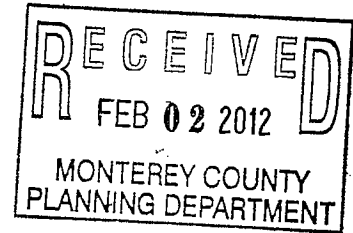


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February 1, 2012

Ms. Delinda Robinson
Monterey County Planning Department
168 W. Alisal St., 2nd floor
Salinas, CA 93901



Re: Connell House

Dear Ms. Robinson,

I am writing to on behalf of the Connell House, designed by Richard J. Neutra (1892 - 1970) and completed in 1958.

Allow me to introduce myself. As the author of *Richard Neutra - Complete Works*, and *Neutra - Selected Projects* (Taschen, 2000, 2004), I am a scholar of Neutra's works, numbering some 450 projects worldwide, and am completing a Ph.D. on his work at the University of Liverpool. Professionally, I am a qualified architectural historian according to the Secretary of the Interior Standards 36 CFR Part 61. Trained as an architect with an M.Arch. degree, both privately and as Senior Architectural Historian, ICF International, Los Angeles, I evaluate buildings for historic significance for lead agencies and developers; assist architects with interpreting the Standards; prepare National Register and Landmark nominations, among other duties typical of my profession. I am writing you in my capacity as an expert on Neutra's works, though I apply professional standards, objectivity, and expertise in considering his projects.

Given his prolific contribution to 20th century architecture, while undoubtedly a master architect, it is nonetheless unwise to assume anything a master architect designed is worthy of National Register consideration, as the Register guidelines for criteria remind us. Before I received word of potential demolition of the Connell House from Dr. Anthony Kirk, I had only a superficial acquaintance with the dwelling, primarily for writing the *Complete Works*. But the more I considered the house, the more I am convinced that Monterey County can be proud of having a highly accomplished example of Neutra's work in its midst, an aesthetically compelling, spatially complex house perfectly wedded to its site.

Apart from Neutra's well-known books such as *Survival Through Design* and *Nature Near*, both championing the requisite of nature in an architecture tailored to essential human needs, he also wrote a book directed at laypeople titled *Mystery and Realities of the Site*.

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Through this poetic little volume dense with images, he taught how building and landscape could be integrated to create an indelible experience on behalf of the environment as well as the occupant, delivering a compressed building footprint that nonetheless conferred a sense of expansiveness and tranquility for its inhabitants. The Art Connell House acquits Neutra's convictions in both arenas addressed by these books. Ironically, his acute attention to site (he was renowned for helping clients to choose sites, even walking the site with his clients to evaluate it for both day as well as night conditions) now threatens these houses: because the site is so exquisite and often generous in size, the house itself becomes an impediment to development, typically a much larger dwelling.

The two-level Art Connell House exemplifies Neutra's signature trademarks in its careful asymmetric composition of volumes and opposing opaque (stucco) and transparent (glass) planes. Roof planes of disparate sizes, adding visual interest, extend over those areas where protection from the sun is important. In its resolution of volumetric complexity, the house can be favorably compared with the 1957 Sorrells House, Shoshone, and the 1961 Villa Rang, Königstein, Germany.

Of special note is Neutra's exploitation of the sharply sloping site. Here, the user is led down a right-angled path, slowing the procession into the house (a strategy dating back to his 1930 trip to Japan). He placed the private wing below the larger living area, largely hidden by the discrete front entry, a move similar to his design for the 1936 Kun House, Los Angeles, which is sited on a canyon. In the Art Connell House, the long elevation, containing both the upper living areas and lower bedroom levels, faces the ocean to the west. The bedroom wing steps back below the deck above, affording more privacy, protecting these areas from the western sun but also allowing use in inclement weather, another Neutra strategy in pragmatically but artfully wedding indoors and outdoors. This west elevation can be favorably compared with the 1962 Gonzales-Gorrondona House, Caracas, Venezuela, built for a government official, and the 1958 Rados House, San Pedro, designed for a wealthy ship builder. (Images of these houses are on-line or are in *Complete Works*.)

Typical is the varying use of full-height and partial-height glass walls, defining primary view and secondary spaces; planes that extend into the landscape, both connecting building to site and affording privacy; a dual indoor-outdoor fireplace located at a pivotal location; the use of tempered Masonite, here painted given the ocean salt, for exterior base panels below some windows, and a virtually intact open plan interior. While his inclusion of a central courtyard, providing a gathering area sheltered from the window, is not typical, he employed a similar courtyard in the Flavin House, Los Angeles, completed the same year as the Connell House, 1958, but lacking such a dramatic site.

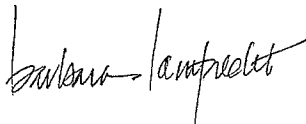
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The architects for the 1992 addition/alteration on the south end of the house, located well away from the primary elevations, should be commended for one of the most thoughtful and compatible additions to a work by master architect I've ever seen. This later work exploits the footprint of a rear, little-seen service yard. The large south-facing picture window of the addition is framed by the surrounding wall, distinguishing it from Neutra's fenestration strategies; the fascia is deeper; the roof extended less than those of other elevations; and the addition's stucco finish is rendered in a slightly darker tone than the extant original shade elsewhere. All are moves that clearly delineate the new from the old while being compatible with the original character of the Neutra design per the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation No. 9. The minor and few reversible window changes, largely replacing jalousies, are quite typical alterations of the houses of many mid-century architects (jalousies were briefly popular but proved drafty and hard to maintain) and have not affected the integrity of the residence, nor has the inclusion of a later light fixture, also reversible, under an extended roof plane.

Thus, in my opinion, the Art Connell House would be considered a historical resource under CEQA. I urge your consideration in retaining this superb example of Neutra's work. As one of the 'first generation' Modern architects who influenced Bay Area Modernism, Pebble Beach is fortunate in boasting an accomplished work by master architect Richard Neutra.

Sincerely,



Barbara Lamprecht, M.Arch.
author, *Richard Neutra - Complete Works; Neutra - Selected Projects* (Taschen 2000, 2004)