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Layers

The cover of this issue is from a portfolio of photographs by Laura Volkerding. They offer us glimpses into the European schools where the skills required for restoration and repair of historic buildings are practiced and refined, into the inner sanctums of craft. These images remind us that the intricacies of skill embedded in well-crafted places do not just happen. They are learned, passed from generation to generation. They represent knowledgeable care gained from observation, instruction and practice, then imparted in the materials of building.

Good places embody many kinds of care, then become overlaid with the acts, memories and concerns of those who use them. Daniel P. Gregory traces the evolution of his grandmother's summer home, an apparently artless ranch house by William Wurster that has long been considered one of the icons of California regional architecture. The story goes that Wurster designed it in a day—but the story behind the story includes two previous architects and layers of previous thought upon which Wurster built. There is a story after the story, too, which includes the bonding of a family, the building's entry into the annals of architecture and the visits of notable architects. We invited three of the latter to comment. They find, not surprisingly, three differing qualities in the place, each related to their own interests and background.

An entirely different array of decisions, inventions and multiple interests underlie the making of the Rockridge Market Hall, an uncommonly effective corner in Oakland. Herb Childress' account of the effort and ingenuity required to bring this place into being is set into the context of community concerns.

The multiplicity of our culture and the range of interests that it represents can be a rich source for environmental design, but more often it is not. A group of papers from a conference on vision, culture and land-

scape explores ways in which the dominant forces in our culture exclude, repress, or exploit minority interests and offers suggestions for expanding our access to cultural diversity.

We begin, however, with a look at the ephemeral layer of images and objects that envelopes everyday surroundings in New York City, a surface layer that unwittingly but persistently qualifies our feelings about places.

—Donlyn Lyndon



Cover:
Maison des compagnons, Paris.
Photo by Laura Volkerding.