Sunday, August 15th, at 2:30PM, the SAH/SCC Authors on Architecture program and Hennessey + Ingalls bookstore will present a lecture by Barbara Lamprecht on her new book *Richard Neutra,* followed by a book signing. The event is free and open to all SAH/SCC members.

**Lamprecht on Neutra**

SAH/SCC Lecture and Book Signing Sunday, August 15th, 2:30 PM

The noted author, Neutra expert, and former SAH/SCC Executive Board member Barbara Lamprecht will be present at Hennessey + Ingalls bookstore to speak about and sign copies of her newly published book, *Richard Neutra* (Taschen, 2004).


It is notable to mention that her new book was on the May 30th bestseller list of the *Los Angeles Times* for non-fiction paperbacks.

"More seriously," she continues, "initially I expected to just condense parts of the first book, but that didn’t feel comfortable to me, and so this little book has ‘new researches,’ as the Germans say. For example, new research reinforced the importance of the 1933 Mosk House as well as Neutra’s stunning and radical approach to schools and education that transformed the architecture of schools as we know them today.

“Second, with only 22 projects, the book challenged me to determine which Neutra, so to speak, should be revealed to people as an introduction to him. Choosing was both maddeningly difficult and the most fun, as it required me to have a thesis, an actual idea."

Lamprecht has written about architecture for two decades for publications, such as *The Architectural Review,* after working as a newspaper journalist for many years. She teaches architectural history in the architecture program at Pasadena City College and practices as an architect. Raised in western Canada, she lived in Boston, New York, and Oxford, England, before moving to Pasadena.

This special SAH/SCC collaboration with Hennessey + Ingalls is a free event and open to the public. Hennessey + Ingalls is located at 214 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, 310.459.9074.
Irrespective of taste or style, it is always gratifying to see the press and the public respond with enthusiasm to a new work of architecture, especially if the building is trying something new, and so I’ve been eagerly watching the reaction to Seattle’s new public library by Rem Koolhaas, which opened in May to great acclaim.

In fact, “great acclaim” may be an understatement; the building has attracted surprising amounts of praise and little negative reaction. In its infancy, the Seattle Public Library has become, like its creator, a media darling. Among the effusive coverage, Herbert Muschamp’s breathless column in the New York Times stood out. “In more than 30 years of writing about architecture,” Muschamp wrote, “this is the most exciting new building it has been my honor to review.”

I haven’t visited the new Seattle Library, and my point here is not to discuss whether building in particular (although I am amused by its imagery—it looks like a pile of books that has been draped by cobwebs). Instead, this episode is for me throwing new light on the role of the architectural critic.

In short, I don’t think we are very well-served by today’s brand of architectural criticism, and this problem has pronounced consequences for the profession. It may not seem, intuitively, that the critic should play such an important role. After all, architects design buildings, builders complete them, and then critics simply describe their strengths and weaknesses to the small fraction of the public who happens to be interested.

But the architectural media could, and should, play a much more important role in public education. The practice of architecture is obscure to the common person. Buildings are difficult, too; few people don’t know how to take them. Some architects benefit from this elitist arrangement, I suppose, but it is not tenable. For our environment, the mathematics is simple: design quality is in direct proportion to the level of public education.

Most of today’s criticism only serves to make architecture more obscure, by focusing on its abstract meanings, rather than tangible issues of technique and practice. For example, in the Los Angeles Times’ review of the Walt Disney Concert Hall last October, Nicolai Ouroussoff wrote: “what makes the building so moving as a work of architecture is its ability to express a deeper creative vision; the recognition that ideal beauty rarely exists in an imperfect world.”

This inquiry is not directed at Ouroussoff personally—after all, he was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize and deserves congratulations—but I think his quotation is illustrative of the gap that exists between the discourse and ordinary people. Is the deep theoretical position of the Disney Hall actually the finalist for a Pulitzer Prize and deserves congratulations—but I think his is not tenable. For our environment, the mathematics is simple: design quality is in direct proportion to the level of public education.

If our architectural critics understood their role more like that of investigative journalists, and truly made it their mission to explain buildings in all their complexity, we would be miles ahead.

Think of our architectural critics, for a moment, in relationship to our food critics. Many of our best food critics actually understand food science and explain it to the readers. Even restaurant reviewers, for the most part, understand how the average person “uses” a restaurant and a restaurant review. People want to know what’s on the menu, how the food is prepared, what the atmosphere and service are like, and how much things cost. You never see a review in which an Italian restaurant is criticized for not being French; the question of genre is simply accepted as a matter of taste.

At its best, such as in the work of writers like Ruth Reichl or Jeffrey Steingarten, food writing is a branch of investigative journalism. When Steingarten, writing for Vogue magazine, wanted to explain the proper French baguette, he went to Paris. But he didn’t simply consume bread. He participated in the official awards for the city’s best loaf, where the criteria for excellence were clearly stated. Then he visited the top 10 winning bakers, interviewed them, watched them work. He checked the temperatures of their ovens. He wrote down their recipes and tested them himself at home, experimenting with different water temperatures and types of flour (certain French loaves, he found, contain unique properties that contribute to the best dough). He named the best bakers, their addresses and hours, and printed a recipe for the perfect baguette. He’s given similar treatment to dishes ranging from coq au vin, to tacos, to dog food.

Can you imagine an architectural writer operating at this level of specificity and sophistication while still speaking to the ordinary reader? What would be the equivalent, in architecture, of a recipe approved in a test kitchen? Can you imagine it printed in the newspaper?

Tony Denzer
1, Thursday

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Screening of films of ephemeral conceptualist and “air architect” Steling! Yves Klein. Panel discussion on conceptual architect Yves Klein with art historians Sylvie Luttringer and Jean Marc Cho, art critic Rachel Kushner, architect and exhibition curator Frances Perrin, and MAK Center assistant director Lauren Firstenberg. MAK Center: Schindler House, 835 N. Kings Rd., West Hollywood; 7PM. $5, 323.651.1510. mackcenter.org.

17, Saturday

24, Saturday
Architectural History of Los Angeles. Illustrated course on building and interior styles, followed by a tour of significant buildings in Peshing Square, with Santa Monica College professor and SAH/SCC Lifetime Member Eleanor Schneider Schap. UCLA Extension; 1010 Westwood Blvd., LA; 5-10PM; $80-$95; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclalexension.org.

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24, Saturday
Student Show. Exhibition by The Artists’ Gallery art association in conjunction with the California Heritage Mule’s Everyday Life in California watercolor exhibit. California Heritage Museum, 2812 Main St., Santa Monica; 11AM-4PM; $2-$3; 310.392.9537.
21. Saturday

A Day in the Greek Islands. Illustrated lecture on vernacular architecture, Byzantine churches, and preserved houses in the Greek islands with Orange Coast College art gallery director Iris Valeria Rickerson, Ph.D. UCLA Extension, 1010 Westwood Blvd., LA, 9AM-3PM; $60-75; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaxtension.org.

21. Saturday

California Outdoor Paintings. Exhibition by the Malibu Art Association and Topanga Art Gallery in conjunction with the California Heritage Museum's Everyday Life in California watercolor exhibit. California Heritage Museum, 2812 Main St., Santa Monica; 11AM-4PM; $2-3. 310.392.8537.

23. Monday

DNA: Design and Architecture. Radio program for design and architecture in Los Angeles with Frances Anderton. 89.3 FM KCRW; 2-3PM. 310.450.5163. kcrw.com.

28. Saturday

A Love Story in Design. Illustrated lecture on the innovative architecture, interiors, and decorative arts of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald Mackintosh with Santa Monica College professor and SAH/SCC Lifetime Member Eleanor Schrader Schapa. UCLA Extension, 1010 Westwood Blvd., LA, 10AM-1PM; $35-50; res. req. 310.825.9971. uclaxtension.org.

28, Saturday

Terra Cotta. Walking tour of terra cotta buildings in LA. Los Angeles Conservancy; LA; 1PM; $8; res. req. 213.623.2489. laconservancy.org.

29, Sunday

Garfield Heights, Pasadena. Tour of historic district of Craftsman-style, Mission Revival, and Victorian homes. Garfield Heights; 3-PM; $12-15. 626.797.3110. garfieldheights.org

Ongoing

Architecture Tours LA.

Tours of Hollywood, Silver Lake, Hancock Park, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Pasadena, and Downtown, as well as Frank Gehry's work, guided by SAH/SCC Member Laura Massino. Architecture Tours LA; $60-70; res. req. 323.464.7868.

Historic Houses

The Doctor's House Museum
1601 W. Mountain, Brand Park, Glendale. 818.424.4290. A restored Queen Anne Eastlake-style home built in 1886. Tours: Sundays; 2-4PM.

Grier Musser Museum
403 S. Bonnie Brae St., LA. 213.413.1814. Queen Anne style Victorian house from 1886. Tours: Wednesday-Saturday; 12-4PM by appointment.

Heritage Walk Museum
321 N. Broadway, Escondido. 760.743.8020. Museum includes the 1888 Santa Fe train depot and blacksmith shop in historic Grape Day Park. Tours: Thursday-Saturday; 1-4PM.

Hollywood House

San Gabriel Mission
15415 E Don Julian Rd., San Gabriel. 626.282.5191. Fourth oldest mission in California. Tours: Daily, 9AM-5PM.

Sepulveda House
622 N. Main St., LA. 213.628.1274. An 1887 furnished bedroom and kitchen modeled after the original El Pueblo de Los Angeles, plus a film of L.A. history. Tours: Monday-Saturday; 10AM-3PM.

Villa Montezuma
Jesse Sheppard House
1925 K St., Santa Monica. 310.239.2211. An 1887 Queen Anne style house designed by Comstock and Trotscheck for the architect. Jesse Sheppard. Tours: Sunday; 11AM-5PM.

Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum
15415 E. Don Julian Rd., City of Industry 626.986.9400. homesteadmuseum.org. An 1870s country home constructed around an 1840s adobe built by William and Nicolaus Workman, and La Casa Nueva, a 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival mansion built by the Workmans' grandson Walter Temple. Tours: Wednesday-Sunday; 1-4PM.
Historic Fresno Celebration
SAH/NCC and SAH/SCC
Lectures and Tours
Saturday-Sunday, October 22nd-23rd

Postcard from Ojai

A few weekends ago, a fortunate group of tour-goers, including myself, enjoyed a great day visiting the Ojai homes of architect and builder Rodney Walker. We started the day with coffee and pastries, and a lecture and slide presentation on the work of Walker and his connections to other prominent mid-century modern architects of the time. The buses were loaded and we were off to see the first house of the day.

We drove up into the southern foothills of the Ojai Valley to the Lloyd residence, which is perched at the top of a slope overlooking the valley to the north. The house was well-integrated into the existing oak trees and had large expanses of floor-to-ceiling glass, bringing the nature and views right into the house. The roof had a distinctive butterfly shape and natural woods were used throughout. This residence was well sited to provide the best views and solar orientation, yet provided privacy to the bedrooms. The house was built of cost-saving materials, a practice that Walker used in many of the homes he built. He developed the innovations needed to use these materials in an elegant and modern way.

Our group then headed back east to have a delicious lunch at a local restaurant, where we broke into groups and discussed what we had just seen. After lunch we headed further east to see the remaining four houses on the tour.

The first house we saw was the McCann residence, an early Walker home in the valley, with a great covered porch looking out over orchards and oak trees. This house had an unusual ceiling profile in the main living space, with the ceiling sloping in two directions, like a great tent. The site was unique with large boulders scattered about. There was a separate guest studio and attached carport that was quintessentially modern.

The next house for me was the Pearson residence. Although it had been substantially remodelled, the home still exuded the clean modernism that Walker imbued in his work. The north façade looked out over a beautiful pool, while the south side of the L-shaped home enclosed a beautifully landscaped courtyard. The interiors were sensitively designed to stay in the modern vernacular.

Next on the tour was the Harvey residence, by far the most dramatic of the five homes we saw. The main living space had a huge vaulted ceiling that continued outside of the house and into the landscape. There was even an oak tree that the open-trellis portion of the roof wrapped around, further reinforcing the connection between the building and nature. The main living space was very dramatic and central, with the bedroom wings separated on either side of the main space. Like the others, this home was nestled among the oaks and orchards surrounding the property.

The last house I visited was the Semel residence, which was similar to the previous home in that it had a large, vaulted ceiling in the living room. This room had its ceiling sloping upward with its highest point right above the dramatic fireplace. Floor-to-ceiling glass provided views in several directions, including looking out over a pool. The floor of the main space was polished concrete, which shines like oiled leather. This was probably the best preserved of all of the homes.

Overall it was a great day. The weather was ideal with clear skies and moderate temperatures. It was truly a beautiful location and an enjoyable experience that our fortunate members were able to have. Hats off to board members Sian Winsip, John Berley, and especially Rodney's son Craig Walker, for all of their hard work in preparing for the tour, and to the other board members that provided support. Thanks also to the kind owners who allowed us to tramp through their living rooms!

Brent Eckerman

Rodney Walker's youngest son Craig describes the plan organization of the Lloyd residence from 1961.

The remarkably expressive roof of the Harvey Residence from 1958.