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### More Online

- texasarchitect.org
  - Daylighting Design Process: Two Cases
    - Phil Zimmerman, Assoc. AIA
  - Soo Sunny Park’s “Unwoven Light” Installation at Rice
  - Preservation Texas 2013 Design Awards: Call for Entries
Louis Kahn spoke often of his faith in natural light and his belief that structure was the maker of light. He wrote of not disturbing the wonder of natural light: its moods, shadows, reflections, and colors. He praised the “silvery light” in the Kimbell Art Museum and its ever-changing effect on the perception of the art. He said that the “inky-green shadows” of a red sunset were one of the many inspirations for never painting his walls and allowing for the color and shadows of light to simply be “a surprise” in a room.

Kahn spoke of the contradictions between the light bulb and the sun; he referred to the rhythm of darkness and light created by columns and brought fame to American poet Wallace Stevens’ lines: “What slice of the sun does your building have? What light enters your room?” Inspired by light, this element was fundamental to all he built, and his thoughts on the subject have influenced architects for more than forty years.

This issue on light features many projects that, like the work of this master, aspire to inspire through light. Some of the projects are artistic explorations of light and color while others minimize or maximize daylight for functional purposes. Each of these projects presents a unique response to the integration of daylight and design.

In his essay, Michael Malone, AIA, discusses how he discovered Kahn’s light, so revered by his architecture professors, as a student. Max Levy, FAIA, proposes five ideas for bringing daylight into a space including a room where rods trace light from the ceiling to the floors and a gallery with rotating “Light Sails” that pull sunlight directly into the space or diffuse it through the fabric.

Kevin Sloan explores both the poetic and the prosaic nature of sunlight in Texas in his discussion of how shade structures can mitigate the effects of our harsh climate. The two final projects: LifeWorks, offices for a social service provider in Austin, by Miró Rivera Architects and the Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy, a public school in Dallas, by SHW Group are built around the notion that maximized access to daylight enhances not only the experience of the spaces, but the success and growth of the individuals in the buildings. Collectively, these projects make it clear that Kahn’s faith was well founded.
Contributors

Phil Zimmerman, Assoc. AIA is as a designer for Lake|Flato Architects and enjoys his free moments with his one-year-old, Dean. Read his article on daylighting studies online.

Rachel Adams is the associate curator of exhibitions and public programs at AMOArthouse in Austin. Adams has curated numerous exhibitions of works by international contemporary artists. Read her interview with Seher Shah about the artist's exhibit “Constructed Landscapes” on page 10.

Ingrid Spencer writes about architecture and design from her home office in Austin's Zilker neighborhood. She is former managing editor and current contributing editor to Architectural Record; read her article on LifeWorks on page 52.

Gregory Ibáñez, FAIA just returned from New York where he viewed the impressive “Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light” at the Museum of Modern Art, which he highly recommends. Read his article on the Perot Museum of Nature and Science on page 66.

Kevin Sloan is a landscape architect, writer, lecturer and professor of architecture. A 2000 Harvard Loeb Fellow finalist, read his article on shade in Texas on page 40.

Aaron Seward is the managing editor of The Architect's Newspaper in New York City. A native Texan, he is a regular contributor to Texas Architect. Read his article on The Office of James Burnett's Sunnylands on page 46.

Max Levy, FAIA has enjoyed drawing since about first grade. He believes that our best drawings as architects are those we do for ourselves ... the ones we don’t plan on showing to others. The irony is that if we do show these conceptual sketches to clients, they often turn out to be among our most compelling artifacts. Though his “Light Sketches” on page 32 are unattached to any current work, he hopes they may someday cast real shadows.

Nonya Grenader, FAIA is principal of her own small firm in Houston. At Rice University School of Architecture, she is professor in practice and associate director of the Rice Building Workshop. Read her article on James Turrell on page 34.

Jack Murphy is an architectural designer currently based in Austin and a contributing editor to BI (bi-publications.com). He received his Bachelor of Science in Architectural Design from MIT. Read his article on Re:Site and METALAB's "Memory Cloud," on page 92.

Michael Malone, AIA and his co-chair Mark Wellen, AIA, shown here, are well underway planning the Third Annual Texas Architects Design Conference to be held next February. The theme is “Borderlands” and will explore what it means to practice architecture in the four states bordering Texas, as well as Mexico. He wrote about light on page 19.

Larry Speck, FAIA is a principal with PageSoutherlandPage Architects and a faculty member in the School of Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin. He is a thoroughly addicted architecture junkie who has spent decades trooping around buildings, villages, neighborhoods and cities — generally with camera in hand. He has a huge admiration for the architectural photographers who capture the built world much better than he does and wrote the profile on photographer Richard Payne, FAIA, on page 83.

Ron Stelmaski, AIA moved from the Windy City to Dallas just under two years ago to serve as design director for Perkins+Will. A strong believer in the power of participation, Ron appreciated seeing students mixing it up at the Kathryn Gilliam Collegiate Academy. Read his article on the Dallas public school on page 58.
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Also at brick.com, download Masonry Designer, a free companion program to design with Acme Brick and related masonry products. Plan coursing, patterns, and mortar colors with realistic detail to print and share with clients and colleagues.
Waller Creek’s Creek Show
by Octavia Hayes

On the heels of the Waller Creek Pop-up Adventure Picnic, when the typically deserted Palm Park hosted five hundred Austinites with an evening of food and live music, there may soon be several other reasons to visit Waller Creek before its upcoming metamorphosis from derelict and forgotten waterway into a vibrant downtown destination. If funding prevails, Creek Show, a series of temporary installations, will appear along the 1.5-mile Waller Creek site in an attempt to surprise and delight the community while also creating awareness about the importance of Waller Creek’s transformation for Austin’s connectivity.

“illumination is the theme,” says Ingrid Spencer, co-director of the project. “our team has at least six Creek Show projects currently being prototyped, each involving lighting and each designed by local architects and landscape architects. If the funding can be secured, we’re ready to start making Waller Creek an active venue for art, architecture, and landscape architecture.”

Waller Creek Conservancy Board President Melba Whatley envisioned Creek Show as a way to engage the public in Waller Creek’s ongoing transformation during the two years that the massive tunnel infrastructure project is underway. It also aims to get the community excited about the possibilities and significance of the Michael Van Valkenburgh and Thomas Phifer-designed park. The tunnel, scheduled to be completed in early 2015, will remove 28 acres from the floodplain, protect the creek bed from erosion, and help keep the creek’s water clean.

“If the funding can be secured, we’re ready to start making Waller Creek an active venue for art, architecture, and landscape architecture.”

“The great challenge for us is to encourage people to think about Waller Creek as a place to go, when there is really nothing for them to visit yet,” said Whatley. The first iteration of this effort was the Palm Picnic, and Creek Show will continue to activate Waller Creek in anticipation of its integration into the urban fabric and its evolution into a destination in its own right.

Waller Creek at its heart is a landscape architecture project that banks on the fact that green space has consistently proven to be hugely effective in terms of transforming cities. Creek Show is a landscape architecture-led endeavor; co-directing with Spencer is Hope Hasbrouck, landscape architect and UT Austin professor. Along with Hasbrouck and Spencer, the Creek Show team consists of two other landscape architects, Jason Sowell and the firm Design Workshop, as well as three architecture firms, Baldridge Architects, Thoughtbarn, and Legge Lewis Legge. “We have assembled a team composed of some of the most creative minds in the city for this effort,” said Whatley.

“The Waller Creek Conservancy has gone to great lengths to reach out to and engage the broader community in original and unexpected ways. The jury presentations and selection process for the design team was a public event,” said Murray Legge, FAIA. “The Creek Show is another great example of this kind of ingenious outreach.” The installations will occur in and around the creek and will be visible from the nearby streets.

The logo for the series, designed by Pentagram Austin, plays on the idea of the creek’s current condition, with a beauty-and-the-beast themed artwork featuring a creek monster illustration by award-winning artist Marc Burckhardt. “Waller Creek is a freak now,” says Spencer, “and the logo plays on that ‘creature from the Black Lagoon’ idea. But the creek is coming to life, and we are eagerly anticipating the change from ugly to beautiful. Still, there’s a
bit of nostalgia for the raw state of the site as it is. The monster represents all that.”

Spencer says others recognize the importance of bringing attention to the creek’s current state as well. Local architectural photographer Casey Dunn is currently photographing the bridges, tunnels, and other areas along the waterway, and his photographs are part of a book, designed by Pentagram, titled “Not Forgotten.” Much like the series of photographs Joel Sternfeld shot of New York’s High Line in its wild and abandoned state before it became a celebrated New York City park, Dunn’s photos will provide a valuable document of Waller Creek in its current wild and unkempt condition.

The Creek Show projects on the table — tentatively scheduled to begin popping up this fall — are less freaky and more refined than the logo suggests, with everything from glow-in-the-dark graffiti that will create a luminous path along the creek, to a line of LED-lit balloons tethered and controlled to reveal the creek’s trajectory, to a bridge of light, suggestive of the journey from now to the future destination that Waller Creek promises to become, to “Lightening in a Bottle,” a project that could potentially create a new habitat for fireflies along the creek.

But Spencer believes the program can be expanded in the future to include all manner of artistic, architectural, or performative programs. “This current group of projects focuses on illuminating the creek, but we hope the Creek Show series will continue even after the tunnel infrastructure is complete and Van Valkenburgh and Phifer’s transformation occurs. There will always be a place for interesting artistic works in and around Waller Creek. We’re pretty sure this monster has legs.”

Afterimage
Concept: Jason Sowell, Landscape Architect and UT Austin Assistant Professor
“Afterimage” will consist of images, words, and stencils painted in photo-luminescent paint on the street, tunnels, and bridges along Waller Creek. The glow-in-the-dark graffiti will provide a glowing outline of the Waller Creek site.

Tracing the Line
Concept: Baldridge Architects
An orchestrated event that highlights the creek’s untapped spatial and social potential, “Tracing the Line” consists of a series of 220 large, round, latex balloons, each containing an ultra-bright LED, suspended on approximately 10-ft centers at a single chosen datum — close to the level of the creek on the north end and above the street level at the southern terminus. Although the views within the creek are often obscured, the winding line of airborne lanterns should become increasingly visible as the evening progresses into night.

Light Bridge
Concept: Legge Lewis Legge
“Light Bridge” is composed of repeated hanging rope or wire elements that include segments of electroluminescent (EL) wire. Segments of EL wire are arranged to create a glowing three-dimensional volume/image of a bridge hovering in space over the river. The vertical elements will be lightly weighted and connected at the bottom to prevent tangling while allowing movement. “Light Bridge” will sway slightly in the breeze, giving the volume a shimmering spectral presence.

High Water Mark
Concept: Thoughtbarn
“High Water Mark” is a manifestation of an invisible line that will soon be erased: Waller Creek’s 100-year floodplain. Sitting approximately 20 ft above typical water levels in the creek, the floodplain has stunted development within 28 acres of downtown for decades. “High Water Mark” will make tangible a fragment of this disappearing floodplain, with a compelling 100-foot-long installation of fluid EL wire, suspended above the creek and under the 7th Street Bridge. The bridge is a hidden gem of spectacular double curvature stonework, and “High Water Mark” will offer a chance to see it illuminated.

Flow
Concept: Design Workshop
“Flow” is a kinetic installation that aims to capture and reveal wind patterns within the Waller Creek corridor, while providing shade and shadows.

Lightning in a Bottle
Concept: Jason Sowell
With the goal of transforming an aspect of Waller Creek’s ecology into a visual spectacle and community event, “Lightning in a Bottle” seeks to release the Photinus pyralis, or “firefly,” common in the wet meadows and creeks of Texas, into Waller Creek’s appropriate habitat. Tapping into the resources of the Firefly Meadow at UT Austin’s Brackenridge Field Laboratory, the project could be a magical summer event.

People or organizations interested in helping to sponsor the Creek Show series should contact Waller Creek Conservancy Director Stephanie Lee McDonald at slmcdonald@waller creek.org. For more information about the book “Not Forgotten” contact DJ Stout at Pentagram Austin: djstout@texas.pentagram.com.

Octavia Hayes is an Austin-based writer.
Seher Shah’s “Constructed Landscapes”
by Rachel Adams

Artist Seher Shah (b. 1975, Pakistan) discusses the intersection of architecture and drawing in her work. With degrees in art and architecture, Shah’s areas of interest include overlapping historical and geographical elements, reconstructing modernist architecture and urban monuments, and examining futurist landscapes. AMOA-Arthouse in Austin presented Shah’s first solo exhibition, “Constructed Landscapes,” earlier this spring.

You attended the Rhode Island School of Design for both visual art and architecture. How do your overlapping degrees translate into your work?

I am interested in the effects of rendering a space and how various mapping constructions can be represented through architecture, landscape, and objects. I try to engage with representations of the formal qualities of particular moments in architectural history through drawing, sculpture, and photography. There is a difference between an artist who is interested in architectural space and its representations and the practice of a working architect.

Much of your work is influenced by modernist and brutalist architectural styles of the mid-20th century, especially that of Le Corbusier. How did your interest in this style arise?

The hierarchy that exists in the spaces we inhabit, whether on an urban or individual scale, is something that continues to interest me. I consistently research brutalist buildings, and I am really intrigued by these structures. “Object Relic (Unité d’Habitation)” directly references the Le Corbusier project. For this drawing, I considered how brutalism affects the relationship between the landscape and the object. I find that drawing always allows for a visceral way to construct these landscapes.

Can you talk about the history and process behind “Geometric Landscapes and the Spectacle of Force” and “The Mirror Spectacle”?

My drawings explore the power dynamics of amphitheaters, civic buildings, mortuary architecture, and large-scale housing projects by removing hierarchy through specific methods of rendering. These events and objects are simultaneously fascinating and perplexing because they show the power struggles and aspirations of the context in which they are located.

The source of my inspiration for these two works was a photograph of the Delhi Durbar, an amphitheater in Delhi that hosted several military events and ceremonies. I reconstructed the semicircle of the amphitheater through layers of drawing and digital processes. By intentionally flattening the perspective, I employed a drawing method that created an alternative view of a historical event and removed the hierarchy involved in the photographic image.

Are the geometric forms in your work largely invented, or do you appropriate the shapes from existing architectural spaces?

It depends on the work at hand and how the process of making it develops. Some of the monument forms in the drawings are based on historical context, while others experiment with pure form and mass.

The drawing “Object Relic (Unité d’Habitation)” uses the forms to explore the formal and visceral qualities of this idealized modernist project by Le Corbusier. The role of the architect, the use of scale, and the contradictory principles inherent in these plans are a few of the reasons I was attracted to the project. But the forms are taken directly from the elevations of the building. I then proceed to flatten out the height and mass, and situate them in a constructed landscape.

Rachel Adams is associate curator of exhibitions and public programs at AMOA-Arthouse in Austin.
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Everyday Object Transformed
by Rebecca Roberts

We usually expect to encounter everyday objects like clothes hangers in the roles they were designed to fill. But recently, MF Architecture of Austin converted this seemingly specific-use product into a lighting feature for the 2012 Tribeca Style Fashion Week Show. “Fashion[ING] Objects” was composed of 5,000 hangers arranged in two layers that functioned in juxtaposition to one another: a back layer of “feathers,” which evoked an organic, free-flowing system, and a front layer of “diamonds,” which presented a more controlled system. The piece served as a backdrop for the runway show, with models entering and exiting through a gap in the backlit assemblage of hangers.

Mounted onto scaffolding, the installation was non-structural but utilized the triangular shape of the individual hangers to affix itself to the frame and hold itself together.

The singular clothes hanger itself is emblematic of the fashion industry, and the organization of “Fashion[ING] Objects” sought to refer directly to the runway activity. Just as the feathered layer is cloaked in some areas and exposed in others by the rigid diamond layer, the biotic bodies of the models are both exposed and concealed by the clothing they exhibit.

The backlighting served to fuse the two divergent layers of the installation into a unified whole through the shapes created with the light and shadows cast by both layers.

Rebecca Roberts is studying architecture at The University of Texas at Austin.

The piece served as a backdrop for the runway show, with models entering and exiting through a gap in the backlit assemblage of hangers.
Recognition

In April, AIA Austin announced the recipients of its 2013 Design Awards. The competition recognizes outstanding architectural projects by members and promotes public interest in architectural excellence. The jury was made up of esteemed colleagues from other cities and included Craig Kolstad, Assoc. AIA, of Dallas; Lauren Rottet, FAIA, of Houston; and Teresa Rosano, AIA, of Tucson, Ariz.

Honor

1 Hillside Residence
Alterstudio Architecture
A 1927 Austin bungalow was rescued from dilapidation through a substantial renovation and expansion. The building was delineated abstractly in stark white and paired with a new volume clad in black-stained cypress. The two are connected via a glass entry bridge. The renovation respects the original structure’s character, maintaining its inward focus; the expansion, by contrast, is characterized by openness, spatial continuity, and abstraction.

2 Manhattan Micro Loft
Specht Harpman
Architects radically transformed a tiny, awkward New York City apartment — a 425-sf space with a 24-ft ceiling height — by creating four “living platforms” that accommodate necessary functions but still allow the apartment to feel open and bright. The spaces are interleaved, with a cantilevered bed hovering out over the main living space, an ultra-compact bath tucked beneath the stair, and a roof garden with glazing that allows light to cascade through the space.

3 New Canaan Residence
Specht Harpman
An existing 1970s tract house was completely redesigned to immerse the occupants in the full range of environments offered by the site. Accessed via a winding drive through a forest, the house is built on a steep grade, with the main entrance on the second level. A tree canopy enfolds the interior space, creating a visual perimeter that changes with the seasons. The lower level of the house, which is carved into the earth, is cozy and provides an experiential contrast to the expansive, light-filled level above.

4 Peddle Office
Alterstudio Architecture
Built in the 19th century as a general store and updated with a new facade in the 1940s, Austin’s Buttrey Building had fallen into disrepair. Standard partitions and lay-in ceilings were removed to expose the building’s structure, which serves as a raw frame for the new Peddle headquarters. A lower ceiling defines a service zone and hosts new mechanical systems, and three rooms were inserted around which the working space flows freely. Reclaimed wood was used for floors and walls, along with purpose-made steel fixtures and hardware. The space was finished with an abstract palette of glass, stainless steel, and plaster.

5 T3 Parking Structure
Danze Blood Architects
Nested into a steep hillside on a busy Austin thoroughfare, this parking structure offers an unapologetic architectural expression while having minimal impact on its site. The helical concrete structure is organized around a central elliptical element that forms a light well, and features rhythmically overlapping steel screens that are anchored into the framework and appear to float along the exterior. Vines trained onto the screens will eventually provide living green walls, allowing the building to recede further into the hillside. A planted green roof above acts as a water detention pond that is used to irrigate the roof and surrounding landscape.

6 Uchiko
Michael Hsu Office of Architecture
Uchiko is a restaurant anchoring one end of a renovated two-story mixed-use building. Its interior design evokes the atmosphere of a simple Japanese farmhouse and employs a natural materials palette that emphasizes handcraftsmanship: hand-rubbed solid bronze, individually stained bricks, rough-sawn walnut wall and ceiling finishes, and burned cedar siding. A controlled light quality emanating from custom walnut fixtures and brass ceiling bubble pendants fuses these elements together.
to create a warm and inviting, cohesive environment. Outside, concrete shingle roof tiles used as a wall finish distinctly separate the restaurant from the rest of the building.

**Citation of Honor**

- Barranca Residence
  - Alterstudio Architecture
- Cotillion Park Pavilion
  - Mell Lawrence Architects
- Kendra Scott in City Centre
  - Red Design Studios

**Merit**

- F1 Tower
  - Miró Rivera Architects
- Locomotive 501 Ranch Trailer Home
  - Andrew Hinman Architecture
- The African American Cultural and Heritage Facility
  - McKinney York Architects
- The University of Texas at Austin Belo Center for New Media
  - Lawrence Group
- West Anderson Plaza
  - Levy Architects

**Unbuilt Awards: Citation of Honor**

- Saints Peter and Paul Chapel
  - Danze Blood Architects
- Studio Awards
  - Merit
- Estuarial Habitation
  - John Paul Rysavy

### AIA Houston Recognizes Student Proposals

A student design competition hosted by AIA Houston’s Committee on Architecture for Health (CAH) asked groups to consider the integration of health services into underserved communities by proposing health centers near existing mass transit centers. Teams were comprised of four student designers, a faculty advisor, and a professional advisor. Architects from Morris Architects, HOK, and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center participated as professional advisors for the three teams.

The students had six weeks to prepare responses to the program before traveling to Houston for the juried presentation. The jurors were Gerard Van de Werken, chief architect with the Texas Department of State Health Services; Peter Dawson, AIA, senior vice president of facility services for Texas Children’s Hospital; Val Glitsch, FAIA, the incoming president of the Texas Society of Architects; and D. Kirk Hamilton, FAIA, a professor at Texas A&M University.

The inaugural year of the competition brought together the energy of the architecture students and the experience of practicing professionals in a dialogue for the improvement of healthcare architecture.

1. **The University of Texas at San Antonio School of Architecture**
   
   The student team developed a scheme that folded a healthcare facility into a nature preserve near a disadvantaged neighborhood in San Antonio. Replete with a daycare facility, walking trails, and a bike path knitted into the architecture, the solution exemplified the idea of preventative healthcare as an integral part of community development.

2. **The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture**

   Students proposed a clinic based on thorough analysis of the proposed site’s adjacent population, in terms of the community’s general health and income level. The study demonstrated the clear need for a clinic in the selected neighborhood.

3. **Texas Tech College of Architecture**

   The proposal challenged pre-conceptions of the treatment environment by proposing mobile treatment rooms with a “machine in the garden” concept. It inverted the typical distribution of patient treatment rooms by proposing a method to bring the room to the patient rather than the other way around.
Legge Lewis Legge’s proposal for the Chapel Saint Francis de Sales in Haute-Savoie, France, is designed to honor the obscure saint of writing. The building takes both its inspiration and formal logic from cursive penmanship. Constructed atop a 6.5-meter circular stone base, the chapel is comprised of a set of three basic wooden computer numerical control (CNC) methods. The arc length and radius of each of the wooden units (a, b, and c) increase in scale by 1.618 up, and .618 down (a = (b+c), 2a = (a+b+c) etc.).

Component-based, the structure relies on a hinging connection system and is detailed to allow incremental rotation when stacked. The chapel forms a loop of repeating shapes, gently opening and closing as you move around it — evoking the act of writing. The intent is that the chapel appear as though its units could be arranged in innumerable iterations; however, it is not meant to be literally reconfigured. “Looking at the forms of the chapel is like watching someone write in cursive and anticipating the countless things that they could write, while knowing that, in the end, only a single transcription will be rendered,” said Murray Legge, FAIA. Lit from within, the chapel becomes a lantern in the landscape.
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The freshman architecture sequence at Auburn University, where I was an undergraduate in the 1970s, was largely taught by recent graduates of high-profile Northeastern universities. Many of these instructors and assistant professors had been educated in places replete with examples of the work of Louis Kahn, who was then well on his way to deification, having died just a few years earlier. Some of them had attended lectures by Kahn; others had actually been students of his. All of them had been to Yale to see his Art Gallery and Center for British Art buildings. They ‘got’ light. They referred to it like it was a fact of life and as though we should all ‘get it’ too. Many of my peers did (or at least they affected they did), but I did not. As embarrassing as it is to admit now, when I first went to the architecture library to study Kahn’s work, the images left me a little cold. All the photos looked dark and shadowy. I did not know that this effect was his exact goal. I had not found the light, let alone the silence.

As first-year architecture students, my studio-mates and I worked on basic composition and the manipulation of forms. We performed many shade and shadow studies that involved drafting patterns of light cast onto simple forms and learning about how light affected various volumes. For me, these exercises were unpleasant and trouble-some, but at least they were easy to understand — light as palpable substance was not.

Perhaps it was my background or my lack of exposure to strong examples of architecture designed with light as a key element, but I just didn’t get it. I’ve always been a bit slow and dull. I grew up in a family of engineers and contractors, so I could be forgiven for not coming to an easy understanding of conceptual ideas such as space, light, and transparency (both literal and phenomenal). At least, I could be forgiven by everyone but my teachers. I was dangerously close to being one of those kids who didn’t get invited back for their second year. Somehow, I made it through that period, but my hold on my major field of study was tenuous.

In 1978, during my sophomore year of architecture school, I discovered what all those folks were talking about. It happened in one revelatory, lightning bolt-like, aha! moment. I was on a spring break trip to Florida when one of my friends (a non-architect) suggested we go to Lakeland to see Florida Southern College (FSC), with its many buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Knowing I was studying architecture, he thought I’d enjoy it, so after a day of skydiving, we went. It was the first time I’d ever seen a Frank Lloyd Wright building, let alone a whole campus of them, and it had the expected impact on me.

Wright was out of fashion. However, as was the case for most incoming architecture students, he was the only architect I knew, so it was a shock to hear he was not highly regarded in the academy. Modern architecture was under assault by the predominance of postmodernism, and Wright was lost in discussions of context and architectural language. According to my professors, his ideas and work seemed quaint and personal, not really applicable to the world we were living in at that time.

FSC was a weird and wonderful place, distinctively beautiful and dynamic in its composition and organization. The Wright buildings, made of cast-in-place concrete and his unique textile blocks, were low and spare. Finished all in white, the buildings hugged the ground and were connected by covered esplanades. The centerpiece of the campus — one of its earliest buildings as well as its most vertical element — was the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel. A typically inventive Wright composition, the chapel was composed of a hexagonal base with a soaring lantern that sat directly over the seating area.
of the sanctuary. Originally designed to house a carillon, the rectangular lantern was solid on two wide faces (planes, really), which were connected by glass on the sides. Light flooded into the space, illuminating the chapel interior and all of the wall surfaces simultaneously.

Many of Wright’s greatest spaces were successful because of how they brought light into the buildings from above — think of the former Larkin Company Administration Building, in

As the sun moved over and around the building, light slashed through the spaces, often forming surprising angles, and animating everything with constant variety.

Buffalo, N.Y.; Unity Temple in Oak Park, Ill.; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. The quality of light in the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel was exactly like its effect in these spaces. I was literally overwhelmed by the beauty and clarity, and much to my embarrassment, I teared up in front of my friends. But they, too, understood we were in a special place. And the four of us stood there quietly, looking up into the great lantern. That was the first really great building I ever visited — and the first time I understood light.

That day, I learned not only the importance of the way light enters the space, but also what it does once it gets there. Wright had created a structure with an integrated surface ornament, typical of his later work, and the light bounced off of these bas-reliefs, giving the structural elements life. So many surfaces in the modern architecture revered by my professors were not very interesting when illuminated — they were just blank walls or ceilings. But the surfaces of the Annie Pfeiffer Chapel were alive and the textures compelling. As the sun moved over and around the building, light slashed through the spaces, often forming surprising angles, and animating everything with constant variety.

After this experience, I was on the lookout for light. In Auburn, the number of exemplary places of architecture and light were few, but in other nearby cities, there were more — and better — examples. Atlanta was the largest city in close proximity to Auburn, and in the 1970s, it had its own famous homegrown architect; John Portman. An architect-developer who built his own work, he received a great deal of popular and professional attention for his atrium hotels and for his commitment to the urban core. Portman’s buildings, however, were actually rather anti-urban; their inward-facing atriums generally denied any connection to the surrounding fabric. But they did represent significant investment in cities at a time when so much development was fleeing to the suburbs.

Opinions about Portman and his work vary widely now, but whatever the architectural merits of his buildings, he definitely understood spatial grandeur. And he understood light; it literally fell through his spaces, bouncing off the balconies that surrounded the atriums and filtering through rows of hanging plants and trellis structures. His buildings were alive with natural light and responded to changes in the atmosphere and sun. The Hyatt Regency and the later Peachtree Plaza atriums, both in Atlanta, were exciting places to be; they were great spaces to sit, watch people, and have a cocktail. Built of textured concrete, the buildings absorbed and reflected light with rich, constantly changing shadows. They were at once fantastic and nuanced — like a Piranesi drawing come to

Atlanta architect, John Portman pioneered the much-copied and now much-maligned atrium hotel. But in the 1970s, he was one of the world’s most recognized and influential architects. He was an accomplished master at bringing natural light into his buildings and providing surfaces to animate and reflect it. This image of the Westin Peachtree Plaza was taken by the author in the 1970s.
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life. I was entranced, and I went back to see them over and over again.

Yes, I’ve seen better buildings since, and, yes, perhaps I’ve outgrown Portman’s work. But it is still visceral for me. It was the first architecture that I really got to know firsthand. In these buildings, I saw the potential of what we do as architects. I watched folks come through the doors and look up, and up, and up into the space — straining their necks in order to see it all. The experience made them stop in their tracks and notice their surroundings. I saw similar reactions later in Rome at St. Peter’s Basilica and in London at St. Paul’s Cathedral, but I first witnessed them in Atlanta in John Portman’s hotels.

As my life has gone on, I find myself admiring how light is handled, not just in buildings where I am supposed to see it — the famous places where the shaping and molding of light is a strong feature of the architecture — but in other spaces and places as well. A few years after college while visiting Venice, I discovered light as a pervasive substance through which we see the world. Following several cold and drizzly months in northern Europe, I arrived by train, and as the clouds parted, I exited the station and boarded a vaporetto. It was late in the day, and the sunlight was glimmering off the water as we traveled along the Grand Canal. The aqueous lighting of Venice is a product of daylight reflected and refracted by the lagoon; the buildings are lit from below as well as from above. The effects are sublime, especially at sunset, when the golden light is a perfect accent on the buildings’ facades.

Art and architecture look good in Venice. The light illuminates the details — the bits and pieces — and all of the fragments come together in one colossal collage. Different ages, times, and technologies all meld together to form this brilliant whole of discrete parts. Witnessing this
helps you understand the work of Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa, which is filled with layered details and ornamentation that give his surfaces so much richness. He was working from what he had known and experienced, and the results are wonderful.

I see light everywhere now, and I try to savor the moments when I see it doing something special. Those moments are fleeting and easy to lose — like love and happiness, or the feeling of contentment — and they are the reward of observation, quiet and usually personal.

However, in my professional career, I’ve spent so much time orienting buildings to the north to mitigate heat gain and the damming effects of direct light that I’ve denied myself, and my clients, the drama of light moving around a room or through a space. Gone are the slashing blades of light cutting beautifully through a room, as seen in the photos by Ezra Stoller. It’s smart design, but it’s sad — we have really lost something in our uniformly illuminated spaces with their flat, never-changing light.

A few years ago, I went to New York with my son Max, and, as we made the rounds of many well-known buildings, including a preponderance of museums, I never failed to point out to him the light coming into the spaces. As the child of an architect, he is aware of buildings, and he knows when I am moved by them. He has seen me cry more than once when something touched me — a beautiful space or a painting.

We visited the Erol Beker Chapel of the Good Shepherd below St. Peter’s Church, which shares a site with the Citicorp Tower, and went to see the Louise Nevelson sculptures that adorn the walls of the space. It was a perfect time of day; the light came down into the room, which was located well below the street, with a brilliance and intensity I had never seen before. The walls were alive, with light animating and reflecting from Nevelson’s pieces, and the small flakes of gold accenting the sculptures were sparkling and bright, intensifying the experience.

Sometimes you are just in the perfect place and time for an epiphany, and you know you will never see it again no matter how hard you search for it. You have found the light, and you know it’s there, and it’s very, very good.

Michael Malone, AIA, is the founding principal of Michael Malone Architects in Dallas.

The aqueous lighting of Venice is a product of daylight reflected and refracted by the lagoon; the buildings are lit from below as well as from above.

Opposite page Understanding the phenomenon of the aqueous light in Venice provides insight into the architecture of Carlo Scarpa. His collage-like use of materials is best understood as part of an illuminated mosaic. The Olivetti Showroom in the Piazza San Marco is perhaps Scarpa’s most loving homage to his birthplace.

This page No essay of the modern movement more succinctly illustrates the potential of light to transform space than Le Corbusier’s Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut in Ronchamp. The south wall, with its myriad of buttress windows, is an architectural essay in mystery.
Karen Lantz, AIA, of Lantz Full Circle | Enter Architecture purchased a lot in Houston’s Ranch Estates subdivision in 2002 and then proceeded to think long and hard about the house she wanted to design there for herself and her husband, dentist Andrew Farkas. Ranch Estates is an anomalous subdivision in the museum district: two streets of low-ceilinged postwar ranch houses built in a part of the city that was otherwise developed in the 1920s.

Since the late 1990s, Ranch Estates has been transformed as new two-story houses, ranging in size from 3,400 sf to 4,700 sf, replaced the original 1,400-sf ranchitos. Many of the replacement houses are bulky, intrusive, and stylistically overdetermined. But Ranch Estates also contains houses designed by Natalye Appel + Associates Architects, Glassman Shoemaker Maldonado Architects, Michael Landrum, Strasser Ragni Architects, William T. Cannady, Francois de Menil, and Scott Ballard, who treated the impact of new construction on the shape of the neighborhood as a design consideration. Lantz expanded this consideration to include the environmental impact of designing, building, and occupying the house. As she began to translate these considerations into architectural terms, Lantz drew on her knowledge of domestic architecture in Houston, applying methods and materials that, she observed, made sense there. Lantz commenced design in 2009, started construction in 2010, and moved in just in time to celebrate Thanksgiving 2012 in the almost-completed house.
Lantz calls her house the Down and Up House, an acknowledgement that it is more complex spatially than Ranch Estates’ original houses. But Lantz did not overlook their virtues. Like the original ranch houses, the Down and Up House expands in plan along its east-west cross axis but is relatively shallow along its north-south axis so that it is penetrable by the prevailing southeast breeze. This was standard planning for Houston houses built prior to the mass adoption of air-conditioning in the 1950s.

The steel-framed house is extensively glazed along its north (rear) and south (street-facing) sides but minimally glazed on its narrower east and west ends. The low-pitched shed roof expands outward and down to shade south-facing glass during the hottest periods of the year while permitting greater sun penetration in the winter. Because the street front is so transparent, Lantz screened it with layers of fencing that enclose, without totally obscuring, the front courtyard. This layering of scrim-like planes (which extends to the gates closing off the double-car, street-facing carport) allows for a high degree of interior-exterior visibility without making its inhabitants feel like they are living in a fishbowl.

The staged entry sequence, which begins at the courtyard gate, endows the straightforward house with a degree of perceptual complexity. Lantz repeated this kind of spatial layering on the house’s second-floor level by treating the roof of the carport as a roof terrace and container garden. Her choice of an open carport rather than an enclosed garage contributes to the sense that the house is made up of airy layers rather than solid blocks. The backyard is a long courtyard space. Open to the interior through floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels, it introduces not only clear reflected light but also a sense of peacefulness and composure.

As a co-founder and former president of Houston Mod, Houston’s modern design nonprofit, Lantz is also attuned to the virtues of mid-20th-century modern houses. This is evident in her use of structural-steel framing for durability as well as modular clarity, and her delight in finish materials that are part of the architecture rather than the decor. Externally, she differentiates between surfacing material (panels of acid-etched steel and of horizontally-corrugated steel siding) and structural supports. The east- and west-end walls and the wall between the carport and the interior staircase are built of blocks of earthy brown Lueders limestone laid up to emphasize their subtle distinctions.

Interior partitions are primarily of sinker cypress planks. Grey-blue and green marble chips from Marble Falls are embedded in the polished terrazzo surface of the basement-, first-, and second-floor slabs. Lantz reserved white for the ceiling. On the first floor, it consists of angled segments of wallboard rather than a flat plane, a technique for acoustically deflecting sound that she observed in the work of the contemporary Spanish architect Francisco Mangado (when Mangado visited the Down and Up House, he conferred his blessing). Air-conditioning diffusers are concealed within these panels.

Lantz balances her love of materiality with spatial continuity. The ground floor consists of a continuous, high-ceiled space that transitions from living room, to dining area, to kitchen, each subtly distinguished by the number of structural bays it occupies. The centrally-located dining area is ceiled with backlit panels of gold-colored mica. Modern furniture and a growing collection of contemporary art inhabit these spaces.

Lantz subdivided the second floor with two bedrooms and bathrooms, and the generous roof terrace, which is paved with river rock. Mischievously,
Previous spread. An end wall of Lueders limestone and the serrated profile of the ceiling, slotted between exposed steel beams, set off the glass-walled living room of the Down and Up House.

This spread. A scrim-like fence screening the entry courtyard buffers the street front of the house, including the lap pool adjacent to the living room. Partitions faced with sinker cypress and a ceiling grid of backlit mica panels above the dining table materially enrich the open plan of the ground floor. The stair is railed with thin sheets of rolled steel; the second-floor landing is finished with a panel of transparent glass.
The approach to the master bedroom is contingent on crossing a bridge-like floor of clear, structural glass set atop a steel grid, which is visually open (harrowingly) to the entrance foyer below. Horizontally aligned sliding-sash windows and high-set clerestory windows illuminate second-floor rooms while ensuring privacy.

The big surprise of the Down and Up House is its “down” component: a 1,180-sf basement and terrace. Here Lantz inserted the mechanical room, a kitchenette/bar, a full bath, a generous seating area, and her husband’s wine storage. A subterranean patio containing a rolled-steel spiral stair to the first floor ensures that the basement is suffused with natural light. The space is also ceiled with suspended backlit panels of mica, giving it an intimate quality. Lantz used LED lighting throughout the house to reduce heat build-up inside.

Lantz also designed the landscape setting of her house. Rather than a creating a lawn, she surfaced the ground plane with a mixture of light green gravel from Marble Falls. Bamboo lines the back fence, and plants requiring minimal watering punctuate the gravel plane between the front courtyard fence and the curb. Inside the front courtyard, Lantz inserted protected beds for growing edible plants, and a raised terrace, which opens off the living room and contains a small lap pool. A water collection system provides irrigation to plants in the courtyard.

As her own client, Lantz was able to pursue preoccupations that a more conventional architect-client relationship might have precluded. She sought to specify U.S.-made products to the maximum extent possible (journalist Mimi Swartz chronicled her efforts in a feature article in The New York Times Magazine in October 2012 entitled “The (Almost) All-American Home,” an indication of Lantz’s partial success). As her own contractor, Lantz was also in a position to insist on a degree of constructional rigor and refinement that someone other than an architect might not value as highly. And as with the sustainable practices and technologies she incorporated, the experience of designing and building her own house enabled Lantz to teach herself about what it costs, financially and emotionally, to produce the kind of architecture that you hope your clients are willing to pay for.

The paradox of exerting one’s self to achieve a certain standard of architectural precision and subtlety is that the final product, if successful, reflects none of the agony this entails. The Down and Up House instead is a serene and happy space, where the couple generously dispenses hospitality to friends, visiting architectural celebrities, and admiring members of art and design organizations. The clarity, simplicity, openness, and warmth of the Down and Up House dissolve anguish and struggle as effortlessly as the serrated ceiling dissolves noisy reverberation. It is left up to the glass floor to playfully impart an inkling of the turmoil that insisting on the integrity of an idea inexorably produces.

Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas and a contributing editor of 7A.
This spread. A transparent glass floor and a skylight illuminate access to the master bedroom. The stair goes down to the basement entertaining space. Cypress partitions screen the high-ceilinged master bedroom from adjacent bath and dressing areas. The kitchen is also partially finished in wood. The “down” part of the Down and Up House houses a glass-walled wine cellar.
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The projects featured illustrate a range of artistic and functional expressions where light is essential to the experience of each space.
Light Sketches

by Max Levy, FAIA
1 “Light Sails,” manually operated canvas sunscreens inside light monitors.

2 Rods, painted white, trace natural light falling from the sky to the floor.

3 Trellises cast increasingly cross-hatched shade.


5 Ceiling: half painted grey, half painted white. Skylight baffles bounce light to white surface.
Weekend with Turrell

by Nonya Grenader, FAIA

For me, it's using light as a material to influence or affect the medium of perception. I feel that I want to use light as this wonderful and magic elixir that we drink as vitamin D through the skin — and, I mean, we are literally light-eaters — to then affect the way that we see.— James Turrell (Interview with Michael Govan, 2012)

Artist James Turrell began experimenting with light as a medium in the 1960s, and since then, he has created site-specific installations in 25 countries. His innovative studies in manipulating light have been informed by interests that span art, science, and religion. Turrell received a degree in perceptual psychology from Pomona College, in Claremont, Calif., and as a pilot and a rancher, he has formed strong relationships with sky and land. Though Turrell often works outside of cities, Houston is the location of three permanent installations by the artist. Each yields distinctly different effects, yet they are profoundly connected by the artist’s immersive exploration of light.

Houston is the location of three permanent installations by the artist. Each yields distinctively different effects, yet they are profoundly connected by the artist’s immersive exploration of light. In a statement to Hilarie M. Sheets of The New York Times in March of this year, Turrell commented, “I’m interested that light has thingness in itself.”

A leisurely weekend in Houston affords the opportunity to experience the Turrell installations in full.
Dusk on Friday:

“Skyspace” at Live Oak Friends Meeting House

Before sundown on Friday evenings, a small group gathers at the Live Oak Friends Meeting House, a place of worship for a community of Quakers in Houston’s North Heights neighborhood. A Skyspace installation designed by Turrell serves as a centerpiece in the primary gathering space, and the public is invited to experience the mesmerizing and ever-changing view of the sky as it develops through the 12-foot-square void in the roof.

Turrell’s Skyspaces are typically installations in enclosed rooms defined by an aperture open to the sky. He began the series in the 1970s. When the Live Oak Friends Skyspace opened in 2001, Houston Chronicle art critic Patricia Johnson noted that it was a “glorious interior space that makes manifest the Quaker principles of simplicity, silence, and the ‘light within.’” The experience is peacefully slow and invites pure observation: the everyday phenomena of the changing sky, moving clouds, an occasional flock of birds, and even a floating leaf are heightened to invoke new levels of perception.

The Skyspace is housed in a humble grey rectangular building with broad overhangs and a retractable metal roof, which opens to reveal the specific square of sky. Thoughtfully designed by architect Leslie Elkins, AIA, the modest meetinghouse is punctuated by deep openings and features entry and meeting spaces that bookend a serene and luminous center space. In the 38-foot-square central area, bleached pine floors hold stark and elegant white oak benches, which are symmetrically arrayed for viewing the Skyspace above. Viewers are contemplative, and at times, they gravitate to another bench or to the ample windowsills to take in a different perspective.

When night comes, guests are asked to step outside while the roof is closed and hidden neon tubes are activated. Upon re-entry, the Skyspace is filled with an ink-blue wash, making tangible the fleeting light that occurs between dusk and darkness. As it changes from indigo to the deepest shade of blue, it is the color that remains just before sinking into black.

Saturday:

“The Light inside” at Wilson Tunnel, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Situated underground in the Wilson Tunnel between the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) Caroline Wiess Law Building and the Audrey Jones Beck Building, “The Light Inside” is more than a pathway. “It is in essence a passage and destination,” said Alison de Lima Greene, curator of contemporary art at MFAH. Museum visitors can certainly cross the street to get from the Law Building’s Brown Pavilion to the Beck Building, but they generally choose to take the tunnel, enjoying the experience of being enveloped by Turrell’s work. First-timers are easily recognizable when they hesitate for a few seconds before entering the space, where walls and ceiling disappear.

Neon strips transform the tunnel into a vessel for conducting light, rendering those walking through the space shadowed figures whose movements seem choreographed in the theatrical environment. Without natural light, the space feels immediate and removed from any specific context. The raised black walkway detaches the viewer from the seemingly limitless colored light and creates an almost floating sensation. Returning from the Beck building through the tunnel, the experience is rarely the same — the light has changed from blue to crimson to violet.

Completed in 1999, the tunnel will be of particular interest to visitors coming to see the artist’s retrospective, “James Turrell: The Light Inside,”
on view at MFAH from June 9 through September 22, 2013. The exhibit is part of a group of exhibitions jointly conceived as concurrent shows at MFAH, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The Wilson Tunnel will be the conceptual core of the MFAH exhibit, and additional light-based installations will be featured in upper Brown Pavilion galleries. The exhibit will allow visitors to witness how light shapes space and becomes an entity unto itself.

“Turrell was the first artist who really stated unequivocally that you can liberate the light from the source and make it the artwork,” observed Greene.

Dusk on Saturday and Dawn on Sunday:
“Twilight Epiphany” Skyspace at Rice University
Just before sunset, the lower level of Turrell’s most recent Houston installation, the “Twilight Epiphany” Skyspace at Rice University, is usually filled to capacity with about 40 visitors. Additional viewers mill around the second level mezzanine, and others scatter on the lawn beyond the steep angled berm that surrounds the space. In the 28-foot-square lower level room, a bright white 72-foot-square ceiling seems to hover overhead.
The focus is on a center void, where a piece of twilight sky is framed by a 14-foot-square opening with a razor thin edge.

The light show begins at sunset, when an intriguing and, at times, spectacular lesson in color theory ensues. Starting slowly, allowing viewers’ eyes to adjust, a warm light is cast upon the large square soffit, and it gradually intensifies to hot pink, turning the smaller dark blue square of sky into a vibrant turquoise. Then, a procession of color combinations unfolds more rapidly: complementary colors, cross complements, saturated hues that fade into subdued neutrals. The sky, framed by the opening in the roof, shifts from translucent to full-opaque, like a painted surface. At times, the transformation of light and sky is so dramatic, so otherworldly, that viewers walk outside to verify that, indeed, the sky has not really changed.

At times, the transformation of light and sky is so dramatic, so otherworldly, that viewers walk outside to verify that, indeed, the sky has not really changed.

Sited on an open area of campus, the Rice Skyspace is near the Shepherd School of Music and is on axis with the distant but visible Brochstein Pavilion. As noted by Emily Stein, manager of the Skyspace, when Turrell visited Rice, the Brochstein Pavilion “spoke to him” in a way that not only solidified the chosen site for the new Skyspace but also the selection of its architect, Thomas Phifer and Partners. The two projects share more than their alignment and architect; their crisp and pristine white surfaces stand in stark contrast to the textural St. Joe brick facades so prevalent on campus.

Also known as the “Suzanne Deal Booth Centennial Pavilion,” the Rice Skyspace was named for the Rice trustee and alumna who made both the commission of “Twilight Epiphany” and its construction possible. Deal Booth envisioned the pavilion to be used not only during the sunset/sunrise light shows but also for music events and other intimate gatherings. With twelve speakers hidden in the plaster walls, it is the first Skyspace to be engineered for acoustics. Additionally, students and visitors are encouraged to use the space as a pathway or a place to pause during their everyday travels across campus. The lower-level pink granite benches, with their comfortable sloped backs, offer a cool break and place to enjoy a unique view of the Texas sky.

The Rice installation is Turrell’s 73rd Skyspace and one of the largest. The upper level is accessed by stairs that flank the deep entries, and it accommodates 76 additional guests. But the view from above is quite different than from the enclosed lower space. From the upper-level concrete benches, the light source at the balcony rail is revealed, which diminishes the magic a bit. And though the elevated view is dramatically expansive, at night, it is dominated by Houston’s densely developed medical center, with aggressively lit buildings that vie for attention. Close to the aperture, the need for diligent maintenance is apparent, as there are already small cracks at the corners of the opening resulting from the city’s relentless heat and humidity. In spite of these distractions, or perhaps because of them, the Rice Skyspace offers an understanding of Houston itself, with its sweeping ambition and willingness to embrace the resulting challenges along the way.
The space feels most intimate of all just before dawn. With few visitors and enveloped in darkness, the programmed light begins to conjure up new and unexpected combinations that are different from but just as exquisite as the show the night before. It is not just that the programmed light changes for the morning view, but the event also encourages a realization that the color mixed with light is both fleeting and memorable. Turrell described that act of memory to LACMA when he said, “If we define art as part of the realm of experience, we can assume that after a viewer looks at a piece, he leaves with the art, because the ‘art’ has been experienced.”

As the first morning light approaches, it seems natural to replay the weekend. The Live Oak Friends Meeting House Skyspace is peacefully contemplative and beautifully serene. MFAH offers “The Light Inside” not just as a pedestrian pathway, but also as an integral and compelling exhibition in the museum sequence; it is as much about being there as getting there. And Rice University’s “Twilight Epiphany” can be appreciated intimately from within or as a glowing object in the landscape, in natural light or through the programmed focus on surprising color relationships.

All of Turrell’s Houston spaces heighten the perception and awareness of light and its properties, allowing the viewer to participate in ways unexpected and illuminating.

Prior to visiting the three Turrell installations, please verify specific times and availability at the following websites: www.friendshouston.org, www.mfah.org, and www.skyspace.rice.edu.

Nonya Grenader, FAIA, is a professor in practice at Rice University School of Architecture.
Made in the Shade

by Kevin Sloan
When architects think about sunlight, they generally dwell on the poetics of hues, moods, and shifting atmospheres. Natural light is essential to architecture, but when thinking about the sunlight in Texas, one of its qualities seems to dominate all the others: heat. If it weren’t for Death Valley, Central Texas would be the hottest place on the national weather map on most summer days. Thus, it is perplexing that after 70 years of Sunbelt expansion, a school of architecture renowned for transforming the light and heat of our region into architectural potential does not exist. Texas architects may be emboldened by kindred groups who gained a design edge by addressing regional environmental conditions with architectural solutions.

Just as the perpetual motion and manic culture of Los Angeles inspired the Southern California Institute of Architecture — and its Pritzker Prize-winning notable Thom Mayne, FAIA — the work of the Sarasota School of Architecture also grew from a specific place: Siesta Key, Florida. The architects who pioneered this style focused on the goals of dissipating heat, maximizing breezes for natural ventilation, and leveraging lightweight construction techniques to overcome the shifting sub-surface sands.

They produced buildings such as Paul Rudolph’s 1953 Umbrella House, which was recently restored and consists of two structures, one nested inside the other. The outer structure is a flat trellis, composed of closely spaced slats, that protects a smaller cube-shaped living volume from the Florida sun. Another example by Rudolph is the 1950 Healy Guest House — more commonly known as the Cocoon House — an experimental home...
with an integrated structure comprised of steel straps spanning the side walls, which support an inverted catenary-shaped roof. Entire walls are finished in wood louvers, allowing for flexibility in both natural ventilation and light sources.

A contemporary of the Sarasota School, Bud Oglesby, FAIA, whose Dallas-based office is known today as Oglesby-Greene, established a legacy of thoughtful design appropriate for Texas ecologies. His work, along with that of many others, such as O’Neil Ford, FAIA, of Ford, Powell & Carson, provides numerous precedents for buildings that reap the benefits of the Texas climate while shielding against its harsher elements.

Dallas architect Max Levy, FAIA, recently restored a Bud Oglesby residence in Wichita Falls that bears a striking resemblance to the shade-minded structures of the Sarasota School. “The original Bud Oglesby design is audacious,” noted Levy. The house is a flat modernist box shaded by a gabled trellis of closely spaced slats floating over the entire house. The design is functional and provides an expressive effect. “The rare thing — the beautiful thing — is the gabled trellis,” said Levy. “Not only does the trellis shade the house, but it makes the whole structure an abstracted version of the houses around it, which helps the design fit into the scale of the neighborhood, even though it is bold architecture with a capital ‘A’.”

The history of the house is the key to understanding its architecture. Air-conditioning was just becoming a commonplace commodity in 1957, when Oglesby designed the house, and at that time, Wichita Falls was largely recognized as having the hottest average temperatures in North America. After 55 years, the original trellis deteriorated. Levy noted that when the owners took it down, they “immediately noticed that the air-conditioning bills skyrocketed, and the interior environment became physically different — almost stifling.”

The reconstruction of the trellis concluded in February 2013. Levy made only one change from the original blueprints; in lieu of using old growth redwood to rebuild the trellis, he substituted a dense-grain red cedar. He is confident it will last another 55-year cycle.
The Oglesby restoration sharpened Levy’s perception of shade and architecture. “Whether it’s the sun’s ferocity or the anesthetizing effects of excessive air-conditioning, our buildings tend to withdraw from the natural environment, and we become desensitized,” said Levy. He emphasized that buildings today are rarely connected to their immediate settings. “It’s as if we make buildings with question marks floating above them that say, in effect, ‘Where am I?’ And the only ‘where’ I can conclude is: in denial.”

Shade and archetype, along with digital fabrication technologies, underpin the design for the Westmoreland Park Pavilion in Dallas by Austin architect Murray Legge, FAIA, of LZT Architects. With influences taken from Renzo Piano’s designs for the Menil Collection in Houston and the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, the pavilion is an analogous superstructure made of steel louvers, powder coated in white. By varying and undulating the depth of the louvers, Legge produced an architectural abstraction of cloud formations that casts shadows with nuanced gradations of shade and light. The Westmoreland Park Pavilion is the most recent addition to a portfolio of nearly two-dozen other pavilions designed by local and international architects for the City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department. All of the pavilions aim to provide respite from the harsh Central Texas sun.

While houses and pavilions demonstrate smaller-scale strategies for maximizing shade, two examples from San Antonio and Dallas capture the possibilities for larger public buildings to provide and benefit from shade. Like Bud Oglesby, O’Neil Ford was concerned with appropriate design solutions for the Texas climate. His 1969 trellis structure at The University of Texas at San Antonio campus created a viable public space that continues to function well for students today.

Ford called it “Sombrilla Plaza,” and when it was completed, it arguably merged the archetype of a temple with a vernacular hat. Roughly 150 ft by 200 ft, the Sombrilla was designed as an open-air hypostyle of concrete columns supporting a structural trellis of teak slats oriented vertically. The temple of shade it creates is heraldic. It also protects and provides for a cooler microclimate in the public plaza below.

A similar application of a large-scale trellis is found at the Winspear Opera House in the Dallas Arts District. Foster + Partners of London skillfully executed the interior program and then focused on the urban space surrounding the building. As part of the design development, Foster + Partners engaged consultants to evaluate temperature differences in the sun and shade. Evaporative cooling calculations completed by Battle McCarthy Consulting Engineers and Landscape Architects, also of London, and microclimate measurements made by Kevin Sloan Studio of Dallas demonstrated temperature differences of more than 40 degrees when comparing areas of summer sun and shade. In order to complete the microclimate study, six thermometers were set within a 150-ft semicircle in various sunny and shaded locations. Measurements were observed over the course of a 10-day period in 2004 and then averaged. Emboldened by the numbers, Foster + Partners designed a monumental canopy of steel and aluminum louvers to protect the glass concourse of the building and shade the public events that would take place in the Annette Strauss Artist Square below the canopy.

“After two short years, the trees under the canopy are clearly healthier and growing faster than those planted in full sun,” said Michael Korns, AIA, the director of design and construction at the AT&T Performing Arts Center. “These trees are taller, and their foliage has proven less likely to yellow and wilt during the hottest days of the summer.”

This is not an insignificant observation, considering the fact that 60 to 80 percent of the water taken out of regional reservoirs in Central Texas is used to irrigate landscape in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Rather than using
The Sombrilla Plaza by O’Neil Ford at UT San Antonio is located in the center of campus and acts as a social condenser for student activities. The Westmooreland Park Pavilion in Dallas offers a shaded respite in a public park.

PHOTOS COURTESY LZT ARCHITECTS AND FORD, POWELL & CARSON.
The importance of using architecture expressively and spatially to humanize the summer heat potentially seems more relevant if you consider the state’s position on the globe; most of Texas resides on latitudes that traverse North Africa.

the water supply to try to turn the prairie grasslands into Ireland, architects, designers, and planners should consider alternative solutions that accommodate people and plants in the Texas climate. The Winspear Opera House canopy quite literally moves the building into a more temperate climate.

The monumental canopy of Foster + Partners’ Winspear Opera House in Dallas generates a microclimate where trees and plants are thriving. The lowered structure moves the building to a more temperate climate.

Kevin Sloan is principal of Kevin Sloan Studio in Dallas.

The Texas sun arguably provides two distinct conditions each calendar year: muse and beast. In the more temperate months, the poetic qualities of the sunlight take on characteristics that have stirred the works of writers such as John Graves and painters like Georgia O’Keeffe. During the late summer months, however, the element’s intensity changes it from a source of artistic inspiration into an unrelenting force of nature. As the passive, shade-giving structures of the Bud Oglesby house in Wichita Falls, Westmoreland Park Pavilion, Sombrilla Plaza, and Windspear Opera House demonstrate, solutions can be devised that work with the light and heat of the Texas sun — innovations that would be unassailable architecturally and that probably save more energy than many current LEED strategies.
Desert Decadent

by Aaron Seward
Sunnylands was the Southern California winter home of the late Walter and Leonore Annenberg — wealthy Philadelphia socialites who, during the latter half of the 20th century, became legendary for their philanthropy, patronage of the arts, and commitment to politics. The couple donated vast quantities of their media fortune to education, including $50 million to the United Negro College Fund, and gifted a $1 billion collection of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They also held civil service posts (Walter was ambassador to Great Britain under Richard Nixon, and Leonore was the State Department’s chief of protocol under Ronald Reagan) and hosted seven U.S. presidents and the British Royal Family at Sunnylands.

Appropriately named, the estate is sited on the corner of Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra drives in Rancho Mirage, just outside of Palm Springs. Its sprawling modernist house, designed by A. Quincy Jones, FAIA, is situated in the midst of 200 acres featuring verdant gardens and a private nine-hole golf course — an oasis in the sun-scorched Sonoran Desert. The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, which comprises both the home and the grounds, was created by the couple prior to their passing. Under the new programming, and expanding upon its “Camp David of the West” role, the estate functions as a retreat for political, educational, and cultural dignitaries from the United States and abroad, and is open to the public on a by-reservation basis.

The Trust hired Los Angeles-based architecture firm Frederick Fisher and Partners and landscape architecture firm The Office of James Corner to re-envision the estate.

The new Center & Gardens is a composition of color and texture achieved through a densely layered, yet sustainable, planting design.
Burnett (OJB), which has studios in Houston and San Diego, to design a visitor center for the estate. It was to be a place where the public could gather to learn about the history of the Annenbergs before visiting the house itself.

However, what began in concept as a mere way station soon became a destination in its own right. “In 2006, we started the programming and design of the project with Mrs. Annenberg. We had a great relationship with her,” said James Burnett. “We took what everyone thought would just be a center and made the Sunnylands Center & Gardens.” Complete with a LEED Gold certification, the new Center & Gardens is a composition of color and texture achieved through a densely layered, yet sustainable, planting design.

Frederick Fisher’s design for the Center takes its cues from the low, orthogonal, horizontal profiles and minimal materiality of Jones’ original. And, as with the original house, the building is approached via a curving drive that meanders through the landscape. However, the nine-acre gardens — which fill out the 15-acre site — make a significant departure from the neighboring grounds.

“We took a different strategy with the landscape than the estate, which is predominately lawn and golf course,” said Burnett. “At the Center, we created a beautiful garden that is very rich and full with seasonal interest and uses minimal resources.”

Burnett’s quest for fullness came in response to visiting nearby desert gardens, which tend to take the “specimen” approach with “onesies and twosies” of species well spaced out in a gravel mulch bed. “We wanted to try to take desert plants and give them more of a solid appearance, something where the plants would be designed in mass, where you would get large sweeps of a few interesting varieties,” said Burnett.

“In the Coachella Valley, a lot of people try to mimic a desert environment, which is usually sparingly planted,” added Dillon Diers, vice president at OJB. “Jim and I tried to create something you might find more appealing — something that provokes a different emotion — rather than mimicking nature.”

OJB laid out the gardens with an eye for color, proportion, and line inspired by the impressionist and post-impressionist painters that the Annenbergs so loved. They worked with a palette of more than 50 different species (some 53,000 plants in all), most of which are native to the Sonoran Desert. Massed groups of agaves, yuccas, golden barrel cactus, and desert milkweed, among other species, occupy their own distinctly defined beds, appearing, from above, much like the strokes of color in a Cezanne or Van Gogh. “The view changes on a month-to-month basis,” said Burnett. “Some varieties of grasses and agaves and aloes are quite dramatic; they give you a lot of show and beauty.” Multiple hues of yellow, a particular favorite of Leonore Annenberg, emphasize the arrival of spring.

The landscape scheme transitions from an orderly, geometric composition adjacent to the Center to a progressively more organic and free-flowing arrangement at the eastern end. The central event lawn beside the building provides a hint of the more traditional landscape to be found at the estate and caps the geothermal wells that service the Center’s HVAC system. Here, the agave and cacti, arranged in perfect rows and circular patterns, radiate from the lawn in tight planting patterns emphasized by the short palo verde trees. Enwrapped in the varied textural experience offered by the gardens, visitors walk along intimate paths that lead to a small performance space and a labyrinth.

To the east of the Center, the landscape opens up, and thornless mesquite and palo brea trees present visitors with shade as they walk deeper into the gardens, where serpentine paths lead to a two-acre field of desert wildflowers. Poppies, primroses, desert marigolds, and chia are planted en masse, creating large sweeps of exploding colors. “The gardens are quite an
Previous spread  OJB laid out a dense composition of native Sonoran plantings, emphasizing color and seasonal change, in contrast to the typical sparse desert garden.

Opposite page  The Center is approached via a curving drive that snakes its way through the eastern section of the Gardens. The layering of massed plantings creates a varied textural experience.

This page  The selection of plantings emphasizes colors, especially yellow, which was a favorite of Leonore Annenberg. Intimate paths lead visitors to a labyrinth.
experience,” said Diers. Light, shade, color, and texture, all fundamental to the design concept, defy traditional notions of a sparse desert landscape. The effect is that of densely layered views of greens, greys, yellows, pinks, oranges, and crimsons all framed by the San Jacinto Mountains beyond.

The soil itself was primarily left in its natural sandy, desert condition, without the addition of much fertilizer or organic material, which would have been typical in a more traditional approach to landscaping in the region. The gardens do boast a sophisticated capillary irrigation system, however, complete with soil monitors that measure moisture levels. It can be calibrated to deliver differing quantities of water to different beds.

This was important for the initial planting phase (completed during the summer), when the plants required abundant quantities of water in order to establish their roots. Once that stage was over, the water was tapered back. All of the storm water that falls on the Center’s roof and parking lot, as well as a portion of the water that collects on Bob Hope Drive, is redirected to on-site retention areas that surcharge the depleting Coachella Valley’s aquifer.

Mrs. Annenberg passed away two years before Sunnylands Center & Gardens opened, an unfortunate turn of events that bothers Burnett to this day, but he feels that she would be pleased with the way the project turned out. “Mrs. Annenberg knew that in order for the Center & Gardens to be successful, it had to tell a sustainable story and also be beautiful,” said Burnett. “We made the Center a place where people can learn how to make a garden in the Sonoran Desert.”

All of the storm water that falls on the Center’s roof and parking lot is redirected to on-site retention areas that surcharge the depleting Coachella Valley’s aquifer.

Aaron Seward is the managing editor of The Architect’s Newspaper in New York.
Left The San Jacinto Mountains frame the Gardens’ splay of color.

Opposite page The central events lawn covers geothermal wells that service the Center’s HVAC system. Benches give visitors places to sit and absorb the planted splendor.

Right The architecture of the Center itself responds to the orthogonal modernist expression of the existing Sunnylands Estate, designed in the 1960s by A. Quincy Jones, FAIA.
The staff involved with the Austin-based organization LifeWorks knows plenty about building; as the most comprehensive social service provider in Austin and Central Texas, their main goal is to help build strong families and individuals. Through its services, which include family counseling, housing, education, and training, as well as youth development for teens and young adults transitioning out of the foster care system, the nonprofit transforms the lives of some 11,000 families in crisis during a typical calendar year.

Recently, LifeWorks was involved in another kind of building — the design and creation of a new facility on a 5.9-acre site in East Austin. After reviewing ideas from 16 firms, the organization chose Austin-based Miró Rivera Architects for the project. It then gave the team, led by principals Juan Miró and Miguel Rivera, a tall order: design a sustainable facility, full of natural light, to bring together several services once housed at separate locations; make the building safe and secure, yet welcoming to staff and clients; and create spaces that are tailored for specific services but also multifunctional.

In addition, LifeWorks’ new home needed to be a place that would make the statement to its neighbors in East Austin that it was a solid part of their community, and it needed to include rental space for a couple of other nonprofits. All that was to be done within a budget of no more than $150 a square foot. “We asked for a lot,” said LifeWorks Chief Operating Officer Mitch Weynand. “We also wanted the building to honor the spirit of East Austin, yet support and contribute to its future.”

Miró Rivera Architects, known for its elegant, high-end modern residences and its design of the signature structures at Austin’s Circuit of the Americas racetrack, was up for the challenge. “East Austin, especially this area, is changing,” said Ken Jones, AIA, senior associate at Miró Rivera Architects. “It’s redeveloping into a more walkable area. And the idea of giving the building a real connection to the street, reflective of its connection to

A New Lease on Life

by Ingrid Spencer

Project LifeWorks Sooch Foundation Youth and Family Resource Center, Austin
Client LifeWorks
Architect Miró Rivera Architects
Design Team Juan Miró, FAIA; Miguel Rivera, AIA; Ken Jones, AIA; Ada I. Corral, AIA; Sara Hadden
Photographers Paul Finkel and Michael Hsu
the community and the transformation that both the area and LifeWorks’ clients are going through, was a great opportunity.”

The 33,600-sf, three-story facility celebrates the street and the outdoors on all sides. Borrowing from the vernacular style of the dogtrot house, the building is broken into two rectangular volumes, which are connected by a shaded bridge. Visitors drive between the buildings and under the bridge to access covered parking at the back of the property. A generous curved overhang, supported by slim, circular metal columns in a seemingly random pattern, provides shade and acts as a ‘front porch’ for the building.

“The poetry behind the many columns, which are functional as well, is the idea of arms reaching up,” said Juan Miró. “It takes many people to support a community. It’s a philosophy that reflects what LifeWorks does.”

The building’s exterior is also a reflection of the organization’s activity; each story is wrapped in a different material — stucco, aluminum, and cedar wood — representing LifeWorks’ cornerstones: counseling, education, and youth development.

Evidence of the building’s five-star sustainability rating from Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) — LifeWorks’ new home is only the fourth commercial project so far to receive a five-star rating in Austin — is apparent outside the building; bike racks and electric car stations promote alternative means of transportation for staffers; photovoltaic arrays atop the building and the parking area roofs contribute up to 80 percent of the building’s energy usage; and xeriscaped gardens with benches and walkways encourage outdoor connections on the east and south sides of the building. Not apparent, but also worth noting, is the fact that over 80 percent of waste generated during construction was recycled or salvaged, and over 50 percent of building materials were sourced in Texas.

**Fitting together like a puzzle**, the different wings in the larger structure to the south — counseling on the first floor, education on the second, and tenant space (Capital IDEA and Literacy Coalition of Central Texas) on the third — are stacked for easy wayfinding and daylight penetration even into the most central spaces. In fact, over 90 percent of occupied spaces have access to natural light. Beginning with the lobby, which is warm and welcoming with generous windows, marine colors, and a cypress-paneled reception desk, the architects’ high-end residential experience came into play. Continuing into the hallways, the lighting especially stands out, as the team eschewed the usual 2’x2’ acoustical ceiling panels in favor of larger,
Previous spread Over 90 percent of the occupied spaces have access to daylight.

This spread The architects intentionally gave the building a very street-friendly profile with a large covered sidewalk and parking in the rear. Slender, tilted steel columns tether the roof to the ground. Stucco, aluminum, and cedar cladding add interest to the streetside facade and delineate the three different floors.
light-reflecting ceiling panels, and covered fluorescent lights with custom translucent boxes.

Offices that double as counseling areas line the perimeter, and daylight filters into hallways through translucent office doors. Generous windows on the first floor use “bottom up” shades to allow for privacy without sacrificing sunlight. Globe lighting fixtures in every office and some larger gathering spaces provide another home-like touch. “Searching for fixtures not typical for a nonprofit commercial space with a very limited budget was something we were more than willing to do for this project,” said Miguel Rivera. “It was part of how we wanted the design to show respect for the staff and clients.”

The building’s exterior is also a reflection of the organization’s activity. Each story is wrapped in a different material representing LifeWorks’ cornerstones.

That carefully considered respect continues on each floor, where colors — blue, yellow, and green — are used as wayfinding devices to make navigation easier for LifeWorks clients with literacy issues. The computer lab, located in the center of the second floor because it requires less natural light, has a large, graphic world map on the wall dotted with flag pins to show clients’ home countries. “Our clients come from all over the world,” said Wendy Varnell, LifeWorks’ chief program officer, “and we want them to know that they, and their heritages, are valued and respected.”

Other art in the building also honors clients and where they come from. The hallways and gathering areas feature beautiful black-and-white images by celebrated Austin photographer George Brainard, as well as wall-size graphic photos of East Austin waterways donated by New Era Portfolio. “Our goal is always to let our clients know that LifeWorks, even the building, is about them,” said Varnell.

The artistic expression continues on the bridge between the north and south structures, where a large oculus puncturing the third-floor passage and the roof above, draws eyes upward, to the sky. Across the bridge, the smaller, north structure has a first-floor multipurpose room, second-floor Youth Transition Center, and third-floor youth services center. Singling out the large first-floor space as a “multipurpose” room is almost a misnomer, though, as all spaces are flexible, and larger rooms have soundproof partitions that can be used to divide rooms to accommodate smaller groups.

With a Texas Society of Architects 2013 Design Award adding to the five-star AEGB rating, the LifeWorks building has been getting recognition, but again, staffers say what counts most is what clients say. “Our clients can now experience a building that reflects how we see them — the strength, courage, and potential we know they possess in the midst of their struggles,” said LifeWorks Executive Director Susan McDowell. “The transformation families experience through LifeWorks is often inspirational, and it is fantastic to provide a space that communicates and supports that.”

Ingrid Spencer is an Austin-based writer and a contributing editor to Architectural Record.
This spread. A high-end look and feel on a tight budget was the goal, which was achieved by thoughtful architectural moves such as a rooftop oculus, flexible spaces, and lower-priced but stylish interior lighting and furnishings.
School Matters
by Ron Stelmarski, AIA

Project  Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy, Dallas
Client  Dallas Independent School District
Architect  SHW Group
Design Team  Terry Hoyle, AIA; Vandana Nayak, AIA; Mike Elmore, AIA; Jennifer Deng, AIA; Amy King, AIA
Photographer  Luis Ayala
With so much attention given to shifting curricula, new technologies for learning, and healthier educational environments, it is a great time to be a student. In response to the diversity of learning styles — engaged, layered, hands-on, project-based, community, and digital, to name a few — some schools are beginning to offer a wide array of spatial experiences as well. The new educational space typology is a high-performance, ultra-flexible, collaboration zone that is intended to spark new ideas and advance creative, independent thought.

As educators work hard to prepare students to move from a K–12 environment, to higher education, and to the workplace, cross-market influences are flowing upstream and downstream in an innovation feedback loop. K–12 buildings are trying to look and act like higher education environments, and universities are embracing workplace trends. Both are efforts to create more seamless transitions that are enhanced and reinforced by the fact that the workplaces of the most successful creative sector companies, such as Google, Pixar, and IDEO, increasingly do not look like office spaces at all. We should all be celebrating this move from homogeneity to differentiated spaces that, until recently, have been largely speculative.

The Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy, the first custom-designed early college high school in the state built independent of a college campus, should inspire a “light bulb” moment among architects working on educational buildings. A motivated Dallas Independent School District (DISD), in collaboration with the local community and partnering colleges,
engaged SHW Group to build the kind of school most only talk about. Opening its doors for the 2011–12 academic year, the 110,000-sf, 500-student high school is a direct result of thinking — and acting — differently.

Sited approximately eight miles south of downtown Dallas on a greenfield adjacent to a nature preserve, Gilliam is an island of ideas in an area of town that is otherwise largely undeveloped. The primary mission of the school is to help prepare first-generation college students for the rigors of higher education. This focus called for a design response that would both create and support distinct behavioral shifts, such as greater levels of independence. The program thus required more space for informal learning and an architecture that would help students structure unstructured time. The building’s design responds to these challenges with refreshing clarity.

Gilliam looks and acts like a college campus; the program spaces are articulated as separate buildings that surround a central, two-story commons area, or collaboration plaza. The plaza serves as a flexible, multi-functional space that includes cafeteria seating and can accommodate large group events. The campus was originally imagined as independent pavilions with open-air connections; however, security needs motivated a single-building solution. The result nevertheless captures the architects’ original intent and, ironically, emulates a very large, one-room schoolhouse — the prototype for collective and differentiated learning — where the program spaces occupy thickened, inhabitable walls surrounding the single “room” of interaction.

The program required more space for informal learning and an architecture that would help students structure unstructured time.

Lighting was fundamental to the interior design concept at Gilliam, and the architects sought to give the inside of the building an outdoor feeling. This was achieved by making daylight the primary light source throughout. (For comparative purposes, it’s critical to understand that the collegiate academy was previously housed in an adapted mall building, with very few windows.) We may take the abundance of windows in our homes and workspaces for granted, but unfortunately, this is not always the case in schools; however, data shows that daylight in a classroom can yield up to 20 percent better scores in math and 26 percent better scores in reading.

SHW Group has clearly exceeded expectations with their skillful control of natural daylight and views to the outdoors in the new school. Light breaks the box and helps maintain the sense of a campus of buildings. Materiality again, reinforces this effect. Over the course of the day, natural light enlivens the various surfaces, such as the smooth yellow panels of the “perch,” or the folding ceiling panels that reflect light into the commons space and reference the cloudscapes of the broad Texas sky.
Students are able to match spaces to their individual tasks or learning styles. Writable surfaces promote interactive group learning; a row of glass workrooms allows acoustical separation while maintaining visual transparency; a meeting room sits just above the treetops; and the media lab enjoys a unique, “open-air” environment.
This spread The school peeks out from its wooded site. The single roof plane consolidates all program masses, defines a two-story entry plaza and frames the perch as it literally breaks the box.
Of course, artificial lighting sources were still necessary. One key characteristic of an open, flexible learning environment is mobility, and it requires that technology be available anytime, anywhere. At Gilliam, both desktop computers, previously cloistered away in windowless computer labs, and textbooks have largely been replaced with the freedom of laptops, tablets, and smartphones. The luminous surfaces of these technologies require a fundamentally different quality of ambient light than do traditional books, which rely on reflected light. Thus, classrooms and lab spaces benefit from indirect light that creates a more diffused, even illumination in these areas.

SHW Group didn’t allow the contingencies of artificial lighting to diminish the design concept. Consistent with the original design intent of creating the feeling of an outdoor pavilion-type campus, the lights are strategically placed. For example, the double-height central commons space has light fixtures suspended 30 ft above the floor. Additional custom light sources are integrated into the railing that rings the space. Terry Hoyle, AIA, principal-in-charge at SHW, explained, “The artificial lighting was intended to be hidden in the commons area because we wanted the space to feel like an outdoor environment.” This attention to detail occurs throughout the building.

Gayle F. Smith, principal of the school, said that one of the primary differences between the old school and the new building is the presence of daylight. Its abundance in conjunction with the views of the surrounding natural landscape has had a visible effect on everyone working and studying in the building. “The connection to nature had a calming effect, particularly in the classrooms — on the students and even the teachers,” said Smith. This same behavioral shift has been seen in the lack of vandalism of the furniture. SHW used comfortable, moveable furniture in all the interaction spaces. Smith speculated that the students, being given the ability to adjust their environment to meet their needs, were given focus, keeping them engaged and helping them to avoid boredom, which often leads to vandalism.

The story of Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy is grounded in the essentials of quality architectural design: natural daylight, views to nature, tectonic richness, and social interaction spaces, all guided by purpose. The use of light and space makes an otherwise simple parti a very porous, layered experience, with visual access between and through the spaces. At Gilliam, light — the most constant, timeless element of our physical world — merges with educational objectives to offer significant value to the student experience. While they may leave this school without fully understanding how the spaces have impacted them, many students will no doubt have their own “light bulb” moment someday when they look back to their time in this building and realize it was a key part of their development.

Ron Stelmarski, AIA, is associate principal and design director of Perkins+Will Dallas.
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“Our design and choice of Acme Natural Stone allowed us to create a clubhouse and entry that feel like they belong and have been here for some time. Stone helped significantly as a natural response to climate concerns. To complete the look, we carried stone inside as well, and used Acme Brick as a complement for headers and ledgers to finish openings and edges beautifully.”

—Greg Irwin, AIA, Principal, Irwin Partners Architects
Nature Meets Science

by Gregory Ibañez, FAIA

Project Perot Museum of Nature and Science
Client Perot Museum of Nature and Science
Architects Morphosis Architects and Good Fulton & Farrell (Associate Architect)
Design Team Thom Mayne, FAIA; Kim Groves; Brandon Welling; Arne Emerson; Aleksander Tamm-Seitz; Natalia Traverso Caruana; Paul Choi; Kerenza Harris; Sal Hidalgo; Andrea Manning; Aaron Ragan; Scott Severson; Martin Summers; Jennifer Workman, AIA
Photographer Thomas McConnell
The Perot Museum of Nature and Science is the latest specimen in Dallas’ impressive collection of edifices architectus Pritzkerus. This architectural diorama includes work by Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, I. M. Pei, and Renzo Piano, and is supplemented with significant buildings by other local and national architects. It’s a pretty difficult neighborhood in which to get noticed, but Morphosis Architects has claimed possibly the most visible place in the conversation with the fractured, vertical form of the Perot. The new museum can rightfully be described as an overnight success: it opened in December 2012 to great fanfare and is continuously drawing massive crowds (the museum exceeded its expected total number of visitors for all of 2013 in its first three months alone).

The lineage of the Perot can be traced to the 1936 opening of the Dallas Museum of Natural History, which was erected as part of the celebrated Texas Centennial in Fair Park. Although the architectural style was streamlined Moderne, its exhibit concept followed a Victorian era approach by depicting flora, fauna, and lost cultures in static dioramas. The museum was popular and beloved. However, its potential expansion was constrained by Fair Park’s designation as a National Historic Landmark and by a zoning overlay that restricted the 40,000-sf building to a maximum adjacent addition of equal size. Approximately 25 percent of the building interior, including the dioramas, was also protected from alteration.

The Dallas firm Good Fulton & Farrell (GFF) and New York-based exhibit designers Ralph Appelbaum Associates were retained in the mid-1990s to program a new vision for the museum and study potential expansion sites, including Fair Park. GFF Principal Duncan Fulton, FAIA, led the effort, which identified the need for a roughly 185,000-sf facility. The process resulted in four years of site evaluations across the city. This relatively glacial pace was given a boost in 2005, when a $10 million gift from Hunt Oil Company allowed for the purchase of a 4.7-acre site in the nascent Victory Park development on the northern edge of downtown.

A signature architect was desired, and although Frank Gehry was briefly associated with the project, he was not retained formally. A short list of four firms rose to the top of the 150 requests for qualifications received from architecture firms across the globe. Snøhetta, Shigeru Ban, the Polshek Partnership (now Ennead Architects), and Morphosis were interviewed and asked to present a public lecture at the Nasher Museum of Sculpture — a process Fulton described as “community vetting.” Despite their lack of museum experience, Morphosis was retained in 2008, and design work began in earnest on the 180,000-sf building with GFF as the associate architect.

In that same year, Dallas’ indefatigable philanthropic community once again stepped forward to make a major cultural project a reality. The largest of numerous eight-figure donations was gifted by the five children of Ross and Margot Perot, who presented $50 million to the museum in honor of their parents. Thus, the new building was re-named the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, and its historic home was similarly designated as the Perot Museum of Nature and Science at Fair Park. The Fair Park facilities will remain open as both a museum and a home for the museum’s scientific research, collection storage, and conservation activities.

The major feature of the Perot site is the elevated Woodall Rodgers Freeway, a frequently congested, eight-lane highway carrying over 150,000 cars daily, which forms the length of the property’s southeastern edge. The site is bound on the northeast by Field Street, a six-lane thoroughfare and major gateway to Dallas’ central business district, and on the northwest by an apartment complex. A parking lot, situated to the southeast of the museum property, provides for a possible site for future expansion.

Maybe it shouldn’t come as a surprise that Morphosis, based in the archetypal car-culture city of Los Angeles, takes an unapologetic approach to the automobile in the design of the Perot. The building’s siting, massing, and texture all acknowledge that the first experience with the Perot is essentially from the inside of an automobile. While in motion, from the car. It’s easy to imagine children in backseats clamoring, “Can we go there!” Indeed, such engagement with the target audience might rightfully be considered a functional imperative.

There is a dedicated plaza, entry, and driveway for the over 2,000 daily visitors arriving by school bus. And the Perot does sit within reasonable walking distance of two light rail stations, with a future line and station planned immediately to the west. The majority of public parking is placed under the aforementioned elevated freeway. But any semblance of a distinct entry sequence is absent until one reaches the grounds of the museum proper.

The building’s siting, massing, and texture all acknowledge that the first experience with the Perot is essentially from the inside of an automobile. Yet, unlike the extravagant geometry associated with the firm’s large body of work, the Perot is relatively clear in its formal organization.

According to Aleksander Tamm-Seitz, senior project designer with Morphosis, the top of the undulating podium that rises gently from the earth was set purposely at the same elevation as the freeway. “The cubic volume, which sits atop the podium, grew out of the museum’s desire for an iconic, yet extremely efficient, structure,” said Tamm-Seitz. The varied precast concrete panels that clad the facades were inspired by the exposed geological strata of the Texas landscape. The most prominent feature is a cantilevered, glazed escalator that forms a dramatic diagonal across the highway-facing southeastern facade. There is little fenestration; daylight is provided to the interior through the escalator, and via a vertical opening formed by a glazed corner and a series of horizontal apertures at the top level. Although the four levels that rise from the undulating podium are rectilinear, the building has a kinetic head-turning quality when viewed while in motion, from the car. It’s easy to imagine children in backseats clamoring, “Can we go there!” Indeed, such engagement with the target audience might rightfully be considered a functional imperative.

The building’s generous entrance plaza contrasts the street-hugging nature of the rest of the podium. Dallas-based landscape architects Talley Associates designed a series of park-like spaces enhanced by interactive play areas to complement the covered, gently sloping walkway, which leads up one level to the event plaza. Here, the building’s low plinth edges provide a curved enclosure, which screens views of the highway and re-orient the visitor to the glazed entry. Another salient feature of the landscape architecture is partially revealed at the entry level: the impressive one-acre undulating green and fractured-stone roof, an exhibit in its own right. Talley Associates designed the planting scheme as an abstract cross section of Texas ecology. Rainwater features dramatize the experience of the roof and feed two large underground cisterns. These elements combine with water harvested elsewhere on the site and from HVAC condensation to satisfy 74 percent of the museum’s non-potable water needs and 100 percent of the landscape’s irrigation needs.
This page The undulating green roof, highly visible in the urban context, is further revealed from vantage points inside the museum. The vertical circulation system of stairs and escalators creates a thrilling ride worthy of Piranesi.
This page The galleries are devoid of natural light and have a theatrical character that allows for flexibility and updating. In contrast, the lobby and intervening spaces provide sweeping views of the Dallas skyline.
The building achieved a four Green Globes Certification from the Green Building Initiative, a level reached by only 12 of the 759 certified buildings in the United States. It is targeted to attain a LEED Gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council and also anticipates a Two Star certification from the Sustainable Sites Initiative pilot program.

Unlike the grand vaulted halls of classic natural history museums, the Perot is more akin to a black-box theatre complex. Morphosis designed the public and circulation spaces, but the flexible, neutral galleries were left to the exhibit designers, a highly-specialized field in its own right. Certainly, the galleries are very dramatic in their presentation, a benefit in our age of short attention spans.

In terms of organization, the entry level is a free zone, housing the lobby, box office, theater, and museum store. The lower level, which is also accessed directly from the bus drop, houses the children's museum, learning labs, an auditorium, and a large temporary exhibition space. In keeping with the “building as exhibit” theme, the mechanical room walls are glazed and the various systems are exposed and color-coded. As suggested by the exterior,

**Unlike the grand vaulted halls of classic natural history museums, the Perot is more akin to a black-box theatre complex.**

the vertical circulation system plays a starring role. Tamm-Seitz noted two museums as prototypes for the Perot’s interior system of movement: Frank Lloyd Wright’s Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, where patrons are directed to the uppermost level, working their way down through the galleries, and the Pompidou Center in Paris, where glazed escalator tubes hang on the building’s exterior, providing both a thrilling ride and dramatic views of the downtown skyline. Morphosis married the two concepts, creating a cantilevered one-way ride up to the fourth level, and a series of wide stairways and elevators, with transparent sides lit to reveal the pulleys and counterweights in action, for the trek back down.

Clearly, this is not a building made for sufferers of acrophobia. The atrium, which rises through the entire building from the entry, is traversed by grated flooring connecting the escalator and stairs to the exhibit spaces. The fifth floor houses the colorful and energetic staff offices, designed by GFF Interiors in collaboration with Morphosis; in contrast to the museum, they are flooded with natural light from both perimeter glass and skylights above.

Dallas has spent the last few decades creating cultural institutions that will help define the city well into the future. Some may question the focus on large, splashy projects at the expense of the small-bore connective tissue, which obviously creates more complete urban environments. But Dallas is engaging in very interesting exercises in architecture and city building, and these experiments have urbanistic merit.

Located in a state that is infamous for meddling in the teaching of science, this building is an impressive architectural and philanthropic achievement that is most definitely fulfilling its mission to “inspire minds through nature and science.”

Gregory Ibañez, FAIA, is principal of Ibañez Architecture in Fort Worth.
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PageSoutherlandPage undertook building an economical small office (13,000 sf) for the Austin practice group of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE). WJE is an interdisciplinary engineering firm with offices across the country, and its Austin team specializes in concrete construction. So naturally, the possibilities of concrete as a building material were thoroughly explored.

When the architects proposed using high thermal mass concrete walls as a means of reducing energy consumption, WJE’s engineers saw an interesting case for experimentation. They conducted rigorous testing to evaluate how temperature would move through the structure. This convinced them it was the right way to go. The design uses 18-inch-thick, unreinforced concrete walls that carry structural loads and provide thermal, vapor, and moisture resistance in one material. Monitors were cast into the concrete in order to evaluate the wall’s performance over time.

The absence of rebar and limiting the formwork to simple rectangles kept labor costs low. Leaving the solid concrete walls exposed on all sides and keeping the corners square helped the concrete look finished. The natural texture of the plywood formwork provided a unique finish that adds interest to the concrete surfaces. Complementary materials on the building include Massaranduba wood infill (used inside and out), aluminum windows, and steel gutters and downspouts.

The building’s two volumes reflect programmatic requirements for both flexible office space and a testing laboratory. The office volume includes perimeter private spaces and conference rooms which surround central open offices where collaboration is encouraged. The central space receives generous borrowed light and has views on three sides through large glass partitions. High ceilings with exposed steel beams and wood joists create a character appropriate to an engineering firm.

The reception area stitches the offices and laboratory portions of the building together. Similar to the offices, it has high ceilings and exposed structure; the space also features niches.
in the concrete walls that house artifacts from some of the firm’s forensic assessments on historic buildings. Floors in all the public spaces are diamond polished concrete, exposing, again, the structural bones of the building. The reception area gives access to north-facing conference rooms, a break room with expansive views, and a patio that opens onto a nature preserve to the rear of the site.

Sustainability features of the project include energy economy derived from high thermal mass, minimizing secondary layers of finishes where possible, sustainably grown woods, fly ash replacement for a portion of Portland cement in concrete, abundant daylighting, LED fixtures for artificial lighting, native plants for landscaping, and energy-efficient HVAC systems.
Warehouse Transformation

Project  Hughes Warehouse Adaptive Reuse, San Antonio
Client  AREA Real Estate
Architect  Overland Partners
Design Team  Jim Shelton, AIA; Patrick Winn; Bess Swantner, AIA; John Burleson; Fernando Ortega; Albert Condarco
Photographer  Dror Baldinger, AIA

For its new home, Overland Partners converted a 26,000-sf warehouse in the burgeoning River North area of downtown San Antonio. By drawing on the historical roots of the space, the adaptive reuse of the 1918 building went beyond a simple renovation to transform not just the warehouse, but the firm itself.

Overland’s new ground-floor studio is organized around collaborative areas integrated into the existing structural grid under daylit clerestories. The open forum of the studio fosters communication and integration among the employees, and the collaborative areas facilitate project reviews, client meetings and charrettes, and other events. There is also a series of seven closed meeting spaces thoughtfully placed within the space to allow for privacy and focused collaboration.

The existing structure was built of long-leaf pine and brick. To add natural light and ventilation to the space, the architects inserted a courtyard, around which the building is now organized. Glass and steel, including new punched windows and a window wall overlooking the courtyard, were used to filter light into the interior spaces. Raw sheet steel and reclaimed wood were used in the conference rooms and workshops. While this materials palette preserves the history of the industrial space, the architects propelled the building’s efficiency forward with the integration of modern lighting and mechanical systems. Solar panels installed on the roof offset 60 percent of the building’s energy consumption.

The new courtyard serves to expand the entry sequence from the compressed street edge...
and loading docks along the former railroad corridor. It unfolds beyond the existing brick facade, creating a surprising public space that opens the building to the street and allows access to other tenant spaces. The existing loading dock openings are filled with custom fabricated steel gates built by Overland Workshop. The gates speak to the graffiti-laden past of the warehouse, as well as to the building’s location in the art and design district, which is grounded by the neighboring San Antonio Museum of Art.

According to Overland, the expansive transformation of the warehouse provides an ideal environment in which to work toward its mission to influence and transform the world through the practice of architecture.
Portoflio: Small Office Buildings

1000 Foch Street

Project 1000 Foch Street, Fort Worth
Client 1000 Foch Street Partners
Architect Cunningham Architects
Design Team Gary Cunningham, FAIA; Lonnie Burns, AIA; Bang Dang; Rizi Faruqui, AIA
Photographers James F. Wilson and Gisela Borghi

An adaptive reuse of two early 20th-century industrial buildings, 1000 Foch Street is a simple combination of minimalist forms and materials. Located in Fort Worth, the new 15,000-sf offices house small entrepreneurial companies.

The existing structures comprised a Quonset hut and simple brick warehouse with a gabled roof marked by a clerestory along its ridge. Unnecessary additions to the two buildings were removed to provide for parking, landscape, and a proper front yard to address the street. As part of the rehabilitation, the Quonset hut was re-clad in new standing seam galvalume panels, and new arched storefront systems were inserted into the shorter facades. The brick warehouse was repointed as necessary on its longer facades, and its shorter, street-facing facade was re-clad with an integral color, hard-troweled cement stucco that was hand-finished. New, larger openings in the facades of both buildings allow for easier circulation and additional daylight penetration. Additional rear entries were provided for on the parking-lot facade of the warehouse. The gable of this facade is marked by long strips of Accoya (modified acetylated pine). Selected for its durability, sustainability, and low maintenance, the Accoya also frames the clerestory windows.

Simple Accoya-clad boxes were inserted between the buildings. These wood blocks contain additional offices, as well as all plumbing and mechanical needs, and frame a small courtyard and an artificial turf putting green.

The use of wood is continued on the interior, where slender slats of Douglas fir help insulate the barrel-vaulted roof and diffuse daylight in the interior of the Quonset hut. The finishes are simple and utilitarian, in keeping with the industrial character of the buildings. The flexibility of the design also allows for expansion. The Quonset hut can accommodate a future stacked office space on a mezzanine level, which is already partially built out. The wood-clad addition closest to the street is also designed for vertical expansion of two future levels.
THE "HUT" FLOOR PLAN
1 ENTRY COURT
2 LOBBY
3 RECEPTION
4 CONFERENCE
5 OFFICES
6 KITCHEN/BREAK ROOM
7 COUTYARD
8 RESTROOM

THE "SHED" FLOOR PLAN
1 ENTRY COURT
2 VESTIBULE
3 LEASE SPACE
Located in the rapidly gentrifying Midtown district of Houston, the Magnificat House W.T. and Louise J. Moran Center aims to support a population in transition by providing them with valuable skills. The owner is a faith-based, nonprofit, charitable organization that ministers to homeless and mentally ill individuals, helping them to integrate into society.

Leslie Elkins, AIA, designed the $1.45M LEED Silver-certified training center to house a retail shop, a woodworking shop, an art studio/gallery, and a facilities maintenance office. Residents of Magnificat House live on adjacent campuses, and the new building provides a community space where they can learn valuable skills in woodworking and art. The education is complemented by the opportunity to exhibit their work on site. The client requested an efficient and economical one-story structure with flexible, low-maintenance interior spaces. Openness, ample daylight, and natural ventilation were specified as high priorities.

Elkins’ design is an L-shaped, 7,000-sf structure sited close to the street with parking in the rear. Located on a busy intersection, the building is in compliance with Midtown Houston’s 10-ft urban setback regulation. This proximity to the sidewalks and the streets gives the retail shop maximum visibility that is enhanced by the engaging massing and rooflines.

The retail wing is defined by a dynamic butterfly roof marked by clerestory windows. At the sidewalk level, this section of the building is extremely transparent. Large storefront windows, protected by metal canopies, encourage interaction between the Magnificat House community and the surrounding neighborhood.

The workshop and art studio/gallery wing is situated perpendicular to the retail wing. Five slightly sloped roofs, arranged in a flip-flop manner, create a stepping pattern along the street. The facade composition recognizes the distinct spaces within the building. They project and recess, creating a push-pull effect. On the rear facades, glazed garage doors connect the individual interior spaces to the parking lot, which provides ample room for loading and unloading.
Common materials, installed with special attention to detailing, are used throughout the building. Grey-colored concrete veneer tiles anchor the building to the site. Moss-colored HardiPlank siding serves as the primary facade-cladding material. It is complemented by the exposed steel-column framing, which is finished in a dark grey. Below the deep roof eaves, exposed wood roof trusses project from the interior. This continuity between the exterior and interior also occurs with the steel framing. The spaces all have an open, lively, and utilitarian look. The color scheme is white and grey with bright color accents.
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Behind the Lens

An icon and indisputably the dean of architectural photographers in Texas, Richard Payne, FAIA, has been a registered architect since 1964 and a full-time architectural photographer for almost 45 years. Payne has been commissioned to photograph work by renowned architects such as Philip Johnson, I. M. Pei, Charles Gwathmey, and Ricardo Bofill and has worked all over the world — Spain, France, Germany, the Middle East, Australia, and across North America. But he has also kept himself deeply rooted in Texas with five beautiful portfolio books to his credit that focus solely on the architecture of his home state.

He is perhaps best known for his stunning photographs of the work of Philip Johnson, produced primarily in the 1970s and 1980s, that became the iconic images through which the world got to know the buildings of one of the most influential architects of his generation. Payne shot 140 projects for Johnson. The architect commissioned Payne to photograph every building completed after 1970, and then, through a grant from the Anchorage Foundation of Texas, Payne photographed Johnson’s earlier projects beginning with the Glass House in New Canaan. This work led to the publication of the largest of three monographs on the architect, published in 1979, 1985, and 2001.

Payne’s relationship with Johnson began when Payne shot a black-and-white picture of the Pennzoil Building in Houston when he was just beginning his photographic practice in 1970. He sent it to a marketing director for the building’s developer, Gerald Hines. And they sent the image to Johnson, who asked Payne to come to New York; the architects met and began a professional relationship and friendship that lasted until Johnson’s death in 2005.

The sleek, dramatic images of Johnson’s internationally renowned buildings are complemented in Payne’s work by poignant, often gritty, images of the places he loves and reveres closer to home. He has authored two books that document the architecture of the kind of small towns he knew as a young man growing up in Texas: “Guerrero Viejo” and “Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture,” published in 1997 and
Whereas the human eye easily and naturally adjusts to variable light conditions, the camera is not so accommodating.

Payne captures the life of architecture in images. He is adamant that he is not “in the business of fixing architecture.” He just tries to capture an image of a building “when it looks good.” The process involves painstaking efforts to get to know the building itself well, and to study the conditions of weather, light, and activity around the building to find the perfect moment to portray it.

“The big issue is the weather — wonderfully unpredictable and uncontrollable,” Payne notes. Whereas the human eye easily and naturally adjusts to variable light conditions, the camera is not so accommodating. “We see with the magical ability to compensate for the excessive contrast of bright, harsh light that has befuddled photographers for generations,” he says. “Excessive contrast, ever present during daylight hours in regions such as Texas, can defeat efforts to be clear about details in shaded areas and where there are major changes of plane.”

These days, contrast can be controlled to a certain extent with software in digital photography, but Payne prefers to deal with it on site by working with the weather. In summer in Texas, he does not take photos between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. He prefers the richer color of morning and afternoon light, but he also feels shadows are too deep at mid-day, making the details in them too hard to capture. At all times of the year, he watches clouds very carefully and will often select a particular cloud moving across the sun and use just its edge to soften the light. Clouds are also important as a means to “make glass be glass” through vivid and memorable reflections. He loves winter cirrus clouds in Texas and hates the summer “cotton balls.”

Just as Payne carefully monitors the sky and light, he also watches activities around and within the building that animate it and indicate its social and cultural role. He generally tries to visit a building without his camera before he actually shoots it just to get a sense of how it is inhabited and used.

Then, through the gift of digital technology, says Payne, he can take a dozen frames and later select an image in which “the light, the position of the clouds, the location of the people, and other elements necessary for a sense of scale and animation come together to define the architecture and its function and context.”

Payne comments, “Digital photography has not changed what I and other photographers try to do, but it has dramatically improved how we do it.” He and his wife and partner, Amy Claire Ladner, are thrilled with the opportunities presented by digital technology, but they use it with great restraint. They are painfully aware of what they see as abuses of the new medium, creating scenographic images that lack authenticity. Payne knows he can place a sunset in any image, but he says, “I prefer to be there during the sunset and not miss the magic moments when luck is on my side and the light is exactly right.”

Payne is strikingly modest about his role as a photographer, in spite of his success and renowned work. His endearing lack of pretension springs from a strong belief about what the goal of photography should be: “Photography, at its best, has always been a matter of presentation. Personal interpretation and unrestrained image manipulation is better left to other art forms.”

He explains: “If someone, after a review of my work, should detect some semblance of style — the way I look at buildings and work with the light, or how I might apply some digital trick — I would be surprised and disappointed. A personal style is the last thing I want because it would mean that I have failed to prioritize my client’s interests, and have tried to ‘affect’ architecture — alter the truth of it to make it fit my portfolio.”

This modesty is evident in the potency and authenticity of Payne’s images. While they carry powerful and poignant messages, they are not speculative or slick. When Richard Payne creates great photographs, he embodies many of the same traits that other excellent architects use when they make great buildings — the ability to see and perceive situations deeply, craft careful and elegant solutions, create responsive and original work, and check their own personal egos.

Larry Speck, FAIA, is principal at PageSoutherlandPage and teaches architecture at UT Austin.
Opposite page Richard Payne is pictured next to a small collection of his photographs.

This page He is shown in his studio with his wife and partner, Amy Claire Ladner. The photographer shoots digital these days, but gained recognition in the 1970s and 1980s for his black-and-white images. Payne’s collection of his published work includes five portfolios on Texas architecture.

Above Due to the frequent changes in the Houston skyline, he has never been able to recapture his original shot of the Pennzoil Building. Payne describes his work as a logistical puzzle: “I must schedule, plan, organize, and execute the photography in the fervent hope that the light quality — its intensity, direction, and color — will allow me to make photographs of a building that are simply beautiful.”
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THE-BAC.EDU
Texas Firm Among Global Sustainability Award Winners

On May 5, the recipients of the 2013 Global Awards for Sustainable Architecture were honored with a ceremony and symposium at the Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine in Paris. San Antonio’s Lake|Flato Architects was among the five architects from around the world to receive the prestigious award. Principal Ted Flato represented the firm at the ceremony, delivering a presentation on the topic “Buildings and Landscapes.”

This sustainability awards program was created in 2006 by the Locus Foundation of France to “identify and reward the most innovative and engaged architects from all corners of the globe and to federate them in theoretical research and participative urban renewal projects.” The recipients are selected by the Foundation’s European Scientific Board of architecture centers and universities, with the assistance worldwide critics and specialists.

Lake|Flato was honored by the Foundation for its success in “convincing society from within [about the value of sustainability], with an office which has stated is ecological convictions and developed its knowledge from project to project.” The firm is joined by honorees from Portugal, Malaysia, Ecuador and Belgium. For more information on the work of all the recipients, visit www.locus-foundation.org.
Texas Legislature Passes Historic Preservation Bills

During the 83rd Texas Legislative Session, lawmakers passed two bills in support of historic preservation: HB 500 and SB 111. Both are awaiting a signature from Governor Rick Perry.

Omnibus bill HB 500 includes the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, the first of its kind in the state, which would allow a credit of up to 25 percent of eligible expenses incurred in the rehabilitation of certified historic structures. If approved, the law would become effective on January 1, 2015.

Anna Glover Hudson, executive director of Preservation Texas, which led grassroots efforts in support of the bill, commented that the organization is glad to see a new tool for developers and property owners interested in revitalizing historic districts and landmarks.

“Historic rehabilitation is a known economic driver, especially in small cities where one or two rehabbed properties can spur a renewed interest in downtown or along a commercial corridor,” said Hudson. “It will be important for architects to understand the tax credit, as they are often the first resource that property owners look to when planning a rehabilitation project.”

SB 111 requires the Texas Historical Commission to designate buildings that meet certain requirements as “Texas Historical Use Buildings,” a designation that makes the buildings eligible to apply for restoration grants through the state’s Preservation Trust Fund.

Eva Read Warden, chair of the Historic Resources Committee of the Texas Society of Architects, praised the piece of legislation as “a significant opportunity to help ensure that some of the character-defining buildings of our local communities are maintained for future generations.”

However, she also noted that funding available through the Trust will need to be evaluated in future legislative sessions to ensure that enough money is available to support the number of projects deserving such support.
UT Arlington Students Design West Dallas Homes

Graduate students at The University of Texas at Arlington School of Architecture got a helping of real-world design experience thanks to a partnership with West Dallas Investments (WDI).

As part of a class assignment, the students in a second-semester design studio taught by Professor Bijan Youssefzadeh were invited to design four houses for the corporation, which is working to transform more than 80 acres of land in West Dallas through mixed-use development.

Youssefzadeh’s students worked on the design portion of the project, and they collaborated with students in a construction drawing course, taught by Professor Ed Nelson, who produced the final plans.

WDI is managed by partners Larry (Butch) McGregor, Stuart Fitts, and Phil Romano. The investors are planning to build the homes designed by the architecture students for four families in neighborhood of La Bajada as part of a trade arrangement with the homeowners. The houses required two to three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a carport.

Youssefzadeh said his students learned a great deal from the assignment, including how to design a building with a client, and how to work within site, construction method, and program constraints.

McGregor, WDI's spokesperson for the project, commented that the project was a very interesting exercise for his team. “We thoroughly enjoyed it, and the students came up with good, fresh ideas.”

The first of the houses set to be built is a two-bedroom unit designed by student Nicholas Lowe with construction drawings produced by Selina Cinecio. McGregor said WDI is looking forward to having the builders break ground in the fall.
Overland Partners Office, San Antonio
Contractor The Beck Group
Consultants MEP: Cleary Zimmerman; STRUCTURAL: Architectural Engineers Collaborative; LANDSCAPE: Coleman & Associates; CIVIL: KFW Engineers & Surveying

1000 Foch Street, Fort Worth
Contractor JSZY Construction
Consultants STRUCTURAL: Leisinger & Potts Structural Engineering; MEP: MEP Systems Design and Engineering; LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Hooker Design Group; GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Nottestad Design
Resources METAL MATERIALS: Berridge Galvalume Roofing; VAPOR RETARDERS: Henry Waterproofing; SIDING: Accoya Wood Siding (Universal Forest Products)

Magnificat House, Houston
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No longer confined to a single machine, data storage has gone atmospheric. Content stored in “the cloud” is better protected against loss and is accessible anywhere, a technique enabled by the light-transmitting properties of fiber optic cables and LCD screens. This technology allows a new relationship with past experiences; even distant memories can be easily revisited, visualized, and shared.

Expanding on this paradigm is “Memory Cloud,” an installation at the Texas A&M University Memorial Student Center created by Re:Site and METALAB, two Houston-based firms of artists, designers, and architects. The proposal was selected from over 300 submissions to a competition inviting works that creatively embodied campus life.

“Memory Cloud” is a grid of tubes, each filled with white LEDs, collectively suspended within an atrium. The tubes’ lower ends are capped with diffusing discs, and the lengths of the tubes and the angle of the discs have been designed to form a swooping, fixed shape resembling a literal cloud. Viewers encounter the installation from multiple vantage points: at eye-level while on an adjacent staircase, from below while passing through the hall, and from a distance. Its respective effects are a maze of plastic rods, a wavy soffit of translucent discs, and a flickering pulse of brightness.

The work’s impressive infrastructure is assembled only to disappear, supporting an interactive experience with light. Previous installations by other designers were either fixed displays of assembled content, or responsive systems, based on sensors mimicking environmental conditions. “Memory Cloud” is both, mixing silhouettes from videos of university rituals and traditions with the tracked movements of passing individuals. These feeds are combined and diffused through the array at varying speeds and distortions. Seen singly, each tube pulses mysteriously with luminous capillary action, but together, the array creates a field effect of shifting densities and shapes. The result is a flock of mesmerizing apparitions.

The attraction of “Memory Cloud” is the way it compresses student experience — historic and real-time — into one compelling, composite present. Institutions rely on this mixture of tradition and renewal for survival, and the memory of past successes is nurtured to inspire current pursuits.

Viewers see their shapes mapped alongside images of older generations, only to watch the forms disintegrate back into noise after a couple of steps in either direction. This temporal flatness is perhaps the best feature of “the cloud,” where memories are instantly accessible, able to be recast and relived as part of our ceaseless march into the future.

Jack Murphy is an architectural designer currently based in Austin and a contributing editor to BI (bipublications.com).
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