

NEWS

September/October

2011



Twin Palms. (See Page 3.) Photo: John Ellis

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LA's Olympic History

SAH/SCC Annual Members' Celebration Saturday, November 5, 2011, 1-3PM



Paul Ziffren Sports Resource Center, 1988. Photo: LA84 Foundation



Eugene W. Britt House, 1910. Photo: Office of Historic Resources

Join SAH/SCC as we explore a seminal part of Los Angeles history, the Olympics, at the LA84 Foundation headquarters and library. The Foundation, whose mission is to serve youth through sport and to increase knowledge of sport and its impact on people's lives, is headquartered in the Eugene W. Britt Residence (Alfred F. Rosenheim, FAIA, 1910). In addition to experiencing the impressive three-story, red-brick Colonial Revival, attendees will also view the Paul Ziffren Sports Resource Center (Heidi Hefferlin Architect, 1988) which houses the largest sports research collection in North America.

Highlights of the collection include ephemera associated with the 1932 and 1984 Olympic Games of Los Angeles. This year's SAH/SCC Members' Celebration will address how the 1932 Games played an important role shaping the development of Los Angeles.

The West Adams Britt mansion was originally built for the pioneer Southern California attorney, who came to California from Missouri in 1887 and took up residency in Los Angeles in 1900. In 1910, he commissioned architect Rosenheim, a fellow Missourian, to design the elegant residence for his family. Rosenheim—who also designed a home for Edward L. Doheny—was noted for his 1904 Hellman Building, the 1908 A. Hamburger & Sons Department Store, and the 1907 Second Church of Christ Science, also in West Adams. Rosenheim's architectural legacy, however, was overshadowed by scandal in 1921 when he was removed as Secretary of the Los Angeles Municipal Arts Commission for accepting a bribe from a jewelry store owner for approval to erect an ornamental clock on the sidewalk.

Heidi Hefferlin, AIA, the architect of the library addition, worked previously for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Richard Meier & Partners Architects, and is now partner in the Tennessee firm of Hefferlin + Kronenberg Architects.

The annual SAH/SCC Members' Celebration is free to all SAH/SCC members as a "thank you" for your generous support over the past year. Each year, the event offers members access to a rare architectural (and/or cultural) resource. This year, there is something for everyone: period revival, contemporary architecture, and an opportunity to learn more about how the Olympic Games have shaped our city.

In addition to the program, members will be treated to light refreshments and the opportunity to engage Board Members and other members in our mutual love of Los Angeles. We encourage you to bring friends who would enjoy a special afternoon of architecture, cultural history, sport, and fun. Their entry fee can go toward full SAH/SCC membership that day.

Members' Celebration: LA's Olympic History: Saturday, November 5, 2011, 1-3PM; Free for SAH/SCC Members in good standing; \$20 for non-member guests (applicable toward new membership on that day); reservations required; see order form on Page 5, call 800.972.4722, email info@sahscc.org, or go to www.sahscc.org.

SAH/SCC President's Letter

Why Can't We All Just Get Along?

While writing my Masters of Historic Preservation thesis this summer, I unwittingly became embroiled in what seems to be an ongoing linguistic debate between architectural historians and preservationists: is modern a style?

The historians were quick to answer: no. The preservationists offered a less dictatorial, more welcoming position: kinda. Who among us hasn't traversed a residential street in Los Angeles and said "Oh, nice Modern-style house!" Hey, if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, surely it is a duck. Heresy! Please report to the town square for flogging.

Thoroughly confused, I turned to author, Neutra scholar, and former SAH/SCC Board Member, Barbara Lamprecht, for guidance. Barbara quickly got to the heart of the matter pointing out the difference between theory and pragmatic application. Lamprecht suggested that Modernism is a philosophical construct: "...a range of questions proposed to oneself then resolved through a series of problem-solving choices architecturally." As for the pragmatic, "the answers to these questions produced a range of building elements that collectively and loosely create an umbrella for how modern architecture looks and feels."

Interesting. The "elements" are the visual language by which preservationists create the character-defining features of a style. And boy how they've tried. Virginia and Lee McAlester took a stab at it in their 1997 A Field Guide to American Houses and concluded that Modern was a style (distinct from the International Style) and Ranch was a subset of Modern. So was Minimal Traditional. Lord, have mercy. That is the sound of a generation of modern architects turning over in their graves. More recently, for SurveyLA, the Office of Historic Preservation has dealt with the matter by separating Mid-Century Modern from the International Style, from Ranch, from Minimal Traditional. That certainly feels better.

I counter, however, that the crux of the matter lies in both what Barbara Lamprecht was talking about and a shortcoming of preservation approaches to modern architecture. Frequently, the byproduct of that range of questions is invisible: it is the spatial relationship and that is not a thing at all. This gets to the latter part of Barbara's explanation: it is how modern architecture feels. And that isn't always easily discernable when evaluating historic resources in a windshield survey.

A May 7, 2011, Wall Street Journal article contended that Frank Lloyd Wright was not a modern architect and Fallingwater was "not a work of modernism [sic]." OK, the man was not a joiner and I doubt he would have adopted any "ism" other than "Wrightism," but what about the free plan? Isn't that where it all started? Wright's space certainly feels modern.

Here's another dilemma: how do you describe architecture that uses post-and-beam construction to create an open and free plan on the interior with multiple sources of natural light and expansive view corridors to the outside, but then slaps shutters and flower boxes on the exterior?

Keep asking questions. I appeal to any of you who are interested in sharing your thoughts on this topic. Write us at info@sahscc.org.

Sian Winship



Welcome New SAH/SCC Board Member

SAH/SCC is pleased to welcome new Executive Board Member Alice Gates Valania, AIA, LEED AP. Alice came from Federal Way, WA, to study architecture at USC and fell in love with Los Angeles' culture, people, and diversity. Inspired to help preserve the built landscape, Alice continued on at USC completing the Master of Historic Preservation program. As an Associate at Levin & Associates Architects, in downtown Los Angeles, she has worked on notable historic projects, such as The John Anson Ford Theatre Master Plan, Southwest Museum, and Wilshire Boulevard Temple. Particularly interested in human interaction and sacred spaces, Alice holds a dual Masters of Theological Studies and Entrepreneurial Leadership from Golden Gate Seminary. Alice and her husband Michael live in Highland Park, where Alice serves as a City of Los Angeles HPOZ Board Member.

Tour and Event Information:

1.800.972.4722: info@sahscc.org



SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

SAH/SCC NEWS is published bi-monthly by the Society of Architectural Historians / Southern California Chapter, Subscription is a benefit of membership.

Editor: Julie D. Taylor, Hon. AIA/LA Internet Editor: Brent Eckerman Art Director: Svetlana Petrovic Administration: Arline Chambers

November/December 2011 issue deadline for newsletter information and ads: October 10, 2011. Please send all ad materials, and news to the attention of the editor:

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September/October 2011

William Krisel, Architect

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

Join SAH/SCC for a special screening of the acclaimed documentary "William Krisel, Architect," with guest appearance by the subject himself 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



William Krisel in the 1970s.



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

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

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Postcard From Harvard Heights

The Dennison House in Harvard Heights opened to SAH/SCC on July 30th for a fantastic afternoon of exploring and learning. The house introduction came from realtor, local resident, and historic home expert David Raposa, who relayed the story of the house of an orchardist who hired Heineman & Heineman in 1913 to design the two-story craftsman bungalow for his family. While occupied by only two families until 1950, the house then experienced 50 years as a group living center, which wore on the architecture and original features. A restoration of the interior has since brought the house back to its original beauty, which gave SAH/SCC the perfect opportunity to tour the house between owners.

After the tour of the two levels as well as the yard, attendees enjoyed lunch catered by Canter's Deli and a talk from long-time SAH/SCC Executive Board Member Merry Ovnick, an expert in Los Angeles residential architecture and author of *Los Angeles: The End of the Rainbow* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1999). She spoke on the history of the families who lived in the house and on the curving street at the end of the Washington streetcar line. The house gave way to many interesting conversations among those touring, from discovering the technology of the era to the craftsman architectural ingenuity of Heineman & Heineman—central vacuum system, empty wall openings where radiant heating once was, curved walls, and a sleeping porch. And, with the pressing heat outside upon arrival, the interior of the home, both upstairs and downstairs, remained comfortable and cool. We had a wonderful mix of attendees, and welcomed new members!





Icon and Anonymity

Saturday, May 19, 2012 University of California at Santa Barbara

"Icon and Anonymity"—a daylong conference on Californian architectural history—is looking for participants to engage in collegial round-table discussions, hosted by UC Santa Barbara's Department of the History of Art & Architecture and the Art, Design, and Architecture Museum (ADAM). Participants will partake in a tour of the ADAM exhibition "Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House," and lunch-time discussion groups, as well as in a public roundtable talk and open discussion.

"This first-ever exhibition dedicated to the oeuvre of Californian architect Cliff May draws from the archive housed at UCSB and offers a perfect opportunity to think more generally about the teaching of Californian architectural history," notes UCSB Professor Volker M. Welter. "We'll be debating if there is a specifically Californian history of architecture."

Prospective participants will be hosted, and are asked to submit a brief statement (no more than one page) of their interest in Californian architectural history and a short CV (maximum one page) by October 31, 2011. Applications to participate in the exhibition tour and lunch-time discussion may come from scholars, professionals, and graduate students teaching, researching, and engaging with architectural history in universities, city colleges, preservation foundations, public history and environmental groups, real estate, museums, architecture firms, and other organizations and initiatives concerned with Californian architecture.

For submission and questions, please contact Prof. Volker M. Welter, Department of the History of Art & Architecture, UCSB (welter@arthistory.ucsb.edu), and Prof. Simon Sadler, Design Program, UC Davis (sjsadler@ucdavis.edu), with the subject heading "Icon and Anonymity: Call for Participants."

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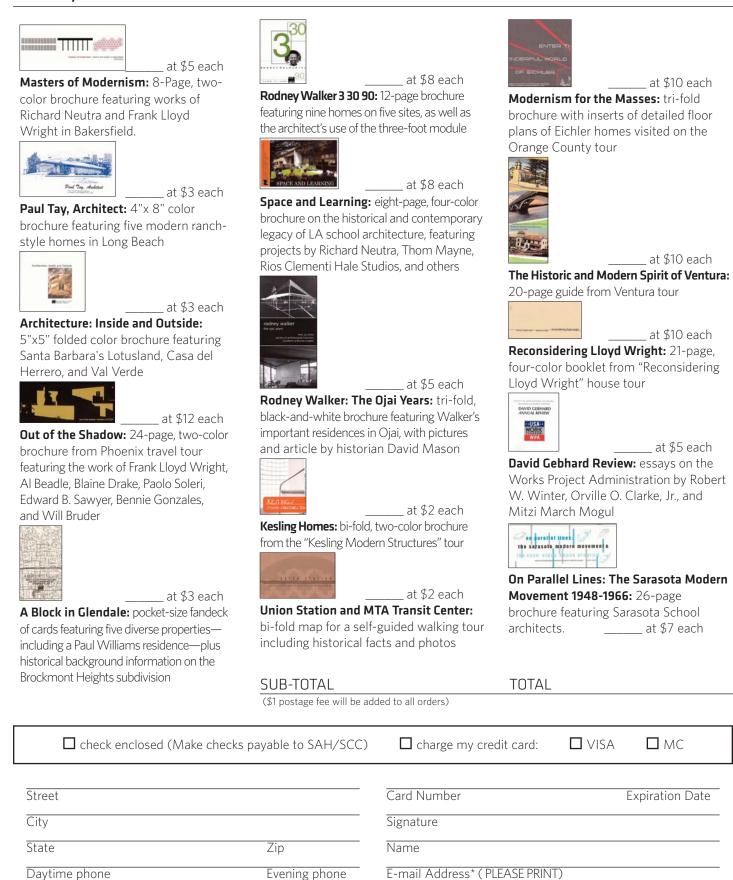
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SAH/SCC is a 501c 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to providing its members with opportunities to learn about and experience the rich architectural heritage of Southern California and beyond. Our volunteer board members create tours, lectures, travel 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:

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Members' Celebration-November 5, 2011 SAH/SCC member reservations Non-member ticket(s) at \$20 = \$ ☐ check enclosed (Make checks payable to SAH/SCC) ☐ charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MC Card Number Expiration Date Signature Name E-mail Address* (PLEASE PRINT) Street City

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Architectural historian seeks information on the Tremaine houses in the Santa Barbara/Montecito area, especially, first, the Warren Tremaine House (1970s), adjacent to the Neutra-designed Tremaine House (Moore Avenue) from the 1940s, and, second, the Kitty Tremaine House (late 1970s) in Coyote Road and its architect Paul Soderburg. If you know the whereabouts of the later, please forward this notice; if you have any recollection, photographs, or information about any Tremaine house, please contact Prof. Volker M. Welter at welter@arthistory.ucsb.edu or volkermwelter@gmail.com.