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Shulman 2.0

Next to the front door of photographer Julius Shulman’s house sits a plaque stating that the property is Los Angeles Cultural Historic Monument #326. It’s a well deserved designation. The legendary home was not only the stomping grounds of one of the most famous chroniclers of the modern movement, but its indoor-outdoor design, which frames the site, was created by one...

After buying LA’s Union Station in April, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has wasted no time putting the site to use. On July 13 it kicked off the process of soliciting planning proposals for a redevelopment of the 42 acres of land it owns around the station, a project that instantly became one of the most important development zones in Southern California.

The Union Station Master Plan Industry Review, which took place at Metro Headquarters, drew continued on page 10

The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) continues to face roadblocks in creating a Cleantech Corridor and Green District, a 2,000-acre development zone on the eastern edge of downtown Los Angeles conceived as a manufacturing base for sustainable industries.

The area was first envisioned in the fall of 2008 and was heavily supported by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa as “the cornerstone” of his “vision to put Los Angeles at the forefront of the clean tech revolution.” The corridor runs from continued on page 10

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All across the United States, architects and designers are badly frustrated by a sad economy, timid clients, dwindling public funds, and bureaucratic systems that make any project into a multi-year affair. My suggestion: Stop waiting. Just do something, anything—temporary installations, neighborhood improvements, pocket parks, street furniture.

If you look around some big cities, it’s already happening. My favorite example is the “parklets” program in San Francisco, which consists of 15 mini-parks on tiny pieces of city-owned land. The parklets are part of the City Planning Department’s “Pavement to Parks” program, which looks to build parks on “wasted” parcels like rights of way and extra-wide streets. Another SF program, “parkmobiles,” consists of portable landscapes of trees, fens, and shrubs in red steel bins with adjacent street furniture that will be rolled out in the Yerba Buena Gardens. The city also hosts the “Proxy” project in Hayes Valley, a temporary retail village made of shipping containers until the real buildings get finished.

This DIY architecture and landscape movement is also unfolding elsewhere. Houston, New York, Chicago, Dallas, Portland, Memphis and other cities have experimented with “Better Block” programs, a grassroots effort of nonprofits, business owners, and neighbors to create temporary projects to encourage people to get out of their cars and enjoy their neighborhoods. Park(ing) Day now takes place in most of the major cities across the country, where parking lots are converted into parks for a one day year. And Philly has gotten in the game too, creating mini-parks and art installations in its University City area.

Local governments should be encouraging such behavior with more gusto. Why not take advantage of a hungry set of designers who could make their cities more livable? In California, while SF’s planning department has made a great start, its downtown sister LA is lagging. Granted, the city has helped create some great new parks, including the Corridors and the Vista Hermosa Park, both near downtown; non-profits and schools like Materials and Applications and SCI-Arc provide a home for installations; and some advocates are trying to install pocket parks throughout the area. But the city doesn’t have any regular program to spur inventive urban transformations.

Until this happens, I propose a new, possibly unorthodox, approach: guerilla architecture. Just as street artists have managed to legitimize their work and have changed much of the landscape of LA and other cities, architects can do the same creating what we can call “street architecture.”

The work can provide a showcase for new talent while making our cities more dynamic and approachable. There’s so much wasted space that could use an intervention to make people see it differently—not only rights of way and wide streets, but also surface parking lots, which take up more space in our cities than they ever should. Imagine these becoming usable spaces in the urban environment.

In the current climate, how much more satisfying is it for architects and designers to create something immediate and tangible instead of continuing to work on virtual concepts for competition entries and other projects that may never see the light of day?

How can architects be proactive in transforming LA and other cities? Ask a neighborhood non-profit or museum what it needs and start a Kickstarter. How can you turn a parking lot into a park? Ask an architect to work on virtual concepts for competition entries and other projects that may never see the light of day?

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BUILDING IN CONTEXT

As architect of the JELD-WEN Field renovation in Portland, Oregon, AECOM created an electric atmosphere for Major League Soccer in the heart of the city. The transformed stadium invites the public into its plazas and fans onto the pitch, connects to transportation and strengthens a vibrant downtown community.

Building in context means architecture with a view to infrastructure, ecology and local culture, to the full process of project delivery and to the perspectives of our partner disciplines.

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aecom.com/buildingincontext
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GOOGLE PLUS
After Apple unveiled its plans for a spaceship-like new headquarters by (we think) Norman Foster at a recent Cupertino city council meeting, it appears that their chief rival is looking to add to them. We hear that super-green German architect Christoph Ingenhoven will design the addition to the massive GooglePlex in Mountain View, CA. According to the San Jose Mercury News, the company has already leased another 9.4 acres from the city at a price of $30 million.

FRIENDS FOREVER
Ah, Facebook, where the living commune with the dead. It has come to our attention that the architecture critic Reyner Banham, who died in 1988, seems to have a very popular Facebook page. In fact Banham, author of world famous Architecture of Four Ecologies, has over 600 friends, who like to post on his site as if the man were still alive. “Thank you for adding me. I am a fan of your work,” said one Banham admirer. We sent “Reyner” an email—still no word back.

MACK STRIKES BACK
In the wake of Michael Kimmelman’s appointment as architecture critic at the New York Times, the AIA California Council encouraged architects to weigh in on “What Makes a Great Critic?” Mark Mack wrote, “There are no real critics anymore. There are just stars or hired guns fitting in a magazine publisher’s agenda. There are no independent thinkers. I cannot think of one good architecture critic these days.” Maybe he should friend Banham.

THE ARCHITECT’S NEWSPAPER AUGUST 17, 2011

SHULMAN S.O. continued from front page of the most famous mid-century modern architects, Raphael Soriano.

But since Shulman’s death two years ago, the 1950 house has slid into a sad state of decline. Its paint is peeling, its carpets are dark, its concrete is cracking, and its interiors have a worn look that begs for renewal. Furthermore, the home’s abundant landscaping, designed by Garret Eckbo, is starting to become an overgrown jungle that’s turning on the house itself.

LA-based Lorcan O’Herlihy Architects (LOHA) has been commissioned by the home’s owners, who wish to remain anonymous, to ride to the rescue. Firm principal Lorcan O’Herlihy has had some experience renovating modernist masterpieces; he also restored Richard Neutra’s Stoller Residence in Bel Air and Neutra’s Goldhammer House in Palos Verdes. He has been working on the Shulman project since May and is set to complete the renovation by the fall. And despite the fact that the house is carefully designed, LA’s Office of Historic Resources is allowing the architect to add some of his contemporary “voice,” as he puts it.

“It’s going to have a new life,” said Lamberto Giessinger, Historic Preservation Architect for LA’s Office of Historic Resources. “It’s not going to be a museum. We try to maintain a balance between preserving the historic fabric and responding to the needs of the owner.” Giessinger says this often comes as a surprise to owners and architects, but such flexibility is common within the bounds of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which guided the project.

The house, with its floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors, open floorplan, and lush landscaping, showcases the California lifestyle that Shulman captured over his storied career. The scenery dominates most views, and Shulman’s office is located in a separate building altogether.

But one of the elements that Soriano didn’t like was Shulman’s addition of screens, which essentially created outdoor rooms but didn’t adhere to Soriano’s idea of strict formal boundaries between inside and out. Still, for Shulman, his family, and visitors the screened areas became the dominant location for meals and socializing and proved quite successful. O’Herlihy plans to riff off these screens, adding several of his own in a lighter color that will create a contemporary take on a modernist look.

While the exterior will remain essentially the same, changes inside will include re-cladding the house’s aging Douglas fir panels with lighter woods, adding some skylights to help light penetrate darker corridors, and creating completely new kitchens and bathrooms. “Adding richness where there’s tightness,” as LOHA associate Donnie Schmidt put it. Shulman’s old office will become a guest suite, and the firm will add a series of small new ductless heating and cooling units, which should be virtually impossible to spot.

O’Herlihy describes the renovation as a “light touch,” and points to “control and improvisation” as his guiding themes. “Change is ok,” he added. “Tension between old and new can be valuable.” The firm is working with Soriano’s original drawings, found in the Cal Poly Pomona archives, and will likely collaborate with landscape architect Mia Lehrer in the near future to return the house’s terrain to its former glory.

In many ways LOHA is the perfect firm to undertake the job, since they’ve made a name creating splendid-looking modernist residences using inexpensive off-the-shelf materials. And they will need to use that expertise—at $240,000, the overall budget is tight. “That’s architecture,” said O’Herlihy. “You have parameters.”

STEVE FRANCIS JONES

Steven Francis Jones is becoming one of the restaurant kings of California. In the next six months he will launch eateries in West Covina, Rancho Cucamonga, Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Mendocino County. But the first of the bunch is MB Post, which recently opened in Manhattan Beach. The rustic project had once been the home of the Manhattan Beach Post Office. That building’s bones of old concrete walls were discovered behind more recent remodels and then exposed. Jones, who lives in Manhattan Beach, brought other pieces of the town into the space, including walls constructed of mismatched planks of reclaimed barn wood, as well as planks painted to look like volleyball posts and life guard stands. An old 1914 bicycle reinvented as a light fixture dresses up a wall partition, while the designer also installed mailbox slots, cubby holes, and various mail-related antiques. Large sliding steel and glass doors connect the dining room to the outside, and the ceiling was opened up, revealing trusses and creating more space. Hanging trough lights seem to float and concentrate lighting on food, not peoples’ faces. “I don’t know that I could do the same thing for another city that I was not so intimately part of,” said Jones of the interior.
SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS MEMORIAL
Fulfilling a vision that dates back to the 1920s, a veterans memorial commissioned by the city of San Francisco will be erected near City Hall. A sketch from the archives shows that the original concept was quite traditional (think “man on pedestal wielding sword”), but the contemporary proposal by Los Angeles architect Susan Narduli and San Francisco landscape architect Andrea Cochran, winners of a national competition, is in keeping with today’s more subdued approach to memorial design. Other finalists were Norman Lee and SWA Group; and Larry Kirkland and J. Douglas Macy. The 2,500-square-foot, $2 million memorial will be located in the courtyard that lies between two of San Francisco’s Beaux Arts icons, the War Memorial Opera House and its twin, the Veterans Building. The space is very formal, with gilded metal gates at either end and a row of sycamores along the perimeter. At the edge of the lawn facing City Hall, concrete pavers form a large circle and octagon intended to represent heaven and earth. Working with those existing shapes, Narduli and Cochran’s design will feature a round reflecting pool with an octagonal monument rising five feet above street level. The basah encased monument will be split in two, allowing visitors to walk into its center along a steel mesh walkway, suspended over the water.

“I wanted the memorial to be understood physically when you entered it,” said Narduli. The long lawn will become a forecourt, gradually sloping down to a depth of 30 inches (the maximum before a guardrail is required), and the rammed-earth retaining walls will double as seating. “The slope was our way to resolve how to create something that can stick up out of the ground, but doesn’t block the views,” said Cochran.

LYDIA LEE
Designers: Narduli Studio and Andrea Cochran Landscape Architects
Developer/Client: City of San Francisco
Location: San Francisco
Scheduled Completion: November 2013

PARKING SMART continued from front page
land uses in the city. Sometimes, that doesn’t work,” summed up Tom Rothmann, the Los Angeles city planner in charge of shepherding the proposed policy through the public process. The MPR allows modifications to the city’s existing parking requirements depending on a particular neighborhood’s needs. Seven optional parking requirement modifications have been introduced, including the option to decrease parking requirements in developments near transit districts or to increase parking in continually clogged areas like the beach.

Other innovations include parking maximums (instead of the current minimums), off-site parking within 1,500 feet, allowing a building to change its use without requiring its parking to adapt to current codes, and the possibility of commercial parking credit systems, where excess parking could be surveyed and rented out to smaller businesses to help fulfill their parking requirements. With a case file that dates back to 2007, the proposed ordinance has gone through major changes. One important modification was lowering parking standards for density bonus projects, which would prevent MPR districts from undercutting affordable housing development. The proposed ordinance has gained favor especially with those looking to build a more transit-oriented city and those working in construction and development. The creation of MPR districts relieves much of the pressure to over-provide for parking, making it easier for businesses to set up shop. In a letter to LA City Planning Commission President William Roschen, AIA/LA Executive Director Nicci Solomons supported the move, writing, “With a city as vast and as diverse as Los Angeles, parking policy cannot be regulated in a one-size fits all approach because, unfortunately, excessive or misaligned parking requirements often impair our ability to have a vibrant, sustainable and healthy city.”

MPR still has its detractors, however, primarily coming from parking-starved neighborhoods that have already seen commuters take up parking spots.

“We find this to be a dream for the growth machine and a nightmare for the neighborhoods surrounding one of these districts,” said Jack Allen, president of the Palisades Preservation Association. According to Allen, parking spillage would cause residential area homeowners to fight for parking with shoppers from nearby commercial districts. Barbara Broide, president at Westwood South of Santa Monica Boulevard Homeowners Association, agrees. She is asking for more research before proceeding. “We don’t have data and facts to back this up,” said Broide. Despite their concerns, an ever-growing demand for a more transit-friendly, walkable city carried the day. Pending a signature from the mayor, the ordinance could mean less parking in exchange for more small businesses, denser development, and even green space. Speaking in favor of the ordinance, Matt Smith, principal of Civic Enterprise Associates said, “If indeed Los Angeles stays the capital of cars, we should at least be the capital of smart management of cars.” Carren Jao
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Two new garages by Brooks+Scarpa architects are not expensive or fancy or even architectural masterpieces. They are simply good improvements on a difficult building type. And they should be considered a model to cities building future utilitarian structures.

The garages, just outside the redesigned Santa Monica Place Mall in Downtown Santa Monica, were once covered with green steel mesh facades made by none other than Frank Gehry. But the buildings had fallen on hard times and needed an aesthetic and functional upgrade.

The firm’s main design move was the placement of large steel frames on the exterior, to which they attached multi-colored and multi-textured bars of cement board. The relatively easy and cheap process provides shade and privacy, while still allowing light to filter through. It also gives the structures, which Scarpa points out can often be “neighborhood killers,” a sense of rhythm, visual variety, and vibrancy, helping them become part of the urban fabric rather than a detriment to it.

Another important move was putting retail—enlivened with fold up garage doors—on the ground floor, so as not to deaden the street level. Now there is always foot traffic in front of the garages, and their brightly colored orange glass-enclosed exterior stairs even encourage people to (gasp) walk up to their cars. Eventually the firm hopes to install bike stations at ground level as well.

Besides these two garages, the firm also collaborated on four others in the vicinity—although their work on these was minimal, mostly repainting, improving facades and installing new lighting and parking management systems. All the garages are fronted with public art, including an array of hanging steel orbs by Ball Nogues, a colorful tile mural by Anne Marie Karlsen, and several water-like perforated metal screens by Cliff Garten.

The work on all six garages and their public art cost $3 million, said Scarpa. That’s probably less than one floor of Herzog & de Meuron’s garage in Miami. Other new garages in LA have used equally uncomplicated means to create dynamic and useful spaces. John Friedman Alice Kimm Architects designed a wonderful, colorful steel mesh frontage for the LA Police Headquarters Garage in downtown Los Angeles. They’ve also put in space for ground level retail, although the city has yet to utilize this opportunity. And Moore Ruble Yudell, also in Santa Monica, created a fascinating composition on the exterior of the Santa Monica Convention Center’s parking lot using colorful channel glass. Unfortunately, that project does not have ground level retail, but it’s already become an icon for the city.

“Garages are finally considered part of the urban fabric,” said Scarpa, who noted that he wasn’t concerned with making the structures precious, just effective. And his model, he noted, can be “fabricated at a reasonable schedule,” meaning it can easily be replicated.

As Brooks+Scarpa demonstrate, the simplest solutions are often the best.
CATCH 27 continued from front page state to close its budget shortfall.

According to CRA/LA, which is by far the largest redevelopment agency in the state, the bills would necessitate a payment by the city of LA of roughly $70 million by this January and an estimated $38 million in future years in order to preserve that agency. San Francisco’s payment would measure between $24 and $27 million, that city’s agency said. Riverside’s $19.6 million pay-ment would be more than 40 percent of its redevelopment revenue according to Emilio Ramirez, Director of Development for the city.

“This is extortion sponsored by the legis-lature,” said CRA/LA spokesperson David Bloom, who said that the CRA/LA is now waiting for the city of LA to decide whether to keep the agency running. He hopes the vote will come before city council recesses in August, and said he feels good that the city will “continue with their strong support for a robust redevelopment presence in the city.” Bloom stressed that the redevelopment bills are a violation of Prop 22, a ballot measure passed last year that prevents the state from raiding local redevelopment funds. The California Redevelopment Association and the League of California Cities on July 18 filed a lawsuit in the California Supreme Court challenging the measure’s constitutionality.

Several cities, predicted Redevelopment Association Executive Director John Shirey, will not be able to pay their share of the $1.7 billion, and their redevelopment agencies will “die.” Gabriel Metcalf, Executive Director of San Francisco Planning and Urban Research (SPUR), heard that nine of the ten largest redevelopment agencies would be spared by their cities, with the exception of San Jose.

CRA/LA was able to get approval for what Bloom considers almost a year’s-worth of projects before the passage of the measures. But as CRA/LA waits for a decision on its future, about 20 of its upcoming projects—like improvements to the Nate Holden Performing Arts Center in Mid-City, the Downtown Streetcar, and affordable housing projects throughout the city—are now on hold. San Francisco CRA director Fred Blackwell said in a videotaped statement that the city could lose “hundreds of affordable housing projects that are in the pipeline”: facade improvements along Sixth Street, South of Market, and Third Street in Bayview; Mid-Market Redevelopment projects; and the revitalization of the Schlage Locks site in Visitacion Valley.

SPUR’s Metcalf, while supportive of redevelopment, wants more CRA reform than generic “accountability and transparen-cy” promises. “It’s a very expensive pro-gram with some incredible success stories but with a huge number of unsuccessful stories,” he said. He suggested changes to redevelopment law that would make it easier to enact, more fairly distributed, and less prone to “overuse.”

Silver Lake Riding High

The search for a new neighborhood symbol in Silver Lake is over. In July, Silver Lake residents selected “Bloomrs” by LA firm All That Is Solid as the winner of the Envisioning Silver Lake competition. The contest, organized by LA City Council President Eric Garcetti, the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council, and Silver Lake community groups, called for designs for a plaza and bicycle-friendly community patio. Bike racks also hide underneath one of the upturned ends.

“We wanted to avoid inserting another billboard into the landscape. We realized that a community-populated lush green site in such a prominent location is in itself the best possible advertisement for the pedestrian and bicycle-friendly lifestyle that Silver Lake embodies,” said Danielle Wagner, one of four partners at All That Is Solid. The firm’s members all earned their Masters in Architecture at UCLA, where they formed their partnership.

The competition received 59 entries in all. A jury of locals and designers trimmed those down to their top five, which were present-ed in a community meeting. The designers were each given five minutes to present their concepts, after which community members were asked to rank every design. Other finalists included Bau 10, Meter, BplusU, and Patrick Tighe Architecture.

With the winner announced, the next step is to actually build. Given a $100,000 budget (from the $1.5 million set aside from the state’s Metro Call for Projects program), the winning firm, engineers, and LA Street Services will need to work out how the design will be executed, said Ryan Carpio of Garcetti’s office. As of press time, the parties have yet to meet and discuss feasibility and implementa-tion, but Carpio said that the city will likely break ground in this winter or early spring of 2012.

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COURTESY ALL THAT IS SOLID

The design for “Bloomrs” calls for a sagittal-shaped lattice structure made of Cor-ten that doubles the possible green space of the triangular median where Sunset meets Santa Monica. The two upturned ends serve as shade canopies while the lowest point of the hyperboloid can become a community patio. Bike racks also hide underneath one of the upturned ends.

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Since the days of the Case Study Houses and well before, architects have been trying to solve the formula for making elegant, modern homes affordable. Many of today’s top architects have tried, but the results, while definitely attractive and livable, are rarely at the regular Joe’s income level.

One of the latest to try is a company called Proto Homes, established in 2007 and led by Frank Vafaee, a veteran of the luxury homebuilding industry. “You can always build a palace in Brentwood,” noted Vafaee, who said he saw a hole in the market for new modern homes and decided to pursue it. “Developers love to say Modernism is the kiss of death,” said Vafaee, but he clearly didn’t believe them.

While architects espouse their custom designs and signature touches, the construction-savvy Vafaee realized that these elements were the enemies of low cost. Proto Homes uses standardization and factory-built pre-fabricated elements combined with interior flexibility to keep costs down but maintain a lofty and modern feel. The company, whose partners include two architects and an engineer, also designs and builds its projects, keeping costs, and uncertainty, down.

The company recently completed its first home in Baldwin Village, a nice but certainly not Brentwood-like area of LA. The home uses a hybrid construction method combining prefabricated steel roof and wall panels with a timber frame that can go up in one week. The exterior materials and sizes are pre-determined, but buyers can choose from selected variations of corrugated steel and PVC panel. “Things can change, but we need to keep the bones the same,” explained Vafaee.

The envelope is highly efficient, with thick walls insulated with foam or fiberglass and double pane glass and a high-efficiency furnace. The roof tilts up dramatically, helping with drainage and opening the interior up to light and space. Because all mechanical systems are located in a central core (all can be controlled on an iPad), the roof is clear of bulk and can allow more light penetration.

Inside, the interior is lofty, with a second floor mezzanine and open-plan living spaces that can be divided up into a variety of configurations. Everything is flexible, with a series of modules arranged around the central core (which the company calls the “Proto Core”). Accordion doors close off bedrooms, and sliding doors move along walls. The kitchen’s modular cabinets whose finishes can also be switched out.

Vafaee says that Modernism has been relegated to “trophy” residences and that he wants to bring it back to its roots of inexpensive materials and true innovation, “not gimmickry.” In addition to Proto Homes, a handful of other companies, like Blu Homes, Piece Homes, and Mia Modular are all trying to crack this slowly emerging market, but none have yet captured the popular imagination (and others have gone out of business). Perhaps Vafaee’s model, which aims to combine prefab techniques with custom comfort, has found a formula for success.

STATE OF THE UNION continued from front page

architects, engineers and planners from firms like Genesee, Grimshaw; Foster and Partners, Perkins + Will, ZGF, Johnson Fain, Rios Clementi Hale, Dale Genik, Buro Happold, Arup, Barton Myers, and others.

The agency shared plans to develop up to six million square feet on the site, which contains three subway lines, Amtrak, and Metrolink stations and bus lines. The station should also see Metro’s Regional Connector and California High Speed Rail.

Specific requests for transit-oriented development and a mix of uses, including commercial, retail, entertainment, housing, and a new high-speed rail terminal, will be dictated to some extent by the existing Alameda District Specific Plan. The agency’s goals, according to a document it posted on its site, include accommodating transit needs, creating an "iconic place of extraordinary design," improving connectivity to the city, and maximizing the value of Metro’s investment.

The agency issued a Request for Information and Qualifications (RFIQ) for a site planner on July 22, and will select a short list by October 27. It will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) on October 31, and select a winner by March or April 2012.

Planning teams, pointed out Martha Welborne, Executive Director of Countywide Planning at Metro, should be multi-disciplinary, including architects, planners, and engineers. In addition to the typical nuts-and-bolts, the RFP asks for an assessment of the area’s commercial viability, for ideas to connect Union Station to its surroundings, and for a plan for public engagement.

Metro is also requiring short listed teams to produce a “Vision Plan” for the area, which will be an “unconstrained” vision of Union Station consisting of visual perspectives and site plans that will be presented publicly. The goal, said Calvin Hollis, Executive Officer of Countywide Planning & Development at Metro, is to “create some excitement about the property.”

The Vision Plans will hold no weight in the selection of a winning team. Welborne didn’t yet know if a stipend would be made available for such work. “We don’t have the time to do a full-blown design competition,” said Welborne, who acknowledged that limiting expectations about the plans would be tricky.

Not every planner and architect in the room liked the vision plan proposal. “It’s disingenuous to the firms to say you’re going to do all this work and present it to the public, but nothing will come of it,” said one architect.

Roland Genick, Chief Architect for Rail and Transit Systems at Parsons, countered, “I like the idea of showing a pathway to the development rather than a detailed architectural proposal.”

Once a master planner is chosen, Metro plans to lease parcels on the site to developers. A final master plan for the project is planned for August 2013.

Early conceptualization of the La Kretz Innovation Campus.

Approved legislation to potentially dissolve the state’s CRAs, thus binding CRA/LA and DWP to fulfill its obligations.

LA based architecture firm John Friedman Alice Kimm Architects (JFAK) have been awarded the contract to master plan the property, located at the corner of Hewitt and Fifth streets in Downtown. No designs for the project have been finalized, but it will occupy portions of an existing one-floor masonry building. Alice Kimm, principal at JFAK, said the firm hopes to break ground in about a year and begin construction a year after that. A 3,300-square-foot temporary space just down the street from the planned site is already up and running.

The planned La Kretz Innovation Campus will mostly be occupied by Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI), a non-profit launched by CRA/LA and the DWP to help green businesses get their start. It will include 27,500 square feet of administrative spaces, office areas, and conference rooms for 20 to 25 companies, shared Kimm. The LADWP Demand Response Demonstration Laboratory (DRDL) will occupy about 10,000-square feet, and will include workspaces and demonstration areas for clean technology products and electric vehicle prototypes. The rest of the facility will be leased to Cleantech companies or used by LADWP.

The site also includes plans for a $2.5 million half-acre Arts District Park on the corner of Hewitt and Fifth streets. The park, still being developed, would have a plaza area, gathering spaces, shading, a water plaza, children’s play areas and possibly an urban farm component.
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AGENCIES ARE ACTIVELY COLLABORATING WITH DEVELOPERS. SAM LUBELL INVESTIGATES TRANSIT-ORIENTED DESIGN.

Yes, we admit it: the car is still king in California. But from LA to San Francisco an impressive list of new transit projects are beginning to change this. LA, known as the archetypal freeway city, has built or is planning more than ten new rail lines and extensions—largely spurred by 2008 ballot measure R, a sales tax hike providing billions to transit projects. In the Bay Area, recently-completed initiatives like San Francisco’s Third Street Light Rail and the San Francisco Airport extension, as well as future extensions into Silicon Valley and the East Bay, are helping connect a sprawling collection of cities. Meanwhile, California has become a test ground for High Speed Rail, with the stage set for lines running the entire length of the state in coming years.

Thanks to changes in both attitude and development patterns, the growth in transit is bringing with it a lengthy list of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs), projects catering to a combination of mass transit, denser neighborhoods, and mixed-use and pedestrian scale development. And the leaders in TOD are none other than local transit agencies themselves, taking matters into their own hands by making huge investments, often in coordination with the field’s other players: developers, non-profits, and redevelopment agencies. In addition to several transit authorities along the path of California’s high speed rail, the leading agencies are LA County Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). “The public sector creates infrastructure, the private sector creates development. That creates harmony,” sums up Ronald Altoon, a partner at architecture firm Altoon + Porter and incoming Executive Director at the Urban Land Institute’s LA Chapter.

TOD projects have proven successful in increasing ridership for Metro and BART, containing sprawl, and earning millions of dollars in income for the agencies. Some have won awards for architecture and urban design. But of course, as with any public endeavor, they’ve got their issues. Many complain that their uses are too limited and that their connections to their communities are weak. Others complain that the focus is on the wrong D-word: Development, not Design. As developers, not architects, become TOD point people, originality and innovation often takes a back seat to the profit and practical concerns of developers and bureaucrats. Given this, combined with the high cost of TOD development and the lower incomes in many transit-oriented districts, it’s impressive when thoughtful designs emerge.

AGENCIES ON BOARD
Metro’s Joint Development TOD program, founded about five years ago, has completed eight projects and is working on close to 30 more. Most are mixed use projects dominated by multi-family residential buildings either near transit or containing their own transit stations (about a quarter of the units are affordable), Roger Moliere, Metro’s Chief of Real Property and Economic Development, calls Metro’s TOD program the biggest of any transit agency in the country. In the first five years of its existence it has brought in about $14 to $16 million a year for the agency, said Moliere. “People want to live in cities,” said Moliere, who insists that the best way to add density in cities is with mixed-use development near transit. “I would not want to be a single family homebuilder right now.”

Perhaps the most recognized of the completed projects is Hollywood and Vine, a mixed-use complex that contains the W Hotel as well as condos by KHS architects with elements by Daly Genik and Sussman Prejza and a glassy subway entrance by Rios Clementi Hale. Another is Wilshire/Vermont, by Arquitectonica, a mixed-use building lined with retail on its ground floor with a giant mural by artist April Greiman. Other stand-outs include Michael Maltzan’s One Santa Fe, a sinuous project near SCI-Arc and the Metro Red Line that will include over 400 apartments and over 750,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space, as well as Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists’ Del Mar station on the Gold Line, a New Urbanist-style mixed-use compilation of buildings around a central plaza.

The projects are generally located on land that Metro already owns, often adjacent to existing right of ways or on Metro surface parking lots, which are being converted into parking structures. Projects generally wait until rail lines are completed to begin, and Metro prefers leasing land to selling it, so it can collaborate closely on the types of buildings planned, maintain the character of development over the long haul, and ensure a steady stream of funds.

BART, meanwhile, is involved with 19 TOD projects at its stations, representing over $2.7 billion in private investment. Five have been completed and 13 are either approved or in negotiation. The agency adopted its TOD policy in 2005, hoping to increase ridership and make money. Other benefits, according to BART, include connecting with communities, creating tax revenues for cities, and increasing mixed-use and infill development instead of single-use sprawl.

According to Jeff Ordway, Manager of Real Estate and
AGENCIES ARE ACTIVELY COLLABORATING WITH DEVELOPERS. SAM LUBELL INVESTIGATES TRANSIT-ORIENTED DESIGN.
Property Development at BART, TOD’s were part of the agency’s original mandate in the 1960s, but that idea fell apart when land use patterns couldn’t keep up. Starting with a modest project in Castro Valley in the late ‘90s, the agency finally got its program underway.

As opposed to Metro’s joint development, BART has no pre-determined model. “Each community is unique,” said Ordway, who points to projects that are direct leases to developers, direct sales, land swaps with jurisdictions, and joint-powers authorities for land that is split between the county and the agency.

One of the more complicated land deals came about when BART and the city of Berkeley swapped air and land rights to clear the way for Leddy Maytum Stacy’s Ed Roberts Campus, a dynamic facility for non-profits that includes spiraling internal ramps, large skylights, and a memorable glass facade. Ed Roberts got the ground, BART got the air (and subsequent station and parking areas) and the development was on its way.

Ordway also notes that the agency tries to promote transit “villages,” such as the MacArthur Transit Village, a mixed-use collection of buildings located at the MacArthur stop of the Pittsburgh/Bay Point line. “We’re trying to create something that’s sustainable, not just a building,” he said, noting that the agency will try to phase in projects with local cities and landowners, which can be a financing and zoning headache. But to Ordway, “It’s a superior product.”

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Pros and Cons

While there's no arguing with agencies’ success at creating new TODs and their subsequent spikes in ridership and profits, some questions have arisen, like how these developments fit into their communities and whether their designs are up to par.

“TODs are not focusing enough on putting employment directly on top of transit stations,” said Egon Terplan, Regional Planning Director for San Francisco Planning and Urban Research (SPUR), who argues that the focus on residential and retail should spread to office buildings and other employment centers. A good example, he notes, is San Francisco’s Transbay Terminal’s 1200 foot office tower. “You want offices because that’s where transit riders are going to,” he said.

“Where are the real jobs? Not just the retail jobs but the jobs that can employ the people that live in the area?” agreed Will Wright, AIA/LA Director of Government and Public Affairs. AIA/LA is trying to promote passage of the Community Plan Implementation Overview (CPIO), a local ordinance that would force new developments like TODs to “start to thinking about their integration into the community” by coordinating more closely with city planning. Wright is critical of Metro’s existing TODs, noting “almost every one has been compromised extensively because Metro wasn’t looking at the bigger picture.” He points to Wilshire/Vermont and Wilshire/Beverly on the Red Line, both with gas stations on opposite corners, which he notes are not exactly pedestrian or mass transit friendly establishments.

Meanwhile unlike the fairly consistent praise thrown at high-profile, mega-budget high speed rail hubs, local TODs’ architectural quality, according to some, is improving but still not where it needs to be. ULI’s Altoon, who praised Metro’s Moliere for turning around that agency’s TOD efforts, says that TODs have taken huge steps from their early days when designs were very “utilitarian.” But he added that design still suffers, often as a result of the high cost of developing TODs, due to many infrastructure-related burdens, lower income neighborhoods, and density. He recommends more interaction with the community for feedback as well as new financing methods to provide more design funding, like lowering rents, increasing entitlements, providing more tax incentives, or setting up business improvement districts.

Metro has shown an ability to add more uses than residential and retail with upcoming projects like A.C. Martin’s NOHO Art Wave in North Hollywood, which combines a city’s worth of uses (the project is still up in the air, however), and Mariachi Plaza in East LA, which
The Architect’s Newspaper

**ED ROBERTS CAMPUS**
ARCHITECT: LEDDY MATUM STACY
DEVELOPER: ERC PARTNERS
LINE: RICHMOND LINE
SIZE: 149,000 SQUARE FEET
COMPLETION: 2011

**MACARTHUR TRANSIT VILLAGE**
ARCHITECT: MVE & PARTNERS AND VAN METER WILLIAMS POLLACK
DEVELOPER: BRIDGE HOUSING
LINE: BART PITTSBURG/BAY POINT
SIZE: 524 FOR-SALE UNITS; 42,500 SQUARE FEET RETAIL; 5,000 SQUARE FEET CHILDCARE
COMPLETION: 2015

**PROS AND CONS**
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Metro has shown an ability to add more uses than residential and retail with upcoming projects like A.C. Martin’s NOHO Art Wave in North Hollywood, which combines a city’s worth of uses (the project is still up in the air, however), and Mariachi Plaza in East LA, which
is anticipated to include not only apartments and retail but also community and office space.

Meanwhile the agency has design standards for each of its projects, said Moliere, and chooses architects through an RFQ/RFP process and a panel of four or five experts, one of those being an architect/planner. The results “are not cookie cutter by any means. We make sure they work in the context of the neighborhood,” said Moliere. But is design dominant? When asked for the names of the architects on their TOD projects the agency replied, “Architects are a subcontractor to the developer and we do not have that information.” One would hope these names would be at Metro’s fingertips if they had control over their developers’ designs. After the UL’s recent TOD summit in Hollywood, LA community activist Stephen Box complained that TODs, often built at a formidable scale, ignore the human experience. “The unique and personal perspective of the individual must never be lost in the awesomeness and hugeness of TOD. Unfortunately, losing that human touch is the norm, not the exception.”

When asked where design fell in the mix at BART, Ordway admitted it wasn’t the top priority on the list. “We look at capability, experience, concept. An understanding of what the local jurisdiction is doing.” But he said that both design and practicalities have to be right. “It’s got to work physically. It has to relate to the street. It has to relate to the transit function. But it also has to work financially, so it’s a mixture.” Sometimes, like in Pleasant Hill, BART invited the community in for a charrette.

Many of BART’s TODs are being designed by the same firm, McLaren Vasquez Emnsie & Partners, which believes a lack of architectural variety. And some in the Bay Area have criticized the agency’s TODs for not being on the cutting edge design-wise. Still the agency has pulled off some triumphs, like Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, which designed by the same firm, McLaren Vasquez Emnsie & Partners, which designed the Transbay Center in San Francisco.

Meanwhile the Transbay Redevelopment Plan will facilitate the development of nearly 2,600 residential units, 3 million square feet of new office and commercial space, and 100,000 square feet of retail.
How smart is your kitchen?

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While architects and designers are focusing on the grand gestures—where to place a door, a stair, or a walk-in shower—the individual parts of those elements can be overlooked due to tight budgets or timeframes. But hardware components like handrails and doorknobs are crucial not only to a design’s safety and function but also to its longevity. In the world of component hardware, manufacturers are upping their customizable options to cater to a range of indoor and outdoor needs, from high-traffic public spaces to high-design residences. And in the bath, often-neglected details like drains, grab bars, and even speaker covers are getting a modern makeover. From the front door to the kitchen cabinet, quality hardware always adds a luxury finish, while high-caliber components make a solid impression from the very first touch.

JENNIFER K. GORSCHE
Cambridge Architectural offers full design, engineering, and collaboration services on a wide range of interior and exterior architectural mesh systems including stair railings and enclosures. The company recently introduced several new open-weave stainless steel mesh styles while continuing to offer classic patterns and attachment systems for a range of projects.

www.cambridgearchitectural.com

DecorCable’s X-Tend2 line is a timesaving solution for interior and exterior balustrade applications. Mesh panels available up to 78 inches long and in heights of 28, 33, and 37½ inches are pre-installed on stainless steel frames. These attach to the company’s universal mounting system, available for post, floor, wall, or handrail applications. Diagonal panels are available in a range of sizes.

www.decorcable.com

Silhouette pre-engineered railings integrate a range of options and materials usually only available for custom installations. Drawing from Form+Surfaces material palette, the expanding line includes interior and exterior systems. Stainless rails can be specified with an embedded continuous LED light strip powered by low-voltage DC current. The lens assembly is weather resistant and can be angled depending on the desired effect.

www.forms-surfaces.com

Though not for use as a hand railing, Gera’s Light System 8 is a light rail suitable for horizontal or vertical use. The aluminum luminaire has a variable width and hides technical components, emphasizing the adjustable screen, which is available in metal, translucent glass, or custom decorative options.

gera.publick.net

Stair design is moving up, and expanding out.
Until now there was no easy way to lug a bike up stairs. Korean company Neomerce has introduced a new solution, an anti-skid public bike ramp that allows bicyclists to safely roll their bike alongside a stair rail. Rounded edges prevent users from injury, while a narrow, extruded aluminum design leaves as much room as possible for pedestrians.

bike-pullway.com/en

Architectural rope manufacturer Brugg has created a line of outdoor accessories designed to fit with its range of high-grade steel railing systems via vertically adjustable rods. The modular system includes shelves, weatherproof lighting, bird baths and bowls, and privacy screens. Attachment systems for steel handrails and glass railings are available.

www.brugglifting.com

Santa&Cole’s line of outdoor urban elements includes the Línea handrail, a simple stainless steel line that serves the dual purpose of pedestrian barrier and resting place. Suitable for any public space where a subtle barrier is required without the visual obstruction of a full fence.

www.santacole.com

Contemporary street furniture manufacturer Onn’s Sloper handrail is designed to complement the other elements of the angular Sloper line, including a lighting beacon, bollard, and fencing. Available in two heights, the cast aluminum post can be fitted with two or three stainless steel rails and an optional glass panel.

www.onnoutside.com

Four-year-old company Ee stairs has developed a range of bespoke balustrade and stair designs for commercial and residential applications. Beginning with a patented 1m² staircase that requires only one square meter of space, designers moved on to develop a range of designs including the FlatRhythm balustrade (pictured) with a horizontal infill of steel tubes or wire and (on page 23) the Transparency 1-06 balustrade.

www.eestairs.com/en
Clean-lined drains and covers are better than invisible.

1 ADVANTIK VARIO SHOWER DRAIN
VIEGA

The Vario drain’s customizable length allows it to integrate seamlessly with the walls of enclosed shower areas. Suitable for new construction or renovation, the 47-inch basic channel can cut as short as 12 inches in length. Its recessed design is less than one inch wide, allowing for a nearly uninterrupted floor surface.

www.viega.com

2 ZENTRIX SHOWER DRAIN
DALLMER

Partnering with the CeraNiveau drainage system from Dallmer, the rectangular Zentrix drain can drain more than 12 gallons of water per minute. Designed to eliminate the risk of flooding in level-access shower designs, a polymer concrete collar secures the drain in the screed while providing a solid bond for waterproofing beneath bath tiles.

www.dallmer.de/en

3 STARCK SPEAKER MODULE
AXOR

The basis for Philippe Starck’s Axor shower collection is the square—all elements in the line are derived from a 5-by-5-inch module. The high-performance watertight speaker module follows the formula with a 40-watt speaker encased in a sleek aluminum membrane with a rubber seal. Available in chrome or aluminum the unit is rated for indoor use only.

www.hansgrohe-usa.com

4 CERAMIC SHOWER DRAIN
ROYAL MOSA

Netherlands-based tile producer Mosa recently released a ceramic drain that eliminates any visible stainless steel. Available in twelve finishes, the 6-by-36-inch drain is installed in combination with an Easy Drain shower channel leaving a barely visible drainage opening, less than half a centimeter thick, around its perimeter.

www.mosa.nl/us

5 SHOWER GRID DRAINS
WATERMARK DESIGNS

Brooklyn-based Watermark Designs recently launched a new collection of six shower grid drains designed to complement contemporary or traditional baths. Drains are held in place with rare earth magnets, creating a clean finish without visible fasteners. The 5-by-5-inch grids are available in 37 finishes including polished chrome, antique brass, and charcoal.

www.watermark-designs.com

6 EMPIRE DRAIN PLUG
WATERWORKS

A modern adaptation of late 19th-century styles, Waterworks’ Empire collection includes a chain and plug waste drain. The drain includes a removable grate for cleaning and servicing. The hardware is designed to complement the company’s Empire tub and is available in nickel (pictured), matte nickel, and chrome.

www.waterworks.com
As an industry leading manufacturer of plumbing and drainage products, we have developed a line of green roof and cool roof drains.

Our line of engineered roof drains includes professional grade Area, Siphonic, and Traditional roof drains for all types of conditions and aesthetics.
Artist and designer Ted Boerner has collaborated with Rocky Mountain Hardware to create five hardware collections. Cast in recycled, art-grade bronze, the collections include 27 pieces of hardware and cabinet pulls available in nine standard finishes. Pictured is the 121⁄16-inch Shift grip shown in white bronze and brushed patina.

www.rockymountainhardware.com

German manufacturer Jado’s new Flux door handle has a seamless form made from a single piece of metal sculpted downward and affixed to a softly rounded square doorplate. Coupled with a durable chrome finish, the shape is made to resist dirt accumulation and complement a range of door styles.

www.jado-hardware.com

Rejuvenation has added new exterior door hardware to its Mid-Century Modern Collection. Cast in iconic shapes from the 1950s and 60s, the collection includes square, star, and round (pictured) knobs designed to fit the Schlage Orb door set. Sets are made with solid brass and are available in three finishes: brushed chrome, polished chrome, and lacquered brass. Matching doorbell buttons are available.

www.rejuvenation.com

Compatible with most locks and latches, the C Class door handle is a patented design with a concealed tie-bolt and self-adjusting spindles. Approximate dimensions are 3 1⁄2 inches by 1 inch with a 2-inch depth. Constructed with solid brass and stainless steel components and three standard finishes, the knob is available in special finishes on request.

www.architrend.com.au

Inspired by Asian architectural details, Top Knobs new Sanctuary collection of knobs and pulls emphasizes delicate details wrought so that they do not compromise durability. The full line is available in eight finishes including brushed satin nickel, flat black, German bronze, oil rubbed bronze, pewter antique, polished chrome (pictured), polished nickel, and Tuscan bronze.

www.topknobs.com

Designed in partnership with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Reveal’s new Taliesin collection includes three series: Series 630 and 631 can be mixed and are available in 4 1⁄4- or 7 1⁄4-inch round rectangular pulls finished in stainless steel and beech, walnut, oil rubbed bronze, or as solid stainless pieces; Series 632 handles (pictured) have a solid wood and metal form and are available in three sizes.

www.reveal-designs.com
The Architect’s Newspaper introduces a new, local online resource guide for the design community, allowing users to search their city for the products and services they need.

Contact Lynn for information
Email: lynnb@archpaper.com
Phone: 212.966.0630

WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM
Noguchi: California Legacy

Noguchi California Legacy features three bodies of work that capture the connection Los Angeles-born sculptor Isamu Noguchi had with the California landscape. California Scenarico: The Courage of the Imagination celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Segestrom commission at the South Coast Plaza sculpture garden; a gallery is illuminated by Noguchi’s famed Akari lights; A New Biennial in Venice Biennale is What Is Sculpture?; shown above; and for Noguchi at Gemini G.E.L., his sculpture for atelier Gemini G.E.L. Los Angeles in 1982 are reproduced as flattened steel plates, described by Noguchi as “short poems pertaining to California where I was born, and to the world I have known.”

Endless Possibilities

I was born, and to the world I have known.”

Laguna Art Museum

NOGUCHI: CALIFORNIA LEGACY

Through October 2

Laguna Art Museum

601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Santa Monica Library

601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Santa Monica

www.smpol.org

Joint Lecture: Merrill Elam

AIA East Bay Chapter

1405 Clay Oak, Oakland, CA

www.aiab.org

SYMPOSIUM

Sympathetic Seeing: Esther McCoy and the Heart of American Modernist Architecture and Design

6:00 p.m.

MAX Center

835 North Kings Rd.

West Hollywood, CA

www.maxcenter.org

WEDNESDAY 28

LECTURE

Jesse Reiser

Presentations and Receptions

7:00 p.m.

Southern California Institute of Architecture

960 E 3rd St., Los Angeles

www.sciarc.edu

THURSDAY 15

LECTURES

The Bay Area’s Modern Landscape Legacy

1:00 p.m.

654 Mission St., San Francisco

www.spur.org

Graduate Studies Lecture Series: Brenda Laurel

7:00 p.m.

California College of the Arts

1111 Eighth St., San Francisco

www.cca.edu

SATURDAY 17

LECTURE

Sah/HCC Film & Talk: William Krisel, Architect

(dir. Jake Gorst, 2010) 85 min.

1:00 p.m.

Santa Monica Library

601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Santa Monica

www.smpol.org

WEDNESDAY 21

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Philip Beesley: Diffusive Architecture

7:00 p.m.

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Joint Lecture: Merrill Elam

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www.aiab.org

SYMPOSIUM

Forward Motion: Advancing Mobility in California & Quebec

11:30 a.m.

Art Center College of Design

1700 Lida St., Pasadena, CA

www.artcenter.org

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www.spur.org

Graduate Studies Lecture Series: Brenda Laurel

7:00 p.m.

California College of the Arts

1111 Eighth St., San Francisco

www.cca.edu

SATURDAY 17

LECTURE

Sah/HCC Film & Talk: William Krisel, Architect

(dir. Jake Gorst, 2010) 85 min.

1:00 p.m.

Santa Monica Library

601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Santa Monica

www.smpol.org

WEDNESDAY 21

LECTURES

Philip Beesley: Diffusive Architecture

7:00 p.m.

Southern California Institute of Architecture

960 E 3rd St., Los Angeles

www.sciarc.edu

Joint Lecture: Merrill Elam

AIA East Bay Chapter

1405 Clay Oak, Oakland, CA

www.aiab.org

SYMPOSIUM

Forward Motion: Advancing Mobility in California & Quebec

11:30 a.m.

Art Center College of Design

1700 Lida St., Pasadena, CA

www.artcenter.org

TUESDAY 27

EXHIBITION OPENING

Sympathetic Seeing: Esther McCoy and the Heart of American Modernist Architecture and Design

6:00 p.m.

MAX Center

835 North Kings Rd.

West Hollywood, CA

www.maxcenter.org

WEDNESDAY 28

LECTURE

Jesse Reiser

Presentations and Receptions

7:00 p.m.

Southern California Institute of Architecture

960 E 3rd St., Los Angeles

www.sciarc.edu

THURSDAY 15

LECTURES

The Bay Area’s Modern Landscape Legacy

1:00 p.m.

654 Mission St., San Francisco

www.spur.org

Graduate Studies Lecture Series: Brenda Laurel

7:00 p.m.

California College of the Arts

1111 Eighth St., San Francisco

www.cca.edu

SATURDAY 17

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The ELEMENTS are SIMPLE … the POSSIBILITIES are ENDLESS!
Automobile is something different. Minimum: Le Corbusier and the make anyone proud. But Voiture that have arrived in the last decade. or so books devoted to Le Corbusier as to defy understanding. That Everyone has an opinion about LA, offering ambitious overviews. Davis, and Charles Jencks from McWilliams, Reyner Banham, Mike Like the cosmos, Los Angeles seems so infinite and contradictory as to defy understanding. That hasn’t stopped such writers as Cary McWilliams, Reyner Banham, Mike Davis, and Charles Jencks from offering ambitious overviews. Everyone has an opinion about LA, sometimes memorable but usually negative. Orson Welles wrote it off as “a loose and sprawling confederation of shopping centers...with a downtown as metropolitan as Des Moines or Schenectady.” In Cites and People Mark Girouard termed it, “a failed Jerusalem, a low-density Babylon.” Michael Maltzan has wisely framed his analysis as a symposium, conversing with ten individuals who share his concerns about the state of the metropolis and its future. All came from somewhere else, and this gives them a critical perspective and a stubborn optimism about the potential of this urban agglomeration. Photographer Iwan Baan complements their insights with a quirky collection of images that range from a trailer park in East LA to traffic stalled on the 405. Maltzan has built SROs on Skid Row, mansions in Beverly Hills, and a park in Playa Vista, so he has first-hand experience of LA’s diversity. He grew up back east in the Long Island suburb of Levittown and remembers, “I was drawn to LA because it seemed real.” Twenty years on, he can still muster enthusiasm for his adopted home. “As inhabitants of a city that is constantly confronting endless change, we possess an inherent creativity and ability to surprise the world with our urban inventiveness,” he writes. “LA is now at a pivotal moment when its new identity is being determined” Those themes recur throughout these conversations. There’s consensus that LA is a great laboratory for urban investigation, especially of infrastructure, for in-between spaces, and communities that mutate with each new wave of immigration. There are also disagreements. James Fiannigan, a business correspondent, calls LA the new Ellis Island, a portal to opportunity. Edward Soja, a UCLA professor of urban studies, deplores the extremes of wealth, but sees the heterogeneity as an opportunity for grass roots action. He cites the court victory of the Bus Riders’ Alliance over the MTA, which diverted billions of dollars into improving bus service for the city’s poorest inhabitants. Sarah Whiting, an architectural professor at Rice, compares LA to Houston in its lack of a comprehensive plan. “People think the best idea in urbanism is a neighborhood,” she remarks. “I think large-scale juxtapositions are far more interesting and applicable to contemporary cities.” No More Play is full of provocative insights, and it tries to spur fresh thinking without offering easy answers. We all construct personal maps of the cities we live and work in, focusing on the places we know and often losing sight of the larger whole. Carey McWilliams subtilted his study of Southern California, “An Island on the Land”—it’s easy to relapse into insularity. This symposium offers a corrective. As Gingeruy Ma, Dean of the USC School of Architecture observes, “Architects today realize that if they are not part of the urban voice, then...our practice will never sustain itself.” Michael Webb is a frequent contributor to Am.

**LA STORY**

No More Play: Conversations on Urban Speculation in Los Angeles and Beyond

Michael Maltzan
Edited by Jessica Varner
USC/Hatje Cantz, $50.00

Like the cosmos, Los Angeles seems so infinite and contradictory as to defy understanding. That hasn’t stopped such writers as Cary McWilliams, Reyner Banham, Mike Davis, and Charles Jencks from offering ambitious overviews. Everyone has an opinion about LA, sometimes memorable but usually negative. Orson Welles wrote it off as “a loose and sprawling confederation of shopping centers...with a downtown as metropolitan as Des Moines or Schenectady.” In Cites and People Mark Girouard termed it, “a failed Jerusalem, a low-density Babylon.” Michael Maltzan has wisely framed his analysis as a symposium, conversing with ten individuals who share his concerns about the state of the metropolis and its future. All came from somewhere else, and this gives them a critical perspective and a stubborn optimism about the potential of this urban agglomeration. Photographer Iwan Baan complements their insights with a quirky collection of images that range from a trailer park in East LA to traffic stalled on the 405. Maltzan has built SROs on Skid Row, mansions in Beverly Hills, and a park in Playa Vista, so he has first-hand experience of LA’s diversity. He grew up back east in the Long Island suburb of Levittown and remembers, “I was drawn to LA because it seemed real.” Twenty years on, he can still muster enthusiasm for his adopted home. “As inhabitants of a city that is constantly confronting endless change, we possess an inherent creativity and ability to surprise the world with our urban inventiveness,” he writes. “LA is now at a pivotal moment when its new identity is being determined” Those themes recur throughout these conversations. There’s consensus that LA is a great laboratory for urban investigation, especially of infrastructure, for in-between spaces, and communities that mutate with each new wave of immigration. There are also disagreements. James Fiannigan, a business correspondent, calls LA the new Ellis Island, a portal to opportunity. Edward Soja, a UCLA professor of urban studies, deplores the extremes of wealth, but sees the heterogeneity as an opportunity for grass roots action. He cites the court victory of the Bus Riders’ Alliance over the MTA, which diverted billions of dollars into improving bus service for the city’s poorest inhabitants. Sarah Whiting, an architectural professor at Rice, compares LA to Houston in its lack of a comprehensive plan. “People think the best idea in urbanism is a neighborhood,” she remarks. “I think large-scale juxtapositions are far more interesting and applicable to contemporary cities.” No More Play is full of provocative insights, and it tries to spur fresh thinking without offering easy answers. We all construct personal maps of the cities we live and work in, focusing on the places we know and often losing sight of the larger whole. Carey McWilliams subtilted his study of Southern California, “An Island on the Land”—it’s easy to relapse into insularity. This symposium offers a corrective. As Gingeruy Ma, Dean of the USC School of Architecture observes, “Architects today realize that if they are not part of the urban voice, then...our practice will never sustain itself.” Michael Webb is a frequent contributor to Am.

**CORB’S CAR**

Voiture Minimum: Le Corbusier and the Automobile

Antonio Amado
The MIT Press, $49.95

To be honest, my budget hasn’t included any of the twenty-six or so books devoted to Le Corbusier that have arrived in the last decade. More than two books a year would make anyone proud. But Voiture Minimum: Le Corbusier and the Automobile is something different. A few pages in, I realized that I’d been guiled. Corb is in there, but only as a walk-on. Built around a few scrappy sketches from the thirties, Antonio Amado manages to lasso an entire era in which the automobile, not architecture, represented the ultimate design challenge. Think about it. While we take the suburban zeitgeist of SUVs, ATVs, minivans and Rovers for granted, in the 1930s it looked as though it would be the automobile that would transform cities. It would be the automobile that led material culture away from wood and rabbit glue, and it is the automobile that redefined and popularized the formal language that today’s Young Turks aspire to apply to their buildings. The tale of Le Corbusier trying to duke it out with the auto industry is a bit like a varsity wrestler trying to duke it out with the auto industry. In Detroit and came back besotted with the upright architectural profiles that would transform cities. It would would have devoured, the one with the bespoke car in place of the manifesto, the one with Josephine Baker perched on a running board, and product placement high on his agenda.

Streamlining was in the air when Le Corbusier visited America, where he toured Ford’s assembly plant in Detroit and came back besotted with the upright architectural profiles that would transform cities. It would have devoured, the one with the bespoke car in place of the manifesto, the one with Josephine Baker perched on a running board, and product placement high on his agenda. Streamlining was in the air when Le Corbusier visited America, where he toured Ford’s assembly plant in Detroit and came back besotted with the upright architectural profiles that would transform cities. It would have devoured, the one with the bespoke car in place of the manifesto, the one with Josephine Baker perched on a running board, and product placement high on his agenda.

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Corb's Cars continued from page 31

Industry had already become established, and he found himself up against some very stiff competition. Amado beautifully reproduces plates of 78 entries by rivals, many

Taking the modular and the harmony of intersecting lines with no Xenakis in sight, it was caught off-guard. Lacking beziers and splines, locked into antediluvian T's and angles, he found himself far from the shells and airfoils he lauded in Towards a New Architecture. Nevertheless, he soldiered on, eventually producing drawings for a strange, pug-nosed vehicle which would be right at home in Trey Parker's garage. Slab-sided, and aggressively Euclidian, with arcs and planes where his peers imagined aircraft-like swoops and ogee curves, it has all the charm of a self-propelled, home-built travel trailer. Interior room presses to the margins, barely acknowledging the running gear, popping the wheels half the way into the passenger compartment. As soberly utilitarian (it fairly shouts home-built travel trailer. Interior room presses to the margins, barely acknowledging the running gear, popping the wheels half the way into the passenger compartment. As soberly utilitarian (it fairly shouts

“Home Depot!” as the Voisin is proud and majestic, the design is a tart reminder of the disconnect between Le Corbusier’s rhetoric and his bid to personally enter the world of the industrialist. That world, at least on the surface, seemed willing to entertain his entreaties. Amado has unearthed fascinating letters politely shunting Corb to those the authors deem likely to collaborate, which, like a spurned lover, he pursues with increasing ardor. Between the lines, however, the message was blunt: architecture was fine for the estate, but not for the road.

Conflicted? Indeed. This was an era in which the contesting forces of industrialization and elite culture were uneasy companions. Architects, noses in the air, were awash with grand illusions. Gropius shed his austere identity to build his very own bling-mobile, and Frank Lloyd Wright eventually produced drawings for Fuller and Molino threw their hat in the automotive equivalent of the Voiture Minimum.

He gives us the goods, packaged in a in a generally designed format, which fills page after page with folliesketches (in color), and a remarkably astute collection of period photographs. Corbusian lore peppers the pages, sparked by the occasional well chosen bon mot and, above all, untainted by a whiff of undeserved authority. This book is clear and innocent, and the author is passionately devoted to his subject. Leafing through the reproductions of the competitor’s drawings, I thought as Le Corbusier must have thought, perhaps for the first time, “Merde—all the good ideas are taken!”

Craig Hodgetts is a Principal at HODGETTS + FUNG in Culver City, CA.
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Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, founder of the upstart—and remarkably successful—BIG, sat down with A+D/West Coast editor Sam Lubell while on a recent trip to Los Angeles.

You’ve certainly catapulted into elite status. You’re the man of the hour here. How do you see this recognition? I think moving to New York and opening an office there has given us more presence on this side of the Atlantic. It’s amazing how big a divide the Atlantic is in terms of architecture. In Europe it’s shocking how little you know about American architecture except maybe the Case Study Houses and the work of a select few like Frank Gehry. I think the same divide goes the other way. Being here now and starting to do stuff in the Americas has probably created a little more attention.

You describe your work as pragmatic utopian architecture. A combination of sculptural forms with practicality. One of our latest ideological pursuits is the notion of hedonistic sustainability. What if sustainability actually becomes a way of increasing life quality? For example, in our waste to energy plant in Copenhagen we’re using the sheer mass of a power plant to explore the fact that Copenhagen doesn’t have the topography for skiing. By installing an elevator we can create a man-made ski slope and save people the eight hour bus ride to Sweden. It’s a decent hill, 350 meters tall, so you can actually do some serious skiing there. Factories aren’t just places for work. They actually turn trash into electricity and can serve as a giant park.

A lot of people hope sustainable architecture will evolve and be more inspired. Do you think what you’re doing is the next evolution of sustainable architecture? For quite some time the notion was that sustainability was so important that it had to happen at the expense of everything else—this Protestant idea that it has to hurt to do good. If everybody gets the idea that sustainable life is less fun than normal life then it becomes a very undesirable proposition. Who wants to opt for something less nice?

You have these formal plans that are very practical. In this day when everything moves so fast and attention spans are so short how do you fight the urge to focus too much on form? I think the level of sobriety in our work is that we’re committed to the fact that our buildings look differently because they perform differently. It’s the spark that triggers the design. They respond to completely different conditions, they answer completely different questions, they solve different problems and they exploit different potentials. The architecture is less an expression of our preconception than it is an expression of the specific qualities or ideas that project is pursuing. The Figure 8 building in Copenhagen looks like a distorted 8 because it allows the townhouses and the apartments to gravitate toward the sun and the view. It allows the commercial spaces to be as deep as they want to be. As a result you wind up getting this path that lets you bicycle all the way to the top of the building. The distorted skew of the building is not a result of some sort of craziness. It’s still a result of some very practical optimizations of the conditions for each program and the facilitation of this public invasion.

Some people complain that there’s now a global style divorced from its region. Do you think that’s a bad thing? Or do you think it’s more important to respond to the immediate site? I think both are important. Each project needs to understand its climatic context, its cultural context, its urban context, its infrastructural context. A lot of our early work was dealing with the culture and the conditions of Copenhagen. As a result it’s a series of projects that try to develop the local topologies one step further. Now that we’re doing projects in Shanghai and Shenzhen and Astana and Athens and Hamburg and Stockholm and New York and Vancouver and maybe in LA, we’re having some interesting conversations. Each time it’s an opportunity to understand the possibilities and the limitations of the specific urban topologies and of the local lifestyle and culture.

A lot of architectural discourse is run in academia. Sometimes it gets so far from the constraints and realities of everyday life. Do you think academia can have too large a role in the discourse of architecture? I think when academia is too removed from the actual conditions that architecture faces, it loses its role. I think the interesting thing is of course the overlap (between academia and practice). Essentially I’m always trying to use academia as a way of, at a slower pace, pursuing ideas that interest our office in general.

Who have been your biggest influences? An incredible amount of architects have been very inspirational. Right now I’m reading Buckminster Fuller’s Oblivion. And Le Corbusier’s Towards a New Architecture. A major part of the book is talking about building closets and stuff like that; it’s so down and dirty pragmatic. It’s got a blatant proposition of: don’t look at all the different elements of art history and architectural history; look at organizing the practicalities of human life. Look at the moves of the housewife through the kitchen and use that as the driving point of your design. Which back then must have seemed ridiculously profane.

In the U.S. a lot of architecture is driven by developers. Do you have thoughts on how architects can return to prominence in terms of getting their role back as the totality of the building? By addressing issues that actually matter to people in general. By actually building things that are meaningful, essentially the idea of the starchitect as the creative genius that makes weird and impossible and spectacular things is lost in the sense of creating a popular appeal for architecture. Projects like the Guggenheim Bilbao and Walt Disney Concert Hall have really achieved that. And I think the good thing about the star system is that it makes people attracted to something at first because of something maybe superficial, but eventually they’ll realize that sense of profound interest. It’s probably been not so constructive in the sense that it created the idea that architects are people you call if you have an absurd amount of money and you want a lot of attention. You can actually create some kind of crazy icon that is technically difficult and expensive to realize, but it will put your city and its new icon on the cover of the international media. But you wouldn’t really call an architect if you wanted to solve the problem (I think it’s about) reacquainting that trust to be somebody who can actually turn all that real concern and demands of people into interesting propositions for future cities and buildings.

Your firm has built a lot of work recently. But with the amount of notoriety you’ve received and the scope of commissions you’re now receiving, there may be questions about your ability to match your current recognition with accomplishments. Are you worried about being what some called Zaha and Rem before they started building a lot—the so-called “paper architects”? We started building quite early. Our first building commission was the VM House, a 250,000-square-foot apartment building that we got through the luck of running into a developer who actually had the courage to give us this commission based on the trust that we developed in the design process. This was at a point when we had not even built a dog house. We’ve been very committed to real world issues and building from day one. We never did wonderful and impossible oil paintings. I think in that sense the project always starts with the performance of the building, and then it explores “what experience does the performance generate?”

For some the greatest innovation in architecture is simply the ability to bridge disciplines—visual arts, sciences, new media, technology—and new ways of thinking. It seems like that’s something you’ve been able to exploit, the multi-disciplinary approach. I think the fact that given architects never build for themselves but for everybody else, we always need to—in the design process—plug in intelligence from these different professions. Architecture gets informed by the various specialists who actually have the requirements and demands of people that we need to incorporate into the architecture. We need to somehow be able to communicate these ideas to the outside world. If you can’t relay your ideas to the clients, to the city architects, to the politicians, to the neighbors, to the community board, it will never get built. In this way Ingels has exercised a discipline that allows you to transmit ideas across the boundaries of professions.

I read you didn’t always want to be an architect? So you sort of from an outside perspective. My family is completely devoid of architects. I wanted to be a graphic novelist originally. I enrolled in the Royal Danish Art Academy. The Architecture school was the easiest one to get in. Then I had to change how to do it, I would return to my original trajectory of becoming a graphic novelist. Then I sort of got sidetracked for 15 years. Then with the publication of Yes More we found a way back into graphic novelism, just a different kind than originally envisioned.

You came out of Rem’s office. Are there any areas that you strongly part ways with him in outlook? Obviously I learned a lot there. I think he’s a great writer and architect. He is evidently the Le Corbusier of our times. I think we have a radically different atmosphere in the [BIG] office, which is for the social conditions are quite different and probably more Scandinavian at BIG.

My reading of Rem’s work is probably different than everybody else. But often people see something dark and cynical in OMA’s work. Whereas our work is never really ironic. It is this idea of turning pleasuring into a radical agenda. Having this sunny social and environmental outlook on things. Instead of having a mission statement driving having one that is positive. I like the Schopenhauer quote that you can do what you want, but you cannot want what you want. Each project has a propensity to become something, and if you try to force it into becoming something else you’ll ruin its potential. And it’s the same way with an architectural practice. We didn’t really want to do anything other than what we are.

Do you have any dream projects? Right now I’d love to do something in LA. We’re actually having two interesting conversations here right now. What I’m interested in is the fact that the climate here is the climate in the world that is most suited for human life. So there is a different potential for a radical approach to sustainability, because hardly need the building.
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