
Never built: Los Angeles

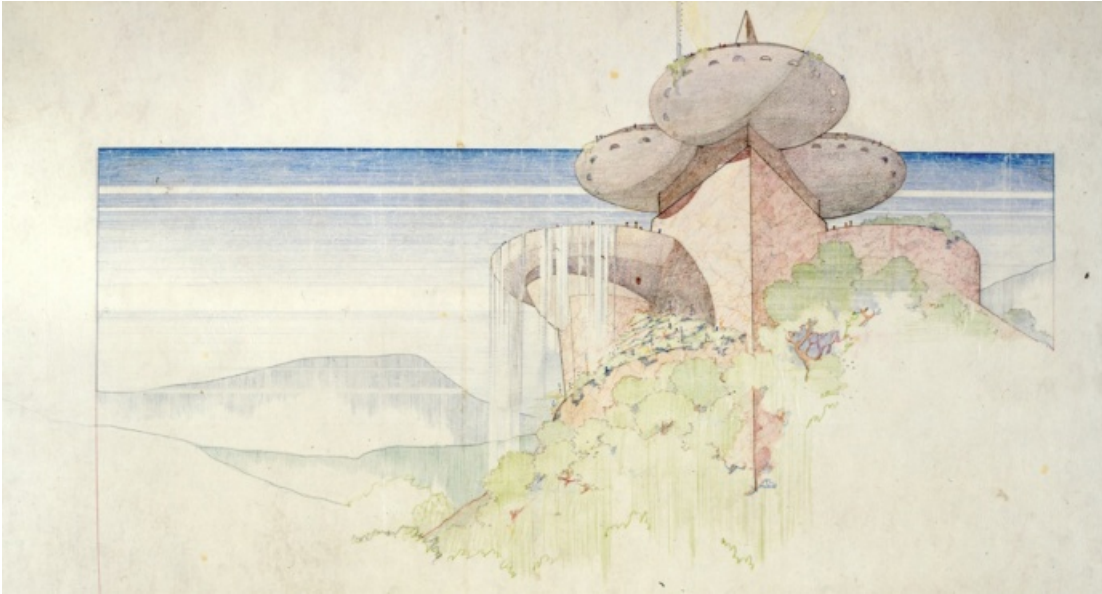
30 July 2013 | Alexandra Felts

Imagine: Los Angeles is lavish with greenery, easy to navigate and connected by a huge rail network. Because that's what it could have been like, if architects and urban planners had had their way. A new exhibition in L.A. is showing these fascinating ideas that haven't (yet) been realised...

There's no real urban core, just a sprawling concrete jungle, growing out of control

Even the Los Angeles faithful admit that the vast metropolis, basking under the Californian sun, leaves a lot to be desired. There's no real urban core, just a sprawling concrete jungle, growing out of control and lacking in architectural innovation. To add insult to injury, it's polluted by a recognised abundance of cars making even the shortest commute to work a long and stressful experience.

Now, a new exhibition at the Architecture and Design Museum in L.A. asks 'what if?' The 'Never Built: Los Angeles' expo showcases what the city could have been, with many great architects' meticulous plans, models and sketches, none of which came to fruition.



Parkland, playgrounds and beaches

In 1930, the offices of Olmsted and Bartholomew, for example, called for several thousand acres of open parkland, and a shoreline protected from the rapid urban development. The legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright (the man behind the Guggenheim Museum in New York City) wanted to build unusual houses and apartments to revive the once fancy L.A. suburbs. In 1952, Pereira and Luckman envisioned the city's airport as an impressive glass structure under which all major airlines would convene, thus eradicating the need for multiple terminals. All these ideas, novel as they are, were abandoned due to high costs and potential interference with the city's business interests. What a shame.

Time and again, planners intended to create more affordable and attractively designed housing to bring a little order to the urban chaos of 'film city'. Would its reputation as a car town have changed if the unrealised 100km metro project had been implemented? It would certainly have provided stressed commuters with a quicker and more reliable route to work. But never say never. 'Never Built: Los Angeles' is still an exhibition of the maybe.

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