Title
Allied Bank Tower at Fountain Place [The Inhabited Landscape: An Exhibition]

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The development of
American cities is char-
acterized at present by
a sharp decline in the
construction of publicly
funded outdoor spaces. The
task of creating vibrant,
elegant, and civil streets,
parks and plazas has fallen,
to a large extent, to the
private sector.

Allied Bank Tower at
Fountain Place in Dallas
thrusts a world of Magritte
strangeness into the center of
Dallas, commenting in a
sophisticated way on the
total disruption of the
natural order in that place
and creating a fantasy of
waterfalls, isolated trees and
bubbling geysers that is as
hard to locate in the world of
commonsplace reality as are
the shimmering mirrors of
the building from which it
withdraws our attention. Its
world of disconnected make-
believe is perhaps more
bravely reflective of our
financial institutions, and the
public life they afford us,
than most of us can bear
realizing.
Architect's Statement

The Allied plaza combines elements of a pond and a European public garden. Seventy percent of its surface is water, so that from above, the office tower appears to be floating. Some areas are dark and tranquil, like the surface of a swamp, while others froth and roar with bubblers and cascading waterfalls, like miniature upland landscapes. A dramatic computerized fountain sits in the center of the plaza, surrounded by hundreds of bald cypress trees in soldierly rows and interlaced with a grid of walkways. It is a rigorous classical design, a downtown version of a Le Nôtre landscape, in which building and site come together as one. The plaza lures us in with a glimpse of water and trees, only to reveal something beyond, and then something beyond that. Our imagination does not stop at the edge of the site; the cypress trees, planted 15 feet on center, could go on forever, like the horse chestnut trees in the Tuileries. And as we walk among the trees and beneath the legs of the building—the Eifel Tower again—interior and exterior spaces merge. The outdoor plaza is the real lobby of the building.

Allied currently stands midway between a fledgling arts district and a revitalized warren of warehouses and commercial buildings known as the West End Historic District. Unrelated formally to either, it nevertheless acknowledges its urban responsibilities through its grand plaza, which may be the key to unifying this entire area as a kind of garden office district, unlike anything else in the city.

In the meantime, Allied balances skyline bravura with urban sensitivity. If it is unapologetically open to the future, it also provides an illustration of how to live civilly in the present.