



## APT Conference News

### LESSONS FROM LOS ANGELES

As we move into 2010, the APT Conference Committee and the Local Conference Committee (LCC) has finally had time to compile the comments and reconcile the books from the 2009 Los Angeles Annual Conference – *Preservation in the City without Limits*. By all accounts, the 41<sup>st</sup> annual conference was a great success providing opportunities to exchange ideas, network with colleagues, and experience America's quintessential 20<sup>th</sup> Century City. Despite some grand accomplishments, the conference wasn't perfect. In this article, I hope to summarize the conference and identify some of the lessons we learned in Los Angeles.

**More Modernism:** The conference was designed to highlight one of LA's greatest assets: Post-war and modernist cultural resources. Conference events included a meet and greet tour at the Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport; a Technical Committee Meeting on Modern Heritage (TC-MH) Reception at the mid-century modern landmark Office of Kelly Sutherland McLeod; a paper track dedicated to Modern Heritage with a panel discussion and sessions on *Challenging Typologies*, *Curtain Walls/Glazing*, *Art and Sculpture*, plus *Recreation Re-Creation*; a field session at homes designed by Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler; a field session to two of Frank Lloyd Wright's textile block homes; the Awards Banquet held at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion; and a post-conference tour of Palm Springs, including Neutra's Kaufman House. Rather than satiating the attendees' appetite for practical and philosophical treatments for our modern heritage, we witnessed a ravenous need for more information exchange and dialogue. Practitioners will be looking more and more to APT to provide leadership and guidance in conserving modern materials and resources. An encouraging sign for the future of the TC-MH, who played a critical role on the conference Program Committee.

**Materials Matter:** In addition to the modernism track, the conference track entitled "Material Matters" proved exceedingly popular, highly attended and well received. Sessions included *Glazed Expressions*, featuring the conservation of Dalle de Verre Panels and Pyrex; *Ceramic Challenges*; *Strange Surfaces* covering Caen Stone and Akoustolith Panels, as well as brown zinc paint; and *Adobe Achievements*. While not formally in the materials track, a session on concrete evaluation was highly rated. Information exchange on conservation of materials and assemblies continues to be in demand and one of APT's core strengths.

**Back to Basics:** Response from APT members and conference attendees indicates, over and over again, that people come to the annual conferences for 1) the opportunity to network and socialize with colleagues and 2) the paper sessions. APT-LA-09 provided a plethora of social opportunities including the Workshop/Symposium Dinner at the Fred Harvey Room of Union Station; the Opening Reception; a Chapters Mixer; a dinner for Getty Foundation guests; a reception for the Technical Committee on Modern Heritage; an AIA Historic Resource Committee breakfast meeting; the College of Fellows reception; "Dine Arouds" in which Local Conference Committee members hosted small groups at our favorite restaurants around town; alumni gatherings for both the University of Pennsylvania School of Design and Historic Preservation Program and the Columbia University GSAPP; lunch with exhibitors; and finally, the Awards Banquet at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Many attendees cited one or more of the social events as the highlight of their conference. A large number of paper sessions were also presented; however...

**Less May Be More:** The most difficult part of planning and programming APT-LA-09 was deciding what *not* to include. The conference contained four paper tracks spread over two days. Easily, the number one complaint

arising out of the conference was that two paper sessions overlapped with our field sessions. The second most common criticism was that there were conflicts between multiple sessions people wanted to attend. While multiple options are typically considered a good thing, too many options leave attendees feeling they may have “missed out” on something. Future conferences will need to more carefully consider the number of paper tracks and the pacing and placement of papers.

**Local Projects, Global Lessons:** This year’s conference introduced a fourth panel track dedicated to local efforts including SurveyLA, Mural conservation, and the rehabilitation of the Griffith Park Observatory. These sessions consistently received the highest ratings for technical excellence, yet averaged the lowest attendance. Lack of attendance at these sessions was one of my biggest disappointments as Conference Chair. Were the sessions victim of too many tracks or are attendees not interested in local efforts? I encourage APT to continue to showcase regional preservation efforts that can teach global lessons.

**Workshops Without Limits:** Prior to the conference, APT hosted three 2-day workshops: *Architectural Ceramics*; *Movin’ and Shakin’: Advances in Seismic Retrofit*; and *Injection Grouts for the Conservation of Architectural Surfaces*, held at the Getty Center. Additionally, a pre-conference Symposium entitled *Capturing the Past for Future Use: Integrating Documentation with Repair, Design and Construction Practice in Historic Buildings* was co-hosted with the AIA-HRC and the Getty Conservation Institute. Reviews of all of the workshops and the symposium were highly favorable and indicated high professional standards were met. Again, maybe less is more; as evaluations indicated the price-point of the pre-conference training was so close to that of the conference that attendees had to choose between the workshops or the conference itself. While workshops are popular, they should not be the focus of the conference. Striking a better balance between the conference and the pre- and post-conference activities is critical to future success of the conference.

**Walking in LA:** Building upon successes at the Montreal Conference, the LCC endeavored to have major events accessible on foot or by public transit. *Trails of LA* walking maps were developed by Virginia Paca and Marlise Fratinardo to guide people past local landmarks (both historic and of general interest). If we can reduce the carbon footprint of the conference in “Car City, USA”, there is no excuse for future conferences...

**Teamwork:** APT-LA-09 was made great through the extensive contributions of our conference partners (see sidebar) and the efforts of a wonderful and dedicated LCC. I again want to thank and honor the contributions of the Program Committee: John Fidler, Chris Gray, Bill Ellinger, David Fixler and Tom Jester; the Special Events Committee: Jim McLane, Virginia Paca, and Rosa Lowinger; the Fundraising Committee: Tom Neary and John Fidler; the Marketing and Graphics Committee: Stephanie Kingsnorth and Marlise Fratinardo; the Outreach Committee: Laura Janssen, Teresa Duff, and Mark McMillan; and the Tours and Field Sessions Committee: Peyton Hall, Glen Duncan, and David Fixler. Additionally, I wanted to thank APT’s Conference Planner Dana Saal and Conferences Committee Chair Gretchen Pfaehler. My fondest memories of APT-LA-09 will be the personal relationships I developed with committee members.

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