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landscape architects Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Alexandria, VA
general contractor The Beck Group, Fort Worth
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## More Online

- [txamagazine.org](http://txamagazine.org)
  - Brantley Hightower, AIA, discusses the importance of preserving Texas's historic courthouses in a video produced by TxA. It's posted on *Texas Architect*'s new website. While you're there, review all of the articles from the most recent issue of the magazine, the latest news on our blog, and our growing digital archive of searchable back issues.
500 Chicon

by Aaron Seward

The building at 500 Chicon Street in East Austin has a storied past. Erected in the 1920s as a storage warehouse for the Gulf Refining Company, it is composed of concrete, brick, full-dimension lumber, and a steel truss roof. Texaco took over ownership sometime in the 1950s or 60s, and in 1976 it was the office of the Associated Republicans of Texas.

It spent a certain number of years vacant. In the 1990s, it may or may not have played host to a gentlemen’s bath house, and a group of developers considered turning it into an incubator for fledgling tech companies, much in the mode of the co-working spaces that are all the rage today.

In 2002, graphic design consultancy fd2s scooped it up and hired Houston-based Stern and Bueck Architects to help them transform the old oil barrel shed into their office. The architects installed industrial-looking divided light windows in the brick infill walls, cut a 1,000-sf hole in the wood floor to open the basement to the daylight that spills down from the ceiling’s high clerestory, and hung a steel “bird cage” from the trusses. This loft’s Corbusian-painted steel framing integrates with the railing around the cutout and with the stairs that lead to the lower level. They arranged semi-enclosed workspaces around the open-plan space and inserted a reception desk, enclosed in a metal and glass paneled cube rotated off the axis of the rectangular plan, into the wall by the entrance, where it protrudes out onto the porch. The bird cage was lined with Tatami mats, and fd2s imagined they would use it as a meditation perch from which to conceive their latest branding concepts.

It’s difficult to say what level of architectural education or sensitivity the people who originally built 500 Chicon had, yet each of the materials was used in a forthright manner that is very much admired by architects today. The compressive strength of brick is evidenced by its use to form the columns that support the floor’s timber girders. The lightness and long-span capabilities of structural steel are on display in the exposed roof trusses. The rugged wood plank floors and the rough, unfinished concrete of the basement’s retaining walls have over time developed a variegated patina, as though intended to exhibit the finest principles of the Japanese wabi-sabi tradition. In a culture that by and large favors the new over the old, that expends great amounts of money and energy to tear down perfectly reusable structures in favor of often inferior replacements, it is relieving to see people instead valuing what is there and adapting it to new purposes.

That same spirit fueled 500 Chicon’s most recent renovation. The Texas Society of Architects moved into the space in 2011, doing little more than cosmetic touchups to the fd2s layout. In 2015, the Society hired the Austin office of Lawrence Group to reorganize some of the workspaces, develop an acoustical dampening solution, and complete an efficiency upgrade, all while maintaining as much as possible the openness and raw materiality of the interior. The architects bolted a sunshade to the south face of the building, added a new insulated roof, and installed storm windows, all to improve thermal performance. Some of the offices and conference rooms were entirely enclosed, while others were left open, and two continuous soffits were run down the length of the space for additional acoustic control.

One interesting result of the efficiency upgrade is a greater quantity of machinery and ductwork in the office, much of which is tucked above the soffit, where it hangs from the existing wood ceiling. The effect is much like that conveyed by Rem Koolhaas’ installation in the central pavilion of the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale, which comprised a drop ceiling and a mechanical array suspended beneath the building’s frescoed dome. There, as here, the composition reminds us that architecture exists with one foot in the past and the other on the leading edge of technology. It is the negotiation of this dichotomy that defines the profession today.
Murray Legge, FAIA is a principal of Murray Legge Architecture in Austin and a co-founder of Legge Lewis Legge, which is based in Austin and New York. Read his article on the Mell Lawrence Architects-designed Hollowcat Wild on page 64.

Igor Siddiqui is an architect, writer, and associate professor at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. He is the principal of the interdisciplinary design practice ISSSStudio and co-founder of Field Constructs Design Competition. Siddiqui studied architecture at Tulane and Yale. In this issue, he writes about the 2016 Venice Biennale (page 11).

Jamie Flatt, Assoc. AIA is a principal in Page’s Houston office. Specializing in pre-design analysis and comprehensive facility programming, Flatt’s work incorporates client engagement, dynamic listening, and graphic analysis to clarify and effect lasting decisions. She writes about WW Architecture’s EL House on page 48.

Bart Shaw, AIA is an architect in Fort Worth, where he works at his firm, quite uncreatively named Bart Shaw Architect. He was really taken with Edgeland House by Bercy Chen. His article about the project is on page 56.

Margaret Sledge, AIA grew up in New England and practiced architecture in California, Connecticut, New York, Alabama, and Mumbai before returning to San Antonio, where she has been an architect at Lake|Flato for the last five years. Although she misses the cooler summers of the Northeast, she is happy to be able to practice archery outdoors year round in Texas. See her article on Ford Powell & Carson’s restoration of Mission San Juan Capistrano on page 76.

Brantley Hightower, AIA is an architect at HiWorks in San Antonio, where he also produces a monthly podcast, “The Works,” about the built environment. Despite all evidence to the contrary his eldest daughter, Sammy, insists that she is not tired. His article on the South Texas Heritage Center appears on page 68.

Andrea Hawking, AIA is owner of Hawkins Architecture in College Station, which focuses on education and civic projects. He also writes articles for AIA National concerning mobile technologies and is active in the AIA at all levels. Hawkins believes in sustainable design, technology in practice, and the power of thoughtful architecture. He writes about HOK’s computing center for BP on page 60.

Ron Steimarski, AIA is the design director for Perkins+Will’s Texas practice and a frequent contributor to *TA*. He writes about Max Levy Architects’ Saint Michael and All Angels Columbarium on page 80.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA is a designer with Baldrige Architects in Austin and a regular contributor to *TA*. In this issue, he covers the Boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake by Limbacher and Godfrey Architects (page 44).

Audrey Maxwell, AIA is a principal at Malone Maxwell Borson Architects in Dallas and chair of TxA’s Publications Committee. Read her article on Antenora Architects’ Cotton Gin at the Co-Op District on page 32.

Rita Catina C Orrell is TIn’s products editor. For the Design Awards issue, she curated a collection of her favorite new products that are made here in the U.S.A. See page 27.

Hannah Ahlblad is an M. Arch ’18 candidate at The University of Texas at Austin, currently on a six-month leave at Steven Holl Architects in New York. Her independent and collaborative design work has been published on ArchDaily and Dezeen, and exhibited at the Dallas Center for Architecture, the MIT Media Lab, UT Austin, and ARCOMadrid. As a designer, Ahlblad hopes to integrate an understanding of human interaction, memory, and visual perception in cultural and civic spaces. Read her take on the public murals of Mexico City on page 31.
I got back from Marfa last night after a short visit to celebrate the formal opening of the Hotel Saint George. By some coincidence, the day before I left I received a copy of the July/August Texas Architect (delivered to my office at Rice). I was able to read Jack Murphy’s article “55 New Ways of Looking At Marfa” on the journey, and more calmly once I got there.

I am very impressed by the depth of journalism and insight that you and Mr. Murphy gave to our hotel project. I love the cinematic title given to the article and the attention to/ inclusivity of all participants. I was delighted to find Paul Hester’s pictures, as I thought Casey Dunn’s were the ones that you were using primarily for the piece. Either way, they tell their own story.

Lastly, your Russian references at the end of the article were most welcome, as I am an avid and loyal follower of Andrei Tarkovsky’s work. In fact, I examine his films in detail with my students in a seminar I teach at Rice every spring (“Constructing images: case studies in architecture, film, literature, and music”).

All best, and thanks again for the depth and care that you invested in telling our story.

Carlos Jiménez
Professor, Rice University School of Architecture, Houston

I really liked your article about your recently renovated house (“My House,” TA, May/June 2016). So much of our practice has been an investment in making the forgotten relevant again, so it spoke to me.

On that note, I wanted to inform you about a project that we have been working on for several years here in Tyler. Developing public/private partnerships, we have jumped heart-first into the revitalization of our downtown, starting with a primary catalyst — The People’s Petroleum Building. It was less than 10 percent occupied at the time we began. Now it’s over 90 percent occupied. Part of the success story is the establishment of a high-end restaurant in the previous 1940s-era bank lobby. The transformation story of the building is fascinating, and we would love to tell you more about it. The lighting was all custom designed to recall the imagery of the past with today’s technology. It has brought so much life and energy to the building and has taken the building occupancy to an all-time high.

We are currently in the process of modeling our entire downtown core to help cast a vision for the future, to continue developing public/private partnerships, and to keep the momentum going. So stay tuned!

Brandy Ziegler, AIA
Fitzpatrick Architects, Tyler

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The shallow pool built inside the Australian pavilion offers a respite from the Venice heat, but also serves as a prompt for examining the country’s architecture, culture, and identity.

**Reporting from the 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture**

The theme of the 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture, “Reporting from the Front,” frames the work of architects as a battle shaped by the complexities of real-world circumstances, the challenge of which is not only to survive but also to have positive, transformative impact. For Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena, who curated this year’s biennale and is the most recent Pritzker Prize laureate, the aim was “select examples that address a problem that matters and for which quality architecture made a difference.”

The Biennale’s main exhibition, which occupies the Central Pavilion at the Giardini as well as the nearby Arsenale, gathers projects by 88 participants from 37 countries, giving visitors a sense of what kinds of problems contemporary architects are taking on globally, but also showing what exactly Aravena means by quality architecture. In both venues, one enters the exhibition through rooms constructed with materials left over from last year’s Art Biennale. Drywall is cut up and stacked in layers to produce a textured interior envelope, while bundles of discarded metal studs similarly redefine the ceiling above. Each handsomely designed room explains a bit about the exhibition — the making of it, in one, and the inspiration for it, in the other — but in terms of innovation offers little more than a lesson in trash-to-treasure material use.

Beyond, in the Central Pavilion, a series of beautifully composed rooms — each conceived and laid out independently, based on its specific content — features an array of projects conducted and conveyed through a range of means. One of the first installations to encounter is Paraguayan firm Gabinete de Arquitectura’s impressive arched diagrid structure built at full-scale using only bricks, mortar, and unskilled labor, making a case for an architecture that transcends its humble resources. German architect Anna Heringer transformed the interior of another exhibition area using 25 tons of mud in order to promote the material’s contemporary...
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relevance. A large sectional mock-up showing the layers of trash, various soil types, and vegetation that make up the ground of a capped landfill is the centerpiece in a landscape restoration project by Batlle i Roig Arquitectes. It gives literal depth to dirt by revealing its highly engineered synthetic nature.

The aesthetics of dirt, mud, and other neutrally toned humble materials that dominate the exhibition is occasionally disrupted by projects like the multi channel video installation about a school project by Chilean architects elton_léniz set in a space invitingly lit with fire-red neon. Provocative media work by Forensic Architecture, a London-based group led by Eyal Weizman, is perhaps the most overtly political content in the exhibition and one that radically redefines the role of architecture in inter disciplinary research and practice.

The Arsenale portion of the exhibition continues to carry the curatorial tone of the Central Pavilion and presents works by the likes of Rahul Mehrotra, Cecilia Puga, Atelier Bow-Wow, Kengo Kuma, and the only U.S. architects included in the exhibition, Rural Studio. The Biennale's most remarkable installation — it would have been my personal pick for the Golden Lion for best installation, which was instead awarded to Gabinete de Arquitectura — is the Armadillo Vault by the Block Research Group from ETH Zurich and engineers Ochsendorf Defong & Block. A sprawling thin-shell canopy composed of nearly 400 slabs of limestone, the installation is a study of new possibilities afforded by compressive structures, and a compelling synthesis of high technology and traditional masonry construction. The project's development and realization were made possible by one of its key collaborators: the Escobedo Group from Buda, Texas, where the installation was fabricated before traveling to Italy. Assembled entirely with dry connections — there is no mortar or adhesive between the limestone panels — the structure is as aesthetically rich as it is intelligent.

Exhibitions within national pavilions, mostly scattered throughout the Giardini, are somewhat independent of the Biennale's main curatorial theme, but there are deliberate overlaps. The Spanish exhibition titled "Unfinished" — this year's winner of the Golden Lion for the best pavilion — focuses on the status of the country's architecture after the 2008 financial collapse. Curated by architects Ifraqui Carnicero and Carlos Quintán Eiras, the exhibition juxtaposes
Of Note

The Armadillo Vault inside the Arsenale, produced by the Block Research Group at ETH Zurich and engineers Oehsendorf De Jong & Block, in collaboration with the Escobedo Group from Texas.

...stunning photographs of buildings unfinished because of funding cuts with a series of recent built projects by a range of Spanish practices designed within tight constraints. Diverse in typology, scale, and style, what the selected projects have in common architecturally is their role in completing the seemingly incomplete conditions (infill sites, abandoned buildings, leftover facades) while managing the relationship between the existing and the new through sophisticated calibrations of continuity and contrast. “Unfinished” optimistically highlights architecture’s ability to collectively direct adverse circumstances toward both inspiration and action.

The exhibition at the U.S. pavilion advocates the role of architectural imagination in shaping our future cities — as perhaps something different from the problem-solving ingenuity that results from real-world built commissions — and presents a group of theoretical projects speculatively sited in Detroit. Curators Cynthia Davidson and Mónica Ponce de León selected 12 design teams, ranging from some of the most prominent voices in contemporary American architecture, including Greg Lynn, Merrill Elam, and several emerging practices. The intention of linking experimental avant-garde works of vivid imagination (“The Architectural Imagination” is the exhibition’s title) with the stark realities of a shrinking city like Detroit is provocative, but the connection between the two may seem too tenuous, to some. However, the open question of how innovative works of architecture primarily driven by the discipline’s internal concerns — and often constrained by the computer screen rather than physical sites — can continue to meaningfully impact the future of our constructed environment remains important and relevant.

Elsewhere in the Giardini, national exhibitions range from didactic to immersive, to downright delightful. In the Swiss pavilion, Christian Kerez’s “Incidental Space,” an amorphous white cloud of sprayed cement made through a combination of high- and low-tech means, allows one to explore its surprisingly inviting cavernous interior. The Australians built a swimming pool inside their gallery, an obviously appealing amenity on a hot Venice day, but also an effective foil for exploring broader cultural issues. The British exhibition, “Home Economics,” likewise offers a playful experience — psychedelically colored inflatable spheres, designed by the London-based art collective áyr, inside which non-claustrophobic
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Visitors are encouraged to lounge—while critically exploring new financial models for housing in the 21st century. More than simply acts of novelty, these clouds, pools, and pods serve as important thresholds that connect architecture to its broader audiences and encourage further engagement.

Much in the way he refers to his practice, Elemental, as a do-tank rather than a think-tank, Aravena places what he sees as the most relevant contemporary architecture at the front, rather than on the cutting edge. Where the cutting edge traditionally aligns itself with the latest technological and theoretical innovations, the architecture of the front is in this regard skeptical. The front is drawn to political intricacies but seems to seek out formal and material restraint. Despite its global ambition, approximately 60 percent of the practices represented in Aravena’s exhibition are based in Europe, most of them practicing in their home regions and within a familiar modernist canon (Francis Kéré, who is based in Berlin but produces much of his work in his native Africa, is among the exceptions). In this regard, the exhibition makes one wonder how many different ways the discipline may be able to consider notions of inclusiveness in order to further architecture’s vitality and relevance as we move forward. Inclusivity starts on home turf, so perhaps one possibility is for architecture to embrace its own plurality of ambitions, expanding beyond the well meaning, but ultimately reductive notions of timelessness, usefulness, and good quality. In this way, architectures at the front and the cutting edge need not be mutually exclusive. “Reporting from the Front” offers a few glimpses of this, and it feels worthwhile to want to see more.

The 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture is on view from May 28 to November 27, 2016.

Igor Siddiqui is an associate professor at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture.
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Robert: Dallas's Answer to a Critical Void

"Hello ... my name is ROBERT," begins Dallas's architectural 'zine, an artifact of 2010, when the city was between architecture critics. It lasted for only two issues, and now, even the digital imprint of the publication has disappeared, leaving only the paper traces of a voice.

Its mission statement is admirable, taking a no-nonsense view of what it intends to accomplish. "The point is that the Dallas architecture community — designers, clients, patrons, media observers — lacks confidence in our own ability to be amazing. It is time to get over it and expect things of ourselves. It is time to grow up and embrace our Texas-Bad-Ass-Ness."

Highlights from the offerings include ruminations on the nature of suburban and urban living, an opinion piece on the George W. Bush Presidential Library, and a study of foreground versus background architecture, all by a series of anonymous contributors.

While the 'zine has a tendency to favor style over substance, it does represent an architectural voice rarely heard — one free from the constraints of collegial diplomacy and the watchful eyes of sponsors. Particularly promising is the second issue's call for readers' stories about the greatest architectural disappointments of the past five years. Unfortunately, no subsequent issue was ever produced. ROBERT had the potential to spark dialogue that, even with the appearance of a new architecture critic at the Dallas Morning News (Mark Lamster), is often sorely lacking when it comes to issues surrounding the built environment. Perhaps the most striking thing about ROBERT is its potential, which was never given the chance to develop into something more.

While the various contributions are hit-or-miss, combining poetry and grainy images with substantive architectural criticism, the concept here is heartening, and the content, to the point. After all, admonishes ROBERT, "Keep in mind that anything over 400 words is boring, unless it is really well-written." A shared discussion between architects and citizens about the urban environment and the future of the city, unmediated by blogs or newspapers, seems like a productive conversation to be having. And, in the meantime, if you have a story of the greatest architectural disappointment of the last five years, send it to editor@texasarchitects.org.

Alyssa Morris is web editor of Texas Architect.
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The Vanishing Sanger-Harris Mosaics

In 1965, Sanger-Harris opened its first new, ground-up department store in downtown Dallas as its flagship. Designed by Dallas architect Thomas Stanley, the store featured a four-story marble column facade, a trait evocative of the practice’s work in retail and corporate applications throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s. Clad in white marble, the facade created a dialogue between itself and the Stanley/Dahl-designed First National Bank tower located across Pacific Avenue.

Behind the slender columns was an expansive mosaic composed of 1-in, primary-colored tiles that formed an abstract pattern highly visible during the daytime and equally so during the evening, when paired with the lighting scheme. The mosaic clad three of the building’s facades. The largest glass mural to be installed in the country with a single surface, it measured 600 ft by 360 ft. “The trick was to not interrupt the mural with horizontal floor beams extending to the columns,” recalls Robert Young, who served as the director of planning for all Sanger-Harris department stores: “Therefore, the last bay along Pacific is framed in steel with a deep truss at the top. The whole mural wall is hung from this truss. I think the public liked the mural and the color and excitement it brought to the streetscape.”

The downtown flagship store was also the first Dallas building to use an air door. Designed by Herman Blum Consulting Engineers, it allowed the entry to be wide open, so visitors walked in from the summer heat directly into a cool environment with no impediment.

Beyond its size, the design of the mosaic remains something of a mystery. “The design was purely abstract, although many thought it could be an aerial view of the Metroplex,” says Young. Though its meaning remains opaque, the treatment did succeed in creating an iconic language that would be applied to future Sanger Harris department stores during the next decade: eight stores in total.

No matter the speed at which you pass a former Sanger-Harris department store, the entry is sure to catch your eye. The Valley View Center location in north Dallas, designed by Harold A. Berry & Associates and built in 1973, is home to the largest remaining Sanger-Harris mosaic. (The one on the downtown store was removed after Sanger-Harris, later Foley’s, vacated the space in 1990, and the building was converted into Dallas Area Rapid Transit’s headquarters.) The pattern of this mosaic is more geometric in form and seems to emphasize the centrally located entries on each facade. Still abstract, the primary colors form a textile-like pattern that more closely resembles a Rorschach test than the sweeping form that adorned the downtown flagship store. The signature of Brenda J. Stuble can be found along the bottom edge of the facade, though limited information could be found on the details of her involvement.

With the impending redevelopment of the Valley View Mall site into Dallas Midtown, the Sanger-Harris store — along with locations at Southwest Center, Collin Creek, and Six Flags Mall — faces an uncertain future. If demolished, the store at Hulen Mall and the Sanger Harris location in Tyler will be the final two stores upon which the original mosaic facades remain.

Michael Friebele, Assoc., AIA, is an associate with the Dallas office of CallisonRTKL.
Fighting to Save the McAllen Civic Center

Pedro Ayala, Assoc. AIA, wants to preserve the 1959 McAllen Civic Center in the booming Texas border city of McAllen. Ayala, a 2002 graduate of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston, is an urban designer. This summer, he began an effort to persuade McAllen city officials to hold off on demolishing the center, which they are obligated to do before closing on the sale of the 13.4-acre site to Dallas-based Provident Realty Advisors and Indianapolis-based Simon Property Group. Since completion of a new convention and civic center in 2007 (TA, May/June 2008), the City of McAllen has not sought alternative uses for the 1959 complex.

What got Ayala involved were the civic center's distinctive mid-20th-century modern architecture and its generous landscaped public spaces, including a three-block-long park facing McAllen's major north-south thoroughfare, 10th Street. Ayala was convinced that preserving and reusing these resources made more sense than scrapping them. The center consists of a performance auditorium and a convention and exposition center organized around a terraced interior patio. The complex was designed by Houston firm Caudill Rowlett Scott (CRS) with McAllen architects Zeb Rike and J. B. Hancock. It is a CRS classic: exposed, black-painted steel framing infilled with rose-colored brick panels, including solar screens that facilitate breeze flow. Ayala cleverly appropriated the center's iconic feature, the auditorium's faceted roof, as the graphic emblem for his preservation campaign.

Simon Property Group owns the nearby, 1.35 million-sf La Plaza Mall. In 2006, the Wall Street Journal identified La Plaza as one of the highest-grossing shopping malls in the U.S. La Plaza is a magnet for affluent consumers from Monterrey, 150 miles southwest of McAllen. To appeal to this market, Provident and Simon plan to build an upscale lifestyle center, The Shops at Solana, on the civic center site, subdividing the cleared tract into five large blocks separated by landscaped internal streets and buffered from the rest of the city by perimeter parking lots.

Ayala initially formulated a counterproposal for how the civic center could be adapted for shopping, restaurant, and entertainment uses. Since half the site is a surface parking lot, plentiful space remains for new construction. Ayala reached out to other preservationists — RGVMOD, Preservation Texas, and the Texas Historical Commission — for encouragement. The historical commission responded by notifying city officials that the civic center is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which could trigger substantial federal and state tax credits if the developers were to undertake a certified rehabilitation. Ayala also took his campaign to social media. Preservation Texas posted a link to his online preservation petition. The result was 263 comments, a sign that there is a constituency for preservation and adaptive reuse of this building. Already in 2014, Dallas Morning News critic Mark Lamster had identified the civic center as one of a number of significant modern buildings in the southwest threatened with demolition.

Ayala addressed McAllen's mayor, city commission, and city manager in late July, asking them to organize a design workshop to investigate alternatives for the site. City officials responded respectfully rather than dismissively. Ayala's preservation initiative demonstrates how architects can use their analytical, visioning, and design skills to advance arguments about civic design, architectural preservation, resource conservation, and public space protection in public forums — and use social media to inform and seek a supportive constituency.

Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas.
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Thursday 8
EXHIBITION OPENING
Obstacle
Trinity University’s Michael and Noemi Neidorff Art Gallery
1 Trinity Place
San Antonio
bluestarart.org

Monday 12
EXHIBITION OPENING
Canstruction
North Star Mall
7400 San Pedro Avenue
San Antonio
aiasa.org

Thursday 15
EXHIBITIONS OPENING
Ansel Adams: Distance and Detail
The Briscoe Western Art Museum
210 W. Market Street
San Antonio
briscoemuseum.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Picasso The Line
Menil Collection
1533 Sul Ross Street
Houston
menil.org

Friday 16
EVENT
2016 Texas Student Biennial Opening Reception
6:00 p.m.
Architecture Center
Houston
315 Capitol, Suite 120
Houston
aiahouston.org

Monday 19
LECTURES
RSA Cullinan Lecture: Francoise Fromonot
5:30 p.m.
Rice University
Anderson Hall
Houston
arch.rice.edu

Sunday 16
EXHIBITION OPENING
Degas: A New Vision
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet
Houston
mfah.org

Wednesday 28
EXHIBITION OPENING
Telling Tales: Contemporary Narrative Photography
The McNay
6000 N. New Braunfels Avenue
San Antonio
mcnayart.org

LECTURE
RSA/RDA Lecture Series:
Mass Timber
Yasmin Vobis & Aaron Forrest, principals at Ultra-moderne, Providence
Rice School of Architecture
Houston
arch.rice.edu

Thursday 29
EVENT
Latinos in Architecture Presents East Austin Roundtable
5:00 p.m. meet and greet,
6:30 p.m. panel discussion
Mexican American Cultural Center—Black Box Theater
600 Red River Street
Austin
aiaaustin.org

Tuesday 18
EVENT
AIA Fort Worth Design Awards
The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell Street
Fort Worth
aiafw.org

Thursday 20
EVENT
Rockitecture 2016
6:30 p.m.
Dallas
aiadallas.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
KAWS Where the End Starts
The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell Street
Fort Worth
themodern.org

SYMPOSIUM
Through Saturday 22
The Secret Life of Buildings
UT-Austin School of Architecture
Austin
aoa.utexas.edu

Saturday 22
EXHIBITION OPENING
Sightings: Michael Dean Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora Street
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

FEATURED

Chianti Weekend 2016: 30th Anniversary Celebration
Chinati Foundation, Marfa
chinati.org

OCTOBER 7 THROUGH 9

Enjoy self-guided viewing of the Chinati Foundation’s collection and 350-acre campus in celebration of its 30th anniversary. Robert Irwin’s new large-scale, permanent installation is now open, and there will be talks, performances, and a special sunrise viewing of Judd’s 100 works in mill aluminum, all free of charge.

As Essential as Dreams: Self-Taught Art from the Collection of Stephanie and John Smither
Menil Collection, Houston
menil.org

THROUGH OCTOBER 16

Quoting Jean Baudrillard’s assertion that to create is “as essential as dreams,” the Menil Collection mounts an exhibition of Stephanie and John Smither’s collection of self-taught artists. These works “question a traditional art history” and often align closely with surrealism.
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Here we present a few of the domestically produced building product solutions now on the market for architects and designers, including a modular acoustic panel system made in Dallas.

Anne Kantor of AJK Design Studio has created a new market category with this collection of modular, laser-cut metal squares for suspended ceilings. The finishes are offered in steel, brass, bronze, and aluminum in three repeat sizes, 16 patterns, and a range of finishes. Intended for residential, hospitality, and commercial applications, the squares comply with California seismic requirements and are sound-absorbent when backed with wool felt or acoustic board. The customizable modules, which come in a 24-in-square standard size, join a line of custom grilles from the company.

 Designed by Michael Vanderbyl and made in Hickory, North Carolina, Conexus is a work/lounge chair with a matching ottoman designed for offices, lobbies, hospitality spaces, and other interiors. Spanning the gap between task chair and lounge chair, Conexus features a sculptural shape and slim profile with a wood edge that merges seamlessly with the upholstery. Conexus is available fully upholstered or with a Walnut wood back with a polished stainless steel or powder-coated black base. According to HBF, all components of the chair can be easily recycled or composted at the end of its life.

Rocky Mountain Hardware has partnered with the New York-based design firm Kravitz Design (rock star Lenny Kravitz's company) for the Trousdale collection of bronze hardware for residential and commercial spaces. Handcast in Hailey, Idaho, the pieces feature sleek architectural elements, angular profiles, and a strong textural effect. The line was inspired by the famed Trousdale Estates neighborhood in Beverly Hills, an enclave of mid-century homes known for its celebrity inhabitants in the 1950s and '60s. Trousdale includes seven lever, grip, and knob designs with complementary escutcheons for door applications, four cabinet pulls and knobs, and five accessory pieces, including a recycled door-knocker.
LOFTwall's BLOX system manages interior sound control in a new way. Instead of being permanently affixed to existing walls or ceilings, BLOX modular acoustic panels can be moved anywhere they are needed. BLOX is offered in 12 tackable premium fabrics made with a premium wool felt finish that is claimed to absorb VOC pollutants. The matte anodized frame, made from 73% recycled content, is easy to set up and configure. Like all LOFTwall products, BLOX is made in Dallas.

Manufactured in Sacramento, California, from reclaimed and sustainable woods sourced from around the country, the Plankprints Collection of "peel-and-stik" real wood wall covering includes seven new patterns that offer the look of treasures revealed during a renovation. The patterns are carefully imprinted onto 5-in-wide-by-40-in-long wooden planks using the latest techniques in high-quality digital imaging, imprinting each design with millions of drops of color made with non-toxic ink that is eventually cured with light, and enabling a completely VOC-free process.

LightArt, a 3form company, has added a new short profile to the LA2 Connected lighting system of thin-gauge, lightweight fixtures. The lighting is made of local, American-made components in LightArt's Seattle design and fabrication studio using a modular system that minimizes waste. Ideal for low ceiling conditions, the LED lighting fixtures come in a standardized kit of parts that can be connected in various shapes and configurations to turn corners, extend down hallways, and move through rooms and open spaces.
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The Radius of a Mural

A graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture travels to Mexico City to discover what the Distrito Federal’s great public murals mean to its residents and visitors. The tools of her research include a sketchpad and a set of pencils and oil pastels with which her subjects create “cognitive maps.”

by Hannah Ahlblad

On any day along South Congress in Austin, you might pass a line of people in front of a brick wall with no door. They are waiting to pose in front of the cursive words “I love you so much,” painted in red on a mint green background that covers one exterior wall of Joe’s Coffee. Painting and color evoke our emotions and cultural sensitivities. These psychological reactions magnify our relationship with place when the painting and composition of colors are integrated with the physical architecture of the city. If the simple “I love you so much” mural can become a significant landmark for Austin, then what effect do the socially charged murals of Mexico City’s civic architecture have on local navigation and sense of identity in that place?

Although a mural may be distinguished from a painting by the manner in which each is framed, the mural is still studied within a frame — be it a wall’s face, a page in a book, or a PowerPoint screen. While a painting lives within the curated space of a gallery, a mural lives within the architectural space of a city. In Mexico City, I hoped to elucidate the frames around its murals by asking locals and tourists to draw mental maps of two famous murals, the buildings that house them, and the...
subjective urban frame in which each resides. The idea was to develop a living image of the city along with the cognitive presence of its iconic murals.

Since the talud-tablero at Teotihuacán, art has driven architecture's social function in Mexico. Beginning after the Mexican Revolution, 20th-century Mexico City was marked by artists such as Diego Rivera, architects such as Mario Pani Darqui, and planners such as Carlos Contreras Elizondo, who collaborated in the creation of a visual narrative for a modern city with public institutions: ministries, schools, housing, museums, and the Ciudad Universitaria. Their collaboration had a precedent: Thousands of years earlier, in fact, the practice of integración plástica — a marriage of painting, architecture, and sculpture — became central to Mexico's architectural and art history. The integration of colorful arts and formal architecture represents not only a combination of the two in a building, but also a singular means of expressing cultural identity and connection to place in one of the most densely populated cities on earth.

My project was inspired by the work of the urban designer Kevin Lynch, who, while at MIT in the 1950s and '60s, emphasized the importance of subjective reading and cognitive mapping of the city. He begins with a definition of "public images" as "the common mental pictures carried by large numbers of a city's inhabitants: areas of agreement which might be expected to appear in the interaction of a single physical reality, a common culture, and a basic physiological nature" (Kevin Lynch, "The Image of the City," 1960, p. 49). Lynch's "Three Cities" research used two groups of map-makers: "a systemic field reconnaissance of the area" by a "trained observer," and "a lengthy interview ... held with a small sample of city residents to evoke their own images of their physical environment" (ibid., p. 15). The resulting interviews helped Lynch generate cognitive maps constructed from a unique language of symbols and lines: paths, edges, nodes, districts, and landmarks.

As architects and designers, we translate phenomenological experience to formal expression for our clients. In this project, I wanted to give each participant the freedom to impose their own aesthetic, lest something be lost in my formal interpretation of their descriptive experience; the process of rendering interviews as a single set of my own drawings would have isolated their communicated responses from their visual understanding of place. Instead, I gave each participant a 9-in-by-12-in piece of paper, a set of 12 colored oil pastels, and a pencil: I let them draw their own cognitive maps. Oil pastels offered a loose material unfamiliar to both architects and non-architects. Instead of perfectly straight streets and geometries, the oil pastels captured each individual's expressive hand and forced them to make bold, intuitive strokes. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and, with permission, filmed, though in some cases the interviews had to be transcribed.

On January 5, 2016, I arrived in Mexico City, terrified. This was my first time in the city. College years steeped me in the history of Mexican art, as did months studying and...
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then co-teaching a course in Mexican architecture, and two summers at the New York office of Mexican firm TEN Arquitectos. Not a single “moment” of these framed narratives of art, city, and space allowed me to grasp the multidimensional experience of being there: the tiny ticket counters for airport taxis; the colorful geometries of the houses we passed between Benito Juárez; the monumental experience of the infamous traffic; and the variety of expressive people crowded into cars, peseros, and taxis. The next morning, fully woven into the fabric of the Distrito Federal, I went on the first site visit.

When I did my academic research on the work of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, I saw their colorful murals in books. They stood out like beacons amid the black rhythm of the text. In Mexico, I expected the murals to hold the same centrality and distinction in their concrete context. Upon arriving, I discovered that in the patter of urban life, many of the 14 murals on my pre-travel list of sites had fallen into the shadows behind new construction, architectural programs, or implemented boundaries, while some had altogether vanished, and many of the public institutions that housed murals granted limited or no public access.

I had arrived in Mexico to examine the cognitive presence of historic murals in the contemporary image of the city. As I proceeded, the pursuit of my research challenged the physical realities of borders and accessibility of what had been known as a public art movement. The murals most recognized and beloved by participants were part of defunct government offices or institutions, now tourist destinations where tickets had to be purchased to view them. The functioning public buildings with murals were nearly inaccessible to the public, and the guards and front-desk workers seemed unaware of the rich artistic contents of the buildings where they worked. Some murals were impossible to find at their site, and architects I asked suspected that when the buildings were renovat ed the murals had been moved or destroyed.

For example, I went to the Secretaría de Salud Pública to see one of Rivera’s famous murals. Although officially public, the secretariat was not open to visitors, and several weeks were required to process an application to pass through a gate beyond which the mural lay.

“Are there murals in here?” said one guard.

“We have some stained glass windows; you can look at that from the street.”

And at the Supreme Court, the women who checked in officials and visitors knew where the murals were located, but claimed to be unfamiliar with their appearance. In these cases, the murals designed with social intent had been reassigned as paintings of the state.

In zooming around Mexico City over 10 days to check out every site on my list, two sites that were a short metro ride apart are juxtaposed in social circumstance and emotion: Palacio de Bellas Artes and Conjunto Urbano Nonoalco Tlatelolco. Each of these buildings wrapped its construction phase during a renaissance of post-revolutionary idealism. The Palacio de Bellas Artes embodies the golden age of Francophile culture and architecture in Mexico under the regime of Porfirio Díaz, although its construction was slowed in 1910 by the Mexican Revolution. When Federico Mariscal took over the project in 1932, the exterior was completed in keeping with the existing design, but inside the intended Beaux Arts and Neo-Classical detailing were replaced with ornamentation that fused iconography of pre-Hispanic cultures with American Art Deco. The walls of the multi-story atrium and galleries of the Palacio feature work by Rivera, Siqueiros, and Orozco that glorified Mexico’s mixed indigenous and European heritage, communism, and fruits of the land, instead of the landed gentry.

Meanwhile, Tlatelolco is known today for its Plaza de las Tres Culturas, originally an extension of Tenochtitlan with a second Templo Mayor complex. The Spaniards built a monumental stone church on the site and adopted a large plaza to demonstrate their conquest over the Aztec empire.

Located only a few blocks apart, these two sites gave rise to cognitive maps of starkly different colors and emotions.

**Palacio de Bellas Artes**

Approaching the Palacio de Bellas Artes from the metro station is an easy delight. The building’s white marble glows against the smog of Mexico City, which even on a clear day remains in the dust and crowd below the great blue sky. The exterior of the building was crowded with people seated on marble planters that held massive green bushes. Laughter, snapping photos, and conversations rang in the air. Inside, a visitor steps with awe into history, and the scale of the murals relative to the free-flow circulation around the galleries conceptually separates them from the...
The interview questions invoked subjective descriptions: the color and emotion of the building, its zone, and the city. These experiential responses are the ones architecture and urbanism generate in everyone, not only in formal connoisseurs. No interviewee was privy to the responses of the others, but when they visited they all felt part of something bigger and monumental: “very small,” “protected,” “happy, satisfied, fulfilled,” “good,” and “intrigued.” Only one person, a tourist from the Yucatan,
mentioned the overwhelming chaos of Mexico City. Were these emotional relationships with place related to the architecture? Or were these experiences impacted by the presence of these national murals?

Several participants felt that the beauty of Bellas Artes was inherently linked to the murals. The concierge was uncertain how things might change if the building was stripped of its murals, but Maria of LIGA explained with conviction: “The building imposes so much that no one enters to see the murals on the wall except to show their children for their civics classes in primary school. Bellas Artes has a foreboding symbolism; the poor do not enter, not because they cannot, but because they still feel forbidden from entering.”

The reality suggested otherwise. Another Maria, the retired woman who was not comfortable reading and writing in Spanish, came to Bellas Artes and the Alameda Central every month because she loved art. She felt that the beauty of the architecture and art within carried deep spiritual meaning. Asked about the difference between murals and paintings, she considered the question for a moment before answering: “Murals are more important; they are immortal, and although man passes, murals immortalize our culture and history. Paintings are pretty to look at, but they are made by the artist, not by the culture. These murals are made by our culture.”

**Conjunto Urbano Nonoalco Tlatelolco**

At Bellas Artes, the murals are enclosed; in Tlatelolco, the neighborhood is closed.

Colorful layers of paint and integración plástica guard the exterior of Mario Pani’s urban development. The interviews at the Palacio de Bellas Artes inspired gaiety. When I mentioned over dinner with a friend who works in finance that I intended to do the same research in Tlatelolco, he looked bemused and asked to come along. Uber said the trip would take less than 20 minutes from the leafy, elegant streets of the Colonia Polanco where I’d eaten breakfast, but for upper middle-class and affluent Chilangos, there is no incentive to visit the Americas’ first functionalist public housing project, spearheaded by Mario Pani.

While other neighborhoods of Mexico City are so downright dangerous that no one, not even the police, enter, Tlatelolco carries more ambiguity. The Plaza de las Tres Culturas has reviews on TripAdvisor, and UNAM, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, has a branch right next to the plaza. Still, most internet queries yield results about the dramatic history, the 1968 Olympic protests and massacre, the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, or the memorialization of the ancient pyramid next to the plaza. So, as I prepared to wander with my camera into an unknown zone in search of murals, I decided to invite along a few friends: a music producer and three architects.

If low-income neighborhoods are happy, then the street is filled with chatter. Music plays from boom boxes or rings out from the windows. In Tlatelolco, parked cars and tentative tianguis line the periphery of the housing complex where it meets the highway. The facade of the building is the entirety of what is known about this place by the general public. It proves almost as difficult to enter the interior of the Conjunto Urbano Nonoalco Tlatelolco as to gain access to the murals in the government institutions I visited. There are no gates, but the
Left and above Tlatelolco apartments and a gym.
Maps clockwise from below By architects Israel López Bolan, Sebastian Rodríguez, Ulises Omar Zúñiga, and Tatiana Bilbao.
Facing One of six major murals in Tlatelolco by Mexican muralist Nicandro Puente.
concrete and brick structures draw a sharp edge around the building’s public contents.

On this Sunday, we pass rows of high-rise apartments, shabby remnants of a former modern glory. Most people outside are men. It is difficult to comprehend how many people live here, because the buildings are more like silent sculptures, and the people like the Virgin de Guadalupe in a Mexican chapel — so easy to visualize, in context, but detached from present reality.

We curve off from a main street, one of the Conjunto Urbano’s boundaries, to traverse the Tlatelolco metro station on an adjacent outdoor path. The station and the parallel pedestrian path feed into a sprawling plaza. Groups of young men and boys stand around talking. Some eye me. When I raise my camera to capture the life of Tlatelolco through the lens, I begin to see that the clusters of men are gathered in surreptitious drug deals.

The people walking outside between the walls stare into our eyes, silently, hauntingly. My friends follow the professor arquitectos Israel López Balan, as he shares the history of the zone. There are bright colors and six vibrant murals by Nicandro Puente. On this trip, it is too challenging to speak to the housing residents. Along the paved sidewalks, shaded by orange steel structures, the locals walk quickly. An invisible wall slides between us and them, separating our interactions.

The original plan of Tlatelolco by Mario Pani aimed to rectify what he called “herradura de tugurios,” a horseshoe slum, titled this way because of the informal, disorganized residential area that workers inhabited on the city’s periphery. While ordering systems in architecture most often demand an aesthetic and mechanical prowess, at the scale of the urban physical composition requires an emotional and psychological empathy.

On a Thursday, I met the energetic and brilliant Tatiana Bilbao — Mexico City-raised and educated, and a leading architect — at her studio to discuss the mural project. A great fan of Mario Pani’s functionalism, she is drawn to the mapping of Tlatelolco. Given the activity in the studio, she only visits there once or twice a year, though she used to go much more often. Bilbao described the “heavy weight, one of history, a very powerful weight.”

“To me, what comes to mind is collective identity, a collective responsibility. A pressure, social repression… political… and inequality. I think the responsibility of an architect with respect to this is very strong. With an architecture, especially one at this scale, one engineers how an entire community lives.”

What about the color of the zone? What colors do you associate with the radius around the housing? Does the integración plástica play
any role in improving the psychological condition of public space? The concrete depicts a sugary world of painted orange cream, lemon yellow, and cotton candy pink.

Bilbao contemplates. “Well, I think that’s very difficult. I don’t think it has anything to do with the color of concrete [or material]. I think that the concrete or color might add certain connotations, but it’s the composition of the concrete that matters. I think in controlling the form and scale you can make concrete very likable. So, definitely, it’s not the color that makes the behavior, but the disposition and composition of the place that makes it. Yes, the integración plástica in Tlatelolco is important; it’s part of the life, but unfortunately, it’s the grey mood that overtakes it. It’s missing something. It’s missing strength. It’s difficult to compete or contest with an architectural composition that is so negative, so massive, so geometric, so functionalist.”

This interaction of architectural composition with color plays out along the streets of Mexico City. The facades incorporate brise-soleil, materials, color, and vegetation in a rainbow of effects, all to illustrate a public narrative on the street and, on the other side, a domestic alternative to the polluted urban reality. On a larger scale in Tlatelolco, the buildings themselves become walls that enclose a less pleasant reality of urban housing from the interaction it needs with the expansive potential beyond.

Wild, Colorful City

After 30 interviews in January 2016, I returned to continue research over the summer with a travel grant from LLILAS (Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies) at The University of Texas at Austin. Mexico City is indeed a city of contrasts. It begins in the airport line, where a collection of people — young people wearing backwards Dodgers caps and baggy clothes; well-starched Mexican businessmen; a team of American filmmakers along with a bespectacled celebrity — shuffles along toward customs and into the wild, colorful city. At the arrival door, after bags are collected and travelers pass through customs, an olive green canvas body bag on a stretcher parades through the exit between arrivals and enthusiastic drivers, family, and friends. Contrast and colors define the Distrito Federal.

In the taxi from the airport, my driver pointed out a furniture warehouse, plastered with teal and maroon advertisements: “Chairs! Living room! Outdoor furnishings! Bedroom!” they read.

“I’ve never seen this place before,” he said. “Do you know how I can tell this place is new? The colors! That maroon purple is my favorite. Look! I even keep this little towel for my face in the taxi; it’s my color!”

When the taxista learns that I came to Mexico to do a project about the city’s murals, color, and their perception within the reading of the contemporary urban plan, he purses his lips pensively. “Wow! Look over there: Do you like those murals? They grab our attention even as we speed past.”

“These are colorful [hot pink], but it’s a line of advertisements for running shoes pasted to a construction board. Is that a mural?”

He smirks. “Do you know the murals of Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros?”

He nods slowly. “Sí.”

“Do you care for them? Did you mostly visit them as a schoolboy or have you looked at them at other times?”

He looks away from the traffic for a moment. “Yes, I saw them in school.” He is not a day under 50.

On one hand, the residents of Mexico City are proud of the murals, as a part of their history and culture. On the other side, it appears that unless you are a muralist yourself, an art historian, or an elementary school teacher leading children through the Palacio de Bellas Artes, murals are artifacts of the past. Even as buildings remain, the integración plástica on their exterior fades into a silent backdrop of civic space. Just as the nuances of architecture often become indiscernible with occupants’ activity, these once-political murals may indulge our view momentarily. More often, Mexico City locals read the murals studied less as markers of public life across urban space than as accessories to the city’s indefatigable clamor.

When I began this project in January, the question was: What larger role or presence do the populist murals carry in a contemporary reading of Mexico City?

In Austin, the kitsch simplicity of murals like “I love you so much” charge them as genius loci, nodes of memory around the city’s commercial and tourism operations. Joe’s Coffee in Austin thrives in an understated masonry building in part because of the playful exterior “adornment.” In contrast, the 20th-century murals of Mexico depict deeper, more complex histories of the Mexican people, and consequently become silent, stoic monuments to the past. This is not to say that the murals of focus in the maps are insignificant, but rather that, at the convergence of color and animation, it is actually these works of architectural art that frame the varying spheres of influence and the diversity of emotion one encounters within the city.

This city is an excursion through contrasts, but the contrasts did not grow up on their own; rather, they are the collision that resulted when two narratives of the city, disconnected in the vast sprawl, encountered one another. Around one mural, the single narrative fragments about the edges of a given public space, flowing back into a sea of stories.

Hannah Ahiblad is a graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture.
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2016 Design Awards

The Texas Society of Architects 2016 Design Awards jury met on May 5 and 6 in Austin to review 285 entries from across the state. After a lengthy and spirited deliberation process, the jury — which comprised Thomas Hacker, FAIA, of Portland, Ore.; Mauricio Rocha of Mexico City; Dan Wheeler, FAIA, of Chicago Ill.; and Clive Wilkinson, FAIA, of Los Angeles, Calif. — selected 10 winners that acknowledge the wealth of high-quality single-family residences submitted, while also recognizing the top civic, commercial, cultural, preservation, and sacred projects that sought awards. After the winners were picked, the jury toured the Charles Moore house in Tarrytown and Alejandro Arevena’s dormitory at St. Edwards, a rewarding epilogue to what Hacker called “the most well-organized design awards I’ve ever been a part of.”

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Boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake

"IT'S GREAT JUST AS A PATH THAT A HUMAN WOULD TAKE NATURALLY, WANTING TO SORT OF LOOK IN CERTAIN DIRECTIONS, GETTING ENOUGH OF THAT EXPERIENCE, WANTING TO CHANGE INTO OTHER DIRECTIONS."

- CLIVE WILKINSON, FAIA

by Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA

Project Boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake
Client City of Austin
Architect Limbacher & Godfrey Architects
Design Team Alfred Godfrey, AIA; Laurie Limbacher, FAIA
Photographers Francois Levy, James M. Innes, Jeffrey Buehner
If Barton Springs is the aquatic heart of Austin, then Lady Bird Lake is surely its lungs. Every day, citizens can be found running, walking, or biking along its shores. The seven-mile loop, from the Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge down to Longhorn Dam using both north and south paths, is now finally completed. The 1.3-mile-long boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake opened in 2014 after six years of work by Limbacher & Godfrey Architects, an Austin-based office led by the husband and wife team of Al Godfrey, AIA, and Laurie Limbacher, FAIA. This project was one of two TxA winners to also secure a local AIA Austin Design Award this year. Juror Clive Wilkinson, FAIA, declared: “Everything about it is a success as a piece of public architecture.”

Austin's new boardwalk is fabricated out of a kit of precast concrete planks and galvanized steel components. The architects took care to ensure the infrastructure's easy replacement and maintenance, as everything is bolted together and nothing is painted. Directional changes are achieved through angled edges of the walkway units rather than curved parts of specific radii. This allowed flexibility in the final layout of the boardwalk, which changed even during construction due to the complexity of the land agreements and to finesse around critical environmental features.

Walking the boardwalk at dusk in mid-June this year, Al Godfrey remembered that the original brief showed a simple path following the shoreline, but the firm’s impulse was to expand the idea into a more habitable format. Angling between various options — on solid ground, over interstitial marshy expanses, out over open water, close in among limestone outcroppings, under Interstate 35, on shaded eastern pavilions positioned for watching rowing competitions — the boardwalk resists easy experiential categorization. Juror Dan Wheeler, FAIA, remarked, “So often we find these that are hugging at the edge of a river or waterway, and the fact that this one moves back and forth between woodlands to little slivers, to being the broad landscape, vistas — there are these varying levels of experience to it.” Every 200 feet or so, a lookout provides respite from the ambulatory flow. In a couple of locations, the walkway bends around individual trees — a Cottonwood, just west of I-35, for example — and lifts slightly when access to an existing boat dock was required. It is a flexible, responsive path.

At night, minimal LED lighting under the guardrail provides the illusion of darkness, with just enough lumens to allow visitors to navigate safely without challenging the skyline’s glow. There is no signage, currently, which further reduces regulatory visual clutter. The boardwalk is a part of active city life, where one can exercise or, at dusk, catch the bats in their nocturnal commute. “It kind of reinvents the very public idea of a promenade,” Wilkinson says. “I think it’s a fabulous example to be followed with urban design going forward.”

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA, is an architectural designer at Baldridge Architects in Austin.
Opening image The walkway, seen here at an entrance point from Riverside Drive, threads through its riparian environment.

Facing Different shoreline conditions are experienced east and west of Interstate 35.

Above A new view of Austin's skyline at dusk.

Below The boardwalk runs for 1.3 miles on the south side of Lady Bird Lake.
I THINK, ON ONE HAND, HOW YOU MAKE A HOUSE VERY SIMPLE WITH THIS IDEA OF A BOX. A BOX WITH A CIRCLE IN THE MIDDLE, THAT YOU CAN SEE THE SKY, AND THEN YOU HAVE A LOT OF WINDOWS THAT GIVE YOU LANDSCAPE INSIDE, OUTSIDE, IN MANY WAYS.”

— MAURICIO ROCHA

by Jamie Flatt, Assoc. AIA

Project  El House, Houston
Architect  WW Architecture
Design Team  Ron Witte, AIA; Sarah Whiting, Assoc. AIA; Dan Baklik; Sam Biroscak; Mary Casper; Alicia Hergenroeder; Rasem Kamal; Riley Neal; Renee Reder; Geoffrey Sorrell; Sam Tannenbaum; Liang Wang; Peter Di Yi
Photographers  Nash Baker; Paul Hester; Ron Witte, AIA
Opening image A cylindrical courtyard insulates the residents from the densifying neighborhood while keeping them in touch with natural light and views.

This page The materials and color palette, like the form, is simple. Pale blue casework and slate flooring demarcate the kitchen. The finish on the veneer brick refracts light, adding interest to the minimal facade.
El House, by WW Architects (the practicing partnership of academics Ron Witte, AIA, and Sarah Whiting, Assoc. AIA) proposes a new typology for private homes in densifying environments with a powerfully simple reinterpretation of the central courtyard. Set as it is on a quiet suburban street in southwest Houston that has sustained annual property value increases of 10 percent over the last five years, the architects cite the combined pressures of increasing property values and a general desire among homeowners to maximize volume as their original inspiration. The simple, cubic response employs strategic window placement and a cylindrical void to insulate the interior without isolating occupants from natural views or presenting a hostile facade to the street.

Responding to the pressures of value and volume resulting in the jarring collection of adjacent styles, scales, and eras, the typology asserted by El House offers a universal solution. Employing windows at varying heights and sizes to frame views into, across, and out of the house, the architects created 14 distinct “wobbly” view axes to achieve interest and connectivity. Prioritizing views to the sky and the stable parts of the surrounding environment (in this case, established trees), the combination of central void and controlled views protects the interior experience while maintaining broad context connectivity. It is this power as a transcendent typology that differentiates the project. Imagining the rounded central courtyard in active rotation as “it works sectionally up through the building,” jurors noted that the strategy employed “is a model that has a lot of strength.” The clarity of understanding offered by the design and accompanying diagrams is explicit and effective.

FEMA flood zone designations required that living areas of the home be elevated above the ground. Observing that this height increase succeeded in inflating the effective scale of many recently built homes in the area, the architects created a simple detail to achieve the opposite effect. By cantilevering the perimeter of the structure out over a narrow band of white stone, the necessary height was achieved while making the cube form of the house appear to float. At night, perimeter downlights create a soft glow between the home and the ground plane.

Material selection and color palette, like the form, are simple and strategic. Witte described the design team’s extensive research into exterior cladding options that produced the dark gray thin brick. As all brick façades perform as veneer, not structure, the lighter weight of the thin brick made the cantilevered structure-to-ground detail feasible. The specific color and composition creates subtle surface light refractions that add interest to the facade and highlight the curve of the interior courtyard.

Similar restraint is found on the interior. Walls are painted gypsum white everywhere except for the pale blue that sets off the kitchen. Crisp, custom reveals at window and baseboard are consistent throughout. Blonde hardwoods are punctuated only by dark slate at the entry, kitchen, and terraces. Fixtures, cabinets, and technology recede, leaving the focus on the form and intersecting views.

In selecting El House from “the many, many beautiful projects” considered this year, the jurors gave credit to the architects’ restraint. Demonstrating confidence that the simplicity of the mission, diagram and tectonic response were enough, El House stood out for being “beautifully edited.”

Jamie Flatt, Assoc. AIA, is a principal in Page’s Houston office.
The Cotton Gin at the Co-Op District

"IT'S A RESPECT FOR THE EXISTING BUILDING RESOURCES, AND I THINK IT'S ADMIRABLE FOR THAT. WE SHOULDN'T ALWAYS BE KNOCKING DOWN THINGS TO BUILD NEW THINGS."

— CLIVE WILKINSON, FAIA

by Audrey Maxwell, AIA
Two inward-facing cotton gin structures were deconstructed and their pieces reassembled to form an engaging public event space for a growing Texas town.

**Project** The Cotton Gin at the CO-OP District, Hutto

**Client** City of Hutto

**Architect** Antenora Architects

**Design Team** Michael S. Antenora, AIA; Gordon B. Bingaman, AIA; Justin Gesch

**Photographer** Brian Mihealsick, Mihealsick Photography
Perforated metal skin and large glass openings admit a dynamic display of natural light that changes throughout the day. The city hopes the building will become a catalyst for future development, both public and private, on the 16-acre site. The photo above documents the condition of the existing buildings.
The City of Hutto, located northeast of Austin, was established in 1876 with the construction of the International & Great Northern Railroad. The city has a rich agricultural history, particularly of cotton farming and cattle ranching. Once a small rural town, Hutto has experienced significant growth due to the opening of SH-130, which connects to the Austin area and the nearby Dell corporate campus.

The 16-acre Co-Op District site was purchased in 2003 with the idea of using the land for new city facilities and, potentially, private development. Antenora Architects was commissioned in 2009 for a citywide facility-needs assessment. They were later tapped for a master plan and preliminary design for a new City Hall on the Co-op site which relocated and re-purposed portions of the two existing Cotton Gin buildings. The master plan and building design were revised in 2012 with the Gin buildings adaptively reused in situ as a more modest public events center. A future, adjacent City Hall will incorporate remaining stored materials from the original gin structures.

Ultimately, two existing cotton gin structures from 1947 were carefully disassembled, cataloged, and reassembled into one new building on the larger of the two gin buildings’ footprint. The structure was repaired and then reinforced to comply with current code. A deliberate effort was made to identify materials worthy of reuse. Existing roof trusses and columns were sandblasted, scraped, and coated with marine epoxy. Members were reassembled, then supplemented structurally where necessary. New openings and cladding were installed to complete the vision. The new Gin Building alludes to its predecessors, while avoiding outright mimicry. The existing building pad was topoped with 12 in of new concrete and reused, and the building massing is intentionally similar to the original structure. Signature elements of both buildings, such as the awnings were reused and reconfigured. The building skin is a clever reimagining of the conventional metal siding so often associated with agricultural structures. Three sides of the new building are clad with metal panels that match the original construction; the south is skinned with a perforated stainless steel. In combination with glass overhead doors installed in the three center bays, a once-inward-focused structure has been transformed into an engaging public space. During the day, sunlight filters into the structure, while at night it appears as a lantern. It creates a dollhouse-like effect, as if the front facade has been stripped away, the goings-on inside exposed to public view.

Clive Wilkinson, FAIA, a juror for this year’s Design Awards, said of the project: “It was an interesting challenge that the city had about what to do with its industrial legacy, and how to remember the past and also bring it into contemporary use. I think with a tight budget, we imagine, they approached this with a lot of ingenuity about how to revive a structure, to refresh it for the future and re-appropriate it for event space in the absolutely most minimal way.”

The result is a flexible civic building that honors the city’s agricultural past. The Cotton Gin now hosts an array of city events, farmers’ markets, and weddings. It serves as a beacon to passersby on U.S. 79 and portends a thriving, progressive future for the City of Hutto.

Audrey Maxwell, AIA, is a principal at Malone Maxwell Borson Architects.
Edgeland House

"ONE APPROACHES SOMETHING WHICH IS EARTHEN, SOFT, AND NATURALISTIC. AND YOU OPEN THIS CREVASSE AND YOU FIND THIS CRYSTALLINE REFLECTIVITY, AND LIGHT-FILLED SHIMMER THAT ONE IS NOT NEARLY EXPECTING."

— DAN WHEELER, FAIA

by Bart Shaw, AIA

Project Edgeland House, Austin
Architect Bercy Chen Studio
Design Team Thomas Bercy; Calvin Chen; Dan Loe, AIA; Ryan Michael; Brad Purrington; Agustina Rodriguez
Photographer Paul Bardagjy
The house forms a philosophical and physical rift. It finds a continuity with the landscape, a harmony with nature that many projects seek, while presenting a strong metaphor for its disturbance. It yields each idea to reveal the other.

It was this conceptual duality that captured the attention of the jury. “It sets itself apart with the very dramatic concept, but then again at the same time it buries itself into the earth. So it’s sort of doing two things at once: It’s both being extremely bold, [and] it’s also trying to restrain itself. That tension is fascinating,” said juror Clive Wilkinson, FAIA.

The site is in East Austin, between an industrial strip and the river. An oil pipeline ran diagonally through the property, and it was never developed. The owner was looking for a place to build a house on the river and saw potential in the lot. Researching the property, he learned that the oil pipeline was no longer in use, and he sought out the oil company’s participation in its removal.

The owner came to view the land as nature scarred by this pipeline, a harsh human intervention that tore through the natural river habitat. He wanted his home to reflect this scar, this tearing of the natural fabric and sought out Bercy Chen Studio. The architects, who note that the excavation of the pipeline inspired them to draw on the typology of the Native American pit house, created a poignant manifestation of the owner’s idea.

To reveal the singularity of a line, you must remove other forms and shapes, then other lines, until only one is left. Working with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to reintroduce native species, the architect established a green roof that looks as if it stole a section of the adjacent site to appoint its surface. It finds such solidarity with the surrounding site, it’s hard to find its edge. As you approach the house, the roof tilts and angles as if tectonic plates were at work beneath its surface. This uniformity is what gives the jagged tear in the landscape such power. The break emerges as you approach; the land splits to either side, the roof rising toward the opening in the earth as if the surface tension were broken by its formation.

Descending the steps, the plane of the ground passes above you, and you enter a glass canyon. The steel structure supporting the vegetative roof lends a light feeling to this space, with no obstructions from the glazing to the rear walls of the interior. The walkway through the rift separates the public from the private portions of the residence, both of which feature views toward the river. The glazing of each side creates mosaic views of reflections back across to the trees and ground above, creating peeks at the natural environment through angled wedges of space. The vegetation is finding its own way, beginning to cascade down the edges of the roof and retake the hard edges of the modern lines. A triangular pool reflects the harsh angle of the roof and projects its horizontal plane toward as the hill falls away.

The strength of the metaphor is profound, capturing an idea so purely that it may portend larger notions. Yet this is not an architecture of theory, but in fact a beautiful place to be, satisfying a human desire to not only commune with nature, but also to contemplate our relationship to it. Here, one can find solace in the power of nature to adapt and recover. You can feel it as you stand in this break in the land, as the vegetation on either side reaches across and alien-looking insects, snakes, and lizards “mind the gap.” As the tear reveals itself to you as you approach, so the land seems to heal as you walk away, as the gap disappears into the landscape.

Bart Shaw, AIA, is an architect in Fort Worth.
BP Center for High Performance Computing

"IT COULD BE, LITERALLY, A BIG, DUMB PRE-ENGINEERED BUILDING. IN THIS CASE, THE NOTION WAS TO TRY TO GIVE SOME DIGNITY TO THE PEOPLE WHO WORK THERE."

- DAN WHEELER, FAIA

by Andrew Hawkins, AIA

Project BP Center for High Performance Computing, Houston
Client BP America
Architect HOK
Design Team Peter Ruggiero, AIA; Kathrin Brunner; Bob Carnegie, AIA; Francisco Silva, AIA; Gregory Lake, AIA; Joanna Lam; Emily Willner, NCIDQ
Photographer Mr. Steve Hall, Hedrich Blessing Photographers
Opening image Layers of geological sediment and arrays of circuits inspired the pattern on the precast cladding.

This page The north facade facing the highway has a solid pedestal at street level with ribbon glazing above. The conference room on the first floor has become a favorite on campus due to its curving interior space and east-west views. The hum of data is ever present.
Speeding down I-10 west of Houston, it is easy to lose interest in the amalgamation of architecture on either side of the roadway, yet within this monotonous hull of freeway and commodity lies a facility dedicated to the speed of data. The BP High Performance Computing Center on the BP campus contradicts both the adjacent freeway and the existing archetypes of data computing centers. The project, sensitive to its location and function, prompted jury member Clive Wilkinson, FAIA, to say: “We thought it was important to acknowledge it as an example of what these types of buildings could do, which is something that is so often disappointing. This was something well worth applauding.”

Duality of purpose, duality of inhabitants, and duality of responses characterize the facility. It plays two roles adjacent to the freeway that conveys mass numbers of people on a daily basis: It must address this entity too large to disregard (that section of I-10, comprising an astounding 26 lanes, is the widest freeway in the world), while also acknowledging the BP campus that houses it. What the Computing Center shelters is 65% “silicon-based” (the machines) and 35% carbon-based (the humans). While silicon reigns supreme in this structure, the design is mindful of its role as a place where carbon-based life performs day-to-day work activities. The box-within-a-box archetype had to be expanded to put researchers in close proximity to their computations. This duality of response is handled by the separation of focus for each of the three floors within the design.

The building is split on each level between the humans and the machines, a duality not lost on its inhabitants or the design team at HOK. The lower floor is still the area with the most public access, and it addresses the bulk of the main campus to the south: An outstretched, glazed appendage invites users to approach this elevated first level, where the conference room has become a campus favorite. Perhaps paradoxically, there is no pressing sense of congestion or noise, as the 26 lanes of traffic nearby are hidden behind the curved clad north wall of the conference room; this floor purposely turns its back on the freeway just yards away. (The freeway is so close that an auto or two has already entered the stormwater detention area now dubbed the “protection moat” by the center’s on-site director of technical computing, Keith Gray.)

The upper two floors contain both inhabitable space and space dedicated to the business of data computing. These floors expose themselves along the north facade via a rippling wave of ribbon glazing to the bustling of the interstate. The carbon-based occupants get to work in this portion of the building, with its copious north light and sometimes frantic views. The spaces are elevated and insulated from the noise of the freeway, yet just across the corridor the purr of big data computing is all that one can hear. The uppermost floor houses one of the largest supercomputers for commercial computations in the world. In the center of this supercomputing brain is the “Fishbowl,” a glass-enclosed conference room amid the data servers, computing racks, and buzz at the heart of the building’s third floor — a computer geek’s dream space. Sitting in this space — insulated from the heat and whirring, yet fully aware of the computing racks, their continuous blinking, and obvious workloads — the duality of the facility becomes apparent, and the sophistication of the solution even more so.

Andrew Hawkins, AIA, is principal of Hawkins Architecture in College Station.
Hollowcat Wild

“IT'S ALL HANDLED IN A VERY MODEST, CONTROLLED WAY, WITH QUITE A BEAUTIFUL MATERIALITY TO THE WALLS.”

- CLIVE WILKINSON, FAIA

by Murray Legge, FAIA
Project  Hollowcat Wild, West Lake Hills
Client  Lynn Walton and Bill Witcher
Architect  Mell Lawrence Architects
Design Team  Mell Lawrence, FAIA; Krista Whitson, AIA; Kim Furlong; Erin Curtis; Scott Smith; Francois Lévy
Photographers  Whit Preston; Andrea Calo
In reviewing the Wildcat Hollow house known as “Hollowcat Wild,” the TxA Design Awards jury noted its material restraint, elegant detailing, and quiet confidence—all commendable achievements of a well-crafted building. More importantly, the jury mentioned the building’s contrasting relationship to the site, an unexpected approach that conceptually underpins the project as a whole.

The City of West Lake Hills, located to the west of Austin, is situated in an area of densely rolling hills and winding roads. The picturesque box canyons and dense woods, punctuated by spectacular views, have made this affluent suburb a popular place to build for those looking for a wilder setting and retreat from Austin’s growing urban intensity. Wildcat Hollow Road winds up from the lake along the edge of a densely wooded and very steep hillside. The approach to the house is from above.

Turning off the road, you abruptly descend the driveway to a surprisingly empty central courtyard space. Mostly hardscape for circulation and parking, the courtyard feels utilitarian. The only vegetation is a rectangle of grass looking like a constructed placeholder for something green, in the way an architect might shade a green patch on a drawing with a colored pencil, meaning to add something later. Were this a theater set, the green space would be a stand-in for a lawn.

Three figurative buildings compose a rectangular frame enclosing the courtyard space, which is open on one side. The severity of the courtyard figure, with its penetratingly blank interior, marks the daring spatial contrast to the steep, wild site on which it is located. The emptiness and control of this de Chirico moment detaches from the site. A more probable architectural response would have been to work with the slope; however, this building clearly has other ambitions. The austere courtyard space, benched into the steep slope of the site, could be anywhere, giving the project an anonymity at its core.

The lack of spatial transition into the courtyard further heightens the experience of entering it, giving a visitor the feeling that he or she has accidentally stumbled onto a conversation among three characters caught in the middle of an argument. The composition acts as an inverted proscenium, where the three framing buildings contain the personality, and the dialogue is occurring on the perimeter. There is the feeling of a frozen moment where observers are left wondering what the scene was about.

The three buildings are familiar to each other, somehow, while containing markers that identify them as clearly separate. Although all are composed of the same exterior Lueders limestone, each has a different roof treatment. The two side buildings are single-story volumes that resemble each other and act as more typical courtyard wall buildings with rational openings that correspond to their functions.

The third building, a primary figure at the end of the composition, is more ambiguous. This two-story volume is asymmetrically shifted to the east, downslope, as if it were in the process of exiting the scene, having been distracted from the serious mood by the slope and view. The asymmetry heightens the tension among the buildings and leaves the rigidity of the courtyard frame uncertain. Its one large eye looks directly into the roof overhang of its companion, further emphasizing their tentative relationship.

Mell Lawrence is skilled at creating buildings that have a figurative, storybook-like quality. While no less personal and idiosyncratic than his previous works, this new conversation occurs across a tabula rasa at its center giving the project an undeniable questioning and gravity.

Murray Legge, FAIA, is a principal of Murray Legge Architecture in Austin and a co-founder of Legge Lewis Legge.
Opening image Three buildings frame a rectangular courtyard space that is open at one end.

Facing The open kitchen-dining area is filled with daylight from a raised clerestory. An enclosed balcony off the master bedroom looks into the trees.

Left The use of Leuders limestone ties the three buildings together.
"IT'S JUST A VERY FINE EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ADD TO A HISTORIC BUILDING IN A WAY THAT IS OF ITS OWN TIME."

- THOMAS HACKER, FAIA

by Brantley Hightower, AIA

Project Robert J. and Helen C. Kleberg South Texas Heritage Center, San Antonio
Client Witte Museum
Architect Ford, Powell & Carson
Design Team Chris Carson, FAIA; Allison Chambers, AIA; Yu-Long Yang, AIA; Nathan Perez, AIA; Steve Trevino
Photographers Dror Baldinger, AIA
Since 1926, the Witte Museum has sat on the east bank of the San Antonio River at the edge of Brackenridge Park. In the 90 years that followed, the museum amassed an expansive collection of artifacts related to natural history, science, and Texas history. It also acquired an eclectic collection of buildings.

In addition to the museum’s much-altered main building, the Witte campus includes a number of relocated historic structures, as well as Pioneer Hall, a Mediterranean Revival-style limestone structure originally built as a somewhat belated part of the Texas Centennial Celebration in 1938. The Ayres and Ayres design was built as a gathering place for surviving pioneers, trail-drivers, and early Texas Rangers who were still alive in the 1930s. The simple, rectangular-shaped building had three clubrooms on the first floor and a large ballroom on the second. A small lean-to on the building’s backside housed support spaces and stairs.

Pioneer Hall served its original function until eventually there were no surviving pioneers left to gather there. Although it was initially operated as a separate institution, it merged with the Witte in the early 2000s. When a master plan for the Witte campus was being studied, it became clear that changes would need to be made to Pioneer Hall in order for the campus to function as a cohesive whole.

In 2009, Ford, Powell & Carson was hired to assess and restore the interior of the existing 11,600-sf structure so that it could display artifacts from the Witte’s collection pertaining to the history of South Texas. The clubrooms and ballroom were easily converted into gallery spaces. Historic details and finishes — including concrete ceilings that were painted to look like wood — were restored, and upgraded mechanical systems were sensitively inserted into the 1938 building.

The lean-to was repurposed to act as a transition to a new, more open gallery space. New openings were cut into the lean-to’s mostly blank rear facade to connect to the addition. Clad in a combination of steel-framed curtain walls and banded limestone, the modern, 7,000-sf addition acts as the new public entrance for the restored and expanded facility. Visitors to the Witte now enter the rebranded South Texas Heritage Center through an expansive 30-ft atrium that also acts as a new venue for receptions and events. Its large expanses of glass provide views of the river and the Witte’s landscaped riverside campus. A mezzanine acts as a gallery that recreates what San Antonio’s Main Plaza was like in the 1850s.

In addition to its function as a repository for historic artifacts, the South Texas Heritage Center was also designed to accommodate the incremental implementation of the Witte master plan. Earlier this year, its atrium was connected to the new Mays Family Center that acts as a venue for large traveling exhibits and as an event space. The South Texas Heritage Center will also eventually connect to a new Great Hall, which will act as the new public entry point for the entire Witte campus.

Brantley Hightower, AIA, is the founder of HiWorks in San Antonio and author of *The Courthouses of Central Texas.*
Opening image Sitting on the edge of the San Antonio River, the addition breathes new life into a 90-year-old building.

Facing The blue-green color of the window mullions matches those of the original 1938 structure.

Above A grand stair case connects the first and second floor galleries in the addition. The ballroom of the original building houses permanent exhibitions that tell the story of South Texas.
THIS IS ONE OF THOSE PLACES THAT IS SO WELL DONE AS AN ORDERED PLAN WITHIN A VERY POWERFUL LANDSCAPE, AND THE ORDER OF THE PLAN COMBINES WITH THE LANDSCAPE IN A WAY THAT MAKES THEM REALLY ONE THING."

- THOMAS HACKER, FAIA

by Aaron Seward

Project Gewinner Residence, Fredericksburg
Client Jim and Kym Gewinner
Architect Energy Architecture
Design Team Jim Gewinner, AIA; Amanda Smith, AIA
Photographers Dror Baldinger, AIA
Jim Gewinner, AIA, cites the land as his first consideration while planning a house for himself and his wife. “It took a year and a half to find the right property with a buildable location and the right view facing in the right direction,” he says. “As you can see, I like glass. And we knew from living in Houston that a north-south orientation was critical, because of the intense low sun on the east-west exposures in the early morning and late afternoon.” When he found the 10-acre plot at the end of a country lane outside of Fredericksburg where their house now stands, he immediately fell in love with it: The sloping terrain falls away from the road and overlooks a wide, picturesque valley.

Before designing and building this house, Gewinner had very limited experience with residential projects. He spent his 40-year career working on highly technical facilities for the oil and gas industry, most recently with Energy Architecture, a company he founded. After purchasing the site, he took a few years to think very carefully about the land and the house he would place there. The result is a synthesis of landscape and architecture that 2016 TxA Design Awards juror Thomas Hacker, FAIA, says possessed “a kind of interesting Kahnian character.”

“The organization of the service spaces as things that serve the big space of the house allows that space to be completely free and engaged with the landscape,” Hacker says. “That contrast, I think, is very much like some of the earlier work of Lou’s that explored that idea very well.”

Gewinner lined the house’s premier, south-facing view up with the axis of the valley it overlooks. “I didn’t want the eye to get caught at the house,” he says. “I wanted the view to go through, for the house to not get in the way.” While the north-south glass walls keep the view moving through the site, the house is also lifted above the sloping terrain on concrete walls and is accessed by a bridge. This separation from the ground plane also allows air to flow more easily around and under the house, and gives it a sense of lightness, which was important to Gewinner.

There is little to catch the eye, or the wind for that matter, on the interior as well. Gewinner placed all of the service functions — bathrooms, closets, laundry, mechanicals — in a solid, limestone-clad core. A guest room for his daughter extends from the east side of the core, and the living room/kitchen and lofted master suite is on the west side. At just under 2,200 sf, it is modest and open, a way of living the Gewinners grew accustomed to in the studio apartment they shared in Houston.

Gewinner acted as the general contractor on the project, hiring the subs and doing quite a bit of the work himself. He took a similar hands-on approach to the design process. After extensive computer modeling, he built a balsa wood model. Seeing the design in this form led him to make four changes: two related to proportions, and two to the exact location of the garage and the bridge. “It’s interesting,” Gewinner says. “Here in the digital era, we can still learn things from actual physical models that the computer model just can’t touch.”

Aaron Seward is editor of Texas Architect.
Opening image The house is sited to align with the view of the valley it overlooks.

Facing Glass walls on the north and south faces and a minimal, open-flight stair keeps the view moving through the house.

Left The guest room extends from the opposite side of the solid core.

Below left Glass floors at the edges of the loft keep the light and views moving through the space.

Below right Guinter's passion is restoring vintage cars.
Mission San Juan Capistrano

"THEY REALLY LET THE BUILDING BREATHE, AND AT THE SAME TIME, YOU CAN SEE THE HAND OF THE NEW ARCHITECTS, BUT WITH A LOT OF SILENCE. I THINK THIS IS SOMETHING VERY DIFFICULT TO DO."

- MAURICIO ROCHA

by Margaret Sledge, AIA

Project Mission San Juan Capistrano, San Antonio
Client Old Spanish Missions
Architect Ford, Powell & Carson
Design Team Carolyn Peterson, FAIA; Rachel Wright, AIA; Anna Nau
Photographer Mark Menjivar
For three centuries, the five San Antonio missions have been a constant, standing humbly and stubbornly in the face of neglect. Today, as in the early 18th century when the missions were first constructed, parishioners file into the four southern mission buildings every Sunday. A recent renovation of Mission San Juan Capistrano by Ford, Powell & Carson (FPC) has allowed the modest structure to shine again for parishioners and visitors alike.

It is easy to understand how San Antonians could forget that these structures have been altered many times throughout their lives; with the exception of Mission Concepción, all have endured extensive reconstructions. Early-20th-century photographs show roofs caved in and rows of cars parked right up against the buildings. The recent reconstruction projects were funded by a capital campaign by Old Spanish Missions of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, which raised over $15 million and established a maintenance endowment. FPC's projects under the current campaign have included exterior and interior plaster restoration, structural stabilization, introduction of new HVAC and sound systems, and new electrical and lighting infrastructure.

The restoration at Mission San Juan began as a stabilization project to bring the structure back to its original 1720s architecture. Almost thirty 28-in-deep foundation piers were added at the building perimeter; sections of walls were also stabilized above grade, and 20th-century buttresses were removed. Once the structure was stabilized, a new HVAC system was integrated into the interior renovation along with lighting, an AV system, and new liturgical furniture. The western wall was repointed, and remaining walls were patched and plaster washed, lending the exterior of the building a clean, stark, and stunning new face. The Design Awards jurors noted the restraint of the design and the artful integration of advanced technologies, respecting "the simple beauty and character of the existing historical building without really interfering with it."

Before deciding what steps to take, the architects and their consultants did a thorough condition assessment. This included research into the history of the site, as well as on-site material investigations, which attempt to peel back the layers of reconstruction to find the original architecture. Rachel Wright, AIA, of the FPC preservation team, notes the frequent friction between architects and preservationists. She points out that the process of design is the same: research, client, budget, site, and scope are all factors to be considered. For preservationists, most of the decisions are on a more micro scale, with more influence from historic precedent. "If we do a good job," she says, "you can't see the intervention."

The reconstruction and restoration efforts of recent years have coincided with a decades-long effort to restore the riparian ecosystem of the adjacent San Antonio River. This, together with the designation of the missions as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has brought renewed interest in, and foot traffic to, the four southern missions. The nearby river improvements have also attracted developers to the surrounding neighborhoods. Wright notes these changes have resulted in growing pains, but the city is supporting sensible and careful growth; after all, the missions were established with the intent that a city would grow up around them. One of the biggest challenges, with so many stakeholders and so much emotional attachment, will be reaching consensus on the buildings’ care. One of the most important — and least visible — aspects of FPC’s current work is the development of an updated conditions assessment and a maintenance manual for the missions. Let’s hope the manual can guide future generations through the difficult preservation decisions that will give these treasures the care they deserve.

Margaret Sledge, AIA, is an architect with Lake|Flato in San Antonio.
Left: New HVAC, lighting, and AV systems were carefully integrated into the interior of the building.

Below: The restored entry welcomes parishioners to Sunday services, and visitors from around the world to the UNESCO World Heritage Site.
Saint Michael and All Angels Columbarium

"I THINK THIS BUILDING IS REALLY A WORK OF POETRY AS MUCH AS IT IS ARCHITECTURE."
- THOMAS HACKER, FAIA

by Ron Stelmarski, AIA

Project  Saint Michael and All Angels Columbarium, Dallas
Client  Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church
Architect  Max Levy Architect
Design Team  Max Levy, FAIA; Clint Brister; Matt Fajkus, AIA; Tom Manganiello; Matt Morris; D'Jelma Perkison; Jason David Smith
Photographer  Charles Davis Smith, AIA
We are all subject to the effects of time — the beauty and the burden. Architecture is held to the same standard: experienced in time, a project deals with seasonal variations, memory, trends, and timelessness. Max Levy Architect’s Saint Michael and All Angels Columbarium takes maximum advantage of the conditions of time with a clear concept, a heightened sense of craft, and artful inventiveness. Tucked away at a quiet intersection next to the church it serves, the columbarium replaces an open lawn with an equally calm, open-air brick structure. Levy explains: “Our site is framed by mature oak trees. These trees also frame a view of the sky above the site, so this was the starting place for the design. It so happens that the animating attributes of the sky — wind, rain, the passage of sun and clouds — carry with them spiritual qualities. A nice coincidence.”

The columbarium design is not an architectural sound bite that calls attention to itself, yet it is anything but dull. The design jury clearly understood the essence of the project. Thomas Hacker, FAIA, founding principal of Thomas Hacker Architects, comments: “There are a few times that I’ve been on juries like this for design awards where a project presents itself in a way that is so simple and so understated but is about something that is so powerful and so important for us as human beings that it sort of rises above the kind of norm in terms of its poetic content.”

The columbarium at once creates a reassuring, uplifting place for visitors, with a fundamental consideration of the position of the visitor throughout the experience. For example, benches are integrated throughout and positioned to allow visitors to sit “with” a niche rather than confront it. The moments are “there to be discovered,” says Levy, with details such as mirrors placed in the wall that juxtapose a reflected sky with the solid masonry walls and niches, “appealing to visitors, design peers, and the imagination of a child.”

Walking through the columbarium, it’s clear that Levy has created an ordered whole that masterfully leverages sequence, scale, proportion, and materiality to reinforce the connection between the physical and the spiritual: dual trinities bound together in a series of courts that make the elements of wind, water, and sun visible. Dan Wheeler, FAIA, founding principal of Wheeler Kearns Architects explains that, “in reading the proposal or agenda for the project, it’s about three things: the wind, the rain, and the sky. Those three things were not overdone. They were architectural; they were specific; but we found that that gave meaning for each one of the three tiers of the spaces as they were created.” The harmony of materials completes the design intent — the brick, in particular, referencing the hand-built nature while subtly explaining the structure with intimate details.

Wheeler puts the design in perspective: “My office has had some experience with this type of project, and frankly, the lowest common denominator is just to go and buy a columbarium. You buy a packaged unit. And this was actually an act of architecture to elevate that kind of assignment. So we acknowledge that this was a quiet but important piece to include in the repertoire for this jury.” The project is sure to exceed visitors’ expectations; it’s a piece of design that doesn’t let go and instead continues to unfold, the longer and more closely you look.

Ron Stelmarski, AIA, is the design director for Texas practice at Perkins+Will.
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Middle Landscape

Dillon Kyle has been quietly practicing architecture in Houston for 20 years. He handles traditional and modern design languages with equal facility and has built a body of work that defies easy classification.

by Aaron Seward

“I used to play Nerf football on this street with the other neighborhood kids,” says Dillon Kyle, AIA. “Now you never see children playing outside around here.”

We were driving through River Oaks in Kyle’s white F-150, on our way to tour a house he designed that was under construction. There didn’t appear to be much that had changed about Houston’s toniest neighborhood since his youth, at least nothing that might explain the absence of Nerf-football-playing kids. The stately, sober houses, designed in a variety of traditional styles from the East Coast and Europe, still form a charming backdrop to the well manicured lawns and gardens. Though some of the houses are newer, they resemble their venerable neighbors in materials and composition. The few modern homes, many of which have been replaced by still more modern moderns, still recede quietly, respectfully, behind sylvan shrouds. The sinuous black boughs of the live oaks still reach out to each other across the street, forming an intricate trellis over the roadway that blocks the fury of the high, summer sun, letting only a gentle, dappled light fall through to the ground.

“I do love the landscape here in Texas,” Kyle says. “I’m drawn to it. I don’t love the beach or the ocean. I don’t love the mountains. There’s something about this middle landscape, this normal, average Texas landscape, that I find particularly beautiful.”

As comfortable in these surroundings as he may be, Kyle left Texas to go to college. He started
Profile

to study medicine at Princeton, admitted that the sight of blood made him woozy, and switched his major to architecture. After earning a bachelor's degree there, he went to Harvard for his M. Arch. He practiced architecture in New York and the San Francisco Bay area before heeding the call felt by many expat Texans and returning to his home state in 1995. While his wife engaged a clerkship in Dallas, Kyle lived in a mobile home on his family ranch outside of Brenham, where he started his practice. His first project was a house for his cousin. It was never built, but word got around among family and friends, and before long he got another job designing a house, and then another, and then another. A year later he moved the practice to his hometown.

Delving into the residential market in Houston, Kyle came face to face with a factor he had not previously considered: clients with traditional tastes. "I had preconceptions of what it meant to be a student who had gone to Princeton and Harvard. I thought there was a certain look to the work I would do — Capital A architecture," he says. "But as the practice developed, all sorts of work came in, some traditional, some remodels; I didn't have control. I could say, 'well, I'm not going to do work that doesn't fit this preconception,' or I could yield to it and grow a practice in the midst of the clients and projects that are available."

The latter is just what Kyle chose. Today, his firm, Dillon Kyle Architecture, which just celebrated its 20th anniversary, employs 23 people. The bulk of the studio’s work continues to be residential — traditional and modern, as well as intriguing amalgams of the two. "I have always been fascinated by taking polarized ideas, like free plan vs. traditional plan, and melding them and seeing how you don't just accept one or the other. You let there be a hybrid, a different kind of space."

The house that Kyle designed for himself, his partner Sam, and their three dogs (he and his wife parted ways years ago) is just such a hybrid. Located in Houston's Shadow Lawn historic district, among homes designed by William Ward Watkin, Harrie T. Lindeberg, and John Staub, it is clad in St. Joe Brick and topped...
by pitched roofs. The interior, however, has a definitively modern sense of flow, composed of small, connected rooms of slightly varying elevations that are held together by a continuous ceiling plane.

The firm is also taking on more commercial projects, including its own office, which is now under construction on West Alabama Street, next door to the Brave Architecture-designed Sicardi Gallery and across from the Menil campus. Orthogonal and flat-roofed, the steel structure has a narrow two-story podium and a large open-plan third floor that cantilevers out over the parking lot.

Up to this point, Kyle has remained, for the most part, under the radar, conducting his business on a word-of-mouth basis and not seeking promotional opportunities with much avidity (a carport he designed for the Meredith Long Gallery won a TxA Design Award in 2009 and was mentioned favorably by Alexandra Lange in a 2013 piece she wrote for “Design Observer” called “Patterns of Houston”). This project, however, will serve as a coming-out party for his firm, and Kyle is taking full advantage of the prominent location. The first two stories of the building will be clad in glass through which will be displayed the architect’s materials library — a transparent, welcoming gesture that was inspired by the Menil’s open-door policy. The studio itself, of course, is up on the third floor in the tree canopy, also an inspiration for the building and a metaphor that Kyle returns to again and again.

“Trees are the things that make Houston exquisite,” he says. “Trees are kind of like porches, the thing along the street where people get together. The language of trees feels accessible to me.”

After a moment’s consideration, he revises a statement he made earlier about Texas’ middle landscape: “Houston is not a place of inherent natural wonder and beauty. Most of the beautiful oak trees we see here were planted; there isn’t a beautiful forest that we’re destroying. It’s a place where an architect can improve the landscape.”

Aaron Seward is editor of Texas Architect.
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1. E6 Restaurant
   A Parallel Architecture
2. South 3rd Street Residence
   Alterstudio Architecture
3. Cuernavaca Residence
   Alterstudio Architecture
4. The Cotton Gin at the CO-OP District
   Antenora Architects
5. Nutrabolt
   The Beck Group with Standard Architects
6. Hillmont Studio
   FAB Architecture
7. Las Casitas
   Jobe Corral Architects
8. Boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake
   Limbacher & Godfrey Architects
Recognition

9 Lady Bird Loo
Mell Lawrence Architects

10 Canopy
Michael Hsu Office of Architecture

11 South Congress Hotel
Michael Hsu Office of Architecture with Dick Clark + Associates and Studio MAI

12 Juniper
Sanders Architecture

13 The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Academic Performing Arts Complex
Page

14 The University of Texas at San Antonio North Paseo Building
Page

15 Hillside
Tim Cuppett Architects
It's Alive

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Berridge’s “Total Program” integrates all phases of architectural metal roofing and cladding systems, including factory-made products, portable roll formers, and PVDF painted coil, as well as warranty, technical, and marketing support. Berridge offers the industry’s widest selection of factory-produced standing seam panels, tiles, shingles, siding, soffit, and other prefinished architectural metal products.

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Biorev
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Biorev is an International 3D Rendering and Business Consulting Company successfully involved in domains of Architectural Rendering, IT Solutions, and Outsourcing services. Biorev possess the expertise in 3D Rendering, 3D Floor Plans, 3D Virtual Tours, Animation, Architecture Drafting Service, MEP Drawing/Shop Drawing, and R2V/CAD CONVERSION/Sketches TO CAD.

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210-733-8161
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The Cavallini Co. Stained Glass Studio, founded in 1953, specializes in leaded, faceted, and etched glass, as well as protective glazing, mosaic murals, and historic restorations. We offer complete design services, fabrication, and installation performed by Cavallini employees — assuring our clients the highest level of quality.
To satisfy the ever-growing demand for superior products and unmatched protection, Concept Surfaces is the exclusive supplier of high-quality, hard-surface materials. For over a decade, they have been providing designers and architects an unparalleled selection of porcelain tiles, glass mosaics, and hardwoods.

**Centria**

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CENTRIA Architectural Systems is recognized as the leader in exterior metal wall cladding systems. CENTRIA provides solutions to successfully meet the challenges of today's commercial construction industry. In addition to an impressive array of form, color, and integrated components, we also offer the industry's most advanced thermal and moisture protection technology.

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**Concept Surfaces**

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713 524 1956
www.conferencetech.com

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Designmaster Fence is a group of welded wire fencing systems for different fencing applications such as residential, commercial or industrial. The Designmaster Fence product line has five different fence designs: Classic, Milan, Florence, Contempo and Forte.

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International Code Council
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888 422 7233
www.iccsafe.org
The International Code Council is a member-focused association dedicated to helping the building safety community and construction industry provide safe, sustainable and affordable construction through the development of codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes.

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817 478 4848
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MARCOZA architectural castings are used for plaques, name plates, historical markers, architectural letters, memorials, and ornamental restorations. Cast in architectural bronze or aircraft quality aluminum, photographically generated crests, logos, and other images, including custom crafted 3D personal likenesses in a bronze bas relief, are created with impeccable detail from digital files.

**Milgard Windows & Doors**
**Booths 801, 803, and 805**
705 E. Wildfire Pkwy. #105, Grand Prairie, TX 75050
817 525 2601
www.milgard.com
Milgard Windows & Doors, a Masco company, offers a full line of vinyl, wood, fiberglass, and aluminum windows and patio doors and has recently opened a manufacturing facility in Grand Prairie, Texas. The company is known for its top quality products and outstanding customer service, backed by the Milgard Full Lifetime Warranty including parts and labor.

**Minick Materials**
**Booth 330**
326 N. Council Rd., Oklahoma City, OK 73127
405 834 8280
www.minickmaterials.com
Minick Materials is a regional supplier of building stone, manmade stone, and thin stone. Our specialty is sandstone from the Oklahoma/Arkansas formations, including building stone, landscape stone, and retaining wall stone.

**Mitsubishi Electric US – Cooling and Heating**
**Booth 747**
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832 460 7951
www.mehvac.com
Mitsubishi Electric Cooling and Heating is the leading global manufacturer and pioneer of Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) cooling and heating equipment and controls in North America. Mitsubishi Electric Cooling and Heating provides cooling and heating products that yield precise temperature control and zoning for commercial and residential buildings.

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**Booth 717**
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512 835 7000
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**Morrison-Shipley Engineers**  
Booth 706  
13601 Preston Rd., Ste. W770, Dallas, TX 75240  
214 932 3141  
morrisonshipley.com

Laser scanning is a commonly used method of building documentation providing fast and accurate measurements of all building elements in their true spatial relationship. Laser scanning captures a million points of measurement per second producing a collection of 3D points representing the actual structure in true proportion and high fidelity.

**Natural Gas Utilities of Texas**  
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214 549 7149  
www.atmosenergy.com

Natural Gas Utilities of Texas represents three natural gas utility distribution companies (Atmos Energy, CenterPoint Energy, and Texas Gas Utilities) providing natural gas service to residential, commercial, and industrial customers.

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www.nichihacom

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956 239 1320  
www.novidesa.com.mx

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210 444 1376  
www.officefurnitureinteriors.com

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844 576 1364  
www.oldcastl3epa.com

Oldcastle Architectural Products Group is a subsidiary of CRH Industries. Oldcastle/Jewell Concrete Products and Trenwthy Industries manufacture high-quality architectural masonry products across the U.S. Manufactured materials consist of Architectural Block and Gray Block, Oldcastle Segmental Retaining Walls Systems, an innovative wall system called Enduramax, and Insultech. Belgard, our paver and horizontal application group, is also nationwide.

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630 635 5000  
www.ovalfireproducts.com

Innovating Unparalleled Fire Protection Products - Oval Brand Fire Products is a manufacturer of slender pressure vessels, valves and related products. We offer unparalleled accessibility, aesthetics and added functionality, all while providing the highest level of durability and safety.

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Owens Corning is a leading global producer of commercial and residential building materials and systems, including fiberglass, mineral wool and extruded polystyrene insulation. A Fortune 500 company for over 60 consecutive years, Owens Corning is committed to driving sustainability by delivering solutions, transforming markets, and enhancing lives.

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Resources

Boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake, Austin

Contractor: Jay-Reese Contractors


El House, Houston

Contractor: Whitley Construction Services

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Insight Structures; MEP ENGINEER: redding Linden Burr: CIVIL ENGINEER: Andrew Lonnie Sikes

Resources brick: Endicott (Uphurhjmbroimkh Company): WINDOWS: RAM Industries; DOORS & WINDOW WALL: Western Window Systems; SLATE FLOORING: Thorntree

The Cotton Gin at the CO-OP District, Hutto

Contractor American Constructors

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Architectural Engineers Collaborative; MEP ENGINEERS: TTB: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: TBB Partners; CIVIL ENGINEER: Bury


Edgeland House, Austin

Contractor: Bercy Chen Studio LP (Design-Build)

Consultants STRUCTURAL: MJ Structures; SOIL ENGINEERING, PLANT SELECTION, SITE PRIORITIZATION RESTORATION: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center; CIVIL: Waterstreet Engineering; LIGHTS: Agi Miagi, Recht Lighting; MECHANICAL: Bercy Chen Studio, Ehrlich Mechanical; POOL: Bercy Chen Studio

Resources CONCRETE: RCS Concrete Professionals, Lauren Concrete; STEEL: Estructuras Hidalgo; MASTERBED STAIRCASE: Steeleshell (Designed by Agustina Rodriguez); GREEN ROOF SYSTEM (GROWER SYSTEM): Alcoa Geosystems (Geo Solutions); FINISHES: H&H Tile & Plaster (Swimming Pool); DINING CHAIRS: RAD (Ryan Anderson Design); CABINETS: IKEA; PLUMBING: Chabert Plumbing; EQUIPMENT/HOUSING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC): Ehrlich Mechanical; ELECTRICAL: Austin Electrical Contractors; WOODS, PLASTICS, COMPOSITE: US Lumber Brokers; THERMAL & MOISTURE PROTECTION: Sika: OPENINGS: C.R. Laurence; FINISHES: IKEA; RECHT Lighting; US Lumber Brokers; FURNISHINGS: Agi Miagi, IKEA; SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION/ EARTHWORK/ EXTERIOR IMPROVEMENTS: Bercy Chen Studio; DESIGN SOFTWARE: Vectorworks

BP Center for High Performance Computing, Houston

Contractor: Anslow Bryant

Consultants CIVIL ENGINEER: Bury Partners; STRUCTURAL ENGINEER/MEP ENGINEER: HOK; LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Clark Condon Associates

Resources PRECAST ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE: Coreslab Structures; METAL WALL PANELS: Alcoa Architectural Products (MCT Sheet Metal); GLAZED ALUMINUM CURTAIN WALL: Accura Systems (Haley-Greer)

Hollowcat Wild, Austin

Contractor: J Pinnell Company


Robert J. and Helen C. Kleberg South Texas Heritage Center, San Antonio

Contractor: Guido Brothers Construction


Gewinner Residence, Fredericksburg

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING: Smith Structural Engineers; GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING: Holt Engineering


Mission San Juan Capistrano, San Antonio

Contractor: Pugh Constructors

Consultants STRUCTURAL: Sparks Engineering; MEP: James T. Rodriguez Consulting Engineers

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Saint Michael and All Angels Columbrian, Dallas

Contractor: Beck Group

Consultants STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: GSEI; CIVIL ENGINEER: Goodson Engineers; LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Naud Burnett Landscape Architects; MASONRY CONTRACTOR: Dee Brown

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While small in size, the admissions kiosk at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin accomplishes a lot. Designed by Sanders Architecture, the 101-sf pavilion replaced a guardhouse at the end of the center’s driveway that was part of the original set of buildings by Overland Partners. Unable to keep the guardhouse staffed all the time, the center had to place a sign in the window asking visitors to pay in the bookstore. As a result, it was losing as much as 50 percent of its ticket revenue. Visitors also had trouble finding the center once they parked.

Sanders Architecture positioned the admissions kiosk between the parking lot and the center’s main buildings, where it serves as a wayfinding device. To keep the site as undisturbed as possible during construction, most of the building — with the exception of the foundation and the electrical infrastructure — was constructed off-site. This dictated the size and the materials: The steel frame was designed to be shop-fabricated, picked up by a crane, trucked to the center, and rested on its footings. By the same token, the building can be easily moved in the future, if necessary.

In addition to improving wayfinding and revenue collection, the kiosk communicates the center’s more arcane missions. “Everyone can go and pick up on the fact that they like native plants and sustainable landscapes,” says Christopher Sanders, AIA. “It takes digging deeper to discover they’re doing cutting-edge green roof research.” Native wildflowers and prairie grasses planted in the center’s proprietary recycled growing medium adorn the kiosk’s green roof and wall, which are irrigated in part by condensate captured in the AC unit. Photovoltaic panels in the awning produce about 65 percent of the building’s electricity needs, and the structure opens up for ventilation during the six months when AC is not necessary. All the materials are either locally sourced, low-VOC, recyclable, or rapidly renewable, including cork floors and cypress siding. “We were interested in LEED certification,” says Sanders, “but it’s too small to meet the minimum size for a LEED building!”

The kiosk’s vegetated roof is meant to communicate the cutting-edge green roof research being done by the center’s Ecosystem Design Group. The building opens for ventilation during the six months when AC is not needed.