

The Florentine Condominium's revered Architect,  
a native-Houstonian  
with extraordinary training.

## **W. Irving Phillips, Jr.**



Born In Houston in 1936, Phillips knew at the age of 5, while playing with dominoes, that he would forever be attached to architecture. When he realized he could draw his vision, he didn't need the dominoes any longer.

Irving attended Pershing Middle and Lamar High schools and went on to the University of Texas at Austin in 1954, where he studied with the "greatest educators of the century" — just by luck of timing U.T. had just hired a British architect, author and architectural historian Colin Rowe, Werner Seligman, Bernard Hoesli, John Hejduk, Robert Slutzki, John Shaw and Lee Hodgden — considered the intellectual giants of architecture at the time with an European influence that could not be found anywhere in the U.S.

"We (architecture students) were a bunch of hicks and it was serendipity. They — the 12 deans — had incredible influence," said Phillips, who graduated UT with a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1959.

It didn't last long, Phillips said, as they all were fired and scattered to different places. But the core reassembled with Colin Rowe at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where they were known as "The Texas Rangers."

After two years of work and study in Europe, Phillips followed them to Cornell, where he said he "almost had Colin all to myself." He received his master's degree in architecture in 1964. (He named the first of his three sons after Rowe.) Phillips married in New York City and returned to Texas in 1963. His career began with the design of a Galveston residence for Louis Pauls, a former Galveston city councilman, in 1959.

Phillips opened his own firm in 1968, and his practice grew normally, he said. At one point, he had a staff of 40 employees.

He said goodbye to the headaches of running a large business and dealing with management issues when he sold his firm in 1992 and began working on his own as a design architect.

Phillips has seen continuous construction since that decision in 1992, and he's not about to think about retirement.

In addition to his design work, Phillips has taught courses at the University of Houston and the University of Texas.

"This is my neighborhood," said Phillips, who resides with his wife and partner, interior designer Kathleen Wild, in a residence/studio on Mt. Vernon.

He and Wild attend art openings and concerts in their free time.

"We love the same things," he said.

Phillips has remained in Houston for the creative opportunities it offers him.

SOURCE: Excerpts taken from article originally published in 2006, by the Houston Chronicle. **FACES IN THE CROWD: Houston an open canvas for architect Irving Phillips**

3200 W. Lamar Street – The Florentine 1999



In his biography, he writes, "My approach to design is much the same as a playwright writing a play. It's an approach to planning architecture that creates a meaningful story about the lives of those it will house, incorporating the heritage, the legends, and the personalities of people for which the plans are made."

"I see buildings as a work of art, not just a building," Phillips said.

And the manifestation of that approach is what Houstonians are experiencing with Phillips' designs.

He is affecting the city's residents where they live, wait for public transportation, train and anticipate fighting fires, attend classes, read books, experience nature, buy goods and entertain themselves.

I see the Dome!

1700 Montrose – The Renaissance 2000



5201 Memorial Drive @ Shepherd – The Bayou Bend 2006



The Bayou Bend 2006



Another Dome



102 Quitman Street –The Point



3311 Yupon The Tremont Tower



g of Remodeling in Progress

1953 Montrose Blvd.— The Art League Houston

