

KILLER TEXT ON ART

artillery

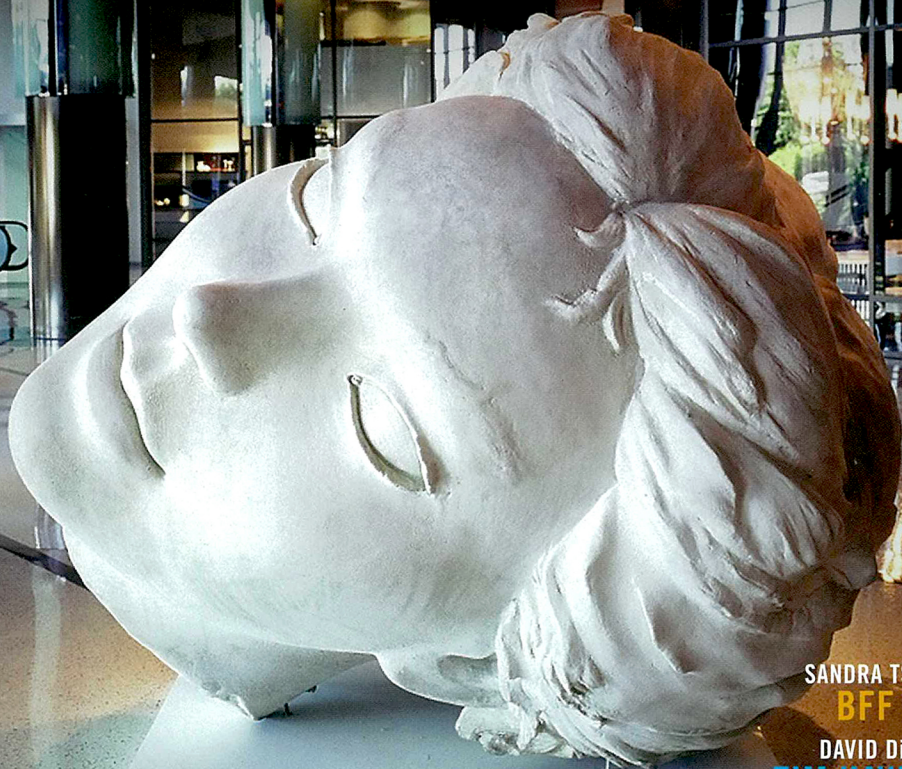
SEPARATE

CULVER CITY

CHINATOWN

REALTIES

PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER

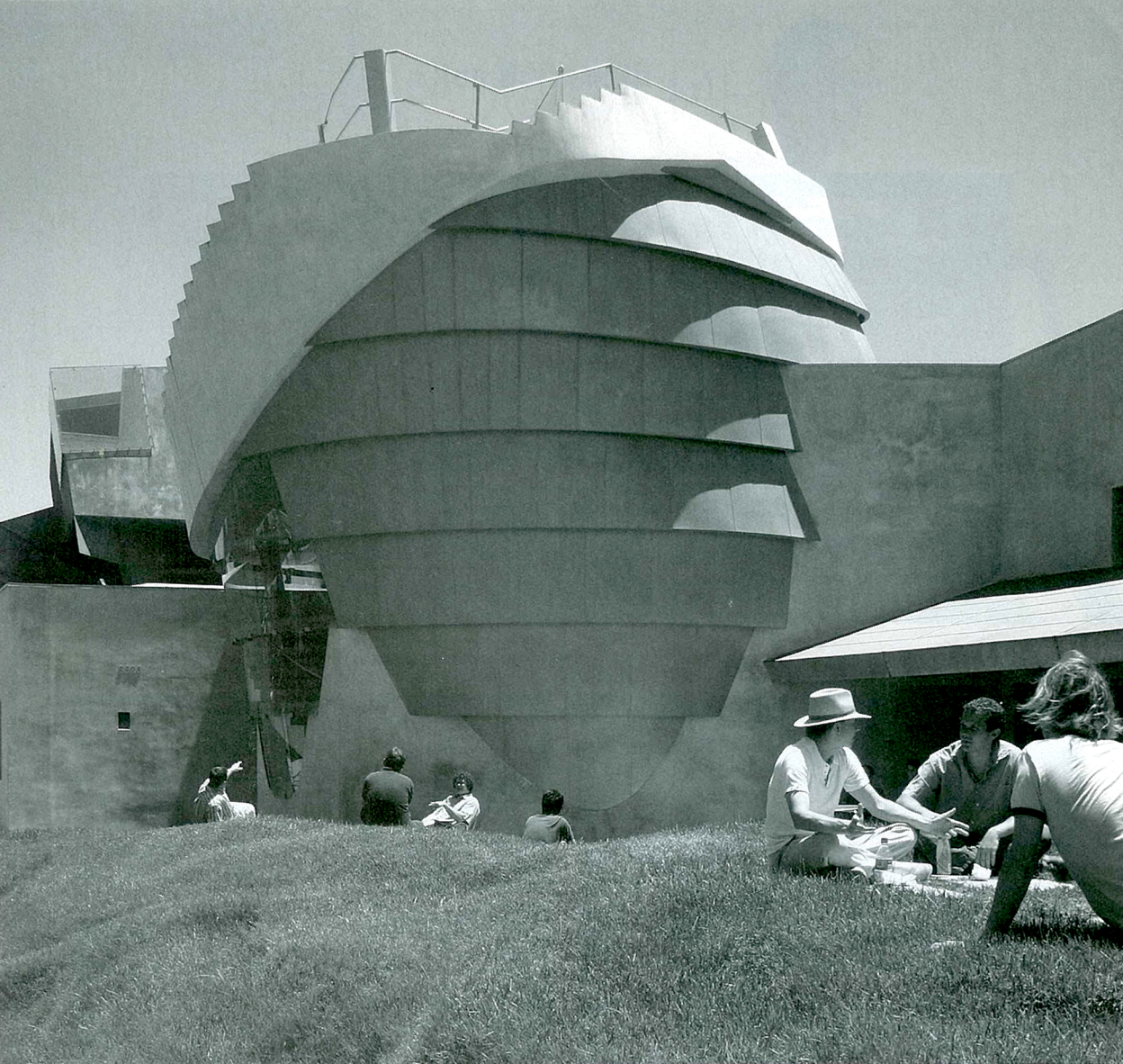


SANDRA TSING LOH ON
BFF NADFLY

DAVID DiMICHELE ON
TIM HAWKINSON
GORKY & GEGAM

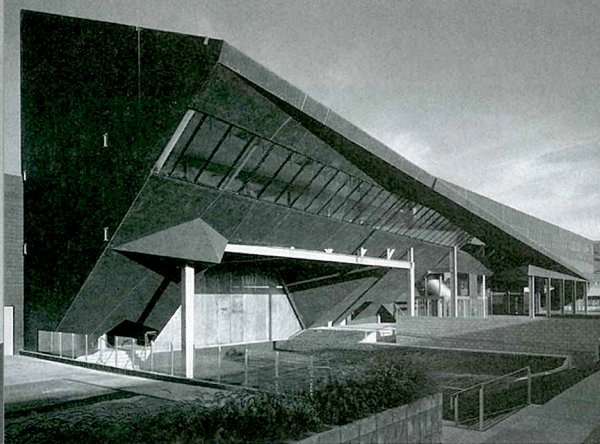
GUEST LECTURE
PAUL McCARTHY

PLUS
SUPER SUMMER SHOWS!



ROLLING STONES

GATHERED CULVER CITY ARCHITECT MOSS BY MARTINA DOLEJSOVA



ARCHITECTURAL activity in Culver City is a creeping presence in public that is getting larger and receiving more recognition. With the help from Measure R — the county's latest transit tax — the Exposition Light Rail Line construction has been moving forward. The rising structures from Phase I — the first segment starting from downtown to Culver City — are appearing along Jefferson and National boulevards as growing landmarks. (Phase II will extend the line to Santa Monica). This is also bringing more exposure to the surreal, object-like buildings that line Hayden Avenue, designed by architect Eric Owen Moss and built over the last two decades. Ideas for a futuristic city are being rekindled from the light rail and Moss' experimental forms.

Truncated concrete columns with smooth edges have sprouted in the city's landscape. Roland Genick, the lead designer for the light rail line, has accomplished a streamline aesthetic. In the era of streamline, the future came with soft, curvilinear lines. Genick's designs bring back these projections.

At the corner of La Cienega and National, the uncompleted bridge for the La Cienega elevated station emphasizes motion and movement. Subtly angling the column's axis, the opening stretches wider. The form leans away from the street. This gesture creates a relationship where the forces are perceived to go around you, as if it were a tunnel. Each edge curves so the eye does not perceive a boundary. It creates a slimming effect for the concrete infrastructure and a perpetual idea of an inert object in motion.

The La Cienega Station of Phase I is at Hayden Avenue where the architecture and firm of Eric Owen Moss Architects exists. Moss is an architect who has earned a reputation for his unconventional buildings. Raised in Los Angeles, he has been practicing in the city for the past 30 years. He is recognized for his postmodern work that injects art concepts into architecture, and most of his built work is in Culver City. He is also the current director at the Southern California Institute of Architecture in downtown Los Angeles.

Referred to as the "Conjunctive Points Theater Complex," the projects along Hayden Avenue, commissioned by developers Frederick and Laurie Samitaur-Smith, bring to mind an amusement park. Normal perspective and the traditional building symbols of a door, window, façade or alcove are skewed. It makes you wonder what Moss was thinking.

Recently completed by Moss at the corner of National and Hayden, the Samitaur Tower stands as a 72-foot entrance pillar. It is the welcoming tower at Conjunctive Points, exceeding the 56-foot height limit in the neighborhood, which automatically makes it one of the tallest points. Five 30-foot-in-diameter steel rings serve as platform bases, jutting out and intersecting a central wall. Standard structural steel sections make up the material of the building, which acts as both a beacon and viewing platform to observe the city. There are plans for video projections onto the translucent screens that serve as walls between the steel rings.

At the base of the tower, two small amphitheatres called "The Lecture Wells" invite the pedestrian traffic. These will house screenings, readings and possibly theatrical productions. Other uses include exhibit and event space as well as viewing platforms. A total of seven towers have been proposed by developers Samitaur-Smith, to be designed by Moss, each positioned along the track of the Exposition Light Rail Line.

While Samitaur Tower is the most recent, it is also the most conservative. Moss demonstrates a fascination with new architectural vocabularies that pokes at our sensibilities. "Every once in a while, there is a venue that can take you into the future," says Moss. The surrealist objectification is a mixture of over-scaled objects with a Disneyland effect, all used as working offices.

"The Beehive" at 8520 National Boulevard built in 2000, looks like ... a beehive. Housing a conference center with a lobby, the steel-frame-building is fair game for any critic. It's wrong — for all functionality. Custom panels on the façade add to the difficulties. "It was like putting shingles on an egg," Moss says.

Going down Hayden Avenue, there is a bubbly glass-covered stair, ("Green Umbrella," 1999) adjacent to the "Petrodactyl Building" (2001) that houses office spaces and a parking garage. The "Stealth Building" (2001) is reminiscent of a shipwrecked ocean liner cut in half. All push the vocabulary of visual relationships, altering the symbolic notions of a building and its components. Moss creates spatial effects that flout expectations.

Conjunctive Points is at the last stop of the 8.6-mile stretch in Phase I for the Expo Line, projected to be complete in 2011. The line brings to Culver City the symbolic gestures of the future and new eyes to the creations by Moss that test what functional architecture can be. ☉

Opposite: "Beehive"; Above left: "Stealth," view from northwest; Above right: "The Box" is seen under palm tree, staircase beside it is back of "Beehive." right hand corner is "Samitaur Tower," view from future Expo Line. Photos courtesy of Eric Owen Moss Architects