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NEWS



Photo: Julius Shulman

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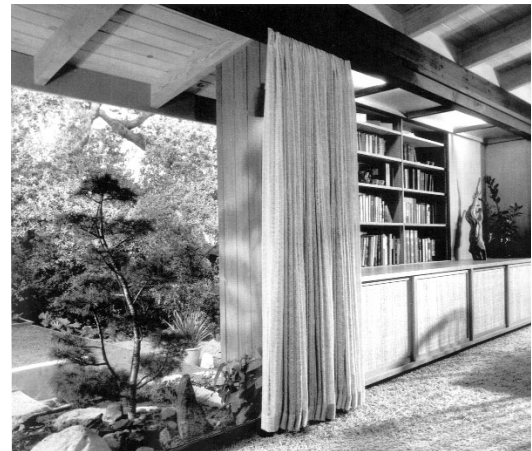
Modern Patrons: Straub in San Marino

**SAH/SCC Lecture and Tour:
Saturday, June 12th**

Saturday, June 12th, from 2PM to 4PM, the Modern Patrons Program will investigate the work of Case Study House architect Calvin Straub and the 1954 house he designed in San Marino for Mr. & Mrs. George Brandow. The event is \$10 and open to Life- and Patron-level members of SAH/SCC (the program will be available to the general membership in the event there is space available—a waiting list will be created). Reservations are needed, as space is limited. Please see order form on back page.

In the book *Modernism Rediscovered* by Pierluigi Serraino and Julius Shulman (Taschen, 2000) the house is described "as part of an old San Marino estate, the site was filled with trees and large plants that were preserved in the project. The relationship between the house and the garden is pivotal in the architecture. Following a pinwheel scheme, four wings extend out into the landscape from a central core, maximizing the exposure of each room to the surrounding garden. The kitchen is in the center of the house. Access to the 2,800-square-foot house is from the garden, without a formal entry hall. Living, dining and family rooms occupy two wings, while the remaining two accommodate the sleeping section for the owners and their children. Extensive glass walls afford garden vistas throughout. Paving around the house perimeter provides each room with an out-door extension. The living room is reminiscent of the California ranch houses designed by Cliff May, the slab floor paved with river washed pebbles and the structural skeleton of the roof."

Calvin C. Straub was born in 1920 in Macon Georgia, and studied at Texas A&M and Pasadena City College before receiving his degree in architecture at the University of Southern California in 1945. After serving in the Navy, Straub lectured at the USC from 1946 to 1961. From then until 1988 he held a professorship of Design at Arizona State University in Tempe. He worked for the firm of A.B. Gallion before entering into a partnership with Conrad Buff and Donald Hensman (1956-61), and was a member of Schoneburger, Straub, Florence & Associates (1972-75). He also ran his own office in Arizona. Together with Buff and Hensman, Straub designed Case Study House #20 (1958), and the Bass House in Altadena (1958). He also built the Lawry Foods Administrative Center in Los Angeles



Calvin Straub Brandow Residence, 1954
Photo: Julius Shulman

(1960) and the Frank Hall Student Dining Facilities at Pomona College (1982). Straub was elected Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1969. Apart from his work as an architect and lecturer he also published *Design Process and Communications* (1978) and *The Man-Made Environment: an Introduction to World Architecture and Design* (1983). He retired in 1988 and passed away in 1998.

Our afternoon at the Brandow residence will be an opportunity to experience the house, learn a great deal more about Calvin Straub firsthand, and share the perspective of the owner who commissioned the architect.

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SAH/SCC

President's Letter



Our community lost one of its giants in April when Pierre Koenig, one of the few surviving Case Study architects, died of leukemia at the age of 78.

He was an innovator, particularly in steel construction. Having trained at USC and in the office of Raphael Soriano, Koenig came to love the material steel, and he remained convinced for the rest of his life that steel was the best material for residential construction. Could anyone, in more than 50 years of practice, convince Koenig otherwise? No. It was a matter of ideology.

In 1950, when he designed and built his first exposed-steel house, the material still carried with it the wartime aesthetic of tanks and guns. But here was Koenig's aesthetic genius: he took a brutal material, saw the simple beauty in the logic of its industrial application, and rendered it with such refinement and elegance. In Koenig's hands, steel became a luxury material.

Look, for example, at Case Study House #22. Look at Julius Shulman's photos. Forget the glamorous atmosphere, the furnishings, the young models. Look at the architecture. God is in the details, Mies van der Rohe said frequently. Koenig was listening. He designed the corrugated-steel roof deck in a custom shape deep enough to send it out eight feet into space without perimeter support. The underside of the roof deck is exposed as the ceilings of the interiors. This detail, so expressive, would seem like simplicity itself, but in fact is very difficult to accomplish because the insulation and the electrical wiring is normally contained in the ceiling. Visual simplicity often requires tremendous technical dexterity to achieve.

He was an innovator, too, in environmental controls. He used passive cooling and solar heating techniques to create energy efficient buildings—in the 1950s! These are issues barely entering the collective architectural consciousness in the 21st century. He had mastered the principles two generations ago.

In fact, a typical steel-and-glass box is about as environmentally inefficient as you can imagine. In glass skyscrapers, mechanical air conditioning runs all day long, even in winter. Workers draw the blinds to reduce glare, then turn on the overhead fluorescent lights to compensate. Koenig understood that steel-and-glass construction required special attention.

His steel houses were simple, in terms of their shape, but they were not glass boxes. As in CSH #22, many included wide overhanging roofs in order to shade the interior from direct sunlight. CSH #22's sliding-glass walls can be opened to catch prevailing breezes, and those breezes move across the large swimming pool for additional cooling. Scientific studies recently conducted by Pablo La Roche at UCLA have confirmed what Buck and Carlotta Stahl—the clients—have known for more than 40 years: that the house is a remarkable work of environmental engineering. It has never had, or needed, mechanical air conditioning.

Similarly, Case Study House #21 was surrounded by reflecting pools, with "bridges" at every doorway. Again, water is at the heart of Koenig's innovative environmental control system. A circulation system pumps water up to the roof gutters, from where it falls back through the scuppers into the pools.

To look at Shulman's period photos of CSH #21 (some including Koenig and his wife Gloria) is to be reminded of the great romance of this period and its emphasis on "lifestyle" and leisure time. The way you are meant to sit at the breakfast table and admire the Chevrolet. Many of us know Koenig's work through these photos. However it is easy to be seduced by these images and to miss the larger and more significant point of Koenig's work: that he saw architecture as an instrument of social change and responsibility. Which makes him, simply, a great modernist.

(Donations may be made to the Pierre Koenig Endowment at USC School of Architecture, Watt Hall, Room 204, University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089.)

Tony Denzer



Tour and Event Information: 1.800.9SAHSCC; info@sahscc.org

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Postcard from Palm Springs



Rain or shine, Palm Springs was the place to be for the third SAH/SCC Palm Springs tour on April 3rd. As always, board member Hal Meltzer pulled out all the stops for a fantastic day of architecture, design, fantasy, and sensuality. Having attended numerous Palm Springs architecture tours, this one in particular loaded a full day of special offerings along the way. Themes included first-hand accounts by architects sharing their histories, houses once owned by celebrities, restored-to-perfection houses, and voyeuristic bathrooms.

A few of the highlights:

Special guest appearances by luminaries Don Wexler and Stewart Williams in the context of their designs, and furniture designer Charles Hollis Jones added to Hal's intimate knowledge of space, time, and architecture in Palm Springs. We were mesmerized by Williams' erudite perspective on past and present "isms" in architecture. He so simply stated, "I didn't believe in isms, what we practiced was contemporary architecture."

On the same note of language, a new architectural terminology emerged for many of us: "hush and flush" seen in the Abernathy House (1962) by architect William F. Cody. It conjures up a visual that is quite different from what these three words actual define. It is where a window frame is recessed into the ceiling, creating a disappearing act of apparatus. It's a window detail expression surprisingly not used today. It seems much of what is innovative about Palm Springs design has stayed and played in the town, or has been copied with an obnoxious rigor elsewhere.

We were the first—and only—group so far to visit the slick remodel of Wexler's Dinah Shore House. Wexler and the homeowner discussed the changes that have occurred throughout the years and showed that the house, with its modern and contemporary detailing, could meld without revealing its seams. It is a rarity to find a new owner take an already exceptional house and enhance its materiality to create an equally stunning environment. This house reaches beyond the imaginable restoration.

Charles Hollis Jones joined the entire tour and pointed out his acrylic furniture and accessories provoking a timeless clarity. We experienced a quintessential 1970 Palm Springs residence sited on the golf course in Canyon Country. This house had stood still, and has now fast forwarded to 2004 with the original mirrors and patterned wallpapers of cub scout browns and lime greens, it transcends us back to a time of dream escapades and cocktailing on the 18th hole.

For those who like to eat, the day was augmented with delectable delights at almost every stop. The day ended with a cocktail reception and a strange exhausted desire of wanting to continue gazing through the tennis court of the Kirk Douglas Estate on into the night.

—Cara Mullio

Palm Springs Moderns on the Rise



Model of 2801 South Palm Canyon designed by OJMR Architects.

Courtesy OJMR Architects

The success of SAH/SCC's Palm Springs tours speak to the desire for a piece of the Modernist desert lifestyle. In the past several years Palm Springs has grown in popularity as a destination for both weekend and primary residences. Certainly, many architecturally inclined homebuyers dream of owning an original Mid-Century Modern home (obviously there is limited stock) or building a single-family residence from the ground up. For most, those are impossible dreams.

Recently, a third alternative has arrived on the scene: Modernist-inspired town home developments, such as 2801 South Palm Canyon, which has recently broken ground. 2801 South Palm Canyon comprises 16 new homes on a 2.2-acre hillside site in South Palm Springs. It is a joint project of OJMR Architects and Symphony Development, that aims to combine classic Modern style with contemporary sensibilities. "These homes exemplify our commitment to what we're calling New-Century Modernism," explains Jay M. Reynolds, AIA, principal of LA-based OJMR Architects. "The design adapts the Southern California Modern style to fit the needs of an area that is becoming increasingly urban."

OJMR designed the distinctive homes as light-filled, open spaces in the tradition of Albert Frey, Richard Neutra, John Lautner, and the other mid-century architects who defined the Palm Springs Modern style. Orthogonal volumes, flat roofs, clean lines, deep overhangs, and open plans recall the simple forms of this California architectural tradition. OJMR's design adds a 21st-century sensibility to this tradition with luxurious light-filled bathrooms, energy-efficient elements, and a contemporary use of materials, including exposed block and concrete floors. Each unit has sliding-glass doors leading onto private pools. The two-bedroom, two-bath residences will range in size from 1,700 to 2,600 square feet and feature six different floor plans, each with an office/den, garage, and private outdoor space.

—Julie D. Taylor

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For those of you who missed out on recent SAH/SCC tours, or would like more information for your reference, here's an opportunity to get your hands on the publications printed especially for SAH/SCC events. Don't let another chance pass you by.

- Beyond the Bauhaus:** 32-page illustrated booklet with plans, photos, and essays based on Boston tour _____ at \$10 each
- Soriano: Man of Steel:** 12-page illustrated booklet with article by Neil Jackson _____ at \$10 each
- Palm Springs Postcards:** seven postcards of homes visited on "Shelter Under the Sun" Tour, photographed by John Ellis _____ at \$10

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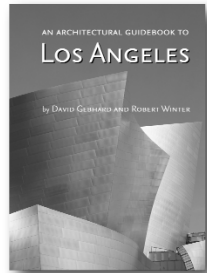
The bungalows have potential for adaptive preservation and the LAUSD hopes that an appropriate relocation site and use can be identified.

The bungalows are available at no cost. However, interested parties will be responsible for all cost and entitlement processes necessary for bungalow relocation. Hazardous material abatement will be conducted by the Los Angeles Unified School District prior to the relocation and preservation of the bungalows.

Interested entities will be required to submit information regarding the individual or organization requesting the bungalows, information on the moving company, and be prepared to relocate the bungalows according to the standards outlined in John Obed Curtis' *Moving Historic Buildings* and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standard for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

The Letters of Interest must be addressed and submitted to the Los Angeles Unified School District, Special Projects Division, 355 S. Grand Avenue, 5th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90071, attention Mr. Keith Packey, kpackey@laschool.org.

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