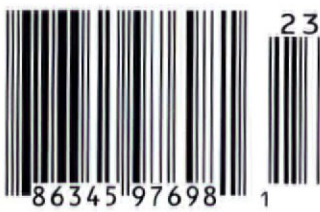


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# FORM

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MARCH/APRIL 2009

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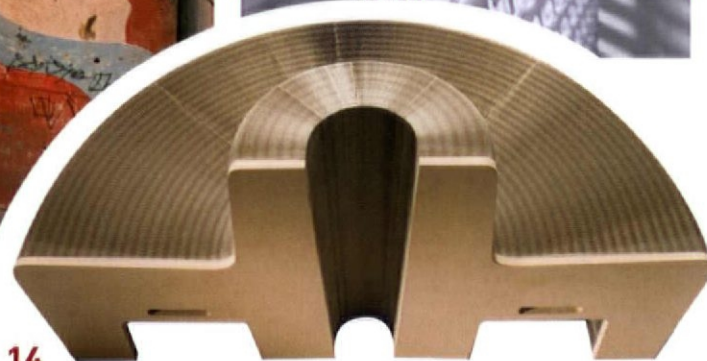
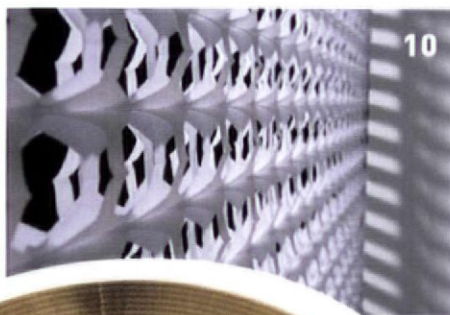
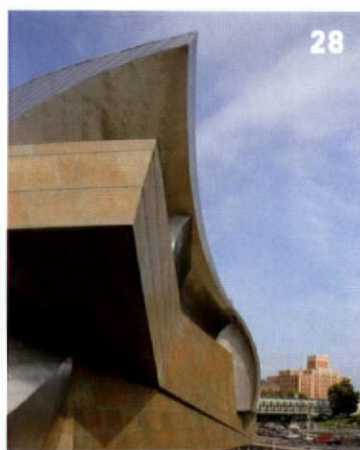
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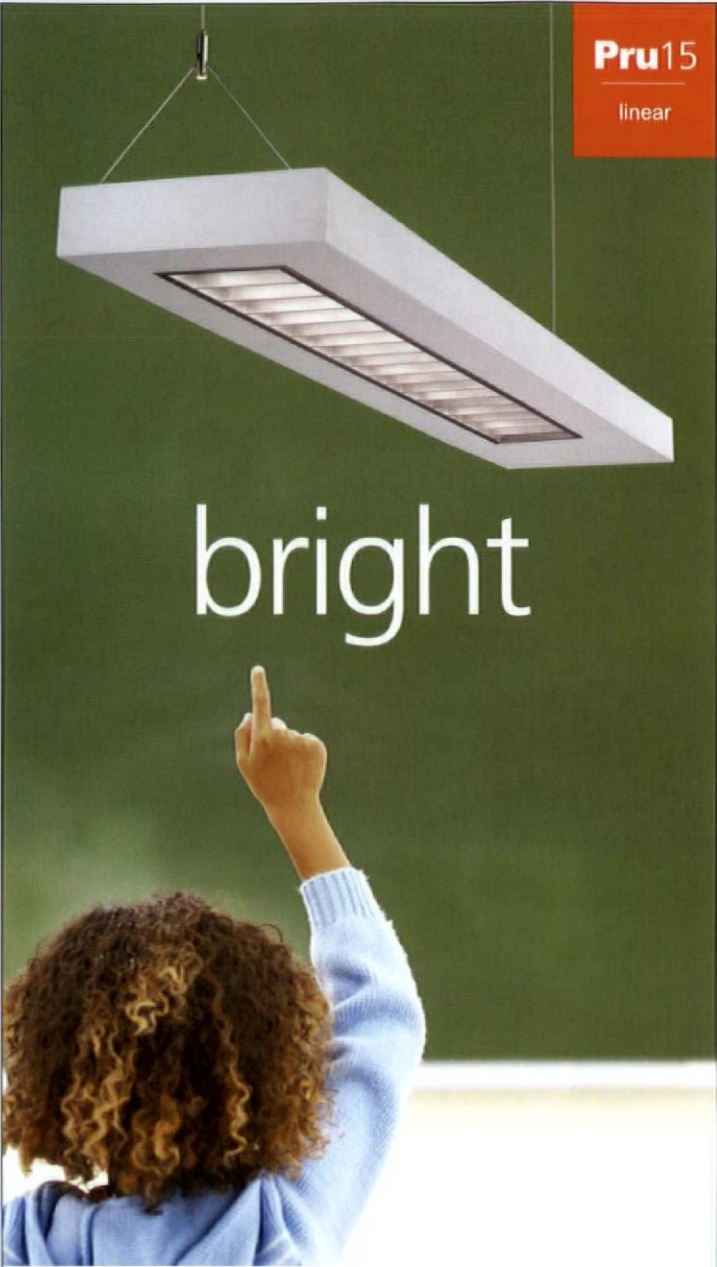
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## CONTRIBUTORS

As a painter, **INA DROSU** draws upon her artistic experience in this month's issue to explore the challenges of museum design. Drosu's extensive talent is evident in her breadth of work from fine art and murals to gilding and faux finishes, [www.inadrosu.com](http://www.inadrosu.com). She has been featured at numerous galleries in the Washington and Oregon area.

Photographer **MARK EDWARD HARRIS** has spanned the globe capturing beautiful images in several books, including *Wanderlust* (R.A.M. Publications) and *Inside Korea* (Chronicle Books), available at [www.markedwardharris.com](http://www.markedwardharris.com). His work has appeared in numerous publications including Condé Nast Traveler, Harper's Bazaar and Vogue. Harris's photography has earned him several awards, among them a Clio and an Aurora Gold Award.

**JACK SKELLEY'S** writing has been featured in Harper's magazine, Los Angeles Times and Los Angeles Downtown News, and he edits the urban-design e-newsletter, [www.TheHotSheetRPR.com](http://www.TheHotSheetRPR.com). He co-edited the book, *Los Angeles: Building the Polycentric City*, for Congress for the New Urbanism. In FORM this month, Skelley explores the question: "Is Innovation Dead in the United States?"

To illustrate the piece "Is Innovation Dead in the United States?," **TOM TRAPNELL** explored the personification of America. After more than 10 years as Editorial Design Director of the Los Angeles Times, Trapnell is principal of his own firm, [www.tomtrapnell.com](http://www.tomtrapnell.com), specializing in the design of books, magazines, newspapers, websites and corporate identity. An avid musician, he plays lead guitar for the band, Below the Fold.

**MICHAEL WEBB** is the author of twenty-six books on architecture and design, most recently *Venice CA: Art + Architecture in a Maverick Community* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), and *Modernist Paradise: Niemeyer House, Boyd Collection* (Rizzoli). He travels widely in search of new and classic modern architecture and contributes to magazines around the world. Michael lives in the Neutra apartment that Charles and Ray Eames once called home.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

As our new President takes office a financial crisis looms ahead of the Nation, affecting the entire population. And in these challenging times, our leaders often call on the American public to serve the country. No one said it better than President John F. Kennedy in his 1961 inaugural address when he advised Americans to "Ask what you can do for your country." Today, we can all apply JFK's words in our daily lives, using our profession to serve our communities.

In the second issue of the year, we explore public works, from museums and churches to clinics and community centers. Architects can create designs to define and uplift the communities they live in; the end result is often cutting-edge and iconic. However, members of the profession are growing disenchanted with local bureaucracy and funding, turning abroad to create innovative architecture. In our piece "Is Innovation Dead in the United States?" (p. 32), writer Jack Skelley explores this creative migration and examines the definition of the word itself. Defining public works broadly allows us to explore the world culturally and politically. Mark Edward Harris takes us "Inside Iran" (p. 24) through his photographs while artist Ina Drosu explores international museum design (p. 28). One more note: this month FORM introduces its newest column, Beyond the Grid, spotlighting the latest sustainable products and techniques.



Eric Roth

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alexi Drosu".

Alexi Drosu



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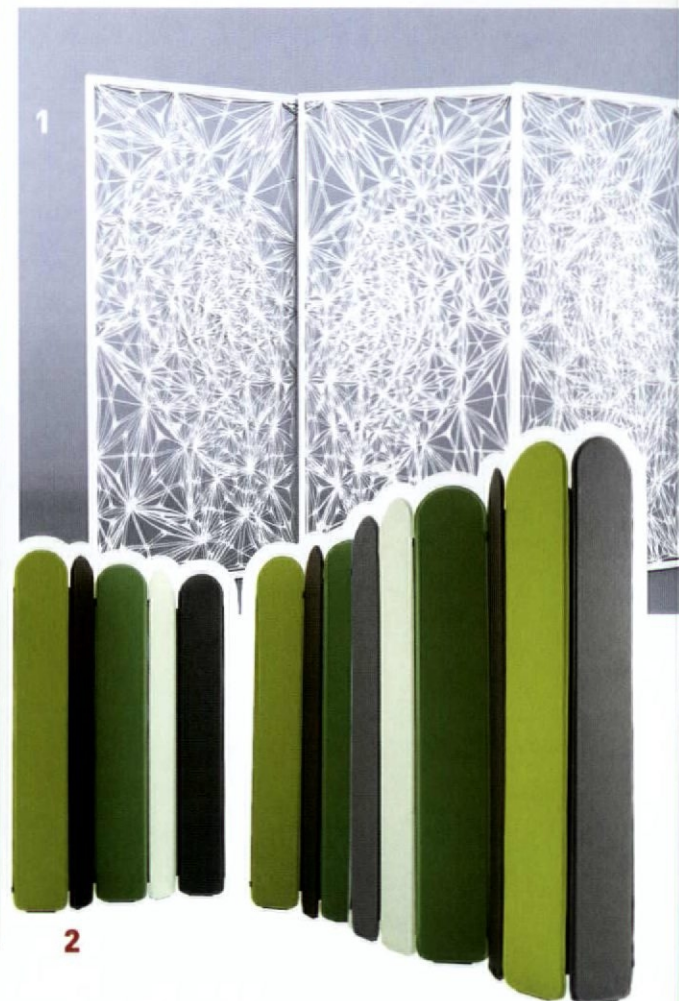
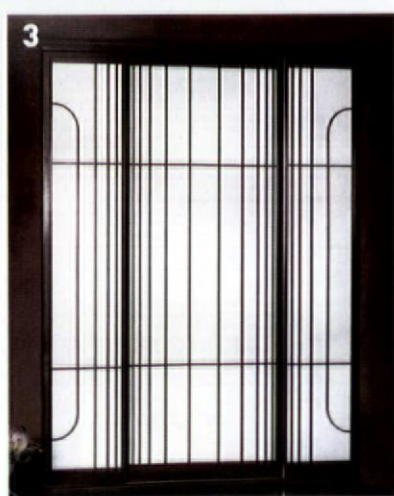
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# SHOWROOM



## Screens and Partitions

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The design and manufacturing company, Arktura of Los Angeles, creates durable products that last a lifetime with a high amount of recycled content. The Nebula screen, designed by Chris Kabatsi, is a dynamic, shape shifting form that changes depending on your perspective. To create this effect, two identical laser-cut steel sheets are placed parallel to one another and separated by a one-inch space. The pattern is algorithmically generated as a means of conveying the forces that shape galaxies. Available as a bi-fold or tri-fold construction and in a gloss white powder coat finish.

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### 2 Linea Inc., Endless Screen from Ligne Roset

At Delo-Lindo Design agency based in France, the realm of spatial, object, furniture

and industrial design occupies the creative minds of founders Fabien Cagani and Laurent Mantras. The Endless screen features a series of five Divina fabric hues that add a modern accent to any room. Available in three different monochromatic Divina color schemes (one color per panel): black/grey, green or amethyst.

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—Jennifer Fordyce





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## WHY SIGNS? WHY NOW?

AIA/LA has been increasingly involved in the Los Angeles signage wars. You might wonder why, when the economy is collapsing and architects are loosing their jobs, this particular issue consumes so much time and energy. The simple answer is that AIA/LA started down this road before the present economic circumstance.

Last spring, in an e-mail to AIA/LA's Political Outreach Committee, one of our members challenged the committee to get engaged in a growing public controversy. Communities were upset at the proliferation of extralegal signage. Billboards and wall wraps with no permits or approvals were sprouting throughout Los Angeles. At the same time advocates were most upset at the introduction of digital billboards looming over residential neighborhoods.

Almost 900 of these winking bright boards are anticipated, the result of a legal row between the City and outdoor advertisers. The latter claimed their rights had been abridged. The City had granted too many sign exceptions. Rather than continue to fight and maybe lose, the City settled and agreed to a set number of screens. A colleague goaded us. If AIA/LA could not take a stand on bright lights shining in people's bedrooms and sign chaos, what did AIA/LA stand for?

In response to this challenge, the Political Outreach Committee developed what we thought was a nuanced response. AIA/LA suggested an interim control ordinance to

give community groups, City staff, and decision-makers a breather. Allow time for enforceable signage regulations to be crafted, debated, and implemented. Subsequently, this position was adopted by the AIA/LA Board and became a part of our legislative agenda presented to City Council members and the Mayor's office.

I never imagined that this position would resonate. I assumed Los Angeles leaders would interpret this as a message to initiate the drawn out process of revising the sign code. Instead, interim control was embraced. The Planning Commission adopted the idea last November. In December an interim control ordinance was approved by City Council. In January and February the Planning Department released drafts of revised signage regulations. During this time AIA/LA held two public forums exploring first, the place of signs in the urban landscape and second, the design impact of draft regulations.

Because of our support for the interim control ordinance and creation of public sign forums, AIA/LA is perceived as constructively engaged; architects' opinions matter. Thus I

began to get phone calls. Some encouraged AIA/LA to draw a line in the sand and stand with those who want a complete ban on new advertising signs. Others assume that AIA/LA has already taken such a stance.

A few architects called and said stick it to the signifiers. One architect conveyed calls from developers fearful of losing sign rights, thanks to AIA/LA. One of my clients buttonholed me and suggested I was destroying the building economy. He then stated that he was only in part joking.

The LA signage debate pits sign abolitionists versus sign advocates and represents a design conundrum. Architects know that signs can contribute to urban vibrancy, whether on the sidewalks of Ginza or the Sunset Strip. Increasingly signs represent an integral and necessary contribution to a design's bottom line. In this entertainment world capital, signs also promote a unique local industry that invents dreams and images for global consumption. Los Angeles signs, deployed on the exterior walls of movie studios or piercing the night sky, represent the work of our city.



Conversely, it is not unnoticed that Los Angeles is often times ugly. Unmitigated and immersive signage can and does contribute to environmental crassness and blight. Clearly, the opportunities of one point of view represent the constraints of the other. Given this range of opinions, where should AIA/LA stand?

A balance needs to be struck. Surely there are places in Los Angeles where exuberant signage is expected and appropriate. Just as obviously there are locales such as residential neighborhoods where most signs, particularly digital signs, are inappropriate. And then there are the places in-between, such as the plethora of commercial and emerging mixed-use boulevards. There is not a uniform design solution possible for these transects but I sense that the general direction that the Planning Department has indicated in their draft signage proposal makes common sense for these streets as well as the city as a whole.

Planning has outlined reductions in the overall allowance for signs compared to what now exists. They have also sought to create consistent definitions of signage that allow for easier enforcement. There are also provisions for signage districts within regional centers that allow means to realize exceptions to the new constraints. The devil of course is in the details of the sign types. These details need to be designed and vigorously debated if any type of balance is to be realized.

Los Angeles architects should have a public opinion on the details because if we don't our silence is interpreted, at best, as an absence of professional ideas for signage stewardship within our backyard of expertise. At worst, silence suggests to many a lack of professional citizenship or perhaps undue professional acquiescence to client desires.

Why signs? Signage resonates. It forms spaces and places. Signage is symbolic of an



**Is this art, commercial self-promotion, advertising, a life-safety hazard, anti-neighborhood, protected free speech, ugly, architectural defacement, or a sign of vital urbanism? These and other questions are being sorted out as Los Angeles considers new sign regulations.**

urban design and architecture frontier; the qualities of the city's future are at stake. People are interested in architects' opinions. Not having a public opinion regarding signage now diminishes the profession's credibility on too many other issues and thus unnecessarily diminishes the role of architects in shaping our city's present and future form.

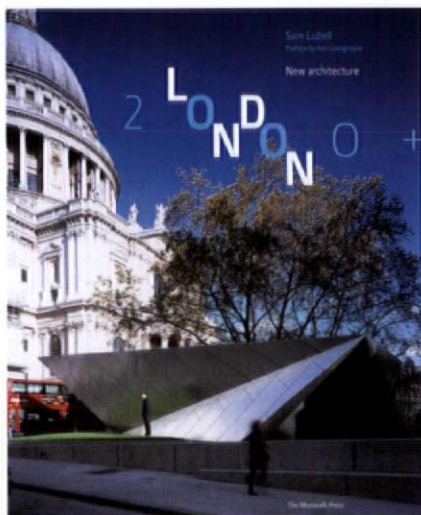
Why now? If architects as a profession have nothing to say on this issue, which engenders such passion on the part of so many interests, why should we expect anybody to pay attention to architects the next time we have a better idea that we want implemented?

My goal is for AIA/LA to promote a balanced approach to signage regulation that acknowledges the uniqueness of the Los Angeles situation and its diverse geography and communities. Perhaps in an age of simultaneous environmental and economic crisis sign regulation seems like a small issue, but for architects to be credible on issues of greater import, our design opinion on signage matters right now.

*—John Kaliski, AIA, is principal of Urban Studio, a Los Angeles architecture and urban design firm, and president of the American Institute of Architects Los Angeles Chapter*



# NEWS AND REVIEWS



## BOOK REVIEWS

### On Architecture by Ada Louise Huxtable

*On Architecture* (Walker & Company, \$35) is a must-read: a dazzling selection of Ada Louise Huxtable's sharply opinionated reviews for leading New York papers over the past 45 years. Eloquent, insightful and timeless, they represent architectural criticism at its best. No one exposes pretensions and deflating pomposity better than Huxtable; she dismissed Edward Durrell Stone's 2 Columbus Circle as a "little die-cut Venetian palazzo on lollipops."

### London 2000+: New Architecture by Sam Lubell and Ken Livingstone

In contrast to his survey of the best and worst of New York, Sam Lubell provides a snapshot of new architecture in *London 2000+* (Monacelli, \$50). Brief texts accompany a colorful portfolio on 29 varied projects that mark a decisive break from the drab mediocrity of most post-war building in the capital. The London Eye, Lloyd's Register and the Gherkin have changed the skyline, but Lubell also includes smaller projects and remodels that have enriched emerging neighborhoods. It's a timely survey, with the pound at low ebb; one can now afford an architectural pilgrimage to London.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Cathedral of Christ the Light

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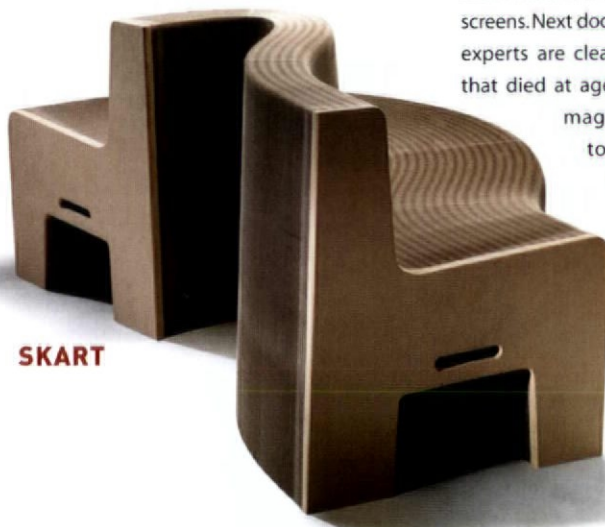
Closer to home, the San Francisco office of SOM have realized their masterpiece, the Cathedral of Christ the Light, in Oakland. It's a shimmering beacon of light and a soaring vortex of luminous space. A truncated cone of fritted glass encloses curved planes of wood louvers that rise from a wall of poured concrete. Visitors can look up through circular openings in the side chapels to see how the inner and outer shells are tied together with beams and steel rods. Beyond the altar, an evanescent image of Christ is projected through a diagrid of perforated metal. SOM has renewed the concept of sacred space and even non-believers can feel inspired.

### Skart

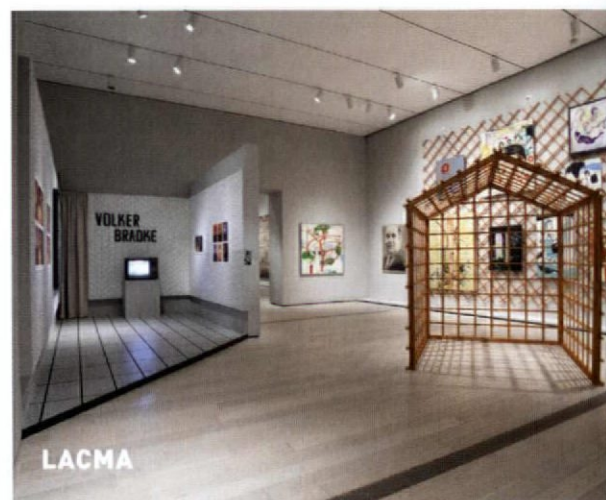
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As architects are forced to downsize, they might look for inspiration to the firm of Minarc in Santa Monica. Tryggvi Thorsteinsson and Erla Ingjaldsdottir, a husband-wife partnership from Iceland, have opened a shop at the front of their office to sell crafts made by friends from their homeland, whose incomes have been wiped out by the collapse of the krónur. It's called Skart—an Icelandic word meaning precious—and it offers inventive furnishings, hand-knitted sweaters and jewelry, also available on-line.



SKART



## EVENTS

### LACMA: Art of Two Germanys/ Cold War Cultures

The Berlin Wall was torn down almost 20 years ago, and LACMA is exhibiting the art that was created on either side of that divide over four decades. *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* is the third survey of 20th-century German art to be organized by curator Stephanie Baron, and it's full of fascinating discoveries. Defying the Soviet-inspired mandate of socialist realism, many artists of the East found their own path or fled to the West. The exhibition runs through April 19; don't miss the related screenings and symposia in March. More information at [www.lacma.org/art/ExhibColdWar.aspx](http://www.lacma.org/art/ExhibColdWar.aspx)

### Natural History Museum: Visible Vault

In LA, Hodgetts + Fung have breathed new life into the Natural History Museum, a venerable institution that is currently under restoration. *Visible Vault* is an open archive of Pre-Columbian sculpture: a room, lined with faceted vitrines highlighting selected treasures, with nearly 700 others serried on four shelves behind. Images and information can be accessed on interactive screens. Next door is Thomas the T-Rex Lab, where experts are cleaning the bones of a dinosaur that died at age 13, prior to reassembly. It's a magnet for kids, who are invited to handle replicas and fit loose teeth into a jawbone. More information at [www.nhm.org](http://www.nhm.org)

—Michael Webb



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## Lumen Multi-Faith Centre for Worship

Location: London, United Kingdom

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Website: [www.theisandkhan.com](http://www.theisandkhan.com)

The site of the Lumen redesign offers a colorful past. The original church, which backs onto an ancient burial ground for the people of Bloomsbury, was bombed during World War II then later rebuilt in the 1960s. More recently, Theis and Khan were commissioned by the United Reformed Church to redesign three elements within the 1960s shell: a café, a sacred contemplation space and a new extension to be used as a community space.

"Light is one of the strongest sources of inspiration for the whole project," says principal Soraya Khan. The Shaft of Light, a soaring physical representation of a ray constructed from laser cut polystyrene blocks, extends upwards more than 36-feet to create a contemplative space for worship. Between 10 and 12 people can sit comfortably within the Shaft of Light and enjoy a secluded space for private gatherings.

One of the biggest challenges for the firm was ensuring a peaceful setting for the church while incorporating a café visible from the street. "The contemporary approach to worship is less formal than in past centuries and this has been reflected in the willingness of the Church communities to allow various activities to take place in what might have been perceived as sacred spaces," says Khan.

With the help of art agency Modus Operandi, Theis and Khan collaborated with two artists, Rona Smith of Cell Studios and Alison Wilding. Wilding created a trio of sculptures to reflect the overall theme of the architecture. "The sculptures, which explore themes of living water and light, create new points of stillness and reflection within the internal and external spaces," says Khan.

Opposite page (left): Richard Davies. This page (all): Nick Kane.





## Korean Museum of Animation

Location: Bucheon, South Korea

Designer: NBBJ

Website: [www.nbbj.com](http://www.nbbj.com)

"The design style of [the] Korean Museum of Animation was quite fluid, with soft forms undulating about art, public and office spaces, echoing the fluidity of the animation industry in the project's overall form," explains principal Robert Mankin. The City of Bucheon sought a design that would propel the Korean animation industry onto the global stage. Additionally, they asked NBBJ to create two separate structures, one to serve as an office building and the second as a museum, both will be completed in mid-2009.

In order to create a dynamic energy between the two separate yet complementary buildings, NBBJ carried the idea of fluidity and movement into a pedestrian space between the two. The design incorporated the site's natural slope into an outdoor amphitheater facing a series of LCD screens inset into the side of the building, while the orientation towards a large transit station creates a natural pathway through the complex. The firm translated the city's importance within contemporary Korea "in a need for these buildings to express a strong, streamlined and modern vocabulary," says Mankin.

NBBJ incorporated green, habitable roofs throughout both buildings and created a system to capture and filter rain water on the site itself. "Keeping the water on-site was especially important so as to minimize the water needed for landscaping and the project's impact on the surrounding infrastructure and waterways," he says.

Renderings courtesy of NBBJ







## Peter and Paula Fasseas Cancer Clinic

Location: Tucson, AZ

Designer: CO Architects

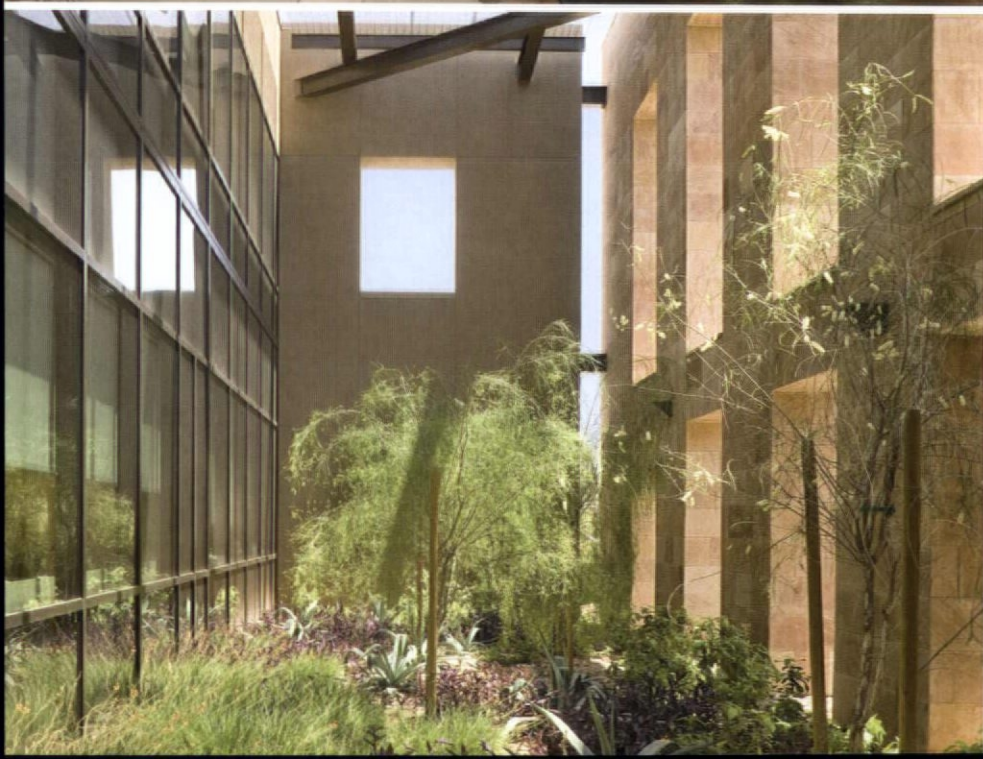
Website: [www.coarchitects.com](http://www.coarchitects.com)



Before beginning the planning process, CO Architects conducted numerous interviews with patients, nurses and doctors to truly discover their clients' needs. The result was an inspirational design that serves to draw upon the healing powers of nature. Trellised terraces offer sweeping views of the Arizona desert, healing gardens create a sense of calm and an abundant stream of natural light infuses the entire space with hope.

The 82,000-square-foot compound features examination spaces, waiting rooms, conference and counseling areas, a pharmacy, a laboratory, a resource library, private rooms for massage therapy and yoga and a café. All of the infusion therapy and exam rooms are situated around landscaped outdoor courtyards, while the waiting rooms and public spaces showcase views of the garden and mountains beyond.

CO Architects reused the original foundation and steel frame of the previous hospital and extended the width of the building by two structural bays to accommodate a new public entrance, lobby and administrative suites. To further acknowledge the natural beauty of the local desert, they used Arizona sandstone, plaster and metal as exterior materials, and featured neutral shades of natural finishes, such as stone and wood, inside.



Photographs by Robert Canfield



## Taipei Performing Arts Center, Competition Entry

Location: Taipei, Taiwan

Designer: B + U, LLP

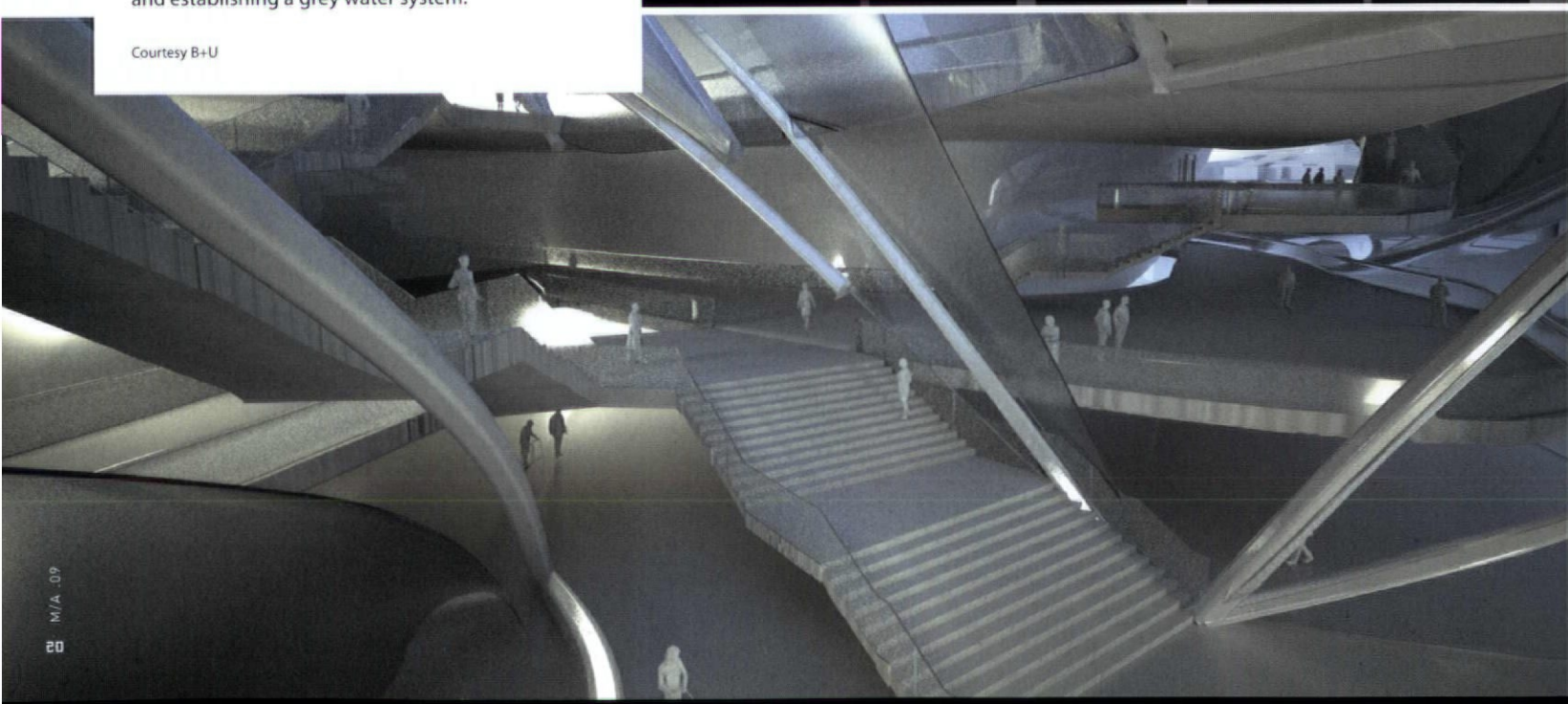
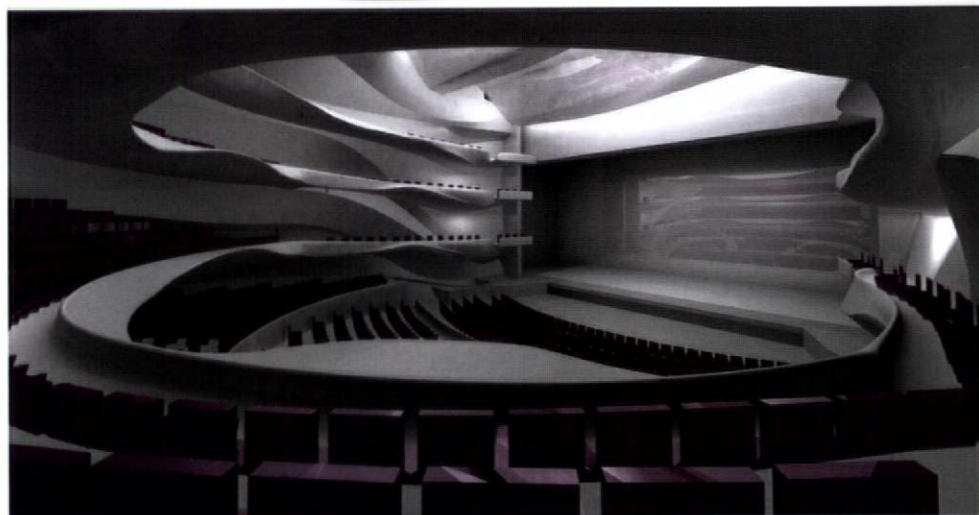
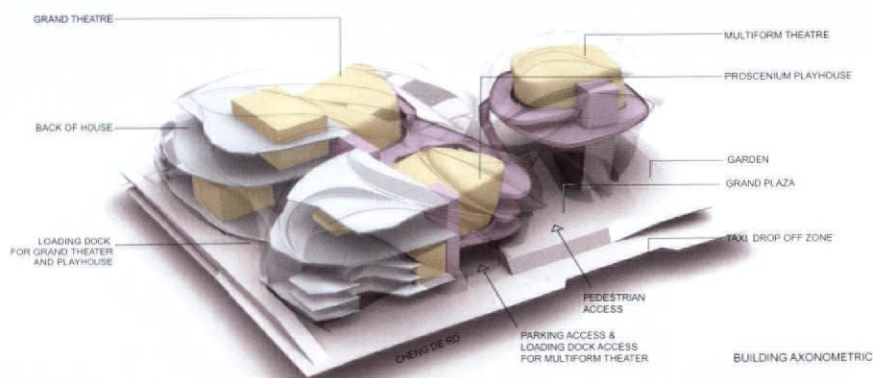
Website: [www.bplusu.com](http://www.bplusu.com)

Principals Herwig Baumgartner and Scott Uriu's competition entry for the Taipei Performing Arts Center was designed using sound waves, visually reflected in the amorphous shape of the 400,000-square-foot structure. The architects explored the idea of a Grand Plaza in their design, acknowledging the bustling area of the nearby train station and popular night market as an inspirational element. "To provide a public space was an essential part of the design," says Baumgartner. In order to accommodate a large pedestrian volume, B + U lifted the multi-form theaters 20 meters off the ground. "The theater is held up by a massive concrete and steel core structure that includes circulation, freight elevators and some back of house components," he adds.

Three separate theaters encircle a central foyer enclosed in glass, each accessible through a singular grand staircase. The dynamic shape encourages the public to experience the space before entering the theaters. Each theater was specifically designed to address the needs of the Taiwanese art scene. The Grand Theater was configured to accommodate 1500 people, while the two smaller theaters seat 800.

To create the amorphous shape, Baumgarten says, a combination of double curved steel pipe structure would create the framework while large curved metal panels and/or glass curtainwall would make up the skin. Baumgartner and Uriu designed the competition entry with several sustainable concepts in mind such as incorporating photo-voltaic cell technology into the large glass surfaces and establishing a grey water system.

Courtesy B+U







## Sierra Bonita Mixed Use Affordable Housing

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Designer: Tighe Architecture

Website: [www.tighearchitecture.com](http://www.tighearchitecture.com)

The West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation commissioned Tighe Architecture to design a mixed-use affordable housing project for people with disabilities that would serve as a sustainable model for the newly implemented Green Building Ordinance. The five-story structure contains 42 one-bedroom units, each approximately 620 square feet in size. The building also incorporates two levels of subterranean parking, retail and commercial space.

The firm wanted to create a microclimate within the confines of the project; therefore, "the building is very dense with green space carved out of the middle of the building [as a courtyard] along with other outdoor garden spaces and roof decks," says Tighe. Entry to all of the units is accessible via the landscaped courtyard at the second level that spills out to the street. The building itself is set back from the street to create a landscape buffer. "The landscape provides an entrance for the residents of the building, the eccentric braced frame is expressed as an organic lattice work to counter the rigidity and order of the rest of the building," he adds.

As a pilot program, the Sierra Bonita project incorporates many sustainable initiatives including solar voltaics array for power, solar for water, passive cooling and cross ventilation and environmentally mindful building materials.

Courtesy of Patrick Tighe Architecture







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# public realm

MARCH | APRIL 2009

Translating the voice of many is often more challenging than translating a singular vision. When an architect begins a public work project, he or she commits to carry this collective weight, both a blessing and a burden. In the following pages, we explore several important questions that challenge public projects. Is innovation dead in the United States? Can iconic museums revitalize a community? And, why does architectural pride uplift even the most depressed of populations?



# INSIDE IRAN



Photographer Mark Edward Harris captures the essence of Persian architecture, art and people in his new book

**IT WAS WITH SOME TREPIDATION THAT I BOARDED IRANAIR 747 AT** London's Heathrow Airport bound for Tehran in the spring of 2007. How would the Iranian citizenry feel about an American traveling freely around their country, especially one armed with professional photographic equipment? Several Americans of Iranian origins were already being held in the country, accused of spying for the United States.

Nevertheless, where ever I go I try to arrive with an empty cup, so to speak. I wasn't oblivious to the issues that exist between Iran and the United States, but my goal is always to absorb, observe, and photograph as much as I can while I am "in-country." I spent several weeks traveling 2,000 miles on the ground, emerging from Iran with a very different impression. Life on the streets was much more vibrant and open than I had expected. For example, I was surprised to see women running restaurants and acting as contractors on construction sites. Iran has an incredible history, which is reflected in its art and architecture, and its populace is very proud of that history regardless of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rhetoric that now casts a shadow over this nation. ■

*Mark Edward Harris will be exhibiting in April at MOPLA 2009. For more information: [www.monthofphotography.com](http://www.monthofphotography.com) or [www.markedwardharris.com](http://www.markedwardharris.com). Inside Iran is available through Chronicle Books at [www.chroniclebooks.com](http://www.chroniclebooks.com)*

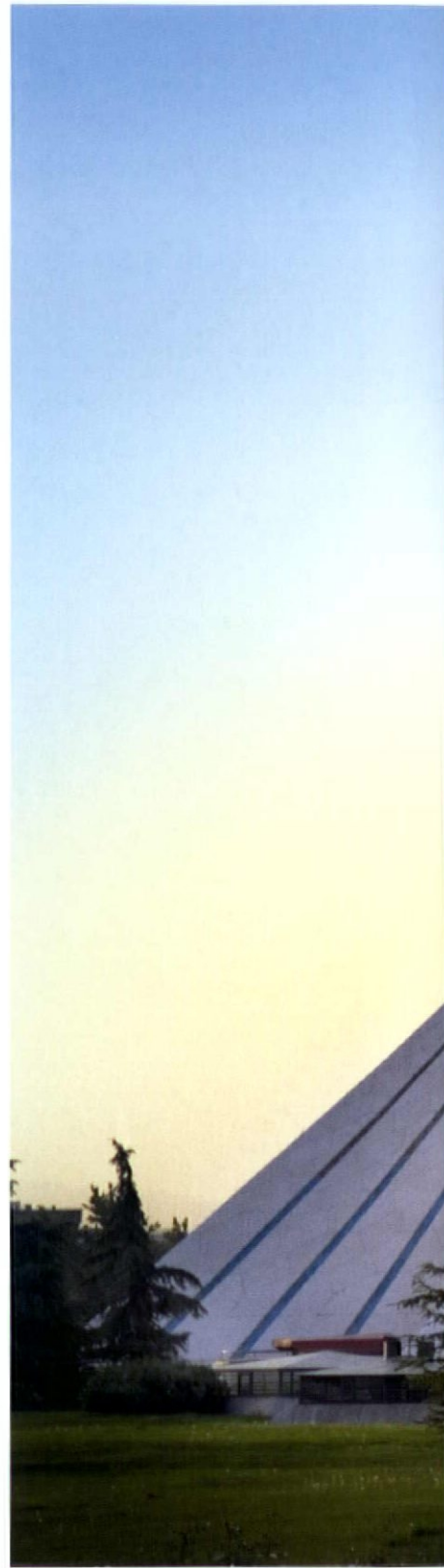
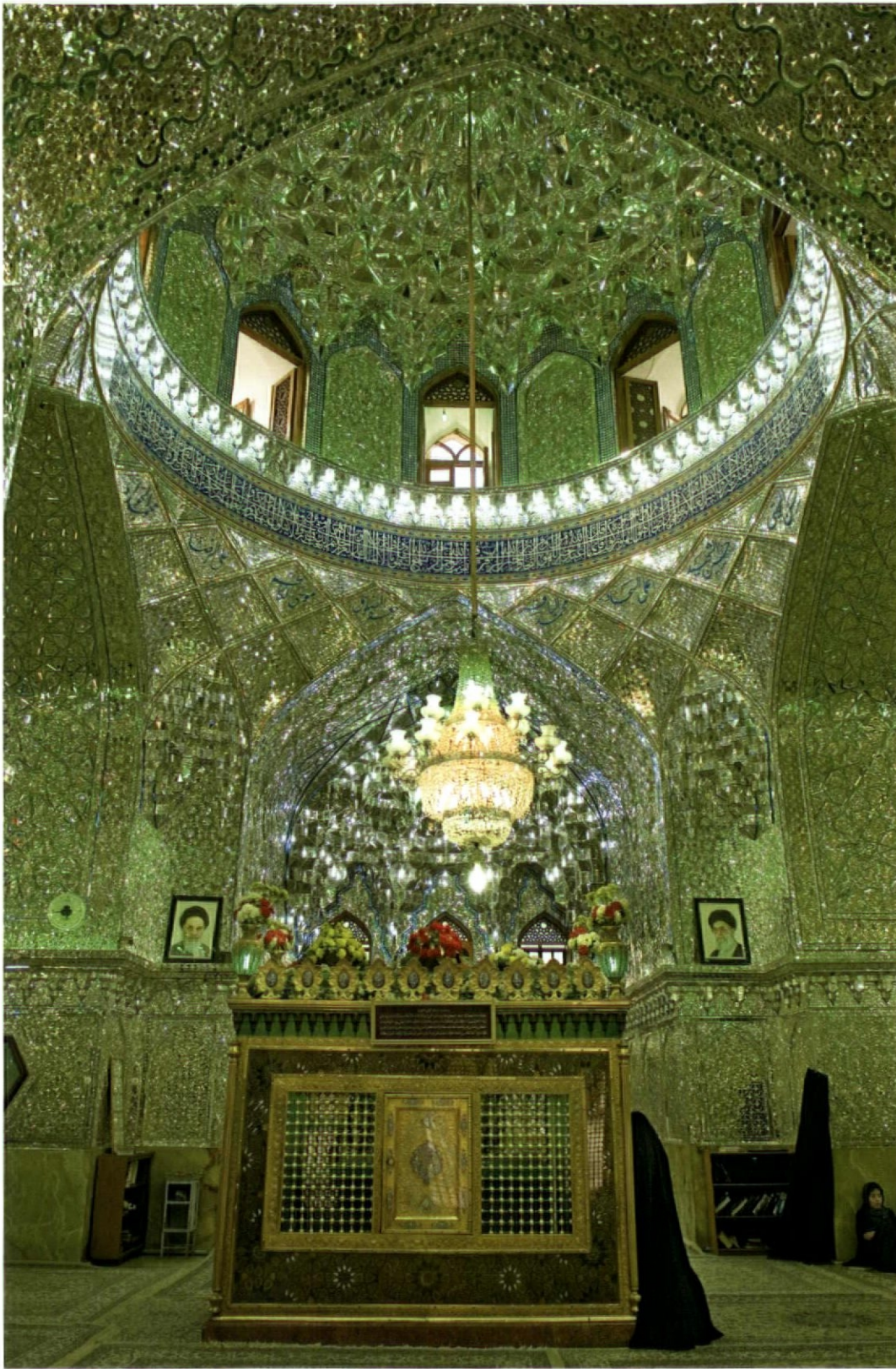
OPPOSITE: A henna mill in Yazd, an oasis where the two deserts Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut meet. Recognized as the center of Persian architecture, the city boasts one of the largest networks of qanats (water management systems) in the world.

ABOVE: A shot-up door advocating peace on display at the Holy Defense Cultural Center in Khorramshahr.













FROM PAST TO PRESENT: A woman prays at the Shah-e-Cheragh mausoleum in Shiraz, left, built in the third Islamic century (circa 13th century AD). The 148-foot-tall Azadi (Freedom) Tower, above, was built as part of the shah's lavish 1971 celebrations of the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire. It incorporates 14th century architectural and 12th century decorative influences.



# Of Museums & Men

Design narrative paints  
a picture of revitalization  
over disenchantment

BY INA DROSU







**IN A WORLD RIFE WITH SENSATIONALISM, TADAO** Ando's pure-form concrete museums glow like fireflies in a moonless night. One might well call his work "the Anti-Bilbao Effect"—not as a reaction against a highly innovative and successful rehabilitation, but as the inner impetus toward an individualized design aesthetic solely guided by Vitruvius's precept, which he praised so intently in his Pritzker Award acceptance speech. *Firmitas*, *Utilitas*, and *Venustas* remain undaunted by trends inflated with the wish to sail like Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum.

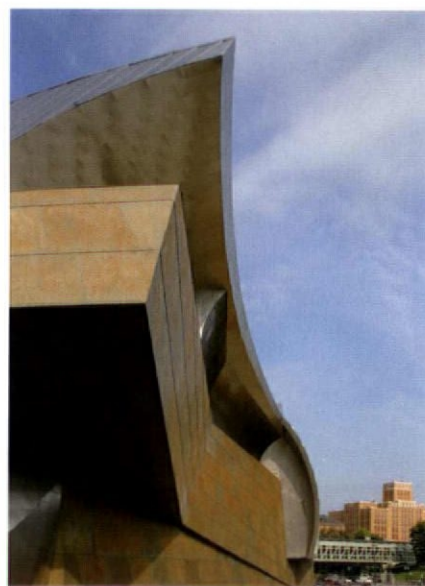
Ando is not the only one. Gehry himself follows that same creed in the influential Guggenheim, yet the complex's 1997 opening seems to have created a phenomenon without borders dubbed the Bilbao Effect: a worldwide increase in museums, trusting that the addition of a fabulous piece of form will revitalize economy and make them internationally famous.

Randall Stout of Los Angeles-based Randall Stout Architects witnessed his Taubman Art

Museum in Roanoke, Virginia spark the building of numerous galleries, restaurants, a hotel, and the repopulation of downtown apartments. Nonetheless, he insists "there has to be a confluence of will in a community, beyond the museum as a single institution. The citizenship, investors and property owners saw the museum as an anchor in a broader re-emergence of downtown."

While some museums have revitalized communities others sit empty and sealed, creating a sense of disillusionment. "I've looked at such fabulous buildings without enough money to finish the inside," says master museum and exhibition designer Stephen Greenberg of Metaphor, U.K. He explains that creating a narrative within the museum is a key element in its success. After the initial impact of an iconic exterior structure, the inner story of the museum entices visitors to return. "Over time the word would get out and people would know you're offering an amazing experience," he says.

OPPOSITE: The Taubman Museum of Art hovers above the Roanoke market district. This page, left: The flourishing neighborhood is reflected in the glass entrance of the Taubman. BELOW: The metamorphic shape of the North façade echoes the surrounding mountains.



Still, vanity can only partly explain the billowing boom of recent decades, which is only now slowing down due to general economic hardship. An over-abundance of fashionable private collections is a potential factor, though Greenberg says a lesser one. Hagy Belzberg of L.A. firm Belzberg Architects says the trend is a response to the outward expansion of museums' historically urban setting—a growing thirst in a new cultural dynamic.

Pei Zhu of China explains that in prosperous times more money is invested in the civic and cultural infrastructure. "The boom may have mostly to do with the increasingly diverse



specialization of independent fields of work. The opportunities to present this depth of knowledge results in a legacy of museums that is an investment towards future generations," he says.

Leaving the contextual causes aside, experts agree that to transform a design into a long-lasting successful art institution, sustainability and integration on architectural, functional, and cultural grounds are key. Belzberg's 2009 Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust is a case in point for architectural sustainability and integration. The building's underground submersion not only allows its lawn-like roof to merge with its park setting, but facilitates climate control and increases insulation, as do the recycled all-concrete-and-steel walls. The roof filters rainwater before running off into the ground and the building materials come from local quarries and mills. "Architects are writing the new narrative," says Belzberg. "Museums fall under the same category of the new environmental responsibility that we share."

Zhu calls integrated architecture "Invisible Architecture" that rejoins people to nature because "contemporary art exists not only in the art world, but in the physical world." The dialogue of this "dual landscape" is evident in his upcoming water-drop OCT Design Museum, the pebble-like Museum of Yue Minjun, and the overlapping leaf-like clusters of the Xixi Wetland Museum.

By itself, environmental integration does not spell out longevity and relevancy, though some treat it as a *raison d'être*. Fruitful human interaction must be the museum's primary function: providing a profound learning experience and an opportunity for study in an enjoyable way. London architect Marko Neskovic of Metropolitan Workshop reflected on this connection in the highly complex Museum of Conflict to be built in Tripoli, Libya. This future amalgam of architectural sustainability, social activity, and cultural relevancy pays no less attention to the fact that "architecture is the servant to the content and changing exhibitions," he says. "Where museum buildings fail is where the architecture takes precedence and inhibits the flexibility that keeps the museum alive," adds Neskovic.

What used to be the communicative venue for scholars and specialists decades ago must become, as Greenberg says, "accessible to a

wider range of audiences, not just by ethnic background or social class, but simply by people's learning styles." Here the concept of interaction looms large; through interaction audiences become engaged, engagement engenders understanding, which leads to lasting interest. Greenberg's holistic approach is based on the premise that the content of a museum is given by an object and not the other way around. He uses everything from audio, films and graphics to special lighting and installation art to convey it.

The object determines the narrative, while the orchestrated pathway to it leads the visitor into a particular kind of encounter. The designer becomes director of a theatrical production having the power to generate profound experiences of great impact and memorable consequence.

A poetic example is the Grand Egyptian Museum, which Greenberg's Metaphor is restructuring into a grand archeological site. The biggest running stair in the world was created by the initial architect who considered it to be representative of the power of Egypt, and the way to reach a plateau at the height of the pyramids outside. Greenberg recounts: "I asked myself, what's



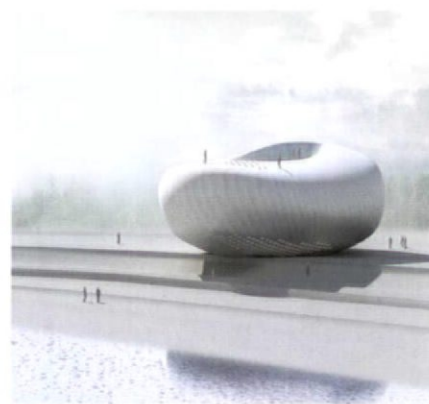
the one monument that the pharaohs never built? There isn't a single monument that has the cartouches of all the pharaohs, so we transformed this stairway into the Pharaonic hall of fame. The visitor is not just experiencing architecture, but the story, the content, the encounter with the object, the encounter with history."

Enough interest and ideas exist today to create museums well into the 21st century. What could possibly stand in the way of creating lasting masterpieces? Imagination, knowledge, genius, lack of master-planning, lack of money, lack of time—the list is endless. Frank Gehry might say, just let the organization of the artists sway and keep the political and business interests away. ■





CLOCKWISE, STARTING TOP: Bedouin tents inspired the design of the Libyan Museum of Conflict; The Museum of Yue Minjun is an architectural metaphor of a river rock; Narrative spins around pharaonic artifacts mounting the stair of the Great Egyptian Museum towards Khufu's pyramid; Xixi Wetland Art Museum.





# IS INNOVATION DEAD IN THE UNITED STATES?

Challenged by American nostalgia and a poor economy, innovative architecture finds a home abroad **BY JACK SKELLEY**

**WHEN IT COMES TO EXCITING ARCHITECTURE IS THE** United States losing its mojo? New York Times Columnist Thomas L. Friedman recently observed that "landing at Kennedy Airport from Hong Kong [is] like going from the Jetsons to the Flintstones" because of Kennedy's "ugly low ceiling" and poor tech amenities. And just as the world has marveled at Beijing's brilliant Olympics facilities, Dubai is about to complete the world's tallest skyscraper, the 818-meter Burj Dubai (about one-third taller than current leader, Taipei 101, designed by C.Y. Lee & Partners).

Ironically in many cases, American architects are behind this wow-architecture. Adrian Smith, formerly of SOM, designed The Burj Dubai as well as Shanghai's 88-story, pagoda-inspired Jin Mao Tower skyscraper. While Kohn Pedersen

Fox of New York created the Shanghai World Financial Center rising like a colossal bottle opener. The balance of iconic originality seems to be shifting away from the United States. Even the once creative hotbed of Southern California has not seen a major Frank Gehry building since the Walt Disney Concert Hall. (Gehry was commissioned for Los Angeles' Grand Avenue, but the project has been sidelined by the economy.)

"America is becoming old now. It's wearing out, while the old countries with new economies are going gangbusters," says Frances Anderton, host of KCRW's "DnA: Design and Architecture" radio program in Los Angeles. Scott Hunter, Principal at NBBJ's Los Angeles headquarters, explains it this way: "Rapid urbanization in Asia creates more

opportunities. Land is at such a premium that there is a positive attitude toward renewal—a futurist belief that cities can and should be made better."

For such an ancient culture, China has a stunning absence of nostalgia, says Hunter. Here, "there is fear about what L.A. can turn into, distrust about big thinking and big plans, and a feeling that people might long for the charming, cozy Southern California landscape of garden parties and backyards," he adds. In addition, China's centralized, authoritarian government, homogenous society and huge labor pool hastens development. But architects, such as Cunningham Group Architecture P.A. Board Chairman John Quiter, whose firm does work around the world while headquartered in Minneapolis and Los Angeles,





**"America is becoming old now. It's wearing out, while the old countries with new economies are going gangbusters." – FRANCES ANDERTON**

are not necessarily impressed by many of the overseas buildings.

"To showcase the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese did create a few icons, but most of the work on the Olympics was not cutting-edge," says Quiter, who serves on the Executive Committee of ULI Los Angeles, and shares the group's espousal of sustainable design. "The same is true in the Middle East. What bothers me most is that cutting-edge, in today's world, should mean sustainable as well as eye-catching. But many of the world's most celebrated architects are not being responsible in producing truly sustainable work. In helping shape these dynamically growing new economies and cities, our best architects should be teaching

them and the rest of the world what great sustainable architecture looks like and how it performs."

If innovation is defined by sustainability, the United States leads in some ways, lags in others. "Most American cities now require LEED Silver certification for city or state buildings," says Hunter. "And California has led the charge in energy consciousness." On the other hand, much of Asia's energy standards are already green: "Their offices are a bit humid, not as cool as here, and you can open the windows. [In the U.S.], if it's not the optimal humidity, people will complain. Our threshold of comfort will just have to change."

As for Dubai, some American architects

reject the entire concept, flashy buildings or not. "We have declined to work there because we fundamentally don't believe the idea is sustainable," says Ronald Altoon, Partner at Altoon + Porter (also a member of ULI Los Angeles Executive Committee). "It's an emirate which is largely comprised of expat workers and buildings for people who are non-residents of Dubai. That's not a real economy."

Nevertheless, iconic buildings reflect not only a country's wealth and innovation but are symbiotically linked with a sense of national pride. Beijing's Olympics buildings served as China's coming-out party in front of the entire World. So what can the United States do to regain its glory?

More opportunities may arise from the Federal economic stimulus funding. The first

priority, of course, is to support projects already on the drawing boards. But sustainability should remain a clear priority: "It would be better to see projects that build a greener infrastructure in this country, rather than just spending money to get the economy moving," says Quiter.

An innovative and sustainable vision among government, designers, and transportation infrastructure may allow the United States design to shine: "Our cities are in dire need," says Hunter. "Our metro and bus system will never replace the auto unless we have a massive overhaul of the entire system."

While we're at it, can we please fix our Flintstonian airports? ■





## JENNIFER SIEGAL OF OFFICE OF MOBILE DESIGN

A traveling architect gets her clients moving in the same direction

### What is your latest project?

An interesting woman with a lot of property in Big Sur hired us for two residences. The intention is that they be off-grid. She wants them to be a different version of prefab structures, as examples of what can be done, as test projects.

### Tell me about the Eco Lab. Who initiated it?

That project was done in 1998. It was one of my first design and build projects right after I graduated. I initiated it and found a non-profit in Hollywood, the Hollywood Beautification Team, that needed [help]. We determined they needed a mobile classroom. I went around begging for materials. It's pretty easy to get people to step up to the plate. There were six students in the studio and we used recycled and found materials. It was interesting because the trailer itself came from Richard Carlson at the Brewery. I

later did a house for him with containers. The problem with the Eco Lab, like a lot of programs, was that they didn't have a long-term vision for how they would staff it and how they would repair it, so after its first couple of seasons it disappeared. But Sharon

them. That spurred the next project with Larry Scarpa to take a manufactured home and turn it into mobile classroom for the Venice Community Housing Corporation. A lot of the students from Eco Lab came on as managers on that project. It's a testament to

**"My biggest joy is traveling and lecturing. I think at some level that's why I got into this work."**

Romano who founded the HBT was my cohort and client. It was a labor of love, about getting a bunch of people together and moving them in the same direction.

### So in a sense you also had a mobile client.

Yes. She had all kinds of people coming through that helped work on it, students from Woodbury and students doing community service. It was amazing to watch

what you can do with a lot of passion and direction but not a lot of funding. They need leadership. Especially now, given the local schools cutting curriculum, the idea of using mobile classrooms can be shared between schools, like a science lab, is timely. There is a group called Side Street Projects in Pasadena that is starting to service the schools in Pasadena. They have mobile trucks and trailers [and] run on solar.



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### Is this a prototype for others?

It has spawned new things for us as well as for other people. I think as I mature in my profession and I do a lot of lectures, it gives me a platform. When a student has a [good] idea, to say "That's a great idea, why don't you do it." There's something about mobility that conjures up images for students at architecture schools. It's a scale they can grasp and it's generational. It's the way in which they have been born into technology. It's a clear leap between mobile structures and the way they communicate with each other.

### Mobile architecture is as ancient as man but there is less concreteness in how we live our lives so paradoxically it is very current.

You look at a car and realize how much it does for us. They talk, they heat, they comfort us, they move us—and then you look at a house and they look so bulky, they look so out of date. There is so much evolution in autos but not in architecture. Auto design is changing but how come architectural design is not evolving?

### How does it differ from your other mobile projects?

It was the first so I learned from it. I learned about making decisions on the fly, pulling something out and trying it again. It was an experiment so it wasn't precious. If we found a better material or a better way to do something we could be more responsive. The first time you are so naive you don't



PREVIOUS PAGE: The Eco Lab, one of Siegal's first design and build projects started out as an experiment. ABOVE: Siegal had a maple leaf with the inscription, "You are Nature," carved into the original trailer flooring.

know you can't do it. You tend to be freer and sometimes it tends to be the best work.

### Who provided the educational content?

HBT provided it. They would take the classroom to the local schools and the kids would get on board and learn about the life of a tree, for example. [Students] would move through the structure and at the end they would get a sapling to take home [and] plant. It struck me that those kids had not seen that many trees before.

### Have you seen the children interacting with the Lab?

They were crazed, running around and the teacher was trying to get them to flow through the space as we intended. It was exciting and more rewarding than doing a single-family residence.

### What is the most surprising result of the Lab?

Working with the Woodbury students. They were not the star students but it instilled confidence in them. I saw a real transformation.

### Any other classrooms on the boards now?

I just finished a big school in North Hollywood last year. I was hoping [it] would get me back to my educational roots; then I got sidetracked with all these houses. But I would be keen to develop that. Those projects take initiative and time. It's something that the universities should be [encouraging]. It should be mandatory that each arch student go through a community related project.

—Ann Gray





# Tall Building imagining the Skyscraper



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# CREDITS

## Korean Museum of Animation

LOCATION: Bucheon, South Korea

ARCHITECT: NBBJ

PROJECT MANAGER: Robert Mankin

LEAD DESIGNERS: Paul Q. Davis, Nnamdi Ugenyi

DESIGNERS: Kiki Wang, Young-im Kim

CLIENT: Hyundai Construction

LOCAL PARTNER ARCHITECTS: Mooyoung A&E,  
Gansam Partners

## Lumen Multi-Faith Centre for Worship

LOCATION: London, United Kingdom

DESIGN TEAM: Theis and Khan Architects

ARTS CONSULTANT: Modus Operandi

LIGHTING CONSULTANT: George Sexton Associates

INTERIORS: Theis and Khan Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: F J Samuely

SERVICES ENGINEER: EngDesign

QUANTITY SURVEYOR: Boyden and Company

LANDSCAPE: Theis and Khan Architects

CONTRACTOR: Dollman Ralston

PLANNING SUPERVISOR: DPK Associates

CLIENT: United Reformed Church

## Peter and Paula Fasseas Cancer Clinic

LOCATION: Tucson, AZ

ARCHITECTS: CO Architects

PRINCIPAL IN CHARGE: Stephen Yundt, AIA

DESIGN PRINCIPAL: Dennis McFadden, FAIA

SENIOR PROJECT ARCHITECT: James Simeo, AIA

SENIOR MEDICAL PLANNER: Suzanne Jagers

MEDICAL PLANNER: Michael Gould

DESIGN ARCHITECT: Will Longyear

DESIGNERS: Kin Lee, Lance Oda, Susan Conn

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Ten Eyck Landscape Architecture

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: John Martin & Associates

MEP ENGINEER: Arup

CIVIL ENGINEER: Engineering and

Environmental Consulting

LIGHTING DESIGN: Kaplan Gehring McCarroll Lighting

INTERIOR DESIGN: CNI Design

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT: DPR Construction

## Sierra Bonita Housing Project

LOCATION: Los Angeles, CA

ARCHITECT: Patrick Tighe Architecture

PRINCIPAL: Patrick Tighe, AIA, FAAR

PROJECT MANAGER: Lisa Little

PROJECT TEAM: Risa Tsutsumi, Yosuke Hoshina,  
Peter Storey, Jarod Poenisch, Karla Mueller

### CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL: Gilsanz . Murray . Steficek, Inc (GMS)

ENVIRONMENTAL: Ideas for the Built Environment (IBE)

LANDSCAPE: Ahbe Landscape Architects

CONTRACTOR: Parker Sarg

## Taipei Performing Arts Center

LOCATION: Taipei, Taiwan

PRINCIPAL DESIGNERS: Herwig Baumgartner, Scott Uriu

PROJECT TEAM: Paul Macherey, Justin Oh, Phillip

Ramirez, Daniel Saltee, Yaohua Wang, Art Zargaryan

CONSULTANTS: Chih-Sun Shen and Hsun-Yao Chang,  
S.C.S. & Associates

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Bruce Danziger, Associated  
Principal, ARUP

THEATER CONSULTANT: David H. Rosenberg, Principal,  
and Brian Hall, Principal Theater Design, Theatre  
Projects Consultants, Inc.

ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT: Yasuhisa Toyota, Principal,  
Nagata Acoustics

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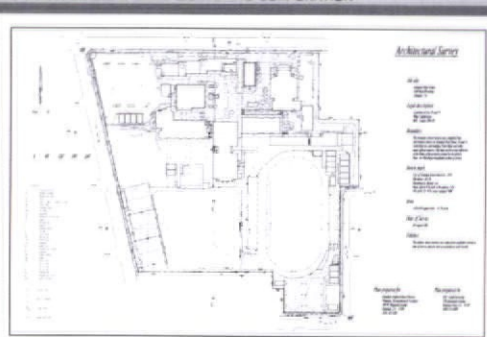
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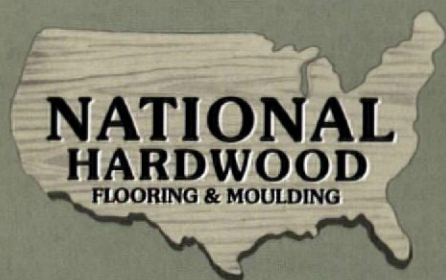
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# BEYOND THE GRID



## CORE RENAISSANCE

Burt Hill harnesses geothermal energy into Terratempere Park

BY INA DROSU

ONE OF THE MOST BOUNTIFUL, ADAPTABLE, AND cost-effective energy sources we have is perhaps the one we sit on: the Earth. Throughout history, humans have used geothermal springs for vital needs such as warm shelters, cleansing, cooking, and therapeutic medicines. The resurgent interest in this resource is therefore the rekindling of an old relationship that has been greatly improved and expanded through modern technology.

Geothermal power plants draw their source—turned into electricity through turbine action—from miles-deep geothermal reservoirs; or water and steam are harnessed for direct use in numerous non-electrical applications. From single items—such as geothermal park benches and children's play surfaces by Burt Hill Elementterra™ to whole geothermal districts such as the Klamath Falls, Oregon Geo-Heat Center that features heated roads and sidewalks—the Earth's core power has made possible what would be,

through any other system, technologically and cost prohibitive.

"The main advantage of [geothermal power] is the heating system is outside, and they are far more efficient than conventional systems," says Dr. John Lund, Director of the Geo-Heat Center. Having installed more than half of the world's two million geothermal heat pumps, the United States is leading the way as one of the fastest growing geothermal hosts in the world, increasing by roughly 20 percent each year, according to Lund. Why, then, is geothermal not more widespread? Lack of infrastructure—trained installers, designers and drillers—creates the biggest obstacle, he says.

Sara Moore, ASLA, Principal and member of Burt Hill's board of directors explains: "Geothermal power is viable if programmed into a project early in the design phase—planning, programming and budgeting are key." Advance planning to install in-ground piping

creates multiple opportunities to incorporate geothermal elements, such as benches and sidewalks, in the future. "Ten years ago, geothermal systems were not so attractive because traditional energy alternatives were relatively inexpensive," says Moore. "Today is a very different story." Experts agree savings in operating and maintenance offsets the initial costs of installing geothermal power.

Through Elementterra, Burt Hill hopes to revitalize projects through a series of sustainable design technology systems including Terratempere Park, a series of geothermal benches, sidewalks, play structures and shading. "The tactile surfaces are maintained at comfortable ambient temperature levels that serve to refresh the user as they relax in a multitude of environments and spaces," says Moore. The technology can apply to many different design spaces including schools, healthcare complexes, parks and residential communities. ■





Photo G. Antonelli - Kon

Photo taken in the Migotto workshop in S. Stino di Livenza - Venezia

Design: Gabriele Centazzo

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