

Texas Architect

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Catalytic Jam

Latest project by artists Havel and Ruck inspired by Fifth Ward's music heritage

by Fernando Brave, FAIA

Clockwise from top right *Dean Ruck, Sherman Miller, and Dan Havel take five. The artists improvised with found materials. Intended as a temporary public sculpture, "Fifth Ward Jam" will stay on the site at least through October 2014.*

Like the music that inspired Dan Havel and Dean Ruck of Havel Ruck Projects to make *Fifth Ward Jam*, their latest collaboration is a social experiment. The duo, with help from local resident Sherman Miller, assembled *Fifth Ward Jam* using materials scavenged from dilapidated buildings in the Houston neighborhood. Their sculptural intervention appears to pulse with movement, evoking a dynamism that resonates harmonically with the Fifth Ward's rich heritage of blues, soul, jazz, zydeco, and hip hop.

An abandoned house moved from over a mile away provided the central element. Also intricate to the project was the special permit concocted by the City of Houston that listed the structure as a house to be relocated and delivered to the site as a sculpture. "Somehow," the artists say, "the house magically ceased to be a house during its journey."

As realized by the artists, the combination of chutes, tunnels, and sightlines coalesces in a coherent organic form. At the same time, the implied forces of movement seem to tear the object apart in multiple directions. This stretching, twisting, and pulling hints of its conceptual origins in improvised music, and serves as an appropriate backdrop for impromptu performances on the stage extending from the bandshell-like space.

Fifth Ward Jam was funded with an Artist in Neighborhood grant from the Houston Arts Alliance as part of a program that seeks to spur catalytic change through public art of temporary nature. According to Ruck, Sherman Miller's

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spontaneous participation proved to be just the type of catalytic transformation hoped for by the project's benefactors. A resident of the neighborhood, he approached the artists and asked for work shortly after they arrived to begin the project. Ruck says Miller didn't immediately buy into the concept, but later became integral to the process.

Havel Ruck Projects previously created *Inversion*, a short-lived installation along Montrose Boulevard that was profiled in *Texas Architect's* July/August 2005 edition. The latest project, located at 3705 Lyons Avenue just northeast of downtown Houston, received additional support from the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation.

Fernando Brave, FAIA, is principal of Brave/Architecture in Houston.



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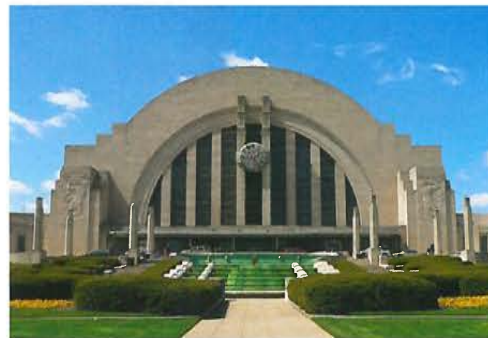
Fernando L. Brave, FAIA was born a naturalist and pursued scuba diving à la Cousteau with dedicated zealously early on. He continues to seek balance between the constraints of our surroundings and his hunger for aesthetics. A generous hedonist, Brave dives into gastronomy, music, sailing, and other earthly pleasures with the same youthful abandon. His Backpage article features *Fifth Ward Jam* by Havel/Ruck Projects.



Jeffrey Brown, AIA is focused on his ongoing research into the architectural potential of tilt wall, the subject of his latest book. Areas of investigation include the technology's low-cost effective application to the current DOD/UFC criteria for progressive collapse and blast resistance. The latest white paper was published in the August 2011 edition of *Construction Specifier*. See his article on the Asia Society Texas Center on page 44.



Brantley Hightower, AIA spent five years at UT Austin in the late nineties, starting longingly at the outside world from his drafting board. He was finally able to explore the rest of his alma mater's campus in his story about the new Student Activity Center on page 38.



Gregory Ibanez, FAIA who writes about the Fair Park Esplanade on page 50 says, "The Esplanade is evocative of my youth in Cincinnati, which also has an incredible collection of Art Deco masterpieces. In particular, I was reminded of Union Terminal and the cascading water feature on axis with its monumental facade."



John Pearcy, AIA is a principal at Megamorphosis and a native "Valley-ite." He loves his amazing wife and two beautiful daughters, but the Gulf Coast around the Rio Grande delta is a pretty close second place to those lovely ladies. See his article on the Ringgold Drive Residence by Origo Works on page 30. ■



Matt Fajkus, AIA is a graduate of the Harvard GSD as well as UT Arlington. He teaches at UT Austin School of Architecture and is the principal of MF Architecture. He was recently thrilled to find out that he will be an uncle for the first time. Fajkus writes about the UT Austin's outdoor sculpture program on page 24.