



The Chemistry of Architecture

The chemistry of architecture is a beautiful fascination, but do we really understand it? Are we not too eager to ascribe those strange juxtapositions of bits and pieces of the familiar—roofs, gables, garden walls and things for people to peek out of or slip discreetly into—to the reasonable business of being accommodated, sheltered, built-for? It seems though, that we miss a lot of the magic of the creative process when we merely overlay the stated additional games played by the designer or overlay some of our favorite classroom prejudices. So it is that observations of Historic Icons, Philosophical Allusions, Geometric Tricks are there for the picking, but still miss the positive quality of *coincidence* which is somehow related to the inherent quality of *collage*.

That the Morphosis pair of Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi are aware of this mysterious extra territory is given away in a snippet from Mayne's own description of their objectives in the 6th Street House—as searching for the “ability to absorb the idiosyncratic.” You don't have to be much of a cynic, more an open-eyed observer of life to realize that most urban existence in the late twentieth century is the absorption of the idiosyncratic; and just as we expect an engaging novelist or journalist to be able to extract the telling or the quizzical out of the apparent normality of life, and in the same way expect an illustrator or film-maker to lean the eye towards such things, then why not an architect?

We can ponder the fascination that Wittgenstein's one excursion into architecture has for us: not enough to note objectively that a none-too-exceptional modernist structure with some quite straightforward characteristics must be chewed-over from window to window, corner to corner, so as to absorb the (presumed) thoughts and significances and then conclude that, after all, architecture was not *his* language. I believe that the composition of a piece of architecture can develop quite strong narrative lines and layers within *its* language: with the work of Morphosis there are continual clues in their obvious knowledge of, and sometimes fascination with, their clients, which can also be the inspiration. The language is of a special degree of abstraction: unlike the writer, it need not restrict its documentation to that lineality and musical sense of the “digestible” read. Unlike the painter, it is not necessary to summon-up all the forces in a single, memorable image. Succinctness is not necessarily a quality of all good architecture. Only of some.

But the narrative layer is only one. There is the functional.

How marvellous it is to be, at last, far enough away from the period of history where the acknowledgement of function need not involve us in honoring it. An approach to the business of getting people in and out of a building, giving them enough space to do what they must do and then, perhaps as a bit of an indulgence, celebrating some particular commonplace activity—maybe it's collecting books, or keeping cats or having a view of the sea or doing aerobics—with a special altarpiece. From this moment on, the air begins to fill with these collaged absorptions of the idiosyncratic, and dare one say it: the idiosyncracies are deliberately created as well as absorbed.

That special architecture *should* come out of Los Angeles has been one of the excuses for my twenty-year love affair with the city. That this particular repository of the invented world, the dreamed-up world and the instantly summonable environment, should—and must—have its effect upon the local architects is obvious. But my first joyous reactions at seeing the audacities of John Lautner or the cuteness of Lloyd Wright have been progressively overlaid by watching the younger, the *real* Angeles architects. I suspect that to them, the snide dismissals of earlier years and the bright-eyed chasing after toy architecture that is the indulgence of grey Easterners and phased Europeans is an equal avoidance of the issue. A city of such rich cultural mix and girth and such curious overlay of the commonplace issue of drilling for oil or making airplanes or selling software, with quaint lurches into forgotten attempts at escape (usually from the Midwest) that have left baked-up pensioners tapping around their yard as lonely and puzzled as they might be in old Zagreb—what should it really have to offer as its alternative to the Georgian terrace or to the Grands Boulevards or to the bourgeois villa?

Increasingly there seems to be a parallel wish for seriousness and reason as *a priori* to the relaxed absorption of beachtown gambitry. Moreover, this gambitry is, on closer inspection, more an attitude towards hardware than merely the reproduction of forms and techniques borrowed from beach and strip. The portfolio of Los Angeles junk architecture concerns itself with legitimate breakdowns between roof and wall, vegetation and enclosure, tack-on and dig-in, and a most extraordinary attitude

towards the ground plane as befits slide areas and swamps and inhospitable cliffs. From this one can then affect a delicious overlay of any mixture being possible, the creative effect of cutting (in film) with its speed and callousness which, if extrapolated, could have dramatic consequences to the otherwise gentlemanly way in which most architecture concerns itself with cause-and-effect—the “after you Charles” consistencies that can even be felt in Russian Constructivism, if you are familiar with the language of its parts.

The clue is in one of the earliest built works of Morphosis, the “2-4-6-8 House,” a building that sets up a conversation with itself. It is a camera offering a series of peeks out to the flotsam and jetsam of backyard Venice, at once part of it and aloof from it, for the bright paintwork and the sign-like quality of the separated wooden parts makes light of its self-awareness. A schoolmarm finding herself in an ice cream line smiles brightly at first glance, but then she is to be seen peering quizzically through the deliberate frames of (in this case) four sets of spectacles.

Could this selfconsciousness also be a selfpossessedness that must come from two young architects who were spending a great deal of their time as teachers, rationalizing and postrationalizing the issues of architecture as such for other young architects? Few clues can be found from the earlier built work in Tijuana, at least not expressionistically; for there the strong, stark walls and reduced fenestration act only to establish sharply the diagram of the building and its concentration upon the walled rectangle of space that allows itself to be invaded by a house for roughly 50 percent of its space. The only ponderable is the architects’ statement that it is a “straightforward, systematic approach to row housing...required by Chermayeff and Alexander’s classic book *Community and Privacy*. In fact, the Morphosis work never looked as direct and scholarly and (though in Mexico) *European* again. One is fascinated, as one was in seeing Arata Isozaki’s early girls’ school in his home town of Oita, or Gunther Domenig’s teachers’ training college in Graz (before the explosions of the “Z” bank and so-on). These buildings are, all of them, textbook examples of direct planning, and good spaces, and, more significantly, the placing of walls are only where they need to be. It is perhaps our preoccupation with facade (helped along by a generation of critics

keen to find pictorial-verbal icons rather than delve around the more labyrinthine conditions of a building), that concentrates our attention on windows and doors, surfaces and viewable assemblages. These early buildings by highly inventive architects do, in fact, contain the wit of invention and ability to wring out of normal events the stuff of architecture. In all three cases, it will become more and more useful to return and ignore (perhaps) their own irritations with this *direct* and unfashionable work.

Was it in Mexico that the young teachers were able to build directly on a tight budget in a culturally ambiguous territory? Did they manage to work out those same exercises that young English or Dutch architects worked out vis-a-vis le Corbusier via Atelier 5? The section of the Tijuana houses reveals an understanding of light—full light, peered-at light, borrowed light. Without having been there, one senses the quality of coolness, very much allied to this sense of calm and the shielding wall.

What makes the “2-4-6-8” admirable is its concentration upon one key idea and lack of nervousness about this concentration. In the twelve years since, the world of architectural discussion has virtually exploded and a more histrionic mood has taken over, not least inspired by Morphosis’ “uncle,” Frank Gehry. It would be out of character for Mayne or Rotondi to wear their psychological or artistic hearts on their sleeves in the way that Frank can. Yet in his case, the cut and thrust of commercial survival was interwoven amongst a conscious involvement in the artistic milieu of Los Angeles and was at a level of contrast, even rhetoric, that doesn’t now seem necessary to the generation in their late thirties or mid forties. The role of the “new” and loose-limbed school, SCI-ARC (Southern California Institute of Architecture), where Mayne was one of the original teachers and Rotondi was one of the first graduates and is present director, has served their work instead. Having observed them in class as well as in the office, I am struck by the way in which the quizzical attitude towards architectural inheritance can be carried forth from the one to the other. Simple rhetoric or “naughty boy” roles are thus seen as being too simplistic and able to be replaced by layers and layers of criticism and a clarification of discussion so that the point of departure of one of their buildings can be intensively stated. Much of their

energy in the years of the last decade has gone into helping to create, out of a laid-back and sweetly renegade institution, a place where some of the most investigative younger architects are gravitating in order to be intelligently criticized, so their own acidity as critics develops: it has to be self-imposed as well as pedagogically effective. It can lead to selfconsciousness, of course, so that one of their least memorable projects, the Western-Melrose Offices, can remain in the mind as a verbally stated idea for: “the typological nature of walls in order to address both conceptual and practical issues. First, the wall produces a prominent corner for a building on a prominent site. Second, the wall type changes to scale the building to its context. Third, the changing wall refers to the merging of two different types while deferring to existing buildings. Finally, this layered surface is used for sun control by the addition of retractable blinds.” Basically, at this time (1980), they are waiting for the chance really to overlay a series of scalar or recognitive ideas into something larger than a yard house. That Kate Mantilini’s Restaurant or the Cedars Sinai Medical Center can, by their complexity and mandate, rise to the audacity of the brave words of the Western-Melrose, and more, sets up a nagging question.

Too often we can separate the pomposity of academics discussing architecture from the territory of the quick job for the money man. More complexed, we can separate the aspirations of the eager, angry, territorially frustrated young architect from the punch-taking steps of the operational, but still aggressive and good, architect. Very good architects do somehow hold on to it all. Why can’t a corner wall for a developer be an essay in expressionism? Why can’t the demand for rationale made in a seminar be the same demand for rationale directed towards the devoted assistant at twelve o’clock at night? The strength of the Morphosis work of the last eight years is that it has intelligently *rolled* with the academic/intellectual punches of the SCI-ARC experience and allowed the pragmatics of construction and cost limitation to be supporting conditions. As the tide of architectural discussion has turned away from the quasi-historic or the purely rational towards the spatial and the explosive, Morphosis has expanded its system of creative nets into which it can hold several coincident conversations. Of course, the tricky patch was during the time that this sophistication of understanding was building up, yet the jobs themselves remained small.

First smatterings of such a dilemma rest even in the Sedlak House addition. Just down the track from the “2-4-6-8,” it purports “coherent ideal, to emerge conceptually from the contingent topiary.” It is delightful enough as an object, but nobody is fooled by the words; it is almost surely a very small and restricted shell desperately wishing to be spatially as well as nominally as contrapuntal as the description suggests. The carcass (I think for the first time in their work) shifts significantly, but the shift is as much an itch as it is a quote. In a sense, the Flores house expansion finds a more appropriate texture for its conceptual language. The project here is also modest—a mere lateral expansion—and held, more-or-less achieved, in a series of parallel layers of wall. All that intervenes is a drift of stair and toilet intervention: that is all that is needed. An almost copybook exercise, it prefaces the time when the walls can act both as a conversation with each other as layers and as the scenic contrivance for gatherings of idiosyncratic individuals, the clientele of Kate Mantilini’s Restaurant.

In level of sophistication, intensity of programmatic and editorial sense, and academic exercising on a larger scale than previously available, the Lawrence House at Hermosa Beach is the key turning point. It is seized upon by Morphosis as a chance really to set up two component forces that can act upon each other with enough space and enough objectives of recognition to start a real dialogue. There is the object that they describe as the “House” (an asphalt-shingled, gable-roofed structure set symmetrically in the site in memory of a house that once stood in its place), and the “Block”...a rectilinear box that slices through the diagonal, referring to some of the buildings around. When one looks at the plans and walks around the building itself, however, one realizes that this program is but a trigger for the very complex overlay of ideas. There is clearly a heroic spatial focus in the form of the half-circle shaft halfway along the north side, and it attracts much of the staircase activity. It has neoclassical aspirations, but only up to a point, for it opens off an alley and it has only wayward relationships to the principal rooms (which are anyway on a different axis). The mixture of rhetoric and calm, heroics and nonchalance, are to be found all over the building. A most revealing diagram is the *unfolded elevation* which clearly illustrates a most

mature ability to control window series without becoming pious. The house is firm and centralized but has introspective fenestration, whereas the block is extrospective and its fenestration—makes a total diagrammatic statement. This must be read as a serial composition in which the total rectangle is directly related to the window opening—in analysis very similar to the game played by Richard Meier in his controlled requotation of Asplund's Villa Snellman at his Frankfurt Museum.

The framing of views, the threading of routes through and beyond the ceremonial shaft, and a straightforward attitude towards the big, useable volumes as well, make this one of the most urbane villas of recent times. In Hermosa Beach of all places!

It is at this point that Mayne and Rotondi's sense of theater as well as their obvious enjoyment of more cerebral architectural conversations becomes apparent. They will talk about the Lawrences, who are obviously a sophisticated enough couple to provide plenty of constituent material for the layered idiosyncrasies of family commonplaces and conscious activities to be overlaid. The house can be worn as a party piece or it can inhabited as an elegant beach house. I guess, should the need arise, that it could be used as a series of temporary retreats or assertions of different moods or postures that always do occur in family life. It is rare for a modern building of its size to have the quality of comprehensibility along with so many nooks and crannies. Its greyness does not appeal to me, though it probably has its own buzz for Angeles folk; to a European who sees enough grey it feels that it could just as happily been white and, as an excuse, the cartographic discussion of its facades could have been even more clearly spelled out. The galvanized steel and the tack-on felt tiles have the last say for other reasons, of course; they are the children of the time, of the budget, and of the deliberate wish to avoid the danger of prissiness which would never occur to one in a European museum park but might be terribly wrong in a California beach town. Here then is an essay in raunch as well nonchalance. The academics have come out of hiding and are becoming as streetwise as Uncle (Frank Gehry).

Concurrent with this work were the many projects that became known through publications, though never built, so there began to be a recognition of the Morphosis ethos through their marvellous models and drawings. The models in particular have a distinctive characteristic of being bas-reliefs in the antique mode. I refuse to believe that this well worked-over patina of paint is not a strange instinctive grab at a quality that one has experienced once or twice inside a Roman villa or in sniffing at the original drawings for the thesis works in the 19th century Ecole des Beaux-Arts—some feeling of status mixed with solidity; some quality of the *established*—in tactile form. One can ponder this instinctive need if you come from Los Angeles and wish to be part of the creation of a serious architecture for that town, of a good architecture—to be *in* the hillside, to be *of* it, rather than sliding off the side and rolling away, to be *hewn* instead of always being tacked together. Perhaps it is in reverse, the same instinct that inspired so many twentieth century architects of imagination in Northern Europe to crave for glass, for the glimpse of the sun, to eschew the tyranny of the dank wall and the solid column. So it is quite legitimate to analyze drawings, models, and the deliberate stylization of their elegant distortions in order to pry open just *what* the taste and aspirations of the designers might be. The models can be read as art pieces in their own right. They can be read as distillations of the analytical technique of layering (and some of the models are very deliberately set up in this way). They can be read as invitations to note the primary intentions of the building before being side-tracked by the context or the built materials. Out of it all has come a very astute ability with walls. No longer mere dividers of space or lines of force, they increasingly become musical combs where the interval between piers can be infinitely and subtly tuned. Another analogy might be that of a rack or of a loom where the existence of the spatial and "musical" interval is awaiting the insertion (or even counterpoint) of additional elements. Clearly, in some cases, these elements can be people themselves. By the time of the design of the Crawford house (the late 1980s) this accumulated method of modelling, combing, space-interval implosion, or whatever, has led to a peculiarly personal architectural mode. Moreover, it is one that can be put out in space and turned as the Crawford project enjoys showing.

The business of discussing architecture, explaining architecture, refining the discussion, refining the model, explaining the model, and *then* but only then, stretching and twisting the methodology seems to be the accumulative process by which the later Morphosis work is so assured and effectively grounded.

It is the very opposite of "knee-jerk" architecture.

In an unguarded moment, Michael Rotondi admitted that "young people have a sense of frustration and powerlessness, and there are times that I don't feel that different... because we too are looking for how to express ourselves, our work has a quality of questioning, of risk-taking...." Admittedly, this was said a-propos the Market Street Restaurant and thus seems to summarize a frenetic period in their development. The necessary requirement of a restaurant to show-off could also be a nagging irony in the minds of such architects. At Market Street, it is necessary to set up a totally artificial range of atmospheres, analogous to the artificiality of the traditional theater stage, and somewhat in that tradition they established a "hot room" and a "cool" room. In the first, the geometry and iconography arrest and disorientate; in the second, they reassure once more. Reference and incident in one, near blandness in the other. Studio discussions can be exercised in such a restaurant. The restaurateur, by the way, can, if he wishes, bask in the knowledge that some of the great *experiential* leaps of the twentieth century have been made in restaurants. Imagine the bumptious diners of Berlin as they had to avoid glancing up at Wœurzbach and Belling's extraordinary ceiling (it's one thing to buy a neat little Finsterlin drawing, another thing to eat under it). By 1926 the rhetoric was out in the open, and even the cultural ambiguity of a Strasbourger must have been sorely stretched by van Doesburg's Aubette. Yet most unlikely of all is to imagine the stiff bourgeoisie of Stockholm finding themselves in a gossamer-loose cage such as Asplund's Paradise restaurant at the 1930 Exposition. These examples all went far beyond the accepted band of tolerance of their city and society at the time.

Yet, here we are in Los Angeles. All is tolerated. All those dreams have been put on celluloid. The Brown Derby is a thirty year old conversation if not more. The house developed in the yard of a tolerant intellectual is one thing, but

the marketing of a space that you can chat about to your friends is another. I dwell upon the contradictory instinct that must have pressed in on Morphosis to some purpose: The need to show off; the wish to avoid beachtown gimmickry; the doubt perhaps that their accumulated vocabulary could be too obscure, even too tasteful; the reasoned instinct that knows that it must be possible to transfer qualities of scale, progression, hierarchy, and *then* dramatic incident somehow into a very public place where contemplation as such is not the mode.

Kate Mantilini's is the convincing response.

The strategy is of treating the existing building shell as a cage and then layering a new box within the cage—but much more. An almost ecclesiastical device emerges in their major work. The heroic shaft of the Lawrence house was an anticipation. The pillar game at Market Street another anticipation. But it requires a gesture as essentially theatrical and audacious as the introduction of the orrery object to set it all off. What we have here is a chapel or church dedicated to meeting and eating. The space is large enough to allow the swung geometry to hang there *in its place*: at the necessary position in the hierarchy of the architecture. Hung, swung, and essentially *commenting* upon the primary conditions rather than fragmenting them. The play of light is beautiful, the large mural is essential, the mystery of the orrery disappearing up into the sky is referred to by the authors as an "interpretive" project.

It seems though, that with all the accumulated wit of play, this building is powerful because it consciously or subconsciously understands the power of objects to set up just the right amount of play between themselves. In order for this to work they have to be elegantly balanced and then *telling*, and not just elegant. The pressed-out and wrapped bas-relief wall, the spider-like altarpiece, the tweak and tantalization of the occasional voluptuous surface, the usefulness of the absolutely regular and ordinary table layout as a regulator—put this all together and one is reminded of the balanced apparatus of the basilican church affected by Gothic tricks. Light, curvaceous occasions, layers of pierced wall—it's all there.

A serious restaurant might seem a curious artifact on the main street of Beverly Hills, but it is a question of timing as well. Just at the point where Morphosis might have been getting most frustrated with the tribulations and limitations of designing restaurants (a whole trail of them and all of them successful), this project emerges to vindicate the whole effort. Did they consciously attack it in a different way, or was it just a question of scale? Anyway, it remains in one's mind as having that enduringly European atmosphere of Oslo's Theatercafeen or the old Coupole in Montparnasse—a response to the essentially theatrical nature of meeting and eating downtown.

Though two years separate the completion of Kate's and the Cancer Center for the Cedars-Sinai hospital, it seems essential to discuss them together. The mood with which one enters each could not, of course, be more different. The one with relaxed anticipation, the other with nervous apprehension. The one tripping casually off the street, the other disappearing down into a hole in the ground. Yet, in each, one is immediately struck by the role of the major space and the iconic object. Whether intended purely as a decoy or a focus, the play structure has a clear architectonic role in the Cancer center as did the orrery in Kate's. The comparison continues: the side walls of the restaurant are an essay in fragility and ambiguity; in the Center they are an excavation into the earth, moreover, an earth that we know contains some private and probably scary goings-on. Yet there is a certain matter-of-factness about the latter building that is engaging—the use of decoration at the focal points of corridors, the use of plate glass to prevent excessive secrecy and mystery where it would oppress even further. The clever utilization of such natural light as is available, so that you don't in the end feel that claustrophobic. There are 45 feet of height for the layering of the main space walls and the great deluge of light to be appreciated. From the plans we can trace another sophistication, whereby the swung geometries are acting as introductory conditions, "mouths," but then the inner conditions settle down to necessary foursquare hierarchies. In this building, too, the role of attached or dangled elements, such as lamps, arrive at a degree of finesse combined with *repetition* that inevitably recalls Otto Wagner's Post Office Savings Bank in Vienna. A clue, perhaps, to the issue of imaginatively speculative cities: only now can Los Angeles in general, and architects such as Morphosis in particular, have thrown out enough

strands of theatrical or literate design for them to be shaken down, structured to a degree, and set up as a new set of references.

In other words, the relative calmness and maturity of this piece reassures one that it can offer a total vocabulary of response.

In the light of that, the most recent houses and smaller projects become quite relaxed. But never boring.

Thom Mayne describes the design of the 6th Street project (a house) as continuing their "investigation of the impacted building; a metaphor for veils and walls that we use to protect ourselves from the world and the secrets and mysteries that are so much part of the human condition." Mayne's written descriptions of the work are often very poetic in themselves, and the available drawings push out into a twitching, restless condition where odd pieces of machine and roof and frame and stair are all exploding off the carcass. So not only is the impacted cage evolving, but is (at least theoretically) engaged in a wrestling match with specially invited parts. The orrery and the play structure from the larger works have their progeny here, but seem to be multiplying. Along with the assured quality of the overall carcass there is the restlessness of these small parts. At this moment, one starts to question the role of the model. If the eventual building feels like that object, it will have the compositional resolution of, say, Frank Lloyd Wright's better houses or of a De Stijl piece. But if the container can be persuaded to accept and ignite a series of restless metal parts, what then? Is there a robot or a ghost or a strange fluttering bat awaiting the next generation of Morphosis houses?

This activity level spreads to the whole concept where the Crawford house for Montecito is concerned, though here it seems to concern their favorite, and most developed, territory: the combs have now become staves as well as sheets of sound (in musical terms). An analysis of a piece of rich scoring might throw up something similar, where the interval of one coloration is hung in front of the interval of another and the melody line swung through. They offer their own program: "Arithmetic progression of pylons (totems), structure and walls determine the basic elements of the architecture. The same progression, but in reverse order, determines the size and character of the negative spaces between the elements."

A first glance at some of the drawn diagrams suggests a sideways observation of the explosive effect of Daniel Libeskind and his followers; and an academic conclusion might be that the Libeskind effect upon many of us is to encourage us to engage more relaxedly in the scattering as well as the layering of idiosyncratic series than we might have done before. Yet unlike Libeskind, the Morphosis partnership is quite able to *anchor* and at the same time *explode*. The key is a glance at the straightforward upper and lower level plans of this house. The existence of the arc wall as a kind of lasso is very engaging; the skimming quality of many of the marks made by the parts is captured in the dismembered model. Once again, we know that they are up to something *additional* to the known vocabulary—this time to do with lightness.

We can by now itemize some typical conditions of this architecture: the comb, the implosion, the church, the icon, the dangle, the shift across space between combs, the dig-in.

In a conclusive homing-in, I prefer to look back three or more years to a house, Venice III, which one simply enjoys for itself. It wears its heart well outside its sleeve: the restless wires and counterweights and sails are nonetheless resolved back onto the vertebrae of the house. The swung double-carcass that by now one has come to expect in Morphosis's work is pitched just at the right scale and right amount of incident. The bookshelves really are a celebration of the activity of the inhabitant, but remain also as an absorbent element; even the whiff of neoclassicism is relaxedly worn: as the imprint of the two-tented pyramids falls down to the ground it is picked up on a screen at one end and a dais at the other.

It is a building which is prepared to quote several of the parts of other Morphosis work: the galvanized faces from Lawrence, much of the "feel" of Mantilini (even though such a small house), even recollections of the earlier Venice backyard houses; but there is something additionally elegant about it. I am amused, by the way, that magazines very rarely show the adjoining bungalow, for the juxtaposition of the two (used as one building anyway) is not that bad. The real architectural statement is the *stronger* because they exist together. The ramshackle quality of Venice-as-found is lovingly and simultaneously regarded *and* disregarded. The schoolmarm has taken off

her glasses and begun (almost coquettishly) to play with her companions. A shrill laugh and a few muttered literary quotations are uttered (of such a level of cultural elevation that they could not possibly be understood by the crowd) but said without bitchiness. Then, finally, the girlish revelation of bare shoulders. Something about this house suggests that from now on, Morphosis is happy with its literature: very precise with its scaling, and able to resist the overloading of certain nooks and crannies with too many decoys; naughty enough to put the most volatile elements on the *outside* of the building, and relate them (if they wish) to the most straightforward part of the plan.

We are back, are we not, to the layering of the idiosyncratic?

It would seem that in this instance, there was the ideal client. Not just a sponge for witty gambits but a true fan. Bright enough to ask creative questions. This was probably much in mind when the design was made.

In the next phase, a whole scale of activity remains to be explored. The urban scale projects for Hermosa Beach and other California locations are more diagrammatically simple than one might expect. Yet Crawford is surely a model for an urban-scale intervention? Most recently, the Berlin architectural milieu was surprised (and not a little humbled) by the directness, and at the same time the poise of the "wall" project—a comment upon social interaction, a comment upon expressionistic directness, the most mature architecture to come out of Los Angeles since the Eames House, in a way with the same gravity, reminiscent of the 1960's as a proposition and as a form, yet utterly fresh in its manipulation and clarity.

There is now a sonority as well as a wit abroad in Santa Monica. The sonority has come as a result of their constant *consideration* of architecture, coming, as I have suggested, as much from their ability as critics as from the day-to-day office discussions. The wit has come from a quartet of extremely amused eyes blinking lovingly at the idiosyncracies of such a quaint city.