

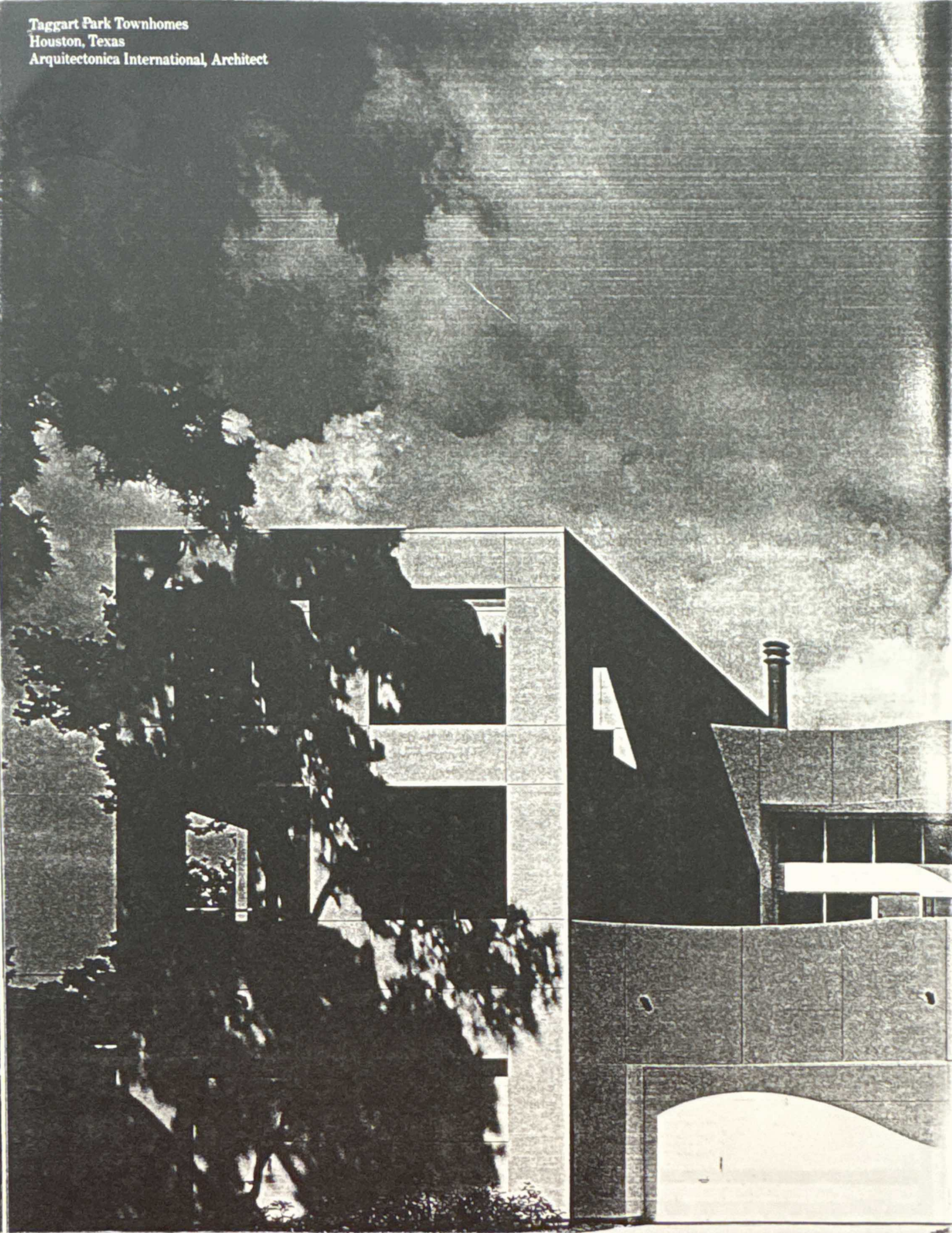
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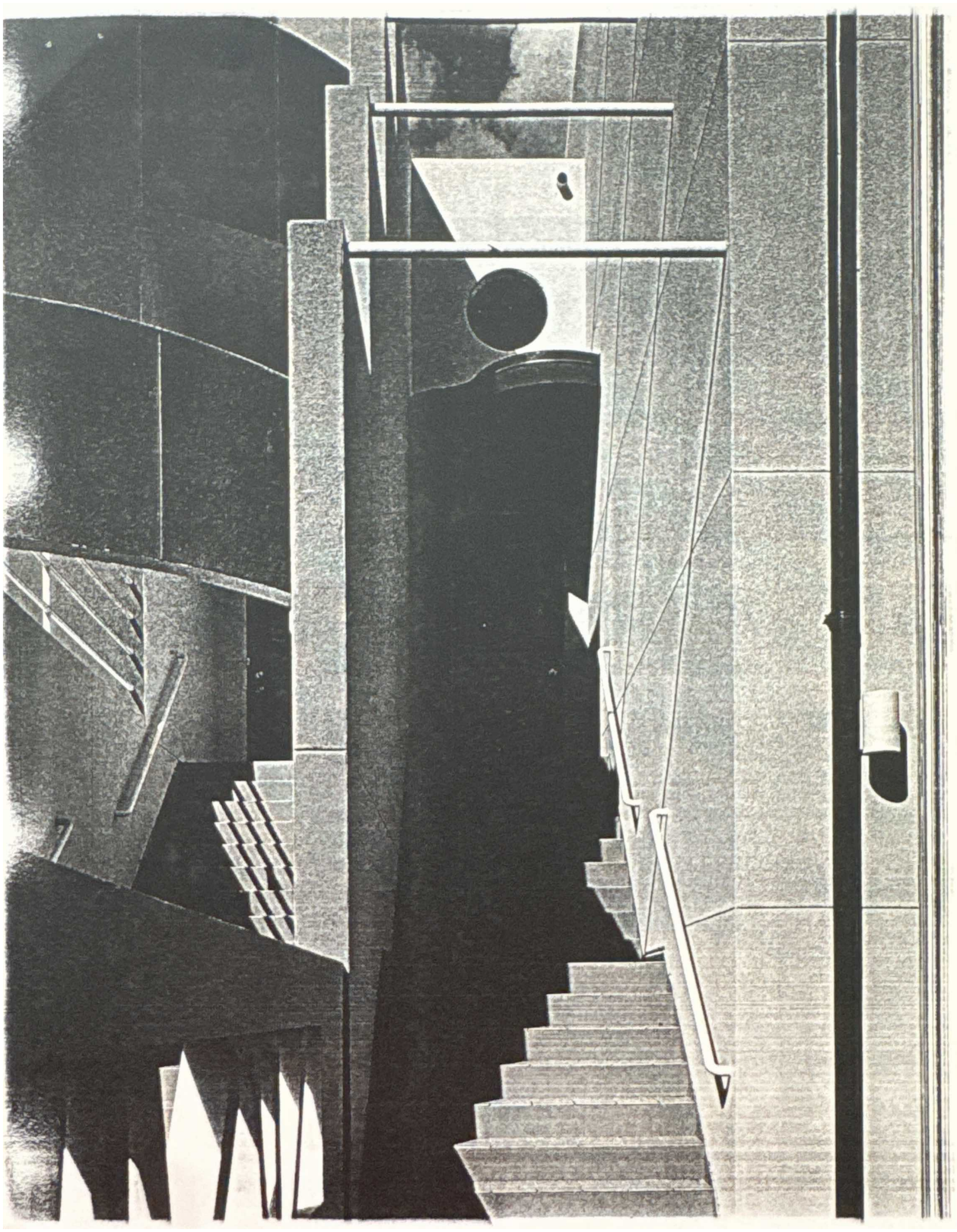
Business Design Engineering
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June 1985



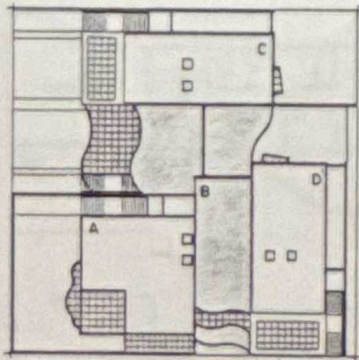
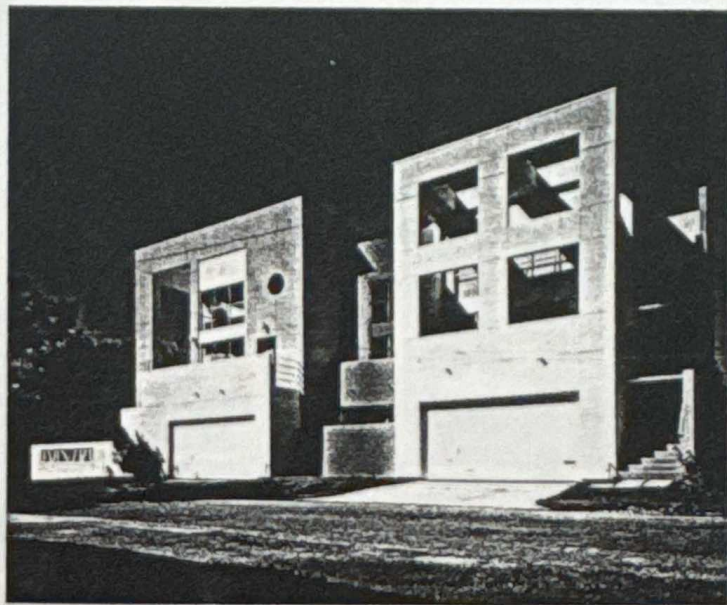
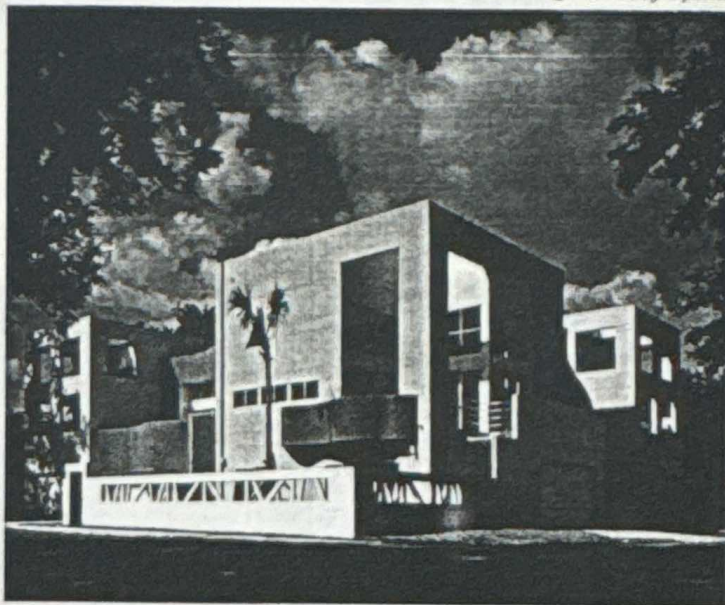
Taggart Park Townhomes
Houston, Texas
Arquitectonica International, Architect

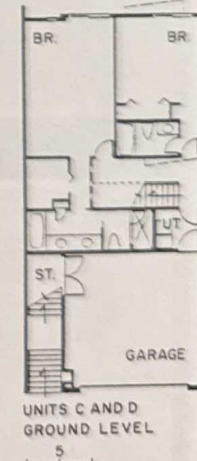
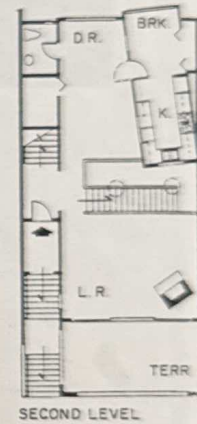
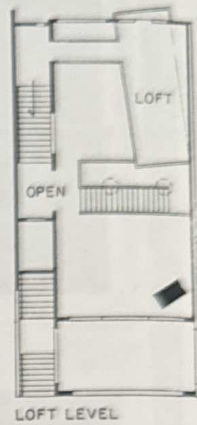
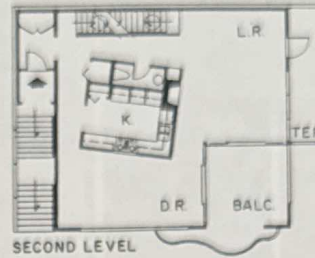
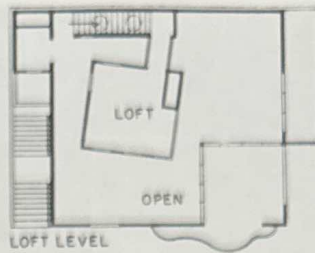
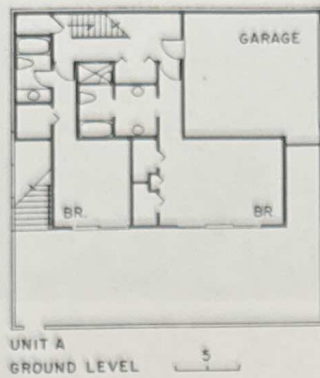




Certainly the most reserved of Arquitectonica's Texas townhouses is the Taggart complex, a four-unit residential enclave on a corner lot in Houston's formerly modest, but now trading-up, Memorial Park neighborhood. The mannerly "low-homes" owe their good neighborliness to a shifting pastel (not primary) palette, to a push-pull (in-out) site and massing plan, to a layered and variegated facade for both Taggart Avenue and Coppage Street (photo right) . . . in other words, to the fact that Arquitectonica resisted the expedient temptation to simply line up four identical units (as other architects are doing in the immediate neighborhood). Consequently, purchasers of the \$298,000 units are offered that elusive commodity in townhouse ownership, unit identity—"It's the pink house on the corner." The snappy (but not too snappy) cadence of the plans, colors, and elevations, also helps reduce the apparent scale of the new neighbor, which is always appreciated in single-family-house areas in the grip of "densification." For those concerned that the purchaser of the pink unit may decide to hate pink but love brown, developer Jerry Maba reassures us that the townhouses come with deed restrictions—any esthetic modifications must be approved by Arquitectonica. A non-esthetic footnote: According to realtor Judith Briggs, who is handling not only the Taggart townhouses but the Milford townhouses, Arquitectonica's projects get an extraordinary number of "lookers," but "in a softer market people feel more comfortable in terms of resale with more 'traditional' design." (The impressive resale record of Arquitectonica's Miami condominiums has not caught up with them yet in Houston.)

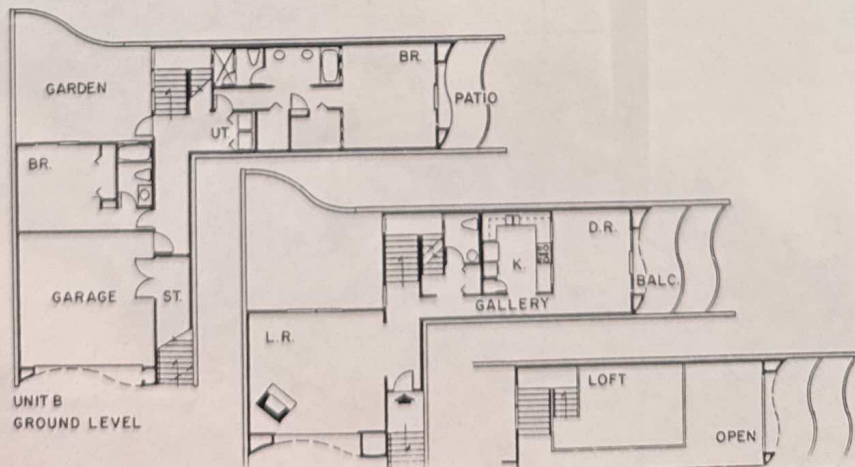
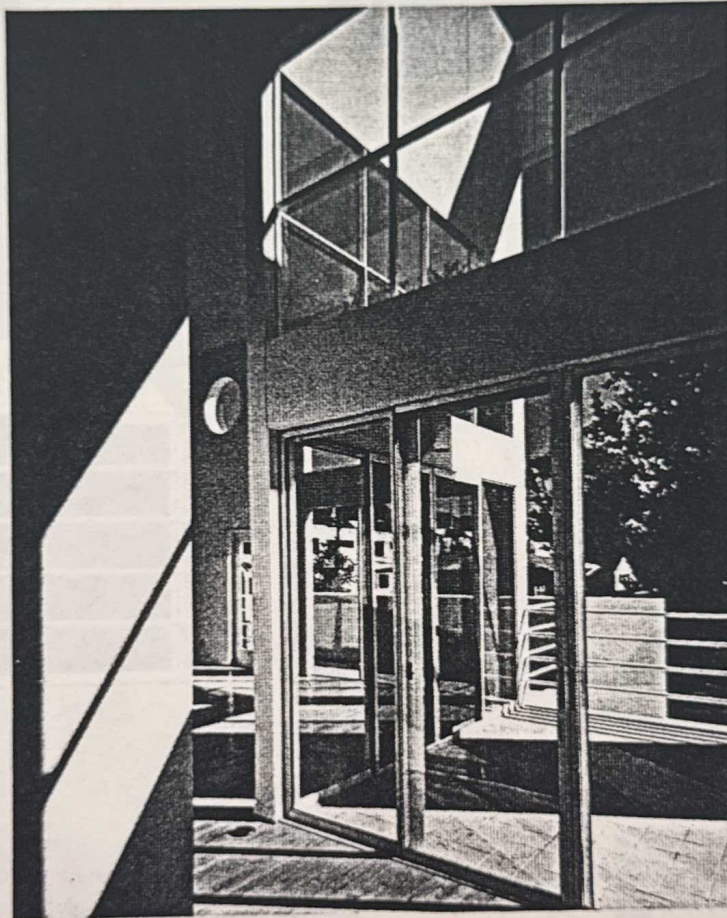
©Richard Payne photos





"They grab you with color outside, but you have to live inside... the feeling of the spaces is what's important," assays developer Jerry Maba. And though *Arquitectonica's* three floor plans for Taggart's four units can stand up against the best of what the competition can offer, they in no way convey the character of interiors that rely on vertical space as much as horizontal for their quality (right). Assisting in that qualitative cause is the more-than-generous glazing, which obviously floods the double-height living and dining rooms with sunlight, but also affords expansive aerial vistas from the second-floor public zone (the bedrooms share the ground floor with the garages) to the verdant lawn of Taggart Park, across the street.

Taggart Park Townhomes
Houston, Texas
Owner:
Jerry Maba, Developer
Architect:
Arquitectonica International Corporation—Bernardo Fort-Brescia, Laurinda Spear, principals and project designers; Robert Tolmach, project coordinator; Mark Volpendesta, project manager; Jenifer Briley, assistant
Engineer:
Cunningham Associates (structural)
General contractor:
Neartown Builders, Inc.





Reagan II: Full Speed Ahead

After presiding over an improvised indoor Inaugural "parade"—a bow to Washington's bitter cold—and squiring the First Lady to nine Inaugural balls, Ronald Reagan turned to second-term business with a vigor that belied his reputation for disengaged leadership. He has dedicated the next four years, he said in his second Inaugural Address, to a "new American Emancipation"—the completion of a political revolution he views as only half finished. *Page 18*

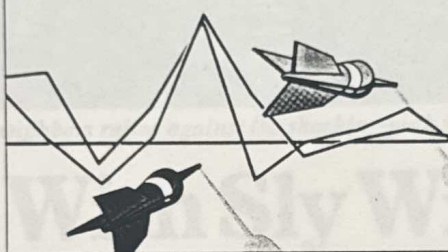


An Absence of Malice

After 10 weeks, Time magazine won its libel battle with Israel's Ariel Sharon, but the case and two other media trials now under way in New York—one Gen. William Westmoreland's suit against CBS—raised new questions about the credibility of the media as a whole. NEWSWEEK's cover package examines the trial, its impact on the media and the law, and looks at Sharon's political future in Israel. *Page 52*

What Good Are Economists?

The American economy performed superbly in 1984, growing at a headlong pace while the inflation rate remained low. But it was another disastrous year for economists, whose forecasts once again were far off the mark—subjecting them to ridicule from the White House and raising new doubts about the value of forecasting. *Page 60*

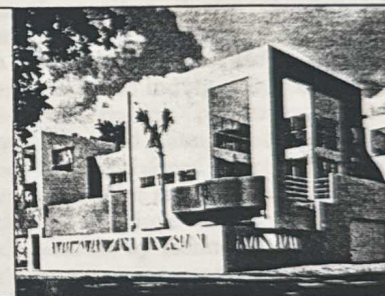


A New Epidemic

America is in the grip of an unprecedented outbreak of sexually transmitted diseases, throwing many people into a panic over infections that have been linked with sterility and cancer. *Page 72*

Witty Designs

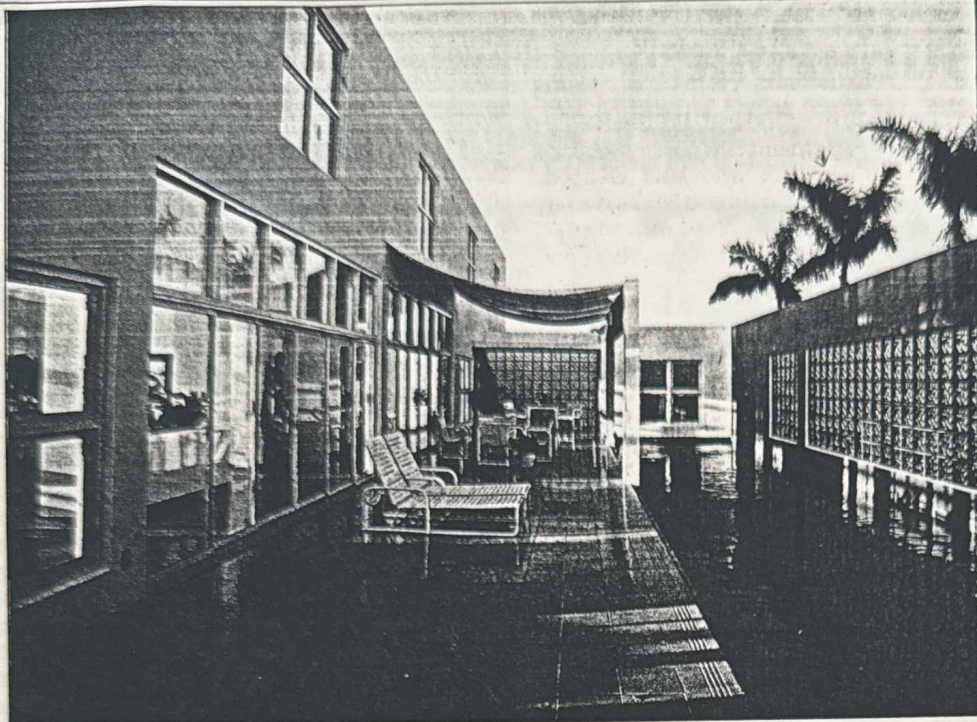
Arquitectonica, a brash young husband-and-wife design team, has come a long way in eight years—from renegade status in Miami to architects celebrated for their iconoclastic visions (right). *Page 76*



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Poolside courtyard of Spear house: The neighbors railed against the shocking-pink intruder

Designing With Sly Wit

Youthful Arquitectonica turns convention on its head.

When the shocking-pink and red façade of the Spear house began to rise in Miami in 1977, the neighbors were shocked in turn. The houses on the city's genteel North Shore were all white, beige and gray, hiding discreetly behind green gardens. The Spear house towered over the road, as garish, in the eyes of nearby residents, as a painted harlot. The long, narrow building stretched the length of the plot, right up to the waters of Biscayne Bay. More outrages

lay ahead. As the house neared completion, the neighbors noticed that the small porthole in the center of the façade glowed azure blue at night. Why? Up close, the porthole proved to be a window overlooking a glorious swimming pool, perched high above the ground and surrounded by walls painted in soft pastel tones. North Shore residents began to protest. NEIGHBORS SEE RED OVER PINK HOUSE, screamed one headline in the local press.

The furor that greeted that swashbuckling debut of Arquitectonica (Spanish for architectural)—a team of brash young Miami architects—seems ancient history now. Designed by two of Arquitectonica's founders, Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear (three other partners have since left to begin their own firms) the roseate house on the bay rapidly became the darling of design and architecture magazines all over the world and the winner of several prestigious awards. That eye-catching venture was soon joined by bigger, equally iconoclastic buildings, one of them a 20-story electric-blue condominium on the city's busy Brickell Avenue. Named the Atlantis, it features a huge cubic hole gouged out of the center. Once again the local press, worried about the building's gaudy looks, attacked. Once again the young designers triumphed. Within a year the Atlantis, too, became an architectural icon, known around the world

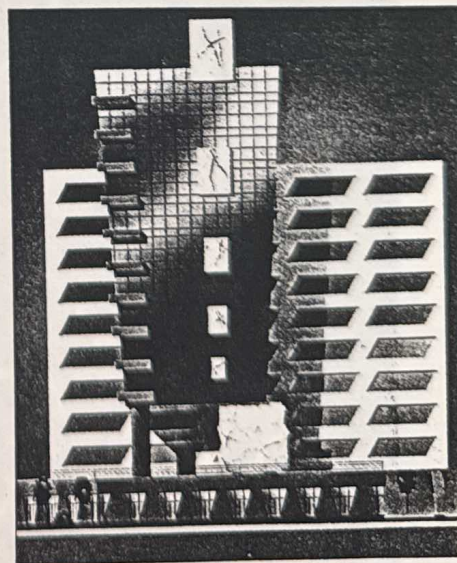


Fort-Brescia, Spear: Stylish innovators

—and sold out on every floor. Today, Spear and Fort-Brescia, now married, are reaping the benefits of a meteoric rise to success that has been matched by few architects so young—34 and 33 respectively. Since January 1984 they have completed, begun or planned buildings worth an impressive \$250 million—a healthy amount even for the most celebrated names in the field. The Miami establishment has completely surrendered. Last year Arquitectonica won a competition to design a new courthouse, the kind of commission normally reserved for the staid elder statesmen of the profession. Now the city's respected Center for the Fine Arts has mounted an exhibition of their work that will travel to Minneapolis and Houston and eventually to Europe. It is supported in part by a grant from the Southeast Banking Corporation Foundation.

'Dreams Without Limit': Arquitectonica's success is an intriguing case study. It has not only defeated the odds in Miami, where architects have ignored the colorful Spanish-American styles that once flourished in Florida in favor of the gray-flannel esthetic of northern cities, it also has defied the international tastemakers of architecture. In a decade in which an entire generation of architects has indulged in the glories of revivalism, rearing reinterpretations of Renaissance and classical icons, Arquitectonica has proclaimed its commitment to innovation. "We are modern," says Fort-Brescia. "We love to use new means made possible by technology. In the 20th century, you can express your dreams without limit."

Fort-Brescia, who was born in Peru, pep-



Dallas office building: Defying gravity

pers his sentences with hyperbolic adjectives like "fantastic," "unbelievable" and "amazing." He is legendary for his ability to inspire sober executives to flights of fancy. "Gentlemen," he announced to a panel of officials during an architectural competition last year, "courthouse design is in a rut." When they got the North Dade Branch Courts Building commission, Arquitectonica quickly designed a boomerang-shaped structure clad in pink marble and white glass laced with blue strips, and flooded with natural light. The design delighted the judges who will preside there.

Drawings: Yet another reason for Arquitectonica's success is Laurinda Spear's soft, romantic pencil sketches, which captivate cautious clients. In an age when "paper" architecture—drawings, models, photographs—reigns supreme, Arquitectonica is a tactical master. But charm, romanticism and drawing alone do not explain its swift rise.

Arquitectonica's critical asset—and potential flaw—is its wit. In each of its impressive new projects, there is one brilliant punch line that lifts the building beyond the appeal of sheer technical virtuosity. In a massive new bank under construction in Lima, Peru, for example, a weighty white-marble

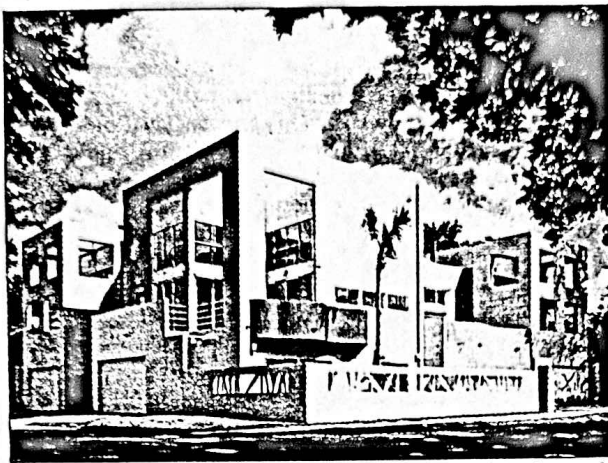
pedestrian bridge hangs suspended between two of the building's wings, defying logic as well as gravity. A 15-story granite office building that will rise in Dallas seems to float in space. It is supported on one side by a slender glass tower that is virtually invis-

dome-covered swimming pool—an incongruous slice of "ground" in the midst of the sky. Inside each of the new Taggart town houses in Houston, there is another "small house" containing a kitchen, a bathroom and an upstairs study.

Each of these sallies echoes the sly wit of the porthole in the Spear house and the fantastic "skycourt" in the middle of the Atlantis. Such surreal humor pokes fun at the mind-numbing boredom of big-city architecture and is as crucial to Arquitectonica's style as brilliant color and bold geometry. But it runs great risks of offending civic scale. The \$150 million Horizon Hill Center now rising in San Antonio will loom eerily over the captive audience passing on the nearby freeway. The center's four monumental 40-story glass towers will support nothing but a slim six-story corridor acting as a horizontal "bridge" across the top—as if a massive giant were hoisting a feather

beside the road. Seen over and over again from below, this poetic fantasy might well collapse into monstrous banality. Increasingly, the dreams—and the wit—of these talented young architects will be put to a rigorous public test.

DOUGLAS DAVIS in Miami



RICHARD PAYNE

Houston town houses: Buildings that pack a visual punch

ble, on the other by a rough-hewn "rock" (sculpted out of granite) that seems to be jammed accidentally in place. A 40-story condominium scheduled for Manhattan's Upper East Side will boast a three-story opening midway up. The cutout will reveal greenery, a running track and a heated,

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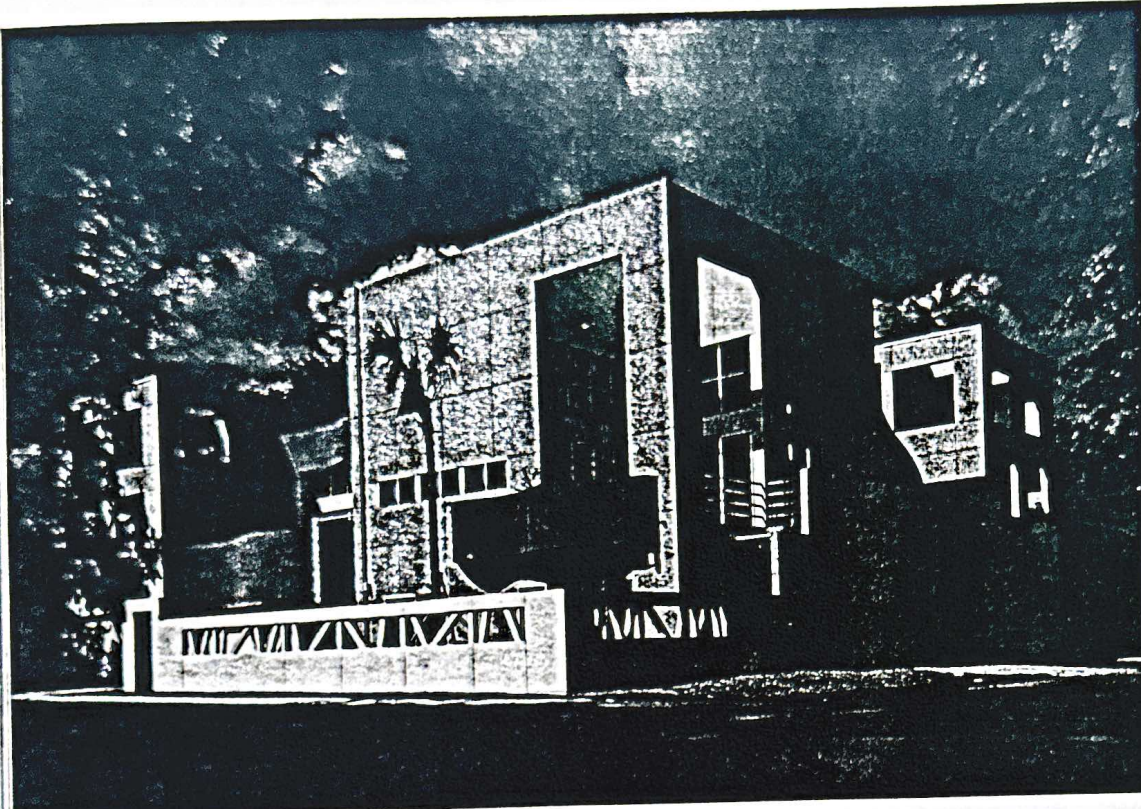


What are friends worth?



TAGGART TOWNHOUSES

Photography by Richard Payne



While appearing at first glance to be a non-contextual play of geometric figures and colorful stucco, Taggart Avenue townhouses do manage to acknowledge a major neighborhood feature. Memorial Park, which spreads its lush acres just down the street, is viewed diagonally from the townhouses across the intersection of Taggart Avenue and Coppage Street. Each of the four units has been oriented to enjoy a glimpse of the park.

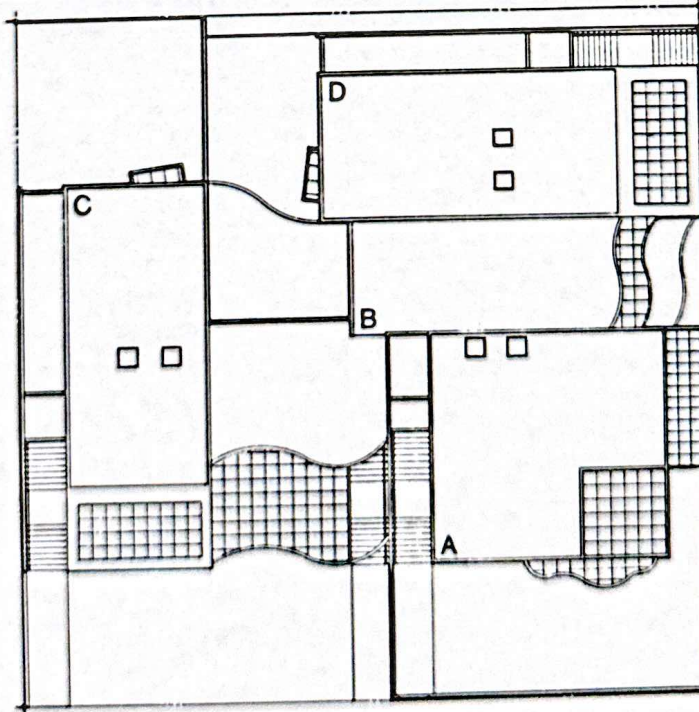
This corner lot traditionally would have dictated four linear units set 20 feet back from Taggart. But by placing one square-plan unit on the corner, Architectonica architects nestled an L-plan unit—facing both Taggart and Coppage—behind the square. Two linear units—with mirrored floor plans—then complete the complex, one fronting Taggart and the other Coppage.

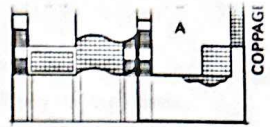
Exterior configurations clearly divide the four units through varying heights and wall surfaces. The square-plan corner unit presents a similarly squared facade, with balcony cutouts, on both street elevations. The adjacent L-plan townhouse faces both streets with an undulating “free-form” garage frame, patio wall, and parapet. The linear units revert to plane geometry for identity, presenting the street with inset terraces above their double-garage doors.

As if the wall surfaces couldn't convey individuality for each unit, a splash of colors leaves no doubt. Integral pigments mixed into the stucco—cream for the linear units, turquoise for the L-plan, and pink for the corner—are accented with a red balcony

Exterior configurations clearly divide the four units of the Taggart Townhouses through varying heights and wall surfaces.

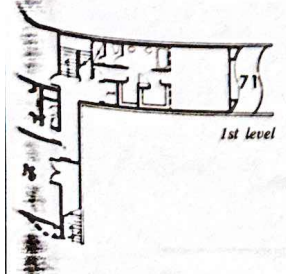
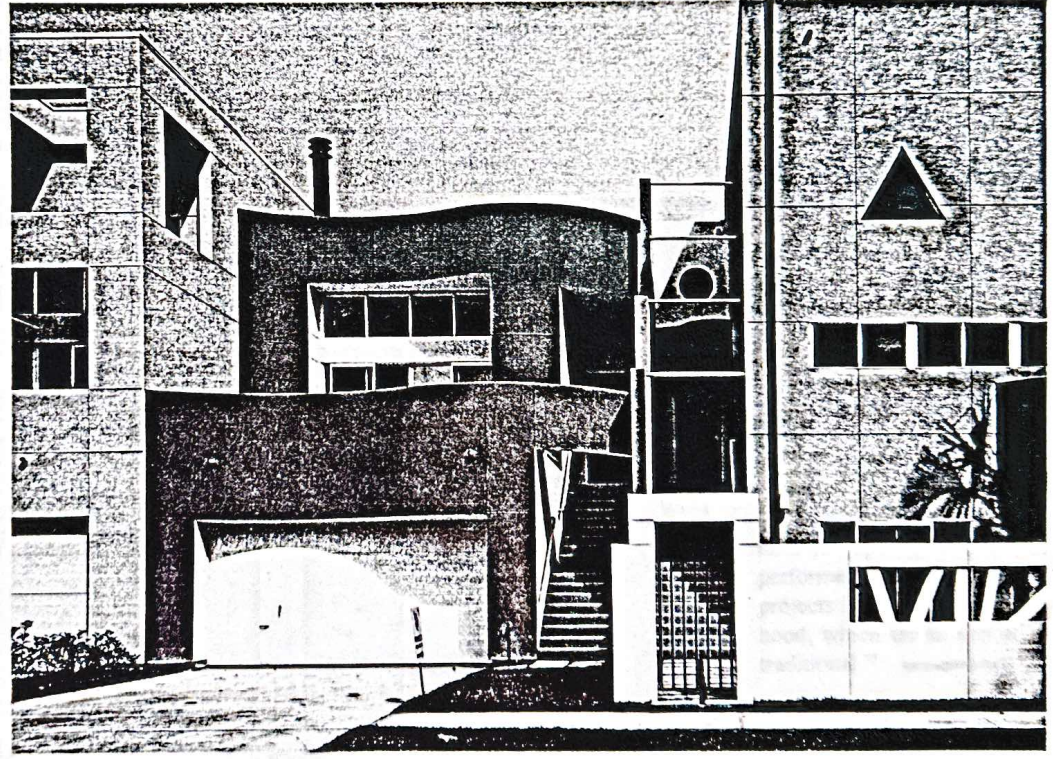
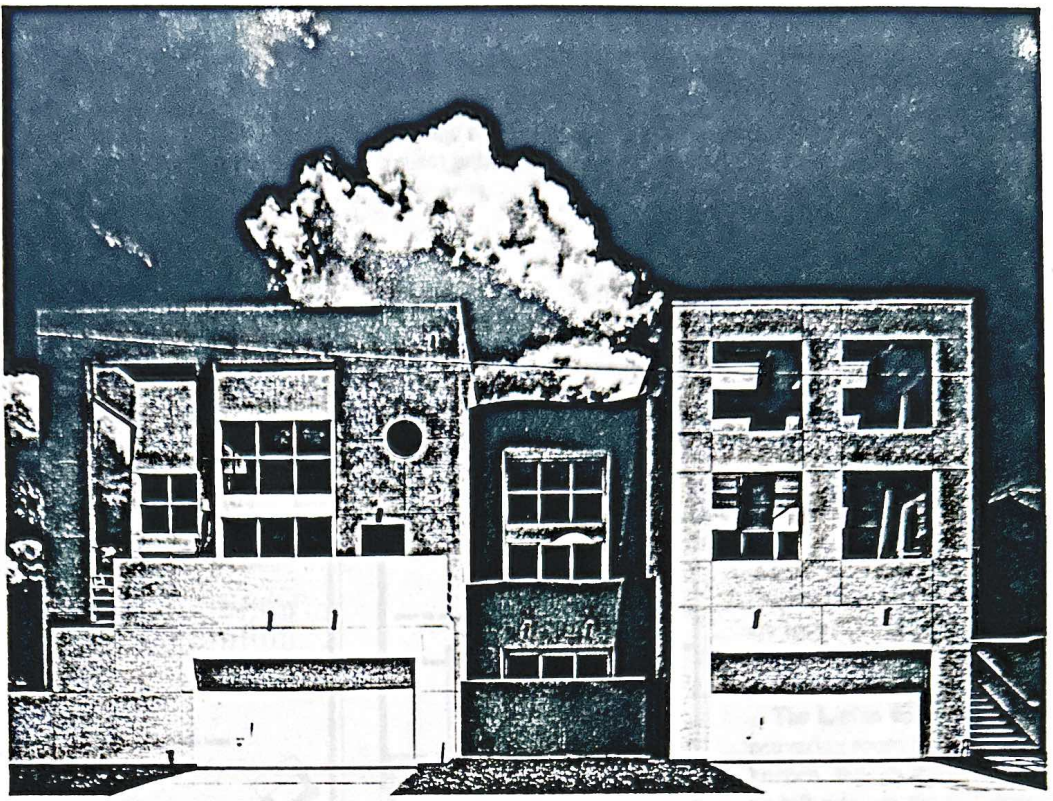
RIGHT: Roof plan.



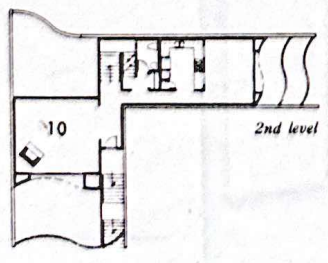


COPPAGI

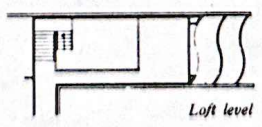
TAGGART AVENUE



1st level

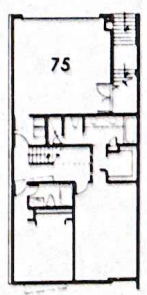


2nd level



Loft level

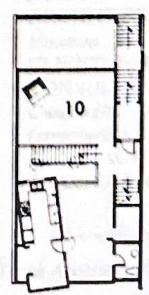
UNIT B



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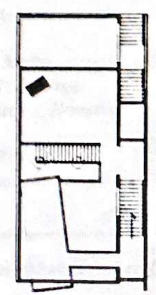
1st level

UNIT C
UNIT D



10

2nd level



Loft level

wall on the corner unit, and gold and linear-plan units, kitchens are placed in "twisted" islands within the soaring living and dining spaces. Small open lofts, with views to the courtyards and across living spaces to the streets, rest over the kitchens as extensions of their partitions.

The client's desire to place master bedrooms on the ground level has been met, and each has a courtyard or patio view. On the second level of the square-oblique "volumes" (kitchen bays and corresponding loft balconies) jutting from behind the linear units.

"They're large units," says Arquitectonica's Bob Tolmach, of the \$290,000 condominiums. "But instead of having a large living room and a large dining room . . . there's one large space: a combination exterior terrace [through a glazed wall], living room, dining room."

The kitchen-loft module in the corner and end units is a "rotated volume" emphasizing visual and physical separation as a "house within a house." Philip Johnson treated the private and utility areas of his 1949 New Canaan, Connecticut, Miesian glass house in a similar fashion. But here in Houston, 1984, unable to be surrounded by walls of glass in the middle of Memorial Park, the utility modules are rotated a few degrees from the main axis to assert their presence.

The L-plan unit lacks maneuvering room for a rotated kitchen, though the characteristic loft rides on top and overlooks the dining room and outside patio. An oblique, free-standing fireplace hearth in the second level living room serves to break uniformity here, as do the "free-form" exterior walls at each street facade.

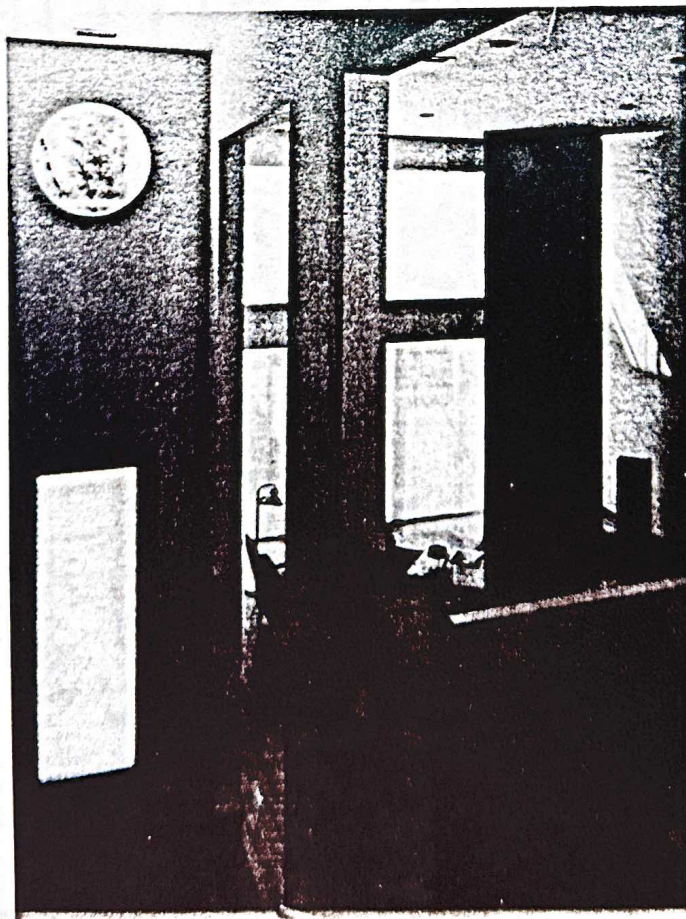
The immediate context, aside for the touted view of Memorial Park, is a transitional pre-World War II neighborhood of modest residences. Townhouse projects abound, drastically altering the scale and density of the environs. Noting that all the Taggart units are either sold or under contract, architect Tolmach justifies the architectural concept. "It's far outperformed [in sales] the other projects in the neighborhood, which are all sort of traditional."

PROJECT: Taggart Townhouses, corner of Taggart and Coppage, Houston.
 ARCHITECT: Arquitectonica, Houston.
 CLIENT: Jerry Maba.
 CONSULTANT: George Cunningham Assoc., Houston (structural).
 CONTRACTOR: Neartown Builders, Houston.

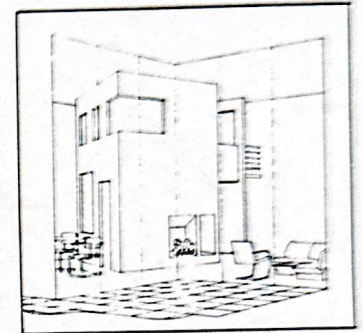
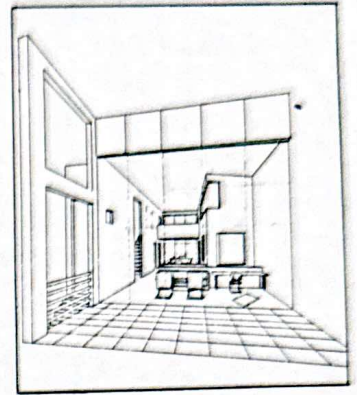


Ground level, second level and loft floor plans of linear units.

Small open lofts provide views over living spaces.



"Noting that all the Taggart units are either sold or under contract, architect Bob Tolmach, Jr. justifies the architectural concept."



Perspectives of two different units showing the "house within a house."

The square-plan corner unit presents a square facade, with balcony cutouts, on both street elevations.

Austin freelance writer Jim Steely is a graduate student in architectural preservation and history at UT Austin.

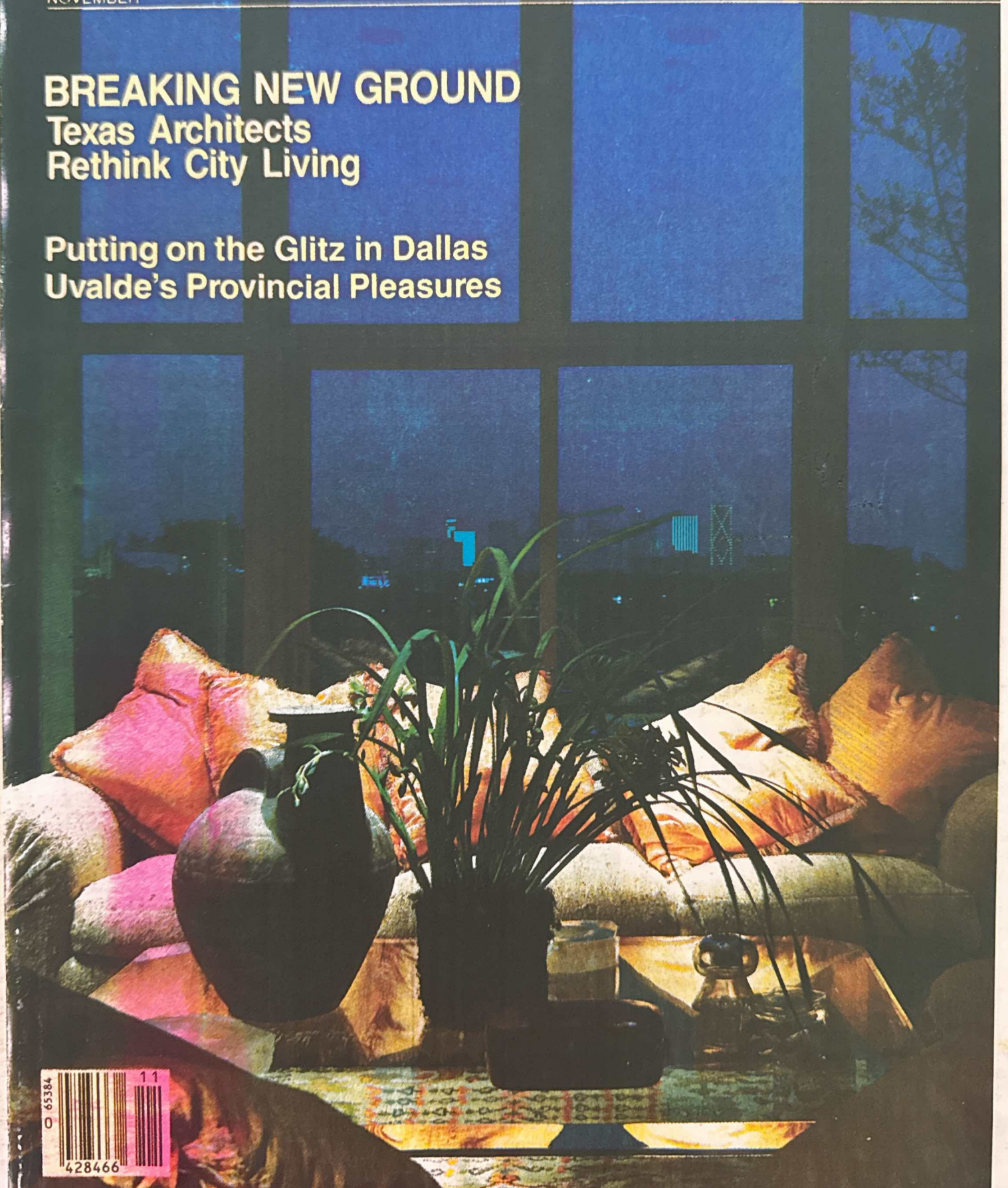
TEXAS HOMES

NOVEMBER

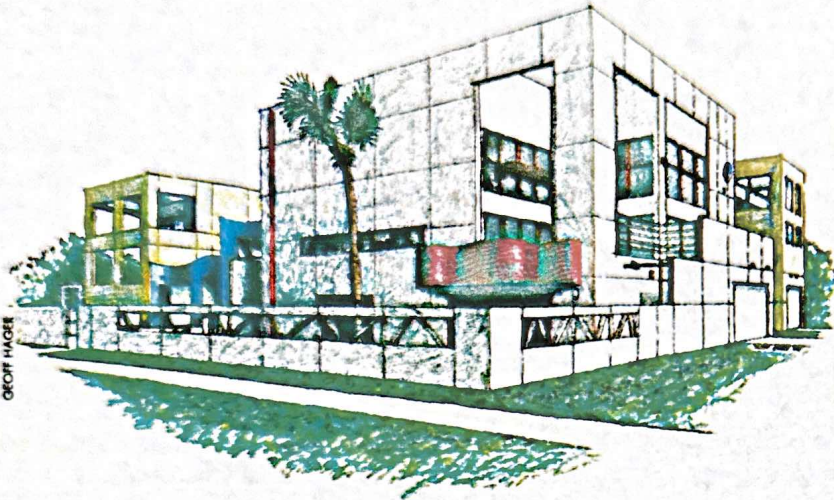
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Uvalde's Provincial Pleasures



**TAGGART TOWNHOUSES
HOUSTON**



Chances are, even if you don't know a thing about architecture, you've heard about Arquitectonica, a young Miami-based trio who recently established a firm hold in Texas as well. It's hard to not feel something for the group's work; its images are so consistently powerful and unconventional that they demand a reaction, whether it be love or hate—but rarely indifference.

One glance at Taggart Townhouses explains why Arquitectonica has received so much attention from the public as well as the press. First of all, it's pink, it's yellow and it's blue (a different color per unit). It's also composed of three huge squares interrupted by two series of waves. Such extraordinary emphasis on color and shape is typical for the firm, although more familiar is the use of an undiluted primary palette à la Mondrian (one of several De Stijl influences; other references include the Russian Constructivists and painters ranging from David Hockney to Giorgio de Chirico).

Why the exaggerated shapes? One reason, says 33-year-old founder Bernardo Fort-Brescia, is that he and partners Laurinda Spear (his wife) and Hervin Romney wanted to give the unusual square lot a special sense of uniqueness. They also wanted to take advantage of a park view, so the bedroom areas were placed downstairs, while the living areas and a loft (plus large outdoor balconies) were placed upstairs.

Critics of Arquitectonica claim that the firm designs for photography's sake rather than for people and that it doesn't have a strong enough sense of context. Its buildings, they say, could be placed in any neighborhood in any city. Fort-Brescia admits context isn't always a concern. He believes that if a neighborhood doesn't have any predominant architecture (which, he says, is especially true in Houston) or that if the existing architecture is bad, it shouldn't be matched; it should be changed. Arquitectonica's goal, he says, is to set the tone for a new spirit—to conform to no single style, keeping the possibilities endless, which he considers true Modernism.