

# THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER

02 02.24.2010

CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM

\$3.95



PROPOSED NEIGHBOR TO TRANSAMERICA STILL AWAITS APPROVAL

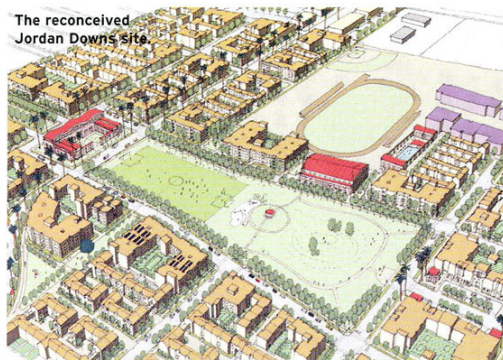
COURTESY HELLER MANUS

## PYRAMID SCHEME

After four years in the works, a proposed residential tower next to San Francisco's iconic Transamerica Pyramid is getting the runaround from the planning commission. The project, designed by local firm Heller Manus, has been on the docket

twice—and the architects hope the third time, in March, will be the charm.

The 38-story highrise is proposed for 555 Washington, on the same block as the Pyramid, in the city's Financial District. The **continued on page 9**



The reimagined Jordan Downs site

COURTESY NACLA

INFAMOUS LA HOUSING PROJECT TO BE REMADE AS MIXED-INCOME NEIGHBORHOOD

## DOWN GETS UP

Opened in the mid-1950s, the 700-unit Jordan Downs public housing complex in Watts is a cold collection of repetitive and faceless brick buildings that has,

like its cousins in places like Chicago, New York, and St. Louis, become a grim emblem of urban poverty, gang violence, social isolation, **continued on page 10**

CONTENTS

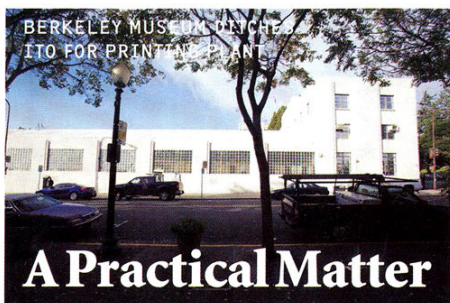
07 CALI CODE GREEN

08 FREEWAY PARKING

10 LANDMARKS IN LIMBO

27 KRISEL LOOKS BACK

05 EAVESDROP  
12 AT DEADLINE  
21 DIARY  
24 MARKETPLACE



BERKELEY MUSEUM OF ART  
ITO FOR PRINTING PLANT

## A Practical Matter

STEVEN ADDIS

The staff at the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive may be on their way to discovering a new appreciation

for Streamline Moderne. After ditching plans for a costly Toyo Ito-designed building, the institution has

decided to revamp a 1939 printing plant on the planned site, at the intersection of Central and Oxford streets.

Museum director Laurence Rinder told AN that the current plan is to renovate the existing 48,000-square-foot structure and build a new addition that will double its size, giving the institution the added space it needs for a viable expansion. The museum board is expected to vote yea or nay on the plan this month.

"It's really an undiscovered gem, and another great part of the **continued on page 12**

PRESIDIO'S PARADE GROUND GETTING CROWDED

## NEWBIE AT THE POST

The Family Violence Prevention Fund, a nonprofit organization based in San Francisco, broke ground last month on its new \$18 million headquarters at the much-scrutinized Presidio Main Post. The project will be located a few buildings from the Walt Disney Family Museum, which opened in the fall, and just down the road from where the recently scrapped Contemporary Art **continued on page 3**



Seattle's Marshall Foster.

LIZ MARTINI

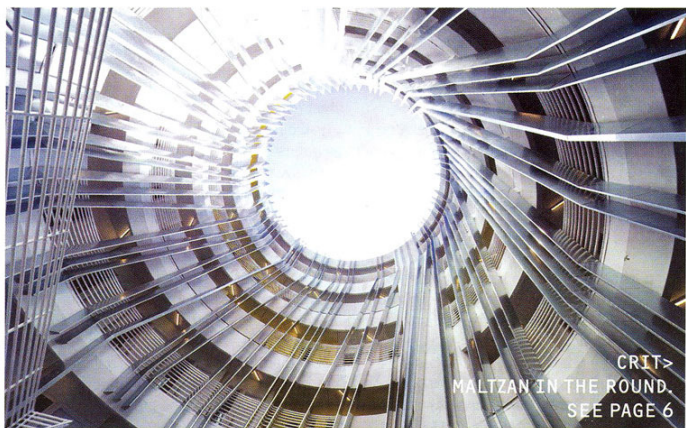
NEW PLANNING DIRECTORS IN SEATTLE, LA COUNTY, PASADENA

## MUSICAL CHAIRS

It's been some time since the West Coast had its last earthquake, but local planning departments recently experienced big tremors. First, Raymond Gastil, Seattle's city planning director since August 2008, resigned on January 28. And on February 1, Richard Bruckner, former director of the Pasadena Planning **continued on page 5**

## SUPER SOURCE ME

DELVE INTO OUR 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL COMPILATION OF RESOURCES, WHERE YOU'LL FIND THE CONTRACTORS, CONSULTANTS, SUPPLIERS, AND FABRICATORS THAT MADE AN'S FAVORITE BUILDINGS OF 2009 STAND UP AND STAND OUT. PAGES 15-20



CRIT> MALTZAN IN THE ROUND. SEE PAGE 6

IVAN BAAN





Clockwise from top left: Rough concrete contrasts with finer finishes in a stairwell; the upper stair's curve is expressed above the residence's living area; thin steel railings add to the understated elegance; the exterior makes a bold statement on Abbot Kinney Boulevard; circular skylights allow the upstairs hallway to glow; a small skylight over the bedroom resembles a Turrell skyspace.

BENNY CHAN

Architect Dennis Gibbens has created a home for himself that is the closest thing to a nest that one could ever find on Venice's swank and hectic Abbot Kinney Boulevard. The project, located on the second and third floors over a Japanese housewares shop, is part of a mixed-use project. Once you walk upstairs from the hubbub of the road, the board-formed, poured-in-place concrete walls provide a textured and substantial shell surrounding a more refined palette of lacquers, stones, mirrored glass,

smooth-troweled stucco, terrazzo, and polished metal.

"I've created my own private bunker up here," said Gibbens. Bunker hardly seems the word for this sophisticated lair. Viewed from the outside, the home's juxtaposition of rough and smooth is hinted at in a facade of alternating gray concrete and white plaster. Inside, the U-shaped second-floor space—which includes a kitchen, sitting room, dining room, and living room—is divided by a glass-enclosed entrance courtyard that cuts into the

middle, drawing light and air into all corners.

The finishes are at once simple, artful, and elegant: a balancing act of the serenely austere and the dynamically modern. Gibbens designed much of the furniture in the formal living room, including a movie screen that the architect made from honeycomb laminate cut in an off-kilter shape reminiscent of Googie modernism. Much of the other furniture was found in some of the top-tier furniture stores on Abbot Kinney itself. A cutout terrace off the living

room opens the cloistered space to the street, if so desired. And most of the utilitarian functions of this floor—closets, a bathroom—are bunched on the south side, leaving the space remarkably uncluttered.

Upstairs rooms continue to offset careful restraint with strategic "wows": a square skylight in the master bedroom that looks like a James Turrell skyspace, a glass floor in the hall that looks down to the living room, glass walls in the guest room that suggest a boutique hotel, and of course a roof deck,

where the walls are high enough to provide privacy but low enough to be open to the sky, the surrounding palm trees, and the lovely sunsets.

The 29-foot-wide house, at about 3,500 square feet, was a labor of love for Gibbens, who was general contractor for much of the work himself to preserve details and save money. The entire ground floor is a mat foundation, a two-foot-thick pad of concrete. Throughout the building, several steel moment frames, relatively disguised, help support the structure,

accompanying a more conventional wood frame. Gibbens said the most challenging part, besides getting the eclectic elements to come together as a whole and casting exposed concrete for the first time, was pouring that concrete so close to adjacent buildings, and calling for a tight gap to complete any form work.

"It was more gratifying than nerve-racking," said Gibbens, of the construction. "It's fun. I like the construction process." And, he added, "I was getting exactly what I wanted." **SL**