UNCERTAINTY LOOMS AS LA PROJECTS STALL OR FAIL

DOWNTOWN DOWNTURN?

A fickle economy, rising construction costs, and skittish buyers are just a few of the factors that have slowed the frenzied development in downtown Los Angeles to a crawl. But as two of the area’s largest planned projects—Frank Gehry and the Related Companies’ $3 billion Grand Avenue Project and the $1 billion Park Fifth condo towers—failed to break ground as expected during the last few months, and as several smaller projects went under, hushed conversations between architects, developers, and real estate agents persist in the shadows of half-finished skyscrapers: Is downtown’s rally over?

“I have the feeling that this is not a good time to be building skyscrapers, in LA or anywhere,” said Peter Slatin of the real estate website TheSlatinReport.com (and AN contributor). “It’s risky to start building into a market that’s starting to decline without knowing how long the decline will last.” According to the National Association of Realtors, U.S. condo sales were down by about 11 percent in 2007, while residential construction dropped by almost 17 percent.

continued on page 5

VERT ET VERTICAL

Irvine-based developer SunCal has unveiled plans for a 45-story luxury tower designed by French architect Jean Nouvel for Los Angeles’ Century City.

Nouvel referred to the $400 million tower at 10000 Santa Monica Boulevard as the “green blade.” And for good reason: the “blade,” which is expected to be submitted for entitlements next week, will have an extremely thin 50-foot depth with north and south glazing for all of its 177 units. Each unit will also be wrapped outside with plants resting on projecting podiums, giving the building an organic aesthetic and lending to living spaces a combination of light, calm, and privacy, rare attributes for this type of building.

“This is the idea of the green city,” explained Nouvel, who noted that the building will reflect LA’s context of “beautiful homes surrounded by greenness.” Nouvel says his firm is investigating two types of irrigation systems for plants: a hydroponic, soil-less continued on page 10

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

POLITICAL FIREFIGHT OVER LA’S INDUSTRIAL LAND

LOFTY AMBITIONS

The ongoing clash over LA’s controversial Industrial Land Use Policy has seen its most contentious firefight erupt over the AMP Lofts, a planned $40 million mixed-use development at Sixth Street and Santa Fe Avenue, in the Arts District near the west bank of the LA River.

The 182-unit project, which would include 5,000 square feet of retail space and a half-acre of open space, would rise on the site of a building owned by truck parts supplier American Moving Parts (AMP). Designed by Santa Monica-based.. continued on page 3

SKIM: BROAD CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM. SEE PAGE 10

San Francisco’s Japan Center, the retail centerpiece of a controversial downtown redevelopment project that leveled most of Japantown nearly 50 years ago, is now the subject of its own new development plans presented at a public meeting on February 12. EDAW’s San Francisco office and Colorado-based retail architect Studio Taku Shimizu recently unveiled preliminary plans for a mixed-use center that reintroduces housing to these historically residential blocks. continued on page 8

NEXT BIG THING

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) is designing San Francisco’s largest new development, the 393-acre Treasure Island. As if that weren’t enough, the firm’s San Francisco office is now also working on a blockbuster on the other side of the city: a transformation... continued on page 7

SCHMES PROPOSED FOR SF’S JAPAN CENTER

OF TORII AND ROJI

continued on page 10
Daedalus
Pendant designed by Audi Design Center California

A 5'-long pendant with a 17"-wide glass-and-aluminum helical sculpture suspended by aircraft cable from a 22"-wide disk. The sculpture is illuminated by eight MR11 low-voltage halogen lamps.
Putting together our first annual California favorite sources list, an impressive lineup of your preferred contractors, engineers, consultants, material providers, and more (see pgs. 15-18), we’ve been blown away by the power of your voice. And it’s in that spirit that we’d like to make this newspaper more interactive. To start, we’d like to ask you about the most pressing concerns, and possible solutions, for architects in California. We’ll try to print your responses in the next few issues, and look to include stories about many of your ideas in the future as well.

For instance, most architects I know are concerned about a likely economic downturn. Has that already affected your firm? Is there any less work—or do you plan out to accommodate the cyclical nature of building? In the short term, how are you going to handle it? We are wondering of strategies for older firms who’ve been through it all differ significantly from younger firms. In other words, do layoffs work? Is now the ideal time to focus on new income brackets or project types?

As we head down a cyclical cycle, the question inevitably rises about the usefulness of government intervention. This could mean tax deductions, health care bonuses, or more efficient or comprehensive job/commission listings. It appears that the downturn is hitting architects in developing areas like the Inland Empire and Sacramento region more than established markets like Los Angeles and San Francisco. Is this what you are seeing, too?

Regardless of the economic climate, it’s clear that salary is an issue for most architects. Private businesses guard their salary scales and depend on open-market competition to set the bar. But what about an architect’s union?

I’ve also heard architects mention that the day-to-day aspects of working here can be frustrating. Building permitting and approvals throughout the state take too long, and many building departments have yet to upgrade to computerized systems. I’ve also been told that overcautious planning departments often make it too difficult to pass ambitious designs. Do you have any good examples? Have you heard of improvements? It might also be good to hear more about your experiences with clients. What are the biggest problems you face with them? Payments? Creative control? Do developers have too much say in California?

Aside from practice-related concerns, we’d also like to hear your thoughts about other local issues like sustainability, sprawl, density, transportation, preservation, competitions, architectural education, and regional planning. California is known as a progressive state, but it’s become clear to me that on some of these topics—particularly transportation, sprawl, and regional planning, are far behind the curve.

So that’s a kitchen-sink load of topics and, naturally, you will consider some red-hot issues, while others leave you cool. Let us know what matters most to you.

Please email all responses to editorCA@archpaper.com. Once we’ve identified your issues, and your suggestions, we’ll get our reporters out there to investigate. The more dialogue we get going, the more possibilities we’ll come up with, so please contribute.

LOFTY AMBITIONS continued from front page
Koning Eizenberg Architecture, the lofts have been the focus of a tug of war between the LA city council and supporters of residential development in industrial areas on one side, and the Planning Department and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) on the other. AMP submitted its proposal to develop the property, sandwiched between industrial warehouses, in 2005, receiving initial support from the Planning Department, the CRA, and several neighborhood groups. All praised the project’s green design, which would utilize renewable materials and include storm water retention systems. Fifteen percent of the units would be set aside for low to moderate-income families. But not long after the AMP proposal was submitted, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa directed the Planning Department and CRA to jointly evaluate preservation of the city’s industrial land, effectively denying AMP’s approval. Nearly two years in the making, the agencies released their “Industrial Land Use Policy Project” (ILUP) memorandum on January 3. It divides industri-alized land in the city into four categories. The largest of the four (where AMP falls), comprising about 80 percent of the city’s industrial land, are designated as Employment Protection Districts, and would retain exclusively industrial uses.

Among the concerns voiced by planning director Gail Goldberg and CRA general manager Cecilia Estolano is that once industri-alized land is converted, it cannot be reclaimed. They assert that the loss will prevent job growth in developing sectors. This is of particular concern to the CRA, given that Los Angeles has lost 57,000 jobs in the last 25 years, they said. Supporters of the ILUP report also claim it reinforces the city’s General Plan and existing Community Plans. Skeptics contend that the report represents new policy that stifles resi-dential growth downtown.

On January 8, despite the ILUP recommen-dations, and despite an April 2007 rejection of the AMP plan by the City Zoning Administration, City Councilman José Huizar received unanimous backing from the City Council to assert jurisdic-tion over the project. On January 18, the City Council allowed the project to move forward. Councilman Huizar said of the victory, “I believe this project will be a model for the future development of downtown, because it will help us continue to build a community in an area which is already largely converted to resi-dential and mixed-uses.”

The lengthy battle also highlights the struggle between parcel-by-parcel development, which enables officials to make flexible land-use policy in their districts, and the Planning Department’s goal of a consistent strategy. Councilman Huizar’s deputy chief of staff, Peter Hidalgo, said that as a result of Huizar’s victory, the Planning Department is reconsidering the boundaries of the ILUP’s Employment Protection Districts. “They’ve seen the handwriting on the wall.” MIKE SCHULTE
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FED UP IN FEBRUARY

As LA’s Grand Avenue Watch reaches fever pitch, Frank Gehry called out developer Related for the project’s mysterious disappearing groundbreaking date. As reported by Blogdowntown, Gehry was naming names: “Money is not available and the developer is in denial.” Looks like he’ll finally reached breaking point. With his scheme completed, Gehry’s said to have walked away as lead architect, delivering the team at HK5 Architects. Across town, Renzo Piano played nice with philanthropist Eli Broad and LACMA director Michael Govan at the opening of the Broad Contemporary Museum of Art. But things aren’t going so swimmingly for his California Academy of Sciences project in San Francisco. Sources say Hodggets + Fung, who were commissioned to design exhibitions, bolted because Piano bossed them around. He probably wanted everything in Renzo Red.

WON’T YOU BP MY NEIGHBOR

On February 11 the eco-aspirational gas company BP unveiled Win Ferrill as the latest to participate in its Solar Neighbors program, joining a lineup of hotshots like Edward Norton, Own Wilson, and Don Cheadle. The program brings solar energy to low-income neighborhoods by matching solar purchases that celebrities make for their own homes. Ferrill’s donation benefits the multi-unit St. George housing project on LA’s Skid Row, where residents are already said to be saving hundreds on their monthly utility bills. Perhaps this will balance out Ferrill’s environmentally blasphemous “Green Team” parody he made for his website Funny or Die. Highlights included this advice from Ferrell: “A compost bin is environmentally blasphemous.”

Send tips, gossip, and party souvenirs to slubell@archpaper.com

DOWNTOWN DOWNTURN? continued from front page

According to most projections the numbers aren’t expected to improve this year.

Although materials prepared last year for Grand Avenue (which would include 18- and 48-story towers and a 16-acre park) indicated that Phase I of the scheme was scheduled to begin construction last October, that date has now been pushed to this summer. Karen Diehl, a representative from Related, said that updates are being made to the design documents and, despite reports to the contrary, groundbreaking was never set to happen. “We’ve never set a groundbreaking date and at present it is expected sometime this summer,” she said. According to Diehl, an existing parking structure on the site needs to be stripped of its lead paint first, then will be demolished in “the next months” so construction can begin. Meanwhile, reports that Related had not yet secured a construction loan spurred rumors that the mixed-use project was short on financing.

Groundbreaking for the 76- and 41-story towers of Park Fifth, once scheduled for the first quarter of 2008, has been pushed back to the third quarter. After reported staffing and investor shakeups, spokesperson Stephanie Holbrook now blames bureaucracy. “Park Fifth does not expect to have final entitlements for the project until the end of May,” she said. “Until these formalities are finalized, one would not start construction of a major project.” While the project was also rumored to have major financing issues, Holbrook said that financing is in place to move forward.

“It seems to me that Gehry himself was very disappointed in the outcome to related to its surrounding neighborhood near Pershing Square. But for Grand Avenue, he thinks the perceived inability to sell its 390 residential units is mostly due to Gehry himself. “They wholeheartedly bought into the idea that good architecture is added value but went with an architect who is not always the greatest fit for residential design,” said Slatin. “You have to find a lot of people who are willing to take that perceived risk for an apartment that’s kind of quirky.” And a slew of projects on the way have endured similar delays or changes. The Parkside Tower, a 35-story mixed-use property downtown, has declared it has “no financing to move forward.” The Mill Street Lofts by Linear City—developer of the successful Toy Factory and Biscuit Company Lofts—is delayed until at least the fall. The Old Union Bank Building and the Blossom Plaza in China Plaza both recently switched from condos to rentals. Last May, the New York hotelier Gansevoort yanked its plans for “Gansevoort West,” leaving its developer, Chetrit Group, without a hotel partner.

The capital and credit markets are extremely challenging right now,” said Jim Atkins, a principal with The South Group, a Portland-based developer that has three residential projects in downtown LA: Elsevier, Luma, Evo (still under construction), and South Figueroa (now on hold). “That’s brought investment in new condo projects to a halt. You don’t have

> KUMO
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Los Angeles
Tel: 323.851.5866
Architect: Stephen F. Jones

Architect Stephen F. Jones first worked with entertainment mogul-turned-restaurateur Michael Ovitz when he designed Spago, where CAA founder Ovitz was an investor. For Ovitz’s newest endeavor, Jones was tapped to transform a space—formerly the famed Citrine—on a busy corner of Melrose into the power sushi spot, Kumo. Working with Ovitz was “difficult but rewarding,” said Jones. “He had very high expectations.”

Those expectations included a specific color scheme (all white, with a dark blue floor) to which Jones added glass tile walls and sleek curves inspired by sculptor Isamu Noguchi, including a rounded notch in the ceiling that gives the sense of staring up into a fluffy thunder cloud. Jones actually wasn’t told that Kumo meant “cloud” in Japanese until he delivered preliminary designs to Ovitz, but it ended up informing details like the blown glass lamps that sink into the dining room like giant raindrops.

Minimal decor put the emphasis on the sole piece of art in the dining room, the animated piece City Glow by Japanese artist Chito Aoshima. In it, blinking caterpillar-like buildings sway across five screens behind the sushi bar, giving diners something to chew on as they nibble their albacore. SAM LUBELL
Two-and-a-half years after flooding devastated New Orleans, a home designed by Los Angeles firm Graft will break ground in the city’s Lower Ninth Ward in March, marking the construction phase of Make It Right, a highly-publicized philanthropic effort to create new homes headed by actor Brad Pitt. Designs by LA firms Morphosis and Pugh + Scarpa are also among the 13 offered for over 150 houses to be built over the next two years. New Orleans-based John Williams is serving as executive architect, with designs contributed by an international cast including Adjaye Associates of England, Constructs of Ghana, MVRDV of the Netherlands, and Shigeru Ban Architects of Japan, along with several local firms. In addition, a core advisory team consists of Graft from Berlin, Germany, and William McDonough + Partners of Charlottesville, Virginia.

Make It Right was announced last September but given a huge financial boost when funds of $5 million each were pledged by Pitt and producer Steve Bing. An even larger publicity boost came when Pitt, a huge architecture enthusiast, assumed a large creative role in the project, personally selecting firms to participate. The results, said Pugh + Scarpa principal Lawrence Scarpa, are houses that combine innovative modern design and an ability to address displaced residents’ needs. He equates it to a modern-day Case Study House program. “There was an idea to give people an opportunity to have a new and different way to live. To provide normal people with quality design.”

The firms were instructed to incorporate green building features into a 1,200-square-foot home to be built for about $150,000. Residents can choose their design, which has made them incredibly curious about the process, said Graft associate Neiel Norheim. Many firms modernized elements of the traditional shotgun houses that existed in the area before the hurricane. Graft’s design reinforces community, with wide stairs on the front porch that can be used for seating and a single hallway connecting the entry to the back porch, uniting the social areas. Pugh + Scarpa’s unique spatial organization is inspired by patchwork quilting, with abstract geometric shapes defining large, family-oriented areas. The exterior is shaded with inexpensive recycled wood pallets and perforated cement board screens to maximize light, while deep roof overhangs create wide porches to further insulate the interiors. Morphosis’ design, which at first appears to be a bright yellow modernization of a shotgun house, actually feels more like a boat inside. Buoyed by polystyrene foam encased in glass fiber-reinforced concrete, the foundation will actually float in high water.

One concern from the architecture community was whether Pitt’s celebrity would eclipse the work of the designers. But Alejandra Lillo, partner at Graft, whose firm has a longstanding relationship with Pitt and was brought on during the earliest brainstorming stages, said Pitt’s commitment has actually been the driving force. “Brad is an incredible philanthropist with keen architectural vision and the determination to elevate the quality of design in this neighborhood,” she said. Scarpa agreed. “Clearly he is more than the public face of the project,” he said, noting that Pitt attended every meeting, sans entourage.

To further spur donations and to help visualize the magnitude of destruction in this neighborhood, Graft also spearheaded a large-scale art installation called the Pink Project, where a team gradually assembled and illuminated 150 structures in a 14-square-block area to represent the number of donations needed to restore the neighborhood. The structures, which looked like giant Monopoly houses when flipped upright, were covered in hot pink Earthtex fabric to be recycled into tote bags. Stefan Beese, executive associate of Graft and executive producer of the Pink Project, said the response to the architects’ presence has been overwhelmingly positive in the community: “The residents of the Lower Ninth were very happy to see that the focus and attention was being brought back to an area that felt like it had been abandoned and was still in such need.”

ALISSA WALKER
Timing, he noted, is what seems to separate the sturdy from the worried. Those who offered presales and secured financing a year or two ago did so during a robust economy. The slowing means that potential buyers today aren’t as likely to jump at a presale, say Atkins. For example, the 19-story Luma property had many buyers fall out of escrow before it opened in July. But they were able to resell those units as the property got closer to completion. “Buyers feel they if they buy today, the price might go down tomorrow,” he said. “There’s no incentive to buy six to nine months out anymore.” Their Eve project will be one of 2008’s largest debuts in a market many consider glutted. But Atkins says traffic to their sales office is good—relatively. “There’s still quite a bit of demand,” he said. “But there’s not as much as there was a few years ago.”

There is one glimmer of hope. The federal economic stimulus package which recently passed by President Bush will raise the conventional loan limit cap from $417,000 to $625,000, meaning that buyers who usually had to find higher-interest, high-risk “jumbo loans” for amounts over $417,000 can lock in to lower, more stable rates. “From our buyer’s perspective, more of the downtown market is accessible at that price point,” said Atkins.

Alissa Walker

The plan will also add retail and slightly more public transportation by moving an existing MUNI stop, adding a new one, and providing low-emissions shuttles to BART. But the intensive scheme, which would radically change this once-sleepy development, has its opponents. Aaron Goodman, an architect at San Francisco’s Studios Architecture and vice president of the Park Merced Residents Organization, the area’s recognized tenant group, complains that the new plans will be unaffordable and will disturb the area’s neighborly atmosphere. “The character of the site will be lost,” said Goodman. “I wouldn’t call it charming, but it’s very effective.” Goodman is one of the leaders in an effort to landmark the property, and has filed documents with the city’s Landmark Preservation Advisory Board.

Docomomo (International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement) is working together with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the California Preservation Foundation, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, and the Cultural Landscape Foundation to get Park Merced placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“It’s highly significant,” said Andrew Wolfram, president of Docomomo’s Northern California chapter, who pointed out that Park Fairfax, also built by Metropolitan Life, is already on the National Register. “We’re not saying it needs to be frozen in time, but its important elements should be preserved,” said Wolfram.

Stellar Management spokesperson P.J. Johnston points out that the scheme has been through 63 community meetings, and that many of the buildings on the property are too degraded to save: “It’s a property that’s well beyond its use-by date. It needs to be revitalized and rebuilt.”

Sam Lurell

NEXT BIG THING continued from front page

of Park Merced. If approved, the scheme for the World War II-era housing development will add about 5,700 new units to the 115-acre site, now renamed Parkmerced, tripling the number of apartments there today. Like Treasure Island, the project’s acre site, now renamed Parkmerced, will add about 5,700 new units to the 115-ac

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OFTORIIAND ROJI
continued from front page
The proposed housing enjoys broad community support, the project poses more complex questions about how best to preserve Japantown’s cultural core when the Japanese-American population is diminishing and only three such districts remain in the United States.
This latest look at reinventing Japantown was set in motion, in part, by the 2006 sale of two malls and a hotel comprising two-thirds of Japan Center plus a nearby hotel to Los Angeles developer 3D Investments. Working with hotel group Joie de Vivre, 3D Investments moved quickly to reopen the hotels as the upscale Hotel Tomo, but heeded the planning department’s request to let the larger vision of the existing hotels and the malls to the streets, to comprehensive site reconfigurations that would more than double the leasable retail space to 200,000 square feet and add 73 to 210 residential units. The higher density of such schemes would require a 14-story tower comparable in scale to the existing hotel.

PUBLIC comment at the meeting and online has favored the “Roji” scheme (roji means “alley” in Japanese), which introduces more human-scaled, mid-density (yet acknowledged the need for Japantown to reach immigration rates and higher densities that would be displaced during construction, yet acknowledged the need for Japantown’s cultural core when the Japanese-American population is diminishing and only three such districts remain in the United States.

TOUGHIYASATO
UNVEILED
Tree House
The tree house is undoubtedly an archetype of an idyllic childhood, providing a retreat from the world of the adults below. Still, this universally loved symbol of childhood innocence has, for the most part, gone the way of the see saw in our world of fear and regulation.

SH_Arc of Venice, California, wants to change that. With construction under way in a private forested estate outside of Seattle for a retired couple and their grandchildren, the firm’s tree house project is sure to strike a chord with adult children everywhere. Conceived as a kind of tree house that doesn’t require a tree, the clients have devised works in concert with the surrounding trees, but relies on steel columns set into cement for its support. The actual modules will be manufactured in a shop out of steel frame and SIT panels and hoisted into place with a crane. Though not much wider than a twin bed, the modules will be twenty and forty feet off the ground and will be used as additional guest houses by the client. The project is set for completion late this summer. SH_Arc will also begin manufacturing their tree house system this year as a kind of modified pre-fab unit available by order.

JAKE TOWNSEND
Architect: SH_Arc
Location: Seattle, Washington

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*Image courtesy of WMCPR Architects, Maryland*
It’s been a rough few weeks for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. First they found out that philanthropist Eli Broad was loaning, not giving, his art to the museum addition he had largely paid for. Then the museum was raided by federal agents as part of an investigation over potentially looted art. Now they have opened a museum that has come under fire for falling short in its design.

Not to say that Renzo Piano’s new Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) is a disaster. It has much of the architect’s trademarks of elegance, craftsmanship, and tasteful deference to art. Spatially, it helps bring unity to a museum complex that has long been disjointed. But it falls short of expectations and of the quality of many of Piano’s other works. This is watered down stuff, not Renzo Piano in top form.

The new addition, composed of two Italian travertine-clad, three-story wings to the west of the existing museum campus, adds 60,000 square feet of new gallery space, showing off works by some of the great masters of contemporary art. It also includes a new “Grand Entrance,” a large covered pavilion connecting the new spaces to the old, a covered walkway linking east and west portions of the museum, a two-level underground parking garage, and a new “Grand Staircase” for LACMA’s Ahmanson Building, which helps unite the museum’s new front. Not so now.

The new plaza, similarly built of a red steel frame with concrete cladding, also seems unresolved: a clunky, strange kit of parts recalling an outdoor high school playground. It appears that the architect hasn’t figured out exactly what it wants to do with this space. Chris Burden’s Urban Light, a wonderful compilation of old lamp posts, further takes away from this spot’s dominance in the area, making it more of a spillover space, not the museum’s heart. Piano would have done better to lay the BCAM’s track record for creating magical museum interiors, as exemplified by the Menil Collection in Houston or the High Museum of Art extension in Atlanta, the interior spaces would justify and offset the exterior. They don’t.

Grand ceiling heights work well with the collection’s large artworks, but Piano’s customary flair for dramatic light scooping fails on the top floor, which felt dark, even muddy, on the brightest of California days. Lower floors are equally dim. And while some spaces need darkness to preserve fragile works, the firm’s recent two-story high school for Richard Serra’s massive sculptures seems like another afterthought, with the architecture adding nothing in particular. The large south-facing louver system feels like a prison from the inside, or as if you’re stuck inside an air conditioner.

Piano pointed out in his opening remarks that Broad wanted the space to be eminently practical, and that it is: no space is wasted. But this is a museum, not a factory. While it should defer to art, it needs to add its own statement, its own richness, its own magic. This extension does not appear to gather inspiration from its art or from its surroundings. It feels dated and familiar, not—like much of Piano’s work—classic and original. As a Piano fan, I find this surprising and disappointing. But I got the feeling while walking through the spaces that Piano was hemmed in by the calculating demands of Broad (a builder of kit-of-parts homes) and of the museum’s board. One gets a glimpse of Piano’s customary talent in his graceful new stairway for the Ahmanson Building, which receives dramatic light from far away and aggressively stakes its claim as the building’s centerpiece. I have to wonder how the whole project would have looked if Piano had had free reign to work his magic.

SAM LUBEll
"It is always a challenge to build a project on a tiny budget," said François Perrin, the architect responsible for a semi-transparent polycarbonate-clad guesthouse recently completed in a Brentwood backyard. "When you are building in Brentwood where you are supposed to be rich, and most people commission million dollar extensions to existing homes, doing something under $100,000 is even more of a challenge." Perrin, however, found freedom within the constraints of the small budget, and from that restriction, a radical structure was born.

The client, an anthropologist who divides his time between Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Brentwood, wanted a backyard structure that would serve several purposes. According to Perrin, the guesthouse is both a live- and work-space and a "cabinet of curiosities where the client can showcase his collection of objects." The client's intent is to use this guesthouse as a prototype for identical buildings to be constructed on his properties in Taiwan and Sri Lanka. Built as a rambling two-story addition in a heavily regulated Brentwood neighborhood, the building became a paean to the limits of the building code. "We created the biggest volume possible to house the client's extensive collection of objects and art," said Perrin. A 20-foot-by-40-foot swath of the backyard was sacrificed to the structure, which makes the most of the miniscule footprint. Perhaps the most striking feature is the exposed framing and plywood, which has been, in a sense, preserved and displayed as one would an artifact. A translucent polycarbonate skin was affixed to the traditional Douglas Fir wood frame. The effect is at once unsettling and uplifting, as if an unfinished structure had been found by an anthropologist and been preserved for curiosity's sake.

The design was equally rooted in practicality, according to Perrin. There are no mechanical or electrical heating or cooling systems; the temperature is regulated through efficient cross-ventilation, taking advantage of the ocean breezes, and through the heat build-up that naturally occurs in a translucent-clad structure. A solar panel on the roof provides a great deal of the electricity. "The idea was to use as little energy as is possible," Perrin says. He points out that a combination of wind turbines and solar panels should take the future projects in Taiwan and Sri Lanka completely off the grid.

At just 400 square feet, the building maximizes the interior space with a small loft. The lower level, which is dominated by an oversized floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, is devoted to the client's work. A small tatami mat was placed in one corner for meetings and meditation and the second floor loft houses a small bed and bathroom. Perrin sees the unfinished look of the building as a means of creating a link between the language of construction and the natural environment. "The choice to reveal the framing creates interconnection; that moment when a building is unfinished creates a more interesting condition between interior and exterior—and the building itself is a transitional moment," he says. "Sometimes a tiny budget makes for more interesting architecture."
In San Francisco, where so many residents pride themselves for leading such a high quality of life, the bar for innovative architecture is embarrassingly low. By this standard, nearly anything Stanley Saitowitz manages to build here qualifies as a small coup. Whether or not you favor the stripped-down chic of his buildings—he has an obvious penchant for concrete structures and metal cladding—there’s much to appreciate in his ability to push an aesthetic aim through to completion.

One of the latest projects for his firm, Stanley Saitowitz/Natoma Architects, is a 33,000-square-foot synagogue and Jewish community center for San Francisco’s Congregation Beth Sholom, is almost there. The project is just months from completion. Even now, it looks nearly finished, save for a few rows of zinc panels that need to be applied to the surface of a 12-foot plinth. The metal cladding will rise up from street level to form the surface of a large rectangular box whose most prominent vertical edge punctuates the corner of the 14th Avenue and Clement Street intersection.

Although the design includes loose references to the ancient Masada synagogue in Israel, its inspiration does not stem from any single source. “Hebraic architecture has a tendency to melt into what’s going at the time,” said Saitowitz. “Jewish culture is regulated, but its architecture is not.”

The project has been more than five years in the making: Board members of Congregation Beth Sholom, Northern California’s main Conservative congregation, hired Saitowitz in 2002 to design the $10.5 million campus in the city’s Richmond District. To some, this neighborhood of quiet streets lined with three-story Victorians may seem an unlikely location for Saitowitz’s minimalist aesthetic. Aside from the 30-foot height limit, the synagogue bears little resemblance to its wood and stucco neighbors. But to Saitowitz, the task of relating a building to its surroundings involves a level of thoughtfulness—in this case, about proportion, color, and massing—that is usually missing from simpler, more facade-focused efforts to make a building fit in.

At Beth Sholom, meaningful contextualism occurs by way of contrast, not mimicry. “They’re not supposed to be contextual,” Saitowitz said, referring to both the synagogue and the domed Christian Science Church, located a few blocks away. “It’s always been the nature of religious architecture to stand out.”

The Congregation’s activities are organized into two separate buildings: a glass “cube” and a concrete “bowl” joined by a split-level courtyard. An early rendering shows the box-like structure wrapped in channel glass—yet the zinc paneling maintains the lightness of the original design, especially in contrast to the heaviness of the concrete sanctuary.

The “cube” will house community functions, including a library, meeting rooms, a double-height event hall, and a kitchen. This building also includes the Congregation’s daily prayer chapel, a rectangular room that will be finished in floor-to-ceiling walnut and lined with stained glass windows preserved from the Congregation’s former sanctuary.

In a playful twist on the properties of building materials, the 700-seat sanctuary—a bowl-shaped mass made of a solid concrete shell—seemingly balances atop a lightweight podium. In fact, the sanctuary is rooted in the concrete foundation through three sets of concrete pylons visible in the office spaces below.

The primary aim of the bowl-shaped sanctuary is to emphasize union around shared rituals. It is also meant to encourage equal participation in the liturgy, thereby eliminating the Orthodox tradition of separating women and men during services. Saitowitz envisions the room “filling like a cup” when ceremonies begin, the experience only enhanced by daylight that enters through slits in both the center and around the perimeter of the roof.

Visitors will have to wait a few more months to experience this first-hand. In the meantime, we must rely on the poetry of Saitowitz’s vision: “The walls are people; the roof floats over this cup; the connections are light.”
The AIA Honor Awards are given annually to outstanding projects across the country. Of the 28 awards presented, nine went to projects or firms located on the West Coast.

**ARCHITECTURE**

**26th Street Low Income Housing**
Santa Monica, California
Kanner Architects

This low-income family housing project is the product of an exhaustive community outreach mission. The design incorporates the region’s mild climate, historical precedents of Southern California modernist architecture, and the human scale of residents and pedestrians.

**Delta Shelter**

Mazama, Washington
Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects

This 1,000-square-foot weekend cabin is essentially a steel-clad box on stilts that can be completely shuttered when the owner is away. Raised above the ground to minimize potential flood damage and take in 360-degree views of the surrounding forest and mountains, the cabin was conceived as a low-tech, virtually indestructible weekend house.

**Griffith Observatory**

Los Angeles
Pfeiffer Partners Architects

The renovation took the famous telescope into new dimensions, restoring its mix of Beaux Arts, Neoclassical and Art Deco features while more than doubling its size with the addition of new exhibition spaces, a theater, and a cafe. Griffith Observatory, one of Los Angeles’ most visible and beloved landmarks, is an iconic presence in the Hollywood Hills.

**Olympic Sculpture Park**

Seattle
Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism

This project is located on Seattle’s last undeveloped waterfront property, sliced by train tracks and an arterial road. The design connects three separate sites with an uninterrupted Z-shaped “green” platform, descending 40 feet from the city to the water, capitalizing on views of the skyline and Elliot Bay and rising over existing infrastructure to reconnect the urban core to the revitalized waterfront.

**Residence Halls Units 1 & 2**

Infill Student Housing

Berkeley, California
EHD Architecture

The architects’ solution of infill student housing remedies the urban design challenges of an existing residential site one block south of the University of California at Berkeley campus. The project increases the density of housing units, creates more usable open space for students, maintains a street wall with units oriented toward the public street, and helps to reduce the scale disparity between the existing housing and the more modest structures in the neighborhood.

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**FUEL FOR DESIGN**

Los Angeles River Rehabilitation Master Plan

Los Angeles

CIVITAS INC.

The 32-mile long concrete channel of the Los Angeles River cuts through the city with restrictive abandon. A team of engineers, urban designers, and landscape architects led the urban design and river planning efforts to create a master plan that will rehabilitate the river into a green amenity and an economic engine.

---

**NEUTRA HOUSE FOR SALE**

Richard Neutra’s renowned Kaufmann Desert House will be auctioned off in New York on May 13 by Christie’s Realty International. The auction house expects a $15 million to $25 million final bid for the 62-year-old five-bedroom home in Palm Springs. This is the latest in a long line of iconic midcentury modern houses that have been auctioned off in the last few years, and certainly the most high-profile, which proves that at least this tiny sector of the housing market is still thriving.

---

**LA’S MAGNETIC PLANS**

Will Angelinos ever give up their cars? As traffic continues to worsen, the City Council hopes so, and to entice them to do so, the council has chosen a racy package: maglev. On February 6, the council gave initial approval to a $26 billion public-private venture that would link downtown with the ports of LA and Long Beach and the Ontario Airport. This unusual arrangement is because the high-speed train will not only carry passengers but also freight, thereby taking not only passenger cars but also delivery trucks and tractor-trailers off the road.
Growth occurs from the center of activity.
For the past four years, our New York editors have asked our readers to do the unthinkable and reveal their favorite consultants, contractors, and suppliers. Hundreds of architects have responded, and each year we’ve been able to publish a directory of the best sources for the profession out there, from saintly contractors to mom- and-pop cabinet-making shops. Now we’re continuing the tradition in California. So without further ado, we present our first annual California Favorite Sources issue.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBI Construction</td>
<td>1155 Third St., Oakland, CA; 510-288-6200</td>
<td>510-286-8200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bbbconstruction.com">www.bbbconstruction.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Brothers</td>
<td>1402 W. Farn Dr., Fullerton, CA; 714-671-0465</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Osvaldsson Builders</td>
<td>1333 Pine St., Santa Monica, CA; 310-382-8899</td>
<td>310-392-8899</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bob-inc.com">www.bob-inc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonomo Development</td>
<td>1523 Linda Ct., Simi Valley, CA; 805-407-0578</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CW Driver</td>
<td>488 North Rosemead Blvd., Pasadena, CA; 626-351-8800</td>
<td>626-351-8800</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cedriver.com">www.cedriver.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkins Construction</td>
<td>4177 Yake Ave., La Mesa, CA; 619-463-1222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matarozzi/Pelzinger</td>
<td>1080 Capp St., San Francisco; 415-286-6930</td>
<td>415-699-5274</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thompsonsuskind.com">www.thompsonsuskind.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw &amp; Sons Construction</td>
<td>829 W. 17th St., Costa Mesa, CA; 949-642-0660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas George Construction</td>
<td>8716 Carmel Valley Rd., Carmel, CA; 831-624-7315</td>
<td>831-624-7315</td>
<td><a href="http://www.matpelbuilders.com">www.matpelbuilders.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young &amp; Burton</td>
<td>345 Hartz Ave., Danville, CA; 510-820-4953</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.youngandburton.com">www.youngandburton.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Produced by Sam Lubell and Izabel Gass.

All images courtesy firms, unless otherwise noted.
“GIlsanz Murray Steficek are really flexible, and react quickly. We called them the day before yesterday about a project detail and they were able to turn it around in a day. It's a small detail, but with other firms it could take much longer.”

Paul Zajfen
CO Architects

“IBE are mechanical engineers who have the same sort of sensibilities as architects. They're very concerned about sustainability and look at engineering from a global perspective; problem-solving at a large-scale level. And they're very interested in exploring new ideas.”

Paul Zajfen
CO Architects

“With principal Mike Ishler, you can really have a collaborative design experience. If you want to push your design technologically and structurally, he's your guy.”

Barbara Bestor
Barbara Bestor Architecture
“The intimate success of our projects is this idea that there’s a balance between material and texture. The fact that we can have that conversation with Basil Studio and play with that balance together makes the collaboration really strong.”

Jennifer Luce
Luce et Studio

“Deglas’s Heatstop is amazing. It’s twice the R value of insulated glass at half the cost. And it comes in 24-foot-long sheets that you can cut on site.”

Whitney Sander
Sander Architects

“Benchmark Scenery have a lot of expertise in making very complicated things very quickly.”

Peter Zellner
Zellner + Architects

“JU Construction did fantastically good work. They’ll try anything.”

Craig Hodgetts
Hodgetts & Fung
Mike Amaya listens to you. He’s not fixated on a certain way of doing things. His renderings have life, but they don’t try to duplicate what reality would be. We’re more interested in capturing the spirit of the place.”

Larry Scarpa
Pugh + Scarpa Architects

“Stephanie Bartron’s background is sculpture, and I think she brings a more artistic perspective and architectural edge to landscapes.”

Barbar Bestor
Barbara Bestor Architecture

Mills Center for the Arts:
COMPETITION ENTRY
PUGH + SCARPA
MIKE AMAYA
Supplement 01

Hardware

Published by The Architect’s Newspaper

www.archpaper.com/hardware

Products: Monitor Tracks; Adjustable Hinges; Cabinet Pulls /
Trends: Digital Smart Locks / New Approaches to Sliding Doors

Profile

Index-d

COURTESY INDEX-D
For architects, hardware can be a sleeping giant that rears its expensive head when a contractor can’t figure out a custom-designed sliding door or when an offset pivot hinge needs more than a little modifying. And when European manufactured products enter the mix, a lack of familiarity can have architects up to their necks in foreign installation requirements and instructions.

Recognizing this, architect Nils Wiesenmüller and civil engineer Matthew Preston combined their exasperation and design sensibility to offer a solution: Index-d. A distributor of around 20 European and American manufacturers, the Connecticut-based firm also offers services—from hardware customization to installation support—that make the specification process a walk in the park.

After only a year of full-fledged operation, their resume includes co-designing a modified sliding panel system for Harvard University and providing Simonswerk concealed hinges for the new Prada store in Las Vegas. It might have been fate that brought the two together, when Preston answered a roommate ad in a Berlin newspaper in 1991. Originally from Connecticut, Preston had gone to Germany to travel but ended up spending four years studying and working there while his German-born roommate studied architecture. In 1998, after returning to America and attending graduate school, Preston encouraged Wiesenmüller to come to Connecticut to form the Bridgeport Design Group, an architecture firm specializing in high-end professional office and boutique retail spaces.

In 2002, the group began work on the design for the Progressive Medicine Center in Kent, Connecticut, whose complex foreign hardware specifications gave birth to Index-d. Since its founding, the company has grown from two to five employees and from providing products solely for their own architecture firm to filling a niche that benefits architects and contractors all over the world.

In my early days, I naively assumed when I did a hardware spec that the contractor would do his homework, find the hardware, and get it installed,” said Preston. “We saw a need not only for the hardware itself but also to provide services for finding the products and for specifying them without architects killing themselves.”

The recent project for Harvard University highlights one of the company’s specialties: customization. Last month, it modified an Astec exposed sliding door system to support a set of glass marker boards and framed Forbo panels that would glide over each other for the entire length of a 27-foot conference room wall, the modified carriage wheels have an integrated panel stop, which, unlike a rail stop, allows the system a full range of movement.

“Customization is just a huge issue for architects who are trying to stretch the design dollar,” said Humberto Cordero, marketing director at Index-d.

The firm also helped design several customized hardware products and generated the entire hardware schedule for an addition to a home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that will be completed this year. “They effectively worked as a hardware consultant,” said Catherine Truman, an associate at Antithet Architects. “But what really sets them apart from other companies is their background in design,” said Truman, who envisioned a minimalist hinge for a set of large overlay chino cabinet doors that was not available through any manufacturer. It had to be custom designed through a collaboration between Index-d and Thoughtforms, their contractor.

“Coming from a design background, Preston understood what I was talking about,” said Graham Grallert, the shop supervisor of the millwork department at Thoughtforms. He sent a few sketches to Index-d and Preston offered a solution. Accurate Lock & Hardware, based in Connecticut, fabricated a similar hinge that could be altered to be more inconspicuous.

“With our expertise and design sensibility, we can help in the specification process so the architect can hand over the drawings and the schedule and we can provide a detailed spec that offers not only the architect but the contractor a very simple and straightforward solution,” said Cordero.

Last year, Preston chose to devote himself entirely to Index-d, and Wiesenmüller took over Bridgeport Design Group. They currently have about 40 open projects, including another contemporary residential project with Thoughtforms and the new Prada store in Las Vegas. The age of the hardware consultant has arrived.
FSB offers a consistent design theme for all openings in your project, including lever handles, door and cabinet knobs, door stops and pulls, as well as window handles.

Known for design excellence and premier product quality, FSB USA stocks thirty-five lever designs in satin stainless steel and natural anodized aluminum in our North American Distribution Center. All other finishes shown are available from our German production facility within three to six weeks.

These products are supplied complete with US-made (ANSI Grade 1) mortise locks and UL-rated (3 Hour) tubular latches. Contact us for your design needs.

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PRODUCT
A DROP RING PULL
NANZ

Designed to operate a mortise latchset, this pull combines Georgian simplicity with Baroque compound curves. On its lip, the three-inch-diameter ring sports a plain astragal, also available with beaded or roped detailing. A back-to-back application can be used with doors thicker than two inches. With its refined look and hidden fasteners, this new pull is appropriate for a variety of interiors. Pick from more than 100 plated and patinated finishes from Nanz’s Brooklyn factory, including light pewter, chrome, and stately antique gold.

Hand-rubbed bronze gets squeaky clean with this new brushed-finish collection from Rocky Mountain Hardware. Melding old-world casting techniques with precise CNC machining, the Idaho-made, solid bronze hardware is finished by hand, giving each piece its own panache. Serving applications from knob entry and multipoint sets to sliding doors, the Metro line runs from pristine white bronze (pictured) to a rusty-hued silicon bronze that looks impeccably ravaged. As a bonus, Rocky Mountain’s wares are certified to contain 72 percent minimum recycled content, of which 50 percent is post-consumer.

For clients with a conservative bent, Ormia’s new Traditions line offers classic looks in 14 knobs and levers, including a mix of new and existing designs. Door knob No. 443 (pictured, in the polished nickel finish) features subtle scalloped details. Traditional round, beaded round, and rectangular rose options are available in two sizes. Finishes include a mix of traditional and contemporary looks, ranging from antique bronze to polished chrome.

These Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired door handles were originally commissioned by a Japanese manufacturer and have only recently become available in the United States. Known for his snazzy Italian modernist designs, New York architect George Ranalli riffs on geometric form while highlighting modern functionality. Radiating tactility and warmth, the Lock-it (pictured) and Charm levers are said to be more ergonomic than a plain doorknob. Made of three cast aluminum pieces, the Lock-it comes in an electro-coated matte clear finish; as does the Charm, made of cast brass; and the larger Pendant, a push plate/pull bar in brass and brushed nickel.

The angled grip on this rectilinear cabinet pull is enticingly grabable. It comes with a single satin chrome finish or a split satin- and polished-chrome (pictured), which provides a bit of visual interest and tactile pizzazz. Made of zinc alloy and brass, the pull comes in three sizes, 6 inches, 8 inches, and 12 inches from center to center; the largest can even be used on your refrigerator.

This adjustable concealed hinge makes it possible to get a completely flush surface on the hinge side of a door. It’s three-dimensionally adjustable to move the door a few millimeters horizontally, vertically, and depth-wise, keeping it even and level with the wall. At 8.2 inches, the largest of three available sizes of the stainless-steel hinge can support a door weighing almost 400 pounds.
The last 30 years have brought an explosion of options in hardware. There are products to suit nearly every use and aesthetic—even niche novelties such as doorknobs that smell good or light up in the dark. But, said experts in the field, several overarching trends are shaping today’s market. For architectural hardware, moving parts are gaining popularity. In the world of locks, security concerns have made high-tech hot. And when it comes to items that make a design statement, clients are willing to shell out more for the perfect look to punctuate their space.

John Risch, business and showroom manager of Häfele, has found droves of architects streaming into Manhattan’s 26th Street showroom for the perfect look to punctuate their space. For the perfect look to punctuate clients are willing to shell out more for items that make a design statement, security concerns have made high-tech hot. And when it comes to items that make a design statement, clients are willing to shell out more for the perfect look to punctuate their space.

In a project for one company, for example, Ted Mondis Associates project designer Kimberly Sharpe recently faced the challenge of helping to create a conference room that could be transformed into a café area when meetings weren’t in session. Through Häfele, her firm specified the Hawa Super 250, a hardware system for top-hung sliding doors. Surrounding three sides of the pentagon-shaped conference space, several glass panels slide behind a stationary panel or into pockets to the side, out of the way. “Now we have a conference room that can suddenly—presto change-o—become something else. It’s sort of James Bond-like,” Sharpe said. Her firm’s own office has a Hawa Cornectec sliding door system in its elevator lobby area, which closes to provide security at night. Versatility is the name of the game in locks, too, leading to the rise of electronic access control (EAC) systems in office buildings, hotels, and residential towers, among other places. EACs come in many varieties, including ones that scan fingerprints or read chips embedded in access cards. These smart locks not only secure doors and cabinets, they can be programmed to do so selectively—only during certain hours and for specific people. They also gather information about who has used the lock when. Thus a business could use the electronic records to figure out who was present at the time of a theft, which is helpful for insurance purposes, said Joey Dalessio, director of business development for Marks USA.

Another advantage is the heightened security such locks offer. Manhattan’s Bellevue Hospital switched from Simplex locks—a mechanical push-button type that accepts one code from everyone—to Marks USA’s IQ Access Control system. Some locks in the new system can accept more than 3,000 users, each with a unique electronic access card or code to enter on a keypad. As a result, the hospital’s security is now much tighter, said Martin Murphy, the hospital’s supervisor for the locksmith’s shop. But the fastest-growing area of EACs—and those with the highest potential for security—are biometric: systems that read body parts such as retinas or fingerprints. For hardware that’s designed to be on display—doorknobs, handles, cabinet pulls, and the like—there is enormous variety on the market, and with the rising popularity of home-design TV shows, many clients are increasingly savvy and willing to pay more than before for just the right look.

“It’s changed a lot over the last ten years: With HGTV and Extreme Makeover, you see all these crazy things,” said Steve Hertzberg, national account manager for Topex Hardware. When clients see hardware, paint, or moldings they don’t like on a design show, they often ask architects to emulate it, he added. Fortunately, there’s also been an explosion of products to match the demand (though some firms still favor their own custom designs). For many years, brass was the default finish, then occasionally chrome in the 1970s and ’80s, Hertzberg added, but now, the options are numerous: stainless steel, satin nickel, and distressed finishes, to name just a few. For years, Vali & Vali has offered door levers by top designers and architects that, naturally, cost top dollar. “There’s a stratification going on in the market,” remarked Matthew Preston, managing director of Index-d. While builders may be inclined to go for the cheap stuff, architects tend to be pickier and to spend more—and high-end hardware companies such as Nanz, E.R. Butler & Co., FSB, and d line are reaping the benefits, he said. However, “not all the projects that an architect gets involved with have the budgets to pay for that kind of stuff. In those situations I think it’s pretty difficult for the architect to get what he wants these days. You have to make compromises and do your best.”

Below: With the Hawa Cornectec 150 G/V sliding door system, panels can slide open during the day and shut at night to provide security. Above: Marks USA’s IQ1KPT/26D electronic access control lock is programmable.
ASSA ABLOY is the global sponsor of the Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future exhibition which will travel to Bloomfield Hills, MI; Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis, MN; St. Louis, MO and New Haven, CT through 2010.

www.eerosaarinen.net

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Exit Devices | Master Key Systems
DIARY

FEBRUARY

WEDNESDAY 27
Lecture
State in Green Architecture
6:30 p.m.
Assistance League of Pasadena
820 East California Blvd.,
Pasadena
www.aliap.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
The Austrian Winery Boom—
A Wine and Architecture
Miracle
COPIA: The American Center for Wine, Food & the Arts
500 1st St., Napa
www.copia.org

THURSDAY 28
Lecture
Architecture & Beyond
6:30 p.m.
Los Felix Library
17417 Hillhurst Ave.,
Los Angeles
www.lapl.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Michael Moon
Inner Spaces
Artamio Gallery
11 West Anapamu St.,
Santa Barbara
www.artamio.com

FRIDAY 29
Lectures
Ramiro Diaz Granados,
Heather Flood
1:00 p.m.
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
www.sciarc.net

EXHIBITION OPENING
Mitzi Pederson
Hammer Projects
Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

MARCH

SATURDAY 1
Lecture
Eritia Naginaki, Louis Marchesano, Marcia Reed
The Magnificent Piranesi
Marchesano, Marcia Reed
Erika Naginski, Louis
SATURDAY 1
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Armand Hammer Museum
Hammer Projects
Mitzi Pederson
EXHIBITION OPENING
Los Angeles
1:00 p.m.
Jancar Gallery
3875 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.jancar-gallery.com

WEDNESDAY 5
Lecture
Mark Johnson
Re-Building Civilitas—
The Re-Generation of
Place in Urban Design
7:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
www.sciarc.edu

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Enrique Chagoya
Borderlandia
Gallery Paule Anglim
14 Geary St., San Francisco
www.gallerypauleanglim.com

Martin Schostiller
Bodybuilders
ACE Gallery
Los Angeles Institute of
Contemporary Art
5514 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.acegallery.net

Friday 5
Lecture
Douglas Crimp
Action Around the Edges
7:00 p.m.
Fowler Museum of Art
308 Charles East Young Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.fowler.ucla.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING
The Color of Life
The J. Paul Getty Villa
17865 Pacific Coast Hwy.,
Pacific Palisades
www.getty.edu

FRIDAY 7
Lecture
Marc Frohn
so FA so good
6:00 p.m.
W. M. Keck Lecture Hall
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles
www.sciarc.edu

SATURDAY 8
EXHIBITION OPENING
Carlos Estevaz
New Works
Courtyard Gallery
168 North La Brea Ave.,
Los Angeles
www.courtyardgallery.com

SUNDAY 9
EXHIBITION OPENING
Ed Ruscha
Honor Fraser
1337 Abbot Kinney Blvd.,
Venice
www.honorfraser.com

SUNDAY 2
EXHIBITION OPENING
Kara Walker
My Compliment, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love
Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

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FEBRUARY/MARCH

THURSDAY 13
Lecture
Wangshu Mu
7:00 p.m.
Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

THURSDAY 14
Lecture
Hiromi Nakamura
1:00 p.m.
Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

EVENT
CA Boom V
Annual California Design
Show
11:00 a.m.
Barker Hangar
Santa Monica Airport
3021 Airport Ave.,
Santa Monica
www.caboomshow.com

SATURDAY 15
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Ana Bagayan
Yoko Tanaka
Judith Schwachter
Billy Shire Fine Arts
5790 Washington Blvd.,
Culver City
www.billyshirefinearts.com

Anne Laure Sacriste
Chung King Project
936 Chung King Rd.,
Los Angeles
www.chungkingproject.com

California Video
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

Kate Crowe
Gina Borg
Jancar Gallery
3875 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.jancar-gallery.com

SUNDAY 16
EXHIBITION OPENING
Russell Olson
A Studio Gallery
4300 Lankershim Blvd.,
Studio City
www.astudio-gallery.com

THURSDAY 20
Lecture
Ronald E. Steen
Plein Air:
From Okefenokee to the Arroyo
7:30 p.m.
The Neighborhood Church
San Fernando City
2 Westmoreland Pl.,
Pasadena
www.gamblehouse.org

FILM
Fighting for Life & A Time of War
(Terry Sanders, 2008), 89 min.
7:00 p.m.
Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

SATURDAY 22
EXHIBITION OPENING
In Collaboration:
Early Works from the
Media Arts Collection
San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art
503 1st St., San Francisco
www.sfmoma.org

SUNDAY 23
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Allan Kaprow
Art As Life
The Geffen Contemporary
at MOCA
152 North Central Ave.,
Los Angeles
www.moca.org

David Wetzel
Carbon/Silicone Hybrid Zone:
New Work
Martha Edmisten Lol
Another Year in LA
1213 North San Fernando Rd.,
Los Angeles
www.anotheryearinla.com

or public, austere or grandiose. Photographer Candida Höfer
This show explores the many ways that painters and pho-
SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
the topography of a cliff overlooking the Bay of Naples. The
walls punctured by tiny windows in shades of sand-yellow
and purple-tinted whites. A photograph taken by Rudofsky,
Casa Orsi (Naples, Italy). View of Three Terraces, shows
lounging women on the protruding terraces and ledges of
one of his own works of architecture, which responds to
the topography of a cliff overlooking the Bay of Naples. The
displayed appreciation of unrestricted life pleasures could
have some museumgoers enjoying a suiper supper.

LESSONS FROM BERNARD RUDOFSKY
J. Paul Getty Museum
1200 Getty Center Dr., Los Angeles
March 11 to June 8

From Rudofsky’s love of vernacular architecture to his belief that
people should eat lying down (imagine robed Romans
being fed grapes), the Austrian-born architect, critic, and
fashion designer extolled the spontaneity and celebration of
sensual pleasures he discovered during his extensive
global travels. The exhibit’s 140-odd pieces—watercolors,
drawings, photographs, architectural models, and more—
explore the relationship between his various philosophies
on eating, sleeping, designing, and even bathing habits, and
include a series of colored slides documenting the for-
paign places and customs that brought him to reconsider the
Western routine. In his 1929 artwork View of Oia, Santorini
Island, Greece (above), watercolor and pencil depict a dense,
sun-scorched mound of vernacular box dwellings, thick
walls punctured by tiny windows in shades of sand-yellow
and purple-tinted whites. A photograph taken by Rudofsky,
Casa Orsi (Naples, Italy). View of Three Terraces, shows
lounging women on the protruding terraces and ledges of
one of his own works of architecture, which responds to
the topography of a cliff overlooking the Bay of Naples. The
displayed appreciation of unrestricted life pleasures could
have some museumgoers enjoying a suiper supper.

INSIDE ARCHITECTURE:
SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
Museum of Contemporary Art
Pacific Design Center
8687 Maltrose Ave., West Hollywood
March 9 to June 1
In his new book, A. Quincy Jones, author Cory Buckner says that the architect worked with “economy and simplicity, beauty and quiet reserve.” The epitaph is fitting. Quincy Jones, the Los Angeles-based modernist, was committed to the notion that design was more than an aesthetic exercise. He believed that what he sketched out on vellum had to reflect a set of social ambitions. He called for luxury living on a tight budget and a tiny plot of land. He thought that the layout and volumes in homes ought to ease the burden of homemaking and family life. He believed that architecture had to work in tandem with city planning—by building large tracts centered around public spaces like parks and schools, doctor’s offices, and supermarkets. Jones practiced what he preached. With his partner, Frederick E. Emmons, Jones helped design the seminal Eichler Homes for northern California developer Joseph L. Eichler. Eleven thousand Eichlers were built according to Jones’ conception of a small, open floor plan, with nearly every room exiting to the exterior and flooded with light. Triumphs of compression, the post-and-beam houses shaped the idea of postwar, subdivision American life. He was a student of Lionel H. Pries at the University of Washington, who taught that architecture was not about the manipulation of historical styles, but was involved in “problem-solving.” In postwar America, as Levittown initiated the era of mass-produced suburbs, Jones rightly perceived that the rise of cheap, cookie-cutter housing was the demise of community. Rarely were architects given a chance to unite their social commitment to large-scale projects. As Buckner demonstrates, Jones was lucky twice. His first chance, before he signed on with Eichler, was as the architect for an enormous, overly-ambitious project of 500 homes for the Cooperative Housing Group—a communal development initiated by four musicians in 1951 in the then-blank Crestwood Hills, above Brentwood. Jones shrank lot sizes to make room for a nursery school, park, and a recreation center. Contrary to the customary practice of lining up the houses in a straight row, Jones placed them off-kilter to the streets, to capture the hillside views and offer privacy in a crowded development. “The houses were finished in their natural state,” Buckner writes, “concrete block, redwood siding, exposed Douglas fir plywood and tongue-and-groove ceiling planks, with no applied plaster or paint.” Glass walls, sliding doors, and plywood clerestories extended spaciousness to the modest, 1,200-square-foot homes. Jones’ own Steel House #2, which he built in 1954, is a model of his conception that luxury can be coaxed from a small footprint and simple materials. The one-story, steel frame house was partially prefabricated off-site and trucked in. Completed in just three months, the house consisted of a super-thin flat roof floating above glass walls. Dead simple, but then Jones took the interior space, and rather than carve it up, he left it truly open. Curtains closed off the living spaces from public areas. The living room doubled as a library, with a bed that converted to a couch. The kitchen was kitchen, family room, and dining room, all in one.

In the small room off the main gallery, all in one. continued on page 28

LA conceptual artist Michael Asher is presenting a unique new site-specific installation at the Santa Monica Museum of Art. He has reconstructed the structure (steel stud walls) of the 44 exhibitions that have taken place at the museum since 1998, when the museum relocated to its current location: Bergamot Station (a large art gallery complex, formerly a trolley station). As you enter the main gallery, you feel like the exhibition has yet to open; several stud walls awaiting their final layer occupy the space intersecting each other in all directions. The result is an open labyrinth you can see and walk through that creates a mesmerizing visual experience, as well as a time travel into the recent history of the museum.

You can look at this piece in many different ways: a kinetic sculpture that you can navigate, an architectural space in (de)construction, or maybe just the ghosts of exhibitions past.

The use of steel stud walls spaced 16 inches on center (the required spacing distance by the building code) makes the space navigable as you walk through each wall. This experience of moving through a memory of a space transforms the museum into a lively experience.

In the small room at the entrance of the museum, you can find the drawings of the 44 floor plans of previous exhibitions, making for an interesting visual journey. continued on page 28

ESSENTIAL LUXURY
A. Quincy Jones
Cory Buckner
Phaidon, $29.95

REVIEWS
27

WALKING THROUGH WALLS
Michael Asher
Santa Monica Museum of Art
2525 Michigan Avenue, Santa Monica
Through April 12

With steel stud walls, artist Michael Asher reconstructed 44 past exhibitions.
BRINGING ARCHITECTURE TO LIGHT

The recent exhibit Primaries and Secondaries, a survey of the career and work of artist Robert Irwin, speaks volumes to an architect, especially Robert Irwin, an architect of space, light, and perception. This new exhibit curated by Hugh Davies, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), focuses on the fascinating way that Irwin touches our perceptions, bringing to light tactile sensations, spatial relationships, and the sensual reactions that make everyday life in the space of architecture meaningful. Irwin does what easy what architects strive to achieve in the span of careers. He points to and marks our physical and psychological relationship with the world around us.

Davies’ exhibit follows the full spectrum of Irwin’s artistic life and formal language. Included are the early abstract expressionist dot paintings, compelling acrylic discs pieces, his scrim environments (Squaring the Room), and more recent site-specific installations (Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue) and the light wall Five x Five. Once again, Irwin uses his work to observe, analyze, and respond to surrounding architecture, questioning its meaning and revealing its essence. Works in the exhibit, old and new, identify Irwin as a philosopher of space and alchemist of light, setting him apart from other artists of his time.

Primaries and Secondaries is housed in the new MCASD annex in the Santa Fe Baggage Depot, San Diego. The annex, an urban gift to the city, has been carefully and thoughtfully renovated by New York architect Richard Gluckman and is fertile ground for Irwin. In recent years, Irwin has played the role of interpreter of architecture, designer of landscapes, and architect in his own right. For him, it is like being home in an environment that allows him to play with the dappled light, intensify form in space, and alter volumes with the insertion of the ephemeral.

A quick survey of his early works on the second floor reminds us of Irwin’s journey, and sets the stage for his phenomenological approach to space. On the ground floor, Five x Five is a scrim-filled room that picks up where he left off with his installation at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas (2006). Massive black and white scrim panels compose a labyrinth. The visitor is invited to enter this ephemeral world, weaving between them. In the formation of distinct volume and space, undefined boundaries created by translucency and light make the experience magical.

Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue is a series of panels, some hovering just above ground, some suspended in mid-air. These panels are so perfectly crafted that upon initial encounter, one feels Irwin has taken the act of creating to new heights. On close inspection, panels make infinite space; reflections double upon themselves, and architecture becomes infinite, color the tool for creating a dynamic stage for phenomenal sensation. Finally, Light and Space is an installation of precisely mounted fluorescent tubes composed on a huge wall. The light emanating from the tubes creates an aura both sensual and ominous; carefully calculated spacing between tubes takes a white backdrop wall and makes it shades of gray, something Irwin said he initially was not sure would happen.

Irwin’s work embodies courage and bravery, a confidence that his sense of light and space will carry his work to uncharted territory. If each of us as architects could take these chances, could make magic happen, this world would be a truly fascinating place.

JENNIFER LUCE IS AN ARCHITECT IN SAN DIEGO.

EXHIBITIONS REDUX continued from page 27 reference as you notice how the space has evolved through time. Often the space was given a new configuration for a few exhibitions before returning to a void without walls. Besides the familiar experience that architects or builders can encounter in the dynamic environment of a construction site, the installation recalls some of the early works of Frank Gehry (an architect with whom the artist once collaborated), such as his nearby iconic house where some of the walls structures were left exposed, or the works of Gordon Matta-Clark, another artist interested in architectural space and its deconstruction.

The work is also reminiscent of Asher’s earlier projects. The artist has been exploring the institutional spaces of exhibition (museums, galleries, and public spaces) since the late 1960s, when he started to reconstruct the spaces that were proposed to him. Some of his most striking interventions include the removal of a number of museums or other art institutions around the world, and while some artists would make a lifelong career of this, Asher will stop with this installation. Asher is a native of Los Angeles but rarely shows in his city, so it would be wise to take advantage of this event, as no one knows when it will happen again.

The artist can spend years working on just one piece; this one has been seven years in the making.

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You would expect that the boldest urban gesture heralding mixed use in Los Angeles would be happening downtown, where the much anticipated $3 billion Grand Avenue plan is being gilded by Frank Gehry and work continues on the $2.5 billion L.A. Live extravaganza produced by RTKL and a host of other firms.

In contrast, what is perhaps more impressive and significant for Los Angeles is an ambitious transit-oriented development in North Hollywood, the NoHo Art Wave, developed by Lowe Enterprises, which recently won a competition hosted by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

The winning scheme may not twist, turn, and sizzle in the Southland sun as the structural indulgences of our star architects do, but judging from the submitted plans, the project appears to be potentially much more friendly to those who will actually live, work, and visit there. Now there is a divertissement in one’s critical matrix.

Master-planned by the local firm AC Martin Partners, with a challenging mix of uses and a refreshing site plan, the $1 billion proposal lends to the sprawling suburbs San Fernando Valley the hope of a welcomed urban density and a desirable focal point.

Well, maybe not that welcomed in the valley, where in recent years, fear that development of any heft and substance might heighten the growing gridlock and lower municipal services has cast a pall over real planning and urban design. And the project definitely has the heft and substance to unnerve the NIMBYs, no doubt prompting charges of Manhattanization, while conversely, paradoxically, making starry-eyed architects ache with envy. Lowe Enterprises proposes the transformation of 16 acres of now mostly surface parking lots around the major intersection of Chandler and Lankershim boulevards into a conglomeration of nearly one million square feet of office space, 200,000 square feet of retail, restaurants, and entertainment, and 560-plus units of various housing types, including nearly 100 affordable. Then there is the ubiquitous parking and various community facilities.

Add the public garages and open space located at the convergence of the Redline subway and Orange line busway routes linking the valley to Hollywood and downtown, and you have the makings of a true satellite city center. That indeed was the hope of the MTA when it sponsored the competition for the site last year in its heretofore praiseworthy but problematical program to sponsor joint development projects adjacent to transit nodes.

No doubt they never would have been approved in today’s parochial political climate, located as they are far from mass transit and severely impacting local traffic. To the MTA’s credit, it established criteria for the NoHo competition that took into consideration the circulation patterns of the area that will now have the increased burden of being a park-and-ride transfer point. Recommended street widening and a few well-placed signals will be traffic band-aids at best. Indeed, whatever mitigation is eventually proposed, it is questionable whether they will lessen the expected opposition by recalcitrant communities in the valley worried about increased traffic and the march of highrisers.

Nevertheless, the design addressing the interaction on the pedestrian level is noteworthy and praiseworthy. There will be no “Grove Two” mooring the public streets in NoHo as the infamous Grove project does in the city’s distant Fairfax District.

Judging from the plans, the most discernible architectural problem will be the large park-and-ride structures to serve the commuters using the transit lines. They squat like oversized pillboxes at the opposite ends of the site and beg to be wrapped with retail at the street level and above with vertical landscaping. I’d even settle for some advertising. That may make the garages perhaps more appealing, though may not lessen the crunch on the connecting streets and the concerns of neighboring communities.

The project interestingly intensifies the mix of offices, retail, and residential, and instead of isolating the project on dead-end plazas, attempts to reach out to the surrounding community. What we have in the master plan so far is less an emphasis on soaring sculptural forms (although those exist) and more on the need for streetscaping. It may not be the sexiest of schemes, but it sure makes for more “collegial public places,” and the hope through its “connectivity” for more amenable neighbors, according to the firm’s principal designer David Martin. Nice thoughts, but it is going to take a lot of convincing and urban design smarts to overcome the valley’s suburban mindsets, where front lawns are still valued more than streetscaping. Both the client and its consultants have had limited experience with the proposed scale and the needed sensibilities, and will be challenged.

That the project is also sustainable is a given, added Martin. That, of course, is what is expected in these green-conscious, climate-conscious days. That we also can expect a concern for context and the actual users is nice to anticipate, and in the NoHo project even nicer to witness. Of course, once the entitlements are secured, how the projects will be phased and what other design firms might be selected for which buildings and public spaces could turn this hope into just another LA hype.

SAM HALL KAPLAN IS A CRITIC, AUTHOR, AND URBAN DESIGNER LIVING IN LOS ANGELES.
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