

# Letter from the Executive Director

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Don't you sometimes wonder what peers, colleagues, friends, or family might talk about over dinner? Asking what is deemed worthy as a topic of conversation—in our case in architecture and design—is a thought worth exploring.

So, what shall we talk about? We devote a great deal of time to that precise question, and the answers shape RDA's programming and publications. *Cite* 103, now in your hands, is the product of myriad conversations, discussions, agreements, disagreements, proposals, and exchanges within our RDA community and beyond.

A mention of dinnertime conversations assumes a return to some notion of togetherness, a reality that thankfully has made a comeback—slowly for some, faster for others—in the continued, but improved, pandemic state of the last months.

What we choose to talk about—to write about, to read about—is important, as is what we choose to leave out. In our last issue, we recommitted this publication's long-standing intent to focus on urgent topics affecting the urban realm of Houston and the larger fields of architecture and design. The existential questions we asked ourselves in *Cite* 102 turn specific in *Cite* 103, with an optimistic sense of *getting on with it* as we continue to grapple with pandemic and other unimaginable difficulties. We simply have too many important things to talk about.

In this issue, you'll meet those who we think are leading and will lead these conversations in Houston. We thought it was important to listen to these voices at our dinner table. You'll also encounter topics treated in more detail. These features showcase how the built environment is changing in significant, positive, and, dare I say, optimistic ways.

Building technologies that address increasingly daunting environmental challenges at a planetary level have and will play a central role in the conversation about design in the years to come. This issue focuses on one of them, the material innovations of mass timber. We go to its source and cover the full arc of lumber's regional supply chain with a fascinating trip to Rice University's forest in Louisiana by Editor Jack Murphy which might change the way you look at the spindly tall pines that appear on this issue's cover and that populate this region.

The power of food as a catalyst for spatial and community-making is brought forward in Adán Medrano's piece that reconnects the land of the Atakapa, Akokisa, Deadose, and Karankawa with the new expansion and renovations for the Houston Farmer's Market by Studio Red Architects. There's no dinner conversation without dinner, and this piece underlines the importance of maintaining the spaces in Houston that have extended a connected, cohesive culture of food for over 13,000 years through farming, trading, and cooking.

As I take my leave from RDA after five fascinating years, I hope you will enjoy *Cite* 103—and future issues to come—as much as I have enjoyed the conversation with all of you over my tenure here.

As RDA enters its 50th anniversary year and *Cite* its 40th, I know it will be a time to celebrate its past successes, but also to continue its growth and commitment to gathering a multiplicity of voices to tell important stories about design in our city.

I'm proud of what we have accomplished as a team and of the achievements of this publication in particular, which would have never been possible without the efforts, wit, and heart of Editor Jack Murphy, who is now Managing Editor at *The Architect's Newspaper*. We bid farewell to him, with admiration and gratitude, for his contributions to the profound transformation of *Cite* and the ways in which he has elevated the content and rigor of our publications and programs during his time at RDA.

I extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to this extraordinary community for so passionately supporting the importance of design and architecture in our lives and for saving me a seat at the dinner table these past years with the best conversational partners I could have hoped for.

Until we meet again.