

# COLUMNS



SEP/09

From the Ground Up: Prototype housing helps shape the places we call home | Palm Springs Eternal: The photos of Julius Shulman | Design Pittsburgh 2009: Meet this year's lead juror | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

# COLUMNS



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# HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



**I am an avid reader of the New York Times.** Think more or less of me as you will, but it's true. The Times is my newspaper. I have never actually bought a copy, but I read it everyday, checking the headlines online as I eat breakfast. It all started years ago, when a boss's homepage was the front page of the Times' Science section. As we gathered in his office each morning, he read aloud to us about discoveries that had been made or scientific advances that were being reported. As we would sip our coffee and contemplate these wonders, he would dole out the daily assignments and our day would begin. Once I was sucked into the world of technology and found myself the owner of my very own computer, I quickly bookmarked nytimes.com in my browser and checked it often, even if only to skim headlines. My husband is also a fan of the publication, and the innocent question "Did you read the article about.....?" quickly evolves into heated debate over the dinner table. We often do read the same stories, but every so often, one of us catches something the other did not, and it never ceases to amaze me how much information there is to be found and read within the site. I can (and have) spent hours browsing its pages, clicking from one feature to the next – give me a rainy Sunday and my laptop and my day is as good as over.

I have recently become enamored with a recurring feature found in the Real Estate section – "Property Values: What You Get For.... \$\_\_\_\_\_". This weekly piece picks a number (say \$370,000) and presents three properties currently on the market for that price. The properties are located all over the nation, with the author's choices and accompanying slideshow highlighting just how much variety you can find in a place to call home. These features are little more than glorified home

continued page 2

SEP/09

**In this Issue** | From the Ground Up:



Prototype housing

helps shape the places we call home page 7 | Palm Springs Eternal: The photos of Julius

Shulman page 25 | Design Pittsburgh 2009: Meet this year's lead juror page 14 |

News page 4 | Breaking Ground page 16 |




ON THE COVER: Allen Cabin, 1950 (photograph 1958), Julius Shulman, photographer, architect unknown



listings, but they still fascinate me. I love to compare the square footage and acreage of one house to the next, as well as location and some of the decorators' choices. The lush, saturated images help the reader to step into the rooms, imagining the flow of the layout and what changes you would make should a place like that ever be yours.

I find it very easy to speculate about housing. Even though I love my home, I still find my mind wandering as I pass "For Sale" signs along my bus route or as I walk my dog. I think it is human nature to ponder what else is out there, especially for a place where you spend so much of your time, the place where your life is housed. *What would I do differently? How could it be improved?* These questions, which we have all asked ourselves, are likely some of the preliminary questions the architects and designers – who created some of the iconic prototype housing in our main feature – asked themselves as they put pencil to drafting paper. Spanning multiple decades and various architectural movements, these designs have withstood the test of time and many are considered modern day classics.

Keeping in line with the theme of housing, our second feature, "Palm Springs Eternal" (page 25), takes a look at an upcoming exhibition at the Heinz Architectural Center – *Palm Springs Modern: Photographs by Julius Shulman*. Shulman spent a good part of his life capturing the mid-century architecture and elegant lifestyles found in Palm Springs, CA, and those photographs are featured not only within our pages, but to a much greater extent at the HAC. I encourage you to read our review, but to also visit the exhibit in person this fall to take in the glossy renderings of a time gone by.

And finally, as is the case every September, the AIA Pittsburgh staff is gearing up for Design Pittsburgh. This year some adjustments have been made, which reflect our goals to serve the best interests of the organization and our membership. First, we're consolidating the Design Pittsburgh Gala and Awards Ceremony into one celebratory evening. While the economic situation has made this necessary, we think the venue of the newly opened August Wilson Center will help set the tone for an exciting evening. The second major change is that AIA Pittsburgh welcomes Elizabeth Shirey as a new staff member who will be focusing on membership and communications. My days on staff are numbered with my due date quickly approaching, and while I will continue to manage this publication, by the time you read this, the job of 'mother' will likely have been added to my life. With this exciting and gigantic responsibility bestowed upon me, I am stepping back from the AIA, with a fondness and gratefulness for the experiences and friendships I have had over the past four years. So, make sure to stop and say "hi" to Elizabeth at our next event, and stay tuned to future issues of this publication as the written word becomes my primary communication with you, our members. 





# from the ground up

Prototype housing helps shape the places we call 'home'

BY VIRGINIA SHIELDS

**It's one of humanity's basic needs.** From caves to huts to houses, shelter has changed dramatically as humans have sought to better their world.



Many housing innovations have had to do with survival, furnaces for warmth, glass windows for protection, while other strides have been in the art of building and the building of art. None-

theless, humans have been busy perfecting the construction methods of home-building for thousands of years. Each of the new developments in homes had to start with a dreamer architect and a prototype design, be it a Cro-Magnon with a crudely constructed hut or a designer with a neatly grafted blueprint.

And today's architecture is as rich as yesterday's with prototype designs and innovations. Modernism, tract housing, and green building have all drastically changed the way we think about our homes. While technology is

OPPOSITE AND INSET: Slither apartment building. A government subsidized housing project in Gifu, Japan, 2000. Architect Diller + Scofidio.



making it easier for dreams to become reality, many begin to wonder if prototype designs that surpass current construction limitations are useful in a world in crisis.

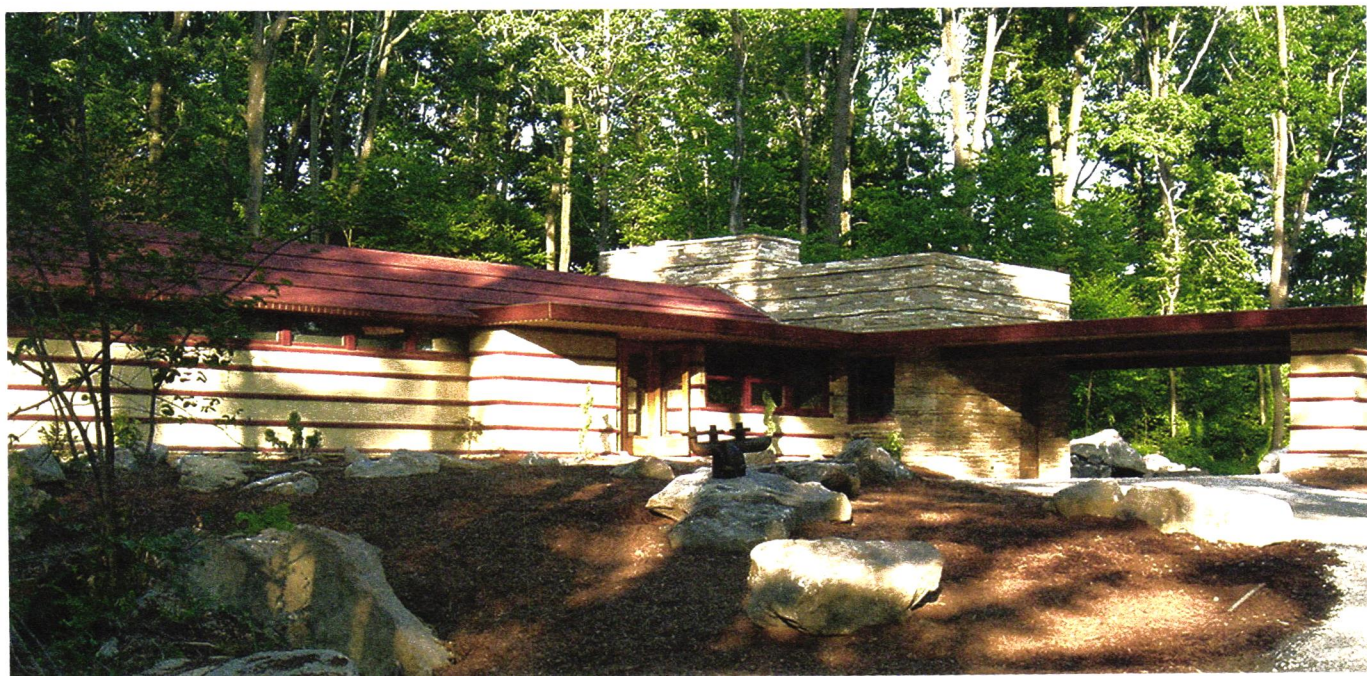
The City of Pittsburgh has a rich background of innovative homes and buildings. After most of its neighborhoods had been established, local architects focused on filling in the gaps between and within communities. Pittsburgh's infamous millionaires like Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick peppered the city with dauntingly striking Gothic buildings like the Allegheny County Courthouse, the Cathedral of Learning, and the unique mansions along Fifth Avenue. All of these buildings helped to make Pittsburgh a forerunner in the ideals of 'City Beautiful' design and gained international attention.

Prototype housing in the Golden Triangle didn't really get its start until the early 1900s, when modernist architects like Frederick Scheibler were busy crafting the next generation of housing in their backyards. Scheibler, a Pittsburgh native, was a rebel of architecture in the early 20th century. At a time when other designers were recreating grand Victorian and Gothic-style homes, Scheibler was building sleek, modernist houses. A stunning example of his work is Highland Towers. The U-shaped apartment building, made of yellow tapestry brick and stucco, with inset patterns of blue tile and

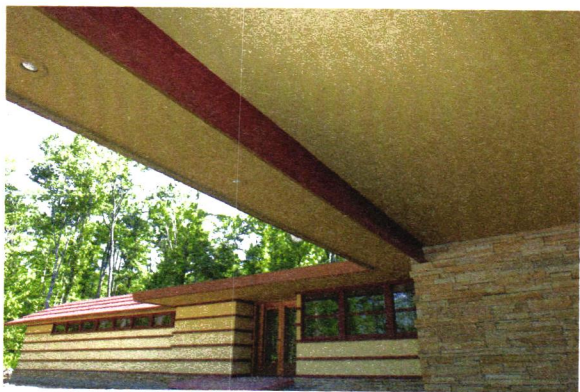
glass, was fitted with vacuum-cleaning outlets and a prototype air-conditioning system – state of the art technology for its first 1913 residents. Highland Towers is still occupied today, along South Highland Avenue in Shadyside.

The 1930s brought the beautiful homes of Frank Lloyd Wright to the Pittsburgh area, with the internationally renowned Fallingwater and, more recently, the lesser-known Duncan House. Wright designed the Duncan House to be a prefabricated, mass produced sort of home for contemporary suburbanites. However, only a few of the homes were made and even fewer survive. One remaining prototype was bought, moved from Chicago, and reassembled in Polymath Park in Mount Pleasant Township by local builder and Wright enthusiast, Tom Papinchak. It is one of several Frank Lloyd Wright homes that allows overnight guests and is a major tourist attraction today.

After World War II, Pittsburghers began to realize that the continuation of their overzealous industrialization would leave the city stranded in a changing national, global, and economic environment. They also began to see the damaging effects pollution wrought on their fine city, and strove to stop and reverse the city's decay. Since the industrial days have passed, Pittsburgh has become one of the best cities for green building and innovative engineering.







OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: Duncan House by Frank Lloyd Wright. A prefabricated house moved from Chicago to Polymath Park in Mount Pleasant Township.

The city opened its own branch of the Green Building Alliance in 1993 and is consistently among the top three cities under the LEED rating system, with 21 LEED certified buildings in the city (the state of Pennsylvania has 72, second only to California). LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is considered a benchmark on the road to energy efficient homes. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and conducted through the Green Building Certification Institute, LEED ratings take an extensive look at how new or remodeled homes effect the environment. The LEED system is a 100 point system which measures how efficiently a building uses water, energy, and resources. It accounts for sustainability of the building site and resources used, as well as indoor environmental quality and access to transportation. LEED certified buildings strive to serve the ecosystems outside a building and the human inhabitants inside.

One example of a building project seeking LEED certification in Pittsburgh is the Homestead Apartments building on East Eighth Avenue, Homestead. In what was formerly one of the largest industrial neighborhoods in the city, it is a renovated twelve-story apartment building originally constructed in 1959. Overhaul of the old building was extensive; pavement around the building was replaced with native vegetation, which doesn't require a special irrigation system to survive. Thermostats were set with restricted high temperature levels to prevent waste of

energy. The roof was replaced with an energy-efficient roof and all of the apartments were given Energy Star rated appliances. Furthermore, recycled materials were used where possible, construction waste was recycled, and recycling receptacles were provided for residents. The building itself and the construction practices used are excellent examples of how to build or renovate with the environment in mind.

## FEELS LIKE HOME

Pittsburgh isn't the only U.S. city with forward thinking practices. Shaker Heights, a city in Ohio, takes great care to use the best home-building practices when constructing or renovating its homes. The city consists of several close-knit neighborhoods, each lined with trees and close to Ohio's rapid mass transit system. Shaker Heights officials encourage current homeowners to upgrade their homes with green appliances and materials using federal tax credits and ensure all new homes are compliant with Ohio green building standards. This city is practically a utopia for high quality, green living with its nature center, lakes, farmers markets, and exclusive community services. Even though Shaker Heights homes are not LEED certified, they certainly adhere to the criteria for certification, down to the close proximity of community resources and local markets.

Not all modern prototyping efforts concentrate on green building, although most still



In Shaker Heights, Ohio, where green living is front and center.







incorporate green techniques in their designs. Sometimes, the greater challenge is utilizing urban space while maintaining individuality or incorporating nature into structure. Diller + Scofidio, a husband and wife design team, created the Slither apartment building in Japan, which dispels the belief that mass standardization negates individuality in urban housing. The Slither building consists of fifteen vertical stacks, each seven units high, for 105 units in total. Each unit is rotated 1.5° and vertically offset by 8" from its neighbor, which gives the building a sloping, concave curve adjacent to a communal courtyard. The units all have their own balconies, covered by scale-like, metal screens. Not only does this design create a beautifully reptilian structure, but it also provides privacy and separation for residents, even though they live in identical, adjacent apartments.

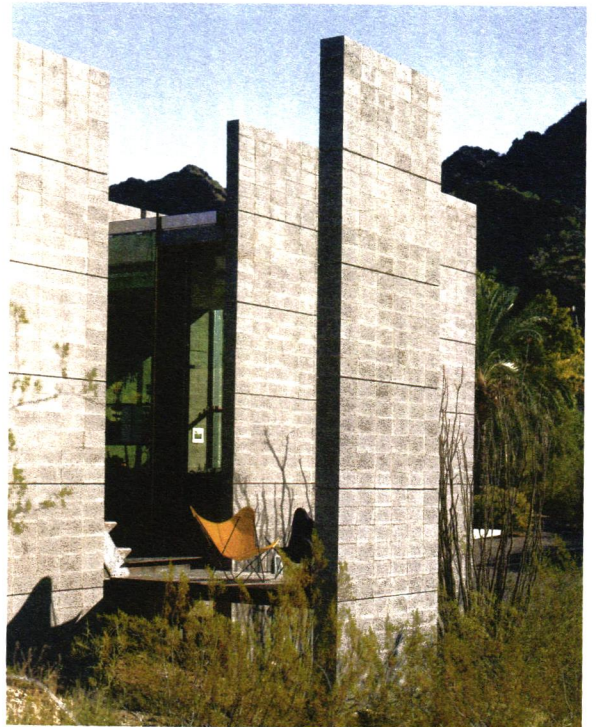
When it comes to making architecture at one with nature, Wendell Burnette, AIA is practically a guru. With strong ties to the Arizona desert, Burnette's meticulous attention to detail coupled with his love of nature allow him to create homes that are perfectly integrated with their surroundings. His studio and residence in Arizona is a rectangular structure made of foam-injected concrete blocks, open on the sides facing east and west, and closed off from light in the north and south. This takes advantage of the natural (and intense) sunlight of the desert while allowing the house to stay cool and shaded. The walls are also punctuated with small, random-but-not openings, carefully selected to let in light and effectively vent hot air outside. These openings, as well as other open areas of the home, are covered by glass that is flush with the exterior wall or recessed within the wall. Not only does Burnette consider climate when designing and positioning his homes, he considers the view of the landscape from inside the home as well. Because of the openings and windows in the house, one can stand in any place within and see the mountainous landscape that surrounds the home.

## INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Designs for prototype homes are excellent tools for research and development, and can foster new ideas and innovations for building homes that have less impact on the environment, be it from aesthetics or emissions. But do designs that are too advanced for current means of construction bring less to the table than homes that can be built and occupied today?

Greg Lynn, a modern prototype housing designer, has big plans for the future of homes, even though his houses cannot be produced. Lynn, like many cutting edge architects, uses a digital interface to create his "Embryological Homes". Their layered, curving, snakelike contours are meant to resemble organic forms found in nature. Each of his designs have similar "DNA", meaning that although no two homes are exactly alike, they all share similar key traits that connect them, much like various species in the same genus.

Lynn foresees his designs being laser-cut by machines and has already enlisted the help of auto-manufacturing robots to cut pieces for his smaller, more artistic endeavors. His main



OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: Wendell Burnette residence, Phoenix, Arizona. Photos by Bill Timmerman, Timmerman Photography.



While pioneer designers are crafting the future of homes, green builders are helping to ensure that future will exist. To limit prototyping architects to current construction capacities and to discredit futuristic designs for their unconstructable nature is like putting a cap on innovation.



Renovations at the Homestead Apartments by UpStreet Architects, Inc. of Indiana, PA led to two Silver LEED NC certifications. It is one of the earliest high-rise projects to be LEED registered in the nation.

problem now is finding the right material for homes that can live up to the sleek appearance of the digital designs.

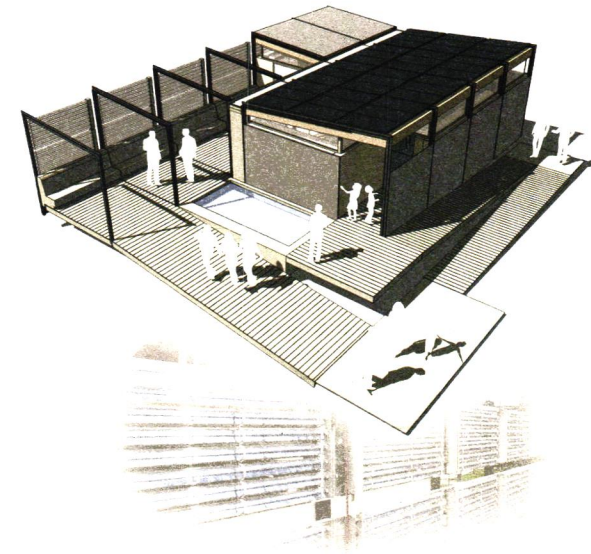
In an interview for *Index Magazine*, Lynn sums up his feelings about virtual reality, which are akin to his design philosophy:

“I always think of [virtual reality] as designing a thing that has yet to be specified or realized. Rather than virtual reality being a space detached from reality, I always see it as a thing that gains something by being real.”

Most other architects seem to be designing for today while keeping the future in mind. Great examples of build-able, sometimes reproduced, prototype homes often come from the Solar Decathlon, a competition run by the Department of Energy in which students from twenty colleges across the globe compete to build the best energy-efficient house. Students design and build their 800 square foot homes before the competition, then transport them to Washington, D.C. where the houses are assembled into a “solar village” and judged in ten categories. The decathlon gets its name from these ten criteria: architecture, market viability, engineering, lighting design, communications, comfort zone, hot water, appliances, home entertainment, and net metering. As the name also suggests, each house must use solar energy in some capacity and most strive for a zero-energy home.

With Zero-Energy Homes (ZEH), a house is connected to a utility grid but also relies on solar (or wind) energy for some of its power. The amount of energy used or produced by the home varies by month, but the annual, aggregate calculation of energy use generally balances out to zero, so any energy costs incurred are negated by the energy produced. ZEHs aren’t too different from regular homes; they use most of the same materials, with the exception of a photovoltaic system which processes the energy produced by the home. Photovoltaic cells, or solar cells, use semiconducting materials to absorb sunlight and convert it into electricity by loosening electrons and allowing them to flow freely through the system. These cells





Solar Decathlon 2007 entries from (left) University of Cincinnati and (right) University of Maryland, the second place winner. Photos by Kaye Evans-Lutterodt.



can double for roof shingles, building facades, glazing for skylights, and can be fixed or set on a track that follows the sun.

After the Solar Decathlon, most of the solar homes are reconstructed on the building team's campus or at a nearby museum or research facility. Some have become laboratories for solar energy research, others are used for demonstrations and tours to show the public the future of solar-powered living. Carnegie Mellon University's 2007 home, for example, has been reconstructed on the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Western Pennsylvania and serves as a great example of a solar home. University of Missouri-Rolla, however, has chosen a different fate for its past entries; all three (soon to be four) homes have been reassembled into a solar village on campus and are rented out to students of the University. And Kansas State University's 2007 entry was bought by SunEdison, to be used as a demonstrative tool.

The Decathlon's criteria for success and construction requirements suggest that prototype homes are meant to be buildable, usable,

and their effects measurable. This is rather different from the design perspective of architects like Greg Lynn, whose futuristic outlook is shaping the homes of tomorrow. Each method of design has its own merits and brings to light new ideas and innovations for how we live. After reading so much about prototype housing, its design and its function, it is this writer's opinion that both the conceptual and the functional philosophies are necessary for the progression of housing. While pioneer designers are crafting the future of homes, green builders are helping to ensure that future will exist. To limit prototyping architects to current construction capacities and to discredit futuristic designs for their unconstructable nature is like putting a cap on home innovations. Imaginative and functional ideas together are what make great advancements in architecture possible.

So while the concept of what a house should be has undergone drastic changes over the years, all innovations have had an impact on the future of designing. And with prototype homes the future is now, or at least it is being shaped now. **C**



# design pittsburgh 2009

Meet our lead juror and gold medal recipient



Our lead juror, **ALLISON WILLIAMS, FAIA** is a design principal with Perkins+Will and Design Director for the San Francisco office. In a career spanning more than 30 years in corporate practice, Williams' leadership in the design of large scale civic, corporate, and cultural facilities has influenced significant projects in the San Francisco Bay Area, nationally, and internationally.

Her diverse portfolio of work includes The August Wilson Center for African American Culture (Pittsburgh PA, 2009) and CREATE (Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise) a 700,000 sf research center for the National Research Foundation (Singapore 2010), two prestigious design competitions won by Perkins+Will under her design direction. Williams is currently designing a 3 million sf Health Sciences and Research Campus for The Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University – a new university for 40,000 Saudi women in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as part of an overall campus being designed by Perkins+Will.

Williams is committed to a collaborative design approach that seamlessly integrates aesthetics, efficiency, sustainable strategies and modern technologies. Identity in architecture is a refined sensibility that touches on traditional values, culture and environmental awareness. Conceptually, buildings should be primarily expressive of program and use, and directly responsive to the climate, the specific site and to the influence of the sun.

Williams was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard Graduate School of Design, and received both her Masters of Architecture and Bachelor of Art in the Practice of Art at the University of California, Berkeley. She currently sits on the Harvard Design Magazine Practitioners Board, Public Architecture Board of Directors, and the University of California Design Review for Capital Projects.

## **August Wilson Center for African American Culture Pittsburgh PA**

A 65,000 sf performing arts and cultural center celebrates the cultural achievements of African Americans in Pittsburgh and Western PA and of people of African descent throughout the world. The facility includes a 500 seat theatre, education center, exhibition spaces, a flexible performance studio, and a ground level cafe with sidewalk seating. The commission was awarded through an invited design competition in 2003 and opens officially in September 2009.

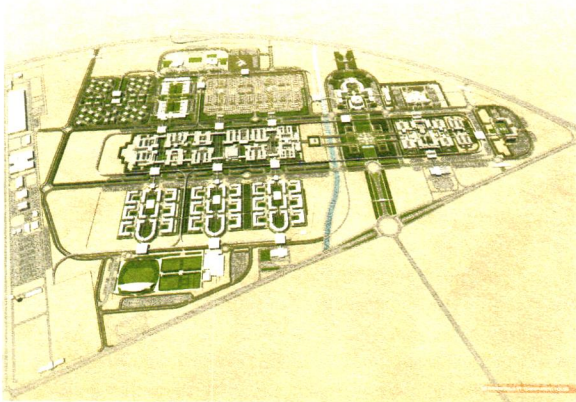






**CREATE (Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise), Singapore**

A 700,000 sf research campus of flexible laboratory space for CREATE, the project was awarded through a global design competition from Singapore's National Research Foundation and is the gateway to the National University of Singapore's campus expansion. When completed in 2011, CREATE will be one of the greenest buildings in the world. It consists of a high-rise with aerial sky gardens that engage a podium of student amenity spaces and three low-rise laboratory wings framing a town center.



**Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

A 3 million sf Health Sciences and Research Campus for a new university for 40,000 Saudi women in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This project is part of a 30 million sf overall campus being designed by Perkins+Will.

**Gold Medal Recipient: REBECCA FLORA**  
Senior Vice President, Education & Research,  
U.S. Green Building Council



Rebecca Flora has been chosen by AIA Pittsburgh to be this year's Gold Medal Recipient. The Gold Medal is an honor bestowed upon a non-architect who has made a significant contribution to the built environment and the community as a whole, through efforts to create awareness of the importance of good design and the central impact good design has on improving quality of life. Flora's central belief that education and design choices could help to green our world is apparent in all that she does, and her work both locally and on a national level has clearly exhibited this belief.

Rebecca Flora, formally the executive director of the Green Building Alliance, was named to the position of Senior Vice President, Education & Research of the U.S. Green Building Council in January 2009. Under Flora's leadership, the Green Building Alliance has emerged as a leading advocate for green development in western Pennsylvania while the Pittsburgh region achieved prominence as a center for green building. She was named an "Environmental Hero for 2004" by Interiors & Sources magazine, and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette identified her as one of "The Top 50 Cultural Forces in Pittsburgh."

Flora was the 2008 chair of the U.S. Green Building Council and a founding member of the USGBC's LEED for Neighborhood Development Core Committee. She was a founding member of the Pittsburgh Civic Design Coalition, and was an advisory board member for the University of Pittsburgh's Mascaro Sustainability Initiative, and a board member of Phipps Conservatory and the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development. Additionally, she has been an adjunct faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School of Public Policy and Management.



# BREAKING

## FROM THE FIRMS

Direct Energy Business, which first came to Pittsburgh last June when it acquired Strategic Energy LLC for \$500 million, has signed a five-year lease for 52,000 sf at Liberty Center in Downtown Pittsburgh. **Desmone & Associates Architects** will provide interior design and space planning to accommodate 300 people within the space, which will become the company's North American headquarters in November.

**JSA Architecture Planning Engineering Interior Design** has been selected by the Cafaro Company to provide architectural and engineering design services for a new one level, 54,000 sf Dick's Sporting Goods store to be located at South Hill Mall in Puyallup, WA, near Seattle. The new Dick's store will be a retrofit of existing space formerly occupied by Circuit City and Linens N Things. Opening of the store is planned for spring of 2010. JSA principal in charge of the project is **Thomas J. Mrozinski, Jr., AIA**.

The new Seton Hill University Performing Arts Center, designed by **MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni Architects** and

built by Massaro Corporation, opened this summer in the Cultural District of downtown Greensburg. The \$21 million performing arts complex will house complete performance, support, and academic space for the music and theatre programs at Seton Hill.

Western State College of Colorado has hired **WTW Architects** and **SLATERPAULL Architects** to design a new College Center, with a target of achieving LEED Gold certification. Construction of the \$21 million student center has begun and will be completed by summer of 2010.

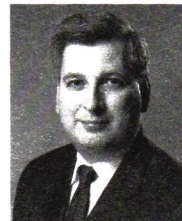
## BUSINESS BRIEFS

The Construction Legislative Council of Western Pennsylvania (CLC) announced the election of its officers for the 2009/2010 calendar year: Chairman: Joe Fecek, American Society of Civil Engineers; Vice-Chairman: **Paula Maynes, AIA**, American Institute of Architects, Pittsburgh Chapter; Treasurer: Michel Sadaka, Pennsylvania Society of Professional Engineers; Secretary: Jon O'Brien, Master Builders' Association of Western PA.



Western State College of Colorado, College Center

Rick Lipinski has been promoted to Chief Information Officer (CIO) of **Burt Hill**. Lipinski has been with Burt Hill for two years and has been acting CIO for the past five months. Additionally, Burt Hill has recently announced the election of two new members to the firm's board of directors. Robert Ray and Michael Reagan, in addition to 11 incumbent board members, were elected at the firm's annual shareholders' meeting. In addition to his seat on the board, Ray serves as Burt Hill's General Counsel and Chief Legal Officer.



Ray



Reagan

Brian May has joined Gateway Engineers as a project manager. May, previously with a Montana-based engineering firm, is a graduate of Penn State University and possesses over 10 years of structural engineering experience executing projects from analysis through construction.

Two graduate architects have been hired by **IKM Incorporated Architects**. Melissa Annett and Natale Cozzolongo both join the firm working towards fulfilling IDP requirements with the goal of becoming registered architects.

**Timothy Kist, AIA, LEED AP**, of **JSA Architecture Planning Engineering Interior Design** has passed the LEED V2.2

NC accreditation exam and is now a LEED Accredited Professional.

**Moshier Studio** has hired Kevin Kenna as a new intern architect. Kenna is a LEED Accredited Professional with a background in the design of schools and institutional projects. He holds a B.A. in Architecture and a B.Arch. from the University at North Carolina at Charlotte.

**Perkins Eastman** has announced recent promotions. Scott Fitzgerald, Mark O'Matz, and **Lee Pellegrino, AIA** have all been promoted to senior associates. Charles Krimmel and Rebecca Roche have been promoted to associates. Additionally, David Hance, **J. David Hoglund, FAIA**, Alan



Seton Hill University Performing Arts Center



Schlossberg, AIA, Richard Northway, AIA, Steve Quick, FAIA, Arch Pelley, AIA. Christina Szejka, Mark Barnett, AIA, Kathy Cienciala, Anthony DiFulvio, Charles Kimmel, John Lingley, Lauren Merski, Nadeene Owusu-Anti, and Paul Palko have all achieved LEED Accredited Professional status.



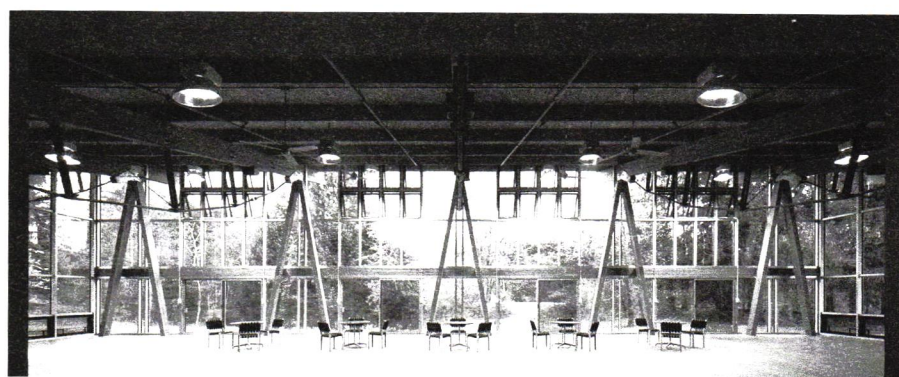
Berry

The Sextant Group, an independent consulting and design firm specializing in audiovisual technologies, information technologies and acoustics, has added Peter Berry as a senior consultant, opening the firm's new office in the New York metro area.

## KUDOS

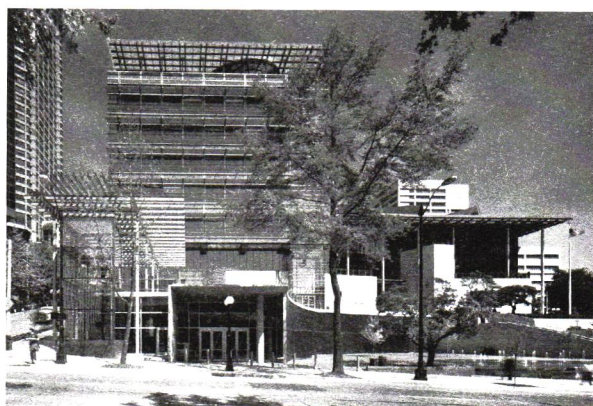
**Astorino** has been included in Engineering News-Record's annual list of the Top 100 Green Architecture Firms.

**Bohlin Cywinski Jackson** has received four architecture awards given by the European Centre for Architecture, Art, Design, and Urban Studies and Chicago Athenaeum through its new Green GOOD DESIGN program, which recognizes architecture, environment/landscape architecture, and products/industrial design for excellence in sustainability and design. Bohlin Cywinski Jackson's award winning projects are The Barn at Fallingwater, the Ballard Library and Neighbor-



hood Service Center, Seattle City Hall, and Pocono Environmental Education Center, Visitor Activity Center.

The Master Builders' Association was honored for its community service at Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh's annual fundraiser, Club Noir, on Friday, July 31st. The MBA and the BNY Mellon Charitable Foundation were the inaugural recipients of the RTP Brass Hammer Award. The Brass Hammer Award was developed by RTP to recognize an organization with a rich history of generous support of RTP's mission and work. It is fitting for RTP to honor the MBA, the organization responsible for launching RTP and continues to this day to house RTP at their location.



From the top: Ballard Library and Neighborhood Service Center, Pocono Environmental Education Center, Visitor Activity Center, Seattle City Hall and The Barn at Fallingwater



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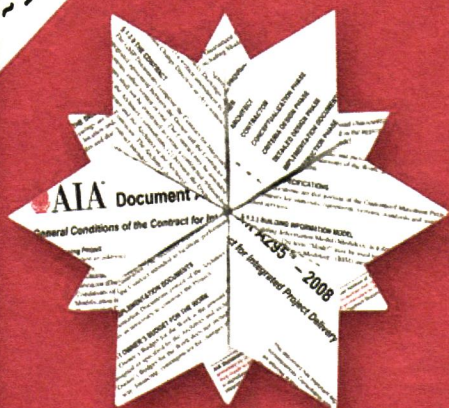
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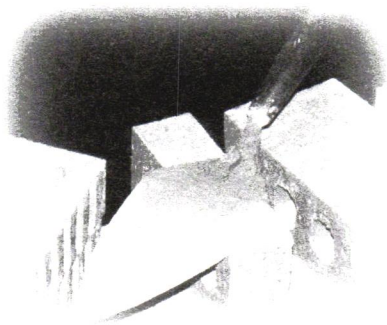
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# palm springs eternal

The photographs of Julius Shulman at the Heinz Architectural Center

BY SEAN SHEFFLER, AIA

**The near-catastrophic burst** of the housing bubble last fall may have many pundits questioning the monetary worth of a house, but the value of a home has yet to lose its importance.



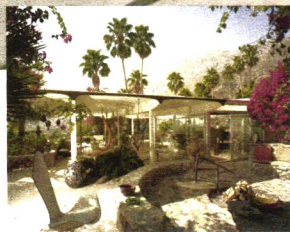
To own a home is to own a small piece of the American dream, even if society has moved away from the white picket fences of our grandparents' era. The single-family residence has consistently been redefined over the past century by architects searching to find new ways of expressing home and hearth. Some of the best – and most diverse – have been captured by famed architectural photographer Julius Shulman. Over 100 of his definitive images have been collected in a new exhibit entitled “Palm Springs Modern: Photographs by Julius Shulman,” set to open at the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie on September 19.

It's entirely possible that most of us are familiar with the work of Julius Shulman without even knowing it. Over the course of a career that spanned more than seventy years, Shulman

OPPOSITE: Frey House I, 1947/50, Julius Shulman, photographer, Albert Frey, architect

INSET: Spa Hotel, 1962, (photograph 1963), Julius Shulman, photographer, William Cody, architect





Shulman redefined what it meant to take a photograph of a building, and in doing so, quite humbly considered his work to “sell architecture better and more directly and more vividly than the architect does.”

TOP: Twin Palms Houses, 1957 (photograph 1957), Julius Shulman, photographer, Dan Palmer, architect, William Krisel, architect

INSET: Burgess House, 1958 (photograph 1984), Julius Shulman, photographer, Hugh Kaptur, William Burgess, Albert Frey, architects

photographed virtually every work of architectural importance to be built in the United States. “‘Uncle Julius’ loved telling stories,” recalls Raymond Ryan, curator of the Heinz Architectural Center. “No one was better able to depict the evolution of modern architecture... he captured moments in history that turned buildings into icons.” Shulman’s work established architectural photography as an art form, and the publicity brought about by his near-iconic images helped launch the careers of several burgeoning architects, such as his close friend Richard Neutra. His photographs defined the Modernist style of architecture, even if the photographer himself remained somewhat critical of the movement. Until this point, it was considered unprofessional – amateurish, even – to include people in architectural photographs. Instead, Shulman chose to show what it was like to truly *live* in the houses he photographed, often in stark contrast to the “coldness” of the minimalist spaces encompassing them. People, in his opinion, were the soul of the home; without them, the spaces and planes

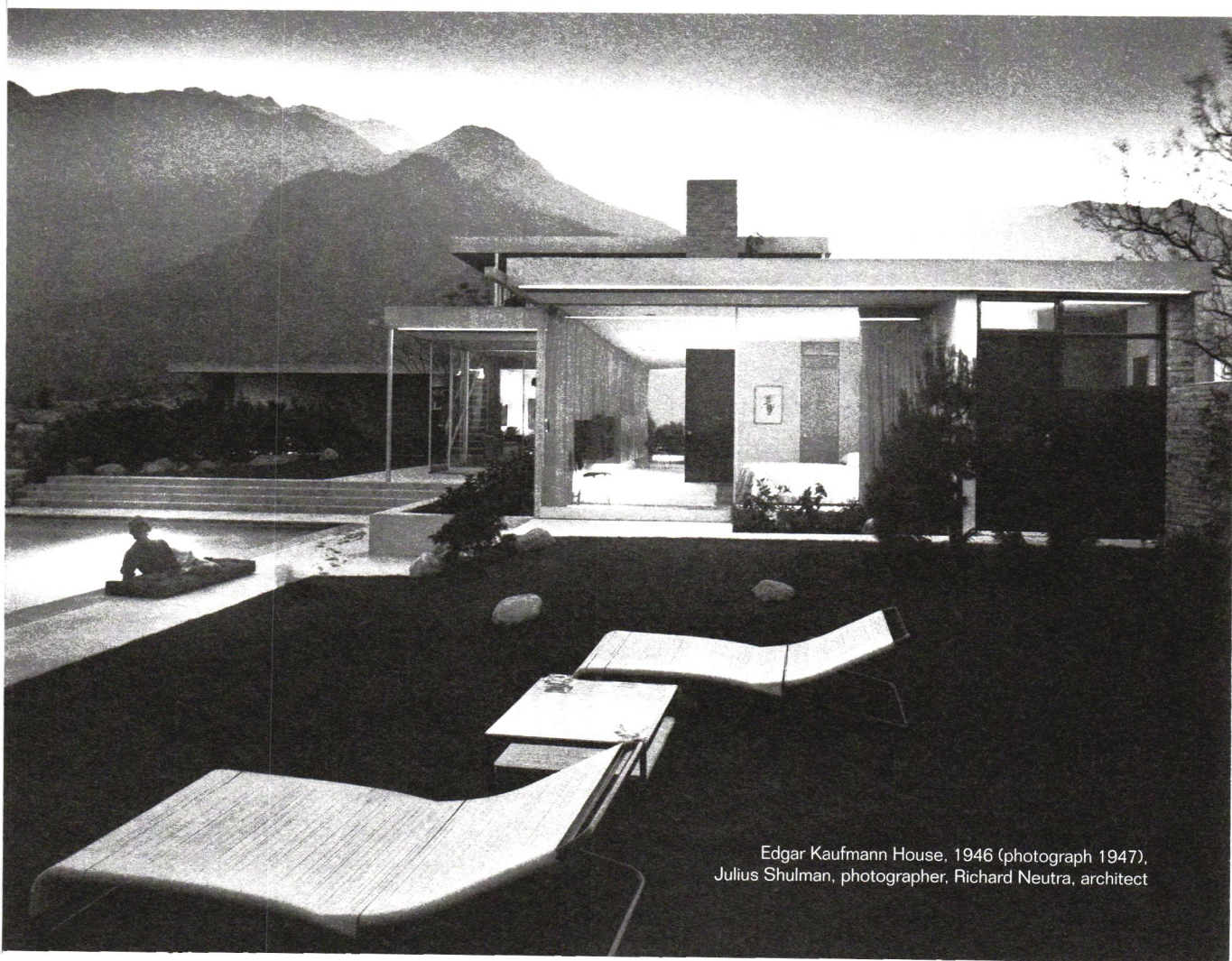


of the house were devoid of heart. Shulman redefined what it meant to take a photograph of a building, and in doing so, quite humbly considered his work to “sell architecture better and more directly and more vividly than the architect does.”

Shulman’s work took him to all parts of the United States, but throughout his career he maintained a particular fascination with Palm Springs. A densely packed, concentrated city about 100 miles east of Los Angeles, Palm Springs sits in the middle of the desert region of the Coachella Valley, surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges (most notably the San Bernardino Mountains to the north). A former Indian reservation, the area experienced a building boom in the years following World War II. The population of Palm Springs nearly tripled between 1950 and 1970, mostly consisting of East Coast “snowbird” industrialists looking for an ideal location to spend their

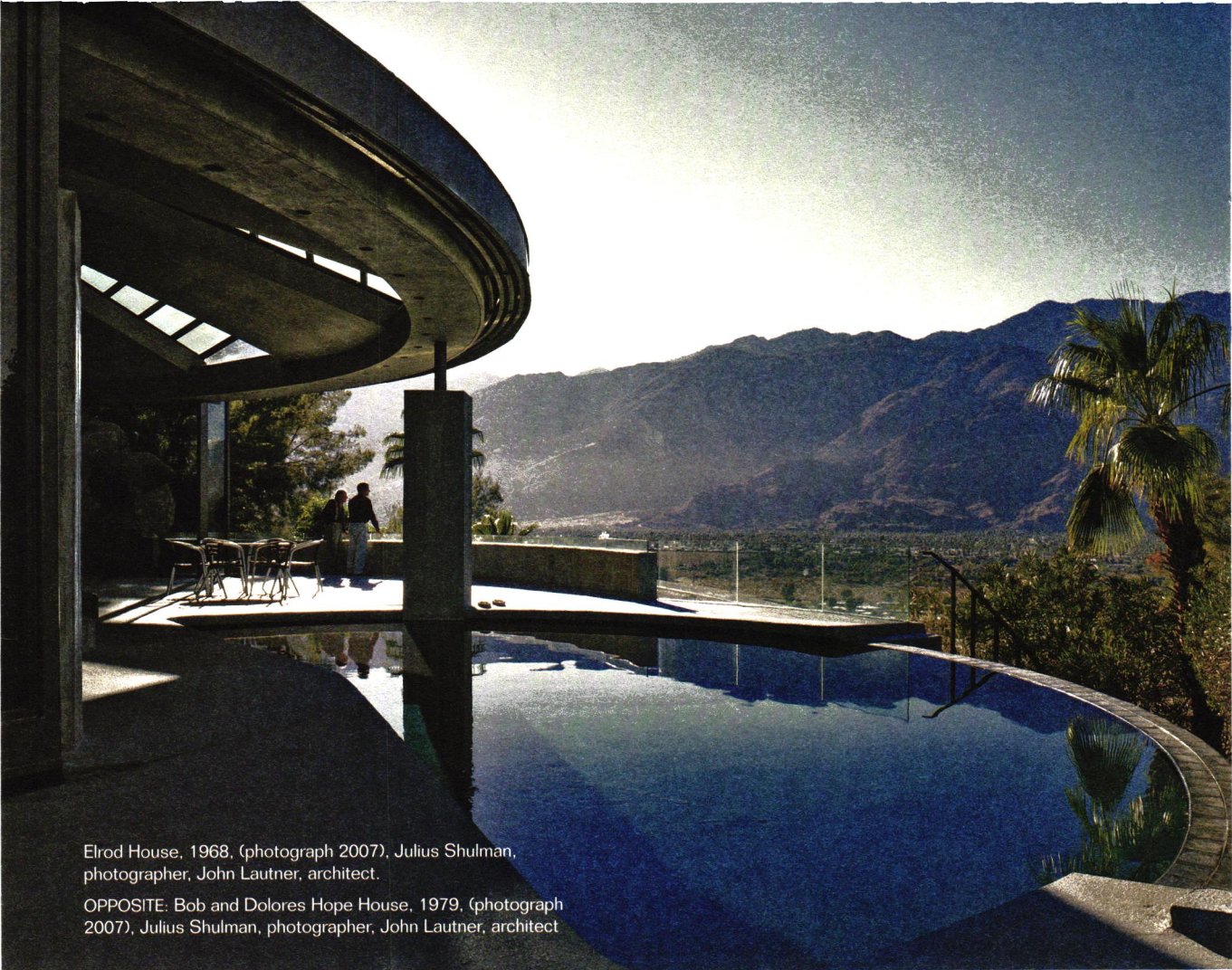
winter months, as well as Hollywood A-listers wanting an escape from the Los Angeles area. As many were building their second (and, in some cases, third) homes, these individuals were “willing to take a little more of an artistic risk,” as Ryan puts it. Its temperate climate blurring the line between inside and outside, and the desert landscape sprawling beyond in all directions, Palm Springs became an empty canvas, an area rife with potential.

Enter the Modernists, beginning with Swiss architect Albert Frey. An apprentice of le Corbusier, Frey brought his Bauhaus training to California in the mid-1930s, and after becoming immediately enamored by the Palm Springs region, became a permanent resident of the city in 1939. Frey built some of the first Modernist houses in Palm Springs: his own home in 1940, followed in 1947 by his residence for industrial designer Raymond Loewy (the father of such



Edgar Kaufmann House, 1946 (photograph 1947),  
Julius Shulman, photographer, Richard Neutra, architect





Elrod House, 1968, (photograph 2007), Julius Shulman, photographer, John Lautner, architect.

OPPOSITE: Bob and Dolores Hope House, 1979, (photograph 2007), Julius Shulman, photographer, John Lautner, architect

other modern icons as the Studebaker Starlight coupe and the Coca-Cola bottle). Frey's work quickly established a precedent that many other Modernist architects – including Donald Wexler, William Cody, and Palmer & Krisel – would soon follow, each one captured through the lens of Julius Shulman. One of Loewy's principal designers, architect E. Stewart Williams, also relocated to Palm Springs in the mid-1940s, designing residences for Frank Sinatra (1947) and real estate tycoon George Edris (1954). Other well-known homes featured in the exhibit are John Lautner's Elrod House from 1968, Paul Williams' residence for Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, and A. Quincy Jones' 1966 work at the Annenberg Estate (also known as "Sunnylands"). While Ryan offers that there was more to Palm Springs architecture than the culturally elite ("some were quite modest homes," he admits), the sheer celebrity on display is hard to ignore. The houses featured in this exhibit, framed so elegantly by Shulman's knack for composition, display the high-style, high-society image that

has become synonymous with Modernism in general and southern California in particular, and several of them have appeared in countless feature films. James Bond, for example, famously grappled with Bambi and Thumper in the Elrod House in *Diamonds Are Forever*; Frank Sinatra's residence was used as the home of the mob boss in Joan Crawford's 1950 film *The Damned Don't Cry*, and the *Ocean's Eleven* gang planned their Las Vegas casino heist from a house designed by Jones. Such exposure was not necessarily a good thing: in his 2003 documentary "Los Angeles Plays Itself," director Thomas Anderson puts forth the notion that, by associating style with excess, modern cinema has done a disservice to architecture by constantly "casting" these Modernist masterpieces as residences for the villain of the piece, establishing "the architectural trophy house [as] the modern equivalent of the black hat, or the moustache."

Sinister cinematic associations aside, the intent of Modernist architecture was one of functionalist efficiency, a purity of space unencum-




bered by ornament or decoration, “machines for living in,” as le Corbusier preached and his disciples followed. Richard Neutra in particular was well-known for his interest in the human condition, and the manner in which it informed his architecture. Neutra especially possessed what Ryan calls “a strong sense of publicity about his work,” and intuitively understood that “photographs are also promotional tools.” In 1936, Neutra came across some photographs taken of his Kun House in California’s San Fernando Valley, and was so impressed with the images that he invited the photographer – a young, fresh-from-college Julius Shulman – to take some shots of some of his newly completed works in Palm Springs. The resulting photographs – the Grace Miller House in 1938, followed very soon afterward by the Von Sternberg House – launched a close personal friendship and a near-symbiotic career for both men. Neutra’s work is featured prominently in the 4,000 square foot exhibit, through Shulman’s photography as well as Neutra’s own renderings. His 1946 house for Pittsburgh business giant Edgar Kaufmann is, by Ryan’s admission, “the star of the show.” Shulman’s 1947 photographs of the house – the rectilinear pool in the foreground, cacti and mountains backlit by the setting California sun in the background, and Neutra’s minimalist industrial glass planes in between – instantly became symbolic images of Modernist architecture, as well as Palm Springs style and elegance. Meticulously restored over the past ten years, the Kaufmann House (also known as the Desert House) is a seminal piece of Modern architecture, considered by many critics to be one of the five most important houses of the 20th century, thanks largely to Shulman’s images. In acknowledging the importance of his friend’s photography in bringing Modernism to the masses, Neutra himself had said “Film [is] stronger, and good glossy prints are easier [to] ship than brute concrete, stainless steel or even ideas.”

Neutra’s work in Palm Springs is also represented by his Miller House (1937) and his Maslon House (1962), which was demolished in 2002; Shulman’s photographs are all that remain of

this piece of Palm Springs history. The loss of the Maslon House adds another dimension to Shulman’s photography: a time capsule for that which no longer exists. The citizens of Palm Springs, very much aware of the cultural significance of their Modernist architecture, manage to possess “enough savvy to maintain their image,” according to Ryan; the citizens most outspoken over the loss of these landmarks formed The Palm Springs Modern Committee, dedicated to the preservation of the city’s Modernist heritage. Many of the houses in the Palm Springs area have since been named to the National Register of Historic Places, and many of the commercial buildings in the region have found new life serving different functions (Frey’s Tramway Gas Station now serves as the Palm Springs Visitor’s Center). An annual symposium called “Modernism Week,” a joint collaboration between the PSMC and other like-minded organizations, is held every February. It was at this event in 2008 that the Palm Springs Art Museum premiered “Julius Shulman: Palm Springs,” dedicated to his masterful attention to detail. The traveling exhibit that will open at the Carnegie in September is, for the most part, a recreation of that exhibit, with the addition of a few Shulman photographs that are part of the Carnegie’s private collection.

Shulman died at age 98 on July 15, 2009, but the exhibit is far from a eulogy; instead, as Ryan puts it, the intensely pragmatic and often quite blunt Shulman quite simply “would have

been happy to have another exhibition of his work.” Capturing a particular movement in architectural history through the eye of an extraordinarily talented photographer, the exhibit is as much about architecture as it is about the representation of architectural works, about imagery and iconography that have

become inextricably linked. This collection obviously will appeal to those specialized in the fields of architecture and photography, but Ryan feels that it’s notions of home should also prove to be a “wonderful stimulus even to the casual museum-goer, someone just wandering through looking for dinosaur bones. We hope that everyone will find it pleasurable and informative at the same time”. 








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