

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS/ SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER



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NEWS

July/August

2011

# William Krisel, Architect

SAH/SCC Film & Talk Saturday, September 17, 2011, 1PM

If you missed the standing-room-only screening of the acclaimed documentary "William Krisel, Architect" last year at the Getty Center, mark your calendar for this very special afternoon with the architect on September 17, 2011, at the Santa Monica Public Library (Moore Ruble Yudell, 2006). Following the screening, architect William Krisel, AIA, will be on hand to discuss his career and to field questions from the audience. Throughout his 60-year career, Krisel is best known for his residential developments in Palm Springs with the Alexander Construction Company. Bringing modernism to the masses, he has designed more than 40,000 individual housing units across the U.S. The documentary—directed by Jake Gorst and produced by Design Onscreen, a Denver-based nonprofit dedicated to producing, preserving, and promoting high-quality films on architecture and design—explores his life and work. "I'm a firm believer that good modern design can make your life happier, more productive, and more enjoyable," says Krisel, a great champion for the architect's significance in society.

The talented and charismatic Krisel is also responsible for many significant modern non-residential buildings throughout Southern California. Come learn about them from the architect—in his own words. This event is free. Seating will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis.

William Krisel, Architect: Saturday, September 17, 2011; 1PM; Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium, Santa Monica Public Library, Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.; free; 310.458.8600.



Krisel-designed Alexander home in Twin Palms. Photo: John Ellis



William Krisel in the 1970s. Image courtesy: Design Onscreen



Krisel's 1969 Sandpiper development in Palm Springs. Image: courtesy Design Onscreen

## **Rethinking Welton Becket**

The City of Santa Monica recently decided to revisit its intentions for one of its designated landmarks, the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium (1958) by Welton Becket and Associates. There were many questions that came out of the discussion regarding what to do with this civic icon, but a larger question looms that has dogged historians and preservationists for the past decade: Why are the buildings of Welton Becket and Associates so hard to love?

Thomas S. Hines' recent book, *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism, 1900-1970,* comes the closest, so far, in explaining Welton Becket and Associates. Hines positions the Becket practice as one of the firms that took the principles of the International Style to scale in large, post-war, corporate, commercial, and institutional projects across the Southland. His is an interesting interpretation, yet it leaves the reader somewhat unsatisfied in that it perhaps implies the less-successful buildings in the Becket oeuvre are the failure of the International Style to transcend scale.

Having recently investigated the mid-fifties work of Welton Becket and Associates, I believe one possible answer lies in a working culture that made the firm a young designer's paradise, but left a murky architectural legacy: individual designer autonomy.

Conversations with former Becket employees have revealed that Welton Becket and Associates not only hired top young creative talent, but quickly empowered them with the freedom to design large, significant, and highly visible projects for the firm. Most young designers loved it. Becket provided a platform and a support network for the imaginations of these freshly milled designers unconstrained by a sharply articulated central design vision for the office. His philosophy of "Total Design" relied more on the integration of the various aspects of architecture (e.g., planning, landscape, interiors) than on an intellectual manifesto or visionary mantra that would result in a more recognizable architectural language or style. By making client service a high priority, as Becket did for his stable of larger-than-life entrepreneurial and industrialist clients, the result is a large quantity of projects that appears to lack cohesion and that varies in quality.

During the 1990s, while I was working at the creatively driven advertising firm Chiat/Day, founder Jay Chiat made a decision to expand the agency beyond the renegade, creative boutique it had always been. "Let's see how big we can get before we get bad," Jay used to say. The agency grew. Inevitably, the sheer volume of work made it impossible for all the ads to reflect Jay and his well-articulated, dogmatic, creative vision. As a percentage, the jewels became fewer and fewer. They were harder to find in the portfolio, but the jewels remained, nonetheless.

That said, the work of Welton Becket and Associates deserves sensitive study; study that may reach outside the traditional paradigm of architectural history to include context and organizational behavior. Perhaps then, and only then, will we be able to fully understand and embrace the architectural legacy of Welton Becket instead of running away from it.

Sian Winship



## Welcome New SAH/SCC Board Member

SAH/SCC is pleased to welcome new Executive Board Member Mark Piaia, AIA, LEED AP, RIBA. Mark has been a Life Member of SAH/SCC for almost eight years, along with his wife Anne Zimmerman, AIA, LEED AP. "I've enjoyed so many of the tours and talks that I felt it was time to contribute to SAH/SCC in a greater way," said Mark, who moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco in 2003. He has 30 years of professional architectural experience on a broad range of building types, including educational, corporate, civic, cultural, and other mixed-use projects, as well as adaptive reuse of historic facilities. Mark-currently a Principal with ZGF Architects-earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and is also a member of the LA Conservancy and MAK Center.

### Tour and Event Information:



SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

1.800.972.4722; info@sahscc.org SAH/SCC NEWS is published bi-monthly but the Society of Architectural Historians

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#### Julie D. Taylor, Editor

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Questions: Call 800.9SAHSCC.

# Ojai: A Postcard History

## SAH/SCC Lecture & Book Signing Saturday, July 16, 2011, 1PM

Join SAH/SCC on Saturday, July 16, 2011, at 1PM at the Santa Monica Public Library (Moore Ruble Yudell, 2006) for a lecture and slide presentation on the architecture of Ojai. Craig Walker, former SAH/SCC Board Member and co-author of the book Ojai: A Postcard History (Arcadia, 2010), will share images and insights about the architecture of Ojai, past and present. (Note: This event was originally scheduled for this past February, but was postponed until now.)

The presentation will draw heavily from Ojai's legacy of Mission Revival architecture and feature the work of such architects as Mead and Requa. Wallace Neff. Carlton Winslow, Arthur B. Benton, Robert Stacy-Judd, Arthur C. Martin, Roy Wilson, George Washington Smith, Julia Morgan, and J. Cleveland Cady. Emphasis will be given to rarely seen or lost commercial and institutional buildings documented through postcards.

The book project was organized by the Ojai Valley Museum, with many of the postcards coming from its own extensive collection. Collectors living in the Ojai Valley also donated to the project.

Craig Walker is a life-long resident of Ojai and the son of Case Study House designer Rodney Walker. His lecture is sure to offer an insider's view of this very special California community. The book, Ojai: A *Postcard History*, will be available at the event for sale and signing by the author.

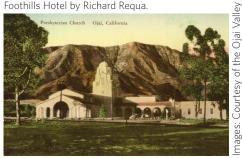
Ojai: A Postcard History: Saturday, July 16, 2011; 1PM; Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium, Santa Monica Public Library, Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.; free; 310.458.8600.



Valley Country Club by Wallace Neff. Ojai



Foothills Hotel by Richard Regua



Presbyterian Church by Carlton Winslow.

# Patrons Pasadena Postcard



Photo: Anne Zimmerman

April's Modern Patrons event brought SAH/SCC members to the Wirick House in Pasadena, designed by Calvin Straub. SAH/SCC Treasurer John Berley (in photo, left) engaged homeowner Barbara Wirick in lively conversation about the house in the soaring, doubleheight living room that overlooks the steep hill the house is part of. Built in 1958, the Poppy Peak Historic District house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places just last year.

# SAH/SCC Members

### Life Members

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continues

Recently, SAH/SCC Board Members and a few friends were invited take the journey our water takes: from the dams of the Colorado River via aqueduct and pumping station, up mountains and through deserts, until it arrives cleanly and reliably at the LA Basin.

This trip is part of the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) educational outreach program. SAH/SCC Executive Board Member and Mayor of Glendale, Laura Friedman, also sits on the Water Board of the District and made the gracious invitation.

At 7AM, Friday, May 13th, with bags stowed and Starbucks in hand, we piled into the chartered bus outside Glendale City Hall and headed for the F.E. Weymouth Treatment Plant in La Verne. Here we learned how water is processed, sampled, and cleaned for safety before it's released for consumption. We also saw the tasting room. Like a Napa Valley winery, tasters here sample for sweet, bitter, salty, or any trace tastes or smells to make sure all our thirsty palates are happy.

Next stop was Diamond Valley Lake, a 260-billion gallon reservoir, in Hemet, where we watched dozens of high school science students compete in a solar kayak race sponsored by MWD. We visited the Water + Life Museums, at the base of the lake, which tell the stories of water and of archeological finds during the lake's excavation. Designed by Lehrer Architects of LA for MWD as a give-back to the community, Water + Life was named the first LEED Platinum museum for its sustainable design.

Gene Camp, near the Arizona border, was our home base, and was affectionately known as a "Motel 3" by our ebullient and informative Inspection Trip Manager Pat Chandler. Gene Camp is on MWD land, and feels like a military base for water. I was expecting to see Jim Nabors bring out the hearty meals we were served each day by the friendly crew!

Early the next morning, we pontooned on Copper Basin, a private MWD reservoir that serves as a way station for the water along its lemming-like journey to LA. Here we glided across the unspoiled reservoir—which was built in the 1930s along with the entire aqueduct system.

The idea of the Colorado River Aqueduct (conceived by William Mulholland) was to channel water from the Colorado River to LA. Designed by MWD chief engineer Frank E. Weymouth, the Colorado River Aqueduct was the largest public works project in California during the depression and employed 10,000 people at a time. From Lake Havasu (which means "blue" in Navajo, thank you Pat), the water is harnessed into power as it travels through Parker Dam.

Along the 242-mile journey from Havasu, the water travels primarily downhill. Gravity does the job, and the water sails smoothly in the open canals at ground level and behind high, guarded fences. However, at five key points along our mountainous state, the water must be lifted, and this is where the engineering begins to manifest its genius. Through a series of pumping stations and concordant reservoirs, the water is gracefully forced up (sometimes 500 feet at a time) to a new height so it can continue its journey from Arizona to the LA basin.

When the route downhill (about four feet per mile) comes across a natural wash in the desert, the engineers decided not to fight Mother Nature (building the dams was enough of a battle). Here, they created a reverse siphon, where water flows under the wash. Through speed and gravity, the water comes up the other side. Again, the engineers had the foresight to create these reverse siphons with room to easily expand as water needs grew along with the population.

We re-entered the LA area with Roman Polanski's "Chinatown" playing on the video system: a perfect cinematic closure to a weekend where water was center stage.



Water + Life Museums designed by Lehrer Architects. Photo: Tom Lamb

ARTHUR & GLORIA ROSENSTEIN ROB ROTHBLATT RICHARD CAYIA ROWE JEFFREY B. SAMUDIO TRUDI SANDMEIER STEVEN SAUTE LAWRENCE SCARPA ELEANOR SCHAPA ANN SCHEID JAMES M. SCHWENTKER III PATRICIA SIMPSON CECILIA SINGER MARK SLOTKIN CORBIN SMITH GIBBS M. SMITH NANCY & KYLE SMITH JANANN STRAND CAROLYN STRAUSS LYNN MARIE SULLIVAN VERN SWANSEN MARIE TARTAR & STEVE EILENBERG **REGINALD THATCHER** RAUN THORP M. BRIAN TICHENOR, AIA A. TISCHLER SARAH FLYNN TUDOR MAGGIE VALENTINE DANIEL VISNICH WOLFGANG WAGENER & LESLIE ERGANIAN ROBERT D. WALLACE OUINCY WARGO JOHN & LORI WARNKE FRIC & KAREN WARREN DR. PATRICIA A. WARREN RON WATSON DAVID R. WEAVER JOHN H. WELBORNE, Hon. AIA/LA TED W. WELLS VOLKER M. WELTER DR. ROBERT WINTER TERI SUE WOLF MR. & MRS. DAVID YAMADA **BOB YOUNG** JOYCE ZAITLIN DAWN SOPHIA ZIEMER STEVEN ZIMBELMAN ANNE ZIMMERMAN & MARK PIAIA

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John Ellis

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NEWS

CLAIRE ROGGER

Life Members, continued

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS/SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

The group at Copper Basin Reservoir.

Photo: Hakhamanesh Mortezaie

# SAH/SCC PUBLICATIONS

# TIII

at \$5 each Masters of Modernism: 8-Page, twocolor brochure featuring works of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright in Bakersfield.



\_\_ at \$3 each

Paul Tay, Architect: 4"x 8" color brochure featuring five modern ranchstyle homes in Long Beach



at \$3 each

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



at \$12 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



\_\_ at \$3 each

A Block in Glendale: pocket-size fandeck of cards featuring five diverse propertiesincluding a Paul Williams residence-plus historical background information on the Brockmont Heights subdivision



at \$8 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



at \$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



\_ at \$5 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



at \$2 each

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

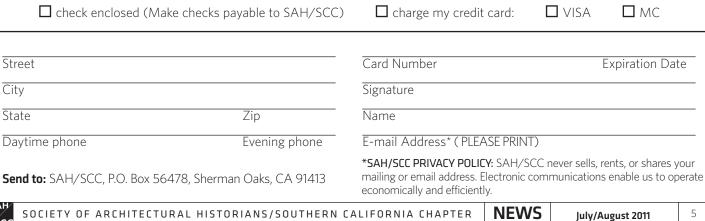


at \$2 each

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

## SUB-TOTAL

(\$1 postage fee will be added to all orders)



### at \$10 each

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





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



at \$10 each

Reconsidering Lloyd Wright: 21-page, four-color booklet from "Reconsidering Lloyd Wright" house 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



**On Parallel Lines: The Sarasota Modern** Movement 1948-1966: 26-page brochure featuring Sarasota School architects. \_\_\_\_\_ at \$7 each

TOTAL

# SAH/ORDER FORM

# JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

SAH/SCC is a 501c 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to providing its members with opportunities to learn about and experience the rich architectural heritage of Southern California and beyond. Our volunteer board members create tours, lectures, travel tours, and other events that explore the ideas behind the architecture as well as the buildings that result from them. From modern to craftsman, from Spanish Colonial to contemporary, our programs are the best-kept secrets in Southern California!

# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- Advance notice of all SAH/SCC events—important because they usually sell out just to members
- 20-30% discounts on tour and event ticket prices
- Bi-monthly E-news with printable newsletter
- FREE tickets to our annual Members' Celebration event
- Special Members-Only E-Alerts about upcoming events
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(two names at same address)	= \$
Life membership at \$650 each	= \$
Corporate membership at \$500 each	= \$
Student membership at \$30 each	= \$
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□ charge my credit card: □ VISA □ MC

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

All event ticket sales are final.

### We are sorry, refunds cannot be accommodated.

\*SAH/SCC PRIVACY POLICY: The SAH/SCC never sells, rents, or shares your mailing or email address. Electronic communications enable us to operate economically and efficiently.

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