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# Ruth Shellhorn: Mid-Century in Southern California

**SAH/SCC Film Screening, Lecture, & Book Signing**  
**Wednesday, June 15, 2016, 7:30PM**

SAH/SCC presents an evening of film and talk focusing on Ruth Patricia Shellhorn (1909-2006), a landscape architect who helped define the distinctive mid-century regional aesthetic of Southern California. Author and landscape architect Kelly Comras, ASLA, will discuss and sign her newly released book, *Ruth Shellhorn* (University of Georgia Press, 2016). The book is part of the new Masters of Modern Landscape Design series published in association with the Library of American Landscape History, which produced the short film "Ruth Shellhorn: Mid-Century Design in Southern California," which is also part of the program to take place at the Pasadena Central Library (Myron Hunt and H.C. Chambers, 1927).

Most well known for her work on the Bullock's department stores and Fashion Square shopping centers—projects that redefined the commercial experience as a relaxing and entertaining activity—and for her work with Walt Disney on the original design of Disneyland, Shellhorn also designed a landscape master plan for the University of California at Riverside and other campuses. Her work also included a number of private gardens and estates for movie stars and the business and financial leaders of the Los Angeles region, including newspaper magnates Norman and Buffy Chandler, label tycoon R. Stanton Avery, and actors Spencer Tracy, Barbara Stanwyck, and Gene Autry.



Kelly Comras, ASLA.  
Photo: Hudson Lofchie.



Bullock's Pasadena (Welton Becket, 1945), Lake Avenue, 1967.

Photo: ©Courtesy of Kelly Comras.

She created landscape designs that refined the indoor-outdoor living concept, and she developed a palette of plant materials that perfectly expressed the exuberance and optimism of the post-war era, which became known as "the Southern California look." Among her palette are such flora as star jasmine, hibiscus, bougainvillea, bird-of-paradise, agave, creeping thyme, olive trees, and myriad species of palm.

*continued on Page 4*

# SAH/SCC President's Letter

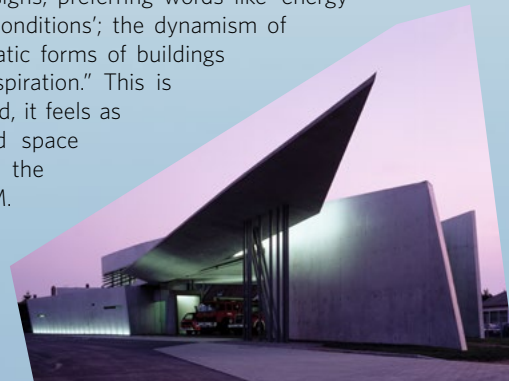


Haydar Aliyev Center (2012), Baku, Azerbaijan.  
Photo: Helene Binet

The recent passing of Zaha Hadid, Hon. FAIA, at age 65, and the subsequent tributes to the architect and her work have invariably mentioned two terms: "starchitect" and "digital architecture." Hadid has been widely praised for being the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize and for rising to a position within the male-dominated pantheon of internationally renowned architects that have dominated the media.

What has been more telling, in my opinion, has been the description of her work process. Hadid's early forms came from her abstract paintings, from which it was nearly impossible to make the translation into built structures. Over the years, technology played an important role in realizing those forms. A review of her built work reveals the evolution from the sharp, jagged forms of the Vitra Fire Station (1993) to the sinuous curves of the Heydar Aliyev (2012). The algorithm is clearly showing.

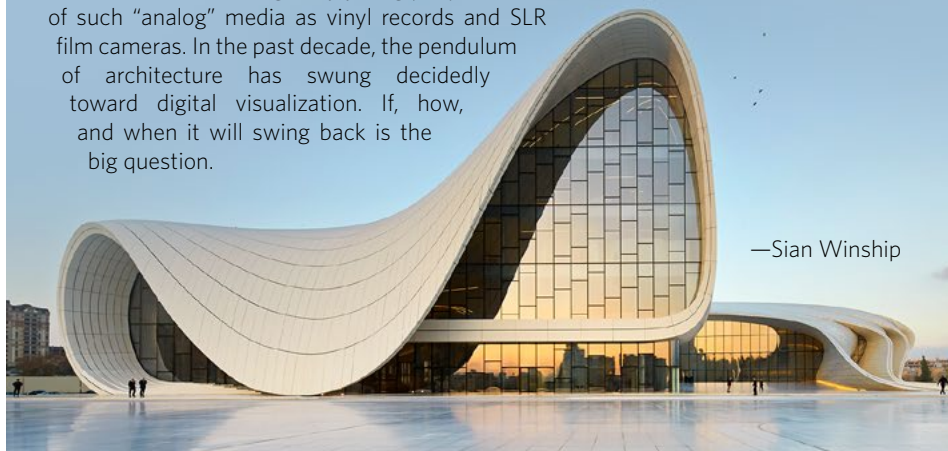
In his fascinating 2009 piece for *The New Yorker*, John Seabrook observed "Hadid rarely uses the word 'space' in talking about her designs, preferring words like 'energy' and 'field' and 'ground conditions'; the dynamism of the city, rather than the static forms of buildings within it, is her source of inspiration." This is an important observation. Indeed, it feels as though technology has relegated space to a second-class citizen over the decades. Those of us who visited R.M. Schindler's Presburger Residence (1945) late last year were reminded of the power of space in architecture. Not only did Schindler draw, he was constantly making changes in the field to capture the spatial opportunities that presented themselves—a creative process that is all but eliminated today through 3D modeling.



Vitra Fire Station (1993), Weil am Rhein, Germany.  
Photo: Christian Richters

So it seems, then, the process for architecture often drives the results. Seabrook posited that "the computer was only a tool that helped [Hadid] realize a preexisting vision; it did not create her aesthetic." I would argue they are much more tightly intertwined.

Obviously, technology is here to stay. Will it continue to drive design? Or will a nostalgia for the old way of doing things find a way back into the process somehow? I'm encouraged by young people's embrace of such "analog" media as vinyl records and SLR film cameras. In the past decade, the pendulum of architecture has swung decidedly toward digital visualization. If, how, and when it will swing back is the big question.



Haydar Aliyev Center (2012), Baku, Azerbaijan.

Photo: Hufton + Crow

—Sian Winship

## Tour and Event Information:

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

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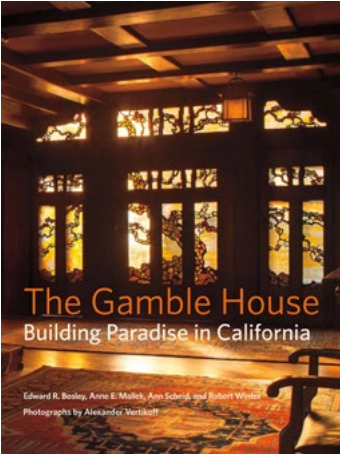
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## Authors on Architecture: Bosley on Greene & Greene and Their Clients

**SAH/SCC Lecture & Book Signing**  
**Sunday, July 24, 2016, 2-4PM**

Please join SAH/SCC and the Santa Monica Public Library (Moore Ruble Yudell, 2006) for a very special program celebrating the first book published about Pasadena's Gamble House (1908), designed by Charles and Henry Greene, in more than 20 years. Author, SAH/SCC Life and Advisory Board Member, and Director of the Gamble House, Edward R. Bosley, will speak on *The Gamble House: Building Paradise in California* (The Gamble House/USC School of Architecture and CityFiles Press, 2015).

This new book looks at the clients, David and Mary Gamble and their family, and their roles in the design of the house, its interior, and its garden, their experience living in the house, and their vision in preserving it. The book is based on research in the Gamble family papers at Radcliffe and Harvard and is lavishly illustrated by the Gamble family's snapshots.

More than a century ago, architects Greene & Greene created homes that redefined the intersection of art and nature—spaces where families could make for themselves lives of purpose and beauty in harmony with the land. When practiced as a fine art, architecture has shown its power to transform the emotional and spiritual relationship we have with our environment. Few architects have understood this as clearly as Charles and Henry Greene. Fewer, still, have created such compelling work as the Gamble House. The house was completely restored in 2004 (Kelly Sutherland McLeod Architecture, Historic Resources Group, Griswold Conservation Associates, Krakower & Associates, Ashba Engineers).

New photography by Alexander Vertikoff illuminates a series of scholarly essays based on recently discovered archival material. The essays were written by Gamble House scholars Bosley, Anne E. Mallek, SAH/SCC Life Member Ann Scheid, and SAH/SCC Life and Advisory Board Member Robert Winter.

Lead author Bosley will give an illustrated talk on the various perspectives presented in the book, followed by a book signing and light refreshments. The books, normally selling for \$60, will be available that day for \$50.

*Authors On Architecture: Bosley—Sunday, July 24, 2016; 2-4PM; Santa Monica Central Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.; free; seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis; 310.458.8600.*



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Ruth Shellhorn and Walt Disney at Disneyland Western Railway station two weeks before opening day, July 2, 1955.  
Photo: Harry Kueser/©Courtesy of Kelly Comras

While working on Disneyland, according to Comras: "Designing in the field without plans, she helped lay out watercourses with stakes and string and supervised grading around the moat to dramatize the park's centerpiece, the majestic [Sleeping Beauty] castle. Under Disney's direction, she worked alongside the art directors as part of an elite leadership team of otherwise male designers who oversaw design of the park. Her engineering skills became apparent when she discovered discrepancies in grades and dimensions that were appreciatively acknowledged by surprised road crews."

Shellhorn's superb educational training from Oregon State College and Cornell University distinguished her from most practitioners of the time and prepared her to practice at the top of her profession, in spite of early obstacles because of her gender. Her work bridged the Beaux-Arts and the Modern and she experimented with many elements of Modernist landscape design, but she never identified with any particular camp. She placed a high value on how people would use the spaces she designed. Her professional peers considered much of her work to be elegant and timeless. Shellhorn collaborated with some of the finest architects of the era, including Welton Becket, A. Quincy Jones, Pereira & Luckman, and Wallace Neff.

Author Comras is principal of Kelly Comras Landscape Architecture and is an attorney, practicing in Pacific Palisades. Her work focuses on the study or use of land, and bringing people together to achieve a common goal related to such use. Comras also conducts research, publishes, and lectures on topics relating to mid-century landscape design. She has lectured at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, California Preservation Foundation, and UCLA. Comras presently serves as President of the California Garden & Landscape History Society.

*Ruth Shellhorn—Wednesday, June 15, 2016; 7:30PM; Pasadena Central Library, 285 East Walnut St.; free; seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Lecture attendees must park in the free University of Phoenix lot at 299 Euclid Ave. (enter on Garfield Ave.); the Library parking lot is reserved for patrons only. Violators will be cited. This program is not sponsored by the Pasadena Public Library.*

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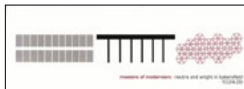
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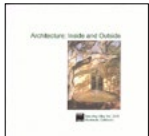


# SAH/SCC PUBLICATIONS



\_\_\_\_\_ at \$5 each

**Masters of Modernism:** eight-page, two-color brochure featuring works of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright in Bakersfield.



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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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**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.



\_\_\_\_\_ 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.



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**Greta Magnusson Grossman:** 3.5" x 8" 2-page color brochure featuring two residences by Greta Grossman.



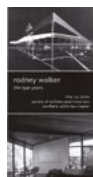
\_\_\_\_\_ at \$8 each

**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

**John Parkinson, Downtown:** 11"x17", four-color brochure featuring a self-guided walking tour of Parkinson buildings in Downtown LA's historic core and beyond.



\_\_\_\_\_ 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.



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



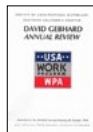
\_\_\_\_\_ at \$2 each

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



\_\_\_\_\_ 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.



\_\_\_\_\_ 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 \$10 each

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



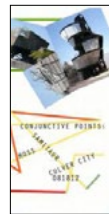
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**Killingsworth: A Master Plan for Learning:** 11"x17", four-color walking tour brochure of the Cal State Long Beach campus features history of master plan development by architect Edward A. Killingsworth, FAIA.



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**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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**Designed for Learning:** 11"x17" walking tour map and brochure of the University of California, Santa Barbara, campus.

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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!

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## Spring-Summer Architecture & Design Fests

Whatever your design preference—traditional, modern, vernacular, futuristic—there's something for you at the myriad architecture and design fests happening in LA.

### Venice Design Series through May 21, 2016

The Venice Design Series includes site-specific special events, hosted by visionary architects, artists, chefs, designers, civic leaders, entrepreneurs, and performers in support of Venice Community Housing, a nonprofit housing and community development organization. Among the offerings, which bring together site tours, performances, and food, are: A Sullivan Canyon Walking Tour (May 7th), Moveable Feast on Appleton Way (May 7th), SWLA: The Vibrant Southwest Los Angeles Tour (May 14th), Saddle Peak Soiree (May 15th), and THE Party (May 21st). [www.venicedesignseries.org](http://www.venicedesignseries.org)

### Legends May 3-5, 2016

Put on by the La Cienga Design Quarter, Legends celebrates interior design and designers. Panel discussions, window displays, book signings, and social events dominate. Discussion topics include outdoor living, social media, and client relationships. Showroom windows will be imaginatively transformed by some 65 global designers, including Nate Berkus, Nina Campbell, Mark Cutler, India Hicks, James Magni, and Marmol Radziner. Authors Anthony Iannacci, Annie Kelly and Tim Street-Porter, and Richard Shapiro will present and sign their books. [www.lcdqla.com](http://www.lcdqla.com)

### LA Design Festival June 9-26, 2016

This citywide celebration features around 50 events representative of the diversity of design talent of Los Angeles. Under the LADF rubric fall numerous events with various sponsors. The goal is to have an inclusive place for design enthusiasts to get information about lectures, tours, and exhibits. LADF-organized events include Chinatown Design Night and opening and closing parties, along with tours of east side homes, Schindler's Rodriguez House, Morphosis and M+ studios, and DTLA/Arts District studios. [www.ladesignfestival.org](http://www.ladesignfestival.org)

### Dwell on Design June 24-26, 2016

Curated by the editors of *Dwell* magazine, Dwell on Design returns to the Los Angeles Convention Center. Three days of exhibits, programs, and tours are geared to the design trade and the public, and revolve around thematic pillars of Healthy Architecture, the Business of Design, Smart Home, and the Nice Modernist. Among the 70+ speakers are Aaron Betsky, dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School at Taliesin West, architect Frank Clementi, FAIA, of Rios Clementi Hale Studios, and architect Matthew Hufft of Hufft Projects. [www.la.dwellondesign.com](http://www.la.dwellondesign.com)



The Outdoor Pavilion at Dwell on Design.

Photo: Mimi Teller