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Los Angeles Architecture Spotlight: The Work of Zoltan Pali and Studio Pali Fekete

I have written at length about the **Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** and its ceremonial opening in Beverly Hills. But I have not yet touched upon its stunning architecture. The creation of award-winning architect Zoltan Pali and his firm, **Studio Pali Fekete** (SPF:a), the \$75 million center mixes historic preservation with what **Christopher Hawthorne** calls “unapologetically contemporary architecture.” It’s a striking and brilliant representation of our city’s past, present and future: the 1933 Italianate-style Beverly Hills Post Office on one side and the new, contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Goldsmith Theater on the other side. In the middle, rests courtyards, a sunken sculpture garden and event terrace, which act like a bridge between old and new.

Instead of referencing the post office literally (in form), Pali’s vision for the new theater took inspiration from the “poetry” and “tactility” of delivering the mail. The most obvious reference appears on the building’s façade, which resembles half-opened envelopes.

“Like a good poem, I am trying to find a pure system and order,” he has said in the past. “If you believe that good design comes from a search for clarity and honesty, then it will result in a sort of ‘solutional poetry’—as opposed to cacophony or randomness.”

Frank Lloyd Wright once said, “Every great architect is—necessarily—a great poet.” And clearly, Pali takes that job description to heart as one of the city’s reigning star architects. Over the years, he has had his hands in the renovation or new construction of many of the city’s most famous museums and cultural centers: LACMA West, the Getty Villa Museum in Malibu, the Greek Theatre and the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, set to open next to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2017. He is also a gifted residential architect, with his “poetry” being writ in simple, modern dwellings. I cannot wait for the day when I can sell one of his homes myself!

After one visit to the Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts, you will innately understand his sense of order and profound sense of optimism. He also seems to be continually inspired by the city’s fascination with the past and future—a concept that is captured quite beautifully on the corner of North Santa Monica Boulevard and Crescent Drive. It’s one building you simply cannot (and should not) miss.