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Unfinished Spaces

SAH/SCC Film Screening & Panel Discussion
Sunday, April 21, 2013, 1PM

Please join SAH/SCC at the Santa Monica Public Library (Moore Ruble Yudell, 2006) for a free screening of the documentary film "Unfinished Spaces" (2011) by Alysa Nahmias and Benjamin Murray.

In 1961, three young architects—Vittorio Garatti, Roberto Gottardi, and Ricardo Porro—were commissioned by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara to create Cuba's National Art Schools on the grounds of a former golf course in Havana. Construction of the radical designs began immediately and the school's first classes soon followed. As the dream of the revolution waned, construction was abruptly halted and the architects deemed irrelevant in the prevailing political climate. Forty years later, the schools are in use, but remain unfinished and decaying. Castro has invited the exiled architects back to finish their unrealized dream. This fascinating documentary chronicles the site's design, decay, and potential rebirth.

Following the screening, SAH/SCC will host a panel discussion with members and Cuba architecture experts, SAH/SCC Advisory Board and Life Members Stephen Harby and Ken Breisch, along with SAH/SCC Member Peter Moruzzi. Harby has led several architectural study tours to Havana. Breisch is SAH National First Vice President and a professor of architectural history at the USC School of Architecture. Moruzzi is the author of *Havana Before Castro: When Cuba Was a Tropical Playground* (Gibbs Smith, 2008), about which he lectured for SAH/SCC in 2009.

Unfinished Spaces: Sunday, April 21, 2013; 1PM; Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium, Santa Monica Central Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica; free; seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis; 310.458.8600.



National Art Schools in Cuba (1961-1965) by Vittorio Garatti, Roberto Gottardi, and Ricardo Porro.

Photos: Peter Moruzzi

SAH/SCC President's Letter

The End of An Era

During the past 15+ years of my affiliation with SAH/SCC, I've had the opportunity to meet many original owners who commissioned modern residences during the postwar period. By and large, these people were men and women of relatively modest means who looked at the thousands of generic homes that were popping up all over Los Angeles and wanted something more. Whether they could articulate it at the time or not, we'll never know. But that "something" was a high level of architectural design that would facilitate their visions of the idealized Southern California lifestyle. And so was born a generation who sought the architect for an enhancement of their way of life.

In 1945, a young Lore Kingsley read "The California Way of Life," an article in the October 22nd issue of *Life* magazine. The subtitle of the article was "Climate and the automobile create a new pattern of indoor-outdoor living." The article profiled three families. They were

headed by a fireman, a salesman, and a composer, respectively. Lore was drawn to the Stothart Residence (1937) for its clean modern lines, expanses of glass, and indoor-outdoor living. Lore and her husband, Joe, were looking to build a house of their own and contacted the Stothart Residence designer, J.R. Davidson. The article also featured architects Harwell Hamilton Harris and Richard Neutra, whom the Kingsleys also interviewed before awarding the commission. Joe Kingsley, a men's clothier in the San Fernando Valley, ultimately selected Davidson as their architect for the home that was completed in 1946.

Ultimately, Davidson gave the Kingsleys everything they hoped for: a modern, dynamic home in which they could develop a cultured lifestyle and raise a family. The house served them well into their golden years, with Lore passing away, at home, in February—six years after Joe's death.

A significant aspect of Los Angeles' architectural legacy is rooted in the postwar confluence of migration, open space, climate, and economic development that defined postwar Southern California. Los Angeles was an architectural mecca for the everyman. That is why it is not just the elite or the grand that is responsible for Los Angeles' architectural contribution. And why relatively modest homes are significant—both architecturally and culturally.

Today, architects and architecture are no longer in the purview of those with relatively modest means. Custom residential architecture lies squarely in the laps of the rich and famous. With the passing of the current generation of prophetic homeowners, we also lose access to a group of modern patrons who were just real people with utopian dreams.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE: We want to extend congratulations to SAH/SCC Life Members Kelly Sutherland McLeod, FAIA, and Polly Osborne, FAIA, on their elevation to Fellowship by the American Institute of Architects.

—Sian Winship



Lore Kingsley (left) and Esther McCoy.
Photo: Marvin Rand. Archives of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution

Tour and Event Information:
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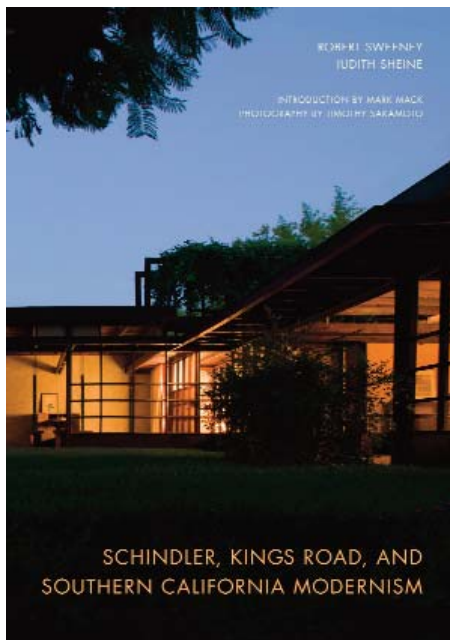
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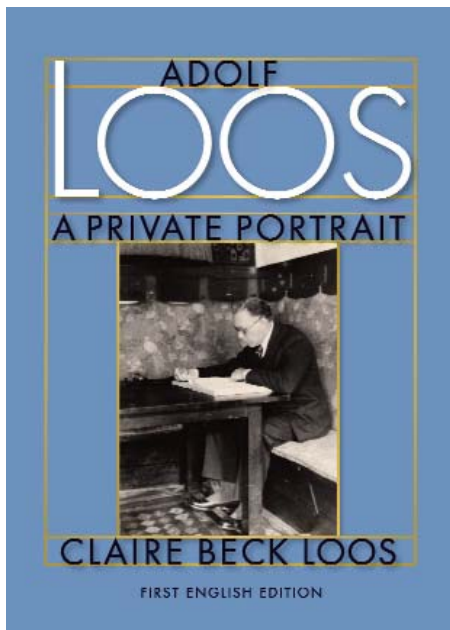
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University of California Press; hardcover; 112 pages; \$39.95.



DoppelHouse Press; hardcover; 200 pages; \$24.95.

California Modernism has a three-part agenda. It burrows deep into the sequence of construction of the iconic 1922 Schindler-Chace house, designed as a duplex for R.M. and his wife, Pauline, and contractor Clyde Chace and his wife, Marion. Second, the book illuminates the contribution of Pauline, an unflagging activist, self-proclaimed Bolshevik, and gifted writer. Through her story a whole new house emerges, suddenly a fulcrum overflowing with people experimenting with everything from progressive education to dance. Finally, the book recasts R.M.'s importance as a far more influential Modernist than history has credited him for. In some ways this is a needed revision, but other polemical speculation warrants far further investigation, especially regarding Schindler's possible influence on the work of Erich Mendelsohn and Mies van der Rohe. In any

Schindler, Kings Road, and Southern California Modernism

by Robert Sweeney and Judith Sheine

Adolf Loos: A Private Portrait

by Claire Beck Loos

Adolf Loos (1870-1933) was one of Rudolf M. Schindler's principal influences. Loos, the Viennese theorist and architect, is widely thought to be 20th-century architecture's most controversial figure. His scathing jeremiads on hypocrisy and ornament have generated their own torrent of interpretations, only to prove the enduring fecundity of his ideas.

But Schindler and Richard Neutra knew the man as well as the work. They gravitated to Loos because he was an original, the Classicist that Modernism can't ignore. Both younger architects frequented the *Bauschule* (building school) Loos founded in 1912. Huddled over *kaffee* or exotic American concoctions (for his students) and curdled milk (for Loos' stomach), he propounded his theories on the fly and conducted *flâneur*-esque building tours. The peripatetic teaching method would be familiar to the Stoics, and particularly apt for a school with no facilities and a Socratic faculty of one.

Schindler, especially, seized the potential of Loos's *Raumplan*, in which interior spaces vary according to function and status, resulting in three-dimensional puzzles rich in complexity. Schindler interpreted this emphasis in section, rather than in plan or elevation, against a backdrop of a new country, geography, and climate.

That is the historical connection between Loos and Schindler, yet these two books differ sharply in objective and tenor. Written by the two leading scholars of his work, the Schindler monograph distills ideas in earlier, larger works by the authors, as well as in a similar book on the Kings Road House by Kathryn Smith.

Schindler, Kings Road, and Southern

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continues

case, the house is a radical watershed by any criterion. The two essays flank new photography by Timothy Sakamoto, who captures the dwelling's earthy materiality, the integration of Japanese sensibilities in the play of light and shadow, and, above all, the building's intimacy with its setting.

Adolf Loos: A Private Portrait was written by Claire Beck Loos, the Viennese architect's third wife. Claire, a photographer, a beauty, and a secular Czech Jewess, married—against her parents' wishes—an aging genius, broken in health and hopeless with money, but tender, impulsive, and unforgettable. They wed in 1929, when she was 24 and he was 58. She left "Dolfi" fewer than three years later and was devastated when he wouldn't take her back. Spoken from his sick bed, he declared: "A woman who leaves me may not come back!" Nonetheless, Loos wept at her loss to his friend, the artist Oskar Kokoschka, and she managed to see Loos before he died in a sanatorium. For the next eight years, she appears to have no permanent home. In 1941 she boarded a train for the concentration camp Terezin, was transported to Riga, and killed on her arrival.

Claire wrote the book—first published in 1936—to raise money for the tombstone Loos designed for himself. The book is so very alive with his presence, however, that surely it was a means to keep him close to her. Filled with family photographs, it was recently republished in English. Beck Loos's niece and nephew, Janet Beck Wilson and Charles Paterson, along with his wife Fonda and their daughter Carrie, compiled supplemental family commentary, helping to place the Loos couple in the context of their larger world and history.

In razor-sharp anecdotes, some a paragraph, some several pages, Claire writes in the present tense. The result is altogether Loosian: timeless, with as little ornament, but as much empathy, as any protégé could deliver. Here, theory in the flesh walks in. Claire recounts several telling moments: Loos dancing the Charleston with Josephine Baker; Loos having the foyer ceiling of the brilliant Villa Mühler (1930) painted a dark blue at the last minute to "lower" the still-too-high ceiling so that it conveyed the feeling of shelter he required. He scolds clients regularly and protects his craftsmen: "Never bargain a worker down ... Give him rather a little more, and you will receive a thousand times better work." Shocked at his wife's letting an unattended soap cake dissolve away, he turns red: "Don't you know that I have spent my entire life fighting against ornamentation, against the waste of energy, against the waste of material?" We do know, Herr Professor Loos. Thank you Claire Beck Loos and family, for sharing with us your exasperating, exhilarating adventure with him.

—Barbara Lamprecht

Barbara Lamprecht, M.Arch., is a Neutra scholar, writer, and qualified architectural historian specializing in Modern buildings

Exhibitions of Note

Two exhibitions at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara will be of interest to SAH/SCC Members. They both run through May 12, 2013. More info: www.museum.ucsb.edu.



Union Minute Man Service, Union Oil Station (1945-1947), by Kem Weber.

Image: Courtesy Architecture & Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara

Gas Station DeSign: A Tour of the Collection surveys the architecture and images of gas stations from the early days of automobile ownership to the 20th-century car culture in the mid-1960s. This visual tour emphasizes the pivotal and contested role of signs used for advertising and has been organized by Christina Chiang, Assistant Curator, Architecture & Design Collection. The exhibition is supported by Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck, in memory of Reuben Katz, owner/operator of "Commercial Super Service" truck terminal, Los Angeles.

Walter S. White (1917-2002): A First Glimpse of the Archive comprises a selection of drawings of Walter S. White's work in the Coachella Valley put together by students in a graduate seminar of SAH/SCC Life Member Prof. Volker M. Welter. The seminar is conducting preparatory research for a larger exhibition on the architect, which is scheduled for autumn 2014 at the museum.

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Architecture: Inside and Outside: 5"x5" folded color brochure featuring Santa Barbara's Lotusland, Casa del Herrero, and Val Verde



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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Kesling Homes: bi-fold, two-color brochure from the "Kesling Modern Structures" tour



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



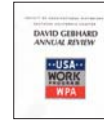
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Modernism for the Masses: tri-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floor plans of Eichler homes visited on the Orange County tour



_____ at \$10 each

The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura: 20-page guide from Ventura tour



_____ at \$5 each

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



_____ at \$7 each

On Parallel Lines: The Sarasota Modern Movement 1948-1966: 26-page brochure featuring Sarasota School architects.



_____ at \$8 each

Ray Kappe-Apotheosis: eight-page brochure features five Kappe Houses from 1959 to 1966 in the Royal Woods development of the San Fernando Valley.



_____ at \$8 each

Conjunctive Points: four-color, 11"x17" brochure featuring a 20-building walking tour of the Hayden Tract, designed by architect Eric Owen Moss and developed by Samitaur Constructs.



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Digital Exhibit Explores SoCal, 1940-1990

The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West will present an innovative, web-based digital exhibition this spring with more than a dozen authors, critics, and scholars curating photographs from the 70,000-strong Southern California Edison archive of The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. "Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940-1990" is part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A., an initiative of the Getty celebrating the city's modern architectural heritage through exhibitions and programs at arts institutions in and around Los Angeles starting in April 2013. "Form and Landscape" will launch in May and will be available through www.huntington.org. The exhibition includes images relating to regional landscape and infrastructural change in Los Angeles according to several themes: "scale," "text," domesticity," "mobility," "noir."



Pokey's Restaurant (1955) at Beverly Drive at Santa Monica Blvd, Los Angeles.
Photo: Joseph Fadler. Southern California Edison Photographs and Negatives.
Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens