

the Studio of

R O B E R T M O R R I S A R C H I T E C T
A r c h i t e c t u r e + E n v i r o n m e n t s

2003 was one of those years that was filled with small but memorable events. Of course one never knows what affect these events may eventually have but they certainly become part of the psyche's composite. As a great abstract-expressionist artist once said, "you take all your life into the studio, your family, friends, circumstances, etc, and as you begin to paint, one by one they leave the studio; if you are lucky, you leave the studio."

I continue to teach full time in the College of Architecture @ the University of Houston. This is the fourth year of teaching and I know now that I shall always teach, somewhere, until I cannot. I also received my Master of Science in Space Architecture (outer space) @ U of H and began teaching a 4th year undergraduate design studio in Sustainable Design & Space Architecture with help from a woman astronaut from NASA. Three of my design studio students were finalists in a national competition for sustainable design and went to Pittsburg for the conference. I also lecture to an undergraduate class of 180 students & graduate class of 20 students about the theory of structures (Fall semester) and the natural systems of heating, cooling & lighting (Spring semester). I now have all my lectures in "PowerPoint" and received a grant last spring to convert those lectures into an "electronic, interactive" web course. This means my students will have the option of taking live lectures or lectures on the web.

As well as teaching, I maintain a small architectural practice dedicated totally to sustainable design. Most of the projects are residential but I have proposed designs for a H.I.S.D. elementary school and a commercial strip center. My current projects are: 1) a horse farm & winery in the Santa Ynez valley in northern Santa Barbara County, California, that is completely "off-grid", using wind generators for electricity, catching, storing & treating rainwater, recycling all waste water as nutrients to restore the top soil, using rammed-earth (basically dirt) for all the structural walls, solar thermal collectors for all hot water & building heating, aromatic Eucalyptus wood for all cabinetry and an organic garden & vineyard; 2) a dentist office in Houston that incorporates energy saving systems and provides a high standard of health by substantially decreasing the amount of volatile organic compounds within the space

For several years I have been thinking about the connection between sustainable earth architecture & space architecture and have found that they are one. The first mission of NASA is to learn about & protect the home planet. Considering that it takes 10 lbs of fuel to deliver 1 lb of payload into low earth orbit, all design considerations become mass/volume critical. This means that we must learn how to do "more with less" in the extreme environment of outer space, which is exactly what we must learn to do on earth if we are to survive the future as a species on this planet. The design & technology of space architecture all relates to my interest in sustainable earth design because "there is no water, food or dumpster" in outer space; all must be regenerative. Although I am just now constructing it, checkout my web site, aboriginalspaceship.com.

As if this were not enough to keep me busy, I am working on my Master of Fine Arts @ the Glassell School of Art & St. Thomas University. I have been studying painting, part time, for several years and am pursuing a definite direction with my work which is exploring a theory for the color of mass @ the sub-atomic particle level, i.e., quantum mechanics. Scientists have no instruments to see an atom, much less the sub-atomic particles, so as their work is theoretical, so is mine. However, I have been getting positive critiques from my teachers & fellow students and exhibited six of my paintings in the U of Houston faculty show last fall where I sold two of the pieces.

My son, Kent, and his family have been living in Tampa, Florida for the past few years but are moving back to Wichita, Kansas, this Spring (home-town of daughter-in law, Kelly, where they met & married). They made me a "grand parent" in 2002 with a beautiful girl, Meredith, June. She will be two years old in May but already knows how to manipulate me, I am happy to say.

I also met Anne. Actually, we were "match-made" by a mutual friend last August but have been inseparable ever since. She works at the Museum of Fine Arts/Houston where she is the director/curator for the department of photography, is author of several books and a true baseball fan. She is the only woman I know who keeps a diary of all the plays for each Astros game she attends & knows the statistics of all the players. Besides baseball, we have much in common and enjoy each other's point of view. I may have met my match this time.

It seems that just when I think my life is over, it begins again. This past year had some beginnings for me as I hope you had and that we will all become better human beings by "beginning again".

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