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# Richard Neutra's Modern Architecture and Design

*AD* revisits the work of this legendary architect, whose contribution to California Modernism was immeasurable

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**VIEW AS SLIDESHOW**

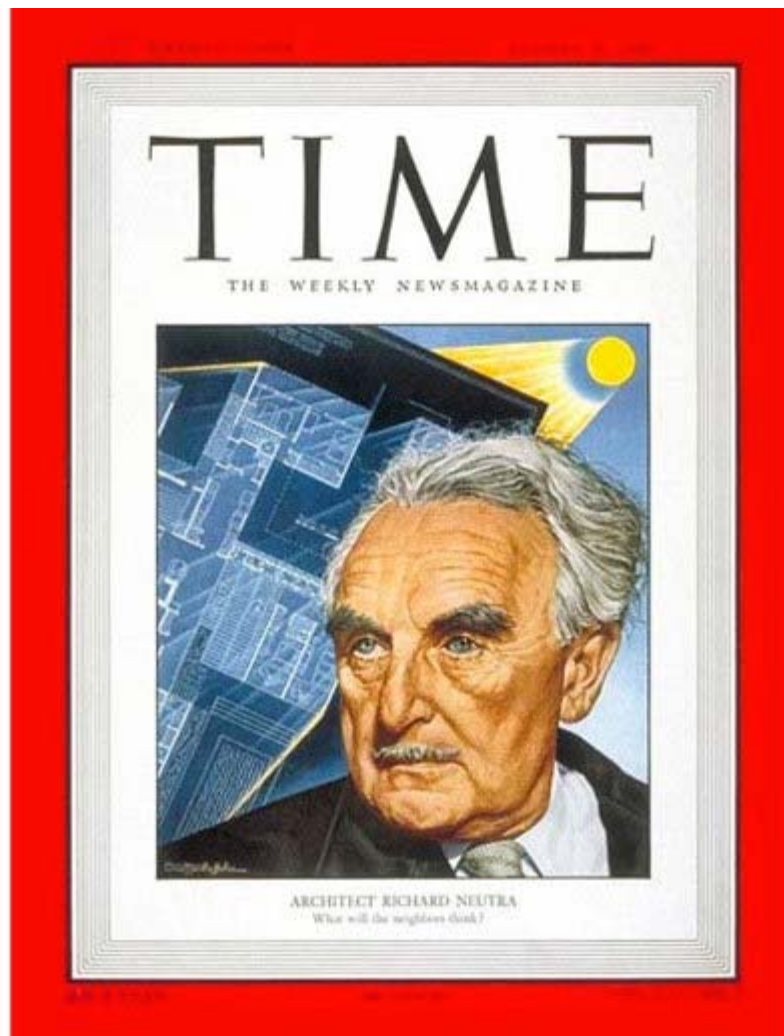


Photo: Getty Images

When *Time* magazine put Richard J. Neutra on the cover of its August 15, 1949, issue, the Austrian-born architect had been designing astounding modernist houses for more than 20 years—houses, *Time* said, with "broad, glassy brows" and "spaciousness and compactness combined." Neutra (1892–1970) was a prophet of clean, crisp modernism, and his houses, most of which were built in California, have inspired countless architects and emboldened preservationists in an area of the country notoriously quick to raze landmarks. And why not? As *Time* eloquently observed, "Their beauty, like that of any sea shell, is more than skin-deep—practical, not pretentious."



Photo: Getty Images

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## Singleton House, Bel Air, California

Completed in 1959 and recently restored by hairstylist Vidal Sassoon, the Singleton House was commissioned by engineer Henry E. Singleton, cofounder of the electronics-and-aeronautics conglomerate Teledyne. The one-story residence is all about elegant intersections, its glass-walled living areas melding with a shimmering ornamental pool. That magnificent transparency, however, eventually led Singleton's wife, Caroline, to complain of a lack of privacy. So in 1970 the couple and their

children moved to a formal Normandy-style château designed for them by Wallace Neff.

Click here to see more images of this house as featured in *AD's April 2011 issue*.



Photo: Getty Images

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In 1947, nine years after the construction of their country house Fallingwater—designed by Frank Lloyd Wright—Pittsburgh department-store magnate Edgar J. Kaufmann Sr., his wife, Liliane, and their dachshunds settled into their newly built

Neutra winter residence. Marmol Radziner + Associates oversaw a much-admired restoration of the property in the 1990s, and today the lean stone-and-glass house is considered one of Neutra's finest achievements.



Photo: Getty Images

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In the mid-1930s, St. Louis socialite Grace Lewis Miller asked Neutra to build her a winter getaway in Palm Springs. What the architect completed in 1937 was a minimalist machine for living, its reinforced-concrete walls trimmed with aluminum and framing views of cacti and mountains. His client was thrilled, writing, "Whether there is one or more to dinner, one or two or a crowd for tea or cocktails, or a bunch of young things for dancing, careless with their cigarette butts, the house is always a success." Financial difficulties, however, led Miller to sell the

place a few years later. The house's present owner restored and updated it over the past decade. However, development has robbed the house of its views.



Photo: Getty Images

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Dating from 1956 and built for poet Josephine Ain—who had lived in a Neutra house in her younger days—and her third husband, painter Robert Chuey, the Chuey house was a startlingly elegant essay on indoor-outdoor living. "You are an alchemist who has transmuted earth, house, and sky into a single enchantment," Ain wrote to Neutra after the completion of the house, which featured a deck dramatically cantilevered over a



cliff. "I can only hope that I can in some measure grow up to the wholeness and balance embodied here."

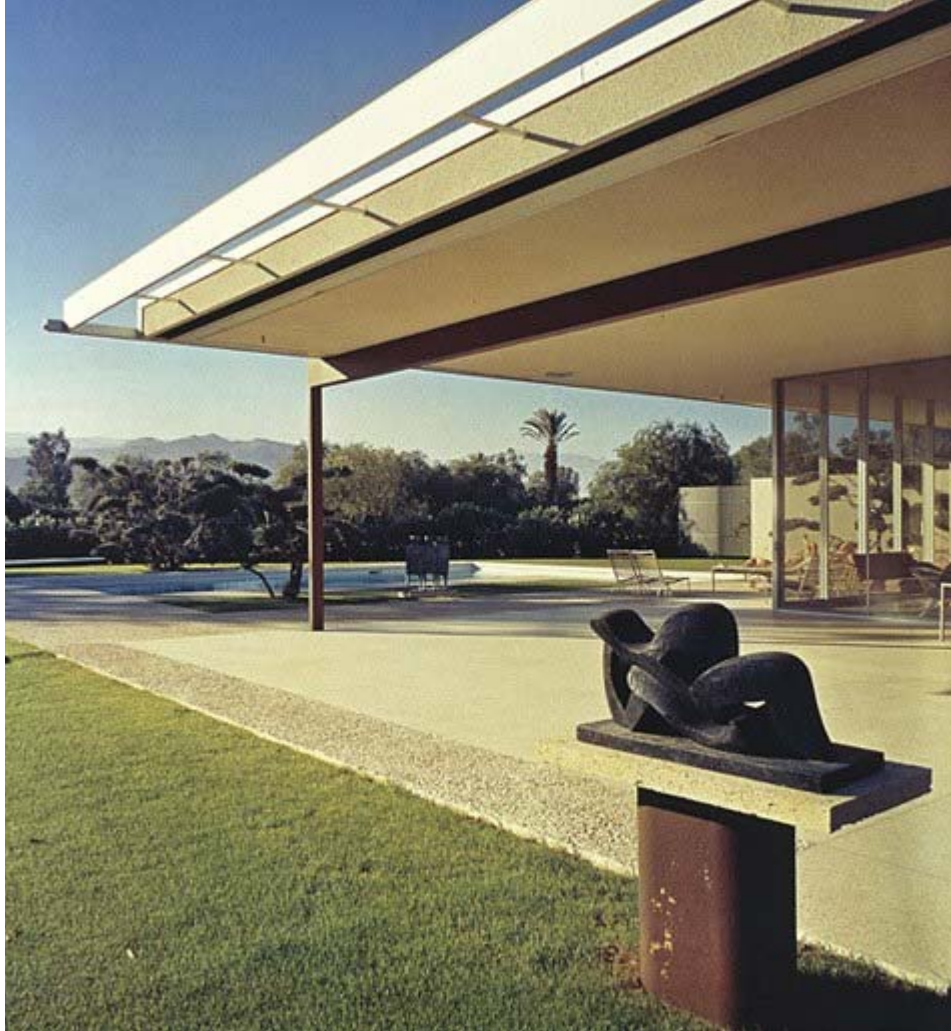


Photo: Getty Images

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Erected in 1962 alongside the golf course of the Tamarisk Country Club, this suave weekend house with six bedrooms was built for art collectors Luella and Samuel Maslon and is considered Neutra's late-career masterpiece. It remained astonishingly intact until March 2002, when it was demolished.



Photo: Getty Images

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Likened to a greyhound by one of its admirers, the Von Sternberg residence of 1935 was the home of Hollywood movie director Josef von Sternberg, the man who made Marlene Dietrich a star. He wanted, he wrote in his memoirs, "a retreat for myself, my books, and my collection of modern art." Neutra also gave him a kennel for his dogs and a patio with an aluminum privacy wall and decorative moat, which was photographer Julius Shulman's favorite feature. The Von Sternberg House, later owned by novelist Ayn Rand, was demolished in 1972.





Photo: Getty Images

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Little more than 1,300 square feet in size, this 1952 house was designed for newlyweds Dorothy M. Serulnic, who became Neutra's secretary, and her husband, George, a violinist. With its multipurpose rooms and expanses of plate glass, the building, an observer wrote, was "clean-cut, good-looking—and seems enormous." It is now used as a guesthouse for a dramatic polygonal residence built in 2009 by Michael Maltzan for artists Lari Pittman and Roy Dowell.



Photo: Getty Images

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With vast plate-glass walls framing mesmerizing, ever-changing views of the Pacific Ocean, the 1957 Wise House was proof that, for Neutra, architecture was as much about creating memorable experiences as about enduring comforts. The satisfaction of "thrilling occurrence," he wrote in his 1954 essay collection, *Survival Through Design*, was to be more highly prized than "humdrum steadiness."



Photo: Getty Images

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The project that made Neutra an architectural sensation was this 1929 residence for Leah and Philip Lovell, a naturopathic physician known for his love of modern architecture. Located in Griffith Park, the Lovell Health House, as it is also called, is considered an International Style masterpiece, its steel frame spray-coated with gunite and faced with immense windows. As Lovell wrote, he wanted a home with "air, light, outdoors sleeping, the ability of the sun to penetrate, etc. . . . The city house for nearly 2 [sic] decades became a house of comfort, happiness, and above all, radical drugless health." It appeared in the 1997 film *L.A. Confidential*.

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