

# THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

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**ARCHITECTURE AND ECOLOGY**

**Morphosis in Madrid Hübner's self-build Greening Seattle**



# FORD FOCUSED

Reworking Albert Kahn's assembly building, Mountain Hardware, SunPower and Vetrizzo take over where Ford left off.



- 1 The scene in the awe-inspiring Craneway at the opening ceremony in 1931.
- 2 This factory produced, among other things, Ford's Model A, seen here on the production line.
- 3 The aerial view shows how the building has strong north/south axis, with Craneway jettied over the water.
- 4 At the southern end a jettied platform projects the dramatic 20m high Craneway over the bay.
- 5 Inside Mountain Hardware's upper level workspace, and how the space can be made essential cellular when needed.
- 6 Slender cross bracing was added after the earthquake.
- 7 The existing interiors are expansive, providing scope for adaptation.
- 8 Inside Vetrizzo's production and storage area.



At over 400m long, Albert Kahn's Ford Assembly Building in Richmond, California broke new ground when it was built in 1931. Situated on the northern shore of San Francisco Bay, it commands dramatic views of the city's distinctive skyline. Surviving the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the building's distinctive form – the continuous bands of windows and sawtooth north lights – has some of Kahn's most impressive interiors; particularly the building's awe-inspiring Craneway at the southernmost end, but also the two levels of former production line and administrative spaces that now host some of San Francisco's thriving industries.

Under the design direction of Marcy Wong and Donn Leggan, the goal of the architects, developers and new tenants has been twofold – to re-appropriate and enhance the building's most powerful architectural aspects, while improving its environmental performance and operational capacity for new users: Mountain Hardware – producers (and users) of high performance outdoor equipment and apparel; the SunPower Corporation – producers of solar power systems; and Vetrizzo – who recycle windcreens and glass waste to manufacture distinctive worktops. All of whom have admirable ambitions to promote the main tenets of sustainability through their businesses.

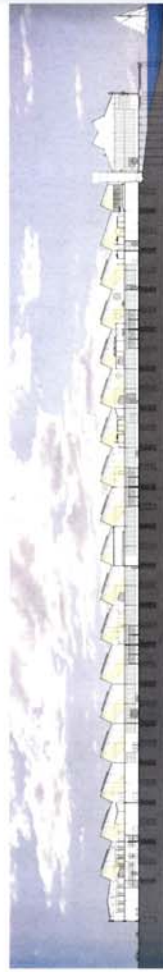
In broad terms the architect's touch has been light, working with plan geometries that adhere to the building's repetitive order, and proposing new installations that defer to original elements. Each of the three key tenants has worked closely with architect and developer, resulting in unique and bespoke conditions. Mountain Hardware will be occupying space at the north of the site, taking advantage of proximity to the site entrance to re-use Ford's original sales showroom for their own Friends and Family Store. And, along with extensive testing and development space, they will also be re-colonising Ford's delightful timber and glass manager's office suite. Vetrizzo occupy the ground-floor single storey to the east, taking advantage of access and servicing capacity for their production process. And the more conventionally desk-bound SunPower



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long section looking east showing jettied Craneway over Bay



cross section looking north

workspace features a central bamboo-clad conference suite and a series of upper-level offices that overlook the stunning Craneway.

The developer and tenants have generated a holistic shared vision for impressive environmental and social aspirations. Working together, the developer and SunPower have committed to a groundbreaking landlord/tenant agreement that will result in the installation of a 1MW solar panel array on the near perfect roof configuration, with the potential for all tenants to enter into so-called Power Purchase Agreements. Furthermore, developer Eddie Orton already runs a shuttle bus between the waterfront and the Bay Area Rapid Transit station in Richmond, and is promoting the introduction of ferry service to the Ford peninsula, adding to the benefit of the building's adjacency to the Bay Trail, a bike and pedestrian path that circumscribes the San Francisco Bay. Topping this, Mountain Hardware (who, as you may expect, employ many hardened adrenaline junkies) are even proposing a row to work scheme with their own internal canoe storage facilities.

Future phases include conversion of the Craneway into a public entertainment venue and the future home of the National Park Service's Rosie the Riveter Visitors Center. All of which is a model for creative re-use, in a region historically criticised for poor environmental stewardship. With schemes like this, opinions are changing, not least in Richmond, that benefits from the support of City mayor, Gayle McLaughlin; the first Green Party candidate elected to this office in California. All in all, A for effort, and for execution. **ROB GREGORY**



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8 SunPower's upper-level offices have stunning views into adjacent Craneway.

9 Essential services and cellular spaces sit within the original volumes.

10 Working with the linear geometries, office 'huts' form internal streets.

11 At the heart of SunPower's work space, bamboo-clad meeting rooms suite in existing volume.

12 Mountain Hardware will occupy Ford's original manager's offices.

13 However possible original features were stockpiled for re-use ...

14 ... seen here with original pendant lights and staircase in the cafe.

**Architect**  
Henry Wong & Dean Logan  
Architects, California  
**Photographs**  
Billy Huzarce



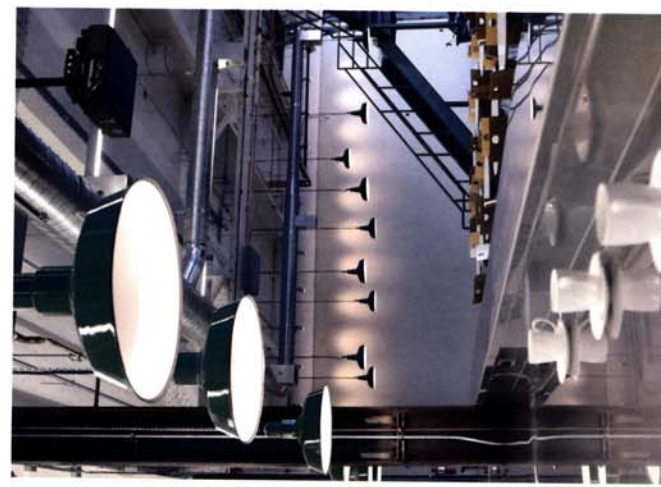
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