

LAUTNER PROGRAM NOVEMBER 11

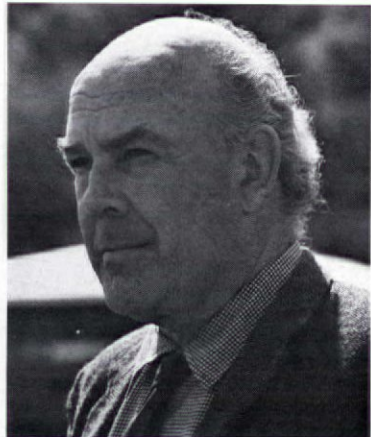


photo by Julius Shulman

On November 11 the 4th annual LA/AIA Recognition Dinner will honor John Lautner, FAIA for his outstanding contributions to the profession. The evening's festivities will be held in the Collonade Room of the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Beginning with a no-host reception at 7:00 p.m., dinner will take place at 8:00 p.m. after which Lautner will address the gathering. During the course of the evening program, the results of the 1981 Chapter Board elections will be announced. The cost of the dinner is \$18.00 per person. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP the Chapter office by Wednesday, November 5, 1980, using the envelope enclosed with this issue of *LA ARCHITECT*.

Lautner is a principal in the firm bearing his name and has emphasized residential and school design in his professional practice. Among his major projects are the "Silvertop" home overlooking Silverlake in Los Angeles, the Elrod house in Palm Springs, Cal Tech radio observatory laboratory in Pasadena, and the University of Hawaii science building. More than 100 residences in Southern California, many in the Hollywood Hills, reflect his architectural philosophy.

Lautner's design achievements have been shown and critiqued in several domestic and foreign publications including *Life Magazine*, *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, *California Arts and Architecture*, *Arts and Architecture*, *House and Home*, *LA ARCHITECT* and *A Guide to Architecture in Southern California*.

Born in 1911 in Michigan, Lautner received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Northern Michigan University. He has been a member of the LA/AIA for 23 years. A concerned citizen in civic and cultural affairs, he has participated in design seminars, teaching assignments, and campaigns to save the Watts Towers and Elysian Park.

LA/AIA ENDORSES BERNARDI PROP. PROPOSAL

A motion to require the Building and Safety Department to issue a building permit on plans prepared by licensed architects or structural engineers without checking plans for other than non-structurally related matters has been introduced before the City Council by Councilman Ernani Bernardi. Suggested for the purpose of streamlining the building permit process, this proposal, in the opinion of the LA/AIA Board of Directors, would have far-reaching beneficial effects. A committee, chaired by Director Harry Newman, AIA, has been formed to lend enthusiastic support to the motion and to pursue this critical issue on both the local and state levels.

The motion reads as follows: Delays in the City's processing procedures for building permits should be avoided or eliminated wherever possible in order to lower the costs and expedite the construction of badly-needed housing. One procedure which routinely results in a project being delayed for one to two months, and in many instances much longer, is plan checking. Many plans are submitted by qualified architects and engineers who should be knowledgeable enough of the City's building requirements to assume responsibility for the accuracy of their plans without further pre-construction review. Compliance with the City requirements could then be checked during routine inspections already being performed by building inspectors at the construction site. City requirements not structurally-related such as zoning, and plans submitted by other than qualified architects and engineers, could continue to be checked by the City prior to the issuance of a building permit. Such a procedure would reduce delays in construction for properly-designed projects, place the responsibility for assuring conformance with the City's requirements more directly in the hands of private enterprise, and allow current City personnel to process all other projects more quickly: I therefore move that the City Attorney, in cooperation with the Department of Building and Safety, be requested to prepare and present amendments to the City's Municipal Code to require the Building and Safety Department to issue a building permit on plans prepared by licensed architect or structural engineer without checking plans for other than nonstructural related matters such as zoning.

We spoke with Councilman Bernardi just prior to going to press: the Council has referred his proposal to the Building and Safety Commission for an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, plus a comprehensive report on how

this matter is handled in other jurisdictions, up to and including the Federal Government.

Your comments, suggestions and/or active participation on the LA/AIA support committee would be most welcome. This issue may well be a turning point for the profession as well as the entire construction industry.

Janice Axon

Janice Axon is the office manager for Kamnitzer Cotton Vreeland, Architects and Planners; and serves on the LA ARCHITECT Editorial Board as Treasurer.

ARCHITECTURE VERSUS ART?

That architecture is culturally allied to other areas of the fine arts is a proposition that all too often loses relevance outside the confines of academic institutions. The fine arts have traditionally influenced architecture as well as each other. An exhibition currently on view at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, *Architectural Sculpture*, examines the role of painting and sculpture as cross-influences on architecture.

The objects on display can be roughly divided into two categories. The first consists of two-dimensional representations, sketches, written descriptions, photographs, originally "made" some other place and time. These works almost always involve an artist focusing attention on an element, usually of some architectural significance (a house, a barley field, a window) by visually altering this element so that the viewer is made conscious of it in some previously unperceived way.

This disassociation of sensibilities allows a new perspective that should be noted by architects. For too often it is the expedient answer rather than the best, most imaginative, cheapest, wittiest or most serious that gets built. The pieces on display then, speak to a quality that is generally lacking in our architecture. It is this quality that Esther McCoy referred to in her lecture at the Architecture and Design Support Group Symposium (see article page 2) as "mood...night side...surprise...."

The other category of work in this exhibit can be described as two-dimensional representations of a mental construct of a space or object. Usually made by an architect, these pieces vary widely in their specificity.

Architectural representations of cerebral space are not new, in fact they are as old as the profession. What seems to be new is the focus recently placed on these representations themselves. This focus at times eclipses the importance of the object, space or idea being represented.

Architecture is elevated to the position of a fine art only as it becomes

a uniquely perceived sensory experience. By diminishing it to a representation of itself it (architecture) becomes flawed insofar as it is trying to compete with painting and sculpture on their own terms.

And why this recent shift in focus? Of course there is no one answer, but there are a few notable factors. Since much of society seems no longer committed to the quality of the built environment, the most innovative architects of our time are not allowed to build. The media, architectural press and art and architecture galleries, have become influential and, as such, they are propagators of not architecture but representations. When it becomes more important for an architect to produce a beautiful representation of a space than to produce a building, we are faced with a potential diminution in the quality of the man-made environment.

The show, however, is important for the same reason publications and galleries are important: they provide an immediate forum for communication among architects and encourage the dissemination of ideas.

Various installations of *Architectural Sculpture* will continue to be presented at galleries throughout Los Angeles until the middle of November. For further information contact: LAICA, 2020 S. Robertson Blvd., (213) 559-5033.

Michael Hirschbein

Michael Hirschbein is a practicing architect in Los Angeles.

Program Review: THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL

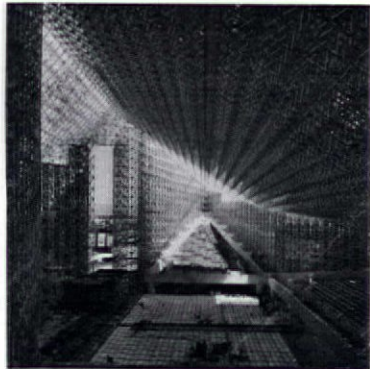


photo by Julius Shulman

Who would turn down the opportunity to see at the same time Philip Johnson, John Burgee, Robert Schuller and the most published and controversial architectural project in Southern California today? The event was an open house for the regional design community, September 16, at the newly completed Garden Grove Community Church. Los Angeles architects, who turned out in force despite the 50 mile rush hour drive, expected to be entertained by the hosts respective reverence and irreverence and were not disappointed.

But looming even larger than the personalities was the Crystal Cathedral itself. Preconceptions melted on approach. The building could have won visitors over passively with its soaring scale and refined palette of colors and materials, but instead it took them by force: the glass skin echoed a spectacular sunset, fountains gushed forth, 90-foot high glass doors glided aside as if by Heavenly proclamation (actually with assistance of a motor the size of that in a washing machine), and the hall's notorious acoustics added a special accent to every sound. In spite of the building's formidable play for audience attention, each speaker fully lived up to his reputation, treating the design community to more drama and wit than seasoned lecture-goers have come to expect.

Schuller assumed a proper ecclesiastic posture, describing in splendid tones his commitment to remove barriers between people and the great firmament. He related the controversial cost of the building to his belief in human worth and art: "Art reflects humans and what they can

(continued page 3)

BROWN DERBY SAVED



photo by Regula Campbell

One of the city's most famous restaurants, the original Brown Derby on Wilshire Boulevard, narrowly escaped demolition two weeks ago when owners, in an attempt to keep the project a secret, summarily dismissed the employees early Friday evening, September 19. Credit is due to employee Angela Stewart, who notified the local news media, who in turn called Marian Gibbons, president of Hollywood Heritage. At the same time Martin Weil, president of the Los Angeles Conservancy, was notified.

Together, they developed plans to notify the news media and their own constituencies, arriving at the Derby as scaffolding was being erected. An impromptu picket line was set up, and the officers went to work trying to contact the owners to propose alternatives to razing the historic building.

The Brown Derby was the creation of Herbert Somborn, husband of actress Gloria Swanson. A friend, Wilson Mizner, had commented that "anyone who knew about food could sell it out of a hat." Somborn did know about food, and the Brown Derby opened in 1926 to prove his point. Its original location was about a block west of the present site. It was an instant success, and became a popular place for reporters to interview celebrities and politicians. Press people

were often given special identification, tables, and a substantial discount on their food. It was said that something about the Derby was printed somewhere in the world every day of the year.

Today, the Derby is owned by Gloria Somborn Anderson, daughter of Gloria Swanson and Herbert Somborn. Acting as her agents are son Larry Anderson and son-in-law James Young. Maintaining that the restaurant could no longer make a profit in its prestigious Wilshire Boulevard location, Young and Anderson set about finding new uses for the land. Aware that there might be a public outcry, they went about business as usual up to the last minute. On Friday evening, with the evening meal fully prepared, they gave notice to the employees, donated the food to a rescue mission on Skid Row, and removed the fixtures from the interior of the structure. But that was before, as they put it, they knew "there were people who would work with us to solve our problem."

In some preliminary conversation on Saturday, September 20, it was discovered that the owners had no demolition permit, a violation of the municipal code. As the day wore on, Conservancy and Hollywood Heritage phone calls produced more pickets and reporters. One sign, "Honk if you would like to save the Derby," drew constant response from weekend motorists on Wilshire Boulevard. Local residents paused in their errands to learn of the Derby's fate, some becoming very angry that such a landmark was being so summarily dismissed from the landscape. Saturday ended in an impasse. Coverage on local news programs that evening brought floods of calls to Hollywood Heritage and the Conservancy.

Early the next morning, Gibbons and Weil were alerted that the bulldozers had been moved on to the site. Again, the organizations turned out, and the police were called. As the bulldozers took one bite out of the auxiliary brick portion of the building, they were

ordered to desist by LAPD.

At this point, Marian Gibbons made contact with the owners and explained that it was possible for them to develop the property and at the same time satisfy the community by allowing the two preservation organizations to move the hat portion of the structure to another site. The owners readily agreed, and in the ensuing conversation, it became apparent that the family still had strong feelings for the Derby. An agreement was reached whereby the hat portion would be donated to Hollywood Heritage and the Los Angeles Conservancy.

Monday afternoon, in a meeting with City Councilman John Ferraro, Gibbons, Weil, and the children of Mrs. Daly, signed an agreement donating the original Brown Derby to the two organizations. Gibbons commented that a distressing situation had been turned into a happy ending for all concerned by the complete cooperation of the Daly family. Demolition of the auxiliary brick structures, including the kitchen, began the following Thursday. But the Brown Derby remains untouched. The two organizations have until March 15, 1981, to remove it from the site.

To that end, Hollywood Heritage and the Los Angeles Conservancy have formed a joint venture committee to expedite the process of finding the Derby a new home. Known as the Historic Brown Derby Project, the committee expects to begin fund-raising activities and to accept proposals from developers shortly. Proposals will be evaluated in terms of the best use for the unique building. Offers have begun to come in already. Anyone wishing to contribute to the maintenance and security fund or to join in the above activities may write to Historic Brown Derby Project, c/o Hollywood Heritage, P.O. Box 2586, Hollywood, CA 90028.

Christy Johnson

Christy Johnson is an architectural historian and is presently Vice President for Hollywood Heritage.

NOVEMBER 1980

Volume 6, Number 11

ADSG Symposium

by Elizabeth McMillian

Watts Towers Report

by Christy Johnson

Calendar:

Nov. 5: Abraham Zabludovsky and Theodore Gonzales de Leon, 8 p.m., Sci-Arc, 1800 Berkeley St., Santa Monica.

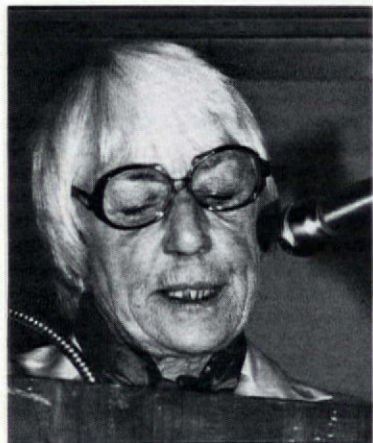
Nov. 6: Sally Woodbridge, 8 p.m., Room 3400, Boelter Hall, UCLA.

Nov. 11: John Lautner Program, 6 p.m., Collonade Room, Biltmore Hotel, 515 S. Olive St.

Nov. 12: Ricardo Legorreta, 8 p.m., Sci-Arc, see Nov. 5.

Nov. 13: Ricardo Legorreta, "Mexican Minimalist Architecture," 6 p.m., Sequoia Room, P.D.C., RSVP: 657-0800.

THE ELUSIVE MUSE



Esther McCoy



Craig Hodgetts



Herb Rosenthal



David Gebhard



John van Hamersveld



Lois Boardman



Barbara Goldstein



John Pastier



Mildred Friedman



Arthur Drexler



Lisa Taylor



Michael Pittas

Saturday, September 27, the Architecture and Design Support Group of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art held a day-long symposium, *The Elusive Muse*, to discuss the founding of a department of architecture and design within the new museum. It whet the appetites of the design and architecture community with the hopes of a permanent museum forum for its activities and exhibits.

Over 350 architects, designers and other interested professionals attended the all-day event held at the Department of Water and Power auditorium. Applause, comments and questions heard from an attentive audience reflected a sympathetic tenor. The Support Group made its introduction into the community and it seems to be well received. Questions now remain as to what has the group substantially achieved by the meeting and what has it re-defined as its needs.

Joseph Giovannini, architecture critic of the *Herald-Examiner* and chairman of the group, briefly introduced and identified the group as a number of interested architecture and design professionals who initially came together last March at the suggestion of architect Gary Gilbar, AIA, member of the Mayor's original Museum Advisory Committee. Gilbar approached former LA/AIA Executive Director, Deborah Feldman, to form a group for the inclusion of an architecture and design department within the planned museum. In March the group held its first meeting and a committee, chaired by Barbara Goldstein, was formed to plan the symposium. By July the group had acquired recognition by the Museum Board and formulated a position paper, stating its goals. So far, the overall course of action taken by the group has shown a wise and cautious approach for a youthful organization made up of a broad, loosely defined community.

The Symposium committee invited national participants from prominent established institutions in order to learn from their experience and their varied departmental structures and exhibition policies. The speakers were part of the afternoon session and each reported their own beginnings and the operations of their departments.

Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design at New York's Museum of Modern Art, explained some of the unseen difficulties of running his well-known department. Despite the "lip service" paid by the museum to the department since its opening in 1929, it functioned without a permanent space until 1964 and it regularly has to vie for funds with the other museum departments. Overall, Drexler presented a model of a collecting and exhibiting department of a high standard with a constrained and, at times, restrictive museum-department relationship.

On the other hand, Mildred Friedman, Curator of Design at the Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis, described the fortunate position of being part of a museum which strongly supports architecture and design. Her department is not hampered with the maintenance of a collection and it focuses on imaginative exhibits which often cut across the boundaries of urban, environmental, design and architectural issues. The museum-sponsored publication, *Design Quarterly* (edited by Friedman), acts occasionally as an exhibit catalog and always as a forum for discourse with the national and international design community. The role model she outlined is a cross-disciplined department with a co-operative relationship to the museum institution and one which publishes a magazine of national importance.

The last departmental prototype was presented by Lisa Taylor, Director of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. This museum has sponsored a wide variety of exhibits, particularly notable are their out-of-doors exhibits using the city itself as artifact and museum space. Taylor showed how resourceful a department that has a strong sense of itself and a broad interpretation of design and architecture might be.

Although L.A. has its own strong generative force and character which will affect the structure of this new department, the survey of departmental types and their histories should prove useful to the Los Angeles group.

Positive suggestions came from the national panelists for the possible activities or scope of the Support Group and the hoped-for department of the new museum. Drexler said the group

should enlarge its constituency and, with a note of optimism, he boldly advised it not to be afraid of getting this department started — "just do it." Friedman stressed the necessity for a department of architecture and design in a contemporary museum to exhibit nationally-recognized local talent. In her slide presentation, Taylor said that the group must both recognize the specific needs of L.A. and define departmental goals. Most importantly, she inspirationally added, "There is an audience eager for the kind of department that this group envisions." The last panelist of the afternoon session was Michael Pittas, Director of the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment of the Arts. His comments were direct and incisive, "Money is a prime force," and "NEA's Design Arts Program is willing to help and wants to stimulate incentive and encourage active participation from other local organizations and the private sector."

In the morning session, representatives of the local architecture and design community spoke about the structure and the needs of the design and architecture department. David Gebhard, president of the Society of Architectural Historians and former director of the UCSB art galleries, stirred up the panel with questions challenging the basic nature of the exhibition process, "Why have a department of architecture and design in a museum at all? It might not be advantageous for L.A. to have such a department. What effect will it have? Is this to be a department to exhibit artifacts as high art or are we unrealistic to think we could affect some social-political position?"

This cautionary tone continued when Lois Boardman, director of California Design, warned of the hardships of fund raising and expressed her fear of an unbalanced museum-department relationship. She questioned, "Once in a museum, will architecture and design be thought of as Cinderella's ugly step-sister?"

Designer Herb Rosenthal also presented a pessimistic attitude when he questioned the appropriateness of a design department within a museum. "If Braun coffeemakers are part of the collection, perhaps an editor of *Consumer Reports* should be on the Museum Board." And he concluded "I don't want to see Braun coffeemakers next to Picassos." In reference to the department's design collection (if it must have one), he urged that the difference between art and utility ought to be examined very closely.

John van Hamersveld, artist and graphic designer, optimistically stated his feelings that the department should be a tangible expression of society. "There is a dichotomy between art and commerce...but let's have the museum function as a communication center, so we can acquire video cassettes, programming, publications and visualize at our homes what comes out of it. The museum can still remain the palace where we can go to have a different meditative experience."

Architect, writer and professor at UCLA, Craig Hodgetts brought attention to the heart of the Symposium. He pointed out, "The previous speakers focused on *objects*, the designer and architect's obsession. But the real focus of this community of companion spirits is the experience and the memory of the object. Once the group recognizes that intangible connective tissue that binds it together, it can extend to a national community and ferret out its paramount interests." Hodgetts responded to Herb Rosenthal that "Braun coffeemakers have little to do with the idea of a museum."

Esther McCoy's delivery triggered everyone's imagination. She proved to be the Elusive Muse herself — or, at least, the group's personal spiritual guide. Her first-hand experience as recorder and participant in architectural and design events in the area for over thirty years enriched her lyrical presentation with practical insights. "A museum presents a frontside, inside, *nightside*. It's an outside envelope that photographs well; an inside for the show; and a night side aspect that is the unexpected, the eye-opener — that is, the mood...what happens...a search for the absolute...what you take away with you in remembrance." She poetically recounted a history of local architectural events and exhibits using translucent images of the old County Art Museum in Exposition Park, the specter of the present County Art Museum on top of the tar pits and dinosaurs. Her verbal fragments evoked powerful images in

the minds' eyes of the listeners, all the while establishing some important definitions for the group: "A successful exhibit is one where a memory of something special lingers.... Place is important — but only if it provides the place for an experience." She concluded, "Frank Gehry drove a truck out to the desert. Cesar Pelli showed some visiting architects set-back tract houses in the Valley. These are exhibits." McCoy's use of the present tense was authoritative. The cohesive spirit of the audience and the experience of her compelling presentation were memorable.

Does the department stand a chance of coming into existence at all? Leading-off the afternoon session of speakers, Museum Board member, Max Palevsky boldly presented the bottom-line: the group has no assurance of establishing the department without raising its own funds for staffing and exhibitions. Will the department be only a boarder or an adopted child of the museum? Hasn't anyone on the Museum Board seriously questioned the role of architecture and design in the full spectrum of modern art? When questioned by the audience, Palevsky affirmed that this organized body representing the interests of the architecture and design community will not have a part in the selection of the architect for the Museum. He argued that having two eminently capable artists, Sam Francis and Bob Irwin, on the Architect Selection Committee is enough to insure a competent architectural decision. Someone in the audience asked, "How will this board be able to make a responsible decision regarding the planning and the program of the building since all they know are walls and painting?" Palevsky responded, "What else is there?" He dismissed a question about having a design competition by referring to the failure (!?) of the Beauborg in Paris. Several out-spoken members of the audience voiced their displeasure over his withholding the names of the architects under consideration for the museum design and over the rejection of a design competition. It seems that the Board has eschewed other benefits derived from a competition as, later in the afternoon session, Michael Pittas explained that "the NEA advocates the design competition both as a mechanism that raises funds and educates the public."

Other speakers of the day included Joel Wachs, a Councilman sympathetic to the inclusion of architecture and design within the museum and one who sees the museum building as a work of art that will revitalize and stimulate the economy of downtown Los Angeles. In the absence of Tim Vreeland, AIA, representative of the developer-architect team for the project, Symposium Moderator and architectural critic John Pastier gave a brief summary of the choice of the team from among the five proposals in the Bunker Hill competition. And architectural historian, John Chase gave a presentation of the regional precedents in architectural exhibits, lectures and collections.

The Architecture and Design Support Group achieved its purpose of educating the group and gaining public awareness by the symposium. The group paid its homage to the established institutions of New York and Minneapolis and recognized the viability of working with umbrella organizations and funding sources such as the NEA. It seriously evaluated itself by the records of its own local institutions, publications, exhibits, collections and individuals. It attempted to define its values, audience and goals. The group now needs to raise funds for its own survival, exhibits, a curator and a place in the new museum.

The design and architecture community can look forward to the next event of this group. It anticipates that this group will establish a co-operative working association with the museum organization: the Museum Board, Architect Selection Committee, and Artists Group. And, that this will be achieved with the backing of the community's own local professional and political organizations. When these far-ranging goals of the group are fulfilled, then we can call this symposium a success.

Elizabeth McMillian
Elizabeth McMillian is the President of the Southern California Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians and a doctoral candidate in architectural history at the University of Southern California.

Photographs, Kathy Bick

PERSPECTIVE

Cathedral

(continued from front page)

become. Sixteen million dollars is a small price to pay for something so beautiful it will remain for centuries." Schuller tempered his euphoria with his admission that he "went through Hell" (presumably a place not lightly visited by this man) during construction, his regret that not a single fellow cleric has praised the project, and his frustration that decorum prevented him from passing a collection plate through the SRO — but definitely secular — crowd of 2,900.

As Johnson ascended the pulpit, one wondered how this diminutive man could follow Schuller's combination of vocal therapeutics and manipulation of the building's gadgetry. There was no problem, however, as Johnson employed the well-worn Schuller technique of building audience self-esteem in his opening remarks: "Southern California is The Promised Land. Where else can you build fantasies? Rejecting his label as a post-modernist, Johnson cited the straight-forward means by which he designed the cathedral: he took the program and designed the building. His first consultation for the nine-story high glass doors was purportedly *Sweets Catalogue*. Admonishing architects to talk less and do more, Johnson stressed the importance of monuments to human spirit. How to get those monumental commissions? "Get yourself a patron."

Johnson's legendary tongue-in-cheek repartee was nicely balanced by his partner and foil, John Burgee. Presented with the unenviable position of following theology and philosophy with nuts and bolts, Burgee rose to the occasion and filled listeners in on some of the intricacies and insecurities of the construction program. Honest enough to admit some apprehension when the scaffolding was removed to allow the roof to support itself (it did) and brimming with enthusiasm about a new silicone gasket with exactly the properties he required, Burgee was someone with whom audience could relate. All raves aside, Burgee said he is pleased that the cathedral "looks like a church."

Amid the fanfare of the evening, one

of the program sponsors, the Architectural Guild of the University of Southern California, was inadvertently forgotten; instead, the ASID took the initial bow. However, the spectacle more than offset the error. In contrast with typically under- or oversold AIA events, the number of attendees almost precisely matched the number of available seats. Perhaps divine intervention should be credited for the smoothness with which the architectural event of the year was staged.

A. Jeffrey Skorneck

Jeffrey Skorneck is an architect and urban planner with Gruen Associates. Note: The LA/AIA regrets that the Architectural Guild of the University of Southern California was not properly credited on September 16 as co-sponsors of the Crystal Cathedral Program.

WATTS TOWERS PROGRESS REPORT

1979-80 has been year of steady progress for the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts. The Committee, charged with the guardianship of the Towers and with promoting community awareness about this unique folk art monument, has been working with state and local officials in an attempt to preserve the delicate structures and inhibit future destruction.

The Towers have never been ordinary. They are not ordinary structures, nor was their creation an ordinary achievement. One man, working alone for thirty-three years, created these amazing structures. Simon Rodia used only simple tile-setting tools, a window washer's belt and bucket in creating his masterpiece. He slowly crafted his fantasies into physical reality, transforming steel rods, mesh, and mortar into remarkable towers which he embellished with glittering pieces of glass, tile, and ceramics. And then, one day in 1954, he was finished. He deeded the property to a neighbor, disposed of his personal possessions, and left, never again to see the Towers.

By 1959, a demolition permit had been ordered by the City of Los

Angeles. The City felt the structures were unsafe, citing instability and poor quality of materials as their rationale. The Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts, a non-profit organization, was formed that year in an effort to rescue the unique structure from demolition. Engineers, architects, and attorneys volunteered their time. An aerospace engineer devised a stress test. After some discussion, the city agreed to allow the Committee to conduct the test. It proved that the Towers could withstand 10,000 pounds of pressure, equal to a 72 mph gale. The demolition order was rescinded, and the Committee began to restore the Towers, opening them to the public in 1960.

By 1975, it had become clear that the Towers could no longer be maintained by the Committee. They were deeded to the City of Los Angeles. The City, in its turn, failed to restore and maintain them properly, and ownership passed to the State of California in 1978.

This summer, Governor Brown

signed AB 990, which included a \$1,000,000 appropriation for the restoration of the Towers. The appropriation will insure an on-going restoration plan. Problems including cracking, corrosion of metal elements, and loss of decorative materials. The Committee, using a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has hired a consultant to design a comprehensive preservation plan for the structure, which will guide the State in its restoration efforts. With such cooperation, it is hoped that major strides will be made in restoring and maintaining the Towers.

Operating under a grant from Tosco Corporation and the California Arts Council, the Committee continues its

public education activities. Information is available from the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts, P.O. Box 1461, Hollywood, CA 90028, or by phone at (213) 655-7614.

Christy Johnson

Christy Johnson is an architectural historian and is presently Vice President of Hollywood Heritage and Executive Director of the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers.

Paul Bielenberg Photography

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CHAPTER NEWS AND NOTES

Summary 2,172 Meeting of the LA/AIA Board of Directors, September 9, 1980:

- Zechter volunteered to help Steve Johnson in the writing of the Office Procedures Manual. Questions were raised regarding the procedure for the nomination of new directors. Newman suggested that the Board poll the membership for nominations for upcoming committees.
- Nominating Committee accepted the following names from the Board for consideration: Jerry Pollack AIA, Dan Dworsky FAIA, Ray Kappe AIA, Bob Kennard AIA, Mike O'Sullivan AIA, Ron Goldman AIA, Fred Lyman AIA, Michael Hall AIA, John Mutlow AIA, Virginia Tanzmann AIA, Frank Bernard AIA, W. Landworth AIA.
- Maston described qualifications for advancement to FAIA and moved the 5 nominations recommended by the Fellowship Committee be accepted.
- Richard Wurman asked for commitment of \$12,000 for funding of LA by LA from LA/AIA.
- Crompton moved to increase 1981 budget by \$12,000. Motion passed.
- Conklin opposed the method of funding.
- Bruce Boehner presented his exhibit and motion was passed to sponsor at not cost to the LA/AIA.
- Margo Siegel introduced by-laws changes and suggested that they be voted on at the membership meeting in November.
- Zechter requested funding from Board to allow Associate delegate to attend State Caucus three times per year. Lomax moved to support the request at a maximum of \$500 and upon approval of the Associate budget for 1981. Motion passed.

Membership Report: October: New members: Melvyn Bernstein (self-employed); Stephen Harrell (Ben Dengler AIA & Associates); Roger E. Layman (Maxwell Starkman AIA & Associates); Susan Peterson (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill); Mark W. Reinmiller (CM Construction Managers, Inc.); Ted Wu (Ted Wu Design Consultant); Associate Members: Arthur W. Chang; David Walter Decker (T. Scott MacGillivray AIA); Kong-Wei Ho; Stan Pao; David Lawrence Rhodes (Charles Copeland & Associates); Chris Short; Ronald C. Takai (Flewelling & Moody); Mark A. Wareham; Donna Jean Brown.

To celebrate the birthday of Los Angeles, the Da Camera Society of Mount St. Mary's College will produce eight special concerts of chamber music in historic architectural sites around the City. The series begins on December 7, with concerts approximately once a month. The programs are designed to

match music with an architectural environment. Seating is limited and early reservations are recommended. For a brochure, write to Dr. MaryAnn Bonino, Mount St. Mary's College, 12001 Chalon Road, Los Angeles 90049 — or telephone (213) 476-2237, x266.

Martin E. Fuller, FARA, has notified us that the California Society of American Institute of Building Designers is renewing their efforts to re-open the state's statutory registration of building designers as a licensed occupation. The licensing authority has been closed since 1964 when the law provided for a one-time registration of building designers. Fuller urges all California architects to contact their representatives in Sacramento to protest the re-opening of this law. "The safety and well being of the public demands fully qualified professionals whose expertise can enrich and safeguard the fabric of life in California."

The LA/AIA Chapter office is currently compiling information for the 1981 Membership Directory. Please contact the Chapter office if there have been any changes in your listing since the 1979 directory was printed.

WAL

- The October regular meeting was very well attended. A tour of three houses designed by Peter Choate was followed by a delightful luncheon at the Boulangerie in Santa Monica.
- Wednesday, November 19th promises to be another excitingly interesting event. Scheduled is a visit to both the Wilshire Boulevard Temple and the St. Cecilia Greek Orthodox Church, with luncheon to follow. For further information and reservations, call Janet Caasmann, (213) 462-2500, or Martha Bowerman, (213) 347-3402.
- Mark your calendar for December 12th and make plans to attend the always gala WAL Annual Holiday Party.

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Summary 2,173 Meeting of the LA/AIA Board of Directors, October 7, 1980:

- President Smith announced CCAIA and LA/AIA Director nominations and appointed Fred Lyman as a replacement for LA/AIA Director Dan Branigan for the completion of the term.
- Lisa Pendleton explained the Associates architectural education program for the public schools. She also announced four Associate seminars for the December licensing exam.
- Lomax stated that registration for the design awards program will remain open until Oct. 15.
- Discussed 1981 budget. Landworth directed the ad hoc finance committee which includes Zimmerman, Wertheimer and Landworth to submit the supplemental dues structure.
- Pujdak introduced the possibility of LA/AIA buying existing space for the Chapter office.

LA ARCHITECT

Published monthly (except August) by the Los Angeles Chapter / American Institute of Architects, 8687 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

One year mail subscriptions: \$10.
Students: \$6. Advertising rates are available from the Chapter office.

Editorial contributions and correspondence are invited. The opinions stated are those of the authors only, and do not reflect the official position of the AIA or the Los Angeles Chapter, except where noted.

Copy deadline is the first of the month prior to publication.

Appearance of names and pictures of products and services in either editorial or advertising does not constitute an endorsement of same by the AIA or the Los Angeles Chapter.

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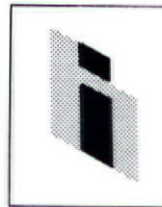


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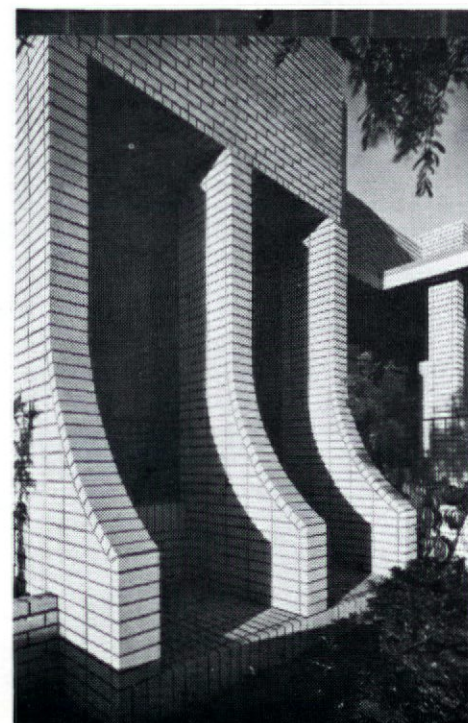
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