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“We used a combination of Acme Brick for educational spaces and Featherlite’s Hill Country Stone for larger areas to meet both budget and the City of Benbrook’s requirements for facade articulation, across a site that drops sharply. Earth-tone masonry colors allowed the building to blend in beautifully with surrounding residences.”

-Lowell Taylor, AIA, Associate Principal, Huckabee

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general contractor Reeder General, Fort Worth
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## Articles

- **5** Editor's Note
- **6** Contributors/ Letters
- **9** Of Note
- **25** Calendar
- **29** Products: Made in Texas
- **35** Fiction by Jessica Deaver, Assoc. AIA
- **128** Backpage: TheVeryMany

### Special Section

- **109** Design Expo Preview Guide

### On the Cover

One of this year’s TxA Design Award winners: Joy House in Marfa, designed by Kinney Morrow Architecture.

### 2018 Design Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Award</th>
<th>Architect(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lamar Union</td>
<td>BOKA Powell with Michael Hsu Office of Architecture, Christopher Ferguson, AIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 Record</td>
<td>Gendler, Andrew Barnes, AIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy House</td>
<td>Kinney Morrow Architecture, Marcel Merwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Oak Music Hall</td>
<td>SCHAUM/SHIEH, Andrew Hawkins, AIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sombreada Hasta</td>
<td>Rhoenberry Wellen Architects, Michael Malone, FAIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TreeHouse</td>
<td>Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Campus</td>
<td>Barnes Gromarzky Kosarek Architects, Sarah Gamble, AIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumbleweed Residence</td>
<td>Alterstudio Architecture, Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant Springs Residence</td>
<td>Alterstudio Architecture, Jesse Miller, AIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### More Online

- [txamagazine.org](http://txamagazine.org)
  - Examine all six designs for Uber’s Skyport concept (p. 19).
  - Look at exclusive photographs of another perforated house by Havel Ruck Projects currently on view in downtown Houston. Learn about an expansion master plan for the Museum of Texas Tech University by Morphosis.
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Art, Or Something Resembling Art

by Aaron Seward

My first job after college was as a book editor at Edizioni Press, a boutique publishing house in Manhattan that specialized in architectural monographs. I had no background in architecture, aside from a few art history electives, so there was a lot to learn. One early lesson was that there is more than one kind of architect. My boss put it to me this way: “In Europe,” he said, “architects are more like artists. Here, they’re more like businessmen.” He told me that just after we’d met Patrick Blanc, a French botanist who was making a name for himself designing vegetated walls. Blanc wasn’t an architect, but close enough. His hair was died green and his fingernails were long. When asked if he wanted something to drink, he requested a beer, even though it was before noon. He didn’t come off like the people I’d met from the big corporate architecture firms, who were difficult to distinguish from stockbrokers or lawyers. This architecture thing is interesting, I thought, lots of different types of people.

Artist/businessman, to that point, is too reductive. As my familiarity with the profession increased, I came to understand that there are many more facets of architectural personhood: the riled-up, screaming from the rooftop, speaking truth to power, social justice architect, for example; or the butch, tectonically oriented, DIY builder-craftsperson architect; not to mention the tech-geek, parametrically enabled, CNC robot manipulating architect of the machinic domains. There are so many types, in fact, and hybrids of multiple types piled together in strange assemblies, one has to conclude that the role of an architect isn’t a simple one, or easy to define. A year ago in the pages of this magazine, Andy Tinucci, AIA, wrote that architects make images, yet we all know that there are some architects who rarely put pencil to paper, or finger to mouse, but instead ply their trade shepherding clients and, hopefully, steering them toward decisions that will prove beneficial to the built environment: the silver-tongued, dream weaving, natural-born wheeler dealer schmoozechitect.

This peculiar and appealing heterogeneity of the profession was on my mind again while I was in New York City in June for the AIA national conference. Two experiences in particular brought the artist/businessperson dichotomy into focus: attending the 24x24x24 event at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, and observing the ongoing construction of the massive Hudson Yards development next door to the Javits Center.

The 24-hour marathon event at Storefront, which took place on the summer solstice, invited 24 architects to create 24 stools that “provide an antidote to over polished, hyper refined, hyperbolic, and expensive design,” and to present these stools with an hour of programming. One standout was GRT Architects, who made a fluted ceramic stool that was presented with a slideshow of fluted architecture throughout history, sparkling wine served in champagne flutes, and a live flute performance by Andrew Rehrig. The aesthetic inquisitiveness of the visuals, the effervescence of the libations, and the lilting notes of the music (“Syrinx,” among other tunes by Claude Debussy) did much to restore a mind made dull by a day spent entertaining the patter of product reps and breathing carpet fumes in the convention’s expo hall. In a music/image/booze-induced reverie, I found myself standing...

Continued on page 107

Andrew Rehrig performs Claude Debussy’s “Syrinx” as part of GRT Architects’ presentation of fluted architecture at the Storefront for Art and Architecture (left). Local #46 protests unfair wages and conditions at the Hudson Yards development (right).
Contributors

Mark Lamster is the architecture critic of the Dallas Morning News and a professor in the architecture school at The University of Texas at Arlington. His biography of Philip Johnson, “The Man in the Glass House,” will be published this fall by Little, Brown and Company. Read his review of Ben Koush’s new book on the Houston modern architect Arthur Evan Jones on page 9.

Audrey Maxwell, AIA, is a principal at Malone Maxwell Borson Architects in Dallas. She is currently serving as secretary of the Texas Society of Architects, was previously chair of TxA’s Publications Committee, and is a regular contributor to Texas Architect. In this issue, Maxwell reported on the new Dallas Center for Architecture, which is now known as AD EX (p. 18).

Jessica Deaver, Assoc. AIA, is a design associate at Nick Deaver Architect and an avid naturalist interested in connecting people with the environment. She has an M.Arch. from the University of Houston’s College of Architecture and Design and a bachelor of science in Radio-TV-Film from The University of Texas at Austin. An excerpt from her novel “Zero:Emancipation” is on page 33.

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA, is a master of architecture candidate at Rice University and a regular contributor to Texas Architect. Previously he worked at Baldrige Architects and Dyal and Partners in Austin and was an intern at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa. He earned his bachelor’s degree in architecture from MIT. See what he found out from Marc Fornes about TheVeryMany’s new canopy in El Paso on page 128.

Letters

The following comment was left on txamagazine.org in response to “Wall Wasteland,” about the effects an expanded border wall would have on significant architectural sites in Texas, which appeared in the July/August 2018 issue of TA.

Very true, Jesse, as you point out using the pointless, costly, and dehumanizing border wall as example. America, a multi-ethnic nation with a Constitutional foundation of ideals, aspirations, and hope, seems — blindly — to disregard past lessons of history. War not peace; separation not integration. Hopefully this drought of logic and humanity will one day be overcome. Thanks for your touching narrative.

J. Tom Ashley III, FAIA
McAllen

The following comment was left on txamagazine.org in response to “Petal Power,” about San Antonio’s new Confluence Park, which first appeared in the July/August 2018 issue of TA.

Thank you for your commentary on the project. You have beautifully captured the essence of Confluence. And yes, the structure is determinant, part of the structural logic for the design. As a determinant structure, the forces and moments within the petals can be understood with greater certainty.

Charles “Chuck” Naeve, P.E.
Architectural Engineers Collaborative
Austin

I just finished looking at Mr. Payne’s book, “Towns & the Art of Architecture.” I decided to visit the courthouses of Texas and picked up this book at my local library. I loved the book and the passion he shown throughout. I then proceeded to look him up to let him know how much I enjoyed the book, and found out that I am a little late. Rest in Peace, Richard Payne.

Rosalinda Reyes
Freeport

Corrections

In “Public-Private Power” (TA May/June 2018), the client was listed as Southwest Strategies Group. In fact, Southwest Strategies Group was the managing partner of a larger collaboration organized under the name Scagholm Power Development. That organization also included State Street Partners, La Corsha Hospitality, Capital Project Management, and Centro Development.

In “It Takes A Village” and “A View to a Tree” (TA July/August 2018), the credits incorrectly included associate architects. In fact, there was no associate architect on either project. The first was the work of Page, and the second, that of Buchanan Architecture.
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It is one of those strange ironies that, while Houston is considered the archetype of the modern city, its construction barely a faded memory, a good many individuals who actually built it remain anonymous. Oh yes, there are the famous buildings by imported stars like Philip Johnson and I. M. Pei, but it has been locals who have truly defined the place, and none more than Arthur Evan Jones, a Houston native whose work is a good deal more distinctive than his rather forgettable name.

A new monograph on Jones and Lloyd Morgan Jones, the firm he led for much of the second half of the 20th century, should go some way toward elevating his profile. Written by the Houston architect and critic Ben Koush, AIA, it is part of a series produced by the nonprofit Houston Mod that has shed light on underappreciated local architects, including Donald Barthelme, Hugo V. Neuhaus Jr., and William R. Jenkins.

As Koush writes, “The work of Lloyd Morgan Jones stands out for its continuing commitment to architectural quality and large-scale commercial projects and its ability to compete locally and regionally with the work of nationally recognized architectural firms.”

Jones was a developer’s architect, and here Koush perceptively speculates that one reason for his relative anonymity could be the fact that his principal clients were Jewish in an anti-Semitic age.

Among those patrons was Melvin A. Silverman, who, with partner Bennett Rose, commissioned Jones to design Houston’s first modern office tower. The Melrose Building (a portmanteau of the developers’ names) was completed in 1952, and established what would become a standard Houston typology: a tower marked by projecting sun shades that both shielded the interior from the blazing Texas sun and gave aesthetic definition to the exterior.

But it was another Jewish developer, Kenneth Schnitzer, who would become the firm’s most prolific client, through his Century development firm. The relationship began with several smaller projects, and then in 1967, Schnitzer
commissioned the 28-story Houston Natural Gas Building. A series of additional towers followed.

Exactly which ones is a bit confusing, and here we get to one of the hiccups of this book. Essays at the beginning are dedicated to individual developers and typologies, which means there’s a lot of skipping around between names and buildings that have a tendency to blend together. And, while Koush can be an elegant writer and flat-out brilliant critic, the text here has a tendency to be burdened with leaden detail about Houston development. Indeed, the essay sections of the book seem undecided as to whether the focus should be on Jones or on a more general contextual examination of Houston’s growth. Not helping matters is the small type, which makes concentration even more difficult.

Overlooking these missteps — and they are faults of admirable ambition as opposed to laziness — what emerges is the story of a designer and firm of prodigious ability and output. Under Jones’ direction, the company designed something on the order of 2,000 projects, across many scales and types: In addition to skyscrapers, projects include office parks, sports facilities, private homes, apartment buildings, master plans, and more.

As Koush writes, the firm’s work is “intriguing for the dialectical way it not only reinforces the idea of Houston’s built form as the logical result of economic calculations and programmatic requirements but also often poetically encourages consideration of Houston as a distinct place.”

This idea is most effectively conveyed in the book’s projects section, set off handsomely on coated paper stock to better display an extensive collection of drawings and photographs. Here, we see the diversity of Jones’ work, as well as Koush’s deep knowledge and critical acumen.

The great irony of Jones is that the project that will always be his most iconic is one for which he evinced little enthusiasm: the Astrodome. Though it is considered a programmatic victory, the architects of the so-called Eighth Wonder of the World did not consider it an aesthetic success. As Koush notes, when asked by a reporter to discuss it for a 1978 profile, Jones declined, saying it “wasn’t a particular favorite.”

Jones had a very different attitude when it came to the American General Building, the 25-story tower composition along Allen Parkway with a gridded sunshade of precast concrete — a sharp-edged testament to commercial modernism. Reflecting on it years after its 1965 completion, Jones said, “Oh, it was perfect. They just don’t make them like that anymore.”
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Less successful, at least urbanistically, was the firm’s Greenway Plaza development, a self-contained complex of gridded towers that exemplified Houston’s development into a multi-nodal city defined by automotive transit.

As Koush would have it, Jones’ masterpiece is the 50-story Four Allen Center of 1984, a lozenge-shaped tower with a pristine wrap-around facade of reflective glass offset by bands of white aluminum. No less an eminence than Arthur Drexler, then the chief architecture curator at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, called it “the most beautiful mirrored-glass building I have ever seen — absolutely staggering.” At the time, he had never even heard of Jones. With the publication of Koush’s book, one can only hope that this lack of recognition will be less of a problem.

Mark Lamster is the architecture critic of the Dallas Morning News.

Trinity Campus Placed on National Register of Historic Places and Receives a New Master Plan by Page

Trinity University had been located on three different sites already when, in 1945, the school found and bought its promised land: an abandoned limestone quarry four miles north of downtown San Antonio.

The quarry’s uneven topography and littered condition made it an unlikely site for a university campus. Economy trumped ease, however, for the board of trustees, and then-President James W. Laurie bought the site with high hopes of it becoming the university’s permanent campus. They hired Bartlett Cocke and Harvey P. Smith to design a campus that would solidify Trinity’s status in San Antonio, but once again the more conventional path forward was the more expensive one. When the architects proposed a plan in the traditional Georgian style and called for leveling the quarry, the board found it too costly. They recommended a more functional style that utilized nearby resources.

It was at this point that the man who would become the standard bearer of Texas regional modernism stepped in: O’Neil Ford.

Ford had already made a name for himself with projects such as the Little Chapel-in-the-Woods in Denton and the restoration of La Villita in San Antonio when he joined the architectural team for the Trinity project in 1948. With his experience, Ford brought an immaculate vision for architectural and spatial potential. Where the other architects saw a decrepit and troublesome site, Ford saw an organic and intimate campus sprawling across a rocky hillside like a low-lying Italian village, offering some of the greatest vistas of downtown San Antonio in the area.

Over the next three decades, that vision would be realized under Ford’s careful and considerate eye.

Now, 70 years since Ford came to Trinity, his campus has received a national historic designation with the help of Page. The architecture firm has been working closely with Trinity alumni, faculty, students, and staff since 2015 to create an architectural master plan that will honor the legacy of Ford’s design while planning for future innovation and development.

“We always wanted to strike the correct balance between recognizing that an institution providing a 21st-century liberal arts education needs to advance — needs to have current technology, current learning spaces — while preserving its past,” says Page’s project manager for the master plan, Ryan Losch, AIA. “That’s always a delicate balance to strike.”

In working with the Trinity community on the master plan, Page saw an opportunity for the school to decisively preserve Ford’s innovative and integrated architecture on campus by seeking out a national historic designation.

“The fact that you have this collection of midcentury modern buildings that is so cohesive — and the fact you have it done by one architect, and you get to witness one architect’s career trajectory over the course of three decades in one location — is fairly significant,” Losch says.

Page got in contact with Stan Graves, FAIA, of Architexas to walk the master plan committee

Above Ford’s 1950s buildings emphasize horizontality with a uniformity of material and scale.
Left A network of meandering, oak-lined pathways connects upper and lower campuses.
The new master plan seeks to honor the historical legacy of Ford while providing modern facilities. While underscoring the historically designated area of campus designed by Ford, the master plan makes changes to improve mobility and create a more integrated campus.

and the university board of trustees through the historical designation process, and after obtaining their approval, he began to draft the nomination.

The process of seeking designation went hand in hand with the design of the master plan and testifies to the university's and the architects' dedication to transparent and collaborative decision-making. The common theme of the discussion was the tug-of-war between preservation and innovation.

"There's always a segment of people who want to freeze everything exactly as it is or was," Trinity's university librarian emerita, Diane Graves, says. However, there was also a group who wanted to be sure there would be flexibility for change when necessary.

Stan Graves explained how national historic designation could appease both groups by protecting the essential Ford-designed aspects of buildings while allowing nonessential aspects — such as certain interiors — to be modernized when necessary.

Additionally, Graves said the primary merits of designation are that it opens the university to state tax credits, which could fund future projects and improvements, not to mention "the honorific potential behind the designation," since Trinity is now one of only three campuses from the 1950s with a historic designation.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the designation and the master plan is that they bring a new philosophy for navigating the future of Trinity to the university’s leadership. “The approach to problem-solving and space challenges and maintenance was reactive,” Diane Graves says. “There wasn’t good consideration of what would happen in the long haul.” She says the goal of the master plan was “to bring the process of thought back to what we do from now on.”

Walking around the Trinity campus, one clearly sees how the university leadership’s dedication to careful architectural consideration, preservation, and innovation is an extension of Ford’s vision. The architect thoroughly considered all aspects of design — site, scale, materiality, relationships — to create a coherent, intimate, and welcoming campus. Rather than leveling the quarry before building, Ford deftly crafted low, horizontal buildings to be situated onto and into the quarry escarpment, producing an organic flow of movement between what would later be called upper and lower campus.

"The buildings on this beautiful ex-dump-heap are ranged above and below the rock quarry bluff with enough ease and order and interrelation to make them relevant to each
other," Ford said of the campus in 1967. "This has resulted from a determination to put things where they logically belonged, rather than setting them in some prescribed monumental or geometrical pattern."

The buildings maintain uniformity of scale and materiality — two- to three-story buildings and "Bridgeport pink" brick — that make the campus cohesive rather than monotonous. Ford's ability to leverage the site so that each building and pathway provides a distinct view of campus also wonderfully juxtaposes the uniformity of the facades and creates additional dynamism.

Ford intentionally oriented the buildings east-west to afford sweeping vistas of the San Antonio skyline, and he placed buildings just close enough together that fluid pathways could construct a meandering network across campus, producing intimate spaces of interaction fit for a small liberal arts university.

Other aspects of the master plan include improvements such as developing a more streamlined corridor through the core of the campus, establishing a clearer university entrance, and rehabilitating the interiors of the oldest buildings.

"It's rehabilitation which we really zeroed in on, rather than restoration," Losch says. "Because restoration has more of a connotation of restoring back to a certain point in time, versus rehabilitation, which acknowledges the overall aesthetic, the significant features, but allows you to change use if you need to change use. It allows you to change the organization of the less significant spaces as you need to."

As Diane Graves says, "The master plan ultimately will force generations to come to ask: What is the right way to do this so Trinity still feels like Trinity?"

Christiana Sullivan is a journalism student at UT Austin and a summer editorial intern at TA.

Dallas Center for Architecture Moves Downtown and Rebrands as "AD EX"

In 2009, the newly established Dallas Center for Architecture was featured in Architectural Record. The article, by former TA editor Stephen Sharpe, Hon. AIA, discussed the challenge of attracting people to the space. The solution was a faceted glass wall facing the storefront and lit by an "enigmatic sequence of intense colored light." The center was located north of downtown, and one of its aims was to command the attention of motorists driving by on the adjacent highway. When it opened, Dallas was in the midst of a recession and downtown development...
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was focused on the Arts District, a 19-block district of architect-designed buildings. Woodall Rodgers Freeway divided the new center from downtown, but plans for an urban park (Klyde Warren) spanning the freeway were in the works. The center was banking on the new park to bridge the gap to downtown and draw the public off the street.

Fast forward nearly 10 years: Klyde Warren Park has become a major destination, drawing nearly one million visitors in its first year. Development in downtown is booming, and the downtown core finally crossed the magic 10,000-resident threshold. In June of this year, a press release announced that the DCFA would be moving downtown to Republic Center and changing its name to the AD EX, the Architecture and Design Exchange. The new facility will still house the foundation and AIA Dallas, along with other allied partners. Version 2.0 — as it has been dubbed internally — shares many of the same goals as its predecessor. It aims to better engage the public and expand member services, relying on its new location to boost those efforts. The press release lauds the location in Dallas’ “dense” urban core, its street presence, and its proximity to a new park.

Omniplan, the architect of record, warned against the aspirational “build it and they will come” mentality, encouraging leadership to rely on quality programming. To support their multifaceted approach, they brought along a lengthy list of team members: lauckgroup (now operating as Perkins+Will) (interiors); Aurora (creative arts consultant); Better Block (activation consultant); RSM Design (branding); LDWW (rebranding); Studio Outside (landscape); and LUM Architectural Lighting Design and Telios (MEP engineering). James R. Thompson is serving as general contractor of the Phase One interior finish-out. The as-yet-unfunded Phase Two will address desired improvements to the outdoor terrace, and street engagement.

As for the rebrand, AIA Dallas President Mike Arbour, AIA, and Architecture and Design Foundation President Emily Henry say it was a matter of relevancy. The previous name was stodgy and stiff. AD EX (pronounced as two words) was deemed hipper and more accessible to younger members, whose numbers have been declining in recent years. Whether the younger generation will appreciate the change remains to be seen, but texting their BFF will definitely be simplified by the acronym: SCNR. CU @ AD EX.

AD EX will open its doors to members and the public in October 2018.

Audrey Maxwell, AIA, is a partner at Malone Maxwell Borson Architects in Dallas.

Six Skyport Designs Unveiled at Uber Elevate Summit, Four by Texas Firms

At Uber’s 2nd Annual Elevate Summit, which took place this past May in Los Angeles, over 700 industry leaders in aviation and transportation came together to discuss the future of urban air transport. Conference-goers witnessed the unveiling of airport concepts designed by the six finalists in Uber’s invited airport design competition. These airports, dubbed “skyports,” will serve as the main transportation hubs in Uber’s proposed electric VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) aircraft network. By utilizing three-dimensional airspace, Uber’s plans for on-demand aviation are intended to alleviate ground transportation congestion in major cities around the world.

Uber’s brief for the competition called on submissions to accommodate 4,000 passengers per hour within a three-acre footprint. Each skyport must meet the noise and environmental standards of the city in which it is located, with as little intrusion as possible on nearby communities. Because the aircrafts themselves are electric, charging ports are required in the design plan. Uber is working with aviation firms and graduate students from ArtCenter College of Design and Savannah College of Art and Design to create the electric VTOL aircraft.
Perfect Performance

"We wanted to make the project dynamic and energized. The copper screen looks more solid during the day and perforated at night when lights are on behind it—enhancing the urban experience within the entertainment district."

-Todd Walker, FAIA, Principal, archimania
Four Texas-based firms revealed their designs at the summit: BOKA Powell, Corgan, Beck, and Humphreys & Partners. Pickard Chilton, based in Connecticut, and Gannett Fleming from Pennsylvania made up the remainder of the six finalists. While most of the plans are radically unique, many share some of the same characteristics, like considerations for sustainability and an emphasis on scalability.

Since Uber’s Skyports are intended to be situated in busy metropolitan areas, spatial considerations were incorporated into several firms’ designs. Beck, Corgan, Humphreys & Partners, and Pickard Chilton created raised structures that sit over existing highways and parking lots, aiming to “repurpose existing and familiar infrastructure.” A modular design was another common adaptation to the spatial requirements: Gannett Fleming, Corgan, and Pickard Chilton designed Skyport plans based on modular components that can be replicated and stacked as necessary to scale up or down.

Several firms took inspiration from organic sources. Beck and Humphreys & Partners created designs inspired by bee colonies; Beck’s “Hive” incorporates the hexagonal shape of honeycomb cells, while Humphreys & Partners’ Skyport mimics the cylindrical shape of the beehive itself. Both firms used bee colonies as a metaphor for the busy activity of a transportation hub. Living walls were another organic element that appeared in multiple designs, including the plans of Humphreys & Partners, BOKA Powell, and Gannett Fleming.

Given that Uber Elevate aims to implement a new mass-scale form of urban transportation, environmental concerns were central to many Skyport plans. Gannett Fleming, BOKA Powell, and Humphreys & Partners emphasized sustainability in their designs. All three firms highlighted the use of photovoltaic receptors for solar energy, daylighting techniques to reduce the need for artificial lighting, and naturally ventilated, open-air spaces that minimize energy consumption. Humphreys & Partners discussed a two-layer wall in its beehive-shaped Skyport design: an outer green wall and an inner wall made of Bio-Concrete (concrete mixed with calcium carbonate-producing bacteria that heals cracks) to aid in noise reduction, air filtration, and CO2 absorption.

See all the designs at txamagazi.org.

Mackie Kellen is a rhetoric student at UT Austin and an editorial intern at TA.
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## SEPTEMBER

**Saturday 8**
EXHIBITION OPENING
Framing Eugène Atget: Photography and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris
Blanton Museum of Art
200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Austin
dma.org

**Sunday 9**
EXHIBITIONS CLOSING
Body Ego
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

**Wednesday 12**
EVENT
Emerging Professionals Meeting
AIA Austin
801 W. 12th St.
Austin
aiaaustin.org

**Thursday 13**
EVENT
Crew Austin + AIA Austin Boat Tour
Austin
aiaaustin.org

**Saturday 15**
EXHIBITION OPENING
The Nature of Arp
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora St.
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

**Tuesday 25**
TALK
Nasher Prize Laureate Reveal
Nasher Sculpture Center
2001 Flora St.
Dallas
nashersculpturecenter.org

**Thursday 27**
EVENT
Martino Stierli
Futures of the Architectural Exhibition Lecture Series
Glassel School of Art
5101 Montrose Blvd.
Houston
uh.edu/architecture

**Sunday 30**
EXHIBITION OPENING
Concentrations 61: Runo Lagomarsino
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

## OCTOBER

**Thursday 4**
EVENT
Giovanna Borasi
Futures of the Architectural Exhibition Lecture Series
Rice School of Architecture
6100 Main St.
Houston
arch.rice.edu

**Sunday 14**
EXHIBITION OPENING
Laurie Simmons: Big Camera/Little Camera
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
3200 Darnell St.
Fort Worth
themodern.org

**Sunday 21**
EXHIBITION OPENING
Günter Förg: A Fragile Beauty
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 N. Harwood St.
Dallas
dma.org

## SPOTLIGHT

**Cult of the Machine: Precisionism and American Art**
Dallas Museum of Art
SEPTEMBER 16 THROUGH JANUARY 6
“Cult of the Machine” examines American culture from the 1910s to the Second World War and reveals how the American love affair with new technology and mechanization shaped architecture, design, and the visual culture of the United States. The presentation includes key paintings by American Precisionists such as Charles Sheeler, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Charles Demuth, and iconic works by the masters of straight photography such as Paul Strand, Berenice Abbott, and Edward Steichen.

**Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design**
Blanton Museum of Art
OCTOBER 14 THROUGH JANUARY 6
“Making Africa” showcases the work of over 120 artists and designers and illustrates how African design accompanies and fuels economic, social, and political change in the continent. Through sculpture, prints, fashion, furniture, film, photography, apps, maps, digital comics, and more, the exhibition presents Africa as a hub of experimentation that generates innovative design approaches and solutions with worldwide relevance. The exhibition was organized by the Vitra Design Museum and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.
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Dick Clark & Associates Architecture
Edward B Frierson Architect
FAB Architecture
Furman + Keil Architects
Hobson Crow
Hugh Jefferson Randolph Architects
Jackson & McElhaney Architects
James Holland, Architect
Jay Corder, Architect
Jessica Stewart Lendvay Architects
John Grable Architects
J.W. Wood, Architect
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Dri-Design Metal Wall Panels are manufactured from single-skin metal, making them a non-combustible component of any wall assembly. Furthermore, Dri-Design has been tested at UL, as part of a complete assembly, and is NFPA-285 compliant. Although fire is always a concern, it is especially important in high-rise building applications, such as the Aloft/Element Hotel, in downtown Austin, Texas. The 32 story hotel also employed a unitized building technique, allowing the project to be completed on a confined lot, in less time than conventional building techniques.

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Squilinder Fixture
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luciferlighting.com

Manufactured in Lucifer Lighting’s San Antonio facility, Squilinder is a highly adjustable, dimmable LED fixture that provides hot-aim, self-locking, tool-less adjustment with up to 90-degree tilt and 357-degree rotation. Along with its high adjustability, Squilinder offers a range of mounting options: surface-mount-fixed or adjustable, wall-mount up-down or downlight, and suspended mount pendant or adjustable stem. The fixture’s sleek aluminum body and internal heat-sink are precision-cast as a single piece. It comes in four finishes.

Custom Loftwall Panels
Loftwall
loftwall.com

Dallas-based menswear brand Mizzen + Main turned to Loftwall to develop a fashion-forward custom wall panel design for workstations in their open office space to foster both collaboration and privacy. The Loftwall workstation panels use a mix of cedar wood slats sourced from a local hardware store, dry erase boards, and soundboard felt panels covered with performance fabric from Mizzen + Main’s own design department. The system was made in Texas with the exception of the soundboard felt panels.

Texture Intrigue
Wilsonart
wilsonart.com

Wilsonart has added 12 new abstract and woodgrain custom laminate designs to the company’s Virtual Design Library. Called Texture Intrigue, the collection comes in shades of grey, blue, green, brown, and taupe, and works in residential and retail settings. The designs range from rustic looks with nail holes, paint splatters, and saw marks, to distressed, charred, and bleached-out wood patterns. Shown here is Taupe Geo, a medium-scale taupe-colored wood design with plank- ing and an overlaid geometric pattern.
In 2018, Form and Fiber expanded its commercial furnishings to include powder-coated aluminum and steel options for many of their standard designs, as well as custom products. The Echo Bench Series features an Ipe wood plank seat paired with a powder-coated steel base in both stock color options and RAL colors. The base has a slatted pattern and comes with stainless steel leveling feet for adjustment. Measuring 18-in tall, the Echo Bench is available in 18-in and 24-in widths and can be specified in 2-ft, 4-ft, 6-ft, and 8-ft lengths and two cube sizes.

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Architectural Stained Glass designed, fabricated, and installed the massive oak main entry doors of the baptistery at St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Catholic Church in El Paso. Designed by Dennis Hyndman, of Hyndman & Hyndman Architecture, the new Spanish Mission Revival Style-inspired church greets parishioners with a “Descending Dove” design made of mouth blown glass, lead, and solder. The doors measure 23-ft-wide-by-9.5-ft-high, while a round window above measures 5-ft in diameter. The company collaborated with Supreme Glass Company, who had the door lights encapsulated in IGUs by Glaz-Tech Industries and then installed the IGUs in the doors.
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Information can be found at pcmatexas.org and by contacting Chris Lechner at: lechner@pcmatexas.org

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Zero: Emancipation

The following is an excerpt from a currently in-progress novel that imagines a near-future Houston in which natural disaster and economic disparity have gone to new heights.

Story and collages by Jessica Deaver, Assoc. AIA

In the shadow of Upper Houston, Bayou City gurgled in a permanent dusk. The Sun, a star of habit, dipped 18 degrees below the horizon, signaling astronomical twilight. Night was settling in, awakening the wetlands. South Texas enjoyed both the allure and the reality of its reputation; harsh, unforgiving, and wild. Everyone that didn’t drown in Lower City knew just how thin the line was between God’s country and the Devil’s yard. Few remembered it from before. They announced in zero-30 the dawn of ascension, where select communities could elevate citizens 15,000 feet above sea level on giant platforms held up by a grid of piers similar to wind towers. Grounded below the platforms of the upper cities, the earthbound became prisoners of rapidly diminishing resources. Drinkable water became a game of hide-and-seek, with most left thirsty. It was now zero-59. Bayou water ebbed and flowed through Lower Houston, becoming the bond that held those left below together.

Lower Houstonians lived in a constantly shifting state of pre- and post-flood. Each neighborhood responded according to the solutions of their means, leaving a visible timeline of housing typologies. Older areas with elevated homes built on three- to four-foot concrete piles were rare but historically significant in the once-prosperous areas on the west side, their skirting coated slick with fishbowl-like residue. Some of the luckier institutions like the Menil, Museum of Fine Arts, and Chapel of St. Basil were elevated to Upper City, leaving holes in the urban landscape that quickly became skiff towns for the homeless. To the south, long, wide ranch style homes floated on platforms of buoyant columns and pontoons. These semi-submersible residences gave the owners a certain amount of freedom to move from place to place, and could be ballasted up or down by altering the levels of their buoyancy tanks. Long chain and wire ropes anchored them in place. Architectural engineering firms eked
out a living doing underwater maintenance. Entire streets, unable to afford elevation or flotation infrastructure, were peeled into segments and rotted half below sea level. Cheap town-homes throughout the sprawling city shed building materials and chemicals into the floodwaters. Taller buildings in the Med Center, Downtown, and the Galleria opted for a method of containment, sealing off lower floors and creating new entry points. The once-modern principle of connecting inhabitants to nature was no longer viable. Everything was already too close and too raw. Most desired a pristine view of the sky, but it meant moving far from a city center to get it. Out there, it was still the Wild West.

Historically speaking, there were numerous outlier events, each marking a step closer to the end of sustainable life on earth. The heat of zero-31 scorched the ground, drying up lakes and tributaries. Fires on the west coast of the United States charred cities and rural zones alike, pushing predator species into backyards. Wildlife everywhere was thirsty. By the mid-zero-40s, the public was desperate to find answers in space technology, but the increased pressure only heightened the frequency of explosions and accidents among private sector programs. No one expected Orbital Sciences to succeed, but after quietly joining with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration they left Houston for a facility two klicks off the shore of New Caracas. They needed it. Humans needed space. The wealthy were nervous. Everyone hoped there was a better life somewhere off the planet. Houston lost a primary benefactor when the space program left, but Rice University was prepared. Johnson Space Center, with its miles of asphalt, warehouses, and machinery, became home to the International Earth Venture. Universities from all over the world partnered to research agrobiology, life, ecological and environmental science, engineering, extreme habitat design, and sustainability. Acceptance to the program was restricted to the elite, meaning few participated that weren’t arriving from ascended communities. For many scientists arriving at the storied gates of the IEV campus, it was their first experience on the ground.

Not far from the edge of the old highways were the gates to a very different kind of complex: Valero Park. The one-time petrochemical complex was transformed on the notion of rewilding that was popularized by Harvard zoologist Edward O. Wilson and various environmental groups that found their voice in the zero-20s. Principally, rewilded zones were separated from human interaction to allow biological life to regenerate, but that limited human observation of the process. Valero’s parent group, engaged in the rewilding project at its start, tucked tail and finally turned to interplanetary power, leaving room for long-term research into bio-remediation alongside rewilding. One good thing that came out of the second civil uprising in zero-25 was the resurgence of interest in redeveloping abandoned industrial sites into places where rain could be gathered through pockets in the infrastructure. Before the rebellion, codes didn’t regulate how much rain and sunlight could be blocked by the expanding infrastructure in the sky. Companies quickly swooped in to purchase air rights above old factories and complexes, leasing them back to Lower Houston for tax breaks.

Each structure in Valero Park was evacuated of its residual chemical compounds. Over the course of nearly five years, trained environmental teams documented, cleaned, and stabilized the area. Former cafeterias that once fed the complex’s workers became studios for onsite engineers and designers. Bio-remediating plants were spliced with engineered rapid growth genetic doppelgängers cultivated by the IEV. Their success at quickly cleaning Valero Park was widely chronicled and became a standard for regenerative landscape design. “We are now at the leading edge of response to calls for resilience in our grounded communities,” the Houston Chronicle reported. Since the site was located directly adjacent to the ship channel, city mandates asked for proposals that would be flexible for future development. Many of the submissions were for permanent housing for the skiff communities, but Upper City wasn’t interested in bringing those kinds of people any closer to their platforms. Lower Houstonians were just different, the board stated. Aside from housing, the most successful civic designs sought to clean and reuse the site for public good. The most ambitious scheme finally won the commission, resulting in a bio park that began to thrive faster than even the scientists expected. Unbeknownst to the public, the most interesting discovery was a new fungus. News of the finding was buried by media sites more interested in scaring people away from hope. Fear would always sell faster. Two strains of fungus, when introduced to bacteria at the site, colonized polyester polyurethane plastic, causing the material to eventually degrade. IEV was especially interested in developing super varieties that could eat plastic humans were bringing to the space stations.

In order to protect the research and the public, a thick mesh of braided galvanized steel wire was anchored to the bottom of the ship channel and stretched like a porous skin over the cleaned infrastructure. The web was large enough for water, insects, and small animals to pass through, but theoretically narrow enough
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that humans couldn’t enter. Electronic sensors were placed along the perimeter to shock anyone curious enough to try to break in. The skies above Houston remained a superhighway, with thousands of birds migrating south across the Gulf of Mexico each year. As humans adapted to environmental changes, so did other animal species. Avian architecture began showing up in new and surprising spaces, including woven into the web of Valero Park. Thick nests dimpled parts of the structural skin, pushing the exo-layer deeper into the protected zone. Valero Park became a beautiful ruin of Earth’s most recent geologic time period, the Anthropocene era. It was a term proposed by Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen at the turn of the new century to signify what the Encyclopedia of the Earth described as “overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric, and other Earth system processes are now altered by humans.”

Visitors to the park accessed long, metal walkways that laced over and across the high mesh, forming a linear park reminiscent of the Highline in what used to be New York City. The climb up and around the park was arduous, with elevators arriving at designated ramp stations. One reporter called it “an elaborate game of chutes and ladders,” while others saw it for what it was — a giant maze with views across Lower City and out to the grid. The experience of height was still able to capture the hearts of the public in a way that immersive images couldn’t. Novelty was one aspect of climbing through the labyrinth of walkways, but it paled in comparison to the real reason people visited the park. A lily pad-shaped water catchment system delivered rainwater to collectors outside of the mesh. Families gathered in long lines that wound through the wet streets of lower Houston’s East End. They shuffled along in line for hours a day to receive the legal minimum of two liters of drinkable water. The public water infrastructure was privatized to bolster the South Texas economy in the wake of the oil collapse. It left the poor grasping for ways to stay alive, since Houston’s natural precipitation required costly water treatment. The water industry evolved into joint utilities and private securities. Armchair naturalists and students of ecology speculated that the universities and research groups from the IEV maintained hidden entries to Valero Park, which were off limits to the public. “Those entries would have to be underground, and anything below the surface is too unstable to permit construction of passageways,” the IEV operations director argued. “The park,” he continued, “was designed as a time capsule waiting to be opened once the site was ecologically viable.” As each year passed, the dehydrated public lost interest in the park, and the wild grew wilder.

Inside, the enclosed park was dank and thick with a briny scent. Sounds creaked and croaked, intermingling with wind pushing through the steel mesh and accompanied by a steady beating. Rhythmic as a heartbeat and more insistent than the heat, something slid its way through the tall grasses. A unique microclimate developed, in which various species thrived. Several years into the Valero Park project, a group of scientists entered the compound to take readings and collect samples. Their trip, scheduled to last only a few hours, dragged into night. Radio communications were cut off by a rapidly approaching tropical storm and flash flood. After three days with no word from the scientists, rescue operations were discussed. Before the rescuers could be deployed, however, two of the scientists returned. Reports of a rash and infected insect bites were released and ignored. One of the surviving scientists didn’t live long, and the other never spoke publicly about the ordeal. IEV and local authorities investigated, but decided not to enter the park in search of the others. It was a “closed loop,” they argued. Around that time, another off-planet explosion was verified, and many were reluctant to revisit the strange, unknown world inside Valero Park.

Despite the shadow of the platforms above, the rain seemed to fall sideways, leaving Lower City one step closer to vanishing into the bayou. Plastic snakes of debris lined the slippery, cracked roads, where blocks of houses, their roofs crushed under the weight of time, were reclaimed by unidentifiable species of vine. Vacant lots and abandoned buildings marked the least successful revitalization efforts and became havens for black market activities. Streets were lined with electronic billboards, creating a forest of digital haze selling a way of life that remained foreign to most of the world. One billboard stood above the rest, projecting a real-time Doppler weather radar map alongside flood warnings. For people living grounded, each flood event eroded the edge of their lives inch by inch.

Life felt tenuous in the astronomical darkness 18 degrees below the horizon. For decades, upper cities justified their existence, while lower cities decayed. Only a few media sites tried to remain objective, searching for ways to unify the growing policy divide. This was not a story of cities, but of how nature could take as much as she gave. The struggle felt by every resident above and below was more than a fight for resources or human rights; it was a grenade, waiting for the right amount of pressure to go off. In the final days before the end of cities, the journey begins.

Jessica Deaver, Assoc. AIA, is a design associate at Nick Deaver Architect. She lives in Austin and Houston.
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9/10 2018 Texas Architect 41
REDEFINING ROOFTOPS
CREATING ROOFTOP ENVIRONMENTS

project: Austin Central Library (Austin, TX) | architects: Lake|Flato and Shepley Bulfinch | architectural photographer: Leonid Furmansky

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The Texas Society of Architects 2018 Design Awards jury met on May 10 and 11 in Austin to review 259 entries from across the state. After a thorough deliberation process, the jury, which did not know the identities of the submitting architects, selected 14 winners that represent a wide array of project scales and types, ranging from large mixed-use urban developments to temporary installations.

The Jury

"I think what's really interesting about the entries we saw were that a good amount of the larger entries or more public entries were actually sometimes private entities sponsoring public space. I thought that was a really welcoming sight here in Texas. On the housing front, there are a significant amount of mid-century modern houses that seem to be prevalent or on trend right now, and we worked through each one and enjoyed seeing the array of them."

– Vivian Lee, LAMAS, Toronto

“What I observed was there is no ‘Texas’ architecture. In fact, it’s as varied and big as the state is, and we saw projects from huge large scales to the most intimate and the smallest. There was no defining style or even attitude about architecture. We saw a great deal of skill of craft and sensitivity to materiality at the highest level, and a burgeoning awareness of performance characteristics, both for energy sensitivity to landscape environment and just general sustainable principles.”

– Anne Schopf, FAIA, Mahlum Architects, Seattle

“I thought that the projects I saw from Texas this year raised a lot of interesting questions about the future direction of architecture, and the role and agency of architects in confronting some of the challenges that humanity is facing.”

– Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA, Curry Stone Foundation, Berkeley

“There was a breadth of projects of various scales and typologies. The attention to design and thinking about the building relationship to the context and to the urban environment was quite evident in the work that we saw. Also, I would observe that modernism is alive, and architects in Texas are developing and mastering the modern Texas vernacular language.”

– Mehrdad Yazdani, AIA, Yazdani Studio, Los Angeles
- ERIC CESAR, ASSOC. AIA

SOMETHING THAT'S MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY.

TOWARD SOMETHING THAT'S MORE INTEGRATED.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THAT AND WANTING TO MOVE

BUILT EFFECTIVELY FOR CARS AND WE'RE REALIZING

TO DEAL WITH THIS LEGACY OF A WORLD THAT WE

TEXAS, AND EVERY CITY IN THE UNITED STATES, HAS

OF HOW TO RE-CREATE PUBLIC SPACE. EVERY CITY IN

'LAMAR UNION WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE

Lamar Union Awards Design 2018
As urban centers throughout Texas continue to be affected by the ever-evolving role of the automobile, jurors gravitated toward Lamar Union as an example of responsible redevelopment — a model that shifts focus from environments that cater to cars to those designed for density and an elevated pedestrian experience.

Boasting nearly 450,000 sf of program, exclusive of parking, the nine-acre site, originally developed in the 1950s as a car-centric shopping center, was transformed into a colorful and economical mixed-use development through a collaboration between BOKA Powell and Austin-based Michael Hsu Office of Architecture.

“We were fascinated by how it transformed a car-oriented retail center to something that was more pedestrian-oriented: Relating to the sidewalk — creating spaces where pedestrians can engage with the retail — the treatment of the massing and the delineation of the material and the use of color was quite admirable,” says Mehrdad Yazdani, AIA.

Indeed, the team’s submission documents deftly underscore these particular moments. Most slides feature unpopulated, wide-angle, and richly saturated photography that would just as easily feel at home in a leasing brochure. Photographs of the residential terrace at dusk, taken poolside while looking out over the Austin skyline, are married with adjacent slides of ground-floor storefronts along Lamar Boulevard at daybreak. The photography as presented is strategic: The presentation insists that these are dynamic environments that speak to crafting a walkable, 24/7 urban zone, a place that at once identifies as quintessentially Austin, while also keeping the city at a comfortable arm’s length, when desired.

“I am quite familiar with Lamar Boulevard,” Yazdani says. “It’s a vehicular thoroughfare. The street is populated by a collection of different-scale commercial buildings with large signage and buildings surrounded by parking lots.”

It’s a description that any Austinite would consider apropos, and an urban condition that the project team emphasized throughout the award submission. Long-exposure imagery with trails of headlights streaking across the foreground lends the colorful development a poise and sense of place. By later introducing imagery featuring softer, more intimate pedestrian moments, the project clearly reads as a refuge from the boisterous thoroughfare often lamented by locals.

“Many of the attempts at doing this [type of development] are really superficial and cheesy,” says Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA. “We thought that this project actually did an effective job of bringing safe spaces away from the road and creating moments of interaction between different populations of people.”

Christopher Ferguson, AIA, is an architect at Clickspring Design and co-founder of DO.GROUP.
One Legacy West

"IT LOOKED LIKE IT COULD BE A VERY FUNCTIONAL COMMERCIAL OFFICE BUILDING, AND WE WERE CONVINCED IT WOULD BE A TIMELESS STRUCTURE THAT WOULD SURPASS ALL THE FASHIONABLE EXPRESSIONS THAT COME THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE."

— MEHRDAD YAZDANI, AIA

by Michael Friebele, Assoc. AIA

Location Plano
Client Gaedeke Group
Architect Morrison Dilworth + Walls
Design Team Mark Dilworth, AIA; Lionel Morrison, FAIA; Joanna L Hampton, AIA; Brett Milkovich
Photographers Charles Davis Smith, FAIA; Wesley Tunnell, AIA

Designed as an understated expression of the structural system and used as a multi-tenant office space, the 300,000-sf project stands out among its North Dallas surrounds, a key component of the real estate strategy.
The line between Plano and Frisco today is a developed blur of projects referencing the history and context of the past: corporate campuses influenced by the rolling terrain of the Hill Country, copious amounts of limestone, and numerous allusions to the Shawnee Trail. Point, and you will find one. One Legacy West, on the other hand, is a white box, referencing nothing and responding to very little. It's an anomaly of sorts.

It was clear the jury expected an outcome quite different from a speculative office building. “There was quite a bit of debate among us about the project,” says Mehrdad Yazdani, AIA. “As we know, commercial office buildings have gone through transformations over the years. More and more, they are becoming buildings that are highly sculpted and highly articulated to attract tenants.” One Legacy’s neighbors, like the new Toyota headquarters and J.C. Penney’s complex, are good examples of what Yazdani is talking about. They explore a narrative driven by context, and too often their intent is rendered vapid in built form, hollow in meaning as the diagram breaks down to parking and functional demands.

One Legacy West, on the other hand, is an act of restraint and clarity — a clean form that thinks of itself as nothing more than a functional object that gives tenants exactly what they need. “It was a brave and refreshing thing to see the designer retreat towards a more logical and expressionist history where the logic and the structure can be read easily from the outside,” Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA, says. “The detailing was meticulous and was done in the right spirit.”

The composition of One Legacy West is not without fault. It’s another instance where you wish parking was nonexistent. However, the bridge that connects the garage and the tower is as spatially simple and finely detailed as any part of the building, extending the experience of the building beyond the envelope.

The clarity of the building diagram, from form to detail, was matched by the clarity of the presentation put before the jury. In 12 slides, the architects described the building through a site plan, a ground level plan, and photography that showed its refined interior and exterior details, the qualities of space it creates, and its expansive, suburban context. It conveyed One Legacy’s unique distinction as a refreshingly different place in Dallas’ northern suburbs.

Michael Friebele, Assoc. AIA, is a project designer at Perkins+Will Dallas.
Above left The dedication to the grid was carried through the bridge that links the building to its parking garage.

Above right The lobby is as spare and refined as the facade.

Left It's an object in the landscape par excellence, but it also achieved a high level of sustainability, earning a LEED Gold certification.
Facing Airport Boulevard, the western facade serves as the primary entry to the adapted structure and larger campus.

"THE HIGHLAND CAMPUS IS INCREDIBLE BECAUSE IT TAKES A TYPOLOGY THAT ALL CITIES HAVE — ESPECIALLY NORTH AMERICAN CITIES, WHICH IS THIS MALL — AND, INSTEAD OF LEAVING IT AS A DERELICT BUILDING THAT POTENTIALLY HAS TO BE DEMOLISHED, THEY'RE TAKING THAT INFRASTRUCTURE AND USING IT AS A COLLEGE CAMPUS."
— VIVIAN LEE

by Sarah Gamble, AIA

Location Austin
Client Austin Community College
Architect Barnes Gromatzky Kosarek Architects (BGKA)
Design Team Jay W. Barnes III, FAIA; Lauren Goldberg, AIA; N. Thomas Kosarek, AIA; Rick Moore, AIA; Ray Vela
Photographer Casey Dunn
 Highland Mall is in the process of being transformed into a mixed-use neighborhood at the heart of which is Austin Community College’s (ACC’s) new Highland Campus. As part of Phase One, BGKA was hired to redesign the 207,000-sf former J.C. Penney store into an academic hub for North Central Austin. Described as “a brilliant adaptive reuse project” by Vivian Lee, this dead retail eyesore has been transformed into a welcoming, public amenity for student learning.

At the time of its completion in 1971, Highland Mall was the third-largest shopping center in Texas, with 80 retail spaces and more than 750,000 air-conditioned square feet. Through a private-public partnership between Redleaf Properties and ACC, the mall structure and its parking lots are being redeveloped into multifamily housing, retail, office, and educational space, totaling over three million square feet that will be accessible by Capital Metro’s light rail and bus lines. Over the coming years, ACC will transform the entire mall structure and construct several buildings within the new Highland neighborhood to create its largest campus to date.

Designers have transformed the exterior from monolithic to engaging, using texture, pattern, and volumetric modulations to break down previously impenetrable facades. The western face, oriented to Airport Boulevard and the terminus of Denson Drive, was a straightforward choice for the primary entry and campus signage. The school’s star logo is stamped in repetition beneath a new two-story porch structure with rhythmic columns, creating a dynamic screen that shields the expansive glass from the western sun. Along the northern face, a significant re-grading reveals more of the envelope, channeling natural light to the ground floor through a series of vertical windows.

Inside, a two-level “Academic Street” became the primary organizing device running east-west from the main entry. This internal backbone is activated by a 170-ft-long linear skylight, which illuminates the ground floor by means of cuts in the heavy floor plates. The original concrete structure is exposed throughout, and complemented by the brightly colored furnishings, streamlined finishes, and diverse lighting. At the center, a social stair facilitates circulation and interaction, while the café beneath promotes gathering for extended periods. Upstairs, classrooms, laboratories, and office spaces line the Academic Street and secondary corridors. Downstairs, students access classroom learning spaces, a media center, and the ACCelerator—an open work environment designed for self-paced learning and collaboration, with 604 computer stations and small study spaces.

BGKA has captured ACC’s vision and set a new precedent for sustainable adaptation of this familiar American typology. “What do we do with these buildings?” Mehrdad Yazdani, AIA, asks. “Do we erase them? Do we reposition them?” The success of ACC presents a strong case for repositioning and calls communities to consider a range of unlikely inhabitants for these vacant retail giants.

Sarah Gamble, AIA, is an architect in Austin.
Facing left Along the northern facade, a series of terraces align with vertical windows introduced after significant grading.

Facing top right Natural light permeates the interior through a 170-ft-long skylight above the two-level “Academic Street.”

Facing bottom right An iconic stair connects the first and second levels, serving as a hub of circulation and gathering.

Left Occupying half of the first floor, the ACCelerator is the world’s largest high-tech learning environment designed for self-paced learning.
Just north of downtown Houston, at the edge of I-45 and the banks of the Little White Oak Bayou, sits White Oak Music Hall. This campus of several entertainment venues was designed by SCHAUM/SHIEH and consists of both indoor and outdoor performance spaces. "We really respected the complexity of the program that was delivered to the architects, and the way in which they handled that complexity in a very convincing way that could really revitalize the neighborhood and be an anchor to a different kind of mobility that's now emerging in this neighborhood of Houston," Anne Schopf, FAIA, says.

The hall encloses two stages: one on the main floor and mezzanine, for an audience of 1,200, and a smaller, 220-capacity venue on the upper floor. The outdoor landscape-and-turf-grass amphitheater accommodates 3,500. The building has two balconies and a roof terrace that overlook the outdoor stage. Whether you're standing on one of those platforms, or lounging in the grass of the amphitheater, the full scenic skyline of Houston is in full view.

The building — both interior and exterior — is clad in simple, durable materials. "The White Oak Music Hall attracted a lot of attention from the jury because it was done very subtly," Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA, says. "There were no grand gestures, but it managed to create a grand space."

The building reveals its program while attempting to achieve a monumental architectural expression by simple means, shown in the black-to-white gradient of the horizontally oriented fiber cement lap siding. Cedar boards backed by rockwool insulation provide acoustic dampening in the main performance space inside and on the facade of the building that faces the outdoor stage. There are three bars inside — each realized by means of a different material: wood; metal; concrete. While many of the materials are budget-conscious, the architects did custom-design most of the doors, focusing money and effort on those aspects of the architecture that people actually touch. "We thought the application aptly demonstrated that it was being used and being enjoyed by the community, with a minimal exertion of effort [and] minimal exertion of materials," Cesal says.

The project is near the newly expanded light rail and connects to the ever-growing Houston Bayou Hike and Bike trail network. These alternative transit options, along with the venue's ability to foster community gatherings, influenced the jury's view of the project and its contributions to the neighborhood.

Andrew Hawkins, AIA, is principal of Hawkins Architecture in College Station.
Anne Schoepf, FAIA

Retail Design:

It is really learning this idea of sustainable retail. It was able to achieve, which are very admirable.

RECOGNIZE THIS PROJECT FOR THE ACHIEVEMENTS WE FELT THAT IT WAS REALLY IMPORTANT TO

Treehouse
The project puts its net-zero features on display, including a large rooftop photovoltaic array.
Clockwise from right. North-facing clerestory windows fill the interior with daylight. The building systems were left exposed, part of the company’s ethos. A wood-encased stair leads to the upper-level classrooms and offices.
Heading north along Highway 75 in midtown Dallas, as you cross over Walnut Hill Lane, if you look to your right, you can catch a glimpse of an irregular saw-tooth shaped roof covered in solar panels. Depending on the time of day, you might be able to stare at it for quite some time. This new structure may seem a bit out of place in a highway-adjacent district of pubs, restaurants, and shops, but from any distance you can conclude that this is not your typical home improvement store.

This part of town has undergone a resurgence of late, involving renovations and tear-downs of “outdated” retail strip centers. In the midst of this regeneration is TreeHouse, Dallas. Designed by Lake|Flato, the 30,000-sf net zero energy retail shop provides consulting services and products for sustainable home construction and renovation to compatible — or just curious — average consumers. “[We felt that] the TreeHouse Flagship Store … was an important project to recognize,” Anne Schopf, FAIA, says. “It’s groundbreaking, in that it’s net zero as a big box store. It doesn’t look like a box store.”

The structure has a character unique to the local area and to TreeHouse’s purpose. The large entry overhang gives a welcoming view on the interior while accentuating the large roof structure and pointing up its solar capabilities. It also directs attention to the outdoor sales area that was designed to protect the single existing heritage red oak tree.

The interior spaces are sparse, with a limited material palette. Most of the systems and elements of the building are exposed, a move that expresses the ideology of the company.

Large north-facing clerestory windows on each section of the saw-tooth roof admit a gracious daylight that cascades throughout the volume. Depending on the cloud conditions, the clerestories are the only source of light in the space. The open floor plan allows the light to permeate the spaces, which are arranged around the central core of the main circulation stair, services, and the Tesla battery cluster that powers the facility. The monumental wood-encased stair leads to upper classrooms and office areas. The display of the Tesla battery bank is used as an educational tool for visitors. The synthesis of the client’s ideologies and the design and construction of the project attracted the jurors.

“It’s a responsibility to fuse whatever the sort of social or corporate agenda is along with aesthetics and choice of material, and a responsibility both to the community and to the planet,” said Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA. “There was a tight integration between the choice of materials, the design choices going into the building — as well as the social agenda and corporate strategy of TreeHouse.”

Andrew Hawkins, AIA, is principal of Hawkins Architecture in College Station.
Tumbleweed Residence

"THE TUMBLEWEED RESIDENCE, I THINK, WE ALL FEEL LIKE WE ALL JUST WANT TO MOVE IN. IN THE SPAN OF ALL THE RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS WE SAW, IT SORT OF SITS IN THE MIDDLE AS FAR AS SQUARE FOOTAGE. IT'S NOT REALLY BIG AND IT'S NOT REALLY SMALL. YOU HAVE THIS SENSE OF IT BEING MODEST AND BEING APPROACHABLE."

– ANNE SCHOPF, FAIA

by Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA

Location Austin
Architect Alterstudio Architecture
Design Team Kevin Alter; Ernesto Cagnolino, FAIA; Tim Whitehill; Michael Woodland, AIA; Daniel Shumaker, AIA
Photographer Casey Dunn
Located on an expansive site in the hills of West Austin, the Tumbleweed Residence’s abstracted, undulating stucco masses stand in contrast to the more tactile nature of the interior’s steel, concrete block, and wood finishes. Careful detailing and craftsmanship illuminate qualities inherent in the home’s simple material palette.

"The Tumbleweed Residence stood out not only for its use of masonry, but also for the fact that those two volumes really create a very beautiful sculpture," Vivian Lee says. "We loved that it follows the Texan shed typology but re-dresses it with this new material that is quite thick. You can see it in the way that they address the windows, which are far recessed from the face of the building." Lee’s favorite detail, however, was the ordered way in which the standing seam roof meets the undulating stucco walls: with a clean finish that allows the masses to sing as sculptural volumes.

Evidence of the craftsman’s hand is found throughout the Austin home: in the welds of the custom steel windows; in the tool marks of the waxed hot-rolled steel panel at the kitchen island, and in the hand-turned walnut seats of the barstools.

“This was a project that was the counterpoint to many of the houses where we saw a more constructivist exterior and then the interiors were stripped of details and very homogenized,” says juror Anne Schopf, FAIA. Instead, the Tumbleweed Residence carves out a somewhat uniform — though beautiful — exterior shape, displaying its “tectonics” on the interior, in the form of a layered wall, for which the concrete block forms the basic structure with modest insertions of fireplace and detailing. “We saw a lot of very Miesian houses, and I think this struck us as a different vocabulary. The softness of those exterior forms [was] a relief to a lot of the hard-edged vocabulary that we’re seeing throughout many of the entries. That may be why it initially stood out to us, but as we looked deeper at the project — even studying the elegant and restrained plan — we really couldn’t find any place where it was out of step.”

Anastasia Calhoun, Assoc. AIA, works at Overland Partners in San Antonio.
**Facing** The kitchen and living space extend to a terraced outdoor patio overlooking the creek bed.

**Below left** The stand-alone studio features a sleeping loft and kitchen, doubling as guest quarters.

**Below right** Craftsmanship is showcased in the waxed hot-rolled steel panel at the kitchen island and hand-turned walnut seats of the barstools.
The roof of the house envelops an existing mature tree at the main entrance.

Constant Springs Residence


— MEHRDAD YAZDANI, AIA

by Jesse Miller, AIA

Location Austin
Client Robert C. Hill and Julie Hill
Architect Alterstudio Architecture
Design Team Kevin Alter; Ernesto Cragnolino, FAIA; Tim Whitehill; Joseph Boyle, AIA; Michael Woodland, AIA; Sara Mays
Photographer Casey Dunn

2018 Design Awards
The interaction with the landscape, the simple yet dynamic roof, and the overall attention to detail fill the home with fine moments.

The Constant Springs residence by Alterstudio is a home for a family of four in Austin. The project earned praises from the awards jury by focusing on the key features that make this house stand out — mainly how the house interacts with the landscape, and its dynamic roof.

The form of the house seems to embrace the landscape of the front yard via the roof as it bends around an existing mature tree and then envelopes another at the main entrance. The motion of the roof and the guiding forms of the exterior walls draw the view to the front entrance, where the warmth of the cedar ceiling and walls and ipe deck creates an inviting threshold to view through the floor-to-ceiling glazing. Here, light plays on the finishes and furnishings in the house against the backdrop of the dense tree cover in the backyard beyond.

At the back of the house, the landscape is treated with equal reverence. In the spirit of, at once, restraint and celebration, the dense tree foliage at the rear of the property is left untouched. The back patio creates an overlook of the escarpment where it runs to meet the creek below. The pool is positioned at this vantage point, and above it the roof opens up, bringing an airy feel that emphasizes the value of the space.

The roof had a striking effect on the jury. “One of the really great things about the Constant Springs Residence is that the roof plane moves over the pool and creates a nice oculus, and frames the different views both internally and externally,” said juror Vivian Lee. Other jurors noted how the roof, with its gentle shifts and openings, seems to dance with the living boxes below.

Alterstudio highlighted a unique detail in the story of the house, one that resonated with the jury: The home was built by its owner as his first significant project as a general contractor. “This particular building was built by the client,” Mehrdad Yazdani, AIA, said. “The client acted as a contractor, so it was delightful to see the attention to the craft and the detailing of the building.”

The interaction with the landscape, the simple yet dynamic roof, and the overall attention to detail fill the home with fine moments. Framed views in and out of the house are lively from day to day and season to season. The detailing and finishes are augmented by light and reflections off the roof and the full-height glazing. The design, story, and landscape come together to create a memorable experience.

Jesse Miller, AIA, is an architect with Megamorphosis in Harlingen.
FLOOR PLAN
1. ENTRY DECK
2. ENTRY
3. FAMILY ROOM
4. BEDROOM
5. MASTER BATH
6. MASTER CLOSET
7. MASTER BEDROOM
8. POWDER
9. DECK
10. POOL
11. LIVING/DINING
12. KITCHEN
13. MUDROOM
14. OFFICE
15. GARAGE
VIVIAN LEE

OF THE TYPOLOGY:

THIS FRONT PORCH, WHICH SEEMS TO BE CLASSIC LIKE A BED AND BREAKFAST, BUT EVERYONE SHARES MAJORITY, IT’S NOT REALLY QUITE A HOUSE. IT FEELS INSIDE/OUTSIDE, PUBLIC/PRIVATE; LIGHT AND HEAVY. IT REALLY PLAYED UP THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN

THE JOY HOUSE IS ONE OF MY FAVORITES. I THOUGHT

Joy House
by Marcel Merwin

Location Marfa
Client Kok Lye and Joy Ohara
Architect Kinneymorrow Architecture
Design Team Michael Morrow, AIA
Photographer Casey Dunn

The Joy House’s existing front porch unifies three separate units with a shared, public-facing space.
Marfa is one of the few towns in which contemporary design does not stand out from its surroundings, and the Joy House is no exception. It would be easy to drive by without noticing its rich vocabulary and meticulousness. The project, designed by Houston-based Kinneymorrow Architecture, seems to have been there forever.

The rigorous plan of the Joy House sets up a logic that Kinneymorrow follows through in materiality, section, and fenestration. For juror Anne Schopf, FAIA, “the rigor of the plan and the discipline of the tectonics were very captivating.” Even though the Joy House encompasses three independent dwelling units within the building envelope, the design language employed keeps the project cohesive while maintaining a sense of space for each suite. Courtyards produced by the additions act as entry points for the smaller units, while the larger unit maintains its entry court using the street wall.

Distinct binaries between the existing structure and the additions form a visual language that can be read through all three living spaces. Traditional adobe methods used on the existing structure express the local nature of the renovation and delineate the living and sleeping quarters, with the support program situated within each attached addition. The dialogue between existing structure and addition is beautifully articulated through a shift in materials, from traditional adobe construction in a medium gray to a glowing white addition. A sharp transition is present in the boundary, either through the vertical edge of the tragaluz or the visual break produced by the repeating glazed connections joining the three units.

As a renovation, Joy House respects the existing structure, paring the previous additions back to the adobe footprint and the east-facing porch. For such an unusual program, the porch acts as the glue tying the three spaces together in a unified assemblage. Externally, the three units are nearly indistinguishable. “We were interested in ... understanding how the guesthouse pieces interacted with the main house,” Schopf says. “In fact, it’s three independent units, but we’re thinking that they’re seamed together by the porch element, and the porch as an integration to the street [is] actually the place where they all come together.”

With the Joy House, Kinneymorrow continues a tradition in Marfa of regionally specific architecture. Preservation of traditional techniques within contemporary design and materials gives a voice to the past without being beholden to it. You need only walk around the block to understand the history of the Joy House.

Marcel Merwin works for CONTENT Architecture in Houston.
Sombreada Hasta

"THE SOMBREADA HASTA WAS JUST SO ELEGANT. THERE'S AN ECONOMY OF MEANS — IT'S A SHIPPING CONTAINER; IT'S SOME RAW STEEL PARTS; VERY SIMPLE TECTONICS — BUT THERE WAS A LOT OF EXPERTISE IN HOW THE ARCHITECT PUT THESE PARTS TOGETHER."

- VIVIAN LEE
by Michael Malone, FAIA

Location Real County
Architect Rhotenberry Wellen Architects
Design Team Mark Wellen, FAIA; Cale Lancaster, AIA
Photographer Grant Alford, AIA

The Sombreada Hasta reestablishes the domicile of a now demolished ranch house. The former yard is defined by a concrete fence base, a few corner posts, and a gate. Set within a pulverized granite-filled precinct and edged by existing trees, Sombreada provides a sheltered place to sit, cook, bathe and sleep in otherwise inhospitable country.
The clarity of vernacular rural structures has long been an inspiration for modern architects. Essentially, a roof and a hearth are the only requirements to inhabit a landscape. With these two components, early humans could protect themselves from the elements, stay warm, cook their food, and ward off the terrors of the night (fierce predators, both real and imagined). Native Americans built these shelters in various forms, establishing a pattern for domestic life on the North American continent. Later, pioneers (ostensibly hardly ones of good yeoman stock) followed those same traditions. Informed by their European ancestry, they made more substantial shelters that became the basis for thousands of rural dwellings across America. These simple buildings in their more developed form are the basis for many of the buildings we have been making ever since.

As postwar modernism (along with postmodernism) has developed in Texas, the simplicity and perceived integrity of these types of structures have informed a regional vernacular that has become almost passé in countless buildings throughout the state, often in decidedly non-rural settings. Sheds and service structures, made of industrial materials and unadorned stone, abound in urban centers like Austin, Dallas, and Houston. They are adapted as houses, libraries, commercial structures — even cultural centers and hotels. The idiom is so common it’s not even remarked upon as a displacement from its origins: It is simply vernacular (or, worse, Texas vernacular). The reverse is rarely true, where an urban sensibility for organizing space, acknowledging memory, and defining a precinct is a strategy for creating a response to a rural need. At Sombreada Hasta, the planning is decidedly urban and the result cloyingly refined.

The economy of means and the sure hand with which the complex is detailed indicate a reductive kind of planning that is intentional and extreme in service of a simple-seeming intent. The deceptive casualness is a product of the humble materials — steel, corrugated decking, flagstone, and concrete — not of humble thinking or an ad hoc approach to problem solving. Detailed precisely, allowed to weather and rust, the sombreada is an essay on complex tectonic ideas rendered in a straightforward visual composition, resulting in effects that are not accidental. Its power comes from its clarity and the joy of inhabiting it. You want to participate in the narrative, stand under that roof, and be in that shade.

The refinement of the structure is best illustrated in the acknowledgement of the sun rendered visible through creation of an oculus. Solar movement around the sky is written on the walls of the container (bunkhouse) and “X” literally marks the spot with the shadow of the cross-bracing cables that bisect it. The rich sienna brown palette looks beautiful in this landscape. Bracketed by a silver metal tractor shed and another similar headquarters building, it mitigates between them and creates an inviting negative (open) space as a counterpoint to their enclosed volumes. Strategically placing the structure within the fence line of the now-demolished original ranch house is a memorable touch. It anchors the structure, reestablishing a pattern of habitation of a somewhat hostile landscape.

Michael Malone, FAIA, founded Malone Maxwell Borson Architects in Dallas and chairs the TxA Honor Awards Committee for 2018.
Facing The umbrella-like roof shades a shipping container bunkhouse and an outdoor seating area arranged around a fire pit. Above left Interior finishes are rough and durable: plywood and galvanized metal. Above right A repurposed bathtub provides a welcome respite from the dust and heat, and a bucolic view.
West Lynn Studio

"THE WEST LYNN STUDIO IS EFFECTIVELY A MINIMALIST WHITE CUBE. IT TOOK AN EXISTING BUILDING AND SHEATHED IT AND DID SOME VERY INTERESTING ROOF DETAILING AND SLASHES THROUGH THE BUILDING THAT GAVE IT A MINIMALIST LOOK, BUT WITH THE SORT OF DETAILS THAT EFFECT AND DEMONSTRATE AN EXTREME ATTENTION TOWARD QUALITY OF DESIGN."

– ERIC CESAL, ASSOC. AIA

by Christopher Ferguson, AIA

Location Austin
Client Baldridge Architects
Architect Baldridge Architects
Design Team Burton Baldridge, AIA; Michael Hargens
Photographer Casey Dunn
This page jurors admired the project’s sensitivity to scale while also making use of a limited number of details with maximum effect.

Facing Controlling daylight and treetop views are vital to the intimate studio’s airy and bright disposition.

As Baldridge Architects sought to relocate its office in Austin, the firm settled on a location within the charming residential neighborhood of Clarksville. Surprisingly, the particular site they selected was an unassuming masonry warehouse at the rear of an aging midcentury television repair shop. The resulting renovation, per the jury, is laudable for maintaining a striking, minimal aesthetic while also deferring to the history and scale of its context. This would prove to be just one of many commendable contrasts woven throughout the project.

At a mere 1,450 sf, the studio maximizes its small footprint, comfortably accommodating nine workstations in an open configuration, as well as a glazed conference room, modest kitchenette, bathroom, and materials library.

Photographs of the project expertly showcase the most critical aspect of the space: its masterful approach to daylighting. Light and treetop views spill into the studio from all sides, most dramatically from a narrow, floor-to-ceiling window that seamlessly folds into a deep light well at its east facade. “I think the architects were very, very careful in strategically using their skills where it mattered, which were the few openings of the windows,” juror Vivian Lee says.

The interiors, while intimate, are quite airy, also due in part to a restrained material strategy. White walls ricochet light around the studio, yet the dark Cumaru wood floors anchor the scene, lending the workspace warmth and richness.
The presentation of the project in its Design Award submission was also noteworthy for its inclusion of meticulous plan, elevation, and section drawings that clearly demonstrated that the project was carefully considered from all angles. Material seam alignments, landscaping gestures, neighboring structures, and scale figures for human, furniture, and vehicles are all clearly defined in these drawings, often presented opposite imagery of the realized space or detail.

As may be expected with any space designed by an architecture firm for their own use, the architects’ submission touched on, in the words of Eric Cesal, Assoc. AIA, the palpable “element of agitprop in operation.” There is an overt desire to indulge in an aesthetic that, per client requests, is often tempered. Here, the jury celebrated the firm’s desire to double-down on its minimalist inclinations, while doing so with sensitivity. Baldridge notes that the project demonstrates “how a building can be simultaneously simple and dynamic, minimalist and inviting, off-putting and warm.”

With a submission format supplemented by documentation echoing those elemental ideals, the firm rightly earned the praise of the jury. “I think if you’re not careful you might almost overlook the West Lynn studio,” Lee says. “It’s incredibly minimalistic, and all its expertise is in the alignment of everything and the few details that were afforded in this renovation project.”

Christopher Ferguson, AIA, is an architect at Clickspring Design and co-founder of DO:GROUP.
The Micro House is set in a mixed-use, affordable housing development in Austin serving the needs of the city's homeless population.

Community First! Village Micro House


— ERIC CESAL, ASSOC. AIA

by T.J. McClure, AIA

Location Austin
Client Mobile Loaves & Fishes
Architect McKinney York Architects
Design Team Heather McKinney, FAIA; Aaron Taylor, AIA
Photographer Thomas McConnell
Facing  The screened porch provides shelter from the elements, and a place to gather with friends and neighbors.
Bottom left  The window placement balances the needs of cross-ventilation, privacy, and daylight.
Bottom right  Pine board finishings lend a warmth to the interior.

The Micro House by McKinney York Architects is the only pro bono project receiving a TxA Design Award this year. It is located within Community First! Village, a 27-acre community in Austin that provides sustainable and affordable permanent housing to the chronically homeless.

In addition to an innovative mix of units, the village also offers residents access to medical facilities, as well as vocational opportunities.

McKinney York’s contribution to the village is a micro home composed of a white box constructed with humble but effective materials and an attached screened porch. Both box and porch are covered by a single-slope shed roof reminiscent of early 20th-century icehouses. The spaces and their carefully placed openings create a layered effect that offers residents varying levels of privacy while cleverly addressing environmental needs.

The screened porch, oriented to the south, takes advantage of prevailing summer breezes while offering refuge from harsh northerly winter winds. As with most porches in the Texas vernacular, the screened area becomes the gateway from the community into the more secluded part of the house. In this case, the porch also serves as an extension of the interior space. This procession, along with such details as a full-length built-in bench, provides residents with a sheltered, semi-public space where they can interact with neighbors.

Constructed of 2x framing, the shed roof is lifted off the main volume of the house and sits over the screened porch. Sheathed in corrugated metal panels, the roof continues the layered composition, reducing summer heat gain by providing shade and capturing summer breezes.

The humble material palette continues on the interior of the house. Walls, ceilings, and floors are finished with pine boards that lend a warm hue. Built-in elements made of the same material provide ample storage. Windows are situated to balance the needs of interior cross-ventilation, privacy, and daylight.

“When you go in the room it’s all wood, so you’re surrounded by this notion of biophilia — so, in its minute size it’s actually beautiful material surrounding you,” juror Anne Schopf, FAIA, says. Overall, she calls it “a really admirable project, a pro bono project, that we felt is important to recognize.”

T.J. McClure, AIA, is a principal of Rhotenberry Wellen Architects in Midland.
The project comprised 102 glowing tubes spread at 10-foot intervals along a 1,100-foot-long section of the creek.

2018 Design Awards

Tracing the Line

"I WAS REALLY, REALLY IMPRESSED BY THE 'TRACING THE LINE' EXECUTION FOR EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT WALLER CREEK WITH VERY, VERY MINIMAL MEANS. IT WAS ABLE TO GATHER AND HARNESS SO MUCH TERRITORY WITH SO LITTLE."

- VIVIAN LEE

by Ben Koush, AIA

Location Austin
Client Waller Creek
Architect Baldridge Architects
Design Team Burton Baldridge, AIA; Michael Hargens, AIA; Brian Bedrosian; Laura Grenard; Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA; Andrew Fuicher; Tyler Frost; Elaine Shen
Photographers Baldridge Architects; Elaine Shen
Tracing the Line, by Austin-based Baldridge Architects, was a temporary light installation commissioned by the nonprofit Waller Creek Conservancy in 2014 to draw attention to its newly adopted master plan by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and Thomas Phifer and Partners. It was one of five “illuminating works of art” located along different sections of the waterway running through downtown Austin. Baldridge’s project included 102 glowing tubes spread at 10-foot intervals along a 1,100-foot-long section of the creek. The top of each tube was set at a uniform level. The illuminated portion increased in length from one foot to six feet as the creek made its way downstream, to demonstrate the watershed topography’s descent in a highly visual, but also almost scientific manner.

The architects fabricated the tubes themselves, using a “collection of everyday items that can be found in the aisles of the big-box hardware store.” The light source was a high-powered LED flashlight inserted into a PVC conduit head. It shone into a plastic fluorescent tube protector capped with a reflective insert. This lighting device was supported by a 1.5-in black-painted PVC conduit slid over a steel tube welded to an 18-in-square, 3/8-in-thick steel plate. They installed the tubes themselves — as photographs of team members in rubber waders with a variety of measuring instruments amply demonstrate.

Night photographs of Tracing the Line’s light tubes at several points along the route evoke markedly varying sensations. Where they pass under a concrete post-and-beam bridge and under a barrel-vaulted viaduct, they appear as ceric sentinels marking an abandoned city. Where they pass through a pedestrian plaza filled with visitors, they act as garden lanterns, adding a festive touch to an outdoor party. This diversity of interpretations: land art, party space, public service announcement, and science project — all coming out of such an ad hoc, DIY contraption — appealed to the jurors.

“Tracing the Line is a project that we recognized right off as being unique, in that it was not architecture, but was telling a story about place, the urban made place as an intersection with the natural world — and illuminating that way in a very simple device, a very economical device, in this temporary emplacement,” says juror Anne Schopf, FAIA. “That device, I think, used its resources wisely to stretch and expand the understanding of what the natural systems were, here in Austin, and how that’s being somewhat strangled out by the urban environment. So very, very simple, direct, quickly understandable, and also very humble and simple to understand on many levels.”

Tracing the Line was refreshing because of the way it shows that the ability to evoke strong reactions is not necessarily tied to cost. The core idea was remarkably simple, and its realization was straightforward to the point of being diagrammatic. The end result was fascinating to the jurors in its ability to touch on many different concepts and disciplines with a minimum of means. Tracing the Line’s strength as a project came from its unusually direct translation from concept to execution, jettisoning all that was unnecessary along the way.

Ben Koush, AIA, is an architect in Houston.
The architects assembled the tubes from standard parts sourced from the hardware store: PVC pipe, steel pipe and plate, fluorescent tube protectors, and high-powered flashlights. The tubes increased in height further downstream.
Photography by ©Andrea Calo

Urban Design, Reimagined.

Once a retail strip center, Lamar Union, a new South Austin mixed-use development, adds vibrancy and sleek modernism to the area. Exterior shades and awnings, designed and fabricated by The Chism Company with Serge Ferrari Soltis Horizon 86 fabric, enhance the urban aesthetic, provide relief from the sun and help reduce the heat island effect.

"The Chism Company and Serge Ferrari congratulate BOKA Powell Architects for their 2018 Texas Society of Architects Annual Design Award. Working with them on this innovative and beautiful design was an honor."

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Katy Independent School District's 15th junior high school features an all-new architectural design which incorporates the education market's latest trends and technology.

Designed by Houston's PBK Architects, the new school features several green spaces and includes outdoor learning gardens and a teaching amphitheater.

In published interviews, Chris Bailey, the school's assistant principal for student support, says the new junior high emphasizes individualized learning. "Most campuses have only one flexible-use space, but SJH has six such spaces, along with a much more open design throughout that encourages collaboration," he said. "The school also has a lot of what I call 'nooks and crannies' that provide places where students and teachers can collaborate in groups of various sizes."

Boral Ground Face concrete masonry units, proudly sourced and manufactured in Texas, were utilized throughout the facility and are a prominent feature of the building's main entry and architectural accents.

SJH just wrapped its inaugural school year and has future capacity to serve up to 1400 students.
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beside another Texan — Charles Renfro of DS+R — who appeared to be as entranced by the piper et al. as was I. On the tail of the flautist’s final strain, I overheard Renfro compliment soon-to-depart Storefront director Eva Franch Gilabert on the event, comparing it favorably to the heady days of the 70s and 80s — I assume in that it was promiscuous in its variety. The previous presenter, after all, had shucked oysters on the sidewalk.

Later, during a presentation that involved downloading an app and following along with headphones, which I didn’t bother to do, I wandered outside and bumped into Florian Idenburg of SO-IL. He was crouched on a stool from the erstwhile oyster bar, counseling a couple of young academic architects wearing T-shirts with holes in them about when/if to cash-in with a corporate client or job. I was reminded of another related architectural dichotomy that Idenburg once pointed out to me on a jury panel in Dallas: “There are two kinds of buildings — those that make money and those that cost money,” he said. “We design the latter.”

The next morning, I climbed out of the 34th Street/Hudson Yards subway station on my way to the Javits Center and came face to face with a giant, inflatable pig. It was dressed like a banker, with hundred-dollar bills fanning out of a pocket, a Rolex on its wrist, a cigar in its mouth, and a sinister look on its pink face. It was a protest by Local #46, the metallic lathers and reinforcing ironworkers union. They had a beef with some of the builders of Hudson Yards. A sign next to the pig read, “NOT PROVIDING AREA WAGES, CONDITIONS AND STANDARDS.” Nonetheless, the dust and noise of construction continued to crank away — lifts whirred up and down, mallets clanged, dumpsters boomed as they were filled with debris.

Even by Chinese standards, Hudson Yards is a big mixed-use development. Its square footage is measured in the tens of millions, its cost in the tens of billions. A deal between the state, the city, and the transit authority, two developers (Related Companies and Oxford Properties), one master plan architect (KPF, perhaps the epitome of the artsy-corporate architecture firm), and a slew of other design practices churning out the project’s 16 skyscrapers packed with class-A office, retail, hospitality, and residential units, acres of public outdoor space, including the final phase of the High Line, one puzzling stairway-to-nowhere observation platform (“Vessel” by Heatherwick Studio), and even an ambiguously programmed performing arts facility, which has been prosaically named “Culture Shed” (by DS+R), it’s clear that this is one of those projects intended to make money, and a lot of it, even though some of its components are buildings that cost money. The first phase is well on its way to being finished and it’s possible to see in steel, aluminum, and glass what was already apparent in the renderings: something more than the spreadsheet is at work here. The towers — one leans this way, another that — one transitions from a rectangle to a cloverleaf, another evokes the city’s cast-iron past — seem to be vying for supremacy in a look-at-me contest. It’s a sort of Dubai in New York, where the real estate bean counters have bought the notion from some charismatic soothsayer that a thing as lame as extravagant and otherwise purposeless formal posturing will give them an edge in a competitive leasing market. They’re probably right.

At Hudson Yards, art, or something resembling art, has infected the spreadsheet. But the wrong part of the bacterium was absorbed. The outward formal variation of great art is present, but it’s there as smokescreen. It does not refresh and delight the mind with unexpected combination and variation as did GRT’s presentation of flutes. It conceals the underlying banality and numbing repetition of its parametrically designed, pre-fabricated structural and cladding systems, not to mention its overriding purpose as a machine for fattening the wallets and indulging the appetites of the already rich and powerful.

Architecture may not be at fault for the way of the world, or capable of changing it, but it does have the ability to turn the too-often venal and short-sighted motivations of its clients into something far more generous and diverting. That it fails to do so most of the time is infuriating and depressing because so much is at stake in each building project — time, money, resources, the future itself. Perhaps by further harnessing and developing architecture’s diversity, not to mention increasing its promiscuity and potential to surprise, better outcomes might ensue.
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The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards develops and recommends the standards for becoming licensed and practicing architects. The organization is best known for the Architectural Experience Program (AXP), a comprehensive training program for aspiring architects, and the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®), an assessment tool required for licensure.

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Marc Fornes/TheVeryMany's Marquise in El Paso

The sculptural canopy is composed of thin aluminum tiles assembled in a doubly curved geometry that gives the structure its rigidity.

Marc Fornes/TheVeryMany's Marquise in El Paso

Marc Fornes/TheVeryMany's Marquise in El Paso, billows like a circus tent frozen in time. Its colorful undulations — diamonds on top; bands underneath — welcome visitors to El Paso's Westside Natatorium. Its rippled surface is a disruption between the sharp West Texas sun and the facility's conditioned interior. The structure's wild shape and vectorized field of shadows is a shock of sorts: It jolts you out of your mind and into your body for a moment, much like the upcoming rush of your first dive into the pool within.

In French, marquise means "a canopy in front of an entrance, often made of iron and glass," but the commission didn't start with that scope. Fornes recalls that they originally were selected to make an artwork for the lobby. During their first site visit, however, discussions with the architects at In*Situe Architecture led to an opportunity to engage the entrance of the building in an exterior encounter. Combining the public art budget with the budget for the architectural canopy also created a larger fund to make something special.

The VeryMany are experts in realizing lightweight, self-supported structures ( "Spineway," an earlier pavilion in San Antonio, was featured in the March/April 2016 issue of TA). Their assemblies are unified systems whose strength is derived from their geometry, not from their materiality. In this case, the doubly-curved surface of "structural shingles" is realized in overlapped aluminum tiles, as thin as 1/8-in, that are digitally generated, then cut, bent, painted, and bolted together.

"The skin we produce is everything," Fornes said. "Envelope, space, structure, experience."

The Cheshire coloration of yellow and blue gradients subtly reinforces the form's curvature, but this observation lands only after close study or repeat visits. What else can you find within the space of this contemporary marquise? Fornes remarked: "Most public art collections acquire a piece and then display it. We're trying to take what's there — in this case, an entrance, a canopy — and ask, 'Can we make it an art experience?'"

Jack Murphy, Assoc. AIA, is a regular contributor to TA and a master of architecture candidate at Rice University.