



# EA(S)T OUT OF THE WESTERN BOX

FEATURING THE WORKS OF JOHN KERRIDGE, ROB PAULLUS AND SEBASTIAN MARISCOL. CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART TAKES CENTRESTAGE. INTERVIEW WITH TOM DIXON, EDUCATIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE CITY AND A SPECIAL FEATURE OF ISH'S CHRISTMAS SHOPPING LIST!





# ***SUB-SUBURBIA: BARRIO METALICO, TUCSON ARIZONA***

TEXT BY **BRADLEY WHEELER**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LIAM FREDERICK, ROB PAULUS & BRAD WHEELER**















In a sun-scorched and seemingly "undesirable" industrial belt of downtown Tucson, Arizona, (population 500,000), Architect Rob Paulus has done what others, including the city building department, said could not be done - he has created life. And he calls it Barrio Metalico.

The architect's goal was to create a community, and in the process he has made a statement by giving economic CPR to a part of a town he calls home. His vision was to produce a type of anti-suburbia contrary to the faux-Mediterranean, Ranch and English wood and stucco boxes that have cast a pox upon the housing-landscape in post World War II United States.

Staring down pessimism, (which is all too infectious,) Architect Paulus saw opportunity in property next to the railroad tracks, land once used for worker housing in the early 1900s and subsequently forgotten by the community. With financial partners, the architect quickly purchased the lots and immediately started work on the design.

Acting as both architect and developer, the forty-year-old native Tucsonian began to see his vision appreciated by others when the first unit was purchased even before the foundations had been dug. Now, some eighteen months later, the recently completed campaign has surpassed his original expectations.

The project is composed of nine, energy-efficient, 145-square metre simple metallic houses. Rising out of the desert floor, they reflect the Arizona sun, as well as the industrial flavour of their surroundings. The units are skinned in corrugated metal panels with a galvalume finish. Walls with R-48 blown-in blanket insulation, providing protection from blistering 41 degrees celsius summer days and 4.5 degrees celsius winter nights. Perforations in the building envelope are carefully studied to allow minimum heat transfer while bringing in the majority of ambient light from the north. Windows are in aluminium frame insulated glass. Each unit from its northeast corner on both first- and second-floor levels affords eye-catching views of the majestic Catalina Mountains.

The floor plan of the units is straight forward with a 93-square metre bottom plate that comprises the main living area (a two-storey 4.5-metres high space,) dining bar, kitchen, bath and rear guest bedroom/office. The upper plate is open to the ground floor, consisting of the master bedroom, master bathroom and walk-in wardrobe.

Metal culverts standing vertically beside each unit further emphasise the Barrio's industrial aesthetic. The cylinders, 3.65-metres high and 1.2-metres in diameter, are used as part of a rainwater harvesting system, which collects roof drainage for outdoor use.

A major characteristic of the project's design is fencing, which combines several recycled elements: segments (memories) of adobe wall once used for a tenement, corrugated metal and wood from the nearby Ice House Lofts. The Lofts are another of the Tucson-based studio's recently completed projects consisting of 51 loft units rehabilitated from a 1920's ice-making factory. Constructed from common industrial materials, the fetching price for a unit of the Barrio Metalico has since risen, following increased popularity in the projects and the new development works in the Millville neighbourhood.



MODERN ARCHITECTURE HAS LONG BEEN DISMISSED BY MANY AS NON-VIABLE FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S CONSUMPTION.



For some, the project's success seems puzzling. Modern architecture has long been dismissed by many as non-viable for the general public's consumption. In fact, the Case Study House program, though intended to bring modernism to the American populace, in many ways actually created the perception of the movement as being highbrow. Because of this, the economic success of Barrio Metalico is all the more significant, and signals a victory for good modernism produced en masse.

Recalling the achievement and communal sensibilities of the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart (1927) and Gregory Ain's Mar Vista Tract (1948), Barrio Metalico fulfills a kind of modern co-operative living and collective pride woefully lacking in contemporary suburban sprawl.

"We were not interested in creating a typical suburban scenario," said Architect Rob Paulus. "Plenty of Tucson developers already do this and oftentimes incorporate tired southwestern aesthetic cliches. However," he continued, "in recognition of people's interest in modern community living, we addressed this desire and aimed to produce an exceptional project. These residents relish being downtown," he said, "and enjoy a neighbourhood with a mix of residential and commercial occupancies." ■





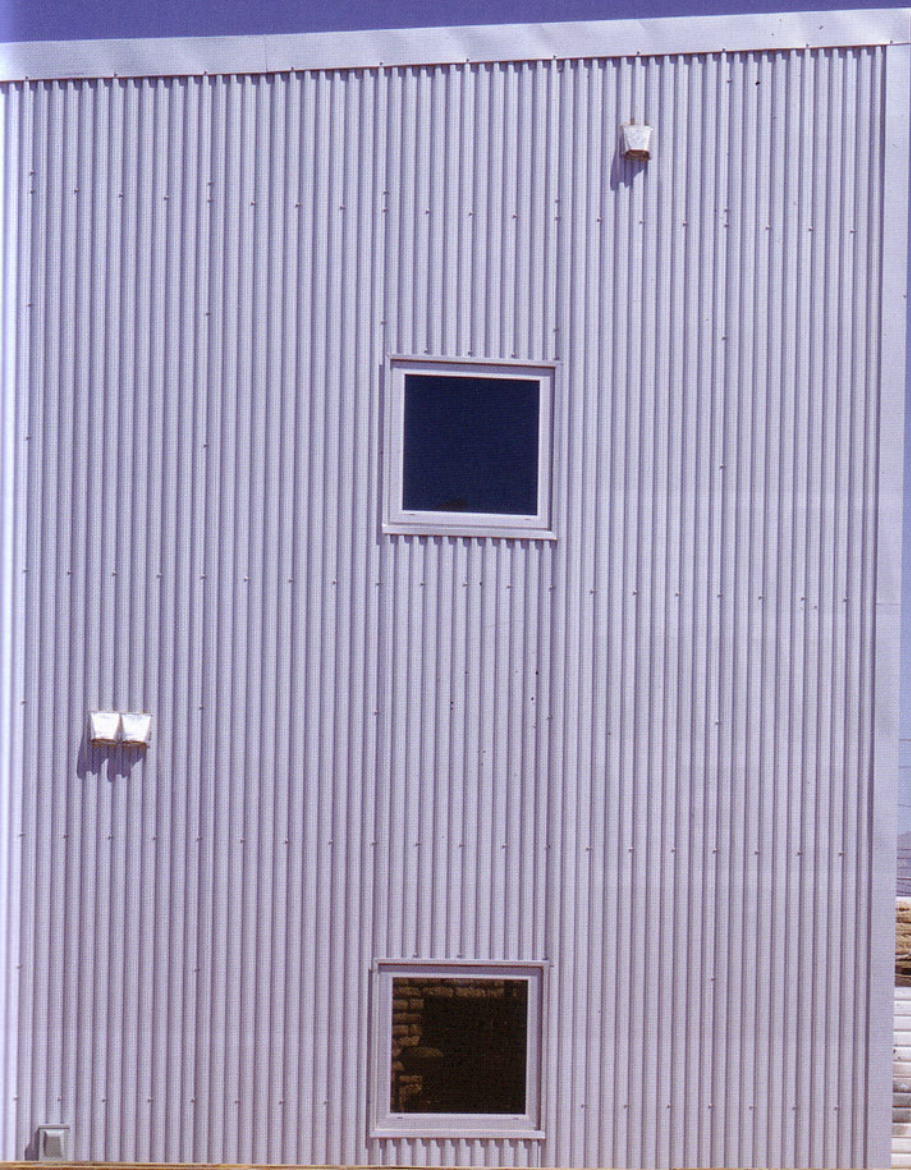
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## **PROJECTCREDITS:**

ARCHITECT **ROB PAULUS ARCHITECT, LTD**

PROJECT TEAM **CHRIS FORD, BRENT HOFFFLIN, ROB PAULUS**

INTERIOR DESIGN **ROB PAULUS ARCHITECT, LTD**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE **ROB PAULUS ARCHITECT, LTD**

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **GRENIER STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING, INC**

MECHANICAL ENGINEER **JCS GROUP, TUCSON ELECTRIC POWER, GUARANTEE HOME PROGRAM**

MAIN CONTRACTOR **CALIBER WEST, LLC**

KEY CONSULTANTS **AMERICAN STEEL BUILDING COMPANY (STEEL FRAME DESIGN), GEORGE STEEL (CAR CANOPY),**

KEY SUPPLIERS **CROWN INTERIORS (CABINETS), CACTUS JACK (SITE FENCING), MODERN HOME (FURNITURE), METROFORM LIMITED (ART)**

KEY MATERIALS **CORRUGATED METAL D-PANEL SIDING WITH GALVALUME FINISH, CORRUGATED METAL ROAD CULVERT, SALVAGED WOOD SIDING,**

**INTEGRAL COLOUR CONCRETE FLOORS, DECORATIVE GRAVEL**

OWNER **FREMONT PARTNERS - ONE, LLC**

FLOOR AREA **NINE UNITS OF 145SQM EACH**

LOCATION **FOUR LOFT UNITS AT SOUTH FREMONT AVE AND EAST 17<sup>TH</sup> ST., TUCSON ARIZONA, FIVE LOFT UNITS AT SOUTH FREMONT AVE AND EAST 18<sup>TH</sup> ST., TUCSON ARIZONA.**