

A R C H I T E C T U R E  
**CALIFORNIA**

**PLAN**  
*De la Ciudad*  
THE CITY  
**ANGELES**

Surveyed & Drawn by

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A R C H I T E C T U R E  
**CALIFORNIA**

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## Changing California Landscapes

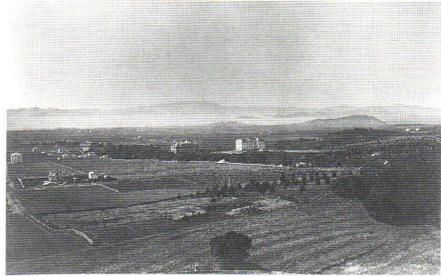
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# From the Editor

“When the ice melted, the sea came up and drowned innumerable river valleys—drowned the Sacramento-San Joaquin from the Golden Gate through the Coastal Ranges and into the Great Central Valley, filling the Bay Area’s bays.” So the story goes, describing the change that has shaped the California landscape for centuries and continues today, as told by John McPhee in his recent installment of “Annals of the Former World” in *The New Yorker*. Then came *homo sapien* inhabitation, the Spanish, Mexican, then U.S. waves of colonization, the rush for gold, the fight for water, and at each stage growth of the population, the built environment, and the imperative for ‘the control of nature’. The control of nature is now so pervasive that only the artifice of a second socially-constructed ‘Nature’ is known to us—except when history’s forces of ‘necessity’ wrench us out of self-certain self-centeredness: earthquake, fire, flood, or civil insurrection.

From within this second Nature J.B. Jackson, in his book *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, defines landscape as the spatial expression of social order: “the field of perpetual conflict and compromise between what is established by authority and what the vernacular insists upon preferring.” “Whatever its shape or size [landscape] is never simply...a feature of the natural environment; it is always artificial....” Thus, landscape is given as societal flux written in the dimensions of space.

Closer yet to the everyday practices of architects is the challenge to ‘design’ the landscape within socially- and environmentally-constructed parameters. Here the control of nature actually means its ‘rendering’: “the charm of the wilderness, tamed and diversified for



Carleton Watkins, Berkeley and San Francisco Bay, c. 1870. California State Library Photograph Collection.

convenience and accessibility,” as David Streatfield tells us the poet Charles Keeler wrote.

The articles compiled in this number of *Architecture California* address these senses of ‘landscape’—the physical, the social, the artifactual—each with its particular characteristics of change. Jackson focuses on shared experience of recurring events as the signal characteristic of place-making. Doolin, reflecting flux as a painter can, draws our attention to the profound depth of illusion that characterizes this ‘shared experience’. Crawford, projecting a new landscape of “spontaneous malling,” shows how the exchange of attributes achieved according to the operation of “adjacent attraction” has successfully made commerce the *genius* of place and privatized the space of public life. Groth introduces us to vernacular parks, unseen by the ‘official’ eye of government (and design professionals). Looking at development patterns in the San Joaquin Valley and in northern San Diego County, Newman and Lieberman examine disparate aspects of change originating in the imperatives of economic growth and in the search for symbols of stability in a radically changing social and physical landscape.

Streatfield and Schwartz describe opposite moments in the history of modern landscape architecture—the Arts and Crafts search for the seemingly ‘appropriate’ and the beyond-the-modern artist’s play with now-‘natural’ manufactured materials, the new ‘appropriate’ for landscape. Field, rejecting the vernacular veneer of an imagined past, reminds us of the way we never were, challenging California practitioners to lead a new and responsible shaping of the landscape. Suisman and Phelps take up the challenge by analyzing two artifacts that have transformed the contemporary urban landscape: the boulevard and the freeway. They embrace the apparent disorder of late capitalist urban development and its post-modern culture and, from this stance, engage the possibility (and illustrate the danger) of harnessing the formal power of these ‘monumental’ artifacts. They anticipate a new urban order in a larger frame—a possible symbolic unity in the cultural landscape within the context of radical disunity in the social terrain.

Lastly, Stanton and, yes, the Bloods and Crips, address disaster as a force of acute rupture in the changing landscape: the ravages of the earth and of civilized society. Bringing all senses of the term ‘landscape’ together, one disaster is the result of nature resisting human design, the other of human force resisting the (survival-of-the-fittest) laws of second Nature. Each piece grapples with the potential of radical change—in one case articulating, in the other silently anticipating, the failure to harness our collective knowledge in historic moments of opportunity.

In the interstices between these points of view I cannot help but see revealed the ‘map’ that Fredric Jameson envisioned in his 1988 essay “Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” the map of “a new and historically original penetration and colonization of Nature and the Uncon-

scious.” We fight to protect the remnants of agricultural lands (which Newman points out were ‘originally’ wetlands), to recapture the qualities of the wooded East Bay Hills environs (which Streatfield explains were ‘originally’ grassland), to celebrate the stability symbolized in the Sycuan chief’s belltower “watching over her people” (which Lieberman tells us actually recalls the memory of the colonial mission at which her grandmother was a slave). We fight to restore the sanctity of Nature (always ever the fabrication of social consciousness) and the integrity of the individual Unconscious (always ever the product of social being). Here we are reminded by Doolin of his cardinal rule for making art: “Don’t be fooled by your own illusions.” Yet, it is the production of illusions, particularly illusions about the nature of Nature, that constitutes the late capitalist/postmodern landscape of history as we make it today. The architect, as *artifex*, has no choice but to embrace second Nature: this is our business. However, behind the power of architecture to achieve a visible and symbolic unity is its tendency to efface differences of origin, culture, and class, immersing them in the larger ‘unity’ of a utopian society. The challenge, and correspondingly the wondrous responsibility of the *artifex*, is to contribute to the quality of daily human life and the wealth of our collective culture, mastering the illusory qualities of artifice without illusion, practicing in the company of nature’s forces of contradiction and change as yet unforeseen. After all, as McPhee theorizes “For an extremely long percentage of the history of the world, there was no California. Then, a piece at a time,...parts began to assemble. An island arc here, a piece of continent there...came crunching in upon the continent and have thus far adhered.”

Lian Hurst Mann, AIA

# The Timing of Towns

J.B. Jackson

Most foreign visitors to the United States eventually come to like us. It is our landscape that bewilders them and that they find hard to understand. They are repelled by its monotony, by the long, straight roads and highways, the immense rectangular fields, and the lonely white farmhouses, all very much alike. They remind us that in Europe, every city has its own individuality, whereas in this country, it is often hard to distinguish one city from another. With the possible exceptions of Boston, New Orleans, and San Francisco, cities not only lack architectural variety, but they are also lacking in landmarks and in neighborhoods of unique character. We are often asked, how we who live in the midst of such urban monotony can have any sense of *place* whatsoever.

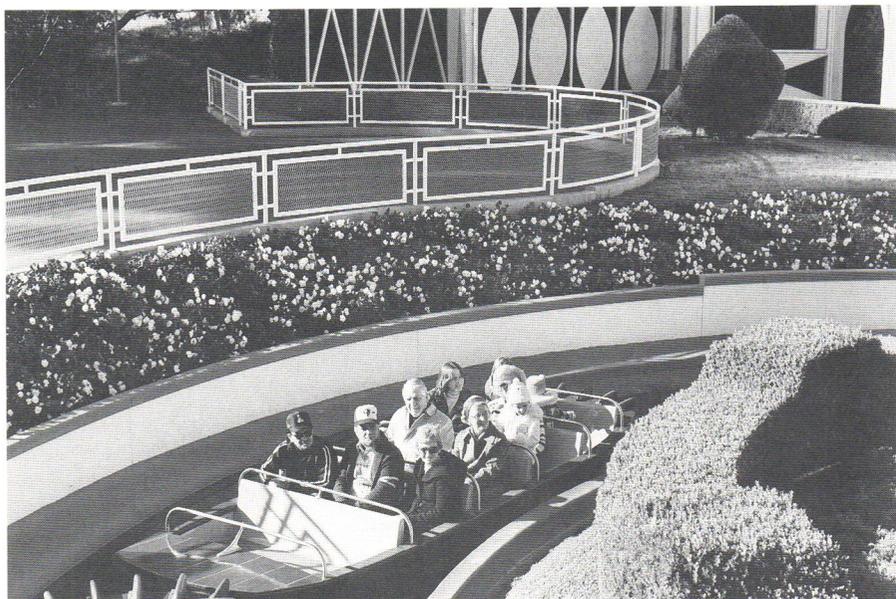
I find this difficult to answer. Most of us, I suspect, without giving much thought to the matter, would say that a sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learn to know its peculiarities. It is my personal belief that a sense of place is something that we create for ourselves over the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom. But others disagree. They believe that a sense of place comes from our response to features that are *already* there: either a beautiful natural setting or well-designed architecture. They believe that a sense of place comes from being in the midst of an unusual ensemble of spaces and forms—natural or manmade.

In any case, plenty of thoughtful Americans see eye-to-eye with those foreign critics and wish that we could

somehow give our downtown areas a sense of place. Much has already been accomplished, in fact, in the way of injecting life and design into the decaying central zones of the American city: Streets have sometimes been turned into pedestrian walks of brick pavements, adorned with fountains, planters, and brilliantly colored flowerbeds. Small parks planted with rows of trees and a piece of abstract sculpture have often been inserted among glass high-rise buildings, and many efforts have been made to conceal the original grids on which the downtown areas and towns have been laid out. Concerts featuring Baroque music in the new mini-park and ethnic pageants each feature the costumes, dances, and food specialties of a specific group of people that occupy the city.

On such occasions whole areas are brought to life. A kind of invisible confetti fills the air, and we feel that the central city has at last become an exciting and stylish part of town, the old monotony having been banished forever. The sense of place is reinforced by what might be called a sense of *recurring events*.

The truth is, many Americans are of two minds as to how we ought to live. Publicly we say harsh things about urban sprawl and suburbia, and we encourage activity in the heart of town. In theory, but only in theory, we want to duplicate the traditional compact European community where everyone takes part in a rich and diversified public life. But at the same time most of us are secretly pining for a secluded hideaway, a piece of land, or a small house



Tim Street-Porter.

in the country where we can lead an intensely private non-urban existence, staying close to home. I am not entirely sure that this is a real contradiction. While we agree that scatteration and the dying central city are both of them unsightly and illogical, we also, I think, feel a deep and persistent need for privacy and independence in our domestic life. That is why the freestanding dwelling on its own well-defined plot of land, whether in a prosperous residential neighborhood, or in impoverished urban fringes, is so persistent a feature of our landscape. That is why our downtown areas, however vital they may be, economically speaking, are so lacking in what is called a sense of place.

'Sense of place' is an expression that is often used at the moment, especially by architects. But it has been taken over by urban planners, interior decorators, and the promoters of condominium living, so that now it has come to mean very little. It is an awkward and ambiguous modern translation of the Latin term, *genius loci*. In classical terms, it refers not so much to

the place itself as to the guardian divinity of that place. It was believed that a locality—a space or a structure or a whole community—derived much of its unique quality from the presence or guardianship of a supernatural spirit. The visitor and the inhabitants were always aware of that benign presence and paid reverence to it on fixed occasions. The phrase thus implied celebration or ritual, and the location itself acquired a special status. Our modern culture rejected the notion of a divine or supernatural presence, and in the eighteenth century, the Latin phrase was usually translated as *the genius of a place*, meaning its influence. Travelers would say that they stayed in Rome for a month or so in order to savor the *genius* of the city. We now use the expression to describe the *atmosphere* of a place, the quality of its *environment*. Nevertheless, we recognize that certain localities have an attraction which produces in us a certain indefinable sense of well-being to which we want to return, time and again. That original notion of ritual, of repeated celebration or rever-

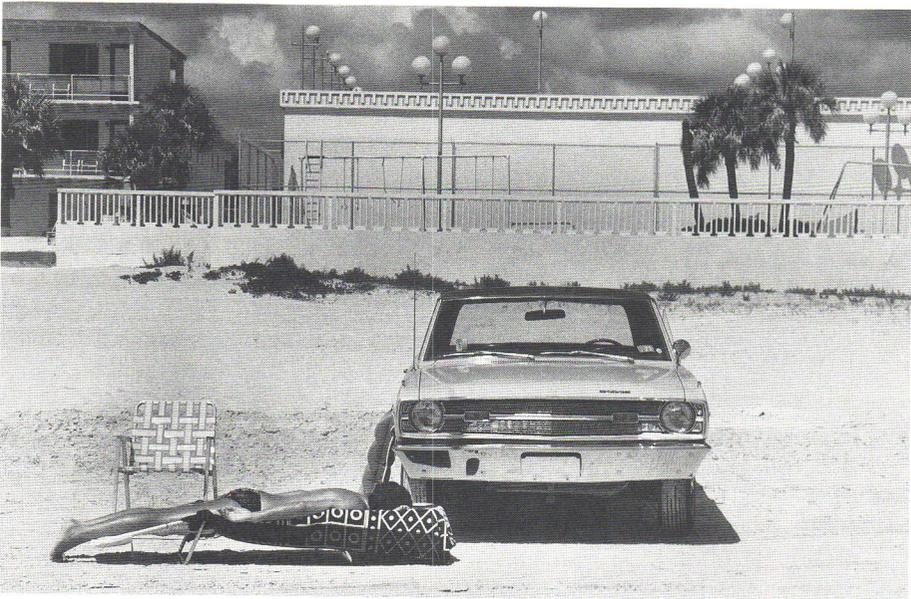
ence, is still inherent in the phrase. It is not a temporary response, for it persists and brings us back, reminding us of previous visits.

One way of defining such localities would be to say that they are cherished because they are embedded in the everyday world around us and easily accessible, but at the same time are distinct from that world. A visit to one of them is a small but significant event. We are refreshed and elated each time we are there. The experience varies in intensity: it can be private and solitary or convivial and social, a natural setting, a crowded street, or even a public occasion.

What moves us is our change of mood, the brief but vivid event. And what automatically ensues, it seems to me, is a sense of fellowship with those who share the experience, and the instinctive desire to repeat it, to establish a custom of ritual.

I realize that this sort of definition automatically excludes many localities that a careless use of the term endows with a sense of place. I think it is essen-

tial to examine current usage very closely in order to avoid such misunderstandings. But to return to the American scene, particularly to the average western town or city in America, I would say that, for historical reasons, few of them have structures or spaces which produce any vivid sense of *political* place. Until very recently we have had spaces and events related closely to the *family* and the small neighborhood unit. By that I mean not merely the home itself—which in the past was the basic example of the sense of place—but also those places and structures connected with ritual and with a restricted fellowship or membership, places which we could say were extensions of the dwelling or of the neighborhood: the school, the church, the lodge, the cemetery, the playing field. Ask the average American of the older generation what he or she most clearly remembers and cherishes about the hometown and its events and the answer will rarely be the public square, the monuments, the patriotic celebrations. What comes to mind are such nonpolitical, nonarchitectural places



Tim Street-Porter.

and events as high school commencement, a revival service in a tent, a traditional football rivalry game, a county fair, and certain family celebrations. For all of these have those qualities I associate with a sense of place: a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on shared experience.

Many of these localities are out of date: As our cities have grown, we have come closer together and acquired a more inclusive sense of community. Even so, I'm inclined to believe that the average American still associates a sense of place not so much with architecture, a monument, or a designed space, as with some event, some daily, weekly, or seasonal occurrence we look forward to or remember, and which we share with others. As a result, the event becomes even more significant than the place itself. Moreover, I believe that this has always been the common way of recognizing the unique quality of the community we live in. The Old World farm village came to life whenever it observed the events marked on the traditional farm or church calendar. The special days for plowing, for planting, for harvesting, and the days set aside for honoring the local saint were days when the local sense of place was most vivid. What made the marketplace significant was not its architecture; it was the event which took place there, the recurring day. It would be worth studying how special places have been abandoned over time, and how events themselves have been relocated.

Modern America, of course, abandoned most of these traditional calendars, but to take its place we continue to evolve, in town after town, complicated schedules of our own. What brings us together with people is not that we live near each other, but that we share the same timetable, the same working hours, the same religious observances, the same habits and customs.

That is why we are more and more aware of time, and of the rhythm of the community. It is our sense of time, our sense of ritual, which in the long run creates our sense of place and of community. In our urban environment which is constantly undergoing irreversible changes, a cyclic sense of time, the regular recurrence of events and celebrations is what gives us reassurance and a sense of unity and continuity.

In his remarkable and pioneering treatment of the "sociology of time" entitled *Hidden Rhythms* (1986), Eviatar Zerubel defines it as "the *sociotemporal order* which regulates the lives of *social* entities such as families, professional groups, religious communities, complex organizations, or even entire nations." Much of our social life," Zerubel writes, "is temporally structured in accordance with 'mechanical time', which is quite independent of 'the rhythm of man's organic impulses and needs'. In other words, we are increasingly detaching ourselves from 'organic and functional periodicity' which is dictated by nature, and replacing it by 'mechanical periodicity' which is dictated by the schedule, the calendar, the clock."

There is no need to dwell on the ever-increasing importance of mechanical time in modern America, or on our insistence on schedules, programs, timetables, and the automatic recurrence of events—not only in the workplace but in social life and celebrations. Nor need we be reminded that this reverence for the clock and the calendar has robbed much social intercourse of its spontaneity and has in fact relegated place and the sense of place to a subordinate position in our lives.

Regarding the High Plains, with which I am familiar, I think it could be said that two factors contributed to an early shift from sense of place to sense of time in the organization of the landscape: first, the advent of the railroad

with its periodicity—a decisive influence in the patterns of social and working contacts in the small railroad towns; and second, the almost total absence of topographical landmarks. Zerubel, however, goes further in describing the social consequences of this sharing of schedules and calendars and routines, and the consequent downgrading of gathering places:

A temporal order that is commonly shared by a social group and is unique to it [as in a work schedule of holidays or a religious calendar] to the extent that it distinguishes and separates group members from ‘outsiders’ contributes to the establishment of intergroup boundaries and constitutes a powerful basis of solidarity within the group....The private or public quality of any given space very often varies across time....By providing some fairly rigid boundaries that segregate the private and public spheres of life from one another...time seems to function as a segmenting principle; it helps segregate the private and the public spheres of life from one another.

In the long run, it is that *recurrence* of certain days, certain seasons, that eventually produces those spaces and structures we now think so essential. I believe we attach too much importance to art and architecture in producing an awareness of our belonging to a city or country, when what we actually share is a sense of time. What we commemorate is its passing. We thus establish a more universal bond and develop a deeper understanding of society. Let me quote from Paul Tillich:

The power of space is great, and it is always active for creation and destruction. It is the basis of the desire of any group of human beings to have a place of their own, a place which gives them a reality, presence, power of living, which

feeds them, body and soul. This is the reason for the adoration of earth and soil, not of soil generally but of this special soil, and not of earth generally but of the divine powers connected with this special section of earth....But every space is limited, and so the conflict arises between the limited space of any human group, even of mankind itself, and the unlimited claim which follows from the definition of this space....Tragedy and injustice belong to the gods of space, historical fulfillment and justice belong to the God who acts in time and through time, uniting the separated spaces of his universe in love.

# Art and Artificiality: Southern California

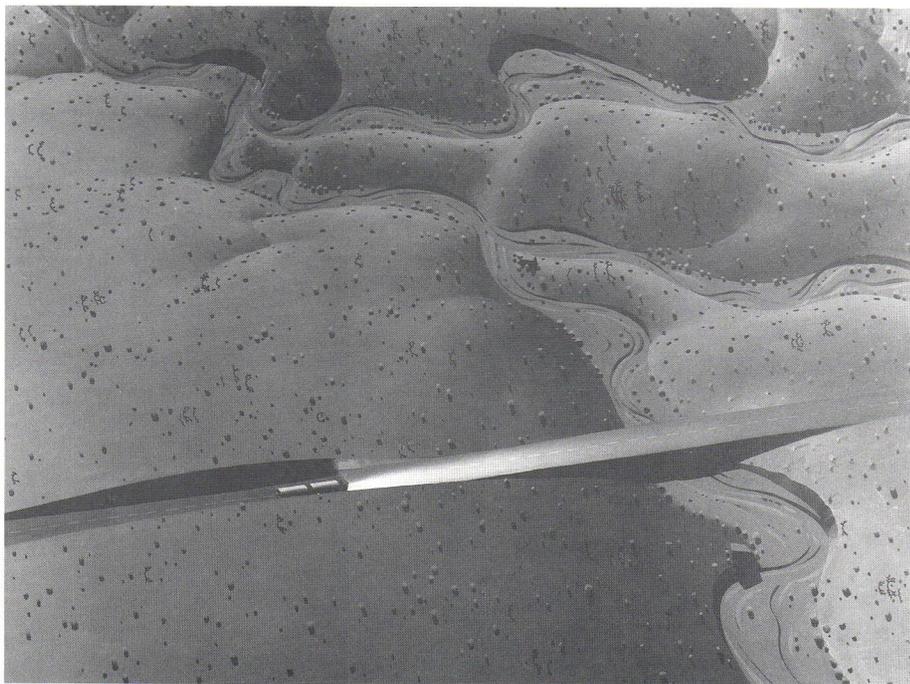
*James Doolin*

One wonders what was here to begin with and what has been done with it? I imagine how the scale would have seemed to the first Europeans on foot or horseback. Dry, scrubby, monotonous flatlands, with not even a tree to relieve the infinite horizontality, no shelter, no protection—just space to cross as quickly as possible. No reason to settle in, unless, unlike the native peoples, one could deny the reality of the landscape by reconstructing a remembered one of controlling boundaries, gridded roads, and temporary structures.

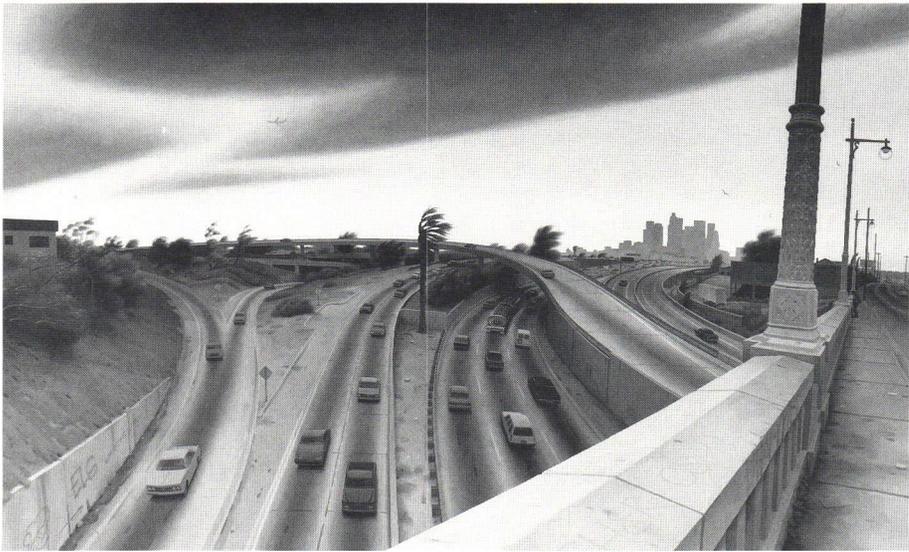
The majority of Southern Californians still come from somewhere else.

Before our first visits, most of us thought we already knew what it looked like here and how it would be. We had all seen fragments of the landscape rendered in a hundred Hollywood films and TV shows. Many of us, I suspect, came here partly *because* of what we saw. Most of us were unprepared for what we actually found when we arrived.

As a landscape painter from the East Coast who arrived in Los Angeles twenty-five years ago, stunned, awed, and horrified, I find the landscape of Southern California at once spectacular and outrageous. Those early feelings must have stirred me because I remain,



James Doolin, *Desert Highway at Night*. Oil on canvas, 72" x 96", 1984.



James Doolin, *East Wind*. Oil on canvas, 72" x 120", 1991.

painting away, moved in one breath and cursing with the next. Like many young artists, I loved to paint what I hated. Being here suited my purposes well. "Art thrives in an extreme environment," I would assert when I had to explain why I was here. I still find this true, but not in the way I first thought.

I should have said, "Artificiality thrives in an extreme environment," because my overwhelming impression upon arriving here was that of endless artificiality on a scale not previously noted by my East Coast-conditioned mind.

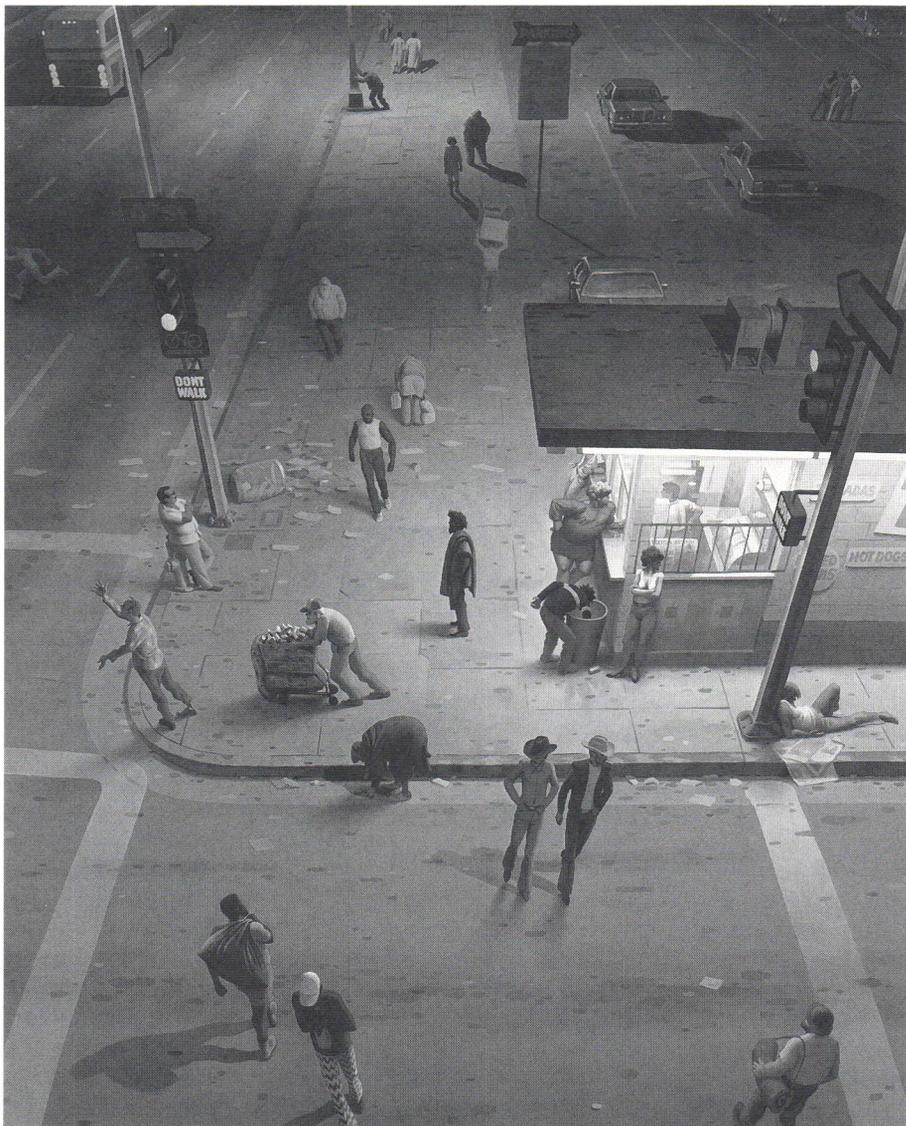
In this sense, all urban areas are artificial. But Southern California is different. It is one thing to see a completely man-made settlement in the remote desert and another to see one that spreads out as far as the eye can see. Here the level of artificiality goes beyond the usual structures and roads, the water, power, and communications systems required by most cities. Consider a kind of artificiality that is not the accidental result of substitution or mechanical fabrication, but based in conscious simulation and deception. As an artist, I know a lot about this subject.

This space is too vast, too horizontal. No wonder we have covered our urban areas with so many low rise, low value buildings—anything to fill the empty expanse of desert. No wonder the roaring freeways are our only real monuments—monuments to the all-important need for mobility in an area too huge to cross without them. No wonder there is no intelligent land-use plan beyond the basic gridded battleground of real-estate speculation. When space seems infinite, who would consider an overall plan that limits how much one can take for oneself. When space seems infinite, it seems to have its own vast power and self-contained realities that do not relate to any other place. One feels the need to artificially simulate some reassuring realities from other places or times. Back East, where I come from, people call such substitute realities 'phony', because in the mass media they function only as images and symbols. It is hard for them to understand their actual function here.

As a painter, I am not supposed to be a rational observer. People expect a more emotional reaction, and the extremes of this very artificial environ-

ment provide a lot of emotional—and entertaining—content for my painting. But I find that my rational side is constantly questioning the basis of life as we live it here. The time that I have spent in the streets, the mountains, the deserts—making pictures by hand—has given me certain insights. It takes a lot of looking before one can see clearly. A good landscape painting is not just an

instant mechanical view, like a photograph. My paintings are formed in an almost organic unity, over a period of months, or even years, from eye, as well as brain, heart, and hand, one stroke at a time. The resulting pictures can surprise me with insights about the physical and social character of Southern California beyond what I would otherwise see.



James Doolin, *Oasis*. Oil on canvas, 90" x 72", 1985-6.

I have made paintings of the most densely layered urban areas and also of the most desolate areas of Southern California desert. In the desert, the difference between natural and artificial is very clear. The abandoned mines, the tacky little shacks and trailers, the roads and bridges, power lines and aqueducts all stand out clearly in their isolation. They actually heighten the natural character of the landscape around them. This is a first level of artificiality that results from practical contrivance.

But in the urban areas, layer upon layer of artificiality covers every square foot of ground, wall, and background space. Greedy dreamers have transformed a boundless, dry, monotonous and lonely space into a land speculator's paradise, utilizing every artifice imaginable—from the most practical constructions to the most useless deceptions, all mixed together. What confronts us is an immeasurable, three dimensional, larger-than-life assemblage of simulations, illusions, symbols, and images that stretches for miles in every direction. Most of these illusions and

deceptions are more closely related to desires than to real lives—they are never real, never tangible.

After many years of observing and then laboring through the process of putting together many hundreds of pictures of this extraordinary landscape, I find that I no longer hate it. I find it to be immensely interesting as a rich source of exotic, paintable forms, full of ideas about our culture and our art. However, I remind myself of a basic rule of art making: Do not be fooled by your own illusions. Never conceal from yourself what you are doing, or how and why you do it. Avoid being the fool in your own artificial hall of mirrors.

Does a parallel principle apply to the use of artificiality in the real world? Surely, it is one step to import water to create an artificial oasis, and another to pretend that the oasis is natural. The final step is to enlarge the scale so that there is nothing but oasis as far as one can see, cutting off all awareness of another reality.

The cliché 'fool's paradise' keeps coming to mind. The changes that have



James Doolin, *Highway Patrol*. Oil on canvas, 72" x 118", 1986. Photograph by Douglas M. Parker. Courtesy of Koplín Gallery.



James Doolin, *Shopping Mall*. Oil on canvas, 90" x 90", 1973-77.

occurred since I arrived a quarter century ago are immense, mostly negative, and probably predictable. What has not changed is the endless cultivation of illusion to feed the continuing denial of where we are, who we are, and what we really need. Wrapped in this expansive, illusionistic, artificial landscape, we have become completely incapable of perceiving the failure of the economics we practice. We are surprised and angered by the symptoms: overcrowding, congestion, water shortages, sewer overloads, polluted air, unemployment, economic polarization, social injustice—and now, actual rioting and rebellion in the streets.

Do we have a plan for the future that can really address the causes? Of course, not. But even if there was one, voters, caught up in the illusionism of the largest artificial environment in history, would vote it down. We're just diddling as Los Angeles burns.

# Mall California

Margaret Crawford

Is California the shopping mall capital of the world? Although the title has not yet been officially conferred. The only body capable of awarding such a distinction, the International Council of Shopping Centers, has thus far remained silent. Here are some of the facts: A recent Coldwell Banker survey listed more than 5,000 malls in California alone—more than anywhere else in the nation. In spite of tough competition from mega-malls in West Edmonton and Minneapolis, California's malls are still record holders: At 2.65 million square feet of selling space, Del Amo Fashion Plaza in Torrance is America's largest shopping mall; last year South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa generated more sales than any other shopping mall in the country. There are 17 square feet of mall space for every Californian. The system of malls as a whole dominates retail sales in the state, accounting for more than 53 percent of all purchases.<sup>1</sup> To put these abstract figures into perspective, imagine the entire state covered by a uneven pattern of overlapping circles representing mall-catchment areas, each circle's size and location dictated by demographic surveys measuring income levels and purchasing power. Clearly, California has been malled.

## THE SCIENCE OF MALLING

How did the malling of California occur? Like the 23,500 other malls in North America, California malls are all governed by strict rules of finance and marketing.<sup>2</sup> These rules date from the golden years between 1960 and 1980, when the basic regional mall paradigm

was perfected and systematically replicated. Developers methodically surveyed, divided, and appropriated suburban cornfields and orange groves to create a new landscape of consumption. This was accomplished by honing standard real-estate, financing, and marketing techniques into predictive formulas. Generated initially by risk-free investments demanded by pension funds and insurance companies, the successful malling process quickly became self-perpetuating. Specialized consultants developed techniques of demographic and market research, refined their environmental and architectural analysis, and produced *econometric* and *locational* models. Mall architect Victor Gruen proposed an ideal matrix for mall-building that combined the expertise of real-estate brokers, financial and marketing analysts, economists, merchandising experts, architects, engineers, transportation planners, landscape architects, and interior designers—each drawing on the latest academic and commercial methodologies. Gruen's highly structured system was designed to minimize guesswork and to allow him to accurately predict the potential dollar-per-square-foot yield of any projected mall, thus virtually guaranteeing profitability to the mall's developers.<sup>3</sup> In their first twenty-five years, less than one percent of shopping malls failed: profits soared as making malls, according to pioneer developer Edward DeBartolo, proved to be "the best investment known to man."<sup>4</sup>

For the consumer, the visible result of this intensive research is the 'mix'—each mall's unique blend of tenants and department store 'anchors'. The mix is



Northland in Detroit, totaling 1.1 million square feet, opened in 1954. It is one of the nation's first single department store centers and embodied Victor Gruen's pedestrian shopping mall concept. Courtesy, Gruen Associates.

established and maintained by restrictive leases with clauses that control everything from decor to prices. Detailed equations are used to determine exactly how many jewelry or shoe stores should be put on each floor. Since branches of national chains are the most reliable money-makers, individually owned stores are admitted only with shorter leases and higher rents. Mall managers constantly adjust the mix, using rents and leases to adapt to the rapidly changing patterns of consumption.

The various predictable mixes are fine-tuned to the ethnic composition, income levels, and changing tastes of a particular shopping area. Indexes such as VALS (the Values and Life Styles program), produced by the Stanford Research Institute, correlate objective measures such as age, income, and family composition with subjective indicators such as value systems, leisure preferences, and cultural backgrounds to analyze trade areas.<sup>5</sup> For example, Brooks Brothers and Ann Taylor are usually solid bets for areas populated by outer-directed *achievers* ("hardworking, materialistic, highly-educated traditional

consumers; shopping leaders for luxury products") and *emulators* ("younger, status-conscious, conspicuous consumers"). *Sustainers* ("struggling poor; anger toward the American system") and *Belongers* ("middle-class, conservative, conforming shoppers, low to moderate income"), on the other hand, tend to be "value oriented," making KMart or J.C. Penney good anchors for malls where these groups predominate. According to the Life-Style Cluster system, an alternative index, even with identical incomes, the *black enterprise* and *pools and patios* groups will exhibit very different consumption patterns. Careful study of such spending patterns can generate a mix that makes the difference between a mere profit-maker and a 'fool money-machine'.

#### THE UTOPIA OF CONSUMPTION

As central institutions in the realm of consumption, shopping malls constantly restructure both products and behavior, transforming them into new combinations. Most directly, the mall, as its domination of retail sales indicates,



Southdale in Minneapolis totals one million square feet and opened in 1956. It is one of the nation's first two department store centers, introducing for the first time Gruen's concept of the climate-controlled, two level total environment. Courtesy, Gruen Associates.

functions to efficiently circulate large numbers of goods. However, the rigid financial and merchandising formulas that guarantee and maximize its profits restrict the range and variety of goods it can offer. At the same time, the shopper arrives at the mall with a "confused set of wants."<sup>6</sup> Presented with constantly increasing numbers of products, each promising specialized satisfaction, the shopper exists in a state of fluctuating desire. The mall must simultaneously address these contradictory demands: stimulating nebulous desire and encouraging specific purchases. To survive profitably, it must operate within the enormous disjuncture created between the objective economic logic necessary for the profitable circulation of goods and the unstable subjectivity of the messages exchanged between consumers and commodities, between the limited goods permitted by this logic and the unlimited desires released by this exchange. This subjects retailers and shoppers to a commercial logic that

forces both to constantly realize the abstract concept of consumption in money terms. Faced with such restrictions, the mall can realize its profits only by efficiently mediating between the shopper and the commodity. The shopping-mall mix is calculated to organize the disorienting flux of attributes and needs into a recognizable hierarchy of shops defined by cost, status, and life-style images. Merchandise contextualized by price and image orients the shopper, allowing the speculative spiral of desire and deprivation to be interrupted by purchases.

The physical organization of the mall environment mirrors this disjuncture. All the familiar tricks of mall design—limited entrances, escalators placed only at the end of corridors, fountains and benches carefully positioned to entice shoppers into stores—control the flow of consumers through the numbingly repetitive corridors of shops. The orderly processions of goods along endless aisles continuously stimulates the desire to buy. At the same time, other architectural tricks contradict commercial considerations. Dramatic atriums create floating spaces for contemplation, multiple levels provide infinite vistas from a variety of viewpoints, and reflective surfaces bring near and far together. The resulting 'weightless realm' receives substance only through the commodities it contains.

These strategies are effective; almost every mallgoer has felt their power. The jargon used by mall management demonstrates not only their awareness of these side-effects, but also their partial and imprecise attempts to capitalize on them. Joan Gidion saw malls as an addictive environmental drug: "One moves for a while in an aqueous suspension, not only of light, but of judgment, not only of judgment, but of personality." William Kowinski identified *Mal de Mall* as a perceptual paradox created by simultaneous stimu-

lation and sedation.<sup>7</sup> The jargon used by mall management demonstrates not only their awareness of these side effects, but also their partial and imprecise attempts to capitalize on them. The 'Gruen Transfer' (named after Victor Gruen) designates the moment when a 'destination buyer', with a specific purchase in mind, is transformed into an impulse shopper, a crucial point immediately visible in the shift from a determined stride to an erratic and meandering gait. Yet shoppers do not perceive these effects as negative: the expansion of the typical mall visit from twenty minutes in 1960 to nearly three hours today testifies to their increasing desirability.

### RETAIL MAGIC

Malls have achieved their commercial success through a variety of strategies that all depend on 'indirect commodification', a process by which nonsaleable objects, activities, and images are purposely placed in the commodified world of the mall. The basic marketing principle is 'adjacent attraction', where "the most dissimilar objects lend each other mutual support when they are placed next to each other."<sup>8</sup> This logic of association allows noncommodified values to enhance commodities, but it also imposes the reverse process—previously noncommodified entities become part of the marketplace.

At an early stage, malls began to introduce a variety of services, such as movies and restaurants. As customers grew more jaded, new attractions such as symphony concerts and skating rinks became commonplace accompaniments to shopping. This expanded the mall's social and recreational role: For teenagers, hanging out at the mall replaced cruising the strip; 'mall walkers' began to exercise in the safety and shelter of mall corridors; many young adults now regard malls as safe and benevolent places to meet other singles. Proximity

has established an inescapable behavioral link between human needs—for recreation, public life, and social interaction—and the commercial activities of the mall, between pleasure and profit in an enlarged version of 'adjacent attraction'. Developers and retailers have recently upped the ante even further by combining shopping with theme park attractions, transforming the mall into a tourist destination. Entertained and stimulated by rollercoasters and merry-go-rounds, shoppers will stay longer and ultimately spend more. Indeed, the two forms had already converged—malls routinely entertain, while theme parks function as disguised marketplaces. Both offer controlled and carefully packaged public spaces and pedestrian experiences.

With 'mall time' an increasingly standard unit of measure, the conflict between private and public space became acute. Despite Justice Thurgood Marshall's argument that since the mall had assumed the role of a traditional town square, it must also assume its public responsibilities, the Supreme Court confirmed an Oregon mall's legal right to be defined as a private space.<sup>10</sup> Most malls now emphasize this by posting signs and prohibiting picketing, petitions, and anything else deemed detrimental to carefree shopping.

The contrived packaging, obvious manipulation, and mass-market imagery of formula entertainment malls was not without critics, particularly among affluent and educated shoppers. To please this more demanding audience, developer James Rouse expanded the definition of adjacent attraction to incorporate 'authenticity'—genuinely historic and scenic places—into the world of the mall. 'Festival marketplaces', such as Ghirardelli Square and the Cannery in San Francisco and Faneuil Hall in Boston, reject mall formulas by mixing historic setting with tasteful renovation and recreational

shopping. Highlighting the unique character of a single significant location, these festival marketplaces use simple themes rooted in genuine contexts as a means of enlivening predictable shopping experiences.

If actual historic places are not available, they can easily be manufactured. Shopping mall architects easily adapted another theme park concept, Disney's 'lands', appropriating geographic, historic, or fictional 'places' and reconfiguring them into a specialized shopping environment. This produced a series of specialty centers with invented themes, such as Ports O' Call village in San Pedro, a New England fishing village with a touch of Mississippi steamboat, Oakland's Jack London Village, a timber mining camp, or Beverly Hills new nineteenth-century European shopping street Two Rodeo Drive. Whether rooted in a real context or totally simulated, these malls reduce

the complexity and messiness of real places. The demands of marketing erase the uniqueness of place. Still it works: The implied connection between unexpected settings and familiar products reinvigorates the shopping experience. Faneuil Hall attracts as many visitors each year as Disneyland, confirming Rouse's slogan: "Profit is the thing that hauls dreams into focus."<sup>10</sup>

#### HYPERCONSUMPTION: SPECIALIZATION AND PROLIFERATION

Throughout the period of shopping-mall expansion, economic and social changes were significantly altering the character of the consumer market. Precision in locating and satisfying consumers has become increasingly important since 1980, when malls began to approach the saturation point. In this unstable situation, the continued development of existing mall types was no



Ghirardelli Square, renovated as a festival marketplace by Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, Inc., Photograph by Jeremiah O. Bradstad.

longer assured. Heightened competition—between corporations, entrepreneurs, and even urban regions—forced a series of shakedowns in the industry. Although the system of regional malls continued to flourish, it was clear that the generic-formula mix no longer guaranteed profits.<sup>11</sup> The system demonstrated a surprising adaptability: in spite of its history of rigidly programmed uniformity, new economic and locational opportunities prompted new prototypes. Malls expanded by multiplying and diversifying into as many different fragments as the market.

Existing malls renewed themselves by upgrading their decor and amenities. Future archeologists will read Orange County's social history in South Coast Plaza's successive extensions: the older wings featuring Sears and J.C. Penney's recall the suburbs' original lower-middle-class roots; the elaborate new corridors with stores such as Gucci and Cartier reflect the area's more recent affluence. In the richest markets, luxury malls like the Rodeo Collection in Beverly Hills offer expensive specialty goods in sumptuous settings, more like luxurious hotels than shopping malls. At the other end of the market, outlet malls sell slightly damaged or out-of-date goods at discount prices; since low cost is the major attraction, undecorated, low-rent buildings only enhance their utilitarian atmosphere.

New smaller malls eliminate social and public functions to allow more efficient shopping. Strip malls, with parking in front, are the most flexible type: their false fronts can assume any identity, their format can be adjusted to any site, and they can contain any mix of products. In Los Angeles, more than three thousand minimalls supply the daily needs of busy consumers with convenience markets, dry cleaners, video stores, and fast-food outlets.<sup>12</sup>

In this overcrowded marketplace, imagery has become increasingly critical

as a way of attracting particular shops and facilitating acts of consumption. Through a selective manipulation of images, malls express a broad variety of messages about the world outside. Large, diverse cities offer veritable encyclopedias of specialized mall types that cater to recent immigrant groups. Here the images retain a vestige of their cultural heritage: Korean malls have blue-tile temple roofs, Japanese malls combine Zen gardens with slick modernism to attract both local residents and touring Japanese. Minimal developers also style their malls according to location: postmodern on the affluent Westside of L.A., high-tech in dense urban areas, and Spanish in the rest of the city.

Malls have not only responded to changing market conditions, but have also become trump cards in the increasing competition between developing cities and regions. Faneuil Hall's success in generating adjacent development led cities into private-public ventures with the Rouse Company to build waterfront centers as catalysts for urban revitalization. This strategy can also backfire: Horton Plaza, San Diego's spectacular, enormously profitable, and heavily subsidized 'urban theme park' mall has remained a self-contained environment, a city in itself—with little effect on its seedy surroundings.<sup>13</sup>

## THE WORLD AS A SHOPPING MALL

The spread of malls around the world has accustomed large numbers of people to behavior patterns that inextricably link shopping with diversion and pleasure. The transformation of shopping into an experience that can occur in any setting has led to the next stage in mall development: 'spontaneous malling', a process by which urban spaces are transformed into malls without new buildings or developers. As early as 1946, architects Ketchum, Gina, and Sharp proposed restructuring Main

Street in Rye, New York, as a pedestrian shopping mall; later Victor Gruen planned to turn downtown Fort Worth into an enclosed mall surrounded by sixty thousand parking spaces. More recently, a number of cities have reconstituted certain areas as malls simply by designating them as pedestrian zones, which allows the development of concentrated shopping. In California, where weather encourages year round outdoor shopping, self-regulating real-estate values allow these new marketplaces to create their own tenant mix, organized around a unifying theme; this, in turn, attracts supporting activities such as restaurants and cafes. Even without removing automobiles, urban streets like Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills have spontaneously regenerated themselves as specialty malls, thematically based, respectively, on new-wave and European chic. Now, developers are reproducing the city itself in a shopping mall. Still under construction, Universal CityWalk in the San Fernando Valley will provide a prepackaged urban experience, a shopping mall combining simulated fragments of Los Angeles—Melrose Avenue, Hollywood Boulevard, and Venice Beach—into a four-block hyperreal city.

Clearly, the mall has transcended its shopping-center origins. Today, hotels, office buildings, cultural centers, and museums virtually duplicate the layouts and formats of shopping malls. The principle of adjacent attraction is now operating at a societal level, imposing an exchange of attributes between the museum and the shopping mall, between commerce and culture. The world of the shopping mall—respecting no boundaries, no longer limited even by the imperative of consumption—has become the world.



City Walk, Universal City. The Jerde Partnership, Inc., design architect; Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall (DMJM), executive architect; Emmet L. Wemple & Assoc., landscape architect. Model maker, Randy Walker. Photo, Annette Del Zoppo.

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# Vernacular Parks

Paul Groth

Design professionals usually see urban parks as official places: special areas reserved for esthetic and spiritual refreshment, and for learning the ruling interpretations of nature and society. Washington D.C.'s Mall and its adjacent museums constitute an obvious example. Other official parks—such as the inevitable collection of pioneer structures rudely collected at the edge of a mid-sized city or the organized arrows pointing the tourist towards the 'booster's' view of downtown—lead visitors and local citizens alike to pre-planned conclusions. Even though such parks may not be 'high style', in their forms they still suggest clear rules of behavior.

However, if we look at ordinary American environments we can find a very different and very vibrant urban park tradition, one that we might call the *vernacular park*. The vernacular park is *ad hoc*. It is not focused on a 'correct' visual style, on the adulation of certain types of geological or botanical specimens, or on a prescription for specific activities. It is not particularly urban or wilderness, but simply away from one's 'normal' environment. Like other vernacular landscapes, it is not focused on the future or on abstract ideas, but instead on the present and the everyday. Vernacular park uses often take place where official order is beginning to crumble—in underused areas of the city or out on the urban fringe. An uncharacteristically permanent but ubiquitous form of a vernacular park might be a temporary speed-boat dock. Vernacular parks often exist within official parks: for instance, a dirt

road behind the levee of an otherwise official urban park.

Children innately create and use vernacular parks largely invisible to the adult population. For the eight-year-old with a tiny boat or model raft to float or to pull with a string, the chains of mud puddles along the side of a road form a public recreation space that can stretch for several blocks. Children of all classes and ethnic backgrounds know vernacular park use, but the adults who create and use vernacular parks most typically come from the lower half of the socioeconomic spectrum. They are recent urban migrants, racial or ethnic minorities, or young adults: people whom the 'official' population might disparagingly categorize as 'working class', 'low brow', 'red neck', or merely 'adolescent'. They often have access to a car—most often a used car.

For many people, the vernacular park is not the covertly transformed nature of official parks, but brazenly commodified nature. The experience of nature goes hand in hand with buying, collecting, and using nature. An exuberant example of this commodification is



Entrance to the gift shop at the Reptile Center, near Luray, Virginia, 1988.

the Reptile Center gift shop near the Luray Caverns in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Entrepreneurs often run vernacular parks as a business; a brightly colored sign directing motorists to "BUY TICKETS AT GIFT SHOP" is a typical announcement. How different are the announcements in the official park, where small tasteful signs might merely label the park and credit its benefactor or denote its memorial status (and thus falsely appear to be value-free). In California's Humboldt Redwoods State Park, for instance, islands of official tall redwoods are discreetly denoted with woody log signs. California viewers of a sign saying "Fannie K. Haas Grove" will automatically connect the trees and the park with the prominence of the Haas family, well known as part of the Levi Strauss fortune and of San Francisco's urban leadership. However, stretching between the official groves of Humboldt redwoods are long areas of private land. In these areas entrepreneurs have erected a vernacular redwoods park: coffee shops, redwood burl emporiums, dubious museums, and other overt tourist attractions all related somehow to the adjacent trees.

Both the official and the vernacular are important and authentic parts of Humboldt Redwoods Park. Both zones are commodified. However, at only one of them can visitors buy a redwood burl to take home and make into a coffee table. To the 'official' eye, parkland trinkets are offensive. Yet, since Americans are constantly taught to buy material possessions for their membership in society, why should they not decide to buy into nature as well?

Interviews and surveys in Jackson State Forest (reported in 1988 by Marcia McNalley and Randy Hester for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) show that the vernacular park is not a sacred realm but a scenic backdrop for ordinary and everyday activities, many of which ignore

nature altogether. Hester and McNalley found that park users felt automobiles, trucks, loud radios, or a motor boat (in the case of water) were usually considered essential; park use could mean such mundane activities as fixing the transmission or watching television. Throughout the U.S., vernacular park use for teenagers can mean having a drinking party or just hanging out. The closer a vernacular park area is to the center of the city, the more likely its daytime social promenade will include waxing one's car in the shade while potential admirers cruise by on the nearby road.

The easy juxtaposition of everyday activities with a naturalistic background reveals an attitude among those users that does not separate culture from nature—at least not nearly so much as do the people who design official parks. A few years ago a billboard at the entrance to Glacier National Park announced that an auto tape tour would permit visitors to "Hear Glacier Na-



Official sign in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, near Myers Flat, California, 1983.



A vernacular area, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, 1983.

tional Park Come to Life!" Nature, in this format, was clearly something outside the car, separate from humans and separate from culture. Yet in the vernacular park nature is not only outside the car but also inside the car. The intervening educational program—if there is one—is commercial. In the vernacular park wilder nature is simply there (usually in the background), admittedly damaged on occasion. Everyday activities are also there, scenically a bit better off than at home. In their own minds, vernacular users are not desacralizing the park. For them, it was never particularly sacred in the first place.

As a lesson for official parks in the U.S., the vernacular tradition reminds us that wherever park use thrives there the automobile is usually thriving too. To plug into the potential vitality of the vernacular park, landscape architects and planners may need to stifle their professional urge to eliminate cars or hide them in the background. In popular vernacular parks, seemingly random parking along the roadside and among the trees blurs the conceptual boundaries between road, parking lot, and park. Inside even Yosemite National Park (as official a park as one might want), the parking lots are dramatic in and of themselves and often see more pleasurable social activity than the hiking trails. Along the vernacular zone of the Humboldt Redwoods Park, the predictable roadside attraction of a drive-through tree and drive-on log also prove that parks can embrace automobiles and their occupants.

Vernacular and official parks may be inherently contradictory; if so, we must ensure that urban park programs are pluralistic enough to allow both traditions. We must also find ways to mitigate the ecological damage of the vernacular traditions without undermining them with official control. We might, for instance, find ourselves designing shelters for waxing cars as well



Sign inviting automobile use in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, 1983.

as shelters for picnic tables. If indeed we are to make an urban park for the future, perhaps we ought to start with the parking lot.

*Reprinted with permission from Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams, eds., Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991). © MOMA.*

# Encroachment and Coexistence: Preserving the Edge Condition of the San Joaquin Valley

*Morris H. Newman*

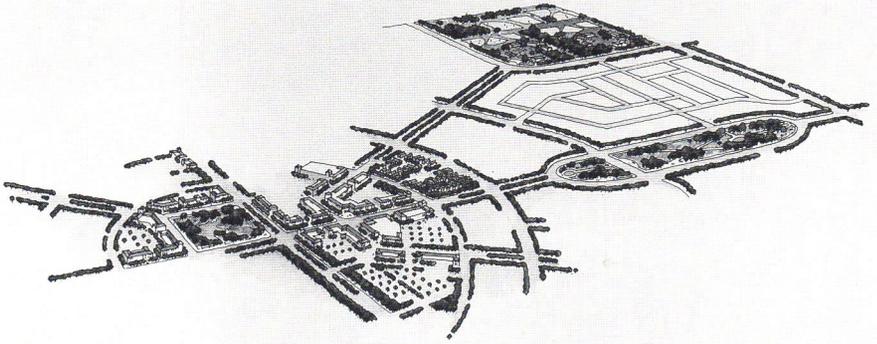
The boundaries of Stockton, a traditionally agricultural town in the north San Joaquin Valley, will soon offer some startling images of urban encroachment onto farmland: Before long, a 1,500-acre master-planned community will stand like an island in a sea of ploughed acres. The community will contain tens of thousands of homes, millions of square feet of office and industrial space, schools, hospitals, police stations, and neighborhood shopping centers. And at the edge of this masterplanned metropolis, all construction stops, and the infinite horizon of farmland resumes.

This image may not be as alarming as it seems at first glance. The goal of such communities is to preserve agricultural land, not to consume it. Intent on preserving some of the world's most productive farmland, a group of local governments in Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Sutter counties have created a policy of encouraging home building and commercial development in controlled spurts at the edges of existing cities rather than let developers go wild in unincorporated areas, as they have traditionally done. This strategy is the urban equivalent of what fire fighters call 'back burning': promoting a conflagration in one location to prevent it from spreading to another.

The growth of the Bay Area has pushed the urban frontier south to towns like Stockton and Modesto about an hour's drive to the southeast. These

areas have become the new suburban fringe for Bay Area homebuyers seeking affordable housing in the nation's most expensive housing market (as determined by median prices). With the pressure rising on both land values and land use, local planners have decided to take control of surging home construction. Rather than allow homebuilders to buy cheap land outside of city boundaries, which has been the traditional pattern of homebuilding for generations, cities are using their sphere-of-authority powers to keep the homebuilding within city boundaries as a means of preserving 'ag' land. The strategy is essentially this: approve large projects immediately outside the city boundaries, on land that has been identified as 'urban reserve' (as distinct from 'open space'), and then annex those areas to the city.

The landscape of encroachment, of course, is an archetypal image of California. Much of the state's urban space was originally farmland that was overtaken by land speculation and home building. Los Angeles residents above the age of thirty can remember when the San Fernando Valley and Orange County were largely agricultural; now development has swallowed much of Northern San Diego County and is gnawing at Ventura County. (Perhaps ironically, the farmland of the San Joaquin Valley could itself be viewed as an encroachment, as the entire valley was wetlands until the nineteenth century.)



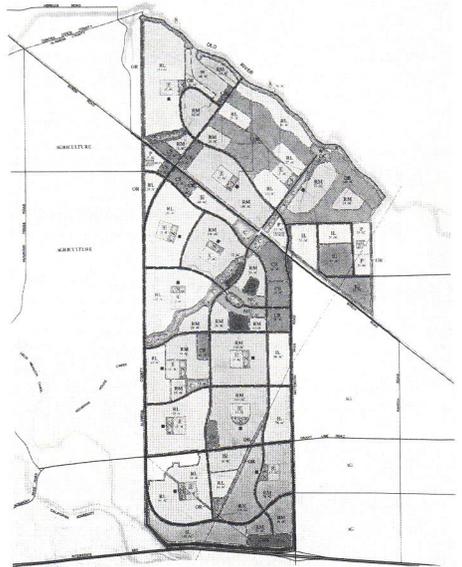
Village One Specific Plan, prepared for the City of Modesto by ROMA Design Group.

The landscape of encroachment is a sort of Steinberg cartoon of sharp contrasts: vast versus compact, vertical versus horizontal, soft versus hard. Even the symbolism is at odds: homebuilders love to sell the countryside with sylvan names like ‘hills’, ‘lakes’, ‘valleys’, and ‘bluffs’. Farmers, on the other hand, take a less sentimental view of the land, worrying about bushel-per-acre yields as they manipulate the terrain with high-tech machinery.

Now policy-makers and environmentalists are saying ‘The sprawl stops here’. Instead of the landscape of encroachment, they have proposed the landscape of coexistence where (it is hoped) an enlightened planning establishment has provided both for the housing needs of a growing population and the preservation of the most productive farmland on earth. The important difference, of course, is that in the landscape of coexistence, development has been restrained.

The City of Stockton is attempting to control urban sprawl by proposing six new planned communities that range in size from 50 acres to 1,500 acres. In Sutter County, voters cleared the way for development of a new self-contained community that would eventually house 160,000 residents on 16,500 acres of farmland just north of the Sacramento Airport.

In nearby Modesto, voters have approved a plan to concentrate new development in village-like projects at the city’s edge. The City Council recently approved a specific proposal known as Village One and is currently annexing 1,775 acres for the purpose; the site will contain 8,000 residential units, 700,000 square feet of commercial space, and a 2.3 million-square-foot industrial park.



General Plan to 2010, Mountain House New Community, San Joaquin County. The SWA Group, Land Planners.



Houses in the 1,500-acre Weston Ranch development. Photo, Terrence McCarthy/New York Times.

In Stanislaus County, which contains Modesto, a group of farmers and local property owners North Salida Development have created a 1,600 acre planned community in Salida, an unincorporated town northwest of Modesto. Plans call for 578 acres for housing, 210 acres for commercial development, 100 acres for commercial development, and about 300 acres will be set aside for recreational open space.

Yet this truce between farmers and homebuilders is uneasy, if we look at the fiscal pressures facing California cities. In the wake of *Proposition 13* (the 1978 'tax revolt' initiative that limited property taxes) the majority of cities have been in fiscal crisis for more than a decade. Many have started redevelopment agencies with the hope of acting as developers and creating new sources for property taxes. Other cities have welcomed residential growth and the tax base that accompanies it. Cities that are hurting for revenue may be tempted to incorporate more and more land at their boundaries. In this nega-

tive scenario, the landscape of encroachment once again gathers steam, this time not as the piecemeal fashion but rather as public policy: *encroachment in the name of environmentalism*.

Defenders of the urban reserve idea say the strategy is still the best hope to keep the city and the countryside apart. If planners have their way, and if cities can be trusted, the landscape of encroachment has been frozen in place, forever preserving the classic California edge condition.

# “I Didn’t Want to Forget”

Paul Lieberman

When Anna Sandoval’s new home began taking shape several years ago on the Sycuan reservation in eastern San Diego County, it quickly became the talk of Native American communities throughout the state. A tribal leader hundreds of miles away remarked on “that house on the hill down there.” Others’ comments were tinged with envy or suspicion. Some speculated that a glitzy gambling hall had enabled Sandoval, long-time leader of the Mission Indians of the Sycuan tribe, to afford “a monument like that.”

There were questions, as well, about the odd features of the home. Why did the belltower atop it—if that’s what it was—look half-finished? Were the walls really adobe? And what the hell was that rounded room in front, the one with no windows? “No one had seen anything like it,” noted Sandoval herself. “That was the idea.” Indeed a case could be made that the house at Sycuan represented nothing less than a move by one California Indian to break a mold—the mold of bleak, standardized housing imposed by a generation of government programs.

In California, few Native Americans wound up on anything resembling the popular image of a reservation, the vast ancestral lands typified by the Navaho nation of Arizona or the Cherokees of Oklahoma. Here, numerous tribes were systematically displaced by Spanish missions, Gold Rush miners, and other early settlers. Essentially homeless, they were eventually given ninety-six small tracts—reservations and postage-stamp *rancherías* in deserts or mountains around the state,

“pushed into the rocks,” as one anthropologist expressed it. Established in 1875 by Executive Order of President Ulysses S. Grant, Sycuan certainly bears out that definition. It was one square mile of border-strewn wasteland in the Dehesa Valley, ten miles east of El Cajon.

Covered wagons were still in use when Sandoval’s mother, Ada, was a young girl. A horse and buggy took her to town where she worked as a nurse’s aide for \$1 a day. ‘Home’ was provided by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the 1920s: one room with a dirt floor. Plank flooring was added over the decades, along with a couple of rooms, but the outhouse was never replaced by indoor plumbing. Well into her eighties, Ada lived in what a visiting architect described as “a cardboard shack.”

In the 1950s, the state donated trailers to some California reservations. They were ‘surplus’, often having been used to provide emergency shelter after earthquakes and “so broken, you couldn’t move them,” recalled Jack Sanderson, retired director of California’s Indian Assistance Programs. “But,” he added, “we were lucky to get them.”

Far from public view, the tribal communities became classic enclaves of rural poverty—if they survived at all. With the federal government pushing assimilation, dozens of California’s *rancherías* were ‘terminated’ by congress in the 1950s and the land distributed among tribal members. Indians were encouraged to migrate to the cities to look for work and join the mainstream of America life.

It took the political movements of the 1960s—and yet another housing program—to revive life on the reservations. In the wake of the civil rights struggles that emboldened Blacks, Native Americans staged their own mobilizing protest with the nineteen-month takeover of Alcatraz Island. Many began reconsidering their ‘roots’ and the lands of their parents—particularly when a cheap way to move back soon was provided by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The square, cinder block HUD homes, dubbed “Rocky boys,” were in many ways an anathema to traditional Indian life. Despite the fact that tribal society was traditionally centered around rituals involving food preparation and meals, they provided only small kitchens and dining alcoves. They forewent fireplaces as unnecessary luxuries and required gas stoves, even though wood often was the most readily available fuel source. HUD clustered its housing to keep construction costs down, apparently ignoring the fact that Indian families craved privacy. The cost to beneficiaries, however, was irresistible: as little as \$50 a month. The competition for HUD housing thus became fierce, and small subdivisions appeared on reservations throughout the state, often a single paved road lined with identical homes. It was as if suburban, working class *cul-de-sacs* had been plopped down in the middle of nowhere.

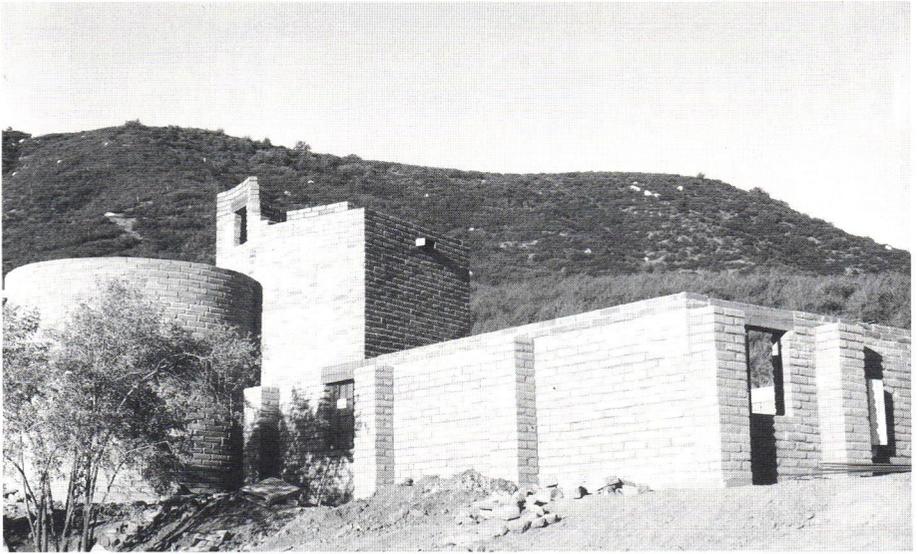
While many occupants complained that the homes began falling apart after a year, they still seemed luckier than colleagues on reservations that never got HUD housing. One of those was Sycuan. Even into the 1970s, there were but a handful of families scattered about over its hillsides and a government survey described it as “largely neglected.” The only communal structures were a century-old Catholic church reflecting

the heritage of the Kumeyaay Mission and a cinderblock meeting hall.

One thing the tribe did have was a strong leader. Anna Sandoval was in her thirties, a mother of five children, and on welfare. But she proved to have “a mother complex or whatever,” as a tribal advisor described it, doling out food and advice to others. It was something of a tribal myth how she ran out of milk for the kids one day and trekked to town seeking work, praying all the while for deliverance of her people. “I said, ‘God, what can you do to help us?’” she recalled.

In 1979, she did get a new home, a modest brick ranch set in an oak grove, provided by yet another BIA program. True deliverance would have to wait a few years more, however, until fast-moving events overhauled many tribal economies nationwide. It began in 1979 when the Seminoles taunted Florida authorities by running high-stakes bingo games. After confrontations, court battles, and congressional debates, Indians won stunning competitive advantages in gambling: Though a state might limit charity bingo to \$100 jackpots, there were no limits on Indian land: \$50,000 prizes could be offered to draw thousands to the warehouse-sized halls. Soon there were card rooms, off-track betting parlors and, in many locations, slot machines. Today, reservation gambling is a multi-billion-dollar industry.

To be sure, the adoption by reservations of a ‘Las Vegas’ style economy has its critics. Many see it as a perversion of Native American traditions—“bad medicine”—and cite an array of horror stories ranging from mob infiltration to bloody tribal infighting over the new enterprises. But it has also been a bonanza to some reservations. And high on anyone’s list is the ninety-five-member Sycuan tribe. Located within an easy drive of San Diego, the bingo hall drew crowds from the moment it opened in 1983. A few years later, planning was



Anna Sandoval House, Stephen Thompson, architect.

begun for the 55,000-square-foot Sycuan Gaming Center, complete with 520-seat off-track betting 'theater', sunken 5-table poker area, restaurant, bar, gift shop, and valet parking.

There was an early crisis when the Sycuan fired their first outside management firm. A month later, however, the tribe had \$300,000 in its coffers. Soon the profits ran into the millions. The first thing Sandoval built was a new church. A health clinic and fire station followed. The houses started going up in 1987. There were eventually twenty-two of them, built on a priority schedule established by Sandoval: "The first people that got them were seniors," she said, her mother included in the group. "Then we went down by age group or family. The single ones got theirs last." Actually, her own place was last. It wouldn't go up until the others were complete.

Tribal members agreed that the houses should be nothing like the HUD boxes elsewhere. "We wanted something better," said treasurer Hank Murphy, who got 2,600 square feet with a "million dollar view." Their homes were spaced out over the land-

scape. There was a choice of several floorplans, but the basic structure was much like the 'Spanish-style' homes popular around Southern California: three bedrooms, two baths, a stuccoed frame, mission-type roof. They had central air conditioning, wall-to-wall carpeting, custom oak cabinets, and automatic sprinklers. The designs allowed expansion, for family rooms, enclosed porches, and the like.

During much of the same period, impressive new houses also appeared on a hillside above San Bernardino, where the San Manuel tribe ran a 2,800-seat bingo hall. To the north in Colusa County, bingo proceeds helped the local tribe finally escape shacks of rotted wood and leaking roofs. Where the gambling worked, it changed the face of life on California reservations.

Though some resentment simmered under the surface, most tribal members understood when Sandoval made plans for a place a notch above the rest. She'd brought in the bingo, after all, and volunteered her own land 'allotment' as the site for the hall when others worried about the noise and traffic. Of course she took a greater percentage of the

profits for putting up with the hassles—an arrangement that would make her one of the wealthiest Native Americans in California. “They got mad about it later,” she said.

The architect Stephen Thompson was brought from Arizona. A sole practitioner who makes much of his living designing banks, his real passions are Native American culture and the desert landscape. Each year, he takes a week-long survivalist hike, bringing no food or water, because it “keeps you in touch.” A man who relishes the differences among peoples, he believes, “We can’t design white man’s houses and think Indians will be happy.”

He consulted Sandoval and got her marching orders: “I wanted to remember where we came from,” she said. And, “most important to her,” he recalled, “was that the structure symbolize stability.” Though reinforced with steel and concrete to withstand earthquakes, the walls were made of adobe, the twelve-inch blocks imported from Arizona. You couldn’t actually climb into the belltower looming above the house. It was “symbolic really,” Thompson said, because “she’s watching over her people.” By design, the tower looked half-finished, or, more to the point, like a ruin from one of the old missions found around California.

“My great grandmother was a slave there,” Sandoval noted. “It was something I didn’t want to forget. I look at it as a reminder of what my ancestors faced.” The rounded, windowless room that dominates the front of the house is a traditional *kiva*, a sunken space designed for prayer and meditation. The largest ceiling beam in the house runs through the *kiva*, symbolizing “the stability of the whole thing,” Thompson said.

Sandoval moved during the Christmas season of 1990, only weeks after the dedication of the showpiece Sycuan Gaming Center. But it was a bittersweet

time for her: That same month, fellow tribe members ended her eighteen-year reign as chair. They elected the younger Dan Tucker, who called for “more working together” on the reservation. No more one-woman show, in other words. Sandoval took the loss hard, sequestering herself for weeks in the house on the hill. She also began pondering the changes she had witnessed, coming to no easy answers. She had a microwave in the new house, for instance, but missed the old wood-burning stove on which she used to cook up tortillas for her kids. She missed the oak grove at the old house. She had a Jacuzzi now, but she began musing about the days when they soaked in tin tubs.

Moving had been tough for Sandoval’s mother, too. Nearing ninety, she almost had to be carried into her new home, then wouldn’t sit at the kitchen table for weeks. In time, she learned to turn on the television set, but never to change the channels. A helper tunes in her favorite show—wrestling.

“Material things don’t mean that much,” Sandoval concluded recently. “You have to give up something to get something.” But the die was cast, as they say, for Native American housing in California. Even the federal government has gotten the message. For a planned 54-unit project on the huge Tule River Reservation near the western slope of the Sierras, HUD has allowed a local architect to design houses in consultation with the tribe’s people themselves. There will be four floorplans. The homes will go on scattered lots. “The new generation of regulations is a philosophical departure from what we’ve done in the past,” explained C. Raphael Mecham, an Arizona-based HUD official who supervises projects in the region. “You can basically do what you want. We say ‘here’s so much money, build anything you want. I don’t care if it’s a hogan or an adobe house’. We’ve come a long way.”

# The Arts and Crafts Garden in California

David C. Streatfield

*David Streatfield's exploration of the importance of the Arts and Crafts garden is excerpted from a more extensive treatment to appear in the forthcoming book, The Arts and Crafts Movement in California, edited by Fronia W. Simpson (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), published in tandem with the first comprehensive exhibition of arts and crafts work in California, opening at the Oakland Museum in February.*

The garden was one of the most important contributions of the Arts and Crafts movement to the creation of natural, unpretentious, and harmonious environments. Gardens were intended to express regional character, to be built from local materials and simple plants. They were meant to be used as outdoor rooms and places to grow productive plants. The influence of these ideas in America was considerable, with regional variations appearing in the Eastern and Midwestern states, as well as in California. Because of the extraordinary variety of the physical landscape, California garden makers achieved a diversity of gardens that explored arts and crafts themes, exemplified by the hillside garden in the San Francisco Bay Area and San Diego; by the open-landscape garden, primarily in the Los Angeles Basin; and by the patio garden found throughout the Southland.

The Arts and Crafts garden emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century as part of a strong reaction against nineteenth-century gardens,

which had embraced a wide variety of styles and a heterogeneous array of plants: These collectively represented a set of cultural ideas that had little to do with the landscape itself. Such floristic and stylistic diversity thrived in California, where it was possible to create any kind of garden. The benign climate, the long growing season, and the apparent abundance of water for irrigation led to the importation of plants from many other regions. In this way, the landscape had already been substantially changed before the introduction of Arts and Crafts ideals.

When the prodigality of this floral abundance came into question at the turn of the century, Arts and Crafts gardens provided a new set of choices relative to regional 'appropriateness'. Outwardly oriented to frame views of the landscape, the various garden types provided places in which a domestic space could be settled into the outer landscape. The garden thus became an important transitional space in the continuum of experience from the interior of the house through the garden and out into the landscape. California's mild climate made it possible to spend more time out-of-doors, in the outdoor room, than in other parts of America.

## THE PHYSICAL REGIONS OF CALIFORNIA

California's visually dramatic physical setting is defined by a series of mountain ranges. The Coastal Mountains rise directly from the waters of the Pacific



Italian cypresses, banana trees, and eucalyptus were used as specimens to provide vertical contrast to the predominantly horizontal shrubs on the terraced slope in the garden Kate O. Sessions created for the B. F. Chase House, designed by Irving Gill in 1911. San Diego Historical Society.

Ocean along the north-south axis from the Oregon border to the Tehachapi Mountains, below which runs the Transverse Range along the east-west axis. This range includes the Santa Ynez, San Gabriel, and San Bernardino Mountains. To the south is the lower plateau known as the Peninsular Range, the western edge of which follows the crescent-shaped shoreline south to the Mexican border. The Los Angeles Basin is a roughly triangular plain lying between these ranges and open to the ocean.

This rugged yet fragile topography has been and still is being created by earthquakes; in addition, wildfires have recurring impact on native plants and human settlements. These dramatic processes were largely ignored by settlers, who were preoccupied with the admirable climate. California enjoys a climate that is similar to that of the Mediterranean Basin: very mild, wet winters; hot, dry summers; and warm springs and autumns. In the second half of the nineteenth century, climate came to define the character of the state.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS SOURCES

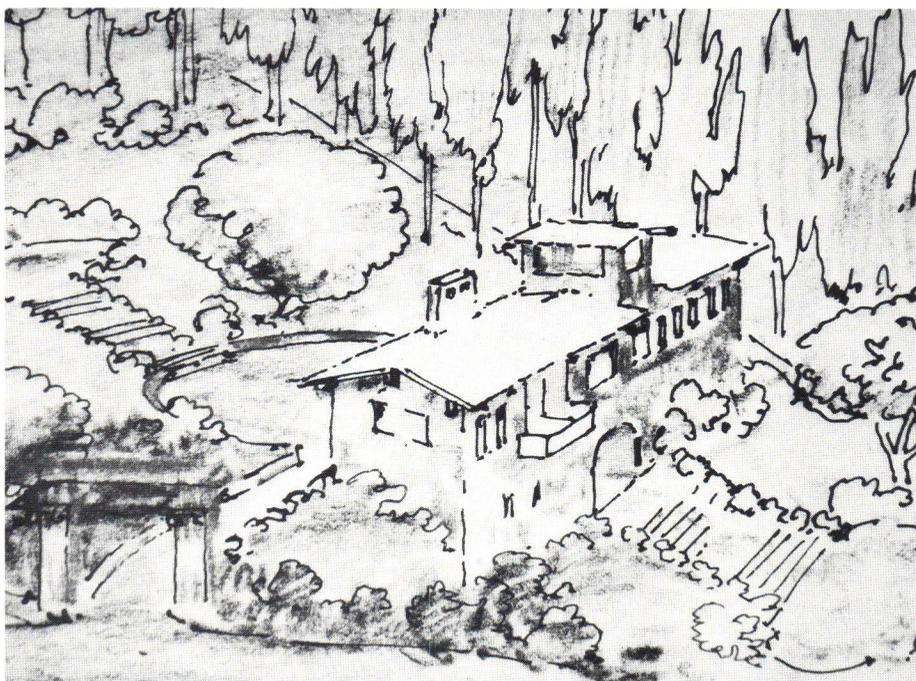
Prior to 1870, California garden designs attempted to replicate either the forms of gardens that were typical where settlers had come from or garden styles that were popular elsewhere at the time. Such cultural imposition was made possible by the unusually extensive range of plants available from other regions of the United States, Europe, and Australia, plus an unlimited supply of irrigation water: Plants cultivated in California could be grown in the rest of the country only under glass. Formal gardens and beds of *mosaiculture*—a European technique for growing closely cropped succulents in mosaiclike designs—juxtaposed with broad lawns fringed by groves of an extraordinarily large range of trees and shrubs. In 1874, a writer suggested that the ideal mood for California was the “tropical.”<sup>1</sup> In practice, this involved the lavish use of palms and many subtropical species that had to be imported.

These typically Victorian gardens were largely plant collections, and they had a markedly introverted, self-contained character: only later did gardens begin to take full advantage of outward views. As Arts and Crafts theory and practice became an alternative to these styles, it was taken up by communities such as Berkeley and Pasadena, which had active civic-improvement societies, as well as by individual architects and designers who sought to achieve regional appropriateness.

The conceptual origins of Arts and Crafts gardens in the United States were loosely derived from the ideas of English theorists, most notably John Ruskin’s insistence on looking to nature for the development of aesthetic principles and on handcraftsmanship in which the artisan-craftsman maintained autonomy.<sup>2</sup> Other English writers extolled the virtues of the independent artist-gardener.

Americans quickly absorbed these ideas, published in new magazines such as *House and Garden*, *House Beautiful*, *Country Life in America*, and, especially, *Craftsman*, the main organ of the Arts and Crafts movement. Regional differences developed. In California there was a general fidelity to Ruskin’s principles, but the influence of English writers and designers was not particularly strong. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sweden-borgian minister Joseph Worcester’s reverence for the holiness of nature was close to Ruskin’s, and both strongly influenced the architect Bernard Maybeck.<sup>3</sup> Worcester also appears to have been attracted by Japanese gardens and their symbolism. The existence of a competing Hispanic tradition also provided new challenges to the designers of California gardens. In 1888 Frederick Law Olmsted, working on a plan for Stanford University, proposed a set of design principles appropriate for a new California design tradition, which he based on the Spanish missions and on Mediterranean courtyard gardens, using little water.<sup>4</sup> Charles Augustus Keeler advocated a mixture of Mediterranean and oriental imagery to provide an ordered harmony. He called for gardens that would combine aspects of the mission and the Japanese garden to create places for repose, study, and domestic leisure. Both traditions emphasized order and the control of nature, and both could be brought together so that “the charm of the wilderness [would be] tamed and diversified for convenience and accessibility.”<sup>5</sup>

These varying points of view confirm the fact that in California the Arts and Crafts movement embraced diverse forms that were not limited to any one style. This range reflected social differences among the garden owners and specific design responses to the distinct physical regions. The one element shared by all of these approaches (with the conspicuous exception of the work



A sketch by Maybeck poetically conveys the fluid, integrated character of the linked, naturalistic garden spaces advocated by the Hillside Club. Documents Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

of Kate O. Sessions in San Diego) was dependence on profligate use of water.

#### ARTS AND CRAFTS EXEMPLARS

A coordinated set of principles for private gardens and the entire landscape of the Berkeley hills was developed by the Hillside Club, an improvement society founded in 1898 by Keeler and Bernard Maybeck.<sup>6</sup> Under the guidance of this organization, members completely transformed the grassland hills into a wooded hillside of variegated, exotic trees, within which a variety of carefully sited shingled houses commanded sweeping views of the San Francisco Bay. This landscape was experienced as a continuous public garden, as well as a series of private gardens. Roads were treated as country lanes, following the contours of the hills and avoiding existing trees and outcroppings of rock. The residential blocks were irregular in

shape, with individual houses stepped back into the slope to minimize disturbance of the site.

The plan resulted in an irregular path system through the landscape. Sidewalks did not parallel the roads. This pattern of movement was also used in the gardens to which the paths led. The routes created effects of intimacy and mystery and made each garden seem larger than it actually was. Paths were paved with local stone, which was also used for low retaining walls. Even these minor structural features seemed like creations of nature. The colors of materials were carefully selected to make each house appear to be an organic element of the landscape. This reserved approach did not, however, apply to the landscaping itself. Believing that indigenous plants might appear “dull in color and lacking in character,” Keeler advocated creating a landscape by using redwood trees underplanted with small native trees and shrubs; he

also recommended that the California garden should have “a massy bloom at all periods of the year.”<sup>7</sup>

Santa Barbara was the only part of coastal California that had extensive, open groves of indigenous oak trees. Charles Frederick Eaton—a landscape gardener, architect, and craftsman—embellished his estate in the foothills there over a period of twenty years, using a highly painterly approach. He called the system “nature under control.” Ocean views were broken up so that one never saw too much at once, and views up the slope of the hills were punctuated by “sky-trees,” Eaton’s term for trees taller than the surrounding vegetation. He also carefully pruned his trees to emphasize their sculptural qualities and asymmetrical foliage.<sup>8</sup>

A most successful form of natural hillside gardening was practiced in the Ojai Valley by the architects Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey in their gardens for C. W. Robertson and E. D. Libbey. In both, there was little disturbance of the natural landscape of rough grass, rugged boulders, and scattered oak trees. The simple, almost shack-like

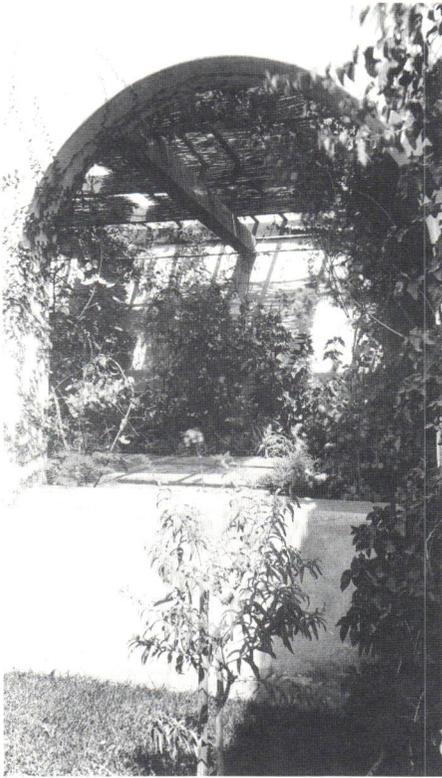
houses based on wooden Swiss chalets were carefully sited among the trees.

A completely different form of hillside garden was created in San Diego by the horticulturist Kate O. Sessions, working with such architects as Irving Gill, Frank Mead, and Richard S. Requa. San Diego’s mesa-like landscape with its steep-sided canyons lacked native trees, and, despite the extensive planting of trees in Balboa Park and on Point Loma, the city never developed a forested character like Berkeley’s. Sessions’s planting sought a new ecological order derived more from a sense of what would grow in the specific climate conditions than from a predetermined set of visual ordering principles.

The only similarity between the open-landscape garden of the Arts and Crafts movement and the English landscape garden of the eighteenth century was the use of an irregular, fluid pattern of movement through space. This Arts and Crafts garden type was used frequently in the Southland. Houses were placed in the center or on the edge of large lawns, looking out toward the mountains or a nearby arroyo, and the



The David Gamble house in Pasadena (1908) is one of the best examples of the Greenes’ use of Japanese themes. The house is lifted up on a terrace that surrounds the bulk of the house and extends the space of the living rooms out toward the garden. Documents Collection, University of California, Berkeley.



In the Annie Darst garden in San Diego by Irving Gill (1908) the living room opened on to a large pergola covered space, which in turn gave on to a walled garden. San Diego Historical Society.

garden spaces were completely open to the street. The garden space functioned as both a foreground to the views of the distant landscape and an extension of the house.

The most important exponents of this garden type were Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, who were particularly fascinated by the aesthetic qualities of Japanese gardens. The Greene brothers' use of Japanese garden forms was evocative and not derivative. Indeed, like many other architects, they frequently conflated elements from several sources.

Arts and Crafts designers favored patio gardens because of their association with Spanish California and Italy. The patio provided space that could be used for a variety of purposes: some

patios were covered with retractable glazed roofs or removable canvas panels to become an additional enclosed room, others housed swimming pools. A number of Irving Gill's houses were designed around a patio defined on three sides by colonnades and on the fourth by a wall with glazed openings to a walled garden beyond. These paved patios—furnished with vines, a banana tree, or a small palm, wicker furniture, and rugs—were used as rooms.

In larger gardens a detached pergola would provide a place in the shade to sew, read, converse, or enjoy the view of the garden and the mountains. This created a spatial transition from full enclosure in the patio to partial shade to full sunlight in the garden. Gill's houses represent a form of regional appropriateness derived from Hispanic precedents. But they were also progressive. His concrete houses united advanced building technology with simplified and abstracted references to mission buildings and a romantic delight in the color and wildness of the landscape. The abstract forms were anchored to their settings by pergolas—sometimes open and sometimes covered with creepers and vines that created a delicate tracery on the walls.

Meadow gardening was an unusual garden type, the earliest recorded example of which is Charles Fletcher Lummis's own garden of 1898 at his house El Alisal in Highland Park, near downtown Los Angeles. Lummis created one of the most compelling Arts and Crafts images in California by building his house with boulders taken from the nearby arroyo, close to the grove of sycamore trees from which the house takes its name. The house overlooked a large wildflower meadow—an uncontrived garden that was the quintessence of that harmonious naturalness sought by Arts and Crafts advocates. The usable area of the garden was confined to the paved patio around which



Large wildflower meadow of the Lummis house El Alisal, Highland Park. Photograph, *Out West* (1905).

the house was built and an orchard of citrus and fruit trees. The result unmistakably expressed a regional character.

#### IMPORTANCE TO CALIFORNIA

The Arts and Crafts garden in California was a distinct regionalist expression. It shared in the general ideals of garden design elsewhere in the country by creating unpretentious designs out of local materials, in relating buildings to the broader landscape, and in treating garden space as an outdoor room. But it was unique in a number of ways, including the distinctive use of color, the value placed on views, the range of sources and styles, the unique use of the garden room, and, with extensive impact, the reappearance of a number of professional design features in the gardens of that popular California housing type, the bungalow. In these various ways the Arts and Crafts garden in California established a memorable alternative regional identity. However,

like all other attempts to settle this volatile and fragile landscape, it depended on the imposition of cultural order and of imported water.

#### NOTES

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3. Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sacks Sussman, *Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Tradition* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974), 10, 45.
4. Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984), 21-24; Charles E. Beveridge, "Introduction to the Landscape Design Reports: The California Origins of Olmsted's Landscape Design Principles for the Semiarid American West," *The California Frontier, 1863-1865*, ed. Victoria Post Ranney (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 457-60.
5. Charles Augustus Keeler, *The Simple Home* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Co., 1904), 11.
6. Freudenheim and Sussman, *Building with Nature*, 54-73.
7. Keeler, *The Simple Home*, 12.
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# Landscape and Common Culture Since Modernism

*Martha Schwartz*

In this century, landscape architecture has produced a small but well-known cadre of designers such as Roberto Burle-Marx, Garrett Eckbo, Thomas Church, Lawrence Halprin, and Dan Kiley who, aligning themselves with modernist theory, broke from classical and beauxarts traditions. These designers believed that landscape architecture was an art form related to the other visual arts, and that landscape could also serve as a cultural artifact, expressive of contemporary culture and made from modern materials. Although these practitioners could be lumped together as modernists who believe that landscape could and should reflect the needs and values of a modern society, their individual design vocabularies ranged from surrealism to constructivism.

A more recent generation of landscape architects, including Peter Walker, Rich Hoag, George Hargreaves, and myself, practice within the same modernist tradition—but we are also being influenced by (as well as exerting influence upon) the art world. Today the boundary between art and landscape design

has been at least partially effaced. Among this group are Richard Fleischner, Andrew Leicester, Andrea Blum, Elyn Zimmerman, Gary Reivischal, and Mary Miss. This coalition of artists and designers presents an opportunity for landscape to at last be seen again as an aesthetic enterprise and a legitimate art form capable of being judged on formal and intellectual grounds.

Many aspects of modernism still hold promise for today's world (inten-

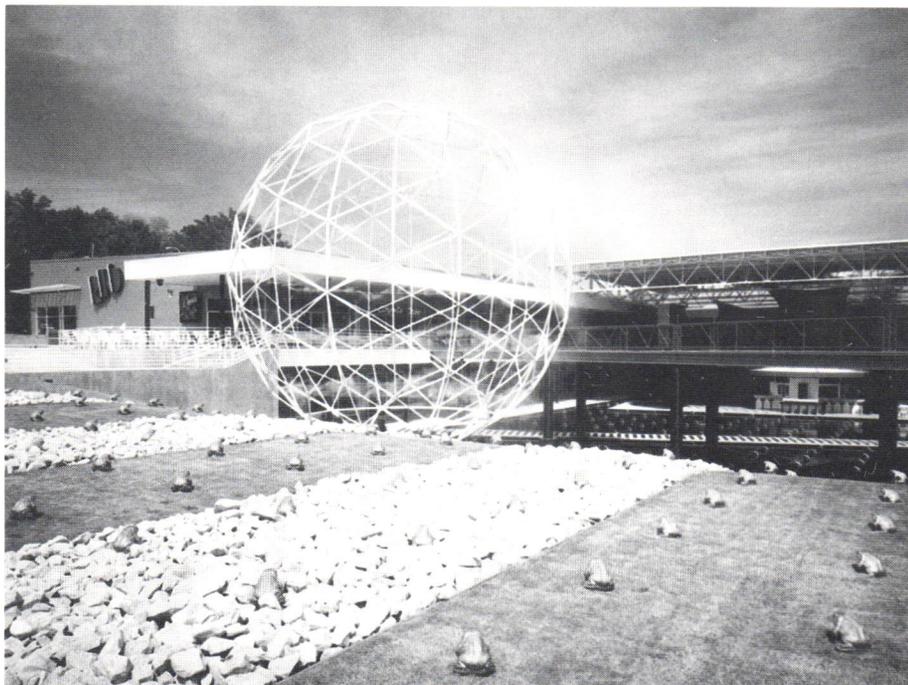
tions such as social egalitarianism, honesty in the use of materials, optimism about the future, and the belief in human rationality), but how have these ideas exhibited themselves in the landscapes of the recent past? While it was based to some degree on environmental improvement, architectural modernism has not been kind to the landscape. A great distinction divides the modernist architect's attitude toward architecture and the modernist architect's attitude toward landscape. Architectural modernism has been remarkably disinterested in issues of collective space, for example, focusing instead on the space within buildings. Nor has it developed a formal attitude toward the built landscape. Instead, this was left as a moral arena, unmanipulated although actually socially utilized. Curiously, even those architects who see buildings as being able to manifest ideas are often antagonistic toward landscapes that display visual or intellectual power. Viable landscapes, those landscapes with obvious form, are perceived as competing with buildings and as being too formally active. To allow the building to 'read' more clearly, content must be drained from the landscape. Although every other aspect of the designed environment from buildings to soap spoons has been seen as fair game by architects, modernism never envisioned the landscape as manufactured space or allowed landscape to address issues of form and composition. Well-designed, affordable manufactured products were a goal of the Bauhaus, but the landscape was to

remain the pure interstitial fabric upon which buildings were placed. It was clearly not a field in which cultural attitudes and ideas could be explored. Exterior space was, and has remained, a moral battleground and until recently has rarely been viewed aesthetically, an attitude that has resulted in a remarkable lack of design talent in the field of landscape architecture during the last three decades. Those interested in design seek their expressions in more fertile fields, such as the visual arts. This, among other factors, has contributed to our degraded visual environment.

The lack of a modernist vision for our manufactured landscape has had a devastating effect on our urban and suburban environments. Architecture's myopic and self-serving attitude towards landscape as the passive, untouched setting for heroic objects, has been disastrous visually and ecologically. Ironically, it has positioned modernist architects comfortably next to those whom

they perceived to be their antagonists, that is, the neoclassicist and historicist landscape architects. Modernist landscape architects have been left out on a limb, isolated by an ironic agreement between the lay person and the modernist architect on the point that the landscape should function environmentally and socially, but not intellectually or aesthetically. Landscape architecture has been in existence as a profession in this country for over a century, and the fact that only a small body of notable work of any intellectual rigor exists after those hundred years attests to the unfertile ground for the proliferation of landscape design ideas.

Many ideas central to modernism are still attractive to me, and thus I distinguish my work from projects by historicist and neoclassicist designers. Of modernism's social agenda, the basic optimism toward the future—where 'good' design can be available to all classes—holds the most power. I view



Rio Shopping Center, Atlanta. The Office of Peter Walker Martha Schwartz. Photo, Rion Rizzo.



King County Jail, Seattle. The Office of Peter Walker Martha Schwartz. Photo, James Fanning.

the manufacturing process not as a limitation but as an opportunity, and I see rationality in a positive light. Great landscapes can no longer be made in the tradition of carved stone and the fountains of Renaissance Europe. Instead they must be made today from concrete, asphalt, and plastic, the stuff with which we build our environment on a daily basis. Nonprecious materials and off-the-shelf items can be used artfully, and with this attitude we can build beautiful landscapes, not only for the rich, who today will no longer pay for precious materials, but also for the middle class, who can't afford them. That we must embrace technology to find the aesthetic opportunities inherent in mass production appears as valid today as it was to the early modernists. While these modernist sentiments are certainly not new attitudes in architecture, landscape architecture has been slow in dealing with the aesthetics of technology, and has evolved a profession based on the romanticizing of the past.

For example, cheap and ubiquitous landscape materials such as asphalt and

concrete are often regarded as lowly and are shunned by developers trying to sell an image of 'quality'. Developers often commit to budgets that can accommodate only lowly materials, although the true (low) value of the project must be hidden from a prospective buyer by attempting to make the product look expensive. The decision to veneer or stamp concrete into stone patterns, for example, ultimately fools no one and simultaneously expresses the lack of value and discomfort with this ruse. It is possible, however, to appreciate asphalt and concrete for what they are—simple, cheap, and malleable—and for their potential beauty when used and maintained properly. This, I believe, is a more realistic and hopeful attitude than the reliance on 'fine' materials applied only superficially.

Having trained as an artist for ten years before entering graduate school in landscape architecture, I was well acquainted with the artists and art movements that had evolved from modernist painting and sculpture. Perhaps these suggest other sources more germane to my thinking than architectural modernism. My initial interest in the landscape came from sculpture made by artists such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Walter DiMaria, and Mary Miss, artists who broke from the tradition of the studio and the commercial New York gallery scene by venturing out into the wilderness to do their work. There they created monumental landscape-inspired sculpture that could not be contained in a gallery or sold for profit. Producing early examples of both conceptual and environmental art, those artists were the bellwethers of a new wave of environmental awareness. They had gone beyond 'modern' art by redefining art as something that was neither a painting to be hung on the wall nor conventional studio sculpture. Art was reinstated as a part of our environment, not as an iso-

lated event accessible only to the effete gallery world.

From making discrete landscape objects to shaping the landscape as an integrated work of art and space seemed to me a completely logical sequence. The next step was to move from the pristine natural environment and apply the same ideas of interaction and intervention to the complexity of the city. I am as energized and challenged by this gritty arena as the early earthwork artists who took inspiration from the untouched landscapes of the American southwest.

My interest as an artist has always been in the mystical quality of geometric forms and their relationships to each other. In order to apply these ideas outdoors, the landscape must be depicted as architectural space so that it is both recognizable and describable. As in architecture, people should derive a sense of orientation in space that produces a subliminal sense of comfort and security. Simple geometric forms, such as circles and squares, are familiar and memorable. To understand the relation-



Becton Dickinson Immunocytometry, San Jose. Schwartz/Smith/Meyer, Inc. Photo, Michael Moran.

ship of one space to another, one must first establish a sense of orientation in order to recognize new juxtapositions or changes. Simple geometries are thus best used in the landscape as mental maps. Given the nature of our built environment, the use of geometry in the landscape is more humane than the disorientation caused by the incessant lumps, bumps, and squiggles of stylized naturalism. Geometry allows us to recognize and place ourselves in space and is more formally sympathetic to architecture. Lastly, it deals with our manufactured environments more honestly; geometry itself is a rational construct and thereby avoids the issue of trying to mask our man-made environments with a thin veneer of naturalism.

During my training in landscape architecture, I began to study the works of minimalist artists such as Robert Irwin, Carl Andre, Richard Long, and Dan Flavin, artists who deal with the description and manipulation of space. As landscape encompasses a much greater field than painting or most sculpture, the effect must be accomplished with an economy of means. In its ability to command large areas of space with very few moves and materials, the work of the minimalist artist is germane to landscape architecture. Michael Heizer collapsed the vast space of a valley by connecting the viewer with the far side of the mesa along a simple bulldozed line. Carl Andre described a column of space above a perfectly flat plane with plates of industrially discarded metal. In a serial piece by Andre, the repetition of objects set on a floor mystically elevates the objects while focusing our attention on the visual potential of the flat plane.

Artists such as Ron Davis, Robert Mangold, Mel Bochner, Frank Stella, John Newman, and Al Held are of particular interest to me in their use of geometry. They explore a range of emotions produced by particular visual

relationships and delve into the mysticisms and symbolisms inherent to geometry. Mangold surprises us through his warping and stretching of perfect form, as Andre Le Nôtre's plans did: first perceived as rational designs, they also reveal arbitrary and unpredictable relationships.

The Pop artists—Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg—interest me for their concern with banal, everyday objects and common materials. Insightful, poignant, and sympathetic to our common culture, they feed upon its energy and rawness. I respond positively to the hard-edged humor with which they illuminate the stuff of our everyday lives.

If one wishes to work on the cutting edge in either fine art or design, one must be informed of developments in the world of painting and sculpture. Ideas surface more quickly in painting and sculpture than in architecture or landscape architecture, due to the many factors including the immediacy of the media and the relatively low investment of money required to exploit an idea.

Ideas must be challenged in order to prove their viability in a culture. Art—such as that produced by Jeff Koons, Gordon Matta-Clark, Cindy Sherman, or Vito Acconci—may be important only in that it creates discussion and, in the end, critical self-reflection. Not every work of art or landscape need be a timeless masterpiece. More importantly, provocative art and design foster an atmosphere of growth by questioning and by challenging the established standards.

In conclusion, the modernist architect's break from the beauxarts tradition and neoclassicism was an important event for landscape architecture. As architects had to shed the old in order to develop an aesthetic and philosophical stance to deal with the social needs of post-World War I Europe, we must now shed our romance with our wilder-

ness heritage and the English landscape in order to deal effectively with our expanding urban- and suburbanization. The nostalgia for the (imagined) English countryside (idealized in English landscape and Hudson River School painting) has prevented us from seeing our landscape as it truly is and inhibited the evolution of an approach to landscape appropriate to urbanization. We shake our heads at collective disgust in the ugliness of our manmade environments, and yet we do little to fully consider the scope of the problem or its possible solution. To improve the visual blight, we place diminutive mounds in our median strips and at the bases of our buildings. Unthinkingly, we dredge up the rolling English countryside like a universal balm, without questioning its appropriateness or viability in today's environments. Our profession's narrow and moralistic view of what constitutes a 'correct' landscape has disallowed the questioning of this particular aesthetic and has hampered the exploration of other ideas and solutions that might address the problems of increased urbanization. While our culture professes to be repelled by what and how we build, we still have been unable to require other formal vocabularies than those established by economic values, or to break from an ingrained romantic attitude toward our landscape.

Landscape architecture, as a field, has barely touched upon the questions raised by modernism. To many practitioners, modernism and its attendant growth and embrace of technology are viewed as the cause of the degradation of our natural environment. There continues, however, to be a steady stream of landscape designers working within, and perhaps beyond, the modernist tradition, designers who search for meaningful relationships between our natural and built environments, and who work less with romantic sentiment than eyes opened to the world around them.



The Citadel, Los Angeles. Schwartz/Smith/Meyer, Inc. Photo, Jay Venezia.

## NOTE

The design team for the Rio Shopping Center was Martha Schwartz, Doug Findlay, David Meyer, Martin Poirier, Ken Smith, and David Walker.

*Reprinted with permission from Mark Treib, ed., Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review (The MIT Press, 1992).*

# Seaside Broadside

*John Field, FAIA*

A generation ago, many Americans began to fear a grim future for the nation's cities, and in response, there was a massive movement to the suburbs during the post-World War II decades. No one fleeing could have foreseen the similar decline of the nation's suburbs in the 1980s.

The degeneration of suburban life affects the traditional pre-World War II suburbs—those commuter towns outside Boston, New York, or Chicago that spread out from earlier villages with their prototypical 'main streets'—as well as the sprawling newer suburbs, where housing tracts and freeways engulfed farmland and ranches yet never developed any community focal points other than their shopping centers. Typical of this pattern of growth are Houston, San Jose, and the San Fernando Valley adjacent to Los Angeles.

Where we live has lost its identity and with that has gone the citizen's sense of social responsibility, yet the comforting feeling of belonging to a larger community beyond an immediate circle of friends is essential in a 'human' environment. The fact is that all American cities and suburbs are spreading far more than the population is increasing. It seems obvious that the destruction of the environment is caused by the subdivision of the countryside rather than by the growth of cities. We need a different kind of urban development in order to provide housing that departs from the subdivision forms of the last fifty years. We must be flexible enough to adapt to the inevitable economic, social, and technological changes that the future will bring, without abandoning what we have already built.

City planning in the United States functions like it did in competing dukedoms of the Middle Ages, but now each socio-political faction demands its share. So politicized is the process that the only goal, finally, is to find consensus on larger issues. This leaves a staff occupied with an endless codifying of small decisions about the design of buildings rather than dealing with the urban experience. Implementing design controls is institutionalizing the whimsy of consensus.

The planning controversies we see springing up across America involving 'no growth' are the result of the public changing its mind. Or perhaps, having gotten what it asked for, the public doesn't want to sacrifice the quality of lifestyle to the extent that would be required. Growth is not the issue: it is the whipping boy. Population increase is one of the normal conditions of a healthy city, and such change is essential to the vitality of any urban community. City planners cannot change the socio-economic forces that affect the nation's rate of population growth. We already have a housing shortage, and population increases, though small, seem inevitable for the near future in the United States. Therefore, growth controls in one location will not stop development as a whole; they will only drive up house prices in the desirable but protected locales and shift the pressure to other temporarily less restrictive areas.

Unfortunately, at present, the most popular idea for dealing with these issues and for planning our future is based on a Ralph Lauren-like notion of creating a past that almost no one ever had. That concept is based on the 'tradi-

tional small town'. This is typified by Seaside, Florida, a remote coastal resort community with design roots in Andrew Jackson Downing's carpenter Gothic architecture of 1840. But Seaside is hardly a serious solution to today's suburban challenges or tomorrow's metropolitan growth, even if planners say it is the 'suburb of the future'. We don't need another suburb.

Seaside can be applauded, however, for the many things that it is not. Seaside is not based on an arbitrary architectural exhibitionism, such as individual high-rises penetrating empty expanses of green grass. It creates a fabric of low-scale roofs with bay windows in a variety of shapes organized by the repetition of open porches where people are supposed to sit—in rockers, we assume.

Seaside is not based on the notion of the car as its primary internal transportation system. Although it is small, Seaside demonstrates that an important part of what we call 'livable' means communities primarily for people, where cars are merely servants. Considering the American preoccupation with the car, it is little wonder that design in our cities has focused more on the sequence of experiences possible moving in a car than on the experiences of walking on two feet. Walking is an essential part of feeling connected to your community. At Seaside, some streets are designed for pedestrians only. The streets for cars are narrower than normal, which creates a more pleasing pedestrian scale and slows down through-traffic but does not hinder service or emergency vehicles. However, in spite of Seaside's skillful handling of traffic within the community, the plan ironically demands that its full-time residents use their automobiles, as in most suburbs, because it is a subdivision without a real city. Unless these residents work at the town center grocery or drug store or are retired, they simply must have a car to reach jobs

outside the community. In the same way, they need a car to carry out most shopping errands.

Architects and planners praise Seaside as the ideal suburb and a model for metropolitan growth. Indeed, the Seaside example is now being copied for numerous other new communities. Alas, while its details have merit, Seaside's premise is faulty. Such a community is still based on the American Dream of a single-family house separated from neighbors on its own lot—planned as one of a never-ending series of new suburbs. Seaside is only one more subdivision on the landscape, spread out low and wide, quite separate from an adequate base of jobs and shopping. Most significantly, it is impractical and unaffordable for most Americans, even though it is appealing in the same way that a home furnishings store window is. Seaside is essentially yet one more elitist concept for housing in the long line of so-called 'innovations'.

Better suburbs like Pullman outside Chicago, or Forest Hills Gardens in Queens, which evolved from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century escape from the city, work as small experiments, but endlessly extending them horizontally has destroyed the essence of their merit. Instead of retreating into a fantasy past, Americans will have to create a new vision and new patterns of more dense development in order to achieve more functional, more livable, and more human metropolitan living—making use of concepts that include rather than ignore the given realities of our cities and suburbs.

California is experiencing a particular urgency, as the air becomes evermore polluted, while the cars multiply, and the road system becomes overloaded even as it extends. Since California has led the way in carving up the landscape into 'nowhere' subdivisions, it could also lead the way in discovering what comes next.

# American Boulevard: The Wilshire Project

Doug Suisman  
Roundtable One

Doug Suisman, Director of Public Works Associates in Los Angeles and author of *Los Angeles Boulevard*, received grants in 1991 from the NEA and the Graham Foundation to produce a book on urbanism in Southern California. As a means of posing broad questions about Los Angeles in order to stimulate further inquiry, Suisman organized a series of five roundtable discussions focusing on Wilshire Boulevard, arguably the region's preeminent street. More than thirty individuals participated, including designers, planners, anthropologists, and developers. The following is excerpted from Roundtable One. The discussion raised several themes that were revisited in subsequent roundtables: the nature of Wilshire as an urban artifact, the extent of design versus happenstance in its development, the changing social character of its buildings and neighborhoods, and the prospects for transformation, both physical and social. It should be noted that the discussions took place five months prior to the civil disturbances in Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup>

The participants of Roundtable One were: Teresa Caldeira, a social anthropologist at Cebrap, São Paulo and Berkeley; Jim Holston, a social anthropologist at U.C. San Diego; Rex Lotery, Director of the Urban Innovations Group (UIG) at U.C.L.A.; Barton Phelps, AIA, architect and author of a design study on the Santa Monica Freeway entitled "Corridors" (published in

*this Architecture California*); Lance Robbins, a developer specializing in affordable rehab housing in Wilshire Center. Tulasi Srinivas was the research assistant for the project.

Suisman: When Los Angeles first burst out of downtown because of the automobile, Wilshire Boulevard was where the city went. Reyner Banham called it "the world's first linear downtown." The area from Bullocks Wilshire all the way to Beverly Hills was known in the 1930s and 1940s as the *Fifth Avenue of the West*, because all the prestigious shops were located along that five-mile stretch. The sidewalks were crowded with shoppers, and the boulevard was crowded with slow moving cars. The two went hand in hand, like a broad New York avenue, heavy with car traffic, but dominated by pedestrians.

Phelps: I assume it originally had a trolley car down it?



Wilshire Boulevard as the *Fifth Avenue of the West*, street life in front of Bullock's Wilshire.

*Suisman:* Actually, in Gaylord Wilshire's founding agreement with the city, which concerned only a few blocks of what is now *Wilshire*, it was stipulated that there never be trucks or trains on the boulevard. The street was intended to be elegant and *residential*. When the city later brought in the Olmsted firm to study the city's traffic patterns, they recommended that Wilshire be widened to 200 feet, and become a monumental residential parkway, on the order of the *Avenue Foch* in Paris. However, streetcars eventually were introduced and ran along *Wilshire*. It became intensely commercial, especially in the *Miracle Mile* district. Even there, however, the developer took his fight all the way to the state Supreme Court to overcome the original zoning restrictions against commercial use.

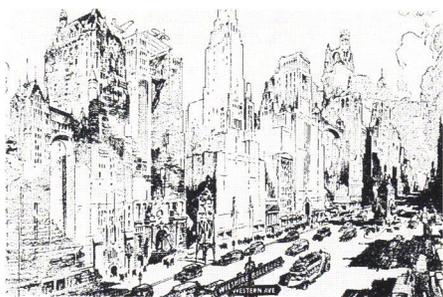
*Holston:* One of the things that's so striking about the brazen self-promotion of L.A. is the invention of these names: *Fifth Avenue of the West*—it had nothing to do with *Fifth Avenue* really. The *Miracle Mile*—give me a break! The notion that by naming it we'll make it so is undisguised nominalism.

*Robbins:* There was a time in the city's history when the name *Miracle Mile* fit. To some extent, the created image becomes self-fulfilling. With *Wilshire*, the question is whether the sun has set on those days, and whether a renaissance is even possible.

*Suisman:* Perhaps we should simply assert that it *was* the preeminent boulevard, and further, that it *ought to be* once again. Would this be nostalgia?

*Lotery:* It remains the preeminent boulevard in Los Angeles, no other comes close to it, particularly with respect to its *diversity*. It's not only commercial and retail, it's residential.

*Suisman:* Is it useful to frame the question in those terms, that *Wilshire* remains preeminent, albeit somewhat irregularly, and therefore deserves special attention? Or should we be concen-



A 1927 proposal for Wilshire Boulevard, *LA Times*.

trating on the *Lankershims* and the *Picos*—the really generic boulevards—and look at their genetic codes?

*Phelps:* I think *Wilshire* is different. I'd like to go back to the *Miracle Mile*. I think the street has a strong *symbolic* function. I'm an architect with only five people in my office, and yet I can say I have an entire floor on *Wilshire Boulevard*. The reason is that the tower on *Wilshire* in which I am located only has 1300 square feet per floor. The only reason for building the tower was to hold up the sign that announced the Desmond's department store occupying the ground floor. In 1928, it was the first tower on the *Miracle Mile*. The department store stretched along the whole length of the block, with the tower in the middle, and big glass windows at the corners on the second floor, so you could do a kind of drive-by window shopping. It was meant as a modified version of a building you'd find on a New York boulevard, plunked down in the middle of a bean field. In my mind this is the *miraculous* part.

*Holston:* That's the 'miracle'! That's what I was trying to find out. It reminds me of imperial Roman planning techniques, like you find at Timgad, where a perimeter is defined, and streets are all laid out before anything is actually built. There's something quite similar with *Wilshire*, defining something in principle, in plan. The power is a symbolic one: 'something

will be here, and it will be great'. But in the end, *Wilshire* ends up being an enormous string, because it doesn't have enough density. We should probably talk about lots of 'Wilshires'; talking about the identity of the whole misses the fate of the boulevard.

*Lotery*: I think the unique thing about *Wilshire* is that, yes, it is a string, but a string strung with pearls. And each one is highly identifiable. There is *Wilshire Center*, *Miracle Mile*, *Beverly Hills*, where it becomes 'Main Street', as it does in several places. It is also a major transportation artery, the most important one in Los Angeles aside from the freeways. The stretch passing through Westwood is the most heavily-traveled surface street in all of Los Angeles, and perhaps in the world. The statistics are awesome.

*Phelps*: Here in the *Miracle Mile*, there's probably much less traffic than on other boulevards.

*Lotery*: Yes, that's true. *Wilshire* also has very clear divisions of open space. In some parts it still *is* fields. Its variety is extraordinary.

*Phelps*: It also exemplifies what Robert Venturi called 'hyper-proximity', which means things being closer together than they're supposed to be. On *Wilshire* in Westwood, you can go into the backyard of a one-story house and find yourself within a hundred feet of a twenty-five-story apartment building on the boulevard. When you approach from the side streets, it's almost as if you turn the corner and enter a fantasy stage set of a big city.

*Holston*: A small town main street.

*Robbins*: Growing up here, I always loved walking one block from the neighborhoods into the excitement of 'Condo Canyon'. It makes L.A. one of the more livable big cities in the world: You can overwhelm your senses one moment, and then quickly retreat into a suburban ambience only a very short distance away.

*Suisman*: I go back to the question: Are there any common interests for the seventeen miles? Would anyone care about *Wilshire's* symbolic role in the life of the city? Would anyone view it as a unity, or will it always be a series of fragments?

*Lotery*: That's exactly the point. It has continuity with respect to transportation, but discontinuity with respect to communities. And I think the discontinuity may finally be more important.

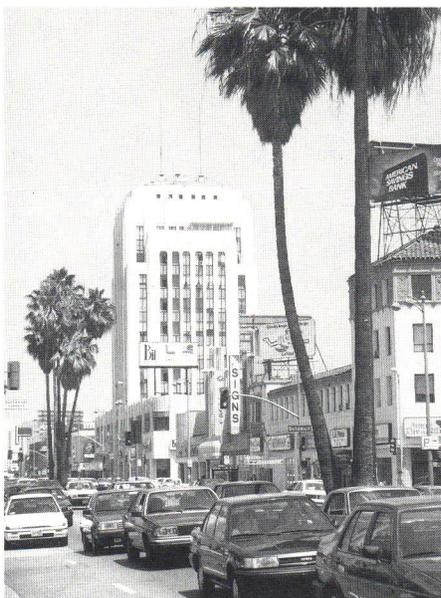
*Suisman*: But does it really have transportation continuity? I always think only bus drivers and architects ever drive the entire length.

*Lotery*: No, it doesn't have that kind of continuity, but it is a major east-west carrier. And it is related to the regional freeway system.

*Holston*: Isn't there an opposition between that larger *regional* function and the needs of *local* clusters along *Wilshire*?

*Lotery*: Absolutely. But that's not unique to *Wilshire*.

*Suisman*: In fact a fundamental characteristic of the modern automobile



The Desmond building in the *Miracle Mile*.



'Condo Canyon', *Wilshire* in Westwood.

street is the perpetual conflict between its role as a transportation corridor and its role as an urban place. In Los Angeles, the corridor function wins almost every time.

*Lotery:* In our UIG study regarding the character of the corridor, we saw *Wilshire* as the 'cool', 'corporate' street, while *6th Street* (running parallel to *Wilshire*) was the 'warm' or 'hot' street. We called that a 'coupler'. When we looked historically at other cities, whether Mexico City, or New York with *Madison* and *Park Avenues*, we saw this pattern: one street carried the heavy traffic and the corporate office towers, while the other was more pedestrian oriented, with housing, movie theaters, restaurants, and shops. It still carried considerable traffic, but less than the other street.

*Holston:* One of the things that perplexes me about *Wilshire* as a space is that the overall corridor is remarkably thin, but the street itself is so wide: for me, it is disqualified as an interesting urban space. It loses any figural definition.

*Phelps:* I think that is precisely the identifying characteristic of the *American* main street. People used to build streets with the idea that the importance of the town was related to the width of the main street. In America, the assumption was always that the town would eventually fill out that width, but in many places that didn't happen. As a symbolic armature, *Wilshire* seems to

allow many different kinds of development: the office district in Westwood, the residential canyon towards *Beverly Glen*, the parkway in the *Miracle Mile* and *Park Mile* areas. I keep thinking that this thing we can't quite put our fingers on—this symbolic, iconic 'city-but-not-city' quality—is actually the most valuable thing about *Wilshire*. It allows anything you put along it to reinforce that sort of urban interpretation. Its narrow thread of urbanism then becomes available to countless developers. One analytical tool might be to see how the couplets identified by UIG *vary* along *Wilshire*.

*Suisman:* Of course we could look at various segments and say, you can do a little here and a little there, let's bring trendy restaurants and people will show up. But in the larger picture, does it make any sense to emphasize the symbolic or iconographic quality of *Wilshire as a whole*, to argue that *Wilshire* should be *the* street that leads the way in new solutions to some of the city's urban problems: better transportation balance, environmental appropriateness, and so forth? Is that a ridiculous dream for *Wilshire*? Will it happen instead in pockets all over the city?

*Caldeira:* On the question of whether there is some *unity* to *Wilshire*: it can be a model for a very limited type of space. Doug, you have talked about returning to L.A. and feeling that this was not after all going to fulfill the dream of the multi-cultural city in which people of different backgrounds live together and tolerate each other. If you look at *Wilshire*, you don't see anything of the city's multiculturalism on the street. This makes it unique to the city. You could think of it as representing one type of use, one type of community. It could be understood to represent this one kind of unity.

*Suisman:* You mean high-prestige corporate use?

*Caldeira:* That's it.

*Suisman:* That's a pretty limited role for *Wilshire*.

*Caldeira:* Yes, I think it is limited. Because I don't see any of the other cultures manifested on *Wilshire*.

*Suisman:* But could they be?

*Robbins:* They do appear, if you're willing to define *Wilshire Boulevard* as the whole corridor and not just the street itself. It is still the main street of Los Angeles, and gives legitimacy to whatever's near it. It ties together, literally, the communities that are along it.

*Suisman:* Which communities?

*Robbins:* Westlake, for example, which I call the new 'port of entry' for the city. It's the first place many new immigrants go. I would guess over half the tenants are Mexican, with some Guatemalans and Salvadorans. The area is one of the most heterogeneous in the world, if you consider the Latino populations, the Koreans, the Black and Anglo populations—not to mention the potential for other groups, given low housing costs and the area's transportation assets. It's a unique urban opportunity, and still relatively livable, compared to other urban areas of equivalent socioeconomic character. As for the tensions between the ethnic groups, I think the press overblows it because it sells papers. Given the amount of interaction between these groups, I think there's an amazingly small amount of violence.

*Caldeira:* But, if *Wilshire* itself is going to represent something unifying in the city, won't that most likely be the unity of the dominant culture?

*Suisman:* Let me propose an alternative reading. At the Pacific Palisades, the Lebanese gather. At *Westwood*, Iranians. At *Fairfax*, Jews. At *Crenshaw*, the Black middle class. At *Western*, Koreans. At *Alvarado*, Salvadorans. And so forth. One could conceive of *Wilshire* as cutting through these communities.

*Phelps:* A theme park?

*Suisman:* Well, yes, it might end up as an ethnic theme park.

*Caldeira:* But those groups are not presently visible.

*Suisman:* Perhaps they could be made visible. Is that something you could do? Could *Wilshire* be the street where all these groups find some sense of symbolic identification?

*Robbins:* That might require buying a medium-to-high-rise building, and that much capital would suggest that the reading would still be Anglo.

*Phelps:* Yet high-rise buildings look the same in Mexico City.

*Lotery:* The buying of large buildings is already happening in Koreatown.

*Holston:* The image that you give is of a smorgasbord of ethnic identities. There's something troubling about that.

*Suisman:* Because it seems artificial or patronizing?

*Holston:* I'm not sure. Is identity something you can design for?

*Suisman:* Suppose you commission a series of public art projects that are intended to reinforce that new identity.

*Holston:* Is this something that the various ethnic groups actually want? Many Anglos assume this, but some groups are mainly seeking assimilation. Meanwhile, L.A. is one of the most segregated cities I have ever lived in.

*Robbins:* By class.

*Holston:* By class, and by race.

*Phelps:* I believe that statistics show it as the most racially segregated city in the United States.



MacArthur Park in the Westlake area.

*Holston:* The linear boulevards contribute to it. Their dimensions create a cordon effect, cordoning off particular areas. L.A. has been incredibly 'successful' at keeping groups apart. I don't see much to suggest that it's going to change. So if you want to think about the *unity* of this boulevard, you have to keep in mind this intense desire to segregate.

*Suisman:* We discussed the popularity of Westwood and the Third Street Promenade. And they are pretty ethnically mixed, albeit not particularly mixed by class.

*Holston:* But *class* is the big thing.

*Suisman:* Wilshire Center has quite a class mix.

*Holston:* From nine to five. And that mixture is very controlled under the watchful eye of corporate America. We can argue about whether people want to be with other people. But we live in a time of the technologies of supervision, enclosed communities. I'm doubtful.

*Phelps:* In terms of neighborhood identification, it took me a long time to realize that many people in Los Angeles really didn't have a civic consciousness beyond their local neighborhood. You tend to know only five or six blocks on either side of where you live or work. The growing infrastructural problems of Los Angeles—air, water, traffic—are so big that people are terrified. They will do anything to not think about it. And one of the great ways of not thinking about it is to get very excited about your own neighborhood, or your own street. You get really protective, form an organization, and get very nasty about your neighborhood's future, because that you can see, that you can control. But who knows where that sewage is going? So the new energy behind the 'neighborhood' movement is, I believe, essentially paranoid.

*Suisman:* Yes, such neighborhoods can become like medieval enclaves.

*Caldeira:* I think what these people don't want to think about is the heterogeneity and multiculturalism of the city, because most of those 'local' identities are pretty homogeneous. A neighborhood is the largest area that you can keep homogeneous. This creation of segregation occurs in many big cities. In São Paulo this is absolutely clear in terms of class. The city grew, and what followed was segregation. And the same is true in New York or San Francisco. Instead of growing tolerance, you'll see more and more segregation.

*Robbins:* No one's denying that ethnocentrism exists, that people will pay to be in the kind of neighborhood they want. But in the extremely diverse area of *Wilshire Center* where I'm working, I've seen a lot less conflict than I thought I would. Latinos and the Koreans more or less get along.

*Suisman:* Let's assume for the moment that people will almost universally segregate themselves in cities by class, race, or ethnicity. Two questions then arise. What is the scale of the segregation? We know, for example, that it can be block by block, based on residential patterns. What that means is that interaction still occurs, but that there are clear boundaries. In L.A. one of the reasons segregation is so complete is because of the city's scale, meaning that most interactions require a trip in the car, which reinforces the separation. If we accept this tendency—maybe it's okay, maybe it reinforces a sense of identity within the metropolis—isn't the goal then still to encourage contact with 'the other', the other class, the other ethnic group, and so forth? In what place does that contact occur? And for what kinds of activities? Is it enough to live in separate places, but shop together? Or to live and shop separately, but all go to a parade or a sporting event together?

*Phelps:* Does this situation give new importance to symbols of shared under-

standing? I would propose that *Wilshire Boulevard* is a *monument*. And a useful and necessary monument, because it allows for a shared understanding of the landscape of the city.

*Holston*: Beyond the freeway system, Los Angeles really doesn't have a visual identity as a city. The unity of the boulevards is really what the city is. There are sports teams and stadiums, and a lot of neighborhood enclaves, but not much else. So if you're thinking about the identity of *Wilshire*, and that's your project and your commitment, you come back to its value as a *symbol* of 'city' in a place that is pretty anti-city.

*Phelps*: I have to say I disagree with you rather ardently, in your limited definition of the city. I don't see the word city as having been so defined that there are no new chapters in its existence. If you start with the development of the American landscape, the Jeffersonian grid, the idea of wholesale ownership of small pieces of private property, and the *temporariness* of the landscape—which is perhaps *the* distinguishing American characteristic: 'trash it and move on'—you produce this kind of city. Our older cities were generated

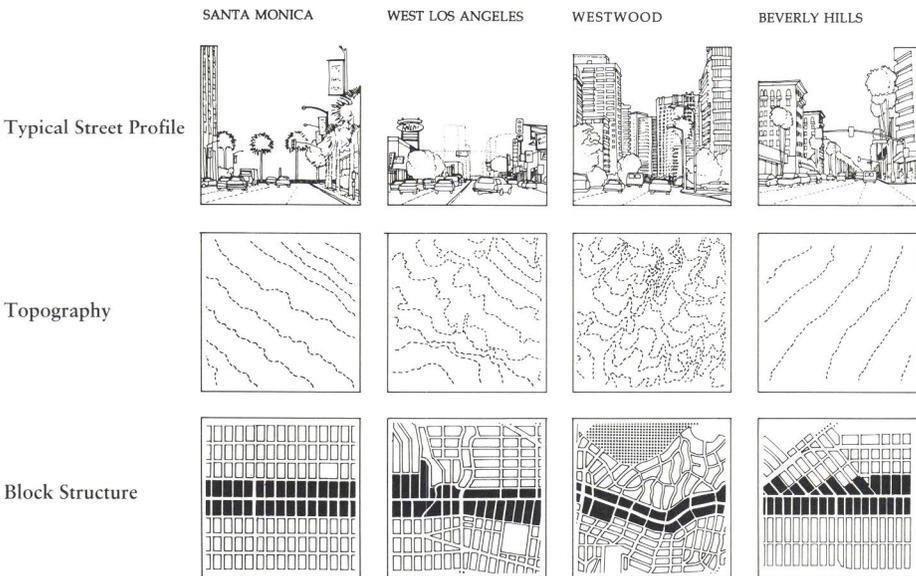
by non-American imprints. But Los Angeles offers the biggest collection of 'typical traits' of the American city of the twentieth century. The twentieth century developments around Boston and New York look much like L.A.

*Holston*: But those aren't cities. That's suburbia.

*Phelps*: Okay. Then let's define your use of the term, city, which has to do with an established, Western notion.

*Holston*: No, it has to do with a political entity.

*Phelps*: All I'm saying is that if we talk about *Wilshire* as a kind of street that is useful to this *new* kind of city, then we probably have to talk about it differently, not as a traditional boulevard of a traditional city. At the bottom of this is the question of whether we're dealing with a *cultural anachronism*. What's the origin of this street? I think you have to go back to the nineteenth century French boulevard, which is primarily a symbolic divider of a city, and which is so clearly understood in its use that people know what to wear on it and which way to walk when they are there. It is successfully policed, every house has a number on it, it's a totally



controlled environment. This became something that all cities had to have. This is what J.B. Jackson would call the ‘Renaissance landscape’, with its clear division of public and private. You step out of your door onto the street, and you’re in the public realm. This is distinguished from the medieval city, where you lived and ran your business in the street. And now, we have a confused landscape, with its vestigial connections to the Renaissance version. So the question that faces us is whether the boulevard is a *monument* that gets preserved—a historic relic of some value or something else to be used differently. For example, when people start to sleep in it, we must acknowledge that it has been taken over again and becomes part of what you might call the public realm.

*Suisman:* You mean the way the homeless sleep there?

*Phelps:* No, I meant in the medieval sense, where life is lived in the street. Is there a way of reintroducing a kind of public value to *Wilshire*, above and beyond its symbolic value, but in a new sense, an anticipation of the future without nostalgia for the Renaissance—or medieval—past?

*Suisman:* The larger question is, what public value, what public life would you locate there?

*Phelps:* And is it proper for anyone to propose it, rather than have it simply occur in the American way: wherever it needs to happen, make it happen. From a formalist point of view, then, is the job to support the traditional boulevard icon, or is it to develop new uses for an icon that has lost its value.

*Suisman:* Clearly, it has to be the latter. The physical space of the city is not going to disappear, but it is going to be transformed, it is already in the process of transforming. And we have to imagine other uses, other ways of thinking about it.

NOTE

1. Doug Suisman, *Los Angeles Boulevard* (Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urbanism; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). This dialogue is excerpted from the working manuscript of “American Boulevard: The Wilshire Project.” © Public Works Associates. The complete transcripts for all five roundtable discussions are available from Public Works Associates, 506 S. Fuller Avenue, Los Angeles, CA (213) 965-1332.

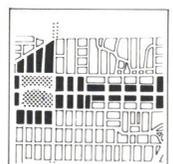
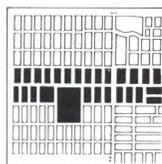
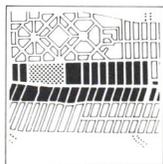
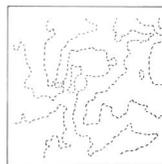
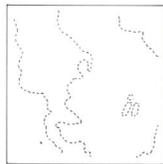
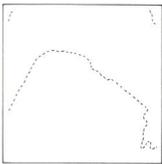
SAN VICENTE

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WILSHIRE CENTER

OLD ORANGE STREET



# Corridor: The Highspeed Roadway as Generator of New Urban Form

Barton Phelps, AIA

*A landscape without visible signs of political history is a landscape without memory or forethought. We are inclined in America to think that the value of monuments is simply to remind us of origins. They are much more valuable as reminders of long-range, collective purpose, of goals and objectives and principles. As such, even the least slightly of monuments gives a landscape beauty and dignity and keeps the collective memory alive.*

J. B. Jackson

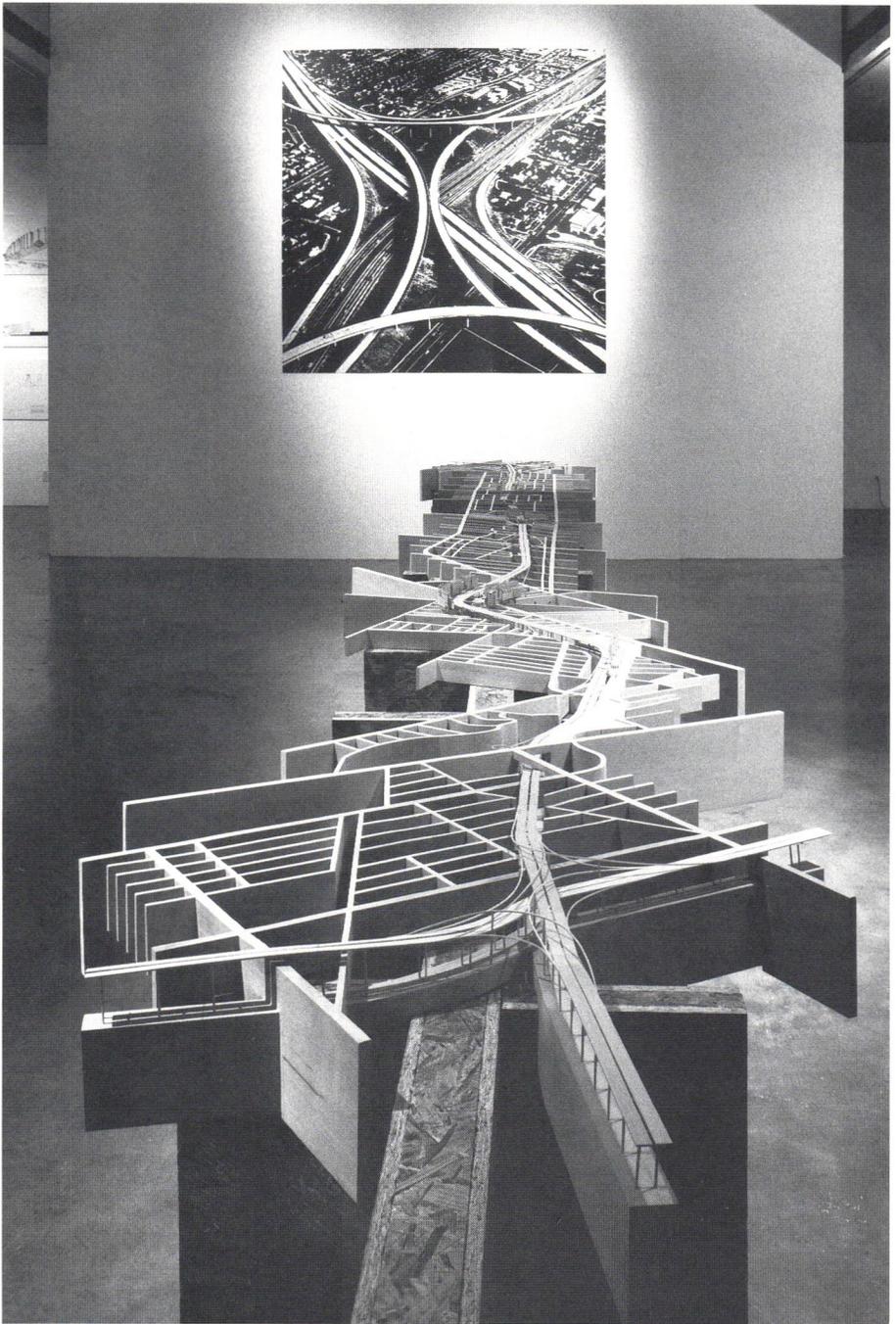
In his elegant essay, “Concluding with Landscapes,”<sup>1</sup> cultural geographer J.B. Jackson draws an abstract distinction between the messy, ad hoc use of the medieval European landscape (“Landscape One”) and the clear physical and social ordering of public and private space that developed during the Renaissance and led to the urban formalisms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (“Landscape Two”). It is the latter, Jackson suggests, that Americans, and American architects in particular, have persistently admired despite its foreignness to an American landscape that he has shown to be distinguished mostly by the signs of temporary and historically “conscienceless” use. In the remarkable conclusion to his essay, Jackson finds that Renaissance concepts of ordering had only a brief impact in the United States and that the American landscape we encounter today derives from the topography of late medieval England with which the earliest settlers

were familiar. What he calls our “Landscape Three,” Jackson believes, has more in common with Landscape One than with Landscape Two.

If Jackson’s observations seem to seriously question the overall relevance of design, they can also be seen, perhaps more positively from the architect’s perspective, to underscore the value of recognizing the significance of periodic urban transformations and the usefulness of analyzing the often unconventional arrangements that they produce.

In California, twentieth century changes in transportation—in particular the supremacy of private cars and trucks and the accommodation by means of elaborate highway engineering of their potential for random and high-speed movement—played a key role in shaping a uniquely complete version of Landscape Three, undiluted by previous urban forms. With this approach, Los Angeles can be seen as a superbly equipped environmental laboratory—the largest (and most repetitive) collection of those commonplace, ‘undesigned’ urban landscape events that have come to characterize the twentieth century development of American cities, most of which are now more like Los Angeles than their citizens may choose to admit.

One indication of the radical transformation caused by the construction of the Los Angeles freeway system some thirty years ago is the difficulty we now encounter in imagining the landscape of Los Angeles without it. Freeway construction photos from the early sixties



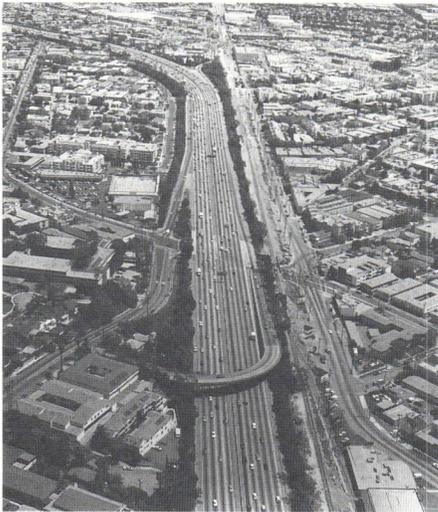
*Corridor* installation, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, 1992.

remind us of the enormity of its physical impact as well as the seemingly arbitrary disruption brought about by

its superimposition over a fully-developed urban/suburban grid. Harder to grasp now is how the advent of the

freeway fundamentally changed the way in which we understand the city.

Before the colossal pattern of elegantly engineered roadways was imprinted over the small scale neighborhoods through which it passes, residents depended on trolley lines and what we now call 'surface' streets to structure their reckoning of the city. Because most building was kept low, the system of roads and streets was more diagrammatic than monumental and it was still useful (and easy) to know the names of neighborhoods through which one needed to pass on a trip, for they were posted on street signs across town. This old-fashioned intimacy with places in Los Angeles was obliterated by the freeway system, reducing the names of neighborhoods and the boundaries between them to local lore and obscur-



Beginning at Motor Avenue, Exposition Boulevard parallels a mile-long stretch of the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way until making its most pronounced swerve, to the northeast, at Robertson. Eighty feet wide, vacant, and located well below the roadway, this strip provides one of the most promising sites for redevelopment in the Corridor. The Exposition strip marks a shift from the Cheviot Hills street grid to that of the Palms/Culver City area. The four 300 foot-long blocks at the center of the site that curved to accommodate this shift were severed by construction of the roadway.

ing their relations to each other. Now, freeway exit signs define important locations and they do so in terms of major cross streets. Newcomers receive seemingly arbitrary instructions to turn "right" or "left" as a first direction upon returning to the pre-freeway streetscape. *Movement* through the city has become abstract and separate from *experience* in the life of the street.

Dense parkway planting, intended to soften the juxtaposition of two different scales of building, results in a remarkable duality between the experience of the roadway and that of the bordering streets. The striking clarity of engineering thought that created the hyperproximity of suburban backyards and fourteen lane roadways can now be perceived only from the air. Thus, the monumental formal implications of the roadway, for the most part, go unnoticed.

Functionally, an exponential increase in the volume of traffic has lessened the promise of dependably efficient automobile travel and rendered the residual condition at street level even less tenable. There, a noisy, fractured landscape of *cul-de-sac* streets that still seem only recently severed, ugly and ineffective noise barriers, daunting (even dangerous) pedestrian bridges and tunnels, and overgrown plantings stretch hundreds of miles throughout the city. Citizen concern focuses on protecting neighborhoods along the corridor and even reconnecting them across the roadway. Stripped of novelty, the high speed roadway has become a common, powerfully definitive feature of the landscape of the 'horizontal', car-oriented city. But a revisionist examination of those all-too-familiar urban conditions—'unresolved' by urban design standards—that result from the superimposition of the freeway suggests the possibility that new building types and collective forms could be used to reclaim neighborhood identity

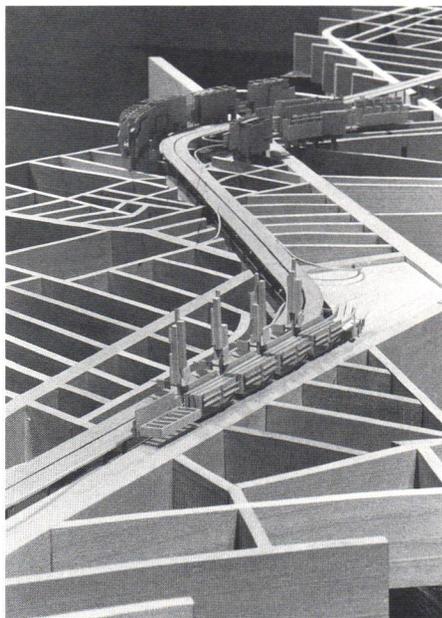
and even reconnect freeway drivers with the places they roll by.

Preliminary research conducted in 1988 with students at the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, indicates that, for reasons of cost and political complexity, major freeway expansion in Los Angeles is generally unlikely. No-growth activity in established neighborhoods, an encouraging Cal-Trans air rights leasing program, the lack of clear planning policy, and the record of recent speculative building work together to suggest rather than the land comprising freeway corridors is likely to attract intense and incoherent development.

A 9.4 mile stretch of the Santa Monica Freeway between the San Diego and Harbor Freeways was selected for study because in addition to its status as the most heavily traveled roadway in the world, it displays an impressively varied design as it slices over and through a broad range of topographical and neighborhood conditions: Applying rudimentary procedures of architectural analysis and using plans and sections of the roadway to permit figure-ground mapping of surrounding conditions, it is possible to distinguish the layered phenomenal, formal, and political implications of this freeway landscape. Our 1991 exhibition *Corridor: The Highspeed Roadway as Generator of New Urban Form* represents a first attempt to analyze and reconfigure prominent edges of the vast, often suburban, fabric that lies along the right-of-way of the freeway system. It accepts the freeway as a meaningful monumental form and takes its overlay on the city as a stimulus for the development of richer, more comprehensible urban landscape—one that responds to the scale of the roadway and its formalizing potential for the city around it.

Organized into four parts, the exhibition began by documenting the trans-

formation of the pre-freeway city. “Superimposition: Building the Roadway” compared construction photos from the early 1960s with views of the same sites today. The second part, “Duality Unresolved: Conditions and Possibilities,” was composed of a sequence of slides showing present conditions. These were grouped as experiential types: “The Ride,” “Hyperproximity,” “Disruption,” “Vacant Rooms,” and “Vestigial Armatures.” The latter posed the formative potential of the freeway artifact by showing lively public spaces in Italy that were shaped by the foundations of long-gone Roman structures. In Part Three, “Ways of Looking at a Freeway,” differing graphic representations of the corridor were combined with provocative quotations from well-known observers of the landscape. “On and Off,” “The Ride,” “Topography,” “Local Conditions,” “Zoning,” and “Disruption” suggested alternative



The Lateral Incident “Exposition” proposes a row of low-rise apartment blocks scaled to the residential neighborhood across the street to the south. These are topped by a series of slender, 18-story apartment towers on line with the severed streets.

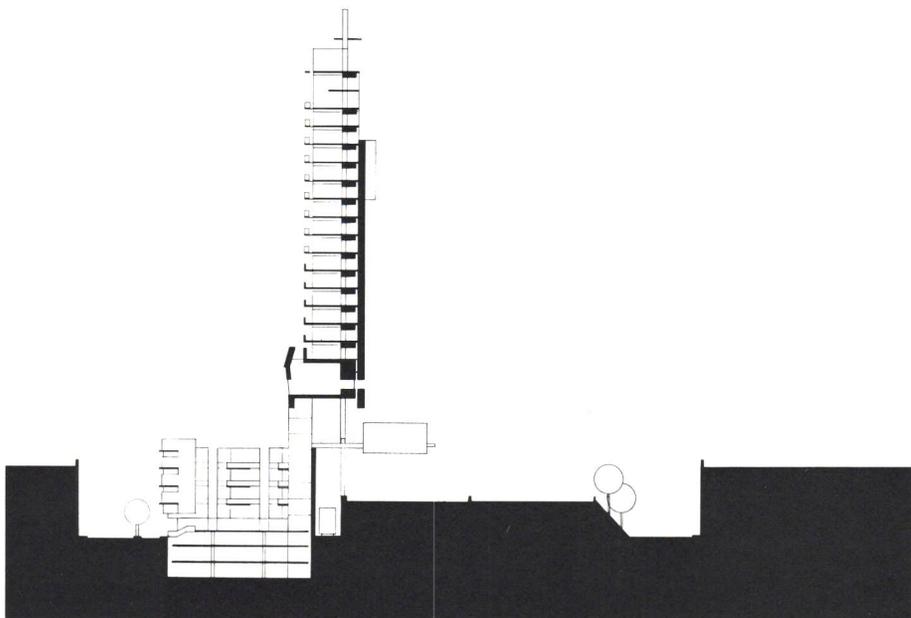
interpretations and reconsiderations of the freeway beyond the humdrum of the commute.

The last part, "Proposals for Lateral Incidents," was shaped largely by two concepts that emerged from the 1988 study. We referred to them as "The Middle Layer" and "Informing the Ride."

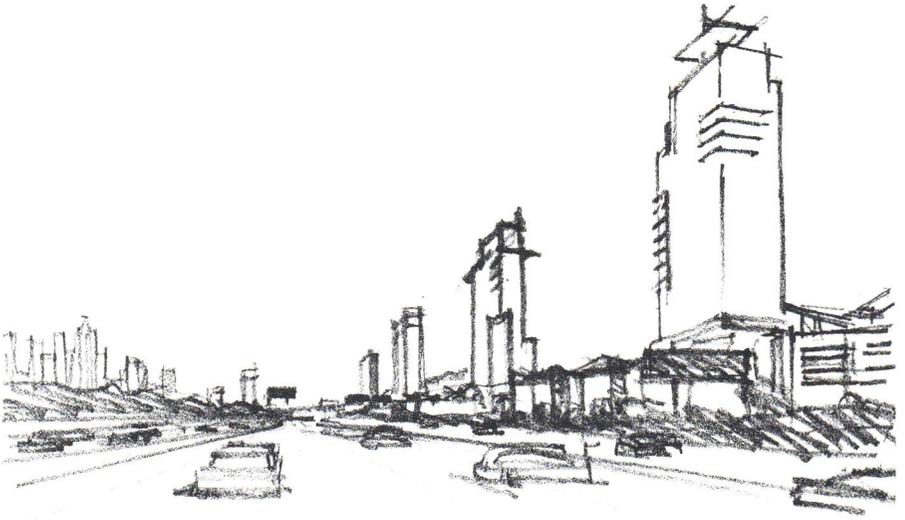
"The Middle Layer" postulates the insertion of a variety of building types into the undervalued and unprotected strips of property that border the freeway system and straddle two dramatically different scales of buildings. At street level, the Middle Layer raises specific questions of the appropriateness of programs and architectural form, as well as more general issues of neighborhood coherence, noise abatement, traffic reduction, and possibilities for new densities or proximity between living and working space. Current thinking suggests that these latter linkages and their resultant reduction of commuter

travel promise one of the few attainable solutions to the rapidly worsening problem of car traffic in Los Angeles. Middle Layer studies need to look realistically at land value and development potential, but another main focus rests on design issues related to the context of the selected sites—their unusual topography and shape, the special construction techniques they will require, and their proximity to a noisy, dirty urban artifact of extraordinary formal power.

"Informing the Ride" explores the experiential duality that exists between the roadway and the surrounding city, and the possibility for citizens to understand both better. It assesses the effect of 'marker' buildings and spaces in order to learn how they can fix and identify specific neighborhoods or places within the panoramic view of the city that the freeway driver comes to know and enjoy. Informing studies involve structuring the visual impact of the Middle Layer when it moves into



Automobile entry occurs at large courtyards off intersections along the Lateral Incident "Exposition." Smaller intermediate courts, two per block, serve as pedestrian entrances. These are shared by tenants of two- and three- bedroom duplex apartments in the low rise blocks. The towers contain one and two bedroom units with balconies that give views of the ocean.



The duality of the composite structure at the Lateral Incident "Exposition" is functional. The low block visually and spatially completes the neighborhood, while the slender towers identify it and reflect its grain along the roadway.

the motorist's field of vision. They suggest structures that respond to dramatic transitions in use and perception, both in their horizontal and in their vertical dimensions. Because the particular stretch of freeway under consideration is often elevated above the street plane, these studies need to operate at a larger scale than that of individual buildings on the street. They emphasize three-dimensional concerns of solid and void, sculptural form, skyline, texture, rhythm, multiple lines of view, and kinesthesia.

Prompted, in part, by Jackson's willingness to view change in the American landscape as a positive cultural expression, we have examined ways in which a structural interaction between the freeway and its adjoining neighborhoods can work to the benefit of both. In the interest of posing credible alternatives for a less exclusive planning policy, *Corridor* proposes a series of Lateral Incidents at selected sites along the roadway. These suggestions represent only a few of the specific sites with Middle Layer and Informing potential. They represent an architect's

reading of the implications of certain undeveloped residual situations and are essentially practical. The scale of such projects can be extremely large and their design and implementation would require complex public-private cooperation and neighborhood participation to develop guideline requirements allowing for local specificity and multiple designs. In all cases they would require a fundamental balance between respect for the roadway as a single artifact and the thoughtful restructuring of the social landscape it is intended to serve.

#### NOTES

1. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, "Concluding with Landscapes," *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 145-57.

# The Aftermath of the East Bay Fire

Michael Stanton, FAIA

A cruel combination of hot weather, high winds, human miscalculation, and a landscape parched by years of drought enabled the grass fires to grow into the most destructive residential fire in California history. Burning for four days in October of 1991, the East Bay Hills fire killed twenty-five people, destroyed 5,000 residences, and cost \$1.7 billion, leaving in its tracks 1,600 acres of charred rubble punctuated by stalagmite-like chimneys. A major portion of this California community had been wiped clean of buildings, plantings, and most other vestiges of human use.

This tragedy offered an opportunity to reshape the landscape—to analyze the mistakes in the past and anticipate the requirements of the future. Many residents, city officials, and involved architects recognized both the shortcomings of the landscape that had existed and the chance to improve what would continue to be some of the most desirable residential land in the state. Narrow roads, often dead-ending, could be replaced with new thoroughfares better able to accommodate traffic, emergency vehicles, and parking. Community facilities could be added. The safety of individual buildings could be improved, and replacement structures made more responsive to modern life. In the face of great loss, many thought we could rebuild a better physical and social landscape.

Certainly a lot of effort was spent trying to realize this potential. Staff and elected officials in Berkeley and Oakland looked for opportunities. The East Bay Chapter of the AIA sponsored a California Emergency Design Assistance Team (CEDAT), led by Harry Jacobs, FAIA, in December of 1991 to assist the

community in envisioning alternatives. To the critical eye, however, the effort to improve the landscape probably seems timid and the opportunity for significant change, squandered. Faced with the reality of thousands of parcels of individually-owned land, the existing network of utilities and roadways, and, more importantly, the compelling imperative to move quickly to help people restore their lives, grand schemes were quickly discarded. The flurry of construction on the hills above Oakland largely replicates the past.

Truly, much is being improved. Limits on flammable materials, prohibition on dangerous design features, installation of fire sprinklers, control of flammable vegetation, the pre-positioning of fire-fighting equipment on *cul-de-sacs*, a system to incrementally improve parking and access on existing roads: each will make the new community safer. Yet throughout history, humanity has seldom been able to create new landscapes after disasters. The response to the London fire of 1666 was not to make radical improvement, but rather to install building codes. Chicago and San Francisco, after their fires, were quickly rebuilt largely in the previous footprints.

Most urban landscapes are built incrementally over time and the patterns, once established, survive even the most abrupt and severe trauma largely unmodified. Certainly in California this has been the case. Indeed, the East Bay Hills fire reminds us that in California new landscapes have been—and are being—realized not by modifying living patterns but by moving westward and expanding outward, building anew in a natural and undeveloped setting.

# Bloods/Crips Program

*One week after the Los Angeles uprising in April, this document was circulated around the city. Issued under the name of the street gangs Bloods and Crips who had recently declared a truce, the proposal addressed the potential for physical as well as social change. The following excerpts are specific recommendations for environmental design. The full proposal was printed in Z Magazine (July/August 1992).*

## PROPOSAL FOR L.A.'S FACELIFT

Every burned and abandoned structure shall be gutted. The city will purchase the property...and build a community center. If the structure is on the corner lot or is a vacant lot, the city will build a career counseling center or a recreation area, respectively.

All pavements/sidewalks in Los Angeles are in dire need of resurfacing. The Department of Transportation shall pay special attention to the pedestrian walkways and surface streets located in predominantly poor and minority areas.

All lighting will be increased in all neighborhoods....All alleys shall be painted white or yellow....

All trees will be properly trimmed and maintained....New trees will be planted to increase the beauty of our neighborhood.

A special task force shall be assigned to focus on the clean-up of all vacant lots and trashed areas....Proper pest control methods shall be implemented by the city to reduce the chances of rodent scattering. The city will declare a neighborhood clean-up week wherein all residents will be responsible for their block—a block captain will be assigned to ensure cooperation....

## EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL

The Bloods/Crips propose that \$300 million will go into the reconstruction and refurbishment of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) structures....Reconstruction shall include repainting, sandblasting, and reconstruction of all LAUSD schools, remodeling of classrooms, repainting of hallways and meeting areas; all schools shall have new landscaping and more plants and trees around the schools; completely upgrade the bathrooms, making them more modern....

## HUMAN WELFARE PROPOSAL

Federal government shall provide the deprived areas with three new hospitals and forty additional health care centers. Dental clinics shall be made available within ten miles of each community. The services shall be free and supported by federal and state funds.

We demand that welfare be completely removed from our community and these welfare programs be replaced by state work and product manufacturing plants that provide the city with certain supplies....The State of California shall provide a child welfare building to serve as day care centers for single parents....

Los Angeles parks shall receive a complete face-lift, and develop activities and programs in the parks throughout the night. Stages, pools, and courts shall be reconstructed and resurfaced, and the city shall provide highly visible security four hours a day for these parks and recreational centers....

**GIVE US THE HAMMER AND THE NAILS, WE WILL REBUILD THE CITY.**

# Letters

To the Editor,

The May 1992 issue of *Architecture California* is wonderfully interesting. It deals with the deep questions of how we perceive architecture and how we are 'acculturated' to evaluate buildings in predetermined and limited ways. The articles take up these complex subjects in a clear, fresh, stimulating manner—all too rare in architectural publications.

Bobbie Sue Hood, FAIA  
San Francisco

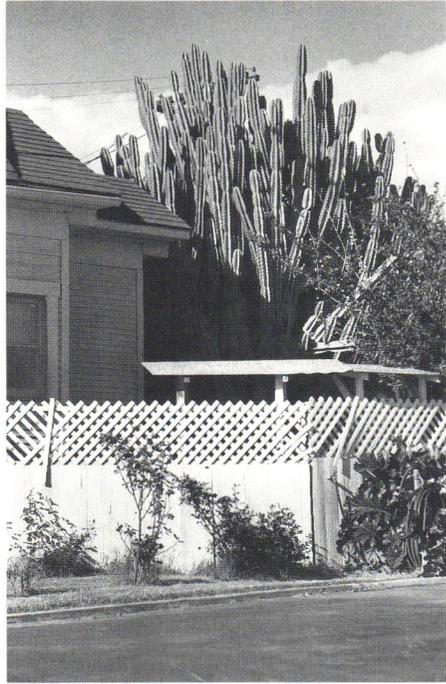
Dear Editor,

Thank you for the Edition. It is a pertinent statement on our art. Of course, I do not agree with most of the comments. Such a volume of esoteric thoughts—enough to drive away those seeking *information*, although the intent on your part was to make the issue not a how-to-do-it camera magazine piece, but rather one of provocative expressive individuality.

I part company, however, with such feelings when they become involved in generalities, such as "two categories." The full purpose of the camera, *vis-a-vis* who observes the 'architectural' photograph, lies in its definitive role in portraying design.

Therefore, a discussion on "axonometrics" can be construed as bordering on pedantry. The qualified photographer's total responsibility is to *introduce* the essence of dimension in his visual/photographic expression by means of composition, lighting, and often restructuring the sequence of design elements.

Furthermore, I differ vehemently with the statement regarding the sameness of ten different photographers' images. How can a writer fail to observe that some of us are *different*? My letter files are crammed with statements: e.g.



Tim Street-Porter.

Frank Lloyd Wright's, saying "no better photographs have ever been taken of the Camp (Taliesin West)!" Or, the reaction of a San Francisco architect: "After 12 years, with the works of many photographers in my files, at last you have defined, for the first time, the essence of my design!" And others from SOM, Gropius, Kahn, and on and on. Vive la différence!

Julius Shulman, Hon. AIA  
Los Angeles

To the Editor,

One of the great pleasures of *Architecture California* has been that it is not only directly informative, but the articles either revive one's ill-formed ideas or stimulate further thought. For me the issue on photography did both.

We are all aware of the tremendous influence of photography on architectural form by the simple fact that most of the buildings that we know about we have never seen except as photographs. Further thought on this could be rewarding. Two examples: 'Advances' in the rendition of color in both film and reproduction technology over the past ten or fifteen years have been remarkable. Just look at some of your old slides or magazines or books from the seventies and then look at how color is used today in buildings and especially interiors—even in television or stage sets. I perceive a clear circularity. Similarly, I think I see a relationship between the CAD reproduced stick perspective drawings and a new international style that, curiously, is referred to as 'deconstruction', a style that seems to me to be okay provided you live where there are neither rain nor pigeons.

Articles in the issue by photographers suggested two distinct approaches—either that the role of the photographer was to interpret what the architect had in mind or to interpret what the photographer has in mind. A third suggested that the media might be the problem; that is that other technologies, video or film, might be better. What seems to have been missed was what anybody else thought. That is, how do the owners or the users of a building perceive it, how do people who simply look at the building perceive it? This raises the question as to whether the purpose of taking the photographs and publishing or otherwise disseminating them is didactic and if it is then how much of such presentation comes down on the side of control or authority? Is the function of the image one of finality, to fix the building and whatever ideas are associated with it in time? Or can the function be more open-ended, more pluralistic, an act of liberation?

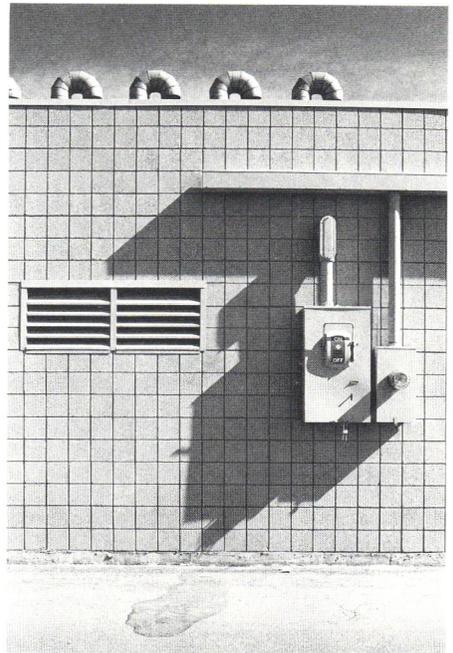
Joseph Esherick, FAIA  
San Francisco

To the Editor,

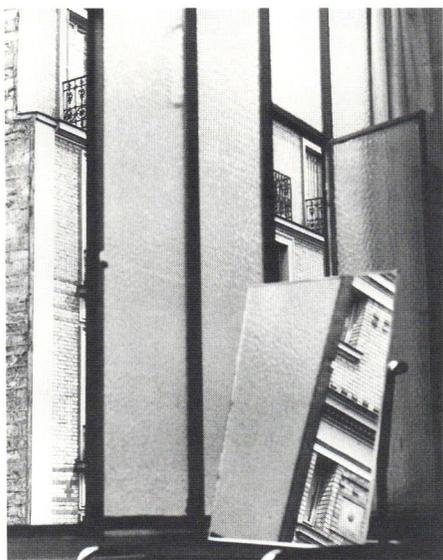
As someone who works with architectural photographs every day, I took special interest in the May issue. I have reread the articles by Esther McCoy, Craig Hodgetts, and Grant Mudford because I found links between them that were not apparent on first reading.

I turned to Esther McCoy's piece first because her stories, which are so direct, so clear, reveal more layers when they are reread. In her funny tale, one many of us have experienced, she establishes the basis for the truth/untruth discussion that can be found throughout this issue. By now, most sophisticated clients understand that architectural photographs are similar to artists renderings; a building is seen in its best light. It is the good glimpse, not the whole story.

How architectural photography moves forward, out of the invented, or styled, lies in what Hodgetts calls "the political, or the capitalistic." Whoever pays owns the refocused truth. Some



Grant Mudford. *Denver* 1976.



Florence Henri, *Window Composition*, 1929-30. Gelatin silver print. Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.

possibilities for dialog about this can be found in Grant Mudford's article and more importantly, in his work. He is quite precise about the distinction between the commissioned work and what he calls his "own photographs." I'm not sure that many of the architects who hire him know about his other work, nor am I sure how the two kinds of work influence each other. But what he is doing—taking photographs of buildings as he sees them, without commission—is a political act. Working outside of the capitalistic/owner model, both Mudford (and Abbott) turn away from what Hodgetts calls the photograph's narrative and return to the realm of the photographer's or artist's narrative. The choice to record on one's own, without a capital end in mind—whether with a single image or with moving images, as Hodgetts suggests—will be real movement. I hope more architectural photographers step outside the constraints of the commission and that *Architecture California* devotes a future issue to *those* images, those 'truths'.

Kenneth Caldwell  
Berkeley

With an issue dedicated to "Architecture and Photography" Lian Hurst Mann has inaugurated a new chapter in the uncertain life of *Architecture California*. The quality and promise of this issue are such as to whet everyone's appetite for more of her probing and spirited treatment of topical subjects. Provocative in its array of voices and perspectives, the issue manages to awaken our interest in the chancey relationship that has always existed between buildings and their photographic records. Today, our knowledge of architecture owes more to photography than to either the capacity of our memory or the power of architects. It was an excellent idea to invite photographers, architects, and critics to write on this subject, and to frame these provocative issues with a terrific anthology of images. Instead of mere tidbits, the journal offers a banquet of ideas in a highly portable form, a tasty take-out supper of worthwhile observations and insights. Bravo for the journal! Brava to its editor!

Kurt W. Forster  
Santa Monica/Zurick



Patrick Ramsey, *Los Angeles* 1992.

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