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Cover


Errata

In our last issue, Dan Arsenault was not credited for his photography in the product review "Street Furniture" and, in our "After Industry" issue, for "Sticks and Stones." The credits for Oscar Tusquets and Richard Meier's silver services were transposed. A photo of "Presence of the Past" incorrectly appeared under the guidance listing of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The mural at the bottom of page 61 was done by Jane Golden, and is located at Main Street and Ocean Park, Santa Monica.
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Notes
In Passing

The kind of houses which are needed today are not being built. This is not entirely an architectural problem, although architecture does enter into it. The reasons for this are many, but critical among them are the cost of borrowing and the continuing failure of housing producers and money lenders to recognize the changing needs of the population. While architects can have little effect on the interest rate, they can be instrumental in bringing to light alternative forms of housing. In this issue, we examine the architect’s role in this process, both in the recent past and in the present. We focus on the ways that architects have acted as catalysts for change in the domestic environment. In the period after World War II, architects were helped to popularize new concepts of modernity in the home. First in experimental single-family houses, and later in tracts and apartment buildings, they introduced new ideas about space, form, materials of construction, and the relationship between indoors and out. The changes they effected were mostly formal, however, and tended to reinforce the primacy of the nuclear family. Today the issues are different. While architects are still concerned with formal problems, some are also becoming concerned with developing more responsive forms of housing. In this issue, we will look at radical solutions such as the housing cooperatives designed for low-income families by Ted Smith in San Diego and Ann Hirschi of Environmental Works in Seattle. We will also see how architect/developer Donald MacDonald in San Francisco has demonstrated that it is possible to address the needs of the small, middle-income household. All three understand their role to be political as well as practical. The problem for the changing city is also addressed. In Houston, Arquitectonica has raised the standard townhouse to a new level of urbanity. Bill Leddy in San Francisco has designed a prototype for an energy-efficient courtyard house which can be grouped to create cohesive neighborhoods. In each case it is the architect who makes a difference. Acting as developer or advocate, the architect has recognized the need for alternatives to the detached suburban home. Although the economic climate cannot be changed by good design, the social one can be improved by the provision of appropriate places in which to live. Perhaps by taking more risks and becoming involved in the production of housing, architects can show that it is possible to work within existing economic constraints and still produce socially relevant solutions.

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"I really loved that house." Lutah Maria Riggs was speaking that day in 1978 of a house by Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith which she had seen in the now-defunct magazine American Architecture. And from that day in the early 1920s she determined to work with the architect. Together, almost through the decade, they would become chief among the architects creating Santa Barbara’s Spanish Colonial revival, now called its “Golden Age.” The daughter of a doctor in Toledo, Ohio, Lutah moved with her mother and stepfather to California in 1914, and she graduated from the School of Architecture at Berkeley in 1919. After some graduate work there and a short apprenticeship in Sussville, she came back to Santa Barbara in 1921. There she got the job she wanted and worked as chief designer for Smith until he died in 1930. After finishing his incompletely work with a temporary partner, she opened her own office in 1931. From this house and a nearby studio, she worked sometimes 7 a week and evenings until 1981, except for a short period during World War II, when she worked as a set designer for MGM in Los Angeles. Under Smith’s sanction she designed the Lobero Theater (interesting today particularly for its out-sized detailing), the News Press Building (later remodeled), and the favorite of many a local, the Meridian Studios on East de la Guerra Street. She collaborated with Oscar Niemeyer, worked as a consultant with William Pereira on a local commercial building, and worked for a time in partnership with Arvin Shaw. On her own she did a series of commercial and residential projects, mostly in the Santa Barbara area. In 1961 she was on the jury for the competition for the design of the California governor’s mansion and in 1962 she was one of the Los Angeles Times’ “Women of the Year.” She was Santa Barbara’s first licensed woman architect and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for Design. Her drawings are now in a collection at UCSB with those of George Washington Smith, which she helped to catalogue. Her favorite building remained the Vedanta Temple in the foothills above Montecito. Although they never worked together, she knew Julia Morgan, who designed a building across from her theater as well as the Hearst Castle. Lutah Riggs was a colorful personality and became a bit of a Santa Barbara legend during her career. She served on several review boards and strongly believed in civic responsibility. She was loved by those who worked for her, and was often to be seen in black coat, white rubber boots and with tousled hair heading in her Mercedes to the Copper Coffee Pot, a local cafeteria, which she baptized “The Ritz” (and where some well-known designers are still sometimes seen at breakfast). Her life and her career in architecture were complementary to an amazing degree—the “marriage” was a success, and the person that was Lutah Maria Riggs had fulfilled many a dream. She was not an architect who radically changed the course of her profession—this was never her intent—but she left a body of work inspired by what Pereira called her “intellible instinct for excellence.” When Lutah Maria Riggs died this year on March 8 at age 87, she had most assuredly left a legacy of the best of the Spanish Colonial style for which Santa Barbara is so well known. Among those works may be something that might inspire the picturesque romantic spirit in another (or even some new kind of Post-Colonial spirit) as George Washington Smith’s house had first so inspired her that day in 1921.

Karen Clayton is an architect in Santa Barbara.
**Century of Optimism**

**Yesterday's Tomorrows**

Eugene. Both the counterculture and the eco-culture have made us wary of technology, but this fear contradicts a century in which Americans embraced science as the guarantee of an improved future. This optimism about the shape of things to come is documented by "Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future," an exhibition which shows at the Williamette Science and Technology Center, February 2 to April 14. A history of popular expectations over the last 100 years, "Yesterday's Tomorrows" includes an array of models, prototypes, toys, games and images. One major section will be "The Home of Tomorrow," illustrating the ideas of those designers who saw a revolutionized domestic life. Among the objects will be a large model of Buckminster Fuller’s 1928 "4-D Utility Unit," otherwise known as the Dymaxion House. Other sections will deal with transportation, the image of the future in advertising, the impact of futuristic toys on play, Hollywood’s treatment of the future, and the relationship between industrial design and the emergence of a futuristic aesthetic in the 1930s. Organized by the Smithsonian Institution, the exhibition has a long itinerary, traveling to the California Museum of Science and Industry, Los Angeles, Oakland Museum, Oakland, Museum of Science, Boston, and Whitney Museum of American Art, Stamford.

**Artists by Themselves**

West Palm Beach. Penetrating self-portraits by Thomas Eakins, Raphael Soyer and Asher Brown Durand are among the 90 works of 19th and 20th-century American painting included in “Artists by Themselves: Artists’ Portraits.” The first comprehensive survey of the portrait collection in the National Academy of Design, New York, this exhibition is on view through January 20 at the Norton Gallery of Art. Also included are self-portraits by George Tooker, Samuel Morse, Eugene Speicher, John Singer Sargent, and Andrew and Jamie Wyeth. All the works were submitted by the artists as a condition of their membership in the academy, and they are here organized chronologically to illustrate the evolution of American painting. Organized by the National Academy of Design, the exhibition travels to the County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

**Lucas Samaras**


**Gilbert and George**

Milwaukee. They began their artistic collaboration in 1967 while students at St. Martin's in London. Trained as sculptors, Gilbert and George regard every aspect of their work as sculpture, including the single public personality they have created for themselves. They have explored a wide range of media and genres—painting, drawing, poetry, postcards, and mural-sized photo-­pieces—gradually coming to work as single artist. Sixty-seven of the photo-pieces are the subject of this exhibition which traveled widely and successfully through Europe and will show at the Milwaukee Museum of Art, January 11 to March 17. Gilbert and George did not set out to create shocking art, but their decision to express extreme states of consciousness is important to their work. George says, "We're not interested in being ambiguous. . . We've always thought that we try to make our work clearer and clearer. The more we do that, the more we hear people say 'enigmatic' at the same time." The exhibition travels to the Guggenheim Museum, New York.

**Jan Groover**

Minneapolis. The artist appeared in New York during the early 1970s with a series of small color diptychs and triptychs. These early works combined multiple-image of cars and trucks, passing in front of buildings and
interrupting the space of the photograph, in an attempt to explore the difference between what the eye and the camera see as space. The first mid-career survey of works by Jan Groover shows at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, January 12 to February 24. This exhibition includes over 120 photographs, many printed especially for this occasion. In the mid-1970s, Groover moved her attention indoors to produce single-image still lifes. Like Cubist paintings, these works emphasized geometric forms with cropped angles. Groover began working in palladium-platinum printing in 1979, abandoning the rich color of early works to exploit the tonal possibilities of black and white photography. The exhibition was organized by the Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase, and travels to the Center for the Fine Arts, Miami.

**Newcomb Pottery**

**Washington.** From the first experiments in clay through the handsome, incised motifs of the 1900s to the softer, abstract designs of the 1920s, “Newcomb Pottery: An Enterprise for Southern Women, 1895–1940” traces the history of an important experiment in art and labor. Newcomb was established at a time when opportunities for working women were limited. Men performed the hard labor of mixing clay, throwing pots and firing the kiln, giving what was known as the gentler sex the opportunity to earn a polite living. The shop provided work for approximately 90 women during its 45-year existence. The forms of the pieces were traditional; the real innovation was in their decoration. No two were alike and within the basic colors of blue and green there was much variation. Stylized plant motifs were based on the observed natural environment, the fauna of Louisiana. Organized by Tulane University, New Orleans, this exhibition continues at the Renwick Gallery through February 24, 1985.

**Alvar Aalto**

Evanston. Aalto’s innovative contributions to 20th-century design will be the subject of a major exhibition continuing through March 24 at the Mary and Leigh Block Gallery. “Alvar Aalto: Furniture and Glass” will examine in depth the Finnish architect’s industrial design, and will be the first exhibition ever to present the full range of his furniture. The exhibition will include approximately 35 such pieces and 35 examples of glass. Also on display will be a number of Aalto’s evocative sketches, several finished drawings, and photographic panels showing the furniture as it originally appeared in a variety of interior settings and international exhibitions. A short film on the manufacture of the furniture in Finland has been made especially for the exhibition. The exhibition will be arranged to call attention to the essential forms Aalto created and to demonstrate how his particular philosophy, use of natural shapes and materials, and rich sense of color and texture were integrated into a body of work that became enormously influential. After closing at the Block Gallery, “Alvar Aalto” will travel to the Akron Art Museum, Akron, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Montreal, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, and the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk. The exhibition is organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**American Realism**

Boise. Rooted in the artistic conventions of the 19th century, realism has emerged as a contemporary movement of representational art in the past two decades. Indicative of these new expressions is a strongly revived interest in drawing and watercolor in addition to painting. Traditional and contemporary interpretations of objects, persons and landscapes is represented by over 80 artists in the exhibition, “American Realism: Selections from the Glenn C. Jans Collection.” Included will be the figurative masters of the American scene, Edward Hopper, Reginald Marsh, George Bellows and Thomas Hart Benton. The traditionalists, Fairfield Porter, Philip Pearlstein and Neil Welliver; the photorealist, Richard Estes, Chuck Close and Robert Bechtle; the well-known but very disparate artists, Carolyn Brady, William Beckman, John Stuart Ingle and PS. Gordon all will demonstrate the variety and divergence of realism today. This encompassing collection spotlights formal issues, as well as the interpretive and narrative viewpoints, which have surfaced as a vibrant contemporary movement. The exhibition continues through February 17 at the Boise Gallery of Art.

**Cervin Robinson**

Fort Worth. Robinson’s interest in architectural photography grew out of his work in the 1950s with the Historic American Buildings Survey. An exhibition of his work, “Cervin Robinson: Photographs, 1958–1983,” will be on view from January 18 to March 3 at the Amon Carter Museum. Robinson’s style is both documentary and romantic, serving as an inventory of architectural detail and a souvenir—especially in images of Beaux Arts buildings—of lost grandeur. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum will sponsor a lecture and film series on architecture.
Intros of Interest

Designer's Saturday

Billed as "the biggest and best" in the market event's 17-year history, Designer's Saturday took place in New York, October 11-15, in 51 showrooms and what seemed as many city blocks. The name is a misnomer; Designer's Saturday extends over four days, and Arts and Architecture found a number of pieces which should be of interest to everyone.

Ambiant. The Lexicon system by Michael Stewart has a framework of modular, medium-gauge steel tubes joined by cast aluminum connectors. The legs are turned from solid hardwood and threaded to allow for adjustment to uneven floors. Seat, back and arm cushions are made from thick, soft polyurethane and covered in Ambiant's own fabric or the customer's material. Table tops are available in glass, solid laminated hardwood, or ply wood.

Artemide. The Sintesi floor fixture is the newest addition to the already popular lighting series designed by Ernesto Gismondi. This particular model has a long swiveling arm which reaches to bring the incandescent lamp where it is most needed, as well as the signature hood with its wire heat shield. The metal body is available in white, black and red painted finishes.

Atelier International. Kick is a jaunty, three-leg table designed by Toshiyuki Kita. The tear-shape wood top, available in blue, yellow, red or black lacquer finishes, pivots and adjusts for height within nine centimeters. The base in grey-enamel steel has casters and it glides.

Haworth. System 300 is an economical new side chair that coordinates with the manufacturer's existing SystemSeating. The sled-base chair weighs only 28 to 30 pounds and can be moved easily from one station to another. The upholstered chair is available with or without arms; it has a base and back which flex for comfort.

Images. Walter is an overstuffed chair of unusual shape and weight, designed by Gropius in 1923 for the director of the Bauhaus in Weimar. The fully upholstered seat, back and arms are available in fabric or leather and are supported by a hardwood inner frame. The exposed frame and base of steel is available in a variety of finishes—natural, chrome, bronze plate, and ten colors of polyurethane.

Sunar Hauserman. The open office system by Niels Diffrient is one of the latest responses to the evolving electronic office. It is not merely a tinkered version of an existing product, but a meticulously researched, completely re-engineered system. It is noted for the size and accessibility of its cable space, and it includes acoustic and non-acoustic screens, completely adjustable tables and chairs, paper and wire management accessories, and an elegant lounge chair which has been compared favorably with the eternal one by Charles Eames.

ICF. Postmodernism has yielded a number of contemporary designs influenced by the pre-modern furniture of Mackintosh and Hoffman. The 1911 Black Chair is sympathetic to the spare but ornamented work of either man. This reproduction makes available what the manufacturer describes as one of the few high-back chairs with the proper curve and pitch to be comfortable; the designer is unfortunately lost to history. The frame is in solid beech with ebony stain standard; the seat is foam-filled and upholstered to specification.

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**Equa**

Equa, a fresh direction in ergonomic chair design, has recently been unveiled by Herman Miller. The family of chairs was created by designers Don Chadwick and Bill Stumpf in a three-year research, development and design process.

Equa chairs were designed to respond to the human body’s constantly changing posture by utilizing a flexible thermoplastic shell. The chairs provide continuous lumbar support as well as height flexibility.

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**Designer Rugs**

Inspired by an aerial view of the American landscape, architect Charles Gwathmey has created a rug entitled *Le Soleil Couchant* for V’Soske. The implied topography of the rug is achieved through a layering of overlapping earth tones and landscape forms which can be viewed from above or hung on a wall. Another collection of V’Soske rugs designed by Nob and Non features dramatically cut contours creating the illusion of changing depth and surface from different perspectives.

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**Design RS**

*Snaidero. Making kitchens* is an art. This is the philosophy of Snaidero International, an Italian manufacturer founded in 1946 but only recently introduced to the West Coast. Two new additions are Nuits, also finished in polyester resin, and Design RS, shown in white plastic laminate with neat blue trim. Snaidero is being welcomed in Redondo Beach by Ambienti.

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**Big Bath**

A new bath designed to accommodate two people in a very small space is now being manufactured by Water Jet. Called TwoDeep, this two person 60” x 30” x 27” whirlpool bath will fit spaces formerly limited to one person shallow bathtubs. TwoDeep is constructed of heavy duty fiberglass reinforced polyester resin and is available in more than 51 colors.

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**Designer Rugs**

*Le Soleil Couchant, Charles Gwathmey*

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**Metaphor for Many Things**

For the Italian futurists in the 1900s, a racing car expressed the beauty of speed; it was a symbol of the technology that would sweep away the past. Even the English thought so; in 1909, *The Wind in the Willows* extolled “the magnificent motor-car, immense, breath-snatching, passionate, with its pilot tense and hugging his wheel, possessing all earth and air for the fraction of a second...” Two ideas—raw power and speed; a luxurious conveyance for rich daredevils—captured the imagination of designers and artists for several decades.

Our love affair with the car has degenerated from the heroic to the humdrum; from visions of knights on fiery steeds to the reality of cans on a freeway conveyor belt. What’s lacking—in an age of polite taste and rational engineering—is the opportunity to cut a dash. “The Automobile and Culture,” a landmark exhibition that runs through January 6 at LA’s Temporary Contemporary, chronicles nine decades of the car as sculpture and the art it has inspired. In it we can relive a lost sense of adventure.

The exhibition interweaves cars and art works in chronological sequence. We see how swiftly the automobile evolved; from high-sprung horseless carriages with tiny motors, to huge and powerful machines. Early standouts include a low-slung 1913 Mercer Raceabout in bright yellow and polished brass; the 1925 Rolls-Royce Boattail Speedster, whose pale coachwork seems to float on flared black wings; grandest of all, a 1931 Bugatti Berline de Voyage, worthy of an emperor. The earliest art works on show are by Dürer and Leonardo; the first of modern times is an 1896 lithograph by Toulouse Lautrec.

In Lautrec’s work, the car is implied; what you see is the driver—a marvelously theatrical figure in cap and goggles, leaning into the wind. Later work is equally expressive: paintings of cars leaping over hills and racing airplanes; Giacomo Balla’s *Plastic Construction of Noise and Speed*; Lartigue’s photograph of a race, in which wheels and spectators are squeezed out of shape by the rapidity of motion.

The Depression shattered this naïve faith in material progress. The photographers who travelled the country for the Farm Security Administration—such as Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans and Margaret Bourke-White—saw the car as a reminder of survival and despair; wealth shamed by poverty. Here are jalopies and junk yards; angry slogans and anxious faces; the enforced mobility of hungry Americans. In jarring contrast to this social realism are displayed the luxury cars of the 1930s. The 1933 Pierce-Arrow Silver Arrow is the epitome of refined decadence. An experimental 1938 Phantom Corsair is a bizarre blend of black whale and Buck Rogers. Two models achieve a fusion of elegance and power: the 1934 Packard Sport Phaeton and the 1936 Mercedes Special Roadster.

World War II was the great divide. Postwar Europe had no taste for ostentation; even its glamor cars—the first Ferrari, the gullwing Mercedes—are toylike in scale. America became the home of the regal auto, and the 1951 customized Mercury captures the exuberance of the decade.

The art also begins to grow in scale and audacity, incorporating cars and billboard imagery. Edward Kienholz’ *Back Seat Dodge* (which scandalized Los Angeles 20 years ago) was a forerunner. Here, too, is James Crook’s *Pegasus*, in which a winged horse bursts through the roof of a red and blue Chevy; Scott Prescott’s armored *Ghetto Blaster*; and Salvatore Scarpitta’s racing car/video installation.

Everyone has an opinion on cars; “The Automobile and Culture” sensibly avoids dogmatic statements. Guest curator Walter Hopps has created a provocative, eclectic show that omits some obvious choices (the Cord, the first Volkswagen, a Loewy Studebaker) to include the rare and unexpected. It overcomes local bias; freeways, tail fins and drive-ins are downplayed; and Europe is generously represented. Best of all, the exhibition, designed by Chermayeff and Geismar Associates, is wonderfully spacious and free-flowing.

Inevitably, perhaps, the early cars upstage the art. Isolated and spotlit, they have a mystical aura—the machine as god—that draws every eye. Their size and refinement of detail are astounding. By 1960, the balance had tilted the other way; even the sci-fi Lamborghini Countach seems tame. So unsparing is the contemporary auto that artists turn their gaze backwards, or create multiple images such as a fan of overlapping doors, a stack of crushed bodies, a procession of tiny models. Once embraced as the spirit of the future, the car becomes a metaphor for chaos and destruction.

Michael Webb
Cotton Exchange

Abandoned buildings are often inhabited by ghosts. So when Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) opened an abandoned office building downtown to any artists who wanted to participate, it wasn’t surprising that ghosts turned up. The Cotton Exchange show, open during May and best experienced at the opening party, had a funhouse atmosphere. There were dark closets containing surprises. There were blinking lights, and there was an inordinate amount of work that made noises as one ventured along the hallways. The work was enveloping, pulling the viewer into one fantastic environment after another. It was Gothic horror, full of humor and anger, done tongue-in-cheek with a freedom, or abandon, that denied the rigidors of a gallery or museum context.

In fact, the salient characteristic of the Cotton Exchange show was the lack of constraint. It ignored any rules about format and presentation, and offered relative anonymity in a context of ephemera and cheap materials. Experimentation in the art world has been eclipsed by careerism in this town of portfolios; and it was refreshing to consider a format in which artists could relax and play.

There are other contexts in which to view this show. Inevitably, one goes back to the historical precedents. The granddaddy of artist-run free-for-alls was the Times Square show of 1980. Collaborative Projects, or Colab, a political artist group based in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, had begun guerrilla installations in the city, most notably the Real Estate show. It criticized local landlords, and led both to the artists’ speedy eviction from the site and the offer of a semipermanent alternative site. (This became ABC No Rio, an artist-run venue for alternative programming.)

Subsequently, Colab moved into Times Square. For the month of May 1980, artists virtually lived at Seventh Avenue and 41st Street in a donated space that had previously housed a bus depot and massage parlor. It’s a seedy neighborhood; the artists invited the neighbors to watch and participate in their works. The show was informally structured, uncurated, democratic, and, as it crested the wave of expressionism that was breaking, it introduced a stylistic trashiness that has since become routine.

The Times Square show marked a second generation of artists’ self-distribution. During the Seventies, artists provided alternatives within the gallery system and were heavily funded by government agencies. In the Reagan years of tight money, artists are providing one-shot extravaganzas that respond to the lack of finances. The most visually stunning of these spectacles was the Terminal show in Brooklyn last October.

The Terminal Building was built in 1917 as an Army depot. The space is impressive: a central atrium rises eight stories from an interior railway to a skylight. (The architect, Cass Gilbert, also designed the Woolworth Building and thus, at one time, had both the tallest and, with the Terminal Building, the largest buildings in the world to his credit.) Artists were offered 300,000 of the five million square feet of the complex as a prelude by investors to renovating the structure and inviting industrial tenants.

The Terminal show was nominally curated, in that proposals were considered and certain artists invited to participate, but with some 600 entrants, any curatorial imprint faded when faced with the diversity and energy of the works. Much of the art responded to the space and its political implications. Performances during the opening weekend and the festive energy of the installation lent an air of event and spectacle to the exhibition.

The Cotton Exchange show imitated these precedents. It was run under the umbrella of an existing alternative space, for which it functioned as a membership drive. A committee of artists labored intensively to stage the show. Joy Silverman, the director of LACE, had previously opened an abandoned hotel for a show by Colab in Washington D.C. in May, 1983. In

Virginia Hoge’s second floor installation

Anonymous in context of cheap material

Los Angeles, Silverman threw her energies into coordinating the diverse resources of the downtown real estate-government complex. LACE obtained the use of a government-owned structure at Third and Main Streets that was scheduled to be razed to make way for the biggest state building in California. The Cotton Exchange show was no quick fix. The Community Redevelopment Agency sank thousands of dollars and countless hours into qualifying the building for a temporary use permit. Neither was the show intended to effect social change, as Colab’s shows have been. The Cotton Exchange building shares an intersection with the Rescue Mission, which has bread lines of bums outside its doors by day and neat rows of indigents sleeping on its sidewalks by night. Some of the artists chose to deal with the outside world, notably Fred Tomaselli, whose alleyway in one passage on the ground floor recreated the filth and decrepitude of the neighborhood. When a visitor walked past it, a pair of severed legs dangling from a flayed spinal column jumped to the accompaniment of a loud, rude noise. Virginia Hoge came closest to evoking an experience of the building prior to aesthetic invasion. A hallway on the second floor had been lined with piles of empty hangers, chiming faintly in the slight breeze that wafted through an industrial fan set in the wall at one end of the corridor. For the show, Hoge assembled several racks of flower-print polyester ladies’ blouses, still in their protective plastic bags, along with two fans aimed towards the shirts.

Brett Goldstone placed a near lifesize chicken wire figure stuffed with junk food wrappers behind an extending restaurant sign. When activated, the figure’s forearms moved between table and mouth (the head consisted of a wide funnel), simulating the fast food experience. Goldstone is from arcadian New Zealand, and takes a dim, distanced view of conspicuous consumption. He uses junk, especially scrap metal, to make his figures.

The kinetic pieces were fascinating. Technical invention is a California habit, and the Cotton Exchange show featured numerous inventions. These included a stairwell sculpture of water running from a pipe, the sound overlaid with recordings (the piece was discontinued because the artist had allowed no outlet for the water, which began seeping through the walls). A room lined in black plastic contained a backlit ghost in traditional white sheet; stencilled shapes were projected on the ceiling while a tape of curious sounds played. Rick Hink lined a room with television sets behind gauze shrouds; the silent, moving screen images shone through cut-out silhouettes of a factory, a palm tree, a swimming pool; accompanying was the sound of running cars. Dan Chapman piped in a short, whimsical tape loop that became more sullen and ominous the longer it was repeated.

The Cotton Exchange show high-
lighted the loud and raucous by setting it in an environment that was full of distractions, fragmentation and shifts of context. This is the experience that contemporary painting tries to bring into a gallery context as an analogue for modern life. Here the kinetic and aural pieces were framed at the expense of painting, which, when kept within boundaries, seemed sedate and faded into the background, and when let loose on the walls tended to dissipate and look sloppy. The most effective presentation of painting found an architectural niche to support the work. The show demonstrated how dependent modern painting is on white walls and isolation.

The Cotton Exchange show was thrills and chills. It was a hodgepodge: what gallery could have logically supported Seth Seiderman’s (real) soup kitchen and voter registration booth? The show was ephemeral; it quickly became the record of an event (the installation and opening) and seemed abandoned well before the Health and Safety Department closed it down following a small fire. It was throwaway, exploratory, unfinished, well attended. Those qualities were its strengths, and they excepted the show from the artworld norm.

Kathi Norklun writes regularly about art in LA Weekly.

**Campus Sculpture**

**Monumental contemporary** sculpture has come to signify two current trends in art patronage—support from the corporate sector, and the art-in-public-places programs of governmental art agencies or institutions. Many an urban park or inner-city plaza is adorned with massive pieces of sculpture purchased with funds from municipal coffers (usually mandated as percent-for-art allocations) or the corporation art acquisition budget.

A third trend of patronage for large sculpture has developed in places around the country, often combining public and private resources and conditioned by an environment that differs from the urban public sector. The university campus has become a place for art. Its role is viewed primarily as didactic, as an instrument for acquainting and educating students in the appropriate academic setting. On university campuses around the country, temporary and permanent works of art (often sculptural projects) have been created by visiting artists or generated by artist-in-resident programs. Some campuses are endowed with private collections of sculpture (e.g., the Franklin Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA); but an aggressive program of campus sculpture acquisition is unique to only a few institutions. Two such programs currently exist on the west coast: at Western Washington University in Bellingham, a few miles from the Canadian border, and at the University of California, San Diego; in La Jolla, a short distance from Mexico.

A significant common feature of these two collections is the involvement of private patrons. The campus collection at Western Washington, begun in the late 1960s and acquired over the years by various means, was given major financial impetus during the late 1970s by Seattle art patron Virginia Bloedel Wright. At UCSD, the collection was initiated in 1982 by an endowment established by La Jolla businessman James DeSilva from his family-owned Stuart Foundation.

The Outdoor Sculpture Museum of Western Washington University is devoted to large-scale, site-situated object sculpture, and its guiding philosophy is “to have major works of art placed in everyday campus surroundings, with a didactic as well as aesthetic purpose,” according to Lawrence Hansen, the organizer of the collection and a WWU art professor. Despite its nomenclature, the WWU collection is less a “museum without walls” and more a showcase for big sculpture.

The philosophy and program of the Stuart Collection at UCSD goes further beyond the availability of major artworks for didactic interaction and seems to have a more diverse and aesthetic component. It benefits from the opportunity to begin with an organized, comprehensive direction and focus, and a single source of funding, whereas at WWU the collection evolved from more humble beginnings through various stages and degrees of development. The commissioned projects for the Stuart Collection are, to a greater extent, site-specific, and projects currently in the planning or negotiation stages will in some cases be interactive with other systems of visual display (i.e., computer graphics).

Western Washington’s first major piece of outdoor sculpture, Isamu Noguchi’s Skyviewing Sculpture, was commissioned in 1969 by the architect of a campus building and plaza where the piece is located. Delicately poised on three ungainly round pedestals of red brick, the large, black, three-sided cube has become the university’s logo. The next two projects, an environmentally kinetic “steam piece” built in 1971 by Robert Morris and set into the outer campus grounds, and the four-part array of cantilevered triangular Log Ramps built in 1974 by Lloyd Hamrol, resulted from their tenures as visiting instructors.

This small but important collection came to the attention of the trustees of the Virginia Wright Fund, which had been set up in 1974 to purchase and place works of art in western Washington state. The first gift of the Wright Fund was Mark DiSuvero’s enormous I-beam tripod placed in 1975 on a grassy campus plaza. Originally in rusty Corten steel with an attached swing, DiSuvero’s For Handel is now painted industrial orange-red. Other outright gifts from the Wright Fund, approved by a campus committee of administrators, professors and students, include an Anthony Caro welded-steel sculpture and minimalist works by Donald Judd and Robert Maki. Richard Serra’s triangle of leaning Corten panels and Nancy Holt’s concentric Rock Rings of basalt slabs and cardinaly aligned portals were acquired with matching NEA funds.

As the collection grew so did its reputation, especially among artists. Beverly Pepper asked for and received a campus commission (funded by the Washington State Arts Commission) for her small, totemic steel sculpture. A ground-hugging concrete and copper wedge by Mia Westerlund-Roos rests on its flank under a fir tree, on extended loan from the artist and the Leo Castelli Gallery. Since the Wright Fund is currently exhausted, Hansen has expressed hope that future sculptural acquisitions will be manifested as long-term loans.

The Stuart Collection has a multi-million dollar budget, a ten-year license granted by the UCSD regents to place artworks on campus, an advisory committee of art-world heavyweights, and a dynamic director in the person of Mary Beebe. She expects that three to five major pieces of art will be commissioned each year. So far, works commissioned and installed since mid-1983 include Niki de Saint Phalle’s Sun God, a festive, colorfully...
The Stuart Collection, though in the early stages of development, holds the promise for environmentally sensitive, materially diverse and aesthetically expansive projects—as evidenced by works commissioned or planned. The projects evade stylistic classification. The WWU collection is heavily weighted towards 1970s mainstream minimalism, and even in the case of the environmentally-oriented projects these works stress their formal and material autonomy. It is in the process of selection and the latitude of experimentation that the determinations of formal and aesthetic differences of these two collections is made. James DeSilva has given the collection committee a free hand in commissioning projects of their choice. At WWU, the selected donations of work by the Virginia Wright Fund are more predicated on her tastes and interests.

But both collections agree in basic concept. A commitment to the ongoing aspect of forming a collection is vital, more so than matters of aesthetic coherence. The role of the university in promoting the education and awareness of contemporary art is also vital, and these collections should function as a resource for students and scholars. Virtually all institutions of higher learning are dependent on private contributions; if the alumni can pay for a football stadium, then these sources can be tapped for aesthetic additions to the campus fabric. The university is an ideal environment for sculpture collections to flourish, for not only is there the available space and settings for art, the campus is a laboratory as well as a museum for all kinds of knowledge.

Ron Glowen is a Seattle-based writer who is a new contributing editor to Arts + Architecture.
Minnesota’s Case Study

Winners of the New American House competition were announced last June by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Co-sponsored by the college, the NEA Design Arts Program, and Dayton’s department store, the competition drew 346 entries from 37 states and 3 foreign countries.

Harvey Sherman, competition director, and Jeffrey Ollswang, professional advisor, named the following winners: for best design, Troy West, architect, and Jacqueline Leavitt, urban planner, both of Wakefield, Rhode Island; for second place, Jill Stoner, architect, of Philadelphia; for third place, Carlo Pelliccia, architect, of Charlottesville, Virginia. The best design award was withheld because the entry violated the competition’s presentation guidelines. West and Leavitt’s floor plans bled across two of the three presentation boards, instead of being contained on the center board as required. “You don’t lose $6,000 every day,” said West. “But what I want to do more than anything in the world is to build these houses and I’m happy that’s going to happen.”

The purpose of the competition was to design housing to meet the needs of the increasing number of Americans who live in non-traditional households. As proposed in program scenarios, these include single parents with children, “empty nesters,” and two unrelated, cohabiting adults.

The competition also addressed the needs of a growing number of Americans who choose to work at home. “The New American House is actually reviving an old idea in a new context,” said jurist Thomas Hodne, “the mom-and-pop store on the corner, the tailor shop storefront with family quarters in the rear, the family doctor using the parlor as a waiting room.”

As required by the program, competitors designed six attached units for an urban infill site, each with approximately 1000 square feet and accommodating no more than three occupants. The site is an actual one in the Whittier neighborhood of Minneapolis, a diverse residential community south of downtown.

The best design by West and Leavitt spread a row of six houses across the middle of the site. Each unit has a dumbbell-shaped footprint which provides natural separation between a living and working space by means of a spine containing cooking and toilet facilities. The dumbbell encloses a court; parking is at the front with a garden in the rear.

The house design seems very traditional and brings to mind several plausible models. The doughnut English terraced house is recalled in the narrow street front and the inclusion of a utility building in back; the Philadelphia Trinity rowhouse, in the narrow, three-story stack of rooms.

It is the intention of the college to find a developer who will construct this winning project on an undesignated lot in the Whittier neighborhood. Negotiations have begun between the sponsors and the architects to contract for design development.

Judges for the competition were Michael Brill of BOSTI, Buffalo; Thomas Hodne of Thomas Hodne Architects, Minneapolis; David Stea of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Cynthia Weese of Weese Hickey Weese Architects, Chicago; James Wines of SITE Projects, New York City.

Hommage à Mondrian

In keeping with a tradition that each of their hotels be decorated according to an artistic theme, Severn and Arnold Ashkenazy of the L’Ermitage Hotel Group recently commissioned artist Yaacov Agam to create a site-specific work for a 145-foot-tall building in West Hollywood. Agam began last May to transform the 100,000-square-foot surface of the Le Mondrian hotel.

Titled Hommage à Mondrian, in honor of the leader of the De Stijl movement, the work draws on the Dutch artist’s distinctive vocabulary of strong orthogonals, basic forms and primary colors. The execution requires 490 gallons of paint in 54 colors.

On five sides of the building, Hommage attempts to trace Mondrian’s evolution from the austerity of his early period to the animation of his American works; Agam’s personal style is represented on the sixth side. Corrugated attachments reproduce Agam’s “kinetic” paintings.

The Ashkenazy’s began to consider Agam after finding an article in Time magazine describing the artist as one of Mondrian’s leading successors. According to Severn, Agam’s conception for Le Mondrian, his conceptual ties to De Stijl, and his repertory of site-specific works made him the strongest choice.
Lifestyle Winery

A design competition to create a new winery in California’s Napa Valley was announced last June by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The unique estate, Domaine Clovis Pegase, will integrate an extensive private collection of contemporary American and European art with the age-old practice of wine-making.

Architects, artists, landscape architects, and other design professionals were invited to participate, and entering teams included both an architect and an artist working in collaboration. From an initial submission of qualifications and statement of design approach, ten design teams were interviewed and five finalists selected. These were: Baty and Mack with Peter Saari; Michael Graves with Edward Schmidt; Robert Mangurian with James Turrell; Stanley Saitowitz, Toby Levy and Pat O’Brien with Elyn Zimmerman; and Dan Solomon, Barbara Stauffacher Solomon and Ricardo Bofill with Ed Carpenter.

The finalists were awarded $5000 each to prepare, within a 60-day period, conceptual plans, drawings and a model for the project. Authors of the winning concept will have an opportunity to enter into a contract to execute the winery design.

The museum’s Department of Architecture and Design will show the work of the five design teams in an exhibition scheduled to coincide with the national convention of the American Institute of Architects in June, 1985.

The winery design competition was conducted with the professional guidance of Donald J. Stastny AIA. Judges were: Mary Livingstone Beebe, Director of the Stuart Collection, UCSF; architect/film-maker Craig Hoggett; art collector/restaurateur Modesto Lanzone; vintner Robert Mondavi; and landscape architect Hideko Sasaki. The winning team had not yet been selected at Arts and Architecture’s press time.

In Progress

O’Neill & Perez of San Antonio has been named associate architect by Charles Moore, of Moore Ruble Yudell, who is designing a new educational building for the San Antonio Art Institute. O’Neill & Perez will assist the California-based architects during the construction stage of the new 50,000-square-foot complex adjacent to the school’s current facilities on the grounds of the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill has been awarded the task of creating one of the largest business centers in the West, Harbor Bay Business Park, to be located on the shore of San Francisco Bay. According to the announcement by Harbor Bay Associates, developers of the 425-acre park in Alameda, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of San Francisco was selected from a group of four architectural and planning experts. This group included two other San Francisco firms, Genesl and Associates/Architects and Kaplan/McLaughlin/Diaz, and Leason Pomery Associates of Orange County.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill has been awarded the responsibility for the final refinement of the site plan. In addition, it will be given the contract to create the first major build-to-suit structure in the park. At the same time, Leason Pomery Associates will be in charge of creating the first major speculative complex.

Construction has begun on the first new building on New York’s Wall Street in 15 years. Designed by Welton Becket Associates, international architects, planners and engineers, the $200 million, 36-story structure is being developed by London and Leeds Corporation to serve as the new Barclays Bank headquarters.

The free-standing, rectangular tower with its chamfered corners and setback top continues and reinforces the street’s traditional canyon image, according to Becket. Each corner of the tower sets back on the diagonal, creating a series of balconies and terraces as the building rises to its crowned roofline.
Clear Agenda for Change

Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work and Family Life
by Dolores Hayden
270 pp., illustrated, $17.95 cloth.

Dolores Hayden is part of a long line of Anglo-American social critics and designers who view the built environment as a catalyst for social change. In Redesigning the American Dream, she presents ideas for housing and social networks that address the increasing gap between people’s needs and existing housing. She proposes variations in form and organization which arise from an artful synthesis of previous American housing concepts.

Hayden outlines and analyzes three strands of housing ideologies: those which have advocated the individual single family home and women’s place as a homemaker, those which have supported collective and neighborhood-oriented alternatives to women’s individual household labor, and those which have supported the abolition of women’s domestic sphere in favor of industrialization. Hayden finds the most possibilities in the collective solutions first developed by the “material feminists” at the turn of the century.

She recognizes that the often inward-looking and neighborhood-limited designs of the material feminists need to be updated to incorporate such realities as consumerism, working parents, the increasing role of technology, and the goal of broadening men’s participation in the domestic sphere. She proposes a redesign of a typical suburban block that addresses these issues. The design provides for common services and public spaces in backyard areas, while retaining private spaces through selective alterations to individual homes.

Redesigning the American Dream covers territory familiar to readers of Hayden’s earlier works, in an anecdotal style designed to appeal to a wider, non-academic audience. Occasionally her vision is too tightly focused to appeal to those not already converted, as in her tale of two women taking a walk through a typical urban environment filled with sexist imagery. Some examples illustrate the point well, such as a semi-naked woman on a billboard which can only be interpreted as a degrading image in the service of consumerism. However, a sculpted relief of a woman on a building is a more complex image. Most passersby would ignore it, since the built environment is often taken for granted; some would consider it a welcome bit of architectural adornment, some might view it as a celebration of the female form, and then some would agree that it presented an insulting image of women. Usually, though, Hayden maintains the delicate balance between acknowledging divergent needs and opinions and presenting an uncompromising view of existing problems and a clear agenda for change capable of motivating action.

Hayden’s book provides a wealth of practical design ideas to meet her social goals; and she is currently putting some of these ideas to the reality test. Hayden is a participant in the development of a 48-unit project in south central Los Angeles geared to single mothers working at an adjacent hospital. Completion of this project is hoped to serve as an example of housing that meets the real needs of working mothers. But the real advance will come when this form of housing will be considered the norm instead of a unique prototype. Redesigning the American Dream helps us visualize that environment and move us closer to its realization.

Laura Chase is a planner who is currently writing a book on Los Angeles public housing.

Of Limited Significance

Mizner’s Florida
by Donald Curl
240 pp., illustrated, $30.00 cloth.

I suspect that the “Age of Communication” in which we are supposed to be living is responsible for the death of modernism. The child has killed the father, and we’re back where we started. Now, however, history and cultural precedents have become the commodity of content required to fill our voracious media appetites. Apparently out to help avoid any embarrassing information shortages, social historians and cultural anthropologists (as well as journalists) are rummaging around in architecture, looking
for good stories... after all, don’t inquiring minds want to know?

Mizner’s Florida is the result of such an effort. The author, Donald Curl, professor of history at Florida Atlantic University, has drawn upon the work of Christina Orr, who in 1977 mounted an exhibition on Florida architect Addison Mizner (1862–1933) for the Norton Gallery at the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach. In his introduction, Curl writes that the show captured wide attention and stimulated new interest in Mizner’s work. Alluding to postmodernism, Curl concludes “architects, bored with utilitarian architecture and willing to experiment with historical styles, saw Mizner’s work with new respect. Mizner’s architecture once again appeared fresh and innovative and worthy of consideration.”

Anyway, Mizner is a good story. He is credited with introducing Spanish style architecture to Florida, and was one of America’s most eminent society architects during his time. His heyday began in 1916 with his Spanish style Everglades Club in Palm Beach designed for sewing machine heir Paris Singer. It ended in 1933, marked by perhaps his most interesting building, Casa Cece da Sol, in St. Petersburg. Between these years Mizner designed mansions and commercial buildings for the very rich in Palm Beach and planned Boca Raton, in all the heavily decorated, over-scaled Spanish style that was his trademark.

Curl traces Mizner through his California boyhood, his early travels with his diplomat father through Central America, to his brief university experience in Spain at the University of Salamanca. After four years of apprenticeship with architect Willis Polk in San Francisco, in 1897 Mizner began a series of adventures in the Sierras, Hawaii, the Yukon, Australia, and Guatemala. These stories highlight the book, casting Mizner as a washboard world traveler. In 1904 he settled in New York and used family connections to establish himself in east coast society. He practiced there until 1918, doing period houses until an injury prompted his friend Singer to take him to Palm Beach to recuperate. It was there and then that he began his significant work.

The author goes on to detail Mizner’s life in Florida. The book’s value is in its glimpse into one man’s life and the society in which he lived. Until recently, socio-cultural determinants of architectural form have not been given their due by historians. However, though we have the information here, we are left to our own conclusions. Such are the shortcomings of a social historian writing about an architect. The book is very readable as a biography, peppered with candid quotes such as “… there was nothing to the architectural business but proportions,” but it is lacking in terms of architecture. For instance, there is no comparative analysis of floor plans, only descriptive accounts and the fact that they met the needs of his clients. Graphically, it’s frustrating to have plans but no elevations or sections, just postcard-type photos of the buildings.

The larger question of Mizner’s place in the context of architectural history is left begging. What he symbolized was changed by the depression, high taxation, the rise of modernism, and a trend toward less showy displays of wealth. His introduction of the Spanish style to southern Florida is certainly a contribution to the region, and perhaps his manipulation of scale and ornament predicted current practices, but his heavily literal forms and generally prosaic floor plans rarely lifted his work beyond the picturesque. And in architecture today, fragments of style and period are all even the rich can afford. Mizner’s derivative style, wildly expensive then, would be prohibitive today. One is left to conclude that, on the whole, Mizner’s significance is limited, and that he was probably an anachronism even in his own day, even to his peers.

Bob Easton is principal of his own design firm in Santa Barbara, and is co-author of Native American Architecture (Oxford, 1985).

Le Merveilleux


John Bernard Myers has been involved in the New York art world for the past 40 years; as one of the editors of View magazine, as the founder of the Tibor de Nagy Gallery and later the John Bernard Myers Gallery, and as a friend to many members of the art world. In his autobiography Tracking the Marvelous, he has given us a portrait of the most fascinating period of American art, 1940-1975, when it (specifically New York art) underwent a sudden and rather convulsive escalation from isolation and neglect to its current position at the center of a big-money art market.

Myers’ book is reminiscent of Ambroise Vollard’s Recollections of a Picture Dealer, published in 1936. Vollard, the first dealer to give shows to Cezanne, Picasso and Matisse, left a chatty account of life in Paris at the beginning of this century, wandering from anecdote to anecdote, interspersed with descriptions of the people he had known. Similarly, Tracking the Marvelous is more a series of reminiscences than a careful reconstruction of a period.

Myers describes himself as an ardent gossip, and his book displays the attractions this approach holds. It has an amiable tone in which personalities and humor predominate, giving us plenty of intimate, often fascinating scenes. There is Charles Ford, one of the publishers of View, rhapsodizing over Sarte: “Ah just love that play Huis-Clos. It’s so perfect for Ruthie [his actress sister].” When the offices of View are closed, Myers throws out a group of black and white drawings by Arshile Gorky because at the time he thought them of no value. There is a visit to Joseph Cornell’s Utopia Parkway home, where the artist lived with his mother and disabled brother. Cornell served lunch (cottage cheese, toast, bologna, Jello, milk and Lorna Doone cookies) and took Myers to his studio, in the garage (“I felt as though I were entering Aladdin’s cave.”). And a hilarious story is told about the Chilenan painter, Matta, who was so unnerved when he heard about his wife giving birth to twins that he instantly developed two black eyes and abandoned his family. Edouard Rotidi called it “the first case of an authentic stigmata since the blessed Saint Teresa of Lisieux received hers.” These are typical of the stories contained in the book—affecting to the most part and never very scandalous.

Perhaps the best Myers offers us is a portrait of an art world which has largely vanished. There is an enthusiasm for the making of art and the ideas attending it, a feeling he portrays in New York of the 1940s and 50s. Naturally, the grass always appears greener in an effective memoir, but there is an energy and optimism which the artists and dealers displayed which makes a resident of the current carnivorous art world quite sentimental. (Lest we come too nostalgic, Myers also makes us vividly aware of how tastes change. In 1945, Charles Ford and Parker Tyler were promoting the neo-romantic, Pavel Tchelitchew, as the greatest living painter.) Myers himself subscribes to this nostalgia; he ends the book after a lengthy account of the Rothko court case, an affair in which he interestingly takes the part of Frank Lloyd, Theodore Stamos and the other defendants who ultimately lost the trial. For Myers, the progress of the art world he has known is one from innocence to corruption, from collecting and dealing art for the love of it to an art world where paintings are seen merely as commodities.

Myers is not a writer, and his book, like Vollard’s, is more interesting for the nuggets of information it holds than for its literary value. Some of his writing habits are endearing, such as his charming, old-fashioned way of describing people’s lovers as “special friends.” Others get in the way and he falls into many traps which beset a novice. Anecdotes are repeated; we are told twice about Myers’ reasons to dislike Lawrence Alloway, twice about The Tiger’s Eye (a publication which centered around the Parsons Gallery), and twice about how Bernard and Becky Reis helped the Surrealists who fled Europe during World War II. Clichés are used abundantly and Myers’ narrative often seems to wander off the track. This is particularly maddening in the recounting of the Rothko trial, which meanders from telling part of the circumstances to an extended description of someone’s history to an event in the trial, all without any seeming order or chronology. Responsibility for this disorganization can be shared by both author and editor. Typographical errors riddle the book and index, in which Charles and James Merrill are listed as if they were one person.

However, what Myers has written is valuable: a first-hand account of the New York art world during a period of tremendous change. That world has a notoriously short memory, and while we cannot return to the innocence Myers portrays so lovingly, it does not hurt to be reminded of a time when the emphasis in galleries was on the art, not the enormous prices paid for it.

Tom Knechtel is an artist who teaches history at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles.
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John Entenza, editor and publisher of *Arts and Architecture* magazine from 1939-1962 and director of the Graham Foundation from 1960-1971, died on April 27. He was 78 years old. The following reminiscences and photographs recall his life and years at the magazine.

His goals were modest but few people affected Los Angeles more. A laissez-faire moralist, he gave the city a new and more urbane image of itself. He was too civilized to impose a program on others but nevertheless started the most successful architectural program in America: Case Study Houses. He was never regional or provincial; the first thing he did when he bought *Arts and Architecture* in 1938 was to remove the name, California, from the title. He also eliminated most of the descriptions of buildings, except the program, materials and site solution, to accompany the plan and photographs.

Just as the magazine, after being redesigned by Herbert Matter, fit into no standard-size envelope, the contents, after being revised by Entenza with Charles and Ray...
Eames to include furniture, industrial design, fabrics etc., fit no ready-made audience. As thin as a tortilla and as sleek as a Bugatti, it created a new audience from among the visually and intellectually initiated. Arts and Architecture was perhaps the only magazine whose appeal was almost entirely linear.

Between the sparse advertisements in the front and back pages were the regular columns. Longest were Peter Yates' music pieces, aimed at readers who listened to Bartok and Ives at the "Roof" concerts held in the small concert hall R.M. Schindler had built on top of the Yates house in Silverlake.

With its one paid editorial assistant and unpaid photographers and contributors, the magazine favored bright young architects over the middle-aged, established ones. It could not compete with the eastern architectural journals. Instead, it was a discoverer of talent; young architects considered it a mark of great distinction to have been published in Arts and Architecture.

But the magazine was also a breeder of talent. As a rallying point for all the arts, it created the climate in which good work flourished. Students from Art Center went to Entenza's office with an idea for a cover and he listened. He listened to everyone, to young architects who didn't know how they were going to keep their offices open, to students from Japan or Argentina.

He could be caustic. A draftsman came one day to confide that he was the real designer of a house that Entenza had published, and asked for the credits to be corrected. I will do this, John said, when you bring me a house I can publish from your own office. But I don't have the money to open my own office, said the draftsman. You are lucky, John said, you get to design a house while your employer is hustling to pay your salary.

The Case Study House program was so successful that cottage industries sprang up to produce appropriate accessories. The houses were unique because they incorporated the amenities of high-cost houses while their floor plans reflected the demise of the live-in servant, even the daily cleaning woman. The influx of women into war plants had forever dried up the source; gardens as well as houses were planned for low maintenance.

By 1962, when Entenza could not carry on his work as editor while heading the Graham Foundation in Chicago, he sold Arts and Architecture to David Travers. The dream had faded that the aircraft industry would turn after the war to the production of prefabricated housing elements, the frame and walls ordered for a three- or six-room house as needed. But Entenza had made his point—good design was a stable commodity. The postwar hit-and-run builders lost because of the standards Entenza had set for the small house.

By 1962, Arts and Architecture had fixed Los Angeles indelibly on the design-elite map. One indication of the high esteem in which England held the publication was that bibliographers listed San Francisco as the home base of the magazine, an error rooted in the conviction that originality flowers in close proximity to centers of established culture; in the presidios not the pueblos.

Esther McCoy

I always asked myself the question, and never got a fully satisfactory answer, why John Entenza didn't write more. His command of language was surely one of the most striking things about him, and it kept impressing you the longer you knew him. And all of that gift—the salt of his wit, his
insights—seemed to manifest itself with the most remarkable extemporaneous ease. He certainly enjoyed it himself. He took the same pleasure in turning a phrase as would the vainest professional writer. Moreover, he had plenty of experience with the literary arts, not only as someone who knew intimately the belles lettres of architecture, but who read applications for Graham fellowships from countless critics and historians and who, shortly after World War II, published and edited a magazine, Arts and Architecture, that was virtually without peer as a source of informed thought on all the contemporary arts.

My suspicion is that John was precisely not vain enough to put his ideas regularly on record. He preferred letting others do it, indeed encouraging them to do it, as he encouraged so many people, in the most tireless way, to make the most of their creative and scholarly talents. He was the best kind of patron, as tough as he was generous.

I found a piece of his writing which will let him speak for himself: the short tribute he paid to Mies Van der Rohe when the Chicago chapter of the AIA awarded him the gold medal. We could fit these very words about Mies, without too much strain, to John himself:

It is unlikely that any man can arrive at a moment such as this without some deep scar tissue, and we must honor him for his ability to withstand life, as well as for his major victories over it. And it might just be, that in the perverse nature of things as they are, a creative man needs to function in this kind of boiling biological broth in order to refine and distill his attitudes about the real issues as he sees them. It is just possible that in some cases a solution is not really arrived at so much as it is provoked. And no one can ever really know until the deed is largely done anyway.

In a day tending toward conformity, he remains a most literate man, with an uncompromising rationale, who has never asked to be forgiven anything, who has shown an Olympian indifference to anyone who would presume to make excuses for him.

He has refused to speak, when in his judgment there was nothing to say, and has permitted very little to be put down by way of characterizing material. I am sure, however, that there have been wonderful evenings of great unrecorded conversation, awash in a river of double gibsons, and lost forever.

Certainly there have been several of his contemporaries who have made thunder as shakers and movers, in order to get the best out of their moment in time and place, but none of them have done all that he has done with his special kind of light; with a logic at the highest level of meaning, with an intellect making its points so precisely that it develops a progression from fact to the inevitability of reason and on to the exquisite balance of poetry.

Franz Schulze, art critic

Architectural magazines have never been conspicuous for their critical attitude, restraining themselves, usually, to an informative activity that reflects the prevailing trends promoted by the most successful architects of the moment.

One of the few welcome exceptions was John Entenza's Arts and Architecture. I met John for the first time when he was its editor in California, and I was impressed by his strong personality which was reflected in his editorial policy.

In contrast with the bland reporting attitude of most other publications, he always devoted some space for commentaries and criticisms of the projects included and of the state of the art. Instead of insisting on the presentation of the work of renowned architects, his magazine had distinction and flair for his devotion to the discovery of new talents. Many young architects in California and elsewhere had their work published for the first time in John's journal.

I was lucky enough to have some of my early Mexican projects presented by him, and when he found that I was born in Spain he developed a kind of warmer affinity toward me because he was very proud of his own Spanish ancestry. Entenza is a well-known name among the nobility of Aragon in Spain and his natural disposition to an aristocratic attitude in life might have been reinforced by the belief in the high rank of his ancestors. He was, in the first place, a true gentleman.

His witty mind and sometimes caustic remarks may have occasionally displeased the consecrated stars of the profession, but he was kind and generous with promising personalities that his acute judgment and instinct often detected.

He was given a well-deserved appointment in Chicago as head of the Graham
Foundation where he was in a position to provide an even greater service for national and international talents. Thus, in his last active years he continued earning the respect and gratitude of many architects.

Felix Candela, architect

After John Entenza moved to La Jolla, we often lunched during my California visits. John was a man of habit; the lunches were patterned—always on the garden terrace of La Valencia Hotel, always with one scotch and water, always eggs Benedict.

And after every lunch John would ritually walk me, arm-in-arm, to a nearby shop to present me with one of his favorite conical seashells. John was a man of his own special form.

Our friendship was a long one. It began in 1948 when I was the cost-estimator for the builder who built his house.

He was unlike anyone. Attractively singular, he carried his tall frame with stately grace, elegantly, princely, always wearing a dark conservative suit; commanding attention without seeking it. A guilelessly elfin smile usually softened his strongly angular face.

His style was purely Entenzian.

He was a shy man, a good man. Principled, disciplined, dedicated, a perfectionist. Intellectual, articulate, witty, sensitive, thoughtful, kind.

He was a gentle man.

And with all his sophistication and urbanity, his sometimes innocent naivety was disarmingly incredulous, boyishly charming.

I honored his friendship. I loved him. I hold years of good memories and a prized collection of beautiful conical seashells.

Craig Ellwood, painter and architect

Announcing a Limited Edition Portfolio Of Outstanding Artists and Architects

Arts and Architecture magazine, in association with Freidenrich Contemporary Art, is pleased to announce the creation of a special Portfolio to be released in late 1984. The list of distinguished artists and architects participating in this project:

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During World War II, one hardship was shared equally by returning veterans and their families: a housing shortage whose roots lay in the Depression and whose severity was exacerbated by the virtual ban on peacetime construction during the war. Between 1940 and 1943 the total number of war workers who needed at least temporary shelter was estimated at seven million; by the end of the war, 12 million housing units were needed for the next decade. The sacrifices made by all Americans during the war fostered an atmosphere of yearning which turned to hope, as victory seemed assured. A large part of this hope was predicated on the promise of a new and better residence: the postwar house.

The Veterans Administration-Federal Housing Authority loan programs realized this hope. It was possible for veterans to buy houses with little or no money down—clearly as a reward for faithful service. Through magazine articles and advertisements many Americans became aware of what they could achieve when peace was finally attained. Technologies pioneered during the war—especially prefabrication—would be adapted to the housing industry to yield everything from the “et cetera room” to machines which purged the house of dust. As the editors of Architectural Forum guilelessly exclaimed, “The dream of the small house to come...can be potent propaganda for our side. It can even sell War Bonds...”

The postwar house was the object of much speculation, the gist of which is summed up by Hudnut’s quote; the celebrated dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design created a mildly antagonistic dichotomy between the “machine” and the “hearth.” Indeed, there was hearty mistrust of what Americans considered the “extremism” of the French modernists. American citizens—and architects—were not interested in exploring the potency of the “machine” as an architectural metaphor as Le Corbusier did in his magnificent villas of the 20s. Americans didn’t want to live in landlocked ocean liners (perhaps Frenchmen didn’t either) but in an improved version of their beloved “hearth.” Richard Pratt, architectural editor of Ladies Home Journal, betrays this veiled conservatism in praising the “plan of the future.”
This house contains hope for the millions of new houses to come when peace building begins in earnest... That hope springs from a new way of planning... The floor plan is as unlike the plan of a Cape Cod cottage as modern machines and materials are unlike the tools and building methods of the seventeenth century.

Indeed, Pratt endorses technology—as Hudnut does—but only in its place, and its place is to mechanize the Cape Cod cottage; to make a house more capable of answering the American dream. Herein lies the interesting hybridization which was to form the postwar house. Planning, execution and construction of the building were to be rationalized technically and scientifically through experimentation and research. The object of this planning was to create a new kind of home for most Americans; to introduce “wife-saving devices,” flexible spaces, and above all facilitate family activity and happiness. In other words the postwar house was to place the “machine” in the service of the “hearth” in much the same relationship as that between a homemaker and her washing machine. Architecturally, the result was “domesticated modern,” a superimposition of home symbolism and International style forms.

Research for the postwar house took place as hypothetical projects in magazines and pamphlets. John Entenza’s Case Study program in Arts and Architecture, which actually commissioned homes to be built, is the best known program of this sort. Entenza’s “manifesto” was full of hard talk and scientific intentions: “It occurs to us that it might be a good idea to get down to cases and at least make a beginning of the gathering of that mass of material that must eventually result in what we know as ‘house—postwar.’” As Entenza implies, this process was meant to be methodical and analytic. He was to gather material to make the most efficient livable residence for a new era: “That building, whether immediate or far distant, is likely to begin again where it left off is something we frankly do not believe.” The form of housing was to be rationalized using the techniques developed during the war; the new house “will be conceived within the spirit of our time, using as far as practicable, as many war-born techniques and materials best suited to the expression of man’s life in the modern world.”

Entenza was not the only editor to indulge in brave suppositions about the postwar house. As a preface to a set of 33 prefabricated projects entitled “The New House 1943,” the editors of Architectural Forum proclaimed the “ever-increasing importance [of publishing] projects especially prepared to show what design might accomplish if freed from the restrictions of everyday practice.” Like cold warriors, these architects and editors were constantly experimenting to create the most efficient product possible. The glamour of science, of the new and the convenient, was a strong influ-
ence on them and could, ironically, be found in the European forms of the International style. Formal innovation, however, was made palatable through references to the hearth: a strange domestication of the rationalized modern.

In the late 40s and 50s most things European seemed suspect to Americans, including the old "decadent" way of painting that the abstract expressionists were intent on eradicating. The postwar house, therefore, presented a curious dilemma. It was clear that technology was its muse—that new techniques in planning were in order which could only be adapted from the International style. It was important, however, that the new house be uniquely American. Unlike the radical innovations of the painters, the International style was Americanized with the "hearth" and traditional values of home. Two architects exemplify this development. Walter Bogner and George Fred Keck were in close contact with European architects of the International style; Bogner was a colleague of Gropius at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and Keck was the architecture instructor at the New Bauhaus in Chicago, undoubtedly familiar with the work of Mies. As such, each of these men knew the European International style first-hand, and each developed schemes for the postwar house.

Bogner's own house was built before the war, in 1939. It is across the street from the Gropius house and next door to the Breuer house. Perhaps no two neighboring buildings in the United States demonstrate so poignantly the differences between modern and domesticated modern than the Gropius and Bogner houses. Like Gropius' building, Bogner's is fundamentally a two-story rectangular box, but whereas Gropius' house faces New England with a piously "modern" veneer of thin white siding and strip windows, Bogner's strip windows are surrounded by exposed fir vertical siding and his box is pierced by a stone wall which holds the hearth inside the house. More interesting, the plan of Bogner's home, though "open," adheres to the traditional divisions of the American farmhouse. An entrance hall is created by the fireplace wall which leads to the living room on the left and the dining room on the right—a sharp contrast to the lateral "slivers" of space Gropius arranged in good cubist form in his own house. The inglenook in Bogner's living room, centered around the fireplace, is the symbol of his domestication of Gropius' sort of architecture. This inglenook is recreated in his later scheme for prefabricated housing in Architectural Forum's "The New House 194X." Here, in a more pointedly International style plan, Bogner retains the heart of the American house. It is a literal solution of Hudnut's disjunction of "machine" and "hearth."

George Fred Keck designed a postwar prototype house planned as a simple box with a narrow strip of windows in front, and a wide bank of them in back. The open interior is ostensibly an adaptation

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The vision of the mass-produced single family house has haunted 20th-century American architecture.

The revolution of the automobile industry tantalized architects. Mass manufacturing offered products for a wide range of incomes and tastes; surely the American dream for a house with a new car in the driveway could be fulfilled in the same way.

The dream implied specific architectural forms. The Jeffersonian model of an agrarian citizenry rooted to the land buttressed the cultural memory of the ranch house set in splendid isolation on the range. The detached house was symbolically—if not always spatially—satisfactory. It did not really matter if the typical suburban house sat squarely on a small lot only ten feet from its neighbors. If the average family’s Monticello did not look out to a wilderness continent of manifest destiny it did at least look out onto an abbreviated, personal version of the wild blue yonder: the back yard.

As a means of spreading this way of life to more people, the century’s expanding catalog of new materials and building techniques promised to make homebuilding easier.

Experiments from the 20s through the 60s ranged from the commercially unsuccessful but beautifully designed small tract developments by architect Gregory Ain in Los Angeles in the 40s and 50s to the wishful reports of new materials in a 1957 Architectural Forum article, “Does Atomic Radiation Promise a Building Revolution?” Methods for prefabricating houses occupied Buckminster Fuller (utilizing aircraft production techniques), Raphael Soriano (an all-steel house) and John Lautner, all of whom built prototypes that featured their different approaches.

But the revolution in housing ultimately did not depend on dramatically new technology or design. The real engine of suburban mass planning and design lay beyond the architect’s drawing board. It was the merchant builders after World War II relying on management and marketing, economies and financing who came closest to achieving true mass production in housing. Several factors coalesced to create a mass market then.

After more than a decade of depression and war, pent-up demand was unleashed by innovative long-term, low-interest loans. Local, state and federal government policy supported services and roads which made new land at the edge of cities usable. Entrepreneurs such as William Levitt on the east coast and Joseph Eichler on the west mobilized labor and supplies on larger land tracts than ever before to exploit the new market.

Taking advantage of the economies of mass production and rationalized building techniques, mass single family housing became a reality. While using some prefabricated elements, tract houses were built mostly on site out of conventional materials by traditional building techniques managed on a mass scale in a steady, efficient flow. Technological innovations were more likely to involve mundane power tools than helicopters ferrying complete steel and plastic houses from factories to building sites.

Architectural design became a function of these economies in most tracts. The proverbial little boxes made of ticky-tacky derived from a rationalized design process using standardized fenestration and minimizing exterior wall breaks. The architectural results for the most part failed
Expanses of glass visually extend the living space to live up to the utopias prophesied earlier.

But there were exceptions. In stretches of the San Fernando Valley, in Marin County and on the San Francisco peninsula, entire districts of houses can still be seen carrying the flag of progressive modernism. They are set in a landscape of space age coffee shops, sweeping cloverleaves, Constructivist car washes and panoramic supermarkets. Jungle gyms at the playground down the block are fashioned as planets and rocket ships. High art and commercial architects were creating a persuasive model of what the future would look like if it had been built in 1955. Historical styles had been defeated, and modern technology and design were changing the way everything looked.

A visit on a balmy southern California evening to a Granada Hills tract in the north end of the San Fernando Valley shows the vision at its best: craggy peaks form an exotic desert backdrop against a deepening blue sky. Spread over a small rise, the simple post and beam pavilions of 20th-century man suit the rugged southwestern setting as well as do the adobe and stone Anasazi communities of Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon. Patios create private gardens in the desert for each family. Sheltered by plants, an atrium allows outdoor living even in the heat of the day.

These were the tracts built by Eichler Homes. Joe Eichler was one of the few and certainly the most prominent of the merchant builders to employ architects specifically for their design work; most builders hired draftsmen only to produce the documents required to receive permission to build.

Robert Anshen and William Stephen Allen, of Anshen and Allen in San Francisco, were Eichler's primary architects when he began in northern California; later he also worked with A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons of Jones and Emmons in southern California and Claude Oakland in San Francisco, among others.

Discussing tract housing in terms of architecture alone, though, misses the point. Eichler's use of architects was not a personal crusade for good architecture, though he once lived in and was impressed by Frank Lloyd Wright's Bazett house in Hillsborough. Tracts were commercial products. Good design was a marketing tactic added to the package in the same way a second bathroom or a two-car garage would be offered. Price and location determined a development's success more than style.

Eichler's first tract, south of San Francisco in the late 40s, had been modern in style and had sold well. Noting that most of his buyers could actually afford more expensive houses, Eichler could see an upscale market. Most other developers, including Levitt, were appealing to the lower end of the market. Eichler took careful aim.

"My father decided to build what became an 'Eichler,'" writes Ned Eichler in his 1982 book, The Merchant Builders. "Its special appeal was to those who liked unusual design and who saw themselves as somewhat avant-garde. In those days they differentiated themselves by driving foreign cars, drinking wine and reading The New Yorker... at one time it seemed that every ad agency director in San Francisco lived in an Eichler home."

A community of taste had been defined. Fortunately for Eichler, it was large enough to support a major home building firm. The next Eichler tract, designed in 1952 by Anshen and Allen, was on the fringes of Palo Alto in the cultural penumbra of Stanford. Soon Herman Miller and Knoll furniture filled his model homes.

Though successive subdivisions varied with the character of the architect and market, Eichler architecture had certain trademarks: modern styling, a central open air atrium, indoor-outdoor living and radiant heating. In the 1950s, three bedroom, one bath Eichlers of 1000 square feet sold for $8,000 to $12,000.

Curving roads, cul-de-sacs, several different...
Inside, partition and cabinet walls rise short of the ceiling, defining living, cooking and dining areas. With natural finish wood veneer, up-to-date appliances and built-in counters and tables, the open kitchen is designed to be seen and to be a part of the living area. The broad sweep of the planked ceiling and exposed beams unifies the informal spaces. The bedroom wing is private.

The same wall materials are often used inside and out to tie the two spaces together; continuity is a major theme of the architecture. Expanses of glass and sliding doors make the walled backyard visually and practically a part of the living space; in many standard tract houses a traffic pattern to the back door through the kitchen made the backyard less convenient to reach and less integrated into the living areas. Thus, by making more of the lots usable for living, Eichler's designs provided a better value than conventional tracts.

There was a markup for good design, though. The clerestory and floor-to-ceiling glass required skilled carpenters. In using exposed structures and natural finish materials, Eichler could not rely on sheetrock and stucco to hide sloppy workmanship.

Many of the elements of the Eichler houses had been developing in both Bay Area and Southern California high art architecture since the 30s. The simple, almost rustic exposed structures and indoor-outdoor spaces of William Wurster, John Funk, Hervey Parke Clark, Cliff May, Gregory Ain and other architects developed in response to the benign climate, open lifestyles, regional vernacular traditions and injections of high art ideas. The atrium echoes the patio court of Spanish ranchos. Both the flowing spaces of Frank Lloyd Wright and the simplifying abstractions of European modernism influenced the Eichler designs.

Architects and Eichler home buyers alike shared the belief that honestly expressed structures and light-filled spaces open to nature were the healthiest, most natural, most progressive way of life and architecture. While Levittown, in the heart of the East, could rely on picket fences and saltbox forms as an easy shorthand for home and tradition, Anshen and Allen and Quincy Jones helped develop a popular modern vocabulary to communicate the idea of the modern home.

But by 1984 a Sunset magazine article on remodelling an Eichler was asking, "How do you add a little formality to an Eichler—the California tract house best known for its open-plan informal living? The living room suffered from lack of definition." The once self-evidently progressive informal plan, bursting rigid limits of box-like rooms, was replaced by self-evident formality.

Some Eichlers have been remodelled, though the modern streetscape of the subdivisions remain intact. Some owners update the once ultramodern houses with traditional shingled facades, Dutch doors and colonial window panes. The solution to adding a convincing second story to an Eichler house has escaped most of the designers attempting it. But an equal number of remodellings remain within a modern vocabulary, from high tech renderings in grays, plums and Levolor blinds to Hawaiian modern in volcanic stone rustication and Niemeyer-esque curving bays.

A more common alteration has been the enclosure of the atrium space, pushing the recessed front entry forward, flush with the plane of the garage doors. New ducts and cooling equipment crawl along some roofs, indicating that air conditioning may be killing the open air atrium just as it did the convertible. Changing habits and a changing climate have eliminated the sleeping porch which was part of many Maybecks, Schindler and Greene brothers homes earlier in the century. This may be California, but people don't sleep outside every night anymore.

The idea of mass-produced modern housing, born in the idealism of the early 20th century, has become a commodity. But even riding on the coat-tails of merchant builders, it succeeded in establishing its revolution, at least in enclaves. Long after the original loans have been paid, after the merchant builders have merged with conglomerates, and after the baby boomers born into the tracts have moved into middle age, the best of the architecture will still be with us, reminding us that in the 50s people not only dreamed of the future, they also lived in its midst.

Alan Hess wrote about California coffee shops in Arts and Architecture's Fifities’ Design issue.
In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the dichotomous lifestyle of southern California was embodied in an exuberantly packaged housing venture—stucco box apartments. Shoehorning the maximum number of units onto a lot and utilizing cheap construction methods and materials, the buildings were ruthlessly pragmatic. Yet they were flamboyant objects, providing more sybaritic environments than had early apartment buildings in the region. ■ The typical stucco box was constructed as infill housing in established neighborhoods from Echo Park through Santa Monica and out to the San Fernando Valley and Orange County. Buildings would house 4-16 units on single or paired 50-foot-wide lots. Many of them were constructed with an approximately equal ratio of 700 and 900 square foot apartments. Interiors were spartan and functional, except for decorative details like swag lamps or exotic, glitter-flecked ceilings. ■ In smaller buildings, apartment access was most frequently provided by an open corridor along an outside wall; in larger buildings, apartments were entered from decks along interior courtyards. Ideally, a courtyard would include a swimming pool. More often, in the interest of economy, it did not, and the area was landscaped and paved as a communal patio. ■ Parking was most frequently provided at grade level, on the periphery of the building. If the parking was located in front, the automobiles were openly displayed, literally becoming part of the buildings. The stucco box would often float on thin pipes above its carport, an object separate from the landscape in characteristic modernist fashion. Sometimes this arrangement assumed uncanny aspects of a pop homage to Le Corbusier’s villas of the 1920s and 30s. ■ The buildings were unique in that they made no attempt to disguise the inherent flat, blank quality of their stucco walls. This was an attitude held in common with the neutral box buildings popular with local high-art architects. But if neutrality was an end point for high-art designers, it was a departure point for the architects of the stucco box school. The honesty in their forms was inadvertent, a result of the ease with which the speculative developer could allow economic necessity to masquerade as modernist chic. ■ The ornamentation of the stucco box was normally confined to its street facade, and, where one existed, to the courtyard. Its sides and rear were treated in the most economical manner possible, resulting in large areas of smooth wall, repetitive window patterns, and cubic forms cantilevered over carport voids. Aluminum frame windows placed on the surface of the walls created the images of depthless planes—light, technologically advanced membranes. ■ The lighting and landscaping of these buildings were often exhibitionistic and ornamental, employing plants with dramatic silhouettes or luxuriant foliage. These were frequently isolated as sculptural elements or graphic accents, and at night walls would dance with the shadows of plants lit by colored spotlights. ■ In order to bring about the unholy marriage of art and commerce, designers developed a battery of effects that arose directly from the nature of stucco—a cheap, easily manipulated medium. They scored it in stripes and grids, painted it contrasting colors, and scattered dark colored sand and coarse grit over light colored walls to create smoky overlays. They even embedded pumice chips into the stucco surface, giving it a texture analogous to chocolate chip cookies. ■ Although the top of the stucco box was usually flat, low pitched roofs were sometimes used to project a more domestic image, and butterfly roofs gave other buildings an air of
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUDY FISKIN
It was popular to “christen” the boxes. In the mid-50s and 60s rental property was a very attractive investment for the small, southern California investor. In many cases a building represented the entire fortune of its owner, and was a public symbol of success. Pride in the accomplishment accounts for the frequency with which the stucco boxes were given human names— the Melody Ann in Inglewood, or surnames such as the Muscat Apartments in Echo Park. Sometimes a name would evoke other places or times, like the Telstar in the San Fernando Valley or the Algiers in Rosemead. Other names referred to the location of the building, or were puns on their street names, like the Cinema in Hollywood, the Rocks on Gibraltar on Gibraltar Street in Baldwin Hills, or the Fountain Bla on Fountain Avenue. Sands, Palms, Dunes, Capri. Names were important because, as packaged objects, these buildings needed labels. The trademarks of vernacular modernism were taken from four primary sources: automobile design, high-art architecture, abstract art and interior design. It is no coincidence that the most ebullient modern apartment houses were built during the 1950s, when Detroit was manufacturing its most exaggerated modern automobiles. The moxie of 50s automobile design, evident in details such as harlequin patterns on the dashboard or the two-tone paint job, set a level of stylistic sophistication and daring for other objects of the decade. From the local tradition of architectural modernism, stucco box designers lifted the exhibitionistic expressionism of John Lautner and Lloyd Wright, converting it into a language of graphic pattern and decoration. Abstract art was also a major influence and Mondrian’s starkly counterpoised rectangles were particularly apparent. Less popular, although still quite common, were boomerang and kidney shapes. These elements usually appeared on the stucco box as two-dimensional cutouts mounted flat on the wall plane, but they also occurred in plan as entrance canopies and planters. Although the facade was frequently treated as an environmentally-scaled abstract relief, it was also treated decoratively; like an interior wall, with objects placed on its surface. The swag lamp, wall sconce, ornamental plaque, picture frame, and shadow box—all popular devices of interior decoration—were used often on street facades to give buildings a quasi-private appearance. Modern architecture was popularized during the 50s and 60s in both the professional and popular press. These buildings were studied, interpreted, and reinterpreted by clients, developers and builders who were all familiar with modernism in home furnishings and automotive design. As members of a design-conscious public, they demanded an up-to-date backdrop for their everyday life. Their modernism was not rigorous, theoretical or high-art; it was accommodating, inexpensive and vernacular. However, the commitment of clients and designers to the stucco box was not always heartfelt, and it sometimes was merely a superficial attachment to modernism as a fashion. Although the box was adaptable to various lot configurations, grade changes, and budgets, its organization and layout were largely determined by set formulas. Its aesthetic choices were largely packaging; and by the late 1960s, a combination of increased costs and diminished returns made the stucco box apartments less attractive to those dabbling in real estate investments. In Los Angeles today, the stucco box has become an artifact, a representative of relatively stable social values, faith in technological progress, and endless upward mobility. Yet the box has been consistently attacked both

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Via Aprilla lies to the North and West. Carmel Valley Road and the marshlands border on the East and South. In between is Ted Smith's Del Mar Terrace dominion. This ten-block area is part of a neighborhood where this architect has spent most of his life. And for the last several years he has dedicated himself to a theoretical experiment in architecture which is now coming to fruition.

As an architect, Ted Smith, principal of the San Diego firm Armistead Smith and Others, has become aware of certain realities inherent in this stereotypic community which he sees as an example for innumerable middle class suburbs. He is disturbed by the fractionalized existence created by the typical suburb. The segregated functions of living unit and work place are not only socially dysfunctional, but a waste of land. Changes in economic conditions have prevented increasing numbers of people from becoming home owners. When combined with the slow but steady momentum away from the nuclear family, it is apparent that traditional lifestyles are changing.
All this was in Ted Smith’s head when, through community group meetings, he noticed an interesting dilemma facing residents of the marsh-front neighborhood of Del Mar. While most of the area is zoned R-1 (residential), a small portion bordering the water is zoned as a commercial neighborhood (CN). The single family residences abutting the division of the two zones, as well as some developers who own local CN property, were faced with the possibility of re-zoning and re-building. Some of the residents, in fact, were anxious to convert parts of their homes into offices. Moreover, the general concern among the residents was how to resolve the collision of these two zones.

Ted Smith saw a remarkable opportunity. He began to study this ten block area and soon developed a master plan. He even built a jigsaw puzzle of the neighborhood to illustrate his thoughts. He saw the major issue as how to create a functional buffer zone between the R-1 and CN zones, and what building type would best fit there. What he developed is called the GoHome.

In the simplest terms, the GoHome is a hybrid of a multi-family residence which combines living quarters and work space under one roof. While this returns to an urban building type which is centuries old, it also makes Ted Smith an architect/developer in a very unconventional sense. The GoHome transposes raw commercial loft space into residential space. In doing so, Smith arrived at a 500-square-foot volume of space which would provide both a small work area and living space. This 12x20 foot two-story living unit became the basic GoHome module, and the first GoHome was made up of four of these. Each has a small bathroom, in addition to the living and working areas, and all the residents share one large community kitchen. Smith feels that competition in the housing market is perpetuated through an on-going, contrived escalation of a minimum housing standard. With the GoHome, he undertook to lower the minimum standard and in so doing, lowered both construction costs and asking price to an affordable level.

While drawing his master plan, Smith came across a slightly sloping lot for sale. Situated along the border line of the two zones, this 60x120 foot lot, offered for $92,000, seemed perfect for the first GoHome experiment. His major hurdles were the financing of the property and the construction, and, just as menacing, the zoning of the project seemed problematic. He was fortunate that the land owner was willing to carry the note on the property. He put down $20,000 and acquired a note for the balance at 12½%.

In researching the zoning ordinances, Smith found that he could build the GoHome in the R-1 zone as long as he built only one kitchen. Under these circumstances there was no limit to the number of unrelated adults that could inhabit the GoHome. Now he needed a partner. Once he found one, the partner put down another $30,000 towards the land costs, and they each contributed $10,000 for construction costs. Each partner built a module at the end of an imaginary rectangle and extended the roofs over the remaining modules by...
The remaining GoHomes were quickly sold. One of the reasons was that the cost was comparatively low. In this neighborhood, a typical 8-unit condominium situated on a 60x125 foot lot markets its 750-square-foot units for $120,000. The 500-square-foot GoHomes are $40,000—$50,000 for the land and $10,000 for construction.

But there are other reasons which contributed to the success of Smith’s experiment. Most of these reasons have to do with architecture and lifestyle.

The GoHome is a shed building, cut into four modules. Conceptually, it is the sum of its parts, while the realities of ownership and budget make it more the decomposition of an original whole. Its public-versus-private zoning occurs vertically and horizontally. The living units, for the most part, face the commercial zone, and the communal kitchen forms the up-slope, R-1 zone half. The GoHome module is a vertical volume. The work space—the “commercial” area—is on the first or entry level, with sleeping lofts above. Because of
this vertical zoning, the two-story elevation is divided into four neat parts, expressing each owner's sensibilities. The architect, with the help of colorist Kathy McCormick, took care to subtly introduce some continuity along this facade. Thus the GoHome can be seen as a discontinuous container.

What makes this project work over time is the mixed-use concept within the context of raw loft space, in addition to the attraction of a very inexpensive space. The occupants' four spaces work independently and as a whole; albeit a whole which is somewhat labyrinthian. But there is a delight in finding the secret to this maze of lofts, trap doors and staircases. What is most interesting is the abrupt stylistic and volumetric juxtaposition of each personalized space.

There are surprisingly few problems. The communal kitchen does not function smoothly as such. The tendency is for occupants to prepare meals in the kitchen and retreat to their private units. However, this seems to be the only flaw of the unique lifestyle implied by this building. The owners are committed to the building and its philosophy. When units are altered there is a conscious sense of participation in a project which offers a first opportunity at property ownership. The ownership is set up as an equal equity cooperative. Each occupant has first option to buy any adjacent modules that become available.

Smith continued to work on the master plan and became acquainted with a developer who owns 9,000 contiguous square feet of a commercial building located on a prominent corner in the CN zone of the neighborhood. It appears that Smith will embark on the development of the next generation of GoHomes utilizing this site. The first GoHome combined small, individually-scaled commercial activity with residential units. Appropriately, this second will take the next generational step. The building will have medium-scaled commercial units—restaurants, for example—on the street level, with GoHome-type loft space on the second level. Instead of vertical volumes, as in the first GoHome, these new ones will be turned horizontally in a more conventional fashion. In the second GoHome, each unit will have its own private kitchen.

Smith sees his GoHome, and the associated master plan, as a way to "put the city back together." It is a much more efficient use of land and succeeds as a sort of "DMZ" between the R-1 and CN zones. It proposes to change zone on a building instead of on a property line. In so doing, it ends typical zone leap-frogging.

The GoHome has a slightly naive, original presence. For all its bold color and eccentric facade, it is a quiet building. Avant-garde in concept, it is appropriate to not only its physical context, but to economic and social climates as well. It is an accommodating structure, peacefully assuring its occupants of its statement, viability and irony.

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"Failure to build affordable housing is a failure of democracy," according to architect Donald MacDonald, who has taken his moral crusade to the building site. Over the last year, he has set out to prove that it is possible to build reasonably priced houses in the city of San Francisco. Acting as architect and developer, he has built a group of small, experimental houses for middle income buyers.

MacDonald’s goal was to build homes whose mortgage payments after tax-deductions could compare favorably with rent payments, making it possible for middle-income people to buy their own homes. If the houses did not sell quickly, they could be profitable to the developer as rental units.

While the concept seemed basically sound, the implementation required considerable creativity. Factors such as land values, labor costs, building materials, and regulations would have a tremendous effect on the form the buildings could take.

For his first “garden cottages,” MacDonald began by looking for inexpensive infill lots in a transitional area, where construction would have a positive effect on the neighborhood. He purchased two lots in the Western Addition district of San Francisco, one at 196-198 Germania Street, the other at 388-398 Hermann Street.

Although it was possible to build more units on each lot, the architect decided to build two houses at Germania Street and four at Hermann Street. This would allow him to keep the costs down to desirable levels. A greater density of houses would have required more on-site parking, necessitating costly three-story construction. Two-story construction, in contrast, permitted considerable savings: it eliminated the need for elevators, sprinklers and fire escapes; and it reduced the costs of both materials and labor. Instead of building three-story, attached units, MacDonald built adjacent but separate two-story houses, each 800 square feet in floor area with its own enclosed yard. Construction of the houses took three months.

Working backwards from the desired selling price, the architect arrived at a set of design restrictions. These included building the houses on concrete slabs, providing only one bathroom for two-bedroom houses, using standard size windows and painted plywood cladding, and combining living room, dining room and kitchen areas into one, multi-purpose space. The use of a pitched roof minimized material costs while creating a lofty second floor living room.
There is one parking space for each house on-grade, in a yard enclosed by a high wooden wall. This gives each unit a sense of security, and provides the option of creating a walled garden. In addition to the front yard, houses on Hermann Street have enclosed back yards overlooked by second story balconies. One of the Hermann Street houses has a garage instead of a second bedroom.

While the houses are small, they are ideal for couples or single occupants. At 800 square feet they offer spatial standards comparable to early California bungalows. Although simply constructed, the "garden cottages" can be easily adapted to express the tastes of their owners. In fact, this kind of refinement was anticipated by MacDonald, who sees the houses as "an armature" for further elaboration. He believes that the owners can easily and inexpensively alter the exterior appearance of their houses. Inside, the second floor living room can accommodate a loft.

MacDonald describes the houses as "political architecture," meaning that he has tailored their exterior appearance to blend with their neighborhood. The painted board-and-batten facades of Germania Street reflect the maroon and gray exterior of a nearby Victorian house, while the Hermann Street houses match the texture and colors of the community. Nonetheless, neighbors of the Germania Street houses complain about the way they fit into the context of adjacent three-story houses with bay windows.

While MacDonald views the appearance and cost of the units as a political statement, one of the most radical choices he made was simply to build units geared toward small, middle-income households. While the existing housing market offers many units which cater to traditional families or offer luxurious space standards and special features, there are few houses available for middle-income couples or single adults. The proof of the need lies in the fact that the houses were sold as soon as they were placed on the market.

By acting as both developer and architect, MacDonald was able to keep a close watch on costs. However, his concern with this issue was perhaps a bit too conscientious. The houses, while carefully planned, are in need of certain refinements, such as counter space dividing the kitchen area from the all-purpose living room, or slightly higher standards of finish. Site planning, too, has suffered, particularly in the case of the Germania Street houses, which are jammed against the rear wall of the house behind them.

MacDonald intends to continue his experiment, and has planned larger housing developments in other parts of San Francisco and in Santa Monica. These include mixed-use projects with living units above commercial space, and slightly larger houses with two second-story bedrooms, and a living room and garage on the ground floor. He believes that in areas where the land cost is lower than in San Francisco, the houses will be even less expensive.

A critical factor, as the architect sees it, is to establish affordable housing as a priority of city policy. To him, this is where the issue of democracy becomes important. Present policies such as conditional use permits, mandatory public hearings, and burgeoning regulations favor the maintenance of the status quo over the construction of appropriate, affordable dwellings. Perhaps by demonstrating the success of his first experimental houses MacDonald can prove his point and influence the process. The need for affordable houses is certainly there.
ARTISTS' CO-OP

Apex Co-op's 21 units nestle above Egbert's Furniture Store.

The Apex Belltown Co-op is 21 sleeping rooms with shared bathrooms and living-dining-kitchen areas made out of a 54-room, 78-year-old hotel. It also is an urban activists' answer—albeit a rather patchy one—to protecting low-income housing in a downtown where land prices and rents are being driven up by the prospect of high-density development. The Apex is perched on a bluff over First Avenue in downtown Seattle. The top two floors were operated as a transient's hotel until 1978, when the Japanese couple who had operated it for 20 years retired. It had a steady clientele because the managers ran it with a firm hand, not allowing drinking or smoking in the rooms. The rest of the neighborhood was less savory. That stretch of First Avenue had become a catchment for indigents driven out by the conversion of flop houses to offices and shops in Pioneer Square, some 15 blocks south. Just as the wave of blight had rolled up the street, so, by the mid-1970s, was the wave of downtown living. Condominium midrises were being built, attracted by the urban excitement of nearby Pike Place Market, 180-degree views over Elliott Bay and relatively low property prices. The Apex is on the view fringe of an area of one- and two-story commercial buildings interspersed with an occasional five- or six-story brick apartment building that had been earmarked by city zoning policy for dense residential development, preferably as part of mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground level to encourage pedestrian traffic. Jim Egbert had bought a parking lot in the area as a site for his proposed home furnishings store. Egbert and a partner had pioneered a similar design store in another neighborhood in the early 1950s. The store, Keeg's, set design trends and living styles. In the mid-70s, the partnership wore thin and Egbert withdrew from it. In 1978 he couldn't find satisfactory financing for anything as small as a $500,000 free-standing store, so he traded his parking lot, which could be developed as high-rise property, for the three-story Apex, which was not considered prime real estate. The building had two basement levels, a three-bay retail frontage and a small adjacent parking lot. Egbert, with a University of Illinois degree in industrial design, was able to do most of his own interior and exterior store design. The upper two

Common room displays Andrew Keating's painting above Kevin Harvey's table.

Susanne Takehara's design for a vinyl tile floor brightens kitchen.
Common room boasts uncommon pachinko machine by Susanne Takehara.
Floors were a throw-in, not having much prospect of generating income except as storage.

It wasn’t long before he was sought out by a delegation of street people, artists and craftsmen living, in varying shades of legal occupancy, in old buildings nearby. Would Egbert be interested in converting the upper floors to housing which could be rented for $130 to $250 a month? Yes, he would. “It was kind of immoral, having all those empty spaces,” he explained. One of the group was Ann Hirsci, an architecture student at the University of Washington. She lived around the corner in another old hotel and was working on a design for a bath house for the neighborhood as her thesis.

Egbert was receptive to the idea; a community meeting drew 12 or 13 residents interested in permanent housing. A grant of $2,000 for legal costs was obtained from the National Endowment for the Arts by the Allied Arts of Seattle’s housing for the arts committee.

It was decided the best approach would be to create a condominium with Egbert’s store on unit one, and the 21-share co-op the other. After an exchange of appraisals and some “jawing around,” Egbert was paid $130,000 for the top two floors. Under conditions of the low-income funding, co-op shares cannot be resold for profit. The price can only be increased by a percentage determined by a rental-housing index plus any improvements added that are to be left in the unit.

Hirsci took the project to the Environmental Works, a nonprofit community design center, where she worked. Don Cole became project architect and Hirsci became, in effect, the developer and liaison, keeping a lively and contentious dialogue with members of the co-op continuing throughout the project.

Environmental Works was able to tap the Department of Community Development’s block grant, that was set aside for technical assistance to low-income housing, for $10,000, which paid for most of the design. Feasibility research by Bob Fish and Terry Furlong resulted in three major

floorplan of the Apex, showing the three types of bedrooms and common kitchen and activity areas

funding sources: the National Consumer Cooperative Bank, HUD Section 312 and the city’s multi-family housing rehabilitation fund. Later stages of the project called for considerable creativity, including a restructuring of a National Consumer Cooperative Bank loan as interest rates fell to produce an extra (and desperately needed) $23,000, and persuading the city rehab funding to increase its loan.

“After a while I didn’t care where the money came from, I’d just go to Bob and Terry and tell them we needed some more,” Hirsci said. “We went at it backwards, of course. We started with what people thought they could afford for housing, which turned out to be $100 to $250 a month.”

The co-op bank loan was $160,000, HUD provided $220,000 and the rehab $174,000. A wind-fall $70,000 (at 4% with payback beginning in 15 years) came from a $200,000 low-income housing fund set up by Cornerstone, a downtown developer under pressure to provide replacement housing for low-income residents being displaced. Equity raised by the residents, selling co-op shares at $1,155 each, amounted to $25,000.

The financing may have been a triumph of marketing, but it created paperwork problems, Hirsci said. As many as 10 or 12 agency representatives had to be included in regular walk-throughs of the project and six signatures were required for each change order. Because of the public funding, the designers were required to take the lowest bid on the project, regardless of the contractor’s experience. Relations between MarPac Construction, the co-op members, who remained active in overseeing the construction process, and Egbert were strained through most of the two-year construction period. Egbert particularly remembers coming back from a three-day buying trip to find plumbing from the units above “galloping twice as low as called for across the rear ceiling of the shop,” and having to fight to get it moved to where it would be covered by the ceiling.

Common kitchens and baths were given before the project went into design because the committee felt the project should be faithful to the historical single-room-occupancy lifestyle. The corner of the building with the choicest view was reserved for the major dining-living-kitchen area.

In the design process it was discovered that the side walls of the building had been poured without reinforcing steel and thus required major work. A plan to cut two interior courtyards down through the roof was scrapped; the side walls were cut out and deck space added for the center units. The two ends of the building were stiffened with plywood floor diaphragms and tie-ins. Additional exterior columns—a $120,000 unforeseen expense—were required by the city.

Another given was the roof; that would become a common activity area and Hirsci admits the structure could have been better reinforced. “It might not tolerate mass breakdancing—it’s kind of bouncy, but we schlepped it through.” The existing circulating hot-water heating system was kept, although provision was made for later conversion to a solar energy system.

Lack of funds dictated much of the design of the project. Three sizes of sleeping rooms (based on the module of the original rooms) were developed; 130 square feet, 280 square feet and 440 square feet.

Monthly carrying costs on the units came close to the original “backwards” concept—$161, $246 and $331.

As building department requirements and structural surprises added to the cost of the project, more of the finishing fell to co-op members. As a result, the floor coverings and kitchen and bathroom tiles reflect the artistic skills of the residents. A niche of one kitchen was taken over by an artist who created a tile mosaic with a Pablo Neruda poem in Spanish illustrated with large stalks of celery. “We sort of divided up the spaces,” Hirsci explained. “There is one bathroom designed by four people with strong egos and it looks it.”

The building was occupied in April 1984 and all the shares have been sold. Of the original co-op group, only five or six made it through the prolonged construction period. Egbert bought a share for his sister, who works in the store, “partly because I thought it was a good investment and partly because they needed one more share to complete the financing.”

The tenants, now safe from the pressures of rising rents and the threat of demolition as developers stalk the area, are joining Egbert at environmental-impact hearings, fighting a proposed development that includes three 125-foot towers “that will put everything behind them, including our building, in a hole.”

And Hirsci is looking around for another building for a similar project. “I think it almost will have to be as another nonprofit developer—someone without time constraints who can bite the ankle and not let go,” she has concluded. “We don’t do very well in developing low-income housing. Going in I thought it would be easy if you just had enough of a creative twist, but it doesn’t work that way.”

**Alf Collins** is a columnist for the *Seattle Times*. 

Photography by Mark Sullo
Bathrooms and nook are rich with tile designed by various artists.
In Houston the bottom line is the datum. Currency (or the anticipation of currency) dictates that the physical, the stable, the real, be modified, manipulated, and transformed relentlessly. Change, therefore, is the constant. The skyline downtown, the innumerable new suburban skylines, strip development along freeways, shopping malls, condominiums, subdivisions: these contribute to what has been described as a landscape of becoming; one that in its continuous transformations bewilders natives as much as it does newcomers.

Since the early 1970s, Houston’s older suburban neighborhoods (from the 1910s and 1920s) have been subject to this phenomenon as the young and affluent seek the convenience of living intramuros, inside the freeway loop that circles downtown Houston at a five-mile radius. The housing type that has received the warmest response from this market is the townhouse: a narrow, vertically organized row house sheltering one or two cars and providing minimal outdoor space. The locus is usually a neighborhood of single-family houses on 50x100-foot lots. The standard practice is to pack between four and six houses on a lot. Corner lots are preferred since garages can open directly onto streets and no buildable real estate need be sacrificed to on-site auto circulation. Therefore, cars live with their owners rather than in common garages or parking lots, there is no property that requires collective policing or maintenance, and row houses can be sold as fee simple rather than as condominiums. Municipal regulations impose a three-story height limit on wood frame structures, with two means of egress required for buildings of more than two stories. Until 1982, developers could build to the lot lines on all sides of the property unless subdivision restrictions mandated setbacks.

These trends and restrictions have resulted in an urban form mutation in older suburban neighborhoods. Bungalows, cottages, duplexes, and 50s garden apartments still occupy the central lots on residential blocks, but tall, narrow row houses cluster with increasing frequency at the corners. These townhouses typically face the side streets (the longer dimension of the lot) rather than the main residential streets, exposing tall and comparatively blank side elevations to the main street and collective backsides to the next door neighbor. Developers and their architects generally attempt to mitigate the ensuing discrepancies of scale, siting and type by adopting suburban-residential design themes, based on the apparent premise that the more innocuous the styling, the less adverse the impact upon the existing fabric of the community.

In their first Houston townhouse project, Arquitectonica has ignored this strategy, going instead for maximum impact. Consistent with their larger buildings in Miami, this residential project is imagery-intensive. It is also a carefully deliberated response to the problems inherent in designing infill housing on tight spots.

The Haddon Townhouses, completed in the fall of 1983, are located at Haddon and McDuffie in a neighborhood of modest houses. The site, though, lies only three blocks from Houston’s most prestigious residential district, River Oaks, which accounts for the flurry of townhouse construction in the area. The developer and
contractor, Neartown Development, acquired two corner lots, one on either side of McDuffie. This site allowed Arquitectonica to make a terrace front along Haddon, the side street, although the construction of a set of undistinguished townhouses at the third corner of the intersection has compromised the intended urbanistic effect. The two terrace blocks are symmetrical about the axis of McDuffie. At the end of each, a two-car, two-story studio house brackets a row of four, more narrow one-car, three-story houses.

The elevations are programmed to articulate internal organization. The canted window bays on the two-story houses locate the big spaces. Vertical slots indicate circulation zones in the three-story houses, projecting boxes at the third-floor levels contain bedrooms, and fins advertise the spatial stratification of each house. Garage doors speak for themselves. The rear elevations also participate in this architectural narrative. Only the sawtooth roofline is deceptive; the third-floor rooms have flat ceilings. To enhance the notational theme of the elevations, bright primary colors identify incisions (red), spatial projections (blue), and planar projectiles (yellow). A restrictive covenant protects the polychromy for a term of years. The elevations present in full force the effect that some critics find maddening in Arquitectonica’s work: the pose of dumbness, the studied awkwardness hinting at an erudite, historically informed, neo-elementalist attitude toward architectural composition.

Of course, such criticism is deflected simply by pointing out that the interiors generate the exteriors. This represents the more serious side of Arquitectonica’s grasp of the Houston townhouse problem. Ever since Howard Barnstone designed and built his ingenious, 16-foot wide Graustark Townhouses in 1973, Houston developers have insisted on narrowing house frontages down to this dimension—the width of a single-car garage door opening side-by-side with a front door. Arquitectonica sought to devise a spatial infrastructure to relieve the boxcar effect that often results from this arrangement. They aligned a vertical spatial slot along one of the long side walls, naturally lighting it from the back of the house and from above, and separating it from the tiers of living spaces by a perforated screen wall that “penetrates” the front and rear elevations to become the yellow fins. A flight of stairs within this slot breaks twice to provide a graduated sequence of view points, and a small balcony projects playfully into the slot from the master bedroom. In a minimal dimension, Arquitectonica has orchestrated light, movement and view to create the sense of an “other” space that conceptually and perceptually escapes the limitations of the narrow site. This spatial slot is experienced most strongly in the houses on either side of McDuffie, where natural light is filtered into it from glass block apertures in the street walls, as well as from the ends and top.

In the more narrow units, the double volume living room is at the back of the house, set a half-level above the street overlooking a narrow, fenced garden. The kitchen and a dining platform are shelved atop the garage, half a level still above the living room but spatially continuous with it. The third floor contains bedrooms at
front and back with closets and baths between them. The stepped composition of the three lower levels circumvents the requirement for a second means of egress from the top-most floor, inasmuch as kitchen and dining platform legally qualify as a mezzanine rather than a true second floor. Unfortunately, it is at the juncture of these two levels that the design runs into a problem. The dining platform thrusts into the living room in a piano curve, a graphic device that acquires considerable power when translated from two dimensions to three. A sinuous shelf curves continuously along this wall, resisting the placement of any but the smallest objects and limiting furniture arrangements in the living room. Coupled with this formal problem is the fact that one must cross the living room to get from the street or garage entrances to the stair slot. Circulation and spaciousness thus make the living room feel more like a spatially activated reception hall than a relaxed seating area, a space that is more enjoyable when observed from the dining platform than when occupied.

The comparatively wide two-story studio houses underscore the essential limitation Arquitectonica confronted in planning the three-story houses: that of narrowness. Each of the two-story houses is entered midway along its side elevation. Thus the stair slot is relatively compact (although still accorded a distinctive spatial treatment). Sitting and eating functions occupy a large, high, airy room above the garage that extends across the street front of each house behind the angled window bay. A master bedroom and a compact kitchen are on the back side of the second floor, opening into the big room. Beneath these, on the ground floor, are two more bedrooms and a bath. The organization of spaces in these two houses lacks the diagrammatic rigor of the three-story houses. Consequently the spaces are less intense. But they also are more serene and accommodating.

In subsequent Houston townhouse projects Arquitectonica has refined the techniques employed at the Haddon Townhouses. The Taggart Park Townhomes, completed this summer, break with Houston real estate orthodoxy by subdividing a square corner lot into an interlocking sequence of four house sites. Two projects nearing completion, the six-unit Milford Townhomes for Principium, Inc., and the four-unit Mandell Residences for Southampton Development, transcend the problems of the narrower units at Haddon. Scissor stairs are located at the center of each house rather than along a lateral wall. These generate transverse spatial slots into which light is filtered from above, thus freeing the fronts and backs of the houses for destination spaces and providing natural illumination at the center as well as at both ends. Framed views of the out-of-doors through oversized windows and surprise vistas of inner spaces through perforated screen walls continue to produce exhilarating experiences. The piano curve recurs at Milford, but in a much more deliberate and knowing fashion. It does not compromise internal arrangements but compensates for a particularly troublesome entrance condition. (The developer had to provide two on-site parking spaces for each unit, even though four of the six are on

Continued on page 80
Cocucho is a village removed from the high-tech tempo of modern, urban Mexico. It is a place where time moves at a slower pace yet its people possess energy, vitality, and a sense of pride. The village is located in the state of Michoacan in central/western Mexico. It is bordered by the states of Jalisco, Colima and Guanajuato on the north and the states of Mexico and Guerrero on the south. It is an area rich in folklore, and it boasts rustic villages and Spanish colonial architecture in its larger cities and towns. It is also the home of the Tarascan Indians. To reach the mountain village of Cocucho is to penetrate the backlands. No map is of much use—oral directions are the only guide. The village cannot be seen from a main road; in fact there...
is no main road nearby, only a long winding path to take visitors by car, burro or truck.
From one point far across a very wide valley you can see the trojes, the roof tops that reveal Cocucho’s position of hidden sanctuary. Cocucho is a typical Tarascan village. There is a main zocolo (plaza) with a stone church in the center, and a central watering well near the church where the women come to fill small tinjas (water jars), then carry them to storage places near their family dwellings. Streets are arranged in a rough grid, and are lined with volcanic stone walls laid without mortar. Streets and paths lead to the edge of the village and into the mountains. Each family compound has a wooden gate at the entrance. If a neighbor or stranger is heard
from outside the compound, he is either invited into the yard, or the owner comes into the street closing the gate behind him. The gate, entrance and walls give privacy and safety to the villagers. Huge pots are dried in the yards, and the streets are lined with fir shakes that are used for the trojes' roofs. The men of Cocucho have specific tasks to perform when they are not tending the fields. There are men who go to the forests to select and fell trees. There are mill workers and shake makers, master carpenters and laborers. All contribute to the local industry of woodworking. The women of Cocucho are the potters. They make huge tinja water jars without the aid of the "imported" potter's wheel. They also sell the pots at important market days in Mexican cities. The trojes, although as handmade as the pottery, are not indigenous architectural structures; they were imported by a small group of Spanish carpenters who brought the tools and designs for the buildings to Mexico shortly after the Spanish conquest in 1519. The trojes are based on the Spanish horreo, a dwelling/storage house type still in use today. The horreo is similar to the troje structure, but it has a ceramic tile roof. Old trojes have black wooden walls, and dark, unlit interiors. A troje will last 50 to 80 years with its shake roof having to be replaced about every ten years. The best shakes for a roof are fir because they last longer than pine. The entire structure turns black in a few years because of the wood's exposure to the elements and the smoke from the fires used for cooking near the dwelling place. There are two types of trojes: troje labradas, carved houses with ornate facades, and trojes lisas, cruder in fabrication and detail. Both structures are basically square, one-room houses. The trojes labradas have a porch and a high pitched roof with heavy beam construction. The most unusual aspect of the Tarascan trojes is that although they seem permanent, they are designed to be moved if necessary. And, although they are beautifully made rural houses, they are not really houses at all, but storage/dwellings used to hold pottery, corn, family possessions and other things. Sometimes trojes include elaborate shrines and beds for guests, but the Cocuchan family cooks, works and sleeps in a separate structure called a cochina, a kitchen/room with an earthen floor and ceramic hearth. The exterior of a troje can be either simple or elaborate. Its construction is an example of traditional woodworking done by the most competent of carpenters. Usually, when a new troje is being built, a master carpenter is hired, and the family then helps with the construction. It takes about three and a half weeks to build a troje labrada, and a shorter period to construct a troje lisa. The trojes, although rigid, wooden structures, are designed to be taken apart. Beams are fitted together with mortise and tenon joints, roof beams are pegged, and roofs are made in sections which can be lifted off when a troje is to be relocated to another area of the village. It takes a group of men about a day and a half to move the structure. Since the inhabitants of Cocucho are, in most cases, illiterate, all parts of the house to be moved are marked with a symbol so that they can be reassembled again on a different site. The floor planks are set on stones for leveling. Most trojes have floors set well above the ground and away from direct dampness. There is no cooking done in a troje because of its wooden floor. As a result, it is usually damp in the rainy months from May to October.

The family prepares meals and sleeps around the fire in the cochina. Trojes are often cold and wet, with winds whipping through the side planks. With no heat from a fire, it is doubtful that the storage house would be used except during the warmest months. The weather in the Sierra is mild much of the year with no snow fall. Much of the dry season is very warm with an abundance of sun. Since much work and living is done out of doors in the Tarascan Sierra, the trojes are far from cozy, elaborate dwellings, but they more than serve the needs of living, storage, protection and privacy for families.

Jens Morrison is a ceramicist whose work was featured in Arts and Architecture, Volume 2, Number 1.
Master carpenters using simple tools often produce unexpectedly sophisticated structures.
Humankind’s need for shelter is instinctive. Primitive people built structures in trees or “nests” in caves; the lost hunter first finds shelter, which he often must make, then decides upon which course to take; survivors of plane crashes create shelter out of the wreckage.

Shelter is basic, primal, mandatory for existence; but it also defines and shapes our lives. An individual’s house is an important symbolic edifice; whether constructed roughly out of daub and wattle or in the more sophisticated International style of concrete, glass and steel, the house is a metaphor for wholeness and security. So strong is its symbolism that as children we all drew the same house with the same two windows, the same door, and the same peaked roof, regardless of whether we grew up in an apartment building or a Bauhaus residence. For all of us, this was the single common symbol that meant “house.”

Past societies have been defined, examined and psychoanalyzed through their houses. One thinks how much we know about the people of Pompeii from structures and the residential amenities preserved under the layer of volcanic dust. It isn’t only houses which engage our intellectual curios-

Tony Berlant, Prisoner of Love, 1967
ity, it is the purposeful structures which have been
built through the ages—structures utilized for re-
ligious ceremonies, secular meetings or play. The
-consuming lure of Stonehenge derives from its
very enigma.

In order to have shelter, man must build.
Whether it involves lashing together twigs or con-
structing with wood, brick, stucco and steel, building involves a progressively sophisti-
cated, evolutionary thought pattern, a sense of
geometry and aesthetics coupled with a need or
use. In its sophisticated aspects, dwellings separate
man from the animals.

Great literature is replete with images of shelter
and place. From Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Fam-
ily Robinson, to Remembrance of Things Past,
there are powerful images of the shelter, the struc-
ture, the grand or bourgeois house, and sometimes
of a specific room in that house. Through writers
such as Rilke, Sartre, Blake, D.H. Lawrence, Woolf
and Durrell, we are made aware of the sensorial
presence of those places; the writer has described
them so that we might sense them as he does.

From the earliest, the visual arts have also been
concerned with the representation of architecture.

We have come a long way if one considers the
projecting walls of the Lascaux caves, where in-
habitants drew pictures of magical horses and bi-
son. But one thinks also of the architectural
thrones erected to shelter the Madonna in the
paintings of Giotto and Cimabue, of great sculpt-
ural works such as the figures on the tympanum at
Autun, the figures on the exterior of Chartres and
the bronze doors of Ghiberti.

By the same token, architecture has come a long
way, from its vernacular beginnings in the princi-
pal to the refined, disciplined spaces of con-
temporary architecture. Although humans have
been building with great creativity for thousands
of years, the history of architecture is concentrated
in the last few hundred. In addition, it is only in
the 1980s that architecture is again mentioned in
the same breath as art.

As attitudes regarding art and architecture come
closer, the concern among painters and sculptors
alike is with space and place and/or built struc-
ture. Thus as architecture, in the thros of its post-
modern phase, has become more like art, forsaking
many aspects of the work and teachings of Mies
van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd
Wright, and seeking less purity, newly erratic form
and eclectic embellishment, one aspect of visual
art in its postmodernist phase has become more
like architecture.

The antecedent for this new, “walk-in” art is
the work of artists who came to the fore in the
1960s such as Edward Kienholz and George Segal.
Kienholz’ existential life-sized tableaus deal with
birth, death, sexuality and temporality. They force
us to examine the shadow side of our psyches.
Segal’s symbolic yet enigmatic set pieces serve as a
frame of reference for his figures made of bronze
or plaster, figures which are eloquent in their
muteness. The fact that both Kienholz and Segal
cast from life is a highly relevant factor, in relation
to the capacity of the figures both to carry the
work’s implicit message and to “be” in the houses
built for them.

Now a new group of artists is concerned with
narrative art. In Roland Reiss’ stage sets, either in
doll house or human scale, there is a quality of
abstraction (in the walk-in ones made of neutral
unpainted particle board or plastic laminate) and
of narration (in the diminutive works replete with
mini-detective-story clues). The same is true of
Michael McMillen’s H.O. gauge worlds or of the pseudo-archeological presentations of Richard Turner, which evoke a sense of the mystery and adventure of other places, other cultures and earlier times. In the works of all these artists we find a strong literal and metaphorical involvement with the building as a symbol, as a miniature stage for the viewer’s metaphysical dramas.

Tony Berlant executes archetypical little houses, “sculpture pedestal” size, as well as larger, more complex ones in human scale that are just as poignant as those we drew as children. They are simple and stylized, with two windows and a door. Many are executed with a child’s sense of color, applied with Berlant’s unique neo-primitive metal collage technique; for example, he overlays parts of a globe upon a tiny house, layering it metaphorically and expanding the implications of its existence. In Berlant’s houses—which are also boxes of a sort—contents are very important. One small house contains a huge conch shell which, like the apple in Magritte’s Listening Room, has phenomenologically filled the entire space.

Donna Dennis’ houses and facades are also symbolic but much more overtly representational.
Whether created in three-dimensions or in movie or stage-flat style, her constructions are impene-
trable. Subway facades or ubiquitous Midwestern screenporch frame houses, they glow from within,
yet their windows and portals are shaded, their contents remain forever an enigma.

At the other end of the scale, the “houses” of Siah Armajani are sophisticated architectural
structures designed for use. An example is *Reading Room*, created for the Baxter Art Gallery, incorpora-
ing Robert Frost’s poetry stenciled on the walls, and within which poets gave readings. *Newstand*,
created for the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, also was meant to be entered and used. As
much about theory, experience and social function as they are about aesthetics and “built” structures,
Armajani’s work can be experienced on a multi-

plicity of levels.

Eric Orr creates magical rooms predicated upon
an entirely different point of view which empha-
sizes the experiential qualities of the piece, rather
than its physical structure. Two of the most nota-
able were *Silence and the Ion Wind*, created for the
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in which
inky, ion-filled blackness led to a gold-leaved
chamber opening onto another world, and *Stuxine*,
built into his studio. This piece was a solemn, silent
chamber, built of lead the color of silvered moth’s
wings and carpeted to screen noise; it traced the
sun, dragging its rays slowly down one wall in a
luminous golden bar.

There are a number of artists who construct
spaces, rooms, enclosures, tombs, kivas, huts and so
forth in which the experience of the space is para-
mount, yet which are handsome as constructions.
One thinks, for example, of the metaphysical
chambers, structures and “machines” created by
Alice Aycock, which fill whole rooms and have
complex literary associations. Her beautifully
built, fantastic constructions of raw, unpainted
wood are unique in their merger of object with ex-
perience.

The outdoor structures of Mary Miss, such as
*Sunken Pool*, provide the sensation of being re-
moved from reality and enclosed in a private
world. This opaque turquoise structure rose from
the land and was framed by clean unpainted two-
by-fours. Inside one found water and, descending,
one saw only sky. Other vernacular underground
pieces by Mary Miss are influenced by Native
American dwellings, the beehive tombs of Myce-
nae and other primitive sources. The works of Miss
have their roots in what Bernard Rudofsky called
“architecture without architects” or “nondedi-
greed architecture.” He notes, “It is often ar-
chitecture by subtraction or sculpted architec-
ture.” (Carved out of rocks and caves, for example.)

Vernacular houses clinging tenaciously to hill-
sides remind one of the extraordinary villages of
thumbnail-size buildings, created by Charles
Simonds out of miniscule clay bricks and inserted
into the cracks and crevices of city streets, occa-
sionally installed in a museum or gallery. Simonds’
houses, with their pink, folded vaginal canyons
and all of their earthy sexual clay overtones, are
some of the most exquisitely erotic works of con-
temporary sculpture.

This essay was excerpted from “The House That
Art Built” catalogue, which accompanied the ex-
hibition at the Art Gallery, Cal State, Fullerton. It
was designed and organized by Dextra Frankel,
gallery director.

Jan Butterfield is a freelance writer in Sausalito.
Cooking has been a scientific endeavor long before Fannie Farmer introduced the level measure to the Boston Cooking School, but rarely have the tools of science been used so elegantly in the kitchen as they are today. Redefining for many users the aesthetic of quality casework, a new kind of storage system is penetrating the U.S. market, causing American makers to sit up, take notice, and introduce their own competing versions of cabinets in the European style. The look of these light and spare cabinets is responsible for their popularity. While some American casework appears to be reminiscent of grandmother's dresser, the European systems are clearly industrial products which do not imitate traditional furniture. Dominated by the big-three German group of Allmilmö, Poggenpohl and SieMatic, their makers do not try to reproduce the look of handmade furniture but embrace machine technology to ensure a consistent level of quality. Above all, they use materials in a surprisingly appropriate and specific manner.

European designers have always tried to economize on wood, which is in relatively short supply. While the traditional standard of quality for American casework has been hardwood, the Europeans have eschewed this construction in favor of a dense particle board which is dimensionally more stable. On opening a drawer, you may be disturbed to find that the inside compartment is a single piece of injection-molded plastic, but the choice becomes more attractive when you realize that the connections are simple and smart. The compartment is easy to clean and strong; a salesman will stand on this. The interior finish of these cabinets is melamine, a liquid-applied plastic, or plastic laminate—surfaces which do not require shelf paper.

Exterior finishes are meticulously detailed, since there is growing concern over the effect of formaldehyde, which vaporizes from particle board, on the domestic environment. The most economical finish is plastic laminate, which can be sealed at the edges with melamine strips, hardwood, or metal. In a gesture of pure technological extravagance, it can also be made to bend across a rounded edge, allowing the cabinet door to be covered in a single sweep of one material. Wood veneer is the most expensive finish due to strict export controls. Surprisingly, the moderately priced alternative be-

Looks Luxurious.

SieMatic's 9009 PRS kitchen system has a smooth and seamless polyester finish which matches the glossy finish of lacquer furniture. The vertical stiles are a decorative detail not attached to doors or drawers. Like all SieMatic kitchens, the openings are fully lined with dust seals, so the contents of these cabinets will pass any white glove test. Shown in white with grey trim and white plastic knobs; countertop in solid black granite.
C'est arrivé à la conscience d'aurore de l'avenir.
The trim design of Poggenpohl’s Combi-Duo (CD) 106 combines two compatible materials—textured white plastic laminate and ash.

A special process used in the fabrication of AllmilmO’s Zelldesign kitchen systems bends plastic laminate around rounded horizontal edges to produce a seemingly seamless finish.

Poggenpohl MS 86: solid oak slats with burnt oak stain and silver metal pulls and vertical trim; countertop in DuPont Corian.

Brookspan's trim design of Poggenpohl's Combi-Duo (CD) 106 combines two compatible materials—textured white plastic laminate and ash.

A special process used in the fabrication of AllmilmO's Zelldesign kitchen systems bends plastic laminate around rounded horizontal edges to produce a seemingly seamless finish.

Poggenpohl MS 86: solid oak slats with burnt oak stain and silver metal pulls and vertical trim; countertop in DuPont Corian.

tween plastic and wood is luxurious-looking polyester lacquer, a beautiful, seamless finish which satisfies the concerns of both estheticians and environmentalists. In spite of the claims of manufacturers as to strength, lacquer is not recommended for kitchens subject to abuse. Best, conceivably, for "empty nesters"—people with children who are grown and gone.

Ultimately, what makes the European systems look different is not a matter of finish but of detail. To hang doors, most American makers continue to use a traditional metal hinge which is visible on a return or face frame. The Europeans, in contrast, use a concealed, collapsible hinge—known under the names of manufacturers such as Häfele and Gras—which is stronger than the conventional one. It is mounted on the back of the door and inside of the cabinet, allowing surfaces to be kept flush and doors to be set close. This gives the systems their unmistakably smooth look.

But the buyer beware! European base units are manufactured to a height and depth which is smaller than typical for American kitchens. To accommodate American appliances, they must be given a higher, six-inch base and set a short distance from the wall. Countertops and longer end panels cover the gaps; some makers provide storage units which make the most of the extra base height by accommodating such goodies as step ladders; in areas where code or bearing wall requires, the space at the wall serves as a convenient chase for plumbing. In any case, care must be exercised in the choice of appliances, otherwise you may find the smooth lines of your Euro kitchen marred by an intruding American dishwasher.

It should also be noted that the Euro kitchen is not cheap. However, most of the systems are available through dealers who include design and installation. You have the satisfaction of knowing you are getting something for your money—excellent materials and fabrication as well as intelligent design. These systems display the same serious style that we expect from other products of European industrial design, whether they are cars or coffee grinders. In spite of the fact that some lines may be more traditional, others more industrial-looking, these systems generally do not subscribe to the current excesses of the "country" or "professional" kitchen. Euro kitchens are rational and comfortable—places where intelligent people can feel at home.

Jacqueline Rosalagon organizes and maintains resource materials for architects and designers.

SieMatic 4004 GRL: textured white plastic laminate with trim in red smooth laminate and white plastic bow handles; countertop in red smooth laminate.

Eurokitchen. Thanks to the following Los Angeles showrooms for opening their spaces to our photographer: for AllmilmO, Kitchen Design Studio, 408 N. Robertson Boulevard; Poggenpohl, La Cuisi­

Gino 2000, 8687 Melrose Avenue; SieMatic, Kitchen Studio, 8687 Melrose Avenue.
We live in an age of shortages. This unhappy fact penetrated first the public consciousness during the oil crisis of the 1970s, and it continues to disturb us. Even now, when reserves are at an all-time high, we understand that this can only be a temporary condition; that natural resources are by definition limited.

Affordable housing is also in short supply. The scarcity of this social resource depends on the availability of oil, for certainly the cost of heating house and water enters the calculation of affordability. But the obvious determinants are the initial costs of land and construction. Any attempt to address the problem of affordable housing must take into account both the initial cost of building the home and the life cycle cost of operating it.

The row house has become popular by dealing with the initial cost of building the home. As a townhouse it has two stories and a compact footprint, so it saves on the amounts of land and construction. It also has a short front and back, joined by long party walls, so a large proportion of the
area enclosed is dark, noisy and remote from the outdoors.

Architect William Ledy of San Francisco has proposed a solar courtyard row house, an alternative which deals not only with the initial cost of building a house but also incorporates a solar strategy which should lower its operating cost. The contribution of solar energy is anticipated to be 65-70% of the total heating load.

The organization of the individual units suggests a strong diagram. The footprint of the house occupies a diminutive, 42-foot square, ensuring a rough parity between party and unshared walls. The core of this plan is also a square living room with a high open ceiling. This served space is the principal route for circulating through the house, and is insulated by a ring of servant spaces—entry, kitchen, study, bedrooms and bathrooms, plus three adjacent patios of various sizes.

The patios are small but efficient. They are close enough to be possessed and used by the inhabitants; defined strongly by walls on three sides so that they become outside rooms. One patio serves as an entry; another small one as a sitting space between a bedroom and a study; the largest as a complement to the public area of the living room. Each enhances the privacy of the unit by mediating between the open, public world of the street and the enclosed private domain of the room.

The solar strategy is simple and reliable. The living room serves multiple functions; the concrete slab floor and concrete masonry walls both provide thermal mass which is heated by sunlight streaming through the tall, dormer-capped window. The height of the room acts as a flue to draw rising warm air out through the same dormer, or recirculating fans can force this air back to floor level. The dormer window is shaded by a row of deciduous trees in the large patio, and protected by an insulating blind. The living room is also protected by such blinds, and insulated by the servant spaces on three sides. A solar panel system heats water; the entire strategy is backed by gas-fired water and space heaters.

The units are combined in a linear fashion. The solar strategy fixes the orientation of these dwellings along an east-west axis. The units are proposed as infill to an existing suburban tract or as an entire planned unit development. In either case, parking is remote and penetration into the site is on foot. It should be noted that the architect proposes this as a generic solution to the problem of affordable housing. Adjustments must be made according to the specific requirements of a real client and site.

Even as a conceptual design, the solar courtyard house is admirable. It combines inexpensive and proven solar design with a sensitive consolidation of the single family house. With the exception of the second bathroom and a formal dining room, it is not lacking for differentiated spaces, and the slack is more than taken up by the addition of three functional outdoor rooms. It uses space thriftily, not by reducing the number of amenities, but by reducing their size. This is not a process of elimination, but of civilized reduction.
because it wasn't modern and because it was. In fact, the stucco box was modernist in its image and, to a degree, in its matter-of-fact acceptance of the most readily available technology. In vernacular fashion it grafted the new with the old to create a product which was simultaneously forward-looking and comfortably familiar. Its ability to symbolize southern California and modernism, both in the mind of the vernacular builder and client, is also sign of its importance.

John Beach is an architectural historian, designer and frequent lecturer. John Chase is the author of Exterior Decoration (Hennessey & Ingalls, 1982). This essay was excerpted from the "Home Sweet Home" catalogue that accompanied the exhibition at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles.

Judy Fiskin creates her art by retrieving the isolated dignity of buildings that have lost their shine. The self-taught photographer has been capturing that quiet, abandoned quality of the desert, bungalows and old amusement park rides for the past several years. Recently, she has been working with the stucco box apartments of Los Angeles. Associated with southern California's indigenous architecture, these buildings sprang up throughout the area during the 1950s and 1960s.

The photos featured here are devoid of any sordary 50s nostalgia. Fiskin approaches these buildings with a classical sensibility, stripping away any cheap mood of melancholy. All the buildings are photographed straight on, neatly centered within the square of the lens, from approximately the same distance. These flat frontal images emphasize a still, stark, graphic quality. Enhancing the photos' austerity, the street and sky are bleached to nearly the same whiteness as the photographic paper. This results in a very academic view of these unusual buildings, one that enhances the characteristic quality of their forms.

It is in this manner that Fiskin succeeds in presenting these buildings as noble, isolated enigmas. They appear timeless in their rational presentation, yet their distinctive architectural style confines them to a specific moment of time. Fiskin's acute sensitivity to the quiet dignity of these structures prevents the photos from becoming a sentimental inventory of distinguished local architecture. Rather, the artist presents these buildings as a unique and forgotten artistic tradition.

Cynthia Castle

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17½-foot centers. To get to the front door, therefore, one must walk through an open carport. The curved wall provides a spatial break between units and signals the location of the front door.

Arquitectonica has demonstrated conviction and assurance in applying architecture to the dwelling house problem as conceived in late 20th-century Houston. Their approach has consistently been one of architectural analysis and it persuasively demonstrates their mastery of spatial ordering; of scale, color, and volumetric composition; and of a sensuous delight in the experience of architecture. Their houses provide private domestic retreats yet also acknowledge the street. They design with intelligence and wit, not merely accepting the constraints imposed by speculative real estate development, but expressing them architecturally with a transparency that borders on naughtiness. New York author Simone Swan observed that Arquitectonica, unlike many postmodernists, "are not frivolous, they're outrageous."

Such virtuosity, of course, is bound to provoke. Arquitectonica does not dissemble. The Haddon Townhouses are bitterly resented by many of the neighborhood inhabitants. (Such is not the case with the other three projects, however.) Popular criticism has been stylistically focused, exempting other neighborhood townhouses that camouflage themselves with kitsch styling. But it is not difficult to understand the more fundamental, if unarticulated, objection: the urban transformation that the Haddon Townhouses portend.

In Houston change is the constant. Since the municipal setback ordinance of 1982 especially affects corner lots by imposing setbacks on both street frontages, developers, who feel they cannot build fewer houses on such sites with any economic justification, now are buying two lots and planning seven- to nine-story mid-rise condominiums among the bungalows, cottages, and duplexes. Arquitectonica already has several such projects on the boards.

For the moment, however, Arquitectonica has contributed to Houston four sets of townhouses that unequivocally are works of architecture. In concert with other young architects they have brought to the always problematic realm of speculative development the same inventiveness, ingenuity, and resourcefulness that Philip Johnson has used to transform Houston's skyline.

Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.

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of Mies' tenets to the housing needs of millions. In explaining the building he belies a concern for family living; in fact, he creates a situation where the motivation for open planning is the better functioning of the family.

Any young American family can arrange itself in this house. There is space for leisure and eating; there is sleeping space. And this space is flexible and arranged to make work and play simple to do. There is space for food preparation (which becomes increasingly simple with the new devices and inventions) and other household work duties.

Keck envisioned a new lifestyle which motivated his use of new forms. Everything would be better and more ample: more leisure, more flexibility; work and play more "simple to do." The hopes for a new life developed by years of wartime privation converged with the forms of modern architecture.

As with Bogner, however, Keck does not borrow indiscriminately from the Europeans. His box house looks modern, but is sheathed with horizontal wood siding, derived from the suburbs. Above the main door is a corrugated canop y, inconsistent with high art models, but very consistent with the pragmatic, "homey" intentions and tastes of his imagined clients.

In the Fifties, Keck codified a modern style that proliferated in the prosperous suburbs of Chicago. His major stylistic variation on Mies' boxes was the insertion of louvres in a bank of windows. These louvres are remarkably gracious; they are vestigial shutters which give the modern architecture of this area the same air as their colonial neighbors. Modern in these buildings, as Richard Pratt's prose implied, is an update of the colonial.

The recent history of American suburban architecture makes a consideration of the 50s a matter of curiosity than a search for the roots of postmodernism in this country. The hybridizations of local vernacular and International style elements in the work of Robert A.M. Stern, Robert Venturi, Michael Graves and a host of their followers and associates is the most recent flowering of the American ambiguity toward the "hearth" and the "machine." Perhaps in the truest sense, modern architecture has always been postmodern—what has differed is the ratio between its mechanistic and symbolic ingredients.

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