HOLLYWOOD'S GRANDE ARCHE

Morphosis' satellite building in Hollywood for Boston-based Emerson College was approved on May 29 by the LA Planning Commission. The 125,000-square-foot Emerson Center will be the permanent home for the college's... continued on page 4

SANTA MONICA PLANNING APPROVES TALLER BUILDING HEIGHTS

REACHING FOR THE SKIES

As part of a larger revision of the city's zoning codes, the Santa Monica Planning Commission voted in favor of increasing the city's maximum building heights last month, a move it claimed would improve the city's architecture and make buildings more green. Building heights could rise an additional two to six feet, which may not seem like much, but the impact on the city is likely to be big, which has both supporters and critics out in force. If approved by Santa Monica City Council, the change would be part of the first comprehensive alteration to the city's Land Use and Circulation Elements (LUCE), a set of policies and programs that have been a blueprint for the city's physical... continued on page 3

Morphosis' satellite building in Hollywood for Boston-based Emerson College was approved on May 29 by the LA Planning Commission. The 125,000-square-foot Emerson Center will be the permanent home for the college's... continued on page 4

LA AGENCY FACES DIFFICULT TIMES HOLDING ON TO FUNDING

While no public office has prospered in the current economic climate, it's been a particularly tumultuous time for the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA). In early May, a state judge ruled that the California legislature had not violated the state constitution in seizing some $2 billion... continued on page 3

CRA BABY

NEW SCIENCE CENTER MERGES SCIENCE AND RELIGION

AND THEN THERE WAS ARCHITECTURE

The lines between religion, science, and architecture are strangely blurred at Azusa Pacific University's new Segerstrom Science Center, located... continued on page 11

TOO TALL

On June 3, Venice's M Cube, a floating, prefab, minimalist apartment building designed by architect Mark Baez, was at 32 feet determined by LA's City Council to be two feet above local height restrictions. The result, said Baez, will probably be destruction of the structure. "To fix it would cost more than it cost to erect it in the first place," the architect said, adding that if the roof were lowered, the top floor of the building... continued on page 9

CA PORT CITY DEVELOPING ITS OWN ELEVATED PARK

REACHING FOR THE SKIES

AND THEN THERE WAS ARCHITECTURE

High Line West?

With the runaway success of New York's High Line, it's not surprising that other cities are developing similar projects. Even LA's portside neighbor Wilmington, a place known primarily... continued on page 7
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After all the drama related to SFMOMA’s museum expansion shortlist—the lack of local firms, the lack of diversity, the lack of transparency—you’d think that California architecture patrons would learn their lesson. Apparently, not.

The culprit this time is none other than Eli Broad, the LA billionaire who has helped bankroll many of LA’s recent major institutional projects, including the Broad Contemporary Art Museum, the Broad Stage, LA High School #9, and more. And now, Broad is planning a new museum for the city featuring his impressive contemporary art collection. Although he has announced neither a site nor an architect for the project, he is sending out signals that he may have already settled on both (Diller Scofidio + Renfro for the museum and downtown Los Angeles for the site).

All this secrecy and leaking while a great way to play municipalities off each other and attract publicity, is upsetting and unprofessional. Just as SFMOMA should think more about hiring local firms, Broad and his future museum should think more about making their selection process public, not cryptically closed.

The public deserves to be at the table because whether in downtown LA or Santa Monica, Broad will be banking on public funding. The downtown deal depends on the city and county of LA leasing Broad a prime spot of land next to the Disney Concert Hall for $1 per year for 99 years. The Santa Monica deal hinges on that city giving Broad a 2.5-acre site a few blocks from the beach, at the same giveaway rate of $1 per year for 99 years.

Besides this obvious civic obligation, Broad owes it to the people of Los Angeles to have a say in their next major cultural center. Without it we’ll be looking at business as usual in a city that seems to see the public process as a joke, or at most a rude inconvenience. Where was the public process in choosing AECOM to design the downtown police headquarters? And where was the public review for any of Broad’s other projects, for that matter?

Broad thus far refuses to go public, and won’t cede control to anyone outside his tight circle. Instead we keep hearing about a list of major firms through “inside sources.” These firms have included, for the record, Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & de Meuron, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Christian de Portzamparc, Morphosis, and SANAA, to name a few. All are great firms, but none can guarantee that LA will get something great, especially with the city’s record of getting mediocre results from great architects (Piano’s BCAM? Moneo’s downtown police headquarters?). Whether public money should finance Broad’s new venture at all is another question that seems to have been tabled for now.

We hope Broad will at least publicly reveal the names of his shortlist to allow for public criticism and debate. And perhaps we’ll be able to review plans and ideas before the process moves beyond input. It’s the democratic thing to do.

SAM LUBELL
In putting together its second boutique for luxury eyewear merchant 9026 Eyes, LA firm MASHstudios had to overcome some tough challenges: Fit a comfortable, trendy store into just 300 square feet of space, and balance the client’s demand to be beachy, retro, and contemporary all at the same time.

The beachy element of the tiny Malibu store is manifested through solid teak driftwood-like drawers, bright white walls, distressed details, and airy atmosphere. The throwback vibe, inspired by the Malibu pier and its famous Country Mart, comes from medium-toned wood, midcentury-inspired foldout bobby-legged tables, and eclectic seating. The rest is all modern: minimal and built-in display cases with backlighting that gives the glasses a unique glow. Sleek lines lead the eye straight into the store.

Meanwhile, the architects shrink all the cabinets and desks by ten to 20 percent and installed sliding, inset cabinets to maximize space. Luckily, the glasses a unique glow. Sleek lines lead the eye straight into the store.

“It’s not easy to avoid being super claustrophobic while maximizing the display and having enough product on sale,” noted principal Bernard Bruchas.

SF PLANNING, A MELODRAMA

After a web porn sting that will probably cost a few employees their jobs, we now learn that Lance Farber, the ex-boyfriend of SF planning director John Rahaim, has passed away. In 2008, Farber was convicted of setting fire to a mattress in the city-owned home where he and Rahaim had been living. According to the San Francisco Medical Examiner’s office, the cause of death has still not been determined (Farber died well over a month ago). Meanwhile, Rahaim has taken some time off while the department continues to reel.

NOT A PATRON OF ARCHITECTURE

One of the most famous buildings in LA, AC Martin’s DWP Building, is rumored to be on the market. New DWP interim general manager Austin Beutner told the LA Times that he is serious about trying to sell the utility’s 17-story office building on Hope Street to a private buyer, who would lease offices back to the agency on a long-term basis. “Do you want to own a building, or do you want to have renewable energy?” he said. “You pick. I don’t care. If you like the building better, that’s fine. You can’t have both.”

PLANE HYPE

Architect David Hertz is closing in on the completion of what promises to be a most talked-about house. Hertz’s Malibu Wing Home, built from the parts of a retired ‘747, is about three months away from taking flight. And already it’s getting serious press coverage: Fox News, Yahoo, Inhabitat, and Curbed LA have all reported on the still-unfinished house, which reportedly needed approval from 17 government agencies to get clearance. The house uses the wings and tail as roof sections. But can you smoke in the lavatory?

HOLLYWOOD’S GRANDE ARCHÉ

Arché continued from front page

Arché’s minimum LEED Silver rating and will feature exterior landscaping as well as a vine-growing trellis along the Gordon Street side, creating a leafy entranceway and shading for a cafe. The sides of the building will contain residential halls for students, while the center will house classrooms, administrative space, and two retail venues. The ambitious complex, funded largely by the school’s trustees, will also include outdoor terraces, outdoor instructional spaces, and a large open stair ascending from the third to fifth floors. When the project was announced two years ago, firm founder Thom Mayne said it “makes a significant contribution to one of LA’s most dynamic urban contexts.” More recently, firm principal Kim Groves added that the quiet exterior is meant to defer to the incredible variety of its neighborhood, and that the core’s visual movement would reflect “the intensity of what happens on the inside.” The project is set to appear before the LA City Council in mid-August.

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ReLAX

It may be the world’s fifth busiest international airport, but LAX is arguably the world’s ugliest. But a just-completed $723 million renovation project to the Tom Bradley International Terminal may change that.

Built in time for the 1984 Olympics, the 23-gate, one-million-square-foot mass of beige concrete and steel was an eyesore from the moment of its unveiling. Its confusing layout, inefficiency, and low lighting have negatively colored so many travelers’ first impression of the city.

Project architects Leo A Daly spent nearly 12 years and almost a billion dollars to add, among other things, a 45,000-square-foot baggage screening area, massive upgrades to the arrival and ticketing lobbies and concourses, four new airport lounges, new furniture, restrooms, accessibility measures, elevators and escalators, better temperature control and ventilation, and a new electrical system. Renovations also included two new gates capable of handling the enormous Airbus A380 aircraft, multimedia installations, and “dynamic color and brighter view,” said Keith Mawson, corporate director of aviation programs for Leo A. Daly. The firm did, however, leave the hideous exterior almost intact, focusing instead on getting LEED certification. The team reid the building’s lighting control system to reduce energy consumption and installed a new, more energy-efficient HVAC system. The architects used local and sustainable building materials and finishes with a requirement of 70 percent recycled content wherever possible, including recycled epoxy flooring, carpet tiles with low VOC adhesive backing, terrazzo floors comprised of 80 percent recycled material, and 70 percent recycled metal ceilings. High-performance, low-e insulated glass is being used in the two new buildings.

The project, which is the largest in the history of LAX, came in nearly $18 million less than the $755 million budget, and was funded with a combination of revenue from bonds, airline reimbursements, facility charges, and airport revenues. Travelers will be happy to hear that the upcoming Bradley West Phase will be completed in December 2012, and will feature 18 new gates and a new 100,000-square-foot eating and shopping “piazza” to rival those in other major international airports. We can only hope.

JAKE TOWNSEND

S AN FRANCISCO’S FOUR PICKS FOR CONTRACT WORK HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON

WOMEN’S WORK

Every three years, the city of San Francisco sends out an RFQ to architecture firms for its “as-needed work” list, following a rigorous point system to winnow down applicants. Typically, the work consists of tenant improvements and accessibility upgrades.

For the first time, all the preselected firms have female principals. This in spite of the fact that California Proposition 209 forbids San Francisco to give preference to minority- or women-owned firms. But all four studios were beneficiaries of the preferences given to small firms, which is legal.

“The city’s Human Rights Commission was put in place to level the playing field for disadvantaged firms,” said Gary Hoy, city architect and manager of the city’s Bureau of Architecture. Of the four, two are independent firms—Paulett Taggart Architects, Hamilton + Aitken—and two are joint ventures with small firms—Tom Elliot Fisch with Knapp Architects, and Mark Cavagnero Associates with Cary Bernstein Architect.

While these outside contracts are not specifically part of a “design for excellence” program like New York’s, observers are hopeful that the city is heading in that direction. “With the slate of architects this time, it looks like they are looking more for good design rather than tons of experience in the public sector,” said Paulett Taggart, who made the list for the second time in a row. The city plans to contract out $4 million in projects, divided among the four firms.

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AMETRON ELECTRONICS

It doesn’t get much more Hollywood than this. LA architect Joey Shimoda is designing the new headquarters for Ametron Electronics, a major supplier of production equipment for the film industry. The 20-story, 218,000-square-foot building, located in the center of Hollywood, is inspired by the collection of sleek vintage microphones and radios owned by Ametron owner Fred Rosenthal.

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ANIMAL INSTINCTS

The Presidio hosts an unusual art exhibit

Architects haven’t always been welcome on the sacrosanct grounds of the Presidio (see Richard Gluckman), but even if grand glass cubes aren’t allowed, some very contemporary work has been able to infiltrate the former army base—at least temporarily—in the form of an art exhibit called Presidio Habitats, currently showing in the Fort Scott area.

A group of 25 artists, designers, and architects were invited to design a “habitat” for one of the animals living on the Presidio. The most high-profile name is artist-of-the-moment Ai Weiwei. The Chinese phenom created a series of classic porcelain vessels for the Western screech owl. But there is also a buckeye perched on a tepee by LA architects Taalman Koch; a stacked-cedar pyramid by Danish firm CEBRA; and an artistic rendering of a dead tree by Fritz Haeg. All the proposals that weren’t built are displayed in the visitors’ center by Ogrydziak Prillinger Architects (OPA), which created a three-legged triskelion, a departure from routine shipping-container architecture.

One of the more creative interpretations is Jensen Architects’ poetic tribute to the great blue heron: ten yellow chairs placed around the Fort Scott meadow, from which visitors are invited to contemplate the landscape (and with luck, see a blue heron). “We didn’t literally provide a home for the blue heron, but we’re protecting the habitat by asking people to slow down and respect it,” said Mark Jensen.

The exhibit was arranged by the FOR-SITE Foundation, whose tagline is “art about place.” The group was founded in 2003 by Cheryl Haines, the owner of San Francisco’s Haines Gallery. “Nothing like this has ever happened in a national park—there was no blueprint,” said Hal Fischer, FOR-SITE’s director of special projects. The exhibit is the organization’s second partnership with the Presidio; in 2008, sculptor Andy Goldsworth, whom the gallery represents, created a 90-foot spire out of salvaged cypress trees that overlooks the park’s Inspiration Point.

The habitats will be in place through May 2011.

STANFORD BREAKS GROUND ON AMBITIOUS NEW CONCERT HALL

SING A LONG

On May 11, Stanford University broke ground on a new 844-seat performing arts space that will be a key element of an emerging campus arts complex presently anchored by the Cantor Center for Visual Arts. Designed by New York’s Polshek Partnership, the $110 million Bing Concert Hall will open in 2012 or 2013, supplanting the midcentury, functionally problematic 714-seat Dinkelspiel Auditorium as the main venue for Stanford’s Lively Arts series. In 1998, Polshek also oversaw the renovation and expansion for the Cantor.

Prospects for sonic excellence are good, thanks to the involvement of Nagata Associates’ Youhsia Toyota, the acoustician for Frank Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall. Toyota worked with Polshek’s Richard Olcott, who led the project’s design. Elements of the auditorium interior bear a resemblance to Disney (albeit at a much smaller scale), such as the fragmented and tiered “vineyard” seating with beech wood, the Alaskan yellow cedar stage floor. Toyota’s design is meant to accommodate classic unamplified instruments as well as electronically assisted and pure electronic sound. The exterior, in a bow to campus context, will be a large oval drum clad in stucco, fronted by a large glass lobby.

Given its immense financial and intellectual resources, Stanford, which discontinued its architecture program in the 1970s, has been a surprisingly barren environment for architectural excellence. Its evolving arts district should help reverse that trend.

JOHN PASTIER
Baez had agreed in a concession to remove the home's solar panels, lowering the house from 33 feet 4 inches to 32, and said that his neighbors were all supportive of the house.

But it was to no avail.

The prefab, modular building at 709 5th Avenue in Venice has three units measuring a total of about 5,500 square feet. Completed in 2004, it glows from within thanks to exterior windows and sliding doors made of translucent fiberglass. These and other elements make the cube look like a Japanese Tatami home floating above the city. The structure also uses radiant heating, which for now is powered by the rooftop solar panels.

According to the LA City Council, the height discrepancy violates the Venice Coastal Specific Plan. The height resulted, said Baez, not from disregard of city standards but from fabrication and measurement errors and from unclear communications with the city. Baez said that the problems arose when the height was measured from the building's alleyway, not centerline, and when fabricated parts didn’t match with the original schematics. “We’re still puzzled,” he said. As for the city: “Every step of the way it was signed off. We didn’t do anything without approval,” said Baez. “We were deemed 99 percent complete when the height problem was discovered.”

Finally, Baez tried to invoke a city rule stating that local mechanical systems could measure as high as 35 feet. The city first agreed, then reneged, according to Baez. City planner Kevin Jones and building and safety investigator John Kelly beg to differ. Jones says that Baez knew that his building had to be 30 feet tall. The building, he said, was granted that height in 2002 as part of a discretionary action allowing him to raise the height from 25 to 30 feet, and the 30-foot height was specified in his plans submitted to the city. “If you tell us that your building is going to be 30 feet in height then it has to be 30 feet in height,” said Jones. “When you are an architect and you prepare plans, it means you are legally responsible for following all the laws that are in place,” he added. His planning report concludes that, “A Specific Plan Exception is not appropriate relief post hoc from a hardship created through negligence or misrepresentation.” Jones added that while some buildings in Venice can have mechanical systems measuring up to 35 feet, the buildings themselves must still measure under 30 feet. “Their side of the story suggests that I didn’t have any approvals and I just built it on my own. I got every approval,” said Baez, adding that, “Yes, the drawings indicate that the building was to be 30 feet. The result was an oversight by myself, my contractor, and everyone else.”

As for the contractor error, Kelly said it wasn’t his department’s fault that Baez built the project higher than planned. “That’s between him and his builders, isn’t it?” he said. Baez must now come to terms with the city’s criminal proceedings against him. The architect has been living in the building and renting out units for years, despite lacking a certificate of occupancy, held up due to the height limit battle. Baez will argue that the city sent him mixed signals all along.

Above: The interior of architect Mark Baez’s loft home. Below: The glowing-lantern look of the M Cube has become a local landmark in Venice.
FRANK GEHRY ONCE VOWED never to build in Las Vegas, a place where serious architecture is submerged in a tsunami of kitsch or fatally compromised by commercial imperatives. But Larry Ruvo, who made a fortune as Nevada’s chief liquor distributor, refused to take “no” for an answer. Ruvo has been a passionate supporter of Alzheimer’s research since the loss of his father, Lou, to that disease. Having formed an alliance with a major medical institution, he wanted a building that would be a magnet. He persuaded Gehry that this was a worthy cause and gave him creative freedom to design a research facility linked to an events space that would play a supporting role by generating income from rentals. The Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health was inaugurated on May 21.

It’s located on the bleak north side of the city, just off Interstate 15. The small corner site is flanked by a vast and hermetically sealed design center, city offices that resemble a cartoon castle, and a future performing arts center and park. Gehry’s modestly scaled structure holds its own, presenting four distinct but interrelated faces to wide boulevards and parking lots. The Life Activity Center (an events space) is contained within an irregular cluster of sculptural forms, clad in brushed stainless plates with punched-out windows and skylight openings. This carapace swoops down over a courtyard as a bowed trellis, and the expanded openings cast a pattern of dappled shade over the pavers. A supporting skeleton of exposed steel beams links the public facility to the stacked white stucco blocks of treatment rooms, labs, and a fourth-floor office suite, all lit by expansive bay windows. Reception and a small library open off a breezeway, and the inner wall has panels of aqua, lemon, and red as a foil to the silver and white palette of the complex. The sculpted stainless steel skin that Gehry first employed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis has evolved over the past two decades to provide an ever-changing yet immediately recognizable signature. To dismiss the architect as the metal man is absurd; his preferred material has unlimited expressive potential, and is rarely used in isolation. At Ruvo, there’s a joyful exuberance and geometric invention that captures the spontaneity of conceptual models. In commissioning the Experience Music Project in Seattle, the client invited Gehry to be “swoopy,” but all the excitement was on the outside, relinquishing the interior to a conventional and claustrophobic set of exhibits. Here, inner and outer are closely integrated, and the rational and intuitive wings of the building are linked like the two halves of the human brain—an apt image for this institution.

The Ruvo Center is also a rare instance of an architect exercising total control over a project, installing his own furniture and lighting and selecting the art. But the star of the show is the interior of the activity center, which is a true original, radically different in form and effect from anything that has come before. It evokes an enchanted forest glade, a soaring white billow of foliage, with 199 openings to admit natural light, partially supported on square trunks and angular branches. Two stylized trees are located inside the glass entry wall, which frames and reflects the complex structure over the courtyard.

Beyond this portal, everything seems to be in motion, swaying in a spectral wind that tosses branches every which way. In contrast to the rigor and symmetry of the Walt Disney Hall, this interior is simply an uplifting place to celebrate weddings, raise funds, and party. Gehry has liberated his artistry from programmatic constraints and is able to turn gestures into concrete form. Architecture has been likened to frozen music; here, music is on the boil. Surface and structure combine to lift, dart, thrust, and recede in ways that defy categorization.

MICHAEL WEBB
AND THEN THERE WAS ARCHITECTURE
continued from front page  about 20 minutes
from LA. The school was California’s first
Evangelical Christian college, and designing
its new science center was not likely to be
an exercise in design rationality.

Named for well-known Orange County
philanthropist Henry Segerstrom (he was the
main donor for the Segerstrom Center for the
Performing Arts in Costa Mesa), the 70,000-
square-foot, $42 million building houses the
school’s departments of biology, chemistry,
mathematics, and physics. It was designed
by LA firm AC Martin.

The recently-completed structure, set amid
native landscaping next to a large parking lot,
is composed of two large linear bars, two and
three stories in height, that intersect at an
angle to form an open-air interior courtyard
featuring a pond filled with fish and turtles
as well as seating and breakout spaces. The
facade is a muscular but tempered combina-
tion of light channel glass, black cement
board, and brown Trespa panels marking the
entrances. Inside, classrooms and labs are
softened with light colors and wood finishes,
and several patios make break-time all the
more pleasant. Several hallways have floor-
to-ceiling glass to bring more light inside.

But that’s where subtleties end. Onto the
channel glass facade, the school—which
espouses Creationism—has etched verses
from Genesis in large letters, easily visible
on busy Foothill Boulevard, an extension
of historic Route 66. One reads, “And in the
beginning, God created heaven and earth,”
followed by more verses all etched in large
letters. Even more Biblical texts are posted
on the interior hallways and in the main
lecture hall, among them “Let Us make man in
Our image” and “God’s creativity in nature.”

School officials admit that the signage is
provocative, but they see it as a way to
encourage discussion about the interaction
between faith and science. Each class at the
college, from calculus to Shakespeare, includes
“faith integration,” exploring how religion
can inform that field of study and vice versa.

“The words make a statement about the
position of the university as followers of
Christ,” said Bruce Spalding, Azusa’s chair
of Biology and Chemistry. Despite such force-
ful religious rhetoric, Spalding seems open-
minded. The school, he said, “encourages
all faculty and students to find a harmony
between what’s described in the Bible and
what science believes.” He added, “We
believe the Bible is true, but we give a wide
range of perspectives and let the students
come up with their own way.”

This questioning and exploration is a
refreshing refutation of the doctrinaire atti-
tude many expect from an evangelical
college. And architecturally, the rationalism
of form and function is clearly on display.
The writing, said AC Martin partner David
Martin, “gives the architecture another layer
of richness.”
The center is located on the site of the for-
mer Azusa Foothill Drive-In. Though it closed
in 2001, the theater’s lively Googie-style
sign still stands. It now advertises events
at the college, but one can’t help recalling
the more profane encounters that probably
once took place there.

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COLLABORATIVE IN TEMPERAMENT AND FRUGAL BY NECESSITY, INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTS ARE THRIVING IN MEXICO CITY

BY MICHAEL WEBB
Mexico is getting terrible press for drug-related violence—to the point that many wonder if it’s safe to venture South of the Border. You get a very different perspective on these troubles from Mexico City, a vibrant metropolis that’s far from the gun battles in Ciudad Juárez. Corruption—along with pollution and gross economic inequalities—are ubiquitous, but the mood in the capital is surprisingly buoyant. That’s especially true among younger architects who are cultivating a new level of inventiveness here, responding creatively to context and social needs.

Frugal or refined, high- or low-tech, their work shares a lack of pretension and marks a sharp break from the ponderous monumentality of Teodoro González de León, Ricardo Legorreta, and other establishment firms.

There’s a warm collegiality among the younger practitioners of Mexico City, a rare and welcome phenomenon in this often cutthroat profession. Many were at school together, collaborate professionally, and meet socially in the Condesa and Polanco districts. Veteran architect Benjamin Romano explains the optimism that sustains him and his colleagues at a time when peers in the U.S. and Europe are struggling for jobs and laying off staff: “Mexicans have endured so many financial crises that they prefer to put their money into bricks, not banks, providing their own funding for construction,” he said.

Enrique Norten led the way, establishing TEN Arquitectos in 1986 and a second office in New York in 2003. Over the past two decades, he has progressed from crisp cubic houses and condo blocks to the Habita Hotel (where he wrapped the concrete skeleton of an existing building in translucent glass) and on to large-scale commercial and residential projects in both Mexico City.
cities. He was one of the first to reject the “Mexican architect” tag as disparaging, and his work has a cool universality. That's evident in his latest building: a bold addition to the Chopo Museum in the Santa María de Ribera district. The linear steel-and-concrete block appears to float within the lofty void of a prefabricated cast-iron hall imported from Germany a century ago, and formerly used as a museum of natural history. Now it’s an animated, university-administered center for contemporary arts. The addition contains ramped galleries on two levels and a library at the top beneath the old ceiling vault. A small theater and cinema are located below the ground floor, and are accessed from a sunken central lobby. The clean lines, open spaces, and glass-railed staircases of the addition complement the springy elegance of the old hall, a bold contemporary statement in its own day.

Alberto Kalach is a near-contemporary of Norten and established his office, Taller de Arquitectura X, around the same time. He developed a visionary plan for the capital, Return to the City of the Lakes, and has realized a few exceptional buildings. Casa GGG has the mystery of a pre-Columbian temple, but it's stripped to essentials: a massive bunker, admitting narrow shafts of light from above and opening onto gardens. More recently, Kalach transformed a carpentry workshop in the Colonia Roma district into the Kurimanzutto Gallery for contemporary art. Like Chopo, it establishes a lively dialogue between old and new. Glass endwalls and a roof lantern in the wood-vaulted gallery pull in abundant natural light, and flush-glazed windows in the street facade serve a suite of offices. The sculpture court has some of the sublime simplicity of Luis Barragán’s spaces, and the gallery opens up to a sybaritic garden in the rear.

Fernando Romero worked with Rem Koolhaas in Rotterdam, and was project director for OMA’s Casa de Música in Porto, Portugal. That influence shows in the theoretical manifestos and radical visions he has conceived in his Laboratory of Architecture (LAR), which he opened in 1999. The Soumaya Museum, now under construction in the Nuevo Polanco district, is his most ambitious work to date: a stack of galleries for an eclectic private collection, linked by ramps and wrapped in a flared shell of ceramic tiles that resembles an asymmetrical cooling tower. An ambitious project nearby is Benjamín Romano’s Torre Tres Picos, a ten-story office tower shoehorned onto a small traffic island in a busy intersection. Two walls are clad in steel, the third in glass, and each facade has a distinctive character. Romano is also starting the Torre Reforma in Mexico City, which when completed will be the tallest in Latin America at just over 750 feet.

Michel Rojkind was a drummer in a rock band before launching his architectural practice in 1998. A pierced eyebrow and assertive manner set him off from his understated peers, but he’s quickly won acclaim and major clients, notably for the Nestlé factory and chocolate museum in Querétaro. The Tamayo Museum, jointly designed with BIG of Copenhagen, is currently mired in political turmoil, but construction has begun on Rojkind Arquitectos’ 40-story mixed-use tower on Paseo Reforma, the most prestigious boulevard in Mexico City. It will house retail, condos, and a five-star hotel at the top in a shaft that is stepped back in nine sections with a fragmented, angled glass facade. Architect-developer Javier Sánchez’s firm JSA has
designed more than 30 elegant condo blocks in the Condesa district, and is now branching out into large-scale work for a leading construction company in the capital, and for the Ministry of Education and Health in Tlaxcala. Despite his commercial success, Sanchez has a deep sensitivity toward the historical core of Mexico City, rehabilitating two tenement blocks for poor migrants, and extending the Spanish Cultural Center, which occupies a 17th-century house overlooking the cathedral. Sánchez's bold addition provides new program spaces and offices on a vacant site to the rear. The upper stories are set back from the narrow street and lit from concrete louvers that filter the light, and a roof terrace shaded by a retractable awning links the two buildings. Tatiana Bilbao is a major talent and is currently adding staff to handle 40 varied projects scattered around the country. Surprisingly, these do not include Mexico City. Her ambitious proposal for a circular plaza to serve as the city’s bicentennial monument was not accepted, and an impressive gallery for a leading art patron is difficult to access. This year, Bilbao was selected by New York’s Architectural League to be one of its Emerging Voices (as was Michel Rojkind).

Overall, the action and talent in Mexican architecture are still focused on Mexico City. When the latest batch of projects is complete, the capital may well be recognized as one of the architectural centers of the world. But while these architects are by nature and inclination collaborative, there have been few over-the-border exchanges with U.S. architects. It’s our loss, for we have much to learn from the way this new generation of Mexican practitioners are finding fresh solutions to old problems.
JUNE

WEDNESDAY 3
LECTURES
Olga Tapia
A Forgotten War
7:30 p.m.
The Huntington Library, Art, Collections, and Botanical Gardens
151 Oxford Rd.
San Marino
www.huntington.org

Peter Bohlin
5:30 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
150 Sutter St.
San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

Sarah Vure
American Art, 1850–1900:
The Hudson River School to Impressionism
1:30 p.m.
The Bowers Museum
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

WITH THE KIDS
Look at Me! Self Portraits
1:30 p.m.
San Diego Museum of Art
450 El Prado, Balboa Park
San Diego
www.sdmart.org

Thursday 7
LECTURE
Abyl Brown
Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan
10:00 a.m.
AIA San Francisco
150 Sutter St.
San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Dennis Lundeen
Braunstein/Quay Gallery
631 West 2nd St., Los Angeles
CalArts Theater
Roy and Edna Disney/Western Enterprises Inc.
Chen Chieh-Jen
www.aiasf.org

Friday 18
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
La Mirada
Monterey Museum of Art
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

Saturday 19
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Guggenheim Bilbao
The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Visitor Center
Bilbao, Spain
www.guggenheim-etsb.eus

Sunday 20
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Water Street Studios
San Diego Museum of Art
250 South Grand Ave.
San Diego
www.mcasd.org

TUESDAY 1
LECTURE
Jack N. Mohr
Behind the Scenes
Artamo Gallery
11 West Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara
www.artamo-gallery.com

Maira Kalman
Various Illuminations
(c of A Crazy World)
Contemporary Jewish Museum
736 Mission St.
San Francisco
www.thejcim.org

Friday 4
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Denise Hamilton
Surfl relaxation
Robert Palacio:
The Game of Life
La Luz de Jesus Gallery
4633 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.laluzdejesus.com

Elijah Blue
Stuff of Legends
Madison Gallery
23410 Civic Center Way
Malibu
www.kantargallery.com

SATURDAY 4
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Quilt: Two Centuries of American Tradition and Technique
The Bowers Museum
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

Maureen Gallace,
Richard Hughes, et al.
Country Music
Blum & Poe
2727 South La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.blumandpoe.com

Selections from the Hammer
Contemporary Collection
The Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

Bennie Lubell
Conservation of Intimacy
San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art
560 South 1st St.
San Jose
www.sjica.org

MONDAY 5
LECTURE
Jonathan Gold
1:00 p.m.
Art Center College of Design
1700 Lida St., Pasadena
www.artcenter.edu

WEDNESDAY 7
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
David Hollen
Jen Hsiang-
Aqua
Bart Green Fine Art
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bartgreenfineart.com

David Wilson
Gatherings/MATRIX 233
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
2621 Durant Ave., Berkeley
www.bamfa.berkeley.edu

Tony Berlant
Matt Wiedel: Child Flower Tree Landscape
L.A. Louver
45 North Venice Blvd., Venice
www.lalouver.com

THURSDAY 8
LECTURE
Chris Patillo
Historic American Landscapes Survey
6:30 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St., San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Chen Chieh-Jen
Western Enterprises Inc.
Rey and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater
631 West 2nd St., Los Angeles
www.redcat.org

FRIDAY 9
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Eric Baudelaire
The Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu

SATURDAY 10
EVENT
Special Dose
10:00 p.m.
19th Street Art Center
1639 18th St., Santa Monica
www.19thstreet.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Van Arno and Chris Pugliese
Shooting Gallery
839 Larkin St., San Francisco
www.shootinggallery.com

Caitlin Longe
Christopher Miles
ACME
6150 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.acmeinla.com

Jennie Ottinger
Kantor Gallery
7025 Melrose Ave.
Los Angeles
www.kantorgallery.com

Ansel Adams:
Portrait of America
Monterey Museum of Art
720 Via Mirada
Monterey
www.montereyart.org

Andre Ethier
Actualized, and
It Feels So Good
Honor Fraser
2622 South La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.honorfraser.com

Rena Small
Early Polaroid Work,
1975–1982
January Gallery
961 Chung King Rd.
Los Angeles
www.januarygallery.com

SUNDAY 11
EXHIBITION OPENING
Dennis Hopper
Double Standard
Museum of Contemporary Art
250 South Grand Ave.
Los Angeles
www.moca.org

WEDNESDAY 14
LECTURES
J. Michael Padgett
The Niobid Painter in Athens
7:30 p.m.
The J. Paul Getty Villa
18185 Pacific Coast Hwy.
Pacific Palisades
www.getty.edu

Suzanne Snyder
Remembering
Vintage Fashion
1:30 p.m.
The Bowers Museum
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Picture Mechanics: "KABOOM!"
La Luz de Jesus Gallery
4633 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.laluzdejesus.com

Hautlond
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
2614 Durant Ave.
Berkeley
www.bamfa.berkeley.edu

THURSDAY 15
EVENT
Patterns for Paws
5:30 p.m.
Pacific Design Center
8876 Melrose Ave.
West Hollywood
www.pacificdesigncenter.com

Infinite City:
Villages and Queens
7:00 p.m.
The Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art
151 3rd St., Santa Monica
www.losangelesmca.org

FILM
My Tehran for Sale
(Granaz Moussavi, 2009)
97 min.
5:30 p.m.
Palm Springs Art Museum
101 Museum Dr., Palm Springs
www.psarmuseum.org

FRIDAY 16
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Jorge Pardo
Bulgogi
Gagosian Gallery
465 Cameron Dr.
Beverly Hills
www.gagosian.com

SATURDAY 17
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Gemstone Carvings:
Masterworks by
Harold Van Pelt
The Bowers Museum
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

Picturing Modernity
New Geographies:
Photographs of a Man- Altered Landscape
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
151 3rd St., San Francisco
www.sfmoma.org

WITH THE KIDS
Trashy Fun with
Aaron Kramer
1:00 p.m.
Craft and Folk Art Museum
5814 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.csac.org

SUNDAY 18
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Viva La Revolution: A Dialogue with the Urban Landscape
Museum of Contemporary Art
250 South Grand Ave.
Los Angeles
www.moca.org

With the Kids
Build Your Own Art Shack
1:00 p.m.
Laguna Art Museum
301 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach
www.lagunaartmuseum.org

Super Sculptures
11:00 a.m.
Orange County Museum of Art
850 San Clemente Dr.
Newport Beach
www.ocma.net

THE ARTLESS DRAWING:
NEIL DENARI
1982–1996
Ace Gallery
5514 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles
Through July 15

Ace Gallery displays the early drawings of Los Angeles- based architect Neil Denari in The Artless Drawing: Neil Denari, 1982–1996. The crisp lines and sharp planes of color machine of inscrutable purpose. Upon closer inspection, however, it is in fact a working fountain, with slender arcs of water shooting out of its apparent vertebrae. Fountain is the work of architect Greg Lynn, who built this folly out of a series of more than 57 children’s toys—plastic whale and shark teeter-totters welded together and painted white. The playful craftsmanship is a nutshel incarnation of the cutting-edge digital work for which Lynn is well known. As the first in a series of architecture and design works guest- curated by architectural historian Sylvia Lavin over the next three years, Fountain marks an appealingly free-form kickoff.
It Never Rains

Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism, 1900–1970

Thomas S. Hines

Rizzoli, $95.00

Ardent modernists and book lovers have equal reason to celebrate this splendid production, and to congratulate its publisher. Succinct yet meticulously researched chapters explore the origins and flowering of the modern movement in Southern California. In contrast to so many mega-scrapbooks of stunning images and multilingual captions, it offers nourishment for the mind as much as for the eye. Here are insights and visual delights of a quality you’ll never find online. The designer, Green Dragon, has done an exemplary job of seamlessly weaving text and pictures together and setting them off with luxurious expanses of white space. Architecture of the Sun is as cool as a vintage Richard Neutra house.

Tom Hines, a native of Oxford, Mississippi, arrived in LA in 1968, around the same time as Reyner Banham and David Hockney, and all three have enhanced perceptions of a city most outsiders disparage. Architecture of the Sun is his magnum opus, drawing on 40 years of teaching, writing, and exploring the modernist legacy. He traces its roots from the Greene brothers’ Craftsman bungalows to the pioneering work of Irving Gill and Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright’s art deco houses. There’s a masterly comparison of Schindler and Neutra, the Austrian émigrés who embodied the twin strains of expressionism and rationalism that have shaped LA architecture down to the present. Neutra’s protégés—including Ain, Soriano, and Harris—receive their due, and Hines provides a judicious summary of Craig Ellwood as an impresario who inspired his associates but stole credit for their creativity. He evokes the regional tradition and sketches the context within which these architects worked.

The book provides a brilliant synthesis of a drama with many themes and players. The strongest sections, on Gill and Neutra, reprise the texts of Hines’ books on those architects, but there is much new material. Architectural descriptions are enlivened by portraits of remarkable clients who took chances and often sacrificed themselves in the cause of artistic experimentation. But the last two chapters are anti-climactic. Hines seems to have little appreciation for John Lautner, whose achievements in the 1960s far outshone that of Neutra and the other rationalists. It’s ironic that his cursory or dismissive comments mirror those that were directed at Schindler during his lifetime. More space is devoted to the corporate modernism of Welton Becket and William Pereira, whose work (most notably the Music Center and LACMA) symbolizes LA leaders’ eagerness to settle for mediocrity. It was the suits, remember, who fought Gehry’s vision for Walt Disney Concert Hall. In essence, nothing has changed. Architecture of the Sun concludes on the same low note as the architecture it chronicles: 1970 was a bad year all around. What matters are the decades of innovation that went before. Here is a body of work that captures the spirit of place and retains its power to inspire, in California and around the world.

LA CRITIC MICHAEL WEBB IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.
and the Union Car Dome, right.

Bucky, aging but still visionary, and the Union Car Dome, right.

With firms like Arup and Buro Happold making possible the most ambitious architecture of today, it’s important to remember that they weren’t the first. Buckminster Fuller, whose architecture was as intertwined with engineering as any designer in history, is the father of the modern marriage between ambitious, expressive architecture and radical engineering. This makes it all the more amazing that one of his most astounding designs, the Union Car Dome in Louisiana, was allowed to be destroyed just a few years ago.

Director Evan Mather, a Louisiana native, captures this story in his riveting new documentary <i>A Necessary Ruin</i>, which manages not only to make engineering sexy and preservation politics compelling, but succinctly tells the tale of one of the most tragic architectural plunderings in recent memory.

Fuller’s Union Tank Car Dome, completed in 1938 and sited just north of Baton Rouge, was at the time of its completion the largest clear-span structure in the world, measuring 384 feet in diameter. The building, a real-world example of Fuller’s geodesic dome, was a self-supporting, lightweight steel edifice enabled by the interdependence of compression (steel pipes) and tension (metal panels). Engineered by local Dick Lehrer, who provides commentary in the film, it covered Union Car’s revolutionary train turntable, a key link in the movement of crude oil to local refiners. Prior to this construction, such domes were chiefly present at exhibits and fairs, but this one proved how practical such a structure could be.

Photographer Ivan Masser called the dome “the most beautiful thing in the world,” and his many pictures in the movie back up this assertion. The scope and geometric purity of the structure really were breathtaking, and the film captures views, videos, and commentary to bring it to vivid life. (Unfortunately, the audio on some of the interviews is a bit poor, but with a super-slim budget, it’s a wonder Masser was able to make his 30-minute documentary at all.) We learn some precious details: that Fuller grew up virtually blind until age seven, and thus was forced to think differently about engineering. And Fuller didn’t call himself an architect, but a “comprehensive anticipatory design scientist.”

Try putting that on your business card.

The region’s dependence on refining off-shore oil remains as timely as ever, given the situation in the Gulf of Mexico. But whether you support offshore drilling or not, it remains the largest moneymaker in the region, and Fuller’s dome played a huge role in that operation for years.

That is, until rail company Kansas City Southern purchased the dome around 2000. At that point, the size of most refinery freight cars had grown, making the train turntable, and thus the dome, obsolete. Instead of trying to preserve or adapt the structure as was done with a twin structure created near St. Louis, the company allowed it to deteriorate, and then in 2007, a year before the building was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, they demolished it.

A necessary ruin is compellingly told in the film, it covered Union Car’s revolutionary train turntable, a key link in the movement of crude oil to local refiners. Prior to this construction, such domes were chiefly present at exhibits and fairs, but this one proved how practical such a structure could be.

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The secretive process of demolition set off the largest outcry among locals and architectural historians. If they had been warned, perhaps they could have raised money to relocate it. The movie is a compelling reminder to all who think our most cherished monuments are safe from harm.

SAM LWEELL IS APS WEST COAST EDITOR.
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Getting Past Green

This spring, the twin calamities of an erupting Icelandic volcano and a busted oil well in the Gulf of Mexico served as spectacular reminders of the fragility of modern life and of our profound dependence upon a complex natural world. Another powerful reminder came this May when the National Academy of Sciences released a series of reports calling for immediate action to address global climate change. Strongly emphasizing that the time for “business as usual” is over, the academy’s report stated, “The U.S. should act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop a national strategy to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change.”

Meanwhile, scientists report that glaciers are melting faster than earlier predictions and the world is in the grip of the “sixth great extinction” of species, driven by the destruction of natural habitats, hunting, and climate change. It’s an overwhelming barrage of distressing news that makes many of us want to “stick our heads in the sand,” as one observer put it. Surely no one can rationally deny that we live on a planet in serious distress, and yet when it comes to taking immediate action on energy and climate change, mass denial appears to be in full flower this spring. The disappointing failure of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December was followed in March by an equally disturbing Gallup poll. It reported a significant increase in skepticism about climate change among American voters, with 48 percent now believing that the seriousness of climate change is “generally exaggerated”—up from 31 percent in 1997. In the face of overwhelming international scientific consensus that climate change is real and largely caused by human activities, the national conversation about our shared future has deteriorated into a politically charged argument between “believers” and “non-believers.”

Surprisingly, it’s not much different among architects, where climate change denial and “green fatigue” appear to be almost as prevalent. Indeed, we have our own “believers” and “non-believers” in the relative importance of deeply sustainable design and the role architects can play in helping to combat climate change. Despite thousands of articles, conferences, and position papers on sustainable design over the past 20 years, an October 2009 Architect magazine poll reported that only 46 percent of responding architects agreed that “it’s vital that we design and build sustainably, in order to conserve scarce resources and prevent further global warming.”

Whether due to the overexposure of all things sustainable, misconceptions about the true costs of resource-efficient buildings, or an unwillingness to reconsider long-held design values, we are still a divided profession on this issue. There are separate journals for architecture and green building, separate awards programs for design excellence and energy-efficient design; separate studios for design and sustainable design; and a post-carbon world. But the first yet perhaps biggest challenge is to convince every architect and every client that this effort is worthy of our collective, undivided attention, and not just a boring, trendy distraction as some still claim.

Voluntarily broadening the long-held core design values of our profession focused on form, material innovation, and function, while critical to long-term success, will likely be a slow process. The significance is in getting past “green” as an alternative, thus exclusive, approach. Already underway, this process requires the active support of every practicing architect across all spectrums.

Zero-energy building should be required by law. While California’s landmark Green Building Code and the upcoming International Green Construction Code (IGCC) are important first steps, our building codes should be pushed further to require radical resource efficiency in architecture, including net-zero energy and carbon-neutral construction. When this occurs, three very important results will follow: First, these measures will no longer be seen as voluntary or “alternative” by building owners, and every building will be required to meet rigorous energy performance criteria. Second, the integration of these measures will become a matter of course for every architect, and the full creativity of the profession will be brought to bear on addressing its challenges. Finally, entrepreneurial innovation will be unleashed across the nation, helping to accelerate the development of new, low-cost carbon-neutral technologies.

It is equally important to integrate design thinking into the profession to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels used to construct and operate new and renovated buildings to zero by 2030. Needless to say, this is no small task to achieve in a mere 20 years, and adding a few “green” features to our buildings clearly isn’t going to get us there. To come even close, we will need to get past our current conceptions of “green” design and fully integrate the pursuit of high-performance, net-zero energy building within our overarching concepts of design excellence. We will need to rethink our fundamental design aspirations—many of which are firmly rooted in the energy-rich oil age—and find new architectural languages that express and celebrate the pressing realities of a post-carbon world. But the first step is to convince every architect and every client that this effort is worthy of our collective, undivided attention, and not just a boring, trendy distraction as some still claim.
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