



SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

2008
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NEWS



P.O. Box 56478, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413, 800.972.4722, www.sahscc.org

HAUS and HOME

SAH/SCC Tour: Saturday, June 7th

Join SAH/SCC at Richard Neutra's Van der Leeuw (VDL) Research House in Silver Lake for an afternoon of engaging conversation and exploration. The place Richard Neutra called home will be open to all SAH/SCC members and friends on Saturday, June 7th, 1-4PM, for a special day that will inform and enliven your experience of the landmark house and garden.



Photo: Douglas Hill

Originally built in 1932 on Silver Lake Boulevard and reconstituted after a tragic fire in 1966, the house is named in honor of Cornelius H. Van der Leeuw, a Dutch industrialist who provided the capital so that young Neutra could build an experimental house for himself and his family. The house is all about living and working close to nature in an urban residential setting.

Tickets are \$25 for regular SAH/SCC members, \$20 to our Patron and Life members, and \$35 for non-members. All proceeds will go directly to support the restoration campaign established by Richard Neutra's youngest son Dr. Raymond Neutra, The VDL Advisory Board, and Cal Poly Pomona College of Environmental Design.

In her book *Neutra*, esteemed Neutra scholar, historian, and former SAH/SCC Board Member Barbara Lamprecht writes: "While the Neutra homes VDL Research Houses I and II succeed in their self-appointed task of solving generic problems, they are also intimate family portraits. The houses explore a range of issues. How does an architect communicate his ethics aesthetically? Neutra's response shows how to increase urban density in a city; how to accommodate and layer potentially conflicting uses in a house/office; and how to enhance human vitality through an intimate bond with nature."

The three-story main house faces Silver Lake with work spaces on the ground floor, the main living spaces above on the principal floor, and at the top, a small glass penthouse and roof deck. Together, the main house and a one-story apartment to the rear form a central courtyard creating an outdoor "room" at the center of the property. Spectacular views are

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SAH/SCC

President's Letter



Tour and Event Information: 1.800.972.4722; sahscc-info@sahscc.org

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

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Registration for our "Architecture Inside and Outside" event, featuring three ultra examples of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in Santa Barbara, filled up immediately—not surprising, as these are celebrated gems. We all enjoy touring mansions, iconic structures, and innovatively designed masterpieces. While these may be landmarks in the history of architecture, they shed only limited light on the history of their times. Great works of architecture may tell us about the architect and a few individual clients or their circles, but it is the vernacular houses, stores, office buildings, and schools that can inform us about the visions, limits, and possibilities available to most people of the times. Yet it is the palatial and the distinctive structures that tend to be preserved, not the tract houses and shopping rows. Selective survival and the attention we give to elite and exemplary structures tend to skew our concept of the past.

Rows and rows of 1940s stucco boxes that constituted war-worker and immediate post-war housing tracts of several hundred houses each, with very little variation in plan or trim, tell us about wartime material shortages and restrictions for a generation whose imagination had been stunted by the depression and molded to conformity by wartime indoctrination. But no one wants to preserve these rows of look-alike houses as historical monuments. Nor should they. I grew up in such a tract and recently returned to the block where I lived to find that all but two of the 20 houses had been converted into two-story behemoths with varying whiffs of aesthetic sensitivity. It is right that later owners should adapt these houses to meet their needs and fill their visions. But the physical record of the 1940s past has disappeared.

Happily, the record of the historical built environment has been preserved in scattered photo collections. Take a look at the Los Angeles Public Library's online selection from its 2.5 million historic photos (www.lapl.org), or at USC's newly accessible collection (<http://digarc.usc.edu>). Regional libraries, such as Long Beach and Santa Monica, have their own collections. Everyone's past is there, safe and sound, for virtual touring.

Merry Ovnick

Exhibition Preview

Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner

The Hammer Museum highlights John Lautner's legacy and creative process by presenting the first major exhibition survey of his work: "Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner," on view from July 13 through October 12, 2008. One of the most important and influential architects of the 20th century, Lautner had a remarkable career spanning nearly six decades. Residing and working in Los Angeles during much of that time, he infused his designs with radical innovation and specific attention to materiality, space, and a consciousness of the natural environment.

An aesthetic, philosophical, and social visionary, Lautner made buildings that continue to amaze architects and patrons alike with their formal variety and freedom, their structural originality, and their sculptural force. Lautner's work has come to represent some of the most important examples of architecture in Southern California, including private residences such as Eloid House (1968) in Palm Springs and Malin House (1960) in Los Angeles—also known as the "Chemosphere," which hovers high above a canyon, and balances on a single support..

Curated by historian Nicholas Olsberg and architect Frank Escher, the exhibition features a design as visceral an experience as Lautner's buildings themselves. Newly crafted large-scale models give a sense of the internal spaces and scale of key projects, and digital animations reveal Lautner's construction processes. Short color films by prize-winning documentarian Murray Grigor convey the sensation of movement through these buildings and their sites, helping the visitor to feel the "vitality within repose" that Lautner sought to create. Surrounding this dramatic core are a wealth of archival materials, including never-before-seen drawings, architectural renderings, study models, and construction photographs that will offer insight into how the structures and spaces unfolded in Lautner's mind and emerged physically in their settings.

Accompanying the exhibition at the Hammer Museum will be a catalog published by Rizzoli International and a full range of public programs, including lectures, screenings, a symposium on modern and contemporary architecture, and walking tours of notable modernist homes in Los Angeles.

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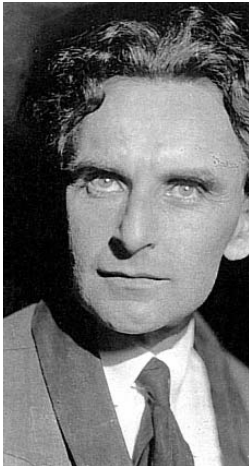
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designed to continue throughout the house, across the courtyard, decks, and balconies, extending space beyond typical boundaries. The house represents the complete integration of so many vital ideas about life and human habitat that Neutra brought to all of his projects.

Of the VDL House, Thomas S. Hines, UCLA professor of history and architecture and author of *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture*, writes: "In addition to its beautifully proportioned and elegantly minimalist geometry, Neutra's VDL Research House epitomized his penchant [1] for the use of new, experimental materials, [2] his delight in 'naming' buildings to connote larger issues—e.g. 'research house'—and [3] for multivalent 'after-the-revolution' planning in which particular spaces and elements could be later re-cycled and re-utilized for different uses as circumstances changed and different needs arose."

Neutra was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1892 and died in Wuppertal, Germany, in 1970. He studied under Adolf Loos, was influenced by Otto Wagner, and worked for a time in Germany in the studio of Erich Mendelsohn. He moved to the United States by 1923 and became a naturalized citizen in 1929. Neutra worked briefly for Frank Lloyd Wright before accepting an invitation from his close friend and university companion Rudolf Schindler to work and live communally in Schindler's Kings Road House in California. Neutra subsequently opened his own practice in Los Angeles a few years later. He was famous for the great attention he gave to defining the real needs of his clients, whether he was commissioned to build a simple house or a mansion. To determine his clients' needs exactly, he would use detailed questionnaires. Neutra's domestic architecture blends art, landscape, and practical comfort.

Included in the day's events will be a panel discussion with author Barbara Lamprecht, Cal Poly Pomona associate professor of architecture Dr. Lauren Bricker, and additional special guests.

This important combination of house and architect is the inaugural program in a series the SAH/SCC is initiating to explore the ideas architects bring to the making of a house that is their own home. Please join us for a stimulating afternoon at the family home of Richard J. Neutra.



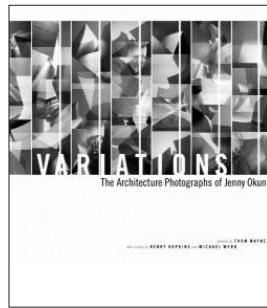
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Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House

by Daniel P. Gregory
photos by Joe Fletcher
book design by Volume, Inc.

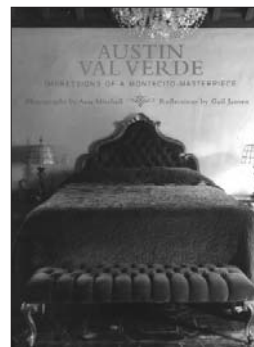
When it comes to the propagation (or propagandization) of the California Lifestyle, perhaps there is no better team than Cliff May and *Sunset Magazine*. Those two Golden State entities come together in this terrific new volume by *Sunset's* long-time architecture editor Dan Gregory. It is extremely rare to credit a book's designer (Volume, Inc.) along with the author and principal photographer, but the graphic quality of this book is dynamic in its fresh approach to the combination of new and vintage visual information. Several spreads establish a cinematic quality to the volume prior to reaching the title page and foreword by famed movie producer and architectural home collector Joel Silver. A sprightly biography gives the reader a real sense of the man, who "still had a sparkle in his eye" well into his later years. The projects begin with May's 1939 Riviera Ranch House—the third he built for his family—and spans to the 1980 Robert Mondavi Residence, showing a mix of vintage and new photography. Interspersed are essays on May's relationship with *Sunset* (not only a huge supporter, but a client, as May created its beautiful Menlo Park headquarters), along with discussions of the Western lifestyle, illustrated with plans, sketches, promotional materials, and insightful quotations. This book is the definitive work on a defining lifestyle.
Rizzoli International Publications; hardcover; 256 pages; \$60.



Variations: The Architecture Photographs of Jenny Okun

by Jenny Okun
preface by Thom Mayne
essays by Henry T. Hopkins and Michael Webb

Los Angeles- and London-based photographer Jenny Okun creates images of shape, shadow, color, form, and feeling. Spanning 25 years of the artist's explorations of architecture, *Variations* includes 93 image groups of structures from around the world—most famous, some not. Several structures that would be easily recognizable to most Angelenos—MOCA, Case Study House #21, LACMA, Disney Hall, Getty Center—are given an unfamiliar and almost otherworldly treatment in Okun's constructions. She manages to create abstraction and air from the most solid and permanent of art forms. Her background in painting and filmmaking feed effortlessly and obviously into her photography, as she deftly displays mastery of both color and movement. Okun's fascination with architecture began as a teenager while seeing the construction of a Charles Gwathmey house. Indeed, any architect would be honored to see her interpretation of a building, for, as Thom Mayne states in his preface, Okun's images "retain the fundamental DNA of the architect's project, brilliantly elucidating the character and essence of the three-dimensional work."
Five Ties Publishing; hardcover; 164 pages; \$65.



Austin Val Verde: Impressions of a Montecito Masterpiece

by Gail Jansen
photos by Ann Mitchell

To remember your Montecito tour with SAH/SCC early this May—or even if you weren't able to join us—you'll want to delve into this dreamy volume documenting every detail of the Val Verde Estate. Commissioned by Austin Val Verde Foundation, the book intends to bridge the historic site's past with its present. Mitchell's sumptuous photographs are shot, printed, and toned in the pictorialist style of early photographers, yet with a thoroughly modern compositional view. They recall the lovingly tender photographs that Eugène Atget did of Paris in the late 1800s, with their quiet mystery and subtle sensuality. On pages opposite images, a running dialogue between Foundation director Jansen and photographer Mitchell emerges as almost whispered thoughts through the oversized fonts and spacing.
Balcony Press; hardcover; 176 pages; \$50.

SAH
scc publications order form

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.

Out of the Shadow: 24-page, two-color brochure from Phoenix travel tour featuring the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Al Beadle, Blaine Drake, Paolo Soleri, Edward B. Sawyer, Bennie Gonzales, and Will Bruder
 _____ at **\$12 each**

A Block in Glendale: pocket-size fandeck of cards featuring five diverse properties—including a Paul Williams residence—plus historical background information on the Brockmont Heights subdivision
 _____ at **\$3 each**

Rodney Walker 3 30 90: 12-page brochure exploring the architect's usage of the three-foot module and features nine homes on five sites
 _____ at **\$8 each**

Edward Killingsworth: Setting a Modern Standard: 20-page, black-and-white brochure featuring seven Long Beach houses and an article by the architect
 _____ at **\$8 each**

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

Rodney Walker: The Ojai Years: tri-fold, black-and-white brochure featuring Walker's important residences in Ojai, with pictures and article by historian David Mason
 _____ at **\$5 each**

Kesling Homes: bi-fold, two-color brochure from the "Kesling Modern Structures" tour
 _____ at **\$2 each**

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

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

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New Case Study House #16 by Rodney Walker
BEST Modern Architecture Value In Ojai Vicinity

Re-created by Craig Walker, 2006. The spirit of celebrated Case Study House #16 lives again on an oaken ridge just outside Ojai. This is not a slavish copy, but rather a sensitive reinterpretation incorporating today's technological and green resources. The timeless aspect of the early modernist vision pervades: one lives within nature, not sheltered away from nature. Inside dissolves to outside, and the peace of the mountains is with you. The property is over 2 acres and affords dramatic mountain and valley views. Includes: three bedrooms, 2.5 baths, den, office, sitting room/atrium, live on roof terrace with fireplace, laundry, and four car covered parking.
\$1,495,000
Crosby Doe
 Photograph by Stephen Schaffer



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VDL House Tour—June 7th

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