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Coming in

Cite 51

Christof Spieler examines the appeal of adaptive reuse. Claudia Kolker digs through the city's Spark Parks program. David Theis surveys the past and present of historic preservation in the Sixth Ward. Margaret Culbertson and Mitchell J. Shields check out the Houston Public Library's master plan.

VENETIAN BLIND & FLOOR CARPET ONE

A SPECIAL THANK YOU NOTE TO EDNA SMITHERS WHO BOUGHT THAT SNAPPY COUNTERTOP FROM US BACK IN JUNE 1952—

Hey Edna,
let's talk
Corian!



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Note: Edna's real name has been protected as she wouldn't want anyone stopping by until she's had time to complete her renovations!

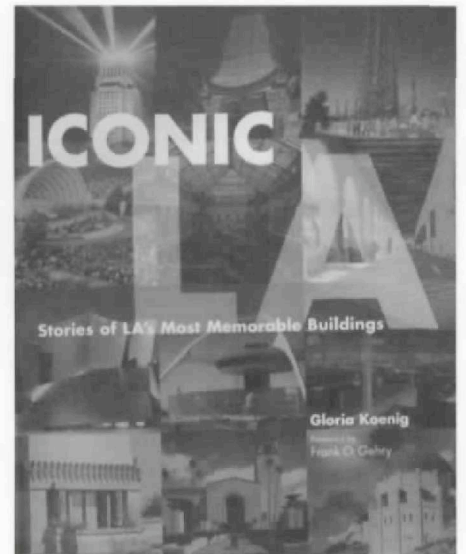
QUALITY WINDOW COVERINGS, COUNTERTOPS & FLOORING SINCE 1952

requirement of creating space for exhibitions was often treated as the poor cousin next to the primary importance of architecture as urban, typological, and form-giving experiment." As projects in this book show, such neglect may not have ended with the '80s.

And as at least one of the book's essays make clear, not everybody thinks that's such a bad thing. Kurt Forster's piece on the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is particularly fascinating in its argument that Gehry's giant circus-tent sculpture, standing at the most recent end of a continuum of museum design, is everything it should be. Gehry's museum appears to be a good example of what Lampugnani complains about; it has been criticized as a terrible place to show art even while being a wonderful piece of art itself. Forster, though, suggests that such an argument is no longer relevant. He argues that the Guggenheim has ushered in a new era of "franchise" museums, museums designed not for collecting and hoarding, but for showing and telling in a continually transforming way. He calls museums the "unsuspecting heirs of the theater," a view that echoes Trulove's ideas about cultural tourism. Forster also claims that Gehry's Guggenheim revives an architecture of excess that has lain dormant since the Borromini's lavish Renaissance buildings. "Overweight, overdone, and overwhelming" become compliments to this theatrical architecture.

Museums for a New Millennium's final few highlighted projects are still in design or under construction. Computer simulations and drawings, though, give a good idea of what they will likely become. Tadao Ando's Fort Worth museum, Steven Holl's museum in Bellevue, Washington, and, finally, Zaha Hadid's plans for the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, while all very different, illustrate new geometries made possible through computer design, a tool that will continue to transform monumental architecture in the 21st century.

Museums for a New Millennium manages to include work of many of the most celebrated architects of our time, and concludes with brief but relatively complete biographies. This volume, then, doubles as a cogent analysis of new museum design and a general reference work as well. *Designing the New Museum* may be an attractive publication, but it should be considered a supplement to *Museums for a New Millennium*, the current standard on recent museum design.



Knowing Los Angeles

Iconic LA by Gloria Koenig. Balcony Press, 2000. 120pp., illus., \$29.95.

Reviewed by Barry Moore

Iconic LA is not exactly the book its title and appearance might lead one to expect. Though at first glance it seems to promise little beyond slick photos of the city almost everybody loves to visit displayed in a coffee-table array, *Iconic LA* turns out to be more than that, more than just a splashy presentation of the cool, the weird, and the kinky. What it is instead is a carefully focused look at 13 notable buildings spanning two centuries, well illustrated with pictures both current and historical, and topped off with succinct text sufficient to whet the appetite of the Los Angophile and architectural historian alike. Koenig, a former editor and writer at the University of California Los Angeles, has selected buildings that represent different eras and architectural types: the mission San Fernando Rey, the Bradbury Building, the Hollyhock House, Watts Towers, Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles City Hall, Grauman's Chinese Theatre, Griffith Observatory, Union Station, LAX Theme Building, Case Study House #22, the Getty Center, and Disney Concert Hall. Each project is broadly described and documented, and the photographs — many of them rare — are sublime.

My first question was, why these particular 13? Why not include the Wayfarer's Chapel, the Los Angeles Public Library, or the surprising Max Factor building in Hollywood? But after some thought I think I understand the rationale behind Koenig's choices: the criterion was

obviously buildings that are recognized by everyone as quintessentially LA. Some are indelibly associated with motion pictures and television, such as the Bradbury Building (*Bladerunner*), City Hall (*Dragnet*), Hollywood Bowl (television specials), Grauman's Chinese (footprints of the stars in the sidewalk), and Griffith Observatory (*Rebel Without a Cause*). Others, specifically Union Station and LAX, have served as iconic gateways for millions coming to the Promised Land over two or three generations. And yet other choices represent the origin of a style or approach to architecture, among them the Mission, which influenced California Spanish Mission Revival, and the Case Study House. Surely everyone remembers the famous photograph of this house, the picture showing a steel-framed glass cube projecting out of the Hollywood Hills, with a blonde on one side of the living room coolly surveying the Los Angeles nightscape at her feet. Koenig is apparently betting that the Getty and the Disney will attain similar status as icons, and she may well be right.

Some surprises await the reader of this book: for example, how important a fixture on the Los Angeles' architectural scene Lloyd Wright was, from the time he came to complete his father's Hollyhock House in 1920, to his seminal designs for the Hollywood Bowl, and on through the 1940s. A reader can also develop a new appreciation of how much Frank Gehry is an architectural product of LA; it's probably for that reason that he was asked to supply the book's introduction.

It is also a revelation to realize how many of Los Angeles' great projects took years to be fully realized. Through multiple design competitions the Los Angeles City Hall became ensnared in tough politics; Union Station was greatly delayed due to the railroads fighting the city in court over the question of who was going to pay for what. It took forever to translate various temporary pavilions at Hollywood Bowl into something permanent. And the 1912 bequest that was supposed to clear the way for the Griffith Observatory was stalled for 21 years, in great part because of a scandal involving Colonel Griffith W. Griffith, the observatory's namesake benefactor (he tried to kill his wife). And everyone knows what a journey in time the Getty Museum turned out to be. Might there be a lesson here for those of us in Houston interested in light rail?

I have a growing bookshelf dedicated to Southern California, and *Iconic LA* has

an important new place on it. It nestles comfortably next to Reynard Banham's *Los Angeles, the Architecture of Ecologies*, with its revelation of the London-like characteristic of a metropolis that grew up and around a series of small villages and towns, and Charles Moore's *Experiencing Los Angeles*, with its delightful chapters on Western Avenue, Wilshire Boulevard, and the Pacific Coast Highway, which teach us how to be a space-time-movement architectural pilgrim — in an automobile, naturally. Its overview of immediately familiar structures and the insights they offer into the city's culture make *Iconic LA* a good companion to these. In his introduction to the book, Frank Gehry notes that "LA is a city of instant recognition." He's right, and *Iconic LA* is where that recognition gets its due.

NEW AND NOTABLE

Parallax by Steven Holl. Princeton Architectural Press, 384 pp., illus., \$40. In this volume, author Holl — the architect of the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki and the Chapel of St. Ignatius in Seattle — traces his ideas on topics as diverse as the "chemistry of matter" and the "pressure of light," and shows how they emerge in his designs. Holl reveals his working methods in a part treatise, part manifesto, and part, as he writes, "liner notes" to 15 recent projects, some never before published.

Gigon/Guyer Architects: Work and Projects, 1989-2000 by Christoph Burkle. Gustavo Gili, 384 pp., 397 illus., mostly color, \$80. This beautifully produced, richly illustrated monograph is the first on the work of this young Swiss practice, taking readers from its early efforts in Switzerland to more recent projects for the City of Culture competition in Santiago de Compostela and at Kansas' Nelson-Atkins Museum.

40 Architects Under 40 by Jessica Cargill Thompson. Taschen, 560 pp., illus., \$39.99. In this volume, Thompson attempts to uncover the Norman Fosters and Tadao Andos of tomorrow. Spanning the globe, she highlights her choice of the world's best young architects. Among them are Berger + Parkkinen, Studio Archae, Mathias Klotz, Vincent Van Duysen, and Shigeru Ban, along with some lesser known names. *40 Architects Under 40* features biographical information and details of each designer's work, along with a wealth of photos and floor plans. — Michael Kimmins/Karl Kilian



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Stephen Fox and **Paul Hester** when they sign copies of *Rice University: An Architectural Tour* at Brazos Bookstore, Tuesday, May 8, at 7:00 pm

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A preview party will be held on Thursday, May 3, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$25 per person in advance; reservations accepted through April 30. Please call RDA at 713-348-4876 for tickets and information.