

Viva La Vida

Architecture students unveil models for proposed museum in Costa Rica

By NONI SRIDHARA
The Battalion

"Spacious 2,206 square meters, an IMAX theater seating 250, observation area including a lookout area. Exhibitions ranging from culture and historic significance, to future explorations of space, shuttle service to transport visitors to the planetarium"

This is the description that junior environmental design major Andrea Martinka uses to attract locals and tourists for her museum.

Martinka and 18 other Texas A&M juniors in the environmental design major of the Department of Architecture are designing models for this museum.

Under the guidance of George W. Bates, an A&M biochemistry and biophysics professor and George J. Mann, a Ronald L. Skaggs endowed professor of health design, the 19 students were given a mission to develop and design a site plan for a Museum of Life and The Environment in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. The students unveiled their presentations at Cushing Memorial Library Monday.

Bates, who will soon retire said that, for the 31 years he has been at A&M, he has worked on many projects involving the health and nutrition of the indigenous people, and he also has funded a non-profit organization to carry out academic programs and public education in Mesoamerica, which includes Mexico, South America and the Caribbean.

At different centers throughout the complex, an emphasis will be placed on the nutrition, environment, and health.

"The purpose of developing this museum is to do public education both in the sciences and social needs such as children who are malnourished and suffering from bad health care," Bates said. "I chose Costa Rica because it is one of the most stable countries politically and has very high levels of social welfare programs."

Different concepts from students will be combined to design the final project. Bates will be financing the museum construction. The final cost will run some \$80 million. Bates said the project is expected to be completed within the next four to five years.

The students thought not only about the aesthetics of their projects, but also considered many scientific details of the museum's structure, from airflow to the physics of the dome structures.

Candace Goodman's museum design consisted of a

system of glass triangles, comparable to a tessellation, known as a geodesic dome.

"This series of triangles serves as a self-supporting structure," she said. "This allows versatility for people to learn about astronomy and meteorology and it meets our design goal of being interactive."

Students wanted to avoid hurting the environment and natural resources by building such an enormous complex.

Patrick Winn said his design was inspired by the Costa Rican rainforests. The levels of his design imitated the canopies of the rainforest. On the grounds outside the museum, he has strategically placed

water fountains and ponds.

"My main concern was how the water run-off would act with the topography of the land," he said.

For Marissa Kane Nering, the integration of heat and education was a key inspiration for her building design. Nering described how she heard a story of how no matter how impoverished families were in Costa Rica, they will never starve. She said it is more of an issue with malnourishment.

"Some of these children you will see will have big bellies and discolored hair," she said. "This could be because some of the families they come from will eat tortillas for two weeks straight. It is clear that these indigenous people are lacking the essential protein, vitamins and minerals. In the nutrition center, we want to make sure to educate them on having a healthy lifestyle."

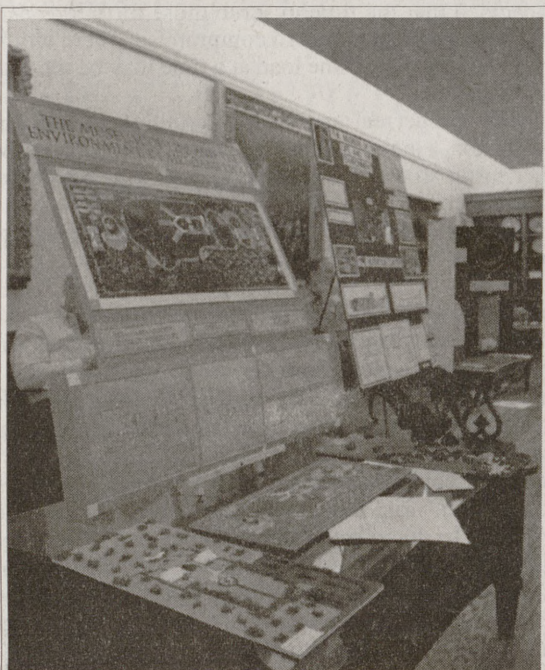
As she made her rounds, Jody R. Naderi, assistant professor of landscape architecture, said she was very impressed with the assignment and presentations.

"I feel this gives the students a real clear perspective on taking into consideration the effects of water, wildlife and plant life when designing their projects," Naderi said.



BERNARDO GARZA/THE BATTALION

Far Left: A student's model shows an architectural design for a proposed museum in Costa Rica. Center: A environmental design student explains a site design to a visitor. Above: A student's presentation displays a picture to attract locals and tourists.



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