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From the Editor

A Decade of New Directions

This is a time for celebration – a landmark edition of Inform. How long ago it seems that a buoyant crowd in tuxedos and gowns gathered to toast the premiere of the Virginia Society AIA's new magazine. At that moment early in 1990, Inform was fresh, new, and exciting. Everyone associated with it was brimming with optimism, even as we could see the first signs of a recession that would plague the architecture profession and drive any number of arts-related magazines out of existence. By sheer will, Inform survived.

That first issue charted a course for a general interest publication that we were fond of calling "the Smithsonian magazine of design for our region." That was the standard of excellence we were striving for, the kind of ecumenical breadth that we believed would engage a reading audience envisioned to be not architects, but a readership of people who are the shapers of our world. After 10 years, with minor adjustments here and there, we are still following that course.

So this is a time for tribute. Although as editor it is my role to plan each issue, assemble the graphics, assign the articles, and edit the whole, there is a cast of other people who combine their efforts and talents to make this magazine happen. It took a leap of faith and a bit of persuasion to bring about the launch of a magazine. Credit for the early campaign goes to Gary Arnold, AIA, whose energy and interest was a vital part of Inform's early development. He has been followed as chair of the magazine's advisory board by other capable volunteers, most recently Steve Weisensale, AIA, whose sincerity, clear-headedness, and leadership have been godsend at important crossroads in the magazine's journey.

In addition, all those who served on the association's Communications Committee have been valued sources of guidance and support. My thanks also go to the graphic designers with whom I have been fortunate to work during the magazine's history – first the team at Communication Design, who crafted the magazine in the first years, and Steven Longstaff, who has assumed the role of designer since 1993. Hats off also to my colleagues at the Virginia Society AIA, each of whom touches some aspect of the magazine in an important way and without whose support I would drown. And a special appreciation to John Braymer, who as publisher skillfully allows the editor a free hand to do his job while overseeing the business side of our publishing venture.

Finally, this is a time for renewal. Once we have paused a moment to take stock of the past decade and raise another toast for a job well done, the next task is to find ways to make Inform better and improve its ability to champion the cause of good design. For starters, we are celebrating our 10th anniversary by sponsoring a competition for an affordable house in conjunction with Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity. Beyond that, we are working to develop new partnerships in the region to strengthen the magazine as a business entity while spreading its influence as an advocate for the design community.

The best news is that Inform is on solid footing. It has the enthusiastic support of the vast majority of our members, it is fiscally sound, and it is perceived as a credible voice for good design among a growing constituency of architects and non-architects alike. Ten years ago I urged our new crop of readers to spread the word about Inform. I renew that call today, knowing that with readers' support and involvement there are many contributions the magazine can make both to the region's design community and to the cities and towns in which we live.

— Vernon Mays
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Inform was launched ten years ago with the purpose of promoting quality design - and the architect who creates it. That simply-stated mission has led us in many directions over the past decade and we take time here to revisit some of those stories.

Skewering the '90s: The Bilbao Decade
When critics looked for a catch phrase or a snappy epithet to capture the decade of the '90s in architecture, they kept coming up empty. What’s up with that? By Richard Guy Wilson

Elevating Education
By designing a small high school that is intelligently organized and functions in many ways, VMDO Architects earned national recognition for its design of Manassas Park High School. By Ed Guns

Announcing the Inform Awards
The ninth annual Inform Awards shine the spotlight on eleven stellar examples of design from across the region. For the second year, we also recognize the work of university students.

Cox Enterprises, Greenwell Goetz Architects
Scianella Residence, McInturff Architects
Academy Conference Center, Dynerman Whitesell Architects
Lumia Residence, Michael Vergason Landscape Architects
Children’s Museum, Hands On, Inc. with Edwin Pease
Feller Residence, McInturff Architects
Bedon’s Alley Garden, Nelson Byrd Landscape Architects
Ruesch Garden, Graham Landscape Architecture
Two Porches, Treacy and Eagleburger Architects
Executive Mansion, Hanbury Evans Newill Vlattas & Co.
The Zone at PricewaterhouseCoopers, Gensler

Design Lines
new developments in design

Books
Olmsted, landscape’s spiritual godfather

House & Home
creating a temple for dining

Taking Note
doing the small thing well

In our next issue:
Residential Architecture

On the cover: CIT revisited.
Photo by Karan Schneebaum.
Triumph of the Baroque

By Douglas McCready Greenwood

From Giovanni Pannini's interior of St. Peter's in Rome (above) to Antonio Rinaldi's model for St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg (below), the exhibition contains an embarrassment of riches.

The current exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., "The Triumph of the Baroque: Architecture in Europe 1600-1750," reminds us, if we forgot, what is so compelling about the glories of the creative spirit. And it reminds us, if we need to be reminded, that before we had machines to crank out answers to tough questions, human beings did the computing in their minds and on paper to come up with answers to difficult questions—questions such as, "How do you build a place of worship that is theologically attuned to its subject matter and intent?" Or, to put it another way, "Can we fashion an apse, a dome, or a cloister that reflects man's place in the universe and pays proper homage to the god we worship?"

The answer in this magnificent exhibition, which continues through October 9, is a resounding "Yes." Unlike so many exhibitions that unwind straightforwardly, "The Triumph of the Baroque" cuts across two centuries of European architectural history. En route, it takes fascinating detours that suggest the rigorous nature of translating ideas into concrete reality. These detours, in rough pen-and-ink sketches and painstakingly finished drawings, in superbly detailed wooden models and clay sculptures, come together in an accumulation of vision that consists not only of the works of art in themselves, but manifestations of the best aspirations of the human spirit.

"Baroque" is the operative term here, and while it has from time to time had negative connotations of gaudiness and excess, it is also, of course, a term applied to some of the most magnificent music ever composed. In like fashion, what we find here in the West Wing of the National Gallery, itself designed along neo-classical lines by John Russell Pope, is an elegant gathering of several different media. It's almost as if we are being treated to a crash course on how the architecture of the period swept across Europe for generations, influencing not only how people thought about their world, but also why.

What makes this exhibition memorable is twofold. First, in addition to the architectural models and sculptures by renowned artists such as Christopher Wren, Inigo Jones, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, we also have glimpses of the finished works themselves in paintings by the likes of Canaletto, Pannini, and Bellotto. Because they are side-by-side with the models, these drawings, prints, and other pieces on display add exciting dimensions to the paintings that significantly enlarge our appreciation of them.

Here at the beginning of a new millennium, we seem to have been obsessed with looking back in time and evaluating where we have been and where we're going next. The century just past has been filled with wondrous inventions and scientific breakthroughs—the airplane, color TV, the personal computer; the virtual elimination of polio and certain birth defects—innovations that have changed us for all time. But it is also a century that will always be remembered for the great world wars (and hundreds of lesser ones) that wreaked death and destruction on a scale never before deemed possible, and inventions brought to fruition by the need to vanquish the forces of malevolence. The 20th century, in short, has been a mixed bag, where both the genius and the depravity of the human imagination have, from time to time, held the upper hand.

This exhibition celebrates the former, and makes a strong case for remembering that whatever it is we believe in, there is, in the last analysis, no accounting for genius. It happens, in spite of all those forces that militate against it. "The Triumph of the Baroque" also insists on recognizing that genius knows no particular national boundaries. The Italians had no more of a lock on architectural brilliance than the French, although it is equally clear that various aspects of the Renaissance flowered in different places at different times.

A final note: the exhibition catalogue, which covers everything on display, ventures farther afield in a number of areas. Yet, for an exhibition such as this, it's one of those things well worth taking home.

Douglas Greenwood is a marketing manager by day and, at night, .writes from his home in Vienna.
Memorial Letters from the Front

Military associations with the city of Norfolk are longstanding, and the city has done its heritage proud with a new Armed Forces Memorial dedicated this spring. The memorial, which is adjacent to the city’s Town Point Park, occupies a prominent point in Norfolk Harbor on the Elizabeth River, a waterway that for two centuries has carried servicemen to war.

Noted architect James Cutler and artist Maggie Smith, both from Bainbridge Island, Washington, were selected to design the memorial as the result of an invited competition. Along with two other finalists, Cutler and Smith were chosen from among 15 competitors to visit the city and prepare a presentation for judging.

The memorial was the idea of John R. Burton, Jr., a former Army captain who willed $500,000 to the city for its construction. Burton’s wish was that the memorial be a contemplative place with views of the water. In order to satisfy his wish, the designers cut two bays from an existing concrete pier and bounded the landward side of the point with brick walls. Two bridges, the only access to the site, were placed across the removed bays.

The focus of the memorial is a stone plaza with seating at its periphery. In order to give a tangible presence to the people being memorialized, the designers searched for letters written by those who fought and died in U.S. wars from the Revolution to the Persian Gulf. These texts are cast into 20 oversized sheets of bronze that are curved to appear like paper blowing freely in the wind, a latter-stage refinement in the design by Cutler to give the memorial an ephemeral quality. “The intent was to express the transient nature of human lives and struggles, and at the same time to give reality to the people commemorated,” Cutler says.
The design community lionizes Frederick Law Olmsted for his grand landscape schemes: Central Park, Prospect Park, George Vanderbilt’s Biltmore, to name but a few. *A Clearing in the Distance* offers a broader perspective. In it, writer and architect Witold Rybczynski introduces us to a youthful dilettante who dabbles in a variety of professions before settling – quite late in life – on the work for which he is best known. Rybczynski clearly admires both his subject and the landscapes he created. The author is himself a man of diverse interests who no doubt recognizes a kindred spirit in Olmsted. That empathy elevates *A Clearing in the Distance* from mere biography to an affectionate, even reverent, tribute.

Olmsted was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1822, the firstborn son of a prosperous dry goods merchant and his young wife, who died when young Frederick was three. The elder Olmsted soon remarried, and Frederick spent the next twelve years shuttling among schools in and around Hartford. Rybczynski devotes ample attention to Olmsted’s checkered childhood, seeing it as an important source of his subject’s brilliant eclecticism.

Unlike many well-bred young gentlemen of his day, Olmsted eschewed college in favor of apprenticeship to a surveyor at the age of fifteen. Perhaps an eye malady prevented him from preparing for college. Or perhaps – as Rybczynski speculates – the eye condition was a convenient excuse for a young man who had no use for book learning. As Olmsted wrote to a friend, he was left to run wild at a critical point in his life. “While my mates were fitting for college, I was allowed to indulge my strong natural propensity for roaming afiel and daydreaming under a tree.”

Olmsted spent the next 20 years at a variety of occupations, all arranged or subsidized by his father. At eighteen, he lost interest in surveying and moved to New York City to clerk for a dry goods importer. That stint lasted less than two years. He moved back home for a few months, then shipped off on a tea importer’s ship bound for China. High adventure for a lad of 21, or so he anticipated. Though the trip proved to be miserable, it would lead in a roundabout way to a later calling, travel journalism.

Next, Olmsted tried farming. It allowed him the outdoor life he craved, while requiring sound business sense and knowledge of the latest agricultural practices. The combination appealed to him. He remained more or less a farmer until 1855, still supported by his remarkably indulgent father.

In the meantime, however, Olmsted discovered he could write. Through his farming connections, he had met Andrew Jackson Downing, the influential house and landscape designer. In 1851, Downing invited Olmsted to write an article for his new magazine, *The Horticulturist*. Olmsted’s subject was a new park near Liverpool that had impressed him during a recent trip to England. That first publishing experience was pivotal for two reasons: It was Olmsted’s first public discourse on landscape design and it launched his career as a journalist.

Olmsted was by now 29, still unmarried, and still uncertain of his professional future. He was able to satisfy his chronic wanderlust with a series of trips through the southern United States for what is now The New York Times. His assignment was to write about rural life there. Between 1852 and 1854, he spent time in Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Texas; the *Times* published no fewer than 46 articles on his travels. These trips affirmed his opposition to slavery.

Following a brief stint in magazine publishing – bankrolled yet again by his father – Olmsted finally became involved in the work that would seal his reputation. He was 35 when a chance conversation led to his installation as superintendent of New York’s Central Park. He was not yet known as a landscape architect; the appoint-
ment was largely political. And contrary to popular belief, he was hired not to design the new park, but to manage its construction workforce.

A "glorified foreman," Rybczynski calls him, but Olmsted had finally hit his stride. Having impressed the park's commissioners as an astute manager, he entered a public competition for the park's design - and won. Not alone, however. History has been kind to Olmsted, but in fact he could not have won the competition without the collaboration of Calvert Vaux, an English architect who was to remain his business partner for 15 years. Together, they produced much of the work for which Olmsted is credited today. Rybczynski takes great pains to give Vaux his due throughout the book.

Even as he was building his career as a landscape architect, Olmsted took two surprising detours during the Civil War years. He served as CEO of the United States Sanitary Commission, a civilian agency established by Abraham Lincoln to monitor health conditions among the troops. And from 1863 to 1865, he managed the Mariposa Estate gold mine in Bear Valley, California. Both positions allowed him to continue his design work.

Most design aficionados are familiar with Olmsted's accomplishments as a landscape architect, ranging from private estates to public parks to entire communities, such as Riverside in Chicago. Rybczynski does a thorough job of describing each project's genesis and execution, and includes a comprehensive list of his subject's commissions. But the author weaves another dimension into his tale: Olmsted's personal relationships with family and friends, his precarious health and sad decline in old age. It is this intimate perspective that brings Frederick Law Olmsted to life in A Clearing in the Distance.

Rybczynski's affinity for his subject compels him to add personal commentary throughout the book. It is a minor but unfortunate flaw. When he describes Olmsted's youthful inability to settle down, Rybczynski adds a paragraph on his own post-college wanderings. In discussing young Olmsted's literary tastes, the author talks about his own. It is a conceit. Less offensive - but also questionable - are a series of semifictitious vignettes that speculate on Olmsted's mood at various high and low points throughout his life. Though based on actual events, they are the author's conjecture.

Perhaps we can excuse this streak of narcissism if we understand how closely Rybczynski identifies himself with Olmsted. Indeed, A Clearing in the Distance reads like a protege's testament to his mentor.

Susan Bradford Barror is a Washington, D.C., freelance writer.
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When the Virginia Society AIA launched Inform magazine ten years ago, its purpose in doing so was to promote quality design by introducing a general audience to the value of a well-designed environment—and the architect who creates it. That simply-stated mission has led us in many directions over the past decade. In this anniversary issue, we take time to revisit some of those stories.

**Center of Attention**

The Virginia Center for Innovative Technology’s unconventional headquarters building drew more than a few skeptical glances when it opened in 1989 and we featured it on the cover of Inform’s premiere issue. Here was a non-profit corporation dedicated to the growth of technology and business in Virginia setting up shop in a remarkable piece of architecture on a lonely hilltop overlooking Dulles International Airport. Considerable political and economic success was at stake in the $34.5 million structure, and some questioned its mission, design, and location.

Today, on all three counts, CIT appears to be succeeding in its mission: enhancing Virginia’s competitiveness through technology innovation, providing access to technology research and expertise, promoting research collaborations with Virginia’s universities, and enhancing the state’s technology infrastructure. In 1999, CIT surpassed its targets for the fifth consecutive year, with 7,601 jobs added or retained and 105 companies started. As for the symbolic value of this bold structure, the CIT remains “a signature building,” says Gregory K. Hunt, FAIA, dean of Catholic University’s School of Architecture and Planning, who oversaw the competition for the building’s design. “It’s pretty magnetic,” says Hunt.

As an office building, meeting space, and business incubator, the CIT building has been a success, though a challenging one, says Eric Lecis, CEO of Innovative Management Inc., which has managed the property since it opened. A half dozen or more small businesses have gotten their starts there, grown and moved on, Lecis says, while several others have stayed. “If we had three or four times the space, we could fill it easily,” Lecis says. He gets nothing but agreement from G.T. Ward, FAIA, whose Fairfax architecture firm Ward/Hall Associates, AIA, collaborated with Arquitectonica of Coral Gables, Florida, on the building. “It still looks good, and we’ve had no callbacks on technical or use problems,” says Ward. “And the building’s 10 years old now.”

– Rob Walker

In 1991, we profiled Virginia Tech professor Milka Bliznakov and her efforts to establish the International Archive of Women in Architecture. Since then, the archive has grown to include more than 180 collections from America and abroad, including the works of Seattle architect Jean Linden Young (above). The archive—now chaired by professor Donna Dunay, AIA—primarily collects papers from before the 1950s, but also includes many contemporaries.
Golden Years for Preservation

“No question these have been golden years for the APVA,” says Peter Dun Grover. As executive director of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities for the past decade, Grover has seen the organization uncover and preserve chapter upon chapter of Virginia’s history since Inform first wrote about the organization’s 100th anniversary.

This spring, Roxane Gilmore, the state’s First Lady, joined the digging at James Fort on Jamestown Island, where archaeology students are hard at work. Gilmore is honorary chair of the Jamestown 2007 committee, which is preparing for the 400th anniversary of the landing of settlers at Jamestown. No one doubts that the Jamestown work is one of the foremost archaeological projects in the United States. So far, close to 300,000 artifacts have been unearthed there under the umbrella of the Jamestown Rediscovery project, which was begun by APVA in 1994 to identify and interpret remains of James Fort. Diggers are hopeful now that they will uncover evidence of the earliest statehouse. In preparation for 2007, APVA and the National Park Service are planning major new exhibits that will focus on the broad sweep of American history.

Meanwhile, the organization has purchased Corotoman, the Rappahannock River home of King Carter. Now the historic site near Irvington, which is known to contain foundations of 17th and 18th century buildings, will be preserved and explored. APVA also is better equipped today to protect properties that are historic or in historic districts as a result of recent legislation. A revolving fund created in the mid-’80s for that purpose has been transferred from state control to APVA, says director of properties Louis Malon. “We hope to put six or eight houses a year back into the private sector,” says Malon. “We can make meaningful contributions with this.” — Rob Walker

In 1992, Inform announced a new design awards competition focused on interior architecture and objects. The first edition of the Inform Awards attracted nearly 150 entries. Four of the twelve awards went to an emerging young talent from Bethesda, Maryland, named Mark McInturff, whose design work has since become a fixture in magazines that concentrate on the home.

In 1992, we chronicled the restoration of the Barret House, a National Register property in Richmond that now functions as the Virginia Center for Architecture and houses the Virginia Society AIA.
As the specter of suburban sprawl has inspired political uprisings and new approaches to land use planning, the idea of transit-oriented communities has come alive in Virginia. And with commuter rail advancing through sprawling Northern Virginia, planners and thinkers have envisioned Neotraditional communities in which typical civic landmarks such as churches, schools, shopping districts, and varied housing types sprout around transit hubs.

One such proposal was Brooke Station, a hypothetical community in Stafford County proposed by the Community Design Group, a team made up of faculty from the University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University. But since Inform wrote about this enlightened proposal in 1995 – political realities and, ironically, the need for better road access has kept Brooke Station on the drawing board, says Leo Bevon, director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

"It hasn't developed as we'd envisioned," says Bevon, largely because road access to the station is poor. And without the roads, no developer has been willing to tackle the project. Stafford County, which initially backed the study, has been cool to the plan as well, withholding the extension of utilities into the site.

Still, Bevon sees signs that development around transit stations is inevitable - and already taking place - as ridership on the Virginia Railway Express approaches 2 million people per year. From Fredericksburg to Lorton to Bealeton, transit stations and proposed stations are magnets for development. Even relatively isolated Brooke Station is seeing new housing development. And in newspaper ads, developers are promoting their projects' proximity to transit stations, offering home buyers shuttle service to the station and free train tickets.

"It's catching on," says Bevon. "The concept is more valid today than it was five years ago."

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In 1994, Inform reported on the first Virginia Design Forum, which featured Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, among others. In an impassioned plea for design that is respectful of the earth's resources, Murcutt chastened his audience by declaring: "We are the planetary disease."

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John Clark's enthusiasm seems hardly to have been tempered by the passage of time, assaults by critics, and scores of regulatory hurdles. The visionary developer who would build a Neotraditional town on the banks of the Rappahannock River says the beginning of construction is in sight - but that's what he said when Inform first wrote about him in 1995.

More than a decade has passed since Clark launched a relentless drive to build Haymount, a proposed high-density development for some 4,000 dwellings on 1,600 acres in Caroline County. The plan, which was designed by Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, remains intact. So does the partnership that owns the development.

But the passage of time, Clark says, has largely worked in his favor. "Technology has become such a big part of the world. Had we jumped into this at the beginning, we might have missed a lot of what's needed today. Time has been our friend."

As of now, the development has been zoned and infrastructure financing should be in place this summer, says Clark (seated at right on the Haymount property with visiting land conservation advocates). Then he will seek final permits for Haymount's waste water treatment plant. The county and state Department of Environmental Quality must sign off on that, which should take another 10 months. Clark's current projection for groundbreaking on houses: about a year.

Jerry Norville, chairman of the Caroline County Planning Commission, confirmed that Clark's group appears to be on track this time, providing the financing is solid. And early opposition to the project seems to have died down. "We may hear something when they actually get started," Norville cautions.

In the meantime, Clark is still on the lecture circuit touting his plans to build, with the aid of renowned architects, a demonstration house incorporating features that will make Haymount a comfortable, environmentally-friendly alternative. With characteristic bravado he declares, "It's going to be spectacular."
Mall Madness

When MacArthur Center Mall finally opened in March 1999, there were plenty of detractors on hand to question the wisdom, not to mention the cost, of placing a suburban-style shopping center in Norfolk's beleaguered downtown. With a $100 million investment of public funds riding on it, the mall was being counted on to save the city's dying retail corridor while boosting revenues and revitalizing the city core.

Critics, including numerous architects, turned thumbs down. The mall wasn't urban enough, they said. It didn't embrace the city. They called it faceless and unattractive, a behemoth smothering eight city blocks. In the pages of Inform, writer Alex Marshall likened it to an alien spaceship.

But what a difference a year makes. By the first anniversary of MacArthur Mall's opening, the local daily newspaper documented tax revenue flowing into city coffers that far outpaced expectations. In less than ten months, the mall had generated more than $3.5 million in taxes for the city on retail sales, food, theater admissions, and business licenses. "It's going to exceed the city's projections," said Rod S. Woolard, development director.

Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority spokesperson Kathleen Cosco said the mall is stimulating growth in downtown Norfolk. "We feel like a real 24-hour downtown is coming," she added. Already a theater has opened across the street, several national restaurant chains have come into the area, and five older hotels have been renovated. The vacancy rate for Class A office space dropped 5 percent. Apartments are opening up and filling quickly. And ground has been broken for new condominiums.

"People said the design of the mall - a mall with no windows - wouldn't foster downtown development," Cosco said, "but that just hasn't proven to be the case."

- Rob Walker

As construction wound down on the new Library of Virginia in 1997, the Commonwealth realized that not all the furniture in the old library could be consigned to surplus. Spread throughout the building was a remarkable collection of Depression-era furniture by New York designer Warren McArthur. Late that year, the library auctioned 103 of the lightweight aluminum pieces, including sofas, chairs, tables, hat racks, and mirrors. Attracting bidders from as far away as California, the auction raised money for the acquisition of historically significant books and manuscripts.
In the premiere issue of Inform, professor Richard Guy Wilson sounded off on the excesses of architecture in the 1980s, which he said was preoccupied with “showbiz” and “glamour.” For our tenth anniversary issue, Wilson turns his eye toward the decade of the 1990s — and finds new reasons to lose enthusiasm.

A quick fix, snappy epithet, or headline to summarize the 1990s appears to have evaded the media mavens. Whatever one calls it, the decade began with a recession and ended with great prosperity for some, a real barbecue. Terms such as “Gen-X” and “dotcom” invaded the language while many critics anguished over the rise of the Baby Boomers and the “last great generation.”

For the arts the decade was less than stellar. Yes, there appeared Harry Potter, the minimalist repetition of John Adams, and the serious reappraisal of Norman Rockwell as an artist and not an illustrator, but long lasting contributions are questionable. Globalization of the economy and the American commercial hegemony continued apace, but none of this leads to catchy phrases. In some ways the ’90s were a cipher.

In architecture, some events did catch the public imagination, principally a building located in a town almost nobody had heard of – the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. Indeed we might call the ’90s The Bilbao Decade if measured by the amount of hype showered on this one building. The Guggy in Bilbao is a museum for viewing contemporary art and it accommodates that quite well, but for most visitors the memorable feature is architect Frank Gehry’s forms – a great piece of abstract sculpture that soars and bounces and changes with the light. It’s a feat of psychological and technical bravado.

Bilbao’s success makes Gehry the architect of the decade (winner of the AIA Gold Medal in 1998), sought after for signature buildings around the world. Whether his aggressive sculptural stance is appropriate for all situations will be tested with his addition for the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Here at the axis mundi of American classicism, scarily a block from the White House, long ribbonlike forms sprout from the dignified Corcoran’s rear and roof. Gehry’s proposed addition sums up the difference of the 1990s from the 1980s, for back then Hartman-Cox Architects of Washington, D.C., had designed an addition far more contextual which essentially slid part of the Second Empire Old Executive Office Building down the block and attached it to the Corcoran rear.

Postmodernism, or Pomo, the reigning style of the 1980s, largely disappeared in the 1990s to be replaced by two opposing trends: a new Modernism and a Neotraditionalism. True Pomo survives in places such as the hapless Norfolk Opera House and the overscaled bombastic pediments of shopping centers, but for the most part a revived Modernism rules, a remarkable comeback from a death reported by critics in the 1970s. If Bilbao is the building of the decade, Berlin is the city of the decade, with an all-star cast of leading Modernists building there. Daniel Libeskind’s Holocaust Museum is the current star, a moving tribute in its abstract form. Other European and Asian cities – Paris to Hong Kong – are must-see sites for the new Modernism.

The minor role of the United States in this booming international Modernism is a bit puzzling, for while many of the leading cast members are American, the country as a whole has been less than welcoming. Yes, there is the Getty Center. And yes, glass office towers continue to sprout. And the occasional building – such as the new Library of Virginia in Richmond by Skidmore Owings & Merrill with The Glave Firm – appears and gives some heart to the Modernist cause. But overall Americans seem skeptical, if not downright hostile, to Modernism. The tallest building in the world Ind’sar Pelli is in of all places Kuala Lumpur! What happened to American pride?

Neotraditionalism, the other major offspring of Pomo, is where the hearts of many Americans reside. Real classical or Gothic details now appear instead of the goofy ones of the 1980s. New Yorker Robert A.M. Stern might be taken as the exemplar of this transformation. His Darden Business School at the University of Virginia aspires to look like it could have been built in the 1920s, but too much sheet rock and thinness of brickwork give it away.
Locally, The Glave Firm's most recent addition to the Virginia Historical Society illuminates the way in which traditionalism and Modernism might be successfully bridged.

Another current aspect of Neotraditionalism is the New Urbanism, as seen at Celebration in Florida and Kentlands in Maryland. In many ways a sensible solution to the problems of sprawl, the New Urbanism betrays a certain affinity to the older Modernism which is its arch enemy, a totalizing approach that allows for no variation. But beneath the facile charm caught in the Jim Carrey movie "The Truman Show," the New Urbanism is posing some solutions of great importance.

Of the many buildings of the decade clearly one type stands out: the museum. The sheer volume of museum construction — I.M. Pei's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, James I. Freed's Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and Mitchell/Giurgola's Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton (with Rancorn Wildman of Newport News) — all testify to the tremendous popularity of the museum. Quite clearly this building type is the new civic architecture of the decade. It is hard to think of a religious building or city hall of the past decade that can rank with any of the above.

Governmental architecture and, more specifically, federal buildings have in the past helped define an age: Jefferson neoclassicism, Grant Gothic, and FDR stripped classicism. One quails at the thought of what might be Bill Clinton's architectural imagery, but to give his administration credit, federal building programs are far better than those of a decade ago. Leading American architects including Richard Meier, Robert Stern, and Kohn Pedersen Fox have got federal courthouse design on a roll. Sadly, little of this spirit has crossed our state boundaries and recent Virginia courthouses are best left unexamined.

Historic preservation also played a role in the architecture scene of the '90s and should be given some credit — or blame perhaps — for Neotraditionalism and New Urbanism. But historic preservation helped stop Disney in Northern Virginia and turned some of its attention away from the cutesy past of the 18th and 19th centuries to the more recent Modern past. Diners became a mania, so much so that the Exmore on the Eastern Shore and the Frost in Warrenton were given National Register status.

Alternatively, not all Modern buildings fared as well. The decision of the National Park Service to destroy Richard Neutra's Cyclorama at Gettysburg National Battlefield Park caused a huge commotion. Here is one of the 20th century's acknowledged masters, yet one of his rare East Coast commissions is being destroyed for — you guessed it — a red brick-and-white trim new visitor's center! As of this writing the Cyclorama's fate is unresolved.

One trend of the '90s overrode all others: the constant reworking of the single family American house. The flood of books and specialty magazines from Old House this to Colonial that— even a television network, HGTV — all focused on the home, continues a very old American concern while upping the ante. The kitchen, the bathroom, and the garden received the most attention, with unthinkable tons of money spent on gadgets that require operator's manuals to use. Excess income bags for an outlet, and the single family home has been the primary recipient.

Up the speedy slopes of Modernism or the tidy brick steps of Neotraditionalism, the 1990s were a grand ride from an architectural point of view. The decade may not have a name, but architecture caught some public interest. Can that be sustained? Knockout, stand alone landmarks are one thing, but also needed are thoughtful solutions for those in the city and suburb, and out across the broad landscape.

Richard Guy Wilson is Commonwealth Professor and Chair of Architectural History at the University of Virginia.
By designing a small high school that is intelligently organized and functions in a variety of innovative ways, VMDO Architects of Charlottesville has earned national recognition for its work on Manassas Park High School.

By Ed Gunts
The school's public spaces activate the ground floor, with classrooms and labs on the upper two floors; athletic wing is in the background (above). Inset photo shows metal trellis at main entrance.

When student-athletes at Manassas Park High School in Northern Virginia were asked several years ago whether they preferred to play games at home or away, a surprisingly high percentage said they'd rather travel. They were so embarrassed about the condition of their school—a collection of prefab units trucked to the site in the mid-1970s—that they would willingly forego their home field advantage.

Since they moved to a new building last year, however, there's no question where the students want to be. “It's so much better than the old building,” says Everett Kline, a varsity football player. “I like everything about it.”

Students have good reason to be proud of their new home, designed by VMDO Architects of Charlottesville. It has just been named the best new school in the country by the National School Board Association, winning grand prize in the organization's annual design competition. Judges praised its organization, flexibility, and size, noting that the architecture is “warm and well-scaled, creating an environment that recognizes the sophistication of high school students.”

Rather than simply replacing an outmoded facility, the $14 million project represents an attempt to reinvent public education for grades 9 through 12 while making the school a focal point for the community. Designed for 650 students—unusually small for a new public high school—it also shows how teaching can be enhanced when architects think small.

“One of the secrets of the school’s success is the fact that it’s small,” said Robert Moje, AIA, principal-in-charge of the project for VMDO. “Instead of letting size be a limiting factor, we tried to expand the opportunities for using each space. We took what might be perceived as a disadvantage and made it an advantage.”

The project has an unusual history. For years, Manassas Park residents sent their children to school in Prince William County, but that arrangement ceased when Manassas Park was incorporated as a city in the 1970s. No longer able to send students to county schools, the fledgling municipality created its own school system. It carved land from an industrial zone to create a combined intermediate and senior high school and set up trailers for classrooms. The solution was meant to be temporary, but 20 years later students still occupied the same trailers.

By the mid-1990s, city leaders realized they had to rebuild, starting with the high school. They hired VMDO, specialists in school design, to create a technologically advanced building that could be a source of pride and inspiration for the city. The new site consisted of nearly 60 acres just north of the old school, which continues to house intermediate grades.
School officials wanted a building that would improve the school's image and raise the self-esteem of students, who told the designers they were ridiculed by peers for attending a school that looked like a warehouse. It was one of the most poignant moments of the design team's interviews with students, Moje recalls. "We wanted students to go from being embarrassed about their school to being proud of it."

VMDO responded with a master plan for a cloistered campus containing both the high school and an intermediate school that could be built in the future. They positioned the high school close to nearby Euclid Avenue and at the edge of the sloping site, leaving ample flat land for athletic fields. The L-shaped building forms a dense wall along the busy street so that most of the school's public spaces are focused toward the wooded part of the site and away from the road. Its three-story height makes it different from the low-rise warehouses nearby and distinguishes it as one of the tallest buildings in the city.

The high school's main entrance is on the corner, and the two legs of the L contain classrooms and science labs. Nested between the two wings is a three-story rotunda, or commons, that contains the school's main gathering spaces. Clerestory windows admit natural light into the drum-shaped rotunda, and large windows at ground level offer views of the wooded landscape. The athletic department has its own wing next to the playing fields.

The school is organized so that public functions, including the cafeteria and theater, are on the first level. Classrooms and labs are on the upper two levels, clustered around four teacher resource planning areas. Science labs, with their fixed equipment, are closest to the bend of the L.

In response to requests that they create a highly flexible building, the architects designed academic areas that can be used in various combinations. While the 102,000-square-foot school was built for 650 students, the academic part was designed to be divided vertically into two independent "houses" of 325 students or four distinct academies of approximately 150 students. These smaller learning communities allow teachers from different disciplines, such as social studies and English, to work together toward integrated curriculums and to structure both the classes and rooms to support innovative teaching strategies.

The flexible design grew out of a comprehensive planning process in which VMDO worked closely with administrators and teachers to rethink the curriculum and scheduling at Manassas Park High. Even though the building is relatively small for a public high school, Moje said, administrators wanted to make sure it offered the same amenities as high schools two or three times larger. The building also can be expanded to accommodate up to 800 students by adding two more "academies" to one wing.

To keep costs down, the architects designed most of the public spaces to serve more than one purpose. The commons acts as cafeteria, assembly hall, and informal theater. The stage doubles as a vocal music room. And the athletic wing serves as a community fitness center.

Upper level spaces serve double duty as well. The second-level media center is also the command post for the school's integrated computer network and video equipment. Teacher resource areas are equipped with computers, copiers, and other technology, and teachers can use them as offices, lounges, or conference areas for meetings with students and parents. Wide stair halls that connect the second and third floors double as informal meeting and presentation areas. The stairs themselves serve as seating, providing gathering places for small groups. All spaces are wired to the school's computer network.

The technologically advanced school includes features such as 25 miles of fiber optic cable, 350 computers, 6 academic computer labs containing 15 computers each, 6 teacher resource areas, 6 science labs, and 260 advanced technology classrooms. The building is also equipped with a complete computer network and a video surveillance system.
puter labs, 1300 computer ports (including 200 in the commons area and 24 per classroom), a TV production studio, telephones in each room, cable access in each room, and internet access in each room. Each classroom also has a large video monitor which is linked to a schoolwide network for daily coursework or special presentations.

Besides finding new ways to organize and furnish teaching space, the architects gave the school a sophisticated image inside and out. On the exterior, the building looks more like a corporate office building or a research facility than a public high school. Brick solidifies the street side and drum, while metal panels and anodized aluminum window frames provide a lighter enclosure facing the woods. Inside, natural-finish birch plywood panels add warmth to the common spaces.

The architects didn't pander to the students with primary colors or artificially themed areas. In fact, they leaned the other way. One 80-seat classroom has the sophistication of a college lecture hall - part of an effort to get college-bound students accustomed to the caliber of teaching spaces often found at universities.

The school is still addressing a few design problems, such as finding the best way to darken the theater for daytime presentations without making the media center too gloomy. For the most part, users say, the design's positive aspects far outweigh any shortcomings.

Because it is compact and has a limited number of entry points, for instance, the...
Project: Manassas Park High School

Architect: VMDO Architects, PC, Charlottesville (Robert W. Moje, AIA, principal-in-charge; Joe Celentano, AIA, project architect; Joe Atkins, AIA, project designer; Randy Livermon, AIA, Tarry Forbas, AIA, Ken Thacker, Montie Breeden, Allison Henry, Ruth Ellen Outlaw, Kirsten Stadheim, Paul Hanson, project team)

General Contractor: SPN, Inc., Construction Manager

Consultants: Fox & Associates (structural); 2rw Consulting Engineers (mechanical/electrical); Barnes & Johnson (civil); EIS, Inc. (food service); Gregg Bleam (landscape architecture); KMK (acoustics); KBD Planning Group, Inc. (programming); Virginia Computer Institute (technology)

Client: Manassas Park Public Schools
building is easy to monitor for security purposes. And because practically every space has multiple uses, there's no place for students to withdraw or get lost. Interiors are filled with natural light. Teachers have a sense of control, yet students have a sense of freedom. "If you design it like a prison, people will treat it like a prison," Moje says. "We decided to make it more like a college or a research facility, and let the kids respond to that."

Students and administrators have been full of praise for the architects' small-is-beautiful approach. "It's a dream to teach in," said Amy McCracken, chairman of the English department. "If I were going to high school today, this is the kind of school I'd like to attend."

Principal Margaret Huckaby says the students have taken ownership of the place. "It's gratifying to see. They talk the place up with their friends. It's been fun to watch them grow in this school, and their pride certainly shows."

Manassas Park Schools Superintendent Thomas DeBolt notes that test scores are up and so is morale. "It is a world-class building, and the institutional image of our schools has soared," he enthuses. DeBolt cites the school's "visual openness" as one reason for its popularity. "In a setting where you have adults watching over young adults, supervision can feel oppressive. Here, there is a sense of being cared for," he adds.

For winning the national design prize from the school board association, VMDO received $1,000 to establish a scholarship for Manassas Park students. The high school has also won recognition from the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects, AIA/Central Virginia, the national AIA Committee on Architecture for Education, and the Virginia School Board Association.

Moje takes particular pride in the school's three-story configuration, noting that, from the school's top floor, students can see the Washington Monument 15 miles away in the nation's capital. The design team believed that increasing the height of the school was a way of raising the students' sights about themselves.

"In a symbolic way, that's the idea of education," Moje says. "By elevating the school, we were trying to elevate their expectations of what education is all about and what opportunities education is the key to. We wanted students to know they can go anywhere, if they have a good education."

Ed Gants is the architecture critic of The Baltimore Sun.
Our jury of Minneapolis architects was actively engaged by this year's submissions, finding much to talk about and many projects to recognize. Eleven winners emerged from a field of 120 entries, although the entries in the objects category were completely passed over for awards. “The objects exhibited something in common with the projects we did not premiate in the other categories - they all lacked a really good editor,” observed juror Jeff Scherer. “These objects seemed to go too quickly from concept to construction. There was no intermediate step, like a full-scale model to study a joint.” Cunningham also noted that many of the objects seemed to be so much about form that they failed the basic test of usefulness. Snow’s parting shot: “Encourage people to keep doing this.”

The Jury
Jeffrey Scherer, FAIA
Jeff Scherer is a principal of Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle of Minneapolis. He has designed more than 50 libraries and museums and frequently lectures on topics such as technology’s impact on library design. His firm’s honors include a P/A Award for the Herman Miller Design Yard.

Julie VandenBerg Snow, FAIA
As sole principal of a 12-person Minneapolis firm, Julie Snow has gained wide attention for corporate and manufacturing facilities, municipal works, and museums. Winner of two Architectural Record/Business Week Awards, she also teaches at the University of Minnesota.

John W. Cunningham, FAIA
John Cunningham is chairman of Cunningham Group of Minneapolis and has distinguished himself in the design of schools, corporate offices, and urban settings — with a strong interest in building communities. For 18 years, he taught design at the University of Minnesota.

MEDIA ALERT
Combined offices for the Washington bureaus of Cox Enterprises’ broadcasting and newspaper operations required shared resources and a unified presence, but also mandated that the two divisions maintain separate operations. Aluminum frames for banks of TV monitors in the lobby create a gateway to the broadcasting studios. Along the corridor to the newsroom, aluminum-and-glass display cases exhibit
The design consistently uses a family of details that focus on material connections.

The reception area is distinguished by its banks of TV monitors on heavy metal frames (left photo and drawing).

Headlines of historical news events. Jurors lauded the design as a worthy collection of individual pieces. "I really like the use of the television monitors," said John Cuningham. He also took issue with the newspaper display, in which he said the presentation dominated the information. "Here's where I'd like to tell the designer to calm down a little bit. But the quality is very high."

**Architect:** Greenwell Goetz Architects, Washington, D.C.

**Owner:** Cox Enterprises

**Contractor:** Regency Commercial Construction
DELICIOUS CHOICES

This project involved a process of editing, not adding. Within the existing shell of a one-story ranch house, interior walls were removed and the rest organized as planes of colored plaster, glass, and maple cabinetry. The formerly dark, boxy interior is now light-filled and spacious — open to horizontal vistas afforded by the ranch-type house. “This house is transformed in a very restrained, very deft, and disciplined way,” said Cuningham. “And the linear piece in the ceiling ties the house together. The renovation succeeds on a lot of different levels, both organizationally and spatially. It’s like a primer — if you are going to make these simple volumes and pieces, this is one of the ways to do it.”

Architect: McInturf Architects, Bethesda, Md.
Owners: Roberta Hanson and Frank Sciannella
Contractor: Dreieck Builders Group

RECONSTITUTED CORE

Six levels of parking were removed from the core of a Washington, D.C., office building to make room for new conference facilities for the Academy for Educational Development, a not-for-profit organization. The architects were challenged to remove the parking ramps, reconstruct the space, and insert a conference center, the primary piece of which is a single space that can accommodate 400 seats arranged auditorium-style. The architects took a kit-of-parts approach to the architecture, envisioning material and geometric fragments that float within the surrounding offices. “We all admired the way it uses daylight, both through the sides and through the roof, to illuminate a space that could have been dark and dismal,” said Cuningham. “There’s also a restraint to the palette. You don’t see them trying everything in this one space.”

Architect: Dynerman Whitesell Architects, Washington, D.C.
Owners: Academy for Educational Development
Contractor: Davis Construction
Scenes in the landscape vary from formal arrangements (above) to the very informal (right).

Changes in the lighting dramatically alter the feeling of the conference room (below and below right).

SOFTENING EDGES

This design reinvigorates a neglected 7.5-acre property for a family in Pennsylvania. Two principal lines of sight and circulation, laid out on the traces of former garden paths, knit the orchard and meadow to a series of garden rooms, while a curved stone walk, newly aligned entry drive, and drifts of white birches provide a soft counterpoint to the axial sight lines. “This project explores the idea that landscape is about both interior and exterior rooms, and the space between each roomlike space is carefully planted,” said Scherer. “There’s a foil of one thing against another. And it respects the notion of transition and vistas, which I think is one of the most interesting aspects.” Added Snow: “You get the sense that this landscape is as carefully planned as a home, with an understanding of how things would happen in each room.”

Landscape Architect: Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Arlington
Owners: Paul and Melanie Lumia
Contractor: Wesco Construction
CHILDHOOD DISCOVERIES

The exhibit design for this children's museum in Rancho Mirage, California, drew its inspiration from three sources: the building's architecture, the desert town's natural setting, and the prevailing culture of the Coachella Valley. Two long curving walls create small areas within the large building shell and separate the messy activities from quieter ones. Openings and passageways through the walls emphasize movement. Icons of the local Anglo and Latino communities are referenced in extruded plastic tubes (that recall Mexican popsicles) and abstracted steel frames (recalling the carports of local houses). Jurors praised the quality of light — and shadow. "This is very energetic," said Scherer. "Each of the vignettes has a nice sense of place, without the kids overlapping. So there's a place to move and a place to do the activity."

Owners: Core Communities/Anita B. Richmond
Children's Museum of the Desert
Contractor: C.W. Shaw

CONTAINING NATURE

Five freestanding masonry walls and a canopy of steel and glass are juxtaposed to define a new outdoor room and garden for this 1920s house in Washington, D.C. The walls terminate views from the house, screen a carport, and enclose a paved courtyard. The interior and exterior are connected by materials including limestone paving, stucco, steel, and glass. "We decided to forgive some really funky chair choices on behalf of a really interesting addition of a rather crisp space to a more prosaic house," said Snow. "It has beautiful moments to it, and it defines a progression from the house into this space that opens onto a garden. To me it is like taking an outdoor space, a garden, and just covering it. It is beautifully done."
INWARD GARDEN

This contemplative, minimalist garden - which revolves around the preservation and celebration of a gnarled peach tree - complements a renovated warehouse/residence in historic Charleston, South Carolina. The garden highlights the relationship between inside and out through the coolness, reflectivity, and sound of water; the combination of native and acclimated plants; and subtle references to the garden traditions of Andalusia, Japan, and the Mediterranean. “What struck us on this project was this rigorous authenticity of plane combined with the softness of the landscape,” observed Scherer. “We liked the serendipity of the found spaces between the built walls and the edges of the house - and the fact that they were left rather calm and not overly designed.”

Landscape Architect: Nelson-Byrd Landscape Architects, Charlottesville
Owners: James and Miss Ray Coker
Contractor: Richard Marks Restoration

The garden’s water feature begins at a spiraling fountain (above) and weaves beneath an old peach tree (left).

Architect: McInturf Architects
Owner: Mimi Feiler
Contractor: Acadia Contractors
LOOSELY KNIT

This small urban garden in Washington, D.C., had to serve as a venue for frequent entertaining, while allowing barrier-free access for a family member confined to a wheelchair. In addition, the husband's appreciation for year-round gardening was a factor, along with the couple's desire to display a part of their sculpture collection outdoors. The counterpoint of garden architecture to plants was key to giving the exuberant, lush look of the plantings an overall orderly appearance. "What I am struck by is the different personality as you move around the house, even though it is less than one acre," said Cunningham, who noted that the garden succeeds at conveying an informal feel in spite of the house's strong formal quality. "There are all these different experiences and they are obviously all related to the house."

Landscape Architect: Graham Landscape Architecture
Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Otto Ruessch
Contractor: Accent General Contractors
Landscape Contractor: Evergro Landscaping, Inc.

The garden's informal structure keys on views of sculpture or, as in this case, water.

GOOD NEIGHBOR

Two identical design problems yielded two identical solutions for these neighboring houses in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Both houses were missing the type of front porch that is typical of their circa 1920. The first porch was an outgrowth of one house owner's desire for a change to the front door. The architect responded with a proposal for a porch as a necessary complement. Then the next-door neighbor, seeing the dramatic transformation, sought a similar result. The second porch aligned with the first, reinforcing the clarity of the public and the strength of neighborly ties. "These houses were very introverted to begin with and there was very little presence," said Scherer. "That has been addressed now, by the metaphor of neighborhood - it is a very delicate distinction between simply doing a porch for porch's sake and trying to make something happen on a social level. It's a nice gesture."

Architect: Treacy & Eagleburger Architects
Owners: Marea Grant; Julia Dahlberg and Jim Meisel
Contractors: Carson Associates Custom Builders; GPD Constr
The design included new paving, garden walls, and a gate leading from the front drive (above).

Fabrics and finishes in the Ladies' Parlor were selected to accurately interpret fine interiors of 1813.

TRUE RENDITION

Returning the 1813 Virginia Executive Mansion to its origins presented more challenges than just the intensive research that went into accurately interpreting bits of fabric, remnants of faded wallpaper, and numerous paint layers that obscured original details. Designs included not only the historic documentation necessary to precisely replicate these centuries-old interiors, but also the custom manufacturing of fabrics and patterned carpet and the fabrication of furniture, mantles, hardware, trim, and wainscoting. "You really don't find many restorations that do the research and the quality and the detailing that you find here," Snow enthused. "Usually you can find some brass-plated fixture in there that is out of character and out of date. This one has a real attention to detail."

Architect: Hanbury Evans Newill Viattas & Co., Norfolk
Owner: Commonwealth of Virginia
Contractor: Daniel & Company
The color, sound, and feel of the office interiors can be manipulated to create different moods for each client (all photos).

EMBRACING CHANGE

This space changed the way a company does business. In "The Zone," clients of PricewaterhouseCoopers in Philadelphia are led through the development of new software solutions. The space is constantly transformed by sound, video, and lighting. "This is very now," said Cunningham. "I like the concept of the lighting - making the background neutral and then changing it for each new client." Added Scherer: "It tries to be less architecture and more process related. The props used in the building may not be functionally as relevant as they need to be, but they are giving the impression to the client that this company is with it. It's really a theatrical stageset for the era we're living in. And it reinforces the notion that there is some boundary between hype and reality that we are trying to nestle in."

Architect: Gensler, Washington, D.C.
Owners: PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Contractor: Clemens Construction Company
WASTE NOT

Made of Baltic birch plywood with aluminum and stainless steel joints, this glass-topped coffee table is an exercise in the efficient use of materials. "It's a nice exercise to go through — maximizing the efficiency of the plywood and using the whole sheet with no waste," the jury noted. "We see this more as a production kind of piece as opposed to a one-of-a-kind design. Still, it seems to be really well-conceived and well-crafted."

Designer: Tyler Brown, Virginia Tech

About the jury

Student entries were judged by Edwin Pease, AIA, of Williamsburg; Camden Whitehead, AIA, of the Department of Interior Design at Virginia Commonwealth University; and Christopher Fultz, of SMBW Architects.

LUMINARIALUMINARY

This lighted screen for a student apartment doubles as a freestanding room divider or alternatively can be supported by a wall-mounted light box base as a wall divider. Optional shelves fit in the space between the two screen panels, whose structure becomes apparent when the light is turned on. "We liked this because it attempts to define space and not simply serve as a functional piece of furniture," said the jury. "The designer also dealt nicely with the location of the light source. It's a wonderful idea — although not as evolved as it could be."

Designer: Kenta Kawahara, Virginia Tech

WITH A TWIST

This study in the nature of materials combines a simple plywood seat with an elegant set of curved aluminum legs. "The metal leg is a great detail," observed the jury, "although we're not sure that the twisted metal really counteracts the tendency toward wracking, as the student maintains. No matter which way the piece is made, whether it's twisted or flat, it is probably rigid enough to do what it needs to do."

Designer: Charles Ellinwood, Virginia Tech
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The contractor attaching the final hinge to the sunroom door still hadn't been told what color to paint it when he was done. He appealed once more to the lady of the house. She spied a copper wire hanging from the back of the new refrigerator that was next in line for the contractor's attention.

"I ran out to Ace Hardware and bought a can of copper spray paint, and we painted the door with it," she says. One of many serendipitous touches that give the renovated Williamsburg home its singular personality, the copper door looks fantastic.

That sort of spur-of-the-moment decision-making was typical of the renovation project, which was "truly a collaborative effort," says architect Robert Magoon, AIA of Magoon & Associates in Williamsburg. "Throughout the process, the design kept evolving."

Protective of their privacy, the owners of this home - she, the owner of a marketing firm and he, a chef - asked that their names not appear in this article. Their 1984 home, twice expanded and renovated by Magoon, reflects this desire for anonymity. Clad in silver-gray cedar with a foundation and chimney of brick in variegated rosy hues, the single-story house has no windows on the front. Set back only slightly from the curb along its stereotypical subdivision street, the house hugs the ground, enveloped by the landscape but for its glossy red front door.

One step inside, however, erases any expectation of the "contemporary ranch." The rear wall is composed almost entirely of huge panes of glass. Bigger than French doors, uncurtained and completely shorn of trim, they provide virtually unobstructed views of the wooded one-acre lot. It's as though, by stepping inside, you walk out into the lush forest. Suburbia and the 18th century colonial capital both feel very far away indeed. Their images recede even further as one takes in the vibrant colors of the often whimsical paintings, sculpture, and artist-designed furnishings that fill the house.

In both a 1987 addition and a 1998 renovation, the owners sought not only more space but an aesthetic reworking of the original house. Magoon's 1987 addition had min-
imized moldings and emphasized large windows. The owners wanted to go even further in that direction with the later renovation. Avid art collectors, they desired an interior that would serve as a backdrop for their ever-changing collection of paintings and sculpture—much of it by Virginia artists. Connoisseurs by nature and profession, they needed a bigger kitchen and grander dining area. And enamored of the beauties of nature just outside their back door, they asked for a house that would exhibit nature's talents as deftly as it showcased the manmade artifacts inside.

The original house incorporated several features the owners still valued—master and guest bedrooms on opposite ends of the house, skylights throughout, and a deck on the back—while the 1987 expansion had added an informal family room and art studio. One special feature of the original house—a small atrium smack dab in the middle of the living room—had been a disappointment. "We wanted windows, light, something a little unique," says the wife. What they got instead was an airless outdoor room, too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter, that collected leaves every autumn.

Reconsidering the atrium, Magoon hit on the idea that became the centerpiece of the renovation. He decided to reincorporate the atrium into the interior as a dining space—a "temple of food," as Magoon calls it. The requirement for windows and light was met by elongating the outdoor space, which was formerly an uncomfortable catchment for leaves, into the house's dramatic new centerpiece (right).
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Architect: Carlton Abbott and Partners, P.C., Williamsburg
Project: Fluvanna Heritage Trail Project

This large group shelter is one of several concepts developed to define the “new rustic” theme for the Fluvanna Heritage Trail project near Palmyra. “New rustic” is being defined as recreating themes in park architecture utilizing readily available materials. Tel: 757-220-1095

Architect: Tut Bartzen & Associates Architects, Richmond
Project: 1229 King Street Office Building

The new 20,000 s.f. office building in Alexandria will include 1,500 square feet of retail space and parking for 12 cars on the ground floor and 3,000 square feet of office space on each of two floors above. Contextual materials include brick, stucco, and painted metal canopies. Tel: 804-288-3436

Architect: Rancorn Wildman Architects, PLC, Newport News
Project: Williamsburg Christian Academy

Williamsburg Christian Academy is planning to build a new 550-student, K-12 private school in Williamsburg. The 70,000 s.f. facility will include a media center, computer training labs, cafetorium, and gymnasium. It is scheduled for completion in August 2002. Tel: 757-873-6606

Architect: Studio B – A Division of Baskervill & Son, Richmond
Project: Play

This company’s new 10,000 s.f. home in Richmond is centered on the concept of a “big red four square ball,” which prompts visitors and associates to see things differently. The renovation incorporates creativity into the environment through flexible furniture and unconventional finishes. Tel: 804-343-1010
Architect: Mitchell/Matthews Architects, Charlottesville
Project: Monroe House Student Residence, University of Virginia
Mitchell/Matthews has completed schematic design for this new 30,000 s.f., four-story residence at U.Va. Located near McKim Mead & White’s Cabell Hall, the new building will provide accommodation, dining, and social spaces for 80 foreign language students, faculty, and guests. Tel: 804-979-7550

Architect: Baskervill & Son, Richmond
Project: Performance Food Group
This 35,000 s.f. building will be the corporate headquarters for a company that distributes food products. Clad in precast and glass, the building has a two-story atrium on the interior providing a central location for building activities and natural daylight throughout the space. Tel: 804-343-1010

Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, Richmond
Project: Addition to the Mill House
This 500 s.f. addition to a historic mill house in Powhatan provides a master bedroom, master bath, laundry room, and walk-in closet. The addition maintains the rural character of the existing building and offers views of a nearby creek and other natural aspects of the seven-acre site. Tel: 804-780-9067

Architect: Clark Nexsen, Architecture & Engineering, Norfolk
In association with Mitchell/Giurgola, New York
Project: Chemistry/Physics Building, Phase II, Virginia Tech
The new 87,800 s.f. chemistry, physics, and biology building will include laboratories, seminar rooms, offices, and two 200-seat demonstration theaters. The building will enclose the end of a quadrangle near Derring Hall. Tel: 757-455-5800
Wiley & Wilson is designing a new 36,000 s.f. Museum of Fine Arts and History for the Town of Pulaski. The museum will house historical artifacts pertaining to Southwest Virginia. The building facade is based on the old Maple Shade Inn that once graced the town’s landscape. Tel: 804-947-1901

The $19.5 million South County High School will accommodate 900 students with a capacity for expansion. Adaptability to changing educational methods and technology is paramount. The school will feature integrated telecommunications, audio/visual, and data systems. Contact Dale M. Leidich. Tel: 540-344-6664

This 54,000 s.f. replacement terminal for Bakersfield, California, will be a vital part of the California aviation system. It has been designed to accommodate jet, regional jet, and commuter aircraft. Tel: 804-644-5941

SMBW has been commissioned to design a new five-story 85,000 s.f. office building at the Canal Walk turning basin in Richmond. Included are renovation of an existing 13,000 s.f. Southern Railway building and below-grade parking. The area’s historic industrial fabric informs the new building’s design. Tel: 804-782-2115
Montgomery County is centralizing all services by renovating a 126,000 square foot manufacturing plant into a new Municipal Center. Circulation patterns are clearly defined by a newly created vehicle and pedestrian plaza. Bays of oversized windows will enhance the quality of the interior spaces. Tel: 540-633-1897

This new facility at Ft. Buchanan in San Juan, Puerto Rico, will provide a developmental environment for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. The facility includes age group modules as well as kitchen and laundry facilities. The design is influenced by its Caribbean location. Tel: 757-496-4926

In the Ballston Metro area in Northern Virginia, this new 13-story office tower presents a strong Modern image with its distinctive glass top, extruded aluminum fins, and elegant glass corners. Retail space and a garden at ground level provide other amenities for tenants and neighbors. Tel: 703-807-2500

The temple complex of Congregation Beth Ahaba is located in Richmond's historic Fan District and centers on the synagogue building constructed in 1905. Proposed additions and renovations connect the existing structures and provide additional meeting and classroom space. Tel: 804-788-4774
Architect Cheryl D. Moore, AIA, works in understatement, maintaining a control and a celebration of the connections of materials and a visible expression of their use. Case in point: the addition to a Richmond home, in which she met the clients' diametrically opposed requirements for security and openness, while fulfilling lesser priorities of financial restraint and a backboard for tennis and soccer practice.

The public side of the addition – which contains a two-car garage, recreation room, and guest room with an attached bath – allows only clerestory windows to pierce the board-and-batten skin. The private side, in contrast, opens to gardens through a series of 4-by-8-foot sliding glass doors, each topped with an 8-foot-wide transom. Making the transition between the outside and inside is a covered veranda, which is absent of railings or pickets to interrupt the garden view. The veranda floats slightly above a bed of washed pea gravel.

The 8-by-8-foot planning module used in the addition is most apparent from the garden. Sliding doors are separated by a column, which is echoed by another column at the outside edge of the veranda. Oversize beams, tied together by a grill of 2-by-2-inch wood pieces, connect the pairs of columns and reinforce the module's rhythm in a different plane. While solving the primary requirement for security, the closed nature of the addition provided the means to solve another, which was to include the backboard for sports practice. A double-stud wall covered with marine plywood provides the needed stiffness and sound isolation for it to function correctly.

The repetitive module, combined with simple, off-the-shelf materials such as manufactured trusses, kept costs well within budget. Detailing, including a continuous soffit/light trough and exposed structural elements, provides good design without budget excess. Says Moore: “We try to use ordinary materials to create distinctive architecture.”

— T. Duncan Abernathy, AIA
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