January 12 Chapter Program: Critics' Predictions 1982

Four local critics will participate in a panel discussion on the Critics chapter's yearly program, Critics' Predictions. The panel will take place on Tuesday evening, January 17, 1982, at the Center for Architecture and Urbanism, 1800 Berkeley Street, Santa Monica. For more information, call 476-2237.

1982 LA/AIA Officers

LAAIA Board of Directors, left to right: Lester Wertheimer, Frederick Lyman, Robert Tyler, William Landworth, Cyril Chern, Virginia Tanemann, Chester Widmon, Lynne Paxton, Michael Ros, Mark Hall, Gordon Forrest.

On November 17, Robert Tyler, FAIA, Directing Partner of Wehunt Beckett Associates and an honors graduate from the USC School of Architecture, was elected to the post of Vice-President/President-Elect. Elected to the LA/AIA/IAA, Tyler graduated cum laude with the AIA Silver Medal from the University of Southern California and joined Wehunt Beckett Associates in 1952. In 1969, he became the Los Angeles Chapter as Treasurer and CAAIA and was elected to the AIA College of Fellows in 1977. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the USC Architectural Guild.

Other election results announced at the November 17 elections by 1981 President Lester Wertheimer were Chester A. Widmon, principal of Widmon/Wein & Partners of Santa Monica, will become Chapter Secretary; Mark Hall, principal and co-founder of Architect of Los Angeles and Lynne Paxton, president of Lynne Paxton Architects, will serve two years term as Chapter Director.

Elected to two year terms as Directors were Martin Gelber, principal of Martin Gelber and Associates of Santa Monica; Joseph Zinn, FAIA, Vice President and executive director of the Leo A. Dahl Architects office; Ken Newman, Architect of Los Angeles; and 1981 President Wertheimer who will serve as Alternate CCAIA Director.

1982 Installation Dinner Dance

On the heels of LA’s 200th birthday festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. and dancing. The Bill Green Jazz Band encourage you to dress festively for this occasion. Tickets are $22.00 per person.

LA Architect

January 1982

Volume 8, Number 1


February 27: Art and Architecture: A Changing Relationship, a day-long symposium featuring four sessions: (1) AIA: The New President of the LA/AIA presents his ideas about architecture in words and works; (2) Interview: Frank Gehry about his new buildings for Loyola Law School in downtown Los Angeles; (3) Lecture: Wednesday evenings, 8:00 p.m. SCI-ARC Design Forum, Call for Details; (4) January 14: Faculty Lecture: Ralph Knowles, USC School of Architecture, Harris 101, 1:00 p.m.; (5) January 13: Faculty Lecture: R. M. Schindler, USC School of Architecture, Harris 101, 1:00 p.m.; (6) January 12: Faculty Lecture: Richard Neutra, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California; (7) January 23: 8:00 p.m. Blackstone Ensemble, Villa Maria.

Further information: Wayne Attoe, (213) 825-9413 or 206-6643.

Exhibitions

Through January 29: Drawings; R. M. Schindler, AIA, A. D. 1900—1950, The 1900 House, 835 N. Kings Road, Los Angeles. Open Sat.-Sun., 11:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Admission: $2.00; tours: $3.00. Further information: (213) 631-5112.

Through January 10: The Magic Mystery Tour: A Retrospective Exhibition for children of all ages, Municipal Art Gallery, Travelodge at Harbor Island, 835 N. Kings Road, Los Angeles. Tuesday—Sunday, 12:00-5:00 p.m. Further information: Wayne Attoe, (213) 825-9413 or 206-6643.

Events


January 29—31: Women Up Front '82, Architectural Options, San Diego. Further information: LA ARCHITECT, for details on this and other women's events.

Correspondence


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The lobby of the Title Insurance Building is lavishly appointed with marble and brass.
Concepts: Frederic P. Lyman, AIA, Architect

A theory of architecture must, I think, be based on the Chinese concept of yin and yang. Architecture deals with comple­ mentary relationships in the absolute sense, erotic; and the primary rela­ tionship with which architecture is involved is that of logic to passion, that is more specifically, of protection to spirituality. The primary material is stone.
The secondary materials usually involve complements: wood to stone, steel to concrete, glass to aluminum, polyester fiberglass to what ever its support system may be. There are sometimes cross complements: wood and glass to stone and tile, aluminum and glass to steel and concrete, But, from this point on, tertiary materials will probably be required, relationships will become com­ plicated, probably unexplainable and there­ fore reprehensible. Undoubtedly, we are correct in sensing that the greater the number of materials employed in a building, the lower its spiritual significance and, prob­ ably, the sooner its material deterioration.
The purpose of architecture, Richard Wagner implied, is to turn time into space. The sepulchre is, therefore, a stone vault.
Still, these are arrogances. As the Anasazi well knew, we are all of the earth and the colors of the earth.

"The plan," Le Corbusier wrote, "is the generator." From the plan the architect begins construction with the perspective with an H pencil, which at some point he drops along with his T-square and triangle. He then begins to sketch with Prismacolor. This is the most glorious moment of his life. It may be similar to what a pilot experiences at the moment of take off.
"Geometry," Eugene Nolle said, "is the friend of the architect." In other words, the shatter­ ing of fundamental geometric relationships is not a creative but a destructive act which may at times be necessary, but when unnecessary is merely eccentric and inefficient.
The system of color relationships may be entirely different than the system of geo­ metric relationships, but involves and requires the same discipline and passion.
Discipline is described by measured work (plans, elevations, sections, models, axono­ matics, specifications: lines, numbers, and letters of the alphabet). Passion is described by perspective. But measured drawings must have passion and perspectives must have discipline.
The task of our time, except for the ignorant and cynical, is to build in harmony with nature and, therefore, the architect is also a protector of empty space, a wanderer, a gardener, or a farmer; for architecture is to farming as time is to space as sun to earth as form is to color as wood to stone as solid is to void as beam is to arch as ambition is to love.

The scheme of Jeffersonianism is not so much social architecture as the architectural approach to society. A Jeffersonian society would be ordered but on the basis of the needs of the citizens as expressed by them­ selves. Ideally, therefore, architecture is not an imposition of forms upon society but an organization of the forms which emerge from social and geological events.
In music, as a parallel, we hear from within the ancient and mysterious Hungarian folk songs the radical exuberance of Beta Bartók.
Ironically, it is difficult to rationalize the chopping off of a mountain top by an army of slaves to make a flat place for Montecello nor the imposition of a one mile by one mile grid over the entire Louisiana Territory. Those were, as we all know, 18th Century ideas, reminiscent of Versailles. Nevertheless, it is too bad that the great diagonals, which might have been rather grand connections between the cities and towns (and continuing in the L'enfant manner) within the cities themselves were omitted from the Louisiana grid.
Well, Jefferson was a paradoxical fellow. But we are not here concerned so much with his interesting hypocracies as with Jeffersonianism: the concept which I do not believe he ever specifically expressed, but which seems to me to be that the architec­ tural process—listen, organize, design and construct—is synchronous with the demo­ cratic process and, if the two were inte­ grated, they could form the basis of, what Mr. Wright might call, an organic civilization. Thus, the Jeffersonian is politically involved and territorially responsible. Thus, we now form the Corps of Architects.

Attempts to establish civic govern­ ments are always difficult, because they overlap county governments. A city is not a subdivision of a county as is the case of a state. Counties and states are both determined by land areas. Cities are determined by population. Cities should, therefore, not be thought of in terms of enclosed areas but in terms of cen­ ters of populations and, therefore, of build­ ings. A city is to be measured by length and width but by the location of a point, more commonly called the center. Therefore, cities should not be governed by elected representatives in the manner of counties, states, or the nation; but designed by architects commissioned by the people.

In the later nineteenth and the earlier twen­ tieth centuries cities were connected by rail­ roads, which formed the diagonals which Jefferson omitted, and the center of each city was the railroad station and the cities flourished around the stations and, in spite of terrible social inequities, were magnificent to behold, because they were dependent upon social intercourse and not upon advertising and tax write-offs.
So the trains must return, as they seem to be straining to do, faster and more beautiful than ever.

We cannot ignore the finances of architec­ ture. If we wish to build great buildings and at the same time abolish smog, we must stop taxing production and start taxing waste.
We are all equal shareholders in the corporation of God, but one owns that which one produces.
Therefore, in the great city, all profits on the use and exchange of land are returned to the people, pollution is taxed with an eye to extinction, and the producers of useful goods and services are left with their full reward.
A controversial figure—controversial forms, but is this really true? Certainly from the exterior his architecture is original and expressionistic. It forms compositions of three-dimensional art with interpenetrating planes and subtly suggestive dialogues with spatial illusion. Is that not a description of Los Angeles? A city of unique places, spaces, and movie sets where alternate forms are accepted as an integral part of our culture. His ideas are in the vanguard of architectural thought today and extend and reinforce the understanding and appreciation of architectural space.

The extensive experimentation in Gehry's homes serves as a starting point for his larger scale quieter, more controlled compositions. The visual enrichment of buildings in space dramatizes the mundane or ordinary. Facades are not meant as buildings, but simply as enclosure envelopes. The plans of Santa Monica Place and Loyola are functional, rational and efficient, transposed by circulation spaces that knife through at an angle to create spatial excitement. Loyola with its rationalist, thin, planar facade is made visually vibrant by the juxtaposition of artistically applied projecting elements (staircases). The central entrance cuts a void as it transposes the facade in forced perspective and off axis. This drama is enhanced by the scale of the simple proportional relationship of large to small windows and of solids (stucco) to voids (glass) of the facade. Tension and interest is the result. Minimal simplicity made exciting by an artistic touch. The building appears complete, and stands by itself as an element in space, but when the classroom buildings are placed in the plaza they will create a more dynamic parti.

People relate to Gehry's experimental work, typified by his own house, but he is really an artistic rationalist, with an understanding of the human's greater interest in nonrepetitive elements, variation of form, changes in scale, nongeometric structures, and identification with spaces. Loyola typifies his successful exploitation of ordinary materials, and when complete, the creation of a sense of place. His is an acceptable alternate form of architecture.

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objects placed in the plaza. The result is a center projecting circulation elements and about efficiency, repetition and responsibility, scenery is a very rationalistic facade with could be surprising to realize that there is the place, it becomes the center object. Santa Monica Place. The stage set is one of your earlier ideas. Here you have a very plain stage set. The scenery is a very rationalistic facade with three spatial images or elements that project out from the facade. They layer. You also have an interrelationship of two spatial ideas com­ ing together. A very simple facade that talks about efficiency, repition and responsibility, and the intersection of the facade by the off center projecting circulation elements and the chapel and classrooms as independent objects placed in the plaza. The result is a harmonic relationship. This is very similar to Santa Monica Place. I can see what you were saying about the relationship of Santa Monica Place because, in each of the courtyards the building became a backdrop for that court. In that sense is the requirement at Loyola was that we needed three exit stairs by code. We did not want to place the staircase spaces within the building. We had the idea that if we could just hang them like fire escapes on the facade, we could save money. With the center stair, we wanted to make a statement about entrance, processions, identify the corner—a two-dimensional ges­ ture, combined with painting into a three-dimensional gesture. The colors in the project. Very bright warm amber facade with sand forecast on the out­ side, and very cool colors with dark green, very light green and light blue on the inside. Is there a relationship? The material originally on the exterior facade was marble. We selected a marble that we felt would hold up on the exterior in this cli­ mate, and it would have had browns and oranges in it. When the marble was eliminated for cost reasons, we tried to simulate it, as we liked it. Yes, it is to make the center stairway look more like a building. We wanted the two end stairways to be lighter and less. The light ones relate to and hang on to the existing building while the central stair cuts it. The center stair is a much more aggres­ sive move. It was to focus, and make a building in the center, and make a point of entry. You also have forced perspective in the central staircase. Is that a design element? Yes, I have used that device in the Davis house and in my own house. My initial impression of the facade was that it was very planar, very thin, and yet as one moves towards the center of the building, one realizes the depth of the facade with the win­ dow recesses and the staircase projections. How did you establish this interrelationship of planes at one point and three dimensional depth at another? By painting the wall as a plane to the corner—a two-dimensional ges­ ture, combined with painting into a recessed window returns—a three-dimensional gesture. The colors also have to do with trying not to upsetage the neighborhood or the Martin building. The intention was to try and make it as quiet a building as possible, relatively, because it is a large object, and make it fit in and not push the neighborhood. Regarding the interior colors, when you get bright blasts of sunlight into an interior that has light greens and blues, it's very pretty. I used those colors in my house too. I noticed how the intensity of natural light changed the light colors on the walls. I think that has been a consistent tool in our work. The way we handle natural light, and interior lighting. Each time we do it, we get better at it. The orientation of the planar wall and the dissection of that with another three dimen­ sional element at an angle. Is this an idea of spatial awareness and visual perception developed through your relationship to art­ ists? It does not appear to be based on pure geometry, which probably would dictate that the stumps should be at right angles. I don't know about that being obvi­ ous that it should be at right angles. However you go in Europe, old buildings, rows, the greatest exam­ ple is the Pantheon—everything is placed at an angle and set up for views and for processional approaches. I think that has been an idea in architecture from way back, which we have inherited. The idea that everything has to be on a grid is an imposition that has come from simplistic attitudes about organization. It is certainly true in Europe that buildings create a much stronger sense of place than they do in America. The simplicity of the facade will reinforce the spatial awareness of the more articulated buildings in space. With­ out the classrooms in the plaza to complete the part, a different space and architectural statement is formulated. Loyola is a stage set transformed into archi­ tecture. Let the performance begin.
The renovation of the Wiltern theater is being supervised by P. B. Waltz. Jr., and is expected to be complete by the December, 1982, opening date.

John Chase

The Hollenbeck Home, 573 S. Boyle Avenue, Sacred Heart Church, 2210 S. Shelton St, and Home Federal Savings and Loan Association, are part of a new building

Review: The Mystery of Form, Architecture of Alvar Aalto


Southern California had an important architectural guest in town last month. Alvar Aalto came to visit not in person, of course, but in the form of an exhibition at the SCI-ARC Architecture Gallery. Since his passing five years ago Alvar Aalto's unique talents remained largely uncelebrated. He is studied to be sure, in the world of architecture, but the level his work deserves.

The exhibition at the Architecture Gallery capitalized in color slides, black and white panels, and in beautiful examples of his furniture, the very personal flavor of Aalto's work. Originally organized by the Department of Architecture at Cornell University and brought to Los Angeles by Shelly Kappe with the support of the Finnish Public Pension Institute it was not covered in the exhibit. However, within the neutral square field of the slides and panels were the organic forms of Aalto's architecture.

One little gem apparent as one viewed the careful chronology of his work was through an original search for an architecture that was in harmony with its environment, and not just a part of it. Aalto's unique contributions to the history of shelter and to the cultural condition in architecture.

In his own studio at Helsinki a bulbous circular wing grows out of an L-shaped leg creating a semi-enclosed court in an old warehouse. The new library facility will allow enlightened developers and public officials the needed flexibility to convert an existing structure into a renovated library facility that will serve the community on a century.

Exterior of building before renovation began.

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Second Semester Courses
Japanese Total Design: Architectural and Gardens

Units of aesthetics and function are the focus of the course.

In Japanese culture, architecture and gardens are conceived as a whole. This course will focus on the three main features of Japanese gardens: the influence of different materials, the harmony and balance in composition, and the expression of Shinto and Zen Buddhism concepts.

Contact: The Associated Students, University of California, Los Angeles, (213) 825-9413.

Art and Architecture

A seminar course in the History of Architecture which focuses on the development of architectural styles and the evolution of architectural design.

The advisory board put together a curriculum for the course, which includes lectures, seminars, and workshops. The course is aimed at students who want to pursue careers in architecture.

Contact: The Associated Students, University of California, Los Angeles, (213) 825-9413.

The Prepared Professional 1982: ISD Design Conference in Aspen

Julian Beinart, president of the International Design Conference in Aspen, announces the conference program for the 1982 conference.

The conference will focus on the theme of "The Italian Idea," which will be explored through seminars and workshops. The conference will be held from June 13 to June 18.

Contact: The International Design Conference in Aspen, 8738 West Third Street, Los Angeles 213/272-0731.

Beautification Awards

The Los Angeles Regional Chamber of Commerce is accepting nominations for its Beautification Awards. The awards will be given for both new and remodeled landscapes.

The awards will be presented on March 22, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m., in Room 1256 Graduate School of Management. Fee: $125. For information and registration, call (213) 743-4560, ext. 403, or write to T. Kawana, Director, College of Environmental Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

The Arts, UCLA Extension at (213) 825-9413.

Environmental Singing and Design

The course will provide an opportunity for students to explore the relationship between nature and design.

The course will be taught by a professional singer and designer. Fee: $125. For information and registration, call UCSC Continuing Education, (213) 743-4560, ext. 403.

Music in Historic Sites

By popular demand, the Da Camera Society of Mount St. Mary's College is offering a five-week course in music in historic sites.

The course will be taught by a professional musicologist and historian. Fee: $125. For information and registration, call UCSC Continuing Education, (213) 743-4560, ext. 403.

Correction

Pamela Burton was the landscape architect for the award-winning Kings Road housing for the elderly. This is a partial listing of the public projects of LA ARCHITECT.

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Chapter News and Notes

LA/AIA Board of Directors meeting 2118; Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, November 23, 1981.

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LA/AIA Chapter Program, 1982

February 16: Dr. Warren James, JPL, Pacific Design Center.

March 16: Norman Pfeiffer, FAIA, Pacific Design Center.

April 20: Dinner Social, featuring J. Paul Maguire, Maguire/Pinto/Gilp.

May 18: Conrad Wachsmann Birthday Memorial (Speaker to be announced).

June 15: To be announced.

August 21: Beach Party.

September 21: To be announced.


LUMBER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

We have available to you:

- Design information
- Technical assistance
- Literature including Timber Construction Manual
- Grading rules book Western Wood Use Book
- National Design Specifications

Contact Information

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