THE NEW FACE OF HUMANE ARCHITECTURE
MICHAEL MALTZAN DELIVERS AN AMBITIOUS VISION FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

DURBACH BLOCK JAGGERS, BAK ARQUITECTOS, SAM JACOB AND STEFAN SAGMEISTER

A Norman Day double-bill on two very different schools Architecture and design à la LA An urban shade structure like no other The Zen of Elliot Rich Mury Architects designs for autism
BAll-NOGUES Studio

Gaetano Nogues and Benjamin Ball, SCI-Arc alumni, joined forces in 2004 to create a practice that intersects architecture, art, and product design. Ball-Nogues Studio's experimental installations combine research into digital design and fabrication with traditional materials and forms of production. "Sometimes the mandate can be liberating," says Nogues.

Creche (2010), a public art project in Santa Monica consisting of over 350 mirror-polished stainless steel balls (above right), operates structurally like an enormous Newton's cradle. A recent commission for LAX MOCA, Feathered Edge (2009), explores the emergence of digital technology and craft to create ephemeral architectural forms. An astounding 3,000 individual lengths of twine were dyed, cut, and suspended from the gallery's walls and ceilings. Nogues considers temporary installations as building projects: "No site to challenge the notion that the limited life spans of some of our work disqualifies us as architects."

Ball-Nogues Studio began operating in a garage space behind Nogues' house. It is now moving to a new 3,000 square metre studio to deliver future projects, including a permanent public commission for Los Angeles International Airport.

ball-nogues.com

Los Angeles spread from a cluster of towns and villages. Los Angeles has grown into one of the biggest presences on the world stage. Although it is typified and shaped by, among other factors, its urban sprawl, car-dependency and film industry, architects have a lot of love for the city partly for these very reasons.

Cal-B architecture critic Reyner Banham declared his admiration for the city ("I love the place with a passion that goes beyond sense or reason"), and in his 1971 publication Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies proposed Los Angeles as a model for a post-urban future. Perhaps incidentally, Los Angeles is home to radical Pritzker Prize-winners Thom Mayne and Frank Gehry (whose Walt Disney Concert Hall is pictured in the opening spread).

There is space here for architects to experiment, and the city has long encouraged this. Los Angeles embraced the pioneers of Modernism, such as Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, with open arms. The city hosted most of the Case Study Houses including #22, Pierre Koenig's Stahl House, which famously looks out across the city spreading out below it.

A new generation of architects is innovating with form and fabrication and making the most of the city's resources, such as the aerospace, automobile and entertainment industries. At the centre of the architectural scene is the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), an independent, non-profit school in the eastern side of Downtown Los Angeles. SCI-Arc's impressive campus occupies a 400,000 square-foot former freight depot and is a hub for Los Angeles' emerging Arts District. Walking through the studios and exhibition spaces it is clear that digital design and technology rules. Most of the interesting architects in Los Angeles are either graduates or teachers here.

Los Angeles has become denser over the past 20 years. As a result, rather than a vast city connected by freeways, it is slowly evolving into a collection of smaller enclaves. Often it is the freeways that help shape and define these places, enclosing creative communities that cross-polinate and influence each other. There is a tradition of cross-over and collaboration between artists and architects, supported by local organizations.

The architect Yi-Fu Tang calls his home—a geodesic dome—with contributions from architects, artists, choreographers, musicians and other creative disciplines. Vietnam's MAK Museum for Applied Arts has an outlet in the Schindler House, and runs a residency program for international artists and architects, encouraging shared discussions and collaboration. The MAK Center also programmed the recent How Many Billboards? urban exhibition, featuring 21 commissioned works by contemporary artists, which were presented on billboards across Los Angeles.

Los Angeles still poses challenges for architects and urbanists, but improvements are starting to be felt. While Los Angeles will remain car-dependent for the foreseeable future, the city is now investing in its public transport infrastructure including bus rapid transit, light rail and subway. People are moving back into the heart of the city and populating the Downtown streets.
LOS ANGELES
THE TOP PICKS OF LA'S EATING, SHOPPING AND SLEEPING DESTINATIONS, BY ELIAS REDSTONE.

Sleep

CHATEAU MARMONT
Refurbished in the 1960s, Chateau Marmont is where celebrities stay when in LA. As Harry Cohn, then head of Columbia Pictures, said back in 1939, "If you must get into trouble, do it at the Chateau Marmont."

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HOLLYWOOD
CHATEAUMARMONT.COM

STANDARD DOWNTOWN
André Balazs' second LA Standard hotel opened in 2002 in the 12-storey office originally built for Superior Oil. Leading the charge to revitalise Downtown, the hotel's highlight is the rooftop pool surrounded by terracotta blocks.

550 SOUTH FLOWER AT SIXTH STREET
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STANDARDHOTELS.COM

EAT

CLIFTON'S CAFETERIA
Gaston Nogues of Ball-Nogues Studio shares his tip for LA-style sustenance.

"Dining in LA can be quite diverse. We have everything from Hollywood fancy, where one might see movie stars, to Mexican food carts where you'll only see starring actors."

"Clifton's Cafeteria in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles is a southern California gem. It has withstood the ravages of time and today its interior, modelled after Californian redwood groves - right down to a babbling brook with a waterfall - is pretty much the same as it was when it opened in 1935. My favourite table is made from a giant redwood slice, and I can't get enough of the dark wood paneling decorated with saws. The place is enormous to boot, so for a while it was the official Ball-Nogues eating spot - until the vegetarians in the studio put a stop to that!"

Gaston Nogues

To see Johnston Marklee's pick of shops and restaurants in LA, go to monumentmagazine.com.au/102