

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

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### LA AIRPORT UNVEILS AMBITIOUS EXPANSION PLANS



COURTESY LAWLA

## RE-LAX

It's been almost 25 years since Los Angeles' LAX airport received a major addition, but that may be changing. Denver-based Fentress Architects on November 17 unveiled models and renderings of a new terminal and other extensive updates to the cramped, aging airport. The last major new building at LAX, the Tom Bradley International Terminal, was completed in time for the 1984 Summer Olympics.

The newest element of the plan is the Midfield Concourse, located behind the Bradley Terminal, for domestic and international flights. According to the RFP issued earlier this year, the structure would measure between 500,000 and 600,000 square feet to accommodate eight to nine Airbus A-380

The new terminal, with its arched connector bridge, will be located behind Bradley Terminal.

jumbo planes. The terminal's rhythmic, sloping glass and steel roofs, said Fentress Architects, are meant to evoke the breaking waves of the nearby ocean. The building's flat-seam stainless steel canopy would stretch over several column-free structures. A new two-level arched bridge would cross a new taxiway, connecting passengers to the concourse from the Bradley Terminal. The bridge's design refers to the airport's 1961 Theme Building, with its iconic parabolic arches.

Fentress' other plans for the airport include major changes to the Bradley Terminal, which is already undergoing a \$723 million renovation by Leo A Daly Architects (now about 65 percent completed, according to LAX spokesperson Tom Winfrey). These would include larger **continued on page 3**

### PRESIDIO MUSEUM TO BE SCALED BACK



COURTESY MARK HORTON/3A GALLERY

## THE PLOT THICKENS

In a blow to the proposed Contemporary Art Museum of the Presidio (CAMP), the Gap's Don Fisher said on December 5 that he will consider major alterations to the Gluckman Mayner-designed contemporary art museum at the heart of a new development plan for the former military barracks, including a new site, a shorter height, and the movement of much of the museum underground.

In a letter to the City Attorney's office, the San Francisco Planning Commission had already complained that an environmental impact statement was inadequate and did not fully address the impact of the new museum, situated within a National Historic Landmark District. Further, it stated that, "the design of the proposed contemporary art museum and the associated landscape plan is too stark of a contrast to the buildings and spaces that would flank it."

Both statements should cheer the Presidio Historical Association, an ad hoc coalition that has been organizing an ongoing effort against Don and Doris Fisher's proposed \$150 million museum, a white contemporary **continued on page 5**

**One proposal from the show at 3A Gallery showed the museum under the Main Post.**

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LAYOFFS SPREAD AS ECONOMIC CRISIS WORSENS

## GATHERING GLOOM

As the financial crisis continues to deepen and expand, West Coast architects are preparing for a sustained battering. Layoffs are sweeping through an increasing number of firms as they struggle to weather the worsening storm—with no apparent end in sight.

According to a recent AIA Work On The Boards survey, billings plummeted in October, in sync with the distress felt in international credit markets. The Architecture Billings Index (ABI) score fell to 36.2, a new low **continued on page 12**

### BALLOT INITIATIVES WILL TRANSFORM CALIFORNIA'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## MEASURE FOR MEASURE



COURTESY METRO

On Election Day across the country, citizens registered their votes for major changes in the White House and Congress. But change will also soon come to California's built environment, as several major initiatives facing California transit, infrastructure, and development were approved or denied.

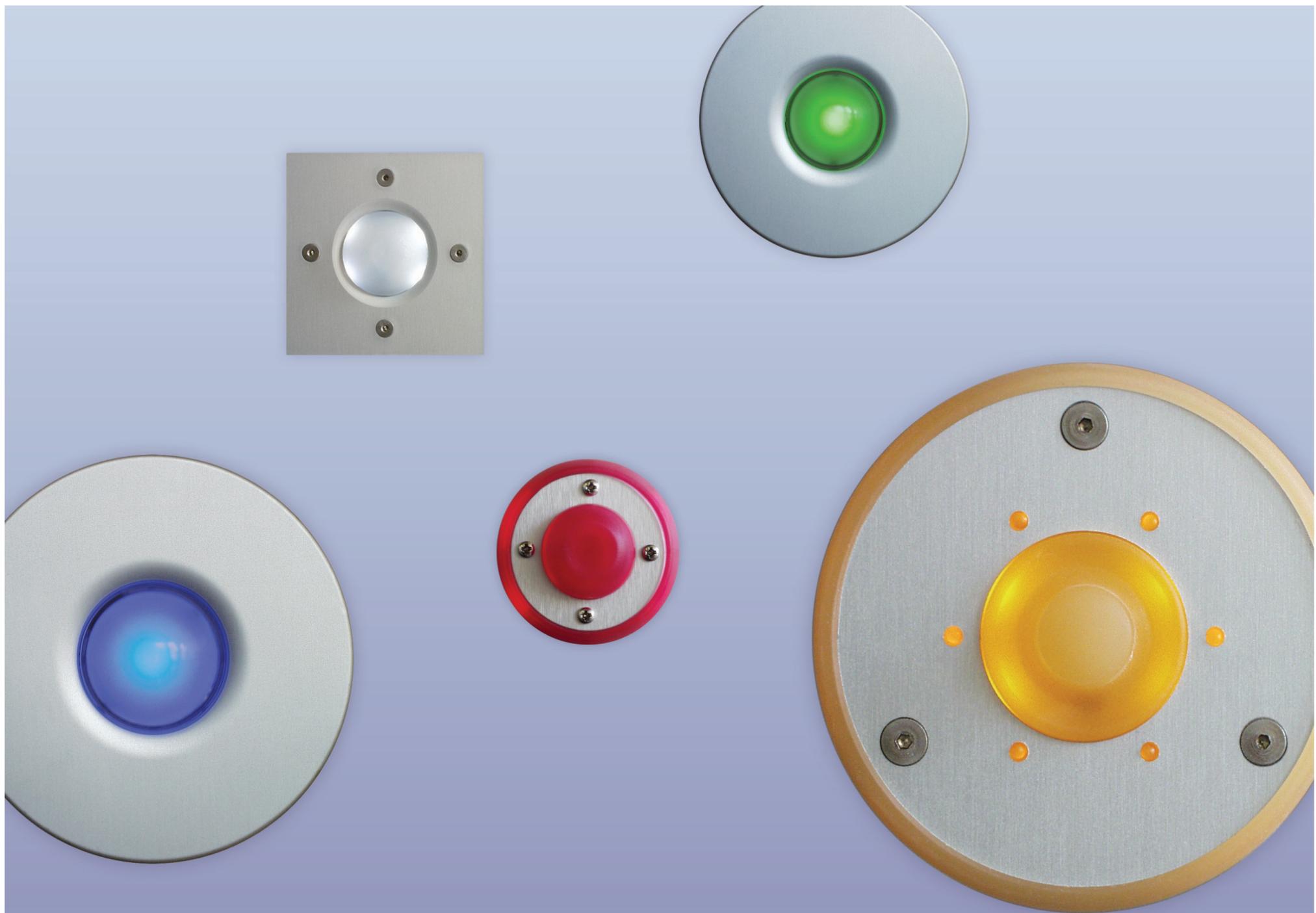
Thanks to Measure R, LA will start seeing more subway trains.

On the statewide ballot, Proposition 1A passed with 52.3 percent approval, meaning a high-speed train linking San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento—and most major cities **continued on page 6**

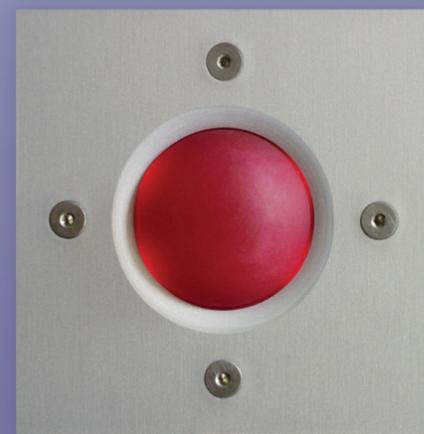


HOUSE OF THE ISSUE, JAPAN STYLE. SEE PAGE 11

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## PROMISES TO KEEP

It's finally happening! We have a president who cares about architects! And architecture! And the urban environment! And infrastructure! As noted elsewhere in this issue, President-elect Obama has promised to invest billions in alternative energy, to increase new and existing building efficiency, and to revamp our nation's decaying infrastructure.

It goes without saying that I'm not the only one now holding my breath and hoping that he follows through on these promises. But I'd like to ask our leader-to-be to go even further. First, in implementing his new agenda, he needs to take architects and other design leaders on board and single out the built environment in his strategic planning. I agree with recommendations recently circulated by the AIA that a high-level advisor on green buildings must be part of the White House advisory team, and that the White House ought to develop its own office of Urban Policy. Our country has cabinet members dedicated to the health of our national parks, our housing, and our transportation systems. Why not members dedicated to green building and urban issues? Plenty of political pundits are all coming together on the subject of green building and infrastructure as a sure way to save our environment, and even rescue our economy. Furthermore, we need to pay closer attention to the way that the health of our cities—where the majority of our citizens live and where most of our wealth is created—has an immediate impact on such issues as public transportation, coordinated planning, and affordable housing. Singling these areas out will send a message that President-elect Obama takes the environment seriously. Whether cabinet-level post or urban policy office, either one would help to better organize efforts that are now scattered across various government branches. At the very least, these topics should be given specific managers, empowered to spearhead efforts and whom we can hold accountable, within existing departments.

And regarding the President-elect's promises on infrastructure—something we know about here in California—he needs to push not only for more funding, but for tying that funding firmly to much more innovation and integration. Forget the same old same old, it's time to use our technology and our design skills to create transit systems and support systems that increase efficiency, usability, and safety; preserve and enhance open space; meet our green building goals; and blend seamlessly and dramatically with our cities and our neighborhoods. In order to help spur this effort, AN is teaming with SCI-Arc's newly inaugurated SCIFI (Southern California Institute for Future Initiatives) program to develop a competition for architects, engineers, and urban planners to propose new ideas for LA's—and the country's—infrastructure. LA County's recently-passed Measure R, which will provide up to \$40 billion for transportation in the next 30 years, is an opportunity we can't afford to squander. Nor are federal infrastructure promises. Stay tuned to our pages for more updates on the competition, which will launch early next year. We need you, and our best minds in all fields, to think together to come up with the best solutions. This is our chance of a lifetime. **SAM LUBELL**

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY  
ADMINISTRATION MEANS GOOD  
NEWS FOR SUSTAINABLE BUILDERS

## FEELIN' GREEN-Y

Among the less-publicized items in the government's \$700 billion bailout package passed on October 3 was a whopper for the architecture and construction industries: significant tax credits for renewable energy initiatives like solar, biodiesel, wind, and geothermal. The legislation, known as the Energy Improvement and Extension Act of 2008, includes an extension of the 30 percent tax credits for residential and commercial solar installations. The solar credits, originally enacted in 2005, were set to expire at the end of this year, but will now continue for another eight years. Their former cap of \$2,000 has been removed. The Solar Energy Industry Association predicts that with the credits intact, there will be \$232 billion more invested in solar installations over this time period.

Even better news for sustainable builders arrived on December 6 when President-elect Obama pledged to create the largest public works construction program since the 1950s and dedicate significant funds to new clean tech infrastructure. During his campaign, Obama also said he would increase new building energy efficiency in the country by 50 percent over the next ten years and make all new buildings carbon neutral by 2030. Obama promised to weatherize one million low-income homes a year, and to create a competitive grant program that rewards state and local governments that implement building codes prioritizing energy efficiency. Obama said he'd put \$150 billion into clean technology over the next decade. He even proposed a green jobs corps, a clean energy corps, and has committed resources for smart growth, mass transit infrastructure, and transit-oriented development.

"We really think his proposals during the campaign offer a tremendous amount of promise for green building," said Jason Hartke, director of advocacy and public policy at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). "It would be a commitment like we've never seen from the federal government." The USGBC estimates that if the administration keeps its renewable energy commitments, there will be 2.5 million new jobs created. Hartke added that the measures should transform how architects consider designing. "I think it's going to allow architects to be as creative and innovative as possible when they look at a project, and to start thinking of ways to integrate sustainable design."

Of course, Hartke warned that we still have to find out which proposals become reality. Skeptics have wondered where the money for green initiatives will come from in these tough economic times, especially given the high price of many sustainable technologies. Some even warn of a coming "green bubble." And the USGBC said it would like to see more concrete evidence of support for local green building initiatives, not just national ones.

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger promised to work with Obama on these and other green measures. While Eric Lamoureux, spokesman for the California Department of General Services, noted that many of Washington's plans are already in place in California. These include a 2004 executive order that all new public buildings be LEED certified; AB 32 (2006), set to reduce carbon emissions in California to 1990 levels by 2020; and new state standards calling for all construction to reduce energy and water usage by 15 and 20 percent, respectively. **SL**

## RE-LAX continued from front page

curbside canopies for check-in; a high-ceilinged "great hall" containing concessions and retail; a "bumped out" new dining area and window wall on the west side of the terminal; a glassy new elevated international concourse; and a huge passenger processing facility across from the Bradley Terminal with a roofline that would echo that of the new Midfield Concourse, where a parking structure is currently located.

Airport officials said they expect a completion date of 2013. The Tom Bradley additions would cost about \$2 billion, said Gina Marie Lindsey, director of Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), and the total cost of the project has been estimated at \$5 to \$6 billion.

Lindsey also told *The Los Angeles Times* that the airport will finance the modernization with higher landing fees, bonds, revenue from airport concessions, and seed money from a portion of \$850 million in bonds sold by LAWA earlier this year.

In order to follow the airport's Sustainable Design and Construction Guidelines released last year, the project must "optimize recycled building materials, minimize the amount of energy used in construction, and optimize energy efficiency," according to the standards. The new designs are consistent with applying for the highest level possible in LEED certification.

Since the Bradley Terminal was completed 25 years ago, several expansion plans for LAX

have been proposed and then stalled or scrapped. In 2003, for instance, Mayor James Hahn proposed a \$9 billion modernization plan that was later dropped in the wake of neighborhood lawsuits and concern about design and security costs. The current plans still have to complete a rigorous environmental review process before moving forward.

Fentress, which was awarded a \$41.5 million, three-year contract earlier this year for the LAX project, has become one of the nation's most prolific airport architects, having also designed ambitious new airports in Denver, Seattle, San Jose, Sacramento, Raleigh-Durham; Seoul, Korea; and Doha, Qatar. **SAM LUBELL**

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 17, 2008

EAVESDROP: ALISSA WALKER

## YES, THEY REALLY CAN!

So never mind all that about the economic slowdown, because it would appear that a win for **Barack Obama** and **Joe Biden** is a win for all American architects! Not only does their platform address infrastructural improvements and green-tech upgrades, Obama and Biden have both expressed that if they hadn't become politicians, they would have wanted to be architects (elevating, we calculate, the Cooper-Hewitt's National Design Awards to Academy Awards status). But Biden took his architectural aspirations even further, designing his own Wilmington, Delaware home! In 1997, Biden designed his family's three-story Neo-Colonial-style house located on four lakeside acres. According to lore, there are tales of him sketching plans during his daily Amtrak commutes to Washington. Vice presidents, they multi-task just like us!

## LOOKING UP IN A DOWNTURN

A recent event at the A+D Museum in LA featuring *The Next American City* editor **Diana Lind**, our very own *AN* editor **Sam Lubell**, and *The LA Times'* Christopher Hawthorne gave us some food for thought (and not just when Hawthorne lamented the latest, most scathing layoffs at the *Times*, whose owner Tribune Co. recently filed for bankruptcy, even after axing, in his words, the people "doing the best, most creative work at the paper," including architecture writer **Scott Timberg** and film critic **Carina Chocoro**). The panelists discussed what would happen to architecture in a recession, and Hawthorne mentioned that the slowdown in work might spur a new age for criticism: "If architects aren't so busy designing buildings, hopefully they'll take more time to write about them." A more pensive era was also predicted by grand dame **Ada Louise Huxtable** in an interview with *The New York Times*. "This will give us a chance to think, to take stock," she said. "I am so weary of these stupid alliances between developers and cultural institutions in which the cultural institution is given a block of space and the developers overbuild the rest and make an enormous profit." In an interview with Bloomberg, **David Chipperfield** was not so, um, chipper, reading last rites to the "wow factor" in architecture. "It's an architecture of excess, a consequence of there being too much money around," said the Brit. "At a time when people are worried about other things, those things become really irritating, and probably less relevant. So I think we will see a mood shift—a certain sensibility coming back." Everyone hear that? There's only way out of this recession: Design really, really boring!

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ELON SCHOENHOLZ

Situated on an oddly shaped lot across from Adams Square in Glendale, the new Library Connection Satellite Library—the Glendale Library's first-ever satellite branch—is anything but square. Exercising design muscle honed from years of building schools and institutions, Glendale-based Osborn Architects challenges the notion of a traditional library throughout.

The semi-circular satellite library is located in the front of a brick building that was once part of an open-air market but now contains an office and retail store. Rather than fill the space with intensive stacks, Osborn pushed the books to the periphery, opening up the center for community interaction. A custom semi-transparent flex shelving system made of laser-cut acrylic panels holds books along three exterior walls, allowing for maximum natural lighting. Stack shelving along the fourth wall accommodates the rest of the constantly evolving collection. Acoustic tiles are hung from the double-height ceilings almost as ornament. Bright chairs and tables by Magis and colorful Baleri ottomans adorn the central community space, inviting visitors to sit, read, or hang around on the communal laptops. The result is a cheerful, transparent, and inviting space that constantly captures the attention of people on the busy intersection outside as they pass by. **HAILY ZAKI**



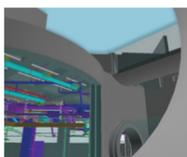
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### California Science Center Phase II

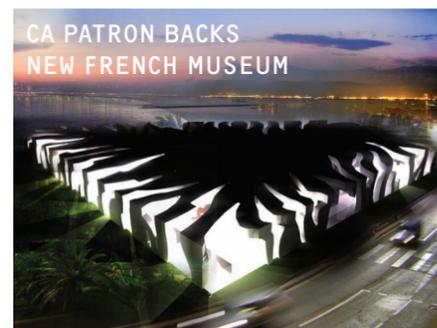
Constructed from a BIM model created by Morley, the 170,000 sf Phase II Expansion of the California Science Center will feature science museum exhibits, administrative office space and back-of-house support spaces. The exhibits include living habitats, interactive museum elements and the World of Ecology, featuring a 180,000-gallon kelp forest tank.

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AGENCE RUDY RICCIOTTI

## COCTEAU CACHE

The poet, dramatist, and artist Jean Cocteau has finally gotten a home he might deem worthy of his work. An oneiric composition based on the artist's sinuous graphic line, the Cocteau Museum is set to rise in the French Riviera town of Menton, to a competition-winning design by architect Rudy Ricciotti. Yet in fittingly paradoxical fashion, the project has its roots in Orange County.

The museum was instigated by the late California art collector and philanthropist Severin Wunderman, who donated hundreds of works from his vast collection to the city of Menton. The Belgium-born Wunderman, who made his fortune designing and marketing Gucci watches, had previously opened a Cocteau museum in Irvine, near his longtime Laguna Beach residence, and was well known for his holdings, having also donated a large trove to the University of Texas at Austin.

Expected to open in 2011, the new building should serve as a capstone to Wunderman's

career. It replaces an existing Menton museum devoted to Cocteau, who adored the seaside town and decorated its marriage registry office in the 1950s. Set atop a below-grade parking structure on a waterfront site, the museum is carefully positioned to accent an adjacent town square and 19<sup>th</sup>-century market, while keeping a low profile that preserves views of the sea.

The structure itself, however, is anything but meek. Composed of white, self-consolidating concrete with tendril-like piers touching down from the roof, the museum celebrates the artist's restless imagination. "The dreamlike work of Cocteau demanded that we abandon the terrorist cultural practices of minimalism," Ricciotti told *AN* in an email. "Massivity, a strong identity, and sensuality mark the southern temperament of the museum."

The nearly 30,000-square-foot building will house a permanent collection with more than 1,800 drawings, paintings, films, and other works. The program is organized in nonlinear fashion, wending around and through spaces to encourage visitors' impromptu revelations. The same goes for the exterior, where the projecting roof creates a generous colonnade, supported by 1.5-foot-thick pillars that provide both solar protection and a veranda-like passageway allowing glimpses into the collection. Altogether, the space celebrates Cocteau's line drawing, noted Ricciotti, who is based in the French Riviera town of Bandol. "It's a continuous link," he said, "without beginning or end."

Perhaps Cocteau, who died in 1963, should have the last word on his architectural legacy. "If I exhibit my painting I unsettle, and if I don't exhibit it, I unsettle," the artist wrote. "I will unsettle even after I am dead." Given Ricciotti's forcefully shapely forms, that much seems assured. **JEFF BYLES**

A PAINSTAKING RESTORATION OF A FAMED HOLLYWOOD NIGHTSPOT IS COMPLETE



## BACK IN THE LIMELIGHT

"Everyone in Los Angeles has their Palladium story," said Christopher Coe, the Culver City architect who renovated the iconic Hollywood dance hall, which opened its doors in 1940 to a room full of waltz-happy couples that sashayed the night away in step with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra fronted by Frank Sinatra.

But perhaps no one knows the Palladium's architectural history as intimately as Coe and Peyton Hall, the historical consultants on the project. As they set about bringing the building back to its original

streamlined moderne splendor for use by concert operator Live Nation, the task became more architectural sleuthing than simple restoration.

"When I took the job I thought it would be a slam dunk," said Coe about the building that was originally designed by renowned Los Angeles architect Gordon B. Kaufmann, who designed, among other iconic Southern California buildings, the Hoover Dam, the Los Angeles Times building, and the Greystone Mansion. "For as famous as Kaufmann was, there

just wasn't much there."

The original plans were archived at the Los Angeles Building Department, but they had been copied so many times they were barely legible. As for pictures, Coe found one vintage daytime exterior shot in color, another one taken at night in black and white, and a newsreel clip of Marilyn Monroe getting out of a car in front of the building. The latter proved invaluable because the motion footage demonstrated the animation of the neon signage and the marquee

that fronts Sunset Boulevard.

After six months of preparation and six months of construction that required they blow up those small post-card-size images to 800 times their original dimensions, they were able to get the scale just right to produce detailed drawings of every last detail. "It was like architecture CSI. We didn't have much to go on, but as we found one clue, it led to another and another," Coe said about the \$20 million overhaul. A forensic paint study revealed the original palette—cream, blue and green, and when they removed the cladding that had been put up in 1962 to accommodate the long-running *Lawrence Welk Show* (Googie signage and all), they were pleased to find the original poured concrete in good shape, as well as a portion of the metal grid that defined the original facade design. They also found small pieces of blue vitrolite glass enabling replication of the original exterior glass cladding in the exact color.

In a city that's short on nostalgia and long on demolition, the Palladium's survival can be attributed at least partly to its storied pop music history. It started with the Big Band era, and then came shows by Glenn Miller, Led Zeppelin, Barbra Streisand, the Who, and Ray Charles. In the 1980s, the Palladium regularly hosted bands like the Ramones and the Clash, and as the years went by, Björk and Courtney Love graced the stage as well.

With Hollywood's recent renaissance (helped along by the Community Redevelopment Agency, the Business Improvement District, and Councilman Eric

Garcetti) the Palladium was perfectly positioned to become another historic building that got a painstaking renovation.

"There is a very strong preservation ethic in Hollywood, and that really differentiates us from other entertainment destinations like City Walk or the new L.A. Live," explained Kerry Morrison, the executive director of the Hollywood Property Owner's Alliance, which manages the Sunset and Vine Business Improvement District. "We have original authentic venues from the 1920s, '30s, and '40s and little by little, we are revealing these great stories from the past as we peel away the facades and bring them back to their original state."

This back-to-the-future philosophy certainly dictated the Palladium's first booking upon its re-opening in October of this year. After all, who better to represent the modern incarnation of Frank Sinatra than Jay-Z?

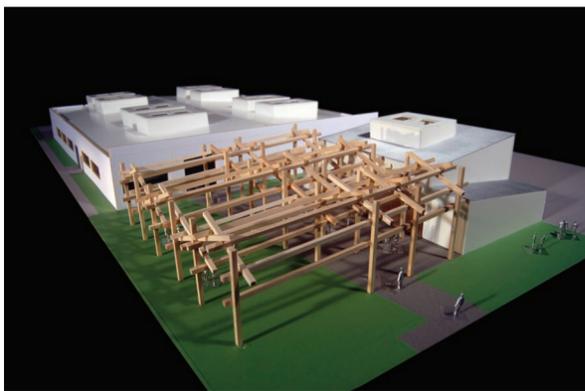
Coe admits it wasn't easy getting to opening night. But now, at the end of the day, when he drives down Sunset and sees the neon anchor on the boulevard, he said, "It's just been a remarkable transformation."

**STACIE STUKIN**

**Left: The original Deco facade; Below: the dance floor in the 1970s.**



COURTESY COE ARCHITECTS



COURTESY GEHRY PARTNERS

### UNVEILED

#### GEHRY PARTNERS NEW OFFICES

Gehry Partners, which has over 160 employees, is moving from its 44,000-square-foot studios in West Los Angeles to the beachside town of El Segundo early next year. Their new campus will add 15,000 square feet of space to an existing 60,000-square-foot complex of

1960s warehouse-style structures on Beatrice Avenue between Utah and Alaska Avenues. NSB Associates will develop the property with Gehry Partners.

The existing structures on the site have 20-foot-high ceilings and large skylights. A new wood trellis structure by Gehry to connect them bears striking resemblance to the pavilion that the architect built for London's Serpentine Gallery this past

summer. The trellis appears to consist of large wood planks projecting at skewed angles, although the intensity of their disorder is certainly toned down from the London project. The site measures 154,000 square feet total, with room for parking and possible expansion.

El Segundo, just south of LAX airport, was once a center of aviation and aerospace manufacturing, more recently revitalized as a center for creative and technology-based companies. "It's a great coup for our city," said El Segundo mayor Kelly McDowell. "Frank Gehry is truly a giant in the field of architecture." The town has a population of 16,000 and a commercial district with 85,000 employees. **SL**

**Architect:** Gehry Partners  
**Developer:** NSB Associates  
**Location:** Beatrice Avenue, El Segundo  
**Completion:** 2009

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**THE PLOT THICKENS** continued from front page two-story structure that emphasizes the formal geometries of the former parade ground. As an alternative, it is proposing a history center on the same site, replicating the barracks typology of the Main Post grounds.

However, the Planning Commission also stated that none of the alternate proposals, including the history center, were a reasonable alternative to the proposed project. Instead, it urged the completion of the Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act review, a mandatory impact review required of all properties listed on the National Register. It felt that Alternative 1, a visitor and community center using the existing buildings, would have the least impact of the four schemes. The Presidio Trust, which oversees the park, has also asked for changes to a lodge on a nearby site, including downsizing it from 125,000 to 110,000 square feet.

According to a report in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, the Presidio Trust now wants Fisher to go back to the drawing board, moving the museum to the west, away from some sensitive archaeological sites, breaking it into two buildings, and putting about half of the new construction underground. The museum may be only one story high, no higher than adjacent historic buildings. Asked if a redesign was in the works, Gluckman

told AN, "Fisher is considering all his options."

As an alternative, architect Mark Horton has invited several local architects to present concepts for an alternate vision of a Presidio museum at his 3A Gallery in the South Park district. The projects include a proposal to locate the new museum under the Main Post, and one to locate the museum's collection in multiple towers scattered around the Presidio. The exhibition, *CAMP: Reconsidered* will run until December 23 at the gallery, on 101 South Park. **ERIC LUM**  
**Top: A typical vernacular building on the site; Below: Rendering of Gluckman Mayner's proposed two-story museum.**



COURTESY GLUCKMAN MAYNER

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 17, 2008



TWO NEW HOSPITALS RETHINK THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

## HEALING WAYS

In late October, officials at Stanford Hospital & Clinics and the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital unveiled designs for two new facilities—one by Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) and the other by Rafael Viñoly Architects—to be built at the Stanford University Medical Center in Palo Alto, California.

Bill Pedersen was on hand to present his firm's contribution, a 104-bed expansion of the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. In addition to solving the institution's capacity issues, KPF's design seeks to create a narrative that will give comfort to the children who receive treatment there. This narrative was

cast as a journey: beginning in the lobby, a space dubbed the Explorer's Pavilion, continuing on a trail that winds its way along a garden path, and ending in the patients' rooms, which were envisioned as "nests." Other spaces that might add to a child's sense of wonder were also incorporated into the design, including "tree houses" and "overlooks" that provide perspectives of the garden.

"As waves emanate from a stone tossed into a tranquil pool, our design is influenced by nature radiating from a healing garden," Pedersen commented in a statement.

Viñoly wasn't to be outdone by KPF in

his design for a new, ground-up, 600-bed hospital for Stanford, describing the goal as a redefinition of the model of a healing environment. And as with the KPF design, Viñoly's goes out of its way to incorporate nature into the architecture.

Glassy corridors offer views to the foothills of Palo Alto, and the design boasts a central courtyard and roof gardens. The courtyard, which includes a prominent water feature, organizes public circulation on the lower levels and brings natural light to each floor. The roof gardens surround a public level that contains family and staff amenities.

"We are challenging outdated conventions in hospital design to establish a new architectural identity for Stanford Hospital," said Viñoly.

Stanford University Medical Center has submitted a formal application for the

renewal project to the city of Palo Alto, which is currently conducting the required environmental impact report, a process that includes multiple opportunities for public comment. Phased construction is scheduled to begin in 2010. **AARON SEWARD**

Left and below: KPF's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital; Right: Viñoly's Stanford Hospital courtyard.



COURTESY RESPECTIVE FIRMS

**MEASURE FOR MEASURE** continued from front page in between—could be ferrying passengers at speeds of up to 220 miles per hour by 2030. While a whopping \$9.95 billion in state bonds was allocated by the proposition, development cannot continue until matching funds are secured from federal, local, and private sources. A business plan for the program was released on November 7, equating it in scale to the State Water Project, the world's largest public water and power system, funded by a 1960 bond measure. California High Speed Rail Authority chairman Quentin Kopp called the proposition's approval a "21<sup>st</sup>-century golden spike."

Once funding is secured, the Authority will focus first on the LA-to-San Francisco "backbone" segment. Environmental impact reports have been completed for the route and alignments chosen, with the exception of the Northern Mountain Crossing connection between San Jose or Oakland and the Central Valley.

In Los Angeles County, another major transit proposal, Measure R, reported 67.93 percent voter approval when a 2/3 majority was needed. The 30-year, half-cent sales tax increase will fund improvements and expansions for light rail and subway lines, HOV lanes, freeways, and traffic reduction. According to Metro spokesman Rick Jager, the tax will go into effect next July, and citizens could start to see evidence immediately, since a portion of the funds will go directly to LA-area city governments. "The local return is an important element because these 88 cities will start getting their 15 percent share from the tax that's generated," he said, noting that many cities had plans for street resurfacing, pothole repairs, improving left-hand signals, pedestrian improvements, and bikeways. It also postpones a planned Metro fare increase to 2010.

The rest of the funds generated by Measure R will be available in 2010, when the major projects up for funding will be an extension

of the Gold Line that goes to Azusa (the first six-mile extension of the Gold Line, begun in 2004, is on budget and on schedule to open in the summer of 2009), the Green Line extension to LAX, and the second phase of the light rail Expo Line stretching from downtown LA to Santa Monica. The first segment of the Expo Line's route from downtown to Culver City is scheduled to open in 2010, and with this burst of funding, it could reach Santa Monica as early as 2013. Later, funding will become available for the Purple Line or "Subway to the Sea" extension in 2013.

In Santa Monica, the hotly-contested Proposition T, which would have limited development in the city to under 75,000 square feet annually, was defeated 55.92 percent to 44.08 percent. This was a relief to many architects and developers who had fought hard against the measure, including Gwynne Pugh of Pugh + Scarpa, who, in his role on Santa Monica's planning commission, will address

Proposition T's concerns in the city's new Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE), which is currently in environmental impact reviews. "The LUCE has addressed this issue by stating that there will be a goal of 'no new net trips,'" he said. "Unlike previous plans, this will be monitored, and development phased as resources are developed such as the Expo Line."

After Beverly Hills' city council approved a 12-story, 170-room Waldorf-Astoria hotel and two condo buildings on the site of the Beverly Hilton in May, opposed residents gathered enough signatures to put the decision on the ballot as Measure H. After results were too close to call for several weeks, on December 2 the city certified that Measure H had been approved by 129 votes, meaning that an architectural design review and tract map will move forward as planned.

In San Francisco, Proposition B, which would have required the city to set aside 2.5 cents for every \$100 of assessed value over the next

15 years for affordable housing, failed 47.4 percent to 52.6 percent. This was disheartening to housing advocates and the city's Board of Supervisors, who strongly urged its approval to prevent what they called an "affordable housing crisis" due to budgetary concerns. Proposition B would have allocated \$30 million to help house those making less than \$18,000. According to housing advocate Calvin Welch, the budget currently only reserves \$3 million for affordable housing. Mayor Gavin Newsom was one of the strongest opponents of Prop B, arguing that it was unnecessary.

And while its outcome did not directly impact architects, another Measure R, this one also in San Francisco, was certainly a topic of conversation for anyone working in infrastructure: This ballot initiative that would have renamed a Bay Area sewage plant in honor of President George W. Bush was soundly defeated.

**ALISSA WALKER**

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NEW PLANS FOR SAN PEDRO WATERFRONT REVEALED

# PORT PROMENADE

A surreal area long dominated by towering steel shipping facilities may be about to get a friendlier, more community-oriented focus. The Los Angeles Harbor Department and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in October released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for their San Pedro Waterfront plan. The 400-acre project is set to replace the Port of Los Angeles' now-relocated industrial ports and docklands along the west side of Los Angeles Harbor's Main Channel with a new promenade, bike paths, park spaces, commercial spaces, and cruise ship facilities.

Following a public review phase that ended on December 8, the plan would take about five to seven years to complete. Groundbreaking is set for summer 2010. LA-based Tetra Design, Inc. is coordinating the project. EDAW's LA and San Francisco offices are developing the master plan, landscaping, and urban design. And Oakland-based Hood Design and Pasadena-based Cityworks are assisting with landscape and urban design. Costs are still being estimated, but the port is setting aside \$60 million for the project. The Port said the scheme would help revitalize San Pedro, in addition to providing much-needed recreation opportunities. According to estimates provided by the Port, the plan would provide over 1,000 new jobs, about \$38 million in new wages, and about \$30.8 million in passenger spending.

The plan's waterfront promenade would include an eight-mile-long, 30-foot-wide pedestrian path stretching from the Cabrillo Bath House at the south end to the Vincent Thomas Bridge to the north. The plan also proposes two new harbors—the 75,000-square-foot Downtown Harbor, and the slightly smaller 7<sup>th</sup> Street Harbor—to accommodate visiting cruise ships and other vessels. Among the plan's several (and interconnected) new public parks would be the Town Square, at the foot of San Pedro's Sixth Street; the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Landing, adjacent to the new 7<sup>th</sup> Street Harbor; and an 18-acre central park that would include an amphitheater seating up to 3,000 people. The area's existing ports of call would be enhanced with 375,000 square feet of complementary development, including commercial, retail, and restaurant uses. Finally, the plan calls for two new two-story, 200,000-square-foot

cruise ship terminals along the area's outer harbor.

While architectural choices have yet to be made (schematic design begins in January), EDAW says the plan will focus all uses on the water, with a continuous waterfront and various districts within this stretch merging the public realm with the area's existing waterfront activities. Part of that, pointed out Sacha Schwarzkopf, senior urban designer for EDAW, is drawing on the existing drama that the channel presents.

"One of the things that San Pedro has to offer is that you can have ships at the curb," he said. "Cruise ships. Tall ships. Industrial ships. Having that sense of awe looking at them is a unique experience." According to the EIR, plans would also draw for inspiration on the city's "maritime industrial history," as well as on the unique character of San Pedro.

To help people get to all of these new facilities, the plan will include a series of transportation improvements, including the expansion of existing roadways; intersection, landscape, and parking improvements; extension of the Waterfront Red Car Line (which will run parallel to the promenade); and water taxi berthing facilities. And to protect the environment, the plan pledges to use recycled water for landscaping; drought-tolerant plants; LEED certification for all buildings over 7,500 square feet; solar power; and pedestrian and bike connections throughout.

Yet to some in the area, these efforts are not enough. Local website Curbed LA described the plan as a "Disneyesque happyland of shops, tourists, and cruise ships," and pointed to comments by June Burlingame Smith, who heads up a port advisory panel overseeing the waterfront planning. "The current plan is a 'drive-by' plan," she said. "Drive by the waterfront, drive by downtown San Pedro, drive by the museums, monuments, restaurants and shops to get to a cruise ship where dreams of happiness will be found in faraway foreign playgrounds."

Schwarzkopf disagreed: "We're not trying to make this themed. There wants to be a nice waterfront layer to it, but it has to feel real. San Pedro is about muscle and it's about working ports that are right at your doorstep. It's about honest, genuine development."

SL



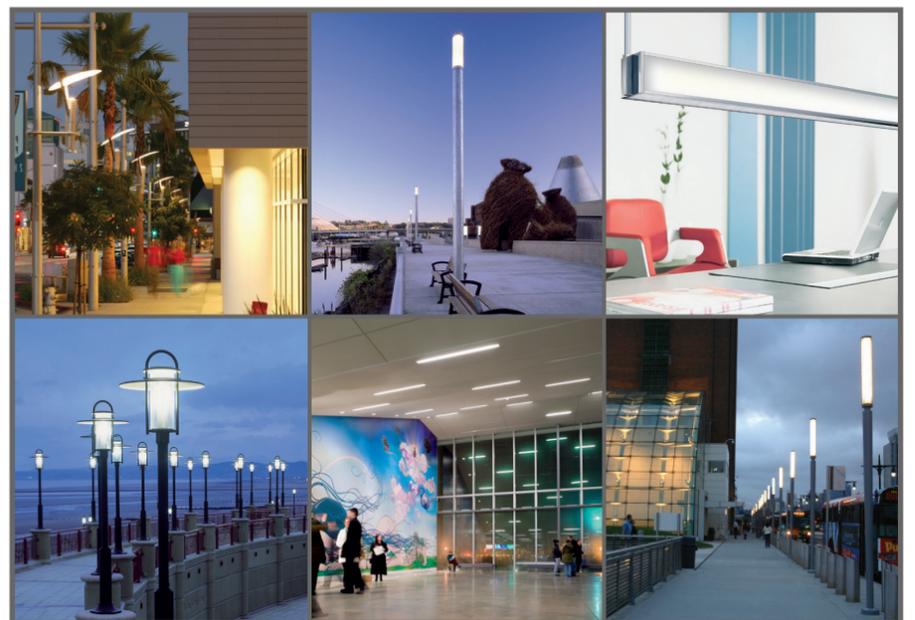
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## ARCHITECTURE AND INSPIRATION MEET IN WATTS

# STREET ART



Installing tiles designed by Watts House participants. Below: An exhibition at one of the project homes.

Volunteers and skilled laborers are toiling together in the variegated shade of Watts Towers on an ambitious, grassroots revitalization project that was launched this fall. The focus of their efforts is not Simon Rodia's historic landmark, but the 20 small bungalows that line East 107<sup>th</sup> Street just south of the towers.

The Watts House Project (WHP) seeks to transform all 20 residential properties into vibrant works of art. Beyond simply renovating each home's facade, the goal is to re-imagine the interior, exterior, and front and back yards of each home to reflect the resident's vision and reinforce a sense of community.

The WHP is intended to be a malleable artwork as much as it is an urban revitalization. To explain his inspiration and strategy, artist and WHP director Edgar Arceneaux pointed out that Rodia's quixotic spires emerged as a process of trial and error. Rodia would construct something one day and tear it down the next. "It really was a site where he was building something and didn't know ultimately what shape it would be. We're trying to operate in the spirit of that," he said.

To that end, Arceneaux begins the process by providing each resident books and magazines, such as *Dwell*, to help them develop their own ideas. "I'm not trying to master plan the whole thing," he said. He then introduces them to an artist and an architect to begin work on their house's design. While each property

is an autonomous project, Arceneaux points out that because there are three sets of households who occupy adjacent properties, an opportunity exists to do something architecturally that "blurs the property line." Reflecting the heavy concentration of skilled labor in South Los Angeles, much of the work is being done by people who actually live in the neighborhood. The block of East 107<sup>th</sup> Street that is home to the WHP also boasts a blacksmith, a family of roofers, a cabinetmaker, and a professional house painter, among other tradesmen.

To do the financial heavy lifting, Arceneaux has had to look farther afield. The WHP has thus far raised about \$85,000 from Creative Capital and LAXART, a small but significant portion of a projected \$900,000 to \$1 million. Arceneaux said they will need to complete the initial stage of the project. Additional funding is coming from local art collectors and through limited edition pieces Arceneaux has created and sold through LAXART. The UCLA Hammer Museum

is also supporting the project as a partner.

While the WHP falls outside the boundaries of the Community Redevelopment Agency's Watts Redevelopment Project, Arceneaux is in conversation with the agency's South LA branch in an effort to involve them in four of the facade improvements. Arceneaux is also hoping to attract architects who would be interested in working on a small-scale project that might not be possible in other parts of the city. "Because Watts has been more or less neglected, you can get away with a lot more," he said. "The city's not breathing down your neck."

The transformation of the homes on East 107<sup>th</sup> Street is scheduled for completion by 2013. The second phase is what Arceneaux calls the project's "five essential programs": an Artist in Residency Program, with a workspace, gallery and housing; the Café Project, addressing the current lack of a space for people to eat, drink, and view the Watts Towers; the WHP Office Project, to provide a permanent space for WHP activities; a Social Services Program to address needs, such as day-care, as articulated by the residents; and perhaps the most important, the Residential Housing Project, where WHP hopes to purchase seven to ten properties on East 107<sup>th</sup> Street and Santa Ana Boulevard to create low-income housing.

Sitting on a front porch belonging to Felix and Christina Madrigal against a checkered backdrop of colorful paint samples, Arceneaux reaffirmed his Rodian vision for the WHP over the din of power tools at work in the Madrigal's driveway. "I tell the residents, 'Nothing is permanent, so why not do something adventuresome now and we can change it later?'"

MIKE SCHULTE



AMY CHANG



LA COUNTY WEIGHS DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS IN MARINA DEL REY

# ROUGH WATERS

With proposed development in Marina Del Rey that could add over 3,700 residential units and 630 new hotel rooms, the County of Los Angeles just began a process to determine whether it will adopt recent California Coastal Commission recommendations to limit and examine this development and bring the community's Local Coastal Plan into compliance with the California Coastal Act.

On October 29, the county held a meeting to gather public input about the Coastal Commission's 67 recommendations—made on October 16—concerning density and urban planning. These included changing land use designations of parks or parking lots; a comprehensive study of anticipated future development; and incentives for free or lower-cost public uses on waterfront parcels. While the county is not required to follow the recommendations, it must provide the commission with a report specifying its reasons for not following them.

As the aging marina—once a bastion of stewardesses when air travel was the sleek new way to go—has been slated for updates and new development, the county has faced increasingly contentious opposition to its handling of the roughly 950-acre marina, initially financed through a publicly-funded bond measure.

Underlying community objections is the fact that the county both owns the marina's property and controls all

planning in the area. Officials negotiate terms of leases with developers in closed-door sessions, leaving the public and urban planners with little capability to adjust those terms once they reach the design process. The Coastal Commission has therefore been viewed as a nonpartisan decision-maker.

"The county is the landlord on every property, and development partner on every property," noted Steve Freedman, a Venice resident who lives just feet from the marina's property line. "I think there's a term for that—conflict of interest."

Freedman's assertion is disputed by David Sommers, a spokesperson for County Supervisor Don Knappe, whose 4<sup>th</sup> District includes the marina. Sommers said the dual role, which dates back approximately 50 years, was "not a conflict," and all decisions made by the Board of Supervisors are reviewed by several other entities.

But in October, the Board of Supervisors shifted some responsibilities, as well as the meetings of the local review board known as the Design Control Board (DCB), to the county's regional planning commission downtown. A person familiar with the decision who agreed to speak with *AN* on condition of anonymity believed the move was partially to limit decisions that ran against developer interests, as in the case of the Woodfin Hotel, initially slated to be situated on protected wetlands. Though the project is now

moving forward, the DCB delayed its approval, requiring that its site plan be changed.

In an email to *AN*, Susan Cloke, the DCB's chair, said, "The recent action, removing site plan and conceptual review from the board's authority, diminishes our ability to help the marina become all that it could be." Cloke cited recreational activities like boating, walking, and cycling, essential to producing income for the area, that had been sidelined in favor of residential and commercial development.

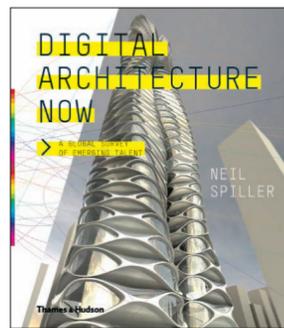
"The magnificent thing about the marina is that it was designed as a resort for daily life," observed John Chase, co-author of the book *Everyday Urbanism*. "But because the marina is county territory... there is little local control and accountability for the nature and quality of development there."

According to Gina M. Natoli, supervising regional planner with the County of Los Angeles, the county will address the commission's recommendation for a comprehensive study of development and the DCB will continue to exercise design review authority after the county has approved site plans. Among those on the DCB are planners like Simon Pastucha, whom LA Planning Director Gail Goldberg appointed to the Urban Design Studio to set a design criteria system for walkable streets in the City of Los Angeles.

Additionally, the county's Department of Beaches and Harbors is planning a study on the cumulative effect of all redevelopment projects that are in the proprietary or regulatory processes, according to Kerry Silverstrom, chief deputy director. The review will study the impacts of such large projects as the 19-story, 424-room and time-share unit Woodfin, large residential projects like a 544-unit apartment complex, and large-scale restaurants, retail, and mixed use.

The county's October 29 public meeting also kicked off a series of working groups organized to review the Coastal Commission recommendations and report their input to the county's Board of Supervisors. Natoli anticipates the county will complete its response to the Coastal Commission's recommendations by October 2009. **TIBBY ROTHMAN**

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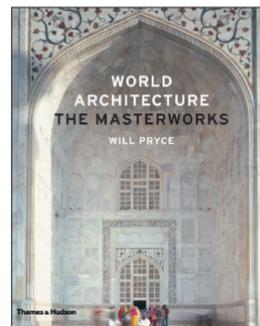
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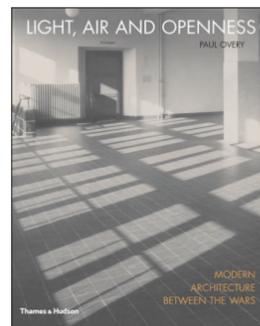
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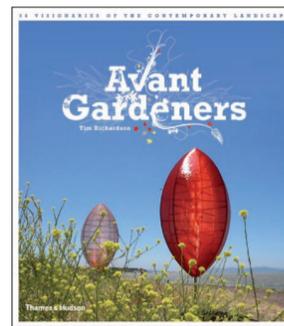
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GENSLER



Few creative processes today could be as different as that of the entertainment and architecture industries. "The industry" usually green-lights projects based on the least risk-taking path—the known star, the worn story formula, the sequel. Meanwhile, architects in Los Angeles (with obvious exceptions) often transfix and drive the creative community with the untried, the testing, the innovative—if not always the successful.

And so it was hardly surprising when two powerful entertainment industry talent agencies, Creative Artists Agency and William Morris, commissioned the same architectural firm to design new headquarters on LA's west side. If something went awry with the visual, an executive couldn't be blamed for not betting on a sure thing.

Gensler's commission for the Creative Artists Agency headquarters in Century City was completed in 2007, accurately projecting the agency's calling card—the unabashed exercise of power—through a monolithic, monochromatic building. For

William Morris, Gensler takes a much different tack: it dispatches a variety of warm spaces for the public segment of the building that read: *Be inspired here.*

Real estate firm George Comfort & Sons first commissioned Gensler to design the 185,000-square-foot, retail-and-office building for the agency. William Morris itself then selected Gensler to design interiors, through a competition. While design for the core and shell has been approved and the building broke ground in spring 2008, interior work is ongoing.

Interestingly, the tone, identity, and innovation of the William Morris commission are derived from Gensler's solutions to challenges rather than opportunities. The Morris headquarters are to be housed in the first office building to be constructed from the ground up in approximately 20 years in Beverly Hills, a notoriously conservative city in terms of design. (When Gensler first presented the plan to the city, they were asked, "Can't you make it look like Barneys?") To dedicate essential ground floor space for

the building's retail component, the agency's entrance needed to be placed far back from the street, ruling out an imposing lobby on the first floor. Meanwhile, on two of its four elevations, the building interfaced with existing restaurants and Beverly Hills retail endeavors of a far smaller scale.

Gensler's solution led to a structure that dissipates massing, facilitates required setbacks, and supports a dramatic exterior terrace for hosting the talent during events. The firm replaced the traditional office building rectangular block with five shifting horizontal planes visible from the property's main elevation on Beverly Drive. A single story of ground-level retail space is contrasted with a narrow second plane that shifts to the south and serves as a base for the exterior terrace on the second floor. Alighting on top is a three-story volume that slides back to the site's northwest corner. The next volume, which is two stories, shifts to the south, creating a 30-foot overhang that frames the first terrace while facilitating an executive terrace available

Far left: The facade on Beverly Drive; Left: The "link" leads to a lobby.

only to agents with fifth floor offices along Dayton Way.

While the multiple planes may sound dizzying, their visual expression is decidedly unbusy: simple volumes that produce tension. Gensler wraps the building with a skin of blue and pewter glass that changes color based on its density to emphasize the different planes on the Beverly Drive and Dayton Way elevations, but also to recognize the sameness of the alley exposure, where, due to budget and structural constraints, the headquarters reads as a single rectangular volume. An irregular pattern of narrow vertical and horizontal sunshades adds depth and variation to the exterior surface.

Gensler's response to the constraints placed on the William Morris' lobby best exemplify their original thinking. Mindful of the developer's need for retail and of William Morris' need for reception and entertaining functions, the firm designed a sequence of spaces that transport agency clients to the heart of the agency at the building's furthest side in a dramatic and multi-step progression.

"It wasn't about revealing everything at once," said Gensler's design director Li Wen, who heads the team handling shell and core. "We wanted it to be sequential, almost cinematographic."

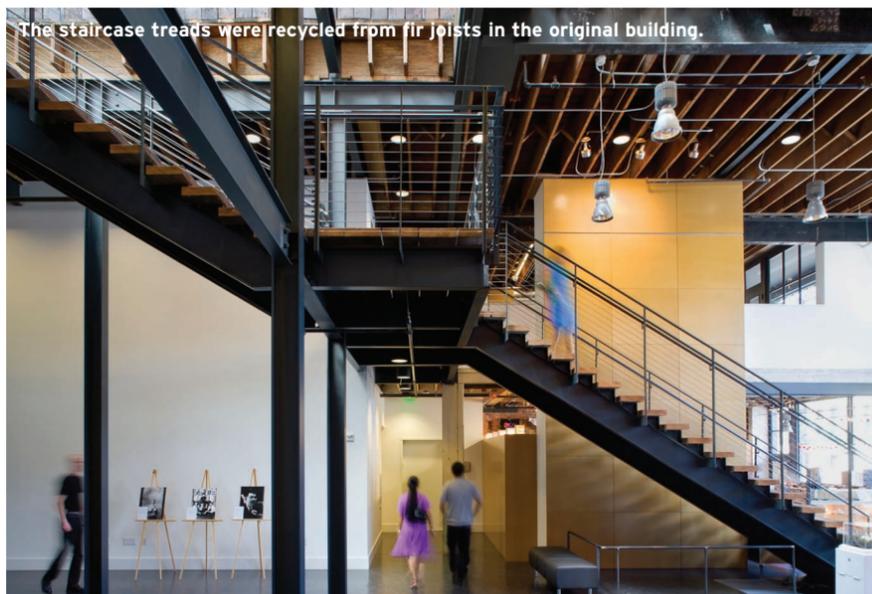
Upon entering a small doorway, entrants will not find themselves in a lobby, but a narrow hallway or "link" that reaches three stories, the entire height of the project. The link is clad in wood louvers, which add warmth, and is

punched through on multiple levels with transparent bridges. As entrants reach the link's end, it turns to the left, revealing an open stairway that leads one floor up to "the grand hall," a two-story lobby and reception area.

"We loved the idea of this very dramatic, very thin, three-story-high space that kind of set the mood as you pass through it to get to the lobby," said Jim Young, Gensler's regional design director who heads interiors on the project. "A very different kind of approach to how the typical client might approach an office building."

Though the firm titled the lobby "the grand hall," the formality of the space is dissipated by a second, wide and relaxed stairway that leads a half-flight up to the screening room entrance on the mezzanine level. Beyond this is the terrace and an outdoor "living room" created by the cantilevered volume containing the fifth and sixth floors above. This indoor/outdoor space serves as an informal gathering place for clients attending William Morris events in the screening room. Sheathing the far end is a wall that separates the so-called living room from the bridges that punch through to executive offices at the same level and to the link below.

Within minutes, visitors have taken a multi-level journey containing a variety of spaces that transition from the frenetic, public nature of a street to the relaxed atmosphere of Southern California's indoor-outdoor living, more residential than commercial. "It's a comfortable, warm environment more than anything else," noted Wen. The firm will start design for the offices that lie above the entry segment in January 2009. **TR**



WING LUKE ASIAN MUSEUM OPENS IN SEATTLE

## Where New Honors Old

Seattle architects and recently-announced AIA 2009 Firm of the Year winners Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen (OSKA) have used their delicate touch to create a beautiful new building for the Wing Luke Asian Museum, a Seattle institution dedicated to exploring the culture, art, and history of Asian-Pacific Americans. Set in the heart of the city's International District, also known as its Chinatown, the museum's design combines the best of historic preservation adaptive reuse.

The museum's new home is the product of a community-driven \$23.2 million capital campaign. Previously located in a nondescript, 7,500-square-foot rental space that sat alongside a commercial strip, the new 60,000-square-foot location is built out of the shell of a four-story 1910 brick hotel called the East Kong Yick Building.

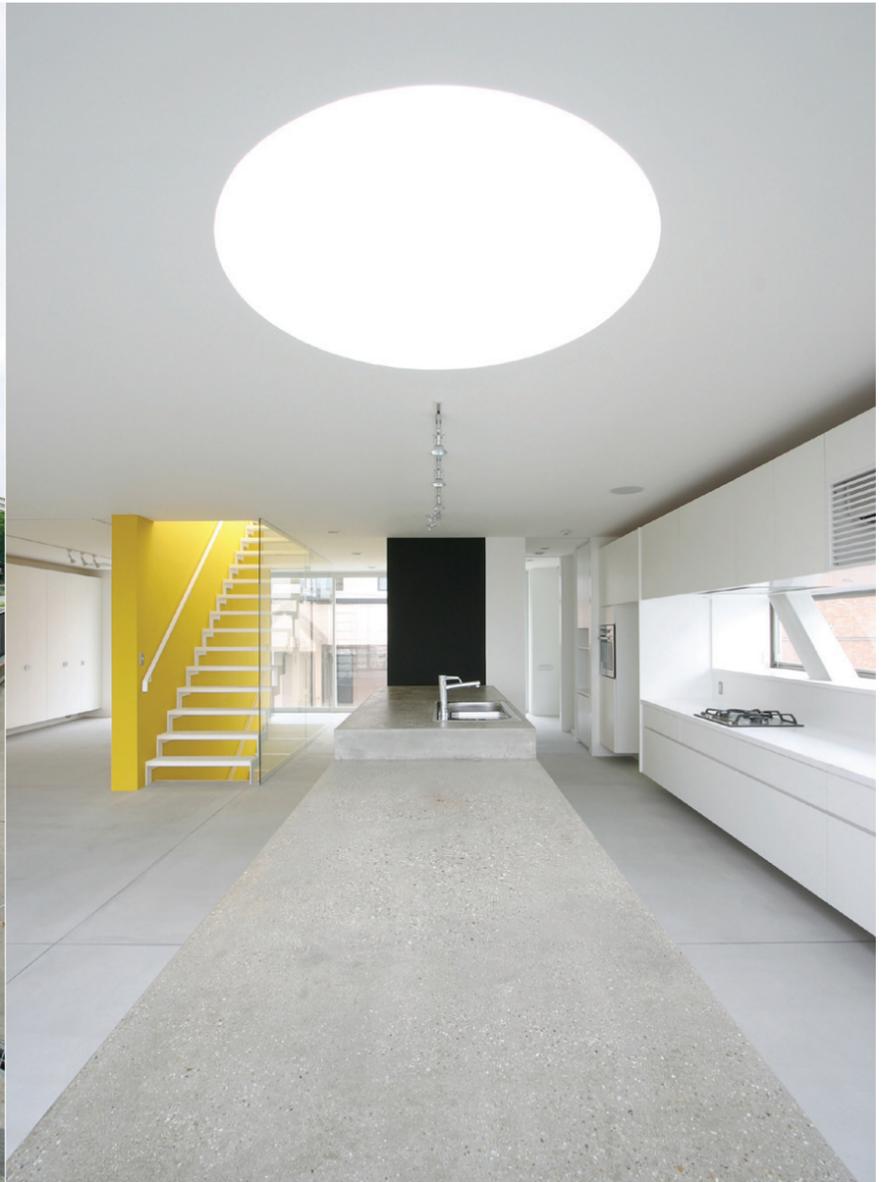
The firm's biggest challenge was to modernize and bring light into the building while still maintaining the unique spirit of the structure. OSKA opened up the building's first two floors, creating airy spaces for the lobby, galleries, main staircase, and a theater. To retain the building's character, the firm preserved original materials in unique ways, while intentionally keeping wall and floor treatments simple to draw attention to exhibits. Many original materials were salvaged, from timbered floors to fir joists recycled into stair treads. The original

building's zinc fire doors have become furniture and wall decorations for the the new lobby. The upper two floors draw from the building's history as a social center and living quarters for Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants. The small, one-room apartments and narrow hallways have been replicated as they were at the turn of the last century to immerse visitors in the past.

The architects interpreted this past without imitating it in two second-floor "lightwells," adapted from existing airshafts. Lined with wood panels, the shafts look like hidden alleyways between historic row houses. Visitors can easily envision the homes of newly arrived Asian immigrants behind the window-lined walls that border the shafts. With transparent skylights and built-in sound and sculptures, the lightwells capture the intimate yet uncramped aesthetic of the overall museum.

On the southern edge of the city's downtown, the historic but underutilized International District is the focus of several redevelopment plans, among them Mayor Greg Nickel's Livable South Downtown Plan, released in June, to increase zoning heights and other long-standing efforts to increase affordable family housing. The Wing Luke Asian Museum is intended as both cultural anchor and jumpstart for these other plans.

**MICHELLE KANG**



Clockwise from top left: The house cantilevers over a driveway; the main floor with 15-foot concrete counter; a glass wall on the north side opens without railing; the concrete-lined meditation pool with pavers.

Located on a steeply-sloped site in a residential neighborhood of scattered houses, razor-thin alleys, and tightly packed apartment houses, Portland-based Architecture W's M House doesn't have a lot of room to breathe. That's not surprising, considering it's located in ultra-dense Nagoya, Japan. So the task for firm principals Brian White and Michael Weenik (who lives in the house with his family) was to give it the illusion of lots of space. The restrained, box-shaped house, clad in a thin pattern of corrugated

metal, does indeed feel spacious, thanks to creative siting, massing, and lighting.

The first major space-maximizing move was a surprising one. Despite the inviting mountain views to the north, the firm cantilevered the house (via steel trusses) 15 feet over an adjacent alley to the south, providing a place for parking and for Weenik's son to play. On this newly-created plinth, the firm built a small, concrete-lined reflecting pool, filled with lilies and set with elegant square steps. Underneath, the

architects fit an underground apartment for the Weeniks' in-laws, a common concession in a country where older parents almost always live with their children.

Above the cantilever, there's an airy living area clad with exposed concrete walls and floors, enclosed on both the north and south facades by floor-to-ceiling sliding glass walls that open completely to the distant mountains, not to mention the sun and breezes. The north-facing elevation feels almost impossibly open because it has no railing (building rules are not

as strict in Japan). Light pours in, thanks to a glass-enclosed yellow stairway leading to a large, top-floor roof deck and a dramatic circular skylight. Space in the open-plan main space is used in a familiar Japanese way. One single white wall, beset with built-in plasterboard cabinets, contains almost all of the house's storage space, including a Murphy bed.

White and Weenik had worked together in Japan for the San Francisco firm K+D before starting their small practice—with footholds in Portland, Nagoya,

and Tokyo—in 2001. White said they like to bring the best of Japan and the U.S. to their work. The American touch includes bits of nature like the reflecting pool and the wide-open expanses, and the Japanese touch comes from the superb craftsmanship and concrete work (thanks to highly trained local builders). The overall effect, White said, is especially effective because of the house's simplicity. "Why get too tricky? This works pretty well," he said.

SL

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 17, 2008

**GATHERING GLOOM** continued from front page for the survey. To put that number in perspective, an ABI score below 50 is symptomatic of a slowdown.

In September, inquiries remained relatively consistent at 51.0, but fell to 39.9 in October. Not surprisingly, many of those participating in the survey pointed to difficulties in client financing as the primary factor affecting new projects.

The inevitable rash of layoffs has spread to every sector of the business, as firms reorganize in response to the crisis.

Among recent cuts, Johnson Fain is reported to have laid off six architects over a finance-related construction halt. Calls to the firm's Los Angeles office were not returned. An official at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill would only confirm that there have been layoffs at the firm's West Coast offices. SB Architects, which specializes in high-end hospitality projects, has cut staff by 20 percent in their San Francisco and Miami offices. The collapse of financial services firm Lehman Brothers scuttled a number of the firm's most significant projects, including a Southern California Ritz-Carlton. According to SB president John F. Eller, when the announcement was made that Lehman had failed, the contractor simply walked off the job.

While SB has sustained damage from the downturn, Eller said the firm has new projects on the boards. "We're holding our own, relative to current staff levels and workload," he said. Eller notes that SB's conservative staffing prognosis extends to the end of the firm's fiscal year in June 2009. "With the volatility of the current situation, we will expect some additional pieces of bad news, we're just not sure where it's coming from next," he said.

Carrier Johnson, a San Diego-based firm that averages between 18 and 24 million dollars per year in gross fees, has seen a ten percent loss of volume since last year, resulting in a 15 percent decrease in staff. Company principal Michael C. Johnson considers his firm's cutbacks modest in comparison with others in the region. "Some firms in town are almost gone," he said.

As construction has recessed over the last year and a half in California, Johnson has witnessed larger firms increas-

ingly undercut smaller outfits to weather the downturn. "I think you're going to see some of the bigger firms competing in areas where they weren't competing," making it even harder for smaller firms to survive, Johnson added.

The institutional sector has largely remained behind the downward curve, experiencing its first statistical weakening in four years this September, according to the AIA. CO Architects, a Los Angeles-based firm with an institutional specialization, laid off 15 percent of their staff midway through 2008, the result of stalled projects in the U.C. system. While the firm has re-staffed in response to a strong backlog, Scott Kelsey, managing principal of CO, sees an uncertain future. "We're not sure what will happen in 2009. The farther we move out, the less sure we are."

Both Eller and Kelsey express guarded optimism, largely because their firms are not tied exclusively to the California economy (SB is active in the Middle East, while CO's practice is national), but others sound a more pessimistic note.

Paul Milton, CEO of Hart/Howerton, a firm with offices across the country, sees no regional safe harbor from the economic storm. "We've got the benefit of looking at this from a global perspective, and there is nowhere that is immune," he said. To illustrate, Milton points out that Dubai home prices were off 19 percent in October. His 250-person firm has undergone a 15 percent staff reduction in the last three months—half of which are in the architectural realm, with the additional cuts being made among the firm's landscape architects, planners, and interior designers.

Milton sees his firm's bulwark against the current financial spasms not in geographic diversity, but in the economic resilience of its "ultra-high-net-worth" clients. He notes that many of these clients can afford to move ahead with construction projects. "We're working on a private island in the Persian Gulf," he said. "Gone are the days of master planning communities in Scottsdale."

With the financial tempest growing ever more complex, and industry-wide staff cuts likely to last well into 2009, Milton's pessimism is well-founded. "I don't think anyone knows the full effect of what's happening," he said. **MS**

AT DEADLINE

## BROAD-BASED POWER

Philanthropist Eli Broad's Broad Art Foundation has offered to make a \$30 million investment in LA's struggling Museum of Contemporary Art, with the expectation that the board and others would match at least half, according to a letter he wrote to *The Los Angeles Times*. Meanwhile, Broad is planning a museum of his own, just down the street from his \$56 million Broad Contemporary Art Museum. In an October letter to the city manager of Beverly Hills, Broad's lawyer said he is considering a site at the corner of Santa Monica and Wilshire Boulevards. Broad said he needed more storage space for his artworks. The Broad Art Foundation uses a building in Santa Monica for offices and a gallery. Broad has hired Gensler's Marty Borko to advise him on the new museum project, said the letter.

## DANNY BOY LA

A new 43-story, residential condo designed by Daniel Libeskind has been proposed for Downtown LA's South Park neighborhood. The project includes 273 market-rate units, two stories of retail, and a spa. Located across from the Los Angeles Convention Center, the building has a hearing date set in January 2009 and aims to complete construction by 2013.

## WALDORF BATTLE

According to results finalized a few weeks after Election Day, Beverly Hills voters narrowly approved Measure H—a plan to add a 12-story Waldorf-Astoria hotel and two luxury condo towers measuring six to eight and 16 to 18 stories to the Beverly Hilton complex. The measure won by just over 100 votes. Opponents claim the vote was fraught with irregularities, and are battling it in court.



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Luc Lefebvre, Team Leader–CAD Coordinator/Instructor, King & King Architects, LLP



An architect from Quebec, Luc enjoys playing golf and barbequing—though not simultaneously. He also enjoys working with Vectorworks Architect, where 2D drafting and 3D modeling can occur at the same time. Luc and his firm, King & King Architects, depend on Architect for this flexibility, especially as they strive for platinum LEED certification in their office renovations of an old warehouse in downtown Syracuse.

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# China

# Express

Technology Helps California Firms Thrive in China.

By Amara Holstein





As people tuned into the Olympics this past August, they saw buildings like the evocatively nicknamed Bird's Nest and Ice Cube settling into the Beijing landscape. But what wasn't seen so clearly by Olympic viewers were the challenges of working in this frenetic setting, and the logistics of trading design drawings with clients and colleagues over five thousand miles away. It's a world where technology plays a central role, increasing in importance and complexity.

Without a doubt, the Chinese economy has been nothing short of miraculous over the last few years, turning a development nobody into one of the hottest markets in the world. Although new signs are ominous—a recent report in *The New York Times* said that housing sales in big cities this year have dropped by as much as 40 percent, and several firms told *AN* that commercial construction in the country is way down—China is still the place to be for Western architects, including many of California's top firms looking for large-scale work.

Among these entrepreneurial spirits constantly boarding flights that “would drive me nuts if I thought about it,” according to Andy Feola, president of Pasadena-based F + A Architects, technology allows the once time-eating, mundane coordination of cross-continental business to be managed electronically through innovative new data sharing, construction management, and teleconferencing technologies.

“Working on projects in the early '90s, we would print up designs, box them up, and then have to schlep stuff over there. People were on the plane every week, information got lost in transportation, and it was prohibitive both in terms of cost and personal life,” said Mehrdad Yazdani, principal of Los Angeles-based Yazdani Studio of Cannon Design, which is now working on a concert hall, a restaurant, and a villa as part of the huge Ordos development that is employing star architects in Inner Mongolia. “My experience now is completely different,” he said. His firm uses the FTP site Cute Ftp to share documents of all sizes; it employs Smarttech's Bridgit software for WebExing—internet conferences in which users can interactively edit the same drawing—and it uses long-distance teleconferencing technology like Skype and the Polycom System (a hardware application linked to an overhead projec-

tor, a camera, and a computer image system) to conduct videoconferences with colleagues in China.

Gene Schnair, managing partner of SOM's San Francisco office—which is working on over 20 projects in China—noted his firm's use of the Polycom system and go2meeting, which enables users in different locations to work on documents simultaneously, for teleconferencing. Morphosis, which is working on ambitious projects in China as well, uses the web-based project management system Aconex, in which the contractor in China posts drawings and images on the website for U.S. architects to review and send back with changes. For videoconferencing, the firm uses the Tandberg system, which like Polycom uses cameras and projectors to link teams over the internet. The firm's videoconferences are further enhanced through the Cintiq tablet by Wacom, an LCD tablet imbedded in the firm's conference tables that allows architects to instantaneously share sketches with their overseas counterparts. The firm also employs a software called Gathering Place, which displays architects' desktops on colleagues' computers in China.

There are still more work-saving and work-enhancing technologies on the way. A New York company called iBeam sells to architects and construction managers a handheld camera that beams live video from anywhere on a construction site to any computer screen; it can be shared by multiple remote viewers. And IT companies like Control Group provide comprehensive electronic tracking systems; or firms can do it on their own with software like Microsoft's SharePoint, which allows huge document transfers from a central repository, with version tracking, vaulting, and other tools.

And since wages are significantly lower in China, firms are able to take advantage of a technique that is more controversial: outsourcing to Chinese offices. “Before, when I hired recent graduates of Harvard or Cornell or USC, we had them pick up red marks or do area calculations or color a drawing,” said Yazdani. “Now, we have our team in Shanghai do that, and it frees up our California team to do more of the creative and design work.”

Michael Mann, a principal at Los Angeles firm DMJM Design, also praised the financial benefits of sending some work to China. “Full-on 3D animations can get

really expensive here, and they're a third of the cost in China. It allows us to not only do better visualizations, but also to send work there for our U.S. clients that is otherwise too expensive to be done,” he said. Local companies like Shanghai-based Architectural Management on Demand (AMOD) can produce scale models and renderings within days using existing documents.

Outsourcing is a controversial step in some ways, but one which some feel balances, rather than replaces, the jobs of American architects. “There is a lot of concern about outsourcing,” said Yazdani. “But it's allowed us to do the work much faster and be more competitive in the marketplace here—as well as allowing us to focus on the things we do well.”

Freeing up creative time can be crucial in a setting that's often described as one of the most inventive in the world. Tim Christ, a principal at Morphosis, remarked that, “The Chinese are willing to embrace new ideas that you don't see in the U.S. now, such as really ambitious spatial relationships. There's a progressive spirit that's extraordinary.” Morphosis is in the middle of construction of the Giant Group Pharmaceutical Campus just outside of Shanghai. Slated for completion in spring 2009, the 258,000-square-foot campus is a sinuous combination of lifted forms spanning a four-lane highway, a massive green roof, and cantilevered shapes anchoring both ends, one of which projects dynamically over a man-made lake.

“There's a willingness to push the envelope and explore different opportunities and directions,” agreed principal Robert Mankin, based in the Los Angeles office of NBBJ, whose firm is working on five projects in China, including a large mixed-use project in Dailian and a sports park in Hangzhou.

Still, although most firms find

that China embraces innovation and has high levels of technological capability, there is sometimes discordance between how work is approached in China and in the U.S. Some, like SOM's Schnair, have had limited success with shared platforms, since “what we're finding is that our Chinese counterparts have AutoCAD as their basic platform. Revit isn't implemented to the degree that it's become a commonplace utility.”

Yazdani has had more success sharing complex modeling platforms, and explained that of all his firm's offices, “our Shanghai office was the first that was completely Revit-ized.” As a result, he said, “we're able to work and build on the same model simultaneously between both our California and Shanghai office, with daily communication back and forth. We confront more technological challenges when we work on local projects than we do in China.”

Probably the biggest remaining challenge in China rests with the implementation of an actual design. Specifically, there's still a large gap in construction standards. Although the level of quality is “much, much better; it used to be terrible,” said Jack Bouvrie, Design Director at Los Angeles-based firm Nadel Architects, there are still some concerns of overall ability with local engineering and construction firms, especially in cities outside Beijing and Shanghai. Because of regulatory limitations, American architects aren't allowed to produce construction documents or act as architect of record without a local license, so they become consultants during the construction process.

“At SOM, we're still involved to the extent we can assure ourselves that our design is being carried out in a way that we'll be satisfied with the outcome. It requires a watchful eye, from reviews of shop drawings to answering questions from con-

tractors, to going out into the field for various visits. If that watchful eye isn't there, chances are the quality will be problematic,” explained Schnair. Other firms, like DMJM, have purchased architectural engineering firms in China with Class A licenses, thereby ensuring that they'll be in charge of the projects from beginning to end.

At the same time, projects in China—unbound by public hearings and slow approval processes—happen at accelerated speeds. That means that buildings are completed in China even before the working drawings are finished for most American projects. That much speed can compromise quality, however. As Bouvrie explained, “While I think it's good that things get done quickly, the expectations are often unrealistic. You have a huge project, and the clients say they want to start construction in three months, and the project isn't even designed, yet they start digging anyway. It's really bizarre.” It can drive American architects slightly insane, as vocal clients demand completion of projects based on impatience rather than on realistic (and functional) schedules.

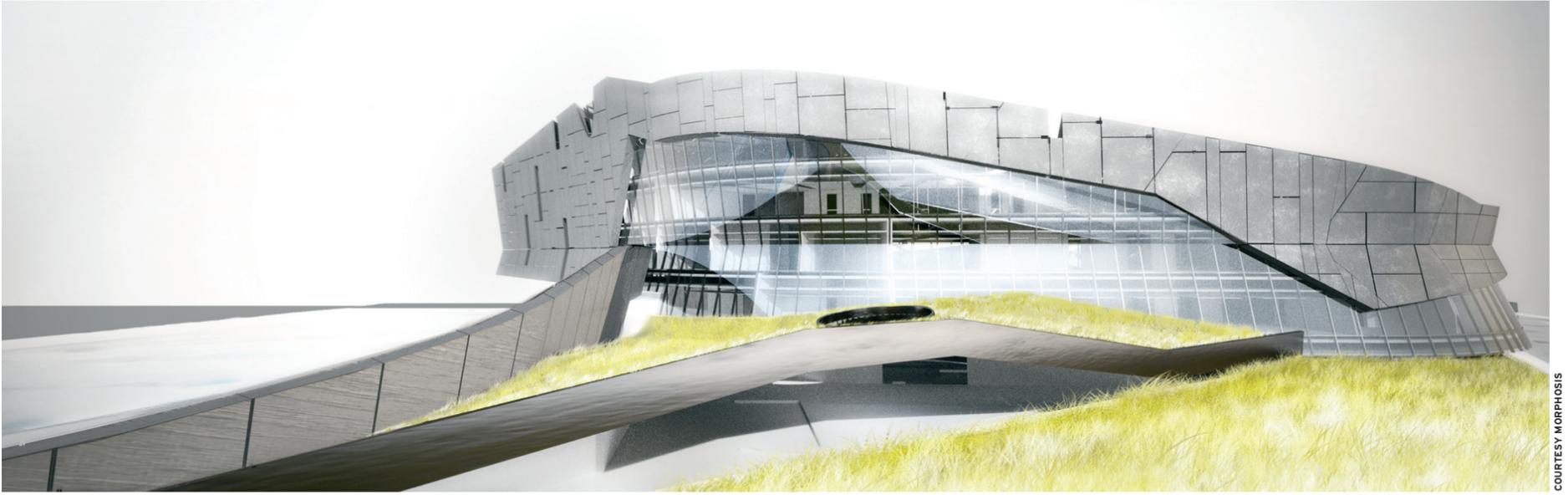
Overall, however, despite any challenges raised, most architects involved in China feel that their work there is worth the effort. “Some view China as an opportunity for exciting design,” said Yazdani. “But for me, the more important reason to be there is that architecture is a global proposition, and if you want to be involved in that dialogue, you need to be in China.”

And so, high-tech tools in hand, California architects continue to amass frequent-flier miles—or just travel electronically—as they pursue the profit in Chinese construction—and the dream of contributing to the next worldwide architectural sensation.

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Tech-aided design: A rendering of Morphosis' Giant Group Pharmaceutical Campus outside Shanghai (top); a preview of NBBJ's Chinatrust Headquarters in Taipei, Taiwan (middle); Yazdani Studio's planned concert hall in Ordos, Inner Mongolia (left).



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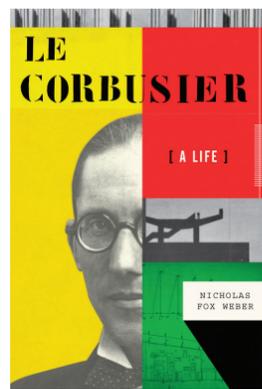
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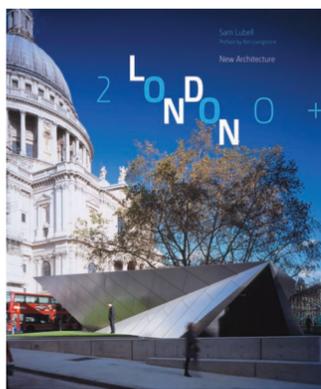
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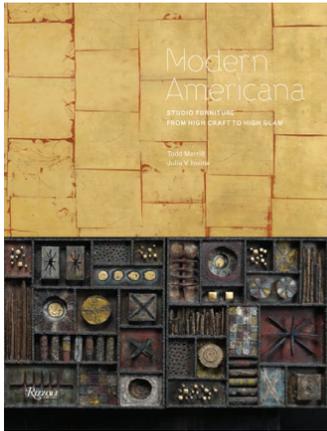
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We bring to you our editors' idiosyncratic picks of treasures, large and small, silly and serious

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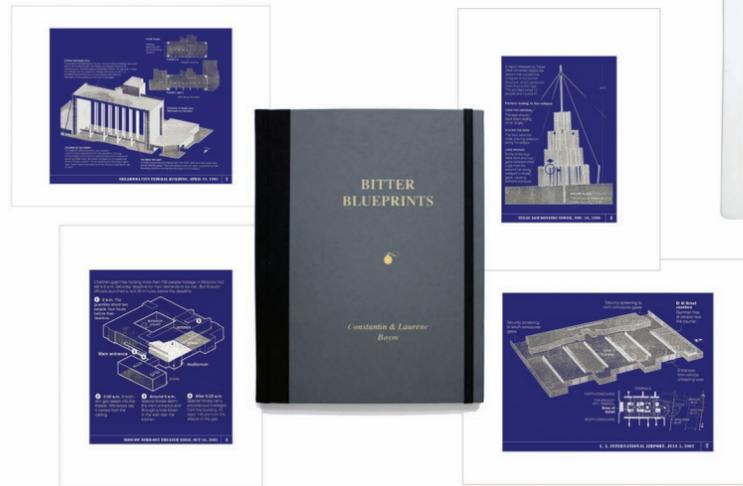
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www.aiaf.org

**THURSDAY 18  
EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Fragment to Vase:  
Approaches to  
Ceramic Restoration**  
**The Getty Commodus:  
Roman Portraits and  
Modern Copies**  
**Reconstructing Identity:  
A Statue of a God  
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The J. Paul Getty Villa  
17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.,  
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**Holiday Group Show**  
Braunstein/Quay Gallery  
430 Clementina St.,  
San Francisco  
www.bquayartgallery.com

**EVENTS**  
**Art After Hours**  
5:00 p.m.  
Monterey Museum of Art  
MMA Pacific Street  
558 Pacific St., Monterey  
www.montereyart.org

**Teen Night**  
5:00 p.m.  
Orange County Museum  
of Art  
850 San Clemente Dr.,  
Newport Beach  
www.ocma.net

**Design LA**  
7:00 p.m.  
GOOD Space  
6824 Melrose Ave.,  
Los Angeles  
www.goodmagazine.com

**SATURDAY 20  
EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Shirana Shahbazi**  
The Hammer Museum  
10899 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.hammer.ucla.edu

**Yoshitomo Nara**  
Blum & Poe  
2754 South La Cienega Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.blumandpoe.com

**SUNDAY 21  
WITH THE KIDS**  
**Family Gallery Adventures:  
Hanukkah is Here!**  
1:00 p.m.  
Contemporary Jewish  
Museum  
736 Mission St.,  
San Francisco  
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**TUESDAY 23  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Drawing the Classical Figure**  
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San Francisco  
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**SATURDAY 27  
WITH THE KIDS**  
**Kwanzaa Family Festival**  
12:00 p.m.  
The Bowers Museum  
2002 North Main St.,  
Santa Ana  
www.bowers.org

JANUARY

**SUNDAY 4  
EVENT**  
**L.A. Paint - Public Tour**  
2:00 p.m.  
Oakland Museum of  
California  
1000 Oak St., Oakland  
www.museumca.org

**WEDNESDAY 7  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Carrie Mae Weems**  
Gallery Paule Anglim  
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www.gallerypauleanglim.com

**THURSDAY 8  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Sam Francis  
Works on Paper**  
Elins Eagles-Smith Gallery  
49 Geary St., San Francisco  
www.eesgallery.com

**FRIDAY 9  
EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**From the Streets of Brooklyn**  
Thinkspace Art Gallery  
4210 Santa Monica Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.sourharvest.com/  
thinkspace

**Peter Krausz**  
Forum Gallery  
8069 Beverly Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.forumgallery.com

**FILM**  
**Annual Palm Springs  
International Film Festival**  
Through January 19  
Palm Springs Art Museum  
101 Museum Dr.,  
Palm Springs  
www.psmuseum.org

**EVENT**  
**photo la 2008**  
Through January 11  
Barker Hangar  
3021 Airport Ave.,  
Santa Monica  
www.artfairsinc.com

**SATURDAY 10  
EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Dorit Cypis**  
**Hildegard Duane**  
3875 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Suite 1308  
Los Angeles  
www.jancargallery.com

**Esther Pearl Watson**  
**Jessica Joslin**  
Billy Shire Fine Arts  
5790 Washington Blvd.,  
Culver City  
www.billyshirefinearts.com

**Kirsten Stoltmann**  
**Spencer Young**  
Sister  
437 Gin Ling Wy.,  
Los Angeles  
www.sisterla.com

**James Buckhouse: Video  
Animation and Drawings**  
**Political Draw:  
Gallery Artists Reflect on  
Current Political State in US**  
Walter Maciel Gallery  
2642 South La Cienega Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.waltermacielgallery.com

**The Intimate Picasso -  
Photographs by Lucien  
Clergue**  
Lewis Stern Fine Arts  
9002 Melrose Ave.,  
West Hollywood  
www.louissternfinearts.com

**Maira Hahn**  
**New Paintings**  
Koplin Del Rio Gallery  
6031 Washington Blvd.,  
Culver City  
www.kopplindelrio.com

**David O. Johnson**  
Little Tree Gallery  
34122 2nd St., San Francisco  
www.littletreegallery.com

**SUNDAY 11  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Sally Stevens**  
A Studio Gallery  
4260 Lankershim Blvd.,  
Studio City  
www.astudiogallery.com

**TUESDAY 13  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Olivier Babin**  
**When I Was Young /  
When You Were Kings**  
Honor Fraser  
1337 Abbot Kenney Blvd.,  
Venice  
www.honorfraser.com

**WEDNESDAY 14  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Dorit Margreiter**  
**Locus Remix. Three  
Contemporary Positions**  
MAK Center for Art and  
Architecture  
835 North Kings Road,  
West Hollywood  
www.makcenter.org

**THURSDAY 15  
LECTURE**  
**Amy Meyers**  
**How America Got a Great  
National Park - the GGNRA**  
12:30 p.m.  
Oakland Museum of  
California  
1000 Oak St., Oakland  
www.museumca.org

**SATURDAY 17  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Robert Mapplethorpe:  
Portraits**  
Palm Springs Art Museum  
101 Museum Dr.,  
Palm Springs  
www.psmuseum.org

**THURSDAY 22  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Peter Voulkos: The Montana,  
Otis & Berkeley Years**  
**Stephen Vincent: ACCESS**  
Braunstein/Quay Gallery  
430 Clementina,  
San Francisco  
www.bquayartgallery.com

**FRIDAY 23  
EVENT**  
**ART LA 2009**  
Through January 25  
Barker Hangar  
3021 Airport Ave.,  
Santa Monica  
www.artfairsinc.com

**SATURDAY 24  
LECTURE**  
**Architecture and Design  
Council Lecture Series and  
Reception**  
6:00 p.m.  
Palm Springs Art Museum  
101 Museum Dr.,  
Palm Springs  
www.psmuseum.org

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**The Future Imaginary**  
Otis College of  
Arts and Design  
Ben Maltz Gallery  
9045 Lincoln Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.otis.edu

**SUNDAY 25  
EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Art of Two Germanys/  
Cold War Cultures**  
Los Angeles County Museum  
of Art  
5905 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.lacma.org

**Exploring the Other:  
Contemporary Iran  
Through the Lens of Iason  
Athanasiadis**  
**Paper Cuts: 200 Years of  
Black Paper Dolls**  
Craft and Folk Art Museum  
5814 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Los Angeles  
www.cafam.org

**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Family Explorations! Lunar  
New Year Celebration**  
12:00 p.m.  
Oakland Museum of  
California  
1000 Oak St., Oakland  
www.museumca.org

**TUESDAY 27  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**In Focus: The Portrait**  
The J. Paul Getty Center  
1200 Getty Center Dr.,  
Los Angeles  
www.getty.edu

**FRIDAY 30  
EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Dateline 09**  
Contemporary Jewish  
Museum  
736 Mission St., San  
Francisco  
www.theejm.org



**MY PARADISE: A HUNDRED YEARS OF FINNISH  
ARCHITECTS' SUMMER HOMES**  
AIA San Francisco  
130 Sutter Street, San Francisco  
Through January 9, 2009

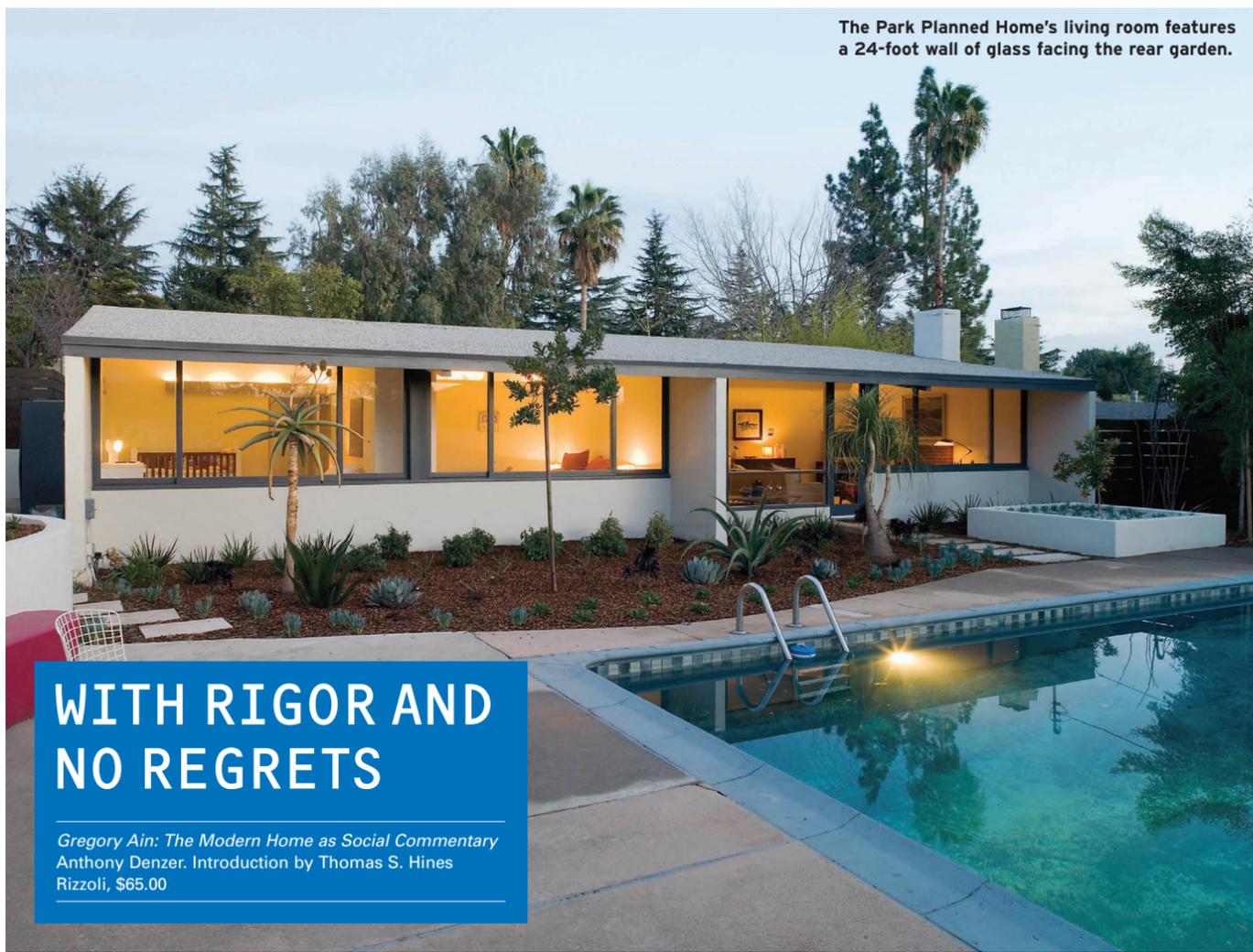
For a few scant summer months of the year, the Finnish landscape affords its people time to bask in the nation's magical extremes. Since the latter part of the 19th century, the tradition of leaving the urban environment and communing with nature became a part of Finnish culture, with whole families heading for the shores of lakes and the seaside to best enjoy the long days. For Finnish architects, the summer villa quickly became a means to experiment with distinctly vernacular and experimental building styles, where a designer's romantic dreams could be incorporated. As photographer Jari Jetsonen and architect Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen, who constructed and designed the displays in this fine exhibition, put it: "summer houses are very personal—they are like journal entries." Peeking into the villa-journals of such luminaries as Eliel Saarinen, Juhani Pallasmaa, and J.S. Sirén (above) allows us a glimpse of what the architects created when at their most candid. The generous provision of light and air dominates these spaces, but so do the individual whims of each designer. New photographs by the Jetsonens, historic material from the Museum of Finnish Architecture, and models made by Tulane University students bring some 20 examples of this tradition—spanning the last hundred years and including many lesser-known Finnish architects—richly to life.



**A "NEW AND NATIVE" BEAUTY:  
THE ART AND CRAFT OF GREENE & GREENE**  
The Huntington Library, Art Collections,  
and Botanical Gardens  
1151 Oxford Road, San Marino  
Through January 26, 2009

The brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene are among the foremost pioneers of the American Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century. In a time of rapid mass industrialization, the Greenes were trained in the "art of the hand," and like its counterpart in England, the American Arts and Crafts movement advocated artisanal craftsmanship in the construction of buildings and furnishings. Their career culminated in the creation of such "ultimate bungalows" as the anything-but-small Gamble House, which celebrates its centenary this year, and the 1905 Tichenor House (above). The Greenes' architectural style developed in California, though its influences stretched across the globe with an undeniable strain of Oriental ornamentation, as well as a splash of the English Arts and Crafts style championed by William Morris. However, these were fused with Shaker, Prairie, and other American vernacular styles, as well as with the great regional sensitivity particular to southern California, such that in 1952 the AIA lauded their creation of a "new and native language." A chronological survey of the brothers' prolific career, this exhibition features over 140 objects and many drawings and photographs, illustrating their unique design vocabulary as expressed through intricate metalwork, furniture, and glass work.

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The Park Planned Home's living room features a 24-foot wall of glass facing the rear garden.

## WITH RIGOR AND NO REGRETS

*Gregory Ain: The Modern Home as Social Commentary*  
Anthony Denzer. Introduction by Thomas S. Hines  
Rizzoli, \$65.00

Idealistic and inventive, Gregory Ain was a modernist who, for a few years before and after World War II, challenged the patterns of living in LA. "His designs sought to restructure the spatial organization of the single-family house [...] and offer alternatives to the housing patterns of suburbia," writes Anthony Denzer in this first full-

length study of the architect. In the minimal dwellings he designed for clients as progressive as himself, notably the Dunsmuir flats of 1937 and the Mar Vista tract of 1946-49, Ain was a radical in the Bauhaus tradition. His principles collided head-on with the realities and prejudices of mid-century America, and his achievement was consistently underrated.

When he died in 1988 at age 80, he was a broken and forgotten man.

Denzer draws on his doctoral dissertation at UCLA, new interviews, and a close study of the 30 Ain projects that survive to create his well-researched text. The writing is flat and the plans are printed far too small, but the story is a fascinating one. Growing up poor in

Boyle Heights, Ain's Polish-Jewish parents instilled a respect for learning and an aversion to any form of extravagance. The Beaux Arts curriculum of the University of Southern California School of Architecture seemed irrelevant to him, and he became an architect by observing Schindler and apprenticing to Neutra, while working as a draftsman in the office of B. Marcus Priteca, the prolific designer of movie palaces.

Despite his lack of experience, Ain freely criticized Neutra, and he produced his own entry for the General Electric Small House competition of 1935. That introduced an idea he explored throughout his career: the servantless house, with an open kitchen as command post for the mother of small children. The living-dining room was placed to the rear, opening into a yard. Other progressive architects still separated servant and served spaces.

His practice got off to a brisk start. A Russian-born contractor commissioned the Dunsmuir apartments for a narrow, sloping lot, and Ain exploited the limitations of the site by adopting a sawtooth plan that gave each unit a separate entrance and a private garden to the rear. It's a brilliant solution that looks as fresh today as when it was new, and it showed the architect's potential for moving beyond his mentor in the subtlety of his planning and fenestration.

When the war interrupted civilian construction, writes Denzer, Ain joined the fledgling Eames office, channeling his engineering skills into the molding of plywood for military projects and the first generation of chairs. In 1945, he reestablished his office in association with Joseph Johnson and Alfred Day, forgoing elite commissions in his eagerness to build rational multiple housing. Three schemes were partially realized, and demonstrated a mastery of versatile spaces and varied siting. Mar Vista and Avenel tract developments are still eagerly sought-after. But Ain's bold plans **continued on page 23**

CONRADO LOPEZ/COURTESY RIZZOLI

## DESIGNING THE GOOD LIFE

*The Architecture of William Krisel*  
SPF:a Gallery at MODAA  
8609 Washington Blvd., Culver City  
Through January 15, 2009



Twin Palms Estates

COURTESY MODAA GALLERY

William Krisel, the architect who played a major role in putting a modernist stamp on Palm Springs and wide expanses of the San Fernando Valley, is the subject of this small exhibit at the MODAA Gallery. Krisel, who is still alive, was part of an outstanding crop of architects to emerge from the University of Southern California after World War II. His early influences were Raphael Soriano and Garrett Eckbo; he apprenticed with Paul Laszlo and later, Victor Gruen.

Krisel formed the firm Palmer & Krisel with partner Dan Palmer in 1924. Their work during the 1940s and 50s reflected the hopes of tract-home builders to deliver an informal and invigorating lifestyle for a minimal price. By the mid-50s, Krisel had designed more than 10,000 homes, with flat, A-frame, or butterfly roofs, screened entries, open floor plans, high-beamed ceilings, breezeways, and landscaped yards. Somehow, the workaholic had a hand in all of them. Popular developments in Palm Springs included Las Palmas Estates and Royal Desert Palms, a group of tract houses developed by Bob Alexander, captured in black and

white by Julius Shulman. Similar pictures of Krisel's work are bustling with women in A-line skirts and men pushing babies in prams. This was the good life, circa Ike.

Over his 51-year career, Krisel expanded into office buildings and apartment towers, holding firm to his modernist roots. He also built the House of Tomorrow, an experiment in modern living that impressed developer Alexander so much that he made it his personal residence. Even today, builders in Southern California are recreating versions of Krisel's old houses for hip new owners: Once again, his style is bringing modernism to the rest of us.

The exhibit includes 64 large renderings, along with 14 evocative photographs and numerous reproductions of floor plans that all capture the simple but elegant and lively spirit of Krisel's work. Unfortunately, other than an introductory note, none of the individual displays are identified by year, location, or project description. Without this information, it is hard to gain a deeper appreciation for the work of a man who did so much to shape the parched, unanimated landscape of Southern California. **GREG GOLDIN**

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 17, 2008

# INSIDE THE BOX

*Big Box Reuse*  
Julia Christensen  
MIT Press, \$29.95



JULIA CHRISTENSEN

Julia Christensen grew up in Bardstown, Kentucky, a place known for its bourbon whiskey and historic architecture. There, she saw Wal-Mart come to town, build, and abandon a big box store, which ended up as the site of the new county courthouse. A writer and photographer who teaches at Oberlin College, Christensen was inspired to visit and photograph other big box stores like Winn-Dixie and Kmart that have been repurposed. Her photographs are currently on view in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie Museum of Art, where her images are included in the show *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes*.

In *Big Box Reuse*, Christensen highlights ten cases. The huge metal sheds have been converted to Head Start centers, senior care facilities, indoor go-kart tracks, and libraries. One houses a Route 66 Museum in Lebanon, Missouri, another the Spam Museum and offices of the Hormel meatpacking company

in Austin, Minnesota. One has become a church in Pinellas Park, Florida. None are especially great or inspiring architecture, but several involve extensive refurbishing that nearly disguise their origins.

Christensen's travels are proof, if we needed it, that Stewart Brand's *How Buildings Learn* belongs in the architectural canon alongside *Delirious New York*, *Learning from Las Vegas*, and *Vers Une Architecture*. On the highway, however, reuse is more about earning than learning: Budgets are minimal and the repurposing work, it turns out, requires more than simply redecorating these giant sheds. But while we regularly honor architects for urban reuse, Christensen reports that several of the architects involved in projects were too embarrassed by the work to want their names used. Some of the facilities are grim, others less so, though none of the architects here are as sophisticated as James Wines and

SITE's witty Best Products stores from the 1970s. Still, real creativity is evident, for all the budget limits, in the Lebanon Laclede County Library in Missouri. Credit goes to Joan True and Charlie Johnson, the interior and exterior architects of that project.

We are accustomed to reuse in the city—former sweatshops housing fashion labels and lofts for printing presses sheltering ad agencies—but pay less attention to reuse elsewhere. Still, it is there. Perhaps you have to be a certain age to recognize the many former Howard Johnson's restaurants or A&P grocery stores that now vend dinette sets or carpet remnants. Not far from my home in New Jersey, the steep blue roof of an erstwhile International House of Pancakes sells iPhones as an AT&T store. Reuse along the highway will increasingly become a fact of life as more big boxes become available in the current economy. As I write this, Circuit City has just

announced bankruptcy and plans to close more than a hundred stores, and Linens N' Things is running its liquidation sale. Architects looking for work in the current climate would do well to keep their eyes hopefully trained on America's highway strips for signs of potential. The way seems open for more clever ideas of building inside these modern "ruins."

Readers may be surprised that growth, not recession, has made most of these buildings available. Wal-Mart finds it more economical to build a new, larger store down the road than to expand an existing one, leaving empty stores behind like so much discarded snakeskin. Moreover, the chain wants to keep the empty stores as placeholders against competitors, Christensen reports.

It would be easy to react to her stories with anger and indignation at the power of chains that have decimated Main Streets (reuse is struggling there), and bemoan a country where the shivering, starving public sector is forced to wear the cast-off clothing of an uncontrolled private one. Christensen, however, is more encouraged by this process than others might be, although some of the statements from officials involved in these projects seem naively optimistic, even boosterish. I wonder how many other efforts to reuse other big box buildings have been in vain; most of her tales have upbeat endings.

Yet the subliminal message of Christensen's photographs, which are reminiscent of Stephen Shore's—empty of people, with expanses of alienating asphalt parking lot or sheet metal facade—is less hopeful than her words. And Christensen's case studies raise more general questions she doesn't answer: How durable are these buildings? What is the responsibility of the big chains? What can law or planning do to make big box reuse easier, perhaps by studying the modular mode of malls? (Pull out a Gap, plug in a Delia's as fashions change.)

Still, Christensen's enthusiasm is an antidote to cynicism, encouraging and humane. "As I stand there in the parking lot," she writes, "snapping photos of that reused Wal-Mart sign, I look around and observe an endless ribbon of strip malls, full of buildings just like this. I think to myself, they have stories too. All of these faceless, nameless, corporate big box buildings—which turn over so quickly for the sake of 'business'—actually have stories behind them, stories well hidden behind their stoic facades. These buildings have an impact on the lives of people."

PHIL PATTON WRITES FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, *I.D.*, AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

## UNPACKING ARCHIGRAM

*L.A.W.U.N Project #19: Studies in the Real*  
Edited by David Greene and Samantha Hardingham  
AA Publications, \$70.00



Suitaloon (1967)

COURTESY AA PUBLICATIONS

For David Greene, one of the founding members of architectural iconoclasts Archigram, the expression of ideas in print rather than in built form is a long tradition: His investigations have historically been rolling, incomplete experiments. His L.A.W.U.N (Locally Available World Unseen Networks) projects began in 1967 with *The Bottery*, a phenomenally prescient imagining of technologies we now take for granted. The present publication, *L.A.W.U.N Project #19*, revisits many of Greene's designs dating from the 1960s to projects of the present day.

Born of Britain's postwar recov-

ery and the reclamation of modernism by state-funded welfare programs (and arguably the one moment when the country was "groovy"), Archigram was both a group and a magazine. The product was a collision of words—architecture and telegram—and of several young London architects: Warren Chalk, Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron, and Michael Webb. The group used a unique and vivid graphic sensibility to proclaim their radically playful paper architecture, railing against the conservative environment of the era and excitedly exploring the freedom suggested by evolving

technologies. Though Cook was the vocalist of the gang, Greene is often credited as being the poet and most visionary wayward of them all.

Since Archigram's eventual dissolution in the mid-1970s, Greene has, like the rest of the group, had a peripatetic teaching career. Currently first-year design tutor at London's Architectural Association (AA), he runs the master's program in advanced architectural design at Oxford Brookes University and pursues research at the aptly named Centre for Experimental Architecture (EXP) at the University of Westminster. *L.A.W.U.N Project #19* emerged **continued on page 23**

**UNPACKING ARCHIGRAM** continued from page 22 from a dialogue with Samantha Hardingham, an author and research fellow at the EXP. Tipped off to a stack of cardboard boxes in Greene's garden shed, Hardingham unearthed an archive of projects that this book presents. The volume is not simply an archive, but an attempt to revisit the projects and assess their validity today.

For this project and its sister exhibition (itself a separate entity, *L.A.W.U.N #20*), Hardingham and Greene invited four designers to reinterpret four of the original projects. Former teaching colleague Shin Egashira adapted Greene's thesis project from 1959, a design for a mosque in Baghdad; Theodore Spyropoulos of the AA Design Research Lab and founder of miniforms took on one of Greene's best known projects, *The Living Pod*; textile sculptor Ronan Merz produced the first-ever prototype of *The Hairy Coat*, extending Greene's notion of a man who carries his architecture in his pocket. The accompanying exhibition also featured the work of architect and filmmaker Nic Clear, tackling Greene's ongoing *Invisible University* project and the idea of education through wireless communication. The book's real gold, however, is its reproduction of a back catalogue of Greene's visionary projects, each accompanied by a commentary from the man himself, written especially for this book.

Parts of the text, including the chapter and project headings, can appear ponderous, even deliberately obtuse. This seems at odds with the playful and humorous ren-

derings, naive models that would look at home in kindergarten and contrast with the über-bureaucratic categorizing of the projects they illustrate. Yet a little patience and vision are all it takes to get past initial cynicism: In his commentaries, Greene is candid and informal, explaining the origins and rationale of each project with insight and humility.

The book's design is remarkable in its holistic aptness. The cover and binding are reminiscent of a "jotter," or notebook, giving the impression of a loose collection of notes and works—exercises in progress. Inside, the pages are rich with 1960s ephemera, particularly ads for tools and gadgets that hint at Greene's predilection for mechanics. Following Marshall McLuhan's statement that "culture is what most people are doing most of the time," Greene's deliberate inclusion of graphic ephemera is an attempt to evoke the climate in which his ideas and approach gestated; reprints of Archigram's output reveal visual crosscurrents between pop culture, the group, and Greene's own investigations. Several illuminating essays have been printed using an experimental process, in which shades of ink were varied and modulated during printing, creating a unique gradation on each imprint.

This adds up to a lurid joyride through Greene's mind, which is always retracting from conventional notions of form and moving ever more toward "ideas about ideas." The book provides proof that the *L.A.W.U.N* series is what Archigram failed to become: an ongoing questioning of architectural thought.

**SHUMI BOSE IS AN INTERN AT AN.**



**WITH RIGOR AND NO REGRETS** continued from page 21 for standardized construction were frustrated by the hostility of the building trades, and an ambitious plan for a multiracial community with shared amenities was blocked by the Federal Housing Authority (which demanded restrictive covenants) and local opposition to "socialist" housing.

The housing authority also regarded open kitchens and flat roofs as too risky, and pushed the developer of the Mar Vista tract to include Colonials and Cape Cod houses. Ain and many of his clients were censored for their association with the Communist Party. Denzer cites the hysterical 1953 speech of Elizabeth Gordon, the reactionary editor of

*House Beautiful* and tireless promoter of Frank Lloyd Wright, who denounced modernism as the expression of totalitarianism (apparently unaware that both the Nazis and Soviets had stifled it).

Ain was a natural for the Case Study House program—but he was never asked (or quietly refused) and the show house he designed for MoMA in 1950 fell short of expectations. He closed his office and became an inspiring teacher at USC and Penn State. Ain urged his students—one of whom was Frank Gehry—to build "a vital harmonious environment for the whole human community." He denounced "caprice" and "groundless novelty," insisting that only rational design could restore architecture to its status as

"a universal language." Though his career was brief, Ain merits this careful reappraisal. At a time when we all are renouncing excess, his work shows how to live large in small spaces. Spare, humane, and infused with natural light, they are as fresh and relevant as they were six or seven decades ago. **MICHAEL WEBB IS AN LA ARCHITECTURE CRITIC.**

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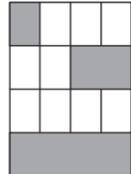
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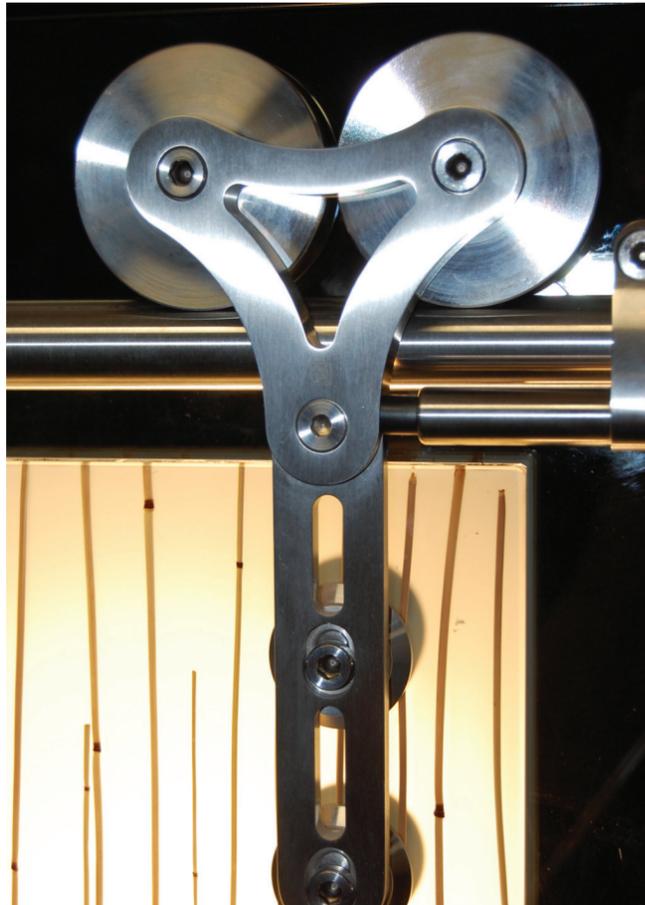
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 17, 2008



COURTESY PALAZZO WESTWOOD

## PALAZZO CASTS A PALL ON WESTWOOD VILLAGE

After two decades of contentious community debate and fierce parochial politics, a major mixed-use development, Palazzo, has opened its doors in Westwood Village. Let the debates continue, for if nothing else, the project points to a disturbing drift in the design world, where heralded mixed-use projects do not necessarily translate into accessible urbanity as promised, but rather into economically isolating banality—at least in this less than inspiring instance.

Woe to Westwood, now promoting as its new heart the Palazzo's 350 luxury apartments, an array of gilt-edge amenities, a cavernous 1,252-space garage, and 50,000 square feet of mostly high-end retail and restaurants. Shoe-horned onto the four-plus acre site and shrouded in a nauseating canary yellow, the heavily hyped development has all the charm of an extended-stay mid-city hotel residence. It is more citadel than community.

A Casden Properties conceit, it was designed with an experienced if predictable hand by the venerable firm of Van Tilburg Banvard & Soderburgh in the all-too-familiar Spanish colonial style that has carpeted swaths of sprawling Southern California over the last quarter century.

To be sure, the apartments seem to work, deftly maximizing light and air in limited interiors in no fewer than 17 different floor plans. The now-standard gourmet kitchens replete with granite countertops and spacious closets are attractive. But the attempt to clad the exterior in an Andalusian mode of bygone Westwood is more boorish than Moorish. The detailing that distinguishes the style is just not there, no doubt a budget consideration by the infamously cost-conscious CEO Alan Casden, with whom Van Tilburg has worked before.

The project's aggressive sales pitch may play off of the cultural attractions and conveniences of the adjacent UCLA megacosm, but with rents in the \$4 per square foot per month range—one bedroom is listed starting at \$2,940, two bedrooms at \$3,875—the Palazzo is more in tune with NYU and New York real estate prices than LA's. And let us not forget the rock climbing wall and concierge service. We are talking here of "a secluded five-star resort with the advantages of stepping out your door into a vibrant and dynamic cityscape," in the words of Casden that hint at [Grove developer Rick] Caruso envy.

How "dynamic" that cityscape will be is questionable. Clearly, neither Palazzo's residences and retail nor its streetscaping

are designed to serve the penny-pinching, poor-tipping college crowd that in the past so animated Westwood and made it particularly attractive to that forever-18 crowd. Especially fun were the weekend nights when the village's array of first-run landmark movie theaters existed. For a while, it was LA's premier pedestrian scene.

But that scene has long languished, following several nasty incidents over the past few decades that prompted a security-concerned UCLA to try to keep its students on campus by providing more on-site housing and diversions. Meanwhile, the obtrusive wannabe Bruin teenagers from the Valley who used to hang out in the village flocked to Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade and elsewhere to act out.

Casden was quite direct in his remarks at the opening, declaring that the hope of the Palazzo is that it will attract deep-pocketed residents and visitors to the faded village, and spur its revitalization and property values, even in these tough times. Echoing this hope for a new community in Westwood of "new people and new top-tier retailers" was Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, ever alert to both old and new campaign contributors.

Conversely, that heralded revitalization was the paramount fear of those objecting to the project during its protracted planning stage, as they quixotically clung to a nostalgic vision of the area's past as a comfortable college town catering to both students and the surrounding community of postgraduates and professionals. In addition, the feeling was that Westwood

did not need to become a regional attraction to pump up its real estate, and in fact was potentially more valuable as a modest yet distinctive development.

Westwood Village was indeed once a village, designed in a fanciful Spanish style and in a suburban spirit to serve a burgeoning Los Angeles in the Roaring '20s. Planned by one of the more acclaimed land use designers of the time, Harland Bartholomew, the village was the focal point of a high-end housing tract developed by the Janss Corporation, adjacent to a new campus for UCLA that had outgrown its downtown location.

Nevertheless, the hyped development dollars and anticipated local taxes that an ambitious high-end mixed-use project would divert from the adjacent wealthy municipal enclaves of Beverly Hills and Santa Monica was too much for the city of Los Angeles to ignore, even if it meant enduring some raucous public hearings and nasty press and turning its backs on UCLA's fast-food and fast-forward crowd.

The politically-connected Casden persevered, cheered on by local real estate interests and city economists, who see the village's future and their profits pinned to high-end development. And if the mixed-use Palazzo doesn't quite work as hoped, and Westwood slips further into somnolence, perhaps a streetcar going up and down Glendon Avenue would help, just like at the Grove and the Americana. They are all beginning to look the same, anyway.

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