

LETTERS



IN RESPONSE TO CITE 78, MAY 2009

I am a second-generation Houston architect, locally educated. I have also been a member of RDA for many years. In addition, I am always looking forward to reaching into my mailbox and finding that my current issue of *Cite* has arrived.

However, I have recently been quite disappointed by the contents inside. Is this not our presentation of local Houston architecture any longer? I often hope to find something within the (few) pages that I am not aware of, or have accidentally driven by without notice while my kids are frantically being themselves.

As members of AIA, we all receive our state and national publications; yet, I depend on RDA and *Cite* to focus on Houston.

Let's get back to our basics....as well as ourselves. Sincerely,

Kirk Gant, AIA
BGK Architects



IN RESPONSE TO "DOWNTOWN'S DOWNTOWN: HOUSTON PAVILIONS AND AN URBAN DILEMMA" BY MAX PAGE, CITE 77, FEBRUARY 2009

I wish to clarify comments attributed to me in your article on the Houston Pavilions.

The writer of the article states that I "lamented" the choice to build the retail along a central spine. This choice of words to describe my words is the author's, not mine. It is true that we had other compelling ideas, as most architects do, but in the end the design team collectively felt that the scheme we developed was the best one, the most compelling one.

Further the author states that the choice of the scheme was selected because it more closely resembled traditional covered malls. Here I believe the author betrays a lack of understanding of how a retail project of this magnitude actually works, and the urban fabric of downtown Houston into which it fits. There are many significant urban retail projects in well established cities, such as Milan, Amsterdam, London, Istanbul, dating back to more than a century, where a mid block, central spine of retail works in tandem with active streets. These are the

models our team had in mind when choosing this option. To compare the scheme to a mall misses the point quite entirely. Our solution, we believe, enhances life at the street, creates porous edges along the block edges and corners, and establishes a framework for a vibrant and dynamic destination for retail. We are optimistic that this project sets a precedent for a higher density retail Downtown, which is essential to enhancing our livable city.

Please continue your work of architectural criticism, our city needs it.

Thank you,

Roger Soto, AIA, LEED AP

President and Director of Design, Odell Associates
Formerly Sr. Vice President, Design Director, HOK



IN RESPONSE TO "ASTRODOME: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?" OFFCITE.ORG, AUGUST 2009

There are two things to keep in mind about the dome. First, its essence is that mega-sized, ineluctable, air-conditioned, volume inside. Second is the fact that the dome is fundamentally useless, a claim similar to the one Roland Barthe makes for the Eiffel Tower. Its inutility is a scandal. But once you get over it you realize that trying to turn the dome into a shopping mall, a parking garage, a hotel, or maybe a mega church for the Osteens who seem to appreciate the ecclesiastical potentials for ever larger houses of worship, is never going to be a money maker or a good, functional, business solution to anything. Leaving aside the fact that in accomplishing these schemes there would be very little dome left. This leaves the perfectly reasonable, unreasonable idea to simply preserve it and hold it in reserve, a little world apart: A place of wonder, where you can take an air-conditioned walk, watch a movie with 30,000 others, climb, dream of a plan to snare the Olympics, play every game known to humankind, invent some new ones, provide shelter for the population of a medium-sized city. Speculate.

Professor Bruce Webb

Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture,
University of Houston

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Cite welcomes and encourages readers to send letters, including critical ones, to citemail@rice.edu.

CORRECTION

The article "Dallas Reaches for the Stars: The Metroplex Gets a New Center for the Performing Arts" did not properly credit the design and construction of the Wyly Theatre. The architects were REX/OMA, Joshua Prince-Ramus and Rem Koolhaas; Kendall/Heaton Associates Inc. The contractors were McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.

CALENDAR

RDA LECTURES

GETTING HIGH: TOWERS IN ARCHITECTURE
Brown Auditorium, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet (Enter via the Main Street door)
7p.m. | 713.348.4876 | ricedesignalliance.org

PETER BUCHANAN
ARCHITECTURE CRITIC, LONDON
Wednesday, September 16

ALI RAHIM
DIRECTOR, CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE, NEW YORK CITY
Wednesday, September 23

WINKA DUBBELDAM
PRINCIPAL, ARCHITECTONICS, NEW YORK CITY
Wednesday, September 30

ROSS WIMER
DESIGN PARTNER, SOM, CHICAGO
Wednesday, October 7

RDA GALA

Hilton Americas | November 14, 2009
Honoring Phoebe and Bobby Tudor

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, Room 150
3p.m. | arch.uh.edu | 713.743.2400

DAVID FANO | September 24, 2009

MARY MCLEOD | October 6, 2009

ROBERT KELLY | October 13, 2009

MIMI HOANG | October 20, 2009

MARLON BLACKWELL | October 27, 2009

RICE UNIVERSITY

Rice School of Architecture
Farish Gallery, Anderson Hall
5p.m. | arch.rice.edu | 713.348.4864

BLAINE BROWNE II | September 14

STEVEN EHRLICH | September 21

JENNIFER SEGAL | October 5

AMALE ANDRAOS AND DAN WOOD | October 19

CHRIS REED | October 26

KEVIN ALTER | November 2

RAVI SUNDARAM | November 9

TEXAS SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS CONVENTION

George R. Brown Convention Center
Houston, Texas | October 22-24, 2009

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