Carrizo Springs stood for farming and ranching until Eagle Ford shale generated resources to create an inspiring high school for an aspiring student population. Architects used Acme Brick closure units in four regionally appropriate colors from three plants, contrasting them with Featherlite’s Cordillera Stone, distinctive for its pitched profile. Together, the brick and stone enclose a spacious campus and punctuate a daylit central stair and cafeteria. Bright and bold, these elements elevate the school to symbolize a proud region with the down-to-earth practicality that only masonry provides. Masonry brings low maintenance, design flexibility, the opportunity for LEED regional sourcing, and long-term life cycle value.

Acme Brick is the efficient, natural material with a firm place in history and on the land.
"Carrizo Springs has a rich history and a promising future, qualities we designed into these inspiring spaces. We combined valued materials in modern ways with personal scale in this high school. Three blends of colorful Acme Brick closure units elevate the visual appeal and contrast well with Cordillera Stone's heightened texture and longer units."

- Bo Ledoux, AIA, Principal, Claycomb Associates, Architects

Carrizo Springs High School
Carrizo Springs, Texas
architect
Claycomb Associates, Austin
general contractor
Bartlett Cocke, San Antonio
masonry contractor
L&T Masonry, Austin

Acme Brick materials
Acme Brick: Windsor Park, Garnet, Glacier White, Westchester velour 4" x 8" closure
Cordillera Stone Masonry Units:
La Cantera 4" x 16", 8" x 16"
Convergence

77th Annual Convention and Design Expo
3–5 November 2016
San Antonio

KEYNOTERS

Debbie Millman
"Design Matters" Podcast Host

Marion Weiss, FAIA, and Michael Manfredi, FAIA
Weiss/Manfredi

Eric J. Cesal, Assoc. AIA
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Texas Architect is in the process of designing a new website, which will launch on August 1. Check the URL above to see articles from the magazine, videos, and other exclusive web content.
Snaggletooth City

by Aaron Seward

On our first day in Philadelphia for the 2016 AIA Convention, TxA Executive Vice President James Perry and I stood on the bustling corner of 12th and Market streets. We were taking a minute to orient ourselves and sniff out the nearest cheesesteak when a drawly voice called out behind us: “Boy I sure am glad to see a couple more Texans here in the big city!” The voice turned out to belong to former TxA President Bryce Weigand, FAIA, James, doing his best hayseed act — eyes wide in a dumfounded expression — was quick to rejoin: “I’m just a poor country boy.” We all had a big Texas laugh, drawing the eyes of more than one of the passersby, who shouldered their way past on the crowded sidewalk, in a hurry to get somewhere.

There was harmony and irony in the joke; that’s what made it so funny. On the one hand, the majority of Texans (including the three of us on the street that day) are city-dwellers. We’re a long way from the agrarian cotton and cattle kingdom we once were. Yet our thriving cities are for the most part big suburbs, built on the 20th-century model of car-centric development; whereas the urbanism of the 21st century is turning out to look a lot more like that of the 18th and 19th centuries. And so Philadelphia — this “snaggletooth city,” as another Texas architect affectionately called it — had quite a lot to teach us about what makes a city great.

And what makes this city great? Density; walkability; transit accessibility (of all kinds); the mix of residential, ground-floor retail, workplace, cultural, and noncommercial public space; a richly layered fabric of historical and contemporary buildings; the relatively peaceful cohabitation of a diverse citizenry — all these things. From the corner of 12th and Market I was able to walk to the convention center and Reading Terminal Market, through Chinatown to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, and from there into the 18th-century core of the city and Franklin Court. The one-time home of the most eccentric of our Founding Fathers is today commemorated by a pair of white steel “ghost structures,” built in 1976 and designed by Venturi and Rauch, now Venturi Scott Brown Architects and Planners.

Robert Venturi, FAIA, and Denise Scott Brown, Hon. FAIA: Philly is their town. The couple received this year’s AIA Gold Medal, the first time that AIA recognized a collaborative with the award. Scott Brown showed up at the convention hall on Saturday, sat on stage with AIA President Russell Davidson, FAIA, and CEO Robert Ivy, FAIA, and said that it was a long-overdue development that “was worth being a witch” for Venturi, now 90, stayed at home. Venturi and Scott Brown were some of the first architects, during an era when urban renewal meant wiping the slate clean and starting over with rationalist superblocks, to take cities as they were, find value in the odd juxtapositions that they often present, and incorporate these in their planning and design efforts.

Rem Koolhaas, Hon. FAIA, the convention’s final keynote speaker, echoed the notion of looking at history and combining that investigation with contemporary reality. “Architecture stands with one leg in a world that’s 3,000 years old and another leg in the 21st century,” he said. “This almost ballet-like stretch makes our profession surprisingly deep.”

Here in Texas, where the world is ever made anew — where daily the prairie is eaten up by ever-expanding urban sprawl, and our cities are leapfrog affairs: disjointed, the exurbs willfully ignorant of the urban cores — such depth is needed now more than ever.
Contributors

Antonio Petrov
received his doctoral degree in the history and theory of architecture, urbanism, and cultural studies from Harvard University. He is currently assistant professor at The University of Texas at San Antonio. He is founding editor of the Harvard GSD publication "New Geographies," and founder and editor-in-chief of "DOMA." Read his article on re-thinking transit and public space in San Antonio on page 68.

Christopher Ferguson, Assoc. AIA is an architectural and broadcast designer with Clickspring Design in Austin and New York. He co-founded DO.GROUP DESIGN in 2014, a product design partnership with a mission to empower young designers with skills to bring products to market. In this issue, he writes about Smiley, Texas (page 36).

Canan Yetmen is an Austin-based writer. She is a frequent contributor to TA and recently completed her second novel, to be published in 2017. In this issue, she writes about the design of Austin's Second Street District (page 42).

Jesse Hager, AIA is an architect with CONTENT Architecture in Houston. He serves as a board director of AIA Houston and member of the TxA Publication Committee. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the University of Houston. Read his take on Studio RED's renovation of Ulrich Franzen's Alley Theatre on page 13.

Craig Kinney, AIA was born and raised in Houston and attended the University of Texas at Austin where he received a bachelor's in English literature and a master's in architecture. He has worked in various firms across the country but has spent the past 20 years in San Angelo, Texas, where he started Kinney Franke Architects. Read his thoughts on the wind farms of West Texas on page 96.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA is a designer with Baldridge Architects in Austin and a regular contributor to TA. Read his article about Marfa and the new Hotel Saint George on page 50.

Rita Catinella Orrell is TA's products editor. For the Shift issue, she curated a collection of some of her favorite new designs for outdoor fittings and furniture. See page 25.

Ben Koush is an architect and writer in Houston. See his piece on the plan to move I-45 east of downtown Houston on page 62.

Ron Steimarski, AIA is the design director for Perkins+Will's Texas practice and a frequent contributor to TA. Read his report on the Greenhill School's new performing arts center by Weiss/Manfredi on page 82.

Patrick Michels is an Austin-based reporter and staff writer at the Texas Observer, where he covers crime and education. He is also a regular contributor to TA. In this issue, he writes about San Antonio councilman Roberto Treviño, AIA (page 89).
May 17, 2016

Letter to the Editor:

I found these at a garage sale, under a lime green polyester leisure suit and a Jefferson Starship LP. They confused me so much I couldn't sleep for a week. Their presence continues to unsettle me, and so they are in this envelope to you. Perhaps they might be of some use in lining a bird cage in your office?

A faithful reader-

Robert

Robert

The above parcel arrived at the TxA offices in May, addressed to Texas Architect editor Aaron Seward. Enclosed, in addition to a letter signed by the mysterious ROBERT, were two zines, also called ROBERT. Undated, the zines' introductory texts indicate that they were produced in the time between the death of former Dallas Morning News architecture critic David Dillon in 2010 and the hire of current DMN architecture critic Mark Lamster in 2013, as a stopgap for the lack of a critical architectural voice in North Texas. Look for a full review of ROBERT in the September/October 2016 issue of TA.

Send letters to the editor to editor@texasarchitects.org
Howard Roark, Zaha Hadid, and Architect Barbie Walk into a Bar

“Where Are the Women Architects?”
By Despina Stratigakos
Princeton University Press, $19.95

When the American Institute of Architects released the results of its 2015 Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey in March, the results told a bleak but familiar story. Nearly 70 percent of the women surveyed believed that they were not represented equally in the profession. Meanwhile, male architects’ perceptions of women’s representation proved to be far more positive, demonstrating a gap between the experience of women architects and the way their experiences are perceived by men.

Thus, Despina Stratigakos’ “Where Are the Women Architects?” comes at an opportune moment, as we are beginning to discuss more openly the challenges that women and people of color face in the industry. Stratigakos is an associate professor at the University of Buffalo, as well as an architectural historian. She was involved in the creation of Architect Barbie. Writing for Princeton University Press, Stratigakos presents a well-researched and concise history of the woman architect.

Beginning with the Victorian era, the book traces the path of the first generation of female architects and the origins of the prejudice they encountered. Meant to be “angels in the home,” tending to hearth and family, this first group of women was relegated to designing the private domestic spaces of homes, mainly kitchens and closets. The group included the first female graduate of Cornell’s architecture program, Margaret Hicks, who, upon her graduation in 1880, was expected to stick to domestic architecture despite her thesis on tenement reform. Male architects, meanwhile, were held to strict standards of masculinity, a stereotype that only intensified upon the publication of “The Fountainhead” by Ayn Rand and the introduction of its hyper-masculine protagonist, Howard Roark.

Unfortunately, it took decades to see any improvement for women, as Stratigakos artfully illustrates. Even when women were successful, their success was framed in terms of their gender, a theme that recurred some 50 years later when the reaction to Zaha Hadid’s Pritzker Prize win centered on her gender instead of her accomplishments. Indeed, the editor of Architectural Record at the time, Robert Ivy, FAIA, called out his colleagues for their gendered coverage of Hadid, stating, “Can you imagine the leading practitioners in other professions treated to such personal scrutiny on receiving a major award?”

“Where Are the Women Architects?” does a tidy job of illuminating the presence of unseen female architects in history, as well as illustrating just how few female architects there have been until recently. In 1960, there were only 260 women in architectural practice in the United States. Recently, architecture schools have become more gender-balanced, but the number of practicing women architects remains shockingly low, with women representing only 22 percent of AIA membership.

Stratigakos lays out a few compelling reasons why this continues to be the case. First, she explains that the lack of balance begins in school, where there are fewer female professors and not many classes focusing on female architects. Even public lecture series at universities are weighted heavily toward male speakers. Female architects are confronted with the male face of architecture rather than being encouraged to find female role models.

Another factor in the gap is the unbalanced culture that continues to dominate many architectural offices. This all-or-nothing culture disproportionately penalizes women, even those who choose to conform to these standards. Stratigakos writes, “Yet women can excel day after day, year after year, and still remain invisible in a system that sees only men as leadership material.”

Stratigakos also describes her experience working with Mattel to create Architect Barbie. Once Architect Barbie was produced, everything from her outfit and shoes to the color of her drawing tube (pink) became a hotly contested issue. Ultimately, Stratigakos feels the response was positive, and Architect Barbie currently retails for as much as $440. “Inside architecture’s hallowed halls, Barbie’s ‘girlie’ attributes were a mark not of oppression but of resistance,” she writes.

One of the most troubling aspects of the book’s investigation concerns the strategic editing of Wikipedia articles to exclude women from history. Groups often organize edit-a-thons to highlight women architects who have been excluded from mainstream recognition — only to watch as their work is erased by other Wikipedia editors. Providing the example of a 2012 edit-a-thon, “She Blinded Me With Science,” Stratigakos writes, “Entries were nominated for deletion almost as soon as they were posted.” The work of including women in databases like Wikipedia is particularly important as these resources replace traditional methods of research.

Stratigakos’ work will prove fascinating for those seeking a comprehensive analysis of the ever-evolving place of women in the architectural profession. While the book highlights instances of progress, including the popularity of Architect Barbie and the 2013 Denise Scott Brown petition, the work also makes clear how far away from equality we still are. Scott Brown still has not been recognized by the Pritzker committee, and Zaha Hadid remains the only solo female architect to have been recognized with the honor. Stratigakos closes with a telling anecdote about one of her young female students wanting to take on a research project about the current status of women architects.

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she surmised that the barriers that had once confronted women architects now lay in the past or, at the very least, that ‘things are not that bad anymore.’ I understood that behind the premise of change lay both hopes and fears about the future before her, and I encouraged her to learn and be prepared. ‘Go ahead,’ I said, ‘and see what you find.’"

“Where Are the Women Architects” serves as an excellent first step for those wanting to “see what they find” and learn about the challenges women architects have faced in the past, as well as the challenges many continue to face. As Stratigakos explains, the work “is also meant as a clarion call. For those of you who, like me, care deeply about architecture and want to see it become a truly inclusive profession, I ask that you be vocal and make trouble.” Her work certainly makes a compelling case for action.

Alyssa Morris is web editor of Texas Architect.


It was 1993 when I met Bill Booziotis. A friend was working in his office, and since she knew I was looking for a job, she suggested I speak with Bill. It was not until my second interview that I actually met him. We talked for a long time, mostly about things that had nothing to do with architecture or my qualifications.

Finally, Bill offered me a job, and said I could start immediately.

I said I would accept the offer happily, but there was one problem: I was leaving for a month-long trip to Italy in just two weeks. Bill took this news in and was quiet for a few moments. Eventually he said that would be fine as long as I only was gone two weeks. So, I changed my travel plans and went to work for Bill Booziotis the next day.

At first, Bill was my employer, albeit a rather quirky one. He would hop around the studio going from person to person, moving projects forward in ways he found interesting. He might tell you that what you had just spent several hours working on was awful and here was what you really should have done. A quick sketch to guide you and he was off. But as time went on, Bill became both my mentor and my friend.

Bill encouraged people if they chose to leave the practice and would welcome them back with open arms. He built long-term friendships with the many people who worked in our office over the years. Bill Booziotis had more than colleagues; he had partners, collaborators, and dinner companions.

Always looking near and far for new ideas, Bill would apply these to projects we had underway. He encouraged all of us to travel, to become better informed, and to continue to educate ourselves every day. Bill’s openness to outside influences sometimes caused us frustration, such as when some new idea was foisted on our design work when we were already deep into construction documents. I remember Bill coming back from Brazil and saying he had been looking at Oscar Niemeyer and thought the project we had been working on was ripe for a Niemeyer-influenced change. We all recoiled in horror. Eventually, we moved forward without substantial change, but Niemeyer did influence future work in subtle ways.

Bill Booziotis loved Dallas, and he was passionate about the arts. He was deeply involved with the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Symphony, and Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, to name just a few. He did design work for them and supported them tirelessly. He also loved and generously supported the educational institutions he attended, that are a part of Dallas.

We in the architecture community will miss his friendship, his dinners, where the state of the profession and many other wide-ranging topics were discussed, and his support of the profession he cherished. He has left an enormous hole we must now try to fill, and I hope we can do that with as much grace as Bill did.

We are all deeply saddened by the loss of Bill Booziotis. Our office is forever changed, but Bill’s endearing qualities will inspire us to carry forward the practice he began so long ago. Our memories of Bill will never fail to influence and inspire us.

Jess Galloway, AIA, is a principal at Booziotis & Company Architects.
Less sensitive, but far less noticeable, is the expanded glazing for upper-story meeting rooms. Though necessary for opening parties and fundraisers, these undermine the rhythm between interior and exterior endemic to the original design. Similarly, the enclosure of balconies facing north, now shadowed by the garage, provides needed green room space for entertaining and a sorely needed catering kitchen on the uppermost level. These latter balcony spaces lost their original allure long ago due to surrounding development.

The lobby interior feels surprisingly unchanged. Concrete still buttresses the ticket booths; the textured plaster of the walls looks the same; and the original storefront was left in the entry. Moving up the red-carpeted stairs, the spiraling tiers continue to imbue the space with the drama of the theater. The transformation of provisional office space into a bar and lounge unifies the lobby.

Inside the theater, newly outfitted with light and sound locks, the stage becomes the focus. Seating has been reconfigured on a tighter radius to provide a greater thrust. The audience surrounds the stage, nearly parallel with the proscenium. The farthest seat is now 22 feet closer to the stage. The stage was lifted 5 ft to decrease the rake and the catwalks demolished to make way for the fly loft. Original concrete bunkers that served to "break the fourth wall" had been removed a few years prior to make additional seating. In their place, Studio RED introduced two new vomitories for the actors that connect to an added trap space below.

Ten Eyck Swackhamer, the Alley Theatre's general manager, contends that this renovation was primarily about eliminating obstructions. The scalloped ceiling was replaced with a non-descript arc of services blanketed with acoustic treatment. Striking acoustic changes enable a range of volume in actors' voices that was previously inaudible. These modifications, in conjunction with such added back-of-house spaces as recording booths, rehearsal space, and connections between prop construction and stage, allow the company to broaden its potential.

Swackhamer says the best part of working with Studio RED was their level of communication with stakeholders. He taped out dressing room dimensions, having actors stay within the allotted spaces for 30 minutes, then had their notes incorporated into the design. Early schemes for wood ceilings, terrazzo flooring in the lobby, and reconfiguration of ticket booths were dismissed as contrary to the iconic nature of the original. The result is a building that builds upon the past and honors the evolving needs of the company.

Jesse Hager, AIA, is an architect in Houston.
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JULY

Monday 4
EXHIBITION OPENING
Light on the Plains: Frank Reaugh pastels from the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum
Amarillo Museum of Art
2200 South Van Buren Street
Amarillo
amarilloart.org

Friday 8
EXHIBITION OPENING
Teen Artist and Mentor Program
Pump Project
702 Shady Lane
Austin
thecontemporaryaustin.org

Sunday 10
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Storybook Houses
San Antonio Botanical Garden
555 Funston Place
San Antonio
sabot.org

Tuesday 12
SCREENING
Metropolis
7:00 p.m.
Classic Film Series
The Paramount Theatre
713 Congress Avenue
Austin
austintheatre.org

PLAY OPENING
Agatha Christie's Spider's Web
Alley Theatre
615 Texas Avenue
Houston
alleytheatre.org

Thursday 14
EVENT
Design Talk – Tour of Ridglea Theater
6025 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth
aiafw.org

Sunday 17
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Sightings: Mai-Thu Perret
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora Street
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

Wednesday 20
LECTURE
Master Builders – Mind of the Maya Series
Witte Museum
3801 Broadway
San Antonio
wittemuseum.org

Thursday 21
EVENT
AIA | TEXO: Bark + Build Kick Off Party
SPCA
2400 Lone Star Drive
Dallas
aiadallas.org

Monday 24
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Life is Once, Forever: Henri Cartier-Bresson Photographs
The Menil Collection
1533 Sul Ross Street
Houston
menil.org

AUGUST

Friday 5
EVENT
AIA San Antonio Shoot N' Sky
National Shooting Complex
5931 Roft Road
San Antonio
aiasa.org

Monday 15
LECTURE
Bercy Chen Studio
6:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m.
reception
1111 East 11th Street
Austin
bcarc.com

Thursday 18
CONFERENCE
Through Friday 19
AIA Austin Summer Conference
Norris Conference Center
2525 W. Anderson Lane
Austin
aiaaustin.org

EVENT
Through Sunday 21
The Mystical Arts of Tibet Featuring Tibetan Monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery
Asia Society Texas Center
1370 Southmore Boulevard
Houston
asiassoc.org

Thursday 21
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Joel Shapiro
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora Street
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

Thursday 25
EVENT
AIA Houston Design Awards
6:00 p.m.
TDECU Stadium
3875 Holman Street
Houston
aiahouston.org

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Thomas Cummins
Blue Star Contemporary, San Antonio
bluestarart.org

AUGUST 4 THROUGH OCTOBER 2
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AIA Dallas 2016 Unbuilt Design Awards

On May 4, AIA Dallas announced the four winners of its 2016 Unbuilt Design Awards contest. The award recognizes excellence in unbuilt projects by Dallas architects. The recipients were selected by a jury including Jacob Brillhart, AIA, founder of Brillhart Architecture; Mary-Ann Ray, principal at Studio Works Architects, and Adam Marcus, AIA, director for Variable Projects and partner in Futures North. Two additional awards were given, the Critics' Choice and People's Choice Awards. The Critics’ Choice Award, selected by a panel of local journalists, went to The Light Basin (RCRD), Nandi Bay Redevelopment (CallisonRTKL), and Element House (RCRD), with an honorable mention going to Moliere Bajopuente (FTA Design Studio). The People’s Choice Award, voted on by the event attendees, was given to Wellness Center (Smith Group).

The four winning projects are:

1. **Dallas Arboretum, Perkins+Will**
   Proposed as an education center at the Dallas Arboretum, Perkins+Will’s undulating design is integrated into the garden landscape.

2. **Jiefangbei Tower, CallisonRTKL**
   Designed for the city of Chongqing, this residential tower also integrates passersby at the street level.
3 Hillen Residence, NIMMO
A single-family residence, the site-specific Hillen project integrates the landscape into every element of the home.

4 Oak Cliff Brewing, Munn Harris Architects
Due to the high equipment cost for brewing, the architects put forth a low-cost design plan to reclaim an industrial warehouse as a comfortable space to welcome the public.

An honorable mention was awarded to:

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WHEN
September 29 - October 1, 2016

WHERE
South Padre Island Convention Center
7355 Padre Boulevard
South Padre Island, Texas 78597

EVENTS
September 29 - Historical Tour
September 30 - October 1, 2016 Conference
October 1 - Shrimp Boil at Doubleday Bar of Champions, Port Isabel

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2019 winners clockwise from top left: Chicago Horizon, Ultime, photo Tom Harris; Hedrich Blessing; Fire Station 78, Hennebery Eddy Architects; photo Jack Pardee; Olney Branch, Montgomery County Public Libraries, The Lakemont Partnership; photo Eric Taylor; The Brooklyn Riverside, Dwell Design Studio, photo Pulvar Shows; Matrix Residential; Cottonwood Valley Charter School E-Pod, Environmental Dynamics, photo Patrick Coulais, Unitarian Universal Fellowship of Central Oregon, Hiepler, photo Lara Swimmer.

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These products for outdoor spaces — from a stylish aluminum pergola to slip-resistant ceramic floor tiles — must be durable enough to withstand the elements as well as the end users.

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CSL's LED step light collection offers safe illumination to well-traveled outside areas in residential or commercial projects, while providing energy-efficient illumination via zero-maintenance Cree LEDs and integral drivers. The step lights feature nine distinct profiles in bronze, silver metallic, and white finishes, and are able to withstand the high temperatures and strong sun of the Southwest.

Algarve Pergola
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ernest-ny.com

Renson's Algarve pergola is a simple and practical terrace covering that offers a sun protection roof system based on rotating blades. The extruded aluminum blades rotate up to 150° to control how much sun protection or ventilation is provided. When closed, the blades form a waterproof roof in normal showers while a gutter system drains the rainwater away toward the columns. The Algarve is available in the full range of RAL colors, and its light, elegant design works with contemporary, traditional, and modern building styles.

Concrete & Corten Planters
Form and Fiber
formandfiber.com

Form and Fiber designs and manufactures concrete and Corten steel modern planters in Texas for designers and architects working on commercial exterior and interior projects. The precast concrete planters come in a standard natural gray or a choice of integral color pigment from Davis Colors. The company does not stock inventory, but handcrafts each order in the style, size, color, and quantity for the project. Collections include the Boardform Series of precast concrete in two joint options, and a range of pre-cast concrete and Corten steel designs.
The CB406 is a floor-fitted shower design for both indoor and outdoor use. Unlike its chrome-plated counterparts, this stainless steel fixture is extremely resistant to oxidation, making it ideal for an outdoor shower design in the harsh Texas summer heat. Two columns with knurled details and slanted handles are connected by a steel bridge, which supports an architectural, curved spout in the middle. The design includes a hand spray and tilting handles that easily regulate water flow and temperature.

Richard Schultz designed the 1966 Collection at the request of Florence Knoll, who needed outdoor furniture that could withstand the corrosive Florida ocean air. Regarded as the first modern outdoor furniture, the collection of tables, chairs, and other furnishings is now available in six new color options. Inspired by David Hockney paintings, the new colors include bright electric hues in plum, yellow, lime green, and orange, as well as a more earthy green. Shown here are the 1966 Adjustable Chaise and Contour Chaise in the new blue option. The collection is available through Sunset Settings in Houston and other retailers throughout the state.

Intended for both indoor and outdoor use in commercial or residential projects, the Revstone ceramic tile collection is manufactured with an innovative digital inkjet system that allows it to reproduce the look of natural stone. Revstone is available in seven sizes in natural, glossy, and anti-slip finishes, the last of which is ideal for outdoor applications including terraces, balconies, and outdoor paving. The 20-millimeter-thick outdoor tile is resistant to thermal shock, is frost- and fire-resistant, and can be installed dry on grass, gravel, or sand.
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The Pair of Jeans

IN RETIREMENT, TWO TEXAS STATE PROFESSORS EXPANDED THEIR SAN MARCOS HOME TO ADD A LIBRARY, PAINTING STUDIO, AND GALLERY. THE DESIGN BY A.GRUPPO ARCHITECTS BOLDLY REINTERPRETS THE EXISTING HOUSE WHILE PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE COUPLE’S COLLECTION OF ART, FURNITURE, AND BOOKS.

by Aaron Seward

Project Laman Residence
Client Jean and Jene Laman
Architect A.GRUPPO Architects
Design Team Andrew Nance, AIA; Thad Reeves, AIA;
Brett Davidson; Ana Riley
Photographers Dror Baldinger, AIA; Mark Menjivar
Jean and Jene Laman, "the pair of jeans" to their friends, both originally from Dallas, spent nearly 40 years on the faculty of Texas State University (formerly Southwest Texas State University). Jean taught fiber arts; her work in metal, ceramics, paint, and paper has been shown in exhibitions around the world. Jene started and directed (for a time) the interior design department, practiced his trade through Laman Designs, and is an artist in his own right, creating boxed assemblages reminiscent of the work of Joseph Cornell. At the end of their decorated professional and academic careers, neither showed any sign of going gentle into that good night. Rather, still full of the delight and curiosity that fueled their lifetimes in the arts, the couple decided to expand their 1970s house in a wooded subdivision beside the Purgatory Creek Natural Area in south San Marcos to add a painting studio, gallery, and library.

"Rather than downsize, we added on in retirement," Jean says. "It's fun," Jene adds.

The Lamans sourced their existing house from the Heritage Homes Plan Service of Henry Dole Norris, AIA. Modest in size, it is composed of two shed-roofed wings and a gable-roofed connecting volume, all on one floor. Over the years, the couple had added a fiber-arts studio and a greenhouse, and had created a series of outdoor "rooms" where they entertained friends, family, and students. Sited well back from the road, the little compound was accessed by a curving drive that terminated at the back of the plot and a footpath that wended its way through the trees to the "front" door at the side of the house. "The original idea was walking down a wooded lane to Hansel and Gretel's house," says Jene.

For the new addition, the Lamans hired A.GRUPPO Architects, which has offices in Dallas and San Marcos. Jene met A.GRUPPO's Andrew Nance, AIA, through the interior design department at Texas State, where Nance is also a professor. The commission gave Nance and his team a rare opportunity to work with private clients who have an artistic program and a penchant for experimentation.

"The vocabulary of the existing building is standing metal seam roofs and plaster with lots of sliding glass doors," Nance says. "We tried to carry that into the new addition but introduce a different take, give it a sculptural quality and a strong presence with these two tower-like elements and interstitial spaces. The clients, as artists, brought so much to the table."

Since the previous additions and outdoor rooms were located to the rear and sides of the existing house, A.GRUPPO sited their building toward the street, reorienting the main entrance and connecting it to the curving drive with a bridge. The slightly sloping site is an old riverbed, and its expansive...
Facing The addition contains a painting studio, gallery, and library, as well as the new front entrance, which is accessed by a bridge that allows site drainage.

Above The architects expanded the master bedroom and added a new master bathroom in the existing house.

Left An enclosed bridge connects the addition to the existing building. Translucent polycarbonate cladding on the north face allows for the transmission of light.
Open House

Clockwise from top: The view through the connection into the addition. The painting studio showing the skylights and the cantilevered library shelf. The library on the second level. An office/lounge area on the second level that overlooks the painting studio.
clay soil makes for a lot of drainage when it rains. For this reason, another enclosed bridge connects the existing structure to the addition, which rests on a cantilevered concrete slab foundation. The superstructure is made with 8-in-thick structural insulated panels, which came in at a third of the price of steel and with the rigidity to allow the interior volumes to remain open — a key to the design.

A.GRUPPO conceived the towers as modified gambrel-roofed extrusions, clad with standing metal seam roofing and capped on the south street face with plaster to create large display walls on the interior and on the north face with translucent polycarbonate sheets to admit indirect daylight. Natural light also enters the towers — the eastern housing the painting studio, the western, the gallery — through skylights that are baffled a bit on the interior by horizontal bracing panels. Half of these panels are structural; the other half are there only for rhythm. The glass-fronted element that connects the towers accommodates the main entrance on the ground floor and on the second floor the library, whose shelves cantilever into the tower volumes. It also leads to the connection to the existing house, where A.GRUPPO moved the master bedroom to the west to open up a new corridor. They also added a new master bathroom looking out on a walled Zen garden, and a large walk-in closet accessed by way of a pair of elaborate dark wood doors taken from an antique wardrobe. A copy of “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” sits on an adjacent shelf, in case anybody wonders about the reference.

As forward as the architecture of the addition may be outside, inside, the white oak floors, white walls, and pleasantly abundant but suffuse daylight put all attention on the Lamans’ art, eclectic furniture, and books. “We wanted to make it sculptural and functional, but also make it work for the collection,” Nance says. “The collection really makes it come together fully.”

Aaron Seward is editor of Texas Architect.
INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABILITY

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In the introduction to his 1968 collection of essays, "In a Narrow Grave," Larry McMurtry described the upheaval that he then saw occurring in Texas:

The state is at that stage of metamorphosis when it is most fertile with conflict, when rural and soil traditions are competing most desperately with urban traditions — competing for the allegiance of the young. The city will win, of course, but its victory won't be cheap — the country traditions were very strong. As the cowboys gradually leave the range and learn to accommodate themselves to the suburbs, defeats that are tragic in quality must occur and may be recorded.

McMurtry was writing about the literary possibilities, the inherent human drama, that this transition made available to the novelist. The work that it made available to the architect turned out to be even more profound; we certainly got more buildings out of the suburbanization of Texas than we did books.

We are now in a similar era of upheaval. This time the transition, painfully slow as it may be, is from suburban to urban. The ground is no less fertile for conflict than it was at the time of McMurtry's writing, nor can there be any doubt that greater density will be the future of our cities. Again, architects have their work cut out for them.

In this issue of Texas Architect, we look around the state at several examples of the shifting landscapes. The stories in this feature section trace an arc: from a tiny town on the Eagle Ford Shale, over the chic streets of downtown Austin and the burgeoning cultural mecca of Marfa, to a more livable Houston freeway and a utopian dream of a San Antonio that could be.
Go Down, Pump Jack

Smiley is like a lot of small Texas towns on the Eagle Ford Shale: as its fortunes rise and fall with the boom and bust cycle of the international energy business, it nonetheless evinces affection for the oil and gas infrastructure that is so much a part of its landscape.

By Christopher Ferguson, Assoc. AIA
just don't know, man. A lot of us are real worried. Just look out there and tell me how many jacks you see stopped." Andy pauses to wipe the grease from his hands before continuing. "When the jacks are movin', the truckers are groovin'." He flashes a wry smile. "But they're cappin' wells out here like you wouldn't believe."

Andy, a colorful oil tank truck driver for one of the largest petroleum and natural gas exploration companies in the country, is right to be concerned. The last five years have seen United States crude oil production nearly double, a steady climb from around 5.6 million barrels per day in 2011 to just over 9 million barrels per day in 2016. This is largely due to the adoption of induced hydraulic fracturing, a technique that has allowed previously inaccessible pockets of oil and natural gas to be extracted via new horizontal drilling technologies through shale rock formations.

Texas boasts two of the three largest oil-producing shale regions in the country, and has spent the majority of the unprecedented boom period benefiting from global oil prices hovering around $100 per barrel. Yet over the last 18 months, that average price has collapsed dramatically, bottoming out below $27 at the beginning of 2016. For comparison, the low point during the sub-prime mortgage financial crisis was $33 per barrel at the beginning of 2009.

The rise in domestic production is still supported by an insatiable global demand, but the plummeting prices have led to mixed fortunes for communities across the state. Drilling companies, desperate to maximize efficiency, have consolidated their drilling on sites that are densely saturated with oil. Meanwhile, low-producing fringe fields have been largely abandoned, which has rapidly led to a complex and varied regional landscape across West and South Texas. In some cases, just a few dozen miles has made the difference between feast and famine for towns with oil-based economies.

Andy's route takes him through the small town of Smiley, where he was happy to talk on the condition his full name and employer not be disclosed. "They're real strict with publicity these days. Everyone's on edge just a little bit."

Smiley sits at the intersection of U.S. Highway 87 and Farm to Market 108, about 60 miles due east of San Antonio. It has one blinking traffic signal, a population of about 500, and is located in the middle of the Eagle Ford Shale Play. It has suffered substantially from the collapse of oil prices, with new drilling activity ground to a halt as speculators shift their focus to more fertile ground.

But Smiley, like the dozens of other towns confronting similar challenges, is far from deserted. Tankers like Andy's rumble through the main intersection every few minutes, transporting hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil each day past Smiley's lone, abandoned gas station.

"All these towns have been through this before, so nobody is really packing up and leaving. But people are definitely feeling it. Not as much activity, but it'll rebound. It's just a matter of when. That's what's got me nervous."

For comparison, the low point during the sub-prime mortgage financial crisis was $33 per barrel at the beginning of 2009.
With rig counts dwindling to historic lows both nationally and across the region, these dignified beasts are at risk of becoming an endangered species. While some are dormant, others are dismantled completely and stored off-site until they are needed again.

for development, its freshly mowed yard and white picket fence hinting at unrealized potential. A barbecue joint, closed at noon on a Saturday, hangs a sign in the front window reading, “Reduced hours due to decline in oil productivity.” A cafe across the street follows suit. There is a sense that the town itself has slowed its metabolic rate in order to survive the winter.

Other effects are less tangible. When asked, many of Smiley’s residents will speak to an emotional connection with the sight of the various machines that dot the landscape, such as pump jacks, derricks, and “Christmas trees” (assemblies of pipes, valves, and spools that control the flow of oil or gas out of a well). Visible in all directions from highways and county roads alike, the infrastructure is a physical representation of the industry that enhances the vitality of both local communities and the state as a whole.

Just as the symbolism of an iconic, silhouetted cowboy riding off into the sunset speaks to a specific regional ethos, so too does a line of pump jacks on the horizon, churning in place with a singular purpose and downright Texan resolve.

Andy is affectionate toward the pump jacks in particular. “You just hate to see those big guys with their heads down and legs up,” he chuckles, referencing the position of a static unit visible over his shoulder. “You gotta know they feel humiliated, right?” It’s an apt comparison, its two giant, revolving counterweights and bowed head vaguely resembling a long-lost prehistoric bird of prey.

But with rig counts dwindling to historic lows both nationally and across the region, these dignified beasts are at risk of becoming an endangered species. While some are dormant, others are dismantled completely and stored off-site until they are needed again.

Andy is undeterred. “We’ve been through worse,” he assures, “but that doesn’t make it fun.”

While the immediate future of the petroleum and natural gas market remains uncertain, the enduring spirit of the people and infrastructure in communities like Smiley remains steadfast. As if mimicking the cyclical motion of pump jacks themselves, these places are designed to withstand the ebb and flow of an often-turbulent economy. These oil towns’ longevity is well documented, and their character and built environment quintessentially Texan. In that respect, the faith of people like Andy is well placed.

Christopher Ferguson, Assoc. AIA, is a designer at Clickspring Design and co-founder of DO.GROUP DESIGN.
By Caman Yee men

Activity at All Hours
Use neighborhood bustling with all varieties of day and night into a surging mixed. A derelict strip haunted by bankers during the millennium began. It has been transformed from millennium district in the 16 years since the new thinking. Look no further than Austin's second for a prime example of 21st century urban design.
Above The north side-walk of Second Street was designed to accommodate outdoor street cafes mixed in with retail.

Right Second Street before its reincarnation. The historic J.P. Schneider store, now Lamberts Downtown Barbecue, is all that remains.

Facing Page Street-level retail on the W block, under the ACL Live music venue.
On a hot night in July 1999, Austin’s Liberty Lunch hosted what was surely a once-in-a-lifetime event: 24 straight hours of a live performance of Van Morrison’s anthem, “Gloria.” The occasion was the imminent shuttering of the club, one of the town’s most beloved, beer-soaked live music joints. The demise of Liberty Lunch was facilitated by the fact that it resided on one of four and a half city-owned blocks along Second Street in downtown for which Austin Mayor Kirk Watson had a grand plan. The blocks of waterfront property housed only the city’s permanently “temporary” council chambers and a boarded-up historic general goods store in addition to Liberty Lunch, which was little more than a glorified shed with a stage and a bar. The street was decrepit, derelict, and, in Watson’s words, “dead as a doornail.” The solution: create a new “digital district” that wrested dominion over downtown from old-economy bankers and lawyers — fuddy-duddy nine-to-fivers — to create a high-tech, digital district that would keep people downtown 24/7. Second Street would be ground zero.

As if to provide the spark, the revelers at Liberty Lunch burned a photo of the mayor’s face in effigy as a last defiant gesture, branding into history the moment when Old Austin became New Austin.

This year, what is now known as the Second Street District is celebrating its 10th birthday. The formerly wayward, bereft little road has become a lustrous mecca of music and foodie tourism, steeped beard-deep in hipness, the self-declared epitome of New Austin cool. And, like most tweens, Second Street is getting a foothold in the world, not quite all grown-up but beginning to fulfill its promise. Now nestled among nearly a dozen hotel and residential towers (with more on the way), it is the jewel of downtown Austin and the envy of economic development councils from here to Detroit.

The Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit planning design and education group, identifies successful public spaces as containing four distinct qualities: They are sociable, accessible, comfortable, and they provide diverse activities. Second Street today, at least the stretch that covers the original three-block segment between San Antonio Street on the east and Colorado Street on the west, boasts a decent showing of these essentials. Wide, tree-lined sidewalks accommodate street cafes and restaurants that seem to always be at capacity. Small, boutique-y shops, as well as vendors catering to downtown dwellers (a dry cleaner’s, a Mac repair shop) entice a steady stream of people — conventioneers and downtowners during the week, joined on weekends by tourists, locals from the ‘burbs doing a day downtown, and Mom and Dad visiting their Longhorn. Hotels and residential towers keep people in the city, and at night ACL Live, an arthouse cinema, and award-winning eateries and bars keep things animated well into the wee hours.

But it was not always thus. Second Street was so dead, it is almost impossible to find a single photo of it from the 1990s; there was simply no reason to take one. But Watson had an idea. He credits working alongside architects with informing his vision and educating him about the way cities, streets, and buildings contribute to urban life and make great downtowns. He says that Austin needed a “living room,” where people could be together and the life of the city would continue well into the evening, as a way to attract and keep talent for a new, high-tech, digital economy. What
he needed was someone to be the proverbial urban design guinea pig for this new vision.

Back then, the city had long been refereeing fights between developers and environmentalists — “aquifer politics,” in local parlance — and it is Watson who deserves credit for having the political will and audacious vision to shift development of desirable corporations away from the eco-sensitive outskirts and smack into the middle of downtown. Watson, along with Larry Speck, FAIA, of Page Southerland Page (now Page) doggedly kept after Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), a Los Angeles-based software company, encouraging them to come downtown instead of building a campus out in the watershed. “I told them downtown is the really desired development zone,” Watson laughs. “It has 100 percent impervious cover.” It was not quite that easy and involved a lot of incentivizing and convincing from both the mayor and the architect, but CSC ultimately agreed, under one big, easy-on-paper, difficult-to-execute stipulation: Its $150 million investment had to be supported by a plan to create a district of urban life around them that would support their employees and make the risk worthwhile.

Speck recalls the extensive trial-and-error period that was required to get the mix of uses just right. “There was a whole lot of testing and feeling, and it was complicated because everybody had their own idea of what mixed-use meant,” he says. CSC was adamant that the district retain a certain dignity, and the decision was made to orient the buildings southward, to create a presence along the waterfront and a new entry to downtown from the south. Second Street frontage to the north would be developed at street level to accommodate a variety of uses — tastefully executed per CSC’s stipulation. Designed by Page, the CSC buildings created the core of a

The formerly wayward, bereft little road has become a lustrous mecca of music and foodie tourism, steeped head-deep in hipness, the self-declared epitome of New Austin cool. And, like most tweens, Second Street is getting a foothold in the world, not quite all grown up but beginning to fulfill its promise.

civic district, and established a palette of materials — mostly limestone — and a massing vocabulary that transitioned easily from the lakefront into the urban core. A new city hall, designed by Antoine Predock with Cotera Reed, was planned for a site between the two buildings behind an open plaza, to be paid for with money from the CSC leases.

This vision of a civic and retail district was informed and enriched by another grand plan that was running on a parallel track — that of the Great Streets Master Plan. Conceived by Black & Vernooy + Kinney (with Donna Carter, FAIA, Lars Stanley, FAIA, Eleanor McKinney, José Martinez, and Charles Thompson, FAIA), the plan was the realization of a street-level vision architect Sinclair Black had been championing in his roles as advocate and longtime member of the Austin Downtown Alliance. He worked closely with Jana McCann, FAIA, then the City’s urban design officer, who managed the program, bringing her own experience as an architect and urban planner in Europe to the work. Building on an earlier conceptual street plan completed for the city by Roma Design Group, the master plan developed prototype streetscapes for the 300 blocks of downtown Austin that delineated six prototypes of street environments.

As part of the master plan, Second Street became the embodiment and the test case of the Great Streets idea. Informed in large measure by the work of Allan Jacobs, whose 1995 book “Great Streets” served as inspiration and impetus for Black’s work, the plan set the stage for a communal downtown space, rich with amenities and social offerings. Black recalls that a lot of thinking went into unseen and unglamorous details of how streets work. “We did a lot of research into things like converting one-way back to two way and what that meant for the sidewalks as well as the economy,” he says. “And then we developed the standards.”

The master plan also outlined street amenities like light fixtures, signage and wayfinding, pavers and public art, with a view to creating a cohesive and authentic design.

The effort was underpinned by a recent design commission guideline that declared downtown streets give priority to pedestrians first, transit second, and bicycles third. “Cars had to fend for themselves,” Black says. To understand the complete U-turn that these guidelines represented, a typical Austin downtown street has an 80-ft right-of-way, of which 60 ft were traditionally dedicated to cars. The Great Streets plan dedicates 36 ft of the right-of-way to pedestrians, reducing the cars’ space to only 44 ft. On Second Street, the ratio favors pedestrians even more, boasting 32-ft sidewalks on the north side, in a gesture that accommodates street seating for restaurants and responds to the shadow cast by the CSC (now Silicon Labs) buildings to the south.

It was the first Aml Downtown project designed by Sinclair Black with Page as architect of record: that gave hints about the big idea of how the district would unfold beyond the CSC and City Hall buildings. Located on the block northeast of City Hall, it boasted a street level café with open-air seating, with residences above. “When that first block opened, everybody got the message,” Black says. Design Within Reach became a seminal tenant and the retail anchor the district needed. Block 21, the brownfield site directly north of City Hall, became the W Hotel and Residences tower, along with the ACL Live music venue (Andersson-Wise and BOKA Powell), which at its opening in 2010 was the largest LEED-certified mixed-use development in the country. At the far west end, another AMLI block (Page) added more retail and residential space, and Watson’s six-block living room was complete.

According to the City of Austin, in 2010, that six-block core generated $4.55 million in property taxes, before the $300 million W Hotel and Residences opened late that year. That same year — an economically down year, to say the least — the district also produced $2.29 million in sales taxes. The City of Austin also says the district added $1.032 billion to the tax base in 2014, the most recent numbers it can provide (presumably, the city is too busy counting its receipts to stop and update the numbers). Not a bad return on an initial public investment of $8 million.

The Second Street corridor is expanding further, “doing what it’s supposed to do,” says Watson. In addition to extruding northward into Third Street and into Republic Square Park, which hosts a large farmers’ market/street party every weekend, the corridor will soon connect the Seaholm District on the west directly with the Austin Convention Center and a new programmed park along Waller Creek on the east. For the first time, a large swath of downtown will be physically connected and will coexist in the same mental space. It will be possible to walk from Seaholm, past the new Central Library (Lake|Flato and Shepley Bulfinch) at the western end, across the new pedestrian bridge at Shoal Creek, all the way across Congress and past the JW Marriott, to the convention center. At
Left: The Pedestrian Dominant Street Plan flipped the ratio of cars to people, giving 50 ft of the 80-ft right-of-way over to pedestrians.

Below: The Great Streets Master Plan creates a consistent and predictable atmosphere for downtown streets.
Shoal Creek you could make a detour to the hike and bike trail along Lady Bird Lake or enjoy the pocket park planned between the library and the adjacent Northshore 38-floor mixed-use development. At Waller Creek on the east, you might soon be able to turn south and access a pedestrian bridge across the lake to the south shore (where more mixed-use development is planned) or turn north and work your way to the University of Texas at Austin campus and its new Dell Medical School. It is the next evolution of downtown that is bringing new thinking to how we use and share community space. Peter Mullan, Chief Executive Officer of the Waller Creek Conservancy and veteran of New York’s High Line, recognizes the potential that is bubbling to the surface. “Second Street cracked open the door on the possibility of a more robust and diverse urbanism in Austin, he says. “Barriers to entry to doing mixed use projects have been sufficiently lowered that it will only continue.” And, in a city plagued by traffic of biblical proportions, it is worth mentioning that Second Street provides an essential east-west artery for active commuting — biking, walking — that cities tout as desirable amenities for enticing people to move downtown, preferably without a car (as one proposed development is advertising).

As any visitor to the city can attest, Austinites love Austin, and for decades Barton Springs, Deep Eddy, Zilker Park, and even the lore of lost places like the Armadillo World Headquarters and Liberty Lunch told of happy common meeting grounds for rednecks and hippies, academics and lawyers — “the boots and the suits,” as Watson says. The Willie Nelson statue on the corner of Second and Lavaca summons that soul of Austin, now packaged in a new incarnation that is a little more self-referential and polished, with $20 burgers and artisanal beer. But Second Street’s realization and its influence on the fabric of Austin in just ten years is a testament to political will and architectural vision combining forces with an unblinking focus on a specific mission. “The idea that great cities grow organically is a myth,” Speck says. “Nothing will ever coalesce. You need urban design to do it.” And Black agrees. “People say it would have happened anyway. But would it have been that fast, or been that robust? Because for the 85 years before the street was redone, nothing happened.”

Canan Yetmen is a writer based in Austin.
Fifty-Five New Ways of Looking at Marfa

THIS LITTLE TOWN IN WEST TEXAS NOW EXERTS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE, AND THE OPENING OF THE HOTEL SAINT GEORGE IS THE LATEST OF ITS ACHIEVEMENTS. WILL MARFA BE ABLE TO HOLD ON TO ITS FRONTIER, AVANT-GARDE MYSTIQUE WHILE ACCOMMODATING ITS BURGEONING TOURIST ECONOMY?

by Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA
Marfa. Say it loud and there’s music playing. Say it soft and it’s almost like praying. Say it three times and it acquires a shrill, Brady Bunch-esque insistence: Marfa, Marfa, Marfa! Stories of a transcendent escape to here are heard everywhere, and are met with a supportive ear or a dismissive smirk, depending on the listener’s persuasion. The town is undeniably in the midst of a boom as its cultural star soars ever higher, thanks to the hard work of its artist-citizens. Their efforts offer serious reasons to visit, beyond the more important smorgasbord of celestial beauty or, below, the rolling high desert landscape itself. Take, for example, a possible schedule at this year’s CineMarfa festival: Where else could one screen an Agnes Varda film, participate in an afternoon video synthesis workshop, and, later, eat Thai food and watch a free Tortoise concert inside a former lumberyard? Only in Marfa, as they say.

When the town was featured on 60 Minutes in 2013, Morley Safer offered reductive descriptions of the town’s “artful coexistence” between Cowboys and culture,” but a clear evolution was present in this “capital of quirkiness,” obvious even in national television coverage. Though still thoroughly addressing the long shadow of Donald Judd’s life and work, the town supports new generations of working artists in addition to the more steadfast economies of Border Patrol exercises and ranch operations. A split between locals and artist types is an easy — and still mostly accurate — binary classification, but the truth acquires complexity as the factions mix and as artist types establish sincere roots in this remote outpost.

Marfa’s tourist economy has grown considerably in recent years, but it remains strapped for adequate lodging. According to a 2015 Big Bend Sentinel article by Sasha von Oldershausen, Marfa had at least 12,493 visitors but only...
Right The new massing as seen from the single flashing light. The hotel is in dialogue with the other white facades along Highland Avenue.

Below A white stucco and glass exterior takes on the color of the sky. The Judd Foundation building is in the foreground.
104 hotel rooms in four establishments (not counting the funkier, camp-like accommodations at El Cosmico, or the many vacation rentals). Meanwhile, Alpine, to the east, recorded only 4,461 visitors but sports over 600 hotel rooms. Weddings or large events in Marfa saturate the available lodgings, leaving the overflow visitors to spend their nights and dollars elsewhere.

Due to the demand, there are many VRBO or Airbnb vacation rentals, a trend that increases housing costs for the town, putting further pressure on its lower-income residents. Visitors now arrive in about the same numbers to see art as they do to see the Big Bend region’s “beautiful country mountains,” as Donald Judd himself wrote to his mother via telegram in 1946 when he saw the region for the first time. Constant promotion through celebrity sightings and rave travel reviews shapes the town’s cultural image around a core practice of high desert bohemian relaxation — New York City prices in a Trans-Pecos environment. Throughout, cooler-than-thou Houston the little power environment. Throughout, cooler-than-thou Houston the little power environment.

Tourism is a double-edged exchange. Von Oldershausen wrote: “To those who reside in Marfa, the incessant tide of tourists has become an ever-present reality and, at times, the source of vague amusement. And yet, this is also the source of its survival.” The prose invites a comparison to water’s power in arid lands: A constant trickle with seasonal downpours supports life as we know it, but unnatural deluges alter the ecology of a place. Such is the context for Marfa’s recently opened Hotel Saint George.

West Texas wanderers have long required a place to hang their hats. The original Saint George was Marfa’s first hotel, a two-story brick structure that opened on the corner of Highland Avenue and El Paso Street in 1886, four years after the town was founded in 1882 as a water stop on the Southern Pacific Railroad. The hotel was, for a time, directly south of the rail depot, where trains collected agricultural products like wool (harvested from sheep) and mohair (harvested from Angora goats). The Saint George burned down in the 1920s, and a new single-story concrete structure with a basement was built in its place in 1929. Other buildings along Highland were single-story structures first, with second-story additions realized later. It appears that this was the plan for this second building, with its robust construction and weirdly located columns and beams, but no upper floor was built. Much later, it was subdivided into smaller areas that have hosted important tenants over the years: the Lannan Foundation; KRTS 93.5, Marfa’s public radio station; and the Marfa Book Company, which now occupies a prominent location in the new hotel’s lobby. The New York Times listed Marfa in its “52 Places to Go in 2016” feature, but, contrary to that blurb, the new Saint George is neither reopening nor renovating an old hotel — rather, the endeavor is a reimagining of an establishment that has lain extinct for 85 years.

The new Hotel Saint George is the work of its sole owner, Tim Crowley. Crowley first visited in the region in the early 1980s, and attended a Chinati Weekend when Donald Judd was still alive. He eventually moved to Marfa full time in 1996 and began buying property during the town’s post-Judd lull. Crowley worked, and occasionally still works, as a trial lawyer in Houston with his law firm Crowley Norman. Now also a philanthropist and entrepreneur, he has focused his attention on creating vibrant artistic initiatives and businesses in Marfa. The theater that bears his name was once an agricultural feed store that he renovated as a performing arts contribution to a town already rich in visual art. And, if you had visited the Food Shark truck in its previous location under a long steel canopy next to the railroad tracks, you sat on his property beneath his Farmstand structure. Marfa is “not a place where you could appropriately build a Hampton Inn or a La Quinta,” Crowley says. “It might fill up and be a very successful project, but architecturally, it wouldn’t really be what you want to [see].” So he took on the hotel project because the town clearly needed more rooms and it seemed more fitting for the problem to be solved with local means rather than outside investment.

Carlos Jiménez, Houston-based principal of Carlos Jiménez Studio and a professor at Rice, is the lead designer of the new Hotel Saint George. He first visited Marfa in 1993 to write an article on Judd’s work for a Spanish publication. Crowley and Jiménez first worked together in 2000 on Crowley’s first house in Marfa, designed for Tim and Lynn Goode, his wife at the time. The residence is an impressive compound of CMU block and painted steel in a two-courtyard configuration, sited southwest of Marfa on Pinto Canyon Road. Crowley has since sold the property, Jiménez later designed an addition to Tim’s Crowley Theater, resulting in a sharp metal panel canopy over a reception area and bathrooms. The walls are framed in deep members and are thoroughly insulated; the form acts as a “pillow” to shield the theater’s interior from the sound of passing trains. As the addition was nearing completion, it was put on hold while Marfa’s construction labor force was absorbed in finishing the Saint George. In 2011, Crowley was looking for property in Houston in the same neighborhood as Jiménez’s studio. Carlos eventually sold him a lot next door and designed a house for Crowley and his two children. Construction was finished last year, and the two are now neighbors. Jiménez remarked that Crowley is a “very dear friend and a true client, in the sense that he supports what you want to do,” evidence of their history of collaboration and friendship. The hotel project marks Jiménez’s fifth project in Marfa and the fourth designed for Crowley.

Preliminary studies indicated that the new hotel should be located downtown rather than at the town’s periphery, so as to be within walking proximity of major attractions. An early scheme by Jiménez placed its rooms in four blocks with three interstitial courtyards along the railroad where the Farmstand existed; the massing was intriguing but was ruled unbuildable once the cost of soundproofing was considered — measures that were required to isolate sleeping areas from the vibration and whistle of the trains that roll through the town some two dozen times, daily. The duo then focused their attention on the current site, and for eight months toyed with how to treat the lobby, “basically just thinking of many possible ways of dealing with the original building.” What if the pool were there, indoors? What if the ground floor were removed to create a double-height space? What if there were a small theater on the premises? They ultimately settled on the creation of a “public living room” that mixes lobby, retail, bar/cafe, and restaurant uses together in an open plan. Jiménez envisioned the hotel rooms as deep volumes with “apertures” through which one peers out toward the Marfaan landscape. His sparse west elevation is deliberately straightforward, with a gridded modularity that prizes the fenestrations’ interior experience rather than their appearance as an exterior composition. It could be an office or apartment building; what is important is the form’s repetition of openings, now activated through the habitation of each room: Lights are on or off; windows open or closed; and curtains drawn or pulled, forming a daily portrait of who is staying at the hotel.
Jiménez and Crowley “needed help with Hotel 101,” and engaged with HKS of Dallas to realize proper arrangements for a functioning hotel. Their scope addressed back-of-house needs, hotel floor plans, room layouts and interiors, and all construction drawings. They also suggested recessing the hotel floors from the street edge of the existing building, a small but successful move that detached the renovated plinth from the upper volume’s new construction. Nunzio deSantis, FAIA, who leads the HKS Hospitality Group, and Mary Alice Palmer of HKS provided constant guidance and expertise. Interior designer Alice Cotrell of Dallas also contributed material specifications and finish selections. The San Antonio office of Datum Engineers, led by Larry Rickels, completed the structural engineering. Their analysis of the existing columns revealed enough compressive strength to support an additional seven floors, though the final design only added three.

Crowley told me that an initial effort to bid the project was unsuccessful, given the high travel cost to mobilize subcontractors to Marfa. Later, in 2014, as oil prices plummeted, the project was able to secure a contractor — the San Antonio office of Jordan Foster — and began construction. Jiménez remarked that construction was “very basic, no different that what you see in hotels built along the highway,” utilizing standard light gauge metal framing techniques in an optimized manner. The most challenging issue was negotiating the “network of structure” provided by the existing concrete work. Steel tube columns were installed on top of the existing concrete columns, and steel beams were laid between, then pan deck and a topping slab, followed by metal framing and joists for the remaining two floors. Demolition work commenced in October 2014, and construction proceeded rapidly, with interiors finishing and the restaurant opening in March 2016, just before SXSW and the Marfa Myths music festival hosted by Ballroom Marfa.5

The open lobby that welcomes visitors upon entry is the project’s most impressive space. Steel or brick partitions define various spaces but leave them open to each other, allowing lines of sight and sonic spillover that give the area a notably city-like sensation. Exterior openings were partially bricked in, a move that eliminated prized views of the main street, but limited light to a workable, comfortable level inside, an optical choice further softened by the sheer curtains. Air supply grilles are located in the floor, leaving the white painted concrete ceiling clean, save for a line of light fixtures, designed by Tim Crowley himself. Most spatial dividers detach from the columns, leaving the existing concrete to make one wonder about the decisions of those who cast them almost a century ago. The puzzling grid offers “a unique footprint and unusual spatial relationship so that, as you move around these awkwardly-placed columns, you see these other things within it as objects,” Palmer says. Sitting in the lobby, gazing up, the mysterious structure grows abstract in its mix of light and shadow, and the reflected soundings of commerce are reminiscent of an indoor pool. Urban, aquatic sounds in the desert — it is actually a calming thing.

Local skills and materials were critical in the realization of this space. Joey Benton, of Silla, a design and fabrication studio in Marfa, designed and fabricated the wood check-in counter and the steel paneled back wall that hides a stair to the basement and an office, while local fabricator Mack White crafted interior doors designed by Benton. Reclaimed dark blue marble from the original building’s facade is now reused in the countertop for the bar, and spotty parapet brick was relaid in partial height walls to divide the bar from the restaurant. Bar Saint George is open for coffee in the morning and cocktails in the evening, complete with its own menu. Nestled behind is LaVenture, a more private restaurant that bears Crowley’s mother’s maiden name, delivers “rustic American-style cuisine with French and Italian flavors,” helmed by chef Allison Jenkins, who was most recently an executive chef at Austin’s now-shuttered LaV establishment. LaVenture is cozy, furnished with large rugs and Bauhaus-inspired furniture, and includes two private rooms for parties that are both large and more intimate.

The Marfa Book Company, at the southern terminus of the lobby, remains Marfa’s beating cultural heart, led by its intensely smart operator, “poet/philosopher” Tim Johnson. The store was founded by Tim Crowley. Johnson worked there as an employee and later acquired the business (they now share ownership). Johnson describes it as a “generative cultural space” — a site of encounter, where one can investigate all of Marfa’s cultural dimensions. In the shop’s original location, before the arrival of Saint George, Johnson hosted lectures, readings, concerts, art installations, yoga sessions, record-listening salons, discussions, movie nights, and more.6 Johnson hopes to bring the same energy to the new space. Merchandise is staged at the check-in counter and in the bar, allowing the diversity of the store’s wares to be showcased throughout the lobby. Johnson approves of the interior openness, as it allows flexibility and a multiplicity of habitations. Similar qualities of responsiveness appear in his modular Vitsoe shelving system and in his desire to “have something that can absorb new ideas and new directions.” Johnson’s store aspires to “establish the possibility of generative cultural activity” — to provide a space where discovery happens. It is no coincidence that this mindset of curiosity also defines the goals of the entire Hotel Saint George effort.

Traveling up from the ground floor, through the interior hallway, and into one’s telescopic room instantly yields an elevated view of the town environs. The ascent was, I realized, my first time in an elevator in Marfa. Unavoidably, each view is new: The eye blazes across previously unforeseen cornices and rooftops as the town splays out before the cliffs of mountains meet the horizon. The rooms themselves — 55 in total, 49 rooms in various configurations and six suites — are generous in size, ceiling height, and furnishings. Behind the bed, a wall of wool conceals a lighting trough and, at headboard level, a strip of mirror ledge with steel distorts the room’s perspective. There are Tokomeo bedside lamps, black and pale wood furniture pieces with an accompanying dark gray Eames chair, and — thankfully — illy coffee. The bathrooms are handsome, with square white tiles, dark grout, and Grohe fixtures. Lying in bed, one can see that the ceiling surface is undisturbed with punctures and serves as a welcome canvas for the wash of indirect illumination or the play of light from the nearby window. Jiménez distinguishes between luxury and opulence, and the rooms shine with the former.

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Top Bar Saint George, open early until late, aims to be the town's ‘living room,’ a distinct possibility now that Padre's has closed.

Right The rooms are spacious, comfortable, and well-appointed. Indirect light emanates from behind the bed, and each window acts as a portal to the town beyond.
Hotel Saint George stays far away from the epithet of “art hotel,” but contemporary art, in casual installations with a strong bias toward local artists, exists in every public space and in every room. Think of it more as living domestically with art instead of staying in a museum with a minibar. The body of work, gathered by Crowley, Johnson, and artist Jeff Elrod, is highly commendable. Works in the lobby and restaurant are by artists who live in Marfa or who spend significant time there; Christopher Wool, Charline von Heyl, Harmony Korine, Jeremy Deprez, Michael Phelan, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet, Ann Marie Nafziger, Nick Terry, Maryam Amiriyani, and Jeff Elrod himself, among others. In the rooms, work is principally by artists represented by the Marfa Book Company: Martha Hughes, Bob Hughes, Sam Schonzeit, Laszlo Thorsen-Nagel, and others. Many of the works were produced with Marfa-based printmakers Arber & Son Editions. Robert Arber originally moved to Marfa to print the last works of Judd and remained, later working with artists like Ilya Kabakov, Richard Prince, and Bruce Naumann. Riffing on an infamous Warhol stunt where he gifted a hotel an artwork for every room, each of the 55 rooms has a unique Mark Flood painting from his “Lace” series, one of his most sought-after bodies of work. In my room there were four artworks, including one in the bathroom.

The project provides about 60 full-time-equivalent jobs, with employees traveling from towns as far away as Presidio and Van Horn to work. It also promises to serve as a reliable point of orientation for curious visitors in a town that is famously hard to navigate. The Saint George signals a paradigm shift in how Marfa offers itself to the world.

I had the pleasure of examining my personal Flood “Lace” piece up close while I toned a shirt mere inches from the canvas (no damage was done). Immediately to the hotel’s north, where Crowley’s Farmstand shade structure used to be, sits its in-progress amenity building, a steel frame shed designed by Jiménez with a north-facing clerestory and structural clay tile infill sourced from the D’Hanis Brick & Tile Company. When finished, the new Farmstand will host a variety of activities, organized in sequential slices that call to mind the original scheme of the hotel on the same site. After a street-side parking lot, the westernmost area remains a covered exterior space where the weekly Farmer’s Market occurs. A cafe with regular hours will be inside, followed by a large indoor/outdoor space with a dance floor — made with long-leaf pine salvaged from the existing roof — for events like weddings. A pool area is next, complete with partitioned cabanas and a bar, capped by a larger parking lot. The full ensemble of amenities won’t be complete until early 2017. Diving underwater to feel the water vibrate as a train roars past is, personally, a highly anticipated sensorial experience.

At a civic scale, the Saint George, along with the Judd Foundation’s Print Building, forms a kind of gateway to Highland Avenue, a view that frames the centered Presidio County Courthouse, built in 1886. Taking cues from Judd’s Architecture Studio, formerly a bank, the first floor of the Saint George uses marble tile, although in a small size that generates texture (the tiles are of a “tumbled” variety, to create even more texture). The upper floors, once envisioned in a Corian-like solid surface material, are now stucco with regular horizontal control joints. Jiménez told me he is tired of the extravagance of architecture today, that he prefers buildings that “recede [and] allow life to unfold.” However respectfully minimal it may be, the hotel, due to its sheer size, is an unavoidable new visual component of Marfa’s cityscape, on the scale of the courthouse or the water tower. It will take some getting used to.

Hotel Saint George was built on a moderate budget in a remote area with limited access to the trades that metropolitan markets take for granted: Ceiling lights wobble in their alignments; water gathers on bathroom floors; scuppers shed water onto the sidewalk. But the sheer audacity it took to will the hotel into existence overrides its physical appearance, and makes the project a welcome success. Combined with its Farmstand building, the effort constitutes the largest new construction project in Marfa since Fort D.A. Russell was built in the early 20th century, nearly 100 years ago. The integrity resides in the main gestures — the treatment of the existing structure and the comfort of the rooms — and, much more importantly, its economic and cultural impact. The project provides about 60 full-time-equivalent jobs, with employees traveling from towns as far away as Presidio and Van Horn to work. It also promises to serve as a reliable point of orientation for curious visitors in a town that is famously hard to navigate. The Saint George signals a paradigm shift in how Marfa offers itself to the world.

Arts-related construction in town has picked up in the past few years, and many initiatives go big or go home. An intriguing drive-in theatre designed by MOS Architects for Ballroom Marfa that was to be located east of town at Vizcaino Park was in the planning stages for years before being scrapped, largely due to a lack of funds. As covered in Texas Architect’s March/April issue, the new Robert Irwin building at the Chinati Foundation opens in July. Tim Crowley, who has served on the Board of Directors for Chinati, previously owned the hospital property and gifted it to Chinati for the project, only to see the structure demolished and strategically reconstructed for Irwin’s design. The decision caused an uproar, especially because the museum is known for its dedication to preservation, but the choice was accepted, as it was guided by Irwin’s artistic vision. In 2014, Oklahoma architect Rand Elliott, FAIA, unveiled the design of a home for himself on the site of one of the officers’ homes remaining from Fort D.A. Russell. The scheme had won a 2013 Studio Award from the Texas Society of Architects, but when Elliott presented it in the local newspaper, he was met with a tidal wave of opposition and criticism from locals, mostly due to a perceived lack of sensitivity to the adjacent artistic site and the neighborhood’s historic past. The project didn’t move forward.

New construction forces further conversation about how the town is to be simultaneously preserved and developed. Marfa has a serious engagement with its built heritage — a key idea for Judd’s architectural endeavors — but it shouldn’t lock in a particular version of the past, forever (the question of what version of the past do you want to pretend still exists never ends well). There are currently no historic districts in the town center (though Fort D.A. Russell has its own), and the current height limit for buildings along Highland Avenue is 90 ft. almost twice the finished elevation of the Saint George, which measures 55 ft tall. As reported by the Big Bend Sentinel, height restrictions are now being considered for Highland Avenue. The Saint George, it seems, initiated new discussions about how Marfa should and could restrict new structures. It is not a question of if development may or may not happen, but rather how it should happen in the most authentic, respectful, and appropriate manner possible.

Beyond zoning issues, the region faces more significant challenges of general infrastructure. Presidio County is one of the poorest and least
populated in the country, with about 8,000 residents in an area twice the size of Delaware. The emptiness makes it one of the darkest night skies in America, a boon to the nearby McDonald Observatory, but city lights signal city revenue. At the same meeting where a downtown height restriction was discussed, the City Council also voted to replace their single aging Animal Control truck, for which repairs were no longer worthwhile. When Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died at Cibolo Creek Ranch, south of Marfa, in February, no county officials were available to travel to the scene, and Presidio County’s Justice of the Peace pronounced Scalia dead over the phone. The ladder of the single fire truck owned by the City only works for two-story structures, leaving the taller buildings vulnerable in an emergency. There is one ambulance, which isn’t a problem until it is: In 2014, a teen tragically died after receiving delayed treatment because the local EMS team was responding to another call. An old poem by Marfa-based artist Sam Schonzeit wondered “What do you think the effect / is on a town when a train / passes through and doesn’t stop?” More importantly, what does it mean to be a town with one ambulance? Despite all of the prestige rightly awarded to it, Marfa is still frontier territory, and its inhabitants take the risk because the reward — the landscape, the light, the sunsets, the solitude, the community — is worth it.

Marfa has always carried an air of vaguely cosmopolitan otherness. Certainly, New Yorkers shuttle back and forth as if it were a foreign land. This trait is even embodied in the name of the place itself, and disagreement about its origin, a Russian version of “Martha,” persists to this day. The more popular story traces the name to a heroine in “The Brothers Karamazov” by Dostoevsky, published in 1880 and supposedly read in Russian and suggested by the wife of an engineer. Another story links it to Marfa Strogoff, a character in the Jules Verne novel “Michael Strogoff,” published 1876. I offer another namesake, chronologically impossible but more spiritually relevant: Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1966 film “Andrei Rublev” imagines episodes in the life of the 15th-century Russian painter of Christian icons. In one vignette, “The Feast,” dated Summer 1408, Rublev is captured after spying on pagans during one of their naked feasts. He is tied up in a tent until a woman named Marfa comes to his rescue. “Is love a sin?” she asks. After Rublev demeans her sinful lifestyle, she shoots back, “No matter; it’s love,” before baring her body, kissing him, and setting him free. Later, Rublev and the monks passively watch from their boats as her partner is captured and she, naked again, swims away to freedom. Marfa is that wild spark of earthly abandon.

Marfa’s popularity grows every year, as does Judd’s legacy. Jiménez reminded me that we “live in a time where the Internet does not take you everywhere. It is just a way of getting fast information very conveniently.” It creates a revolution in which we can know remote places, but we still have to visit in person to experience them fully. He said, “The place still exerts an allure, and a desire to go.” The art and landscape pilgrims of our new age will continue to arrive in droves to this beautiful retreat, and, thankfully, the Hotel Saint George will be there to point the way.

Finally, Saint George minds the details. Inscribed on my bathroom’s soap dispenser was a quote from Friedrich Schiller, an 18th-century early Modern German thinker: “Dare to err and to dream,” an appropriately Marfan suggestion. The apparatus failed to finish the quote, though, which continues: “Deep meaning often lies in childish play.” Marfa still holds countless surprises. It is up to us to find them.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA, is an architectural designer at Baldridge Architects in Austin.
Visitors interact with the new marble tile facade of the hotel.
This conceptual sketch shows the 8-block-long cap park that could be placed on top of I-45 and I-69 on the eastern edge of downtown, if donors can be found to sponsor it.
Freeway of Love

THE NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT HAS BEEN IN THE WORKS SINCE THE LATE 1990S, AND MAY REMAIN ON THE DRAWING BOARD FOR SOME TIME TO COME. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PLAN, HOWEVER, SHOW THAT TxDOT IS OPENING UP TO STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPROVED PUBLIC SPACES COULD BE THE RESULT.

by Ben Koush
Houston, like most modern American cities, is almost completely dependent on cars as transportation. Because of the city's flat geography, interrupted only occasionally by its meandering system of bayous that have been drafted into service by the Harris County Flood Control District as unruly storm sewers, its massive freeway network takes on a de facto role as an urban place-maker through its spread and sheer bulk. Rising and falling, curving and straightening, all the while with roaring traffic ebbing and flowing, the freeways seem almost like a natural system. It is thus with no small amount of trepidation that Houstonians await news of the newest massive freeway construction projects, whose disruptive effects on daily life are akin to those of destructive hurricanes blowing in periodically from the Gulf. Coming on the heels of the multi-billion-dollar Katy Freeway widening, completed in 2008, and the Northwest Freeway widening still under construction, TxDOT's $6.5 billion North Houston Highway Improvement Project includes the section of Interstate 45 from Beltway 8 to downtown and the baby loop surrounding downtown where I-45, I-10, and I-69 (the "freeway of love," US 59's new designation as of March 2015) join each other — and it promises to be a doozy.

Although formal studies for this project have been going on since the late 1990s, it is now reaching a critical phase where alignments have been more or less decided, funding is going to be secured, and the first right-of-way purchases are going to be made. The 24-mile-long plan is broken into three segments. Beginning from Beltway 8, Segment 1 is the nine-mile stretch to the North Loop. Segment 2 is the three-mile section from the North Loop to I-10. And Segment 3 is the 12-mile downtown loop system. Segments 2 and 3 are consistently included in the top 10 of the most congested roadways in Texas, and none of the segments has been repaired or upgraded in decades. All this points to a massive reconstruction.

According to TxDOT's published plans, Segment 1, which will be the last section completed, will be built according to design standards similar to the Katy and Northwest Freeways — that is to say, super-wide at 18 lanes. (Last year, in the Houston Chronicle, a researcher from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute said that if there's any freeway wider than the Katy, he hasn't heard of it.)

Segments 2 and 3 are going to be more interesting. When a group of concerned residents in the neighborhoods just north of downtown heard about the impending project, they formed the I-45 Coalition in 1998 to present their concerns to TxDOT, which at the time was proposing the same design standards as Segment 1 for Segment 2, essentially doubling its width through the area. With the help of elected officials, they worked with TxDOT to reconsider design options. The current plan reflects this process and proposes not to increase the right-of-way in most of this segment. The big feature of this section will be at the choke point between Hollywood Cemetery and Houston Avenue at North Main Street, where the freeway will be undercut with cantilevered feeder roads above it. This section will also be designed so that it could be capped eventually to create new green space.

Section 3, however, is where TxDOT really stepped out of their comfort zone. With right-of-way issues more constraining than in segments 1 and 2, multiple design options were studied. Two of the more radical ones included making the entire loop a one-way artery like a gigantic Parisian traffic circle, and boring bypass tunnels deep under downtown. This last plan alarmed a major stakeholder, the Houston Downtown Management District — a semi-public planning agency that works with its affiliates Central Houston and the Downtown Redevelopment Authority to promote downtown and encourage further investment in the downtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone. They believed (perhaps rightly, after Boston's messy
Facing Another view of the proposed freeway capping greenspace with Minute Maid Park in the background.

This page The hard to navigate tangle of freeways has been choking downtown since it was first constructed. The diagrams at left show the existing green space and traffic connections.
**Top right** The design and alignment of the existing freeway loop around downtown disregards Buffalo Bayou and several parks in its immediate vicinity.

**Below right** The currently approved scheme addresses these green spaces as amenities rather than obstacles to avoid.

**Facing from left to right** The existing layout, the proposed merging of I-45 with I-69 on the east side of downtown, the fleshed out new scheme showing traffic connections and public greenspace.
Big Dig: that tunnels created another problem, not the solution to traffic woes. Ever the marketers, they also believed that this project should be considered not just on its merits as an improvement to infrastructure but also for its image-making possibilities.

The loop, depending on whether you see it encircling or choking downtown, was a symbol of the old way of thinking: the engineering logic that cared more about traffic counts than the delicate urban tissue that was wrecked when they forced the first freeways through American cities during the postwar era. Although the Downtown District acknowledged that TxDOT would not remove the freeways completely, they believed the agency could be massaged into a more sensitive configuration that would still move cars while appearing less obtrusive, helping stitch together neighborhoods, and even allowing for new public green space. They conducted their own study sessions with other less well-financed stakeholders, including the Greater Northside Management District and the East Downtown Management District and their consultant landscape architecture firm, SWA Group, to devise an alternate scheme for TxDOT to review.

The big move of this scheme, which has been adopted officially as of last year, proposes to run both I-45 and I-69 in a deep trench along the rear side of the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB). By relocating I-45, the obnoxious Pierce Elevated could be decommissioned and downtown could again reconnect with midtown as it did before the freeways. While at first it seems like a poke in the eye to the East End, the plan makes sense because there was already a series of physical barriers that were not going away on the eastern edge of downtown, including the Toyota Center, the GRB (which currently has plans to expand), and Minute Maid Park. The East End’s consolation prize, however, isn’t too bad. The eight-block-long section of trenched freeway between Lamar Street and Congress Street is slated to be topped with a park (once a private donor can be found) à la Dallas’ popular Klyde Warren Park, which caps three blocks of the Wood- all Rodgers Freeway.

While there have been some plans floated around to convert the decommissioned section of the Pierce Elevated into Houston’s version of the Highline, most people I spoke with didn’t think that was going to happen, simply because TxDOT needs the money it could get from selling that right of way to private developers. Some still hold out hope that at least some of the land or maybe even a small section of the elevated roadway could be made into a public green space. The recently completed Buffalo Bayou Park will also benefit a little, due to the smaller bridges that will be rebuilt over the waterway as on and off ramps for the new freeway system.

On the north side, the freeway will be straightened in two sections. The first is where the freeway currently wraps around the Clayton Homes housing project (which will get axed, in the current scheme), and the second is where it dips in and slices the University of Houston Downtown campus in two. What is bad news for Clayton Homes is good news for James Butle Park, currently isolated and unused, which will be able to increase in size, and UH Downtown will be able to stitch its bifurcated campus back together.

Despite all the work it has taken to get to this point, unknowns still abound. There are plans for the Hardy Toll Road to be extended to downtown, but it is administered separately by the Harris County Toll Road Authority and only appears as dashed lines on TxDOT’s latest published plans. All the lovely park schemes are just that until they get private funding, TxDOT is not the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, and the city doesn’t seem to have the wherewithal to fund such projects itself. There are numerous issues with convoluted and discontinuous city streets just to the east and north of downtown that should be addressed but so far haven’t been included in a holistic examination of all the effects the new plan will have on adjacent areas. Induced demand has brought traffic to a standstill on the new Katy Freeway, but TxDOT suggests no options other than to build bigger freeways. And finally, the kicker: TxDOT doesn’t actually have the money to build the entire project and is not currently sure when or if the money will become available.

All in all, while TxDOT’s is not as radical a proposal as, say, what happened in Portland, Oregon, where money for new freeways was instead used to build its first light rail lines in the early 1980s, for Houston it is a big step in the right direction. It is to be hoped that new freeway projects from here on out will continue to incorporate stakeholders’ considerations into master plans that are as sensitive and nuanced in their way as this one has slowly but surely become.

Ben Koush is an architect and writer based in Houston.
By Antonio Petrò

Alliance between architecture and nature, and transit in growing San Antonio, that seeks an

Petrò, has developed a proposal for public space planning led by assistant professor Antonio

College of Architecture, Construction, and

Expaner Lab, a „Think/Do-Tank” at the UTSA

a Line in the Sky

1,000 Parks and
Joseph Paxton's capital, city reframed the discourse on the anthropocene as an event to be celebrated, rather than lamented or feared. Eco-modernists welcome the "new epoch as a sign of man's ability to transform and control nature. They see it as evidence neither of global capitalism's essential fault nor of humankind's short-sightedness and rapacity; instead, it arrives as an opportunity for humans finally to come into their own." From the Greek, anthropo- (human), and -cene (new), the anthropocene emerged as a proposal for a new geological epoch by Paul Crutzen. In an article published in 2002, Crutzen outlined a planetary-wide system of causes and effects, explaining how changes to the planet have become so prominent that humans are now described not only as geographical agents, but also as geological ones. Within the framework of human territoriality, Robert David Sack argues, geography is everywhere and "we humans are geographic beings transforming the earth, and that transformed world affects who we are."

This not only outlines global change, or that the human condition is an urban condition. In fact, as some have argued, the world itself is a human construction rather than an a priori condition. Architecture straddles the intersection of these geographies, and at this trajectory it makes nature a fundamentally architectural issue. Dietmar Steiner alludes to the relationship between architecture and nature by saying, "Sometimes it requires architectural interventions in nature, in order to get closer to it."

New, hybrid conditions demand new sensory approaches to nearly every aspect of our lives. To shape our environment, it is not simply about adapting to new ways of life or "thinking sustainably," "There is something deeply troubling in many ecological demands suddenly to restrict ourselves and try to leave no more footprints on a planet we have nevertheless already modified through and through," as Bruno Latour puts it. What's troubling is not the level of restrictions that are demanded, or how we think we are solving systemic issues by making better machines. It's that we continue to rely on "the management discourses of environmental science and technology, seeing environment as an object that has the possibility to create alternative trajectories for architectural scholarship and"
experimentation that could build unprecedented relations with eco-criticism, science-technology studies, and environmental history.  

In the Expander Lab, a “think/do-tank” in The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) College of Architecture, Construction and Planning, we are arguing for a fundamental ontological shift in the relationship to the environment without reducing the urban to a totality without an “outside.” Our research is concerned with the geographic, a design and research paradigm to foreground the politics of isolationism in the urban-ecological question. In “The Politics of Nature,” Latour claims that “nature is not a particular sphere of reality but the result of such a political division.” In the lab, we explore strategies and tactics that do not just question the limits of the politics of divisions of urban and suburban spatiality, but also critique urbanisms that are too focused on the city and ecologism that is too concerned with “nature.”

How do we respond to these spatial, if not ontological, problems? How do they unfold, and what are the political forms their spatial organization produces? What are the implications for the agency of architecture? Can architects venture into an era in which we show political commitment to become protagonists of a new alliance between architecture and nature?

By 2040, San Antonio’s population will have increased by more than one million people. As a result, existing infrastructure, public transit, and ecological systems will be challenged. Territorial partitioning and compartmentalization have contributed not only to an increased spatialization and division of the urban fabric, but to a political economy, at both macro and micro levels, in which “interpreting these effects depends once again on one’s view of capitalism.” More pragmatically speaking, ongoing urbanizations are begging for refreshed morphological models.

It is no secret that San Antonio is struggling with inactive systems being unavailable to the public; more importantly, however, its cultural markers are not blending with the fabric. Furthermore, roads need repair and the city’s mass transit and public park systems need capital improvement. The larger systemic issues reach far beyond the obvious. Alexander D’Hooghe, MIT professor and director of the Center for Advanced Urbanism, investigates how infrastructure-related dissatisfaction is primarily rooted in a sense of cultural impoverishment. He argues that culture not only collectively reflects shared values; it also “requires, at its most basic level, a common space for these expressions to be articulated and received.”

Cities across the nation — New York, Chicago, Boston — have already re-conceptualized the needs of new demographic movements from the periphery into the center. Under the umbrella of landscape urbanism, newly designed streets, parks, and public spaces incorporate artifacts of the American industrial landscape, unused and underutilized interstitial spaces, and infrastructure.

At 8.6 miles long, Broadway Avenue in San Antonio is such an a priori condition. Stretching from the airport to downtown, Broadway is centerless...
These renderings and model shots depict the proposed skybus transit system as it passes several San Antonio landmarks along its path between the airport and Travis Park. 1,000 parks would fill-out unused interstitial spaces that Expander Lab mapped out along Broadway. The lab is made up of Dr. Antonio Petrow and UTSA students Jose Antonio Herrera, Michelle Montiel, Aaron Stone, Mariano Garcia, and Jessica Gameros.
and fragmented, an agglomeration of micro-communities, residential areas, businesses, and parking lots. The experience of the avenue only feels urban through the windshield of a car. As a pedestrian — if someone would dare to walk, let alone cycle — it feels suburban, because there is hardly any pedestrian experience to be had along the avenue. Nearly 50 percent of its urban landscape is flanked by parking space. In fact, nearly all spaces along Broadway are tied to businesses, and almost no public spaces exist for people to mingle or gather as citizens without being consumers. As a result, the architecture is incoherent, with an urban facade that reminds one of a commercial corridor rather than a great avenue in America’s seventh-largest city. Despite developments like the historic Pearl Brewery district, the architecture leaves no room for imagination, supporting the argument that Broadway is an unresolved urban space. One could take this idea further and argue that Broadway is an artifact of the suburban American consumer landscape.

“1,000 Parks and a Line in the Sky” proposes a linear park system of 1,000 parks and a skybus public transit system that connects the San Antonio Airport to Travis Park. The project renders Broadway Avenue as micro-geography. Within the framework of San Antonio, a polycentric field of geographic objects and events — the downtown tourist core, San Antonio Museum of Art, Pearl Brewery, Alamo Heights — Broadway, a centerless line, has the potential to articulate a more nuanced awareness of sharing a common geography, a common web of individual and shared memories, and, ultimately, a common destiny within the city.

Ranging from micro to macro, 1,000 potential frameworks for parks we propose are unused interstitial spaces we mapped along Broadway. The idea is to avail citizens of new geographic frameworks for activating larger systems along the thoroughfare. To amplify the contestation between architectural and geographical scales, parks, as well as the skybus, are experienced as sequences of encounters and events, as one moves from place to place. The 1,000 parks stretch from the airport — the moment of arrival or, as a matter of fact, departure — to downtown, expanding and contracting horizontally and vertically to completely obliterate any set boundaries of urban perceptions, infrastructures, and transportation.

Rather than simply the context within which architecture performs on Broadway, the environment is actually defined by architecture. Like architecture, it has been and continues to be manifested in various incarnations with multiple meanings and implications. Within this framework the linear park system did not conceptualize the environment as “natural,” requiring being preserved or protected, or systemic, needing to be managed and maintained, but as a geographic non-naturalistic conception of the environment. The material presence and performance of “1,000 Parks and a Line in the Sky” draws from its familiarity that is strategically suspended somewhere between nostalgia and identity, and abstraction. These various environments are revealed at all of the scales at which architecture operates, such as a room, a building, a facade, a city, and an infrastructure. We are not looking at them as epistemological provocations or discrete phenomena to speculate about the city of the future, but how they come together.

The way we engaged with the contemporary city not only shortened the distance between innovation in design research and the way we as designers impact the world, but it also instigated new political and social realities, and recovered regional aesthetics that derived a new legitimacy from the (causal) relationships between micro-geographies, infrastructure, ecologies, and demographic flows that are crucial in developing new meanings of new (sub)-urban geographies that greatly affect Broadway Avenue, and San Antonio as a region. This not only postulated a new level of significance for the readability of the urban fabric, but it allowed for a critical look into how contemporary urban theory unfolds in questions immanent in San Antonio. As a matter of fact, some of our findings and methodologies gave us a better sense of how, currently, the agency of architecture plagues architects, planners, and designers on a regular basis.

Macro-scale community engagement — lectures, symposia, round-table discussions, and the exhibition of our 50-ft-long model — were our means to keep an open dialogue in the design process, but we also aimed to expand and refine our own methods of public engagement to embrace San Antonio’s rich cultural heritage in the design of the future of one of San Antonio’s main avenues. Our reflections on history and experiences in the present, along with the involvement of a vast array of people from the public and private sectors — decision-makers, stakeholders, consultants, specialists, and citizens — all contributed to active participation and the shaping of new social and cultural spaces, perhaps even new identities, as a reflection of the larger cultural fabric of San Antonio.

The way we engaged with (sub)-urban natures or anthropocentric trajectories, both as an investigation and as a geographically infused practice, illuminated deeper conflicts between society and nature. We replaced them, and regarded the contested relationship as an opportunity to reformulate spatial systems as metaphors for epistemology and a new rupture of geographic relations upon which, arguably, the totality of urbanism rests today.

Antonio Petrov is a professor at the UTSA College of Architecture, Construction, and Planning.

4 Ibid.

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM AIA HOUSTON

Design Awards
The AIA Houston Design Awards recognize design excellence in architecture, residential architecture, interior architecture, restoration/renovation, and urban design.

Award Presentation: August 25, 6 PM at TDECU Stadium. Free and open to the public.
Exhibit Open: September 16–December 16

Home Tour
Open to the public, the AIA Houston Home Tour showcases the finest residential architecture in the Houston area. Houses are all designed by licensed architects and chosen to showcase a variety of design styles demonstrating that excellence in design is not limited by size, style, or dollars.

October 29–30

Gingerbread Build Off
Architects, engineers, contractors, students, and bakers push the limits of design and food to create masterpieces made entirely of gingerbread and other edible components.

December 10

Texas Student Biennial
This year's biennial explores sequences in student work. Sequence in design has the capacity to chronicle the continuity of a process, describe the evolution of a contextual setting, convey the intention of space or frame a possible scenario.

Exhibit Open: September 16–December 16

VISIT AIAHOUSTON.ORG TO FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ALL OF OUR EVENTS.
Performing Arts

On January 16, 1770, the 13-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart performed a concert at what is now called the Teatro Bibiena in Mantua, Italy. At that time, the theater was only a year old, having just been completed in an early Rococo style and with a bell-shaped floor plan by the architect Antonio Galli Bibiena. Not long after the concert, which was a resounding success, Leopold — little Wolfgang’s father — wrote a letter to his wife, which included the following description of the theater on that night:

I wish you could have seen the place where the concert was held, namely, what’s called the Teatrino della Academia Filarmonica. Never in my whole life have I seen anything more beautiful of its kind; and as I hope that you are assiduously keeping all my letters, I shall describe it to you in due course. It’s not a theater but a hall with boxes, like an opera house; where the stage should be there is a raised section for the orchestra, and behind the orchestra is another gallery, like boxes, for the audience. The crowd of people — the shouting, clapping, noise, and the bravos upon bravos — in short, the general shouting and the admiration shown by the listeners is something I can’t begin to describe to you.

Well, clearly, the architecture of a performing arts space becomes part of the performance. The two projects in this portfolio section — one at UT Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, the other at the Greenhill School in Addison — show that a superlative performance hall requires more than good acoustics and clear sightlines. The juxtaposition of audience and performers, the arrival and procession into the hall, the way the building interacts with its surroundings all factor into the experience and elevate the drama of human life itself.
Orchestra, Choir, Band, Mariachi

Page’s design for the new Performing Arts Complex at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg responds playfully to the campus’ 1970s architectural vocabulary while opening up to the wider community and representing the region’s predominately Hispanic culture.

by Aaron Seward

The recent consolidation of the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) and University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) in Edinburg to form The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) didn’t go off without its share of controversy. Most of it, however, centered on the naming of a new mascot. Supporters of UTPA, the larger of the two legacy schools, were adamant about keeping their beloved Bucky the Bronc; whereas proponents of UTB, formerly proud home of the Ocelots, favored a clean slate for the merged academic institution. In the end, the UT System Board of Regents approved a new mascot, the Vaqueros, which perhaps better signifies the region’s predominately Hispanic culture, but was nonetheless decried as culturally insensitive, racist, and sexist. Well, this just goes to show how seriously people in Texas take sports. It also serves as an illuminating bit of context for an architectural project that does a much better, if quieter, job of bringing the two schools together while connecting them to their community and placing them within the global cultural discussion: the UTRGV Performing Arts Complex (PAC), designed by Page.
Facing The glass clad lobby creates an open, welcome entry to the PAC, serving as a gateway to the campus and expressing its role as an amenity to the wider community.

This page clockwise The large cutouts in the heavy masonry walls serve to bring daylight into the circulation spaces. Each of the four main practice rooms is acoustically tuned for the type of music performed there. Page incorporated patches of color into the building and took a playful approach to the window penetrations. The music of Mozart was a guiding inspiration of the architecture.
Sited on Edinburg’s University Drive at the southeast corner of the former UTPA campus, the PAC comprises a 1,000-seat performance hall; rehearsal rooms for orchestra, choir, band, and mariachi, each with its own acoustical treatment; a large, glass-enclosed lobby that can be used for receptions and other events; and — in two renovated existing buildings — smaller practice rooms, classrooms, and offices for staff and faculty. In addition to providing facilities for the UTRGV music program, the PAC is home to the Valley Symphony Orchestra & Chorale and hosts traveling performance groups. Far more than serving the university, the PAC is a community resource whose state-of-the-art performance hall can handle anything from a chamber ensemble to a Broadway show. The $42.7 million project — which was pushed through by passionate supporters during an era of belt-tightening for the UT system, before the shale boom filled its coffers with tax dollars, when most of what was approved were science, technology, math, and engineering projects — is also a happy sign that, in the Valley, the arts matter.

The PAC replaces an older performing arts facility that occupied the same site, which was designed by now-deceased Houston architect Kenneth Bentsen. Bentsen, who was born in Mission, also master-planned the UTPA campus and designed nearly 20 of its buildings. An admirer of Louis Kahn’s work in South Asia — the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and the National Assembly of Bangladesh in Dhaka — Bentsen established a vocabulary of heavy masonry walls with large geometric cutouts that performs well in the subtropical climate. His performance hall was well liked, but it had its problems — including chronic flooding and a very steep seating rake — and so the decision was made to replace it outright.

Page’s building takes its cues from Bentsen’s Kahn-inspired vocabulary, but gives it a playful twist with a less-regimented use of large cutouts and the introduction of color. The mariachi practice studio, for example, is entirely clad in glazed red brick, a real departure from the light brown brick that predominates on campus. It’s also a more open building than was Bentsen’s. The aforementioned glass-enclosed lobby is a welcoming gesture to the community and functions as a gateway to the campus. Inside, the architects used the cutouts as clerestories to bring daylight into the circulation areas. Page worked with New York-based acoustical consultant Jaffe Holden and theatrical consultant Schuler Shook to design the performance hall itself, whose stage features wings that reach out to embrace the audience for mariachi and ballet folkórico performances. These wings can also be used as premium seating for orchestral recitals. An acoustical system of curtains concealed behind wooden screens in the ceiling allows the hall to be tuned specifically to whatever is happening on stage.

When the PAC opened for its grand premier in April 2015, the program included everything from mariachi and ballet folkórico to symphony and guitar ensemble. Many of the performances featured UTPA and UTB students — Broncos and Ocelots — on stage together for the first time. It was a fitting moment of unity, made possible by the universal languages of music and architecture.

Aaron Seward is editor of Texas Architect.
A Gentle Cascade

With the Greenhill School’s Marshall Family Performing Arts Center, Weiss/Manfredi provides a well-crafted and flexible venue that responds sensitively to its natural and architectural context.

by Ron Stelmarski, AIA

“Greenhill is not buildings. It’s people.”

This was a sign posted by Greenhill School students after a fire in 1987 destroyed their 1974 Fulton Upper School building. It was a declaration of optimism and an understanding of the values of the school.

Fast forward almost three decades and there is a new declaration of the spirit of Greenhill, a building fundamentally about the expression of its people: the Marshall Family Performing Arts Center, which officially opened in February 2016. Designed by New York-based practice Weiss/Manfredi with Page as architect of record, the 65,000-sf facility brings together under one roof for the first time the school’s well-recognized theater, music, dance, and film programs.

Accommodating all of these space-types in one structure meant a lot of upfront planning that included site selection, site organization, and program adjacencies. Passing over what may have seemed like an obvious choice along a street at the campus periphery, the design team advocated for placing the building directly east of the main academic core. The purpose of this site choice, in the words of firm co-founder Marion Weiss, was connecting the center “to the carefully tuned sequence of open spaces on campus, and making the arts central to campus life.”

Integrating buildings with their environment is a major design tenet of Weiss/Manfredi, and the prevailing figure-field relationship of building to open space on campus is dissolved. The Arts Center is instead formed by a coil of program that melds inside and outside space using framed views and natural light, paradoxically feeling very connected to nature even though the building has little surrounding planting. The resultant spiraling form is a clever strategy that mitigates the visual mass of the fly loft while bringing the building into scale with the children and adjacent...
Facing  Varied seat colors and folded wood panels create an intimate environment in the main performance hall.

This page  The two-story lobby offers an ever-changing range of views and activities throughout the day.
Above Early design sketches describe the intention of nestling the building into the campus landscape.

Below Building form and landscape mounds blend together as the building rises.

campus buildings. Spatial overlap and sectional richness are emphasized at the building approach as the topography of the site is carried into the lobby in a gentle cascade of floor trays.

A clear site strategy organizes the big box performance spaces and back of house to the east and all spaces with glazing to the west. The lobby stretches across the entire west face and acts as a collector rather than a single, formal entrance; one entry has direct visual and physical connection to the campus and the others greet the public from the north parking lot or directly from the plaza, thereby emphasizing the social nature of the forecourt. Moving into the building the experience is welcoming, exhilarating, and equally sophisticated in the manipulation of light and space. A sense of discovery and anticipation builds when walking through the episodic sequence of spaces. The project literally breaks the box using folded walls and roof planes, allowing the energy of students to find its way into the form of the architecture. In fact, performances can happen anywhere; outdoor plazas, generous stair landings, and wide passageways accommodate impromptu events. Even the two-story lobby becomes a figurative stage viewed from the outside with its piano-key frit pattern on the glass curtain wall.

Those who pay close attention will be rewarded by the level of craft and tactility Weiss/Manfredi brought to the project. “A subtext of the building is the combination of very humble materials with precious materials,” says firm co-founder Michael Manfredi. This idea is immediately apparent as the handcrafted brick envelope gives way to entry doors with custom pulls and polished concrete floors with smooth-face concrete masonry units at the interior. The Texas sun is embraced to maximum effect as the play of light and shadow against the neutral, almost all-white spaces creates an ever-changing, delicate pattern in the main lobby. The designers have given a unique, surprising material identity to each of the performance spaces. The main theater is a 600-seat venue wrapped throughout in cherry wood and warm tones, giving the space an intimate feeling, “like you are inside a violin,” as Manfredi puts it. The black box is
not the usual color black, but instead midnight blue, painted on an alternating sequence of plywood and acoustic wood panels, creating the appearance of varying shades. A wire grid above provides safety to students while they manipulate the theater’s lighting. The dance space explodes with views and light through wall-to-wall glazing at the north and south ends of the room. This volume is lifted to the second floor and forms a covered entry plaza below, literally elevating dance to provide a living billboard of activity.

For all the marked qualities of the building, one less visible hallmark of the design is the flexibility throughout. This is an important planning challenge for a building of this type. Michael Orman, the performing arts building coordinator at Greenhill, was highly involved in the planning process. The building needed to serve many functions, not the least of which was “access by the students throughout so it would be used as a learning tool,” said Orman. The footprint is compact, but the performance spaces are kept just far enough apart to allow simultaneous use without any interference with one another. Other examples include a set of double doors that connect the black box theater to the lobby for special events and a 1:1 sizing of the dance rehearsal area with the size of the main stage proscenium.

The building unquestionably belongs to the legacy of great architecture on the Greenhill campus without repeating the formal tropes of the originals. Instead, celebration of the arts and community seamlessly merge, showing how design brings value through creative interpretations of placemaking to the students of Greenhill.

Ron Stelmarski, AIA, is design director for Texas practice at Perkins+Will.
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He was 10 when he got his first job, delivering newspapers on a route patrolled by cranky Dobermans. With his first earnings he bought a pair of Nike running shoes, an investment in his own survival.

In 2014, though he had never entered a political contest before, Roberto Treviño, AIA, found himself in something of a familiar position. Vying to fill an open seat on the San Antonio city council, he and two other finalists took their turns interviewing with council members. Twenty-five years earlier, he'd been a freshman in Texas Tech University's architecture program, in a lecture hall where a professor explained the cutthroat business. "Look to your left and right," the professor said. "If you're still enrolled in four years, odds are neither of the folks beside you will be."

"I remember thinking, 'These poor guys, they're probably not going to be here,'" Treviño recalls. His assuredness back then wasn't misplaced — he graduated from the program in 1995 — nor was it two decades later in the council chambers. After unanimously choosing Treviño, the council further tested his mettle by asking him to join them that night. "We started off right away," he says. "It's been a whirlwind."

Nine months and one election later, Treviño has already left his mark on the nation's seventh-largest city, using design to improve the lives of residents and reminding fellow officials what a difference the right architect can make in city construction. And, while his confidence propelled him to these daunting new positions, it's a sense of responsibility — to his fellow citizens and to his fellow architects — that drives his work.

Treviño grew up in McAllen, raised with his brother by a single mom who worked as a secretary. He was 10 when he got his first job, delivering newspapers on a route patrolled by cranky Dobermans. With his first earnings he bought a pair of Nike running shoes, an investment in his own survival.

Citizen Architect

SAN ANTONIO CITY COUNCILMAN ROBERTO TREVIÑO, AIA, SEES PARALLELS IN THE ROLES OF THE ARCHITECT AND POLITICIAN: BOTH CALLINGS REQUIRE UNDERSTANDING HOW PEOPLE LIVE.

by Patrick Michels
Dobermans. With his first earnings he bought a pair of Nike running shoes, an investment in his own survival. Treviño says his modest upbringing taught him early that if he wanted something, he’d have to get it. While college classmates in Lubbock blew fortunes on basswood models and ornate bindings, he salvaged shoe boxes for chipboard and got creative with photocopiernent.

“I found it almost poetic, too, knowing that when you grow up with limited means and you can’t do much, you now are the guy who holds the key for people who have the means to do things that they love,” he says. “Knowing how to build stuff, knowing how to create things, knowing why they’re made — is very empowering.”

After starting his own practice in San Antonio, Treviño revisited the ideals that first drew him to the job. On a whim, he walked into then-city councilwoman (now mayor) Ivy Taylor’s office, volunteered to help, and got a spot on the city’s building code appeals board. That was followed by places on the Airport Advisory Commission and the Bexar County Appraisal District Board. He’s heard he’s only the second architect on the city council, but to Treviño, it’s a comfortable fit.

“I feel very much like I belong here,” he says. “Architects have a huge responsibility in understanding how people live and what that environment is like for people, so I do think there’s a translation to public service.”

It’s a point he made early in his tenure on the council, when he saw the plans for a new control tower at Stinson Municipal Airport on the city’s south side. Directed, and mostly funded, by the Texas Department of Transportation, original plans called for a tower he says “looked like it was made out of highway parts.” Instead, working with the San Antonio chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Treviño put the tower plans to a competition. “I got with my colleagues and was like, ‘Let’s go out and prove the value of an architect,’” he says. “The local AIA chapter’s been really incredible in helping me push that agenda.” The winning entry, from San Antonio architects Brantley Hightower, AIA; Jay Louden, AIA; and Rebekah Perez, Assoc. AIA, evokes Doberman designs from the city’s early aviation history and, Treviño says, is a distinctive landmark for the surrounding neighborhood.

Treviño repeated the process when the council was on the verge of buying new River Walk barges based on a design the city has used for decades. Again, Treviño saw an opportunity and organized another San Antonio AIA-supported contest. The winning boat design, by Metalab from Houston, features colorful railings resembling papel picado — evoking San Antonio’s annual Fiesta — and an open, modular floor fit for a tourist ferry or a maritime yoga class. Treviño says the exercise demonstrated that opening up the city’s design challenges can yield better results than anyone at City Hall could imagine.

“If you provide the platform or the setting for people to innovate or come up with great ideas, you actually get more out of it,” he says. “In fact, it’s kind of arrogant to think that the city could think of everything for you.”

Now he’s putting together another competition around accessibility at San Antonio’s City Hall, which dates to 1881 and is only wheelchair accessible via a narrow basement entrance. He says, “This is my challenge to architects: Come solve our civil rights issue at City Hall.”

As a child in McAllen, Treviño says, he would have welcomed someone with authority inviting his contribution, making the civic conversation a little more accessible. “The most important thing I can think about is making people feel like they’re a part of this,” he says. “It’s all about community; it’s all about embracing and loving the community that you’re a part of.”

Patrick Michels is a writer based in Austin.
AIA Lubbock Design Awards

AIA Lubbock's bi-annual Design Awards recognize outstanding architectural design by chapter members. The winning projects for 2015 were selected by jurors James R. Rhotenberry, Jr., AIA, Mark Wellen, FAIA, Timothy J. McClure, AIA, and Andy Chandler, AIA, all of Rhotenberry Wellen Architects in Midland. Award recipients were honored at a banquet held on November 13.

Honor Awards
1 Bacon Heights Baptist Church Additions and Renovations
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
2 Rawls Clubhouse and Team Facility, Texas Tech University
   JDMA Architects
3 Rhodes Perrin Field House Additions and Renovations, Lubbock Christian University
   SLS Partnership

Honorable Mention Awards
Surgical Center/Clinic and Day Spa for Team COSMO
   SLS Partnership
American National Bank
   SLS Partnership
Lone Star State Bank
   MWM Architects

Citation Awards
Texas Department of Public Safety Regional Headquarters
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Lyntegar Electric Cooperative
   SLS Partnership
Bayer Museum of Agriculture
   MWM Architects
Lubbock ISD Jayne Ann Miller Elementary School
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
XCOR Aerospace New R&D Center
   SLS Partnership

Merit Awards
Mid-Cities Community Church Children's Addition
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Seminole ISD Performing Arts and Fine Arts Addition
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Seagraves ISD New Pre-K–5 Elementary School
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Plainview High School Additions and Renovations
   Chapman Harvey Architects
Plains ISD Competition GYM
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Plains Capital Park at Lowrey Field
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper
Covenant Health System
   Parkhill, Smith & Cooper

Recognition
HOW RESILIENT IS NORTH TEXAS?

Resilience is a concept that is grabbing attention, especially with those who shape the world around us. The increasingly severe weather—flooding, droughts, and other natural disasters—teamed with power outages, threats of terrorism, and disease outbreaks, all increase the need for systems that can respond to these shocks and stresses.

The AIA Dallas Committee on the Environment (COTE), USGBC Texas Chapter, and CSI Dallas have joined forces to present the 2016 North Texas Sustainable Showcase, featuring a line-up of nationally known speakers and local experts focusing on the importance of Resilience.

Those who attend will come away with a firm understanding about how resilience will affect our region, and how to craft an optimistic approach to include it.

SPEAKERS

Mary Ann Lazarus, FAIA, will be the initial keynote speaker. A founder of the sustainable design initiative at HOK, she will introduce, define and expand the concept of resilience for the crowd. Lazarus recently led the team that created the Resilience Pilot Credits for the LEED systems.

Dr. Z Smith of Eskew, Dumez and Ripple in New Orleans, will provide the lunch keynote remarks. He will present some of EDR’s excellent work as case studies of designing for resilience.

Jim Newman of Linnean Solutions in Boston, will lead an interactive exercise to bring home an understanding of resilience in each person’s community and practice.

All three speakers will gather for a panel discussion, moderated by Betsy del Monte, FAIA, about the implications for design professionals working on the built environment. Does resilience change anything? Does it change everything?

The day will also include a discussion of the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities program with Theresa O’Donnell, Dallas’ Chief Resilient Officer, and Nicole Ferrini, Chief Resilience Officer for El Paso.

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Contractor A.GRUPPO Architects
Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: SW Structural Engineers; Pat Caballero PE; SIPS CONSULTANT: GeoFaZe; HVAC CONSULTANT: Positive Energy/ Eco Science Resources CONCRETE: Decor-Crete; STUCCO: SuperCarpenters; METAL FABRICATION: La Bestia Metal Shop; ROOFING: AmeriWest; LUMBER: BMC West; CARPENTRY/FRAMING: Super Carpenters; INSULATION: Elite Spray Foam Insulation; DRYWALL: Summit Drywall; GUTTERS: AT Gutter; DOORS/WINDOWS: BMC West; PCCS: Regal Plastics; TILE: Interceramic (Tile with Style); SIPS: GeoFaZe; HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC): Architectural Windows and Doors

Resources POLISHED CONCRETE FLOOR FINISHING: Rock Solid USA; UNIT MASONRY: Acme – Elgin Butler Glazed Brick (RAS Masonry); STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAMING: Palmer Steel Supplies; METAL FABRICATIONS: Catwalks (etc) (Palmer Steel Supplies); FINISH CARPENTRY: MGM Custom Millwork; SHEET WATER-PROOFING/WEATHER BARRIERS: W.R. Meadows (RGV Alliance Construction); METAL WALL PANELS: NOW Specialties; MODIFIED BITUMEN (SBS) ROOFING: Johns Manville (Sechrist-Hall); ALUMINUM FRAMED STOREFRONTS: Kawneer (G&C Glass and Mirror); GLAZING: Guardian Sunguard (G&C Glass and Mirror); LINEAR WOOD CEILINGS: 9Wood (Marek Brothers Systems); WOOD STRIP FLOORING: Bauer Sport Floors; ACOUSTICAL ROOM COMPONENTS: G C Acoustics (Marek Brothers Systems); THEATRICAL LIGHTING EQUIPMENT/CONCERT ENCLOSURE SYSTEM/STAGE RIGGING AND CURTAIN SYSTEM/TENSION WIRE GRID: Texas Scenic; FIXED AUDIENCE SEATING: Series; SOUND ISOLATION AND CONTROL: Kinetics Noise Control; PERFORMANCE AUDIO/VIDEO SYSTEMS: All Pro Sound

Marshall Family Performing Arts Center at Greenhill School, Addison
Contractor Andres Construction Services

UTRGV Performing Arts Complex, Edinburg
Consultants ACOUSTICS: Jaffe Holden; THEATRICAL: Schuler Shook; COST ESTIMATING: Sunland Group; CIVIL ENGINEER: Jaster-Quintanilla Engineering; FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEER: Jensen Hughes; IT: Datacom; STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Rogers Moore Engineers; AV: Jaffe Holden; LANDSCAPE: Clark Condon

Resources TURF: George, Marfa; CIVIL ENGINEER: Once Each Year; LANDSCAPE: Pecos: Summit Drywall: Carpenters; AmeTiWeSt; Consultants SRGS: Jaffe Holden; LIGHTING DESIGNER: Tillotson Design Associates; CIVIL ENGINEER/LANDSCAPE: Pacheco Koch; CODE CONSULTANT: Code Consultants; FOOD SERVICE CONSULTANT: James N. Davila Consulting; TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT: Datacom Design Group

Resources TOPPING SLAB: Texas Bomanite; BRICK: Belden; BLOCK: Featherlite; STRUCTURAL STEEL: W&W Metal Products; METAL ROOF: Berridge Manufacturing; GLAZING SYSTEM: YKK; GLASS SUPPLIER: Viraco; ACOUSTIC PLASTER: Sonokrete; CARPET: Bentley; STAGE RIGGING & DRAPE: Texas Scenic; MOTORS AND CONTROLS: Electronic Theater Controls; STAGE CURTAIN FABRIC: KM Fabrics; ORCHESTRA SHELL: Wenger Corporation; THEATER SEATING: Series; FURNITURE: Herman Miller (WRG), Haworth (Furniture Marketing Group); DEMOUNTABLE SEATING RISERS: Wenger Corporation; TELESCOPIC SEATING RISERS: Irwin; ELEVATORS: Otis; FIRE SUPPRESSION: Reliable; PLUMBING: Sloan; FIXTURES: American Standard, Zurn; HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING: Trane, Runtal Radiators; INTEGRATED AUTOMATION: Trane; ELECTRICAL: Leviton, Eaton, Lutron; A/V EQUIPMENT: Middle Atlantic, Crestron; TEL/DATE: Leviton

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TxA is seeking academic papers for peer review, publication, and presentation at our 77th Annual Convention, which takes place in San Antonio on November 3–5. Papers should focus on developments in digital technology that inform design and fabrication in architecture and building.

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The View from West Texas

by Craig Kinney, AIA

Growing up in the 1970s, each Christmas our family would load the station wagon and make the long drive west from Houston to a ranch outside of Big Spring, Texas. Around about San Angelo, the view from my side window would begin to enlarge with sweeping vistas of mesas, arroyos, and plains that merged land with sky. Occasionally a windmill feeding a stock tank flashed by. This was John Wayne country; at least it looked that way to me.

In the late 1990s, I made what I felt was a risky move, from Houston to the unknown of working in San Angelo. The remarkable vistas only a short drive from town were a real consolation to me as I adapted to a different place. In the 20 years since, many of those same vistas have been interrupted by thousands of massive white wind turbines. These are not quaint windmills feeding stock tanks; they are enormous industrial propellers churning in the sky, over 300 ft in diameter. Big.

According to the American Wind Energy Association, Texas has by far the greatest number of wind turbines in the country, over 10,000. The largest “farm” of wind turbines is the Roscoe Wind Farm in Nolan County, near Sweetwater, with close to 700 turbines. Wind energy employs about 18,000 people in the state and accounts for approximately 9 percent of our electricity needs, equivalent to 3.6 million homes.

I’m trying not to make this a nostalgic rant. I recognize the need to wean ourselves off fossil fuels. Wind energy is clean. I’d like to think I’m pretty forward-thinking when it comes to sustainability. Yet I can’t help but miss the views from the side window of the station wagon. Are they gone forever? What have we lost? Shouldn’t we at least be asking the question? Maybe I’ve turned into a Don Quixote character, tilting futilely at windmills. I wonder.

Craig Kinney, AIA, is an architect in San Angelo.