

Projects

PROJECT OF THE WEEK

Short on Time and Money, Long on Design

Pugh + Scarpa's new production studio makes good use of an old shipping container

The mission for architect Pugh + Scarpa was to renovate a 1930 Art Deco art gallery in Santa Monica to become a state-of-the-art workspace for the production of TV commercials. Not too hard, except that the client, Reactor Films, needed the project done in 14 weeks on a budget of \$50 per square foot.

To accomplish this daunting task, the client, architect, and contractors worked very closely to devise a strategy that allowed separate areas to be designed and developed in distinct phases. Construction began during the first week of design, with city permits issued at the beginning of the second week.

Spatially, the project focuses on a centrally placed conference room, which in a former life was a cross-ocean shipping container from the Long Beach, Calif., shipping yard. Easily visible from the street, the conference room is a metaphor for the entire building. "In essence, it exhibits a spatial biography, its surfaces and voids charged with fragments of memory etched into it over time," the architects explain. They allowed



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the building at large and the shipping container/conference room to retain and show off their histories, relating to each other as big and small, old and new. "While the surface plane remains flat and orthogonal, it is consciously exploited for sculptural expressiveness," says the architect. "The surrounding interior space was conceived as the fluid surface wrapper rotating asymmetrically around the centroid of the container."

The building will receive a 2001 AIA Honor Award for Interior at the Institute's national convention May 17-19 in Denver. The jury that selected the project for the award was particularly enamored with how its well-crafted materials were juxtaposed. "The program is accomplished through the arrangement of set pieces in space," the jury wrote in its awards statement. "Like filmmaking, the story is told through strong visual imagery and a compelling visual experience." ■