

# CRANBROOK

JOURNAL  
FALL/WINTER 1995

## FRONT COVER

*Cranbrook graduate Tom McGuane, author of acclaimed novels such as Ninety-Two in the Shade and Nothing but Blue Skies, reads on the range in Montana. Photo by Paul Dix. Electronic collage by Katherine McCoy and Denise Heckman.*

## INSIDE FRONT COVER

*Sandra Brownlee's 1985 textile There's a World in My Mind (left) reflects her spiritual and actual relationship with the natural world. The signature piece leads Weaving Out Loud: Sandra Brownlee, an exhibition of 40 black and white woven works at the Cranbrook Art Museum through the end of 1995. In contrast, Evacuation (right) is one of 80 sequenced photographs documenting in human terms the ongoing and traumatic events in Eastern Europe. Farewell to Bosnia: New Photographs by Gilles Peress will be on view at the Art Museum through Oct. 29. For more information, call 810 645.3323.*

## BACK COVER

*One of the few group photographs of the Saarinen-Swanson studio.*

Riding the range with Tom McGuane  
2 *Mary E. Iorio*

An architectural legacy remembered  
9 *Annamarie Erickson*

Building on tradition: Susana Torre  
16 *Ray Carson*

Tracking trillium, wildflower rescues  
22 *Mary E. Iorio*

24 Final entries

*Cranbrook Journal* is published three times a year by Cranbrook's public relations department. *Cranbrook Journal* is distributed without charge to alumni, members, parents of current and former students, faculty, staff and friends. Cranbrook comprises its Academy of Art, Art Museum, Institute of Science, Schools and other affiliated educational and cultural programs. Please send correspondence to: Public Relations, Cranbrook, 380 Lone Pine Road, P O Box 801, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303.0801. Telephone: 810 645.3142

EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
*Annamarie Erickson*

EDITOR  
*Mary E. Iorio*

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
*Katherine McCoy*

DESIGN ASSISTANCE  
*Denise Heckman*



Ray Carson

In 1925, Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen arrived in Bloomfield Hills to assist George Gough and Ellen Scripps Booth in creating an educational community of uncommon quality. During nearly two decades at Cranbrook, Saarinen maintained his own successful architectural practice while serving as Cranbrook's master architect and as the Academy of Art's first president.

In the tradition of Saarinen, the newest director of Cranbrook's Academy Susana Torre has combined a successful architectural practice with an equally successful career as an educator for the past 20 years. While serving as chairman of the Parsons School of Design in the early 1990s, she designed the Ironworkers Union Headquarters office building in New York City, the Montauk Library on Long Island, housing prototypes in Manhattan's lower east side and residences in the Hamptons and Carboneras, Spain.

"I have always maintained a tension between my life as an architect and my life as an educator," Torre said. "Quite frankly, I really can't conceive of doing things in any other way. I think the academic world allows me to ask the most important questions. On the other hand, it is in professional practice that you can affect the realities that surround you."

A native Argentinean, Torre joined Cranbrook in December and started her first full academic year this fall. JOURNAL talked to her recently about her life as an architect and educator and her decision to come to Cranbrook.



JOURNAL

### *Susana*

One of your well-known commissions is Fire Station No. 5 in Columbus, Indiana.

In fact, it's noted as one of the most significant buildings in 20th century architecture. Can you tell me about that project?

*That project became rather well known because it was a building that changed the type of fire stations. This was because the city of Columbus was interested in making an attempt to hire and retain female firefighters. Firefighting is one of the occupations that have been more resistant to the presence of women within it primarily because of the rigorous tests of strength that must be passed by anybody who wants to be a firefighter. When you have a fire, it's a life-and-death situation so it's imperative that a firefighter can handle a significant amount of dead weight. However, statistics indicate that even when women pass the strength test, it still is extraordinarily difficult to retain them.*

*I studied the question and concluded that one reason this was occurring was because emotional bonding and support were critical needs for firefighters and that occurs in the fire house.*

Sure, because of the stress involved in life-or-death situations.

*That's right. What I did to address this problem was to create a fire station that looks very different from all other fire stations because it has individual bedrooms in separate wings rather than dormitories. What this does is basically force the bonding ritual out of the*

locker room and dormitories and into the common spaces. Since no architect can be sure that buildings will do exactly what they think they will do, I simply provided a pretext for people to devise new rituals. Another unique feature is the location of the fire pole and the exercise room within full view of the place where people gather. This way everyone sees the strength, coordination, precision and agility of all the firefighters in the house, whether men or women, so they can learn to trust each other's physical abilities.

**An architect can't define a building's end-use. Do you feel this design achieved its purpose?**

*I know my building inspired a whole generation of fire stations, so clearly it became an influential model. And I know that many local firefighters do whatever is in their power to be assigned to that particular fire station.*

**Let's talk about your decision to come to Cranbrook. Had you been to Cranbrook before?**

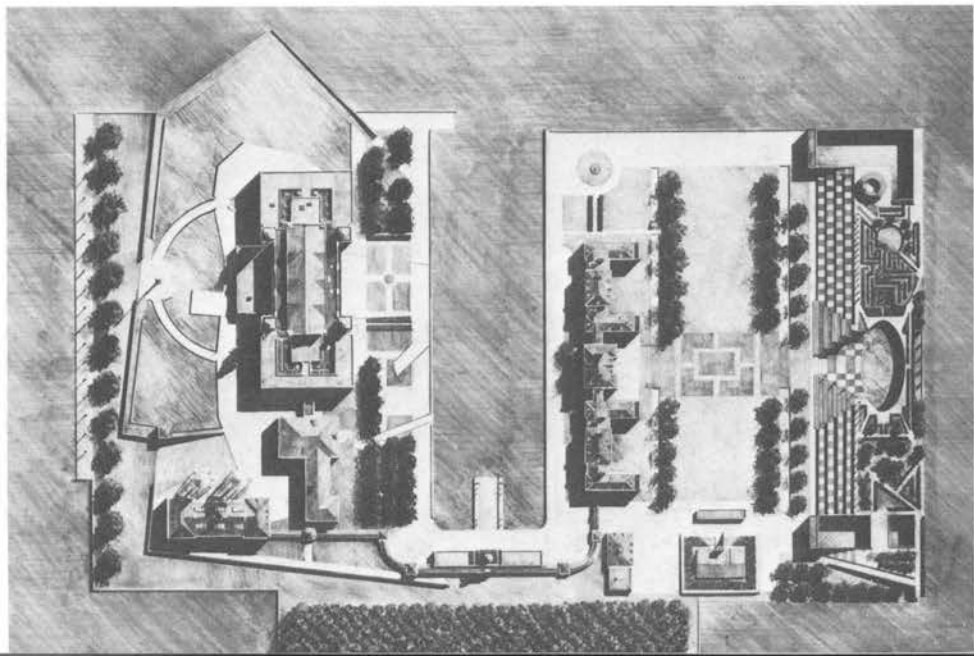
*Well, the first time I came to Cranbrook was in 1967. I had been selected to represent Argentina as a student delegate to the Aspen Design Conference. This was a great honor. I was also given a study travel scholarship by the Edgar Kauffman Foundation. It was during that trip that I first visited Cranbrook. I was very, very taken by the integration between buildings and landscape. I felt it was absolutely extraordinary. Since then, I returned to campus several times as a speaker.*

**What attracted you to the position?**

*To be very honest, I was not interested in the position initially. I was approached by someone who suggested I come to Cranbrook and talk to the search committee. Since I had met Lillian Bauder (Cranbrook's president) when I came to lecture previously and had been very impressed by her vision for Cranbrook, I thought at the very least I really owed it to her to come and meet. I thought I might be able to help the search committee further define what qualities they were looking for in the new director.*

*When I came, I met with the Academy faculty. We had very good conversations and a great many intellectual intersections regarding the place and how it would project itself into the next era. After my visit, I also found out that the position could take into account both my academic and professional work. This is something that is consistent with the tradition of the Academy.*

*Torre's 1981 proposed master plan for Ellis Island Park and Museum in New York Harbour "remembered the past and celebrated immigrants."*





Courtesy Susana Torre

Elliott Krufman

**So, after visiting you changed your mind?**

*Well, I think that the position found me and that I then found the position, so to speak. And things like that happen very rarely in life and it's quite difficult to put words to it. There was a convergence that worked.*

**One of the first projects you were involved with was last February's *Intersections and Interstices: A Collaboration in Pontiac*, a project that utilized an abandoned office building in that city. What made that project significant?**

*I think it was significant for two reasons. First, it was an important outreach project for the students. It provided them the opportunity to show their work in the context of the larger community. It's certainly important that the world comes to Cranbrook, but it is also important that Cranbrook goes out into the world. The Pontiac show allowed us the opportunity to reach an entirely new audience that may not have come to see a show on our grounds.*

*Secondly, it was the fact that it was an experiment in collaboration. Three departments — ceramics, fiber and metalsmithing — created cross-disciplinary teams of students that adopted specific rooms and spaces within the warehouse. Rather than encouraging students to do things they knew they were good at, this arrangement would challenge them to work together and challenge each other. Many installations were extraordinary and would not have happened in a more typical, single-artist creation.*

**Does the Pontiac show foreshadow an Academy of the future? Do you see the Academy doing more outreach programs within Michigan and beyond?**

*Oh, yes, definitely. And we hope that the outreach can take many forms. For example, we're considering the creation of a Cranbrook "outpost" in the form of a non-profit gallery that would be devoted exclusively to showing the work of graduates during the first three years after graduation. Those three years are the most fragile in the life of an artist who just ended a period of great immersion at the Academy. This November, the Academy will show the work of this year's graduates in Washington, D.C., and the painting department in New York City.*



Left  
The Whitney Guide to 20th Century American Architecture lists Torre's 1987 Fire Station No. 5 in Columbus, Ind., as one of 200 key buildings for its groundbreaking design.

Right  
Torre's designs range from Manhattan high rises to private residences such as Garvey House in Amagansett, Long Island, built in 1988.

**What are your major priorities for the 1995-1996 academic year?**

*Starting the Critical Studies program is a major priority. We intend the program to permeate the life of our Academy. Whenever something is new, however, it's important that it gets established properly, so we will need to monitor its function carefully. We want it to be a very positive addition to the life of the entire community.*

**Can you tell us more about this program?**

*When I first arrived, I talked to the artists-in-residence and there was clearly a desire for a program that would give more structure to the conversations that naturally exist among students and faculty. While everybody agreed that it was desirable to have something, there was not agreement on what form this should take. So I created a structure that calls for a scholar-in-residence to coordinate regular lectures featuring visiting critics, writers, poets and artists. In addition, the scholar-in-residence will work with second-year students as they refine and frame their theses and will tutor them in the process of writing.*

**Are there other changes you are planning for the Academy?**

*I will reopen the Urban Design program that Eliel Saarinen created at Cranbrook. It will not exist like a department in the sense that it will not have a full complement of students. It may have one or two students per year who are working on projects toward their degree under my guidance. It will function much like an institute that gathers practitioners and scholars regionally, nationally and internationally to deal with the theoretical and practical problems presented by our metropolitan areas and region.*

*Another important priority is the assessment of studio space. As you know, we must improve the working conditions for our students, which will require the construction of an additional studio building in the next five years. But we cannot wait five years to make our students' lives more comfortable. We must ensure an environment that is conducive to creative endeavors so we may need to make alterations to the existing studio spaces to achieve this.*



Norman MacGrath



Adam Musto



Adam Musto

Top  
*Lobby, Columbia  
University Wallach Fine  
Arts Center, 1985*  
Right  
*Susana's days at the Art  
Academy range from the  
formal to the spontaneous.*

Over the last few years there have been many changes to Cranbrook's campus and more are planned as we move forward to 2004, Cranbrook's centennial. What are your thoughts about Cranbrook's architectural vision?

*Great institutions are led by clear visions and before I even came to Cranbrook I was very impressed by the quality of its vision. I think that the architects selected for the projects will be very sympathetic in their interpretations of the campus. One of the projects — the athletic and recreation complex designed by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien — is particularly exciting. I say this because it will be built on one extreme of the campus and it has the potential for realizing part of the spirit of the original Saarinen plan, which was to create a building that ties physically the Academy with the Schools along an axis. Because Tod spent so many years as a youngster in Cranbrook's Schools, he is aware of how this building can restore that sense of integrity to the vision and to the plan.*

*Regarding the Academy, I am now in the process of reassessing the way the new studio building could be tied to the new programmatic projections of the Academy. We're moving toward an era that will recognize the interdisciplinary nature of the activity of arts, crafts and design disciplines, particularly in the sharing of technological and production knowledge and resources. At the same time, the Academy desperately needs spaces where students can create projects larger than can be fit into the individual studios and where they can create collaboratively if they so desire.*

Can you compare what it is like living in metropolitan Detroit to your time in New York?

*First of all, metropolitan Detroit is exactly the opposite of New York. In New York I lived in Manhattan and the beauty of Manhattan is the amazing amount of energy that can be collected in a place that is so densely filled with choices and opportunities. Of course, it's a place where you use public transportation or travel by foot. Detroit is exactly the opposite, it is a much more fragmented environment where specific destinations — commercial, cultural and educational centers — are linked by roads. So in that way, for me, it has been almost like living on another planet (laughter) in that you have to relearn how to live and travel. I don't think I could tell you one is better than the other because they are so very different.*

*Of course, living at Cranbrook has helped me make the transition. I see this as returning to a very small community similar to the type of environment in which I grew up. I have always been very attracted to this type of small community feeling where people relate to each other in a very personal way.*

Last question. What would you like to communicate to students and alumni as you embark on your first full year at Cranbrook's Academy?

*First of all, I hope the Academy will continue to be a spiritual home to which everyone who has worked and studied here can continue to return if they need to recharge themselves through the beauty and energy of the place. Also, I am seeking very actively to communicate with students and alumni regarding ways we can start to articulate our vision for the Academy. This vision is one I will be responsible for shaping but in the end it needs to draw from the collective aspirations of those who work and who have worked here throughout the years.*

