Tuesday 1
New Year's Day
Chapter office closed.
National AIA ExCom Retreat
Call (213) 380-4955.

Wednesday 2
ExCom Meeting
4 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.
Board of Directors
5:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Thursday 3
Urban Design Committee
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Friday 4

Weekend
Saturday 5
Little Tokyo
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Sunday 6

Monday 7
M. Robert Markovich, "Photographs: Two Architecture Projects"
Exhibit continues through January 29

Institution Committee
3 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Monday 8

Tuesday 9

Wednesday 10
Urban Design Committee
9 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Friday 11

Weekend
Saturday 12
Art Decco
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 4
Pricing Your Services
4pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Seventh Street: Mecca for Retailers
Pershing Square
Call (213) 825-9061.

February 5

February 6
Antone Predock and COD (Eric Kahn, Russell Thomson, Ron Gola)
ICSI Los Angeles series, SCI-Arc Main Space, 8 pm.
Call (213) 829-3402.

Urban Innovations Group: Works in Progress
Exhibit continues through March 1
at UCLA Gallery 1220. Call (213) 825-5935.

Sarasota 1991
Washington, DC, continues through February 7.

February 7

February 8

February 9

February 10

Tuesday 15
ExCom Meeting
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.
Board of Directors
5:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4955.

Secrets of Dealing with Difficult Clients
Panel moderated by Norman Kadaran, 4:30-5:30 pm,
Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center.
Call (213) 657-0800.

February 12

February 13
Critical Mass: The Arts and Critical Commentary
Lecture sponsored by Civ. Arts and the
LA Festival in the continuing series,
"Art in the Life of L.A.," PDC Theater, 6:30 pm.
Call (213) 825-1090 ext.1216.

February 14

February 15

February 16

February 17

February 18

February 19

February 20

February 21

February 22

February 23

February 24

February 25

February 26

February 27

February 28

February 29

Weekend
Saturday 19
Lion Law Seminar
9 am. Call (213) 380-4955.

1991 AIA/LA Installation
Union Station. Call (213) 380-4955.

Spring Street: Palaces of Finance
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 30

Weekend
Saturday 20
Seventh Street: Mecca for
Merchants
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 21

Weekend
Saturday 21

LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 22

Weekend
Saturday 22

LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 23

Weekend
Saturday 23

LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 24

Weekend
Saturday 24

LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theatres
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am,
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 25

Weekend
Saturday 25

February 26

Weekend
Saturday 26

February 27

Weekend
Saturday 27

February 28

Weekend
Saturday 28

February 29

Weekend
Saturday 29

February 30

Weekend
Saturday 30

March 1

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March 31
The guidelines have not been finalized and the Department recognizes that projects now are being designed, in advance of publication of the guidelines, that may become available for occupancy after March 13, 1991.

Proposed guidelines published on June 15, 1990, available from HUD, state that in the interim, compliance with ANSI A117.1-1986 will meet the requirements of the Fair Housing Act in connection with the Department's investigation of any complaints.

Owner and architect should be aware that plans and/or buildings under construction were issued prior to January 13, 1990 which building permits or renewals/cancellations were issued prior to January 13, 1990, are exempt. For a copy of the "Fair Housing Guidelines: Proposed Rules," dated June 15, 1990, contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410. A 1-4, workstations available in attractive small office near PDC. amenities include reception, conference, fax, xerox, reception services. Call Linda (213) 416-2240.

Office space, 880 s.f. with high ceilings, partitions and counters, private office and restroom. Was architect's office, now looking to rent to architects for $800/month, one month free rent, at 5659 W. Pico. Call Gus at (213) 874-3116.

Spaces Available--Westside from drafting station to private office/design studio. Full support system: repro, secretarial, accounting. (213) 452-5533, 10 am to 6 pm. Dale.

Architectural Administrators Unite
A dozen architectural administrators from the Los Angeles area will join the Society of Architectural Administrators (SAA) this month. The SAA is affiliated with the AIA nationally. It is recognized through this bond that the organizations share objectives consistent with the goal of improving the architectural profession as well as strengthening each group.

These administrators have been meeting since February of last year to exchange ideas and information, share resumes, and further educate themselves through seminars and guest speakers. If you are interested in taking advantage of a large network of your colleagues and associates, please contact Julie Robison (213) 939-1900.

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-Stamp Required-

Effective January 1, 1991, architects will be required to stamp plans, specifications and other instruments of service when submitting them to a governmental body. This change to the Architects Practice Act resulted from legislation sponsored by the California Board of Architectural Examiners, AB 1005 (Chapter 94, Statutes of 1990).

The law specifies that the architect's stamp contain (1) the legend "State of California," (2) the term "licensed architect," (3) the architect's name (as licensed with the board), (4) the architect's license number, and (5) a means for noting the renewal date for the current license (last day of birth month and year). The renewal date may be hand written or typed. The type set version will require replacement every two years.

The architect's signature is still required on documents submitted to building officials. Both the imprint of the stamp (and written renewal date when using stamp with blank) and a signature constitute compliance with law.

CBAA anticipates adoption of regulations regarding the shape and size of the stamp. We recommend a 1" minimum - 2" maximum diameter circular shape. The design of the circle may include solid lines (thin or thick) or broken lines, such as dashes or dots. Other possibilities include a rope or beaded effect or words forming the circle. Emblems (stars, graphic designs) are also acceptable so long as the stamp is legible. The stamp shall not be of the embossing type. For additional information, call (916) 445-3394.

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The ordinance is based on a thorough review of available scientific literature on the ecological effects of planting. However, the amount of planting required is not directly calibrated to implement specific levels of oxygen production, energy use and other factors. Therefore we do not have a direct correspondence between the amount of planting and a desired environmental result. Biomass theories which address these questions are too complex to implement at this point in a workable public ordinance.

Impacts on Design Professionals

The ordinance will impact our daily practice. First we will have to learn the requirements—a daunting task at first due to the ordinance's length, but not difficult, particularly since all related landscape regulations will be aggregated into a single code section. The scope of our work will expand to increase. In addition to the required amount of landscaping, for the first time virtually all commercial and industrial projects as well as parking lots must be landscaped.

Requirements for documenting the project's landscaping and irrigation may create an additional source of work for architects and landscape architects. The strong emphasis on conserving native and natural plant materials, as well as the requirements for shading the western and southern faces of buildings, will impact site and building design. Requirements for a base level of landscaping will force a readjustment in the way that building construction costs are budgeted. A certain minimum level of landscaping must be provided before a building permit and certificate of occupancy is granted; this landscaping may no longer be eliminated in order to reduce the project costs. The ordinance gives the designer more control over the ultimate installation of the landscape through its requirement for a Certificate of Substantial Completion of the landscape before the city will issue permits for occupancy.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Despite the political logic described above, the AIA/LA Design J udges believe the basis can and should be legitimately expanded to incorporate urban design issues and to embrace the public realm. The urban design and planning community has strengthened and developed the city's helplessness in matters of occupancy. The ordinance's author has an opportunity to test this belief. Issues which this review should address include critiques listed above.

This effort should result in an ordinance which addresses the full range of issues. Anything less may be a bow to political expediency but simply won't do the job. Suggested changes, however, should attempt to retain the simplicity, practicality, and political effectiveness of the current draft. It may well be that some of the urban design issues raised cannot be accommodated within the confines of a landscape ordinance but must become incorporated in other vehicles—potentially an urban design element of the city's General Plan of which landscape is a subset and is implemented within the Community Plans and related Specific Plans. Perhaps additional ordinances are also needed.

Ben Rosenblom, AIA

Mr. Rosenblom is the principal of Rosenblom Associates.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, continued on 6

however in the hillside landscape, this concern usually means that no house should be planned with more than one story above the high point of the street facade. With a little imagination, one could develop a plan that runs down the hillside to provide more livable space for the homeowners, thereby creating a number of exciting solutions to the need for more square footage. Attention is paid to the use of color and materials for roof and wall finishes, to the landscaping and use of fencing materials. There are concerns for clean, simple lines and for organized glass areas that are uncluttered, as well as the prevention of "skyglaze" from skylights, and for the visual control of service areas, air conditioners, and pool equipment.

The years of use of the guidelines for Crestwood Hills have strengthened and developed the features of the guidelines which addresses the full range of issues. Those involved in energy with those earlier claims play in any expanded scope of environmental considerations, will be a subject of discussion for the AIA/LA Environmental Resources Committee, as well as the broader concerns for clean, simple lines and for organized glass areas that are uncluttered, as well as the prevention of "skyglaze" from skylights, and for the visual control of service areas, air conditioners, and pool equipment.

The long experience of architects in-
may be uncovered, tandem, and within the five foot front yard setback. A sewer--a sewer connection is required if the building is within 200 feet of an existing sewer line.

Grading—Erosion control plans are required if the building is under construction or the building is within 200 feet of an existing building. Also recommended are walls on the downhill side of down-sloped lots should be covered with landscaping so that no more than 12 feet of wall is exposed.

Discussion

The commonly held belief that most of the unappealing hillside construction of the recent five years is due to developer greed does not recognize the permit that existing hillside restrictions have played. The boxy, flat-roofed architecture that is common to new construction in the hillsides owes much of its existence to current height restrictions which make it almost impossible to design interesting roof architecture. The more restrictive height proposed in the ordinance will only make it worse.

Many of the imputts for the height restrictions appear to be political, based on the politicians' perception that the public equates lower height with better looking, smaller-scaled buildings. While this may be true on flatland, reducing height limits on hillsides simply spreads a building out horizontally and removes roof articulation. It is highly questionable that a stepped, horizontal building is actually seen as a less obtrusive mass than a vertical building of the same overall height when the angle of the hillside is taken into consideration. The height restrictions amount to de facto style control as the vertical massing and stepped roofs characteristic of older revival styles would be discouraged in favor of the stepped massing and flat roofs of modern style. As the revival styles appear to be the style of preference for hillside residents (since they tend to be similar to the older existing houses), the ordinance essentially discourages the very design residents prefer.

The most charming feature about existing hillside development is its intimate, small scale. Prospects for maintaining that small-scaled buildings are jeopardized by the ordinance's excessive street width requirements. The ordinance's flexibility is dependent on the Bureau of Engineering, which typically requires the maximum allowable street width. Street improvement guidelines, the task force is recommending that front and side walls be modulated by requiring average setbacks. It also recommends walls on the downhill side of down-sloped lots should be covered with landscaping so that no more than 12 feet of wall is exposed.

Critique

In its present form, the draft responds primarily to an ecological rather than aesthetic/urban design imperative. This gives rise to at least four major limitations. The ordinance is not an urban design or visual design document. What it doesn't address in detail or at all reads like an urban design textbook: protection of all significant ridgelines and maximum allowable cut heights, location of buildings on hillside building pads, protection of views through standard street sections and streetscape standards, and review of city standards for the spacing of lighting, illumination and trees. Qualitative standards for the design of landscape, hardscape and open space are largely omitted.

The ordinance is not a manifesto for expanding the amount of open space. The call and means for increasing the quantity of public open space is not addressed. The quality of open space, however, is affected by the ordinance's minimum requirements for open space landscaping.

The ordinance is not based on a plan which integrates ecology, land use, landscape, and urban design. Such a plan does not now exist. Rather, the ordinance was written in response to a set of mayoral directives. It relates to and is triggered only by applications for a building permit, not addressing larger questions of linkages between projects and landscaping of the urban public realm.

The ordinance does not provide a basis for measuring a relationship between quantity and type of planting and specified eco-

The City of Perris is seeking collaborating teams of architects and landscape architects interested in providing design services for the new Civic Center. The design competition will be a three-phase process, as follows:

I. Submittal of Qualifications and Statement of Design Intent (due 2/15/91).
II. Selection of Competitors (three to five teams will be invited to participate in the Design Competition).
III. Design Competition (90-day period for preparation and presentation of a design).

Those teams selected to participate in Phase III will be paid an honorarium of $10,000 each. Competition packets and submittal requirements are available by written request only to:

Mr. Donald J. Stasney, AIA
Perris Civic Center Design Competition
101 North “D” Street
Perris California 92370

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Los Angeles as Garden City: Looking at the Landscape Ordinance

The Ordinance on Paper

In response to a request by Mayor Bradley, the City Planning Department, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Section of ASLA, is developing a landscape ordinance for the city. In his request, the Mayor asked that the ordinance address issues such as air pollution, noise and glare abatement, mitigation of the urban heat island, uniform parking standards, and reorganization of Municipal Code sections relating to landscape. Draft "L" of the ordinance will appear about January 1.

The ordinance will apply to any "project," which is almost everything over 500 square feet. It will apply not only to residential construction, but also to commercial and industrial construction, and parking lots. The ordinance should go into effect no earlier than late 1991, and plans submitted before that date will be for the most part exempt.

So where would this new ordinance leave the architect? One, it rephrases the trend to restrict landscape submittals to landscape architects. The ordinance allows architects to make any submittals that they are licensed to do. Two, it aggregates into one section of the Zoning Code all landscape requirements, so that they are easily findable. Three, it makes all landscape submittals ministerial, except in projects that are already discretionary. Landscape plan check will work like Xeriscape currently works—an over the counter sign-off. Four, in those cases where the architect Has a Better Idea, he or she can submit an Alternative Landscape Retrofit Plan, which is intended to suspend the precise requirements of the landscape ordinance, so long as the plan fulfills the ordinance's intent. It is discretionary, but it must be approved or disapproved within 20 days, or it gets automatic approval. Five, the draft ordinance leaves various avenues open for the designer to create the most appropriate design, by providing a menu of design features and techniques that the architect can choose from on his project, much like the current Xeriscape ordinance works. The menu also acts as a brake on City Planning's discretion ary authority.

The ordinance packet is quite large—over 100 pages—and people ask why it has to be so long. The answer is simple. The ordinance is ministerial, and there have to be specific, countable criteria to make a ministerial ordinance work. In the packet, you will find all of the criteria that will be applied to your submittal—no "as determined by City Planning" wording that leaves the appli cant more confused than enlightened. The Ordi nance Committee plans to have all guidelines and submittal forms created before sending the ordi nance for City Council approval.

Some of the major features of the draft ordi nance that will be of interest to architects are the following. Requirements for parking lot landscap ing have been considerably strengthened, so that in all projects they are about the same as those in the current Mini-Mall Ordinance: one tree per each 25 feet of frontage (which must be coordi nated with signage), one tree per four parking spaces (and tree location must be coordi nated with lighting), and the area under bumper overhangs must be landscaped. All of this holds true even for parking lots on slab (but not parking structures).

For most multi-family dwellings, 100 square feet of usable open space per unit must be pro vided. This must be a "permanently reserved portion which can no longer be counted—it must be landscaped, and the front setback can't be counted in your open space requirement. There are exceptions for mixed-use projects.

All buildings must be shaded on the south and west sides, which means that adequate space must be left in the site plan for shading devices such as trees.

There are other requirements, including ext ensive provisions for conservation of native trees and for protection of wildlands, that are too lengthy to summarize here. What the draft ordi nance does not regulate for the most part is aes thetics, since the architect is best qualified to make aesthetic judgments, and not some bureau cratic. To receive the current ordinance packet, call (213) 485-3492. The ordinance is still in process, so please use your comments to make sure that it does not unnecessarily restrict what you do best—design.

Michael O'Brien, ASLA
Mr. O'Brien is the primary author of the Landscape Ordinance. The Ordinance in Practice

The City's draft landscape ordinance is a significant initiative which usues future landscaping within the city to further critical environmental goals. However, other intentions can be read into this serious document—giving the ordinance an

AIA Environment Committee Meets with Ambitious But Narrow Agenda

The AIA National Committee on the Environment (COTE) held its first open meeting on November 13, 1990, in Washington, D.C. The one-day meet ing was largely devoted to a symposium, "Cross­

Continued on 9

Continued on 8
Designing Hillside Houses: An Historical Perspective

The design of hillside houses, particularly in the Los Angeles area, offers architects some unusual opportunities to stretch their design imagination and environmental consciousness. The designer is not only presented with the engineering considerations associated with steep topography and soil conditions, but also with those that come with new arrangements of the traditional home plan. Designing in the hills is an art that has been with us for hundreds of years. In the United States, the move to build on steep terrain, particularly in the Los Angeles area, offers architects some unusual opportunities to stretch their design imagination and environmental consciousness. The designer is not only presented with the engineering considerations associated with steep topography and soil conditions, but also with those that come with new arrangements of the traditional home plan.

Construction in the hills is very expensive due to the foundations. Caissons are usually required. The design of hillside housing under present code requires more than normal juggling of plan, section, and elevations in order to fit a building on a steeply sloping site within the height envelope allowed. Generally houses are constructed as close as possible to the streets to keep retaining walls as low as possible. Designs are typically modern style, flat-roofed, rectangular in plan, and boxy in appearance in response to the high cost of hillside construction and the height restrictions.

Process

Architectural input on the ordinance thus far has been limited to informal discussion with planning staff and public comment at Planning Commission meetings. There are no architects on the ordinance preparation team, although our informal input has provided a major portion of the technical design information used by the Planning Department to prepare the ordinance. However, since we are treated as merely one of many interested parties, our input is only selectively included in the ordinance.

Ordinance Highlights

The ordinance requirements apply to all new construction and, with a few exceptions, to additions of 5000 square feet or more. Highlights of the ordinance are:

- Setbacks—a minimum front yard setback of five feet for garages and main buildings. Sideyards are a minimum of five feet with increases of one foot for every additional ten feet over 16 feet.
- Height—a maximum height of 36 feet measured along a line parallel to the slope for buildings on slopes which do not exceed 1:5 (20%). The maximum height for buildings on slopes in excess of 8:1 shall be 40 feet, also measured parallel to the slope. Maximum height at the front property line shall be 24 feet for a depth of five feet on slopes which exceed 14%. Lot Coverage—a maximum of 40% of the lot may be covered by the building (excluding the garage).

Parking improvements—A 15 foot half-street dedication and a 12 foot half-street improvement is required for all new construction which does not front on a 24 foot wide street (called a Standard Hillside Street). Street improvements less than described above will be acceptable with City Engineer approval. Owners of buildings or additions constructed after the effective date of the ordinance shall agree to join an assessment district to improve fire safety. Parking—two covered parking spaces are required for up to 2400 square feet of house. One additional space is required for every 1000 square feet of additional square feet, up to a maximum of three additional spaces. The additional spaces

Continued on B
Michael Rotondi said that when he saw the Rooflop in Vienna, he was struck by the tension between old and new, and his question was whether we can get the same power in LA because we have nothing to fight against. His answer is we have a lot to fight for—we never fight against something, we always fight for something. And if there is something in our way like part of an old villa, we remove it. If nothing is in our way, we create our environment. I would prefer if we could do that in Vienna, but it happens there is a lot of old stuff standing around that you have to deal with. I feel very free in Los Angeles, and I think that we'll create a new kind of power which can't be read by the model—you have to step inside.

I'm curious about this Vienna connection because I think of Schindler—50 years ago he eliminated the distinction between inside and outside space but within the confines of the Cartesian box.

Cartesian box? In every office I hear cartesian grid, cartesian box! You guys don't know what it is! You don't have to suffer with it. You just try to create this grid order, I don't know why. You should be happy you don't have to deal with that. No! Everybody wants to have a cartesian grid, cartesian box.

Now 50 years later here comes Coop-Himmelblau to Los Angeles with its concepts of an open architecture which has gone further to free us as from the box, gravity, and the static elements of architecture.

Yeah, I would love to but we are not preachers, coming to a city like LA, and floating a half meter over the city, saying "look at us, I tell you, you should get rid of the Cartesian box..." No, this is just another challenge to create, to respond in a certain way to a new environment. I'm very impressed by the light. I never had such a light in Vienna, so this is the challenge we have to play with. Maybe it looks like that we want to bring something to Los Angeles, but it's here, I think it's all here...

Looking through the chronology of your projects, looking at the pneumatic structures of the 1960s and 1970s, it seems that you are trying to do the same things now but within conventional means of building. You are trying to free the building. Whether it's through the Rehak House or the Open House, it seems to be a cycle that is coming around.

Yes, I think that you're right. We are doing a lot of buildings with x's. This office building is a loft building suspended between two x's. And the movable thing is not an invention of ours—Archigram did it with movable, walking cities. There are basic lines which sometimes are hidden in our work, concerning content, program, structure, light and space, which are sometimes very important for us. Basically, we are much more interested in the program, and its content, what's going on inside the box, so it comes up in the Open House, and Villa Rosa, not so far away from the Open House. You call it conventional architecture or normal means of construction because now we have the commission to do it...

I think we should talk about the design strategy, which I think is misunderstood. The only thing we try to do is bring emotion back to architecture. In the moment of design, we don't care too much about anything else—we are going right to the point of what we want to have, and afterwards we clarify it by rationalising structural means and things like that. If we look at the Rehak house, there is a basic concept to separate kids and parents, and give them space in between, so they can meet whenever they meet. There are a lot of rational issues in this project, but the first approach was to do an x on a hill. Working with subconscious things enables us to break boundaries which are seemingly very strong.

From that initial response sketch, is there an understanding of how the entire process works?

People like students think that this is easy, that I just make a scribble and that's it. We can organize everything into this sketch because we trained, we practiced it a long time. The sketch can be blown up to the right scale and it turns out everything fits, even the proportion of the spaces, without thinking about that. Of course this is a very Viennian thing, working with subconscious, being very emotional about architecture, but how do you get the feeling of space rationally?

I always say to students, if the piece doesn't speak for itself, it's lost, because you are not able to stand there and explain to everyone what the concept is, it has to come out by itself. Nothing is more boring than just one level. Nothing is more boring than pretending intellectual explanation. Of course, therefore most architecture is very boring.

How have your experiences in LA, and reaching at SCI-Arc, affected you?

I really can't tell right now, but I can see that something is changing because, of course, we are influenced by the environment, talking to American architects, getting close to American architecture. Looking at the Open House and the Melrose project, the change is in terms of vocabulary, material, in terms of explaining it. We are not Viennese architects anymore, we are in between.

I think the left building came into our minds in New York 20 years ago. We thought, this is a good fabric for the city, because we don't have to destroy the buildings, we can remodel them from the inside. We refused to do apartment buildings or single family residences because we were afraid to determine the client too much, so this was a very logical development, taking loft buildings, and breaking them up until they evolved into the Open House. So you could take the Hot Flat building, which is an apartment building where the arrow goes through, and break it up till it's more broken, more broken, more broken, until it becomes an open space, like the Open House or the Rooflop. People say we are very aggressive, we destroy things. We never destroy things, we just open them up for new things.

What about Coop-Himmelblau's objectives to realize the concepts introduced by Ron Herring or Peter Cook?

Himmelblau keeps the promise others gave 20 years before. The bigger the project is, the more you get into politics, and the more you have to be very careful about how to deal with things. That doesn't mean getting obedient; the challenge is in not being very obedient. For example, we got a commission to do the first highrise in Vienna, so we had to change the codes. We did a study for the city about which Viennese building codes had to be changed in order to build the highrise.

I think the cleverness of future architects should be not to follow codes but to figure out how to break codes, unreasonable codes that derive from aesthetic and preservation reasons in order to preserve a bourgeois style.

But it's a shame for society that Archigram couldn't build—the first building Peter Cook is doing will be finished soon in Berlin. I think this is one of the reason I really can't stand po-mo architects. These guys inhibit experiments because they're always importing, pretending to be very progressive, but really being very conservaive. It's easy for a bourgeois client to commission an architect who seems to be very progressive and is doing a very conventional bourgeois ground plan. It's convenient and it's well known, and on the outside they're pretending to be very progressive, because they get the P/A awards.

Leon Krier supports this very bourgeois way of thinking, and he gets a lot of support from Prince Charles and every other conservative guy. He behaves like a bohemian, but walks on the safe side of society. This is not the future.

I think realizing a building is the real proof, and I can't tell whether we will succeed in all the things we try to do, but I promise that we will succeed in some.
In a recent interview, you referred to Los Angeles as a "mono-functional city", one that could become multi-functional if downtown was the core with Wilshire as a force line. However, Los Angeles is actually evolving into a multiple city region. It is not possible to say the multi-functional areas are already in place?

If you take Watts and Beverly Hills together, LA seems multi-functional, but you can't do that. It has to be within a certain distance, otherwise you could say Manhattan belongs to LA, and so on. The city is not interwoven; it's Koreatown, downtown, Brentwood, boom, boom, boom. It stays mono-functional. There is no intersection, no crossing.

Connection lines need to be made between very different things. It is funny, we are thinking about doing a city plan for ourselves, how we think the touch of European eyes could develop LA. But I think we will start in very special areas like Melrose, Culver City, downtown, and Wilshire Boulevard, and look at how we can combine things without being traditional European city planners. I have no recipe right now.

You've said that you're interested in exploring what each city is about, in terms of materials, in terms of energy, volumes and space...

Also in terms of feelings...it's not an architectural approach, it's an emotional approach.

How would you compare your emotional approach to this city with that of Vienna?

One emotional approach is Guns 'N Roses, driving on the freeway, having the sun right in your eyes, driving west. You can't see on the freeway—I never have that in New York or Vienna. Having four cars beside you, driving 50, 60, 80 miles, tension trying to catch the right sign because you have to get to Culver City, or to the airport, then coming in from Europe, flying half an hour over built land, artificial nature, without having an idea of what it is. Sometimes the smog, sometimes the fog, the very quick sunset, and you notice the moving airplanes around, hanging like flying stars. That's what LA is, on one hand. On the other hand, I know everything is illusion here.

What do you find is primarily the illusion?

Everything is illusion here, everything, even the architecture. Someone was asking me, what do you like in LA. And I said, okay, I like to drive in LA because this is a kind of public place, this intersection. You have no other public place where people connect. This is so different than every other city I ever saw. You are far ahead of something we call culture, so the way it's expressed in city plan—I can't see any city plan, which is good on one hand, on the other hand it's bad.

Los Angeles is like a movie. People are pretending, saying "have a nice day" without thinking. It's just illusion. I believe this is the city of the future whether we like it or not. And sometimes I really don't want to touch it, because it's a kind of laboratory for how the future will work. Will it explode, will it break down?

I don't think the social problems, the drug problems are coming from the city plan. You can't change them by doing another city plan. But there is a displacement of places where you have to get everything together in your head before you start, you have to have a concept of how to drive, otherwise you are lost. We have to weave the city together in our brain.

Maybe what I'm missing here is one or two of what we call lines of power or energy, made visible like on Wilshire. Wilshire could be a little more dense in some places and that could make an impact on developing a multi-functional structure. It could provide refreshing points or crystal points in a still mono-functional city.

Then from what you're saying, there is nothing you can extrapolate from your past projects concerning Los Angeles.

No, there is no recipe. Everything you do something, you have to think in special terms. You can't take Paris and throw it into LA. But maybe you could use pieces of Paris as a design strategy.

You mentioned in an earlier interview that you try to give a project the best of Paris, the best of Vienna.

Yes, we tried to do that in Paris, with Melun-Sénart, as a strategy for getting the things we liked the most out of Paris, Vienna, New York and LA, and combining them. Then we came out with low density and high density structures intersecting each other. The way it worked could be a point of departure.

Is anything from Melun-Sénart actually going to be realized?

In Paris, the political situation is changing because they are thinking about extending the borderline of the city, and therefore the project is on hold.

But two weeks ago we won a city planning competition to design a plan for the city center of St. Polten, close to Vienna. We proposed the strategy of interweaving high and low density elements. This is the strategy of Himmelblau: if there is a strong element or big volume, and a small volume penetrating the big volume, we always support the small volume by making it very important in terms of structure and meaning. So then we get this floating, ambivalent feeling of design.

Basically the project is a multi-functional combination of multi-use space, ranging from single houses to high density structures like office buildings combined with leisure time functions, cultural functions, shops, etc.

The design strategy is based on the site's magnetic fields. They're supposed to be unhealthy, but no one knows for sure.

The client, who is a developer, wanted us, the participant, to keep away from these lines. We talked to a lot of scientists and they told us that this stream from the magnetic fields acts like an air stream. So we did a kind of wind tunnel test. We built a box, the size of this site. We made holes along this magnetic field, and we blew air beyond that, so that simulates the action of the magnetic fields, and then we threw the buildings into the box, to see what the air stream did. So our design had slanted beams, going away from the air stream.

In the Power of the City book the process of design for Melun-Sénart involved the use of body language where in this case it's more about science.

Yes, but it looks very similar.

But you are still dealing with magnetic fields in both cases.

I think city planning has to do something with making invisible forces visible. The Paris project was visualized through the running of energy lines, and their positive imprint. St. Polten used the negative influence of energy lines. I think this is the way we will approach LA, finding out what's going on. It takes a while.

During the "Architecture Strikes Back" symposium, you presented a thesis that the architecture of the next century would be a reflection of the tension and complexity of today's society, but that 19th century attitudes must be eliminated first. In Los Angeles most of the history was created in the 20th century. What possibilities exist for an open architecture that does not depend upon traditional city forms such as the cities you've responded to in the past?
He studied with Louis Kahn, provided emergency architectural services to earthquake victims in Armenia and now he works in a bank. For the time being at home in a temporary office, boxed papers and drawings filling what was once a bank vault, incoming AIA/LA president Ronald A. Altoon offered LA Architect a tour of Altoon & Porter's new location, and some opinions on the challenges facing AIA/LA in 1991.

Recovering from a staggering financial loss incurred last summer with the demise of First Pacific Bank (approximately $64,000), and the third administrative upheaval in a little over five years, and bracing itself for the onslaught of recession, AIA/LA looks to Altoon to provide leadership and vision in the uncertain future.


Altoon left CKA in 1984 to form his own firm, Altoon & Porter Architects. The firm has been responsible for numerous national projects, and has been featured in national journals such as Architecture, Architectural Record, and Progressive Architecture, among others.

In addition to his firm's work, Altoon received a number of awards for leading the AIA/CCIA Armenian Earthquake Urban Design Assistance Task Force. Following the 1989 earthquake, Altoon formed a team to conduct an on-site charrette proposing strategies for rebuilding the town of Spitak, Armenia. The team returned again to facilitate the follow-up effort, and in 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian Soviet state the follow-up effort, and in 1990, the Design Assistance Task Force. Following the convention in 1994 successfully, we will position wherever is executive director on a platform of much greater effectiveness for lobbying in the city. I think what has been achieved in the last year, despite the recent changeover, has been a stabilizing of functions within the office. What we need to do is to determine how we want the community outreach to occur in our chapter.

On Divisions in the Design Community

I understand the "design community" to be the one with the capital "D." By necessity, that community has to align itself from the AIA, because the AIA is the Institute, it's mainstream, and that community, generally speaking, does not want to be associated with the mainstream. It's a real tragedy that the design side of the profession wants to extricate itself from the rest of the profession, because there is so much capability, intelligence and strength there.

Back in the fifties, the post war era, Quincy Jones, Carl Martin, Ed Killingsworth, all those guys, they were the mainstream architects and the design architects, and they were very much aligned with the universities. There was a real camaraderie, and a real consensus in the community of what good design was, and it occurred because the leadership of the profession was in the hands of the best design people.

They generally had a speaker at the monthly board meeting. There was a lot of drinking and a lot of events, that's when drinking hard stuff was really popular, and there was this level of camaraderie in the air. I've noticed in the last eight years or so that there have been very few meetings, and very few exchanges of ideas, so that exchange occurs in the design awards program or in the magazines.

I've felt for a long time that something needed to occur to bring the profession back to the dialogue side, and that's ultimately what the AIA is all about. It was in parallel with this central theme project will be a number of opportunities for architects to meet, exchange ideas, and engage in dialogue. I would like to see two major speaker events in 1991. The first, to occur coincidental with Architecture Week, will be the first of a series of papers on architecture and would address the subject of design in the urban environment. The second, to be given by a distinguished member of our design awards jury, would be delivered in September coincidental with the jury itself.

There will be four Focus on Architects events which will be presentation/exchange forums similar to those which were established two years ago. Each of these would be focused on a theme of designing in the context of the urban situation where the preceding architects would show work relevant to the urban situation.

I have discussed with the San Francisco Chapter the concept of a series of north-south debates on architecture, perhaps based on regional idiocratic theory that each city was destined to be prominent at every level. There would be four debates: two in Southern California and two in Northern California. They should begin a dialogue across our state that should have been taking place for many years. Finally, there will be two major social events this year. First, we propose a Los Angeles River Festival to take place along the river on a mid-summer night's eve. Imagine the possibilities. Second, we intend to revive an age old tradition in this community, far too long absent from the architects' list of annual events. The Beaux Arts Ball will be revived in early November and is intended to allow each of us to challenge the limits of self-expression. We look forward to a very full year, one that will challenge our creative energies. The agenda for the year is intended to be inclusive, participatory, and provocative. It will require your collaboration, your criticism, and your creativity, and I encourage you to take advantage of every part of it. We are on the cusp of a new era in Southern California. We are emerging as a world class metropolitan area. We are struggling with difficult economic times and a cumbersome political system. But we will emerge as a greater city because of the energies and the resources of those who will share their vision for our future. I look forward to sharing with you your part of that vision in 1991.
SALK HONORED AT PDC

As the recipient of the first annual Presidential Commemorative Award on December 13 at the Pacific Design Center, Dr. Jonas Salk spoke about his meetings with Louis Kahn to develop the Salk Institute in San Diego, describing the force that drew them together as "the logic of the magic." He then evaluated an architect selection process. Questioning from the audience, he responded to photographs Julius Shulman's query about how he would choose an architect today, considering the "terrible state of architecture," by saying that for him it was a highly personal decision determined by meeting an architect who shared his vision. He went on to speak about his work on an AIDS vaccine, and his prognosis for the future of man, commenting that in many ways we are "the victims of our success," and we must work to solve the environmental and societal problems we have created. Outgoing president Raymond L. Giao presented him with the monumental crystal award pictured on the event invitation, commemorating his achievements as a humanitarian and visionary.

Building Small Firms

Starting February 27, the AIA/LA will sponsor a seminar conducted by Bill Truby, director and co-founder of the A & E Management Academy, on the elements that go into making a small firm successful. The course will meet five times, and will cover five essential areas: assessment of each firm's current strengths and weaknesses; team-building and leadership training; the process of establishing a vision for each firm; the organizational work-flow process; and marketing. The course fee is $375/member and $500/non-members. To reserve a space, call (213) 380-4595.

Lien Law Examined

On September 30, 1990, Governor Deukmejian approved Assembly Bill No. 1789, creating a new "Design Professional's Lien" for unpaid preconstruction design, engineering and survey services. The law goes into effect January 1, 1991, and gives design professionals the right to record a mechanic's lien to collect fees from a defaulting landowner, even though no actual construction is done on the site.

On January 19, an AIA/LA seminar will address briefly the design professional's rights under existing law and will go in detail the new law. The seminar will be conducted by Herb Wiedenfeld, AIA, and will be held at the Department of Water and Power Auditorium, 111 North Hope Street, from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. The attendance fee is $25/member and $35/non-member. For more information, call (213) 458-9077.

The Search Continues

On March 15-17, at the Asilomar Conference Center, Monterey X.: "Will the Real California Architecture Please Stand Up?" will bring together over 500 architects, designers, educators, and students to explore the historic precedents, ideas and evolution of California design. Participants include: Joseph Escherrer, FAIA; Peter Carlthorp, AIA; Franklin D. Israel; Witold Rybczynski; Shelly Kappe; Hoon, AIA; C. James Lawler, FAIA; Jim Heimann: Sally Woodbridge; Craig Hodgetts; and Nelson Rice.

Presentation of the 1991 CCAIA design awards will be included in the conference program with a discussion by A. Eugene Kohn, FAIA, RIBA, chair of the 1991 Design Awards Committee.

Conference registration forms will be sent to all CCAIA members and professional affiliates this month. For advanced registration and further information, call (916) 448-9082.

Code Talk

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 has established design and construction requirements to provide handicapped access to multi-family dwellings, including condominiums, where first occupancy is obtained after March 13, 1991. This requirement is for buildings containing four or more dwelling units. Many such buildings being submitted for plan check or qualifying for building permits at this time may not be completed by March 13, 1991, and will be subject to the regulations.

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 makes it unlawful to discriminate in any aspect relating to the sale, rental or financing of dwellings or in the provision of brokerage services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 expanded coverage of Title VIII to prohibit discriminatory housing practices based on handicap and familial status. As amended, Section 804((3)(c) provides that unlawful discrimination includes a failure to design and construct covered multi-family dwellings available for first occupancy on or after March 13, 1991. (90 months after the date of enactment) in accordance with certain accessibility requirements. The Act makes it unlawful to fail to design and construct these multi-family dwellings so that (1) public use and common use portions of the dwellings are readily accessible to and usable by persons with handicaps; (2) all doors within such dwellings which are designed to allow passage into and within the premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by persons in wheelchairs; and (3) all premises within such dwellings contain specified features of adaptive design.
Planning for 1991

Creativity is a solitary act. It requires deep introspection, commitment, and truth. Architecture is a communal act requiring cooperation and compromise. When each of us shares our creative energies, we do so with cooperation and compromise. When each of them. We can lay claim to notable convergence and achievements communities and those which appear endless or in need. The architect's hand has been active in creating each of them. We can lay claim to notable successes, but must admit, as well, our notorious failures.

We must enter now a time of enlightenment. In this final decade we must learn more about ourselves, and the limits of our work, and the effect that our work has on those around us. And we must offer our capabilities to those where we can render assistance to the community in need.

In 1991 my focus will be on design in the urban environment. The goal for this year is intended to be the energy of this chapter together. By the year 2000 Los Angeles will be the largest city in the United States. Will it be the greatest? Surely this must be our goal. Well before the year 2000 the Los Angeles Chapter will be the largest in the United States. Will it serve its membership, the profession, and the community more effectively than any other? Surely this must be our charge. Can we capitalize on the pluralism that is the essence of this community? Diversity of architectural thought flourishes here. As we are a diverse culture, so are we a melting pot of ideas. There is the opportunity for a plethora of self-expression. But why work in isolation? It is my intention to create monthly programs that will bridge architecture to discussion with architect; to raise the level of debate, to challenge, provoke, and encourage discussions on design. This year I envision a program of interaction among architects. I envision a year wherein our profession can present ideas, exchange views, and openly debate our different points of view.

I have proposed to the Board of Directors and to our committee chair that we embark on a common project this year—the Los Angeles River. Most of us know this as a Corps of Engineers flood control channel. But for those of us who grew up in Los Angeles, it was a natural and recreational resource. I propose that we embark on a year long study of the Los Angeles River. This natural element that weaves its way through many of our communities, many of the cities that we serve, many of the political and cultural districts, can become a resource for all of us, given a vision and a solid commitment by our profession, our allied professions, community groups, and the political establishment.

I propose that the chapter, led by its Urban Design Committee, and calling upon the resources of many of the other committees, begin a major analysis of the river.

In This Issue...

Each year the incoming president is invited to outline his plans and visions for the coming year in the January issue of LA Architect. In the adjacent message to the membership, 1991 President Ronald A. Alson previews coming AIA/LA activities. On page 8, LA Architect continues the discussion with Alson, profiling his background, and posing further questions about his aspirations for AIA/LA.

On page 3, Miguel Baltierra (LA Architect's erstwhile Arts Editor, newly returned from Harvard GSD) interviews architect-about-town Wolf Prix.

Finally, from page 5 onward LA Architect dissects the proposed Landscape and Hillside Ordinances, offering an overview of how they will affect both architects' practices and the state of the environment. The accompanying photo feature invites reader's opinions on already built hillside projects observed in and around LA.

Working in concert with community groups, the government, and the schools of architecture within our chapter area, we should study the river, and its various environs, and produce a white paper which poses questions and presents opportunities so that our community can visualize the full potential of this resource. I have spoken to the Deans of the schools of architecture, to representatives of federal, state, county, and local government, officers and committee chairs and many members of our chapter. Each has responded with interest to contribute.