

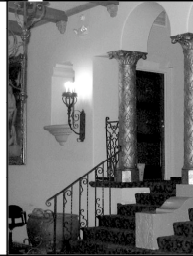


SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

2005
november december

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NEWS



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Los Altos Invitation

SAH/SCC Members' Celebration
Sunday, November 20th

Join us at the Los Altos Apartments on Sunday, November 20th, from 2PM to 5PM, for the annual SAH/SCC Members' Celebration. You'll meet old friends, greet prospective new members, see this historic gem located at 4121 Wilshire Boulevard (between Norton and Bronson), and hear about the restoration and operational challenges posed by historic structures. As always, the Members' Celebration is a benefit of your membership. We encourage you to bring non-members, who will get \$10 off a new membership (or pay \$10 for the event if they don't join). To reserve a spot, use the form on the last page, call 800.9SAHSCC, or email info@sahscc.org. Walk-ins are always welcomed.



Architect E.B. Rust built the Los Altos in 1925 for investors Luther Mayo and Preston Wright. Designed in the 1920s favorite "Spanish" style—tile roof, cast-stone and terra-cotta ornament—the five-story, steel-frame apartment house with a charming garden entry court was built at a cost of nearly \$1 million. It contained 75 spacious one- and two-story own-your-own apartments. A ballroom, dining room with restaurant service, cedar-lined closets, terrazzo or hardwood floors with mahogany woodwork, hand-stenciled beam ceilings, and steam heat, among other swank amenities of the day, made it a favorite of seasonal society folks from the east. The Los Altos was also a Hollywood hotspot for movie stars, such as Marion Davies who owned an eight-room apartment furnished with artifacts from Hearst Castle. Hearst had an adjoining apartment of his own.

The Los Altos was long a favorite site for society teas, debutante balls, and wedding receptions. Perino's restaurant opened next door. But by the 1970s many of the apartments had been converted to business offices and the rest were rental units. In the 1980s it was abandoned and faced demolition.

In 1997, non-profit housing developers Neighborhood Effort put together a team of public and private investors who purchased and restored the building. Barry Milofsky, partner in M2A, the architectural firm that handled the restoration, will give an illustrated talk on the challenges experienced in the restoration. Owner Alan Gross of Neighborhood Effort will address the issues involved in operating historic structures. The Los Altos is now a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument and on the National Register of Historic Monuments.

These speakers, food, good cheer, and a prize-drawing limited to those who bring prospective new members, will be topped off by a tour of the Hearst apartment.

We hope to see you all there!

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SAH/SCC NEWS is published bi-monthly by the Society of Architectural Historians / Southern California Chapter. Subscription is a benefit of membership and provides members with one of the most comprehensive calendars of architectural events in Southern California and advance notice of exclusive SAH/SCC architectural events and tours.

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Information and ads for the newsletter should be sent three weeks before the issue date.

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Please send all ad materials, notices of events, exhibitions and news to the attention of the editor:

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Royal Street in the French Quarter. Prytania in the Garden District. On each visit to New Orleans, I've found myself on the same streets, re-photographing the same buildings. Maybe there's a red geranium on this porch, or a shawl draped over that lacy cast-iron balcony. I feel possessive toward these familiar sites—as I do here toward the Gamble House or homes I go out of my way to pass en route to the Huntington Library. Or lesser known historical buildings, such as the Los Altos Apartments (E.B. Rust, 1925) where SAH/SCC will hold its Members' Celebration on November 20th. I care about these buildings and want to check on their well-being. In that sense, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit home in a personal way and I followed the news to see if my favorites had been lost or spared.

And then I felt guilty for focusing on my favorites, chosen on the bases of history and aesthetic appeal. In the Ninth Ward, far removed from the tourist haunts, thousands of flats and shotgun houses were destroyed or irretrievably damaged. Most were rentals and their owners will be glad to pocket insurance or eminent domain money. If the federal government gets its act together, large parcels may be put together and new housing, strip malls, schools, and gas stations with no particular regional references—just efficient and profitable developments—may replace what was lost. While we can build better, cleaner buildings for those former residents who return—and for the immigrants who move to New Orleans to replace those who never return—we tend to overlook a critical social component, the incalculable personal and social harm.

Primo Levi, writing of his experience in a Nazi concentration camp, observed that even the poorest beggar in normal society could look at the frayed cuff of his coat, the meager contents of his pocket—an old handkerchief, a photo—and know who he was and that he had a continuity from yesterday to today. But, said Levi, when the camp authorities took away everything—one's clothes, one's hair, even one's name—the senses of self-identity and continuity were shattered.

A tiny, rented shotgun house (so-called because the rooms are set enfilade so that a shot passing from front to back would go through every room), where one knew every inch of the interior, in a neighborhood of shabby but familiar landmarks peopled by familiar faces—those things gave meaning to the people who lived in them. The disruption to personal lives and patterns—even if eventually the refugees may be relocated to more spacious, healthier surroundings—represents an immeasurable loss, multiplied by the many thousands of persons displaced by these storms and levee failures.

It's nice to know that my favorite New Orleans structures will probably survive, that residents are returning to the Garden District, that Mardi Gras will be celebrated in 2006. We might even hope, as architectural historians, that an example or two of the unique regional type of working-class housing—the shotgun house—might be saved, like a museum piece. But don't we have a responsibility to plan ways to restore the meaning of place and the community and personal identity it fosters as we enter the post-Katrina reconstruction era?

Merry Ovnick

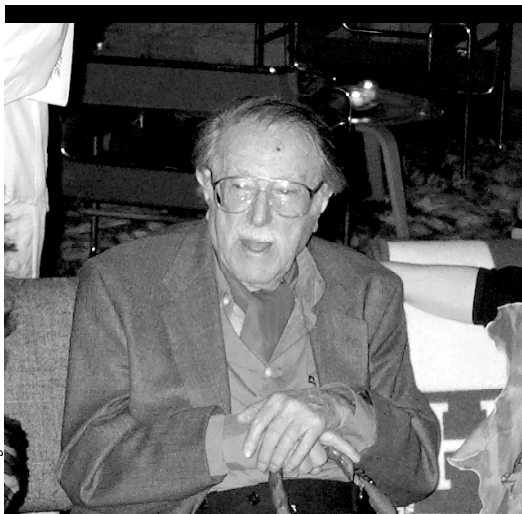


Photo: Craig Walker

A Jolly Good Fellow

SAH/SCC presented Julius Shulman with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the October 8th celebration of his 95th birthday. Toasts and tributes, an update on the Getty Museum's plans for housing Shulman's 260,000-image collection, and Julius's words of wisdom on the utility of the word "however" made for a memorable event for Julius and all present. All this was enjoyed over a delightful repast in the spectacular setting of John Lautner's Harvey House (1950) surrounded by LA's city lights. Thanks to those who attended, to SAH/SCC Board Member Hal Meltzer for organizing the event, and to our hosts Mitch Glazer and Kelly Lynch. For those who weren't able to attend, don't miss the Getty's current exhibition, "Julius Shulman: Modernity and the Metropolis," on display through January 22, 2006.

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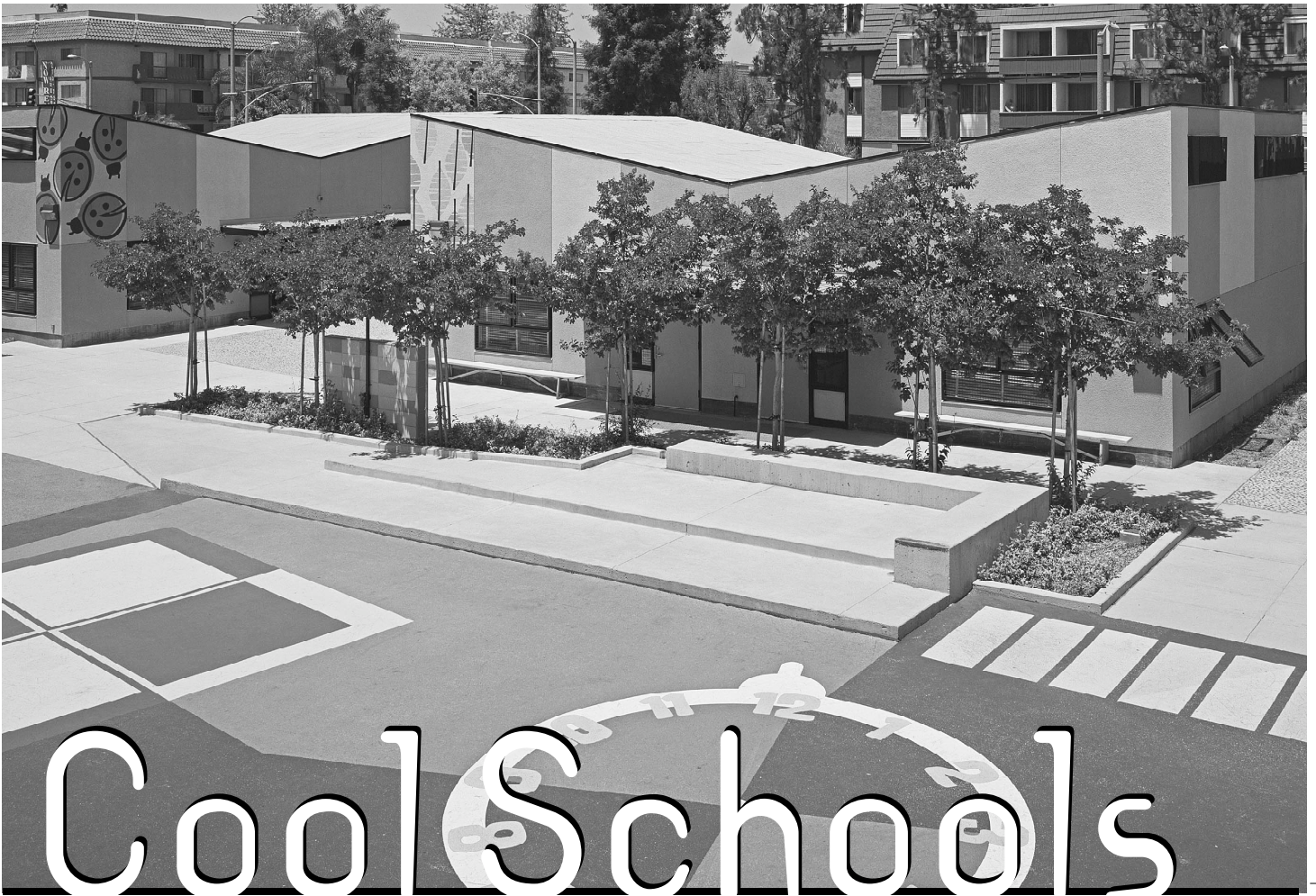
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Cool Schools

Lafayette Park Primary Center by Rios Clementi Hale Studios.

Photo: Tom Bonner

On Saturday, October 1st, dozens of veteran SAH/SCC members and many new faces took on the issues associated with modernism and early childhood education during "Space and Learning," organized by SAH/SCC Board Members Sian Winship and John Berley.

The day began with a lecture by former SAH/SCC Board Member and author Barbara Lamprecht, who set the stage by describing Richard Neutra's ideas about how modern architecture could replicate the natural environment for learning and evolution. In the setting of an experimental/laboratory school that is University Elementary School (UES), it was easy to see how Neutra's ideas and those of educator Corinne A. Seeds came together to create an appropriately scaled learning environment on a remarkable site.

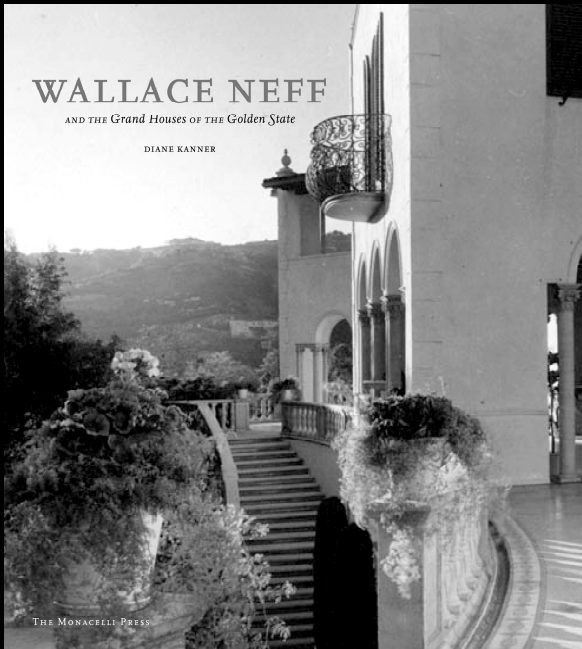
In the afternoon, the group visited five unique approaches to contemporary programmatic challenges. From the modular primary school solution, to the adaptive re-use of a mini-mall, and to dynamic new construction projects, tour-

goers experienced a series of spaces for learning that were more diverse in approach than similar.

After all of this visual stimuli, past SAH/SCC President Ted Wells led the architects of the new buildings in a panel discussion that showcased the challenges and the opportunities of building for space and learning. Ted's thoughtful question about what tour-goers missed by not seeing the spaces filled with children during a normal school day reminded us all of the real audience for elementary school architecture: the precious young minds that are the future of Los Angeles. Ultimately, the children will be the real legacy of the city's largest school building program in more than a half century.

Authors on Architecture:

WALLACE NEFF
AND THE Grand Houses of the Golden State
DIANE KANNER



THE MONACELLI PRESS

Kanner on Neff

SAH/SCC Event
Sunday, December 4th

Authors on Architecture is proud to present Diane Kanner at a book-signing Sunday, December 4th, 2-4PM. She will discuss and sign her long-awaited book on Wallace Neff and his residential work, *Wallace Neff and the Grand Houses of the Golden State* (Monacelli Press, 2005), at Hennessey & Ingalls, 214 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica; 310-458-9074. The event is free and open to the public.

The book is more than its title suggests. It's a poignant biography of the man, his relationships with his clients and colleagues, and a long view of changing tastes in architecture throughout the 86 years of his life, from 1895 to 1982. Kanner uses this context to look at Neff's distinctive work—not only the grand houses for the rich and famous in the "California style" (Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean references) for which he is largely remembered, but also his commitment to social housing in the form of the experimental Bubble House. Lavishly illustrated with some 250 period photos, Kanner's book could not be more timely, as the popularity of Neff's work has recently soared. SAH/SCC hopes to follow Kanner's book with a Wallace Neff tour in the near future.

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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.

Space and Learning: eight-page color brochure on the historic and contemporary legacy of LA school architecture, featuring projects by Richard Neutra, Thom Mayne, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, others, from Los Angeles tour
_____ at \$8 each

Rodney Walker: The Ojai Years: trifold black and white brochure featuring Walker's important residences in Ojai, with pictures and article by historian David Mason, based on Ojai tour
_____ at \$5 each

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, from Los Angeles tour
_____ at \$10 each

Palm Springs Postcards: seven postcards of homes visited on "Shelter Under the Sun" tour, photographed by John Ellis
_____ at \$10 each

Kesling Homes: two-fold, two-color brochure from "Kesling Modern Structures" Tour
_____ at \$2 each

Avenel Homes: two-fold, two-color brochure from "Ain on Avenel" Tour
_____ at \$2 each

The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 20-page guide from Ventura tour
_____ at \$10 each

Modernism for the Masses: three-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floor plans of Eichler homes visited on the tour to Orange County
_____ at \$10 each

Cool Pools: booklet from "Reflections on Water: Cool Pools Along Sunset Boulevard"
_____ at \$10 each members
_____ at \$15 each non-members

Reconsidering Lloyd Wright: 21-page, four-color booklet from tour
_____ at \$10 each

Union Station and MTA Transit Center: two-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos
_____ at \$2 each

Eagle Rock—LA's Home Town: 17-page handbook with history and self-guided tour of Eagle Rock, by Jeff Samudio
_____ at \$4 each

David Gebhard Review: essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr., and Mitzi March Mogul
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at \$10 each = \$ _____

(If you become a member, your ticket price will go toward the special \$25 member rate for that day)

SAH/SCC Membership Benefits:

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Member prices for SAH/SCC events
Free Members' Celebration

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- \$100** Patron (up to 2 names at same address)
- \$500** Life Member (one time contribution)
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