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The American Pavilion at the Venice Biennale
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Historically airports have been viewed as discrete entities catering to a specific audience. If we imagine them as part of a larger regional transportation plan what effect will that have on our ideas for rail, bus, and highway construction?

MODERATOR: G. Peyton Hall
Kathryn Welch Howe,
Getty Conservation Institute
Christy Johnson McAvoy, Hon.
AIACC, Historic Resources Group
John English, Myra L. Frank
Associates/Jones & Stokes

March 16, 2005
Lawsuits of the Future

With environmentally benign materials now widely available, will architects become liable in the future for the effects of toxic materials even if they are currently the low-cost alternative? Two attorneys expert in such matters host a lively debate and deliver the prognosis for the profession.

Bruce Cohen Esq, Cohen & Lord
Scott Lord, Esq, Cohen & Lord

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MORRIS NEWMAN, former editor of LA Architect, is currently writing about business, design and planning for numerous publications, including GRID, Landscape Architecture, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times and California Planning & Development. He lives in Studio City with his wife, LA Times reporter Sharon Bernstein, and their four children.

OLA NYLANDER is a Swedish architect whose practice focuses on domestic architecture and housing. He is also professor of Housing Design in the architecture department of Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden. His book Architecture of the Home is available through John Wiley & Sons, ltd.

MICHAEL FRANKLIN ROSS, AIA is the Managing Principal and Office Director for Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc. (HGA) in Los Angeles. He serves as Principal-in-Charge on all Arts, Community and Education projects. Michael is the author of Beyond Metabolism: The New Japanese Architecture, and was formerly West Coast correspondent for Progressive Architecture and a founding member of the Editorial Board of LA Architect. He has written more than 70 articles published in the United States, Japan and Europe. A strong proponent of design excellence, Michael has twice served as Chair of the AIA/Los Angeles Design Awards Committee and the Los Angeles Business Council Design Awards Committee. He is the 2005 AIA/California Council Design Awards Chair and the 2007 Chair of the National AIA Committee on Design.

MICHAEL WEBB was born in London and has lived in Los Angeles for 25 years. He is the author of more than 20 books on architecture and design, including Modernism Reborn: Mid Century American Houses, new monographs on Ingo Maurer and George Nelson, and Brave New Houses: Adventures in Southern California Living. Besides reviewing books and exhibitions for LA Architect, Michael is a regular contributor to Architectural Digest, Architecture, the Architectural Review and Domus.
Like the Los Angeles housing stock it attempts to represent, this issue is somewhat of a hodge-podge, held together by its theme of house and home. We cast a broad net to capture as wide a range of residences as possible. As a result, we're mixing affordable housing with Malibu mansions, drawing lessons from work in Westwood and China, and taking reports from Venice and Sweden.

If there is any order that can be applied to this material, it is one of scale. From Sweden comes an article on how to create dramatic domestic experiences within small floor plans. Moving out to encompass the whole home, we visit Charles Moore's renowned Selby Avenue Townhouses. We also present a collection of ten domiciles admired by a like number of the region's dynamic inhabitants. Expanding further still, we consider UCLA student housing, affordable housing and neighborhood planning in an urban context.

I had high hopes for achieving some form of synthesis, or perhaps extrapolating a set of salient characteristics or themes. The material proved resistant to such an approach; indeed it repels any form of generalization. So we present to you the particulars in all their granularity. As you read through it, you may be reminded of a drive through Los Angeles, with its similar feeling adjacency-by-accident, neighbors in the whole.

The issue closes with Michael Webb's impressions of the Venice Biennale. This has nothing to do with homes or housing, but it's interesting nonetheless.

Your editor,

Jesse Brink
PROJECTS

Two prominent area firms have recently completed interesting hospital projects—specifically, each an inpatient tower. The 200,000-square-foot North Pavilion of the St. John’s Health Center, by the Smith Group and HOK, will provide new orthopedic, cancer, intensive care, labor and delivery, neonatal intensive care and critical care patient rooms. Lee, Burkhart, Liu have built a 127,000-square-foot tower for Valley Presbyterian Hospital with a focus on creating a welcoming, light and airy atmosphere.

Gensler, as part of the Las Vegas Monorail Team, has expanded the firm’s eight-year-old one-mile rail system to a grand total of 4.2 miles of public transportation with seven stations. The line is meant not only to link casinos, but to move the general population around the gaming district.

PEOPLE

The board of HMC Architects has elected former San Diego regional vice president Randal L. Peterson, FAIA, to be president and CEO of the entire firm, encompassing offices throughout the region.

Hrant S. Zeitlian, AIA, was recently elevated to director of design within the offices of WWCOT. Zeitlian has more than fifteen years experience in architecture, with involvement in more than 5 million square feet of entertainment, institutional and commercial facilities.

The Los Angeles office of global engineering firm Arup has added Teena Videriksen to their team as the new Business Development Leader. She joins the firm from NBBJ.

Morris Architects, headquartered in Houston, has named John Cooper, AIA, Principal and Director of their Healthcare Studio in Los Angeles. Mr. Cooper has been a healthcare specialist for many years, and has been involved with the design of more than 100 hospital facilities.
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Last April, Mayor Jim Hahn and Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) unveiled the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the modernization of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The Enhanced Safety and Security Plan Alternative D is the first comprehensive long-range plan for the improvement of LAX in over 50 years. Once widely assumed to be doomed to failure, the plan is cautiously moving towards implementation.

Over the past year, AIA/LA has been tracking the beleaguered LAX Master Plan in the hopes of bringing the design community's perspective to a huge, complex and controversial aspect of the project. The primary sense that at least parts of the master plan will be approved to proceed, there is a renewed interest in engaging stakeholders and, in particular, seeking input from the design community.

What is driving the LAX Master Plan?
Many factors are driving the Master Plan. First and foremost is aviation safety—perhaps the least controversial aspect of the project. The primary intention is to increase the separation between the two south runways and provide a safer taxiway system to minimize dangerous crossovers between airplanes landing and taking off. The current set-up causes numerous “runway incursions” (i.e., near misses). Upgrading the terminal facilities, which are well beyond design capacity and face obsolescence, will also be a top priority.

Future phases would address security concerns by creating increasingly intensive rings of security to filter passengers and luggage. Passengers would be pre-screened at proposed 16,500-car mega-garages located on the airport's periphery, even before boarding the people mover that ferries them to the terminals. They would then be screened again before entering the departure concourse. Private automobiles would be funneled into the parking garages directly from the 105 and 405 freeways, thus curtailing access through surrounding neighborhoods.

Why is it the LAX Master Plan Controversial?
The initial objections from surrounding communities were based in the fear of endless airport expansions. These have been largely ameliorated by the proposed growth cap which will allow the current annual passenger load of 52 million (down from 67 million in 2000) to peak at 78.9 million and dictates that all future construction occur on land already owned or controlled by the airport.

More recent concerns have focused on the banning of private automobiles from the central terminal area and the creation of a people mover. The new plan will profoundly affect the way Los Angeles’ citizens and visitors travel and conduct business. The ambitious plans for the makeover of LAX faced almost certain rejection given the fundamental resistance to this scheme.

Enter...City of LA’s Cindy Miscikowski
Bringing to bear her 30 years of environmental planning experience, Councilmember Miscikowski (11th District) developed a strategy that would allow the master plan to move forward under the control of the City. Her approach has been to prioritize, or “green light”, projects within the overall plan. These include upgrading the runways, creating a people mover to connect all components of the airport, reconfiguring Bradley Terminal for the next generation of jumbo jets and the consolidation of rental car facilities (anticipated to save 1 million car trips to the terminal per year).

More controversial projects will be “yellow lighted” to allow 3-6 years to develop a specific plan and allow time to see if there are better solutions in the future. These projects include the banning of cars from the central terminal, the creation of a remote Central Ground Transportation Center and the demolition of Terminals 1 to 3. The plan's implementation process will mandate the creation of a stakeholder committee, the establishment of a community liaison and the charge to raise the overall architectural quality of the facilities.

Why should AIA/LA weigh in?
The LAX Master Plan addresses Los Angeles' broader infrastructure issues in only a very modest way. With the banning of cars at the central terminal, LAWA is planning to build eight "Fly Aways"—remote parking combined with express buses located in Van Nuys, Long Beach, Chatsworth, Sylmar and Union Station. The much-touted Ground Transportation Center is fed by 39 lane miles of access-drives, equivalent in length to all the existing arrival and departure roads encircling the terminals. At any given time of day, they will function as poorly as the connecting freeways. The ‘People Mover’ proposal has recently been modified to terminate at the Green Line to provide at least one mass transit link—but that is hardly a direct route to other major destinations in the city.

AIA/LA can broaden the discussion to include consideration more ambitious proposals, beyond the direct presure of LAWA. The most promising is the idea of connecting the red line from Union Station via existing rail rights of way (the southern leg would parallel Florence Boulevard) to the airport, providing free fare and the ability to get your boarding pass downtown. The implementation element of the plan will impose trip caps that will trigger the requirement for the increased reliance on public transit in the future so, like it or not, reliance on public transit is going to grow.
Books
Reviews by Michael Webb

The Art of Architecture

Lucien Hervé: Building Images


Like his compatriots, Andre Kertesz and Brassai, Laszlo Elkan escaped the anti-Semitism of Hungary to settle in Paris, where he became a political activist and took a new name. In 1949, an editor sent him to photograph Le Corbusier's Unite in Marseilles, and, lacking money for lodgings, he shot 650 images in a single day. Corbu saw the contacts and declared "Sir, you have the soul of an architect." Thus was born a 15-year collaboration that yielded a dazzling array of tightly-cropped black and white details, which give fresh life to familiar buildings. The Getty Research Institute has drawn on its own collection to create this superbly printed album, which shows Hervé to be a master of composition, whether it's a close-up of the Eiffel Tower or a child silhouetted against a sundered sky.

Building with Light: An International History of Architectural Photography


A leading British archivist traces the evolution of architectural photography. Unknowns share the pages with celebrities, and the book does double duty as an eclectic anthology of ancient and modern buildings, several of which no longer survive. Everyone who practises or loves architecture should be nourished by this visual feast, and it will inspire even the best-established photographers to reach higher.

Carlo Scarpa: Museo Canoviano, Possagno


In 1996, Richard Bryant photographed the Gipsoteca, a museum of plaster casts by the great neo-classical sculptor, Antonio Canova. It was built in 1836 next to the artist's birthplace in the north Italian village of Possagno, and was extended by Carlo Scarpa in the late 1950s. Bryant has captured the interplay between light-filled spaces and ghostly figures in images of ethereal beauty. His eye is drawn to Scarpa's sensitive addition, in which every precisely wrought detail serves as an abstract foil to the cool sensuality of Canova's work.

Bernard Rudofsky: A Humane Designer

Andrea Bocchi Quinari. Springer, Vienna, $74.50 HO. ISBN 3 211 83719 1

Two legendary books, Architecture without Architects and Are Clothes Modern?, enshrine the spirit of Bernard Rudofsky: an architect turned agent provocateur, who designed rationalist houses, celebrated the vernacular and explored the absurdities of fashion. One of a brilliant generation of Austrian émigrés, he settled in New York, but focused his sharp eyes and analytical mind on subjects and places around the world—particularly the Mediterranean and Japan. Gio Ponti called him "a sublime stroller," and much of his wisdom is the product of patient immersion in familiar things—like the disconnect between form and function in clothes, and still more, in shoes. He designed sandals, sketched expressively, created brilliant graphics and wrote eloquently. This anthology of images and texts illuminates his colorful life and varied achievements.

False Flat: Why Dutch Design is So Good

Aaron Betsky & Adam Eeuwens. Phaidon, $59.95 HO. ISBN 0 7148 4069 6

In the first chapter, Aaron Betsky (a Dutchman who previously worked in LA and San Francisco) bikes from his home on the eastern edge of Rotterdam to his office at the Netherlands Architecture Institute, which he now directs. In a few eloquent, engaging pages, he explores the layers of a truly civilized city, where land was reclaimed from the sea and meticulously planned to be a productive and humane environment. Rotterdam, one of the world's largest ports, was rebuilt from wartime devastation and later had to accommodate a flood tide of immigrants. In most countries, that would be a recipe for squalor and banality, but the Dutch do these things better. Rem Koolhaas and Droog are widely celebrated for their wit and daring, but the authors of this book suggest that imaginative design—from stamps to furniture, polders to posters—has become part of the national DNA.

Swiss Made: New Architecture from Switzerland

Steven Spier & Martin Kocher. Princeton Architectural Press, $45 HO. ISBN 1 56899 425 1

Look beyond the tourist kitsch and you'll discover how deep are the roots of modernism in Switzerland, and this compact survey includes key examples by a dozen firms. All are minimalists from the German-speaking part of the country and were rigorously trained at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. Spier, who is British, made the selections, omitting Herzog & de Meuron (presumably because they are working more abroad than at home) but including Peter Zumthor, the other internationally acclaimed firm. His text is lively and critical, analyzing the work of each firm and placing it in a larger context.

American Dream: The Houses at Sagaponac


Subtitled "Modern Living in the Hamptons," this enlightened project was conceived for a site in the mountains above Beverly Hills, but was derailed by our Neanderthal, regulation-obsessed bureaucrats. Los Angeles lost out, for developer Coco Brown (whose background is in literature
and philosophy is about to realize his dream on the other coast. Richard Meier played impresario, selecting 35 young and established architects each to design a house on a tract near the tip of Long Island. The list includes Ban, Hadid, Moss, Richard Rogers and RoTo. It's a visionary scheme in which art is put ahead of commerce, restraint and modest size in place of vulgar show and retro never rears its ugly head. Leafing through these projects, one is transported back to the idealism and optimism of the Case Study houses. In brief: the polar opposite of almost every other housing development. One can only hope it will be fully realized.

Richard Neutra's Miller House

(STEPHEN LEET. PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS. $40. PEP $150H92747)

The Miller house, the first of three that Neutra built in Palm Springs, embodies the vulnerability of classic modern buildings. Grace Miller, the St Louis socialite who commissioned it as a studio for an innovative system of exercise, spent only four winters there. Within a few years it was deemed unsaleable, and it deteriorated for a half century until Catherine Meyer began her ongoing restoration of this fragile treasure. The author documents the design and construction of the house, drawing on the lengthy correspondence of architect and client. He sketches in the beginnings of Palm Springs as a fashionable resort, Miller's idealistic quest for physical beauty and Neutra's struggle to secure commissions. Julius Shulman's photos make the tale come alive. (Ironically, this orphan survived because of its unfashionable location; Neutra's Messel House in fashionable Rancho Mirage was brutally destroyed.)


(INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT STERN. RIZZOLI. $75 HC. ISBN 0 8478 2509 0)

This monograph portrays Charles Gwathmey as the Grace Kelly of architecture, producing work that is intimidatingly beautiful and disturbingly flawless. One severe, tasteful trophy house succeeds another; corporate headquarters confer dignity on blue chip firms and rough diamonds alike, and there's a cool detachment in the institutional buildings, but for the Basketball Hall of Fame. The images are exquisite but, for lack of a critical text, curiously uninvolving. One misses the charge that his best work imparts. A house he built for friends in Los Angeles gives me the feeling believers must anticipate in the afterlife, but this book has no magic to stir one's blood.

Shigeru Ban

(MATTHIAS MOGEND. PHADON. $75 HC. ISBN $7145 4194 3)

A poet of paper, Ban is a brilliantly inventive architect with a social conscience, who treats houses as laboratories for larger and minimally budgeted projects. This handsomely designed monograph illustrates the best of his 12-year career, grouping the buildings by theme: paper, wood, bamboo, prefabrication and skin. Ban studied at SCI-Arc and the Cooper Union, and his outlook is global. Yet his architecture remains—in its refinement, fragility and sense of craft—intensely Japanese. He famously salvaged cardboard packing tubes and used them as structural columns, employing a similar strategy to create emergency shelters in Kobe, Rwanda, and Turkey. Beauty and practicality are perfectly balanced in Ban's work.

Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner: Buildings and Designs

(BRINKHAUSER. $89.95 HC. ISBN 3 7643 6931 0)

Past and present are still sullered in Germany, and postwar architects have struggled to reinvent the era of creativity that ended abruptly in 1933. Gunter Behnisch succeeded better than most in his airy, light-filled Olympic complex in Munich and the Bundestag in Bonn. Twelve years ago, his son, Stefan joined Gunther Schaller to create a parallel company, with offices in Stuttgart and Los Angeles, and it is their work that is presented in this handsome, bilingual monograph. Transparency and lightness are the threads that link schools, museums, sports complexes and the North German State Clearing Bank in Hanover. That's the building that has put them on everyone's radar screen: a glass-walled tower with wings that rotate and jut like the petals of a flower—a concept they developed in their plan for an archives building in Copenhagen. Let's hope they get to build in Los Angeles.

Craftsman Style

(ROBERT WINTER & ALEXANDER VERTIKOFF. ABRAMS. $50 HC. ISBN 0 8109 4336 0)

Here is an ideal companion to the Arts & Crafts exhibition at LACMA: an eminently readable, handsomely illustrated survey of a short-lived movement, plus several attempts to revive it. It's hard to imagine better guides than Winter, who is a leading authority on the period, and Vertikoff, who captures the warmth and rich textures of these varied houses and hotels, which look back to the settled world of the 19th-century and forward to simpler ways of living. Winter finds that spirit revived in woody houses by Craig Ellwood and Ray Kappe and in the Sky Rose Chapel of F. Fay Jones.

Karim Rashid

(MARSA BAROLOCCI. CHRONICLE BOOKS. $12.95 HC. ISBN 0 8118 4308 8)

Arne Jacobsen

(CHRISTOPHER MOURAT. CHRONICLE BOOKS. $12.95 HC. ISBN 0 8118 4206 6)

These are the latest, and possibly the last, in the Compact Design Portfolio Series that editor Marisa Bartolucci and designer Raol Cabra launched three years ago. Having written three of the ten titles myself, I'm biased, but others share my opinion that this is an exemplary undertaking, which deserves to continue. As before, legendary and contemporary names are juxtaposed: the master of Danish design, whose output was limited by his obsessive attention to detail, and the Egyptian-born whiz kid who has designed more than 200 products, plus a pair of restaurants and a trio of hotels in the last three years. They provide the greatest possible contrast: almost everything Jacobsen did became an icon, while most of Rashid's prolific output is ephemeral, though his brilliance may yet yield a product for the ages.
To look at their ads, you'd think that Goldbrecht only creates window solutions for Gaudi-inspired hobbits. In fact, their bread and butter work is much more traditional, if no less exacting in detail and quality. But it's the weird stuff that fascinates us. Doesn't it seem that in this, the land of fenestration, architects could be designing much more interesting windows through which to see and be seen? Contact Goldbrecht at 310-301-9889 or www.goldbrecht.com.

Consider these modular carpet tiles sophisticated gym mats for rolling around on the floor in style. The colors, textures and profiles (corrugation! cross-hatching!) available in this line from Paola Lenti are fabulous. The variety of sizes allows for more interesting tiling patterns than many systems offer, and the materials make them appropriate for any room in the house—even the wet ones. Local distribution is available through Modern Living. 8775 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, 90048. 310-657-8775. www.modernliving.com.

Our publisher came across these electronic tiles by Element LABs at ICFF, in New York. Lit by LEDs, the squares are essentially large-scale pixels capable of turning entire walls (or floors or ceilings) into graphic displays. With 30-bit color depth, you have a range of over a billion rich, saturated colors. The deep palette enables this system to reach beyond the garishness of the disco floor or neon light blocks, into the realm of the tastefully stunning. Visit their website at www.elementlabs.com for more details or call 512-491-9111.

Apparently magnetic induction technology is fairly commonplace in Europe, and various implementations of the technology have been available for some time. None, though, has the sheer beauty and startling efficacy of the Induction Wok by Kuppersbusch. The seamless indentation and its perfectly fitted wok form a vaguely erotic combination. Join the two and the pan heats almost instantly. Separate them and it cools nearly as quickly, while the cooktop always stays safely cool. When not in use—it makes a lovely fruit bowl. For local distribution, visit www.kuppersbuschusa.com.
THE APARTMENT AFTER MODERNISM

Contemporary architecture is part of the experience industry. Modernist designs meant to meet the industrial worker's need for rest and good hygiene are not sufficient to meet the knowledge worker's need for stimulation.

Therefore, the contemporary apartment should not only satisfy modernism's advances in terms of fresh air, daylight, well-planned functions and advanced equipment, but also provide a well thought-out, almost staged architectural experience. To develop such rich impressions, three familiar attributes have particular significance: axiality, rhythm and generality.

Axiality creates a line of sight though the floor plan to make an apartment surveyable, and connects vital parts of the apartment to each other. The result is a chain of rooms that offer framed views of adjoining spaces. A total impression of space is created by means of different types of lighting, varied dimensions and content. The rooms and their contrast in shape and color are placed in the context of the total experience. A wide range of impressions is thus created.

A second decisive ingredient of the contemporary apartment is the rhythm of movement. Movement connects axiality with a sense of time. There is a satisfying "aha moment" when we enter the visual axis' origin that we had intuited from the room beyond. Our memories store the physical and visual impressions and become part of the total experience. Thus axiality and movement are an effective way of recognizing the artistic side of architecture—the ability to touch the viewer on a deep and existential level.

To maximize the power of movement, the organization of space in the contemporary apartment should be based on the circular loop. The resident can walk around their apartment, moving from room to room. This creates a sense of great volume and space in small apartments. Movement through an apartment is a precondition for perceiving its architecture as a whole. Movement through multiple rooms that interpenetrate enhances this impression.

A flexible "all purpose" room is the third ingredient of the contemporary apartment. In the modernist building tradition, the room was a cell, a cul-de-sac with a specific function. In the contemporary apartment—after modernism—the residents themselves decide what the rooms in the apartment are to be used for—general rooms allow for flexibility of use. The potential of individually interpreting a room's use is a major quality. No room has been predetermined by the architect to be a bedroom by means of size, materials or fixtures. Versatility additionally provides for long-term sustainability. The general room can be reached through many openings and thereby provides an apartment with a wealth of movement potential.

Some architects have already interpreted the new conditions for residential architecture, and there are a number of inspiring examples that are worthy of imitation. It is through insight into the significance of architecture and with increasing architectonic drama that the apartment of the future will be designed.

A very simple floor plan, 9x9 meters, creates an impression of great complexity. Here we can find attributes such as axiality, movement, generality as well as an uncommon and interesting interpretation of private and public space, because all the rooms, including the bathroom, give the same impression, have the same shape and number of openings.
As a Patron of Architecture, UCLA Falls Short

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and everyone involved in UCLA’s latest and largest housing project meant well. The goal was to put 2,000 graduate students within a short shuttle ride of the campus, alleviate traffic congestion and pressure on parking, vitalize Westwood Village and express the spirit of excellence that characterizes UCLA’s academic programs. Five years and $147 million later, the first phase of Weyburn Terrace complex adds bulk but little distinction to the community and does nothing to enhance the image of the school. An imaginative concept fell victim to cost overruns, an unwillingness to take risks and a preference for contextualism over original expression.

Great buildings are the product of dialogue between demanding clients and determined architects, not a desire to please everyone and fit in. Universities exist to educate and lead, not to mirror the status quo and settle for second-best. From IIIT to MIT, from Arizona to Ohio, the best schools have hired the boldest talent. UCLA is exemplary in so many ways (its performing arts program may be the most adventurous in America) that its lack of commitment to audacious architecture is disheartening. Commercial builders can blame the depravity of public taste for the mediocrity of their product; the academy has no such excuse. UCLA abounds in dedicated people who would love to soar, but find their wings clipped by the conservatism of the Trustees, and a Chancellor who seems entirely indifferent to architecture.

In the 1920s, when UCLA moved from downtown to its new home on the Westside, the fledgling institution sought to associate itself with ancient foundations. It was a historicist era, in which Beaux Arts architects could convincingly recreate Romanesque or Gothic monuments of the Age of Learning. At UCLA, the concrete-framed Royce Hall was inspired by the medieval church of Sant’ Ambrogio in Milan, Powell Library by San Zeno in Verona. Meanwhile, the Janss Company planned Westwood Village as an Art Deco/Spanish fantasia. The conviction and craft that underpinned these deceptions have vanished. The world has moved on and it seems

Continued on page 24
The Architecture Program emphasizes, analyzes, and debates the role of the architect/citizen as cultural communicator and builder responsive to societal, cultural, and environmental challenges. We integrate into the design curriculum recent innovations in computer-aided design, multi-media, and sustainable technologies.

In the Interior Architecture Program students explore how the physical and social join to create interior spaces infused with aesthetic and cultural relevance. Program and rituals of inhabiting space inform the design and discernment of spatial form, color, light, and materials.
In the Potemkin village rendering, cute little houses are embowered in dense vegetation. The final product, realized by Van Tilburg Banvard & Soderberg, is something else entirely.
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Now you know.
FOR THE PUBLIC, "AFFORDABLE HOUSING" HAS become one of those hard to define phrases in the increasing obtuse lexicon of the built environment. It's a shibboleth, full of sound and sincerity, signifying whatever multiple-unit residential project happens to receive some sort of subsidy. For architects whose practices embrace affordable housing, the definition is simpler and much more focused: the challenge to create attractive designs within strict cost and code constraints, and neighborhood contexts, to provide needed shelter at below market rents for the less than affluent.

Whatever its definition, affordable housing is broadly applauded. Except for a few conservative miscreants who fervently believe that any subsidies cut into their tax break, citizens see affordable housing as life preserver of sorts for those adrift in the raging sea that is the current real estate market. It is also the key element in the urban planning formula to combat the increasing economic and social ghettoization of the region, while not incidentally reducing the increasing gridlock caused by commuters forced to drive long distances because they cannot afford to live in the communities where they work.

For regional planners and academic urbanists, affordable housing is the essence of smart growth. With the median cost of a house in Los Angeles County hovering around $400,000,
"Non-profits look more to the architects for solutions. As long as you stay within budget, I have found you have more freedom."

~John Mutlow, John V. Mutlow Architects

The Albert Group
Benton Green

Benton Green provides 38 units of Affordable Housing in a carefully scaled Urban Village set along the edge of the Echo Park District of Los Angeles. Resembling a traditional hill town, smaller groupings of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom apartments, including 2-story townhouse units, are clustered around a central, landscaped courtyard. The courtyard pattern recalls the bungalow and craftsman style housing of an earlier Los Angeles. The varied design of towers, trellised decks and porches, hipped and flat roofs, front porches and balconies, blends easily into the surrounding neighborhood.

The complex makes good use of its open space by providing either common outdoor areas for recreation or private gardens, patios or porches for each unit. There are courtyard spaces for active and passive pursuits as well as shaded decks on each of the upper levels.

rent for a decent one-bedroom apartment at $1,200 a month and the median annual income for a family of four about $55,000, you don't have to be an economist to calculate the need for lower cost housing. Estimates place the need in the tens of thousands of units or even the hundreds of thousands.

Nibbling away at this need are various public and privately supported non-profit community corporations. Aided by a bevy of foundations, they are trying to cobble together housing development efforts by dipping into a grab bag of local, state and federal subsidies, and taking advantage of every zoning incentive reluctantly granted by their host municipalities. It is, for those involved, a very tough row to hoe.

The architects involved are unstinting in their praise of community and housing corporations and other trusts and non-profits dedicated to affordable housing. "They have been getting better and better, taking advantage of what programs are out there and processing projects, and that means for us its been getting easier and easier," observed Wade Killefer, who has been toiling in affordable housing for a dozen-plus years and, at last rough count, had worked for no fewer than 16 different non-profit corporations. Along with his wife and partner, Barbara Flammang, their firm has tackled every form of affordable housing, from adaptive reuse to infill, everywhere from Skid Row to Santa Monica. "At first it was frightening, now it is actually fun," he adds. "Each one is a challenge: different sites, sizes, and most of all, different neighbors."

Critical to the protracted and often frustrating process is "the absolute necessity of involving the neighborhood groups and respecting the scale and character of the neighborhood," according to Stephen Albert of the Albert Group. He adds that most neighborhoods initially adamantly oppose affordable housing, and it
PUGH+SCARPA
Broadway Housing

The project consists of 41 units of affordable housing in downtown Santa Monica. The building will incorporate many of the sustainable features from our Colorado Court project. In addition, much of the building skin is clad with recycled aluminum cans formed into building blocks about twice the size of concrete blocks. The firm worked with the state to get the approval to work with local recycling companies to provide the material. The project will incorporate a wide array of environmental and energy efficient measures, including about 5 million recycled milk jugs in the form of screens, fins and trellis.

"Spend every penny, but not a penny more... fees are low, costs difficult, but there are other benefits and rewards for doing something that is needed."

—Larry Scarpa, Pugh+Scarpa Architects
"The biggest daily challenge is maintaining stamina—it is easy to lose sight of the concept and the detail required to express that concept."

—Julie Eizenberg, Koning Eizenberg Architecture

Sustainable design tends to run up initial costs and requires additional subsidies that the non-profits have to scratch for. His advice when doing affordable housing: "Spend every penny, but not a penny more." As for the challenge, Scarpa added that, "fees are low, costs difficult, but there are other benefits and rewards for doing something that is needed."

The challenge is not for the faint of heart. As Julie Eizenberg of Koning Eizenberg explains: "I've got to say the biggest daily challenge facing architects is maintaining stamina—particularly during construction where everyone involved in the process is burnt out and it is easy to lose sight of the concept and the detail required to express that concept." She adds that a larger challenge is to push "for experimentation relative to interior configurations as well as investigation of more cost effective construction systems." For Stephen Kanner, the challenge of affordable housing also was working within the budgets, and on a broader level, "pushing urban modernism."

Whatever the style, Blumenfeld credits "good design" as being particularly helpful in winning support for affordable housing projects, which residents often equate with the dated and deteriorating low-cost housing of the 1960s and 70s. "Enlightened cities want quality housing that really enhances its streets and neighborhoods," observes architect Michael Lehrer, but he points out that such housing "becomes much more expensive to build (terraces, courtyards, sensitive massing, street entrances to first floor units, et cetera). Great housing is created, the urban fabric is enhanced, and it is very desirable, and very costly. It is a conundrum." The involved architects note that this conundrum would be relieved, of course, if the various subsidies for affordable housing were increased, and perhaps also the fees.
LA'S RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE IS A MIXED BAG, A COEXISTENCE OF THE FABULOUS AND FUNCTIONAL, as eclectic as the populace that inhabits it. On any given street one might find a Craftsman next to an Andalusian next to a Mid-century Modern, all in various stages of improvement or decline. We polled some of the city's most observant inhabitants to see what their favorite LA houses might be. Their choices ranged from classics, like the Gamble House, to a perfect cottage in Venice, to a hole in the ground, each selection inspired by the style, functionality, philosophy and emotional resonance of the space. As architect Ron Radziner notes, "A house is an opportunity for self-expression in three dimensions," and though none of these houses was designed by the people who chose them, each seems an extension of their unique spirits. So the next time we're bemoaning the new McMansion being erected down the street or wishing someone would finally repaint that turquoise bungalow next door, perhaps we could try and see them as reminders of LA's diversity, and remember that each has a family, a story, and might just be somebody's favorite.
When I saw it, I said, "That is a beautiful house. I want to own it. I want to live in it." And I tried. At the time, in the early 60s, USC hadn't taken it over. It sits on the property like the prow of a Spanish galleon, with the incredible marriage of East and West, if not highly influenced by Japanese architecture. Every detail is perfect: the wood-joining; ebony inserts; carpets designed by the Greene brothers (watercolors were sent to Europe to have the carpets woven); the light fixtures designed by the Greene brothers and fabricated by Tiffany's; and all of the furniture was designed by the Greene brothers as well. —Ed Moses, artist

There is a house on Lake, east of Lincoln (in Venice) that I always thought was a classic. It's a perfect little white house, simple, well designed and compact. Their lawn is perfectly fertilized, bright green and well-maintained. There is also a neatly coiled watering hose visible usually, and a clothesline with some things drying between house and garage. It's like a little postcard. When I used to go walking with my son Henry, I would say, "That is the most perfect house in town." —Viggo Mortensen, actor/artist
Modern
Rios House/Mark Rios (private)

"Mark took an existing tract house by an unknown designer and developed it into a classical modernist house. It's so different from the signature modern pieces in the city, very subtle and beautiful."

-Doug Suisman, architect

"There are many beautiful homes in LA, by any measure, and singling one out as a 'favorite' is a futile task, but Mark's house popped into my mind. Maybe it was the cave-with-vista effect we so love about our own home. Maybe it was the quiet wall of sliding glass doors opening the whole house to its view. Or the small, gem-like feel of the home in a Bel-Air of frosted mansions. Or the koi pond. Or the pottery collection. In other words, it is a serene spot even filled with hundreds of other guests and a cross-dressing cabaret singer."

-Moye Thompson, ceramicist

Original
Buñuel House/Architect unknown
5642 Fountain Avenue | Hollywood, CA (private)

"This house is believed to once have been the home of movie director Luis Buñuel. Reason enough to make me pause every time I passed the house."

-Ed Ruscha, artist
Natural
Raccoon House/Architect Unknown
(private)

"I've never been a big fan of domestic, 'look-a-me look-a-me' ego-tecture. I've not noticed many species other than man that favor the construction of living spaces that stand out from or dominate the surroundings. I would have to say that I saw what remains my favorite dwelling back in the early 1970s. My wife and I had just bought a tumble-down bungalow on a dirt road from a retired Portuguese couple who wanted to move closer to town; and I set about converting a cowshed on the edge of a swale out back of the house into a place to write. Once settled in, I kept noticing a raccoon coming and going often enough to think that it must've lived nearby. Finally, one evening at dusk, after a long period of working quietly I spotted the 'coon coming out of his home. It was just a hole in the ground, its entrance gracefully obscured by a clump of salt grass leaning across

Lewis MacAdams, writer and activist
Co-founder FoLAR

Colonial
The Adamson House/Stiles O. Clements
Malibu, CA
(public - limited)

"I have a lot of favorites, but if I had to choose one, I'd have to say the Adamson House at the beach in Malibu, by architect Stiles O. Clements. It's reflective of early Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. It's completely pristine, extensively decorated with Malibu floor tiles (the Adamsons owned the Malibu Tile Company) and overlooks the ocean. The best thing about it is that it's open to the public as a museum. There are wonderful grounds, and it is just as it was in 1930, down to the original furnishings.

-Crosby Doe, Partner + Broker,
Mossier Deasy + Doe
"This isn't my house, but I wish it were. It has to be the most democratic domestic space I have ever seen. When I'm visiting, as I often do, with my children, the uniqueness of the space is visible in the way they play with other kids there. Children of all different backgrounds gather in the house. I think it is the only house on the block with a terrace, right there on the boardwalk, so you can sort of be seen, but you still have privacy. And the tower allows you to do surveillance without being seen."

–Gustavo Leclerc, Director, Self Help Graphics

“There are several houses along Pacific Coast Highway that I call the 'jewels' of PCH. I drive by them every day, so the inspiration stays present in my mind. One of the nicest things about these houses is that you can see them from the beach side, as well as from the street side.

But my newest favorite is Moore Ruble Yudell's Peg Yorkin House, in Malibu, located just before Carbon Beach. For me, that house embodies beach living on the edge of the city at its best. Its rhythmic roofline, calming color, agile detailing and openness to the beach are noteworthy. Contemporary in nature, this house nicely combines warmth and freshness."

–Richard Landry, architect
Idealistic

Schindler House/Rudolf Schindler
835 North Kings Road
West Hollywood, CA
(public – limited)

“LA is the best region for houses in the world. The focus here is on creating private oases. The Schindler house presents a very contemporary idea of living, with two families living together, and work studios for both husband and wife, which was unusual for the time. The entire site becomes part of the house—no space, other than the pond, is not a living space. The pinwheel plan makes it only one room wide at any one point, keeping you always close to the outdoors and forcing circulation to the exterior. Though modern, the house is not reproducible, it is idiosyncratic and specific to the site. In this way it is related to the earth, not machines.”

–Ron Radziner, architect

Affordable

Pueblo del Rio/Paul Williams
1830 E 53rd Street
Vernon, CA
(public housing)

“I admire Paul Williams for his extensive, imaginative, classic work in Los Angeles. I also appreciate his social conscience—in addition to designing city landmarks such as the Beverly Hills Hotel, he was also lead architect for the first affordable housing development in the city.”

–Mayor James K. Hahn
In 1976, three UCLA professors were renting apartments in Westwood and wondering how they could afford to buy a house near campus in a booming real estate market on a meager professor’s salary. Sadly, they could not.

Then Claire Rogger and her husband Hans (Professor of Russian History) met Charles W. Moore, FAIA, Chair of the UCLA Department of Architecture and a recent transplant to UCLA from Yale. Charles was already famous for creating homes for himself with limited funds in Orinda, CA and Sea Ranch while teaching at Berkeley; as well as two remodeled residences in New Haven while Dean at Yale. Why should Westwood be any different?

The fact is, real estate costs made building a custom home in West Los Angeles prohibitive. Claire and Hans couldn’t afford it, and neither could Charles. Then, Claire found a site zoned R-3 on Selby Avenue, opposite the Mormon Temple. She suggested to Charles that they “do” something together. Hans invited his friend, Al Hofflander (UCLA professor of Economics) and his wife Betty to join Claire and himself, with Charles as the architect, to create three custom townhouses on one lot.

It was a bold endeavor. Could Charles create three distinct, individual residences customized to three different clients (one being himself) and bring it together into a single, cohesive architectural statement? He could, and he did. He designed and built the three-townhouse cluster, in association with Richard Chylinski, reaching completion in January 1978. Now, over 25 years later, the Selby Avenue Townhouses remain post-modern classics rarely equaled in Los Angeles.

The trio of dwellings nests into a steeply-sloping hillside, within walking distance of UCLA. It is an urban oasis, tucked into a row of plain vanilla boxes. If you didn’t know where it was, you could drive right by and miss the surprise. Claire Rogger still lives in her townhouse, although her husband Hans passed away a few years ago. Charles sold his unit to Katharine Welsh in 1987, and she has maintained its idiosyncratic character. And finally,
The townhouses are light-filled spatial puzzles...

AI and Betty Hofflander sold their unit to me and my wife, Jacqui Ross, in September 2002.

Each house was designed to fit the individual needs of its owners, while coming together to form what appears to be a single large residence. Charles solved the typical multi-family need for off-street parking with a large semi-covered courtyard that the building bridges over. But the owners ultimately decided it was a perfect pedestrian piazza, and too charming to park in. It remains a shared entry courtyard with plants and vines framing the entry to each unit.

The townhouses themselves are light-filled spatial puzzles that continue to surprise and delight their owners on a daily basis. All three units have exposure on three sides with through-ventilation, private outdoor patios and a complex juxtaposition of spaces that defies description. The quality of light that enters through the three sides and the multi-faceted roof creates patterns that delight and inspire. It's like waking up each day in a sculpture, not knowing quite how it will look or feel. It never ceases to amaze and surprise.

The Rogger residence is the corner unit in the L-shaped site plan; it has six levels within a four-story volume. The Ross-Hofflander unit has five levels in a four-story volume, including two outdoor patios linked by an exterior stair and garden. The Welsh-Moore residence remains one of the architectural wonders of West Los Angeles. It is a collage of architectural parts that Charles collected and invented, weaving together ornamental fragments of recently demolished buildings, with galvanized corrugated metal siding—an edgy material at the time. The house celebrates movement with a large, sculptural stair that cascades down through three levels—not unlike Michelangelo's oversized stair at...
The house celebrates movement...

the Laurentian Library. It's a mannerist move that startles and delights, leading up to a two-story high wall of books that one accesses by another stair that serves as both architectural decoration and pure function.

Katharine Welsh has lived in Charles Moore's townhouse for over seventeen years and exudes with enthusiasm, "it's never boring..." she says, "if you look up, you see something unexpected." Katharine admires Charles Moore's work because "he had a real knack for blending in, like at the Beverly Hills City Hall." Charles was one of the early proponents of contextualism, an architecture that found its inspiration from its context. This can be seen in his work at Sea Ranch in the 1960s and at Kresge College for UC Santa Cruz, 1966-1974.

Beyond the context of the neighborhood, each design is imbued with Charles' dry wit and coy sense of humor. The curved pediment in his townhouse is an altar, an ecclesiastic reference to the Mormon Temple directly across the street. The fan-shaped fenestration, which he called "Falling Windows," imply movement and was a casual reference to Wright's masterpiece.

In total, the three-townhouse complex was "spatially-packed like a Rubics Cube," according to Buzz Yudell, Charles' future partner with John Ruble. Yudell came out to Los Angeles from Yale to help complete the design and construction on this complex, challenging project. Yudell describes Charles' "fiendish ingenuity," creating a series of "perches" in each house, where people could sit, read or hide. Today, my daughters love to climb the stair without handrails to a little perch with pillows: a loft overlooking the master bedroom, where they read or do homework on a laptop.

Claire Rogger wistfully remembers the agonies of the early years, when leaks and floods were not unusual. She describes Charles as Tom Sawyer, who charmed everyone he met and "got everybody else to paint the fence." In the end, she says Charles was "charming, witty and delightful". She and Hans loved it. "It's a magical place, and a blissful place to live."
SUSTAINABLE SITING

BY MORRIS NEWMAN

Seen thus far, residences—be they low-income or high-design—exist almost without context within the greater urban sprawl. Indeed, the potential for insularity seems to be one of the most desirable characteristics of a home in Los Angeles, if not any city. Yet this withdrawal is not simply uncivil, it is irresponsible. Homes and all the buildings that are not home must co-exist in a fashion that is linked and balanced to achieve the highest possible degree of sustainable design. To see one way in which this is being done today, adapting ancient techniques, we listen in on a conversation between urban designer Bill Fain and architect Scott Johnson, excerpted from the book Figure/Ground: A design conversation with Scott Johnson and Bill Fain (Balcony Press, 2004).
Bill Fain Building orientation for solar access is a big factor in our work. This is particularly evident in the large scale urban design projects—the designs for the Central Business District in Beijing and the Junghuan Sub-town Center in Shanghai—both are major additions to their cities and currently under construction. Open spaces, parks and roads are oriented in ways that give buildings direct sunlight for a minimum of two hours each day. This is a planning regulation throughout China. You can see it in the east-west oriented "bar-like" buildings of the Maoist period. I am sure this policy was adopted partly because China has not had the energy to heat buildings. Scott, remember the winter meetings we’ve had in Beijing where temperatures inside are freezing and we all had to wear overcoats and caps to stay warm?

Consideration for solar access and building orientation goes back a thousand years. Neighborhoods in Beijing were developed in large blocks with lots of small walking streets connected to courtyards surrounded by one and two-story homes. Buildings are built together and spaces are well defined—this aggregation is called “hutong”. A similar, more recent type of development in Shanghai is the "lelong". Unfortunately, during the Maoist period, the Chinese did not fully learn from earlier models—on the one hand, learning about the need for solar access but, on the other hand, totally disregarding socio-spatial forms of courtyard and walking street. When you look at communities planned and buildings built from the 50s you will see there is a strong linear dimension to site planning with the bar-like buildings dominating with no regard for pulling the buildings around a courtyard, like the traditional hutongs once did. The modern cities look very undefined because of that—spaces lack clarity and definition. A universal notion of solar access has been executed with total disregard for local tradition.

Scott Johnson The hutong tradition is a beautiful example of how a design solution can be culturally specific without being sentimental or nostalgic, of the possibility of telling an old story that is still germane today. Our lives are different in so many ways now but this goal, and possibly this historically rooted pattern, of solar orientation might remain constant. This is the kind of trace element I would identify as “deep structure”. As it happens, it is also culturally specific. Much of the pre-Modern design and construction throughout Asia (Japan, China, Southeast Asia) refer to archaic rituals that have survived over time and are de facto historically sustainable. The more recent marriage in these cultures of the drive to be modern, and the global accumulation of large investment capital has created instant patterns that may not be sustainable over the mid- or long-term.

BF In the earlier examples, the intent is to air condition and heat buildings by use of building orientation. Orientation is a regulation in China today but with the new mechanics of buildings now underway they may soon reconsider this—like in America where urban development has little regard for these issues. Let’s be fair about it, only in recent years there has been a chorus of professionals and environmental activists supporting policies like LEED certification in building design. Hopefully they will be even more comprehensively applied in the future.

SJ In a similar way, some of the European standards in office design are way ahead of us in the way they mandate shallower building depths and natural light at the core of the building. Throughout Western Europe we are beginning to see multiple skins on the exterior of buildings that provide complex insulation and sun control while preserving visibility. We have also seen the use of large-scale heat sinks, high-rise gardens, and an emphasis on fresh air and indoor air quality. In the States, we are frequently confronted with fixed budgets that did not contemplate holistic sustainability so we look toward technology and new products to achieve these goals. It’s regrettably a more two dimensional approach.

BF Let me finish China. Although we have mentioned solar access as a positive example of sustainability in China, the Chinese totally disregard recycling and are very insensitive to
Johnson Fain's plan for a four square kilometer section of Beijing, east of Tiananmen Square. The project provides more than 100 million square feet of mixed-use development, including office, residential, retail, a wide range of cultural uses and more than 500 different buildings anchored by a central "City within a City," featuring a landmark 140-story tower. The district is composed of multiple unique neighborhoods linked by physical adjacency, multiple transit options, distinct street grids for pedestrians and vehicles and a major park network containing a "necklace" of premier cultural institutions. Mid-block walkways based on the traditional hutong are encouraged for small-scale pedestrian movement. Among proposed building regulations are standards to provide solar access for structures and public spaces.

Open spaces, parks and roads are oriented in ways that give buildings direct sunlight for a minimum of two hours each day.

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choices for childcare, the support for nearby retail and the rejuvenation and increased security of public open space. These are deeply sustainable moves in addition to what the architecture can achieve.

**BF** In Sacramento, there was a conscious effort to make the buildings as sustainable as possible, on many levels. We were careful to recycle materials—from salvaged marble, to on-site soil, even the use of fly ash in mixing the cement, so there was a conscious effort and it is recorded in the LEED checklist format.

Questions still arise... What does all of this mean to composing the building and the spaces that surround it? Are there major differences or is it a matter of detail and process? We are still exploring that. And there is the question of the role of cultural expression. Assuming that it has a role, or can have a role, sustainability begs for an idea that lessons from the past need to be conveyed to the future. It doesn't necessarily draw a line between the abstract vs. the literal, or the universal vs. the regional.

**SI** That's why sustainability is such a potentially beautiful departure point for developing form, because it can be neutral in a cultural sense. Sustainability is authentic, achievable, and much needed. Sounds like a legitimate design problem, right?

No green bells and whistles. It's a whole attitude. Childcare. Senior citizens. The health of cities that give us life. How are any of these concerns materially different? We can sit here in downtown Los Angeles while to the east of us there are hundreds of acres of grossly underutilized building stock. What about that? Those buildings could be the basis for a new and different downtown, which frankly could dwarf the present one.

**BF** The roots of Native America are all about sustainable use of resources. The Indians tend to building a way that is minimally invasive to the environment. Our Native American Cultural Center and Museum in Oklahoma incorporates sustainability at most levels. It is a part of the belief system of the place. Just the fact that the site was given back to the Indians by the white guys, it was a throwaway, totally depleted of its mineral resources. You will recall that it was a major oil drilling site, and the soils are polluted and the Indians are planning to restore it to its pristine state. There is a kind of irony in this. The story goes that Indians have had to deal with natural processes over the centuries, they have had to survive and adapt, they have had to recycle, and they look to nature for answers. They read nature and adapt to the forces at play in nature. One can only speculate that early China was like this, too.

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**“Sustainability...inevitably defines a culture’s sense of balance between what one wants for one’s self in one’s own time, and what one is willing to share.”**

—Scott Johnson

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Historically, neighborhoods in Beijing were developed in large blocks with lots of small walking streets connect to courtyards surrounded by one and two-story homes. Buildings were built together and spaces are well-defined in what was called a "hutong". During an earlier trip to Beijing, I was walking near the Third Ring Road in southeast Beijing and noticed the outer walls of a well-preserved hutong district. It seemed like a wonderful historic example. A month later, walking the same route, I saw that it had been totally demolished and in its place, still in construction, was a wide arterial road. They are very insensitive about this. So we all have a long way to go.

**SI** If they were conscious of their roots, they might pay more attention to that. Sustainability is such an all-encompassing notion that it is, in the end, a reflection of culture. It inevitably defines a culture's sense of balance between what one wants for one's self in one's own time, and what one is willing to share.

In the States for example, conversations regarding energy efficiency and sustainability usually devolve to an interrogation over the quantity of stuff that has been specified in order to achieve certain ratings. It's like, Christmas is green this year; what have you got on your list? It's a consumer event. Solar panels, low-flow fixtures, heat exchangers, recycled glass tile. Count up the stuff, and if there's enough, you get a star. While all these devices kick off the discussion of how a building can be operated differently, they are nothing but a primer.

In my view, you can do much more by transforming the views of an informed population into social policy to which architecture and design can then respond. In the case of our Capitol East End project, the political decision to mop up over 40 state offices scattered around ex-urban Sacramento and consolidate them in the challenged inner city is a huge step in support of sustainability. Think of its impact on the strengthening of public transportation systems, the reduction in use of fossil fuels, the...
Photographing Architecture and Interiors
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Transcending Types
IN THE AMERICAN PAVILION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

The ninth Venice architectural Biennale closes on November 7th, but the legacy of this year's event and its three-volume catalogue is likely to be enduring. Kurt Forster, former director of the Getty Research Institute, asked participants to explore the recent revolutionary shift in architectural forms, a phenomenon he calls Metamorphosis. In contrast to the ferocious nationalism of the Olympics, this is an event in which ideas vault over political boundaries and the language is truly international. Playing off the theme of change is the US exhibit, Transcending Type, which was organized by Robert Ivy and his colleagues at Architectural Record. As co-curator Clifford Pearson explains, "it was offered to us at short notice, but, since the alternative was letting the space go dark, we decided, 'Hey kids, let's put on a show!'"

Six vanguard firms were invited to explore a new form for an iconic building type they had previously investigated. "We left it to them to decide how real their proposals would be," says Pearson, "giving them the chance to spread their wings and take flight. In the real world you don't have that opportunity." Each architect was assigned to either one of the four galleries, the rotunda, or the courtyard of the American pavilion—a 1930 Federal pastiche by one of the Rockefellers' favorite architects.

The Los Angeles partnership Predock_Frane contributes a spiritual space that marks a radical departure from their Zen Buddhist centers in New Mexico and Desert Hot Springs. Far from the desert, they engage the watery world of Venice in a room of suspended filaments, shimmering in natural light and stained to evoke the tides that repeatedly inundate the city. Jonathan Frane describes it as a "study model of an aesthetic experience that could be transformed into architecture."

George Yu Architects, another local firm, rethinks that most despised building type, the shopping center. Yu draws on his studies for developers in China and Japan to propose a series of modular systems with built-in variations and new kinds of circulation, to create vibrant mixed-use complexes.

Studio Gang of Chicago takes us out to the ball game atop a downtown high rise. The office tower provides all the parking, a playing field and seating of a stadium within the confines of a typical city block. The seating folds out to connect to neighboring buildings and borrows their vertical circulation to get visitors in and out. This visionary scheme infuses new life into the heart of the city, rather than isolate the stadium in acres of parking at its edge. Pedestrians are urged to wear hard hats during the game.

A trio of New York firms explore three other familiar building types. Kolatan/MacDonald Studio's Resi-Rise is a radical variation on the apartment tower—a structural frame supporting pods that can be customized for each tenant and recycled to suit a new owner or to incorporate novel technologies. It's an idea that the Japanese Metabolists, Paul Rudolph and other architects considered in the 1960s.

Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis builds on a concept that Wright and Neutra sketched in the early 1920s, a helical ramp that would provide parking and access. Here, a drive-up skyscraper of stacked functions is analyzed on display panels that are extruded into the American pavilion's courtyard from the four columns supporting its pediment.

Reiser+Umemoto explore the highway interchange as a layered complex of complementary functions that mediate between road and landscape. It's something that has already been tried at Schipol Airport in Amsterdam, which offers road, rail, retail, art and meditation, all fully integrated with the primary function of catching a plane. Here, as in many of the exhibits, the future is behind as well as before us.

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