Modern Patrons: Van Der Kar in Elysian Park

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Modern Patrons: Van Der Kar in Elysian Park
SAH/SCC Tour & Talk: Elysian Park
Sunday, September 26, 2010, 2-4PM

Join us Sunday afternoon for another signature event in our Modern Patrons program with a very special opportunity to visit the Henry and Barbara Shire residence in Elysian Park. Designated a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument in 2009, the Shire residence was constructed in 1949, and remains a superbly intact design by a remarkably talented but modest architect Joseph van Der Kar.

Van Der Kar possessed a strong desire to create modern living environments that enriched and nurtured the life and well-being of his clients. He was also dedicated to providing housing to the masses during his tenure working with Konrad Wachsmann and Walter Gropius developing residential designs for mass-production by the short-lived General Panel Corporation. Along the way he developed close friendships with “Second Generation” architect Gregory Ain and noted landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, who designed the landscape for the Shire house.

This will be a particularly unusual opportunity to enjoy the house while we learn firsthand about the Shires and their special relationship with the architect from their sons who grew up in the house. In the Cultural Heritage Commission Summary Report, Henry Shire is described as an artist and carpenter who did custom cabinetry work for R.M. Schindler, and continued to work with clients after Schindler’s untimely death in 1953.

Modern Patrons: Van Der Kar in Elysian Park: September 26, 2010; 2-4PM; $10 each for SAH/SCC Patron and Life Members; reservations required; space is limited; tickets will be made available to general membership should the opportunity arise, on a first-come first-served basis; registration—see order form on Page 8, call 800.972.4722, or go to www.sahscc.org.
Farewell to Friends

Elaine K. Sewell Jones
SAH/SCC Life Member Elaine K. Sewell Jones passed away last month at the age of 92. She possessed a warm generous spirit, incredible memory, and tireless dedication to preserving the legacy of her late husband A. Quincy Jones. It doesn’t seem so long ago that we were all together at the Schindler Buck house for an SAH/SCC celebration. As it turned out, it was also Valentine’s Day, which made the afternoon that much more special. Elaine shared many fond remembrances about the heady times that followed the war, other Valentine’s Day escapades, and about the infectious enthusiasm that permeated the time. How lucky we were to have her with us then. It should remind us how fundamental it is to find time out of our busy schedules for the architectural torch-bearers, such as Elaine, so that we learn firsthand from those who were there, about how this region was transformed, and how Southern California became an inspiration that would transcend the country and the world. Elaine will be remembered as a great inspiration to those who knew her, and her seemingly boundless energy and commitment to education will outlast us all.

John Berley

John Leighton Chase
On a very unlucky Friday, August 13th, we lost John Chase to an unexpected heart attack at the early age of 57. The urban planner for the City of West Hollywood for the past 14 years, John was a champion of great design and good works. He was a former Executive Board member of SAH/SCC, just one of many titles and volunteer committees he contributed to. There are many wonderful tributes online, which I encourage you to look up, and several books that will maintain his legacy. John was a great friend and supporter to so many, including me, and my life was made more colorful (literally and figuratively) for knowing him. More than that, through his dedication, work, and vision, John touched the daily urban lives of countless others who will never know him, but whose lives are better because of him.

Julie D. Taylor
Phoenix-based architect Edward (Ned) B. Sawyer will present a history of his work with fellow architect Alfred Newman Beadle on a series of modern apartment buildings originally commissioned by Arts & Architecture Magazine. Although many people are familiar with the legendary California Case Study House Program started by Arts & Architecture publisher John Entenza, it is often forgotten that the program shifted focus in the 1960s from single-family residential projects to multi-family, multi-unit apartment buildings. Sawyer will talk about his work with Beadle on the Case Study apartments in Phoenix, AZ, as well as their long-standing collaboration on some modern buildings. This presentation will feature archival materials and seldom-seen photographs of their work. Sawyer will present his talk at the main branch of the Santa Monica Public Library (Moore Ruble Yudell, 2006).

A Shared Perspective:
Saturday, September 18, 2010; 1PM;
Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium,
Santa Monica Public Library, Main Library,
601 Santa Monica Blvd.; free;
310.458.8600.

Architectural of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism 1900-1930
by Thomas S. Hines

Given the title, architectural responses to those special qualities of the sun, light, and heat, as experienced in the benevolent climate and topography of Southern California. Rather, this book is really about architecture under the sun: a dense and fulsome offering of the story of Modernisms in Southern California according to Thomas S. Hines, professor emeritus of History and Architecture at UCLA.

Note the “s.” Hines concurs with other recent scholarship in that that there are many “Modernisms” that are not linear and cannot be neatly dispatched. Thus, the 756-page tome is actually an aggregation of histories, beginning by locating our beloved Craftsman architecture not as concluding the 19th century but inaugurating the 20th, and concluding with the large-scale corporate modernism at which Los Angeles excelled, especially that of Welton Becket, A.C. Martin, and William Pereira.

The book also includes extensive material that recapitulates work for which Hines is well regarded, especially his book on Irving Gill (Monacelli 2000) and his seminal biography of Richard Neutra (Rizzoli 2006). Other chapters address important architects or styles, including Gregory Ain, Gordon Drake, Craig Ellwood, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Rudolf Schindler, Raphael Soriano, Frank Lloyd Wright, Lloyd Wright, Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, some Case Study House architects, and John Lautner. However, even though Hines notes in his introduction that his choices extend beyond Los Angeles—Gill practiced primarily around San Diego, for example—other accomplished architects and firms who uniquely, even joyfully, responded to climate, light, and heat in their chosen locales, such as Palm Springs-based Albert Frey and Buff, Straub, and Hensman in Los Angeles and Pasadena, are striking omissions.

While the narrative on Schindler is notable in weaving primary and secondary sources to illuminate the man as well as the architect, Lautner comes across as an eccentric comet in the boon of a shared perspective.

continued on page 4
Lautner’s architecture was theatrical sometimes, absolutely, but a stunt, never. His genius lay in exploiting the limits of technologies and materials. He could demonstrate an economy of means so taut that one can almost hear the strains of tension, or just as easily display a king-of-the-jungle swagger with the same material, especially concrete. And yet, his 1960 Schaffer House in Glendale is one of the most serene houses in Los Angeles, where wood, brick, nature, modernity, and geometry are gently woven together with wood, glass, brick, and landscape. In any case, the book reflects what is clearly Hines’ confident command of research and writing amassed during the past four decades, including both primary and secondary sources, and is rife with personal anecdotes that humanize these monumental figures.

Still, given our unrelenting sun, any brief for a practicing architect in Los Angeles is no less than to modulate the relationship between sun, structure, and site, whether aesthetically or on behalf of the user. A clear and consistent analysis of how this diverse crowd of Modernists negotiated light and heat would have been welcome, but is sometimes obscured or not addressed in the wealth of detail.

These architects considered light in all its spectrums, from technical to existential and philosophical. Swiss architect Frey, a one-time protégé of Le Corbusier and famed minimalist, once told me that the reason he settled in Palm Springs, where the San Jacinto Mountains rear up from the desert, was because at its heart, “architecture is all about light and shadow.” Critic Siegfried Giedion championed “Licht und Luft,” light and air, as primary vehicles for banishing dank, diseased Victorian cities. For many of the De Stijl architects and even Neutra’s future patron, the wealthy Dutch industrialist Cornelius Van der Leewig, light embodied universal truth. Neutra viewed light as no less than urgent-care medicine and a tool for promoting productivity and well-being, whether at work, school, worship, home, day, or night, where he used exterior soffit lighting to extend the radius of vision and “defensible space” beyond the building envelope and into the shadows. (But he made mistakes, too. Some of Neutra’s best-known buildings reflected almost an endearing lack of understanding of how punishing the Southern California sun can be: the master suite of the noted 1929 Lovell Health House in Glendale is one of the most serene houses in Los Angeles, where wood, brick, nature, and surprising—many by Julius Shulman, and certainly never before collected in one handsome volume.)

Critic Hines writes lavishly about Gill’s landscaping, but it should also be mentioned that his lack of overhangs did not mean buildings insensitive to solar gain; his architecture was unfinished, Gill wrote, until vines and landscaping grew to temper heat. As in his earlier book on Gill, Hines compares him to the notorious Adolf Loos, but this conjectural linking still seems dubious to me. Buff, Straub, and Hensman, the mid-century masters of the glass-and-wood post-and-beam “USC School,” created a warm Modernism that integrated a love of the woodsy Arts and Crafts with Miesian rigor and an acute attention to orientation and site for access to nature as well as for climate control.

Overall, Hines’ incredibly ambitious work is a skillfully rendered and rich mine of architectural history. There may be many Modernisms indeed, but most are present here under one roof. The skillful graphic design by Lorraine Wild and Xiaoqiong Wang achieves a balanced sense of scale between text and myriad beautifully reproduced photographs—old and familiar, as well as new and surprising—many by Julius Shulman, and certainly never before collected in one handsome volume. One final note. This book is substantial, not only intellectually, but physically. It is in the “book-as-object” category of desire. If such an object itself is to have a history, good bindings don’t only contribute to its quality, they are the sentinel nodes of its longevity. Until we subject this book to the desirables, a lot of use, we may not know its lifespan. But just in preparing this review, I suspect the binding underestimates the pleasure at hand.

Barbara Lamprecht, M.Arch. Former SAH/SCC Executive Board Member Barbara Lamprecht is author of Richard Neutra: Complete Works (Taschen, 2000).

Rizzoli International Publications; hardcover; 756 pages; $95.
1, Wednesday
Architecture Landscape Product: You Don’t Need To Decide, It’s all Connected. Lecture with architect & landscape architect Mark Rios. USC Architecture, Harris Hall (Flewelling 1940), LA; 6PM. 213.740.2723. arch.usc.edu.

1, Wednesday
The Last Wright. Screening of documentary on FL Wright directed by Lucille Carra. AIA/ SF; San Francisco Main Library (Pei Cobb Freed/SMWM 1996), 100 Larkin St.; 6PM; res. req. 415.362.7397. aiasf.org.

4, 18, Saturday

8, Wednesday

10, Friday

11, Saturday

15, Wednesday

16, Thursday
Three Voices in Design. Panel discussion moderated by writer/blogger Alissa Walker with architects Julie Smith-Clementi, Margaret Griffin, & Jennifer Siegal. AFLA; Ilan Dei Studio, 2100 Zeno Pl., Venice; 7-8:30PM. 310 302 9222. ilandeistudio.com.

19, Sunday
Union Station. Walking tour of architecture & history of LA’s Union Passenger Terminal (Parkinson; Christie, Gilmam, Wirth; Tomson 1939). LA Conservancy; 800 N. Alameda St.; 10AM; $5-10. 213.623.2489. laconservancy.org.

22, Tuesday
Design is One: Multi-Scalar & Multidisciplinary Approach to Architecture. Lecture with designer Elena Manferdini. USC Architecture, Harris Hall (Flewelling 1940), LA; 6PM. 213.740.2723. arch.usc.edu.

25, Saturday

25, Saturday

27, Monday

29, Wednesday
Housing as Grain or Icon. Lecture with architect John V. Mutlow. USC Architecture, Harris Hall (Flewelling 1940), LA; 6PM. 213.740.2723. arch.usc.edu.

29, Wednesday

SAH/SCC EVENT
18, Saturday
A Shared Perspective. Talk on CHS architect Ned Sawyer. See Page 3 for details.
3, Sunday
Adobe to Atomic: Glendale’s Ranch Heritage. Docent-led home tour. Glendale Historical Society; Casa Adobe de San Rafael (1871; WPA 1932), 1330 Dorothy Dr.; 10AM-4PM; $20-30. 818.242.7447. glendalehistorical.org.

4, Monday

6, Wednesday

6, Wednesday

8, Friday

9, Saturday

11, Monday

13, Wednesday

15, Friday

16, Saturday

16, Saturday

17, Sunday

17, Sunday
Off Sunset: Brentwood to Palisades. AIA/LA fall home tour including house by Stephen Ehrlich. AIA/LA; 11AM-4PM; $65-75; res. req. 213.639.0777. aialosangeles.org.

17, Sunday

18, Monday

21, Thursday

23, Saturday

23, 24, Saturday, Sunday
Haunts of Angelino Heights. Spooky evening scavenger hunt in one of LA’s oldest neighborhoods. LA Conservancy; Out of the Box Events; 4PM; $25-30; res. req. 323.799.1374. outoftheboxevents.net.

26, Tuesday
Won’t You Be My Neighbor? Race, Class, & Residence in LA. Panel with UCSB black studies professor George Lipsitz, UCLA architecture & urban design professor Dana Cuff, & Community Coalition executive director Marqueece Harris-Dawson. UCLA Hammer Museum (Barnes 1990), 10899 Wilshire Blvd.; 7PM. 310.443.7000. hammer.ucla.edu.

27, Wednesday

27, Wednesday
Memory is the Soil of Architecture. Lecture with Berlin/Tel Aviv architect Zvi Hecker. SCI-Arc (Paige 2000), LA; 7PM. 213.613.2200. sciarc.edu.

FEATURED EVENT
15, Friday
ConstructionLA. Benefit structures made from cans of food. See listings for details.

“Melt Away Hunger” by CO Architects. Photo: Tom Banner
### Masters of Modernism: 8-Page, two-color brochure featuring works of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright in Bakersfield.

- $5 each

### Paul Tay, Architect: 4”x 8” color brochure featuring five modern ranch-style homes in Long Beach
- $3 each

### Architecture: Inside and Outside:
5”x5” folded color brochure featuring Santa Barbara’s Lotusland, Casa del Herrero, and Val Verde
- $3 each

### Out of the Shadow: 24-page, two-color brochure from Phoenix travel tour featuring the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Al Beadle, Blaine Drake, Paolo Soleri, Edward B. Sawyer, Bennie Gonzales, and Will Bruder
- $12 each

### A Block in Glendale: pocket-size fandeck of cards featuring five diverse properties— including a Paul Williams residence—plus historical background information on the Brockmont Heights subdivision
- $3 each

### Rodney Walker 3 30 90: 12-page brochure featuring nine homes on five sites, as well as the architect’s use of the three-foot module
- $8 each

### Space and Learning: eight-page, four-color brochure on the historical and contemporary legacy of LA school architecture, featuring projects by Richard Neutra, Thom Mayne, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, and others
- $8 each

### Rodney Walker: The Ojai Years: tri-fold, black-and-white brochure featuring Walker’s important residences in Ojai, with pictures and article by historian David Mason
- $5 each

### Kesling Homes: bi-fold, two-color brochure from the “Kesling Modern Structures” tour
- $2 each

### Union Station and MTA Transit Center: bi-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos
- $2 each

### Modernism for the Masses: tri-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floor plans of Eichler homes visited on the Orange County tour
- $10 each

### The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 20-page guide from Ventura tour
- $10 each

### Reconsidering Lloyd Wright: 21-page, four-color booklet from “Reconsidering Lloyd Wright” house tour
- $10 each

### David Gebhard Review: essays on the Works Project Administration by Robert W. Winter, Orville O. Clarke, Jr., and Mitzi March Mogul
- $5 each

- $7 each

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SAH/SCC EVENT TICKETS

Modern Patrons—September 26th

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