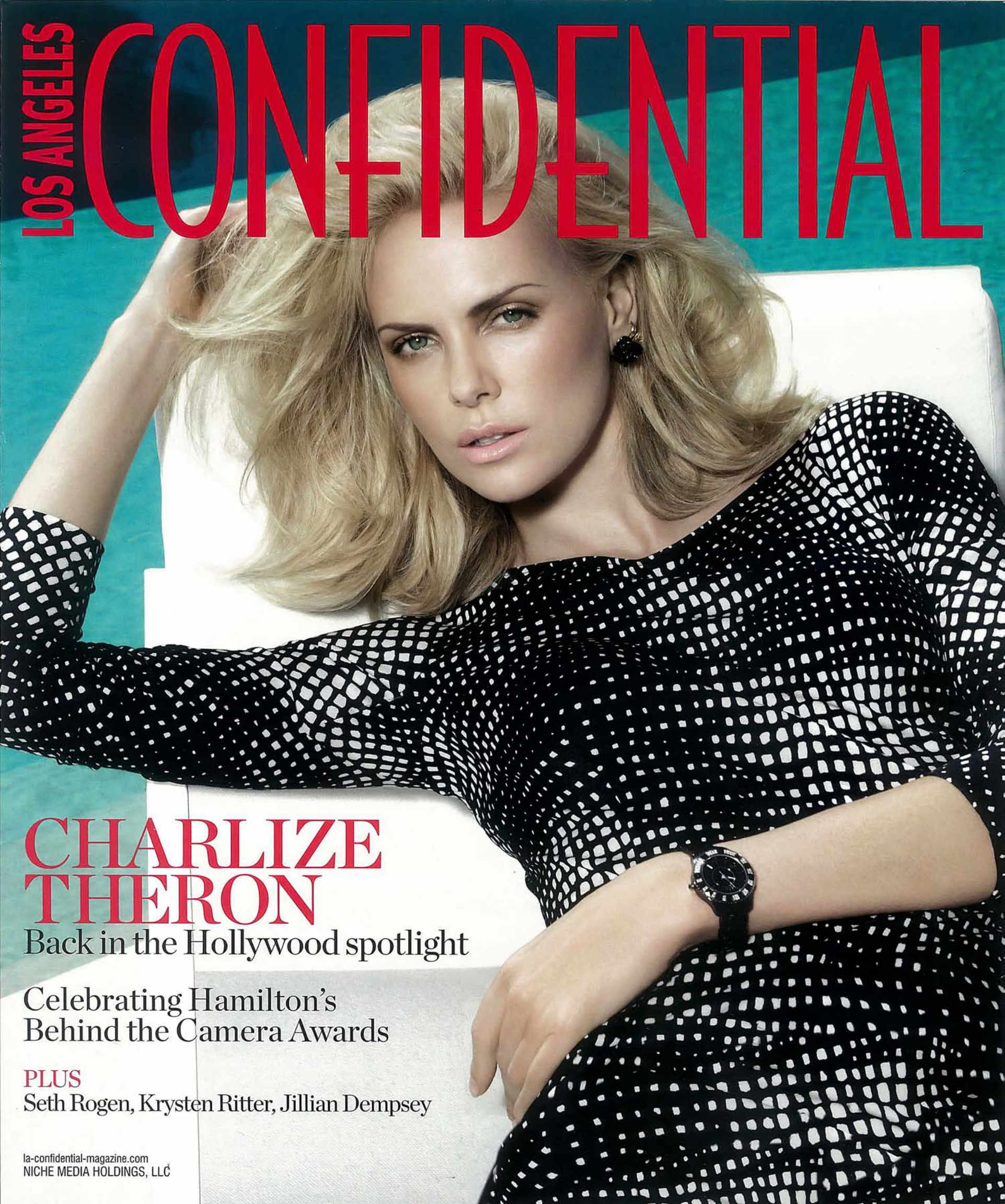


# LOS ANGELES CONFIDENTIAL



## CHARLIZE THERON

Back in the Hollywood spotlight

Celebrating Hamilton's  
Behind the Camera Awards

**PLUS**  
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## changing spaces

CULVER CITY'S CREATIVELY REVAMPED HAYDEN TRACT AREA IS BRINGING A RENEWED LIFE AND ENERGY TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

BY KATHY A. MCDONALD

Once forlorn and forgotten, Culver City's formerly industrial Hayden Tract is now a home to media and advertising companies. What led to the dramatic transformation is a decades-long partnership between developers and an architect. Since 1986, Frederick and Laurie Samitaur Smith have worked directly with architect Eric Owen Moss and his eponymous firm to reenvision and remake former warehouses and industrial spaces into radically contemporary, visually arresting buildings. "The ambition was to go into a very destitute neighborhood—which it was—to improve the economics (via job creation) and to introduce art and culture," says Laurie. Her partner (and husband), Frederick, adds, "We wanted to make 'no place' someplace."

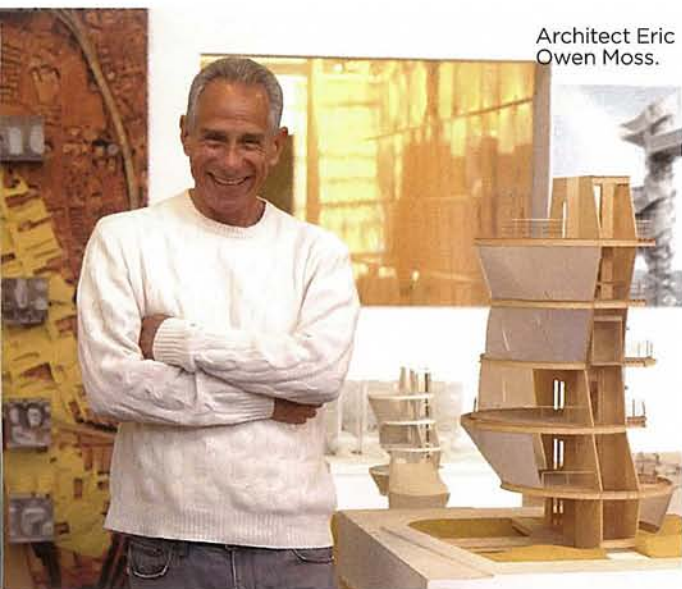
Moss credits the Samitaur Smiths for having the unusual vision and idea the area could be remade without government assistance. "It says something interesting about Los Angeles as opposed to other big cities in America, which tend to be fixed," says Moss. "Los Angeles is really different in that sense; it's a more ephemeral city, it can move and change."

And the area has indeed been altered. "There's no other project like it in the world," says Moss of the privately funded "city-making" project termed *Conjunctive Points*. Within it are singular spaces that are home to some of LA's most creative ventures, as well as major companies including Anonymous Content, the Tennis Channel, and Ogilvy.

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Laurie and Frederick Samitaur Smith atop the 72-foot-high, Eric Owen Moss-designed Samitaur Tower, the Hayden Tract's iconic welcoming structure.

Architect Eric Owen Moss.



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The buildings' titles convey the architecture's atypical looks: the Stealth, the Beehive, and The Box stand out for their mix of twisted facades, crazed angles, and genuine abstractness. Moss has already received critical acclaim for his work at Conjective Points, and he recently received the Jencks Award from the prestigious RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects).

***“We wanted to present art and culture in the broadest sense; there will be no commercial mix.”—LAURIE SAMITAUR SMITH***

Hayden Tract, which borders National Boulevard to the north and the Los Angeles River to the east, comprises approximately eight large city blocks from Higuera Street to Jefferson Boulevard. North and northwest is Culver City's lively Arts District, where some of

the city's best galleries (including Blum & Poe) are found, as well as imaginative event spaces such as the SmogShope and Royal/T, a Japanese-style, pop-tinged gallery, boutique, and café.

With the Expo Line railway reportedly set to open soon, the tract's central location—not far from major freeways and close to LAX—is an added bonus for commuters. “The commercial-production business hub used to be Santa Monica,” says Kevin Batten, a principal at the commercial-production and design firm Süperfad. “Here, we get more space and in the kind of building that is great for creatives—raw, open, and with easy parking,” he says.

Each conversion has its own story. Just outside the entrance to Süperfad's bow-truss building (now sandblasted clean and skylit inside) is the Moss-designed Flying Garden—a former industrial press stripped bare and with its steel frame revealed. Now the 30-foot-high structure hovers above a small plaza and was reengineered to cradle a series of *Alice in Wonderland*-size pots holding live cacti.

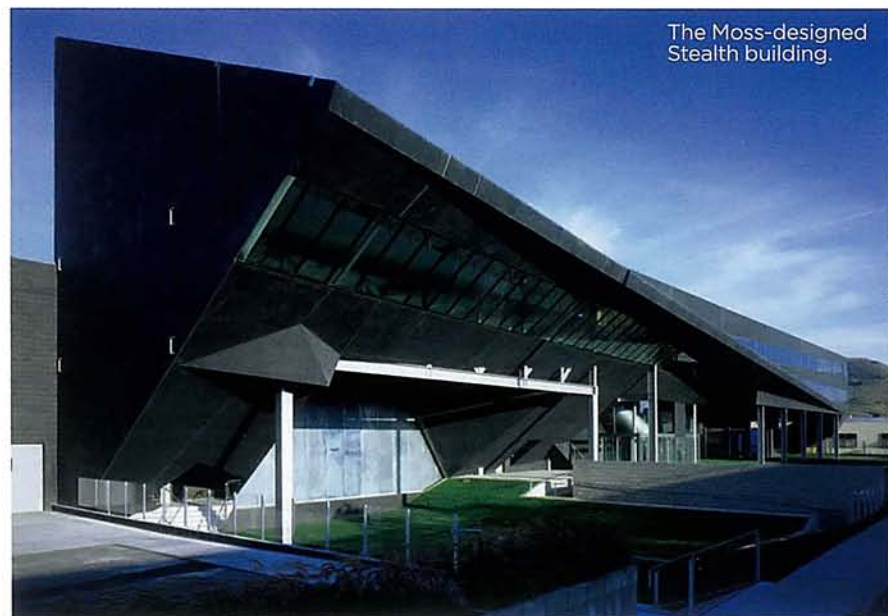
Across from the elevated Expo Line, the 72-foot-high Samitaur Tower, also designed by Moss, is the tract's iconic welcoming structure. Unlike a commercial digital billboard, the tower's screens are angled and designed to broadcast culturally significant content and local event information, as well as art and graphic presentations

in several directions up and down the curved facade. “We wanted to present art and culture in the broadest sense; there will be no commercial mix,” promises Laurie.

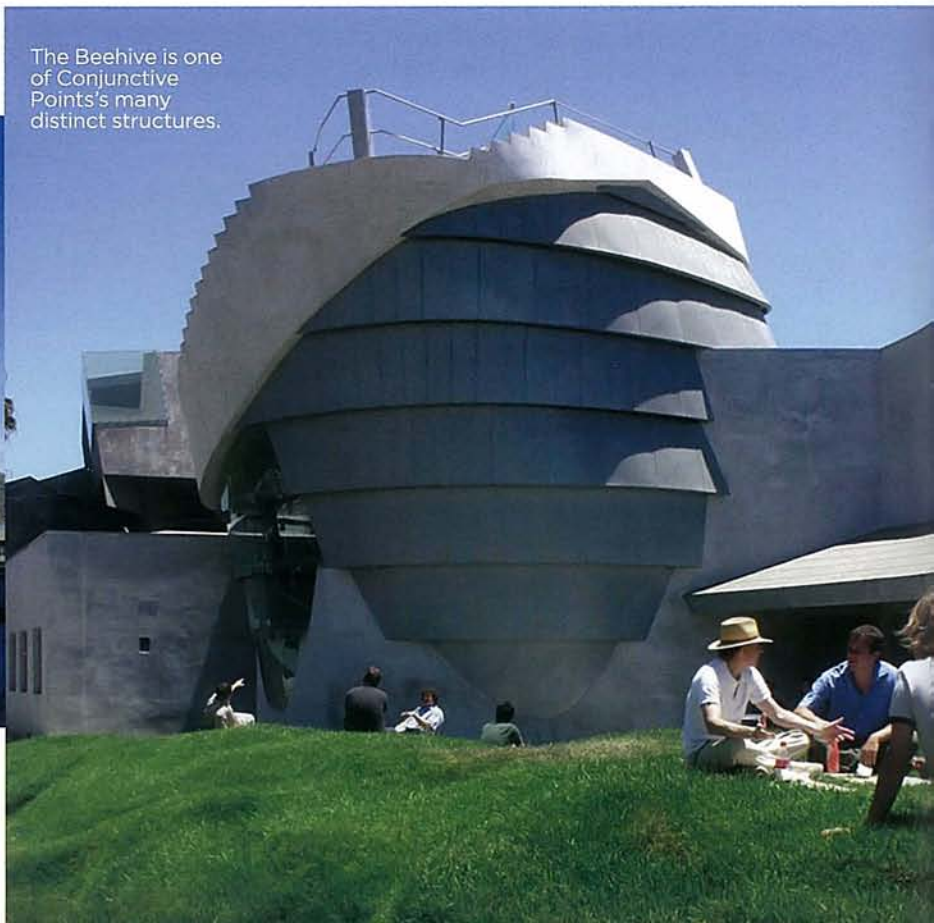
However, art and commerce do coexist at Conjective Points, which demonstrates how “you can use architecture to commercialize real estate without compromising the architecture,” says Moss. And there are 600,000 square feet of projects still to come—from a curvilinear theater and commercial space to the 10-story Jefferson Tower currently in the engineering and schematic-design phase.

An exterior ramp, stairs, and the lobby at the Jefferson Tower will lead to another Expo Line stop, while the design calls for column-free spaces and floors that, for commercial offices, have remarkably high 13-foot, 16-foot, and sometimes 24-foot ceilings. Curving steel will wrap the building, which will be strategically angled so canted glass on the tower's south and west sides reflects the heat.

Still, despite the forward planning in Hayden Tract, Moss believes architecture—and any kind of long-term development and planning—is counter to today's instant-access, attention-deficit mind-set. He says, “Architecture is an anachronism in the sense that it can't gratify instantaneously. It teaches a different lesson.” **LAC**



The Moss-designed Stealth building.



The Beehive is one of Conjective Points's many distinct structures.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM BONNER (STEALTH); ERIC OWEN MOSS ARCHITECTS (BEEHIVE); JENN KENNEDY (PORTRAIT)