

Fall River (WA) Public Library (Cram, Wentworth and Goodhue, 1896-1899). Image: Library of Congress

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# Authors on Architecture: Breisch on America's Libraries

SAH/SCC Talk & Book Signing, Glendale

Sunday, November 5, 2017, 2-5PM



Please join former SAH National President and noted author Kenneth A. Breisch, Ph.D., as he takes us on a tour of America's most significant libraries. His new book, *American Libraries 1730-1950* (W.W. Norton, 2017), is an expansive overview of our storehouses of knowledge, from the earliest library building (Philadelphia, 1745) to mid-century modern and beyond. Although new technologies appear poised to alter it, the library remains a powerful site for discovery, and its form is still determined by the geometry of the book and the architectural spaces devised to store and display it. *American Libraries* provides a history and panorama of these much-loved structures, inside and out, encompassing the small personal collection, the vast university library, and everything in between.

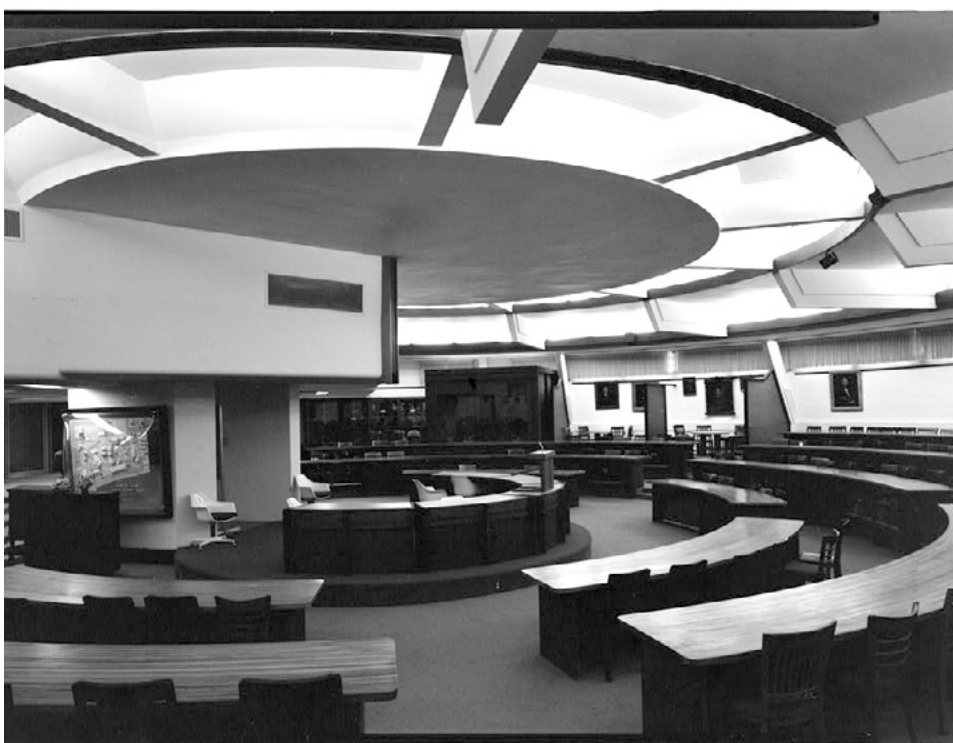
And what better setting than the Glendale Central Library (Welton Becket & Associates, 1973), recently restored by Gruen Associates?

*American Libraries* traces the development of libraries in the United States, from roots in such iconic examples as the British Library and Paris' Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, to institutions imbued with their own American mythology. Starting with the private collections of wealthy merchants and landowners during the 18th century, Breisch looks at the Library of Congress, large and small public libraries, and the Carnegie libraries, ending with a glimpse of modern masterworks.

Breisch, a former member of the Santa Monica Public Library Board, teaches architectural history at USC and has been studying the architecture of libraries for decades. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of SAH/SCC.

This lavish book features more than 500 photographs. Books will be available for sale and signing—just in time for your holiday book buying.

*Authors on Architecture: Breisch—Sunday, November 5, 2017; 2-5PM; Glendale Central Library, 222 E. Harvard Street; free; seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis; 818.548.2021.*



E.T. Roux Library, Florida Southern College (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1941-1942). Photo: Walter Smalling Jr., *Historic American Building Survey*



Detroit Public Library competition (Cass Gilbert, 1913). Image: Library of Congress

# SAH/SCC President's Letter

There has been a longstanding debate about the role preservation plays in gentrification—the social and economic disenfranchisement and displacement of residents of underserved neighborhoods when they are discovered by young, educated, predominantly white, upwardly mobile populations. Do preservation efforts cause gentrification? Do they accelerate it? Could preservation be used to mitigate the effects of gentrification?

On Saturday, October 21st, the USC School of Architecture's Heritage Conservation Anniversary Symposium took on the topic "Exploring the Nexus—Heritage Conservation and Social Justice."



Leimert Park Theater—now, Vision Theatre (Morgan, Walls, and Clements, 1931-32).  
Photo: LA Public Library

It was, in fact, SAH/SCC Vice President Jay Platt who introduced me to the idea of preservation as "managed change of the built environment," in his class at USC. This is a radical idea for many who think of preservation as maintaining the status quo or simply re-establishing the past. Managing change acknowledges that change is inevitable; it is happening all around us. Populations' needs and usages are going to change, and preservation can be a strategy for managing that change.

In recent years, the practice of preservation has adopted the moniker "heritage conservation." This signifies the recognition that resources can be significant for a wide variety of reasons other than architectural, and should be considered expansively to include cultural landscapes and other meaningful places.

Reframing the discussion about heritage conservation and gentrification opens doors for thinking about what role they can play in creating more social sustainability in communities. Neighborhoods in Highland Park, Chinatown, and Leimert Park are all facing gentrification challenges now. Gentrification pressures in these Latino, Chinese, and historically

African-American communities are driven by several factors: skyrocketing housing costs throughout Los Angeles, the path of the light rail system, and the attractiveness of their architectural and cultural heritage. Some of these communities already have preservation districts. Gentrification's harshest critics suggest that the role of preservation is causal. Yet, as preservation economist Donovan Rypkema notes, "it is not the historic designation that makes these neighborhoods great...they were already great."

Heritage conservation actually offers many tools that can help manage change while conserving the historic and cultural fabric of communities. Districts and individual designation of resources can force developers to reconsider demolition. Individual or district designation can stabilize housing values. Residential turnover is lower in historic districts because people have a connection to a sense of place. The targeted rehabilitation of buildings with cultural significance can help the community connect its present to its past. Combining federal rehabilitation and low-income tax credits can help support a stock of low-income housing options.

The time of the Mount Vernon Ladies Society (the first preservation organization, created to save the home of George Washington) is over. And if preservationists are focused on lying down in front of a bulldozer, that battle, frankly, is probably already lost. However, using heritage conservation to bring the community into the discussion early and in a meaningful way will lead to today's heritage conservationists being citizen activists for social, environmental, and economic justice. And Los Angeles needs it now more than ever.

—Sian Winship



Chinatown Dragon Gate and Central Plaza.  
Photo: LA Public Library

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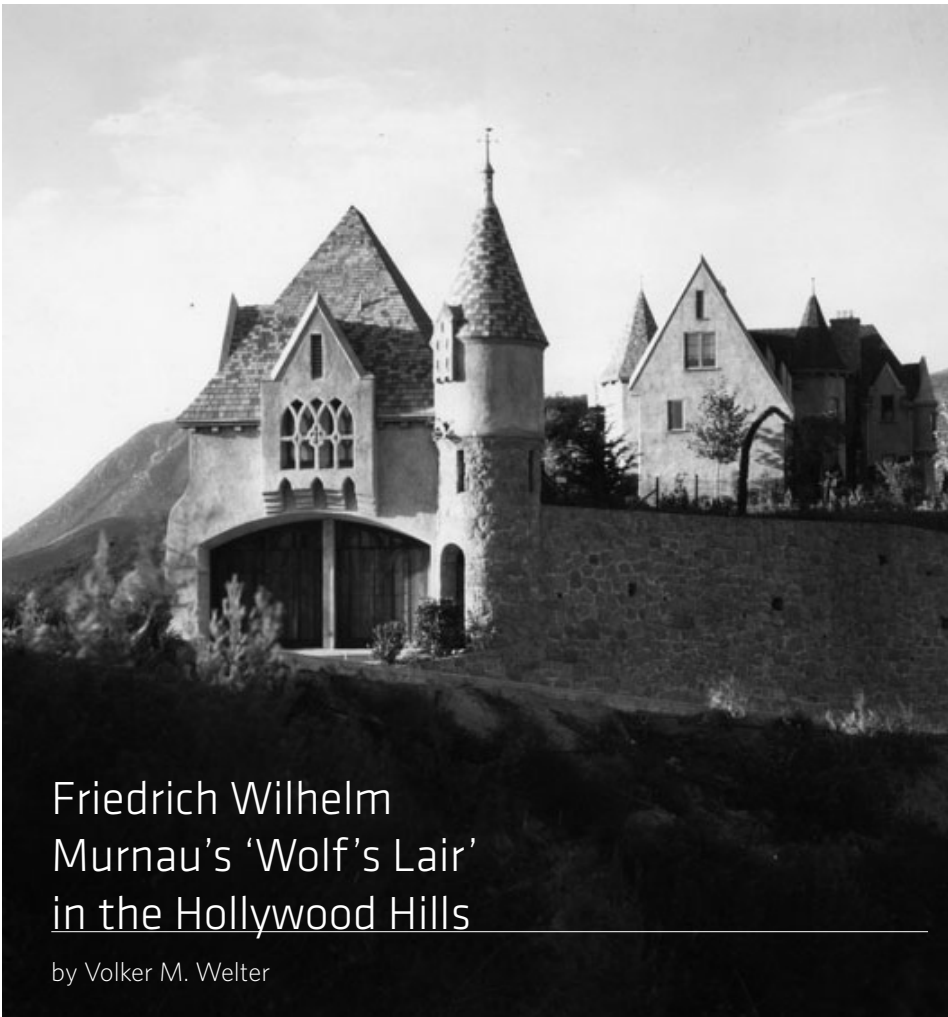
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## Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 'Wolf's Lair' in the Hollywood Hills

by Volker M. Welter

Wolf's Lair.

Photo: LA Public Library

Regular readers of *SAH/SCC News* may recall that in the May/June 2016 issue, an historic black-and-white photograph was published of a house somewhere in the hills around Los Angeles. Together with the image, which showed only edges and corners of the private home, came my call for help in identifying the whereabouts of the building. All I knew then was that the photograph had been taken by the German silent moviemaker Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888-1931), who had come to Hollywood in summer 1926. Best known then, and certainly today, for *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), Murnau used the architecture of his temporary Los Angeles home and the distant mountains to frame photographs of a young actor who he considered, but ultimately did not pick, for a role in the movie *Four Devils*, which he shot in 1928.

In the end, the solution to the puzzle came from an anonymous supplier of photographs to the World Wide Web

in combination with a remark of a guest Murnau had over for dinner in late February or March 1929. Retrospectively recalling the dinner in the 1960s, this guest described the house as a "castle" located on the highest hill above Hollywood and Los Angeles. Comparing details of the house shown in Murnau's photographs with images of castle-like buildings in the Hollywood Hills, I eventually stared at a cylindrical oriel window mounted on the corner of a home high up in the hills. A stepped string course underneath the window was the giveaway; not only had I found the house, but it still existed.

During his time in Hollywood, Murnau lived for some time at the corner of Durand Drive and Wetona Drive, in a building Los Angelenos know as "Wolf's Lair"—a perhaps fitting name for a home occupied by a German movie maker. More recently, the home made headlines when in the early 2010s its then owner, the musician Moby, sold the property after he had restored it.

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F.W. Murnau

The house dates back to approximately 1923-24, when the developer Leslie Milton Wolf (1894-1972) erected the two-story main building in a French Normandy style with a round tower marking the entrance to the lot. By March 1927, Wolf had expanded the entrance tower into a gatehouse accommodating—behind mock medieval tracery—servants and automobiles. Sometime afterward, Murnau's temporary occupancy of the home began. For more about the fascinating history of Murnau's occupancy of this castle-like building, and the importance castles had for Murnau even well before he became a movie director, readers are respectfully referred to my essay in the Spring 2017 issue (#63) of *Cabinet: A Quarterly of Art and Culture*.

Wolf's Lair, moreover, also made modern Southern Californian architectural history. In the early 1950s, John Lautner, FAIA, extended the gate house by adding a guesthouse on top of a tall retaining wall



Nosferatu.

along Durand Drive. Among Lautner's papers at the Getty Research Institute are some drawings for that late addition, but also an anonymous plat plan showing the garden design from approximately the time of Murnau's occupancy. This plan allows one to plot exactly where Murnau photographed his young actor friend back in circa 1928.

In late spring 1929, Murnau sailed for Tahiti to shoot his last movie, *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* (1931). Returning to California by October 1930, Murnau died on March 11, 1931, from injuries he had suffered in a car accident just north of Santa Barbara the previous day. The spot where Murnau was critically injured on the side of today's 101 freeway remains unmarked, yet the rich archival holdings of CalTrans Regional Office #5 in San Luis Obispo allowed me to narrow down, if not to identify, the site of the accident to a location a short distance out from El Capitan Canyon when travelling northbound.



The marble hall in the Berlin Zoological Garden, where *Nosferatu* premiered in 1922.

Murnau found his final resting place outside of Berlin on the Waldfriedhof Stahnsdorf. A monumental, tri-partite travertine wall marks the burial vault where Murnau's embalmed body rests in a metal sarcophagus placed underneath a blue glass mosaic ceiling decorated with golden stars. The coffin is of American origin, for a name plaque spells out Murnau's first name as "Frederick" rather than Friedrich. The sculptor Karl Ludwig Manzel (1858-1936) designed the tomb including a bronze portrait bust of Murnau placed in the center of wall. From there the moviemaker's last gaze goes into the distance where California lies.

*SAH/SCC Life Member Volker M. Welter is an Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara.*

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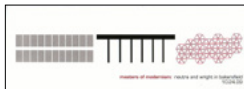
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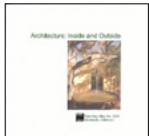
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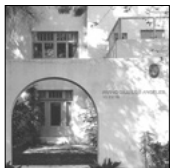
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**Masters of Modernism:** eight-page, two-color brochure featuring works of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright in Bakersfield.



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**Architecture: Inside and Outside:** 5"x5" folded color brochure featuring Santa Barbara's Lotusland, Casa del Herrero, and Val Verde.



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**Irving Gill: Los Angeles:** 10-page booklet featuring photos and articles on Gill and three residential projects in LA.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$8 each

**Rodney Walker 3 30 90:** 12-page brochure featuring nine homes on five sites, as well as the architect's use of the three-foot module.



\_\_\_\_\_ \$4 each

**Greta Magnusson Grossman:** 3.5" x 8" 2-page color brochure featuring two residences by Greta Grossman.



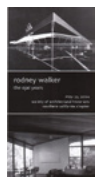
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**Space and Learning:** eight-page, four-color brochure on the historical and contemporary legacy of LA school architecture, featuring projects by Richard Neutra, Thom Mayne, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, and others.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$5 each

**John Parkinson, Downtown:** 11"x17", four-color brochure featuring a self-guided walking tour of Parkinson buildings in Downtown LA's historic core and beyond.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$5 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 \$2 each

**Kesling Homes:** bi-fold, two-color brochure from the "Kesling Modern Structures" tour.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$2 each

**Union Station and MTA Transit Center:** bi-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos.



\_\_\_\_\_ 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 \$5 each

**David Gebhard Review:** essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr., and Mitzi March Mogul.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each

**The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura:** 20-page guide from Ventura tour.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$4 each

**Killingsworth: A Master Plan for Learning:** 11"x17", four-color walking tour brochure of the Cal State Long Beach campus features history of master plan development by architect Edward A. Killingsworth, FAIA.



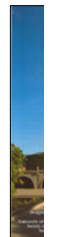
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**Ray Kappe-Apotheosis:** eight-page brochure features five Kappe Houses from 1959 to 1966 in the Royal Woods development of the San Fernando Valley.



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$8 each

**Conjunctive Points:** four-color, 11"x17" brochure featuring a 20-building walking tour of the Hayden Tract, designed by architect Eric Owen Moss and developed by Scur Construct.



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**NEWS**

November/December 2017

5

# SAH/SCC MEMBERSHIP FORM

SAH/SCC is a 501c 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to providing its members with opportunities to learn about and experience the rich architectural heritage of Southern California and beyond. Our volunteer board members create tours, lectures, travel tours, and other events that explore the ideas behind the architecture as well as the buildings that result from them. From modern to craftsman, from Spanish Colonial to contemporary, our programs are the best-kept secrets in Southern California!

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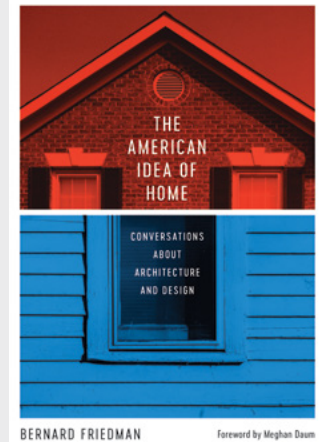
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## Bookmarks

### The American Idea of Home: Conversations About Architecture and Design

by Bernard Friedman; foreword by Meghan Daum



"Home is an idea, a social construct, a story we tell ourselves about who we are and who we want closest in our midst," writes *LA Times* columnist Meghan Daum in her foreword to Bernard Friedman's *The American Idea of Home: Conversations About Architecture and Design*. The book gives readers a peek inside the design process of many of America's well-known and up-and-coming architects, as well as the field's frequent commentators. Interviews expound upon meanings of home, importance of site, and necessity of sustainability, among many other wide-ranging topics.

Los Angeles is well represented in the interviews—AIA Gold Medalist and Pritzker Prize winner Thom Mayne, FAIA, Eames house restorers Frank Escher and Ravi GuneWardena, AIA, theoretical practitioner Gregg Lynn, Arid Lands founder and Woodbury instructor Hadley Arnold, former SCI-Arc director Eric Owen Moss, FAIA, and *Houses of Los Angeles* author Sam Watters.

The book of compiled interviews stems from conversations the author and documentary producer conducted for voiceover commentary for his short film "American Homes," an 11-minute animated film that displays 1,800 years of American culture through the lens of residential architecture.

In the book, 30 conversations are organized into five themes: The Functions and Meanings of Home; History, Tradition, Change; Activism, Sustainability, Environment; Cities, Suburbs, Regions; and Technology, Innovation, Materials (four of the five interviewees in this chapter are LA based). In addition to designers and architects, Friedman sought commentary from thought leaders, such as Sarah Susanka of the small-homes movement, Cameron Sinclair of Architecture for Humanity, and Robert Ivy, FAIA, executive director of the American Institute of Architects.

Opinions range from what the home represents ("a breeding ground for culture," Tom Kundig, FAIA), how it's used ("The living room was a shrine to furniture," Lester Walker), and the power we give it ("Building a house is not a really good way to save a failing marriage," Tracy Kidder), to current topics of sustainability ("The most sustainable building is one that people love, maintain, and cherish," Marianne Cusato), size ("Bigness is not a virtue," Robert Ivy, FAIA), and the challenges of urbanism ("Sprawl emerged from the American dream as a single-family house on a lot," Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, FAIA).

"If all architecture, no matter its purpose, is shelter, then architecture intended as shelter must be the ultimate haven," writes Friedman. These conversations appeal to all fans of architecture and design—indeed, to anyone interested in design decisions that fundamentally shape our ideas of home.

University of Texas Press; 246 pages; hardcover; \$27.95