



Detail of a Pacific Design Center photo by Jeff Goldberg/Esto

**Name the Los Angeles architect that participated in each phase of the Pacific Design Center\*—that person would be Michael A. Enomoto, FAIA. What about the individual who introduced Thom Mayne, FAIA, to Clark Construction on the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters in DTLA job, when his firm was Associate Architect on the commission? Again, Enomoto. Or the project architect on the first Nordstrom's in California. Enomoto, too.**

Enomoto, who is this year's AIA|LA Gold Medal recipient—the highest honor the Chapter bestows, by the way—has had his fingers in so many commissions that make Los Angeles, Los Angeles; Southern California, Southern California. What remains as a dream commission for this managing partner of Gruen Associates, who has been with the firm since he met with Norma Sklarek, FAIA, in 1973? Find out below, along with a personal take on the city starting with photos of 2 major stories about Mike:



### **AIA|LA: Favorite place to eat in Los Angeles.**

Michael A. Enomoto, FAIA: Well, for nearly 30 years it was Chaya Brasserie in Beverly Hills until they closed... so now it is the District by Hannah Ahn, also in Beverly Hills... the sister restaurant to Crustacean in Beverly Hills. Great garlic noodles. But, I have to admit that I have been going to Tito's Tacos in Culver City since high school.

**Dream Commission. What current site, project, or building in Los Angeles would you reconceive? Why and how?**

I would love to do the Master Plan/Business Improvement District (BID) for Little Tokyo in DTLA. It is a district that is too rapidly disappearing. Originally the home for thousands of Japanese immigrants to Los Angeles, it is experiencing a decline that is indicative of the generational ethnic shifts that, I believe, are not only confined to the Japanese in Los Angeles. I think that all cultural/ethnic enclaves have or will suffer similar declines. As a third generation Japanese American I have contributed to this decline – as I do not live nor do I spend much time in Little Tokyo. I do not know if architecture can save the district or whether or not saving it in the first place is the right thing to do. But I would love to explore the possibilities. This could impact many people, young and old as well as future generations. The lessons can be applied to all ethnic communities across the U.S.

**Okay, a commission or project that you've done. Tell us a story about it that we don't already know.**

My career spans nearly five decades so there are so many projects and stories. I like the idea of how our projects affect the very lives of people – everyday. A rather non-traditional example of this is – I was the Project Architect for the very first Nordstrom in California at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa. Now there are Nordstroms everywhere and millions of people shop there regularly. A different example is – On the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters in DTLA, we were the Associate Architect and I introduced Clark Construction, the Design Builder, to Thom Mayne, the Designer (at the time, Clark had never heard of Thom). At the beginning I had to convince each of them that this was a project perfect for them as neither wanted to do the project with the other. The Caltrans building is now one of the great buildings downtown and a success for Clark Construction and Thom Mayne.

**If you had four hours off and could spend it anywhere in Los Angeles, where would it be?**

At a Dodger game with my sons (and granddaughters). Go Blue!

**Been to the Design Awards before? Tell us about a moment that stands out, whether it's inspirational, behind-the-scenes, or lighthearted.**

Los Angeles is the center for design, literally, for the world. The AIA/LA Design Awards is where that design is highlighted and watched by the world. So, of course, I attend each year. I come away each year inspired to seek out the most important projects that I can find. I am gratified to find that so many of the awardees over the years are my friends.

**\*On the Pacific Design Center, Enomoto worked as a junior designer for Cesar Pelli, FAIA, on the Blue Whale. At the time, Pelli was a Design Partner at Gruen Associates. After Pelli launched his own firm, Gruen became Executive Architect for the following two Pacific Design Center buildings. Enomoto was Head of Construction for the Green Building, and was the Partner-in-Charge of the Red Building.**

**Mike Enomoto – 1 of 4 Owners of Gruen Associates  
Gold Medal Architect Award – AIA Los Angeles**