

cityLAB, times 10

cityLAB, times 10 celebrates the founding of cityLAB-UCLA ten years ago as it looks ahead to the next ten years. It advances architecture as a radical urban ingredient with impacts that can be orders of magnitude greater than any individual building, by "powers of ten."

For the past decade, cityLAB has been at the center of innovative thought about the architecture of the city, particularly in Los Angeles. By bringing together research and design, and through collaborations between the university, the architectural profession, citizens, and municipalities, cityLAB models a new form of practice where prototypical projects leverage design to open new possibilities for the urban fabric of Southern California and beyond.

Rather than a retrospective, this exhibition is projective; rather than a presentation of completed works, you see a laboratory of evolving experimentation. The three cityLAB themes of desk, neighbor, and place demonstrate how multi-year, multi-faceted, unconventional architectural studies weave together to advance new design approaches. They allude to the intersections between the body, politics, and the environment, — guiding commitments for cityLAB's practices. To pursue an even more expansive view of L.A.'s coming decade, six tactical proposals by young architects are featured.

While there are abundant issues confronting Los Angeles, architecture must pinpoint its targets. *cityLAB, times 10* asks: What design ideas will spark public conversation about the future of Los Angeles? Is there an architectural portal to an unexpected future for the city?

CITY RENDER

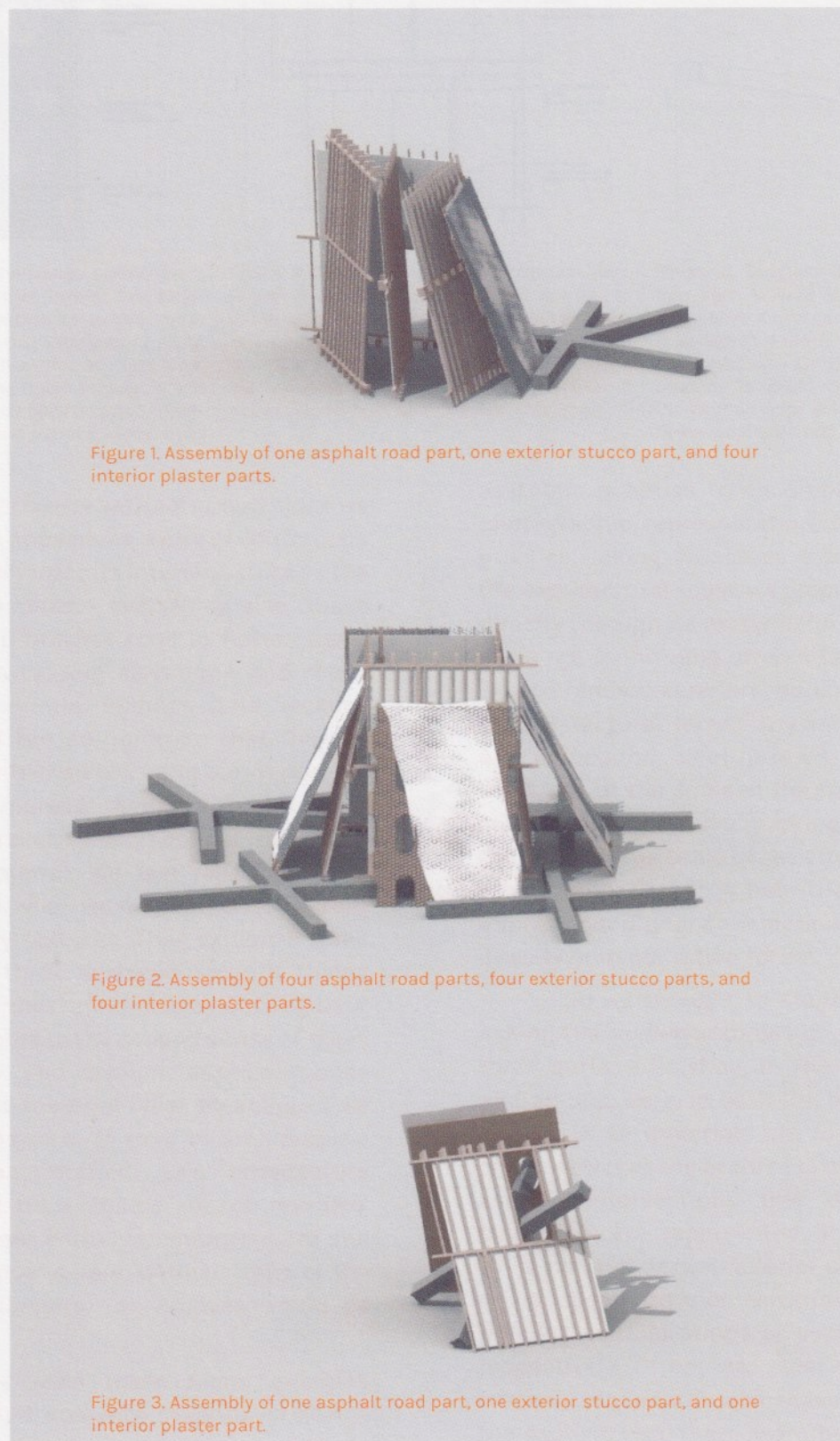


Figure 1. Assembly of one asphalt road part, one exterior stucco part, and four interior plaster parts.

Figure 2. Assembly of four asphalt road parts, four exterior stucco parts, and four interior plaster parts.

Figure 3. Assembly of one asphalt road part, one exterior stucco part, and one interior plaster part.

Anna Neimark, Andrew Atwood (First Office), Theo Triantafyllidis

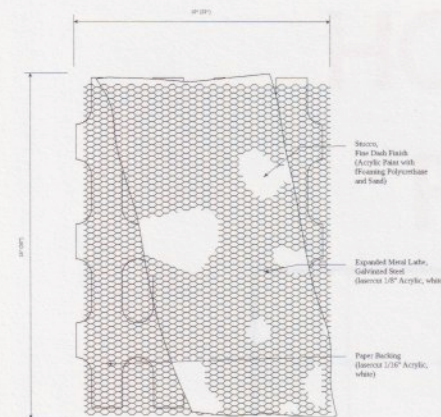


Figure 4. Diagram of one stucco surface part. Stucco is applied in three layers. The initial scratch coat creates adhesion to the metal lath, which is nailed through the paper nailing backer to the exterior sheathing or studs. Final plaster coats create the finish texture, which can vary from smooth to highly textured, creating a continuous exterior surface. Model built at twice real size.

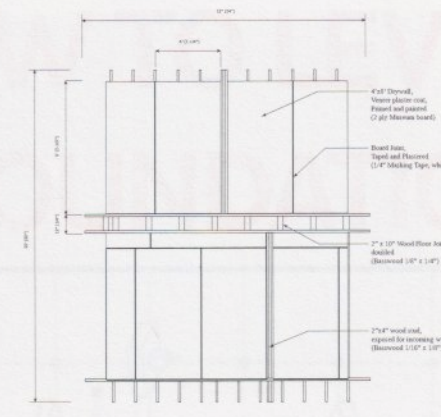


Figure 5. Diagram of one plaster surface part. Plaster is applied to drywall that is secured to dimensional lumber framing. Drywall is taped at joints and plastered, sanded, and painted to create a continuous interior surface. Stucco set on metal lath with paper nailing backer is shown. Model built at one fortieth real size.



Figure 6. Diagram of one asphalt intersection part. Asphalt is set into a mesh earth grid above a compacted gravel base. Asphalt is rolled to solidify the hot aggregate mixture, creating a smooth street surface. Paving marking is rolled or stenciled directly onto the asphalt once it is set. Model built at one three-hundredth real size.

No matter where we look or how close we get, Los Angeles appears as a city of continuous materials: drywall clads its interiors, stucco – the exteriors, and asphalt – everything else. These quick and cheap finishes tend to flatten parts and ornaments, casting elevations and roads seamless and infinite. Perhaps it is because these materials are so common that they so deeply impress themselves upon our minds. We use the word *impress*, because they produce something of a relief. Relief in both of its senses: mental and material. We feel relief when we encounter them, when we find ourselves in front of their ordinary textures. They exhibit a weak attitude. Their thick surfaces smooth things over, dulling architectural parts by erasing their seams. So we come to the second sense of relief. Drywall, stucco, and asphalt, especially once painted, produce material relief. Meaning—if we can still use this term to refer to architectural syntax—becomes muffled. LA's architecture does not speak. Its tectonics are not revealed. Passers-by remain entirely uninformed. No one knows what happens here. Without apps or the kindness of strangers, Los Angeles would be barely legible.

We have seen these blank qualities exaggerated in Ed Ruscha's graphite drawings of *Some Los Angeles Apartments* and in Catherine Opie's deadpan portraits of *Mini-malls*, and now we would like to extend these

aesthetic qualities to encompass not just LA in photographic representation, but also in design practice. Taking stucco as a primary example at the architectural scale, we propose to draw the city directly through its material finishes. Stucco, after all, is not for nothing often referred to as "render." Stucco renders exteriors, adding texture and tone to architectural forms. Drywall, using joint tape and compound, when primed and painted, does the same at the scale of the room. Asphalt, when layered, with pavement markings applied to it, does the same at the scale of the city. LA is, therefore, a city of rendering; it is here that we can begin to impress our digital anticipations of our own future directly onto our urban forms.

So we thought to stage an experiment in asking the audience to design urban blocks from three surface finishes, in the forms of a model and an app. Here, in both the physical and digital worlds, three materials are forced to interact in one abstract space at three different scales: urban asphalt intersections that designate building quadrants are represented at a scale of 1:300, while painted drywall interior elevations that lean on stuccoed exterior elevations create possible building configurations at scales of 1:40 and 2:1, respectively. Of course, most of the time, these material planes will misbehave and collapse onto the asphalt. Prop them, lean them, or let them pile up; there are no codes, no rules, no rights, and no wrongs. Send us a picture when you're done.