

Orange Grove

West Hollywood, California

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PUGH + SCARPA CREATES A MODERN LANDMARK IN THE ECLECTIC AND OFTEN UNCONVENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD OF WEST HOLLYWOOD.

By Allison Millionis

Architect: Pugh + Scarpa—Lawrence Scarpa, AIA, principal in charge; Ching Luk, project architect; Angela Brooks, AIA, Silke Clemens, Vanessa Hardy, Gwynne Pugh, AIA, Katrin Terstegen, project team.

Owner: Urban Environments

Engineers: Oxford Engineering (structural); DonLite Associates (m/e/p)

Consultants: Pugh + Scarpa (landscape)

General contractor: Becker General Contractors

Size: 6,700 square feet, housing; 3,800 square feet, parking

Cost: \$1.25 million

Sources

Exterior cladding: JDM Masonry (masonry); Blaney Sheet Metal (curtain wall); Mitchell Construction (concrete)

Windows: Milgard Windows

Glazing: Triepke Glass (glass); Acralight (skylights); Sunsational Skylights (solatubes)

Doors: US Aluminum; Timely; TM Cobb; Fleetwood

Interior finishes: Ikea (cabinetry); Shaw Industries (carpet); Dal Tile (tile); Palgard (paint)

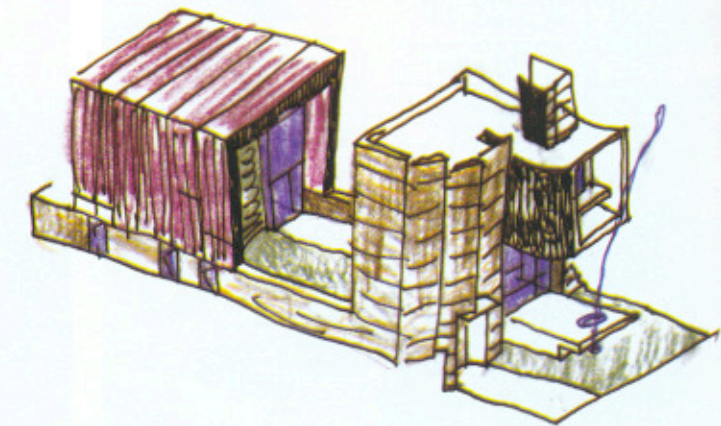
Plumbing: Toto; Modern Arc

"There aren't a lot of bells and whistles," says Los Angeles developer Chris DeBolt of Orange Grove, a 6,700-square-foot complex tucked into a densely populated West Hollywood neighborhood in the heart of the Los Angeles metropolis.

"We wanted to allow people to come in and create their own thing." A former developer of commercial properties, DeBolt had a change of heart when he made a rare find in West Hollywood, a vacant lot in a residential neighborhood teeming with eclectic low-rise apartments. Concerned that Los Angeles lacked enough "decent loft space," DeBolt hired Pugh + Scarpa to design a complex to appeal to a growing niche of buyers who seek flexible, open spaces. "I like the work of Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, but I'm not trying to recreate that model," says DeBolt. "I'm interested in applying the minimal elements of Modernism to create urban environments with an edge."

Program

Rising above 1960s- and 1970s-era apartment buildings that face away from the street to shield residents from public gaze, Orange Grove's demonstrative street facade speaks volumes of the evolving notion of urban living in Los Angeles. Two bal-



conies in the front—one completely open, the other shielded by rusted-steel louvers—create a physical and psychological relationship to the street. A steel window box offers an unobstructed view of the private life within.

An extremely tight budget dictated the materials palette, including the structural system—a conventional wood frame that is ideal for a tall, narrow building. The exterior materials include stucco, which speaks to the neighborhood's character, and steel and corrugated metal,

which enclose the second-story balconies on the east and north facades. Principal Lawrence Scarpa says the tight budget was not an obstacle. "Good design and a small budget are not mutually exclusive," he explains. "It's a different way of thinking about budget. You have to address it right up front."

Solution

A walkway on the north perimeter of the building accesses the units on the ground floor. All five are on a north/south axis, and each shares

For more information on this project, go to Building Types Study at www.architecturalrecord.com.

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Located in a neighborhood of traditional bungalow-style single-family residences, Orange Grove displays a distinctive Modernist aesthetic, without overbearing its neighbors.





A floor-to-ceiling garage door and double-height ceilings open up the narrow footprint of the first-floor living-room area of each unit (left).

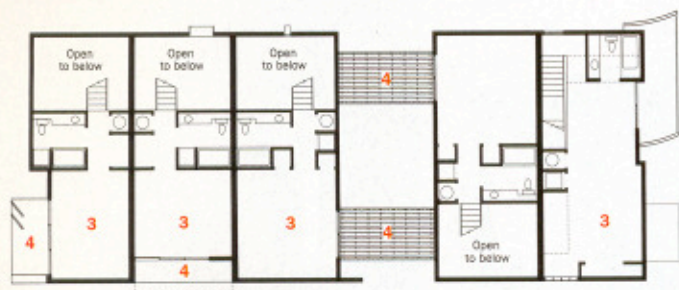
common traits with the others, such as a narrow, open floor plan with double-height ceilings, a semi-industrial material palette, simple finishes, and a floor-to-ceiling aluminum-and-glass garage door that opens onto one of two private balconies. In spite of the similarities, the units are distinct, if only in the position of the interior stairway and the location of windows and balconies, which are oriented for maximum solar exposure and privacy.

Kitchen cabinetry and appliances are rather modest, but the adjacent wet room (open shower and bathroom in one) is a sexy little number cordoned off from the main living area by a translucent glass wall and slider. When lit from inside, the room glows like a lantern, while occupants appear as shadowy forms. A single stairway constructed of steel, cable railing, and lacquered 2-by-12-inch wood risers is interrupted by a chip-board landing and mezzanine that serves as a transition area between the ground and second floors. The space is surprisingly functional as a home office, study, or small bedroom; it is illuminated by a skylight located directly above. The second flight of stairs reaches a spacious room that most residents use as a bedroom, with a full bath and balcony.

Scarpa explains that the site's narrow footprint called for height, but it serves another purpose. "Having taller spaces where there is no one living below or above is advantageous to the resident," says Scarpa. "It clearly establishes each person's domain, and I think is easier for people to live in."

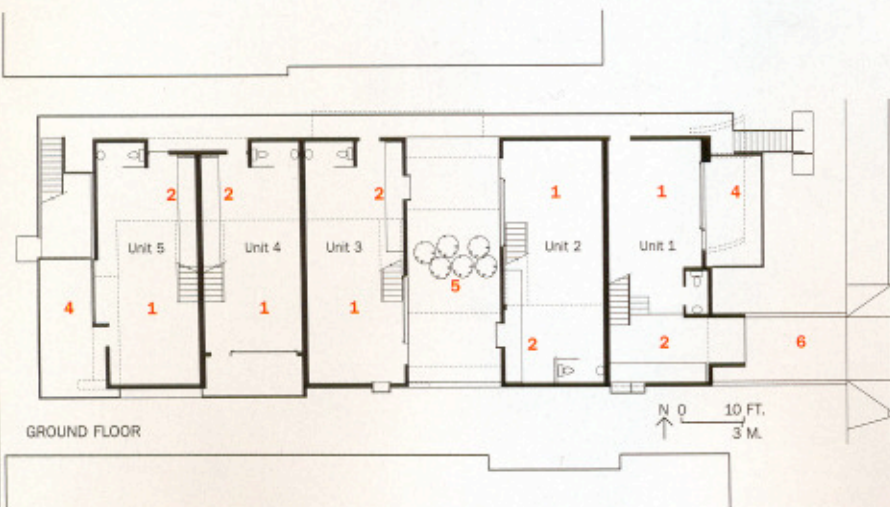
Commentary

What's considered "bells and whistles" at Orange Grove is subjective, as several of the new owners can attest. Minimal only in terms of material palette and details, residents have found that openness and natural light are valuable amenities. Believe it or not, these attributes aren't easy to find in L.A. "I looked at hundreds of properties before I found this," says Daryl Buford, a sports attorney and new owner of one of the units. "I know the housing market really well, and there is nothing out there like this." ■



SECOND FLOOR

1. Living room
2. Kitchen
3. Bedroom
4. Balcony
5. Courtyard
6. Driveway



GROUND FLOOR

A stairway with open wood risers traverses the living-room space, pauses at a mezzanine level, then continues to the second floor.

