M News: Goodbye Robert A. M. Stern / Shubow vs. Wagner / Mystery Buildings / Safdie + Libeskind
From: George Smart HAIA <george@usmodernist.org>
Date: Monday, December 1, 2025



US Modernist



Monday, December 1, 2025

Welcome, Modernist architecture fans, to the USModernist newsletter, sharing Modernist news and events since 2008. USModernist is an award-winning nonprofit 501C3 educational archive for the documentation, preservation, and promotion of Modernist architecture.

Modernist House Archives: 25,000+ Houses	Architecture Media Library: 5M+ Pages	USModernist Radio Podcast: 430+ Shows

View as Webpage

Editor: **Ron Gallagher** Newsletter Staff: **Virginia Faust, George Smart**
Got Modernist News? Contact **Ron Gallagher** at rpg.modernist@gmail.com

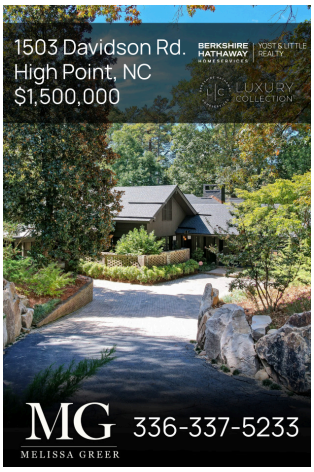
Newsletter Sponsorship: Connect your product, service, or organization to USModernist's 73,000 Modernist fans, architects, real estate agents, preservationists, and builders. Reach out to George Smart, 919.740.8407.

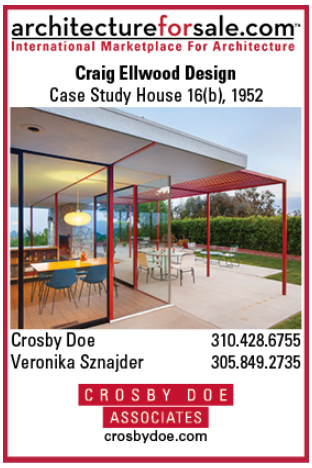
Meet the USModernist Team

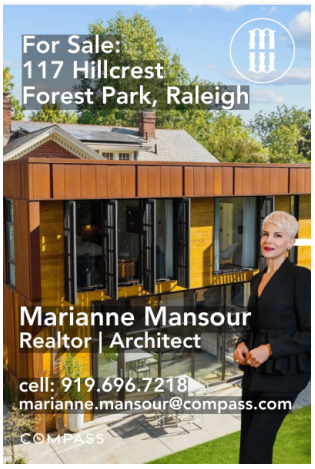
Check out the NCModernist For Sale/Rent Database. Real estate agents and owners can list their North Carolina Modernist houses for sale or rent for free.
Sponsored by:

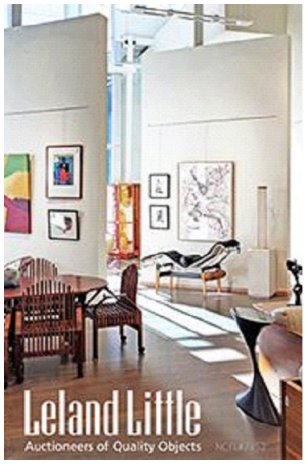
CHAPPELL
Powered by COMPASS

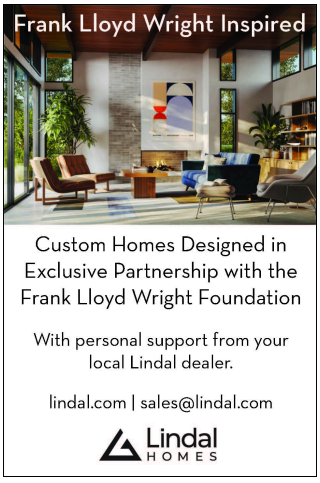












Featured Upcoming Events



This Saturday, December 6, 10-2pm. Sumner Winn was one of the great midcentury Modernist architects in Chapel Hill, creating sweeping rooflines that brought in sun or kept it out at just the right moments. NCModernist tours of his largest commission, the Owens House, which later became the home of Amway magnate **Bill Britt**. Tickets and details. Advance discount ticket sa;es end today at 5pm ET. $20 per person at the door.

ARROWHEAD

Thursday, December 18 - NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at Arrowhead, a design-build firm, 5-7pm, 330 Dupont Circle #102, Raleigh. Free, registration required. Enter ARROWHEAD on the form.



Saturday, December 20. Moving Matsumoto: The Unveiling! The 1954 Weber Residence spent its first 70 years on Transylvania Avenue in Raleigh NC. **George Matsumoto FAIA** designed the house with owner **William Weber**. Sold in 2023 to new owners who were going to tear it down - but NCModernist mounted a statewide preservation campaign that resulted in **Melinda and Andy Knowles** moving the house 7 miles in January 2024. Now, after two years of careful restoration and reconstruction, the house is ready for its big unveiling - and you can be there! Photo by **Art Howard**. *Only 35 tickets left!* Tickets and details.



USModernist Scandinavian Capitals Trip
Copenhagen / Oslo / Stockholm
Tour May 12-22, 2026 / *Only two tickets left!*

You will see – and visit – incredible architecture, art, design, and furniture in three countries, including the work of **Bjarke Ingels**, plus the stunning natural beauty of Scandinavia. Details.

Support USModernist



Your Gift to Modernism. Doubled!

A generous $10,000 matching gift means every dollar you give to support USModernist through December 31 counts twice.

Our readers believe that good design builds and rebuilds great communities. 2025 has been a remarkable year for Modernist architecture preservation and USModernist documented over 500 Modernist houses. We organized sold-out events that invited people to reimagine how Mdoernism can create joy, connection, and a sense of belonging. From intimate house tours to architect

lectures, we saw what happens when preservation and public education meet. We were thrilled to have thousands join us for tours, talks, and parties, with each event helping to turn threatened houses into celebrated landmarks.

We honored the stories that shaped us. We captured interviews with pioneering Modernist architects and their clients, preserving their voices for future generations. Our advocacy work continues as we fight to save endangered Modernist buildings, ensuring that our architectural heritage stays vibrant in our future. Beyond North Carolina, our preservation leadership has expanded nationwide, where our research methodology and documentation standards are helping other cities see what's possible through collaboration and community engagement.

Every gift to USModernist keeps our entire digital archive free; produces engaging tours, parties, and events; and races against time to document at-risk houses. We cannot protect what people don't know about. Thanks to you, we're changing that — one house, one story, one community at a time.

Please consider making a year-end gift today. It will fuel new documentation and research, support the preservation of modernist landmarks, and inspire communities near and far. Together, we're proving that modern design belongs to everyone. Donate here.



You are the reason Modernism endures and evolves. On behalf of the devoted team at USModernist, we are so grateful for your support.

With heartfelt appreciation,
George Smart, Executive Director, USModernist

Endangered Modernist Houses



Under contract: The 1964 Chalif House by Barbara and Julian Neski at 28 Terbell Lane, East Hampton NY is under contract to a buyer saying they will restore it.

Under contract: Carl Abbott's 1989 Gaines House, 1761 Oceanview Drive, in Tierra Verde near St. Petersburg FL. The listing specifically showed renderings for much larger new house (not by Abbott). Under contract, no word yet on the buyer's intentions.



Endangered: Ray Kappe's 1946 Stoner House at 5679 East Corso Di Napoli in Long Beach CA was approved for a demolition permit. The decision will be appealed by a coalition of the Los Angeles Conservancy, Docomomo US/SoCal, and Long Beach Heritage to the California Coastal Commission. Support the coalition's work through this petition.



Endangered: From a town known as Oyster Bay, Long Island, made famous in song by **Billy Joel**, there's a rare, long-neglected 1955 Walter Gropius house, 144 Center Island Road, for sale on 17 acres for $6.75M.



Endangered: The 1963 Fleschner House, 8 Stony Point, Westport CT, designed by Ulrich Franzen. Featured in Architectural Record, November 1963 and Architectural Record Houses of 1964. Despite several clunky additions, the house is in good condition. Sold in 2024 to Thomas and Nadia Wearsch, who applied for a demolition permit. A hearing is scheduled next for January 2026.

Endangered: The deteriorating 1946 Booth House, 319 Pound Ridge Road, in Bedford NY is again for sale. One of the first houses designed by Philip Johnson, still languishing at the too-high price of $1.2M. Rumor is there is a very interested buyer.

Endangered? In 1980, after years of battling with the Modernist-hating Town of Southampton Architectural Review Board (ARB), **Orest Bliss** finally got to build his Norman Jaffe-designed house at 88 Meadow Lane. Fast forward 40+ years, including a non-Jaffe renovation, and Bliss wanted a demolition permit before putting the house on the market, as oceanfront properties get a better price with pre-arranged permits. After lawsuits against the ARB, Bliss got his permit and the house went on the market in August at $24M. Now it's off the market but listed at $21M. *Has it been sold?* If so, a buyer has the green light to tear it down if they wish. Details.

Endangered: Frank Lloyd Wright's 1952 Lewis House, aka Spring House, 3117 Okeeheepkee Rd, Tallahassee FL, was for sale through a commercial property broker for a little over $2.1M. **The property type is listed as "vacant land." That's never good.** Now off the market.

Know an endangered Modernist house? Through our preservation alert program, **Modernism In Danger,** USModernist calls attention to the Modernist buildings around the country at risk for deterioration, demolition, lowball auction, or inappropriate renovation (like turning your Modernist house into an Italianate villa). Tell us.

News

Black Friday Special - good through 5pm ET Monday, December 8. **Join for a year, get a year free!**

Do you love Modernist architecture? That feeling when you discover a cool house. The thrill of saving a piece of history. The community of people who get it. The midcentury homes you love - they're still out there and still vulnerable and worth fighting for. Become a USModernist Mod Squad member and join a national community of architecture fans supporting and preserving the Modernist architecture you love.

Your membership can make the difference between saving a house and watching it fall to a bulldozer. New members only. Does not apply to monthly memberships. Sign up here.



From the *Washington Post*: Renowned architect **Robert A. M. Stern,** former Dean of architecture at Yale, died last week at 86 of pulmonary illness. Stern led the school from 1998 to 2016, was the author or co-author of more than two dozen books and appeared in countless documentaries. He was well-known for producing modern interpretations of historic architecture that propelled his firm to international stature.

After attending Yale, Stern worked at the Architectural League of New York then for Richard Meier. In 1977, after a partnership with **John Hagmann**, he founded Robert A. M. Stern Architects, or RAMSA. The firm eventually grew to more than 300 employees. Honors included the Driehaus Architecture Prize, awarded to exponents of classical architecture. The firm was known for many university buildings, the George W. Bush Presidential Center, and 2008's 15 Central Park West, the most successful condominium building in New York's history.

Stern was an ardent preservationist. He spearheaded efforts to save Modernist structures that appealed to him as an architectural historian. “We have to rise above our prejudices,” he told The New York Times in 1996, when

he compiled a list of 35 modern buildings in New York that he believed deserved landmark status.

HIs philosophy on architecture: "You have to go back to go forward."



Last week's Zoom debate, part of the recent Venice Architecture Biennale, featured architecture critic **Kate Wagner**, leading US classicism advocate and CEO of the National Civic Art Society, **Justin Shubow**, and architecture critic **Edwin Heathcote,** moderated by the Biennale's **Carlo Ratti.**



James McCreary, the architect **Donald Trump** commissioned to design a 90,000-square-foot ballroom on the site of the now-demolished East Wing of the White House, reportedly clashed with Trump over concerns that ballroom would overwhelm the 55,000-square-foot main building. But *USA Today* reports McCreary still has the job as of last Friday.

Architects are no longer considered professionals anymore by the US Government, along with nurses, accountants, and several other fields according to new rules for student loans set out in this year's One Big Beautiful Bill law.



The Neutra Institute for Survival through Design has chosen **Cindy Olnick** as its inaugural executive director, starting in January. “Cindy will help propel the Institute into the future,” said Institute President **Raymond Neutra**, “ensuring that my father’s legacy — as well as that of the other Neutras — continues to create positive outcomes for people and the planet.” Olnick previously developed and led the communications program for the Los Angeles Conservancy.



Dutch architecture firm MVRDV has designed a group of office buildings in Rotterdam inspired by American artist **Donald Judd**.



The new Los Angeles County Museum of Art David Geffen Galleries has been named the 2025 winner of the Architecture Grand Prize Award from the Los Angeles Business Council. The architects were **Peter Zumthor**, **Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill**, and **Olin**.



Design firm **Snøhetta** is designing an opera house in Dusseldorf, Germany, that will be open on all sides on the ground floor with a 1,300-seat performance hall.



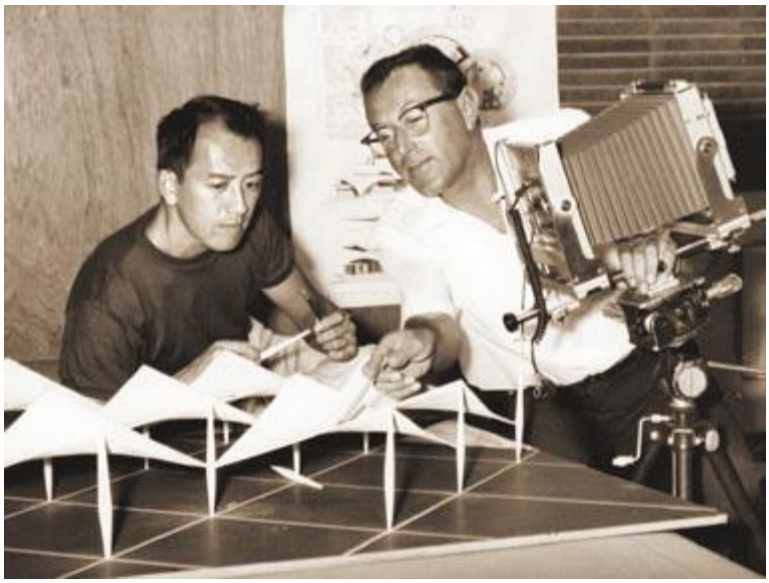
Dezeen magazine named **Herzog & de Meuron** the winner of its 2025 Architecture Project of the Year for the University Children's Hospital in Zurich, Switzerland.



Desai Chia Architecture used charred wood to help the 2023 Osprey House fit with its site on Shelter Island, off Long Island NY.



An airport business center designed in Findel, Luxembourg, by the Bjarke Ingels Group uses about 530,000 cubic feet of timber.



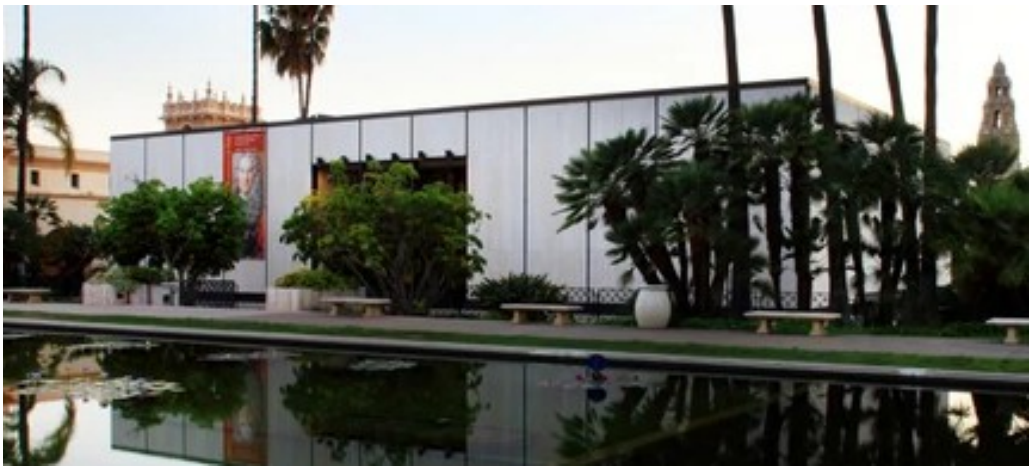
From *Eichlernetwork.com*, a long piece titled *Lords of the Lens* about eight great architectural photographers who made mid-century California their domain with memorable images.



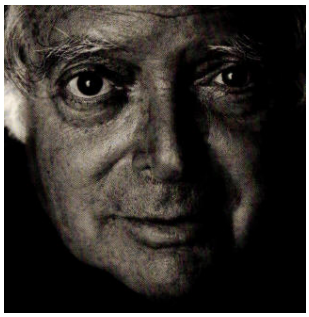
Zaha Hadid Architects used an exoskeleton in designing Symphony Tower in Dubai, a nod to traditional Emirati crafts of weaving with metallic threads.



Mystery House: We think this house is in Waccabuc NY in Westchester County, but we don't know where or who the architect was. Anyone have clues? Write george@usmodernist.org. First verifiable answer gets a $25 Starbucks card!



Mystery Building: Who designed the Timken Museum of Art in Balboa Park in San Diego CA? *Modern San Diego* reports on an architecture whodunit that dates to the early 1960s. First verifiable answer gets a $25 Starbucks card!



Circle Square Triangle is a traveling exhibition on the brilliant and exciting geometric work of Modernist architect Myron Goldfinger. This high-value, portable, exhibition can be assembled in three hours and is available starting January 1. Perfect for small museums, galleries, architect offices, or historic preservation societies. For more info, contact **Kelvin Dickinson** at kelvin.dickinson@paulrudolph.institute or **June Goldfinger** jmgoldfinger@gmail.com.

Modernist Houses For Sale



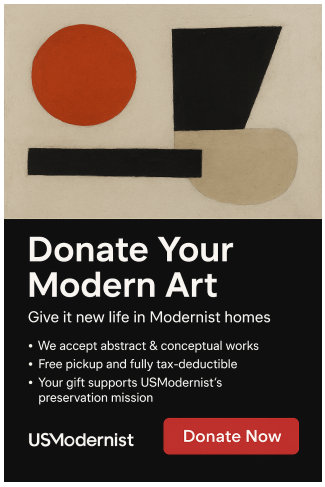
Rudolf Schindler's 1948 Richard Lechner House in Studio City CA has turned up on the market for $6.5M - a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Landmark.



In 1959, Celanese commissioned architect Edward Durell Stone, to build the Celanese House in New Canaan CT to showcase the company's new materials and styles. Carefully restored to museum-quality finishes, the Celanese House is one of New England's celebrated mid-century Modernist landmarks, admired and published by design publications for decades. Just over 2 acres, $4.4M. Details.



If ye have a wee yen for living in Scotland, the 1964 Meadowland house on the River Tyne in Perth was designed by Morris & Steadman Architects and is available for about $2.26M.



Donate to USModernist's nonprofit mission of documenting, preserving, and promoting Modernist residential architecture.

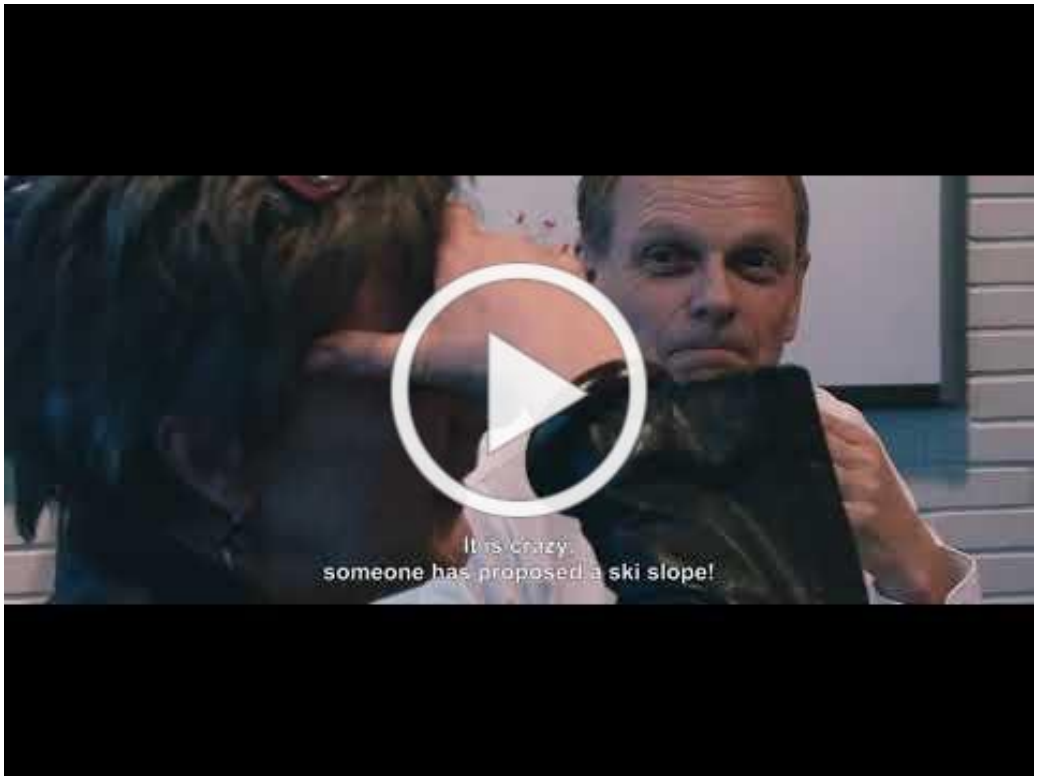
Do you have a basement or attic or storage unit full of Modernist furniture or contemporary art? Can't bear the thought of throwing these away, but your family doesn't want them? Get a tax deduction and free pickup. Your donation to USModernist supports our award-winning documentation, preservation, and advocacy programs. Contact: **Sharon Glazener**, Art Director, 919.787.3515.

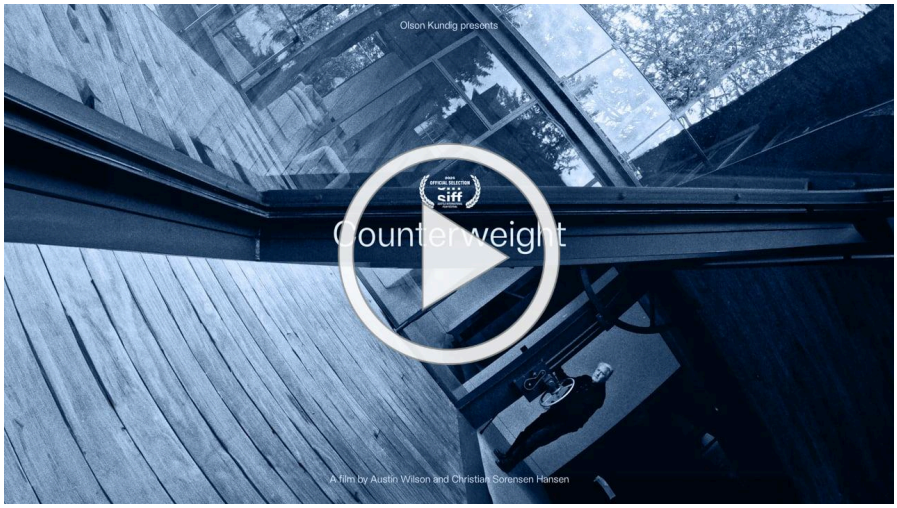
Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 20 - Moving Matsumoto: The Unveiling. Tickets.

December 20 - March 29: The Art Institute of Chicago presents *Bruce Goff: Material Worlds*, at Regenstein Hall. Features architect Bruce Goff (1904–1982), best known for his groundbreaking single-family homes. Details.

Through December 31: An American Versailles, a mixed-media exhibition at the New Canaan Museum, New Canaan CT. All about the Eero Saarinen-designed General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan. Free.





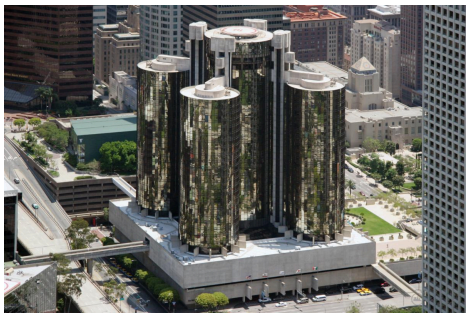
January 6: Opening night of the NCModernist Architecture Movie Series at the Rialto Theatre, Glenwood Avenue in Raleigh NC, sponsored by **Matt Griffith** and **Zach Hoffman** at in situ studio. The first film is *Making A Mountain*, the story of an Denmark incinerator no none wanted into a ski slope loved by everyone, designed by architect Bjarke Ingels. The second film is *Counterweight*, about the creative gadgets in Tom Kundig houses. Tickets at the door, $16 plus small fees. Other movie series dates: February 3, March 3, April 7, May 5, all at the Rialto.



January 29, 630pm: Mayberry Modernism: North Carolina's Modernist Legacy, an entertaining and informative talk by NCModernist's George Smart at the Durham County Library, downtown Durham, designed by Vines Architecture. You can explore the building before or after. Free, registration required. Enter MAYBERRY on the form.

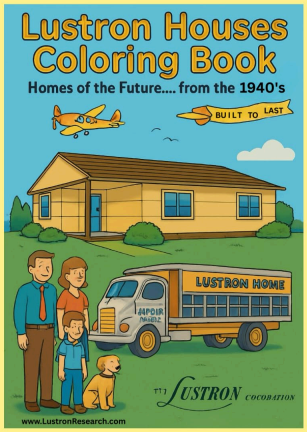
February 12-22: Modernism Week 2026, Palm Springs CA. Tickets here.

March 17-22: DOCOMOMO International Conference in Los Angeles. Join USModernist's **George Smart** for a fantastic cocktail hour on **Wednesday,**



March 18, at the revolving bar atop of the Bonaventure Hotel, designed by **John Portman**, with a thrilling view of LA. Register here. You must register for the conference to attend the party.

New Books



Step into the wonderful world of coloring with the ***Lustron Houses Coloring Book***, a delightful collection of illustrations for kids and adults alike. Lustrons are all-metal homes made of enameled steel. Some 2,500 of these one-story enameled-steel houses went up around the country between 1948 and 1950, Lustron expert **Tom Fetters** says you can usually spot them by their distinctive roofs. With over 26 beautifully designed pages to color, this book offers a relaxing and creative escape go back to the late 1940s - simpler times.

Learn more information or see USModernist's vast index.



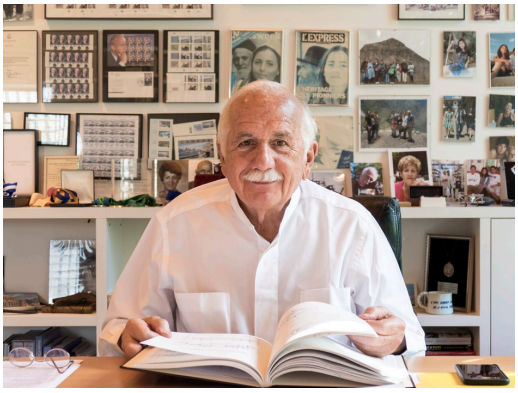
A new children's book by **Jean Fetters Connor**, *Carl and the Amazing Lustron Home*, tells the story of the Lustron metal-home design. The author is the daughter of Lustron historian **Tom Fetters**, who wrote *The Lustron Home: The History of a Postwar Prefabricated Housing Experiment*



Tadao Ando has created a new book – *Sketches, Drawings, and Architecture* – that collects 750 drawings. models and plans from across his career.

USMODERNIST RADIO
ARCHITECTURE YOU LOVE

Latest Podcast





#433/USModernist Radio Rewind: Moshe Safdie + Daniel Libeskind

We've dug into the USModernist Radio vault to bring back two interviews with internationally respected architects **Moshe Safdie** and Danlel Libeskind.

USModernist Radio is underwritten by **Diane Bald** and The Budman Family, restoring significant architecture in Toronto, Los Angeles, Malibu, and Palm Springs. New to podcasts? You can listen to USModernist Radio on any major podcast platform or through any computer.

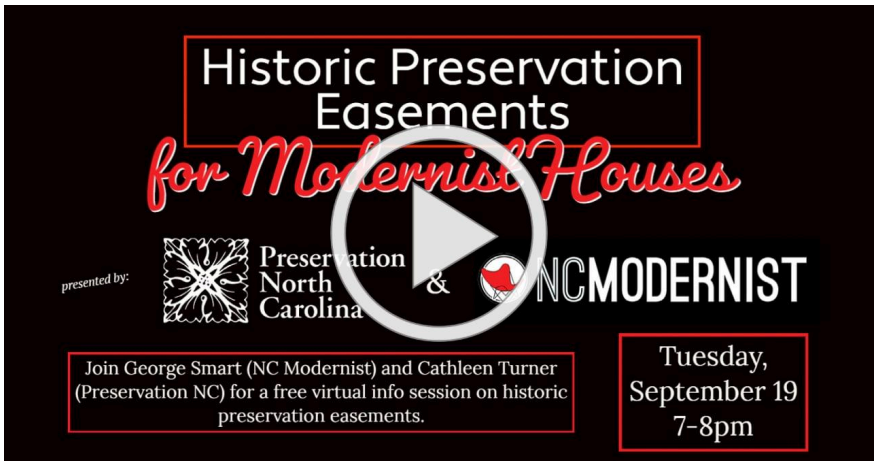
NCMODERNIST

FOR SALE

Vacancy, not development, is the enemy of mid-century Modernist houses. Preserve and protect the architecture you love by notifying us when North Carolina houses go vacant or on the market.

Check out the NCModernist For Sale/Rent Database. Real estate agents and owners can list their NC Modernist houses for sale or rent for free. Submissions are subject to approval: single-family Modernist houses only, they can be old or new, the architect or designer can be from anywhere, but the house must be in North Carolina. Exclusively sponsored by:

CHAPPELL
Powered by COMPASS



The **preservation easement** is one of the only legally enforceable ways to assure a Modernist house does not get destroyed by future owners. National Register status? Meaningless. Famous architect? Nope. Local historic designation? At best, a delay in demolition. And as history shows, there are plenty of smiling buyers who say, "I would never tear this down." Then after closing, it's gone. Think of the preservation easement as a homeowner's association for one house. The easement requires future owners to maintain the house in current structural condition and state of repair, or better, including necessary work to preserve its integrity. Here's a video featuring Preservation North Carolina and NCModernist, along with **Jane Levy**, who has an easement on her Greensboro Modernist home. Here's a sample preservation easement document.

There is another way, the deed restriction. Consider it "preservation easement lite." When a once-cherished residence falls into the hands of new owners, there is always the risk that it will be destroyed, despite promises to the contrary from those owners. One powerful legal tool families can use to guard against demolition is a **deed restriction**. Knowing that potential buyers can and do lie about destroying houses, a deed restriction is a legally enforceable binding promise attached to the property title. Unlike some historic designations, a deed restriction travels with the property through changes in ownership. Even if a buyer threatens to demolish or radically alter a house, they are limited by the deed. The restriction is usually ten years, and it becomes part of the chain of title. Implementing a deed restriction before a sale immediately scares off developers (or developers-in-hiding) in an owner-value-friendly way to protect a property.

USModernist.org | 5409 Pelham Rd | Durham, NC 27713-2533 US

Unsubscribe | Update Profile | Constant Contact Data Notice

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!