



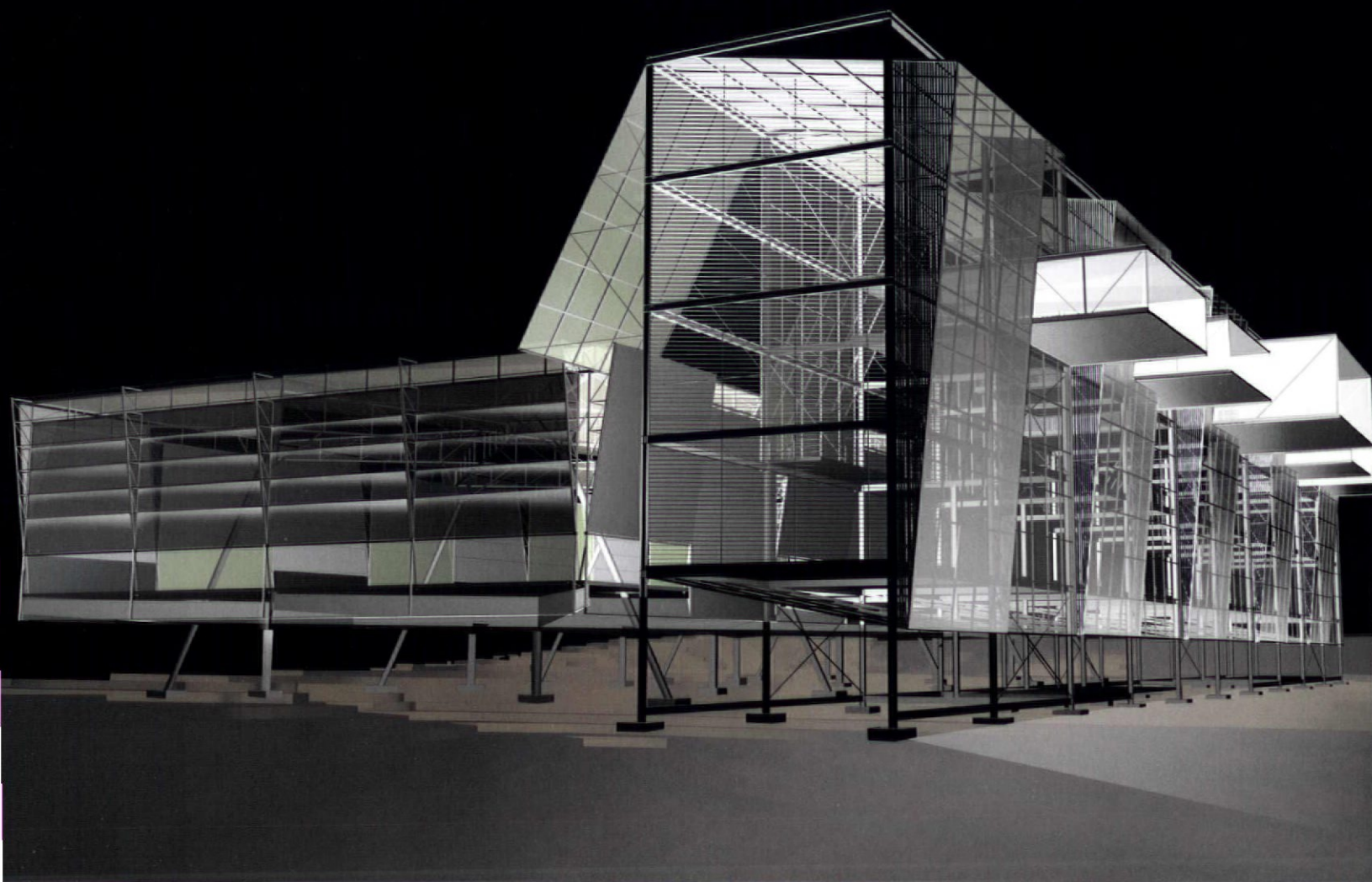
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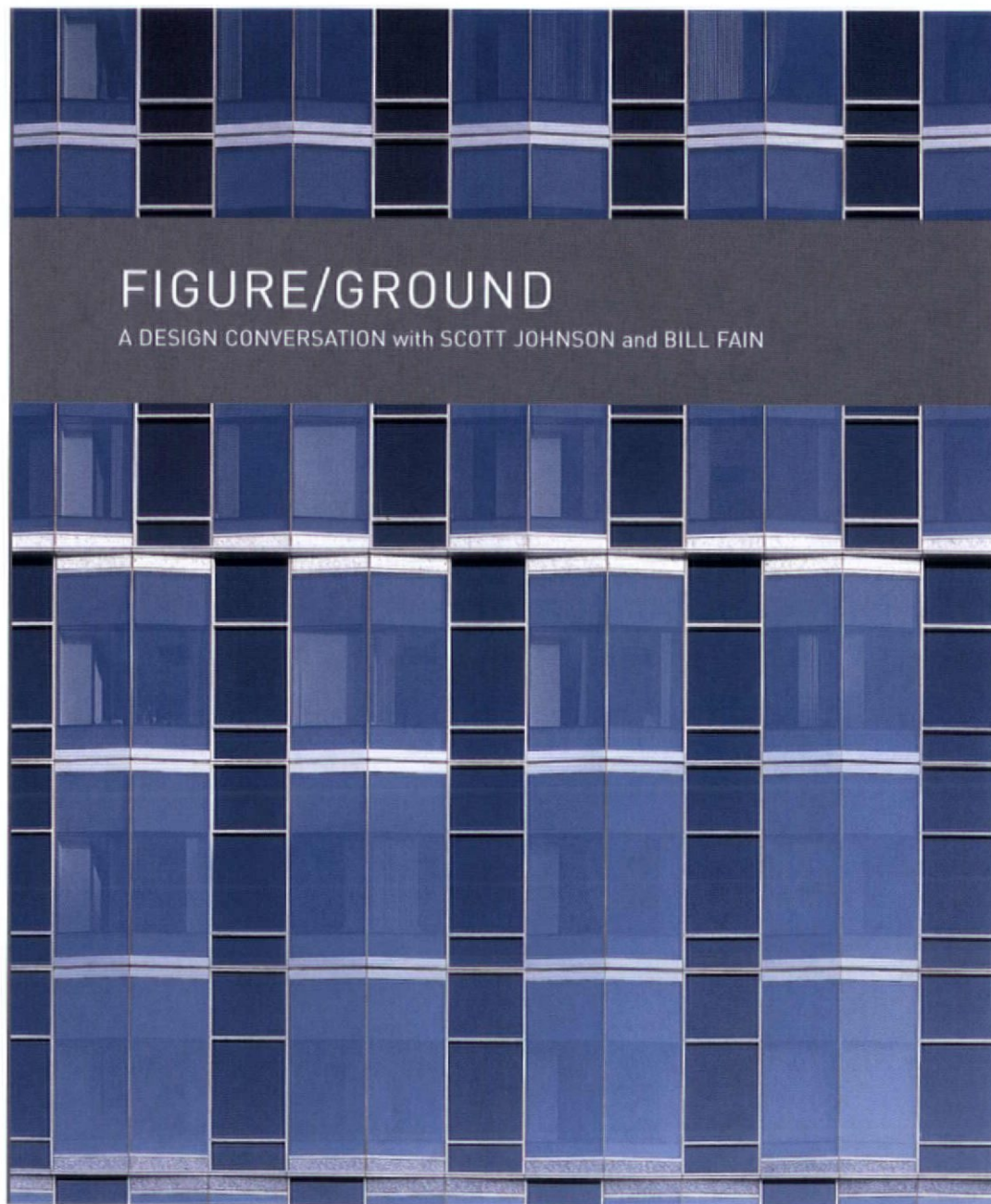
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**Joseph Giovannini**  
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FIGURE/GROUND is a collection of six dialogues by Scott Johnson and William Fain, the principals of Johnson Fain of Los Angeles. Finding inspiration in, among other things, jazz improvisation, Noam Chomsky, classical Japanese architecture, Roman urbanism, Chinese passive solar heating, Catholic monasticism and Native American spirituality, the firm has built a large body of diverse projects internationally. In free-association, Johnson and Fain discuss a broad range of topics such as the globalization of architecture, big architecture vs. urban design, beauty, context and the exigencies of history. Intelligently designed by Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award winner Lorraine Wild, this beautiful volume is an important new addition to the literature of architecture and a must for every firm library.

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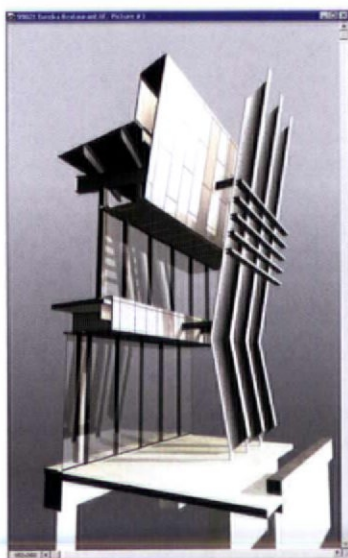
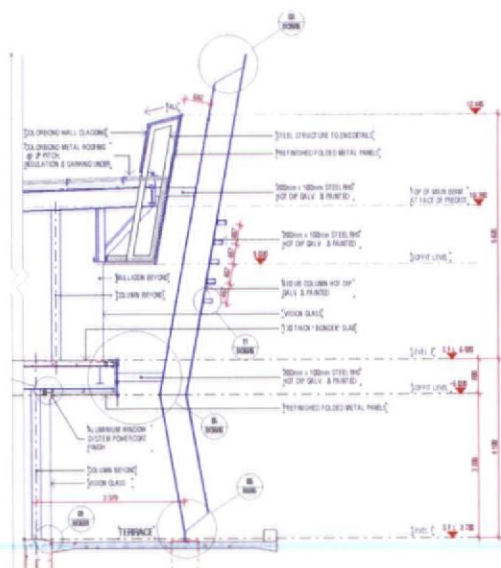


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**JOHN R. DALE, AIA**, earned his B.Arch. from the University of Toronto and an S.M.Arch.Sci. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His professional career includes a long-term affiliation with Barton Myers Associates, as a Senior Associate, first in Toronto and then in Los Angeles, and four years with Perkins & Will, as design team leader and associate principal of the Pasadena studio. He is currently the studio designer for the K-12 studio of Fields Devereaux. As an independent architect, he has designed a series of projects for the Church of Our Saviour in San Gabriel. His articles and projects have appeared in books and monographs as well as journals, including *Spazio e Società / Space and Society Magazine*, *Architectural Record*, *LA Architect* and the *LA Forum for Architecture and Urban Design Newsletter*. Mr. Dale is the 2004 AIA/LA Chapter President, Chair of the AIA/ CC Urban Design Task Force, board member of the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena and a studio instructor at the USC School of Architecture.

**ANN E. GRAY, FAIA**, is the founder of Balcony Media Inc., publishers of *LA Architect*, *LA Inside* and architectural books and monographs under the Balcony Press imprint. Ms. Gray is a licensed architect and practiced architecture in Los Angeles for 15 years—the last eight as Paramount Pictures' studio architect. Ms. Gray has been a visiting lecturer and/or design juror at Woodbury University, Art Center College of Design, UCLA, USC and Harvard University School of Architecture.

**JEFFREY ROTTER** is a writer living in Brooklyn. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Spin*, *Blender* and many others. He does not know Bono.

**SUZANNE STEPHENS** has been a writer, editor and critic in the field of architecture for several decades. She was a senior editor for *Progressive Architecture*, the editor of

*Skyline*, a monthly magazine published by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, and has also written for the *New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *House and Garden* and *Architectural Digest*. Currently she is Special Correspondent to *Architectural Record*. In 1982, Ms. Stephens began teaching a seminar on the history of architectural criticism at Barnard College, and devoted her subsequent dissertation, "Tenacious Beauty: The Shifting Role of Aesthetic Criteria in Architecture Criticism, 1850-1915" to this subject. In 2002 she received her Ph.D. in history of architecture and urban development from Cornell University.

**MICHAEL WEBB** was born in London and has lived in Los Angeles for 25 years. He is the author of more than 20 books on architecture and design, including *Modernism Reborn: Mid Century American Houses*, new monographs on Ingo Maurer and George Nelson, and *Brave New Houses: Adventures in Southern California Living*. Besides reviewing books and exhibitions for *LA Architect*, Michael is a regular contributor to *Architectural Digest*, *Architecture*, the *Architectural Review* and *Domus*.

---

## CORRECTION:

It was on this page last issue that we happily acknowledged Edward Killingsworth's vitality. It is with equal sadness that we report his subsequent demise. A modernist through and through, in projects and in his own home, Mr. Killingsworth was honored with numerous awards. These included Merit Awards from the National AIA for his John E. Baird Office/Residence in Los Alamitos, 1952; and the Architect's Office in Long Beach, 1956. He was also known for the Shaheen/Hancock/Salyer Residence, Long Beach, which blended classical detailing with his modernist sensibility and spatial sophistication. Mr. Killingsworth was 87 years old.

In the "The New Cop on the Block," by Morris Newman, only part of the design team for the new LAPD headquarters was credited. The complete team credits are as follows: DMJM Design/Roth+Sheppard Joint Venture, with the Downtown Architecture Alliance (Shimoda Design Group, Studio 0.10, and John Friedman Alice Kimm Architects).

Two projects in the previous issue, on pages 37 and 39, were mistakenly attributed to Johannes Van Tilburg, instead of the firm of which he is a member, Van Tilburg Banvard Soderbergh.



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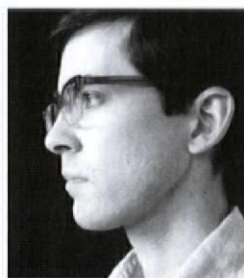






## a letter from the editor

Being a bi-monthly publication tends to preclude timeliness. Moreover, we outline our editorial calendar more than a year in advance, and so choose areas to investigate that have, we hope, a certain evergreen quality. At the moment of this writing, though, this issue's theme of Theory, Criticism and Fame couldn't seem more immediate. Our city is rumored to be losing its primary architectural critic, with a successor yet to be announced.



Architectural criticism has a potential for relevancy that most other critical arenas lack. A person may not read books or attend movies or view art, but buildings are unavoidable. Unavoidable and rarely transparent: they require explanation. Sadly, much of architectural criticism squanders this opportunity, treating buildings alternately as texts or sculptures, and presenting architects as though they were film stars. This approach renders architecture trivial and remote.

But architecture is not a popular amusement or an intellectual diversion; it is a fundamental necessity. Its role reaches far beyond shelter, to affect our health, our communities, our planet and more. We are all consumers of architecture and it falls to the critic to ensure that the general public, and even practitioners, are educated to its ever evolving capabilities and effects, its successes and its failures.

Effective criticism is practical and contextual, as evinced in the best writings of critic Greg Goldin, who we interview in this issue. But, criticism should also embrace aesthetics, a topic that designer Frank Clementi and critic Suzanne Stephens address in two very different articles. On a lighter note, we close with writer and former pop tastemaker Jeffrey Rotter's essay on the absurd state of architects and fame.

There's a lot here to think about; I guess summer is over.

Your editor,

Jesse Brink





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# AWARDS

Three years after its completion, the restoration of Old Santa Ana City Hall was just honored by the City of Santa Ana as the **2004 Outstanding Historic Preservation** project. **Nestor+Gaffney Architecture** of Santa Ana designed the renovation, which focused largely on the interiors of the 1935 building.

The Westchester-Loyola Library from **Aleks Istanbulu Architects** has recently won the LA Cultural Affairs Commission's **2004 Architectural Excellence Award**. The library plus park serves sixteen local schools and the neighboring population. The design establishes the library as a community center and links it, via the park, with the area's civic center.



**Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner's** Genzyme Center, completed by the firm's Los Angeles branch, has received the **AIA/COTE award**, recognizing it as one of the country's top ten green buildings. The judges noted the twelve-story tower's waste-steam driven cooling system and living roof among other features.

The Alegria mixed-use/townhouse project, by local architects the **Birba Group**, was recognized by the **AIA** and **HUD** this summer as an exemplary model of residential and community design. The long-vacant site near Sunset Boulevard now provides affordable housing for families and the chronically ill.

## calendar september

**9/16** The A+D Museum starts the fall season with **LA Now**: shaping a new vision for downtown Los Angeles. The show will present a snapshot of LA at the beginning of the 21st century with the intention of encouraging new thinking for the city's future. Through October 7. The A+D Museum is located at 8560 W. Sunset Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90069. Open Monday through Saturday, from 10 am – 7 pm and Sunday, 12 pm – 5 pm. Phone 310-659-2445. Admission is FREE.

**AIA 9/17** The Interior Architecture Committee's annual Design Meets LA (DMLA) fundraising gala is an annual black tie event celebrating design held by the Committee to honor the LAIAC Student Competition winners, at the Henry Fonda Theater in Hollywood. Contact: 213-639-0777, ext. 78 or visit [www.aialosangeles.org](http://www.aialosangeles.org) for a ticket order form.

**AIA 9/28** International Practice Committee Meeting, Chapter Office (small conference room). For more information please contact chair Tom Johnson at [tjohnson@tsjgolf.com](mailto:tjohnson@tsjgolf.com).

## october

**AIA 10/22** AIA/LA Awards Program Opening Reception, at the A+D Museum. Free and open to the public.

The AIA/LA Chapter continues to provide CES Seminars, Networking Breakfast Meetings and New Beginnings Panels on a regular basis. For further information, call the AIA/LA Chapter for further information at 213-639-0777 or visit our web site at [www.aialosangeles.org](http://www.aialosangeles.org).

## Architecture Books

We herald the opening of Equator Books, in Venice. Besides their entire wall of architecture and design books, they also offer the city's largest selection of out-of-print surf titles. Visit them from 10 am to 10 pm, 7 days, at 1103 Abbot Kinney Boulevard, Venice 90291. Phone: 310-399-5544.



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news  
PEOPLE + PROJECTS

# AWARDS

The American Institute of Architects, California Council (AIA/C), has announced the winners of the **2004 Architectural Design Award**. The jury included: Hugh Hardy, FAIA, Sally Harrison, AIA, Mark Horton, AIA, Robert Hull, FAIA, and Eric Naslund, FAIA. The jury selected 20 projects from nearly 350 entrants. The following is a list of winning local firms, all of which received Merit Awards.

**Osborn Architects**, for the Electrical Training Trust, Commerce, CA  
**Kanner Architects**, for the Ross-Snyder Recreation Center, Los Angeles, CA

**Cannon Design**, for the Clark County Detention Center, Las Vegas, NV

**Joel Blank and Susie Tashiro Architects**, for 745 Navy Street, Santa Monica, CA

**Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners** (Architect) and **BFGC Architect Planners, Inc.**, (Executive Architect), for the Horace Mann Elementary School, San Jose, CA

**Jonathan Segal**, FAIA, for The Titan, San Diego, CA

**Marmol Radziner and Associates**, a Hilltop Studio, Pasadena, CA

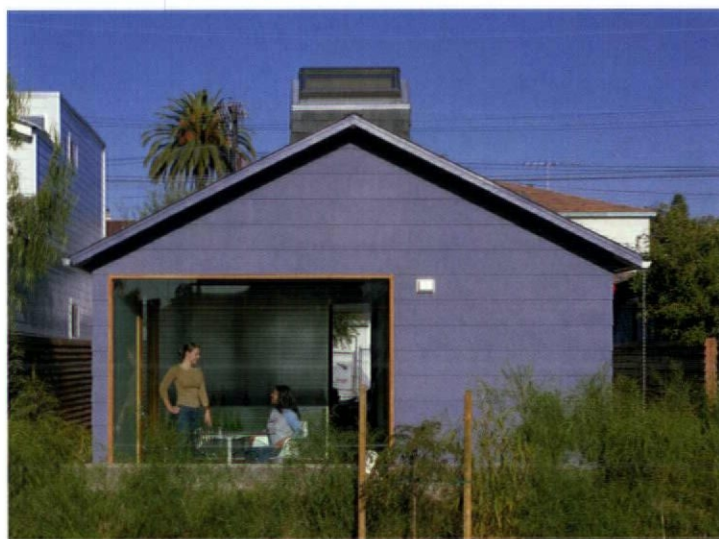
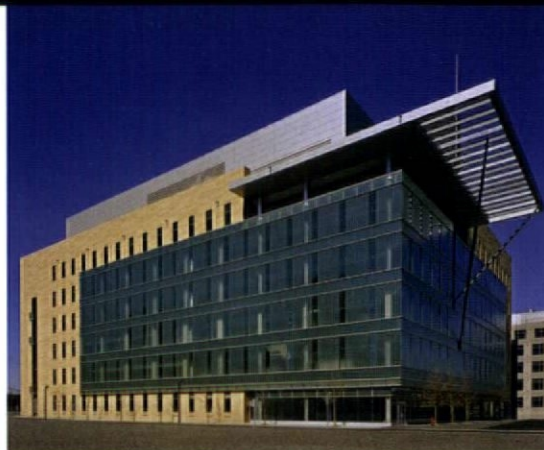
**Stephen Ehrlich Architects** (Executive and Design Architects) and **Symmes Maini and McKee Associates**, Cambridge, MA (Architect of Record/ Associate Architects), for the Kendall Square Biotech Laboratory, Cambridge, Massachusetts

**John Friedman, Alice Kimm Architects, Inc.**, for the Los Angeles Design Center and Cisco Brothers Showroom, Los Angeles,

**Pugh + Scarpa**, for Co-op Editorial, Santa Monica, CA

**Pugh + Scarpa**, for Jigsaw, Los Angeles, CA

**Ena Dubnoff/ One Company Architect**, for El Centro del Pueblo Philanthropic Youth Service Center Los Angeles, CA



## SAVE THE DATE

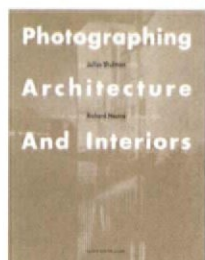
The Los Angeles architectural community will gather this year at the California Science Center school in downtown Los Angeles on the occasion of the annual **AIA/LA Design Awards Gala** on November 4, to celebrate the recipients of this year's Design Awards, Next/LA Awards and a new, exciting category, the Emergent LA Chapter Award, created to recognize the outstanding work of young firms and architects.

All the submission boards to this year's Design Awards will be exhibited at the A+D Museum. The exhibit will open with the annual kick-off party on October 22 and close on November 5. The Design Awards exhibit will host a panel "Placing projects/Projecting places" on October 28, from 6-8 pm, moderated by Robert Somol. Please call the AIA/LA Chapter for further information at 213-639-0777 or visit our web site at [www.aialosangeles.org](http://www.aialosangeles.org)



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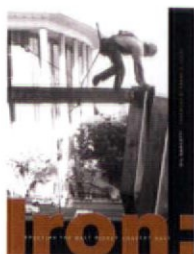


## Photographing Architecture and Interiors

Julius Shulman  
Introduction by Richard Neutra

This was Julius Shulman's first book and he still considers it his most genuine reflection on the profession and his own artistic philosophy. Originally published in 1962, it includes a forward by Richard Neutra. Frank Lloyd Wright once said that to his mind, no better photos had been taken of Taliesin West than those of Julius Shulman. Now reprinted intact with a new foreword by Julius Shulman and digitally scanned reproductions from original prints, this new edition of a classic work is better than the original.

ISBN: 1-890449-07-5, 9" X 12", 154 PAGES, \$39.95



## Iron: Erecting the Walt Disney Concert Hall

Gil Garcetti  
Foreword by Frank O. Gehry

Photographer Gil Garcetti had unparalleled access to the Walt Disney Concert Hall construction site. The personal relationships he developed with the iron workers over the course of many months and his admiration for their artistry are evident in the moving portraits contained in this book. Garcetti's evocative images, reproduced in rich duotones, bring to life the romantic ideal of American industry.

ISBN: 1-890449-15-6, 9.5" X 11.5", 144 PAGES, \$39.95



## LA'S Early Moderns

Victoria Dailey / Natalie Shivers  
Michael Dawson

Introduction by William Deverell

The modernist avant garde of Los Angeles made bold statements in their work, but they were every bit as much a community as they were individual eccentrics. They gathered in solidarity as friends and lovers, patron and client, over the shared excitement of breaking with tradition. The reader will enter a rarified social realm where client, artist, architect, lover, and publisher merge in a creative ferment that occurs spontaneously and magically at rare moments in a city's life.

ISBN: 1-890449-16-4, 7" X 9", 196 PAGES, \$34.95

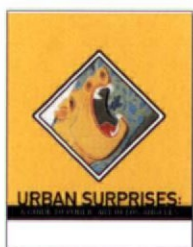


## Frozen Music

Gil Garcetti

In this large-format limited edition of 1500 copies bound in metallic fabric, Gil Garcetti's brilliant interpretive photographs of the stainless steel exterior of the Walt Disney Concert Hall evoke the mystery, fluidity, and form of Frank O. Gehry's lyrical shapes. *Frozen Music* has garnered positive reviews from Pulitzer Prize winning photographer David Kennerly, Weston Naef, Getty Museum curator of photography, and architectural photographer Julius Shulman.

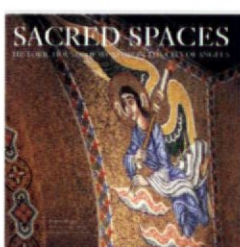
ISBN: 1-890449-27-X, 16" X 14", 45 DUO-TONE IMAGES, BOUND FOR INDIVIDUAL REMOVAL AND DEBOSSSED, METALIC CLOTH, 96 PAGES, \$125.00



## Urban Surprises A Guide to Public Art in Los Angeles

This guide invites its readers to discover hundreds of public works of art; some awe-inspiring, some poignant, and some controversial by both famous and lesser known artists. Enhanced with neighborhood maps and beautifully reproduced color images by photographer Dennis Keeley, this book reveals the magic of the outdoor museum that is the city of Los Angeles.

ISBN: 1-890449-14-8, 6.5" X 8", 112 PAGES, \$14.95

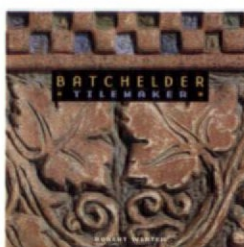


## Sacred Spaces

Robert Berger  
Introduction by Kevin Starr

Photographer Robert Berger visited over 300 historic houses of worship over the course of three and a half years, setting out to record Los Angeles' unheralded religious history. Lively text by noted historian Alfred Willis makes this book come alive and makes this book a substantial contribution to the "undiscovered" realms of religious architecture that make Los Angeles a city of complete beauty and maturation.

ISBN: 1-890449-21-0, 132 COLOR IMAGES, 176 PAGES, \$59.95



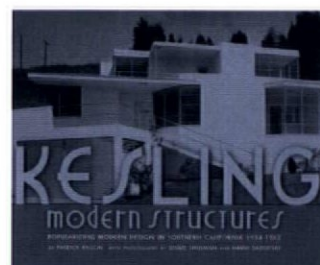
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—Cleota Reed, Syracuse University, author of *Henry Chapman Mercer and the Moravian Tile Works*.

ISBN: 1-890449-03-2, 9" X 9", 130 PHOTOGRAPHS, 112 PAGES, \$29.95



## Kesling Modern Structures

Patrick Pascal  
Photographs by Julius Shulman

Beginning in November 1935, William Kesling was Southern California's most prolific and successful practitioner of Steamline Moderne design, then called Modernistic. With never before published photographs by Julius Shulman, this book is the first exploration of the work of an important, yet, little known player in Southern California's fertile Modernist movement.

ISBN: 1-890449-13-X, 10.5" X 8.5", 96 PAGES, \$24.95







# AIA report

by JOHN DALE, AIA

## Small Learning Communities: IMPLICATIONS, IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

An extraordinary group of individuals—planners, administrators, educators and architects met one May afternoon for a summit focused on the next wave of school building in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Sponsored by the USC School of Architecture and the AIA/LA Chapter, a group of 25 people met over lunch in the living room of Frank Lloyd Wright's Freeman House, overlooking downtown Hollywood. As a follow up to the 'Lessons Learned' Conference held last year to explore the extraordinary building program being undertaken by the LAUSD, a new conference is being developed to focus on the challenges and opportunities of small school learning communities and related issues of joint use development.

At the Freeman House, Jim Watts, District Architect from the San Diego Unified School District, and Jim Brown, former Superintendent of the Glendale Unified School District, offered their insights about joint use planning. LA City Planners Jane Blumenfeld and Sharon Mayer reflected on their ongoing collaboration with the CRA and LAUSD to pool information and identify mutual goals for neighborhood redevelopment as sites are being identified for new schools. Architects and LA Chapter members Kate Diamond and Chris Coe shared their individual experiences working within and outside the LAUSD on cutting edge school projects. Arquitectonica's project integrates affordable housing and a multi-story

middle school over retail stores and a subway station at Vermont and Wilshire. The Edison School in downtown Glendale, by Siegal Diamond Architecture, combines an elementary school with a Senior Center, Community Center, park and Health Clinic. The LAUSD's Deputy Chief Facilities Executive Guy Mehula, Director of Real Estate Ron Bagel and Director of Community Outreach Lucy Padilla updated the group on some of the District's current and proposed projects. These dramatically reduce the scale of the learning environment and successfully integrate schools with joint use facilities integrated with surrounding neighborhoods. The challenge is how to make such innovative approaches the norm rather than the exception.

The LAUSD has already completed 37 of 158 projects planned for Phase 1 of the new construction program. A comprehensive site search is now under way for Phase II, which consists of 52 new projects, including 30 new schools. Even when Phase II is complete, another 50,000 seats will be needed in order to achieve a traditional school calendar and provide facilities within reasonable commuting distances for all students.

With spiraling construction costs and a robust population growth, the task of providing both adequate and innovative school facilities is daunting, to say the least. By developing a common database of case studies, we hope to inform the challenges and opportunities of LAUSD's new approach and help broaden our mutual understanding.

The goal of the AIA/LA and USC School of Architecture initiative is to provide a forum for ongoing collaborations between the LAUSD, City of Los Angeles, the design profession and the academic community.

The Edison School, Glendale; Photo by Paul Turang Photography





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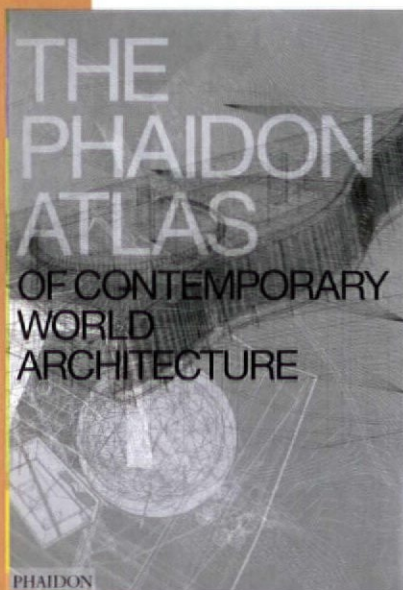
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## PAST AND PRESENT



### Phaidon Atlas of Contemporary World Architecture

(PHAIDON, \$160 HC) ISBN 0 7148 4312 1

Weighs a ton, costs a bundle, but this is truly a must-have for the architect's bookshelf—though a lectern of the kind Philippe Starck designed for Taschen's mega-tomes would be more appropriate. What makes it so essential is the scope (1052 new buildings of every kind from 75 countries), authority (in the selection and descriptions) and rigor of the coverage. Entries are mostly half or full folio page, with an average of five photos and two plans, and the descriptions are succinct and readable. They are grouped by location, country by country, continent after continent, and cued to maps. The atlas recalls the soaring ambition of the Enlightenment to codify all of human knowledge—Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, for example—but it's almost as up-to-date as the latest architectural journals, and even Diderot didn't dream of charting Botswana or New Caledonia.

A panel of 150 international jurors proposed over 4000 buildings and the list was whittled down in discussion over the three years it took to produce the atlas. That would be hard if you were producing a historical survey, but it's an even greater challenge to make intelligent comparisons of newly completed buildings and provide a balanced selection from the last five years. Inevitably, readers may dispute some choices and omissions, though the balanced selection of 23 Angeleno structures instills confidence in the editors' preferences for less familiar locales. I've visited many of these buildings and I'm dazzled by the sense of immediacy the presentations provide, and the consistency of art and texts culled from a multiplicity of sources. And the entries are easy to access—by place, type, and architect—with color-coded margins to tell you where in the world you are.

As a bonus, the atlas provides a global perspective on the architecture of today—in maps that show how it is concentrated geographically in Western Europe and Japan, more thinly spread through the US and very scattered elsewhere. Extraordinary buildings can be found almost anywhere, but there's a sharp contrast between the 77 entries for Germany or 59 for the Netherlands, and the meager six for the vast expanse of the Russian Federation. There are twice as many entries for the UK (67) as for France (31). Multiculturalists may protest, but contemporary architecture is essentially a progressive Western concept that has found a ready acceptance in Japan and the newly affluent countries of Asia, while remaining irrelevant to the needs of poorer countries. Despite the crusading zeal of Le Corbusier and his successors, and the efforts of the Aga Khan Trust to foster new Islamic initiatives, tradition still

rules in over half the world. On the positive side, the atlas highlights centers of creativity that deserve closer attention. As a travel junkie, I'm already planning my next two or three trips.

### Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann: the Designer's Archives

(EMMANUEL BREON, FLAMMARION, \$75 HC) ISBN 2 0803 0432 1

If you want to seduce a sybaritic interior designer, give him/her this book and you'll have a friend for life. Better yet, send it to Bush, and hope it brings on an apoplectic fit. This is what our great leader would characterize as French decadence—two volumes of sketches in an elegant slipcover that's tied with burgundy silk ribbons—and it captures the spirit of its subject. Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann (1979-1933) was the star of the 1925 Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, but his luxurious furniture and refined interiors have more to do with pre-revolutionary France than with Art Deco as it developed elsewhere. He combined a gift for line with a mastery of craft and a love of exotic woods, delighting connoisseurs who could pay the price.

### Furniture and Interiors of the 1960s

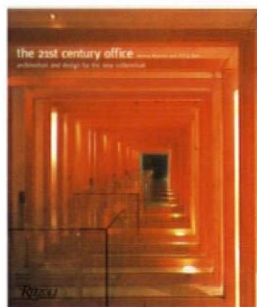
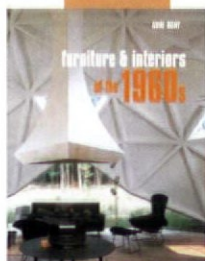
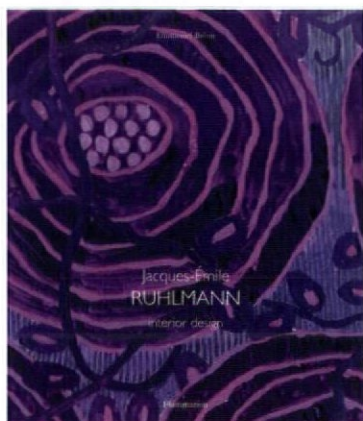
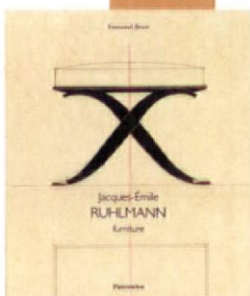
(ANNE BONY, FLAMMARION, \$65 HC) ISBN 2 0803 0446 1

A retrospective that is likely to prompt screams and shudders from anyone who experienced that decade first hand. It was the decade of plastics, inflatables, stretch fabric and organic forms—above all, of furniture as fashion. The Italians came off best, fielding a team that included Achille Castiglioni, Joe Colombo, Vico Magistretti and Marco Zanuso. There's also a scatter of masterworks by Verner Panton, Warren Platner and Paul Kjaerholm, but most of this work has dated badly—the interiors much more than the individual pieces. Even so, it's helpful to be reminded of what the recent past was really like, unfiltered by fond memories.

### 21st Century Office: Architecture and Design for the New Millennium

(JEREMY MYERSON AND PHILIP ROSS, RIZZOLI, \$50 HC ISBN 0 8478 2571 X; \$35 PB 0 84782552 3 PB)

California ad agencies and media companies led the way in turning lofts into workplaces that would provide a vibrant home away from home for young creatives, and that liberating spirit has spread around the world. This eclectic survey is divided into four sections—snappily titled narrative, nodal, neighborly and nomadic—each representing a different strategy of design. The authors offer analysis of function as well as description of design, making this an invaluable guide for clients as well as architects. Remarkably, they've assembled 45 exemplars, mostly from LA, New York and Europe, that are full of fresh ideas and inventive layouts. Just when you thought you knew what the new office looked like, here's a collection to shift your preconceptions.







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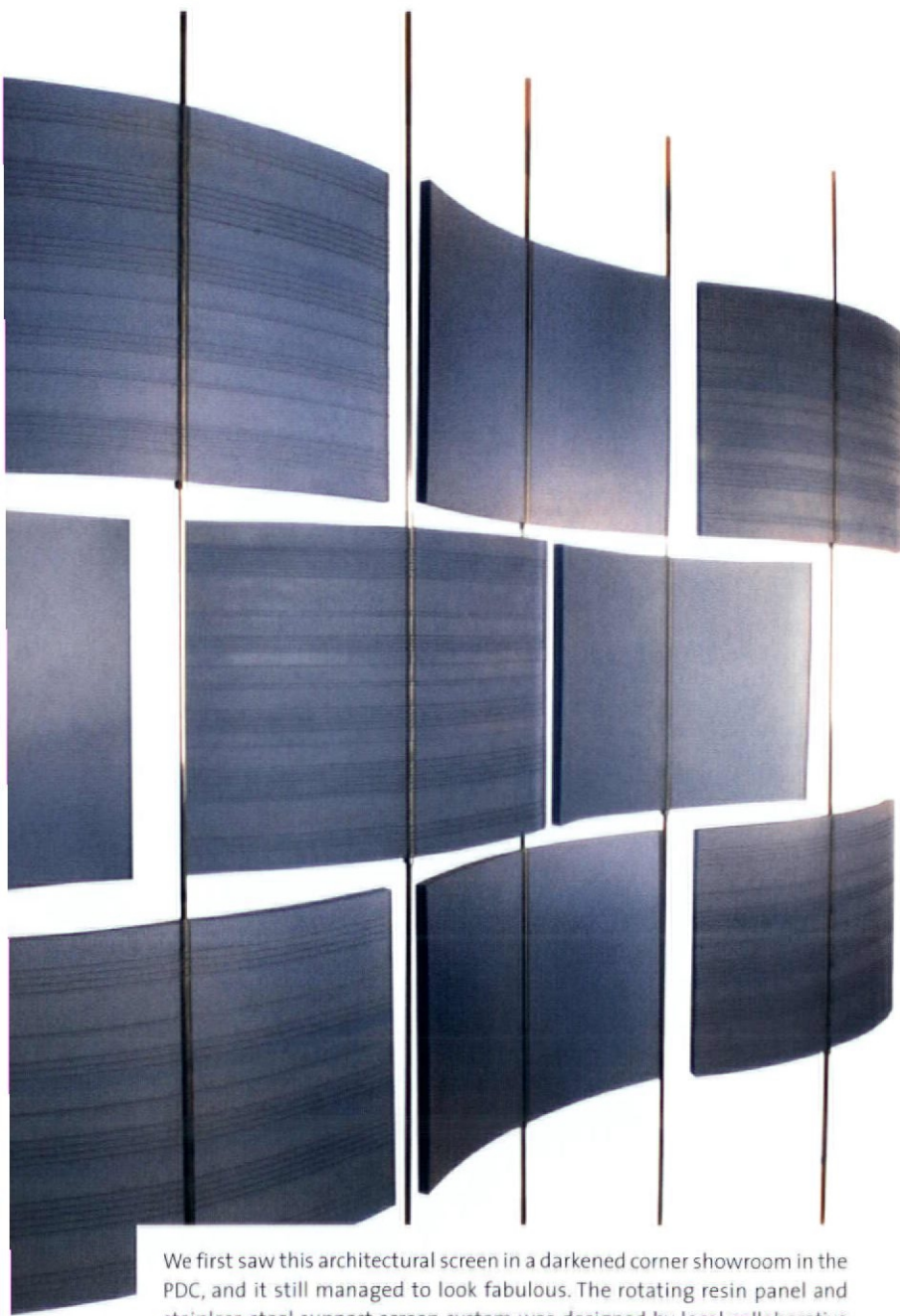




product watch

MATERIALS + TRENDS

# Transparency



We first saw this architectural screen in a darkened corner showroom in the PDC, and it still managed to look fabulous. The rotating resin panel and stainless steel support screen system was designed by local collaborative studio em, which recently opened a showroom on Beverly Boulevard. The resin, available in a variety of colors, is hand poured and can be finished from glossy to flat, or etched with patterns. Each panel measures 24" x 36". See them in person at 8761 Beverly Boulevard, West Hollywood, 90048 or send them an e-mail at [info@emcollection.com](mailto:info@emcollection.com).



Boosters of the local economy may ask why we are promoting a British screen mesh. Simply put: it repels soccer hooligans. But it's also pretty and light, woven from pre-crimped steel to allow for fifty to eighty percent open area. In the polished form, the mesh sparkles discreetly in the sun. For the more subdued, a natural finish is available. Contact Philip Schofield of Soar Engineering, Ltd., for more details, via [soar.engineering@btinternet.com](mailto:soar.engineering@btinternet.com).

Glass-tiled surfaces offer a play of light and color that you just don't get out of materials that merely reflect. The manufacturer UltraGlas has a history in the commercial realm and now wants to bring their tiles into the home. The styles range from sharp-edged flats to more organically abstract profiles. The pigmentation runs from clear to rich hues that evoke that wonderful, mildly radioactive, colored glass of yore. To see the full suite of forms and shades, visit [www.ultraglas.com](http://www.ultraglas.com).



The Pantone accessories craze may have passed, but there is still something enticing about having 1,900 colors available for your modular office system. And that's exactly what Allsteel provides with their enhanced Terrace system. Yes, they're still cubicles, but now you can personalize them to your brand's color scheme, and the translucent panels glow rather pleasantly. Contact Allsteel at 888-ALLSTEEL for more information or visit [www.allsteeloffice.com](http://www.allsteeloffice.com).



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profile  
by JESSE BRINK

# Church of Our Saviour Children's Chapel



## SITTING FOR A MOMENT OF QUIET CONTEMPLATION

in this new chapel in San Gabriel, I couldn't help but feel that seventeen centuries of Christian architecture had gotten it wrong. Doesn't a basilica—essentially an urban form, enclosed and enlivened solely by inert statuary and the slow progress of the sun across stained glass—deny God's creation, substituting the pallid facsimiles of man? Open and largely unadorned,

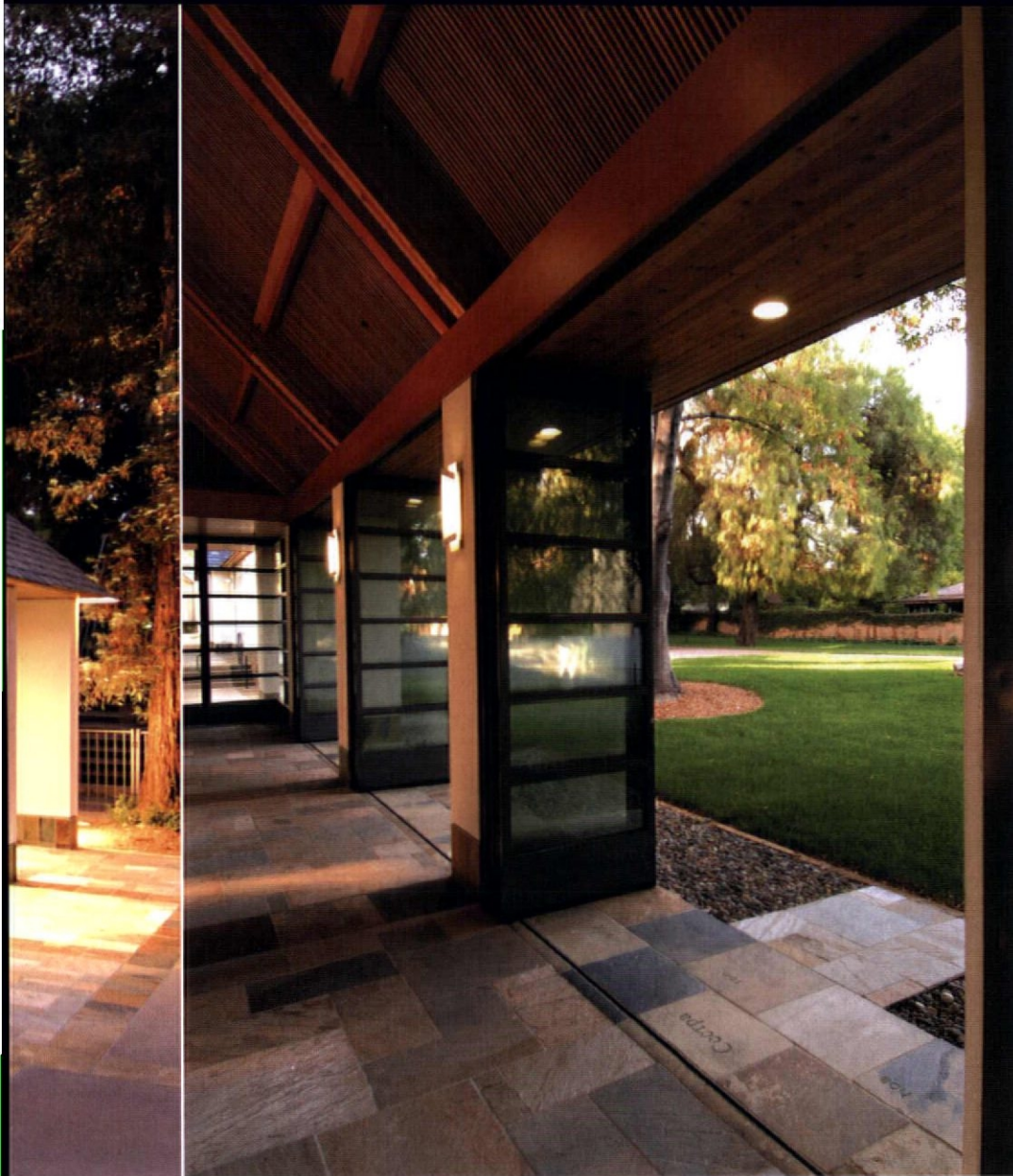
this small chapel on the campus of the Church of Our Saviour, in San Gabriel, lets that creation in, and fosters the wonder it excites.

Of course, this is a children's chapel, so quiet contemplation is not necessarily so easily achieved. Yet architect John Dale's design, augmented by the artistic additions of collaborator Susan Narduli, focuses natural inattention and curiosity to enhance the spiritual message. They do so not through creating an absolutely stark space "without distractions" but rather by including key elements that catch the wandering eye and hold it. For example, the lamps that Narduli designed, in collaboration with fabricator Paul Butler, are fanciful and encourage the sort of close attention that actually can lead to reflection. Dale also offers surprise discoveries as well, such as a child-high shelf along the north wall that is topped with flora- and fauna-rich fossil stone.

Meanwhile, the glazed walls surround the celebrants with the splendor of nature, always visible through glass, and almost tangible when the walls are completely folded aside. Openness feels like the chapel's natural state. Even overhead, the high slate roof is pierced with skylights that expose the movements of the clouds and leafy trees that hover above. In addition, a clerestory window, glazed with dichroic glass, refracts the sun to bathe the cross with golden light during the winter season. To echo this effect, the team hopes to plant a row of ginkgo trees along the eastern edge of the property, the leaves of which also turn golden in December.

Those future ginkgos would replace the ageing hundred-year-old pepper trees that still mark the church's original drive. The site retains much of its venerable history, including parts of the church, where the adults gather, that





date from 1870. Indeed, the church looks as though it were delivered directly from the nineteenth-century English countryside. The new chapel, and an accompanying parish hall, mark the first phase of a two-part master plan. They replace a small 1950s classroom building and a chapel that mimicked the main church on a smaller scale, linked to the parish house by patios and a covered walk.

Dale worked to simplify and unify the interior and exterior spaces. Thus all circulation occurs outside the new buildings, which themselves are almost like open pavilions, with multiple entry points. The chapel sits on a quartzite patio that joins it to the rest of the complex and actually continues into the building to become the floor. This transparency between inside and out is maintained and exposed by the glazed walls. The steep slate roof provides the building its sense of mass

and gravity. All the forms are traditional, but the detailing sharp and contemporary. Dale avoided fussiness to "make it clear that this is not a sentimental addition." The editing necessary to achieve this effect went so far as to exclude rain gutters, relying instead on deep overhangs and French drains.

Artist Narduli took this prosaic detail and developed it to meet a somber programmatic need for the chapel to serve as a memorial for young congregants who have passed away. Inspired by a folkloric tradition of burying children along the walls of a church, with the belief that rain running from a church's roof was blessed, she subtly engraved their names in the glass, to be washed by the water that splashes from the stones that edge the walls. This, like all the chapel's elements, large and small, reflects an architecture that encourages wonder, then steps out of wonder's way. ■

#### CLIENT

Rev. Canon Denis O'Pray, Rector  
Jim Porter, Director of Facilities

#### DESIGN ARCHITECTS

John R. Dale, AIA, Architect  
Judy Akin, John Dale, Edward Dean, Tony Hensley  
William Hoster, Morina Jackson, Sung Lee  
Courtney McLeod Golden, Sita Torres, Binh Wong

#### EXECUTIVE ARCHITECTS

Aleks Istanbulu Architects AIA  
Holly Chacon, Aleks Istanbulu, David Senft  
Gabriel Zamora

#### STRUCTURAL

William K. Koh Consulting Engineers  
William Koh

#### MECHANICAL

The Sullivan Partnership, Inc.  
Mark Alcalde, Tony Gomez

#### ELECTRICAL

Yau Associates Engineering Inc.  
Wayne Yau

#### FOOD SERVICES

Cini-Little International, Inc.  
Jim Little / Tom Chroust

#### CIVIL

KPFF Consulting Engineers  
Tricia Johns

#### LANDSCAPE

Katherine Spitz and Associates  
Katie Spitz, Jessa Chisari

#### ACOUSTICS

Ove Arup & Partners, California, Ltd.  
Daniel Iyzun

#### LIGHTING

Francis Krahe & Associates Inc.  
Francis Krahe, Paul Butler

#### CONTRACTORS

Steiner Brothers Construction Company  
Robert Steiner, Michael Steiner, Michael Head

#### ARTIST

Susan Narduli

#### SPECIAL FABRICATIONS

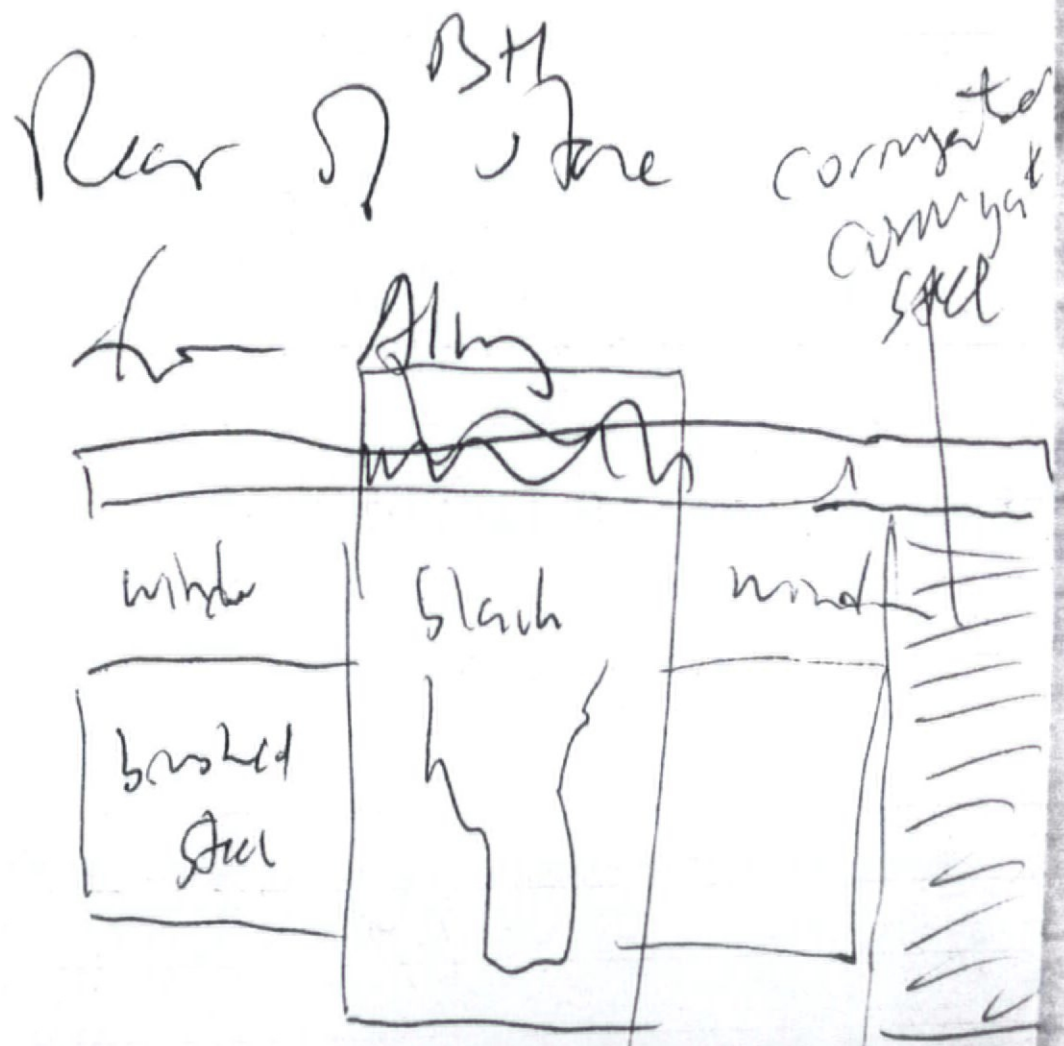
Gilad Ben-Artzy, Tom Farrage, Robert Steiner

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Bill Youngblood



Technical -  
 big space 4  
 this to be  
displayed -



91 93 95



THE DEPARTURE OF NICOLAI OIROUSSOFF FROM THE *LOS ANGELES TIMES* LEFT GREG GOLDIN AS THE CITY'S ONLY REGULAR ARCHITECTURE CRITIC. GOLDIN IS A GRADUATE OF UC BERKELEY, WHERE HE STUDIED POLITICAL THEORY. HE HAS SINCE REPORTED ON THE POLITICS, ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE OF LOS ANGELES FOR MANY YEARS. LA ARCHITECT QUERIED GOLDIN ON HIS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN A CITY KNOWN GLOBALLY FOR ITS ARCHITECTURE, YET SADLY BEREFT OF CRITICAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON THE TOPIC.

# Writing into the Void

By Ann Gray

**LAA:** What publications do you write for? And what do they expect of you?

**GG:** I am the officially designated architecture critic for *Los Angeles* magazine, and I contribute pieces to the *LA Weekly* on urban stuff. The process is an effort to balance the demands of those buildings in the city that you feel you have to review such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall and Rafael Moneo's cathedral. They are big and you can't get around them and you shouldn't want to get around them. They represent a direction the city is going in, or trying to go in, so you want to talk about them. But there is a tendency I call the hyphenate tendency—the Frank Gehry-Brad Pitt syndrome—the prime example of that is when Frank Gehry assembled this all-star cast of architects to make their pitch for the redevelopment of Grand Avenue. They were all up on stage, Zaha Hadid was there and Gehry was there, and then Gehry felt obliged to introduce Brad Pitt and to tell the audience that he had wanted Brad Pitt there because he had some contribution to make to the field of architecture. That's a tendency I believe you have to fight vigorously.

**LAA:** In LA in particular?

**GG:** Yes, but I think it's global now. I think that architects are stars. People who are enormously savvy about how there's a wireless electric charge that runs through everything, among the cognoscenti. And if you utter enough often enough, you are going to gain a kind of stature or recognition. I think that's what Rem Koolhaas has been brilliant at. He keeps on pounding out these obscure books and verbiage and rhetoric and once there's enough of it, and the mound gets high enough, someone's going to notice. It dovetails very neatly with this world of celebrity—that's the Brad Pitt part. It's just talk. We live in a society made up of chatter and noise. I don't blame Koolhaas; he understands that you've got to be part of that wavelength or you'll go completely unnoticed. In Los Angeles, of course, we're one of the hubs for that. You have to work against it by keeping your eyes open and just seeing things go up or hearing from people who aren't part of this chattering, nattering class that there's other architecture. >



Cartier Thier  
in my view  
very specific  
to us;  
Paul Stre  
reads to and  
reflects the city.

Prada  
Same approach to  
Kandee -  
not same intention,  
same textures,  
language in

Glass box -  
private -  
smiles w/  
use of electric  
current from  
translucent to  
transparent -

LAA: Looking at the state of architecture in LA right now—how much of it comes from our legacy of experimentation and how much comes from today's media culture?

GG: That's really tough. The legacy of experimentation, when you talk about Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra, Gregory Ain or any of the pantheon of Los Angeles architects, is by and large work on a very small scale, mostly houses. I think that that is in the bloodstream of Los Angeles architecture, and you see it in Eric Owen Moss, in Frank Gehry, in Thom Mayne. It's there. I guess a better way of putting it is that it's in the DNA. So at that level, I think it still resonates. I see it in other ways; if you just hang around SCI-Arc you see it. SCI-Arc is all about pushing, pushing, pushing use of materials, notions about structure, about engineering, about every aspect of architecture—they are open to questions and there isn't one reigning principle to the work. That's also true in Los Angeles. Look at what Thom Mayne is doing at the Caltrans building, five blocks from Disney Hall—there's a great chasm between approaches to architecture in those two buildings. Frank Gehry is dwelling in the world of 1950s abstract expressionism, that's what he's into – it's sculpture. I haven't quite put my finger on what Thom Mayne has delivered with that Caltrans building, and it may not be on the opposite end of the spectrum, but it's certainly a different area. How does that relate back to this idea of experimentation? I suppose you are still free to do something that doesn't have one imprimatur.

LAA: What do you think the place of an architecture critic is in LA, and why is there not more public discourse on architecture?

GG: First of all, let me say I wish there were. I think it would help us all. I wish there were a lively debate, discussion and dialogue, and I fret over it all the time. When you try to write about these things you feel like you're writing into the void, and the void rarely answers back. That's by way of preface. Why is it missing is an intriguing question. It's missing at every level in Los Angeles. We are sitting on the terrace at LACMA, a museum that has tried to make itself more publicly accessible—extended hours, kids' things on the weekend—and yet it's empty most of the time. I would not attribute that to 'LA, oh, LA is so spread out'. At the official level there is no enthusiasm for the arts. At another level, an unofficial level, there isn't the philanthropic spirit that should exist in a city that has such enormous, deep pockets as Los Angeles. There are gobs of money here. There are people who collect and who have meaningful collections and, in the arts, that stuff doesn't seem to be percolating out; all those people don't seem to want to make those kinds of gifts and endowments. Even Dallas does a better job; Dallas has opened more new museums in recent memory than Los Angeles. >



**LAA:** *You write about things other than architecture. How does that inform your views of architecture? Do those realms connect in your mind?*

**GG:** They do for me, though I am criticized by some people for it. But because I am into politics, the political process partly informs what I do. It naturally leads me to asking questions about who has power, how is the power being exercised, what are the interests behind a given building. Buildings are not like paintings. They represent certain larger forces in our society. If the Catholic church decides to spend a big wad of money on a new mission, I mean a mission in the sense that the Spaniards built, I think we're allowed to ask a lot of questions that conventionally go unasked by architecture critics. So in that sense I write about the politics of architecture. I think that architecture is not exclusively concerned with purely aesthetic matters or forming livable and workable spaces. **Architecture, like a lot of the arts, has taken on an aspect that in many ways helps to deeply inform how we live and walk and breathe in a city.** That's probably always been true, but it's even more true now than in the past. The dictates of structure are no longer confining you in the way they once were and the materials that are available are sort of fluid, and you can do almost anything you want to do. Architects are borrowing languages from all over the place.

**LAA:** *Do you disagree with a critical approach that is formal or aesthetic? Do you think of architecture more as a living piece of the city?*

**GG:** I'm not adamant about this because I think there's room for these different approaches. It's just that I'm not trained or schooled that way. I studied political theory, so I come at architecture from that direction. When I'm working I like to read as much as possible about the particular architect. Many architects are reticent, they don't put a lot of things on paper and when they do it can't be reconciled with the English language. I like to look at their buildings and often, if I have the chance, I like to talk to them. I like to go through the buildings with the architect. I like to know what was on their mind when they were conceiving of it and what sort of forces help to shape their work. **When you talk to architects you discover they're very often acutely attuned to social issues. They really are. The better architects are looking at things at every conceivable level before they have even thought about how to sketch things out.** They are looking at the city as an entirety, and a building that they put within Los Angeles should reflect important essential elements of the city. To me, that has to become your cosmos. Your cosmology is going to arrive from knowing about the demographics of the area, what other buildings are around. It can be a lot of things. I read a lot of poetry and fiction and I'm always looking for different ways of coming at a project. I think that architecture does embrace or distill an aspect of the human experience. Different buildings have different purposes but if you're looking at a Catholic cathedral you can't just look at the history of cathedrals as buildings to get the fullness of the experience you might have going into Moneo's work.

**LAA:** *Do you have a personal crusade as an architecture writer?*

**GG:** What I'm deeply attuned to, and really concerned about, is the way in which buildings are placed in the urban setting. I'm always asking, how does this building work in relationship to its specific place, because **I'm deeply concerned that in a city as vibrant as Los Angeles is we don't have the street-level vitality. We have to constantly press the point that buildings must find a way to reach and push and invigorate.** There needs to be a way to get people on their feet and wanting to use the city and engaging the buildings themselves.

**LAA:** *Other than the big obvious ones, like Moneo's cathedral and the Walt Disney Concert Hall, how do you decide what to review?*

**GG:** Partly I decide by fighting with my editors about it and sometimes I win and sometimes I lose. **I like to drive around the city and see what's happening, because I believe in accidentally coming upon things and saying who's doing this, what is that?** I usually don't win those arguments.

**LAA:** *Do architects call you or do you call them and say what's going on?*

**GG:** More the latter than the former. I try to call architects to see what they are up to. It's hard because I get six or seven columns a year. That's not a lot of space, and very often what might have been twice as long ends up being half as long.

**LAA:** *Do you think there is any trepidation on the part of architects that you might skewer them?*

**GG:** I never hear that. I don't think so, because I kind of like architects. They are more likely to get skewered if the *LA Weekly* for participating in things I don't approve of. I'm trying to write about the Prada store right now. I don't think Rem Koolhaas has anything to fear. I'm formulating it now. I don't think the project hangs together but it's not all bad either, and there are some interesting ideas there, so it's a mixed review. With Disney Hall, I probably wrote the only review that wasn't singing the high praises of Frank Gehry from the first word to the last. I questioned things about that building that should have been questioned, but Frank Gehry didn't call me up to bawl me out. I wish more architects would call.

**LAA:** *Any last thoughts or final remarks on your job?*

**GG:** **I think it's great fun. I have no idea if I'm doing a good job of it. I wish that the really big architecture that is happening in town engaged the city at large. I think the city would be a better place for it.**








# where is my beautiful house?

By Frank Clementi, AIA, AIGA

*You and I both know beauty when we see it. Beauty is visceral – it hits you. No reasoned critique can hold a candle to the simplest episode of axiomatic beauty. So why did architects give up on beauty?*





I became a designer because I wanted to move people. I wanted to show people things they hadn't seen before, but which still struck a sense of recognition. I wanted show them things that might make their hair stand on end. This physical reaction is a palpable indicator of beauty.

But, with a few exceptions, that's not what's happening in architecture. Now we mostly use words to understand form. We look at pictures of other buildings and talk about the pictures. It has gotten so that almost every discussion about architecture now uses justifications for form: Words like meaning and process and efficiency and appropriateness.

Architecture itself now references architecture almost exclusively, like the acoustic phenomenon of feedback, where an amplified signal is picked up by a microphone and re-amplified repeatedly, rising to an overwhelming squeal. This architectural feedback loop reinforces signals we've already seen, rendering a tonal uniformity that preempts richness.

At the same time I've been conditioned to embarrassment at the discussion of beauty. You can't bring it up without prompting rolled eyes and covered grins. In 1990 art Critic Dave Hickey was cornered into declaring that the issue of the 90s would be beauty, and was confronted with a silenced audience. It was as if beauty hung there, no one knowing when to acknowledge the impropriety of allowing its attendance to the discussion of aesthetics.

## SO, HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Some presumptive pathology of beauty's fall from grace:

- **We grew up:** Is beauty a childish indulgence?
- **We agree to disagree:** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. In our egalitarian society we are without the requisite tasteful aristocracy, and as a result ALL are entitled to a determination of beauty, resulting in a factored denominator.
- **It's immodest to talk about beauty:** To assume the authority of objectivity is self aggrandizing and preachy.
- **Quantification:** Beauty can't be measured, so we turn away towards factors that predictably affect market valuations.
- **Form follows function:** Comfort and convenience have supplanted emotion and risk.

My interest in how we got here is a morbid curiosity. This curiosity is part of the problem. We wonder how things happen, assign blame, produce documentaries and create layers of abstraction that further separate us from the visceral effects of the beautiful.

We need to deal with beauty directly, and not through rationalization. We need to overcome our prudish aversion to sensuality, our security with the utilitarian and our misplaced frugality. We shouldn't be co-opted into thinking that talking about art is more important than making it.

Beauty is not comfortable. It reaches out from across the room and

triggers an ecstasy of identification and desire. It attenuates the recognizable and conventional, skirting the sensational, and achieves a deep identification and understanding. While we exalt it as exquisite, beauty rarifies the mundane from within. Sheering our rational judgment makes the commonplace, and sometimes the outrageous, seem seductive.

An example: Since seeing Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes, I can't walk down the supermarket detergent aisle without grinning. In fact, Warhol showed me enough beauty in that mundane environment that I now make deliberate trips down that aisle. Photographers adopt similar methods, transforming the recognizable into the sublime. Beauty isn't created, it's indicated; it hides in plain sight. It's an inspired gaze from across the room that we remember forever.

As architects I suggest we look not within architecture for a generative inspiration, but without.

With this idea that we should look around I started looking for the beauty that flourishes in Los Angeles, through forms that, while not necessarily native, are in any case fundamental to our culture. Originally I thought (was taught) that in order for an expression to be authentic, it needed to have a pure pedigree. That it needed to be indigenous and uncorrupted.

But now I wonder if this attempt to enforce a regional authenticity is just another abstraction that leads to stagnation; perhaps it's another way to justify by precedent rather than appreciate directly. This valuation of the authentic seems especially inappropriate in Los Angeles, which is instead tropically fertile territory for the adaptation of alien influences. We allow various forms and influences to overlay on each other, not in the historically sedimentary ways seen in classical cities, but with semi-transparent overlays where the whole becomes visible through each lamination.

It is precisely this aggregation of (mostly) uniformly applied but (mostly) disparate layers that creates the visual richness of Los Angeles. Attempts to evaluate the complexity by reductive classical means are ill applied, and frustrating. The beauty of Los Angeles is self-directing, and requisite; it is empirical, and not conjectural. Successful examples of this process are evident specifically in the media through which we export our culture, such as automobiles, film and the surf/skate scene. They exist as well in indigenous curiosities including the freeways, weirdness and fantasy.

Car Culture is perhaps the most obvious. It's Southern California's renaissance form. We are a culture defined by the development of

*Beauty is not comfortable. It reaches out from across the room and triggers an ecstasy of identification and desire.*






Above right: "How to Ollie" by Ingo Schäder/[www.fotoingo.com](http://www.fotoingo.com)





Above: Hollywood sign by Pete Burke. All others by Frank Clementi and Jesse Brink.





automobiles as mediums of popular expression. Customizers found ways to establish individuation within a recognizable convention. The automobile was not generated here, but boy did it thrive. Out of the mundane, use-driven uniformity we crafted a radically expressive culture. Finding a way to relate automobiles to everything from farm machinery, to air and space travel, to sharks. Pinstriping, chopping, channelling, lowering, louvering and slamming: these are the processes with which, mostly men, developed an art form within a permissive context.

Film, as well, developed as an art form precisely because it wasn't expected too. It found its own way to make aesthetic and emotionally moving experiences. It was easier still because it was trying to reach a popular resonance, and not seeking academic or critical endorsement. This indifference to "high art" is the key to its currency. It matters not because it matters to the cultural aristocracy, which at this western final frontier carries little relevancy, but because it matters to the consumer of the medium. In contrast, contemporary Classical Music is critically regarded, but wanes mainly because its audience is a cliquish province of narrowly acculturated aesthetes. This trajectory is informative in light of recent questions of the popular relevancy of architecture and the arts.

My favorite is the surf/skate/snowboard scene. Clearly, the graphics and forms of this culture are indigenous. But the meat here is how each group worked across the disciplinary divide to enrich themselves by sharing with each other, and also appropriating from outside. Not just in graphics and dress, but at the core of their own medium, beauty by movement through space. Skating did not originate naturally, but through the forced fusion of wave-derived movements onto asphalt. Today the Ollie is a simple, fundamental and apparently impossible maneuver. This disconcerting impossibility is what makes it beautiful. Subverting expectations, the technique is further appropriated for graphic design, co-opting conventional logotypes to decorative means.

## *...compelling and powerful beauty exists in the prosaic*

Once you start looking, freeways are insanely beautiful. I know that there have been various odes to roadway engineering, and freeway overpasses in particular. But try to raise them as inspiration in a design critique and watch the air go out of the collective balloon. Appreciation of these hundred mile long sinewy structures might be difficult if you can't set aside the environmental and social costs, though I can find even aircraft carriers beautiful while being concurrently appalled at their continued funding and existence. The graceful placid forms of freeway structures just can't overcome knee-jerk dismissal as emblems of our indulgent omission of public transportation. Damned obfuscation: Should we dismiss Chartres for being tolerant of gender inequity?

The context sheer and juxtaposition fundamental to Los Angeles surround us with a truth weirder than the strangest fiction. The opportunities for collage that Los Angeles demonstrates have been alluded to in the films of Peter Greenaway and Mike Figgis. The long-time absence of zoning ordinances in the city has created the wildest relationships. Not just cheek by jowl, but over and under. And the different ordinances for buildings and billboards have produced stunning structural and graphic gymnastics around fairly modest, but apparently inviolable dry cleaners.

Finally, we live in the land that produces fantasies. When people come to see the Hollywood of legend, they find that it doesn't have a material condition of any consequence. It might seem outwardly important to sustain the façade, but for the fact that this is a city of insiders. We know how it's done. There is beauty in the accidents and exigencies of the generation of the fantastic. The space behind the Hollywood sign is beautiful because it holds up the Hollywood sign. We understand the symbiosis between the image and its support, as well as the disparately greater effort spent engineering the disbelief that disappears behind the image. I love that I live in a city where, through film, so many people can will themselves into invisibility to share in the creation of a single vision.

While these examples are obvious, I'm probably overlooking even more conspicuous ones, like the graphics of Little El Salvador's tiendas on 3rd Street or Left Coast Mysticism in Venice Beach. But my intention is not to be comprehensive. In fact, I worry about becoming categorical and not creative. These examples are just my personal verification that compelling and powerful beauty exists in the prosaic. My culture is rich. I want to remember to be pertinent, as well as rational. I also want to dispel the aversion to the evaluation of beautiful. This evaluation takes risk and engagement. Further, as architects, it requires us to stand up and show our work. And we should stop hiding behind cloaks of reason for fear of subjective critique.

There is a final condition worth mentioning, but it's more social than formal, formed in the cycle of waves that roll against the coast. I think it's where Los Angeles derives its cool prudence.

As teenagers we bobbed in the ocean with both friends and rivals, waiting for rideable waves. There was both competition and encouragement. Each wave prompted a qualitative evaluation of its characteristics, and a determination of probable personal success. There were several possible risks of miscalculation; failure to physically claim a viable wave by inadequately shutting someone else out; dropping in on an un-rideable wave, or wasting a high value break. Each mistake was greeted with derision, though almost as often with some support. And the consistency of the tides yielded some relief: That with each subsequent wave came the promise that there was always a chance to do one better. ▀



# JUDGING AESTHETICS AS A CRITICAL BASIS ARCHITECTURE

BY SUZANNE STEPHENS



In my years of experience writing and editing for architectural publications, I have found that almost every decision about what to publish involves aesthetic judgment at its core. The demands of publishing are fairly obvious: there is a pressure to print photographs of architecture that will attract the attention of the reader. Yet editors are usually reluctant to admit how much we depend on aesthetic evaluations. There is a sense of shame about beauty's worth, or at least admitting its worth. There is also hesitation about "standards" of beauty: after all, it is all so "subjective," even when we agree that a building is "ugly." And so the articulation of that judgment has been limited. Very rarely is the aesthetic appeal of a piece of architecture fully discussed, either in editorial meetings, design award juries or even the classroom.

Thus the idea that beauty is an important feature of architectural evaluation has only been implicitly

acknowledged in printed criticism. If the topic of aesthetics is explicitly confronted, it is usually addressed by asking the question, "Is it well-designed?" This term more broadly encompasses considerations of aesthetics and function, as well as the craft of its construction, in other words, the Vitruvian ideals of *utilitas*, *firmitas* and *venustas*. Even so, the aesthetic component of the Vitruvian triad is still undefined and taken for granted. Because they are not consciously considered or examined, they have frequently operated in tension with other criteria, particularly functional ones.

In order to investigate this question of the place of aesthetics in architectural criticism, I have begun with the role that beauty played in architectural judgment in the last half of the nineteenth century in America. During this age of intense growth and expansion (not only in architecture, but in journalism as well), there was a lot of fodder for the nascent profession of architecture critics. Principles of aesthetic evaluation

played a key part in professional criticism during these early years, although over time other values and principles, such as functionalism and organicism, expanded their influence.

But how a building looked, more than how it "worked" in functional terms, was the most telling issue addressed by nineteenth-century architecture critics. It should be noted that functionalism in nineteenth-century architectural terms was manifested in the expression of the structure and program on the buildings' exteriors. Not until the early twentieth century did functionalism connote the efficient planning of space, and solving the program. Furthermore, in the nineteenth

century aesthetic considerations appeared to be accepted without challenge by critics who were also embracing functionalist values.

These critics considered architecture to be both a fine art and a useful art, with the assumption that both could happily coexist. Aesthetic determinations about architecture were based predominately on the visual experience; "beauty" came from the pleasure of contemplating a well-composed work of architecture. The architectural object was often evaluated as if it were a two-dimensional painting, seen from the point of view of the spectator examining its main facade. The nineteenth-century

American critic usually seemed to be standing outside, perhaps across the street, simply scrutinizing a building's façade.

As time went by, and buildings grew from ten to twenty or even fifty stories, critics acknowledged they were viewing the building from afar, or from middle-distance, and in the round. When a critic, such as Montgomery Schuyler, makes the transition from looking at the façade of the tall office building, such as Louis Sullivan's thirteen-story Bayard Building (1897-99), embedded mid-block on a New York City street, to observing Cass Gilbert's fifty-eight story Woolworth Tower (1910-13) from a distance, then from a block away, and finally, close-up, we see the beginnings of a more complex visual experience and the appreciation of the three-dimensional building, one involving rotation in movement and shifts in perspective.

But the bulk of architectural writing during the period still reflected a static viewpoint. It is also important to note that critics writing about buildings, particularly houses, often

*Some critics view aesthetic criteria with suspicion.*



## *There is a sense of shame about beauty's worth.*

referred to black and white photographs. In many cases it was clear that the critic had not visited the site. In certain essays, Russell Sturgis, in particular, refers quite pointedly to the photographs in the publication, in such a way as to suggest that he had no personal experience with the work. The reasons are many, but logistics and expense of travel probably were two prime factors. The result was judgments made from the photographic perspective, often at an angle where the front and one side elevation could be captured in a single shot. Obviously this particular viewpoint does not change the rather static perception of the architecture.

Beauty has always involved pleasure and goodness, in a moral sense, as well as utility or function. Defining beauty as giving pleasure may sound too hedonistic for nineteenth-century American society, emerging as it had from a strong Puritanical belief system. Yet pleasure was not necessarily separate from morality in the understanding of the critics. The belief that beautiful architecture would promote better lives and create better people found a fertile ground here. In addition, many of the critics (or their philosophical and theoretical sources) believed beauty and use or fitness were one, and that a well-functioning building was therefore a beautiful one.

Both appropriateness to purpose and expression of structure were values that were peculiar to the nineteenth-century notion of functionalism. The concept of organicism was also important. Since an organism is a living body, with an organization of parts that is integral to its function and its form, the term connotes a design generated naturally from the response to the site, materials, program and economics.

It was implicit in most of the nineteenth-century architecture critics' writings, although "organic" was not mentioned as often as certain other values as "honesty," or "frank expression."

By the early twentieth century, the criteria for aesthetic value were subsumed under the more developed category of functionalism mentioned above. Now what functioned well, and/or solved ethically social purposes, was beautiful. Beauty was understood to be a by-product of "good design." But beauty did not automatically result from efficiency and economy. Over the succeeding decades of the twentieth century, beauty's place has proved problematic.

Today some critics view aesthetic criteria with suspicion, as does Neil Leach in *Anaesthetics of Architecture*. Aesthetics, which Leach defines too broadly as the world of visual images, is blamed for masking the barrenness of social and political concerns in the late capitalist commodity-oriented culture. He castigates it for placing a diverting emphasis on pleasing the senses. Leach is only one of a legion of cultural critics of the "postmodern" era who has been questioning the role of aesthetics in distracting the public from conflicts

of class, gender, and race. Whereas modern architecture was once embraced for the social and political programs implicit in its functional forms, it too had gotten swept away by beauty, or what it was called at the time "formalism."

Although Leach has reason to be suspicious of the commodity-oriented aspect of culture, aesthetics is not a distraction. It is a scapegoat for the social conflict Leach describes. Indeed it is reminiscent of the suspicion of beauty that is described by Neil Harris, when discussing the early nineteenth-century linking

of art to luxury and moral decadence. True, aesthetic pleasure can make you forget your troubles, and it usually is easier to have beautiful surroundings if you are rich. But that is the problem. The general public, rich and poor, deserves to have beauty in their lives. The problem is figuring out how beauty is defined, evaluated and formulated in a democratic, capitalistic society.

Aesthetic judgment has to acknowledge these conditions. At the moment it thrives, but seems to do so on the surface. As a result of our avoidance of the discussion of beauty, we focus on the banal, or the kitsch, or the retardataire. The desire for beauty spurts up in various guises, but the

## *The desire for beauty spurts up in various*



aesthetic still remains an elusive, if tenacious, aspect of the evaluation of architecture. The nineteenth century critics were working in the cognitive and perceptual realms of aesthetic evaluation. By looking at the various forms of their criticism, we might be able to figure out how to theorize aesthetic evaluation today.

The critical discourse that developed during the nineteenth century could be argued to have encouraged the sea change of modernism, if not through the resolution of aesthetics, function and symbolic expression, then through critical insights provoked by its tensions. The value of an ongoing critical discussion may not be in arriving at a solution so much as keeping issues in the forefront so that the next generation of architects and critics can respond accordingly. At the same time, however, it still appears that much more intensive introspection of criticism's methods would have some beneficial effect.

In analyzing what makes criticism valuable, art historians William Jordy and Ralph Coe decided in 1961 that it involved a three-part challenge. In their introduction to *American Architecture and Other Writings* by Montgomery Schuyler,

they asked: "Does the critic possess an aesthetic philosophy relevant to the creative production of his world?" Second, they asked, "Does his philosophy lead him to the most creative artists and the most significant problems within his world?" Finally, Jordy and Coe wondered if during moments of paradigmatic shifts in the arts, "Can [the critic's] philosophy embrace the new vision, the coming vision, and dare to transform itself in the process of discovery?" They concluded that while Montgomery Schuyler's criticism displayed a "progressive eclecticism" and "radical rationalism," he was thwarted by a "picturesque inheritance," that kept him from having "clarity of vision."

In spite of the nineteenth-century critics' fixation on compositional and visual principles, many of the buildings that were praised then, and are still standing, are highly valued as architectural landmarks, often as much for their beauty as for their contribution to innovative or functional modern architecture. While aesthetic considerations were devalued or dismissed in the functionalist years of the early twentieth century, beauty, or the pleasure gained from contemplating or walking through a work of architecture, retained its appeal. Even today, beauty is a significant factor in the evaluation of architecture in magazines and newspapers. When they do respond positively to a work of architecture, today's writers and editors do not tend to use classical terms such as "unity," "propriety" and "harmony." They have found other words. Unity may be called "coherence" or "consistency," harmony is referred to as "balance," and "propriety" might be called "contextual." In other words the criteria are still there, but under new guises. Beauty, this elusive but tenacious quality, lurks. ■

*guises, but the aesthetic still remains an elusive, if tenacious, aspect of the evaluation of architecture.*

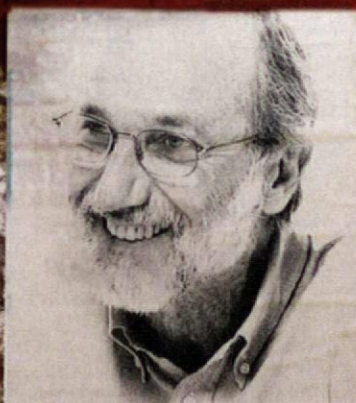
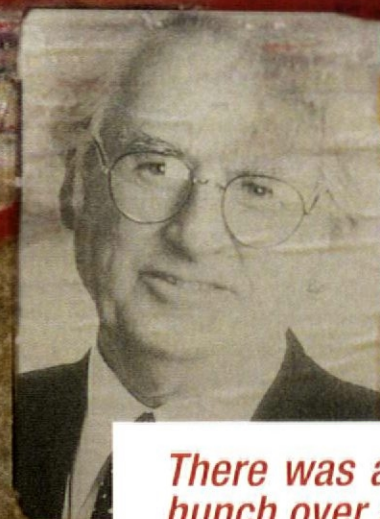
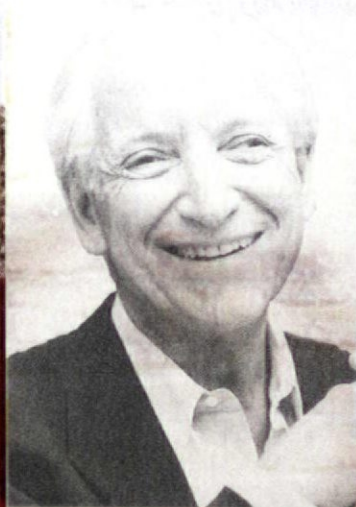


# FAMOUS ARCHITECTS



By Jeffrey Rotter





***There was a time when all you had to do to be a famous architect was hunch over a drafting table and design a bunch of astonishing buildings.***

Alas, those lazy days are over. Now you have to rub elbows with rock stars, make lemon reamers for Target and then try to squeeze in time to design astonishing buildings. What exactly does it take to be a famous architect? Not an important architect. Not an influential architect. A famous one. Well, it helps to design a Guggenheim, but that's just the beginning.

The era of the celebrity architect begins with Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright mixed Victorian gravitas with mass-media savvy to give his profession its first true star. He led a tabloid-worthy personal life, flaunted the demands of engineering to serve his uncompromising art, hung out with Hollywood starlets and wore a cape. Wright's ambition to remake America in his Usonian image required a new skill, branding, and he was a hell of a brand. After Wright, a whole generation of architects took up the mantle. Philip Johnson became a fashion icon of sorts. IM Pei embraced pop culture on a grand scale,

with his Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But it's the latest breed of high-visibility architects who play the fame game in earnest. Take Frank Gehry: he not only designed his own splashy music museum (Experience Music Project), but he also hawks a line of wristwatches.

Pity those profound and influential architects who—silly fools—allow their buildings to eclipse their personal fame. Everyone can picture the Sidney Opera House, but few can name its designer. It was Jorn Utzon, who won the Pritzker in 2003. Then again, keeping a low profile is not necessarily a bad thing. Thanks to *My Architect*, the painfully revealing documentary of the life of Louis Kahn, lots of people know less about Kahn's hugely influential designs than about his life of polygamy and seedy demise in a train station bathroom.

Making the leap from humble draughtsman to superstar takes a new set of skills: marketing, merchandising and schmoozing. Here's how the current batch of blockbuster architects stacks up.



## FRANK GEHRY

**HOMETOWN:** Toronto, Canada

**AGE:** 75

**PRITZKER:** 1989

**ROCK CRED:** Seattle's Experience Music Project; Mariah Carey set a video in his Bilbao Guggenheim.

**BONO FACTOR:** They're old pals. Fellow architects cried favoritism when Gehry received Bono at his California office during the open competition to design U2's new Dublin recording studio.

**COUTURE CONNECTION:** Gehry designed the Issey Miyake store in New York's Soho.

**MERCH:** Fossil's Frank Gehry Signature watches.

**SARTORIAL FLOURISH:** Gehry needs to work on the wardrobe, but his penchant for French cuffs and the shock of white hair are a start. Note the hardhat in his headshot.

**COOL CLUB NAME:** The Los Angeles School.

**CELEBRITY INDULGENCE:** Changed his name from Goldberg to Gehry.

**DIVA MOMENT:** He promises never to work with Donald Trump, no matter how much he begs.

**VISIONARY QUOTE:** "I was freaked out about going on the road and being marketed like Yves Saint Laurent." (*I.D. magazine*)

## REM KOOLHAAS

**HOMETOWN:** Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**AGE:** 59

**PRITZKER:** 2000

**ROCK CRED:** Stoner dudes can't believe his name is really Koolhaas.

**VISIBILITY:** He's the king of coffee-table books. Koolhaas is on every hipster's intellectual syllabus, somewhere between Baudrillard and Howard Zinn.

**COUTURE CONNECTIONS:** Miucco Prada's architect of choice; he designed her boutique on Rodeo Drive. Koolhaas repays the compliment with his all-black, all-Prada wardrobe.

**BONO FACTOR:** They rubbed elbows at the 2002 World Economic Forum in New York.

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** Where do we begin? Koolhaas was an architecture critic before he built a building. "As more and more architecture is finally unmasked as the mere organization of flow—shopping centers, airports—it is evident that circulation is what makes or breaks public architecture..." (*from his statement for the MoMA expansion project*)

## DANIEL LIBESKIND

**HOMETOWN:** Lodz, Poland

**AGE:** 58

**PRITZKER:** Inevitable.

**VISIBILITY:** His disputes with the developer of the World Trade Center have made Libeskind a staple of both the gossip pages and the business section.

**ROCK CRED:** Before taking on architecture, Libeskind was a virtuoso accordion player. Make of that what you will.

**MERCH:** There's no line of Libeskind sportswear, but he is designing the biggest shopping center in Europe (outside Bern, Switzerland).

**BONO FACTOR:** Who needs famous friends? Libeskind is working on the most talked-about construction site in the world.

**COOL CLUB NAME:** Deconstructivist.

**DIVA MOMENT:** Feuding with the money men over the Freedom Tower. Incidentally, his name means "love child" in Yiddish.

**SARTORIAL FLOURISH:** Bauhaus-inspired spectacles; frequently spotted in black leather.

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** "A building can awaken us to the fact that it has never been anything more than a huge question mark." (*acceptance speech for the German Architecture Prize*)

## MICHAEL GRAVES

**HOMETOWN:** Indianapolis, Indiana

**AGE:** 70

**PRITZKER:** No, but Bill Clinton gave him the National Medal of Arts in 1999.

**MERCH:** Been to Target lately? His designs for Alessi are legendary. He's also got a line of Delta faucets.

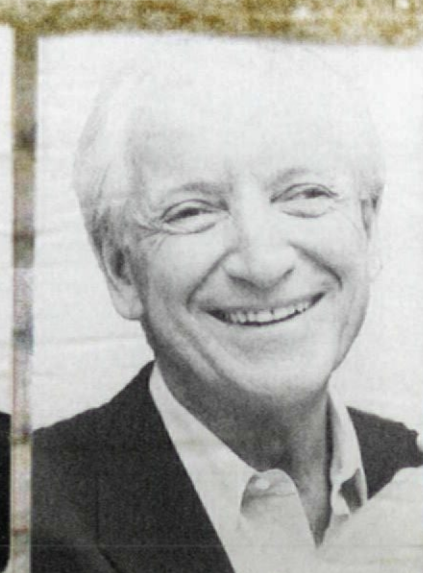
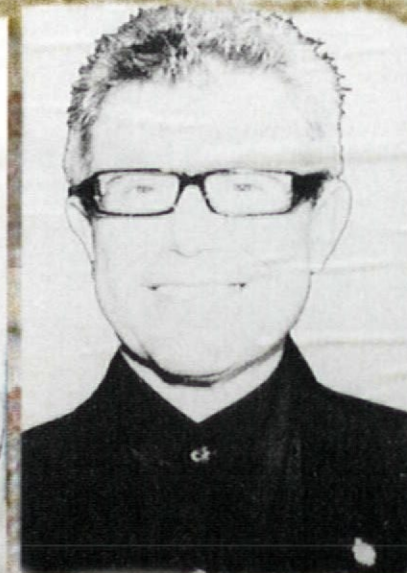
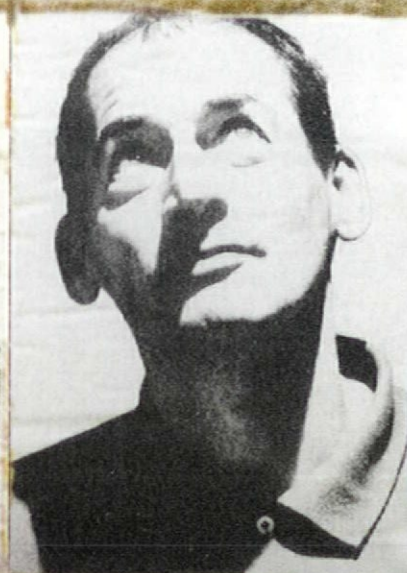
**COOL CLUB NAME:** The New York Five.

**BONO FACTOR:** They were both on the invite list for the Clinton's millennium celebration at the White House.

**DIVA MOMENT:** Graves hosts celebrity signings for his bird-spouted Alessi teapots. If his teapot were a CD, it would be certified gold by now (500,000 have been sold since 1985).

**VISIBILITY:** The 47-foot tall swans atop his Dolphin and Swan Hotels at Disney World don't hurt. He's become the king of "entertainment architecture."

**VISIONARY QUOTE:** "It's when art comes down from the wall that things get really interesting." (*Target promo copy*)





## SANTIAGO CALATRAVA

**HOMETOWN:** Valencia, Spain

**AGE:** 53

**PRITZKER:** Just a question of when.

**ROCK CRED:** "Take it to the bridge" could be Calatrava's slogan.

**VISIBILITY:** Although Calatrava himself keeps a low profile (try getting a headshot of this guy), his buildings are among the most televised in the world. Sports fans got an eyeful of his Athens Olympic Sports Complex all summer. He also designed a very telegenic commuter rail station at Ground Zero.

**BONO FACTOR:** Low. But he did design the James Joyce Bridge in Dublin.

**DIVA MOMENT:** Calatrava is a bridge designer who can't drive. How diva is that?

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** "Asymmetry allows you to explore." (*Time online*)

## ZAHA HADID

**HOMETOWN:** Baghdad, Iraq

**AGE:** 54

**PRITZKER:** 2004

**ROCK CRED:** Designed stage sets for the Pet Shop Boys' 1999/2000 tour; Metropolis magazine called her a "rock star architect".

**GUGGENHEIM:** She's designed one for the Taiwanese city of Taichung.

**COOL CLUB NAME:** Deconstructivist.

**DIVA MOMENT:** Known for her queenly carriage, Hadid is the only star architect who may properly be called a diva.

**SARTORIAL FLOURISH:** Her Issey Miyake shawl and hennaed hair. Hadid must have gotten a few fashion tips from her old mentor Rem Koolhaas.

**MERCH:** Strictly high-end. Her silver tea and coffee service was produced in a run of 10, and they go for 50 grand a pop.

**BOLD STROKES:** Hadid is designing a master plan for a whole new town in China.

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** "There are 360 degrees, so why stick to one?" (*The Guardian*)

## RICHARD MEIER

**HOMETOWN:** Newark, New Jersey

**AGE:** 69

**PRITZKER:** 1984

**MERCH:** Meier designed a limited-edition Lucite gift case for a six-pack of 1995 Dom Pérignon (\$2,000).

**VISIBILITY:** The Getty Center is considered the most important American commission in recent memory. Meier's Perry Street Towers is a home to dozens of New York celebrities, including Calvin Klein, Martha Stewart, and Nicole Kidman.

**BONO FACTOR:** Perhaps the least rocking of the celeb architects. But Neil Sedaka did serenade the architect at a recent awards ceremony.

**COOL CLUB NAME:** The New York Five

**CUISINE CONNECTION:** He designed Jean-Georges Vongerichten's latest New York eatery, 66.

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** "My goal is presence, not illusion." (*Pritzker acceptance speech*)

## RENZO PIANO

**HOMETOWN:** Genoa, Italy

**AGE:** 66

**PRITZKER:** 1998

**VISIBILITY:** His jobsites (Potsdamer Platz, for one) are among the most visible and visited in the world, and Piano even had his own Italian TV show, Habitat, back in the 1970s.

**PRICE OF FAME:** His Pompidou Center had to be shuttered for a time because it was attracting more tourists than it could handle (an average of 25,000 a day).

**BONO FACTOR:** Low, but Bono buddy Jacques Chirac conducted Piano's 1992 wedding.

**COUTURE CONNECTION:** La Maison Hermès in Tokyo

**COOL CLUB NAME:** "High Tech" movement

**MERCH:** If his 70,000-ton ocean liner doesn't count, how about Swatch's timepiece replica of the Pompidou Center?

**VISIONARY PRONOUNCEMENT:** "The space of architecture is a microcosm: an inner landscape." (*pritzkerprize.com*)





# BUILDER'S BALL 2004

SMPS-LA AND LA ARCHITECT WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS YEAR'S BUILDERS BALL. THE DINNER-DANCE AND SILENT AUCTION WERE HELD AT THE JONATHAN CLUB TO BENEFIT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SAN FERNANDO AND SANTA CLARITY VALLEY AFFILIATE.

Morley Builders

Herman Miller

Psomas

BSA

Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters

The Clark Construction Group

Syska and Hennessey

A. C. Martin Partners

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Interior Office Solutions

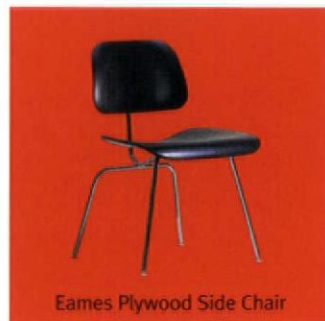
Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity has built more than 175,000 houses, sheltering more than 900,000 people in some 3,000 communities worldwide. Habitat is a worldwide, grass-roots movement. There are more than 2,100 active affiliates in 100 countries, including all 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico.

Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, Habitat builds and rehabilitates simple, decent houses with the help of the homeowner (partner) families. Habitat houses are sold to partner families at no profit, financed with affordable, no-interest loans. The homeowners' monthly mortgage payments are used to build still more Habitat houses.

Habitat is not a giveaway program. In addition to a down payment and the monthly mortgage payments, homeowners invest hundreds of hours of their own labor—sweat equity—into building their Habitat house and the houses of others.

For more information visit [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org). To join the San Fernando and Santa Clarity Valley Affiliate contact Tom Neary at Morley Construction 310-399-1600.

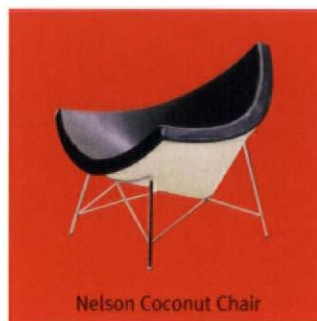




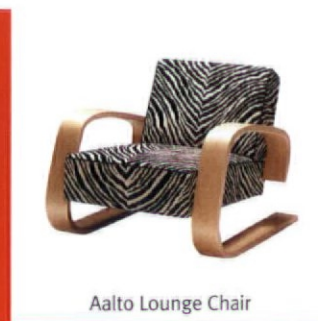
Eames Plywood Side Chair



Aalto Dining Chair



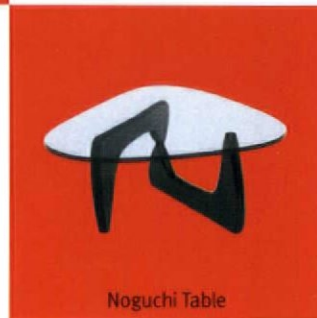
Nelson Coconut Chair



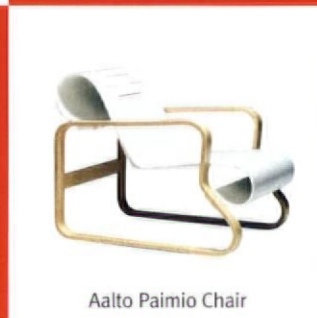
Aalto Lounge Chair



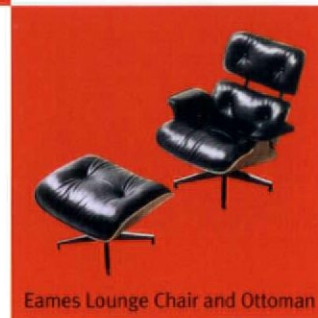
Aalto Tea Trolley



Noguchi Table



Aalto Paimio Chair




Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman

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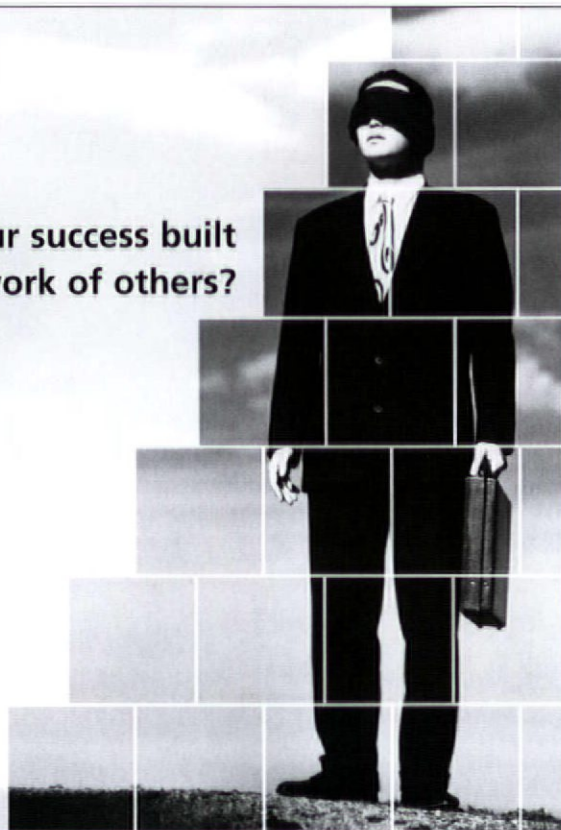
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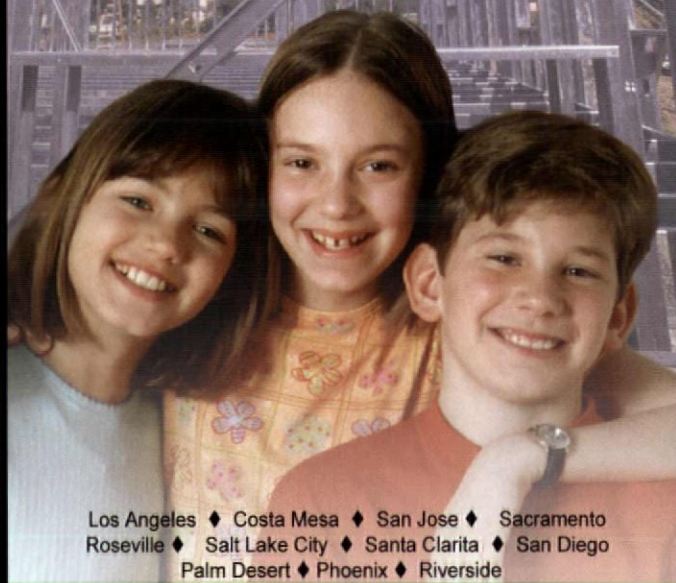
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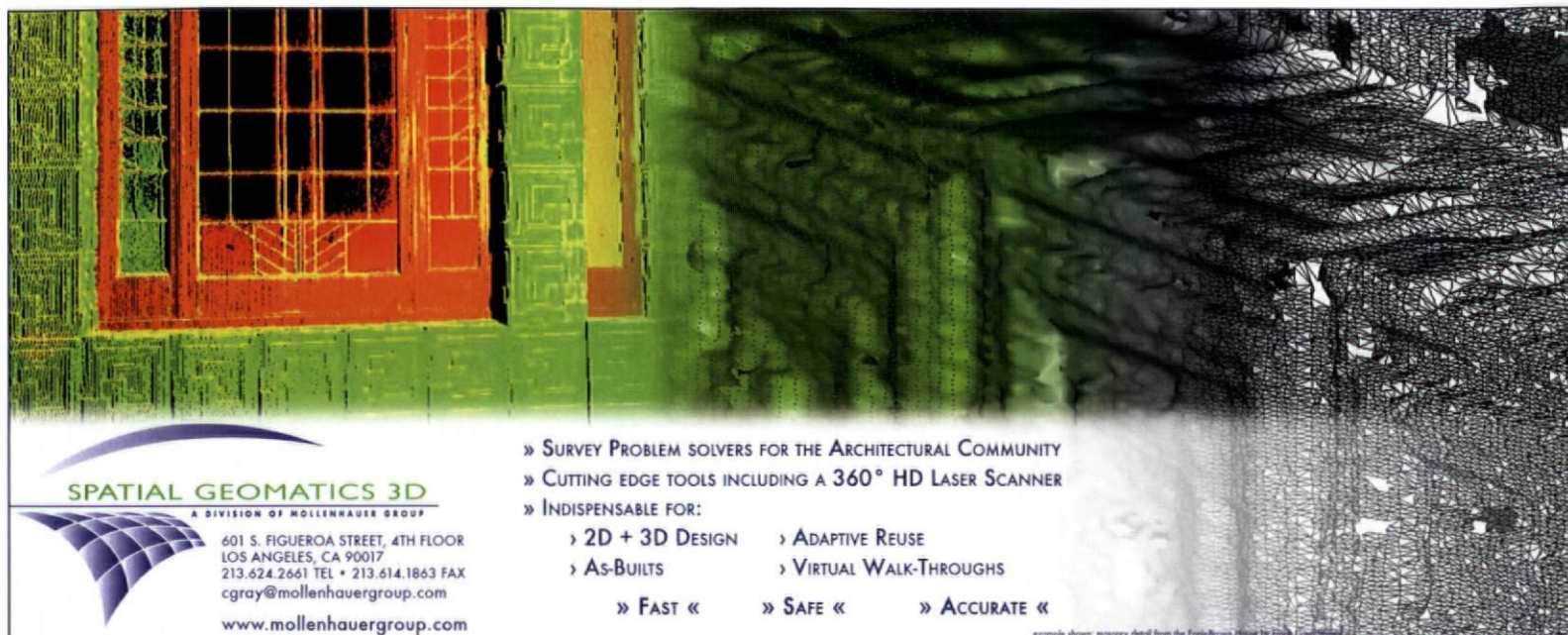
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example shown: masonry detail from the Exile House, rising up from the ground



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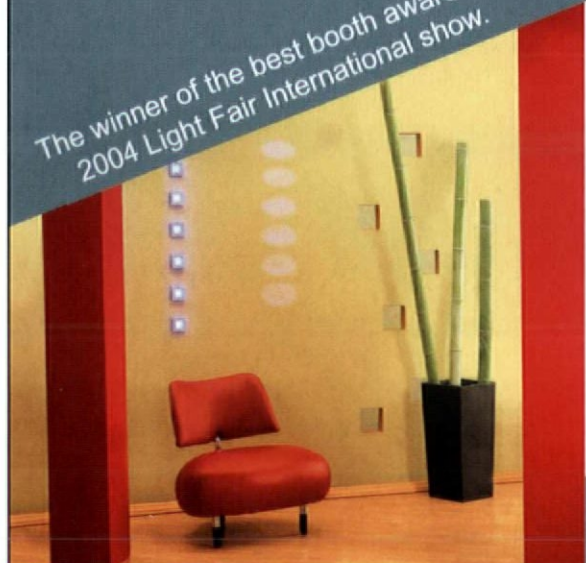
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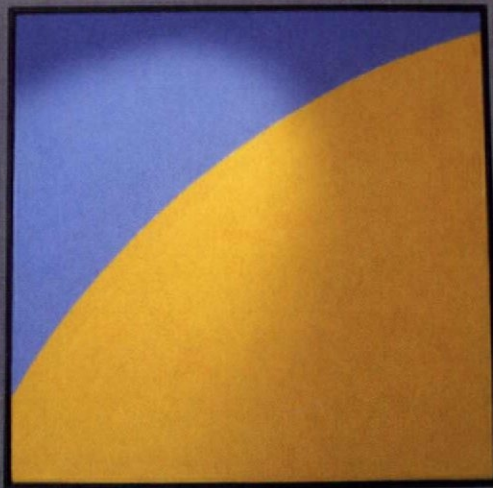
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backpage

by MICHAEL WEBB

# Building Music

THIS PAST JUNE, A CAPACITY AUDIENCE IN Walt Disney Hall stood and cheered Esa Pekka Salonen as he finished conducting the premiere of his master work, *Wing on Wing*. The performance crowned the Los Angeles Philharmonic's first season in the new auditorium, and marked the culmination of "Building Music," a collaborative venture of the orchestra and the Getty Research Institute. For three days, architects, composers, artists and historians discussed the relationship between music and architecture, the arts and society over the past 200 years. Fresh ideas and challenging sounds poured forth in a cascade of intellectual and sensory stimulation—exactly the kind of mind-stretching experience every architect needs for inspiration and enlightenment.

GRI director Thomas Crow, who organized the symposium, could have chosen to focus entirely on buildings designed for music and music composed for, or inspired by specific buildings. That might have proved fascinating for the first day, and then become unduly specialized. Instead, every participant was given free rein. Christopher Mead explored Charles Garnier's Opera as a civic monument that glorified Paris and the newly emergent bourgeoisie—who flocked there to admire the social spectacle in the grand stair hall as much they did the action on stage. He showed how the wonderfully ornate building—a sculptural stone shell mounted on an iron scaffold—is more rational and complex than it appears. This fusion of art and science is, in effect, a dressed-up Eiffel Tower, just as Disney Hall is a concrete box concealed within an armature and sails of steel.

Jean-Louis Cohen recalled the fierce controversy that enveloped another Parisian landmark, Auguste Perret's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées,

which was denounced as "the Zeppelin on the Avenue Montaigne" for its sparsely ornamented façade. In contrast, Hans Scharoun's Berlin Philharmonie was instantly acclaimed as a realization of the Expressionist dreams of the pre-Nazi era, and a validation of modernism in a divided city. As a social condenser, in which the audience wraps around the musicians, it was a major inspiration for Gehry, who borrowed its vineyard seat layout for his competition entry, and was able to abstract it in his final design.

Other scholars discussed site-specific compositions. Glenn Watkins spoke of Stravinsky's determination to premiere his *Canticum Sacrum* in the basilica of St Mark's in Venice, harking back to the antiphonal canons for brass of Giovanni Gabrieli, performed in those echoing spaces four centuries ago. Crow described the Rothko Chapel in Houston as a realization of the artist's vision, and explained how Morton Feldman expressed that spirit. Olivia Mattis recalled the tortuous saga of the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, which the corporation commissioned from Le Corbusier to demonstrate its leadership in sound and light. The architect, preoccupied with the design of Chandigarh, turned the design over to his assistant, Iannis Xenakis, who was also a composer and employed the score of his work, *Metastaseis*, as inspiration for the concrete hyperbolic paraboloids of the pavilion. Edgar Varèse's *Poème Électronique* was taped and played to visitors. It's inconceivable that any corporation would fund such daring spaces and sounds today.

Two of the works performed during the symposium were commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In *Ecstatic Architecture*, Liza Lim sought to capture the spontaneous

energy and invention of Gehry's sketches for Disney Hall. Salonen's composition was meant to express his feelings about the new hall—from exhilaration to a sense of melancholy that the project was now finished, and was no longer something to be looked forward to. The title is a mariner's term for sails spread wide to capture a light breeze, an image that also inspired Gehry. The architect's words were taped and incorporated into the music—launching him on a new career as a performance artist. "Dream Image," he intoned, referring to that shining ideal of a building that every architect envisions, and then struggles to realize, if imperfectly.

Music added a dimension to architecture in *Wing on Wing*, as sopranos and percussion players left the stage to occupy the furthest reaches of the hall, and define its volume aurally, as the corner skylights do visually. Veteran composer Henry Brant performed a similar feat in *Tremors*, a spatial composition he created for Richard Meier's intimate auditorium at the Getty. Both performances demonstrated a fruitful interaction of arts that are too often compartmentalized. As Coosje van Bruggen remarked, as she described the exuberant sculpture that she and Claes Oldenburg have designed for the forecourt of Disney Hall, "a great space opens you up to explore things you might not engage in a conventional setting." ■

—Two recent publications expand on themes explored in "Building Music". The second edition of Leo Beranek's *Concert Halls and Opera Houses* (Springer-Verlag, \$69; ISBN 0 387 95524 0) explores different aspects of acoustics and provides plans and analysis of 100 top theaters worldwide. Peter Grunewald edited *Soundscape: Architecture for Sound and Vision* (Birkhäuser, \$77; ISBN 3 7643 6975 2), a handsomely illustrated collection of essays by architects on studios and performance spaces.



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