

# PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial # \_\_\_\_\_

NRHP Status Code 7

Other Listings Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) California Aerospace Museum

P1. Other Identifier: Aerospace Hall, California Air and Space Museum, SKETCH Foundation Gallery

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted \*a. County Los Angeles

and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Hollywood Date 2009 T 2S ;R 13W; 1/4 of \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 of Sec 7; San Bernardino B.M.

c. Address State Drive City Los Angeles Zip 90037

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 11 ; 381468.38 mE/ 3764742.48 mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate) Located within Exposition Park

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The California Aerospace Museum (originally known as Aerospace Hall but also commonly known as the California Air and Space Museum/Gallery and the SKETCH Foundation Gallery) was designed and constructed between 1982 and 1984. It is situated on a flat, narrow, rectangular site in Exposition Park, south of downtown Los Angeles. The building is located near the park's northeast corner. Its immediate environment consists of a paved lot with an outdoor airplane exhibit to the east, State Drive and other museum buildings to the south, and the Exposition Park Rose Garden to the west. Immediately to the north is the California National Guard 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry Armory, a brick building constructed in 1912.

The Aerospace Museum has a steel structural system and an irregular floor plan. It is essentially composed of two 80-foot forms, one regular and one irregular, separated by a viewing tower. Primary building materials include concrete, stucco, and sheet metal. The building's roof is complex and consists of shed and flat roofs of varying heights. Tall, visible skylight enclosures rise from the roofs over the 80-foot forms. The skylight in the west volume is a rhombus in plan and its enclosure is clad with sheet metal, while the skylight in the east volume is a cross in plan and its enclosure is clad with stucco.

The building's primary elevation faces south, although its main entrance is accessed from the building's north side via a ramp. The concrete ramp winds from the west end of the building's south side to a very narrow plaza on the north side between the armory and the museum. The entrance itself consists of pairs of glazed aluminum doors facing both north and west. Above the entry doors is a stucco, glass, and aluminum elevator tower topped with a large, metal-clad sphere. The aluminum and glass portion of the tower has a shed roof and appears to be breaking through the stepped, block-like, stuccoed portion.

(continued page 3)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP 15. Educational Building

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.):

\*P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures or objects)



P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) View looking north at the south elevation, January 17, 2012

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:  Historic  Prehistoric  Both 1982-1984, numerous published sources

\*P7. Owner and Address: State of California 6<sup>th</sup> District Agricultural Association  
700 State Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90037

\*P8. Recorded by: Name, affiliation, and address) Laura Vanaskie O'Neill  
Galvin Preservation Associates Inc.  
231 California Street  
El Segundo, CA 90245

\*P9. Date Recorded: January 24, 2012

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)  Intensive  Reconnaissance

\*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") None.

\*Attachments: NONE  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure & Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photographic Record  Other (List) \_\_\_\_\_

# BUILDING, STRUCTURE AND OBJECT RECORD

B1. Historic Name: Aerospace Hall  
California Aerospace Museum, California Air and Space Museum, California Air and Space Gallery, SKETCH Foundation

B2. Common Name: Gallery

B3. Original Use: Museum B4. Present Use: Vacant

\*B5. Architectural Style Deconstructivist

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)  
1984 – building completed; 1998-2002 – building renovated.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: None.

B9a. Architect: Frank O. Gehry b. Builder: Chartered Construction Corporation

\*B10. Significance: Theme Work of Frank Gehry Area Los Angeles

Period of Significance: 1984 Property Type: Museum Applicable Criteria: 3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

### Significance Statement:

The California Aerospace Museum is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 3 as a seminal work of internationally acclaimed master architect Frank Gehry. Although it is less than 50 years old, it has already been recognized by critics and historians over time as a definitive work and as the most important example of his warehouse/collision typology. Constructed to coincide with the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, it has also been recognized as Gehry's first major public project and as one of the first projects to earn the then "regional architect" significant national and international attention.<sup>1</sup> After completing the Aerospace Museum, he was commissioned to design high profile museums and public projects all over the world. As such, the museum marked a critical turning point in Frank Gehry's career and helped make him the household name he is today.

### Biography of Frank Gehry:

Frank Owen Gehry was born Ephraim Owen Goldberg to parents Irving and Thelma Caplan Goldberg on February 28, 1929, in Toronto, Canada. His mother and maternal grandparents, Sam and Leah Caplanski, have been credited with having the greatest influence on his early development.<sup>2</sup> The Caplanskis immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1908. While they assimilated to their new country in many respects, such as changing the family name to Caplan, Gehry's grandparents held onto their political values and remained dedicated to the Jewish religion. These ideologies shaped Gehry's own belief system, and consequently influenced his work later in life.

(continued page 4)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) None.

\*B12. References: (See page 8).

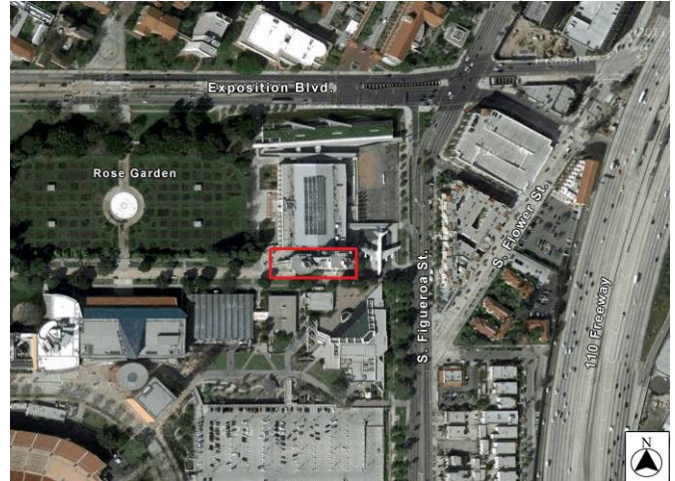
B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: Laura Vanaskie O'Neill  
Galvin Preservation Associates Inc.  
231 California Street  
El Segundo, CA 90245

\*Date of Evaluation: January 24, 2012

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



<sup>1</sup> Gandee, Charles K. "The Right Stuff." *Architectural Record*. Vol. 173, No. 1. 1985; p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Hines, Thomas. "Heavy Metal: The Education of F.O.G." *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*. Presentation of an Exhibition at the Walker Art Center. New York: Rizzoli International, 1986; p. 12.

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**\*P3a. Description** (continued from page 1):

To the east of the main entrance the building's north elevation takes on a very regular, rectangular, solid form with stucco cladding. To the west, however, it morphs into a very irregular, angular, seven-sided polygon with sheet metal cladding. The sheet metal is attached in horizontal strips with exposed fasteners.

The west elevation is made up almost entirely of the angular, metal-clad polygon. The only exception is at the first story, where the irregular volume's regular, rectangular base becomes evident. There is a secondary entrance on the west elevation's third story that is accessed via concrete stairs that begin at the west end of the entrance plaza. The door itself is recessed and not visible from ground level.

Both the irregular heptagon and the regular base continue onto the south elevation. At about half-way along the elevation, the polygon terminates at a relatively narrow expanse of aluminum and glass three stories tall. Rising above this large window is a metal-clad triangular prism pointed toward the sky. The prism has a large, off-center, aluminum window which frames a view of the elevator tower's metal sphere. The rest of the elevation, east of the three-story window, consists of a regular rectangular massing clad with stucco. There is a large hangar door in the center of the stucco mass that was intended to facilitate the installation and removal of large exhibits. Above the door a metal tripod extends southward and supports a real Lockheed F-104 fighter jet, providing the building's best and most visible advertisement.

The east elevation is almost entirely plain. It is an extension of the stucco box at the north and south elevations' east ends. It has only one opening, a metal slab door at the north end of the third story. The door is accessed via concrete steps that rise on a diagonal from the southeast.

The building is currently closed to the public, so the following interior description is based on published accounts, photographs, and section drawings. In contrast to the building's disjointed exterior, its interior functions as a large continuous space. Visitors enter at mezzanine level and circulate through the building using a series of stairs, ramps, and gangways. Viewing platforms allow visitors to experience the exhibits, many of which were intended to be suspended in flight by cables, from a variety of vantage points. Materials and finishes on the interior reference to the museum's subject matter. They include welded stairs, exposed steel beams, and space frames. Large skylights allow an abundance of natural light, despite the building's solid appearance from the outside.

**\*B10. Significance** (continued from page 2):

In addition to sharing their values with Frank, the Caplans also provided him with employment in his teenage years. He worked as a clerk in Sam's hardware store stocking shelves. This exposure to ordinary building products at a young age has been credited with inspiring Frank's fascination with "the nature of materials," a defining characteristic of his architecture.<sup>3</sup> Another source of early inspiration came from his Grandmother Leah's imagination. She and Frank would gather scraps and shavings of materials from the hardware store's repair department and use them to create "futuristic cities and giant connecting causeways."<sup>4</sup> Later, when Frank was in his twenties and deciding on his career path, he reflected on memories of the hardware store and the model cities. These memories helped cement his decision to study architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Gehry's paternal grandparents were also Polish immigrants. They initially settled in Brooklyn, where his father Irving was born in 1900. Shortly after his birth, Irving's parents moved the family to Toronto and set up a small tailoring business. His father died at a young age only 11 years later. Irving and his mother returned to New York, but this time they settled in the poor neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen.

As an adult, Irving moved back to Toronto, where he met and married Frank's mother Thelma. Irving ran a variety of business ventures, including hardware and grocery stores, before setting up a business that sold pinball and slot machines and various related electronics. In the mid-1940s, slot machines were declared illegal in Canada and the family suffered a major economic blow. Shortly after, Irving had a heart attack. In search of both physical and economic health, the Goldbergs moved to southern California in 1947.

The family resided in an apartment at the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Burlington Avenue near downtown Los Angeles. Instead of attending college, Frank got a job as a delivery truck driver for a relative's breakfast nook manufacturing company. In this work he encountered an eclectic mix of famous clients and regular Angelenos. Among the famous clients were Dale Evans and Roy Rogers. Among the regular Angelenos were the parents of his future first wife Anita Snyder.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid; p. 13.

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Frank married Anita in 1952. She worked as a legal secretary, which allowed Frank to attend college. He continued driving the delivery truck while taking night classes at Los Angeles City College. Eventually, he enrolled at the University of Southern California, following in the footsteps of one of his cousins. At USC Gehry took an art class taught by ceramics professor Glen Lukens. It was Lukens who introduced him to Raphael Soriano, an experience which Gehry often cites as inspiring him to study architecture.

As an architecture student at USC and a resident of Los Angeles during a particularly exciting time in architectural history, Gehry was exposed to the older works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Rudolph Schindler, and Richard Neutra, as well as to the new projects by Harwell Hamilton Harris, Gregory Ain, and the Case Study Program. During his last year as an undergraduate, Gehry began working part-time for Victor Gruen Associates, an experience that significantly influenced his approach to city planning.<sup>6</sup> In 1954, Frank graduated from USC and took a full-time job with Gruen. Around the same time, he changed his family name from Goldberg to Gehry.

In 1955, while working for Gruen, Gehry was drafted into the U.S. Army. He and Anita had one daughter by this time and another was on the way. The young family moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, where Gehry was put to work designing dayrooms and furniture. The influence of his military service on his architecture would become evident in the 1970s when he began relying on military materials, like corrugated metal, plywood, and asphalt shingles.<sup>7</sup>

After his mandatory year of service, Gehry enrolled in Harvard's Graduate School of Design as a city planning student. It wasn't long before he realized that the planning discipline was not suitable for him, so he left the program and began auditing classes of interest. It was during this time that Gehry developed an interest and understanding of European modernists, like Le Corbusier.

In 1957, Gehry returned to Los Angeles. He worked for Pereira and Luckman briefly, but soon returned to Victor Gruen Associates. He stayed with Gruen for a few years before moving to Paris in 1961. He remained there for over a year, working for Andre Remonet and studying European architecture. In 1962, Gehry returned to Los Angeles and set up his own practice.

Among the people Gehry has credited with influencing the development of his work in the 1960s and 1970s was psychologist Milton Wexler. Gehry sought treatment with Wexler somewhat reluctantly, because while he believed he needed help in his personal life, he feared such treatment would negatively influence his creativity. Through his relationship with Wexler he found the opposite to be true.<sup>8</sup> Wexler treated several other artists, writers, and actors, and he introduced Frank to many of them. Some would become both his friends and his patrons. The artists whom Gehry credits most frequently with influencing his work include Ed Ruscha, Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Moses, Jasper Johns, and Claes Oldenburg.

In addition to introducing Gehry to like-minded friends and new clients, Wexler had a profound effect on Gehry's work by teaching him to express his feelings and tensions through his work. Consequently, his designs became architectural statements laced with irony, dark humor, and ultimately hope.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hines described his work during the late 1970s as such:

"Reflecting his favored aesthetic of 'buildings under construction,' [Gehry's] work would frequently suggest 'unfinished business' or the poignant incompleteness of all human existence. It would also, paradoxically, suggest arrested decadence in a world continually dying and being reborn."<sup>10</sup>

Hines was referring to works like Gehry's own house (1977-1978) and the Familian House (unbuilt, 1978) in Santa Monica. Around the time he designed these seminal works, Gehry met and married his second wife Berta Isabel Aguilera, with whom he would have two sons.

By the mid-1980s, Gehry obtained his first international commissions. They were for the Vitra furniture factory in Basel Switzerland and the Vitra Design Museum in Weil-am-Rhein, Germany, which were completed in 1989. These commissions catapulted Gehry into the international spotlight, leading to his receipt of the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 1989 at age 60.

During the 1990s, cities around the world began to use new, exciting architecture to spark urban renewal, market themselves to travelers, and attract large events, such as international sports competitions and gatherings of world leaders. Gehry was among the short list of architects in high demand for such commissions.<sup>11</sup> His groundbreaking Guggenheim Museum (1994-1997) in Bilbao, Spain, with its dramatic, sculptural composition, was one of the seminal works of monumental architecture from this period.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid; p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid; p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid; p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Mathewson, Casey C.M. *Frank O. Gehry: Selected Works 1969 to Today*. Buffalo, New York: Firefly Books, 2007; p. 40-41.

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In 2003, Gehry completed his best-known U.S. commission to date, the Walt Disney Concert Hall, in his chosen hometown of Los Angeles. The concert hall was the culmination of 30,000 sketches and 16 years of planning.<sup>12</sup> Since its opening, Gehry has undertaken commissions both domestically and abroad. In addition to the Pritzker Prize, his list of prestigious awards includes the AIA Gold Medal in 1999 and the Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal in 2000, among many others. As a reflection of his particular influence in his adopted home state of California, he was inducted into the California Hall of Fame located at the California Museum for History, Women, and the Arts in 2006. He continues to practice architecture with his firm, Gehry Partners, LLP, in Los Angeles.

**The Architecture of Frank Gehry:**

Frank Gehry began his practice in 1962. Now in his early eighties, he continues to practice with his firm, Gehry Partners, LLP. His body of work is broad and varied. It consists of several distinct, yet overlapping periods of architectural expression. Because his work has often been as much a product of self-reflection and an extension of his own psyche as it has been a response to program and environmental constraints, it is difficult to analyze it in terms of any particular movement, although many critics have tried. Consequently, while it is important to attempt to understand Gehry's work in terms of established architectural movements, such as Deconstructivism, Post-Modernism, and Late Expressionism, the introspective nature of his work demands an equal understanding of it as a singular collection, above and beyond the tenets of a particular ideology. In 2003, James Verini, architecture critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote a compelling article that discusses Gehry's body of work in terms of five categories: urban fortresses, warehouses, flying villages, perpetual construction sites, and undulating metal.<sup>13</sup> These categories provide a simple, yet comprehensive approach to analyzing the architect's work to date.

The urban fortresses represent some of the earliest buildings in Gehry's career, when he was most directly influenced by his education at USC and his work experience at the offices of Pereira and Luckman and Victor Gruen Associates. His buildings from this period employed rectilinear plans and flat roof forms. Examples include the Faith Plating Company building (1964) and the Danziger Studio (1964), both in Los Angeles.

By the late 1960s, Gehry shifted away from the urban fortress typology and began experimenting with elements outside of the modern canon, such as trapezoidal plans, sloping roofs, and ordinary building materials employed in unusual ways. The O'Neill Hay Barn (1968) in San Juan Capistrano and the Ron Davis Studio (1970-1972) in Malibu are good examples of these early experiments and provided the basis for the development of his perpetual construction site buildings, the typology for which he would begin to garner critical attention.

The first major work of the perpetual construction site category was completed in 1978. It was a remodel of Gehry's own house in Santa Monica. This project, in which he enclosed his Dutch Colonial Revival house with sharp angles and intersecting planes made of corrugated metal, chain-link fence, and wire glass, marked a career turning point. In this design he achieved what architectural historian Leland M. Roth described as an intensely layered "sculptural complexity."<sup>14</sup> It also resulted in an emphasis on "disjointedness," which allied him with the emerging Deconstructivist movement.<sup>15</sup>

Largely due to critical reaction to the completion of the Gehry House in 1978, Frank's popularity, along with his commissions, increased in the 1980s. At the same time he made another distinct shift in his design vocabulary. As author and design critic Pilar Viladas observed in 1986:

"While his projects of the 1970s and early 1980s revealed a preoccupation with exposing structure and building process – based in part on Gehry's conviction that most buildings look better unfinished – the more recent work focuses on the manipulation of discrete architectural objects."<sup>16</sup>

In other words, Gehry had begun creating finished, rather than unfinished forms, and then manipulating them through abstraction and distortion. His work during this period yielded the two coinciding typologies of the warehouse and the flying village.

Gehry's warehouse buildings are described as such because of their warehouse-like plans. Early examples, like the Cabrillo Marine Museum (1977-1979) in San Pedro, are simple, "dumb boxes" adorned with and punctured by tangled and distorted sculptural elements wrought in banal construction materials. Others, like the California Aerospace Museum (1982-1984) and the Frances Howard Goldwyn Regional Branch Library (1982-1986) in Hollywood, exhibit more complex exterior massing. These later examples are sometimes called "collision buildings," because Gehry created them by taking distinct geometric shapes, like cubes and spheres, and literally colliding and

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Verini, James. "L.A.: Gehry's Laboratory." *Los Angeles Times*. September 11, 2003; p. E34.

<sup>14</sup> Roth, Leland M. *American Architecture: A History*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001; p. 523.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 524.

<sup>16</sup> Viladas, Pilar. "The 1980s." *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*. Presentation of an Exhibition at the Walker Art Center. New York: Rizzoli International, 1986; p. 159.

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distorting them into single forms. The single forms typically maintained the continuous interiors of the warehouse typology, despite the disjointed exteriors.

The architect's flying villages also employed distinct geometric shapes, but instead of colliding them, he would separate and arrange them into urban landscapes, as he did with Loyola Law School (1981-1984) in Los Angeles, the Yale Psychiatric Institute (1985-1989) in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Edgemar Development (1984-1988) in Santa Monica. The flying village projects involved taking what would often be thought of as a single building with multiple rooms and breaking it into a series of smaller buildings.<sup>17</sup> He employed this technique on a number of private residential projects, as well.

The coincidence of the warehouses and flying villages in the early to mid-1980s gave Gehry's work the appearance of straddling two recognized architectural movements at the same time. While projects like the Aerospace Museum, with its colliding forms and sharp angles, seemingly confirmed his association with the Deconstructivist camp, projects like Loyola Law School, with its gabled buildings and colonnades, led renowned critics like Robert A.M. Stern to classify him as part of the "Ironic Classicist" subdivision of Post-Modernism.<sup>18</sup> In doing so, Stern linked Gehry to other notable Ironic Classicists, such as Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, and Michael Graves.

Gehry's association with Post-Modernism and the Ironic Classicists, however, was short-lived. By 1988, he was included as one of seven architects selected by Phillip Johnson in an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art called "Deconstructivist Architecture." In addition to Gehry's work, the exhibition showcased the designs of Coop Himmelblau, Peter Eisenman, Zaha M. Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, and Bernard Tschumi. Like much of the architect's own work over the years, the exhibition drew both praise and criticism. Regardless, it solidified the manifesto of Deconstructivism as "working to disencumber architecture of too limited a scientific, technical rationality – and of the symbols of such a rationality – with the aid of reason."<sup>19</sup> It also affirmed Gehry's position as one of the most influential and important figures of the movement.

By the end of the 1980s, Gehry began to shift his design vocabulary away from the sharp, angular forms of Deconstructivism toward the curved, twisting forms of his undulating metal typology. Early examples of this transition include the plant and exhibition space he designed for Vitra International Furniture Company in Germany (1987-1989) and the Team Disney Administration Building in Anaheim (1987-1995). These buildings, among others, led critics to classify Gehry's work at the time as "movement-focused" examples of the Late Expressionist architecture.<sup>20</sup>

Gehry's transition from sharp, angular forms to curved, fluid forms was aided greatly by developments in computer technology. In the early 1990s, while working on a commission for the American Center in Paris, Gehry began using a French computer program that made designing freeform buildings easier. It was called CATIA and was originally developed by a French aerospace firm. The program allowed him to create such groundbreaking undulating metal buildings as the Guggenheim Museum (1994-1997) in Bilbao, Spain and the Walt Disney Concert Hall (1988-2003) in Los Angeles. It also allowed him to develop a truly unique, signature style of dynamic curves and shiny cladding. These buildings, although dramatically different at first glance, are actually quite similar to the warehouse/collision buildings of the 1980s. Both typologies have exteriors composed of colliding, seemingly chaotic geometries, but interiors of continuous, logical space.

Gehry continues to work within the undulating metal typology, creating dynamic, eye-catching forms around the world. As such, the full meaning of his legacy is yet to be determined; however, his widespread influence and impact on the profession of architecture is undeniable. As Michael Rotundi stated as early as 1987, "We wouldn't be allowed to produce the work we do if Frank hadn't started it first."<sup>21</sup> Verini furthered that sentiment in 2003 when he observed, "Gehry has permanently changed our ideas of what buildings can be," and "... his influence on our physical environment has proved so profound as to be pedestrian. That exposed beam in the Starbucks bathroom? That's Gehry's."<sup>22</sup>

**History of the California Aerospace Museum:**

The California Aerospace Museum was designed by Frank Gehry and constructed between 1982 and 1984. It was part of a master plan for Exposition Park that included three new buildings and an east-west promenade, all to be completed in time for the 1984 Olympics.<sup>23</sup> Gehry's museum was the only one of the planned projects finished at the start of the games. Its location to the northeast of the Coliseum,

<sup>17</sup> Roth, p. 524.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 493.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 592.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 523.

<sup>21</sup> No Author. "A Frank Gehry Collection." *Los Angeles Times*. May 3, 1987; p. N14.

<sup>22</sup> Verini, p. E34.

<sup>23</sup> Dreyfuss, John. "Exposition Park's Elements Linked." *Los Angeles Times*. Aug 27, 1982; p. H1.

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along with its tall, dynamic design, made it one of the most visible features of the park and helped turn an international eye to the architect's work.

An aerospace museum already existed in the park at the time Gehry was commissioned. It was housed in the adjacent California National Guard 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry Armory building. The armory is a large building, and the cost of renovating it to house new exhibits proved too high, so the planners decided to build an entirely new exhibit space.<sup>24</sup> It would be an entrance piece designed to serve the armory, which would eventually be retrofitted to house additional exhibits when adequate funds were raised. As a result, the location chosen for the building was a very narrow strip of land between the armory and the proposed promenade through the park.

The narrowness of the site, along with the museum's dedicated subject of flight, contributed significantly to Gehry's soaring design, causing him to create walls that slope outward to maximize interior space and to concentrate much of the building's architectural emphasis on the upper stories of the most visible (south) elevation. Early design models indicate that Gehry originally approached the project as a flying village typology, as "a collage of separately articulated building-objects, surrounded by a landscape of scenographic and symbolic imagery," including an elevator shaft in the shape of a missile silo.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, the architect abandoned the flying village typology and employed his warehouse/collision typology by merging and abstracting the distinct objects into a singular, less literal interpretation of the history of flight.

Gehry's museum was expected to draw what *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic John Dreyfuss called, "a ludicrous combination of eyebrows, voices, controversy, indignation, and anger," due to its unusual, dominant design.<sup>26</sup> Gehry was quoted at the time as calling the building "a fantasy" and "a baroque space shuttle."<sup>27</sup> The museum opened to the public on July 28, 1984, to the anticipated mix of criticism and praise. Despite the perceived shortfalls, Sam Hall Kaplan, *Los Angeles Times* urban design critic, noted that it was still "a delight that is sure to enthrall, entertain, and educate."<sup>28</sup> He also observed that it promised "to bring new life and excitement" to the park.<sup>29</sup> *Architectural Record's* Charles Gandee's review of the project was more profound. He stated:

"What the Aerospace Museum reveals is that Gehry has not only not abandoned his love of unorthodox materials, of agglomerating disparate forms and finishes, of awkward connections and collisions, but pursued that love even further. The juxtaposition of disparate forms, materials, and textures not only acknowledges but responds to the ad hoc character of the American city – the real, not the ideal American city."<sup>30</sup>

Since its opening in 1984, critics, architects, and historians have reflected on the importance of the California Aerospace Museum in the scope of Frank Gehry's career. It is seen as his first major museum commission, setting the stage for a long career of outstanding public projects. It is also considered one of his first projects to garner significant national and international attention.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps James Verini summed up the building's importance best when he observed that the museum is often regarded as "the piece de resistance of [Gehry's] warehouse style."<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Pilar Viladas considered the museum to be the architect's "best built effort" in the collision category of his work.<sup>33</sup>

Over the years the building has changed names from the California Aerospace Museum to the California Air and Space Museum and most recently to the SKETCH Foundation Gallery. It was closed for renovations from 1998 to 2002. The renovations were performed by Fremer/Savel Architects and appear to have been limited to interior work. Recently, the museum was closed again and the exhibits were relocated. It remains closed today.

## Integrity:

The California Aerospace Museum retains integrity, as defined by the National Park Service when considering properties for the National Register of Historic Places, from its period of construction. Its design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and location all remain intact. Its setting has been altered by the addition of new buildings in Exposition Park, but these changes do not impair the building's ability to portray its significance as the work of a master architect. Association is not an applicable aspect of the building's integrity, because the building is not eligible under Criteria 1 or 3 for association with significant person or events.

<sup>24</sup> Dal Co, Francesco, and Kurt W. Forester. *Frank O. Gehry: The Complete Works*. New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1998; p. 239.

<sup>25</sup> Dal Co and Forester, p. 248.

<sup>26</sup> Dreyfuss, p. H6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, Sam Hall. "Aerospace Museum Is Geared for 'Maiden Flight': City Review." *Los Angeles Times*. July 20, 1984; p. F2.

<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, p. F1.

<sup>30</sup> Gandee; p. 116.

<sup>31</sup> Roth, p. 524.

<sup>32</sup> Verini, James, p. E34.

<sup>33</sup> Viladas, p. 160.

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## Conclusion:

Frank Gehry's work has redefined the practice of architecture in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the often controversial nature of his work, he has been recognized by critics, architects, and historians as a true innovator whose influence is broad and profound. In 2010, *Vanity Fair* magazine dubbed him "the most important architect of our age," solidifying his status as a household name and a living legend.<sup>34</sup> As such, the notion that he should be recognized as a master architect is undeniable.

The California Aerospace Museum marked a critical point in Gehry's career. Quoted as his "favorite" building in 1985, it was his first major public building and one of his first projects to attract international attention.<sup>35</sup> It has also been recognized as the best example of the warehouse/collision typology developed by the architect in the early to mid-1980s. It could be easily argued that the warehouse/collision typology led directly to the development of the undulating metal typology employed in the designs of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum and the Disney Concert Hall, as the best examples of each parti essentially consist of overlapping, colliding exteriors and continuous, warehouse-like interiors. For these reasons the California Aerospace Museum played a crucial role in Gehry's career and in the development of his exceptional design language. Consequently, the building is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 3 as a defining work in the career of a master architect.

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<sup>34</sup> Trynauer, Matt. "Architecture in the Age of Gehry." *Vanity Fair*. Website:

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/08/architecture-survey-201008?currentPage=all>. Published August 2010; accessed January 24, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Gandee, p. 116.





Photo 01\*: South elevation looking north across Exposition Park



Photo 02: North elevation and armory from across Rose Garden looking southeast



Photo 03: Detail view of Lockheed F-104 Starfighter

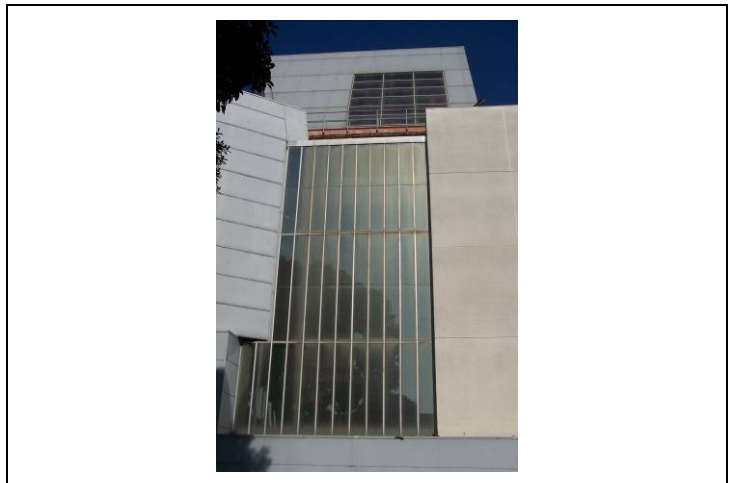


Photo 04: Detail view of three-story window on south elevation

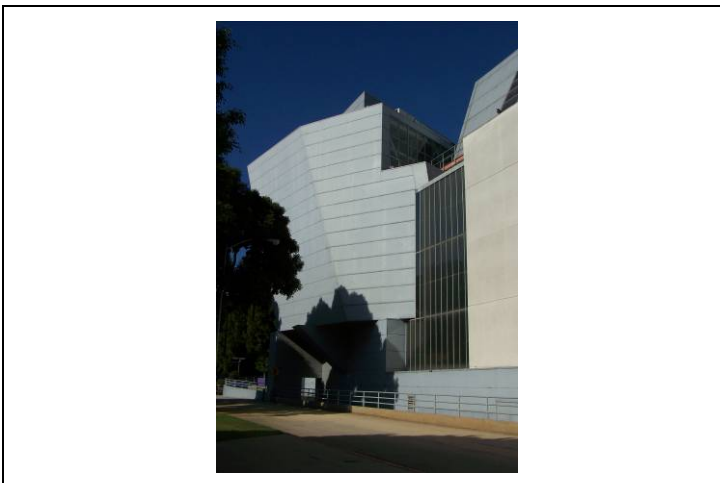


Photo 05: West end of south elevation looking northwest from State Drive

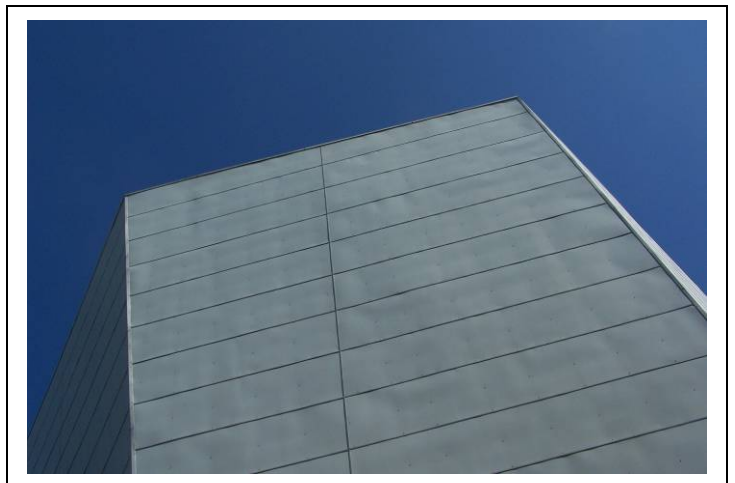


Photo 06: Detail view of sheet metal skin

\*The photo numbers on this DPR form are different from those on the photo log. The photo log is keyed to the photo prints and CD only.

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Photo 07: West elevation looking northeast



Photo 08: West elevation looking east

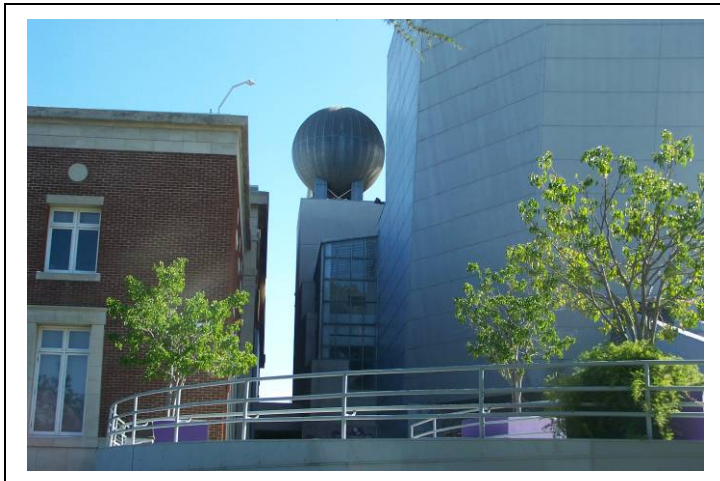


Photo 09: View of relationship between museum and armory looking east

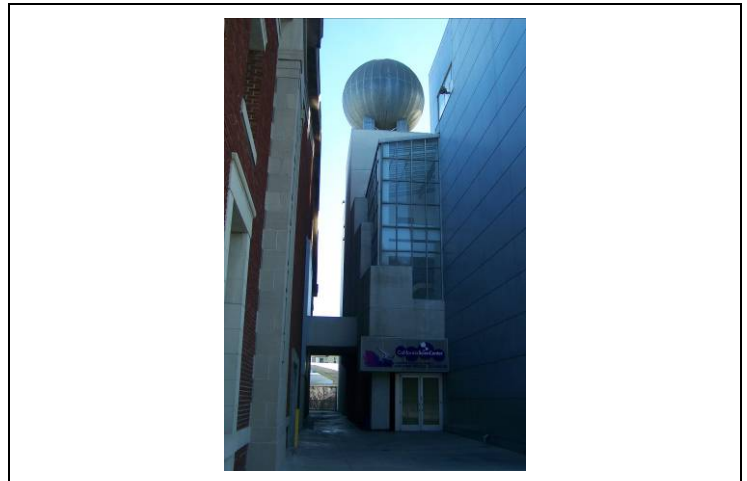


Photo 10: Main entrance and elevator tower looking east

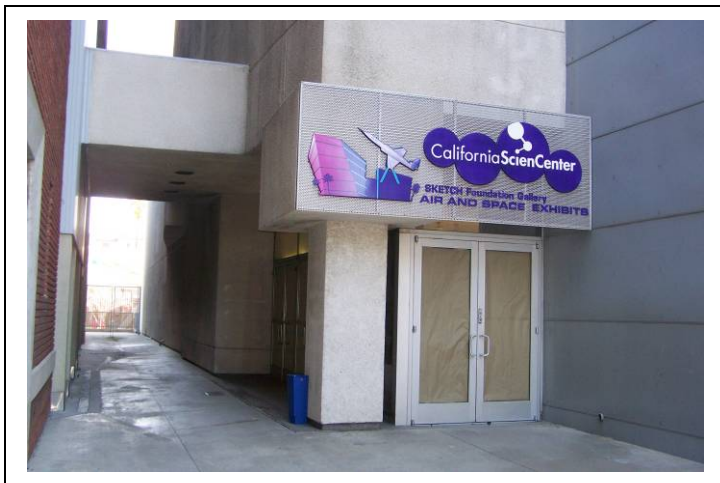


Photo 11: Detail view of main entrance

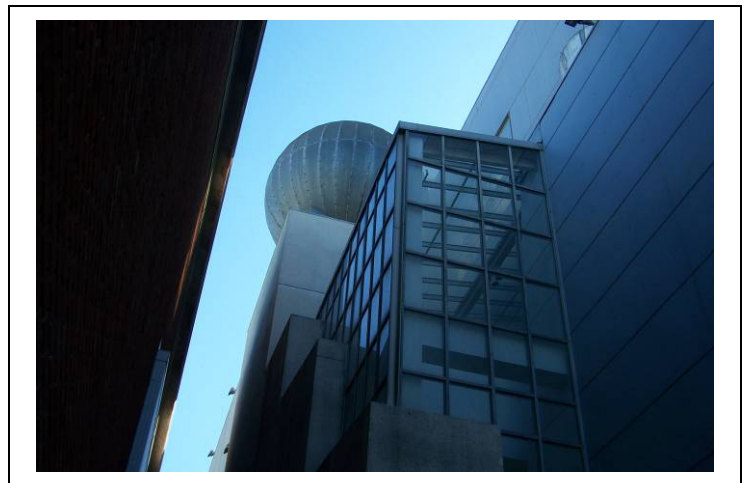


Photo 12: Detail view of elevator tower

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Photo 13: East elevation looking west



Photo 14: East and north elevations looking southwest



Photo 15: North elevation looking southeast



Photo 16: South elevation, looking northwest