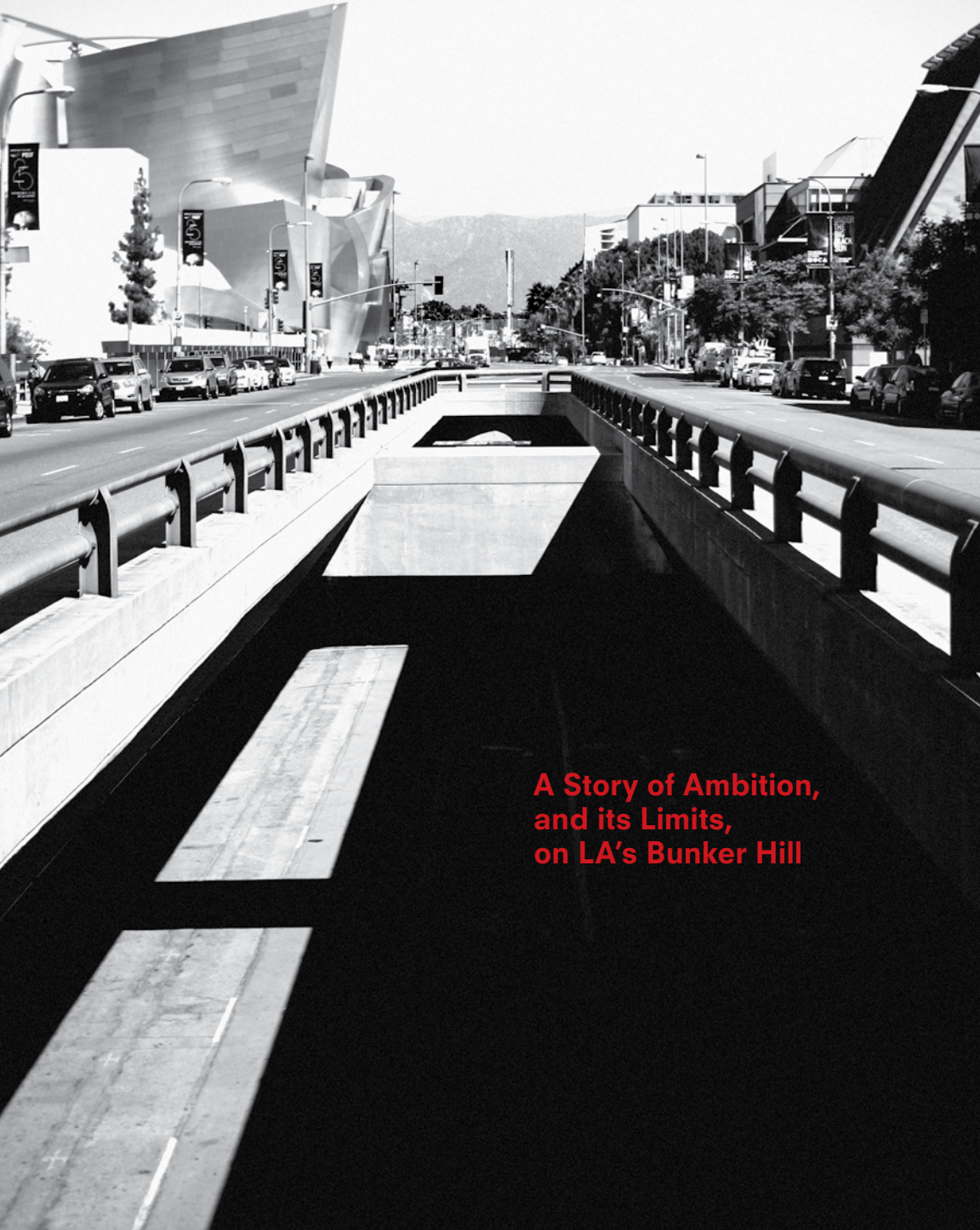


Frances Anderton
Editor

Frank Gehry
Judge Widney Professor of Architecture, USC

Grand Illusion



**A Story of Ambition,
and its Limits,
on LA's Bunker Hill**

Cover: Grand Avenue, looking northeast, with a view into Lower Grand, a service space constructed as part of the postwar urban renewal on Bunker Hill that prioritized the car (pp43). Photo, Julie Cho, 2011.

GRAND ILLUSION

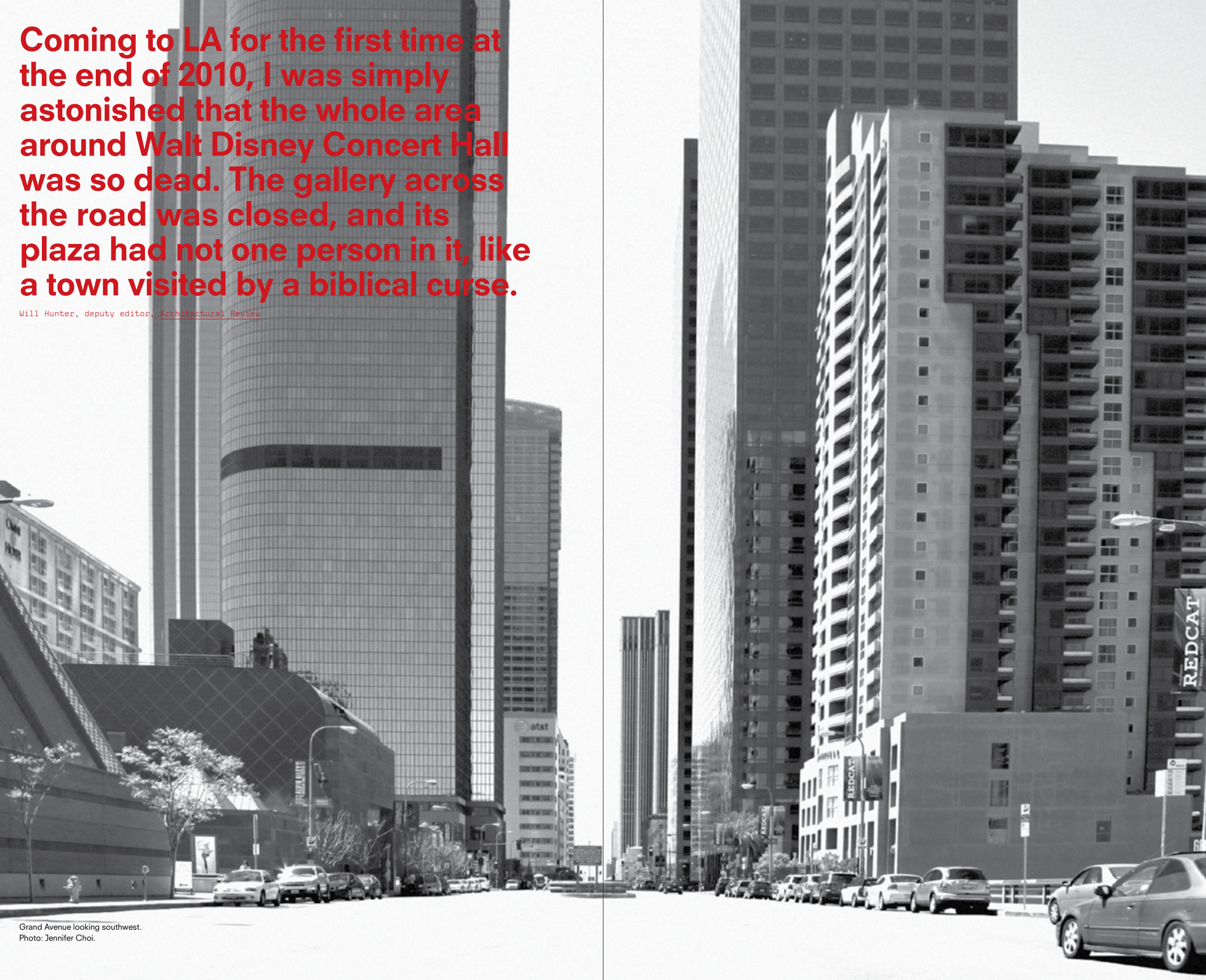
A STORY OF AMBITION,
AND ITS LIMITS,
ON LA'S BUNKER HILL



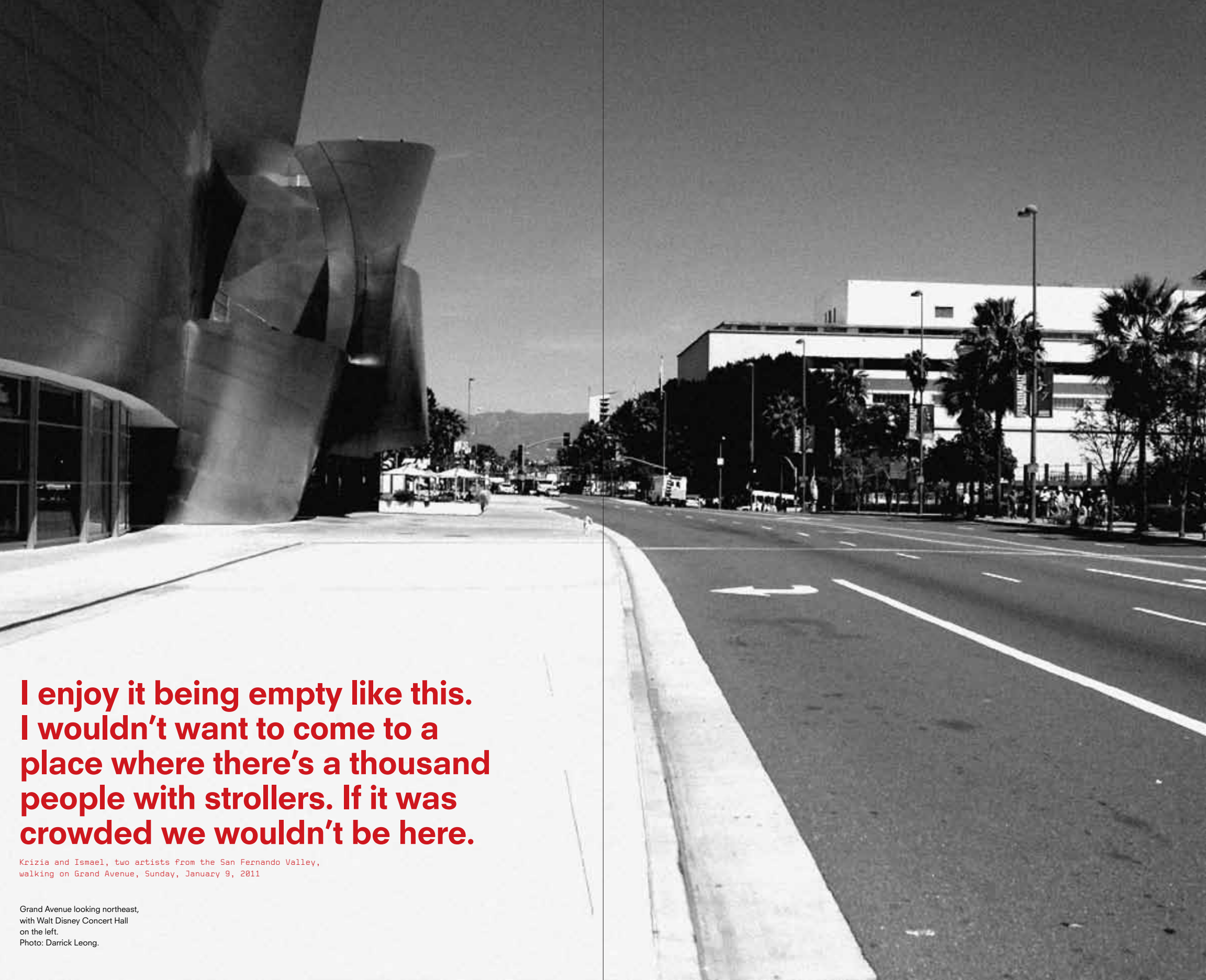
Lower Grand Avenue, transformed from a service tunnel into a destination by Nike Basketball's Los Fearless 2-on-2 tournament (see pp.00), February 19, 2011. Photo: Jared Shier.

Coming to LA for the first time at the end of 2010, I was simply astonished that the whole area around Walt Disney Concert Hall was so dead. The gallery across the road was closed, and its plaza had not one person in it, like a town visited by a biblical curse.

Will Hunter, deputy editor, [Architectural Review](#)



Grand Avenue looking southwest.
Photo: Jennifer Choi.



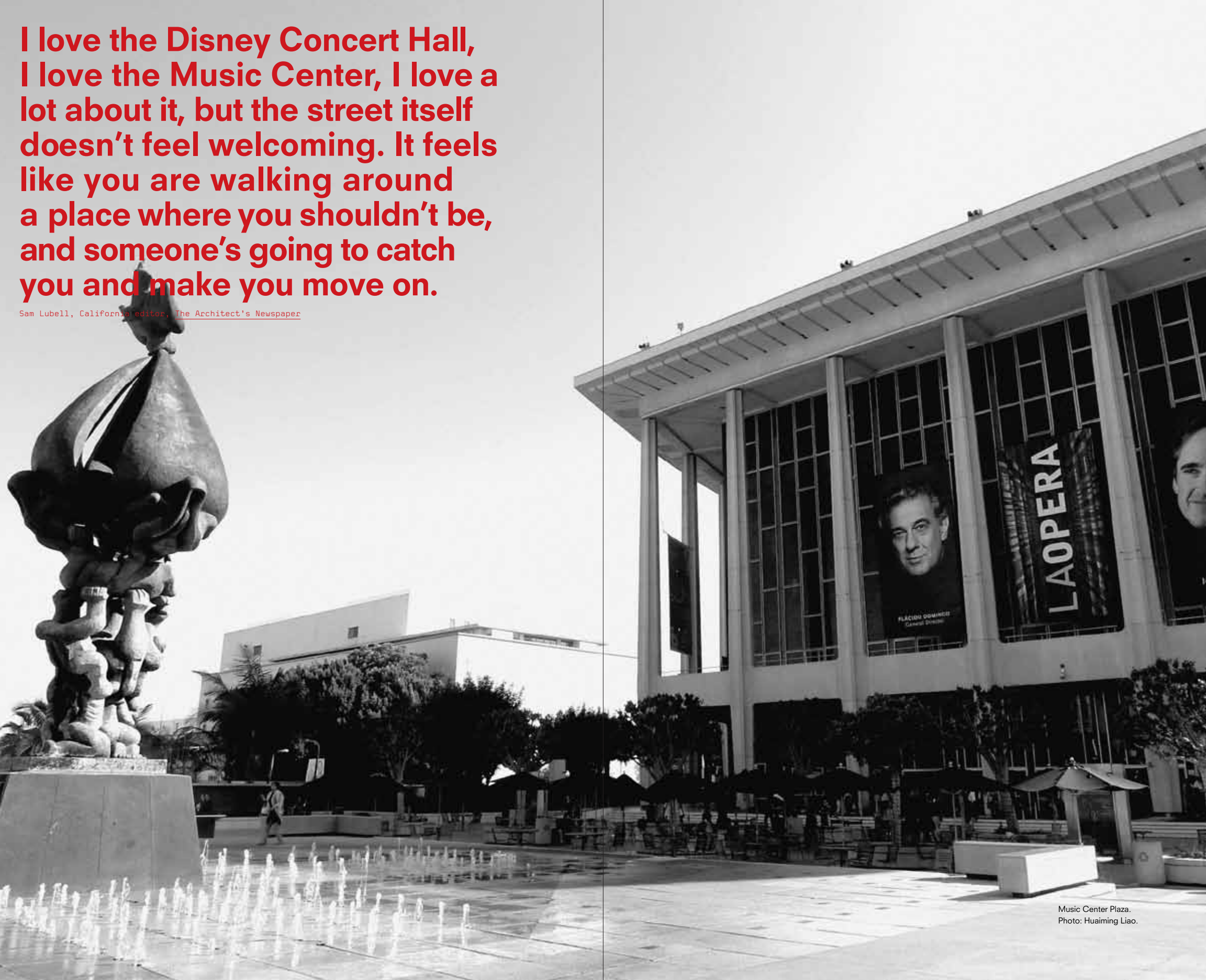
**I enjoy it being empty like this.
I wouldn't want to come to a
place where there's a thousand
people with strollers. If it was
crowded we wouldn't be here.**

Krizia and Ismael, two artists from the San Fernando Valley,
walking on Grand Avenue, Sunday, January 9, 2011

Grand Avenue looking northeast,
with Walt Disney Concert Hall
on the left.
Photo: Darrick Leong.

**I love the Disney Concert Hall,
I love the Music Center, I love a
lot about it, but the street itself
doesn't feel welcoming. It feels
like you are walking around
a place where you shouldn't be,
and someone's going to catch
you and make you move on.**

Sam Lubell, California editor, [The Architect's Newspaper](#)



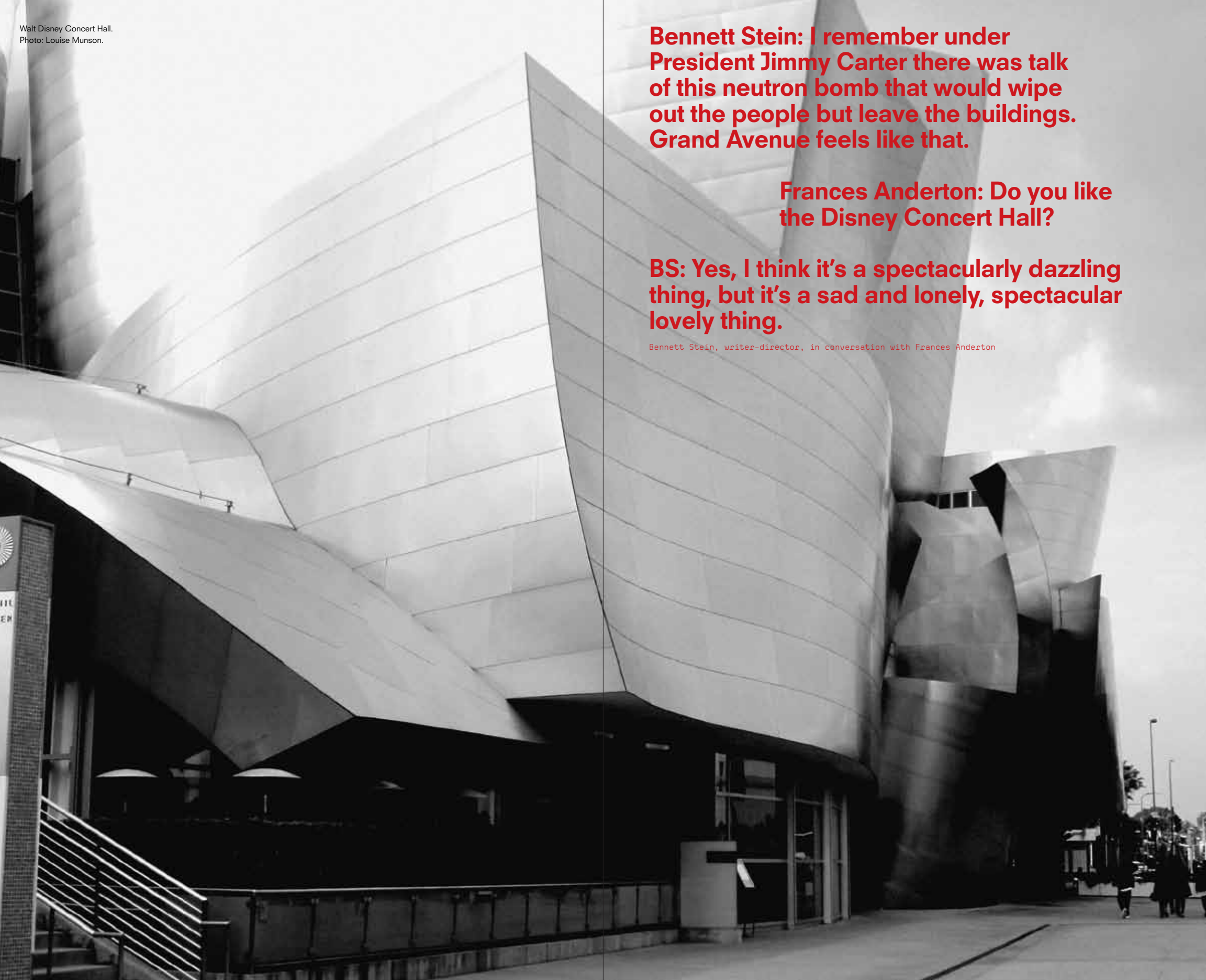
Music Center Plaza.
Photo: Huaiming Liao.

Bennett Stein: I remember under President Jimmy Carter there was talk of this neutron bomb that would wipe out the people but leave the buildings. Grand Avenue feels like that.

Frances Anderton: Do you like the Disney Concert Hall?

BS: Yes, I think it's a spectacularly dazzling thing, but it's a sad and lonely, spectacular lovely thing.

Bennett Stein, writer-director, in conversation with Frances Anderton



I live right here, I
don't want anybody
around, I don't want
any traffic, I want to
be able to walk. I like
it just the way it is,
empty.

Principal clarinetist for the
Los Angeles Philharmonic, walking on
Grand Avenue, Sunday, January 9, 2011



We just came here for a photo shoot. It's beautiful, but there is nothing to do so we are going to leave.

Samantha, resident of Leimert Park, making her first visit to MOCA, Sunday, January 9, 2011

Grand Avenue is soon to be the grand avenue we have all been envisioning and working towards. The Broad museum will anchor MOCA, enhance the architectural greatness of MOCA and Walt Disney Concert Hall, and spawn new retail, housing, and office development. It has been a long time coming, but the dream is soon to be realized.

Carol Schatz, president and CEO, Central City Association
and Downtown Center Business Improvement District

GRAND ILLUSION
A STORY OF AMBITION,
AND ITS LIMITS,
ON LA'S BUNKER HILL

Frances Anderton
Editor

Frank Gehry, Judge Widney Professor of Architecture, USC
Gehry Partners, LLP
and Arch. 605 faculty and students

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PAMPHLET SERIES, CEZI/001

View of the parking lot at
Grand and Second, to be
replaced by The Broad.
Photo: Louise Munson.

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Frances Anderton, editor

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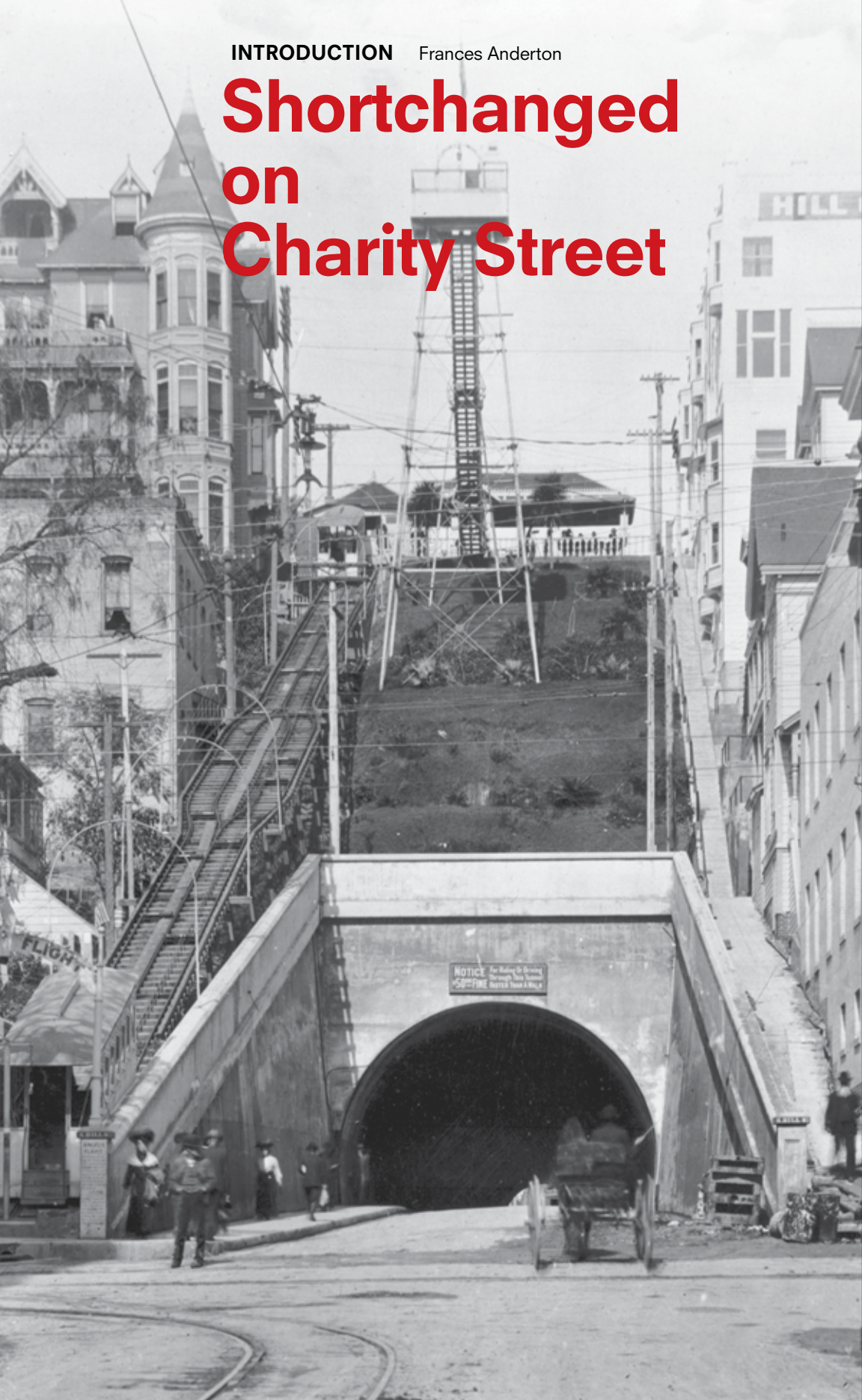
There is always a confluence of ideas flowing through academic institutions. These ideas, regardless of their self-claimed criticality and “coolness,” become quickly mainstream and utterly mundane. The only way out of this ill-fated stream is to neither roar nor splash. This is the intention behind the notion of CEZI.

CEZI is a Chinese pinyin term for small and often thin printed matters which address small points or unconfirmed ideas. *CE* has a connotation of being secondary and off to the side, but also a continuous accumulation. *ZI* means small, minute, and even inferior. Together, they present the power of smallness in accumulation. The smaller it is, the more powerful it collectively becomes.

I must say, making “small” bigger is the essential mission of any education, particularly for the design-based studio tradition. Students come and go; faculty evolve and develop. Only laid out in CEZI can we then see the threads.

Frank Gehry is by no means small. But some of his ideas have passed by without being identified as “Gehry-like.” Therefore, we start our first CEZI with a Frank Gehry studio to recapture the smallness in bigness. Without Frances Anderton, the first CEZI would not be in your hands now. It is her sensitivity to smallness and attention to bigness that teaches us how to let CEZI continue to set the flow.

Shortchanged on Charity Street



Los Angeles was willed into existence by rapacious men who never let little obstacles—say, lack of water—stand in the way of progress. They built a downtown and railroads, then freeways, and eventually a suburban megalopolis. But along the way, they stubbed their toes on a steep mound called Bunker Hill. For men unaccustomed to having nature get in their way, Bunker Hill was an annoyance from the get-go. In 1929 one C. C. Bigelow, president of the Southwestern Investment Corporation, described the almost 400-foot-high obstruction as a “barrier to progress in the business district of Los Angeles, preventing natural expansion westward.”

Men with power and money rammed tunnels through Bunker Hill, and when the Victorian manses that once adorned it devolved into rooming houses teeming with poor people, these men declared them blighted and demolished them. Later they lopped 120 feet off the top of the hill. Armed with vigor and conviction, the downtown power brokers—developers and a dominant Community Redevelopment Agency—went about turning this newly gaping void into a corporate and cultural center. But somehow, Bunker Hill continued to be an annoyance; it refused to conform to the visions laid out for it. Despite the addition of one splendid-looking arts institution after another, culminating in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the corporate and cultural stretch along Grand Avenue on Bunker Hill has not fulfilled its promise. Though a once abandoned downtown has been revived around it, Bunker Hill has remained forlorn, its streets, even on a Sunday afternoon, often empty.

Grand Illusion: A Story of Ambition, and its Limits, on LA's Bunker Hill is an exploration of why. Have efforts to bend Bunker Hill to the will of the powerful been hubristic, or have they been well intentioned if misguided? Did good plans give way to expedient development and unyielding bureaucracy? Are Grand Avenue's challenges specific to Los Angeles and its site or similar to those in neighborhoods nationwide that were upended by midcentury “urban renewal”? Could the best lie just around the corner?

In 2011 the architect Frank Gehry headed up a studio at the University of Southern California and assigned students the provocative task of redesigning the Museum of Contemporary Art on Grand Avenue, the 1986 museum designed by the architect Arata Isozaki and created as the public art component of the corporate California Plaza by the Community Redevelopment Agency. The implication was that the current MOCA Grand had a problem. Indeed, reports have found that MOCA receives around a quarter of a million visitors annually, compared to almost a million at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1.2 million at the Getty, and five million at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New

Somehow, Bunker Hill... refused to conform to the visions laid out for it.

Angels Flight at the Hill Street tunnel, ca. 1903. California Historical Society, University of Southern California, Title Insurance and Trust/C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860–1960.

York. Despite periodic crowd-drawing exhibits and two other sites, including the far more edgy and popular Geffen Contemporary in nearby Little Tokyo, MOCA suffers from weak brand identity. A student researcher even found participants in the downtown Art Walk who had not heard of MOCA.

Gehry's design studio at USC begged these questions: Is MOCA Grand's architecture itself—mostly buried underground—the problem? Is it the isolated location? Are Angelenos insufficiently interested in contemporary art, or in museums, or in the notion of a centralized cultural district? Could a better building or a better street solve the problem?

GRAND AVENUE AUTOPSY



To find the answers, students had to understand MOCA Grand's context: namely, the stretch of Grand Avenue (formerly known as Charity Street) that extends from Cesar Chavez Boulevard to Fifth Street and currently comprises a corporate hub and a linear complex of arts institutions, from Coop Himmelblau's Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts (formerly Central Los Angeles High School #9) at Cesar Chavez to the Central Library on Fifth.

Students were also asked to conduct an autopsy of the “corpse,” as it were, and to research its history and evolution. Specifically, students were tasked with reviewing “the numerous master-planning efforts that have been proposed since the original Victorian residential neighborhood was razed to make way for bigger and better things.” As Frank Gehry's office put it, “The promise of this development has only marginally been realized. The layering of these planning ideas will be viewed in relation to the buildings that were built along the way.”

Grand Illusion is the product of that research. It presents the layering of planning ideas dating back decades, showing how Grand Avenue was shaped at many stages by expedient development needs and deference to the automobile. This book also focuses on the Grand Avenue experience of today, examining the potential impact of projects in the pipeline and positing ideas for a new MOCA Grand and a revived Grand Avenue. Students of the USC studio were encouraged to study the problem empirically, walking the street and talking to users as well as to designers and developers, while drawing on interviews conducted over the years about Grand Avenue on my KCRW radio show, *DnA: Design and Architecture*.

MOCA. Photo: Derek Greene.

To find the answers, students had to understand MOCA Grand's context: namely, the stretch of Grand Avenue (formerly known as Charity Street) that extends from Cesar Chavez Boulevard to Fifth Street and currently comprises a corporate hub and a linear complex of arts institutions,

Bob Hope at the dedication of Music Center Plaza, September 27, 1964. Courtesy of the Music Center Archives/Otto Rothschild Collection.

HIGH HOPES FOR GRAND

Hopes were high as a glittering crowd, including women in mink stoles and celebrity figures, arrived at the Music Center's grand opening in December 1964. Equally gorgeous guests and lofty expectations later accompanied the debuts of MOCA Grand (1986), the Walt Disney Concert Hall (2003), the Rafael Moneo-designed Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels (2002), and the new performing arts high school (2009).



Slightly more tempered excitement greeted the unveiling this year of Diller

Scofidio + Renfro's design for The Broad museum. By this time, people were seeing a pattern: no matter how striking the architecture, each of these “catalytic” projects seemed unable to transform Grand Avenue into the vital center long promised by its boosters, most prominently the billionaire businessman-turned-art collector and philanthropist Eli Broad.

For a long time Grand Avenue's boosters blamed the lack of life on Bunker Hill on suburbanization, on growing congestion, and on the general lack of life in downtown. But over the last fifteen years, downtown east and south of Bunker Hill has made a comeback, adding, says Los Angeles City Council member Jan Perry, forty thousand new residents. An ironic result of the tragic demolition of Bunker Hill, says Ken Bernstein, manager of the Planning Department's Office of Historic Resources, “is that on the positive side, it sowed the seeds for the revitalization of downtown's historic core. The fact that business was diverted to the west end left Los Angeles with one of the most intact historic cores of any downtown

(Right) Children at play on Bunker Hill, 1950s. Photo courtesy CRA/LA.

(Far right) From left: Robert E. Alexander, architect; Donald G. Whiteman, president, City Reconstruction Corp.; Frederick A. Schnell, vice president, Prudential Insurance Corp.; Los Angeles mayor Sam Yorty; and Z. Wayne Griffin, chairman, Community Redevelopment Agency, view a model of the \$60 million high-rise apartment complex to be named Bunker Hill Towers, 1967. Herald Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.



in America. And we are now seeing the flip-flopping of a historic relationship. It used to be that housing was up on the hill, and you took Angels Flight down to the base of the hill to the commercial

On the positive side, [the demolition of Bunker Hill] sowed the seeds for the revitalization of downtown's historic core.

(Right) City hall, with Bunker Hill on the lower left, 1951. USC Digital Archives.

(Far right) L.A. Live at night. Photo: Jared Shier.



core. Now, with the adaptive reuse ordinance and the construction of thousands of residential units, the housing center is at the base of the hill, and you can take Angels Flight for a quarter to the top of the hill, to what is now the commercial center.”

PATERNALISM VERSUS POPULISM

Meanwhile, the south end of Grand Avenue has been invigorated by a more populist—albeit equally pricey—cultural hub: L.A. Live and Staples Center. Grand Avenue also faces competition from another kind of populism: grassroots. When Dorothy Chandler’s Music Center opened, it was the built equivalent of the *New York Times*: paternalistic, authoritative, elitist. Notwithstanding the youthful appeal of the dashing Gustavo Dudamel or the street savvy of MOCA’s new director, Jeffrey Deitch, the arts district on Grand Avenue is still searching for a foothold in Los Angeles at a time of decentralization and democratization in culture—a time when smaller downtowns throughout the region are creating their own cultural centers or when thousands now gather on a Thursday night in downtown for a pop-up Art Walk, ignoring the establishment destinations on high.

In the view of Grand Avenue’s boosters, including Councilwoman Perry, of course the best is yet to come. She cites the pending opening of Civic Park, connecting the Music Center to city hall, The Broad museum, and, when the economy improves, the Grand Avenue Redevelopment Project; farther into the future, she sees the street transformed by pedestrians spilling out of the 2nd/Hope station of Metro’s regional connector, a proposed light-rail corridor through downtown that will connect the Blue and Expo Lines to the Gold Line and Union Station. “I think we are already well on the way to having Grand Avenue be the cultural hub of LA because of the concentration of cultural facilities that we already have here,” she says. “We are still a growing, burgeoning community, still defining itself, but in most

A student researcher even found participants in the downtown Art Walk who had not heard of MOCA.

A Street Called Charity

Grand Avenue was not always named as such. In the early days it was called Charity Street until 1887, when residents persuaded the city council to change the name to Grand because they did not like to say they “were living on Charity.” Some observers believe this is ironic, given that for the past sixty years Bunker Hill, as a redevelopment zone, has been a recipient of public subsidy.

Source: Cecilia Rasmussen, “The Long and the Short of the Southland’s Street Names,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 2006.

major cities, downtown is the heart and soul. It is where the greatest things emanate, and we are pursuing this vision with great vigor.”

John Kaliski, former senior architect for the Community Redevelopment Agency, points out that Lincoln Center, in its time a model for the Music Center, is a more organic and interesting place than it was in the 1970s, and that Grand Avenue is still in its first phase and has yet to go through “its second phase before it realizes its promise.” But, he adds, “the promise, if there is promise, is not going to be something that people realize for another ten to fifteen years, so it is frustrating to still be talking about this fifty years after the project, in essence, started.”

In exploring Grand Avenue, *Grand Illusion* focuses on what animates urban space and to what extent it can be designed. Can architecture and the arts alone fix what ails Grand? The story of Bunker Hill involves many players and is still unfolding. This book does not claim to provide the definitive answer but does attempt to explain how a piece of city is made.

I am optimistic about the future of the Grand Avenue cultural district. The Broad and the public plaza that are being built across the street from MOCA will add a significant amount of vitality.

Jeffrey Deitch, director of MOCA

Eli Broad (far right) unveils plans for The Broad, January 6, 2011. Left to right: Elizabeth Diller, architect; Kenneth Fearn, chairman, LA Community Redevelopment Agency; Los Angeles City Council member Jan Perry; Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Photo courtesy of Casey & Sayre.



Evolution

Grand Is a Victim of Postwar Planning

There have been two or three key big mistakes in addition to the key big mistake of putting the new downtown on the top of an isolated hill: the large parcelization and the failure to solve the linkage to the rest of the city for pedestrians.

Don Spivack, deputy chief of operations and policy for the CRA (1982-2010)

The problem with Grand Avenue is that it's been overly designed and planned. After the area was completely obliterated in the name of "redevelopment," one of Los Angeles' most vibrant neighborhoods was replanned to allow for large superblocks and megadevelopments. Now, almost sixty years later, we are still reeling from the combination of city-planning hubris as well as collective amnesia.

Aaron Paley, president, Community Arts Resources (CARS)

Opponents of the [Grand Avenue] plan declared that taking private land for the purposes of big money development was unconstitutional. Negative phrases and terminology were used: land grab, taking from the poor and giving to the rich, displacement, condemnation and unfair compensation.... This was a total redevelopment clearance project that helped coin the negative nationwide phrase, "The Federal Bulldozer."

Yukio Kawaratanani, senior planner, CRA (1962-1993), from his memoir, [Reluctant Samurai: Memoirs of an Urban Planner](#)

Why Grand Isn't

Bunker Hill is a hill. After medieval times, people stopped building cities on hills.

Don Spivack, deputy chief of operations and policy for the CRA (1982-2010)

It's the Hill's Fault

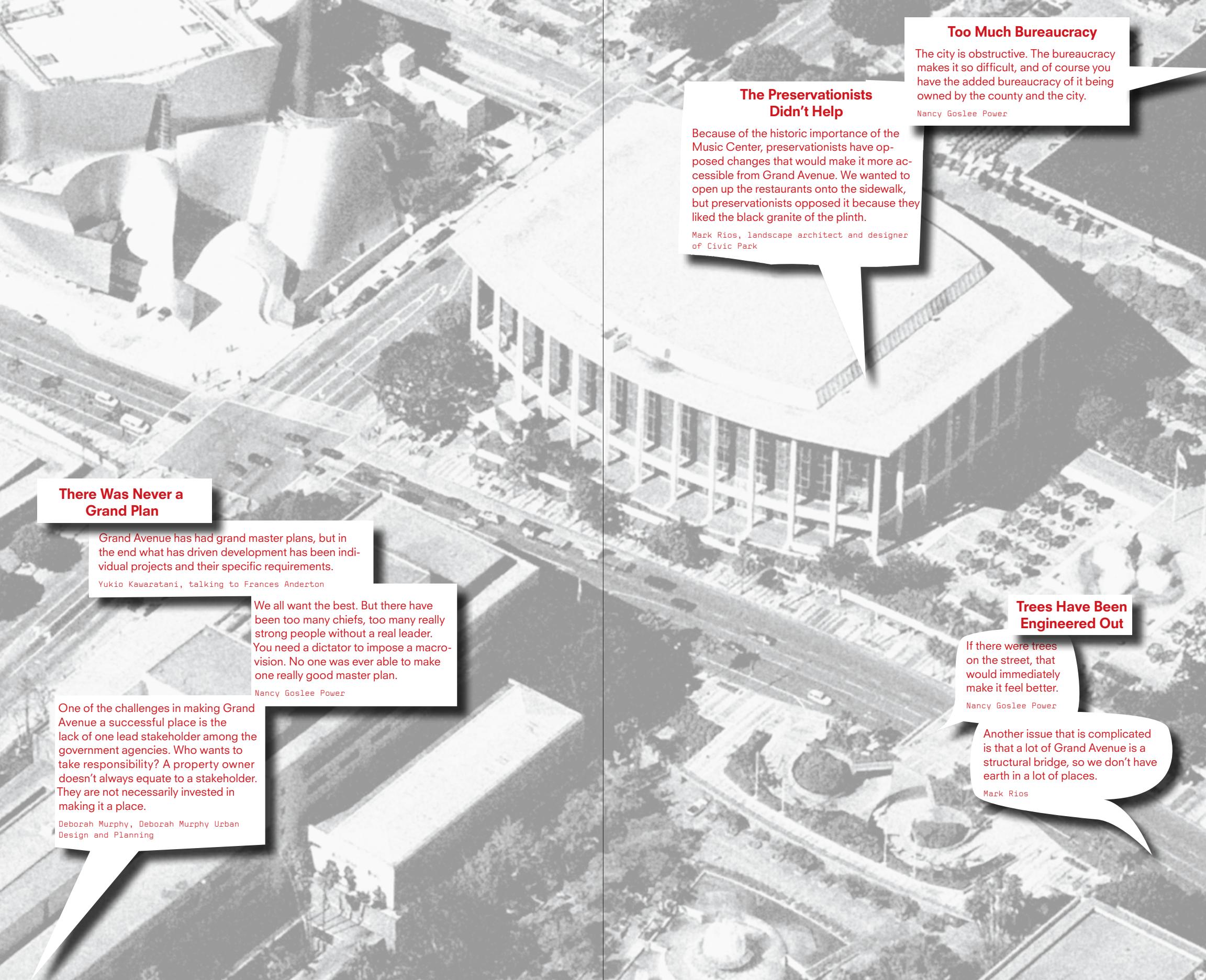
The fundamental thing is that Grand Avenue is on top of a hill, and no matter how you cut it, it is very difficult to integrate some type of fabulous urban life with the rest of Los Angeles when you have to walk up literally 100 to 120 feet to get up there from every direction.

John Kaliski, principal, Urban Studio; former senior architect, CRA

Grand Was Meant for Cars

Originally, when they did the Music Center, Grand Avenue was going to be the back door and Hope was going to be the front door. Then they decided to build MOCA on Grand and it flipped. So you understand why the backside of the Music Center is less attractive.

Nancy Goslee Power, garden designer responsible for the planting on Grand Avenue between Second and Temple



Too Much Bureaucracy

The city is obstructive. The bureaucracy makes it so difficult, and of course you have the added bureaucracy of it being owned by the county and the city.

Nancy Goslee Power

The Preservationists Didn't Help

Because of the historic importance of the Music Center, preservationists have opposed changes that would make it more accessible from Grand Avenue. We wanted to open up the restaurants onto the sidewalk, but preservationists opposed it because they liked the black granite of the plinth.

Mark Rios, landscape architect and designer of Civic Park

There Was Never a Grand Plan

Grand Avenue has had grand master plans, but in the end what has driven development has been individual projects and their specific requirements.

Yukio Kawaratan, talking to Frances Anderton

We all want the best. But there have been too many chiefs, too many really strong people without a real leader. You need a dictator to impose a macro-vision. No one was ever able to make one really good master plan.

Nancy Goslee Power

One of the challenges in making Grand Avenue a successful place is the lack of one lead stakeholder among the government agencies. Who wants to take responsibility? A property owner doesn't always equate to a stakeholder. They are not necessarily invested in making it a place.

Deborah Murphy, Deborah Murphy Urban Design and Planning

Trees Have Been Engineered Out

If there were trees on the street, that would immediately make it feel better.

Nancy Goslee Power

Another issue that is complicated is that a lot of Grand Avenue is a structural bridge, so we don't have earth in a lot of places.

Mark Rios

“The Layering of Planning Ideas”: 1849–Now

Gehry Partners asked the students to examine the “layering of planning ideas” in relation to the buildings that went up as Grand Avenue developed. On the following pages, [Jared Shier](#) explains the plans that shaped Bunker Hill, dating back to the early part of the twentieth century, through the defining midcentury period of urban renewal on Bunker Hill and continuing to the present with plans for Civic Park, the Grand Avenue Project, and now The Broad. What Shier reveals is that despite numerous efforts at grand master planning, what actually got built were piecemeal individual developments shaped by financial and site considerations relating more to development deals rather than to any cohesive vision. These often resulted in urban problems that the next plan endeavored to remediate.

So Why Keep Trying to Improve It?

I think that change like this evolves over time, over ten or twenty years. It does change, and it just happens piece by piece. If Gehry’s commercial project ever goes ahead, that’ll be a huge change. Once the park opens, that will open it a lot. One of the problems right now is you can’t see the fountain and the Starbucks, but when the park is completed you will. I still think it’s the right thing to do.

Mack Rios

[The money invested in Bunker Hill] was absolutely well spent. [The CRA] took a severely deteriorated/dilapidated district with major health problems such as proliferation of tuberculosis and other diseases, buildings that did not meet fire and other codes, and with high rates of crime often perpetrated against defenseless and elderly residents and replaced it with an economically productive and much more secure zone. We acknowledge that we didn’t have a full understanding of social networks in the community and have since learned to be much more sensitive to those. We’ve also learned a lot about workable urban space and are doing better in more recent developments.

Don Spivack

I think it’s wrong to say it’s too difficult, you can’t do anything. Once you’ve got the cathedral, the Disney Concert Hall, it makes sense to keep trying to add other pieces to it to make the interaction between the land uses and the buildings become something interesting in itself.

John Chase (1953–2010), urban designer for the city of West Hollywood, in conversation with Frances Anderton on [DnA](#), KCRW, May 6, 2006



THE EARLY DAYS: THE VICTORIANS AND “THE HILLY SECTION”

Bunker Hill is the result of real estate greed and the best of intentions. Today it exists as an emblem of the city’s growth, a place of limitless potential scarred by carelessness. It also stands as an expression of the aspirations and failings of the Community Redevelopment Agency, which took control of Bunker Hill in 1948 and has shepherded its growth to this day.

Since the earliest days of Los Angeles’s development, Bunker Hill has proven problematic. By the late 1800s, the prospect of abundant and inexpensive land enticed wealthy business owners to purchase large tracts of land to trade with one another or sell to developers. These land speculators were essentially a tight-knit group of high-stakes gamblers who knew one another and battled among themselves at land auctions. Most famous of the bunch was Prudent Beaudry, who in 1867 purchased a small tract of land just to the east of present-day Bunker Hill. He immediately had a map drawn of the tract and the large portion of land to the northwest. Beaudry submitted this map to the city with a request to purchase the unclaimed land on the hill. Coincidentally, a rival of Beaudry’s, Stephen Mott, submitted his own map to the city expressing interest in the very same tract of unclaimed land. For reasons that are unclear, the Bunker Hill tract was awarded not to Beaudry but to Mott.¹

Bunker Hill would sit vacant for another five years until an extensive system of water pipes was installed in what was then called “the hilly section” of the Mott tract. In 1874 work began on grading the roads of Bunker Hill. The map of the tract submitted to the city by Mott did not address the contours of the hill and instead designated a grid of roads laid across the hill that connected into the existing road network. This presented an interesting challenge. Bunker Hill was so steep that grading the roads as prescribed by Mott would create a point along every street that a carriage couldn’t climb. In fact, every road on Bunker Hill had a sign that read “Impassable for Teams.”² It is believed that Mott chose to draw the roads this way to increase land values on the hill, as these roads would share the names of pre-established roads in the city.

Development was slow to start, but the hill gradually came to be populated with predominantly wealthy business owners, doctors, and lawyers who worked in the city center below. As the city expanded on oil and its growing network of streetcars, however, Bunker Hill and its steep terrain made it impossible for streetcars to travel over the hill. The Third Street Tunnel, built in 1901,

A Pacific Electric Railway tunnel under construction at First Street and Glendale Boulevard, 1926. California Historical Society. Photo: Charles Puck. University of Southern California, Title Insurance and Trust/C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860–1960.

allowed streetcars to ignore Bunker Hill's terrain and continue their journey westward.³

When the automobile entered the scene, the increase in traffic congestion forced the construction of several more tunnels, but even this didn't change the public's perception of the hill as an impediment. C. C. Bigelow, president of the Southwestern Investment Corporation, famously proclaimed in 1929 that Bunker Hill is "a barrier to progress in the business district of Los Angeles, preventing natural expansion westward...the removal or regrading of Bunker Hill is practically a necessity."

Although exceedingly critical of Bunker Hill, Bigelow recognized that the problems on Bunker Hill were the direct result of the actions of planners and developers, stating, "These tunnels have merely aided in relieving traffic congestion and have further isolated the hill area above."

1—Pat Adler, The Bunker Hill Story (Glendale, CA: La Siesta Press, 1964).

2—Ibid.

3—Arnold Hylen, Bunker Hill, a Los Angeles Landmark (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1976).

(Bunker Hill) was called "a barrier to progress in the business district of Los Angeles, preventing natural expansion westward."

MAPPING BUNKER HILL'S HISTORY

To understand the "layering" of plans that formed Grand Avenue, Jared Shier selected some of the images and redrew them in a uniform style, so as to better illustrate how the plans build on top of one another, as well as to compare the idealized visions for Grand Avenue with what was actually realized.

I gave myself the task of redrawing some of the key plans for Bunker Hill, thinking it would be easy. The premise was simple: compare each redevelopment plan to the one that followed to better understand how much of each plan was actually implemented. After all, it's the layering of these plans that makes Bunker Hill such a confusing and intriguing problem.

Right away I had difficulty locating any redevelopment plans. The Community Redevelopment Agency's web site had two plans: a map of Bunker Hill pre-dating redevelopment efforts, and a map of Bunker Hill after it had been partially leveled and divided into the superblocks that exist today. Aside from a few grainy photos of physical models built in the 1960s and 1970s, I could not find anything. When I asked Don Spivack, then deputy chief of operations and policy for the CRA, for his expertise, I soon learned things were even more complicated than I had come to believe.

A MULTITUDE OF PLANS

In this bureaucratic and decentralized city, there is never just one plan that rules them all. There are municipal plans, community plans, district plans, redevelopment plans, designs for development, and competition plans. Each of these plans influenced the development of Bunker Hill in one way or another. As it turns out, most of these plans are legal documents drawn up by the city or the CRA and cover issues such as land use, densities, and methods of acquisition. The plans that became the most important were designs for development (overlays to the redevelopment plan of 1959, which was amended often, starting in the 1960s) that set out architecture and urban design rules, regulations, and guidelines. For each design for development, the CRA worked with an architect to draft a new master plan and construct a model.

Although the CRA doesn't keep any of these designs in its archive, its staff pointed me in the right direction. All of the agency's historic material is housed in the Special Collections Department at USC. There I pored over fifteen boxes of historic photos, letters, newspaper articles, and meeting minutes to find the original design for development plans. This was more interesting than it sounds,

because I learned some fascinating things in the process—chief among them being the role of the car.

CAR WAS KING

Everyone knows that the car is king in Los Angeles, but I had not realized just how much it ruled Bunker Hill. I found extensive records of parking studies, lot locations, peripheral parking solutions, ways to separate the car from the pedestrian, and so forth. It seems more attention was paid to the automobile than to the human experience. Everything was geared toward making life easier for the visitor, so long as that visitor is in a car. Each building had its own massive parking structure with excessive parking allotments to ensure that visitors could park close to their destination. It appears that the earliest attempts at encouraging walking involved building elevated pedestrian walkways. These would have allowed pedestrians to walk without disturbing the traffic below and probably would have tied in nicely with the People Mover had it actually been built in the early 1970s. Today the existing pedestrian infrastructure is unintuitive and confusing.

EACH DECADE, A DESIGN SHIFT

By studying the designs for development and skimming some of the other plans, I noticed that every decade there was a major shift in design approach. The 1960s saw a modernist plan by the architect I. M. Pei that separated uses according to the urban

It seems more attention was paid to the automobile than to the human experience.



Pigeons and parking: looking south from Third Place and Grand Avenue, 1960. University of Southern California, Los Angeles Examiner Prints Collection, late 1920s–1961.

Bunker Hill at the Movies

City leaders, postwar, may not have liked Bunker Hill, but Hollywood loved it. Filmmakers were attracted to the very characteristics that doomed the hill in the minds of anti-blighters. According to Wikipedia, “In the 1940s and 1950s, Bunker Hill was a popular film setting, especially in the film noir genre, because of its rundown Victorian homes, its rambling hillside apartments and flophouses, its funicular Angels Flight, and its mean (or at least mean-looking) streets. It was used extensively in such crime films as *Kiss Me Deadly* (1956), *Criss Cross* (1949), Joseph Losey’s *M* (1951) and *Angel’s Flight* (1965). Director Curtis Hansen [sic] recreated Bunker Hill in another hilly neighborhood altogether in his Oscar Award winning *L.A. Confidential* (1997). Kent Mckenzie’s neo-realist and semi-documentary feature *The Exiles* (1961) depicts the lives of a tribe of urban Indians on Bunker Hill in the late 1950s. Angels Flight and its Third Street neighborhood, circa 1930s, were recreated in South Africa for the filming of *Ask the Dust* (2006), based on the novel by John Fante, which was set in the district in the 1930s.”

Source: Wikipedia.org

renewal principles of the era (a plan that failed to be realized). This was followed by the futuristic 1970s plans that sought to elevate the pedestrian above the street. Towers constructed in the 1970s, such as the Wells Fargo Center (built 1973), incorporated low-rise shops and restaurants for workers and paved courtyards and plazas, a departure from the large grassy plazas of the 1960s.

The 1980s saw the most financial investment in Bunker Hill with the construction of massive commercial towers with high floor area ratios (FARs) and plazas that aimed at a greater civic presence, like California Plaza’s water court. During the 1990s, economic turmoil allowed planners to reflect on the previous thirty years of development and reassess their approach in terms of both architectural form and planning. This turn of events birthed the Walt Disney Concert Hall, a fantastic sculpture of silver sails that, on its completion in 2003, was emblematic of an era of digitally enabled expressionist architecture dominated by the architect Frank Gehry. The design also engaged more directly with the street, with entrances and restaurants opening onto Grand Avenue.

Next came Related Companies’ Grand Avenue project, an effort to restore shops and more people to Bunker Hill with a mixed-use development comprising retail, residential, hotels, and restaurants and also designed by Gehry Partners. As of this writing, none of the goals of this new plan has been realized due to the economic downturn of 2008, save for the public component of the project—Civic Park, financed with \$50 million plus interest set aside by Related Companies as part of its deal with the Grand Avenue Committee—and, in place of a portion of the retail, Eli Broad’s new museum designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Dubbed “the veil and the vault,” The Broad will stand as an example of the monolithic structure so popular in the first decade of the twenty-first century, in which the architectural drama lies in the textured structural “skin.”

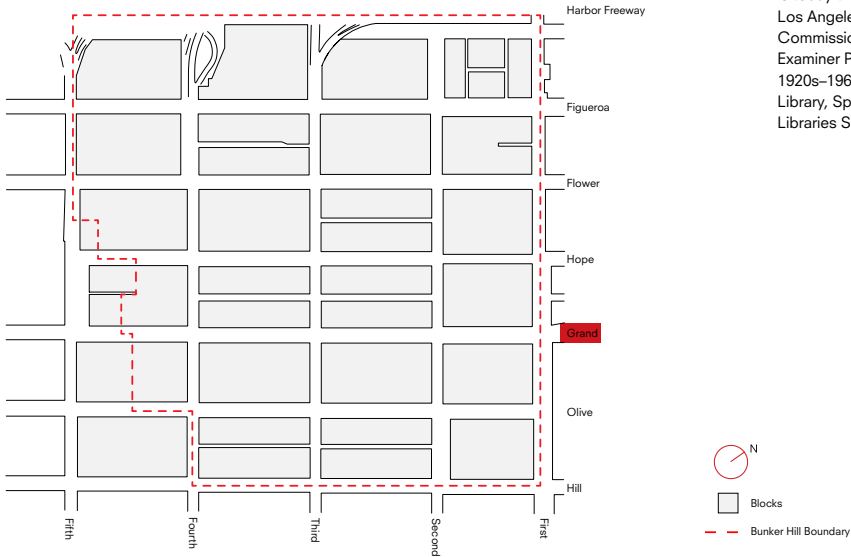
Civic Park connects the Music Center to city hall. Reflective of the changing approaches to civic architecture, it was designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios, with plenty of input from various agencies and local community groups. This process capped an era that saw a transition from the top-down planning of the postwar years to our current post–Jane Jacobs period of greater community engagement—with good and bad results: critics charged that early iterations of the design were weakened by having too many cooks.

Despite the obstacles, this project, and the pending retail and residential plan, might just prove to be Bunker Hill’s final opportunity to position itself as an enlivened city center fifty years of development later.

MAPS AND PLANS OF BUNKER HILL: 1950-NOW

1950: BUNKER HILL BEFORE THE CRA INVOLVEMENT

Before Bunker Hill became the target of major redevelopment efforts, the area was divided into blocks similar in size to those of New York City. The parcels were filled predominantly with Victorian-style homes and boardinghouses. By the late 1940s the Health Department declared Bunker Hill a health hazard. City officials decided to start over from scratch.



Shown on pages 40-51 are maps of plans made for Bunker Hill (redrawn by Jared Shier), shown decade by decade, with actual images from the same period shown on the facing page.

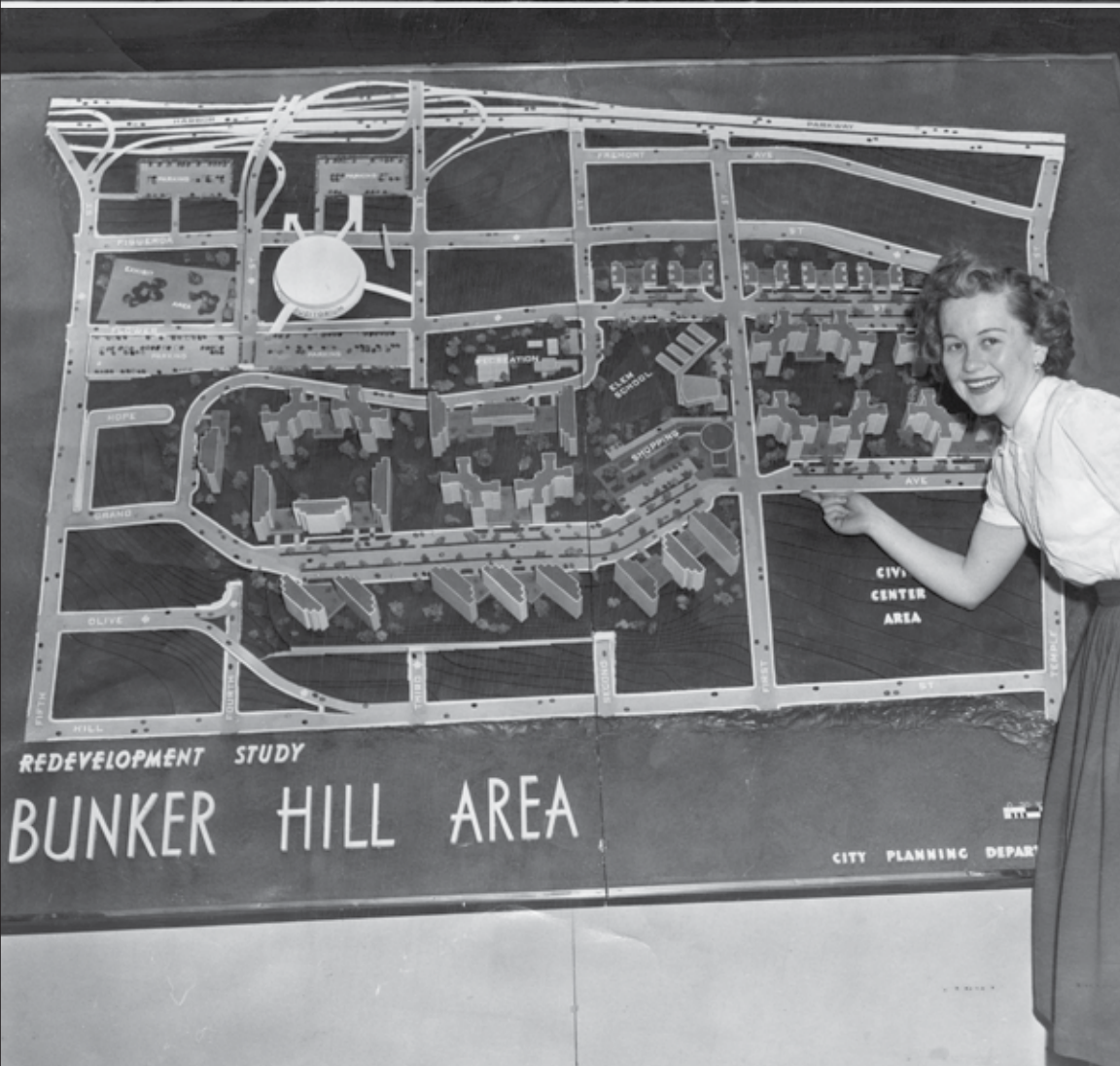
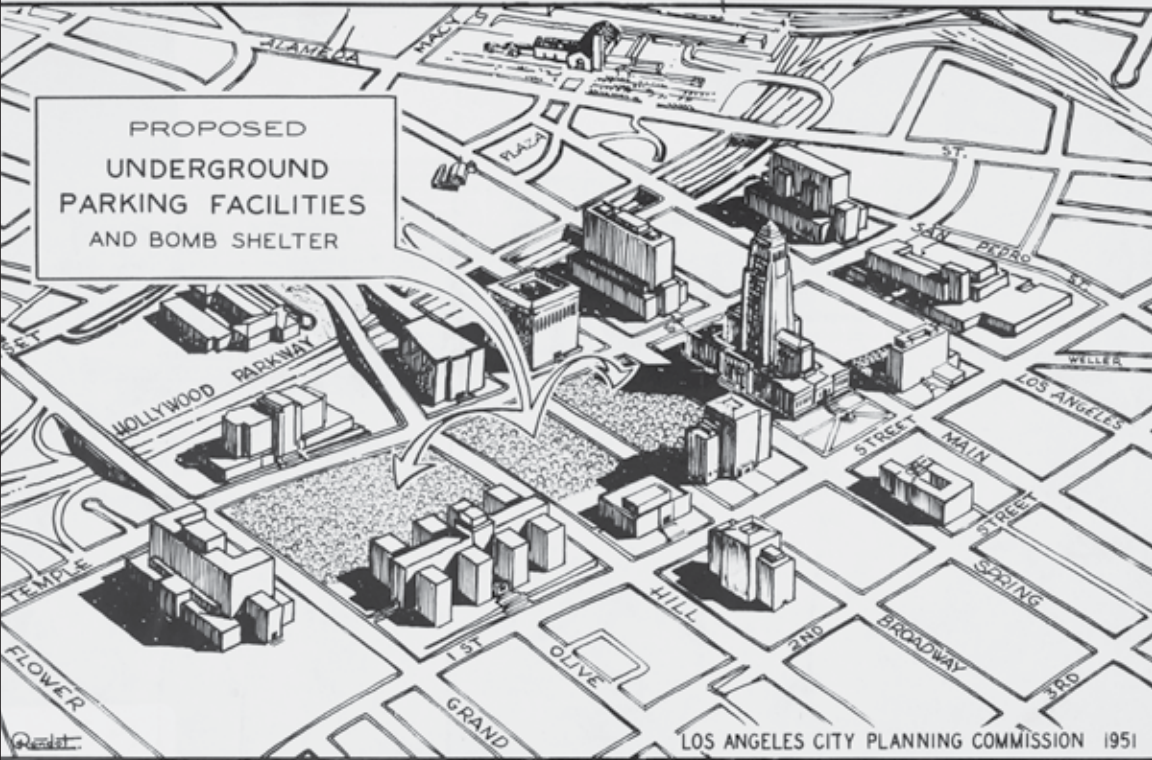
Reflecting the Cold War anxiety of the time, this plan for underground parking facilities and a bomb shelter was once proposed on the site of what is today the new Civic Park. Los Angeles City Planning Commission, 1951. Los Angeles Examiner Prints Collection, late 1920s-1961. Doheny Memorial Library, Special Collections, USC Libraries Special Collections.

1959:

First redevelopment plan drawn by the CRA. Every existing structure on the hill was demolished or relocated. The hill was flattened and regraded. Some streets were realigned and all blocks were redivided and given a letter designation. It was believed all of the parcels would be developed within six years, but the majority of the land remained stagnant as parking lots for the next twenty years.

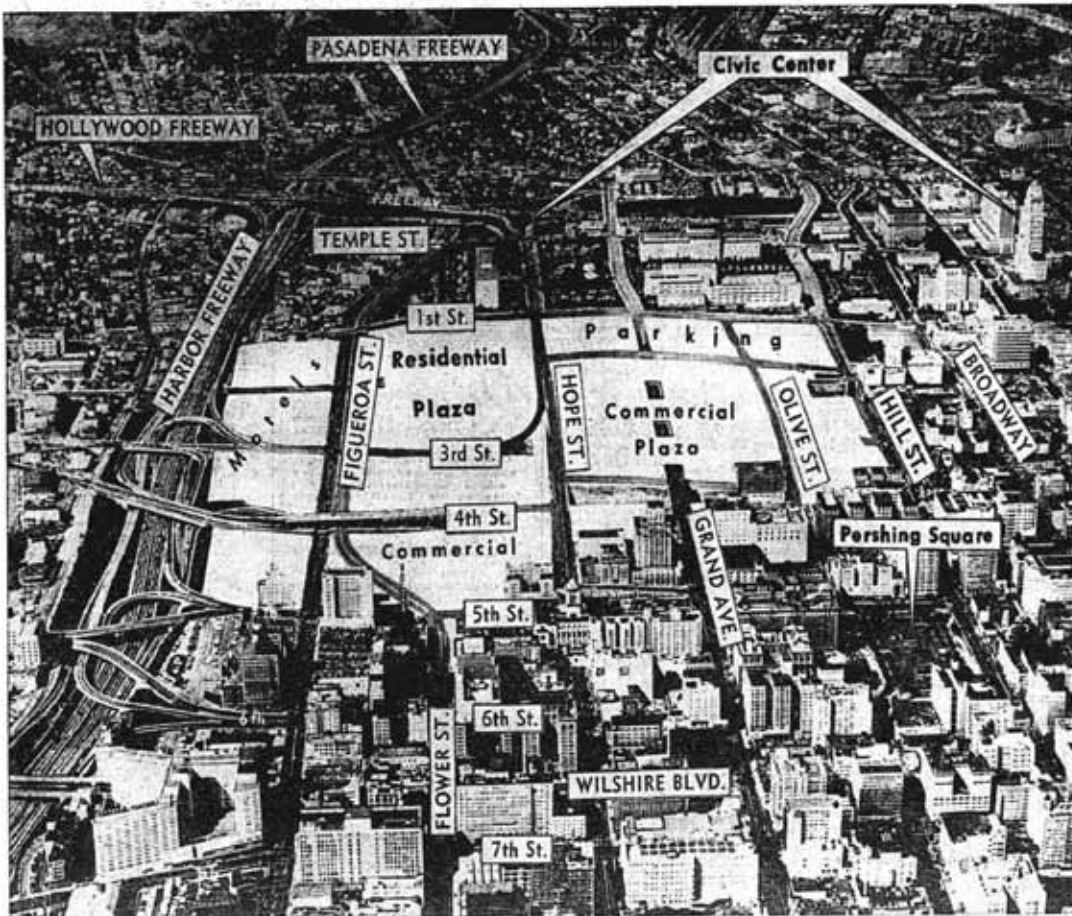


Model of an apartment complex to be built on Bunker Hill, estimated to cost \$200,000 and described then as "one of the greatest building developments in downtown Los Angeles." Herald Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.



Area Included in Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project

34 And Angles Closed TUES, FEB. 10, 1959—Page 3



REDEVELOPMENT AREA—Aerial photo shows the 130-acre Bunker Hill area included in redevelopment project which yesterday won approval of City Council. Once a fashionable residential section, the Hill was declared a slum area in 1949. Boundaries are from 1st St. to 6th and 5th Sts., the Harbor Freeway to Hill St. Civic Center has been altered in photo to indicate some of the planned facilities.

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Freeway to Hill St. Civic Center has been altered in photo to indicate some of the planned facilities.

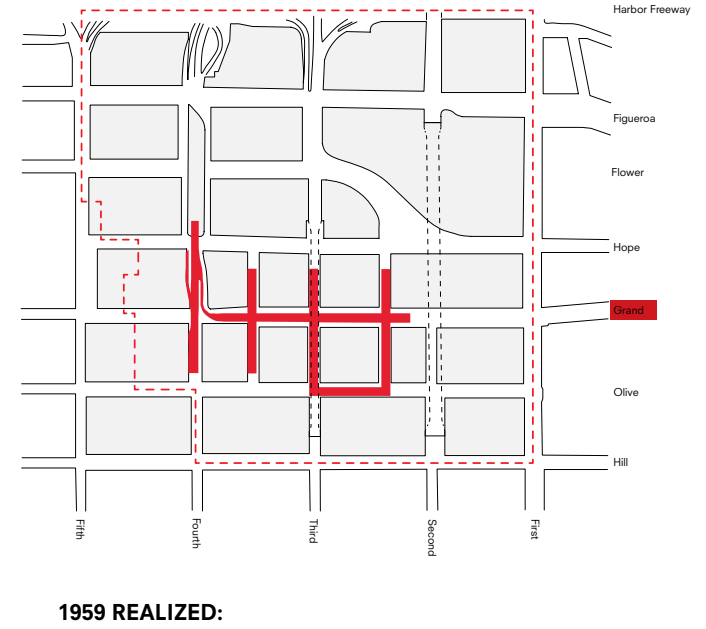
Plans for Dream City Waiting for Signal to Start Work



DREAM MOVES CLOSER—Drawing shows one plan for transforming blighted Bunker Hill into an ultramodern \$345 million residential, business and shopping district. Harbor Freeway runs across right foreground.

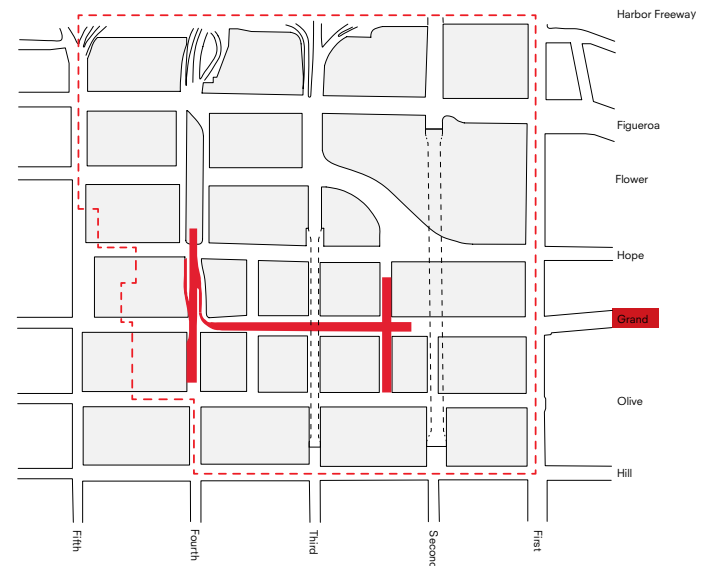
1959 IDEALIZED:

With the 1959 redevelopment plan, the CRA proposed making Grand Avenue two levels. Planners at the time wanted to separate the pedestrian from the vehicle as much as possible. The upper level was intended for pedestrians and light vehicular traffic, while the lower level, which was buried within the hill, would act as a service space for loading docks and access to parking structures.



1959 REALIZED:

Lower Grand Avenue as built. Bunker Hill has always struggled with being disconnected from the city. Lower Grand does little to fix this and, in reality, does more to confuse visitors and remove them from Upper Grand Avenue than was originally intended.



1964 IDEALIZED:

In 1964 the CRA contracted the architect I. M. Pei to draft the Bunker Hill design for development. His proposal exhibited all of the planning conventions of the 1960s. Large housing blocks and commercial sectors cover the majority of the parcels. These single-use zones would later be viewed as one of the biggest hindrances to the revitalization of Bunker Hill.

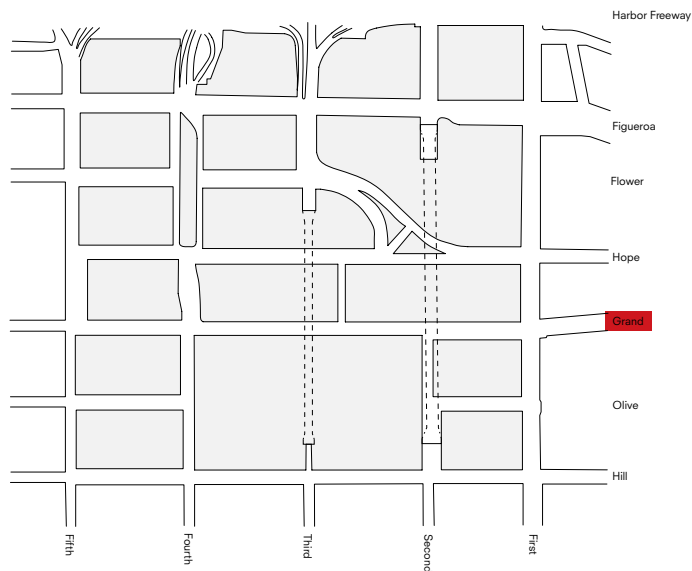


Map of Bunker Hill Redevelopment Plan zones, 1960. University of Southern California, Los Angeles Examiner Negatives Collection, 1950-1961.



1964 REALIZED:

Nothing of I. M. Pei's master plan appears to have been developed. The single-use zones from his plans would remain but were simplified with the next design for development.



Aerial view of Ahmanson Theater, Mark Taper Forum, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and the Department of Water and Power (under construction, early 1960s), "Dick" Whittington Photography Collection, 1924-1987. Creator, Dick Whittington Studio, USC Libraries Special Collections.





BUNKER HILL TOWERS



(Left) Aerial view of downtown Los Angeles, showing the Bank of America building and other high-rise buildings, March 1973, Title Insurance and Trust/C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, 1860–1960, USC Libraries Special Collections.

(Far left) Cover of a brochure for Bunker Hill Towers, 1970.

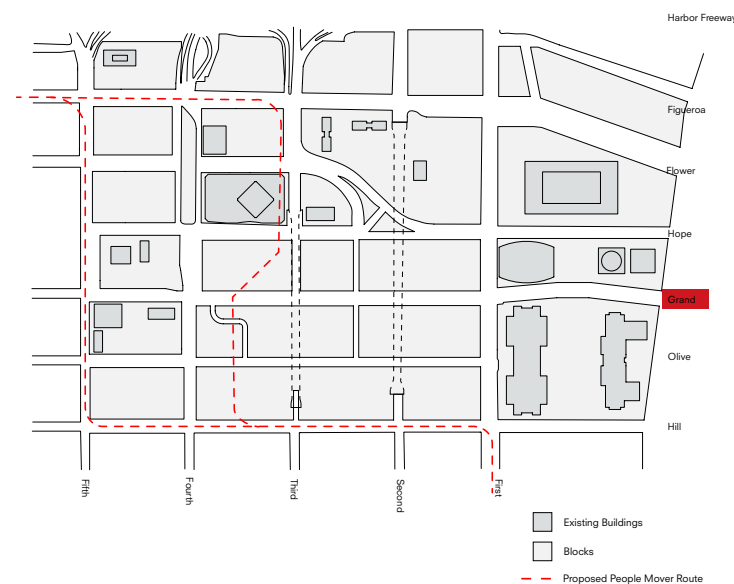
1971 IDEALIZED:

The 1971 design for development proposed an extensive network of elevated walkways that would separate the pedestrian from the street. The residential zone is mostly open space, while the commercial zones are completely covered with office towers and pedestrian walkways.

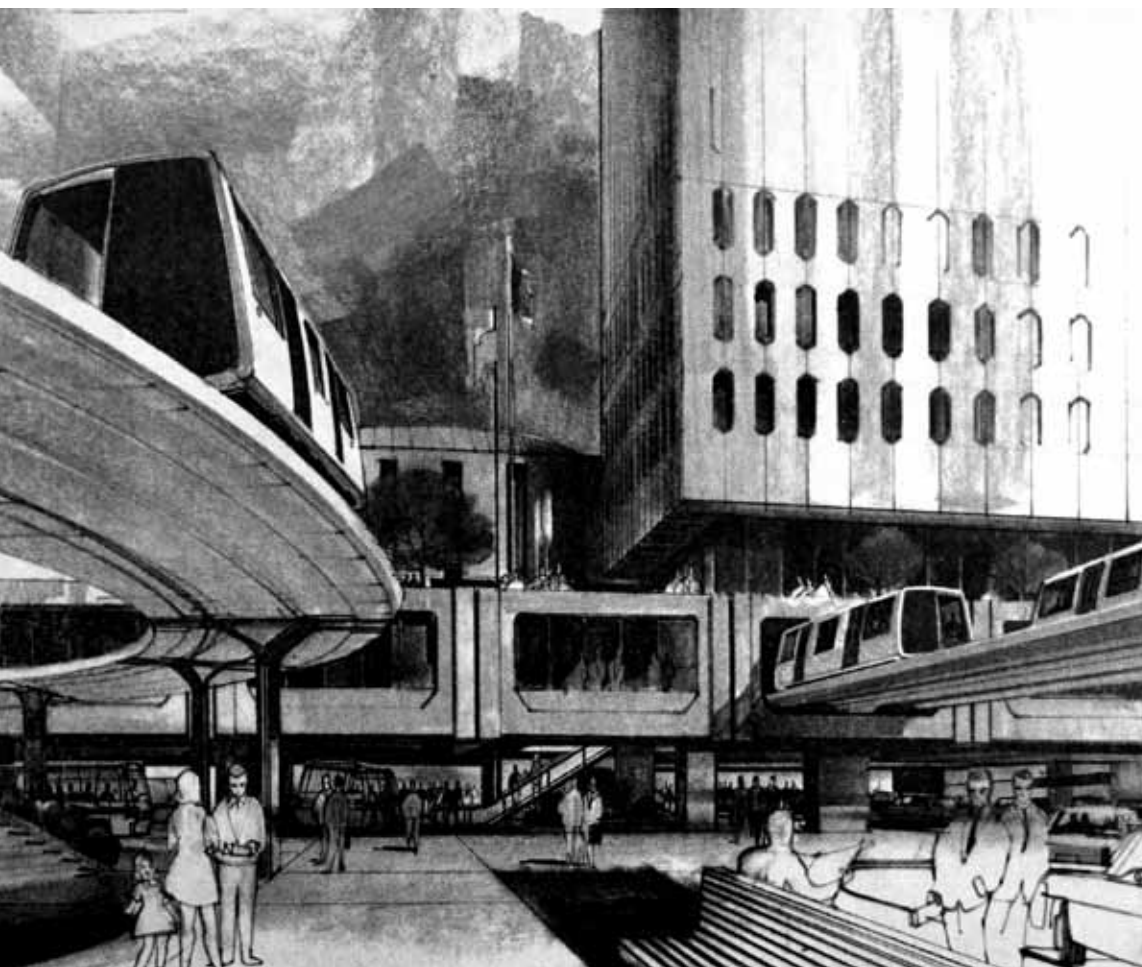


1971 REALIZED:

Like the prior design for development, very little of this plan materialized aside from some residential towers. The undeveloped parcels were paved over and used as surface parking lots. The proposed People Mover and elevated walkways would continue to influence future development, however.

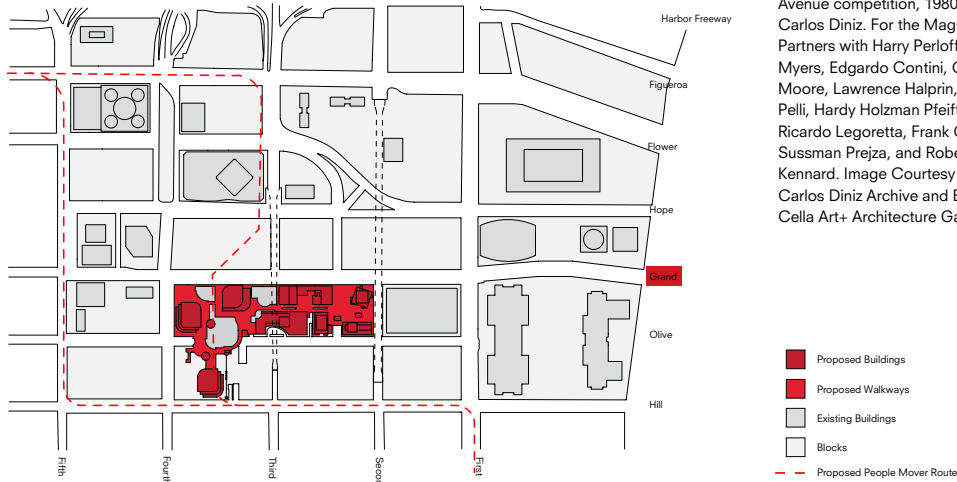


Artist's rendition of the People Mover in Bunker Hill. The Los Angeles Downtown People Mover by the Community Redevelopment Agency, ca. 1970s. Box 16/Folder 1, Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project records, Collection no. 0226, Regional History Collections, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.



1980 IDEALIZED:

California Plaza was the major development of the 1980s. The project spanned four parcels and combined three of them into a superblock. This project became famous for the design competition in which a group of all-star designers lost the commission to a less-inspired design proposal. The public art component of this development led to the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art on the site. Although construction on the People Mover hadn't begun, the tower locations were restricted by the proposed route.

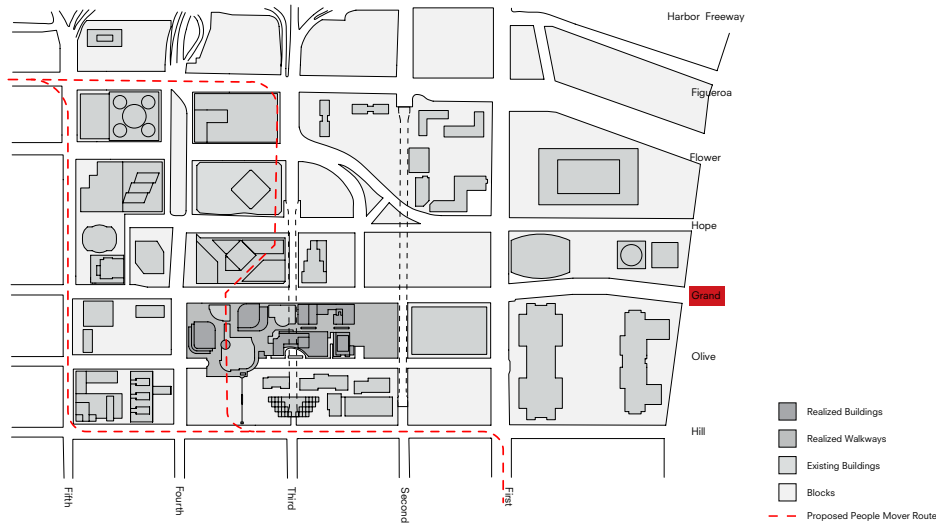


(Right) Architect's model of the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project. Bunker Hill Towers complex looking northeast, toward the Department of Water and Power and the Music Center, 1963. Courtesy I. M. Pei & Associates. Herald Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

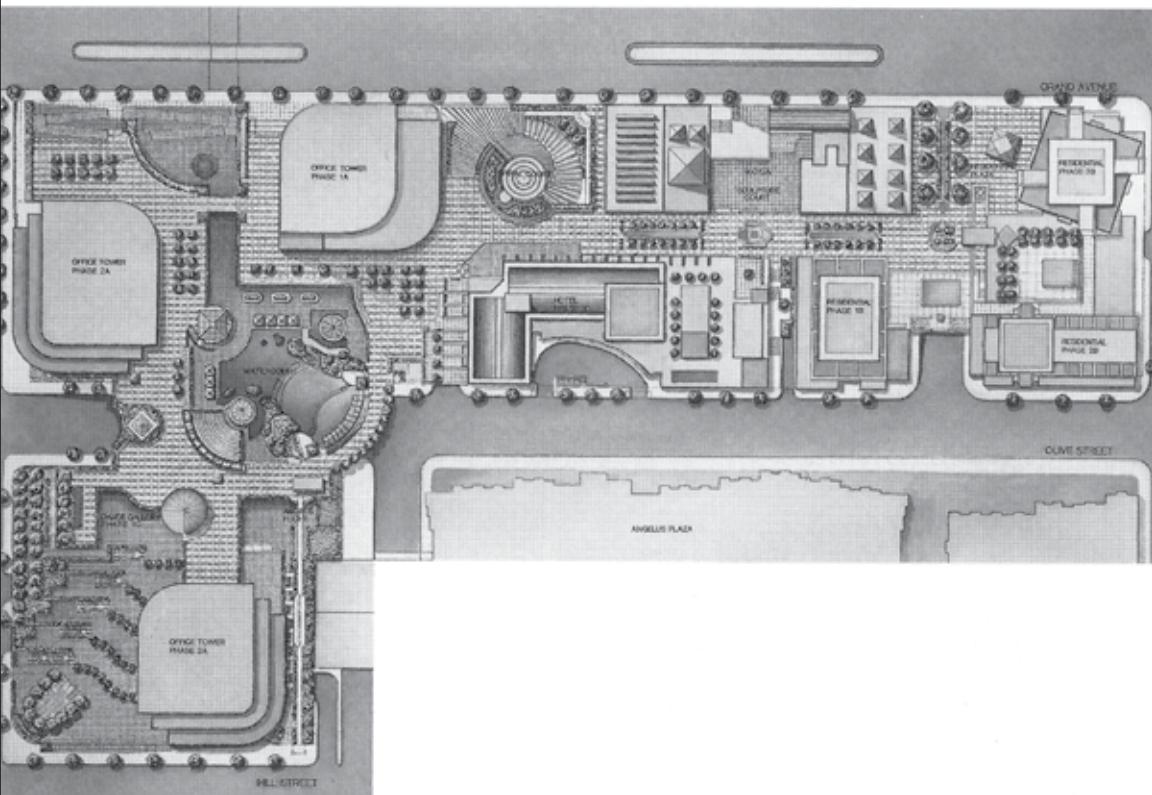
(Far right) Overall view of Grand Avenue competition, 1980, by Carlos Diniz. For the Maguire Partners with Harry Perloff, Barton Myers, Edgardo Contini, Charles Moore, Lawrence Halprin, Cesar Pelli, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, Ricardo Legoretta, Frank Gehry, Sussman Prejza, and Robert Kennard. Image Courtesy of Carlos Diniz Archive and Edward Cella Art+ Architecture Gallery

1980 REALIZED:

Only two of the three commercial towers were constructed, leaving the eastern parcel vacant until it was later converted into Angels Knoll Park. Phase 3 of the development consisted of apartment towers on the north end of the site. These towers were never built, and instead the Colburn School of Music was located there. Though the People Mover was abandoned, the effects its planning had on development are obvious today. Like the Cal Plaza Towers, the Wells Fargo Center to the west was shaped around the anticipated route.



California Plaza site plan. Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles.



2004 IDEALIZED:

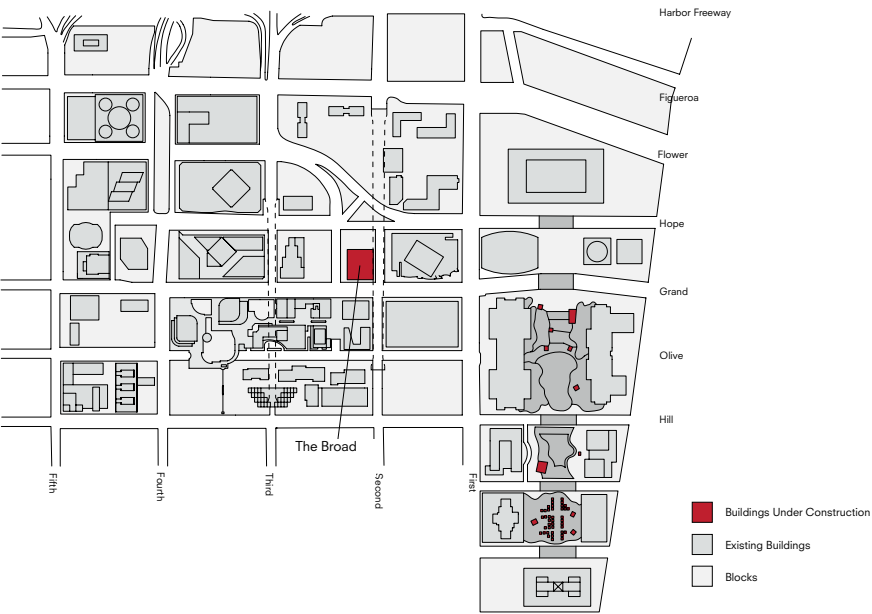
The Grand Avenue Project will fill in the remaining vacant parcels on Bunker Hill. The public component involves redesigning Civic Park and more effectively connecting city hall to Grand Avenue. The intent is to draw high-end retail and condominiums to the hill in the hope of transforming Bunker Hill into a thriving city center.

Civic Park. Courtesy Rios Clementi Hale Studios.




2008 REALIZED:

The 2008 financial crisis stalled the majority of the Grand Avenue Project. Construction on the redesigned Civic Park began in 2010, but the remainder of the project is on hold. Parcel L, originally targeted for residential condominiums, was released for construction of The Broad. Construction on the Diller Scofidio + Renfro-designed museum began in 2011.



Grand Avenue plan.
Courtesy Related Companies.





One California Plaza (far left)
and Two California Plaza (left).
Photo: Huaiming Liao.

**THE NEW DOWNTOWN:
CALIFORNIA PLAZA AND
BUNKER HILL IN THE 1980S**

In cities like New York and San Francisco,

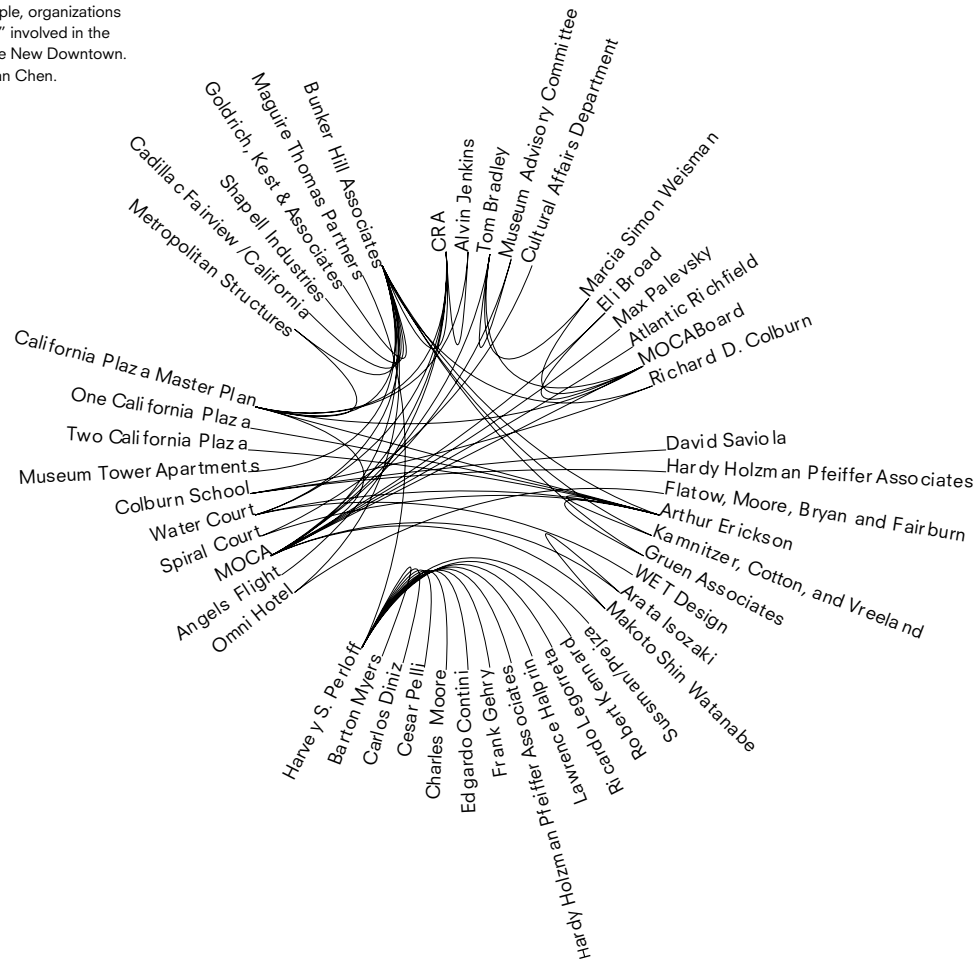
corporate and hipster and tourist and local all mix together

in downtown public areas, because there is something attractive for each of them. I have worked in California Plaza since moving to Los Angeles from New York City in late 2000. When I first started, there was very little going on in downtown in the evenings or on weekends. It was a depressing place off hours. Now, though, you can get a cup of coffee on a Sunday, and there might be a concert any day of the week, and food trucks, and people hanging out in what once were largely empty public spaces. Still no hipsters, though. Bunker Hill has not quite fully arrived.

Stacy Horth-Neubert, attorney, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, One California Plaza

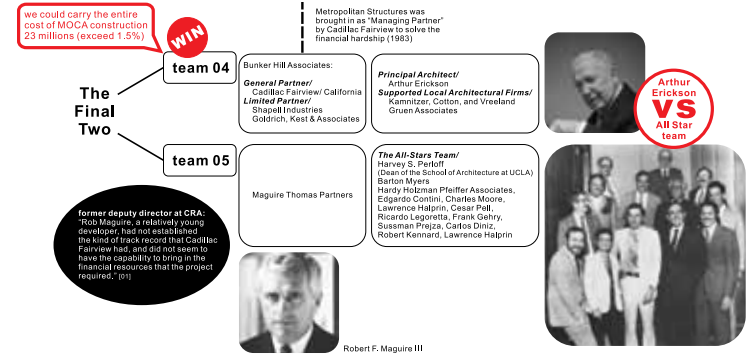
The defining development on Bunker Hill is California Plaza, the glassy corporate complex seen by some as a shining model of LA's economic success in creating modern office towers that would attract international businesses, and by others as emblematic of all that is wrong with Bunker Hill. It consists of two towers, One and Two California Plaza, two public plazas—the spiral court and the water court—and a residential tower, a hotel, MOCA Grand, and the Coburn School. In the end, like other projects on Grand, California Plaza materialized not out of a grand vision but out of prosaic economic considerations. Yu-Quan Chen illustrates how the plaza evolved from a vision to a compromised reality.

Diagram showing “the vortex of power people, organizations and buildings” involved in the creation of the New Downtown. Artist: Yu-Quan Chen.



In 1959 the Los Angeles City Council adopted the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project, which was followed by a design for development by Luckman & Pereira for the Community Redevelopment Agency. This was a time when Bunker Hill seemed to have a bright and prosperous future. Toward the end of the redevelopment phase, the CRA decided to initiate a project that would come to serve as the area's major attraction; the agency called it the “new downtown.” It later became California Plaza. The CRA designated lots R, S, T, U, and Y—large multiple parcels—as one development zone comprising three office towers, three residential towers, a hotel, commercial spaces, and a 1.5-acre park. Finally, in 1979, developers were invited to bid on the project.

The final two teams compete for the New Downtown project. Artist: Yu-Quan Chen.



“THEY WERE THE MONEY PEOPLE”

At 11.2 acres, this huge, mixed-use project attracted many teams of developers and designers. Two emerged: One was Bunker Hill Associates (Cadillac Fairview, Shapell Industries, and Goldrich, Kest & Associates), with the Canadian architect Arthur Erickson and others. The other was Maguire Thomas Partners and an “all-star” team of bright young designers and architects, including Frank Gehry, Sussman/Prejza, Barton Myers, Charles Moore, Lawrence Halprin, Ricardo Legorreta, and Cesar Pelli.

“In place of a unified nod to the master plan developed by Luckman,” writes Peter Zellner in “Downtown...Again,” “the All Stars presented an ‘exquisite corpse’—nine projects approximately connected by a variety of public spaces developed by Moore and Halprin. Emblematic of Moore and Gehry’s adventurous and often outré public work of the period (Moore’s Piazza D’Italia or Gehry’s Loyola Law School), the entry was rejected.”¹

The architect Rem Koolhaas, Zellner continues, declared that Arthur Erickson’s scheme “poignantly evokes what is no longer there: conviction, seriousness, invention.... [F]or lovers of Los Angeles’ ‘no-topia’ both schemes are disappointingly alien to locale mythology. In fact the images they offer are similarly removed from the LA myth of the freeway, of low intensity etc. Granting it would be another kind of nostalgia to condemn LA to a perpetual life without

Was It Worth It?

1959–1964

Cleared from
Bunker Hill:



7,350 residential
units



and hundreds of
businesses

**Bunker Hill today,
after considerable
public investment*:**



11,000,000 sq ft
commercial space



3,255 residential
units



2,200 hotel rooms

*Total revenues from
Bunker Hill to end of
FY11: \$776,547,539
Amount spent on housing
outside Bunker Hill:
\$415,039,456
Difference spent on
Bunker Hill itself:
\$361,508,083, of
which approximately
\$72,300,000 went to
affordable housing and
\$289,206,466 for land
assemblage, relocation,
and public improvements
(infrastructure).
The \$289 million
leveraged roughly \$2.6
billion in private
investment.

Source: Don Spivack, CRA.

a center of gravity, it is surprising that the image of downtown is presented here as merely an East Coast one seen through rose-tinted polaroids.”

Koolhaas’s skepticism notwithstanding, this was potentially an exciting moment for Los Angeles architecture, and the All-Stars’ scheme was embraced by many in the CRA. But in the end, it came down to money. “We loved Maguire’s plan,” recalls Yukio Kawaratani, then senior planner at the CRA, but the Canadian master builders Cadillac Fairview had more experience than Robert Maguire. Says Kawaratani, “They were the money people.”

As it turned out, however, Cadillac Fairview were not the “money people” after all. The builders were unable to pay the full cost—\$205 million—of the first phase of California Plaza and had to bring in one of the losing developers, Metropolitan Structures, who became the lead developer. Then, in 1995, hit by the recession of the early 1990s, Metropolitan Structures had to foreclose. Because of differences of opinion between the developers, the MOCA board, the CRA, and the Cultural Affairs Department, Arthur Erickson was forced to modify the original master plan.

PROJECT INTERRUPTUS

After all the political and business wrangling, and in the wake of the recession, California Plaza was never completely finished. Following the completion of phases 1 and 2, construction on Three California Plaza and the other two residential towers was canceled, in part because of the failure to close a long-anticipated deal to site the Bella Lewitzky Dance Company under Three California Plaza. The dance company was expected to be an important cultural destination, recalls CRA former deputy chief Don Spivack. The original site of the residential towers later became the new home of the Colburn School.

California Plaza’s two original goals were to connect the old downtown (Broadway) with the new downtown (Bunker Hill), and to create a major attraction to visitors and residents. Neither goal was achieved. Ironically, instead of uniting Broadway and Bunker Hill, the unfinished project has become the biggest obstacle to the connection of the two areas. The water court is directly cut off from where it meets Angels Knoll. Surprisingly, even after all the effort to make California Plaza pass across Olive Street, access between the plaza and the bottom of the hill is sadly limited. In addition, the inward-oriented design obviously has nothing to do with attracting the public. Cal Plaza has tried to counter this with its summertime Grand Performances in the water court. Highly popular, these concerts attract thousands, perhaps serving as a model for other ways in which to invigorate Bunker Hill.

By the time phases 1 and 2 of the plaza were finished, the ideas about what constituted good urban space had changed. It is hard to blame the redevelopment projects of the 1960s, says Don Spivack, but it is “easier to blame the projects of the 1980s that made the same mistakes as the ones in the 1960s.”

1—Peter Zellner, “Downtown...Again,” online article, Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design, 2004.

Otherwise the Developers Could Have Sued Us.

Much of what was built on Bunker Hill was transactional, determined by financial and site considerations, resulting in decisions that in hindsight seem tragically shortsighted. Yukio Kawaratani, former CRA senior planner, describes to Frances Anderton how, for example, the building of Bunker Hill Towers led to the loss of subway infrastructure: “When we did the Bunker Hill Towers, we had to build a whole street system on the west side. But there was a tunnel underneath, from Second, which was built in the 1920s for the old street-cars. City engineers said, You can’t add earth here for the road system, as it will put additional stress on that tunnel. City people said, You’ve got to protect that tunnel. So we asked, Who’s responsible for the tunnel? It turned out it was Southern Pacific. But there was no way they could beef it up, and then they deeded it to the city and we couldn’t build the street over it. We took a lot of flak, but we were forced to block the tunnel. Otherwise the developers could have sued us.”

Hill Street entrance to the Second Street tunnel, under construction, ca. 1920. No photographer listed. California Historical Society, University of Southern California.

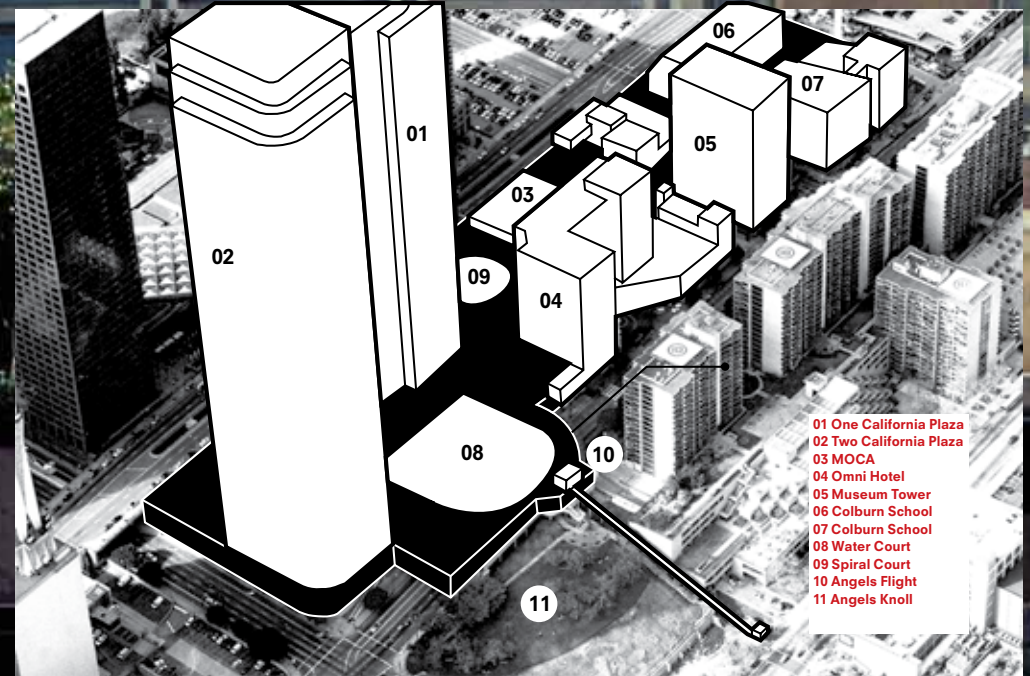
The Water Court, California Plaza. Photo: Jennifer Choi.

A set of architects produced a scheme that was quite brilliant but because the developer was not strong enough the CRA and other government bodies went with the other

scheme that we are now stuck with.

Joseph Giovannini, architect and critic, on the CRA's rejection of the 1981 scheme by the "all-star" team, on DnA, KCRW, February 3, 2004

Diagram of California Plaza.
Artist: Yu-Quan Chen.



There were decisions made along the way that limited what could happen. One was the decision about the grading, and the second was the amount of parking that could be constructed. They shaved the hill down, built parking, and put a top on it. Then the decision that everything would be determined by floor area ratio, coupled with the fact that the parcels were all large, resulted in high-rise towers with large setbacks and open plazas.

Don Spivack, deputy chief of operations and policy for the CRA (1982-2010)

ADDING MOCA TO THE MIX

As progress was under way at California Plaza, local philanthropists saw an opportunity to realize a dream long held by LA's fine arts community: create a public museum for contemporary art. It was agreed that the mandatory 1 percent for art obligation of downtown developers would be used to pay for the museum. Initially they had no location for the museum, but eventually they agreed to site it in what was intended to be a park ringed by towers and a hotel, designed by Arthur Erickson as part of the California Plaza scheme. MOCA's advisers rejected Erickson's plans and held a limited competition to find another architect. To show themselves to be as sophisticated as their East Coast rivals, they picked a blue-chip architect of the era, Arata Isozaki, "an architect from Japan who had a tendency to explain his design concepts to us using Zen-related terminology," recalls the CRA's Yukio Kawaratani, and whose work melded Japanese minimalism and postmodern playfulness with platonic shapes.

Eventually almost 2 percent of construction funds would be used to pay for the museum. In the end, however, MOCA Grand seems to have failed to capture the public's imagination, while the Geffen Contemporary (originally the Temporary Contemporary), designed by Frank Gehry, has proven to be a popular destination, in part for its location and also for its raw architecture and dramatic space. Merry Norris is an art collector and consultant who was involved in the creation of MOCA. She recalls the process.

I was going to New York a lot because I was becoming a passionate collector. New Yorkers are always saying that nothing is happening in LA and you don't even have an institution that shows contemporary art. I thought, *Couldn't we put something together?*

The original concept was to do a Kunsthalle and not a contemporary museum. A few of us walked around downtown Los Angeles trying to locate potential buildings for this concept. Bill Norris—my husband at the time—was friendly with Mayor Tom Bradley, who asked him to set up a committee to explore this idea. We motored along like crazy, and many artists became involved. At some point Tony Berlant, Ed Moses, and Robert Irwin came up with a design for a museum. Then the CRA, specifically its deputy administrator, Don Cosgrove, wrote Bill a letter saying, We'll give you the land on Bunker Hill if you can raise enough money to prove there is community support for this. And that's when I became a fund-raiser. We had to raise ten million dollars in less than a year to prove to the

They selected and hired Arata Isozaki, an architect from Japan who had a tendency to explain his design concepts to us using Zen-related terminology.

Northeast side of Grand Avenue looking south from Third Street, showing the completed MOCA, April 1, 1986. California Historical Society Collection, 1860–1960.

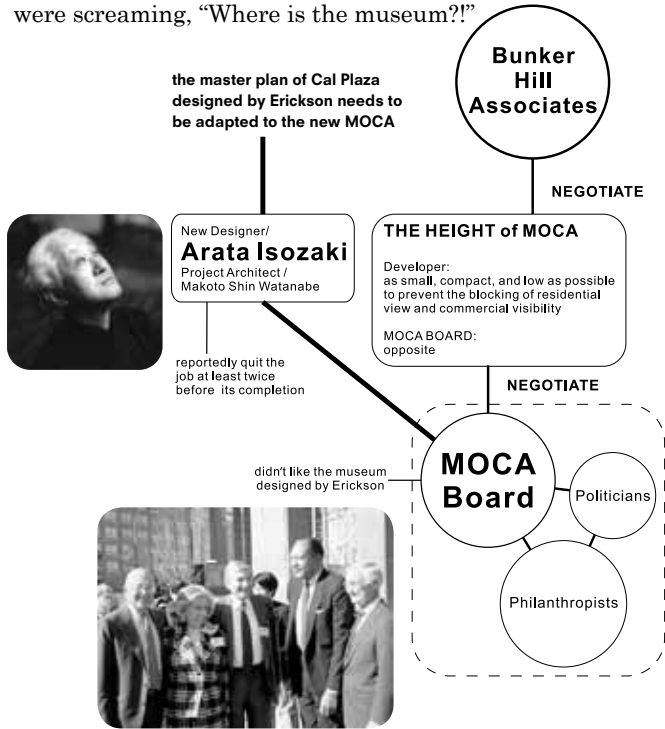
Crowds at the Geffen Contemporary (formerly the Temporary Contemporary), for the members' opening of *Art in the Streets*, April 16, 2011. Photo: Craig Barritt. Courtesy MOCA.



CRA and the city that there was enough interest. In fact, we raised 13.5 million. More and more people kept getting involved. People were so hungry for this.

We organized into two fund-raising camps: Gary Familian and I co-chaired one committee, and Eli Broad and Andrea Van de Kamp went after larger amounts over one million. When Andrea Van de Kamp's year was up, the late art and design collector Max Palevsky insisted that I become interim director of development. I served for six months in that capacity, which was just horrendous because all the people who had donated or pledged more than \$10,000 were screaming, "Where is the museum?!"

Diagram of MOCA people and power connections. Artist: Yu-Quan Chen.



Members of the MOCA Board. From left: Fred Nicholas, Marcia Weisman, Eli Broad, Mayor Tom Bradley, and Bill Norris.

Meanwhile, the city gave MOCA the former police garage in Little Tokyo for a buck a year. The Temporary Contemporary opened in 1983, and I still can remember walking into that huge, fabulous space and just bursting into tears. That was exactly what we always wanted.

Eventually they built the museum on Grand. I was not involved at all with the choice of architect; there was a group that went on an international search.

There are other people you could talk to who could explain how the museum is set where it is. It had a lot to do with parking and everything to do with the CRA. Isozaki is a terrific architect, but what I mainly remember were the endless arguments about the parking. ARCO was a huge player in the creation of MOCA. They were one of the most supportive entities for public art in Los Angeles at that time.

When MOCA opened in 1986, we had an opening every night for five nights—five nights, five outfits. Currently, however, because of the traffic congestion, my westside friends tend to avoid driving to downtown, and many have changed their Music Center tickets to Sunday matinees. I hope that Grand Avenue can become the destination for a compendium of cultural activity in the city of Los Angeles.

Judge William A. Norris (left), Merry Norris, and David Price at an opening-night gala for MOCA in 1986. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Merry Norris.



Isozaki is a terrific architect, but what I mainly remember were the endless arguments about the parking.

Downtown...requires understanding a landscape where world-renowned landmarks rise alongside parking structures, stretches of sunken freeway, sleekly anonymous office towers and vast empty lots. Rather than seeking to cultivate buildings that respond to that strange context, or help point the way to a different, less atomized urbanism, Broad has tended to wonder publicly why downtown Los Angeles can't look more like the capitals of Europe.

Christopher Hawthorne, *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2010

The Broad

You have to create a desire architecturally through design, through programming, and through mixed use. You need a 24-hour city that is charismatic. There has to be radiant urbanism that creates desire. This is the moment for downtown and we can't muff it, it's got to be brilliant, otherwise we've lost our last chance.

Joseph Giovannini, architect and architecture critic, talking about the 2004 developer/architect competition for the Grand Avenue plan, on *DnA*, February 3, 2004

Grand Avenue Plan

Bird's-eye view of Grand Avenue. Source: Bing Maps.

THE NEXT PHASE: GRAND AVENUE PLAN CIVIC PARK THE BROAD

One of the big problems—in terms of the public realm—on Grand Avenue was the gap between the Concert Hall and Wells Fargo Plaza, but now you have Eli's museum and a residential tower with a public plaza coming right to the street. And Civic Park is going to tie it all together.

Nelson Rising, chairman, Rising Realty Partners

Civic Park



GRAND AVENUE PLAN

“The whole idea behind our Grand Avenue plan was and is to create a real place on Bunker Hill that helps tie together east and west and north and south in downtown. While the buildings reflect a vertical integration of uses, the project is intended to be defined as much by its public spaces—Civic Park, public plazas, and so forth—as by its private ones. This is in part a recognition of the year-round mild weather, which should allow for more active streetscapes and public interaction than has been typical for downtown LA.” These are the words of Bill Witte, president of Related Companies, describing their Grand Avenue Project, a planned development of shopping, restaurants, and entertainment long intended to be built on parcels east and south of the Walt Disney Concert Hall. It also comprises streetscape improvements and Civic Park, the project’s key public component. As of this writing, only Civic Park is under construction, and the intended residential development on Parcel L at Second and Grand has been replaced with The Broad.

This change of uses for phase 1 was regretted by some, including Sam Lubell, West Coast editor of *The Architect’s Newspaper*, who commented on KCRW’s *DnA*, “Do we need another art museum? Maybe we need more restaurants, more hotels, and a greater mix of uses. Because there was nothing else happening, I think it’s the right thing now, but it wouldn’t have been my first choice.”

Even the prospect of a mixed-use project being eventually built prompts Lubell to ask if the Grand Avenue plan, like other retail centers, might end up being a self-contained megaproject like other cultural institutions on the avenue. He and others wonder if Grand Avenue could be revived in a more piecemeal, organic way so that, as Lubell suggests, “You don’t have to plan it all in one fell swoop like the Grand Avenue Project.” Says Community Arts Resources president Aaron Paley, “The strip deserves to be broken down and reassembled in some creative fashion so that life can return to this sanitized corridor.... Small-scale initiatives like what we see in the Fashion District, the Old Bank District, Little Tokyo, or Seventh Street have more lessons for Grand Avenue than the current trend of developments.”

The architects are aware of the pitfalls of trying to create urban vitality in a monolithic destination. Their design is intended to create formal continuity with the Walt Disney Concert Hall—“the idea of this scheme was to foreground the towers with pavilions that are the same scale as the smaller elements of Disney Hall”—while creating a medley of open and closed spaces and changing scales. Explains the firm, “A porous plaza fills the spaces between the pavilions surrounded by restaurants and shops. We were trying to create a real southern California indoor/outdoor scene. The landscape climbs up the buildings like a hillside.”

CIVIC PARK

The 16-acre (6.5 ha) Civic Park is the public component of the Grand Avenue plan, and arguably it encapsulates the challenge of revitalizing Bunker Hill: transforming an antiurban space into an organic public draw. *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne described the problem as “how to squeeze an effective design into a tricky, sloping site pockmarked with underground garages and concrete ramps. In that sense the park is a symbol of the hurdles Los Angeles as a whole faces in trying to retrofit its civic spaces for a future in which cars no longer play such a dominant role in urban planning or daily life.”¹

Designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios, with environmental graphics by Sussman/Prejza, Civic Park stretches between the development’s two boundaries: city hall and the Department of Water and Power, and is designed to connect Bunker Hill to the Civic Center. This area is already a public space with plazas, a Court of Flags, and a parklike area with a fountain where many county workers take their lunch under the trees. However, it is a fairly dismal space that attracts few besides county workers because, as observed by the Grand Avenue Committee, “the design is disjointed and cut off by the entrances to several parking garages.”

The design of the park, which calls for tree-shaded sidewalks and plenty of streetlights, benches, and kiosks, presented the challenge of creating a public space at a site that is walled in by buildings that are not intended for public use. Urban designer Deborah Murphy weighs in: “The fact that the park is contained within two impenetrable buildings is a challenge. If they could blow a hole through the county hall of administration and the county courthouse and bring the street through, then it might work. And then the buildings themselves have to be changed to be much more multipurpose.”

Mark Rios, the park’s designer, adds, “The museums and the symphony hall have some kind of public café and store but the courthouse and halls of administration have no street life. They all have solid doors and no public engagement.”

Civic Park’s design process unfolded over an extended period and, unlike that of prior projects on Bunker Hill, involved input from a wide array of public officials and interest groups who had competing visions of the park. This approach, while more democratic and sensitive to the multiple ethnicities and income groups that were ignored in the heady days of urban “renewal,” came with its own challenges, including that of design by committee.

The fact that the park is contained within two impenetrable buildings is a challenge.



View of Civic Park, as envisioned from the observation deck of city hall. Courtesy Rios Clementi Hale Studios.

The park is a symbol of the hurdles Los Angeles faces in trying to retrofit its civic spaces for a future in which cars no longer play such a dominant role.

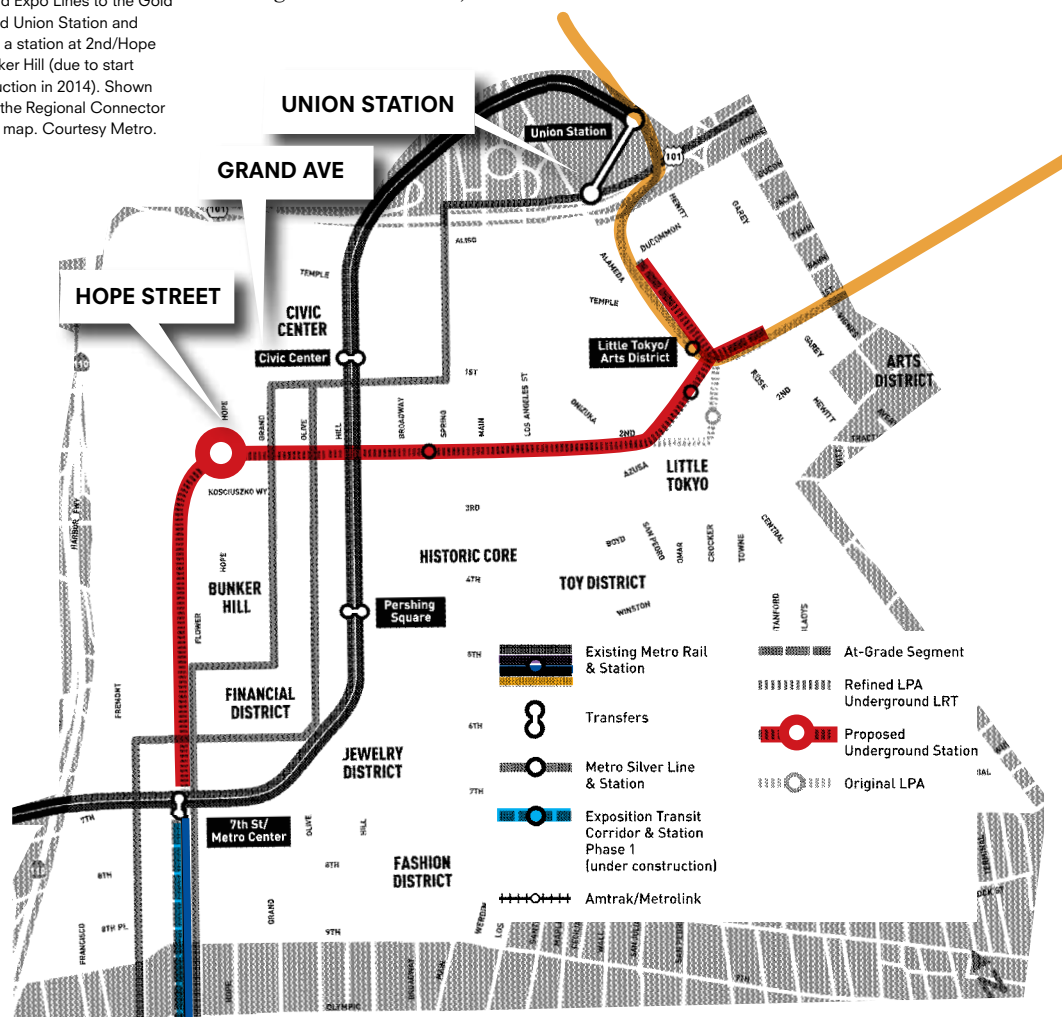
A COHERENT AESTHETIC IDENTITY

As construction began in 2010, the design asserted, in Hawthorne's view, "for the first time, a coherent aesthetic identity." One of Civic Park's main features is a web of what Hawthorne described as "curving north-south pathways, some as narrow as 18 inches and others as wide as 6 feet, to an existing backbone of straight east-west corridors. The design of the new paths is loosely based on a so-called Goode projection, a kind of mapping best known for providing a way to display the Earth's surface on a two-dimensional surface," an abstract concept that "emerged from an effort to think broadly about the remarkably diverse population the park is meant to serve."²

Civic Park is set to open in summer of 2012, with the possibility that it will be programmed in a way that attracts a diverse audience. According to Mark Rios, "It looks like the Music Center might possibly be the operating officer, and that means it opens doors to having events on the outdoor venues."

In addition, "One of the things the park has every intention of including is a farmers' market," says Los Angeles City Council member Jan Perry. "That will be wonderful massive space that will be self-contained and secure in terms of vehicular traffic, so I am looking forward to that, and I am sure it will become a landmark."

The next step toward making Bunker Hill more accessible to pedestrians is the Regional Connector, a proposed light-rail corridor through downtown Los Angeles that will connect the Blue and Expo Lines to the Gold Line and Union Station and include a station at 2nd/Hope on Bunker Hill (due to start construction in 2014). Shown here is the Regional Connector project map. Courtesy Metro.



THE BROAD ART FOUNDATION

"We wanted a great piece of architecture that is iconic that will welcome the public. But we needed a gallery space that is pure. It will be without columns and it will be skylit. We wanted a building that will not clash with Disney Hall, but we didn't want it to be anonymous either."

This is how Eli Broad introduced the Diller Scofidio + Renfro design for his new Broad museum, a permanent home for the works held in the Broad Art Foundation, a collection of more than two thousand contemporary artworks owned by Broad and his wife, Edythe. The design was unveiled in January 2011 after a secret competition pitting relative newcomer DS+R against such established titans as Rem Koolhaas and Herzog & de Meuron, and after sewing up a real estate deal pitting the cities of Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, and Los Angeles against one another. The latter resulted in a vote by CRA commissioners to change the original 2004 Grand Avenue Project to incorporate the \$100 million Broad museum, and secure millions of dollars of CRA funds to cover the cost of its parking structure alone.

Although Eli Broad has touted for many years the idea of Grand Avenue as LA's answer to the Champs-Élysées, he has shown little interest in efforts to bring pedestrians to the street, appearing to be more concerned with monolithic pieces of "starchitecture." Indeed, critics have argued that The Broad is yet another high-art jewel box that will only reinforce Grand Avenue's isolation. Aaron Paley has this observation: "As we lament Grand Avenue's lifelessness, we continue to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in new projects for the street in the hopes that a series of big-box cultural projects will animate a street. Big-box culture does as much as big-box retail for the pedestrian environment."

However, Christopher Hawthorne has reported that Broad, in agreement with the CRA, Related Companies, and city officials, promises "to build a new public plaza wrapping the southern and western sides of the museum and to widen the sidewalks on both sides of Grand between 2nd and 4th streets. Those changes...could help the museum avoid becoming another of Bunker Hill's aloof, self-contained architectural landmarks."³

1—Christopher Hawthorne, "Civic Pride Shaping Civic Park," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2010. <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/14/entertainment/la-et-civic-park-20100714>

2—Ibid.

3—Christopher Hawthorne, "Critic's Notebook: Broad Museum Design Pointed in the Right Direction," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 2011.

[Our design] aspires to make a relationship with Disney Hall through difference. Where Disney Hall is shiny and smooth and reflects light back to the outside, our building is very different. It is matte, it is porous, and it channels light into its interior spaces.

Elizabeth Diller, principal of Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, describing their design for The Broad at a press preview, January 6, 2011

I want to comment
on the proposed design
of the Broad.
I find it uninviting and
somewhat creepy.

Am I alone?

Belinda, KCRW listener who wrote to
[DnA](#), January 18, 2011

You're not alone, Belinda.

**It may just be the angle
of the image, but it
appears that people are
walking into the jaws
of a shark.**

Ray Guarna, coproducer and engineer,
[DnA](#), January 18, 2011

Kings of the Hill: Eli Broad Frank Gehry

Frances Anderton

Going back several decades, a number of powerful individuals have been associated with the growth of the cultural stretch of Grand Avenue. One is the architect Frank Gehry. Another is Eli Broad, the billionaire businessman-turned-philanthropist and art collector.

ELI BROAD

Eli Broad made his first millions as a founding partner of Kaufman & Broad (now KB Home) homebuilders. He has since turned his attentions toward rejuvenating a downtown city center denuded by suburbanization, as well as toward investing in Class A architecture in cultural and educational venues locally and nationally. Broad had a hand in Grand Avenue, where he steered Central Los Angeles High School #9 away from veteran local firm AC Martin Partners to the Austrian firm of Coop Himmelblau. He helped revive construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall when it was foundering, and he is a founding member of the Grand Avenue Committee, a group of downtown power brokers overseeing development of the Related Companies' Grand Avenue Project. Most recently, his name was attached to an effort to have Metro reposition the long-planned 2nd/ Hope station for the Regional Connector. Broad handpicked Jeffrey Deitch to take over the direction of MOCA when it was in a financial trough, and, as described elsewhere in this volume, he is now building The Broad museum on a site opposite MOCA, south of Disney Hall.

In his article "The 42 Most Powerful People in Downtown," Jon Regardie writes, "In a town packed with one-note wonders, Eli Broad stands out for his depth: He founded two billion-dollar companies (home builder Kaufman & Broad and retirement investment firm SunAmerica) and has emerged as the leading philanthropic voice in the region through his Broad Foundation. His involvement

Eli Broad at the site of
The Broad, August 23, 2010.
Photo: Eric Richardson/
blogdowntown.



in Downtown stretches back decades, from helping found MOCA to working on plans in the '90s to upgrade Grand Avenue and bring football back to the Coliseum. While Broad pushes for Related Cos.' stalled megaplan, he also is building his \$100 million art museum across from the Colburn School. By the way, did you notice how L.A. jumped through hoops to get that project?... Some complain that he's tough to deal with, but you don't get his CV by being a patsy."¹

PRIVATE SHAPER OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Inspiring both admiration and fear, Broad is seen by some as an autocrat who steers clear of public outreach and has been the force behind several secretive, closed competitions for projects on Grand, including the latest, his museum. While this may speed up the process and get the results he wants, one has to wonder if this high-handed approach only further intensifies the public's disinterest in Grand Avenue.

On the competition for The Broad, Christopher Hawthorne writes, "Broad has also shown a marked reluctance to use the museum project to facilitate a much-needed conversation about the urban character of downtown Los Angeles. Instead, he has allowed just a handful of people to see the competing designs—and asked many of them to sign confidentiality agreements.... Los Angeles has long struggled to find ways to talk coherently about its public self or plan for a collective future.... The city has always made room, however, for strong-willed individuals and their private architectural retreats—and has at crucial moments handed over chunks of the civic realm to those individuals and their visions of what

**Some complain that he's
tough to deal with, but you
don't get his CV by being
a patsy.**

Los Angeles might become. In recent decades no one has navigated that civic landscape with as much blunt savvy as Eli Broad.”² One can’t help but wonder if public interest and sense of ownership in Grand Avenue might have risen had the design competition for The Broad been opened to young architects, especially local ones, and the schemes put on display for Angelenos to study and comment on.

WHY DOES HE CARE SO MUCH?

Back in 2004, prior to the unveiling of developer/architect submissions for the Grand Avenue Project, I asked Eli Broad why he was so committed to Grand Avenue.

EB: I believe every city in world history has had a vibrant center, and Los Angeles has lacked that. My interest in Grand Avenue and having a vibrant cultural center for a region of sixteen million started sixteen years ago, when I was founding chair of MOCA, but I wasn’t deeply involved until the mayor [Richard Riordan] and I decided we couldn’t let Disney Hall die. Grand Avenue is going to become truly a grand boulevard that is going to become pedestrian friendly with thousands of residences surrounding it.

FA: What contributed to your wealth was your role as developer, contributing to the decentralization of Los Angeles. How do you reconcile that with wanting to centralize Los Angeles now?

EB: I was a young CPA when, at age twenty-three, I started Kaufman & Broad, and we were simply merchant builders, building homes for more traditional families wanting a yard and additional bedrooms. We produced what people wanted and, yes, we were part of the sprawl that’s been created here, but now more and more people want to live in the central city. What I am doing now has to do with the central city and what I think is right.³

Construction sign, Broad museum. Photo: Julie Cho.



Frank Gehry. Photo © Melissa Majchrzak. Courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP.



We looked at each other and said, forget it. It’s omission by bureaucracy.

FRANK GEHRY

Frank Gehry, an architect with a passion for fine art and classical music, has been intimately engaged with the last thirty years of development on Bunker Hill. The architect’s shimmering Walt Disney Concert Hall (completed 2003) is widely credited with helping to lift Grand Avenue out of a seemingly moribund state. But even Gehry himself would be the first to say that Grand still has not fully realized its potential.

Gehry’s involvement with Bunker Hill started in the early 1980s, when he held a minor position on the all-star design team that was passed over for the California Plaza project, designing Angels Place. Later, while fund-raising was under way for the proposed MOCA Grand, Gehry transformed a police garage in Little Tokyo into the Temporary Contemporary (completed 1983). This gutsy space grew to be so popular that it became permanent, now named the Geffen Contemporary. The project for MOCA Grand went to the then fashionable Japanese architect Arata Isozaki. Isozaki’s design was positively received but has not stood the test of time. One wonders what Gehry might have done with the site, especially in the face of development constraints that pushed the museum underground and, to this day, reportedly does not permit a restaurant on the plaza!

Gehry remained involved with Grand Avenue through the first decade of the twenty-first century as the CRA and developers sought to bring vitality to the avenue with residential and retail development. He put together his own “dream team” that included star architects and the actor Brad Pitt for a 2004 developer competition for Grand Avenue plan that was won by Related Companies and a competing design team. A year later Related Companies changed course and

The “Dream Team.” Standing, left to right: Craig Webb, Olivier Boissiere, David Pakshong, Kevin Daly, unidentified, Richard Weintraub, Zaha Hadid, unidentified, Skip Bronson, Richard Weinstein, Greg Lynn, unidentified, Patrik Schumacher, Brad Pitt, Keith Mendenhall, unidentified, Dana Cuff. Seated: Frank Gehry, Harry Cobb. Courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP.



retained Gehry Partners. Gehry’s firm then took on the project single-handedly and created a design that endeavors to connect Grand to the east. The idea of this scheme, which calls for a plaza surrounded by a hotel, residential towers, and lower-scale retail and restaurants, was to make a connection to Disney Hall “with pavilions that are the same scale as the smaller elements of Disney Hall,” says the firm, while creating “a real southern California indoor/outdoor scene. The landscape climbs up the buildings like a hillside.”

STREET LIFE(LESSNESS)

Understanding that a central problem with Grand Avenue is the lifelessness of the street, Gehry has been involved in various efforts to widen and enhance it, including a scheme in 2000 with Rafael Moneo, Arata Isozaki, and Laurie Olin that proposed pushing Grand Avenue well to the east to create a large plaza. The Walt Disney Concert Hall, through its street-level shops and entrances, is more successful in engaging with Grand Avenue than other buildings on Bunker Hill, though some have argued that the street could have benefited from shading devices or trees.

According to Gehry, “I wanted the building to be accessible from the street. There’s a bookstore, a restaurant, there’s a café, there’s a ticket office. The idea was to open it up so there’s a constant flow. Most of the year the doors wouldn’t be there. The amphitheater stairs in front were going to be a place to have musical performances, lunchtime brown-bag concerts for people from the courthouse to come over. There was an idea to project images on the front of the concert hall, on the sails, of what’s going on inside.... They never used the kids’ feature in the back, the little amphitheater. They never used the garden during intermission.... The wide street was made to create a plaza, which would house activities on the street, and if those activities could use trees, then

MOCA’s Temporary Contemporary (now the Geffen Contemporary). Courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP.



trees would be added to it. I didn't want to plant a whole row of huge trees that would be counter-productive to the design. Maybe I was wrong."

The architect also has had inspired ideas that could have extended the artistic stature of his designs into the street. Working with the art consultant and collector Merry Norris, Gehry conceived of arranging Chris Burden's restored antique street lamps down the center of Grand as part of the Grand Avenue Project (2004). (Burden's lamps later became the installation *Urban Light* at LACMA.) He also dreamed of projecting art or scenes from inside Disney Hall onto its external curving planes (see pp. 124–125).

Like most who have tried to bring Grand Avenue alive, Gehry met with bureaucratic inertia. Back in 1981, he recalls, the all-star team "had a very cool projection system and a lighting system that would go across the street, like in Little Italy, to create a connection across the street. And the fire department came in and said, 'You can't put wires across the street because of the firetruck ladders.' The CRA came in and said you can only put poplar trees in...the wrong tree. We wanted to use bollards and illuminate the curbs, and the county said, well, you can't do that because that affects blind people, they can't cross the street. And there were about ten other things like that. I remember Rob Maguire was in the meeting with me. We looked at each other and said, forget it. It's omission by bureaucracy."

A CHALLENGE TO STUDENTS

In 2011, as the newly appointed Judge Widney Professor of Architecture at USC, Gehry decided to challenge the students to ponder the Grand Avenue conundrum by redesigning MOCA. He explained his thinking in a recent interview.

"I don't have a problem with MOCA...MOCA has a problem with MOCA. They came here and said that they want to move to where the TC [now the Geffen Contemporary] is, and there's a lot of talk that MOCA can't grow where it is unless it goes across the street. That's partly what Eli's doing. He's helping them solve the problem by being across the street, so that once he's built there, they will start using his ground-floor galleries for shows. So the idea occurred to me that if you took a real project that was looking to expand and thought about it, with the idea that this was going to spark a renaissance or a movement on Grand Avenue—how would you do it? If you could address those issues in the context of Grand Avenue and what it aspires to be, then you have a microcosm, whereas if I had them design the whole thing from Temple to Fifth Street they'd never get there."

1—Jon Regardie, "The 42 Most Powerful People in Downtown," Los Angeles Downtown News, April 1, 2010.

2—Christopher Hawthorne, "Eli Broad: L.A.'s Peripatetic Patron," Los Angeles Times, June 20, 2010.

3—Eli Broad, interview by Frances Anderton, DnA: Design and Architecture, KCRW, April 6, 2004.

**I don't have
a problem
with MOCA...
MOCA has a
problem with
MOCA.**

When Lillian Disney was having trouble understanding the building, I brought her a dish full of white roses and handed it to her, and said this is what I'm trying to do.

She couldn't understand it. She thought I was trying to make fun of her. If you took the bowl of white roses, especially on a sunny day, it's going to look like a big white rose.

Frank Gehry in [An Icon Is Born](#), KCRW, 2003

TIMELINE: DEVELOPMENT OF BUNKER HILL



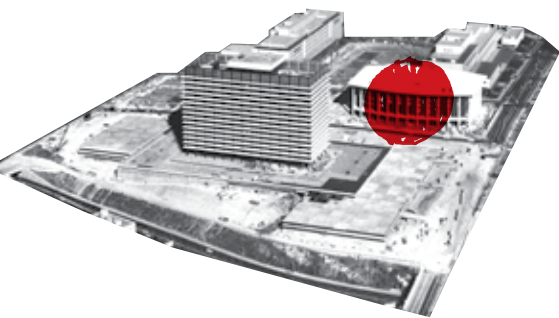
1948 Los Angeles City Council establishes the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for the purpose of eliminating blight and promoting economic revitalization within designated project areas of the city.

1950 Bunker Hill redevelopment plan is designed by the City Plan Authority.

1959 Los Angeles City Council adopts the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, designed by Luckman & Pereira, authorizing eminent domain and demolition of 132 acres of properties on Bunker Hill. Between 1959 and 1964, 7,350 residential units and hundreds of businesses are removed, clearing the area for construction of Dorothy "Buffy" Chandler's Music Center.

1960 CRA starts acquiring properties, relocating residents, and demolishing buildings.

1962-1968 Initial development starts on Bunker Hill, with the Union Bank Plaza and Bunker Hill Towers.



1964 The Music Center opens.

1969 Angels Flight closes for the Urban Renewal Project.

1970 Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project converts to a redevelopment plan.

1973 Tom Bradley is elected mayor of Los Angeles.

1975 With the support of Mayor Bradley and downtown business owners, the city council passes the Downtown Redevelopment Plan.

1979 CRA asks developers for proposals for lots R, S, T, U, and Y (California Plaza). The mayor's Museum Advisory Committee is formed.

1980 CRA's board votes to award Bunker Hill Associates.

1981 The developers and CRA sign DDA.

1983 Cadillac Fairview brings in Metropolitan Structures of Chicago. Major changes affect the physical layout of the project.

Arata Isozaki completes his design of MOCA Grand Avenue.



1985 One California Plaza is built.

1986 The spiral court and MOCA are built and opened.

1987 Lillian Disney makes an initial gift to build a performance venue in Walt Disney's name as a gift to the people of Los Angeles.

1988 Metropolitan Structures engages Community Arts Resources (CARS) to develop a seven-year master plan for public performances at California Plaza.

Frank Gehry beats out Pritzker Prize winners Gottfried Böhm, Hans Hollein, and James Stirling in the competition to find an architect for the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

1989 CARS coproduces Celebrations!, a free noontime concert series of music and dance presented in the spiral court. Celebrations! continues today as Grand Performances.



1991 Arthur Erickson Associates' Los Angeles office collapses without warning.

Frank Gehry delivers his designs for the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

1992 Two California Plaza, its water court, the Omni Hotel, and the Museum Tower Apartments are built.

Three California Plaza and two other residential towers are canceled; original site of Three California Plaza becomes Angels Knoll.

CRA increases rent from \$12,000 to \$125,000.

Bunker Hill Associates stops paying rent.

The Bella Lewitzky Dance Company announces the cancellation of plans to build the center that they originally planned to share with the Colburn School.

Lillian Disney donates an additional \$50 million toward construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Construction begins on the underground parking garage for Disney Hall, paid for through the sale of bonds by Los Angeles County.

1993 Funds appropriated by the CRA for restoration of Angels Flight.

1994 CRA begins to collect the \$3 million rent that Bunker Hill Associates owes the agency. Construction stalls on Disney Hall.

1996 New Angels Flight opens at location south of the original site. Fund-raising begins anew for the Walt Disney Concert Hall, headed by Mayor Richard Riordan and Eli Broad. Plans are revised, and, in a cost-saving move, the originally designed stone exterior is replaced with a less costly metal skin.

1998 The Colburn School moves into California Plaza.

1999 Omni Hotel renovation begins.

Groundbreaking for the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

2001 Angels Flight closes following a fatal accident.

2003 Maguire Properties buys One California Plaza for \$225 million.

Walt Disney Concert Hall opens.

2007 The Colburn School's Olive Street Building is built. Maguire Properties purchases Two California Plaza.

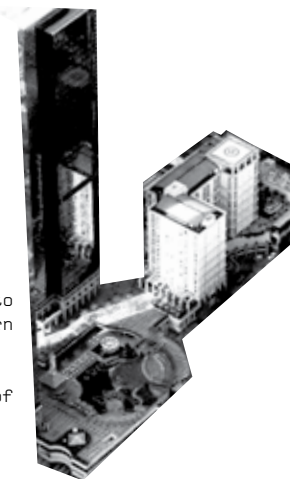
2010 Angels Flight reopens after the California Public Utilities Commission approves the safety certificate.

Construction starts on Civic Park.

Los Angeles City Council agrees to let The Broad museum have the site originally designated for retail in the Grand Avenue plan. CRA offers millions to pay for the parking garage.

Eli Broad holds secret competition to find an architect for his museum and selects Diller Scofidio + Renfro from a group that includes Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & de Meuron, Christian de Portzamparc, SANAA, and Foreign Office Architects.

2011 Construction starts on parking garage for The Broad.



Timeline photo credits

P. 84 From top:
Redevelopment plan for
Bunker Hill, 1955. University of
Southern California, Los Angeles
Examiner Prints Collection, late
1920s–1961.

Tourist card for Angels Flight.
Photo: Dillinger. California
Historical Society. University of
Southern California.

Aerial view of Civic Center with
Music Center, looking east
from Figueroa Street, 1964.
“Dick” Whittington Photography
Collection, 1924–1987. Creator,
Dick Whittington Studio, USC
Libraries Special Collections.

East side of Grand Avenue
looking south from Third Street,
showing the completed MOCA,
April 1, 1986. California Historical
Society Collection, 1860–1960.

California Plaza.
Source Bing Maps.

Band and audience warming up
for a Grand Performance in the
watercourt of Cal Plaza, June 13,
2009. Photo: Jared Shier.

P. 85 From top:
Model of Walt Disney Concert
Hall. Courtesy Gehry Partners,
LLP.

California Plaza.
Source Bing Maps.

Angels Flight, 2011. Photo:
Huaiming Liao.

Walt Disney Concert Hall, 2011.
Photo: Frances Anderton.

The Colburn School, 2011. Photo:
Frances Anderton.

View of the parking lot at Grand
and Second, to be replaced
by The Broad. Photo: Louise
Munson.

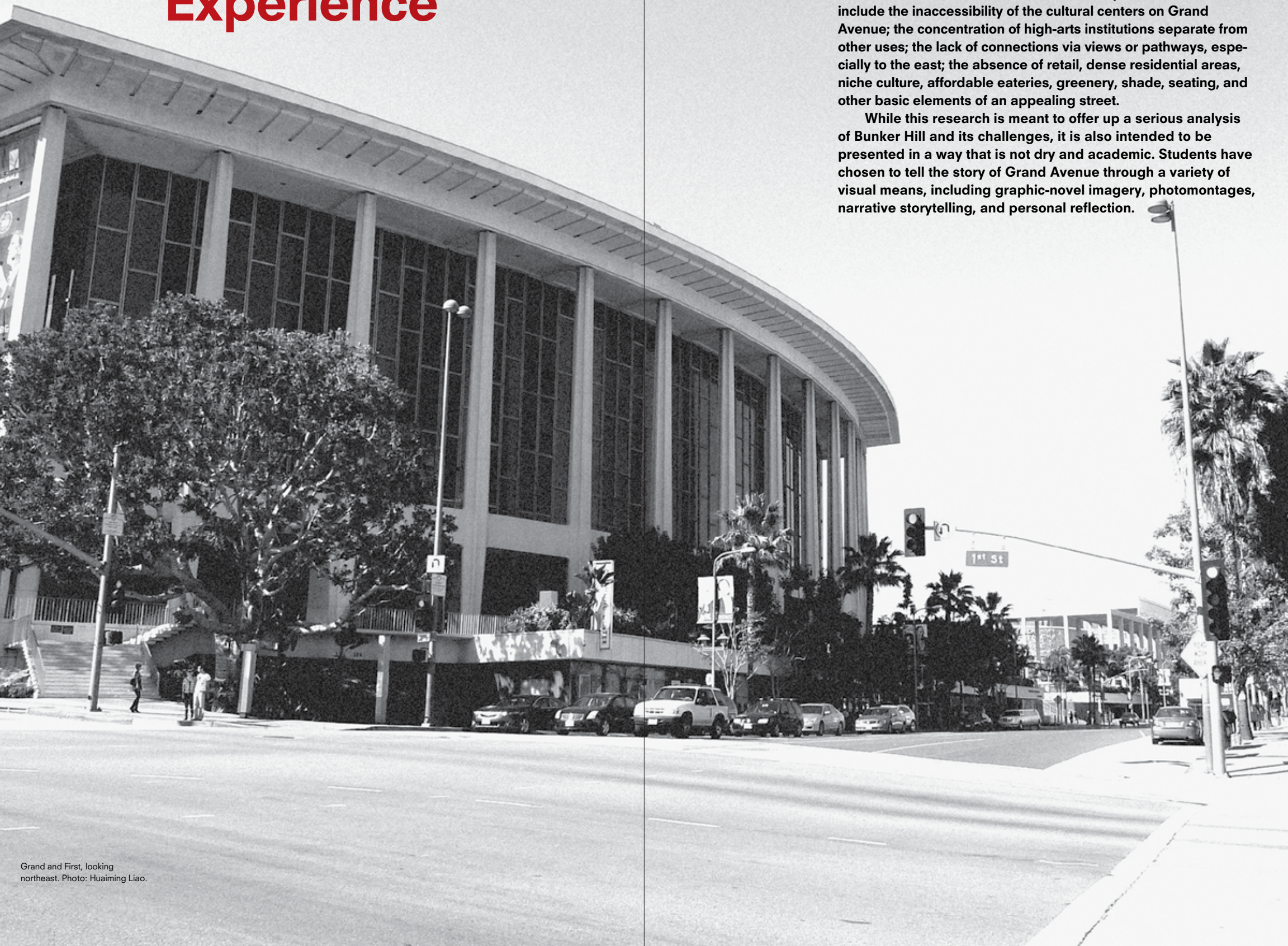
Rendering of The Broad museum
by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.
Courtesy Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

Current Condition

The Grand Experience

In order to rethink MOCA, students had to experience Grand Avenue. On the pages that follow is their record, from getting there to simply walking the street. Students encountered multiple obstacles to Grand Avenue's success as a public draw. These include the inaccessibility of the cultural centers on Grand Avenue; the concentration of high-arts institutions separate from other uses; the lack of connections via views or pathways, especially to the east; the absence of retail, dense residential areas, niche culture, affordable eateries, greenery, shade, seating, and other basic elements of an appealing street.

While this research is meant to offer up a serious analysis of Bunker Hill and its challenges, it is also intended to be presented in a way that is not dry and academic. Students have chosen to tell the story of Grand Avenue through a variety of visual means, including graphic-novel imagery, photomontages, narrative storytelling, and personal reflection.



Grand and First, looking northeast. Photo: Huaiming Liao.

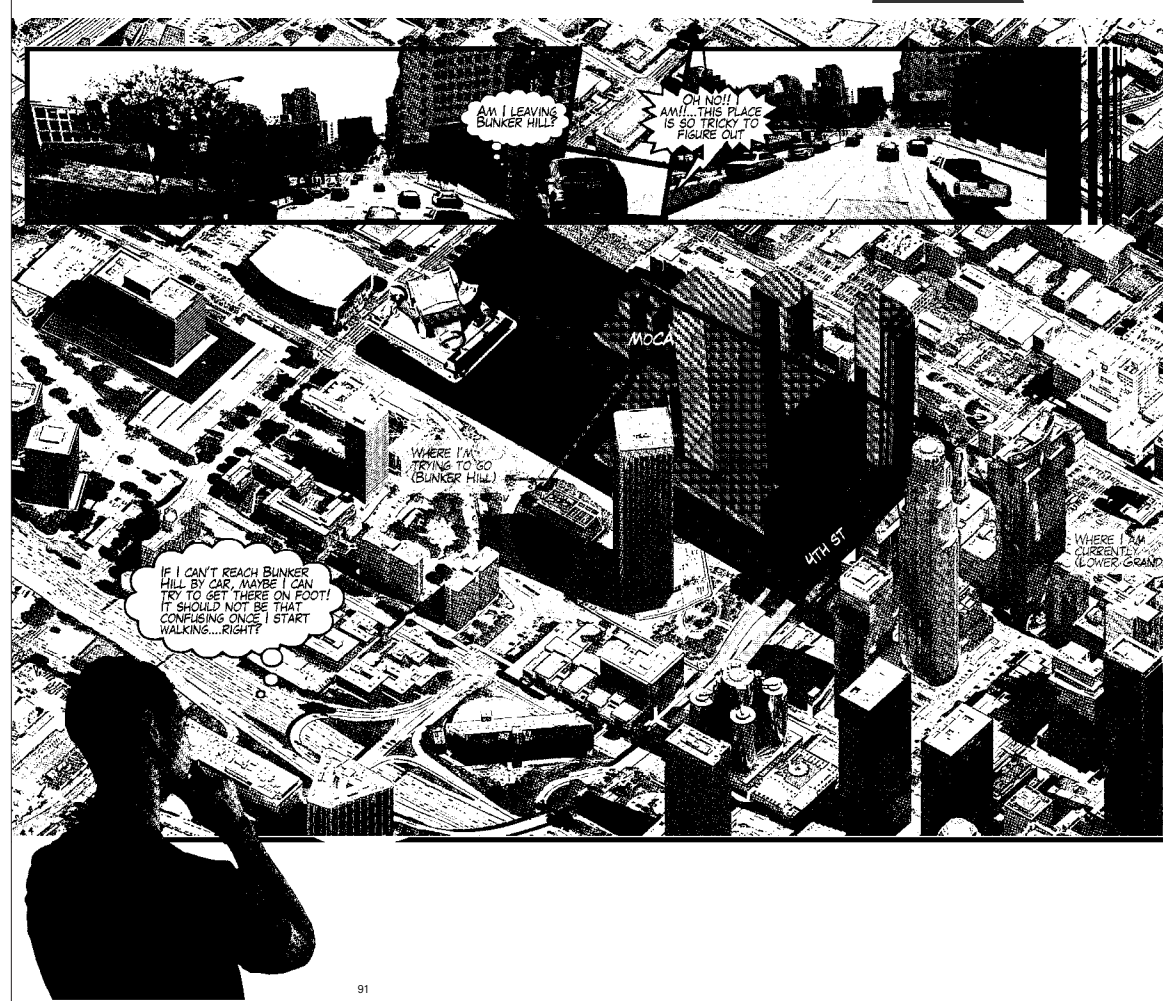
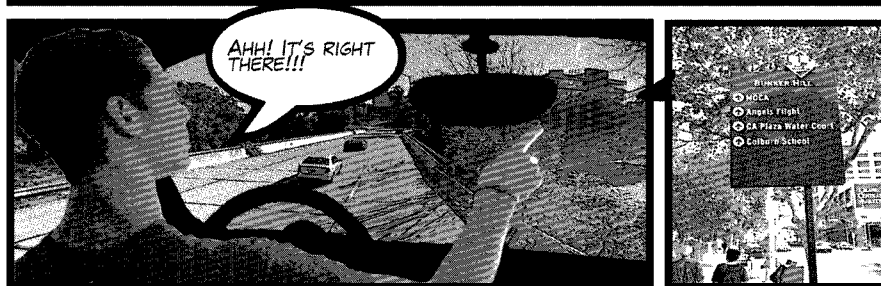
WHERE
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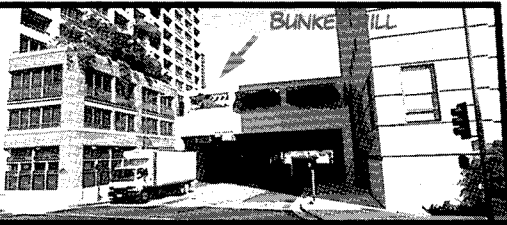
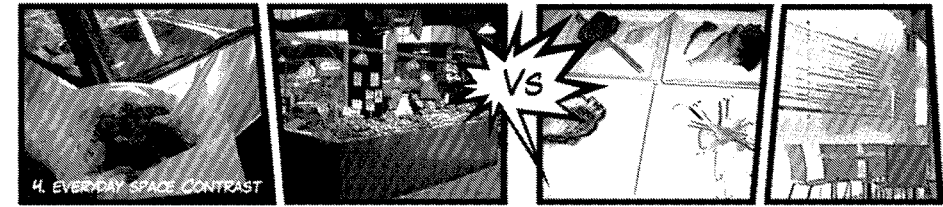
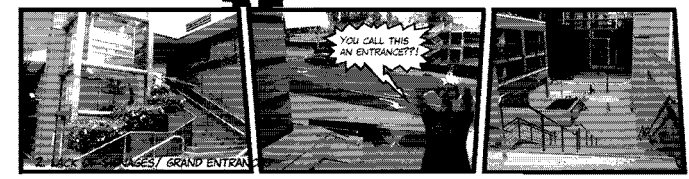
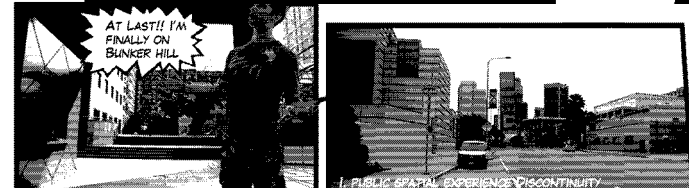
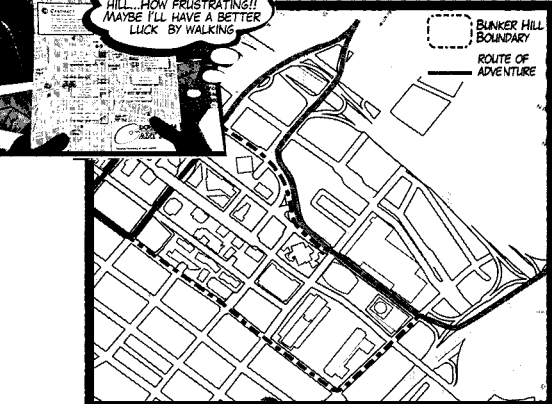
HOW THE @*&! DO I GET TO BUNKER HILL?

One of the deterrents for prospective visitors to Bunker Hill is simply the difficulty in getting there. For starters, the hill is severed from the west and the north by the 10, the 110, and the 105 freeways. Once one has breached this concrete moat, the struggle to reach Bunker Hill continues.

What follows is a humorous take on this frustrating challenge. Mike Yin-Fun Chou sent his roommate, Jordan, on a quest to get to Bunker Hill. From the start, his roommate's journey is already complicated by the infrastructure building mania of the 1960s and 1970s—freeways, one-way streets, split levels, interchanges, flyovers—made even more difficult due to the “invisible wall” created by the lack of signage or visual connection to Bunker Hill. At last, upon Jordan's final arrival at his Grand Avenue destination, the quest has not ended. Now he finds himself in a confusing subterranean parking lot, making the trek from car to MOCA or the Music Center bewildering at best.

How the @*&! Do
I Get to Bunker
Hill?: Graphic
dramatization by
Mike Yin-Fun Chou.





MY END-OF-THE-TRIP ANALYSIS:

DESPITE THE FACT THAT BUNKER HILL HAS MANY CULTURAL NODES, NOT TO MENTION THE IMPORTANT INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS CONNECTED WITH GRAND AVENUE, IT FAILS TO CREATE A CULTURAL LINKAGE AND THE CORE FOR DOWNTOWN'S DEVELOPMENT. THERE ARE 4 MAIN REASONS:

- 1) PUBLIC SPATIAL EXPERIENCE DISCONTINUITY
- 2) LACK OF SIGNAGE/GRAND ENTRANCE TO BUNKER HILL
- 3) VISUAL DISCONNECTION
- 4) EVERYDAY URBANISM INCOHERENCE

1) PUBLIC SPATIAL EXPERIENCE DISCONTINUITY:

THE FIRST AND IMMEDIATE CHALLENGE BUNKER HILL FACES IS THE DISCOURAGEMENT OF PUBLIC USAGE AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF ITS DEVELOPMENT. EVIDENCE IS EVERYWHERE: 1) THERE ARE A LOT OF BUILDING WALLS THAT ARE BUILT TO THE EDGE OF PROPERTY LINES; THIS MAKES THE SIDEWALK VERY UNINVITING AND 2) FENCES ARE PLACED IN A LOT OF PUBLIC SPACES, WHETHER IT IS TANGIBLE OR INTANGIBLE, CAL PLAZA IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTANGIBLE FENCE, WHILE THE FENCE AROUND ANGELS KNOLL CAN BE PERCEIVED AS A TANGIBLE BARRIER.

2) LACK OF SIGNAGE/GRAND ENTRANCE:

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DO NOT KNOW ABOUT BUNKER HILL EXCEPT FOR DISNEY CONCERT HALL OR THE DOROTHY CHANDLER BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE NO VISIBLE SIGNS TO PROMOTE.

3) VISUAL DISCONNECTION

THE TRAFFIC TO GET ONTO BUNKER HILL IS JUST A PURE NIGHTMARE; IT'S HARD FOR TOURISTS, SOMETIMES EVEN FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES, TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET THERE BY CAR, OR ON FOOT.

4) EVERYDAY SPACE CONTRAST:

THE EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES ON BUNKER HILL ARE NOT RELATABLE TO THE ACTIVITIES IN THE SURROUNDING SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES; THEY FEEL DISTANT TO BUNKER HILL. FURTHERMORE, THE COSTS OF THOSE ACTIVITIES ON BUNKER HILL ARE OVER THE BUDGET FOR THE LOWER INCOME LEVEL HOUSEHOLDS, WHICH ARE EVERYWHERE AROUND BUNKER HILL'S IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORHOODS.





Architecture of the "City Beautiful" movement on display at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. Source of image unknown.

A "DECONTAMINATED CULTURAL DISTRICT"

One of the characteristics of Grand Avenue is that it consists at present of clusters of single uses: the corporate Cal Plaza development and a ribbon of arts institutions. Although it seems as if they might have resulted from a master plan, they in fact grew in a more piecemeal fashion, following in the footsteps of Dorothy Chandler's signature contribution to Los Angeles, the Music Center. But the end result is what Jane Jacobs, author of The Death and Life of Great American Cities, brilliantly described as a "decontaminated cultural district" of paternalistic institutions disconnected from the urban fabric and other, more populist uses, like shops, restaurants, cinemas, and housing. Jennifer Choi looks at the origins of the civic parks that influenced the Music Center, and asks what has been their impact on cities since.

City after city built its civic or cultural center.... The monuments had been sorted out from the rest of the city, and assembled into the grandest effect thought possible.... People were proud of them, but the centers were not a success.... People stayed away from them to a remarkable degree.

Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961)



1960s postcard of Lincoln Center. Architects of the Lincoln Center included Gordon Bunshaft, Eero Saarinen, Wallace K. Harrison, and Philip Johnson. Courtesy ETH-Bibliothek Zurich, Image Archive.

Lincoln Center, New York, following remodeling of the public plaza and some structures by Diller Scofidio + Renfro (with Associate Architect: FXFOWLE Architects, Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners). The photographer described the transformation as "contemporary and context-sensitive," and a "vast improvement" on the original Lincoln Center. Photo: Robert Mintzes, December 2010.

We also have to recognize that these places evolve over time. The Lincoln Center after fifty years is probably a much more organic place than people thought it was in 1970. Now it's going through a first-round phase of renovations and it's getting more and more interesting.

John Kaliski, principal of Urban Studio, former senior architect at the Community Redevelopment Agency



THE BIRTH OF CIVIC PARKS

Inspired by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and the launch of a new urban philosophy known as the City Beautiful movement, grand civic parks and cultural boulevards soon began springing up around the country. This trend served an ideal of beautification and the creation of civic virtue, through which the city's parks, fountains, and monuments were sorted out from the rest and assembled, usually along some sort of promenade or park, into a display of cultural icons separate from other uses. Museums, city halls, public plazas, monuments, and libraries in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and St. Louis were moved out of the central cities and into such civic parks, memorably described by Jane Jacobs as "frosted pastries on a tray."

When such clusters were being built in the 1950s and 1960s—New York City's Lincoln Center, for example—modernist planning and architecture principles had been added to the mix. Single buildings now floated in large plazas, accessed from subterranean parking lots that further disconnected from the life of the street. The folly of the single-use destination was a preoccupation of Jane Jacobs, who published her influential book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, in 1961, the zenith of this kind of planning. She did not mince words. Cities, she wrote, are being "murdered, in good part by deliberate policies of sorting out leisure uses from work uses, under the misapprehension that this is orderly city planning."

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

It is possible, however, for such disconnected urban complexes to adapt. Diller Scofidio + Renfro, architects of the forthcoming Broad museum, were also responsible for the recent makeover of Lincoln Center, where they modernized the fountain, redesigned the plaza, and added an electronic "infoscape" and a restaurant with lawn on top. While acknowledging that one cannot make a direct comparison between Los Angeles and New York, DS+R principal Elizabeth Diller argues that change is possible: "When the Lincoln Center was initiated, it was very unpopular because of the idea of centralizing the arts," she said on KCRW's January 18, 2011, broadcast of *DnA*.

"For fifty years nothing happened. I came to a place that was just forlorn, and everyone said it would never work and you can't do anything at Lincoln Center. And all of a sudden something just happened. It clicked between ideas about space and also programming ideas that were contemporary and interesting and ideas about breaking down the walls between certain commercial and cultural endeavors, and even eating there. We had a lot of resistance about putting a commercial restaurant there, and now it is being embraced more and more."

John Kaliski, principal, Urban Studio, and former senior architect, CRA, has also cited the example of Lincoln Center, saying, "We also have to recognize that these places evolve over time. The Lincoln Center after fifty years is probably a much more organic place than people thought it was in 1970." Could Bunker Hill evolve into a more organic place than its planning and physical form appears to allow?

Originally, that part of the Grand Avenue program was essentially a range of different clusters of uses—from the Civic Center to the residential cluster to the hotels and the cultural district. It was determined when we saw they were clustering by themselves.

Don Spivack, deputy chief of operations and policy for the CRA (1982–2010)

The rear facade of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, designed by Rafael Moneo, faces Grand. Photo: Derek Greene.

DOORWAYS ONTO GRAND

One consequence of the car-oriented growth of Grand Avenue is that many of the buildings have little to no direct relationship with the street, intensifying the sense of isolation for the visitor. With this in mind, Derek Greene analyzed entrances—doorways, entry lobbies, and plazas—on Grand and found in most an inherent disconnect.

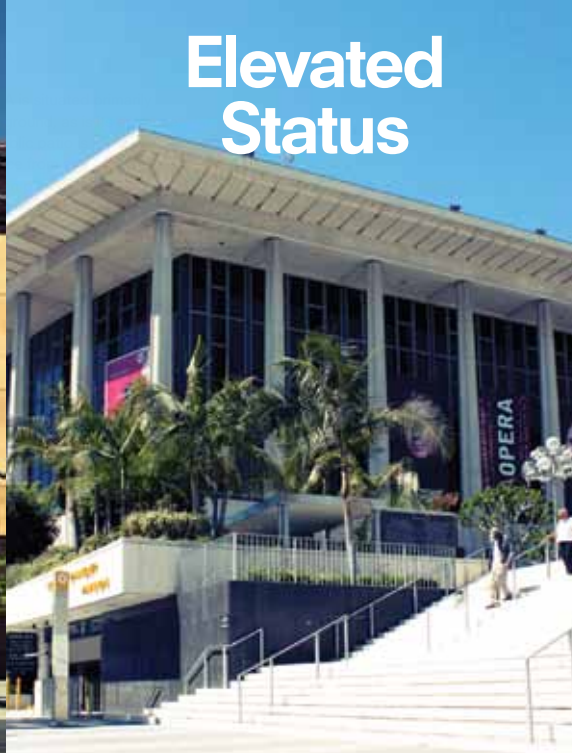


Far Removed



Literally turning her back on Grand Avenue, Rafael Moneo's Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels provides pedestrians with a view of a predominantly opaque concrete wall. In order to access this cultural landmark, visitors on foot must abandon Grand Avenue and stroll down Temple Street to find the entrance to a secluded plaza.

Elevated Status



Although the Music Center Plaza offers pedestrians ample opportunities for congregation and leisure activities, the location of the plaza above the street has produced a large disjunction between Grand and the Music Center. Along Grand, the Music Center frontage of parking lots does little to incorporate street life into the building.

Semi-Public Interaction



The Colburn School offers pedestrians a glimpse into the building through its public entrance and lobby on Grand Avenue. However, because the Colburn is a school, public infiltration into the building is kept to a minimum and patrolled by security.

Sunken Entrance



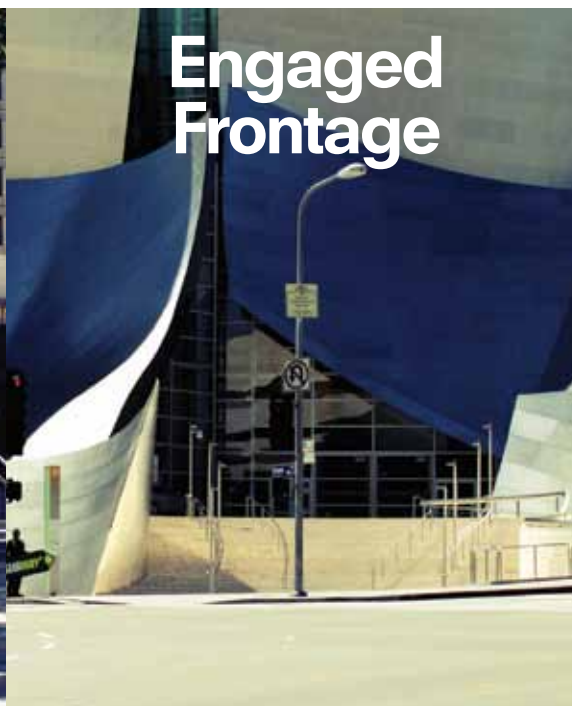
MOCA is situated primarily underground, as is its entrance. The public patio is located at a distance from and above the pedestrian plane. MOCA seems to focus inward, and stairs leading down to its entrance are hidden behind a wall.

(Un)Easy Accessibility



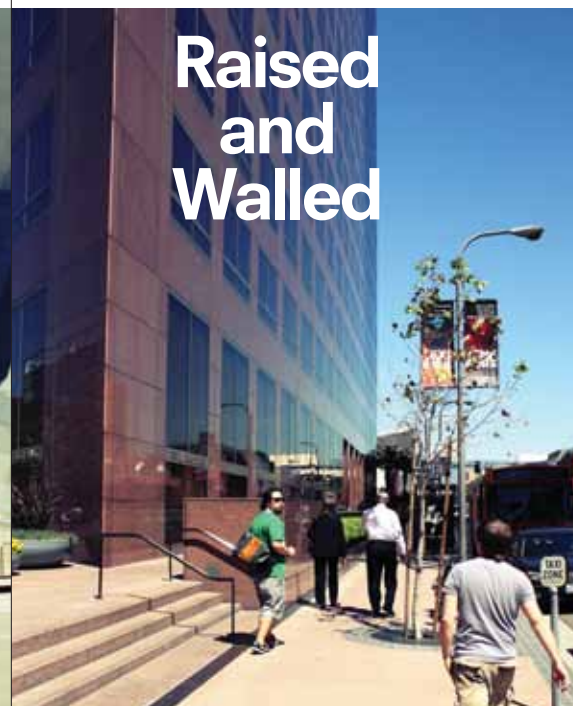
Framing a large public plaza, the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration and the Stanley Mosk Courthouse have entrances off of both Grand and the park. The problem is, pedestrians on Grand have little interaction with these government buildings unless they actually work there.

Engaged Frontage



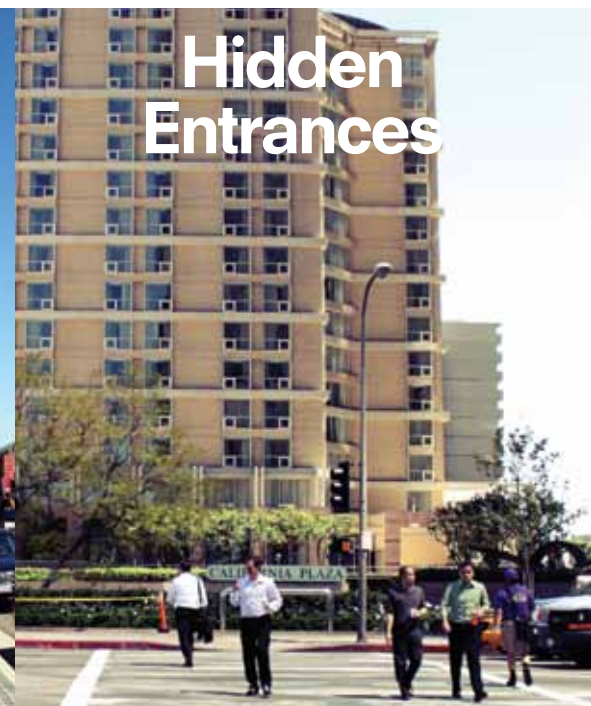
The Walt Disney Concert Hall is one of the few buildings on Grand with an entrance, café seating, and paths to public patios directly accessed from the sidewalk. The boundary between interior space and exterior space is blurred by the extension of the sidewalk "plaza" into the building, and vice versa.

Raised and Walled



An immense public patio sits between the towers of the Wells Fargo Center. However, access to the patio is limited to a couple of select locations on the entire street frontage of the site. Instead of entrances, a wall creates a barrier between Grand's sidewalk and the patio.

Hidden Entrances

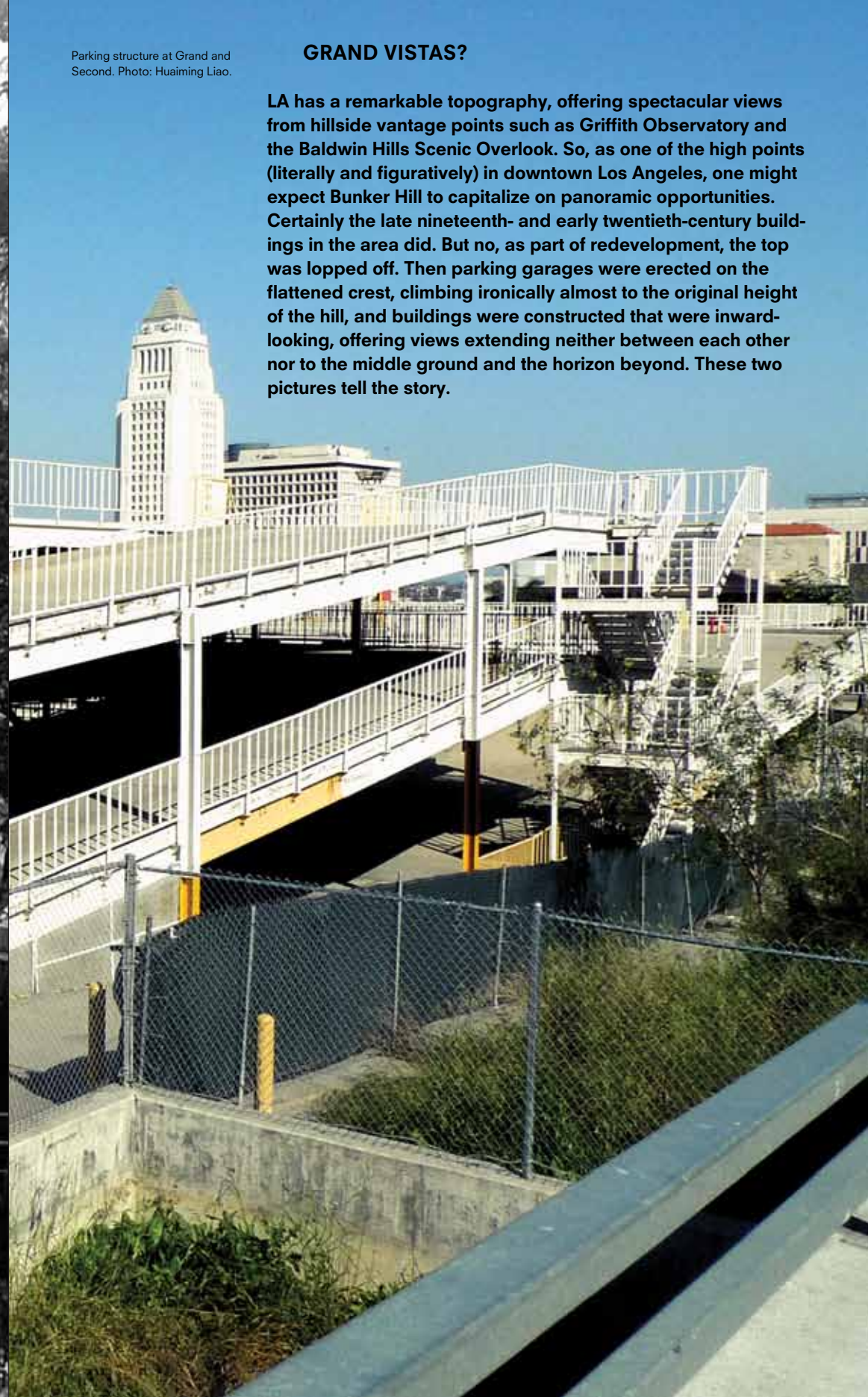


With entrances on multiple sides, California Plaza is easily the most accessible property on the Bunker Hill portion of Grand Avenue. That said, the locations of these entrances and the means by which the site is accessed limit interaction with the street. Grand staircases lead either up to the plinth, with entrances to the two towers of California Plaza, or down to the water court.

View south from Court Hill down Hill Street, 1951. Source and photographer unknown.



Parking structure at Grand and Second. Photo: Huaiming Liao.



GRAND VISTAS?

LA has a remarkable topography, offering spectacular views from hillside vantage points such as Griffith Observatory and the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook. So, as one of the high points (literally and figuratively) in downtown Los Angeles, one might expect Bunker Hill to capitalize on panoramic opportunities. Certainly the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings in the area did. But no, as part of redevelopment, the top was lopped off. Then parking garages were erected on the flattened crest, climbing ironically almost to the original height of the hill, and buildings were constructed that were inward-looking, offering views extending neither between each other nor to the middle ground and the horizon beyond. These two pictures tell the story.

THE VIEW FROM CHINA

Several students in USC's MOCA/Grand Avenue studio hail from cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen in mainland China, where development has been unfolding so rapidly that entire neighborhoods seem to vanish in the blink of an eye. How did these students feel about Grand Avenue, the object of so much attention for so many years? Jiejun Li and Huaiming Liao offer their reflections.

JIEJUN LI

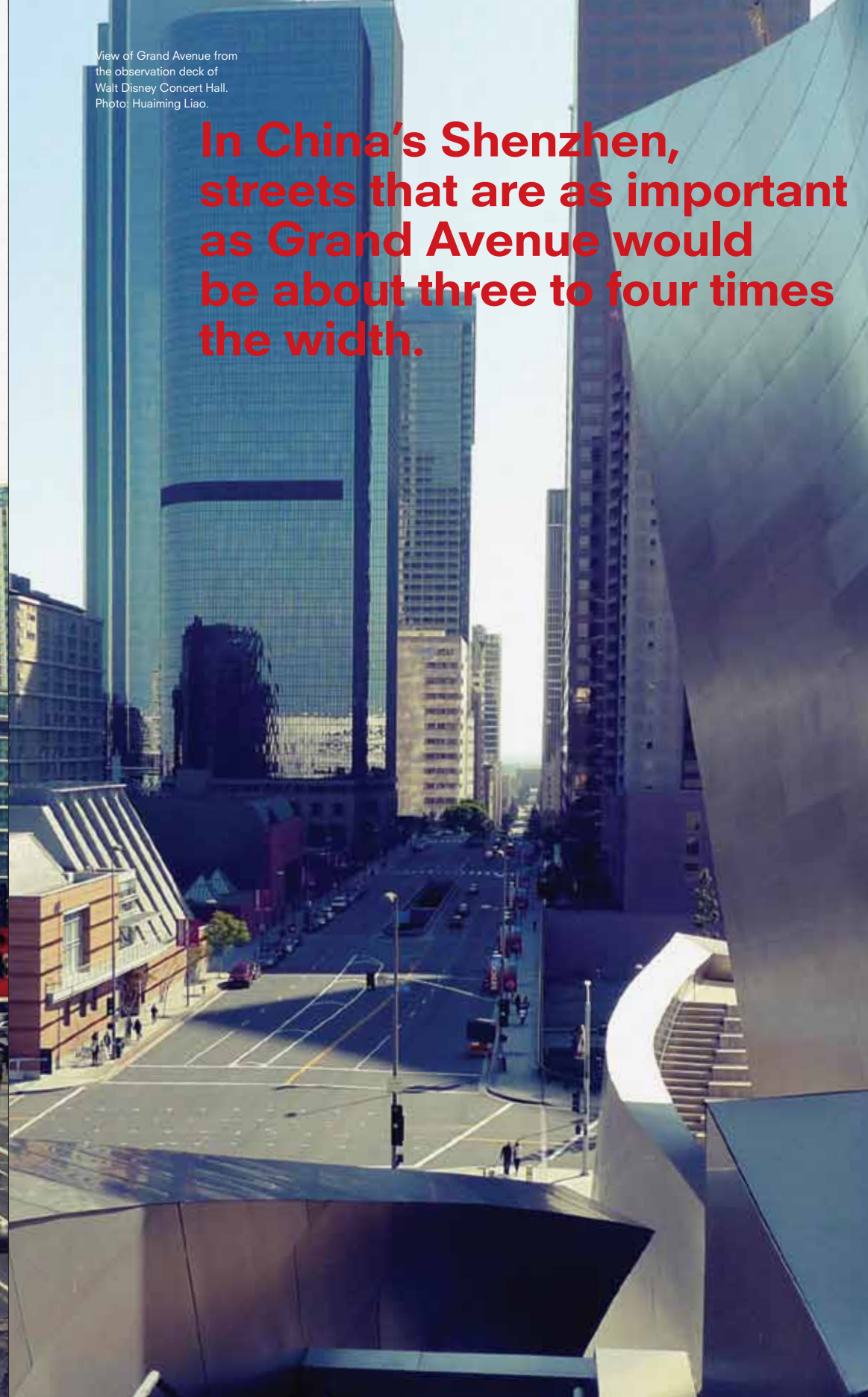
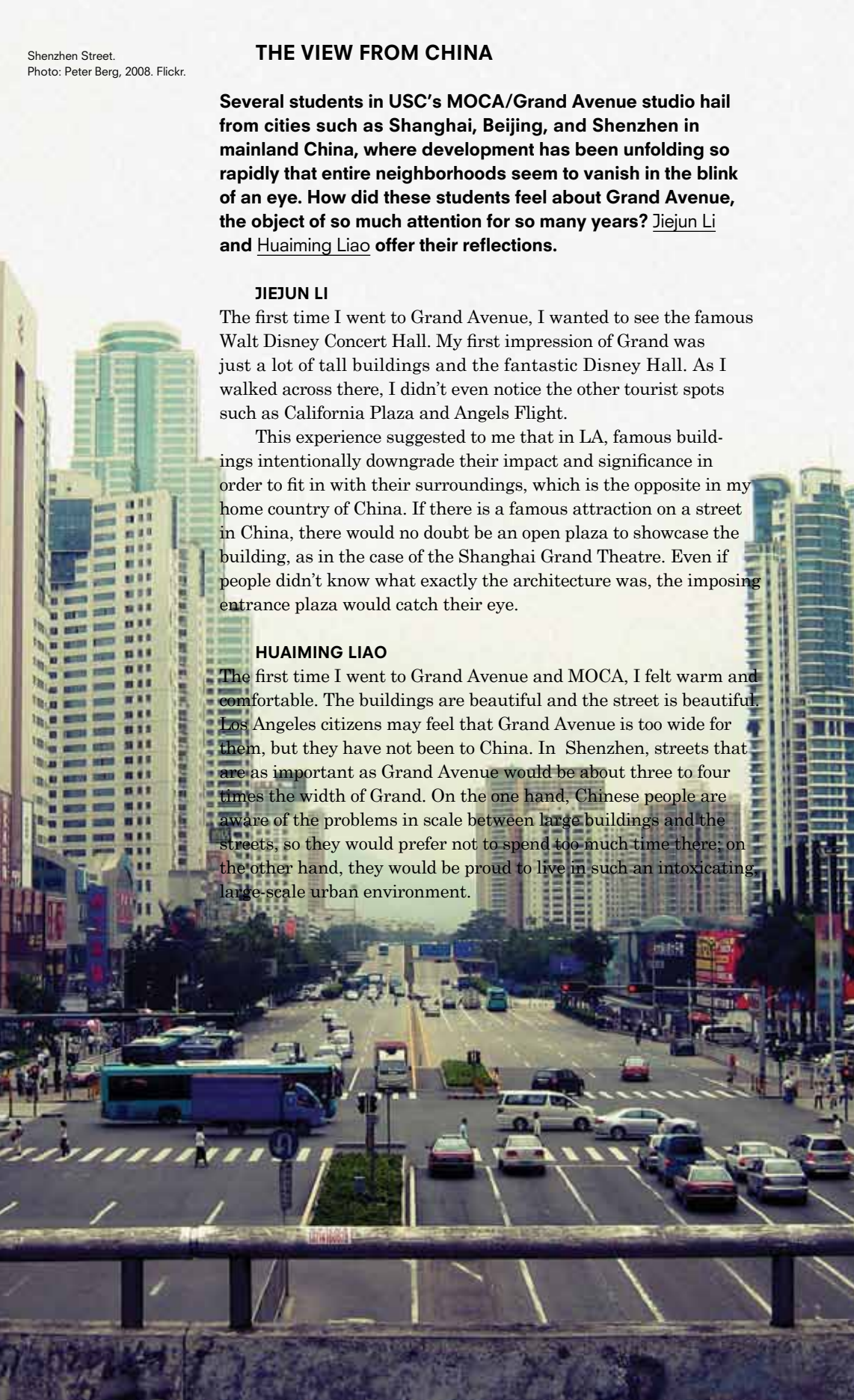
The first time I went to Grand Avenue, I wanted to see the famous Walt Disney Concert Hall. My first impression of Grand was just a lot of tall buildings and the fantastic Disney Hall. As I walked across there, I didn't even notice the other tourist spots such as California Plaza and Angels Flight.

This experience suggested to me that in LA, famous buildings intentionally downgrade their impact and significance in order to fit in with their surroundings, which is the opposite in my home country of China. If there is a famous attraction on a street in China, there would no doubt be an open plaza to showcase the building, as in the case of the Shanghai Grand Theatre. Even if people didn't know what exactly the architecture was, the imposing entrance plaza would catch their eye.

HUAIMING LIAO

The first time I went to Grand Avenue and MOCA, I felt warm and comfortable. The buildings are beautiful and the street is beautiful. Los Angeles citizens may feel that Grand Avenue is too wide for them, but they have not been to China. In Shenzhen, streets that are as important as Grand Avenue would be about three to four times the width of Grand. On the one hand, Chinese people are aware of the problems in scale between large buildings and the streets, so they would prefer not to spend too much time there; on the other hand, they would be proud to live in such an intoxicating large-scale urban environment.

**In China's Shenzhen,
streets that are as important
as Grand Avenue would
be about three to four times
the width.**



ART AND COMMERCE:
MAKING THE CONNECTION

An Ace Caff with Quite a Nice Museum Attached.

In England in the late 1980s, the advertising firm Saatchi & Saatchi ruffled museum-world feathers with an advertisement for the venerable Victoria and Albert Museum that had as its catchphrase, "There's Nothing Wrong with Modern Art that a Good Cup of Tea Won't Cure; an Ace Caff [cafeteria] with Quite a Nice Museum Attached."

Saatchi & Saatchi clearly understood one of the fundamentals of museum-going: it is a social experience as much as a cultural one. Thomas Krens, former director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, has said that a successful museum needs at least "five rides": architecture, a great permanent collection, strong temporary exhibits, shopping, and good food. One of the problems of Bunker Hill is the lack of shops and eateries (particularly affordable ones) on the avenue as well as within most of the arts buildings themselves (compared to those in other major cities). [Li Li](#) explores the essential connection between museums and shopping.

The museum industry has suffered greatly during the recent financial crisis, and museums are now becoming more and more competitive. One strategy for directing museumgoers more efficiently is to locate a museum at the site where there are other facilities attracting a similar group of customers. For instance, the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan is located between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, home to the flagship stores of Prada, Calvin Klein, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and other retail luminaries. Customers who patronize those luxurious shops are also likely to take a look inside MOMA for its contemporary/modern design. On the other hand, for the majority of the public, these shops are too expensive; to them, the shops function much like art galleries: look but don't buy. The museum gift shop, however, is easier on the wallet by comparison. In all, by juxtaposing museum and commerce with a corresponding program, the museum, as a passive predator, gets more opportunities to find its quarry.

From a city point of view, the integration of commerce with fine art presents a paradox: contemporary art is inspired by daily life, but the contemporary art gallery is regarded as culturally elite. For downtown LA's cultural corridor, a programmatic integration between art and shopping needs to be encouraged in order to bring more people to Bunker Hill.

Diagrams of New York and Los Angeles showing relationship of retail to museum. Artist: Li Li.

The museum, as a passive predator, gets more opportunities to find its quarry.

New York City



Los Angeles



THE LACMA CONUNDRUM:
WHY LACMA SUCCEEDS DESPITE
BAD ARCHITECTURE AND WHY
MOCA GRAND AVENUE FAILS DESPITE
GOOD ARCHITECTURE

LACMA organized a competition for its ninth museum extension. One third of the money would have to be spent on renovating undeserving architecture. By reusing the plinth and proposing a single curatorial “field” to float above it, we discovered that the field could be divided in the four zones of the museum’s collection....The scale shifts from architecture to urbanism—the encyclopedic plateau becomes a museum of multiple exhibition typologies and techniques, a laboratory for the experience and (re)interpretation of history.

Rem Koolhaas, [Content](#)

In 2001, Rem Koolhaas won a competition to design an adaptive reuse of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His proposal: tear down the “motley collection” of “undeserving architecture” and build afresh a “single curatorial field” on a tabula rasa.

On the face of it, especially to the architecture cognoscenti, this seemed a brilliant idea. Out with the mediocre and muddled, in with the radically rational. But to the surprise of sophisticates who assumed everyone agreed that few of LACMA’s buildings were worth saving, there was an outcry: Hands off our LACMA. It turned out there was a huge affection for the county museum, that people liked its “motley collection” of dissimilar buildings. Even if they did not like the buildings themselves, they liked the spatial experience created by the buildings in relation to one another and to the park—relationships that have improved since the arrival of Michael Govan as director and CEO. Working with the architect Renzo Piano, who replaced Rem Koolhaas, Govan has shepherded such moves as the repositioning of the entrance, the installation of Chris Burden’s iconic [Urban Light](#), and the linking of the Ahmanson Building to LACMA West, BCAM, and the Resnick Pavilion.

These improvements add to what Renzo Piano has described as a “little town.” “The reason why I use the metaphor of the little town,” he said on KCRW’s [DnA](#) in 2004, “is because the scale of that scheme is of a little town with trees, little piazzas, so many different buildings...it’s organic...I mean, the city is made by growth, it’s made by layers...a place that is loved in spite of it being a bit messy, messy not in a negative way, but meaning a place that people love to be.”

LACMA shares some similarities with MOCA and Grand Avenue. It is a county-owned institution serving the region (Grand Avenue is partly owned by the county).¹ Its core buildings (the Ahmanson Building, the Bing Theater, and the Frances and Armand Hammer Building, by William Pereira) were designed concurrently with the Music Center and in a similar civic modern style. Admittedly advantaged by being in the heart of the Miracle Mile, it is, like Grand, a car-oriented thoroughfare. With the exception perhaps of the Pavilion for Japanese Art and the Resnick, LACMA’s buildings are considered fairly mediocre. As such, it is instructive to compare the two campuses: LACMA and Grand Avenue. Why does the former attract crowds of people on a weekend afternoon while the latter remains empty? [Boren Huang](#) visited both on one weekend and produced the series of photographs on pages 112–113, showing the institutions as they are used by people. Could Grand Avenue take a cue from the “little town” experience of LACMA?

1— The county owns parcels K, Q and W1. City-CRA owns parcels L, M1, and M2, and land under Cal Plaza One and Two, the water court, the Omni Hotel, and the Colburn School. Source: Don Spivack.

[LACMA is] a place that is loved in spite of it being a bit messy.

Renzo Piano



We don't buy a ticket, but we will sit outside in the open courtyard at LACMA and have a drink. We will spend on average three hours every time we hang out there. I think people go there simply because of the layout. It feels more inviting than MOCA. There is comfortable seating, there is a garden area where you can stake out a private part. If you are with a friend, you can stroll and not be observed. It's not so open and spare. You can find little nooks that are secret and precious to you.

Playwright Louise Munson, on why she loves LACMA



Views of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and MOCA.
Photos: Boren Huang.

135 North Grand
Kendall's



141 South Grand
Patina



California Plaza
Noe



California Plaza
Casa



Wells Fargo Center
California Pizza Kitchen



Wells Fargo Center
Nick & Stef's



535 South Grand
Checkers



613 South Grand
Casey's Irish Pub



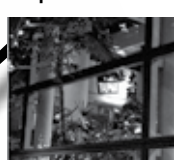
555 West Seventh
Seven Bar & Lounge



801 South Grand
Big Wangs



Wells Fargo Center
Taipan



544 South Grand
Water Grill



506 South Grand
Gallery Bar



515 West Seventh
Seven Grand Bar



700 South Grand
Bottega Louie



840 South Grand
Hank's Bar



Diagram by Paul Sheene,
locating bars on Grand Avenue
(sourced from Google).

WHY I LOVE GRAND AVENUE: A COUNTER-PERSPECTIVE BY A STUDENT WHO WORKED AND DRANK THERE

The USC research studio and this book presuppose that Grand Avenue is an urban failure. But not everybody sees it that way. Some appreciate it for exactly the reasons it is excoriated: its emptiness, its isolated and otherworldly quality. One of those is Paul Sheene, a USC architecture student who worked at Sixth and Grand Avenue in the Pacific Mutual Building for three years from 2006 to 2008. He recalls the experience.

A monthly parking permit at the Pacific Mutual Building on Grand and Sixth costs close to \$300. I take my employer's offer of health insurance instead. The Metro Red Line becomes my primary means of commuting. I board at the Wilshire/Vermont station and exit at either Pershing Square or the Seventh Street Metro station, depending on the length of the section of newspaper I'm reading. I prefer Seventh Street Metro because it offers a five-minute walk to work that I use to calm myself before entering the battlefield.

Working in a downtown office tower can be confining, and sometimes my lunch break provides the only freedom during the day. During my break, I see people filling up empty restaurants that seemingly stay in business only by serving the lunch crowd. Among the crowd, I get the feeling that I deserve lunch as a reward for making it this far in my life. And so, lunch becomes a moment of sweet heaven, a perfectly happy one for a salary man—that is, until I return to the office to do battle once more with numbers and figures to keep clients happy.

I'm in the trenches until the clock strikes six. At that moment work ends and the fun begins. Grand transforms into a variety of options for the evening...until night gets to be midnight, and just like a bachelor Cinderella, I have to get to the nearest Metro station for the last ride home.

After 6 p.m., the entire circulation of Grand changes. Workers file out of their towers to their various destinations for the night. The usual path of circulation starts north of Seventh Street on Grand, where most of the attractive bars and restaurants are located. These places offer an atmosphere of relaxation for workers looking to blow off steam after a difficult day. The call of the night is smooth jazz, downtempo, or lounge music, with small plates shared by groups of friends. It's the place to socialize for workers who are confined daily to their offices and cubicles.

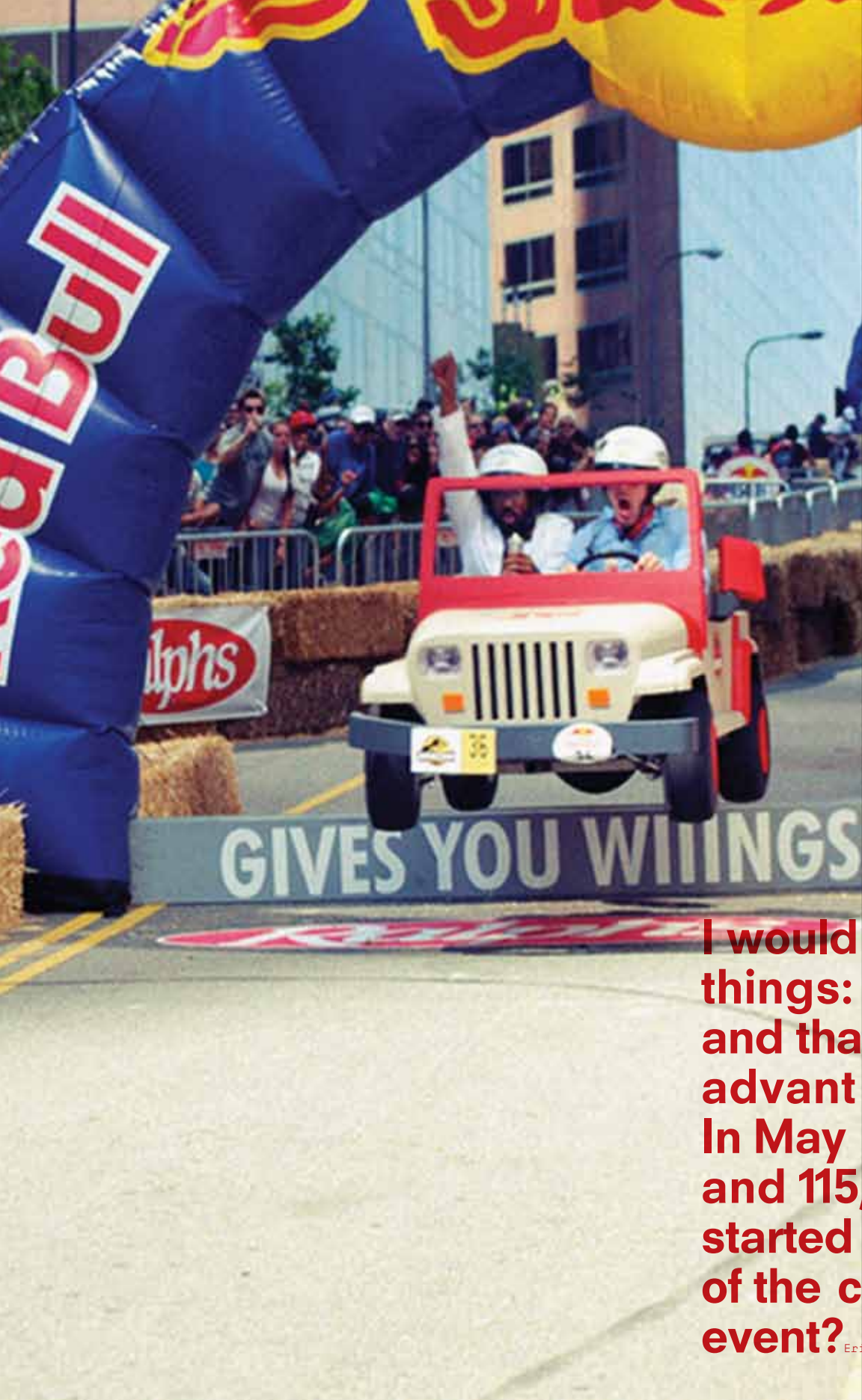
These restaurants and other venues on Grand have not yet been raided by the local residents who have purchased one of the nearby condominiums. It is easy to tell the difference between the locals' favorites and the commuters' favorites. Commuting workers flock to the casual yet formal upscale lounges and restaurants, while locals favor the laid-back places south of Seventh. By the middle of the evening, the mass migration has ended as each worker settles into a seat at his or her favorite spot. It will begin again at last call, either for the bar, the kitchen, or the Metro.

The overall feeling of Grand Avenue ranges from hectic to silent. As masses of people move from one location to the next and back, it becomes chaotic, the sounds of horns and cars trying to find an overpriced but convenient parking spot. I myself, though, enjoy the in-between times, when people are in their offices or at the restaurants and bars, and Grand becomes a silent, deserted street. The skyscrapers on either side are like the walls of a silent canyon, and you can almost hear your footsteps echo. This swing from chaos to tranquillity is unique to this street in LA, making it the most interesting, in my opinion.

One of the biggest criticisms of Grand Avenue is these in-between times. Seeing the empty street, the casual observer would declare it a failure of urbanism and city life. Such demands of twenty-four-hour activity, however, have their own disadvantages. On Grand you can enjoy both the chaos of city living *and* a sense of solitude. This is what I appreciate most.

The skyscrapers on either side are like the walls of a silent canyon, and you can almost hear your footsteps echo.

Grand Solutions



The Red Bull Soapbox Race in front of California Plaza, May 21, 2011. Photo: Aaron Friedman, 1994, Flickr.

“Instant” Improvements and Grand Designs

The USC Grand Avenue/MOCA Studio, led by Frank Gehry, asked students to redesign MOCA with the goal of reinvigorating Grand Avenue. (Results are shown starting on p. 136.) In the process, however, it became evident that architecture and the arts alone could not fix what ails this street. Aside from factors such as lack of residential density and steepness of the hill, students explored why the street itself is not better designed, with wider sidewalks, interesting lighting, shade, greenery. As part of their research, students also considered ways in which Grand Avenue and Lower Grand could be programmed to appeal to a wider public.

I would be focused on the more temporary things: the street fairs and farmers’ market and that sort of stuff, where you can take advantage of Grand Avenue as an island. In May you had the Red Bull Soapbox Race and 115,000 people came out to watch. That started in front of Cal Plaza. Now, were any of the cultural institutions participating in that event?

Eric Richardson, founder and editor, blogdowntown.com

A pop-up event enlivens Grand Avenue, when it was blocked off between Second and Third and filled with temporary structures for a MOCA fundraiser, 2010. Photo: John Shearer/Getty Images. Courtesy MOCA.

MOCA and the cultural organizations in the area need to work together to create a livelier street culture with several additional restaurants and cafes, outdoor screenings and performances, and art- and design-oriented retail.

Jeffrey Deitch, director of MOCA



IT SEEMS OBVIOUS SO WHY HASN'T IT HAPPENED?

As students carried out the research on Grand Avenue, we would ask ourselves questions such as: Why doesn't the Los Angeles Philharmonic do something fun and widely appealing, like, say, project imagery onto the exterior of the arts buildings to entertain passersby, or why doesn't the street have a fabulous lighting installation?

It turns out these ideas had already been floated but failed to materialize. Two such ideas were dreamed up by Frank Gehry and his associates: screening concerts on the sails of Walt Disney Concert Hall, and bringing the artist Chris Burden's street lamps to Grand Avenue.

One of the most striking, place-defining additions to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is *Urban Light*, the installation of restored historic Los Angeles street lamps by Chris Burden. But before LACMA director Michael Govan spotted their iconic potential, art consultant Merry Norris and Frank Gehry dreamed of putting them on Grand Avenue—a march of streetlights, stretching down the middle of Grand Avenue from Cesar Chavez to Fifth Street. Merry Norris tells the story.

“When I first started working on the Grand Avenue Project, the artist that we were the most interested in was Chris Burden. Frank, Craig, and I drove out to Chris's studio in Topanga Canyon. We arrived at a knoll and looked down at his huge studio to see old Los Angeles street lamps painted to match, marching all the way around the outside of his studio. We freaked out; we thought this was the coolest thing we'd ever seen! And that's what we wanted to do for Grand Avenue, put these lamps down the center of Grand Avenue. Time passed and Chris Burden called and told me that LACMA wished to purchase the lamps. Sometimes when I see *Urban Light* in front of LACMA (one of the great photo ops in Los Angeles), I think it's great but I wish it had been on Grand. Can you imagine how cool that would have been?”

OMISSION BY BUREAUCRACY

In talking to various designers and others who have been involved with Grand Avenue, students repeatedly learned that these and other improvements did not happen because various, often competing, interests prevented it—interests that included the Department of Transportation, the Fire Department, the Bureau of Engineering, politicians at the city and county levels, and the CRA, not to mention the competing goals of developers, architects, landscape designers, and historic preservationists. As Nancy



Montage of Grand Avenue, incorporating Chris Burden's *Urban Light*. Artist Julie Cho.

We wanted to put these lamps down the center of Grand Avenue... Can you imagine how cool that would have been?

Goslee Power, a garden designer who has worked on Grand, told the students, “The city is obstructive. The bureaucracy makes it so difficult, and of course you have the added bureaucracy of Grand Avenue being owned by the county and the city. Getting all of the different bureaucratic agencies together is always a nightmare. Everyone fights for his own turf.”

Urban planner Deborah Murphy adds, “One of the challenges in making Grand Avenue a successful place is the lack of one lead stakeholder among the government agencies. Who wants to take responsibility? A property owner doesn't always equate to a stakeholder. They are not necessarily invested in making it a place.”

Projection of a Leger painting
onto the façade of Walt Disney
Concert Hall, ca. 1996. Image
courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP.

There was an idea to project images on the front of the concert hall, on the sails.

Frank Gehry



“ART SHOULD NOT BE ENTERTAINMENT!” LEARNING FROM THE DOWNTOWN ART WALK

“Art should not be entertainment!” declared Glenn Kaino, a visiting artist during Jacqueline Lee’s project for the redesign of MOCA. Lee had proposed enlivening MOCA by integrating it with more public arts uses, such as a street market for local artists. Kaino appeared horrified at the idea of mixing up—gasp—mediocre arts and crafts with the high-art temple that is MOCA.

His statement seemed, inadvertently, to sum up the problem at the heart of Grand Avenue. It is not entertaining. Despite best efforts by Frank Gehry, who has the rare ability to meld avant-garde design with popular appeal, and the LA Philharmonic in bringing in the brilliant and dashing Gustavo Dudamel as music director (whose Youth Orchestra LA program takes music from Grand Avenue to underserved neighborhoods), and MOCA in recruiting director Jeffrey Deitch to spice up its offerings, MOCA and Grand Avenue remain a “decontaminated cultural district” (see Jennifer Choi’s contribution, p. 95) that still exudes the paternalism of the Dorothy (Buffy) Chandler era.

Kaino’s response also failed to acknowledge the central role today of pop-up and interactive events in an era of democratized culture and social networking that can bring thousands together almost instantaneously. California Plaza has proven, through its summertime Grand Performances, that such programming can work. But just east, in the historic district, is an even bigger crowd draw, the monthly Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk. To find out more about Art Walk and what lessons learned from it might be applied to MOCA and Grand, Jacqueline Lee explored the event, snapping photos and interviewing those in attendance.

MOCA is developing plans to enliven its entrance area and plaza and has been working with the owners of Cal Plaza and the Omni Hotel to change the current restrictions on food service in the MOCA Plaza.

Jeffrey Deitch, director of MOCA

On the second Thursday of every month, downtown LA is transformed into a hip destination for people of all backgrounds. It takes place along the streets of Broadway, Spring, Main, and Los Angeles from Second to Ninth (see pp. 128–129).

It was not always like this. The inaugural Art Walk, in 2004, accommodated seventy-five people. Seven years later, Art Walk brings together three thousand people or more in just one night. Bert Green, “godfather” of the Art Walk, explains its success: “Word has gotten out, and the neighborhood has developed with restaurants and stores. We’re acting as a catalyst for further activity.” The activities that Green refers to are the subcultures that have sprung from Art Walk, including pop-up art, food trucks, and fashion tents.

MOCA? NEVER HEARD OF IT.

After experiencing Art Walk for the first time, I started to question why the same atmosphere didn’t exist on Grand Avenue. After all, MOCA is a part of Art Walk, as it is one of the featured museums on the event’s monthly flyer. I wondered if people who attended Art Walk even knew that MOCA is free on Thursdays after 5 p.m.

To my surprise, most people did not even know what MOCA is, and the ones who had heard of it didn’t know where it was. Many attendees gave me a quizzical look when asked if they knew that MOCA was a part of Art Walk. Those who did know of the museum either had never gone there during Art Walk or had visited only once. The most interesting discovery was that almost every interviewee was an LA resident.

Most replied that they would go to MOCA during Art Walk if there were life and activity leading to it. But in its current existence, the quiet environment that separates Art Walk and MOCA discourages people from venturing up to Grand Avenue. Perhaps it’s a change that MOCA and Art Walk need to make together—maybe Art Walk could expand toward MOCA, and MOCA could step up its advertising and become more accessible to the public.

Perhaps a good place to start is to expand Art Walk toward MOCA by guiding foot traffic in that direction. To that end, food trucks could be allowed along Third or Fourth from Broadway to Grand. There would also have to be some thought given to improving the environment for bicyclists and users of public transit; for example, the Red Line stop nearest to Grand Avenue, at Civic Center, is quite uninviting at night.

CAN GRAND AVENUE HOST POP-UP CULTURE?

Can Grand Avenue transform itself to host pop-up culture? Should Grand maintain a clear separation between art and entertainment?

For me, after comparing Grand Avenue on a given Thursday night with Art Walk on a Thursday night, yes, art *should* be entertaining and *should* appeal to the masses. The question is, just how to do so?

I've heard of [MOCA], but I've never gone up there. I just go where the crowds are.

I've heard a lot about Art Walk because it's so well advertised on the buses and trains, but I had no idea MOCA was a part of it.

There's more restrictions over there [at MOCA]...it's too organized. We have rules here, but it's just not the same. It's more casual here.

I'd go up there [to MOCA] if there was stuff to see on the way up there.

I would go up there. Not walk, but I would drive. It's a little dangerous at night.

[After learning MOCA is a part of Art Walk:] Well...I don't know if I would go to MOCA because...actually, I like the atmosphere better downtown. When we were walking down here, there was this band and it was almost like Mardi Gras! It's more lively here than over there.

Art should be like the music industry: sell copies of the work rather than just the original. Brian Lee, owner of HoldUp Art Gallery

I think it's the atmosphere. Everything about it. Everything mixed together. Owner, Sinfully Sweet Apple Company, on why people come to the Art Walk

I didn't know the Art Walk existed until I did the food truck. Despite all the artists on the streets of the downtown LA Art Walk, food trucks also attract a lot of people.

Owner, Jogasaki Burrito food truck

[DAW] is basically a pop-up store that opens for a certain period of time and closes.

Art Walk has developed into something happening. People come here to be seen. There are a lot of artsy people walking around. It's a broad spectrum that speaks to all kinds of different people. It's a great place to come down and walk around and has really helped revitalize downtown. LAPD officer

You just get a little bit of everything. You have the food. You have the art. It gathers different people. My friends come for different things—the bar, the art, the food.

We were here for the art, but then we got distracted by the food.

REDESIGN THE STREET

Ask most people—besides architects—about what they'd like to see improved on Grand Avenue, and they'll say the street. It's the simple things: trees, shade, somewhere to sit and have a coffee and enjoy a view and some people-watching. Many experts have tried over the years to improve the street, and in the process have come up against various bureaucratic and engineering obstacles. Following are some images of stretches of Grand Avenue, before and after, with a farmers' market and greenery added, by [Darrick Leong](#).

People don't go from A to B as fast as they can. It's the circuitous route from A to B, the things that make you linger and stop and shop and eat and meet people, that really make cities work.

Elizabeth Diller, principal, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, on [DnA](#), KCRW, January 18, 2011

Great pieces of architecture in a row on a street do not make a street. What it needs also is for the city to invest in infrastructure; making that street more pedestrian friendly and spending money on plantings and streetscape and making it a place people want to go to.

Sam Lubell, California editor, [The Architect's Newspaper](#), California edition

Grand Avenue imagined by Darrick Leong with trees and a farmers' market. Left column: before. Right column: after.





Montage of street fair, as envisioned on Lower Grand Avenue. Artist: Jacqueline Lee.

MAKE LOWER GRAND A DESTINATION, NOT JUST A ROUTE

One of the lessons learned from Los Angeles is that while its auto-based urban form sometimes defies humanization, Angelenos are highly ingenious at adapting that form and finding an odd beauty in seemingly ugly spaces. So it seems that opportunity lies in turning Grand Avenue's biggest negative—Lower Grand, a dark tunnel gouged into the hill that exists exclusively as a service street—into a positive, just as New Yorkers took their unsightly old elevated railway and transformed it into a landscaped masterpiece, the High Line. Downtown LA resident Eric Richardson of blogdowntown.com puts it this way: "Lower Grand, that space especially in the context of Los Angeles, is so unique, and the more you can do interesting things there that are open to the public, the more people will come. I think the big lesson is these projects of the past created a challenging topography, but yet it is one that now needs to be taken advantage of."

On the following pages, Lower Grand was brought to life in the Los Fearless basketball game described by [Jared Shier](#), and is imagined as an art experience by [Mike Yin-Fun Chou](#).

Developers would have to see the value it would add to their properties. For example, if your proposal can generate events that would bring thousands of people to the area, and the businesses might stay open and realize increased revenues, that might be a selling point.

Deborah Weintraub, chief deputy city engineer, Bureau of Engineering, city of Los Angeles, talking to Mike Yin-Fun Chou, May 2011

LOS FEARLESS

In the middle of February 2011, the NBA All-Star game descended upon Los Angeles. As the game began inside Staples Center at the southern edge of downtown, the event's influence spread throughout the city. This was especially evident on Bunker Hill.

When I heard that Nike was hosting a two-on-two basketball tournament on Lower Grand Avenue, I had no idea what to expect. Nonetheless, I was keenly interested in checking it out. The entire tournament took place on half of a gloomy Saturday. But for those few hours, Grand Avenue on Bunker Hill was alive like I've seldom experienced it. The organizers had managed to transform the nitty-gritty underbelly of the Los Angeles acropolis into something that felt more LA than a walk along the Sunset Strip.

Sound reverberated off concrete, graffiti was displayed on the walls, movie lights illuminated the scene, people were cheering, announcers barked over loudspeakers, music was blasting in the background. The few pedestrians who happened to be walking along Upper Grand crossed the street to peer down through the skylights at what was going on below. The place was alive. Lower Grand was alive. Bunker Hill was alive.

These are the moments and experiences that make great public spaces—the types of spaces that come to mind when people mention the city they're in. I've always been skeptical about Bunker Hill. I've lived down the street from it for several years, heard the hype, and experienced the reality. This was the first time I had seen something on Grand Avenue that made me believe this place is worth the investment.

Los Fearless basketball tournament on Lower Grand Avenue. Photo: Jared Shier.



Montage of Lower Grand Avenue (top) and as envisioned with street art (bottom). Artist: Mike Yin-Fun Chou.

LOWER GRAND AS ART EXPERIENCE

MOCA mounted its 2010 hit show *Art in the Streets* at the Geffen Contemporary in Little Tokyo. Cool enough, but a predictable choice out of MOCA's three venues. Imagine if, instead, they had chosen to locate the show at MOCA Grand and had made Lower Grand part of the art experience.

I think the big lesson is these projects of the past created a challenging topography, but yet it is one that now needs to be taken advantage of.

REDESIGN MOCA: BACK TO THE BEGINNING

As the story began, so it ends, with Frank Gehry's directive to students: redesign MOCA Grand Avenue.

MOCA had expressed a desire to expand, and as Gehry explained, "The idea occurred to me that if you took a real project that was looking to expand and thought about it, with the idea that this was going to spark a renaissance or a movement on Grand Avenue—how would you do it? It was to give the students an anchor, something to hang on to. You have the other projects that did the whole planning thing, but nobody cares about that, so I thought maybe the thinking of it from the point of view of a major institution could enlighten somebody. Plus that site connects back over to the street beyond. Also, it has to deal with Cal Plaza, which is a mess, and it has to deal with the Colburn, which isn't very friendly. If you could address those issues in the context of Grand Avenue and what it aspires to be, then you have a microcosm, whereas if I had them design the whole thing from Temple to Fifth Street they'd never get there."

The USC studio was taught by instructor and architect Aaron Neubert, with Craig Webb, Edwin Chan, and Tensho Takemori representing Gehry Partners. Students created a range of redesigns—some tall, some low and snaking, some bridging the street, some taking the museum to the street—that endeavor to enhance the connection with the street, with downtown to the east, with a broader cross section of the public, and with the rest of the LA region. The projects are from students Yu-Quan Chen, Jennifer Choi, Mike Yin-Fun Chou, Derek Greene, Boren Huang, Huaiming Liao, Jiejun Li, Jacqueline Lee, Darrick Leong, Jarman Montgomery, Li Li, Paul Sheene, and Jared Shier.

The jury included Glenn Kaino, visual artist; Hacer, sculptor; Sebastian Salvadó, architect; Shana Bonstin, urban planner; Gordon Polon, structural engineer; Martin Stigsgaard, architect; Tim Durfee, architect; Warren Wagner, architect; Sandra Kulli, Urban Land Institute member; Aaron Paley, founder of Community Arts Resources; Robert Hale, architect; and Melinda Taylor, landscape architect.

Aaron Neubert describes the studio and the ideas it produced.

**Bunker Hill doesn't
need another icon.
It already has the
Disney Concert Hall.**

Comment by several jurors about the challenge of redesigning MOCA Grand Avenue

Through a series of explorations, the Gehry studio at USC interrogated the inconsistent and less-than-grand development of Bunker Hill, which has failed to deliver on the promise of activating Grand Avenue. What has resulted instead is an isolated and dysfunctional ribbon of trophy architecture better known as a backdrop for sports car commercials. The studio's planning approaches serve as a direct response to the by-product of numerous partially implemented master plans, compromised design visions, internally organized corporate plazas, and institutions that in effect are a disjointed zone of diurnal business and cultural activities.

The urban design proposals generated by the students attempt to transform current patterns of organization and use on Bunker Hill. They alter the margins of the site to capitalize on the urban renewal successfully occurring in adjacent areas of Los Angeles and create a socially and culturally hospitable street. Furthermore, students were challenged to accomplish this formidable task through the design of a 250,000-square-foot new building for MOCA Grand, a Grand Avenue hermit and an institution with a history of weak brand identity, poor attendance, and, in recent years, financial problems. In the end, the design projects ask many more questions than they answer and loosely fall into five typological categories: vertical museums, event spaces, landscape urbanism, dispersed programming, and street activators.

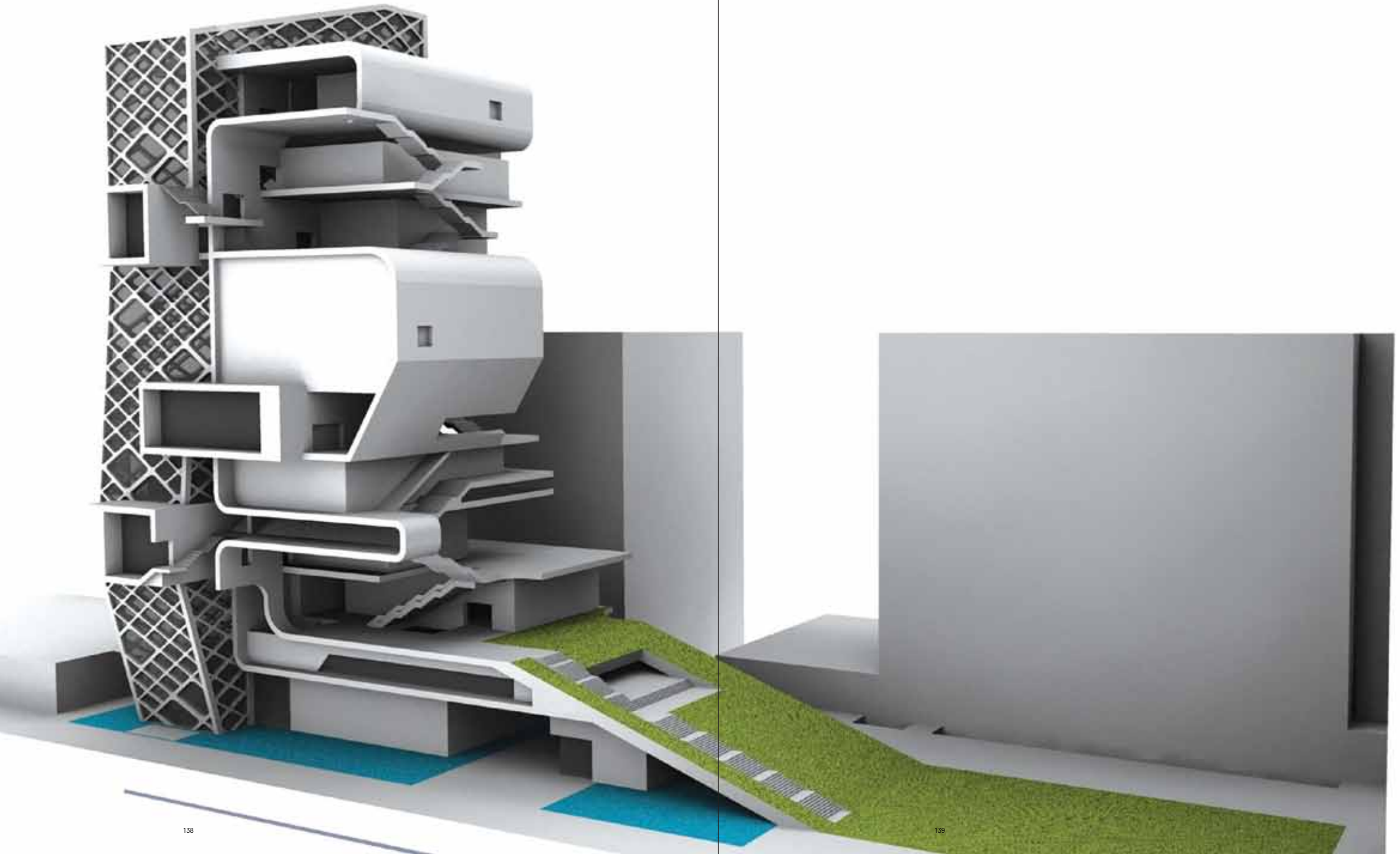
THE VERTICAL MUSEUM

Yu-Quan Chen's design is intended to create a strong identity for MOCA, as well as a public space that opens up California Plaza, connecting Grand Avenue with Olive Street, and a new vertical public experience providing views of downtown and beyond.

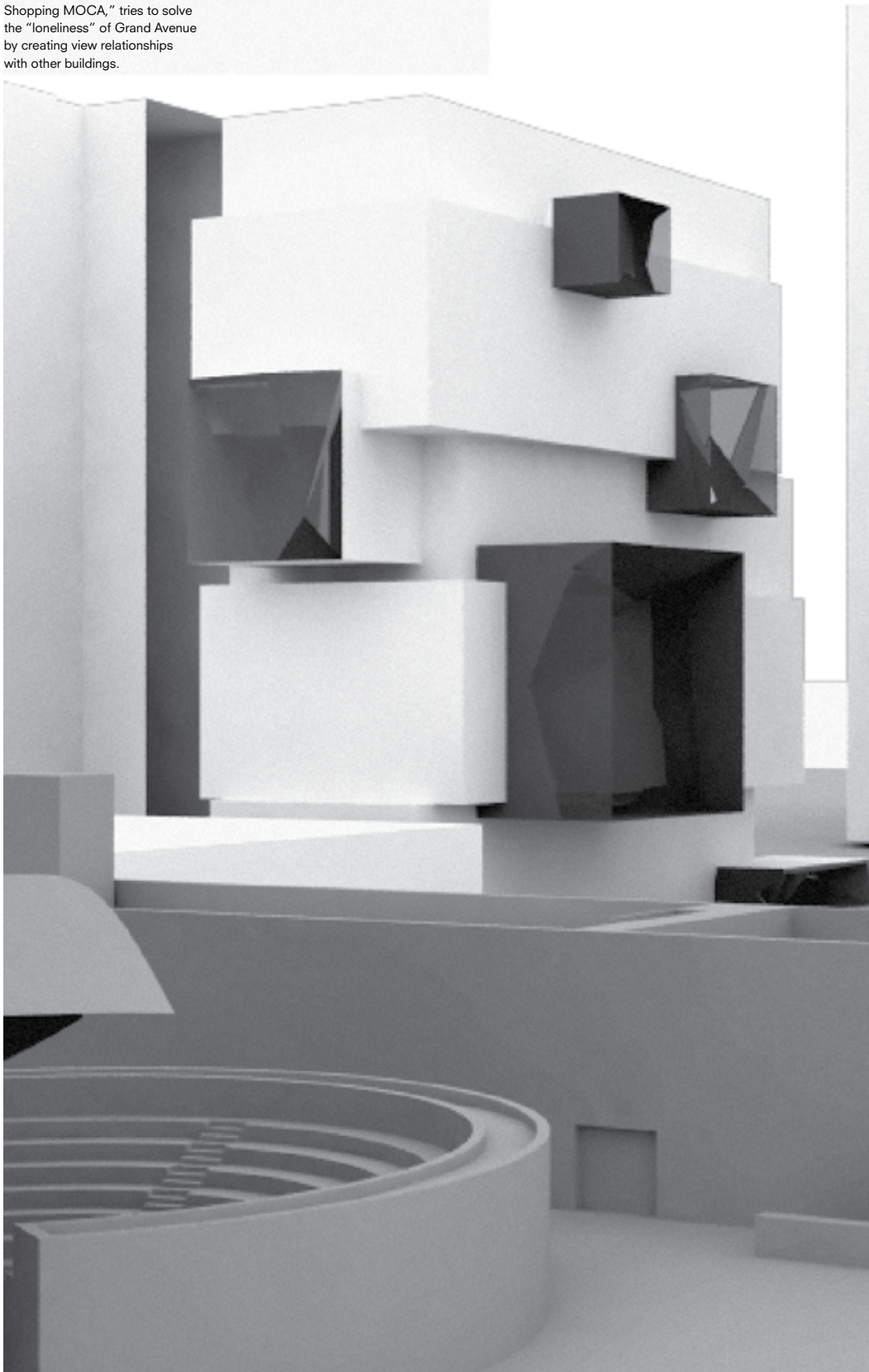
The vertical museums attempt to develop tower schemes with the capacity to compete visually with the adjacent corporate towers, to draw attention to the overall mission of MOCA, and to free up various public spaces at the street to counter the private corporate plazas.

Strong composition and iconic identity that is very truthful and site-specific.

Martin Stigsgaard, architect



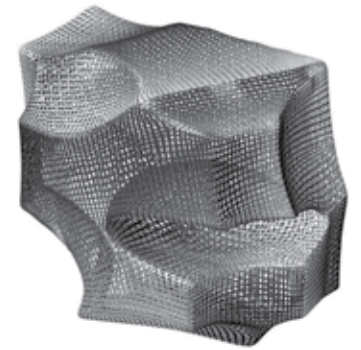
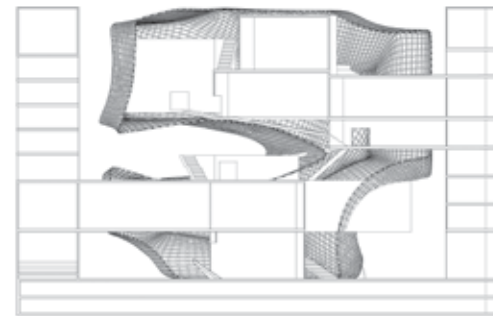
Jiejun Li's project, "Window Shopping MOCA," tries to solve the "loneliness" of Grand Avenue by creating view relationships with other buildings.



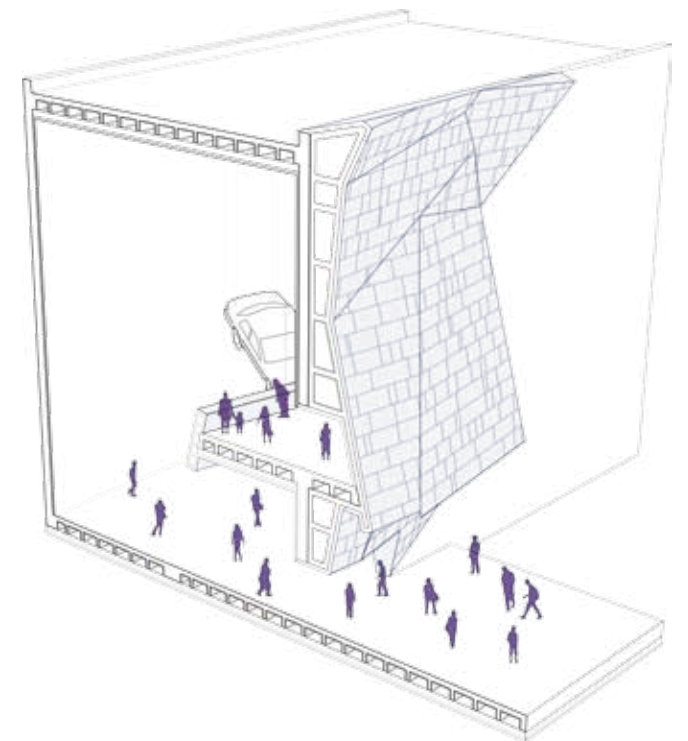
Jiejun Li



Li Li's project introduces shopping strategies to MOCA by wrapping galleries in commercial functions.



Derek Greene's project splits MOCA into two buildings and emphasizes the circulation space as a place to gather.



EVENT SPACES

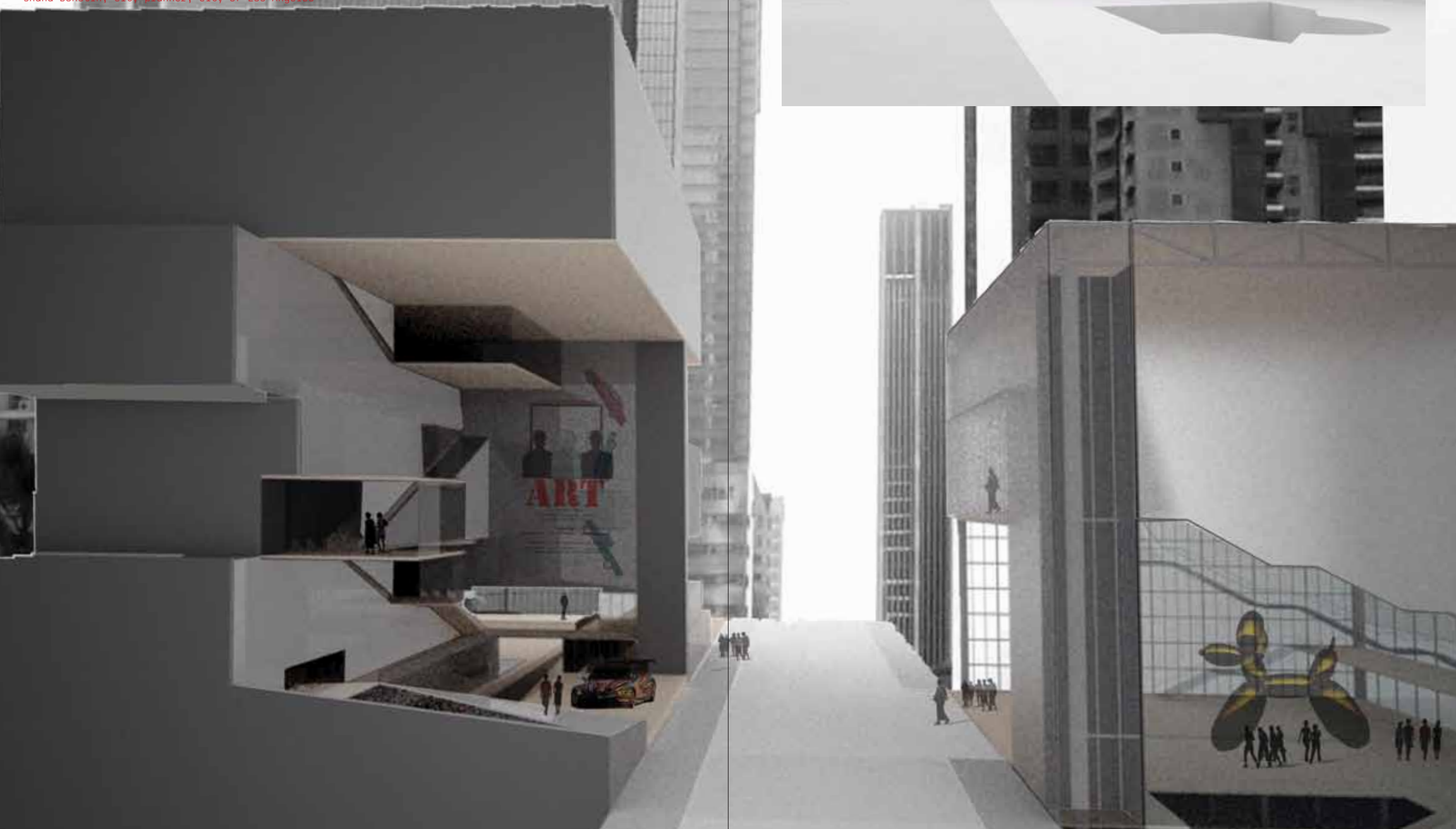
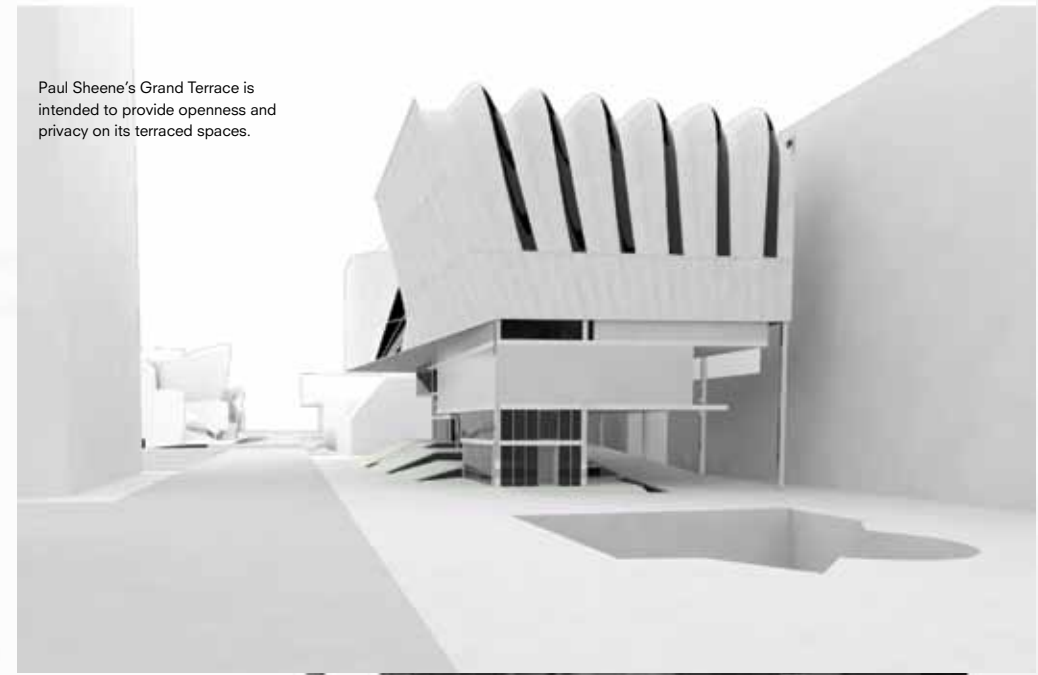
Boren Huang's proposal, shown looking southwest on Grand Avenue, divides the program into two buildings. The space on Grand in between would be periodically closed to vehicle traffic during special events.

The event spaces challenge the necessity for traffic on Upper Grand Avenue by burying vehicular circulation and creating flexible interior and exterior interconnecting rooms across the now pedestrian streetscape.

It's a provocative idea—to have buildings on both sides of Grand that feed out into a pedestrian street. The design creates cogent spaces.

Shana Bonstin, city planner, city of Los Angeles

Paul Sheene's Grand Terrace is intended to provide openness and privacy on its terraced spaces.



LANDSCAPE URBANISM

Mike Yin-Fun Chou's project intends to resolve Bunker Hill's lackluster social interaction on the ground floor by breaking museum programs down into several pavilions and plazas in order to transform Grand Avenue into a "living" street.

The landscape urbanism schemes fragment the museum program into various pavilions working their way across the site in a very flexible and opportunistic manner.

The buildings play off each other to create a harmonious garden.

Gordon Polon, structural engineer



The pavilions concept, including the eclectic design, off-the-grid building placement, and full use of Grand Avenue, is so clever; it completely transforms the space and street into a sophisticated art village, making excellent use of the outdoor space.



Model showing how Mike Yin-Fun Chou's project invades Grand Avenue.

This design creates a significant connection between Hill and Upper Grand, providing an important (visual and pedestrian) link to the Art Walk locations downtown, and even more impact with an overlook above Angels Knoll.



Model of Jacqueline Lee's project, a series of small pavilions and gardens that snake eastward from MOCA to create a connection between MOCA/Grand Avenue and the arts district and Gallery Row to the east.

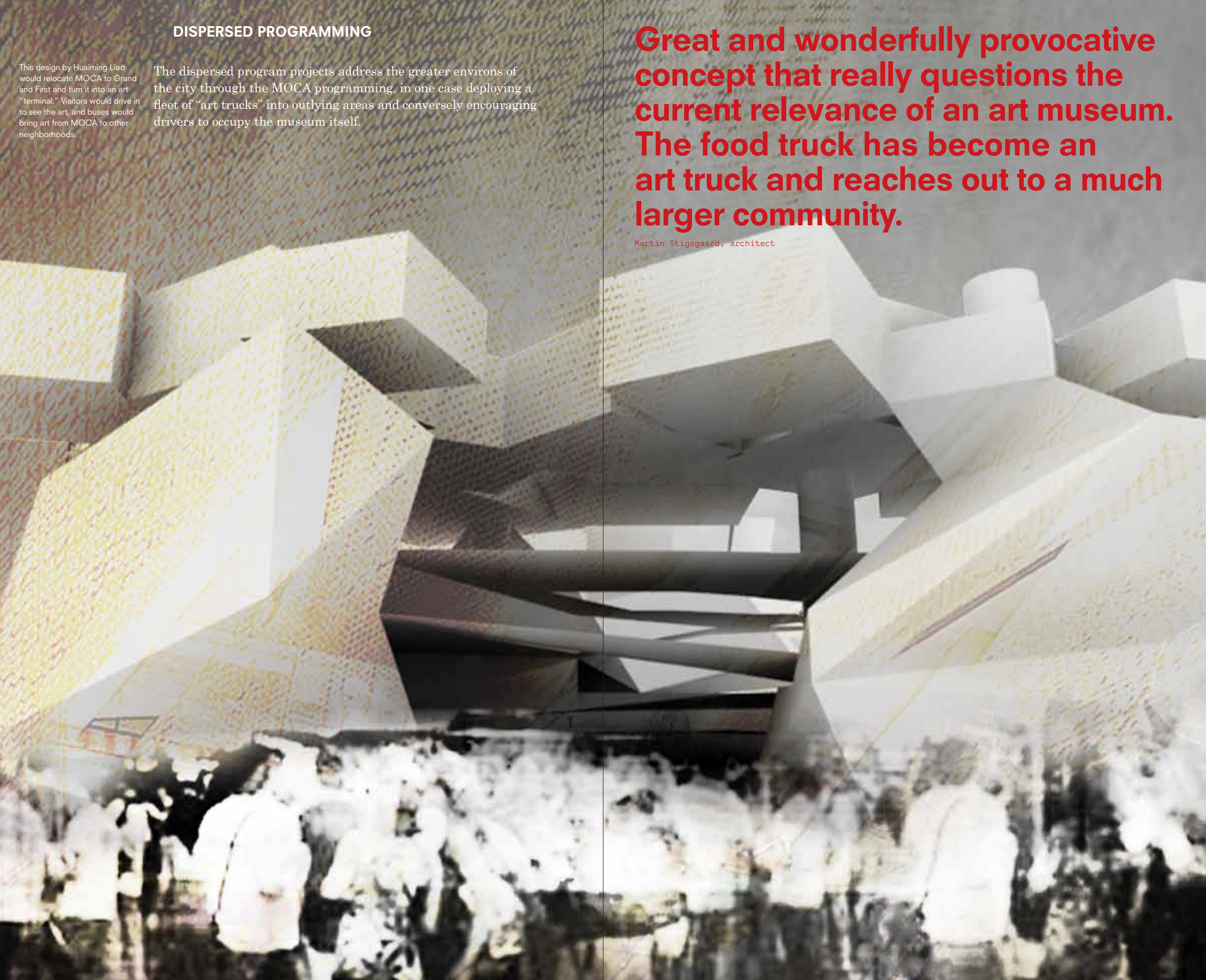
DISPERSED PROGRAMMING

This design by Huaiming Liao would relocate MOCA to Grand and First and turn it into an art "terminal." Visitors would drive in to see the art, and buses would bring art from MOCA to other neighborhoods.

The dispersed program projects address the greater environs of the city through the MOCA programming, in one case deploying a fleet of "art trucks" into outlying areas and conversely encouraging drivers to occupy the museum itself.

Great and wonderfully provocative concept that really questions the current relevance of an art museum. The food truck has become an art truck and reaches out to a much larger community.

Martin Stigsgaard, architect

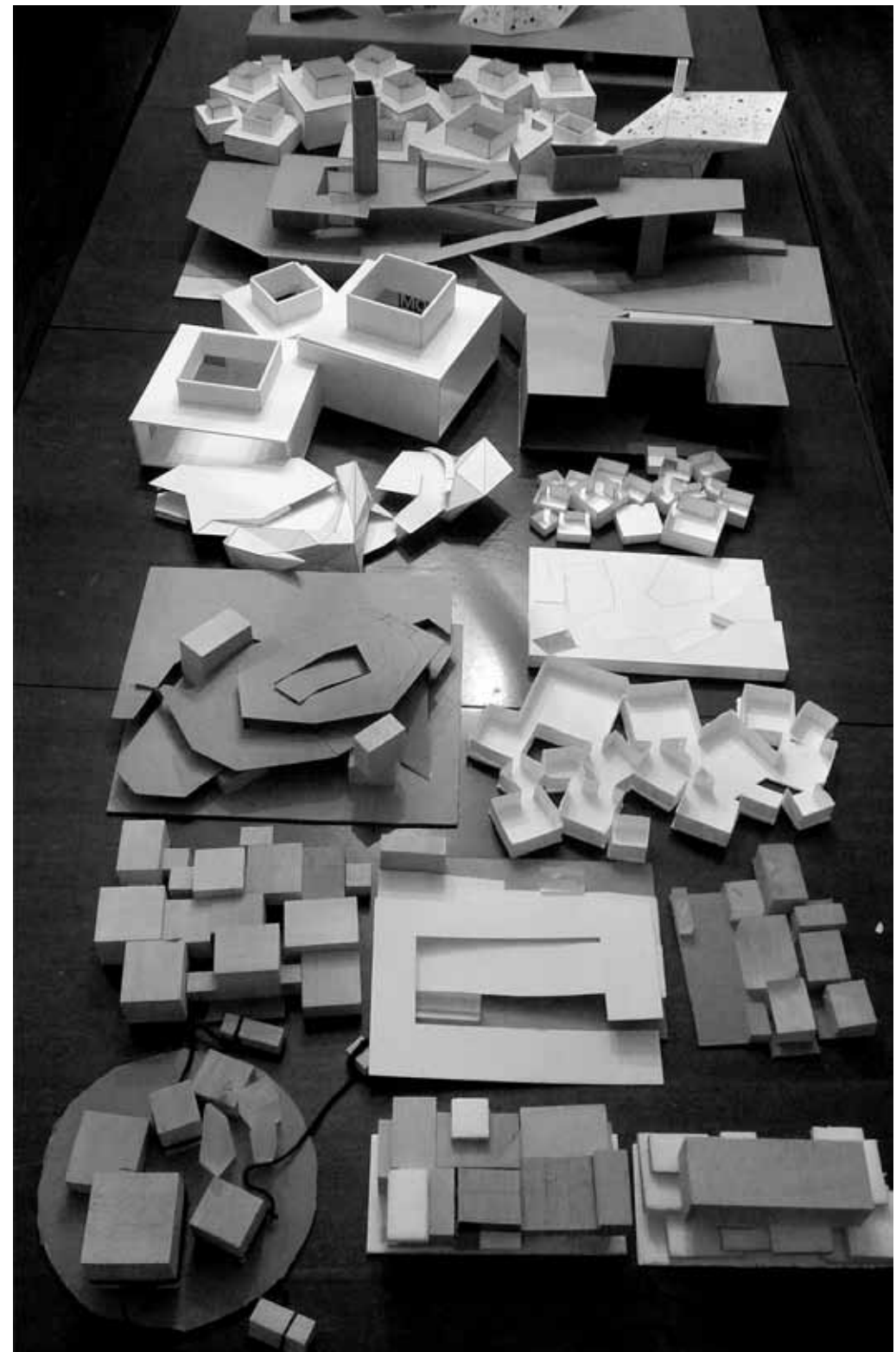


The concept could be very successful; building on our food truck craze and injecting this use throughout downtown. But how do drivers occupy the museum?

Shawn Austin



Huaiming Liao's proposal showing art buses being dispatched from MOCA throughout Los Angeles.



Sketch models by Huaiming Liao

STREET ACTIVATORS

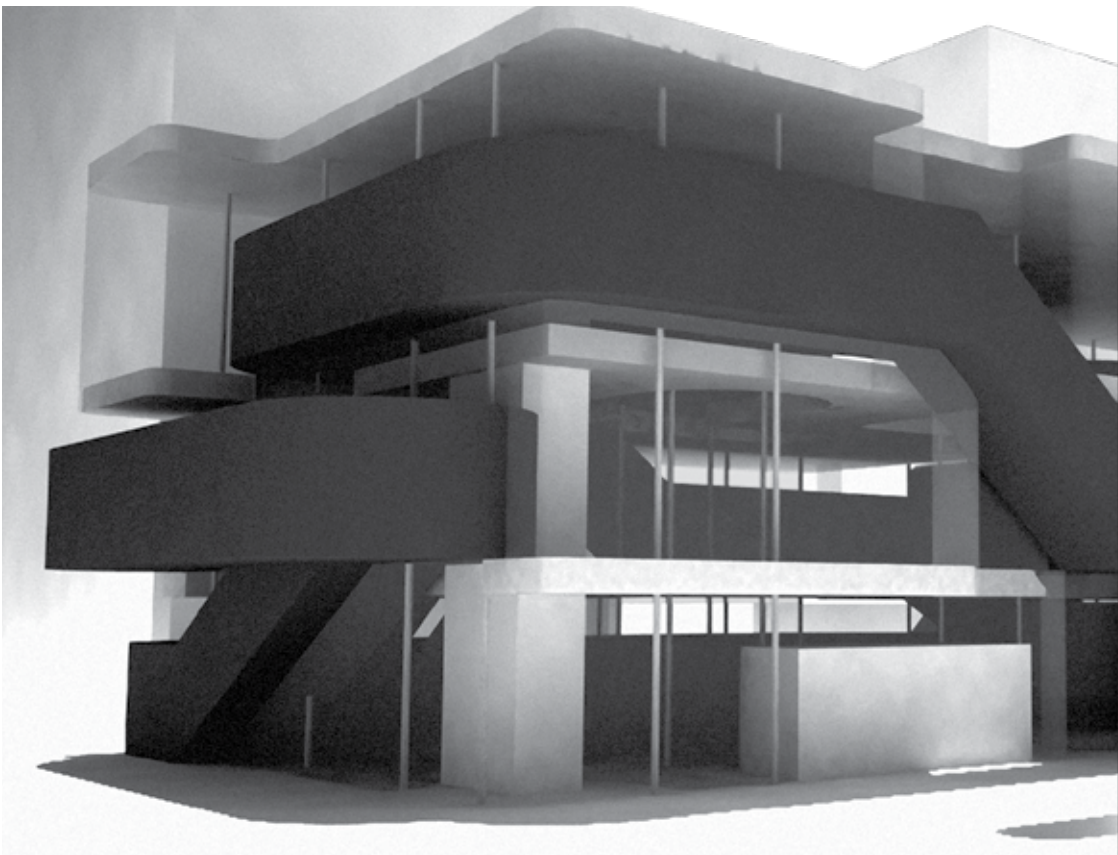
This design by Jared Shier attempts to alleviate the “stagnant” nature of the current MOCA/Grand Avenue by elevating the galleries into a twisted helix above, rendering the ground plane accessible for commercial and public use.

The subtle street activators sought out more polite methods of street-edge programming to holistically alter the impression of Grand Avenue and subsequently its overall appeal.

Refined and iconic.

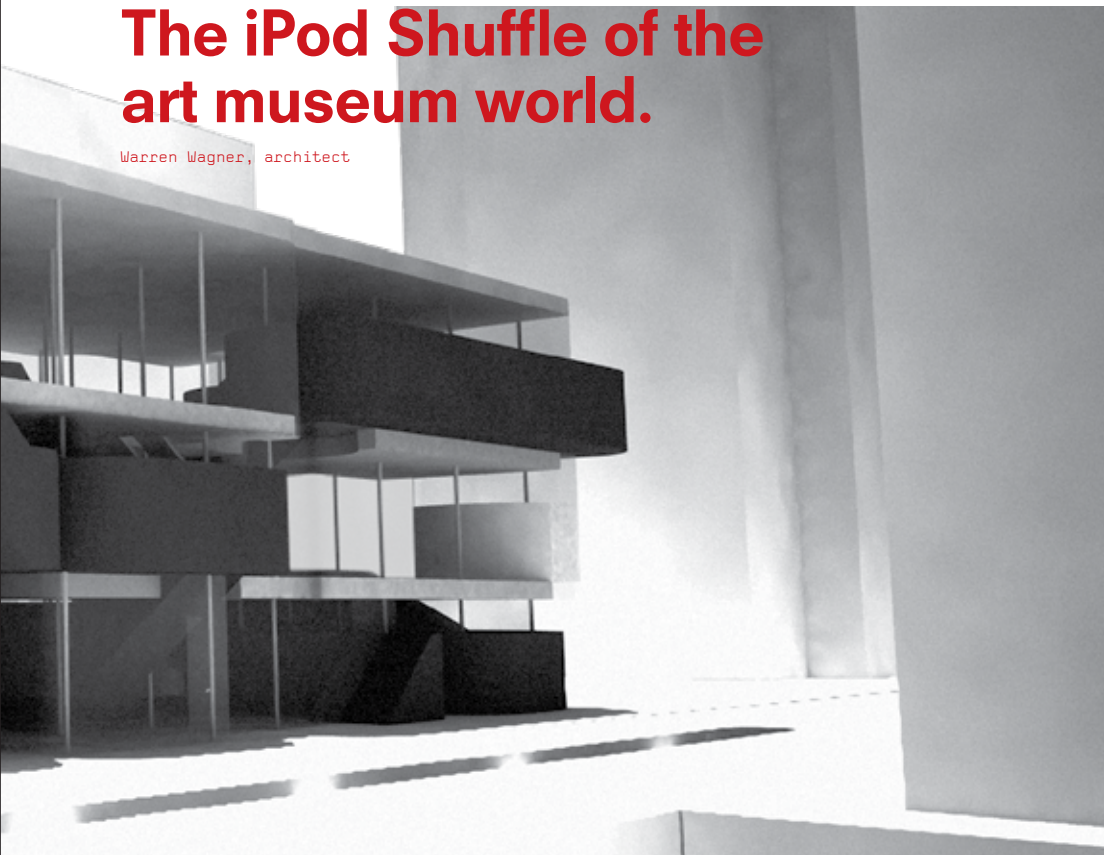
Martin Migggaard, architect





The iPod Shuffle of the art museum world.

Warren Wagner, architect



Jarman Montgomery's project puts the art in a conveyor belt visible outside and inside.



Darrick Leone's project draws the public into a central open space.

The ground floor commercial uses are important to activating the street. The building form is interesting and orients people to the entrance.

Shana Bonstin, city planner, city of Los Angeles



Jennifer Choi's building creates a street frontage hitherto lacking on Grand Avenue.

When I was a little girl in the 1950s, my dad, a native Angeleno, took me to downtown Los Angeles one day. We wandered around a place full of surprises, and as we explored, I learned the Street Order verse:

Los Angeles is
the Main Spring
to Broadway,
over the Hill to
Olive it's Grand
to Hope to pick
a Flower on
Figueroa.

Fifty-five years later, I'm an observer at the MOCA/Grand Avenue Studio, where USC students are inventing design solutions that can bring MOCA to life—from an art laundromat to a pod system that sends art out in trucks to the neighborhoods. They imagine solutions that go beyond architecture.

This is the real design challenge: to weave together the Grand Avenue experience into something as welcoming and joyful as those walks holding my dad's hand a half century ago, where the invitation to "go downtown" meant the possibility of a grand adventure.

Sandra Kulli, brand strategist, member of the Urban Land Institute

Grand Avenue looking southwest. Photo: Julie Cho.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication owes its existence to many individuals. First, my gratitude goes to Dean Qingyun Ma, Frank Gehry, and Amy Murphy for bringing me in to lead the research component of the Grand Avenue/MOCA Studio, an immensely interesting project. From instructors Aaron Neubert, Edwin Chan, Craig Webb, and Tensho Takemori, the students and I learned much about the creation of architecture.

The design of *Grand Illusion* resulted from a deep collaboration with Julie Cho, the graphic designer, and Lee Olvera, instructor and communications director at USC School of Architecture. Julie took multiple perspectives on Grand as well as my seemingly conflicting design directives—Let it be bold! Elegant! Punk! Readable!—and patiently turned them into a coherent and powerful design. Dianne Woo improved the text with her proofreading.

Thanks also to Meaghan Lloyd and Amy Achorn at Gehry Partners for their help in the process; and to Warren Olney and Jennifer Ferro, my employers at KCRW, who supported this project enough to give me time away from my regular producing commitments. Thanks always to my husband, Bennett Stein, a stimulating critic; and to my father, Sam Anderton, my first design teacher, who went through every page with me.

I am grateful to the individuals, many associated with Grand Avenue, who gave generously of their time to discuss the project: Yukio Kawarata, Deborah Weintraub, John Kaliski, Ken Bernstein, Sandra Kulli, Aaron Paley, Julie Silliman, Mark Rios, Merry Norris, Deborah Murphy, Nancy Goslee Power, Eric Richardson, Stacy Horth-Neubert, Will Hunter, Frank Gehry, Jeffrey Deitch, Nelson Rising, Ed Cella, and Carol Schatz. For talking to me on *DnA* over the years, thanks to Eli Broad, Elizabeth Diller, Councilmember Jan Perry, Joseph Giovannini, Sam Lubell, Louise Munson, Christopher Hawthorne, Renzo Piano and the late, great John Chase. Special gratitude goes to Donald Spivack for his great help in explaining the evolution of Bunker Hill. The USC Digital Library was also very helpful in providing many of the historic images. And of course, thanks to the students, who spent many hours contemplating Bunker Hill: Yu-Quan Chen, Jennifer Choi, Mike Yin-Fun Chou, Derek Greene, Boren Huang, Huaiming Liao, Jiejun Li, Jacqueline Lee, Li Li, Darrick Leong, Jarman Montgomery, Paul Sheene, and Jared Shier. Mike Yin-Fun Chou and Jared Shier, especially, went beyond the call of duty in creating content, and without Jared's help in the production of materials, there would be no book. Any omissions or mistakes in the content are my responsibility alone.

—Frances Anderton

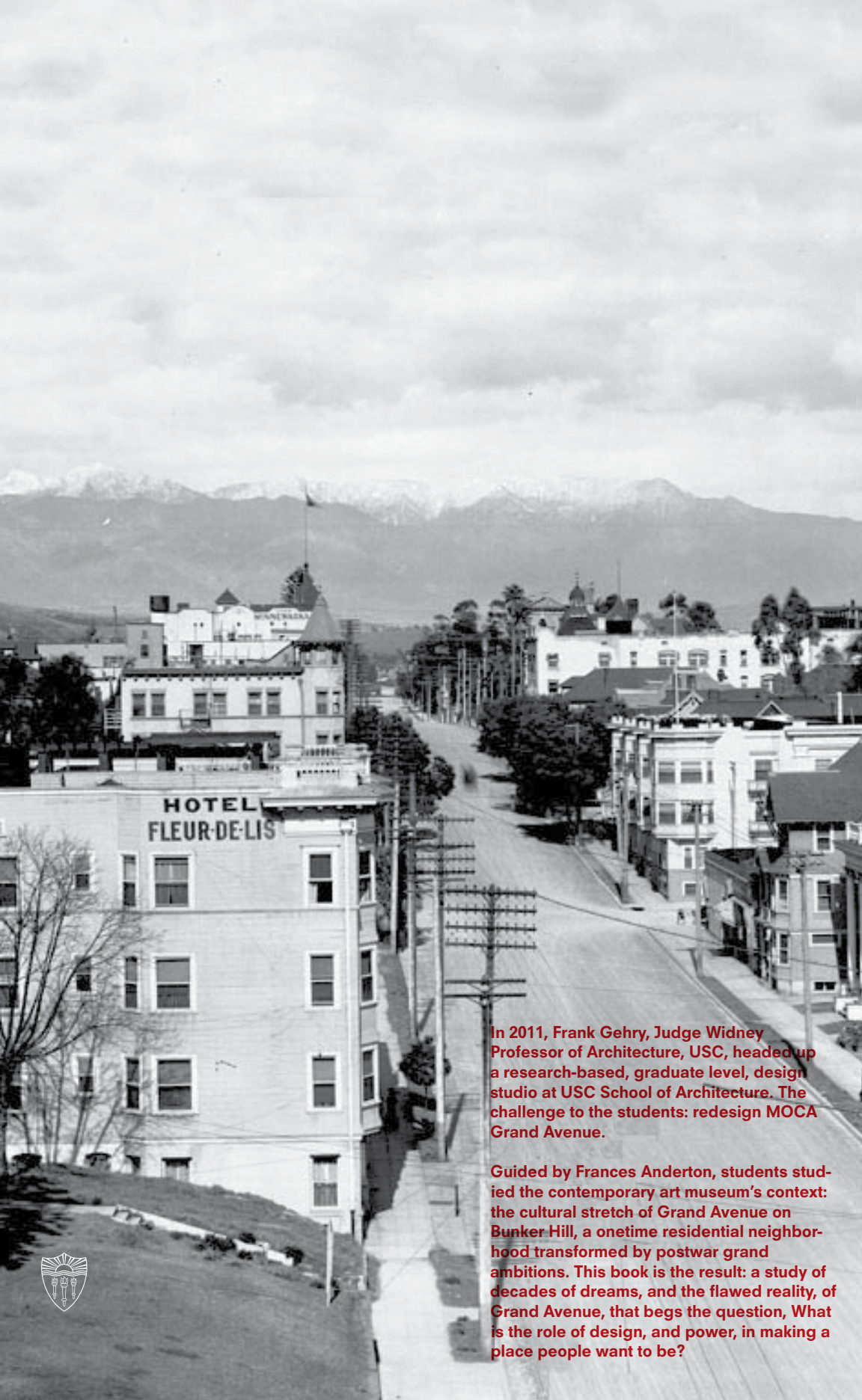


Faculty and students of the MOCA/Grand Avenue Studio, Arch. 605. Photo: Caitlin Boyd.

The historic "Castle" being removed in sections from Bunker Hill, March 7, 1969. The house was relocated to Arroyo Seco Park where it subsequently burned down. Herald-Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library. Photo: Myron Dubee.



Backcover: Photograph of Grand Avenue looking northeast from 4th street, Los Angeles, ca.1913, when Bunker Hill, like many steep urban sites, was largely given over to residential buildings: houses, hotels and apartments. California Historical Society, Doheny Memorial Library, USC Libraries Special Collections.



In 2011, Frank Gehry, Judge Widney Professor of Architecture, USC, headed up a research-based, graduate level, design studio at USC School of Architecture. The challenge to the students: redesign MOCA Grand Avenue.

Guided by Frances Anderton, students studied the contemporary art museum's context: the cultural stretch of Grand Avenue on Bunker Hill, a onetime residential neighborhood transformed by postwar grand ambitions. This book is the result: a study of decades of dreams, and the flawed reality, of Grand Avenue, that begs the question, What is the role of design, and power, in making a place people want to be?

