

### The Louisiana Architect



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#### How to Write and Talk Architecture

After years of hacking through etymological thickets of learned architectural prose, we have hit upon a sure-fire method for converting frustration into fulfillment. Called the Archi-phrase Projector, this system employs a lexicon of 30 carefully chosen Banal-Semantic (B-S) words, all gleaned from one article in an architectural magazine.

- Column 1
- 0 out-moded
- 1 disassociated
- 2 capricious
- 3 systematic
- 4 imperical
- 5 technological
- 6 inductive
- 7 intuitive
- 8 functional
- 9 behavioral
- Column 2 0 conceptual 1 architectural 2 esthetic 3 stylistic

5 analogous

environment

anachronistic

socio-economic

6 eclectic

7

8

9

- 0 synthesis
- 1 obsolescence 2 viability
- 3 interaction
- 4 chronological 4 cybernetization
  - 5 milieu
  - 6 habitat
    - 7 planning

Column 3

- 8 ingenuity
- 9 criteria

The procedure is simple. Think of any three-digit number, then select the corresponding BS-word from each column. For instance, number "973" produces "behavioral environment interaction," a phrase that can be dropped into virtually any article or report with that ring of decisive, knowledgeable authority. No one will have the slightest idea of what you are talking about, but the important thing is that they're not about to admit it.

J. BUCHANAN BLITCH, AIA

#### IN THIS ISSUE

The Second Battle of New Orleans	5
LAA—Honor Award	6
Ambivalent Color	8
Desmond Sketch	10
LAA Student Honor Award	12
Architect Gives Unique House, Not Bigger One	14
Landscaping Your Home	17

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# The Second **Battle** of New Orleans

By MARK LOWREY, AIA Architect

The controversy surrounding the proposed Interstate Expressway along the historic riverfront of the New Orleans French Quarter (the nationally beloved *Vieux Carre*) has now reached the point where Federal officials of the Department of Transportation must make their inevitable, final decisions; i.e., whether or not they are going to approve it for 90% Federal funding. Conservationists throughout the nation and indeed throughout the world have fought valiantly and persistently to awaken the taxpaying public to this incredible threat to the national architectural and historic heritage. It soon will be seen what effect their efforts have had upon the Federal Bureau of Public Roads and the Louisiana Department of Highways.

New Orleans commercial interests have not yet discovered that "Preservation is Good Business." Blessed with the accidental treasure of an intact 18th and 19th Century European settlement in the city's very heart, a magnet which creates a tourist and convention industry grossing almost \$200,000,000 annually, they would willingly and carelessly destroy it in a dubious pursuit of progress. At the same time they turn their backs on the potential of an urban riverfront development of commercial, residential, and recreational facilities, in full view of the teeming port and the majestic sweep of the Mississippi, at the spot where the Crescent City was founded 250 years ago. As their recommended solution to interstate traffic problems, they offer a six-lane, hundred-foot-wide, elevated freeway closely paralleling the streets of the Vieux Carre and unique Jackson Square, loathe to admit a twenty-year-old planning error that could deface the City of New Orleans for all time.

In an age when technology seems to run roughshod over common human sense, and when billions of tax dollars are bled into urban monuments to mobility, with total disregard to valuable parklands, recreational areas, and historic landmarks, Congress has heard the rumblings from New Orleans and elsewhere. It has enacted laws that on the surface offer cause for optimism. These laws direct the Bureau of Public Roads to present every evidence of alternative design efforts that might "minimize" damage to

(Continued on Page 18)-

#### LAA - HONOR AWARD - 1968

#### Recreational Park Development

Peltier Municipal Park

Thibodaux, Louisiana



#### Jury Comments:

Gracefully simple and economical. Just the right touch for recreational use.

#### **Owner's Program:**

The Thibodaux Jaycees in 1966 selected as their major contribution to the City of Thibodaux, Louisiana, the development of the picnic area in Peltier Municipal Park. Since this area was very poorly equipped, unattractive and greatly needed by the community, the Jaycees decided to build a Picnic Shelter and a Children's Play Tower during the first phase of its park development program.

During the planning and construction phases of these structures, Steve Gossen, AIA, was president of the Jaycee Chapter and Richard Weimer, AIA, was the secretary. These two architects were largely responsible for the initial planning, the promotion, the design and the construction of the project.

All work, including the planning and construction was done by unskilled Jaycees on their own time. The program set-up for the architects was as follows:

- 1. Simplicity of design so that structures could be built by unskilled laborers
- 2. Should establish a design standard for future construction
- 3. Maintenance free and hurricane resistant
- 4. Flexible and safe
- 5. Tower to provide imaginative child play
- 6. Budget \$3,000.00
- 7. Place structures on site without disrupting the existing master plan

#### Solution:

In their solution, the architects used a modified post and beam system.

Materials selected were concrete, concrete blocks, steel, rough sawn redwood and hand split cedar shingles.

#### Cost:

The total cost of the project for materials only was \$2,594.00. The construction labor was performed by the Jaycee members on a voluntary basis.





Stephen Gossen and Richard Weimer are with the firm of Picou & Gossen, AIA in Thibodaux, Louisiana and are members of the Louisiana Coastal Chapter.



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#### AMBIVALENT COLOR

The variable nature of color makes it one of the most fascinating and frustrating tools of the architect. It eludes systematic formulas because there are so many variables and because it is so completely relative to its surroundings. In practical application a few fundamental problems occur frequently. It may be helpful to examine them as well as our methods of working with color.

We can not consider color without light because we see it by virtue of light .In a darkened room we may be able to distinguish only value relationships in terms of white, grey and black. With increased light we begin to see individual hues and color intensity (saturation). Adequate illumination is necessary to develop subtle color relations but there is also an optimum level beyond which we begin to "wash out" or lose detail.

The quality of the light source also affects our perception of color. We have a great variety of lamps today that vary in their spectral characteristics. Most of us are well adapted to incandescent light because we use it extensively in our homes and its warmth is closer to what we think of as daylight. But even daylight varies with atmospheric interference as we notice on a "grey," overcast day or in the light of the setting sun.

Through experience we have learned to compensate for the deficiency of incandescent lamps in the cool area of the spectrum. We are less well adapted to fluorescent light despite its widespread application. Here we find a greater variety of lamps used but equally important is their lack of focus or beam, which fails to develop the color quality inherent in textures. Wood grain and stone masonry, for example, appear flat and lifeless. Few people think of shadow as color but by contrast is gives richness to our textures.

Color selections must be made under lighting conditions similar to those under which they will be used. Often this is ignored in the office when we choose colors and materials under an even fluorescent light for exterior finishes which will be subjected to the strong light and shadows of natural daylight.

I have mentioned that color is completely relative

to its surroundings. This is the most fundamental aspect of its nature. We normally do not see an isolated color except under specially controlled conditions. We see color in relation to other colors and to shapes and textures. Most of us have done elementary exercises where we have taken small areas of the same color and by the choice of backgrounds have made the original color appear to be quite different, without completely knowing why. What occurs is that the background color tends to subtract its hue and its darkness or lightness from the small area. A red violet will appear more red on a blue ground and bluer on a red ground. A middle grey will appear lighter on a dark ground and darker on a light ground. A more revealing experiment is shown in plate no. 1, where we take two very different colors, in this instance greys, and by the choice of grounds make them appear as one color. Gradually we realize the roles that light and color intensity, as well as hue, play. With experience one can predict the result within a narrow range.

An amateur photographer may note with some surprise that a photograph of a white boat appears blue or a white building may appear green due to the reflected light from grass areas. The average person is not aware that part of the building is green because he sees various aspects of it, and experiences it as a white building. But in a more restricted setting reflected color can shift the initial color to a point that may be objectionable or less effective. An example might be an interior space where reflections from a strong floor color will shift delicate wall colors.

Changing size or area of color is a frequent source of deception in relation to varying spatial conditions. In some of our experiments we restrict size in order to intensify a particular color phenomenon but we also explore color at various scales to understand how area affects color relationships. A designer can easily create a beautiful and subtle scheme with small swatches of color and materials that will be ineffective at a larger





scale. Colors will be too strong or too weak for the space involved. Having narrowed the range of our selections it is advisable to test large samples for ultimate lighting and spatial conditions.

As our understanding of color interaction increases so does our skepticism about many of the tenets we have accumulated along the way. We have been told that warm colors advance and cool colors recede with some degree of support from the physicist who can measure the spectral energy of individual colors. We find in practice that we can make warm colors appear cool and cool colors warm by the choice of adjacent colors. In similar ways we can make warm colors recede and cool colors advance. The basic reason is that hue alone does not determine the spatial position of a color. Contrasts of light and color intensity are equally important. All that we can accurately say is that warm and cool are relative terms for colors and under certain conditions warm colors tend to advance spatially while cool colors tend to recede.

The factors I have mentioned enter into the optical mixing of color. Most designers are familiar with the paintings of the impressionists and particularly the pointillists, Seurat and Signac. It is not surprising that Chevreul, a chemist working with tapestries, first formulated the basis for optical mixing which inspired the painters. If we look closely at a small swatch of richly woven fabric, we can see the wonderful interplay of colored threads. At a distance of 5 or 10 feet, depending on the scale of the weave, the colors merge and establish an overall tonality. There is more than one kind of experience of the fabric depending on our viewing distance. The overall color quality may be very different from the individual colors used.

Optical mixing is not limited to fabrics but enters into materials selection for terrazzo, tiles and other finishes. One can see evidences in every city of that period of architectural enthusiasm for multi-colored tile walls. Unfortunately the architects did not fully understand the examples they so admired in Venice, Rome Anna Campbell Bliss, Architect and consultant on color and interiors, received her B.A. from Wellesley College, then later graduated from the Harvard Graduate School of Design with a B. Architecture. She was a visiting lecturer in color at the University of Utah and has lectured widely on the subject.

and Ravenna. The interior lighting of those early churches is very different from our high levels of interior illumination or the exacting quality of daylight. More recent designs have failed to consider the viewing distance for the size and spacing of units.

With brick and stone masonry, architects often work at the extremes of mechanical perfection of uniform elements or garnish combinations of undigested color mixing. Examining some of the old colonial buildings we find a great range of colors blended with skill to avoid sharp contrasts or the development of strong patterns. Greater variety of coursing is used to take advantage of the variations in baking of headers and stretchers. The size of brick joints is held to a minimum to avoid competition with the brick coloring.

Color as it is affected by texture and surface qualities may trouble the designer, when trying to match or closely relate quite different materials. A simple problem of texture is the design of a carpet. We can take a supply of wool in one color and have it made up in six different weaves resulting in half a dozen slightly different color samples. The area of the wool in shadow and the variation between cut ends and the sides of the yarn will affect the color. Matching is again a problem of overall tonality rather than the color of the individual thread.

Our knowledge of color and color interaction comes from many different sources, psychology, physiology, physics and the experimentation of painters and others working in the visual arts. Although we have a concrete body of knowledge, the formulation of rules is generally inaccurate due to the many factors involved and the extreme variations under which colors are viewed. An understanding of its nature and experience with its use are both necessary to achieve desired results. I have discussed briefly the influence of light sources, color interaction, optical mixing and color matching. These are only limited facets of the subject but are perhaps the areas most pertinent for the architect's consideration.



#### Parlange

This ancient seat of culture and history is, in addition, one of Louisiana's most interesting pieces of architecture.

It was built about 1750 of cypress, mud, and moss, a rare relic of the type of construction known as "bousillage."

Generous in scale and simple in plan with a completely encircling gallery, it is distinguished by exquisite detailing of doorways, ceiling moldings, and medallions. These were carved by slave labor of native cypress instead of the usual cast plaster.

The building faces False River, a horseshoe shaped cut-off lake formerly a part of the Mississippi River. Originally built by indigo planter Marquis Vincent de Tenant on a land grant from the French crown, it has housed eight or nine generations of his descendants, including the present generation. The history of this family is a fascinating story in itself and much of it can be read in the incredible collection of original furnishings and paintings still there.

The building was restored after years of neglect by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Charles Parlange shortly after World War I.

JOHN DESMOND, FAIA

#### First Place

Comment:

The choice of site is significant as a manifestation of the true involvement of the student in the Social Problems of our time.

Winner of a \$100.00 savings bond and the rotating plaque for his school.

JOHN A. CHRESTIA University of Southwestern Louisiana

Heeding the new cries of students for individual identification and social involvement on and off campus, this module finds its life at the urban center. Located in the heart of New Orleans it involves its students in the social, cultural, and financial functions which are the heart beat of the city. The school becomes uniquely "New Orleans" through the extensive use of existing victorian cottages. Although some new structures are required, they would reflect the character of the location and existing buildings.

The plan achieves its modular character thru the use of victorian cottages which are very abundant in certain areas of the city. The four square block plan may be repeated within such areas. The campus may also grow by extending into neighboring blocks. As shown in plan, the use of these houses as apartments, classrooms, offices and lecture halls illustrates their versatility. Because of their basic shape and size they are easily moveable if necessary. The School is strictly pedestrian in scale because of the existing location of the houses and their relationships to the surroundings. The regular city block serves as a functional part of the campus while not losing its character as a part of the neighborhood or section of the city.

The typical four block plan centers around the academic functions which are located near the center corners of the blocks. This location mirrors the basic purpose for both students and teachers to be brought together education.

The basic cost of the plant would remain quite low because both land and existing buildings would be put into use. To retain the character of the cottages and the suite only minor interior and exterior alterations would be carried out.

#### LAA Student Honor Award 1968



#### Architect Gives Unique House, Not Bigger One

Can an architect who designs a single home for you give you a bigger and better-equipped house than a mass builder?

The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is no, says The American Institute of Architects.

The custom-designed and custombuilt house is not the answer for many people.

A large family with a small budget may be better off buying a large, older house with the kind of space that is expensive to buy these days. A family that faces periodic or unexpected moves may do better to buy a house not too closely tailored to individual tastes.

And there is another hard fact to face: The mass builder can or should be able to provide more enclosed space for the money than anyone, regardless of his skill, can match on a single-house basis. Because he is in competition with other builders in a generally affluent society, the mass builder can also be expected to provide the latest available kitchen, plumbing, air conditioning, and electrical service. The best builders, who almost always use architects for site planning and house design, can provide all of these things and good design, too.

#### The Unique Quality

The family that retains an architect to design a single house for it can and should look for something else: The special delight and compatability of environment that comes from a house which has been designed to accommodate and enhance one family's particular way of life.

In brief, you shouldn't ask an architect to give you what many others can offer. But he is uniquely equipped to give you what no one else can supply. If this is what you want, the all-important first steps are to find an architect and a site — preferably in that order. How do you find the right man? One architect says: "By his work you will know him." The advice is sound; by looking through community newspapers, checking magazines, investigating houses that look outstanding, asking friends, and checking with acquaintances in the building industry, you will come up with the names of several architects. The next move is to make an appointment with the architect and tell him, frankly, what you want and what you have to spend on it.

At the same time, you can ask for information about houses he has done so that you can look at them and ask the owners about him.

#### How Do You Live?

It is very important for both you and the architect to determine early in the game whether you like each other and are likely to get along together throughout the all-important conceptual period.

Knowing how to deal with the architect is equally important. To design a house that suits your living pattern best, he needs to know as much as possible about how your family lives and moves, what it does, what it likes and dislikes. Is the family close-knit? Does it thrive on proximity and conversation? Or do its members value individual privacy? Do you object to cooking smells or is the family likely to congregate in or near the kitchen? Are family members sensitive to noise and early-morning light? The answers to all of these questions will suggest certain architectural decisions, influence the positioning of spaces, determine whether certain rooms should be located close to or separated from other rooms, dictate an open plan or call for considerable partitioning, to name a few considerations.

This kind of information is far more useful to the designer than swatches of cloth, color charts, and tear-outs from residential magazines.

When the architect brings in his preliminary drawings, the prospective owner must gird up his courage and say frankly and directly whether he likes them or not. Withholding a candid opinion at this stage will only result in unhappiness or require later and expensive changes.

#### **Building Process**

After the preliminary drawings are approved, working drawings will be made and a book of specifications will be presented by the architect. It will then be time to choose a builder. The architect can help you make the choice and suggest what should and should not be in the contract. He will act throughout as your agent, and as a professional consultant, take no fee or compensation from anything or anyone but you insofar as your project is concerned.

The architect will normally make periodic visits to the building site and advise you as to the progress and competence of the work being done.

Sometimes architects will receive a flat fee, but generally they are paid a set percentage of the construction cost. This is !ikely to vary from place to place and man to man; the range is generally between 10 and 15 per cent.

Having your own house designed and built is not a simple process. It will make considerable demands on your time, imagination, and pocketbook.

But, if you have chosen your architect well, it can be a unique and revealing experience, one that will be followed by another and even more rewarding experience—living in a home which has been planned only for you and the kind of life you want to live.

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Living in Louisiana, our opportunities for outdoor living, recreation and working are considerably greater than in most of the rest of the country. I don't know that any surveys have ever been made of the percentage of our waking hours spent out-of-doors, but I am certain that we spend enough time outside to make the design of our outside living spaces a worthwhile investment.

Of course, the very best way to approach the planning of outside spaces is to employ a qualified landscape architect. These professionals have the specialized knowledge and training to develop landscape plans specifically suited to the individual property, owner, usage and budget. However, whether you landscape your own property or retain a professional, the design procedure is the same.

First, you write a program. Make a complete list of everything you plan to do out-of-doors and everything you want your design to do for you. A typical program might include the following: outdoor seating and dining; children's play areas; work and laundry drying areas; garage for cars, bicycles, wheel toys; sun and wind protection; screening from streets, unsightly views, neighbors; gardens for viewing, for flowers and vegetables, etc. You get the idea?

#### Be Practical

Be practical. Don't include any features which you do not need or will not use. For instance, don't plan extensive flower beds, requiring constant maintenance unless you really are a gardener, or can afford to hire one. Next, draw a plan of the house and lot to a convenient scale, say ¼8" to the foot, showing interior room arrangements and permanent features, such as power poles and trees. This need not be artistic, but it should be accurate.

You now have the information necessary to develop a landscape plan. Using tracing paper overlays, try to locate on the plan the features listed in the program. Do not attempt to draw them in detail at first. Just figure out in which part of the lot they belong. Common sense will dictate most locations. Examine these sketch plans to see if there is easy access between related landscape areas and house areas. Do the same thing with relation to the street and neighboring property.

Do the spots you have picked take full advantage of the sun, prevailing breezes in summer, cold winds in winter, shade from trees and the house, in the morning and in the evening? Are unsightly features screened from view? Are attractive features placed so they can be enjoyed from inside the house? If not, scrap it. Be ruthless! Start over. It is only by this type of introspection that a really good, workable plan can be developed. Keep at it until you are sure it is right. This is the single most difficult part of planning for non-professionals, and it must be done right.

Assuming that you have now a plan which places all the landscaping features to best advantage on your lot, the next step is to design the features themselves.

#### **Two Categories**

This area of landscape design falls into two broad categories: construction and planting. The design considerations for each are similar. First, you must decide what the object (or planting) is to do; then you must design (or select) it to accomplish its purpose, bearing in mind its relation to the whole.

Construction materials should be selected for durability, ease of maintenance and compatibility with the house and the rest of the landscape. This usually means redwood, cedar, cypress, masonry, concrete and nonrusting metals. Construction may take the form of paving, steps, fences, benches, garden shelters, barbecues, play equipment, raised beds, etc. Plans and details are available from home and garden magazines and building materials dealers. The important thing to remember though is that this is your lot, and whatever you build on it should be tailored to suit it and you.

Planting materials may be selected for size, form, color, growing habit and adaptability to growing conditions. Don't attempt to grow acid-loving, fibrous-rooted, shady area plants such as camellias and azaleas in tight clay alkaline soil in the full sun. Stick to plants that are suitable to the location and which create the particular visual effect you are seeking. Help in selecting plants is available from most nurserymen, the U. S. Department of Agriculture and LSU.

Given enough study, any piece of property can be converted to a functional and practical outdoor living space, and it need not be expensive, either. The magic ingredient is design.

#### Landscaping Your Home



(Continued from Page 5)

important natural and man-made assets before final Federal funding is approved. As a matter of fact, however, preconceived routes for roadways have very rarely been changed, and token design alternatives have merely attempted to prove that huge trans-city Interstate traffic arteries really do little harm to human values. The freeways through Overton Park in Memphis and Brackenridge Park in San Antonio are two flagrant examples of ultimate Federal concern.

Apparently the "minimum damage" theory is to be applied to the *Vieux Carre*. Mr. Lowell Bridwell, Federal Highway Administrator, inherited the riverfront route from his predecessor, who had approved it. In strict application of the law, he has delayed final action for more than a year to permit alternate design feasibility studies. Mr. Bridwell proposes a dip to grade-level along Jackson Square, at a cost appreciably higher than the elevated structure. The project's opponents contend that the grade-level segment still will do serious harm, forming as it will a positive barrier between Jackson Square and the Mississippi. They insist, furthermore, that it still will usurp the valuable land so vital to a future, more enlightened, riverfront development.

Mr. Bridwell now promises a complete presentation of alternatives to the Mayor and City Council of New Orleans in November. These officials, presumably, are to pass judgment on his compromise proposal. Should they reject it, he could approve the elevated design or reject the project entirely. Should they accept it, he would be forced to tell the public that half a loaf is better than outright starvation.

Crumbs, though, will not calm the natives in this instance. Too many know the results of a Demonstration Grant Study of the Vieux Carre financed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (still to be released to the public, although completed more than a year ago), which recommended stronger legal protection against commercial encroachment, along with a coherent development of the river's edge. Too many agree with the Secretary of the Interior, who thinks this expressway appalling. In their hands, legally suspended until Mr. Bridwell speaks, is the two-edged sword of a lawsuit in Federal Court, originally filed in 1966, designed to strike the expressway its final deathblow or to end forever the farcical pretention that the Vieux Carre is a protected area. This suit asks first for a Declaratory Judgment, recognizing the expressway as a breach of the intent of Louisiana Law. A 1936 amendment to the Louisiana Constitution makes the protection of the "quaint and distinctive character" of the Vieux Carre a state and city responsibility. Should this judgment be denied, a Fourteenth Amendment appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court will establish whether or not the owners of private property, who have had to comply with the severe restrictions placed upon construction and renovation in the French Quarter, are being subjected to unjust and illegal discrimination. A landmark decision is in the offing. The Second Battle of New Orleans looms, with serious portents for the nation.

In this classic conflict between the highwaymen and the conservationists, the central issue is just how much "minimum damage" an American city can tolerate in its breakneck quest for "progress." The salient point is that one tree does not make a forest, and that one last lone column does not make a Parthenon.

# Concrete roof systems

# Prepared as an industry service by Portland Cement Association

clip along dotted line



The light, spacious look of concrete roof systems is accentuated here by the repetitive forms of these folded plates. Capitol Federal Savings & Loan Assoc., Denver, Colo. Architect: Bank Building and Equipment Corporation of America, St. Louis, Mo.

quite often the most meaningful cost guide available to a prospective owner In evaluating structural costs, the roof system is a basic factor, and its square-foot price is

can provide accurate estimates geared to local labor costs and other considerations. struction costs, of course, are not uniform throughout the nation and are dependent upon variables such as spans, loads, bay sizes, and manufacturing requirements. Local builders In most cases, concrete roof systems are in the \$1.00 to \$3.00 per square foot range. Con-

roof systems. Write for free literature. meet all industrial and commercial needs. The chart below compares some common concrete production layouts. Concrete roof systems can be efficiently and economically designed to These include the arrangement of machinery, processing ductwork, accessory equipment and The roof and its column spacing must be designed to meet specific occupancy requirements. struction, the selection of roof type and the spacing of its supports are especially important. Since the roof system is such a basic factor in most industrial or one-story building con-

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