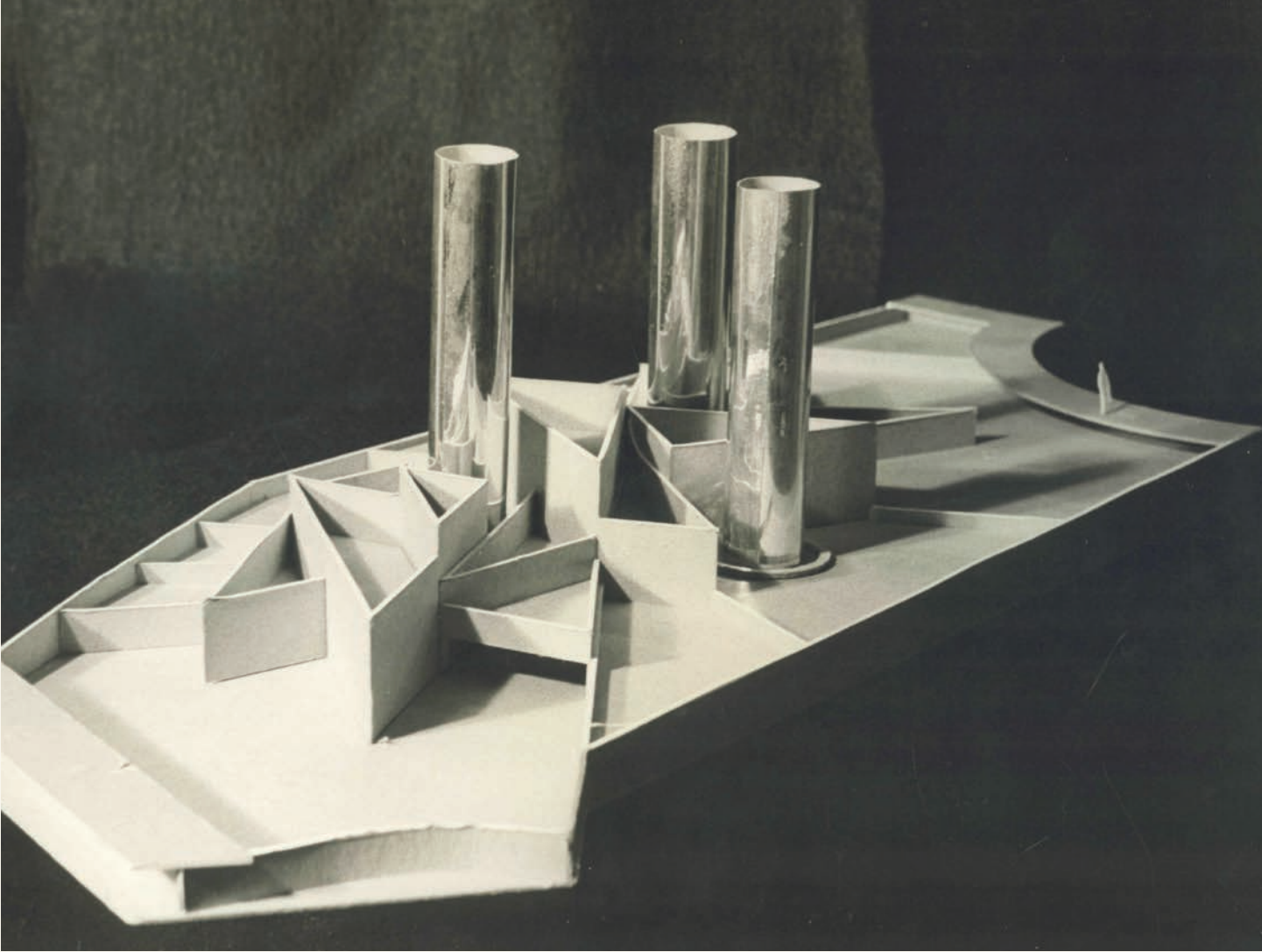
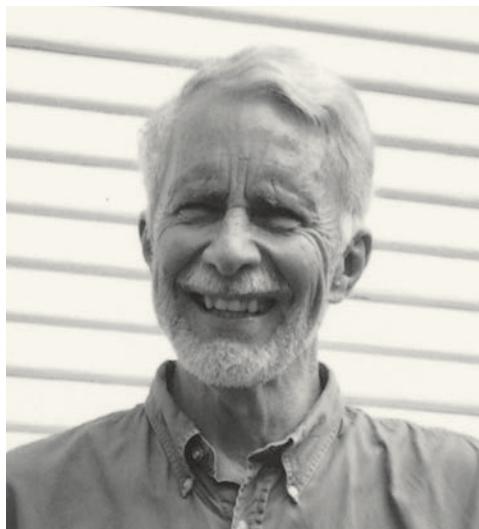


Model for Tranquillity Park, built 1979



Detail from Buffalo Bayou Master Plan



CHARLES TAPLEY, FAIA

A VISION OF A BETTER HOUSTON BASED ON OUR REGION'S TRUE NATURAL ASSETS AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES BEFORE THESE WORDS WERE PART OF OUR VOCABULARY.

HOUSTON'S CIVIC LANDSCAPE is enjoying a remarkable transformation. As this issue of *Cite* makes clear, there is much to celebrate, but we also should keep in mind that we are standing on the shoulders of the visionaries who came before us. Jack Yates, George Hermann, and Will Hogg each made enduring contributions during our city's first 100 years. In our city's second century, few helped set the stage for our current renaissance more than Charles Tapley, FAIA. Charles passed away one year ago on September 21, 2015, after a long career that began as a student from New Orleans at the Rice School of Architecture.

During his career of more than half a century, he rekindled a vision of a better Houston based on our region's true natural assets and an understanding of environmental values before these words were part of our vocabulary. His ability to envision Buffalo Bayou as a great civic treasure when most of us considered it just a dirty coastal stream initiated its decades-long restoration. To help advance his vision, he convinced the city to allow trees along Allen Parkway (imagine that!), worked with Henry Moore to locate his Spindle sculpture there, and even got the state's first tax increment zone created to fund his vision. In contrast to his focus on the bayou's natural beauty, Charles captured Houston's role in exploring outer space by using the moonscape where Apollo 11 landed as the inspiration for Tranquillity Park, the first major park investment our city had made in decades. He also led the way to a more promising suburban future with plans for Woodlake and other projects where trees and natural ravines were preserved, a first for commercial development in Houston.

He also fought bad ideas even if his position was not popular among his peers. He successfully led an effort to kill an elevated heavy rail transit line over Main Street being promoted by other Houston designers. His vision for the street was as a civic corridor, and he led the charge to plant more

live oaks on Main in what we now call Midtown. In his own work, he understood that less is truly more. I recall when he prepared landscape plans for the grounds surrounding Renzo Piano's Menil Collection; the plans only proposed modest landscaping that does not disrupt the building's quiet presence. Of course, these contributions to our city were in addition to an architectural design practice that produced outstanding churches, schools, and homes for decades.

Yet Charles' true gift was as an educator, mentor, and role model for young designers searching for a path that included design excellence, professionalism, and yes, grace. His work at the University of Houston Gerald D. Hines School of Architecture culminated a life-long emphasis on guiding young designers that extended far beyond classroom walls. His office was a revelation to me, as a young architect, while I witnessed Charles as a great designer, civic volunteer, businessman and also one of the most decent human beings I have ever encountered. He also never lost his curiosity and was constantly experimenting—clerestory windows might be added to the office one week and a rain garden added in the parking lot the next. The example he provided remains with me to this day as it does for those now leading our city—from City Council to the Bayou Greenways 2020 initiative to countless design practices here and elsewhere.

Charles was a religious man in the best sense of the word, a Catholic who designed churches for many faiths and then worshipped among those of different faiths as well. For me he is both a visionary and a saint upon whose shoulders I am proud to stand as we continue his efforts to realize Houston's true potential.

Guy Haqstette, FAIA