landscaping. The complex is a welcome addition to its historic neighborhood.

Good Brick Awards were given to Gary Warwick for the façade restoration of the Larendon Building at 309 Travis Street; to Gensler and Associates, Architects and the Harris County Heritage Society for technical excellence in the restoration of the Jack Yates House; to Louise and Rob Jamail for the renovation by Jay Baker Architects of their Troon Road residence; and to the Foley Building L.L.C. (Minnette Boesel, Guy Hagstette, Doug Lawing, Jamie Mize, and Dan Tidwell) for adaptive use of the interior of the W. L. Foley Dry Goods Co. building on Market Square, which was designed by architect Eugene Heiner and built in 1889.

Three new awards were created this year. The first winner of a Good Brick Award for appropriate new construction within a historic context was the Mathes

Group, with Barry Moore, architect, for the Louis and Anne Friedman Clock Tower located across the street from Market Square. The Neighborhood Revitalization Award was created to recognize the restoration of four buildings in the 700 block of Silver Street in the Sixth Ward by the Silver Street Properties Group (Kathy Hubbard, Steve Kirkland, Annise Parker, and Mark Parthie). And the first Craftsman of the Year Award, which was created to recognize craftspeople whose special abilities and expertise allow projects to be executed in a historically sympathetic manner, went to blacksmith Tim Bailey.

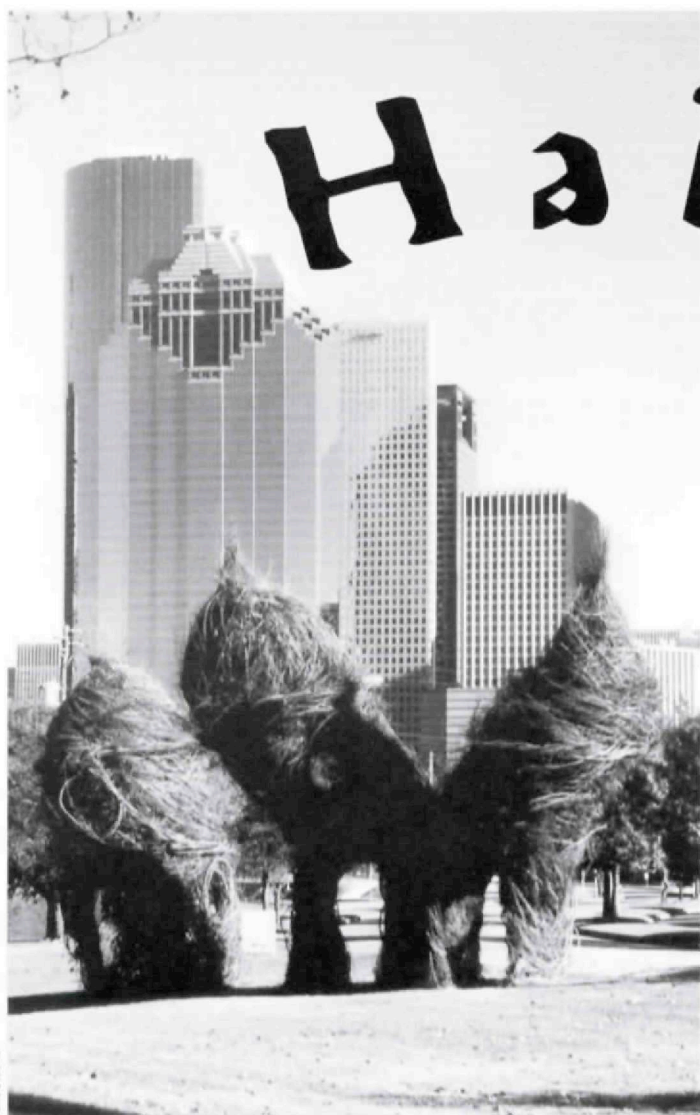
Additionally, GHPA President Anita Garten gave two President's Awards. The first went to Mayor Bob Lanier for his efforts to use historic preservation as a tool for urban revitalization; the second to the Municipal Arts Commission and chairman Artie Lee Hinds for restoration of the Sam Houston Monument in Hermann Park.

Each year, the actual bricks presented as awards are salvaged from a historic building that has been demolished. This year presentation bricks, white on one side and unpainted on the other, were recognizably from Sakowitz Post Oak (1959, Eugene Werlin & C. H. Kiefner, architects) demolished in 1995.

Jurors for the awards were Madeleine McDermott Hamm, *Houston Chronicle*

design editor; Robert Litke, director of the Department of Planning and Development, City of Houston; Gerald Moorhead, architect and architectural writer; Randy Pace, preservation officer, City of Houston; Richard Payne, architect and photographer; and Bart Truxillo, chairman of the Houston Archeological and Historic Commission. The Good Brick Award chairs were Phoebe Tudor and Russell Windham. This year's awards were underwritten by Stewart Title Company, Fayez Sarofim and Company, Max Watson, Mitchell Energy and Development Corporation, and W. S. Bellows Construction Company.

*Phoebe Tudor*



Barrie Scardino

# Hair Dance

Large scale vine sculpture, tentatively titled "Do-si-do," by Patrick T. Dougherty, artist-in-residence, University of Houston Department of Art. Dougherty lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and has installed large temporary sculptures throughout the United States and in Europe - particularly Denmark and England. Funded by grants from Buffalo Bayou Artpark and CACHH. Constructed with the assistance of students from the University of Houston.

## Down and Out

This disciplined ten-story building, described by architectural historian Stephen Fox as having "antiseptic elegance," will be demolished early next year because its site has been deemed more valuable (in money) than its significance (in architecture). The Finger Cos., a Houston apartment development firm has purchased the property with plans to replace the Great Southern Life Building with a residential complex. Tenants, including the Houston Engineering and Scientific Society (HESS), have been notified to vacate the building by the end of the year. HESS plans to move to the old Carlyle restaurant space on Westheimer in February.

According to Larry Lambright, chief engineer and building superintendent, the building is in excellent structural condition. At the time of construction it was the costliest building per-square-foot in Houston. Once a real traffic-stopper, the Great Southern Life Building was set into a reflecting pool that surrounded the building; a two-story water-spray fountain cooled the Buffalo Speedway façade. Lambright said that the fountain and pools cost \$2,000 a month to maintain, easily leading to the decision to

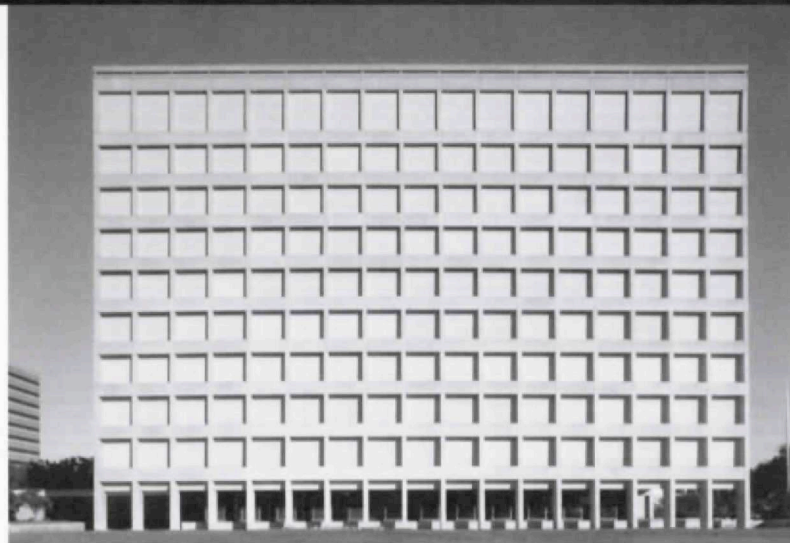
drain them.

The 13.5-acre site has probably the most attractive parking lot in the city. Behind the building, each double row of parking places is lined with mature live oak trees. How these soldierly trees can be preserved within the confines of a land-hungry, 298-unit apartment complex is anyone's guess.

The salt-and-pepper pebble-clad building, designed by S.O.M.'s New York office, has two completely windowless long elevations, facing the rear parking lot and the street. The grid frame carries air conditioning ducts and service equipment. The two shorter elevations are lined with floor-to-ceiling windows forming a horizontal glass grid similar to the concrete grid on the front and back. The wide corridors on the interior bring bright natural light from each end of the building into the windowless offices.

Once again, a significant Houston building is being lost, not to progress, but to prosperity.

Barrie Scardino



Great Southern Life Insurance Company Building, 3121 Buffalo Speedway, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, architects, 1965.



Great Southern Life Building, first floor loggia.