



THE LOS ANGELES HOME FURNISHINGS MART 1958 - 1975 THE LA MART 1976 - 2007 THE LA MART DESIGN CENTER 2008

ITS PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE,
+ EDDY S. FELDMAN, ESQ.

by Ron Fields, ASID

Remember being with my father and mother, "Cy and Helen" in our space during the opening festivities of The Los Angeles Home Furnishings Mart back in 1958. After college in 1964, I joined the family business, Medallion of California here in Los Angeles. At that time the Mart was open to buyers and designers on Fridays and the first Thursday evenings of the month. I spent five years working in our showroom there.

There was a certain excitement on "market" days during those early years, with lots of camaraderie between the buyers, designer, sales reps and Mart personnel. Originally the building contained thirteen floors of primarily home furnishings. During the mid-seventies, eclipsed by the opening of the Pacific Design Center, eight of the now its thirteen floors of home furnishings tenants were replaced with giftware oriented showrooms. No longer just a furniture mart, it was renamed The LA Mart.

Now as it celebrates its half a century anniversary, it has re-invented itself once again, taking on a new life with a new name, that of The LA Mart Design Center. As our

thriving downtown is bursting at its old seams, indeed, just down the street, so is our Mart.

In January the Mart had a grand celebration "Fresh At 50". It was held in its quite handsome new lobby designed by Christopher Gaona, ASID. Attending were such notables as our Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc., President Christopher G. Kennedy, Deborah Davis, President, ASID LA Chapter and our own friend Eddy S. Feldman, Esq.

As an aside, Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. is a mega-giant real estate corporation. Some of its holdings include the Architects & Designers Building - New York City, the Boston Design Center, and the Washington Design Center. Its centerpiece is the Chicago Merchandise Mart. Developed by Marshall Field and Company, the Merchandise Mart opened on May 5, 1930. My father, who had a showroom there in the fifties would tell me that the Merchandise Mart was then the second largest building in the United States, the Pentagon being first. In 1945, the Merchandise Mart was purchased by former Ambassador to Great Britain Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., the father of future U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Later managed by Sargent Shriver, the building was owned for more than 50 years by the Kennedy family through Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc.

until 1998, when MMPI was acquired by Vornado Realty Trust. When I was preparing for this article, prior to the "Fresh At 50" event, I had the occasion to email a note to Mr. Christopher G. Kennedy regarding some questions and concerns that



Christopher
Kennedy

I needed answered. To my surprise and delight, within minutes of sending my note, he called me directly, being quite affable and helpful. In the January 27th edition of the New York Times, under 'Green Buildings Don't Have to Be New' was a picture of

Mr. Kennedy standing in front of his Chicago Merchandise Mart, having received LEED certification. It was noted that this is one of the largest and oldest buildings to collect this green award.

EDDY FELDMAN

Our colleague, legal counsel, friend, contributor to our *ASID Quarterly* and much more, was in the trenches at the inception of the first furniture mart property on Seventh street in Los Angeles in 1947. He went on to be one of the primary figures responsible for the planning and opening of the Los Angeles Home Furnishing Mart here in 1958. He was its director until 1974. Since then he has practiced law, with a large portion of

The Planning Committee at Groundbreaking



As it looked during construction



Eddy Feldman, right, at the Ribbon Cutting



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SAVE THE DATE... BLUE HOUSE IS COMING!

Blue House Party Back by Popular Demand
Thursday, May 1st, 5:30 PM

To be held at the home of Jean Pinto
4960 Densmore Avenue, Encino, CA 91436

The Live Auction will generate proceeds to support legislation, educational scholarships, and the ASID Foundation.

Admission \$25 which includes cocktails, wine, and hors d'oeuvres.

We need your donations for the auction - designer bloopers, samples, overstocked items, etc.



RON'S CORNER *continued*

his practice having to do with architectural, interior design and construction matters here in Southern California. He is a graduate of DePaul University law school.

He has served on the board of the Los Angeles Municipal Arts Commission. He is past president of the Correctional Industries Commission within the California Department of Corrections. That is the body

that oversees the manufacturing of furniture and other products inside our state prison system. He is the current president of the Los Angeles Historical Society. Until we started having our bi-monthly dinners together, I thought I new our city's history pretty good. Turns out next to Eddy Feldman this guy's an amateur.

His published book "The Art of Street Lighting" - 1972 contains an overview of the history of "Street Lamps and Lamplighters" dating from the dark ages (pun) to the then present. So interesting it is, containing over fifty photos of street lights around Los Angeles. How interesting that one of the most exciting elements of the new additions to LACMA is Chris Burden's "Urban Light", a collection of 202 vintage street lamps Standing At Attention outside the new Renzo Piano-designed building. Most likely some of these standards appear in Eddy's book. Poetically, in the background beyond these mighty lamps sits the Park La Brea towers, home to Eddy Feldman for 45 years.

Two greats: Our new reborn LA Mart Design Center is very "Fresh At 50". Eddy S. Feldman is very fresh at 88! Both with a busy law practice along with living a rather vital life.

Our mart has a very exciting present and future right along with a most stunning past. I'll see you at 1933 South Broadway. ■

Best, Ron.....
Ron Fields, ASID
Past President ASID 1980 & 1981
Los Angeles ASID Historian
www.ronfieldsdesigns.com



Chris Burden, Urban Light, 2000-2007 Photos: Chris Burden



Christopher Kennedy and Eddy Feldman



The sophisticated new lobby at LA Mart



Ribbon cutting with the LA Mart team, Christopher Kennedy & Mayor Anthony Villaraigosa



Yours truly with "Hizzonner"