

Pueblo Style and Regional Architecture: The Mystique of New Mexico

A report and commentary from the Symposium

Edna E. Heatherington

In the autumn of 1988 "Santa Fe Style" is again in fashion across the nation. My fall catalogue from a Midwestern department store was all "Santa Fe Style" and filmed in Phoenix. The romance of blue corn and hot chiles is affecting chic restaurants from coast to coast. A new perfume called "Santa Fe" is being marketed for Christmas, and Santa Fe's Mayor Sam Pick, who can be very amusing about Santa Fe life, will tour the country to market the City Different under the auspices of the perfume company.

It was an auspicious season for the symposium sponsored by the University of New Mexico, the Institute for Pueblo Indian Studies of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, and the Albuquerque Chapter AIA and the New Mexico Society of Architects, and held at La Posada Hotel in Albuquerque at the beginning of October. A remarkable array of scholars from the nation and the region participated in two and a half days of presentations and discussions.

Opening with Amos Rapoport's sweeping and definitive discussion of what constitutes a region and what makes a region recognizable, the conference included scholarly papers on Anasazi archaeology; the development of the Pueblo-Spanish Style in California, Arizona and New Mexico; individual histories of people and of such events as the decision to develop Santa Fe in the Style; and the evolution of particular pueblos up to the present.

Both the prepared presentations and the panel and informal discussions were interesting and stimulating, full of illuminating connections, new ideas, and amusing stories. Not only was it refreshing to hear from the visiting scholars, it refreshed my sense of New Mexico's own intellectual community to hear from both scholars whose work I already know and others in anthropology and philosophy whose work and thought were new to me. I was surprised at how consistently interesting and intellectually satisfying the entire conference was.

The only disappointment was that very few local architects attended, despite the participation in sponsorship by the AIA and participation as presenters by some practicing architects. I often think that this typical apathy — few attend the regular lectures presented by the School of Architecture and Planning, and attendance at the annual Santa Fe Design Conference is fairly scant — reflects discouragement

and lack of self-esteem among the New Mexico design community. And yet I think that architects deserve and profit from this kind of aesthetic and intellectual stimulation, both the communication with the larger professional and intellectual community, and the exploration of the riches of our own romantic, picturesque, and mystical region and tradition.

Fortunately, a large number of the papers will be published in a book to be brought out by Van Nostrand Reinhold, scheduled to be available in August of 1989. And toward the end of this symposium, someone, observing that the Puebloan tradition and its origins had been emphasized, suggested that the symposium might appropriately become a biennial event, with the second concentrating on the contributions from the Hispanic culture.

The mystique of New Mexico never is entirely out of style, and during the more than twenty years I've lived here has twice been nationally fashionable. The beauty of this landscape, with its great vistas and brilliant light, the interest of the history embodied in the traditional and continuing architectural forms of the region, and even the spiritual currents which move about our state as palpably as the wind and weather, all will continue to draw and

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keep people dwelling here, and to exert a profound and beneficial influence on architectural design as well as on other aspects of our lives. E.E.H.

Mystique: A complex of transcendental or semimystical beliefs and attitudes directed toward or developing around an object (as a person, institution, idea or pursuit) and enhancing the value or significance of the object by enduing it with an esoteric truth or meaning. — Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged (The word mystique did not appear in Webster's Second.)

The Mystique of La Luz:

The housing development which is a place celebrates its 20th anniversary.

By Edna E. Heatherington

While New Mexico celebrated a heritage of building traditions in the Pueblo Style Symposium at the beginning of October (see another story in this issue). *Architectural Record* brought out an October issue with a splashy article on five projects by Albuquerque architect Antoine Predock, FAIA, whose caption reads "for Antoine Predock ... projects outside New Mexico are a welcome opportunity to prove that he has outgrown the epithet of 'regionalist'." Predock himself is quoted at the beginning of the article: "You're a regionalist if you can't get a job out of state."

Yet, it is Predock's talent for expressing the mystique of his own work which has made him famous as a "regionalist". He

has been able to speak with poetic force of the Modern architect's search for harmony and grace of form in the realities of site, climate, and locally available materials, and in other "metaphors", as well as in the building's functions. Beginning his career in the high desert of New Mexico, Predock created buildings as expressive as those of the Puebloan people of the beauties and exigencies of this land and climate.

In July of this year, Predock's early and famous housing development, La Luz, designed with the creative and farsighted sponsorship of developer Ray Graham, celebrated its 20th anniversary. Predock, now a Fellow of AIA, a Rome Prize winner, and so famous that not only the ar-

Continued on Page 15

Montezuma continued

entire hotel complex from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe a few years ago in order to establish the United States branch of the United World College, which has five such schools around the world. A very laudable idea, but the idea carried with it the need for the stabilization and, as most New Mexicans thought at the time, the eventual preservation and re-use of the old hotel as a part of the college campus. I guess that we were wrong!

□ □ □ □

The Montezuma Hotel was designed by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root, Architects; the hotel opened its doors to the public on April 20, 1885. Although it was consumed by flames in August of 1885, it was rebuilt and opened again in August of 1886.

The hotel and its adjacent complex of buildings stood empty for years during which time vandalism took its toll. But the building remained, as it does today, an important

historical monument awaiting restoration. When Armand Hammer bought the complex for development into the College, it was popularly believed that the hotel building itself was to be a part of the campus complex. But while the older, 1879, Hot Springs Hotel, at the base of the hill on which the Montezuma sits, and other buildings have been remodeled/restored for College use, the Montezuma stood unattended and unstabilized. The adjacent "Casino" building of 1895 was allowed to be demolished. As the recent press release states, it is an "elegant Queen Anne style building with verandas, dormers, bay windows and shingles..." College President, Ted Lockwood, further states, in totally bypassing the responsibilities of the owners, "this will give one of New Mexico's best loved buildings.. the chance to get the preservation/restoration attention it needs" - a need that two of the world's wealthiest men could, would, not address: Armand Hammer, "philanthropist" and the Prince of Wales, President of the United World Colleges and an outspoken critic of architecture. For shame on both their heads. JPC

(See NMA May/June 1977 "The Montezuma Hotel" by Louise Harris Ivers)

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La Luz — continued.

chitectural magazines but *Time* (April) have featured him and his work, was unable to attend the celebration because he was on his way to a symposium in Florida and then to Paris for a meeting about a project.

But La Luz created its own celebration. It is a success not only as a response to its landscape but also as a community, and the residents published a newsletter of history and reminiscences richly documenting that success. The festival itself included walking tours both of the open space and of the private gardens, as well as parades, ceremonies, and a communal dinner and dancing.

Predock wrote a letter to the other celebrants, published in August/September newsletter, in which he reiterates his design principles as well as expressing his particular affection for the community. "When I visit the project today I feel that same visceral response that I felt when the first adobe bricks went into the walls at the end of Arco in 1968," he says.

In the same letter, Predock also says "...architecture as landscape metaphor (was) an obsession to me then as ..now...". In the essay in *Architectural Record*, Karen D. Stein describes Predock's early

study of the choreography of Anna Halprin and the music of John Cage, and says, "such extradisciplinary studies also helped Predock distance himself from the historicizing of many of his colleagues..."

Stein does not discuss what she means by "historicizing" whether that might be the use of a traditionally carved corbel in New Mexico, the patterning of a planned development on the tradition of plazas, scaling the facade of a building to the proportions of nearby or surrounding buildings, or creating pilasters and pediments from foam plastic and synthetic stucco to articulate and relieve a non-structural facade.

Stein does describe some of the metaphors which Predock used in his design for California State Polytechnic University's Multiuse Building: "...imagery-potent points of reference: a historic building, the flight pattern into nearby Los Angeles airport, student traffic through a rose garden".

In New Mexico, "imagery-potent points of reference" include plazas and patios; pueblos and Spanish villages; Railroad Era buildings, especially in Albuquerque and Las Vegas; and a multitude of other things, possibly including the flight patterns of airplanes — just as in any par-

ticular locale. The "landscape metaphor" which Predock mentions in his letter to La Luz is such a strong element in his own work that single-family homes have been designed to echo the forms of mountains, and Stein notes of the Cal Poly design "he submitted his social musings to the pattern of archetypal forms by fitting the various pieces into a chamfered triangle set atop a mesa (for all his worldly references Predock still depends heavily on the motifs of his region)."

For all the pejorative references to "regionalism" — of which the antithesis of "worldly" may not be one — the *Architectural Record* article supplements Predock's own pride and delight in La Luz. "I am proud that it asserts an uncompromising modern image," he says. And so it does. La Luz asserted not just modern but avant-garde principles of open space and community planning, and of the response of building design to climate and site: wind direction, heating and cooling seasons, views, composition of both public and private realms. The celebration of the success of La Luz is a higher honor than a feature story in *Time* for the career of an architect, the designer of the genuine places in which people live their lives.

E.E.H.

Architecture Workshop Opens Doors of Discovery

by Steven C. Yesner, A.I.A.

"Architecture and Children: Discovery through Design" was the focus of a creativity workshop for children, ages 6-13, at the 1st Annual Junior Conference of the Albuquerque Association for Gifted and Talented Students (AAGTS) held October 22 on the campus of the Albuquerque Academy.

Sessions featuring graphic expression through drawing, understanding the architect's viewpoint, examination of building and landscape forms, schematic plan development and model construction in a variety of media and contextual applications were conducted by an enthusiastic group of educators, artists, historians, and architecture students following a curriculum developed by Dr. Anne Taylor, Ph.D., which uses architecture as an interdisciplinary link for teaching visual thinking, problem-solving and basic skills in math, science, social studies and art.

Dr. Taylor is a professor of architecture and planning at the University of New Mexico (currently on sabbatical in the North-west), director and curator of the "Architecture and Children" exhibition and education program, as well as director of School Zone Institute which publishes and produces her educational concepts. For the

past 20 years, Dr. Taylor has worked with architect George Vlastos exploring the relationship between architecture and education, seeking to improve the aesthetic education of future generations and to design and build better and more beautiful learning environments for the schools of tomorrow.

AAGTS is a nonprofit parent advocacy organization dedicated to developing the gifts and talents of children. The "Architecture and Children" workshop, organized by Sara Otto-Diniz, proved to be a tremendous success in inspiring cooperative creativity among the 100 children from throughout the state who participated. SCY



Illustration from "Architecture and Children" by School Zone Institute.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Re: Response to Editorial by Mr. Wayne Williams in July-August Edition of "New Mexico Architecture"

Dear Sirs:

Though I applaud much of what Mr. Williams says regarding the pernicious effects of aesthetic design controls, his statement regarding the architect's and planner's obligation to "educate" their patronage betrays an elitist bias that is no better than the myopia of many preservationists. The challenge may in fact be just the opposite, viz. to change the way architects have been taught to see. As architect and critic Brent Brolin states, "change the definition of 'creative architectural statement' to mean a building which, among other things, also fits gracefully into its context. De-emphasize the cruder variety of creativity-originality through novelty-and stress refinement within the aesthetic confines of the given visual context, whether it is modern or traditional." The rub is that there may be not enough talented designers that are both creative and sensitive to context. Not being a resident of Santa Fe or familiar with its design controls, I can only suggest that this lack of talent might be what afflicts Santa Fe. Be that as it may, perhaps only time will transform both the elitism of designers and the reactionary instincts of preservationists into a dialogue which results in truly creative solutions.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Preston
Colorado Springs, Colorado