

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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AS FUNDING GETS TIGHT, SUPPORTIVE HOUSING ATTRACTS CREATIVE ARCHITECTS



Pugh + Scarpa's Step Up on Fifth in Santa Monica

COURTESY PUGH + SCARPA

Better Living

After several flush years, supportive housing for LA's homeless faces an uncertain future. But that hasn't stopped many architects from seeking such publicly funded projects to survive the economic downturn.

At the height of the economic boom in 2005 and 2006, a number of projects for homeless housing, often involving top architecture firms, secured funding. Michael Maltzan completed the **continued on page 9**

URBAN WATCHDOG GETS NEW HOME



KEITH BAKER PHOTOGRAPHY

SILVER SPUR

For 50 years, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) has been advocating sound planning through investigating local decisions, making counterproposals, and conducting community outreach. As of May 28, it will finally have a welcoming space to match its community-oriented **continued on page 9**

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LA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ORDINANCE STRUCK DOWN

Usher's Revenge?

On April 13, LA County Superior Court Judge Thomas McKnew, Jr., did away with parts of Los Angeles' SB 1818 ordinance, a law that allows local governments to craft their own rules **continued on page 3**



SFMOMA: UP ON THE ROOF. SEE PAGE 6

HENRIK KAM

LA'S EXPO LIGHT RAIL ON TRACK, WITH CONTROVERSIES IN TOW



Wavy canopies shade the Expo Line's elevated stops

COURTESY EXPOSITION CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

CROSSING THE LINE

Work on a century-old railroad right-of-way in Los Angeles is chugging right along. With Phase I of the Exposition Light Rail Transit Line well underway—and due for completion by the end of 2010—the line will follow an 8.6-mile route from downtown to Culver City.

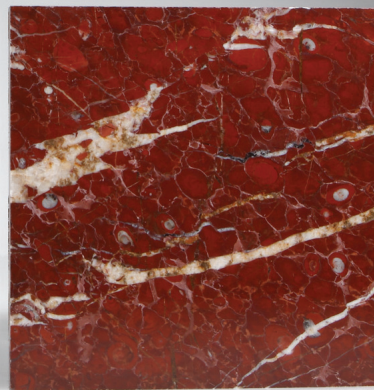
The University of Southern California's station is nearly complete in

Exposition Park. Pylons for an overpass are rising on either side of La Brea Avenue, tracks are welded in Culver City, and the line's undulating sun-shield canopies should start shimmering above stations starting in May. Although beleaguered by community groups seeking changes, the Expo Line remains on track.

The \$2-billion-plus project, which is managed by the

Exposition Construction Authority (Expo, a state agency only partially funded by LA's transit authority), was given a boost by Measure R. The half-cent county sales tax passed by voters last fall will provide needed funds during Phase II—expansion to Santa Monica—and has lent an overall sense of confidence to the project. **continued on page 11**

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While the private sector has already made huge investments in smart systems, public agencies are way behind in taking notice, despite the fact that much of the technology has been developed in the United States and exported to governments elsewhere. IBM, for instance, has developed traffic-monitoring systems in places like Stockholm and London, while improving management for bus and train systems worldwide, and it is even working with food producers to limit the billions of dollars worth of food that is wasted every year. Yet very few American cities have adopted the obvious benefits of such technology.

Take one of the most egregious examples of our backwardness in this area: building permits. A look at the typical building department is a trip down memory lane, with disorganized sheaves of paper documents still dominating. Most of California's building authorities are no exception, despite steps in the right direction. Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego, for example, offer online permitting, but only for simple permits like electrical and plumbing approvals. Anything requiring planning review is still done the old-fashioned way.

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Some might argue that going electronic is a leap into the unknown, but that's not the case. There is no good reason why most new infrastructure projects appear to be moving forward in the same old analog fashion. If the problem is that few seem ready to part with the startup money necessary to install these systems, it's time to wise up. We've already learned the lesson of sustainable architecture—that those willing to make an initial investment now will be light years ahead in terms of saving money and time down the line. All aboard! **SAM LUBELL**

USHER'S REVENGE? continued from front page

when awarding density bonuses (allowances to developers who include affordable housing in their residential projects). Former LA planning commissioner Jane Ellison Usher, who recently stepped down, was an outspoken opponent of the measure, which in some cases gave bonuses 300 percent greater than those mandated by SB 1818. The ruling prevents the city from approving projects with density bonuses that exceed state law.

The controversial 2005 ordinance has been the target of numerous lawsuits. One suit, filed in April 2008 by homeowners calling themselves The Environment and Housing Coalition Los Angeles, argued that the city acted improperly by approving an ordinance that increased density and height while reducing parking and open space—all without environmental review. Judge McKnew agreed, and his decision throws an unknown number of proposed developments into jeopardy.

While proponents have said the ordinance encourages affordable housing and limits sprawl, foes have long argued it was a giveaway to developers and speculators. They claim the measure would result in a net loss of affordable housing, as developers razed older apartment complexes to build profitable, market-priced condominiums with one or two affordable units.

In March 2008, Usher authored an email opposing the ordinance and inviting public action. In the now-famous missive, Usher pointed to ordinance language that defined some projects seeking density bonuses as "ministerial," thereby exempting them from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Usher noted that the ministerial designation was at odds with a Categorical Exemption issued by the Planning Department, which stated that all projects filed in accordance with the ordinance be subject to CEQA review.

To no one's surprise, Usher is pleased with the judge's ruling, asserting that the bill had developers "licking their chops." Will Wright, director of government and public affairs for the LA chapter of the AIA, believes the city's intent was to cut through the "bureaucratic bog" and make it easier to bring projects to market, thereby increasing opportunities for low-to-moderate housing. Still, Wright sympathizes with those who feared the ordinance would destroy the character and scale of their communities, citing the "low levels of sophistication" that have plagued many residential developments. "Over the last 15 years or so, you've seen massive condo projects go up that have no character and no connectivity to the neighborhood—and this represents the monster," he said.

Councilmember Ed Reyes, who chairs the council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee, was unavailable for comment, as were representatives of the city's planning department. While the City Council may appeal Judge McKnew's ruling, Usher hopes they'll instead redraft the ordinance in a manner that promotes smart growth over sprawl-inducing densification. "I think the city has to grab hold of its future growth pattern for traffic and environmental reasons—and here's an occasion where the city can be a leader," she said.

Asked if she is hopeful that an ordinance with those principles might eventually be adopted, Usher let out a hearty laugh. After a pause, she said, "There's always room for hope." **MIKE SCHULTE**

WOLCH TO LEAD BERKELEY'S CED

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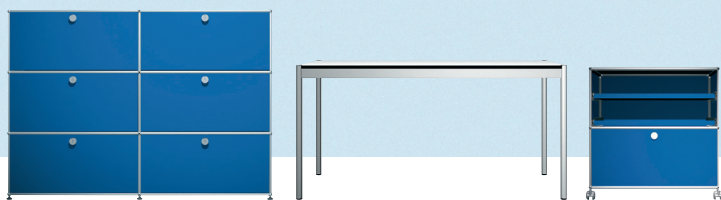
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EAVESDROP > ALISSA WALKER

YOU HAD TO BE THERE

"Less people and less parties" was the word on the street at this year's toned-down AIA convention in San Francisco, but that didn't stop us from kicking it up a notch at our very own block party. Thanks to the hard work of **Yosh Asato** and **Kenny Caldwell**, *AN* partnered with Vectorworks and the fine folks at 3A Gallery and Studio Forbes, who threw open their doors for a little something we called City to Green. 3A was feeling the green with its exhibition *10 x 10 Cities*, addressing sustainability challenges facing ten major North American AIA convention host cities. At the other end of the block, the theme was "biker bar"...well, bicycles, that is, with avid cyclist **Rob Forbes** showcasing his personal collection of modern track bikes from around the world. Someone walked—rather, rode—away with a sweet yellow Alta single-speed bike: Talk about some hot wheels. Afterward, we whisked some of our nearest and dearest away to a private dinner in Handel Architects' Millennium Tower (which was extremely private, seeing as the building had just been completed and had precious few tenants). Among the luminaries who infiltrated our ranks at both events were fellow still-employed journalists John King of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and **Bob Ivy**, editor of *Architectural Record*. Also spotted were a sharp-looking **Henry Urbach**, SFMOMA's curator of architecture and design, SF architects **Craig Hartman**, **Anne Fougeron**, **Mark Horton**, **Peter Pfau**, and **John Peterson**, AIA San Francisco director **Margie O'Driscoll**, California College of the Arts chair **Ila Berman**, and the ever-cuddly **Teddy "Bear" Cruz**.

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PRESERVATIONISTS FIGHT TO SAVE CENTURY PLAZA HOTEL



COURTESY LA CONSERVANCY

Midcentury Mess

It would seem that the work of Minoru Yamasaki can't catch a break these days. The now-deceased pioneering modernist—he designed Seattle's Arch, New York's Twin Towers, and LA's now all-but-doomed Century Plaza Hotel—is known less for being one of the 20th century's staunch modernist architects and more for being the architect of the damned, the doomed, and the destroyed.

His midcentury-modern Century Plaza has been a recent flashpoint in the ongoing debate between development and preservation in LA. Though the hotel sat quietly unnoticed but heavily used for decades, things heated up last December when the 726-room hotel's new owner, local investor Michael Rosenfeld (who bought the property with the D.E. Shaw Group), released this seemingly pro-preservation statement: "Properties like the Century Plaza Hotel are one-of-a-kind; they have lasting value in any economic environment. This is a rare opportunity to buy a jewel in my hometown."

But just a year later, Rosenfeld announced plans to raze the hotel and replace it with a mixed-use development containing two 50-story Pei Cobb Freed & Partners-designed hotel/residential towers. At a cost of \$2 billion, the more than five-acre site will hold 100,000-plus square feet of office space, a 240-room Five Star hotel (still to be operated by Hyatt), 130 luxury condos, and nearly 105,000 square feet of retail and commercial space. When the new plans were unveiled, Rosenfeld changed his pro-preservation tune: "The opportunity to redefine an urban center in one of the great international cities comes along once in a lifetime... The innovative design embraces the future of urban planning with an emphasis on pedestrian

connectivity and sustainable design." Rosenfeld and Co. also touted the new development as very green. The project is expected to be LEED Silver certified, and will use environmentally "correct" construction materials, with some structures featuring "green" roofs.

This was too much for local preservationists, who brought out their big guns in late April in a splashy, Hollywood-style press conference, held across the street from the Century Plaza in a screening room at talent agency CAA. In a surprise move, the Washington, D.C.-based National Trust for Historic Preservation announced that the hotel had been placed on their list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places for 2009. Though inclusion on the list might seem merely a gesture, only six structures placed on the list in the last 22 years have been destroyed.

Unlike the buildings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, midcentury modern structures, especially those used for commercial purposes, have been a tougher sell in the preservation conversation. Modernist buildings can seem cold and unwelcoming, and have often seen little support from the public when threatened. The Welton Becket-designed office complex just down the road from the Century Plaza is headed for the chopping block this summer, with little fanfare and even less opposition.

Perhaps the biggest irony is the timing: This year marks the 50th anniversary of Century City's founding. Leo Marmol, of Marmol and Radziner Associates, whose remodel of Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs is among the storied acts of midcentury modern preservation, noted, "To make our cities more dense is a positive thing, and I support development. But Century City has seen a loss lately." He added, "The question is, will they allow the continued destruction of the fabric of their history, or will they say enough is enough?"

The developer must now submit plans to the Planning Department and initiate environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act, which will likely take 12 to 18 months to complete.

JAKE TOWNSEND

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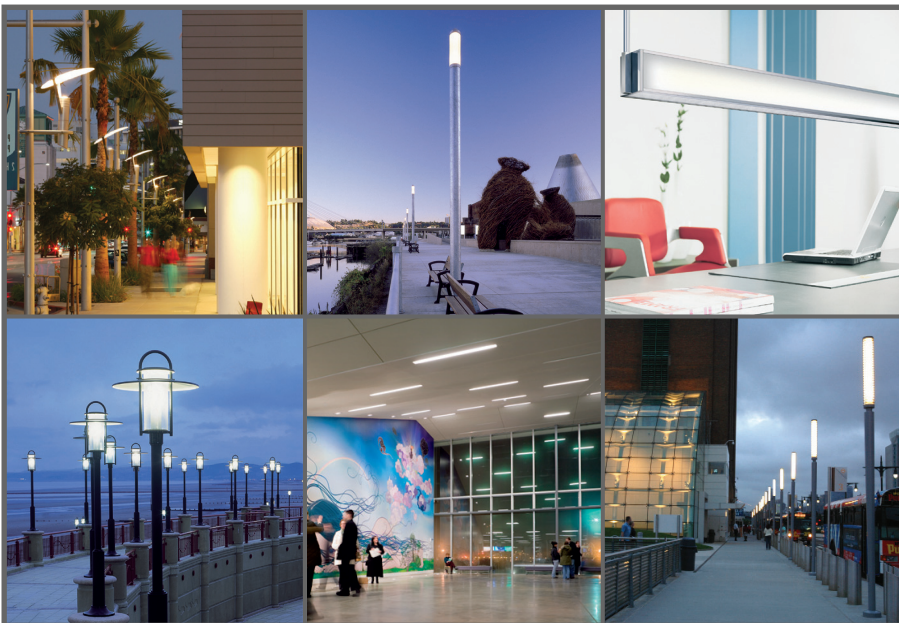
4204 Dale Road, Modesto
Tel: 209-522-7286
Designer: Mark Horton Architecture



COURTESY MARK HORTON ARCHITECTURE

Modesto Commerce Bank's newest branch provides a provocative counterpoint to its low-key, exurban setting. Located at the edge of an expanding new community in California's Central Valley, the branch is shaped by the area's auto-centric lifestyle and hot climate. For San Francisco-based architect Mark Horton, the requirement for covered parking and drive-through bays became an opportunity to enact a singular gesture that would give the building a strong identity rooted in the region's history and landscape.

Two simple volumes—a glass-enclosed public banking hall and an opaque, terrazzo-clad operations space—accommodate the branch's central functions. The offset volumes join along the transaction counter, the juncture between public and secure realms. A continuous "origami" roof hovers above and reaches outward to shelter both interior and exterior service areas, while an integrated photovoltaic laminate system harvests the region's intense sun, fulfilling 60 percent of the building's energy needs. The folded roof and its supporting tree-like columns echo the surrounding landscape and the almond orchards that once thrived on the site, creating a notable element amid unmemorable superblock development. **YOSH ASATO**



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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 27, 2009

LA'S A+D MUSEUM LANDS ITS OWN SPACE AT LAST



COURTESY A+D MUSEUM

both Richard Meier & Partners and Gensler and will encompass 4,800 square feet, including a 3,500-square-foot main gallery, plus space for offices, conference rooms, and project storage.

"We see this as our next big step," said A+D's president, the architect Stephen Kanner, who stressed the museum's desire to stay in the Museum Row area, near major institutions like the LA County Museum of Art, BCAM, and the California Craft & Folk Museum. "This will allow us to have a broader outreach and more shows because of the new, stable location," he said. Kanner added that the museum has been fundraising through top architects and designers in the city over the last nine months, and will announce several top donors at its fall fundraiser.

Over the years, the museum has hosted exhibitions about architects like Ray Kappe, and has put together thematic shows on emerging architects (*New Blood: Next Gen*), on the future of LA (*LA Now!*), on design-savvy developers (*Enlightened Development*), and on the destruction and rebuilding of New Orleans (*After The Flood*). Future shows—roughly four per year, said Kanner—will split evenly between architecture and design. Exhibits might feature production design, commercial design, graphic design, and film-set design in addition to a variety of architecture-based shows.

Before construction begins, the A+D will host a pop-up exhibition in the new space from May 8 to 23 called *Upcycling: Recuperating Past Lives*, featuring art and design objects made from recycled materials.

SL

HOME SWEET HOME

After years of nomadic existence, LA's A+D Museum is finally getting its own home, at 6032 Wilshire Boulevard, across the street from the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) on Museum Row. The museum signed a six-year lease (with an additional five-year option) for its ground-floor space on April 17, and plans to occupy it in September.

Since its founding to "celebrate and promote an awareness of architecture and design," the A+D has bounced around LA, occupying locations donated by philanthropists like developer Ira Yellin, who gave the museum its first facility in downtown LA's Bradbury Building in 2001. It then moved to Santa Monica (2003), to West Hollywood (2003–2005), and finally to its most recent location at 5900 Wilshire (2006–2009), a large space donated by developer Wayne Ratkovich.

The new venue is on the ground floor of a small midcentury office building, and will feature large storefront windows and bright, welcoming signage. Design work for the raw and minimalist space will be donated by

SFMOMA OPENS A SCULPTURE GARDEN AND ANNOUNCES AMBITIOUS EXPANSION PLANS



Let Them Eat Art

The recession may be crippling institutions across the country, but the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is forging ahead. On May 10, SFMOMA opened a \$24 million rooftop sculpture garden, which adds 14,400 square feet of exhibition space for newly acquired or rarely seen large-scale works. San Francisco-based Jensen Architects received the commission in a 2006 design competition, and construction took about a year. The garden's debut follows another ambitious move: the museum's April 2 announcement of a plan to double its exhibition space to accommodate its growing collections, exhibitions, and educational programming.

Located on the eighth floor of a parking garage, the garden space comprises a series of indoor/outdoor areas where patrons can mingle with works by Alexander Calder, Barnett Newman, and Louise Bourgeois, among others. It connects to the fifth floor of the museum's main building through a 110-foot-long bridge that is something of a technical feat: a hanging walkway suspended by beams that are hidden above the ceiling. Entry is gained through an overlook space. With a glass wall framed by black-painted flashings and copings used elsewhere in the museum's exterior, this 1,000-square-foot room acts as a transitional area, leading from enclosed exhibition space to a wide-open view of the two outdoor gardens that flank an enclosed pavilion and the South-of-Market skyline.

Jensen chose subtle materials. Walls of dark gray lava stone enclose the garden areas and pavilion. Concrete floors were chosen because they can be used to bolt down large works—such as Ellsworth Kelly's 18-foot-tall slab of steel—and are easily repaired. Inside the 2,000-square-foot pavilion, Jensen used a traditional flooring material—narrow slats of tongue-and-groove European white oak—on one wall framing a Blue Bottle Coffee Bar.

On April 2, the museum announced the selection of Gensler's San Francisco office to plan a future 50,000-square-foot addition and guide the reorganization of the museum's collections, storage, and office facilities. The firm's founder, Arthur Gensler, is vice

chairman of SFMOMA's board of trustees.

As proposed, the new addition will not alter the 3rd Street view of the now-iconic 1995 Mario Botta building, with its full-height central atrium and cylindrical turret. Rather, the wing will be located on a series of lots that back onto Natoma Street and bridge over a parking area on Hunt Street, a dead end. A new entrance will be added on Minna Street to improve access to the auditorium and better accommodate school groups. The expansion will also allow the museum to consolidate its offices, 60 percent of which are currently off-site.

Last summer, SFMOMA's trustees endorsed an initial planning phase for the expansion, but then put fundraising on hold when the economy took a downturn in the fall. A spokesperson for the museum indicated that part of Gensler's scope of work would be to determine a budget. A capital campaign and architectural selection will commence after the planning phase, which is expected to conclude over the next year.

The expansion comes at an unusual time, as museums all over the country struggle to raise money. But with the museum's rapid growth since the opening of the Botta building, museum director Neal Benezra said now was the best time to act. "Continuing this planning is critical, since it will enable us to move forward quickly and confidently with a fundraising campaign once the nation regains its economic footing," he said in a press release. **JOANNE FURIO**

The museum's new, 14,400-square-foot sculpture garden occupies the eighth floor of a parking garage.



HENRIK KAM

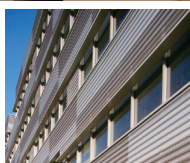


Horizon at Playa Vista

The first of a three-phase development for Lincoln Property Company. The 460,000 sf two-building office complex includes one subterranean level of parking for 565 cars and a freestanding parking structure for 885 cars. This project is striving to obtain a LEED® Gold Certified rating from the U.S. Green Building Council.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 27, 2009

HOUSE OF THE ISSUE > XTEN ARCHITECTURE



When Austin Kelly, a partner at LA-based XTen Architecture, considered building a new home for a small family on a 30-by-40-foot lot in Hermosa Beach, most of his architect and contractor friends told him not to do it.

"People talk about this kind of building in Tokyo, not in LA," noted Kelly. But he decided to ignore them, making the most

out of every square inch to give the family the maximum amount of usable space.

"It was like designing a cabinet," Kelly said. The solution was to locate most public spaces nearer to the corners, and also high up where there was a little more breathing room. After accounting for parking, circulation, and outdoor space, the size of the so-called SurfhousE was

By inverting the traditional arrangement and putting public spaces on top and private below, the architects maximized usable space on this 30-by-40-foot lot.



ART GRAY

down to 22 feet wide and 26 feet deep.

The large, angular fissure in the top floor forms an expansive balcony that gives views to the ocean without sacrificing privacy or shade. This outdoor room extends inside to meet the top floor's open kitchen and living room. A rooftop deck above provides an even better vantage point, where the roofs of this dense beach-side town spread out in all directions.

The rest of the 1,400-square-foot house consists of a vertical progression of rooms designed to minimize the amount of square footage dedicated to circulation and maximize living space. The entry floor includes a guest room and office in front and a garage in back. The second floor holds a master bedroom suite in front and a children's bedroom that cantilevers over

the garage below, enlarging interior space.

Unlike its often ornate, faux-Spanish-villa neighbors, the compact three-story structure is monolithic: a single box, darkly clad in ship-lapped rough cedar that will wear over time. Its black exterior and irregularly placed windows prevent a viewer's differentiating between individual floors. The color not only contrasts dramatically with residences nearby, but also with the house's light, airy interiors, which feature white walls and bamboo floors.

While the SurfhousE went up, the owners, a couple with a young daughter, lived in a tiny summer cottage on the property. "They realized they didn't need a lot of stuff," said Kelly. "When they moved into a house that was 1,400 square feet, it felt like a palace." **SL**

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NICOLAS O.S. MARQUES

For too long, the architecture of most roadside gas stations—with a few notable exceptions from masters like Mies van der Rohe and Albert Frey—has been either purely practical or painfully kitschy. Kanner Architects' new station for United Oil in Los Angeles once again elevates the gas station to the realm of architecture, although it doesn't push it quite as far as it could.

The \$7 million project stands on the gas-station-lined corner of Slauson and La Brea in Ladera Heights, a zone so car-dominated that the word neighborhood seems a stretch.

The station's primary move is its swooping and chamfered, white-and-gray canopy that hovers on V-shaped columns and is inspired, said Stephen Kanner, by the

area's nearby freeway interchanges. The element carries off the task of holding the station together, linking disparate parts and creating a sense of airiness and excitement while providing needed shade. The eye swoops around its curves and up in a dramatic gesture that suggests a runway, leading the imagination into the future. From different angles, the station's unusual shapes change form, each vista capitalizing on the boldness of the design.

The metallic components that make up the station's parts and echo the canopy are equally graceful and well coordinated. These include stainless steel bol-lards, gutters, gates, sign posts, light tubes, bumpers, and window apertures, not to mention the steel sta-

tions for gas pumping. Its circular, translucent-glass welcome stand echoes the canopy's lightness and ethereality. A pocket park next door, with its own curved elements, provides much-needed breathing room for the community.

But then the building gets bogged down in overly familiar references and forms. A ramp in back swoops up audaciously, appearing to lead drivers around to the canopy itself. It only wraps around to a ground level car-wash. This is a letdown—perhaps a hint that not everything here finishes what it starts. The station's large block lettering, meant to be contemporary, feels more imitative of 1960's, not 2000's, futurist architecture. The curving pump stations and the V-prop columns around them are too noticeable where they could have deferred to the canopy, letting that element dominate and unify the bold thought. Even the canopy, upon closer inspection, seems a little too heavy to be revolutionary. Inside, bright, colored tiles echo a modernist diner, or modern mini-mart.

The owner of the station, Jeff Appel, is known for garish designs like his Western-themed station or his facilities adorned with French tiles or Gaudi-like towers. This design is more effective (if less fun), and a reminder of why architect-designed stations can improve a staple of the American landscape. But it could have swooped us off our feet and really into the future. More to the point, this earnestly futuristic design implies the car is the future, clearly not true (particularly not cars that only take regular gas, as they do here). Unlike the new "green" BP station not too far away, this United Oil station doesn't provide any alternative fuels or make any contribution toward a new way of consuming and pumping gas. Perhaps that's why much of the futuristic symbolism seems dated. Once gas stations were a beacon for our world's possibilities. That time is long gone in a world burdened by traffic, fossil fuels, and dying car companies. Looking to the future now means looking somewhere entirely different. **SL**

SILVER SPUR continued from front page goals. The new space (which replaces cramped offices on the upper floors of a building on Sutter Street downtown) not only projects light and openness, it also provides SPUR with a street-front space to host exhibitions, panels, and lectures.

Designed by local firm Pfau architects, the four-story, 14,000-square-foot headquarters is located on Mission Street in the South of Market neighborhood, just around the corner from SFMOMA. Its white, modern facade stands out on a block of traditional brick buildings. But the \$8.5 million building still fits well within its context. It's a simple whole made up of intricate parts, a crisscross of thin louvers, small, operable grid-like windows, clear expanses of glass, and glowing, translucent rectangles.

The unifier is the glass, particularly the large, vertically oriented translucent section that fronts the building's stairwells, opening the space to its neighbors during the day and glowing at night. It also encourages locals to walk right in, where they're greeted on the first floor with a tall, open space informally divided into a welcome hall, an exhibitions gallery, and a conference room. All four floors are similarly tall, open, and pristine white, with exposed mechanical systems to increase height and keep the architecture honest. "People are desperate for ways to learn about having an impact on their city," said Diane Filippi, the Urban Center's director. "This new space will encourage them to come in and learn these skills."

The new building has also changed SPUR **SL**

itself, forcing employees to interact with people wandering in, and removing the cubicles that had once divided them. On the second floor, the open-plan space is divided only by a full-height glass wall that encloses the assembly hall, the new home for lectures, symposia, and other events. Unlike its old assembly space, where columns obstructed views, this one is column-free. The open layout of the third floor offices is reminiscent of a newsroom. The fourth floor contains a conference area, library, and a small balcony, with a "green roof" that is more of a small patch of plants than a rooftop garden.

The first exhibition at the Center, which opens on May 29, is also ambitious. Called *Agents of Change: Civic Idealism and the Making of San Francisco*, the show documents the history of progressive urban planning in the city, featuring movements as varied as the classicists, the regionalists, the moderns, the contextualists, and the eco-urbanists.

SPUR has raised \$13 million of the \$18 million needed for the project; they hope to garner significant revenue from renting the space out, among other things. The building is seeking a LEED Silver rating, impressive for the rest of the country but only a middling rating for eco-crazy San Francisco. Overall, however, the building is a triumph, not just architecturally but socially. It boasts a collection of the best traits of architecture centers around the world, constantly connected to the city with no walls in its way.

BETTER LIVING continued from front page

Rainbow Apartments for Skid Row Housing Trust in downtown LA in 2006. He recently topped off another project, the New Carver Apartments, with 95 units of senior affordable and supportive housing arranged radially around a courtyard, and due to begin leasing in October. Killefer Flammang Architects Villas at Gower, a 70-unit permanent supportive housing project in Hollywood, should break ground in November. Koning Eizenberg is just completing the Abbey Apartments on Skid Row, while Pugh + Scarpa recently completed a 46-unit facility in Santa Monica called Step Up on Fifth. And Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects is collaborating with the Skid Row Housing Trust on an 82-unit site in downtown LA.

Despite this flurry, future funding is in jeopardy. If passed, proposition 1E, on the May 19 ballot, would let the state legislature redirect funds from 2004's Mental Health Services Act—which provided \$400 million in funds for supportive housing—back into state coffers. Furthermore, money from 2002's Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act, or Proposition 46, has been disbursed more slowly than in the past, forcing nonprofit developers to look for alternate funding sources. The failure of the state to approve a budget has also delayed bond issues for publicly funded projects. Just as seized-up credit markets hurt the larger economy, one frozen sector has consequences for every other, explained Molly Rysman, director of special projects at Skid Row Housing Trust.

The private sector is unlikely to make up the shortfall. As Tod Lipka, president and CEO of Step Up on Second, which provides housing for the homeless in Santa Monica, explained, "Giving hasn't stopped, but people aren't giving at the level they were before the recession."

But despite the uncertain financial landscape, architects in Los Angeles continue to work closely with nonprofit developers on more affordable and supportive housing. In fact, with a relatively dire commercial market, more architects than ever are receptive to working with much tighter budgets in the public sector, said Lipka.

Nonprofit housing developers stress that they're looking for architects with an innate sensitivity to the community they're serving. "We want to create housing that doesn't feel institutional," said Rysman. Another criterion is speed. "There's a certain degree of stop-and-go," explained Dora Leong Gallo, CEO of A Community of Friends, an affordable housing developer. "Responsiveness is critical, especially for projects funded with tax credits. Delaying any part of the process can jeopardize a project."

One architect who has transitioned from commercial projects to publicly funded work is Lorcan O'Herlihy, who maintains that lessons learned in the private sector can translate into supportive housing design. "We take programmatic criteria—incorporate green roofs, cable systems for irrigation, landscapes into urban areas—and try to be inventive within strict parameters," he said.

Is there a silver lining to the budget crisis for affordable and supportive housing? Gallo thinks so, especially as president pro tempore of the California State Senate, Darrell Steinberg, plans to introduce a bill to provide a permanent revenue source for affordable housing. Gallo said the political environment may finally be ripe to pass such a bill: "One good thing that's come out of [this financial crisis] is an understanding of the importance of having a place to call home."

MARISSA GLUCK

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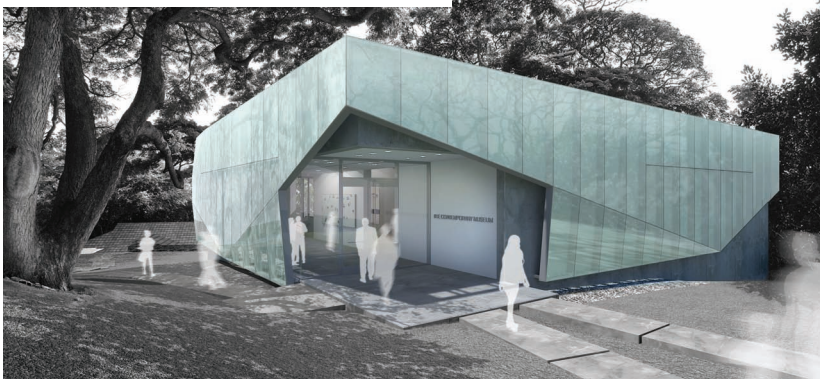
ANNENBERG COMMUNITY BEACH HOUSE



SHERRERD HALL



THE CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM OF HONOLULU



OCEANSIDE MUSEUM OF ART



MANHATTAN BEACH RESIDENCE



COURTESY FREDERICK FISHER AND PARTNERS

In the post-Bilbao era, as pressure to torque form and space rises, California architect Fred Fisher continues to go his own way, dropping simple, quietly evocative spaces into sometimes challenging settings. Since 1980, when he founded the firm to focus on arts and residential work, Fisher has designed close to 70 galleries, studios, and museums. The artists' work that his interiors "frame" (the term he employs), rather than his own machinations, have always taken center stage. "That lesson came very early," he said, cultivated in his first studio commission for the artist Else Rady. His ethos was also fed in part by the light and space pieces of James

Turrell and Robert Irwin, which focused more on internal than external orientations of the individual.

In several new public projects, including a completed museum and one on the boards, Fisher, who works out of a restored courtyard studio designed by A. Quincy Jones, extrapolates this low-key philosophy and uses design to foster small-d democracy, nurturing interaction with both users and site. His residential work for art patrons emphasizes understatement and economy of expression in the service of spatial experiences for the inhabitants. **TIBBY ROTHMAN**

**ANNENBERG COMMUNITY
BEACH HOUSE**
SANTA MONICA

The public beach club commissioned by the City of Santa Monica is situated on the former five-acre Marion Davies Estate, built for the actress in 1928 by William Randolph Hearst. The firm was charged with weaving several historical elements in with new structures that required high degrees of durability. Though the location has design-friendly elements like ocean, beach, and sky, it abuts the noisy Pacific Coast Highway. Cast-on-site concrete panels form a gliding, horizontal wall that buffers sound, securing the site's interior from the parking lot and facilitating an organizational backbone. The feature links a restored cafe to the new structures—an office outpost, pool house, and event house—but stops short of a garden fronting the Marion Davies guesthouse, thus framing the only remaining historical building in its own place and time. Viewed from the parking lot, the wall offsets the pool house's second floor, an inviting, semi-translucent rectangular cube, while lending weight to the entrance.

OCEANSIDE MUSEUM OF ART
OCEANSIDE

When the firm earned this commission, a 16,000-square-foot expansion, another architect had already left his mark. The project was to join the existing gallery space in an Irving Gill building on one side to a second Gill building— slated for renovation— to complete the tableau on the other side. Located on a quiet street in a working-class beach neighborhood, the project engages its community through 11-foot glass sliders that form a street elevation wall. At ground level, the addition is fully exposed—a truly public building— while an elegant white box floats above. The structure is set back from the street, with a resulting plaza that expands the indoor-outdoor space when the sliders are opened for events. Freestanding walls both address the requirements of changing exhibits and protect inner galleries from direct light.

SHERRERD HALL
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

The design philosophy for this 50,000-square-foot, ground-up building for an Ivy League institution was intellectual transparency. Sherrerd Hall physically connects old and new campus structures, and fosters an interdisciplinary ethos for the two academic departments within, engineering and life sciences. Though the interior features a three-story atrium to promote gathering and casual interaction, the glass facade, composed of panels that draw their proportions from neighboring buildings, also minimizes the structure's bulk. At night, varying degrees of transparency turn the building into a lantern, while a semi-opaque, third-floor porch landing creates depth. By day, the skin reflects the importance of the world beyond, giving glimpses of existing campus structures as well as the natural environment, a changing series of images that animate the building's form.

**THE CONTEMPORARY
MUSEUM OF HONOLULU**
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Originally planned as a simple glass prism to house Hawaii's only institution dedicated to contemporary art, this commission extends Fisher's use of the surroundings to provide an ever-changing skin and to project the building into its environment. Fractured geometric planes taper inwards and converge at the museum's entrance, skewing the project's original simple form. The disjointed shapes create an ambiguous object within the landscape. Skinned with frit glass, they reflect the lush Hawaiian flora. To best use the buildable space, the building's footprint sits on an old tennis court—art storage is programmed below ground, the gallery is above.

MANHATTAN BEACH RESIDENCE
MANHATTAN BEACH

For a client with an extensive art collection who sought a 3,500-square-foot home in Manhattan Beach and was interested in extrapolating the ideas of Donald Judd, the firm returned to gallery-like forms. Three distinct concrete cubes progress down a sloped, 33-by-100-foot lot. A spare palette of exposed concrete, steel-framed windows, and wood fulfill the client's directive for a serene space, both inside and out. Fisher has always judiciously placed windows to connect inside and outside. Here, double-floor-height vertical window systems highlight the vertical nature of each cube and frame views while protecting the owner's collection. The endeavor was designed in collaboration with artist Roy McMakin of Domestic Architecture, who focused on interior finishes and furniture.

CROSSING THE LINE continued from front page

"Before Measure R, there was always the possibility that, due to lack of funding, Phase II could be delayed," said Roland Genick, lead designer for the project's urban design and architecture. "But now it looks like it might get accelerated, and final design might start earlier." On May 18, an industry review allowed potential design-build teams to begin viewing procurement documents for Phase II. The companies involved in station architecture, urban design, and engineering during Phase I include Gruen Associates, Parsons, and Miyamoto International.

The Expo Line has a unified design, meaning all stations adhere to the same basic system, with slight customization at each station during the fabrication and installation phase. One detail that designers hope riders will notice is the patterns of tiny perforations in the sun shields: dot-matrix photographs from the neighborhood, which will be shadowed on the ground. The stations will also be transformed significantly at night, thanks to illumination from within the rain shelters. Artists have been selected for each station, adding another layer of local reference.

In addition to the stations themselves, a flurry of development has cropped up along the Phase I transit corridor. Culver City has purchased a triangle of land next to the new Robertson-Venice station, where a mixed-use development with commercial space, a potential boutique hotel, and residential units has been proposed by developers Urban Partners with architects Moule & Polyzoides. Further east near the La Cienega station, Eric Owen Moss has unveiled a concept for a 200,000-square-foot residential tower developed by Samitaur Construct. Surrounding the Crenshaw station, the Community Redevelopment Agency has completed a vision plan with Urban Studio that will bring pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, and a comprehensive landscape plan by ah'bé landscape architects to Crenshaw Street.

Not everyone is happy. As development spikes along the route, grassroots groups like Citizens' Campaign to Fix the Expo Rail Line and Neighbors For Smart Rail have mobilized, specifically to prevent at-grade crossings in neighborhoods, which they believe will increase accidents, traffic, noise, and glare. The groups have also claimed that residents in lower-income neighborhoods are not receiving the same safety

measures as wealthier Westside residents. The Citizens' Campaign focused their efforts on the Exposition Boulevard-Farmdale Avenue crossing, deemed too close to Dorsey High School: Students would have to cross the at-grade alignment. After a February ruling that deemed the crossing unsafe, Expo began work on a new proposal to include a pedestrian bridge and a likely permanent closing of Farmdale. An Environmental Impact Review will be available for public comment this summer, and major changes could delay the opening for a year.

On April 2, Expo announced the preferred alignment for the project's Phase II to Santa Monica, exiting Culver City on the existing Exposition right-of-way through a corner of Cheviot Hills to the art complex at Bergamot Station, and continuing along Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica, ending just blocks from the Pacific. Although the route is not confirmed, it already has its own set of issues. Some residents in Cheviot Hills rallied unsuccessfully for a new alignment down Sepulveda that avoided their neighborhood completely. And further west, Santa Monica residents are up in arms about a potential Verizon facility recommended as a maintenance yard (it has not yet been purchased, but Expo is in negotiations). Groups were so incensed about the yard butting up against one of the city's lowest-income neighborhoods that they put forth a proposal to use the ancient maintenance yard at Bergamot Station instead, striking fear into the local art community.

"The Bergamot takeover is a non-issue—it has never been considered as the site—but with the right design and input from residents, a maintenance facility with a park or mixed-use buffer could actually be an asset to the neighborhood," said Genick. "We are heading into a new city and one that, while very supportive, is pretty opinionated," he added. As the Expo Line continues to travel west (Phase II could be operating by 2014 if construction begins next year as planned), it will be serving more affluent residents, meaning riders who will demand more from their transit system. "You need a solution for the majority, and good design can solve a lot of problems," said Genick, who welcomes the challenges. "Developing designs that are cognizant of the community concerns will result in the communities being invested in the project, and it will be a better project for it." **ALISSA WALKER**

AT DEADLINE

PLANNING BITES THE DUST

The Petaluma City Council voted in late April to eliminate the city's planning staff because of a lack of development activity and a \$4.5 million budget deficit. Ironically, Petaluma was the first city in California where voters approved a growth-control initiative, in 1972. According to the Santa Rosa *Press Democrat*, the city's planning functions will now be handled by consultants and former city employees working on a project basis.

CASH FOR CITYCENTER

MGM and Dubai World, co-owners of the massive Las Vegas CityCenter, ended months of infighting by signing a pact under which they will fund their remaining contributions to CityCenter via letters of credit, while current lenders will fully fund a \$1.8 billion senior secured credit facility.

FULLER LOFTS LIVE AGAIN

Southern California developer Lee Homes is helping continue construction on Pugh + Scarpa's Fuller Lofts in LA's Lincoln Heights. The 104-unit building, which was being developed by now-defunct nonprofit Livable Places, was foreclosed last year. Citibank still owns the project, and Lee Homes President Jeff Lee said the building will be completed next November.



Horizon at Playa Vista

The first of a three-phase development for Lincoln Property Company. The 460,000 sf two-building office complex includes one subterranean level of parking for 565 cars and a freestanding parking structure for 885 cars. This project is striving to obtain a LEED® Gold Certified rating from the U.S. Green Building Council.

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CROSSING THE LINE continued from front page

"Before Measure R, there was always the possibility that, due to lack of funding, Phase II could be delayed," said Roland Genick, lead designer for the project's urban design and architecture. "But now it looks like it might get accelerated, and final design might start earlier." On May 18, an industry review allowed potential design-build teams to begin viewing procurement documents for Phase II. The companies involved in station architecture, urban design, and engineering during Phase I include Gruen Associates, Parsons, and Miyamoto International.

The Expo Line has a unified design, meaning all stations adhere to the same basic system, with slight customization at each station during the fabrication and installation phase. One detail that designers hope riders will notice is the patterns of tiny perforations in the sun shields: dot-matrix photographs from the neighborhood, which will be shadowed on the ground. The stations will also be transformed significantly at night, thanks to illumination from within the rain shelters. Artists have been selected for each station, adding another layer of local reference.

In addition to the stations themselves, a flurry of development has cropped up along the Phase I transit corridor. Culver City has purchased a triangle of land next to the new Robertson-Venice station, where a mixed-use development with commercial space, a potential boutique hotel, and residential units has been proposed by developers Urban Partners with architects Moule & Polyzoides. Further east near the La Cienega station, Eric Owen Moss has unveiled a concept for a 200,000-square-foot residential tower developed by Samitaur Construct. Surrounding the Crenshaw station, the Community Redevelopment Agency has completed a vision plan with Urban Studio that will bring pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, and a comprehensive landscape plan by ah'bé landscape architects to Crenshaw Street.

Not everyone is happy. As development spikes along the route, grassroots groups like Citizens' Campaign to Fix the Expo Rail Line and Neighbors For Smart Rail have mobilized, specifically to prevent at-grade crossings in neighborhoods, which they believe will increase accidents, traffic, noise, and glare. The groups have also claimed that residents in lower-income neighborhoods are not receiving the same safety

measures as wealthier Westside residents. The Citizens' Campaign focused their efforts on the Exposition Boulevard-Farmdale Avenue crossing, deemed too close to Dorsey High School: Students would have to cross the at-grade alignment. After a February ruling that deemed the crossing unsafe, Expo began work on a new proposal to include a pedestrian bridge and a likely permanent closing of Farmdale. An Environmental Impact Review will be available for public comment this summer, and major changes could delay the opening for a year.

On April 2, Expo announced the preferred alignment for the project's Phase II to Santa Monica, exiting Culver City on the existing Exposition right-of-way through a corner of Cheviot Hills to the art complex at Bergamot Station, and continuing along Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica, ending just blocks from the Pacific. Although the route is not confirmed, it already has its own set of issues. Some residents in Cheviot Hills rallied unsuccessfully for a new alignment down Sepulveda that avoided their neighborhood completely. And further west, Santa Monica residents are up in arms about a potential Verizon facility recommended as a maintenance yard (it has not yet been purchased, but Expo is in negotiations). Groups were so incensed about the yard butting up against one of the city's lowest-income neighborhoods that they put forth a proposal to use the ancient maintenance yard at Bergamot Station instead, striking fear into the local art community.

"The Bergamot takeover is a non-issue—it has never been considered as the site—but with the right design and input from residents, a maintenance facility with a park or mixed-use buffer could actually be an asset to the neighborhood," said Genick. "We are heading into a new city and one that, while very supportive, is pretty opinionated," he added. As the Expo Line continues to travel west (Phase II could be operating by 2014 if construction begins next year as planned), it will be serving more affluent residents, meaning riders who will demand more from their transit system. "You need a solution for the majority, and good design can solve a lot of problems," said Genick, who welcomes the challenges. "Developing designs that are cognizant of the community concerns will result in the communities being invested in the project, and it will be a better project for it." **ALISSA WALKER**

AT DEADLINE

PLANNING BITES THE DUST

The Petaluma City Council voted in late April to eliminate the city's planning staff because of a lack of development activity and a \$4.5 million budget deficit. Ironically, Petaluma was the first city in California where voters approved a growth-control initiative, in 1972. According to the Santa Rosa *Press Democrat*, the city's planning functions will now be handled by consultants and former city employees working on a project basis.

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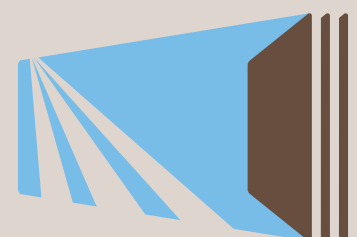
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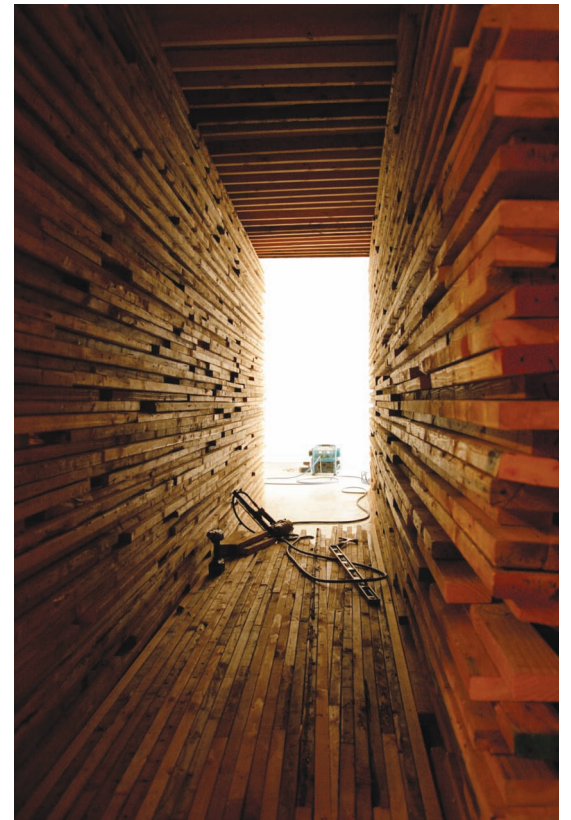
THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 27, 2009

NINE SAN DIEGO ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS ARE REDEFINING HOUSING, DEVELOPMENT, AND URBAN DESIGN IN THEIR OWN CITY AND BEYOND. THE LA JOLLA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART HAS TAKEN NOTICE, GIVING OVER MOST OF THE MUSEUM TO INSTALLATIONS THAT ENCAPSULATE THE CONCERNS AND CRAFT OF A GENERATION THAT IS DEDICATED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

BY SAM LUBELL



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: EDWARD BUTTON; STEPHEN SIMPSON; HISAO SUZUKI; EDWARD BUTTON



SEBASTIAN MARISCAL STUDIO

LEFT AND TOP: SEBASTIAN MARISCAL CREATED A TUNNEL INTO THE EXHIBITION USING RECYCLED PLANKS TIGHTLY LAYERED TO PROVIDE A CONCENTRATED EXPERIENCE OF ENTRY.

ABOVE: THE RECENTLY COMPLETED CASA VISTA HOUSE IN LA JOLLA POETICALLY WEAVES TOGETHER WOOD AND STEEL. ANOTHER HOUSE, TWO INNS, ON A STEEP HILLSIDE IN LA JOLLA, IS ONE OF TWO THAT MARISCAL DESIGNED FOR HIMSELF AND HIS BUSINESS PARTNER.

ON THEIR MARK

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER MAY 27, 2009



EDWARD BUTTON; BELOW: DAVID HARRISON

**LLOYD RUSSELL**

ABOVE: WITH AN AIM TO EMPHASIZE THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF PROCESS AND CRAFT, LLOYD RUSSELL STRUNG HAND-WORKED WOOD BLOCK RENDERINGS OF HIS HOUSES ON STEEL RODS, CALLING THE INSTALLATION "ABACUS." LEFT: HIS RIMROCK RANCH IN PIONEERTOWN, CALIFORNIA, FEATURES A STEEL CANOPY TO SHADE THE HOUSE FROM DESERT EXTREMES.

In 1982, the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art (now known as the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, or MCASD) held an oddly-named exhibition called *The California Condition: A Pregnant Architecture*, which presented the work of 13 highly original California architects. The show augured great things for the designers, including then-rising stars like Frank Gehry, Thom Mayne, Eric Owen Moss, and Rob Wellington Quigley. "A group of risk-taking, rule-breaking, inventive, and innovative architects is creating a new architecture in California today," said one essay in the exhibition catalog.

Now over 25 years later, the museum is embarking on another blockbuster exhibition, called *Mix: Nine San Diego Architects and Designers*, showcasing the original, risk-taking talents of another generation. This time, the designers, who graduated from architecture school in the 1980s, are all from San Diego—a center for emerging talent and creative practice that has been somewhat overlooked nationally. The show, which has taken over most of the museum, is on view through September 6. It is not just a roundup of each firm's work, but a series of installations developed and inspired by creative processes, by theories of architecture (and of society, politics, and community), and, perhaps most importantly, by each firm's own work.

"It's a moment of self-analysis," said Lucia Sanroman, assistant curator at MCASD, who curated the show. "It's very much about the process of design and a focus on experimentation. The gallery becomes a sort of studio." Sanroman noted that the participants are all medium-sized firms with sophisticated, distinct styles, whose work is highly specific to context, and who have developed interdisciplinary practices with their own idiosyncratic presences in the city. Some are developers as well as architects, some create furniture and other crafts, some are activists for sustainable architecture and urbanism, and others have created new models for collaboration in San Diego and elsewhere. The seven firms (which include nine principals, hence the nine in the show's title) are estudio teddy cruz, LUCE et Studio Architects, Sebastian Mariscal Studio, Public, Rinehart Herbst, Lloyd Russell, and Jonathan Segal.

Each firm has been given a gallery space to occupy inside the museum. Some spaces are rectilinear, while others have irregularly-shaped walls, or are even hallways. Sanroman assigned the galleries based on an intuition of each firm's work. For instance, she felt that Mariscal's intricate designs would suit a more enclosed, intimate space, while Segal's muscular creations would suit a lofty environment and Luce, who specializes in interiors, would adapt well to an unusually-shaped space.

A visit to the museum about a week prior to the show's opening was more exciting than your usual gallery installation. Dust filled the air, saws were grinding, hammers were banging, and concrete was being pounded. Sanroman said there had never been this many people working at the same time inside the museum. Amid the tumult, Segal and his team were creating an exhibition that would showcase the cost-efficient, multifamily developments for which they are known around San Diego. An entry corridor—with angled fins that echo the design of his latest building, called the Q—will present small models of projects, along with detailed business plans that show the hard number-crunching behind his work as a developer and builder. A larger section of the space will showcase much larger models and pictures of his projects, intended to give viewers a feel



EDWARD BUTTON: RIGHT: DAVID HEWITT ANNE GARRISON



RINEHART HERBST

LEFT: TODD RINEHART (IN WHITE SHORTS) AS HE AND TEAM MEMBERS INSTALLED PARTS OF THEIR "FENCE" AT THE MUSEUM.
ABOVE: KNOWN FOR THE SKILLFUL USE OF LOW-TECH MATERIALS, THE FIRM DESIGNED AN ELEGANT BUT STURDY WORK SHOP FOR THE WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE.



COURTESY PUBLIC: LEFT: EDWARD BUTTON

PUBLIC

LEFT: PUBLIC FOCUSES ON THE HANDS-ON MAKING OF ARCHITECTURE, WHILE ADDRESSING CURRENT ISSUES. HERE, TEAM MEMBERS OJAY PAGANO AND JONATHAN STEVENS INSTALL A MANIFESTO ABOUT THE NO-MAN'S-LAND AT THE U.S. BORDER WITH MEXICO.
ABOVE: THE DUTRA-BROWN APARTMENT BUILDING IN SAN DIEGO IS PART OF THE GROWING ARCHITECTURE HERITAGE OF THE CITY'S LITTLE ITALY.

for the expanding scale of the work.
Nearby, Lloyd Russell and his team were thumping freshly-watered Quikrete with wood planks to help set a pedestal for one of his models. Russell is becoming well-known for his craft-driven, quirky designs—many of which he has developed himself—such as the Triangle Building in San Diego's Little Italy and the Rimrock Ranch house in Pioneertown, California. Here he's riffing on his distinctive model-making process, in which he hand-works primitive blocks of wood and metal. Models are showcased in several ways: hanging from the ceiling, set on steel rods (into a creation he calls the "abacus"), and presented in varying scales on rough pedestals. "I hate the idea of architecture being precious," said Russell.
Next to Russell, Sebastian Mariscal, known for poetically combining refined and imperfect materials in residential projects like Two Inns and the Wabi House, is building four varied spaces: a long, narrow entrance tunnel made of unevenly stacked recycled wood planks; a large room full of "vestiges" of the firm's work, like models, pictures, and shop drawings; and two video rooms focusing on process and completed work. For their part, Public, who have created original architecture at a variety of scales in San Diego, from small houses to block-sized downtown condos, are presenting a 3-D diorama of all their built work on one gallery wall in the form of a shallow relief, models, images, and projections. The firm is also presenting models inside clever tool boxes, and a mural of text by partner Jim Brown that relates to his development schemes for the no-man's-land between the United States and Mexican borders. Rinehart Herbst, a firm that has gained a reputation for its skillful use of low-tech materials to create very contemporary structures, is dividing their gallery with a lightweight "fence" created from a folded model of one of their recent projects: the elegant, lofty, and colorful



EDWARD BUTTON; RIGHT: PAUL BODY

JONATHAN SEGAL

ABOVE: ARCHITECT JONATHAN SEGAL PRESENTS HIS LATEST RESIDENTIAL-RETAIL PROJECT "Q" THAT HE HAS BOTH DESIGNED AND IS DEVELOPING FOR SAN DIEGO'S LITTLE ITALY.
ABOVE, RIGHT: WITH A DRAMATIC COR-TEN STEEL AND PLASTER FACADE, THE TITAN IS A 22-LOFT BUILDING NEAR THE SAN DIEGO FREEWAY.



Woodbury University School of Architecture, itself built out of the utilitarian frame of a former hardware building. The fence is woven with photos, drawings, and surfaces with varying degrees of transparency.
Probably the best known in the group, Teddy Cruz, whose community-oriented development schemes have changed the urban dynamic in places like Hudson, New York, and throughout Mexico, is focusing his installation on his efforts to help residents in the rural Nicaraguan village, La Prusia, become their own construction crew for prefabricated housing. The installation, which Cruz had not yet built at press time, is to include models and even a piece of truss section from the project as well as a huge mural, practice diagrams, and maquettes from such past investigations as Living Rooms at the Border, a community center and housing project in Ysidro.

The only woman in the show, designer Jennifer Luce, is known for her use of precious materials and for her exquisite craftsmanship. Luce is layering several ideas into one as a reflection of her entire body of work, which includes pristine homes, steely tables, and glamorous showrooms. Her team is using chalk to create a full-scale construction drawing of their exhibition space, including delineated measurements on the floors and up the walls, along with an 80-foot stretch of table made out of steel, acrylic, and wood (a reflection of the materials the firm uses) to create a border surrounding an intimate inner exhibition space, to contain her sketchbooks, models, and films. Among other display elements, Luce is dedicating a corner to objects collected from those who have inspired her, among them Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and landscape architect Andy Spurluck. "It's been retrospective and introspective and tough sometimes and joyous other times," said Luce, who added that she's long been fascinated by the questions at the heart of the architect's work: "How do you get to the core of what you do?"
And it is the elemental inquiries into process and identity that make the show's concept so riveting as it captures the raw creative energy and scale that's often so lacking in architecture exhibitions. It gives architects the rare opportunity to present their skills to the public in a museum, and it gives creative practices the chance, as Sanroman put it, "to say what they're about." And while it's too early to tell if *Mix* will launch their careers to the extent that the 1982 show did for the architects of an earlier generation, there's no doubt that something special is taking shape. "This is it," said Segal. "I don't think there's going to be another show like this in our lifetime."

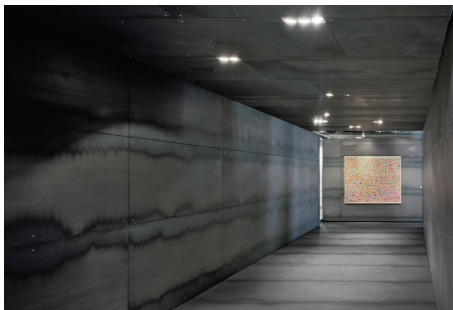
SAM LUBELL IS CALIFORNIA EDITOR AT THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER.



EDWARD BUTTON; BELOW: PAUL RIVERA/ARCHPHOTO

LUCE ET STUDIO ARCHITECTS

ABOVE: JENNIFER LUCE OF LUCE ET STUDIO CRAFTED AN 80-FOOT TABLE OF ACRYLIC, WOOD, AND STEEL TO BOTH SHOWCASE MATERIALS AND CREATE A BARRIER TO AN INNER SANCTUM HOLDING SKETCH BOOKS, MODELS, AND FILMS.
LEFT: THE HOT-ROLLED STEEL WALLS OF HER SHOWROOM FOR THE CUSTOM FURNITURE DESIGNER COALESCE, IN CHICAGO, ADVERTISES HER EYE FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFTSMANSHIP.



MAY

WEDNESDAY 27

EVENT

Broadway Public Meeting
4:30 p.m.
Wurlitzer Building
818 South Broadway,
Los Angeles
www.aialosangeles.org

THURSDAY 28

LECTURE

**Jean-Louis Cohen,
Nabila Oulebsir, et al.
Walls of Algiers:
Reconsidering the
Colonial Archive**
3:00 p.m.
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Nasrin Tabatabai and
Babak Afrassiabi
The Isle: A Reading of
the Island of Kish in the
Persian Gulf**
MAK Center for Art and
Architecture
835 North Kings Road,
West Hollywood
www.makcenter.org

FRIDAY 29

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Eric Owen Moss Architects
If Not Now, When?**
SCI-Arc
960 East 3rd St.,
Los Angeles
www.sciarc.edu

SATURDAY 30

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel
Adams: Natural Affinities**
San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art
151 3rd St., San Francisco
www.sfmoma.org

**Memory of the L.A. Billboard:
Telepolis in the Archetype**
Koplin Del Rio Gallery
6031 Washington Blvd.,
Culver City
www.kopлиндelrio.com

**Tony Feher, Allison Miller,
and Mitzi Pederson**
ACME.
6150 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.acmelosangeles.com

CONFERENCE

**Historic Preservation
Overlay Zone Conference**
8:30 a.m.
Angelica Lutheran Church
1345 South Burlington Ave.,
Los Angeles
www.preservation.lacity.org

EVENT

ARTWALK Culver City
12:00 p.m.
Culver City Art District and
Downtown Culver City
www.culvercity.org

SUNDAY 31

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Deborah Grant
Bacon, Egg, Toast in Lard/
MATRIX 228**
Berkeley Art Museum and
Pacific Film Archive
2621 Durant Ave., Berkeley
www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

JUNE

WEDNESDAY 3

LECTURE

**Anthony Wells-Cole
Rococo Masterpieces in
Context: James Pascall—
London Frame-Maker, Carver,
and Designer**
3:00 p.m.
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

Text & Image
Artamo Gallery
11 West Anapamu St.,
Santa Barbara
www.artamo.com

THURSDAY 4

LECTURES

**Andrew Wallace-Hadrill
The Roman Home
Transformed: Greek Art and
Roman Luxury**
7:00 p.m.
Los Angeles County
Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.lacma.org

**In Conversation: Barbara
Isenberg and Frank Gehry**
7:00 p.m.
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

X, Y, Z, and U
Outpost for
Contemporary Art
6375 North Figueroa St.,
Los Angeles
www.apexart.org

FRIDAY 5

SYMPOSIUM

**Greek Art/Roman Eyes:
The Reception of Greek Art
in the Private Sphere in
Ancient Italy**
9:30 a.m.
The J. Paul Getty Villa
17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.,
Pacific Palisades
www.getty.edu

SUNDAY 7

FILM

**Visual Acoustics:
The Modernism of
Julius Shulman**
(Eric Bricker, 2008), 83 min.
2:00 p.m.
Los Angeles County Museum
of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.lacma.org

TUESDAY 9

CONFERENCE

**An Update on the 2030
Challenge**
6:30 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St., San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

WEDNESDAY 10

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**John Beech
John Zurier**
Gallery Paule Anglim
14 Geary St.,
San Francisco
www.gallerypauleanglim.com

CONFERENCE

**West Coast Energy
Management Congress
Conference**
Through June 11
Long Beach Convention
Center
300 Ocean Blvd.,
Long Beach
www.energyevent.com

THURSDAY 11

LECTURE

**Mix Roundtable: Part 1
Teddy Cruz,
Catherine Herbst, et al.**
7:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary
Art of San Diego
700 Prospect St., La Jolla
www.mcasd.org

SATURDAY 13

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Matt Phillips:
Out Through The In Door**
Cerasoli Gallery
8530-B Washington Blvd.,
Culver City
www.cerasoligallery.com

SUNDAY 14

EVENT

**2009 Los Angeles
Conservancy Annual Meeting**
1:00 p.m.
Farmers and Merchants
Bank Building
401 South Main St.,
Los Angeles
www.laconservancy.org

TUESDAY 16

LECTURE

**Deyan Sudjic
Why Do We Lust for Objects?**
7:00 p.m.
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

CONVENTION

Construct 2009
Through June 19
Indiana Convention Center
100 South Capitol Ave.,
Indianapolis
www.constructshow.com

WEDNESDAY 17

TRADE SHOW

PCBC 2009
Through June 19
Moscone Center
747 Howard St.,
San Francisco
www.pcbc.com

THURSDAY 18

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

**Shalinee Kumari:
American Debut**
Frey Norris Gallery
456 Geary St., San Francisco
www.freynorris.com

Susan Hiller

The J. Street Project
Contemporary Jewish
Museum
736 Mission St.,
San Francisco
www.thecjm.org

FRIDAY 19

WITH THE KIDS

Reflections
The Exploratorium
3601 Lyon St.,
San Francisco
www.exploratorium.edu

SATURDAY 20

EXHIBITION OPENINGS

Daniel Ruanova
Couturier Gallery
166 North La Brea Ave.
www.couturiergallery.com

Gary Lang

Lines, Grids & Circles
ACE Gallery
Los Angeles Institute of
Contemporary Art
5514 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.acegallery.net

SUNDAY 21

EXHIBITION OPENING

Larry Johnson
The Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

THURSDAY 25

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Ursula Schneider
The River**
Braunstein/Quay Gallery
430 Clementina,
San Francisco
www.bquayartgallery.com

CONFERENCE

MOBIUS LA
Through June 27
Los Angeles Convention
Center
1201 South Figueroa St.,
Los Angeles
www.dwellondesign.com

FRIDAY 26

LECTURE

**A New Infrastructure
Discussion:
Architects and Transit**
1:45 p.m.
Los Angeles Convention
Center
1201 South Figueroa St.,
Los Angeles
www.aialosangeles.org

EVENT

Dwell on Design
Through June 28
Los Angeles Convention
Center
1201 South Figueroa St.,
Los Angeles
www.dwellondesign.com

SATURDAY 27

SYMPOSIUM

**Untitled: Variations in
Design Practice**
**Daniel van der Velden,
Jeffrey Vallance, et al.**
1:30 p.m.
Otis College of
Art and Design
9045 Lincoln Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.otis.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Superficiality and
Superexcrecence**
Otis College of
Art and Design
Ben Maltz Gallery
9045 Lincoln Blvd.,
Los Angeles
www.otis.edu

SUNDAY 28

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Michael Markowsky
The Dynamic Landscape**
Armory Center for the Arts
145 North Raymond Ave.,
Pasadena
www.armoryarts.org



COURTESY THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

**LOST TO PROGRESS:
THE MODERNIZATION OF LOS ANGELES**
Heritage Square Museum
3800 Homer Street, Los Angeles
Through June 28

Exploring the evolution of Los Angeles through three “lost neighborhoods”—Chinatown, Bunker Hill, and Chavez Ravine—*Lost to Progress: The Modernization of Los Angeles* examines the role of large-scale public works in shaping the city’s landscape. Beginning with the original Chinatown at the turn of the last century (above), the exhibit probes the complex roles that social communities have played in major urban transformations. With its low-income, minority populations close to the city’s center, Chinatown was displaced for Union Station in 1939, and lost much of its authenticity when reincarnated in an adjacent urban district. The exhibit outlines similar battles in Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine, recounting the epic struggle over the latter, begun in 1962, when Mexican-American communities were ousted to create Dodger Stadium. Highlighting the losers of such battles, the show asks whether these projects benefited or sacrificed existing neighborhoods in the service of civic progress.



COURTESY HOSFELT GALLERY

MARCO MAGGI: CUBIC DROPS
AIA San Francisco, Hosfelt Gallery
430 Clementina Street, San Francisco
Through June 27

Using graphite, clayboard, Plexiglas, office paper, and aluminum foil, Uruguayan-born artist Marco Maggi etches everyday materials to create compositions reminiscent of aerial maps of city streets or some future megalopolis. For *Cubic Drops* at Hosfelt Gallery, Maggi has combined his own two- and three-dimensional drawings into installations that viewers enter as if on some strange architectural journey. Installed at odd heights and locations around the gallery space, these pieces physically draw the viewer into Maggi’s miniaturized realm. *Hypo Real* (2009, pictured) features linear cuts on four stacked Plexiglas cubes that, at ten inches tall, suggest alternately a model of some high-end condominium tower or the sprawling urban vistas of Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys. Maggi, who is based in New Paltz, New York, has likened his work to an indecipherable language or abstract alphabet, and his incisions invite a close reading that itself becomes part of the installation.



BARRY LEHRMAN

Bubblers produce shallow flooding on a field of papaya.

structure no longer defines the city, or more precisely, the region. Simply, this infrastructure is out of control. Water is a dwindling resource for which there are no new supplies. Freeways are clogged, and building new ones only increases congestion. Electricity consumption climbs faster than the ability to build new generating plants. Meanwhile, even if we could readily grasp this old infrastructure, the emerging one is more slippery to pin down. The new consists of multiple layers of political, social, economic, and technological forces—a tangle of interlocked and often unworkable systems that defy definition as readily as they escape the imposition of a hegemonic will.

To begin to see the outline of this “networked ecology,” many of the components of traditional infrastructure are recapitulated—from the Los Angeles–Long Beach Port (the nation’s largest) and the Alameda rail corridor (through which the port’s containers are transported, out of sight and below grade, ending up in warehouses on the plateaus of the Tejon Industrial Complex far to the north of downtown), to the gravel pits of Irwindale (great depressions that occupy more area than the at-grade portion of the city) and the countless oil derricks (which still pump the liquid

gold that once was so abundant and that, until 1970, supplied all of Los Angeles’ needs). Cobbled atop these bedrock elements are things like cell-phone networks, with their faux Deodar Cedar microwave repeaters, computerized traffic-signal controls, and buildings like One Wilshire, the former office tower at the hub of downtown, where the entire telecommunications of Asia, Latin America, and the western half of the United States are, literally, tied together in “meet-me” rooms.

Much of this is not new. The nature of infrastructure has been moving in these directions at least since Al Gore started to claim credit for inventing the information superhighway. So when the authors of the chapter “Traffic, Blocking All Lanes” argue that “most new progress is made at the level of code,” citing the example of “optimizing algorithms,” you are left wondering where the irony is. The only algorithm that can optimize the flow of traffic is one that eliminates those of us behind the wheel. Similarly, when Lane Barden notes that Los Angeles is a dispersed metropolis, “a polycentric matrix of aging suburbs embedded in a larger urban fabric,” he is telling a twice-told tale that dates to the time when Henry Huntington installed his electric trolleys and invented sprawl.

However, it would be a mistake **continued on page 19**

IN THE WEB

The Infrastructural City: Networked Ecologies in Los Angeles
Edited by Kazys Varnelis
Actar, \$39.95

Los Angeles is the inscrutable city. Every effort to explain the place—to take it in, whole—invariably is surpassed by the city’s hurtling reality. From the first encounters of Father Juan Crespi, who found “this delightful place among the

trees on the river,” to Carey McWilliams’ *An Island on the Land*, rife with eccentricity and darkly tainted ambitions, to Reyner Banham’s joyous embrace of chaos as the mystical armature of the city’s greatness, to Mike Davis’

prognostication of its privatized and hyper-exploitative demise, Los Angeles has defied comprehensive reading. In his introduction to *The Infrastructural City*, Kazys Varnelis, who until fairly recently lived in Los Angeles and thus had to suffer its impassable streets, admits that “a total approach” is not possible. The book, instead, is offered as an “atlas... a manual... however incomplete.”

This may sound like a cop-out, but isn’t. The 16 contributors to this densely-packed series of essays are trying to map the contours of a con-

temporary city that can no longer be understood simply by eating fast-food and learning to drive—as Banham famously did. Varnelis correctly notes, “Los Angeles exists by grace of infrastructure, a life-support system that has transformed this wasteland into the second largest metropolis in the country.” Far-flung aqueducts tote its water, vast stretches of freeways connect its sprawling suburbs, electrical cables spanning half a continent feed its voracious appetite for megawatts.

Yet this kind of steel-and-concrete-and-pylon infra-

Artistry on the Line

Richard Neutra, Architect: Sketches and Drawings
Los Angeles Central Library, Getty Gallery
Through September 6

The exhibition of Richard Neutra’s drawings at the LA Central Library adds another dimension to the meticulously composed images (most by Julius Shulman) that we’ve seen time and again. Here is the man behind the work, and the preparatory studies that fed into familiar buildings. An idealized self-portrait in charcoal is juxtaposed with the utopian vision of



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Rush City Reformed. Luxuriant plantings soften the rigorous geometry of the houses. A spiral parking structure Neutra sketched for Frank Lloyd Wright in 1924 draws on the curvilinear forms of Eric Mendelsohn, with whom the fledgling architect worked in Berlin, and it anticipates the rounded bays of houses he would build in LA. Curator Thomas Hines, author of

the definitive Neutra monograph, has made an inspired selection from the UCLA archives to portray an architect who was also a gifted artist and a modernist with a strong romantic streak.

Handsomely installed and thoughtfully explained, the drawings are arranged chronologically to trace Neutra’s career, from his early years in Europe through

The Heller House, Beverly Hills (1950).

his 45-year practice in LA. They are also grouped by theme, to show how skilled he was in capturing the spirit of places he explored, natural forms, and the context in which he built. It’s fascinating to jump from the hothouse world of Vienna, where he mingled with such giants as Gustav Klimt, Arnold Schoenberg, and Sigmund Freud, to the tabula rasa of the American southwest. That was the fulfillment of Neutra’s dream, in the bleak aftermath of World War I, to escape the winters of northern Europe and live on an idyllic tropical island.

Adolf Loos turned the young man away from ornament and traditional architectural forms, and his earliest architectural drawing—a house for an estate in Berlin—has the same purity of line as his last. In contrast to R.M. Schindler, who constantly reinvented himself, Neutra was rigorously consistent. There are fascinating glimpses of unrealized projects, including an austere gym deftly linked to a Spanish-style villa

in Santa Monica, a rooftop solarium composed of glass louvers for his VDL house in Silverlake, and the competition entry he developed with Schindler in 1926 for the League of Nations Headquarters in Geneva. The sketches show how comfortable he was with the language of Mendelsohn and Wright, and how quickly he found his own voice in the Lovell Health House, a timeless icon in the Hollywood Hills. They also reveal his importance as an innovator, pioneering prefabrication and novel systems of on-site construction, as well as developing new models for schools and affordable housing.

This exhibition is a layered artifact of extraordinary significance. It puts an archival collection on view in the most democratic forum in LA, at the heart of downtown. It illuminates the creative process and the multiple skills of an architect who, like so many other talented immigrants from Europe, enriched a provincial outpost. And there’s a poignancy in seeing how little of this vision was **continued on page 19**

Watch Yourself

*Tall Building:
Imagining the Skyscraper*
Scott Johnson
Balcony Press, \$34.95



SITE's proposal for a private residential tower in Mumbai.

Breathtaking for the power with which they soar up from the ground, skyscrapers seem to break free of constraints that keep other buildings earthbound. And yet the skyscraper's form is in fact rigidly constrained—by the structural demands of supporting its extreme height; by the myriad zoning laws mitigating its effect on the light, air, and character of the surrounding city; and by the complex financial calculations that dictate how such an expensive project repays its investors.

So what room is there, a new book asks, for innovation within such a tightly constricted typology? Or, to borrow a query from the introduction to Scott Johnson's *Tall Building: Imagining the Skyscraper*: "The only problem is, as a designer, how to make your tall box different from the rest?"

Tall Building chronicles the various ways in which that question has been answered over the history of the skyscraper—and how it's being answered now in new con-

texts like Asia and the Middle East, increasingly the nexus of skyscraper construction. In 1996, eight of the world's ten tallest buildings were American; by next year, Johnson reports, all ten are expected to be in the developing world.

Cities in the developing world have been a particularly fertile ground for experimentation, where the skyscraper comes with potent associations of prestige and modernity. Yet at the same time, those cities grapple with how

to integrate the monolithic Western forms into their own cultures. Sometimes the results are striking and seminal, like Gordon Bunshaft's National Commerce Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Though its iconic triangular shape is western, its opaque stone exterior staves off the oppressive desert sun, and the rectangular cutouts in each tower ventilate the building's central atrium.

Some eastern cities have also begun to cultivate an idea that never managed to

take off in the west—the mixed-use tower. It's simpler and easier to build each floor the same, Johnson notes, which is why the tallest buildings have traditionally been vertically undifferentiated office towers. But in Japan, mixed-use has gained traction as a form of downtown infill, to reduce demand on an overburdened transit system. It's also a way for them to compete with other business centers like Shanghai and Singapore, through giant complexes that supplement business with destination tourism and luxury retail.

Even public uses are now being integrated into new skyscrapers in Asia. Japan's Roppongi Hills complex, for example, features a public roof deck, art museum, and education center on its highest-rent and most-visible top two floors. And its "swirling and highly pedestrianized base" is architecturally inventive while still echoing the intricate character of the surrounding city.

Johnson is in his element when he's delving into the theoretical. His previous book, *The Big Idea: Criticality and Practice in Contemporary Architecture* (2006), was a meticulously researched argument for the relevance of theory to building construction. He takes the same approach in *Tall Building*, devoting a good third of the book to the ways in which theorists and artists have conceived of the skyscraper.

But although it's a fascinating tour, in the end it's hard to agree with Johnson that theory and conceptual art have anything useful to say about new forms for the skyscraper typology. Sifting through the plentiful examples in *Tall Building*, theory comes off as impotent at best. Deconstructionism, for instance, is one of the most prominent theoretical movements of the latter 20th century, but its attempts to translate

theory into form produced nothing but embarrassingly literal renderings of "deconstruction" as a contrived jumble of fragments.

And at worst, theory seems not impotent but destructive. Johnson chronicles how the writings and sketches of European theorists like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, in the 1920s and '30s, led to the modernist building style that has proven so remarkably tenacious. It's been decades since modernism was rightly judged to be "technocratic," "non-communicative," and disruptive of city fabrics, yet it's still going strong; designer-branded late-modern monoliths are even now becoming the dominant style for residential towers across the United States.

Although the book might leave one leery of ideas with a capital "I", that doesn't suggest that the unconscious forces of commercialism necessarily offer a better alternative. Johnson usually refrains from prognostication, but when he does make predictions, they leave a dystopian taste in the mouth. His vision is a world in which the surfaces of tall buildings are more valuable than their interior spaces, turning them into "armatures for commercial content." It's already happening in Tokyo, New York City, and Hollywood, Johnson notes, and he sees the trend spreading as globalization progresses.

There's plenty of eye candy in *Tall Building*, in the form of full-page black-and-white photographs of many of the buildings described in the text. And the book itself is a stylish package: tall, with text arranged in two slender columns per page. The spare monochrome layout is broken up only by the occasional page of pale blue between sections, like glimpses of the sky between the titular towers.

JULIA GALEF WRITES FREQUENTLY FOR AN.

ARTISTRY ON THE LINE continued from page 18 realized. Though Neutra was prolific beyond the dreams of today's architects, completing about 300 houses in addition to commercial and public buildings as far afield as Cuba, Frankfurt, and Karachi, he was repeatedly foiled by philistines and know-nothings, whose successors still have a decisive voice in the shaping of L.A. Parents disparaged his model schools as "factories," and the Elysian Heights housing development was condemned as "creeping socialism" during the red-baiting hysteria of the early 1950s.

And yet, we should be grateful for what was achieved, on paper as well as on the

ground. Besides organizing three symposia, LAPL exhibitions director Gloria Gerace commissioned an innovative audio guide. Ray Kappe remembers the sliding glass wall in a Neutra classroom where he studied at age 13. Actress Kelly Lynch speaks of the unpretentious simplicity and livability of the Oyler house in Lone Pine, which she and husband Mitch Glazer restored. Leo Marmol and other Neutra specialists describe their close encounters. You can listen to these tributes by dialing 213-455-2927. It's a great way to build anticipation for the exhibition itself.

MICHAEL WEBB, A WRITER ON ARCHITECTURE, LIVES IN A CLASSIC NEUTRA APARTMENT.

IN THE WEB continued from page 18 to dismiss these snapshots as images from the archives. *The Infrastructural City* has a cumulative effect, much like the elements of a composite drawing or the dozens of images in David Hockney's *Pearblossom Hwy., 11-18 April, 1986*. True, the constituent parts are familiar, but the whole composes a portrait of something else—indeterminate, ambiguous, unknown, yet revealing.

Those fake trees that serve as stanchions for cell phone transmitters, for instance, are remaking the city's geography. Like area codes no longer bound to a specific location, the plastic forest helps extend the city far beyond its statutory boundaries. The city is thus redefined.

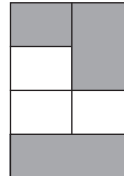
Nothing makes this more obvious than Lane Barden's splendid aerial photographs of the Los Angeles River. Taken at a low altitude, with

a clear horizon and a panoramic perspective, the 33 shots reveal a totally man-made object. As Barden notes, "Precise straight-aways move smoothly and rhythmically across the landscape in a controlled trajectory, minimally affected by the lay of the land." Is this a river at all? Indeed, what exactly is it? To begin to ask such questions is to get to the heart of the matter.

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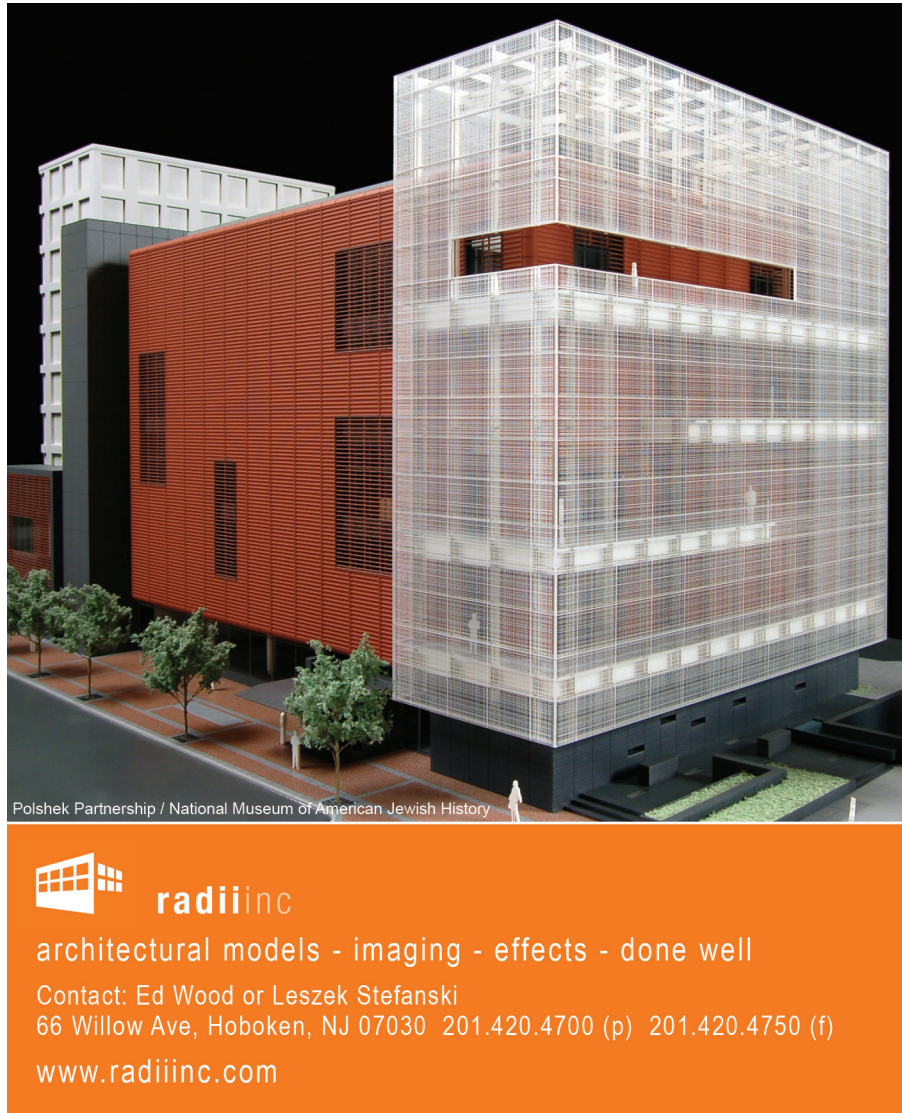


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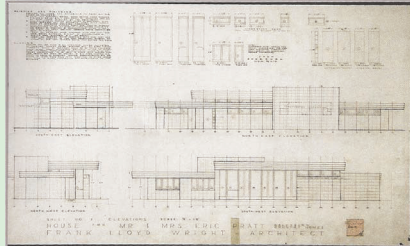


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FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
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A signed blueprint for a Wright "Usonian" home

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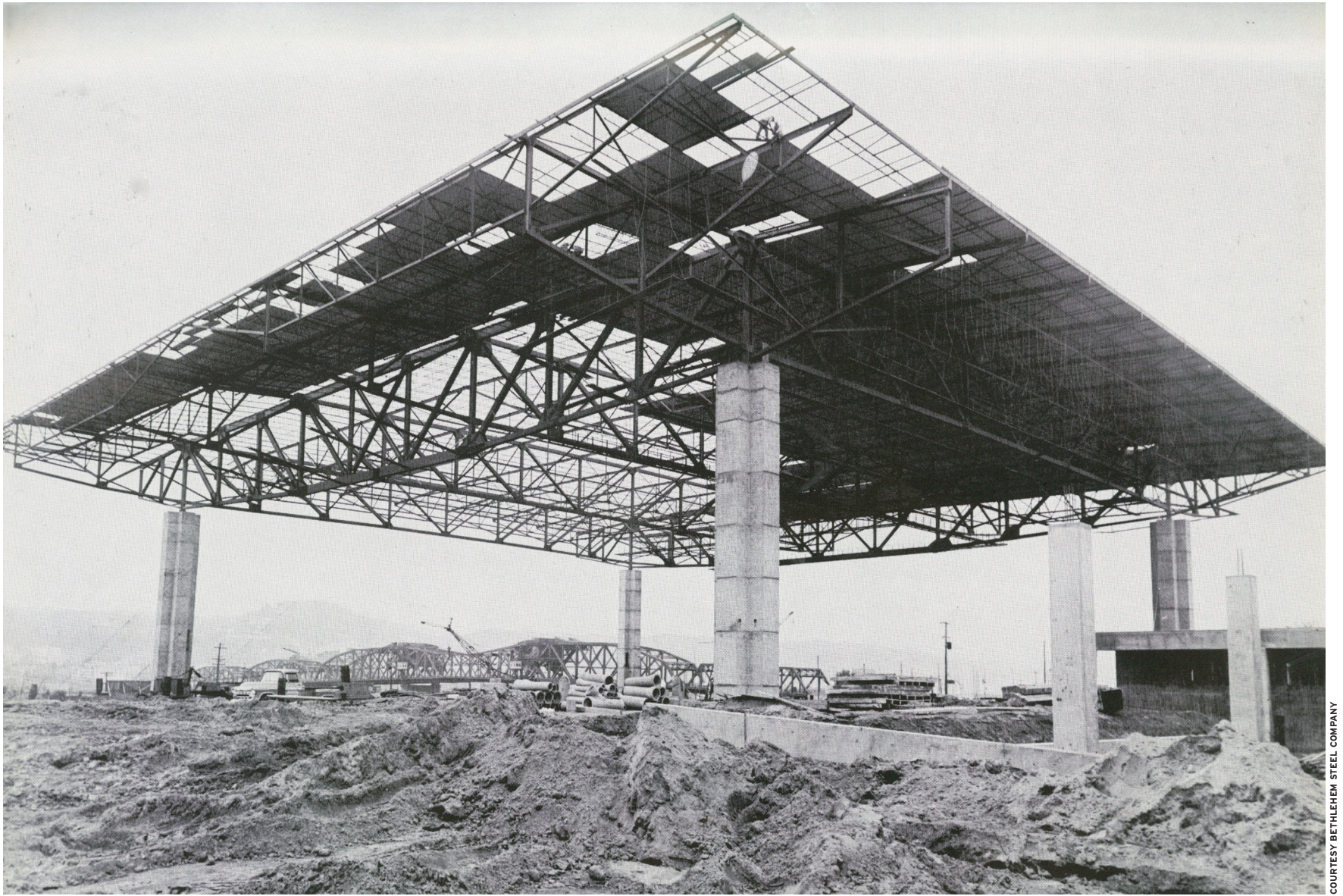
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SAVE MEMORIAL COLISEUM

Portland's Memorial Coliseum under construction in 1960.

This glass box in the center of Portland, Oregon, has hosted performances by The Beatles, Luciano Pavarotti, and Elvis Presley. The Dalai Lama has spoken within its cavernous volume, as did Barack Obama during his presidential campaign. The Trail Blazers, Portland's beloved NBA franchise, won its sole championship in the building in 1977, and UCLA took home one of its many titles from the venue a decade before that. Allen Ginsberg, while attending the aforementioned Beatles concert, was struck by inspiration and wrote a poem entitled "Portland Coliseum."

While its cultural history is impressive, that will not be enough to save the venue from demolition: The Memorial Coliseum has been threatened by a proposal to build a minor league baseball stadium in its place. But the structure's exquisite beauty and refined engineering has motivated a host of architects, sports fans, historians, artists, and design enthusiasts to join together in an attempt to preserve it.

Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and dedicated

on January 8, 1961, the Memorial Coliseum was shaped in part by Gordon Bunshaft, the firm's best-known architect, famous for landmarks such as Lever House in New York. It is one of the more unique arenas in the United States, if not the world, because of its high level of transparency.

The 12,000-seat seating bowl is structurally independent from the surrounding glass box, which, in spite of its massive four-block expanse, stands on only four columns. When the bowl's encompassing curtains are drawn open (something that hasn't happened in many years), the arena can be flooded with natural light. In the book *Modernism Rediscovered*, a photograph by legendary architectural photographer Julius Shulman (taken shortly after Memorial Coliseum's opening) shows the hockey arena during the day without artificial light. This transparency also extends to the outer concourses. Instead of walking through a rabbit warren of interior circulation spaces closed off from the outside, visitors to Memorial Coliseum enter and exit the seating bowl with panoramic floor-

to-ceiling views of the downtown skyline.

The coliseum sits in the Rose Quarter, a loosely knit sports-and-event complex that also includes the larger 20,000-seat Rose Garden arena. Most cities upgrading to new professional sports venues have torn down the arenas they replace. Most recently, Philadelphia tore down The Spectrum, which had a history at least as illustrious as Memorial Coliseum's—but was arguably less architecturally significant. The Rose Garden, however, isn't the biggest threat to Memorial Coliseum. The demolition danger has arisen from proposed changes to PGE Park, another stadium across town. Merritt Paulson, owner of the Portland Beavers AAA baseball franchise and the Portland Timbers minor-league soccer team, has won initial approval from Major League Soccer to bring the sport to the Rose City. But MLS prefers its teams to play in soccer-only venues. That means Paulson's baseball Beavers need to vacate PGE Park so it can be converted for soccer, necessitating the need for a new

home for the baseball team.

Initially, Paulson and Portland Mayor Sam Adams hatched a plan for a baseball stadium to replace Memorial Coliseum. But at a public open house in April to introduce the plan, Adams heard a chorus of opposition. Public and media skepticism for the plan has been overwhelming: Two opinion polls found a more than 8-to-1 advantage for those opposing razing the coliseum. The City Council was set to vote on a plan on April 22, but the mayor postponed the vote indefinitely after it became clear that he would lose 3-2. As of this writing, city planners and Paulson's advisors are considering several alternate locations for a baseball stadium, though the Coliseum site remains an option.

Even if Memorial Coliseum avoids demolition, it could be significantly altered by future Rose Quarter plans. Although owned by the city, billionaire Blazers owner Paul Allen's Oregon Arena Corporation (OAC) manages the site. The company has proposed opening an entertainment zone inside the coliseum, pending the removal of its distinctive seating

bowl. An open-air music venue has also been proposed, which may reduce the arena to a mere skeleton. Research by William Macht, associate director of Portland State University's Center for Real Estate, also shows that OAC's management deal gives the company a financial incentive to break even in operating the coliseum, but a disincentive to turn a profit, contributing to the building's current disrepair.

While the threat to the Coliseum highlights the difficulties faced by mid-20th-century modernist architecture when seeking acceptance as historically significant, there may also be optimism found in its boisterous defense. In this case, a small but vocal group of architects and activists may have successfully stared down the opposing interests of two billionaire sports franchise owners and a sex-scandal-plagued mayor desperate to complete a major project before a recall campaign this summer. So for the time being, when it rains in Portland, which is often, locals can seek solace in their glass palace.

BRIAN LIBBY IS A PORTLAND-BASED FREELANCE WRITER.



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