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DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Not Just Green, “Souper” Green Architecture at A+D Museum

By Olga Khazan

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The solar-panel covered “skin” building. Photo by Olga Khazan.

An oft-made complaint about “green” architecture is that it is virtuous but ugly. Olga Khazan visits a new exhibit called “SouperGreen” at the Architecture + Design museum and finds just how innovative environmentally-integrated architecture can be.

Those suffering from “green fatigue” should be advised that this exhibit is not your ordinary “slap some solar panels on it” eco-shtick. The exhibit, a collaboration between five different architecture firms, focuses not only on environmentally-friendly “solutions” to man-made problems, it promotes using technology to live in symbiosis with the environment in a visually exciting way:

“Souper Green features five architectural propositions that explore the way that technology...can promote and enhance a far more constructive engagement between architecture and the environment. This “souped up” approach to green architecture is achieved by leveraging the expressive potential of a meaner, greener technology in order to produce architecture that is not only environmentally responsible..., but which also critically and positively promotes more expressive, exuberant, rad, boss, and totally stoked green experiences.”



The "ELOV" cards. Photo by Olga Khazan.

For example, a team working with Wes Jones designed a new type of car that works within the confines of LA's admittedly not-green highways. The "ELOV," or "electric low-occupancy vehicle" of California's future, is as wide as half a car, meaning that hypothetically twice the amount of cars can be on a freeway at one time. The cars, which look like the Smart car's cuter little cousins, can also park at a 90-degree angle to a curb, thus making parallel parking both more efficient and less angst-inducing.

Another team, led by Doug Jackson, created a building with a "skin" that appears to "breathe" with fluctuations in the sun and wind. As wind direction changes, the solar panel skin twists and lifts, revealing the wind collectors below.



A wind-turbine house presented as a mock movie. Photo by Olga Khazan.

The clever design of the presentations themselves also jazzes up an exhibit that could otherwise risk being overly technical. For example, one trailer-like house filled with wind turbines, designed by Aryan Omar of Richard Meier & Partners Architects, was described on a realistic-looking mock movie poster as though the movie about the house had been panned by the oil industry. ("The critics rave, 'That's not colonial style!'")

The A+D is a small space, but it's filled with big ideas. While we may not all be driving ELOVs or living in wind-turbine homes in the foreseeable future, initiatives like these certainly would make those summer utility bills and afternoon treks down the 405 a little easier to handle. SouperGreen is on display until April 14.

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