Austin's new central library will, contrary to what some might think, contain actual books. Lots of books. But it will also be a community center, a place that unites technology and people, paper and screen, and, ultimately, city and nature. With thousands of people now living in downtown Austin (and more to come), architects, planners, and city leaders took the opportunity to not only re-examine the traditional function of a library in an age of e-books and internet connectivity, but also to design a facility that reflects the culture and identity of the city.

On February 19, in Houston, Menil Collection director Josef Helfenstein revealed Johnston Marklee’s design for the Menil Drawing Institute (MDI). The $40 million project will be the first freestanding facility in the United States created specifically for the exhibition, study, storage, and conservation of modern and contemporary drawings. “Artists, curators, and scholars have long recognized the heightened importance of drawing in the modern era as an independent medium on the level of painting and sculpture,” said Helfenstein in a statement. “Until now, however, institutions have struggled to accord it the attention it deserves.”

On the opposite page: Vintage postcards depict the Sundowner Motel in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as a chic place where debonair-looking people sipped martinis by the poolside and a neon sign beckoned locals and travelers along Route 66 alike. Built in 1960 along Albuquerque’s Sunbelt, the Sundowner Motel is now converted to affordable housing. Designed by Lake|Flato and Shepley Bulfinch, Austin’s new central library will be a hub for the capital city. Reading Community.

For a guy that began his post-graduate career working as a carpenter and driving a taxi in Boston, who took off five months to hitchhike to California and back, Don Gatzke has definitely figured out what it takes to lead an architecture institution. With seven years prior at Tulane, and heading into his eleventh at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Architecture (UTA), Gatzke is finally stepping down as dean. “I've enjoyed it, yeah. I've got to admit that. I feel like I've come to the end of a personal chapter, and it's time to step away and let somebody else do it,” said Gatzke. “It's probably better to leave before people forget why you were here to begin with.”

On the opposite page: Courtesty Spaceport America.

The World's First Commercial Spaceport. See Page 11.
The architecture community these days, for the most part, is “pro-urban” by indoctrination. Some even go so far as to label themselves “urbanists,” as though a preference for living in cities where one can walk to the grocery store or the bar somehow situates them on the opposite side of a yawning chasm from people who drive to accomplish the same things—much in the way the “Marxist” tag drew a hard line in intellectual circles of generations past. Along with the commodification of a turgid conviction that greater density, smaller residences, and more mass transit is not only the righteous thing, it is a foregone conclusion, the obvious trajectory of our growing population, diminishing resources, and shifting demographic predilections. But none of this is anything that architects do this for.

Alan Malich, a senior fellow at the National Housing Institute, recently expressed a more cautious view of the recent trend of urban in-migration in a post on roolines.org. “As I read much of what is being written about demographic change and urban revival,” he wrote, “I see a lot of urbanist wishful thinking, along the same lines as the scenarios some pundits paint of exurban McMansions turning into slums and squatter colonies, as their former residents flee the suburbs for the cities like the residents of Pompeii fleeing the eruption of Vesuvius. Is it possible? Yes, but the evidence is not there.”

He goes on, “There is no compelling evidence of anything resembling the fundamental shift in values and attitudes on the part of millennials that would lead to most of them behaving that differently from earlier generations, and—to the extent that their means permit—buying suburban houses in which to raise their children, and, as often as not, commuting to work in the city in their Priuses.”

In the Southwest, and in Texas in particular, this discussion between urbanists and suburban defenders (I’ve never seen anyone label themselves a “suburbanist,” which may be some indication of on which side of this shouting match the true doctrinaires reside) seems a bit puzzling—a preoccupation of the Rust Belt and northern coasts, utterly in-tuned to the peculiarities and exigencies of our regional cities and built environment in general.

In Houston, just to take the largest and most perplexing example, the line between urban and suburban is fuzzy; if it exists at all. As opposed to a center city surrounded by outwardly tranquil bedroom communities there are four major employment centers—downtown only happens to be the largest—and many more minor ones spread out across a vast coastal prairie and filled in with single-family garden residences, apartment complexes, and vacant spaces left by the uninhabited, leafpicking development. Each “center” carries its own mass and holds in thrall its own contingent of commuters, who rely almost exclusively upon automobiles for transit. So where in this “vast, attenuated conurbation,” to borrow a term from Lars Lerup, do you decide that you’re either in the city or in a suburb?

Just describing Houston is enough to make a card-carrying urbanist scoff and turn their attention back to a more northerly city with a large existing Victorian district or a fabric of 19th-century row houses. Add that to the fact that the term “Houstonization” is used as a pejorative by most architecture critics and you have to come to the conclusion that, if we wish to have a serious critical discussion about the future of urbanization in the Southwest, we’re going to have to come up with a language to discuss it ourselves.

From the perspective of this editor’s armchair, the urbanist view and Malich’s cautious hedging are valuable steppingstones for reaching an understanding of a Southwest urbanism that breaks the mold of what either of those parties might consider to be urban. This publication is dedicated to investigating that progress in all the unique particularities of the places it arises—as any architect worth their salt would do when approaching a new project.

AARON SEWARD
GOOD PROGNOSIS

The University of Texas Regents have approved the first phase of the new Dell Medical School in Austin’s medical district. Designed by Page (formerly Page Southerland Page) and ZGF, the project includes a 260,000-square-foot research building and a 230,000-square-foot office building, a new education building, and a parking structure for 1,120 cars. A new hospital building, an education building, and a medical office building are joined by a multiple-story glass bridge, allowing access into its creek-side site. The project anticipates a glass railing along the bridge, and a new hospital building will be integrated with the complex into the creek-side site.

The design team avoided by breaking up the massing and using a variety of cladding materials, including UT’s traditional Cordova Cream limestone and metal shingles, and smartly integrating the building into its creek-side site. The project is also climate sensitive. The north-facing side of the education building is mostly glass, with the building’s circulation system expressed on the exterior, and informal gathering areas overlooking a grove of live oaks. The sunnier public side is more opaque and clad in textured limestone. The research and medical office buildings, clad in contrasting light limestone and dark metal shingles respectively, are joined by a multiple story glass bridge, allowing access through the site to the creek. The project anticipates a connection to the city’s light rail line, which will further tie the complex into both the campus and the capital city.

ALAN G. BRAKE

NEW AUSTIN MEDICAL COMPLEX TIES INTO CAMPUS AND CITY

BYE-BYE ART BARN

Texas art website Glasstire.com has confirmed the rumor that Rice University intends to demolish the Martel Center building—more informally known as the Art Barn. The corrugated metal structure was commissioned by John and Dominique de Menil in 1969 to house the Rice Museum, a predecessor of The Menil Collection. The utilitarian structure inspired the “tin house” movement that gained some momentum in Houston’s West End neighborhood in the 1970s. Historian and Rice School of Architecture lecturer Stephen Fox put the demolition in context: “Designed by Houston architects Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry, it was faced with corrugated galvanized sheet iron, which was used to materialize its identity as a workshop for art, rather than a pristine gallery. Along with its architectural companion, the adjoining Rice Media Center, the Art Barn introduced the use of sheets of metal as an architectural finish material to Houston. The Art Barn is a building of exceptional cultural value to Rice University and Houston. It should be preserved and used as a studio for art instruction.” Rice, which claims that the structure is in “very poor condition,” will replace the building with grass. The university, however, decided not to remove a live oak tree that Andy Warhol planted on the site in commemoration of the Art Barn.

IS THAT MUSK IN THE AIR?

Speaking of rumors, Texas Monthly spread the word that Silicone Valley billionaire visionary Elon Musk may be locating facilities for two of his future-looking companies in the Lone Star State. Musk’s SpaceX has been buying up land in Cameron County in South Texas with the implicit purpose of building a space facility on the site to launch an expedition to Mars. In more terrestrial affairs, the South Africa native is also considering building a battery factory in the state for one of his bar’s plush white seats are greeted by views of the Radisson’s pool. Wood pervades the interior, punctuated by occasional tiled surfaces used in part to highlight the more intimate booth seating areas that surround the central dining hall.

FODA took its inspiration from the aesthetics of Mesoamerican textiles and pottery in creating the typographical motif found throughout the space. Stylized letters from the restaurant’s name coat a backlit entryway foyer. The same symbols make an appearance beneath the glass tops of wooden dining tables. The project was several years in the making; conceived when chef Shawn Cirkiel was approached by the Radisson and offered complete creative control in updating the hotel’s eating options. From both an architectural and gastronomic perspective, the resulting effort is a step forward from its casual dining predecessor and a sign of Austin’s maturity.

SCOTT KELLY
Maria Cole, of Denver-based architecture firm Klipp, worked with a diverse group of stakeholders from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science to develop programming for the $56.5 million Morgridge Family Exploration Center expansion. Encompassing 126,000 square feet, the project adds early learning space, studios, additional third floor gallery space, and significant increases to the collections storage capacity of the museum.

As with any civic institution constructed through gradual accumulation of building materials around a collection of artifacts, it can be difficult to distinguish exactly where one structure stops and another starts, and this addition is no different. The design team at Klipp has treated the addition as an interstitial space, mediating the boundary between the vast greenery of City Park to the South and the assemblage of historical structures that make up the museum. “The building really feels like it is part of the park,” said Cole. It is clear the design team was considering the creation of exterior and fluid spaces, but the south patio suffers from an extensive southern exposure, with all the glare and heat that entails. Other outdoor rooms are more successful, and hopefully the space will be activated come summertime.

On the ground floor, the new spaces are located at the end of a circulation corridor that runs through many decades of history before spilling visitors into a four-story atrium, which, like all things in the addition, is outfitted with projectors, screens, microphones, and color-changing lights designed to create an immersive experience for children. Technology-laden exploration studios occupy the south facade, and the spaces find expression as the volume of the studios twists out of the monolithic limestone and brick mass of the second and third floor spaces. The glass facade of the studios is protected by a computer-controlled louver system, while the west wall is treated with electrochromic glass. The high-performance building features continue with soundproof glass in the studios, and an environmental control system that is the penultimate step in modernizing and updating the building envelope, enabling the numerous artifacts to be stored in optimized conditions. “Tight humidity control requires a lot of energy,” said Tom Otteson, motivating Klipp to labor over the performance of the building envelope. All of this technology and planning, including a solar-thermal hot water system and a pilot reclaimed water heat exchange initiative, is expected to net the addition a LEED Platinum score.

The public-facing renovation is a well-considered civic building, balancing effective circulation and sight lines with the difficulty of integrating a new structure with the 11 previous constructions on the site. Below grade, the 63,000-square-foot Rocky Mountain Science Collections Center excels in different ways. Klipp provided vast spaces for artifact storage, outfitting each room with tracks that allow massive cabinets and containers of artifacts to glide effortlessly across the floor and to be rearranged at will. The workspaces and curatorial laboratories are no less impressive, with integrated systems and sanitary surfaces designed for research work—the kind of spaces a postgraduate fellow dreams about.

Klipp is working with a surplus of goodwill and trust from the steady upward development of the Denver cultural and civic landscape in the past decade, in which Cole has had an especially large role. With projects underway, including a renovation of the historic Sage building, Denver and the region will keep coming out ahead on her projects. Nick Cecchi
accommodations for an outdoor grower’s market, retail, and community space, the project maintained the basic scale and composition of the original buildings in a way that retains much of the Sundowner’s early mod aesthetics. “Keeping the basic flavor of this Del Webb-type motor court was a key,” said Smith. “Most of the work on the buildings was kept within the basic envelope with carefully incorporated design improvements that work with the original design.”

The original motel rooms were converted into four apartment types, from efficiencies to three-bedroom units. A design competition determined the gray and blue color scheme of the apartment blocks. The mixed-use portion of the complex was painted in vibrant colors to enliven the streetscape and complement prospective weekend markets where festive multicolored umbrellas will adorn the adjacent parking lot. “We also wanted to greatly reduce the vast asphalted parking area into smaller areas of permeable parking with surrounding amenities such as play areas for different ages, community gardens, meeting areas with picnic tables and barbecue pits, and very nice landscaping,” said Smith.

The Sundowner is expected to achieve LEED-platinum certification and NewLife Homes reports that its 71 residential units are almost completely occupied, the majority reserved for individuals who make less than 50 percent of the local median income. “We’ve adopted the permanent supportive housing model, an evidence-based and cost-effective practice for bringing our most vulnerable community members out of unstable housing situations and into a high-quality, supportive apartment community,” explained NewLife Homes executive director John Bloomfield. “On-site staff members—managers, service coordinators, even maintenance staff—often form deep connections with residents and host educational events, social gatherings, and basic services like food commodities.”

In 2012, Bloomfield and Smith worked together on the renovation and expansion of another Route 66 motor lodge exactly two miles east of the Sundowner on East Central Avenue. Originally built in 1950, the Luna Lodge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and now provides 30 apartment units for low-income residents. “These motel rehabilitation projects act as catalysts for neighborhood revitalization while putting affordable housing on the map as an asset to our communities,” said Bloomfield. “Our residents tend to be loyal patrons of local business and invested in the neighborhood for the long haul, which facilitates additional small business initiatives in formerly blighted areas.”

Such projects yield benefits in other far-reaching ways. “They increase the tax base; they promote use of public transportation; they help stabilize population segments; they restore decrepit properties; in many cases they preserve historically valuable properties; and they are widely supported by businesses and neighbors who see we are providing vitality that otherwise wouldn’t be produced by the for-profit development community because of perceived risk factors,” said Smith.

While the current incarnation of the Sundowner may not include a casino or dance floor, it will soon feature a museum component that pays homage to Route 66 and two former Sundowner guest tenants, a pair of computer scientists who made the motel their home for a year or two in the mid-1970s. Back then, Bill Gates and Paul Allen weren’t household names and, after failing to solicit venture capital in Albuquerque, they moved to Seattle, where they established Microsoft. It is difficult not to wonder what fate would have held in store for the Sundowner and, indeed, for Albuquerque itself had the pair been able to find funding here.

“We are carrying out the legacy of Microsoft by finding innovative solutions to community issues, such as turning dilapidated motels into successful and replicable models of sustainable building, award-winning design, and affordable housing,” said Bloomfield.
SUNUP AT THE SUNDOWNER continued from front page then-developing East Central Avenue corridor, the mid-century modern, two-story, U-shaped motel included 110 rooms surrounding a swimming pool as well as a casino and popular nightclub.

But like dozens of other old motor lodges in town, the Sundowner fell into disrepair with the development of the Interstate Highway System that displaced the Mother Road. A prolonged era of urban decay, most notable along East Central Avenue, followed. The Sundowner was eventually shuttered in 2009 after last being used as transitional housing for veterans.

"Over the past three decades, the area has steadily declined in property values, economic viability for retail and commercial uses, and has seen a rise in drugs, prostitution, and transience," said local architect Garrett Smith. Last year, Smith partnered with NewLife Homes, a local non-profit housing developer with the development of the Interstate 25 corridor, the mid-century modern, composition of the original buildings in a way that retains much of the Sundowner’s early mod aesthetics. "Keeping the basic flavor of this Del Webb-type motor court was a key," said Smith. "Most of the work on the buildings was kept within the basic envelope with carefully incorporated design improvements that work with the original design."

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BENJAMIN IKENSON
KITCHENS & BATHS: MIXED MEDIA

CONVENTIONAL MATERIALS UTILIZED IN CREATIVE WAYS CAN INVIGORATE FORMS—IF NOT FUNCTIONS—IN THE BATH AND KITCHEN. BY LESLIE CLAGETT

1 EFFETI BK2
Designed by Gabriele and Oscar Buratti, the kitchen cabinets are made of matte-lacquered scraped oak, with lacquered interiors. Pulls are cast aluminum, powder-coated to match the casework’s color.
effetiusa.com

2 CROSSVILLE TILE SIDEVIEW GLASS
Beveled to show depth and dimension, these glass tiles are suited for interior walls in dry or wet applications. In four metallic colors, in matte or polished finish.
crossvilleinc.com

3 TRENDS GROUP METROPOLIS
Containing up to 75 percent post-consumer recycled glass, the mesh-backed mosaic mixes hand-cut tesserae in a composition of texture and light. Available in nine colorways.
trend-group.com

4 GD CUCINE LEGNO VIVO
Constructed of solid oak with a stainless steel worktop, this understated kitchen can straddle both contemporary and traditional interiors. Designed by Roberto Pezzetta.
gdcucine.com

5 LAUFEN KARTELL BY LAUFEN
Pairing transparent polycarbonate accents with ultra-thin ceramic-wares and fittings, this collaborative bath collection is available in six colors.
laufen.com

6 KALLISTA PLEO WALL-MOUNT TOILET
Offered in Stucco White or Linen, this sleek toilet has 1.6 GPF/1.0 GPF dual-flush capability. WaterSense certified.
kallista.com

7 MOEN ARRIS TUB FILLER
Proprietary mounting plates resist “wobble” after installation. Available in chrome and brushed nickel. ADA compliant.
moen.com

8 GOLDREIF BY POGGENPOHL PROFILE SERIES
A mid-market complement to the luxury Poggenpohl kitchen system, goldreif’s initial offering in the US market comprises three collections with a palette of 44 colors and more than 130 door styles.
goldreif.com
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the POSSIBILITIES are ENDLESS!

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DESIGNED BY POPULOUS, BAYLOR’S NEW STADIUM WILL BE A CIVIC ICON FOR WACO

BEAR’S DEN

It is hard to miss McLane Stadium from I-35. The building’s hulking mass, sited so close that it literally looms over the freeway, makes a big impression among the profusion of gas stations, fast food, and roadway signs that are otherwise the only indication that you have left the Texas prairie and are now passing through Waco. Even at the speed of traffic it is clear that what’s happening here is more than just the construction of a new college football stadium for the Baylor Bears—here is the making of a civic icon.

“It’s a huge billboard for the university and for Waco,” said Jeff Spears, a principal at Populous, the Kansas City–headquartered architecture firm that designed the stadium. Indeed, the city demonstrated its commitment to the venture by approving $35 million in tax increment financing to help the private university fund its $280 million stadium. “I don’t think you would consider Waco a college town, but I think they’re heading that way,” continued Spears. “With Baylor’s recent success with football, the community is getting behind it.”

In addition to this monetary show of town-gown fellowship, the design of McLane Stadium goes a long way toward improving connectivity both between the campus and its football program, as well as between the city and the university. In addition to being on the east side of I-35, the site (which was briefly considered for the George W. Bush Presidential Library before SMU took another honer) is on the north bank of the Brazos River. It links to the Baylor campus, on the south side, via a pedestrian bridge. As a replacement for Floyd Casey Stadium, which is some two miles away from campus, the new stadium will make it easier for students without wheels to get to games. Also on site is the Baylor Basin, a harbor with boat slips perfect for a new form of water-borne tailgating. The project has also invited Waco to consider a $180 million riverfront development project that could tie into the stadium and help break down the “Baylor Wall,” another name for I-35, which separates the campus from the city center.

As big as it looks from the freeway, at 43,000 seats McLane Stadium is intimate compared to the 80,000-seat-and-up stadia that are home to much of the Bears’ competition. The stadium’s three tiers keep the seats close to the field. A canopy—held 135 feet in the air and cantilevering up to 95 feet out on 42-inch-diameter steel pipe columns—provides shade for hot September games as well as sound amplification to increase the intimidation factor. Horseshoe-shaped in plan, the poured-in-place concrete seating bowl opens up to the south, creating a view corridor to Baylor’s idyllic campus.

Construction is expected to be complete by August 1, well before the first home game of the year on August 31.

The interior is designed to modulate natural light for different functions, from circulation to study, to exhibition and storage. Right: MDI will act as a hub for the buildings on the Menil campus.

DRAwING AND DAPlLED LIGHT

continued from front page a proper place to this relatively fragile and inherently experimental practice. With a design that is at once serene and revolutionary, Johnston Marklee has enabled the Menil to make its drawings a more active and public part of the collection than ever before."

The MDI has existed as a program at the Menil since 2008. In that time, it has developed a national reputation for its local and traveling exhibitions and scholarly projects. In designing a bespoke facility for the program, Los Angeles-based architecture firm Johnston Marklee had to take into account a complex program including multiple groups of users—visitors, scholars, conservationists—and multiple functions and spaces, as well as thousands of delicate works of art.

"Because of the MDI’s public-oriented mission, though, and the famously understated architecture of the Menil’s other buildings, we knew this complexity had to be accommodated in a design that would work with and for the building’s spaces. The roof works in concert with the surrounding landscape and the live oaks to modulate the levels of natural light on the interior. Johnston Marklee worked in collaboration with New York City–based lighting design firm George Sexton Associates to develop strategies for carefully admitting daylight and blending it with electric light. As visitors enter, the powerful Texas sunlight is reduced in stages, first by the canopy of trees, then by the roof canopy. Throughout the interior, gradients of modulated daylight and controlled chambers of artificial light define the functions of the various spaces, from circulation to study to exhibition and storage.

The MDI is one component of an on-going $110 million capital and endowment campaign for the Menil Collection, which also includes the Van Volkenburgh master plan and a new “Energy House” containing all of the building’s mechanical systems, which is also being designed by Johnston Marklee. Groundbreaking for the MDI is tentatively scheduled for early 2015.

Sited across the Brazos River from Baylor’s campus, McLane Stadium can be reached by car, by foot, or by boat.
Austinites are known for their highly participatory and democratic inclinations, and they made their vision of the new library known. "People wanted to make sure the library didn’t just have books, but also different kinds of nice places to read books and interact with technology," said Jonathan Smith, project architect at Lake|Flato Architects in San Antonio, which is partnering with Boston’s Shepley Bulfinch in an integrated joint venture for the project. Lake|Flato completed the schematic design and design development, and is currently overseeing contract administration; Shepley Bulfinch executed the programming and construction documents.

The site for the new and long-overdue central library is indeed a nice place in and of itself. Located on the north shore of the city’s lakefront, the library will act as the terminus for a lively, pedestrian-oriented urban corridor on its northern urban edge, and connect to riparian landscape and long vistas across Lady Bird Lake to the south. Its street presence will animate and complete the until-now quiet, western end of the Second Street District, and make an important physical connection to the city’s high tech community and spirit of innovation, it makes sense that the library will assimilate technology with people. Smith calls it a “new hub for the citizens of Austin.” Not due to open until March 2016, the library has already received inquiries for space rental from South by Southwest Interactive, itself a hub of technology and digital innovation. Proof, hopefully, that reports of the death of libraries have been greatly exaggerated. CANAN YETMEN

The interior of the library is dominated by a six-story atrium (above, left). Its street presence will complete the western end of the Second Street District (above, right). Street frontage.

Inside the building, the space is dominated by what Raike calls the “big move” of the project: a six-story, light-filled atrium that provides vertical circulation and a variety of scales of spaces for people to gather or to be alone, to research or to brainstorm. A multi-purpose space will accommodate up to 350. At street level, a leasable restaurant space provides a social spot—think bookstore café—and a retail space will house the library’s own high-end, museum-style shop, both revenue generators for the city-owned operation. This integration of public and private enterprise takes its cues from nearby Antoine Predock-designed city hall, another municipal building that contains retail and restaurant space along its Second Street frontage.

A 38-story residential tower is being developed by Trammel Crow across Shoal Creek to the east, where the building engages the hike and bike trail. “On this edge, the design accommodates a pedestrian connection between the library and the riparian character of the creek,” said Steve Raike, project manager with Lake|Flato. “These goals are firmly embedded in Austin’s Great Streets design standards.” Here, bench seating, shade trees, and bike parking provide an intimate, welcoming entry to the library, removed from the activity of the street level above. To the west, the city’s decommissioned, iconic 1960s Seaholm Power Plant is being re-envisioned as a mixed-use complex, finally completing this western sector of downtown.

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Quick: close your eyes and think of space flight. Where do the images come from? If you’re of a certain age, they’re from the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions of the 1960s, the heroic era that culminated in a moon landing. For nearly everyone younger, they’re from cinema and video: some iteration of Star Trek, Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica, and 2001: A Space Odyssey. The visual vocabulary became a cliché long ago: sleek techno-biomorphic spacecraft straight out of William Gibson’s Gernsback Continuum, zooming between Fullerian/Saarinenesque/Altoid space stations and CGI battle scenes, dodging the question of whether streamlined contours actually matter in environments with no atmosphere and, hence, no friction (they don’t), as Thom Mayne once noted in reference to the Apollo Lunar Module that his Cooper Union building so uncannily resembles.

Personal visions of space travel are less likely to suggest NASA’s more prosaic space shuttle (or, lower on the aerospace-iconography ziggurat, The Jetsons). Yet commercial spaceports, a critical step toward a future when space is open to every George and Jane, have moved from speculation to actual construction over the past decade. If the space-travel industry follows the path these ports’ proliferation implies, those humbler models will be closer to reality. Spare-no-expense public projects with single-use rockets that discard launch stages into the ocean, manned by larger-than-life rocket jocks who joined the astronaut/cosmonaut elite through military training, have given way to economical carrier craft (“motherplanes”) taking off horizontally on regular runways, ferrying light reusable vehicles full of relatively unheroic civilian passengers. Tourism and eventual routinization, in other words: the passing of the torch from people with the Right Stuff to people with plenty of the green stuff.

Though it’s easy to view rocket-borne millionaires as the ultimate dilettantes, some longtime aerospace observers see tourism as an essential phase in the evolution of the field. Consultant/engineer Derek Webber, executive director of Spaceport Associates, has analyzed the business models and regulatory climate for passenger space flight, managing Futron Corporation’s ASCENT study of space markets for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)’s Marshall Space Flight Center. After decades in the communications satellite industry, he believes that space tourism could grow far larger. “It’s an enormous potential market,” he said, “because if each person is considered as a payload, you’ve got potentially tens of thousands of payloads per year, whereas in normal commercial space you have about 80 payloads a year... globally.”

Envisioning a wide range of “horses for courses”—spaceports tailored to particular purposes—and looking to suborbital tourism as the path to commercial viability as general space transportation matures and expands, Webber compares the brewing space boom to the barnstorming era in the early history of aircraft. “Go back to the Wright brothers. They started something, and they didn’t know where it was going to lead.”

One thing is certain: wherever this industry is headed—back to the moon, to a future Martian settlement, to the Martian moons Deimos and Phobos (an exploratory possibility that some at NASA Goddard Space...
America, with a terminal designed commercial spaceport. Spaceport operates the world's first dedicated Mexico Spaceport Authority (NMSA), on 18,000 acres between Las Cruces Flight Center have studied), or only The ArchiTec T’s NewspArper MArch 12, 2014 by Foster + Partners and URS, is development, business incubation, and a museum. It provides flexible facilities for flight operations, research and The proposal for a Houston Spaceport to be built at Ellington Field was designed This was accelerated after businessman Dennis Tito’s self-financed International Space Station visit on a Russian Soyuz rocket in 2001. The Ansai X Prize— $10 million offered by telecomm tycoons Anousheh and Amir Ansari to the first nongovernmental team that could deliver a manned reusable spacecraft to the Karman line, the 100-km (62-mile) altitude accepted as the border between Earth’s atmosphere and outer space, twice within two weeks—gave the effort a boost.

Mojave Aerospace Ventures, a partnership of aerospace designer Burt Rutan’s Scaled Composites firm and Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen, won that competition in 2004 with SpaceShipOne, a carbon-fiber craft whose folding-wing design allows a high-drag feathered configuration for re-entry and a glider configuration for landing. SpaceShipOne, which launched from the motherplane White Knight at California’s Mojave Air and Space Port, now hangs in the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum. Its successor, SpaceShipTwo, large enough to carry two pilots and six passengers (all with window seats), is undergoing testing as Virgin Galactic’s demonstration craft for a maiden flight carrying Branson and his two adult children from the New Mexico port and back, with White Knight Two (VMS Eve, after Branson’s mother) as carrier. Though Virgin Galactic has kept details quiet and revised its timetable several times, Webber speculates that the Bransons’ ride may occur as early as late 2014. The convergence of the X Prize, the appearance of Virgin Galactic, and the energetic promotion by NMSA, said Spaceport America’s project architect Grant Brooker, senior partner at Foster + Partners, created an optimal opportunity for the firm to apply its signature high-tech, high-efficiency approach to a new realm of transportation infrastructure. It wasn’t a hard sell—more a case of “You had me at spaceport,” really. Any conversation that begins, “We really want to build a spaceport,” really. Any conversation that begins, “We really want to build a spaceport in America,” that’s definitely a project we want to do. This is not an expensive facility; this is not a very big facility; but we were trying to make something that was very concentrated and where, [as] in the early days of flight, you get the people close to the equipment.”

Siting decisions for spaceports, at least for now, rank remoteness above accessibility. Keeping uninvolved populations safe from errant rockets, Webber points out, is a vital function as a kind of science museum. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), favoring ocean-side or desert sites. Spaceport America, Brooker said, offers a “geographical advantage held by no other location in the States, which is the proximity of the White Sands missile base,” creating a large commercial no-fly zone. Additional benefits of the location include impressive desert views, a 12,000-foot runway, and the prevailing westerly winds, which the building employs in a geothermal system, channeling air beneath large earth berms via long tubes for cooling and delivery into the mechanical plants, making the HVAC system more efficient. A broad, blanket-like roof of thin-shell concrete keeps direct sunlight from penetrating the building and provides additional thermal mass. Although flight is obviously energy-intensive, environmental performance is an important priority for the port; the terminal is not carbon-neutral, but it is designed to attain LEED Gold, Anderson reports. The site offers an incremental advantage over sea-level areas: “We’re also at altitude,” she adds. “We always say, ‘The first mile is free,’ because we’re at 4,600 feet, so that means more payload, less fuel.”

The curves of the low-slung, symmetrical, steel-framed facility can be read as a horseshoe crab or a manta ray as easily as a parked spacecraft or winged alien; it references both Earth and space. “We wanted something that really felt that it was almost tethered,” Brooker continues, “floating above the landscape, in the landscape. That gave us an aesthetic straight away. We like that it hovered, but we weren’t consciously trying to drive anything that looked futuristic.” Internally, it circulates observers on a viewing bridge close to the hangar space without disrupting the facility by placing them right in the vaults with the equipment, a decision that Brooker calls the most important design-stage change in a competition proposal that otherwise remained consistent. Lifting the walkway allowed the architects to join the control and training vaults as one large “superhangar” with enough clearance for carriers and jets to pass below.

Galleries for spectators are among the earthbound considerations that make an active spaceport more than a launch site. Astronauts are the most prominent people a port serves, but they are outnumbered by terrestrial onlookers whose purchases of souvenirs, hot dogs, lodging, and other goods, Webber has concluded, will be a key part of any private spaceport’s revenue stream. This far from other settlements, Anderson points out, “we had to build a small city,” self-sufficient in basic infrastructure: water, power, and sewer, plus a fire department, security, emergency flight termination capability, and emergency medical technicians. Aware of the port’s potential for education aimed at the wider population as well as preparatory training for the passengers themselves, she notes its secondary educational potential.

“We hired a company from Florida that did a lot of EPCOT and Disney activities,” she said. “Education is an undercurrent, but it’s a fun experience,
Spanish firm Luis Vidal + Architects’ proposal for Spaceport Colorado, near Denver. Below right: A flyer of Virgin Galactic’s SpaceShipTwo beneath the WhiteKnightTwo motherplane.

so you’re going to learn more about cargo space; you’re going to learn how spacecraft fly, and kids can build model rockets and fly them there. That’s our other business line.” Other spaceports, she said, supplement their central business in different ways. Mojava, for example, is also a wind power center and an intermodal transportation hub with cargo-transfer capabilities to rail and trucking.

In other respects, private spaceports are less complicated than airports to design, build, and operate. Space tourists for the foreseeable future return to the kickoff point rather than traveling elsewhere on Earth. Until enough of these facilities exist to make point-to-point flights an option, there is no need for baggage handling, passport control, or customs. And certainly not in-flight food: with accelerating forces of 3-6G during re-entry, plus a zero-gravity flight segment that reminds some passengers why NASA’s reduced-gravity aircraft acquired the nickname “Vomit Comet,” space tourism is best experienced under fasting conditions.

First, single points; eventually a network
Spaceport America is one of eight licensed spaceports in the United States, including the longtime manned-launch monopolist, Cape Canaveral. Most are either vertical-launch facilities, mainly handling satellites, or repurposed existing airports (decommissioned military fields in the case of Jacksonville Cecil in Florida and Mojava north of Los Angeles); only one, Spaceport Systems International’s California Spaceport at Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, operates with no governmental funding. Wallops Island, Virginia’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, has taken on passenger missions but may hint at long-range ambitions through its acronym. Legislatures in Texas, Colorado, and Wisconsin have mounted efforts to join the “spaceport states” (Alaska, California, Florida, and Oklahoma). Overseas, along with Russia’s Baikonur (actually in Kazakhstan), three in China (Xichang, Wenchang, and Jiuquan), and the Guiana Space Centre, used by the European Space Agency (ESA), proposed ports can market their services with appeals to local features as well as expertise. Webber notes that Spaceport Sweden in Kiruna, already experienced in ESA rocketry, may be able to offer passengers the chance to fly through the aurora borealis. The proposed Caribbean Spaceport in Curacao features Dutch leadership in both architectural design (by the Amsterdam firm D/DOCK) and engineering, along with a tropical location: XCOR Aerospace, which markets two-person flights, one passenger plus pilot, on its Lynx spaceplane (a horizontal-launch vehicle with no motherplane), has brainstormed the idea of moving these operations from Mojava to the Curacao port as early as 2015. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) joined the commercial market with a satellite launch from the island-based Tanegashima port in 2012; Space Adventures, the tourism firm that has put Tito and six other civilians into orbit to date, is reportedly vetting sites in Japan, Australia, Singapore, and Dubai along with U.S. ports for a suborbital-flight port and training center. Abu Dhabi, not to be outdone, may get a passenger spaceport within two years in a partnership between Branson and local investors. A global spaceport network, giving Virgin Galactic and XCOR somewhere to go besides up, is conceivable.

For the proposed Spaceport Colorado, to be located at Front Range Airport, a small general-aviation facility near Denver, planners called in Luis Vidal, an internationally recognized airport design specialist and principal of Madrid-based Luis Vidal + Architects. Vidal sees the spaceport typology evolving out of airports, with distinct requirements. “The trend concerning the ‘air side’ is trying to use preexisting aerodromes, while in the ‘land side’ new buildings should be developed to adapt to the new demands,” he suggested. For tourism, crafting the experience is paramount: “A need will arise to create a unique space focused on preparing the passenger before the trip, and then after the trip, another place to guide and receive this new experience would be required.” Spaceports will also serve as technology development centers, he believes, particularly for studies performed in microgravity environments, calling for laboratories and research facilities, along with “extreme confidentiality requirements, very different from those of a conventional cargo terminal.”

From his work on the Colorado project, Vidal sees functionality and modularity as essential design principles for the emerging typology. The Front Range spaceport, “actually a conventional aerodrome with a regular runway,” is the only one to his knowledge that will include both spaceport and general-aviation uses. He also goes against the grain in advocating site choices closer to cities and commercial airports to facilitate connections for passengers and proximity to spacecraft manufacturers; he is confident that “an evolution of the current aviation safety protocols would be sufficient to guarantee the same levels of safety.” As for aesthetics, he acknowledges that science-fiction visionaries are implicit influences on most spaceport architecture to date—“but we have to realize that so it’s now. These flights will soon be as common as taking a plane.”

A similar conviction that space travel will eventually become routine animates the world’s first academic program in the field, the University of Houston’s Sasakawa International Center for Space Architecture (SICSA). The proposed spaceport at Houston’s Ellington Airport draws on this center’s expertise: Nisp Trost of the Slovenian firm Trost & Associates, author of Chase for Space (Faculty of Architecture, Ljubljana, 2011) and a graduate student at SICSA, worked with recent alumnus Sam Xenenes of Exploration Architecture Corporation to design this facility, which the Houston Airport System unveiled last fall before an annual meeting of the Commercial Space Federation. Ellington is a deactivated Air Force field a few miles from NASA’s Johnson Space Center—and closer than central Houston to the Gulf of Mexico, so that rockets can minimize flight over populated areas. The proposed complex is designed as “a frame that can be modified,” said Trost, “flexible according to the growth of the industry.” It allows for flight operations, research and development, business incubation, and promotion of the general public’s interest in aviation and space through an on-site museum.

Trost, who has flown in zero gravity himself on a Russian “vomit comet” training plane, does not flinch from recognizing that flight can be both thrilling and nerve-wracking. The design for Ellington aims to calm edgy passengers by combining natural environments, calling for laboratories and receive this new experience after the trip, another place to guide and encourage a feeling of the earth’s gravity. For tourists, the spaceport, to give them similar experiences to the space travel.” Trost also wants the facility to be prepared for an eventual transition from suborbital tourism to orbital transportation. “Point-to-point is definitely the next step, after suborbital flights have been proven as safe,” Trost said, “but the speeds are very high, even higher than Concorde, and much higher orbit. So you need thermal protection, and it’s a completely new aviation skill.” Houston’s concentration of aerospace expertise, he believes, is a strong argument for developing the nation’s ninth spaceport there.

Integrating rockets and their infrastructure into the global transpor- tation network is admittedly blue-sky speculation in a non-metaphorical sense. With figures as visible as film stars signed on among Virgin Galactic’s early customers, contingencies that could delay or derail the whole endeavor are obvious (no one discussing these ports and projects mentions insurance; one, alone Challenger). Yet Brooker places the field in historical context: “Jet travel doesn’t begin with an enormous airport complex capable of handling 80 million passengers a year. It begins with a few incredibly brave people piloting small craft, trying them out on small fields, and then expanding the technologies from that knowledge that they’re gaining.”

Webber, a veteran and an optimist, summarized: “In the essence, it’s a very American idea, space tourism. It’s people wanting to push the boundaries, take some risks, have some fun, and other people wanting to see a real thing of it. Everybody believed it; it was impossible; but now the gigafactor is gone. Everyone knows it’s going to happen in different places around the world and in the U.S. It’s just a matter of how successful. Will the forecasts turn out to be correct? Once a few have done it, will they be disappointed? Will they say, ‘Ah, it wasn’t that great’? Or will they say, ‘Wow, it was transforming’? Every astronaut I’ve talked to—and I’ve talked to a lot of them—they always just tell you that they want to go up again.”

Bill Millard is a contributor to AN, Oculus/Deculus, Architect, Architectural Lighting, Leaf Review, Icon, Content, and other publications.
**MARCH/APRIL 2014**

**CALENDAR**

**MARCH 15**

**Houston**

1001 Bissonnet
Law Building
10:00 a.m.
Walking Tour
Arts District
dma.org

**Dallas**

1717 North Harwood St
Dallas Museum of Art
7:30 p.m.
Dave Barry

**SATURDAY 15**

American Artists in
The Modern Museum of
Fine Arts Houston
The Museum of
Reading and Games Room
Klyde Warren Park;
Dallas Center for Architecture
dallascfa.com

**MARCH 16**

**FILM**

Way Down East
2:00 p.m.
Kimbell Art Museum
Kimbell Piano Pavilion
Auditorium
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**TUESDAY 18**

**LECTURE**

Cynthia Daignault
7:00 p.m.
The Modern Museum of Art
Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St., Fort Worth
thefounders.org

**THURSDAY 20**

**LECTURE**

DMA Partners Light from the Prairie: Frank Lloyd Wright and Francis Little House
6:30 p.m.
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

**Friday 21**

**TOUR**

Slow Art at the Modern
5:30 p.m.
The Modern Museum of Art
Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
thefounders.org

**SATURDAY 22**

**CONCERT**

The Godfathers
2:00 p.m.
Kimbell Art Museum
Kimbell Piano Pavilion
Auditorium
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

Melanie Smith
Contemporary Art Museum Houston
5216 Montrose Blvd.
Houston
camh.org

**SUNDAY 23**

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Focus: Fred Tomaselli
The Modern Museum of Art
Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St., Fort Worth
thefounders.org

**SUNDAY 29**

**CONCERT**

Spencer Yeh AKA Burning Star Core
2:00 p.m.
Contemporary Art Museum Houston
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Concentrations 56:
Stephen Lapthisophon—coffee, seasonal fruit, root vegetables, and "Selected Poems"
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

**APRIL**

**WEDNESDAY 2**

**LECTURE**

Citizen Architect Initiative
*“A Call to Action”*
The Center for Design
1000 St. Charles Ave.
New Orleans
anda@archcareers.org

**THURSDAY 3**

**CONCERT**

Fort Worth Classic
Guitar Society
7:30 p.m.
Kimbell Art Museum
Kimbell Piano Pavilion
Auditorium
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**FRIDAY 4**

**FILM**

The Life of Oharu
6:00 p.m.
Kimbell Art Museum
Kimbell Piano Pavilion
Auditorium
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**SATURDAY 5**

**EVENT**

Behind the Curtain:
Conversation with the Stars of the Fort Worth Opera Festival
2:00 p.m.
Kimbell Art Museum
Kimbell Piano Pavilion
Auditorium
3333 Camp Bowie Blvd.
Fort Worth
kimbellart.org

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Art on the Lawn:
Exhibition Closings
Museum Houston
7:00 p.m.
Dallascfa.com

**WEDNESDAY 26**

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

Trenton Doyle Hancock:
Skin & Bones, 20 Years of Drawings
Contemporary Art Museum Houston
5216 Montrose Blvd.
Houston
camh.org

**SUNDAY 27**

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Robert Smithson in Texas
10:00 a.m.
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Young Masters 2014
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

**WEDNESDAY 30**

**EXHIBITION CLOSING**

Art on the Lawn:
Exhibition Closings
Museum Houston
7:00 p.m.
Dallascfa.com
camh.org

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The Leatton S. and Melvin B. Eagle Collection is one of the most remarkable decorative arts collections in the world, and goes a long way toward challenging the idea that there is a difference between decorative and high art. Although primarily American in scope, it also encompasses significant pieces by acclaimed international artists. At its core are stunning examples of ceramics by groundbreaking California-based artists, such as Robert Arneson, Ralph Bacerra, Via Lee, and jewelry and metalwork by Wendell Castle and Sam Maloof; textile and fiber art by Olga de Amaral, John Garrett, John McQueen, and Cynthia Schiria; and jewelry and metalwork by William Harper, Albert Paley, Earl Perry, and Joyce J. Scott. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston acquired the collection in 2010. Beyond Craft represents its first major showing, surveying significant artists, aesthetic principles, and art movements from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s and beyond.

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FOCUS: Fred Tomaselli
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell Street, Fort Worth
Through March 23

FOCUS: Fred Tomaselli highlights works created by the artist in the past ten years, including his New York Times collages. Tomaselli is known for his work on wood panels where he combines unorthodox materials that are suspended in a thick layer of clear, epoxy resin. The materials used in these pieces range from field guides to marijuana leaves. In Tomaselli’s hands, they form a hybrid of subjects and cultural references. The artist tries to represent the transcendental and utopian capabilities available within art. His work comments on suburban in the 1960s and 70s and the quest for escapism. The images that are depicted relate to his California upbringing during those decades. Of his work, Tomaselli said, “it is my ultimate aim to seduce and transport the viewer into the space of these pictures while simultaneously revealing the mechanics of that seduction.”

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THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER MARCH 12, 2014

**LIVE AT HOME**

Focus: Mason and Elle Brown
Mason and Elle Brown
The Modern Museum of Art
Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
thefounders.org

**CONCERT**

The Positivists
2:00 p.m.
The Modern Museum of Art
Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
thefounders.org
Object of Design and Imagination

El Ultimo Grito, Garden Object
Rice Gallery
6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas
Through March 16, 2014

Rice Gallery in Houston is a university art space dedicated to original, site-specific installations. It is known for presenting large-scale environments that encourage direct interaction and exploration and promoting artists who use recycled and common materials. This January, the gallery has again pushed the limits of its space with an architectural marvel of an exhibition. Entitled Marvel of an exhibition, space with an architectural installation is by the husband and wife team of Roberto Feo and Rosario Hurtado, better known as El Ultimo Grito, which, roughly translated, means The Last Shout. According to the duo, their work is “a return to a kind of primitivism.” They hearken back to a time before machines that have dictated the path of modern architecture and design. Drawing upon their background in construction and craftsmanship, Hurtado and Feo use their hands to create art installations with readily available materials that are inexpensive and easy to manipulate. The formula has worked out well for them, and their pieces are now parts of the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This rugged, manually hued aesthetic is at the core of Hurtado and Feo’s artistic vision, an answer, they believe, to problem solving in the modern era. Instead of relying on the philosophy of a “finished object” and the look associated with such, the duo focuses on the imaginative yet functional aspects of construction, and its untidy odds and end. Although their completed pieces are professional enough in terms of fabrication, they still reveal uncertainty and intrigue. “We always try to reflect on what design is,” explained Feo. “For us, design is just the processes by which you materialize ideas. When you think about design in these terms, everything comes into design—philosophy, writing, everything—and the disciplines are just mediums within which you work. You no longer need to think about whether it’s art, design, a film or whatever.”

For the Rice Gallery installation, the husband and wife team constructed a forest of pillars and benches that are framed with timber and wrapped with packing materials, such as peanuts and bubble wrap. Instead of a rigid structure planned to every cut and connection, Hurtado and Feo allowed the installation to come together in a somewhat haphazard fashion, resulting in a loose interpretation of the vertical and horizontal forms they originally envisioned. The result not only creates functional lounge seating, but also draws undulating lines across the room. For inspiration, El Ultimo Grito looked to the soft images of hummingbirds in flight. Hurtado noted that this installation is not just a piece to look at, but a piece for people to use. The other-worldly forms provide more or less functional seating and tables, as though this is not just a garden in which to glory in the bizarre surrounds of nature, but one in which to indulge in a garden party with all of your friends. Visitors are also invited into a back room occupied by a fountain illuminated in an eerie blue light. The greatest strength of Garden Object is the way it welcomes people to use it. The seating and tables, at once strange and inviting, ask for those who enter to stay awhile, stretch out upon their bulbous forms, and lounge about on its surreal, nature-inspired forms. El Ultimo Grito’s Garden Object invites visitors to to stay awhile and lounge about on its surreal, nature-inspired forms.

MEGHAN HENDLEY-LOPEZ IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN HOUSTON, TEXAS.
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Gone Across Oklahoma

Oklahoma is a state that just keeps going. From the evacuated mining towns of Tar Creek, to the historic Dust Bowl departures on the Panhandle, to the memories coming under its rolling terrain, Oklahoma is a state of transition. From east to west, it is the third widest state in the lower 48, after Texas and Montana. Looking at a map of the USA, Oklahoma looks like a faded out portion of Texas from being simply too damn big. The Red River is the wiggy line along the bottom, separating it from Texas, but the rest is straight lines of longitude and latitude.

1 Initial Point
A close inspection of the state lines at the western edge Oklahoma’s panhandle shows that the 35 miles of its boundary shared with New Mexico do not line up with the otherwise straight 300 mile line dividing New Mexico from Texas. This is because the boundary between New Mexico and Texas was set along the 103rd Meridian, as located by a Spanish survey in 1819. When Oklahoma Territory’s panhandle was surveyed in 1890, using more modern and accurate methods, it was discovered that the 103rd Meridian was actually more than 2 miles east of where the early Spanish survey had depicted it. New Mexico was quite upset about this, as it meant that it had lost more than 600,000 acres of land to Texas. Over the years the state legislature has made demands for reparations, including monetary compensation, even as recently as 1991, though no action has been taken.

2 Panhandleland
The west side of the state is that curious cartographic appendage, a 165 mile-long, 35 mile-wide panhandle sitting atop Texas’ panhandle (which, being square, looks a lot less like a panhandle). These overlapping panhandles are similar terrain, blanketed by cattle, cotton, and wheat, irrigated by the Ogallala aquifer, and the panhandle. These overlapping panhandles, are as well, as a source of salt to extract. Cargill, the largest salt company in the country, only operates in the panhandle, on the 35-mile side of the border.

3 Kerr McGee Cimarron Plant
This plant, located in north central Oklahoma, once made plutonium pellets for nuclear reactor fuel rods. It is operated by U.S. Gypsum, a few major mines and plants for the material has been shut down. U.S. Gypsum was formed in 1890, as a joint venture between U.S. Steel and Kaiser Steel. As one of a network of Army Ammunition plants here over the years, such as Illinois’ Savanna Army Ammunition plant, Oklahoma has been a major producer of nuclear fuel rods. It is famous as the site where Karen Silkwood worked and was exposed to radiation that threatened her life. She alleged that what was said was evidence of corporate wrongdoing at the plant, including the possibility that she, an outside activist for workers at the plant, was being intentionally poisoned with radiation. In November 1974, she was on her way to a meeting with a reporter from the New York Times when her car veered off the road and crashed into a culvert, killing her. Suspicions of foul play abounded, and the plant was closed in 1983 about her support of Cargill. Kerr McGee closed its nuclear fuel plants in 1976, and this one was officially decontaminated and shuttered in 1994. Some of the buildings remain, but nobody works on-site.

4 Oklahoma Salt Works
Just after the panhandle connects to the pan of the Oklahoma, near the town of Freedom, is Cargill Salt’s solar production plant. It is one of only a few places in the country where salt is produced in large quantities by solar evaporation (most salt that is consumed is mined from large deep underground. Solar evaporation requires a large amount of surface area and water to make shrinkage and dewatering. The site, overlooking the Cimarron River is high enough to be used to make salt by evaporation.

5 Lone Mountain Waste
Remote from anywhere but the local a quality of northwestern Oklahoma, and an attraction for those that support the industries of away. It is not surprising then to find the Lone Mountain Landfill there, a hazardous waste site operating on a national scale. Operated by Clean Harbors LLC, the nation’s largest hazardous waste company, Lone Mountain treats materials on-site, including liquids and PCBs, to help stabilize them before they are buried in the expanded landfill. The site, near Little Sahara State Park and Waynoka, one of seven commercial chemical waste landfill sites operated around the country by the company. Two are in California, one each in Colorado, Utah, and North Dakota.

6 Southard Gypsum Mine and Plant
Oklahoma is sometimes ranked the largest domestic producer of gypsum, and this facility in the northwestern part of the state is one of a few major mines and plants for the material in the state. It is operated by U.S. Gypsum, the largest manufacturer of gypsum products in the country, which includes wallboard, joint compound, and ceiling panels, some of the most common materials used in building construction. Despite the nationwide reach of the company, it operates only eight mines and quarries in the USA.

7 Fort Sill
Fort Sill is a major artillery test and training base for the Army, located on 14,747 square miles (147 square miles) in southwestern Oklahoma. It was originally established in 1869, as an outpost to protect the local Plains Indians. In 1872, Apache Geronimo was among the hundreds of thousands of Americans imprisoned here, before being buried on the base. During World War II Japanese Americans were held here, as well as German POWs. Today at least 20,000 military and civilians work and train here every year.

8 Will Rogers Airport
Will Rogers Airport, the main airport for Oklahoma City, is the location for the Federal Aviation Administration’s traffic controllers. The FAA campus, called the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, is on the west side of that airport, and has training and technology programs as well, employing up to 2,000 people. The airport is named after the famous entertainer, who was from Oklahoma. The city also operates the Wiley Post Airport, Wiley Post and Will Rogers died together in 1935, in a plane crash.

9 Oklahoma City Memorial
Next door, Spirit Aerosystems makes wings and other parts for Boeing, in a former Rockwell aircraft plant. Next to it is a 5-mile-long pipeline once used to make benzene, now mostly used to make school buses.

10 Tulsa Aircraft Maintenance Center
Tulsa’s Airport is a major maintenance center for civilian aircraft. It is the site of a major, famous engine manufacturer, who was from Oklahoma. Universities’ aircraft maintenance and engineering center, likely the largest maintenance aviation facility in the country. It is the principal facility for the airline’s global operations, and employs 6,400, including 4,700 licensed aircraft mechanics. Farming and aviation equipment are sold.

11 Cushing Tank Farm
Though the refineries from its boom years in the 1940s and 50s are gone, the town of Cushing, northeast of Oklahoma City, is a major storage site for crude oil and gasoline. It is famous as the site where the largest tank farm in the world collapsed in 1990. It is famous as the site where the “cowboys and Indians” identity of Oklahoma. It is famous as the site where the largest totem pole in the world stands. It is famous as the site where the “cowboys and Indians” identity of Oklahoma.

12 McAlester Ammunition Plant
An active Army ammunition plant in southeastern Oklahoma, and the principal manufacturing location for the bombs dropped by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines in America’s wars. McAlester was established in 1954, as a site to produce ordnance. It has been renamed in 1992, following another incident in which a worker at the plant fell into dispair. Preservationists arrived in the 1990s, and the sculptures were repainted. It has now been repainted. It is famous as the site where the largest totem pole in the world. It is famous as the site where the “cowboys and Indians” identity of Oklahoma.

13 Tar Creek
The northeastern corner of Oklahoma was the site where the town of Tar Creek was built. In the 1950s, undermine the district, leading to surface collapse. Dusty piles of tailings contaminated with lead and cadmium in county. They are unsafe conditions, and proven health problems with residents in the area, including a high number of defects as the result of lead poisoning, eventually led to the evacuation of several towns. The federal government declared the region, the Tar Creek drainage area, a Superfund site in 1983 and 1984. 500 families were moved out in 2006. Homes and businesses were moved and torn down over the following years, a process which still continues. Some refuse to leave.

14 Interstate-Spanning McDonald’s
What has become of the largest McDonald’s in the world stands an interstate highway in the east of town, north of the Oklahoma City Public Library. The first restaurant to operate inside the building was the Glass House, an early chain specializing in sandwiches. The second store to open was also operated there for a while. McDonald’s has been the primary tenant occupying the 29,000 square foot space for a few decades, though it shares the space with other tenants, thus possibly disqualifying it from the “largest McDonald’s” claim. A McDonald’s in Orlando, Florida is said to have 25,000 square feet.

15 Totem Pole Park
An unusual park with a dozen brightly painted and sculpted totem poles. There is a monument to the first restaurant to operate inside the building. The site is the world’s largest restaurant chain, was at a nearby orphanage, who retired to this small farm property in 1937. He began work on the largest structure on-site, which he completed 11 years later when it was 50 feet tall. The farm was for sale during the depression, then was bought by the oil company, which was called “the largest totem pole in the world.” He donated it to the city, which, after much work at the site fell into disrepair. Preservationists arrived in the 1990s, and the sculptures were repainted. It has now been recognized as historic site. Though Ed Galloway said he made all these things just as something to do, it is now an officially recognized landmark in the “Cowboys and Indians” identity of Oklahoma.

16 Seqoyah Fuels Gore Plant
A uranium processing plant near the town of Gore, in eastern Oklahoma, originally operated by Kerr McGee. It opened in 1970, as one of only two non-government plants in the nation processing uranium hexafluoride for the nuclear industry. A depleted uranium metal factory operated for seven years on the site as well. The operation closed in 1988, as a result of a state law which still continues. Some refuse to leave. The site was the Glass House, an early chain specializing in sandwiches. It is famous as the site where the world’s largest totem pole in the world. It is famous as the site where the “cowboys and Indians” identity of Oklahoma.

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18 Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center
The Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, on the west side of the airport, is a training and technology center. It is a major maintenance center for civilian aircraft. It is the site of a major, famous engine manufacturer, who was from Oklahoma. The city also operates the Wiley Post Airport, Wiley Post and Will Rogers died together in 1935, in a plane crash.
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