Preservation Summit
Sunday, August 11, 2-4PM

In order to address the shocking destruction of several important historic buildings recently, SAH/SCC is hosting a “Preservation Summit” Sunday, August 11, from 2PM - 4PM.

The event will be held in the lobby of the historic Herald Examiner building in downtown Los Angeles, at 1111 Broadway. The event is free to members and their guests, but we ask that you RSVP to 1.800.9SAHSCC as soon as possible.

The aim of this meeting is to reflect on the particular circumstances of recent losses, but also to make a general assessment of the health of the preservation movement in Southern California, and to find specific strategies for preventing the demolition of more significant buildings.

At SAH/SCC, we have been surprised at the lack of attention paid to the recent losses, and the lack of outrage within our community. The Preservation Summit will call public attention to these issues, which are so important to all of us.

We have invited a variety of leading public figures to serve as panelists and to address these questions. Confirmed participants include: Ken Bernstein, the Preservation Director for the Los Angeles Conservancy; Peter Monuizi, the chair of the Palm Springs Modern Committee; Dan Rosenfeld, Principal of Urban Partners; Christopher C. Martin, FAIA, CEO of AC Martin Partners; and Katharine Hummer, historic preservation commission member for the City of Glendora.

Additional panelists may include attorney Bill Delvac, co-author of Preservationist’s Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, and Christy McAvoy, Managing Principal of the Historic Resources Group.

Larry Mantle, the host of “AirTalk” on KPCC-FM, will lead the discussion, and record it for broadcast the following week. The forum will welcome questions and comments from the audience.

As we have reported in the SAH/SCC News, at least three major examples of modern architecture have been callously destroyed in the past several months. Rudolph Schindler’s Packard House (San Marino, 1924), a radical experiment in sprayed-on concrete, was lost sometime in 2001. It has been replaced by a generic stucco mansion. Schindler’s Wolfe House (Avalon, 1931), a brilliant design and one of his most well-known buildings, came down last Autumn, despite rumored assurances that it would be restored. Then, Richard Neutra’s Maslon House (Rancho Mirage, 1962) was unexpectedly demolished in late March.

In each case, the demolition occurred in a relatively small city, with apparently little bureaucratic attention to these buildings’ respective significance. In our last newsletter, Ken Bernstein pointed out that state law requires cities, even small ones, to investigate a building’s possible historic importance before issuing a demolition permit. This procedure will certainly be among the issues we will discuss.

Since 1970, with the brutal destruction of Irving Gill’s Dodge House, Southern California has maintained a strong attentiveness to its historic buildings. In essence, the loss of the Dodge House was a dark cloud with a brilliant silver lining: the formation of a well-organized preservation community.

Now, however, we must wonder if that community is losing its strength, and what we can do to recover our voice and our political power. Please join us for this important discussion.

Maslon house - before
Photos courtesy of Palm Springs Modern Committee

Maslon house - after


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

Editor: Julie D. Taylor
Internet Editor: Brent Eckerman
Art Director: Svetlana Petrovic

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

Issue Deadline: September/October 2002
August 10

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

Julie D. Taylor, Editor
SAH/SCC News
P.O. Box 56478
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

Tour and Event Information: 1.800.9SAHSCC; info@sahsc.org

SAH/SCC Executive Board
Anthony Denzer (President)
Sian Wishnap (Vice President)
Merry Donnack (Secretary)
Rina Rubenstein (Treasurer)
Brent Eckerman (Internet)

SAH/SCC Advisory Board
Ted Wells, Ted Bosley, Ken Breisch, Stephen Harby, Elizabeth McMillan, Rochelle Mills, Claire Rogger, Richard C. Rowe, Nancy Smith, Robert Winter

SAH/SCC members

New Members:
Kate Barnes
Tina Bedee
Mr. Bullet
Patrick Day
Jim Gardiner
Karen Simmons
Buzz Yudell
Deborah Schlanser
Chev Rush
Mr & Mrs Sam Rubinstein
Deborah Newsome
C. E. Parker

New Patron Members:
Bill Sarnaschke
John McNeill
Karen Simmons

New Life Members:
Peter Norton

Honorary Life Member:
Robert Persson

SAH/SCC NEWS

President’s Letter

As we continue to reflect on the recent losses of three major modern buildings in Southern California, it is interesting to also consider the media coverage of these scandals, and the renewal of an old rivalry.

Because the destruction of the two Schindler houses received almost no attention in the press, while the loss of a Neutra house generated significant publicity—locally and nationally—we are again thrust into a familiar historical conflict: Schindler vs. Neutra. And a familiar outcome. The story is well-worn. Schindler and Neutra were school-age friends in Vienna. Both admired Frank Lloyd Wright, and both saw the future of modern architecture in America. Schindler came first, to Hollywood via Chicago, and built his extraordinary house on Kings Road.

Neutra came second, encouraged by Schindler’s enthusiastic letters. They became housemates and professional partners, then, after a bitter split, rivals. As Esther McCoy observed: “Schindler and Neutra were like oil and water that don’t mix.” They didn’t speak for more than 20 years.

In 1932, when Philip Johnson curated the seminal “Modern Architecture” show at the Museum of Modern Art, he included Neutra but not Schindler. A pattern was set. Neutra’s talents and ambitions led to great success and widespread fame. He lectured internationally, published books, and even appeared on the cover of Time magazine. Schindler, for all his brilliance, remained a relatively obscure local architect.

Still, it is surprising to see the old biases still at work in the coverage of these demolitions. On their architectural merits, Schindler’s Packard House and Neutra’s Maslon House, and the numerous other publications on the pair’s exuberant and prolific work. Personal anecdotes and previously unpublished illustrations (family photos, sketches, etc.) set this book apart from the numerous other publications on the Eames legacy. Especially poignant is the story of Esther McCoy’s influence on Neutra’s talents and ambitions, leading to great success and widespread fame.

As Anthony Denzer observed: “The floor plan radically placed an open kitchen at the center of the house’s cascad­­ing pattern was set Neutra’s talents and ambitions led to great success and wide­­spread fame. The floor plan radically placed an open kitchen at the center of the house’s cascading pattern was setNeutra’s talents and ambitions led to great success and widespread fame.

When Schindler was able to end his rivalry with Neutra near the end of his life in 1953, Schindler was able to encourage their work and spirit.

The story is well-worn. Schindler and Neutra were school-age friends in Vienna. Both admired Frank Lloyd Wright, and both saw the future of modern architecture in America. Schindler came first, to Hollywood via Chicago, and built his extraordinary house on Kings Road.

Neutra came second, encouraged by Schindler’s enthusiastic letters. They became housemates and professional partners, then, after a bitter split, rivals. As Esther McCoy observed: “Schindler and Neutra were like oil and water that don’t mix.” They didn’t speak for more than 20 years.

In 1932, when Philip Johnson curated the seminal “Modern Architecture” show at the Museum of Modern Art, he included Neutra but not Schindler. A pattern was set. Neutra’s talents and ambitions led to great success and widespread fame. He lectured internationally, published books, and even appeared on the cover of Time magazine. Schindler, for all his brilliance, remained a relatively obscure local architect.

Still, it is surprising to see the old biases still at work in the coverage of these demolitions. On their architectural merits, Schindler’s Packard House and Neutra’s Maslon House, and probably more. But Schindler is again lost in the long shadow of his rival. Immediately after the destruction of the Maslon House, a well-organized publicity machine in Palm Springs sprang into action. The incident generated banner headlines and caught the attention of popular magazines.

No such outrage came with the Schindler losses. No pictures. No press releases. No reporting. It is now months later, and I wonder if the architectural community even realizes these houses are gone.

The Packard House, built in 1924, was full of ideas that still seem fresh today. The floor plan radically placed an open kitchen at the center of the house, while three wings extended from this center towards different views. As I mentioned previously in this column, the Packard House was likely the first use of gunite ever in residential architecture.

The Wolfe House was Schindler’s most beautiful building, and an ingenious response to a nearly impossible site. More and more, the house’s cascading volumes look like a direct influence for Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, which makes the Wolfe House extraordinarily significant.

Near the end of his life in 1953, Schindler was able to end his rivalry with Neutra, and their friendship was reborn. His reputation has been rehabilitated several times: even Philip Johnson later apologized, and admitted he had been wrong about Schindler’s talents and his importance. And yet here we are again.

Anthony Denzer
12-13, Friday-Saturday
Restaurant Design: An On-Site Study Tour.
A behind-the-scenes study tour of some of the most renowned restaurants in LA with on-site explanations and discussions by the designers, architects, chefs, and owners led by architect Michael Hricak. UCLA Extension. Westwood; Pre-Tour Lecture, Friday 7-9PM. Tour: Saturday 8:30AM-5:30PM. $225. res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org.

13, Saturday
Egyptian Theatre

13, 20, 27; August 3, Saturday
Warhol: Learning From Los Angeles
Art history course discussing Warhol's relationship to LA and its cultural industries with critic Bruce Hainley. Includes private discussions in the MOCA galleries, in-depth dialogue, and film screenings. UCLA Extension; $170-195; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org.

14, Sunday
The 2002 Home Tour Series: Venice.
Self-driving tour of homes designed by Holger & Yuriko Shubert, Rockefeller Hircoik Architects, and Steven Ehrlich Architects. Docents and project architects available at each location to answer questions and act as guides. AIA-LA; 11AM-4PM. $50; res. req. 213.819.0777.

28, Sunday
Warm, Dry, and Noble: The Philosophy of Sam Mockbee.
Discussion on the work of the late architect. UCLA Hammer Museum. 310.443.7049. See listing below for details.

28, Sunday
Warm, Dry, and Noble: The Philosophy of Sam Mockbee.
Discussion on the work of the late architect. UCLA Hammer Museum. 310.443.7049. See listing below for details.
3, Saturday
Art, History, and the Creation of Flower Arrangement. Lecture and workshop exploring the history of our enduring fascination with flower arranging with floral designer Laura Armstrong, UCLA Extension. Westwood; 10AM-3PM; $165; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org.

3, Saturday

6, Tuesday
Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin. Discussion presenting a myth-shattering interpretation of the hidden costs that the growth of San Francisco has exacted on its surrounding regions and new theories of urban development by historical geographer, journalist, and television producer Dr. Gray Brechin. California Historical Society, 679 Mission St. at Third, San Francisco; 5:30PM. 415.357.1848. californiahistoricalsociety.org.

10, Saturday
Art Deco in America. Lecture on the influential factors and chic forms of the Art Deco style in architectural and interior design, furniture, and decorative objects with art historian Eleanor Schrader Schapa. UCLA Extension, Westwood; 10AM-1PM; $50; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org.

11, Sunday
The 2002 Home Tour Series: Wood Air (Bel Air; Westwood, and Brentwood). Self-driving tour of homes designed by SPF Architects, DesignARC, and Studio 1030 Architects. Docents and project architects available at each location to answer questions and act as guides. AIA/LA; 11AM-4PM; $50; res. 213.639.0777.

11, Sunday

13, Tuesday
The Scandal of Allegory: Issues of Meaning in Andy Warhol. Discussion with Slight Research Institute director and USC art history professor Thomas Crow. Zipper Concert Hall, Colburn School of Performing Arts, 200 South Grand Ave., LA; 7PM. $7.12, res. req. 213.626.682; moca-la.org.

14, Wednesday
Captain John Sutter, A Living History Chatataqua Presentation. Part of the Marin Museum of the American Indian Lecture Series with David Fenimore. The Marin Art and Garden Center, Merced County Historical Society, 415.897.4064.

16-18, Friday-Sunday
History Walkabout: Pleasonton. Walk through historic downtown Pleasonton, the setting for numerous films, hosted by Gary L. Holloway. California Historical Society, San Francisco; 10AM Friday, 10AM and 2PM Saturday and Sunday; $15-20, res. req. 415.567.1048. californiahistoricalsociety.org.

17, Saturday

18, Sunday

18, Sunday

22, Thursday

23, Friday
Creative Negotiating Strategies for Architects and Engineers. Program on common negotiation mistakes, screening for dangerous clauses, and other pitfalls with architectural business consultant Michael Stroop. AIA/LA, Wiltem Center, Wilsire and Western, LA; 8AM-12:30PM. $75-90. 213.639.0777.

24, Saturday
A Day in Greece. Lecture on the architectural wonders of this exceptional country with gallery director Irini Valla-Rickerson. UCLA Extension, Westwood; 9AM-4PM; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaextension.org.

Preservation Summit
A meeting of the minds on the current state of preservation in Southern California. 2-4PM; res. req. 800.635.6555. See Page 1 for details.

Gamble House

Grier Musser Museum
402 S. Bonnie Brae St., LA. 213.413.1814. An 1887 furnished bedroom and kitchen modeled after the original El Pueblo de Los Angeles, plus a film of LA. history. 213.628.1274.

Haas-Lilienthal House
200 Franklin St., SF. 415.441.3000. Queen Anne style Victorian house open to the public as a museum to explore the city's architectural and historical past. Wednesday-12:30PM; Saturday, 12:30-PM; Sunday, 11-4PM. 415.707.1808.

Heritage Hill Historical Park
25151 Serrano Rd., El Toro. 949.855.2028. Four historic buildings, including El Toro School, Bennett Ranch House, Serrano Adobe, and St. George's Episcopal Mission, that span the time of Mexican ranchos to the beginning of the citrus industry. Tours: Wednesday, 2PM; Saturday-Sunday, 11AM and 2PM. 949.855.2028.

Heritage House
8190 Magnolia Ave., Riverside. 951.682.5273. Queen Anne style Victorian mansion built in 1891. Tours: Tuesday-Sunday, 10AM-5PM; Saturday, 10AM-5PM; Sunday, 11AM-5PM.

Lantermann House
4425 Encino Dr., La Colleta Flintridge. 818.790.1421. A historic 1914 Craftsman House, formerly home to the Lantermann family and other local civic leaders, with newly opened archive reading room. First and third Sunday of each month, 1-4PM.

The Marston House

Rancho Los Alamitos
18127 S. Alameda St., Compton. 310.548.7777. Historic site Including an adobe house and barns. Tours: Wednesday-Sunday, 1-5PM.

Sepulveda House
822 N. Main St., LA. 213.632.1274. An 1887 furnished bedroom and kitchen modeled after the original El Pueblo de Los Angeles, plus a film of LA. history. Tours: Monday-Saturday, 10AM-3PM.
Richard Neutra was well published in his time, to the point of local criticism. However, he was a stranger to hype and public relations. Among many others, he started his own firm in 1964 and has received numerous awards. He was featured on the cover of The New York Times in 1950, and grew to the title of Collaborator on such projects as Eagle Rock Community Building, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, and Genealogical Institute in Brentwood, among many others. He started his own firm in 1964 and has received numerous awards and publication for his work. Among the institutions where he has presented and taught are the Monterey Design Conference, UCLA Extension, and the LA Conservancy.

Sokol House, Richard J. Neutra, 1948. Overlooking Silver Lake in Los Angeles, the property had a pitched-roof restriction, which Neutra used as an asset, together with his vocabulary, to form a particularly compelling composition.

Buck House, R.M. Schindler, 1924. The Buck house displays Schindler's unique esthetic. We do not focus on roofs and walls. Rather there is only one continuing solid almost flowing around the voids.

The recent findings of the burgeoning field of memetics (check on the internet) would have been anathema to Richard Neutra. Thought contagion, which memetics studies, was not his goal. Especially with his clients, he felt that anyone had to be convinced in order to weather future stylistic onslaughts. His writings and buildings were not confrontational—not demanding a leap of faith to a new belief system. He knew such work would be met by the innate resistance of conditioning. Memetics, on the other hand, says we adopt new things, of nature to his interiors. Separately and simultaneously he wrote the evidence that he knew could lead others to his consensus of the architectural world is looking for. Currently it seems to be innovation and influence. Neither says anything about innate emotional response or livability, which were the goals their work was created around.

Schindler's work was the most diverse and innovative of the two. He dresses with his dexterity. Almost by definition his work is not easily replicated, which would be a necessity for thought contagion, as revealed by memetics. I believe we tend to reject a building if we do not see it as a useful prototype, predicting the future.

Neutra was the more influential of the two. His "look," if not always the purpose for it, was the most copied form of modernism worldwide, in my opinion. Others agree his houses were not all the same as claimed. Yes, they were made from the same vocabulary of elements that served his purposes, but the compositions were loose, romantic, and individually tailored to the site.

Both men were authentic masters, neither was polluted by para-architectural ideas or effects. Schindler ignored the time-line concepts, for example, by being an individual, making each project different, often with a new esthetic in the spirit of Wright. Neutra established his own criteria and stuck to them as his materials and compositions changed somewhat over time. He was also ignoring the tyranny of any time concept involving past, future, or progression.

Neither would be caught dead with a symbol or a metaphor, or pollute his architectural art with any other literary device. To the end the big common rejection was of formalism. Many other modern architects began to bring preconceptions from modern art and also overall iconic form, with easy replication power, to the drafting table. I maintain that formalism vs. site-and-program-developed solutions is the real eternal fight, even within each of ourselves. It can all be traced back to the Greek philosophers according to Edward R. De Zurko's Origins of Functionalist Theory. It is not modern vs. traditional, but purposefully derived esthetics vs. any prepackaged ones.

**Comments**

We see the fifties now through different eyes because the approach to design has changed. Today the methodological approach is still at least partly necessary to solve needs, but when it is not talked of as the driving force, it loses its driving force. What is lost is the image of a building as the expression of the problem-solving process. When an image that imprints instantly on the mind is the objective, it is all too tempting to design the outside first.

We should extol over artistry wherever we find it; it so rarely gets an opportunity, even within each of ourselves. It can all be traced back to the Greek philosophers according to Edward R. De Zurko's Origins of Functionalist Theory. It is not modern vs. traditional, but purposefully derived esthetics vs. any prepackaged ones.

Richard Neutra was the more influential of the two. His "look," if not always the purpose for it, was the most copied form of modernism worldwide, in my opinion. Others agree his houses were not all the same as claimed. Yes, they were made from the same vocabulary of elements that served his purposes, but the compositions were loose, romantic, and individually tailored to the site.

Both men were authentic masters, neither was polluted by para-architectural ideas or effects. Schindler ignored the time-line concepts, for example, by being an individual, making each project different, often with a new esthetic in the spirit of Wright. Neutra established his own criteria and stuck to them as his materials and compositions changed somewhat over time. He was also ignoring the tyranny of any time concept involving past, future, or progression.

Neither would be caught dead with a symbol or a metaphor, or pollute his architectural art with any other literary device. To the end the big common rejection was of formalism. Many other modern architects began to bring preconceptions from modern art and also overall iconic form, with easy replication power, to the drafting table. I maintain that formalism vs. site-and-program-developed solutions is the real eternal fight, even within each of ourselves. It can all be traced back to the Greek philosophers according to Edward R. De Zurko's Origins of Functionalist Theory. It is not modern vs. traditional, but purposefully derived esthetics vs. any prepackaged ones.
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.

- The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 20-page guide for $10 each
- Modernism for the Masses: three-fold brochure with floor plans of Eichler homes visited on the tour to Orange County for $10 each
- Cool Pools: Booklet and cassette tape from “Reflections on Water Cool Pools Along Sunset Boulevard” for $10 each
- Reconsidering Lloyd Wright: 21-page, four color booklet from “Reconsidering Lloyd Wright House Tour” for $10 each
- Union Station and MTA Transit Center: A two-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos for $2 each
- Eagle Rock — LA’s Home Town: 17-page handbook with history and self-guided tour of Eagle Rock, by Jeff Samudio, for $4 each
- David Gebhard Annual Review: Essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr., and Mitzi March Mogul for $5 each

Prices include sales tax. Total: $?

- check enclosed (payable to SAH/SCC)
- charge my credit card: □ AmEx □ VISA □ MC

Send to: SAH/SCC, P.O. Box 56478 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

For more info contact 310.440.7320.

Worthy recipients of 2002 grants: Bembridge House/Long Beach Heritage; Doheny Mansion/Mount St. Mary’s College; El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles/KCET—Community Televising of Southern California; Ennis House/Trust for Preservation of Cultural Heritage; Exposition Park Rose Garden/Exposition Park Interregional Community Center; Far East Building/Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation; Garber Building (El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument)/Friends of the Museum of Chinese American History; Historic Pasadena Fountains/City of Pasadena; The Hugo Reid Adobe, Queen Anne Cottage, and Coach Barn/California Arboretum Foundation; Lopez, Adobe/City of San Fernando; McCarty Memorial Christian Church/General Assembly of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ; Mount Wilson Observatory/Mount Wilson Institute; Paint Farm Light House/City of LA Department of Recreation and Parks; R.M. Schindler House/Friends of the Schindler House; VDL Research House/Cal Poly Pomona Foundation; Santa Monica City Hall/City of Santa Monica; Walker House/City of San Dimas; Temple Mishkon Tephilin.