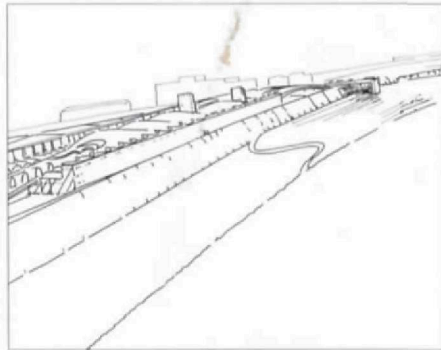


THESE FOUR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PROJECTS ADDRESS WIDELY DIVERGENT BUT CHARACTERISTIC CONDITIONS ALONG THE TEXAS-TAMAULIPAS BORDER. COLONIA LAS PALMAS IS A HYPOTHETICAL DESIGN PRODUCED IN 1992 BY DANIEL M. HEWETT WHILE A STUDENT AT RICE UNIVERSITY. THE PARISIAN ARCHITECT JEAN MARC GAUTHIER COLLABORATED IN 1988 WITH LAURIE MANN ON THE BRAVO PROJECT, A TOURIST-ORIENTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCHEME LOCATED IN BROWNSVILLE THAT WAS NOT BUILT. STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGES ARE A PROPOSED BULLRING FOR NUEVO LAREDO, DESIGNED BY LONGORIA/PETERS, AND A HOUSE IN LAREDO BY FRANK ASSOCIATES.

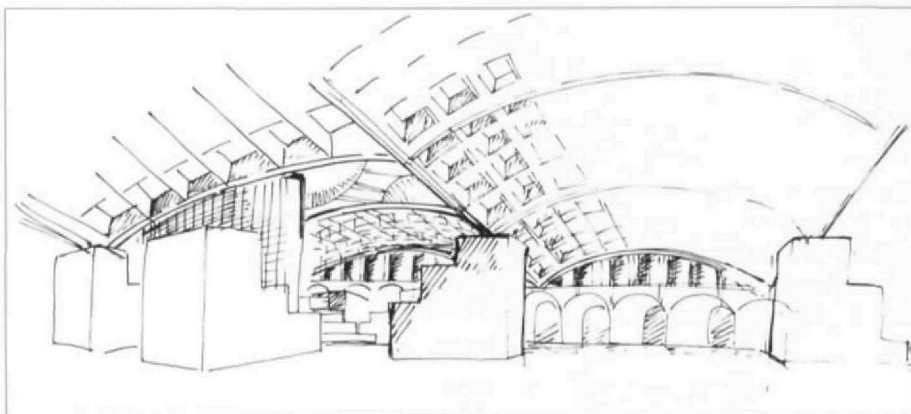
## BRAVO PROJECT, BROWNSVILLE



Bravo Project, site perspective along Rio Grande.

The Bravo Project comprises a 90-room hotel, an office building, and a retail, entertainment, and meeting center to be built alongside the International Boundary and Water Commission levee on the left bank of the Rio Grande. Adjacent to downtown Brownsville and halfway between the Gateway Bridge and the B & M Bridge connecting Brownsville to Matamoros, the Bravo looks across the green space of the river's channel toward the Colonia Jardín in Matamoros.

The Bravo Project was designed to provide a promenade for people to stroll along the river. It responds to the configuration of its 12-acre site with a linear system of walkways that distribute visitors to various activity centers within the complex. Low vaulted bays comprise a repeating structural system and are located on one level, above on-site parking; they correspond geometrically to walled semicylindrical courts that serve as private loggias for the hotel rooms. Offices have access to rooftop meeting rooms, while shops and restaurants are collected in a sheltered, open-air plaza that extends outward to a water garden.



Jean Marc Gauthier with Laurie Mann, Bravo Project, Brownsville, interior perspective.

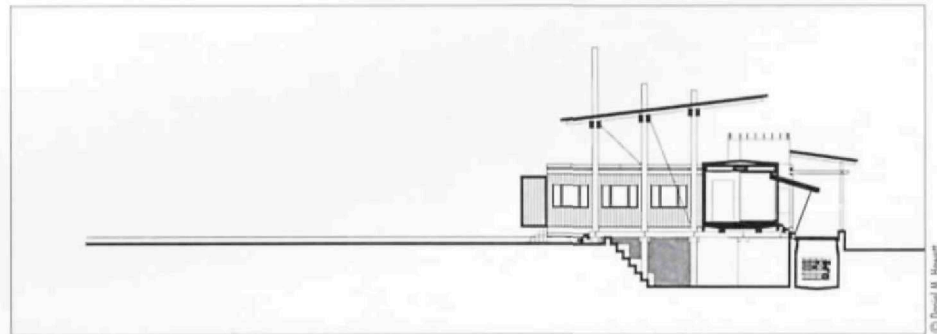
## COLONIA LAS PALMAS, HIDALGO COUNTY

This project began with a visit to several *colonias* in the vicinity of Progreso, in Hidalgo County. *Colonias* originated in the 1950s as unplatted residential subdivisions for migrant farmworker families in unincorporated rural areas.

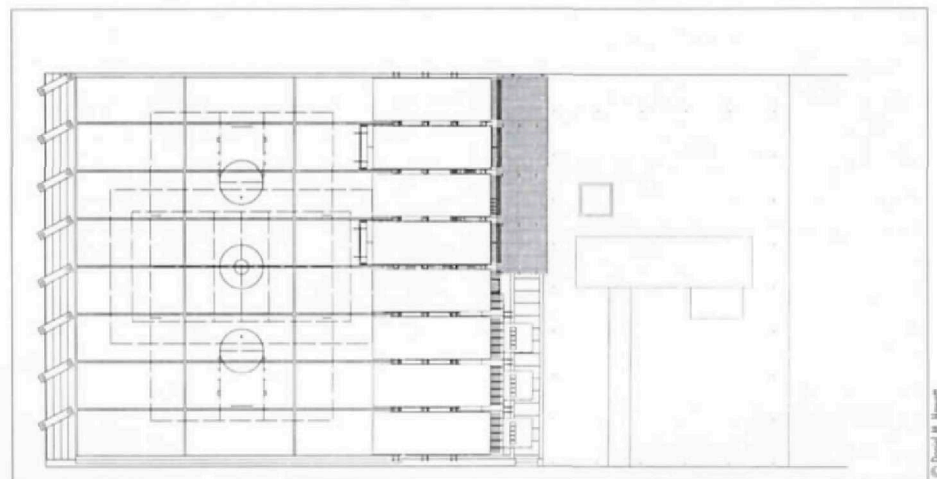
Colonia Las Palmas, in southeastern Hidalgo County between Progreso and the south levee of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's main floodway, was founded in 1974 and now contains approximately 100 single-family houses. Colonia Las

Palmas has electricity and telephone service. There are no paved streets, sewage lines, or septic tanks. A single well provides potable water for the entire *colonia*.

The community center's three manufactured housing modules – one at right angles to the other two – contain all program spaces except the ceramics workshop, which occupies an open-air basement beneath the modules and is



Daniel M. Hewett, community center, Colonia Las Palmas, cross section.



Community center, site plan.

Palmas has electricity and telephone service. There are no paved streets, sewage lines, or septic tanks. A single well provides potable water for the entire *colonia*.

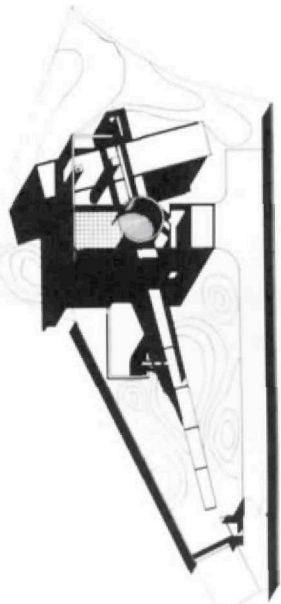
In consultation with Aida González, director of Colonias del Valle, a working program was drafted for a community center to contain a meeting room and space for a branch of the county library,

directly accessible from the plaza. A grid of telephone poles supports canopies made of sheets of translucent corrugated fiberglass. These provide shade and compensate for the small scale of the modular units. Use of the same materials and techniques employed in residential construction will enable the residents of Colonia Las Palmas to build the community center themselves.

## FRANK HOUSE, LAREDO

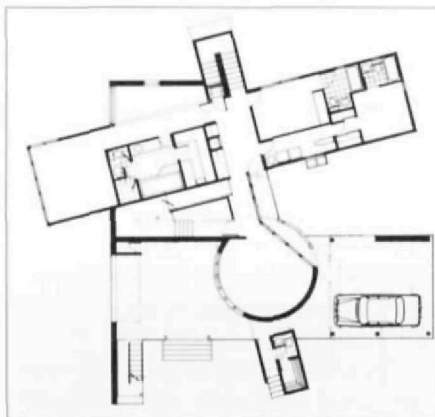
Referred to by its designers as the "House Between Two Countries," the Frank House explores several dualities: American versus Mexican cultural influences, regional versus universal, modern versus archaic, and urban versus suburban.

The house owes as much to Le Corbusier as it does to the massive dwellings of Laredo's 18th-century settlers. Located in a new suburb, it is designed as a walled



Frank House, site plan.

compound reminiscent of the fortresses that once were built in the area to protect against Indian attacks. Today the walls offer protection from the visual aggression of Laredo's newest suburbs, as well as from the region's harsh climate, of which the project's designers write: "A burning



Frank House, ground floor plan.

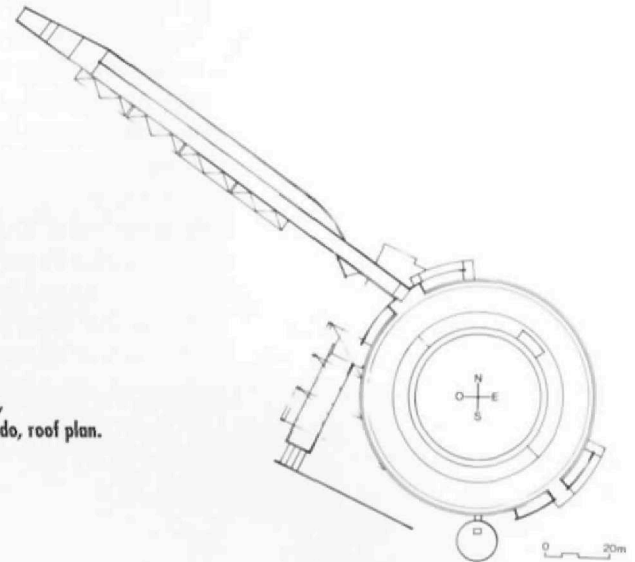
sun, very bright, the air is dry and the mesquite trees offer little shadow or shelter. The stark clarity invites delirium."

Frank Associates, Laredo  
Project Team: Viviana Frank, Frank Rotnofsky, Pedro Morales, Jr., Oscar Pérez, and Victor Sotelo.

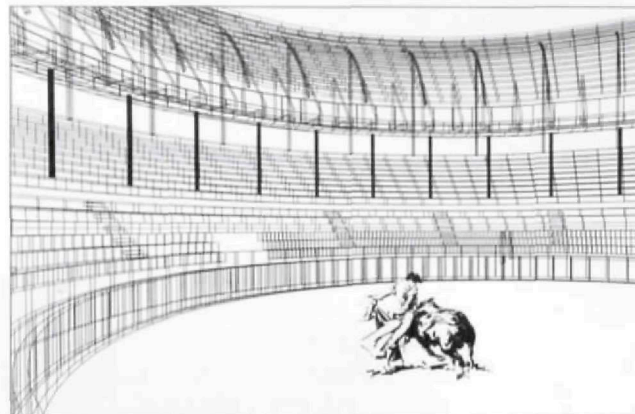


Frank Associates, Frank House, Laredo, model.

## PLAZA DE TOROS, NUEVO LAREDO



Longoria/Peters, architects,  
Plaza de Toros, Nuevo Laredo, roof plan.

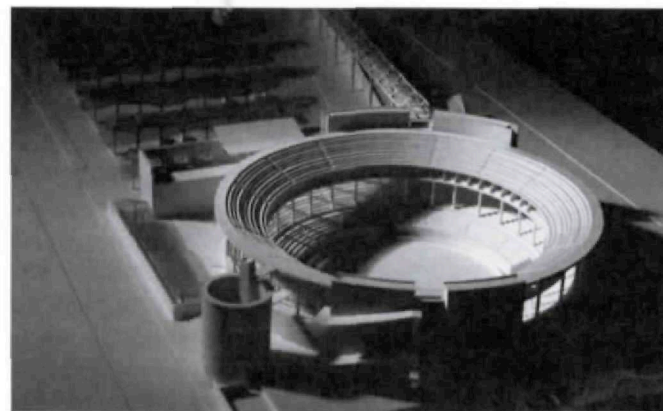


Plaza de Toros, perspective.

A work in progress, the 9,000-seat Plaza de Toros in Nuevo Laredo explores both ancient and contemporary rituals. A complete circle in plan, the bullring is divided into two halves according to the traditional separation of *sol* (sun) and *sombra* (shadow). The abstract figure of this building type is calibrated to the movement of the earth around the sun. Seating is accommodated in two decks in order to decrease the diameter and create a more intimate setting. A circle of private boxes is suspended between the two cast-in-place decks. Circulation to the various levels is intertwined to magnify pageantry during the entrance and exit of the crowds.

Longoria/Peters, Houston

Project Team: Rafael Longoria, Patrick Peters, H. Bellinda Osoria, Lynne Sutter, Sergio Astorga, Alberto Bonomi, Sam Mandola, and Gary García.



Plaza de Toros, model.

Not only a setting for *corridos*, a bullring is also a major landmark in any Mexican city. Everything from concerts to political rallies will take place here. Located at the edge of Nuevo Laredo in a fast-growing area of modest housing, the Plaza de Toros will provide a catalyst and a model for the subsequent development of its surroundings.

Parking is conceived as a periodic use in what will be primarily a shaded civic space surrounded by commerce. This will provide the evolving neighborhood with a plaza, a lively focus in a predominantly pedestrian city.

## Documenting Neutra's Kraigher House

MEASURED  
DRAWINGS BY  
DAVID PAYNE

The Kraigher House was designed and built in 1937 on what were then the outskirts of Brownsville. Today, the compact, two-story house sits in the middle of a lightly wooded six-acre tract that faces Paredes Line Road and is in sight of the U.S. 77-83 Expressway. Yet looking out the south-facing ribbon windows of the living room, or standing on the expansive second-floor terrace deck, it is possible to imagine oneself in the country, where the loudest sound is



Detail of entrance.

the rustling of mesquite and palm trees in the constant Gulf breeze.

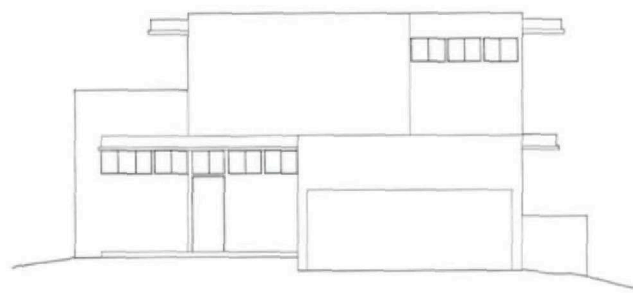
George Kraigher, who built the house, was an executive of Pan American World Airways, which maintained a section of its Latin American division in Brownsville between 1929 and 1944. Los Angeles architectural historian Thomas S. Hines interviewed George Kraigher in 1977 while preparing his book, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (1982). Kraigher told Hines that he was impressed by a modern house he saw while on a visit to Los Angeles in 1936, tracked down the name of its architect, Richard Neutra, and commissioned Neutra, one of the most influential proponents of the Modern Movement in the U.S., to design his house in Brownsville. According to Hines, this was the first building constructed to Neutra's design in the U.S. outside California. It was also the first Modern house in Texas. Kraigher, who eventually had Neutra design a retirement house for him in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1958, gave Hines two renderings that Neutra made of the design: the first for a one-story house, the second of the house as built. The Brownsville contractor A. W. Neck & Sons built the Kraigher House for the contract sum of \$5,000. Neutra never traveled to Brownsville. Construction was supervised by the Brownsville architect Frank L. Godwin. The Kraigher House was published in the May 1939 issue of *Architectural Record* as "Open-Planned, Window-Walled House in

Southwest." In 1939 Neutra submitted a slightly enlarged version of the Kraigher House design to the *Ladies' Home Journal's* National Small House Competition.

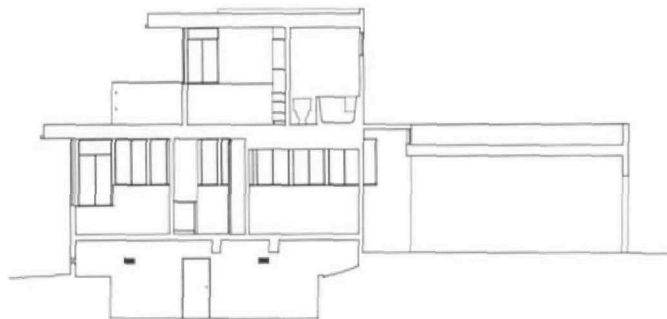
The Kraigher House is a tightly-packed composition of interlocking L-planned spaces, containing 2,446 square feet of livable space (this does not count the terrace deck or two-car garage). Neutra's planning was so adroit, however, that the interiors seem open and expansive rather than compressed. What most distinguishes the Kraigher House from Neutra's California houses is its lack of ground-level, outdoor living space. There is a small porch off the living room, but neither a patio nor a screened loggia, which were characteristic of Neutra houses in the more benign, less insect-ridden climate of Southern California.

Since the 1970s the Kraigher House has been used as rental property. During the 1970s, Paredes Line Road ceased being a country highway and became instead a commercial strip. Thus the value of the six-acre site is considered by its owners, the Franke Realty Company, as highest for commercial use. The property is listed for sale for \$600,000. In 1992, the year of Neutra's centenary, local concern over the condition of the house led to a feature article in the *Brownsville Herald* by reporter Roberto C. González, which precipitated stories in *Texas Architect*, *Architecture*, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's newspaper, *Historic Preservation News*. Brownsville preservation activist T. Ashley Gonzales and the city's heritage officer, Mark Lund, have monitored the condition of the house, which is now vacant, windowless, and unsecured. This spring, Brownsville architect Roberto Ruiz, president of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, arranged for measurements of the house to be taken. University of Houston architecture student David Payne, who was involved in the measuring, produced these drawings, which describe the present appearance of the Kraigher House, one of the most significant works of modern architecture in Texas.

Stephen Fox

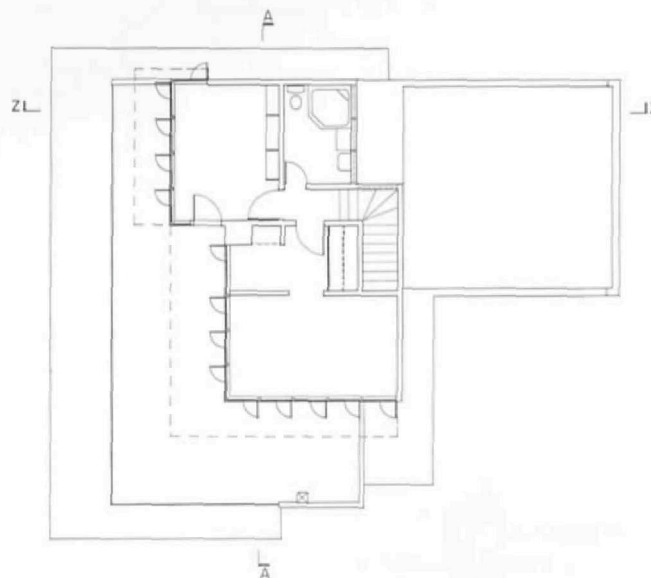


North elevation.

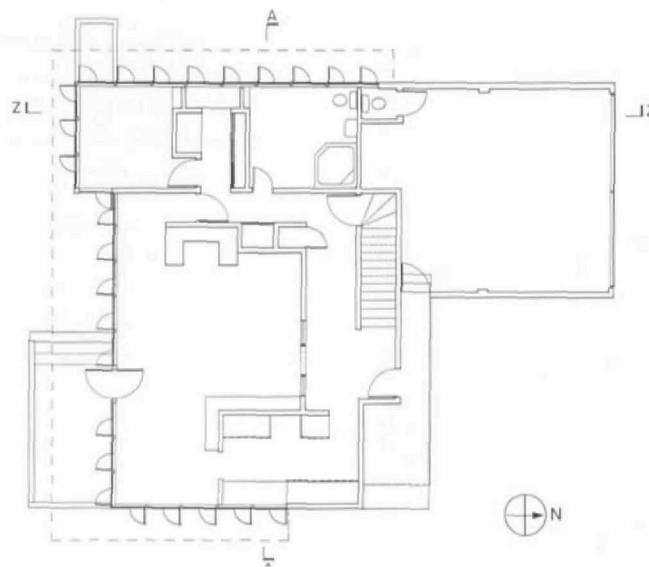


Cross section (Z - Z).

0 10 FT.



Second-floor plan.



First-floor plan.