AL MARTIN TO BE HONORED NOVEMBER 27

On November 27, the Third Annual SCC/AIA lecture series will feature a presentation by Albert C. Martin, FAIA, for his outstanding contributions to the architectural profession. The evening's festivities will be held in the Gold Room of the Bitner Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, beginning with a no-host reception at 7 p.m., at which time an exhibit featuring the work of Albert C. Martin & Associates will be on display. The lecture will begin at 8 p.m., after which Martin will address the gathering. During the course of the evening program, the results of the 1980 Chapter elections will be announced.

The cost of the ticket is $12 per person. Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP to the Chapter office by Friday, November 23, using the envelope enclosed with this L.A. C.A.R. newsletter.

Since 1955, Albert C. Martin has been a partner of Albert C. Martin & Associates, and for five decades, his passion for beautiful architecture, engineering and planning firms in the western U.S. has been an inspiration to other professionals.袁

GIO PONTI: 1891 - 1979

Gio Ponti, who died in September at age 88 in Milan, was a jack of all crafts - a hand for machine - and a maven of all their trades. He designed one of the great buildings of post World War II Europe. His late 1950s designs could be classified as a costume of a collection of works of La Scala in Milan, along with plans for the fine monascriti of the 1960s. He wrote a volume of one line of poetry of his house and the virtues of his clients (one, a duchess seated on his long wonderful versions of a chair) didn't die when he succeeded in designing the house of Italy's emblem of postwar life, the Palace of Exposition, and his great project for the House of the Sun in the United States. The boat-shaped building rose out of the heavy-bombed area near the railway station, far enough away from the base of the mountain that it was not an unwritten law of the building rising to the height of the Duomo. The Pirelli Tower, well, when you saw it, the first thing you see when queuing up for a tax at the Milan station.

He was an anomaly. His respect for the 18th century didn't keep him from using all available technology and modern floor planning in his buildings from 1922 on. He was a designer of the 20th century. He was the first to see new and exciting possibilities in the city, designing buildings that could not have been made forty years ago. He designed his house in Milan in 1928. He invited the rationalists to publish in his pages, and he exhibited in 1933 at the Triennale he organized. The building was an introduction into the modern world, where he designed a factory, a hospital and a planetarium. He had the most winsome designs of his time, and he had no thought to user needs. On the contrary, in the 1950s, the colors were extraordinary, there was an uncommon sensitivity to historic features and regionalism, and the active role of local citizens was something of a landmark.

Several projects featured an odd-shaped structure with cascading elevations, while the Katlov museum addition and the Hyatt on Bunker Hill. The old library, under the active role of local citizens was something of a landmark. Halprin's project for the Los Angeles Central Library (Ponti, 1936) rose up out of the heavily-bombed area near the railway station, far away from the base of the mountain that it was not an unwritten law of the building rising to the height of the Duomo. The Pirelli Tower, well, when you saw it, the first thing you see when queuing up for a tax at the Milan station.

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"THE DESIGN IS THE HORSE"

(QUOTE FROM MIDDLE EAST CLIENT)
A reception in honor of new Chapter officers will be held on December 4 at the Chapter offices, following the Board meeting. To defray costs, $3/person will be charged. The general SCC/AIA membership is cordially invited to attend.

A lecture series entitled "Current L.A.; 10 Points of View" continues at SCI-AIA, 8738 West Third, Los Angeles, with Frank Gehry, November 7; Peter del Tredici, November 14; and Morphosis/ Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondaro, December 5. The two remaining lectures will be announced.

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Yahei Komatsu

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The 1979 Member's Exhibition of the L'Unione Internationale des Femmes Architectes (UIIFA) has been brought to Los Angeles by the Association of Women in Architecture, and will feature the works of women architects, landscape designers and planners from Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Guatemala, Iceland, Israel, India, Sweden, the United States, and West Germany. The exhibition will open on November 10, at 8 p.m., at the Pacific Design Center. All are cordially invited to the gala opening party. The exhibit will continue through the month.

The Southern California Chapter/ Architectural Secretaries Association will be meeting Tuesday, November 20, 6:30 p.m., at the Beverly Hills offices of Maxwell Starkman & Associates. Slim Hafay, of Century City Blueprint, will be the guest speaker.

Reservations are being taken for members and guests by Marilyn Spielman, 278-9400.

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Architectural and Aerial Photography
Yahie Komatsu

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JOHN LAUTNER: ARCHITECT AND ICONOCLAST

John Lautner, F.A.I. A., is an iconoclast, an artist who breaks with tradition to pursue his very personal, unconventional architecture. He is not interested in winning a popularity contest. Whether you like his work or not is a personal judgment, but when you encounter a Lautner building you know you are in the presence of something unique. He tends to make us look at spaces and forms differently and reassess our concepts of architecture.

John Lautner was born July 16, 1911, in Marquette, Michigan. He went to high school in Marquette and New York City and was graduated from Northern Michigan University in 1933 with an A.B. in English. That same year Lautner, at the age of 22, went to work for Frank Lloyd Wright. He worked with Wright from '33 to '39, commuting from Toluca Lake to Toluca Lake in Arizona. Lautner arrived in Los Angeles in 1939 to supervise the construction of two Wright houses, Sturges and Otter. He designed his own house that same year, later sold as an associate with Douglas Honnold, and has maintained an active architectural practice in Los Angeles over the last forty years. In 1946, Lautner officially opened his own office in Hollywood where he has remained, outlining several architectural styles and focal notes through the pursuit of his individualistic art. John Lautner is an architect's architect. He pursues architecture for architecture's sake, always trying to make a statement about space, form and technology. When asked how he stays in business, Lautner exclaimed with candor, "People come to me because they want architecture," and architecture of a very personal nature is what they get. By maintaining a staff of five to six people on the top floor of his Hollywood Boulevard office, Lautner gives his clients the personal attention they demand. Currently he has a staff of five, including two key architects, Helena Aratake, Project Architect for the Crippled Children's Hospital, an important non-residential project, and Warren Lawson, Project Architect on the Segal House in Malibu. Certain Lautner buildings pay homage to Wright in their use of stone and wood and angular forms. The Wolff House of 1963 is a prime example. Wood moldings wrapping around the angled ceiling are reminiscent of Wright's Cooley House. The spatial sequence and interlocking forms seem to grow out of Wright's Toluca Lake and adapt that architectural concept to the steeply sloping Hollywood Hills.

In the last two decades, Lautner has been exploring free, more daring forms with favor and creative energy, uninhibited by the current architectural vogue. This can be seen in the body of work beginning with Silver Star, 1967-1968, and including the Stevens Residence, 1966, and the Elrod Residence, 1966, the Elrod Residence, 1967, and, more recently, residences for Bob Hope and Gilbert and Joanne Segel, both to be completed this year. The Stevens Residence in Malibu accomplishes, according to Lautner, "All kinds of things that are impossible to do." On a 35-foot lot, Lautner has dexterously arranged five bedrooms, five bathrooms, a living room, dining room, painting studio, children's playroom and swimming pool in a house of 3900 square feet. The intersecting concrete cantilever forms curve from a striking silhouette along the beach.

More dramatic in its setting and in its use of exposed concrete is the Elrod Residence, also completed in 1969, in Palm Springs. Gehard and Winter call it "Lautner at his best, a low concrete circular spaceship worked into the west-exposed rocky hillsides."

Impressed with the strength and image of the Elrod Residence, Bob Hope commissioned Lautner to design his own extraordinary house in Palm Springs. The large vaulted spaces bear a distinct similarity to Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal at JFK, but Lautner explains, "TWA is a completely different thing. The concept that I had was basically a cone that has the same angle as a volcano, so the slopes really fit into the mountains... and then I cut these arches in the cone. It's a much simpler structure than TWA."

The scale and function of the two buildings are quite different. Still, one senses an affinity for Wright, for Saarinen and for Bruce Goff in Lautner's free and expressionistic approach.

John Lautner believes deeply in the creative process, explaining that, "To me architecture is an art. It has to have feeling. It has to have something for human beings." In referring to his mentor Frank Lloyd Wright, Lautner says, "He could actually create joy in a building... to me the combination of romance and joy and infinity... those values are fantastic... That's architecture."

The sweeping roofline of the Segal House in Malibu "is like a cave," says Lautner. It gives a sense of intimacy while boldly expanding out toward the ocean view. Gilbert Segal thinks Lautner is "probably one of the all-time architectural geniuses." Yet it took the creative teamwork of his wife, dance therapist Joanne Segal, and Project Architect Warren Lawson to bring Lautner's vision to reality. And John Lautner is an architect of vision, who perceives the spaces he creates extending outward from the building to infinity, not unlike the Baroque concept of space and form. "I have no disappearing spaces," explains Lautner, "as the most ekphrastic and most beautifying. It's exactly the opposite of a box, which is the most confining."

After more than forty years of individual expression, John Lautner remains a witty and disarmingly garrulous observer of the architectural scene. Some personal observations:

- On Bruce Goff: "I like Goff. Sure. I have to admire him for trying all these things. Some of them are good and some of them are lousy, but most of them involve some kind of an idea."
- On Richard Mizer: "What if they were painted black. Would they still be architecture?"
- On "Post-Modern" Architects: "They're discovering that Modernism is dead, but that's just another style, another fad, which is superficial, if that's all the understanding they had anyway."
- On Los Angeles: "It's still a superficial, phony ballet."
- On John Lautner: "I've never done a superficial, little handy-dandy gimmick... I've tried to come up with a real reason and idea for every job... and almost every one has a reason."

Michael Franklin Ross, AIA
L.A. ARCHITECT November 1979

* "If there isn't any design, there's nothing."

(quote from John Lautner)
A CONVERSATION: MOSS & WURMAN

Several months ago, Richard Saul Wurman, FAIA, interviewed Eric D. Moss, AIA, on a variety of architectural topics. What follows are some excerpts from that dialogue.

Wurman: Could you talk about your downtown building?
Moss: We did the Morganstein warehouse on Main St. in downtown Los Angeles. While Robert Venturi's approach is that Main St. is almost all right, our approach was that Main St. is mostly all wrong.

Wurman: We tried to take a social perspective in the same sense that the neighborhood, at 12th and Main, was a very, very bad, utilized down-and-out area. We took over Morganstein's garment district. So we tried to bring a kind of exuberance to that place. Whatever bars would be put up would disappear in the face of all the other noise we hit the street with. There's something exuberant, maybe in a sort of bonfire way, about the building, and I think that represents a social point of view.

Another thing we did was paint the roof in a funny way, and we painted it in a way that the only way you can see it is from the surrounding office buildings. It's kind of a road map on the roof where to put utilities, but also it is a strange thing for a couple of reasons. First, we wanted some aspect of surprise — so to present a face to the people who were in those high buildings around who must be very sleepy doing what they're doing. So at least in the short run, we can energize them a little bit. Also, there is a "Plains of Nazar" reference in our building — referring to those big drawings in the Peruvian landscape which somehow makes it appear the other colors now, like signing up in a cosmic offering. It has that dimension.

Wurman: Not only your conversation, but everyone's conversation is laced with references to things they don't want to do, not doing what someone else does. Moss: I think that there's something of that in every kind of creative work because I think one does work against the background ones and goes along with the spirit that somehow the way one justifies work is to have an alternative who else is doing something different which somehow makes it appear the work one is doing is not so much internally motivated as externally generated. As a reaction to the other guy so you don't want to do something to ingratiate yourself, or else you want to do something in which there's an opposition to him in order to generate a reaction....

Wurman: And there was and still is a "My God, look at the Brooklyn Bridge, or the Golden Gate Bridge, or the John Hancock Bridge — look what we can do." It's kind of bloody incredible with this sort of an unintentional Pompidou aspect to it. Somehow the way one justifies work is to have a comparison who are making something off the shelf, and it's not off the shelf. Somehow the way one justifies work is to have something off the shelf, and it's not off the shelf. That's the adaptive sort of bloody incredible with this sort of an unintentional Pompidou aspect to it. Somehow the way one justifies work is to have a comparison with something off the shelf, and it's not off the shelf. The question seems to be then exposed because certainly it was more useful after all to have a visual assembly of pieces it had lost its fundamental order.

Wurman: It's an opportunity to go on to make something for those other meanings. The Golden Section is a G.K., but you know the Golden Section is the section that goes to the Beaux Arts or to Pythagoras, but his section is a German word, aequi, which I think is a kind of an abbreviated kind of architecture, impersonal architecture. The Sachzial Le Corbusier goes on to make a case in terms of other colors now, like signing up in a cosmic offering. It has that dimension. They're trying to make something else to the listener, but not to you. Wurman: Not only your conversation, but everyone's conversation is laced with references to things they don't want to do, not doing what someone else does. Moss: I think that there's something of that in every kind of creative work because I think one does work against the background ones and goes along with the spirit that somehow the way one justifies work is to have an alternative who else is doing something different which somehow makes it appear the work one is doing is not so much internally motivated as externally generated. As a reaction to the other guy so you don't want to do something to ingratiate yourself, or else you want to do something in which there's an opposition to him in order to generate a reaction....

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It has been that long?

Another memory that illustrates the character of the dynasty concerns Al's father, who came visiting the office one late morning a few years before he died. He was wearing a long gray smock - for old time's sake, I guess. There was a newly hired young woman sitting in front of me busily drawing lines. As the "Old Timer" was going by, he noticed the new face and with a bit of a twinkle in his eye stopped and said: "hello!" The busy lady ignored the stranger, who, having repeated his greetings a few times finally said, "you know I work here... have been around for quite some time" and with a happy smile walked away.

The above vignettes are but samples of a style of an unusual organization, led by unusual men. An organization that manages this complex ACMA team. Ed has a big heart and a rare passion for giving recognition and credit to the individual members of the team, directly in front of the clients. Al Martin's son, David Martin, also a partner in the firm, is now heading up ACMA's Design Department. Since he deals with the creative, form-giving and inventive work, he has the responsibility for the most consequential part of the firm's products and hence its image.

Thus the dynasty goes on. The highly structured and resourceful architectural organization with that unique Martin touch keeps sparring with corporate giants. They have designed California high-rise towers with an equal ease. What next? Whatever it will be, it will be done well, After all, the firm was started for old time's sake. It will be done well, After all, the firm was started for old time's sake.