WELCOME TO THE MACHINE
ON NOV. 22

PETE WILSON ON CITIES AND POLITICS

ON TUESDAY evening, September 20, at 8 p.m. in the Pacific Design Center, in conjunction with the Pacific Design Center’s National Convention, the SCI-ARC, in conjunction with the Architectural Association, will present Pete Wilson, Mayor of San Diego, addressed the Convention and the Architectural Association, and a member of the Pacific Design Center’s Board of Directors, will present him with an honorary Doctor of Architecture degree.

Wilson’s talk will open in his iconic architectural manner, and his desire to respond to questions and comment those present rather than on the principles of public policy.

However, he warned the dangers of being too small for growth for growth’s sake. In this regard, regional planning is vital for cities as well as their satellite communities. Sharing can occur in areas of environment as well as to the same community facilities and services, and coordination of growth policies can be sought.

Wilson focused on the central city as experience and the areas beyond which need to be developed to accommodate suburban patterns. He feels that communities have a responsibility to their suburban neighbors and to those beyond areas which need to be developed to accommodate suburban growth. With the same city, there are not only economic and political questions as to what specific areas are to be developed above what the Department of Public Works in making recommendations, he has not resolved how the D.P.W. has publicly accepted the commission's remarks in the new communities. But this has made no promise of implementing this.
The private residence remains the most popular testing ground for new ideas in architecture. Its generally small scale makes it possible to investigate concepts and forms with individual, understanding clients in ways that would probably not be possible with a school board or governmental agency. The single-family home, in one case, double-family residence—or, after all the energy legislation, OSHA requirements and code restrictions are adopted—still one area of architecture where we can have some fun.

The four houses discussed in this article are distinctly different in many ways, but they all share that ancient architectural desire to try and create an environment for people to live in that is somehow unique and exhilarating. They also represent the work of relatively young members of the profession, three of whom designed their houses while working for large, established offices. Since I'm one of them, I can assure you it takes a great deal of self-discipline, and a lot of week-ends—but every architect knows about that. These houses are featured to remind us that beyond the responsibility of shaping urban environments for the masses, saving energy, and the other important and pragmatic services that architects render, it is still possible to go out there and shape some spaces. The four projects included are: a residence for Faith and James Porter by James Porter, a residence for John and Jean Ross by Michael Ross, Vista del Mar duplex by Eric Moss and James Stafford, and a residence for Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Lagreco by Charles Lagreco.

**RESIDENCE FOR FAITH & JAMES PORTER**

Los Angeles, CA.

1976

James F. Porter, AIA

Paul Y. Kohi, Structural Engineer

James F. Porter, General Contractor

James Porter is currently a Vice President and Project Director with Charles Kober Associates. He was previously an associate with Frank O. Gehry and Associates. The house he designed for himself and his family in the Brentwood Hills clearly bears the influence of Gehry's design for the Ron Davis House, on which Porter worked. While the Davis House is a quadrangle with no two corners having the same angle, the Porter House is a more controlled distortion of the basic rectangle. According to Porter, the Parallelogram evolved out of the desire to take maximum advantage of the views with the minimum amount of grading and retaining walls. The result is a dextrous interpenetration of a rectangular grid with a shifted enclosure. The diagonal walls of the exterior are penetrated by various openings which imply the internal geometry by bending the exterior plate back to the orthogonal grid. This provides recessed, covered entry alcoves at different locations.

The interior is dominated by a large open space with three levels stepping back like a series of trays, under a sloping, skylighted roof. The simple stucco surface over conventional wood frame construction provided Porter with the opportunity to create a stimulating environment at an economical price.

**VISTA DEL MAR DUPLEX**

Playa del Rey, CA.

1977

Eric Moss, AIA, and James Stafford

with George Bliit and David Cooper

John Rotondi, General Contractor

This sculptural duplex received an SCC/AIA design citation this year for what the jury described as a "whimsical... tour de force." It is, indeed, both of these. The owner required the addition of two floors—approximately 1200 sq. ft. —to an existing two-story duplex. The original stucco exterior was removed and the entire exterior was finished, as the architects describe it, "as a single conceptual piece."

The bold, baroque curvilinear forms are primarily visual, rather than performing any particular function, other than to give this dual residence a unique imageability. Nikolaus Pevsner reminds us that "Baroque had originally signified odd, especially of odd shape. It was, therefore, adopted to describe an architectural style which to the classicist..."
appears to revel in odd, extravagant shapes." I believe a modern-day baroque attitude is at work here, in which Moss and Stafford are reacting in an extravagant way to the classicists of today. The building is clearly trying to do too many things at once, but its sheer energy, determination, and facile forms are in themselves noteworthy. The use of electrical connections and mechanical vents as sculptural elements is not new, but is a gentle, if not tongue-in-cheek reminder of the mundane parts that compose the architectural whole. Moss feels there is a certain "weakness, a lack of conviction" among most architects today, many of whom are returning to the warmth and safety of "what's old is good." Moss is the symbol of Enfant Terrible, who enjoys exploring new directions and ruffling a few old feathers.

Eric Moss and James Stafford established their own office in May 1976, and both teach at SCI-ARC.

**RESIDENCE FOR JOHN & JEAN ROSS**

**OLD WESTBURY, N.Y. 1977**

Michael Franklin Ross, AIA
Assisted by Tanaka/Furtik
William McKenney, Structural Engineer
William J. Yang, Mechanical Engineer
Harry Sprinkle Construction, General Contractor

Michael Ross is a Senior Projects Architect with Daniel, Mann, Johnson, & Mendoza. This house for his parents sits on a heavily wooded, two-acre hillside. Predominant views are down the hill toward a broad meadow to the southeast.

In response to the sloping hillside, the first floor has been divided into three tiers that step gently down the ten percent grade. The building has been folded in on itself to preserve a specimen copper beech on its western border. The family breakfast room and main dining area look out at a stepping garden in which the beech tree forms the focus.

A fifteen-degree shift in internal geometry bends the attention of the visitors and inhabitants toward the beautiful view to the southeast, which is enhanced by a large two-story curved glass wall. The sequence of spaces from the approach begins with the oblique face of the garage and the mini-curved entrance alcove, which suggest what awaits the visitor on the interior. Off the entry foyer a skylighted circulation spine links the three stepping levels, while the main view from this spine is framed by the stairs and the bridge overhead.

Outdoor decks, off the living room, bedrooms, and dining areas integrate the natural surroundings with the building.

**RESIDENCE FOR MR. & MRS. C.J. LAGRECO**

**SAN BERNARDINO, CA. 1972**

Charles A. Lagreco with Architectural Collective
Johnson and Nalbren, Structural Engineers
Cal Construction Co., General contractors

Chuck Lagreco is a principal in the firm Architectural Collective and teaches at USC. This house was designed for his parents during the five-year period he was a Senior Project Designer with Caudill Rowlett Scott. The house sits on a steep hillside against the San Bernardino National Forest. Primary views are toward the south overlooking the San Bernardino Valley.

The C.J. Lagreco residence is essentially a cube that has been eroded and layered by the west-to-east entry and circulation sequence, as well as by the closed-to-open spatial sequence of the north-to-south axis. The spatial interplay occurs against the order established by a 4'x4' plan grid which becomes a 4'x8' grid in elevation, responding to the standard plywood formwork.

The house is reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Villa Shodan, 1952, in which Corbusier eroded a concrete cube, and stepped the deep concrete double walls to provide a variety of open and closed volumes overlooking the swimming pool.

While the house is derived from Corbusier and exhibits the influence of his latter-day disciples, Michael Graves and Peter Eisenman — both of whom Lagreco studied with at Princeton — the building itself is extremely well resolved and fitted to its difficult site. All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing is contained in a secondary stud and plaster wall system which is articulated from the main poured-in-place exposed concrete structure.

Photographs by Michael Franklin Ross
CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

The 213rd meeting of the SCC/AIA Board of Directors was held on November 6, officers, directors and guests gathered at the Chapter office to hear reports by Secretaries, Treasurer, and past presidents on the membership applications; President David Martin, ANFA, California's Secretary of State's 1978 state, Fellowship nominations, and CCAIA Land Use Issues. Scenic Montere Ya Mountains Study and plans for construction of the Sally Landworth on Home Tour status; Emeritus Director, Mr. A's proposal for restructuring its Public Works Depart- ment. The agenda continued on an AIA proposed course offering; and Mitchell Rubinstein on proposed handicap

A Governmental Relationships Commit- tee has been established by SCC/AIA. Chaired by Stanley M. Smith, AIA, with Kurt Meyer, AIA, and R.G. Conklin, AIA, the Commit- tee's objectives are to further the architec- tural and engineering selection process for local government agencies and to explore the issue of agencies possibly performing architectural and related services in-house, as opposed to com- missioning work such from the private sector.

A Judicial Building and Historical Museum will be the subject of the December Professional Examination, according to a recent announcement by the NCARB. Architectural License Seminars will hold intensive one-day seminars concentrating on every aspect of this subject. The programs will be held in various cities across the country, including here in Los Angeles on Satu- rday, December 12, at the Sherton LA Airport Hotel. For further information contact the seminars at 417-0121.

An exhibit entitled "Environmental Design: Signing & Graphics" will be on view from November 10 to December 4, held in several cities across the country, as a travelling exhibition. The main lobby exhibition area of the Security Pacific National Bank headquarters building in downtown Los Angeles. Sponsored by the American Institute of Graphic Arts as a travelling exhibit, the mixed media presentation illustrates some of the best work being done in the field of architectural signage and graphics by designers from New York to Honolulu, and demonstrates techniques and materials utilized by the profession. The reminder: The copy deadline for L.A. ARCHITECT (December) is 5th of the month preceding publication. The deadline for the December Member column is November 5. Copy may be sent directly to Editor Margaret Bank, 140 Hollister Avenue #3, Santa Monica 90404.

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