M News: Two Norman Jaffe Houses Destroyed + Frank Lloyd Wright Field Office + Irreplaceable American + Snohetta Theodore Roosevelt

From: George Smart <george@usmodernist.org>

Date: Monday, July 6, 2026

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: 30,000+ Houses	Architecture Media Library: 5.5M+ Pages	USModernist Radio Podcast: 470 Shows

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Editor: **Ron Gallagher** Newsletter Staff: **Virginia Faust, George Smart**
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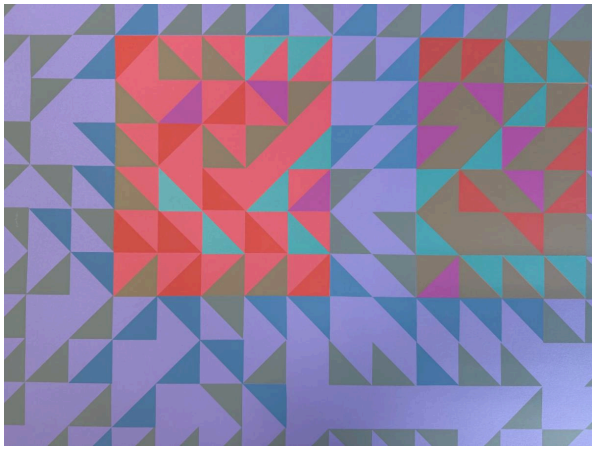
Craig Ellwood Design
Case Study House 16(b), 1952



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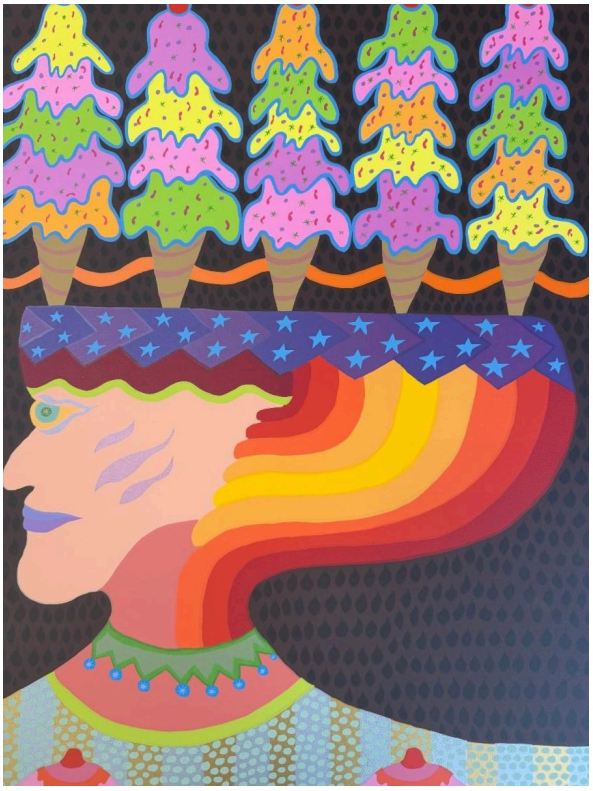
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Featured Upcoming Events






S. Kallus





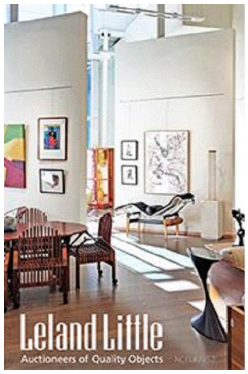






NEW: Saturday, July 18, 10am-Noon: NCModernist's Midcentury Michigan Art Sale, 5409 Pelham Road, Durham NC, offering 250+ original prints, watercolors, paintings, and other media by talented 1970s and 1980s artists at the Cranbrook Academy of Art and University of Michigan. ***All works $29 unsigned, $59 signed.*** Free admission, registration required. Enter MICHIGAN on the form. Details.

Wednesday, July 22, 6-8pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour and the 2026 George Matsumoto Prize Awards at Leland Little Auctions, 620 Cornerstone Court, Hillsborough NC. Preview hundreds of wonderful Modernist items going on auction the next day. Free, registration required. Enter MATSUMOTO on the form. Sponsored by:

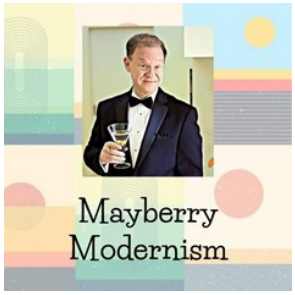


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Thursday, August 20, 5-7pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at the new Building Product Showroom of Fitch Lumber and Hardware, 3010 Stony Brook Drive, Suite 105, Raleigh NC. Free, registration required. Enter FITCH on the form.

Thursday, August 27, 6-8pm: NCModernist's George Smart shares the story of incredible Modernist architecture in North Carolina in the entertaining and informative talk *Mayberry Modernism*. NC Masonic Grand Lodge, 2921 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh NC. Includes refreshments and light bites. Details and tickets. Proceed benefit the Grand Lodge building fund.





NEW: Friday-Saturday, October 9-10, 9am to 3pm: Harkrader House Tour and Celebration Party, Durham NC, sponsored by Preservation Durham and NCModernist. From 1972-2000, **Richard and Lonna Harkrader** founded, owned and operated New Morning Construction and New Morning Realty, two businesses that built numerous passive solar, energy efficient homes and apartments with a unique architectural style in and around the Morehead Hill neighborhood of Durham. Details and tickets.

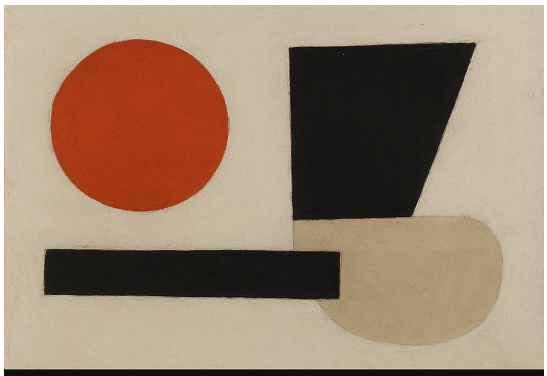
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Contact **Caroline Francis,** USModernist's Chief Development Officer, at **caroline@usmodernist.org.**



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Contact **George Smart**, 919 740 8407, or george@usmodernist.org.

Endangered Modernist Houses



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.

Endangered: From a town known as Oyster Bay, Long Island, NY made famous in song by **Billy Joel**, there's is a rare, long-neglected Burke House at 144 Center Island Road for sale on 17 acres for $6.75M. **Benjamin Thompson** of TAC was the project architect. TAC leader **Walter Gropius** was friends with the Burkes.

Endangered: Frank Lloyd Wright's Sturges House in Los Angeles was built in 1939. Located at 449 North Skyewiay Road, the house is long-abandoned and in significantly deteriorating condition, with the cantilevered balcony falling down. The Los Angeles Conservancy has named the Sturges House the first advocacy priority on its 2026 L.A. Watch List. If you are concerned about this Frank Lloyd Wright house, contact LA City Council Member **Traci Park** at traci.park@lacity.org and urge the council to step in now.

News





Jaffe Destroyed: The Bliss House in Southampton NY. In 1980, after years of battling with the local Modernist-hating 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, Bliss wanted a demolition permit before putting the house on the market. But now, the ARB is all about preservation. That's great, but they went about it in a laughable ham-handed illegal way that only resulted in years of lawsuits - which they ultimately lost. Bliss got his permit and the house was sold - and last week it was gone. Hat tip to Tim Godbold.

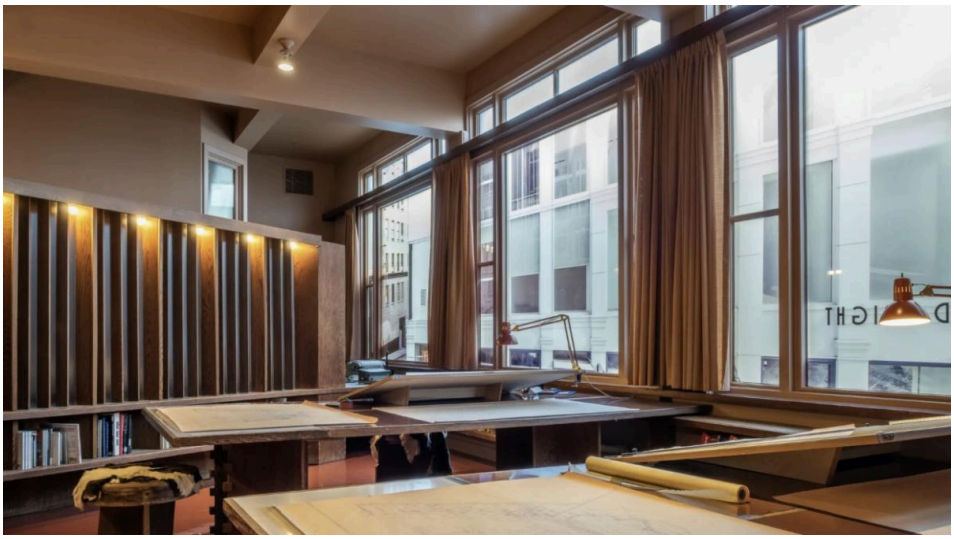




Another Jaffe Destroyed: The 1976 Gilbert House at 11 Autumn Terrace in Alpine NJ was sold by the Gilberts in 1993 and was abandoned for most of the next 30 years. A new owner picked it up in 2025 and last week destroyed it. Hat tip to Tim Godbold.



Bjarke Ingels Group completed the headquarters for Danish material supplier Dymak in Odense, Denmark, a 2,800-square-metre circular mass-timber building overlooking Glisholm Lake.



The Hagen History Center in Erie PA opened Frank Lloyd Wright's Field Office Museum, reconstructing the architect's 1951 San Francisco workspace. Wright designed the redwood plywood office with Aaron Green, using it through the 1950s—his only formal workspace outside his Taliesin complexes. After Green closed it in 1988, it was disassembled, catalogued, and stored for decades. The 3,000-square-foot immersive museum features a soundscape, an actor portraying Wright.



For America's 250th anniversary, the World Monuments Fund announced "Irreplaceable America," recognizing ten heritage sites that face threats from climate change, underfunding, and development pressure.

1. 1. Smallpox Hospital Ruin, Roosevelt Island, New York
2. 2. Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
3. 3. Black Mountain College Studies Building, North Carolina
4. 4. African Meeting House, Massachusetts
5. 5. City of New Orleans, Louisiana
6. 6. Colonial Homes of Newport, Rhode Island
7. 7. Dallas City Hall (I.M. Pei), Texas (photo above)
8. 8. Mission Churches of Acoma and Laguna Pueblos, New Mexico
9. 9. Watts Towers, Los Angeles, California
10. 10. Wright Brothers Sites, Dayton, Ohio

The WMF also gave a special designation to the National Park Service, which faces staffing cuts, underfunding, and climate risks across its 430+ sites.



Snøhetta completed the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library on a butte outside Medora ND overlooking the Badlands. Unlike most Presidential libraries, this 95,000 sf building is privately funded. The building features two timber-framed volumes housing galleries, a theatre, classrooms, and café beneath a sweeping green roof that blends into the rolling prairie landscape. The design deliberately balances both his conservation legacy and his racist history. Donald Trump visited over the weekend.



Movie of the Week: The 1989 architecture parody Home by Sandy Perlbinder, Madeline Warren, and Bruce Feirstein.





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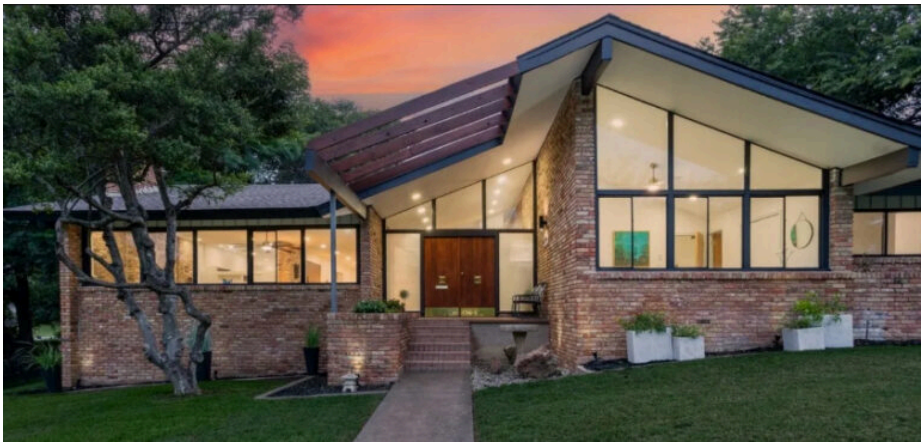
Modernist Houses For Sale



The Thomas Kravis Residence in La Jolla CA is on the market for the first time in three decades. Ken Kellogg remodeled the 1940s home between 1976 and 1987. A 1998 renovation by architect Yum Kee Fu added Asian-inspired details, including artisan wood-inlay doors. Details.



Bill Waddell's 2008 Hunter House, aka Three Pavilions, in Durham NC is for sale at $2.5M.



The 1958 Donham Residence in Dallas TX, designed by **George Sebastian**, is up for sale at $1.2M.

Upcoming Events

July 25: Thoroughly Modern Montgomery Walking Tour, San Francisco, CA, sponsored by Docomomo US / Northern California. Details and tickets.

August 22: How Downtown Became Modern – The Work of Hertzka & Knowles Walking Tour, San Francisco, CA, sponsored by Docomomo US / Northern California. Details and tickets.

Through September 30: Modernism: Born in California. An Exhibition of the works of Ernest and Esther Born. UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives. Details and Hours.



Through September 2, AIA Center for Architecture, New York: Dutch photographer Arjan Bronkhorst published 15 lesser-known houses by renowned architect Gerrit Rietveld). Curated by **Arjan Bronkhorst** and **Barry Bergdoll**. Details.

September 13-15: AIA regional design conference, ASPIRE. Asheville NC. Open to architects and non-architects. *Save $50 with code **ASPMODERNIST26**.*

October 1: AIA Center for Architecture, New York. *Humanist Modernity* showcases the work of Stanisława (Siasia) Sandecka-Nowicka and Maciej (Matthew) Nowicki, two significant figures in American and Polish architecture. While Nowicki died tragically at age 40 when his plane crashed as he returned from a job site in India, Sandecka-Nowicka went on to become the first woman in the US to be appointed as a full professor of architecture in 1963. Through March 2027.

October 3: La Jolla Modernism Home Tour, La Jolla CA. Details.

October 15-18: Modernism Week Preview Weekend, Palm Springs CA. Details.

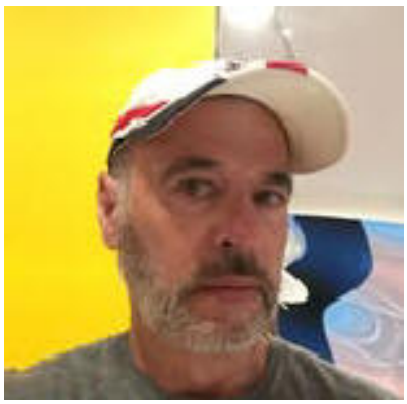
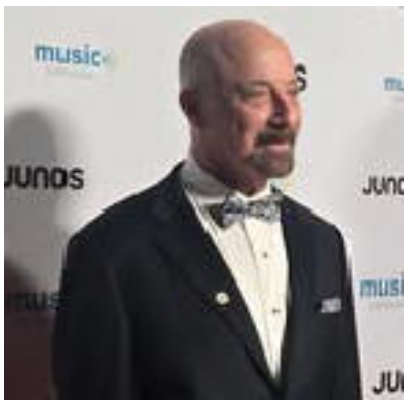
Wednesday, October 21, 6-8pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at Raleigh Architecture at their new office in Raleigh NC. Free, registration required. Enter RACO on the form.

Thursday, November 19, 6-8pm: NCModernist Thirst4Architecture Happy Hour at PELLA Windows Showroom, 3252 South Miami Blvd, Suite 107, Durham NC. Free, registration required. Enter PELLA on the form.

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Latest Podcast



#464/ Ellen Mirro + Howard Miller + Dominic Bradbury + Andy Cohen + Musical Guest Steve Holt

On this episode, **Ellen Mirro** and **Howard Miller** of Studio TJP; then **Dominic Bradbury**, author of a new book on the style we all love to love, Nordic Modernism. Next **Andy Cohen** — a magician, business strategist, and NYU professor who argues that architects and illusionists are in exactly the same business. Last to bat, musical guest, **Steve Holt** — a Montreal jazz pianist who gave up a Wall Street career and won a Juno nomination.

USModernist Radio is underwritten by The Brent R. Harris Charitable Trust, restorer of Richard Neutra's Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs and six other houses in California; by the E. Fay Jones Conservancy, preserving the legacy of Modernist architecture in Northwest Arkansas. Visit efayjonesconservancy.org; and by Diane Bald and The Budman Family, restoring significant architecture in Toronto, Los Angeles, Malibu and Palm Springs.

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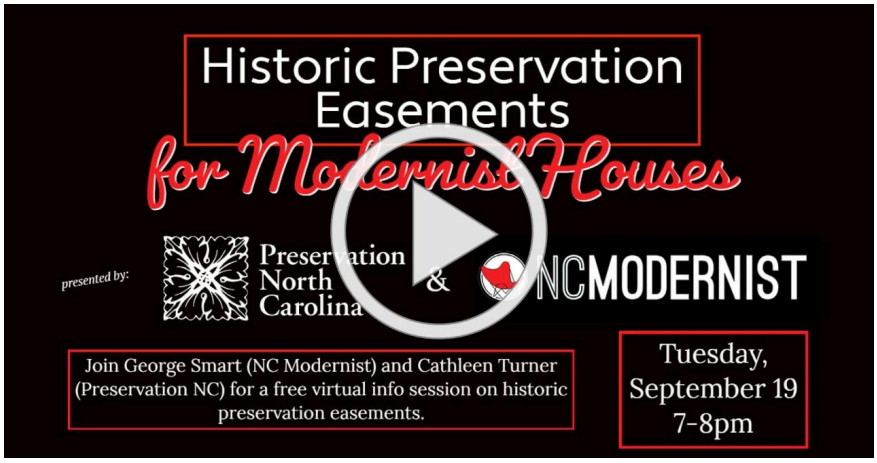
NCMODERNIST



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.

The preservation easement is basically 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, or "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 smiling 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. The restriction is usually ten years, and it becomes part of the chain of title. Implementing a deed restriction before putting a house on the market immediately scares off developers (or developers-in-hiding) in an owner-value-friendly way to protect a property. We're not attorneys, but here's a sample to get you started:

(Insert Owner, Site Address, Legal Description)

This restriction is made a covenant running with the land and shall be binding upon the Grantee, their heirs, successors, and assigns. For a period of ten (10) years from the date of conveyance recorded herein, the Grantee shall not demolish, raze, or cause the removal of the residential Structure located on the property described in this deed, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the Grantor or Grantor's designee. For purposes of this restriction, "demolition" includes any intentional act that renders the Structure uninhabitable or results in the removal of more than 10% of the Structure's exterior walls, roof, or load-bearing elements. This restriction does not prohibit good-faith renovation, repair, or rehabilitation of the Structure, provided such work does not constitute demolition as defined herein. Any violation of this restriction shall entitle the Grantor or their successor to seek injunctive relief, specific performance, and/or damages in a court of competent jurisdiction. This restriction shall be recorded in the land records of the applicable county and shall constitute notice to all subsequent purchasers. Upon expiration of the ten-year period, this restriction shall automatically terminate and be of no further force or effect.

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