Inappropriate technologies' and of course too expensive. These predictable cliches have been rebutted by David Gebhard, the incisive historian from Southern California, who, pointing out its obvious functional appropriateness, and popularity, thinks it one of the most important buildings of the last 15 years:

"As a functioning object, the Getty Museum appears to work as well as—or even better than—most recently built museums ... (the designers) have evinced a far more sympathetic response to the needs of a popular audience than that expressed in any of the recently completed 'modern' image buildings which have been constructed in the US ... Raynor Banham, known for his sometimes celebratory enthusiasm for such pop re-creations, condemns the whole thing for its limitless air, the 'bureaucratic precision' in detailing: "The erudition and workmanship are as impeccable, and absolutely deadly, as this kind of pseudo-Palladian reconstruction must always be ... no blood was spilled here, nor sperm, nor wine, nor other vital joys." Basically then it isn't really Roman enough in its feeling and creation, the old charge of modernism that traditionalists tend in our century to give birth to the corpus. Charles Moore, otherwise sympathetic to this sort of thing, has also faulted it for lack of spatial invention. My own impressions of this over-praised over-condensed villa are somewhat different. It is exciting in its setting, certainly delightful to experience as a good replica (like Sir Arthur Evans' reconstructions at Knossos), very sympathetic to the antiquities displayed and even a challenge culturally, for it is saying that our time sees itself, like no other, in fairly accurate historical simulation. Through our reproduction techniques (serre, film, synthetic materials) and our specialized archaeologists (in this case archaeological and landscape specialists), with our high technologies of air-conditioning and temperature control and our structural capabilities of putting the whole thing over a parking garage, we can do what nineteenth-century revivalists couldn't do. We can reproduce fragmented experiences of different cultures and, since all the media have been doing this for 15 years, our sensibility has been modified. Thanks to colour magazines, travel and Kodak, everyone has a well-stocked museological and a potential eclectic. At least he is exposed to a plurality of other cultures and he can make choices and discriminations from this wide corpus, where previous cultures were stuck with what they'd inherited.

Thus I would argue that the Getty Museum is aensible, if unintended example of Post-Modern building, commendable for its pluralism and opening of choice but neither brilliant nor especially moribund. Perhaps the reason it has aroused a disproportionate amount of praise and blame is that it has raised, at the right time, the question of what architecture should be in the '70s, but it didn't give them (as no all stiles were agitated)."