

NINA CULLINAN PAPERS

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NINA CULLINAN PAPERS

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Nina Cullenan

Cloppings

1972

322 Wednesdays

Random jottings from a New Year's vantage point

By ELEANOR FREED

How does a very private person suddenly find herself putting in print reactions and impressions shared previously only conversationally or in letters? This is what happened to me in November, 1965, when the above byline began appearing regularly on these pages, when my lifelong fascination with the visual arts went public.

One Monday afternoon the phone rang and the voice at the other end said, "Campbell has moved to New York, and before he left he suggested that you might do a weekly commentary on the world of art." George Christian, the brand-new editor of Spotlight (now assistant managing editor of the Houston Post) was calling to offer me a surprise challenge on the recommendation of Campbell Geeslin, my lively predecessor who, besides being art critic, was also editor of Spotlight.

During the summer of 1965, while Geeslin was on vacation, he had asked me to be guest columnist and I had written up the new Maeght Museum, a day with Jean Lurcat, and Castellares-Jeuneuf, all vignettes from a recent trip to France. Christian must have liked those articles because he invited me to be a regular contributor.

Some 322 Wednesdays since then I have been showing up before deadline, copy in hand, except when my articles have arrived by carrier pigeon jettling in from an assortment of world capitals.

FLASHBACKS! Memphis, where I grew up, isn't exactly an art capital. The Brooks Museum and the zoo were just minutes away from our house near Overton Park. When I tired of the lions and the monkeys, I got in the habit of visiting with the guard and the nice lady at the museum postcard counter after a speedy check-up on the static painting collection and a lingering re-examination of the dioramas of Loreda Taft's sculpture studios.

My mother took a dim view of the Brooks, considering it a "pink tea place where magnolia-scented ladies receive their monthly potions of pseudo-culture." A perennial student with equal bursts of enthusiasm in the fields of her major interests — symphonic and chamber music, textiles and lace, Chinese art particularly Ch'ien Lung's, Japanese prints, azuleos and polyantha roses — Mother preferred spending time in museums with specialized curators. While she was closeted in the study rooms, I was left to my own devices.

At an early age I soon learned that no two people share eye-blinks at the same ratio and that it is not only better but essential to work out one's own plan of campaign in a museum. The Metropolitan, Cooper Union Institute, the Fogg, the Boston, Mrs. Jack Gardner's Palace, the Frick, the Morgan Library, the Freer, the Chicago Art Institute, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Louvre, the Cluny... these are just some of the museums where I mapped out by my own excursions. Perhaps a certain pre-familiarity made art history a breeze for me in college where even exam-cramming time wasn't as traumatic as for other subjects.

LONG BEFORE the buildings and collections became as aggrandized as at present, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney were old friends of mine. While in wartime Washington for professional Red Cross training, I became enamored of the National Gallery and the Phillips and was an habituée at the Sunday concerts. While the Baroness Rebay ran the old Guggenheim in a Fifth Avenue mansion, I subjected myself to the frigid treatment given all but the initiated cultists, but I have never forgotten the pervasive mystique of the place.

Frederick Kiesler's superb showcase for Peggy Guggenheim's short-lived gallery "Art of This Century" introduced me to the works of Max Ernst and Jackson Pollock. A four-year interlude in

New York City (1945-1949) brought me face to face with art of our time and often with the artists and dealers whose interaction created the unparalleled excitement then concentrated on 57th St.

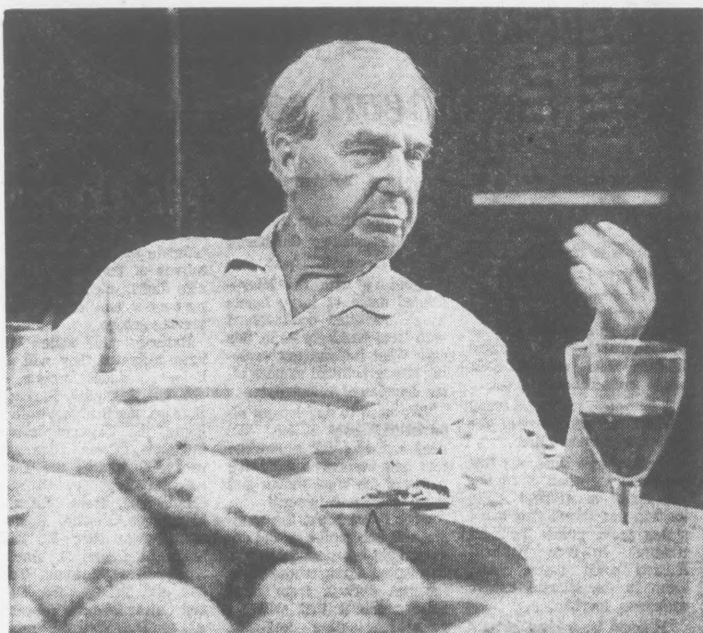
And then in 1950 I came to Houston after marrying Frank Freed, a Texan who began to paint after World War II on his return from France.

The Contemporary Arts Museum animated the Houston scene during the '50s, presenting a succession of new experiences and artists not yet known to the Houston public. The Museum of Fine Arts became revitalized with the addition of Mies van der Rohe's Cullinan Hall. Then James Johnson Sweeney was brought in "to put Houston on the art map." His extraordinary eye selectively sought out postwar paintings and sculpture (mostly from the Continent) as nucleus of the museum's contemporary collection.

IN THE FALL of 1963 Sweeney produced an extraordinarily important exhibition, "The Heroic Years: Paris 1908-1914," which brought together an astonishing collection of pivotal works and addenda of the rich years of Cubism and byproducts thereof. The anticipated catalogue was never produced, so the most important exhibition assembled to date by the Museum of Fine Arts remains undocumented.

Dr. Jermayne MacAgy inaugurated exceptional theme exhibits, first while director at the Contemporary Arts Museum and then at St. Thomas University until her untimely death in 1964. Patroness Dominique de Menil stepped into the void as if accepting the challenge of the MacAgy legacy and soon began to put together specialized, scholarly exhibitions which now are continued in Rice University's Institute for the Arts, a fairly recent creation of the de Menils. A panorama of shifting multi-media stimuli unfold at intervals in Rice's Media Center.

The Rothko Chapel finally became a reality, made possible through the generosity



Henry Moore at home: Face to face with the simplicity of greatness

of the John de Menils to the Institute of Religion. These deeply-toned opaque paintings by Mark Rothko have a spiritual quality conducive to individual meditation and have given rise to more than a little analytic speculation. Barnett Newman's splendid obelisk towers above the reflecting pool, a beacon to mankind dedicated by the de Menils to the memory of Martin Luther King.

WHAT IS most heartening about the past few years has been the strength and viability as well as the assured future development of our two museums. Philippe de Montebello, director of the Museum of Fine Arts, and Sebastian Adler, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum, share not only the strategic intersection of Montrose and Bissonnet but the fact that they as young, vigorous professional museum men have chosen to base their entire future on what happens right here in Houston. Their boards are solidly behind them and have launched monumental building programs.

With his own impeccable credentials in Renaissance art and European paintings, Montebello has assembled a team of young men whose specialties will supplement one another's... curator Jack Schrader, the medievalist, and E. A. Carmean, associate curator of education and acting curator of 20th century art. With an emphasis on scholarship, the staff is already planning future exhibits which will bring together works from the great periods of Western civilization. When the museum doubles in size after completion of the Mies

wing, there will be opportunity then to keep more of the permanent collection on view during temporary exhibitions.

Sebastian Adler heads one of the few museums anywhere dedicated solely to the contemporary. When the new Contemporary Arts Museum designed by Gunnar Birkerts opens on March 18, he will then preside over a flexible facility designed especially for exhibitions whose format cannot even yet be anticipated. Seeking out the new and the innovative with a receptive eye, Adler at long last will have a structure suitable for exploring art works that don't fit into conventional categories as well as for surveying the immediate antecedents of the avant-garde, the past decade. The museum is structured for smaller interim exhibits as well as ongoing educational programs.

ONE CAN no longer count the serious galleries on the fingers of one hand. Even a helicopter wouldn't help much in covering the gallery scene for it is too geographically diffuse. The national graphics phenomenon is reflected locally in that several dealers are now devoted solely to prints and drawings. More and more New York and California galleries are farming out artists to enable them to have a Texas forum; however, this is not working as well reciprocally as few local dealers are seeking out wider coastal audiences for members of their stable.

Although Houston galleries are not hurting the way they are in other cities, several established dealers have admitted, off the cuff, that 1971 was a dismal, discouraging year

measured in terms of sales. Fortunately many of the local art entrepreneurs are sufficiently solvent to withstand periods of financial slump.

The past six years of peripatetic activities and observations have been personally rewarding in contacts and friendships and occasional pen-pal relationships with artists, museum people and others involved in the peripheral world of art. Some exceptional personalities indelibly etched in my memory include Max Ernst, Rene Magritte, Marcel Duchamp, Alfred Barr, Rene d'Harnoncourt, Roland Penrose and Henry Moore.

Perhaps the Moore experience has had the greatest impact, for I often think about the hours spent with him at his home, in his studios and while strolling through his meadow. Coming face to face with the simplicity of greatness and grasping the monumentality that can emerge from an idea in microcosm, one becomes truly aware of what the spark of creative genius can mean to mankind.

IF I HAD to pick just one museum which has consistently been the most stimulating in terms of the presentation of provocative work and experimental ideas, it would undoubtedly be the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam under the direction of E.L.L. de Wilde.

Perhaps in future months I will write less often. We hope to spend much more time traveling, but rest assured that wherever I go it will pretty much be a postman's holiday.

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Sunday, January 9, 1972, THE HOUSTON POST

A backward glance before a great leap forward

By ELEANOR FREED

The Contemporary Arts Association and the Contemporary Arts Museum have meant so many different things to so very many different people that the collective impact on the greater Houston community remains incalculable.

From 1948 on the CAA has led the way in pointing out the relationships of art to the total environment, of design to facets of everyday living, of men and materials considered startlingly anti-art in one decade to find themselves reassessed differently or sometimes even discarded in a short-term overview of aesthetic theories.

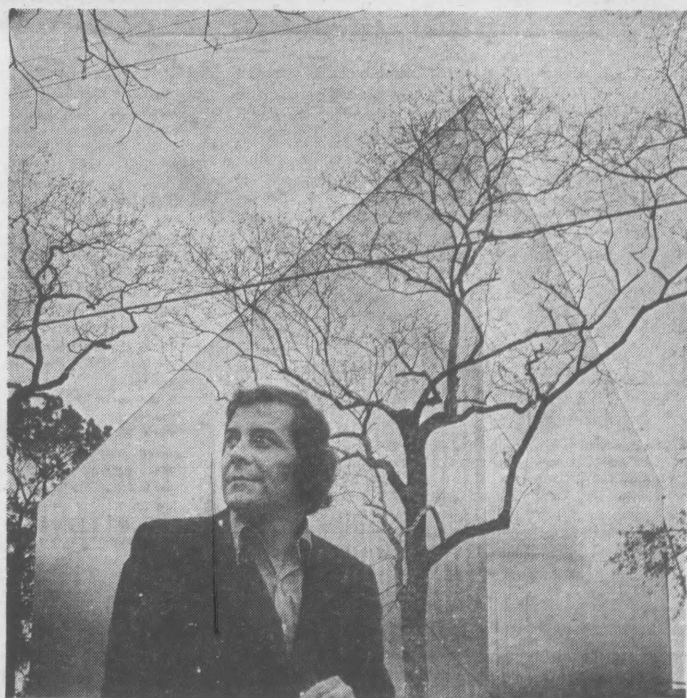
With fitting continuity the corrugated metal triangular A-frame designed by Karl Kamrath has been replaced by a gleaming steel parallelogram designed by Gunnar Birkerts. Three points which touched base with tens of thousands of Houstonians have now become four points reaching even further out to an ever-exploding megalopolis.

In raking over memories of the fat years and the lean, the countless ideas that have funneled in and out and around the Contemporary Arts Museum, the vicissitudes, the viable strengths, I cannot help but be reminded of Alexander Calder's "Acrobats" which to me has always been a sort of signature piece for the CAA. Apparently the museum's director, Sebastian Adler, must find special rapport with these dexterous men too, for they now occupy a place of honor in his office. It has taken keen eyes, alert sensitivities, strong backs and more than a little fancy acrobatic footwork to keep the CAM alive and flourishing.

ALTHOUGH THE museum never set out to be a repository for art or artifacts, intermittently it did possess some exceptional art, ranging from a Van Gogh painting to one by Max Ernst plus assorted other works and a creditable collection of graphics. A museum



The old Contemporary Arts Museum, above, was a corrugated metal triangular A-frame. Sebastian Adler, right, stands before the museum's new home, a gleaming steel parallelogram.



has to survive, and funds from interim sales helped keep the all-too-familiar wolf from breaking down the door.

Today it seems incredible that Houston had basically been without any real exposure to art of our time when nine intelligent citizens with long-range vision set up shop in borrowed facilities, with the goal of exposing the community to the idea that art has a bearing on life and the modern world.

The Museum of Fine Arts had only a minimal budget then and wasn't really grappling with contemporary art. Not only did the CAA act as a catalyst to spirited, receptive citizens, but it definitely gave the thrust needed to awaken the senior museum.

By late 1949 the CAM was a reality, jutting its angular facades for all to see and many to visit on land opposite Sam Houston Park. For many years the museum was run by an executive secretary and an installation technician. Budget was slim. Talents were many. A corps of "creative volunteers" developed and staged a succession of low-cost yet memorable exhibitions. From the ranks of this group can be found in Houston and elsewhere CAM graduates who are leading architects, interior designers, craftsmen, graphics specialists, writers, curators, professors of design, think-

Please see A backward/page 18

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A backward glance before a great leap forward

Continued from page 16

ers, painters, philanthropists and private citizens with an abiding curiosity and deep concern for art and the environment.

FOR FAR TOO long art had usually been associated with something one saw in a frame or on a pedestal within a formal museum setting. The CAA deliberately went about changing this limiting concept with a succession of eye-opening exhibitions inviting the viewer to relate art to life. Among these theme shows were ones which probed the relationship of design to nature, to industry, to theater, to products, to packaging (with special emphasis here on the influence of the Bauhaus and Mondrian) to the world of graphics.

A splendid Van Gogh exhibition was assembled. Exhibitions of artists like Charles Sheeler—Arthur Dove, Alexander Calder—Joan Miro, Rufino Tamayo, Max Ernst, Lyonel Feininger, Modern Mexican Painters were all first shown in Houston under the banner of the CAM. Wisely following the initial theories of its founders, the S was retained after Art to permit the interaction of the arts to take place under CAM's aegis. One of the ongoing programs initiated by the CAM in collaboration with the symphony and school system is "Painting to Music," geared to elicit creativity in the young.

The CAM was the second museum in the country to pioneer art rental as a museum service. One of the most important traditional events (which even today is very decidedly missed) was the special recognition and excitement attached to the Modern House Tour. Merit awards for exceptional accomplishment in the arts is another facet of the museum's function which has been abandoned along with art rental and the Modern House Tour. The CAM's art auctions made history as well as money and stimulated interest in collecting. In fact, many of the art galleries that exist in Houston today have in one way or another profited from the groundbreaking efforts of this museum.

WHILE THE saga of the CAA may sometimes have been a bit thorny or stormy, there has always been a special spirit that has transferred from one generation to another. Who can ever forget one December night in 1954 when the building was cut in half and bodily moved from Dallas Avenue to the Prudential site on Fannin, its next \$1.00 a year landlord? Almost everybody who was then a member or a friend of a member took part in that hilarious caravan.

By 1956 the input and output of the museum could no longer be managed with minimal staff and volunteer decision makers. Dr. Jer-

mayne MacAgy was brought in to bring a needed professionalism to the museum, and she assembled and installed shows with tremendous verve and taste. Among her truly unforgettable exhibitions were "The Sphere of Mondrian," "The Disquieting Muse: Surrealism," "The Trojan Horse: The Art of the Machine," "Mark Rothko," and the most spectacular of all, "Totems Not Taboo" which was held in Cullinan Hall. Dr. MacAgy also designed and wrote a series of scholarly yet often witty and entertaining catalogues which today are collectors' items.

From a semi-shoestring operation, the museum had reached budget proportions with which it could not cope, so again for an interim the museum again was run by volunteers. During Don Barthele, Jr.'s directorship, stress was really placed on the S in Arts for CAA hosted off-Broadway productions of Edward Albee and Samuel Beckett, launched Merce Cunningham and John Cage to Houston audiences, took a harsh look at the ugly aspects of American artifacts of product design. Robert Morris introduced us to the painters that made up the world of "Tenth Street." Winston Burdett staged within the CAM one of the first exhibitions of light art within an American museum.

BY THE FALL OF 1966 Sebastian Adler took firm hold of the museum's reins and

stock of the museum's desperate needs for new space in which to expand the innovative aspects of today's art, non-confining areas for statements made by the avant-garde.

Adler introduced the first minimal sculpture show in the Southwest by providing a forum for John Alberty, imported "Two Happening Concepts: Allen Kaprow and Wolf Vostell" and a very important look at the problems of "Mass Transit," sponsored Vera Simons' "Aerial Sculpture." Often before the demolition of the CAM building in 1969 and entirely since then city-wide facilities have been borrowed for the CAM shows. A vital "Art after School" program reaches 2,000 children in different sections of Houston.

What has brought all this retrospection to mind is that this weekend a whole new era opens for Houston, an era that is already reaching far beyond arbitrary geographical boundaries. Monday the public will be invited to see a varied series of innovative art forms entitled "Exhibition 10" within the extraordinary new Contemporary Arts Museum. And this weekend the hard-working committees for the Contemporary Arts Museum will play host to special guests from across the nation who are coming to salute the new building, the director and generous citizens who made it all possible, and Sebastian Adler's selection of 10 experimental, innovative artists.

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HOLLYWOOD

Eddie Albert made his movie debut in 1938 working in "Brother Rat" on which Frank McCarthy was the press agent; they are now reunited in McCarthy's production of "Fireball Forward."

HOLLYWOOD

"Two People," an original contemporary love story by Richard DeRoy, will have its filming in Morocco. The film had been set for Columbia Pictures but has been taken over by Universal.

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Anatomy of a museum

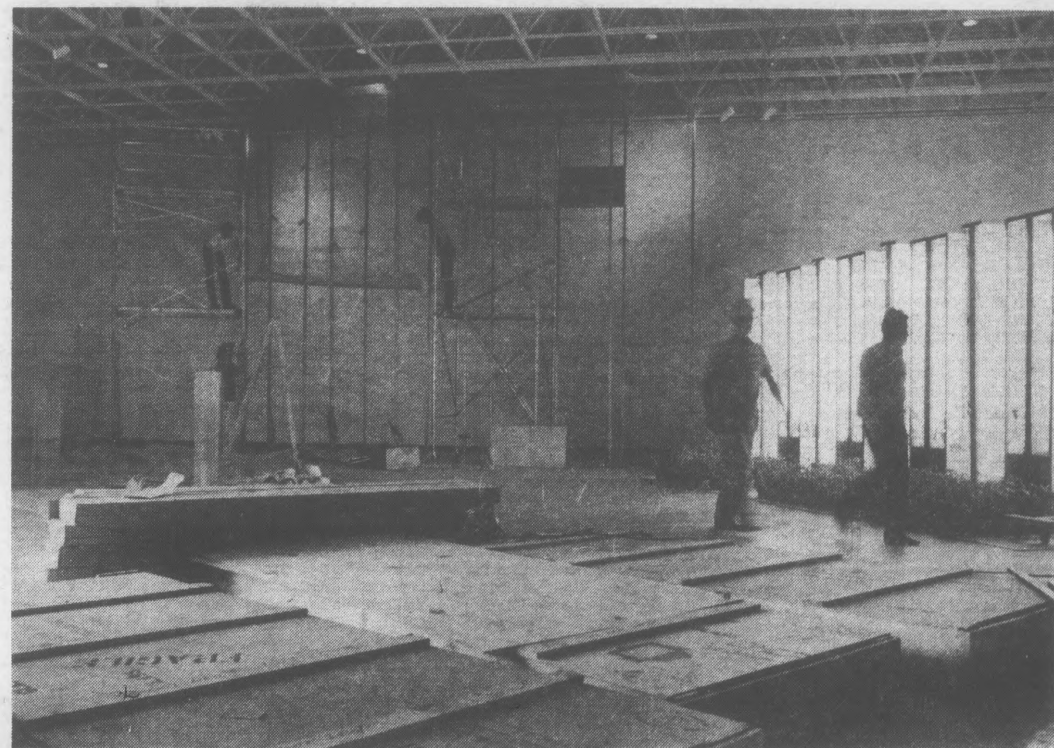
By ELEANOR FREED

When the Contemporary Arts Association set out to build a new Contemporary Arts Museum it didn't choose an architect to build a monument to himself. A formidable fortress or a crenelated castle would have belied the dynamism, the catalytic gadfly mentality that have kept prodding away at awakening the individual citizen and the collective Houston community for well-nigh a quarter of a century.

Detroit-based Gunnar Birkerts accepted the challenge of designing a minimal budget, nonsense, all skin and bones structure where every foot of space had to be both functional and flexible enough to house the large scale art of today (much of which defies categorizing) as well as the imponderables of the future. Since 1966, when Sebastian Adler came to Houston as director of the CAM he has expended vast energies and drive in making this building come into being. Many of the practical features, Adler said, came about "as a result of my 14 years of frustrations with conventional museums."

When the building opens Sunday afternoon to an ever-evolving, ever-curious membership as well as to Houston officialdom and museum dignitaries from across the land, the wisdom of the Birkerts choice should be apparent; for Adler's opening multimedia "Exhibition 10", an assortment of non-traditional attractions and distractions, should truly flex and test the muscles of the skeletal interior.

AT A TIME when museums are in crisis throughout the United States, when services are being curtailed and staff dismissed, when the very basic premises on which both conventional and contemporary museums exist



The CAA museum hums with activity as it prepares to greet its first visitors. At left, the caged environment is readied for Ellen Van Fleet's animals. At right is "Survival

Farm Number 6" by Newton Harrison.

—Post photo by Bela Ugrin

are being scrutinized and questioned, Houston is in an astonishingly viable position. Our two museums are successfully undergoing vast expansion programs, and on a key site at Montrose and Bissonnet the starkly stunning stainless steel parallelogram of the Contemporary Arts Museum looms diagonally opposite the elegantly stunning glass and steel Mies van der Rohe wing of the Museum of Fine Arts.

The CAA was founded in 1948 as a protesting outgrowth of the fact that the MFA seemed oblivious of the changes in the visual arts, photography, design and architecture. After only a few years of the exciting, eye-opening exhibitions and programming of the CAA under both volunteer and professional auspices, the MFA decided to import James Johnson Sweeney as director. These pages have recently reviewed some of the electric events in the interaction of the arts during the CAA's history. The public recognition of this span of creative investment has given a firm financial base to the CAA today.

Sebastian Adler has said that had it not been for F. Carrington Weems' promise of brick and mortar, he would not have accepted the directorship in 1966. Weems indeed has worn many hats, from chairman of the board to building chairman, in pushing a successful building campaign to fruition. Currently today's president Ford Hubbard, Jr. has welded together an effective team of fund-raisers, and just this week an additional grant of \$75,000 towards the building has been announced by the Moody Foundation.

ONE OF THE VAST differences in the old days of the CAA and the current ones is in the makeup of the boards of directors. Now that the museum has a new building and a professional staff of 10, it isn't the fomenting of ideas or program that is expected as much as it is the know-how and expertise in raising necessary funds from individuals, corporations and foundations. One constant through the years is that the organization has always believed in having fun; however, today, paralleling the trend of the times and the augmented cost of keeping the doors open, the museum's social events are usually geared towards raising supplementary funds.

According to Weems the calculated cost of the new museum amounts to about \$655,000 (furnishings will be an additional \$30,000) and "on a normal square footage computation basis, this is a remarkably low-cost building. Only \$100,000 is yet to be raised towards this cost. Other public buildings of a civic or cultural nature are running up to \$75 a square foot, and figuring 24,000 feet this building's cost comes to \$27.29 per square foot. "The upper exhibition area is 8,000 square feet and the lower offices, maintenance and all purpose area and bookstore amount to 8,700 square feet.

Nothing has been adorned. The great strengths of the building are its total honesty and simplicity and fantastic flexibility.

Birkerts is very much of an environmentalist, and he sensitively fit his building into the shifting city grid which occurs at Montrose

and Bissonnet. In creating the small triangular grass forecourts, he had in mind street traffic patterns and the visual transition from the MFA to the CAA. The architect considers the building "a minimal metal block sculpture." It can be viewed satisfactorily from every angle. The building is approached by a wide ramp, where one enters a truncated pyramidal lobby through a vertical slit which becomes both the eyes to the outside and the eyes to the inside. The confrontation with the vast scale of the interior gives one a feeling of untrammelled spaciousness. There are no supporting columns to distract one's eye.

The architect told me that "I chose the parallelogram because it allows me to create space with much more accommodating dimensions. We have the same square footage, but by racking the building, going from a square to a parallelogram, you create an extra long dimension which can accommodate special situations or events requiring more space. At the same time, the perimeter remains the same without any diminished wall space..."

ENTERING FROM THE gleaming stainless steel-stripped exterior, one finds an interior of concrete. The floor has been sealed but not polished, so that any type of construction can be drilled directly into it or suspended from floor to ceiling because of a series of floor ties. Lighting possibilities are infinite, for electric outlets are patterned in a grid throughout the floor and Edison Price has also designed a fixed grid of downlights and a secondary system with electric track con-

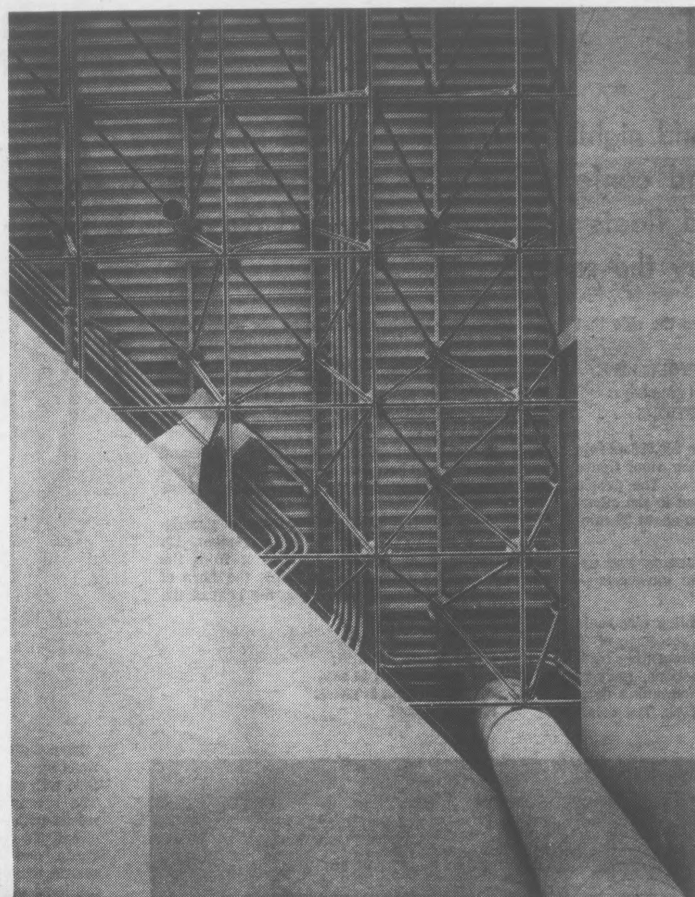
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The new building forms its own contemporary art: An exposed air duct rises to the 20-foot-tall unistrut

space frame ceiling.

—Photo by Hickey & Robertson

cealed in the bottom cord of the unistrut space frame ceiling. Two hundred cylindrical adjustable spotlights can be plugged in at will. In addition, there are three manually operated skylights. Every eventuality has been considered as far as future art forms for there is a floor drain and faucets for hot and cold water and compressed air. Charles Tapley and Associates are supervisory architects.

The ceiling becomes abstract art in its purest form with the geometric patterning creating great effects. The interior shows the holes of the cones left from the concrete forming. The metal spiral ducts are covered with snow-white latex and could be considered minimal sculpture. Plumbing pipes are exposed. Fire hoses have never seemed so handsome as they are in their pristine, unrecycled positions. The cantilevered concrete stairway has white enameled tubular rails.

This is a truly remarkable structure, and one that is sure to lend itself well to all sorts of visual experiences. The buildings has warehouse-like doors and an airplane hangar feel which will adapt it to the varied demands that will be made upon it.

Currently "Exhibition 10" is on view. Unfortunately the installation was too late for this columnist's deadline. Sebastian Adler has been climbing into artists' lofts all over the country in order to select a group of statements which he considers representative of the best innovative work being done today. He is not concerned about how he or we will feel about these artists two years hence. Many of these pieces are expendable and at the end of the show will wind up solely as documents of our time. The artists represented are: William G. Wegman, Richard Van Buren, Vera Simons, Michael Snow, Paul Sharits, Ellen Van Fleet, Newton Harrison, John Albery, David Deutsch and Robert Grovesnor.

The Museum of Fine Arts has mounted an exhibition of 20th century art in Cullinan Hall as a tribute to the opening of its new neighbor, the Contemporary Arts Museum. Works in the show are from the MFA's permanent collection.

Meanwhile, the Museum of Fine Arts, which is well into a building program of its own, has other evidences of contemporary art on its premises. These are murals on the construction site barrier which were painted by art department students of various Houston schools.

The Art League of Houston will have an auction of original paintings and sculpture March 24 at the Briar Club, 3637 Westheimer. Objects to be sold may be seen at the League's gallery, 1953 Montrose. Funds from the auction will go into the Art League's building and maintenance fund.

William Simpson will preside at the auction, for which Mary San Angelo has donated

a framed shiva painting as the door prize.

Winners from among 400 artists submitting works for the Jewish Community Center's Eighth Jury Award Exhibition have been announced by Mrs. David Litovsky, chairman of the art committee.

Prizes totaling \$1,000 were awarded Arnold Goldberg (first), Karen L. Barreto (second) and Jeffrey Lewman (third). Honorable mention was received by Inez Cipriani, Bonnie Seaman, Doris Daigle, Linda Kristianson, Ellen R. H. Stivison and Alfred Lee.

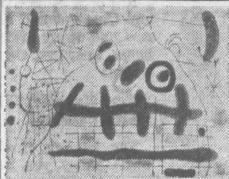
Leonard Siplori, director of the El Paso Museum of Art, was juror. He selected 45 pieces for an exhibition through April 7 at the Jewish Community Center Art Gallery.

Glen Kaufman, associate professor at the University of Georgia, will give a lecture Thursday at the University of Houston under sponsorship of the Loraine O'Gorman Gonzalez Arts-Crafts Fund in cooperation with Houston Contemporary Weavers and the art department of the university. Kaufman's lecture and slide

presentation, which is open and free to the public, will be given at 8 p.m. in the Klva-Room of the College of Education Building on the campus.

The Art League of Baytown is sponsoring a sidewalk art sale Saturday at 401 W. Texas Ave. in Baytown.

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featuring original works of graphic art—etchings, lithographs,—by leading 20th century artists: Picasso, Dalí, Miro, Calder, Chagall, Friedlaender, Searle, Rouault, Vasarely and others.

Hollywood

"Pöcock and Pitt," a film based on a new novel by Elliott Baker, has been scheduled for filming late this year. The screenplay will be written by Baker who is returning to Warner Bros. where he previously wrote the screenplay of his earlier work, "A Fine Madness."

Peter Finch will star in "Lost Horizon," producer Ross Hunter's first film for Columbia Pictures. Finch, portraying an English diplomat in his first appearance in a musical film role, will report to Lugano, Switzerland, to rehearse his musical numbers.

Stuart Rosenberg's first of two films he will produce and direct for 20th Century-Fox will be "Part 35," which is based on spectacular trials in a New York City courtroom. Production is scheduled to begin in the summer. Rosenberg's second project will be "The Laughing Policeman," a film on crime adapted from a novel by two Swedish writers.

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Museum renaissance in Texas

By ELEANOR FREED

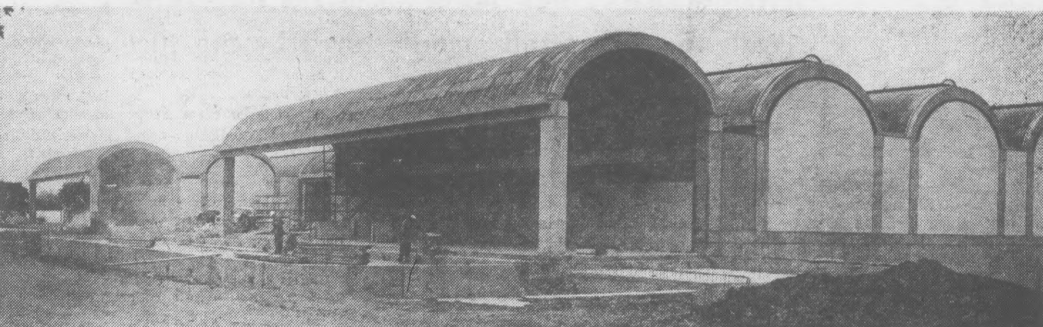
Texas may have gotten off to too late a start to form comprehensive collections of world masterpieces, but it has compensated by choosing some of the world's great architects to house its relatively recently acquired selections.

The museum that has everybody in international art frontiers guessing in terms of its contents is now revealing what Ben Shahn might have called "the shape of content." The new Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth possesses the most extraordinary architectural form of any museum that I have ever encountered.

Philadelphia architect Louis I. Kahn (A.I.A. Gold Medal winner in 1971) has conceived the idea of using a series of cycloid vaults which makes possible the elimination of columns or other interior supports. Openings exist along the length of these vaults through which natural light filters through plexiglass. Imagine 120,000 square feet of interior space! During a recent walk through the almost completed museum, I was first impressed with the exceptional scale, free of supportive beams, then the subtle lighting. Despite the great elegance of the design there is total purity and structural honesty. Kahn does not believe in covering up any structural detail. The most beautifully grained white oak is used throughout but only for aesthetic purposes. The ovoid forms and all areas of stress are made of concrete. At each end of the gallery is a lunette rimmed by the slimmest amount of daylight, which is proof in itself that the wall does not uphold the roof. The areas between the curving concrete sections are of travertine marble blocks. The color is all muted and monochromatic, and the most dramatic material incorporated is the lead roof curving in a manner which has not even been attempted since the Renaissance.

THE CYCLOIDS OF post-tensioned concrete are up to 100 feet in length. There are porticos and interior courts, including one with a waterfall, separating the various galleries. Every sort of mechanical innovation has been incorporated including floor receptacles where vacuum dust is collected, the "living room" area will have the most advanced means for presenting slide lectures and automated material. The theater is stunning. All lighting has been done by Edison Price.

One of the best-kept secrets of museum history will be unveiled officially to the public on Oct. 4. Dr. Richard Fargo Brown told me shortly after coming to Fort Worth from the



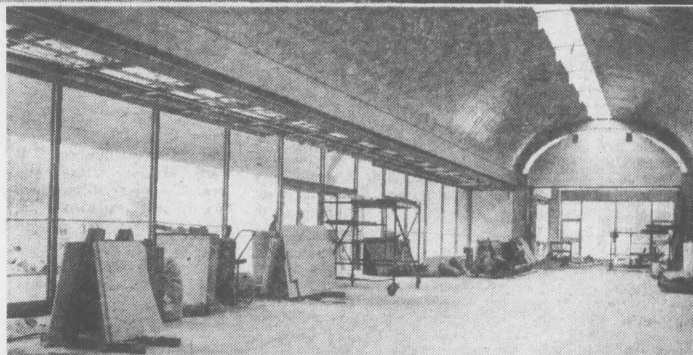
The exterior view from the south end of the Kimbell Art Museum, above, shows architect Louis I. Kahn's use of self-supporting, ovoid-shaped cycloid vaults up to 100 feet long. The glassed-in main entrance hall, right, shows the column-free, flexible space provided by the museum's design.

Los Angeles County Museum that "the Kimbell Art Foundation had at its disposal resources that are among the largest in the world for the purchase of art." During the past six years the selections of director Brown and his staff have been shrouded in mystery; only 11 works have been made public, and only then when they have gone on loan to major exhibitions — such as their six-foot-tall "Enthroned Buddha" from the Khmer Dynasty, or a Goya, Redon or Vuillard.

Saying then and reaffirming today that "whatever it is that we acquire must be definitive in type for whatever it is and of top-notch aesthetic quality", Dr. Brown has acquired definitive examples from prehistoric to Picasso.

THE FORT WORTH complex, located at Amon Carter Square is becoming one of the most exciting in the country, for near the nine acres on which the Kimbell Art Museum stands is the Amon Carter Museum, designed by Philip Johnson and directed by Mitchell Wilder. This museum specializes in surveying western art but no longer confines itself exclusively to that subject. The adjacent Fort Worth Art Center has just added the word Museum to its name and is now in the talking stages of doubling its facilities from 6,000 to 12,000 square feet in order to provide adequate space for its permanent collection, increasing at a gallop under the direction of Henry Hopkins. During a recent luncheon with Mr. Hopkins he told me that these changes are under consideration (to be announced later), but he has authorized me to say that, since the other museums in the immediate area were by Louis I. Kahn and Philip Johnson, they had determined to give their commission to a Texas architect and have chosen O'Neil Ford. The fourth museum in the general area is the Museum of Science.

The Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi will open its stunning new building along the sea designed by Philip Johnson.



Kathleen Gallander, the director, is anticipating an October opening. There are many other new museums in Texas including, of course, the exceptionally bold and functional stainless steel parallelogram designed by Gunnar Birkerts, for the Contemporary Arts Museum. This building has been discussed in earlier articles and so have the proposed changes for the completion of the Mies van der Rohe wing of Houston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Although the vast majority of other museums throughout the country are now in a state of crisis as to function and financing (according to "Museums in Crisis," edited by Brian O'Doherty, George Braziller publisher), Texas is in an enviable position in terms of an ability to provide the financing for these ambitious structures. Hopefully the "shape of content" will equal in excellence the architectural concepts of the buildings.

• An architectural overview: Houston survey

Houston is now the host city for a meeting of the American Institute of Architects, their first collective visit here since 1949. To celebrate this meeting "Houston, An Architectural Guide" has just been published (available locally at \$5), and my copy arrived shortly before deadline.

Talbot Wilson is chairman of the editorial board for the Houston chapter of A.I.A., which initiated the project. Rice architectural professor Peter C. Papademetriou is responsible for the editing and graphic design of this monumental effort which has occupied him and his staff of researchers for a year and a half.

In this first inventory of Houston buildings

ever to be attempted, the task has been compounded, according to Papademetriou, because of non-existence of archives and the fact that building permits are burned every five years. No building, with the exception of the Cotton Exchange (just recently listed), was ever registered with the Historic American Building Survey File. The Texas Architectural Foundation and the Houston Public Library have been prime partners in this study along with 20 business firms, each of which gave \$1,000. All of the photographic negatives and fact sheets will henceforth be available to the public as part of the permanent collection of the Texas Room, Houston Public Library.

WITHIN THE 15 chapters, areas such as NASA, the Ship Channel and Galveston are included. The book is essentially reportorial and, according to Papademetriou, it is non-judgmental. Riffing through the pages and scanning the photographs, one can find landmarks of historic interest, of architectural excellence, but also the all too ubiquitous examples of urban blight.

The A.I.A. has tried essentially to identify Houston 1972, not so much as a city but as a region, which is totally automobile-oriented. An urban area that is so vast that a visitor carries away primarily memories of its scale, its great open sky against which are silhouetted buildings. It is the vitality, the viability, the pace, the dynamism, the pulse, the thrust of Houston that impress and even overwhelm the human observer. Papademetriou hopes that an analysis and digestion of this architectural guide to Houston will cause people to examine what we have to lose as well as what we have to gain from our phenomenal growth pattern.



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James Chillman

James Chillman left a legacy to Houston too large to define.

Because of his love for art, for the entire sweep of art and architecture across civilization, he inspired untold numbers of young people to take up the study that was his life's joy. Caught by him, they have gone on to become artists, architects, art historians, art patrons. At Rice University, the Agnes Cullen Arnold Chair in Fine Arts is in memory of a young girl who felt her life enriched by her teacher, James Chillman.

A native of Philadelphia, Chillman came to Houston in 1916 as a young instructor in architecture at the still new Rice Institute. On his retirement in 1961, Rice University made him trustee distinguished professor and he continued teaching. In 1969 he received the George R. Brown award for superior teaching. In this period he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for outstanding achievement in education.

Chillman was also the first director of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts when it opened in 1924 with a \$150,000 building, a \$50,000 collection and, as staff, one receptionist and a janitor. He sometimes paid the janitor out of his own pocket.

By 1951, the collection had grown in value to \$3 million, visitors to 90,000 a year.

At the time of his death he was director emeritus of the museum he had shaped, and was ending his 56th year as a teacher at Rice. Houston as a city and uncountable numbers of Americans gained from him a whole new vista in the arts.

Ms. A. 9.1. 72