



EVERYDAY MODERNISMS: DIVERSITY, CREATIVITY AND IDEAS IN L.A. ARCHITECTURE, 1940-1990

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DEFINING MODERNISM

Modernism is the broad term defining a wide range of buildings and city planning concepts reflecting the new conditions of twentieth century life. Modern architects believed that new conditions of lifestyles and technology should be given a fresh interpretation, rather than being forced into the forms of previous eras. Modernism derives its forms and beauty from a fresh use of materials, structures, and functions. Modernism includes a wide range of styles, looks, and aesthetics, including (but not limited to) the rich ornament and natural materials of Organic Modernism, the smooth sculptural volumes of Late Moderne, the muscular exposed concrete of Brutalism, the exuberant structural expressionism of Gooogie, the exposed steel or wood structures of the Case Study House Program, and the spare flat-roofed steel-and-glass International Style. The primary theme linking these varied expressions is the free exploration of the new, wherever that search led the architect.

L.A. BEFORE 1940

Well before 1940, Los Angeles architects (both native-born and immigrant) had developed a free-thinking, exploratory Modernism blended with commercial pragmatism that generated new forms, new architectures, and a new decentralized city.

Southern California had been nurturing a culture of architectural experimentation as early as 1900. Inspired by a near-ideal climate and a dramatic natural landscape that inspired artists, the brothers Charles and Henry Greene had turned to the Arts and Crafts Movement (not the Classicism fashionable at the times) to create an informal, airy, and beautiful new architecture. By the teens, Irving Gill was developing a new vocabulary and technology using modern concrete. By 1920 Frank Lloyd Wright (considering resettling in Los Angeles because of its free thinking clients) was building his concrete block houses blending modern technology with his trademark appreciation of nature. In the same atmosphere, his employee R. M. Schindler and his son Lloyd Wright were actively exploring complex, non-traditional spatial geometries for a new era.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Moderne (or Art Deco) buildings by established Los Angeles firms Morgan Walls & Clements, Parkinson and Parkinson, and others

already created strikingly futuristic skylines with crystalline pinnacles of green, gold, and black, both downtown and along the new linear downtown of Wilshire Blvd.'s Miracle Mile. The car culture that defined modern life and Los Angeles as a modern city was in full swing; lowrise commercial buildings like Wayne McAllister's Streamline Moderne drive-in restaurants along the new auto-oriented suburban districts were part of daily Angeleno life. Popular taste and commercial forces played a large role in shaping many of these creative solutions; L.A. Modernism had long embraced both in bringing the advantages of modern technology to the broad public. These visions of the future were complemented by the buildings of a few Europeans, including Kem Weber, Jock Peters, R. M. Schindler, and Richard Neutra, who added some of the latest European concepts of Modernism to L.A.'s existing Modern mix. Commerce and art, neon and concrete, solidity and flux, nature and artifice, natives and emigres, center cities and suburbias, *avant garde* and mainstream: diversity has always been the engine of Southern California architecture.

One of Modernism's ideals championed bringing the advantages and boons of new inventions to improve the lives of average people. In the beautiful climate of Southern California in particular, this principle led naturally to the idea that Modernism was to make the lives of average people more enjoyable, pleasurable, and easy. Besides the well-known custom-designed Modern homes for the wealthy or skyscrapers for large companies, Southern California also focused on bringing good design to mass produced products and everyday architecture. Thus the designs for the city's gas stations, department stores, movie theaters, apartment houses, amusement parks, and coffee shops are often as good as those for expensive custom homes.

Far from being isolated from the world, L.A.'s reputation attracted talented and ambitious designers from all over the world, injecting new ideas on a regular basis. These mixed with indigenous culture and native architects who consistently generated new design ideas to push the cause of Modernism forward.

By 1939, the signs of a city looking to the future were visible in major civic projects. Downtown, Union Station (Parkinson and Parkinson, 1939) opened; it acknowledged both California's mission heritage in its tower, arcades, and plain whitewashed walls, and the Modern era of speed in its sleek forms and streamlined details. The Arroyo Seco Freeway (1933-35, Pasadena) was under construction, heralding a new form of interurban transportation and a future that would knit the region together more closely. Far from downtown, the new May Company Department Store (A. C. Martin, 1939) helped establish a new type of decentralized city by extending Wilshire's Miracle Mile all the way out to Fairfax. Its streamlined forms and its landmark gold tile corner tower announced a new architecture that was meant to be seen through the car windshield. Out in the still-rural San Fernando Valley, a startling new studio for Walt Disney (Kem Weber, 1940, Burbank) announced California's interest in new technology, new ways of working, and new means of communicating.

1940-1950

THE MODERN COMMERCIAL CITY IN WAR AND PEACE

By 1940, the grip of the Great Depression was loosening. Rumors of the European and Asian wars engulfing the United States grew, fueling a build-up of aircraft plants and military bases. The coming war would propel Los Angeles into the future, but the City of Angels already had a head start in that direction. Los Angeles was both looking like and acting like the city of tomorrow.

Few, however, could imagine the profound changes to come. Conventional expectations for the future would be overturned as the world shifted into overdrive for the war. Industry, plodding through the Depression, would be jolted into inventing ways to build hundreds of ships, and thousands of planes, tanks, and jeeps quickly. The stalled housing industry had a similar wake up call to create mass produced housing, first for defense workers, then for returning veterans. Few would have guessed how wartime industries like plastics and aluminum would move from the laboratories to real life so rapidly -- or their possibilities for architecture. As Esther McCoy, the noted historian and critic who worked as a draughtsman at Douglas Aircraft during the war, said, the new design attitude "was all stripped down and essential." Young architects in the war or the defense industries would grasp the possibilities and have the creativity to apply them to Modernism after the war.

The war also returned prosperity to America, generating an expanding population immediately after the war. The demand from the new population spurred new architectural types. L.A.'s downtown grew highrises like the General Petroleum building (Wurdeman and Becket, 1949) boasting flexible partitions to respond to changing needs. Other innovations followed in the wake of a growing regional infrastructure of boulevards and then freeways. Wilshire's Miracle Mile, begun in the 1930s, helped extend development westward, encouraging developers to build in Crenshaw and Westchester. This growth was marked by new department stores like Millirons (Victor Gruen Associates, 1949, Westchester) and shopping centers like Crenshaw Shopping Center (Albert Gardner, 1949, Crenshaw District). The region's first freeway, the Arroyo Seco, helped to speed new residents and new customers to Bullocks Pasadena (Wurdeman and Becket, 1947). Factories were built or expanded in the San Fernando Valley and the South Bay; farms could be turned into housing tracts for arriving employees. New forms of entertainment opened up new architectural opportunities: the television studio, represented by Don Lee Mutual Studios (Claud Beelman, 1948, Hollywood), created another new architectural type. Alongside official planning guiding these growing areas, informal commercial vernacular planning processes guided the planning and design of commercial strips connecting the new suburban areas. Car dealerships, coffee shops, markets, and service stations designed for the car-mobile public blossomed everywhere. Everywhere a new architecture built for daily life brought the advantages and the look of modernity to the general public.

To house the growing population, Southern California architects stretched themselves in many directions. Large-scale planned developments such as

Wyvernwood in Boyle Heights (David Witmer, Loyall Watson, and Hammond Sadler, 1938-41) and Village Green at Baldwin Hills Village (Reginald Johnson, Wilson, Merrill & Alexander, Fred Barlow Jr., 1941-42) incorporated the latest ideas about multiple housing, integrating landscaping, recreation, and community in a model with lasting impact. Highrise towers at Park La Brea (Leonard Schultze & Assoc., Earl Heitschmidt, 1944, Miracle Mile) blended with lowrise garden apartments to create high density neighborhoods near major thoroughfares. Smaller experimental designs like Gregory Ain's Avenel Cooperative Housing project (1948, Silver Lake) reflected his long concern for social issues by defining high density living with creative design. The greatest impact came from the development and expression of mass production for single-family homes, seen before the war at Toluca Woods (Marlow-Burns, builders, 1941, Toluca Lake), and expanded after the war in the large master-planned communities of Panorama City (Kaiser Community Homes, 1948) and Lakewood (Weingart, Taper and Boyar, builders, 1950). Turning the pre-war custom-designed Ranch Houses of Cliff May and others into a mass-produced product, these methods brought home ownership, backyard greenery, open plans, and neighborhood schools and shops within the reach of the average person's pocket book -- a startling accomplishment on such a widespread basis.

The region's talented commercial and residential architects who had been established before the war included Richard Neutra, Harwell Hamilton Harris, John Lautner, Wurdeman and Becket, George Vernon Russell, Stiles O. Clements, Douglas Honnold, Wayne McAllister, John Woolf, and others. They were joined by many talented young architects, many of whom returned to Southern California after wartime visits because of its climate and open opportunity to explore the possibilities of Modern design.

With all the opportunities to build after the war, these architects quickly evolved a wide range of concepts and styles. The Streamline Moderne popular in the 1930s evolved into the Late Moderne seen in Bullock's Pasadena (Wurdeman and Becket, 1947), the first major L.A. department store to follow its customers into the new suburbs as the shape of the city changed. Bullock's Pasadena updated the continuous lines and curving planes of the Streamline Moderne of the 1930s, updating them with the clean forms of the International Style, and adding decorative accents of egg crate grills and bezeled display windows. Meanwhile, Milliron's department store (Victor Gruen Associates, 1948, Westchester) was integrated into the new Sepulveda Blvd. shopping district serving the mass produced Ranch Houses being built nearby; parking was provided on the roof. It was one step on Gruen's evolution of the suburban shopping mall.

Wayne McAllister's Bob's Big Boy (1949) in Burbank reflected the same Late Moderne aesthetic, also designed for the automobile. In addition, the enormous scale of Bob's neon-lined sign board, and its curving window wall looking out on the boulevard showed the evolution of sophisticated architecture designed for the auto.

Diversity continued to be a theme of Southern California design as architects explored the best way to express the new era. The influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic architecture continued to be seen in the commercial and residential work of John Lautner, Lloyd Wright, and others. Other young architects such as A. Quincy Jones and Douglas Honnold followed Wright in using warm natural materials like wood and brick expressed in clean horizontal lines in a distinctive California Modern style. This approach used complex compositions of jutting balconies, distinctive rooflines, and glass walls to blend the home with nature. At the same time, an older generation, known for their masterful pre-war use of historicist styles, followed the trend toward Modernism. Paul R. Williams, Wallace Neff, and Allen Siple are among those who made successful transitions to Modernism. Still other residential architects, like John Woolf, evolved the Hollywood Regency with abstracted historicist elements, though in designs that incorporated the open plans and clean shapes of Modernism.

The Late Moderne and Organic Modern styles contrasted with another style, most often identified with the Case Study House program of Los Angeles-based *Arts+Architecture* magazine, that emerged after World War II. Exposing their spare structural frames of wood post and beam or steel, the lightness and openness of these designs emphasized with large walls of glass opening the house to nature gained popularity and became a hallmark style of the new era.

1950-1960

SUBURBAN METROPOLIS

The decade of the 1950s established Southern California's reputation for creativity in architecture. The city's residential architecture gained international fame, largely due to the Case Study House program sponsored by *Arts+Architecture* magazine. Through *Sunset* magazine, however, California design spread even more widely and popularly.

The region's growth was also gaining attention nationally; its burgeoning population led to enormous mass-produced housing tracts, new shopping centers, recreational facilities, and an eye-catching car culture of drive-ins, car washes, and car dealerships that spotlighted a new youth culture. All these new buildings with new designs gained attention (both positive and negative) for a new kind of city, the suburban metropolis.

The changes spread across the entire culture and all classes, as varied expressions of Modernism blossomed. Among the new architectural types was the McDonald brothers' golden-arched fast food stand (Stanley Meston, 1953, Downey), which became one of the most famous designs of the decade nationally. Home Savings and Loan introduced the first in a series of notable buildings (Millard Sheets, 1956, Beverly Hills) with the solidity of a vault and adorned with mosaic murals, sculpture, and stained glass, bringing fine art to the commercial strip.

Highrise offices also showed diversity. The circular Capitol Records tower (Welton Becket Associates, 1956, Hollywood) became an instant landmark, while Glendale Fidelity tower (W. A. Sarmiento, 1959, Glendale) was an Organic blend of articulated service towers of brick with metal sunshades; the lozenge-shaped Union Oil building (Pereira and Luckman, 1958, Downtown) and the Getty-Tidewater Offices (Claud Beelman, 1956, Koreatown) added to the variety.

Church architecture likewise expressed the same wide range of Modern ideas, from Wayfarers Chapel (Lloyd Wright, 1951, Palos Verdes), famous for its striking use of glass and natural materials on the edge of the ocean, to 28th Church of Christ, Scientist (Maynard Lyndon, 1955, Westwood), a restful composition of solid abstract Late Moderne shapes.

Custom houses expressed a breathtaking range of ideas, from Silvertop (John Lautner, 1963, Silver Lake) to Case Study House #21 (Pierre Koenig, 1959, Hollywood Hills); though very different in concept, each became internationally famous by pushing the design potential of prestressed concrete and steel frames, respectively. Experiments in housing construction as well as planning and organization flourished. A team of talented architects joined in a unique communal organization, the Mutual Housing Association, to build Crestwood Hills (1950, Brentwood), a planned community by like-minded professionals in the hills of Brentwood, with shared amenities and a high standard of architectural design in the individual homes clinging to the hillside. In his own house, Dawnridge (Tony Duquette, 1949, Beverly Hills) designer Tony Duquette, from the quintessential L.A. industries of movies and fashion, showed that history and ornament had a place in the Modern world.

Southern California's most influential housing experiments were the mass-produced tracts that spread over former agricultural land; the nation gasped in amazement at the factory-like production of Lakewood, an instant planned city of Ranch Houses, schools, libraries, and shopping centers. "Ranch House" typically referred to a one-story single-family house with a gable roof and an unpretentious and welcoming appearance; a garage was usually attached. Ranch House architecture came in many varieties and sizes, from the simple Minimal Traditional Ranch Houses of entry-level tracts such as Lakewood, to the more elaborate Traditional Ranch Houses (often custom designed) that featured shake roofs, board-and-batten siding, and diamond-pane windows, to the contemporary Ranch House. Ranch House tracts also came in different varieties, including the prefabricated versions designed by Cliff May and architect Chris Choate, seen at Rancho Estates (1954) in Long Beach. While the majority of tract housing was built by developers without architects, several notable architecture firms (Palmer and Krisel, Smith and Williams, Jones and Emmons, and Edward H. Fickett) brought their respected Modernist ideas to the design and construction of tens of thousands of tract homes.

Higher-density multiple housing was manifested in many ways, including the Dingbat apartment house; the Dingbat gained its name from the ornamental

flourishes, signs, or light fixtures in the shape of the star burst (the “dingbat” symbol of typesetting) on its street facade. The Southern California tradition of courtyard apartments was modernized by architects like Richard Dorman at the Rose Apartments (Richard Dorman, 1959, Mar Vista) and Edward H. Fickett in the Sunset Lanai (1952, West Hollywood), providing apartments around a communal swimming pool/sunbathing/socializing terrace.

Every aspect of life was touched by Modernism. The expanding economy created jobs in auto and aerospace industries, creating a demand for modern highrise offices in the traditional center city, but also for lowrise suburban office and manufacturing campuses; the Stuart Pharmaceutical Factory (Edward Durell Stone, 1958, Pasadena; altered) set a standard by combining office and manufacturing space with recreational facilities for employees designed by landscape architect Thomas Church -- the model of the modern workplace. The new television industry produced CBS Television City (Pereira and Luckman, 1952, Miracle Mile), an International Style box with flexibly functional studio spaces.

The shape of the city itself changed as architects responded to car mobility that created new patterns of shopping, eating, and entertainment. The Miracle Mile had been an urban planning response to the auto in the 1930s, and continued to be successful as a fashionable urban district with new highrise buildings, department stores, and banks through the 1950s and 1960s. Tying the entire city together was the new freeway system, whose sleek, curving four-level interchange between the Harbor and Hollywood freeways (1949, Downtown) became an instant attraction for tourists and locals. Along such boulevards and freeways, Southern Californians went about their lives. They drove to bowling alleys like Covina Bowl (Powers, Daly, DeRosa 1956, West Covina) that were de facto social centers, and to amusement parks like Marineland of the Pacific (Pereira and Luckman, 1958, Palos Verdes; demolished 2006). Along the way they would stop at popular Googie style coffee shops; examples such as Romeo's Times Square, later known as Johnie's (Armet and Davis, 1956, Miracle Mile) and Pann's (Armet and Davis, 1958, Westchester) combined the bold scale required for visibility from the car, and the human scale to create an inviting, garden-like dining space. Such buildings summed up an approach to lifestyle, architecture, and city planning that was reinvented for California.

1960-1970

IMPERIAL CALIFORNIA

Southern Californians sensed that the astonishing future they had eagerly anticipated since the 1920s had finally arrived in the 1960s.

The boom of the 1950s had been the launching pad; by 1964 California became the largest state in the union; its aerospace, oil, electronics, tourist, and entertainment industries dominated the nation; its economy became one of the largest in the world; its fashions, fads, and culture spread throughout the country and the world. The city continued its reach out into previously agricultural areas in the San

Fernando Valley, the South Bay, the San Gabriel Valley, and neighboring Orange and Ventura Counties. California was a nation-state in itself, and its Modern architecture perfectly reflected the wealth, reach, and self-confidence of this empire.

The jewels of this rise in power and prestige were two self-assured cultural monuments, the Music Center (Welton Becket Associates, 1964-67, Bunker Hill) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (William Pereira Associates, 1964, Miracle Mile) -- both designed by major local firms. Both firms were breaking new ground in organization and expertise to be able to design for the size and complexity of the corporate, manufacturing, and educational campuses that were at the cutting edge of California's growth, and idealized in these two cultural monuments.

Similar monuments were rising all over town. Smaller museums such as the Pasadena Art Museum (Ladd and Kelsey, 1969) showed the extent of cultural growth. The Department of Water and Power (A. C. Martin, 1964, Bunker Hill) embodied the ease, the power, the light, the modernity of the city's image of itself -- and replaced the decayed glory of old Bunker Hill. Campuses for new technology firms like TRW Space Park, later Northrop Grumman (A. C. Martin, 1967, Redondo Beach) and Xerox (Craig Ellwood, 1966, El Segundo) highlighted California's dynamic high-tech economy. The new Los Angeles International Airport (William Pereira Assoc., Welton Becket Assoc., Paul R. Williams, 1961, Westchester) was crowned with another intentionally symbolic design, the Theme Building. Other new buildings brought the same modern sensibility to the city's play, including Dodger Stadium (Praeger, Kavenagh and Waterbury, 1962, Echo Park), and the Cinerama Dome (Welton Becket Assoc., 1963, Hollywood), which used a dynamic precast concrete system to house a new movie projection system.

Planning these large complexes became a major expertise for Los Angeles' large architecture offices. Planned communities had been practiced since the 1920s in Leimert Park and Westwood, Westchester and Panorama City in the 1940s, but the even larger housing tracts of the 1950s gave way to more sophisticated master-planned communities in Valencia (Gruen Associates, 1965), Westlake Village (A. C. Martin, 1968), and Irvine (Pereira Associates, 1965, Orange County.) On a smaller scale, builder Joseph Eichler added his Modern mass-produced home tracts to the earlier Modern tracts designed by Palmer and Krisel and Edward H. Fickett in the San Fernando Valley. Century City (Welton Becket Assoc, 1959-1963) updated the traditional center city model with an all-new master plan combining offices, cultural venues, hotels, and housing. The Century Plaza Hotel (Minoru Yamasaki, 1966, Century City) served as the centerpiece of the plan, but the Century City Medical Plaza (Cesar Pelli, Anthony Lumsden, DMJM, 1969, Century City) pioneered a new glass skin that would revolutionize commercial architecture. In recreation, Marina del Rey and Long Beach built large-scale master-planned recreational-commercial-residential developments along the shore and harbor.

The pace of Southern California Modernism's experimentation and diversity in residential design continued in the 1960s. The prodigious range of creative ideas can be grasped in a few examples: the Chemosphere house (John Lautner, 1960,

Hollywood Hills) solved the problem of building on an unbuildably steep site by using a single concrete column; in Case Study House #18 (Craig Ellwood, 1956, Hollywood Hills, altered), slender steel skeletons were a framework for elegantly minimalist homes; the broad shingled pavilion roofs of the Seidenbaum House (Richard Dorman, 1964, Hollywood Hills) echoed Japanese architecture, connecting it to the long influence of Asian architecture in California going back to the Greene brothers; the Kappe House (Ray Kappe, 1967, Pacific Palisades) used massive concrete walls and wood beams with transparent glass to tie the house to a wooded ravine site.

The same variety of ideas is visible in commercial and civic architecture. The Sunset Canyon Recreation Center (Smith and Williams, 1966, UCLA) reflected California's wood post-and-beam tradition. The Neo-Formalist Beckman Auditorium (Edward Durell Stone, 1963, Pasadena) reflected the architect's search for ways to blend classical architecture concepts (in this case, a Greek tholos) with the modern era -- one effort to reform the severity of minimalist International Style Modernism. A Union 76 station (Gin Wong, 1965, Beverly Hills) shows the flexibility of Googie Modernism as a fully realized three-dimensional form expressing its function. The Danziger Studio (Frank Gehry, 1965, West Hollywood) shows the blend of L.A.'s vernacular stucco box tradition with high art minimalism. The rugged exposed concrete structure of Brutalism was used in Liberty Bank (Kurt Meyer, 1966, West Los Angeles).

Apart from the monuments of the city's well-known architects and important institutions, the city's rich vernacular of Mexican restaurants, drive-through dairy stores, tiki apartment houses, industrial buildings, and power plants continued to thrive. Farmer John's Meat Packing Plant (1953, Vernon) with its supergraphic mural of a pig farm idyll was lauded, and the Donut Hole (John Tindall, Ed McCreany, Jesse Hood, 1968, La Puente) kept Southern California's long tradition of programmatic architecture healthy by creating a giant drive-through donut. These and other diverse vernacular architecture would help drive yet more design innovation in the next decade.

By the 1960s, Modernism, which had once been *avant garde*, reigned as the favored style of establishment corporations and institutions. At this point of wide acceptance, ironically, doubts about the usefulness of Modern design principles in a changing world began to arise. As the large architecture firms often applied it, Modernism could lead to formulaic and bland results. Its assumptions about the advantages of infinite growth began to be questioned because of growth's impact on urban quality and natural resources. In attempts to combat the decimation of their Main Street commercial centers by shopping malls, several cities experimented with revitalizing their downtown districts; in one example, Pomona hired Millard Sheets to redesign its Main Street as a pedestrian mall with river stone planters, fountains, and sculptures along the way. Many architects and members of the public felt that Modernism had come to the end of the line.

1970-1980

LOS ANGELES REDISCOVERED

Los Angeles, like most American cities, faced urban decay in the 1960s and 1970s. Though old neighborhoods declined, some of them became the seeds for ideas, imagery, and opportunities that led on to the next step of the region's architectural progress. Unexpectedly, Los Angeles became a focus for intellectual discourse in the 1970s; unexpectedly, it also gave birth to a grassroots preservation movement. As could be expected from its history, however, young architects (both local and emigres) were still drawn to the city believing it was a good environment to test new ideas.

These radical new ideas centered in the Westside rubbed up against the Modernist establishment still very much represented in the new high rises of Bunker Hill and Wilshire Blvd. The city's large firms expanded their Late Modern corporate architecture beyond the plain International Style glass box with a variety of geometries. Great Western Savings (Pereira Associates, 1972, Beverly Hills) took the form of an extruded oval on a prominent Wilshire corner. While two circular Holiday Inn towers (Lundgren and Maurer, Long Beach, 1968, and Brentwood, 1969) echoed Welton Becket's 1954 Capitol Records building, Fidelity Federal (Krisel and Shapiro, 1976, Glendale) utilized a faceted, crystalline form for its glass skin, a motif used frequently in the 1970s. Inglewood Civic Center (Charles Luckman, 1973) used concrete Brutalism in a complex of buildings. Crowning these explorations was the confident mirrored silos of the Bonaventure Hotel (John Portman, 1976, Downtown.)

Educational campuses expressed the same diversity as architects searched for a path forward. While Art Center College of Design (Craig Ellwood, 1976, Pasadena) returned to the structural simplicity of a steel bridge girder spanning a ravine, California State University, Dominguez Hills (A. Q. Jones, 1979, Carson) used concrete to create a multi-leveled mega-structure. Similar variety could be seen in the buildings of everyday life, still the focus of attention for Southern California architects. Sunset Car Wash (Robert Barnett, 1972, Hollywood) brought Brutalist concrete to the commercial strip, while the Hughes Market (Leon Edgar, 1972, Studio City) brought Expressionism to the daily trip the supermarket.

While the work of the large architecture offices continued, the questioning of their Modernist precepts became more insistent in the 1970s. Figures that had embodied the earlier Los Angeles passed from the scene (Richard Neutra died in 1970, Charles Eames in 1978, A. Q. Jones in 1979), while three younger architects came on the scene to re-establish the vitality of Los Angeles as a generator of architectural ideas: Charles Moore, Cesar Pelli, and Frank Gehry. Drawing on different aspects of Los Angeles culture, each offered alternatives to the standard International Style/Miesian Modernism.

Charles Moore became internationally famous for his design for Sea Ranch in Northern California (Moore/Lyndon/Turnbull/Whitaker, 1967, Sonoma County.)

He moved to Los Angeles after heading the School of Architecture at Yale to open an office and to teach at UCLA's recently founded Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. Embracing both the stucco box vernacular and the Spanish Colonial heritage of Southern California, Moore's buildings, teaching, and writing addressed many of the weaknesses of Modernism of the time: a detachment from popular taste, a heroic and empty monumentalism, and an overemphasis on technological fixes. His Psychoanalytic Office building (Moore and Turnbull, 1971, Century City) used the easy flexibility and repetitive elements of Southern California's stucco box contractor vernacular to create an open, airy, and light-filled building. The exaggerated grandeur of its tall entry rendered in simple materials displayed Moore's interest in architecture's public role. The Leland Burns House (Charles Moore, 1974, Pacific Palisades) was also a stucco box, but transformed in the image and lofty spaces of California's Spanish Colonial Revival. Moore's ideas contributed to the international movement known as Postmodernism, though his witty and knowledgeable understanding of architectural history distinguished his work.

Even Los Angeles' large commercial offices pushed into new territory in the 1970s. Cesar Pelli and Anthony Lumsden, alumni of Detroit's Eero Saarinen Associates (one of the most original architecture firms of the 1950s) were hired by Daniel Mann Johnson Mendenhall (DMJM) and Gruen Associates specifically to bring a fresh design edge to those large firms. Reflecting both the region's fascination with technology, and the practical budgetary constraints of commercial buildings, Pelli and Lumsden developed the glass skin held in place by neoprene gaskets as an aesthetic and commercial object. This cost-effective skin for large commercial buildings allowed the architects to create volumes that appeared as light as a dirigible, as at the FAA Headquarters (Cesar Pelli, Anthony Lumsden, DMJM, 1973, Lawndale). The rippling, curvilinear glass skin of the Manufacturers Bank (Anthony Lumsden, 1974, Beverly Hills) demonstrated even more freedom of form. The Pacific Design Center (Pelli and Gruen Associates, 1975, West Hollywood) was asymmetrical, boldly colored, an enclosed volume that denied mass. It gained international attention as an original Modern design that had escaped the boredom of the skeletal glass box with influences from the contemporary art of Larry Bell and Tony Smith. But it was the simplicity and cost savings of Pelli and Lumsden's glass skin that made it an influential new direction for Modern architecture nationwide.

Frank Gehry, a local architect educated at USC and steeped in the commercial and urban character of Los Angeles, also began to attract national attention in the 1970s. He evolved over the decade with experiments exposing the common contractor wood stud framing and stucco skin seen in the Gemini GEL studio (Frank Gehry, 1979, Hollywood), to the exploded forms and vernacular materials of his own house (Frank Gehry, 1978-1992, Santa Monica), a design which influenced the coming Deconstructivist movement of the 1980s.

These trends in the direction of Modernism in L.A. were highlighted in a 1975 symposium at UCLA on the Silvers, including architects Tim Vreeland, Anthony Lumsden, Frank Dimster, Eugene Kupper, Paul Kennon, Cesar Pelli, and Frank

Gehry. Though Los Angeles had never had a strong publishing or intellectual community, this growing ferment brought new critical attention locally, nationally and internationally. That, in turn, attracted architects from elsewhere to the city, and made the city more self-conscious of its architecture.

Esther McCoy, who had arrived in Los Angeles in the 1930s, continued to write for the popular and academic press in the 1970s. British critic Reyner Banham's *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* was published in 1971, mating an outsider's observations with a sympathizer's insights. David Gebhard, director of the University Art Museum of the University of California, Santa Barbara, mounted a series of exhibitions and catalogs on neglected history; with Robert Winter, Gebhard co-authored the *Guide to Southern California Architecture* (1977), the first thorough guidebook to the region's architecture. John Pastier and John Dreyfuss became the first architecture critics of the *Los Angeles Times* in this decade.

Architectural education expanded tremendously as well. The well-established architecture school at the University of Southern California was joined by the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA, and then the radical new Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) spinning off from Cal Poly Pomona. Young faculty at these new schools included Craig Hodgetts, Robert Mangurian, Thom Mayne, Michael Rotondi, Eric Owen Moss, Eugene Kupper, and Fred Fisher. Though often limited to remodelings in then-funky neighborhoods, such as the Delmer house (Morphosis, 1977, Venice), these architects used limited budgets to their advantage by highlighting cheap industrial materials such as corrugated metal, exposed wood studs, plywood, and chain link fencing -- a direction in which Frank Gehry took the lead, but which reflected an interest in the possibilities of ordinary contractor construction stretching back to R. M. Schindler. Other young local architects including Steven Ehrlich, Michael Folonis, and Peter deBretteville, and architects such as Frank Israel attracted to Los Angeles from the East Coast, also drew on Los Angeles itself. Their work would form the basis of the city's impressive reputation in the next decades.

The interest in alternative theories to Modernism coalesced internationally in the 1970s as Postmodernism. Los Angeles contributed to this movement, which sought to reintroduce a wider range of sources to architecture, beyond the narrow range of sleek, geometric, machined imagery of Modernism. Charles Jencks, a primary Postmodern interpreter from Britain, came to UCLA in the 1970s to teach. In many ways, however, Postmodernism simply reiterated Los Angeles' long interest in blending historical imagery with modern uses, from Grauman's Chinese Theatre (Meyer and Holler, 1927, Hollywood), to Disneyland (Walt Disney, 1955, Orange County), to Beckman Auditorium (Edward Durell Stone, 1963, Pasadena), to John Woolf's French Mansard-derived houses, to Tony Duquette's exotic historicism, and finally to the high profile Getty Villa (Stephen Garrett, Langdon and Wilson, 1974, Malibu), an imaginative recreation of a Roman villa buried by Vesuvius at Herculaneum.

The 1970s introduced two other trends that transformed the Southern California scene; sustainability and preservation. In the land of the automobile and glass walled homes, the OPEC Oil Crisis of the early 1970s introduced a new urgency to reducing energy usage and increasing sustainability through design. At a grassroots level, the Los Angeles Conservancy quickly tapped into the public's interest in Los Angeles architecture. When the demolition of an early example of Los Angeles Modernism, the Los Angeles Central Library (Bertram Goodhue, 1926, Downtown), was proposed, a group of concerned citizens was able to coalesce this public support, leading ultimately to the library's preservation and the founding of the Los Angeles Conservancy in 1978.

1980-1990

LOS ANGELES CONFIRMED

Throughout the 1980s, much of the Los Angeles basin and San Fernando Valley were being built out. Open agricultural land and undeveloped hillsides had once offered a blank slate for development; in the 1980s the emphasis of development shifted to the challenge of infill projects, additions, redevelopment for denser uses, and preservation. Yet even the dense, clashing mix of architectures in decaying neighborhoods provided inspiration to architects as a manifestation of an unfinished, ever-changing landscape, still rich with possibilities. The minor commercial area of Melrose Avenue and the funky Venice neighborhood were turned into hip neighborhoods, while the Latino community brought new commercial life to downtown's moribund Broadway. The 1984 Olympics confirmed Los Angeles' rise as a mature global city, as did the growth of immigrant and ethnic communities.

Los Angeles' emergence as a world city had two effects: prominent Los Angeles architects Frank Gehry and Cesar Pelli gained more national and international commissions, while several major local commissions went to architects based elsewhere who were attracted to this new design hub. These ranged widely; Organic architecture was represented by Oklahoman Bruce Goff's design with Bart Prince for LACMA's Pavilion for Japanese Art (1988, Miracle Mile); Mexico's Ricardo Legoretta redesigned Pershing Square (1993) in the heart of downtown; Arato Isozaki designed the new Museum of Contemporary Art on Bunker Hill (1986, Downtown); and I. M. Pei designed the prestigious Creative Artists Agency offices (1989) in Beverly Hills. New York's Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer built additions to two major landmarks, LACMA (1986, Miracle Mile) and the Central Library Tom Bradley Wing (1993, Downtown).

At the same time, the dynamic forces of diversity (commerce, popular taste, landscape, climate, and history) in Los Angeles continued to influence design. Planning for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics drew on all of these strengths: spread over the region, the design of these decentralized venues was united by bold, car-scaled supergraphics and installations by Sussman/Prejza and Jon Jerde, a daring innovator in retail architecture. Los Angeles' most strikingly original architects, John Lautner, Ray Kappe, Pierre Koenig, and Ed Niles, were active and drawing on

their career-long interest in the themes of nature and technology. Though he left L.A. for Texas in 1985, Charles Moore's influence grew as his office, Moore Ruble Yudell, won public commissions for the Beverly Hills Civic Center (1990) and for St. Matthew's Church in Pacific Palisades (1983). Both were strong assertions of Moore's ideas of architecture responding to the nature of the place, culture, and human history. Frank Gehry's career rose to a new level of recognition in the 1980s, even as he continued to draw on the materials and colliding forms of Los Angeles' vernacular landscape and art world for Loyola Law School (1980, Downtown) and the Cabrillo Marine Museum (1981, San Pedro). His exploration of stripped structure and exploded forms contributed to the international trend known as Deconstructivism.

Postmodernism's influence could be seen in everything from corner mini-malls to highrises. A colorful Postmodern highrise tower in Westwood (1988) by Chicago's Murphy Jahn topped by a crown and striped granite was matched by the dignified Home Savings tower (Kamnitzer Cotton Vreeland and A. C. Martin, 1988, Downtown), a Postmodern highrise with classical symmetry and a chateau's silhouette; it reflected Home Savings architecture's decades-long support for public art and ornament.

Out of this mix of intellectual forces and urban reinvention under the spotlight of international interest, a group of young architects, sometimes known as the Santa Monica, or Los Angeles School, emerged as a vital force in the 1980s. Like Postmodernism, they sought a wider spectrum of sources, and complex compositions suggesting multiple interpretations. The clashing, colliding, often jarring forms of the vernacular city, the rawness of vernacular materials such as plywood, asphalt shingles, and corrugated metal, inspired their *avant garde* interpretations of houses and small commercial structures in transitional neighborhoods like Venice, San Pedro, and Culver City. Allied in part with the Deconstructivist movement that emerged at the end of the 1980s with an exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art, the unfinished, in-process, at times apocalyptic imagery of some of their buildings reflected a new vision of Los Angeles, far from the romantic imagery of Helen Hunt Jackson and the arcadian Spanish landscape, or of the Moderne's optimistic futurism.

Made up of strong individual designers, this group did not share a single vision, however. They ranged from the fragmented sculptural expressionism of Eric Owen Moss, to the intricately mechanistic constructions of Morphosis (Michael Rotondi and Thom Mayne), to the kit-of-parts craftsmanship and pop culture savvy of Studio Works (Craig Hodgetts and Robert Mangurian), to Coy Howard's mechanistic sensuality. Some, like Glenn Small, Frederick Fisher, Thane Roberts, and Frances Offenhauser, focused on sustainable design. Critic John Chase in 1991 explained this newest blossoming of Los Angeles design as "reflecting the state of flux of a shifting and transitory society....In an era when jump cuts in music videos are *de rigueur* and surf trunks are made of vivid and clashing panels, it is not surprising that architecture is also designed as a set of contrasting parts." (*Experimental Architecture in Los Angeles*, Rizzoli, New York, 1991, p 136.)

Los Angeles' commercial architecture thrived on many levels, from the corner mini-mall to the shopping mall to the commercial strip. In practice, Los Angeles architects have not refused to design commercial buildings in favor of "fine art" designs, and have brought the same quality to both; Frank Gehry designed a World Savings Bank (1982, Toluca Lake), and Morphosis designed the Kate Mantilini restaurant (1986, Beverly Hills.) The tradition of Googie architecture was revived in Grinstein/Daniels' Kentucky Fried Chicken stand (1989, Hollywood), while Paul Essick's Auto Chek Smog Centers (1984, West Los Angeles) combined the exuberant structural expressionism of 1950s car washes with the modular elements of modern technology.

On a larger commercial scale, the shopping mall changed with the times. Victor Gruen Associates, an original inventor of the shopping mall in the 1950s, developed the type for new conditions in the sizable Beverly Center (1962); this multi-story mall built on top of its parking structure responded to an urban infill site instead of the wide open spaces of suburban malls of the 1950s. Los Angeles' Jon Jerde redefined the mall at Horton Plaza (1985, San Diego) as a destination including many activities and amenities; his new concepts can be seen at his remodel of the Westside Pavilion (1985, West Los Angeles), a colorful collage of historicized elements with graphics by Sussman/Prejza. Frank Gehry's Santa Monica Place Mall (1980, Santa Monica) showed his commercial architecture roots and his awareness of LA signage in a multi-story sign of chain link hung on the exterior of the parking structure, while Cesar Pelli's design for Fox Hills Mall (1974, Culver City) walked the line between commercial necessity and taking architectural advantage of natural light and scale.

Preservation found a strong foothold by focusing on L.A.'s Modern history (including the Moderne or Art Deco) in restorations of the Oviatt and Wiltern buildings, as well as the emergence of the Modern Committee of the Los Angeles Conservancy to focus on postwar Modern architecture. It was founded in response to the 1984 demolition of a major Mid-Century Modern landmark of Googie architecture, Ship's Westwood (Martin Stern, Jr., 1958). Los Angeles' increasing self-awareness continued with the publication of *Exterior Decoration* by John Chase, *California Crazy* by Jim Heimann and Rip Georges, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles* by Stefanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood and James Tice, and *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture* by Alan Hess.

The story of Los Angeles architecture through the decades is one of ongoing exploration and diverse invention. Even with intermittent economic setbacks, the region's prosperity continued to fuel new growth and new building. New technologies and growing immigrant populations created ever-changing conditions, but the response of architects has usually been one of innovation, a response to practical functions, and a desire to please, astonish, and delight. At the same time, a well-established appreciation for the city's vernacular environment has also inspired the region's architects through the decades. These circumstances always provoked varied responses from architects, making diversity a hallmark of the region. This

atmosphere continued to attract new generations of talented architects to reinterpret these new conditions. The wide open spaces still present in the 1940s have disappeared; the freeways have woven the region together more tightly. Los Angeles, however, has continued to be a generator of new ideas, new lifestyles, and new architectures to reflect them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Architect and historian Alan Hess has written nineteen books on Modern architecture and urbanism in the mid-twentieth century. They include *The Architecture of John Lautner*, *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture*, *Julius Shulman: Palm Springs*, *Viva Las Vegas*, *The Ranch House*, and *Oscar Niemeyer: Houses*. Hess has been active in the preservation of post-World War II architecture, including the oldest McDonald's drive-in restaurant (1953, Downey, CA), Edward Durrell Stone's Stuart Pharmaceutical factory (1958, Pasadena, CA), and Wurdeman and Becket's Bullock's Pasadena. Hess has been a National Arts Journalism Program Fellow at Columbia University's School of Journalism, and received a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts to research the work of Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. He has a M.Arch degree from the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA. He is currently researching the architecture of Irvine, California, one of the United States' largest master-planned communities of the 1960s and 1970s. For more information, visit www.alanhess.net.