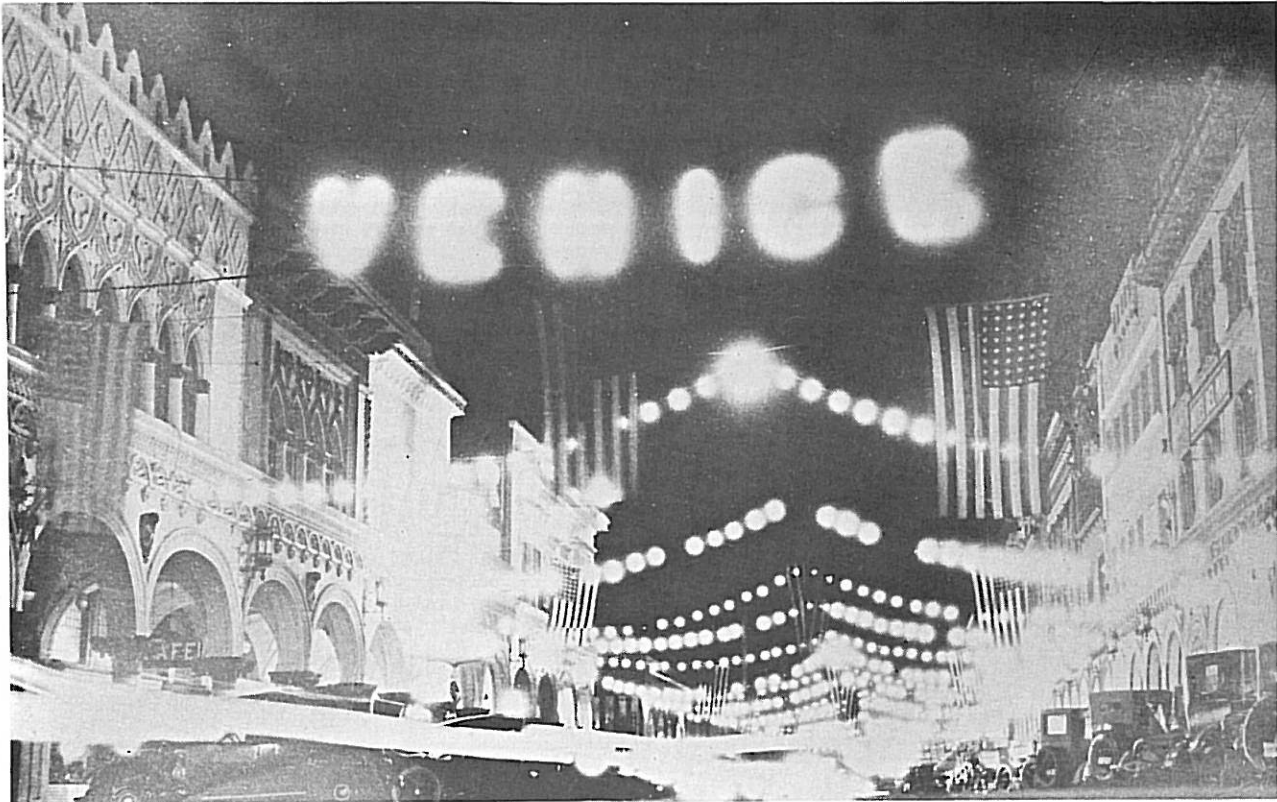


Society of Architectural Historians Southern California Chapter Newsletter



Venice in 1924, Windward Avenue celebrates Mardi Gras.

OLD VENICE

On June 30, 1905 Abbot Kinney, founder of Venice of America, opened the flood gates that filled the initial two miles of the resort's 4'-deep canal system. Two days later, with more celebration, he tripped the switch that brought electricity to over 17,000 electric lamps lining the streets, piers and canals illuminating the facades of hastily built shops, hotels, and amusement centers. Magically, the new buildings gleamed in the night salt air exposing their thin veneer of Venetian ornament. Norman Marsh and C.H. Russell designed the buildings to emulate their distinctive Italian prototype from the late Gothic - early Renaissance period.

Only a few days later, for the Fourth of July, the crowds poured in. Over 40,000 people came to the fantastic beach town from all parts of the area, brought there by Pacific Electric's Red Cars on tracks that were directed there (by Abbot Kinney's foresight) in 1901 and 1902. Amidst the gay celebration, Ellery's seventy-piece Italian band played at the foot of the 1700' long pier. Twenty-four imported Italian gondoliers plied their foreign boats on the 40' wide canals and splendidly displayed themselves and their occupants on the 70' wide, 1 mile long Grand Canal. Crowds strode under the arcades of Windward Street, past the magnificent St. Mark's Hotel, and made their way back and forth between the lagoon and the ocean.

[continued on page 2]

N e w V e n i c e

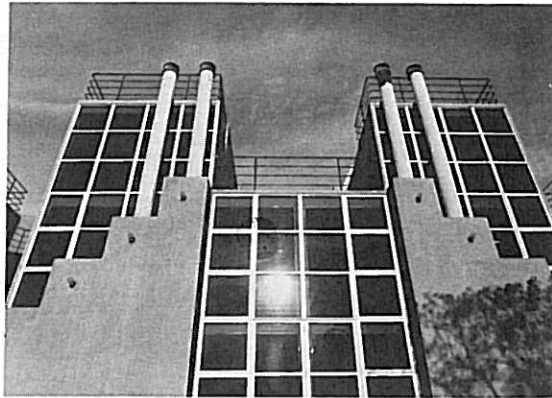
Venice. The beach town seethes with activity, people, cars and movement. The vitality of so much packed into a limited area unites the small, close buildings set on tiny streets and alleyways. It's hard for anything in Venice - mobile or stable, old, new or renovated - not to be labeled contextual. Connections with the past are ever present - the arcades, the digital-like plan of streets overlaid on the original canals. These are constant reminders that the foundation of the city is make-believe. The effect of its fantasy foundation are two fold: it has created a permissive physical and permissive psychological setting.

The carnival atmosphere of Kinney's Venice of America grew into a seedy one in the decades following its heyday. By the fifties, beatniks hung out with the winos and, in the sixties, the artists moved in, drawn to the area by the cheap rents and psychic proximity to the ocean. Today, the combination of artists, winos and transients has brought together a creative mixture. Flexible as it may be, there is a certain sense of community and identity here. Artists feel protective towards the locals, guarding the community from the wealthy who encroach on their once undiscovered space. Now trendy new spots, restaurants and galleries are opening in their midst. However, the community is based on older established physical axes - the traffic circle, Windward, Washington and Main Streets, the boardwalk, and eva-

[continued on page 3]

Sunday, April 26th

LA Contemporary Architecture Tour



Condominiums, Santa Monica, Urban Forms, 1981.

New Wave Palladio. Adulated Vernacular. Architectural Abortion. High-tech or raw-tech. Neo-expressionism or self-indulgence. Art or architecture. Or both.

On Sunday, April 26th, the SAH/SCC plans an exciting all-day excursion through the sometimes visionary, sometimes controversial architecture of the 70s and 80s. The contrasting sensibilities and the dynamic aesthetics of several innovative architects are putting Los Angeles in the forefront of the modern, post-modern and late-modern fray.

Our tour will encompass houses, double-houses, condos and studios by Peter de Brettville, Frederick Fisher and Thane Roberts, Frank Gehry, Craig Hodgetts and Robert Mangurian (Studio Works), Ray Kappe, Charles Moore, and others. The tour promises to be an illuminating and full day. Be prepared to do some walking, occasionally uphill. Tour members can take advantage of the new gastronomic delights of several recently opened cafes in the Ocean Park area where we will stop for lunch. We suggest the Charmers Market - a renovated Bank of America across from the Sea Colony apartments, or you may prefer a brown-bag picnic at the beach. When we resume the tour, we will pass through some revitalized areas of Venice on our way to observe the avant garde movement there.

Those attending the tour will meet at the parking lot of the Pacific Design Center, 8687 Melrose Ave., where free parking will be available for the day. Two buses will depart at 9:30 and 10:00 am. Please indicate your preference for departure on the coupon and we will try to accommodate your request. The lunch breaks will be at approximately 12:00-1:00 (bus 1) and 12:30-1:30 (bus 2), should you care to make reservations at one of the restaurants in the Sea Colony area. After a one hour (no longer!) respite, we will continue, with an estimated return to the Design Center between 5:30 and 6:00.

The tour costs \$15.00 and is limited to members only on a first come first serve basis. Please send in your coupon with payment and you will receive a postcard response indicating your time of departure. We must receive your paid reservation by April 20th. If there are any spaces available subsequent to that date, you will be notified by telephone. Please mail your coupon (p. 7) and payment to: Leslie Heumann, 119 N. Swall, Los Angeles, CA 90048; and for further information call: Leslie Heumann - 271-9551 (evenings) or Elizabeth McMillian - 384-7784 (evenings).

833 N. Kings Rd.

For several years the Friends of the Schindler House have campaigned to raise funds for the preservation and restoration of the R.M. Schindler House in West Hollywood. Schindler built the house in 1921 for use as his home and studio and it is representative of the work of a radical modern style in Los Angeles that appeared a decade before the introduction of the International Style. Several innovative structural and social concepts and its indoor-outdoor relationship make it an important prototype of modern architecture in the area.

Schindler's widow, Pauline, formed the Friends of the Schindler House in 1977 and the group was able to complete a program for restoration and use of the house before her death in 1978. The structure requires immediate remedial work and subsequent restoration will be made as money becomes available. Grants for the purchase and restoration of the house have been received from the California Office of Historic Preservation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The house will be restored as closely as possible to its original appearance, with provision for its planned function as an architectural center for Los Angeles. Proposed activities include educational programs, exhibitions and tours. Immediate goals for the group include fundraising, organization of a docent group and establishment of a national profile. The house is now open to the public for tours on Saturdays, between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm. Additional docents are being sought and anyone interested in becoming involved in the formative stages of this undertaking is invited to contact: Robert L. Sweeney, Executive Director, The Schindler House, 833 N. Kings Road, Los Angeles, CA 90069, telephone: 213/651-1510.

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SAH/SCC BUS TOUR - Sunday, April 26th

● CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN LOS ANGELES
Fee: \$15 per person, SAH/SCC members only

Departure Preference: 9:30 AM 10:00 AM

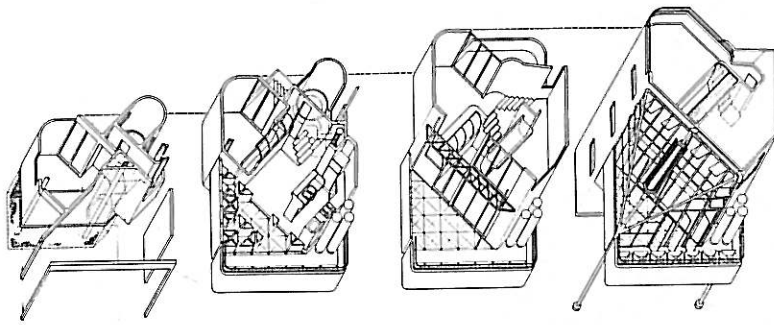
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Please send this coupon with your check to:

Leslie Heumann
SAH/SCC April 26th Tour
119 North Swall Drive, LA, CA 90048



Mihich-Small House, Venice, Milica Dedijer-Mihich, 1981.

New Venice, continued from page 3

From theory into practice, Hodgetts and Mangurian have evolved and expressed a highly refined, humanist sensibility in their work. Their Gagosian Art Gallery is a monumental but diminutive structure with a 1-2-1 bay system and contextual urbanity that could place this building anywhere comfortably. The cornice line and the building's exterior forms line-up and integrate the structure with its neighbors. The harmony of its parts, every form, opening and line is balanced but never simplified (Alberti would have loved these guys!). Every part is carefully thought through and the whole hums like a fine-tuned engine. The machine analogy is quite correct. Common materials, cyclone fencing and metal grating of the exterior are plugged into the classical sensibility with incredible ease. These architects could take any material, industrial or otherwise, and refine it. Their sense of color is critical to the whole as well. Like their choice of primary Renaissance forms, they use colors based on the primaries but taken through precise refinement and adjustment. The exterior is a gray subtly toned with purple and trimmed with light green. For all its classicism and historical references (specifically a circular inner courtyard inspired by Mantegna's own at Mantua or Raphael's at the Villa Madama outside Rome), its monumental aspects are tempered with great individualism - choices of materials, balanced but unexpected placement of forms, and the tautness with which it is all put together.

There is not a true Venetian school of architecture and Studio Works has not yet opened up for Renaissance apprenticeships; however the collegial quality of the architects working in the Venice area is quite real. FREDERICK FISHER and THANE ROBERTS were both students of Hodgetts' and Mangurian's at UCLA and they worked at different times in Frank Gehry's office. Their Caplin House is consciously metaphorical. It looks almost like a large ship drydocked there when the canals were drained. It peers out, above its neighbors, over its cyclone fencing and through the weeds which grow so contrarily where its mooring ought to be. The external craftsmanship is slightly tacky. Typically Venetian, the stucco is already wearing from the weather. Yet, an incipient elegance emanates from its forms. In fact, a stylish, graphic mood is overlaid on the mass. A field of tiles juts out in a neo-constructivist composition on the pink wall, appearing to translate new wave graphics into three-dimensions. The nautical associations are capably handled in the design. A blue wave roof tops the two-story ark-like mass. Portholes open into the house and, inside, ship hull framing of the ceiling and gang-plank bridges traverse the double story atrium space. These elements and the warm use of unfinished wood brings to mind the work of another iconoclast, Alvar Aalto.

Building in the same neighborhood, is the firm MORPHOSIS, consisting of THOM MAYNE and MICHAEL ROTUNDI. Mayne attended USC and Harvard, and Rotundi was one of the first stellar graduates of SCI-ARC (Southern California Institute of Architecture). In two small houses they have created works which are aesthetically exciting and rich in meaning and association. Their "2-4-6-8" House on Amoroso Court has a simple theme: the relationship of four-part windows ascending in scale as you see them - north, east, south and west. The potent image is of a single volume dollhouse with its playful but prototypical windows. The more recent Sedlak House on Superba Court is another small scale caricature, slightly taller and narrower than its nearby sister. Materials in both houses are common, but multiple. Awareness of the materials is enhanced by surprise and discovery as when concrete block shifts and plays trompe l'oeil tricks with asbestos shingle siding. Traditional materials vie with ersatz ones in a game of Reversals and Conventions. The players include structural elements as well. A window may be a window or it may be a vent. The ambiguity of parts and materials is intended to enrich the architectural experience. Mayne and Rotundi do not

Lower left: "2-4-6-8," Venice, and at lower right: Sedlak House, Venice, both by Morphosis (Thom Mayne and Michael Rotundi), 1980.

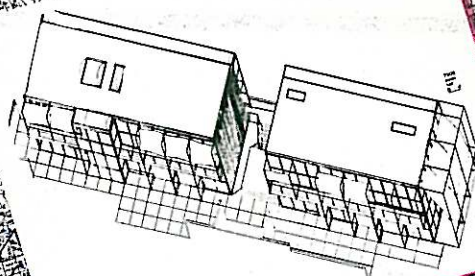


consider it immoral that a part can be interpreted in a variety of ways or a traditional function may be substituted for another - or given none at all. It reinforces the experience of the material or the part and serves to prove that, as Rotundi puts it: "all of them (materials and architectural elements) really have a mind of their own." The craft of architecture, of putting things together, is of utmost importance to Mayne and Rotundi who oversee every constructional detail. They have not intellectualized the process of making things and their work is not tongue-in-cheek. Morphosis has managed to maintain a wholesome approach to building. The most precious, heartfelt expression of common vernacular materials and forms is expressed in their work.

The material and architectural forms, and the Morphosis architects who are occasionally allowed to dominate them, must be well-educated too. Their allowed ambiguities include drifting toward the eclectic, such as paying abstract homage to Aalto in the Sedlak House where the roof and wall are of one material and roof becomes wall (or vice versa). Again, the memory of Aalto is evoked among two more of the modern Venetian masters. Perhaps there is something more in common between these architects besides images. Like Aalto, these iconoclasts are working in a supportive community and, like Aalto, each architect takes the material and the part of the structure and re-invents with a new extremely broad vocabulary. Unlike each others' work externally, their only common paradigm is intellectual invention. This is exactly why Morphosis work is so exciting, their vocabulary is less restraining than the formal images used by Studio Works or the constructivist elements used by Gehry. Morphosis plays with both form and content, material and image.

Gehry, a godfather to this loosely assembled group, Hodgetts-Mangurian, the Renaissance studio men, Fisher and Roberts, the young aesthetes, and Mayne and Rotundi, the new conceptual craftsmen, are only a slice through of the creative characters at work in Venice. Milicia Mihich, Glenn Small, Ray Kappe, Roland Coate, Jr., Coy Howard, Frank Lupo, Heather Kurzi, Scott Carde and Wade Kilifer of Bottom Line Construction Company, as well as artists DeWain Valentine and Ed Moses, are a few more who are responsible for applying the recent architectural makeup to the city. Many years ago Abbot Kinney proposed an idea that would bring magic into the lives of those who would settle in his beach town. It seems that magic has returned to Venice.

- Elisabeth McMillian with Leslie Heumann



[16] SPILLER DUPLEX, 39 Horizon Ave.; Gehry and Associates; 1980.

A complicated fortress of corrugated steel and wood framing. Access to the main second story entrances is provided through a side court area.

[17] CAPLIN HOUSE, 229 San Juan Ave.; Frederick Fisher and Thane Roberts; 1979.

A nautical metaphor is explored in this ale pink stucco house. The light blue, irregularly vaulted roof refers to the ocean while lovingly crafted rafters inside are reminiscent of the hull of a boat. On the facade, an angular window frame and splashes of colored tile make this a painterly design.

[18] MIHICH-SMALL HOUSE, 120 Thornton, Milicia Mihich, 1981.

The home of architects Milicia Mihich and Glenn Small presents a sedate, pure white exterior to the street but explodes at the rear into a Stirling-esque skylit space.

[19] GREEN MACHINE PROJECT, median strip of Venice Boulevard; Glen Small.

A project for low cost housing, the Green Machine will be a three-story pyramid of housing space, 72' high. It is planned for an acre of City-owned land, incorporates both new and recycled elements, and has energy and environmental conservation features. Overtones of utopian, Buck Rogers, and "plug-in" architectural theories notwithstanding, the Green Machine has received funding from NEA and HUD.

[20] "2-4-6-8," Amorosa Court near Linden; Morphosis (Thom Mayne and Michael Rotundi); 1979.

With its precious scale and air of innocence, this garage-house recalls to mind a playhouse, an impression heightened by the manipulation of a single, potent architectural symbol, the window, on each elevation.

[21] SEDLAK HOUSE, Superba Court near Linden; Morphosis (Thom Mayne and Michael Rotundi); 1980.

Another garage-playhouse set on an alley-court. The theme of relationships of common architectural forms and spaces is explored, with an emphasis on the juxtaposition of everyday materials.

[22] CONDOMINIUMS, 28th at Pearl; Urban Forms, 1981.

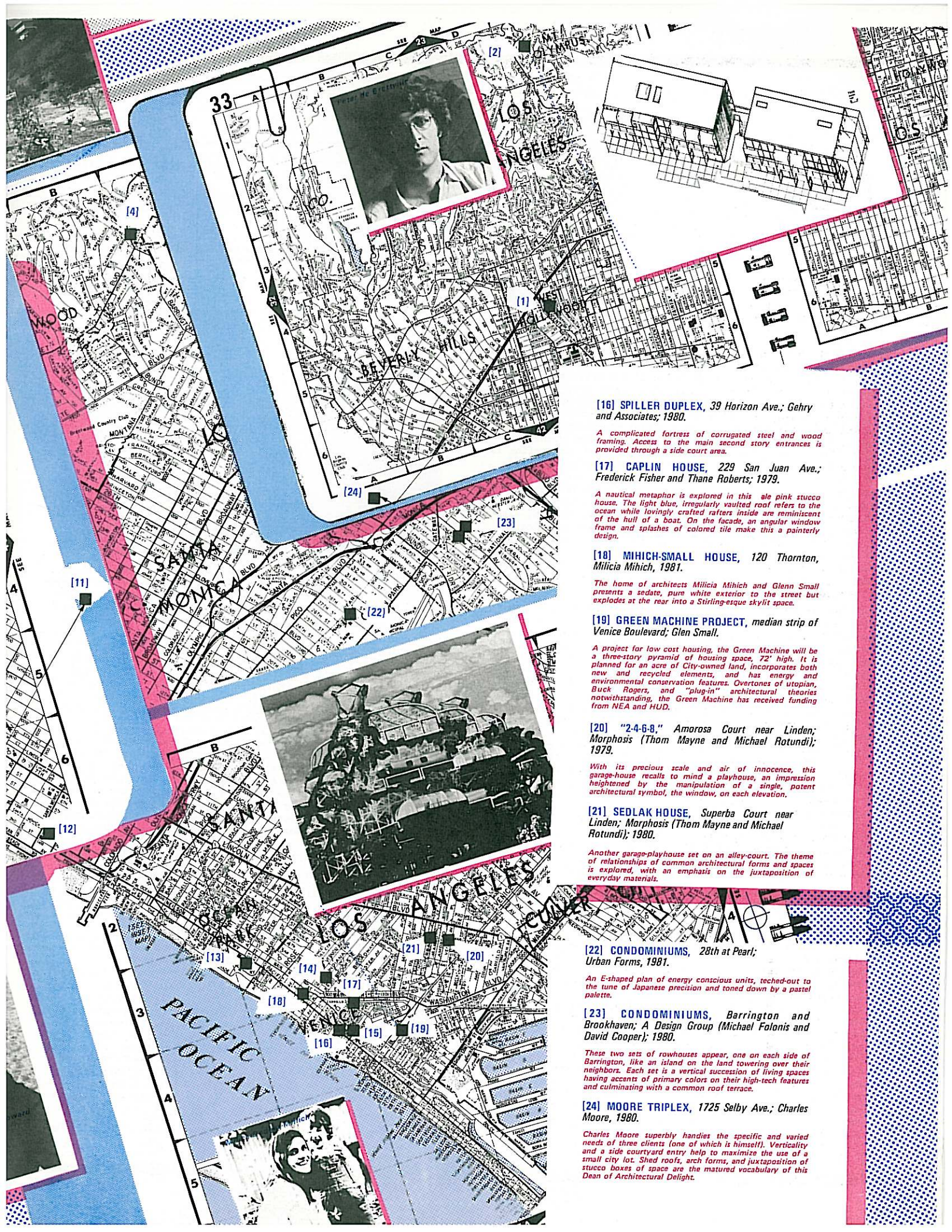
An E-shaped plan of energy conscious units, teched-out to the tune of Japanese precision and toned down by a pastel palette.

[23] CONDOMINIUMS, Barrington and Brookhaven; A Design Group (Michael Folonis and David Cooper); 1980.

These two sets of rowhouses appear, one on each side of Barrington, like an island on the land towering over their neighbors. Each set is a vertical succession of living spaces having accents of primary colors on their high-tech features and culminating with a common roof terrace.

[24] MOORE TRIPLEX, 1725 Selby Ave.; Charles Moore, 1980.

Charles Moore superbly handles the specific and varied needs of three clients (one of which is himself). Verticality and a side courtyard entry help to maximize the use of a small city lot. Shed roofs, arch forms, and juxtaposition of stucco boxes of space are the matured vocabulary of this Dean of Architectural Delight.



[1] PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER, 8687 Melrose Ave.; Gruen Associates / Cesar Pelli; 1971.

A "monumental ocean liner plowing through waves of tiny pink and white bungalows" in the words of one author (Susan King), the PDC has inspired as many aphorisms as it has had observers. One of the first buildings in Los Angeles to break out of the rigidity of the International Style, the PDC paved the way for the experimentation with forms and materials which followed.

[2] DE BRETTVILLE / SIMON HOUSE, 8067 and 8071 Willow Glen Rd.; Peter de Brettville; 1976.

These two houses, built around a common entry court, present a uniform exterior to the street. Constructed of commercial and industrial materials adapted to residential requirements, the plain, box-like forms are sheathed in corrugated steel siding.

[3] RODES HOUSE, 1406 Kenter Ave.; Charles Moore and Robert Yudell; 1979.

This small, stucco house located behind an orange grove echoes a miniature Baroque garden pavilion set in an orangerie. Landscape design by Regula and Douglas Campbell.

[4] CONDOMINIUMS, Barrington Place at Sunset Blvd.; c. 1976.

One of the most visible ventures into "high tech" architectural design, these condominiums have translated theory into a highly successful commercial venture.

[5] MOSS HOUSE, 708 El Medio; Eric Moss; 1980.

The famous house with a blue pointed ear and Swiss cheese holes. Uncompromising in its denial of structure and context, the Moss House offers new alternatives in no-rules design.

[6] WHITNEY HOUSE, end of Rustic Canyon Rd.; Gehry and Associates; 1981.

Isolated rooms of this non-house appear splintered and fragmented, but this composition of raw tech is integrated by site lines and the near collision of forms and materials. Assess it as a Latin strada or the latest version of the Greek acropolis, you must admire the client who provided the opportunity for the architect to take his artistic explorations to the extreme limits.

[7] KAPPE HOUSE, 715 Brooktree Rd.; Kappe, Lotery, Boccato; 1968.

Architect Ray Kappe's home is a handsome structure nestled in a wooded hillside. Warmth, strong post and beam construction, and overlapping volumes keynote the design of this house which draws upon the best of the Bay Region wood vernacular and the Los Angeles modern tradition.

[8] BORGHEI HOUSE, 762 Latimer Rd.; Kappe, Lotery, Boccato; 1981.

A dramatic house on a hillside lot, its sculptural form was dictated by a passive solar energy system. Curved solar panels are juxtaposed against the concrete block mass.

[9] BURNS HOUSE, 230 Amalfi Dr.; Charles Moore; 1974.

Pink and salmon colored, the Burns House playfully juxtaposes shed roofs and neo-Spanish Colonial Revival motifs in a series of linked boxes. Tina Beebe, color consultant.

[10] FREEDMAN HOUSE, 533 9th St.; Kappe, Lotery, Boccato; 1981.

A fortuitous collaboration of architect and engineer resulted in a strong, seismically stable F-shaped frame. Unfinished gray plaster panels (the client's preference) and glass fill in the voids.

[11] GEHRY HOUSE, 1002 22nd St.; Gehry and Associates; 1977.

"It was just a dumb little house with charm, and I became interested in trying to make it more important. I became fascinated with creating a shell around it, one that allowed the old house to exist as an object, and, in a sense, define the house only by showing parts . . . It's very surreal and I am interested in surrealism." —Frank Gehry in AIA Journal, Mid-May, 1980.

[12] SANTA MONICA PLACE, 315 Broadway; Gehry and Associates; 1980.

A three-level shopping mall in the form of a skylit promenade made of glass, stucco, and steel. Twisted boxes are channeled off the mall to create discrete spaces that collide with the axis and relate, by scale and style, to the separate stores that are designed by other architects. The recognizable signature of cyclone fencing is joined on the exterior by two-story letters and three-story palms.

[13] SEA COLONY, 2910 Nielsen Way; Landau Partnership; 1980.

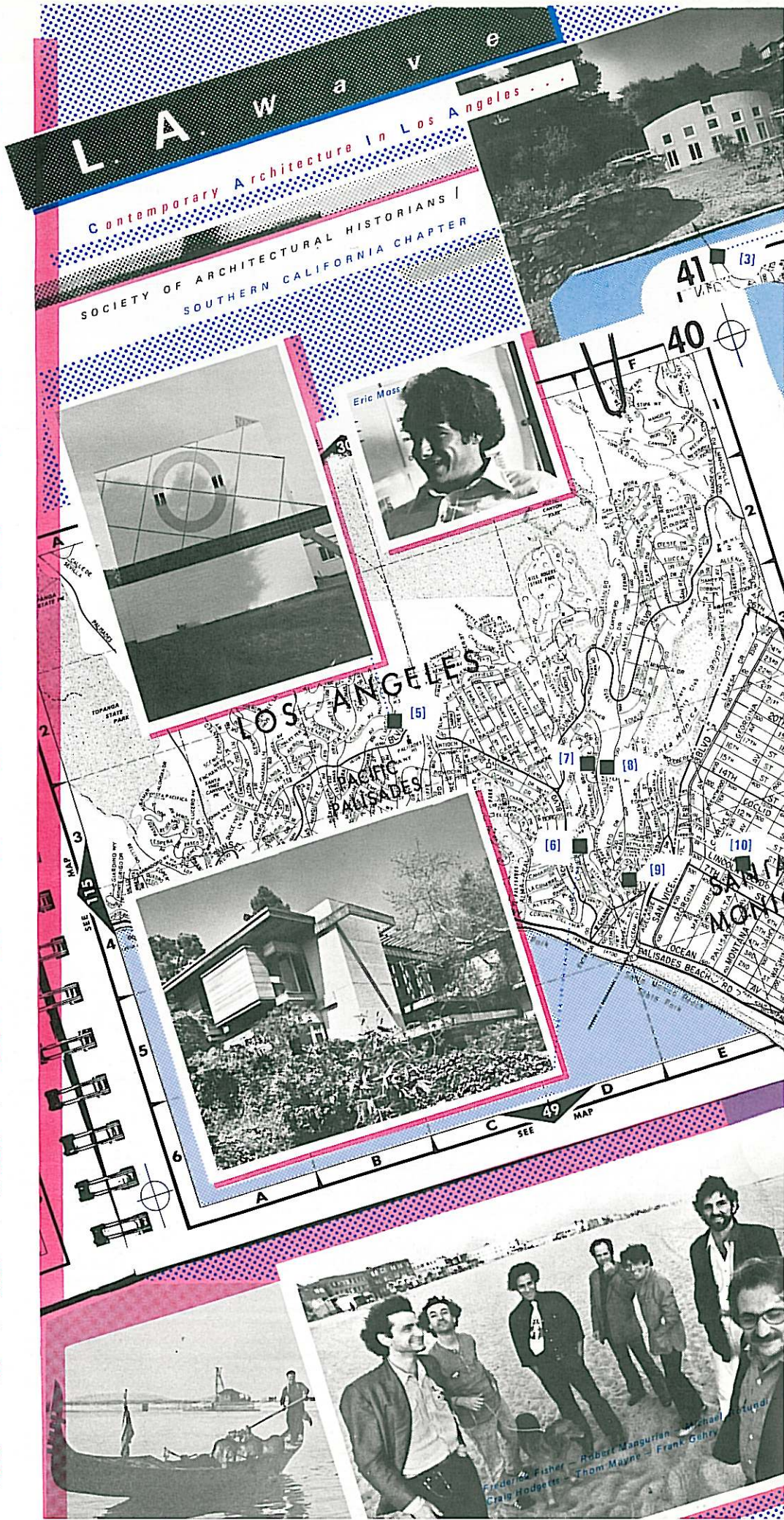
A large housing project utilizing the vocabulary of "high tech" and neo-Corbusian ocean linerism. Permission from the Coastal Commission for this development was obtained with the proviso that an agreed upon number of affordable units be made available in the area.

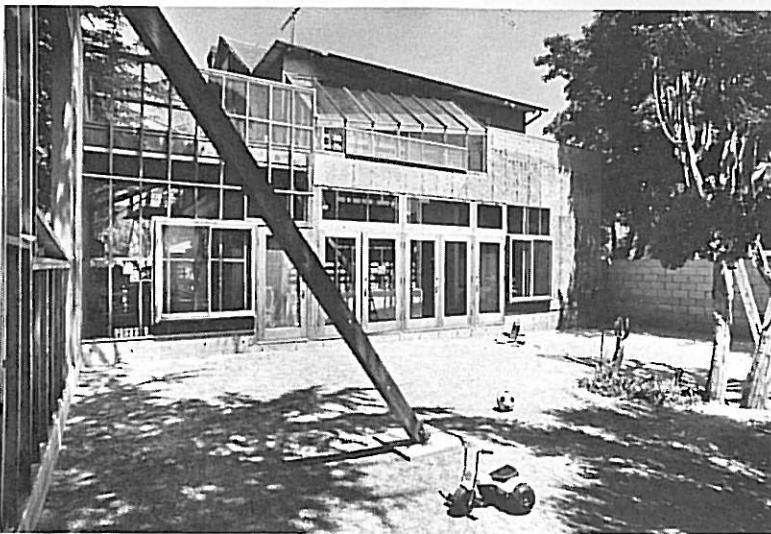
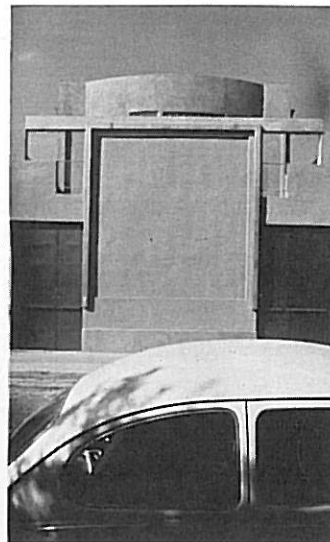
[14] ARNOLDI TRIPLEX, 322 Indiana Ave.; Gehry and Krueger; 1981.

Artist and architect meet on common ground. Three two-story units joined together, but finished in green shingles, plywood, and light blue stucco, respectively.

[15] ART GALLERY, Market St. Studio Works (Craig Hodgetts and Robert Mangurian); 1981.

An elegant palazzo which pays its respects to the street, the building houses an art gallery and living space for the owner. A light gray stucco facade with metallic grates and chain link balconies masks a humanist inspired space, including a circular court.





Top, left to right: Spiller Duplex, Venice, 1980; Gehrly House, Santa Monica, 1977; both by Gehry and Associates; Art Gallery, Venice, (exterior at left, interior at right) Studio Works (Craig Hodgetts & Robert Mangurian), 1981.

Left: Gehry House, Santa Monica, Gehry and Associates, 1977.

Right: Caplin House, Venice, Frederick Fisher & Thane Roberts, 1979.



New Venice: continued from page 1

sive honky tonk spaces - the hangouts and bars, which may be as transient as the population but unite the community for their brief duration.

In this atmosphere architectural experimentation is welcome. Cultural and social distinctions are blurred anyway, so what if architecture is more like art? Constructional and aesthetic constraints are pushed to the limits by architects who self-consciously look to the past, to artists and to other architects. Without copying, or being eclectic in any traditional sense, a new-wave eclecticism is gathering momentum. Its character is something like Cubism which reassembles parts conceptually with time-warp perceptions. And, like Cubism, it is understood by the artist-architect first. The traditional thinker finds himself left out. No matter how common the parts may be, an understanding of the total assemblage tends to evade him.

The few architects examined here, working in Venice, are involved in the pursuit of highly sophisticated conceptual, aesthetic and constructional issues. They digest, assimilate and reconstitute architectural vocabularies with their very own particular enzymes added.

FRANK GEHRY was trained as an artist before studying architecture. Many of his friends and associates are artists. He collects and many of his clients are artists or collectors. His work defies classification and vacillates between art and architecture. Gehry's office is nearby Venice, in Santa Monica, and his work is spotted around Los Angeles and the country.

His Spiller House, a three-story duplex of corrugated metal and wood framing, deals with industrial materials and angular compositions in such a raw manner that even the Russian Construc-

tivists would have to blanch. Going through the intricate spaces created at the Spiller Duplex is an experience that only David Copperfield and his waifish friends might completely understand. The complex of catwalks, unfinished vistas, colliding axes and vertical ascension are slightly frightening because of the scrappy materials and the insecurities created by the transparencies and lack of enclosure. Preconceived notions and assumptions regarding 90° angles and traditional enclosure are sacrificed for a sense of adventure and exploration.

Generally most of Gehry's recent work is like the Spiller House in its non-conciliatory manner. His tumbling technology derives some inspiration from the work of James Stirling but Gehry is an iconoclast. His work is extremely personal, conceptually and aesthetically meaningful to him (and his clients). Though his forms may seem to be trembling at their constructional brink and pushed to the limits of rational order, their meaning can be found in the examination of the material, constructional and formal issues. Traditional beauty, craftsmanship, metaphorical or emotional content are of little or no concern and can be attached or detached according to the client need. The validity of Gehry's work finally rests in the rejection of traditional architectural rules and the examination of artistic ones. "Art gives you a sense of freedom," he has said. "There were rigid rules in architecture and there don't need to be."

Along Gehry's same conceptual lines, CRAIG HODGETTS and ROBERT MANGURIAN of STUDIO WORKS (located in Venice) have replaced a cardinal rule of architecture - practical function - for different values. Hodgetts explains what he sees as the new set of priorities: "I realized...that there is no practical function left to architecture, then the only function is pleasure and spirit."

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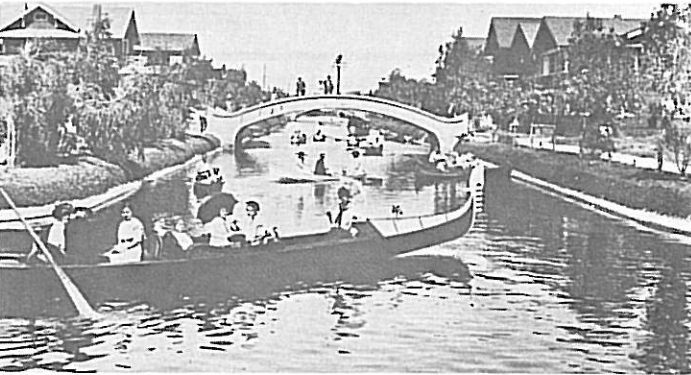


Abbot Kinney, Venice's founder.

Early postcard view of Venice at sunset, the "Ship Cafe" and the Auditorium in silhouette.

Below, top: 1907, Ocean Front Walk promenade extended from Venice to Frasier Pier in Ocean Park.

Below, bottom: 1908, Gondoliers on Altabarren Canal, in the late 1920's it was filled and became Market Street.



Old Venice; continued from page 1

Venice of America was, and is, an elusive place. One reason for this is that it was an odd outgrowth of its original conception. Abbot Kinney, an heir of the Sweet Caporal Tobacco fortune, came to this coast in 1880, and by 1904 he set in motion his idealistic plans for a cultural center no less than that of Venice, Italy's (little realizing, or caring, that his model, with its sensuous climate and own amusements, had the reputation of being the Sin City of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). The particular ingredients of the 160 acres of marshy land, twenty-five miles from Los Angeles and the attitude of Southern Californians grew into something different than his desired dreams. A 3,600 seat auditorium, which initially had performances and appearances by the Chicago Symphony, Sarah Bernharht, Madame Modjeska and Helen Hunt Jack-

son, was slighted for more amusing entertainments, for the beach itself, and the honky tonks of the Midway Plaisance along the lagoon.

In 1907, the speculator Kinney easily gave into the carnival-like tenor emerging from his cultural dream city and began construction of a bathhouse on the beach. He pragmatically sought to capitalize on the amusement center aspects and commercially tried to consolidate the beach-pier area with the lagoon-midway area. Among other jealousies, the Board of Trustees of Ocean Park, currently governing Venice, found this expansion threatening to their own city's commercial interests. Kinney, and the population of Venice, managed to get their bathhouse built - by defiance - and by 1911 they had wrested away from Ocean Park management and incorporated on their own.

Despite the glorious first two decades of its life, Kinney's Venice struggled physically from the hastiness under which it was built, the neglect of the Ocean Park government, and from the elements - fire and rain. First, Venice was never properly engineered. Tidal flow through the one narrow 30" diameter pipe, which fed the canals from the ocean, never flushed the sixteen miles of canals adequately. By 1912, the State Board of Health had condemned the canals as a public health menace. In addition, the sewage plant was overtaxed, the fire protection system using high-pressure sea water had failed, and the beach front was already eroding from ordinary weather and mild storms. Next, the Ocean Park government (and later, lack of funds on the part of the newly incorporated Venice) resulted in neglect in the areas of police and fire protection and garbage collection. And, from the start, Venice was plagued with natural disasters. While under construction, the project was damaged by "the heaviest seas in more than a generation." The erection of a semi-circular breakwater for protection, only created greater harm as the currents diverted by it severely eroded beach front property, especially in 1915 when water-front homes were pounded by high tides. The 1930 construction of the Hyperion Outfall Sewer restored the beach to a normal state.

Fire caused the greatest damage to Abbot Kinney's delightful vision. Weeks after his death in 1920, a fire razed the pier destroying the dance pavilion, the auditorium, the Ship's Cafe (from the original Ship Hotel), and all the amusement park. Venice, a cultural renegade from the start, never regained the financial or popular support to be rebuilt.

The turn-of-the-century development of Venice had coincided with an influx of mid-westerners and a boom in home construction, but Venice never had the all-out sanction of Los Angeles' boosters. Despite this and suffering from a jealous neighbor, it was making a soaring start in the mid-teens when Prohibition and World War I cut short its honky-tonk exuberance. The end of the War saw a cultural change in amusement taste drawing Venice's brief era to a halt. Autos, radios and the movies created diversions from the amusement park and the beach.

There is a lingering residue in the present-day environment, grand tales and specific history that relate what Venice was from 1905 to 1920. We find it in the photos and records that tell us of the 1906 mini-train provided for local transportation, the 1912 first bathing beauty contest, the 1915 Venice Grand Prix - amid a season of gondola excursions, roller coaster and camel rides, and air shows.

All was not over with the fire of December 1920. In that decade film stars moved into the area, building summer homes along the beach or canals. Among them were Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Fatty Arbuckle and Charlie Chaplin. Rudolph Valentino's stone home still stands at Speedway and Anchorage. But the 1920s' popularity of the automobile brought destruction to the canals. Annexation with Los Angeles in 1925 assured that the canals would be paved for streets, although property owners fought against it, taking the case to the State Supreme Court.

In the summer of 1929 the canals were filled. Only those south of Venice Boulevard - Carrol, Linnie, Howland and Sherman, were saved, either because the contracting company went out of business, as one story goes, or because it was considered a meagerly developed area with little need for more roads.

After the 1920s the beach town grew, splintered, overlaid itself. On one hand, it is a capsule version of the death and life of any (great) American city with a dense mesh of new building, renovation and a bit of preservation. However, Venice is unique. It fed off Abbot Kinney's conception. It is an acutely eclectic, flexible, honky tonk atmosphere for dreamers and artists and builders.

- Elizabeth McMillian

Calendar

- March 29- Sixth Annual California Historic Preservation Conference, to be held at the University of California, Riverside; tours, sessions, receptions. Contact Katie Grigsby, 714/787-4493 or 787-5401.
- April 1-6 Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in Victoria, British Columbia.
- April 5 The Los Angeles Conservancy's meeting in East Los Angeles, "The Other Side of the Bridge," 2:00 pm, Montebello Library, 1550 E. Beverly Blvd., LAC, 623-CITY for further information.
- April 7, 8 & 9 Los Feliz Jewish Community Center Home Tour, 10:00-2:00. Visit four homes including the Neutra Lovell House. Tickets \$10.00, purchased from the Hollywood - Los Feliz Jewish Community Center, 1110 S. Bates Avenue, LA 90029.
- April 12 Chamber Music in the historic Doheny Mansion, 2:30. Tickets \$17.50; inquire Da Camera Society, Mount St. Mary's College, 12001 Chalon Rd., LA 90049.
- April 26 SAH/SCC Event: LA Contemporary Architecture Tour, works of Moore, Gehry, DeBrettville, Fisher, Hodgkiss, Mangurian, and others. Coupon p. 7.
- May 16 SAH/SCC Event: John Lloyd Wright Tour. Respond by coupon in May Newsletter.
- June 13 SAH/SCC Event: Guest Speaker and End of the Year Party at the Gamble House, 1:00-4:00 pm.

Do you Know...?

Past SAH/SCC President JANANN STRAND is delivering a paper on Charles Moore's Sea Ranch at the National SAH meeting in Victoria, April 1-6...Our members write: Dr. DAVID GEBHARD wrote the Introduction to Jim Heimann and Rip George's *California Crazy* (Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1980), and another Introduction for *Tulsa Art Deco: An Architectural Era 1925 - 1942* (published by the Junior League of Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1980); JOHN PASTIER has been commissioned by the Texas Society of Architects and the University of Texas to write a history of Texas architecture and urbanism, available by 1984; keep an eye out for CHARLES JENCKS' *Current Architecture* due in our bookstores in 1982.

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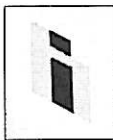
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LOCAL MEMBERSHIP: INDIVIDUAL \$7.50, COUPLES \$10.00, STUDENT \$5.00, CORPORATE \$25.00. Membership is obtained through the Chapter Secretary, Elva Marshall c/o The Gamble House.

The local chapter is affiliated with, yet requires separate membership from, the National SAH. The chapter provides programs, tours, speakers, and a newsletter of local interest.

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Thanks, ARCO!

On behalf of our chapter, the Board of Officers wishes to thank the Atlantic Richfield Company for the grant subsidizing this bicentennial newsletter featuring Venice of America. Also for this bicentennial year we pay tribute to Arco's role in the support of art and architecture in Los Angeles.

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