



## ARCHITECTURE INDUSTRY THE L.A. TEN

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FROM 1977 TO 1978, THE RELATIVELY UNKNOWN Los Angeles architect Frank Gehry enclosed a nondescript 1920s two-story pink bungalow on the corner of Twenty-Second Street and Washington Avenue in Santa Monica within a staged fortress of industrial “debris” of “outrageous appearance” that, in the words of *Progressive Architecture (P/A)* magazine, “distort[ed] and shift[ed] perspective while dramatizing views” (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Gehry’s use of materials reminiscent of “light industrial buildings”—chain-link fencing, plywood, and aluminum siding—according to *P/A* magazine, “violate[d]” the “conventions” of “domestic architecture.” Recalling a troubling image of industry set within a suburban context, Gehry’s “carefully ramshackle construction,” *P/A* argued, “summon[ed]... painful remembrances of the built environment the profession ha[d]... *not* been able to control.” “Stripped, then swathed in tin clothes,” forming a “tougher-than-nails jagged carapace of aluminum siding,” Gehry’s industrialized shell protected the delicate nature of residential life. Proving more than a simple representation of a confused world inhabiting a collage city, or the haphazard play of cheap industrial materials constructed with inane humor, or irony (as other critics and architects have surmised),<sup>2</sup> the “tension posed by the emergence of the pink house from the jagged shell,” as *P/A* well observed, expressed domesticity in a state of extreme vulnerability.

With new industry expanding into older residential communities and new residences sprawling into outmoded industrial territories, normative separation between housing and industry in Los Angeles by the 1970s was becoming blurred. Thus, through building forms of disfigured, Janus-faced expression, Gehry, alongside a group of younger L.A. architects at the time, seemed to confront, if not critique, the impact industry was having on the changing physical and psychological character of the city, among other ideas. Although it is uncomfortable in retrospect for this group of L.A. architects to admit to any kind of cultural regionalism embedded in their formative work, together their designs posed a highly responsive critical assessment of urbanity that radically confronted the roles of domesticity and industry within an evolving postmodern metropolis.

FIGURE 1.

**Frank O. Gehry and Associates (1962–2001).**  
Gehry Residence (1977–78), Santa Monica, 1979.  
Photo by Tim Street-Porter.

### THE L.A. TEN

Characterized by an expansive network of manufacturing, industrial, and warehouse communities situated alongside trucking facilities, ports, rail yards, freeways, waterways, and endless parking lots, Los Angeles's infrastructure supports a sublime manufactured landscape that has had a powerful influence on the cultural imagination of a generation of postmodern architects.<sup>3</sup> Postmodernism, in general, had a radicalizing impact on architects who aimed to challenge the lack of historical precedent demonstrated in the didactic industrial building forms of the modernist period. Exemplifying the postmodern shift away from the more unequivocal forms of modern space and organization characterized by Fordist assembly-line systems and factories of mass production was the work of this young generation of L.A. architects experimenting with industrial sites and the relationship of those sites to domesticity.<sup>4</sup> Similar to the fracturing of large Hollywood film studios from the 1950s to the 1970s into disperse production and distribution facilities, such spaces of outmoded modernist forms of mass production were converted into more fragmented, diverse, and flexible spatial operations. These L.A. architects invented new forms of postmodern space while repositioning ubiquitous industrial materials such as concrete, aluminum, chain-link, and rigid container sheet (RCS) products in rebellious and innovative ways.

By 1980, Los Angeles proved an incubator for experimental post-Fordist practices, which critic and writer Olivier Boissière surmised to be a movement surrounding the L.A. Ten—a loosely affiliated cadre of architects associated with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), formatively including Frederick Fisher, Gehry, Craig Hodgetts, Coy Howard,



FIGURE 2.  
L.A. architects at Venice Beach, left to right:  
Frederick Fisher, Robert Mangurian, Eric Owen Moss,  
Coy Howard, Craig Hodgetts, Thom Mayne, and  
Frank Gehry, 1980.  
Photo by Ave Pildas.

Robert Mangurian, Thom Mayne, Eric Owen Moss, James Stafford, Thane Roberts, and Michael Rotondi (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> These architects exhibited their work locally at the Architecture Gallery in Venice Beach and hosted a series of lectures at SCI-Arc that garnered local attention through sensational write-ups by John Dreyfuss of the *Los Angeles Times*. Affiliation with this group ebbed and flowed, and later included Neil Denari, Ming Fung, Franklin Israel, Wes Jones, Eugene Kupper, and Michele Saeë.<sup>6</sup>

Tim Street-Porter, primarily a photographer and an important champion for this emerging group, notoriously deemed Gehry to be the “Father of Them All,” for not only was Gehry the most mature in age but his Santa Monica house of 1977–78 arguably initiated the aesthetic and material direction for their burgeoning postmodern style.<sup>7</sup> Although other formative members of the L.A. Ten were equally active during the 1970s—for example, Mayne and Rotondi of Morphosis, like Gehry, investigated corrugated aluminum materials when they designed and built their Delmer Residence from 1976 to 1977 (fig. 3)—none of this work garnered the same international attention as that of Gehry, who a decade later was heralded as one of the most formative deconstructivist architects of the twentieth-century.<sup>8</sup>

For better or worse, “deconstructivism” became the official label applied to this school of L.A. architects, for certainly as early as 1980, *de-construction* was a noun unwittingly used to describe Gehry’s fragmented designs.<sup>9</sup> It was not, however, until 1988 that Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson, in their exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), first associated deconstruction, the literary movement, with the contemporary field of architecture design.<sup>10</sup> Hoping to encapsulate and understand a new global form of innovative design practice and package it to an international, interdisciplinary audience, the deconstructivist exhibition at MoMA included several mid- to late-1980s projects by the New York and European architects Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, Wolf Prix, and Bernard Tschumi alongside Gehry’s designs from Los Angeles. So as to avoid Gehry’s appearing too distant from these later deconstructivist designers, the Gehry house was redated “1977–87” in the exhibition fact sheet and the catalog, in effect glossing over the preceding decade of postmodern L.A. architecture that Gehry had already contributed.<sup>11</sup>

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, the L.A. Ten (sometimes referred to as the Santa Monica Group or the L.A. School) experimented with local opportunities, demonstrating innovation that had very little, if anything, to do with deconstruction, the literary movement. More earnestly, on the Westside of Los Angeles, these young architects took advantage of a relative canvas for experimentation created by the detritus left in the wake of the oil, manufacturing, and aerospace industries in and around Playa del Rey, Venice Beach, and Culver City that deflated land values and attracted a strong local art community amid a casual and liberal beach culture. If by the 1920s, Hollywood had produced a fertile environment of sunshine, opportunity, talent, and land value for the film industry to attain critical mass, then by the 1970s,

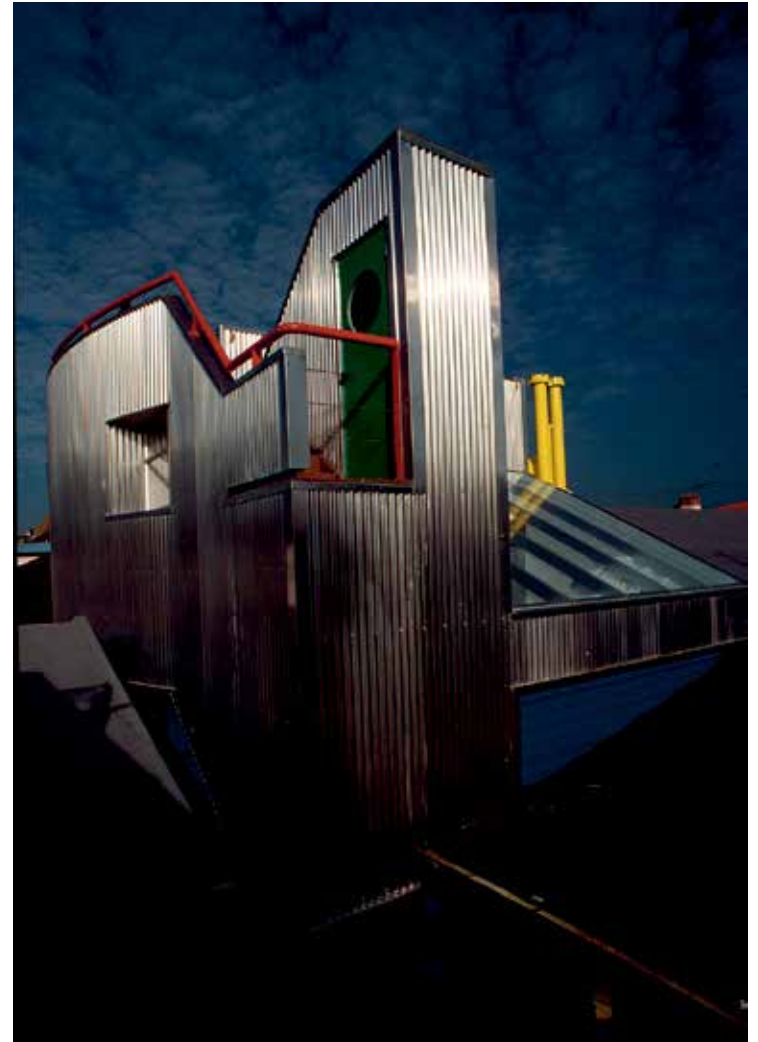


FIGURE 3.

**Morphosis (1979–).**  
Delmer Residence (1976–77), Venice Beach, 1977.  
Photo by Daniel Zimbaldi.

the Westside offered a similarly compelling geographical, political, cultural, and economic landscape. Los Angeles supported the birth of an emerging architecture industry that was catapulted to fame in the 1980s through the powerful reach of international media and an association with the East Coast and European deconstructivist movements in architecture.<sup>12</sup>

The official breakout project for the L.A. Ten proved to be Gehry's house, which posed a character truly unlike anything Gehry had done before. Prior to the late 1970s, Gehry was predominantly a modernist whose domestic work, similar to that of architects Joseph Esherick and Charles Moore of Northern California, had formally used shedlike roof forms with creatively exposed interior wood structures that elegantly conformed to the natural rural topography. Expressing taut surfaces that carefully extruded the floor plan clear to the roof, these modern buildings produced simple figures through clear and appropriate, if imaginative, uses of industrial materials typically found in agricultural buildings, storage facilities, warehouses, and barns. Gehry,

for the most part, remained reservedly modern prior to the construction of his Santa Monica house. The clashing corner skylights, angular windows, and canted walls used in his home—reminiscent of the precarious angular spaces of Robert Wiene's expressionist film *Dr. Caligari's Cabinet* (1920)—constructed a new perspective on architecture, one in which industry was seen crashing headfirst into domestic life.

The Ellen and Jay McCafferty Studio, designed and built by Coy Howard in San Pedro from 1979 to 1980, most explicitly recognized the same latent need as the Gehry Residence to respond to the onslaught of industry impacting everyday life in Los Angeles. Reacting most specifically to the ecology of the San Pedro port only blocks away, Howard's renovation of this three-story home presented a staged gabled facade armored with shiny new RCS aluminum siding. A stern material image was posed to the street facing the port, only to be countered by a lyrical series of variegated window systems beside an asymmetrical line of fenestration that broke up the symmetrical window pattern (fig. 4). As one critic described at the time, the McCafferty Studio exploited "jarring juxtapositions and formal incompleteness to create a sense of wonder and mystery" through eroding elements that suggest "an enigmatic sense of 'abandonment and rehabilitation' to relate to the tough and dilapidated character of the area."<sup>13</sup> The McCafferty Studio was artistically rendered with an industrialized skin to contextualize domesticity within the neighboring port infrastructure, if not to harmonize with it.

The Gagosian Studio (built 1980–81), by Hodgetts and Mangurian of Studio Works Architects; the Lawrence Residence (1981–84), by Mayne and Rotondi of Morphosis; and the Culbertson Residence, or Petal House (1982–84), by Moss also presented similarly stark, if aggressive, industrial exteriors to confront otherwise seemingly harsh urban sites (figs. 5–7). However, unlike Howard's more normative contextualism, the Lawrence Residence and Petal House hardly warranted their extreme industrial facades; they were located on fairly provincial streets adjacent to single-family homes or apartments. Predominantly drawing views toward the top floor, these houses effectively

FIGURE 4.  
Coy Howard and Company, Architects (ca. 1977–).  
Ellen and Jay McCafferty Studio (1979–80),  
San Pedro, 2010.  
Photo by Orhan Ayyüce.

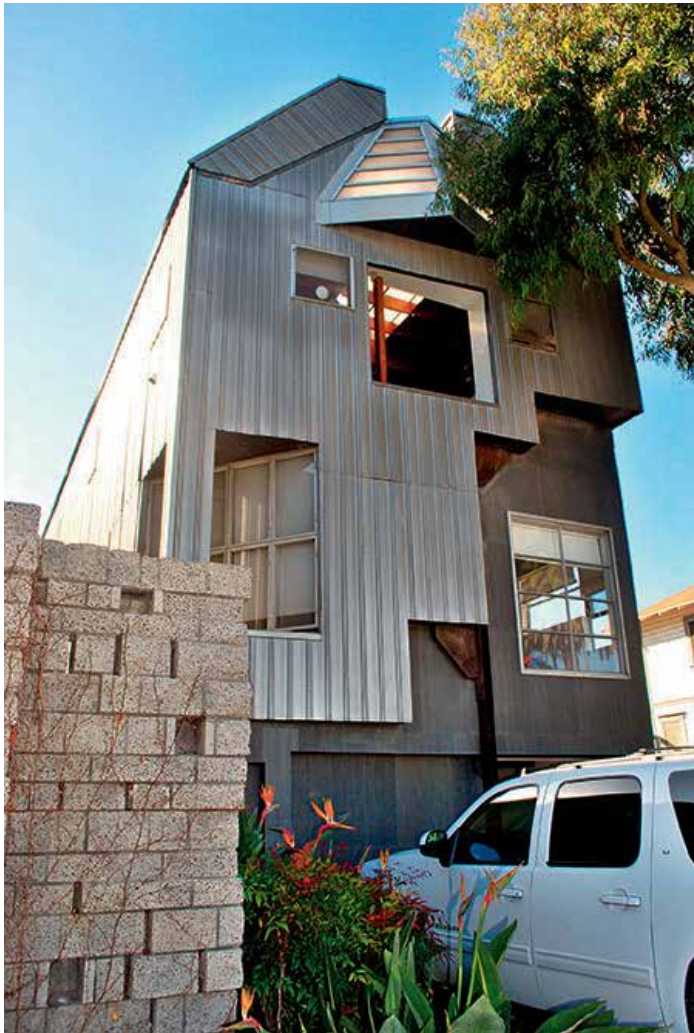




FIGURE 5.  
**Studio Works Architects (1969–84).**  
Gagosian Studio (1980–81), Venice Beach, 1980.  
Photo by Robert Mangurian.

FIGURE 6.  
**Morphosis (1979–).**  
Lawrence Residence (1981–84), Venice Beach, 1984.  
Photo by Peter Aaron.

FIGURE 7.  
**Eric Owen Moss Architects (1973–).**  
Culbertson Residence (Petal House; 1982–84),  
West Los Angeles, 1984.  
Photo by Tim Street-Porter.

turned their backs to the residential street life, as if in response to a more dehumanizing landscape than was actually there. The Petal House, for example, had a roof that peeled apart into four eccentric petals that made way for a rooftop pool while misappropriating fixtures from the marine industry—railings, light fixtures, and ladders—outside of any meaningful context, ultimately transforming an existing midcentury two-story wood-frame tract home in West Los Angeles into a quirky postmodern piece of art. With asphalt roof shingles adapted similarly to those used on Morphosis’s 2-4-6-8 House (1978) sheathing the facade and steel rebar surrounding the residence as reconstituted fence and gate materials, the Petal House ceased to be a suburban tract house per se and instead, similar to the Lawrence Residence, supported a dystopian view of an industrialized future yet to come. As Moss argued at the time, “careful effort was made to understand and extend the essential qualities of both the existing house and the immediate neighborhood,” where the house served as a “counter-point to the tract vocabulary.”<sup>14</sup> Culturally specific, it radically poked fun at the standard postwar suburban housing condition, here riffing on the fact that this house was located almost too close to the Santa Monica (10) Freeway to function as a quiet suburban home. The city, with its extreme kinds of infrastructure, posed a new ecological condition, one in which industry was imagined as expanding cheek by jowl with residential life, producing a new hybridized paradigm: the postmodern industrial-domestic urban form.

Able to seamlessly operate between varied building types and settings, both industrial and domestic, Moss had garnered a keen understanding of Los Angeles’s evolving urban character from one of his earliest commissions, a thirteen-thousand-square-foot office building and warehouse at 1140 South Main Street in the Garment District (fig. 8). Presented with an enormous opportunity to rethink the urbanity of a typical Los Angeles industrial neighborhood, Moss recognized how the local conditions were “very introverted

FIGURE 8.

**Eric Owen Moss Architects (1973-).**  
Morgenstern Warehouse (1977-79), Garment District,  
Los Angeles, 1979.  
Photo by Daniel Zimbaldi.



and defensive”; the industrial buildings were “mostly masonry and mostly barred up.” In somewhat satirical response, he thought to innervate this barren industrial neighborhood with what he described as a “conceptual hypodermic to the life of the street.”<sup>15</sup> Bringing a touch of art to an otherwise hard-edged neighborhood (and possibly paying homage to the Centre Pompidou in Paris, completed by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano that same year), Moss created an artful composition he described tongue in cheek as “utility exhibitionism.”<sup>16</sup> As the warehouse was visible from both nearby office towers and the city street, Moss painted bright yellow patterns on the roof and facade, and he creatively positioned industrial ventilators, register grills, conduit lines, meters, lights, mechanical ducts, and signage to ornament the building. Moss’s industrial motifs served not only to inspire a critique of the banality of normative industry but also to entice a new clientele to occupy these outmoded industrial territories.

Becoming the exemplar of an emerging postmodern urban aesthetic, described locally at the time as “industrial chic,” Moss took advantage of the opportunities produced by a shift in economic practices in the workforce to popularize a new architectural language.<sup>17</sup> By cutting, opening, and operating within failing manufacturing territories, Moss formed a new hybridized aesthetic: one that was both institutional and domestic and that appealed, as he said at the time, to a “new proletariat—going from punch-press industry to computer industry.” At a series of urban sites in and around downtown and particularly in Culver City, where a new digital-film and media-tech community was thriving as a condition of an evolving post-Fordist studio industry, Moss created “funky atmosphere[s]” with “witty stuff going on in the architecture” that tantalized and made more palatable the mundane reality of going to work among old abandoned warehouses. For this “new proletariat” service industry, Moss staged dynamic urban settings that provided fashionable, casually domestic style and character, creating workplaces where one might feel more at home wearing a cool T-shirt and jeans.

Culver City, in many ways, still exemplifies this evolving industrial-domestic condition where outmoded factories are next to affordable working-class neighborhoods located among an expanding film industry; together they provide the setting for many of Moss’s best interventions. Over the years in and around Hayden Street, Moss experimented with reconstructing industrial environments that at one time were vacant and fairly unsafe, only to become the experimental centers for not only Moss’s own artistic and architectural expertise but also a thriving new high-tech-media business culture. Moss’s most important commission within this emerging industry was the reconfiguration of a group of five warehouses formerly used for plastics manufacturing at 8522 National Boulevard, which he turned into a “hip” work space. In over sixty thousand square feet of available area owned by Frederick Norton Smith, Moss made a series of interventions that appealed to graphic design, computer software, hardware, and music companies interested in an industrial space transformed through creative and artistic uses of fairly standard building materials (glass, aluminum, wood, concrete, and various metals) that suggested a new and “edgy” industrialized aesthetic.<sup>18</sup>

Such post-Fordist film and media-tech communities fostered a new architectural expression, which Franklin Israel, an architect and faculty member at UCLA working along lines similar to Moss’, was able to develop into a complex proportional and material sensibility with very fashionable high-industrial style. One of Israel’s most significant works, the studio for Limelight Productions, for example, delivered strong architectural qualities of light, color, and spatial materiality through the use of a design aesthetic reminiscent of





FIGURE 9.

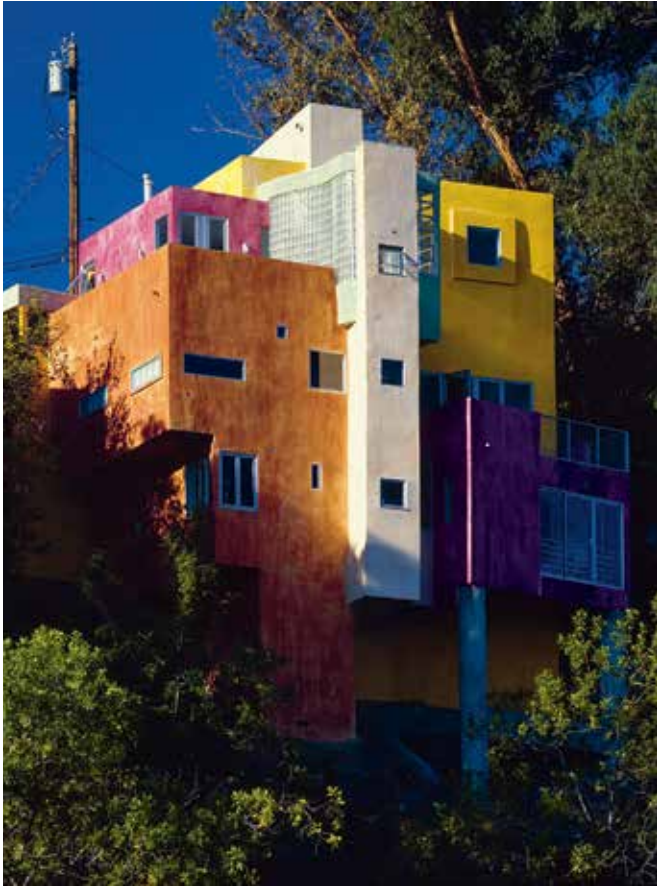
**Franklin Israel (American, 1945–96).**

Limelight Productions (completed 1991), Los Angeles, 1991.  
Photo by Grant Mudford.

Rudolph Schindler’s angular, tatami-inspired proportional systems (fig. 9). Israel, perhaps more than any other L.A. Ten architect, demonstrated the region’s legacy of technological and formal innovation and its emerging “California-fusion” style. In his Limelight Productions design, Israel advanced a new palette of materials and methods—ripping, tilting, bending, and folding brightly stained or naturally finished plywood materials and aggregating them with metals, Italian plaster, glass, and fiberglass to give sensational atmospheric character to his building. In keeping with the rhythms of a high-pressure 24/7 media culture, Israel’s diverse series of fragmented formal and material techniques were lit up during the day and at night, creating a high-design image and aesthetic desired by film industry professionals within the space of a contemporary administrative network. By dividing the original Hollywood warehouse into a progressive clustering of office and in-house consulting units, Israel developed a more fluidly organized, flexibly divided, and readily adaptable workplace.

As Gehry observed, Israel possessed the personal and political skills necessary to work within the film community.<sup>19</sup> Inspired by “the products and personalities of ‘The Industry,’” Israel created staged environments that expressed the tensions between the media image of L.A. as an urban car culture of unbounded freedom and the contradictory reality of Los Angeles as a city of fortified homes, gated communities, and closed office parks.<sup>20</sup> L.A. architecture for Israel, as it had been for Gehry, revealed this Janus-faced media image of a city that celebrates creative freedom within the confines of high-profile, heavily guarded, pristine residential neighborhoods set among gritty industrial territories.

In developing a fashionable style based on proportion, materials, and fragmentation, these post-modern L.A. architects challenged the artistic and cultural assumptions embedded in traditional modern approaches to industry and its components, setting off a new avant-garde aesthetic. As such, “industrial chic” came to be desired by a very high-end, artistically oriented clientele for their Westside and Hollywood homes, almost counterintuitively to their otherwise privileged upper-class lifestyles. For instance, similar to Israel’s designs, Hodgetts + Fung’s Viso House (1990), in the Hollywood Hills, fragmented and reconfigured the spaces of the typical modern residence through a cacophonous arrangement of multicolored interlocking spatial units (fig. 10). Commanding views were choreographed between still moments upon interior landings, balconies, and rooms and then seamed together along a path of circulation. Such creative spatial arrangements generated the effect of a moving filmic narrative that remained hidden from street view behind a stark, virtually windowless, stucco box facade. The glamour of the movie industry found architectural translation in the internal psychological spaces of a new form of industrial-domestic architecture.



Inspired by perhaps edgier forms of L.A. industry outside Hollywood culture, Moss's quite stunning Lawson-Westen Residence, built in Brentwood, housed domesticity in a large industrial drum similar to the conical central figure of his 8522 National building, or perhaps more an aerospace fuselage. Client Linda Lawson placed her trust in Moss: "When we walked into the National building that Eric renovated in Culver City, I knew that if Eric could transform an abandoned old warehouse... Eric could create a house that would reflect our own beliefs, attitudes, aesthetics."<sup>21</sup> With the clients accepting, if not desiring, the image of industry for their new home, Moss was free to apply a number of formally based geometric explorations (similar to the earliest postmodern methodologies of Peter Eisenman in his House series)—a conical surface, cylindrical shape, and spiraling stair—to form intricate spatial figures appropriate to the complexities of postmodern life (fig. 11).

The interior of the Lawson-Westen Residence provided a convoluted network of spaces that Moss sheathed within an unapproachably solid concrete facade—a powerful industrial image to confront an otherwise pleasant suburban neighborhood. Recalling the heavy industrial construction typically unimaginable along this beatific, tree-lined street of Brentwood, the concrete silo and harsh facade with a touch of humor

FIGURE 10.

**Hodgetts + Fung Design and Architecture (1984-).**  
Rear facade of Viso House (completed 1990),  
Hollywood, 1990.  
Photo by Tim Street-Porter.

FIGURE 11.

**Eric Owen Moss Architects (1973-).**  
Lawson-Westen Residence (1988-93), Brentwood, 1993.  
Photo by Tom Bonner.



FIGURE 12.  
**Eric Owen Moss Architects (1973–).**  
 Interior view of the Lawson-Westen Residence (1988–93),  
 Brentwood, 1993.  
 Photo by Tom Bonner.

elicited curiosity, criticism, and debate. The brushed stainless steel details, the carefully constructed concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls, and the guarded concrete facade were all counterbalanced in jest with an obliquely placed corner window, curved roofs with cylindrical and castlelike forms, and a cut-off conical structure, all of which made the industrialized architecture more palatable. Moss seemed to agree with Adolf Loos's declaration that ornament is a crime; he had stripped the building down to a simple, solid shell, which he compared to Henry Moore's 1950 *Helmet Head* sculptures.<sup>22</sup> But unlike Loos, who argued that modern domestic exteriors should be hardened to protect against the traumatic shock of living in an industrial city, while the interiors should be comfortable and artistic, Moss designed an interior for the Lawson-Westen Residence that provided little place for the habitants to hide from the onslaught of industrial high-tech culture; the house instead persuaded the residents to evolve their character and style toward a new industrialized point of view. Every detail in the Lawson-Weston Residence was so exquisite, yet hardened and machinelike, that there was little room left for art beyond the architecture itself (fig. 12). As client Tracy Westen well observed: "Eric changed our aesthetic. We probably expected something tamer. Now, we pull out paintings we planned to hang in the house and see that we've changed our minds. I'd often read about the power of art to transform a person and it didn't mean anything until this house. We are different people from what we were... and it's the house that is doing it."<sup>23</sup> Postmodern habitants were hardly provided with a place of refuge from a difficult day of work or a harsh city commute. Through the disarming pretext of architecture in the form of an industrialized work of art, they were forced to confront industry from within their high-fashion homes.

The L.A. Ten architects thus repositioned the image of industry within varied residential frameworks throughout the city. Thom Mayne's Sixth Street House (1988)

was perhaps the best example of an architect's attempt to stylize this evolving role of industry. Through the use of outmoded machinery in the home, Mayne established the setting for a new form of cultural revolution. According to Mayne at that time, "The Sixth Street Project continues our investigation of the impacted or imploded building, a metaphor for the veils or walls with which we protect ourselves from the world and from the secrets and mysteries that are so much a part of the human condition. This project, part of the diffused Los Angeles metropolis, accepts the suburban context as a point of departure. Present are the traditional concerns of shelter, structure, use, and materiality, order, beauty and meaning."<sup>24</sup>

Mayne addressed culturally specific architectural concerns and challenged the local suburban condition by subtracting, adding, and repositioning ten industrial fragments within the interior of his home. He was engaged in a cryptic and somewhat critical reassessment of the nature of machine artifacts: "The house explores the ground between these ten found objects and building. The pieces (parts of discarded machinery or dead tech) impart decay, tension, risk, balance—a world between utopia and atopia."<sup>25</sup> In the Sixth Street House, Mayne deployed the industrial machine as a trope to alter and redefine notions of domestic life. He posited "dead tech" machinery outside its cultural context, like a Duchampian ready-made,

by suspending it within his home—providing a display for personal use, analysis, and critique and a forum for the habitant's body to engage with obsolete industrial works (fig. 13).

Forming, in effect, a technology museum, the Sixth Street House served as a training ground to simultaneously acclimatize the viewer to the tectonics of a superseded machinic past and the unimpeded onslaught of an aggressive technological future. Through miniaturization and domestication, Mayne set industry on exhibit like a wild animal caged up in a zoo, giving habitants the opportunity to experience the wonder and curiosity of these outmoded forms of technology. Foreshadowing a seamless future between domestic and industrial life, the aim of the Sixth Street House was to provide the habitant time and position to gain authority over past technology, ultimately acclimatizing humanity to a more robust technological future. For Mayne, “the Sixth Street Project is about objects and building, the one self-sufficient and uninhabitable, the other integrated, accommodating, and occupiable.”<sup>26</sup> The interrelationship between domesticity and the machine, as constructed by Mayne, encouraged an enchanted image, an industrial mystique or fetish, of rusting metal, aged concrete, and dilapidated machines (i.e., the relics of everyday modern industry housed within an inner world or the imagined psyche of the domicile) sharing a home with the habitants, who would intellectualize an authoritative position over them. The machines were captured, splayed, and demoralized—tortured, if you will, to personal intrigue and amusement—in order for the viewer to overcome any latent fears that technology might one day replace us and any discomfort with its inorganic materiality. Mayne still argues today that his home, with its industrial character and aggressive displacement of dead-tech machinery, feels to him quite “cozy.”<sup>27</sup> Similar to Morphosis's early restaurants and later institutional buildings, Mayne's home demonstrated a desire to overcome the repressed modern psyche associated with the imagery of an industrial past. Through their architecture, Morphosis reimagined humanity's relationship to the machine and prepared society for the coming future—that of a hypertechnological, posthuman condition.

From the late 1980s through the 1990s, aerospace facilities, mechanical plants, and even shipping containers further inspired the industrial imaginary of high-postmodern L.A. fetish—a style best demonstrated in the souped-up, hypertechn projects of young architects Wes Jones and Neil Denari. Although a latecomer to the L.A. scene, Jones—originally a partner of Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones (HHPF), in San Francisco, and a prior collaborator with Peter Pfau on several innovative speculative design projects—envisaged reality in the 1980s to be

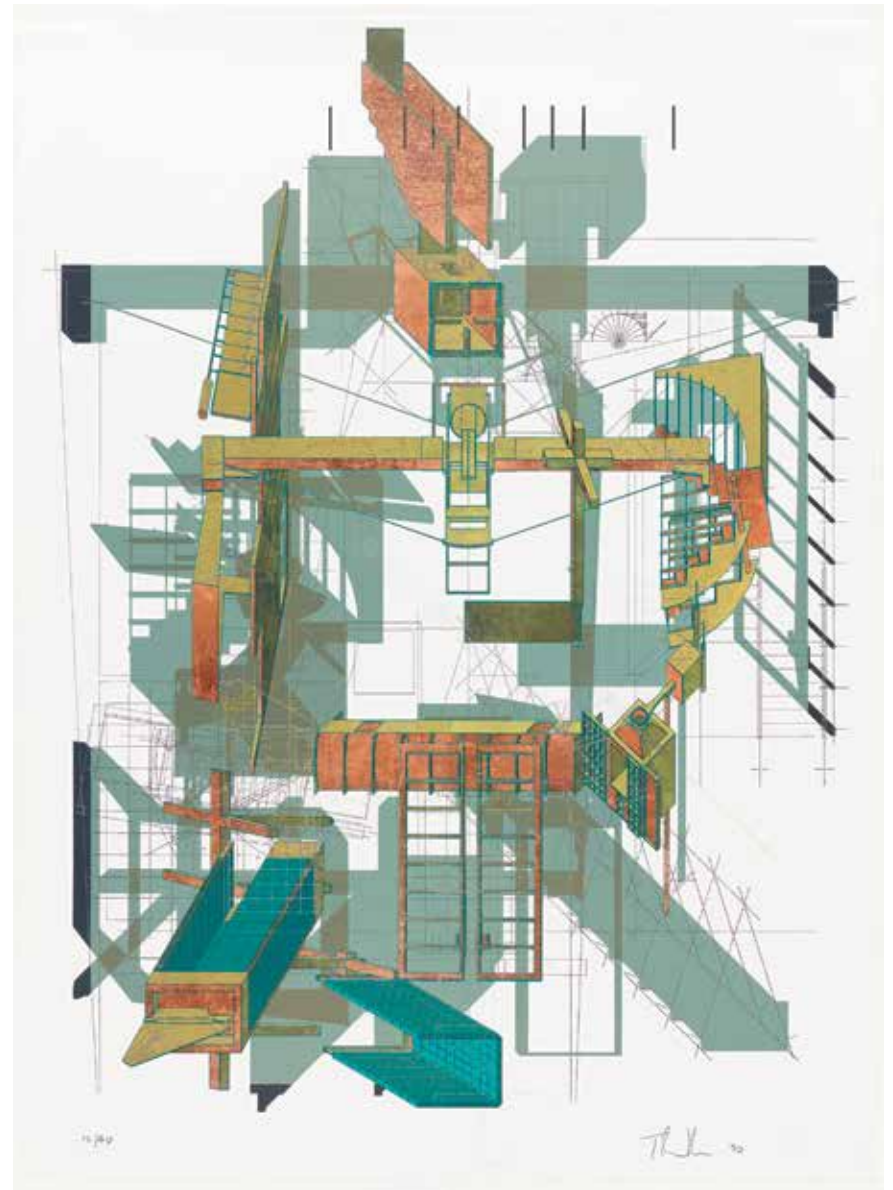
FIGURE 13.

**Morphosis (1979–).**

Sixth Street House (1987–92), Santa Monica, 1990.

Screen print with metal foil on paper,  
101.6 × 76.2 cm (40 × 30 in.).

Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.



“inescapably mechanical.”<sup>28</sup> According to Jones, machines were not “asked to look like something else,” so neither should buildings; architecture should develop “its own expressive potential.”

HHPF’s Chiller/Cogeneration plant (1991–94) for UCLA embodied this paradigm with hypertechnological mechanical systems that, similar to Howard’s residence or Moss’s warehouse projects, maintained a direct correlation between context, program, and industrial aesthetic. The building didactically expressed its mechanical systems, whereas the design for a Pfau Jones tract house (1986) in Manhattan Beach more provocatively located domestic life within a Corbusian *machine à habiter* unlike any modern architecture previously imagined. Jones did not simply use industrial motifs in unique or confrontational ways, as done by his postmodern predecessors; rather, he designed the roof, ceiling, and walls to actually expand or contract space, move along tracks, and react with overt machinic expression to the needs of everyday suburban life. In this suburban “house,” industry and domestic life were integrated within one overt technological operation (fig. 14).

Exploring this allegory one step further at an altogether different size and scale was Denari’s entry for the “West Coast Gateway” competition of 1988. Aiming to commemorate the pride and achievements of Los Angeles’s immigrant population, the city formatively posed a competition for the design of a landscaped pedestrian bridge deck to serve as a symbolic yet physical multicultural gateway and connector over the Hollywood (101) Freeway at Spring and Main Streets. Denari’s design, originally deemed by one *Los Angeles Times* critic as “a hard-edged, high-tech harvester parked above the freeway,” challenged the cultural relationship being presented by the L.A. Ten: the correlation between humanity, industry, and their machines.<sup>29</sup> Responding to the image of Los Angeles as it one day might become—a vast city of industry with an expansive and dynamic all-invasive infrastructure—Denari retrospectively positions how he understood Los Angeles at that time:

The industrial landscape, ranging from the local condition of the parking lot to the more visible industrial infrastructure and the imagined world of the military complex, always seemed the subtext to analyzing L.A. on the historical level and of how it was created, whether the movie industry or the heavy industry surrounding aerospace. You couldn’t think about L.A., at least conceptually, if you did not invoke or understand the larger landscape at that level.<sup>30</sup>

Industry on an expansive and compelling infrastructural scale became integral to what Los Angeles was and might inevitably be. For his competition entry, Denari created goliath forms of experimental architecture to express his curiosity surrounding the underpinnings of economic land use on such a vast urban scale. The type of dystopian megastructure he proposed, one that was reminiscent of Archigram’s Walking City or Japan’s Metabolists’ proposals of the 1960s, produced a “friendly monster” of immense technological construction.<sup>31</sup> With its extreme megalomaniacal shape and form, industry had grown in the imagination of Denari and inspired some of the most sublimely dehumanizing forms of architecture yet conceived (figs. 15A, 15B). Although Denari would argue in retrospect that his work was never intended to be imperious, the “West Coast Gateway” competition design, like his “Tokyo International Forum” competition entry to follow, affords us an understanding of our predilection toward an extreme posthuman society where architecture might

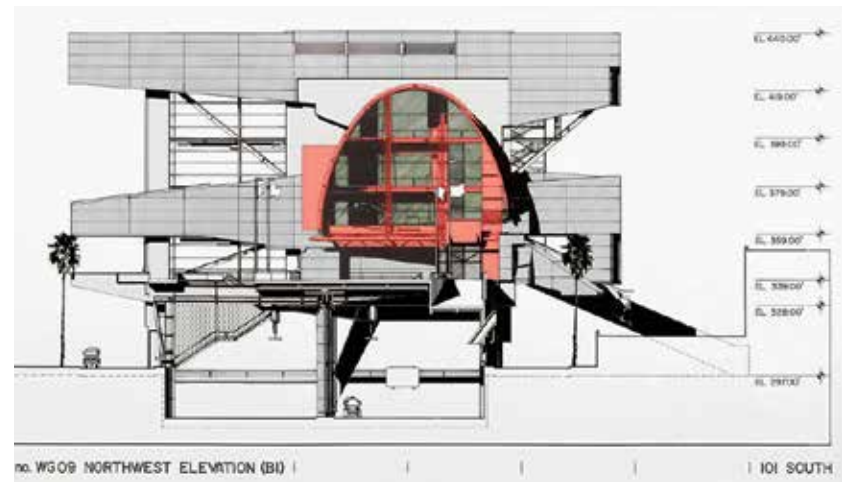
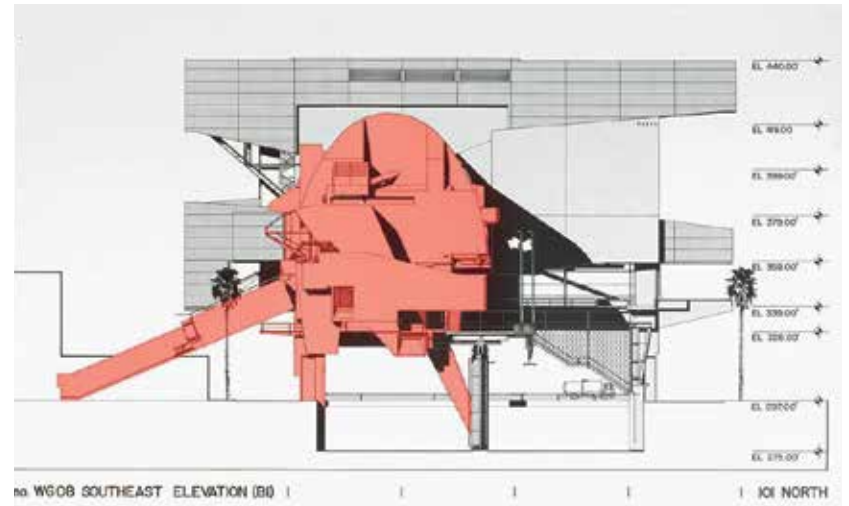
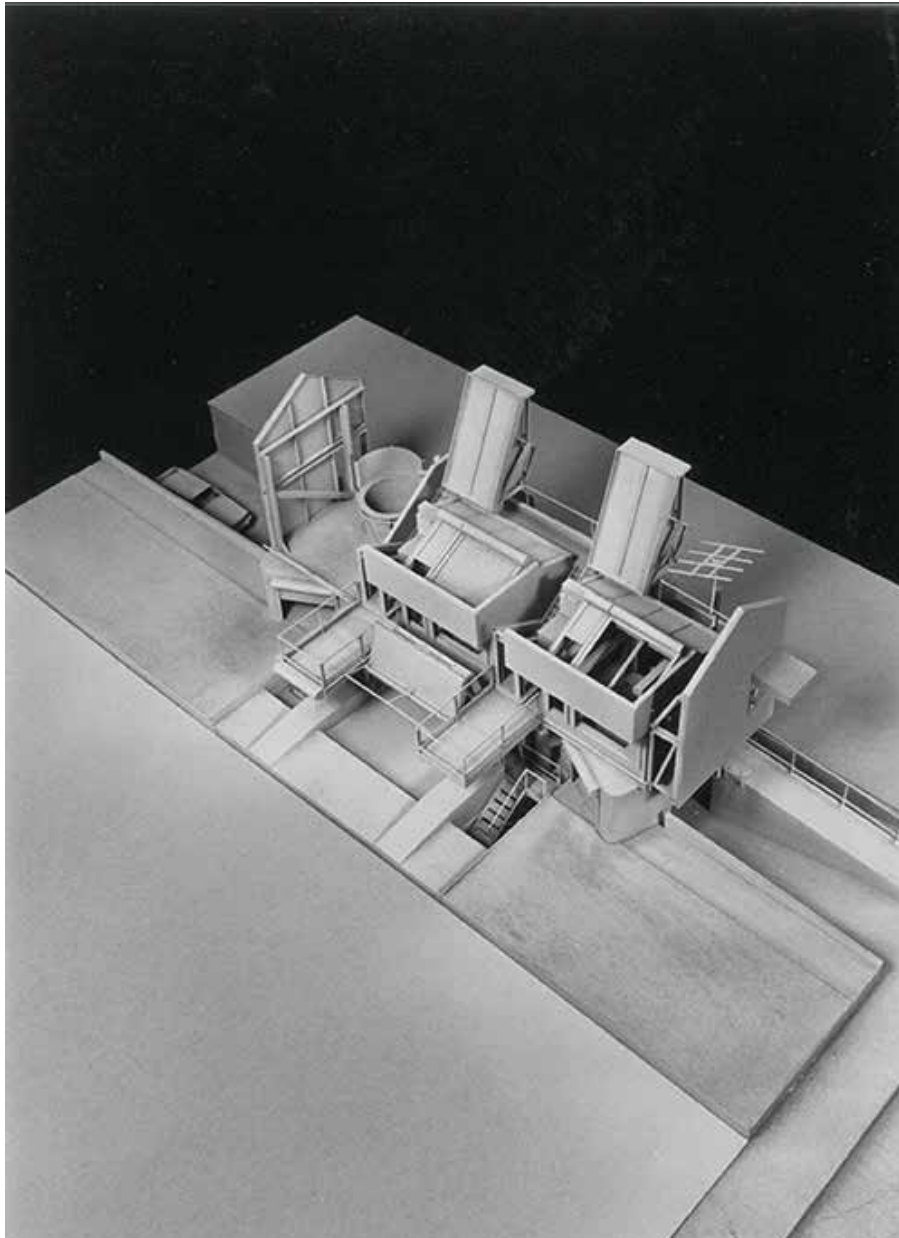


FIGURE 14.  
**Wes Jones (American, b. 1958),**  
**for Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones (1986–92).**  
 Model for tract house in Manhattan Beach  
 (unrealized), 1987.  
 Chipboard, basswood, corrugated cardboard,  
 and paint, 50.8 × 76.2 × 40.6 cm (20 × 30 × 16 in.).  
 San Francisco, Offices of Pfau Long Architecture.

FIGURES 15A, 15B.  
**Neil M. Denari Architects (1988–).**  
 Southeast elevation and northwest elevation for  
 “West Coast Gateway” competition entry, 1988.  
 Ink on paper, sheet: 77.5 × 104 cm (30½ × 41 in.).  
 Los Angeles, Neil M. Denari Architects.

expand into the perverse realms of infrastructural engineering, beyond the confines of any one cultural expression, domestic region, dwelling, or viable function. Architecture taken to this extreme hyper-postmodern position supports an industrial production of global proportion that exceeds the known limits of human construction. It does not belong to any one localized culture or economy, citizenship, gender, or race, but it is consequent of a multifarious understanding that speaks to perhaps a greater, more intimate expression of all humankind: that our most basic instinct for survival and shelter prompts our desire to exceed (for better or worse), through science or otherwise, the sustainable limits of our planet and our own delicate human form. The technophilic proposition underlying our drive to be surrounded in a carapace of industrial materials and machines—whether outmoded, radically new, fashionable, kindred, or chic—speaks to our insatiable need to extend life beyond the limits of the human body within an architecture that doubles as a harbinger for a new prosthetic life.

## NOTES

- 1 “Out of the Rage for Order: Frank Gehry House,” *Progressive Architecture* 61, no. 3 (1980): 81–85. Emphasis in original.
- 2 Frank O. Gehry, *Frank O. Gehry: Individual Imagination and Cultural Conservatism*, ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1995). See also Charles Jencks, *The New Paradigm in Architecture: The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 3 Postmodernism was an international movement forged within the architecture community by East Coast architect Robert Venturi through his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) and then later in the eclectic forms of historical pastiche promoted by architects Michael Graves, Charles Jencks, Philip Johnson, Charles Moore, James Sterling, and Venturi, among others. Postmodern urbanism similar to what I am describing in this essay was first introduced to architecture in 1945 by Joseph Hudnut, American architect and dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, in his essay “The Postmodern House,” *Architecture Record* 97 (1945): 70–75. Postmodern urbanism was then later advanced in the writing of Frederick Jameson surrounding his analysis of the Bonaventura Hotel in “Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 1/146 (1984).
- 4 “Fordism” refers to the system of mass production associated with Henry Ford: car manufacturing, factories, and assembly-line standardization. “Post-Fordism” is characterized by the development of computer information and fabrication systems that afford more flexible, disperse, and networked production facilities and operations, giving rise to multidisciplinary consulting teams and the outsourcing of labor.
- 5 Olivier Boissière, “Ten California Architects,” *Domus*, no. 604 (1980): 17–31. My use of the L.A. Ten is based on a similar name from the MoMA exhibition on five New York architects in 1969 and the movement surrounding them. See *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmy, Hejduck and Meyer* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1975). Similarly, there was the Chicago Seven exhibition in 1976. See *Seven Chicago Architects: Beeby, Booth, Cohen, Freed, Gagle, Tigerman, Weese*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Richard Gray Gallery, 1976).
- 6 John Dreyfuss, “Gallery Stirs Up Architects,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 December 1979, E26.
- 7 Tim Street-Porter, “Houses Now,” *House & Garden* (February 1982), 136.
- 8 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture: The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Little Brown, 1988).
- 9 “Out of the Rage for Order,” 82.
- 10 Jacques Derrida introduced the concept of deconstruction in his three 1967 publications: *Writing and Difference*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Of Grammatology*. Deconstruction, the literary movement, soon centered around Yale University, after Paul de Man joined the faculty in 1970 and wrote the defining deconstructivist text *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* in 1971. Bernard Tschumi and Derrida began collaborating on architecture and deconstruction in 1985. Peter Eisenman joined this collaboration soon after, prior to Wigley and Johnson’s deconstructivist exhibition in 1988. See Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida’s Haunt* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
- 11 See “Fact Sheet, Exhibition: *Deconstructivist Architecture*” (March 1988), Press Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York; available at [www.moma.org/docs/press\\_archives/6526/releases/MOMA\\_1988\\_0029\\_29.pdf?2010](http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/6526/releases/MOMA_1988_0029_29.pdf?2010). See also Johnson and Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, 22.
- 12 Although John Dreyfuss initiated media discussions surrounding the L.A. Ten, it was European articles such as those written by Charles Jencks and Olivier Boissière that provided notoriety and international support to the L.A. school of architects. See the exhibition review of *Los Angeles Now* (29 April–21 May 1988): Charles Jencks, “LA Style/LA School,” *AA Files* 5 (1984): 90.

- 13 "Citation: Architectural Design; Coy Howard," *Progressive Architecture* 61, no. 1 (1980): 110.
- 14 Eric Owen Moss, "Petal House (Culbertson House), Los Angeles, California, 1981–83," in Eric Owen Moss, Pilar Viladas, and Yukio Futagawa, eds., *California Architecture, GA Houses, Special 1* (Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita, 1985), 128.
- 15 Eric Owen Moss, *Eric Owen Moss: Buildings and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 17–18.
- 16 "Design Accents Utilities," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 May 1977, Real Estate, Homes-Industry, Part II, 5.
- 17 Rick Cziment, "Industrial Chic," *Santa Monica Outlook*, 4 April 1989.
- 18 John Hartmire, "Architect Brings CC New Look," *Culver City News*, 1 June 1989.
- 19 Frank Gehry, "Introduction," in Franklin D. Israel, *Franklin D. Israel: Buildings + Projects*, ed. Thomas S. Hines (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 9.
- 20 Franklin Israel, *Franklin D. Israel* (London: Academy, 1994), 7.
- 21 Linda Lawson, "Westen House: The House and the Building Process as It Means to the Client," *L.A. Architect* (October/November 1993).
- 22 Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" [1908], in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, trans. Michael Bullock (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), 19–24.
- 23 Ziva Freiman, "Into the Uncharted," *Progressive Architecture* 74, no. 5 (1993): 68–77.
- 24 Thom Mayne, "Detritus and Flotsam," in idem, *Thom Mayne: Sixth Street House*, ed. George Wagner (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 1989), 50.
- 25 See Rolf Steinberg, *Dead Tech: A Guide to the Archaeology of Tomorrow*, trans. Michael Stone (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1982).
- 26 Mayne, "Detritus and Flotsam," 50.
- 27 Thom Mayne, interview by Stephen Phillips, 10 November 2011.
- 28 Peter Pfau and Wes Jones, "Pfau/Jones—Holt & Hinshaw," in Robert McCarter, ed., *Building Machines*, Pamphlet Architecture, no. 12 (New York: Princeton Architectural, 1987), 55, 58.
- 29 Sam Hall Kaplan, "Unlocking Gateway Competition," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 August 1988, Real Estate, 8.
- 30 Neil Denari, interview by Stephen Phillips, 9 December 2011.
- 31 Neil Denari, "Four Statements on Architecture 1990," *A+U: Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 246 (1991): 26.