M News: Making A Mountain + Counterweight / 2025 Giving / New AI Site Search / Harwell Hamilton Harris
From: George Smart HAIA <george@usmodernist.org>
Date: Monday, December 29, 2025



US Modernist

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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: 450+ Shows

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

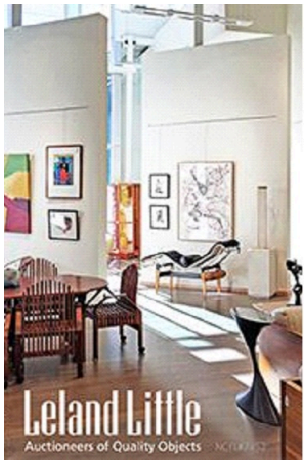
Newsletter Sponsorship: Connect your product, service, or organization to USModernist's 82,000 Modernist fans, architects, real estate agents, preservationists, and builders. Reach out to George Smart, 919.740.8407.

Meet the USModernist Team

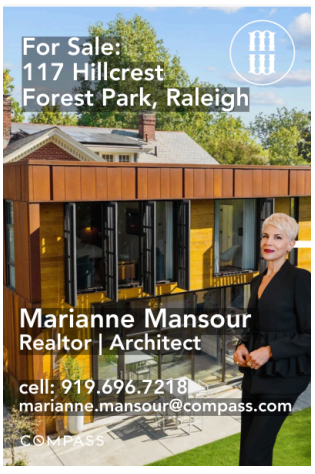
Check out the NCModernist For Sale/Rent Database. Real estate agents and owners can list their North Carolina Modernist houses for sale or rent for free.
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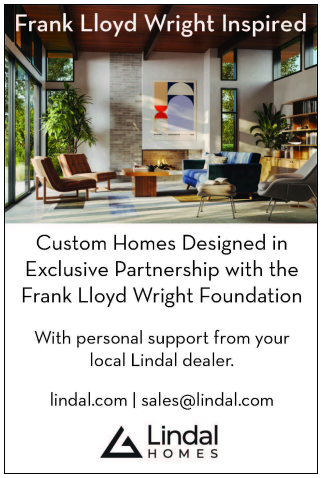






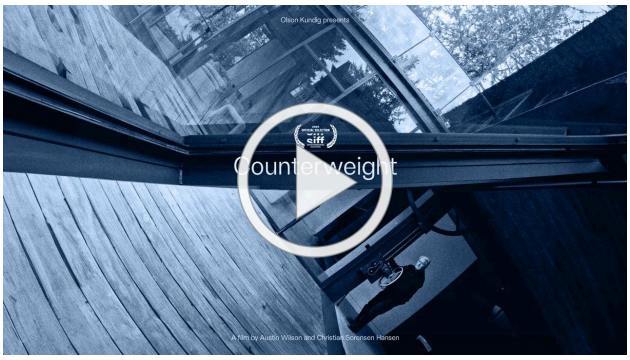






Featured Upcoming Events





Tuesday, January 6, 7pm: Opening double feature 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 a Denmark incinerator no none wanted that turned into a ski slope loved by everyone, designed by internationally known architect Bjarke Ingels.

The second film is *Counterweight*, about the wildly creative gadgets in Tom Kundig houses.

Get tickets in advance, or at the door. Other series movies.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Fallingwater+ Tour
Friday-Saturday, April 24-25 - Sold Out!



We are taking a waiting list for the next trip, Sept 11-12

Support USModernist

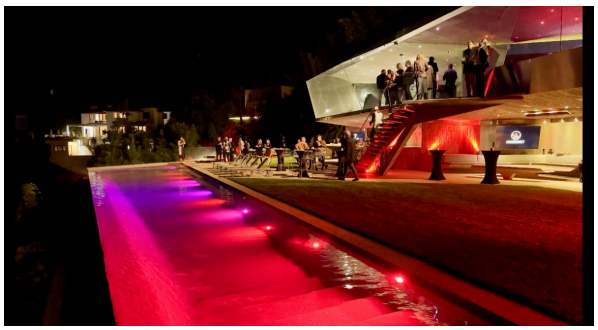














Your Gift to Modernism

Every week, another Modernist house is in trouble. Another architect's archives in some forsaken attic or storage unit gets thrown away. Another story disappears forever. Your membership makes the difference between saving a house and watching it fall to a wrecking ball. Between saving archives or hearing about their disposal.

USModernist's documentation and preservation work consistently delivers national impact, but our future success is only possible through generous supporters. Plus there are many new and creative options in addition to direct donation, including legacy gifts. 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.

You cannot save something if you don't know where it is and why it is important. USModernist's documentation and preservation work consistently delivers national impact, but our future success is only possible through generous supporters. Plus there are many new and creative options in addition to direct donation, including legacy gifts.

Here's what donors made possible last year:

- * 360,000 magazine pages scanned, indexed, and made available to the public, 95% for the first time.
- * 1100 houses documented - houses of Modernist architects gathering dust are now searchable, savable, *alive* again. Each one was someone's dream. Someone's vision. Someone's home.
- * Six housefire victims in Altadena CA received free architectural design from NC architects for their new homes. This is tragedy met with beauty.
- * This newsletter, reaching tens of thousands of passionate architecture fans just like you every Monday.
- * Saving a George Matsumoto house, now completely rebuilt.
- * 52 new podcast episodes. Stories that would not have been told.

And in tax news ... starting in 2026, all taxpayers will be able to deduct a small amount of charitable giving, up to $1,000 for individuals or $2,000 for married couple even without itemizing. However, for many who do itemize, beginning in 2026, the rules for deducting charitable gifts will become more limited. You may benefit by making larger gifts in 2025 while the rules are more favorable.

- * A $250 donation funds the acquisition, processing, sorting, and digitization of 10 architecture and design magazines, preserving them forever and providing free access to the public
- * A $500 donation supports one month of web servers for USModernist and NCModernist
- * A $750 donation funds a video interview with a North Carolina architect
- * A $1000 donation underwrites the architect archive of your choice for year
- * A $1500 donation underwrites the cost of a bus for one of our wildly popular Modapalooza tours

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

On behalf of the devoted team at USModernist, we are so grateful for your support.

Thanks to you, we're leading the way — one house, one story, one community at a time. Donate here.

With heartfelt appreciation,
George Smart
Executive Director
george@usmodernist.org



If you have shelves of architecture and design magazines no one has looked at for decades – and need that shelf space back -- we can help. At 5 million pages, the USModernist Library is the largest open digital archive for of architecture and design magazines in the world. USModernist gives long-gone architecture and design magazines new, text-searchable, online life with free user access.

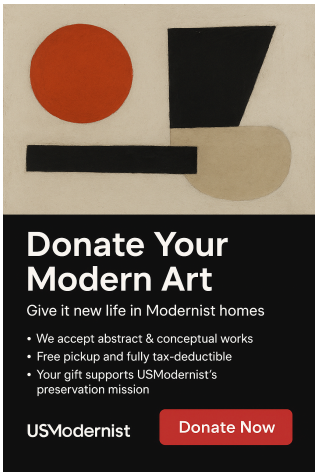
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THE MOD SQUAD

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. Good only through 5pm ET today. Sign up here.



Endangered Modernist Houses



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.

Under Contract: 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.

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. 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, is for sale at $2.1M.

MODERNISM IN DANGER
USMODERNIST

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



A New Blueprint for Discovery: USModernist Debuts AI-Powered Search

USModernist launched a proprietary search interface this morning, marking a significant pivot in how enthusiasts and scholars interact with the world's largest open digital archive of residential modernism. The tool, which integrates generative artificial intelligence with the organization's vast library, represents a first-of-its-kind deployment for a specialized architectural archive. USModernist is moving to ensure its curated history of 20th-century design remains both accessible and protected.

"To thrive in this new era, we must be as bold as the architects we document," said CEO George Smart. "Onsite search is no longer just a utility; it is the primary gateway for our audience to engage. For USModernist, the investment signals a belief that the future of architectural preservation lies not just in the archives themselves, but in the sophisticated tools used to navigate them.?

In addition to the usual search keywords, you can enter entire questions, like "List all the houses designed by Craig Ellwood." Try it out, and let us know what you think!

Remember, AI can make mistakes, so be sure to verify any information before acting on it.



LA architects Angie Brooks and Larry Scarpa used an interior courtyard and outside patio at the Alma Switch House to meet open-space requirements in Manhattan Beach instead of loading a blocky building with maximum outdoor balconies.





Renovators have brought back full glass walls at the Keck and Keck-designed 1933 *House of Tomorrow* across Lake Michigan to Beverly Shores, Indiana, one several houses moved to the Indiana Dunes National Park after the 1933 World's Fair.



The *Financial Times* praised Cape Cod Modern House Trust's work to find and save mid-century Modernist houses. USModernist's **George Smart** spoke with the trust's **Peter McMahon** on USModernist Radio in 2019 and last year.



Herzog & de Meuron and **Curtis + Ginsberg Architects** released their design for a 35-story affordable-housing tower to be built on city-owned land in the Hudson Square section New York City.



Donald Trump wants to replace all the seats in the now Trump/Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with marble arm rests. The building was designed by Edward Durell Stone.



See the restored Weber House at NCModernist's Moving Matsumoto tour, attended by over 400! Coverage in the Raleigh News and Observer.

Modernist Houses For Sale



A 2018 Dallas TX house designed by **Doug Guiling** is on the market for $4.7M. One room has a 21-foot-tall window wall.





An 1875 Cincinnati three-story rowhouse got a two-story addition in 2020 and a Modernist renovation, and it's for sale for $2M.

Upcoming Events



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

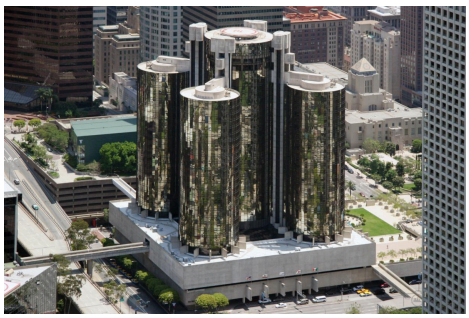
Saturday, February 7: Special tour in Raleigh. Details TBA.

Through February 8: At the National Building Museum, Washington DC, *Lightness of Strength: The Wave*, a 55-by-180-foot spaceframe made of recycled aluminum and constructed by Catholic University of America architecture students. Information.

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

HAVEN DESIGNBUILD

Thursday, February 19 - NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at Haven Design Build, 923 Broad Street, Durham NC. Free, registration required. Enter HAVEN on the form.

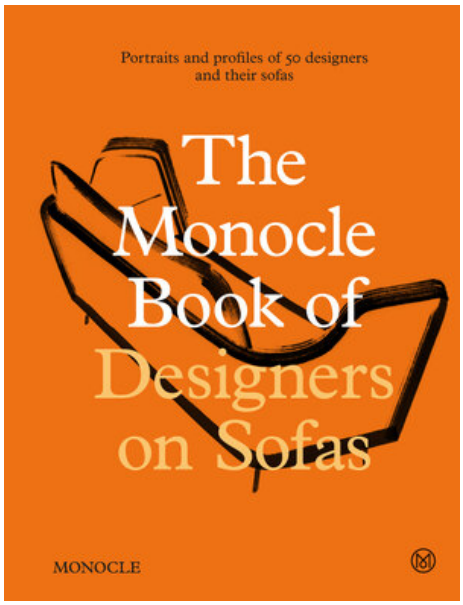


March 17-22: DOCOMOMO International Conference in Los Angeles. Join USModernist's **George Smart** for a fantastic cocktail hour on **Wednesday, March 18**, at the revolving bar atop of the Bonaventure Hotel, designed by **John Portman**, with a thrilling view of LA. Register here. You must register for the conference to attend the party.

Through March 28: The Onera Foundation, New Canaan CT's newest exhibition venue devoted to architectural preservation advocacy, presents *Treaties on De-Fences* by **Jorge Otero-Pailos**, examining the afterlife of the Saarinen-designed US Embassy in Oslo, shown alongside an exhibition on Harvard Five's Marcel Breuer and John Johansen and their Cold War–era embassies designs. Free and open to the public. Details.

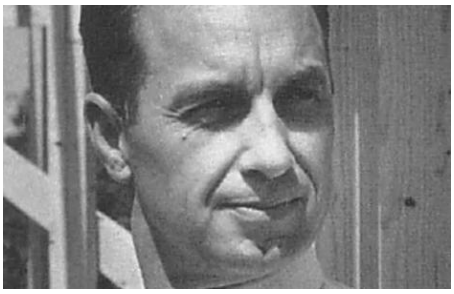
Through March 29: The Art Institute of Chicago presents *Bruce Goff: Material Worlds*, at Regenstein Hall. Features architect Bruce Goff (1904–1982), best known for his groundbreaking single-family homes. Details.

New Books



Available January 27: ***The Monocle Book of Designers on Sofas,*** written by **Virginia McLeod, Nic Monisse**. A fun, informative collection of portraits and biographical interviews with fifty designers from all over the world sitting on their sofas, revealing their style, wit, personality—and sofa choices. Each of the fifty entries features a portrait of the designer on their sofa, taken at their own home or workplace, sometimes with their family, their pets, or with other possessions. In addition, a special foldout presents one hundred sofas from the last century with designs by **Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Charlotte Perriand, Verner Panton, Cini Boeri, Zaha Hadid, John Pawson,** and many more.

Latest Podcast



#437/USModernist Radio Retro: All About Harwell Hamilton Harris with Lisa Germany + Frank Harmon

We've dug into the podcast vault to bring back a show all about Harwell Hamilton Harris, with his biographer **Lisa Germany**, and his close friend and colleague, Frank Harmon.

US Modernist Radio is underwritten by The Brent R. Harris Charitable Trust, restorer of several Modernist houses including Richard Neutra's Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs, and 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.

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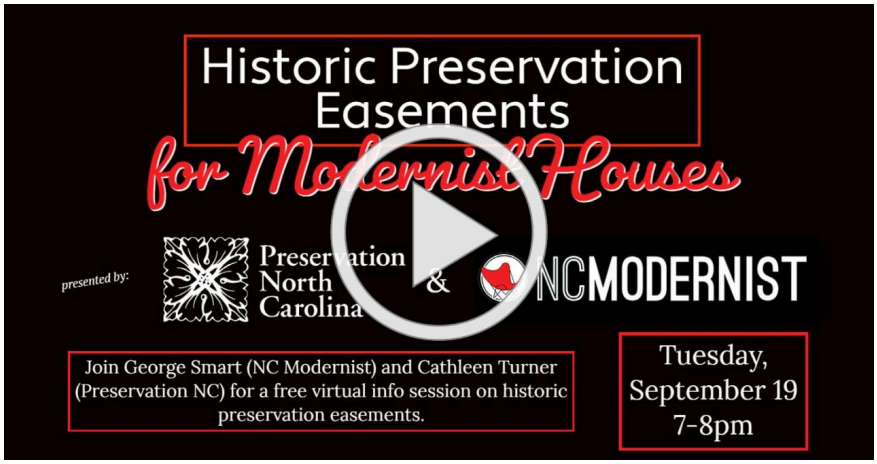
FOR SALE

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:

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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.

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