

May Day

By SAM LUBELL • May 30, 2012

Other



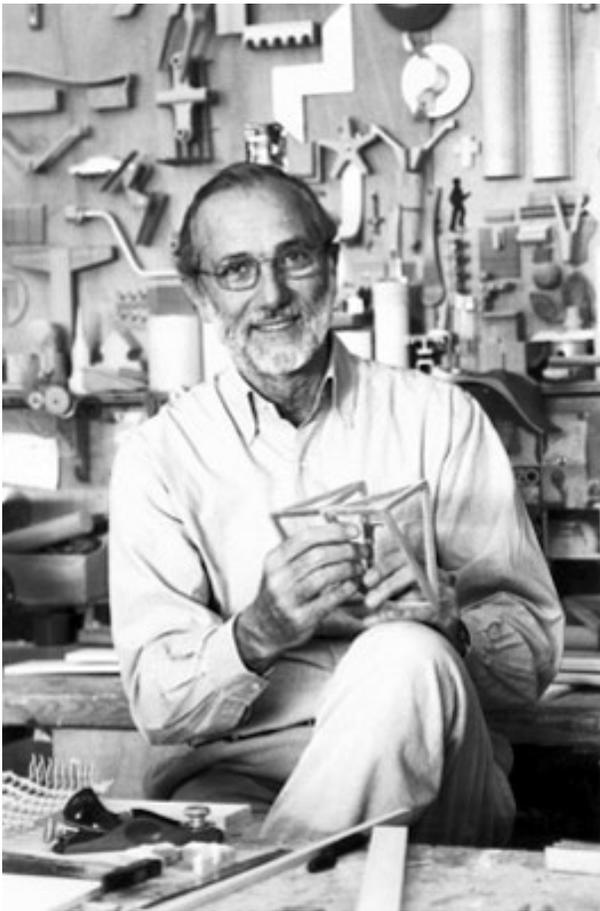
The May Company Building will soon contain the Academy's new museum.

Courtesy Museum Associates

With its streamline moderne façade and bright gold corner detail resembling, some say, a giant Double A battery, LA's May Company building, on the corner of Wilshire and Fairfax, is one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. Now, thanks to Renzo Piano and Zoltan Pali, it will become one of its most important museums.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences today officially named the duo the designers of their new museum inside the May Company. The five-story building will contain exhibits, movie archives, screening rooms, education labs, offices and several other elements that are still to be determined.

"The Academy museum will take the visitor through the back door of cinema, behind the curtain, and into moviemaking magic," said Piano in a statement.



Renzo Piano (left) and Zoltan Pali (right).

Courtesy The Academy

Piano, of course, has designed much of the LACMA campus—the May Company Building sits on LACMA’s west edge— including the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) and the adjacent Resnick Pavilion. So this commission solidifies Piano as architect of LACMA’s western end. Since Piano is also shortlisted to design the master plan for LA’s Union Station, there is a chance that he could have more impact on the city’s new public sphere than any other contemporary architect.

Pali, principal at SPF:a, has worked on several renovation projects, including the Greek Theatre, the Gibson Amphitheatre, the Pantages Theatre and the Getty Villa. His firm SPF:a had been chosen to transform the May Company into a major exhibit space for LACMA, but those plans were replaced by the academy’s new museum last fall.

Among other things, the academy possesses 42,000 movie posters, 10 million movie stills, archives, trailers and press clippings, most of which haven’t been easily accessible to the public.

The organization had in 2007 named French architect Christian de Portzamparc to design its new museum, sitting on an 8-acre campus near Vine Street in Hollywood.

But according to Academy President Tom Sherak that project’s \$400,000 price tag was simply too high in the present economic climate. The May company will provide the Academy with 300,000 square feet of space, about double what they would have gotten from the Portzamparc building. The Academy is now using the land set aside for the Portzamparc museum to show public movies. Piano and Pali’s museum is expected to open in late 2015 or in early 2016 according to Heather Cochran, the museum project’s managing director.