



Peer Reviewed

Title:

A Cross Section in Time: Transitions [Forum]

Journal Issue:

[Places, 12\(3\)](#)

Author:

[Groth, Berent](#), American Institute of Architects

Publication Date:

1999

Publication Info:

Places

Permalink:

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/94t742kr>

Acknowledgements:

This article was originally produced in Places Journal. To subscribe, visit www.places-journal.org. For reprint information, contact places@berkeley.edu.

Keywords:

places, placemaking, architecture, environment, landscape, urban design, public realm, planning, design, forum, cross, section, time, transitions, AIA, Committee, Christ Church, Alexandria, Virginia, John Kirkland

Copyright Information:

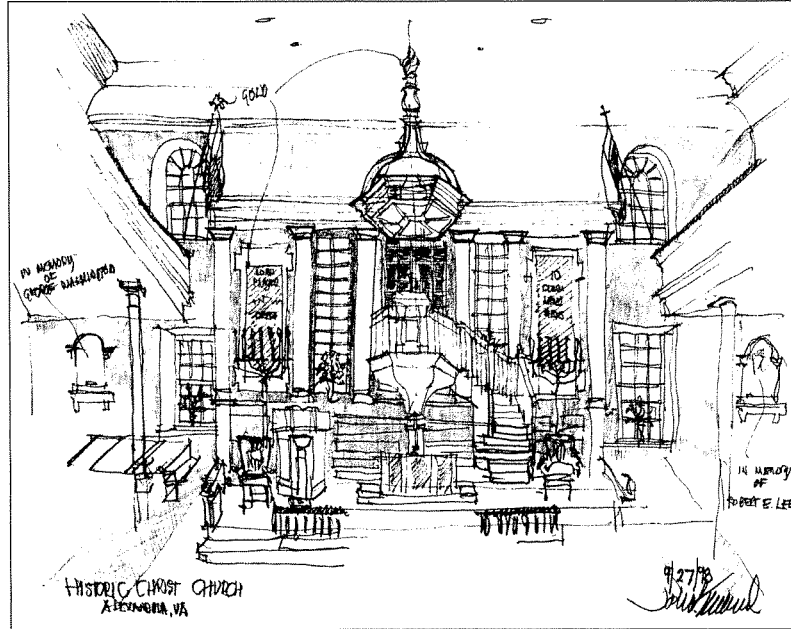
All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author or original publisher for any necessary permissions. eScholarship is not the copyright owner for deposited works. Learn more at http://www.escholarship.org/help_copyright.html#reuse



eScholarship
University of California

eScholarship provides open access, scholarly publishing services to the University of California and delivers a dynamic research platform to scholars worldwide.

A Cross Section in Time: Transitions



Christ Church, Alexandria, Va.
John Kirkland



The Committee on Design's 1998 program concluded with a three-day meeting in Alexandria, Va., and Washington, D.C., October 15-18, 1998. The committee continued its exploration of "Cross Sections in Time and Space," and also debated the contentious topic of design review.

Earlier meetings, in Florida and Paris, were discussed in previous Forum reports published in *Places*.

The Committee on Design's 1999 program will take up the theme of collaborations, with meetings in Cincinnati and Los Angeles. For information about these and other upcoming AIA programs, contact AIA at 800-242-3837.

The year is 1779. The thriving colonial village of Bellhaven is incorporating as the town of Alexandria. Streets in a simple grid are alive with activity to and from an amorphous tidal river. In the new order emerging after the storm of the revolution, an ambitious and enveloping new capital will be conceived in the safety of the marshy confluence upstream. L'Enfant, his visionary plan palpably near, shares with Jefferson an inkling of the burgeoning giant's continental horizons and history to come.

In Paris, the message of Voltaire and Rousseau has caught up with the ancien regime. The Louvre, left behind by the monarchy for safer Versailles, stands grandly complete in its second stylistic iteration. Sainte-Chapelle is a five-hundred-year-old delight. Much grand urbanism has shaped this city: the Marais district is a marsh fully transformed; the Place de Vosges is an established, accomplished residential square. The river, flowing around ancient Roman beginnings under Ile de la Cité, connects and separates a mature metropolis of half a million on the threshold of a great upheaval.

Across the Atlantic, the ruins of an equally sized city on Lake Texcoco have, for two cruel centuries, provided building materials and foundations for an expansive new capital emerging in a foreign language and European mold. The Catadral Metropolitana, begun in 1570, rises ambitiously atop still-buoyant soils. We are in the golden age of Baroque architecture in the center of New Spain. Though events of North America and France will soon disrupt the world of the Spanish Bourbons as well, the colonial empire's northern strongholds still extend to California and Florida.

Only forty kilometers away from bustling Mexico City, Teotihuacan is nevertheless stunningly removed from the world of change. The Pyramids of the Sun and of the Moon stand splendid and immutable over the great expanse of this ancient and ultimate grand axis: the Avenue of the Dead, immense, monumental and dry. Created under a harsh order and by half a millennium of unthinkable toil, they have been strangely deserted for a thousand years.