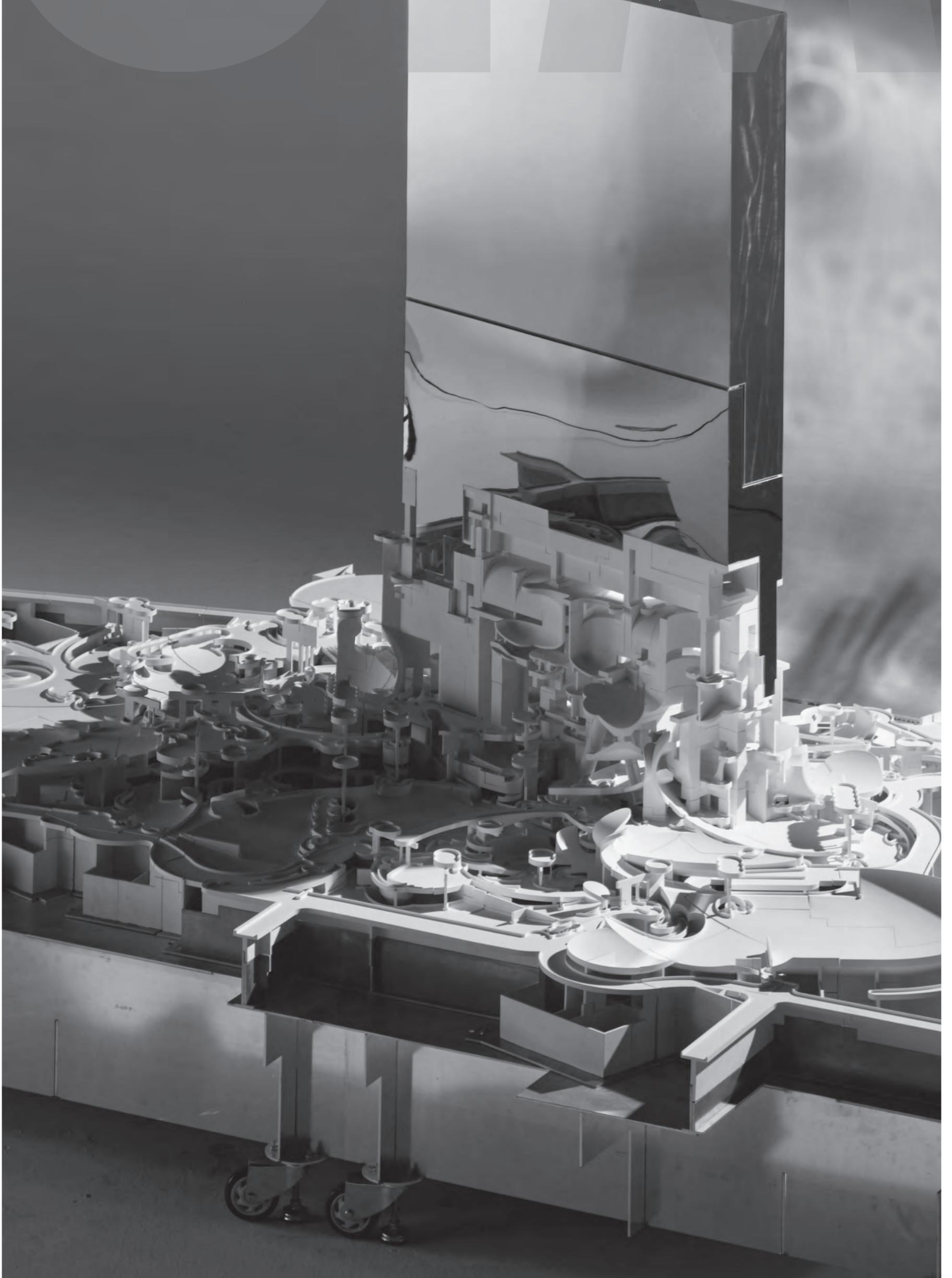


OF THE MOMENT

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“The key to the museum, the mission, is to bring to the public exposure to progressive architecture and design.”

Stephen Kanner, 2010, Architect Magazine



This publication, *Of The Moment*, with pieces contributed by architects and designers, writers and other ambitious thinkers, is the culmination of the various relationships and dialogues that, as described in the words of Arthur Drexler, can be “too complex for presentation in exhibition form.”

A+D Architecture + Design Museum is proud to have served as its publishing partner. It is in keeping with the mission of A+D, the only nonprofit institution in greater Los Angeles dedicated to exploring the allure of architecture and design, and its impact on our everyday lives.

Cofounded in 2001 by the late architects Stephen Kanner, Bernard Zimmerman, and Joe Osa-Addo, the museum has curated exhibitions that propelled academic and cultural pursuits, community engagement, and the ever-meandering dialogue about the built environment. Museums typically magnify the cultural benefit of paintings, cinema, literature, musical composition and performance, but rarely do we see institutions like ours dedicated to architecture and design at a commensurate level.

For example, A+D has been involved with shows such as *Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture*, curated by Sekou Cooke and co-presented by Helms Design District and SoCal NOMA. The exhibition surrounded visitors with experimental visualizations, innovative installations and sound designs, all alongside floor-to-ceiling graffiti by the Los Angeles artist Prime. *Close to the Edge's* groundbreaking contributions from musical and visual artists, students, academics and practitioners translated the link between hip-hop and the creation of innovative space, and inspired a new architectural narrative.

In the relatively short period of time that the Museum has been open at 170 South La Brea, our willingness to push boundaries has continued. *We Are Here*, developed by guest curator and MMR founding partner Laure Michelon, focused on how individuals find their place within the intricate tapestry of contemporary life today, conveyed through a complex blend of data, geography and sociocultural dynamics. *MACHINA DA24 >> INTERLUDE*, curated by A+D Museum's Stephanie Ibarra, presented an exhibition of A+D's 2024 Design Awards winning entries selected by juries for each category consisting of a deliberate mix of high profile architects, designers, writers, researchers, artists, strategists, educators and curators.

Our first successful year at the Museum's new home in mid-city would not have been possible without the support of sponsors who include, in 2023-2024 alone: Alonzo Construction, Arup, bulthaup, Standard Architecture, Kilograph, Blythe and Thom Mayne, Patti & Brian Stewart, Build Group, Clark Construction, Collins & Collins, One Electric, VS America, Joe Day, Smith Clementi, Bestor Architecture, CO Architects, Crest Real Estate, DCI Engineers, Griffin-Enright Architects, KDA Kevin Daily Architects, Steelworks, Studio PCH, Swinerton, A3K Consulting, Autex Acoustics, Brenda Levin, Cynthia Kanner, Gensler, Kurt Fischer Engineering, and Riot Games. These companies, friends, former team members—affectionately known as the A+D family—are following the work done by the Museum, for which we are sincerely grateful.

We also wish to acknowledge our dedicated and hardworking board members—Farooq Ameen, Frank Clementi, Keely Colcleugh, John Dale, Eames Demetrios, Roger Fricke, Kristen Geier, Elizabeth Valmont Harrington, Silvia Kuhle, Nancy Levens, Parini Mehta, Naeiri Petrosian, Patrice Speed, Brian Stewart—and our current team including A+D Museum Assistant Director Stephanie Ibarra, and our strong volunteer team Rocio Citro, Derek Meriwether, Marquise Charles, Melet Halabaso, Seth Calmes, David Salmastyan, Janna De Vera, Kevin Sherrod and Nile Nabet.

Why *Of The Moment*? For more than a century, Los Angeles has been a laboratory for architectural experimentation. In recent years, it seems, not so much. Rising land prices, growing community and code constraints, housing and education costs for young architects—all these have reduced the design freedoms so long enjoyed in the Southland. Or have they? *Of The Moment* asks if LA is still relevant to global architecture, and finds it is, as evidenced in this showcase of recent projects, from ADUs to massive infrastructure, AI imaginaries to new models of linear living. Architects, academics, students and interlocutors reflect on the work on display, and the goals and challenges for an emerging generation of talent. Barbara Bestor, Greg Lynn, and Joe Day riff on the content in a running commentary at the top of each page. Enjoy!



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A Place Models the World, Yaohua Wang, Preliminary Research Office, 2023-24, Photo by Runzi Zhu.

A Place Models The World is an ongoing investigation into architecture and its relationship with contemporary physical space. The “place” imagines public space as a possible world, materialized as a physical model measuring 5x6 meters in footprint and 3 meters in height. In this place, geometry serves as the common ground for understanding, depicting imaginary landscapes with geometrical forms, bridging the gap between novel and familiar architectural conditions. The model is composed of thirteen “chunks” that come together to form a whole. These chunks provide mobility for the model, allowing it to be fabricated and travel across disparate geographies.

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GREG LYNN: IN THIS NEWSPAPER, I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE QUANTITY AND SCALE OF INSTITUTIONAL PROJECTS IN LA NOW, AND VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE INNOVATION IN THINKING ABOUT HOUSING PROJECTS AS WELL. THERE ARE THESE TWO POLES THAT I DON'T GET TO SEE IN OTHER PLACES. IF WE WERE DOING A NEWSPAPER LIKE THIS FOR NEW YORK OR

BOSTON OR VIENNA OR ZURICH, WE WOULD NOT SEE THIS RANGE OF INNOVATION IN HOW PEOPLE LIVE, AND TONS OF INNOVATION IN CIVIC CULTURE, THOSE TWO POLES. NOTHING IN THE MIDDLE. IT COULD BE THE CURATING OF THE PUBLICATION, OR IT COULD BE THE SCENE. Joe Day: It does seem like the way offices are looking away from the

Reenergizing the "Chacra"

"Chacra," La Picada, Entre Ríos, Argentina, Florencia Pita & Co. + HDA-x

As, respectively, professor and director at SCI-Arc, Florencia Pita and Hernán Díaz Alonso expect boundaries to be pushed and breached. In this variant of the traditional Argentinian agricultural "chacra" building, they model it.



The design of this house in La Picada, Entre Ríos, Argentina, represents a blend of tradition and modernity, with a strong focus on integrating with the surroundings of the Argentinian landscape. The use of materials like concrete and metal, ubiquitous in local construction, adds to the design's character and contributes to a closer connection with the rural environment.

One relevant feature of the house is its expansive articulated roof that doubles up as a gallery space, reminiscent of the traditional "Chacra" architecture. This design element provides a shaded outdoor area and serves as a vantage to connect with the region's expansive horizon and deep red sunsets.



Gerónimo Uranga

defining typology of LA architecture: single family homes. Right now, the pull is in either direction from here. I'm excited about ADUs at the moment, but over that last ten years, many friends have focused more on multi-unit housing. Almost everyone I know is trying to find a new

Buried Treasure

Hill House, Montecito, California, Donaldson + Partners
Environmental resilience, long-term sustainability, and a symbiosis between the particulars of the site and tectonic plasticity guided the design of this home for an art collector. The architects explain their concept.

The clients endeavored to create a 21st-century space for housing their art collection, for social engagement and cultural inspiration. Our design demonstrated our exploration of an embedded architecture built to endure for generations, where the distinctions between topography, landscape, and architecture are blurred.

The Hill House presents a new possibility for the contemporary villa, an exploration of an operative tectonic vocabulary integrated with a domestic residential program within a geomorphic form. The typical Palladian Villa parti, defined by an isolated object dominating the landscape, is replaced by a house embedded both topographically and metaphorically. The villa sits on the memory of a hill that existed before being leveled by bulldozers. From the street, the house disappears, representing itself as a neighborhood-enhancing landscaped hill. This landscaped hill, continued onto the roof shell, is designed to evolve over time, growing into a water-

steady-state that works for them and their practice to either side of stand-alone houses. It's funny that Hill House, what we are looking at now, is in fact a museum with a nucleus of a home. I agree with you that at the residential scale it seems really vital and strange and different from

efficient garden of seasonal color. Landscaped courtyards encircle the plan in radiating green fingers.

Life continues into the future under the large protective concrete shell, a shell that can resist the environmental extremes of our endangered planet. Wildfire, earthquake, flood, drought, failing electrical grid, and other less predictable forces all factored into the design of this off-the-grid enabled home. Overt expressions of structural assembly give rise to an interior that is both ready-made and majestic. An interior plaster "liner" bends and carves in complex geomorphic forms to shape indoor space and reflect

daylight deep within the building. Planar surfaces undulate, contrasting the bare concrete with graphic spatial shadow niches, offset by the tectonic assemblies of fully openable glass walls. The eye and the body flow within and out of the house musically and organically, deriving pleasure with every haptic touch to the dramatic Montecito landscape. Relationships between indoors and out, between the frames of human consciousness and nature, are made more symbiotic, allowing the activities of the domestic, and the spaces for art to breathe, to gain a new and fully environmental state of being, as architecture must now be.



the way the 20th century worked in LA. **Barbara Bestor:** *That seem to me very much also about the difference between, say, 1991 when the discourse urbanistically in Los Angeles was about exodus and urban sprawl. Tons of critiques of suburbs. That's all anybody ever*

talked about. So, as the cultural tables have turned, next generations want to live in urban cores. We actually have plenty of room to do things that are innovative and experimental in terms of housing as opposed to a dense high-rise city like New York or

Parallel and Promiscuous: Architects Work with Artists

LA's rich art and architecture scene has produced many fruitful collaborations. **Anna Neimark**, partner at First Office Architecture and faculty at SCI-Arc, sat down for a conversation with architects **Matthew Au** and **Mira Henry** (Current Interests / SCI-Arc) and **Katy Barkan**, (Now Here / UCLA) in their Boyle Heights studio.

Anna Neimark (AN): Before meeting you three, I spoke with Mark Lee about the relationship of architects with artists. After all, together with Sharon Johnston, Johnston Marklee are the GOAT architects of LA's art scene. I recalled Caruso St John collaborating with Thomas Demand and Erin Besler working together with Fiona Connor at their 2017 Chicago Biennial, *Make New History*. Mark talked about Frank Gehry and Claes Oldenburg developing designs for the Chiat/Day Building, and Lawrence Halprin joining forces with Barbara Stauffacher Solomon at Sea Ranch. "Why have architects always been drawn to artists?" I asked. Invoking the late cultural theorist Dave Hickey, Mark pointed to the fundamental differences between the rising value of artworks and the diminishing value of buildings. He pointed out that the IRS treats a work of art as a self-created asset; its value—and therefore deduction allotted when gifted to a museum—is calculated from the material costs that went into making it. What's the cost of paint, of brushes, of metal, of rubbish, in the grand scheme of things? Not much. So, the infrastructure of the art market exists to increase the value of art with each transaction, from artist to gallery to museum. By contrast, building budgets are quite high. And with time, building materials (that take an incredible amount of labor and care to specify) usually only ever decline—they leak, burn, corrode, or—more commonly in LA—get eaten by termites. Inversely to the ever-increasing value of art, the value of a building tends to go down. Perhaps we entangle architecture with art to form an equilibrium of economic value, of cultural exchange, of prolonged life support? *I turn to the architects in this room.*

Katy, you are currently working with the artists Christina Quarles and Catherine Opie; Matthew and Mira, you are collaborating with Laura Owens and Lauren Halsey. Both your studios' work is intimate, material, and technical, and the experimentation is palpable: the tools and models are everywhere. Can you describe the *labor* that is hidden inside the word *collaboration*, and how you understand your material techniques and methods in relation to the artists'?

Mira Henry (MH): There is a refreshing sense of trust that comes out of the collaboration with the artists we work with. It's a clear recognition and mutual respect.

Katy Barkan (KB): LA has, for a long time now, represented a permissive space for architecture (and art for that matter), and working with artists has afforded us a double-permission by working outside of the terms of our own field. There are many assumptions around the jurisdictions of art and architecture, but we have found that working across these boundaries has produced a more promiscuous collaboration that flows both ways. Our recent collaborations with the photographer Catherine Opie, and with the painter Christina Quarles, has allowed us to think more expansively about the culture of materials and invited them to think in spatial



Lauren Halsey and Current Interests, *sister dreamer, lauren halsey's architectural ode to the surge n splurge of south central Los Angeles*, model.

terms. We are finding that this reciprocity is helping to push us up against areas of conservatism in our respective work.

Matthew Au (MA): There are these mythologies around artist-architect collaborations that we tend to de-romanticize. This image of the lone, unconstrained artist melding with the measured architect to create a singular, grand work has never been our experience. Instead, we would describe our working and creative relationships as parallel, responding to what we see and like about each other's work. After all, these collaborations are rarely singular but entangled with various stakeholders and bureaucracies—the gallerists, donors, project managers, politicians, city-planning agencies, and contractors—each with their own say in the collaboration.

MH: Lately, we have been working on cast and pigmented materials—concrete, ceramic, rubber, and wood—things that are solid with integral color and tone, textured, and weighty. These are heavy components, and they bring up questions around assembly and fabrication: How do you hang it? Level it? Space it? How do you communicate intent in the smallest of details to fabricators so you can scale the production of it? What has been interesting about working with artists on artist-led projects, is that we can insist on the strictest tolerance. In the past few weeks, for example, we have been tirelessly working with engineers, contractors, and fabricators to maintain a 1/16" tolerance across a 10,000 sq ft plaza. And this allows us to think about the plaza as a system.

MA: A significant amount of our labor is spent resolving the invisible supports that enable the precision of things seen on the surface. Because we are so used to specifying with tools that encourage infinite zooming in, doing all of these studies is critical for us to avoid getting lost in that.

MH: The aggregate concrete pieces would be an example of R&D that we've worked on in the office for three or four years. They started as a ground paving system that eventually became a vertical cladding system for *Rough House*, a residential project for an art collector. It took a few years to find the right fabricator that could translate something heavy and horizontal into a panel that is comparably thin and lighter. The composition of the concrete had to fundamentally change. Coincidentally, we ended up using a similar hanging cleat system that Lauren Halsey uses on her sculptures. This meant that we could share the same vocabulary, and understand what would entail from the architecture meeting the art.

KB: The question of support comes up a lot in our collaborations with artists as well—literally, but also conceptually. Catherine Opie, for example, has been dealing with architecture and infrastructure as a subject of her work for many years and more recently has turned to architects as collaborators. We met at the American Academy in Rome while we were both developing work around the Vatican. In each of our practices we were questioning the authority of the

architecture and monuments of the city-state, culminating in my project *Obelisk Interior* and Cathy's work *Walls, Windows, and Blood*. She was clear that her vertical panoramas of the Vatican walls should be leaning, precarious. This led us to many discussions about the historical relationship between art and architecture in advancing the power of the church. Rather than remain invisible, the plinths of *Walls, Windows, and Blood* are made of pink marble recalling Bernini's Sant'Andrea al Quirinale and the Baroque metaphors of material as flesh. The aim was to inextricably relate architecture to the body, drawing my work into a new proximity with material, color, and metaphor. This slip between content and support resurfaced in another recent project with Opie for her studio library. Cathy has an extensive art library which far exceeded the capacity of her shelving. Our brief was to subsume the existing library within a new extended wall system that would act also as a partition separating a meeting and research area from the everyday production space. The design comprises two double height library walls and a low linear series of moveable units. The strategy was to bind the whole with a horizontal datum of color that distinguishes the work space below from the reading space above. It wasn't until the project was complete that we stepped back and realized that we had constructed a horizon-line for Catherine Opie—a recurrent theme almost synonymous with her body of work from her ice-houses (2001) to surfers (2003) to oceanscapes (2010).

AN: It's amazing to see how directly the horizons in Opie's landscape photographs transfer to the architectural design of the domestic bookshelf, which, in turn, houses the art books that publish them in print. It's a beautiful circular relation. Matthew and Mira, is there a similar self-reflexive translation of Owen's techniques surrounding pixelization with your articulation of parts of her house?

MA: We began working with Laura Owen's Studio around 2018 to help on a commission she had at the new terminal at La Guardia



Matthew Au, Mira Henry, Katy Barkan, Anna Neimark at Current Interests / Now Here offices in Boyle Heights.

Airport. I've long admired Laura as a painter, and knew her work for these large beautiful, materially rich paintings with conceptual nods to histories of Figurative and Pattern & Decoration painting. The commission had her translate this work into a 450'x60' mosaic made of 1" ceramic tiles along a doubly curved surface punctuated by check-in tellers, escalators, air ducts, and egress lighting. She needed an architect to help manage all of these built conditions and also to help manage the material logistics of a project at that scale.

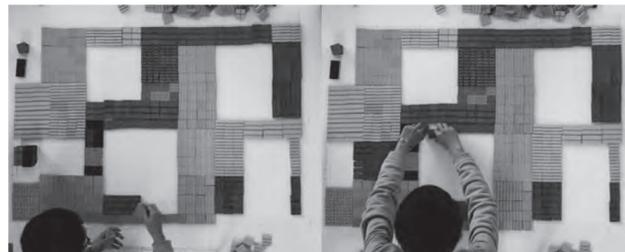
MH: In 2020 we began *Block House*, a residential project for Laura that grew out of our mutual interest in working with clay craft. The exterior is organized like a patchwork textile made with three-dimensional cast porcelain cladding. There is also a nice groundscapes element composed of bricks that we describe as "brick carpets."

AN: I love that she wanted to envelop herself with the ceramic tiles, inspired by the pixels in her own paintings! This beautifully toned model produces a vibrating permutation, not quite a pattern. Katy, could you speak about your collaboration on the house for the painter Christina Quarles?

KB: It is exciting to be working with Quarles, a painter working on large and layered canvases, and who is deeply engaged in a maximalist material practice. Unfortunately Christina's house was recently lost to a fire and so our initial meetings involved assurances on our part that we would not deliver a minimalist or sanitized architecture. Instead, we have been working together to resurrect and redirect the idiosyncrasies of her 1960's mountain bungalow towards new ends. For us, the project has been an invitation to operate from a new set of references: leaning into heavily rusticated stone façades, stained glass, broken ceramic mosaic surfaces, and rough stucco. The project builds on themes we have been undertaking in other projects as well, invoking ubiquity, craft, and details that have largely fallen out of the language of contemporary architecture.

AN: Especially here in LA, relatively new things can appear like they've been here all along. Do we prefer to treat all projects as though they were additions or extensions, conforming to materiality, iconography, signage, symbolism, streetscape?

MH: In the context of LA's urbanism and adhoc materiality, Lauren Halsey's work with signage, glyphs, and graphics speaks to the inscription of Black life on the city. It has been an incredible honor to work with her and her team on *sister dreamer, lauren halsey's architectural ode to the surge n splurge of south central Los Angeles*, a large-scale art plaza that was just announced publicly. Now that we are in construction, she has used the time to develop conversations with the neighbors around the presence of the site during the build. In this way, the project begins the moment when the artist occupies the site in the city, not just when the art is unveiled. This has been a beautiful education for us, and we appreciate a role in the background.



Current Interests, *Block House*, ceramic block patchwork process model.



Catherine Opie and Katy Barkan, *Walls, Windows, and Blood*, Thomas Dane Gallery, 2023.

Chicago. I've lived here long enough to see that discourse completely flip over the other way where there's a housing crisis now in downtown or in the city. It's a great opportunity for innovation. GL: YOU CAN ALSO SPAN WILSHIRE BLVD WITH YOUR MUSEUM WITH VERY LITTLE

The LA Experience

How much does Los Angeles itself shape architecture offices? **Kristy Balliet**, partner at BairBalliet and Undergraduate Programs Chair at SCI-Arc, sat down with **Jimenez Lai**, founding principal of Bureau Spectacular and faculty at USC, and **Kutan Ayata**, founding partner of Young & Ayata and Vice Chair at UCLA.

Kristy Balliet (KB): All three of our offices started in other cities: New York, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. So first, the office in Los Angeles: what has that meant to each of you and how has it changed things? Has it shaped the type of work that you're doing, the people that you collaborate with, or the spaces that you work in? Let's start there.

Jimenez Lai (JL): When I first arrived in LA, I encountered people who were willing to invest in the quality of design: they would take a leap of faith and believe that aesthetics could improve the financial value of their assets. Over the past ten years, people like this have come and gone, but luckily I have been able to work on a few interesting projects along the way. In terms of spaces, we have moved a lot because I've also encountered LA landlords. We're now sitting in office #8.

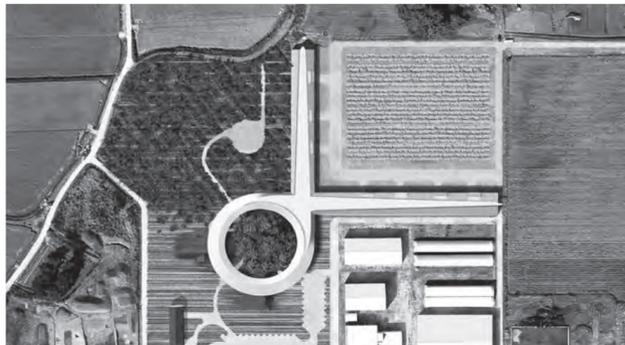
KB: It sounds like LA came with a sense of freedom in terms of who you could work with and what they were aiming to accomplish. On the one hand, it's hard to move eight times, but moving eight times in Los Angeles in ten years offers completely different views of a city.

Kutan Ayata (KA): I grew up in Istanbul, and lived in New York for almost twenty years. There's probably no other city in the US I would have moved to other than LA because there's something inherently experimental in its nature, a domain where practice can thrive. At some level my relationship with it so far is less about being involved in the projects, but rather, trying to understand what this place is both in terms of its architecture, ecology, context, and urban culture. UCLA, of course, plays a huge role in terms of trying to understand and digest all of that.

KB: The academic space has been good to us, however, in order to grow the office, Kelly Bair and I always remind ourselves to develop our networks outside of our common circles. As we do this, it has changed the type of work that we are doing. We get to know Los Angeles by the neighborhoods that we're working in. We are currently working on several projects in South Los Angeles. In fact, we just secured our first building permit in Los Angeles, the others have been in Chicago.

JL: Congratulations, that's no small thing.

KB: Yes, you learn about the systems of the city as relative



Young & Ayata, Agricultural Resources Management Institute, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea, rendering (ongoing).

newcomers: zoning, building codes, etc. A lot of neighborhoods we're working in, like Jefferson Park, also have a historic overlay. As we work on the projects we become curious about the stories and histories and this helps connect us to the city. It is a complex city to navigate as we grow and continue to develop relationships here. But what about projects outside Los Angeles?

KA: Young & Ayata won a competition at the end of 2022 for the New Agricultural Resources and Management Institute in Gyeongsangbuk-do in South Korea. The region is three hours south of Seoul near the city of AnDong-si and Daegu. It's an area in between six villages on farmland. It's kind of a mosaic of farm territories managed by local communities as well as the government, who utilizes the territory as test grounds for quality control of seasonal seeds and crops. It's essentially a public works project to ensure the integrity of agricultural production for the broader public.

JL: Will the farmers be the primary users?

KA: The program itself is interesting because 85% of the project area is for crops, seeds, agriculture machinery storage and their maintenance. There are offices, as well as residences for the field researchers and workers that come to work here on the site. There is also a modest public facing program in a restored old barrack that informs the public of the activities of the institution through small exhibitions. We visited the site and met different groups of people on the ground, including the managers of the project at the regional planning office, the institution's staff and the field workers.

KB: It is a very clear gesture. It's good at connecting while avoiding the complications of a knot.

KA: The building is organized to challenge and redefine the working (and living) culture of the institution. For us, the ambition was for the loop to hold all the amenities—like a cafeteria, fitness center, field worker's lounge, as well as the residences around a communal courtyard. This leaves potential for interaction between various constituencies of the enterprise, and avoids an atomized distribution of spaces on the vast site.

JL: The graphic is also very suggestive about the driving paths of vehicles. Farm vehicles are probably the everyday needs in a landscape like this.

KB: Let's shift over to you, Jimenez, what is developing in the office?

JL: The office is transitioning into taking on more buildings, but we also still work on things that resemble art. Currently, I am working on a number of projects: a house in Arizona, a community center in Minnesota, and most recently we just completed a 30ft tall installation at Art Omi in Ghent, New York. The title of this installation is *Outcasts from the Underground*. We worked with a



Bureau Spectacular, *Outcasts from the Underground*, Art Omi, 2024.

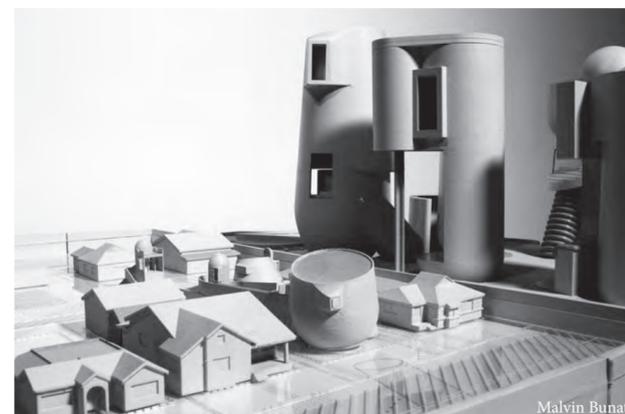
FRICION. IT'S INTERESTING THAT THINGS ARE POSSIBLE HERE TODAY THAT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE IN OTHER PLACES FOR WHATEVER REASON. JD: There is that whole surge Greg mentioned earlier in cultural and other venues, an institutional build-out of the city of which Peter Zumthor's LACMA would be a single, if

local company named Keeler Concrete, who sold precast septic tanks as everyday products. However, like a high risk game of Jenga, we convinced them to let us precariously stack their precast pieces into something that looked like a creature with poor posture. Shoutout to Nous Engineering for helping us make this work. Every precast item on their catalog was born to be buried. Their lifespans above ground end as soon as their missions begin. We wanted them to have a chance to live a life as a monster outcast from the underground. One challenge we faced was that these septic tanks came with tapered edges, designed to contain water. When we flipped them sideways, we discovered diagonal edges that would have been difficult to work with unless we gave this monster terrible body language. The slants became ready-made angles for a contrapposto body.

KB: This image reminds me of Hans Hollein's work with objects in a field. The objects try to reorient you to things that are familiar to you and shift the scale of the world around you. *Outcasts* has quite a lot to do with the projects that introduced you to LA, such as your Coachella project, *The Tower of Twelve Stories*, with the stacked rooms, meant for a music festival. That one was more outward facing. Those would be, maybe not the outcasts, but more the extroverts. The volume is captured inside, and you get glimpses inside. I can imagine moving around this in person, amazing. I think what one would see is how the light moves around it, revealing the volumes inside.

KA: There is always an incredible rigor of geometry in how things come together in your projects, while also maintaining a level of casualness, maybe even carelessness. It's great to see the progression from sketch to drawing to model to built work demonstrating this sensibility.

KB: This is super inspiring. We live in the same city and see each other on reviews, but not in this context. It is helpful to talk directly about what's happening in the office. I will share an LA-based project called *Imperfection*. It brings together our interest in using the game board as a format to host difficult conversations, while also hosting multiple projects in the office. Current zoning codes (SB9 + others) promise to densify and evolve beloved neighborhoods in Los Angeles. In this context, we want to dismantle the idea of the perfect home: a singular structure with a front and back yard in favor of a collection of additions in dialogue with each other, capable of changing the neighborhood skyline. What if the quality and character of these newcomers start to overpower the neighborhood? While some of our ADUs may sit politely in the backyard and hold a lofted office and others are large enough to capture a theater and an outdoor gardening area, but



BairBalliet, *Imperfection*, model, 2022.



Kutan Ayata, Kristy Balliet, Jimenez Lai at Bureau Spectacular in City Terrace.

all of them purposefully have character. As we all know, Accessory Dwelling Units are building types that many in our generation are doing. It is important to ask ourselves, how can they do more to reflect the city? This builds more on my point about Imperfection. The home is considered a super stable, core structure in a city. But when we start to round the bottoms and tilt them off axis to the point they need support, this is more reflective of how our lives unfold. The game board has multiple scales working within a typical LA city block. It also references the 1980s game called *Perfection*, where you would use a timer and try to match shapes into the corresponding hole. It was anxiety-inducing, much like the LA housing market.

KA: Bringing it back to what we do as architects and how it influences the city, specifically Los Angeles, it's hard for me to get a sense of any evolution in the three years since I've been here. I don't know how it's changing, or what's getting built—not necessarily talking about the generic construction-type. I recently went back to New York and was stunned by the amount of change in the skyline and vertical density, which is not the case in LA as a horizontally creeping city. This ties back to your game board project and ADUs: Architecture as instances of objects doesn't leave a dent in the city. In your project though, there is the idea that there are networks of things, which might collectively and incrementally alter the physical character of the city. The ADU, for example, is almost like a reoccurring electric pole, a type of infrastructure that moves through the city and builds character not held within privately owned properties. So then the question becomes: how do you build that dialogue between multiple owners? That's where I find the game super exciting.

JL: That's a big difference between LA and New York. Given the density and scale of buildings in New York, it's impossible for great buildings to go unnoticed. But, here in LA, our scale becomes a context for hidden gems to go "off the menu".

KA: Yeah, absolutely.

JL: Conversely, it's almost impossible for many interesting projects in LA to directly go "on the menu" because you just have to know who to ask, where to look, which nooks to scour. Finding cool things here is like a treasure hunt, where rarest finds are sprinkled in places you just don't think to look. It is definitely an LA experience.

nodal, move. It's all over, it's been twenty or thirty years in the making. In a recent piece on round buildings, I ended up looking at both geometric and cultural centering, that is, not only the many radial or "beyond-radial" buildings like Hill House, but also the gratuitous naming of buildings

A Bridge to Tomorrow



Sixth Street Replacement Viaduct, Michael Maltzan Architects, HNTB, Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering, 2022.

One of the most exciting recent interventions in the cityscape is the replacement for the original Sixth Street Viaduct, designed by Merrill Butler. It shows that infrastructure in the 21st century can be multi-tiered in form and functions. Deputy City Engineer **Deborah Weintraub** and architect **Michael Maltzan** reflect on this connective tissue they built together.

Deborah Weintraub (DW): You know, Merrill Butler worked in the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) 100 years ago and designed a suite of historic bridges in LA over the river. How one joins those neighbors is key. How do you make it something more than just a vehicular thoroughfare—such as a walkway or a place for festivities? A place to come to?

Michael Maltzan (MM): I think it really is that the Merrill Butler legacy, and the legacy of the City Beautiful movement, speaks to how significant civic infrastructure is. Most people would say that history doesn't have a huge impact in a city like Los Angeles, which of course is preposterous. If we are thinking in terms of big scale ideas or how we can transform the civic nature of the cityscape, then, the issue for infrastructure is not just about solving the technical problem, and Butler was conscious of that. I think the Bureau of Engineering has also been conscious of that.

DW: So, when this project came up, a collection of forward-looking leaders in the BOE had early discussions about the social benefits to the communities that the viaduct connects—an ambition about beauty and connectivity crossing the river connecting downtown with Boyle Heights. We thought we need to do what Merrill Butler did. We can't just be functional. We can't just be efficient. We need to move forward in the spirit of the historic bridges. There were discussions about the old Sixth

Street Viaduct as it was much beloved, and some wanted to rebuild it exactly as it previously existed. But it had no connection to the ground once you got on the bridge in Boyle Heights or the Arts District, so you couldn't access the land below. The new viaduct not only connects to the park, but it will also be a feature of the park.

MM: Yes, that idea of positively weaving infrastructure more consequentially into people's lives became a mandate. It became more important to everyone than attempting to preserve the original bridge. One of the things that I felt was so clear in the brief was that the bridge was meant to connect. Not just from one side to another, but it was meant to connect all of the communities that surrounded the bridge, to connect the river, to connect to the spaces and community below the bridge. Ten years ago, in most people's consciousness, the river was still at best a storm channel, so thinking of the bridge as a form of civic infrastructure was for me the most radical departure from the way that infrastructure has largely been thought of in the city. If you think about how much of LA is defined by infrastructure, and how the freeways separate and divide and silo-ize communities as much as they do to connect them. The opportunity to reimagine infrastructure was an essential challenge.

DW: Yes, the ambition was that there be expansive public uses addresses by this project. There's the park space currently under construction, which is going to be 12 acres on both sides of the river, and it will be a substantial addition to the bridge itself. As we wrote the design brief for the competition, we thought about the fact that we also wanted this to be visually compelling from many settings: from the underneath, from a distance, being on the bridge, and so on. It clearly needed to be a three-dimensional object, as well as being socially three dimensional. We didn't know what that would mean exactly, but we challenged the proposers in the design competition to address this ambition and to articulate how

and places as "Centers." That was the surge in the 1990s. In Los Angeles, the embrace of infrastructure and especially cultural infrastructure plays out in a field condition that is unimpeded, but also still under-served compared to many east-coast, European and Asian cities. **BB: Here is another**

their proposals understood this goal. We also started thinking about how important it is in LA to have shade. The space under the bridge became a usable place, and it allowed us to think about putting in a stage, playing fields, and other public amenities, and take advantage of the shade. We certainly learned from examples from around the world where under-bridge spaces had been retrofitted for these kinds of community activities. And so we were able to say to our policymakers, "let's not wait to retrofit this. Let's design with this in mind."

MM: The underneath of the bridge is something I'm very excited for people to discover over the coming years. When you're under the bridge, it's one of the largest civic "rooms" that I know. It has real benefit for spatial equity as temperatures rise. It's remarkable how much, in the middle of the summer, the temperature drops from the road deck to the underneath. The bridge really becomes a kind of parasol for the parks below, which were designed by Hargeaves Jones.

DW: Someone went under the viaduct with me the other day and said it was like being in a cathedral—that's the scale and the quality of the space. The other nice opportunity was using the strict federal and legal requirements like ADA access and allocating that funding to celebrate accessibility through features like the wonderful circular ramp. It makes something important and experientially compelling from those requirements.

MM: Infrastructure is always an extraordinary investment, and we should demand that it does more, makes more of a contribution to the city. Infrastructure needs to evolve from a monoculture of use to more of a multiculture of connections and multiple uses for the city and its communities.

DW: Yes. All of these investments in large-scale infrastructure are so costly, and in my mind, they must have a multiplicity of benefits, or I don't think they are really successful. It will be there for 100 years. So, if we haven't thought through the potential for those multiple benefits, I think we failed.

MM: When you were looking at precedents in other cities, my sense is that projects like these are often made possible by a strong mayor. What did you see with those projects? Were there lessons, not so much in the forms, but in the process? Or did you feel like you really had to invent the process to get here because the process of going through the competition was very unusual for the Bureau, as I understand it.

DW: It was unusual. But once we talked about it, it made a lot of sense to everyone. Looking at other cities, sometimes it's a strong mayor. I think in our case it began with a conversation internal to the Bureau of Engineering, seeing the scale of this and just talking about the potential, and then going to our policymakers and saying, imagine this! We could do a design competition, so you'll have some choices. And it could support all of these other activities, like a theater and all of the playing fields or the festivals on the bridge. And the more we talked about it, the more excited people got.

MM: When I'm lecturing outside of Los Angeles, people are deeply interested in the bridge and the project. I think it speaks to people about an image of what is possible in Los Angeles. Their questions are often about whether LA is unique, or whether their own place is somewhere these kinds of things can happen.

DW: So in part, I think this happened in LA because the Bureau of Engineering hired an architect (myself) and promoted me to management. And when we had to write the design brief, my training in urbanism and design, and in writing, gave me the background to say "I'll take this on."

MM: I think that's really important. As big and complex as these projects are, it still often comes down to a very few people who have the ability to try to move it forward.

DW: Yes it does. And that's something I would say to architecture students. There is a role to be played in these large bureaucracies and in big investments where you can have a significant impact, if you think of your role as kind of an advocate for the value of design.



Michael Maltzan and Deborah Weintraub at Michael Maltzan Architecture in Silverlake.

MM: It's unusual that an architect was involved in the design of the bridge. Infrastructure projects don't often happen with an architect directing the design.

DW: Right, they don't. In the end, it is a large team with many technical backgrounds who implement, but having an architectural voice on the client's side and as part of the design team is important.

MM: That was a choice, right?

DW: That was a choice. My involvement required a commitment from the City Engineer. I suggested making it a requirement that there be an architect on the team and that there be an urban designer on the team, and he said, "Sure, that makes sense."

MM: That part was, frankly, a new process for a lot of people.

DW: Yes, the construction phase was extremely complicated. It wasn't an easy structure to build for the contractor and our entire construction management team. We brought in a specialty bridge engineer to be on our team. We worked very hard to maintain the integrity of what the design intent had been and not to lose that with a million little compromises.

MM: Do you think the bridge process has created any kind of a template for future projects? Do you think these kinds of things will still be a heavy lift to do in a progressive way each and every time?

DW: In some respects, I think the city of LA has created a template because of the quality of the product that came out of the process. The physical form and the social qualities of the viaduct have been so successful and so well received, that it sets a standard. Acknowledging that it's a fifteen-year project, and it takes a community to get here, it is important to be ambitious.

MM: OK. You know, we've talked a lot about the process and how it moved forward. The bridge is built now. The parks are almost here. The impact and visibility out in the world have been extraordinary. The bridge has been a center for everyone and every type of activity in the city, which has been extraordinary to see as well. But going forward, I think the most significant end result is to have shown that this kind of thing was actually possible in the city. So, what would you want to do in the future knowing what the city accomplished?

DW: Well, I think that there could be a template for writing the basic requirements for future projects, particularly large infrastructure projects, which include categories that say: what is it going to do urbanistically? What are your neighborhood impact objectives? What are your social impact objectives? What are your economic objectives? What is the desired visual impact? All those things should be as clear as setting requirements such as how wide the roadway and sidewalks should be, or how long the bridge should be.

MM: Right.

DW: And the other thing that people always shy away from, but I think it's very important to say, is it needs to be beautiful. It needs to be beautiful. Bottom line, it should be a thing of beauty.

topic for us, which is about criticism or the lack of criticism, and critics and public discussions around architecture. It was unbelievable the amount of negative press LACMA got. Now that there are no architecture critics in Los Angeles at any of the major

newspapers or architecture-focused curators at major institutions, we don't have a real public forum to talk about important architecture. Instead, it was completely taken over by a couple of bloggers, and people who give tours of it, and

Bill-ding Boards

Digital Billboards, City of West Hollywood

Digital billboards have been bitterly contested in many Southland cities. However, the City of West Hollywood decided to lean into them as an opportunity for monetary gain and artistic and civic expression on Sunset Boulevard. They invited teams of billboard owners, architects and artists to submit concepts for a designated number of boards. Concepts had to meet stringent environmental and community give-back criteria. Shown on these pages are some of the winning concepts, designed by Los Angeles architects. Most are on private land. The West Hollywood Sunset Spectacular was a private-public initiative by the City Of West Hollywood on a city owned site.

Sunset Spectacular, Tom Wiscombe Architecture (Built)

The Sunset Spectacular is a multimedia billboard conceived of as three outer planes with a “tesseract” nested inside. The tesseract intersects the planes, creating giant figural involutions. The project is stacked and assembled as if it had been created by much larger beings.

The Sunset Spectacular avoids the “sign-on-a-stick” billboard typology and favors instead the vertical orientation of ancient bell-towers and obelisks. The tower’s interior draws the eye up and away from the horizontal continuum of the Sunset Strip. Drivers, however, are afforded only a momentary glimpse of the tesseract nested inside, creating a sense of mystery as they pass. The project is ultimately asignifying yet engaging, an aim of all of our projects.

It also incorporates multimedia art by leading artists, commissioned to be displayed on the tower and its grounds, producing a comprehensive and surprising urban experience. When the square hosts events, the Sunset Spectacular is a live-feed backdrop. When in rest mode, background programs run in light, color and sound, like “color-sampling” or “going to sleep.”

The Cape, Atelier Hitoshi Abe

The Cape translates a visual effect found in artwork throughout history into architectural form. In painting, drawings, and sculpture, flowing fabric draped across the body creates dynamism and meaning. Consider Superman. Without the Cape, he is a muscular man in a leotard; with a cape, he is a hero in flight.

In artworks across time and cultures, capes and scarves enhance the qualities and actions of the subjects who wear them. Similarly, The Cape celebrates the features of the low-rise existing building it envelops while also honoring West Hollywood. The Cape, an interactive media façade, celebrates the features of low-rise buildings against the glamour of West Hollywood. The design consists of two billboards: a static ad facing east and a digital ad wrapping the corner of Sunset and San Vicente. LED backlighting creates an energy exchange between the two ads mirroring the flowing fabric that gives anyone a sense of supernatural abilities.

Blossom, Bouwman Zago Architecture

Continuity of form and arrangement are tenets of aesthetic experience; and yet, we increasingly face demands on our attention that challenge our yearn for continuity. Our work seeks to embrace the stochastic, awkward moments of contemporary urbanity as a possible aesthetic category: one thing after another. The Blossom Billboard consists of three elements—a box, a pole, and a beacon. In deference to the glorious cacophony of the Sunset Strip, no obvious relationship between the elements exists, in this case, one thing on top of another. The box is the terminus of the pole. The pole is in conversation with other billboard poles: they all perform their task diligently, as ours misbehaves, wandering off on its own. The beacon is formed from the inflected and bracketed urban volumes of the strip’s oversized signage. It’s pink.

Wonderwall, P-a-t-t-e-r-n-s

On Sunset approaching West Hollywood, Wonderwall provides a contemporary urban gateway merging digital media, art, architecture, landscape, and meaningful public space. Wonderwall displays a cascading digital waterfall of images rearticulating the façade of the existing structure while gathering its spatial surroundings. Wonderwall borders a rooftop garden above, a serene park below, and an art boardwalk along Sunset, with seating, trees, and public art exhibitions. A serrated, stepped composition of vertical surfaces form a multi-planar digital display facing out to the boulevard. As pedestrians and vehicles approach, Wonderwall shifts from a flat 2D picture to a 3D spatial experience. Visual distortions and illusions enliven the modernist cityscape.

Sunset Cinema, Florencia Pita & Co.

Hollywood is famed as the cradle of the American film industry and the design for Sunset Cinema Billboard takes that to heart. A ribbon-like frame, reminiscent of a film still, surrounds the billboard, while a flowing mesh, reminiscent of a stage curtain, supports the billboard. The design is intended to be double-sided, as many along the Sunset Strip, where cars and people move east and west, with the west face for commercial advertising and the east promoting art content. Stories of LA will show clips of films and photography on the screen, and showcase work by local artists including Alex Prater, Texas Isaiiah, and Awol Erikzu. At the west end of the Sunset Strip, the design’s curvature builds upon the classical French revival building below, connecting old Hollywood glamour and the early commercialization of the Strip in the 1920s and 1930s with current arts, music, and culture. The open curtain captures the evolving history of public performance and public art, central to the identity of today’s dynamic Sunset Strip.



Tom Wiscombe



they somehow controlled the whole narrative of this project, so, that speaks to why we might need an architecture magazine or newspaper for Los Angeles, so that there becomes some way of showing things underway that isn't as dispersed



Digital, Delicate, and Defiant

LA architects, especially in small design-focused firms, have often ventured into related areas of design such as furniture, textiles, graphics and landscape. Four architect-professors use digital tools to craft jewelry, dresses, and AI artworks: **Jenny Wu, Margaret Griffin, Julia Koerner, and Elena Manfredini** (over page).

LACE, Jenny Wu

LACE is a fine jewelry brand specializing in 3D-printed stainless steel, precious metal, and thermoplastic polyurethane statement pieces. The LACE collection reflects Jenny's architectural aesthetic, marrying line-based geometry with intricate organic movement to create avant-garde designs with a high level of digital refinement. Each jewelry piece can be thought of as "architecture on the

body." LACE jewelry begins with a sketch and is meticulously digitally-crafted from its edge detailing to its intricate, interlocking assembly, and then to its nesting on the body. The pieces merge her architectural design sensibilities with high-tech craft, forwarding jewelry-making and tectonics in the 21st century.

Bronze Knuckles, Margaret Griffin

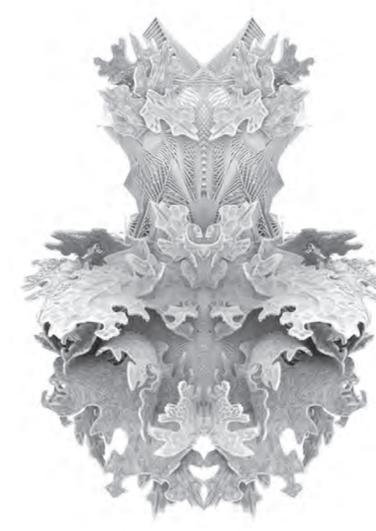
Bronze Knuckles is a jewelry brand created by Margaret Griffin, inspired by a preoccupation with gardens, form and wordplay. Each ring seeks to make you feel empowered, each is weighty and over scaled, yet comfortable on your hand. Deep openings showcase your finger so that you are the gem. Created through alternating iterations of sketches, digital models, drawings, & prototyping with

Jasmine Park

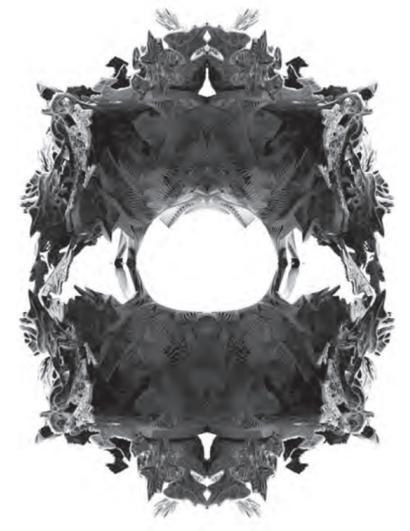
as Instagram or Tik Tok. Plus, how do you create a discourse that architects can also participate in? I think that's an interesting issue. GL: I ALSO GET THE SENSE THAT LA IS EAGER FOR EXPERIMENTATION. THERE'S THIS CONFLUENCE OF THE CITY RELAXING SOME OF ITS SUPERVISION AND SAYING, YOU CAN BUILD



Biopiracy Dress, digital rendering, 2014.
Julia Koerner with Iris Van Herpen and Materialise



Hybrid Holism Dress, digital rendering, 2012.



Hybrid Holism Dress, digital rendering, 2012.



Hybrid Holism on view at the Musee des Art Decoratifs, Paris, 2023.

Naomi Newmark

3D prints, each design is Defiant yet familiar. Three collections explore narrative nuances of empowerment. *Flower Power* is wildly inspired, punchy & provocative phrases define *Alphabet Soup*, while *In the Clouds* is for dreaming bold. Fabricated locally in polished, sterling silver and bronze from a 3D printed wax, some rings are especially tough, others are intricate. All are heavy, none are delicate.

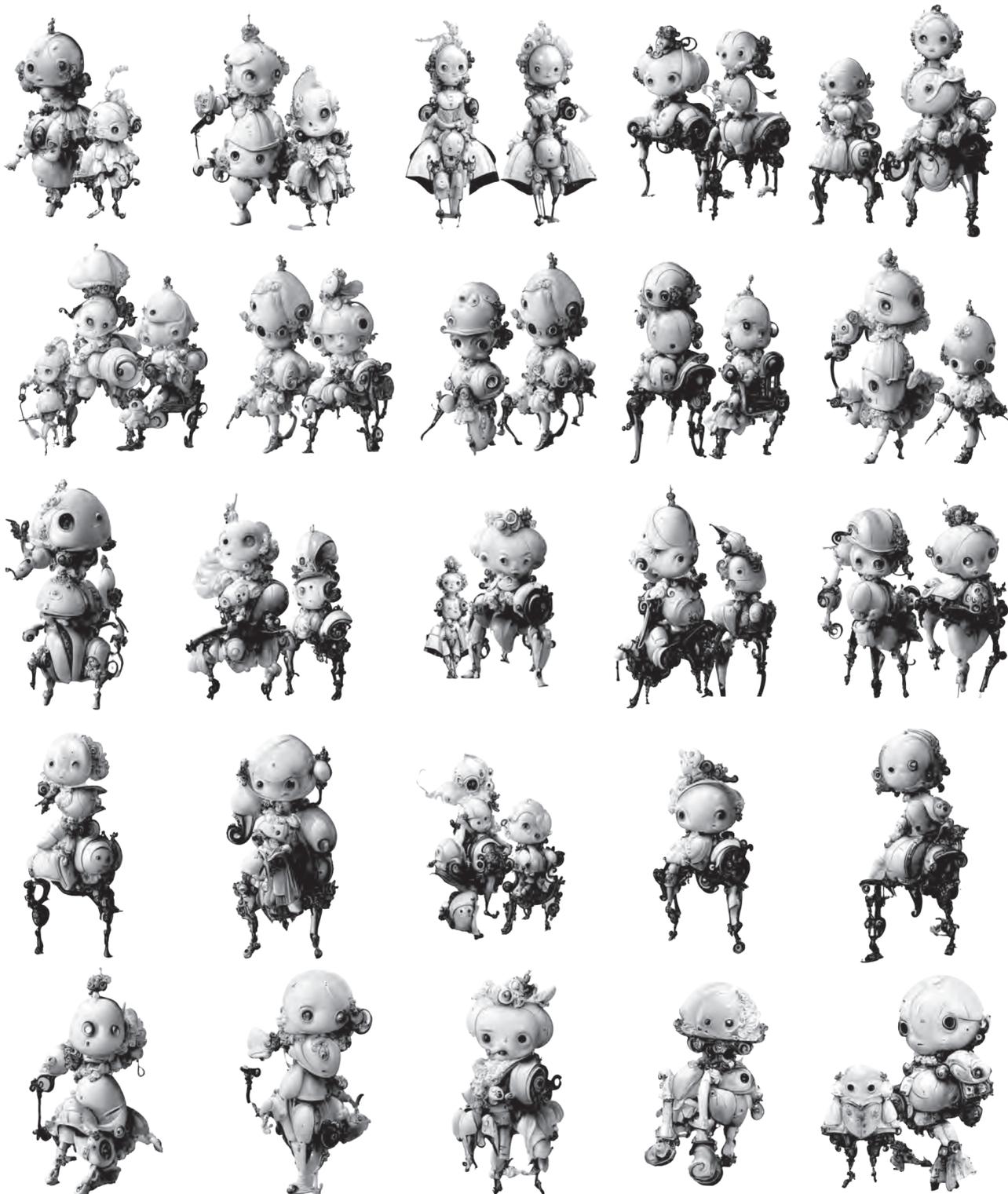
3D-printed Dresses, Julia Koerner

Cutting-edge and intricately lacy, the dresses shown here were digitally-designed and 3D printed by Austrian designer, Julia Koerner. Koerner is best known for her 3D-printed designs with Ruth E. Carter, Academy award costume designer for the Black Panther films. Shared here are Koerner's collaborations with Dutch fashion designer Iris Van Herpen, utilizing architectural 3D modeling and scripting techniques, which advanced computational design and rapid prototyping. Contracting with the Belgium 3D printing company Materialise, these dresses were some of the first ever 3D printed dresses showcased at Paris Haute Couture. The *Hybrid Holism Dress* (2012) was created with the Mammoth Stereolithography Technology using a honey-colored liquid resin. The *Voltage Dress* (2013) and *Biopiracy Dress* (2014) were 3D printed with the Selective Laser Sintering Technology utilizing a flexible powder material. The Biopiracy dress was first published in National Geographic next to a 3D printed NASA suit and a 3D printed ear, as pioneering works in the 3D printing industry.

ADU'S, YOU CAN GO EXTRA DENSE NEAR TRANSIT, YOU CAN CROSS WILSHIRE, AND IT'S SPAWNING EARNEST EXPERIMENTS THAT ARE URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL. JD: I agree, but in two different ways. The experimentation in residential architecture is largely government-sponsored—at least in terms of easing zoning

YOU and AI, Elena Manferdini, 2022.

This project delves into the exploration of Artificial Intelligence's role in contemporary creative culture. The figurines represent a fusion of a futuristic robot and Rococo furniture, blending elements from different eras. These seemingly lifeless objects spring to life, assuming human-like characteristics. *You and AI* embodies a distinct presence, symbolizing our dual existence—our virtual and our physical selves. The artwork encapsulates the concept of “becoming real”.



or holding back the tides of NIMBYism to meet the Housing Element targets we face at the state level. The Lucas Museum is a good example of the other factor: LA is a city of daring, often unbridled, private patronage. In this context, however you feel about their specific buildings, Eli

Is LA a Good Host to the Avant-garde?

Three seasoned architect-professors—Craig Hodgetts, Neil Denari, Mark Lee—sat down for a conversation about the state of architecture and practice in Los Angeles today, as the region confronts the “disastrous” legacy of “absolutely bucolic zoning” and a complicated relationship with the avant-garde.

Craig Hodgetts (CH): OK, let's get this out. What should young architects be turning their attention to and what are their options? What can be their priorities? And then the other thing: is there any way that architects can be meaningful in the global sense?

Neil Denari (ND): What about the Big Office versus Small Office, or whether we should build a city one building at a time, or what's the spectrum of, let's say, aesthetics in Los Angeles? So, I do think it would be useful to maybe begin by briefly talking about larger offices in relation to teaching and how that also relates to career paths, and what that means for most people who teach, and we can maybe go from there.

Mark Lee (ML): Just to expand upon that, I think we were all practitioners and educators. I think it'd be interesting to also follow that line, the evolving role of academia within practice. So going back to your question: as we train our students, what do we plan for them to do, and what do we expect them to do? What do we project their career path would be? For me, it leads to what we promise the students the role of the architect would be or could be.

CH: Well, if you're very pragmatic, I kept hearing this feedback from the most talented students in the corporate world: they resented being slotted into the presentation-only mode. They can make great renderings. They can build digital models. They could do animations. But they never got into the realm of actually generating the designs. They were handed the designs to present which is the way I think corporate architecture firms operate.

ND: Well, that invokes some aspects of the scale of practice, where there's an isomorphic relationship between a big office and a big project like a stadium or an airport, right? But, houses for smaller architects, that indicates that architects operate at the level of what the market offers in terms of client trust. So, I think the question of what the students then aspire to on the one hand would probably be weighed against what they would choose to be limited to, or maintaining a specific kind of expertise. Because, in school, the only thing the student knows is a broad way of looking at things: history, theory, design, representation, speaking, drawing, etcetera. And so, the overall comprehensive nature of an education gives students the idea that unless there's an instinct to trend toward one thing or another, they'd mostly like to be able to put their hands on all aspects of it.

ML: I wonder if the gap between the larger and smaller office seems to be getting wider and wider, while the midsize offices are disappearing. And, I wonder if academia is contributing to further polarization. Let's say we're all teacher practitioners. Do we all want our students to be “singer songwriters”? Or do we leave room for them to not be? I'm just curious. We've been in LA for so many years. Do we feel this is getting further and further apart? And does academia also play a role in further separating that?

ND: Well, a good question then might be: what are the forces that cause the separation? One reason why the gap might be growing is because bigger offices, especially today in terms of how to do a building, how to deal with technology, levels of form-making, and expertise, can capture that which smaller offices generally cannot.

CH: And, there doesn't seem to be a pathway for most of the smaller offices to develop into larger organizations which are doing civic work or corporate work.

ND: Not in America, for sure.

CH: Well, for sure not in America, and more and more in Los Angeles, the selection of architects for large scale projects is an international choice. So, you can achieve excellence in the realm of individual houses because LA is probably the world center of innovative individual houses but the more talented architects here don't have major projects in Los Angeles. Why? Why does Los Angeles look askance at their home talent, or just go for those big firms. It's really distressing because it's almost habitual.

ND: I'm thinking about how young architects, yes, if they could only grab onto a little bit of capital to be able to control some aspect of experimentation - that would be for the good of the city. Then, I think it's OK that LA architects don't get spectacle projects like the Lucas Museum. I think that turning our attention to maybe this idea of building the city, one building at a time. But the question is, what is that building? Single family houses and zoning has its limits, as you know, it drives definitions of income inequality and so forth. Barbara Bestor has done some experimental housing projects and others, and having done them recently too, they're very constraining, they're very formulaic.

CH: Yeah, they all run into that. And the proforma is so limiting. Everybody's adverse to taking any risk with anything other than rubber stamping the norm.

ND: You know, I had a thought about how to get around this. Dana Cuff's CityLab and small firms are doing ADUs. Maybe the housing project migrated to ADUs in terms of urban densification. It's a strategy on the one hand, but you know, there could be ways. What if we took one small block or two blocks or three blocks—“we,” meaning the city, and made it as an experiment. Of course, it would be good if it was a competition and had multiple architects. And, whether it's building tall or near a transit-oriented district, the point is sculpting that project in a way that could be a real demonstration, not a museum exhibition. I think the city could be more progressive, and we could find empirical evidence out of it if it's too dense or the shadows are too problematic, as opposed to regulating everything away from the very beginning.

CH: I couldn't agree more. I just heard that the mayor of Austin, Texas has promoted an overlay zone for experimentation. And it will be an overlay where building codes would be relaxed and projects encouraged and incentivized even to explore different ways of construction, different mixes. I always think back about the Kisho Kurokawa capsule house, which was just recently, sadly demolished, but it really made an attempt to kind of compress all the living functions into very small quarters and to have a certain amount of mutability of the interiors so that you could compress the space. But, unfortunately the original LA City Charter envisioned this absolutely bucolic zoning where each house had its own land surrounding it, and its own access to transportation. And looking back, the actual plotting of LA was a disastrous decision.

ND: That's the flash point of everything in terms of space and time, which I feel like unless we create overlay zones that are different even than what's going on in, say, Hollywood, we will only be able to fantasize about the pedestrian city. That's a wholesale change of this city to another type of city. I have a student who mapped what will happen with a 30m sea level rise and a wildfire zone. And what you're left with is a clear space, like a really long Manhattan, east of the 405. And, that's like a tabula rasa for doing a city for 30 million people. And you know, it's all going to happen, and so the force of nature will turn LA into this island and then, it's a question of whether it's going to be like Barcelona, is it going to be like New York or is it part of New York and part of Barcelona and so on.

ML: With the density now even ten to twenty years ago, people's lives in LA are getting closer and closer together. But I'm curious what that model of this closeness is like. Infrastructure has not increased. Yes,

and Edie Broad set an influential and unusual civic example in their avid support of contemporary architecture. **BB: I think also in the case of LACMA, unlike, say, the Getty, it's owned by the county. It's very rare in the US for a public government to build new buildings like this**



Craig Hodgetts, Neil Denari, and Mark Lee at Johnston Marklee in Sawtelle.

there is some public transportation, but no new freeways, you know. So, with a much higher density, what is the model? What is the type of LA that the next generation should build for? On another note, it might be a good time to segue into our own aesthetic predilections versus a collective aesthetics of the city. I'm curious if we self-reflect on our own predilections, our own aesthetics. How do we see it work with the future?

CH: For me, just speaking as an individual, stretching my imagination into different cultural realms is very exciting, and it's insecure, and it's risky, because it has to do with the interaction between you as a designer and the people that you're working with. So, I think there should be validation within the educational community of people being outside of the realm of the canon.

ND: Well, it's good to raise this topic I think because regardless of ideology, regardless of politics or because of it, or in spite of it, aesthetics, you know, perpetually operate. I was talking with the students in a housing studio, and I was showing housing projects, and some of the responses were, well, how can you inject that much of yourself into work that should be neutral? They're coming from a very deliberate social point of view, but it felt like it was all or nothing, all architecture or no architecture.

ML: Well, how do we find a collective platform, especially when there's so many contingencies and players? Everyone has a story to tell, and sometimes they manifest in design. Your question is also about the zeitgeist now that asks how authentic predilection is. There's some moments where the architect is everything, capital A, but mostly, you come out and they realize, oh, well, I'm not changing the world. I'm just one piece of the puzzle.

ND: I think aesthetics, to take them out of image and into the debate between the new versus the good: the new would represent abstraction and the good would represent empathy. Next, you can't find empathy unless you can find a relationship to it. So, what's obviously always been, especially in the 20th century and beyond, is questions and degrees of alienation and familiarity. This means that individual architects must develop techniques to take risks. That's just a sort of ethic. I'm not sure that that's necessarily the same ethic that students share today, but the nature of the familiar is a direct way to connect to the good.

CH: You just mentioned empathy. We're trying to interpret what is appropriate for a particular audience, what will resonate, and what is part of the design as an architect. And, to my mind, right now, it's mostly defined by the developer whose objective to rent out the maximum number of square feet quickly. So, it's incumbent on the architect to utilize an appropriate genre what's appropriate so that people feel at home. There are limits, such as an honorable use of materials, and an aesthetically rewarding way towards configuration. And, that seems to me, to be creatively challenging with at least

a modicum of empathy in it. And I think that the architect's responsibility supersedes that of the developer.

ML: I think this is very important. I wonder if the next generation feels this sense of separation, or is there an aesthetic for what we call good. If there isn't, is there something that will try to fill in that aesthetic, whether it's through association or being opportunistic or should there still be opposition?

ND: Yeah, I think on the one hand, we're all asking questions about generations and how they view things, and then, we're also speaking for ourselves at the same time. I talk to my students a lot about this issue and make it clear that I'm not necessarily a torchbearer of the new. Maybe I never was, except the issue of how to move architecture in a forward direction. Everybody fits into connecting to the new, and it may not strictly be in the realm of aesthetics. I was talking to my students about housing in Los Angeles, and most of the time with housing based on budgets, you have to use vinyl windows, not metal or aluminum windows. And I said, what if I sat down with a client and said we should just do a stucco box, no funny stuff, but put in the best windows? That's like a Berlin mindset, right? Those windows need to last through thermal and water issues, and that's creeping up in Los Angeles. Does that mean that you're driving down Overland and it looks like East Berlin? Because everything's plain and everything's straight, but it's really good? And then I thought, is that so bad? There's a difference between boring and purposeful I think.

ML: Neil, what you talked about, like this window example, also makes me question the role of the avant-garde in architecture or in architectural education. Maybe at one point after the war or between the wars, the avant-garde was the model. I always question if architecture is the right medium for the avant-garde. Or, it will inevitably always be a closeted vanguard, in that the familiar becomes a pathway or doorway to something more progressive or avant-garde.

ND: That's interesting to think about LA as not being a good host to the avant-garde. But, it's fair to ask, especially in today's world, is architecture a political act and what could one truly disrupt? What sorts of status quos could you be undermining with it? And, it's a little unclear because whether or not we choose to say Los Angeles's most authentic work is the Spanish architecture style, which of course is just an alien thing that arrives to LA, it's a very messy palimpsest of local conditions.

ML: Right. Vis-a-vis students and teaching, I try to present a project, as for a city or a client, in the fly on the wall mode of here's what was presented, and here's the reaction, and here's the criteria for those reactions and so forth, just giving students another dimension, obviously of criticism.

ND: That's interesting. I would tell my students to try not to make aesthetic judgments about their work, but to produce context, and be able to judge that as opposed to their own preferences, predilections and so forth. And one of the interesting things about whether it's the force of a client or a community asking you to change a way of thinking, a level of acute criticism brings something more and better forward in each particular case, and it gets the question outside of issues of taste and predilection into things, territories that are meaningful. And that's not easy to do, but I think that that's an aspiration for having something like aesthetics not be just a choice or something private. And this is, I think, what I've cultivated for myself as how to produce empathy for something that on the surface looks alienating. It's just something that the most persuasive architects want to try to have command of.

CH: I think that's exactly right. Totally agree.

ML: I think that's the perfect end, huh?

anymore, and I think that's great that we're in a very progressive county...The idea of the wild west where you can build your dreams and your clients can have their dreams is an enduring "onwards" narrative, which is certainly why I came to Los

All Along the Watchtower



Oceanwide Plaza, Los Angeles

Dora Epstein Jones ruminates on the artful tagging of the Oceanwide Plaza towers in downtown Los Angeles, and asks if graffiti artists have created LA's most important cultural statement.

The lyrics to the Bob Dylan song, *All Along the Watchtower*, tell an improbable tale of breaking free, breaking free from ignorance, breaking free from the kingdom, not by scholars or rebels, but by a joker and a thief. Jokers and thieves are not always the heroes of Western storytelling (Robin Hood being an interesting exception), but of course, the anti-hero makes much more sense to us now, in an era of Deadpool or John Wick. For people dwelling within the pervasive strata of poverty, or the unsheltered, or the incarcerated, any hero is a welcome one. Princesses still love heroes. Dogs have heroes. Cities deserve heroes too.

Most urban heroes are beautifiers, cleaner-uppers, the ones who have fought for safety, greenness, and for clear policies around affordable housing—they make the city better in terms of better policies and planning. But can a city's hero be a joker or a thief? Can a city have an anti-hero?

Take Oceanwide Plaza in downtown LA. In 2014, Beijing-based Oceanwide Holdings tapped Callison RTKL to design a 3-tower complex consisting of a Park Hyatt hotel, short- and long-stay condominiums, a 3-story retail mall, and an elevated 2-acre private park. Construction began in 2015. In 2019, the contractor, Lendlease, stopped work on the interior after nine liens by subcontractors totaling almost \$100 million were filed. By 2020, Oceanwide Holdings halted the development due to pandemic. The company chairman, Liu Guosheng, admitted also to "liquidity issues" faced by the China Oceanwide Group, the parent affiliate of Oceanwide Holdings.

Unfinished, entirely empty, and abandoned, the former site attracted many of the talented graffiti artists in LA (the top graffiti artist in the world, above both Banksy and Shepard Fairey, Jason Williams aka Revok hails from Southern California). Artists like Actual, Fleet, Pemex, Sour, Aker, ENDEM, and Castle began breaking into and then gradually climbing steps higher and higher. Some tagged, some wrote, but all used the glass balcony facades to display their murals. Now, Oceanwide Plaza, and especially Tower One, are 49 floors of full-wall wraparound graffiti art, unusual and striking due to its vertical display. While graffiti surfaces are typically relegated to the lowest levels of the city, on warehouse exteriors and subway trains, the Oceanwide towers appear more like an American Torre David, at once normative modernist and culturally diverse.

Of course, the city of LA has attempted to discourage the art. Already almost \$3 million has been spent on security fencing, surveillance, and removal while criminal indictments have been leveled at more than 23 artists. The complex was put up for sale in Spring 2024 for a mere \$440 million, down from the \$2.3 billion project it once was, with city officials loudly complaining of the graffiti as a form of blight, and a pearl-clutching wariness of cultural expression in advance of the 2028 Olympics. They claim that they should not allow the work of "criminals" and state that the work is not art due to, of all things, its hastiness. But this author must ask: who really is the criminal here? The artists, reclaiming their selves and their city, or the multinational corporate failure? And now, like many empty towers across America, the Oceanwide towers stand as a testament to ruthlessly fast money without any regard for the people who truly live in a city. Commerce cannot be the sole reason for our skylines. We must also consider poetics and delight. Spraycans up, cheers to the anti-heroes.

Angeles. JD: You know—and I say this as a local, having arrived as a toddler—cultural production in LA is still a vastly émigré project. It's part of what makes this city a great place to be involved in any of the arts. For architecture, it has interesting consequences in terms of how things get

Has it Stopped Making Sense? Deans Debate Architecture Education

Schools have been facing social upheaval and drops in attendance. Are they still up to the task of educating practitioners of a slow art in an age of immediacy? Three deans—Mariana Ibañez, UCLA; Brett Steele, USC; Hernán Díaz Alonso, SCI-Arc—discuss the nature of architecture education and whether it prepares people for a profession that is “spectacularly vulnerable, spectacularly underpaid.”

Mariana Ibanez (MI): Someone said to me that it takes at least three years to know LA, or five years to know LA, but I think the version of LA that I have come to imagine and enjoy is the idea that LA is unknowable as a collective. And because of the way the city is constantly changing, people have individual knowledge of specific places—ones that you would never be able to find unless somebody takes you there. The life of each person is a private ecosystem.

Brett Steele (BS): My favorite part of moving here was that everybody had an opinion about exactly two things (which felt totally LA). One: what part of the city will you live? Come be our neighbor; and two: what kind of car will you drive? I heard that and knew I'd moved to LA. It was so interesting because it emphasized that this place is so dispersed; such a really, really big, flat, dispersed city. This makes me wonder what part of it our students actually see. What do you two think: How much of LA do our students see in order to realize where they've actually come to study?

Hernán Díaz Alonso (HDA): Some students are adventurous. I remember I had a student from Columbia University. And every Saturday he would take the metro from Downtown to Santa Monica.

BS: It's funny because you would think that one of the qualities of our three schools is their capacity to share the experience of a global city like this.

HDA: Yeah, every time we do open-houses at SCI-Arc, I always say, you can choose SCI-Arc or not, or any school you want. But I say, don't go to a monastery school. You have to be in a school that is part of a big city so that you're contaminated by culture, by other forces. And it could be LA, New York, Chicago, London, Tokyo, you name it. The old college towns have great schools but I think at the human level you're leaving so much on the table. The time I spent at Columbia was great. I was seeing the roughness of the city, trying food in the street, whatever it was.

MI: For me London was like that too, there was that kind of creative and cultural energy around the city that had an enormous effect on all the work we were doing.

BS: When I was a student in London, the AA (Architectural Association) didn't even have studio space: that was a firm rule of the school at the time. You would work at home all week, on your own, and you came in once a week for a tutorial with your tutor. As Zaha Hadid once described to me, it was like coming to see the doctor. Now, of course, it's the opposite: school curricula, courses, and studios are so tightly wound that students have almost no available extra time. How do they get out to see the outside world?

HDA: Ya, I don't know. Architecture is very slow. We live in a culture of immediacy. Here are the three of us, and we operate in a discipline, in a profession that has no possibility of immediacy. So, to me, one of the most difficult challenges is that every semester there's a new topic on the table, and everybody jumps on it, and then you realize that pretty much we keep doing more or less what we always did with a different billboard on top. So I'm facing the whole conversation about AI too. Everybody thinks it is going to change everything. Maybe, maybe not. I don't know. It's an interesting thing. I personally think it's going to change much more profoundly the prosaic and the fundamentals more than it is going to change the high level of creativity. So, the university might need to reshape. It's the same

with the city, right? We live in this massive city. You're supposed to have everything. But, at the end of the day, you only end up having the same life that you will have in a 500-person town because of the complexity of it. I've seen the struggle with the students. They all come from this culture of immediacy, and then they're confronted with something that is a very slow burning process of knowledge.

BS: Yes, architecture is literally slow in every sense: the time it takes for change, to build, and to qualify. Our undergraduate students are here for five years—the only undergraduates on a campus of 20,000 students that take five years (instead of four)! Architecture is incredibly arrogant about its disciplinary expectations. As far as career pathways, we have to remember it takes on average between ten and a half to twelve and a half years in this country to qualify as a licensed architect. To me, that's incredibly sad, this dull professional belief that architecture is so hard it should take that long to be allowed to be called an architect. It's crazy. So, the question for me is simple: for a discipline that's literally built around a belief that we can reinvent space, why can't we reinvent time? People should qualify much sooner.

HDA: I spent, I don't know, five years doing basically the same plan in the university. You have to learn how to design a stair, door, whatever it is. Is learning this still relevant? Especially now with AI.

MI: With the idea that less time is better, I feel like curriculum-building is a moving target, a live project, even if it's just not only for the knowledge acquisition, but for the sake of pleasure, enjoyment. I think with every technological shift or new tool, the first application seems to be about efficiency and optimization. With AI we've seen a lot of images and speed and power, but I don't think we have yet seen a significant conceptual transformation.

HDA: I always joke that architecture is the elephant in the jungle, it is very slow. And, it holds the history more than anything else, you know what I mean? If you want to understand a culture, you look at buildings. That's what people who travel do, people try to see buildings! When people say, “I don't pay attention to the architecture,” I don't believe them. With every vacation you take in your life—except the beach or the jungle, when you go to Paris or you go to Tokyo or to South Africa—what do you go to see? Buildings! Because that's what captivates and captures us.

MI: Architecture has the capacity to connect the dots with all areas of history because it is a built archive. It unfolds time from each building.

BS: I'm struck by the presumed expertise that drives architectural curricula right now, which have an unfortunate effect of locking students into an hour-by-hour choreography we presume they need in order to graduate. At the very least, it makes it incredibly hard for them to get out into that world outside the studio or school—at exactly that moment, I would suggest, when it's most needed.

HDA: My theory is always that at any given time in history, the percentage that we consider interesting architecture or interesting to students or interesting to schools is always the same. We just create a romantic, nostalgic idea that historically the architecture was more respected, more important. It's always the same. And I think that design or speculation and experimentation was always a very tiny percentage and that remains the same too.

BS: Being a person that once quit architecture school and moved to the East Village at a certain moment in the life of New York, what mattered for me then was the larger place and moment, which I felt then and still do feel very lucky to have been a part of. It was there, coincidentally, that I first met a group of students there visiting a music club on a field trip from a school of architecture in London; they told me where they were visiting from, a weird little school in London I should go check out if I ever wanted to finish my degree—

imagined, and how they get realized. In the 1980s and '90s there was a sense of an East Coast cultural superiority, feeling like they needed to bring culture to LA, when in fact LA was already at the leading edge of most fields, if not their critical reception. BB: I came out here to go to

which I did a year later.

MI: I think that same thing happens with schools, because each one has a reputation, and themes that are consistently present in the work and research. But from time to time, a particular school becomes really interesting, either by design or by being in a specific location, or by being adjacent to certain events, or groups of people coming together.

BS: Sometimes by storytelling. I mean, the stories that get told about them.

MI: Absolutely. Bringing that idea back to Los Angeles. In cities like LA, there tends to be more than one interesting school at any given time.

HDA: I think it goes in cycles, you know. Modernism took thirty to forty years to take roots, and when it took roots, it became the norm.

MI: And some schools are still doing that.

HDA: And now with social media, you see students quoting other students' work. That was unthinkable in my time. It wasn't thinkable because there was something wrong, it just didn't exist. It was not available. I mean I managed to buy a couple of GA Document's and Croquis a year. And we would copy the big names. But, there's also always a big percentage of sameness. I think we like to worry too much, architects also just like to worry, we're a worrisome people.

BS: Well, architects have a reason to worry. They are spectacularly at risk by comparison to normal professions for being so spectacularly underpaid and filled with vulnerable professional lives, with offices built on old-fashioned professional models in which you wait for someone to walk through the door to give you a project you then design. Other professions are way ahead of architects here for the ways they initiate business activity and even the kind of work they do—instead of hanging around in an empty office and hoping an interesting client finds them. To a large degree architects do too much of that.

HDA: I also really believe now that if we are doing our job right, students are going to have four or five careers in their lives. This idea of the linear career, I think it's different now. I think it's going to be interesting and that's the part I would advocate for architecture education to be seen as a remarkable education. You can do a lot with it. To me, this is one of the most exciting things, which, by the way, I think has existed in our field for a longer time. The thing is now the field and the education institution feel much more comfortable with that, much more comfortable. There are a whole series of new possibilities of practice that we are in a unique position to fuel and propel.

BS: Every shoe company in America has architects up and down; I know an industrial designer who has fifty architects in their studio, or we can think of artists like Olafur Eliasson in Berlin who has a building full of architectural designers that help work on art at the scale of a building. What we call architecture today is an entirely different field than what the modern profession was built around, and what we call practice—like expertise and delivery—needs to change, and schools have a key role in all of that. They have to change too.

MI: Students seem to be well aware of that. If anything, I can also imagine a series of programs, perhaps outside of the model of accreditation, where amplifying the questions around how architectural knowledge is useful to produce all sorts of expertise or engagement with other domains of knowledge or production. Architects do well in other contexts. The question is, how can we leverage that desirability and make everybody aware of it? I think an architectural education is wonderful in terms of how we understand things in the world around us, and in the capacity to imagine things and ideas, and fundamental conceptual shifts that have the capacity



Hernán Díaz Alonso, Mariana Ibañez, Brett Steele at Stray Dog Café in Culver City.

to reorganize how we live, or how we do things, whether they're related to architecture or not.

HDA: One of my main focuses is that I think we need to have a much more sophisticated teaching and learning of the economics for architects. You get it in fashion schools because you have to sell your collection. To me, it's an ingredient that is missing to really go fully into architecture.

BS: Exactly. It's kind of “next” for our field, and schools, for sure. Cultures of design of all kinds have prepared themselves for this next stage which would expand the idea of design beyond just the object and the processes that make that object and/or landscape or surface to include all of those features around the building, economics, management, construction and so on. Architecture schools haven't yet, nearly enough.

HDA: But it's a world based on expertise, knowledge advancing, advancing the other one is what the work is based on curiosity. So you need to keep changing people to keep moving the target. Kind of makes sense.

MI: Earlier we were talking about these moments in schools where all the projects look alike. I wonder about that mix between individual curiosity, the knowledge you acquire in school, and other forms of input. After many years of a visible homogeneity, I am curious to see a more heterogenous field.

HDA: I think it's also human nature. You want to belong, you know, like you want to be part of a larger conversation.

MI: Sure, there is a lot of value in the idea of a collective project that can be articulated. When I think of heterogeneity, I am thinking about articulated diversity rather than accumulation of singularities.

BS: The flip side for me is I'm struck by how little architects are able to talk to the larger world around them. We're certainly comfortable with and used to talking to one another, for sure—just go to any review or jury. And we can talk to our clients, and our consultants, but the larger public? That's where we fail. The example I always like to use is in economics. Economists, who on the one hand are always doing super arcane, highly theoretical work that only about ten other economists on the planet can understand at any one time have that internal component to their disciplinary communication. But on the other hand, they write best-selling books that communicate their field much more widely. Architecture—and architecture schools generally—need more of that.

MI: This goes back to something we always discuss, which is what does architecture school prepare you for? And if it's not for the rest of your life, is it only for the first Monday after graduation? The beginning of a project rather than the end of it?

HDA: You are in school because you're exploring things.

BS: Right.

school because the schools here were free of the essentially pre-corporate training program of the high modernist orthodoxy. It's fun to see here in this newspaper smaller projects or more conceptual non-building projects, and a lot of them are not

“I was self-teaching on Youtube before any architecture education”

The students are the future. So how are they feeling about it? Hallie Black sat down with three groups of students, from UCLA, USC and SCI-Arc, and got their take on architecture education, readiness for the real world, and the allure, or not, of form for its own sake.

UCLA Architecture and Urban Design:

Hallie Black (HB): What were your interests when you began architecture school and how have they shifted since?

Nathan Logan (NL): Having an undergrad degree in urban studies and having interests in theory and other things, other aspects of the built environment that aren't directly architecture related, I definitely resonate a lot with that, especially in this first year. In my first-year cohort, I've found people wanting to have more directly applicable skills to the workforce, like Revit for example. I definitely understand these concerns, but I feel like I'm young in this process, so I'm trying to take things for what they are. I do need to build skills whether it means missing out on opportunities to have very comprehensive design ideas with research.

Kay Wright (KW): Before architecture school, I was skeptical of form. I was convinced that formal extravagance was unjust and disconnected from what is expected of architects. I can't say that I feel the same way anymore—and I might be met with disagreement here, but these days, I'm trying to take ownership of the idea that we have to practice mastery of giving shape, material, and texture to the spaces we inhabit. What are the things that are unique to this profession that we can offer in a conversation with someone who might not have experienced architectural training?

Zanira Sandhu (ZS): I thought that point was interesting about coming from a perspective without an architecture background and viewing school as skill-building, which I also felt. But this was not an opinion shared by a lot of my peers who did undergrad, who felt like they were babied doing this weird design stuff. But at the same time, I feel like I need to build these skills.

Emalee Davidson (ED): I was self-teaching on YouTube and got a nice laptop, did all the prep before even entering any architectural education. I had this assumption that if you want to enter into architecture, you need to learn the tools. I wasn't waiting for somebody to hand me tools, but I also had the privilege of going to a community college that offered classes in Revit. So when I got to UCLA, I could enjoy the theoretical, form-focused design approach which is what I was looking for and why I'm here. I like this approach because I feel like I have this other resource that I can already tap into for technical skills. It's a large conversation with my peers all the time of knowing what the pedagogy of the school is before you come.

HB: Coming here with some ideas for how to pursue architecture, your design interests, do you find an alignment or disconnect between the faculty's interests and students'?

ZS: I think there is a resistance and a strong tone that you mentioned as the optics of the institution—you can only see so much of what this place is and that's how you base your decision to come or not come.

Andrew Genglin (AG): In the first year, I was taught a lot about history, theory and construction, but they are in separate courses. So if I want to apply into studio courses, it's kind of hard for me because I never learned architecture before. I may need some guidance on how to apply these things into my design.

KW: There's so much wisdom and knowledge out there - that sometimes, it's hard to know how to grasp onto anything. I'm thinking about my first semesters learning about architecture - there were so many robots, tools, and technology, and an enormous number of scholars. But not everyone is meant to be a historian, or fabricator, or researcher. I wanted to talk to people working on drawings, buildings, and learn from perspectives not yet represented at school.

HB: In applying what you're learning here at UCLA and how you're synthesizing your curiosities, where are you going next or where could you find yourself?

ZS: The M.Arch degree you know, even though it's a piece of paper, I'm realizing, holds a lot of weight. I'm not saying in terms of prestige, but like what you're saying about skill building and really moving past this idea that all you accumulated was to work as a practitioner in architecture where the amount of skills I learned across these three



Left to right: Hallie Black, Cam Jones, Kay Wright, Nathan Logan, Yitao Gu, Andrew Genglin, Zanira Sandhu, Emalee Davidson.

years can be applicable to fourty different fields. I think that openness is really exciting.

Cam Jones: Do we want to be more sort of rigid and professional and funnel people straight towards licensure or do we want to open it all the way up and say this is an avenue to many other things? I think that's a conversation that is yet to start. There's also just in any professional field where the schooling is associated with an industry, I'm thinking of film school as well, since that was my undergrad, there is always this tension: are we a technical program or a theoretical program, do we teach a way of thinking, or do we teach hard skills? But I do think the stakes of that question are getting higher, and I think it's a direct correlation with cost of education.

ED: I just know a bit of Revit, but I feel like that did clear away some of the anxiety about tools that I think I need for the profession. And I realized that the conversation about weaving narrative into your image-making that we're learning in mediations is so applicable to the practice. When I go to work, I could just do a normal job, but I noticed when I graduated from undergrad, some of the courses, like with Dana Cuff, were immediately applicable to design projects where I'm going into a neighborhood and I need to think about the community that's here and I need to be able to do research and talk to people so that it's not an insensitive project that just cares about its bottom line. So I do think that with a summer of Revit there's a lot going on that is helpful.

KW: It's tough too, because it's changing so fast all the time. The technology that was relevant one year ago could be obsolete tomorrow. Years ago, someone trained at SCI-Arc told me that it has to be beautiful - it's really hard to make something beautiful, and there's a lot of intelligence embedded within that.

HB: SCI-Arc, USC, among others, are a stone's throw across Los Angeles with a hundred offices in between: how do you tap into architecture discourse outside the studio at UCLA?

CJ: I think we're pretty lucky to have firsthand exposure and then obviously being in school, I go to lectures and stuff. But also, we all are on Instagram, and we follow all the design accounts and stuff. I think being in school has made me a little more disciplined as far as seeing a photo of something and then actually pursuing who built it, what was the context?

ZS: The Internet is a place where we can seek out a broader conversation, a comradery, and how we experience architecture, what we're seeing architecture is and where our voices could be heard or negotiated. It's not necessarily happening anymore in the walls of the institution. We have to be careful about that because then it does become an echo chamber.

Yitao Gu: I actually feel like we should join the conversation at SCI-Arc or USC because we don't know what they're doing the whole semester. But LA is too big and Melbourne is more accessible—you can go everywhere in the city and it's safe to travel.

predetermined by any kind of orthodoxy. And if anything, I don't think there is any governing pedagogy or ideology running the cultural production of architecture in LA at this moment. GL: WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME WHAT THEY SHOULD SEE IN LA, ONE PLACE I

“I don't think I'll ever be excited” by projects like the Lucas Museum

USC Architecture:

Hallie Black (HB): Foregrounding this discussion, have you taken part in an internship and if so, what was your experience like?

Emma Dexter (ED): I interned with a firm in New York that was pretty corporate, and I ended up really liking a lot of people there, which was surprising, and it made work more fun. But the environment was pretty rigid. My boss was young and we would go on site visits all the time. We ended up having so much in common and he just loved to criticize. I was like, this is my favorite part of my job. I get to go in a car and talk about all these important architects and all these projects that we really like and really don't like—I felt like this is what I want to get paid to do forever. A lot of my peers feel similarly after having worked for big firms.

JG Henriques (JG): I interned with a smaller residential firm back home in Brazil. The first thing I picked up right off the bat is that it's so different from studio and I don't think I knew how different it would be until I started there. I learned a lot, but I think the setting I was in was really limiting in terms of what I was doing. You sit down, red line these plans or fix this AutoCAD model because the client wants something different. Now I'm looking for a summer internship and I tried to go the other way and find things that I was really interested in. Even if I didn't get any of the cold call emails I sent out, so be it, because then I'll get into something that seems like I'll have some freedom to do my own thing.

HB: How confident in the B.Arch are you, say, to land a full-time job or get your foot in the door of an architecture firm? What about those returning for an M.Arch?

Alex Jeong (AJ): My design education wasn't something I read into much when I was choosing between BA versus B.Arch coming out of high school. It was mainly to get a couple years to be able to design and mature in terms of sensibilities.

Andrew Ghuson (AG): I remember coming into my third year feeling unprepared and lackluster in my ambitions. I don't know how I'm supposed to graduate in two or three years, be ready to work, and still maintain passion. It's so hard to get an East Coast job if you are going to architecture school in Los Angeles, so I was feeling this turmoil. This past semester, my worries have shifted: am I going to be good enough to do the drawings? I'm trying to find a firm that's going to value design-first thinking. The corporate firms seem monotonous. I think we all find architecture to be interesting, the design, concept, and ideation of it. Is the nitty gritty technical going to overshadow everything that I find enticing and enamoring about this field?

JG: I picked USC because it was a five-year program. I'm getting a five year degree and I'm getting a B.Arch. I'm going to get licensed. I'm out of here and can go work, and there's still people in my cohort that still think like that. But the more I stay and get involved, be it SPACE, working as a TA, the more I see that the real freedom to design is actually in school and not when you're in a job. This makes me feel like maybe I do want to take an M.Arch after and continue my involvement past the five-year program. If I want to go back home to Brazil, a five-year program is definitely more than enough, but it's more about the fact that I'd have my own freedom in studio than somewhere else.

Austin Merchant (AM): When I chose to do an M.Arch at USC, design was the most exciting thing to me, the thing that I thought architecture was for the most part. I considered myself a really good designer, something I've always enjoyed doing, and I definitely still have a little bit of that, but after work experience and school, I realized that design is actually a really small percentage of it. And I'm actually a bit relieved to find out that I'm kind of more interested in curation and the way people respond to architecture, the way architecture responds to people. There's only so much creative energy you have when it comes to design, and I find that it's a bit of a reservoir you have to kind of replenish. I feel sometimes that the design work that we do as students is platformed in the school in a way that benefits the them more than it benefits us.

ED: I felt pretty limited in terms of accreditation. There's six checkpoints that we have to meet and I definitely came into this with no research done on what accreditation actually means for your education. I thought, I'm a B.Arch, I'll get a license for what I've done. But now I'm realizing that where I thought every year was going to be a thesis, now

really feels more like a very direct response to a very specific prompt, especially for our core studios, which I understand you have to do. That's been a little bit disappointing and also freeing because once I realized that, until my 4th or 5th year when things got thesis-driven, I could really pursue more of my own interests.

HB: Being here in Los Angeles at USC must shift your design interests beyond the program's curriculum, so how has your vision of the city shifted as you've come up here?

AG: I currently intend on staying here, at least for a couple of years. When I chose to go to USC, I'd never been to LA before. I've been to the West Coast, but never LA. And I intended on hating it. But the more time that I spend here, I find it's an amazing place. With the downtown skyline you can tell which buildings are older because they're a little bit more unique; this is clearly a different building than this and that. The more recent skyscrapers all look the same to me at some point and I think it works in some cities, but I don't think it's personally the right style for LA, not in the way that I keep envisioning the city to maintain its integrity.

AM: I mean, we have the most perfect climate you could possibly ask for in the city. It could be so walkable. It could be a paradise city if designers, city planners, citizens, etc., choose for it to be. I feel like there's a lot of potential in the way the city is built, and there's a lot of missed opportunities in the way that the city is built. I feel a bit disillusioned with the decisions that city planners and architects have made and continue to make in LA, but I think that's just all the more reason to be here.

JG: It's also very architecturally rich in its own specific ways. Yes, sometimes we're preserving that architectural richness and uplifting it as students. I see really exciting firms also doing things that I think are really changing LA in a positive way.

ED: When it comes to Los Angeles, I'm a pretty big pessimist. On the one hand, I see projects like the George Lucas Museum and I feel like I'm supposed to be inspired by it being thrown in my face. But I don't think I'll ever be excited by that kind of architecture or that scope of project, its grandeur, the Rent of Form. It's also really weird to see LA struggle with a lot of the same problems that I see in nowhere-ville Tennessee and we still have the same problem of one kind of apartment building that's easy to make in Revit, the cities selling the plans to each other, popping up everywhere like a parasite. The adorable, quintessential Los Angelean mid-century modern stuff still exists, but it's falling into disrepair, and I'm way more excited about that stuff. I don't think the energy of Los Angeles is calling us to do things like that anymore. But I also don't feel an energy with stuff like the George Lucas Museum.

Etulan Joseph (EJ): There are so many forces at play that touch architecture, even in school curriculums, we just don't know or it's left out, like urban planning and city rules, building codes and how they shift because of this particular area or city. And then you have other sort of Capitalist systems, like labor, even the appreciation for design, or even not being paid more.



Left to right: Austin Merchant, Alex Jeong, Andrew Ghuson, Emma Dexter, JG Henriques, Etulan Joseph, Hallie Black.

ALWAYS SUGGEST IS ERIC OWEN MOSS'S URBAN EXPERIMENT IN CULVER CITY ON THE HAYDEN TRACT. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING PLACES IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH INCREDIBLE SUCCESS, AND IT IS UNDERRATED. IT GRAVITATED CREATIVE CORPORATIONS AND PEOPLE IN ONE PLACE AND MADE IT HAPPEN WITH AN ANCHOR BUILDING BUT WITH INNOVATIVE AND

“SCI-Arc can be very unrealistic for no reason whatsoever”

SCI-Arc:

Hallie Black (HB): With many of you graduating this spring, what's your envisioned trajectory after SCI-Arc? Are you interested in becoming an architect with a capital 'A'?

Ian Fennimore (IF): I'm leaning way more towards teaching. I've worked at a lot of different places and I just haven't found anything worthy of me taking on through practice. There's probably an office somewhere out there that I haven't found yet that is for me. Yeah, I've just been largely put off.

Caroline Hayes (CH): I think there's definitely a distinction between the academic institution, architecture and practice, and it's something that I'm not super keen on to dive into sometimes, but it's also something that I think we all accept as necessary to earn a living if we want to be architects. But I agree, there's this sort of disillusionment, definitely a fear of leaving the bubbles where everything is safe and you can experiment and it's about you and what you want versus going to the external world where there's so many different outside factors that determine it.

IF: With M.Arch II, you come in and they assume you have a certain background. I did disciplinary hand-drawing for three years and didn't even touch the computer. And then the teachers want to blow your mind doing models, renders, crazy stuff. But then you end up with a building made out of shoes that touches the ground with a 6 inch by 6 inch little thing with a 600 foot cantilever, right? And yeah, it looks sick. But what are we doing? You wouldn't want to start with shoes if you're trying to constrain the studio in a particular way. I interviewed at an office and they asked to see my SCI-Arc work. So I showed them my building made of shoes with a 400 ft cantilever. They were like, “OK, really?” They wanted to see it, but I wasn't going to show them.

HB: Either not finding the right fitting office or encountering hairiness with the portfolio, what would you like practitioners to know if they are to attract you as an intern or employee?

Ari Diamond-Topelson (ADT): I've been working with someone now roughly for a year and a half. I really appreciate them because they have to deal with the realities of architecture. Design is a small portion and then there are a lot of other logistics or ways of bringing people together to get the product done. And those skills are as important as the design part and I really appreciate them because they are still able to keep a critical tone in the work, but there's also a seriousness towards getting it done in the real world. For them, putting something out there still has thought behind it and there's very intentional, strong choices. I did an internship where I counted bolts, but there was something great about it. I guess for me, there is no architecture totally outside of reality. You just have the experiments that eventually always come back to getting it done with other people, whether it's building a building or just forming some sort of committee that informs the way buildings might be built.

HB: Do you ever sense a misalignment between your project and the project of the practitioner?

IF: I mean, I've been somewhere that I felt that my personal project aligned, probably as much as we could with the person that was running

the place, but it was just a horrible environment. So I've always found that there's something not working.

Marusia Popova (MP): I have had practice, but there's also a side of it that's really boring. It was nothing like the school. We're in the 70-people class and I don't think that many people know what they're going to do. Almost everyone who's been asked throughout our class has said they don't know what they're going to do. And because of that, I think a lot of people end up going back to school to get their masters.

ADT: There's the issue if you get out of architecture school, you're doing door schedules. If you're going to build buildings, then somebody needs to do the door schedule. And finding a practice that actively fights the boredom, but you're also getting stuff built, it's a pretty big challenge for a practitioner to work outside of the regular production of architecture. You have your BIM model, Revit, whatever, like scheduling stuff and figuring out where all your materials are coming from, who's building, there's that mess that needs to get dealt with to build, and it's boring. Being at the bottom when you come out of school, you have to deal with that. The really good practitioners are able to deal with all of that and then on top of it still do the exciting stuff. I would say it's a challenge to find that person.

Jessica Skitalinsky (JS): I think the most inspiring professors/practitioners I talked to were able to fulfill the project with all the wisdom that they have in terms of discipline. And then being excited about how to make it ethical to be built. And that, I guess, is what keeps a flame in me when I'm trying to do that too. You know, just trying to figure out how it works. Just being passionate about that little thing that makes sense. And finding that balance.

MP: I wish earlier in education we would start asking the question of why this is relevant. To me, if I started asking myself this earlier, or if the instructors started pushing this idea to the world, it would have made a big difference about how we think about what we do. Maybe if projects would get less crazy like huge cantilevers and small columns, maybe then we would find value in the things that we do. A lot of the things we do have no relevance at all. SCI-Arc can be very unrealistic for no reason whatsoever.

HB: Is the jury model in the studio productive or not so much? What's helping you branch from the institution to the 'real world'?

Aram Radfar: Some of my younger instructors are kind of against putting your drawings on the wall, and then bringing in a bunch of people to have a conversation about them. Seems like it's the old standard and everyone is trying new versions, like roundtable discussions, or different ways of trying to break the hierarchy of a jury.

ADT: When you go and present a project and everyone says good job to you, it's useless. It's so much more satisfying when someone looks at your work seriously, like actually looking at it.

JS: Maybe I feel like with critique, all the reasons why you do something, oftentimes it comes down to it looking great and there's not much reason. The work that you do doesn't really have meaning or relevance to the world that it's dealing with. And then, if you don't believe in what you do, you can't do it because I feel like if you really ground it or make it really relevant there's no way you can apply it. And so after school, you're debating whether you should go somewhere you don't see yourself or go back to a safe school to continue just being delusional hoping that it will work out for the next few years.

IF: The institution fails if they charge you that much money and don't make you better at what it was you came here to do better. If you're paying X amount of money, you should come out, especially here, a world-renowned institution, insane faculty, historically insane work, insane prices, with an insane portfolio and connections. People are, it seems, afraid to even give their input. At my undergrad (before SCI-Arc), your final drawings were desecrated. Your final model was you throw it in the trash, or the professor lights it on fire, and you leave the room and they give you some water and you come back and have to put it out. If you just get spoon fed all the way then that's the failure of the school and that can lead to that delusion we were talking about.

ORIGINAL ADAPTIVE RE-USE AND DESIGN METHODS. JD: It's a great kind of pedagogical landscape too. I wonder about Moss's most recent project, the (W)rapper, because the reason that I go to the Highline in New York is to see Neil Denari's tower there, and in both cases, they were the Directors of SCI-Arc

There is a “There” There



When Eric Owen Moss unveiled *The (W)rapper*, some critics were not amused. Thom Mayne explains its essential LA-ness.

Gertrude Stein's pithy comment, “there is no there there,” was written about Oakland but is often believed to be about L.A. I get it. This is perhaps why it is so pleasurable to come across those L.A. buildings that, in their perfectly distinctive natures utterly bely that sentiment. Whether it be Frank's Binocular Building, Rodia's Watts Towers, or The Capitol Records Building, these are some of the city's built works that celebrate the idiosyncratic, the ambiguous, and the quirky which, for many, define our city. That being said, it is notable that L.A. is

still producing works outside of critics' abilities to communicate the complex, layered, subjective world of architecture to a broader audience. Moss's Wrapper Building reminds us that we find pleasure in the unpredictable, in the moments that remind us of the richness and diversity of L.A., in the sheer joy of coming across a part of the city that objects to being yet another block in an endless sea of blocks. To those who say “you can't” or “you shouldn't,” this building says “I will.”



Left to right: Marusia Popova, Jessica Skitalinsky, Ian Fennimore, Caroline Hayes, Aram Radfar, Ari Diamond-Topelson, Hallie Black.

as those projects came into focus. Both projects are novel forms of urban punctuation. And I think those experiments are important. **GL: AND AN URBANISM OF 'THIS NEW CONSTRUCTION WILL GO ON THIS CORNER BECAUSE THIS CORNER NEEDS CHARACTER.' IT MIGHT NOT BE ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF ANY ONE BUILDING BUT IT**

MAKES FOR LOTS OF SURPRISING RESULTS THAT ARE OUT OF THE ORDINARY AND IT TURNS OUT PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE, WORK, AND VISIT THERE. BB: Very sort-of John Hejduk-y with slightly bigger developers? I'm not a fan of all the forms that we're talking about here, but I think that

Cultural Capital

Four cultural buildings are in varying stages of construction in Los Angeles. Each is by a global architect. Renderings and newly commissioned photographs by **Jasmine Park** show how they interpret this terrain. **Dora Epstein Jones** describes the projects.

Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Ma Yansong (MAD Architects)

The Lucas Museum is growing in Exposition Park. Part tree canopy, part massive spaceship, it is both generative and smooth, a formal building type that is common in architectural culture but uncommon in most cityscapes. Set to open in 2025, the museum building is also an exercise in advanced digital fabrication,

composed of a sinuous steel frame and a shell of more than 1,500 individual non-rational panels of fiberglass-reinforced polymer, again a fuller potential for BIM practices worldwide, but still somehow a shocking weirdo building to most. Even in a city like L.A., with a history of exuberant formalism, from the Brown Derby to the Disney Concert Hall, the conservative populace may cast the building as a vanity project by a self-absorbed architect. Given its compassionate attention to the life of the city, it really is not.

The project begins on the ground with a landscape design by Mia Lehrer. Hanging gardens and fountains, pathways and fields, and curvilinear planter-scapes embed the building into the site, creating

a connectivity between the building and its environment, welcoming life in, around, and amongst the trees. Complemented by a proposed green roof, the continuity subtracts from the aloof building type to insist on a more conscious oxygen-rich landscape urbanism. Over 250 seismic base isolators protect the structure from earthquakes, also alerting us to the various forms of resiliency that the architecture of the present must demand. The museum campus is a vision of the future we should be living in.

The museum's interior is a careful expression of grandeur and public space, recalling the historical affects of the Roman Baroque church. An elliptical oculus over a massive stupa of space, framed by curved

glass elevators and legged primordial arches, will greet the visitor as they ascend, transporting them into a realm that actually values the media saturation of contemporary society. Housing George Lucas' massive collection, along with other paintings, sculptures, murals, photography, comic art, book and magazine illustrations, the galleries will be a journey across 100,000 square feet of improbable bedfellows like Norman Rockwell and Robert Crumb. A blooming flower of three 300-seat theaters will play homage to film and moving media. A celebration of media-as-art will be similar to the building itself, asking us to reconsider what an icon can be in a more heterogenous, a more diverse, fuller world. This is L.A., after all.



Jasmine Park

experimentation has gotten a lot of rough press from architectural criticism. But also, I've got to say, Culver City has created this zone where you can build anything. It doesn't have to have any other rules of LA. And, a lot of Eric Owen Moss's stuff

David Geffen Galleries, LACMA, Peter Zumthor

When Los Angeles County Museum of Art first opened its doors in 1965, Ed Ruscha began painting a scene of the then-pristine white modernist campus as if on fire. While initially a critique of the mostly-European art it housed, Ruscha's painting has often been used as a critique of LACMA's architecture. Like quite a few LA institutions, LACMA has had a terrible relationship to its own architecture.

The first iteration was designed by William Pereira as a Lincoln-ish Center, glamorous and resplendent with sparkling granite and reflecting pools, that is, until the pools began seeping La Brea Tar Pit tar. In the

1980s, LACMA hired Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer to remove the pools, and to design an entrance pavilion, markedly more beige and more decorative, but somehow worse at being welcoming. Since 2002, a series of subsequent designs have attempted to ameliorate the poor institutional architecture to the landscape and to the public. A Rem Koolhaas redesign that surfaced for a while would demolish all existing buildings and replace them with one big tent-like building. While socially-promising in its premise, LACMA scrapped the Koolhaas in favor of a set of pavilions designed by Renzo Piano, mostly liked by the public but still repeating the less-inviting campus approach. In 2009, LACMA began talks with Peter Zumthor for

was enabled by the 3% for art rule in Culver City. So, by saying that architecture could be art, is a really interesting proposition for a city to make, to be pro-formalism. With Brooks + Scarpa, their stuff is really interesting because they somehow

an ambitious project that would replace the original pavilions, and in some ways, move toward the great big building of the Koolhaas scheme. Zumthor's original proposal was audacious: a great black blob hovering over the ground of the campus, gathering up the galleries into one continuous being, and spreading out over Wilshire. The popular opinion was one of horror.

Today, the hammers and the mixers and various noisy drills are bringing forth a much more obedient Autogrill of a building. It hovers still but now in a great glass wrapped façade, inviting visual connections within the human experience of the building. It will still cross Wilshire, but now it is

a bridge and not a spread. Will the new building lose some of its autonomy as an architectural object? Yes. But, the tradeoff is clear: the building is now about participating in an already active landscape, opening the ground to the tar pits and the park spaces, and creating a new ground above, one that democratizes the art. Indeed, it is incumbent now that architecture does not try to be the main character of an institution—instead, its goodness should be measured by the meaningful connections it forms. Set for completion in 2025, the newest LACMA might just get it right—the institution is the city, the architecture is part.



Jasmine Park

managed to make buildings with giant holes in the middle in the context of truly low income, affordable, and homeless housing. I think they're under-studied in how they've had to master some ridiculous amount of formula and the funding

La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, Marion Weiss & Michael Manfredi
The La Brea Tar Pits and Museum are an enduring source of wonder for our exploration and understanding of the world, write the architects. Few other parks in the world bring active discovery and raw curiosity into such tantalizingly close reach. Few other museums in the world juxtapose real-time excavation with imaginative display.

Weiss/Manfredi's proposed La Brea Loops and Lenses redefines Hancock Park and the Page Museum as one unified experience. The continuous loops—from an entrance canopy to a lifted plinth, from a science walk to a park edge—connect the rich but disparate existing structures, adding amenities for community and research. The park areas connected by the loops capture three distinguishing themes: research and revelation, community and culture, and spectacle and urban fiction. Each area is designed to be environmentally sensitive and

to maximize space for the public to engage with the site's unique history. The different identities of the intertwining loops embody journeys that encourage discovery, with programming that appeals to diverse interests—from paleontology to bird watching, from artwork and performances to kids' playgrounds.

The lenses, as framed views throughout the park and museum, bring into focus the research and museum collection that contains over 350 million specimens. The proposed design of the Page Museum expansion is rooted in a close analysis of the existing building, preserving and magnifying its unique strengths. The beloved grass slope and terrace of the museum is doubled in size and made accessible in the expansion to provide more opportunities for recreation. The museum treasures will be revealed to visitors, bringing the museum to the park, and the park into the public imagination.



from the state, and then still do something that's architectural, without getting 3% for art for it. JD: I'm so glad the projects by Brooks + Scarpa and Lorcan O'Herlihy were paired together. I think these practices have mastered the scaling from houses to housing most

MOLAA, Enrique Norten (TEN Arquitectos)
The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Long Beach's East Village Arts District, is preparing for a significant transformation to expand its collection, become an intellectual resource, and enhance its visitor experience. MOLAA was founded in 1996, and remains the only museum dedicated to modern and contemporary Latin American and Latino art in the United States.

With pride in Latin American culture, MOLAA is embarking on a vital renovation and expansion project; TEN Arquitectos say they envision not a singular building but a cultural village, expressed by a complementary relationship of mass and void, which will, in turn, create a relationship between open and closed spaces, providing different opportunities for innovation, creation, and exhibition. The visitor will go through a procession of interior and

exterior spaces, engaging in a collections-based experience that will provide a general map of the fundamental movements and artists in Latin American and Latino art during the 20th and 21st centuries.

Open to the public and contained within a city block, the endeavor is like a sliding puzzle, where one must find moves and paths opened up within the two-dimensional confines of the board. The museum's expansion is a carefully planned phasing strategy that includes a new building for offices and much-needed visible storage spaces for a sequence of partial demolitions and new construction. The existing main gallery will be renovated, in addition to a new auditorium, study center, and galleries.



convincingly, but also from really, really different points of philosophical departure. I think Lorcan has always been careful about the part to whole aspect of housing, and how you get the granularity to work and how you get it to cohere. Whereas Brooks + Scarpa put an early emphasis on

environmental performance. **BB:** And objecthood. **JD:** They both started from formalism, true. **BB:** I think that we do have developers experimenting and different kinds of densification. And, that does bring us to the ADUs which are so fun and all over the

Housing Sets The Stage For Linear Living

Housing is the biggest challenge facing Los Angeles today. Some 75,000 people live on the streets of the county, and low and even middle income workers struggle to pay the rent or mortgage. Only millionaires can afford an averagely priced single-family home. Costly land along with growing code and community constraints have also put a crimp in the region's famed freedom to experiment with residential design and lifestyle. Into the picture have stepped two housing trends, both of which have shifted the architectural energy away from the single-family house: the backyard Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), and mid-rise, market rate and "affordable" apartment buildings being built on arterial roads.

Of The Moment explores these typologies through five ADUs (p40) and, on these pages, four recent apartment buildings on or close to Lincoln Boulevard in Santa Monica and Venice: the Rose Apartments by Brooks + Scarpa, Pacific Landing by Tighe Architecture, and the Arroyo by Koning Eizenberg Architecture, all 100% affordable, built by nonprofit developers; and The Wilson designed by Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects, a market rate development with "inclusionary" low-income apartments. They are intrinsically interesting as housing solutions but also as a grouping in relation to Lincoln Boulevard, which has long been a funnel for traffic and must now provide a sense of place.

Patrick Tighe, Lorcan O'Herlihy, Larry Scarpa and Angela Brooks (Brooks + Scarpa), and Julie Eizenberg and Nathan Bishop (KEA) sat down with Frances Anderton at the Stray Dog offices and discussed their projects. They talked about drawing from LA's courtyard tradition and from its decorated stucco boxes, and about making subtle creative moves within a somewhat formulaic building type to heighten sustainability, sociability, architectural expression, and forge a new kind of linear living on a street designed for Autopia.

Frances Anderton (FA): Lincoln Boulevard is part of CA State Highway 1 and goes from the 10 freeway in Santa Monica to LAX in Los Angeles. In 2012, the state turned over management of the Santa Monica stretch of Lincoln to the city, which designated the boulevard for mixed use development. We are focused on three projects in that stretch, and Rose Apartments which falls just outside the Santa Monica border. This is an arid, commercial strip with seven lanes of blacktop. Is the thoroughfare the new frontier for housing in LA?

Lorcan O'Herlihy (LOH): One of the key issues at The Wilson was the mixed use idea behind it, to activate the part of the street. Before it was a series of old automotive places. It was an inbetween, it was passing through. So how do you ground that? How do you create a space that will become a gathering space? And I think Lincoln and other arteries around Los Angeles have to be grounded around people and pedestrians and walking and walkability.

Patrick Tighe (PT): The Pacific Landing building replaced the former gas station.

Angie Brooks (AB): The last four projects we've done in LA have all been on parking lots or gas stations.

LOH: Two of the projects we've done on Santa Monica Boulevard were the Ford dealer, and the Chrysler dealer. So you're talking about not just fixing cars, it's businesses selling cars that are being removed.

FA: Gas station, auto parts, auto repair shop, auto dealers, car washes, motels, taco stands and fast food joints, big box stores—a street where people would drive along, and the only thing they would stop for is something that services the thing they're driving in. How do you make it home? It seems a defining feature in all of your projects is open space and a courtyard. Yet, each one does it slightly differently. Let's talk about each one of them.

LOH: One key idea was to extend the sidewalk for an area of tables

and chairs. Now Tartine bakery has opened, so I'm happy to see people sitting outside. That did not exist before. So my courtyard is also the front yard, which is one key issue. But there is also a courtyard in the heart of the building that you can look into as opposed to seeing the sidewalk. I'm talking about adjacencies, which is about building in the city, it is about how you engage when you are sidewalk adjacent? The more we carve away strategic openings and voids, and the more we can argue against clients who are pushing against that because they want leasable space, the more we can give value to your smaller unit, with outdoor space.

Nathan Bishop (NB): We wanted to do a typology that contributed as much for the neighborhood as it does the residents. So the Arroyo is actually one of seven KEA projects right now that all deal with this idea of "sticky space," where we're trying to make spaces that contribute as much to the life of the neighborhood as the residents, and fuse those two things together. So density can mean how big the building is but there is also density of experience in the public realm, and I think our courtyards are trying to put in as much retail, as many people, and as much activity in relation to the life of the sidewalk as possible because it's a different kind of model. Typically, the courtyard models make living units where half of them might face a lousy alley, or a lousy courtyard. So we create these kinds of long bar buildings, that make housing that's good for access to light, air and views, for the residents, and pair that with something that actually contributes to the life of the neighborhood.

Julie Eizenberg (JE): So at Arroyo the discussions early on were a lot about, if we can plant some trees down there, and the street is densifying and passersby can get a view through that kind of "leaky space," you've got a sense of discovery, and you've got a sense of green that comes back out to the street.

FA: So your project is a court between two bars, and it's on the same level as the sidewalk. So it sort of bleeds into the street, even though there is a barrier. It's asking the residents to have a direct engagement with Lincoln, and vice versa. Brooks + Scarpa at Rose was different.

AB: Yes, because the people who live there are different, probably. This is the second project that we've done that we have created a courtyard lifted up off of the street, at least one story up. And part of it stemmed from past experience at Skid Row Housing Trust, where we met with the community building committee who were homeless people. And we originally had a design that had these sort of monumental stairs and this connection to the street. And they all said, they don't want to be connected to the street, because the street's dangerous. They've lived on the street for many years; they wanted to have a nurturing environment that was protected. These buildings are completely secure-fences, security cameras everywhere-but we have an aversion to these buildings that look really defensive, like a prison and we wanted it to look really open. So by lifting the courtyard up off the street and providing a step planter, that gave a gesture of bringing them to the sidewalk.

LS: We have a device to make it even more open: there's no handrails. If you make the planting wide enough, you don't actually need a railing so when you stand on the courtyard, you're looking out like you're on the bow of a ship.

AB: And people can see in and vice versa.

LS: So it still feels part of the street.

AB: Visually connected and physically separate. The client, Venice Community Housing, did not want the building to only be for young adults. And so she did a 50-50 split with some elderly homeless people. She said that after one week of them living together around this courtyard, they were actually talking to each other and helping



ⓐ **Rose Apartments**
Brooks + Scarpa



Jeff Durkin

ⓑ **The Wilson**
Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects



lincoln blvd

Eric Staudenmaier

place. The ADU's help us to densify these long, skinny city lots that our city has blessed us with. JD: I think that some of my affection for ADUs is a little retrograde. I like the fact that they are, in a way, a last redoubt for people who hoped to come to LA and afford a house for a small

family. It's an LA story to think about what you could do with it and how you could make it innovative. The small footprint sets up certain possibilities and limits others. For a lot of people working on ADUs, they imagine the first could be a prototype for many similar variations. In an odd

each other with things.

FA: It's these little things that are so interesting. And then Patrick's is a more self contained courtyard.

PT: This is probably the tightest site of all the buildings we are talking about, but the courtyard was really important. And it really is a social space. Everyone here knows what makes a good courtyard in Southern California—there is an Irving Gill project (Horatio West Court, 1919) a few blocks away. But more than anything, it's a place where residents come together, so anchored off of the courtyard is the laundry room and the community room, and there's a playground for the kids.

FA: But your courtyard is more self contained. It's not really inviting people on the street to be part of that courtyard.

PT: It's about containment and safety. We are required to have open space, private open space (in 100% Affordable). So how do you use it in a way that it becomes more than just a corridor?

LS: It's a typology that's been around for over 2000 years that's worked. We do 'em, I guess, subconsciously, courtyard buildings, and there's a billion variations.

FA: And it's one of the lovely legacies in LA.

LOH: But it's also in-between space, and in-between space is great architecture.

JE: It's not just a setback, and you've got to use it to advantage.

NB: What we did at the Arroyo wouldn't work for every building along the street. There's parts on Lincoln where a building is acting like a boulevard building, and creating a street wall. Then there's some punctuation, when there is a courtyard that breaks open to the street, that actually works. Lincoln Boulevard is a varied experience.

LS: Your sites are different. Lorcan, yours is narrower.

LOH: With Lincoln we got so much pushback on the height. So the client said, okay, we have to drop this lower, let's make it linear and then we can put four stories at the corner because there is a larger building across the street (a 1990s development by Community Corporation; designed by KFA). We could sell that idea. Sometimes parameters make your project better, because that was a better project, being long and linear. If it had been a larger four or five story, continuous building, it wouldn't have been so interesting.

Constraints and Opportunities in "Affordable" Housing

FA: Each one of these projects contains dwellings aimed at people earning below a certain income level. But the way they got to that is through slightly different funding mechanisms. Rose, Pacific Landing and Arroyo contain 100% affordable dwellings, and were built by nonprofit developers. They are deed-restricted for tenants typically earning between 30 and 80 percent of AMI. The Wilson is a market rate apartment building with a mandatory percentage (or "inclusionary") of subsidized units. The Arroyo is the "inclusionary" portion of a market rate development where the developer chose to put the affordable dwellings in a separate building from the market rate development, called The Park, which is in downtown Santa Monica and was also designed by KEA. What were the design constraints and opportunities that result from the way in which the project is funded?

PT: So the 100% of affordable housing projects have multiple sources of funding; they have national, state, and local, and it really does set up a challenge sometimes in design because each lender has their own criteria. You have to design for all of them and sometimes they conflict with each other. Layered into that there's other sources: banks, and then there's the grants. It's actually a miracle the way these things are put together. There's people that are hired full time just to figure out how to fund these projects.

NB: Yes, it's amazing. The Arroyo was actually funded almost 100% with TCAC funding (Tax Credit Allocation Committee) and each state administers TCAC funding differently. So California has some really great ones that lift the bar on energy; you get better credits for better energy performance. So that's one of the good things about TCAC, and having just one funding source made it a lot easier to navigate.

FA: This technical stuff is what I think needs to be understood in terms of the invisible hand that is shaping these buildings, and the creativity that you all exercise with these wonky packages.

AB: It's all policy.

JE: It's wonkier than you think.

FA: So does the form follow rules? Does it emanate from policy considerations?

AB: The basic volume of the building does, but not the design.

LS: But it's affecting what we do pretty dramatically because affordable housing is running somewhere around 25% more per square foot than market rate housing. And it's because we get layered on with all kinds of stuff like CASp inspectors (Certified Access Specialists who inspect for enhanced ADA compliance). Now we're pre-building a finished unit during construction, so we can have it inspected and signed off.

FA: Does CASp influence things like spatial organization? Enlarging the bathroom rather than perhaps giving some more living space?

JE: You just end up using more space to do less.

LS: I think it's the elephant in the room nobody wants to talk about because I think accessibility is stymieing affordable housing because everything gotta be 100% accessible. And if you look at the trends nationwide, it's like maybe 30%, if you take in every disability.

JE: Hold on, I'd argue that there is accessibility that has a productive value. And there are accessibility requirements now, which are minutiae, which is a different thing again. But I think the goal of accessibility is a good one.

LS: Of course.

JE: The same as the goal of environmental quality was a good one. When we started working on affordable housing, heat and stuff like that was expensive. So you were designing passive cooling, you didn't have air conditioning, and I think that changed form, emphasizing courtyards for cross-ventilation. I think affordable housing had a huge impact on the design of market rate housing. But now, when you use public money, the requirements for performance are much higher. But maybe they should be, because this is something that's meant to be an enduring resource for communities over the long term.

AB: And then there is also prevailing wage. If you go above four storeys you have to pay commercial prevailing wage.

LS: So clients are not building the maximum they can because the cost dramatically goes up.

AB: But the only reason we have prevailing wages is because people need a living wage.

LS: So it's not us who's driving the cost stuff. In fact, we give them maximum bang for buck.

Formal Creativity

JE: So these buildings have been noticed, not just in LA, they've been noticed around the country, and every time we talk about them, people are surprised how many regulations there are. One of the real tricks that is in play here is that a design move doesn't look like you did it because you have to. The deliberateness on the spatial and the formal strategy actually belies the complexities of the stuff that forms them, because if you went by where they were pushing you, you'd have s**t.

PT: For me it's a multi-layered approach. You start with the pragmatic because there's a Pro Forma, it has to work, you have to meet the numbers, and then there's a humanistic quality that gets embedded. And somewhere in the mix is the creative aspect that I think everyone here brings to the table.

FA: So let's talk about that and let's start with you, Patrick, with your scaly skin on the front of the building. One of the assertions made about this Type 5 construction is that it's somehow not real architecture. But actually it is, and what is making it real architecture? Is it a sort of formal expressiveness?

PT: For us, we took this imagery of an iconic home, and we abstracted that piece to create these volumes. And with a very few simple moves we came up with these abstract shapes. It's a corner building; we wanted to celebrate that corner. And we had all kinds of ideas of what that element could be and in the end we decided to tessellate it with mosaic tiles to bring a little life and vitality to the building.

FA: I'm not equating this directly with dingbats, but I look at this strategy of adding a layer of decoration as something we see in LA a lot, which is, when one is price-constrained, do a move on the facade that is very eye-catching. Is it fair to say that just as we've got the courtyard tradition coming through in these buildings, we've also got some other LA traditions coming through?

PT: Yeah, I think in a building that's so simple with a very limited palette of materials – essentially corrugated metal and plaster – it needed a little bit of texture, color, a little bit of exuberance, and you could call it decoration. I think it's just a little bit of exuberance that was necessary.

FA: Architects hate the word "decoration."

© Pacific Landing
Tighe Architecture



Chuen Wu

© The Arroyo
Koning Eizenberg Architecture



Eric Staudenmaier

way, it harkens back to Eichler, and a very different notion of suburban expansion, now turned inward. GL: I'M HAPPY THERE'S NO PREFAB IN THIS ISSUE. AND I'M HAPPY THERE ARE NO PSI PAVILIONS IN THIS ISSUE. WHAT I LIKE IS THAT THESE ADU'S ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO DO VERY ECLECTIC, FORMALLY EXUBERANT,

PT: I think in this case, it needed a little bit of flamboyance.

AB: And it is decorative. I mean, there's a design budget and schedule for these projects. The schedule can't move, the budget can't move, the design can move. And at least in our experience, a lot of times you will design basically a simple box and then you try to figure out how to add a piece and make it kind of look like something else.

FA: And you did glitter stucco.

AB: Yes. And I have to tell you that it was all chopped out of the project. And so part of, I think part of what good designers do is fight for the design every step of the way.

LS: And we had a starting price for putting the sparkle green in the facades and it included a little bit of scalloping. And they were going to chop it out. So I went to our shop, I set up my phone, put it on video, and I actually made it in our shop. And I give a two-minute video to our project manager; he sends it over to the contractor, they go, Oh! Final price: much less!

AB: Now, we did limit the scope of it a little bit. It's only on the front, it doesn't wrap the whole building. But that's essentially what happened. And we had to fight and talk about it and say how important it was to include it. So you have to say, here's where you get the glitter. Here are the bags, this is how much they cost, you have two guys on the scaffolding, one does the stucco, one throws the sparkle grain.

KS: Just throw it on, put some Liberace music on. Honestly, sometimes you can do better stuff when you have the constraints of budget.

JE: There are people who work both ways. There's some people that if you don't give them a constraint, they'll do their best work. But I think this area is a game of constraints. And it's fun.

LOH: You know, it's valuable when you fight the battle, because when you're done, it's bringing 50 people off the street and you feel okay, maybe that's what architects should do.

AB: And then people will then come back to you and say, 'You know what, I was at your public meeting, and I didn't want this project to be built. And now that it's here, it's really beautiful.' We went through 50 public meetings at Rose Apartments.

JE: Only fifty?

Landscape

FA: But let's talk about the other piece to what makes living in LA lovely: landscape. Here you are on Lincoln, which is polluted with traffic and lacking in greenery. The city has plans to beautify the strip with a tree-lined median and improved sidewalks, but that won't happen yet. What do you do to soften the location?

LS: Lorcan, you put it right on the facade of the building (in a green wall)!

AB: So open space requirements in the city of LA are the highest of a lot of other cities that we worked in because we've been told Los Angeles is park poor. So we have to put a lot of open space in our buildings, and then you can use a certain percentage of that for greenery.

LS: Sometimes it's hard, you know, because in Southern California, everything is stick built, it's wood framing, and we get a lot of resistance to putting plants on anything other than the ground. We have one client, we wanted planters on the building and they go, you can have the planters and you can put fake plants in it.

NB: There are maintenance issues and funding issues about how to make landscaping that thrives. You don't want it to die. Also, the market rate developers have been able to turn it into capital and branded outdoor space, rooftop space, amenity space. It's not the same with affordable housing, they're not going to get that benefit out of it. So it has to have something qualitatively that they're willing to have it for. We got lucky on the Arroyo because there was a storm drain down the middle of the site, making it impossible to build underground

parking so the site was unattractive to commercial developers. So we have real dirt. We were able to have big trees. But on other projects it's harder.

Mixing Uses for Change on the Strip

FA: It's lovely at Arroyo. But there's another piece that all of you are dealing with, which is the mixed use aspect. You've got retail space on the base of The Wilson and Pacific Landing, you've got the offices on the base of Rose, and you've got the community room at Arroyo.

JE: The real issue is that retail is fragile. And we have got a whole set of planning regulations based on the idea that retail is going to keep the street alive.

LOH: I mean for our project on Lincoln (with Tartine on the ground floor), there was a bit of research into what is needed in the area. And it was about food. Retail can work, if there's a strategy. If it's placed in the right place, they've done their homework, I think that's really important.

PT: If the retail fails, there are still design ideas that can make the ground space successful via transparency, setbacks, landscape. These are all things that improve the quality of other buildings, whether it's retail for housing.

JE: The thing with this building type, especially on boulevards like this, is that it's not just what you put down there, it's what will happen over time on the street to accommodate how cities are changing. A store tenant can do any kind of storefront. How do you accommodate that when they stick in something that you don't like? Do you still get something that holds together? You've got so many players putting parts into this, that it's a really weird little puzzle. So you're creating an armature more than a finished thing.

FA: Well, thank you, Julie, for summing up exactly what these projects are all doing. And actually, as each of you embarked on these projects, to what extent were you projecting forward into where Lincoln is going?

LOH: I lived in Venice for fourteen years at Rose down on Pacific Avenue, and I drove Lincoln Boulevard every single day of my life. And this opportunity to address Lincoln Boulevard was really interesting because if one thinks of the version of a strip—of all the signs and all the energy and the pipes and the wires—it's such a classic LA scene.

JE: It's iconic, yes.

LOH: Our area was a very, very challenging space. And it's interesting as an architect to be able to add housing, which is going to change the narrative.

FA: We're going from mobility to stasis. You're taking somewhere that's a through-way, a no place, and you're turning it into somewhere that's a place. And that's really an interesting challenge.

LS: It's changing. I think it's going to become kind of a boulevard that has a lot of life. It's already happening, you know, but you know, though always the issue becomes the gentrification, you know. The cost of housing here already is through the roof.

FA: But there's still a lot of space on Lincoln that could still be developed.

AB: It goes back to policy. So Lincoln Boulevard is C-zoned on both sides. And then beyond the C is R, right? So there's a code in the city that says if you are within so many feet of R1, you can only go 25 feet high. So what type of developer would build anything on Lincoln Boulevard because you would have to then go through public hearings and get a variance and nobody wants to do that. So if the city were to just make "by right" policy for Lincoln Boulevard and say anyone can build five storeys on Lincoln Boulevard, I guarantee you that tomorrow it would be completely developed.

JE: I don't want it all the same. I mean, it's kind of messy. Where do you go to fix a toaster? Lincoln Boulevard was all about fixing things. I

LIFESTYLE-DRIVEN EXPERIMENTS. AND EACH ONE IS AS EXPERIMENTAL AS A TEMPORARY \$200,000 PAVILION BUILT ON THE FREE LABOR OF ALL YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. THE ADUS CAN BE INTRICATE LITTLE TINY PIECE OF ARCHITECTURE. THEY'RE DIVERSE AND FUN AND SPECULATIVE. BB: The sheer variety of formal and aesthetic content is also

kind of miss that.

FA: I must say I love the way the motel next door to Pacific Landing is now gussied up. It seems like Pacific Landing appeared and suddenly the motel realized they were looking really shabby. I love the combination of the two buildings and the change in height and color and time period. It's really dynamic.

JE: Don't let development happen too fast. It can happen, slow down, happen again. And it will develop a character. What gets really depressing is when it all does happen at once and it feels canned, and you don't have a sense of discovery, or idiosyncrasy, and that's a problem.

FA: And that's happening in the part of Lincoln that's closer to downtown Santa Monica actually, where there is a uniformity, everything's coming in at the same height level. And this part that we're talking about is more kind of varied right now, more eclectic.

LOH: It is and even though we removed some automotive, fixer upper places that were right across the street, there were eleven others! So it's not like we're taking something away. As you say, cities grow incrementally; this has to grow properly. It can't be just one fell swoop, eminent domain.

NB: It doesn't have to be nostalgic. There's these cool little gyms that happen in leftover parking lots along Lincoln and it is just gritty, in an uncontrolled way. And I think there's ways to think about new projects that still do that without having to be nostalgic.

LOH: It can't just be one thing. It is about adaptive reuse or programming. It's nice that it has the grittiness, like when you look at it, it looks like a street, like a film set.

AB: And it goes back to policy, right. You can write a policy around, you know, we want these things.

JE: It goes back to Michael Sorkin, that local code book he wrote years and years ago (Local Code: The Constitution of a City at 42 N Latitude).

At this point in the conversation, Thom Mayne joined in.

Thom Mayne (TM): I have some broad questions I'd like to add to this. I would think it's not about capital A or small A architecture, it's a matter of what is the nature of the problem and what are the opportunities. I'm from the generation where LA became global and not regional. And so I'm interested in how people in Copenhagen and London and New York respond to what's going on in LA. And Lincoln Blvd, it's where we enter the city. It's a major gate from LAX. The question is now, would an urban plan be extremely useful to solving the problem? Without that, it's somewhat limited, or it's a very different problem, also connected to small A, capital A, architecture. I would have said—as with the The (W)rapper by Mr. Moss—these are temporary buildings. That's LA. And it gives you different opportunities. If you're in Zurich right now or in Copenhagen there is no "looking for opportunities." That would be a joke. They'd be really clean, simple buildings, with high quality triple glass, a window wall system that has an 80 year shelf life and not a 20 year one. It's going to be concrete. It's a Type 1 building. The lobby will have onyx. Those will be real buildings. No question about it and everybody knows how to do this stuff. But it's also kind of boring. But we live in a temporary environment. That's what LA is. But it offers opportunities and they're different opportunities that are quite different than if you're in Zurich.

LS: Oh, yeah. It's the climate.

JE: There's a playground in this place.

TM: It seems like the other thing is, I'd be curious—because I've been investing in my son (Sam Mayne, developer of mid-range, for-purchase multifamily housing in Brooklyn with the firm SO - IL). And at age seventeen he would say to me, Dad, I'm not going in your direction. You're well known and you're broke and you're struggling



Frances Anderton, Lorcan O'Herlihy, Julie Eizenberg, Nathan Bishop, Angie Brooks, Patrick Tighe, Larry Scarpa meet at Stray Dog Café in Culver City.

and you're still working. That's not my thing. I'm going somewhere else. And he was very clear about it. And now he's the developer; he takes a piece of the action when he's done. That's his profit.

If you did it again, or if you look to the future, knowing what you know about the reality of what it takes to build something that has the ethics that you represent, how would that change your kind of discourse if in fact you were the developer, but you would still be constrained, whether it's the city, whether it's regulatory, whether its money?

PT: I remember being in a discussion and there was an architect on the panel and said, Oh, I would never do Type 5 construction. It's just terrible. It's horrible. I would never do it. And yeah, we would all like to do concrete and steel buildings, but that's not what's given to us, right. Type 5 is what we have to deal with. How do we do it well?

JE: What's wrong with Type 5?

TM: But doesn't it actually offer small A opportunities? The fact that it is relaxed.

LS: It's changing though, I think. The codes are making things difficult. I distinctly remember when I first moved out here, and one of the first things I did is go to this restaurant you (Morphosis) did. And there was this detail of the light going through the glass to the outside, and I wanted to see how that was done. And there was a 2 inch hole in the glass and a three quarter inch conduit sticking through it with nothing else. I'm like, that's genius.

NB: I moved to LA thinking it was going to be a lot looser. But there's another part of this, though, that I feel like is at a dead end, which is the lifestyle of the unit. The structure of the financing structures the unit around the cultural idea of lifestyle that feels really stagnant. So the loose part is in the stuff we're talking about, like the courtyard, but these other pieces are sadly fixed.

FA: I think the through line in this publication is the question of whether LA is still an architecture laboratory and what I would argue is that in all of your projects, despite all of these complexities and this Rubik's Cube of putting together the funding, there's still a looseness that you've managed somehow to squeeze out of some quite constrained conditions.

JE: We've demonstrated that no matter how crappy the framework is you can still extract the architecture out of it. But what's kind of nice is if you take the LA tradition of improvisation, the tweak, the clever move, then it can be quite a hospitable place to work, to achieve a kind of beauty, but with a certain modesty. And I think maybe that's part of why people don't really think there's all that much happening with this typology. It's stealth to a certain extent.

LS: I think that the thread is that we are able to do something with the typology that people have cast off as garbage and you know, as I like to say, we make chicken livers from chicken s**t.

great for clients. You can say, I want a high modernist Linda Tallman glass box, or I want Melissa Shin's really cool variations on traditional type, and everything in between. I think it's a kind of architectural pleasure-land for the city of LA and

the people who live here. JD: It seems to me that younger people entering design fields now, for all the challenge they face, are maybe more connoisseurs of cities than we were. I feel like the character, and the actual shape of cities, their morphology, is much more frequently discussed, much

ADUs: A Big Little Canvas

Accessory Dwelling Units in the backyard, or ADUs, were originally proposed as a low density, low-rise means to increase much-needed housing across a region resistant to high density and tall apartment buildings. They emerged from years of research at UCLA's CityLAB, and became state law in 2017, expanded later to encompass JADUs (Junior ADUs), which are attached to the main property. They have been a hit. Of almost 30,000 residential permits pulled in Los Angeles in 2023, more than 10,000 were for ADUs. They are built by homeowners on their properties, typically at the rear. While touted as a solution to rental affordability, or for intergenerational living, many serve simply as additional space for their owners and are not inexpensive to build. But some clients have let them become a creative launchpad for emerging LA architects, in the way that the single family home served for their predecessors.

Sprouting behind homes across Los Angeles is an eclectic range of formally expressive, small structures, often out of sight of passersby. Here are five of them, designed over recent years by architects **Ben Warwas**, **Melissa Shin**, **Casey Hughes**, **Warren Techentin**, and builder **Jared Brunk** (who led the construction of Thom Mayne's house in Cheviot Hills). They talked with **Frances Anderton** about the architectural objects emerging from a basket of constraints that are changing the meaning of the Los Angeles backyard and giving a new generation a canvas for experimentation.

Frances Anderton (FA): These five ADUs are joyfully eclectic. Can each of you describe yours?

Casey Hughes (CH): La Maida is a tiny (305 sf), and fairly low-budget project. Because of this, we designed a simple floor plan and articulated the ceiling to get some interest in the project, while not doing something too complicated from a foundation or structural perspective. The project is directly connected to the existing house, but one of the goals is to minimize that connection so that the project appears to be an independent object. This is one of the formal strategies we use so the project relates to the existing home while developing its own character.

Ben Warwas (BW): Stiff Peaks was a replacement of an illegal structure in the exact same place, in the middle of the rear yard. The client was a screenplay writer. She had purchased the house from a set designer who had attempted to make the backyard look like this Versailles, secret garden situation. We took these aspects—almost vernacular, but pseudo-European aspects—and turned them into this small structure. But because it's on a hill, we ended up creating a roof deck, which made the building feel a lot bigger. And then with the arches and scallops we were really trying to play into this whimsical, vernacular feel. The breakthrough moment was the upside down arch on the staircase to the roof deck. That was where you could do this playful thing that everyone could understand. It was trying to create some architectural humor that wasn't overly sophisticated or needs an in-depth knowledge of the field.

Melissa Shin (MS): Four Corners is unbuilt. It came out of some research that we were doing where we had this large, standard pre-1920s Victorian house that we had initially wanted to convert into a duplex. But we would have had to comply with a Highland Park CDO, a community development overlay that would require us to add commercial space into the project which was tricky because of parking and whatnot. Each one of the four ("Corners") was a study on how to insert some form of additional housing—an ADU or JADU—and commercial space into an existing home. The formal language is meant to be a play on Victorian architecture, secretly inserting these

strange and uncanny moments. We were interested in the construction techniques and the exactitude of a lot of the details, so we ran this fictitious project through the same type of tectonic study that we would have for a built project.

Warren Techentin (WT): So this ADU is in Silver Lake, which is a hillside district. The site goes from a thin upper street all the way down to Glendale Boulevard, so although it's in the backyard of the project, it also fronts this very public street with a huge amount of traffic. The clients had a child, and parents and friends visiting all the time. So we were providing them with additional space, and also trying to block them from the sounds of the street. So you enter at one level, and it is like a skip stop entry, where you continue down to the living area, and down to another bedroom. Or you go up to a bedroom. So it's following the slope of the hill, inspired a teeny bit by some of Charles Moore's projects in hillside areas. It's 33 feet tall, sits on a basement, and then has a roof deck which looks out over all of the San Gabriel Valley. Formally, we wanted to break it up and emphasize the village character of the hillside. So instead of just doing one larger structure, we broke it into two parts, with views in different directions.

Jared Brunk (JB): My approach to the ADU was a little bit unorthodox, because I was the client, but I'm also a builder by trade, so I put an artist-builder team together that had a unique approach to how to get this thing done. So this structure is a corner lot, and there's a craftsman house on the front. And the concept was to make these two houses connect and work together by creating a campus in between. There's a bunch of construction elements and materials that I was trying to avoid: no drywall, no interior paint, no walls, no wood framing. We wanted big, robust materials, block blast steel and this very large interior with massive volumes and double heights, and this open environment, which is LA living inside and out. From a standpoint of materials, no maintenance; just power-wash the outside. This thing was designed based on the structure, which created the art or the sculpture, and not the opposite way. It is pretty intense in terms of its volume and shape, and it was tricky, but we got it done.

CH: Formally speaking, if you look at the projects presented, they all

have fairly simple footprints, and they get more articulated as they rise up, and that, again, speaks to the idea of constructability.

FA: Because these are sometimes secret, and they're on the back of the lot, they're not front of house, do you think you have more freedom to be genuinely individualist?

CH: From a broader perspective, what I'm seeing is that there was a moment in the early 2000s when architecture gained a heightened cultural prominence. With that came the rise of starchitects, and the rise of exuberant buildings heralded as attractors that could spur economic development. More recently there's been a backlash to that formalism, in terms of people feeling that it's extravagant and a little bit hedonistic. It feels like we're now coming into a more balanced perspective where we can embrace formalism, but at the same time have a deep connection to construction and normative methods of building. We look to conventional building techniques, which have an inherent economy, tweaking them to inform the formal expression of the building.

BW: In the Stiff Peaks project, we did exactly that. There's no steel at all, it's all just wood construction. I really wanted to play into a fun formal aspect, but it's very much like a stucco box. I mean, it required quite a bit of foundation, and then these classic vernacular windows, which were a little costly, but generally there's not a lot of complexity in there.

FA: This is a perfect segue to Jared, who may not agree, because he's tried to not use the classic drywall and stick construction.

JB: That's probably because I was able to build it myself. I tie rebar. I can order the material myself. But going back to the no stucco thing, it was challenging in that sense, because for this project all the blocks are exposed on the interior. So Title 24 became a massive challenge. So even though you're solving one problem, you're creating another. So that's why there's that big steel overhang, to knock the sun on the front facade of the building.

MS: One of the excitements about ADUs that so many new and emerging voices are building now, is perhaps their lack of knowledge. The ease of construction techniques for most ADUs offers an interesting, if inefficient, window for experimentation and creativity.

La Maida
Casey Hughes (Casey Hughes Architecture)

The ADU
Jared Brunk

Stiff Peaks
Ben Warwas (ByBen) and Christopher Skeens

The Better Half
Warren Techentin (WTARCH)



Casey Hughes Architecture



Taiyo Watanabe



Nicholas Alan Cope



Eric Staudenmaier

more a part of how young people decide where they want to live. There's more flexibility in terms of where you work now, and not just because of connectivity. A lot of people entering architecture in the United States in the 20th century went back and forth on whether or not they would

work in New York. I could be mistaken, but I think there's an argument that there was a real magnetic north to the discipline for most of the 20th century. But in the 21st, it seems more elective. Some of that aesthetic open-endedness, or lack of predisposition, amongst young people

WT: Whenever we get hired to do an ADU, everyone in the office gets pretty excited. We think they are really fun little objects on which we can spend short bursts of design energy, thought and conversation; and collectively as a group have some fun just discussing the language of the architecture. I appreciate Jared's project, which has no stucco, and I feel like we try to start with these ambitious ideas, but in the end, we go back to Type 5 construction and talk about cladding and how we lay surface and material onto the project. I think it would be really interesting to develop ADUs through alternate construction types, or prefab modules but so far, every one of our ADU projects have been in these situations where couldn't get a ruck in, limiting access to construction materials.

CH: A good portion of our ADU clients come to us after going down a very long road with prefab! What we've found is that they don't pencil out right. So many times in Los Angeles, there's so many site constraints and access issues that you can't get a module onto a site. There's the side yards, there's power lines in front of the property. Clients might have initial conversations and get really great numbers from these prefab companies, but when it comes down to it, they're typically unaffordable.

FA: Is there something distinct and specific about an ADU versus doing a single family home?

CH: One thing that is interesting about the ADU from a design

perspective, is the scale. We're able to do more material exploration on smaller buildings because the cost differential grows exponentially with the size of the project. The La Maida project is clad in standing seam metal panels, but the idea of cladding a whole house in standing seam would not be feasible—unless you're working with a very wealthy client.

One of the other things I really love about these small-scale ADU projects is that you can take the entire project in a single view, which is so different from a house. This means you can design it as more of an object, whereas many times a house has to step with the topography or negotiate other constraints that don't allow it to be as concise of a design object.

BW: It's like a sculpture in your backyard. It becomes like a folly. But also for me, it gives this new ability to activate the backyard. Because typically they're these vast spaces, and they're depressing, and by placing this object either in a corner or in a middle, you can start to cut the backyard into a series of different moments. And also in some of the projects, when the garage is at the back, as soon as you permit the ADU, you no longer have to have a driveway. And so this whole concrete swath of the backyard can be torn up. It can become dirt or an area where the kids can play soccer. And it's a real relief from the car-centric life of LA.

WT: ADUs are different from the suburban Genesis, or birth of

Los Angeles, where it's one house to one plot of land that Banham popularized in his book "Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies". ADUs come from the collective idea that we can densify the city—double it in theory, right—without having to resort to building taller or larger structures.

FA: Several of you have pointed out that this is essentially a sculpture in the garden. But isn't that how the single family home in LA used to be perceived?

CH: I agree that historically the single-family home was like the gem in the garden. Planning and community input was the Wild West where you could do more or less what you wanted from a zoning and aesthetic perspective. If you look at the contemporary planning environment, there are so many restrictions for houses that ADUs can sidestep. They're located towards the rear of the lot, which relieves the pressure to be directly contextual to the neighbors, and the heft of the state-mandated ADU laws mitigates the ability to needlessly block a project.

MS: Another jurisdiction cannot prevent an ADU being built. And so when you're up against historic boards and community development committees, they technically cannot prevent you from doing what you want. So again, it gives ADUs a formal freedom.

BW: I definitely think about the secret garden concept, and trying to create an ADU that does not look like the house, and makes the backyard feel more unique and different from the typical experience. It also plays into LA past, because you have these secret garden moments in Venice and in many backyards in LA, where the backyard is just a totally different place, and you're really escaping the highway aspects of the city.

FA: So the secret gardens of Los Angeles could be the garden of a large house or they could be found in another LA typology, the bungalow court, the little cluster of houses around a shared garden. To what extent are ADUs also giving room for social experimentation in terms of the configuration or the relationship of the ADU to the existing house?

MS: I think that it depends so much. ADUs are sometimes rented, sometimes they're for private use. On one of our projects, they share a wall but they're sited from facing away from each other, and then we carved in all these pockets that are private outdoor spaces that negotiate some of that extreme directionality. There have been a lot of conversations about creating these shared social spaces with ADUs, which would be speaking to the bungalow court, but we haven't done a project yet where there's some really big shared space. I'd say that people still want their own private space within a shared lot.

JB: I experience the connection daily. The ADU is the home, and then the existing front house is the guest house and office. But if you were to separate it, it was also part of the scheme to put in a hedge to divide the two. So when building these things, it was always with a sense of how you could create this overall campus on the lot where these things can communicate, if needed.

CH: If you take a conventional house, let's say a 1930s LA house, they have openings, but they weren't really focused on the rear yard in the way that clients want today. In the case of the La Maida project, it has a strong connection to the rear yard. In fact it offers two separate connections. That offers clients different use scenarios: obviously the idea of being able to rent it, the idea of being able to downsize and move into the ADU and rent the house, the idea of being able to rent both and travel abroad, whatever it might be. Its configuration opens many opportunities that give people flexibility in their lives.

BW: I love the idea of this communal garden between the spaces, and it sounds like Jared has been the most successful at being able to create something that can do all three at the same time. But randomly I have been reading this book about those amazing Spanish revival courtyard buildings and I started thinking about how—with ADUs—you're now



Warren Techentín, Lucy Sherman, Ben Warwas, Casey Hughes, Frances Anderton, Melissa Shin, Jared Brunk meet over Zoom.

shrinking the American dream, but you're giving them this expansive community garden. And with the SB9 thing (allowing up to four extra dwellings, and lot-splitting), I mean, it's even more interesting.

JB: If there is that future split, one of the things to put in is the infrastructure—two sewer laterals, two water lines, two gas lines, fire sprinklers. All these costs are big because these single family homes weren't designed for this unit in the back of the house, so knowing all these things and codes and what it takes to pull these things off is super important, to make sure clients can capitalize before they just build something in the back without the potential or future ability to profit off of it.

CH: We could have a whole separate conversation about the economics of housing and ADUs because there's so much there. One issue is that with the current high interest rates, homes are even less affordable. Many of our clients are priced out of the market for a new home so building an ADU becomes the more economical solution. One thing I like the best about the ADU is how it's the most democratized housing type that's applicable to the most prevalent zoning in Los Angeles. I know there are major housing affordability issues that the ADU doesn't address, but they're a unique opportunity to create very individualistic projects that add subtle housing density.

FA: I do wonder how democratized this all is, because it seems to me the ADU law benefits those who could buy a property in the era when the interest rates were low, and then add on to their property. So they wound up with two properties, but the people who have not been able to enter the market at all have nothing. And I find it fascinating politically, that of all the housing crisis solutions that have been put in front of voters, the ADU is the one they've embraced. And is that because the homeowners get to win from this one, but they don't get to win from the apartment building that lands at the end of their streets?

BW: I totally agree. It's a complete win for the homeowner and the person who already owned a home and it fairly further pushes renters into debt and into just losing more and more money. If you look at these LA Times articles about ADUs, some of these things are being rented for \$4500 a month and it's just a two-bedroom and it's really just helped people with more to gain more.

FA: The only way it can work is if you can split the lot and sell the ADU, per SB9. So then it becomes a bit more like the Small Lot Ordinance perhaps where you wind up being able to buy a small house for 800 grand but still someone can get to buy that.

CH: Why are ADUs so much more burdened with solving affordability than other types of residential architecture? If we want pure efficiency, then we're talking about high density multifamily buildings. To what I was trying to say about democratization, the idea is that ADUs give agency. Unfortunately, this is only applicable for homeowners, but it adds flexibility to their properties and allows them to develop much-needed units that wouldn't otherwise exist.

"Four Corners"
Melissa Shin (Shin Shin)



might have more to do with the broader purview of how they see the landscape and how cities work. **BB: Yeah, honestly that was part of what I think made this newspaper happen. Recent critique has been maybe too much about non-design issues, which is a big topic in**

Beyond an Auteur

Architecture practice was traditionally based on patronage. Today, practice is often about taking or creating a design opportunity. Roger Sherman, cityLAB cofounder turned design principal at Gensler, Christian Stayner, architect-contractor-restaurateur, and Clark Stevens, architect-come-Executive Officer of the Resource Conservation district of Santa Monica Mountains, discuss the implications.

Roger Sherman (RS): We have been somehow inculcated in the idea that there is a false choice between two models of practice: the boutique and the corporate. I have found that over the last eight years since going to Gensler, that there is a way to carve a path that I never would have thought about. My hope is that this discussion serves as an opportunity to find other people who have been on this search and have been brave enough to not worry about whether it falls into one of those categories, and to discuss how liberating it can be to rethinking the idea of design and how it is practiced. So, I think it's good that the three of us are very different.

Christian Stayner (CAS): Although we've bumped up against those practice models through media or personally, I really want to see a different way of doing this where there's a series of experts and the experts have autonomy and they work (together).

RS: Yeah, so I'm hoping that we might actually cast somewhat of a template for a different idea of education here: of how people might get trained. Maybe a good way to start is just to each talk a little bit about what we are each doing, and how, if we're to assume that we've each veered off from the straight line model, that happened and how you see what you're doing relative to the larger field of practice today?

Clark Stevens (CS): As someone who left teaching relatively recently, there's a progression that's been happening in higher education, especially how tenure and faculty promotion is very distant from professional activities. That has created a huge gap between what it means to be an architectural academic and an architectural practitioner. So, maybe teaching is an alternative form of architectural practice. Now, I am the Executive Officer of the Resource Conservation district of the Santa Monica Mountains, which is the oldest local arm of a federal conservation program that exists. It came out of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. Mostly, we are working in agricultural places, but increasingly we're working on natural resources in wildland urban interface places, which we have in LA, and I'm in integrated resource design. So, land and space needs to be formed to do something, right. And so, it's a design problem in that it's everything from research and monitoring of species of special significance, to environmental education, to applied science for habitat restoration, to planning for a sustainable ecological condition within the urban context. I'm moving them from regulatory thinking to design thinking.

RS: So, for you, the term architecture is not a metaphor as it's being used popularly in the press today, rather, you're talking about certain



Will Rogers State Historic Park captured by Frances Anderton, 2024.

other forms of agency that architecture actually plays.

CS: Yeah, because originally it was a dichotomy - buildings or the space between buildings, buildings or land. It's all architecture.

CAS: So, we have a lot of different ways too that we can explain our practice. The interesting part maybe is that we can define our practice depending on who we're talking to. We are a conventional boutique architectural practice. We're also, in certain projects, a developer. We also have a general contractor capability. There's a lot of overlap in terms of knowledge, capacity and even an operational shared infrastructure. We have a couple of restaurants and other types of hospitality venues that we own and manage, and operate on a day-to-day basis, so we are probably the smallest vertically integrated design practice.

CS: You've diversified your pie of offerings, but also, I think the common theme there with my trajectory is moving upstream in the design practice to where a lot of design decisions get made by people who aren't realizing they're making design decisions.

RS: I second that. But that was not wisdom that I possessed earlier in my career—that I needed to fish further upstream if I desired to have more control or impact as an architect. I've been actually thinking more recently about the film production model as a useful analog. I realize in retrospect that I spent most of my career thinking of the architect as tantamount to a director. But actually, our agency really lies in being the producer. Design begins with syndication: putting the team together, finding the money and so on. It also includes finding the right expertise. In the end, the project really is truly produced through a collaboration of people, and it requires embracing uncertainty as part of the creative process.

CS: You don't lose agency, but you lose control. You gain agency.

RS: And when you gain agency, you both gain and lose control—but I think you also gain pleasure. I am learning how to let go and to see that what comes back to you can actually be something more interesting than what you started with. That way, design becomes a kind of adventure. My sense is that the nature of our practice (and our clients) is shifting, and that people are beginning to understand in a broader way that there is less and less agreement as to the value, in the economic sense, of what we produce, whereas there does appear to be a greater value placed upon the "how." Architectural practice is really undergoing reformulation—one might even say redesign. I ended up stumbling into this realization—in the most surprising way—in discovering the transferability of skills that I developed at cityLAB (UCLA) with Dana Cuff. There, we piloted a self-sustaining model of project creation and syndication, which I've incubated at Gensler and that is referenced in colloquially titling my cohort the Stone Soup Group, after the children's fable.

CS: Yes, well, maybe for me, the truth under a lot of these moves is strategic.

CAS: Which is architecture.

CS: I think so. When I heard "stone soup," I had that moment of recognition because that's where my interest has been for a long time. I feel like I'm bumbling, though, sometimes, in drawing out the places of communities. So that's also a practice trajectory, that intention.

RS: Yeah. Traditionally, the idea of practice has been one based on a system of patronage: clients or people who are collectors of architecture, where reputation is a form of currency. That's not the model we're talking about, which is about a kind of self-combustion: wherein the architect creates the client-project (instead of the other way around)—something incredibly powerful. But you have to commit to a process in which if you have a powerful enough idea, that you can aggregate people around what you're trying to do who can provide what you need to know, and have the resources to pool together to help you realize it. I think what makes this hard for us as architects is that the auteur model—where someone simply calls you up because of your reputation—is so persistent. Something resembling this process is simulated through the way that studios are taught in Europe at places

architecture school too. That's a tension at the moment. GL: I CAME TO LA FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE. I DIDN'T REALIZE THERE WAS MANUFACTURING, AEROSPACE, TRANSPORTATION, ENTERTAINMENT. HERE, THERE'S THIS CRAZY POTPOURRI OF INNOVATION, AND FRANKLY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LIKE BIRD SCOOTERS, UBER, TESLA. I

like TU Delft and ETH.

CAS: I think you've identified a sort of process of the practice as well. In terms of the journalism about architecture, the biggest story about architecture recently was the Tadao Ando/Kanye West house which shows how patronage is no longer one of the many of the models that we are putting forth. That model is really not replicable today. And, so practice is now about the design opportunity, and students right now are very aware of work, life balance, and all of these other expectations that are generationally different.

RS: One thing I have learned at Gensler is the value to clients of impact, not publicity. In the case of Olafur Eliasson, artists usually are thought of as the more rarefied their work, the more limited the supply, the more valuable the work gets. But I think in Eliasson's case, his idea is to expand impact by expanding supply. But I think we still believe in the rarefaction of skill—the specialness, the bespoke.

CAS: Granted, artists don't have the licensure, and all of the other obligations that architects are burdened with, and that set us aside from the rest of society with our specialized set of knowledge. But artists have opened up what it means to do artistic practice in a way that allows for an openness that undertakes different operations or activities that we can do as architects, and still be seen as architects, but not necessarily be selling our time for money.

RS: That's really interesting. Along those lines, I'm interested in whether or not, as you were evolving into what you're doing now, was there any one person or firm or model that you've been paying attention to, or tracking that you've thought a lot about in terms of your becoming who you are now? It could be somebody who's currently practicing or from 100 years ago. One person who has interested me is Richard "Ricky" Saul Wurman. He was trained as an architect at Penn, and he studied under Louis Kahn, but realized that he really loved cities. So, he started making maps of them, and that practice in turn led him to become interested in making travel guides. He also was the person who founded TED Talks. He realized that his identity did not have to be tied up in doing just one thing. He could be four different people, or could keep changing what he did and he was still who he was.

CS: Regarding a person, firm or model that helped set my trajectory, I could start in a couple of places. In the early 90s, I started looking at the history of conservation in America, but that started because I started reading a lot of Aldo Leopold's work and there was a small book about his own "designs" called *For the Health of the Land*. He was a forester, and he wanted to implement design as a way of changing concepts about reserves. A whole chain of people that come out of that, Wendell Berry, and his concept of "solving for pattern." This work and thought was a way of kind of looking at the world and saying "his is a place of beauty or ugliness, of good ethics or bad, or lack thereof." And honestly, I just wanted to spend time thinking about those places. I was thinking this morning that there are periods when you're "making a living." But the best is when you get to "living a making." It's based on values. A lot of that is letting go of control and grabbing onto a greater degree of faith.

RS: I do want to make the observation before we switch over to Christian that it is interesting that your attraction was to landscape, which inherently is about the lack of control. There's no illusion of control in working with landscape: you are navigating things and forces that you can control only to a certain extent. In architecture those uncontrollable forces may be less material, but they are there—and yet our discipline largely maintains a much greater illusion of control.

CAS: I grew up in an architecture household, and so immediately I think in the past of who came to mind. Now, there are two in particular that both trained as architects, but for whom my interest is in them being writers or effectively journalists. Arundhati Roy was raised as an architect but wrote about social issues 15-20 years ago at a time when that was not too common. (She) described injustice and inequality by structuring it in a way that's very clearly architectural. And then I like



Clark Stevens, Christian Stayner, Roger Sherman at Stayner Architects in East Hollywood.

Rem Koolhaas, him coming into architecture through journalism, and doing some of the best work, more as a journalist in his writing and the research work and the projects that were narratively based. It was about the story that the building came out of, and how it fit into a larger picture. George Baird was a mentor of mine. I taught with him in grad school in a course, literally the title of it was "Carefully Reading Rem" or something like that, in which we went through each of his major works and dissected it with George, who had been involved in that whole world at the time. I was very heavily influenced by that, but I also saw the office and the disruption that it had. If you want to look at offices, maybe less on the building side and more on what they produced and the type of thinking and discourse, there are few that are as successful than what they set up. You described what option or what pushed you towards a different approach to the profession overall, and I would say too that my interest in having other financial streams for our practice came out of, well, being in Los Angeles. In the 1970s and 1980s, the architecture economy was cyclical. I think that's shifted where LA has become a global center. We have become much more diversified and there's much more stability now, because we're tied into macro-economic conditions, rather than just the residential real estate market shooting up and then bottoming out and shooting up and bottoming out. I think it's the opportunities in practice.

RS: Well, let me throw this out: if you look at new models of practice as being more collaborative, versus running a practice in a traditional way, where the time and the energy of the auteur is dedicated vs distributive, the collaborative model is one in which energy—and I would argue creativity—can be leveraged. Further, it by definition, widens the bandwidth of exploration to include more numerous and errant forays by a trusted team that are necessary to get outside of oneself and one's predispositions in design thinking. What do you think about that?

CAS: Yes, that describes my life. Maybe it's not as fully developed as that, it's more segmented and there are overlaps of course. We have 6 managerial staff that do day-to-day operations of things that I'm not directly involved in any longer. I have two partners that I work with on specific projects, but we're not bound together on everything. We each have our own practices and activities and we're in different cities and we sort of leverage our combinations.

CS: You're also the lead in your projects. You're also the chief revenue officer, the chief sales officer as well in your organization because usually in those collaborations, you're also bringing the client. You have an opportunity to be a force multiplier.

CAS: It sounds like in some ways giving up a certain amount of control is what allowed you to try other options, so then, it becomes a question of constraints—just being open to everything or having a backbone for what you do.

CS: These are our boundaries. These are your boundaries. But, also, these are our values, and they're clear.

THINK WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT ALL THIS STUFF IS HAPPENING HERE BUT GO SOMEPLACE ELSE AND TRY TO HAVE SOMEBODY WORK ON TECHNOLOGY AND AUTONOMOUS DRIVING AND ROBOTS AND SO ON. IT'S ALL HERE, AND I THINK THE SCHOOLS ARE PICKING UP ON IT, AND I THINK ARCHITECTURE COULD PLAY A ROLE IN ALL THOSE THINGS. THE ATTRACTION TO ME IS THE

AMOUNT OF INNOVATION. ALSO THE TESTING OF INNOVATION HERE. I WANT TO RIDE IN A SELF-DRIVING CAR. PEOPLE ACTUALLY COME HERE FOR THAT EXPERIENCE. BB: I think that it's true that you see the production. In some of the schools, it's very much part of the thinking—the way architecture connects

Small Wonders

Wonderland, Los Angeles, Mutuo Helmed by immigrants (Fernanda Oppermann, Brazil) and (Jose Herrasti, Mexico), the firm Mutuo has sought collaborations with communities that are also continuously navigating ideas of both "here" and "there." The pair describe their development, designed to gently and boldly increase density in the Hollywood Hills.

After the housing crisis of 2008 we were able to convince family and friends to join us in this speculative project—financially, formally and professionally—that would, in many ways, influence Mutuo's journey. Before Wonderland we had worked on the Leon Gallery's storefront in El Paso, by the Mexican border with Ciudad

Juarez, and on the North Shore Park pavilion in a mostly Latin immigrant farming community in the Coachella Valley. At the time we were also beginning to explore 'affordable-by-design' housing typologies. In this context, Wonderland became another opportunity to continue with our exploration of housing. This time as developer-designer-builder.

The hillside project redevelops and densifies a challenging site in the Hollywood Hills where a single-family residence once occupied three parcels. The design reimagines both the single-family private living spaces and the shared communal open spaces of the three interconnected units. The stepping and continuous rear patios, the

terraces and the inhabitation of the rooftops promote a sense of community between the three neighbors. Tectonically, Wonderland explores relationships, layers, juxtapositions and compositions of materials and systems used in Latin American and traditional American construction. An amalgamation of systems and materials include monolithic concrete walls that remind us of the buildings we saw as children in Latin America, and traditional American wood framing with its multi-layered construction.

The experience of working on Wonderland as developer-designer-builder taught us about the difficulties of producing housing and led us to an exhibit where we highlighted the underlying housing systems that leave many at the margins. In the *Architecture at Home*

exhibit at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, we built a prototype to create awareness, empathy, and dialog to spark wider participation and change.

Currently we have been working more in Mexico, where we have been able to revert to our cultural and professional knowledge from when we studied and worked in Brazil and Mexico. And we realize how our cultural backgrounds have enabled us to traverse the limitations of being localized and specialized. With commissions in the United States and in Latin America, our work is neither here nor there—it is somewhere in between. Exploring disparate cultural aspects, ways of living, ways of building, allowing for cross-pollination as we continue to develop our design sensibilities.



Marilu Godinez

to that kind of clientele as an entrepreneurial business model. We need to figure out how to get that into the schools, because that is the missing link. Years ago, RAND sponsored art and technology shows. We need to keep those things going. JD: That's

coming back with Pacific Standard Time. GL: I ALWAYS ADVOCATE TO MY STUDENTS THAT THEIR NUMBER ONE JOB IS TO EITHER MOVE CULTURE OR ADVOCATE FOR THE CIVIC REALM. IT'S THE ONE PROFESSION THAT ATTRACTS EARNEST PEOPLE WHO WANT TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. IT IS KIND OF FUNDAMENTAL TO WANT TO DESIGN A PLACE THAT IS

Cold Comfort

Cold War Veterans Memorial, Somers, Michigan, Oyler Wu
The LA firm applies its technological and tectonic flare to a memorial to a war without traditional war heroes. Dwayne Oyler and Jenny Wu explain their design.

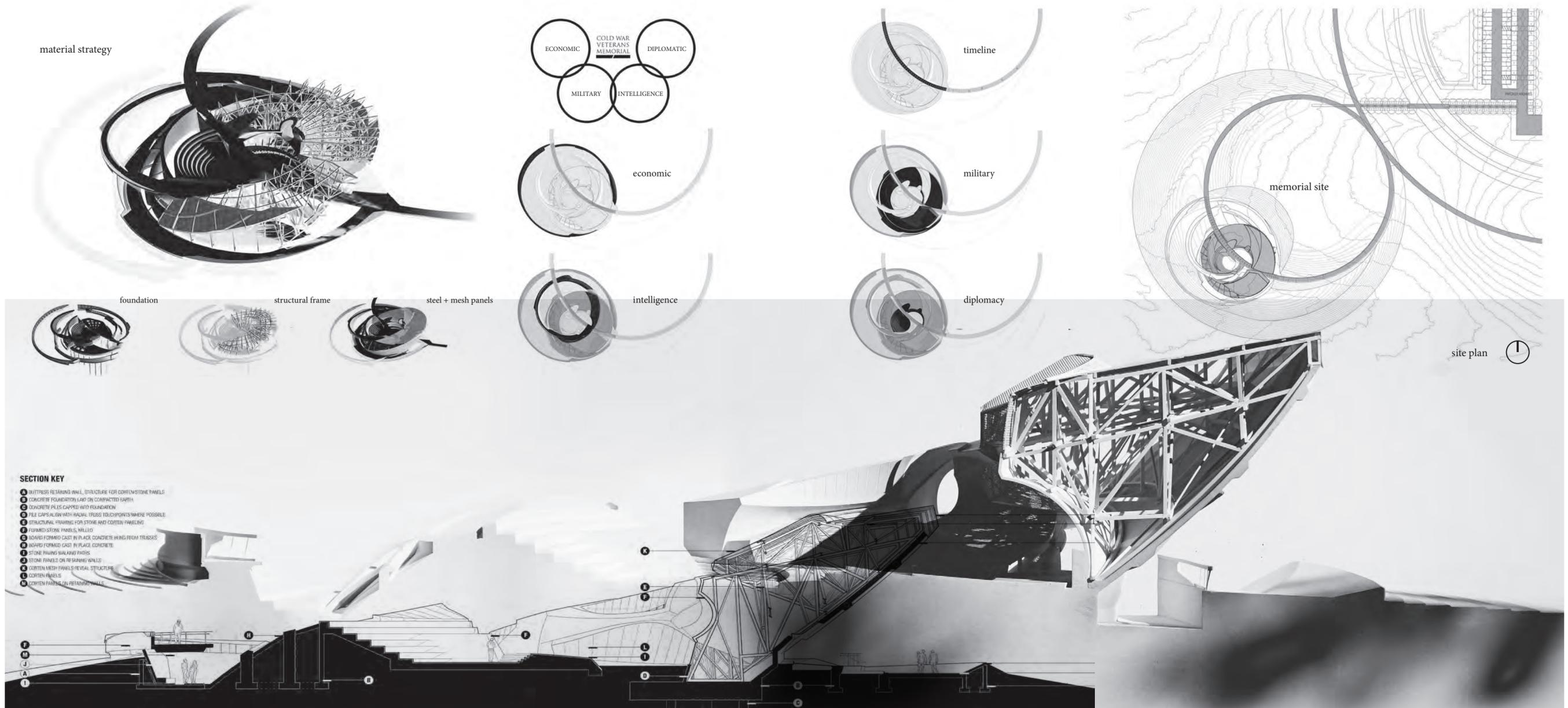
A memorial for the veterans of the often-covert and deeply-complex Cold War invoked, for us, a project proposal that recognizes the spirit and agency of the many nameless heroes who served on behalf of national identity and security. Drawing from a range of meaningful artifacts and imagery from the era, we wanted to create an immersive experience—evoking a range of cultural associations organized as a set of circular 'orbits' through the landscape. It begins

on the ground, and emerges slowly, immersively, as a testament to the spirit of these veterans, and as a reminder of the territorial nature of nation-states in the 20th century. Organized as a set of circular "orbits" influenced by Diplomatic, Intelligence, Military, and Economic themes, our proposal moves the visitor along a journey embedded within a serene Wisconsin landscape. Each orbit takes shape differently, as the memorial and ground interact, from its arcing pathways and gracefully curving walls, to a small amphitheater and a detailed lattice of landscaped hillsides and embankments. A large disk-shaped structure is partially implanted in the ground, tilted to elegantly hover overhead in other areas, forming a unique spatial experience for visitors, and a

planetary elliptical shape from the air. From its formal structure to its shaped surroundings, the memorial emerges from the ground to become an architectural tribute to Cold War veterans, embodying the dedication, optimism, and hope that is emblematic of their enduring spirit. Collectively, the memorial unifies these complex narratives through juxtaposition, recognizing its interconnected history—one of sacrifice, triumph, and innovation.

Also attributable to the Cold War, our proposal departs from the ground to evoke a sense of technological advancement, and a recognition of American ingenuity and ambition, read through the tectonic undersides and material strategies of the memorial.

The juxtaposition of the technological and the natural, as well as the themes of the orbits, correspond to the complex emotional responses that stem from the immersive experience within. Throughout the memorial, the walls contain tributes to the veterans of the Cold War, etched with imagery and quotes that reflect the vast number of Americans that dedicated their service and their lives to its cause, and their many, fragile, and powerful narratives. Our hope is that the memorial speaks to the sacrifice of these service members, while still leaving its visitors with a sense of optimism and hope that is emblematic of their enduring American spirit, from the ground to the sky.



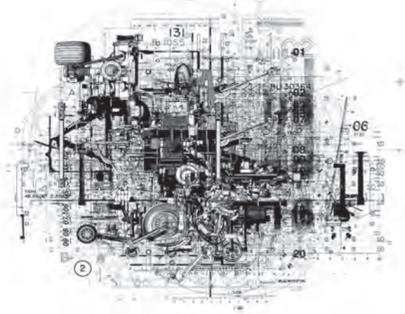
BETTER THAN IT WAS BEFORE. I ALWAYS LOOK THROUGH A CLIENT TO SOME LARGER PROJECT. I WANT THEM TO BE HAPPY, BUT MY JOB IS MORE FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD OR THE CITY, OR THE CUSTOMERS OF THE CLIENT.
JD: Maybe Los Angeles fostered a closer, more immediate interface between culture and urban dynamics, or a quicker

feedback loop between art and the city. When I try to make sense of Frank Gehry's work in general, it seems to me that it's about a radically collapsed distance between art and city-making. LA encourages a dual sophistication that toggles between the two.

In Praise of Drawing

Of The Moment celebrates the art of drawing. *Bea Martin, Bryan Cantley, Perry Kulper, Neil Spiller and Peter Baldwin* explain their concepts below. Some of these will be in an October 2024 exhibition at the A + D Museum called *Impossible Drawings*.

1.



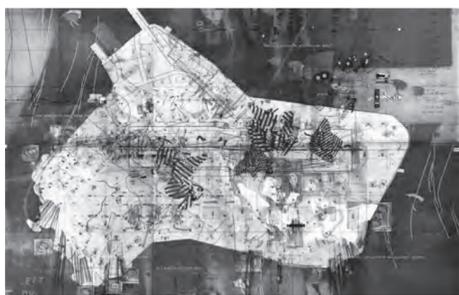
BC: To recalibrate historic architectural drawings, the original 'object' drawing layers are turned off, leaving only the notational systems and machines behind. The resulting 'Syst(m)achine' drawings generate new contexts from the system/machine residues. In *Myth Appropriation Confluence: Cacophonous Harmonics*, 10-20 heritage contexts from previous drawings were removed and superimposed on top of residual notational systems and devices. The aim was to generate a conversation about the formal strategies of the drawing, and most importantly, re-presenting and re-mapping 'line politics': the political frictions of social space. By isolating residual notational fields and machinic devices, the drawings-as-artifacts generate new ideas about political and social conflict.

2.



BM: In my work, a drawing is conceived as a machinic assemblage, a drawing that is multiple. The procedural behaviour of drawing suggests its potential to address issues of construction, translation, and the transformation of meaning through assembled visual constructs. It deflects attention away from the conventions of architectural drawing to re-engage how architecture is explored, envisioned, and communicated when we treat the principles of drawing as an autonomous discipline. My work experiments with drawing as an assemblage, an exploration of the procedural behaviors and its transformations. I argue that a drawing should, ultimately, be valued for what it can do (rather than what essentially 'is') and that assemblages should be assessed in relation to the drawing's potential to become other.

3.



PK: The *David's Island Ideas Competition* focused on a small island off the coast of New York where I utilized a series of interventions: an inaccessible divide; camouflagic surfaces; labrinths of emptiness; metamorphoic rock gardens; bird colony lines; panoramic steel walls and 'no fly zones' that mingle with, interfere with and remain indifferent to the bounded and fugitive aspects of the island. The proposal attempts productive engagement with the islander's experience of remoteness and isolation; the prevalence and propagation of maritime mythologies and folklore; the representational practices and influences of nautical cartography; and the literal and strategic deployment of military jargon.

4.



5.



NS: From 2012, triggered by the passing of a friend and experimental architect Lebbeus Woods, *Walled Garden* was created as part of an ongoing project. *Communicating Vessels*, which seeks to document and explore potential changes between landscape and architecture caused by recent technology. The garden uses a particular point of view of an observer to trigger an augmented-reality storm (Lebbeus died the night Hurricane Sandy hit New York). It therefore has two components, virtual and real, each cossetting and reacting to the other. Of course, the augmented component could be anything, and with this realisation the last drawing of the series shows a golden storm.

PB: My multi-year hauntological odyssey, *Filigreed Gods: Diaphanous Bodies and Sacred Vessels*, reframes the drawing as a host for the intangible through the conceptualisation of a third, interstitial state, "the moment of becoming." Each drawing is formed as a phantasmagorical assemblage of (in)tangible presences, some real, others imagined. In this drawing, inspired by apparitions encountered in Alfred Jarry's nocturnal jaunt through a pataphysically-infused, and spectrally-mediated Paris, Clinamen is both a machinic contrivance and a gestatory environment, at once an island, a building, and the body of Hildebrand himself.

1. Bryan Cantley, *Myth Appropriation Confluence: Cacophonous Harmonics*, 2022-23.

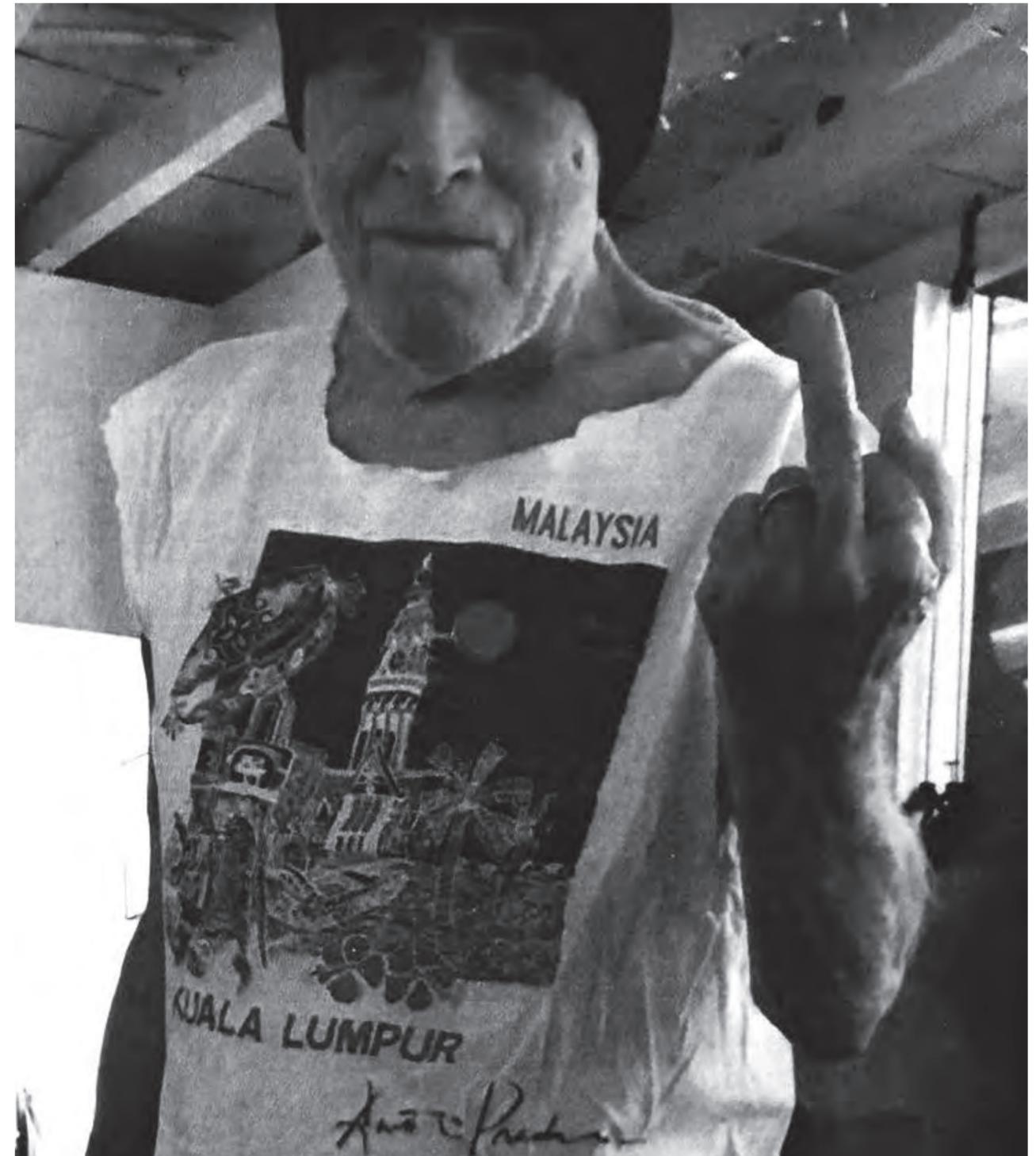
2. Bea Martin, *Tools on the Table*, 2024.

3. Perry Kulper, *David's Island Competition, Strategic Plot and Site Drawing*, 1996-7.

4. Neil Spiller, *Walled Garden for Lebbeus: Golden Storm, Communicating Vessels*, 2014.

5. Peter Baldwin, *The Sealed Palace, within which the Unforeseen Beast Clinamen waits, whilst above the Painting Machine, suspended within a system of weightless springs, revolves in Azimuth, 'Filigreed Gods - Diaphanous Bodies and Sacred Vessels'*, 2022.

Farewell, Old Friend



Antoine Predock passed on March 2, 2024. *Thom Mayne* pays tribute.

I often knew Antoine was in town by the sound of his roller skates as he sped by my house on his way to the Venice Boardwalk. That or when he tore past the house on one of his many vintage motorcycles, headed to who knew where, but clearly happy to be going. He was remarkably innovative, spirited, independent, and irreverent—describing architecture as "a great ride" in a nod to his favorite wheeled activities. Accurately self-described as a "portable regionalist", his work spoke to its places whether it be the desert of New Mexico or the urban environment of Winnipeg. I'll never forget seeing his enormous smile when that particular building showed up on the Canadian ten-dollar bill. And this image? It's pure Antoine—he's going to do it his way—with speed but also with humor; critics or illness be damned.

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