FOREST CITY TAKES ON MAJOR SF REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

San Francisco’s Pier 70, with its surplus of majestic but crumbling brick warehouses near downtown, has been a tough redevelopment nut to crack. But there’s been a major breakthrough. Last month, the Port of San Francisco announced it had selected developer Forest City Enterprises to undertake new construction at the former

continued on page 9

DESERT SHOWDOWN

Everyone in Palm Springs agrees that the Desert Fashion Plaza, a mall in the heart of downtown, is a flop. It takes up 15 acres on the site of the former Desert Inn, one of four large hotels that drew Hollywood glitterati during the first half of the 20th century.

continued on page 6

PRIME SITE

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continued on page 9

UPGRADING SAN JOSE’S IMAGE WITH HIGH SPEED RAIL

Like other young metropolises developed in the 1950s and 1960s, San Jose has tried to move beyond its sprawling adolescence by encouraging high-rises downtown and implementing urban growth boundaries. But while it has yet to establish the real density and mix of

continued on page 2

ELDON DAVIS, 1917-2011

Eldon Davis was always bemused—though gracious—when people showed interest in his 50-year-old designs for modern coffee shops like Pann’s, Bob’s Big Boy, Norm’s, Wich Stand, and Denny’s. Davis, who died April 22 at age 94, had a modest modernist’s attitude: Architecture solves problems. He nurtured no nostalgia, even for his own buildings.

But to younger architects, historians, preservationists, and the public the coffee shops he designed with partner Louis Armet became much more. They were emblems of a key period when modern architecture was truly something for the masses.

continued on page 7
I commend my colleague Christopher Hawthorne for his recent column in Architectural Record assessing the impact of architectural blogs. It’s not all negative: he praises the richness, variety, and energy of criticism on the web. But he also calls blog criticism “wildly uneven” pointing out that online design writing is often “overlong,” “prone to self-absorption,” and in need of an editor.

I agree, but my biggest problem with architecture blogs is the extreme brevity of the work and, by extension, its lack of journalistic self-absorption, “and in need of an editor.”

Blogs by their nature tend to take a simplistic, scattered view of the world. How can one really investigate a topic, or provide any nuance or reflection, in a few lines? It’s rarely journalism. Most are links from other stories, while the “original” reporting is often copied directly from press releases.

One architect I know shared a story of how he once posted pictures online of a complete home renovation and remodel. But the pictures that got picked up and circulated were of the original—very ugly—house. No one bothered to check which house was the subject under discussion.

Countless times I’ve seen blog posts that confirm stories as true without any verification. Be it Norman Foster designing a new Silicon Valley headquarters for Apple (quoting an unnamed source from a Spanish-language newspaper with no confirmation from Apple or Foster), or news that plans had been unveiled for a new plaza at LA’s Broad Museum (they were just conceptual renderings). Here’s an idea: If you don’t know if a story is true, say so by citing the original source.

Blogs also fetishize the image, already a big problem in architectural journalism. As on every site when we post on our blog, the zoomier images inevitably get the most views and re-tweets. I call it archi-porn. It’s the same as pictures of sexy women getting the most hits on the Huffington Post. Also gossip and snarkiness trump vital news, getting the most hits and the most shares. Time after time, they win the day.

The real question is do people care about in-depth reporting? Or is the obsession with the quantity, gossip, and sexy imagery all that matters? In the past, plenty of architecture magazines dealt primarily in images, but when that proclivity is combined with unchecked words, the result is a serious dumbing-down of the subject. With the least reporting grabbing the most audiences, the end of intelligent information exchange seems at hand.

I’m not calling for a blog boycott. Blogs are a vital source of some information and, as Hawthorne pointed out, an important way to keep reporters and critics honest. They open up a once closed field of discussion.

In anticipation of these developments the city is planning a mixed-use neighborhood with an emphasis on commercial space (5 million square feet) to attract companies looking for an energetic environment, along with 2,500 units of housing. Initial land use planning is being carried out by the city with the help of San Francisco firm Field Paoli. Public amenities will include a new plaza, parks, and a pedestrian corridor lined with restaurants and shops and bookeened by the ballpark and the existing HP Pavilion sports arena.

While the new structures are unlikely to outdo those at San Francisco’s Transbay Terminal—because of the nearby airport, heights in San Jose are capped at 11 stories—city planners are counting on architecture to play an important role. “They need to be signature, memorable buildings—when people think of San Jose, we want people to think of them,” said Joseph Horwedel, San Jose’s director of planning. With the Diridon Station Area Plan, he says, there’s the chance to set a good precedent.

“Companies grow and die off so quickly, permanence is not always respected here in the Valley. It’s important that in the public realm, we help develop that appreciation of what quality spaces add to the community,” said Horwedel.

LYDIA LEE
EAVESDROP — THE EDITORS

THE TAO OF AIA

We who live in the largest cities in America think we understand the architecture profession. Then every year at the AIA convention, we’re reminded how wrong we are. Take the clothes at the New Orleans convention this year: we believe the AIA sent out a memo demanding that every architect wear pleated Dockers, preferably brown or khaki in color. We retired our pleats and Dockers circa 1993. But just when we began to think that architects were hopeless, we saw them partying well beyond midnight in the French Quarter. We won’t name names, but perhaps the AIA sent out another memo about the need to be falling down drunk and dancing like a frat pledge or tipsy bar mitzvah boy after hours. Attendance may have been down this year, but enthusiasm, it appears, was way up.

AND THE LIFE AQUATIC

Recently LA architect Greg Lynn, who grew up sailing, gave a lecture in New York explaining his fascination with boats. His love of boat design, he noted, derives from the fact that every aspect of their form is determined by external forces, and because boats are designed as a unified whole. He hates clips, nails, screws, or any extraneous pieces. Other boat builders include Norman Foster, John Pawson, and Philippe Starck, who have been busy designing sleek, racing-like yachts. Foster’s boat reportedly cost $24 million. Starck’s cost $300 million. Now we get it! What is that per square foot anyway?

SEND DANCE TRACKS, BOAT SHOES, AND FURNITURE POLISH TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

GETTING FOCUSED

We heard several months ago that Julius Shulman’s Raphael Soriano-designed home had finally been sold for $2.25 million. Now we hear the new owner is author Jonah Lehrer, nephew of LA architect Jon Lehrer. The author of “Proust Was A Neuroscientist” could be the perfect owner. He’s creative, has a family, and loves architecture. Apparently, he will use Shulman’s studio and write at the photographer’s old desk. Happy to hear our favorite curmudgeon will live on.

OPEN TERMINAL

Renovated with a preponderance of white surfaces and natural lighting, SFO’s Terminal 2 strives—appropriately, given the current state of travel—for a spa-like atmosphere. The ticketing area is paneled in faux zebrwood, and the post-TSA lounge area—aptly named “Recompose”—offers cushioned seating under a gossamer cloud of purplish threads (a ceiling sculpture by Janet Echelman). The food purveyors are primarily local: Napa Farms Market occupies a handsome space with tiled walls and an open oven, designed by Baldau Catvon Eckartisberg Architects. In the main gate area, two tiers of clerestory windows and angled rooflines create a visual sense of uplift, while Arne Jacobsen Egg and Swan chairs lend a design edge to seating clusters. Slated for LEED Gold certification, the $383 million renovation incorporates energy-saving measures like a displacement ventilation system that brings in outside air for natural cooling, and prominently placed water fountains that are designed for refilling water bottles at the gate. LL

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**NYC SETS ITS SIGHTS ON BECOMING A TECH HUB; STANFORD HELPS**

**SILICON VALLEY EAST?**

New York is no longer content with just having a Silicon Alley in lower Manhattan. Last December, the city’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC) took the initial step in establishing a new “applied science and engineering research campus.” In an unprecedented move, it solicited expressions of interest (RFEI) from academic institutions around the world; and by its mid-March deadline, it had received 18 proposals from a combination of 27 organizations,
When Downtown LA’s office buildings first started sprouting up in the ’70s and ’80s, the city had a very different attitude about civic plazas. Most of those spaces were empty, windswept concrete yards meant as tributes to corporate power or to the singularity of modernist architecture, not places of dynamic urban activity or real civic engagement. Often they purposely impeded public gathering. This was, after all, a time when riots and protests were a large fear and homelessness was starting to rear its ugly head.

AC Martin’s recent renovation of the modernist plaza outside of the Citigroup Center at 444 South Flower Street is a good example of how that conception has radically changed in a city that now craves public space and ways to attract tenants to aging buildings. The esteemed LA firm designed the plaza the first time around, back in 1982, and also designed the tower itself.

“I suppose a lot of us architects were naive enough to believe that a beautifully crafted minimal design was enough to activate a space,” said AC Martin principal David Martin, of the firm’s first try at the plaza.

Their strategy this time was simple but not easy: to fill the once-barren space with an intricate network of elements that would make it as walkable, sitable, and people-friendly as possible, while still encouraging lingering and peaceful moments in the midst of the chaotic city.

But whereas the firm wanted to promote a sense of tranquility in the plaza, they didn’t want it to turn its back on the city. The space embraces the urban grid thanks to a diagonal pattern of stone pavers, which lead visitors to and from the main entry on Flower and 5th streets, a dynamic corner bordering John Portman’s Bonaventure Hotel, the classic Art Deco LA Public Library, and AC Martin’s own City National Plaza. Visitors enter the newly designed space, pass its sculpted basalt fringes, and slowly descend along a slight grade change. Colored glass boxes that line the entryways provide clear wayfinding.

To avoid Downtown’s inescapable heat island effect and the bright reflective glare—always an issue for urban plazas—the firm alternated light and dark pavers and filled the space with mesmerizing bright green Palo Verde trees that create an intricate dappled light. They also supplemented the plaza with new palm trees and installed new landscaping—most of it drought tolerant succulents—into handsome dark brown Cor-ten steel planter boxes. The landscape of yuccas and spiny, bulbous, and colorful plants was designed by Melendrez Design Partners. The area is further cooled and calmed by simple Cor-ten steel water features with their great gurgling noises and by a series of what seem to be countless orange umbrellas.

While old school civic plazas left nowhere to sit, seating is everywhere here, with 40 tables and 160 movable chairs (not even chained to the ground!) and gently curving benches that alternate from wood to travertine to match the striped pavers below.

The terraced storefronts in front of the building, which include the ultra-popular Mendocito Farms sandwich shop, were reimagined to include new steel blade signage with a smooth matte finish that not only unifies the facades but also gives the shops a sophistication they sorely missed before.

The popular new park has not become a home for vagrants, as past city planners might have feared. AC Martin has taken a soulless space and made it into an inspiration for the rest of the city. “Over the years I have become a fan of Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, and Holly White,” said Martin. “We’ve learned a lot in the last few years about sun, shade, a place to sit down, permeable walls, and food service. In other words, how to create more humane places.”
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SEATTLE’S CHIHULY MUSEUM FINALLY MOVING FORWARD

GLASS BEATS GREEN

After more than a year of waiting and debating, Seattle city council late last month finally approved the lease and construction of a new Dale Chihuly museum, next to the city’s iconic Space Needle. The exhibit space, which will contain at least $50 million of the artist’s glass works, will be part of the Seattle Center, the site of Seattle’s 1962 Worlds Fair, which also contains the Experience Music Project, the Pacific Science Center, and several theaters and cultural facilities.

The Seattle-based project designers, Owen Richards Architects, were initially selected by developers Center Art LLC in late 2009. But a community outcry for more alternatives on the site put the project on hold in favor of an RFP that drew nine proposals. Despite continued opposition—particularly from outspoken officials and a group called Friends of the Green at Seattle Center, which hoped to build a new 4.6 acre park on the site—a review panel established by the Seattle Center selected the Chihuly project last December. City Council approved the project on April 26.

“The reality is that this particular space was not ideal for demolition,” said architect Owen Richards, who noted that the museum’s site fits well into the Seattle Center’s overall plan, intending from the beginning to balance various open spaces and buildings. As a compromise the area will also include space for local radio station KEXP, a new playground, and additional open spaces.

The Chihuly project—with its 12,000 square feet of exhibit space—will include the renovation of an existing 20,000-square-foot warehouse building that had been used for an amusement park and a new 4,500-square-foot glass structure with an asymmetrical arched roof serving as the showpiece. Other elements will include a one acre garden, small plazas, new walkways, and new or improved landscaping. The project should break ground in July, and completion is expected by April 2012, to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the Seattle Center.

“The story worth telling is how the selection process opened up,” said Seattle City councilmember Sally Bagshaw, who sat on the Seattle Center selected the museum project last December. City Council approved the project on April 26.

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ELDON DAVIS, 1917–2011 continued from front page Davis, the dapper, bow-tied, USC-trained professional architect of schools, banks, and churches, also tapped into the youthful rock and roll spirit of the booming 1950s suburbs, where everyone cruised through the hamburger stand. The Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson even wrote a song about the Wich Stand, one of the greatest Armet and Davis coffee shop-drive-ins in LA’s Windsor Hills. It has taken decades for Davis’ architecture to be recognized as part of the extraordinary surge of creative design coming out of Southern California in the mid century. Originally tagged with the whimsical label of Googie (after John Lautner’s Sunset Strip coffee shop), his designs were widely criticized as arbitrary and extreme by the architecture establishment. But opinions have changed. Just last year, eminent historian Thomas Hines credited Armet and Davis with “major contributions to a significant building type.”

Other architects established the main concepts of this car-oriented suburban architecture, but Armet and Davis developed their own distinctive interpretation. Working closely with restaurateur-clients like Bob Wian of Bob’s Big Boy and Norm Roybark of Norm’s, Davis and colleagues including Helen Fong, Lee Linton, and Victor Newlove translated efficient service and commercial necessity into architectural form and space. Kitchens were put on display, and every cook top and plate holder echoed the building’s unified aesthetic. Bold modern roof structures captured the energy of the space age and also attracted the eye of motorists. Walls of glass and indoor-outdoor dining patios took advantage of the balmy climate.

On his 90th birthday four years ago, friends and colleagues rented a party bus and traveled to a few of Davis’ remaining monuments. The tour started at Norm’s La Cienega, where the sign’s neon pennants still wave into the pulsing energy of glinting chrome and the flow of traffic as seen through the panoramic windows. Still, coffee shops, no matter how well designed, were not a path to professional prestige in the 1950s. Lautner blamed his association with Googie architecture for crippling his career, but Davis took a different tack. He marketed his coffee shops in coffee shop journals because that’s what clients were reading. Hiring photographer Jack Laxer to photograph his buildings in stunningly beautiful 3-D transparencies also helped. From custom coffee shop designs like Pann’s, he moved on to create prototypes for national chains; the first 400 Denny’s used his 1958 prototype design, securing Armet and Davis’ reputation as the premier coffee shop architects nationally. Davis’ passing reminds us that our legacy from the fertile design era of the 1950s includes both the cool elegance of the Case Study Houses and the vibrant opulence of the Googie coffee shops. Both sought to bring good design to the average person. Eldon Davis’ coffee shops actually accomplished that. For the price of a burger and a cup of coffee at one of his coffee shops, any Angeleno could enjoy the modern life.

There is a hidden romanticism behind the design of the new Soumaya Museum in Mexico City, a story of a highly anticipated proposal and the hope for a resurrection of the grandeur of Mexican architecture. Mexicans have been waiting for something like this to happen for a while. They demand opportunities for architecture and design, and for pleasure at the street level. The city needs icons to survive and to maintain its status. With buildings, however, expectations sometimes come with disenchantment. The Soumaya, while a gorgeous object, rises pretentiously, with troubled construction techniques and flawed exhibition design.

Designed by Fernando Romero Enterprise, or FREE, one of Mexico’s most acclaimed young firms, the museum opened in March in Plaza Carso, a new real estate development in Polanco, a vibrant and cosmopolitan area of Mexico City. It hosts the private art collection of the man sometimes called the wealthiest man on earth, Carlos Slim Helu, the Mexican telecommunications tycoon, who is also Fernando Romero’s father-in-law. The Soumaya holds more than 6,200 artworks in 60,000 square feet of exhibition space, as well as a 350-seat auditorium, a library, offices, a restaurant, a gift shop, and a multi-purpose lounge.

There is no doubt that the Soumaya is an interesting object within its context. It rises as a vortex with a skin made of 16,000 hexagonal tiles of mirrored steel; a photogenic image. It is a complex composition of twisted steel rings and columns, infusing character into the area. It breaks away from its surroundings and becomes an abrupt icon within the city. But while it possesses a strong formality on the exterior, the same cannot be said about the interior. While the outside is a complex, and somewhat convoluted shape, the inside is an awkward compromise between promenade and envelope. The relation between outside and inside is neither intrinsic nor well established, and the building negates the seemingly self-supporting structure.

Romero’s little experience—his firm opened in 1999—and understanding of the museum typology is noticeable. The design contains a blatant reference to the iconic and often-criticized ramp of the Guggenheim Museum in New York by Frank Lloyd Wright. However, at the Soumaya the ramp is less formal and less powerful: there is no rotunda or views to give meaning to the spiral, and it does not allow users to orient themselves within the space. Its interiors first deliver a generous vestibule, a white vastness that shows off its fluidity and invites users to explore the building. But its subsequent promenade is less effective. Its spiral ends at the top floor, directing views to the structure above, where one immediately notices the unresolved geometry between trusses and walls, showing the poor level of detailing and construction supervision. Furthermore at the Soumaya, daylight—an important opportunity for poetry, and especially enjoyable for scrutinizing the works of Rodin and other European masters inside this museum—is not given its due. Likewise daylight does little to accentuate the museum’s sculptural details, so the experience relies mostly on artificial lighting. Romero worked for OMA a few years ago. Its leader Rem Koolhaas has always been an advocate for social change, and perhaps Romero absorbed that while thinking about the museum as an object for urban identification and a sense of place. With the Soumaya, Slim has given the gift of free enjoyment of his art collection to everyone in Mexico, perhaps a small gesture of social responsibility. But the expectation for one of the best museums in the world hosting one of the most precious collections in Latin America is disappointed. It could be something much better. It started with a spectacular design on paper and ended in poor execution. We were expecting much more from the wealthiest man on earth.

LUIS OTÓN VILLEGAS IS A MEXICO-BASED ARCHITECT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE DISEÑO DE MONTERREY.
In the past two months over 30,000 people toured the 1927 English manor estate by Paul Williams, chosen as this year’s Pasadena Showcase House of the Arts. Now in its 47th year, the fundraiser supports local cultural programs with local designers donating their time and talents in exchange for press. While many showcase houses take place in unsold or empty properties, one was vacated for six months by its (anonymous) owners. But they returned to a home with millions of dollars worth of remodeling and rehabilitation, both inside and out.

Located in La Cañada Flintridge, a wealthy suburb with about 40 Williams-designed homes, the property includes a 7,200-square-foot main house, a 1,800-square-foot guesthouse, and a pool house on about five acres. Commissioned by former rancher and real estate investor John Bishop Green, the English-style home has a red brick exterior with two decorative pot-topped chimneys. Inside, its ornate ceilings are made of plaster-of-Paris topped chimneys. Inside, its ornate ceilings are made of plaster-of-Paris and burlap, the floors are cork, and windows are glass casements. When the property sold in 1945, it was described in the Los Angeles Times as “the most authentic 17th century English home in this country.”

In January the badly dilapidated house was handed over to 24 local design teams. Because of its architectural significance, the main manor did not undergo structural alteration. It did receive updated landscaping, as well as a detailed cleaning of its brick and mortar façade and a retooling of the roof alteration. It did receive updated landscaping, as well as a detailed cleaning of its brick and mortar façade and a retooling of the roof and gutters. Inside was a different story. With 10-foot doors, original leaded glass windows, a paneled and beamed ceiling, and a hand-carved wood and stone fireplace, the home’s “Great Room” reminded LA designer David Dalton of a hunting lodge or cathedral. He added a custom-made modern starburst chandelier; the Moroccan-themed bedroom, the Paul Williams’ English-manor style house; modern white furniture in the historicized living room.

Forest City is expected to present a formal proposal at the start of next year. Meanwhile, as part of the RFQ process, the company offered a vision of an “innovation cluster” that combines high-quality office space with diverse and inspiring public amenities for the broader San Francisco community,” which would attract high-tech companies, machine shops, and artist studios according to the port’s summary. Warehouse space in the city’s South of Market area currently commands higher rents than traditional offices downtown lending credence to the belief that the pier’s renovated warehouses will be attractive to young companies.

Next month the port will release a separate Request for Interest (RFI) for the adjacent area, the historical renovation portion of the pier. “At this point, we really want to hear from users and developers about what they’d like to do and creative ways to market the buildings,” said Kathleen Diohep, the port’s project manager for Pier 70. The port is also in negotiations with AECOM to design a seven-acre park on the northern edge of the site. The entitlement process is anticipated to take the next two years, with construction beginning in 2014.
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Our pick of the most usefully intriguing from the International Furniture Fair in Milan.
I Saloni, the annual orgy of furnishings, celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. And along with the expected round-up of avant-garde teasers, sumptuous stunners, and thoughtfully recyclable ingenuities, there was a full spectrum of highly-sophisticated lighting designs that transformed LED solutions from dreary requisites to exciting options.

With over 2,500 exhibitors, every one of the 321,320 visitors who pile into the swoopy 2.2 million-square-foot exhibition space are likely to find something that tickles their fancy.
Can find their own selection of favorites. We decided to spotlight a solid 50, basing our choice on our own quixotic standards: technical interest, elegance without fuss, knowing wit, and ecological smarts. We tore through the halls and pounded the pavement until our heels broke in hopes of bringing back some lasting winners. **JULIE V. IOVINE**
**Friday, October 7**

**EVENT**
Real Deals: Hunters Point Shipyard / Candlestick Point Bus Tour
8:30 a.m.
Lennar Site Trailer
Hunters Point Shipyard
690 Hudson Ave.
San Francisco
www.usfili.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**
You Are So Beautiful and I Am A Foot
5-10 p.m.
Speakeasy Community College
1810 North Greene St.
Spokane, WA
www.aiaspokans.org

**MONDAY 13**

**LECTURE**
Say Anything: To Compete or Not to Compete...that is the Question
6:00 p.m.
Switch Studio
1916 East 6th St., Tempe, AZ
www.aiga.org

**TUESDAY 14**

**LECTURE**
Rick Prelinger
San Francisco Top to Bottom: The City Seen by Hollywood and Home Moviemakers
7:30 p.m.
Jewish Community Center of San Francisco
2201 California St
San Francisco
www.sfjcc.org

**WEDNESDAY 15**

**LECTURE**
Josh Levine
D. Talks: the Future of the Question
12:00 p.m.
Seasons Rotisserie & Grill
1201 South Figueroa St.
Los Angeles
www.aialosangeles.org

**Friday, October 14**

**LECTURE**
Edward Weston: American Photographer
7:00 p.m.
Monterey Museum of Art-La Mirada
720 Via Mirada
Monterey, CA
www.montereyart.org

**Saturday, October 15**

**LECTURE**
Andrew Borsanyi, Alan Mark, Tim Sullivan, John Midwain
What Direction Housing?
In-depth Discussion of Near-term and Long-term
4:30 p.m.
Hyatt Regency Hotel
5 Embarcadero Center
San Francisco
www.usfili.org

**Wednesday, October 26**

**EVENT**
Los Angeles Section 2011 Awards Program
6:00 p.m.
Davie/Farrell Theater
7121 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.calapa.org

**Thursday, October 27**

**LECTURE**
Carrie Pilo
The Burbank native's contribution to the field of architecture is celebrated in this new exhibition, which includes original sketches, paintings, photographs, film and video work, storyboards, puppets, concept artworks, maquettes, costumes, and a black-light carousel installation that hangs from the ceiling.

**Saturday, October 29**

**EVENT**
San Francisco’s First Construction Methane
101 4th St., San Francisco
www.calapa.org

**Monday, October 31**

**EVENT**
Best known for directing films like The Nightmare Before Christmas, Edward Scissorhands, Batman Returns, and Beetle Juice, Tim Burton and his work as an illustrator, writer, and artist are being honored with a retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This new show celebrates the way that Burton has managed to put his own spin on movies in an industry known for its fear of the unknown. With over 700 items on display, including drawings, paintings, photographs, film and video work, storyboards, puppets, concept artworks, maquettes, costumes, and assorted cinematic ephemera, visitors get a glimpse into the mind of this modern day Renaissance man. Though the show debuted on the east coast at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, the LACMA version of the show, organized by Brit Salvesen, offers its own take on the Burbank native’s body of work. Burton collaborated with the exhibition designers to transform the museum’s Resnick Pavilion into an appropriately “Burtonesque” environment. He also created several new pieces for the exhibition, including what the museum describes as a “revolving multimedia, black-light carousel installation that hangs from the ceiling.”
RESEATING EAMES

The Story of Eames Furniture
Marilyn Neuhart
Die Gestalten Verlag, $199

Designer-writer Marilyn Neuhart’s The Story of Eames Furniture, a hefty 800-page, two-volume work with more than 2,500 illustrations, recently joined the many publications that document the canonical work produced by Charles and Ray Eames from 1941 to 1978. The book is an exhaustive account of the Eameses’ groundbreaking furniture designs in molded plywood, bent and welded wire, fiberglass, cast aluminum, and other materials—from their home experiments in molded plywood to the mass-produced furniture manufactured by Evans Products, and since 1948, by Herman Miller (Vitra manufactures Eames designs in Europe). The first half of volume one, The Early Years, is devoted to biographical material about Charles and Ray, their staff, and key colleagues (Eero Saarinen and John Entenza) who were influential in the evolution of their design practice. The remaining sections focus on the Eameses’ design work from 1941 through 1947. Volume two, The Age of Herman Miller, picks up the story at the moment when Herman Miller became the manufacturer of Eames furniture. Every Eames design introduced by Herman Miller from 1948 to 1978—seating, storage, and tables—is presented. Apart from being a comprehensive catalogue of Eames furniture, Neuhart primarily intends her work as a corrective to what she claims has been the mythologizing and “deification” of the couple’s professional and personal lives. Charles Eames is shown alone on the slipcase, a clear signal that The Story of Eames Furniture is his story, not a tale of collaboration between Charles and Ray Eames, as other authors have argued. In what had originally been a portrait of the couple, Ray’s image has literally been erased, an apt metaphor for what surely was the mark of civilization. This book—to the annoyance of former Eames Office employee Don Albinson there would never have been a Charles Eames, the author designates nearly 150 pages as “Eames Furniture: The Absence of Ray.” Bertoia—as reported to Neuhart by Albinson, and staff member Fred Usher—is credited with designing the forms and structural system of the molded plywood chair. The author makes it clear that her narrative is that of an eyewitness, an insider’s account, unencumbered by the scholar’s reliance on “second- and third-hand... continued on page 18

Domestic Dreamscapes

Classic Homes of Los Angeles
Douglas Woods, Introduction by D.J. Waldie; Photographs by Melba Levick Rizzoli, $55.00

Sometimes a title is enough to throw you off a book. As you sink deeper and deeper into the lush interiors of the homes in Classic Homes of Los Angeles, you get stuck wondering about Charles and Ray, their staff, and key colleagues (Eero Saarinen and John Entenza) who were influential in the evolution of their design practice. The remaining sections focus on the Eameses’ design work from 1941 through 1947. Volume two, The Age of Herman Miller, picks up the story at the moment when Herman Miller became the manufacturer of Eames furniture. Every Eames design introduced by Herman Miller from 1948 to 1978—seating, storage, and tables—is presented. Apart from being a comprehensive catalogue of Eames furniture, Neuhart primarily intends her work as a corrective to what she claims has been the mythologizing and “deification” of the couple’s professional and personal lives. Charles Eames is shown alone on the slipcase, a clear signal that The Story of Eames Furniture is his story, not a tale of collaboration between Charles and Ray Eames, as other authors have argued. In what had originally been a portrait of the couple, Ray’s image has literally been erased, an apt metaphor for what surely was the mark of civilization. This book—to the annoyance of former Eames Office employee Don Albinson there would never have been a Charles Eames, the author designates nearly 150 pages as “Eames Furniture: The Absence of Ray.” Bertoia—as reported to Neuhart by Albinson, and staff member Fred Usher—is credited with designing the forms and structural system of the molded plywood chair. The author makes it clear that her narrative is that of an eyewitness, an insider’s account, unencumbered by the scholar’s reliance on “second- and third-hand... continued on page 18

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Atlanta had only been in existence for a few years before its burning in 1864, made memorable in Gone With the Wind. Created at the random crossing of railroad lines, the city had only recently passed an ordinance banning free range hogs from its streets. But by 1964 Atlanta was famous for its airport—for a time the busiest in the U.S.

That cities are shaped by modes of transportation is also the premise of Aerotropolis: The Way We’ll Live Next, a book by John D. Kasarda and Greg Lindsay. As defined by the authors, an aerotropolis refers not just to a city built economically around air travel but one designed around the airport: “a new urban form placing airports in the center with cities growing around them, connecting workers, suppliers, executives, and goods to the global marketplace.” Aerotropolis is several books, or parts of them. One part recalls such books as Joel Garreau’s 1991 Edge City, looking at urban developments along the peripheral interstate highways. Another part reports on amazing airports of the Middle East and Asia and astonishing industries, such as the African food business feeding European markets. We get a good deal of flavor of the “airport culture” popularized by Walter Kim’s novel, Up in the Air. But the book suffers from its odd, double-author relationship. Greg Lindsay, a journalist, is the real writer, and Kasarda, the leading advocate of the aerotropolis concept, is its major subject or character. Imagine that Chuck Yeager had been listed as co-author of The Right Stuff. John Kasarda was a sociologist who shifted to the business school and understands Neuhart’s agen-
tion of Charles and Ray’s position of Charles and Ray’s
crediting listed for Herman Miller executives, as
those who care about scholarship and accuracy can be disappointed and frustrated by the many errors and general carelessness evident throughout. To locate Frank Lloyd Wright’s “renowned” Fallingwater in Wisconsin—as Vegas is merely an example of misinformation that casts doubt on the author’s reliability. While the book is long, it contains a vast amount of detail about the Eameses, their colleagues and associates, and about
modemism’s most celebrated furniture, the cumulative effect is an unsatisfying experience. The author’s agenda precludes an objective examination of Charles and Ray’s real role in the design process and a cogent understanding of their design philosophy. DESIGN HISTORIAN PHYLLIS ROSS IS AUTHOR OF GILBERT ROHDE: MODERN DESIGN FOR MODERN LIVING (VALE, 2009). A 1950 ESU.

Lindsay veers from reporting to advocacy and back. Every now and then, he expresses a note of skepticism about Kasarda’s work or teaching, as in his discussion of the debacle of the aerotropolis planned by the state of North Carolina. But he is more often an apostle for Kasarda’s vision—sometimes awk-
wardly so. That vision is particularly vulnerable when it comes to energy consumption: can aerotropolis survive future energy prices? Does it abet global warming? Lindsay offers twisted historical arguments about whale oil and coal. Besides, he tells us, work is advancing to make aviation fuel from algae, supported by Sir Richard Branson. Algae-based fuel not just for airplanes and powerplants would be a fine thing, but it remains largely unproven.

Lindsay and Kasarda might not be the people to invite to dinner with your favorite locavores. Their vision of low cost air transport promises a wealth of fruit from the antipodes—think Gala apples from New Zealand.

The idea of a city planned around an airport might strike many people as a bad joke. Aren’t airports the embodiment of placelessness? Don’t they make us think not just of George Clooney playing the character Ryan Bingham trapped in a soulless airport of life in Up in the Air but Tom Hanks as a character trapped in an airport in Steven Spielberg’s Terminal?. How does architecture fit into the story? Marginally, at best, it seems. There are mentions of Rem Koolhaas and Sir Norman Foster, but the key criterion for architecture in Aerotropolis seems to be size. Foster’s Terminal 3 in Beijing “could accommodate all five of Heathrow’s terminals... It was the world’s largest building under one roof before surrendering the title to Dubai’s own Terminal 3.”

The book’s cover shows a notional, cartoony Aerotropolis whose style might be described as high SimCity. Kasarda says more about his site on the book than the book does. “Placemaking and wayfinding should be enhanced by thematic architectural features and iconic structures,” he suggests, bringing to mind the “theme build-
ing” school of airport design. But the book is often fun. This sort of futurism has a long history. Kasarda admits to admiring Alvin Toffler, the pop futurist author of bestsellers beginning with Future Shock in 1970. It might be argued that such books do little harm and offer useful stimuli for discussion—but they are not be confused with serious economic or social planning.

Transportation is not the only factor that shapes cities. Overemphasizing it is a mistake: we don’t speak of a city centered on a port or river as an Aquatropolis or one built to accommodate the horse traffic as a Hippotropolis. The vision of Aerotropolis recalls earlier visions of the future, like Norman Bel Geddes’ designs for floating airports or Moses King’s imagined city of the future circa 1911 in which airplanes flit among bridges linking skyscrapers. These were inspired by the romance of flight, which continues to intrigue us despite every indignity of scanner and schedule. But Kasarda seems to have lost that sense. As Lindsay describes him, he has “jet lag stamped on his face.” He has given his speech so many times that he has come to resemble Ryan Bingham himself. “He has spent years alight by now, and nothing in the glint of silvery wings stirs his blood anymore.”

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In Porto, a small, gray city in the north of Portugal, you grow accustomed to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century weathered granite buildings that seem to rise from the ground as naturally as mountains. This is the foggy, damp place that has shaped the life and work of Eduardo Souto de Moura, the 2011 Pritzker Prize laureate, and he, in turn, has helped bring the city into modernity over the past thirty years. “In Porto, you have the beautiful historical city,” the architect has said, “the monuments and buildings trying to fig—like cats when they go to sleep—their natural place and positioning, and then they become almost natural, all made with the same stone... And that gives them an immense serenity.”

This same serenity permeates the rigorous work of Souto de Moura, embodied in large, geometric volumes that are grounded and muscular. A fierce regionalist, Souto de Moura was born, raised and educated in Porto, and is today, alongside Álvaro Siza, the most visible face of what is called the “Porto school of architecture.” Souto de Moura began his career working for five years under Siza, but in 1980 started his own practice, winning a series of competitions for public buildings.

His early—and, to date, strongest—body of work is comprised mostly of single-family dwellings in the northern region of Portugal, monumental in their simplicity. In combinations of oversized concrete and granite walls, glass facades and hardwood floors, Souto de Moura’s houses offer horizontal spaces that unfold dramatically, inside long perpendicular volumes surgically inserted into the landscape. “Artists like Robert Morris, Donald Judd, and Sol Le Witt transformed the environment by placing assertive new objects into it,” wrote Hans van Dijk in 1994 for Archis, the Dutch architectural magazine, “and that is exactly what Souto de Moura does.”

Donald Judd was a definite influence in Souto de Moura’s trajectory. The architect first studied sculpture in college and attributes his transition to architecture to a meeting with Judd in Zurich. But other influences are felt in Souto de Moura’s work: Portuguese architects Siza and Fernando Távora, as well as Le Corbusier, and especially Mies. Sometimes described as “a Missian architect,” Souto de Moura has admitted being “passionate about Mies van der Rohe,” and much of his work evokes the German architect’s.

In Souto de Moura’s Burgos office tower, a project that took almost twenty years to build, the homage to the Seagram building is evident, its Missian roots more than apparent in two dark, rhythmic volumes. The seventeen-story tower rises alone in the huge lot that was cleared for construction, unusually tall for the city, and the lower volume—a shopping mall—replicates and anchors the tower beside it. The Burgos office tower is, today, the most visible building within a mile of its site in Porto, and it represents a more recent side of Souto de Moura’s work: public buildings and more ambitious architectural gestures.

Of these, his Braga Municipal Stadium, sitting atop a hill that was once a quarry, is the most striking and dramatic example. Part of a commission by the Portuguese state, the stadium, one of ten built for the 2004 European Soccer championship, is the only one to break free of the traditional typology. Two parallel concrete stands, brutalist at times, with gravity-defying sloping roofs, are thrust into a wall of the former quarry on one side, revealing and framing the pitch dramatically, opening it to the light of the sun and stars. For Souto de Moura, who was given free rein, this was a true gesamtkunstwerk, from “inter-vening in the landscape to drawing the doorknobs,” the architect has said. “It’s a project...in which the faults are mine.”

Many of Souto de Moura’s public projects are smaller interventions. The architect has taken up requalification projects, like the Pousada Santa Maria do Bouro, in Amares, or the Portuguese Center for Photography, in Porto. Both are historical buildings flawlessly renovated, the architect’s attention to detail apparent in every inch. Similarly, Souto de Moura’s project for the Porto light rail system has a light touch, seamlessly embedded in the fabric of the city.

One of the architect’s most poetic interventions is the Portuguese Pavilion at the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale, in collaboration with the artist Angelo de Sousa. Souto de Moura covered an old warehouse facing the Grand Canal with glass inside and out, multiplying the space and making it disappear at the same time. “It’s obvious that architecture has an unseen part, that sustains it,” Souto Moura has said about the project. “Because architecture isn’t a door and a window,” and it must start from within. “Architecture is an almost unconscious process that then acquires an added value that cannot be foreseen or directed. It’s discerned. And we shouldn’t think too much about that process.”

Although it boosted the morale of his economically depressed country, the Pritzker seems to have left Souto de Moura unfazed. He recently defined himself as part of “Europe’s most marginal country,” and “the less flamboyant...among Portuguese architects...defending architecture that is almost anonymous—well done, but almost anonymous.”

The award might offer him opportunities to build abroad, but the architect is pragmatic. “I like to build in Portugal. I feel at home,” he said with a smile.

VERA SACCHETTI IS A NATIVE OF PORTUGAL AND A NEW YORK-BASED WRITER AND EDITOR.
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