

SANTA FE STYLE REVISITED — WITH CREDITS!

Book Review by Robert W. Peters, AIA

SANTA FE DESIGN

Contributing Authors
Elmo Baca and Suzanne Deats
Publications International Ltd.,
Lincolnwood, Illinois, 1990
256 pages, 10" X 13"
550 color photographs; \$29.95

Since my review of the book *SANTA FE STYLE* appeared in this journal in the March/April 1987 issue, development of the "Style Book" genre has continued unabated in the United States, providing Americans with a shopping list of visual images and design resources for various parts of the world, usually in 10" X 10" format, priced around \$35.00 and imminently suitable for display on the most sophisticated coffee table.

Providing equal parts enlightenment and confusion, these volumes seem to satisfy a continuing need to shop for images portraying a sense of heritage in an era increasingly bereft of the real thing.

During 1987 Bantam Books started its American Design Series with *THE FARM HOUSE*, while also publishing *THE DESERT SOUTHWEST*. Crown Publishers brought out one of the most visually beautiful volumes in the series with *JAPANESE STYLE*, while Viking produced a mishmash called *AMERICAN VERNACULAR: REGIONAL INFLUENCES IN ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN*, "A Portfolio of Regional Styles," in which editor Jim Kemp rummaged through old files at magazine publishers like House Beautiful, Metropolitan Home and others, and came up with largely undocumented and uncredited work of architects and designers, including this writer, purporting to show "examples of over 50 styles." Against this plagiarism there ought to be a law.

Output increased in 1988 with hand-some volumes from Crown titled *GREEK STYLE* and *ITALIAN COUNTRY STYLE*. Bantam continued their American Design series with *THE TOWN HOUSE* and *NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL*. And Clarkson Potter, publisher who started the whole trend in 1980, introduced an aberration called *INTERIORS: THE 8 MAJOR DECORATING STYLES SEEN TODAY*. These were proclaimed to be "Cluttered," "Hot Climate," "Simple," "Designer Decorated," "Minimal (somehow different from "Simple" in an unspecified way),

"Ancestral," "Shabby Chic" and "Eccentric." The examples shown involved names like Robert Adam, Luis Barragan, Coco Chanel, Le Corbusier, Memphis, Palladio, Claude Monet, etc.. I will let the reader match names with styles.

A degree of sanity returned in 1989 when Chronicle published *SAN FRANCISCO: A CERTAIN STYLE*, Bantam continued their series with *THE NORTHWEST*, and Crown issued *PIERRE DEUX'S BRITTANY*. Image deconstruction began with VNR's *FLOOR STYLE* focusing only on the floor plan. But the highlight of the year for this reviewer was the publication by Stewart, Tabori & Chang of *CASA MEXICANA: THE ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND STYLE OF MEXICO*, an obvious labor of love by Los Angeles-based photographer Tim Street-Porter with images of extraordinary beauty showing vernacular buildings, remains of 19th century haciendas, an entire chapter on the houses of Luis Barragan including his Casa Luna of 1930, the Casa Prieto of 1943 and Casa Galvez of 1955. This valuable historic documentation includes work by the late Juan Sordo Madeleno, Andres Casillas, Jose de Yturbe and Manolo Mestre, along with the prolific Ricardo Legorreta, and deserves a place in the library of every architect working in the Southwest.

By mid-summer 1990 we had already seen the introduction by Bantam of *DESERT SOUTHWEST GARDENS* and *SECOND HOMES*; Rizzoli had weighed in with *NANTUCKET STYLE*; Crown had come up with two hot flashes entitled *INDIAN STYLE* (that's East Indian) and *MIAMI: HOT & COOL*; while Abbeville Press plunged into *MEDITERRANEAN COLOR* and VNR provided a look through *WINDOW STYLE*.

In all of this proliferation of titles, *SANTA FE STYLE* by Christine Mather and Sharon Woods (with photographs by Robert Reck, Jack Parsons and others) has continued from one printing into another, becoming one of the best selling volumes ever published by Rizzoli and far outweighing in popularity many of its esoteric studies of the work of "show biz" architects around the world. And so it was perhaps inevitable that when the publishers of Consumer Guide Magazine, Collectible Automobile and Favorite Recipes decided to enter the field with guides for the consumption of design, they

would start with *SANTA FE DESIGN*. Introduced by Publications International Ltd., Lincolnwood, Illinois, just in time to be displayed in Santa Fe booksellers' windows during the Indian Market weekend, it has already become a best seller. Lynne Moor, of Collected Works Bookshop just off the Plaza, told me that twenty five copies went the first two days, sending her scurrying to reorder, with people buying four at a time (presumably for gifts). (At a neighborhood cocktail party I myself sold seven copies in less than half an hour.) What's the attraction?

Well, for one thing, as the bookjacket says, "The name Santa Fe conjures up a flood of beautiful images. This is a place where nature and civilization blend together in a complicated harmony that is influenced by its Indian, Spanish and frontier heritage, and blessed by the astounding beauty of its natural setting." The press release says that "Santa Fe — the heart and soul of the Southwest — is brought to life" in this new book, which is "Southwestern style at its very best." Well, dear reader, at five pounds and 550 photographs, it is the best, the worst and all shades in between. Indeed, the most singular thing about the book is that, rather than dealing with issues of "style," it simply presents New Mexico design, in architecture, interiors, arts & crafts, in all its variety and complexity, profusion and confusion, and lets the reader be the judge. In a state full of art historians and authors busily defining and codifying matters of historical taste, it is refreshing to have such a smorgasbord of design images laid out for all to see.

A young New Mexico architect, Elmo Baca, a native of Las Vegas with degrees from Yale and from Columbia's historic preservation program, now working for the City of Gallup, has provided much of the balanced and mostly accurate text, assisted by Santa Fe arts writer Suzanne Deats. There are introductory chapters on "Santa Fe Life," "Origins of Santa Fe Design," and "Santa Fe Architecture." Then follows 100 pages of "distinctive room-by-room views of home interiors created by Santa Fe's top designers; an illustrated (80 page) survey of the extraordinary arts and crafts created by the area's most renowned artists; and a resource guide to Santa Fe designers and where to find their intriguing decorative elements."

The resources section does in fact credit design professionals whose work is shown

in the book, with listings for 15 architectural firms located in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos, and 9 interior design firms in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Twelve member firms of the New Mexico Society of Architects are represented in the book. This is, I believe, the first time in the ten centuries since man came above ground and out of the pit houses here in the Southwest, that professionals in the fields of architecture and design have been given such wide recognition in a nationwide publication. Let's hope the trend continues.

In the face of such progress, faultfinding seems ungrateful, but let it be said that the printing, done in Yugoslavia to facilitate the modest retail price, has produced a number of murky images; that the photo credits list is hard to read and not altogether accurate; that credits are missing for landscape architecture; that the index does not list all contributors; and that those of us who decline to live in the City Different are called "Santa Fe Designers" anyway. The book is none the less a milestone for recognition of the design professions in New Mexico and the Southwest!

R.W.P.



Vernacular Architecture Conference

The annual Vernacular Architecture Forum will be held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 16-18, 1991. Two days of field trips focusing on the vernacular architecture and cultural landscape of north central New Mexico will be followed by a day of scholarly papers.

The conference is co-sponsored by University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research and School of Architecture, State of New Mexico's Endowment for the Humanities, Historic Preservation Division and Museum of International Folk Art.

The tour field guide is designed as an introduction to the cultural landscape and vernacular architecture of the area. Edited by Boyd C. Pratt and Chris Wilson, it covers Taos and Santa Clara pueblos, Spanish villages of Santa Cruz, Chimayo and Las Trampas, Martinez Hacienda (Taos), Las Vegas, Watrous Ranch, Valmora Sanitorium and the tourist district and a working class barrio of Santa Fe. The publication will include an annotated bibliography along with photographs, building, town and field plans.

To receive more information on the conference or a copy of the field guide (\$15.00 post paid, check or money order to VAF, before May 1, 1991) write to Chris Wilson, School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N.M. 87131. (505) 277-2903, 266-0931.

Project Teaches Architecture to Children

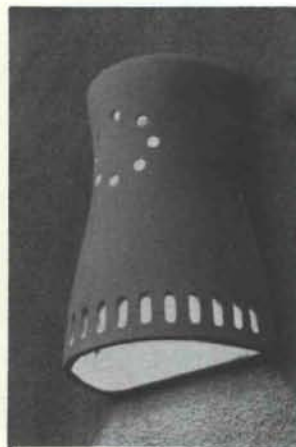
A University of New Mexico professor of architecture and planning and a professional architect have developed a curriculum for teachers to use in their classrooms to help make students more aware of architecture and the environment that surrounds them.

Dr. Anne Taylor, who is also co-director of the UNM School of Architecture and Planning's Institute for Environmental Education, and architect George Vlastos, developed the curriculum for teachers of students in kindergarten through grade 12. Taylor said the project is innovative because "schools of architecture have never trained teachers before, they've always trained architects."

Taylor, whose research in the area led to the development of a curriculum for teachers, earlier this year was invited to describe her work at the Architectural Institute of Japan. She said her curriculum will soon be translated into Japanese. In fact, a delegation of Japanese educators will visit the University of Washington, where Taylor is a visiting professor, to get a closer look at the concept. Kenchiku Bunka, a Japanese architectural journal, also has published an article about her research.

Last year, the "Architecture and Children" program won an award from the Seattle Council for Economic Development.

On September 22, as part of Architecture Week, about 30 teachers from throughout New Mexico will participate in a UNM workshop that will introduce them to the curriculum.



SANTA FE LIGHTS

Southwestern Style
Handcrafted Stoneware
Architectural Lighting Fixtures

INDOOR & OUTDOOR
WALL, CEILING, AND
HANGING LIGHTS.
CHANDELIERS &
GARDEN LIGHTS

Studio: Rt.10 Box 88-Y
Dept. B Showroom:
The Santa Fe Pottery
323 Guadalupe St.

Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
505-471-0076

*With Your Imagination
We Can Create
Concrete Structures of
Distinction*



Ferreri Concrete Structures, INC.

3411 Candelaria, NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107
(505) 884-1221 FAX (505) 884-1224