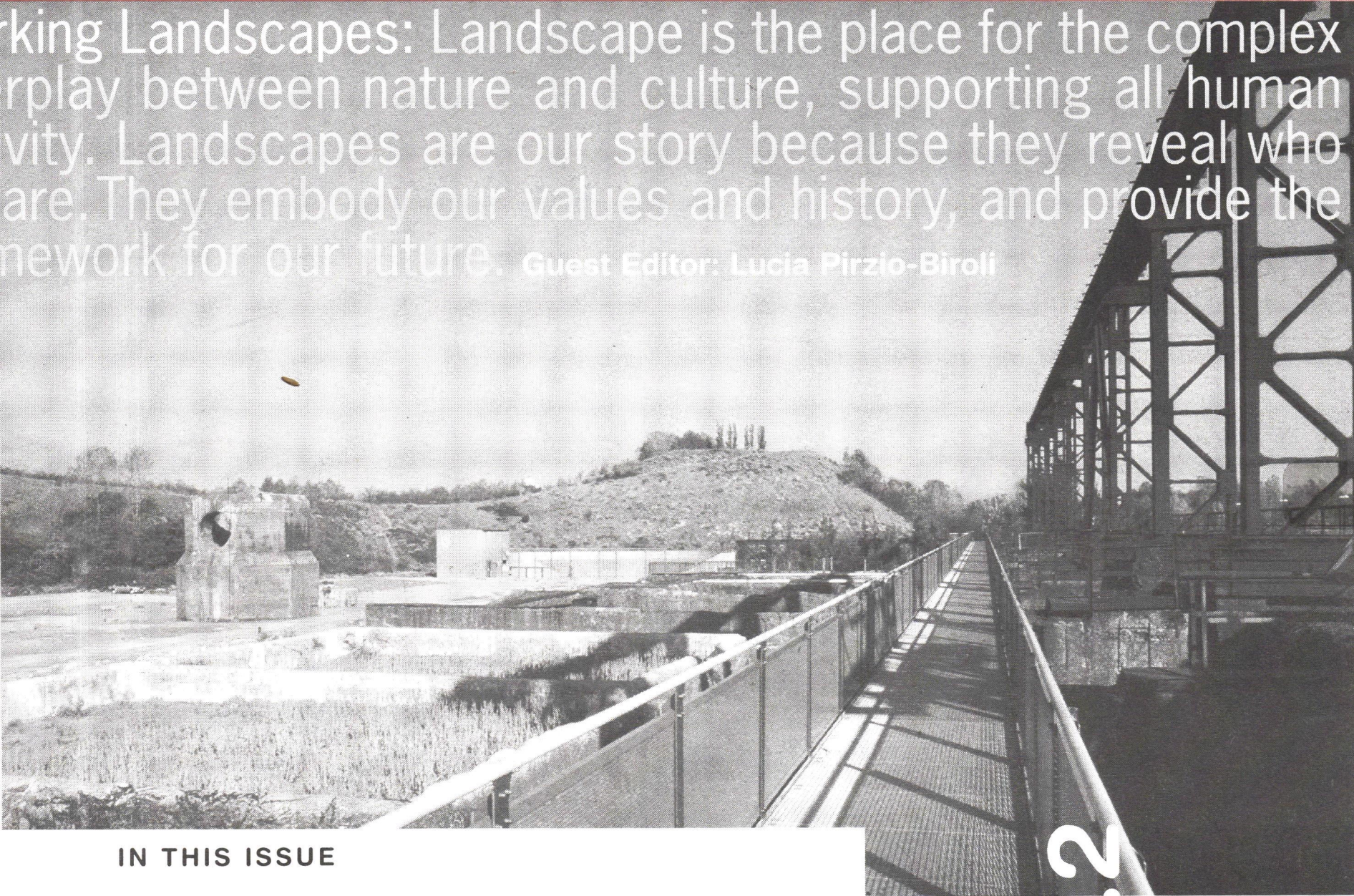


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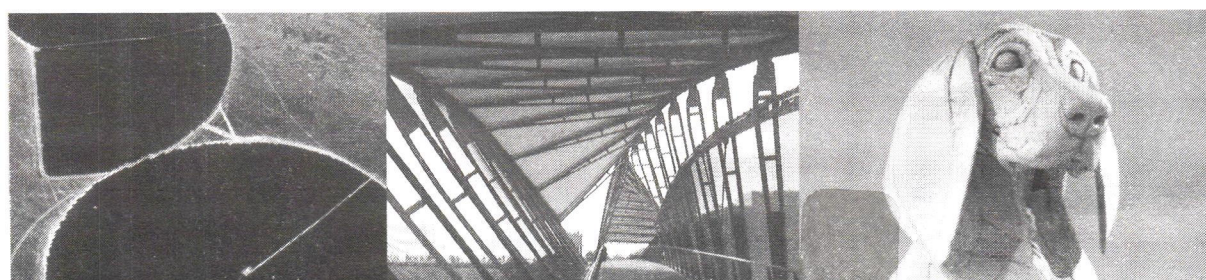
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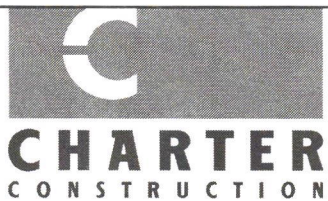


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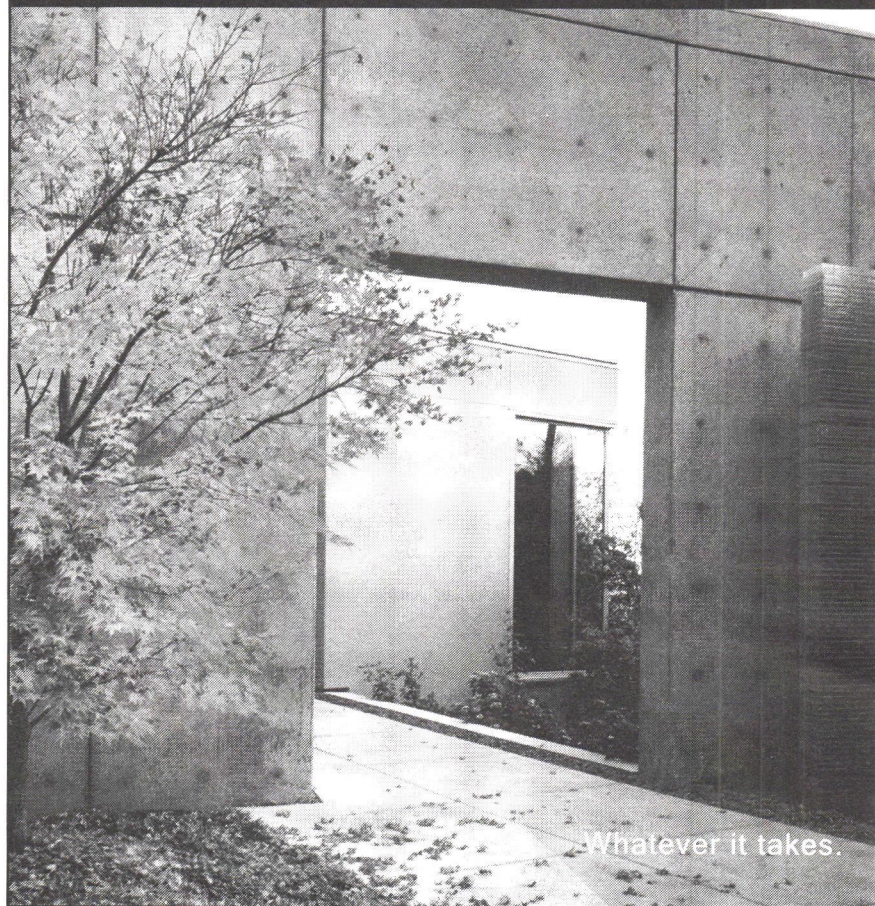


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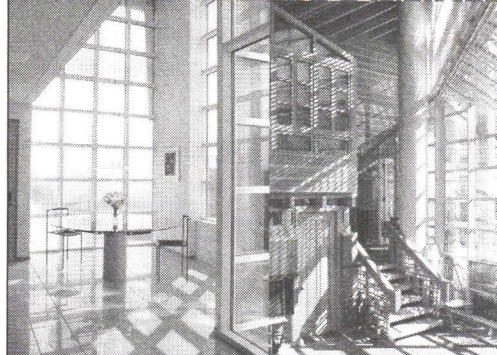
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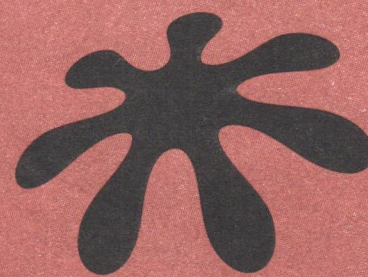
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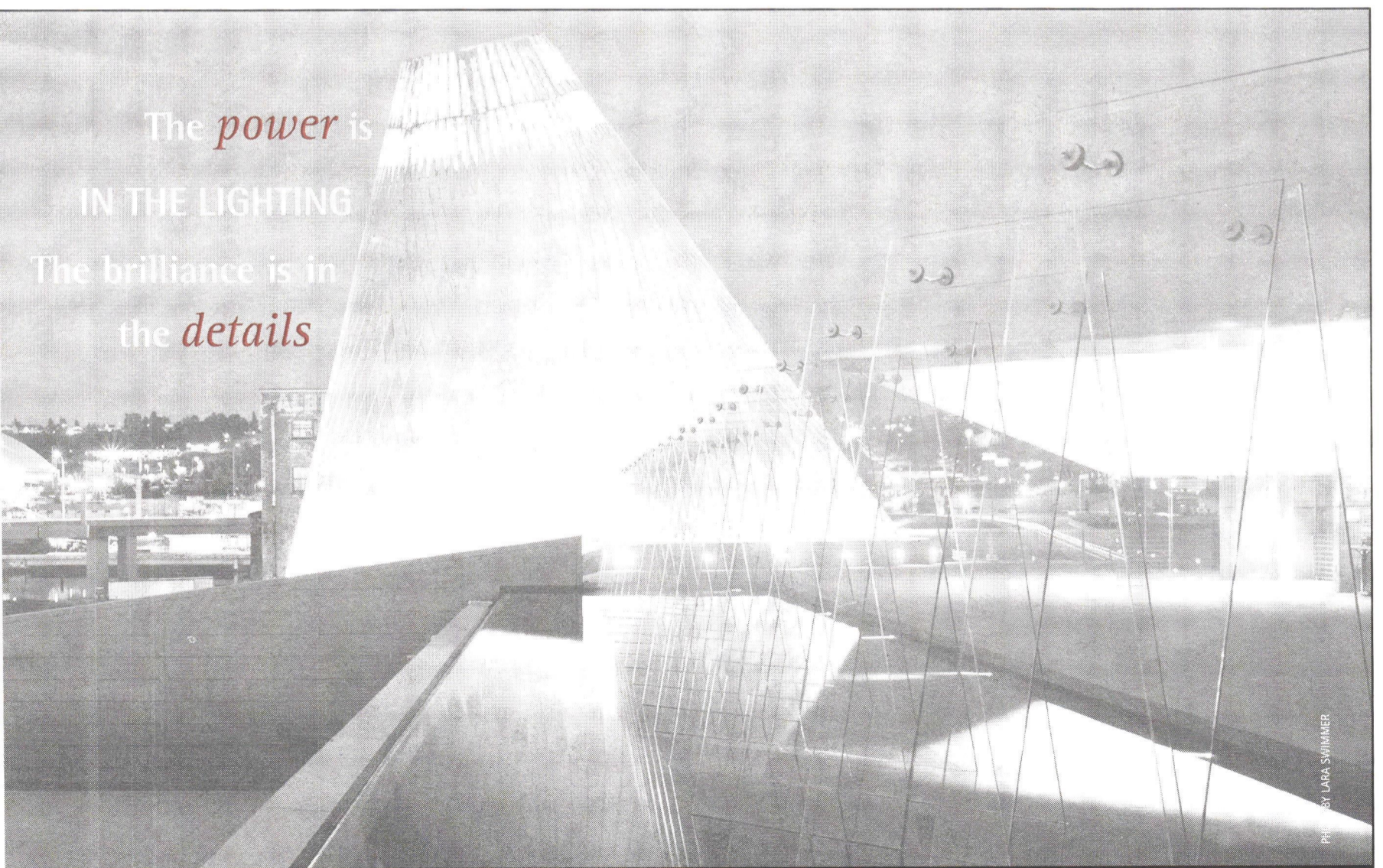
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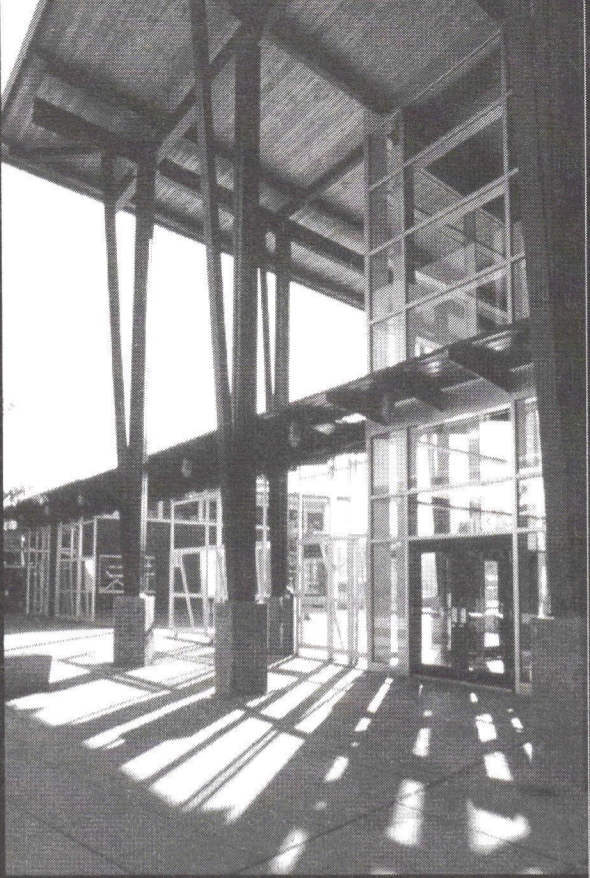
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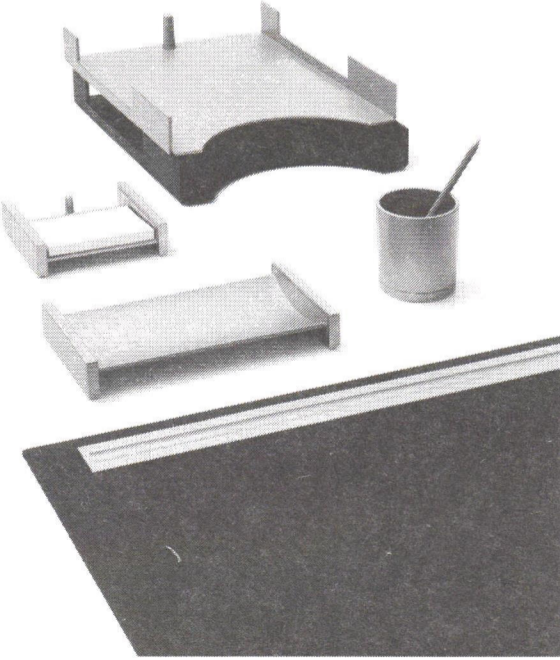


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VICTORIA REED

La Biennale di Venezia, 2004 The Venice Biennale is not a Short Take. Even old hand attendees exclaim to each other as they brush cheeks and kiss the air: “It’s so BIG!” The Arsenale, which houses the main exhibits, is 210 yards long (think 2 football fields) and filled with more than 200 models and drawings from 160 different firms in 48 countries. You literally cannot see the end of it. There’s also the Giardini della Biennale, ten minutes walk away, where individual countries exhibit in pavilions built for the Venice Art Biennale. The viewer has an impression of overwhelming abundance.

Part of the impression of going to the Biennale includes the impression of Venice itself—a city on the water. Venice, however, does not “meet” the water, Venice is *in* the water. Since inception, all commerce has been achieved either afoot or afloat. The internal combustion engine has never invaded here. So, even in a short visit, the visitor slowly becomes aware that the days are unfolding with almost no mechanical assault on the sensibilities except, perhaps, the low purr of the Vaporetto motor as the boat pulls away from the dock in the sunshine.

The 9th Biennale (held this year from September 12 to November 7) was curated by Kurt Forster—former director of the Getty Institute, former director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, and now at Bauhaus Universitat. He chose the theme “Metamorph,” intended to “reveal the profound shifts in architecture.” This suggests exotically morphed organic forms, flexing their variously adaptive and supportive skins. Forster’s theme, however, even divided into subsections – Transformation, Topography, Surface and Atmosphere – did not provide a framework for the viewer to go

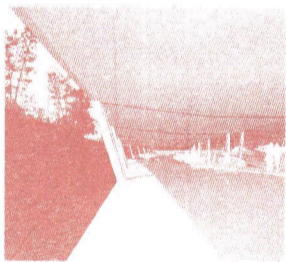
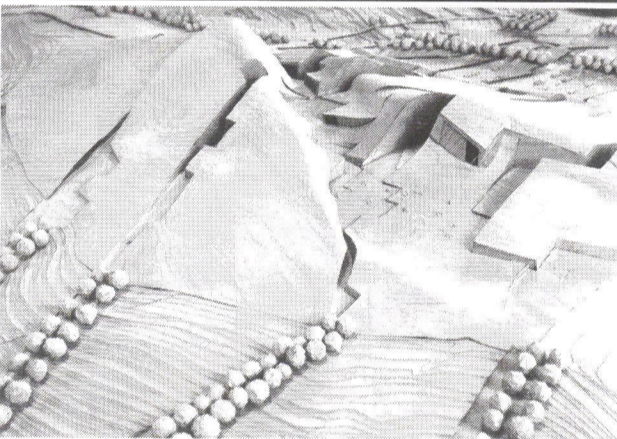
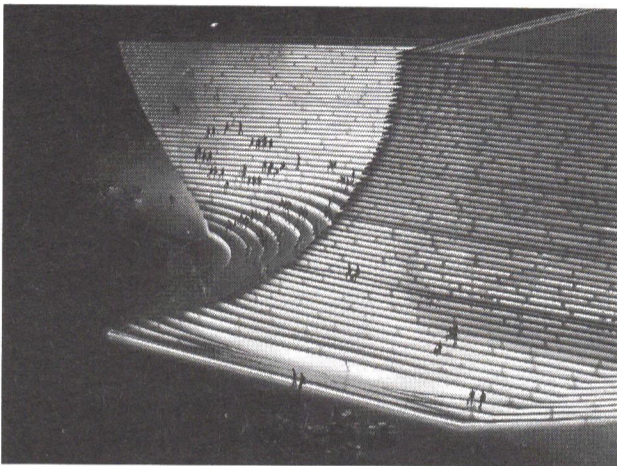
deeper into the subject. The inclination was to look at all of it and see what caught your eye. There were lots of interesting projects. But what you didn’t see was also telling: no work by Pritzker Laureate and architect of Seattle’s new central library, Rem Koolhaas/OMA. Neither was laureate Robert Venturi, designer of the Seattle Art Museum, represented; although his book *Learning from Las Vegas*, as well as Koolhaas’s *Delirious New York*, was featured in the flashy video introduction to the exhibits. This gives a hint at an additional ingredient which is often present in these events: politics. Some of the cognoscenti viewing the Biennale took to dubbing it “The Columbia Club.”

The European jury awarded the Golden Lion for most remarkable project to: SANAA (Kasuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa) for its “Twenty-first Century Museum of Contemporary Art” in Kanazawa, Japan. Other awards went to Foreign Office Architects Ltd of London for its Car Park project in Basel, Gunther Domenig for his Documentation Centre project in Nuremberg and Shuhei Endo for “Springtexture” in Shiga Prefecture, Japan.

The Best Pavilion award was given to the Belgians for an exhibit dealing with housing and urban sprawl—themes that were more a part of the exhibits in the pavilions than in the Arsenale. Graphic designer Bruce Mau curated the Danish Pavilion, with PLOT, the designers of the Stavanger Concert Hall, which won Best Concert Hall. The Japanese Pavilion was called Otaku and was made up of a series of vignettes featuring Japanese fantasy figures. Something different. The American Pavilion – which is a curiously retro Palladian style structure – was curated by Robert Ivy, editor of *Architectural Record*. The theme was “Transcending Type” and included installations by Reiser + Umemoto, George Yu, Predock Frane, Lewis, Tsurumake, Lewis, and Studio/Gang, each transcending types. You sort of had to be there.

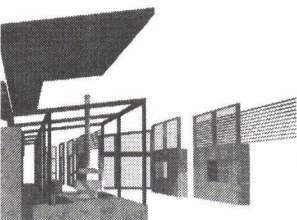
Omnipresent was Peter Eisenman exhibiting various aspects of his Ciudad de Cultura de Galicia project and his Rebstock Park Master Plan, as well as a special Episode which, as Forster described, “mediates on his work by offering a passage from Palladio and Terragni to his own work, like Piranesi contemplated his in the ruins of ancient Rome...” Eisenman was awarded a Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement. Surprise.

There was, really, much much more. If you can go to Venice in early September and indulge in a feast of architectural ideas in the quiet sunshine, don’t hesitate!



Award Winning Urban Designs by bracket Wayne Chevalier, Adin Dunning and Jeremy Fredrichs are three 1998 Washington State University graduates who work together as a design group called “bracket.” They have recently won national awards for their urban housing projects. Their U.03 was a winner in the Habitat for Humanity competition held by the South Eastern Center for Contemporary Art last summer. It’s an 1150 square foot, \$61,000 project, “modeled after a modern interpretation of Usonian houses.” The project incorporates pre-fabricated modules and materials intended to weather naturally, keeping costs low in materials and installation. This project was also chosen by the Smithsonian National Building Museum for their *Affordable Housing: Building an American Asset* exhibition last year. The local chapter of Habitat for Humanity hopes to build U.03 if it is successful in finding an appropriate site and funding.

This fall bracket was also awarded a “Project of Merit” citation, in the City of Portland’s international Living Smart competition. This international competition, sponsored by the City of Portland Bureau of Development Services, sought designs for affordable single-family housing on narrow, 25-foot lots—a typical condition in Northeast Portland. The bracket 04.03 project follows similar ideas as the U.03 featuring a long spine carrying modular elements. 04.03 also



includes passive solar heating and radiant heat in the concrete slab. The Portland competition called for a contextual response which bracket reflected both in the materiality of the project, and in an awareness throughout the design of the pedestrian experience while walking the neighborhood.

The Portland Bureau of Development Services will publish a full-color monograph of the best designs which it plans to distribute “across North America.” The City of Portland also plans to “implement process incentives or other mechanisms that will make the designs desirable and functional for builders.”

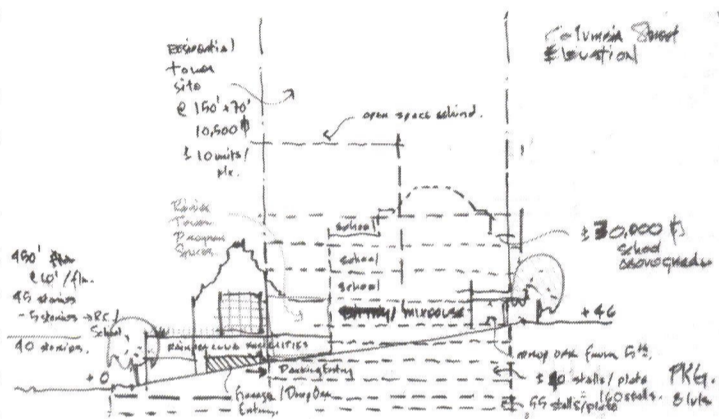
Congratulations to bracket for their contributions to design! Information about the Living Smart competition and winners is available at www.livingsmartpdx.com. For more information about bracket, visit www.studiobacket.com.

Victoria Reed is the former managing editor of ARCADE and a contributor to Short Takes.

GREG BISHOP

First United Methodist Church Design Charette Cities must dynamically evolve and change in response to the modern world, yet there is an underlying need for city dwellers to sense continuity and history in their urban environment. These are the forces at play in downtown Seattle at the site of the First United Methodist Church (FUMC).

Built in 1907, the FUMC is the oldest remaining house of worship in downtown Seattle. Faced with changing downtown demographics, a declining membership and the significant cost of maintaining and upgrading the seismically damaged structure, the church’s congregation is seeking to unburden themselves of their historically significant structure. With the price of downtown real estate soaring, the FUMC, in conjunction with the adjoining Rainier Club, has received approval from the Seattle Department of Design, Planning and Development to demolish the existing sanctuary and in its place build a new 35 to 36-story office tower with new Church facilities located in the base of the tower. (See articles in *ARCADE*, Spring 2004; *Seattle P-I*, July 29, 2004; and *The Seattle Times*, July 28, 2004.)



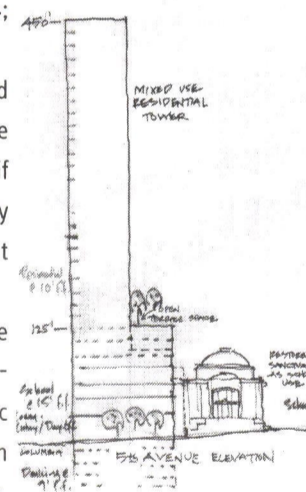
Historic Seattle, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Friends of First United Methodist Church have appealed the Master Use Permit decision and the adequacy of the environmental documents supporting that decision. The FUMC has indicated that it’s willing to consider a “land swap” if it were able to recoup sufficient value from the sale of its development rights to finance the construction of a new facility at another location downtown. Therefore, the challenge is finding a development scheme that can generate sufficient value to meet the relocation price of the church’s congregation.

On September 18, 2004, Historic Seattle convened a four-hour design charrette, inviting a professionally diverse group of architects, designers, engineers, developers and preservationists, to explore and illustrate development strategies to counter the church’s argument that there are no economically viable alternatives to tearing down the historic structure. The charrette generated many proposals for the site. There was strong consensus that the sanctuary is an important asset to the city, and that any development should maximize its importance as a key element on the block. Similarly, the group agreed that it would be useful to partner the preservation goals of the sanctuary with the goals of the adjoining Rainier Club. The Club is interested in expanding its facilities as well as gaining access to additional parking. By leveraging the preservation credits and development rights of the two sites, a developer could maximize the potential of the block and meet the needs of both the Rainier Club and the sanctuary.

Recognizing the demand for increased family oriented housing downtown, one group proposed a mixed-use project with a 400-student K-8 grade school as its centerpiece. The main volume of the sanctuary could serve as the focal point of the school while also functioning as its assembly and auditorium space. A slender 450-foot tall tower to the south would feature 400 residential units, retail at grade along Columbia Street, and related school classrooms and administrative space on the levels adjacent to the sanctuary.

Another proposal featured a mixed-use tower development comprising a boutique hotel at grade and luxury condominiums above. The sanctuary could function semi-publicly as a grand lobby or as a public gathering space with small shops and cafes surrounding the central volume. The central volume could be a setting for music and performance arts.

These were two proposals among many generated at the charrette. Hopefully they will serve as a springboard for further community involvement in a process to preserve the sanctuary and to guide it to a useful new role in our evolving modern city.



Note: On September 24 the City of Seattle Hearing Examiner dismissed an appeal of the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement for the project. For more information: www.friendsoffumc.org *Greg Bishop is a designer living and practicing in Seattle.*

Novartis car park, Basel, Switzerland. Eisenman Architects. Ciudad de Cultura de Galicia. Santiago de Compostela, Spain. 1999. In progress. Novartis credit. All images courtesy of La Biennale di Venezia.

Pride and Prejudice: Minoru Yamasaki's Seattle Legacy

SHERI OLSON

To get a glimpse of how magical Minoru Yamasaki's Federal Science Pavilion appeared when it opened in 1962, rent *It Happened at the World's Fair* and watch Elvis Presley cavort along its dazzling white arcades. Proclaimed "a declaration of independence from the machine age monotony of so much of modern architecture," it was also Yamasaki's triumphal return to the city that had treated him so poorly in the past. Born in Seattle in 1912, he spent his childhood in a cold-water tenement less than two miles from the future fairgrounds. The hardship and prejudice he experienced as a Nisei – a second-generation Japanese – instilled in him a deep-seated desire to succeed. "The man is all steel, tempered by the anti-Nisei discrimination," wrote *Time* magazine in a January 1963 cover story. Throughout his life, Seattle played a key role in Yamasaki's personal and professional development, and it remains an important site of his architectural legacy.

In his autobiographical monograph, *A Life in Architecture*, Yamasaki recounts in detail the racial discrimination that led him and eventually his family to leave the Pacific Northwest. One of his earliest memories was his mother weeping after a cruel encounter on a bus with a white woman. "A word that I heard over and over again whenever there was an incident or a slight was *shikataganai*, which means 'it can't be helped,'" recalled Yamasaki.

A visit from his uncle Koken Ito, a recent architectural graduate from the University of California at Berkeley, sparked Yamasaki's interest in the profession and presented a way out of poverty. In 1930, after graduating with honors from Garfield High School, he enrolled at the University of Washington (UW) and breezed through his freshman year, only to come close to flunking the sophomore year drawing and sculpture classes required for an architecture degree. He asked a much admired architecture professor, Lionel Pries, if he should switch to engineering: "He encouraged me with the prediction that I would become one of the best architects ever to graduate from the school."

Beyond bolstering Yamasaki's confidence, Pries influenced Yamasaki with his design methodology that combined modern and traditional elements. "Pries taught that richness is not a bad thing," says Grant Hildebrand, an architecture professor at UW and an original member of Yamasaki's World Trade Center team. The campus's Collegiate Gothic buildings, designed by Bebb and Gould, were Yamasaki's first exposure to the style he evoked in later work, but Hildebrand believes that Seattle's plethora of white terra-cotta buildings may have had more of an impact on the young architect's aesthetic sensibility.

To put himself through college, Yamasaki worked in Alaskan salmon canneries during summers. The brutal, low-paying work was the only he could find owing to the Depression and to bigotry, and it left an indelible mark on him. In a 1982 interview he said, "When I looked at the older men (working in the cannery) destined to live out their lives in such uncompromising and personally degrading circumstances, I became all the more determined not to let that be the pattern into which my life would fall." The lesson he took from this experience was twofold: life without beauty was not worth living, and, more importantly, the same lowly circumstance could await him if he did not work hard to rise above it.

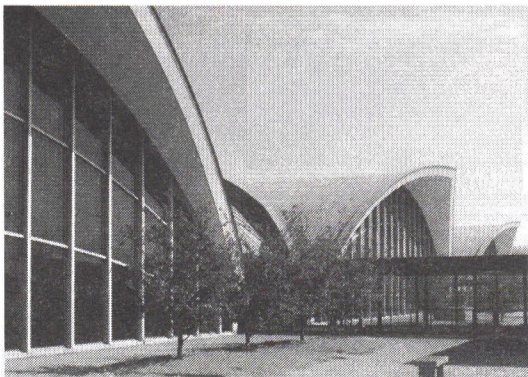
Yamasaki suffered what he described as a blatant act of racial discrimination at UW. In 1933, the year he, as the student with the highest grades, would have won a scholarship to attend the Society of Beaux-Arts in Paris, the program was terminated. Officially this was because of the Depression, but Yamasaki felt the school did not want to see an Asian-American receive the scholarship. "Even in the terrible depression year of 1932, the school has somehow managed to send three students to Europe." When a top engineering student (a Japanese-American) at UW was passed over for a job at a local company in favor of lower-ranking white students Yamasaki decided to leave Seattle.

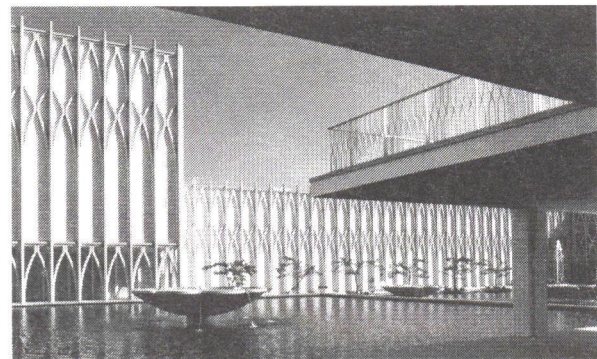
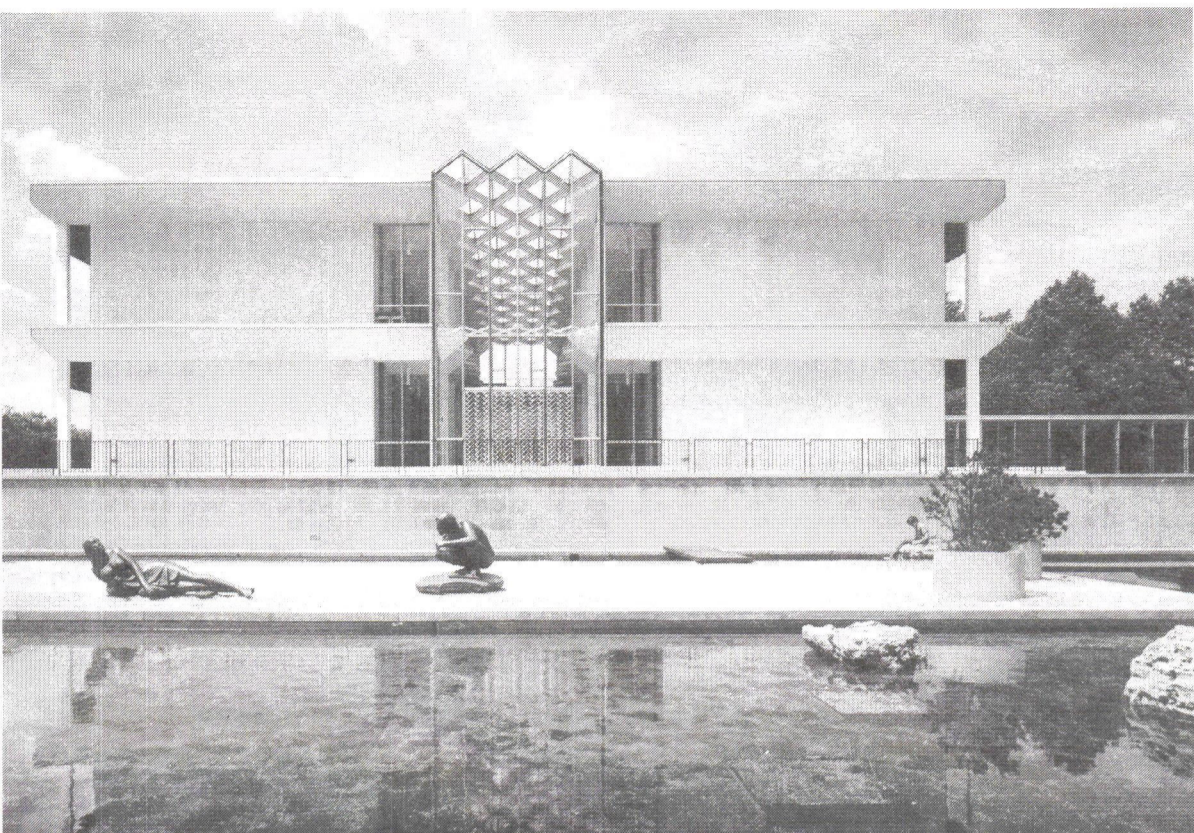
Yamasaki's early career

He arrived in New York City in 1934 at the age of twenty-two, but there were no architectural jobs available. Instead, he packed dishes at a Japanese importing firm while studying for his master of architecture degree at New York University (1934–35). His first job at an architecture firm was with Githens & Keally – library specialists – before moving on to Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the designers of the Empire State Building. This was followed by a year with Harrison, Foulhoux & Abramovitz, designers of Rockefeller Center, and then a year with industrial designer Raymond Loewy.

A job as the chief designer for Smith, Hinchman & Grylls brought him to Detroit in 1945, where he lived for the rest of his life. In 1949, two of his former associates at that firm, Joseph Leinweber and George Hellmuth, asked him to join them in a partnership on a large public housing project in St. Louis that one of them had obtained as a friend of the mayor. Long before Pruitt-Igoe's infamous 1972 demolition, Yamasaki expressed doubt about the benefits of high-rise public housing in a series of published debates with housing reformer Catherine Bauer. "Bauer criticized Yamasaki less for his architectural views than for his politics; he was too willing to give in to prevailing profit-motivated redevelopment and housing policy," wrote Katharine Bristol in *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*.

The office also had its successes. Commissioned around the same time as Pruitt-Igoe, the Lambert–St. Louis Municipal Air Terminal won the American Institute of Architects' first Honor Award in 1956. It was notable for creating an urban vestibule in the spirit of Grand Central Station under three thin-shell concrete barrel vaults. The strain associated





with the project and commuting between Detroit and St. Louis landed Yamasaki in the hospital in 1953, near death from bleeding ulcers. After his recovery, the office split and the St. Louis firm became Hellmuth Obata Kassabaum (HOK) while Yamasaki continued in Detroit with Leinweber until 1959, when he organized his own firm, Yamasaki & Associates.

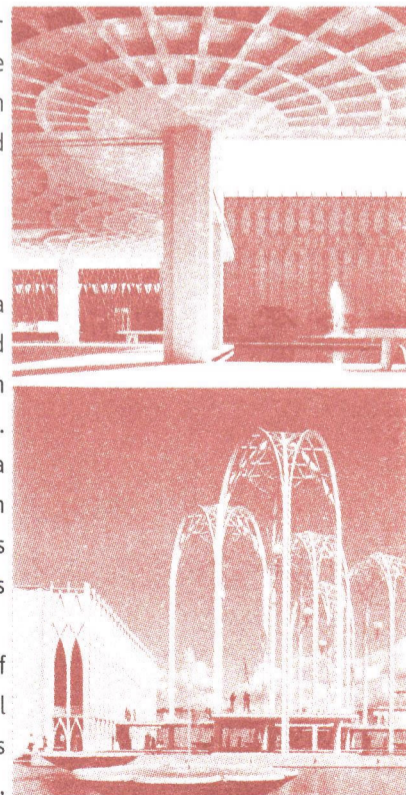
The U.S. Consulate in Kobe, Japan, was one of Yamasaki's first commissions after his recovery and was a major turning point in the development of his increasingly decorative style. The building appears less important in his body of work (it is not among the 29 projects in his monograph) than the opportunity it presented to travel around the globe. From Japanese gardens Yamasaki drew the planning principles he applied to projects for the remainder of his life. "He decided to create buildings that provided a series of sensory impressions – an emotional as well as physical path – and a sense of surprise," wrote Sharon Mizota in "Minoru Yamasaki: Architect of the American Dream." But it was the lessons that he gained from visits to the Doges Palace at the Piazza San Marco in Venice and the Taj Mahal in Agra that were the beginning of an "increasingly decorative style that exploited structure for aesthetics."

The first project Yamasaki designed after his travels, McGregor Center at Detroit's Wayne State University, featured a white marble building on a platform. A folded concrete slab roof cast an intricate silhouette against the sky. The projects that followed in the next few years were increasingly elaborate in the use of grille-work (Reynolds Metals Regional Sales Office, Southfield, Michigan), fanciful silhouettes (College of Education, Wayne State), and delicate precast concrete panels (Michigan Consolidated Gas Company, Detroit). The perceived delicacy of his facades offended the more masculine sensibilities of the modernist mainstream. "Just when you want strength it isn't there," decried Philip Johnson (ironically enough) in the *Time* cover story. In the same article Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill dismissed Yamasaki: "He was an architect but now he's a decorator."

Federal Science Pavilion, Seattle World's Fair

The design of the Federal Science Pavilion thrust this professional debate into the public spotlight and made Yamasaki a household name. Yamasaki's ties to Seattle were weak at this point, his parents having left after Pearl Harbor to avoid forced relocation to an internment camp. It was a UW classmate, Perry Johansen of Naramore Bain Brady Johanson (NBBJ), who invited him to join the Fair's Design Standards Advisory Board in 1957 during its initial planning stages. Soon afterward, Russia's launch of Sputnik inspired its space-race theme, and the federal government committed a whopping \$9 million for exhibits in a science-oriented pavilion. Yamasaki (in association with NBBJ) won a competition to design the fair's \$3.5 million centerpiece on the choicest site. The prestigious commission led to a position on UW's Board of Regents' Architectural Advisory Commission and honor as alumnus of the year in 1960. "He is the first of his race and one of the youngest men to receive the title," wrote *The Seattle Times*. Clearly times had changed.

The pavilion demonstrates the limits of Seattle's architectural impact on Yamasaki's design philosophy. Instead of taking advantage of the spectacular water and mountains views, he clustered five windowless buildings around a central courtyard with flower-shaped fountains floating in a pool. In contrast to the distinctively regional style that several of his classmates were key in developing, which featured a strong connection between the natural and man-made worlds, Yamasaki turned his building inward instead of out, creating "a serene oasis where visitors could escape the hurly-burly of the fair." The buildings were clad in precast, prestressed concrete panels (the first large-scale use beyond industrial buildings and bridges) with inset patterns of vaguely Moorish filigree. Quartz aggregate added an exotic sparkle to the exposed concrete. The five slender concrete Gothic arches that stand at the entrance to the pavilion also mark the beginning of Yamasaki's long association with the structural engineer whom he trusted most and would subsequently rely on more than any other: John Skilling. Although recommended by NBBJ, Yamasaki was skeptical that a local engineer could achieve the delicacy that he wanted for the 101-foot arches. Skilling came back with calculations that the stilt-like legs could be made even thinner than expected. "It's the first time an engineer did me one better," said Yamasaki.



IBM signals a change in Yamasaki's work toward a more minimal, less decorative style

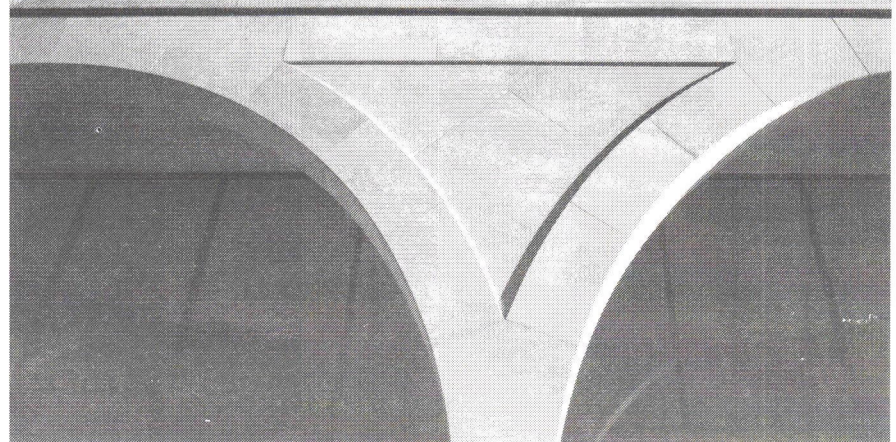
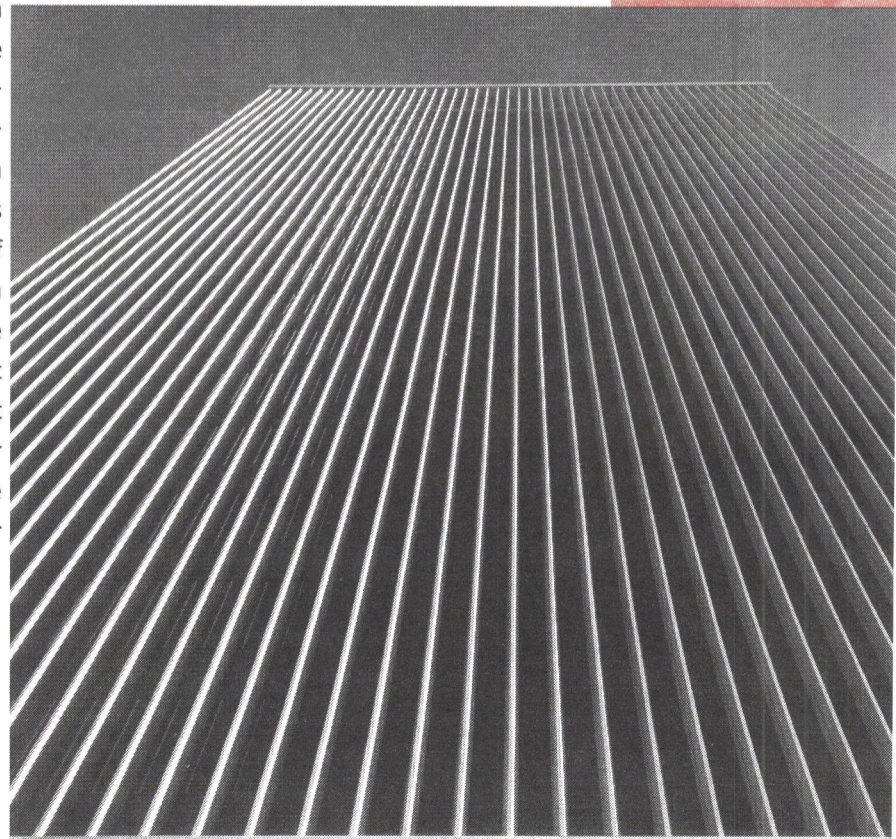
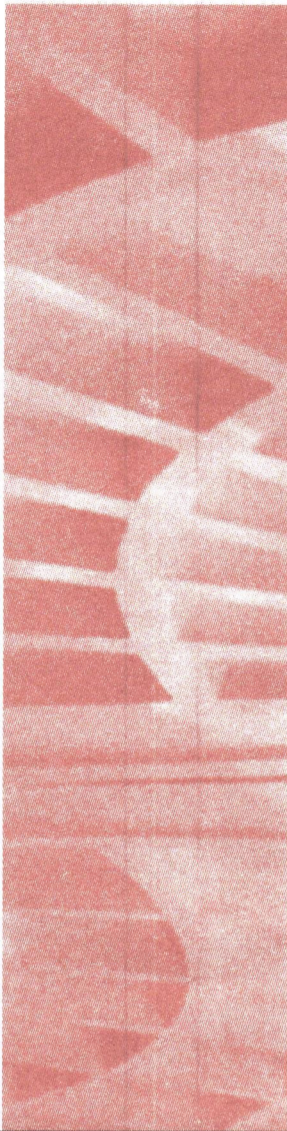
By the Fair's end in 1964, the popular pavilion outdrew all other attractions with 6.7 million visitors, but it was also a lightning rod for criticism. "Yama mass-produced a facade in the Gothic idiom but without the Gothic logic. At best, the building is mere artistic caprice," criticized I. M. Pei. One local architect wondered, "what are those arches, looking like a bombed-out Coventry Cathedral, doing in a science center?" The project had well-placed fans too. British-born journalist Alistair Cooke gushed, "It is as if Venice has just been built." John Canaday of the *New York Times* claimed, "Surely it must join the briefest list of the most beautiful structures of recent decades." But it was Guy Tozzoli, sent to Seattle by Robert Moses to scout ideas for New York's 1964 World's Fair and uncharacteristically moved by the beauty of the Science Pavilion, for whom Yamasaki's work had lasting consequences. According to James Glanz and Eric Lipton's *City in the Sky*, "He found out the name of the architect who had brought him to a stop... he'd never heard of him before." As the World Trade Department director at the Port Authority, Tozzoli "gave no specific orders to short-list Yamasaki but he did dump the 'genius committee' of Rockefeller-preferred architects."

IBM Office Building

The same year that Yamasaki won the World Trade Center project, he received the commission to design the \$8.5 million IBM Office Building in Seattle. NBBJ was the master planner for the Metropolitan Tract (and was the associate architect for IBM), 10 downtown acres owned by UW and developed by Unico Properties. The 20-story building sits above a sunken plaza much like New York City's Rockefeller Center (*sans* ice-skating rink), marking the entrance to the business district from the freeway. IBM signals a change in Yamasaki's work toward a more minimal, less decorative style, perhaps in response to the expediency required in office building design, to the heated criticism from other architects, or to his own evolving aesthetic sensibilities. "For several years, as a result of the influences I received during my trips around the world, I tended to over-design and over-decorate some of our buildings," wrote Yamasaki.

Architectural Record hailed IBM as "notable in the evolution of American skyscrapers. For the reappearance of the 'bearing wall' in new guise – now composed of structural members rather than masonry – is the newest trend in tall building design." The exterior walls are high-strength steel pipes encased in precast panels that create deep reveals on either side of the narrow windows. "The slender column units and the one-foot-nine-inch windows between them emphasize the verticality of the design while again effectively countering any sensation of acrophobia," explained Yamasaki. On the exterior the slender concrete ribs create an attenuated upward sweep rising from a two-story base of steel arches clad in marble.

Inside, the 115-foot-square building has a clear span from the elevator core to the exterior wall, eliminating the need for interior columns. "The importance of this development is obvious: where this new freedom will lead architecture is anybody's guess," concluded *Record*. Yamasaki, with his usual offhand modesty, described IBM as "a step towards the World Trade Center." Local newspapers made much of this connection after the destruction of the twin towers in 2001, but according to structural engineer Jon Magnuson, the similarities are overstated: "While the clear span concept may be similar, the wind forces are resisted in a very different way. On IBM the core resists wind loads and the exterior carries only gravity loads. At the World Trade Center, the reverse was true; lateral loads were carried by the exterior walls and the core carried only gravity loads."





Rainier Bank Tower

Diagonally across the intersection of University and Fifth Avenue from the IBM Building is Yamasaki's last Seattle commission, the Rainier Bank Tower, also part of the Metropolitan Tract owned by UW. Eight years had passed since the completion of IBM, and Yamasaki, consumed by the World Trade Center, had slowly withdrawn from Seattle, resigning from the UW's advisory board in 1965. His workload had grown dramatically, putting pressure on his personal life and resulting in a divorce (the first of three) and another life-threatening ulcer attack.

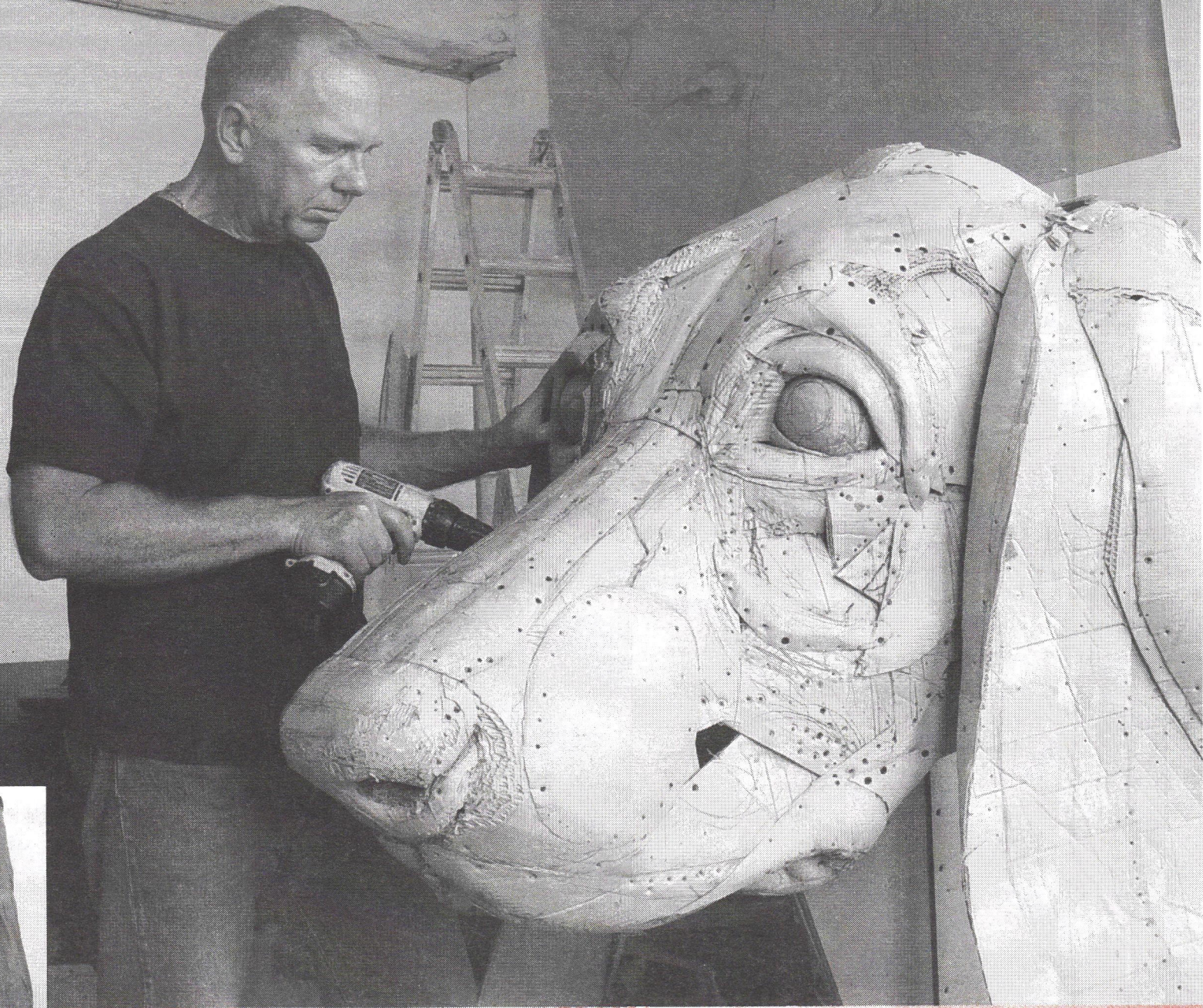
Once the golden boy, Yamasaki returned to Seattle somewhat tarnished from the criticism of the twin towers and the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe to face another controversial project. It began with a bitter fight by preservationists to save the 1908–15 White-Henry-Stuart Building on the block to be occupied by Rainier Tower. Yamasaki's proposed design further divided both the architectural profession and the community: a 32-story tower balanced on a 12-story windowless pedestal that narrows to a width of 68 feet at the street, with the remainder of the site given over to a four-story complex of shops and restaurants topped with a landscaped roof. The controversial design nonetheless assured a unique identity for the main tenant, Rainier Bank, at a time when several banks were constructing headquarters downtown.

One Seattle daily ran a front-page story explaining the engineering principles under the headline, "A Towering Question." When an engineer from Skilling, Helle, Christiansen & Robertson explained, "The structure has the stability of a wine glass," another newspaper columnist quipped that stems of wine glasses "snapped like rock candy." At the same time, when New Yorker Paul Goldberger deigned to criticize the building ("We may know that the building will not fall down but that knowledge is not enough to make walking past it comfortable"), Seattleites leapt to its defense. Since then the tower has regularly appeared in city guides as a top architectural attraction.

Yamasaki's Seattle legacy

After the destruction of the World Trade Center, Seattle newspapers rushed to claim Yamasaki as one of the city's own. For Yamasaki, who died in 1986, the connection to his hometown was more tenuous. He had never opened an office or spent much time there. "He was fond of Seattle but he was not a Pacific Northwest figure; he was a cosmopolitan man," explains Grant Hildebrand. Yet while Yamasaki had commissions across the country and around the world, Seattle, with three projects, has more than most cities. Yamasaki (who was donating his time and design services to UW) resigned from his only other Seattle commission, a law school and library for the university, in protest over the off-campus site.

Yamasaki's completed work takes on added significance with the depletion of his archive, most of it thrown out by his widow after no library would take it. "The buildings were to be our legacy, we thought they would last forever" says Henry Guthard, one of the firm's founding members and current vice-president of Minoru Yamasaki Associates in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Today, the Science Pavilion has new life as a children's museum, but it required alteration to accommodate the new use. There are also plans for major renovations to both the IBM Building and the Rainier Tower. Unico proposed a new one-story building to replace IBM's lifeless sunken plaza and plans to demolish the mall at the base of the Rainier Tower and build new shops. Although the tower is fully leased, the inward-focused mall has been plagued by vacancies and turnover. Ironically, the economic recession that followed September 11, 2001, gave Yamasaki's original designs a temporary reprieve; construction will not start until the company lands a major tenant. The same free market forces that threaten Yamasaki's legacy shaped his career. He harnessed his own personal ambition to meet the demands of his clients and it took him from gutting fish to the most prestigious architectural commission in the world. As one critic wrote, "Yamasaki's architectural vision for the Towers was an act of hyperbolic faith in the potential of American society." His work in Seattle is a record of that faith. *Sheri Olson, FAIA, is Architectural Record's Seattle-based contributing editor and served as the architecture critic for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer from 2001 to 2004. Her most recent books include Miller/Hull: Architects of the Pacific Northwest (Princeton Architectural Press, 2001) and Cutler Anderson Architects (Rockport Publishers, 2004).* This article first appeared in the Fall 2004 issue of *Docomomo* and was presented at the VIIIth International Docomomo Conference in New York, September 2004.



Northwest Perspectives:

Scott Fife

TACOMA ART MUSEUM | NOVEMBER 2 - 2003

This exhibit features a 25-year survey of sculptor Scott Fife's work.
I recently spoke with Scott about art, architecture, and Leroy the puppy.

CAROL BOLT

What do you see as the connection between your studio work and being an architect? Although I'm educated as an architect, studio art is my focus. I create structures that I build or sculpt from; it's like framing, especially in my furniture pieces.

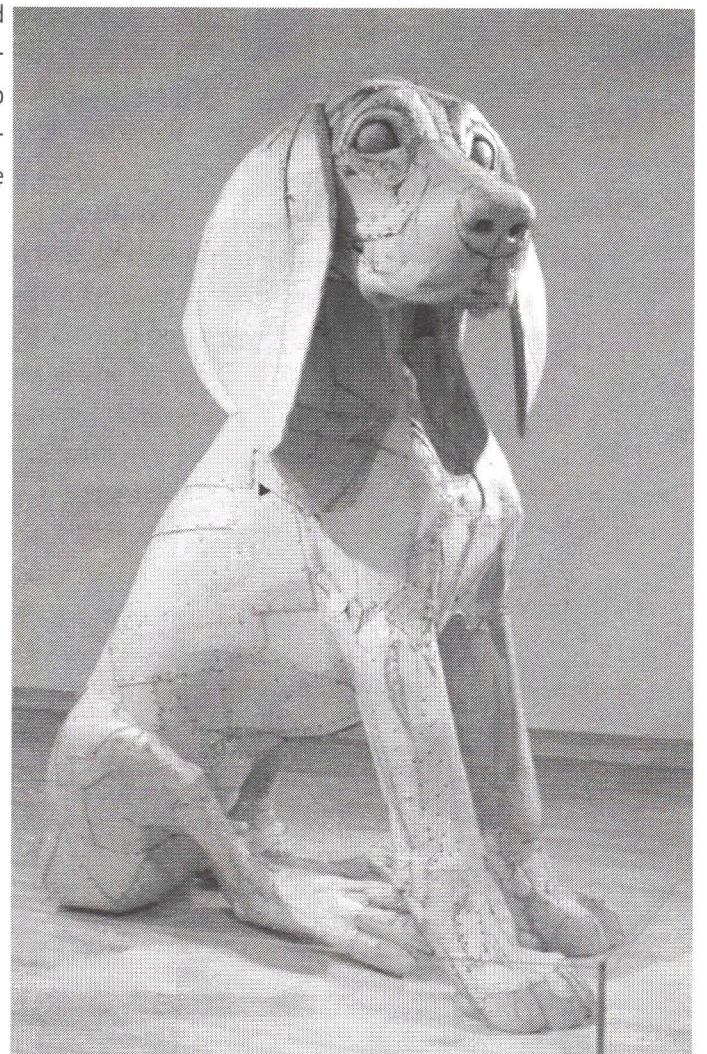
TAM's description in the gallery suggests Pop Art as an influence. Is there a piece that has stuck with you over time? I was working in a student gallery at Cranbrook and as I was cleaning an Andy Warhol silkscreen of flowers, I damaged the piece. I think it was an FTD show. It amused me in a sense that the work was perceived as being cool and irreverent and I had scrubbed a part of the petal off.

If you were going to give someone a tour of the Northwest, what would you take them to see? Of course there's the new downtown library, Smith Tower, and there are a lot of modernist buildings in the Eastlake neighborhood. It's an interesting pocket that still retains a sense of the water industry and commerce. Then there's the harbor itself: the container court, the big boxes, the colors, the cranes, they're all very sculptural—the names, the port, the exchanging of goods. It makes this place so vital. The Space Needle may be old-hat but it still has significance.

Why did you choose the architect Mies van der Rohe to create a bust of? I was drawn to his face. The physicality of it. The way it looked. As the father of Modernism he was a pivotal figure who made a tremendous impact on architecture. He coined the term "less is more," which may have been a tongue-in-cheek statement.

Tell me about creating *Leroy the Big Pup*. My process is very intuitive... looking for the cardboard piece that fits. For a few days it's all about rectangles and then, for a brief moment, it's about an ellipse. Then I use the pieces to make a big dog; I can visualize it but can't write down the rules. The pieces seem rational but they're really so intuitive. I'm trying to capture something, something about the eyes or the nose... I like the physical nature of building sculpture—it seems very old-fashioned and traditional. The material I use is friendly and flexible, and there's a glow from within it. I like the aspect of the low-tech tools I use to make my work. In the beginning I used an X-acto knife, masking tape and glue, and now I use a screwgun. It's like a tribal ritual, working with my hands. Oftentimes, when people see my work they're taken back to places in their lives where they remember pasting things together and understanding the process. They feel comfortable looking at it, and even though they can intellectualize the meaning, it's approachable; it's a big dog!

Is Leroy the name of your dog? Yes. As a puppy I would bring him to the studio and he would play, curl up, sleep, and demand things. At first I'd bring him in a cardboard box, then he had to be carried up the stairs, and then eventually he ran up the stairs, all within few a months. It's fascinating how they grow and the awkwardness associated with that—the changes in their proportions in one week are astounding! *Carol Bolt is an artist, writer and co-owner of Platform Gallery in Seattle. Please visit www.platformgallery.com to read the complete conversation with Scott Fife, and see his exhibit at Platform in February 2005.*





Massive Change VANCOUVER ART GALLERY 10.02.04 - 01.03.05

Opening Nights, Creative Heights & Human Rights

MARI FUJITA + OLIVER NEUMANN

The approach to the *Massive Change: The Future of Global Design* exhibition is littered with lawn signs asking: What do parasites, satellites & gigabytes have in common? What do robots, teapots & sunspots have in common? Like the refrain in a ballad, a set of interspersed posters declares: "It's not about the world of design. It's about the design of the world." Offered not as a response but as a creed, the declaration simultaneously describes a worldview and an agenda, a context and a program.

Colossal in its conception, vast in scope and ambition, the *Massive Change: The Future of Global Design* exhibition is just one piece of the *Massive Change* project that includes a book, radio show, speaker series, poster project, design objects, and Web site. Commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery and developed by Bruce Mau Design in collaboration with the Institute Without Boundaries, the project asserts that design has eclipsed nature, culture and business, and now has the potential and power to change the world to the benefit of all of humanity.

The *Massive Change* project oscillates between presentation of information and bare declarations. Both the exhibit and the book are accumulations of a motley set of statistics, resources, images, design objects and contributions from designers that are sorted and displayed according to eleven design economies. These economies – Urban, Movement, Information, Image, Energy, Markets, Materials, Military, Manufacturing, Living, Wealth & Politics – occupy independent spaces within the exhibition and are held together with the narrative of an eleven-point manifesto. Printed onto the walls of the gallery in generous lettering, the optimistic assertions of the manifesto draw visitors through the linear sequence of spaces: from "We will create urban shelter for the entire world population" to "We will design evolution" through to "We will eradicate poverty."

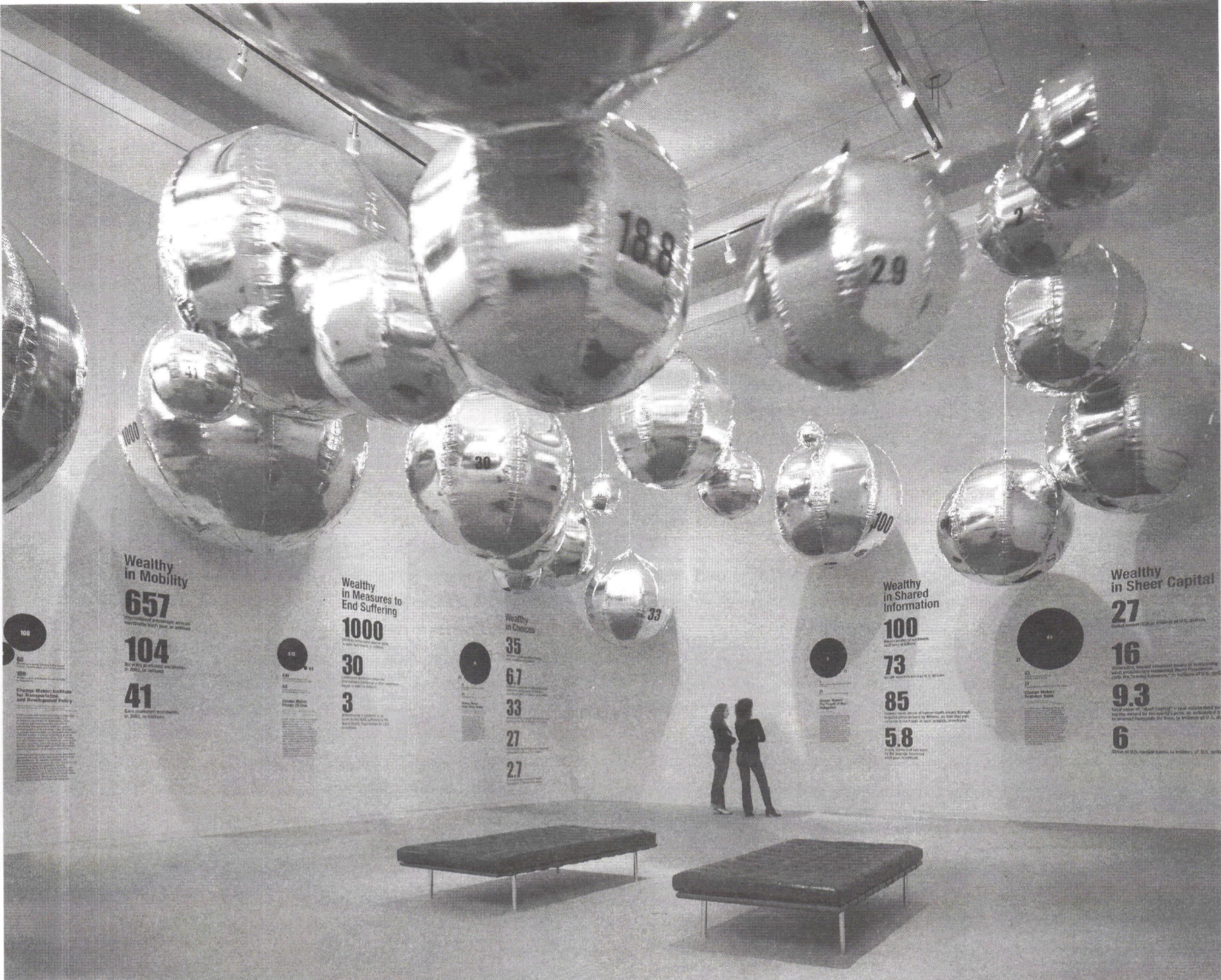
The exhibit offers little insight into how we can identify and synthetically address aspects of design in a global context. Instead, the format and method of the exhibition raise questions regarding the significance and objectives of design in contemporary culture. In an era in which image and information directly correspond to performance and agency, and diagrams equal reality, the makers of *Massive Change* assume that to sort and to illustrate is to be proactive. The practice of sorting and displaying to create meaning is akin to Koolhaas's description of "Junkspace," in which hierarchy is replaced with accumulation, and composition with addition. As described in Koolhaas's critique of commercial spaces, the viewer at *Massive Change* is left empty; more is not more. Despite an attempt to describe the participation of design activities in a global system that is relational, interconnected and emergent, a conceptual link between the information and the agenda is absent. The eleven economies are experienced as discrete fields of interest and human advancement with a curatorial concept that does little to introduce the viewer to the interdependencies of a global ecology. Rather, what are presented as innovations in various fields for the salvation of mankind, read more as market opportunities for the savvy design professional.

It requires a very close look at the exhibit and related book to find a small number of inventions and projects that transcend the classification of their respective economies and illustrate the interconnectivity of global problems and their possible solutions. Narrowly pigeonholed in the Movement Economy section, the public transit system for Curitiba, Brazil, for example, is a successful application of design that negotiates the complexity of urban ecologies, effected by and affecting aspects of transportation, urbanism, politics, economics, and environmentalism.

The exhibit fails to polemicize and problematize the range of issues it sets forth in a manner that is engaging and productive. The viewer is not equipped with tools to make

What do parasites,
satellites & gigabytes
have in common?

WORLD PREMIERE
MASSIVE CHANGE
The Future of Global Design
October 2, 2004 - January 3, 2005



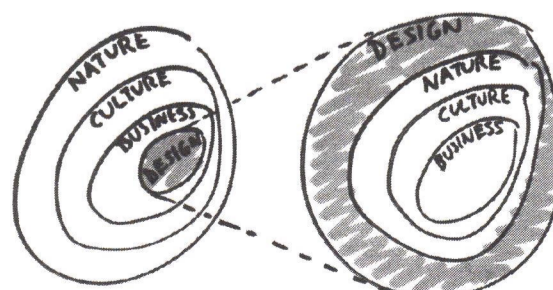
dynamic links between the information and the agenda, nor is the information treated in a manner that surpasses simple binary thinking. When confronted with vitrines filled with featherless chicken, genetically modified grain and enhanced salmon, the viewer is asked to place a vote: "Should we be doing this? Yes or No?" Because the exhibit does little to illustrate the motivations and consequences of the scientific advancements, choice is turned into a mere gesture of participation.

In *Massive Change*, the arena of participation has already been limited by the underlying assumption that the market is the only tool we have. This leaves us to operate only within the logic of the existing economy, and thus limits the critical potential of a design project to the terms of the market.

Shepherded into the *Massive Change* shop at the end of the exhibition sequence, the visitor is left with the choice of colorful drinking glasses, plates with decorative graphs of random data, and the usual array of unrelated design items, and left to speculate what robots, teapots and sunspots might have in common.

Best known for *Zone* books, his collaboration with Rem Koolhaas in the design of *S,M,L,XL* and for his own monograph *Lifestyle*, Bruce Mau has made significant contributions to contemporary visual culture through book design, branding, environmental graphics, exhibitions and product design. In the context of the *Massive Change* exhibit, however, the design efforts seem lost, seeking salvation in a neo-liberal market model whose contribution to overall advancement of the global environment and humanity has yet to be discovered.

Massive Change: The Future of Global Design is on view at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Vancouver, BC through January 3, 2005. From there it will travel to Toronto, Chicago, and three locations in Europe, and will close in New York City in 2007. *Mari Fujita and Oliver Neumann are the principals of the Vancouver-based design firm Studio Fujita Neumann. Both teach in the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia.*



Vancouver Art Gallery, Photo by Robert Keziere / Vancouver Art Gallery Lawnsigns. Photo by Mari Fujita. ABOVE: Wealth + Politics Economy Gallery – Photograph of installation in Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo by Robert Keziere / Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Napkin sketch by Bruce Mau.

On Drinking

KAREN CHENG

One of the awkward aspects of my personal life is that I can't drink anything that has alcohol in it. I have a kind of food allergy—I'm missing the digestive enzyme that breaks down ethanol.

It's not really a big problem, but it can be embarrassing to ask for soda at certain events. At the last dinner party I went to, my request made the host (a gourmet cook and food connoisseur) visibly blanch. "You're not going to drink that with the meal?" he asked, utterly aghast.

After this incident, I decided to put more effort into finding an alternative drink. I have to give up soda anyway—have you seen all the health reports? Soft drinks have too much sugar, caffeine and sulfites; consumption is linked to osteoporosis, tooth decay, obesity and heart disease.

Furthermore, as a graphic designer, it's hard to feel good about having soda in your house. Aside from Coca-Cola (which is beyond value judgments, as an historical American icon) mainstream soda packages are all the same and all terrible: Photoshop montages of 3-d lettering, radial gradients and sports stars.

The obvious alternative is, of course, water. Plenty of reasonable designs there, as long as you avoid the obvious illustrative clichés (glaciers, rivers, droplets, dewy flowers). But unfortunately, I really need something with flavor. My sister, a doctor, disagrees. "You have to get over the idea that drinks should taste good!" she says. I'm sure she's right but I just can't make the necessary psychological adjustment.

So, after a long search, I've decided that I'm going to exclusively devote my refrigerator to Glaceau Vitamin Waters. It's basically Kool Aid for designers—a kind of modernist Snapple. The only weird part is that each flavor has a botanical extract that promises to improve your life (alleviate stress, increase endurance, improve memory, enhance immunity). I guess I find it hard to believe that fruit punch can help me "focus."

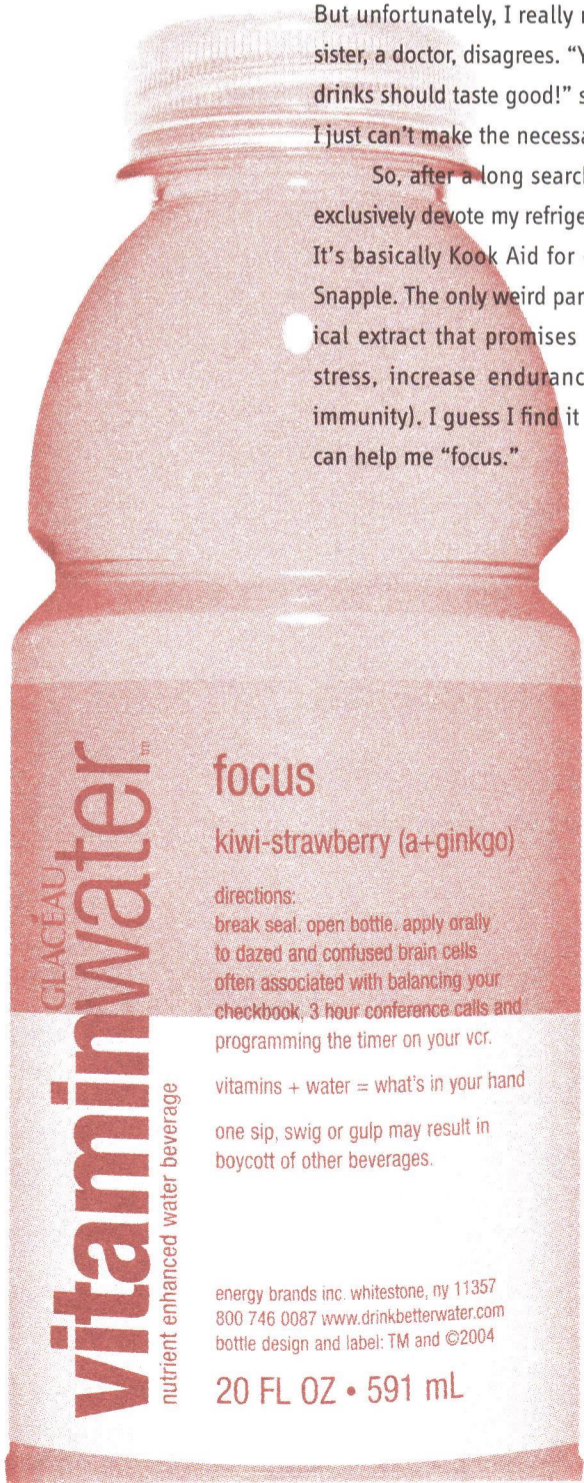
I should first say that I have a lot of respect for designers who work in consumer products. It's very difficult to create something good for a mass market. Packages are supposed to have this magical thing called "shelf presence"—you've got to be able to see them from miles (or aisles) away. This isn't as easy to accomplish as you might think, mostly because all the other packages (and designers) are trying to do the same thing at the same time. Additionally, it's very hard to innovate in packaged goods. A bottle needs to fit into a predetermined space on a fixed shelf. Graphics—and the overall design—need to somehow conform to general expectations (a drink has to look like a drink).

The Vitamin Water package manages to do all these things with simplicity, wit and verve. The bold sans serif typography is actually funny (modernism with a sense of humor—very unusual). Rarely has such a serious typeface (Univers Condensed) been used with such deadpan sensibility. The severity of the layout—the decisive use of white space—is a clever counterpoint to the nonsense names (energy/essential/rescue/defense/revive/balance) and self-effacing descriptions.

The total effect of the combined display is particularly successful. When all the bottles are arranged side by side, they make a luminous wall of abstract color, the holy grail of packaging: a high-impact "brand wall." It's interesting that the visual force stems primarily from the color of the product itself rather than an applied graphic or violator. This reads as an honest and economical gesture—a rare move in our more-is-more, logo-saturated times.

Why aren't there more products with this kind of fun and sophistication? Is there really such a limited market for good design? Sometimes it seems that the majority of product manufacturers are overly risk averse. They seem to believe that it's better to have insipid and inoffensive packaging than intelligent and personality-rich communication. It's a shame that so many companies fail to capitalize on opportunities that exist for better design. Buying a drink (and perhaps drinking itself) may be a mundane activity of everyday life, but it's the role of design to elevate these moments and gestures and to improve the quality of even our most banal needs and rituals. *Karen Cheng is a professor of Visual Communication Design at the University of Washington. She is also a practicing designer whose work has been recognized and published by the AIGA, Communication Arts, Critique, I.D. Magazine, Print and the American Center for Design.*

It's basically Kool Aid for designers—a kind of modernist Snapple.



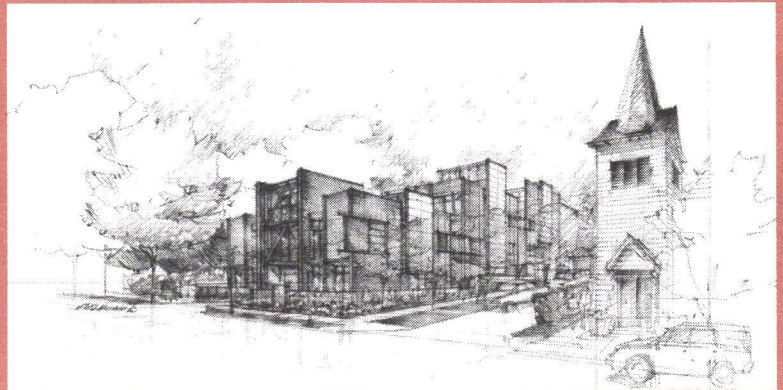
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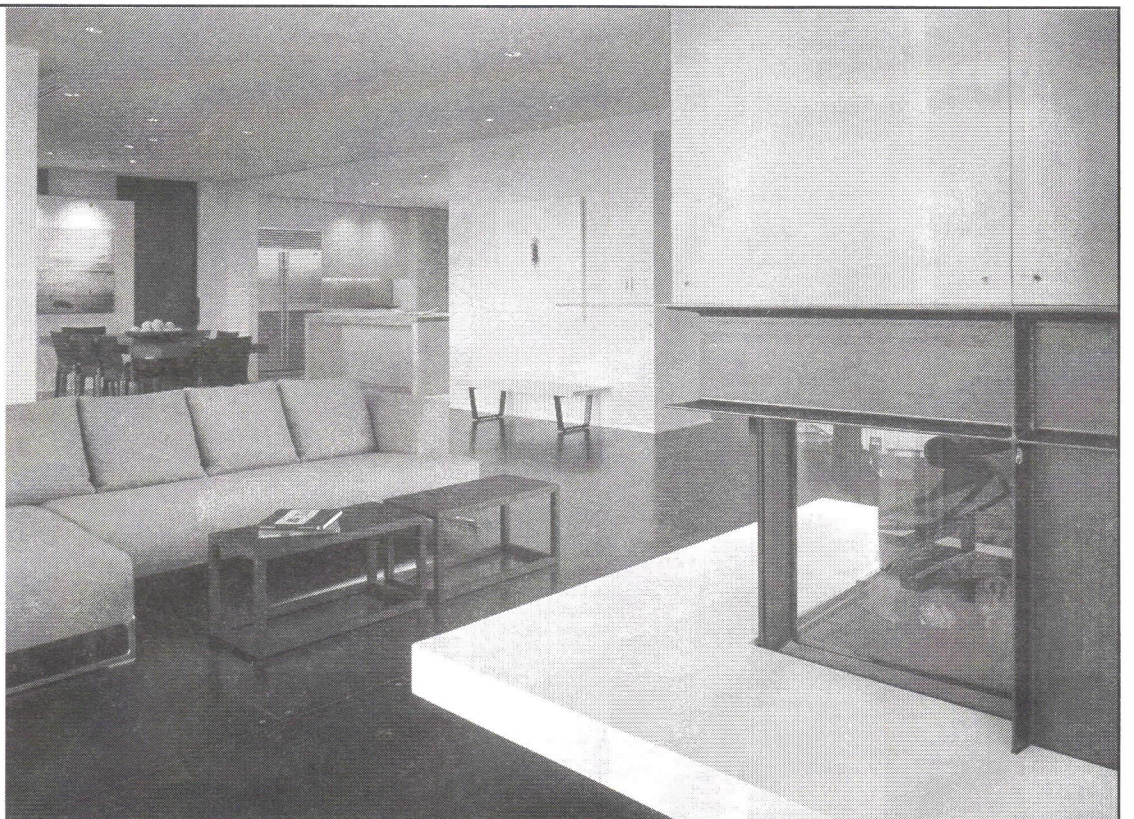
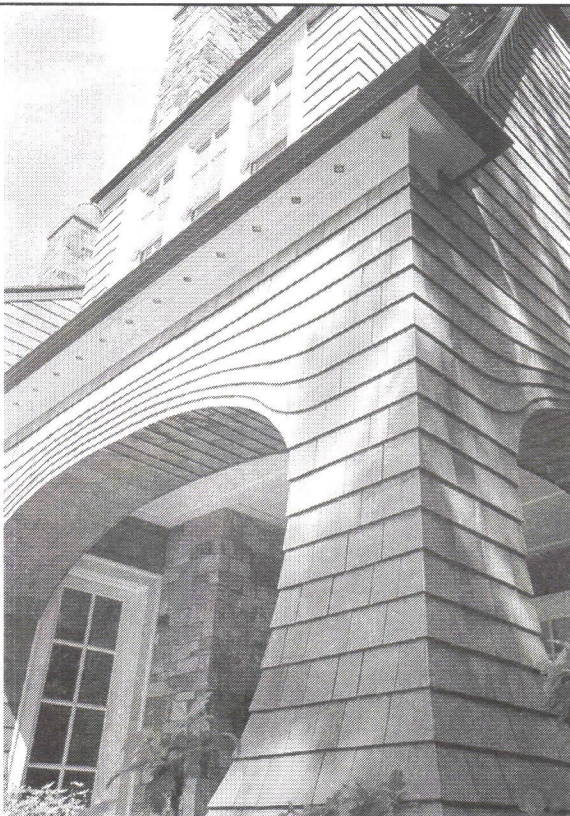
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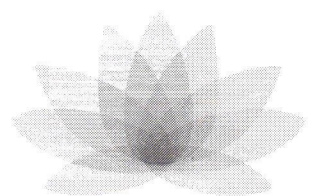
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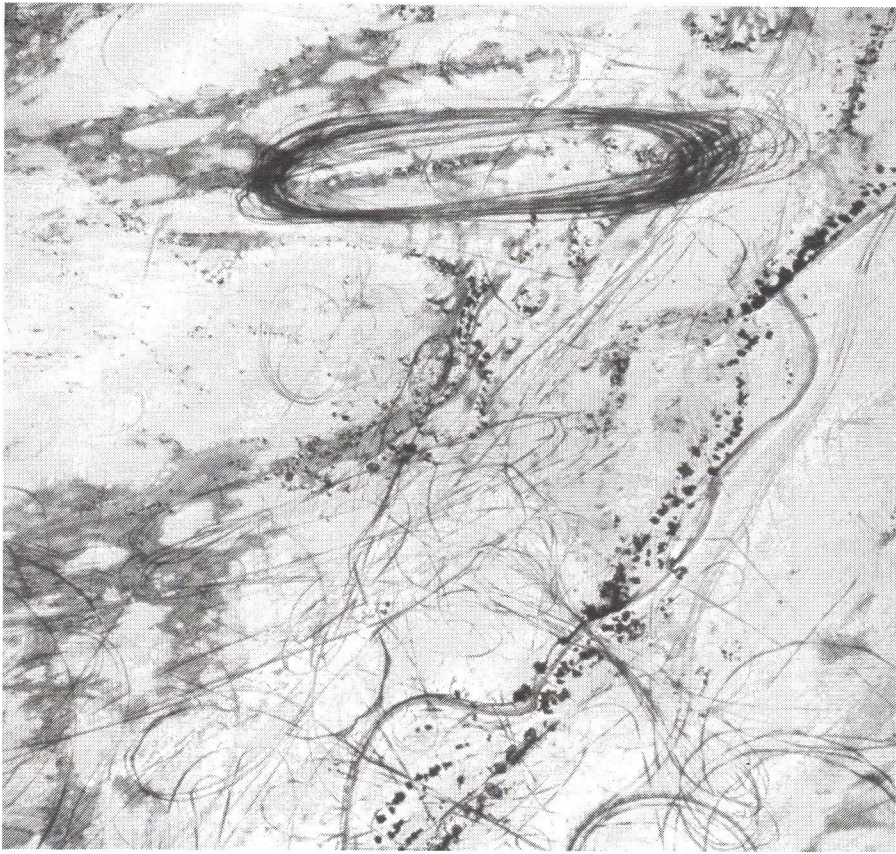
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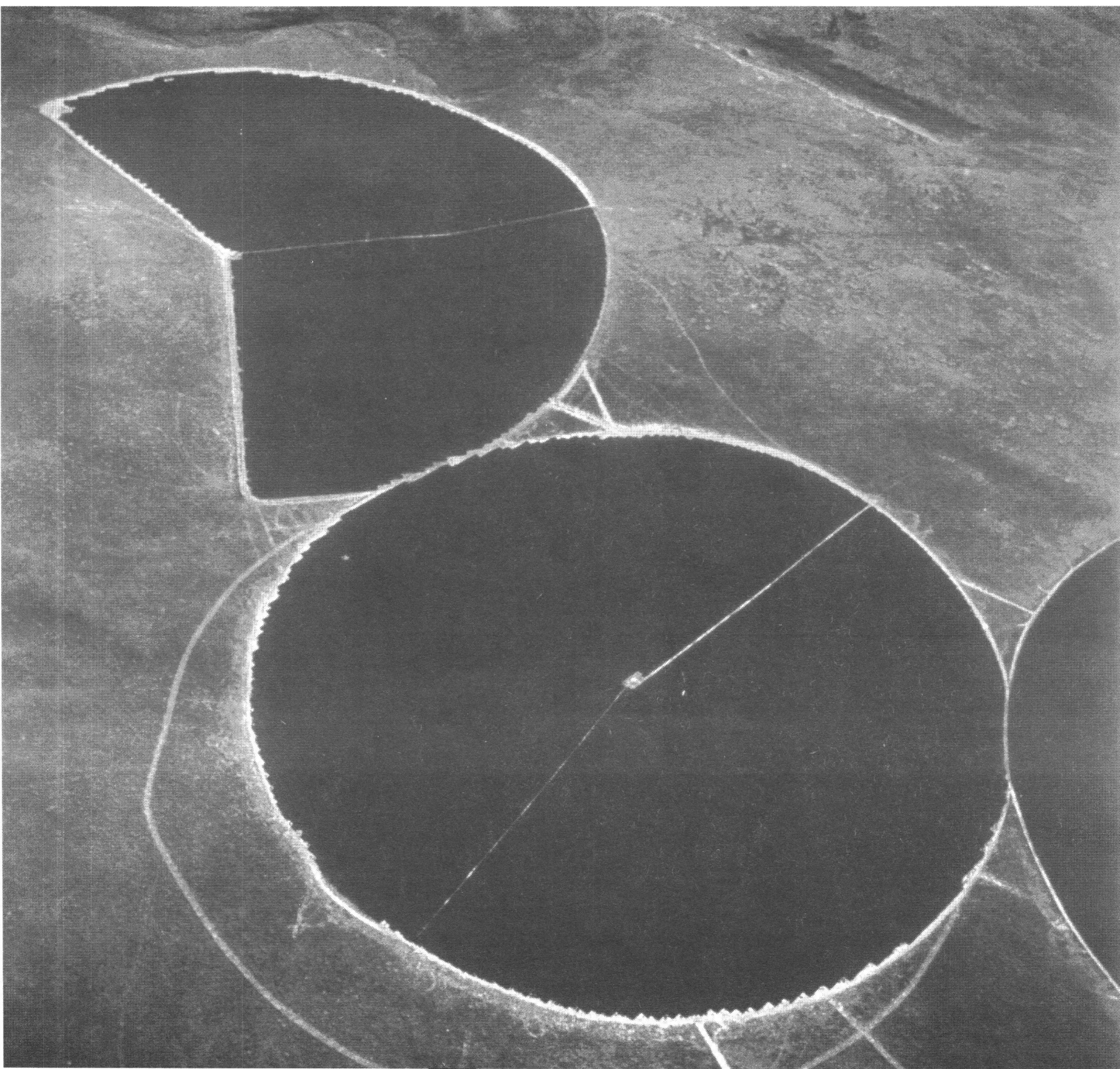


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CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP: *Off Road Traffic Pattern Along the Northwest Shore of the Great Salt Lake, Utah.* 1998. Toned gelatin silver print. *Ground Features, Yucca Flat, Nevada Test Site.* 1996. Toned gelatin silver print. *Erosion, Highway Route 6 and Rail Cut, Looking North from Green River, Utah.* 1988. Toned gelatin silver print. *Cooling Towers and Stacks of Chempetrol, Czech Republic.* 1992. Toned gelatin silver print.





Emmet Gowin

These images have been selected from *Emmet Gowin: Changing the Earth*, a recent exhibition at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Washington.

Our fascination for what is terrible is great. Our need for beauty is great. It's not just willfulness on my part that causes those things to coexist in the same world. There is a tension formed between something that's taken hundreds of millions of years to create and the degree to which it can be destroyed in just a matter of moments, days or decades. You can't think in a trivial way about these relationships. And oddly, instead of wanting to run away from what is granted a terrible thing to know, I wanted to know more and to hold it as an image. I then make a point to bring out as much beauty as I possibly can, because something in me still has a huge degree of respect for what it is and at the same time for what it once was. Forgive me if I have labored to make it illusive, or difficult to understand, but I believe that difficult images bring us all closer to a shared experience."

-Emmet Gowin from *Emmet Gowin: Changing the Earth*

Landscape is the place for the complex interplay between nature and culture, supporting all human activity. Landscapes are our story because they reveal who we are. They embody our values and history, and provide the framework for our future.

The interpretation of landscapes is as varied and complex as the landscapes themselves. In this issue, *Working Landscapes*, each contributor tells part of a story of transformation. *Working Landscapes* is about the landscapes we create, which in turn create us as we inhabit them.

Working landscapes are shaped from the finite wilderness. In this country, and particularly in the West, we are relative newcomers to a spectacular wilderness. Unfortunately, design tends to spring from a culture of analysis and economic efficiencies rather than the dramatic reality of site. In Herman van Bergeijk's article, the wilderness is the sea; the dewatered land providing a palette for the raw grid of the Dutch economy. Whereas landscapes never return to wilderness they can be reclaimed by it to a degree. In Michele Marquardi's "Fourth Nature," castles in the desert become a new prospect. Richard Haag and Peter Latz extend this notion in the renewal and re-inhabitation of urban wastelands.

Landscapes by definition are designed. They represent the continuity of time and human inhabitation, whether for a specific function such as a mining or manufacturing process, or with the well being of the greater environment in mind. Roberto Pirzio-Biroli's article broadens the idea of the Master Plan by providing a larger perspective on historical territories and proposed landscapes. He distinguishes

between the idea of architectural topography and abstract zoning policies. Sites are typically considered without the rich context of their natural and cultural reality. Lesley Bain's article explores the complex layering of Seattle's Interbay site and how design could transform its place in the city

Living in the Northwest we have the unique opportunity to experience the diversity of climate in a very small area, perhaps like no other culture. In the desert, landscapes take forever to heal. On the wet side of the mountains, however, if we just ceased to exist, within six months water would have brought new vegetation and begun the rot of our buildings, covering our tracks. Their structure would still be evident, even if faint. Every gesture we make must be mindful for it will be with us for generations to come, reflecting our values and far (or short) sightedness. The removal of a hill or the infilling of a wetland, the razing of a forest or the planting of a field, the construction of a road or of a city in the endless extension of our society, will be there to be remembered and reflected upon. In the process of design we have the opportunity to be thoughtful or thoughtless, to include the greater good of the area or be concerned about the "highest and best use" of a particular piece of land. Good design does not come from the myopic view of self-interest, but from the recognition that

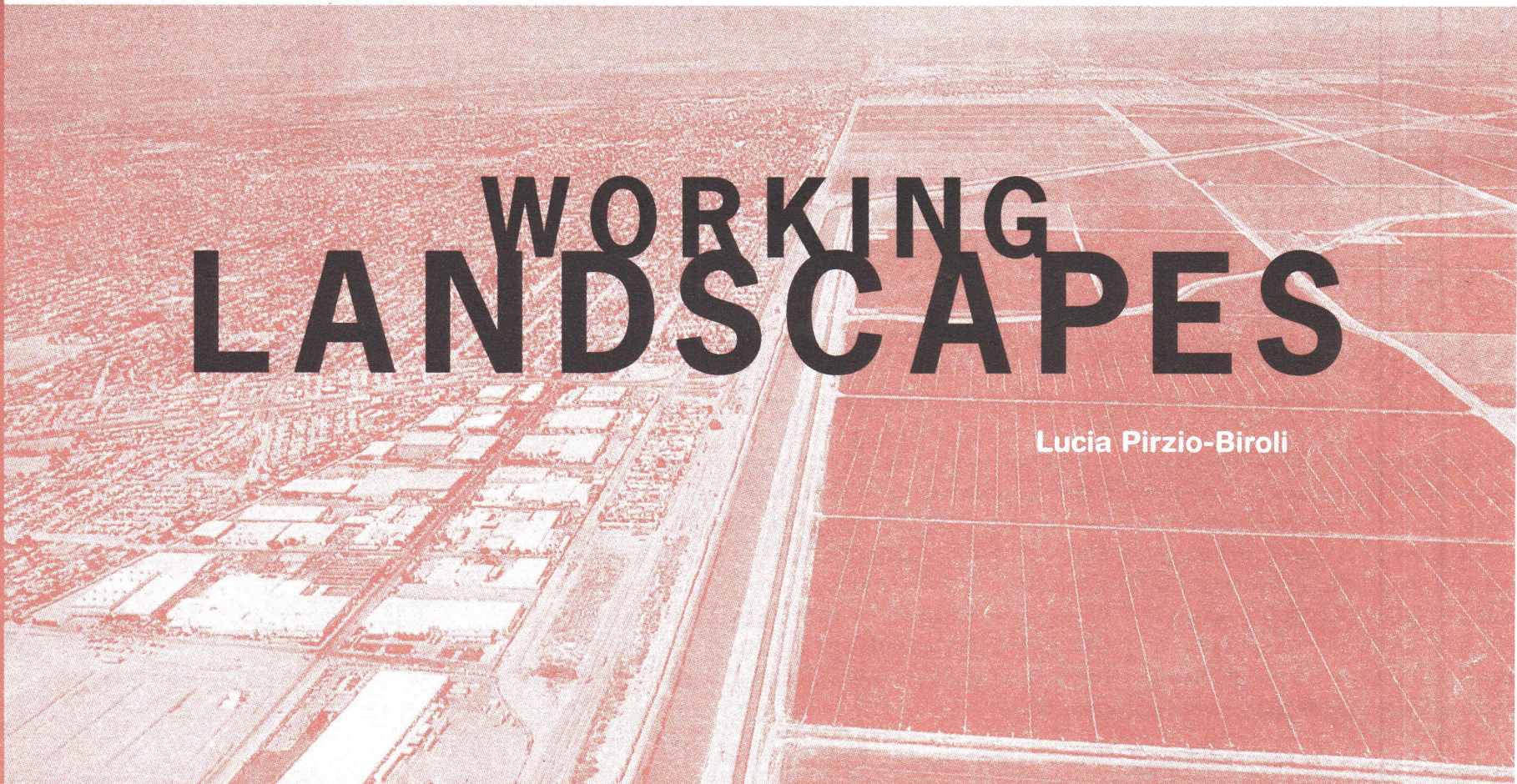
what we are designing is part of something greater than ourselves, influenced by what came before us, and part of a structural system in the future that will be interpreted and built upon. *Lucia Pirzio-Biroli is a native of Seattle and a partner with Michele Marquardi in Studio Ectypos, an architecture office on Mercer Island, Washington.*



*Above: The Quarry at Carrara (originally Luna), Italy, has been continually active from the 1st century B.C. The marble for Ceasar Augustus's Rome came from here, Michelangelo personally selected the marble for his sculptures here, and the slabs for your kitchen counters are cut here. Will this quarry of live marble ever be exhausted? If so, could the ruins provide the structure for a new city with terraced gardens, geometric pools and streets of solid marble? Photo by Studio Ectypos. Background: The borderlands of the Imperial Valley, California and Mexico, are an interface between urban sprawl and industrial scale agriculture, demonstrating the social and economic forces that modify the landscape. Image from *New York Times Magazine*, page 29, December 4, 1994.*

WORKING LANDSCAPES

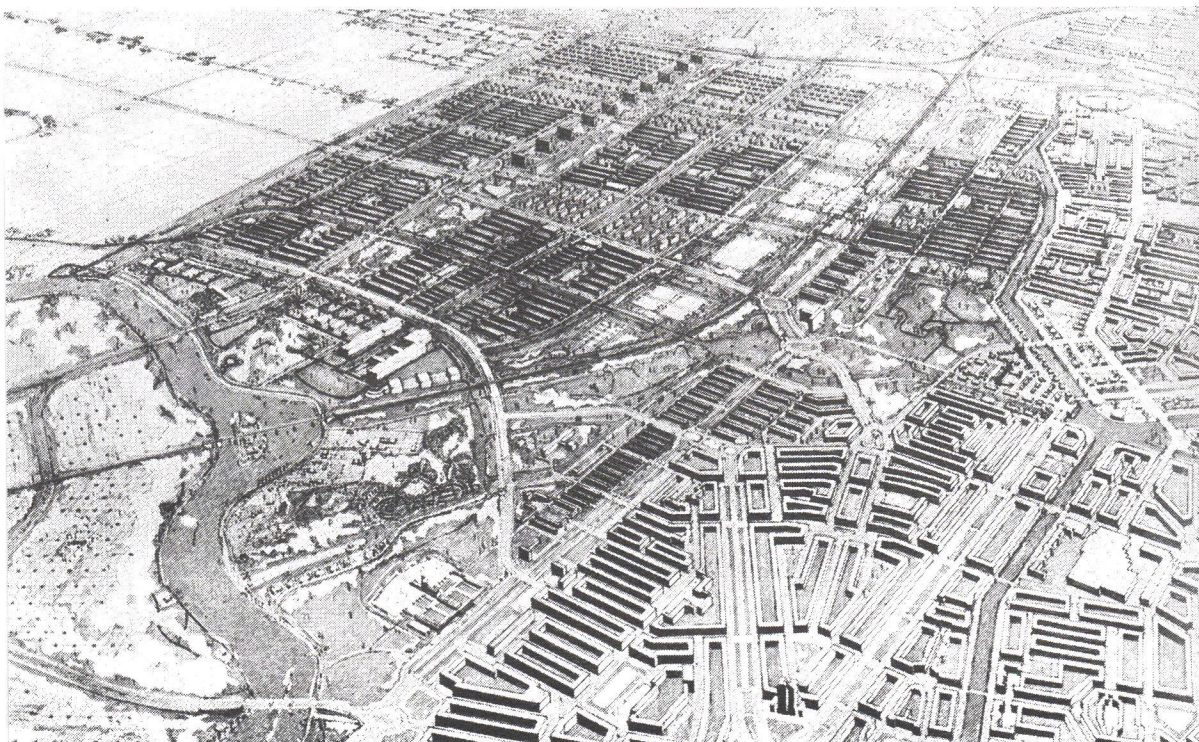
Lucia Pirzio-Biroli



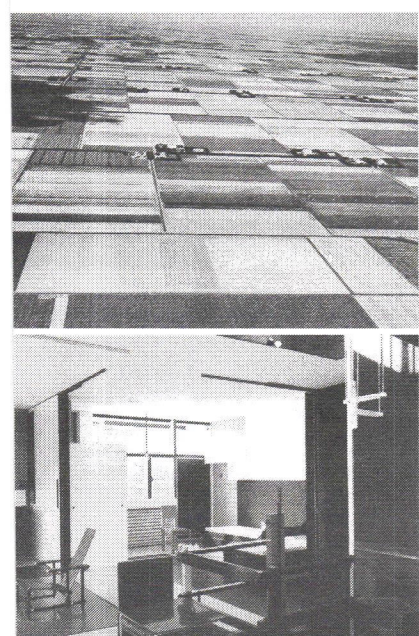
Striving for the Wind: (Re)making the Dutch Landscape

HERMAN VAN BERGEIJK

In the 1920s Aldous Huxley noted a voyage through the Netherlands was a trip through the first books of Euclides—geometry governing the visual appearance of the landscape. The eternal struggle against the sea and reclamation of land through ingenious engineering produced the idealized landscape made by man. In few countries has nature become so totally incorporated in the cultural development and change of landscape that reflects changes of mentality toward nature.



Above: Abstract functionalist urban plan by Cornelius van Eesteren. Image courtesy of Gruppo Editoriale Electa, from *Olanda 1870-1940*, copyright 1980, Milano, Italy. Below: The creation of polders and the landscape shaped by market forces. *The Landscapes of Man* by Jellicoe. Bottom: Photo by Frank den Ouden from *False Flat*, "Interior of the Schröder House, Utrecht, By Gerrit Rietveld, 1924," copyright 2004, Phaidon Press Limited, London.



Untouched nature read as a book of God was dismissed, substituted by the concept that mankind can create its own nature according to its own demands.

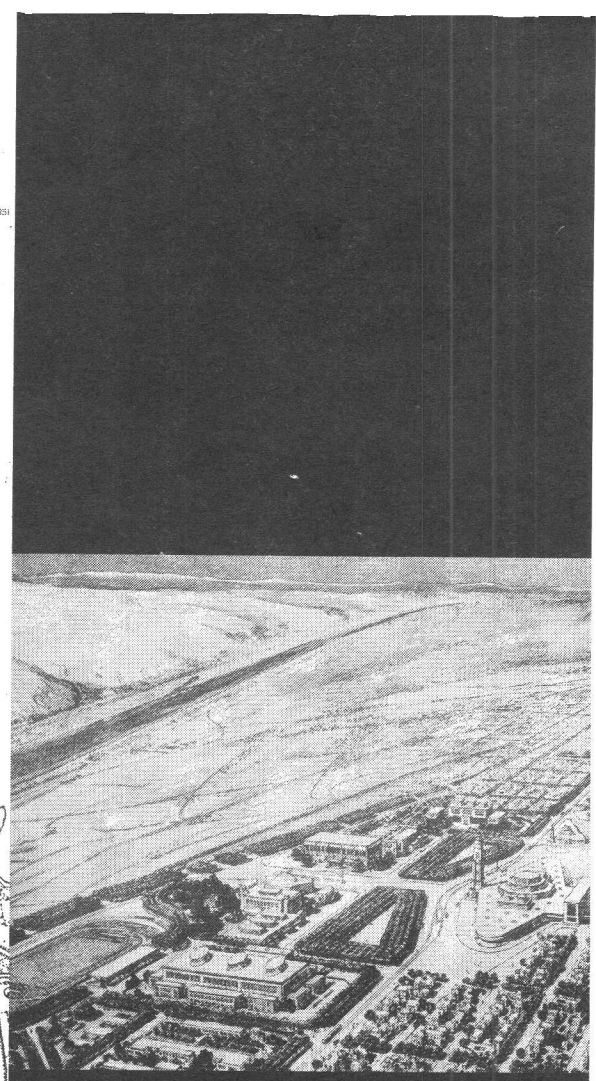
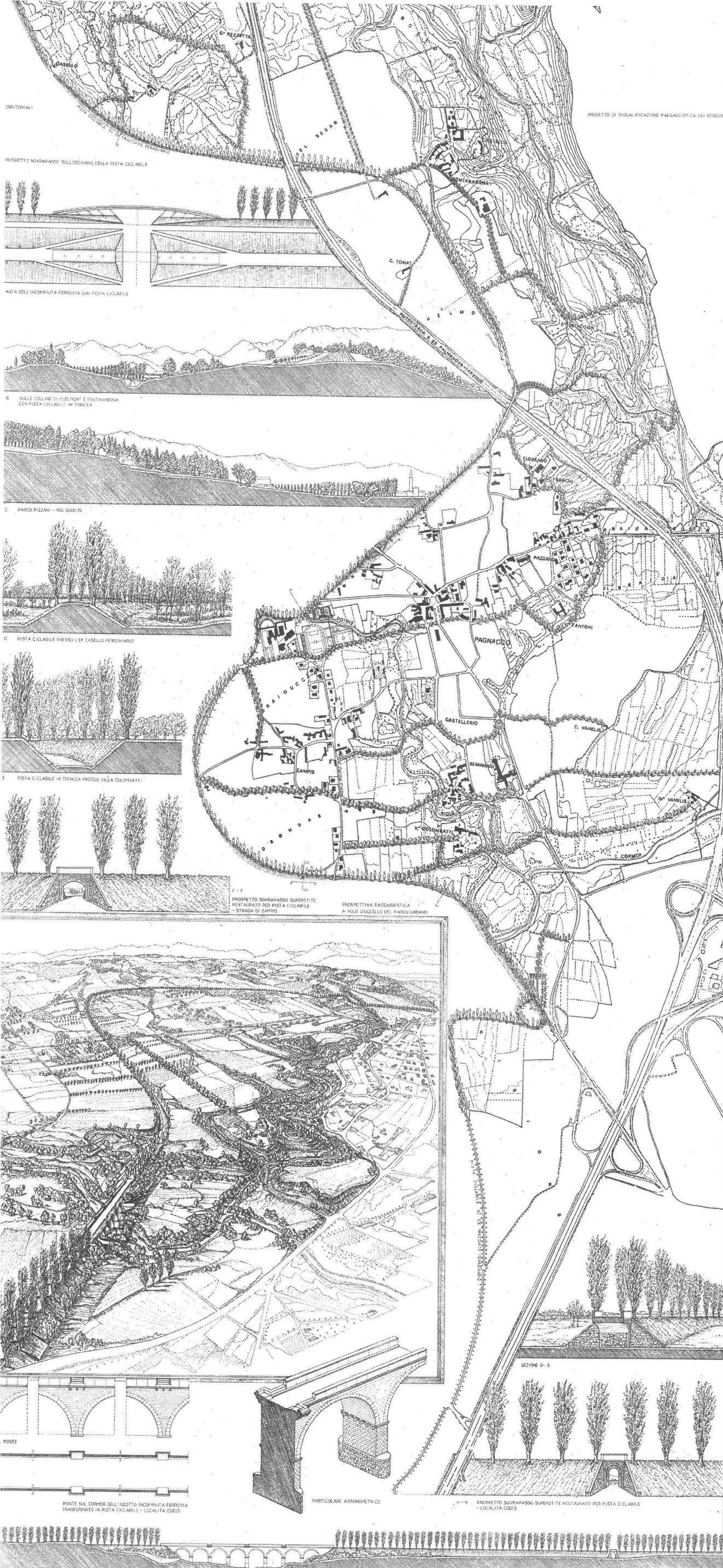
The complex relationship between water and land was manipulated in order to arrive at a safer, more lucrative situation. The creation of polders was above all the result of capitalist enterprise. The rational division of new land was determined by wealthy investors, usually buying lots on the basis of the design presented to them. Through calculation of profit, nature became second nature. The country's flatness made it a *tabula rasa*, increasing the artificiality of the end result. In the 19th century the deserted countryside was transformed to raise productivity, intensify land use and achieve water economy. Since many areas were still wet due to turf removal, numerous canals and ditches were created, facilitating dewatering. These 'lines,' cultural incisions in the landscape, became the basis of further development. At the end of the century, the population of relatively small cities increased, forcing necessary planned extensions. What began as the division of fields became the extension of towns. The housing act of 1901 proclaimed that any city over 10,000 would have a general extension plan. Architects saw the opportunity to "embellish."

The international town planning conference of 1924 in Amsterdam shifted the attitude toward regional planning. After the stock market crash, different conceptual strategies led to such actions as closing off the Zuiderzee and creating polders with agricultural functions, such as the North-east polder and the Wieringermeer. They resulted from spatial planning with a broad perspective, developing the country as a whole versus *small regional interventions*.

Abstract, functionalistic plans of Cornelius van Eesteren for Amsterdam in 1935 illustrated the reigning mentality within progressive circles in the Netherlands. Lacking a clear notion of "big city" (even Amsterdam is just a giant hamlet) led to the concept of the Randstad, the conglomeration of larger cities in the west, with the "green heart," a large area of meadows and agriculture. The 'border' or 'edge condition' demonstrated the friction between city and landscape.

Due to economic and artistic imperative, ecological consequences often disregarded led to serious habitat problems. The Deltaworks, created in the southwest following the 1953 flooding, was a dike permitting water to flow naturally, closing it off as needed. Defense against water from the sea has taken its toll, with recent flooding by large European rivers occurring inland. Protective measures included raising the river dikes and restitution of land to the water, creating "water pockets."

The unstable symbiotic relationship between water and land has created a national culture profoundly affected by the geometric territorial imprint. Seventeenth century picturesque qualities of the countryside were depicted by famous painters such as Hobbema. Today plans of cities and land look more like the abstract paintings of Mondrian or the architecture of Rietveld. Form will, even in non-places, dominate almost any approach and is a clear sign that in the Netherlands nature will give way to the second nature of man. Then only the whimsies of the wind and weather remain as signs of an untamed, divine power. *Herman van Bergeijk is an architectural historian, currently teaching at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University in Delft. He studied in Groningen and Venice and has written extensively on Dutch, German and Italian architecture and town planning. His latest book was an investigation of the theoretical views of H.P. Berlage and their relationship to the built work of this architect.*

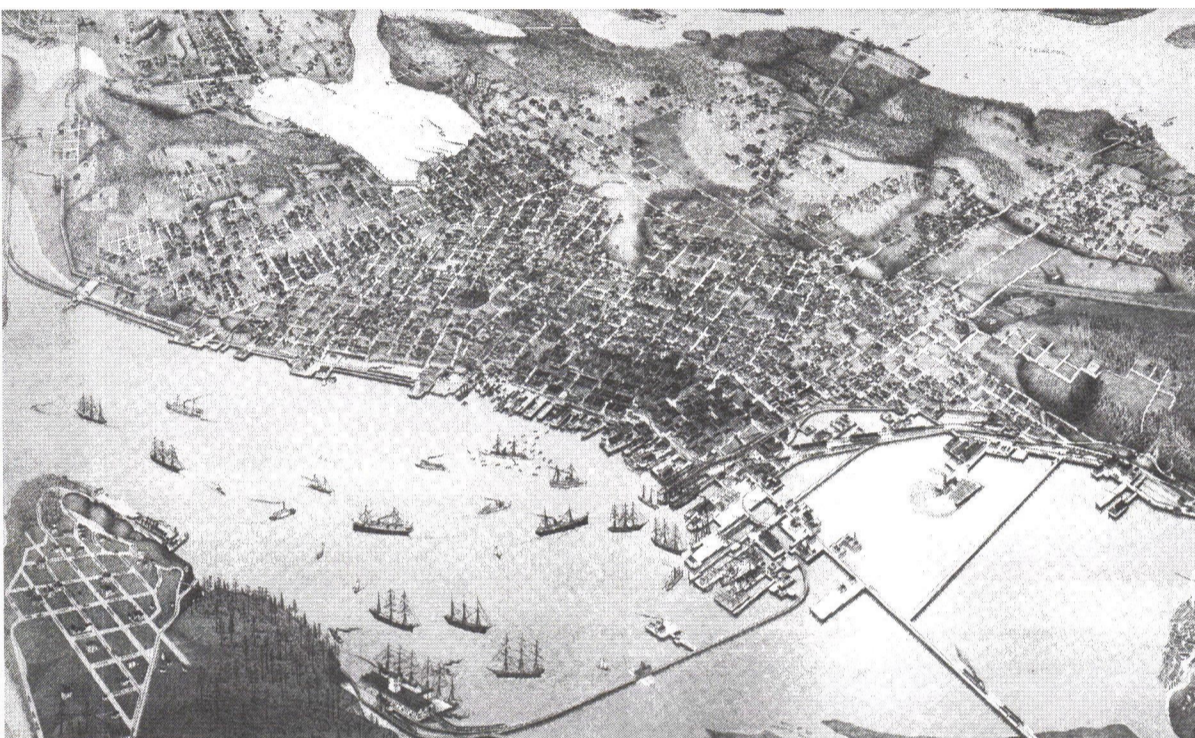


Left: The "Cormor Plan." Drawing of "topographic architecture" combining the existing conditions and the transformative design. Drawing by Maddelena Pandolfi, Studio Pirzio-Biroli. Above: L'Ouvre de Tony Garnier, *L'Architecture Vivante*: Spring-Summer 1932 (Paris: Editions Albert Morancé 8. Opposite page: *Bird's Eye View of Seattle and Environs*, Kings County, WA 1891. *Eighteen Months After the Great Fire*, Augustus Koch. Image courtesy of the publisher, Princeton Architectural Press, NY, NY.

Origins of the Master Plan and the Modern Design of Architectural Topography

ROBERTO PIRZIO-BIROLI

The “master plan,” which establishes and measures the architectural steps required for conservation, renewal, transformation, and development of the agro-hydro-geo-morphologic territory and urban land, originates in the modern era of rationalized topography. However, the master plan, as it was technically formulated and graphically represented from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, found its roots during the Hellenistic era in the Greek city and territory.



In Europe, traces of Greco-Roman architectural design are evident at the territorial level: an abstract, mathematical master plan that, with ditches, canals, and roads, subdivides the territory and the topography into large natural areas in order to develop its agro-forest and hydro-geo-morphology. These subdivisions also determined the urban lots of the city, within a strict hierarchy of inter-field roads. From this large-scale rationalization of the topographic mythological landscape, a sort of primal labyrinth, the *locus amoenus*, or ideal development, was discovered. Only through a clear vision and understanding of the large scale ideal territory were the architect and planner able to understand the magical place: the woods on a hill, the temple on the Acropolis, the mound or tomb in the meadow, the *genius loci*.

Today, we must closely study these living archaeological traces of the Hellenistic period, layered on diverse geographies of natural and man-made forms. Not abstracted mathematical forms, but significant cultural products of rural societies: medieval settlements that established the gothic lot, with a narrow street front, elongated toward the back, dividing the agricultural grid. In Europe, the Renaissance, Romantic, and baroque landscapes, and the modern industrial city,

were formed on this historic topography. The contemporary post-industrial landscape is as well, where the reconstruction of the natural environment and the renovation of the urban periphery should seek to compose a comprehensive “tectonic” sympathetic to the ecological equilibrium and quality of life determined by the architecture of human settlement.

In the United States, this concept is best understood through Thomas Jefferson’s ingenious master plan. Represented in three dimensions, it invented the American city and rationalized natural territory from Washington D.C. to Philadelphia, to San Francisco to Seattle. An extraordinary Jeffersonian invention for the architectural definition of urban space is the lot-to-building ratio, with the short façade of buildings on the avenues and the long sides running along the minor streets; a revolution in the relationship between the Hellenistic territorial structure and the medieval gothic lot. The three-dimensional detail of the Jeffersonian master plan, with its woods, canals, rises, depressions, and terraces along rivers shouldn’t be underestimated. All details are legible and comprehensible, allowing the democratic participation in the creation of the American city and the preservation of the natural environment of the “topography of the mythological landscape.”

William Bridges spectacular master plan for New York was visionary and realistic at the same time: “The land it divides is unoccupied; the buildings it locates

phantoms; the activities it frames non-existent.” The master plan sought to forecast the figurative “tectonic” result of the urban land and its insertion in the geologic stratification of the topography’s architectonic composition. In this context, the master plan placed greater emphasis on the architecture of the territory, than on abstract zoning, which sought to limit development that would be unpredictable anyway.

An enduring inspiration for the modern master plan, at the territorial level, is Tony Garnier’s “Cité Industrielle.” It delineates the architectural detail of streets, embankments, and building typologies of residences on the hills and of industrial complexes in the valley bordered by the river. The scale is comprehensible and therefore the proportional relationship between the natural topographical elements and the built urban areas are clear. “Garnier’s industrial city, designed to provide 35,000 people with housing and employment, is ensconced in an Arcadian landscape of rolling hills.”

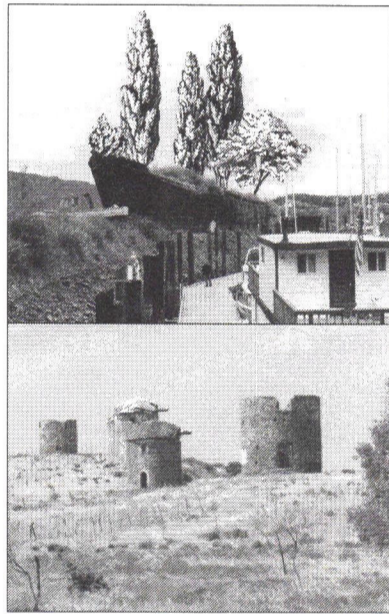
The method I use to create a “topographical architecture” is inspired in particular by Peter Joseph Lenné’s work. His grand plan, developed in Germany between 1810 and 1860, began with the construction of railway lines, which add value to and outline the urban settlements that lead the way into the big cities. I consider this kind of master plan a type of “environmental assessment,” or an “architectural design of the topography.” The rationalized geometry of the “topographic matrix,” with its spatial forms invigorated by the structure of the landscape itself, determines the dimension, aesthetics, and scenic space of its transformation. In this sense the *master plan* is as important in its representation of the land it transforms as it is in the structure of the land itself. It is the antipathy of abstract planning and is founded firmly in the structure and atmosphere of the land itself rather than the policies of the time in which it is drawn. *Roberto Pirzio-Biroli, an Italian born architect, began his study of the territory during the 1976 post seismic reconstruction of Friuli. His objective has been to restore a balance between man, landscape and construction. He practices throughout Europe developing master plans for rural landscapes as well as the urban periphery. He has been a visiting professor at UC Berkeley, Potsdam, Lubeck, and ETH Zurich, and has lectured at universities throughout the United States and Europe.*

A Park to Somewhere: Some Meandering Considerations on the 4th Nature of Landscape

MICHELE MARQUARDI

At least that is what Theodora's inhabitants believed, far from imagining that a forgotten fauna was stirring from its lethargy. Relegated from long eras to remote hiding places, ever since it had been deposed by the system of nonextinct species, the other fauna was coming back to the light from the library basements where the incunabula were kept; it was leaping from the capitals and drainpipes, perching at the sleepers' bedside. Sphinxes, griffons, chimeras, dragons, hircocervi, harpies, hydras, unicorns, basilisks were resuming possession of their city.

FROM ITALO CALVINO, *INVISIBLE CITIES*



I'd like to address a category of architecture: ruins. Not the "aristocratic" monumental ruins representing the pride of nations, or objects of touristic pilgrimage, but humbler ruins that are the debris, abandoned architectural by-products of our culture, often removed from our collective memory.

They do not bear the "obviousness," as defined by Josef Frank, of the classical monuments, but have the accidental character of *objets trouvés*. They belong to a world apart, anachronistic and captivating. Size does not matter: an old steel buoy rusting on the shore, a ship docked forever on a spit, stone chimneys alone in the woods, an imposing concrete cooling tower of an unfinished nuclear plant on the bank of a river. Instead of asking who built them, why and what can they become, we consider them distractedly, denying them the power to change the contextual rapport. They may be errors, victims of economic recession or war, or simply have lost pace with their surroundings. This debris often represents inseparable faces of the same coin: economic achievements on one side, ruins on the other. They are fragments adrift in our landscape, the "4th nature" as defined by Charles Jencks, waiting to be reclaimed or left to definitively return to "zero nature (the earth)," also defined by Jencks. How should the problem of their presence be approached? Confronting the past is difficult, its removal often simpler, but sometimes erasing the "error" is more cowardly than the error itself.

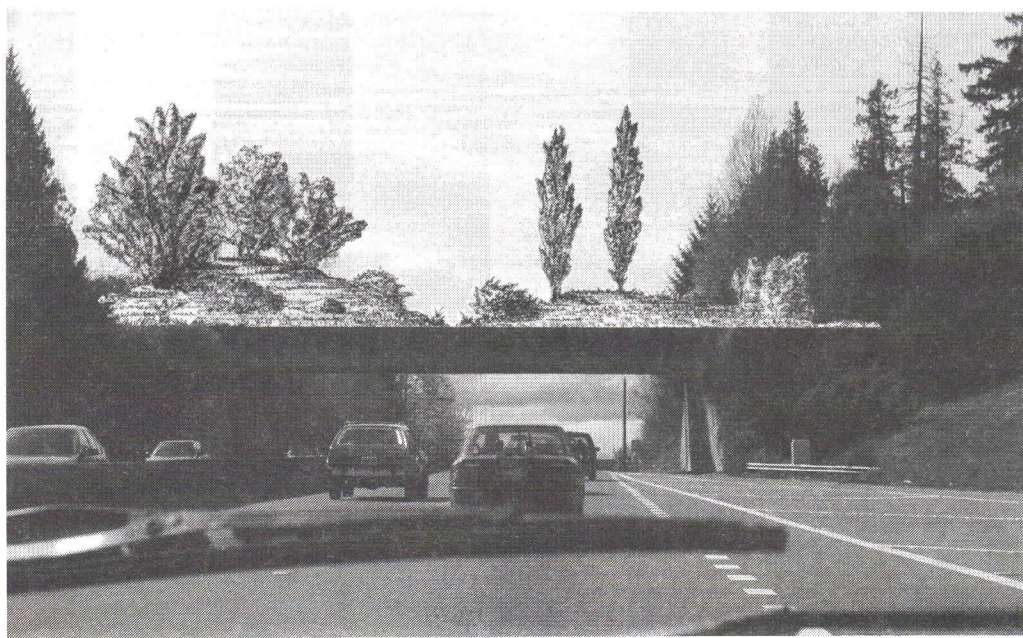
These ruins need to be considered with attention if not reverence. As our culture evolves they continue telling a story if we will listen. They have the unexpected ability to reconnect themselves with the actual world. "Cathedrals in the Desert" was the name given many huge projects of the mid 20th century Italian economic boom. Products of the Kafkaesque inefficiency of that political / bureaucratic world, they were developed but never completed. Nevertheless they sometimes contained their own redemption. For instance the Barene of S. Giuliano in the Venice Lagoon were the object of a grandiose plan for the development of an oil refinery, begun in the 1960s but eventually abandoned unfinished, leaving deep, exposed concrete foundations.

After some time the area spontaneously re-naturalized and the geometric pattern of the concrete "tubs" became a fascinating wetland of extraordinary natural value. The burden of removing the "error" often preserves it until the time is right for its redemption.

Likewise unused SR520 off-ramps northwest of Seattle's Arboretum are significant. In a city that loves demolition, having systematically removed churches, theatres, even its mythical seventh hill, thereby creating the Denny Regrade, it's remarkable that these ramps are still standing. They were built in the 60s, fortunately never connected and never resolved. Today they incongruously unwind in the arboretum and Portage Bay, a reminder that action before thought is a deadly sin.

Many times, sitting in traffic on SR520, I have considered this debris with curiosity, wondering what can be done with it. The ramps wait for a resolution that can give them dignity and bring them into the fold of the city. The Arboretum Master Plan suggests reusing them as a "multi-use link" (including bicycles and service vehicles) to the present Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). I believe, instead, they should become a protagonist in the overall design of the city rather than a diminutive version of the original intent. I propose they be transformed into a linear park where one loses oneself in the linear labyrinth of Borges, a potential *green* connection between MOHAI and the Arboretum, along paths and hills, conservatories and creeks. The whimsical effect of a park passing over the highway with dynamic vistas, overlaying vegetation on concrete super-imposed on the original riparian groves of phragmites and salix, offering alternative approaches to the water with ramps and small docks, would be enchantingly subversive. The linear character of such a park reinterprets, in an inside-out way, the original intention of the ramps. Symbolically, its linear quality forces the user along an axis that cannot be abandoned, follow to the end or return in your tracks. Similar to the use of the car ramps, it is parallel with the original postulate.


The idea that the park becomes a 4th nature in the redevelopment of this infrastructure is enthralling. Peter Latz writes "it is time to integrate ecology and design in order to develop new types of nature." This opportunity does not sanctify the by-product but returns it to the pulse of the city, becoming a forum for the larger debate about city and its approach toward the reuse of its ruins. *Michele Marquardi is an Italian architect who worked for 20 years on the territorial infrastructure of his region before transferring to Seattle and founding the architectural firm Studio Ectypos with Lucia Pirzio-Biroli.*





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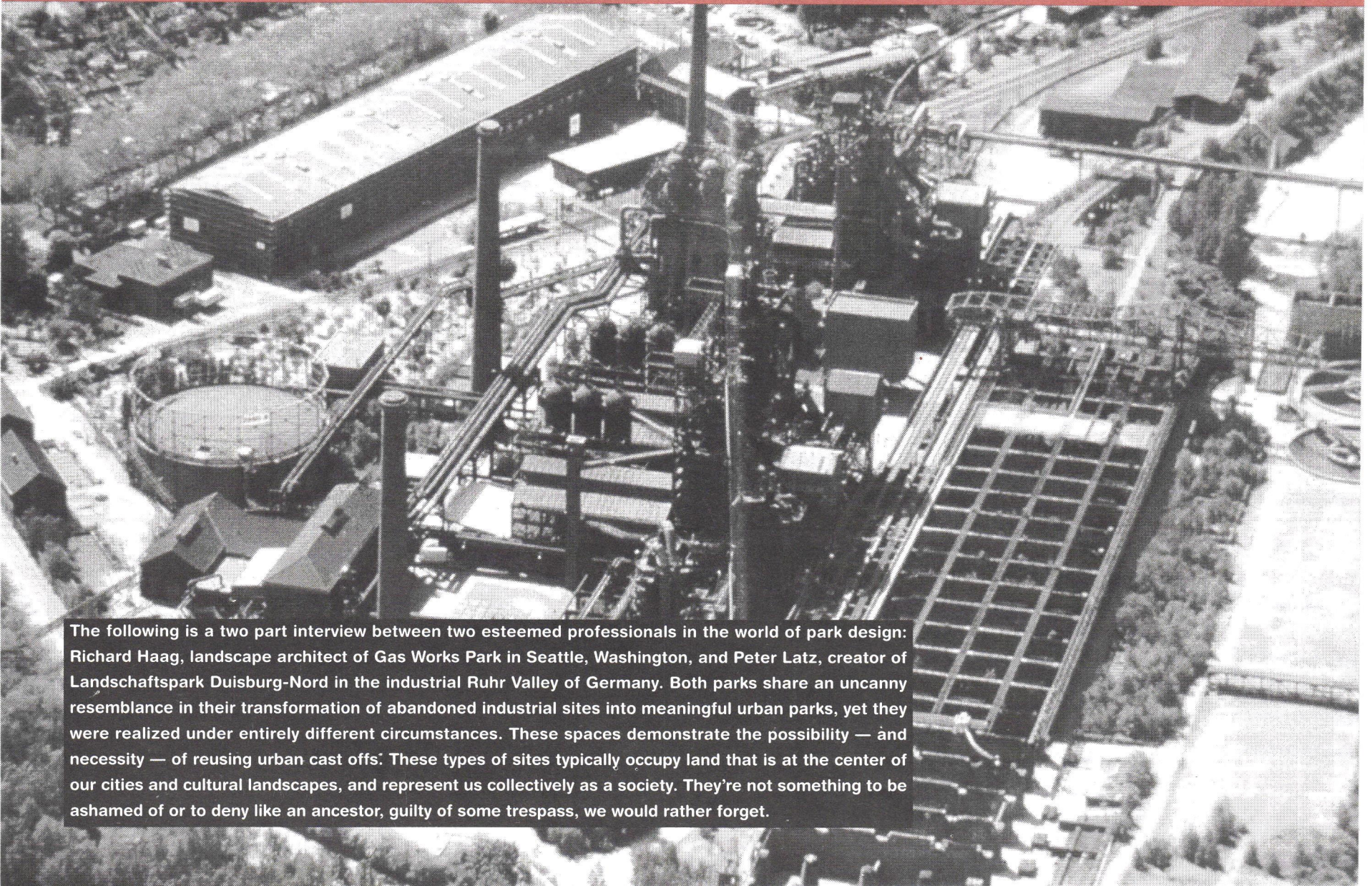
Opposite page, top to bottom: An abandoned ship moored on a breakwater in Anacortes, Washington imagined as a botanical tree garden. Photo by Studio Ectypos; montage and drawing by writer. A view through the windshield at the proposed "Offramps to Somewhere" whimsical park on SR520. Photo by Studio Ectypos; montage and drawing by writer. Abandoned stone windmill towers marking the landscape of Bodrum, Turkey. Photo by Studio Ectypos. Above: Plan of the transformation of the "Offramps to Somewhere" whimsical park. Aerial photo by Pacific Aerial Surveys; montage and drawing by writer.



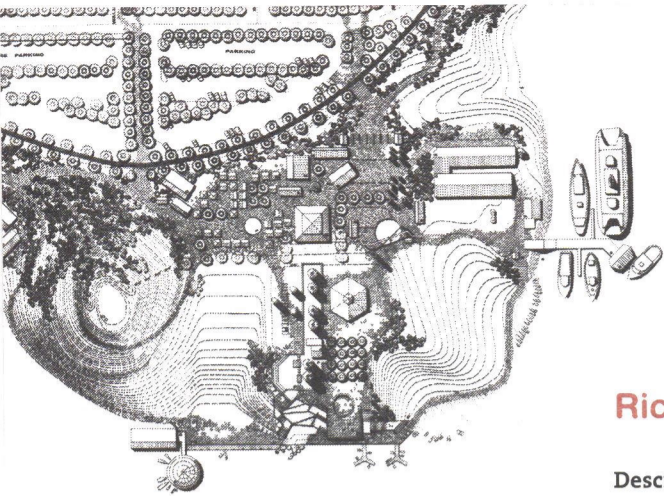
*This page, top: Aerial photo of Gas Works site as Richard Haag found it.
Below: Aerial photo of the Duisburg-Nord site as Peter Latz found it.
Opposite page: Richard Haag's site plan for Gas Works Park.
All images of Gas Works are from Richard Haag.*

Adaptive Re-use, Layering of Meaning on Sites of Industrial Ruin

RICHARD HAAG AND PETER LATZ WITH LUCIA PIRZIO-BIROLI



The following is a two part interview between two esteemed professionals in the world of park design: Richard Haag, landscape architect of Gas Works Park in Seattle, Washington, and Peter Latz, creator of Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord in the industrial Ruhr Valley of Germany. Both parks share an uncanny resemblance in their transformation of abandoned industrial sites into meaningful urban parks, yet they were realized under entirely different circumstances. These spaces demonstrate the possibility — and necessity — of reusing urban cast offs. These types of sites typically occupy land that is at the center of our cities and cultural landscapes, and represent us collectively as a society. They're not something to be ashamed of or to deny like an ancestor, guilty of some trespass, we would rather forget.



RICHARD HAAG
FELLOW ASLA, HON. AIA PRINCIPAL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Richard Haag has received numerous honors and awards including a Fulbright in Japan, a residence at the American Academy in Rome, and the ASLA Medal for 2003, and is the only person to twice receive the American Society of Landscape Architects Presidents' Award for Design Excellence for Gas Works Park, Seattle, Washington, and The Sequence of Gardens at Bloedel Reserve, Bainbridge Island, Washington. He is the founder of and Professor Emeritus in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington, and continues to teach and lecture internationally. Gas Works Park was just awarded the Cultural Landscape Foundation Landscape Stewardship Excellence Award 2004.

Richard Haag on GAS WORKS PARK

Describe the site as you found it.

The 13-acre gas plant began manufacturing synthetic gas in 1906 on the shore of a bog. Coal carried by railroad fuelled the operation until a 1936 shift to bunker oil delivered by tanker when the Government Locks raised the water level 2 meters and the bog became Lake Union. The original site hardened and extended into the lake, forming a 20-acre peninsula; a layer cake of industrial afterbirth. In 1956, natural gas replaced manufactured gas as Seattle's primary energy source. The derelict structures stood in decaying disarray in a toxic wasteland until the early 1970s when radical concepts of a new kind of public park took form.

How did your ideas come about?

Earlier commissions and commitments, some won, some lost, against the constabulary of convention set me up to follow what, I believe, is a universal fascination with decay. During the 50s and 60s the U.S. suffered growing pains of rampant commercialism, slum clearance and urban renewal. Then there was the ghostly spirit of the site as I found it in 1969. I haunted that place and discovered:

- no sensuous earth forms, but a dead level wasteland;
- no craggy rock outcroppings, but peaks of rusty roofs;
- no thickets, but a maze of tubes and pipes;
- no sacred forests, but towering totems of iron;
- no seductive pools, but pits of tar; and
- no plants (not even invasive exotics) had been able to secure a root hold in 15 years.

It needed a new vision. Originally I pledged to save the most sacred structure, the largest oxygen generator tower. But why not save its spouse, then the two sets of twins—who would break up a family? The contract was signed in 1970 and the city occupied the site three years later. This lag time proved to be crucial to gestate our seemingly indefensible approach and sell the idea of a park — created in an aesthetic no man's land and an ecologic disaster zone — to the public. We promoted the concept of a new kind of people's park that paid homage to our rich Olmsted legacy, complementing it through contrast.

How was the park commissioned?

The commission for GWP was a consolation prize to break a hung jury on a competition for another park. There was no formal program for "Lake Union Park," only a wish list of typical passive park activities. My firm was commissioned to propose the scope of services, including site analysis, program of activities, a conceptual Master Plan, design development, construction documents, and supervision. As necessary, consultants were brought on board, the architect was in my office. The sculptor, Charles Greening was chosen to design and build the auto-gnomonic sundial.

When did work begin?

Actual selective demolition contracts were let in 1971. In 1972 some adaptive use contracts followed our pioneering in situ bio-remediation experiments of revivifying indigenous bacteria to devour hydrocarbon pollutants proved to be successful (see ARCADE, 19.4, Spring 2001, "Gas Works at Work" by Patricia Tusa Fels). Without this demonstration, the concept would have collapsed, leaving Seattle with a clay-capped conventional park, sans structures, or worse, the site would have been traded or sold to a developer.

When was the site realized as you envisioned it?

In 1973 the Seattle Parks Department took possession and contracts for adaptive re-use, converting the boiler building into the picnic shed, and the exhauster building into the play barn, were let. Subsequently other construction followed but today the park is not complete as approved.

Why do you think your ideas were accepted? Was there public debate surrounding them? If any, what was the impact on the project?

In 1970 the cultural climate was in a state of shock from the Vietnam debacle, the emergence of the civil rights movement, and the disaffection of young citizens against the "system." The concept of crafting a park featuring "forgotten works" greatly appealed to the younger generation while older generations lobbied for the stereotypical image of "park" such as English pastoralism. A divisive public debate raged, fueled by the two daily newspapers opposing one another. Although the concept — not yet defined in a master plan — was endorsed by the Seattle Design Commission and American Institute of Architects, the Parks Department called for a public presentation to the City Council. Ten days later the Council unanimously approved the concept and program. The master plan took form, emboldened by strong political support. Important factors contributing to the realization of the park, a "fossil" factory in a degraded site, were:

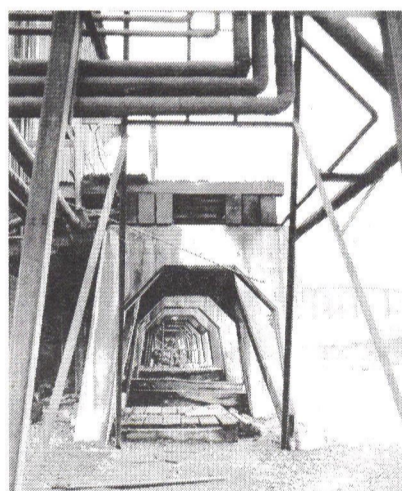
- A. 3-year lead time to study the site, develop an approach, and promote it to the public.
- B. First demonstration of bio remediation.
- C. Public demonstration of adaptive use, by recycling the blacksmith building into our on-site design office.
- D. Develop a new math: by applying the savings accrued by not demolishing, the cost of reconstruction of historic buildings is less expensive than new construction.
- E. Under the current policies of the Environmental Protective Agency, the Department of Ecology and Barrier Free Legislation, Gas Works Park could not have been built. Replication of the GWP prototype will not occur in the US unless we invoke good science and good economics against the conspiracy of the regulators and their engineers.
- F. The site analysis directly supported the concept, which is not surprising since the concept (by revelation) preceded the site studies. >>

Was the park realized with private or public funding?

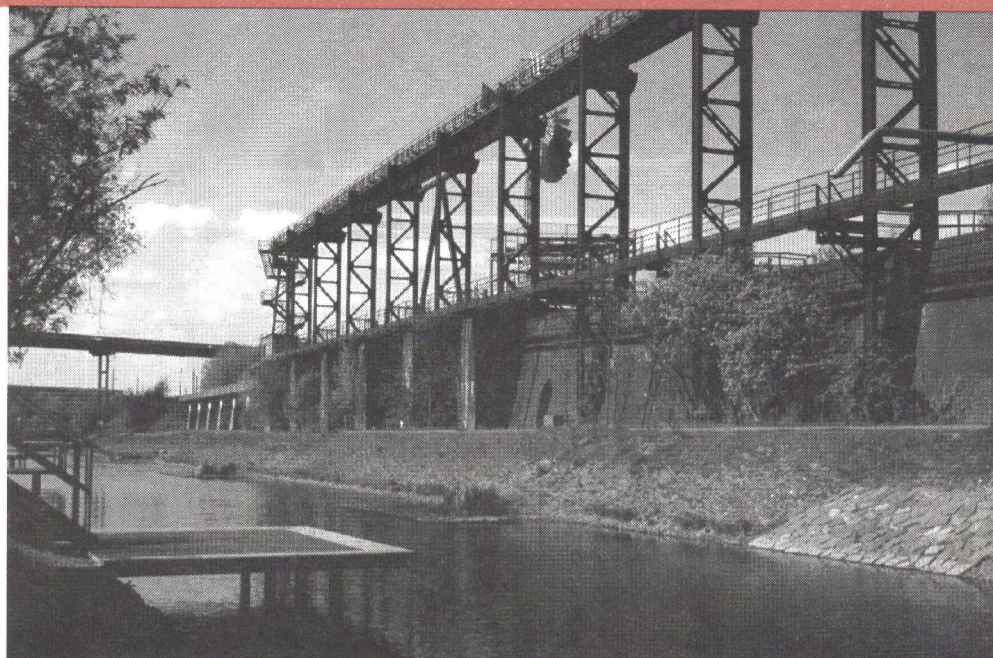
Funding was public. Funding for the future camera obscura, tower walk and interpretive center, however, may be private. The City was coerced by the State Department of Ecology to install a redundant \$5 million benzene extraction system that negated the bioremediation process. The ongoing threat to demolish the six generating towers has been fended off by the concerted effort of a private watchdog non-profit, The Friends of Gas Works Park (FoGWP), founded in 1994 and successful in having GWP designated a City and State Landmark. National Registration is pending. (The mission of the FoGWP is to promote the acclaimed park design of Richard Haag and interpret the park's industrial past and technology through imaginative recycling of the totemic artifacts of this former source of industrial light and energy into a place of recreation and cultural renewal for the benefit of the local, regional, and international community.)

How do you think Gas Works Park has impacted thinking about public parks?

Gas Works Park is well accepted as a special people place, a park with the greatest sense of light, space, weather, prospect and refuge that is presided over by the worlds only surviving ruins of a gas works.

**PETER LATZ**

Peter Latz is a German born landscape architect practicing in Europe since 1965. He has been honoured recently in 2001 with the Grande Médaille d'Urbanisme, Académie d'Architecture, Paris, and in 2000 with the First European Prize for Landscape Architecture, Rosa Barba, Barcelona. He teaches and lectures internationally and has been a professor and chair of landscape architecture and planning at the Technical University of Munich since 1983. He is presently an adjunct professor at the GSFA at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Peter Latz on LANDSCHAFTSPARK DUISBURG-NORD****What was the site like when you found it?**

The future landscape park was a huge 230-hectare conglomerate of sites shut down for years like the cokery and the mine; sites recently shut down such as the blast furnace plant; and of parts still in production like the foundries. All stages of succession and functions of this large "collective combine" were identifiable, particularly the railway connections. They were almost the only links to other parts of the plant. At the beginning of our project they were still in good shape and very visible. Today you can reach the heart of the park with railroad cars. We experienced the "brownfield" and the plant just left and cooling down with the liquid iron of the foundries.

How did your ideas come about?

In the early eighties we worked on the "Hafeninsel" or "River Port Island Park" in the Saar region, at first only theoretically. Realization began in 1985 and it was inaugurated in 1989. There I learned how the *genius loci* can be fixed to ruins of the past and linked to new elements and new uses. As a child, in the evening, the light of the Bessemer converter of a nearby steel mill coloured the ceiling of our bedroom deeply red. I also saw clearly that the total demolition in the southern Ruhr, beginning in the '60s and called "modernization," destroyed the relationships and history of many people. Another essential influence was the mid-European archetypal myths. Could they be transposed on to the special place? Can individual memories and stories that are not associated with the place but with culture gain recognition in this system? How will a blast furnace turn into a dragon?

What was the nature of the competition you won for Duisburg?

It was an international invitational competition based on the invitee's experience and past work. It was also cooperative. The individual teams worked at the site in the same large room. The competition lasted one year. We were obliged to give interim reports every three months, explaining the reasons for our results and discussing them with numerous citizens' committees and interest groups. There was no program. The program

was the object of the competition to be developed by the competitors. The project itself was independent but was a part of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park. There was only one architect on our team. Throughout the development of the project, however, numerous engineering firms, pollution specialists, industrial archaeologists, etc. were consulted for the respective parts being prepared for realization. Consequently the teams were very flexible. The jury participated throughout the process: the town of Duisburg, the IBA Emscher Park, the citizens' groups, some specialists of our profession, and politicians of the town.

When was the competition won and work begun?

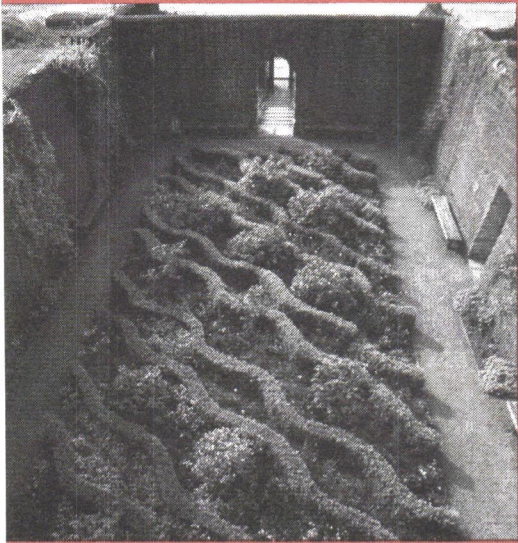
We won the competition in 1991. Work began immediately. The first stages could be identified as the "Securing of Spaces." The different parts of the park were single, very restricted projects, that had to be coordinated individually with the politicians and promoters.

When was the park realized?

It will always be necessary to complete something. You could, however, define the end of construction in the year 2002. I would like to stress one very important phase within this realization: the difficulty of dealing with the non-gramineous neophytic vegetation, imported from all over the world during the active processing of iron ore, and by now an important part of the ecology of the site but outside the gardener's repertoire. We had the time to test, develop and train gardeners for the specific task. They have taken on the vegetation management completely and become skilled enough to preserve these special fields of vegetation (in this case three types).

Why do you think your ideas were accepted?

We were convinced it should be possible for all groups of users to develop their own specific interpretation of the space. Our interventions were cautious and sometimes hard to recognize. The possibility of climbing the blast furnace, an important part of the park, found its expression in detail. A principle of the design is that nothing should work against the existing pattern, no bridges or paths lying at an angle to the original struc



A principle of the design is that nothing should work against the existing pattern, no bridges or paths lying at an angle to the original structures.

Opposite page, far left: Train trestle as it was found on Gas Works site. Opposite page, top: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. The new clear water channel, copyright Christa Panick. Above: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. Bunker gardens—hortensia garden. Copyright Michael Latz. Right: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord. Cowperplace with blast furnace and grid of cherries. Copyright Christa Panick.

ures. Our idea was to accept or find it interesting to walk like the locomotive runs; the users should adjust to the movement of the locomotive, not merely walk along its path. In this way we preserved a great deal of it while at the same time changed the use completely.

What was the cultural climate of the time?

The Ruhr district had become an economic disaster. Renewing this formerly very important industrial area of Europe was a local tour de force. The old rules tried earlier in the southern Ruhr had proven unsuccessful. The need for new symbols and new ideas was one of the reasons for the IBA Emscher Park.

Was there public debate that surrounded them? If so, what impact did it have on the project?

There were strong political debates during the planning of the project and its realization. Even the union of landscape architects campaigned against the project saying our ideas offended the eternal rules of the profession. The resulting project was more precise, especially with respect to the users' ability to interpret it. Through open dialogue they gained insights into other levels of planning. The main principle of this park was that it be directly realized in its structure and be eternally open in its details. Discussion with conservationists, hydraulic engineers, the water resources offices, strongly influenced the different planning stages. It is difficult to compare the spatial sectors — the water system with the bunker gardens for instance — because they had very different degrees of freedom. Economy was an important principle employed by the IBA Emscher Park. Every time a planner proposed a more economic solution, he realized it. When the cost was higher he was obliged to find another solution.

How was the park realized with private or public funding?

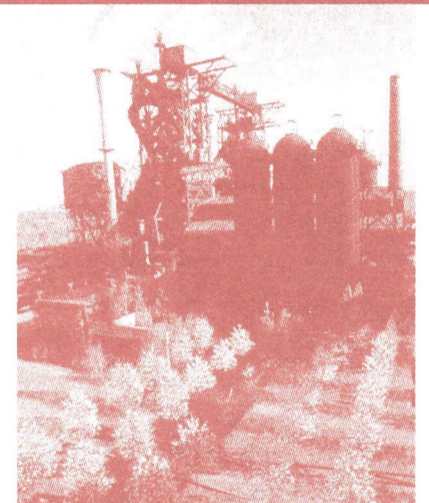
It was realized with public funds. Some objects, however, especially buildings, were put into private ownership contributing considerably to the park's budget. Today a management company operates these buildings, earning money leasing them and securing their maintenance. The maintenance of the park in general is still public responsibility.

How do you think the project has impacted thinking about the public park?

I don't think breaking or changing paradigms impacts societal understanding or that users and municipal administrators see the identities of parks differently, just as our profession doesn't. Every visitor to the park — and there are many thousands — is surprised by the number of people using it even in winter. Residents of the surrounding quarters and region are using it so naturally as if no other parks ever existed, without realizing this completely different approach. I'm especially happy that the youth have conquered it and use it until late at night. Young people, even on ice-cold New Year's Eve, are up on the blast furnace's charging platform. The worldwide recognition of this park has given me more confidence in my "structuralist" approach, understanding existing structures as information systems. It has reinforced my theory that landscape is composed of a wealth of selectable information layers covering one another up and presenting themselves as coincidental images only to the beholder. It is most important to maintain these information layers and complete them—the opposite of mono-structured information. I expressed this in my teaching long before these parks were realized. At Saarbrücken, I submitted, for the first time, the different information layers of a park as a plan refusing to draw an overall design or master plan.

Palimpsest correctly describes this park, more precisely an endless palimpsest. (Reference "The Anti-Olmsted" by Arthur Lubow in the May 16, 2004, issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. Alan Tate said "These landscapes are palimpsests... No matter how little we intervene, we're putting another layer on top of what was there previously.") I am convinced that the public will bring further information layers to it — even if they are only idealistic.

Contrary to other projects, artists are not in the foreground here because the whole work has become an open artwork exactly on the basis of Palimpsest. The real knowledge about the production characterizing this space for 150 years defines the genius of the place, not its ruinous character. This also applies to numerous scientific details of the technical and social processes,



the connection between the plant and its social surroundings. Landscape is the cultural result of the work of generations. To preserve these cultural layers and feature them, the "new design" should exercise restraint.

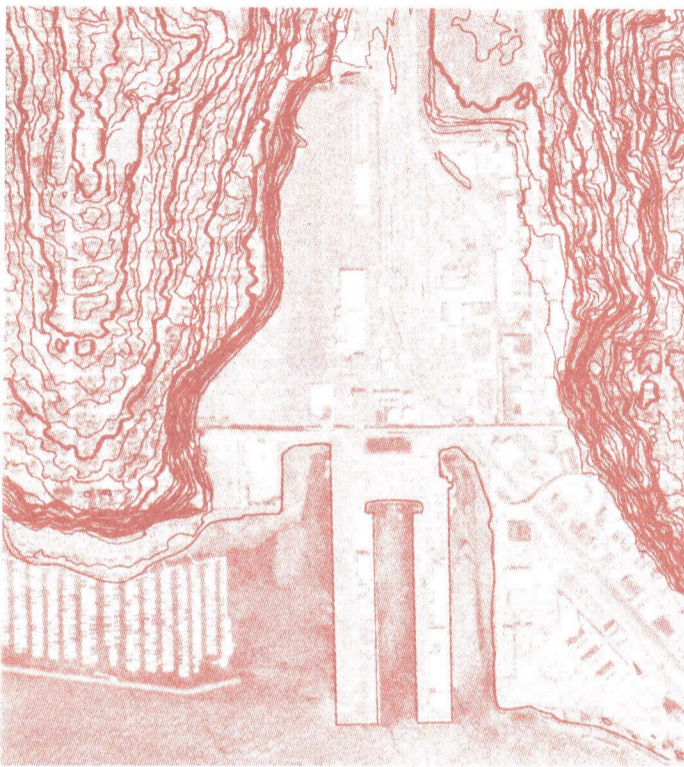
A principle objective here is not only transformation as an abstract system, but the addition of information layers, not functional ones. Instead of ore, the storage bins of the bunker plant now shelter water, seal polluted material, or, beautiful, gardens. Without relinquishing their image of heavy brutal concrete walls continuing to be containers, they are filled with the most important repertoire of our ideas, the reiteration of paradise and so forth.

In an ecologically or more sustainably oriented world, nature and technology have to present themselves homogeneously or even identically. For a new clean water system, we used the profile of the old wastewater channel to avoid contact with the polluted ground all around. This artefact restores natural processes in an environment of devastation. The processes follow the rules of ecology, but are initiated and maintained by means of technology. Man uses this artefact as a symbol for nature, but remains in charge of the process. The system is both entirely natural and entirely artificial.

Interbay: A New View(point)

LESLEY BAIN

At the north end of Elliott Bay, the Interbay site represents Seattle's most powerful set of physical and cultural layers, and enormous unmet potential. Once an estuary, its reconstructed industrial flatland lies 140 feet below the bluffs of Magnolia and Queen Anne hill. Historically, the site has been used to meet the evolving requirements of rail and shipping and provisioning needs for the military and for fishing fleets.



Above: A topographic map and aerial photo of the existing condition at Interbay. Below: A conceptual section of the proposed layers at Interbay. Graphic by Kevin Tabari.

Interbay is an un-built link in the 1909 Olmsted Plan, and remains a required connection between Magnolia and the rest of the city, including the increasingly important one along Elliott Bay. The natural layers of water, landform and woodland remain striking even with the intense changes that industry has brought to it.

Seattle's waterfront development often pits the marine industrial sector against commercial and residential development. For Interbay, the future need not be an "either/or" choice between industry and mixed-use development. The real potential for this site lies in crafting an inter-related set of contrasting uses and qualities that literally layer, where necessary, or merge where creative design allows.

Where industrial uses require separation, physical isolation may result. Considered three-dimensionally, Interbay lends itself to a layering of industrial uses at the water level, with a raised public realm over the rail lines and secured Port property.

Raising the public realm allows for a public "balcony" overlooking Elliott Bay and downtown. This is not a new idea in Seattle. Steinbrueck Park overlooks the water, shielding the view of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Another powerful use of the public balcony is the Brooklyn Promenade, one of New York City's beloved spaces overlooking lower Manhattan. The Promenade is built over the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, with Brooklyn's piers further below.

As long as Port activities at-grade are secured, the powerful desire line from the shoreline paths to Smith Cove can only be complete above grade. From an upper level, currently the sidewalk of the Magnolia Bridge, views sweep across the piers, downtown and the water. At grade, much of the view is blocked or across acres of pavement.

Proposed transportation infrastructure makes Interbay especially suited to layering uses. The main-line railroad tracks separate people and vehicles from the waterfront and Magnolia, requiring some form of grade change in any scenario. Monorail plans include a station there that would bring people down from a third level. The potential juncture of bus, passenger rail, water transportation, waterfront trolley, monorail and a reservoir of parking make it an ideal transportation hub. This confluence of transportation systems also occurs at a point with excellent pedestrian and bicycle connections between downtown and the north, expanding the reach of the hub.

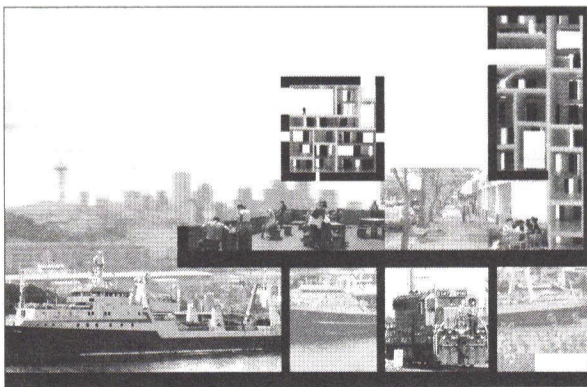
But Interbay should be a destination in itself, central to a cluster of diverse activities. Planning is underway for three public projects — the relocation of the Magnolia Bridge, development in the uplands area, and the monorail. These projects should work together so that an enormous investment of public funds creates

an infrastructure to help achieve the site's rich potential. The bridge could become the backbone of the new, "inhabited" raised grade level. A simple grid of structure could allow flexible use of the lower level for the industrial activities, such as cold storage, that do not seek or want light.

At the balcony level, a promenade takes advantage of the view, with a variety of activities to enliven the space. Midrise offices could capture views, and may be associated with the industrial activities on the lower level. Lower level uses would continue to be job creator that bring low rents to the Port, while the upper level, if designed well, could be some of the most sought-after space in the city.

The natural layer is fundamental to the site, and good development increasingly incorporates natural systems, and mixes uses in ways once considered incompatible. Cary Moon, landscape and urban designer, has proposed juxtaposing and intermixing ecological and industrial layers. Her proposal recreates salmon habitat, constructing a series of weirs that begin at a natural spring at the north end of the site, collecting clean water and making the movement of the water toward the Bay part of the structure of a revitalized natural habitat. The constructed salmon stream is linear in the uplands, where the path runs through a mixture of industrial uses, natural features and incorporated art. Where the waterway empties into Elliott Bay the shoreline is reshaped into a functioning estuary. The intent of mixing the layers is integrating a healthy ecosystem with a healthy economic system.

The coincidence of natural systems, public realm, transportation and developable acreage is an exceptional opportunity. This is the public's space, owned by the Port of Seattle, whose mission includes the creation of new sustainable employment opportunities and community benefits. Interbay's future development deserves the thoughtfulness that reflects our time and values. This exceptional site requires thoughtful, coordinated efforts and boldness to live up to its multi-faceted potential within the region. *Lesley Bain is a partner at Weinstein AU in Seattle, Washington.*





To know a physical place, you must become intimate with it.

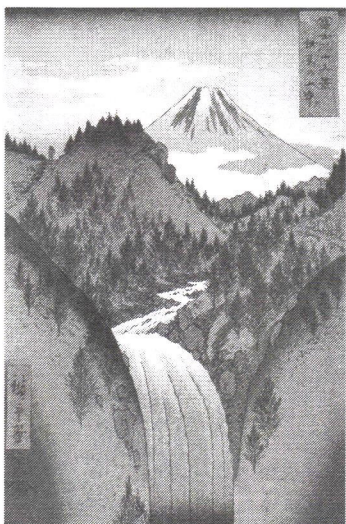
—BARRY LOPEZ, *THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS*

Left: Edward Hopper, *Methodist Church (Church Yard, Cape Elizabeth)*, 1929. Watercolor on paper, 13¹⁵/₁₆ x 19¹⁵/₁₆ inches. Gift of Mrs. Corydon Wagner, Sr. Image courtesy of Tacoma Art Museum. Below: Utagawa Hiroshige, *In the Midst of the Izu Mountains (Izu no Sanchu)*, 1850. From the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji (Fuji Sanj_Rokkei)*. Woodblock print, 14⁷/₈ x 9³/₈ inches. Gift of Mrs. James W. Lyon. Image courtesy of Tacoma Art Museum.

A Sense of Place

PATRICIA MCDONNELL

People experience and inhabit their surroundings in their own, personalized manner. Yet they also gravitate to certain locales and respond to settings in ways informed by cultural habit. One of the core arguments of postmodern thought has been that essences and universals in human nature do not exist. Rather, humans develop ways of being out of cultural, political and historical realities, and the tropes that emerge from these realities influence our patterns of thought, rituals, and most basic human interactions. Even one's response to place is shaped by cultural construction. As cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan noted, "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (*Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*).



Gifted minds in diverse disciplines have been grappling with and forming a refined understanding of this phenomenon for decades: J.B. Jackson and Yi-Fu Tuan as well as sage nature writers, novelists, and artists. The Tacoma Art Museum recently put on view 35 works from the permanent collection that address the artists' articulation of place. From a French 1880s coastline, to Harlem streets in the 1930s, to the oyster light of the Pacific Northwest today, the art reveals distinctive artistic and cultural characteristics in thinking about place.

Edward Hopper's 1929 watercolor *Methodist Church (Church Yard, Cape Elizabeth)* is a telling example. This gifted painter pierced the surface noise of modern life portraying an often melancholic, yet poignant sensibility. Hopper spent his summers in the 1920s roaming New England. In 1929, he depicted the rural church of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, from an unusual side perspective with gravestones. Capturing an elegiac mood of the moment was clearly more important to Hopper than presenting a postcard vision of the quaint church with its spire. About a similar painting, the artist commented, "there is a sort of elation about the sunlight on the upper part of the house. You know, there are many thoughts, many impulses, that go into a picture. ...I was more interested in the sunlight on the buildings... than in any symbolism" (*Edward Hopper*). The late afternoon

sun on the building's west side lent a special pathos to the setting that Hopper worked quickly to capture. The uneasy realism speaks volumes about the ennui and alienation that Hopper perceived in modern America and then described through this churchyard scene.

A large-scale painting by contemporary painter James Lavadour presents a related but alternate statement about place. "I owe everything about my art to the land," the artist commented. "It's where I was educated, where I dreamed, got solace and empowerment" (*Contemporary Art in the Northwest*). Lavadour grew up around and continues to live on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, outside Pendleton, Oregon. Though initially experienced by viewers as abstract, the 1990–91 *Release of the Sun* evokes a specific landscape. The shifts in bold color, sweeping paint strokes and smears, and fragmented canvas panels distill Lavadour's response to the mountainous terrain of northeastern Oregon. The pictorial abstraction translates this artist's rootedness to place into one of modernity's important visual vocabularies. Similarly, Dutch artist Piet Mondrian formulated Holland's unhilled and dyked landscape in an abstract matrix of plane and pure color.

The significance of place and artists' ability to frame and translate the power of their surroundings lies at the core of *A Sense of Place: Selections from the Tacoma Art Museum Collection*, on view through January 15, 2006. Artists Anne Appleby, Thomas Hart Benton, Eugène Boudin, Kenneth Callahan, Randy Hayes, Utagawa Hiroshige, Jacob Lawrence, Kenjiro Nomura and many others, extend the range of this display across time and continents. Collectively, the assembly proves Ralph Waldo Emerson's statement: "The difference between landscape and landscape is small, but there is great difference in the beholders" (*The Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson*). Patricia McDonnell is Chief Curator at Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington. Dr. McDonnell focuses on the relationships between art and culture, emphasizing the larger context from which works of art develop in her various curatorial and scholarly projects.

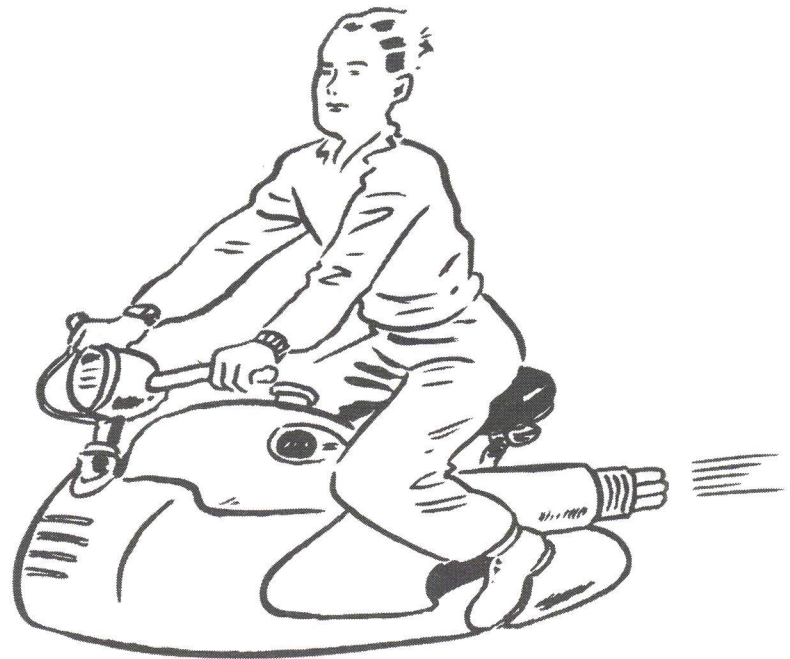
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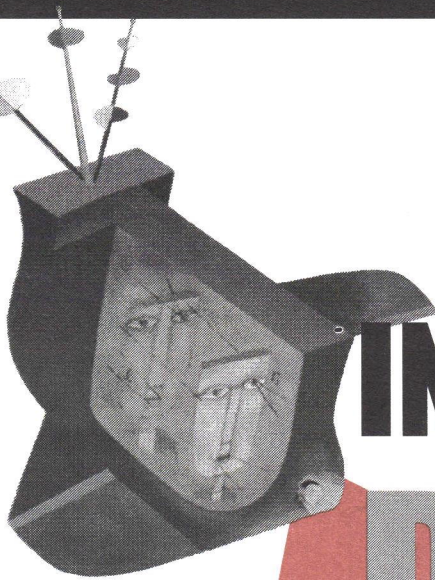

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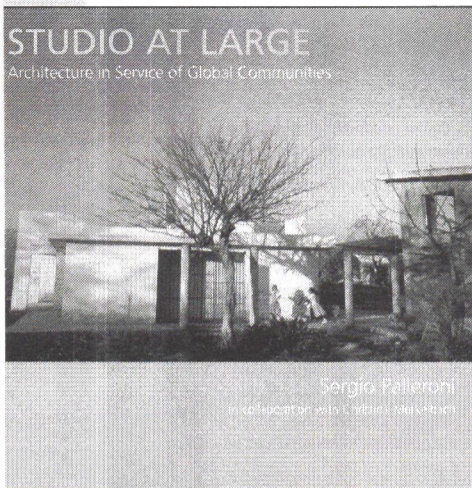
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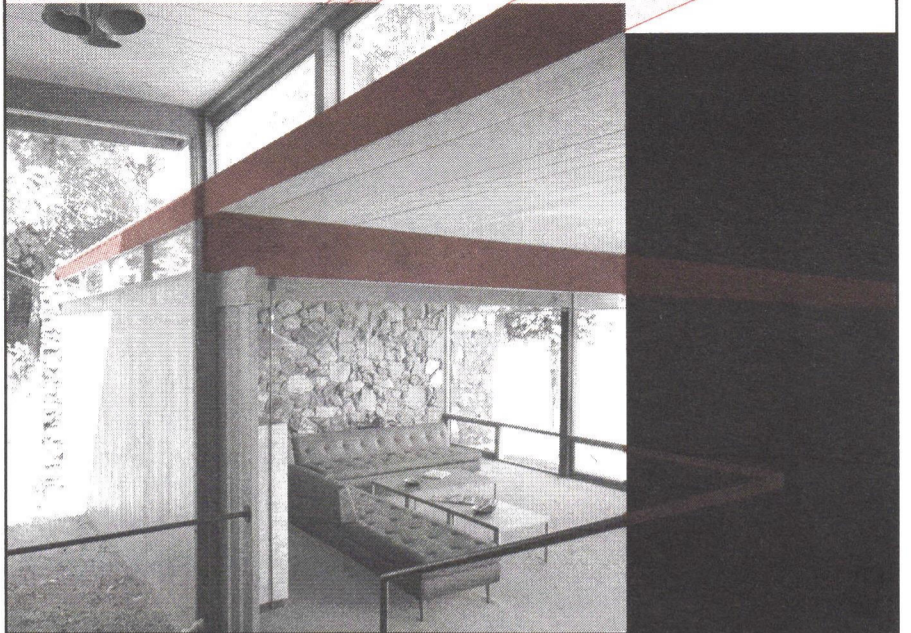


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Some folks are just
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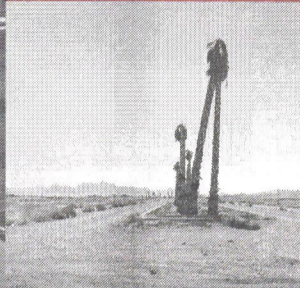


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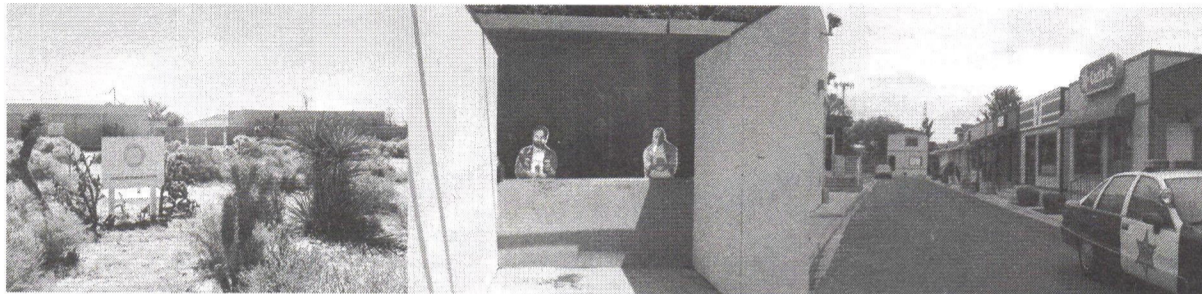
**TRANSPARADISO
BARBARA HOLUB + PAUL RAJAKOVICS**

The recent exhibition at the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), *Emergency State—First Responder and Law Enforcement Training Architecture*, depicted a multitude of special training sites for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). It confronted us directly with topics we have been working on for years: tactics and urbanism. Struck by the density of facilities and their elaborate infrastructure – constructed as condensed simulacra of existing urban environments – one cannot help thinking of Hollywood sets: clean like a model in expectation of the “catastrophe.” One of the most realistic simulated police training villages in California is the Tactical Training Center in the City of Orange. It was built in the 1980s, on a small scale, where distances are reduced and the hunt for suspects happens in a condensed time frame. These training parks wage *war on crime* in perfectly equipped simulations of reality, providing safe distance to the *real* problems of society.

The CLUI was founded in 1994 as an institution between research and artistic intervention that is “dedicated to the increase and diffusion of information about how the world’s land is apportioned, utilized and perceived.” Their network stretches across the United States, but one of the main areas of investigation is the California desert, particularly in the Desert Research Station in Hinkley, near Barstow, which the CLUI took over in 2000 as one of the two main outposts of the Center. Their projects are often funded by government institutions despite the critical nature of their investigations.

We asked Matthew Coolidge, one of the founding members of the CLUI, how it was possible to get permission to intrude upon these secret places: “We run into these issues of secrecy quite often. A couple of years ago we made a project on Nellis Range in southern Nevada, which is the largest restricted space in the US; the area has been closed to the public since WWII. Our project was called “landscape of conjecture” because people projected their ideas onto the sites; they populated it and built it up in their imaginations to conform to their ideas about society. Initially the airforce and the managers of the facilities were very supportive, but post September 11, a lot changed—now there is a new level of resistance. The military is less concerned about their future; places that have been abandoned are being used again.”

“It’s impossible to be objective. It’s a platonic ideal. We try to be objective and to let the landscape speak for itself. Where the curation takes place, there is a lot of interpretation.” Matthew Coolidge, Director of Programming, Center for Land Use Interpretation



The selection of “hot” topics and their “cold” presentation as facts without comment opens up a wide range of speculation, not only on the activities of the CLUI, but also on the institutions and structures that are targets of their research. The “profession without a profile,” which CLUI developed, can be looked at under the lens of the traditional profession of the geographer who had importance especially in Romanic countries like Spain during its colonial period. The aspect of psycho-geography that the Situationists developed in the early 1960s measured the urban scape by involving emotional aspects in addition to traditional urbanistic practice. Again, the CLUI refuses these categories and their work refrains from any romantic undertones one would expect when dealing with the desert and issues of secrecy.

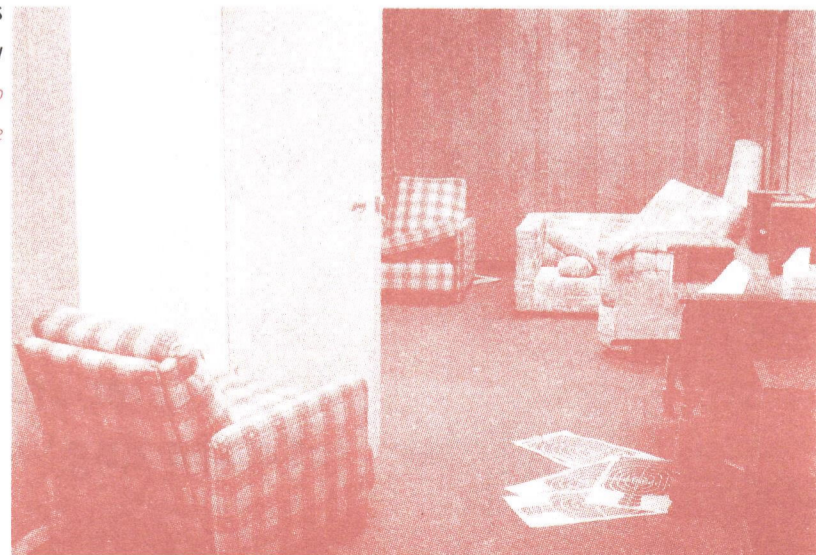
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According to Matthew Coolidge, “The Mojave as urbanized desert has all the issues of an urban environment, but diluted. Palmdale and Castor are often cited as places with a variety of urban and suburban issues. The romantics of the place can often be conducive to certain dystopic qualities that people like to see in those kinds of environments, but in reality, it’s like any kind of environment. Trash does not disappear magically like it does in real cities.”

The interesting question is how triggering speculation can contribute to a closer and more critical look at reality, or facts being presented as reality. Especially when looking at the logo and presentation of the CLUI, one is not quite sure if this institution is a government organization, like a Bureau of Land Management, or if it’s a private institution dealing with “secret” qualities of functional uses.

When – under the Bush administration – each harmless tourist photo can imply a possible threat, we can only speculate about the impact of the projects of CLUI and their very informative and comprehensive Web site archive found at www.clui.org. (See “In Possession of a Picture,” Julia Meltzer and David Thorne, *dérive, Magazine for Urban Research*, Vienna, #17, Oct–Dec 2004.) And it’s exactly there that the CLUI achieves a vital position in fighting paranoia. Presenting debatable uses such as land consuming mega projects and diverted manifestations of socio-economic realities as facts, reduces the fear of uncertain uses or modern myths of the desert, and increases the sensibility in dealing with the desert as off-site of industrial and military secret projects. The final interpretation is left up to the consumer.

transparadiso
— Barbara Holub & Paul Rajakovics principals — is an artist/architect collaborative based in Vienna, Austria.



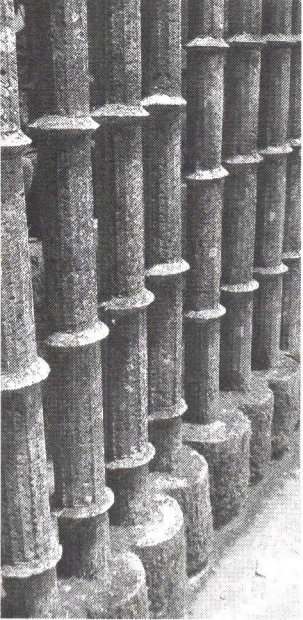
Tactical Training Center. This is a small “Hogan’s Alley”-type facility (a name that comes from the FBI’s training town in Virginia), with a number of alleys and corridors that terminate at fixed and moving targets. It was improved and modified following the notorious 1999 North Hollywood shootout involving heavily armed bank robbers who alarmed police with their firepower. Photo by CLUI. Tactical Training Center, Orange Cty. Sheriff’s Dept. The five simulated businesses are sponsored by the companies themselves, which support their maintenance through donations to police community foundations. Photo by CLUI.

RIGHT: Weapons Team Engagement Trainer Building at the Tactics and Survival Training Facility / LA Cty. Sheriff’s Dept. Photo by CLUI.



Las Poza

He named Las Pozas for the series of clear terrace pools that cluster around the base of two hundred vertical feet of cascading waterfalls.



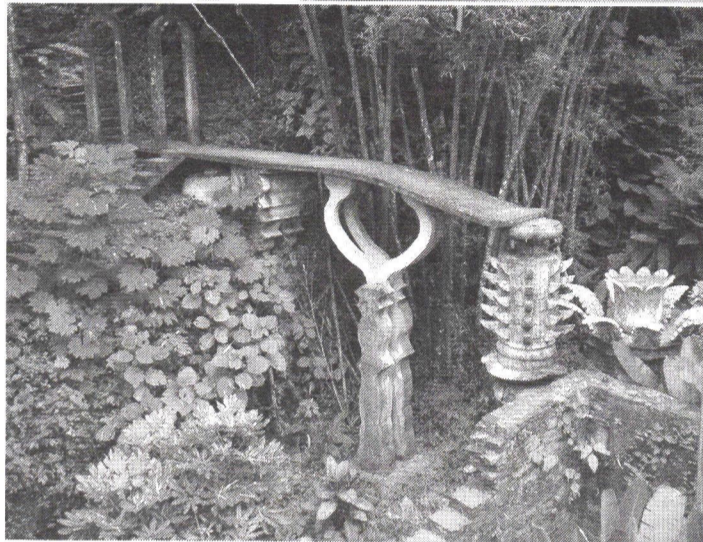
STEVEN KOCH + JOHN CAVA

Hidden in the Mexican village of Xilitla in the tropical jungle of the Eastern Sierra Madre is Las Pozas, an enchanting and mysterious surrealist architectural landscape; the Shangri-La retreat of an obsessive and wealthy British aristocrat named Edward James. James was a true eccentric who was smitten by the surrealist art movement, adopting the bohemian lifestyle of an artist – including the requisite social scandals and intrigues – without producing much credible art. He did have the means to be a serious buyer however, at one time having the world's largest surrealist art collection, purchased from the likes of Man Ray, Magritte and Dali, in addition contracting to purchase all of Dali's work for an entire year and subsidizing his Dream of Venus exhibit at the 1933 New York World's Fair.

Visiting Los Angeles one time, where he liked to cavort with the cognoscenti, he saw the Watts Towers by Simon Rodia; the power of this architectural sculpture profoundly moved him, and in this métier, he decided he could become a surrealist artist in his own right.

James purchased his 88-acre personal retreat in Mexico, about two miles outside of Xilitla, in a remote jungle area that initially attracted him for its exotic orchids. He named Las Pozas for the series of clear terrace pools that cluster around the base of two hundred vertical feet of cascading waterfalls. Beginning in 1949, James – assisted by his amateur-architect friend Plutarco Gastelum – employed as many as 150 workers at a time for 30 years to build this phantasmagoric retreat. He created a series of 36 Gaudi-esque follies, connected by a mazelike web of stone paths, gateways and staircases that lead to unexpected places of extraordinary tropical beauty. The complex-curved organic forms were inspired by the surrounding jungle's oversized flora and constructed using tons of reinforced concrete hand-poured into delicate sculptural formwork made from thin strips of wooden lath. The sculptures function variously as follies, stairs, columns, and bridge supports, some of which were intended as aviaries and cages for James to conserve selected endangered wildlife of the tropical jungle. In love with these animals, he liked visiting American cities trailing an entourage of caged birds and a snake or two.

El Castillo, Plutarco Gastelum's former home, was a collaborative effort by both men and is now a wonderful hotel close to Xilitla. But sometimes one can stay within the compound of Las Pozas itself, in private rooms found between the stone paths, waterfalls, bathing pools and fantastic sculptural forms – what better place for dreaming than in this preternatural vision of a surreal garden paradise held motionless in time? *John Cava is an architect who teaches, makes, and writes about architecture in Portland. Steven Koch ASLA, Principal of Koch Landscape Architecture, is a Portland based landscape architect specializing in landscapes on structure and creative urban design solutions. Edward James, Builder of Dreams, a film by Avery and Lenore Danziger is available on videocassette. See also: www.surfmexico.com/states/SLP/Xilitla/garden.htm and www.junglegossip.com.*



Sometimes to Wonder

MICHAEL SULLIVAN

It often seems that human consciousness is divided into periods of work and wonder. Aside from times when we're asleep or completely unconscious, we spend time with our heads down working, producing or driving ourselves. Then, by some requirement of nature, we unexplainably stop, lift our gaze and simply marvel at the visual or intellectual field before us. The time we spend in wonder is comparably brief and all too often yanked from us by a greedy appetite for clear purpose in what we do. But, undeniably it is in those bantam moments of wonder that we find satisfaction, delight and accomplishment.

Blissful moments of wonder belong in Tacoma these days, even while the center of the city looks like downtown Falluja with Berlin as a backdrop. The afterglow of prestigious cultural projects like the Tacoma Art Museum, Museum of Glass, Washington State History Museum and University of Washington Tacoma is dying in the shade of the prodigious convention center and the chaos of reestablishing Pacific Avenue as a true boulevard. There are massive new constructions underway on the blocks at 15th and Pacific, and the floating cranes are sculpting a freshly carved shoreline beneath the city.

There is a sense that a marvelous episode has been created for the city and that for this moment, it deserves real wonder. Tacoma is quite a thing right now. Definitely not what it was and not what it will soon be. It's at a point quickly moving by where it could not possibly stop. It may also be at the point close to a perfect destination for a physical city of Tacoma's size and it may not know it.

The montage of urban forms, architectural ideas and social patterns that shape Tacoma right now have a musical tension to them—in tune, following a melody, but not loud or distorted. There is a balanced harmony of historiographic buildings, surfaces and patinas blended with ambitious, new architectural phrases and the buzz of street builders and newcomers. It's inconvenient for cars and effortless for streetcar riders. As a laboratory for urban design in the Pacific Northwest, Tacoma is an experiment at the instant of fomentation. There are, however, a few ingredients that suggest the beaker may boil over.

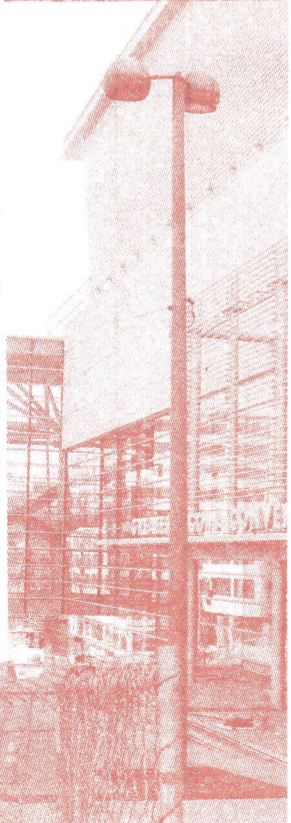
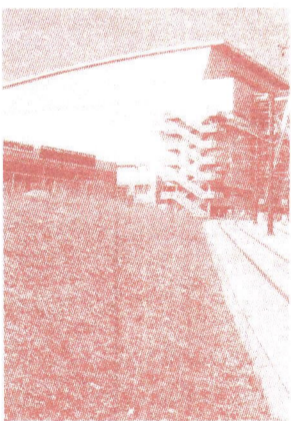
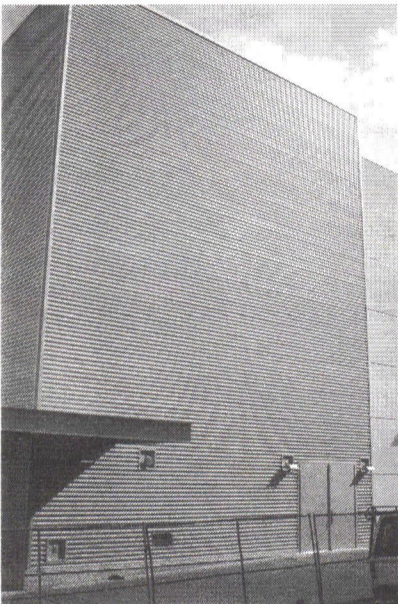
The looming \$100 million convention center marks the epicenter of new downtown construction and embodies the feeling of a physical mass incapable of stopping its motion. In a stepped city, the building is perched, cliff like, on a tread one step up from ground floor on Pacific Avenue. It thrusts out of the hillside like an oversized shed dormer window, its roof sprung with a slight arch. Like many convention centers, it's a massive package of standardized, closed interior chambers encased in divided panels of glass, metal siding and unisurface.

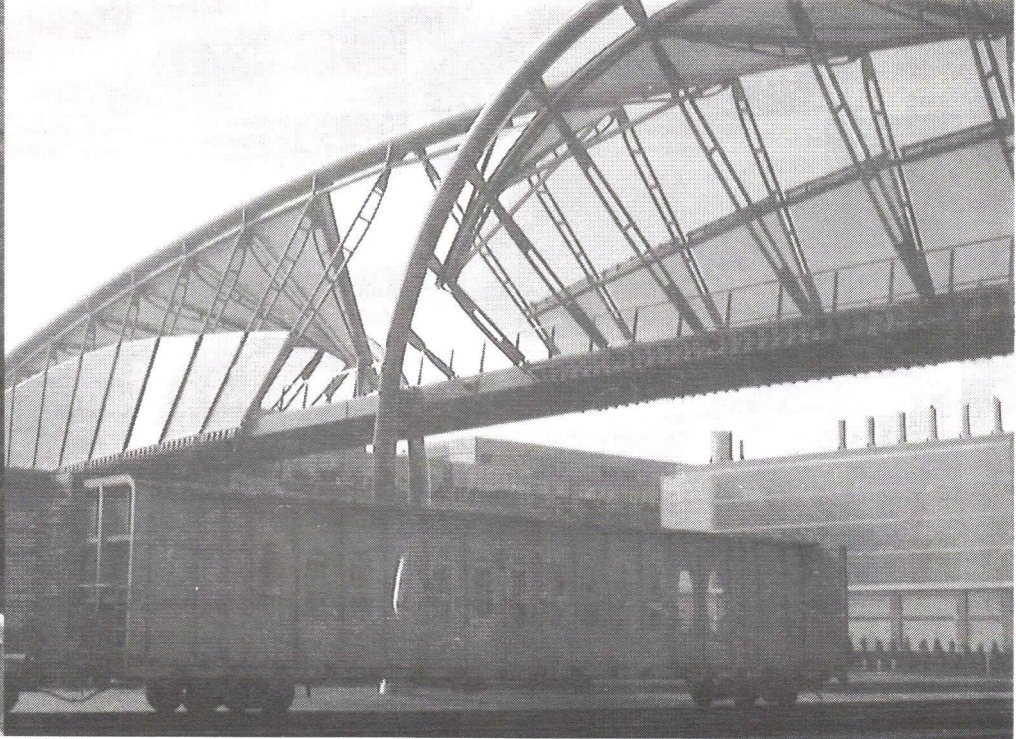
In drawings and models, the structure presented a reasonable sense of proportion and setting, and even a suggestion of serenity in its meandering fountains and water elements. As land was purchased, old buildings cleared, and the thru-line of Broadway blocked by sprawling street vacations, scant attention was paid to basic judgments of vertical scale, secondary facing elevations and surrounding construction. The result is a better than average design set in an ill-fitting physical situation.

As a completed presence, the convention center is now boxed in by a freshly built hotel and commercial structures along Pacific Avenue to the east. Its squared north and south walls offer a long view barrier from both ends of downtown rather than interesting visual punctuation. The south wall is particularly harsh in both scale and brutishness. It seals off the Union Station/ University district and turns a cold shoulder on one of Tacoma's most cohesive pocket districts. The uphill facing rear of the building is in many ways the most welcoming angle on the structure, with a flat overview character to the loading dock area and a clear vista toward Mt. Rainier.

The Greater Tacoma Convention Center has a definite flattering angle that works like an old movie star's best profile: it's from the southeast, looking up the light rail line from Pacific Avenue and the Tacoma Art Museum. From there the tipped out glass front and eyebrow trellis seem to fit into the skyline background created by the Sheraton Hotel, Regents Building and Financial Center. The building focuses its inner illumination through the lens of its glass facade to light the street stage and streetcar corridor outside the main entry. The hulk of the structure will fade back into the night, somewhat, and the shallow front wall of the interior exhibition halls will create a recessed plane set back behind the glass like a display window case. It's definitely a neat visual trick that should have a *film noir* quality on rainy nights. The foreground of this perspective is also smartly intended as an open space park, and the building and its setting will be well served by both the spatial relief and a very cinematic long shot point of view.

Tacoma's days of wonder are worth watching now, even in their passage. The city is following a compelling storyline, engaged in a sort of high-speed chase that leaves the details blurred and the destination undetermined. It is absorbing to watch, as the design narrative of Tacoma changes dramatically, recalling some of its past, inventing part of its future, and pausing a bit longer just to wonder. *Michael Sean Sullivan is a principal with Artifacts Inc., an historic preservation, architectural conservation firm based in Tacoma. He teaches at the University of Washington in Tacoma and Seattle in the fields of historic preservation, urban studies and Pacific Northwest History.*





Two Bridges

Is it clarity of structure vs. ornamentation?

Is ornamentation bad and structural honesty good?

JOHN FLEMING

The residential hill of Queen Anne is separated from the rest of the city on the east side by the six lanes of Aurora Avenue, and on the west side by Elliott Avenue and the tracks of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway. Pedestrians can cross these obstructions in very few spots. In the past, pedestrians hiked a mile or so down the road or put their lives on the line dodging the trains on Elliott or jumping the three-foot high median on Aurora. Something was needed: pedestrian bridges.

What are bridges for? They span across. They get us from one side to the other. What else do they do? They give us something uplifting to look at, something to admire, a gateway, an object or monument in the city or landscape. They may even help define the character of a city or neighborhood.

Let's cut to the chase. What I really want to talk about is not function or purpose, but what these two new pedestrian bridges look like. Why is one beautiful and one, well, ugly.

Is it money? That may be part of the reason. The privately funded Helix Bridge came in at \$10 million. Amgen, who paid for the bridge to connect with its new campus, conducts DNA research as a central part of its work. Spanning multiple tracks of the BNSF railway, the bridge's massive steel pipes bend along graceful curves. DNA was a conceptual design directive. Stainless steel screens and fabrics are stretched and woven across the twisting forms. Elevators in glass and stainless steel were used to meet the ADA requirements.

Contrast this with the \$2.5 million spent on the publicly funded Ray Moore Bridge over Aurora Avenue. The Washington State Department of Transportation bridge design team is quick to point out that the budget suggested a simple pre-cast concrete tub or box girder for the span. Wheelchair lifts that track up the rails of the stairs were a lower-cost ADA alternative. Ceramic tile is inlaid in accent patterns that the designers say complement the adjacent condos. Gabled arches in the bridge entries and along the side fencing panels are said to refer to the residential architecture of the Queen Anne neighborhood.

Is it clarity of structure vs. ornamentation? Is ornamentation bad and structural honesty good? Johnson Architecture's Helix Bridge lets the skeleton of the bridge tell the story, a story of structural logic as well as a story about DNA. The Ray Moore Bridge covers over the raw concrete with decoration. Are referential gestures bad? Even the neighborhood design council, who liked the final plan, and the Seattle Design Commission, who encouraged more investigation, seemed to take opposite sides on this topic.

Is it simply a question of talent? I know a hundred architects and artists who would jump at the chance to design a bridge over a major roadway. Many would love to design a footbridge over a ditch in some hidden back yard. Thousands of commuters each day drive under the Ray Moore Bridge. Highly visible public infrastructure projects deserve, if not require, the attention of talented architects, landscape architects, and artists. These two bridge projects clearly illustrate the importance of seeking creative design and engineering professionals. On the west side of Queen Anne, Johnson Architecture and Planning collaborated with KPFF engineers to create something quite beautiful. On the east side of Queen Anne, WSDOT totally missed the mark. Sadly, Seattle ended up with a very pedestrian public footbridge. Instead of something uplifting, we are left with an uninspiring eyesore that daily affronts our intelligence. We deserve better. *John Fleming is a partner with rbf ARCHITECTURE in Seattle.*

The Not-So-Wide-House: Portland's Living Smart Housing Competition

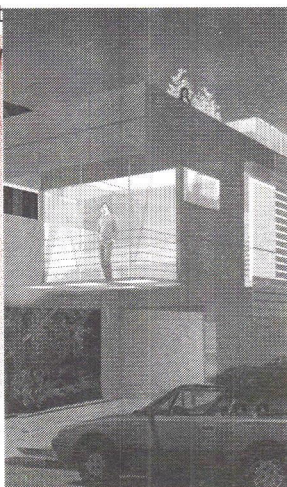
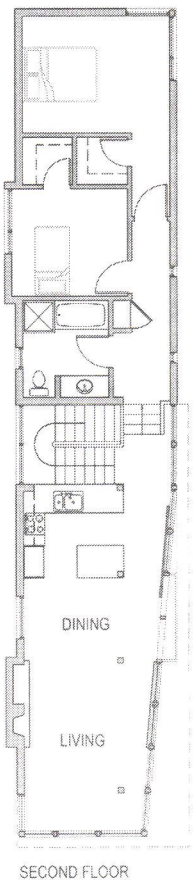
J.M. CAVA

Within this country's great diversity, one attribute continues to permeate every nook and cranny of the edifice that contains American culture. From food to finance, human bodies to auto bodies, high-rises to houses, we enthusiastically and indiscriminately worship at the altar of Bigger-is-Better. And why not? It's a simple and accessible measure of status that probably dates back to the Pleistocene era and, despite the success of the "not-so-big-house" mentality among the reasonable few, the preference for single-family houses (in itself a typology perhaps best suited to the Pleistocene) starts at big, runs through bigger, and tilts towards the quixotic ideal of Biggest.

So you've got to hand it to the City of Portland, always looking to wean its population from Big and Rambling to Small and Dense, hoping its visionary Urban Growth Boundary can hold the line against the natural American tendency to urban sprawl. The City, led by Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard with planner Marcy McInnelly and advisor Fredrick Zal, crafted an international open competition to advertise the architectural potential of so-called "narrow" lots: 25-foot wide by 100-foot long plots of land, compared to the standard 50-foot minimum lot widths. Called "Living Smart—big ideas for small lots," the competition was designed to show doubting neighborhood groups that, unlike the "not-so-liked" row-houses (are they really "row-houses" when there are only two of them?) haphazardly tossed by builders onto any 50-foot wide lot, these skinny houses could "...meet the needs of first-time homebuyers, provide compatibility with a variety of neighborhoods and respond to a range of market demands..." The competition attracted over 400 entries from around the world and its first stage was juried in September with four Merit Awards selected out of 49 chosen for Design Excellence. The seven-member jury included Portland's John Holmes and Suenn Ho, Chicago's Douglas Garofalo, and Vancouver's John Patkau. Most of the entries were some form of "modern" style—though often an overwrought and showy modernism with much computer-generated smoke and mirrors. But overall, the 49 winners cleverly worked within very tight guidelines where there were few options for innovation.

In a unique twist that added confusion, a second phase of judging took place unrelated to the first, privileging "affordability" and "compatibility" with existing neighborhoods over "design excellence." This all local jury included Holmes, Ho, and McInnelly, a builder, Jeff Fish, Portland's most thoughtful developer, Lawrence Wachsmann and others. This second group of winners, chosen from the entire group of entries, will have their plans published in the "Portland Catalogue of House Designs for Narrow Lots" — available to local owners and builders — and will be "pre-permitted" for construction along with plans sold for a nominal fee by the City for easy and rapid construction. It's been hinted that other incentives might be thrown in by the City to make sure these plans are attractive to developer/builders unwilling to hire architects (creating the paradox of a design competition specifically meant to curtail design). This twist — maybe a first in the annals of competitions — allows the City to ignore the initial selections premiated for architectural excellence (pesky and unpredictable things, those architectural juries) and pick out a new group more to their liking. Although, as it turned out three-quarters of the affordability/compatibility winners are in both groups, thus avoiding too much distinction between "compatibility" and design excellence.

Despite the good intentions of all concerned, this two-phase operation raises the proverbial eyebrows in a number of ways. First is the rather clever idea of a well-publicized jury choosing design excellence, whose results can be discarded by a different jury with more pragmatic goals in mind (though presumably the original jury members maintained some continuity). The solution is to make the real criteria clear from the beginning, choosing design excellence combined with explicit cost guidelines. Second is the murky language about payment to any of the winners if and when their plans are built, perhaps even in multiple increments. It could only happen in the world of architecture — where groups originally chartered to look out for architects' interests (such as the AIA) have allowed professional design in housing to become marginalized — could this have been considered. There is talk of a one-time \$10,000 fee for the top handful of designers whose entries the City would like to build as examples; low for a full-service architect's fee, but high for that of a "house designer." Third, the creative envelope in the program was absurdly limited for an event designed to stimulate "ideas" (the only permissible site placement was the simplest and dumbest): a 15 foot wide object set in the middle of the lot like a centerpiece on a table with standard suburban setbacks all around. With 50 feet to play



with, much greater creativity could have been encouraged, such as L-shaped configurations with easements, reduced side setbacks with appropriate fire-rated construction, and the like, which would allow indoor/outdoor spatial integration and complex relationships between multiple units. These kinds of things have been pursued in European housing projects for half a century while the US continues its nostalgic and destructive fascination with the detached single-family house.

As such, the fixed setbacks in the competition program forced all entries to be self-referential objects and precluded useful outdoor space or orientation towards or away from neighbors, the sun, or the street. Instead, outdoor space was relegated to that amorphous suburban “green” filler space surrounding the object in question. Ultimately, as one winner said, “it was extremely annoying to have to wind around in [the City’s] little planning pigeonholes...” and another remarked their team began referring to it as the ‘Narrow Ideas’ Competition.

And finally, whatever happened to context? It’s very odd indeed for a competition stressing sustainability and “fitting-in” to provide a site located by all accounts in outer space—it would have been simple to select a site representative of Portland’s existing fabric which, let’s face it, doesn’t vary much from place to place. Many entries constructed their own “existing” situations in order to give themselves a modicum of design context. In short, comments from winning contestants and jurors indicated an overall preference for a “real” competition, that is, one with only one real jury, a real site, real rewards (money or fees) and real creativity.

But, limitations notwithstanding, the City received quite a few good ideas, and seeing that entries came from Russia, the Netherlands, UK, Israel, Sweden, Turkey, Austria, Germany, and Japan, to name a few, why not have more competitions for more buildings and landscapes? Not the “invited” ones with a handful of celebrity contestants, but a series of European-style open competitions for larger buildings and sites. This might prevent the entire metropolis from being built by a small handful of architect-developer teams (as it now is), give the city a healthy dose of creative variety, and support younger firms with committed enthusiastic designers. This was the genesis of modern architectural competitions and historically they have always paid off. They bring delightful and unexpected solutions to all kinds of projects, often stimulating new architectural and urban paradigms. Portland’s on-going competition for narrow lots is a great idea. Its accompanying narrow thoughts are not. *J. M. Cava is an architect who teaches, makes, and writes about architecture in Portland.*

Peter Busby’s PNE Sustainable Condo Marks Optimistic New Direction

TREVOR BODDY

Architect Peter Busby’s simultaneous wish and prediction for Vancouver’s condominium apartments of the future can be summed up in one potent word: “sustainable.” Sustainability is Busby’s wish, because he is devoting more and more of his professional life to building with less of everything, especially energy. Sustainability is also the prediction to which he dedicates his practice of architecture, and with oil prices now hovering near \$50 per barrel, he may soon be a prophet recognized in his own country.

Busby’s passion for elegant design that draws lightly upon the earth is summarized in the \$450,000 “Sustainable Condo” display he showed in September as part of the Pacific National Exhibition’s (PNE) “Urban Change”-themed Rollerland Pavilion. A fascinating funhouse of the new ecological era, the project was funded by our federal government and managed by the non-profit Eco-Smart Foundation, with support from 40 private sector firms.

Go for a tour of the PNE lottery’s Dream Home if you want a vision of how we lived in the past—this year’s version has lots of retro dormers and fake 19th century windowpanes. But if you want a glimpse of the future, the Sustainable Condo is the most engaging, hopeful and entertaining display to be found at our annual fair.

While the PNE is the first public exhibition of the “Sustainable Condo,” it was originally put together for a trade exhibition last April. Along with the delegates and invited media who toured it then, Prime Minister Paul Martin asked to see it, quizzing the Vancouver architect about its features. “He demanded to see it,” says Busby, “then he had lots of questions about why these features are not yet standard for Canadian construction.”

What caught the Prime Minister’s eye then, and fair-goers now, is a boldly presented collection of off-the-shelf products for domestic life—from plates and bed linens to windows and dishwashers. These have been selected because they draw modestly upon energy and water resources in daily use, or because of the simplicity of their design employing local, renewable resources.

Data from Busby’s suppliers and researchers indicates the Sustainable Condo’s innovations would save fully one third of the 325 liters of water the average Vancouverite uses each day. Electricity costs would drop by at least one quarter, saving an average \$400 per year per apartment.

Busby and Eco-Smart’s commitment to local resources results in one of the most surprising features of the Sustainable Condo—so much of it is made of wood. Tree-huggers need not worry, because not just any wood was used.



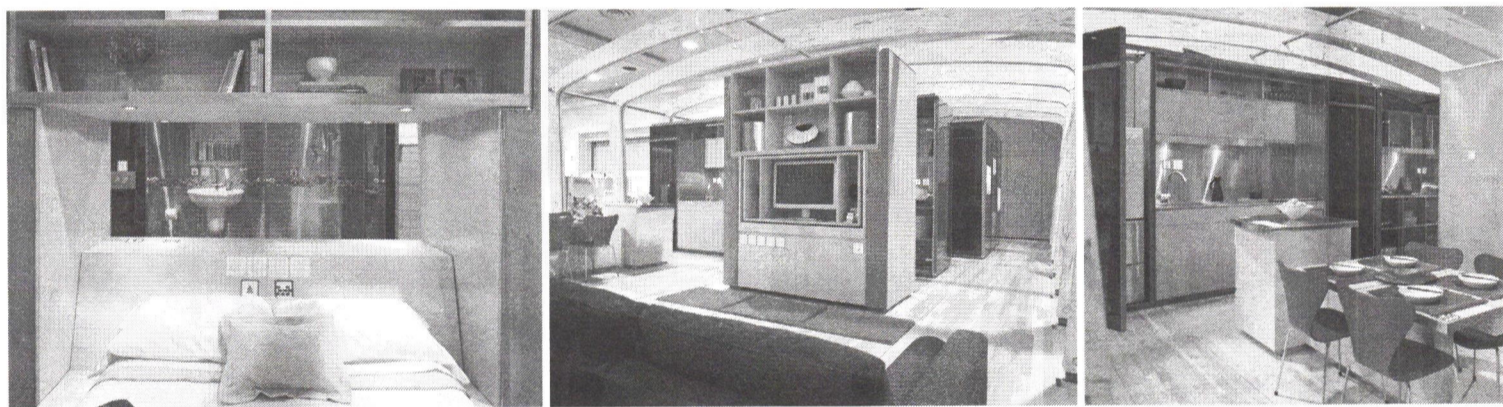
Eco-Smart's website estimates that if 10,000 Vancouver condominiums were built along the same lines, 23,000 garbage trucks full of waste would not have to make that one-way trip to landfill sites.

All the new wood items on show here are Forest Stewardship Council-certified to have come from well-managed, ever-renewed BC forests. As well, the 80 square meters of gleaming fir floors here are recycled from the former decks of the Lonsdale-moored Seven Seas, a floating restaurant that dished up medleys of fried seafood to generations of North Vancouverites.

The living room section of this floor has a curious Busby-designed innovation that might be of real interest to Vancouver's legions of space-challenged condo-dwellers. Right in front of the Sustainable Condo's low-energy plasma screen television hearth, the floorboards are cut into half-meter squares. Slots are cut into each just big enough that they can be picked up and flipped over, revealing a red-upholstered cushion which is then slotted back into place. When all six custom panels are flipped over, a beguiling new padded floor surface is created—just the spot for late night seductions or early morning Kundalini yoga workouts.

Space-saving flexibility is the byword of another Busby custom creation in the kitchen area. The architect observed that condominium apartments are forever short of table space. Busby's table can serve as a conventional height table seating two or three. But thanks to some ingenious hidden hinges, arms and extenders, it can also be transformed like one of those Japanese robot toys into two alternate versions, its tabletop moved a third of a meter higher. One version is wood-surfaced, fine for a food buffet or open bar layout when friends come over. The other version flips the tabletop over, revealing a stainless steel alternate surface, ideal for cutting fabrics or pursuing messy hobbies.

One of the more debatable innovations of the Sustainable Condo is the use of photo-voltaic cells flat-mounted onto portions of its windows. Electricity will be generated here, but is reduced natural light and outside views for residents worth \$70 per year in electricity savings?



"Photo-voltaics will be cheap as borscht soon," Busby assures, indicating that they could be fully integrated onto south-facing walls. The architect cautions that this feature would require European-style "Right to Light" legislation, ensuring their energy-generating value is not stymied by new, sun-blocking towers. Nearing its climax forest build-out, Vancouver's downtown peninsula would seem to have lost its chance to employ this aspect of the Sustainable Condo, but the idea might migrate to less shady locations.

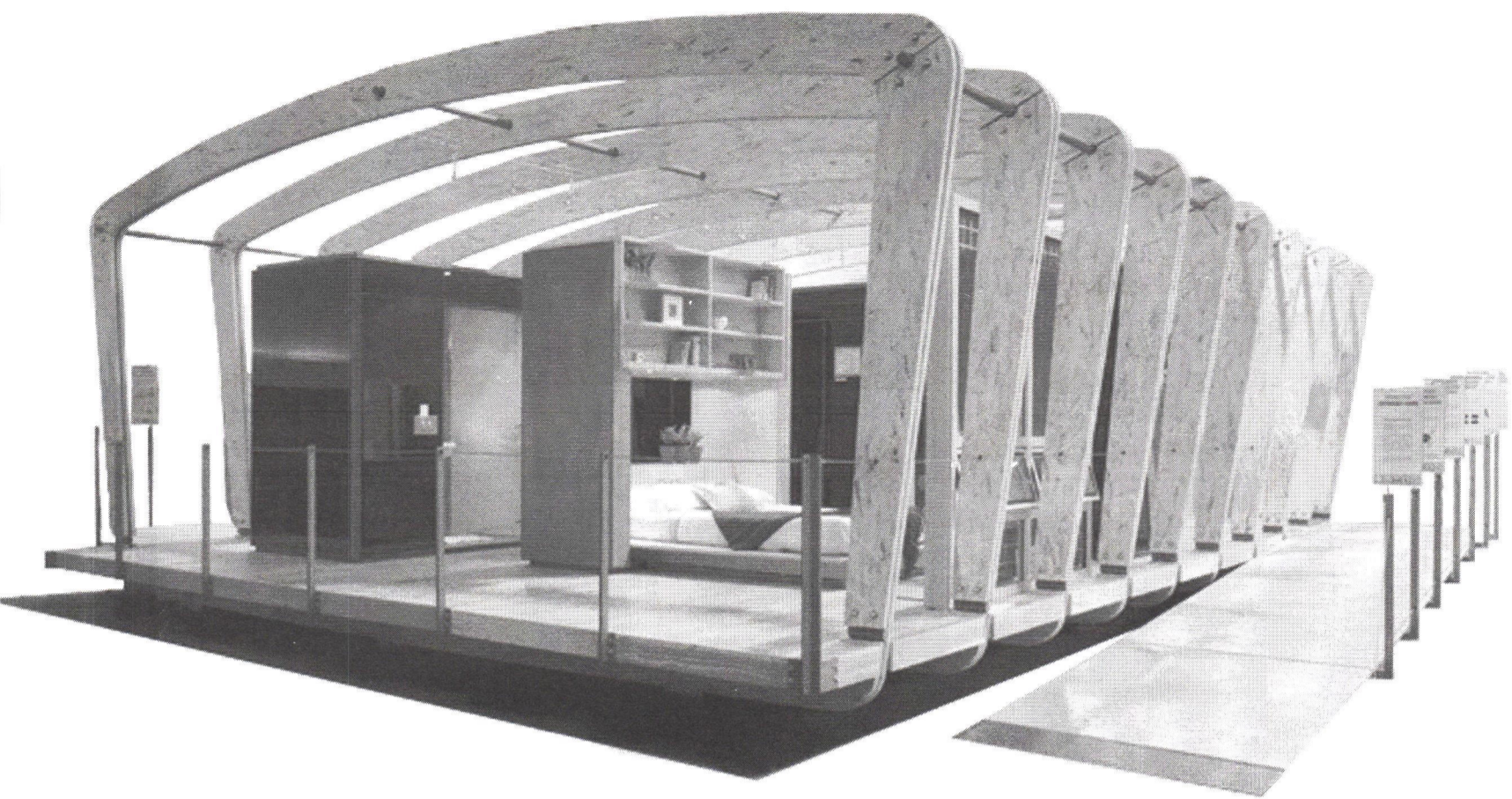
While the Busby employees and architecture students who guide visitors around the demonstration condo are knowledgeable, there is almost no information provided about payback times for its sometimes expensive alternative technologies. Just how many years of lower operating costs will compensate for the higher capital costs of the Fisher-Paykel dishwasher from New Zealand, the Caroma dual-flush toilet from Australia, or the German-made combo washer-dryer?

That said, the ecological bottom line of the Sustainable Condo is very impressive. Eco-Smart's website (www.sustainablecondo.com) estimates that if 10,000 Vancouver condominiums were built along the same lines, 23,000 garbage trucks full of waste would not have to make that one-way trip to landfill sites.

The most dramatic feature of the Sustainable Condo are its curving ribs, rising over these domestic tableaux to deftly outline the missing roof and exterior walls that this showy set-piece does not have. These ribs are built up from pieces of strand board, the eco-friendly alternate to plywood composed out of bonded sawmill scraps and dust—formerly burned as waste. The resulting shape of the Sustainable Condo recalls the curving wood panel walls of Busby's Brentwood SkyTrain station on the Millennium Line.

In October, Peter Busby will go to Rideau Hall to receive the 2004 Governor General's medal for architecture for that Burnaby building. He will receive his profession's highest award not only for Brentwood, but also for his design of British Columbia's only stand alone First Nations post-secondary educational institution—The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, in Merritt. Despite his firm scooping two of the nine top awards given out this year, Busby has turned his firm away from the style consciousness and museum designs that denote high design architectural practices, and towards ever-growing engagement with research, promotion and construction of Green architecture.

It was widely thought that his firm – Busby + Associates – would inherit Arthur Erickson's mantle as Western Canada's most prominent high design firm. But Peter Busby surprised many earlier this year by selling his firm to one of the United States' largest corporate architectural practices, Perkins + Will, a firm ultimately controlled by a Beirut engineering concern. Why would this top designer – in a profession renowned for its Howard Roarke-like "me against the world" rugged individualists – relinquish some measure of his control?



The first and less important reason is that high end architectural design is chronically under-resourced in this part of the world, demonstrated by Erickson's infamous two bankruptcies, which occurred despite his ever-growing wall of Governor General's medals and other awards.

The more important reason is that Busby is a man on a mission now, and architecture – for all of his international success – is but one means towards changing the foolish plundering of the earth's resources now underway. He points out that the design of buildings and cities determines nearly two-thirds of all energy use, and radical action is overdue to prevent a looming energy crisis much more serious than that of the 1970s.

Even when the topic is ostensibly one of his buildings, Busby soon shifts into proselytizing for everything Green. Many of the issues that now concern him range away from his design training into politics and economics: "We have to stop giving away our water, almost for free," he suggests, or a few minutes later, "We need to densify our urban edge." More important for Busby is his desire for a different kind of firm, and an integration of his architectural talents and personal ethos.

Part of Busby's new role will be the "Greening" of Perkins + Will, the fourth largest architectural practice on the continent. He is already jetting weekly to their many branch offices to share some of his Vancouver-developed expertise. Busby is a pioneering expert on the LEED system, a set of 69 criteria used to predict the environmental impact of a building at the design stage. "I have become their in-house LEED expert, and we are spreading the innovations we made here much further and faster because of our new alliance with Perkins + Will."

Busby now estimates that one third of his staff time is occupied with research—some of it funded by public bodies, some of it at the firm's own risk. The moral imperative of his Green convictions combined with this huge investment in exploring how we can build more with less is what really sets Busby apart from his fellow Vancouver architects. He has literally bet his life's work in trusting that his office will become the research hub for Perkins + Will, and not just a profit centre to be drained of its intellectual capital and cash flow in good times, then abandoned when boom turns to bust.

In pulling together the Sustainable Condo, Busby and his staff had to open up their Rolodexes and call in every marker they could find from consultants, suppliers and construction firms. The list of firms who have given in-kind donations of goods and expertise is one of the most impressive elements of the whole display: construction giant Ledcor built it; the Green-innovating engineering firms Fast + Epp and Keen shared technical expertise; kitchen built-ins come from Midland Appliance; some of the furniture from Herman Miller, and so on down the line. Visitors are given a brochure with contact information for all of these suppliers, so they can do their little bit as foot soldiers in the Green revolution.

Peter Busby has clearly positioned himself as a general in the same conflict, albeit one with a sometimes-surprising populist touch. It was Busby that pushed hard that the Sustainable Condo be set up alongside the cotton candy, bumper cars and prize heifers of the PNE. Kathy Wardle, Busby's director of research, describes the hopes the firm has for the fairground display: "Our goal is to transform thinking, and perhaps influence the housing to be built for the 2010 Olympic Village."

Busby's Condo shared the "Urban Change" Pavilion at PNE's Rollerland Pavilion that included a collection of scale models from many of Vancouver's top architects and developers, most of them conventional in their approach to conserving energy and resources. With the Sustainable Condo, Busby now stands apart from his peers. *Vancouver Sun* architecture critic Trevor Boddy welcomes reader feedback at trevboddy@hotmail.com. This article first appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*.

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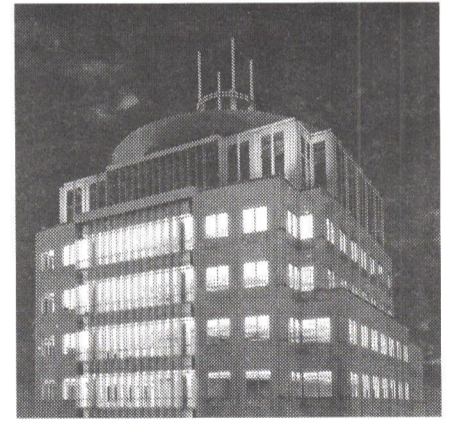
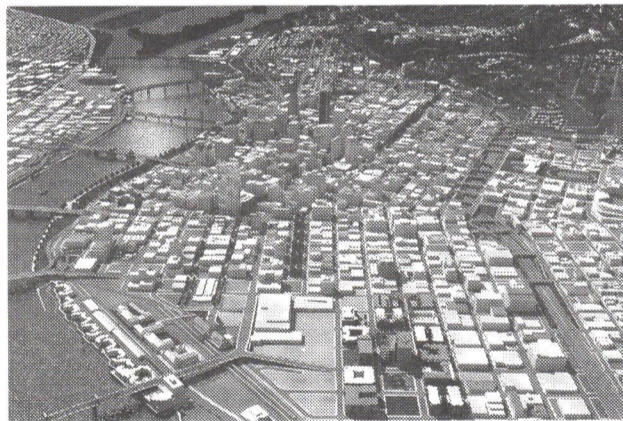


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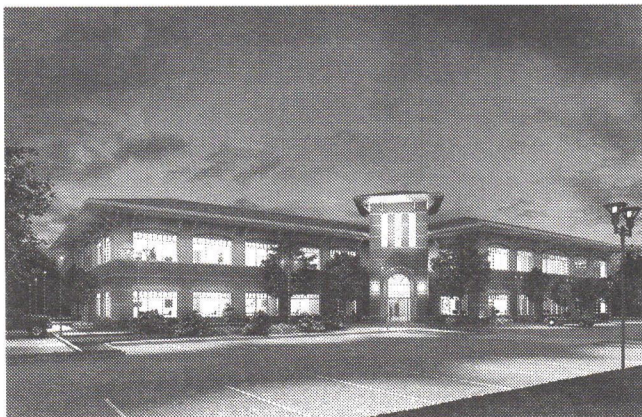
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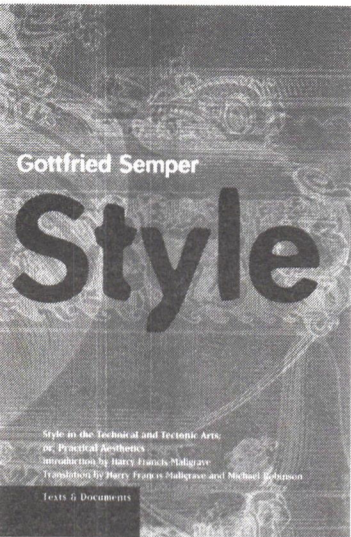
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STYLE

and the DESIRE FOR ILLUSION



Gottfried Semper
Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; Practical Aesthetics
Translated by Harry Mallgrave and Michael Robinson (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Research Institute, 2004).

Gottfried Semper is well known as an architect, an historian and now, with the translation of *Style*, as a masterful storyteller. Harry Mallgrave introduces this translation by tracing the historiography of the text to present an inspired account of its contributions to theory. Semper's *Style* may be the most influential work of architectural thought in the 19th-century. While its historical influence is indisputable, the reader must interpret its mythical narratives and pseudo-national cosmologies as somehow germane to the present.

After removing the precious plastic cover, we recover a subalternate tradition of architectural thought, not displaced by the color image but informing its production. Unlike contemporary theory, which substitutes repetition and intensity for content, all visual pretense and official ambiguity are notably absent. Semper's *Style* makes apology for the culture of systematic displacement and visual effect and instead lends this architectural veil of illusions a "technical-historical" dimension within a specific historic *technê* and cultural praxis.

Semper's *Style* reclaims a mythical, almost childlike imaginary that transforms the pre-modern narrative into something still more effective. He identifies architecture with the ancient Greek *technê*: the craft or practical knowledge of making that objectifies ideal forms and fashions material materials according to the principles of nature. His

overarching theory of tectonics rejects the avant-garde necessity for invention as instrumental and devoid of artistic autonomy. Semper transforms classical *technê* into a transparent practical knowledge, a modern *epistêmê* whose principles are analogous to the individual will and whose forms adhere to the technical means of production. Technology, he suggests, lends architecture a formal appearance, its style. Since modern tectonics retains the knowledge of circumstance, it preserves a tragic awareness of what *ought to be*, permitting an ethical understanding of how things emerge, change and pursue their ultimate purpose. Such practical knowledge precedes modern reason and theory. It is acquired, not learned, and preserves a purposeful goal that also serves as its rhetorical function. As a result, Semper's tectonics lends a unified narrative structure to the chaos of production and establishes a controversial starting point for modern criticism.

Semper's encyclopedic perspective redefines the taxonomy of architecture as an aggregate of four themes emerging from the applied arts: Weaving, Ceramics, Carpentry (Tectonics) and Masonry (Stereotomy). *Style* explains their artistic-technical forms in architecture and exposes their critical meaning in history. His most controversial premise, the *principle of dressing*, demonstrates how art veils the surface with ornament and color (polychromy) to destroy its material reality. Within its genealogy, ancient Greek architecture emerged from dressing the body, and eventually wooden sculptural figures or columnar orders, in bright colored ceremonial costumes. For Semper, the paradigm of architecture is not simple clothing but a festive public fashion. The appearance created by fashion, masks material reality according to a conscious aesthetic ideal. Color, for example, "is the subtlest and most incorporeal dressing. This was the most perfect means to dispose of reality, for while it dressed the material, it was itself immaterial." This so-called law of the "phenomenal world" is intended to satisfy the eye and to raise the issues of "material existence and duration" only to deny their very existence. The ancient Greeks, he asserts, were merely the first to self-consciously destroy the material reality of art or, what we call, to manufacture an architectural illusion.

Semper identifies the concerns of modern theory (representation and illusion) within the ancient Greek temple as purposeful elements used to create a unified synthetic image. The outer layer of the temple (the peristyle columnar orders and architrave) first *mask material reality* with the pure representation of structure, and second, *mask the mask*, with the artistic dressing of sculpture and polychromy, that most delicate veil of mythical illusion. He reasoned that architecture becomes ennobled by this dissimulating fabric first, by ridding itself of all references to internal morphological purpose or structural presence and second, by evoking a certain festive dressing or unified theatrical spirit shared by the ancients and moderns. "Every

artistic creation, every artistic pleasure, presumes a certain carnival spirit, or to express it in a modern way, the haze of carnival candles is the true atmosphere of art. The destruction of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous human creation."

Now we can return to our original question: how to read Semper today. His theory of dressing clarifies the pre-modern principle of integrating technology and materials to find meaning in common cultural acts of production, in that everyday making of things. By reducing the intellectual hierarchy of architecture, he elevates the broader social consequence of building and clarifies how mass-culture overcomes high art. His system of analysis engages practical knowledge through a process of analogy and investigation, not theory. There are no materialist concerns, no aleatory or illegible conditions in this complex strategy of sublation. Here, practical knowledge is always unified or retains a productive tension since it preserves a relative state of artistic consciousness between a rational modern intellect and a free-spirited pre-modern unconscious.

Semper's mythical narrative appeals to contemporary thought by suggesting a more stable system of knowledge based on principles of common sense. Building always suggests an architectonic symbol of clarity and enduring aesthetic ideals. In contrast to our culture of displacement, Semper suggests a playful *narrative of displacement*, a storytelling that integrates material reality, the technical sign and architectural illusions. This narrative system denies architecture's arbitrary nature, the lost meaning of the sign or confusing direction of social dreams and human ideals. We too may be destined to repeat Semper's commanding tectonic narratives in each moment of cultural crisis. Or, as Semper states, with the "sublime terror of nature" and the "bewildering charms of an unknown order. . . there are more active elements that grip our soul and make it receptive to the illusions of art." *Scott Wolf is an instructor for modern history, contemporary criticism and suburban thought at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-arc) in Los Angeles.*

Axel Lieber: Release

December 4, 2004 – April 17, 2005

Artist Lecture

December 9, 2004

7 pm

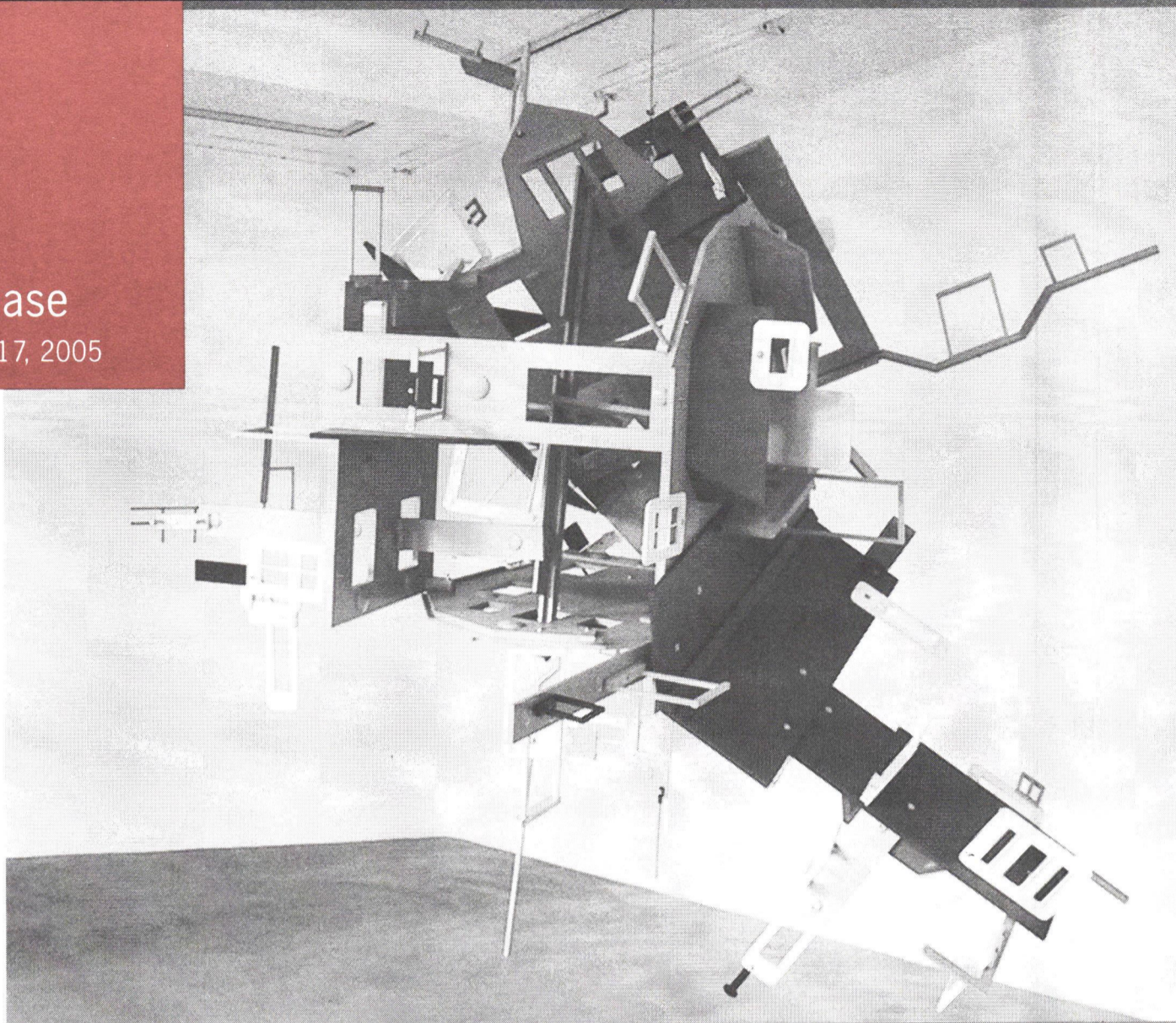
Henry Auditorium

Free

Lieber will be in residence at the museum for approximately two weeks, creating a new work in the Open Studio format to exhibit alongside *Release*.

Axel Lieber is organized for the Henry Art Gallery by Assistant Curator Pamela Meredith. Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and donors to the Henry Art Gallery Contemporary Art Fund. In-kind support provided by the Grand Hyatt Seattle. Special funding provided by IASPIS, Sweden.

Image: Axel Lieber. *Release*. 2003.
Photo: © Gallery Rolf Hengesbach, Cologne, Germany.



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Please note that this issue's third installment of the author's obsessive fantasy of Sheri Olson, will be pre-empted by none other than Ron's wife. It's her turn to tell the "rest of the story."

Been there... Done that

Hello, my name is Kerry van der Veen and my husband is an architect. I'm writing this edition of Side Yard to commiserate with those who, like me, have "married into the profession." This article might be particularly helpful to someone just getting into a serious relationship with a designer, or who is currently blinded by love. As a matter of fact, if you are an architect, I'd appreciate you *not* reading the following. Just hand the magazine over to your significant other and go create a "sense of place" somewhere while we chat.

First of all, as someone who has been married to an architect for over 15 years, I say to you: "I truly understand." Believe me, when I first got into this thing with Ron, I thought he was some kind of fascinating cultural anomaly. Initially, he swept me off my feet with his visual sensitivity and uncompromising individualism. Then I started meeting other people in the profession and realized his temperament was more common than I thought. What I first imagined as a highly idiosyncratic individual; I later learned was just another cog in a vast peculiar subculture; lots of people wear those glasses! No Ron, Volvos are just square and boxy! Why do I have to get rid of my cat vase? I don't care if your friends see it! So none of your colleagues own chairs you can actually sit in?

After getting over the initial shock of realizing my future husband was just a big cute bundle of architectural clichés, I ran into another issue that had to be overcome. I discovered that Ron, like most in the profession, had an incurable disease. It's called V.A.D.D., or Visual Attention Deficit Disorder. He has hyper eyes! Poor guy just can't stop looking at things. And I mean REALLY LOOKING at things. EVERYTHING! You know, in that weird obsessive kind of way. And he used to be really tricky about it. I remember after we had been dating for about a month he asked me if there was anything he wore that I didn't like. I said there wasn't and then felt obligated to ask him the same question. That was a mistake. He told me there were new things and proceeded to empty half my wardrobe. As

a consolation he gave me \$100 (he's not cheap, just an architect) to buy some new clothes as long as they were black (and tight). I should have seen the writing (or at least the sketch) on the wall right there. I could dump this guy and live happily ever after in visual ignorance with my kitty cat vases, or be cursed by the never ending pursuit of symmetry, balance and purity in every aspect of our lives together, including the way I put toothpaste on my brush (only a little exaggeration there for effect).

For any of you who have been on more than one date with an architect, another pattern quickly became apparent. Architects are bred to love what they can't afford. They aren't usually cheap, just poor. So instead of taking me out to humble restaurants, Ron just never took me out. Instead of owning cheap furniture, we had a single chair that was really really cool (and terribly uncomfortable!). Instead of a nice inexpensive full set of china, we owned two very costly plates, a fork, spoon and three knives (Ron especially loved the knife design). He wouldn't even get an espresso maker because *he* had to have the \$200 Italian model that matched the chair (which was in the other bloody room!!)

Now some of you may think I'm just venting some petty marital angst. Not so. I'm only trying to educate and alert. Think of this as a public service warning. Take our "honeymoon" for instance. I was smart enough to insist that we go to a destination that didn't have a sophisticated architectural scene. But after five days in Hawaii, I finally demanded two things to avoid an annulment:

1. We actually visit the beach.
2. He take pictures with people in them—preferably of him and me, maybe even together.

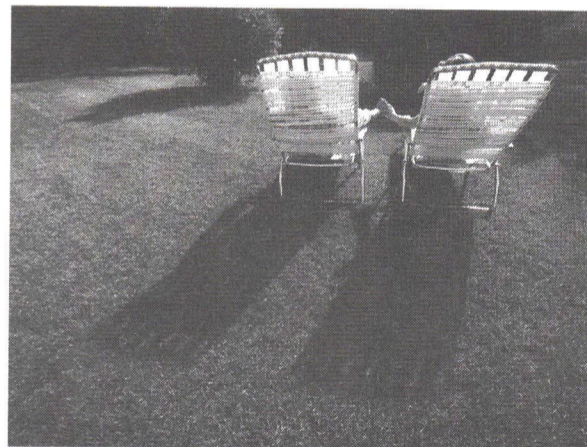
Lately I've had another project that has consumed much of my emotional energy. With three young boys, a dog, two cats and a rabbit, there is no way in hell we will ever do enough to our house to get it published in *DWELL* magazine. How those people live I do not know, but I see the jealous tears in my husband's eyes every time his issue comes in the mail. And just like clockwork, he wakes up early the next morning to put together a new to-do list that includes 2 years of substantial remodeling. If it weren't so predictable, it would be cute.

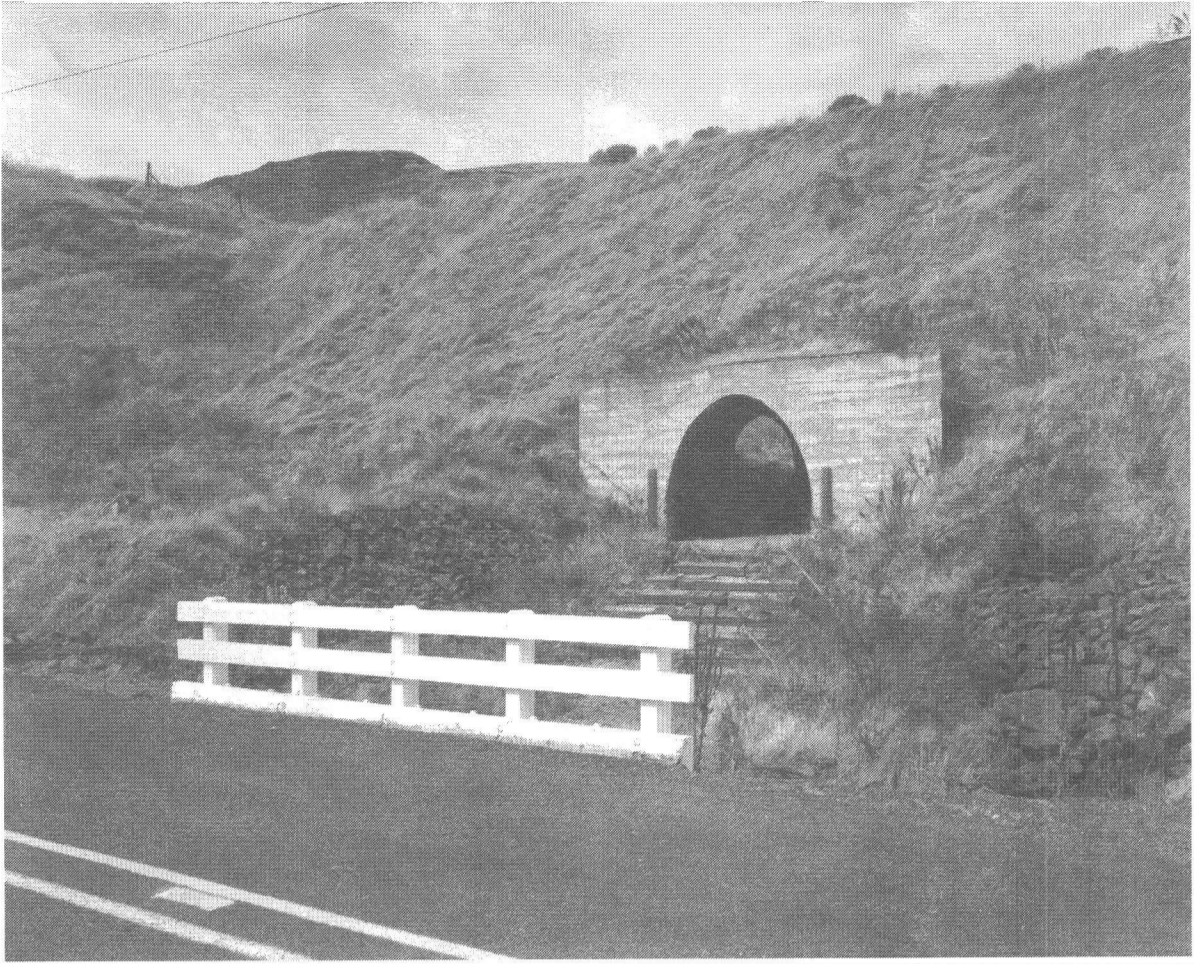
One of the worse rituals in any normal person's relationship with an architect is buying them a present. As a matter of fact, all the eccentricities I have talked about seem to amalgamate during these stress-filled events.

Combine the VADD with the expensive taste, the strange visual idiosyncrasies and lack of hard cash and, well, all I can tell you is: don't throw away the receipt! And don't take it personally. He or she has been programmed not to like your gift; it has nothing to do with your aesthetic taste.

Well, life with this man hasn't been all bad. He is quite popular at cocktail parties, dresses pretty spiffy, seems to know a lot, and isn't around enough for me to get too sick of him. Still, I have to admit that I sometimes fantasize about marrying someone a bit less eccentric and obsessive like an engineer, accountant or manager. What color would I pick for the dining room? Where would I put my cat vase, other than in a box in the attic? What American car would I most want to drive? How much could I get if I sold that stifling Mies What's-His Name's chair in a garage sale?

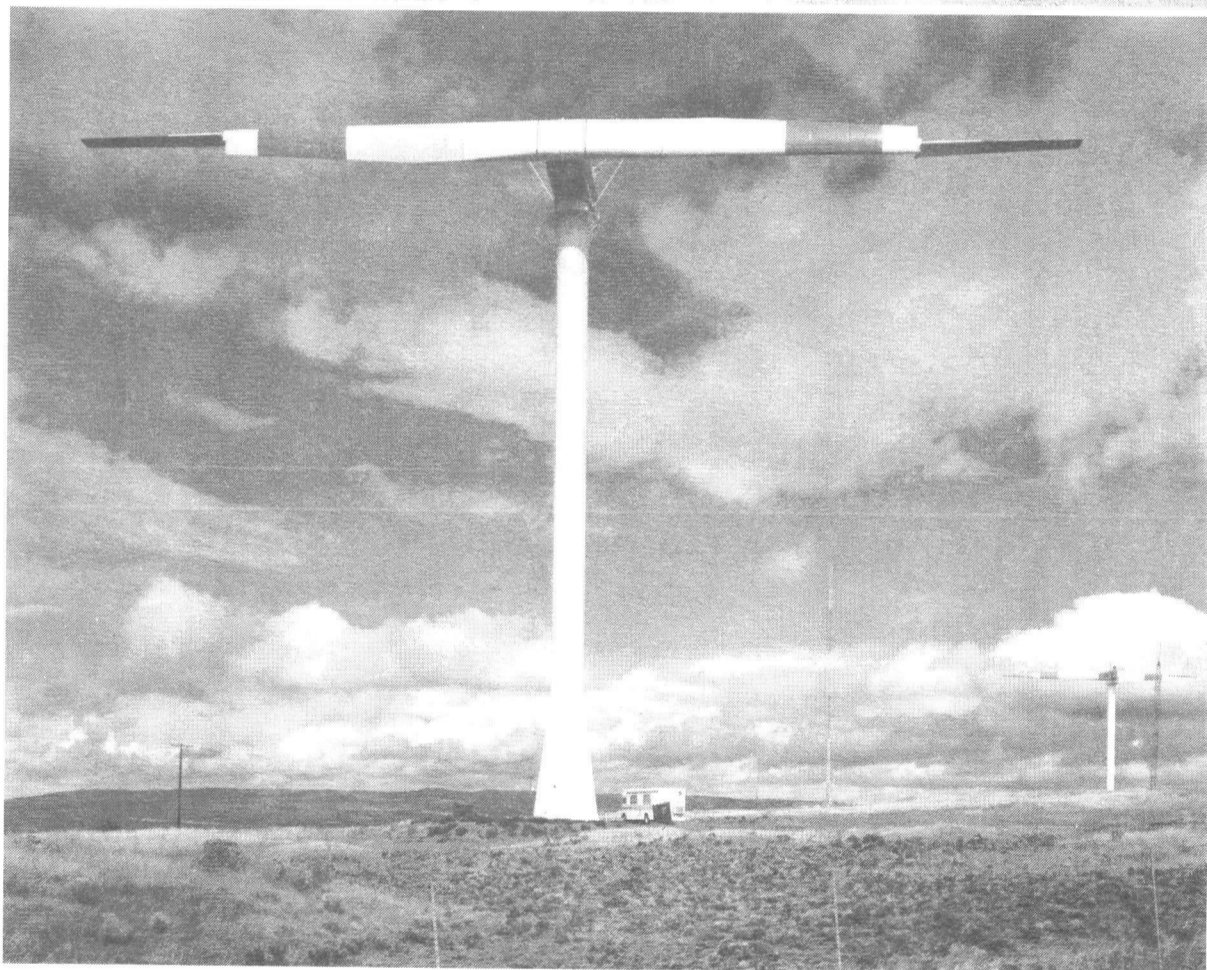
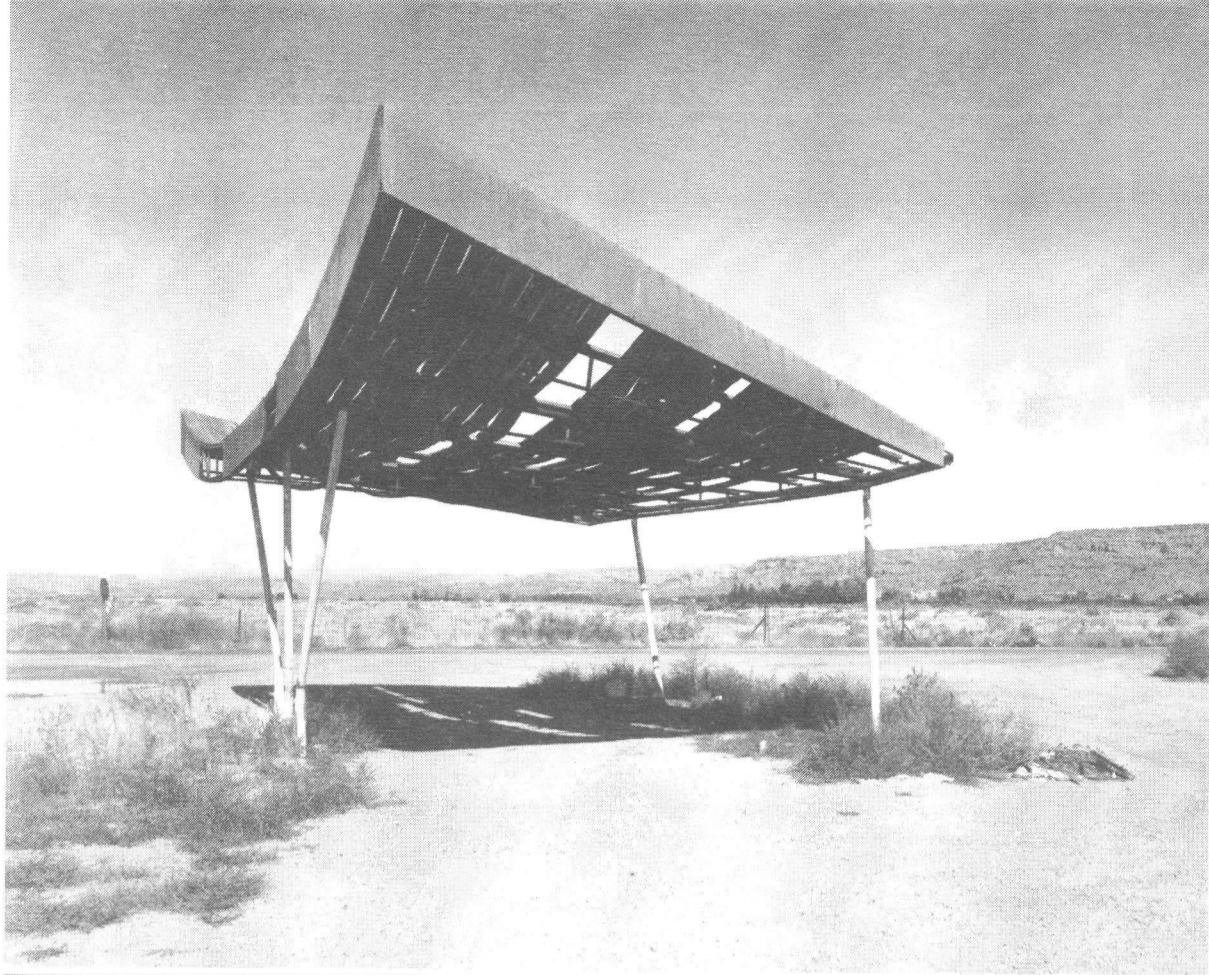
Oh no, here he comes. I need to distract him... "Hey Ron, shouldn't that painting over the mantle be a quarter of an inch to the right? I think it would give the wall a more asymmetrical balance..." *Kerry van der Veen is the wife of illustrious architect and Side Yard correspondent Ron van der Veen. She is currently seeing a therapist that she will highly recommend to anyone reading this article.*





Landscape Architecture MICHAEL BURNS

Michael Burns is a photographer living in Seattle. His award winning work has been exhibited internationally over the past thirty years.





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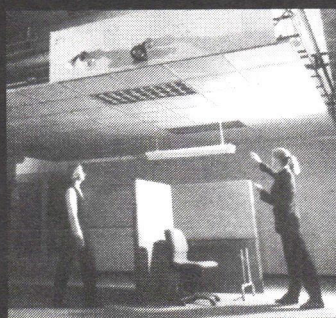
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Meditation on HOUSE

BARBARA EARL THOMAS

The idea of house as home lived in my imagination long before I could list its aspects or delineate its parts. It was a base, a formal structure, but mostly it was inseparable from the people I found there, the faces of: mother, father, grandmother and grandfather. Home was, at first, a movable place that shifted with those faces from one room to the next. As my awareness widened objects took on life: one couch, two end tables, one mantle, two candlesticks, and one bed flanked by two lamps. The concept of *three* embedded itself long before I understood 3 to be a number. House was a place of balance, our personal ark afloat in the landscape. The gabled roof was the triangle on top of the box we inhabited. In a place where prayers ended unfaillingly in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, remove one candlestick from the mantel and the fireplace tips over.

My first house in memory was a low-rise wood-framed structure, military vintage. Temporary housing, in today's vernacular a "starter house." With identical facades grouped in tracks, they snaked like trains in curves that ended in cul-de-sacs. Names like *Highpoint Drive* and *Rainier Vista* indicated that although you lived there, you were expected to see beyond your circumstance. Each day after kindergarten I bounded over the hill to my street of identical houses. I opened the first door I came to, waited for home to announce itself in the sound of my mother's voice. Neighbors got used to finding me in the driveway and taking me by the hand back to my home with the unspoken question, "So what's your mother's name?" After that, each day at noon my mother's car would appear, one doorway stood out.

House was something to strive for in a family of uncertain means, the idea of home. Anyone who could dig a ditch could have a house. The war 1950s boom instilled a baseline expectation of a just home from some war. House for protection, a roof for rain to flow from. For my father's pride. Where they saw a house, I saw a square.

Though some houses were perfect, others, no one was amazed that you could have a house. This idea is fading. In the new economy, you can't buy one that you get by inheritance, grandfather's house, or having lived long enough to create a house. From the old economy to the new carrying over, the triangle has become a square. The idea of house, like the shaky set of lines.

When I became a painter, the shape of the house emerged on the page. The form encompassed my figures. Around it I created a force of movement from which light emanated.

My temporary house had no status; it was low cost, held you without pretension, and by definition, pushed you on to that permanent house. Today's "starter house" also holds, but exists on an elevated plane. Lifting upward it's a rare commodity, each day more out of reach.



In my imagination, house is still a triangle on top of a square, a container of memory, a place that exists in space and time for

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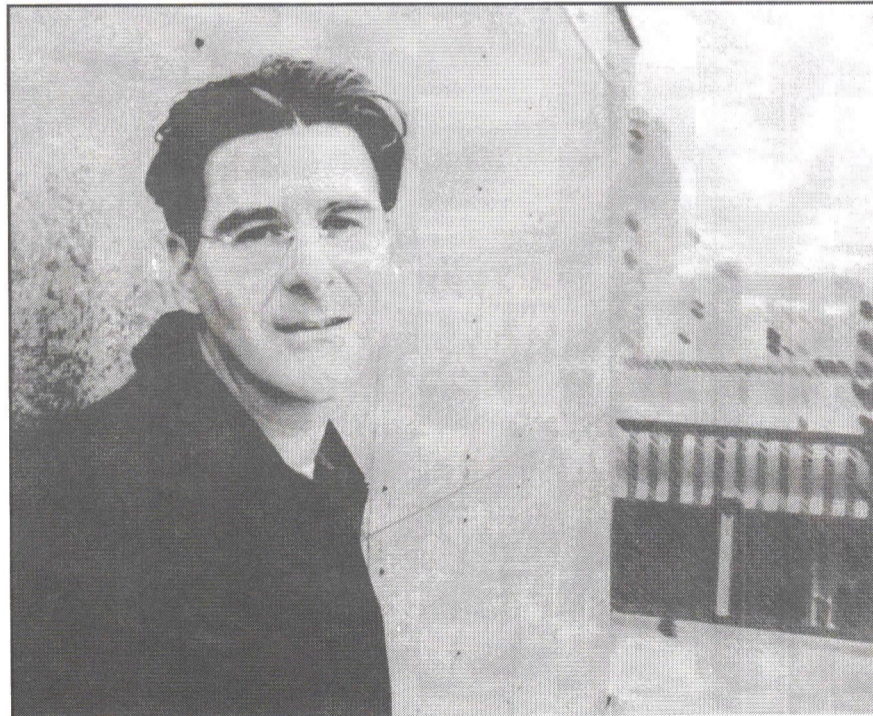
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Comments

(Gentryville, Missouri)

A reader recently wrote that, “the implication of Gentryville, Missouri is that the former mayor, Richmond Laporte, was put in jail for his controversial plan to improve downtown Gentryville.” The reader goes on to say that the story did not explain why Laporte was in jail. Instead, he suggested that the story was a cheap trick to gain our readers’ attention and that we at ARCADE should “save that Gentryville crap for April Fool’s Day.” The reader concluded by saying that this type of editorial has no place in a magazine he wishes to support.

My response to this reader, and to others who may have shared his sentiment, was as follows.

If you will please reread the mayor’s final answer of the interview on page 35, I think you’ll have your answer. The ideas and ideals that were outlined in the story of Gentryville are real perspectives on urban design, architecture and activism. I’m sorry you did not find them interesting, thought provoking or entertaining. And, no, the mayor’s crime was not outlined—purposely. Our intention was to let the reader decide.

Editor

(On Architectural Criticism)

Dear ARCADE,

Bravo for criticizing the lack of criticism in the Seattle papers. Poor Seattle! Where’s the voice of the AIA, which should be pressuring the papers to restore that which will keep us all honest, not merely patting our backs? I was schooled in the gentle arts by Alan Temko in San Francisco. Alan was a schmoozer with the elite — “Phillip” and “IM” were oft in his personal conversation — but on paper he was a tiger. The Chronicle famously backed him in court for his “merde” description of Pier 39, the tacky waterfront development. When I moved to Seattle to teach at UW in the late ‘70s I was overwhelmed by how “nice” everyone was, to a fault, and so was pleased to be offered the chance to be a critic by Polly Lane of the Times. Right away, my first column about the boring West Seattle bridge design (not a bridge, just an extrusion of the highway), drew an angry and slightly threatening letter from the engineers who designed it. That presaged things to come, and before long I found myself erased from shortlists of potential consultants for an urban design job in Bellevue, having taken a local utility to task for their less than civic contribution to the physical environment. Tail between legs, I from then on wrote mostly educational observations, in the Hinshaw mode, having decided that the risk of suffering professionally and financially through acerbic columns was too much. Later, after some better years, I was able to get back to writing, but not in Seattle. In Hawaii, I’ve drawn some angry responses (calls to my Dean, “can’t you control that guy Sidener?”). The good responses outweigh the bad however. For instance,

after a strong critique of the Federal Building in The Seattle Times, I had a letter from architect Fred Bassetti. The gist of his letter was to thank me for writing about his building, with a comment that Seattle had long needed some blunt and honest writing. Years later, I ran into him having coffee with Ibsen Nelson. “Ibsen, have you met my favorite critic?” What a genteel and magnanimous man.

So, ARCADE and your readers, take a cue from Willie Nelson, who says you’ve got to keep at their heels. “Be like a coyote,” said Willie.

Regards,

Jack Sidener

Professor of Architecture, University of Hawaii,
and resident of Juanita, Washington

(I will never dream about Sheri Olson again)

Ron,

I read the “Side Yard” article about Sheri Olsen and agree with you. But I heard a different story about why she left the P-I; that she was too vocal against the Monorail. I wish there were more brave people like her. The architects in the Seattle community are gutless.

Gary Hartnett, AIA | Principal

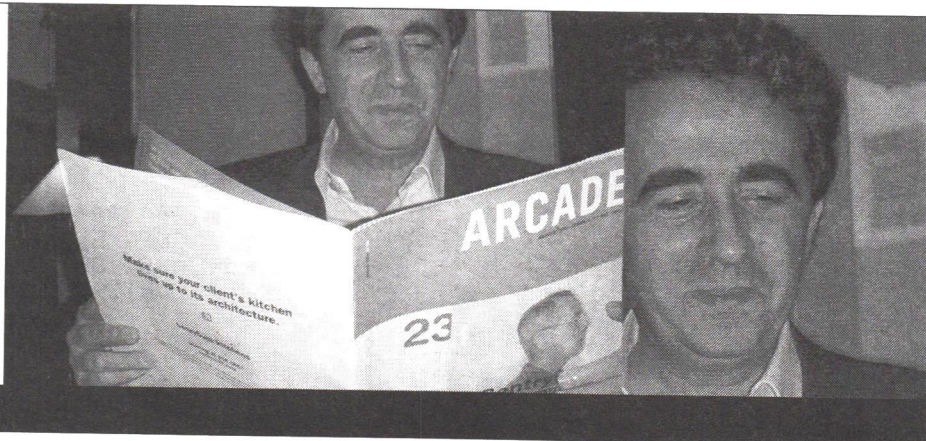
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