As concern over global warming sweeps the country, the nation’s leading universities are emerging as shrewd advocates, combining unparalleled brainpower, youthful idealism, and commanding institutional reputations to tackle environmental issues. Last month, Stanford University took center stage with the opening of the Jerry Yang and Akiko Yamazaki Environment and Engineering Building (Y2E2), an interdisciplinary research center intended to house environmental research while serving as a model of sustainable design.

The first of four buildings to rise on Stanford’s new Science and Engineering Quad, Y2E2, designed by Portland-based BOORA Architects, is expected to achieve or exceed its performance goals, consuming 56 percent less energy and 90 percent less water than a comparable, conventionally-designed building—while adding just three percent to the overall construction cost, which totaled $80 million.

“...continued on page 12
STONE REVEALS THE ORIGINS OF ENDEAVOURS TO IMPART CULTURE.

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PARK MERCED COMPLAINT

Here’s a side note to your Park Merced story (“Next Big Thing,” CAN 02_02_27 2008). The developers who have so quickly targeted the area as a transit-oriented development and gobbled up the surrounding parcels, are using the “green” label to promote their total tear-down of the area. Sustainability-wise, the $130 million being sunk into the buildings is also part of what’s being torn out. This is highly unsustainable. The owner and the San Francisco State University (SFSU) did not do their homework on the property, its concept, or its original outline. It was also noted to the City of San Francisco numerous times that there was questionable prior sales of land to the SFSU foundation as part of their masterplan that annexed property that was a prior amenity of Parkmerced. The SFSU masterplan ignored this in the proposed development of University Park South.

The SFSU masterplan must still pass through individual EIR’s on developments in Parkmerced, including the Creative Arts Center proposed for the one open recreational site formerly a part of Parkmerced’s original property boundary. The original sale of the land was a deal between the City and County of San Francisco and Met Life meant to provide housing—specifically, affordable rental housing—to the area for people who could not afford to buy a home. The city’s general plan specifically states that the property was to be protected and used to expand on the rental housing and open space. But we see no such efforts by developers to protect and expand the existing rent-controlled rental stock.

The need for architects to step up on the rental housing issues, and the need for basic well-designed communities that are not only “for profit” and un-affordable to the majority of the community is what should be driving Skidmore Owings & Merrill and the owner’s vision, and not the proposed densification that will quickly ruin any semblance of a well-integrated and well thought-out preservation and sustainable densification that could occur through transfer development rights and proper maintenance and improvements to the original design and landscape.

AARON GOODMAN

PARKMERCED RESIDENTS’ ORGANIZATION

LETTERS

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THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER APRIL 30, 2008

NEWS

VELVET-ROPE PUBLISHING

Exclusivity. It’s become an obsession for most architectural journals that covet the distinction of publishing a prestigious project all by themselves. Try to print an innovative or beautiful building, and you’ll often come up against: “We’re sorry, but The New York Times/Dwell/Architectural Digest is thinking of/ planning on/ definitely publishing this project so we can’t let you have it.” Or, “you’ll have to wait at least eight months on the off-chance that it’s published.” It’s happened to us several times this is the constant refrain we hear from anxious architects. “Tell us what to do.” First know this: No magazine can afford to alienate a talented architect. The editors themselves are aware of this. If, say, Architectural Digest threatens to cut off an architect who strays, they might just do that—until the next great project comes along. Strong work is irresistible, and no publication is going to turn its back on something special. To say otherwise is intimidation, pure and simple. What to do? Fight back by resisting exclusivity agreements. Further, I encourage publications to look beyond their egos and immediate self-interest for the good of the profession. I understand that all publications want to appear fresh and original. But they can still do that with an individual point of view and without leaving architecture to the few over the many. There are plenty of projects out there, and if we stayed on top of them, this would never be an issue. Otherwise, if we want our field to stay out of the public discourse and in the realm of irrelevant, out-of-touch elitism, then that’s just what we’ll get.

STOREFRONT OPENS TEMPORARY LA SPACE

POP GOES THE ARCHITECTURE

A sojourn on Sunset Boulevard is de rigueur for any styed-eyed Los Angeles newbie, and on April 11, the storied street welcomed LA’s newest temporary resident, a pop-up gallery by the New York-based Storefront for Art and Architecture. The six-week LA outpost represents the 25-year-old non-profit’s first stop on a global tour, bringing exhibitions and events to communities around the world.

“We’ve remained a very small organization all this time, which allows us to kind of tap into these different networks and cultures,” said executive director Joaquim Tenreiro. “Storefront’s international reach when in need of partners and collaborators. “It makes it possible for us to access these clusters with a very light touch.” Inspired by renegade boutiques like that of Japanese fashion house Comme des Garçons, the Storefront is experimenting with installations in urban environments and at global art and design gatherings. Storefronts in London and Yokohama are planned for later this year, as well as potential forays into less-expected cities like Tehran and Mexico City.

“LA was a no-brainer,” said Grima about choosing a site for the pop-first, but when it came to picking a neighborhood, he didn’t want the expected locations like Culver City or Chinatown. When PaperChase Printing in Hollywood offered their empty print room, right next door to the Seventh Veil strip club, Grima jumped at the location. “It’s upmarket and expensive, but also has this latent seediness. I like the contrast.” The 800-square-foot space designed by Storefront’s in-house New York team acknowledges the printworks’ environment, while a partition built through the middle provides a clean, white backdrop for the inaugural exhibition on the architecture of the Communist era photographed by Frédéric Chaubin, CCOO: Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed. The French photographer traveled throughout the former Soviet Union, discovering extraordinary structures designed by architects who were working in a hermetically-sealed culture, yet operating with an unrivaled amount of creative freedom.

The exhibition had a very natural LA connection, after American Apparel founder Dov Charney saw the show in the Storefront’s Soho location last year. “Dov really loves this exhibition,” said Grima. “He emailed me the next day and wanted to put it on the front page of the American Apparel website, which he did.” Fittingly, American Apparel—along with help from the LA Forum and the art marketing group FormArt—sponsored the Storefront at its temporary Sunset Strip address.

DEAN RAGO

ASSISTANT EDITOR

AARON SEWARD

ANALYSIS

AMARA HOLSTEIN

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EAVESDROP: ALISSA WALKER

HOME SHOPPING NETWORK

Preppy fashionistas got a midcentury modern treat while perusing the paisley chinos of J.Crew last month, where Richard Neutra’s Kaufmann Desert House was featured prominently as a backdrop in the retailer’s catalog and website. We’re only a little disgusted by the current owners shamelessly cashing in on Neutra’s legacy—after all, Edgar J. Kaufmann himself was a department store tycoon—but we were curious about the impeccable timing of the high-profile exposure, since the 1946 house is expected to fetch around $25 million at Christie’s International in May. A rep from Christie’s claims the J.Crew shoot was coincidental but “certainly welcome,” and tipped us to the fact that the house is also working hard in ads for glam-tastic? 7 For All Mankind jeans. Also likely surprised by the shoot were Leo Marmol and Ron Radziner, whose firm Marmol Radziner handled the home’s extensive renovation in the late 1990s. The firm declined to comment about their handiwork being used to sell summerweight cashmere cardigans, but perhaps all the attention will help spur interest in another Marmol Radziner desert property up for sale. Their 2005 prefab prototype in Desert Hot Springs has plummeted from $1.85 million to $1.495 million since it went on the market in February.

GRAND NEW PLAN

Would it be Eavesdrop without another installment of Grand Avenue Watch 2008? Only a month has passed and we’ve got more big news, namely, that Dubai’s royal family has saved yet another flailing American development. Istithmar World Capital, which is 100-percent owned by the government of Dubai, was approved in March as a major investor for the stalled project, pumping $100 million toward a much-needed construction loan. Istithmar chairman Sultan Ahmed Bin Suleyem—who also established the company that’s building those notorious manmade Palm Islands—made headlines last month when he publicly threatened European Union financial organizations who attempted to regulate his activities. Note to all the rabblerousers at CRA/LA: Do not piss off the Sultan. But the promise of serious Dubai coin seemed to buoy the prospects of developer Related Companies in more ways than one: Stephen Ross, CEO of Related, purchased half of the Miami Dolphins in February for $550 million. So, to recap: Groundbreaking is now scheduled for April (uh-huh, riiiiiiight), it’s now called “The Grand,” Frank Gehry couldn’t care less, and the Miami Dolphins finished last season with a 1-15 record, making them the worst team in the NFL.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Steven Holl? Who’s Steven Holl? Even though Holl won a 2002 competition that named him as architect of the $300-million, multi-year renovation of the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles, he’s all but extinct from the project today, which just completed its first phase. Structural and restoration work of the 1913 building is credited to Brenda Levin with Jorge de la Cal from CO Architects as the project architect. (Exhibition designers will be named soon as well, which we’re almost certain will be Hodgetts + Fung.) But a recent press event made no mention of Holl. A representative for the museum says it is “really just trying to focus on the 1930 project right now.” But after doing our own digging, we found that funding for the second phase, which would include Holl’s proposal, is non-existent. Holl, it would seem, has gone the way of the dodo.

> THOMAS THE T. REX LAB
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Blvd.
Hodgetts + Fung Architects

Thomas the T. rex Lab is a “paleo-odyssey” designed by architects Hodgetts + Fung for the LA Natural History Museum. Over 18 months, Thomas—one of the most complete Tyrannosaurus rex specimens on the planet, unearthed several years ago in Montana—will be cleaned and analyzed before an audience in the exhibition’s functional laboratory. In 2010, the completed Thomas skeleton will become a permanent resident of the museum’s original 1913 building, now being renovated by Brenda Levin Associates and Jorge de la Cal of CO Architects.

Hodgetts + Fung have consulted for Disney’s Imagineers on rides at Disneyland, and it shows. Visitors move through a corridor along a black wall of informational graphics that serve as footnotes to the brightly-lit lab behind a wall of steel and one-way mirror glass. The effect is cinematic, with the scientists in Thomas-branded white lab coats cast as stars. Two pods of thin-wall steel tubing and MDF sheathing jut out from the wall, allowing visitors unprecedented visual access to archaeologists carefully air-buffing debris from a T. rex femur. Cobbles on either side of the pods employ holograms and synthetic bones for hands-on exploration of what’s happening inside. Hodgetts and Fung worked with scientists to create a pristine “clean room.” Elements like the pods, although serving the audience, are also carefully considered workstations with the same equipment as traditional forensics labs.

CHEERS, FRANK continued from front page

and the gallery turned to Zaha Hadid to save the day with a cluster of fabric mushrooms that opened just in time for the summer party-season.

The design of Gehry’s structure was unveiled at the end of March. Engineered in collaboration with Arup, it will consist of large wooden planks and several glass planes that will project in various angles and directions. Its supporting beams and columns of different lengths will create a warped envelope accentuated by disjointed wooden members that appear like spikes emerging from the top and sides of the structure. The project will serve as an amphitheater for live events and, explained Gehry, as “an urban street,” running from the park to the Serpentine’s gallery.

The pavilion will be Gehry’s first built structure in England. His only other completed UK building is the Maggie’s Center cancer hospital in Dundee, Scotland, completed in 2003. For the Serpentine project, he is collaborating for the first time with his son Samuel Gehry, a designer.

Pavilion by Gehry and son, Samuel.
“It has taken ten years to break out, exactly as Thom Mayne told me it would,” admitted Michael Maltzan. It’s a rueful confession that many architects can make: no matter how great your talent, success is often slow in coming. Projects flame out or are crippled by a lack of funding. Maltzan has struggled for recognition because his work alternates between shoestring social projects and ambitious geometries that demand meticulous construction. LA’s Inner City Arts complex launched the practice in 1995, and that led to an arts center at Harvard-Westlake School and the minimalist precision of the Hergott-Shepard house in Beverly Hills. MoMA QNS, a warehouse conversion that served the museum as a temporary facility in Queens, NY, and the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum in Westwood were frugal and complex. All won acclaim, but new commissions were few and scattered. The Rubik’s Cube of the Scoville-Turgel residence went unrealized. Now the firm is on a roll, with a wide spectrum of projects in development or under construction. The ambitious projects are imaginative both in their bold, highly-recognizable forms and in their clever manipulation of program. For instance, the executive offices for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena (scheduled for 2010 completion) will be an asymmetrical pentagon rising six stories to help departments maintain their own identities while communicating via circulation routes through the building’s main atrium. The Fresno Metropolitan Museum (completion date not determined) deftly takes advantage of the building’s surfaces; the rooftop will have its own amphitheater, and the public plaza at the museum’s base, formed via folds in the building’s envelope, acts as a meeting space and as a unique facade element.

MICHAEL WEBB

Above, left and right: Pirelli factory offices in Milan. Opposite page, top: the Pittman residence in La Crescenta; middle, the Fresno Metropolitan Museum.
A house in La Crescenta for two highly regarded painters, Larry Pittman and Roy Dowell, should be completed by September. The clients will keep their small 1952 Richard Neutra house for guests and an office, and move to a site down the slope. Maltzan was inspired not by art but by the games mathematicians play, turning rectangles into segmented figures. He has created a heptagon—a seven-sided figure that is more dynamic than a hexagon or octagon—with an open plan and an inner courtyard. It’s the alter ego of Neutra’s transparent box. You enter through a narrow wedge opening up into a succession of spaces that unfold one by one as you move around or across the interior. There’s a large, deeply inset window on the facade of the living area; elsewhere, the spaces are lit from the courtyard or from a clerestory that frames the mountain tops.

The Fresno Metropolitan Science and Art Museum was first designed in 2002, and the plan has evolved substantially since then. Maltzan wanted the building to seem to float, creating a shaded public plaza at the base, and to compress the spaces above. Working with engineers, the architects devised a novel system of structural beams that would support the load while minimizing their own weight. The diagram of forces generated a folded underbelly that becomes a fifth facade of the building and is animated by reflected light from a shallow pool. The museum is organized around a series of science galleries and a large flexible art gallery, while a rooftop amphitheater offers views over the city. No completion date has been set.

Maltzan’s interest in landscaping finds full expression in a wedge-shaped park linking two sides of a new commercial campus in Playa Vista, north of Jefferson Boulevard. It was inspired by the allées and parterres of the Palais Royal in Paris and other formal European gardens, as a green alternative to the conventional corporate plaza with its paving and planters. Here the space is designed for exercise and relaxation, with rows of trees defining what the architect calls “bento boxes” devoted to different sporting activities. Colored plants cover the berms that enclose a botanical garden. The nine-acre Playa Vista Central Park should be completed next year.

A competition-winning design of 2005 for the redevelopment of a Pirelli factory into new offices in Milan is still in limbo. The Italian tire company relocated its production activities and requested a gateway to the existing complex. Maltzan designed twin 135-foot towers linked by a wide bridge that serves as a covered plaza. An X-frame rising up through the building supports suspended facades. Trapezoidal lightweight concrete panels are set at a carefully calibrated angle on each facade to block direct sun and allow for natural ventilation. The plan allows for 16 distinct leasable zones, which can be reconfigured to suit the needs of individual tenants.

Playa Vista Central Park.

continued from front page

Charles Warren Callister, one of the early pioneers among architects, brought high-level design into major housing developments and new communities. Callister’s design partners included Jack Hillmer, Jack Payne, Jim Bischoff, David Gately, Michael Heckmann. Most recently, he worked with Barry Peterson on a church in Capitola, California, now under construction.

Callister’s design process depended on working the site and listening, a technique he learned from the photographer Minor White, who had chronicled the Hall House extensively in 1947. “You leave yourself open and it all starts flooding in. You’re listening for more than superficial things. The most powerful things come in when you listen. You have to find the architecture, you don’t come to it preconceived,” Callister once said, later writing: “From the beginning, the really great interest for me has been in the development of an architecture that is as free of style and trends as I can possibly achieve. The great lesson to be discovered in the Bay region lies in the shared response of clients and associates to the social, spiritual, and natural environment in creating together appropriate designs that belong to the natural environment and that are rooted in the nature of the clients. I believe, even more so now than in the beginning, that unique and appropriate architectural design is inherent in the process of working and designing and building with others, in actually generating the architecture wherever it is.”

Richard Ehrenberger and Charles Sholtens

SFMOMA Breaks Ground on Rooftop Sculpture Garden

UP ON THE ROOF

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is shaking things up by tearing down walls. In early April, the museum broke ground on a new 11,400-square-foot sculpture garden that will serve as an extension to the building’s fifth-floor galleries. The rooftop garden is the work of San Francisco-based architect Mark Jensen, who won SFMOMA’s invited competition that he entered with former business partner Mark Macy in 2006. The project is the first major alteration to the museum’s original design, a symmetrical arrangement of white walls and black granite floors orchestrated by Mario Botta to mixed public enthusiasm almost 20 years ago.

Construction of the sculpture garden will require knocking down an exterior wall on the fifth floor and replacing it with a 55-foot-wide panoramic window, located on axis with the museum’s famous fifth-floor catwalk and looking directly out onto the new rooftop space. The window will cantilever a few feet beyond the wall supporting it, creating a strong visual connection to the outdoor area and defining one edge of the sculpture garden. The window will have a relatively modest impact on the existing building. Yet conceptually, Jensen’s design was inspired, he said, by “the intersection of sculpture, space, and light” and represents a lightness and transparency that will serve as points of contrast to the austerity of Botta’s original design. “There are so many different ways that you can talk about this project,” Jensen said. “But in the end, you do just come back to the romance of how you want to spend your time up there.”

The garden will sit atop the roof of an adjacent eight-story parking garage, built by the museum in 1999 on the Minna Street lot directly behind the main building. It is expected to be open to the public by the end of this year.

The building’s Minna Street facade will undergo the only visible change to the building’s exterior. A luminous glass corridor connecting the fifth-floor galleries with the rooftop space will float atop the massive four stories of concrete clad in faux brick beneath it.

Julie Kim

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Sold in 2004 without so much as a nod to its pedigree, a house designed by Richard Neutra in 1941 has narrowly escaped demolition. The Maxwell House, located at 475 North Bowling Green Way in Brentwood, California, will be moved in early May to Angelino Heights. The almost 1,800-square-foot home, built for musicians Charles and Sybil Maxwell, is considered a significant example of Neutra’s work because of its unusual peaked roofline and triangular, glazed gable openings. While a nasty preservation battle rages on about Neutra’s Cyclorama Center at Military Gettysburg National Park, local fans can breathe easy—this house has been saved.

Jim Brandlin of Brandlin & Associates, an accounting firm, and his wife Karen purchased the property in Brentwood over three years ago, planning to build their dream home and unaware that the house was architecturally significant. In fact, they were looking into demolition permits when a local appraiser informed the couple that the home was designed by Neutra and that they might want to reconsider. Brandlin and his wife immediately changed course and decided to sell the home to anyone who would move it. It was even posted for a flash on eBay, creating a heated buzz among local preservationists.

Princess Bovlanna, a small real estate developer in Angelino Heights (she uses the name for professional reasons), heard about the house and purchased it from the Brandlins. She is planning to sell once she has re-assembled and renovated it. Architect Gordon Olschlager has been hired to design the landscape. Bovlanna said the move is a painstaking procedure, which will cost around $50,000 and involve the house being sliced into three pieces to accommodate passage through its very narrow street. Once it has been lifted off the foundations via crane, it will be moved on a flatbed truck and then put back together on the new site. “The re-assembly is going to be like an advanced paint-by-numbers,” Bovlanna said.

According to Brian Linder, a broker with Deasy/Penner & Partners and an expert on midcentury modern properties, this isn’t the first Neutra house to be moved. He noted that another Neutra home for sale in Santa Monica—the Leon Barsha Residence, at 302 Mesa Road, built in 1938—was saved from destruction by an early expansion of the Hollywood Freeway and moved in 1963 to its current location in Santa Monica Canyon. Linder, who posted the home on eBay over three years ago and also hosted a salon on the topic, admitted that bureaucratic red tape can slow the process considerably. “This type of move is definitely not for the faint of heart or the novice,” he admitted. “It is very important. No one wants another Maslon.” He was referring to the 1962 Neutra house that was purchased by a private party in 2002 and then demolished 30 days later.

“This is definitely Team Neutra,” said Bovlanna. “I would never have been able to do this without all the help from the major players.” She continued, “What do you do in your life after you move a Neutra? Once this baby lands, I’m having a major career change,” she said. “It’s time to open a restaurant.”
SUSTAINABLE STANFORD
continued from front page center-piece for Stanford’s environmental movement,” said Jeffrey Koseff, the Perry L. McCarty Director of Stanford’s Woods Institute for the Environment.

The Woods Institute, one of Y2E2’s main tenants, brings together experts in science, engineering, economics, and law—specialists whose paths rarely cross in typical academic environments—to collaboratively address four core research areas: energy and climate, land use, fresh water, and oceans. The School of Engineering and related departments have also made Y2E2 their home.

At first glance, the building’s homage to Stanford’s historic quad—intended to bridge Frederick Law Olmstead’s original campus plan with the adjacent, more contemporary medical campus—obscures the boldness of Y2E2’s vision. Taking cues from vernacular design moves already in tune with the environment, Y2E2 deploys updated arches and a clay-tile roof that belie the advances realized within.

Inside, shared spaces including lounges, kitchens, and meeting rooms are clustered around four atria, color-coded to signal a core research area. A key component of the building’s conservation strategy, these operable atria bring light down through the building’s three floors to the below-grade laboratory level and help to regulate indoor air quality and temperature. They also allow for interaction between floors.

“We wanted Y2E2 to educate people about the real possibilities of sustainable design,” said Isaac Campbell, BOORA’s design principal for the project.

The atria are part of a comprehensive strategy that includes chilled beams and energy recovery systems for heating and cooling, recycled and renewable materials, low-flow toilets, and water recycling systems. The design also integrates three different types of solar technology (monocrystalline, polycrystalline, and thin film), making the building itself a testing ground for new technology.

Despite the achievements in energy and water conservation, Y2E2 currently is not expected to achieve LEED certification. According to Koseff, when the project was getting underway four years ago, California’s spikes in energy costs were still very much a concern. At the same time, water supplies were expected to strongly influence future development. While the project leaders recognized the value of the LEED brand, they wanted the design team to be able to pursue the best possible energy and water solutions independent of the LEED criteria.

The lessons learned from Y2E2 are already influencing future development at Stanford. Since learning that building operations are responsible for 98 percent of its carbon footprint, Stanford has turned its attention to improving the performance of all its facilities, funding retrofits of existing buildings, and last fall, creating a new Department for Sustainability and Energy Management to oversee campus operations, utilities, and transportation. The university’s green strategy also addresses recycling and purchasing.

Perhaps most importantly, data on Y2E2’s ongoing operations will be a model for Stanford in the future. Based on Y2E2’s performance projections, the university has agreed to fund the added cost of extending Y2E2’s performance goals to the remaining Science and Engineering Quad buildings, with plans to raise the bar on sustainable design even higher across campus.

YOSH ASATO

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Finish choices include satin stainless steel, high-polish mirror and a White Gloss durable powder coating. The carrier and stainless steel actuator panel are available separately in all 3 finish selections. Toilet seats are sold separately.

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The San Francisco Giants proposal, designed by SMWM with Beyer Blinder Belle and Atelier Ten, is likewise organized according to a traditional grid. An entertainment district anchored by a 6,000-seat music hall fronts a five-acre park designed by Harreaves and Associates, looking northward to AT&T Park and eastward to the Bay. In addition to 875 residential units and 790,000 square feet of offices, the scheme offers 400,000 square feet of what SMWM partner Karen Alscher described as “fine-grained support” for the site’s corporate and institutional Mission Bay neighbors.

Build Inc.‘s team of local architects—Jim Jennings, David Mackel, Peter Pflau, Stanley Saitowitz, and John Worden, along with urban planner John Kriken—proposed an explicit critique of previous Mission Bay development suggesting “a simplified and relatively conservative modernism of punched openings and large-scale gestures.” According to lead developer Loring Sagan (who is also an architect), the site is fundamentally a gateway between the city and Mission Bay, so its principal axis is an extension of the Lefty O’Doul Bridge as it crosses China Basin. Spanning this oblique axis is a high-rise residential tower intended to be a new icon for the city.

Considered a long shot, the Seawall Partners’ scheme, by C.Y. Lee of Taipei with local architects Patri Merker, treated the entire site as a single, raised, planted parking podium, out of which rise four point towers. San Francisco Chronicle urban design writer John King dismissed the concept, saying that it suggested “1950s urban renewal rather than 21st century San Francisco.”

The findings of a seven-member advisory board, which includes newly appointed San Francisco planning director John S. Rahaim, were presented to the Port Commission at its April 8 public meeting. By April 22, it is anticipated that the Port Commission will have approved the development teams to be invited to participate in the Request for Proposals (RFP) phase of the development solicitation process. The short-listed teams will be invited to produce more detailed development proposals, with a final selection expected later this summer.
At first blush, Abramson Teiger’s Kelly House, located in Brentwood near the Getty Museum, appears to be a traditional modernist living space. Its form is based in the language of Le Corbusier, with a staggered series of three white cubes dotting the lush and gently sloping site. But the similarities end there, as the firm moves this tradition in its own abstract direction.

The house, built for a well-known media lawyer and his family, provides a warm, light-filled environment that is in constant contact with nature. On the layered exterior, each cube’s fourth surface is clad with resin-coated wood Trespa panels, heightening its sense of three-dimensionality, while also helping to “break down the cubes,” according to architect Trevor Abramson. Small stainless steel panels within these dark walls emphasize the presence of the rain screen on which the panels rest. Other walls, supported by thin pilotis, project from the surface of the house and appear to float. Second floor spaces that also appear to be suspended, are built with a solidity that contrasts with the glass-clad first floor rooms.

Inside, the house is warmed both with natural wood floors—Ipê downstairs and bamboo upstairs—and with plentiful access to natural light and views. Ceilings are tall, ranging from nine to eleven feet, and gargantuan windows face the backyard, highlighted by a 20-foot wide opening that admits light into a second-floor hallway. Glass doors appear throughout the first floor, and on the second, a landing and passageway separating the cubes is also encased entirely in glass.

Elegant landscaping by designer Steve Silva directly abuts the house, including a small pond and a grassy plane that gently rises up to a beautiful pool, with the Getty in view just beyond. Where many contemporary houses are built to look as large as possible, this one, while measuring 5,000 square feet, doesn’t feel bulky. Perhaps that’s because the spaces flow into each other so well—The house does not have an open plan, nor is it cellular—and because so much of it seamlessly connects to the outside.

The house is animated by varied windows, projecting planes, and a staggered plan. Clockwise from top, rear elevation; a plane projecting from the master suite; front yard elevation with artificial turf; the back of the house.
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International Interior Design Association (IIDA)
Robyn Beavers, a civil engineer, was to make the “Googleplex” as energy-efficient as possible. After hiring Los Angeles-based Clive Wilkinson Architects to gut and redesign the interiors of the campus’ four main buildings, designed in 1997 by the San Francisco office of Studios Architecture, their next move was to make the “Googleplex” as energy-efficient as possible.

Page and Brin called upon Robyn Beavers, a civil engineer who had been working as Google’s representative on construction projects, to become the new one-person department of Corporate Environmental Programs. Beavers spent much of 2006 coordinating the installation of over 9,000 panels atop eight buildings and two carports. “So far, so good,” Beavers said recently, a few weeks before the installation’s first anniversary. “We haven’t had any real maintenance issues—no broken parts or panels. Once, we came up here and found that one of the inverters had been switched off, but that’s about it.”

The panels offset about 30 percent of each building’s peak energy loads. Although Beavers wouldn’t reveal how much Google paid to buy and install the system, she estimated that it was saving the company thousands of dollars per month in energy costs, and that it would pay for itself over seven years. (“A hard drive within each hard drive within each hard drive within each hard drive,” she said.) Google also received a handsome cash rebate for producing its own energy. The California Public Utilities Commission and the California Energy Commission have since moved to a performance-based incentive system that awards commercial rebates based on the number of watts produced.

Since Google’s goal was to cover the largest possible surface area, the installation period lasted six months—longer than average, claimed Beavers—due to the slight tilt and sharp angles of some of the roofs. “The architects made our rooftop experience very challenging,” she said.

There is one problem, however—not with the installation itself, but with the wireless monitoring system Google engineers installed to create arrays of varying lengths and helped them work around areas on the rooftop shaded by oddly-shaped covers to the building’s mechanical and ventilation systems.

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There is one problem, however—not with the installation itself, but with the wireless monitoring system Google engineers installed to create arrays of varying lengths and helped them work around areas on the rooftop shaded by oddly-shaped covers to the building’s mechanical and ventilation systems. Beavers said, shading her eyes with one hand to get a better look at the seemingly endless array of perfectly aligned panels. “It was a cool idea, but I think we’ll go ahead and hard wire it now.”
This spring, the Berkeley, California, architecture firm of McCamant Durrett will receive a LEED Gold award plaque for its completion of the state’s first green church, the third of its type in the country. The $4-million structure, built for the Unitarian Universalist Church in Fresno, is also the first green building for Fresno County. Pacific Gas and Electric Company considers the building the most energy efficient church in their network, and has already presented rebates to the church, as well as to its design team.

Kathryn McCamant said it was “the most fun project I’ve ever worked on. There was 100-percent consensus of the congregation behind the design. They never deterred from the program once the vision and long-term plan were established and preached about in church.” To make things run so smoothly, McCamant used a participatory development process outlined in her own book, Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves (Ten Speed Press), that she wrote with firm partner Charles Durrett. Although this is the first church her firm has designed, McCamant admitted that it required “all my cohousing skills about building a community with a group client.”

The church has a large courtyard leading to a 400-seat sanctuary, constructed with low-VOC and non-toxic materials. It also makes use of energy efficiencies with its orientation to the sun, and with roof overhangs that shade windows in the summer and offer maximum daylight through Low-E2-coated glass combined with a Solar Reflective Index of 29 to keep the roof cool. The kitchen and bathrooms make use of plentiful natural light and shadowing. Additionally, the building uses 43 percent less water and features low-flow dual-flush toilets and waterless urinals made from recycled plastic bottles. Low maintenance landscaping and drip irrigation also decrease water usage. During construction, waste was delivered to a certified recycling processor instead of going into landfill.

Subsequent phases of the completely green, 23,000-square-foot master plan will add a social hall, a day care center, adult and children libraries, a classroom wing, and a chapel. Meanwhile, McCamant Durrett is also designing Fresno’s first residential green building, a 28-unit condo complex featuring a large common house arrangement to foster community involvement. Currently under construction, the building neighbors the Unitarian Universalist Church.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters has announced the 2008 recipients of its awards in architecture. According to a statement, the $5,000 Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture, which is given “to an architect of any nationality who has made a significant contribution to architecture as an art,” will go to Peter Zumthor of Switzerland. California had a strong showing, with Los Angeles-based Neil M. Denari and San Francisco-based Jim Jennings each taking $7,500 awards granted to architects “whose work is characterized by a strong personal direction.” The historian Kenneth Frampton and architect James Carpenter also received $7,500 Academy Awards as “designers who explore ideas in architecture through any means of expression.” The jurors, a who’s who of the New York architectural establishment, included Henry Cobb (jury chair), Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, Hugh Hardy, Steven Holl, Ada Louise Huxtable, Richard Meier, Cesar Pelli, James Stewart Polshek, and Billie Tsien. Awards are given in the fields of Art, Architecture, Literature, and Music and an exhibition honoring their work at the Academy runs from May 22 through June 15.
At long last, the ultra-hyped $265-million, one million-square-foot retail-residential complex, Americana At Brand, is set to open May 2 on Brand Avenue in Glendale. The 16-acre project, the brainchild of The Grove developer Rick Caruso, will contain 100 condominiums, 238 apartments, a central public park called the Green, plazas, and, of course, more than fifty stores and restaurants. It will also have its own trolley. Not everyone is happy. Critics are already gearing up to protest the traffic, and to question opening such a project in tough economic times, but that shouldn’t stop the biggest stampede this side of Calgary.

ARCHITECTURE PHD AT USC

Beginning this fall, the USC School of Architecture will offer a new Ph.D. program in architecture. The initial focus of the program will be on the building sciences and technology, and it will “lead the effort to explore new knowledge and unknown territories,” said USC School of Architecture dean Qingyun Ma.

DOWNTOWN LA RENTS STABILIZING?

According to the recently-released Casden Real Estate Economics Forecast (released by USC’s Lusk Center for Real Estate), with more than a dozen new apartment projects opened or slated to hit downtown Los Angeles this year, the area can expect to see rents stabilize. “It is an anomaly, because downtown was one of the tightest markets just two years ago,” said Delores Conway, director of the Casden Forecast, in an interview with LA Downtown News. “There has been a lot of new supply to meet the demand.”

REBUILDING HEADACHES

Neighbors of West Hollywood’s Pacific Design Center’s RedBuilding construction site have been complaining about the noise and dust since pile driving began a few weeks ago. The land on which the new RedBuilding at Pacific Design Center will stand is a soft sediment, requiring 1,900 piles driven to secure the structure’s foundation. Neighbors claim that the Design Center should look into noise shrouds and other impact-mitigation measures.

SECOND ACT

The long-neglected Music Center Annex, a building on Los Angeles’ Bunker Hill that formerly housed the County Coroner’s office, is ready to sing a new tune. Plans to replace the 1950s-era building with a new structure were announced at an April event for the Music Center, which also includes the Mark Taper Forum, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Ahmanson Theatre, and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Approximately 150,000 square feet of rehearsal space and offices would sit across Temple Street from the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. No architect has been named.

DIAL-A-SPOT

San Francisco residents will soon be able to use their iPhones and BlackBerrys to look for parking spots in ten neighborhoods around the city. A pilot program called SFpark will embed sensors in asphalt that will allow drivers to use internet-enabled computers and phones to check real-time space availability. Drivers could also use their wireless devices to purchase meter time, with rates adjusted higher in peak hours to discourage driving during heavy traffic periods. Officials also hope to prevent endless circling and thereby reduce emissions and congestion.

ORANGE CRUSH

The balloon ride at the Orange County Great Park remains grounded for the second time since it opened last summer after accusations that a pilot ignored safety guidelines. A letter from a passenger to the FAA prompted an investigation to find out if operators from Paris-based company Aerophile were flying the balloon too high and in dangerous weather conditions, including heavy clouds and poor visibility. The $5-million tethered balloon ride, which is anchored in Irvine, is the main attraction for the 1,347-acre park during a $14-million conversion from its former use as a Marine base.

RIP LIVABLE PLACES

Livable Places, a seven-year-old, LA-based non-profit that advocated for land-use policy reform and also developed innovative affordable housing, closed its doors on April 15. According to a statement released by Livable Places associate Joe Linton, the organization was simultaneously done in by the credit crunch and by the “glut of higher-priced houses,” which lowered demand for new homes in the region. “The impact on the Southern California economy has been dire, and for Livable Places, the economic downturn has proved fatal,” he said. The organization’s Fuller Lofts in LA’s Lincoln Heights neighborhood, designed by Pugh+Scarpa, is currently on hold.

PRIME TIME URBAN FUNDING

The Canyon-Johnson Urban Fund, a private equity partnership between Magic Johnson and Beverly Hills-based Canyon Capital Realty Advisors, announced that its third partnership between Magic Johnson and Beverly Hills-based Canyon Capital Realty Advisors, announced that its third round of financing will allow for over $4 billion in new development and property upgrades in large cities throughout the country. Past efforts have been located in Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Miami, and Brooklyn.

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An exhibition presenting proposals for replacement housing and redevelopment in New Orleans, Louisiana and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.
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**VectorWorks Architect 2008—Flexible to Fit Your Workflow**

Image courtesy of WMCRA Architects, Maryland
When George Mimnaugh set out to restore an original 1963 home designed by Case Study architect Rodney Walker that had been chopped up and turned into a triplex, his intention was to turn it back into the duplex it was originally intended to be and to respect the home’s historic integrity.

“That restoration happened and everyone in the preservation community was thrilled,” he said. “Unfortunately, I couldn’t sell it.

He proceeded to take the house off the market and turn it into a single-family dwelling, trying to retain as much of the original spirit, but clearly not keeping to the original duplex blueprint. “It was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done, but in the end I was really pleased with the renovation and the house sold almost immediately,” he said. “Not everyone has the deep pockets that it takes to turn these homes into museum pieces, nor is it always practical,” he added. For purists, turning the duplex into a single-family home is sacrilege. Others, who don’t take issue with some architectural license and consider it a duty to bring a home into this century, find it refreshing. In a time when midcentury homes are either fetching millions or facing the wrecking ball, the restorations, renovations, and re-builds of architecturally significant modernist houses have become the subject of both pride and controversy.

According to Brian Linder, AIA, of Deasy/Penner & Partners, a “design-centric” real estate firm that has sold many significant midcentury properties in Southern California, there is room for both renovation and restoration. “Some buyers want things in pristine original condition, like a museum piece. Others need the home to be brought up to date, with new kitchens and baths, closets and room sizes, etc., that are more in line with our current lifestyles,” he said. But many in the architecture world are concerned that insensitive or poorly-executed renovations—whether they be for aesthetic or lifestyle reasons—will forever damage an architectural legacy. Alan Leib, chairman emeritus of the Los Angeles Conservancy Modern Committee, claims that the real issue comes with a lack of monitoring in the landmark process on both the local and state level. “Even if the house gets landmark status, it’s almost impossible to truly save anything in the interior because the state system that has it to be ‘exceptional’ to be landmarked,” he said. “Right out of the gate, that’s setting you up for failure. The system makes it impossible to really monitor what’s going on, and it makes it even more difficult to insure restorations are done thoughtfully.”

One person doing his part to carry out sensitive renovations is Michael LaFetra, who has gained the reputation of being Angelinos’ own modern house collector. He currently lives in a home designed by Ray Kappe, and owns nine other architecturally-significant properties. “I simply wanted to buy significant modern homes, restore them with integrity by bringing them back to blueprint form, get landmark status and enrollment in the Mills Act, and then sell them,” he said, referring to the state provision that allows owners to obtain tax reductions in exchange for maintaining their historic properties. To date, LaFetra has completed 13 meticulous restorations, including homes designed by Richard Neutra, Rudolf Schindler, and A. Quincy Jones, among others, and he continues to look around for more salvageable gems. LaFetra tries to maintain the original form and update the original materials, and he pointed out that if he finds a house that he would like to change, he doesn’t buy it. (Not everyone is ready to make the sacrifices that living in a home built in the 1960s can require, but that doesn’t stop many from buying them.) For instance, he and his fiancee looked at the Singleton House, designed by Richard Neutra and completed in 1960. Located in Bel Air, the house was in good condition and had a great site, but when they saw that the master bedroom could only hold a full-sized bed, they decided the house wasn’t for them. “We’re big sleepers and we require a king-sized bed,” he said. “I didn’t want my hands bloodied during the restoration if we had to take down a wall. It’s better to move on and find a house that works for you.”

LaFetra also uses only one contractor, LA-based Jeff Fink and Associates, who is known for his work on Rudolf Schindler houses, to insure all details will be attended to properly. He maintains that even though each house is dramatically different, good resources are often used over and over again. “What I love most about Jeff is that he takes his ego out of it and really lets the original architecture give the cues.”

Robert Thibodeau of Du Architects, who worked on a restoration of Craig Ellwood’s 1963 Johnson House notable for its emphatic use of standardization, agrees on the importance of maintaining as many original details as possible. “It was incredible as we stripped and polished and replaced, the house really started to feel alive again,” he said of the careful work. He points out that compromises that impair the integrity of a home often come when owners are trying to sell the house for maximum profit. A good example of this unfortunate phenomenon is the fate of the above-mentioned Singleton house. In 2004, it was bought by Vidal Sassoon, the hair-care magnate, who decided to change the house and then put it back on the market for $20 million. The project included enlarging rooms, moving walls, and adding bathrooms and other amenities. The house is currently for sale and has been cause for major uproar in the preservation world.

Many architects have openly admitted that they wouldn’t consider a Neutra anymore. One architect who spoke off the record said, “It was a travesty, a complete bastardization of a beautiful piece of architecture.” The architect added that the saddest thing about the whole affair is that the house isn’t selling. “The house now will not appeal to a Neutra lover and because it’s not a McMansion, they’re losing out on a lot of the potential buyers looking for a home in Bel Air.”

Crosby Dox, a real estate broker who specializes in the sales of modern architecture, met with Sassoon when he purchased the Singleton house and took him to the Getty to view some 30 images of the home photographed by Julius Shulman. “It was incredibly disappointing,” he admitted. “We had a complete disagreement about the restoration. It’s really upsetting.”

Leo Marmol of Santa Monica-based Marmol Radziner, which has carried out close to 20 midcentury modern renovations in the area, said that it is important to remember that homeowners almost always think they are doing the right thing. But he added that they should be able to do what they want. “With the attention that many of these homes get from the media and exhibitions comes a lot of social judgement,” he said. “I think it’s important to remember that there are a lot of factors that go into a restoration—time, budget,
Craig Elwood’s 1953 Johnson House (left) in Brentwood was restored by Du Architects, who stripped, polished, and replaced wood finishes and floors as necessary to maintain the original integrity of the house. Venice-based SH_Arc replaced the wood, stone, plaster, and glass of Richard Neutra’s 1956 Troxell House (below).
and a whole slew of other things. It can cause a lot of unnecessary anxiety for both the homeowner and the architect."

Still, his firm’s recent renovation of Richard Neutra’s 1948 Kaufmann House is now seen as the gold standard for meticulous work and an example of the sustainable value of many modernist homes—and the inestimable value of good clients. The home is expected to fetch more than $20 million at auction next month. Its owners, Brent and Beth Edwards Harris, supported the firm’s efforts to reproduce the sheet-metal roof, match the stone to replace what had been damaged, and even find original paint and fixtures.

For Doe, the Kaufmann House is emblematic of what can and will continue to happen in the future. It is essentially the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. "The restoration was done beautifully and the homeowners have maintained the property meticulously," he said. He also pointed out that homeowners who are truly sensitive to the history of a home will be rewarded. "You don’t take a Picasso and make changes," he said. "The value would go out the window." He paused. "Can you imagine what the guy who built the Mason House is thinking right about now?" he said, referring to the 1963 Neutra House in Ranch Mirage. "He literally threw millions of dollars away."

Still, changes to modernist houses are not always frowned upon. Sometimes they can help achieve the architect’s original intention, thanks to increased funds or better technology. When Frank Escher of Escher GuneWardena Architecture was hired to restore John Lautner’s 1960 Chemosphere House, he understood that the house was not completed the way Lautner envisioned it. Even though there were only four pages of original plans, little notes gave the team clues and a sense of direction during the process. "There were things that we were able to do in that house because we were given a cue from the plans," he said. He was able to create more seamless expanses of glass, and the kitchen floor was designed to be the way Lautner intended it to be, not the way it was actually built. "I was asked at the time why I didn’t replicate the orange tile in the kitchen the way the original photographs showed it," he said. "I knew he intended to do a jagged slate floor and that’s what we decided to do." He also spoke about why it’s important to hire experts. "I’ve seen so many poor examples of restorations and renovations where the architecture is ruined," he said. "These are not do-it-yourself projects. The best advice I can give people is to hire someone who knows what they’re doing."

John McIlwee owns the Lautner-designed Garcia House, which was completed in 1962. When he and his partner purchased the home, they were given a notebook filled with snapshots and documentation of various changes made to the house over the years. "I really have to believe that every owner along the way had good intentions," he said, "but in most cases it was abominable." Though some of his changes strayed from the original blueprints—like turning four children’s bedrooms into three, and subtly adding a new master suite—they made drastic changes, would have applauded the decisions they made along the way. "We have no problem going head-to-head with anyone about our house," he said. "We believe this house has been done correctly." According to John Umbanhower of Venice-based SH_ARC, the renovation of Neutra’s Troxell Residence, built in 1946, took cues from the original post and beam residence, but quite a few alterations were made. The footprint was changed and the house expanded to 5,000 square feet. A cantilevered addition to the master bedroom made the home more livable, and a pool (present in Neutra’s original plan, but never executed because Dr. Troxell maintained he had the best pool in town already—the Pacific Ocean) was finally installed.

While the issues of standards, ownership, and actually living in a home continue to collide in unfortunate ways, LaFetra said that as people become savvier, the horror stories related to renovation should diminish. "That being said, the only way you can truly save a house and restore it sensitively and properly is to own it."

Real estate broker Doe believes it is still possible to live in a house built 60 years ago: "If people take the time to live in the house before they make drastic changes, they’ll begin to understand how every day, the house will give something back to them."

KIMBERLY STEVENS IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.
Exterior detail of Rodney Walker’s 1953 house. Former owner George Mimnaugh said, “Not everyone has the deep pockets that it takes to turn these homes into museum pieces, nor is it always practical.”
examines that ongoing fascination includes plenty of industrial photographs, of space where actual cataloguing occurs. From Everberg’s (above) by Candida Höfer reveals the artist’s cool and detached photographic approach of cataloguing the types of interior spaces. Together, through the lens of their large-format camera, they captured black-and-white photographs of framework houses, lime kilns, cooling towers, blast furnaces, winding towers, gas tanks, silos, and other industrial structures. While Basic Forms includes plenty of industrial photographs, much of the exhibit pays homage to the Bowers’ framework houses. Framework House, Gable Side, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, Salzburg, Germany (1981), above is a typical image wherein the photographed object becomes the only subject within the frame. The photographs become more than impressions; they emerge as meticulous documents of the structures themselves. Organizing these prints into categories according to function and then arranging them into grids or rows, the Bechers quietly reveal the mystery of what they do by presenting their work in a straightforward manner of surprising potency.

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

**THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM**

CANDIDA HÖFER/ MOCA

**TUESDAY 22**

**LECTURE**

Eraserhead (David Lynch, 1977), 89 min. 7:00 p.m.

Museum of Contemporary Art of San Diego

1500 Kettner Blvd., San Diego

www.mcasd.org

**FRIDAY 25**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

Philip-Lorca diCorcia

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles

www.lacma.org

NEIL DENARI’S RESEARCH STUDIO 2006-2008

Urban Futures Chicago

UCLA College of Architecture and Urban Design

Perott Hall

Wyton Dr. and Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles

www.aia.org

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**SATURDAY 24**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

Tilman Kaiser

Don’t Worry About the Motion on the Ocean

Honor Fraser

www.honorfraser.com

The Puppet Show

Bryce Rudy

Santa Monica Museum of Art

2525 Michigan Ave., Los Angeles

www.smma.org

Emilee Halpern

Anna Helwing Gallery

2766 South La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles

www.annahelwinggallery.com

**EVENT**

Los Altos Giovanni

 Daly Street Lofts Open House

12:00 p.m.

2460 Daly St., Los Angeles

www.makercenter.org

**APRIL 24**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

Bruce Nauman

Elusive Signs: Bruce Nauman Works with Light

Museum of Contemporary Art of San Diego

700 Prospect St., La Jolla

www.mcasd.org

Fowler in Focus: Ceramics of Papua New Guinea

Fowler Museum of Art

308 Charles East Young Dr., Los Angeles

www.fowler.ucla.edu

**WEDNESDAY 28**

**LECTURE**

Lars Spuybroek

6:30 p.m.

UCLA College of Architecture and Urban Design

Perott Hall

Wyton Dr. and Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles

www.aia.org

**THURSDAY 29**

**LECTURE**

Jonah Lehrer

12:00 p.m.

Museum of Contemporary Art of San Diego

5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles

www.mcaasd.org

**FRIDAY 30**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

Craig Lynn

SCI-Arc

960 East 3rd St., Los Angeles

www.sciaarc.edu

**SATURDAY 31**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

The Bellweather Effect: A Case for the Front Design

Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum

693 Paseo Nuevo, Santa Barbara

www.sbabcf.org

**INSIDE ARCHITECTURE: SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION**

The Museum of Contemporary Art

250 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles

Through May 25

Interior spaces are often a source of interest and inspiration for artists. Inside Architecture: Selections from the Permanent Collection examines that ongoing fascination with both domestic and institutional spaces. The exhibition includes drawings, paintings, and photographs by artists Kirsten Everberg, David Hockney, Candida Höfer, Luisa Lambri, Richard Prince, Paul Sietsema, Thomas Struth, and Paul Winstanley. Deutsche Bucher Leipzig IV (1997), above by Candida Höfer reveals the artist’s cool and detached photographic approach of cataloguing the types of space where actual cataloguing occurs. From Everberg’s paintings of historic rooms of the White House to Sietsema’s college works using photographs of art critic Clement Greenberg’s New York City home, each artist provides us with different representations of interior spaces.

**APRIL 22**

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**

Bernd and Hilla Becher

Basic Forms Framework House

The J. Paul Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles

Through September 14
In the 1960s, curator, critic, architect, and social historian Bernard Rudofsky was probably as influential as Le Corbusier. A modernist dissident, he challenged the dogma of his contemporaries, saying, “The house has to become again what it was in the past: an instrument for living, instead of a machine for living. This would make all the difference in the way we conduct our lives—like the difference between playing a violin and playing a jukebox.” His 1964 MoMA exhibit, Architecture Without Architects, was a bombshell that forced a generation to rethink its attitude toward what he called the “vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural” architecture. The show traveled to 80 countries in 11 years. Yet today, Rudofsky is virtually unknown.

**Lessons From Bernard Rudofsky** is the first retrospective of this peripatetic designer and critic whose fashion ideas, houses, exhibitions, and lifestyle questioned the myths of Western civilization. The show originated at the Canadian Centre for Architecture and migrated to an architecture museum in Vienna before arriving at the Getty. Two hundred drawings, photographs, and blueprints plus 75 of Rudofsky’s famous Bernardo sandals are now on display, pressed into a small gallery.

From the moment you approach the lobby doors of the exhibit, you know you are in for an awakening. Rudofsky, who was born in Czechoslovakia and raised in Vienna, was, above all, a sensualist, and Getty curator Wim de Wit announces this fact by laying a deep-red-colored film over the 30-foot-tall windows flanking the entry. The lobby takes on a rosy glow; the ambient effect clues you in to Rudofsky’s sense of whimsy and his role as provocateur. The hue creates a feeling—a sensation—before the gears of the mind have the chance to turn. That’s how Rudofsky liked to communicate.

The exhibition is loosely chronological, cataloguing the ways of life he witnessed during his constant world travels. It includes the impact of Viennese modernism, as well as Rudofsky’s travels throughout the Mediterranean and to Japan. Because the show was originally mounted in a much larger space, the curators had to find a way to present the same information in a tighter format. They worked in layers. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling wallpaper replete with Rudofsky’s architectural drawings and blow-ups of his photographs. In front of the large-scale wallpaper are models, paintings, clothing, and shoes Rudofsky actually made. Last are freestanding hanging screens with Rudofsky’s aphorisms projected on one side (the right side of his brain, so to speak) and shots of his existing buildings projected on the other (the left side of his brain, presumably).

Where most architecture exhibits present long scrolls of text and often confusing models and blueprints, here the layering provides an accessible visual and spatial summary. You are quickly able to orient yourself in relation to Rudofsky’s ideas without having to pore over explanatory notes. His flat-soled, open-toed sandals, for instance, which he designed in the 1940s as a response to the confinement of men’s brogues and women’s pumps, unfold as an almost tactile experience.

Miss Morgan’s Beauty

Julia Morgan, Architect of Beauty

Mark Wilson

Gibbs Smith, $60

So long as there is Hearst Castle high above the pristine California coastline, Julia Morgan will be known as the pioneering woman architect who designed William Randolph Hearst’s opulent monument to money and lordly fiat. The collaboration began in 1919, when the publishing magnate entered Morgan’s San Francisco office to discuss putting a simple bungalow atop a rugged peak on his 210,000-acre ranch near San Simeon. It ended nearly three decades later, and is usually mistaken for Morgan’s entire oeuvre and her biography, too.

Down through the years, the connection became something of a stigma, summed up by the architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter in their classic, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California*: “Like most of Julia Morgan’s work, the architecture [at San Simeon] is dry, and exhibits little in the way of sensitive handling of overall forms and details. The client can be blamed for the continual changes and growth of the project, but he cannot be blamed for the insensitive rendering of the architecture.”

In *Julia Morgan, Architect of Beauty*, Mark A. Wilson hopes to undo this “smoke assessment.” His book is best read as a compendium of the diminutive and prolific Morgan’s work. It is a surprise to learn that Morgan’s productive years “spanned more than four decades, and her total output was greater than any other major American architect, including Frank Lloyd Wright.”

While she possessed a wide repertoire of styles, from Italian Renaissance Revival to Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival to Romanesque and Georgian, she was far from a crotchety interpreter of rich clients’ fashionable tastes. An unmarried workaholic, Miss Morgan, as she was called throughout her long career, was in fact steeped in the ideals of Arts and Crafts.

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Architecture exhibitions rarely capture the dynamic, life-sized nature of buildings; pictures, plans, and maquettes—their main tools—struggle to communicate ideas about volume and space. To tackle the professed difficulty, architectural exhibitions expand into new formats and strategies, which may have adventurously allowed the idea of visualizing the vertical slice of a building. It’s a noble, bifurcated attempt to address this complicated issue while expanding formats and articulating curatorial style.

In the main wall label, Urbach notes that section drawings “remain elusive to those not trained in the design disciplines.” While the bulk of Cut: Revealing the Section (2004–2007) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), Henry Urbach, the Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design, employs traditional presentation strategies, which may have been honed in his previous identity as an art dealer running the gallery Henry Urbach Architecture in Manhattan’s Chelsea.

A key question emerges from the exhibition: Can art function as a primer to architectural concepts? Cut opens with a small, nearly empty gallery (according to the curatorial statement in the space, it’s 700 square feet). The room contains just one piece by artist Peter Wegner. Here, Urbach reveals his interest in “enhancing our awareness—our interpretive grasp—of even the most familiar spatial arrangements.” The conceit works especially well in identifying the gallery footage and volume—more often we’re told the scale of a public space when it’s vast and difficult to comprehend. This room is tangibly empty but also full of volume. It’s the proverbial white cube and minimalist sculpture.

Further into the show, Wegner’s Buildings Made of Sky (2004–2007) is a grid of 32 photographs of Manhattan street views hung unganged down. Urbach uses the piece to open a dialogue about spatial perception. The orientation focuses on the sky space between skyscrapers, profiles that resemble tall buildings balancing on narrow foundations. These blue areas are both flat and infinite. When seen flipped, the building flips, elements like street lamps and flagpoles jut at odd angles, tweaking notions of perspective and balance.

In a much larger gallery, Matta-Clark’s Splitting, the artist’s classic 1974 sculptural bissection of a New Jersey tract house. Because of the literal act of cutting, it comes across as a key inspiration, represented here with film documentation and black-and-white photographs. In some of the pictures, the thin line of sky is visible between the two halves of the house, subtly alluding to Wegner’s photos. Splitting, however, implies rather than shows a cross-section, though Matta-Clark lends physical weight and even rough, power-tool energy to the smooth demeanor of maquettes and drawings.

Massive amounts of labor are also a key to Wegner’s elaborate, two-room sculptural installation Guillotine of Sunlight, Guillotine of Shade, (2007). A visual centerpiece composed of a million-plus pieces of brightly-colored paper stacked against a wall with slim edges facing out like book spines, it rises ten feet on both sides of a single wall. On one side, the paper is in shades of blue and green, on the other, warmer reds and oranges. Both spaces are infused with the tinted reflection of the paper. They exude a sense of dimension and heft—how much do these dense accretions weigh?

The three artworks serve as a preface to the standard display of wall-mounted drawings and Plexi-cased models, segregated in a separate section. They are more demure objects that don’t compete with the artwork’s visual scale. It also becomes clear that the artworks don’t quite serve a pedagogical function because they use a different language. The drawings seem quite separate and are often more interesting for the regionally significant buildings they depict—Mario Botta’s SFMOMA, Timothy Pfleuger’s Castro Theatre, MLTW’s Sea Ranch Athletic Club. Perhaps the exhibition is a trial run, balancing art and architecture. How might it play with a more integrated mixture of media? That may call for a show of a much larger scale, but the idea adds a meta-edge to Cut, positing it as a cross-section of an exhibition model and suggestion of Urbach’s exhibitions to come.

GLEN HELFAND IS A BAY AREA-BASED CRITIC AND CURATOR.
MISS MORGAN’S BEAUTY continued from page 25
Her mentor was Bernard Maybeck, the Bay Area’s most influential and unwavering exponent of buildings that harmonized with their surroundings through the use of natural materials and details drawn from nature. It was Maybeck Who encouraged her to move to Paris to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where, after two unjust rejections, she became the first woman to attend the prestigious academy. She returned to San Francisco and soon opened her own office in 1904, becoming the nation’s first licensed woman architect with an independent practice. She retired 46 years later, at age 77, with 750 built projects.

She was, to say the least, industrious and dexterous—able to turn out equally polished versions of a shingled Craftsman or a Tudor mansion. Her most compelling work, however, was completion of ownership she inspired. and a testimony to the pride that stands in good condition—

Many of her later homes are paneled in russet-hued redwood. In these projects, she displayed an ability to orchestrate light and use craftsmanship to elicit deep feelings of comfort, spirituality, and majesty. Many of her later homes share this, but lack the purity and determined artistic vision of her earlier efforts. The bulk of Morgan’s work is represented here in the photography, which takes us inside buildings and homes that have rarely been shown. It is fortunate that so much of Morgan’s work still stands in good condition—a testimony to the pride of ownership she inspired.

Throughout the text, however, Wilson almost never attempts to situate Morgan among her contemporaries or to place her within the movements that shook 20th century architecture from the time of Loos, when she entered the Beaux-Arts, to the time of Gropius, when she retired. Wilson avers, “Her legacy speaks clearly to anyone who takes the time to appreciate it: in the subtle beauty of her carefully crafted stairways; in the warm and intimate quality of her thoroughly liveable interiors; in the pleasing refinement of every detail of her exteriors; and in the graceful strength of the structural elements of her largest buildings.”

All true, but not enough to situate Morgan’s best work wherever it belongs: among the finest early 20th century buildings in California.

THE LOCAL TOUCH continued from page 25
Experience. The wallpaper shows a classical Roman sculpture of a foot, with the straps of a sandal laced between the toes, next to which are images of a symmetrical shoe beside a human foot. You can feel your foot being pinched, like the bound foot of a Chinese courtesan.

While the exhibit is functioning at this visceral level, it is also a précis of Rudofsky’s critique of modernism. From his earliest watercolors of houses on the Greek island of Santorini and his photographs of beehive-shaped mud houses in Turkey to the blueprint of his own house in Malaga, Spain, designed like a Japanese pavilion, you begin to understand his argument that “architecture is not just a matter of technology and aesthetics, but the frame for a way of life.”

It has been two decades since Rudofsky died at age 82 in 1988. By then, his influence had waned. Architecture and fashion had become largely a matter of technology and aesthetics. This retrospective demonstrates that if ever the principles of a more organic, humane architecture and design were called for, the time is now. We are scrambling to cope with a self-destructive environment of our own making—from home to office to footwear. Rudofsky believed there was a “satisfactory way” to live in harmony and pleasurably with ourselves and with nature, and a way to think and breathe and act freely. The Getty exhibit underlines his unique contribution and our pressing need to adapt some of his principles today.

THE ACCIDENTAL CRAFTSMAN continued from page 25 de facto project manager, scheduling the beam-by-beam dismantling and delivery of the house over narrow dirt roads and hairpin turns. He also navigated among dubious real estate agents and coordinating local councils while coordinating workers from distant prefectures. Indeed, Yoshihiro, who eventually became Roderick’s adopted son, was so successful in modernizing the house without sacrificing its historic integrity that he went on to a career as an antiquities dealer, renovating minka throughout the world.

Roderick’s Minka is a quick read that will charm enthusiasts of Japanese architecture (or fans of whimsical memoirs), even if the author repeats himself on occasion and strays too often among anecdotal accounts of housekeepers or international visitors. The volume’s black-and-white photos show the minka under reconstruction, but reveal little about the renovation’s unique achievement as a hybrid of historical form and modern amenities.

Still, Roderick’s sense of adventure and curiosity are vibrantly displayed throughout this tale, which illustrates the relevance of craft, tradition, and history to contemporary society. That much was clear to Emperor Hirohito of Japan, who awarded Roderick the Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1988 for his meritorious service to the nation.

JAMES WAY IS A TOKYO-BASED WRITER AND DESIGNER.
Hi-Lights
Air Dimensional Design Inc.
www.airdd.com
Like a moth drawn to a flame, you’ll find yourself mesmerized by these glowing inflatable sculptures. Medusa (left), with its elongated curvilinear extensions, is part of Hi-Lights’ Tentacle collection that features organically-shaped, inflatable sculptural pieces. These voluminous, light-weight pieces are illuminated from within by white or colored lights that create a mystifying ambiance visible both day and night. Measuring over ten feet high, the sculptures can easily be suspended from the ceiling. Available in a variety of ethereal creations, from stars to spheres to tentacles, something is sure to tickle your fancy.

Murmer
Sebastien Servaire
Part of a series of newly-launched products at Gallery R’ Pure, the new Murmer “bookshelf” design is purely aesthetic—no actual books required! Formed by vertical and horizontal units, the faux shelves can be assembled in various ways to cover any wall. Choose from two finishes: white plaster (pictured) for a polished look, or gray concrete for a more industrial feel.

Tempio Acoustic Tile
Cerámica Mayor
www.ceramicamayor.com
Muffle the hubbub with this sturdy, ceramic tile. A series of tunnels inside can be filled with a sound-absorbing material such as Woolrock, while drilled holes in the tile’s surface allow sound energy to penetrate. Great for turning down the volume, the Acoustic Tile is useful in crowded indoor places, such as a pool or gym, or as a decorative and sound-inhibiting element in your home.

Linea System
Neoporte
www.neoporte.com
Gorgeously machined in Germany, down to its fine, 600-grit finish, this new rolling door system is made from marine-grade, 316 alloy stainless steel to repel corrosion. Designed as a one-stop, integrated door system with hardware, pulls, and door panels, the product offers custom mounting options, sizing, and track lengths, plus a wide range of glass door patterns engineered specifically for the line’s hardware. Doors may also be fabricated from stainless steel, and will soon include select wood and bamboo finishes.

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Profiles of Selected Architects
In the heady days of his administration in 2005, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa handcapped Jane Ellison Usher, a legal adviser to former Mayor Tom Bradley and counsel to the 1984 Olympics, to be president of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission. He also selected the well-respected Gail Goldberg to be director of the Los Angeles City Planning Department. The two women set out on a course to deliver a great urban city to the mayor by adopting a manifesto entitled “Do Real Planning.”

The rich but brief document represented a legacy of absence of planning in Los Angeles. There is some sense of entitlement on the part of the development community to live in a city where planning principals are secondary or perhaps tertiary. It will take us more time than we’ve had to turn that thinking around. An awful lot of work went into [the ordinance] on the council floor and I will confess to you that I don’t think that’s the optimal place for that volume of change to occur. Then my eye falls, almost immediately, on language that I had never seen before.

Jane Ellison Usher: There are some foundational activities occurring in the city of Los Angeles that keep “Do Real Planning” alive certainly for me, and hopefully into perpetuity for the rest of the city. But here’s what we’re facing: One, a planning department that culturally has not been as excited and aggressive as they needed to be to do real planning. There’s a lot of leadership now at the top that’s encouraging them to be more aggressive, to think out of the box, to behave and act differently, but I don’t think there’s a magic bullet.

I would add to that that there’s quite a legacy of absence of planning in Los Angeles. There is some sense of entitlement on the part of the development community to live in a city where planning principals are secondary or perhaps tertiary. It will take us more time than we’ve had to turn that thinking around. The third piece is the regular practice of the city council to defer to the home district whenever a planning issue is on the table. This practice has caused the city council to forget to think holistically about the city and about a vision that can be achieved if we’re focusing on all the moving pieces at the same time. You openly invited neighborhood groups to sue the city over its implementation of SB 1818. I did.

What’s wrong with it?

Part of my dissatisfaction was that my commission wasn’t updated until the day the ordinance took effect. And on that score, I have to say that the planning department did its commission a disservice. But the other part of my dissatisfaction was when I read the final ordinance that day, I saw such departures from all of the “Do Real Planning” conversations that the commission had been having for the last two-and-a-half years. I was taken by surprise by the final product.

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