Cultural Daily

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Frank Gehry, LACMA, Jazz Bakery

Elisa Leonelli · Thursday, September 10th, 2015

Frank Gehry retrospective at LACMA, and the Jazz Bakery

Today at the press preview of Frank Gehry's retrospective at LACMA, I met the 86-year-old architect, who was funny and engaging. He explained how 40 years ago, during a trip to Greece with artist Ed Moses, he was moved to tears at the sight of the 300BC bronze statue of the Delphi Charioteer. He realized that "the mandate for artists who make things from inert materials is to create feelings to transfer to people through time, hopefully good feelings that are uplifting, to create spaces that help people feel better, that make their life pleasanter."

Jazz Bakery model, by Frank Gehry 2011

The impressive exhibit consists of numerous models of Gehry's work, from early private residences, including his own, to his most famous public buildings, like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao Spain, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles, and his latest effort, the Louis Vuitton art center in Paris. Video screens present vivid photographs of the completed buildings. But I rushed to the last room, of not yet built work, to take a picture of the 2011 mock-up for the Jazz Bakery.

I remember when 25-years-ago I used to attend jazz concerts in the studio of my photographer friend Jim Britt. A jazz vocalist in the 60s, Jim still owned a Steinway piano, so in 1991, with the cooperation of fellow singer Ruth Price, he decided to invite musicians to play in that space on weekend evenings. I called Jim today (he now lives in Ketchum, Idaho) and he told me that he came up with the name Jazz Bakery, because it was "where something was always cooking." The location was at 3221 Hutchinson (today the Helms Daylight Studio) in the Helms Bakery complex, across the way from what will become a few years later the newly built Jazz Bakery, with a theater, a cafe and an art gallery.

The last time I was there it was in 2009 to attend the exhibit of my friend Ave Pildas B&W photographic portraits of jazz musicians in the 1960s. It was a sad day because the Jazz Bakery was about to close. The landlord had rented the space to yet another furniture store, among the half a dozen already occupying the building. Since then the Jazz Bakery has been homeless, still holding concerts in various venues; but hopefully the new building designed by Frank Gehry will be built soon. In January 2012 Culver City donated a small lot at 9814 Washington, next to the

Kirk Douglas Theater, and the Annenberg Foundation contributed a $2 million grant towards the projected cost of $10 million; but more fundraising still needs to be done. Please check out the Jazz Bakery website for a concert schedule, and to support this worthy project.

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