

MAJOR EXHIBITION CENTERS ON RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE OF RICHARD NEUTRA

THE ARCHITECTURE OF RICHARD NEUTRA: FROM INTERNATIONAL STYLE TO CALIFORNIA MODERN is the first large-scale exhibition to concentrate almost entirely on the houses of Richard Neutra (1892-1970), the Vienna-born architect who achieved the first truly regional, modern domestic architecture in the United States. Directed by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum, and Thomas S. Hines, Professor, Department of History and School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA, it will examine individual buildings as well as the design elements for which Neutra is celebrated. Forty-five of his buildings and projects will be represented by photographs, architectural drawings and two large-scale models; thirty-five other drawings, ranging from early landscapes and portraits to architectural studies, will also be on view at The Museum of Modern Art beginning July 24.

Richard Neutra's long professional career in Southern California began with a strong commitment to the precepts of the International Style and evolved toward the incorporation of indigenous materials like California redwood and natural rock. He produced homes that were effectively related to their landscapes and that created "a calm but enlivening atmosphere," suggesting "spontaneity and improvisation," according to Drexler. Neutra, who passionately maintained that architecture should exist essentially as a service to mankind, developed a large practice designing homes of moderate cost, and was particularly interested in establishing a close collaborative relationship between

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architect and client.

He was born in 1892 and grew up amidst the cultural splendor of pre-World War I Vienna. A talented artist who produced beautiful pencil, crayon, and watercolor sketches during his young manhood, Neutra studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, graduating in 1918 after three years of active military service. His early work was greatly influenced by the Austrian architects Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner. Neutra emigrated to the United States in 1923 at the age of thirty-one and soon fulfilled a long-standing dream when he was employed at Taliesin by Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom he shared a particular admiration for Japanese design. The following year he established his own practice in Los Angeles, and began work on the design of a personal utopia, a metropolis he called Rush City Reformed "to evoke the fast pace of American life and the boom towns of legend," according to Hines.

In 1927, he received his first important commission, the Lovell house, a three-story steel, glass, and concrete residence, which Hines contends is the first mature example of the International Style in the United States. The Lovell house, the first documented steel-framed house in America, contained most of the ingredients Neutra was to later rework in his design of subsequent houses, including the parapet or spandrel, the ribbon window, the overhanging roof, the thin wall plane, and the steel or wood skeleton structure. For a while, says Drexler, the Lovell house became "indispensable to the iconology of modern architecture." A large-scale model of it will be featured in the exhibition.

Neutra went on to design the all-metal Beard house (1934), the first modern house ever to win first prize in the annual House Beautiful competition.

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For the film director Josef von Sternberg he created a simple two-story residence that was distinguished by a curving wall around its patio and a system of shallow encircling moats. The 1937 Miller house combined German modernism and Japanese refinement, and the Landfair Apartments in Los Angeles "successfully balanced density and privacy," according to Hines. The poetically beautiful redwood board and batten Nesbitt house of 1942 represents Neutra's point of departure from strict adherence to the International Style, while the crisply elegant Kaufmann house, Palm Springs 1946, is one of his greatest achievements. Until shortly before his death Neutra continued to design many successful and often brilliant houses as well as several public buildings.

The exhibition, closing October 12, will include a supplemental presentation comparing Neutra's solutions to such formal problems as the use of the glass wall and ribbon window, cabinets and mirrors, flat and pitched roofs, and landscaping.

The Museum will publish a catalog in conjunction with the exhibition that will include an essay by Mr. Drexler and an illustrated chronology by Mr. Hines. The 114-page book will contain 185 illustrations in black-and-white and two in color. It will be distributed by the Museum in a paper bound edition at \$10.

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