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Shelley Smith

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A Museum of Modern Art

Ocean Park, California

Shelley Smith

Critics: Eugene Wendt
Gordon Ashworth
Al Sanner

To enlarge the roll of aesthetics and their spiritual functions in the lives of local citizens. More than a place to view art. It should stimulate the viewer into an awareness of the changing nature of the space through which they move.

Sergi Oshima,
Curator Tochigi Perfectual
Museum of Fine Arts

Background

The location of this thesis project is in Ocean Park, just north of Venice, California, in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. In 1909, developer Abbot Kinney laid out Venice to induce a "cultural renaissance" in the region. The scheme failed to attract the rich clientele Kinney sought, but it temporarily prospered as a vacationland for the working class. Soon after Kinney's death, Venice began to decline. By the 1950's Venice and nearby Ocean Park became thriving artists' communities.

The recent success of the Marina del Rey harbor development to the south threatens these enclaves. Property values have risen sharply. Many artists are no longer able to remain in their converted warehouse studios. High rents and condominium construction are forcing them to move. This project was conceived in an effort to preserve this unique community of artists, and promote the arts to the area residents.

Program

The intent is to provide a museum housing a small, but notable permanent collection of art, a facility for special exhibitions, and twelve

studio/residences for artists. The museum should be successfully integrated into the urban fabric, provide external activity areas accessible to the community, off street parking for resident artists, and service access to the museum.

The project is located on Main Street between Hill Street and Ashland Avenue. The area possesses the ambience of a revitalized shopping district with restaurants, galleries, and small shops housed in one and two-story commercial blocks. Because the area adjoins popular beach recreation areas, pedestrian traffic is high.

Solution

In response to the pedestrian nature of Main Street, the height limitations, and the linear site, the primary organizational axis parallels Main Street. The museum, offices and support facilities extend along the front edge, allowing natural light to penetrate and mediate between the exhibition space and the street.

Connecting the exhibition hall and office corridor is a central rotunda used for special performances, receptions, and meetings of museum patrons. To facilitate traffic flow, the permanent collection is housed on the second level directly above the special exhibition hall. A hierarchy of public to private zones is established in a north-south direction on the site, those spaces directly accessible from Main Street being the most public in nature as opposed

to the more private artists' studios.

The museum sponsors two street front rental galleries for the promotion of local artists and their work. The museum-operated bookstore is removed from the exhibition spaces to attract people not entering the museum itself. It also defines the eastern boundary of the museum forecourt.

The principal elevation adheres to a rigid grid, repeating the rhythm of adjacent street fronts. The colonnade punctuates the street edge, while allowing the museum to recede and project, and thus reduce the building's scale. The colonnade terminates at the north end in a gateway leading to the sculpture court.

The entry hall is framed by large, rose-colored cubes rising in front of the colonnade. The curvilinear sweep of the second level gallery provides a strong contrast to the rigidity of the grid and makes allusions to the Moderne buildings common to the area.

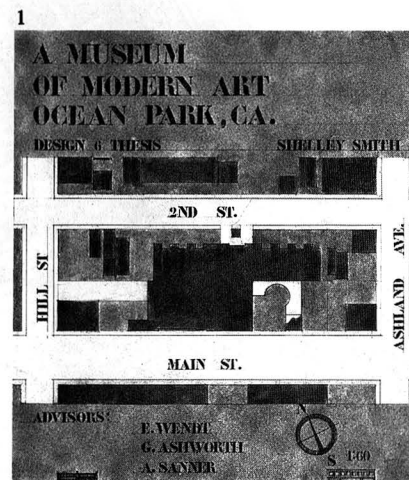
There is no shared circulation to the separate units. Parking for the residents is located five feet below grade placing the studio level above the public domain. With the exception of the three small central units, the studios are equipped with large glass doors for maximum light and to permit movement of sizeable art works.

The living units are organized on

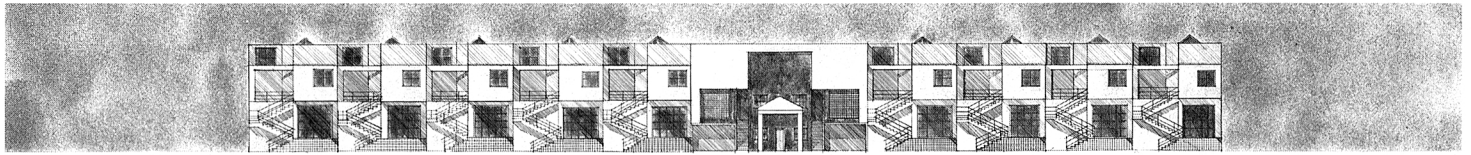
two levels. The first contains the kitchen, dining room, bathroom, and foyer. A half story above lie the bath, bedroom, and living area. The units rest above the museum to gain privacy, light, and ocean views.

The smaller central studios turn inward with less division between public and private domain. The lower studio is equipped with a large darkroom. The elevation reads as a series of distinct elements tied together at the center. The rose-colored circulation tubes visible from Main Street allow residents private access from the underground parking level to their apartments. The colonnade along the street helps to unify the composition.

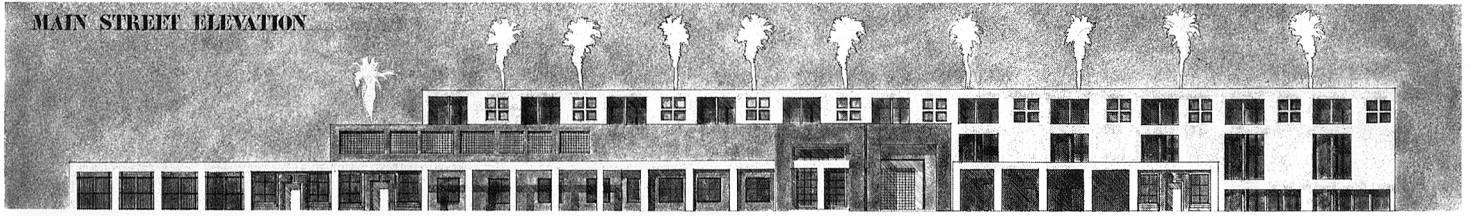
1. Site plan
2. Second Street elevation
3. Main Street elevation
4. Ground level plan
5. Axonometric



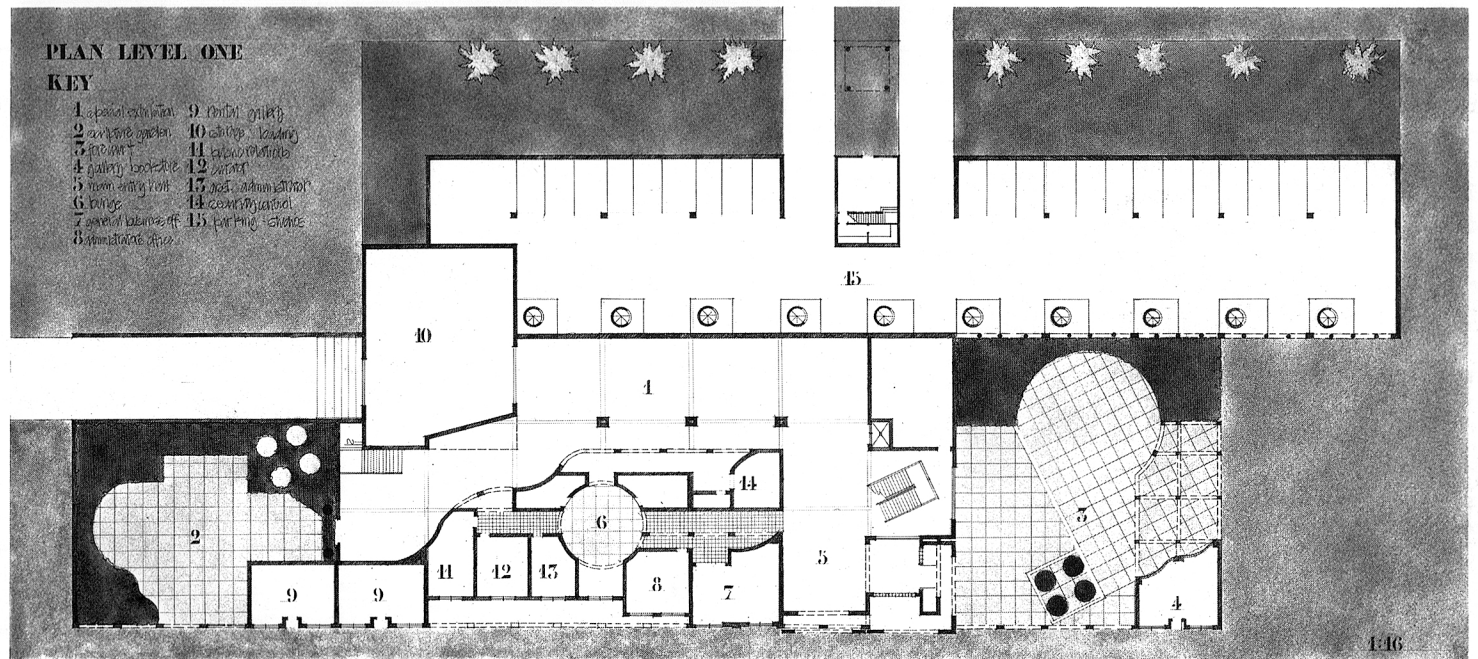
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