

Los Angeles Chapter, American Institute of Architects
3780 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 900
Los Angeles, CA 90010

February 1990
\$2.00

L. A. ARCHITECT

In Memoriam:
Esther McCoy

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Minority and
Women Architects

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Reviewing
LA/DAPT

Page 8

Beverly Street housing, Santa
Monica, Ronald Davidson
Architects, 1985, photo by
Grant W. Smith, 1989, photo by
Grant W. Smith, 1989, photo by

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THE CANAL STREET ARCHITECTS



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FEBRUARY

Monday 5

Peter Pfau
Cal Poly Pomona lecture series,
Environmental Design Main Gallery,
7:30 pm. Call (714) 869-2664.

Tuesday 6

Executive Committee Meeting
Chapter conference room, 4:30 pm.
Call (213) 380-4595.

Board of Directors Meeting
Chapter conference room, 5:30 pm.
Call (213) 380-4595.

**Classical Architecture in Asia
Minor (Turkey)**
Exhibit continues through February
23, Gallery 1220, UCLA. Call (213)
825-3791.

**The Arts and Crafts Movement in
California 1890-1918**
Exhibit continues at the Center for the
Study of Decorative Arts, San Juan
Capistrano. Call (714) 496-2182.

Wednesday 7

Licensing Seminar Orientation
USC. Call (213) 380-4595.

Housing Committee Meeting
Chapter conference room, 6 pm. Call
(213) 380-4595.

Ephemeral Urban Architecture
Lecture by Toyo Ito, SCI-ARC Main
Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-3482.

Thursday 8

Michael Graves
Lecture on current projects, Kinsey
51, UCLA, 8 pm. Call (213) 825-
3791.

**The Paintings of Helen
Frankenthaler**
Exhibit continues through April 22 at
LA County Museum of Art. Call
(213) 857-6111.

Border Architecture
Conference continues through
February 11, Mexicali. Call (619)
357-5198.

Friday 2

Big Changes Coming in Building Codes

National Association for Senior
Living Industries seminar, 1:15-5 pm,
\$35/in advance, \$45/at the door. Call
(213) 573-1922.

Weekend

Saturday 3

Little Tokyo
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 12

**Urban Design Committee
Meeting**
Chapter conference room, 6 pm. Call
(213) 380-5177.

Mark Mack
Cal Poly Pomona lecture series,
Environmental Design Main Gallery,
7:30 pm. Call (714) 869-2664.

**Medical Waste Disposal/
Incineration**
UCLA Extension four-day seminar,
Westwood, \$1095. Call (213) 825-
4100.

Tuesday 13

Associates Board Meeting
Chapter conference room, 6:30 pm.
Call (213) 380-4595.

**The Lighting Design Process: the
Art and Science of Lighting**
Lecture series at Department of Water
and Power Building, Tuesdays
through March 20, 7-10 pm, \$100.
Call (818) 302-3428.

Wednesday 14

Valentine's Day
**LA Architect Editorial Board
Meeting**
Chapter conference room, 7:30 am;
Call (213) 380-5177.

Jose Oubriere
SCI-ARC lecture series, SCI-ARC
Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-
3482.

Thursday 15

**Women and Minority Resources
Committee Meeting**
Chapter conference room, 6 pm. Call
(213) 380-4595.

**8th Annual Association of
Collegiate Schools of
Architecture Technology
Conference**
Continues through February 18 at
USC School of Architecture, \$175
registration fee. Call (213) 743-2723.

The New Plurality in Architecture
Lecture by Frei Otto, USC Bovard
Auditorium, 6 pm. Call (213) 743-
2723.

The Work of Martin Spuhler
Exhibit at USC Helen Lindquist
Gallery. Call (213) 743-2723.

Friday 16

Technology and Architecture
Lecture by Peter Rice, USC Hancock
Auditorium, 6 pm. Call (213) 743-
2723.

Concrete Abstraction
Lecture by Martin Spuhler, 12 noon,
USC Harris Hall 191. Call (213)
743-2723.

Weekend

Saturday 17

**Changing Urban Identity: Modern
Technology and the Architecture
of the City**
Lecture by Fritz Neumeier, USC
Harris Hall 101, 6 pm. Call (213)
743-2723.

**Spring Street: Palaces of
Finance**
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Sunday 18
Grassroots '90
Washington, DC, continues through
February 21. Call (213) 380-4595.

Monday 19

**Washington's Birthday
Observance**
Chapter office closed.

Tuesday 20

Executive Committee Meeting
Chapter conference room, 5 pm. Call
(213) 380-4595.

Wednesday 21

Saim Malool
SCI-ARC lecture series, SCI-ARC
Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-
3482.

**Project Management in the
Construction Industry**
Conference continues through
February 22, Lake Tahoe. Call (213)
453-2929.

Thursday 22

**Health/Professional Practice/
Codes Committee Meeting**
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Mark Scogin
Lecture on recent work, Perloff 1102,
UCLA, 8 pm. Call (213) 825-3791.

Los Angeles AutoCad User Group
260 N. Buena Avenue, Burbank. Call
(818) 762-9966.

Friday 23

**Women + Architecture
Statewide Conference 1990**
Continues through February 25 in
San Diego. Call (619) 296-4545.

Weekend

Saturday 24

**Seventh Street: Mecca for
Merchants**
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 26

Tuesday 27

Wednesday 28

Peter Wilson
SCI-ARC lecture series, SCI-ARC
Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-
3482.

Design of LA
Art in the Life of LA lecture series,
Pacific Design Center Theater, 6:30 p.
Call (213) 657-0800.

March 1

**Government Relations Committee
Meeting**
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

**Nikken Sakkei: Its Ninety Years
and the Modernization of Japan**
Exhibit continues through March 23,
Gallery 1220, UCLA. Call (213) 825-
3791.

March 2

Connotations
Auction and sale of works by
prominent artists, designers and
architects, sponsored by ADPSR,
continues through March 10, Murray
Feldman Gallery, Pacific Design
Center. Call (213) 657-0800.

Weekend

Saturday 3

**Complying with Disabled Access:
Issues, Guidelines and Solutions**
Pasadena & Foothill Chapter seminar,
8:30 am-12:30 pm, \$15/members,
\$20/non-members. Call (818) 447-
1273.

Victorian in Miniature
Dollhouse collection by Edward
Parker, exhibit at Heritage Square
Museum, Pasadena. Call (818) 449-
0193.

Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

March 5

March 6

Executive Committee Meeting
Chapter conference room, 4:30 pm.
Call (213) 380-4595.

Board of Directors Meeting
Chapter conference room, 5 pm. Call
(213) 380-4595.

March 7

Housing Committee Meeting
Chapter conference room, 6 pm. Call
(213) 380-4595.

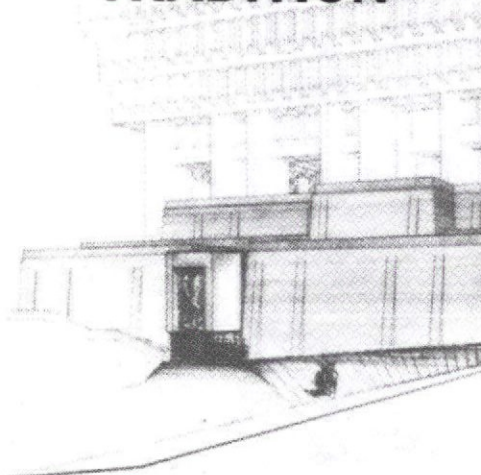
Anton Furst
SCI-ARC lecture series, SCI-ARC
Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-
3482.

March 8

**Aura and Presence in
Architecture**
Lecture by Coy Howard, Perloff 1102,
UCLA, 8 pm. Call (213) 825-3791.

March 9

THE EXPERIMENTAL TRADITION



Perspective, final stage, winning project, Kallman, McKinnell & Knowles, new city hall for the government center of the City of Boston.

The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competition in Architecture, Helen Lipstadt, ed., Architectural League of New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1989, \$24.96.

A companion to the retrospective exhibition organized by the Architectural League of New York, "The Experimental Tradition: Twenty-Five Years of American Architecture Competitions, 1960-1985," the catalog focuses not on the winners and almost-winners, but on understanding the nature of the competition process—origins and evolution, myths and facts, uses and abuses. This surprisingly cohesive collection of essays reviews the historical context of competitions and the never-ending debates about their value. In an attempt to define the cultural and symbolic qualities of the competition object on the part of all participants—sponsor, jury, competitors and public—not just from the competitor's point of view. The book is generously illustrated throughout, and the research is well-documented in copious footnotes. However, the book wears its scholarship lightly, and is enjoyable as well as informative.

The book's recurring themes are the competition as proving professional status of architects; as opportunity for an unknown talent to be recognized; as possibility of a stylistic breakthrough; as selection of an architect, not purchase of a design. There has been an effort throughout the history of competitions to achieve standards and rules ensuring fairness to all parties, and the book

documents seemingly ingenious ways these rule and standards can be subverted.

An essay by Barry Bergdoll traces European architecture competitions 1401-1927, differentiating two environments in which competitions flourished, the academy and the marketplace. Focusing on why competitions were prominent at certain periods, Bergdoll contends that they were the key to establishing architects as artists, separating them from the builder, and providing the alternative to apprenticeship for validating professional credentials. Open competitions flourished in revolutionary France and Victorian England, where they broke the professional monopoly of academies on official positions. However, Bergdoll notes that this loss of academic validation made it imperative to set standards reestablishing the architect's profession as outside the building process.

Sarah Bradford Landau's essay records the evolution of architecture competitions in America, 1789 to 1922. She focuses on the struggle to set fair standards for preparation time, quality of instruction, rights to drawings and composition of juries, citing examples of unfair practices which include splitting prizes among several entrants and having one of them combine the best features of all; decisions made a month before the deadline; and sponsors engaging other architects to alter the winner's design. Landau traces the founding of the AIA and its attempts to establish regulations which were finally accepted in 1900, after which she concludes, "at last a competition's outcome can be examined in relation to its program and entries."

Helene Lipstadt chronicles open competitions in the United States, 1922-1960, focusing on the patterns that emerged from this period of feast or famine. She notes new programs that combined building types and mandated harmony with existing buildings, and "ideal home" competitions sponsored by magazines and manufacturers of appliances and building materials for purposes of education and promotion.

In "Transforming the Tradition,"

Lipstadt traces American architecture competitions from 1960 to the present. During this period cultural organizations emerged as competition sponsors. Competition programs changed accordingly: energy, conservation, and social responsibility in architecture suddenly appeared as priorities. The National Endowment for the Arts also played an important role, sponsoring open competitions for the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Escondido Urban Design Competition.

Mary McLeod recounts "The Battle for the Monument: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," which she claims affirmed competitions as a means for public recognition of architects and unknown talent. The long controversy over the selection of Maya Lin's eloquent, minimal design is well-told and loses nothing of the suspense of the actual unfolding of events at the time. McLeod contends that the design survived the controversy because the competition was important in encouraging public discussion of the war itself. She attributes the overwhelming success of the built design to its break with tradition, its element of participation, generated by the chronological listing of names, and its emphasis on the private aspect of such a memorial.

In "Promise and Perils of Art Museum Competitions: the New Orleans Museum of Art," Helen Searing reviews the historical difficulties of art museum competitions. The NOMA competition is analyzed as an example of National Endowment for the Arts sponsorship, and of the pitfalls in the competition process.

The book's last section illustrates the ten competitions in the original exhibition. Chosen for their importance to architects of the time and their influence on the competition process, the ten competitions also reflect the development of architectural drawing for competitions.

Anne Hartmere

Ms. Hartmere is head of the Architecture and Urban Planning Library at UCLA.

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Pasadena light rail line. The LA Unified School District is also analyzing area sites.

For Olvera Street/El Pueblo, the team recommended pedestrian connections to the Civic Center and to Union Station. They proposed that the Pasadena light rail serve Union Station, which they recognized along with Terminal Annex as major development sites, and called for height and setback restrictions to minimize impact on the historic area. They also proposed small scale developments on the adjacent blocks to the west, with pedestrian links to Chinatown, and a monument to mark the terminus of Sunset Boulevard.

For Chinatown, the team recommended infill development to reinforce the existing pattern, with height, setback and other controls to assure compatibility. They recommended modifications in the street system to separate through traffic from local, and gateways on Sunset Boulevard at the shopping streets. The team also proposed locating a light rail station and mixed-use development at the existing Capitol Milling building.

Along the LA River adjacent to Elysian Park, the team proposed creating parks, as a first step in the larger pattern of greening the river. A river park district, centered on the river, was proposed to transform the existing industrial area into an urban neighborhood with residences and compatible businesses combined in mixed-use blocks. The team proposed joining North Broadway to Alameda to form a principal arterial street, along with a hierarchy of commercial and residential streets and pedestrian walks. A network of public open spaces and recreational facilities, and an urban school cluster with community library and auditorium were also proposed. By proposing coordinated land use, transportation, institutional and recreational planning across jurisdictional lines, the team was able to generate a larger vision for City North.

Led by co-facilitators Robert S. Harris, FAIA, and Charles Zucker, City North team members included Francisco Behr, Arthur Golding, AIA, David D. Leahy, Joseph

Martinez, AIA, Franklin Po, Tim Vreeland, FAIA, and Anthony David Witt. The plan is scheduled to be discussed at a City Planning Commission meeting on March 1, 1990.

The Series: So Far, So Good

The recommendations of the LA/DAPT teams have been as different in scale and focus as the four areas involved. The Van Nuys business district was the first area studied, in October 1988. Led by Michael Pittas, AICP, and Charles Zucker, the team recommended reshaping the existing Van Nuys government center with a new office building to accommodate city, state, and federal expansion. They proposed a complementary commercial development west of Van Nuys Boulevard to form a civic-commercial pedestrian axis, and the reinforcement of existing retail activity along the boulevard, with intensive development at Victory and Van Nuys. The team also called for coordination of parking management, incentives for affordable housing, and landscape and streetscape improvements.

The second charrette, held in March 1989, addressed the Los Feliz area. Led by Brenda Levin, AIA, and Rex Lotery, FAIA, the team recommended fine-tuning the Vermont and Hillhurst shopping districts and protecting residential areas. They suggested formation of merchants' organizations, and recommended city development of parking structures with street retail. Barnsdall Park was targeted for improvements and connections south to the hospital district and north to the Vermont shopping area. Gateways were proposed at principal intersections, and the Hollywood Boulevard diagonal between Hillhurst and Vermont was identified for intensified mixed-use development.

The Watts area was addressed in the third workshop, held in June 1989. Facilitated by Marc Futterman and Terry Hayes, AICP, the team recommended strategies for human development, employment, housing, and transportation. They recommended a

community task force to promote participation in follow-up workshops, and a short-range plan for incremental revitalization with a Watts Gateway, a community center and pedestrian bridge at the 103d Street light rail station. The team envisioned a long-range plan including a cultural arts center adjacent to the Watts Towers and a substantial increase in medium-density housing. Incentives were proposed to encourage light industry and regional commercial projects along the Century Freeway and Alameda corridors.

Next Steps

The fifth LA/DAPT workshop, planned for the Eastside in late spring, will be the last in the current series under the NEA grant. The Planning Department is considering the ongoing use of LA/DAPT workshops in connection with its Community Plan revision process.

The intensive focus of the LA/DAPT process has yielded valuable insights and provocative recommendations. But the LA/DAPT teams produce a first sketch, a preview, not a substitute for a specific plan. All the recommendations require refinement; some may require revision. Follow-up by community and city is critical. Many of the recommendations call for coordination across jurisdictional lines, which will require enlightened political leadership and continuing public support.

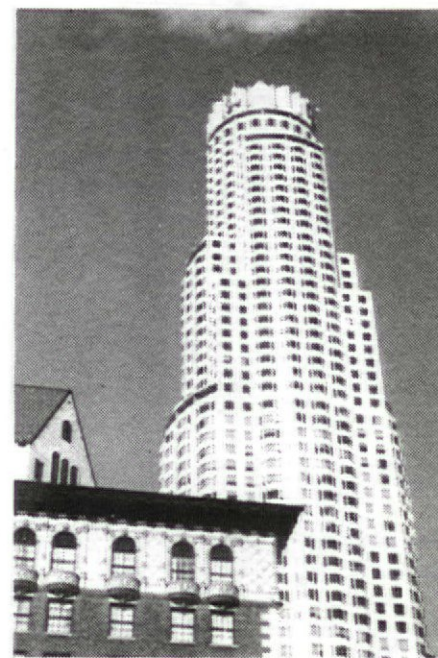
The professional community has demonstrated its willingness to contribute to the planning process. AIA/LA, through its Urban Design Committee, continues to work with the Planning Department. In the end, the City of Los Angeles must make a significant commitment of fiscal and human resources to the basic tasks of planning and urban design.

Arthur Golding, AIA
Chair, LA Architect Editorial Board

Corporate Graffiti

First Interstate Bank and Joseph Pinola, Chairman of the Board of the Bancorp, have a rare opportunity. Having made the monumental blunder of tacking four logos to the top of the First Interstate World Center tower, they can now remove them, thereby gaining considerable goodwill for the bank and setting an important precedent downtown. Recognizing and promptly correcting an error is a traditional mark of leadership, which First Interstate should begin to demonstrate in the Los Angeles business community. The Community Redevelopment Agency and its Board share responsibility for this example of corporate graffiti. The CRA should reconsider the matter of logos on buildings, and prohibit this form of advertising.

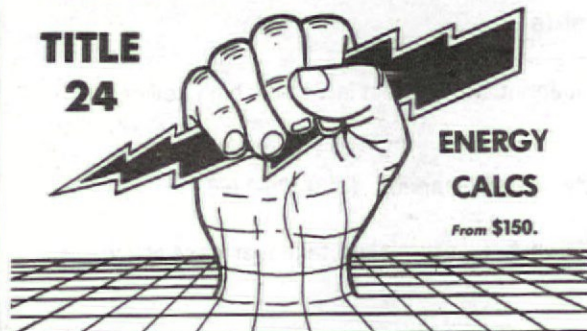
Arthur Golding



First Interstate World Center tower, downtown Los Angeles (-photo courtesy of Judy Kern).

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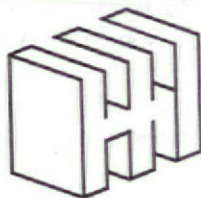
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LA/DAPT: A PROGRESS REPORT

The Los Angeles Design Action Planning Team process focuses professional and community attention on selected areas of the city. The heart of the process is a four-day on-site workshop, in which a team of architects, landscape architects, urban designers, urban planners, transportation planners, economists and other specialists meets with community groups, residents, public officials, and other area stakeholders to address community development, urban design and quality of life. The professional team reviews the issues and prepares a report recommending actions to community and city officials. Recommendations are discussed publicly at a City Planning Commission meeting.

For professionals, the LA/DAPT process offers a unique opportunity to work on urban design issues. The professional team members donate their time and agree not to accept any commissions in the area for a year. The pro-bono arrangement assures objectivity, as does the team's advisory role. The absence of a specific client seems to enable the team to address issues directly, make hard decisions and recommend what the community and public officials need to hear, which is not always the same as what they want to hear.

Based on national AIA's Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program, the LA/DAPT process is sponsored by the Planning Department of the City of Los Angeles and the Urban Design Advisory Coalition (UDAC), with a grant from the



Illustrative plan, City North.

National Endowment for the Arts providing financial support.

The success of the LA/DAPT workshops largely results from extensive preparation by a steering committee for each area and by City Planning staff. Emily Gabel, ASLA, Deborah Murphy, Sterling Barnes, and their colleagues provide base maps and comprehensive reference documents. They schedule interviews with representative individuals and groups, ensuring broad public participation, and set up a studio and conference area, in effect creating a multi-disciplinary design office for the weekend.

The Latest: City North

In December 1989, the City North workshop addressed a triangular area north of downtown LA, bounded by the Santa Ana

Freeway (101) on the south, the Pasadena Freeway (110) on the west and north, and the Golden State Freeway (5) on the east. City North includes three significant subareas: Olvera Street/El Pueblo Historic Park, Union Station, and Terminal Annex; Chinatown; and the industrial area on both sides of the LA River.

The selection of City North was timely. William Luddy, president of the City Planning Commission, recognized an opportunity for pro-active planning. Interest in City North is high: over 200 people participated in the workshop, and development pressures are intensifying in the area. Alternative futures had been proposed previously for the LA River, as a freeway, as a walled flood control channel, and as a greenbelt, and the LA County Transportation Commission is currently considering alternative alignments for the

IVAN PAILOVITS

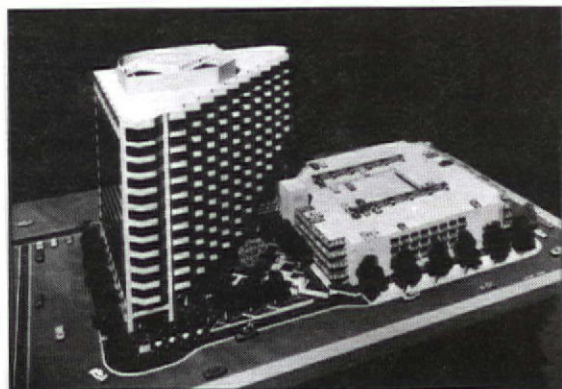
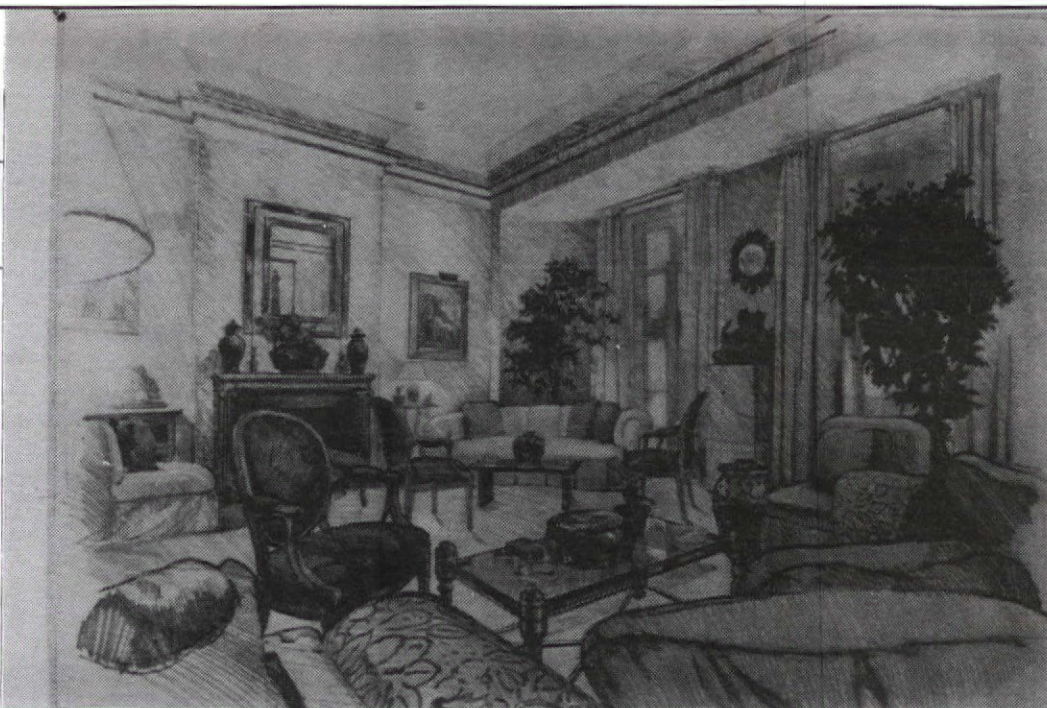
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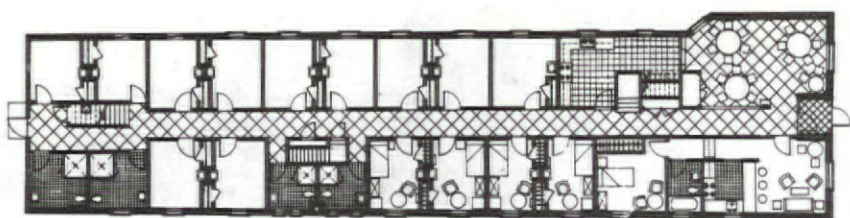
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Above and right: plan and elevation, Leo Hotel renovation, Skid Row, the Tanzmann Associates.

women: six Asian, two black, and 29 non-minority. None are Hispanic. These 37 firms equal the 29 percent of both the Asian and black males, and even slightly exceed the proportion of women (25 percent, by one estimate) in the professional schools. These figures don't begin to represent the total and growing number of women architects in Los Angeles, however. AIA/LA's 1989 Directory reveals 147 emeritus members, including three women—two percent. Among the 1,434 active members, 93 women comprise seven percent, and 81 women represent 39 percent of the total associate membership. If the curve from retired (past) through active (present) to associate (possible future architects) is any indication of a chronological trend, then women architects and women would-be architects have already passed the one-third mark and are on their way to a proportion more representative of their presence in the population at large.

Julie Eizenberg, an Australian who came to Los Angeles 10 years ago with her husband and partner, architect Hank Koning, is one woman who is not accounted for in any of these numerical reports. Though registered in Australia, both she and Koning enrolled for a second master's degree at UCLA's School of Architecture and Urban Design to earn their American stripes. From their entree in the Los Angeles market by way of the Fairfax revitalization project, the partnership has developed a specialty in the design of affordable housing. Their expertise in solving what Eizenberg describes as "planning problems where there aren't already standard solutions" has won Koning Eizenberg recognition in Thomas Monaghan's "Domino's 30" list of the world's leading architects for 1989.

Now with two small children, Eizenberg, who also teaches in the graduate program at UCLA, feels that the biggest question for women is how they can stay in architecture if they have families. She agrees that sufficient support systems don't exist for such women. Though women in architecture share a special sense of need, and have independent organizations in San Francisco and San Diego as well as in Los Angeles, Eizenberg believes that the idea of women in architecture is properly the responsibility of the AIA. Men, as much a part of families as women are, must be equally involved in finding appropriate solutions, she says, "because it's a family issue."

The common denominators for minority and women architects are numerous. They possess intense creative energy. They contend with the fact of difference, and all of them are hungry for work. Their hunger is partly economic, but they also want to participate in the building of the region, and they want to express that impulse through

the same medium that they collectively see as the traditional province of white men. Often, the internal barriers are as real as those imposed from the outside. Their families, though proud of them, don't always understand the work or the commitment, and seeing themselves as architects can be a groundbreaking self-perception.

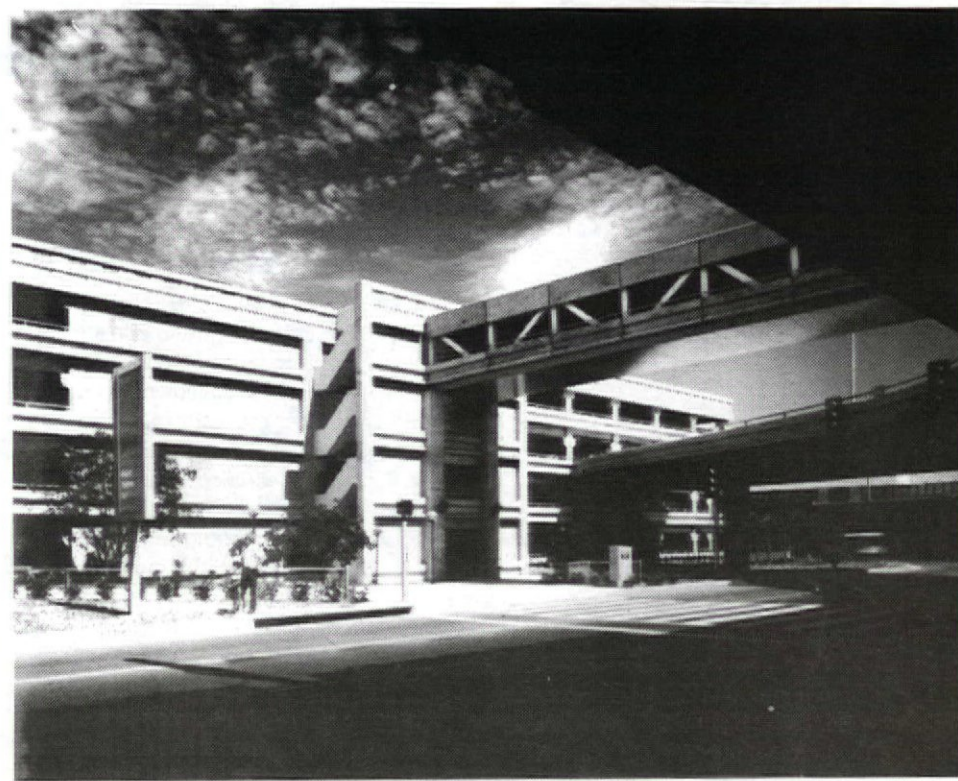
The most successful observe simple and rational principles in their practices. They are realistic. They put aside "attitude," as Wiley puts it, recognize the value of bringing in business, develop vital specialties, and keep their eye on the success of people like Robert Kennard and Virginia Tanzmann, who show it can be done.

They do quality work throughout, from presentation of the proposal to follow-through and total reliability in the contractual relationship. They seek good partnerships—not to "take the money and run," says Kennard, but to learn how to do the job and to build on that experience for the next job. They persist. "To establish a design reputation takes time," says Eizenberg. "Unless you're consistent with your principles, nobody takes you seriously." Norma Sklarek, a black woman architect who joined Gruen in Los Angeles in 1960 and since then has been a partner in her own firm, is taken seriously for precisely that reason: supplied with a good education (Columbia University) and strong experience, she never gave up. How she "climbed through all of that" makes her a respected role model for both blacks and women.

"Only when numbers substantially change will expectations change, too," writes John Morris Dixon in *Progressive Architecture* (Oct '89). In the new order, Eizenberg already sees larger numbers of minorities and women not only among professional architects, but among clients as well. Often, she finds that these clients object to a patronizing corporate approach, and this response has an accelerating catalytic effect on how the profession does business. "There is a new mentality," she says. "It is happening."

It is happening in the AIA/LA as well. Sera Lamb is pleased that more than half of 1990 president Raymond Gaio's directors and appointed committee leaders are minorities or women. He has also created a task force to consider the feasibility of district organization for addressing practice or governmental problems in the grassroots areas where they are at issue. The goal is more inclusive participation of all Los Angeles architects.

A twilight drive westward along the crest of Boyle Heights reveals more than purple mountains and downtown Los Angeles backlit by a brilliant orange sunset. Just as striking are the vitality, busy street life, and sense of neighborliness one feels



Heliport and parking structures, LA International Airport, Kennard Design Group.

on East Beverly Boulevard and East First Street. They would be a credit to the most ambitious urban plan.

No wonder the path for Gabe Armendariz is closing the circle from Century City back to East LA and Whittier. Eventually, he wants his office close to home. Somewhere there, in the streets of the ethnic neighborhoods, the civic life all architects strive for is waiting to be re-discovered.

Ann Moore

Ms. Moore is a writer for Gensler & Associates.



Pacific Bell Special Services Center, Anaheim, RAW Architecture.

"Having been raised in East Los Angeles," says Gabe Armendariz, "Century City is a world away. Boyle Heights and Century City have nothing in common." The road from Boyle Heights to the Westside led Armendariz from studying architecture at East Los Angeles College, where about 80 percent of the students were Hispanic, to the school of architecture at Cal Poly Pomona, where the ethnic proportions were reversed. For the first time, he experienced himself as a member of a tiny minority.

Breaking down the Barriers: LA's Minority and Women Architects



Ocean Park 12 apartment building, Santa Monica, Koning-Eizenberg Architects (photo by Grant Mudford).

Years later, his degree finished and experience in a number of small firms behind him, he went to work for Gensler, whose Los Angeles office was just starting up in Century City. "It was very hard for me," he recalls, "to come up the escalators and see that the people working behind the fast food counters, or the maintenance people, were all Hispanic."

In summer 1989, after 12 1/2 years as director of design for Gensler, Armendariz opened his own company in partnership with a former classmate. "We are doing architecture, design, and planning," he says. "I'm working not necessarily as a minority, but as a professional—in a professional world, going after the same type of work."

Every minority architect in Los Angeles, like Gabe Armendariz, tells a unique and often emotionally moving story. They share many characteristics, yet each group operates under its own set of social constraints.

The AIA attempts to address some of their diverse professional needs through its Minority and Women Resources Committee. Seraphima Lamb, the 1989 committee chair, is a Korean who has been operating her own architecture firm in Burbank for the last five years. Some of Lamb's best attended monthly programs during the year concentrated on project development and how to get jobs.

In addition to, and sometimes instead of the Minority and Women Resources Committee, a good many minority architects attend the organizations that cater to their own ethnic groups. Roland A. Wiley, one of three young black partners in RAW Architecture, explains why. AIA is useful for professional development, he says, but the specialized organizations support "cultural development." They provide their members with a deeper understanding of their own ethnic, racial, or gender identity, he believes, and give them an arena for developing ways to overcome their peculiar sets of obstacles.

Wiley has been one of the powerhouses among young black architects, not only in Los Angeles, but nationally as well. In 1989, he was a representative to AIA's Young Architects' Forum, a part of the Vision 2000 program, and he was local president of the National Organization of Minority Architects. Though the name sounds inclusive and the past national president was Chinese, NOMA was created by black architects at the 1971 meeting of the AIA in Detroit, and its membership is predominately Afro-American. Wiley estimates that in the course of a year about 85 percent of local Afro-American architects come through the meetings. 20 of these are active members who gather once a month as a sort of fraternity to exchange ideas and war stories, and "borrow energy" from their colleagues.

The lack of a major automatic client base within the black community is, in Wiley's view, a major concern. People in Watts don't just naturally call a black architect, he says. Therefore, in addition to helping blacks to develop connections, fortitude, savvy, and well-designed business and marketing plans, NOMA works to educate its constituent community

not only about the availability of black architects, but about the need for architecture in the first place.

The 20-year-old statewide Association of Asian-American Architects and Engineers gives indisputable testimony to Lamb's belief that Asians are adapting well to American life. Members are friendly and focused. The tenor of local monthly meetings in Universal City is one of mutual concern rather than competition, and their goal is to help members in their individual practices network with others in similar and related disciplines. With a number of members employed in city agencies, any typical evening's program includes announcements of upcoming projects, hot from the halls of city government. The speaker exhorts his hearers to get their minority certifications in order and their names on the mailing list for RFPs. "Team up," he admonishes them. "Let's get some winners. I'm looking for a percentage."

"Blacks have a network, Asians help each other, but Mexican-Americans don't," lamented one Hispanic at the April meeting of the Minority and Women Resource Committee. "Demographically, this area is dominated by Hispanics," said another, "but I don't see it happening that they get involved." Figures from the Equal Opportunity Department of the Community Redevelopment Agency bear out this oddity. Of 126 minority-run architectural service firms certified in Los Angeles, 29 percent (37 firms) are male Asian, 29 percent (36 firms) are male black—and only nine percent (11 firms) are male Hispanic.

A more specific reaction to the disparity among Hispanics was expressed by April program-panelist Robert Kennard, a black architect whose firm has enjoyed significant success over the years. Lynwood is 85 percent Latino," Kennard said, "but none are on of the school board. Hispanics historically haven't trusted politicians. Until they vote, things won't change."

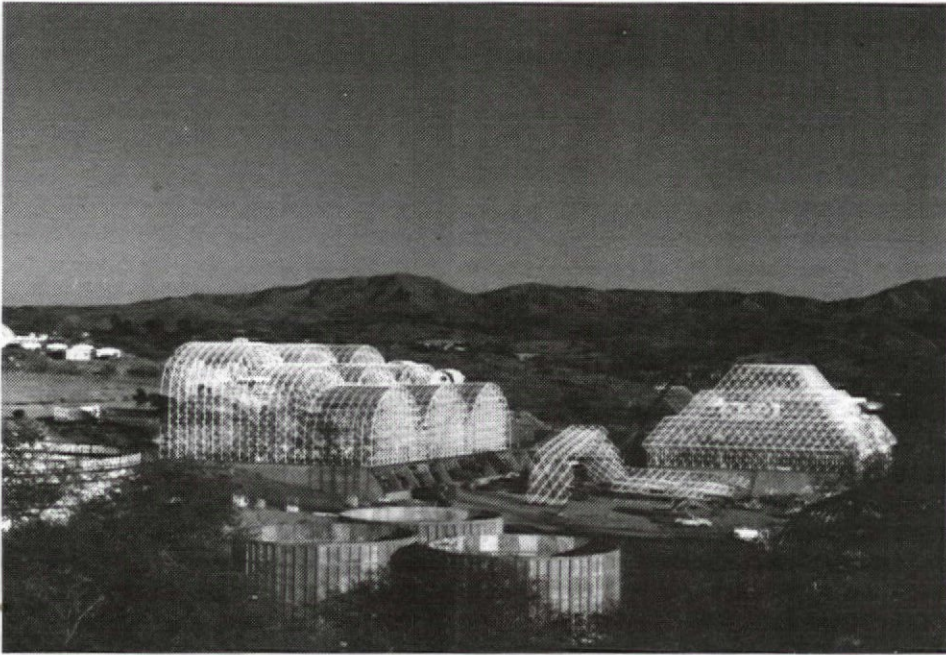
Trust is the key word, Armendariz believes, central to the way Hispanics do business. They help each other, he maintains, but the link is more social than professional, and their style is more reserved. "Mexican-Americans are brought up in a family," he says, "and you really tend to know somebody before you trust them. The work is offered after that."

This diffidence can make the Mexican-American appear less competitive than other minorities, yet among Hispanics, it seems to work. Armendariz tells how, through a friend, he met Frank Villalobos, principal of the Barrio Planners, an East Los Angeles firm that specializes in urban design, planning, landscape architecture, and economic development. The Planners, which Villalobos fondly calls "the Chicano Bauhaus," is a typical entry point for Hispanic architects like Armendariz, who did the graphic work on a visual study of East LA for them. "We became good friends," Armendariz says. "Frank, in turn, introduced me to a friend and former partner, who was doing a church. I ended up working on the church for his parish."

The city code defines women as a group separate from minorities, but entitled to the same consideration. In the CRA's listing, 37 architectural service firms are run by

For over a century and a half, our natural resources have been squandered. Our rainforests are now in jeopardy; our waters and air have become seriously disturbed; there is a greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, and acid rain. Our planet is at war—a whole new kind of war, between man and his habitat, the biosphere Earth. It is being waged every day by all of us, and yet we may not understand the ultimate implication until we start running out of things like organic life, water, and air.

Building a New Biosphere



Biosphere II structures cover three acres of desert north of Tucson, Arizona.

Biosphere II, an experimental project currently under construction in the high desert north of Tucson, Arizona, is exploring the potential for building on this planet. Defined as "a stable, complex, adaptive, evolving life system with the potential of operation in the right conditions as the major geological force transforming a planet's crust and as the source of sufficient free energy to power the start-up of a technosphere," the term was first coined by Vladimir I. Vernadsky, a Russian scientist, in his book, *The Biosphere*, published in 1926.

Conceived by Mark Nelson, Chairman of Space Biospheres Ventures, and John Allen, Director of Scientific Development, the project consists of five large, glazed space frame structures assembled in several different geometries. The structures cover three acres of desert and include an agricultural growing area, wilderness, ocean, marshlands and desert regions, animal and human living areas, a computer control center, library, biology lab, performing arts center, dining and cooking centers. Two domed "lungs" allow the three main enclosed structures to breathe, as the permanently encapsulated air expands and contracts during the solar cycles of night and day. When complete in late 1990, the complex will be occupied by over 4,000 plants, birds, fish, reptiles, small mammals, mosquitos, ants, and eight humans, or "biospherians."

Biosphere II was established to create and then investigate the relationship between the biosphere (natural systems) and

technical problems using a generic, state-of-the-art silicon sealant application, similar to glazing solutions found in contemporary building, along with steel glazing stops and frames in an integrated steel space frame support system.

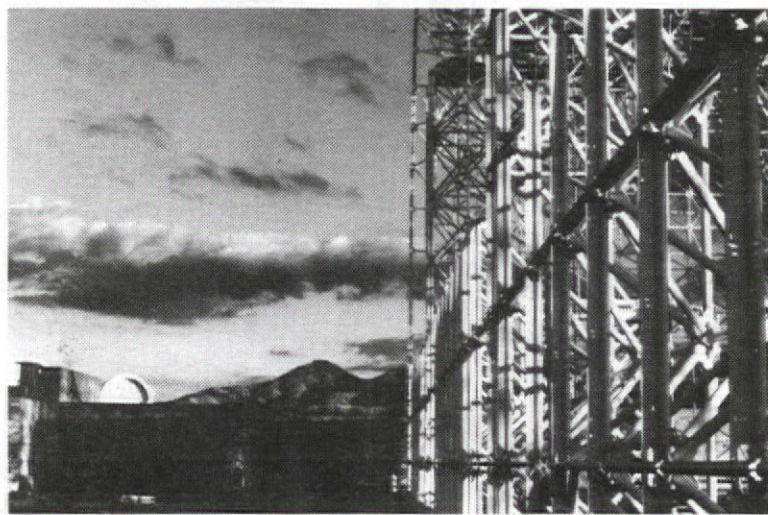
However, in order to be successful on any level—scientific, functional, aesthetic, or philosophical—a biosphere must, by definition, be an expression of balance and harmony. It represents a new architectural program that forces the designer to develop a solution generating a physical, psychological, aesthetic, and even spiritual sense of well-being between all of the various programmatic aspects. John Allen, of Space Biospheres Ventures, refers to the teleosphere "as an aesthetic phenomenon of wholeness, radiance and harmony and as an ethical imperative, achieving the perfection of the good." Certainly this teleospheric awareness of biosphere was most clear on that winter night in 1969 when Apollo 7, circling the moon, sent back those unforgettable photos of our most radiant earth against the black void of space.

Because Biosphere II's design both recalls traditional forms and attempts to create an entirely new prototype, its implications for the future of the man-made environment bear examination. The structure's design emulates 19th century English conservatories and botanical gardens, like Kew Gardens, which clearly expressed the marriage of nature and structure. The long architectural tradition of integrating the natural and the man-made, which found expression during the Gothic period, continued through the 19th century with the industrial and commercial buildings of the American midwest, and culminated in the early 20th century with the emergence of the Art Nouveau movement and the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Antonio Gaudi, Frederick Kiesler and Bruce Goff, to name just a few. In the 1960s, Bucky Fuller's geodesic dome became an icon for a new generation dedicated to the resurgent idea of a Whole Earth society. Soon large botanical gardens began to sprout within these glass spheres, as this "new" technology was further developed.

The fascination for nature that has inspired art, music, and architecture from the beginning of time continues to be an eternal, symbiotic, and essential relationship for man. Suddenly, however, there is an important difference. In the context of a built environment where mini-malls, sprawling subdivisions, and office parks crowd out the green space and the animal habitat, necessitate major regional water redistribution, and cause noise, pollution, and toxic waste, Biosphere II represents a new priority: planetary preservation. It embodies the critical idea of the "ancient future," where historic forms and space age technology are combined to generate a dynamic, yet harmonious whole. This herald of a new paradigm is rapidly being crystallized in the hot, Sonoran desert.

Walter Scott Perry

Mr. Perry, a practicing architect, is currently a project manager for Biosphere II at Pearce Structures in Los Angeles.



The Biosphere II, juxtaposed against the natural landscape, was created to investigate the relationship between natural and manmade systems.

the so-called "technosphere" (manmade systems), with the goal of marketing a prototype for self-sustaining life system environments elsewhere on this planet and others. Both the Antarctic and Mars have been targeted as possible locations. In addition to mechanically creating different weather systems for several discrete climate zones, Biosphere II's major engineering feat is sealing all the structures off from its paradigm, the biosphere Earth—a feat never achieved before on this scale, even by the Russians during their recent space exploration research. The design criterion for the project is one air change in 100 years, or 1% a year, versus the 20% air change a day considered normal for most commercial office buildings. The space-enclosure architect, Pearce Structures, solved the

Continued from I

"Esther painted on a small canvas. She framed her subjects tightly, in detail, writing in simple, often piercing language. Passages were very still, glassy, until she broke the surface with an unexpected thought--a small detonation--then re-established the quiet, as though nothing at all had happened."

she was nearly always fighting for breath. Yet, searching now a little longer for the right word, the copestone image, she worked to the very end. A gem on Luis Barragan appeared last month in these pages; this month or next *Angeles* magazine will publish her article on photographer Julius Shulman. At her death, Esther was writing an appreciation of Marvin Rand, and wondering what would be next.

Esther attracted strays of both two and four legs. What she wrote of a friend she admired greatly I think applies equally to her: "She offered help but never bland comfort; she mothered but was not maternal." Unusually tolerant of waywardness in the personal lives of friends, she strove for perfection in her craft and demanded the same of others. She was a disciplined freelance writer who paid no attention to the clock; her worst epithet was "He's a nine-to-fiver."

Architects were never nine-to-fivers. Esther gave to architects a nobility that was touching and naive. It underlay and infused her writing about their work, so that she sometimes credited to the architect's sensitivity and design skill an aspect of a project which may actually have been dictated by code or other mundane constraints. A sweet, benevolent mistake. The nobility was hers.

David Travers

Mr. Travers is the publisher of Arts & Architecture Press.

This elegant, slim young woman whose mind moved incisively over any terrain she traveled through her 85 years, from fiction to criticism, from memoirs to architectural reportage, had the underpinnings of a sensuous and passionately caring individual who knew how to cut through the haze, in whatever time and place of the collage of her extraordinary life.

She was hard on herself, true, but she also learned from herself. Perhaps it was her view as a fiction writer that informed her at such times. On January 6, 1976, she surveyed her survival from a critical illness

and her near pass at death in the waning weeks of 1975: "The year didn't end badly considering how much I discovered at the end of it...(Another) discovery: death is the last lover and is not necessarily a rapist, in fact he can come gently. And can come with me in my senses."

She was meticulous about her routine, her schedules, especially about food and work. In a somewhat rare defensive tone, she once wrote a two-page letter to assure a friend as to the preciseness of these matters. "I must look terribly disorganized and careless. Perhaps I am--about everything but work and food." But she let Annie take credit for keeping her on track. On the death of Annie, her 17-1/2 year old Sealyham, she wrote, "She (Annie) was a stickler for routine. She got me to the typewriter of mornings and away at noon and back to it in the afternoon. She sat in her chair and presided. She was the best writer on the block."

Like the hand-made papyrus stationery on which she penned some of her letters, in which alternating layers are laid in opposite direction to each other in a way that instills a wondrous strength of structure, her body of work has a structure all its own. Everything relates to everything else.

At any one time she was writing serious, revelatory pieces for international architectural and other journals; chapters for books by others on subjects as diverse as "Bottle Village" for *Naives and Visionaries*, to the full-scale books of her own that now form the solid foundation of Southern California architectural criticism; and hundreds of articles for architectural publications, each carefully crafted and knife-clean in its clarity. She wrote book reviews, catalogs for architectural exhibitions, wrote text for two films and produced one she hoped would save the Dodge House. Her fiction appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and numerous university quarterlies.

These are a few of the layers that are likened here to the metaphor of papyrus that cannot be separated into individual parts, once it becomes paper. Each

molecule is a part of the papyrus. Each word is an integral and inseparable part of Esther McCoy.

Elaine K. Sewell Jones

Esther was working on *The Second Generation* when she asked me to drive Gregory Ain and her to visit Greg's houses as part of her research. The opportunity to visit Greg's houses was a privilege not only because of the buildings themselves, but because while we toured them, I got to know Esther McCoy.

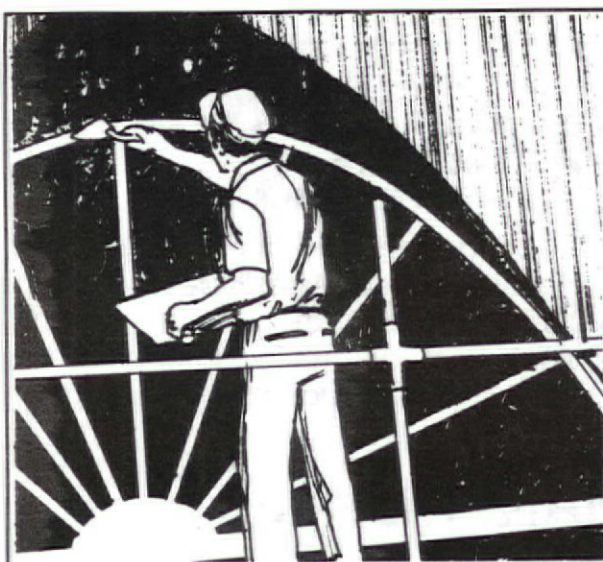
During the last few years I visited Esther often. She would talk about her life or her current writing project, about her frustration with her diminishing physical strength and the enormous energy required for work, about her determination to keep working and to "get it right," about publishers who remaindered her books too soon, and editors who wanted to edit, and about how there was always too little money for so much care and struggle. But there was always great satisfaction when the article appeared and was good, and then it was worth it all. And she was enormously pleased with the well-deserved and abundant recognition she had recently received.

Esther loved and thought about architecture more intensely than anyone I've known. Her method of writing about a building was to know it thoroughly, to be able to "walk the plan," and see all the details in her mind's eye. One Christmas Day she told me that she was caught "walking the plans over and over" in her mind, and was tired. I wish her rest.

She will be missed by so many of us who admired her toughness and individuality, her dedication to her work, her sense of humor and friendship, her love of life and her will to live it fully in her own way. I miss her, but she's not gone. Over and over I find myself wondering, "what would Esther say about that?"

Ena Dubnoff

Ms. Dubnoff is an architect with Sussman/Prejza & Co., Inc.



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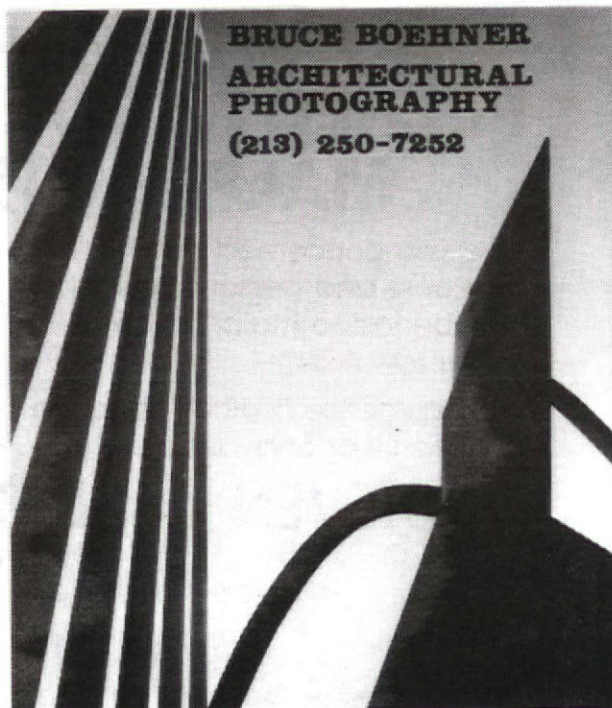
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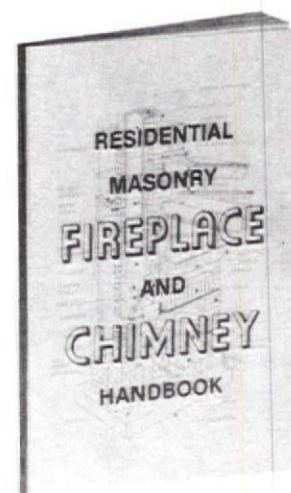
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The Urban Design Committee is reviewing the ordinance and will develop a chapter position for board resolution later this year.

The Planning Department has undertaken a new participatory planning process modeled on the AIA R/UDAT. The Urban Design Committee has been asked by the City to assist in developing LA/DAPT guidelines and to provide names of AIA members willing to participate as LA/DAPT team members and facilitators.

The committee is establishing a relationship with the Planning Department's City Wide Element that will be drafting a new Balanced Growth Element for the General Plan, that will be a critical tool for directing growth in the city.

The committee is spearheading a movement with the board of directors and chapter office to lobby for members' appointment to CPACs being formed to implement the on-going Community Plan Revision Process. 35 CPACs, each one corresponding to a Community Plan Area, will be formed over the next seven years to provide input and monitor implementation of each plan.

Government Relations

The Architects in Government Committee promotes communication between government and private architects, shares problems and solutions, and provides information to chapter members on the work of architects in government and the ways government agencies operate. Considering the multitude of agencies involved in architecture, the main topic developed in the monthly meetings of 1989--presentation of different government agencies--will continue over the next year. New guest speakers will be invited, and some of the guests who spoke in 1989 will be invited to return and update the committee on their agencies' projects.

Maria M. Campeanu, a senior architect with the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, will continue to chair the committee. Robert E. Donald, deputy director of architecture and engi-

neering with the Los Angeles Unified School District is the new co-chairperson. Robert Beltran, associate with the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks, is the committee secretary.

Code Talk

On July 25, 1989, the City Council of Los Angeles passed Ordinance No. 165081, which amends Section 91.0315 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code relating to the issuance of Certificates of Occupancy, as follows: "When after receipt and approval of the Final Inspection Report from each of the Divisions of the Department, and after the City Engineer has reported that ALL REQUIRED PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, the Superintendent of Building shall issue a Certificate of Occupancy, without charge, to the Owner of the Building."

A Temporary Certification of Occupancy may be issued by the Superintendent of Building if: 1) No substantial hazard will result from the occupancy of any building, or portion thereof, before the same is completed, and satisfactory evidence is submitted that the work could not have been completed prior to the time of such occupancy because of its magnitude or unusual construction difficulties, and the City Engineer has reported that all required public improvements have been completed; 2) All required public improvements have not been completed, if the failure to complete the public improvements were due to circumstances over which the person applying for the Certificate of Occupancy had no control; 3) For an existing building or portion thereof, provided no substantial hazard will result and satisfactory evidence is submitted justifying the need for such temporary occupancy. A fee of \$75, plus an additional fee as shown in Table 3-B, will be collected for each Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

Rudolph V. DeChellis, AIA

Co-Chair, Building Performance and Regulations Committee



1990 AIA/LA Board of Directors. Top row, from left: Maureen Vidler March, WAL, Gregory Villanueva, AIA, Seraphima H. Lamb, AIA, Richard Sol, AIA, Margo Hebbald-Heymann, AIA, Katherine Diamond, AIA, William R. Hefner, AIA, Joanna Craig, Professional Affiliates, Joseph M. Mada, AIA. Bottom row, from left: Christine Meyer, executive director, John V. Mutlow, AIA, secretary, Raymond L. Gaio, AIA, president, Ronald A. Altoon, AIA, vice-president/president elect, William H. Fain, Jr., AIA, treasurer.

New Members

AIA. Richard H. Abramson, D.L. Gray Architects; Faramarz Afari, AFCA; Don J. Brubaker, Robert L. Earl & Associates; Maurice Edwards, Barth + Edwards + Assoc.; Mervyn F. Fernandes, STVK; William Kenneth Huang, LA Community Design Center; John D. Hunter, Hunter/Hughes; John H. Kamus, John H. Kamus & Associates; Cindy Gale Kellman; Lisa Landworth, Landworth DeBolske & Brown; Michael R. Osburn, Barsocchini & Associates; Brett Shaw, Leroy Miller Associates; William R. Sims, Walt Disney Imagineering; Michael Lloyd Woodley, Kaufman & Broad Home Corp.

Reinstatement. Kirk Rose, AHT Architects; Stephen Michael Rose, Leo A. Daly; David Von Oeyen, Ellerbe Becker; Ted Wu, Ted Wu Design Consultant.

Advancement to AIA. Gregg D. Ander, Southern California Edison.

Associate. Farooq Ameen, Community Redevelopment Agency; Guillermo Angarita, Land Concepts, Inc.; Mahnaz Barsum, Farna Co; Anthony Walter Coscia, Skidmore Owings & Merrill; Noel S. Davies, Davies Associates; Elizabeth Carol Franke,

Leason Pomeroy; Victoria L. Jenkins, Skidmore Owings & Merrill; Julio Palacio, H. Wendell Mounce Associates; Dennis S. Roy, Hill Pinkert; Michael M. Shaw, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Professional Affiliate. Kenneth R. Caldwell, Albert C. Martin & Associates; Deborah Healon; Gerald W. O'Rourke, Schirmer Engineering; Michael H. Mauno, Cal Fed Enterprises; Richard J. Myers, BCTC Development.

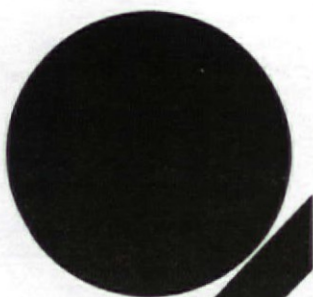
Student. Wail Mahdi, USC; Brenda D. Wince, LA Valley College.

Emeritus. Donald F. Drews, AIA; Maxell Starkman, AIA.

Transfer Out. Bruce E. Allport, Robbins & Bown, to San Fernando Valley; Lindsay A. Anderson, to New York City; James R. Carty, to Pasadena-Foothill; Julia Anne Donoho, to San Francisco; Ralph H. Flewelling, Flewelling & Moody, to Pasadena; Robert W. Johnson, CHK Architects, to Potomac Valley; Arden L. Larson, to Las Vegas; Robert E. Viault, Watson Land Co., to Cabrillo; Susan J. Wittmack, to Northern Virginia; George Iden Zaima, Forma, to Seattle.

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LICENSING EXAM SEMINARS

The first in a series of study sessions for the 1990 Architectural Licensing Examination will be held on Saturday, February 24, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, at USC Harris Hall 101. Sponsored by the AIA/LA Associates, the lecture will be given in two parts, and will cover history, programming and planning. Ernest B. Marjoram, AIA, from Archiplan, will give an overview of architectural history, to aid in answering the history questions found scattered throughout the NCARB exam. Topics to be covered in the second part of the lecture include programming, zoning, codes, economics, legal and other pre-design factors; the speaker will be announced later.

The following three lectures will be held on March 3, 10 and 17, at Harris Hall, and will review general structural systems, materials, and construction practices, using diagrams and calculations. They will also cover lateral forces (design, structure and codes, as related to wind and seismic forces) and long spans systems, along with their applications and performances. Stephen Perloff, S.E., a California registered civil and structural engineer who heads a private engineering practice in Los Angeles, and has lectured for ALS and AIA educational programs for over 15 years, will conduct the structures lectures.

Lectures will be geared toward the NCARB Architectural Registration Examination, June 18-21, which could be tougher because of the switch from CALE to ARE. Admission will be \$20/members, \$30/others,

and tickets will be sold at the door. A 10% discount is available for those who pre-register between February 7 and March 3. Call (213) 380-4595.

Joint Committee Meeting

On February 22, Paul Neel, newly appointed State Architect, will speak to a joint meeting of the Architecture for Health, Professional Practice and Codes Committees. Neel will be joined by Richard Conrad, Executive Director of the Building and Standards Board. The presentation will cover an overview of the State Architect's role, CSA architectural selection process, and an update on code and policy issues with an emphasis on hospital-related codes and agency reviews. Call (213) 380-4595.

Urban Design Committee

During 1989, the Urban Design Committee undertook a range of activities to promote the AIA/LA as a voice in the policy making process for the design of the public realm. The committee's work was based upon the fundamental idea that AIA/LA is a professional organization committed to the quality of the natural and built environment, and that it has a responsibility to act in a leadership role as designer and caretaker of this environment.

The 1990 Urban Design Committee reaffirms this activist approach, and invites new chapter members to participate in developing creative ideas about our urban and regional problems, and positioning them in the public debate. The following activities are currently on the committee's 1990 agenda.

The committee and chapter will host the 1990 AIA National Urban and Regional Design committee meeting in October. The committee intends to develop the conference as a major activity focusing national attention on the efforts of developing an urban design agenda for Los Angeles and Southern California.

Last year, the Office of the Mayor and the Office of Councilman Ferraro asked the Urban Design Committee to assist them in dealing with the urban design issues in the burgeoning Wilshire/Fairfax area, which faces increasing development pressure, with major projects slated for Park La Brea, the May Co. site, and the Farmers Market. The City is concerned that urban design principles be established for the area so that various projects add up to a whole greater than the sum of the parts. At its December 1989 meeting, the chapter board resolved that the Urban Design Committee should take a leadership role in facilitating the process.

In 1989, chapter president Fernando Juarez, a member of the working policy committee writing the Cal-Trans 2010 Master Plan, asked the Urban Design Committee to draft a section of the plan on land use. The committee subsequently submitted the draft land use policy to Cal-Trans, which will be releasing the preliminary master plan in the near future. At that time, the committee will review the entire plan, and provide recommendations for action to the chapter's board of directors.

The chapter president is represented by the Urban Design Committee on an ad hoc committee of the Planning Commission that developed a draft policy for establishing Design Review Boards and a revised plan review process. The Urban Design Committee played a key role in drafting the content of the policy, and is currently developing guidelines for the City.

Last year, the chapter board adopted an Urban Design Committee resolution asking that the Planning Department redraft the proposed Site Plan Review Ordinance. While the draft ordinance sets forth a valuable new process for assessing a proposed project's compatibility with its context, it does not adequately resolve contradictions between environmental and zoning laws and would unnecessarily politicize the planning process. The committee will continue to monitor its progress.

A proposed Landscape Ordinance is currently before the Planning Commission.

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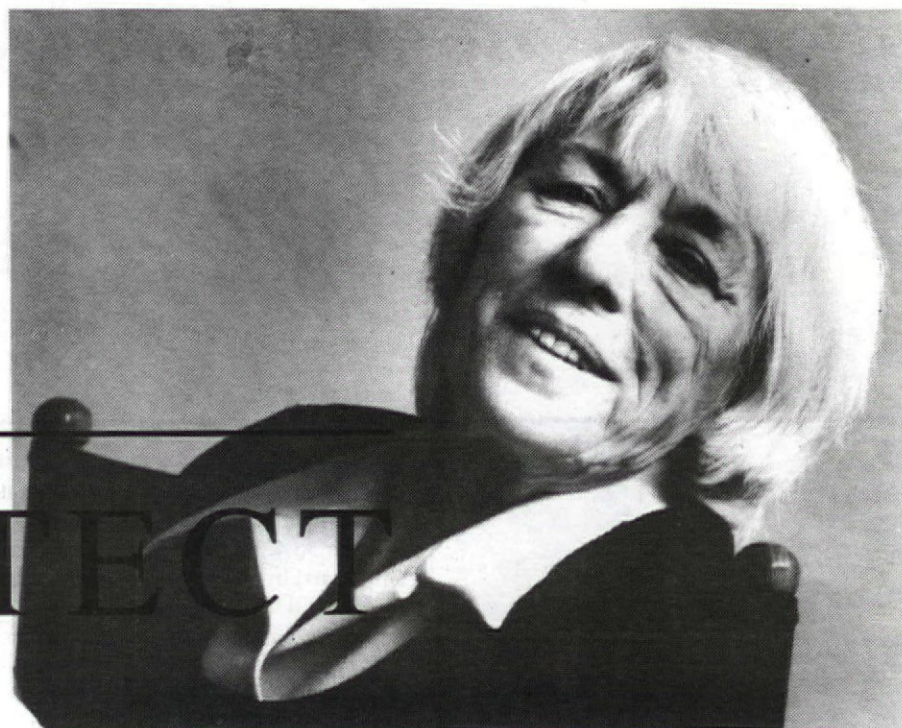
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L.A. ARCHITECT



Esther McCoy, photographed by Deborah Sussman in 1973.

In Memoriam Esther McCoy

This appreciation of Esther was read at the Vesta award ceremony in 1988, and then expanded in the June 1989 issue of Art-coast. It is with great sadness that I change it to the past tense.

I'm told that California architecture existed before Esther McCoy. If so, few knew about it. In 1960, when the architectural past still belonged to the East Coast, and California had only a future, she introduced R.M. Schindler, Bernard Maybeck, Charles and Henry Greene, and Irving Gill to the world with *Five California Architects*. California, it seemed, had a tradition and Esther gave it credibility with her primary research, rigorous thinking and lean writing. She opened the field and she opened minds.

Esther painted on a small canvas. She framed her subjects tightly, in detail, writing in simple, often piercing language. Precise and direct, she invited you into letters, walked you through floor plans, and always delivered the fact. It was firm scholarship, though it read like a novel. Passages were very still, glassy, until she broke the surface with an unexpected thought—a small detonation—then re-established the quiet, as though nothing at all had happened. It was writing without waste, pared to the bone. Listen carefully, as John Pastier once wrote: she will say it just once.

She had the ability to look straight at something and see it without preconception. When she walked into the Schindler house on Kings Road, she saw the complexity of the clerestory windows and the framing, and translated the architecture into words, without loss of poetry. When she walked into a Neutra apartment in West Los Angeles, she understood its light. We learned something about the nature of structure and the nature of light, because she saw what was actually there.

She was one of the few critics who could transcend her own generation to write from the point of view of another. It may have been her compassion; certainly it was her wisdom. She was the friend and confidante of three going on four generations of architects, and this personal contact was her strength: she actually knew her subjects. To them, and to California, she was steadfast.

As a 21-year-old, she wanted to go to Paris to sit and write. It happened that she eventually came to California, where she sat and wrote for over 50 years. 50 years of small canvases on related subjects add up. Together they are panoramic. And because, for her, buildings were artifacts of their time, her writings are social histories. Just beyond the architecture, outside the door, is California—the land, the history: radical politics, the war effort, the housing shortage; and, of course, the people. Here are Frank Lloyd Wright, the Schindlers, the Neutras, the Davidsons, Theodore Dreiser, Charles and Henry Greene, Rafael Soriano, Ray and Charles Eames, Quincy and Elaine

Jones, Craig Ellwood—all woven together in what may be architectural history's only equivalent of Balzac. A primary character in one book appears as a secondary figure in another. Together the works form the social history of a period—the avant-garde, modernist culture before, during, and after the war. She was one of the few to see beyond oranges in Hollywood: she took California and architecture in California seriously.

Her works will live for the same reason her friends found their way again and again to her table in Santa Monica—the books have her intelligence, her wit, her insight and her heart.

Joseph Giovannini

Mr. Giovannini, former architecture critic and writer for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner and the New York Times, is a practicing architect.

Writing descriptively about architecture requires the skills of a metaphysician. The writer must translate an earthbound medium into ephemeral ideas and images. Writing compassionately about architecture requires the skills of a poet. The writer must take the functional and static and suffuse it with life and spirit. Esther McCoy was a metaphysician and a poet.

No one wrote about architecture the way Esther did. Her writing, direct and incisive, revealed the body and soul of architecture. And, although deceptively simple, this skill required agonizing hours over the type-writer, honing the words to exactly the right meaning.

Esther's understanding of architecture came from both her analytic eye and the strong bonds she was able to form with architects. She knew her subjects, and they trusted her. She wrote about architecture like a biographer, probing architects' thoughts and aspirations, and translating their buildings into words.

California architects are fortunate that Esther McCoy was the first writer to describe their work to a broad audience. She laid the foundations for serious consideration of their ideas, and her words have had worldwide impact.

It is impossible for any writer to describe California architecture seriously without Esther peering over their shoulders. The clarity of her thinking is a constant admonishment to stay honest.

Barbara Goldstein

If Esther liked you—if she admired or respected what you did—there was no limit to her friendship or her priceless counsel. If she doubted you, there was no way in—the door was locked. Only a few hours before she left us, I called to verify our brunch date for this New Year's Day. DC3, her first choice, would be closed ("I like the view"), as would Michael's, where she liked the food. It was to be the Bel Air ("Alan Temko takes me there—lovely"). And during that relatively short conversa-

tion she managed, for the last time, a few terse words of advice that unlocked my concerns on a new undertaking in unfamiliar waters. A five-word treasure, good for a lifetime.

Esther's spoken words were as finely honed as her writing. Aside from her delicious, lengthy telephone conversations, which often had to substitute for visits or meetings, she was also an elegant cook. Once she gave us a madeleine cooking mold with a recipe—and the relevant passage from Proust. We cooked them and ate them at a lunch we prepared in memory of John Entenza. Konrad and Judith Wachsmann came, and Stanley Tigerman. It lasted all day, and Esther talked about it for years.

Paul and I used to visit Esther on "occasions"—her birthday, Christmas, the death of Peter Banham. We would provide the stuff she and I shared a passion for: champagne, caviar, oysters—at home or out. Architectural gossip was the main course. Her enormous circle of friends and admirers kept in close contact, so there were always lots of calls and guests.

Some people are beautiful even when illness cripples them. Esther always knew how great her short white hair looked, and insisted on maintaining it, even in the hospital.

She had a special voice—it came from way back in the throat, and it was tough, lean and unembellished, like the rest of her. She would write her notes in the same pitch as her articles and books. How lucky we were to receive them.

Deborah Sussman

Ms. Sussman is a principal in the firm of Sussman/Prejza & Co., Inc.

A reporter asked what qualities a person replacing Esther McCoy would have to have. Such a one would have perfect visual pitch, the intellectual code of honor of a Samurai, a novelist's ability to form the image that brings the architect and his work to life. She would accept the meager, vulnerable life of the freelance in the poorest paid niche in writing. Finally, she would have the goodness to suffer this fool amiably, if not gladly.

Esther's knowledge of art, music, literature, and cooking was as deep and caring as of architecture. A careless or fatuous critical judgment about any of these could turn Esther's tongue into a blade. Her apologies could be subtle and droll, dissolving anger. One evening, over our usual cocktails—martini for me and bloody mary for her—I caught the edge of the blade once too often. I left with a final, stormy farewell. A week or so later she called and asked, "David, does gin go bad?"

During her last few months, she lived, worked, and at times even slept at her work table in a deep Eames executive chair (given to her by Ray Eames and Elaine Jones). She could walk barely two steps without having to fight for breath. Indeed, with only five percent of her lungs working, Parliament cigarette in hand or at the ready,

Continued on 4